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INVINCIBLE™

COMPENDIUM ONE

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ISSUE 7

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INVINCIBLE COMPENDIUM, VOL. 1. Published by Image Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 2001 Center St., 6th Floor, Berkeley, California 94704.

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Originally published in single magazine format as INVINCIBLE #0-47, THE PACT #4 and a portion of the IMAGE COMICS SUMMER SPECIAL 2004.

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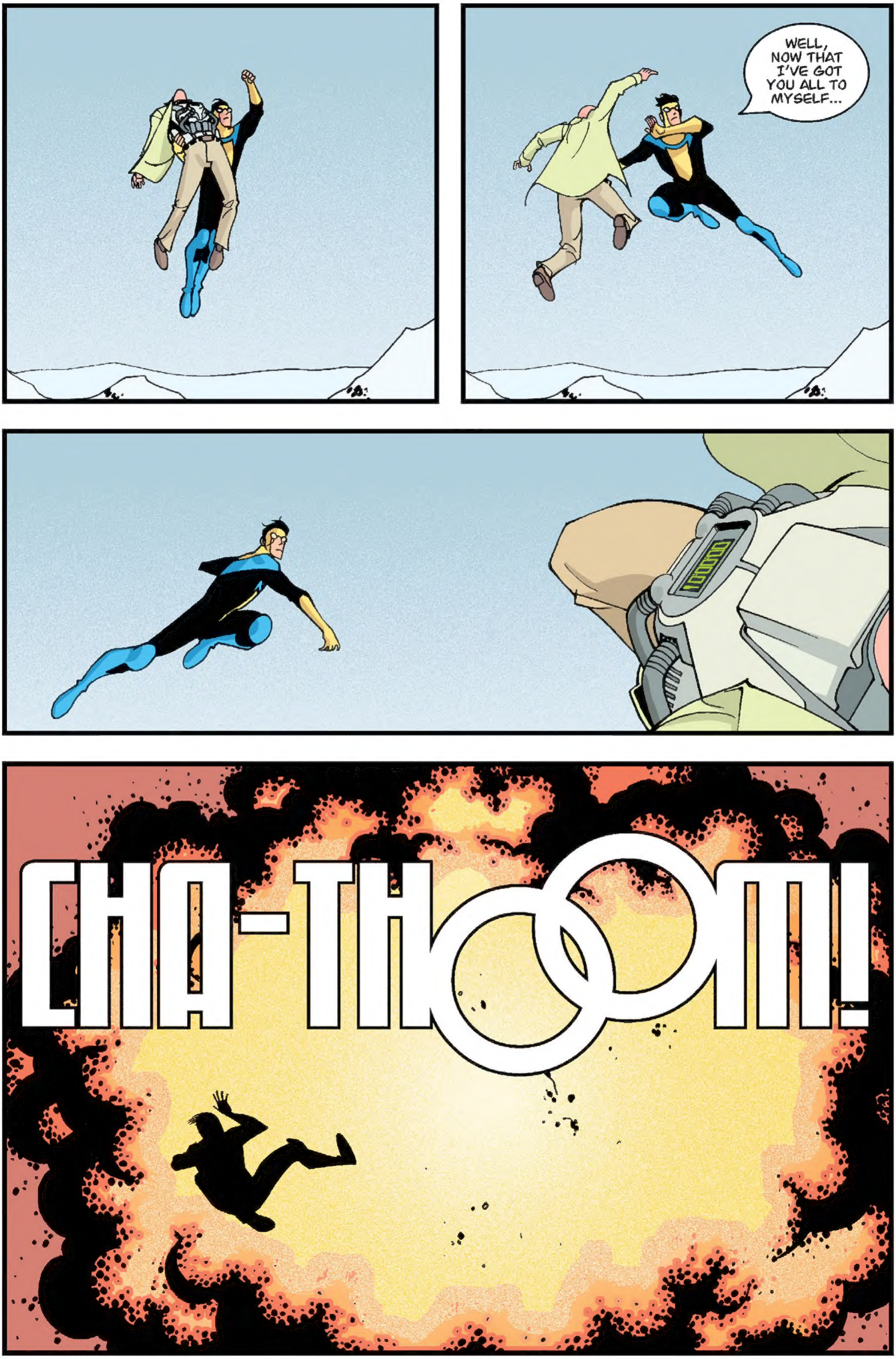
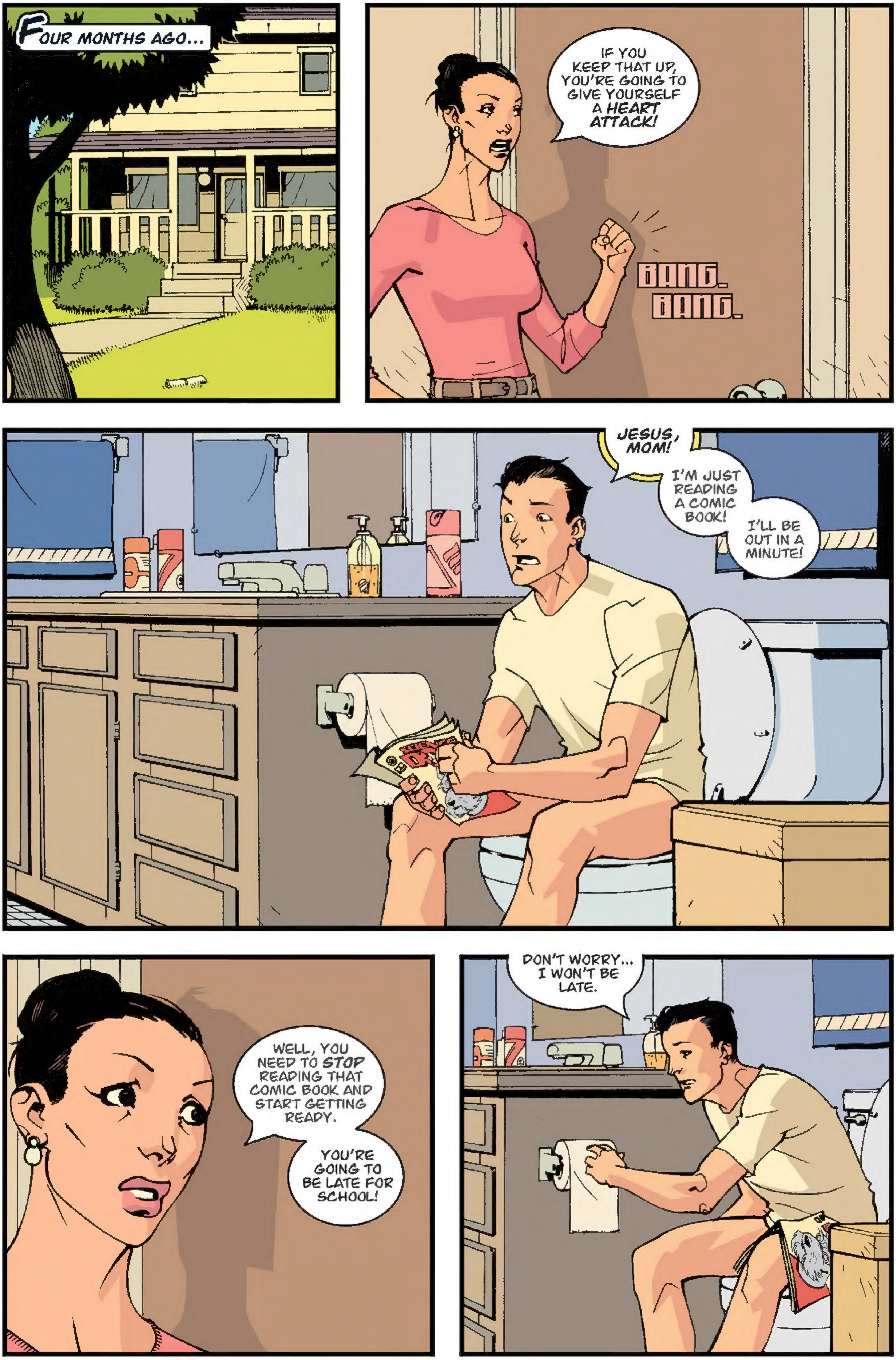
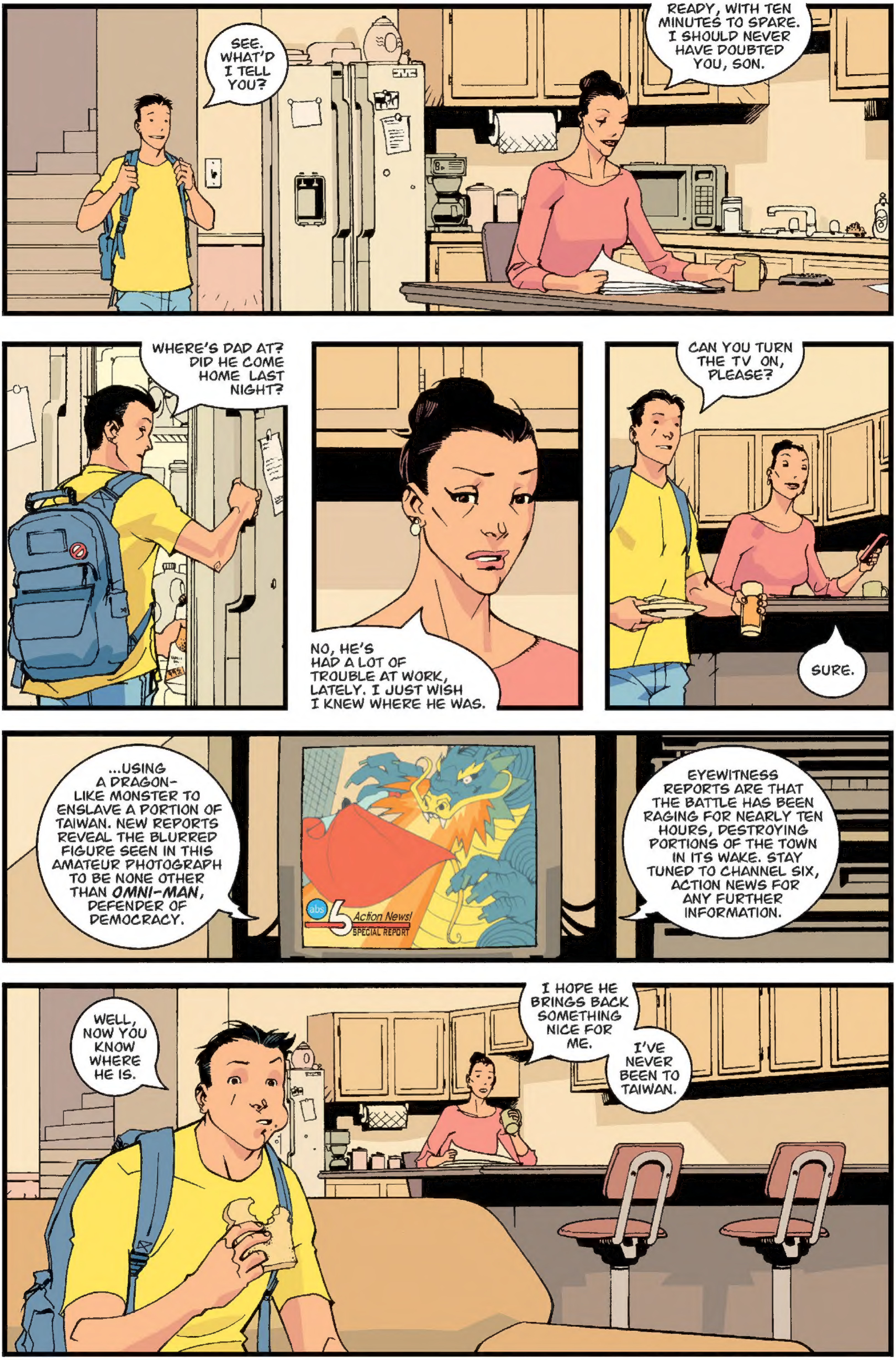
ISSUE ONE

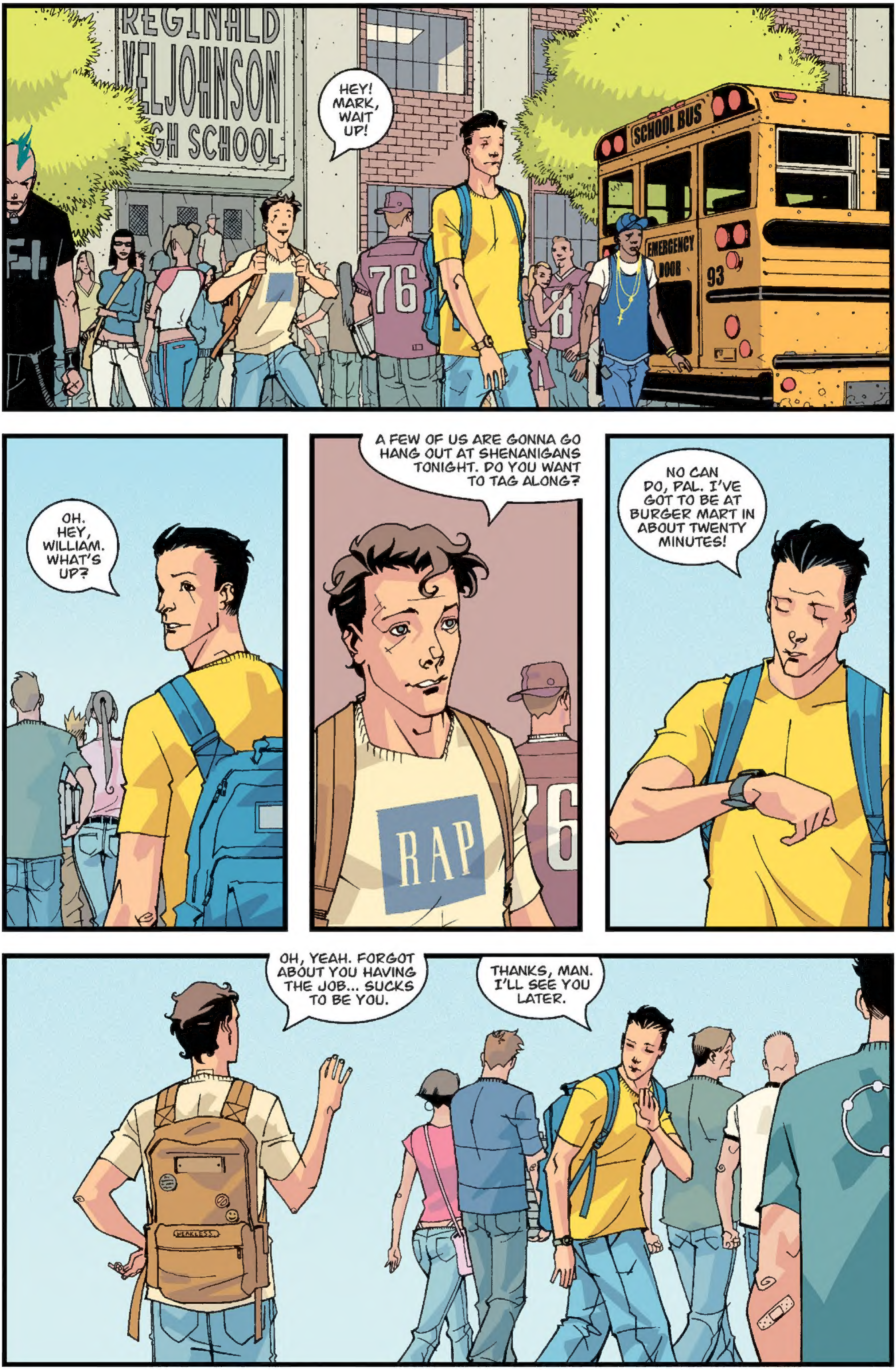
00:00.13
Y'KNOW, YOU REALLY ***RUINED*** MY AFTERNOON.

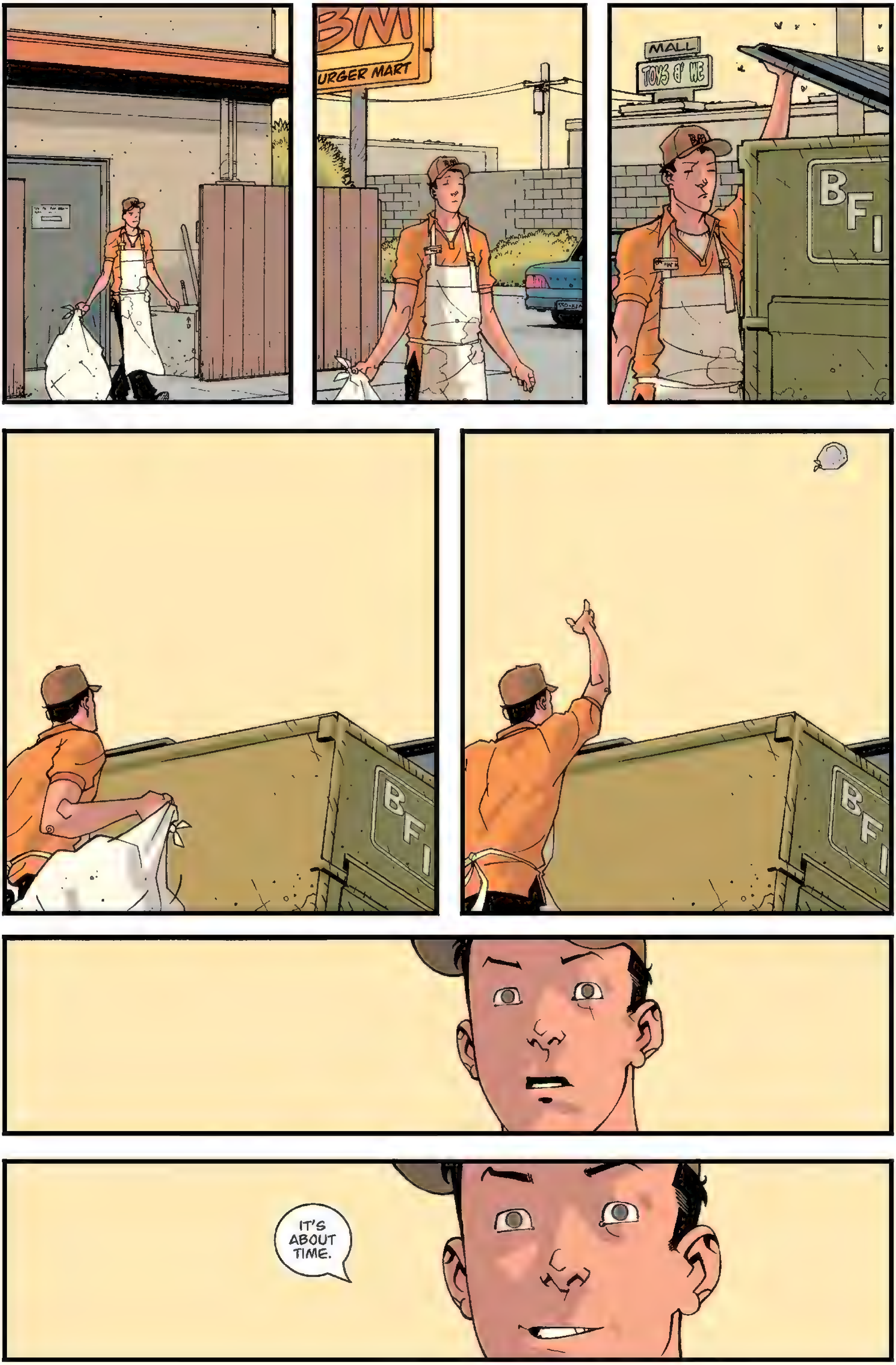

WELL, NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOU ALL TO MYSELF...
CHA-THOOM!

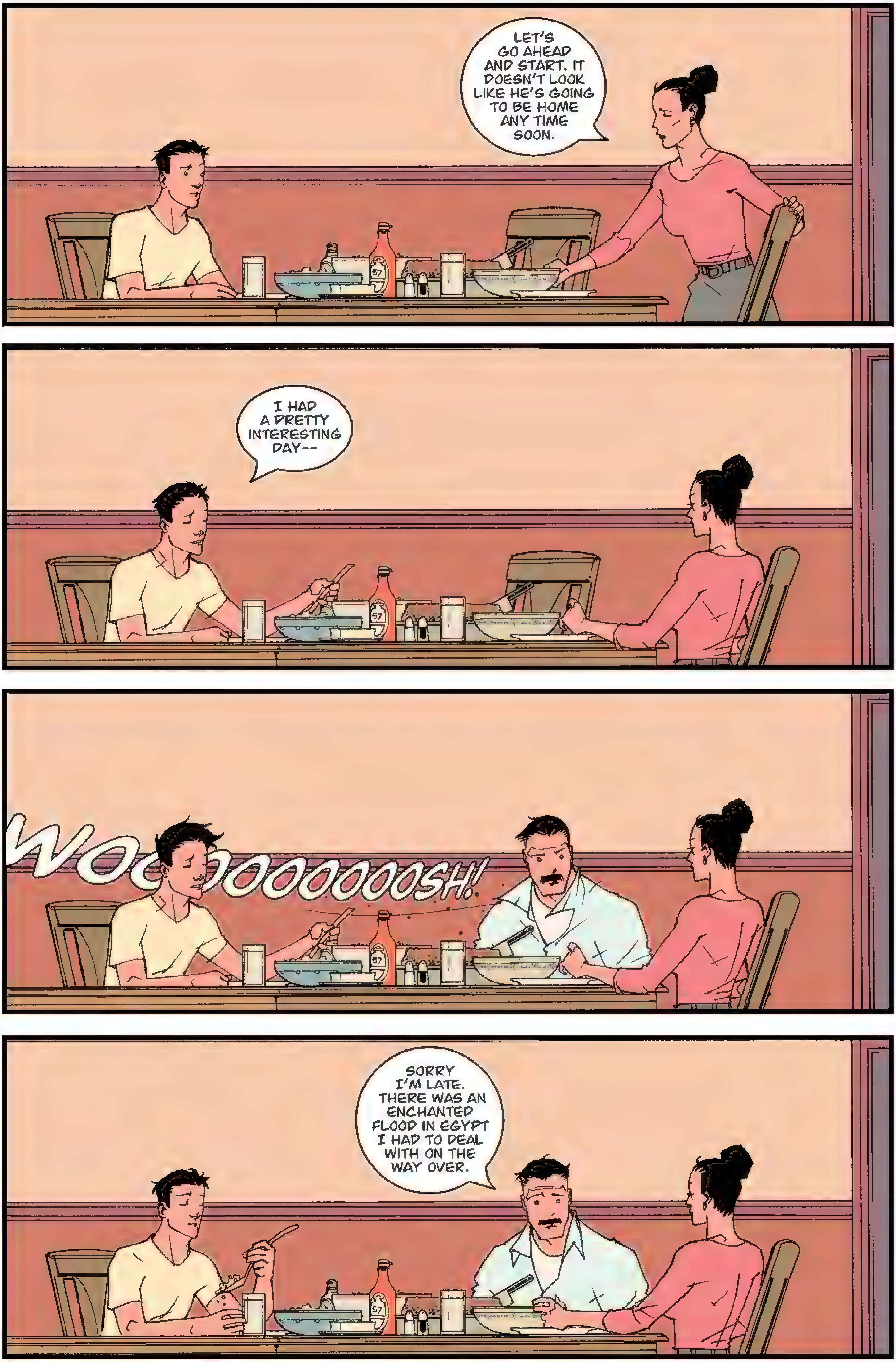
THOOM!
SIGH
IF I KEEP THIS UP I'M GOING TO GIVE MYSELF A HEART ATTACK!

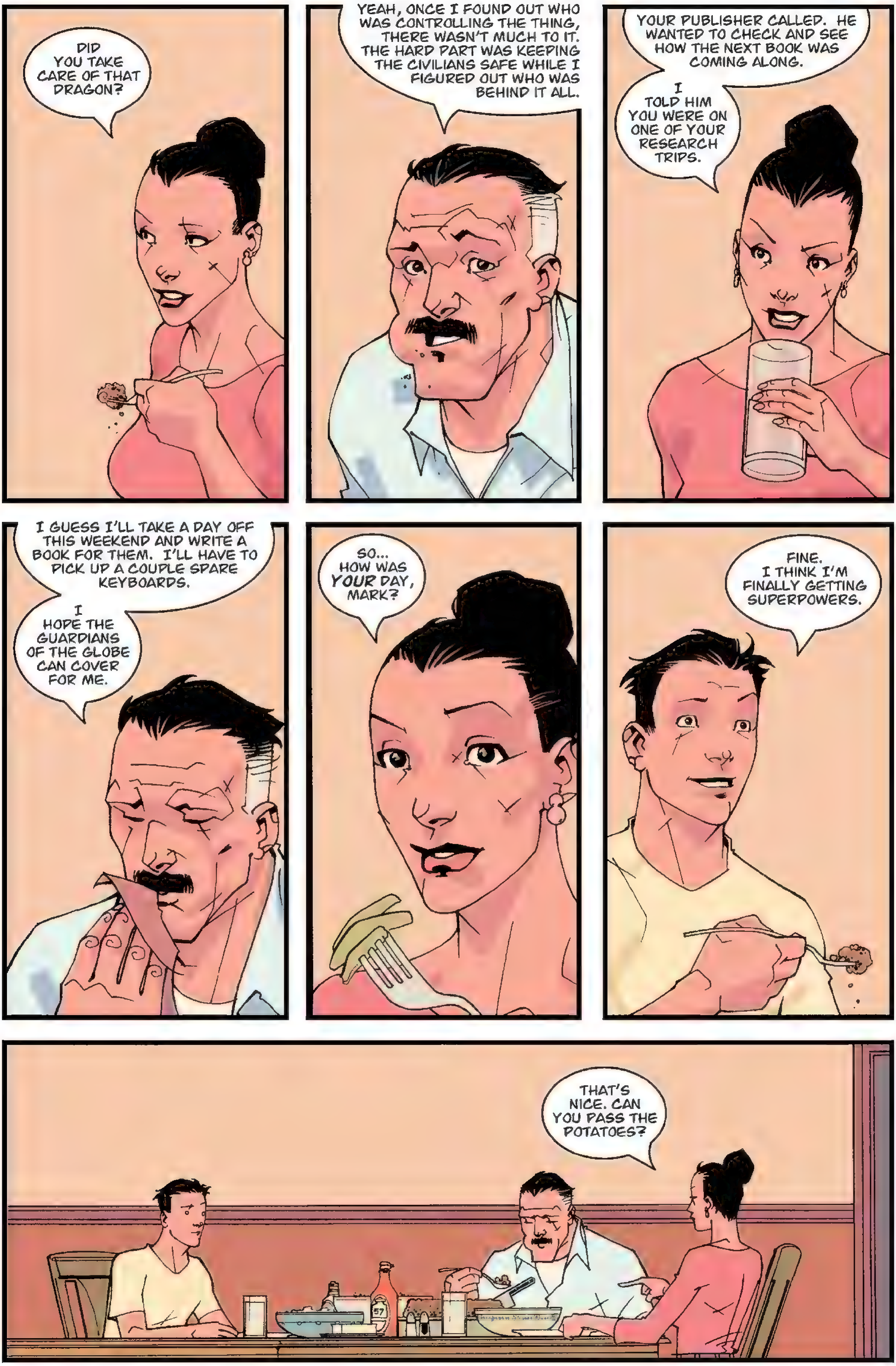

FOUR MONTHS AGO...
IF YOU KEEP THAT UP, YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE YOURSELF A **HEART ATTACK!**
BANG. BANG.
JESUS, MOM!
I'M JUST READING A COMIC BOOK!
I'LL BE OUT IN A MINUTE!
WELL, YOU NEED TO **STOP** READING THAT COMIC BOOK AND START GETTING READY.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!
DON'T WORRY... I WON'T BE LATE.

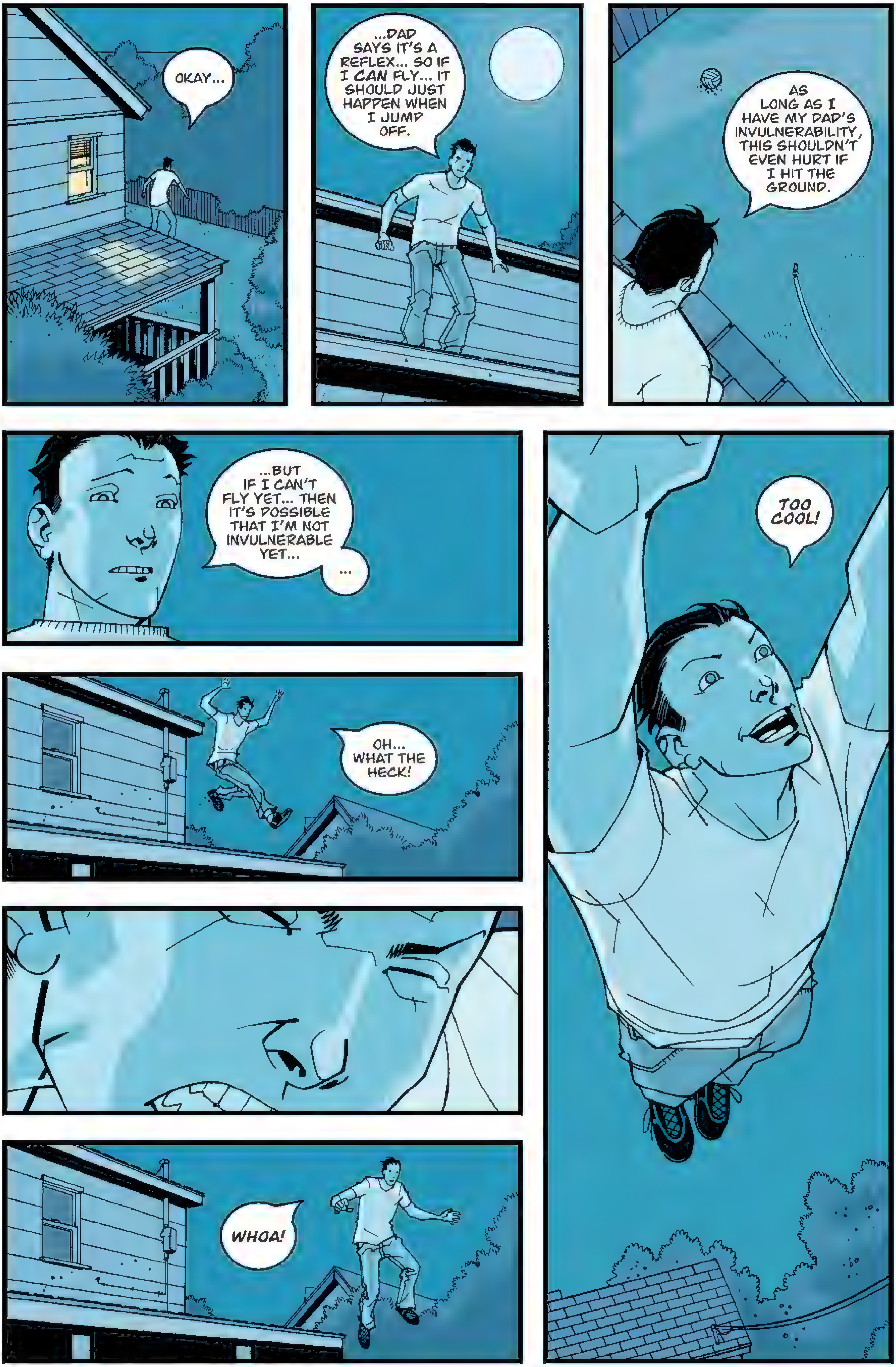

SEE. WHAT'D I TELL YOU?
READY, WITH TEN MINUTES TO SPARE. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE DOUBTED YOU, SON.
WHERE'S DAD AT? DID HE COME HOME LAST NIGHT?
NO, HE'S HAD A LOT OF TROUBLE AT WORK, LATELY. I JUST WISH I KNEW WHERE HE WAS.
CAN YOU TURN THE TV ON, PLEASE?
SURE.
...USING A DRAGON-LIKE MONSTER TO ENSLAVE A PORTION OF TAIWAN. NEW REPORTS REVEAL THE BLURRED FIGURE SEEN IN THIS AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPH TO BE NONE OTHER THAN *OMNI-MAN*, DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY.
abs 6 Action News! SPECIAL REPORT
EYEWITNESS REPORTS ARE THAT THE BATTLE HAS BEEN RAGING FOR NEARLY TEN HOURS, DESTROYING PORTIONS OF THE TOWN IN ITS WAKE. STAY TUNED TO CHANNEL SIX, ACTION NEWS FOR ANY FURTHER INFORMATION.
WELL, NOW YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS.
I HOPE HE BRINGS BACK SOMETHING NICE FOR ME.
I'VE NEVER BEEN TO TAIWAN.

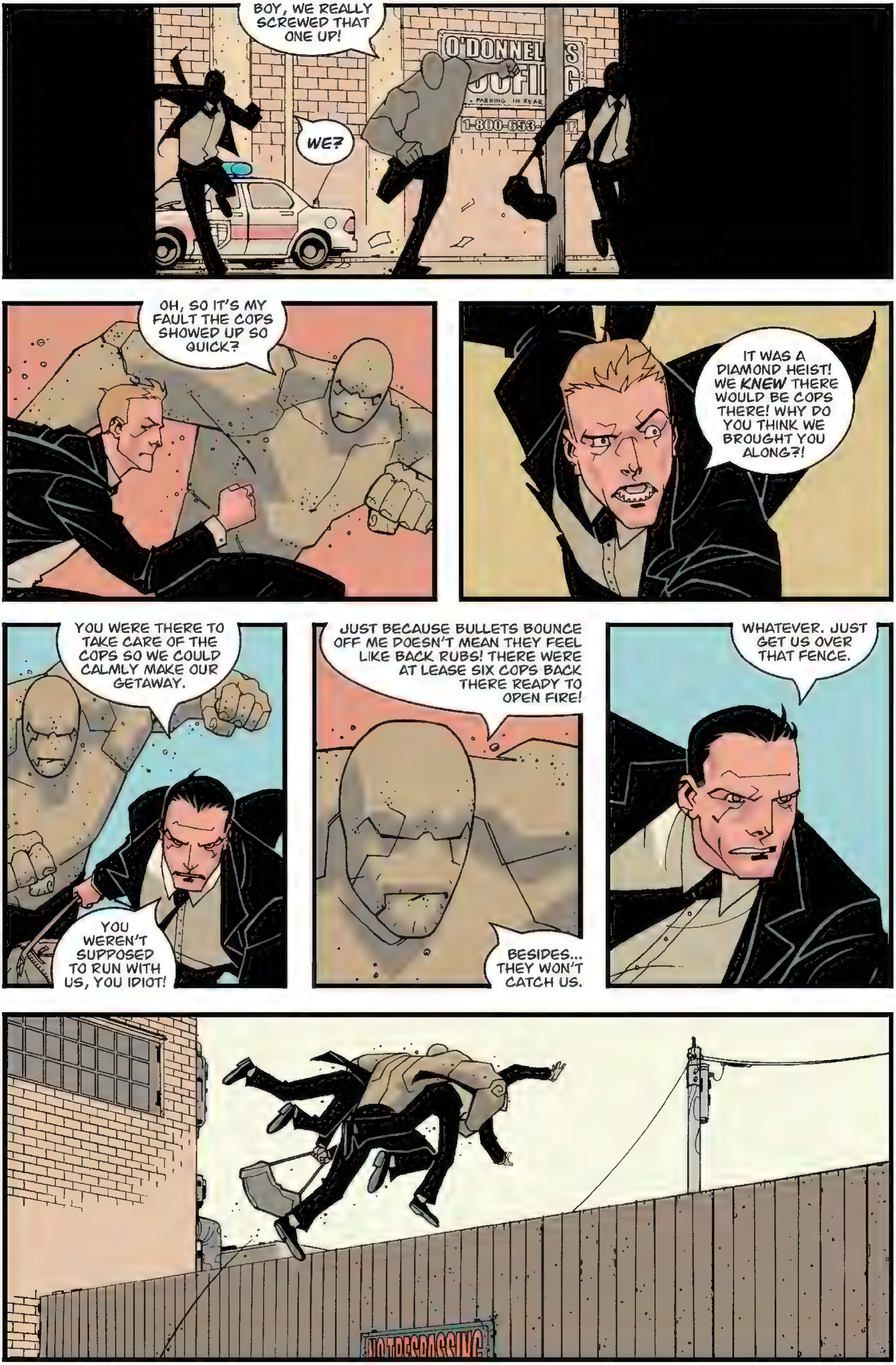

REGINALD
VELJOHNSON
GH SCHOOL
HEY! MARK, WAIT UP!
SCHOOL BUS
EMERGENCY DOOR
93
76
OH. HEY, WILLIAM. WHAT'S UP?
A FEW OF US ARE GONNA GO HANG OUT AT SHENANIGANS TONIGHT. DO YOU WANT TO TAG ALONG?
RAP
NO CAN DO, PAL. I'VE GOT TO BE AT BURGER MART IN ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES!
OH, YEAH. FORGOT ABOUT YOU HAVING THE JOB... SUCKS TO BE YOU.
THANKS, MAN. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
FEARLESS

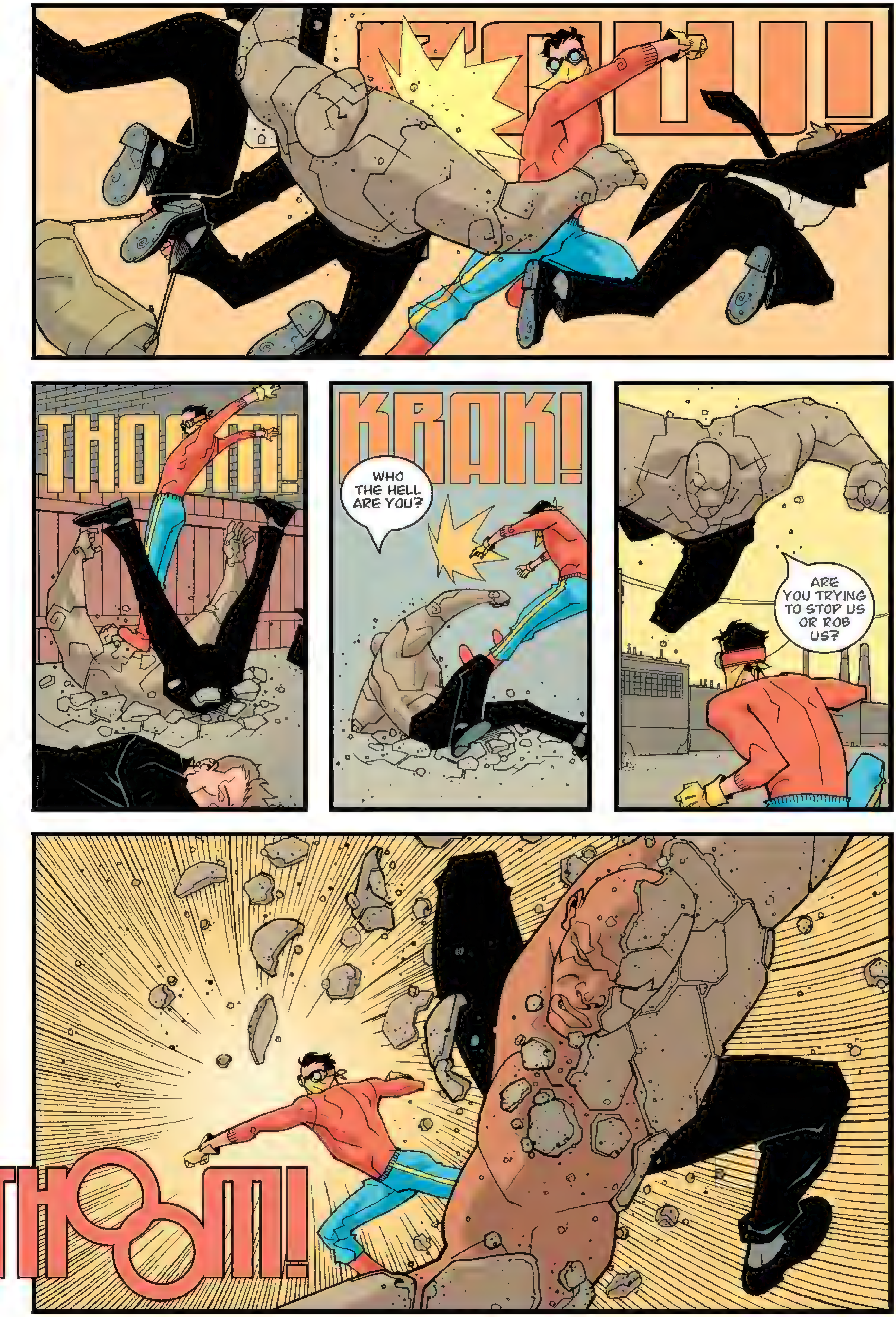

BM
URGER MART
MALL
TOYS 8' WE
BFI
BFI
BFI
IT'S ABOUT TIME.

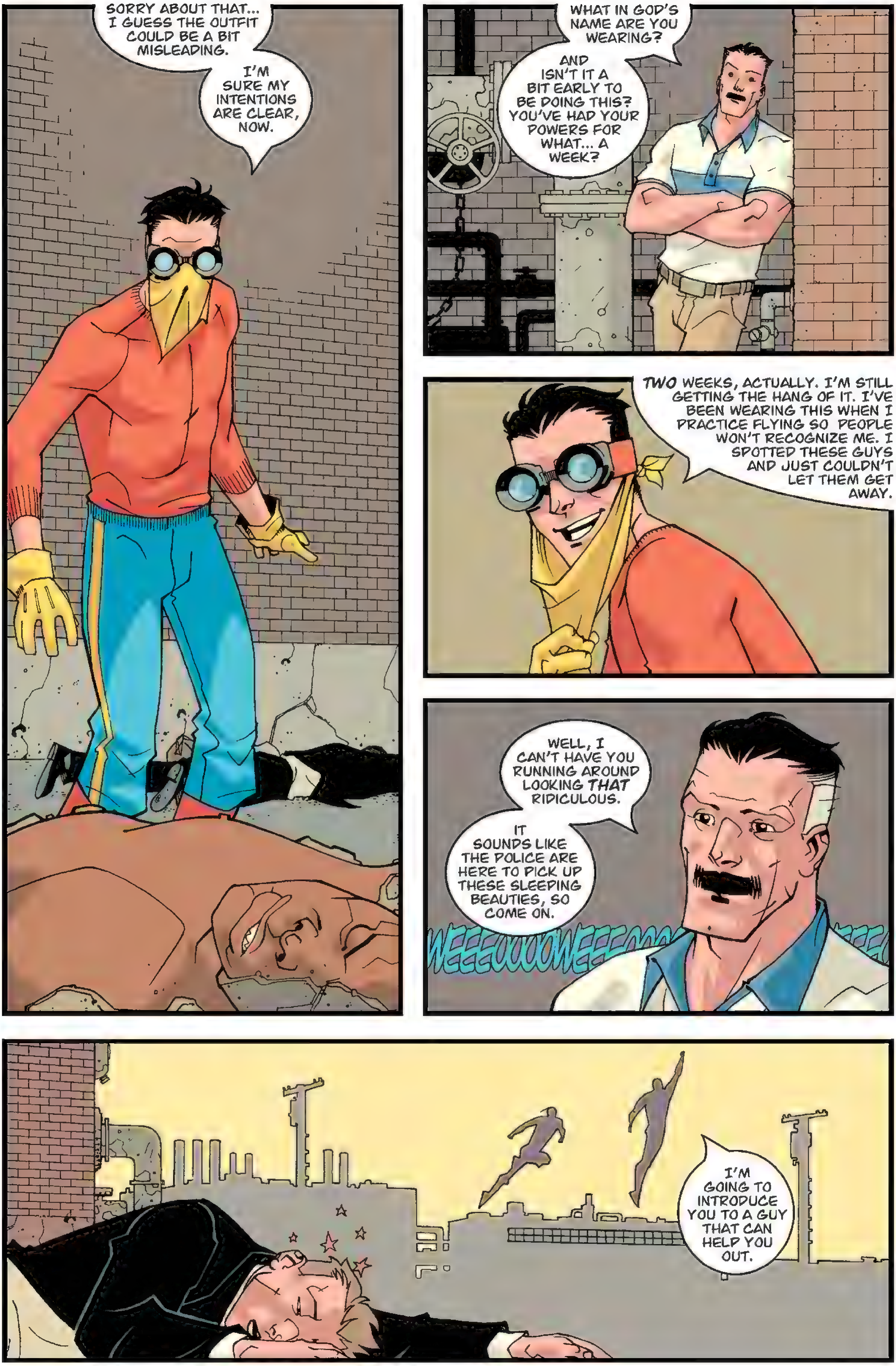

LET'S GO AHEAD AND START. IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S GOING TO BE HOME ANY TIME SOON.
I HAD A PRETTY INTERESTING DAY--
WOOOOOOOOOOOOSH!
SORRY I'M LATE. THERE WAS AN ENCHANTED FLOOD IN EGYPT I HAD TO DEAL WITH ON THE WAY OVER.

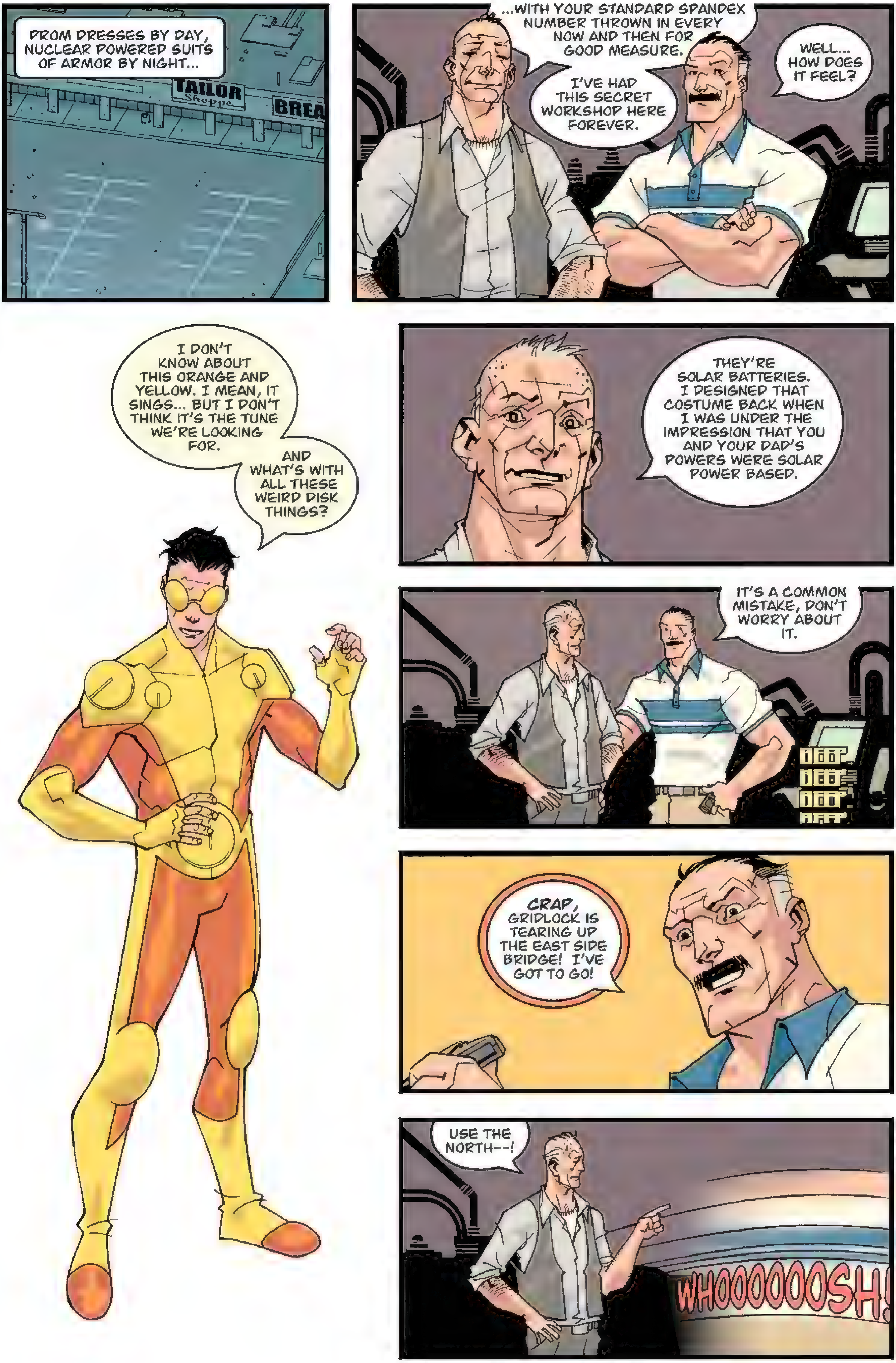

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT DRAGON?
YEAH, ONCE I FOUND OUT WHO WAS CONTROLLING THE THING, THERE WASN'T MUCH TO IT. THE HARD PART WAS KEEPING THE CIVILIANS SAFE WHILE I FIGURED OUT WHO WAS BEHIND IT ALL.
YOUR PUBLISHER CALLED. HE WANTED TO CHECK AND SEE HOW THE NEXT BOOK WAS COMING ALONG.
I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ON ONE OF YOUR RESEARCH TRIPS.
I GUESS I'LL TAKE A DAY OFF THIS WEEKEND AND WRITE A BOOK FOR THEM. I'LL HAVE TO PICK UP A COUPLE SPARE KEYBOARDS.
I HOPE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CAN COVER FOR ME.
SO... HOW WAS *YOUR* DAY, MARK?
FINE. I THINK I'M FINALLY GETTING SUPERPOWERS.
THAT'S NICE. CAN YOU PASS THE POTATOES?
57

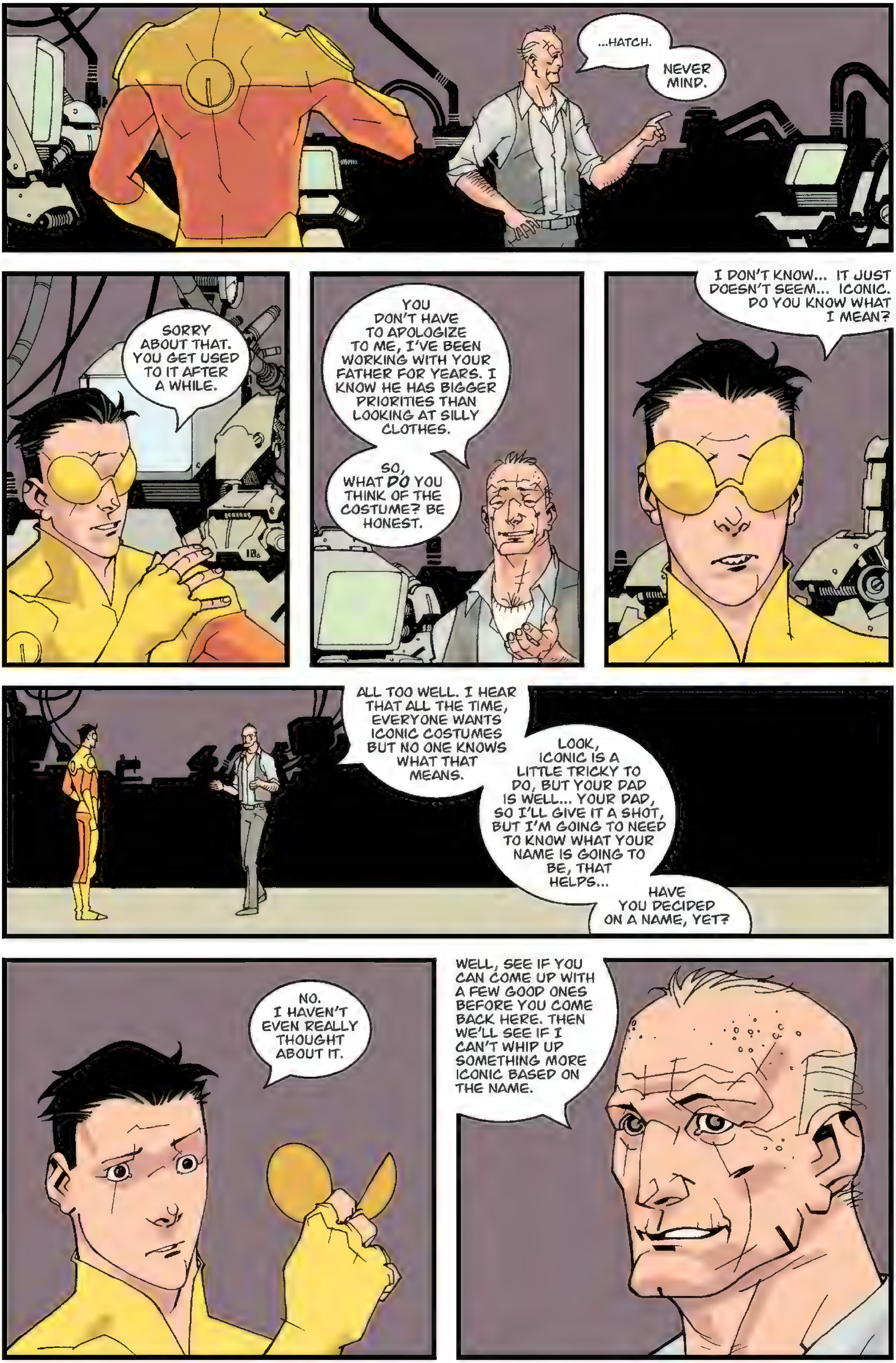

OKAY...
...DAD SAYS IT'S A REFLEX... SO IF I *CAN* FLY... IT SHOULD JUST HAPPEN WHEN I JUMP OFF.
AS LONG AS I HAVE MY DAD'S INVULNERABILITY, THIS SHOULDN'T EVEN HURT IF I HIT THE GROUND.
...BUT IF I CAN'T FLY YET... THEN IT'S POSSIBLE THAT I'M NOT INVULNERABLE YET...
...
OH... WHAT THE HECK!
WHOA!
TOO COOL!

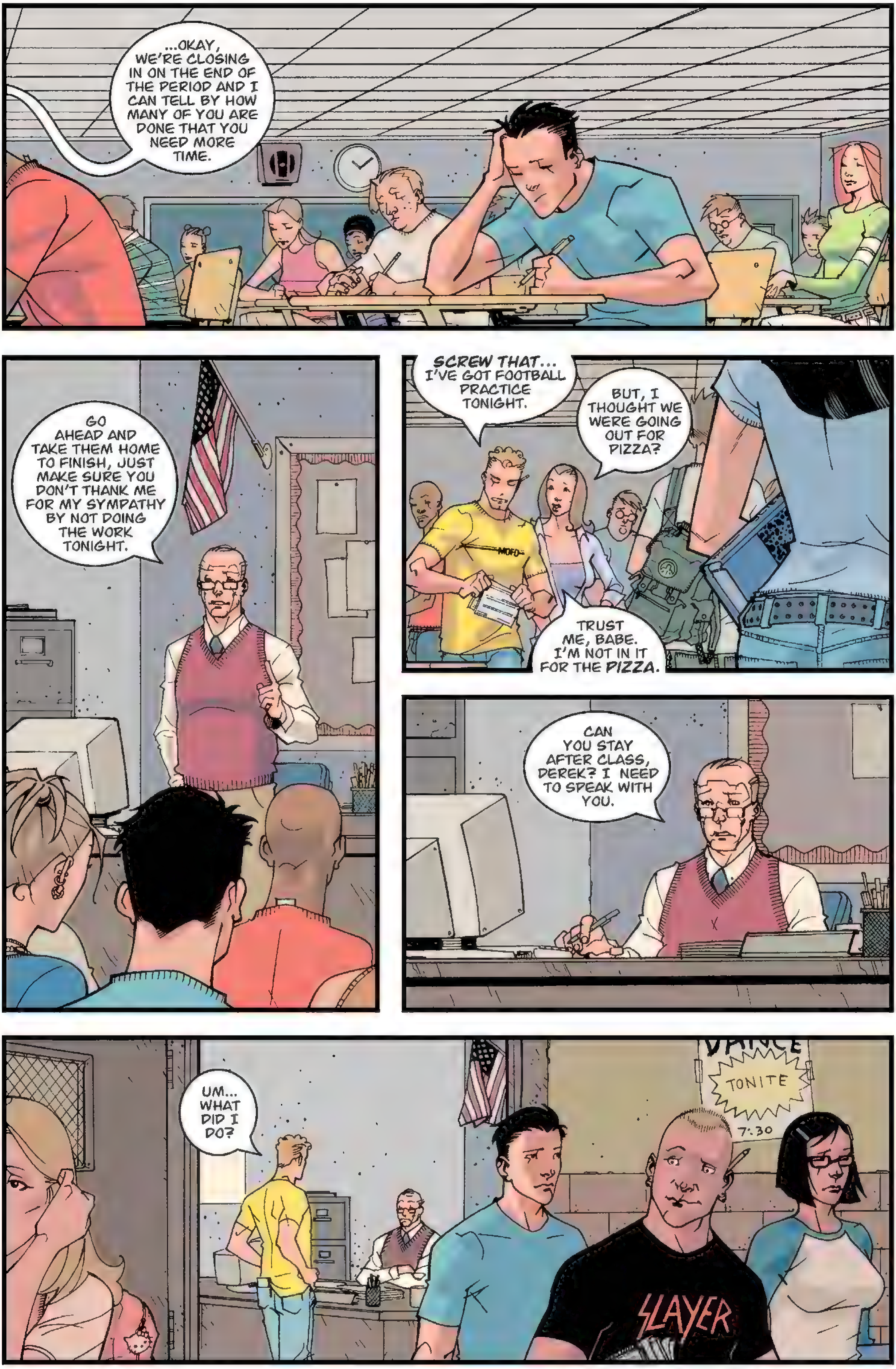

BOY, WE REALLY SCREWED THAT ONE UP!
WE?
O'DONNEL S
PARKING IN REAR
1-800-653-
OH, SO IT'S MY FAULT THE COPS SHOWED UP SO QUICK?
IT WAS A DIAMOND HEIST! WE ***KNEW*** THERE WOULD BE COPS THERE! WHY DO YOU THINK WE BROUGHT YOU ALONG?!
YOU WERE THERE TO TAKE CARE OF THE COPS SO WE COULD CALMLY MAKE OUR GETAWAY.
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO RUN WITH US, YOU IDIOT!
JUST BECAUSE BULLETS BOUNCE OFF ME DOESN'T MEAN THEY FEEL LIKE BACK RUBS! THERE WERE AT LEASE SIX COPS BACK THERE READY TO OPEN FIRE!
BESIDES... THEY WON'T CATCH US.
WHATEVER. JUST GET US OVER THAT FENCE.
NO TRESPASSING

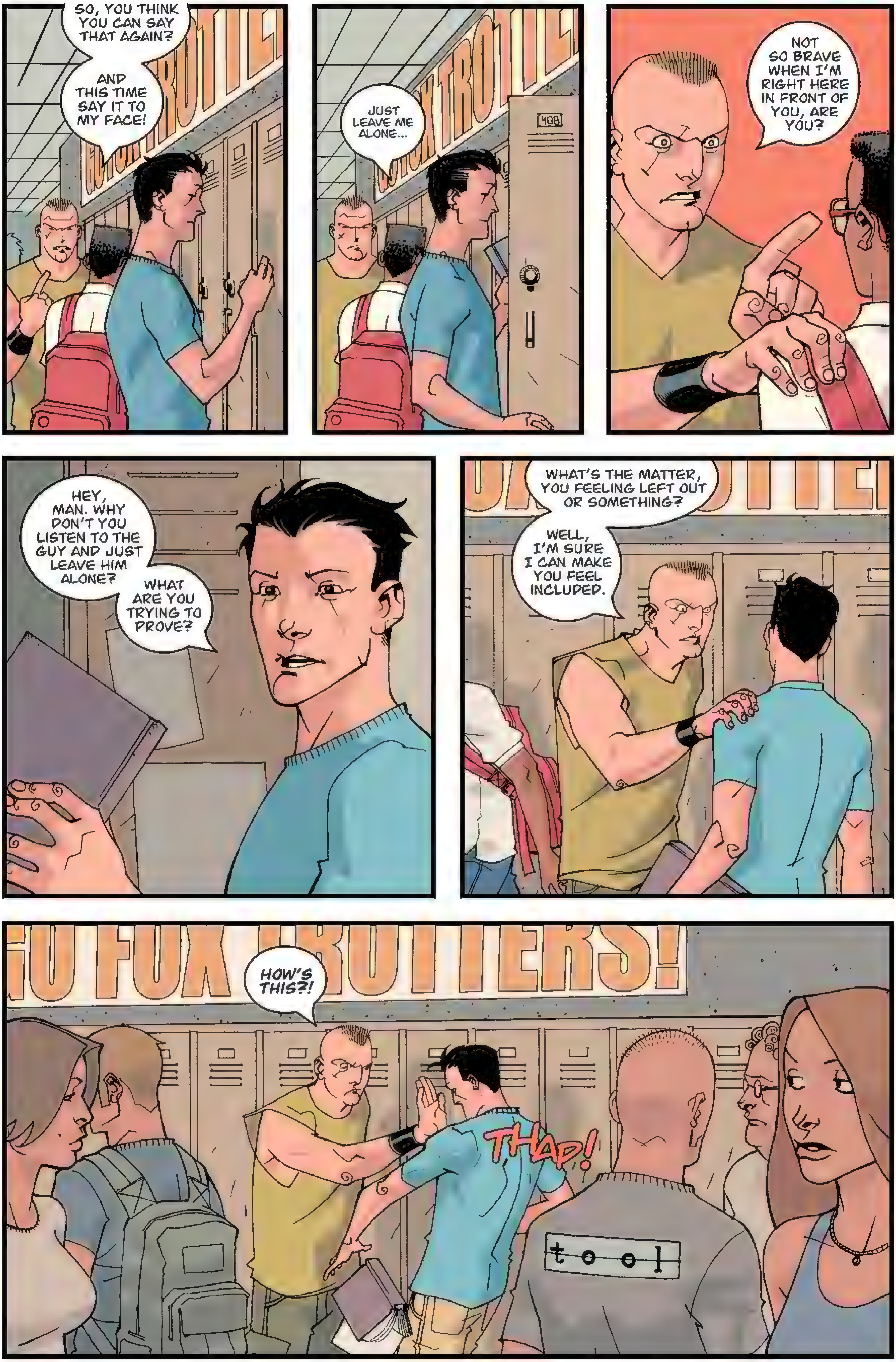

THOOM!
KRAK!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
ARE YOU TRYING TO STOP US OR ROB US?
THOOM!

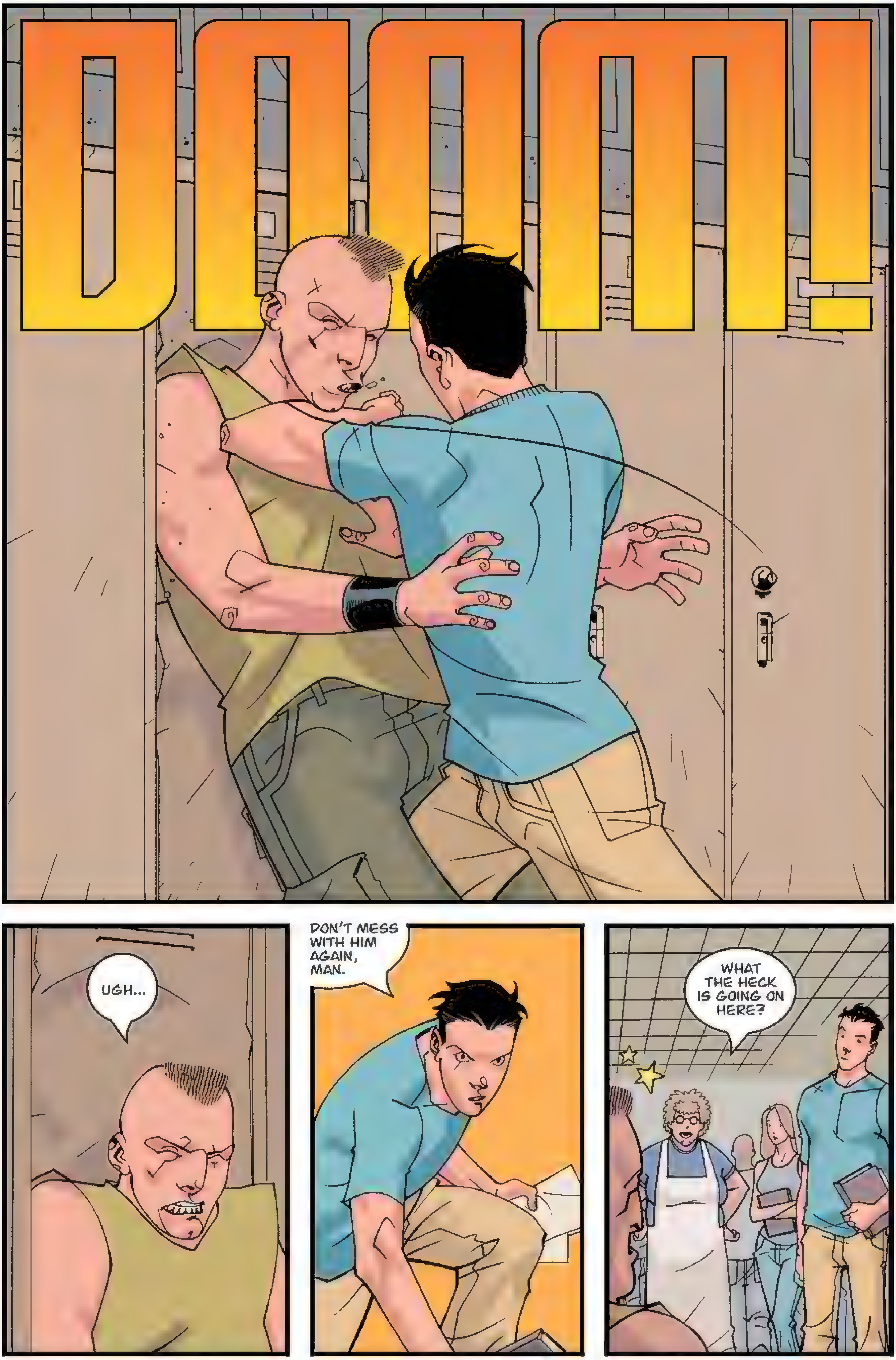

SORRY ABOUT THAT... I GUESS THE OUTFIT COULD BE A BIT MISLEADING.
I'M SURE MY INTENTIONS ARE CLEAR, NOW.
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU WEARING?
AND ISN'T IT A BIT EARLY TO BE DOING THIS? YOU'VE HAD YOUR POWERS FOR WHAT... A WEEK?
TWO WEEKS, ACTUALLY. I'M STILL GETTING THE HANG OF IT. I'VE BEEN WEARING THIS WHEN I PRACTICE FLYING SO PEOPLE WON'T RECOGNIZE ME. I SPOTTED THESE GUYS AND JUST COULDN'T LET THEM GET AWAY.
WELL, I CAN'T HAVE YOU RUNNING AROUND LOOKING *THAT* RIDICULOUS.
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE POLICE ARE HERE TO PICK UP THESE SLEEPING BEAUTIES, SO COME ON.
WEEEOOOOWEEE
I'M GOING TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A GUY THAT CAN HELP YOU OUT.

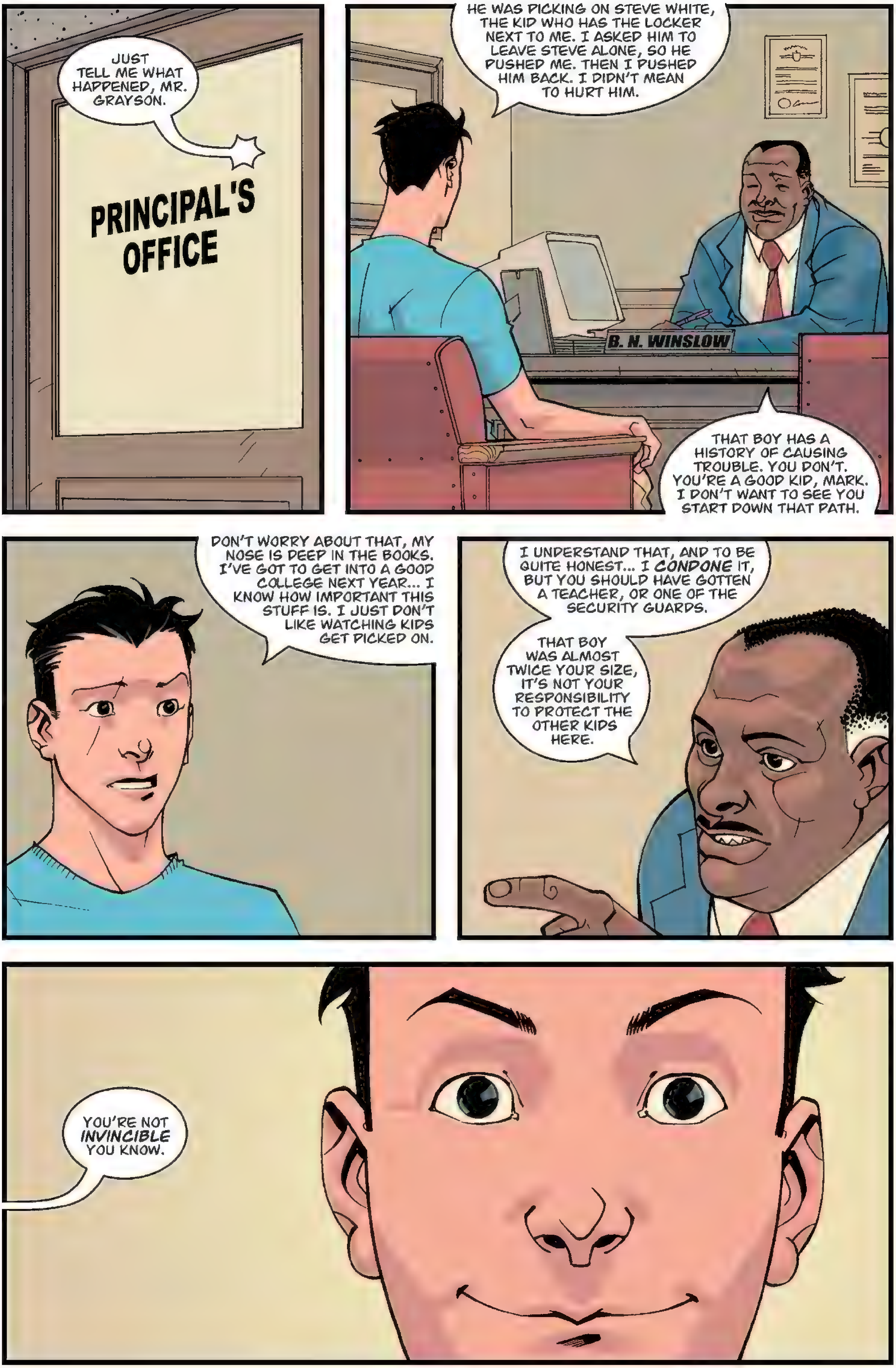

PROM DRESSES BY DAY, NUCLEAR POWERED SUITS OF ARMOR BY NIGHT...
TAILOR Shoppe
BREA
...WITH YOUR STANDARD SPANDEX NUMBER THROWN IN EVERY NOW AND THEN FOR GOOD MEASURE.
I'VE HAD THIS SECRET WORKSHOP HERE FOREVER.
WELL... HOW DOES IT FEEL?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ORANGE AND YELLOW. I MEAN, IT SINGS... BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S THE TUNE WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
AND WHAT'S WITH ALL THESE WEIRD DISK THINGS?
THEY'RE SOLAR BATTERIES. I DESIGNED THAT COSTUME BACK WHEN I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU AND YOUR DAD'S POWERS WERE SOLAR POWER BASED.
IT'S A COMMON MISTAKE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
CRAP, GRIDLOCK IS TEARING UP THE EAST SIDE BRIDGE! I'VE GOT TO GO!
USE THE NORTH--!
WHOOOOOOOSH!

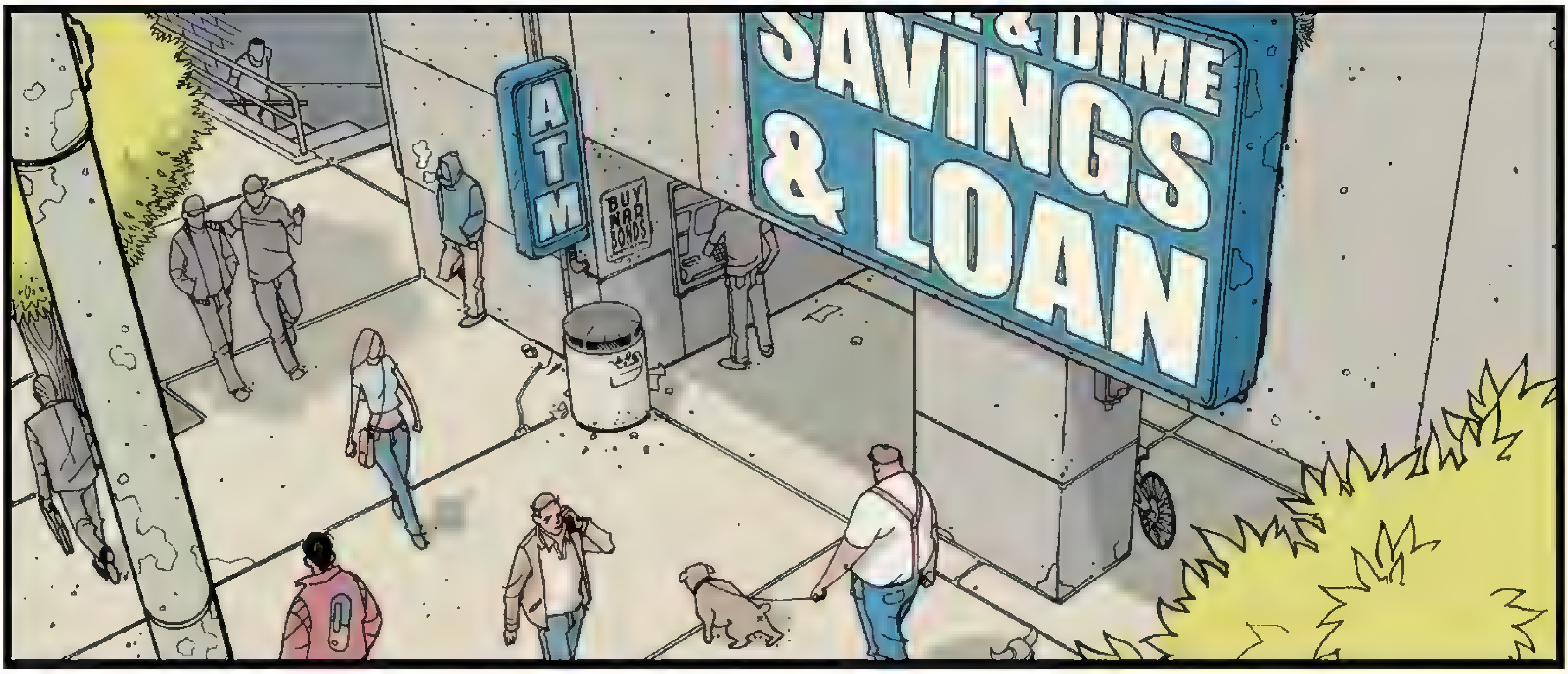

...HATCH.
NEVER MIND.
SORRY ABOUT THAT. YOU GET USED TO IT AFTER A WHILE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO ME, I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH YOUR FATHER FOR YEARS. I KNOW HE HAS BIGGER PRIORITIES THAN LOOKING AT SILLY CLOTHES.
SO, WHAT **DO** YOU THINK OF THE COSTUME? BE HONEST.
I DON'T KNOW... IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM... ICONIC. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
ALL TOO WELL. I HEAR THAT ALL THE TIME, EVERYONE WANTS ICONIC COSTUMES BUT NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THAT MEANS.
LOOK, ICONIC IS A LITTLE TRICKY TO DO, BUT YOUR DAD IS WELL... YOUR DAD, SO I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT, BUT I'M GOING TO NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOUR NAME IS GOING TO BE, THAT HELPS...
HAVE YOU DECIDED ON A NAME, YET?
NO. I HAVEN'T EVEN REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
WELL, SEE IF YOU CAN COME UP WITH A FEW GOOD ONES BEFORE YOU COME BACK HERE. THEN WE'LL SEE IF I CAN'T WHIP UP SOMETHING MORE ICONIC BASED ON THE NAME.

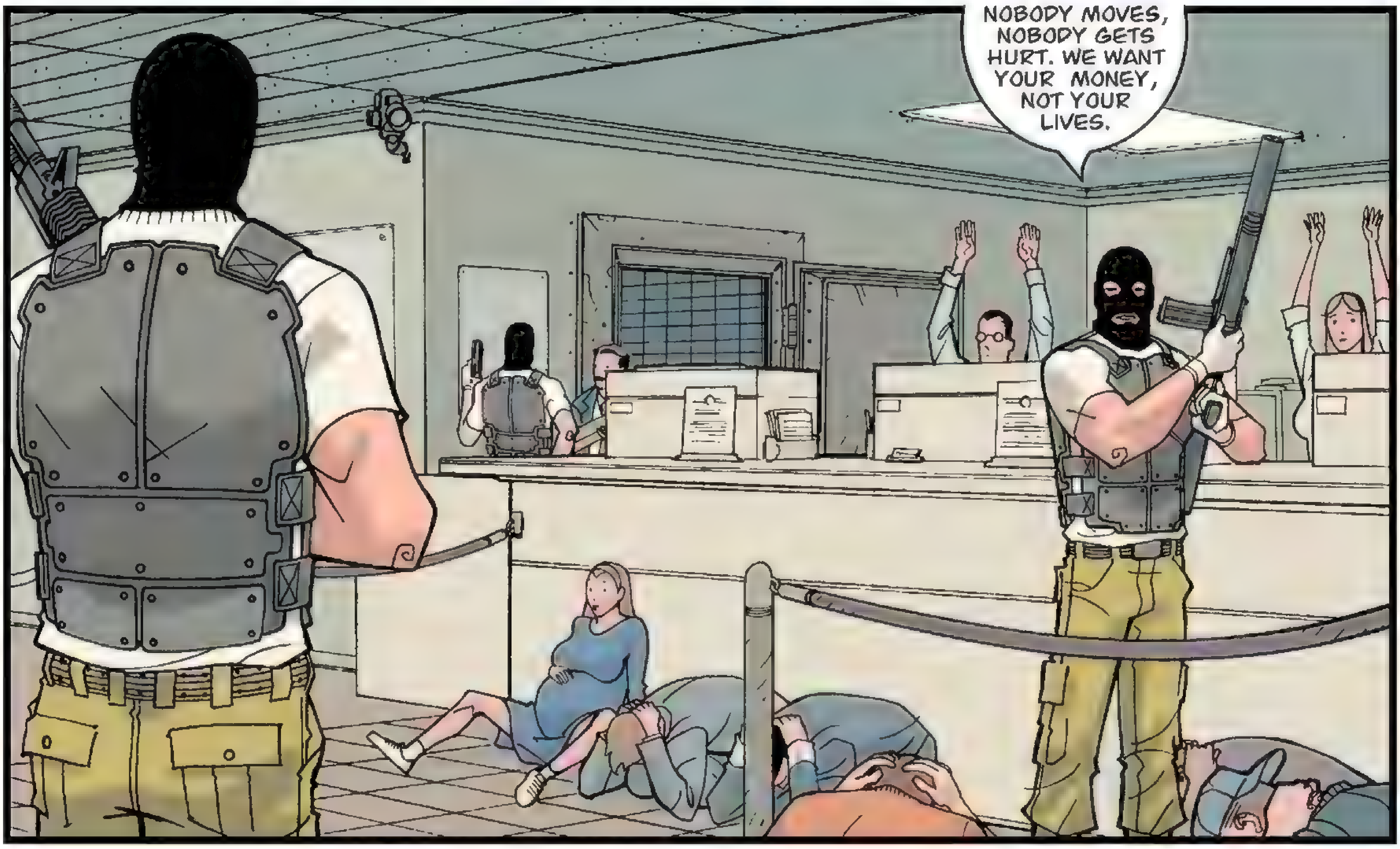

...OKAY, WE'RE CLOSING IN ON THE END OF THE PERIOD AND I CAN TELL BY HOW MANY OF YOU ARE DONE THAT YOU NEED MORE TIME.
GO AHEAD AND TAKE THEM HOME TO FINISH, JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T THANK ME FOR MY SYMPATHY BY NOT DOING THE WORK TONIGHT.
SCREW THAT... I'VE GOT FOOTBALL PRACTICE TONIGHT.
BUT, I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING OUT FOR PIZZA?
MOFO
TRUST ME, BABE. I'M NOT IN IT FOR THE PIZZA.
CAN YOU STAY AFTER CLASS, DEREK? I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
UM... WHAT DID I DO?
DANCE
TONITE
7:30
SLAYER

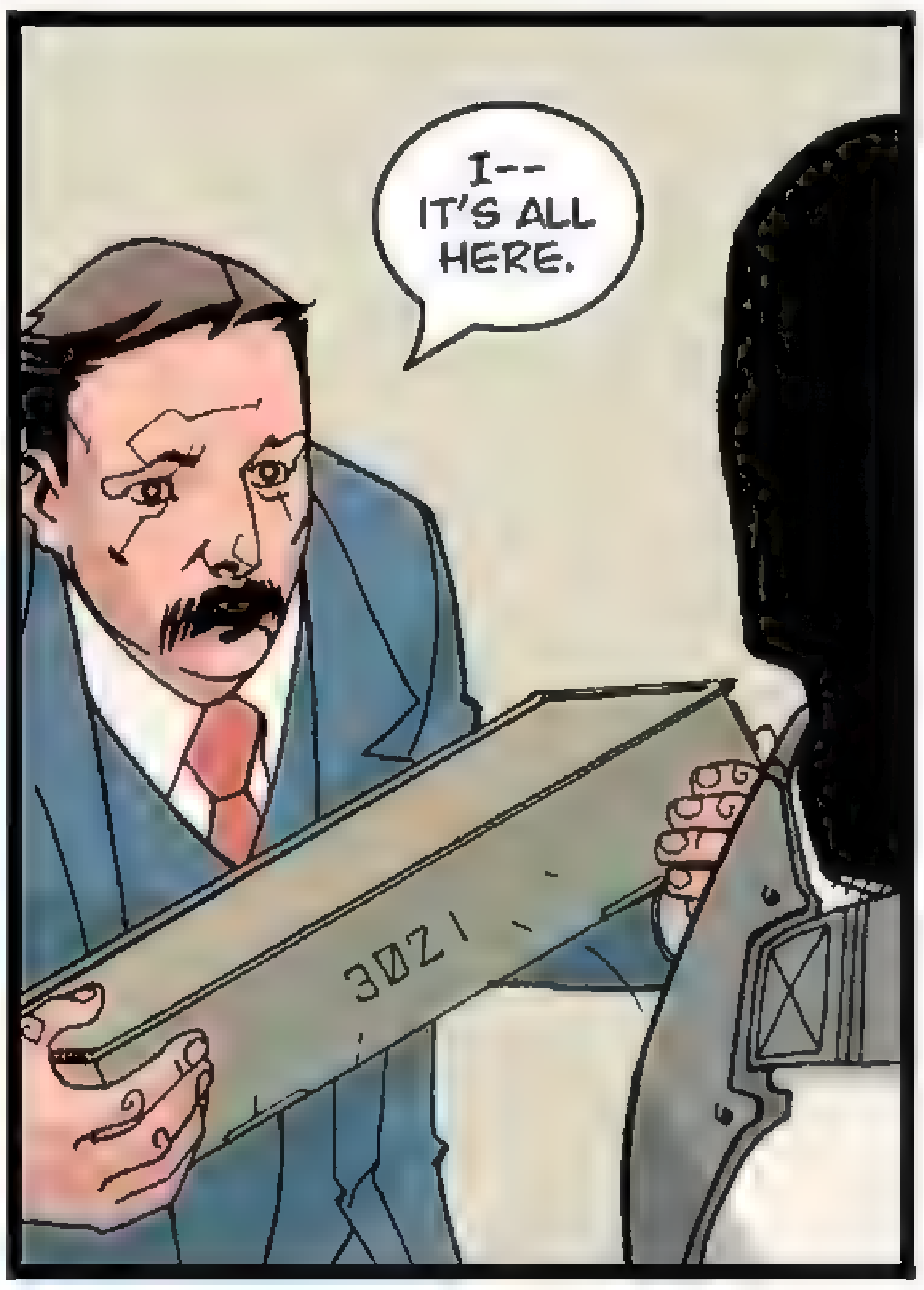

SO, YOU THINK YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN?
AND THIS TIME SAY IT TO MY FACE!
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE...
408
NOT SO BRAVE WHEN I'M RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU, ARE YOU?
HEY, MAN. WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN TO THE GUY AND JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE?
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, YOU FEELING LEFT OUT OR SOMETHING?
WELL, I'M SURE I CAN MAKE YOU FEEL INCLUDED.
O FOX TROTTERS!
HOW'S THIS?!
THAP!
tool

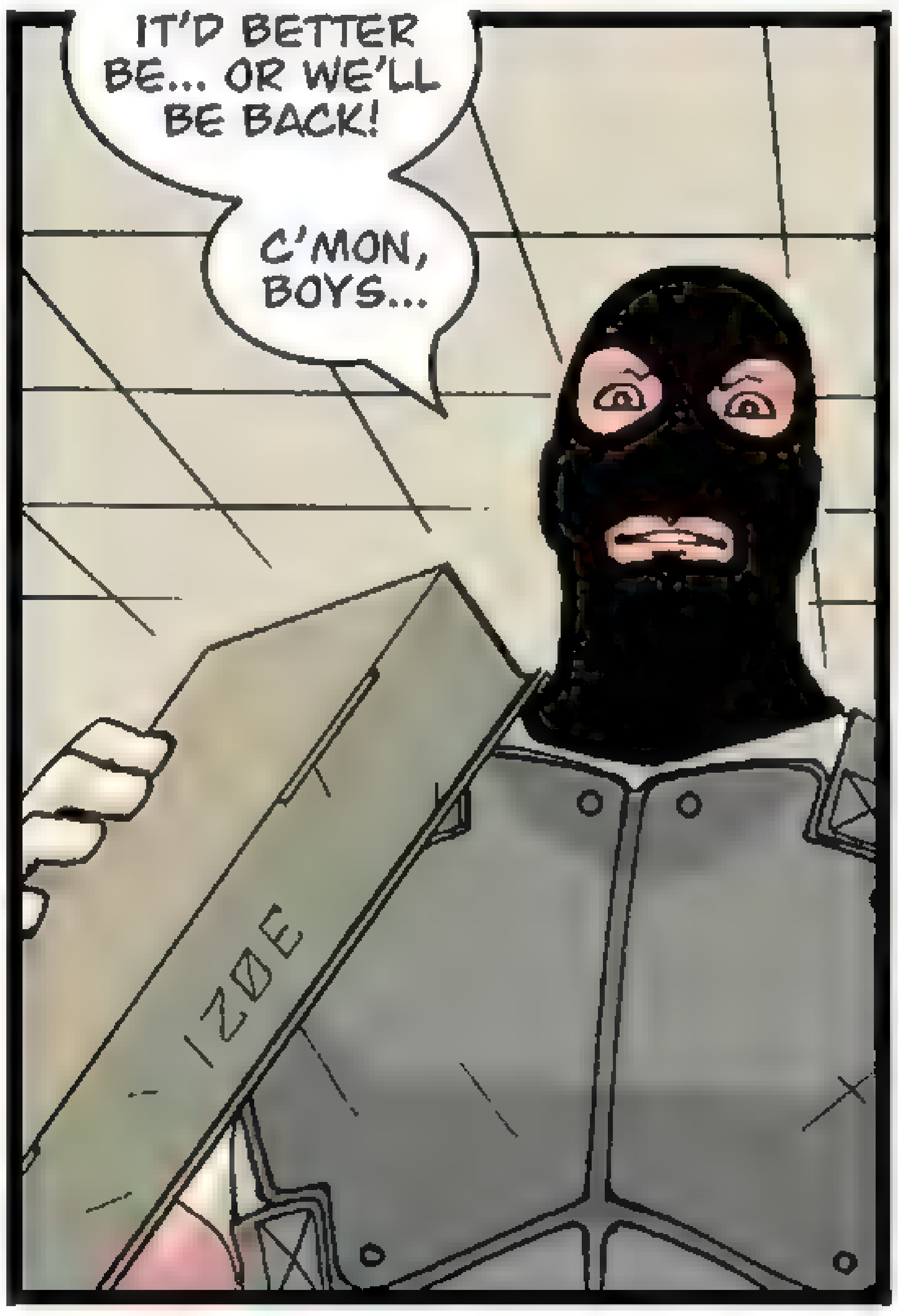

DOOM!
UGH...
DON'T MESS WITH HIM AGAIN, MAN.
WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON HERE?

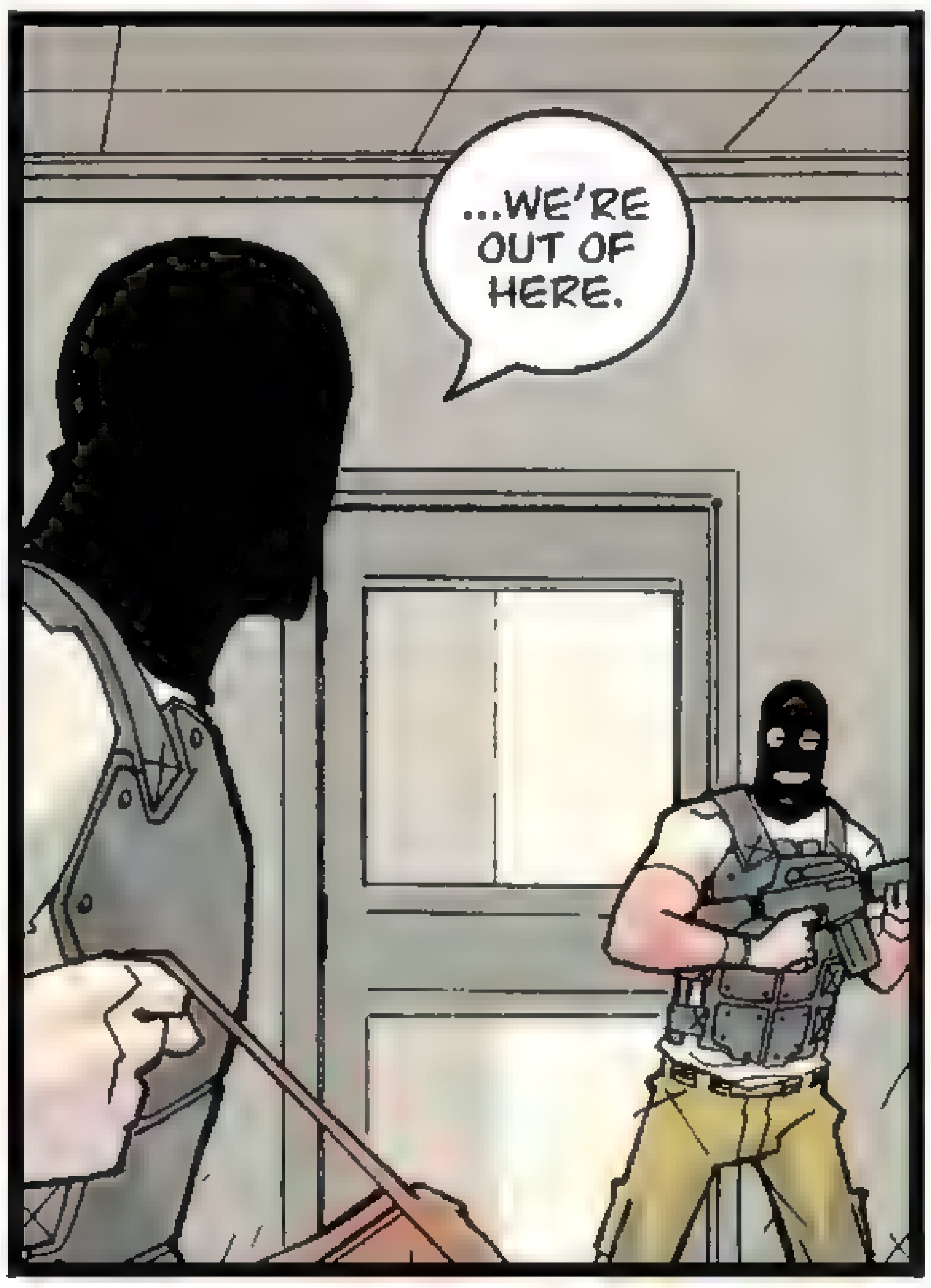

JUST TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED, MR. GRAYSON.
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
HE WAS PICKING ON STEVE WHITE, THE KID WHO HAS THE LOCKER NEXT TO ME. I ASKED HIM TO LEAVE STEVE ALONE, SO HE PUSHED ME. THEN I PUSHED HIM BACK. I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT HIM.
B. N. WINSLOW
THAT BOY HAS A HISTORY OF CAUSING TROUBLE. YOU DON'T. YOU'RE A GOOD KID, MARK. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU START DOWN THAT PATH.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, MY NOSE IS DEEP IN THE BOOKS. I'VE GOT TO GET INTO A GOOD COLLEGE NEXT YEAR... I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS STUFF IS. I JUST DON'T LIKE WATCHING KIDS GET PICKED ON.
I UNDERSTAND THAT, AND TO BE QUITE HONEST... I *CONDONE* IT, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN A TEACHER, OR ONE OF THE SECURITY GUARDS.
THAT BOY WAS ALMOST TWICE YOUR SIZE, IT'S NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE OTHER KIDS HERE.
YOU'RE NOT *INVINCIBLE* YOU KNOW.

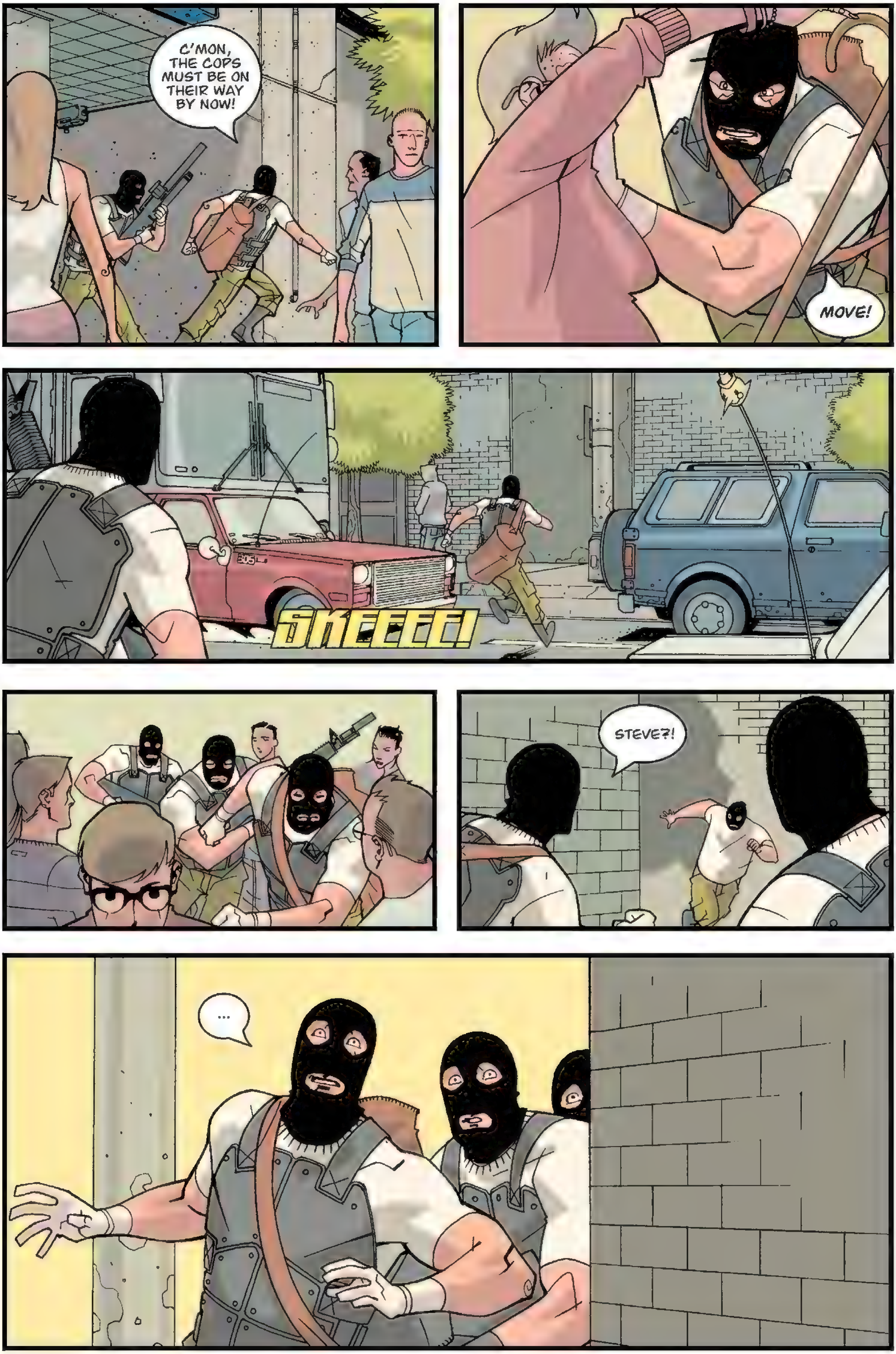

& DIME
SAVINGS & LOAN
ATM
BUY WAR BONDS

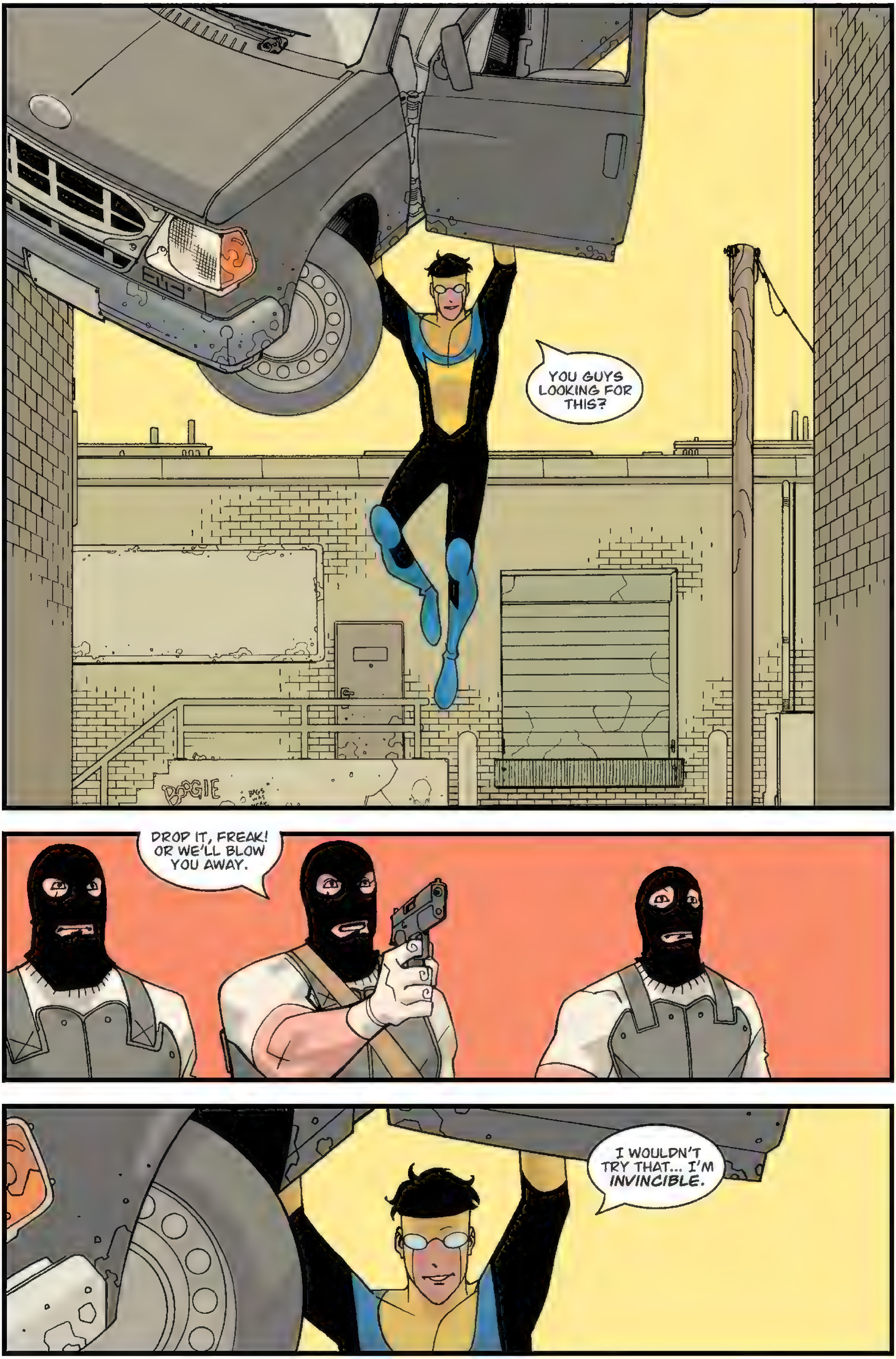

NOBODY MOVES, NOBODY GETS HURT. WE WANT YOUR MONEY, NOT YOUR LIVES.


I-- IT'S ALL HERE.


IT'D BETTER BE... OR WE'LL BE BACK!
C'MON, BOYS...

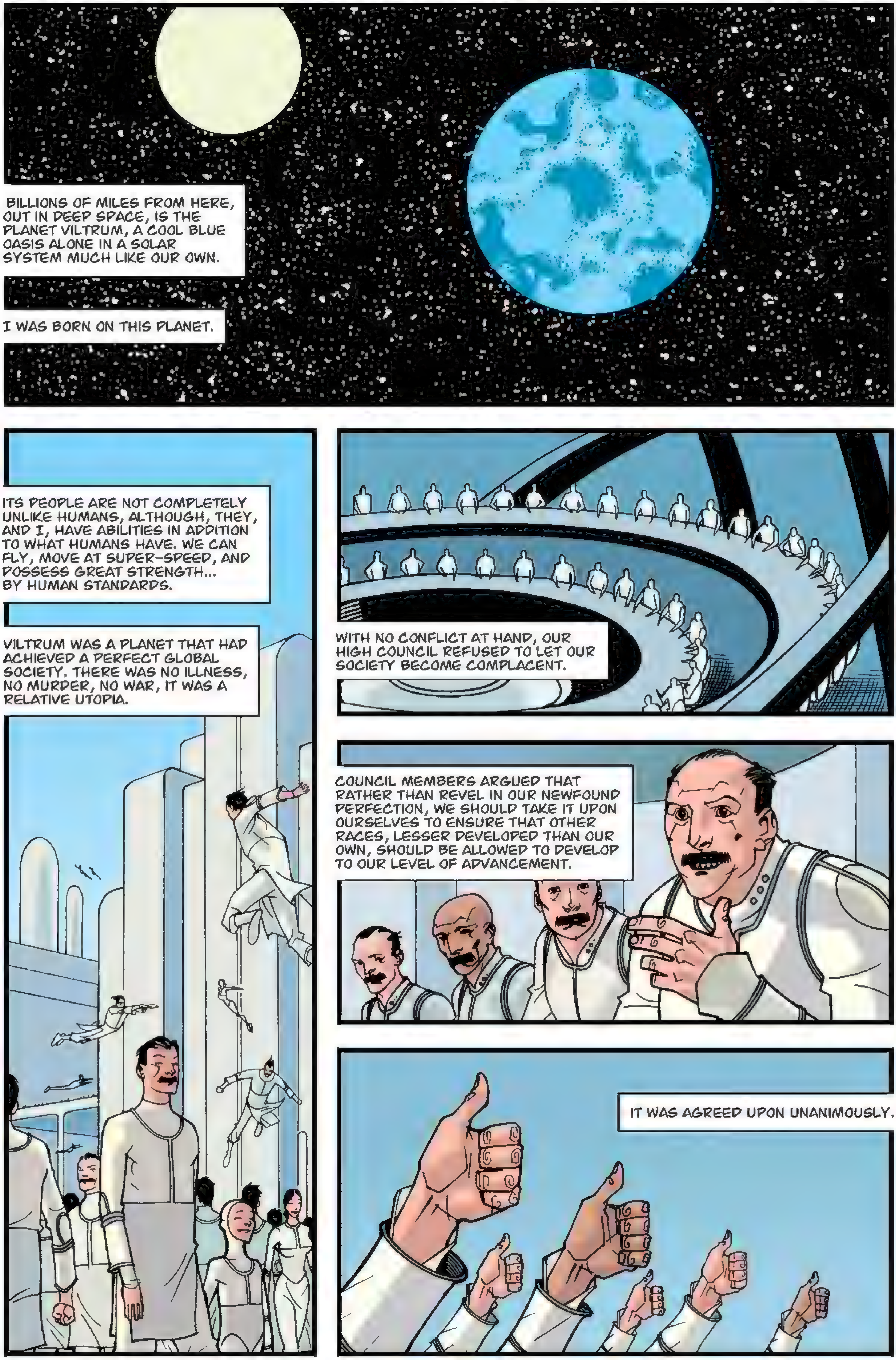

...WE'RE OUT OF HERE.

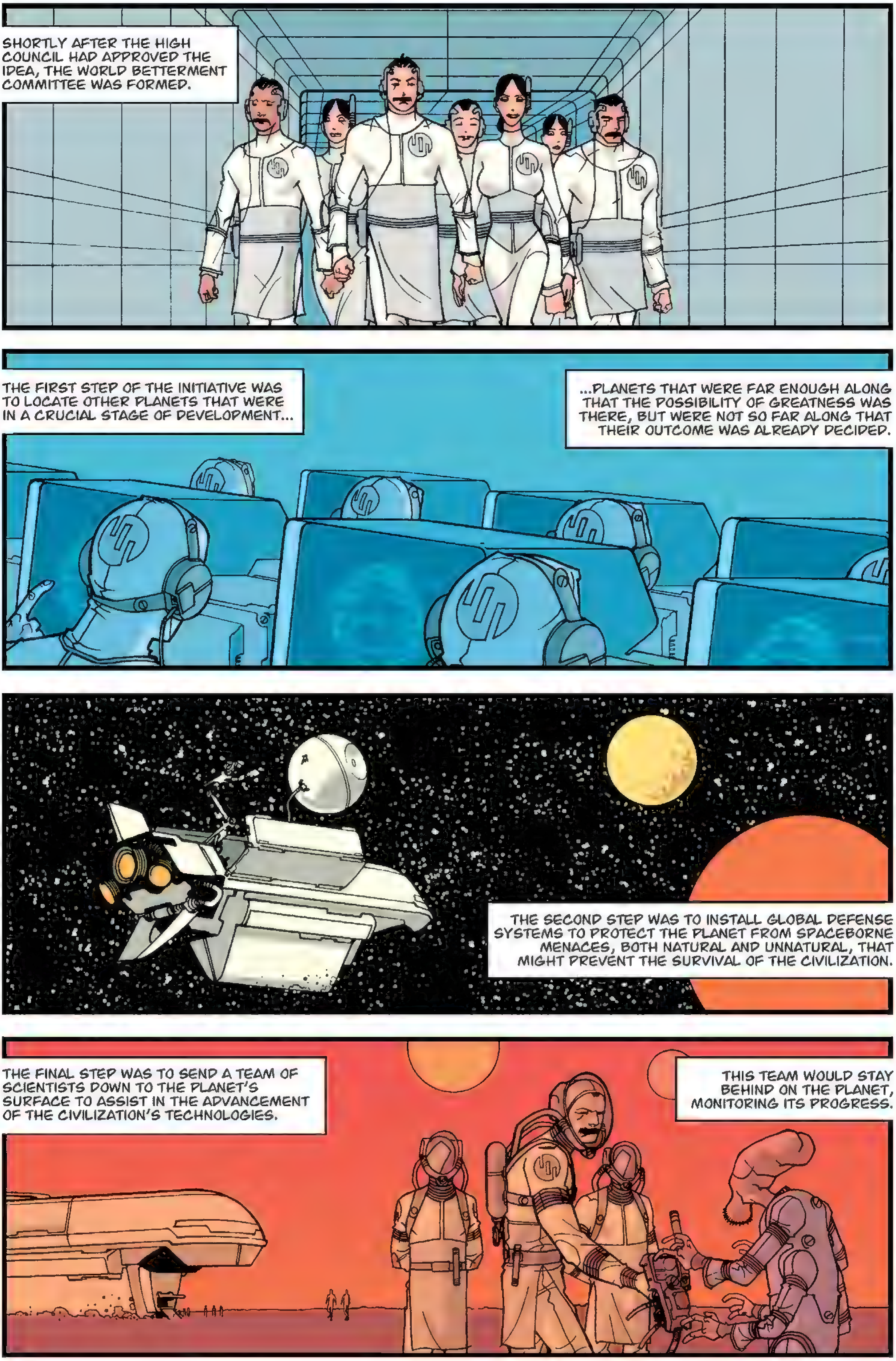

C'MON, THE COPS MUST BE ON THEIR WAY BY NOW!
MOVE!
SKEEEE!
STEVE?!
...

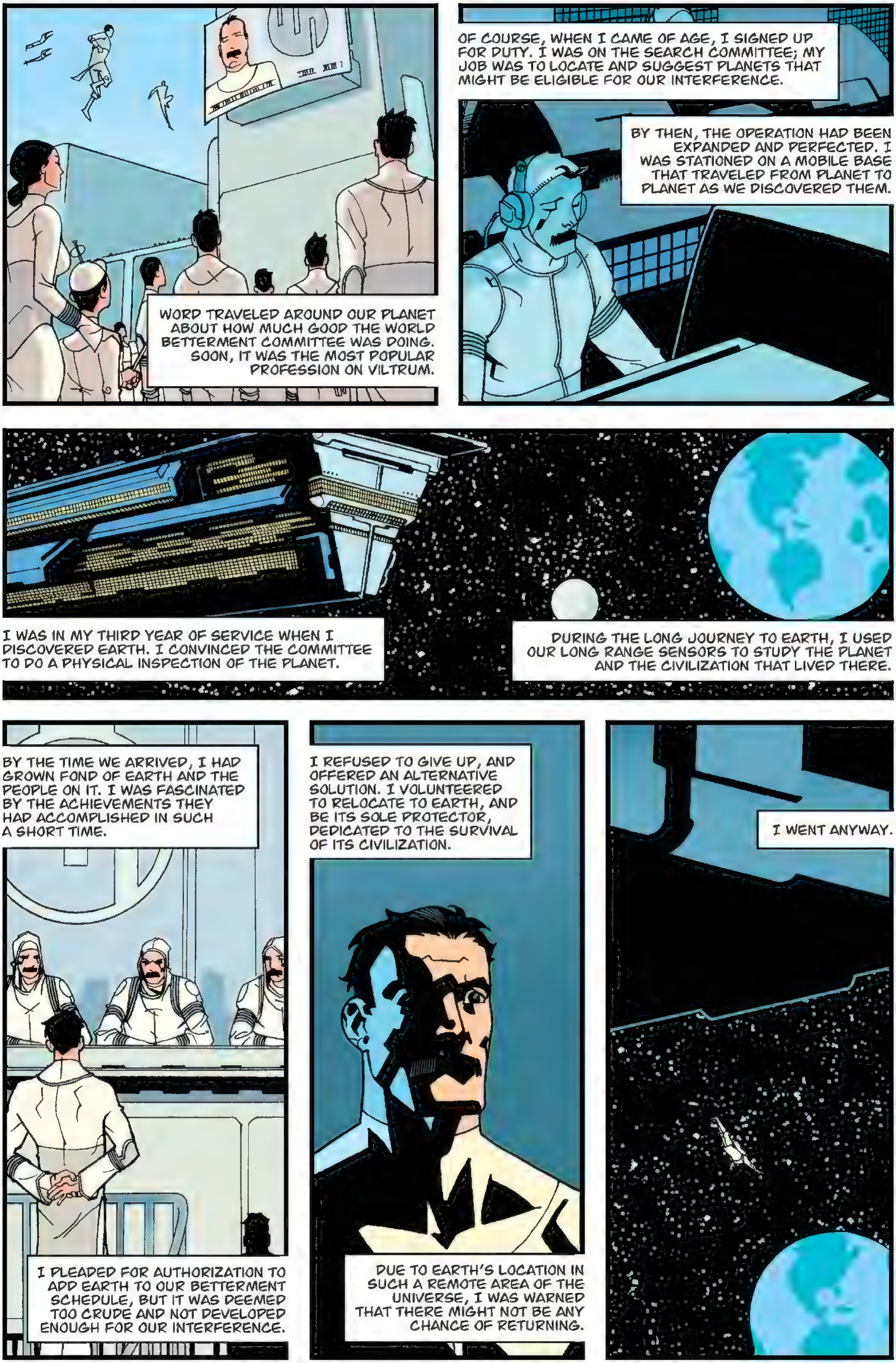

YOU GUYS LOOKING FOR THIS?
BOOGIE
DROP IT, FREAK! OR WE'LL BLOW YOU AWAY.
I WOULDN'T TRY THAT... I'M *INVINCIBLE*.

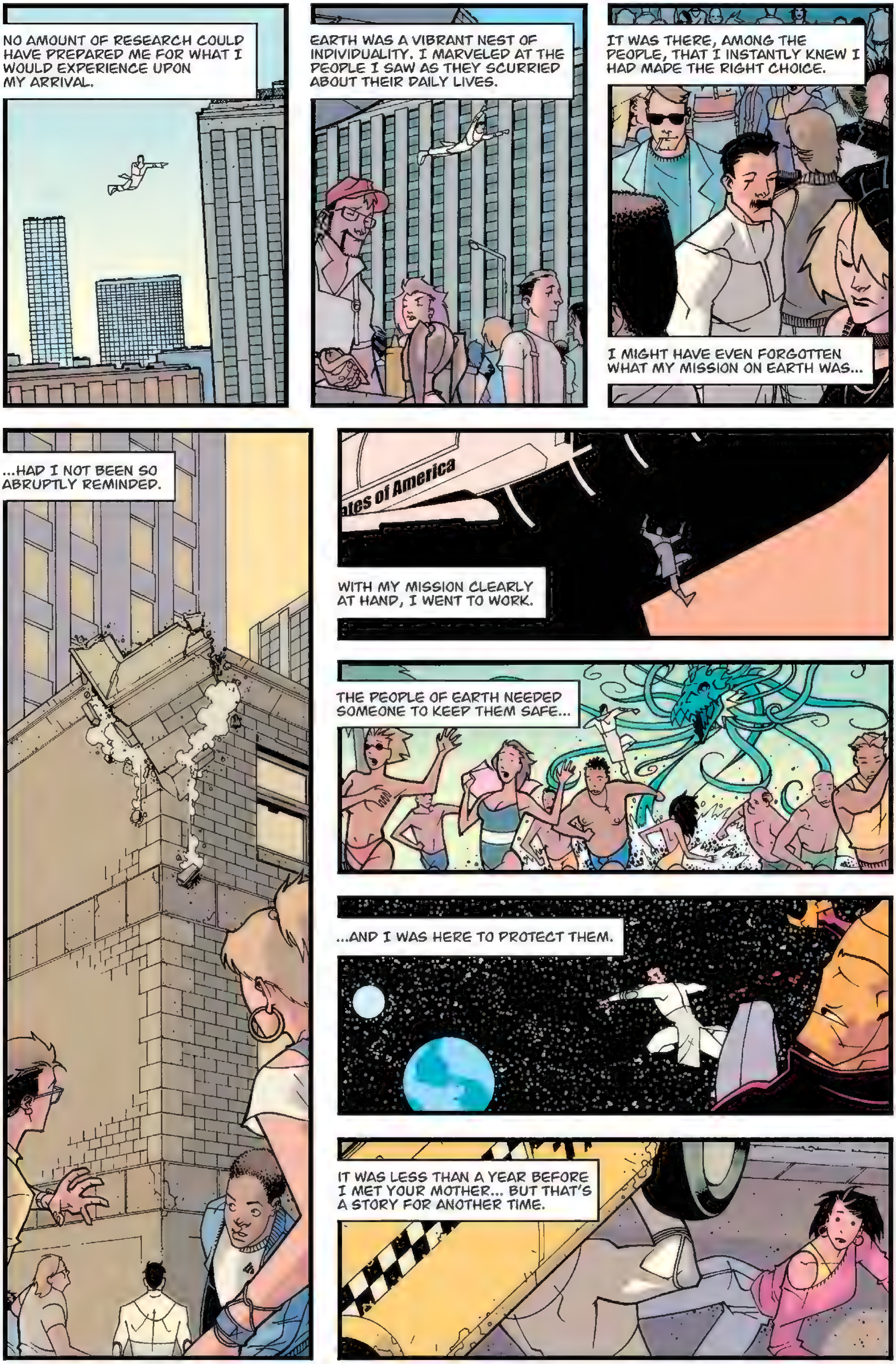
ISSUE TWO

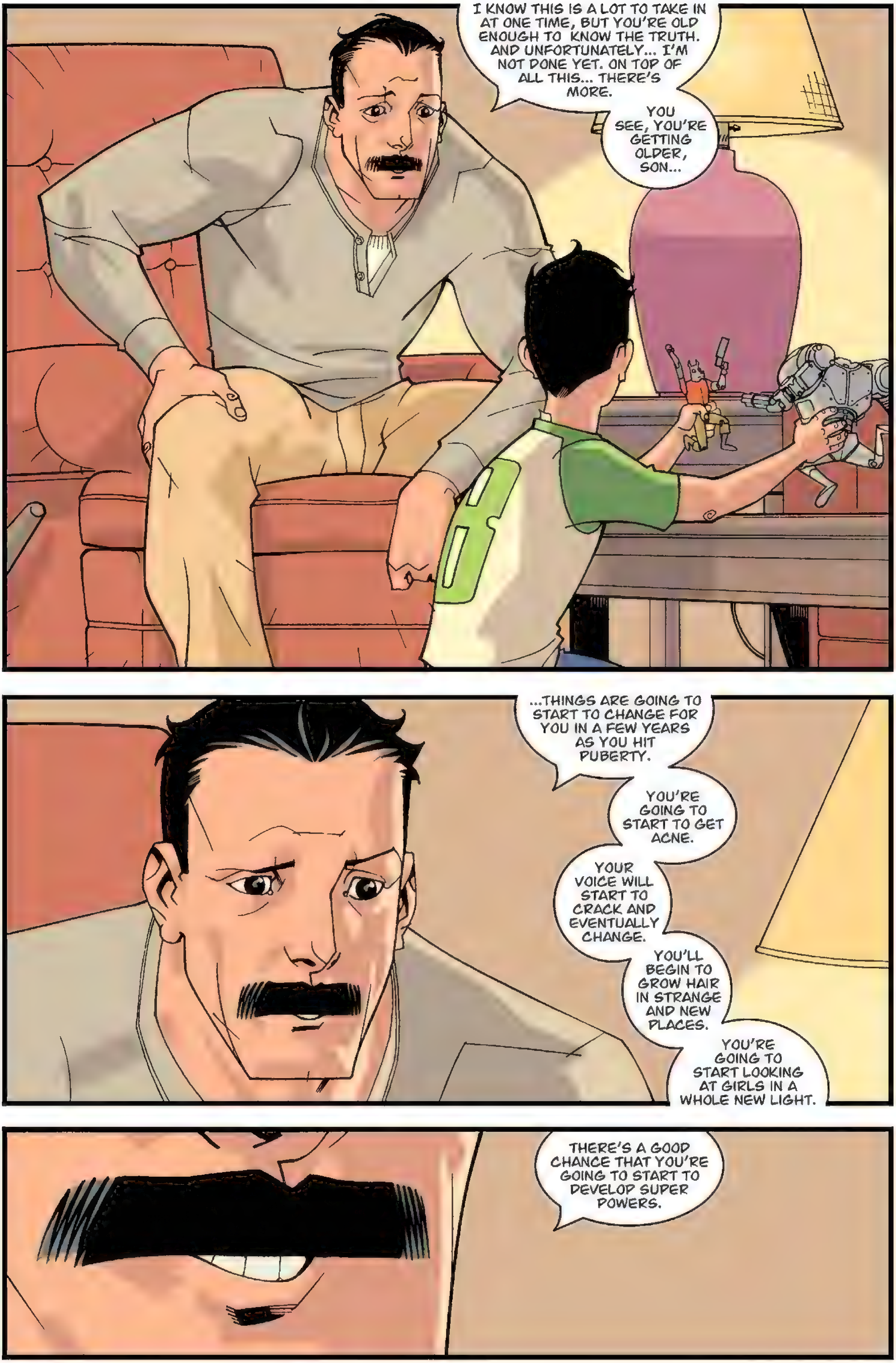
OKAY, SON. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED BY NOW THAT I'M NOT LIKE NORMAL DADS. I'VE... **AVOIDED** THE SUBJECT FOR FAR TOO MANY YEARS, AND YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED THAT IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH.
WE THINK YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH FOR ME TO TELL YOU WHERE I **REALLY** COME FROM.

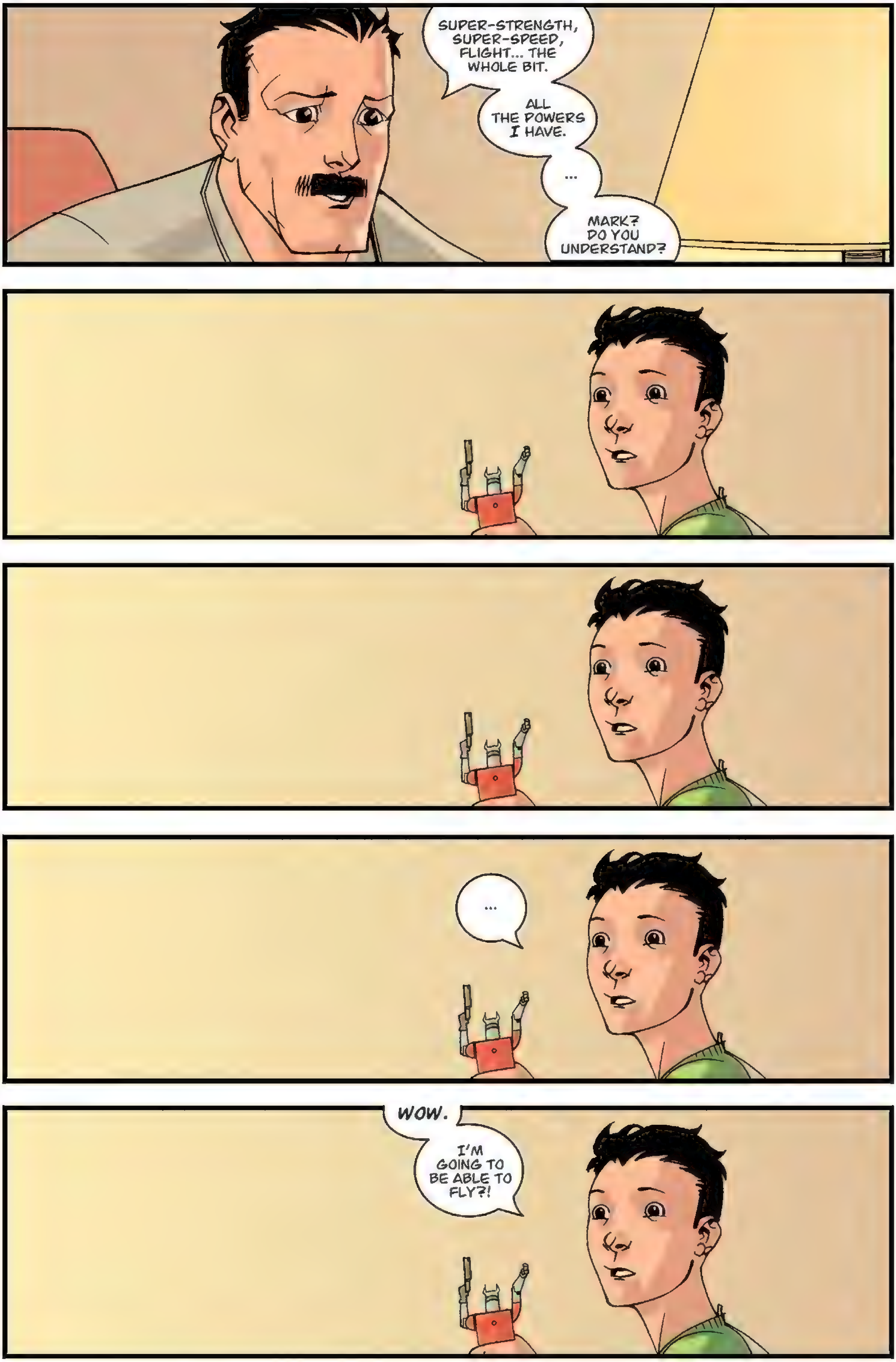

BILLIONS OF MILES FROM HERE, OUT IN DEEP SPACE, IS THE PLANET VILTRUM, A COOL BLUE OASIS ALONE IN A SOLAR SYSTEM MUCH LIKE OUR OWN.
I WAS BORN ON THIS PLANET.
ITS PEOPLE ARE NOT COMPLETELY UNLIKE HUMANS, ALTHOUGH, THEY, AND I, HAVE ABILITIES IN ADDITION TO WHAT HUMANS HAVE. WE CAN FLY, MOVE AT SUPER-SPEED, AND POSSESS GREAT STRENGTH... BY HUMAN STANDARDS.
VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY. THERE WAS NO ILLNESS, NO MURDER, NO WAR, IT WAS A RELATIVE UTOPIA.
WITH NO CONFLICT AT HAND, OUR HIGH COUNCIL REFUSED TO LET OUR SOCIETY BECOME COMPLACENT.
COUNCIL MEMBERS ARGUED THAT RATHER THAN REVEL IN OUR NEWFOUND PERFECTION, WE SHOULD TAKE IT UPON OURSELVES TO ENSURE THAT OTHER RACES, LESSER DEVELOPED THAN OUR OWN, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEVELOP TO OUR LEVEL OF ADVANCEMENT.
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

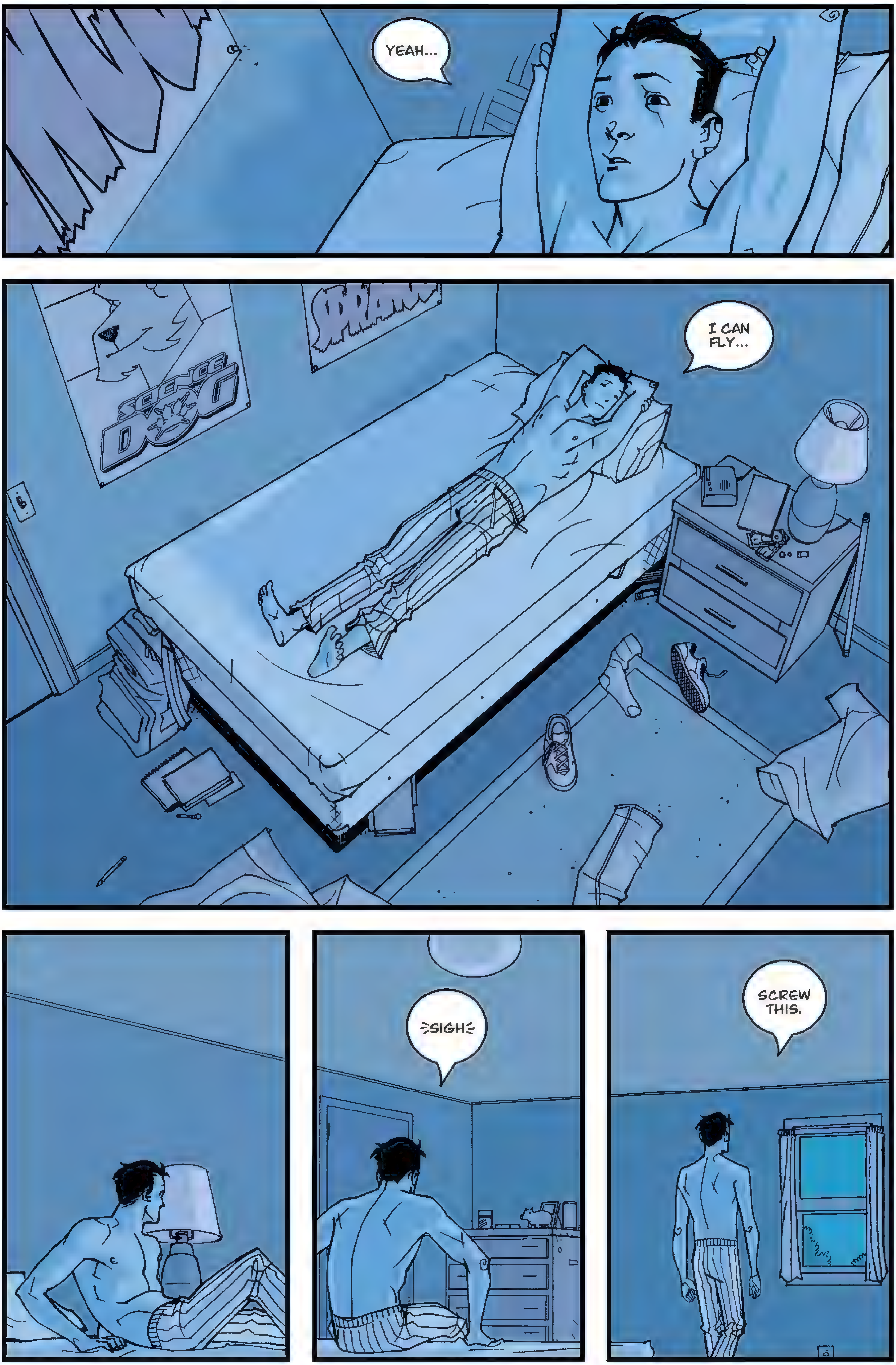

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.
THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...
...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF GREATNESS WAS THERE, BUT WERE NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT THEIR OUTCOME WAS ALREADY DECIDED.
THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL GLOBAL DEFENSE SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE PLANET FROM SPACEBORNE MENACES, BOTH NATURAL AND UNNATURAL, THAT MIGHT PREVENT THE SURVIVAL OF THE CIVILIZATION.
THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ASSIST IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CIVILIZATION'S TECHNOLOGIES.
THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS PROGRESS.

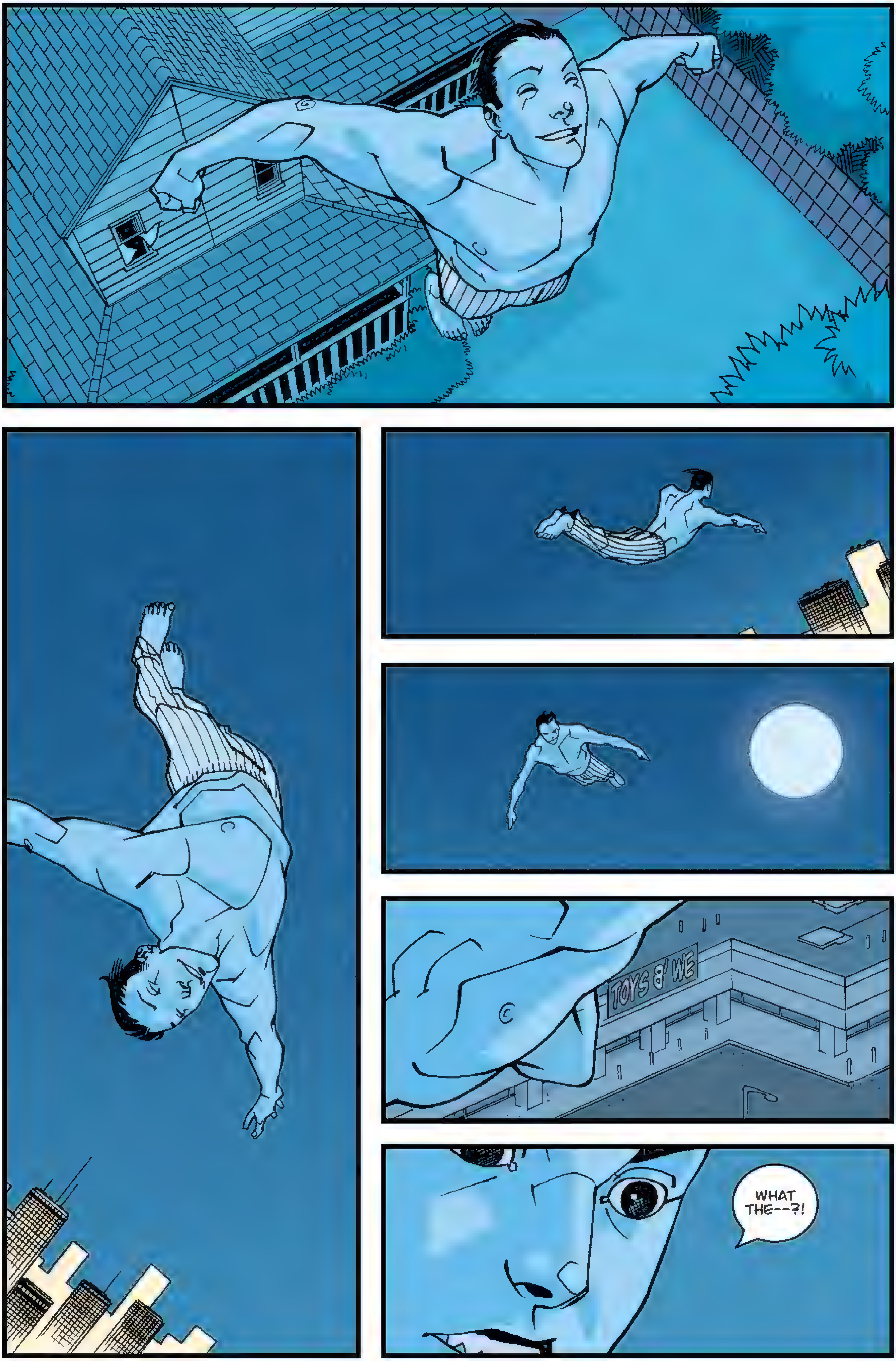

WORD TRAVELED AROUND OUR PLANET ABOUT HOW MUCH GOOD THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS DOING. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.
OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE; MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND SUGGEST PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.
BY THEN, THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE DISCOVERED THEM.
I WAS IN MY THIRD YEAR OF SERVICE WHEN I DISCOVERED EARTH. I CONVINCED THE COMMITTEE TO DO A PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF THE PLANET.
DURING THE LONG JOURNEY TO EARTH, I USED OUR LONG RANGE SENSORS TO STUDY THE PLANET AND THE CIVILIZATION THAT LIVED THERE.
BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED, I HAD GROWN FOND OF EARTH AND THE PEOPLE ON IT. I WAS FASCINATED BY THE ACHIEVEMENTS THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.
I PLEADED FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ADD EARTH TO OUR BETTERMENT SCHEDULE, BUT IT WAS DEEMED TOO CRUDE AND NOT DEVELOPED ENOUGH FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.
I REFUSED TO GIVE UP, AND OFFERED AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION. I VOLUNTEERED TO RELOCATE TO EARTH, AND BE ITS SOLE PROTECTOR, DEDICATED TO THE SURVIVAL OF ITS CIVILIZATION.
DUE TO EARTH'S LOCATION IN SUCH A REMOTE AREA OF THE UNIVERSE, I WAS WARNED THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY CHANCE OF RETURNING.
I WENT ANYWAY.

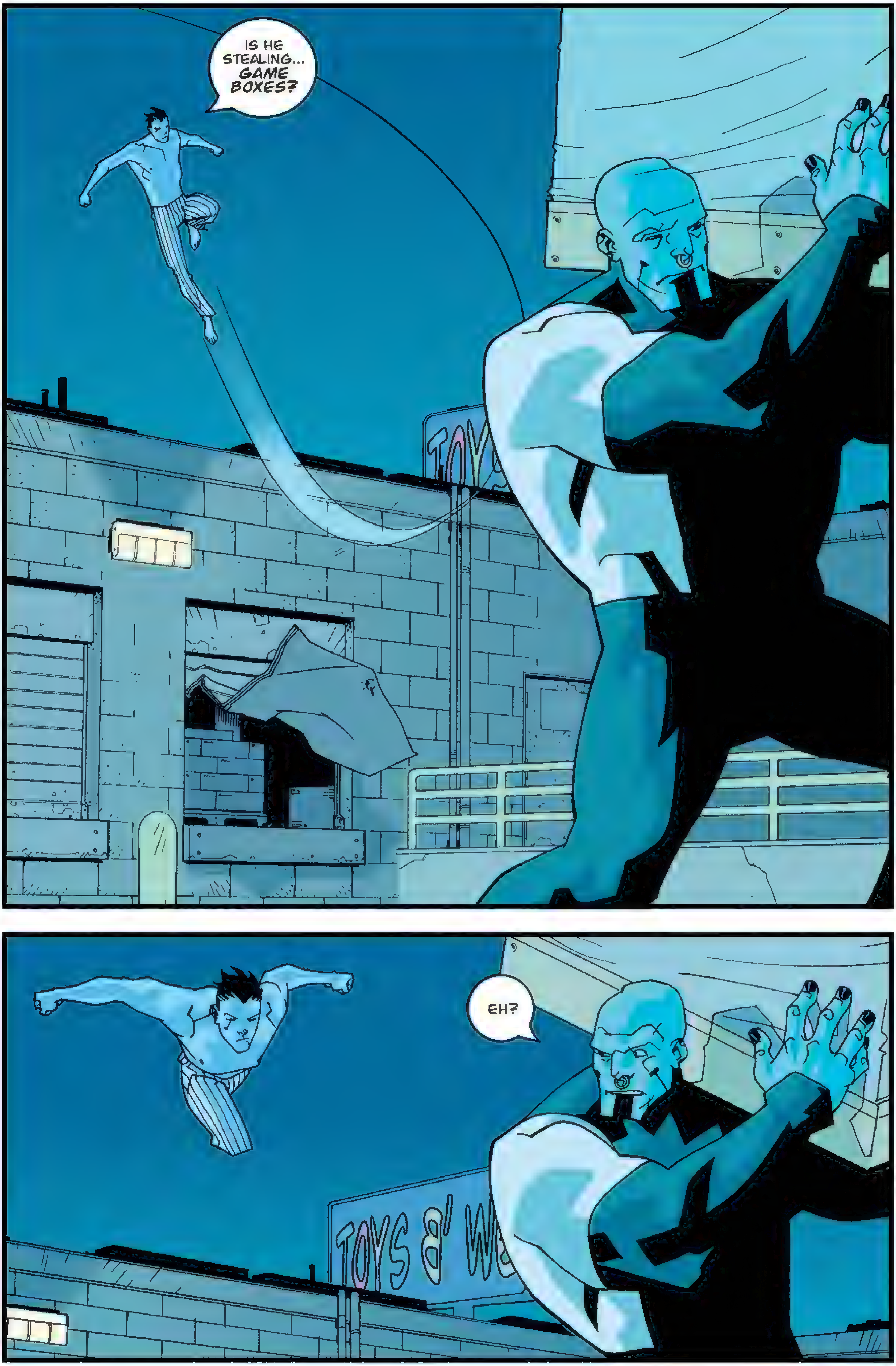

NO AMOUNT OF RESEARCH COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I WOULD EXPERIENCE UPON MY ARRIVAL.
EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY. I MARVELED AT THE PEOPLE I SAW AS THEY SCURRIED ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES.
IT WAS THERE, AMONG THE PEOPLE, THAT I INSTANTLY KNEW I HAD MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
I MIGHT HAVE EVEN FORGOTTEN WHAT MY MISSION ON EARTH WAS...
...HAD I NOT BEEN SO ABRUPTLY REMINDED.
ates of America
WITH MY MISSION CLEARLY AT HAND, I WENT TO WORK.
THE PEOPLE OF EARTH NEEDED SOMEONE TO KEEP THEM SAFE...
...AND I WAS HERE TO PROTECT THEM.
IT WAS LESS THAN A YEAR BEFORE I MET YOUR MOTHER... BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.

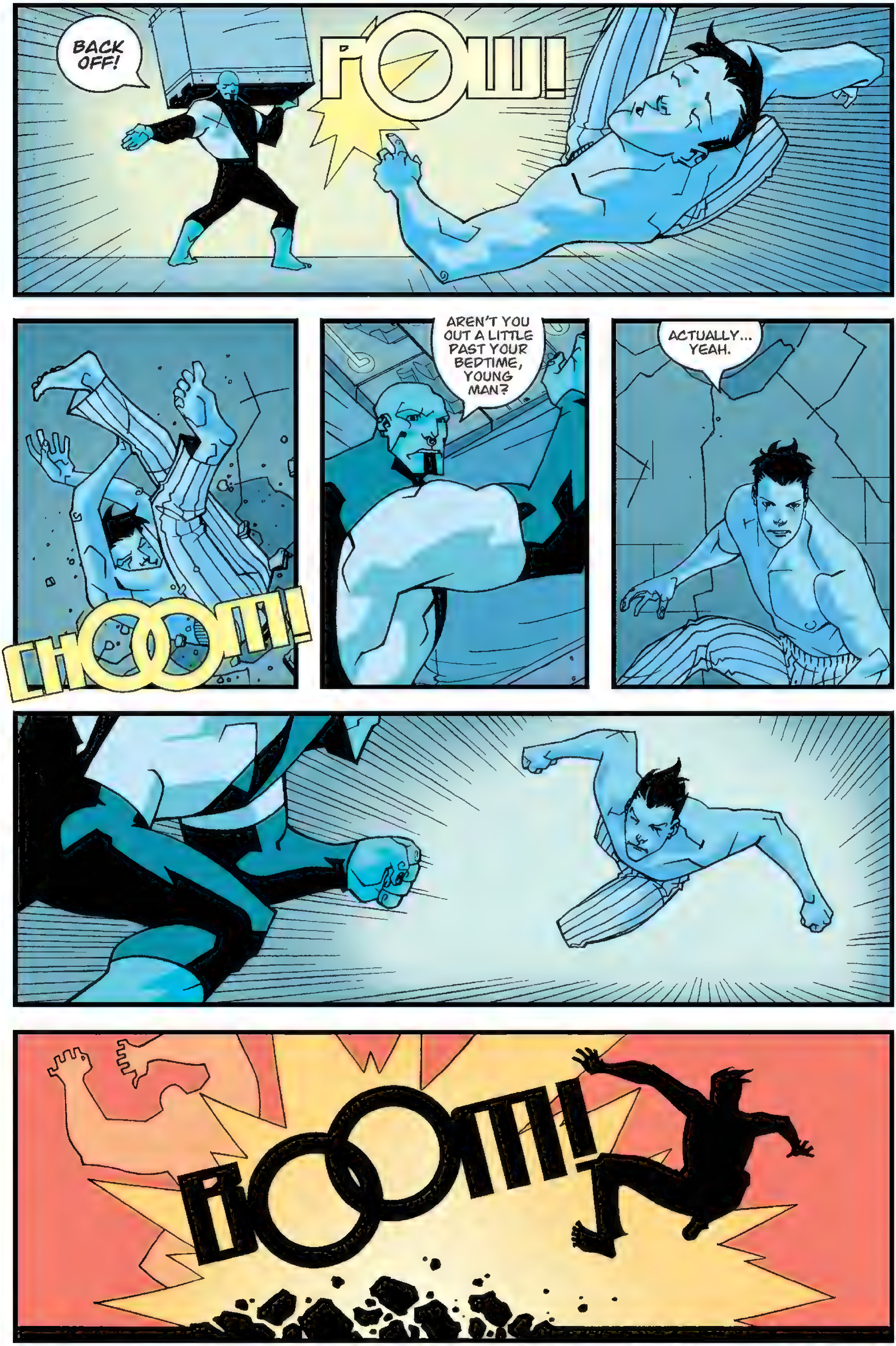

I KNOW THIS IS A LOT TO TAKE IN AT ONE TIME, BUT YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW THE TRUTH. AND UNFORTUNATELY... I'M NOT DONE YET. ON TOP OF ALL THIS... THERE'S MORE.
YOU SEE, YOU'RE GETTING OLDER, SON...
...THINGS ARE GOING TO START TO CHANGE FOR YOU IN A FEW YEARS AS YOU HIT PUBERTY.
YOU'RE GOING TO START TO GET ACNE.
YOUR VOICE WILL START TO CRACK AND EVENTUALLY CHANGE.
YOU'LL BEGIN TO GROW HAIR IN STRANGE AND NEW PLACES.
YOU'RE GOING TO START LOOKING AT GIRLS IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT.
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO START TO DEVELOP SUPER POWERS.


SUPER-STRENGTH, SUPER-SPEED, FLIGHT... THE WHOLE BIT.
ALL THE POWERS *I* HAVE.
...
MARK? DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
...
WOW.
I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO FLY?!


YEAH...
SCIENCE DOG
I CAN FLY...
≈SIGH≈
SCREW THIS.

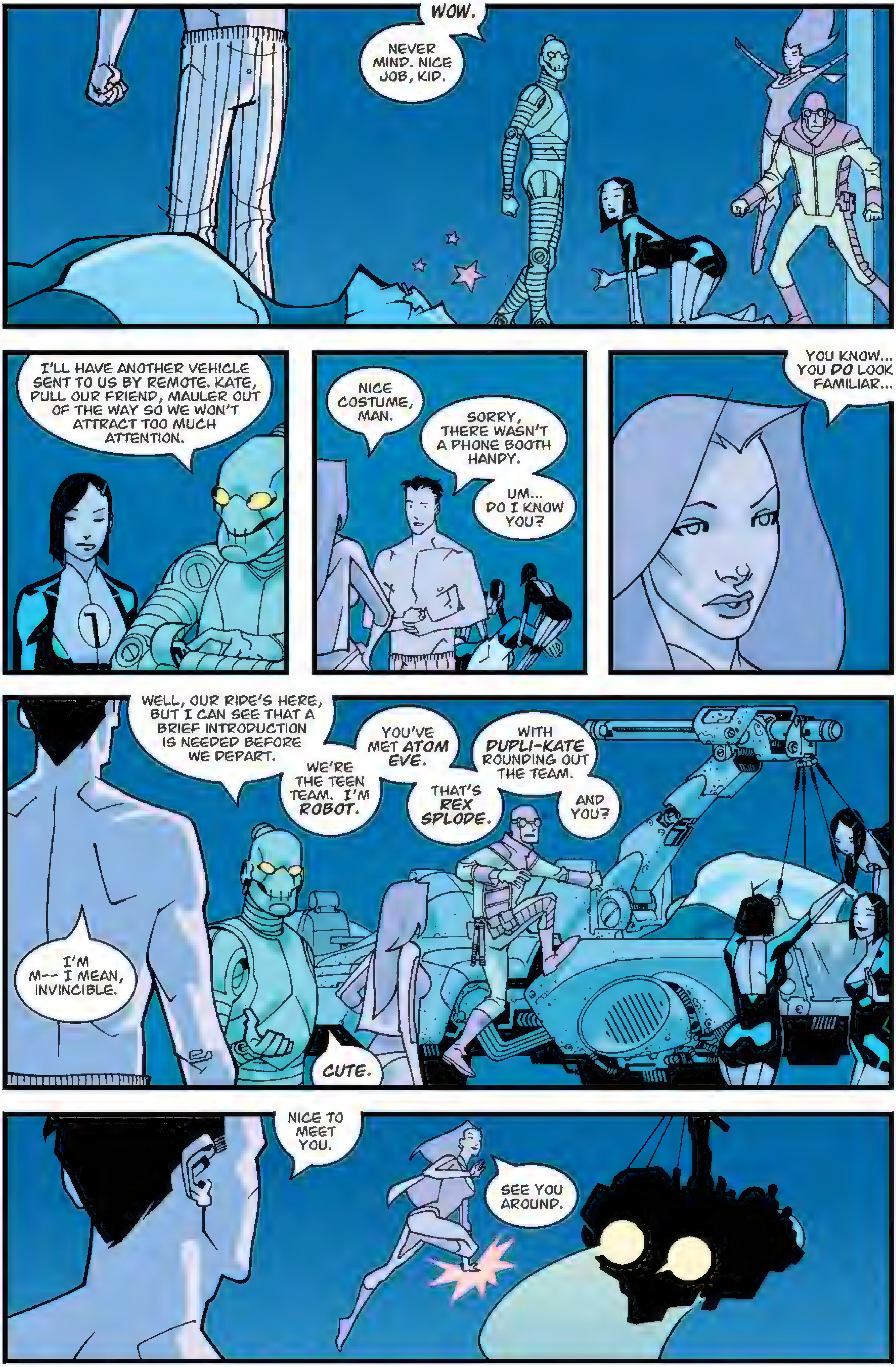

TOYS 8' WE
WHAT THE--?!

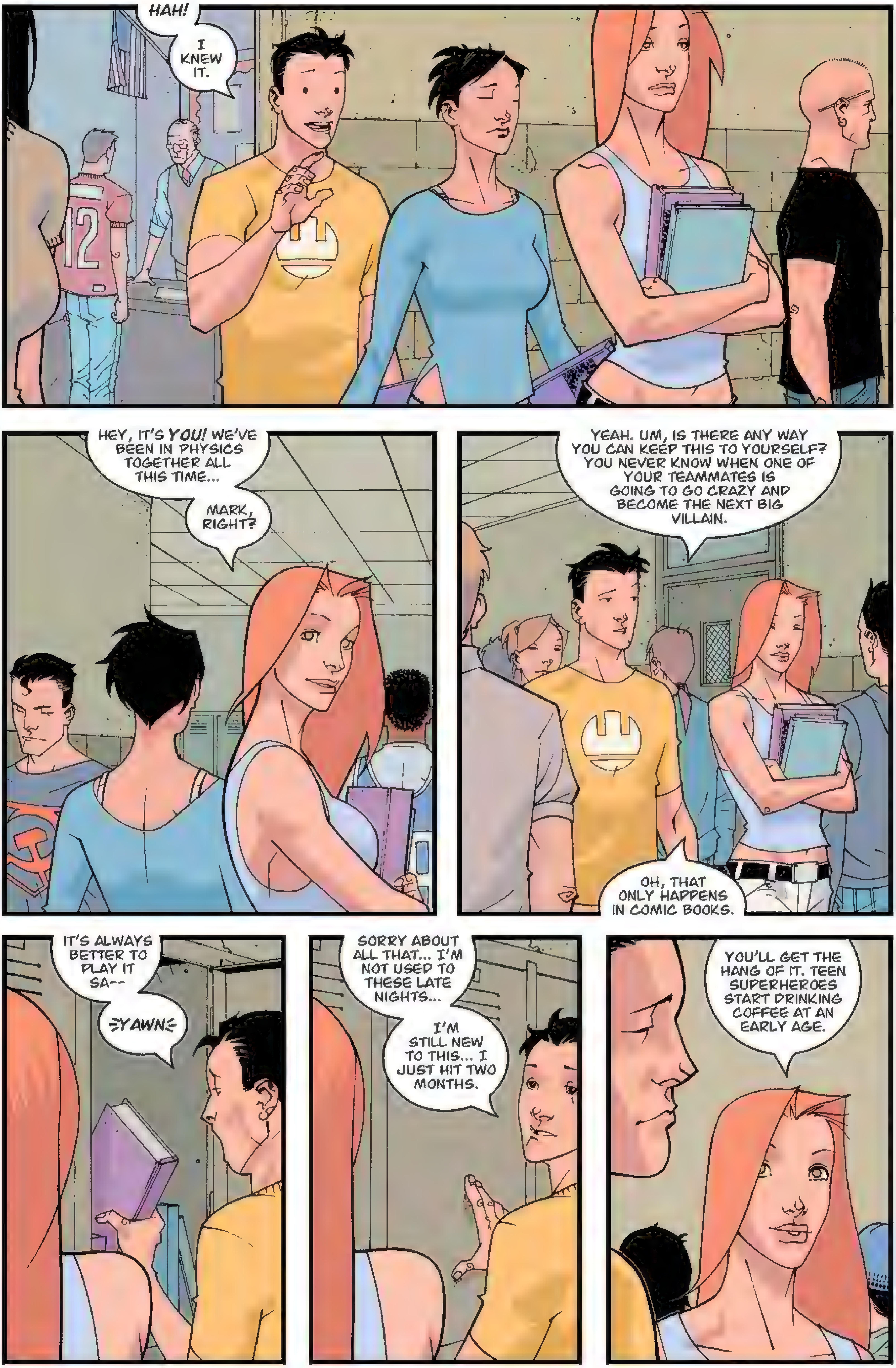

IS HE STEALING... GAME BOXES?
TOYS
EH?
TOYS B' W

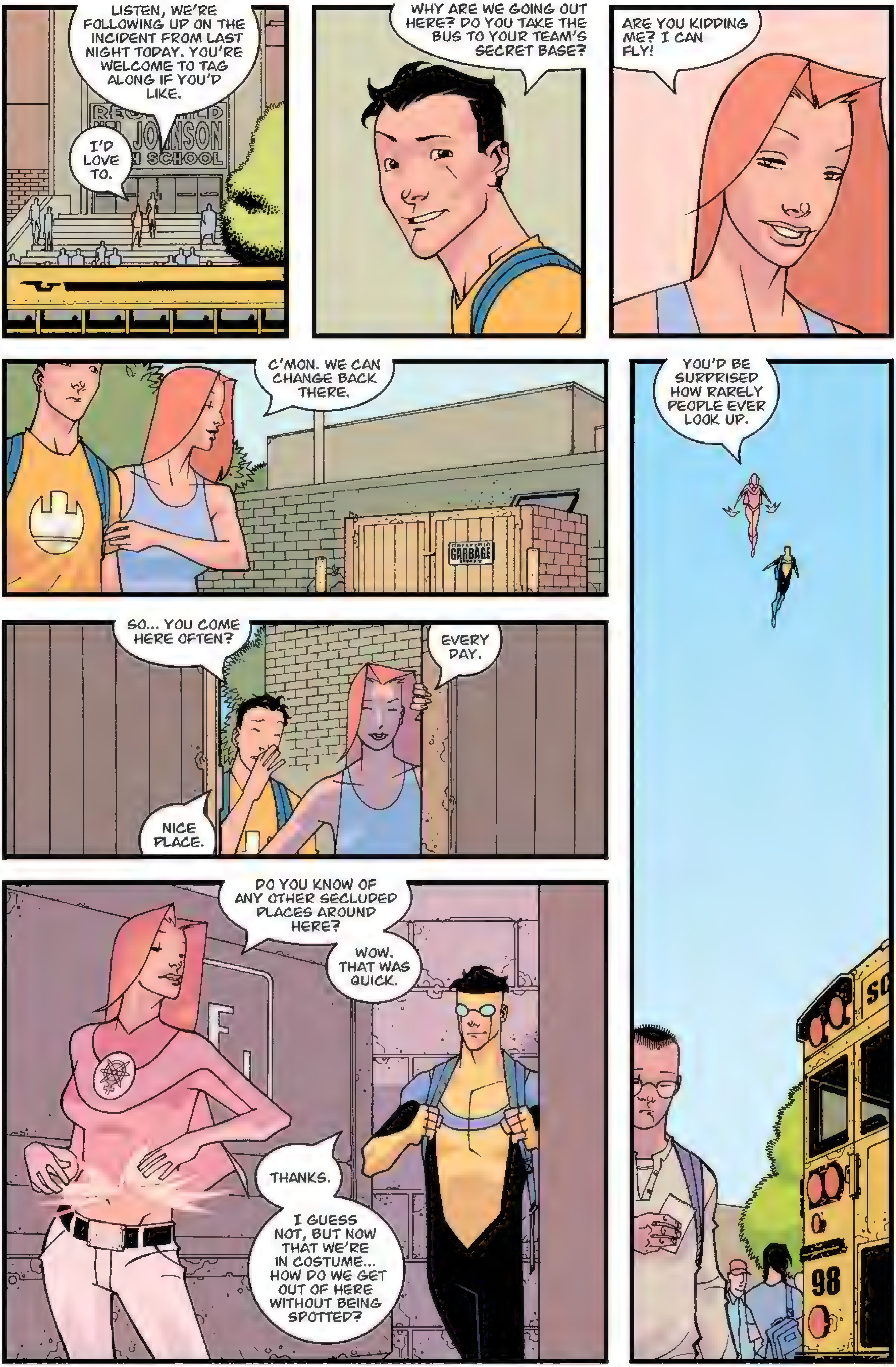

BACK OFF!
POW!
CHOOM!
AREN'T YOU OUT A LITTLE PAST YOUR BEDTIME, YOUNG MAN?
ACTUALLY... YEAH.
BOOM!

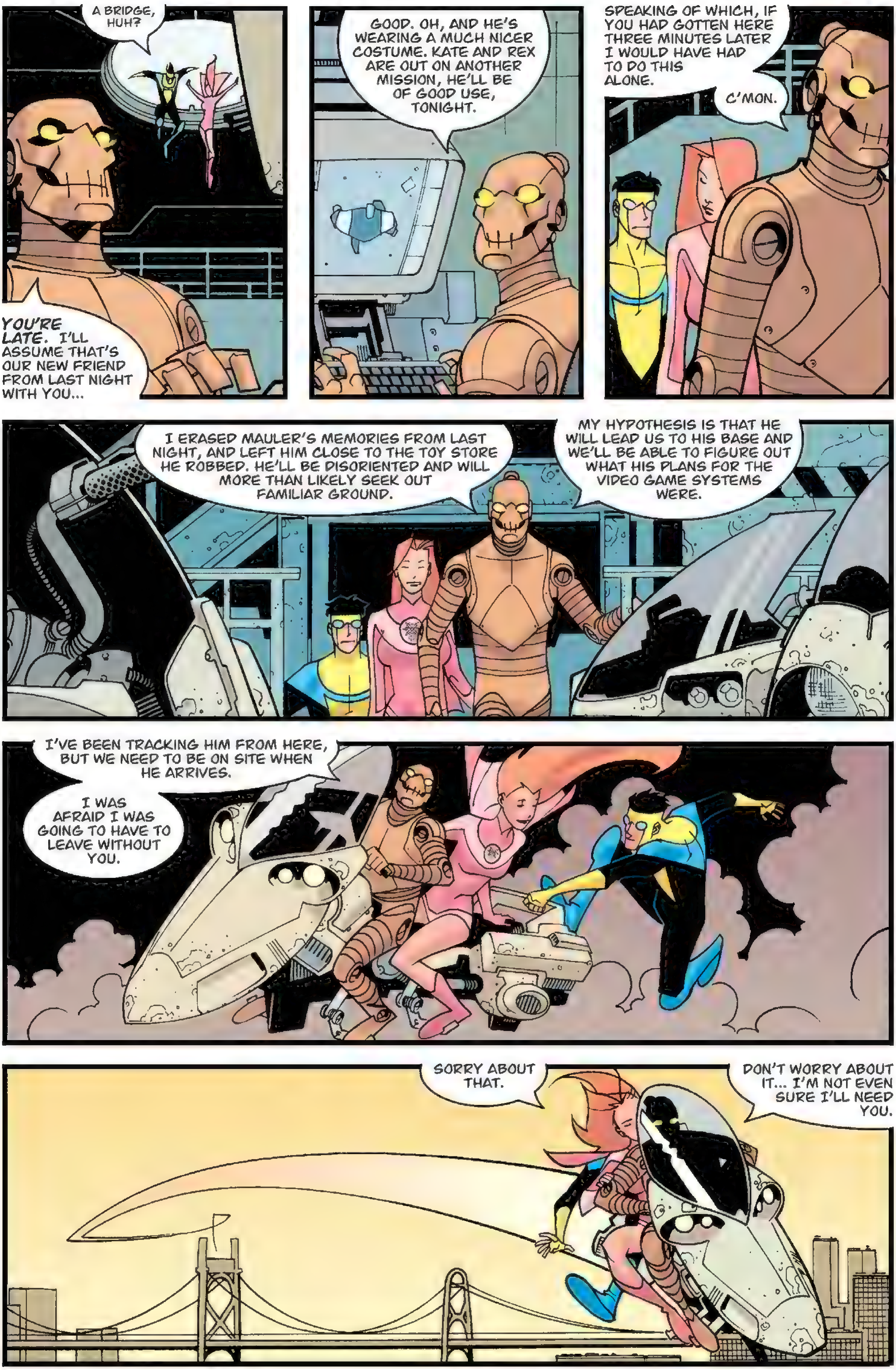
I.D.
10-T
THAT WAS A *BB*, YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE WHAT I CAN DO WITH A GOLF BALL.
NOW.
WHO STARTED IT?

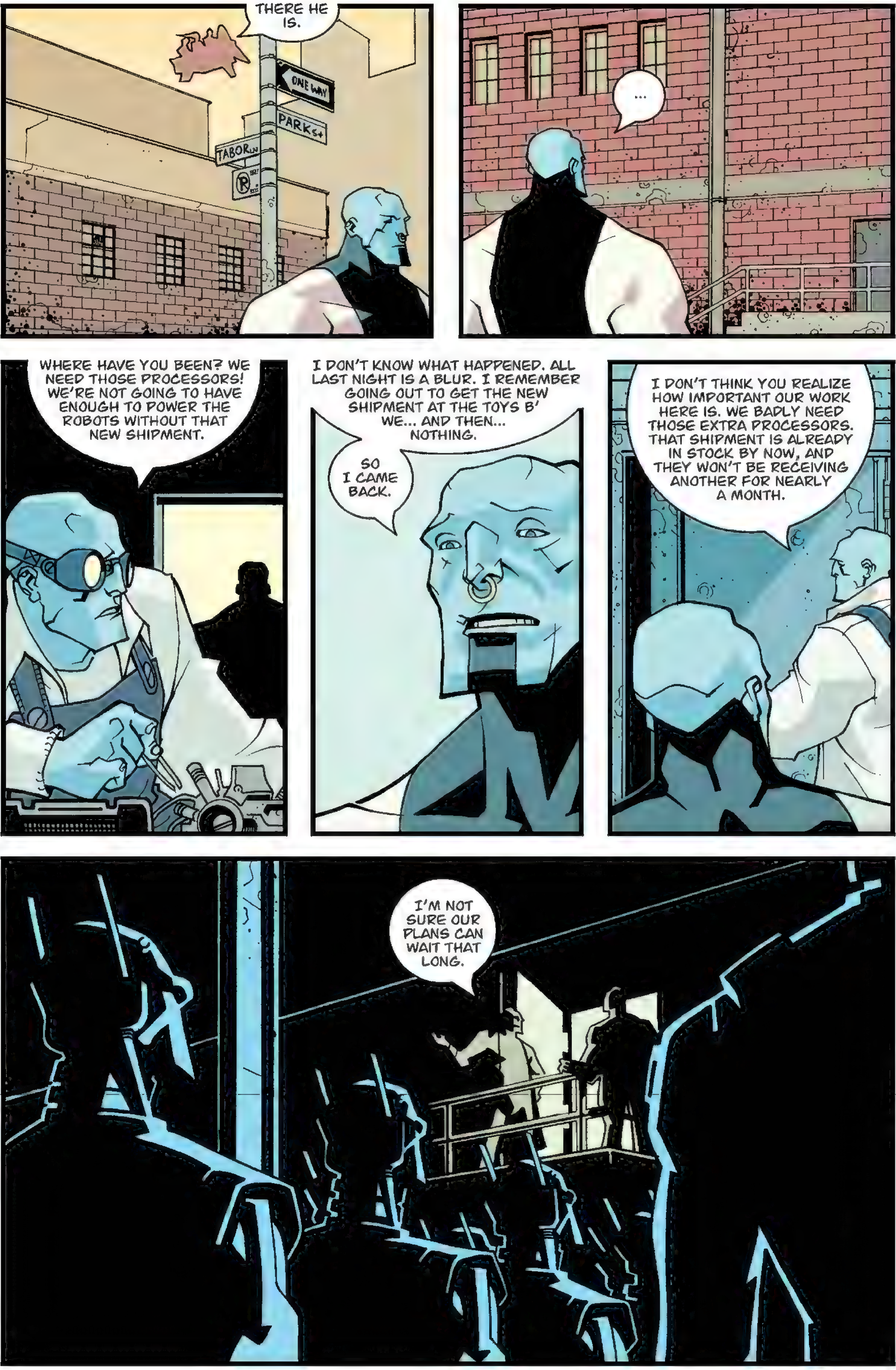
I'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS.
SKRA-BOOM!
WAY TO GO, REX. WE *HAD* THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.
SORRY, 'BOT. IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.
WELL, TRY TO LEAVE THE GOOD IDEAS UP TO ME.
AND, UM...
...WE'RE GOING TO NEED ONE REAL SOON.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!
KRAK!


WOW.
NEVER MIND. NICE JOB, KID.
I'LL HAVE ANOTHER VEHICLE SENT TO US BY REMOTE. KATE, PULL OUR FRIEND, MAULER OUT OF THE WAY SO WE WON'T ATTRACT TOO MUCH ATTENTION.
NICE COSTUME, MAN.
SORRY, THERE WASN'T A PHONE BOOTH HANDY.
UM... DO I KNOW YOU?
YOU KNOW... YOU DO LOOK FAMILIAR...
WELL, OUR RIDE'S HERE, BUT I CAN SEE THAT A BRIEF INTRODUCTION IS NEEDED BEFORE WE DEPART.
WE'RE THE TEEN TEAM. I'M ROBOT.
YOU'VE MET ATOM EVE.
THAT'S REX SPLODE.
WITH DUPLI-KATE ROUNDING OUT THE TEAM.
AND YOU?
I'M M-- I MEAN, INVINCIBLE.
CUTE.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
SEE YOU AROUND.

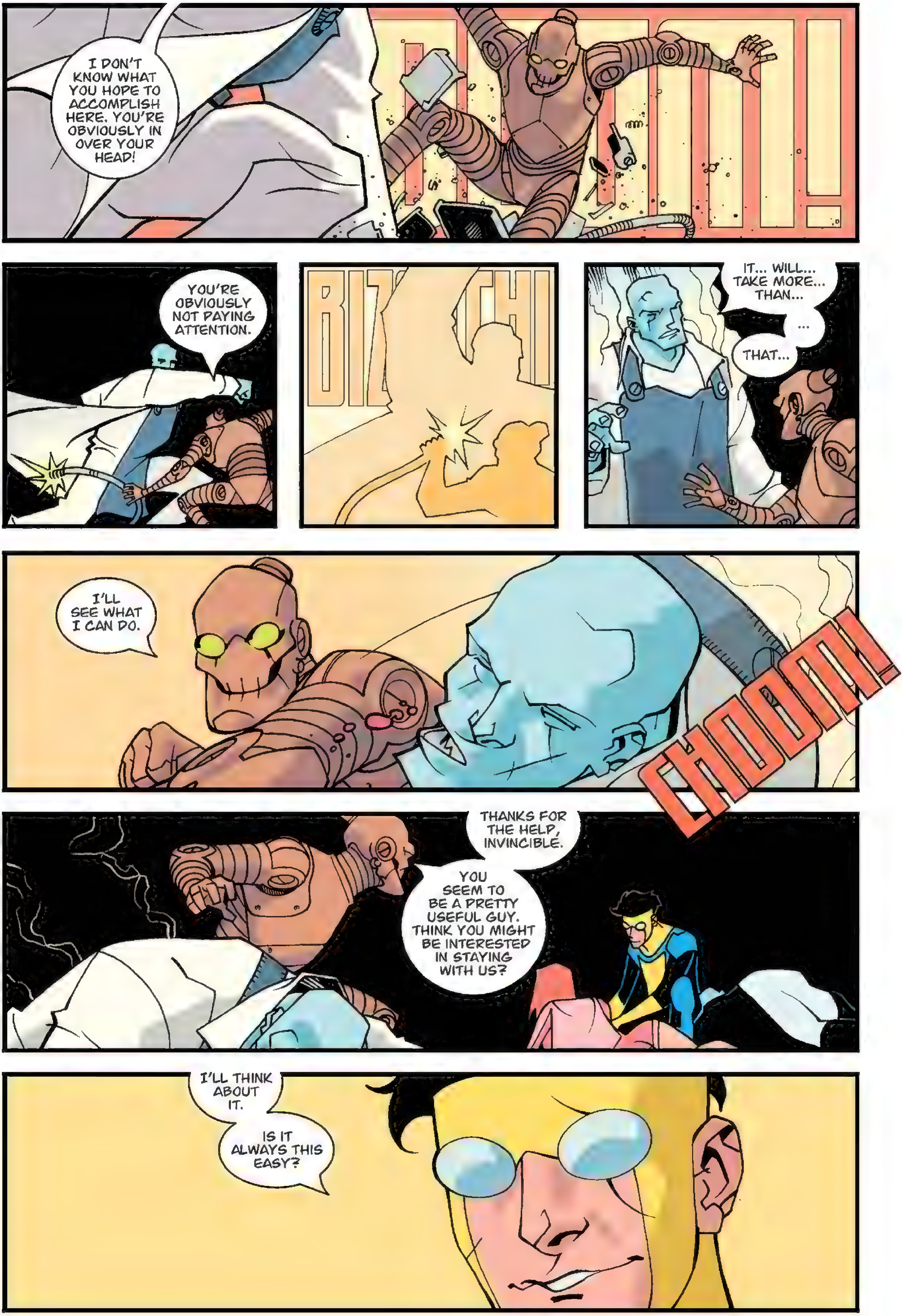

HAH!
I KNEW IT.
HEY, IT'S *YOU!* WE'VE BEEN IN PHYSICS TOGETHER ALL THIS TIME...
MARK, RIGHT?
YEAH. UM, IS THERE ANY WAY YOU CAN KEEP THIS TO YOURSELF? YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN ONE OF YOUR TEAMMATES IS GOING TO GO CRAZY AND BECOME THE NEXT BIG VILLAIN.
OH, THAT ONLY HAPPENS IN COMIC BOOKS.
IT'S ALWAYS BETTER TO PLAY IT SA--
YAWN
SORRY ABOUT ALL THAT... I'M NOT USED TO THESE LATE NIGHTS...
I'M STILL NEW TO THIS... I JUST HIT TWO MONTHS.
YOU'LL GET THE HANG OF IT. TEEN SUPERHEROES START DRINKING COFFEE AT AN EARLY AGE.

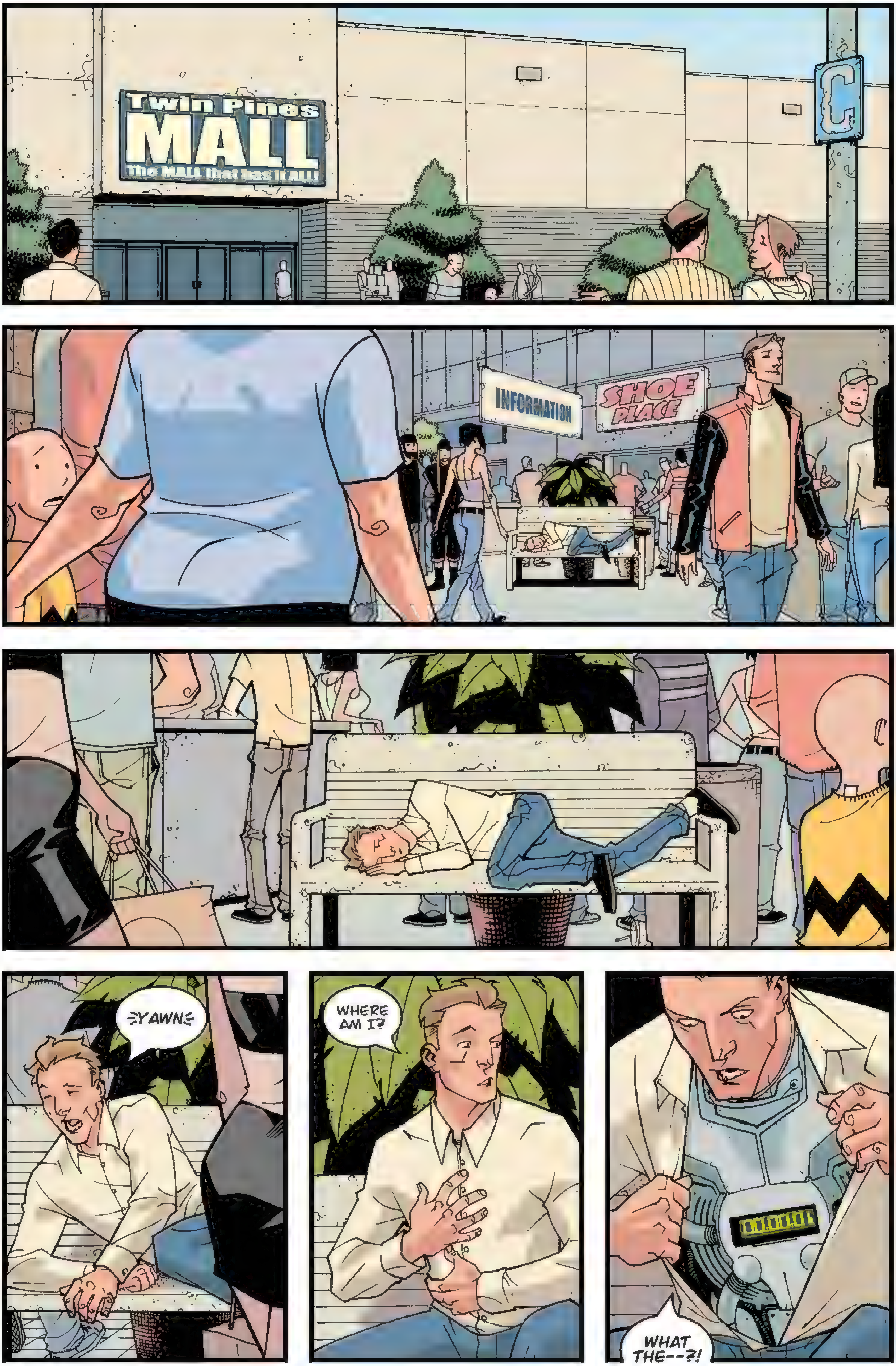

LISTEN, WE'RE FOLLOWING UP ON THE INCIDENT FROM LAST NIGHT TODAY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO TAG ALONG IF YOU'D LIKE.
REGINALD JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
I'D LOVE TO.
WHY ARE WE GOING OUT HERE? DO YOU TAKE THE BUS TO YOUR TEAM'S SECRET BASE?
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? I CAN FLY!
C'MON. WE CAN CHANGE BACK THERE.
CAFETERIA GARBAGE
YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW RARELY PEOPLE EVER LOOK UP.
SO... YOU COME HERE OFTEN?
EVERY DAY.
NICE PLACE.
DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER SECLUDED PLACES AROUND HERE?
WOW. THAT WAS QUICK.
THANKS.
I GUESS NOT, BUT NOW THAT WE'RE IN COSTUME... HOW DO WE GET OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED?
98


A BRIDGE, HUH?
YOU'RE LATE. I'LL ASSUME THAT'S OUR NEW FRIEND FROM LAST NIGHT WITH YOU...
GOOD. OH, AND HE'S WEARING A MUCH NICER COSTUME. KATE AND REX ARE OUT ON ANOTHER MISSION, HE'LL BE OF GOOD USE, TONIGHT.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, IF YOU HAD GOTTEN HERE THREE MINUTES LATER I WOULD HAVE HAD TO DO THIS ALONE.
C'MON.
I ERASED MAULER'S MEMORIES FROM LAST NIGHT, AND LEFT HIM CLOSE TO THE TOY STORE HE ROBBED. HE'LL BE DISORIENTED AND WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SEEK OUT FAMILIAR GROUND.
MY HYPOTHESIS IS THAT HE WILL LEAD US TO HIS BASE AND WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HIS PLANS FOR THE VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS WERE.
I'VE BEEN TRACKING HIM FROM HERE, BUT WE NEED TO BE ON SITE WHEN HE ARRIVES.
I WAS AFRAID I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE WITHOUT YOU.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT... I'M NOT EVEN SURE I'LL NEED YOU.


THERE HE IS.
ONE WAY
PARKS St
TABOR Ln
...
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE NEED THOSE PROCESSORS! WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE ENOUGH TO POWER THE ROBOTS WITHOUT THAT NEW SHIPMENT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. ALL LAST NIGHT IS A BLUR. I REMEMBER GOING OUT TO GET THE NEW SHIPMENT AT THE TOYS B' WE... AND THEN... NOTHING.
SO I CAME BACK.
I DON'T THINK YOU REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT OUR WORK HERE IS. WE BADLY NEED THOSE EXTRA PROCESSORS. THAT SHIPMENT IS ALREADY IN STOCK BY NOW, AND THEY WON'T BE RECEIVING ANOTHER FOR NEARLY A MONTH.
I'M NOT SURE OUR PLANS CAN WAIT THAT LONG.

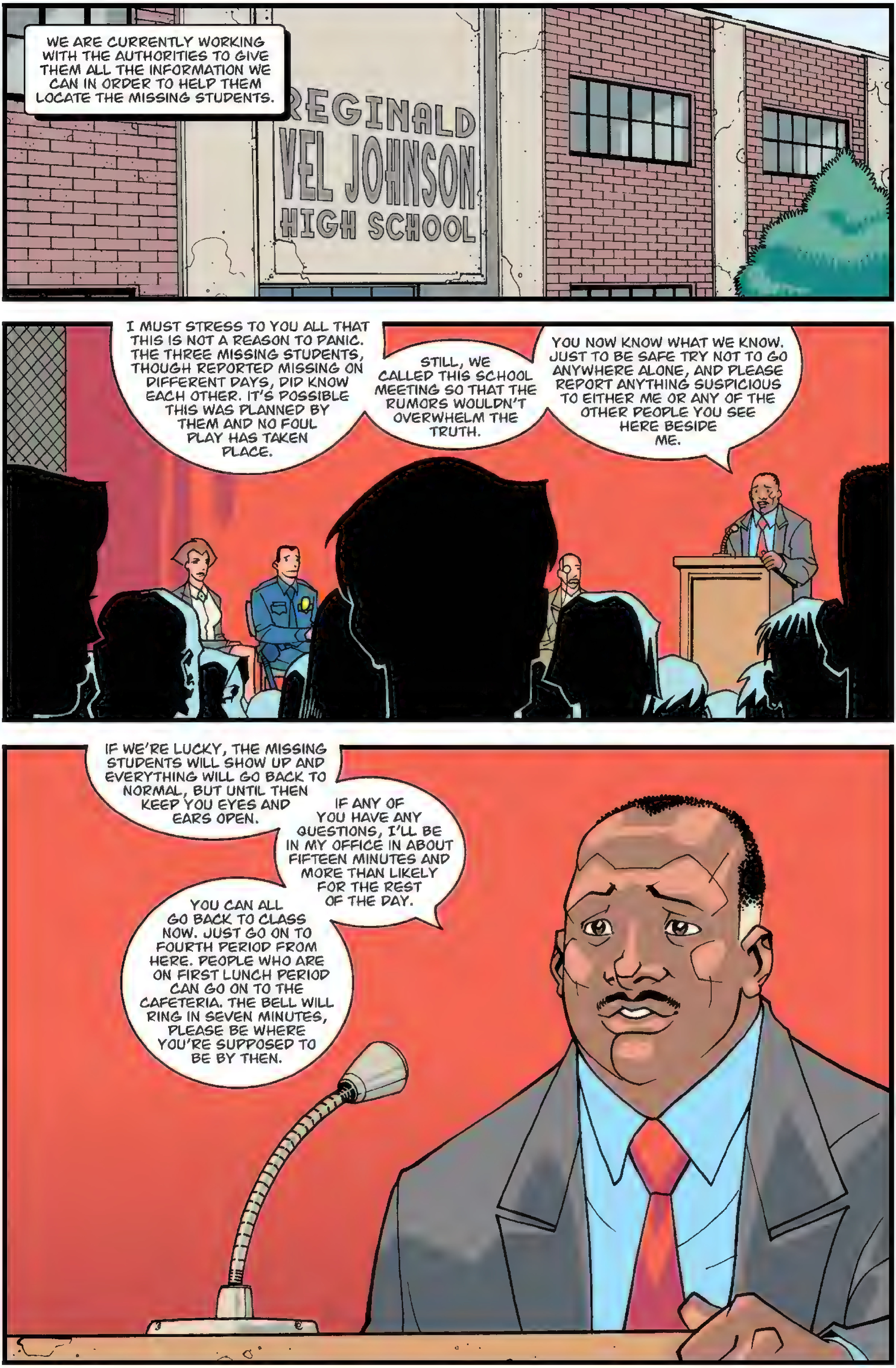
I THINK WE'VE HEARD ENOUGH.
KEEP THE OTHER ONE FROM ACTIVATING THE ROBOTS, I'LL DEAL WITH THIS ONE!
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE NEED THE ROBOTS TO DEFEAT YOU?
LET GO!
KRAK

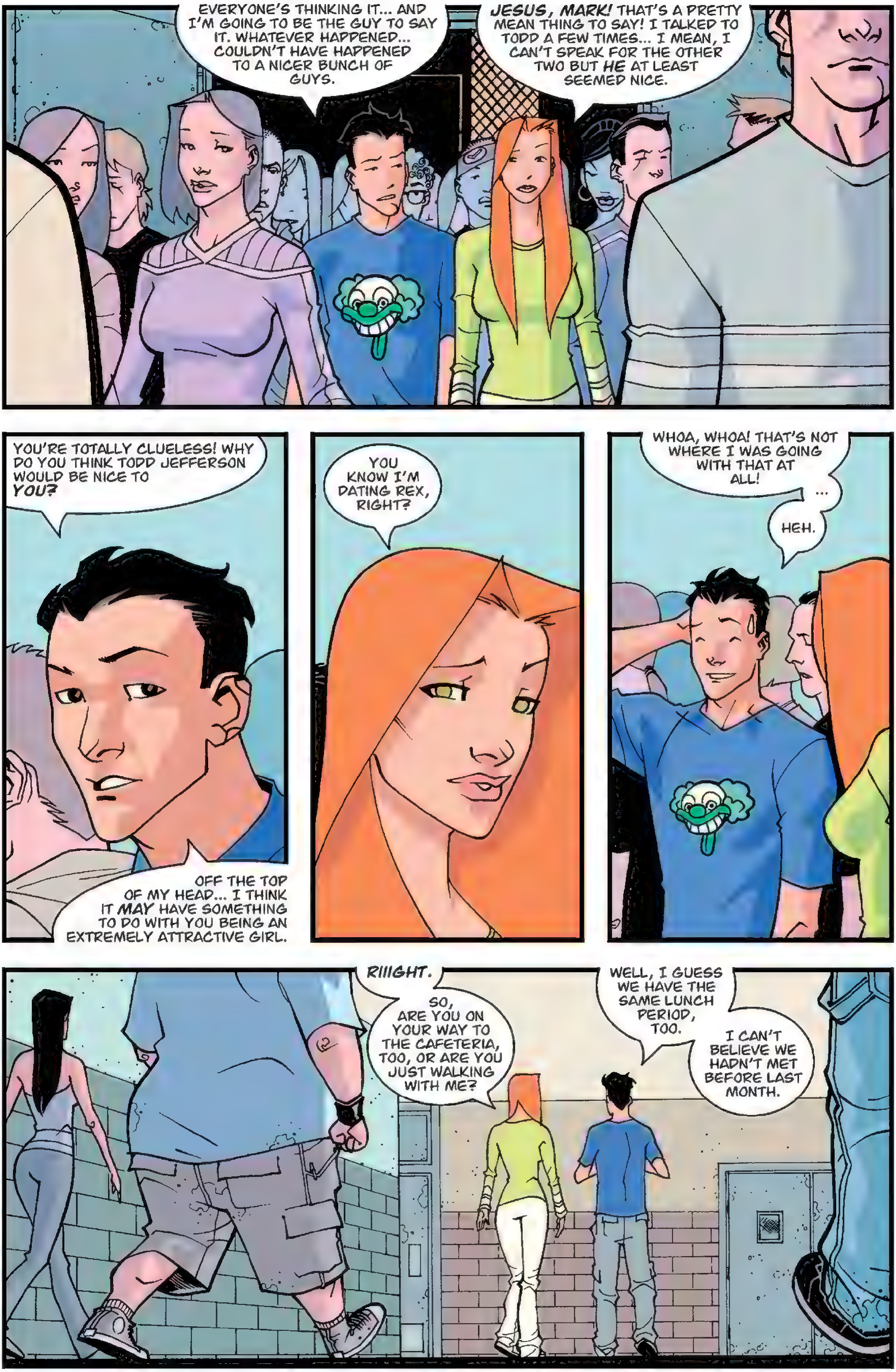

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH HERE. YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY IN OVER YOUR HEAD!
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT PAYING ATTENTION.
IT... WILL... TAKE MORE... THAN...
...
THAT...
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
CHOOM!
THANKS FOR THE HELP, INVINCIBLE.
YOU SEEM TO BE A PRETTY USEFUL GUY. THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN STAYING WITH US?
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
IS IT ALWAYS THIS EASY?

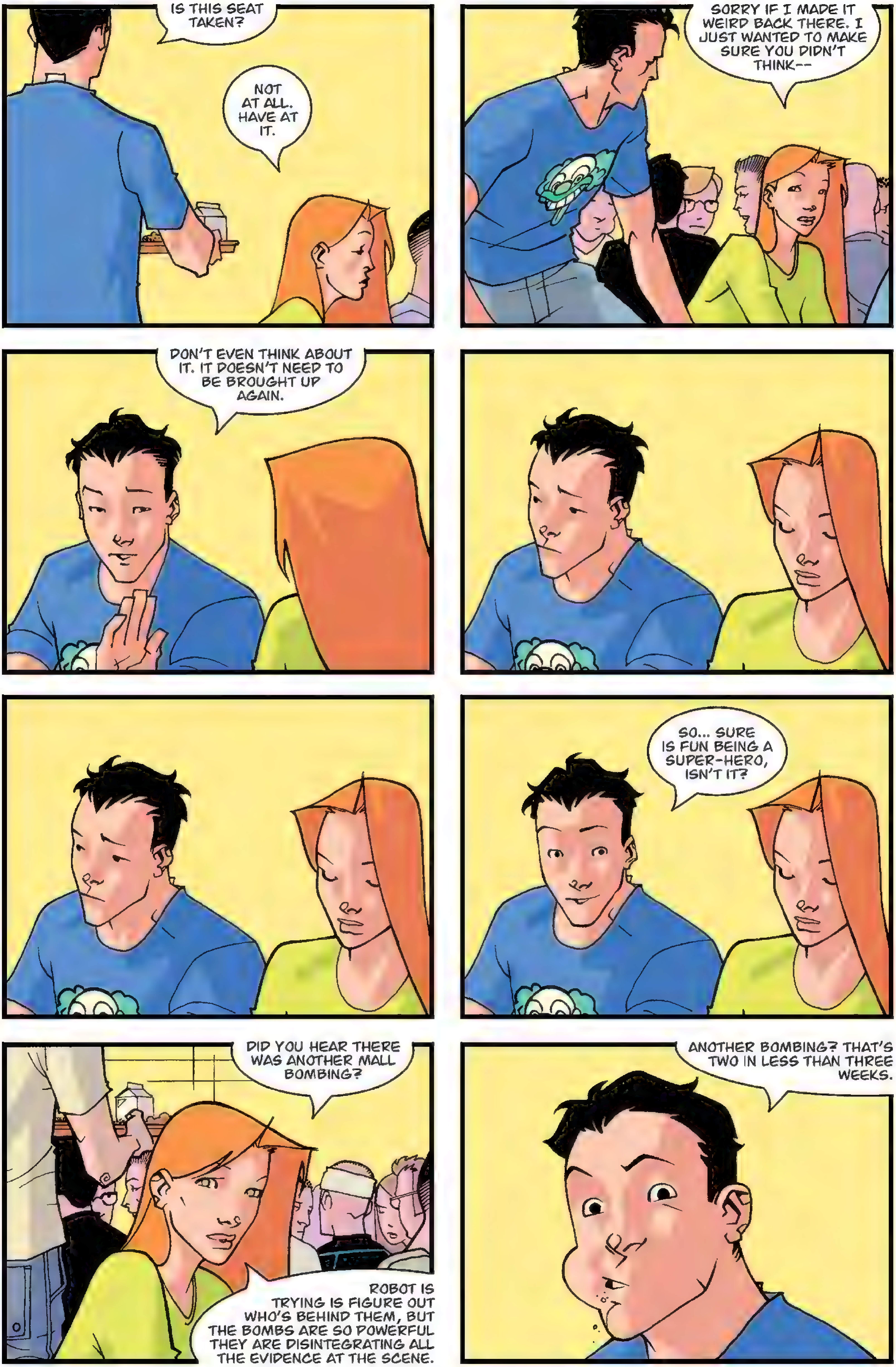

Twin Pines
MALL
The MALL that has it ALL!
C
INFORMATION
SHOE PLACE
YAWN
WHERE AM I?
00.00.01
WHAT THE--?!

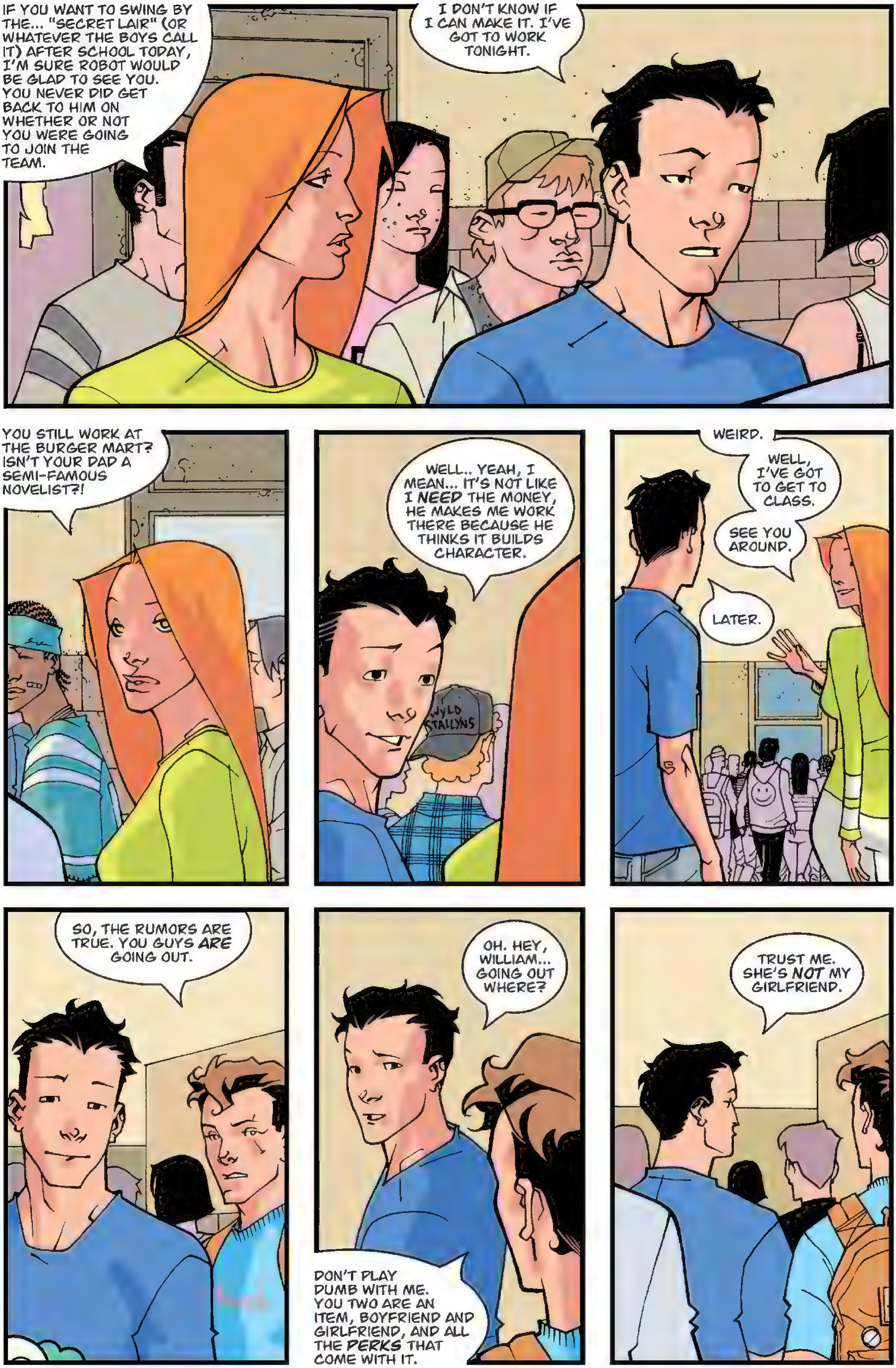
BOOM!
Twin Pines
MALL
The MALL that has it ALL

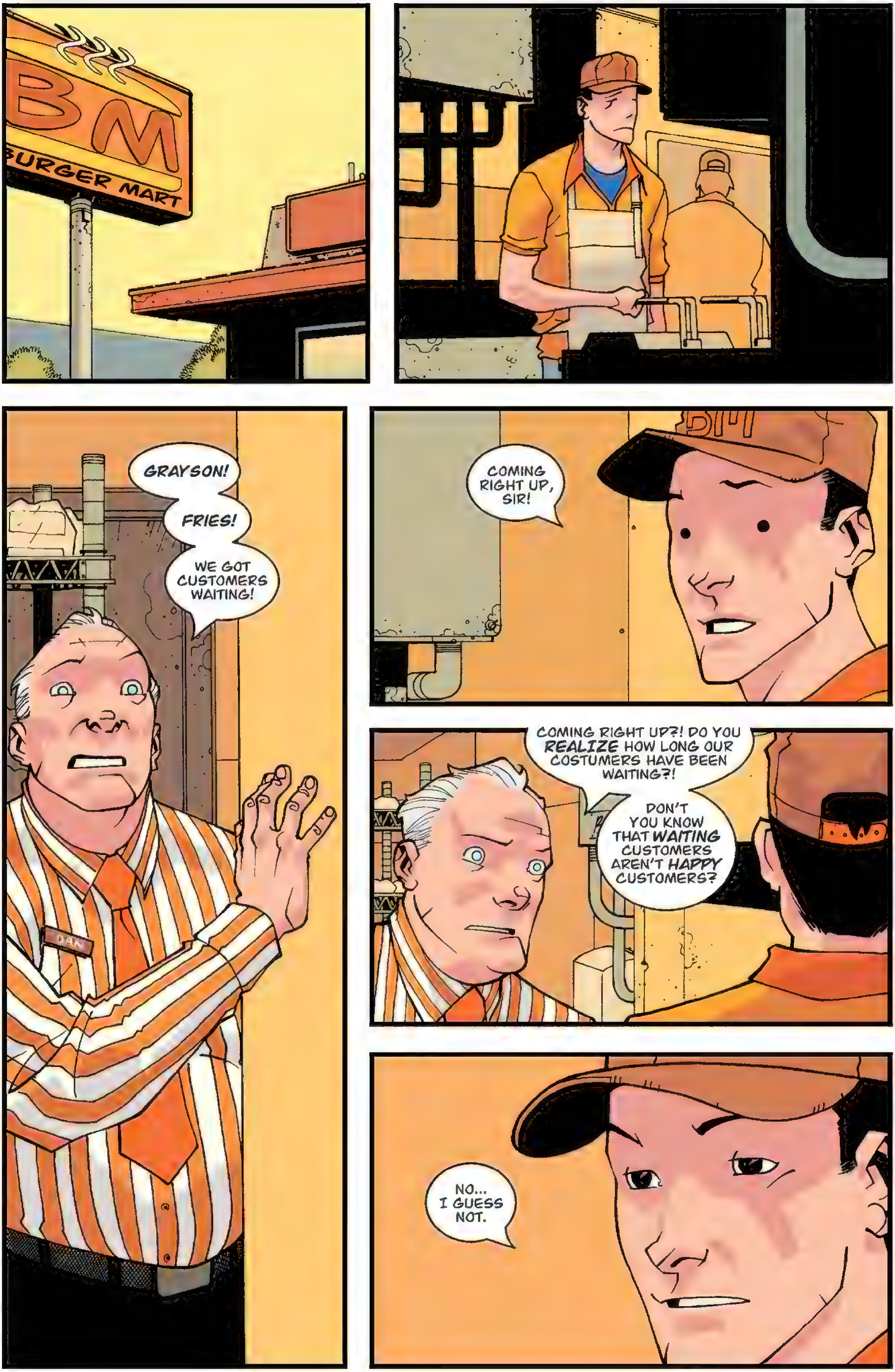
ISSUE THREE

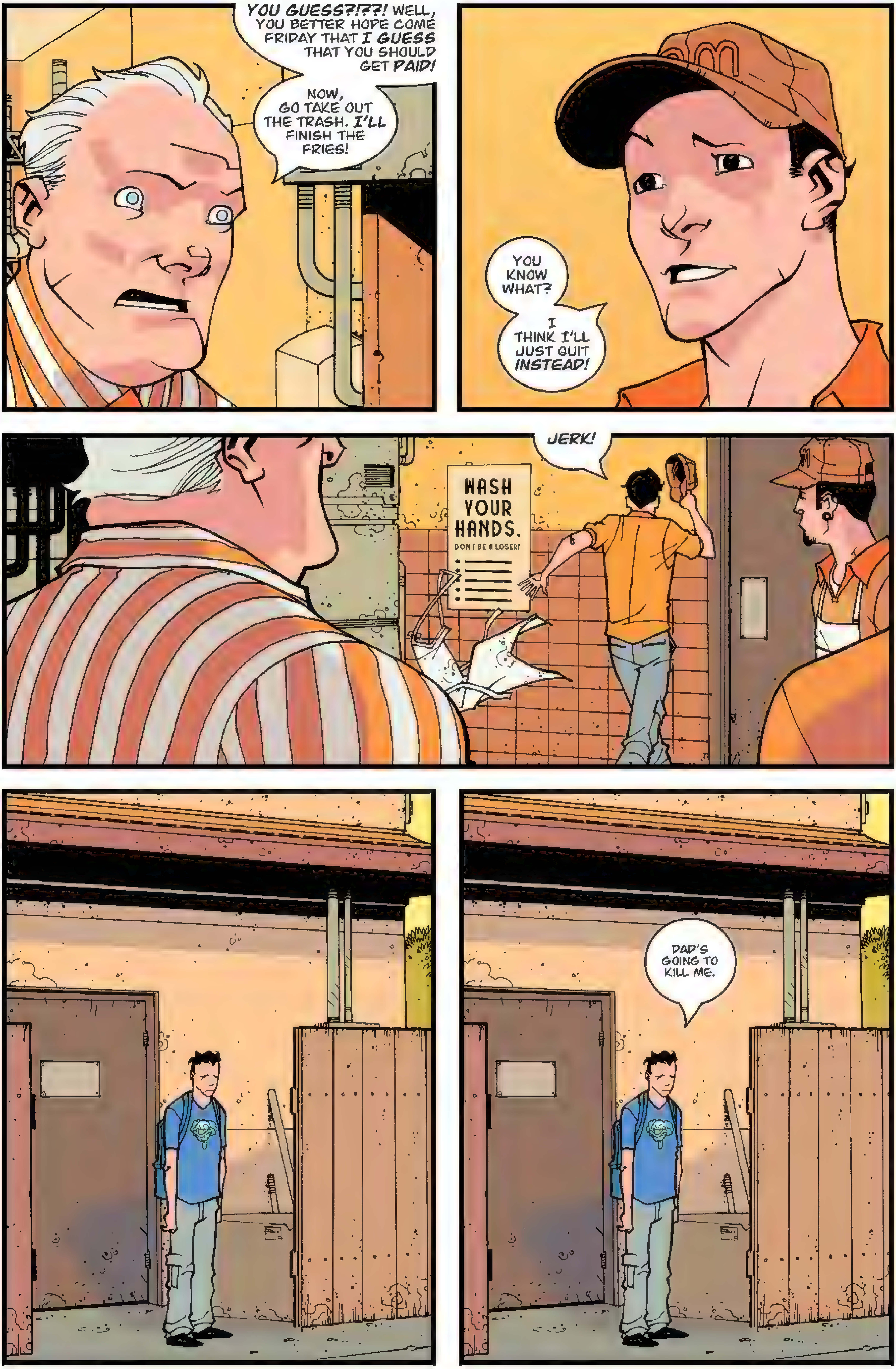

WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING WITH THE AUTHORITIES TO GIVE THEM ALL THE INFORMATION WE CAN IN ORDER TO HELP THEM LOCATE THE MISSING STUDENTS.
REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
I MUST STRESS TO YOU ALL THAT THIS IS NOT A REASON TO PANIC. THE THREE MISSING STUDENTS, THOUGH REPORTED MISSING ON DIFFERENT DAYS, DID KNOW EACH OTHER. IT'S POSSIBLE THIS WAS PLANNED BY THEM AND NO FOUL PLAY HAS TAKEN PLACE.
STILL, WE CALLED THIS SCHOOL MEETING SO THAT THE RUMORS WOULDN'T OVERWHELM THE TRUTH.
YOU NOW KNOW WHAT WE KNOW. JUST TO BE SAFE TRY NOT TO GO ANYWHERE ALONE, AND PLEASE REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS TO EITHER ME OR ANY OF THE OTHER PEOPLE YOU SEE HERE BESIDE ME.
IF WE'RE LUCKY, THE MISSING STUDENTS WILL SHOW UP AND EVERYTHING WILL GO BACK TO NORMAL, BUT UNTIL THEN KEEP YOU EYES AND EARS OPEN.
IF ANY OF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, I'LL BE IN MY OFFICE IN ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AND MORE THAN LIKELY FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.
YOU CAN ALL GO BACK TO CLASS NOW. JUST GO ON TO FOURTH PERIOD FROM HERE. PEOPLE WHO ARE ON FIRST LUNCH PERIOD CAN GO ON TO THE CAFETERIA. THE BELL WILL RING IN SEVEN MINUTES, PLEASE BE WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE BY THEN.

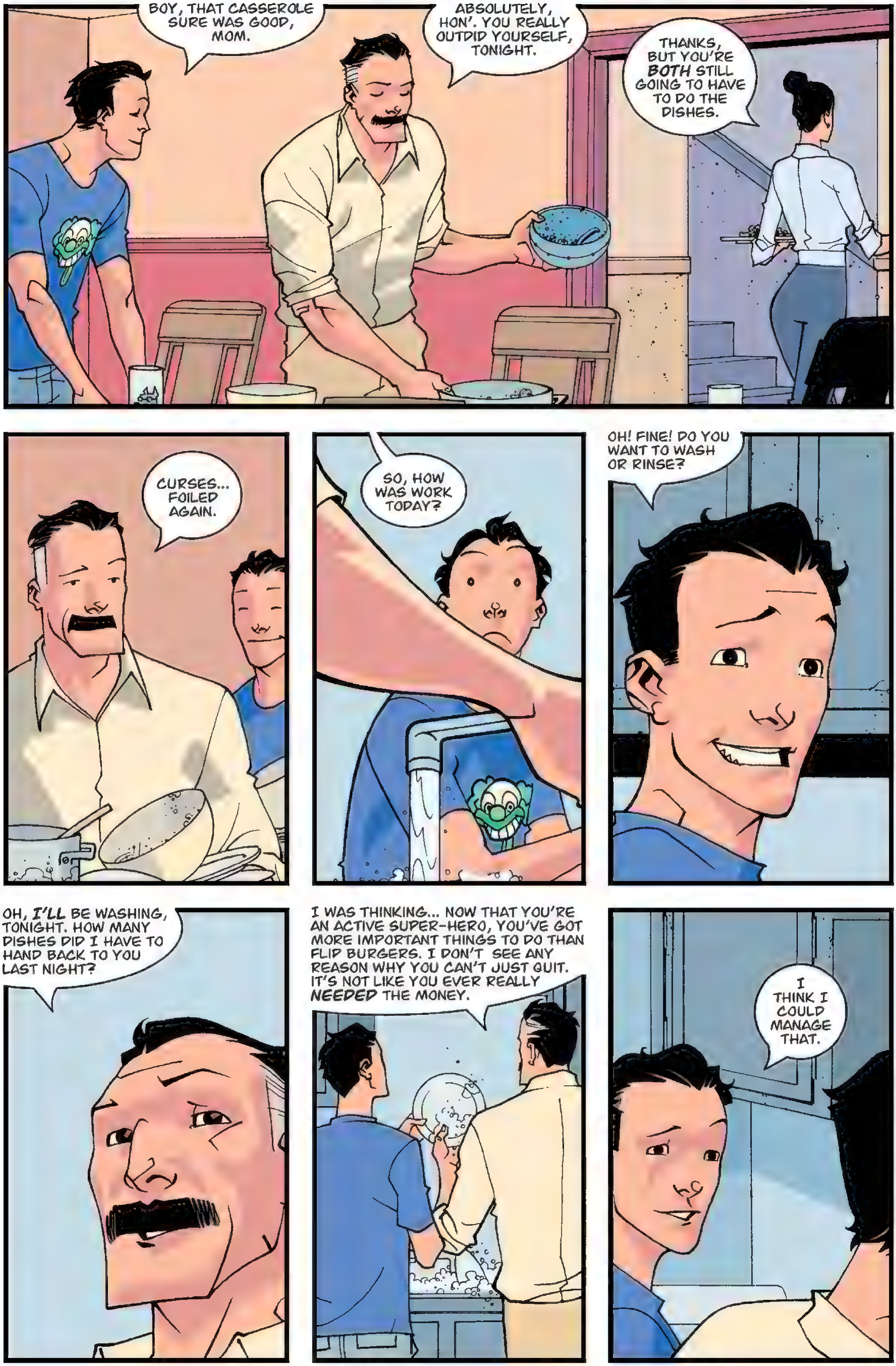

EVERYONE'S THINKING IT... AND I'M GOING TO BE THE GUY TO SAY IT. WHATEVER HAPPENED... COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TO A NICER BUNCH OF GUYS.
JESUS, MARK! THAT'S A PRETTY MEAN THING TO SAY! I TALKED TO TODD A FEW TIMES... I MEAN, I CAN'T SPEAK FOR THE OTHER TWO BUT *HE* AT LEAST SEEMED NICE.
YOU'RE TOTALLY CLUELESS! WHY DO YOU THINK TODD JEFFERSON WOULD BE NICE TO *YOU?*
OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD... I THINK IT *MAY* HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU BEING AN EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE GIRL.
YOU KNOW I'M DATING REX, RIGHT?
WHOA, WHOA! THAT'S NOT WHERE I WAS GOING WITH THAT AT ALL!
...
HEH.
RIIIGHT.
SO, ARE YOU ON YOUR WAY TO THE CAFETERIA, TOO, OR ARE YOU JUST WALKING WITH ME?
WELL, I GUESS WE HAVE THE SAME LUNCH PERIOD, TOO.
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE HADN'T MET BEFORE LAST MONTH.

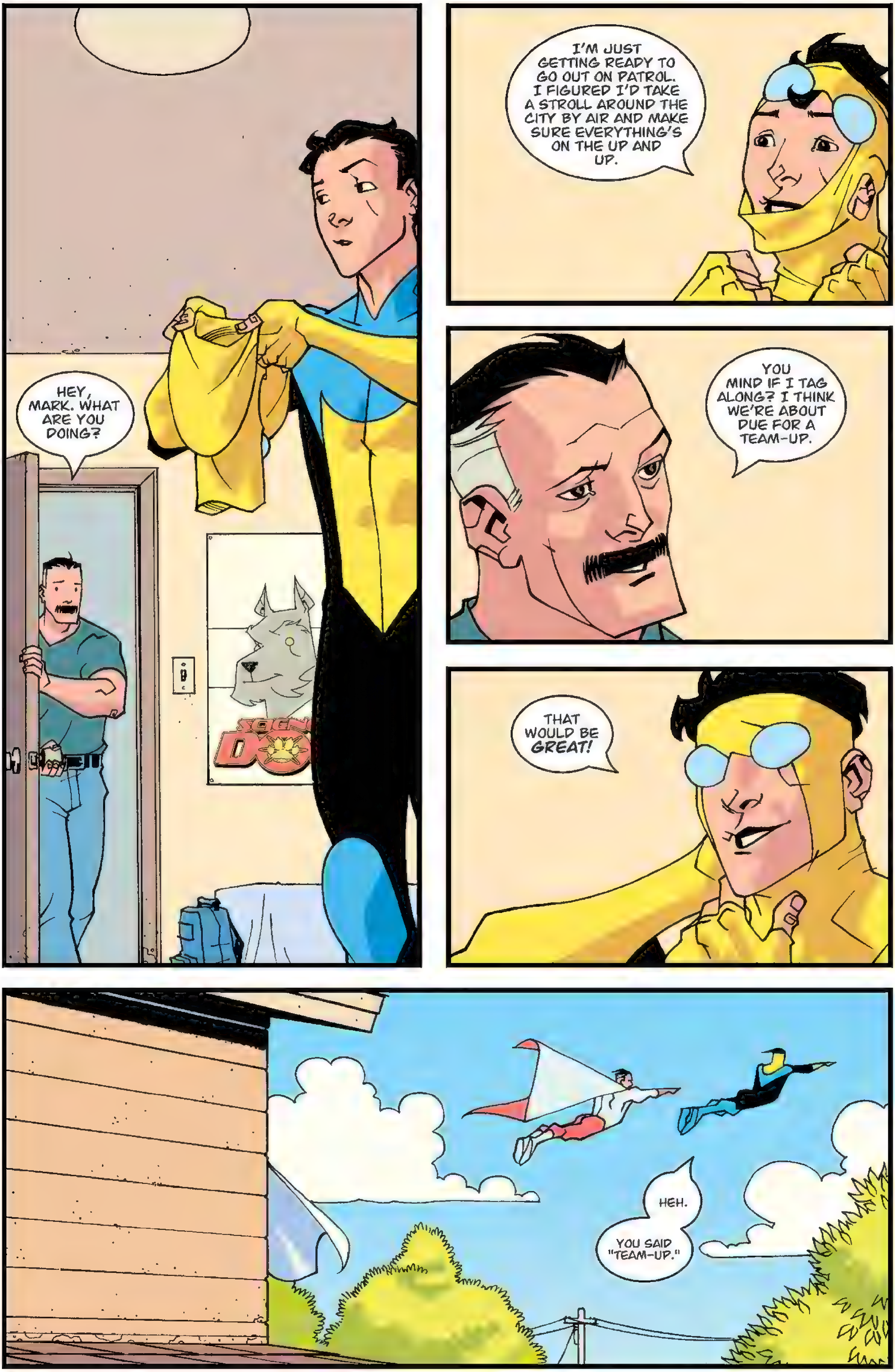

IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?
NOT AT ALL. HAVE AT IT.
SORRY IF I MADE IT WEIRD BACK THERE. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU DIDN'T THINK--
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT. IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE BROUGHT UP AGAIN.
SO... SURE IS FUN BEING A SUPER-HERO, ISN'T IT?
DID YOU HEAR THERE WAS ANOTHER MALL BOMBING?
ROBOT IS TRYING IS FIGURE OUT WHO'S BEHIND THEM, BUT THE BOMBS ARE SO POWERFUL THEY ARE DISINTEGRATING ALL THE EVIDENCE AT THE SCENE.
ANOTHER BOMBING? THAT'S TWO IN LESS THAN THREE WEEKS.

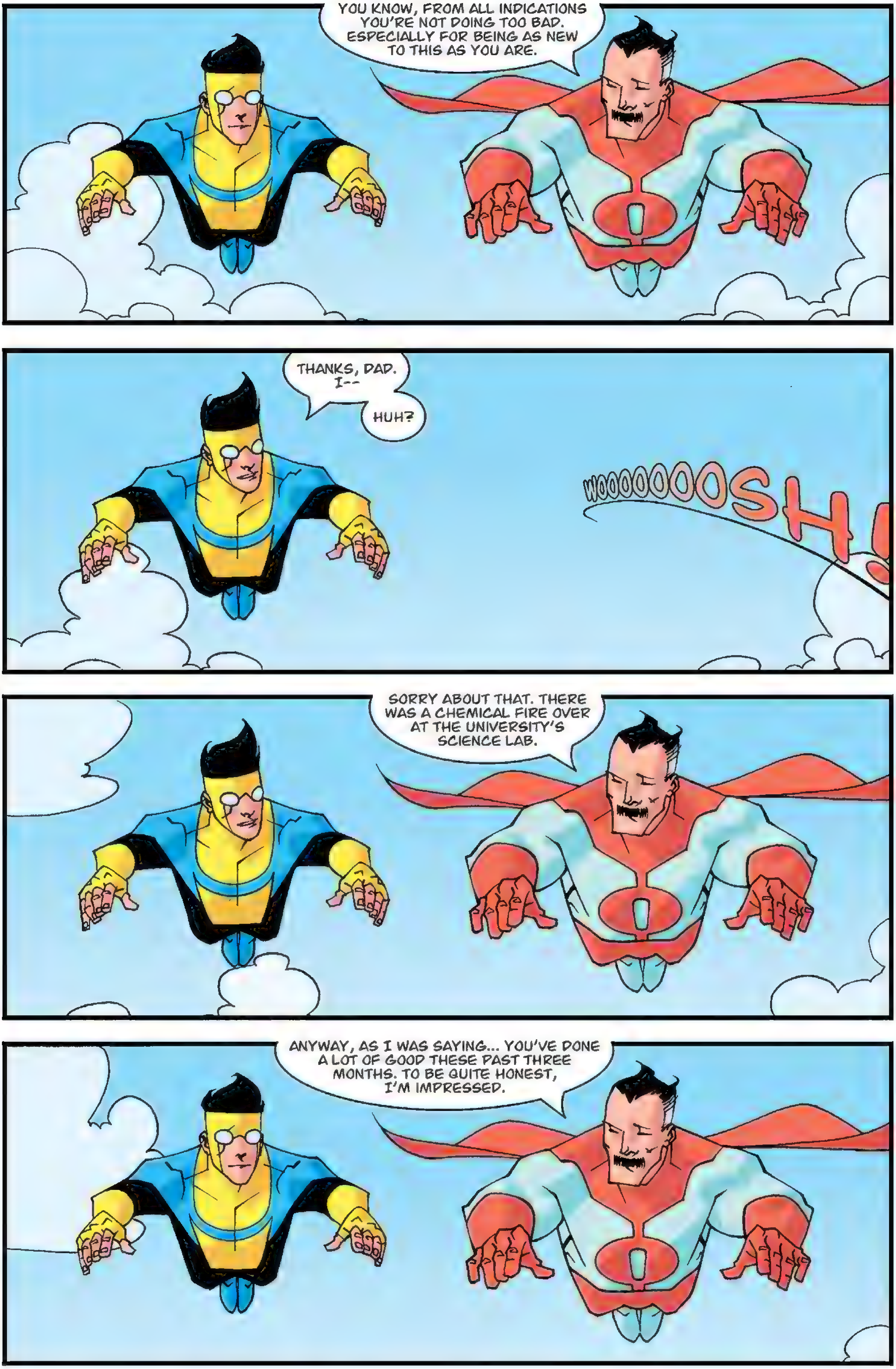

IF YOU WANT TO SWING BY THE... "SECRET LAIR" (OR WHATEVER THE BOYS CALL IT) AFTER SCHOOL TODAY, I'M SURE ROBOT WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE YOU. YOU NEVER DID GET BACK TO HIM ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU WERE GOING TO JOIN THE TEAM.
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN MAKE IT. I'VE GOT TO WORK TONIGHT.
YOU STILL WORK AT THE BURGER MART? ISN'T YOUR DAD A SEMI-FAMOUS NOVELIST?!
WELL.. YEAH, I MEAN... IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED THE MONEY, HE MAKES ME WORK THERE BECAUSE HE THINKS IT BUILDS CHARACTER.
WYLD STALLYNS
WEIRD.
WELL, I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS.
SEE YOU AROUND.
LATER.
SO, THE RUMORS ARE TRUE. YOU GUYS ARE GOING OUT.
OH. HEY, WILLIAM... GOING OUT WHERE?
DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME. YOU TWO ARE AN ITEM, BOYFRIEND AND GIRLFRIEND, AND ALL THE PERKS THAT COME WITH IT.
TRUST ME. SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND.

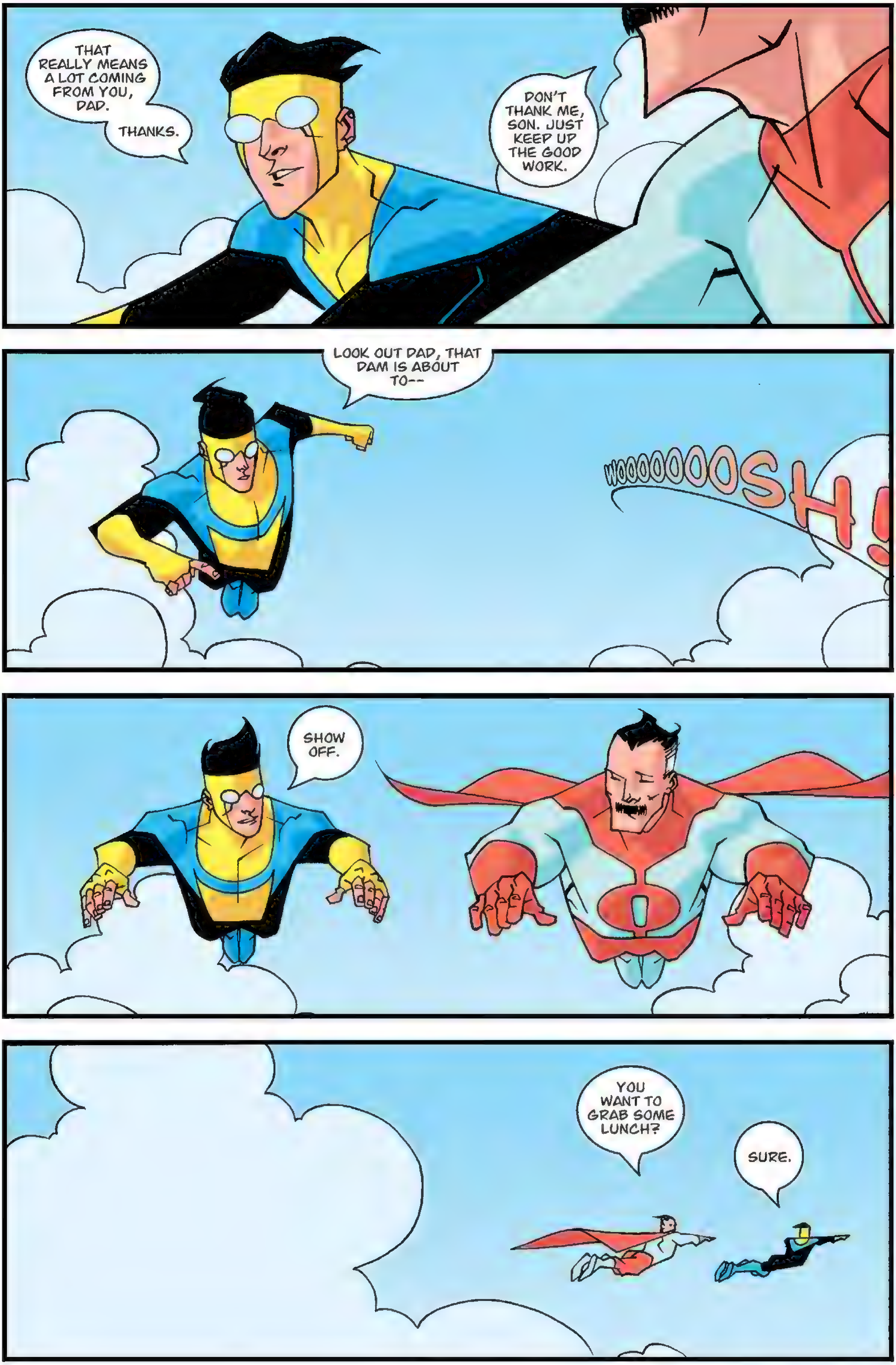

BM
BURGER MART
GRAYSON!
FRIES!
WE GOT CUSTOMERS WAITING!
DAN
BM
COMING RIGHT UP, SIR!
COMING RIGHT UP?! DO YOU **REALIZE** HOW LONG OUR COSTUMERS HAVE BEEN WAITING?!
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT **WAITING** CUSTOMERS AREN'T **HAPPY** CUSTOMERS?
NO... I GUESS NOT.

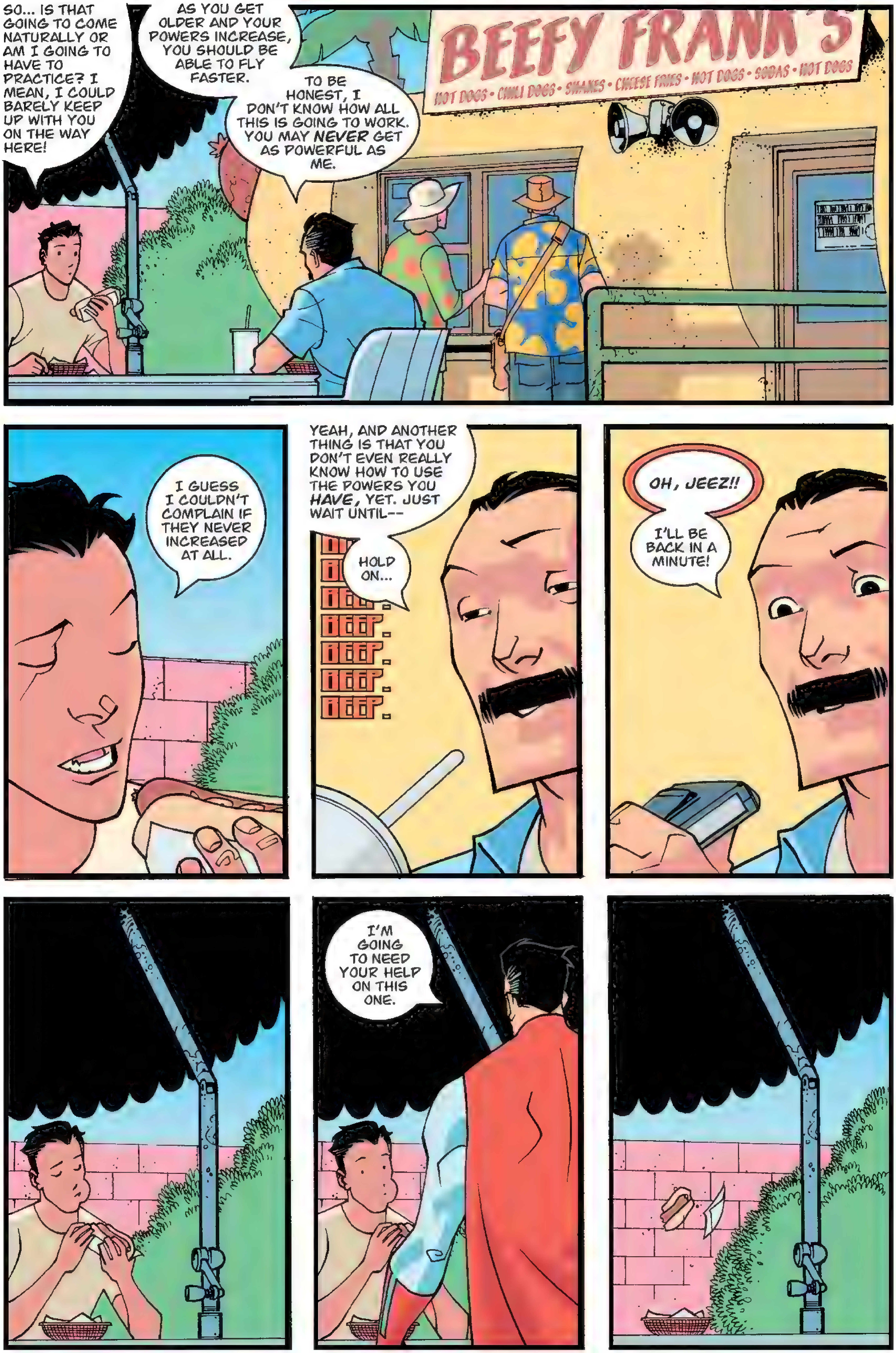

YOU GUESS?!??! WELL, YOU BETTER HOPE COME FRIDAY THAT I GUESS THAT YOU SHOULD GET PAID!
NOW, GO TAKE OUT THE TRASH. I'LL FINISH THE FRIES!
YOU KNOW WHAT?
I THINK I'LL JUST QUIT INSTEAD!
WASH YOUR HANDS.
DONT BE A LOSER!
JERK!
DAD'S GOING TO KILL ME.


BOY, THAT CASSEROLE SURE WAS GOOD, MOM.
ABSOLUTELY, HON'. YOU REALLY OUTDID YOURSELF, TONIGHT.
THANKS, BUT YOU'RE *BOTH* STILL GOING TO HAVE TO DO THE DISHES.
CURSES... FOILED AGAIN.
SO, HOW WAS WORK TODAY?
OH! FINE! DO YOU WANT TO WASH OR RINSE?
OH, *I'LL* BE WASHING, TONIGHT. HOW MANY DISHES DID I HAVE TO HAND BACK TO YOU LAST NIGHT?
I WAS THINKING... NOW THAT YOU'RE AN ACTIVE SUPER-HERO, YOU'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO THAN FLIP BURGERS. I DON'T SEE ANY REASON WHY YOU CAN'T JUST QUIT. IT'S NOT LIKE YOU EVER REALLY *NEEDED* THE MONEY.
I THINK I COULD MANAGE THAT.

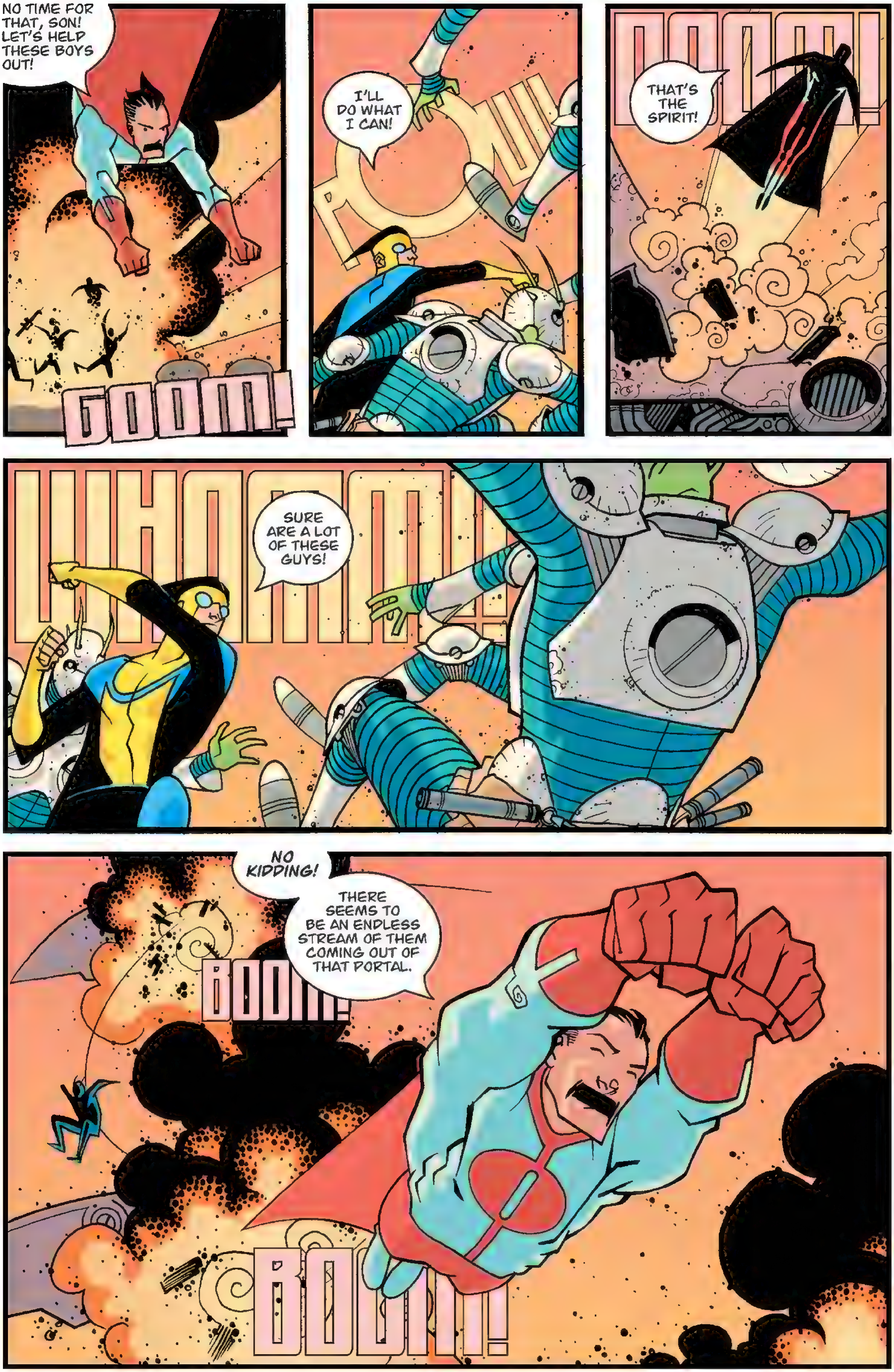

HEY, MARK. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M JUST GETTING READY TO GO OUT ON PATROL. I FIGURED I'D TAKE A STROLL AROUND THE CITY BY AIR AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING'S ON THE UP AND UP.
YOU MIND IF I TAG ALONG? I THINK WE'RE ABOUT DUE FOR A TEAM-UP.
THAT WOULD BE *GREAT!*
HEH.
YOU SAID "TEAM-UP."


YOU KNOW, FROM ALL INDICATIONS YOU'RE NOT DOING TOO BAD. ESPECIALLY FOR BEING AS NEW TO THIS AS YOU ARE.
THANKS, DAD. I--
HUH?
WOOOOOOOSH!
SORRY ABOUT THAT. THERE WAS A CHEMICAL FIRE OVER AT THE UNIVERSITY'S SCIENCE LAB.
ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING... YOU'VE DONE A LOT OF GOOD THESE PAST THREE MONTHS. TO BE QUITE HONEST, I'M IMPRESSED.


THAT REALLY MEANS A LOT COMING FROM YOU, DAD.
THANKS.
DON'T THANK ME, SON. JUST KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.
LOOK OUT DAD, THAT DAM IS ABOUT TO--
WOOOOOOOOSH!
SHOW OFF.
YOU WANT TO GRAB SOME LUNCH?
SURE.

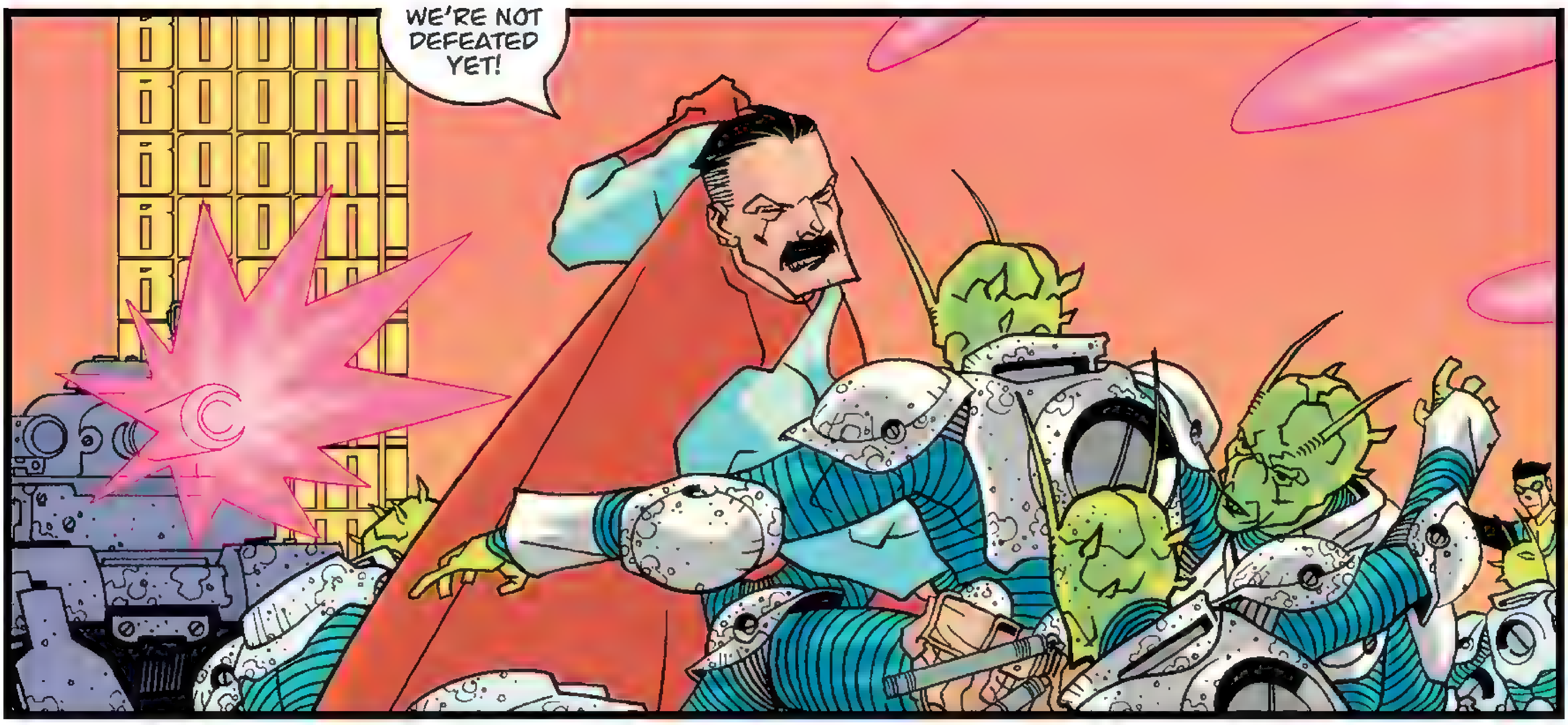

SO... IS THAT GOING TO COME NATURALLY OR AM I GOING TO HAVE TO PRACTICE? I MEAN, I COULD BARELY KEEP UP WITH YOU ON THE WAY HERE!
AS YOU GET OLDER AND YOUR POWERS INCREASE, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FLY FASTER.
TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW HOW ALL THIS IS GOING TO WORK. YOU MAY *NEVER* GET AS POWERFUL AS ME.
BEEFY FRANK'S
HOT DOGS • CHILI DOGS • SHAKES • CHEESE FRIES • HOT DOGS • SODAS • HOT DOGS
I GUESS I COULDN'T COMPLAIN IF THEY NEVER INCREASED AT ALL.
YEAH, AND ANOTHER THING IS THAT YOU DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW HOW TO USE THE POWERS YOU *HAVE*, YET. JUST WAIT UNTIL--
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
HOLD ON...
OH, JEEZ!!
I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE!
I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP ON THIS ONE.

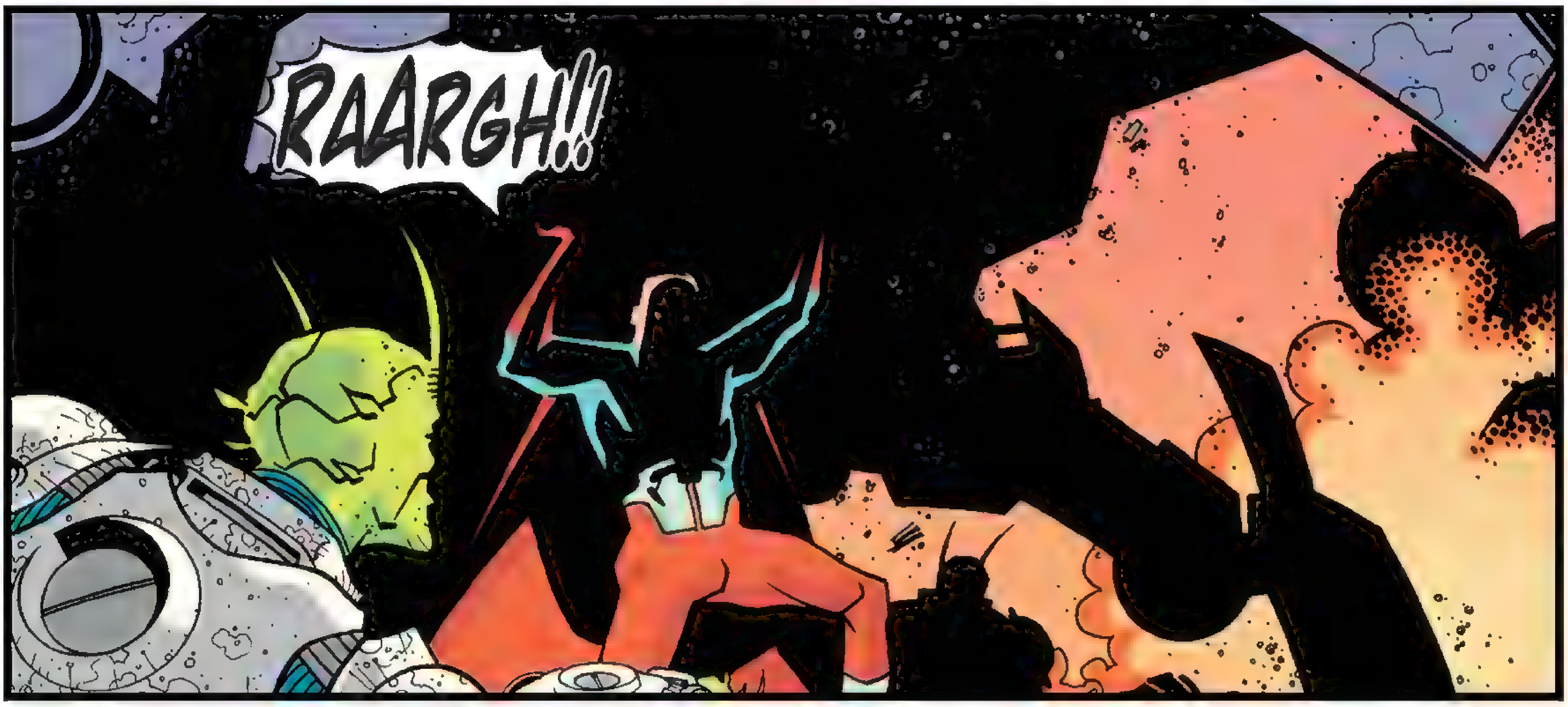
WHOA!

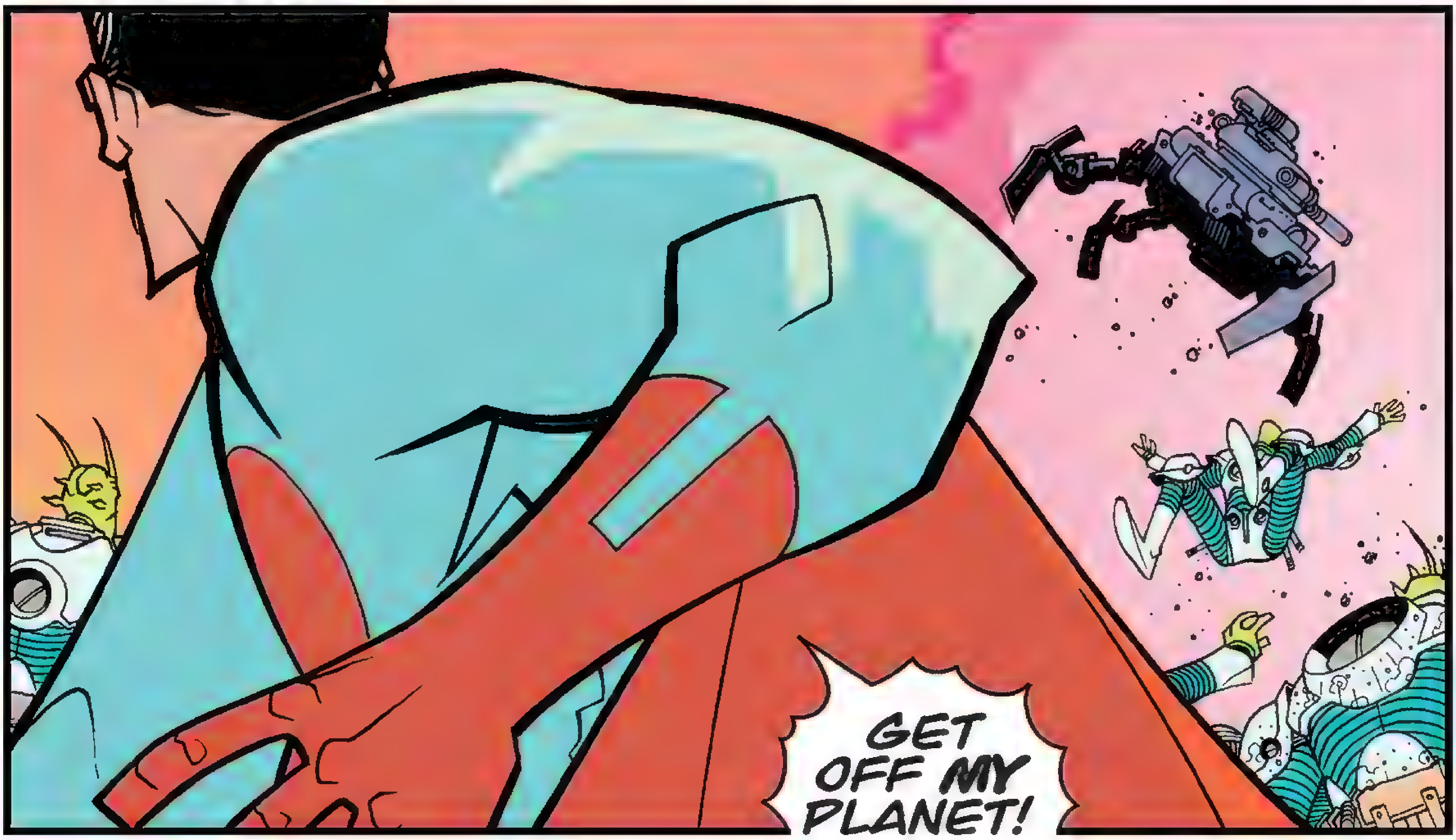

NO TIME FOR THAT, SON! LET'S HELP THESE BOYS OUT!
GOOM!
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN!
POW!
DOOM!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
WHAMM!
SURE ARE A LOT OF THESE GUYS!
NO KIDDING!
THERE SEEMS TO BE AN ENDLESS STREAM OF THEM COMING OUT OF THAT PORTAL.
BOOM!
BOOM!

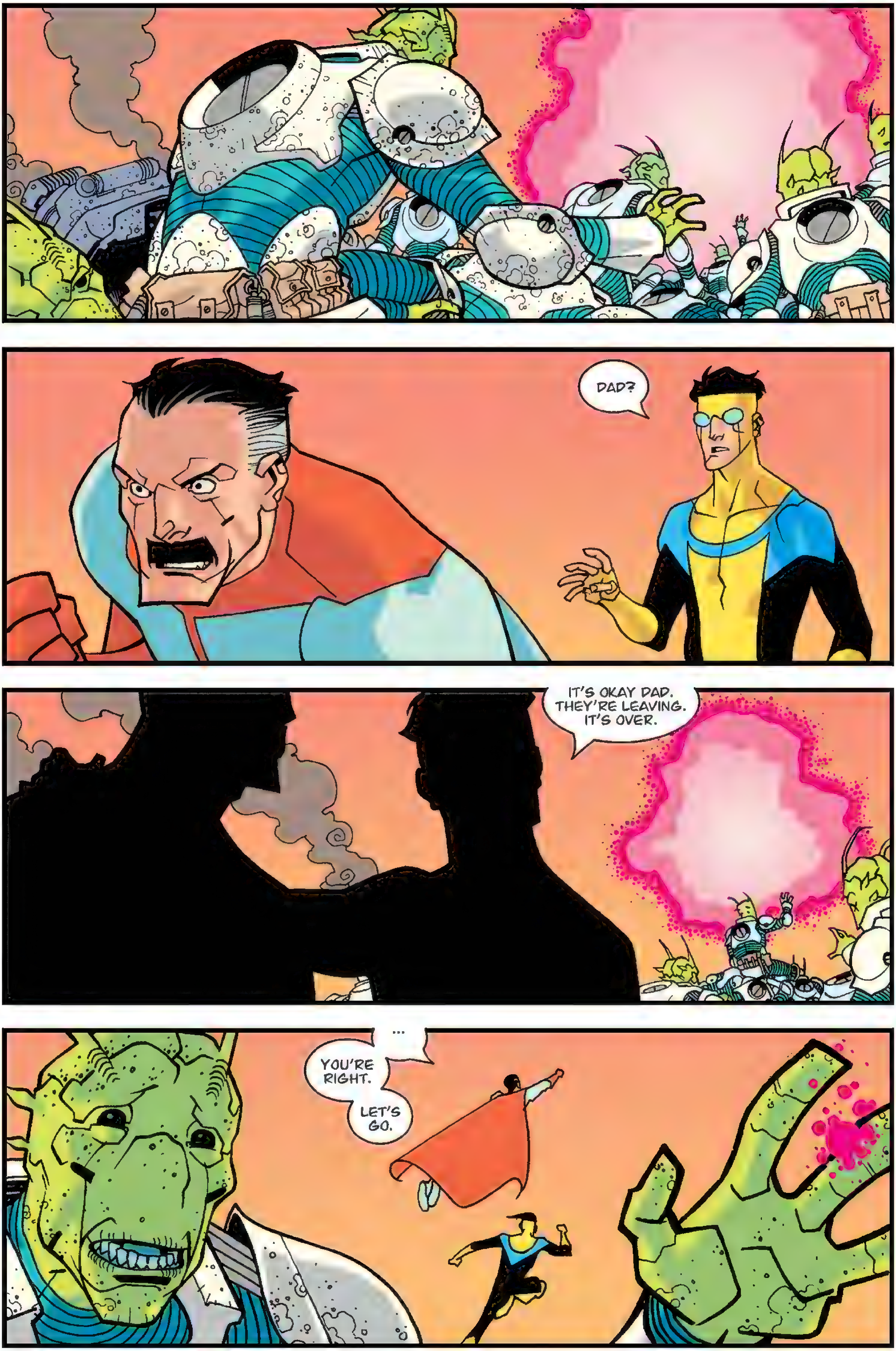
WELL, YOU'RE *OBVIOUSLY* NOT FROM AROUND HERE.
LET ME HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY HOME.
I THINK WE'RE DEALING WITH SOME SORT OF OTHER-DIMENSIONAL ARMY HERE. I DON'T RECOGNIZE THESE THINGS AT ALL.
WHICH MEANS THEY COULD HAVE AN ENTIRE *UNIVERSE* WORTH OF SOLDIERS READY TO SPILL OUT OF THAT THING!
WE'VE GOT TO GET THEM BACK IN THAT PORTAL AND FIGURE OUT A WAY TO CLOSE THAT THING FAST!
ANY IDEAS?
NOT YET... NO.

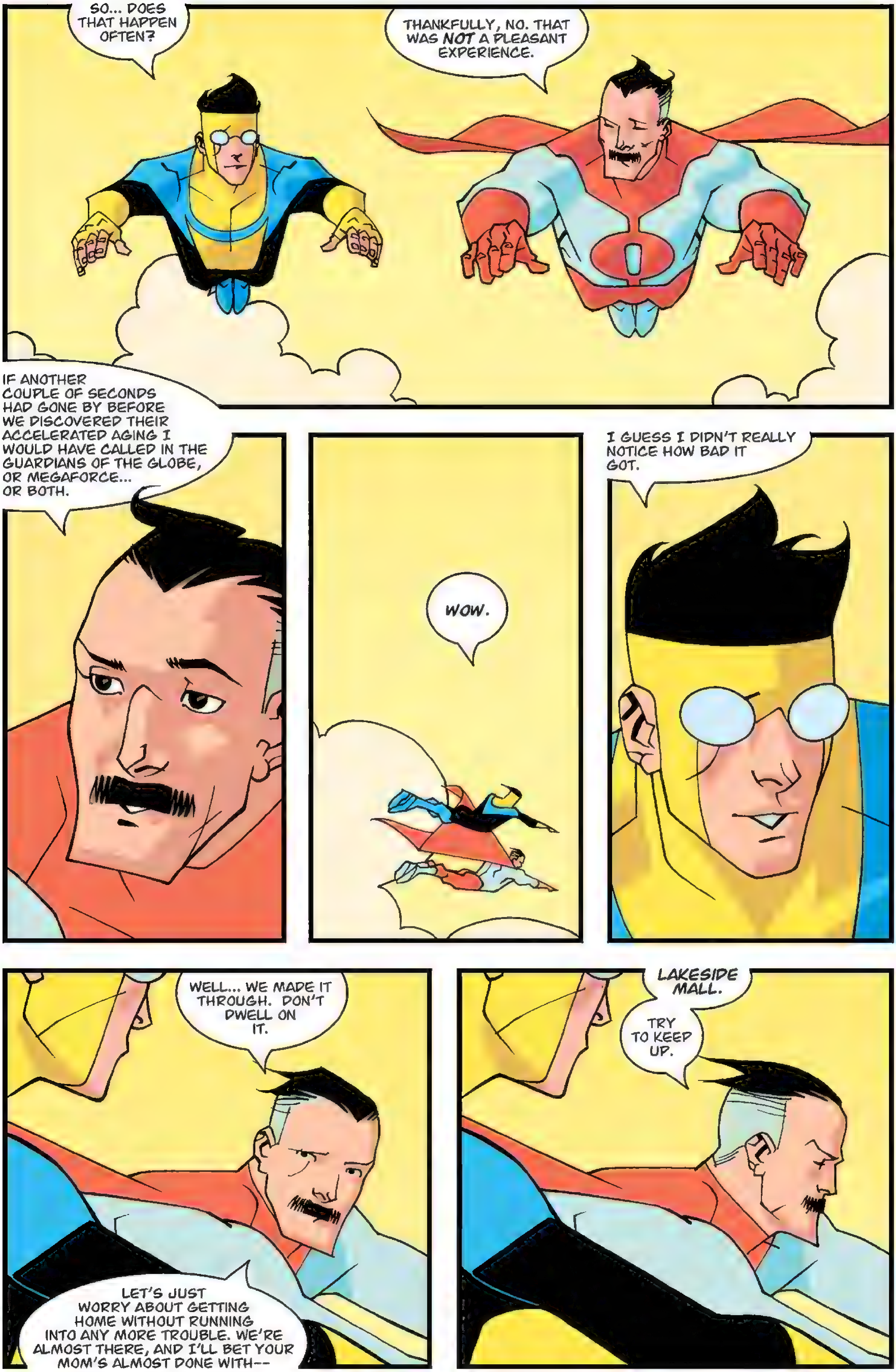
SKRAGG!!
WAIT A SECOND...
...IS IT JUST ME, OR ARE THESE GUYS GETTING SLOWER?
KRAK!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THIS SEEMS TO BE GETTING EASIER.
JEEZ, DAD! THIS GUY IS AGING BY THE MINUTE!
TIME MUST WORK DIFFERENTLY IN THEIR DIMENSION. THEY'RE STARTING TO DROP LIKE FLIES!
YEAH, AND IF THERE WEREN'T SO MANY OF THEM... WE'D BE WINNING THIS BATTLE!

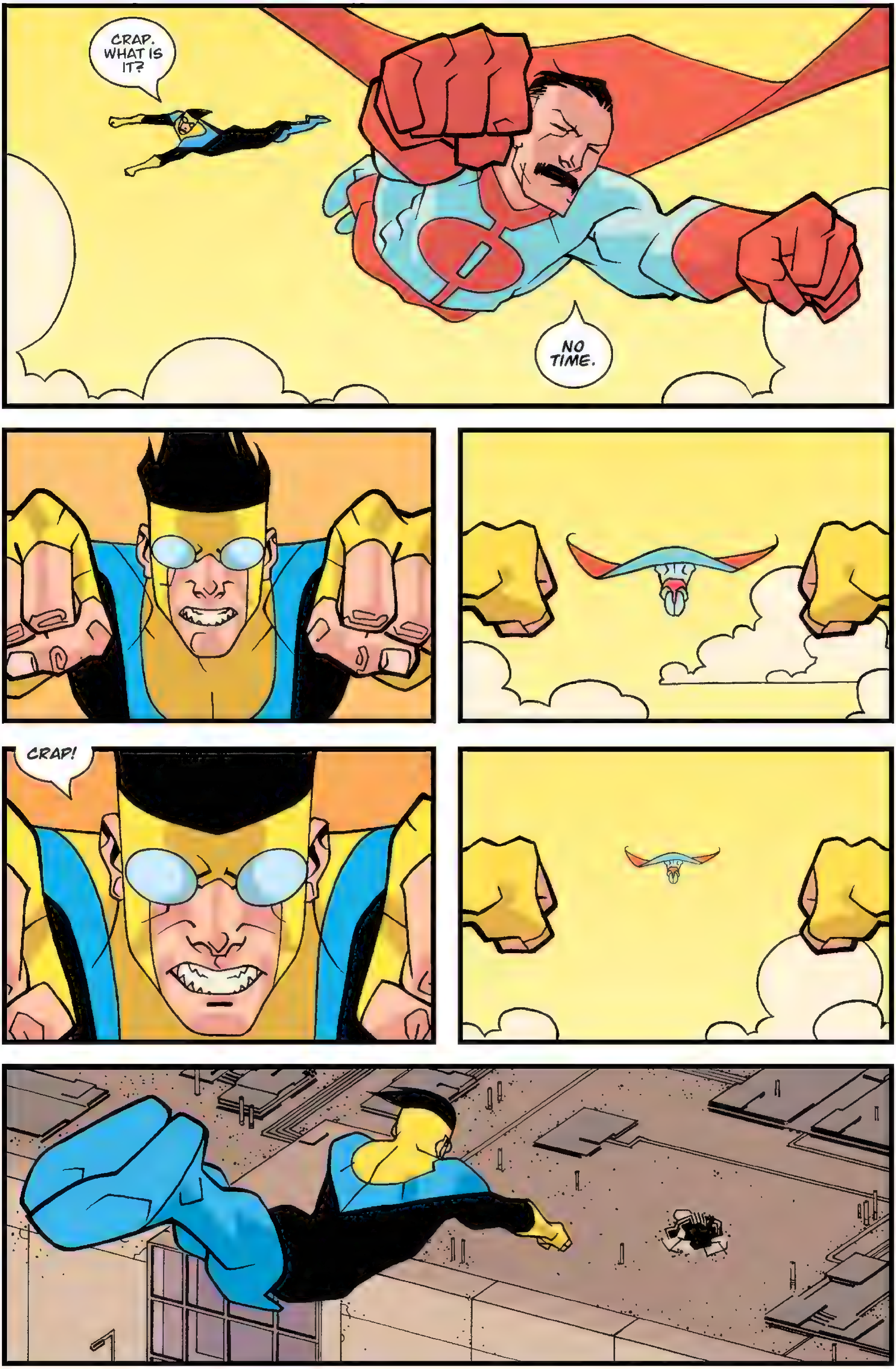

WE'RE NOT DEFEATED YET!


RAARGH!!

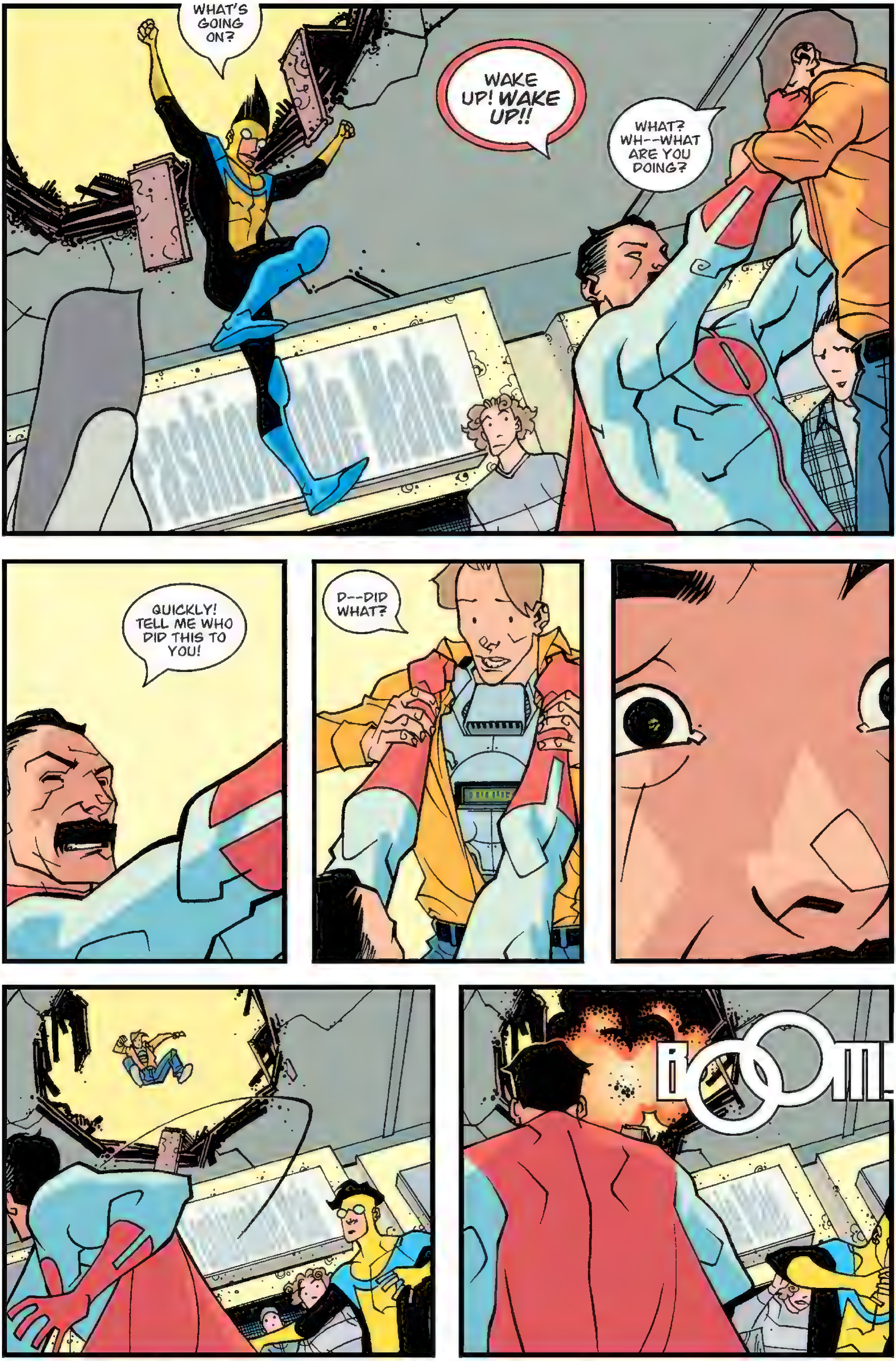

GET OFF MY PLANET!

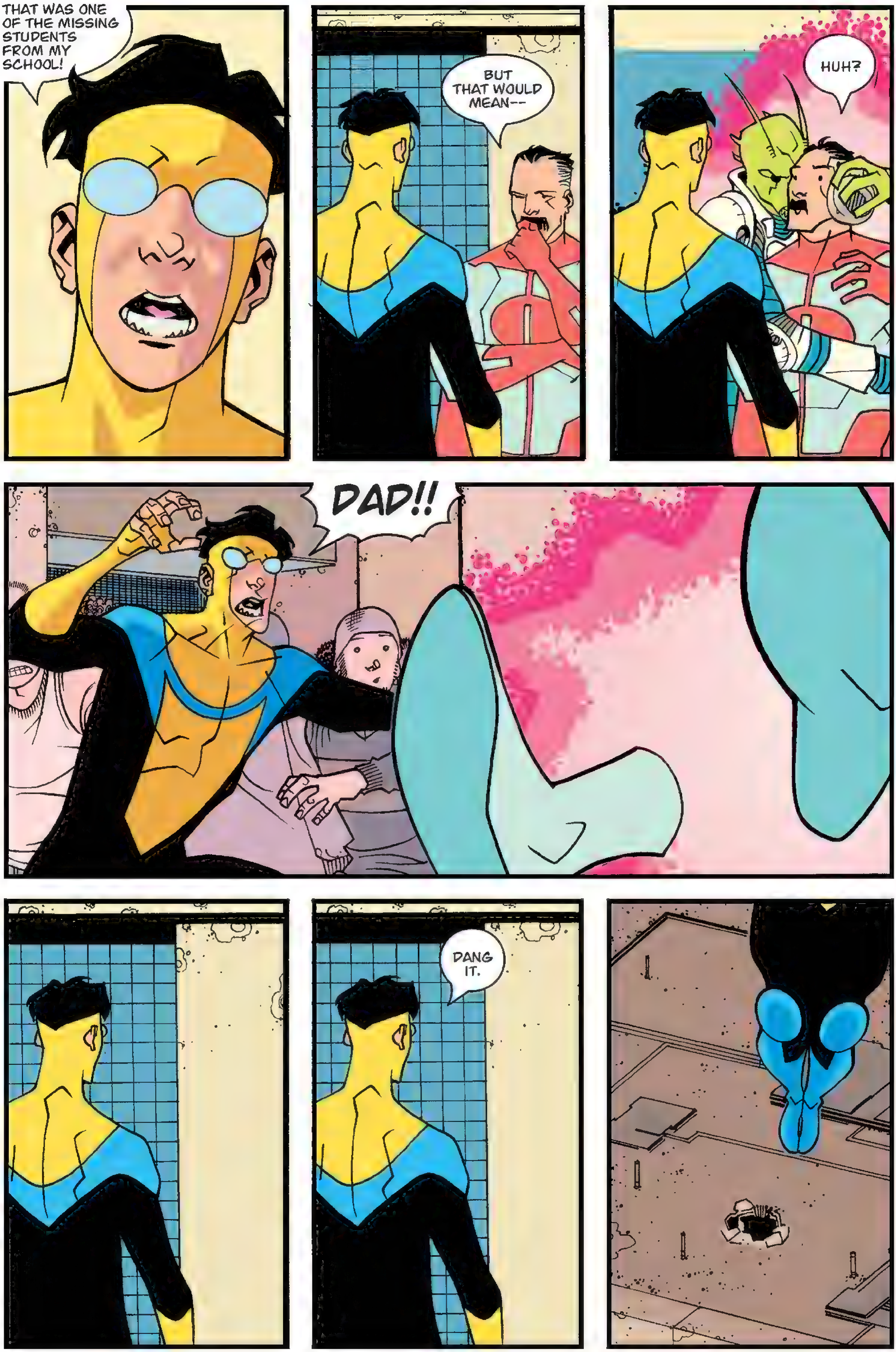

DAD?
IT'S OKAY DAD. THEY'RE LEAVING. IT'S OVER.
...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S GO.

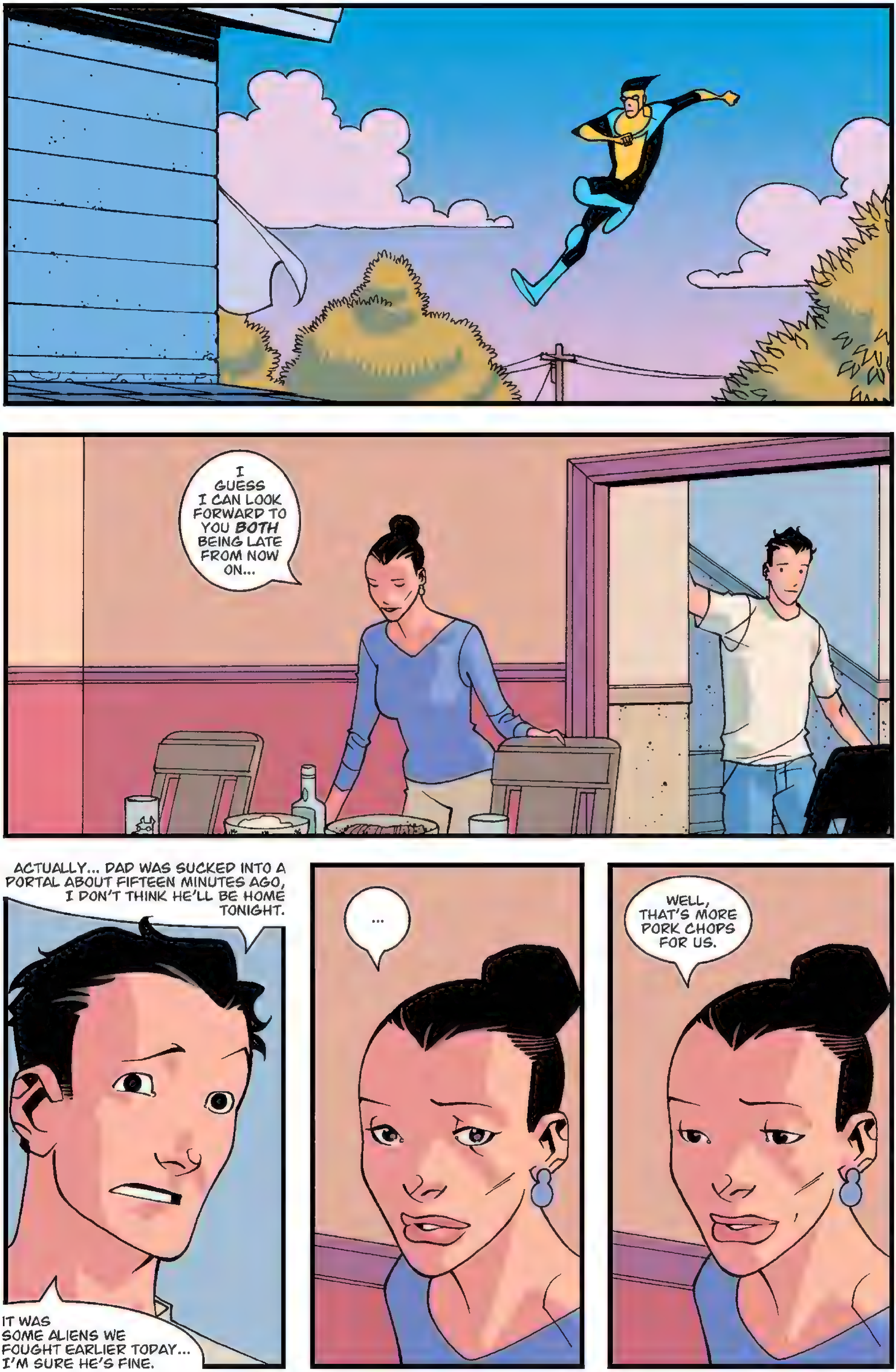

SO... DOES THAT HAPPEN OFTEN?
THANKFULLY, NO. THAT WAS *NOT* A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE.
IF ANOTHER COUPLE OF SECONDS HAD GONE BY BEFORE WE DISCOVERED THEIR ACCELERATED AGING I WOULD HAVE CALLED IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, OR MEGAFORCE... OR BOTH.
WOW.
I GUESS I DIDN'T REALLY NOTICE HOW BAD IT GOT.
WELL... WE MADE IT THROUGH. DON'T DWELL ON IT.
LET'S JUST WORRY ABOUT GETTING HOME WITHOUT RUNNING INTO ANY MORE TROUBLE. WE'RE ALMOST THERE, AND I'LL BET YOUR MOM'S ALMOST DONE WITH--
LAKESIDE MALL.
TRY TO KEEP UP.



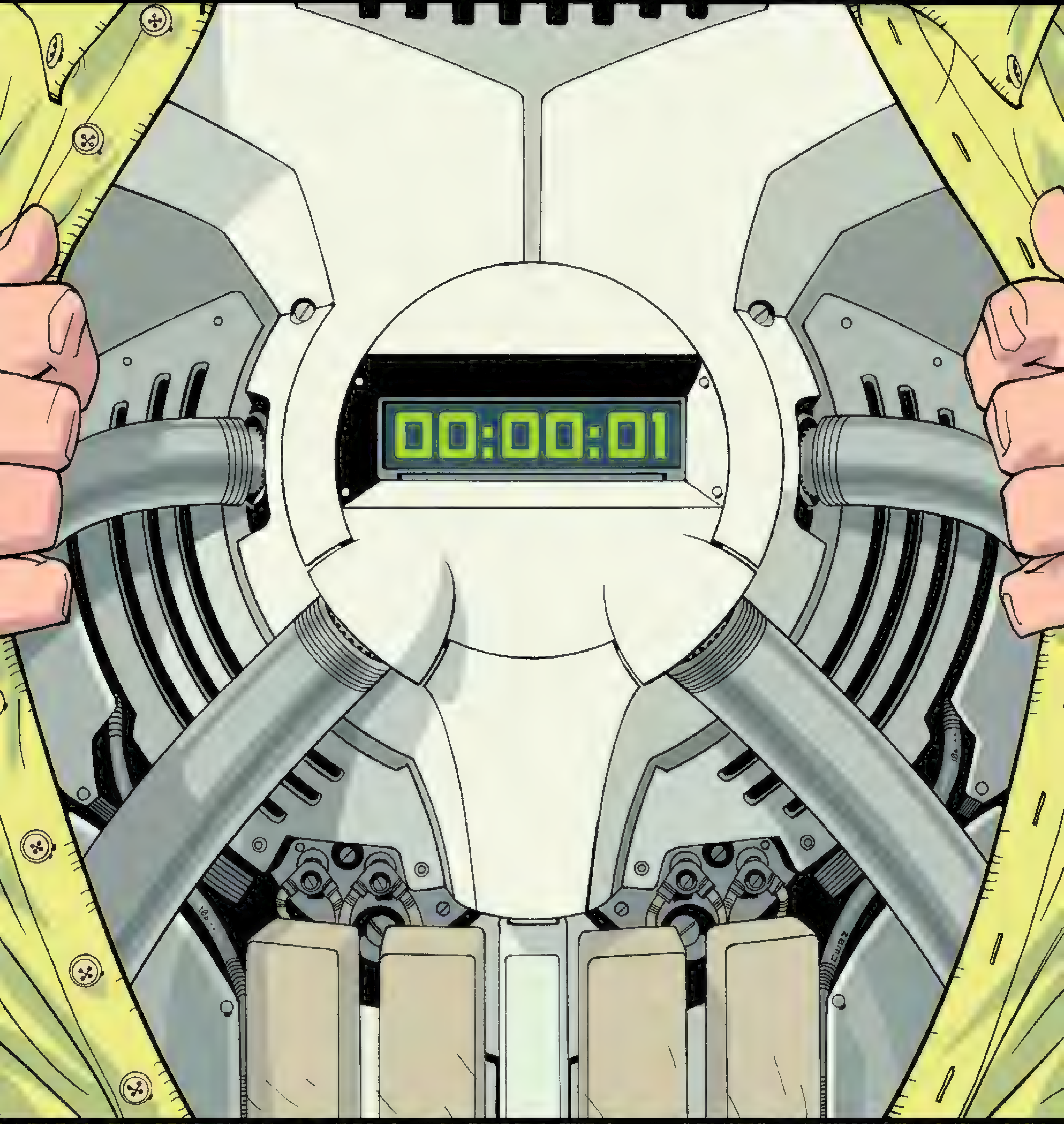
CRAP. WHAT IS IT?
NO TIME.
CRAP!


WHAT'S GOING ON?
WAKE UP! WAKE UP!!
WHAT? WH--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
QUICKLY! TELL ME WHO DID THIS TO YOU!
D--DID WHAT?
BOOM

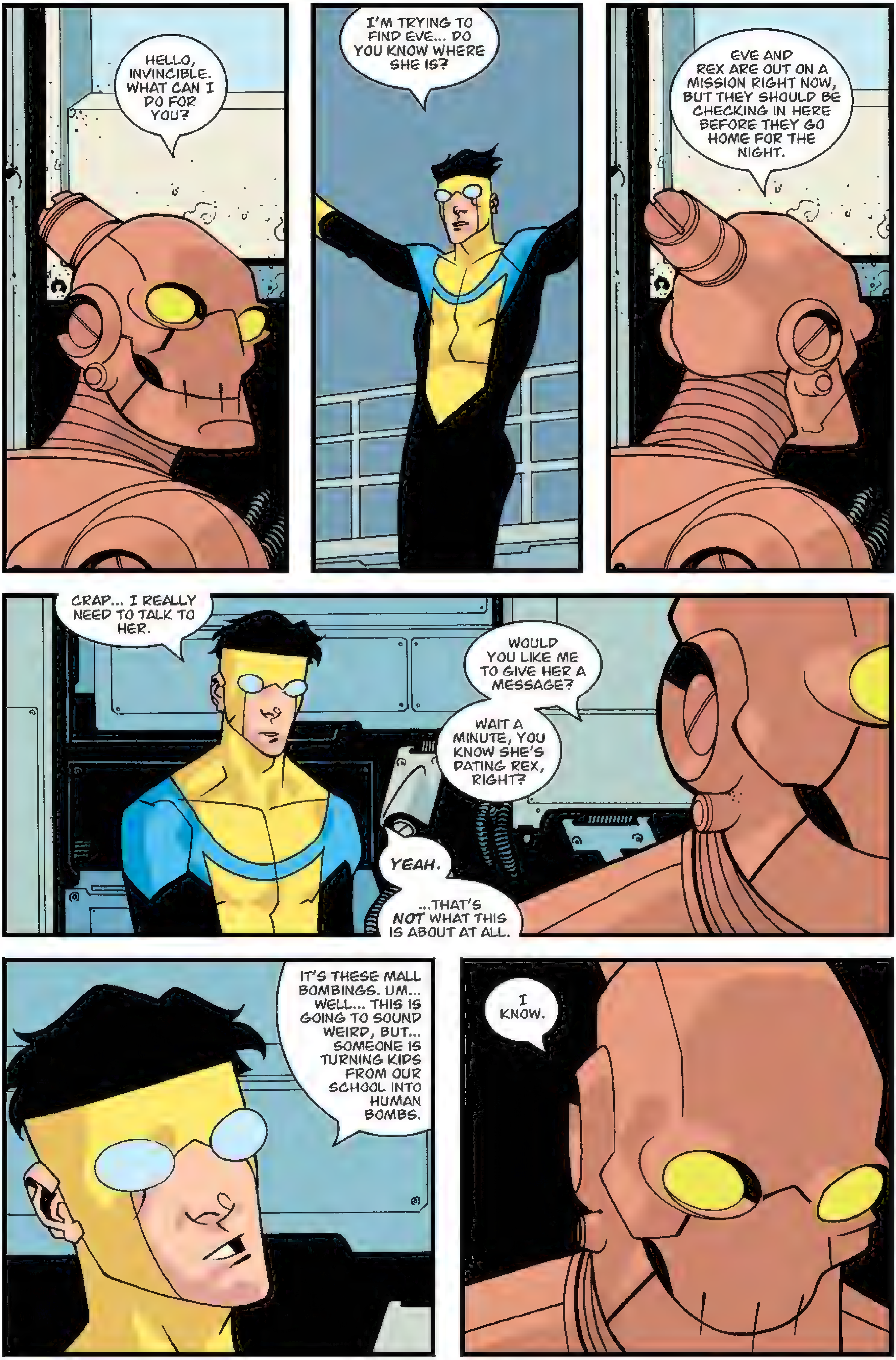

THAT WAS ONE OF THE MISSING STUDENTS FROM MY SCHOOL!
BUT THAT WOULD MEAN--
HUH?
DAD!!
DANG IT.

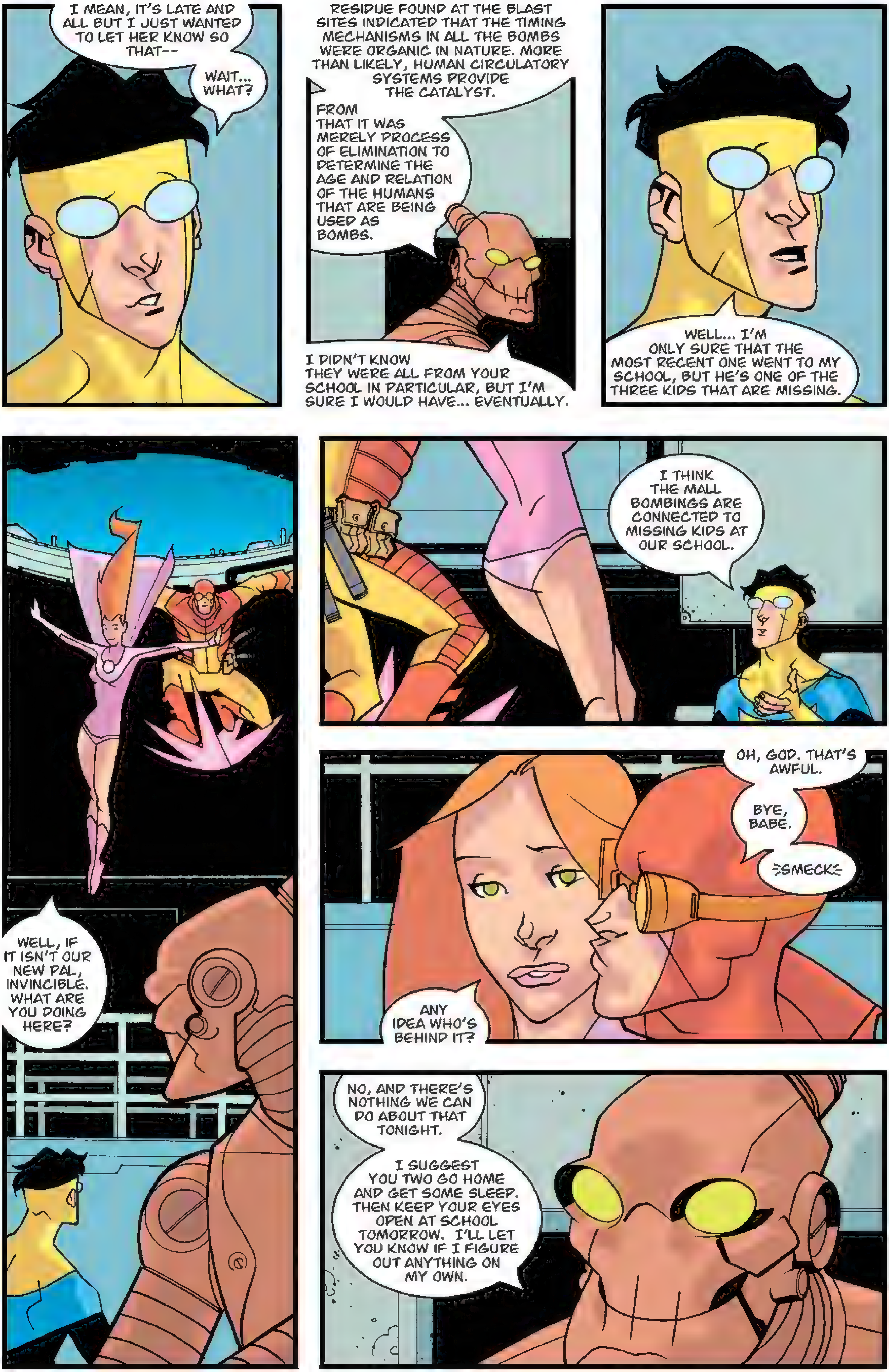

I GUESS I CAN LOOK FORWARD TO YOU **BOTH** BEING LATE FROM NOW ON...
ACTUALLY... DAD WAS SUCKED INTO A PORTAL ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, I DON'T THINK HE'LL BE HOME TONIGHT.
IT WAS SOME ALIENS WE FOUGHT EARLIER TODAY... I'M SURE HE'S FINE.
...
WELL, THAT'S MORE PORK CHOPS FOR US.

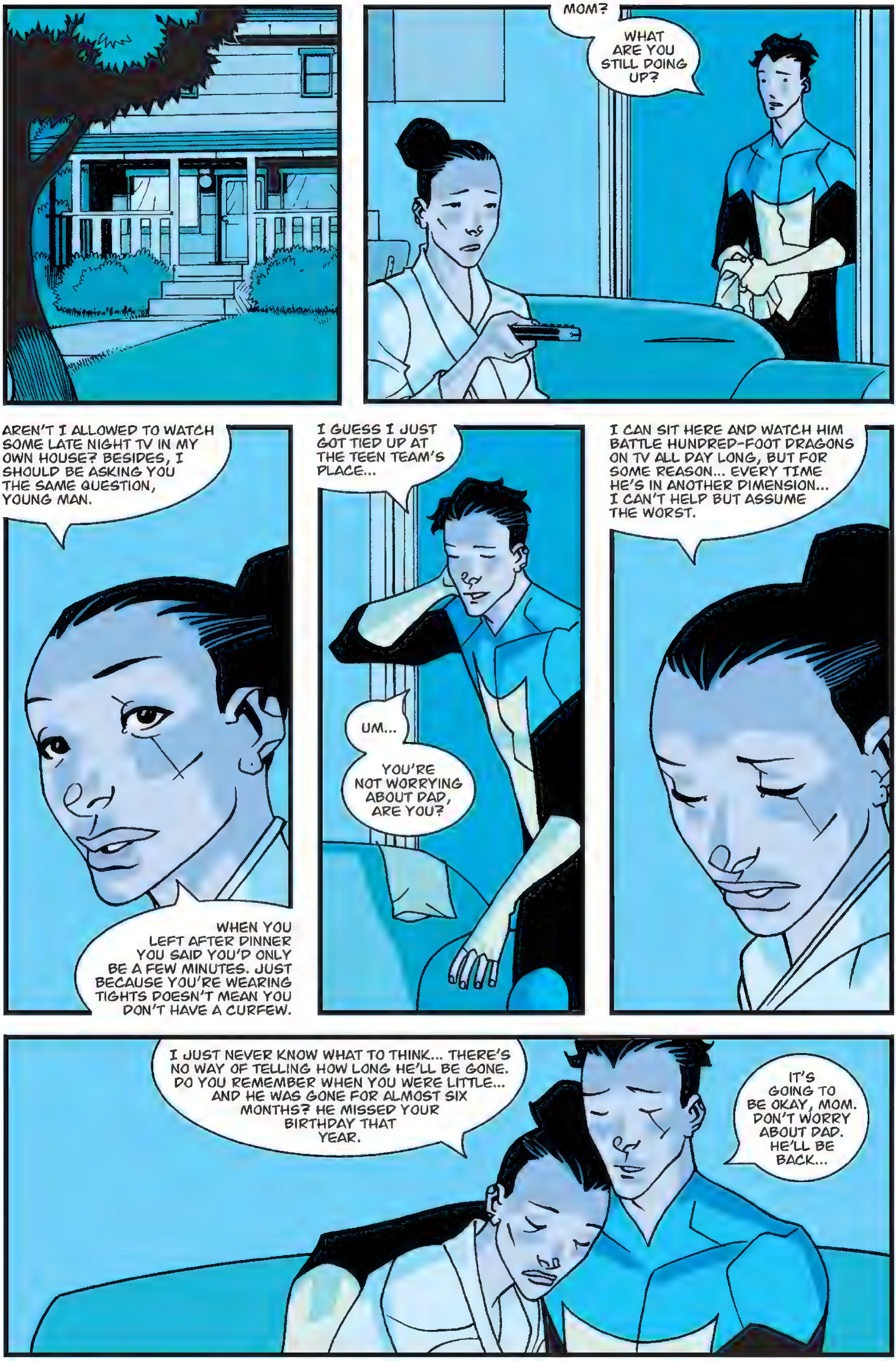
ISSUE FOUR

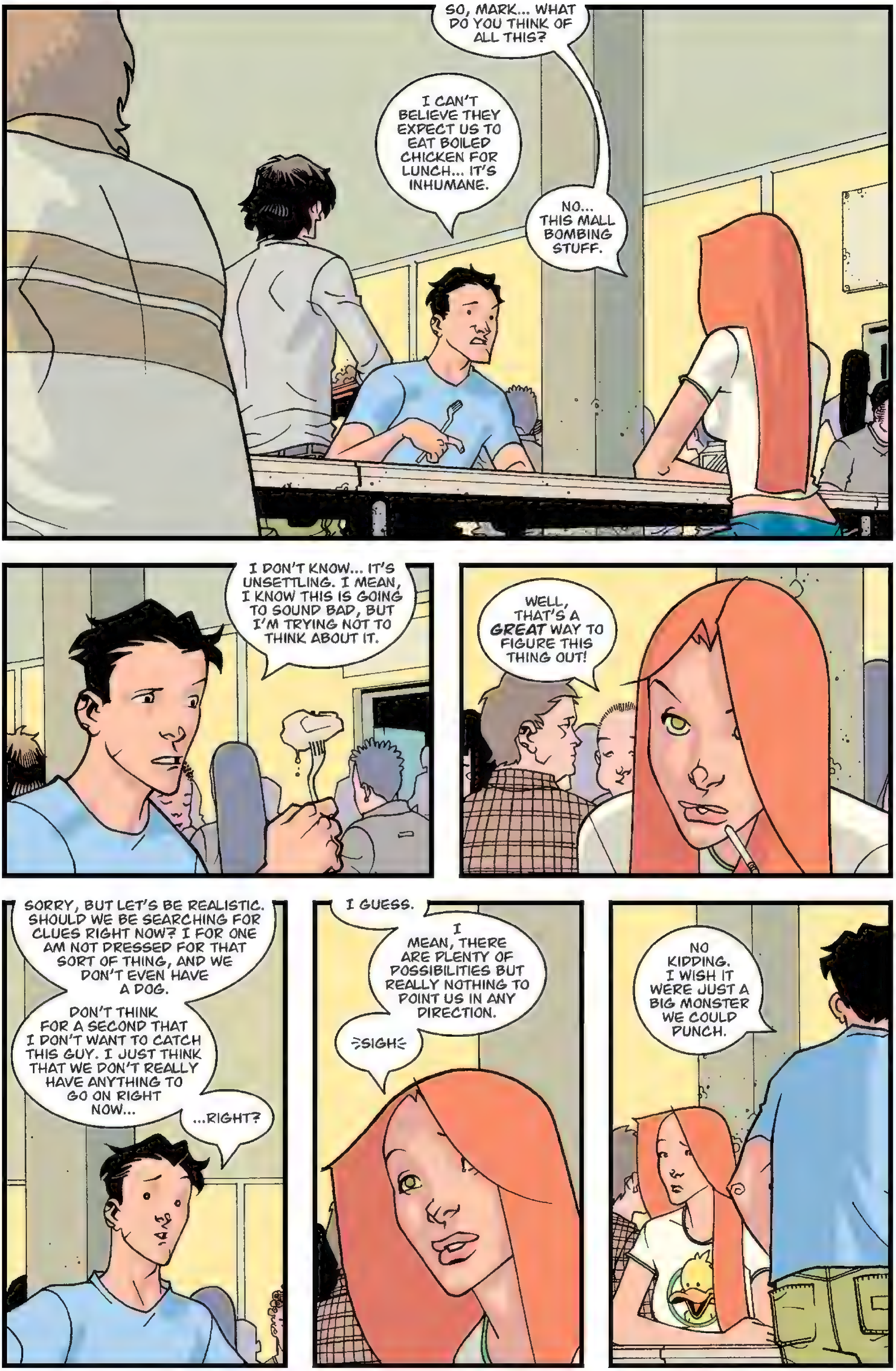


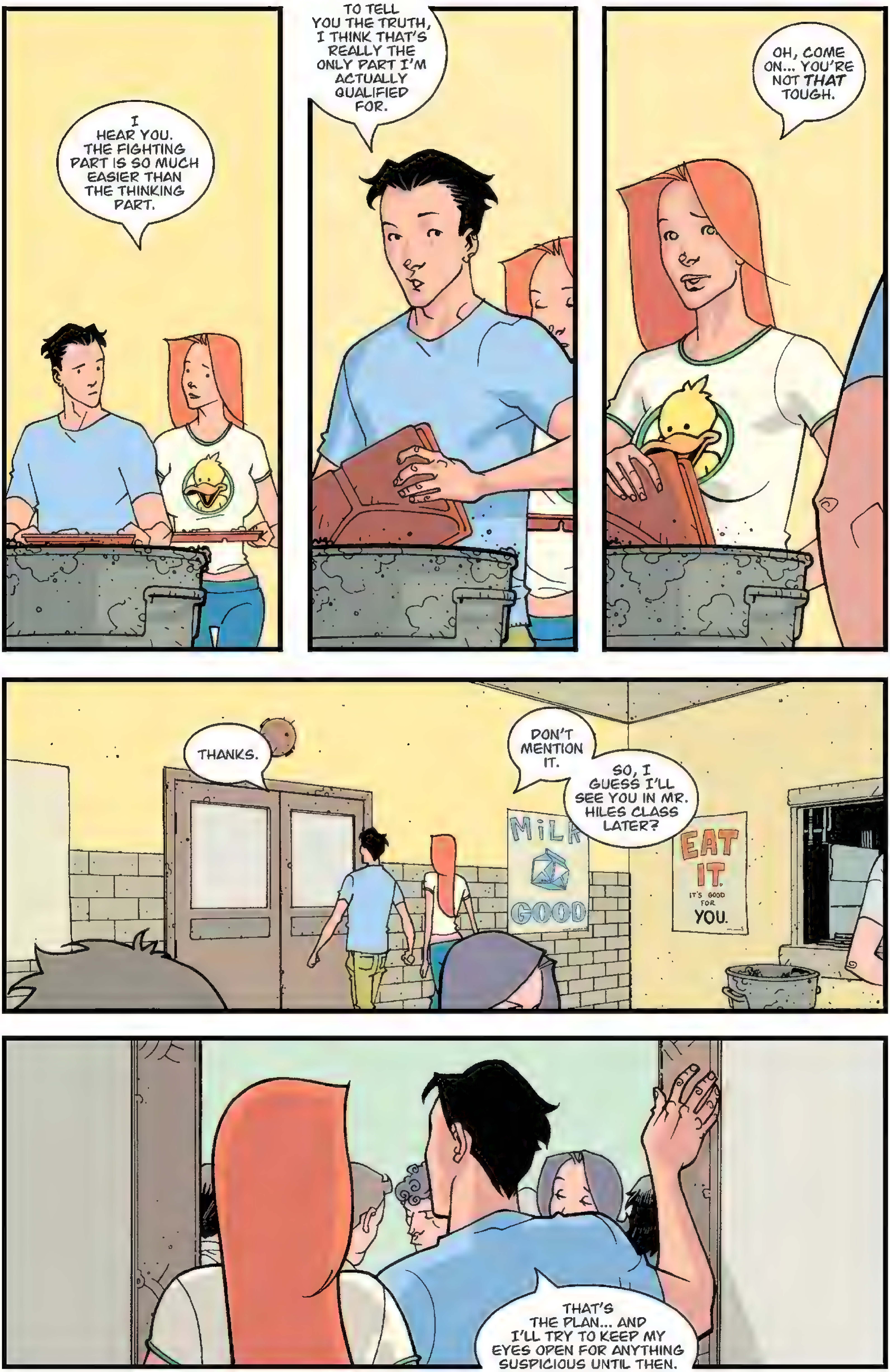
REMARKABLE.
THE GAME BOX PROCESSOR IS SO ADVANCED IT COULD OPERATE THIS MACHINE FOR YEARS WITH A BURNOUT RATE OF LESS THAN TEN PERCENT!
HAD WE NOT STOPPED THE MAULER TWINS BEFORE THEY ACTIVATED THEM, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN NEARLY UNSTOPPABLE.
FASCINATING. SIMPLY FASCINATING.
ROBOT?
ON

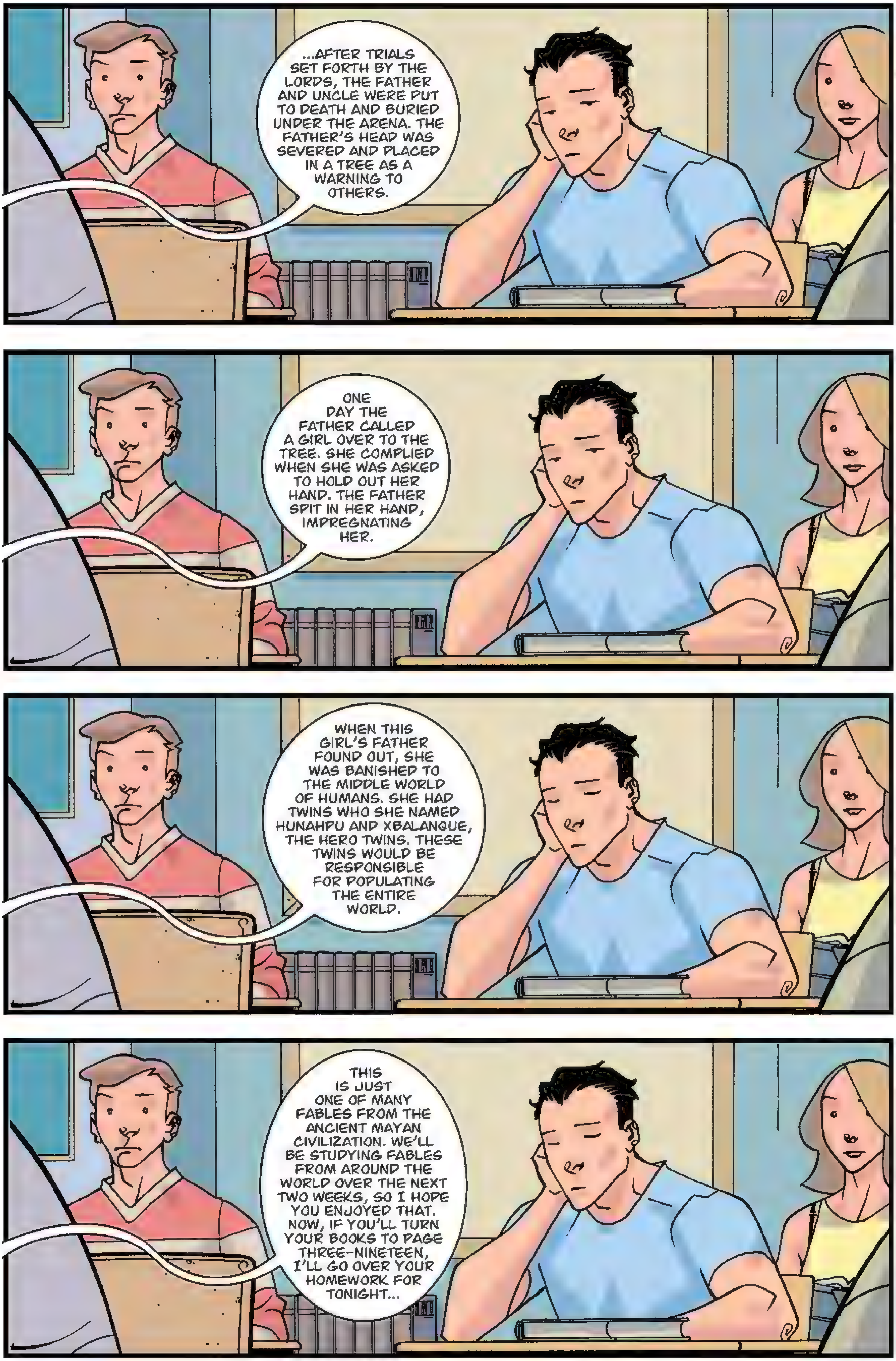

HELLO, INVINCIBLE. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I'M TRYING TO FIND EVE... DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS?
EVE AND REX ARE OUT ON A MISSION RIGHT NOW, BUT THEY SHOULD BE CHECKING IN HERE BEFORE THEY GO HOME FOR THE NIGHT.
CRAP... I REALLY NEED TO TALK TO HER.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GIVE HER A MESSAGE?
WAIT A MINUTE, YOU KNOW SHE'S DATING REX, RIGHT?
YEAH.
...THAT'S *NOT* WHAT THIS IS ABOUT AT ALL.
IT'S THESE MALL BOMBINGS. UM... WELL... THIS IS GOING TO SOUND WEIRD, BUT... SOMEONE IS TURNING KIDS FROM OUR SCHOOL INTO HUMAN BOMBS.
I KNOW.

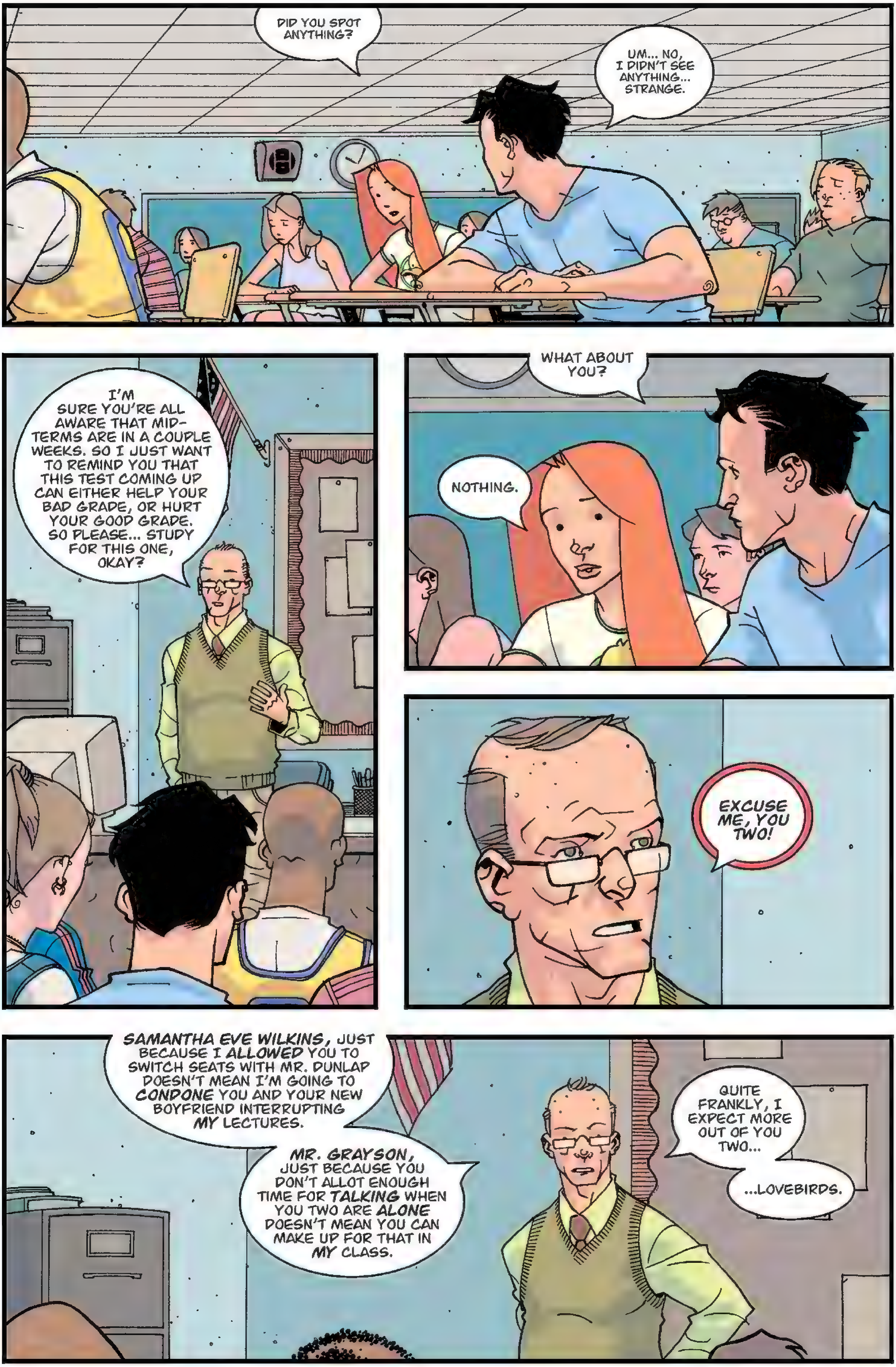

I MEAN, IT'S LATE AND ALL BUT I JUST WANTED TO LET HER KNOW SO THAT--
WAIT... WHAT?
RESIDUE FOUND AT THE BLAST SITES INDICATED THAT THE TIMING MECHANISMS IN ALL THE BOMBS WERE ORGANIC IN NATURE. MORE THAN LIKELY, HUMAN CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE CATALYST.
FROM THAT IT WAS MERELY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION TO DETERMINE THE AGE AND RELATION OF THE HUMANS THAT ARE BEING USED AS BOMBS.
I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE ALL FROM YOUR SCHOOL IN PARTICULAR, BUT I'M SURE I WOULD HAVE... EVENTUALLY.
WELL... I'M ONLY SURE THAT THE MOST RECENT ONE WENT TO MY SCHOOL, BUT HE'S ONE OF THE THREE KIDS THAT ARE MISSING.
WELL, IF IT ISN'T OUR NEW PAL, INVINCIBLE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I THINK THE MALL BOMBINGS ARE CONNECTED TO MISSING KIDS AT OUR SCHOOL.
OH, GOD. THAT'S AWFUL.
BYE, BABE.
SMECK
ANY IDEA WHO'S BEHIND IT?
NO, AND THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT TONIGHT.
I SUGGEST YOU TWO GO HOME AND GET SOME SLEEP. THEN KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AT SCHOOL TOMORROW. I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF I FIGURE OUT ANYTHING ON MY OWN.

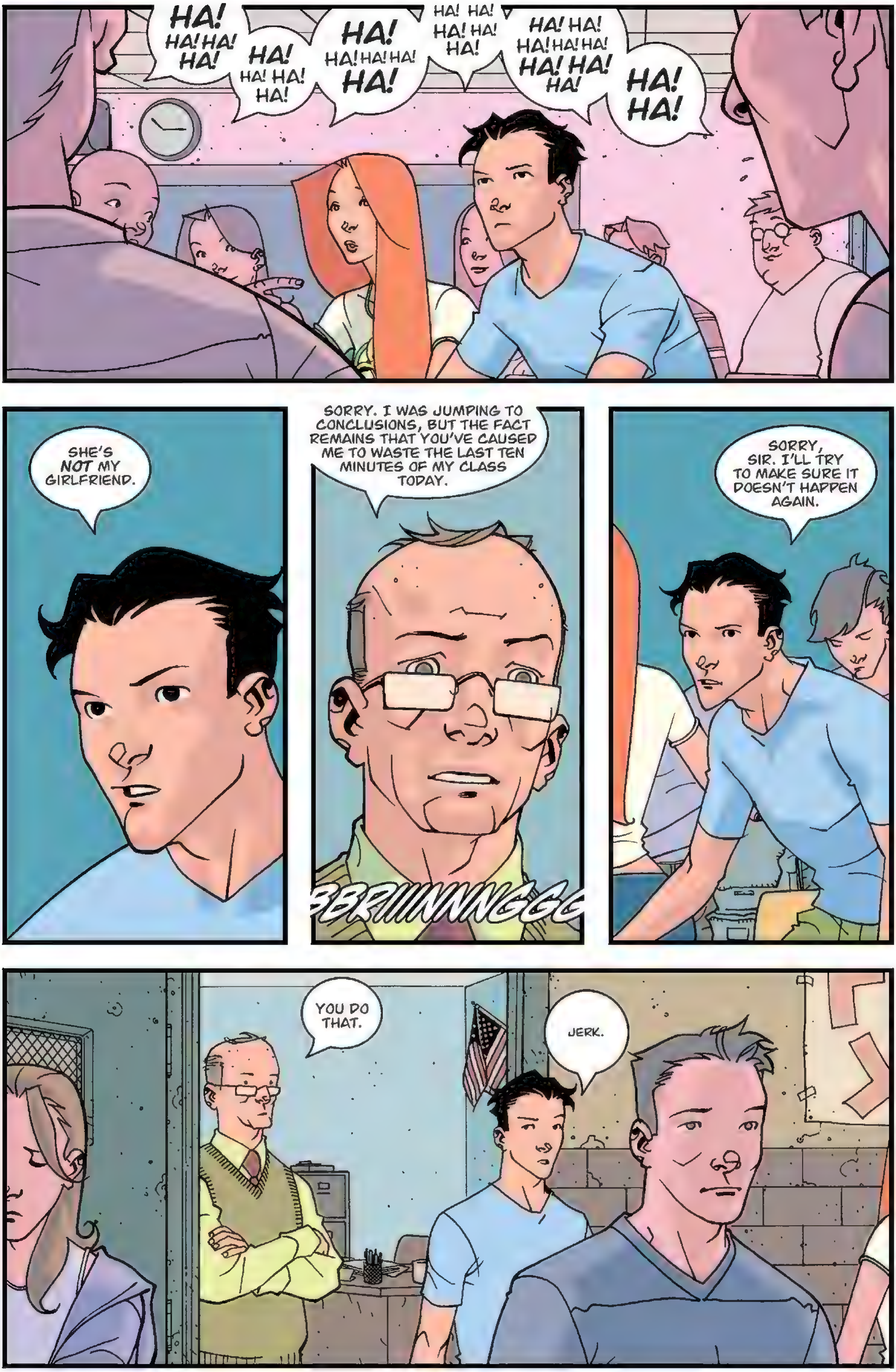

MOM?
WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING UP?
AREN'T I ALLOWED TO WATCH SOME LATE NIGHT TV IN MY OWN HOUSE? BESIDES, I SHOULD BE ASKING YOU THE SAME QUESTION, YOUNG MAN.
WHEN YOU LEFT AFTER DINNER YOU SAID YOU'D ONLY BE A FEW MINUTES. JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE WEARING TIGHTS DOESN'T MEAN YOU DON'T HAVE A CURFEW.
I GUESS I JUST GOT TIED UP AT THE TEEN TEAM'S PLACE...
UM...
YOU'RE NOT WORRYING ABOUT DAD, ARE YOU?
I CAN SIT HERE AND WATCH HIM BATTLE HUNDRED-FOOT DRAGONS ON TV ALL DAY LONG, BUT FOR SOME REASON... EVERY TIME HE'S IN ANOTHER DIMENSION... I CAN'T HELP BUT ASSUME THE WORST.
I JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT TO THINK... THERE'S NO WAY OF TELLING HOW LONG HE'LL BE GONE. DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE... AND HE WAS GONE FOR ALMOST SIX MONTHS? HE MISSED YOUR BIRTHDAY THAT YEAR.
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, MOM. DON'T WORRY ABOUT DAD. HE'LL BE BACK...

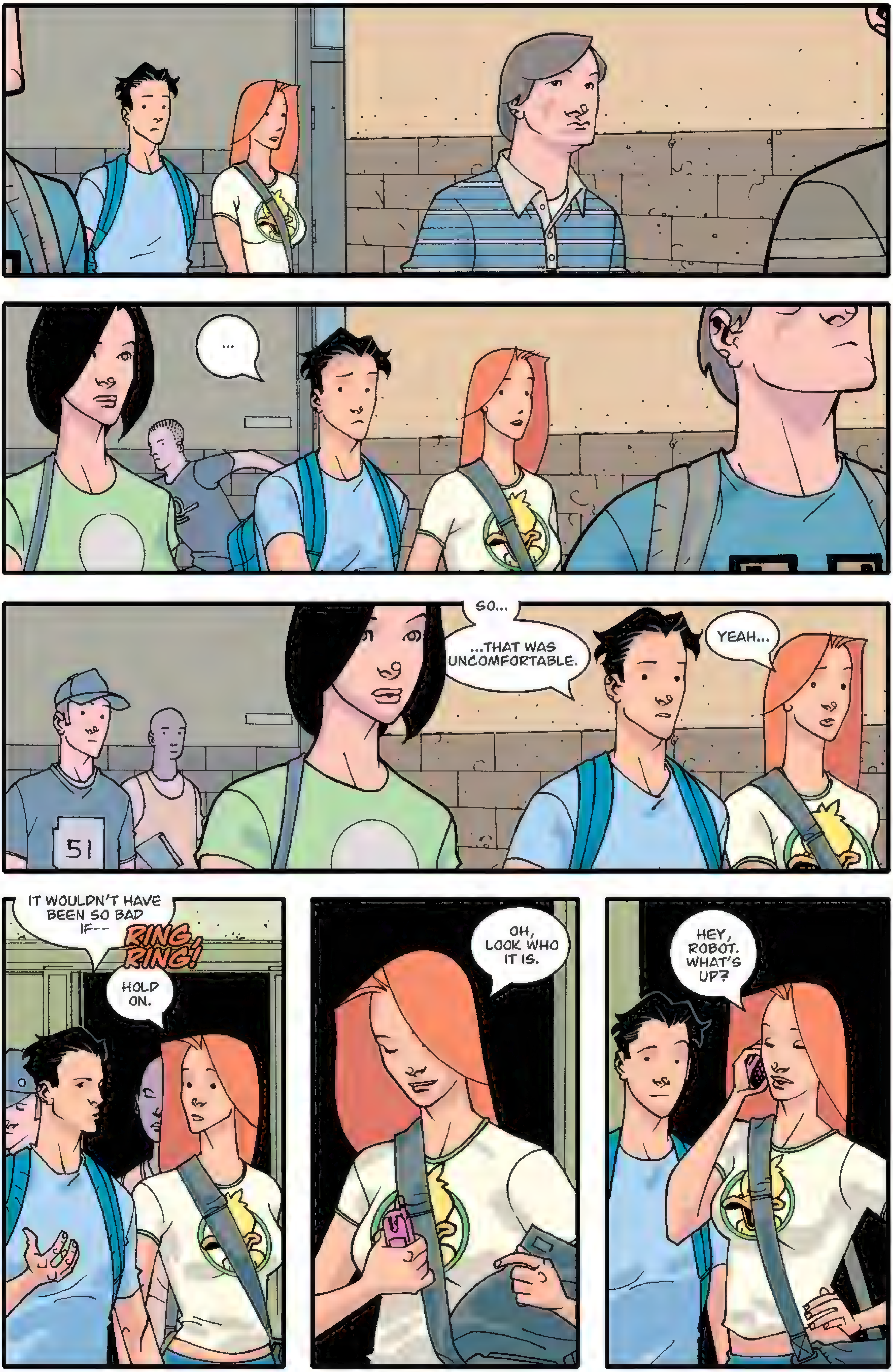

SO, MARK... WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ALL THIS?
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY EXPECT US TO EAT BOILED CHICKEN FOR LUNCH... IT'S INHUMANE.
NO... THIS MALL BOMBING STUFF.
I DON'T KNOW... IT'S UNSETTLING. I MEAN, I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO SOUND BAD, BUT I'M TRYING NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
WELL, THAT'S A **GREAT** WAY TO FIGURE THIS THING OUT!
SORRY, BUT LET'S BE REALISTIC. SHOULD WE BE SEARCHING FOR CLUES RIGHT NOW? I FOR ONE AM NOT DRESSED FOR THAT SORT OF THING, AND WE DON'T EVEN HAVE A DOG.
DON'T THINK FOR A SECOND THAT I DON'T WANT TO CATCH THIS GUY. I JUST THINK THAT WE DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO GO ON RIGHT NOW...
...RIGHT?
I GUESS.
I MEAN, THERE ARE PLENTY OF POSSIBILITIES BUT REALLY NOTHING TO POINT US IN ANY DIRECTION.
≠SIGH≠
NO KIDDING. I WISH IT WERE JUST A BIG MONSTER WE COULD PUNCH.

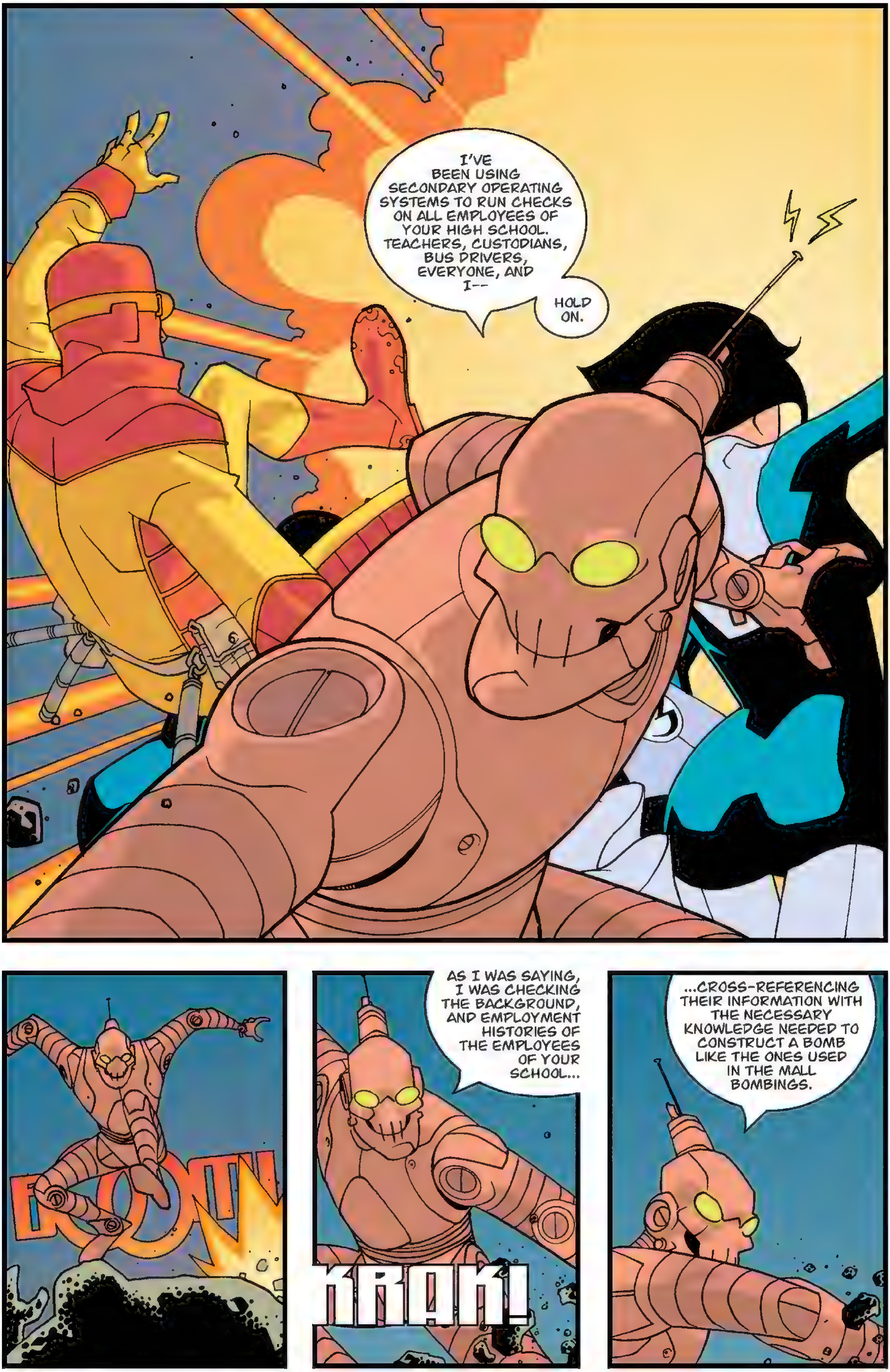

I HEAR YOU. THE FIGHTING PART IS SO MUCH EASIER THAN THE THINKING PART.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I THINK THAT'S REALLY THE ONLY PART I'M ACTUALLY QUALIFIED FOR.
OH, COME ON... YOU'RE NOT *THAT* TOUGH.
THANKS.
DON'T MENTION IT.
SO, I GUESS I'LL SEE YOU IN MR. HILES CLASS LATER?
MILK GOOD
EAT IT. IT'S GOOD FOR YOU.
THAT'S THE PLAN... AND I'LL TRY TO KEEP MY EYES OPEN FOR ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS UNTIL THEN.

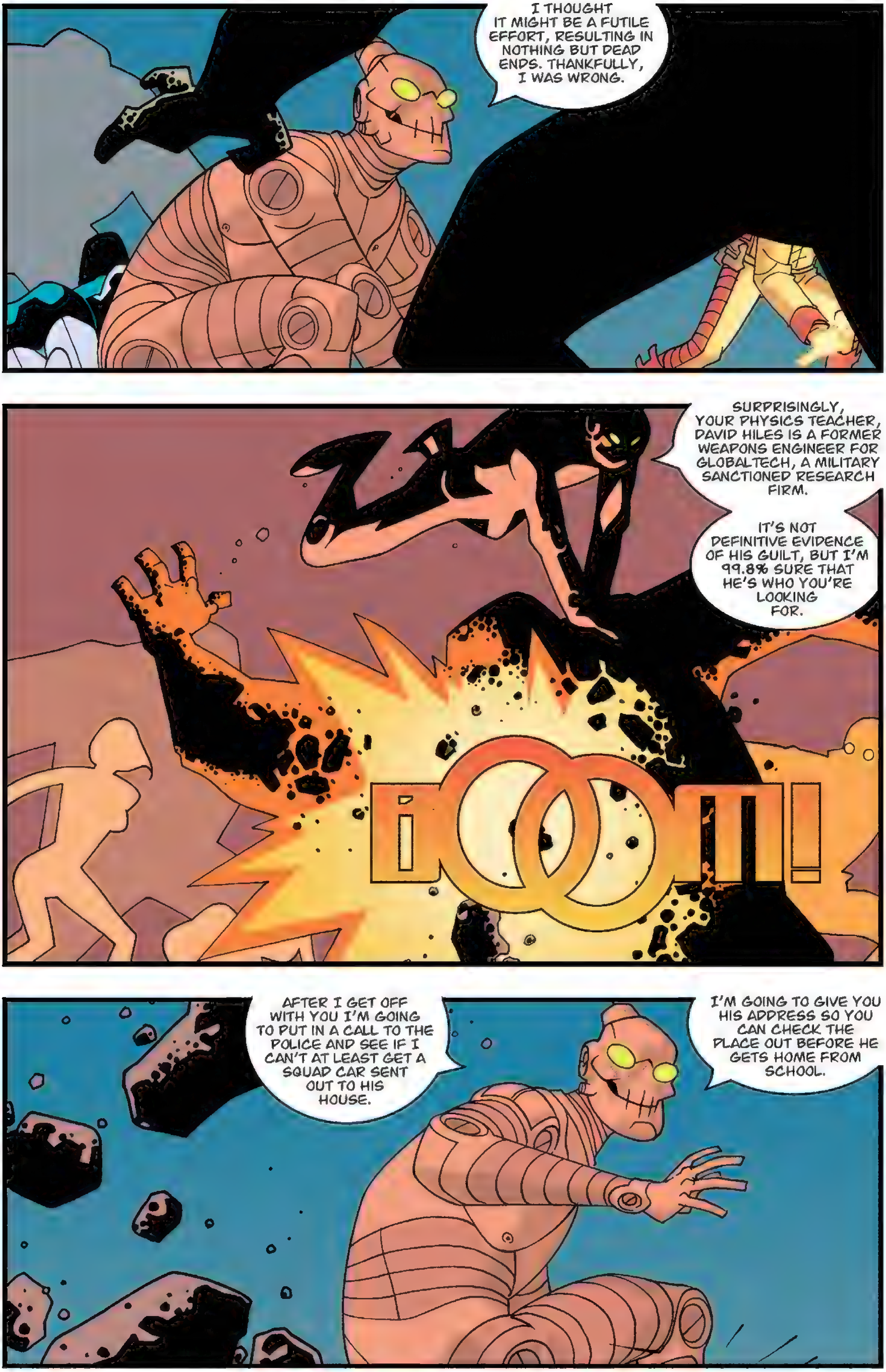

...AFTER TRIALS SET FORTH BY THE LORDS, THE FATHER AND UNCLE WERE PUT TO DEATH AND BURIED UNDER THE ARENA. THE FATHER'S HEAD WAS SEVERED AND PLACED IN A TREE AS A WARNING TO OTHERS.
ONE DAY THE FATHER CALLED A GIRL OVER TO THE TREE. SHE COMPLIED WHEN SHE WAS ASKED TO HOLD OUT HER HAND. THE FATHER SPIT IN HER HAND, IMPREGNATING HER.
WHEN THIS GIRL'S FATHER FOUND OUT, SHE WAS BANISHED TO THE MIDDLE WORLD OF HUMANS. SHE HAD TWINS WHO SHE NAMED HUNAHPU AND XBALANQUE, THE HERO TWINS. THESE TWINS WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR POPULATING THE ENTIRE WORLD.
THIS IS JUST ONE OF MANY FABLES FROM THE ANCIENT MAYAN CIVILIZATION. WE'LL BE STUDYING FABLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OVER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, SO I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THAT. NOW, IF YOU'LL TURN YOUR BOOKS TO PAGE THREE-NINETEEN, I'LL GO OVER YOUR HOMEWORK FOR TONIGHT...

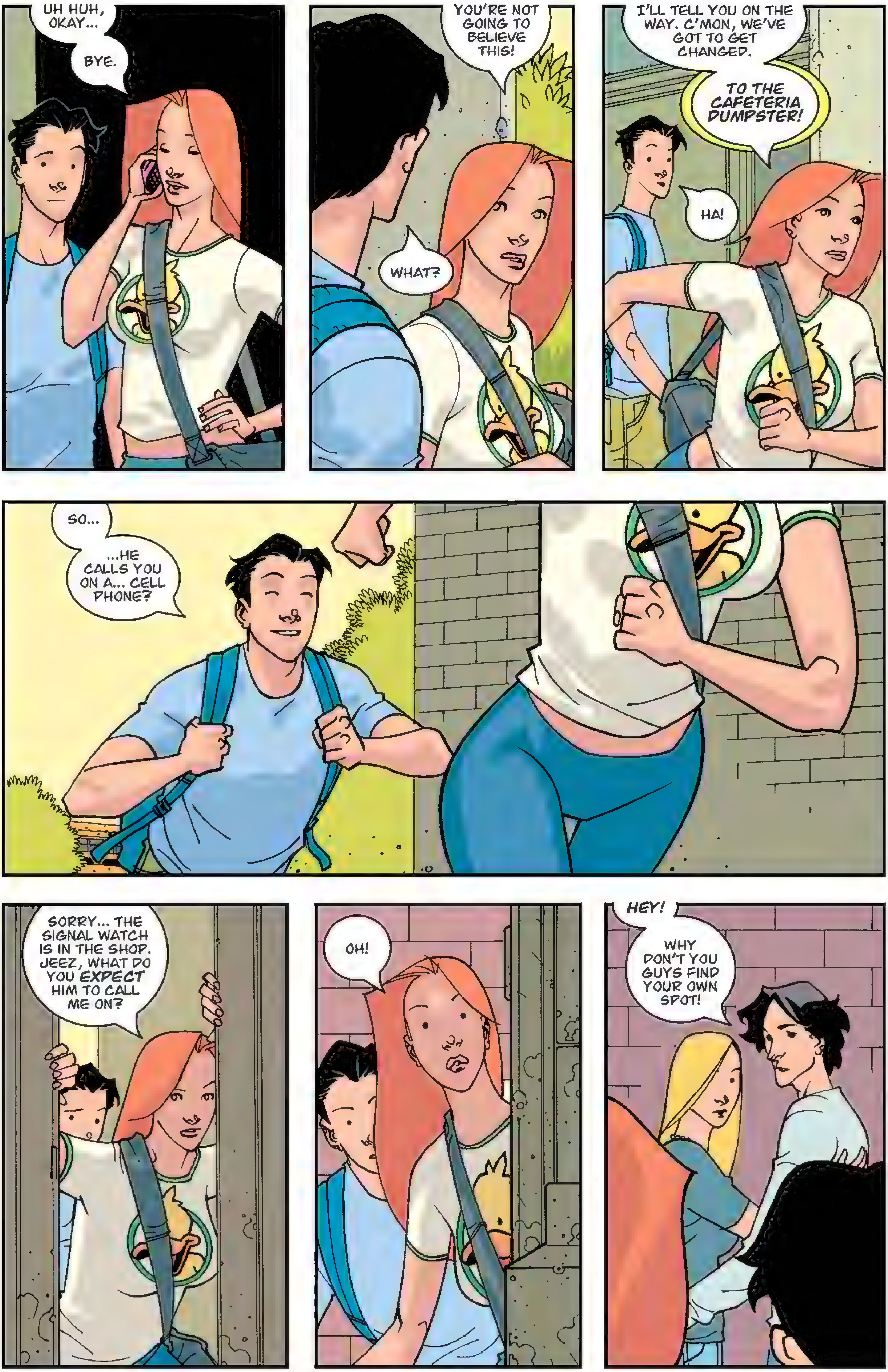

DID YOU SPOT ANYTHING?
UM... NO, I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING... STRANGE.
I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL AWARE THAT MID-TERMS ARE IN A COUPLE WEEKS. SO I JUST WANT TO REMIND YOU THAT THIS TEST COMING UP CAN EITHER HELP YOUR BAD GRADE, OR HURT YOUR GOOD GRADE. SO PLEASE... STUDY FOR THIS ONE, OKAY?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
NOTHING.
EXCUSE ME, YOU TWO!
SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS, JUST BECAUSE I ALLOWED YOU TO SWITCH SEATS WITH MR. DUNLAP DOESN'T MEAN I'M GOING TO CONDONE YOU AND YOUR NEW BOYFRIEND INTERRUPTING MY LECTURES.
MR. GRAYSON, JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T ALLOT ENOUGH TIME FOR TALKING WHEN YOU TWO ARE ALONE DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN MAKE UP FOR THAT IN MY CLASS.
QUITE FRANKLY, I EXPECT MORE OUT OF YOU TWO...
...LOVEBIRDS.

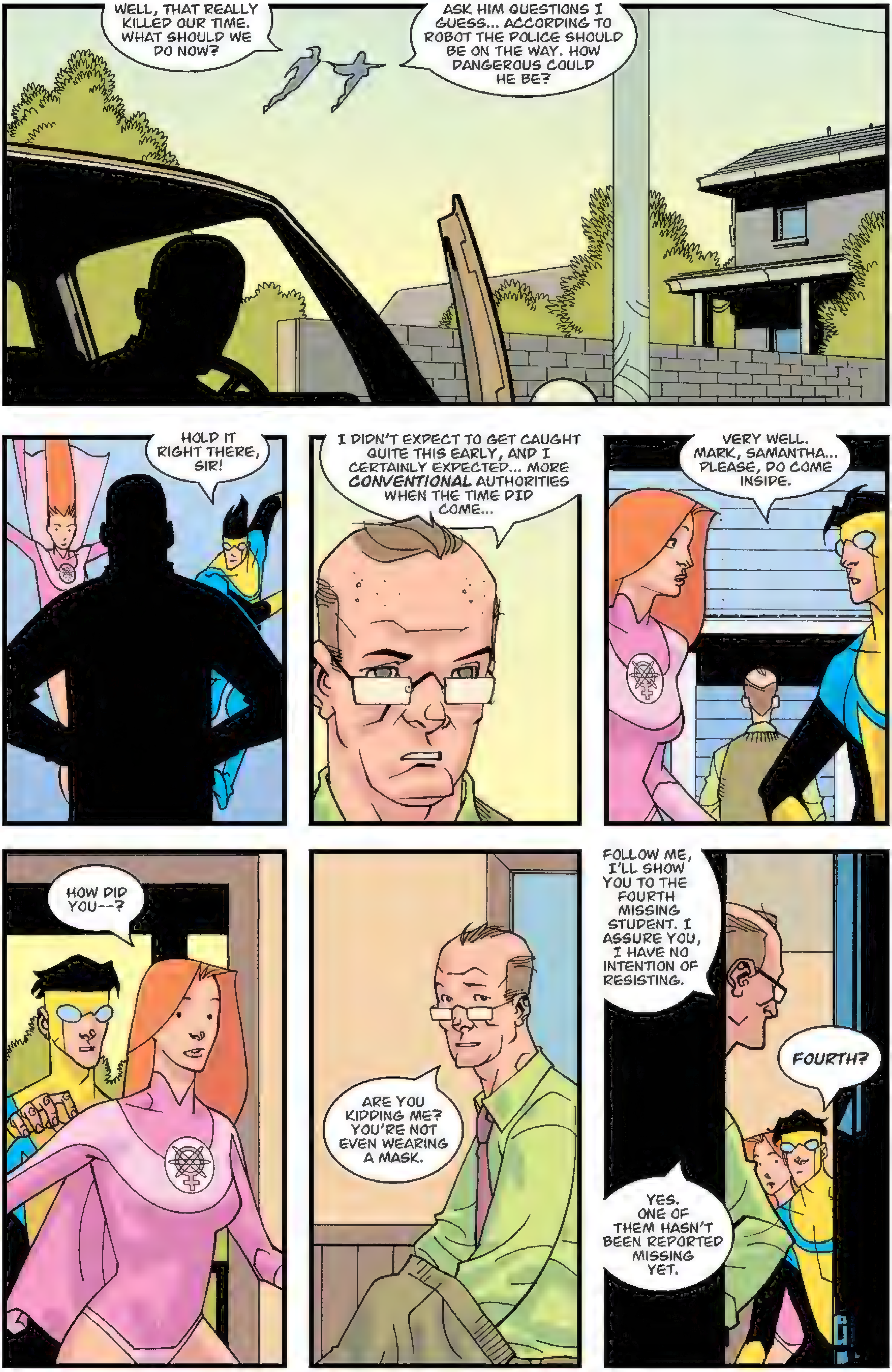

HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA!
SHE'S *NOT* MY GIRLFRIEND.
SORRY. I WAS JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT YOU'VE CAUSED ME TO WASTE THE LAST TEN MINUTES OF MY CLASS TODAY.
BBRIIINNNGGG
SORRY, SIR. I'LL TRY TO MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
YOU DO THAT.
JERK.

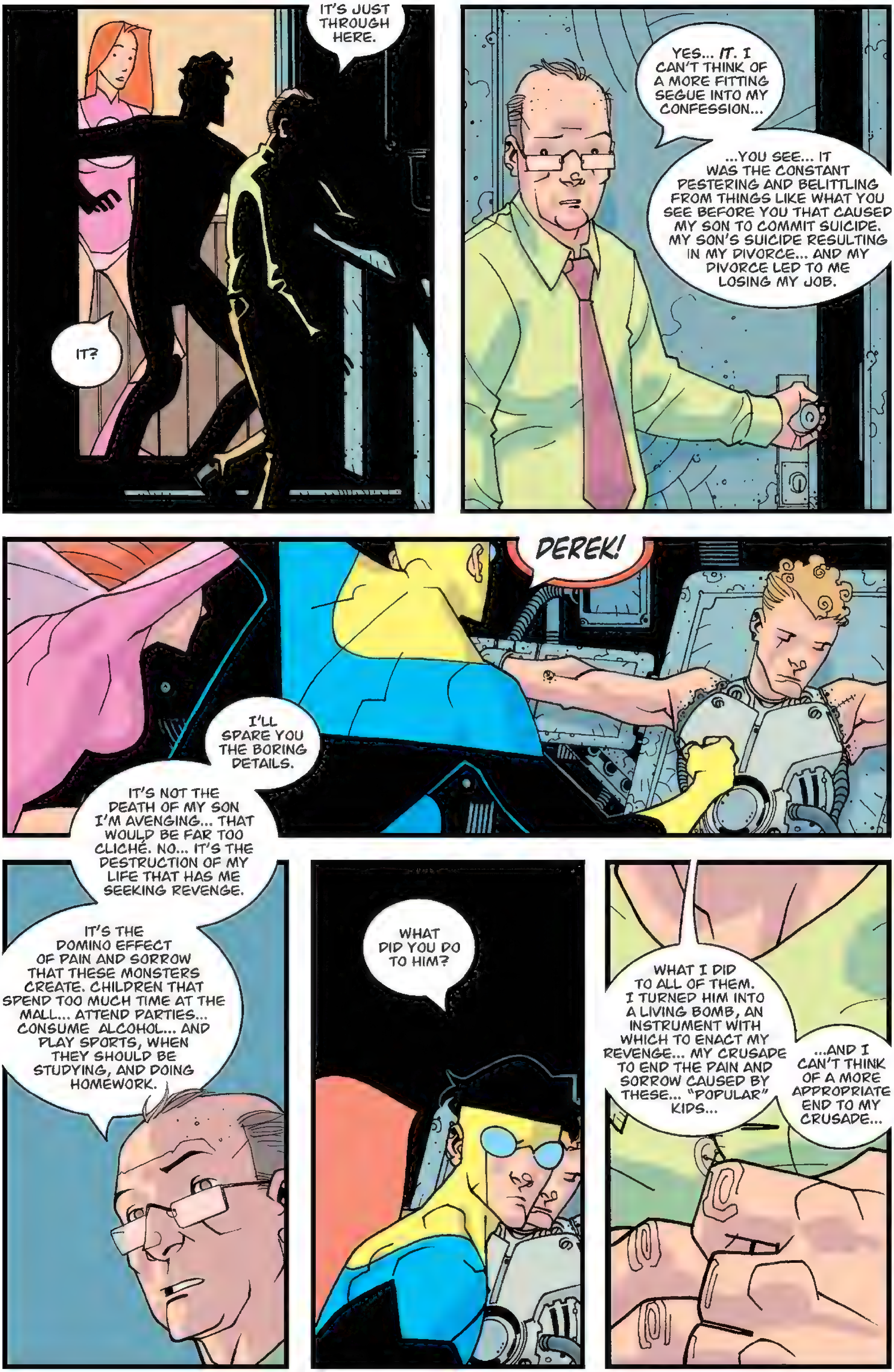

...
SO...
...THAT WAS UNCOMFORTABLE.
YEAH...
51
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO BAD IF--
RING RING!
HOLD ON.
OH, LOOK WHO IT IS.
HEY, ROBOT. WHAT'S UP?

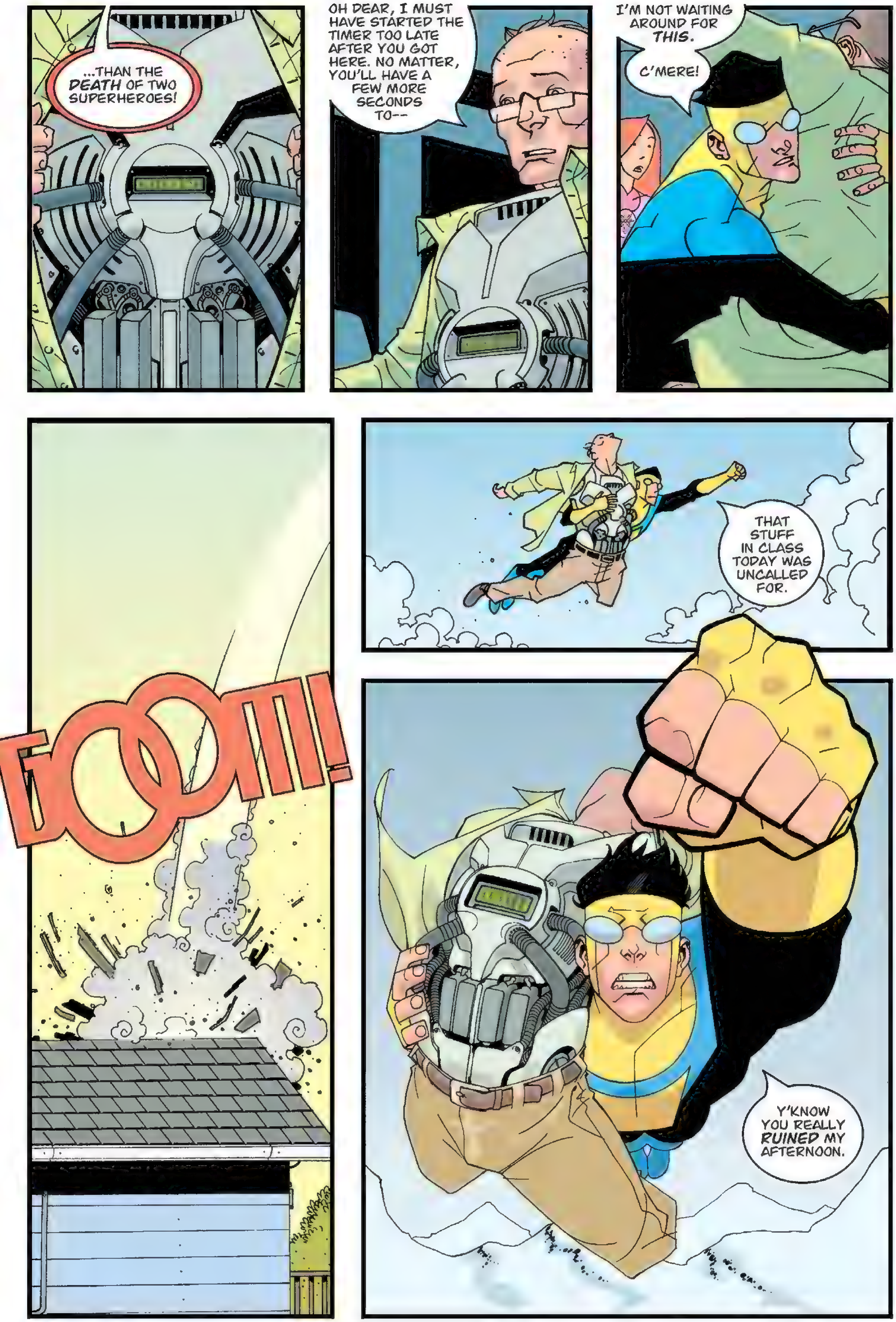

I'VE BEEN USING SECONDARY OPERATING SYSTEMS TO RUN CHECKS ON ALL EMPLOYEES OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL. TEACHERS, CUSTODIANS, BUS DRIVERS, EVERYONE, AND I--
HOLD ON.
AS I WAS SAYING, I WAS CHECKING THE BACKGROUND, AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES OF THE EMPLOYEES OF YOUR SCHOOL...
KRAK!
...CROSS-REFERENCING THEIR INFORMATION WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO CONSTRUCT A BOMB LIKE THE ONES USED IN THE MALL BOMBINGS.

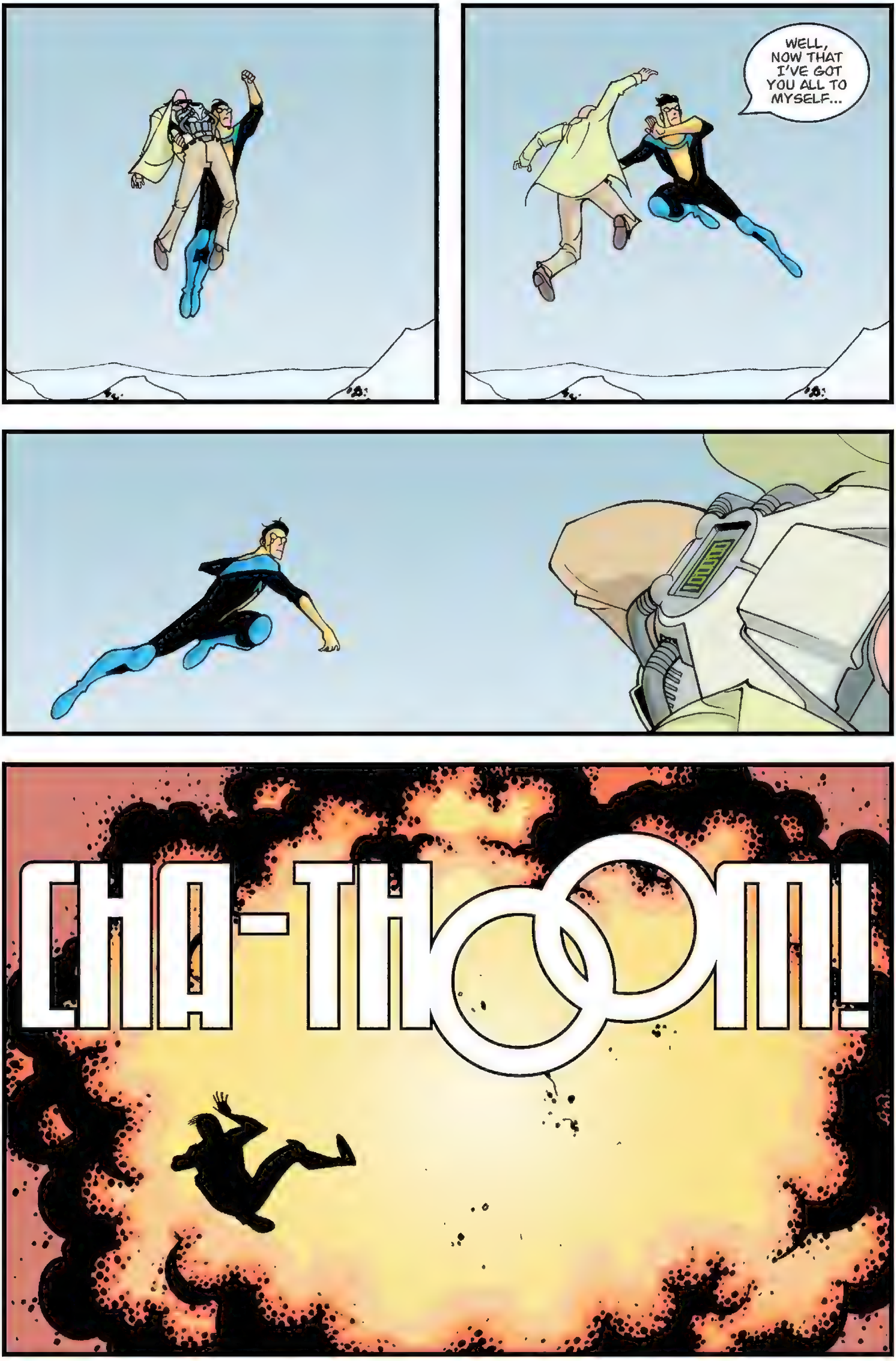

I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A FUTILE EFFORT, RESULTING IN NOTHING BUT DEAD ENDS. THANKFULLY, I WAS WRONG.
SURPRISINGLY, YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, DAVID HILES IS A FORMER WEAPONS ENGINEER FOR GLOBALTECH, A MILITARY SANCTIONED RESEARCH FIRM.
IT'S NOT DEFINITIVE EVIDENCE OF HIS GUILT, BUT I'M 99.8% SURE THAT HE'S WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
BOOM!
AFTER I GET OFF WITH YOU I'M GOING TO PUT IN A CALL TO THE POLICE AND SEE IF I CAN'T AT LEAST GET A SQUAD CAR SENT OUT TO HIS HOUSE.
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU HIS ADDRESS SO YOU CAN CHECK THE PLACE OUT BEFORE HE GETS HOME FROM SCHOOL.


UH HUH, OKAY...
BYE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS!
WHAT?
I'LL TELL YOU ON THE WAY. C'MON, WE'VE GOT TO GET CHANGED.
TO THE CAFETERIA DUMPSTER!
HA!
SO...
...HE CALLS YOU ON A... CELL PHONE?
SORRY... THE SIGNAL WATCH IS IN THE SHOP. JEEZ, WHAT DO YOU *EXPECT* HIM TO CALL ME ON?
OH!
HEY!
WHY DON'T YOU GUYS FIND YOUR OWN SPOT!

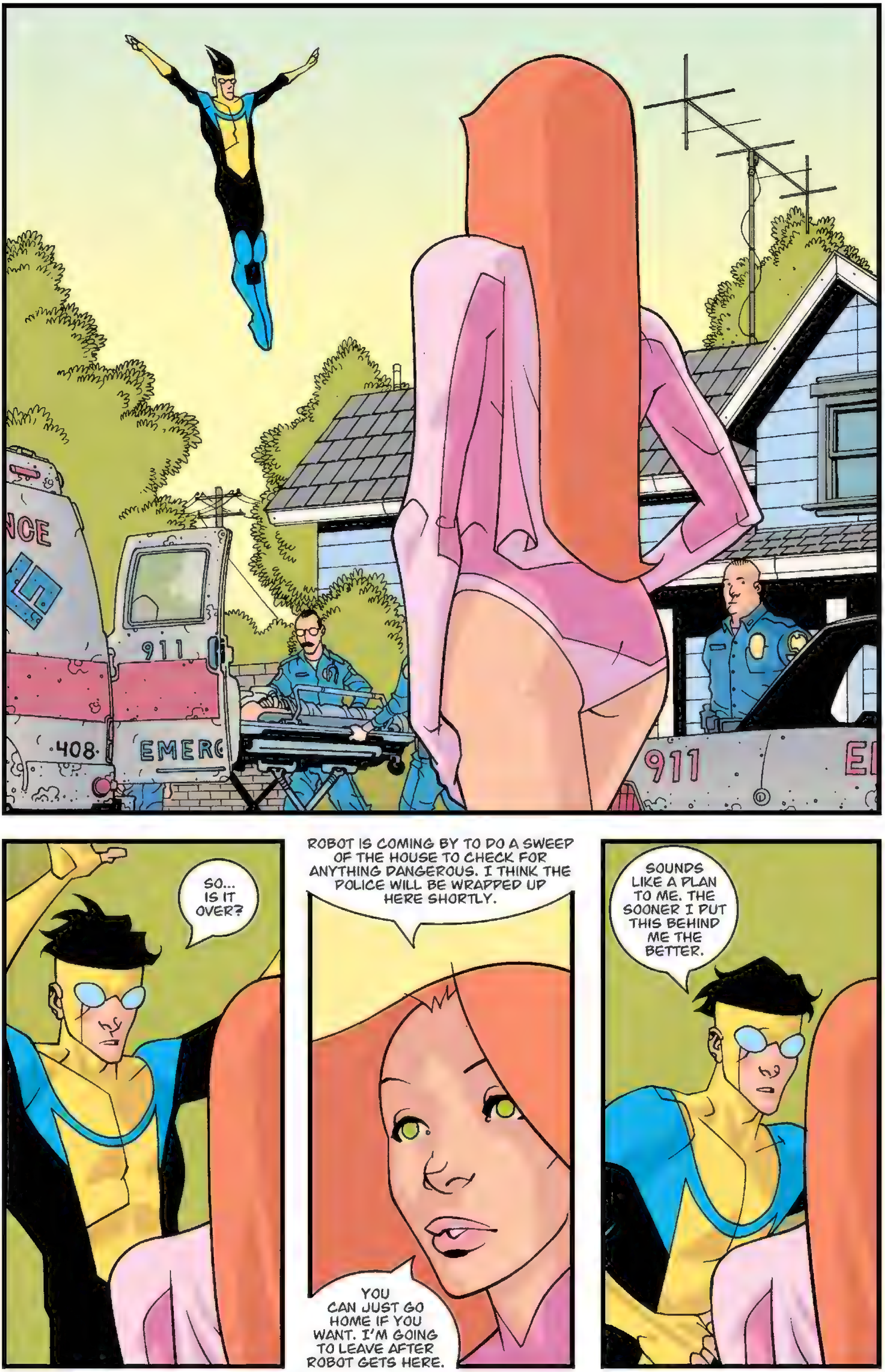

WELL, THAT REALLY KILLED OUR TIME. WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?
ASK HIM QUESTIONS I GUESS... ACCORDING TO ROBOT THE POLICE SHOULD BE ON THE WAY. HOW DANGEROUS COULD HE BE?
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, SIR!
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET CAUGHT QUITE THIS EARLY, AND I CERTAINLY EXPECTED... MORE *CONVENTIONAL* AUTHORITIES WHEN THE TIME DID COME...
VERY WELL. MARK, SAMANTHA... PLEASE, DO COME INSIDE.
HOW DID YOU--?
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? YOU'RE NOT EVEN WEARING A MASK.
FOLLOW ME, I'LL SHOW YOU TO THE FOURTH MISSING STUDENT. I ASSURE YOU, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF RESISTING.
FOURTH?
YES. ONE OF THEM HASN'T BEEN REPORTED MISSING YET.

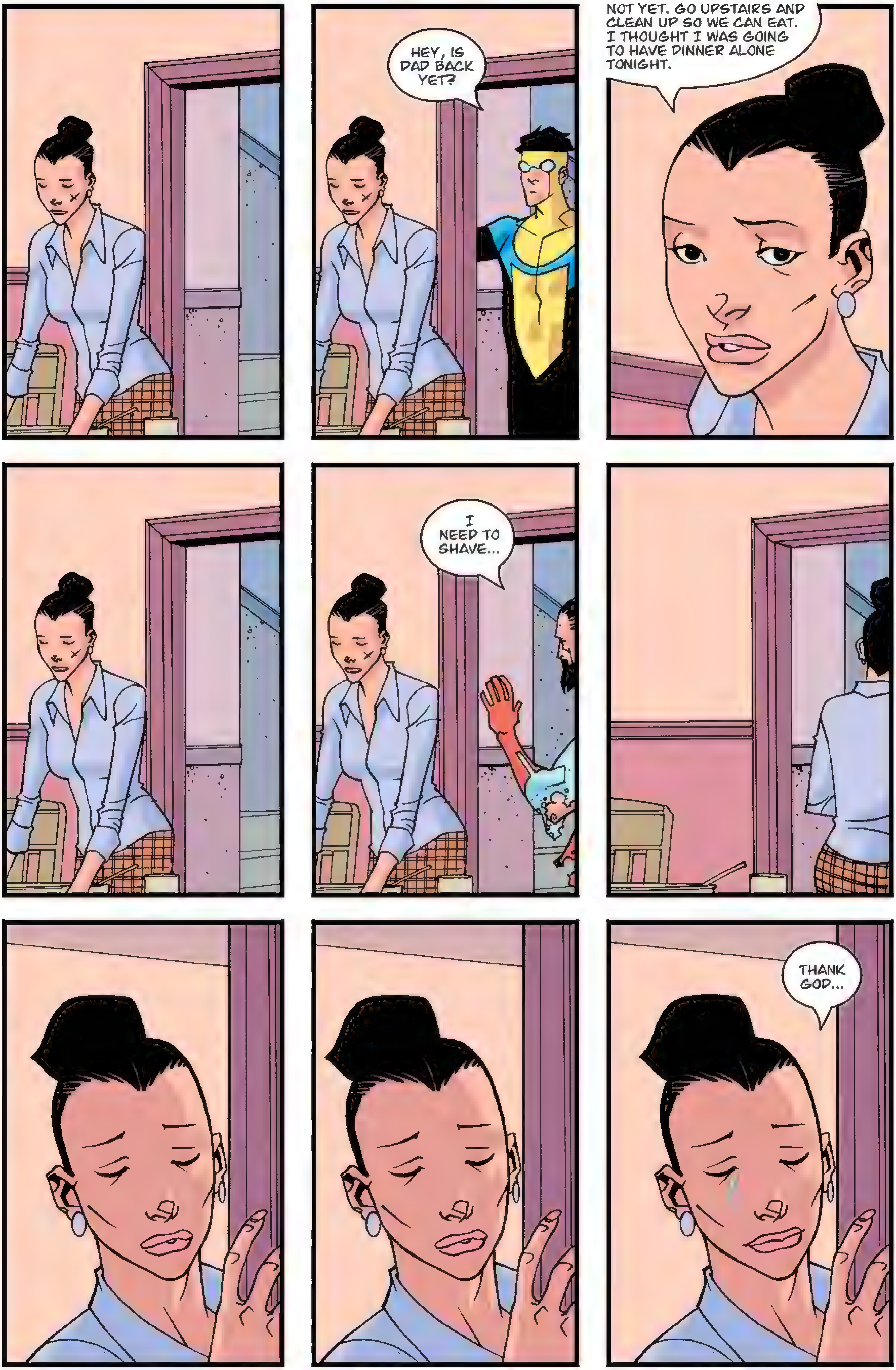

IT'S JUST THROUGH HERE.
IT?
YES... *IT*. I CAN'T THINK OF A MORE FITTING SEGUE INTO MY CONFESSION...
...YOU SEE... IT WAS THE CONSTANT PESTERING AND BELITTLING FROM THINGS LIKE WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU THAT CAUSED MY SON TO COMMIT SUICIDE. MY SON'S SUICIDE RESULTING IN MY DIVORCE... AND MY DIVORCE LED TO ME LOSING MY JOB.
DEREK!
I'LL SPARE YOU THE BORING DETAILS.
IT'S NOT THE DEATH OF MY SON I'M AVENGING... THAT WOULD BE FAR TOO CLICHÉ. NO... IT'S THE DESTRUCTION OF MY LIFE THAT HAS ME SEEKING REVENGE.
IT'S THE DOMINO EFFECT OF PAIN AND SORROW THAT THESE MONSTERS CREATE. CHILDREN THAT SPEND TOO MUCH TIME AT THE MALL... ATTEND PARTIES... CONSUME ALCOHOL... AND PLAY SPORTS, WHEN THEY SHOULD BE STUDYING, AND DOING HOMEWORK.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
WHAT I DID TO ALL OF THEM. I TURNED HIM INTO A LIVING BOMB, AN INSTRUMENT WITH WHICH TO ENACT MY REVENGE... MY CRUSADE TO END THE PAIN AND SORROW CAUSED BY THESE... "POPULAR" KIDS...
...AND I CAN'T THINK OF A MORE APPROPRIATE END TO MY CRUSADE...

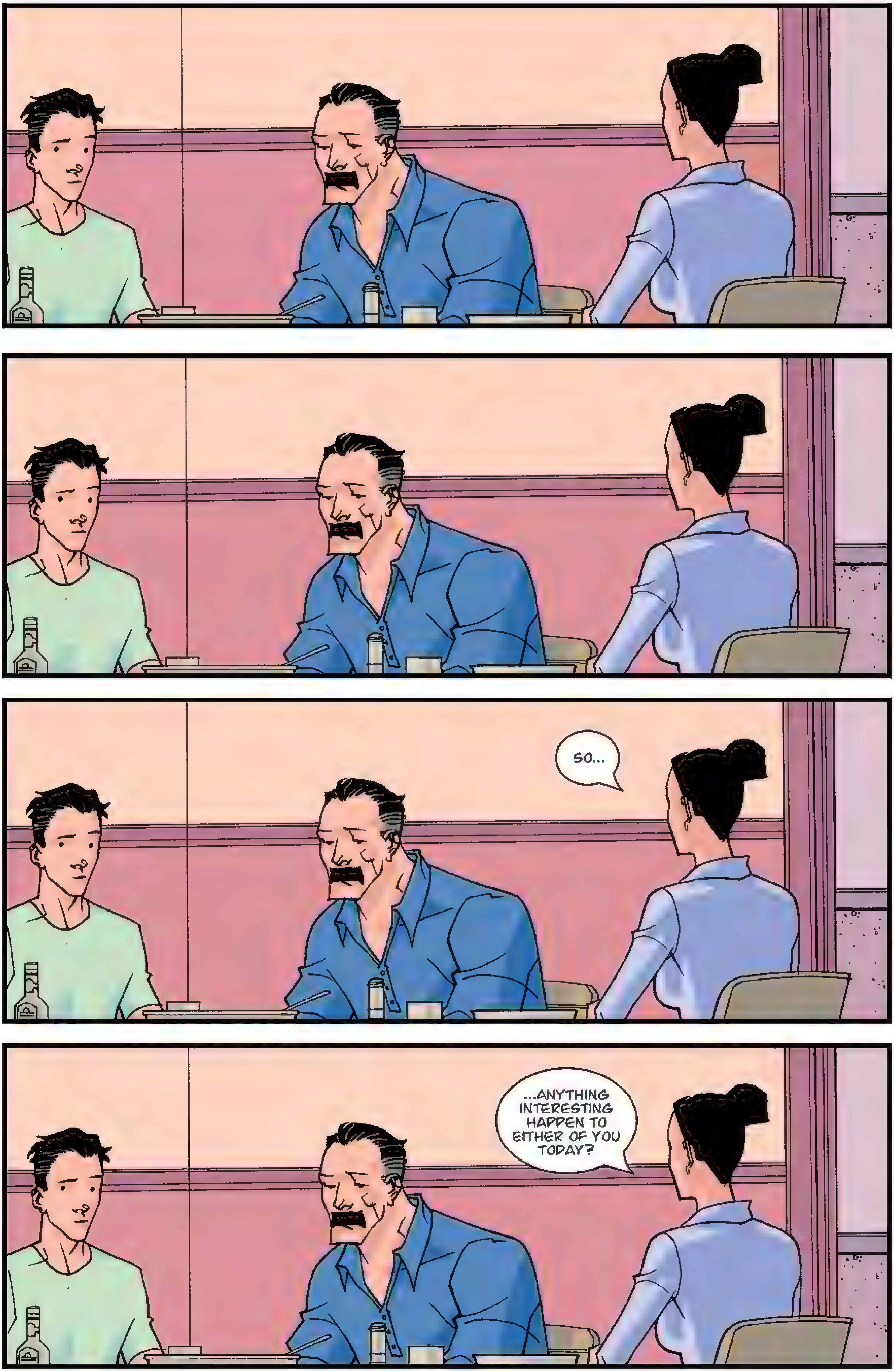

...THAN THE *DEATH* OF TWO SUPERHEROES!
OH DEAR, I MUST HAVE STARTED THE TIMER TOO LATE AFTER YOU GOT HERE. NO MATTER, YOU'LL HAVE A FEW MORE SECONDS TO--
I'M NOT WAITING AROUND FOR *THIS*.
C'MERE!
BOOM!
THAT STUFF IN CLASS TODAY WAS UNCALLED FOR.
Y'KNOW YOU REALLY *RUINED* MY AFTERNOON.

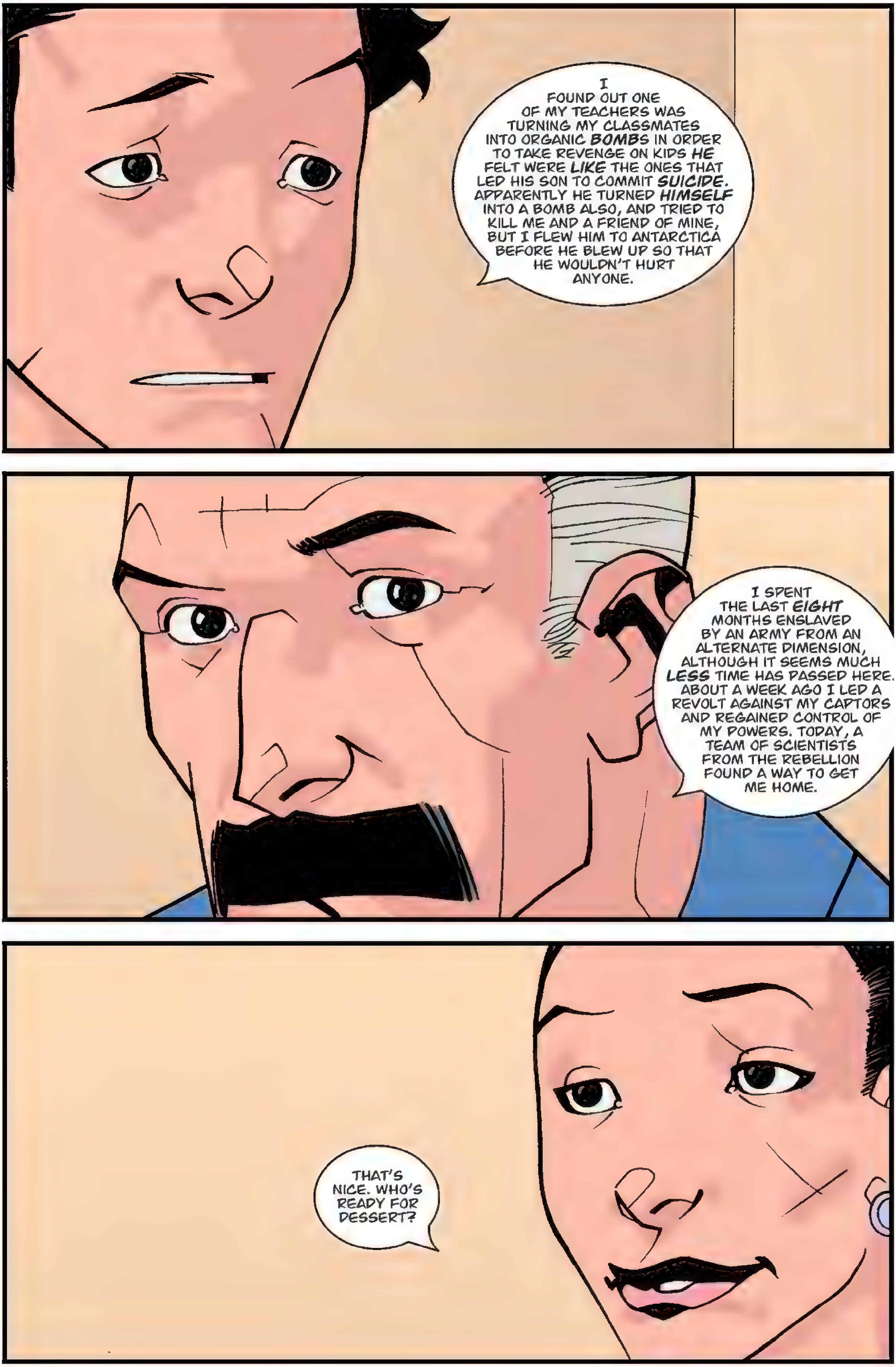

WELL, NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOU ALL TO MYSELF...
CHA-THOOM!

THOOOM!
⇉SIGH⇇
IF I KEEP THIS UP I'M GOING TO GIVE MYSELF A HEART ATTACK!

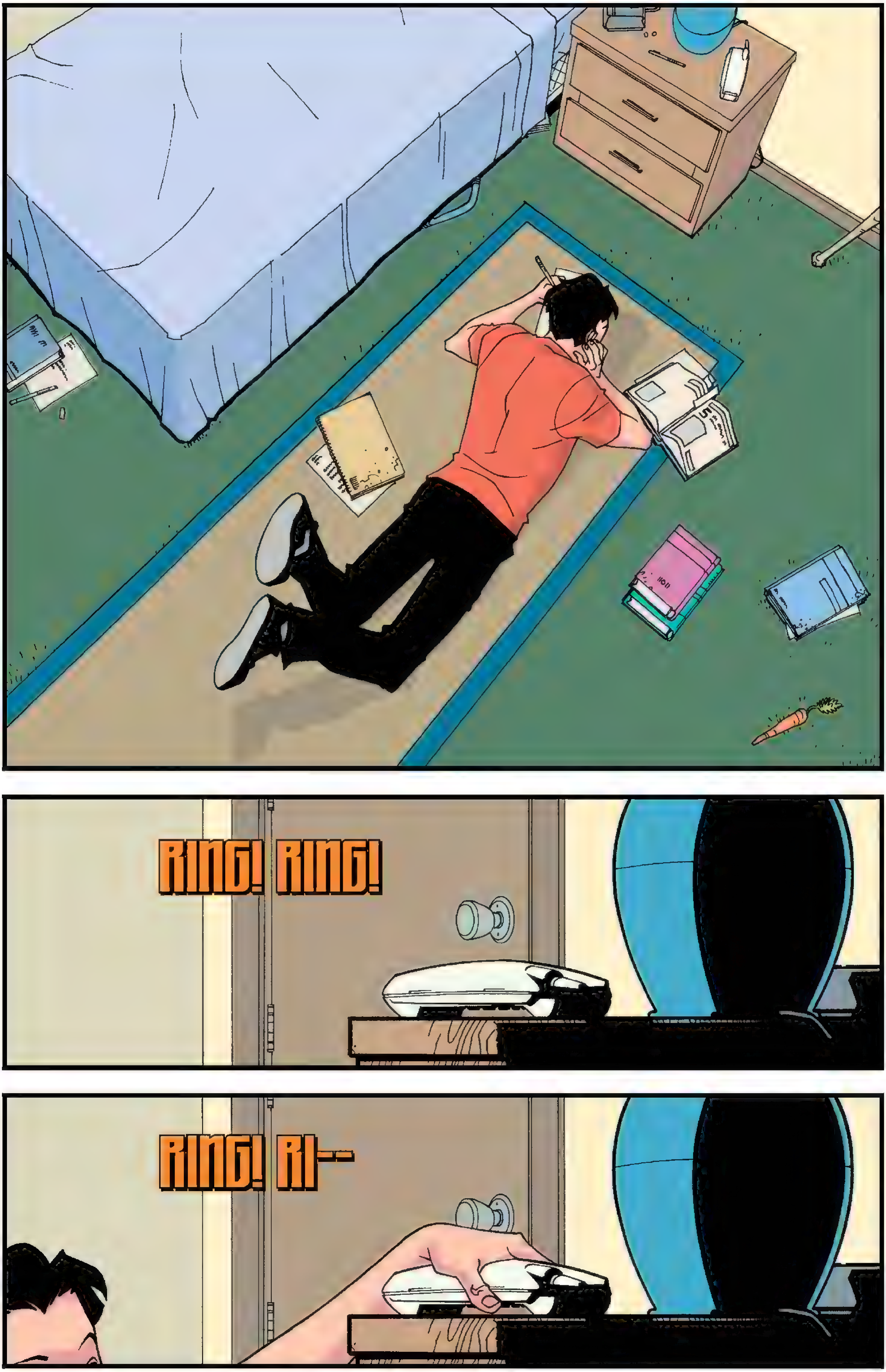

NCE
911
408
EMERG
911
SO... IS IT OVER?
ROBOT IS COMING BY TO DO A SWEEP OF THE HOUSE TO CHECK FOR ANYTHING DANGEROUS. I THINK THE POLICE WILL BE WRAPPED UP HERE SHORTLY.
YOU CAN JUST GO HOME IF YOU WANT. I'M GOING TO LEAVE AFTER ROBOT GETS HERE.
SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN TO ME. THE SOONER I PUT THIS BEHIND ME THE BETTER.

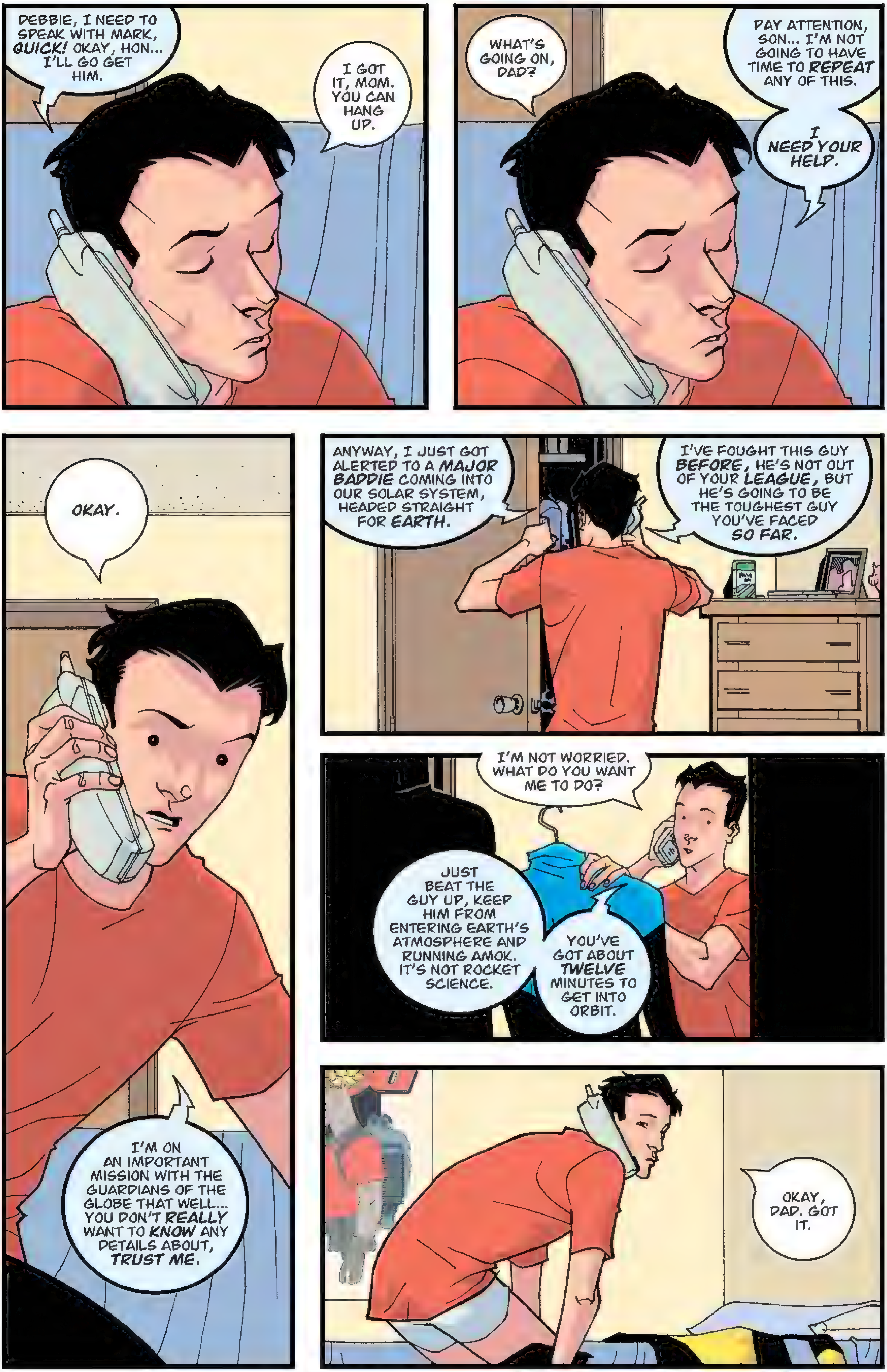

HEY, IS DAD BACK YET?
NOT YET. GO UPSTAIRS AND CLEAN UP SO WE CAN EAT. I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE DINNER ALONE TONIGHT.
I NEED TO SHAVE...
THANK GOD...

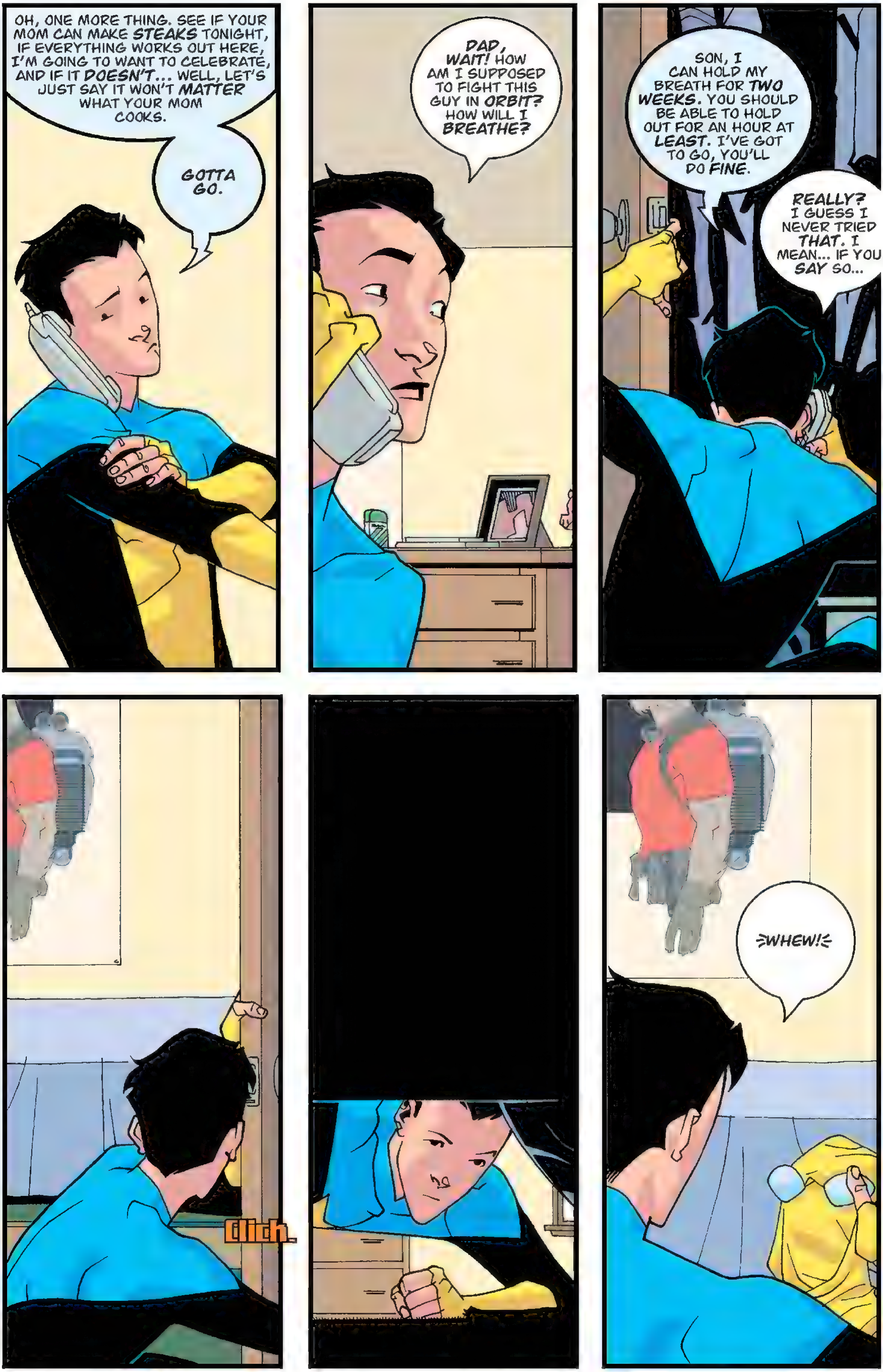

SO...
...ANYTHING INTERESTING HAPPEN TO EITHER OF YOU TODAY?

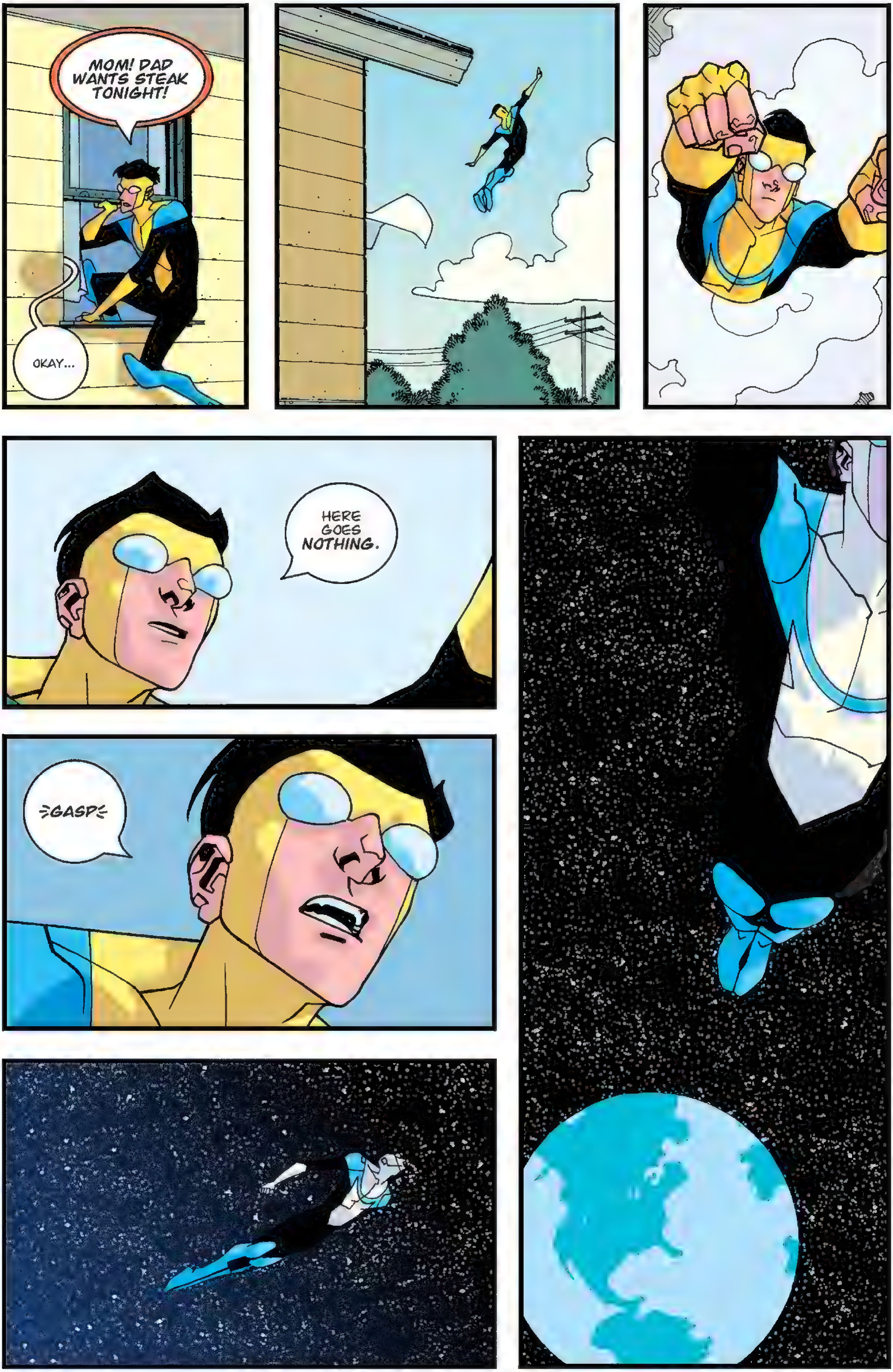

I FOUND OUT ONE OF MY TEACHERS WAS TURNING MY CLASSMATES INTO ORGANIC **BOMBS** IN ORDER TO TAKE REVENGE ON KIDS **HE** FELT WERE **LIKE** THE ONES THAT LED HIS SON TO COMMIT **SUICIDE**. APPARENTLY HE TURNED **HIMSELF** INTO A BOMB ALSO, AND TRIED TO KILL ME AND A FRIEND OF MINE, BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA BEFORE HE BLEW UP SO THAT HE WOULDN'T HURT ANYONE.
I SPENT THE LAST **EIGHT** MONTHS ENSLAVED BY AN ARMY FROM AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION, ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS MUCH **LESS** TIME HAS PASSED HERE. ABOUT A WEEK AGO I LED A REVOLT AGAINST MY CAPTORS AND REGAINED CONTROL OF MY POWERS. TODAY, A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS FROM THE REBELLION FOUND A WAY TO GET ME HOME.
THAT'S NICE. WHO'S READY FOR DESSERT?

ISSUE FIVE


RING! RING!
RING! RI--

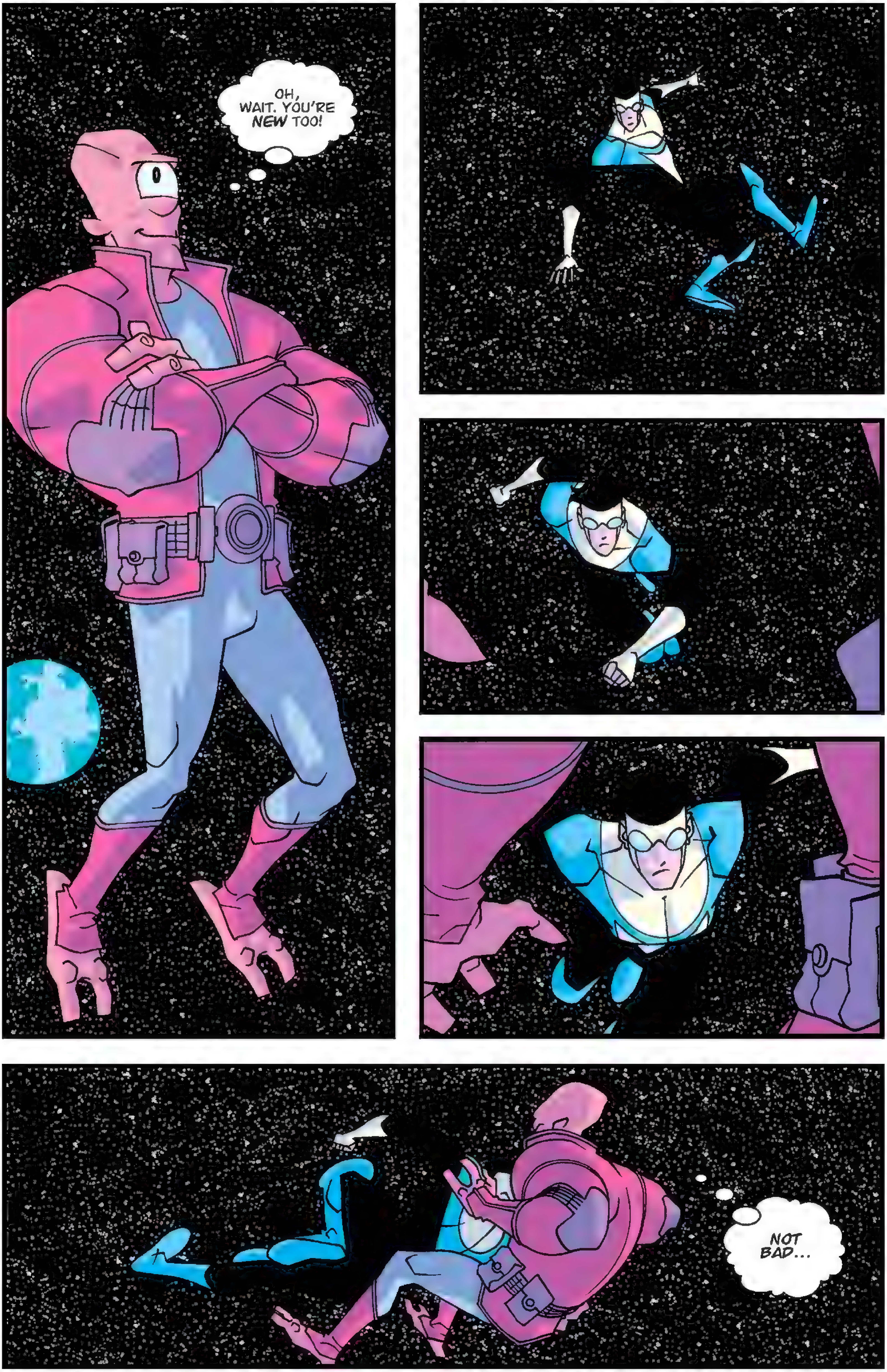

DEBBIE, I NEED TO SPEAK WITH MARK, QUICK! OKAY, HON... I'LL GO GET HIM.
I GOT IT, MOM. YOU CAN HANG UP.
WHAT'S GOING ON, DAD?
PAY ATTENTION, SON... I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE TIME TO REPEAT ANY OF THIS.
I NEED YOUR HELP.
OKAY.
I'M ON AN IMPORTANT MISSION WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE THAT WELL... YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO KNOW ANY DETAILS ABOUT, TRUST ME.
ANYWAY, I JUST GOT ALERTED TO A MAJOR BADDIE COMING INTO OUR SOLAR SYSTEM, HEADED STRAIGHT FOR EARTH.
I'VE FOUGHT THIS GUY BEFORE, HE'S NOT OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE, BUT HE'S GOING TO BE THE TOUGHEST GUY YOU'VE FACED SO FAR.
I'M NOT WORRIED. WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
JUST BEAT THE GUY UP, KEEP HIM FROM ENTERING EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE AND RUNNING AMOK. IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.
YOU'VE GOT ABOUT TWELVE MINUTES TO GET INTO ORBIT.
OKAY, DAD. GOT IT.

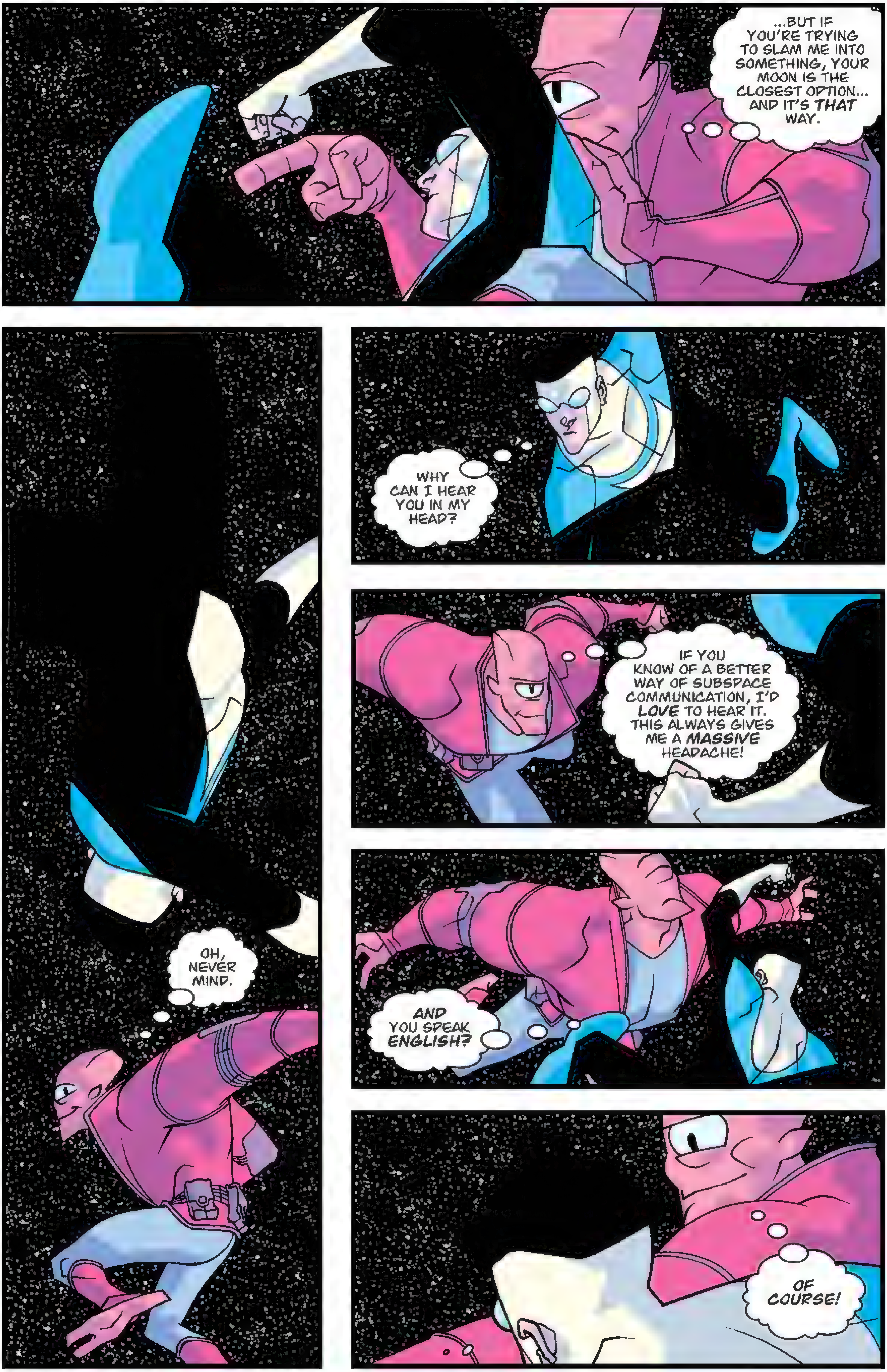

OH, ONE MORE THING. SEE IF YOUR MOM CAN MAKE **STEAKS** TONIGHT. IF EVERYTHING WORKS OUT HERE, I'M GOING TO WANT TO CELEBRATE, AND IF IT **DOESN'T**... WELL, LET'S JUST SAY IT WON'T **MATTER** WHAT YOUR MOM COOKS.
GOTTA GO.
DAD, WAIT! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIGHT THIS GUY IN **ORBIT?** HOW WILL I **BREATHE?**
SON, I CAN HOLD MY BREATH FOR **TWO WEEKS.** YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT FOR AN HOUR AT **LEAST.** I'VE GOT TO GO, YOU'LL DO **FINE.**
REALLY? I GUESS I NEVER TRIED **THAT.** I MEAN... IF YOU **SAY** SO...
Click
WHEW!

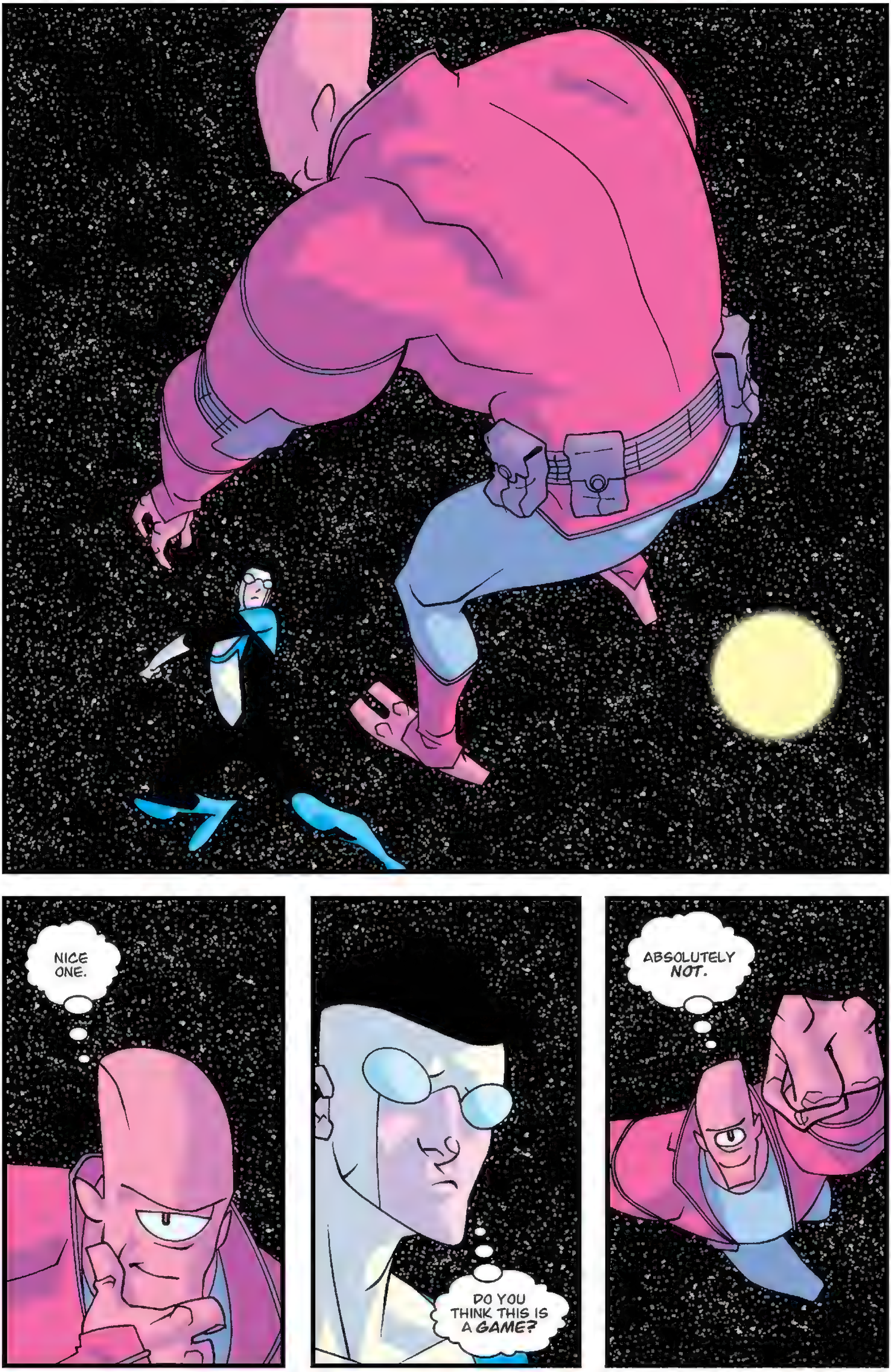

MOM! DAD WANTS STEAK TONIGHT!
OKAY...
HERE GOES NOTHING.
GASP

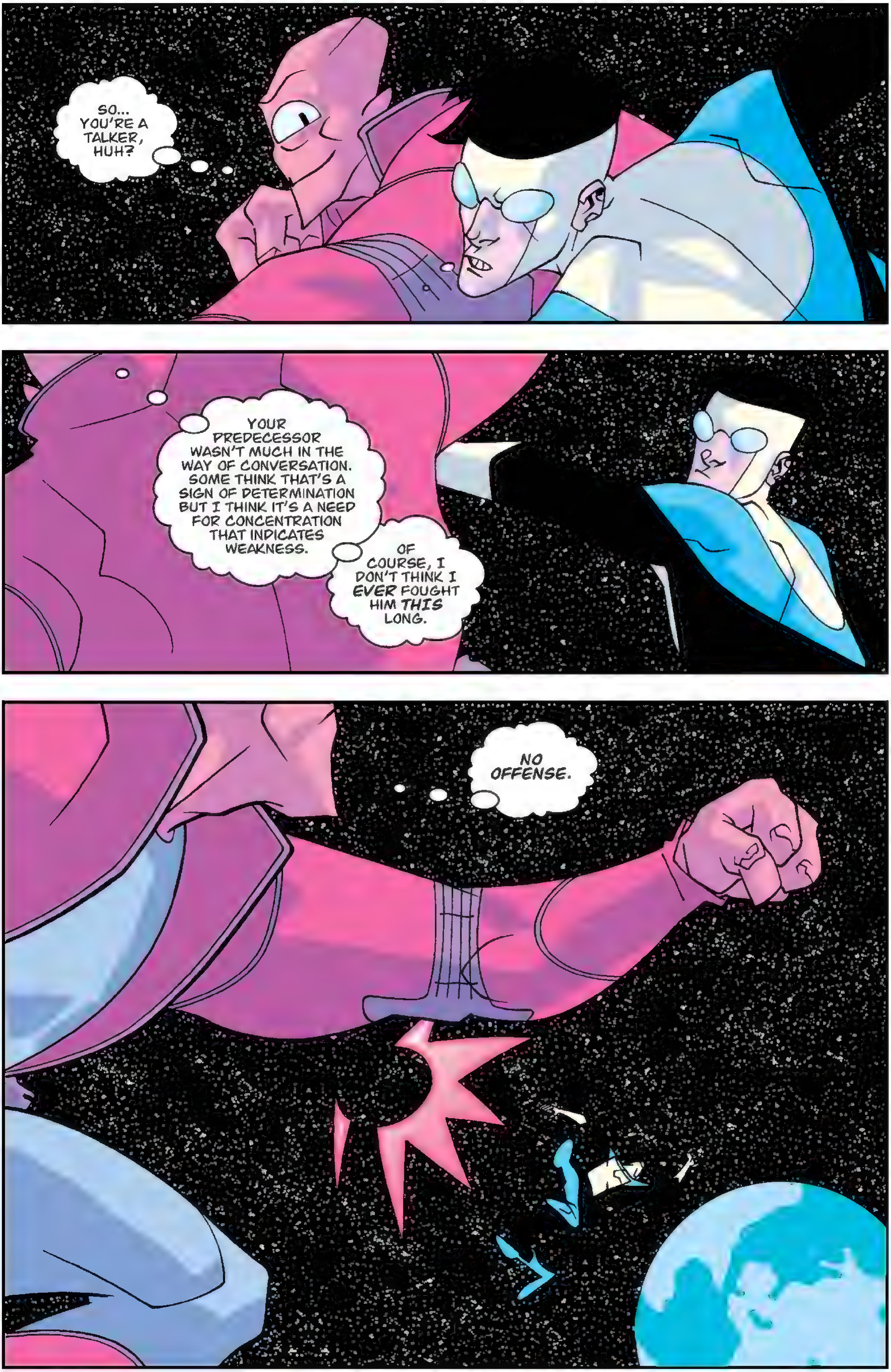
NOW WHAT?

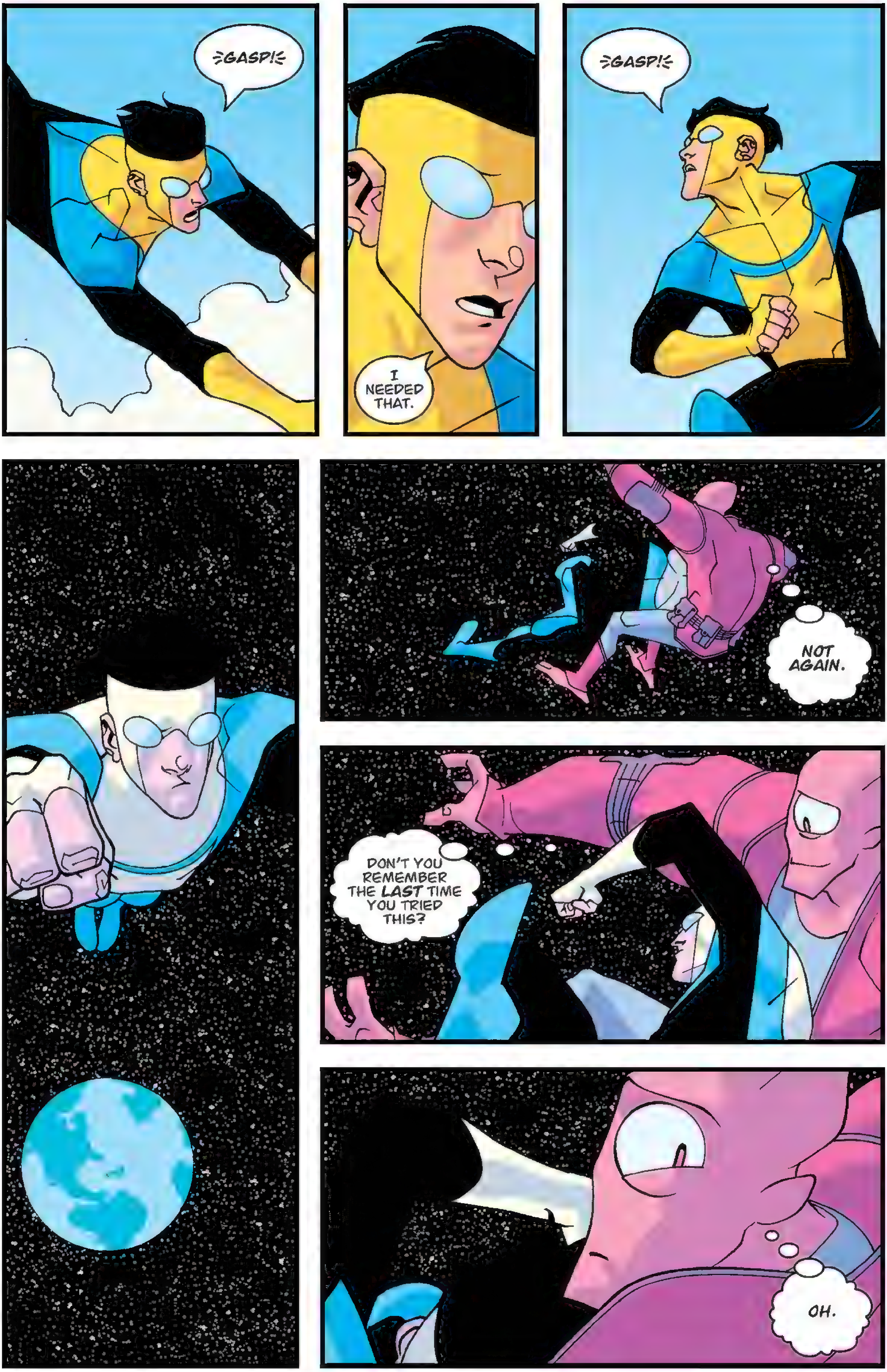
YOU'RE EARLY!


OH, WAIT. YOU'RE *NEW* TOO!
NOT BAD...

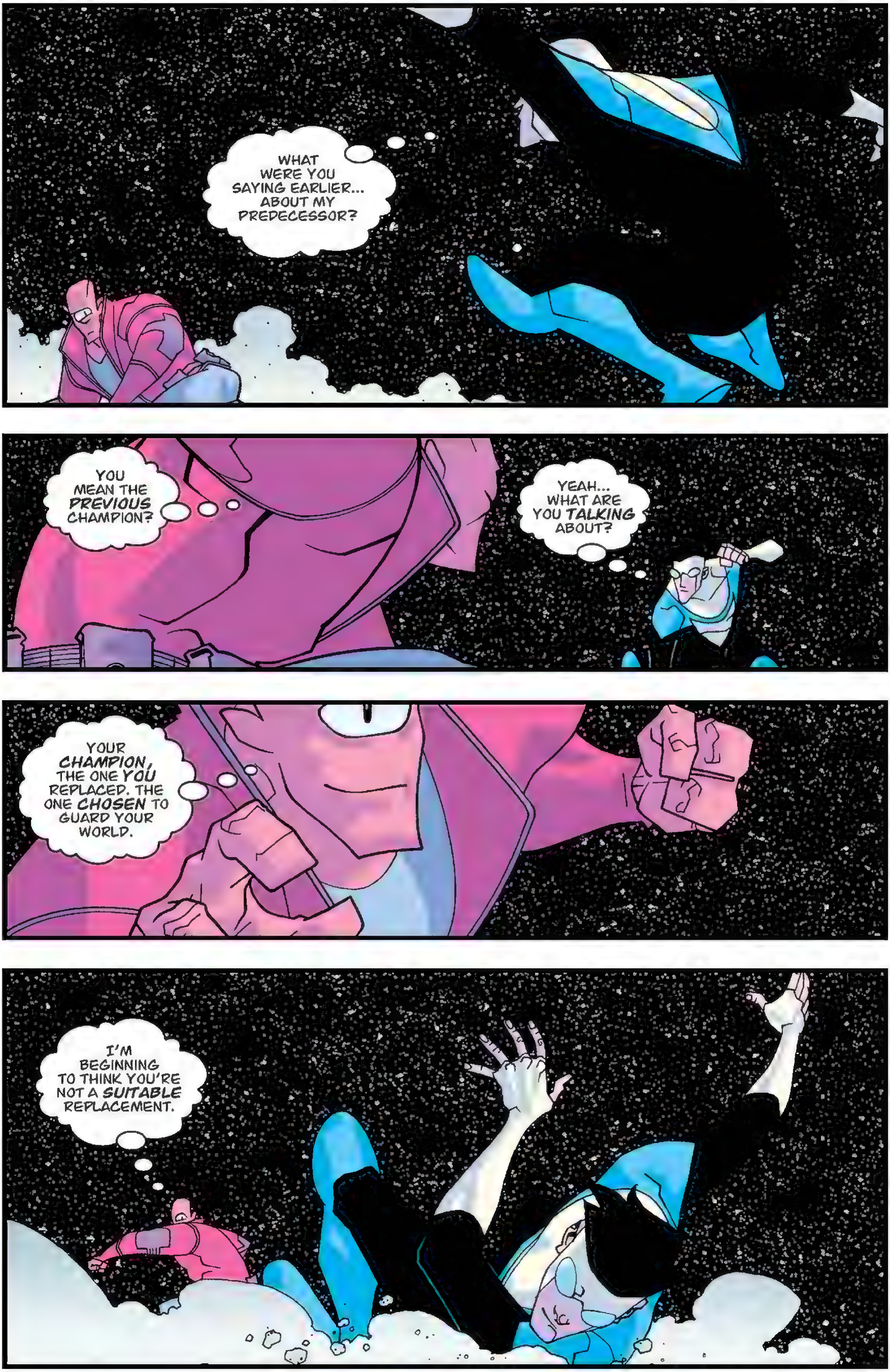

...BUT IF YOU'RE TRYING TO SLAM ME INTO SOMETHING, YOUR MOON IS THE CLOSEST OPTION... AND IT'S *THAT* WAY.
OH, NEVER MIND.
WHY CAN I HEAR YOU IN MY HEAD?
IF YOU KNOW OF A BETTER WAY OF SUBSPACE COMMUNICATION, I'D *LOVE* TO HEAR IT. THIS ALWAYS GIVES ME A *MASSIVE* HEADACHE!
AND YOU SPEAK *ENGLISH?*
OF COURSE!

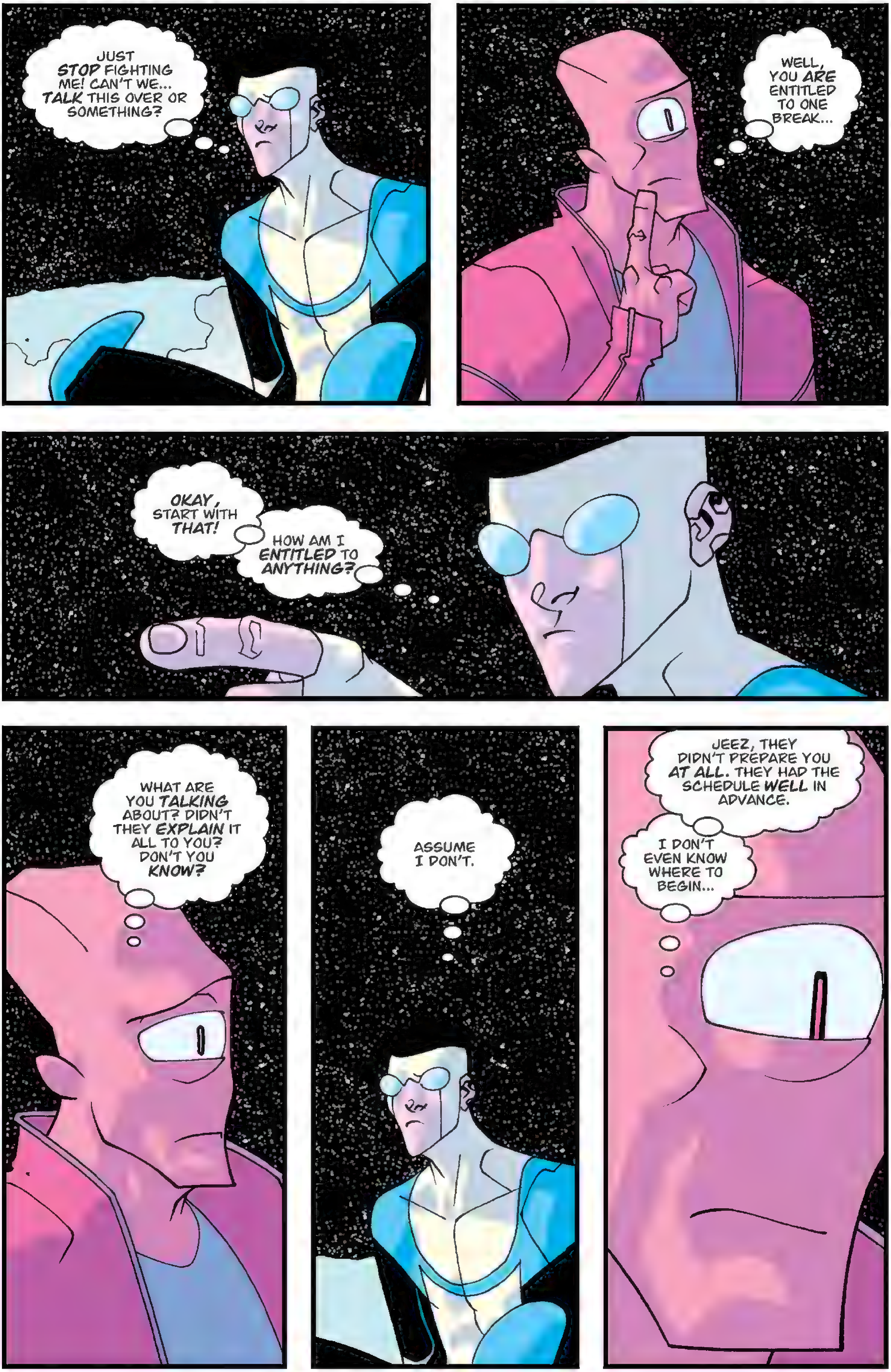

NICE ONE.
DO YOU THINK THIS IS A *GAME?*
ABSOLUTELY *NOT.*

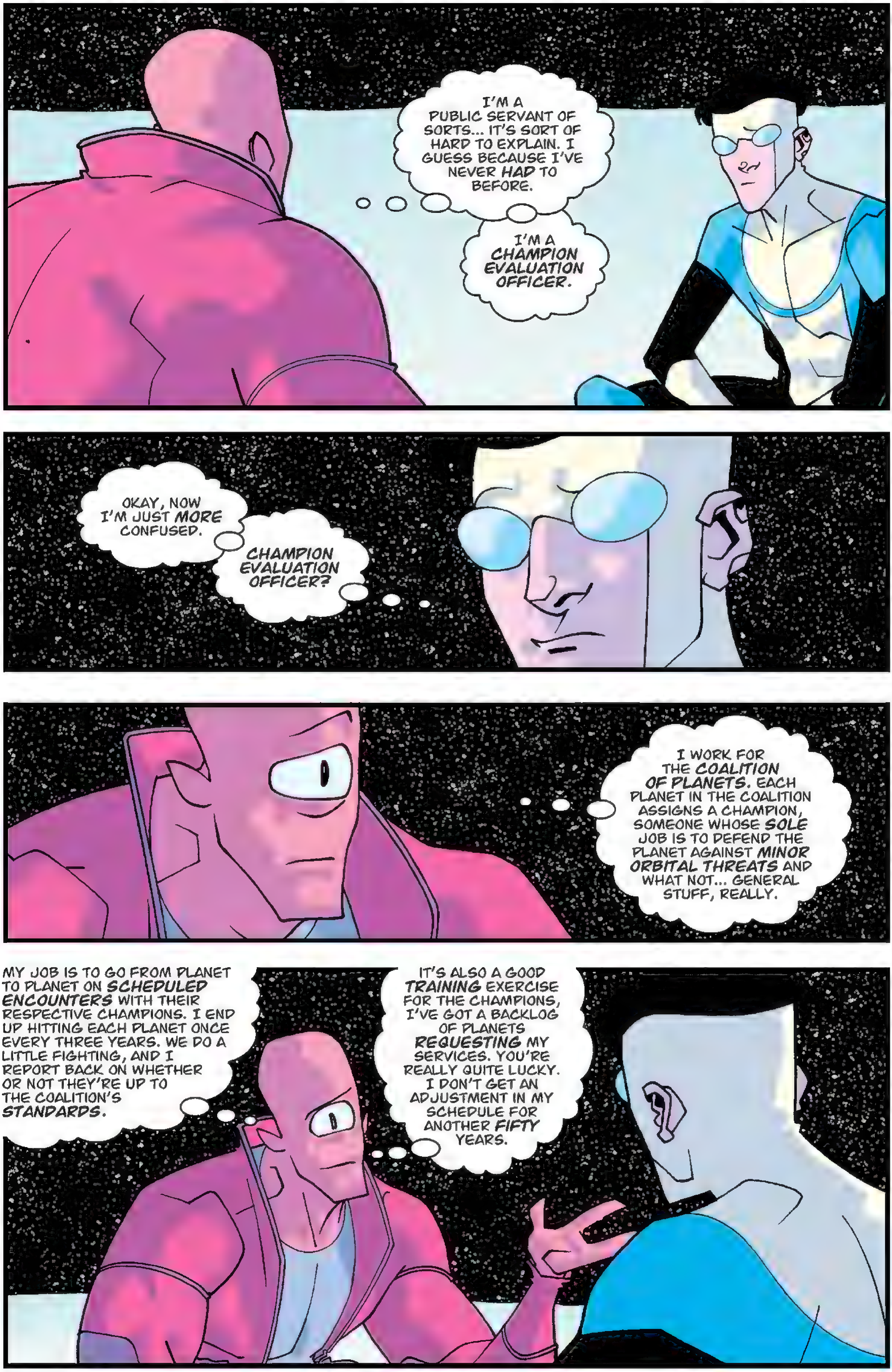

SO... YOU'RE A TALKER, HUH?
YOUR PREDECESSOR WASN'T MUCH IN THE WAY OF CONVERSATION. SOME THINK THAT'S A SIGN OF DETERMINATION BUT I THINK IT'S A NEED FOR CONCENTRATION THAT INDICATES WEAKNESS.
OF COURSE, I DON'T THINK I *EVER* FOUGHT HIM *THIS* LONG.
NO OFFENSE.

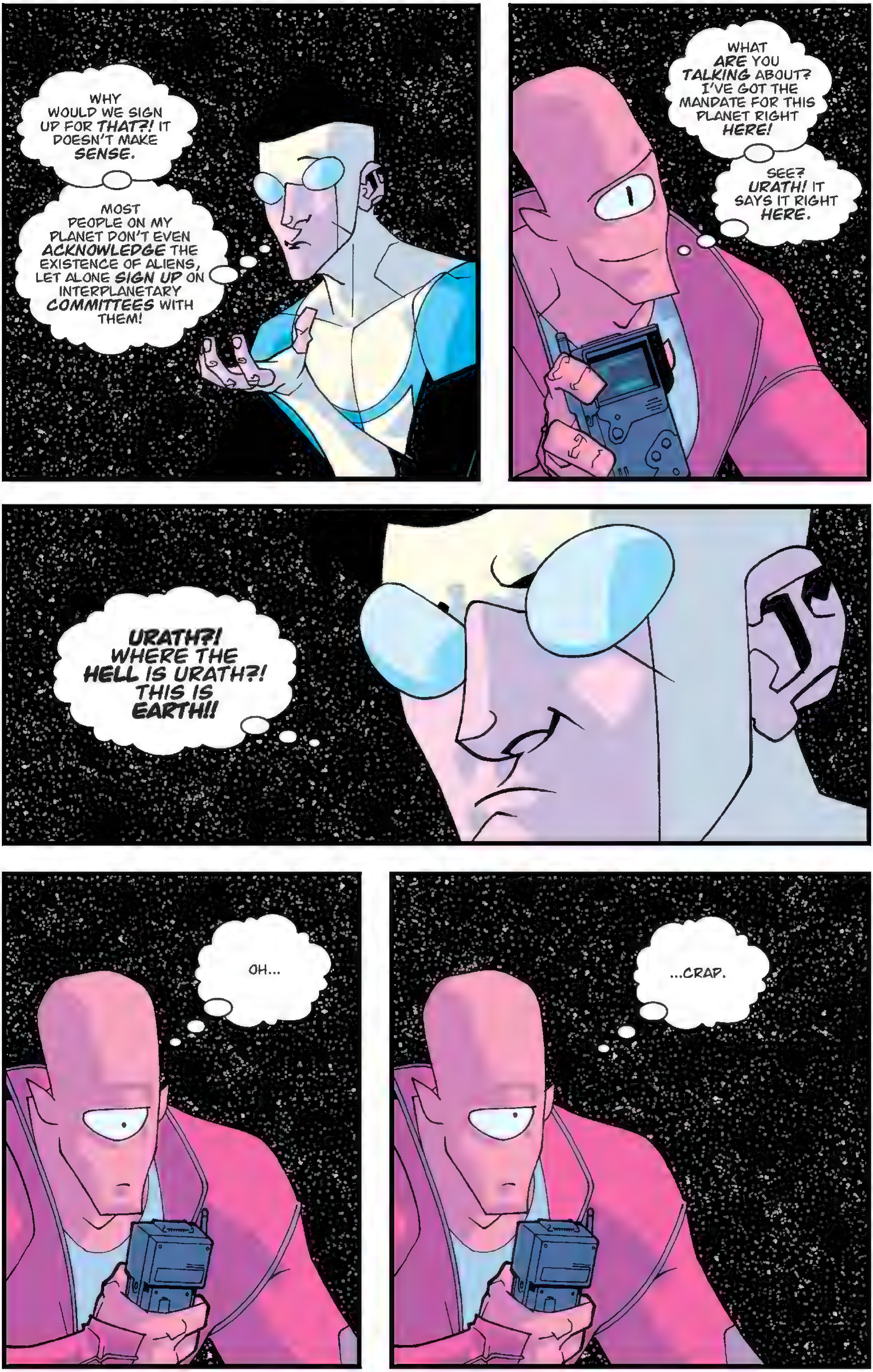


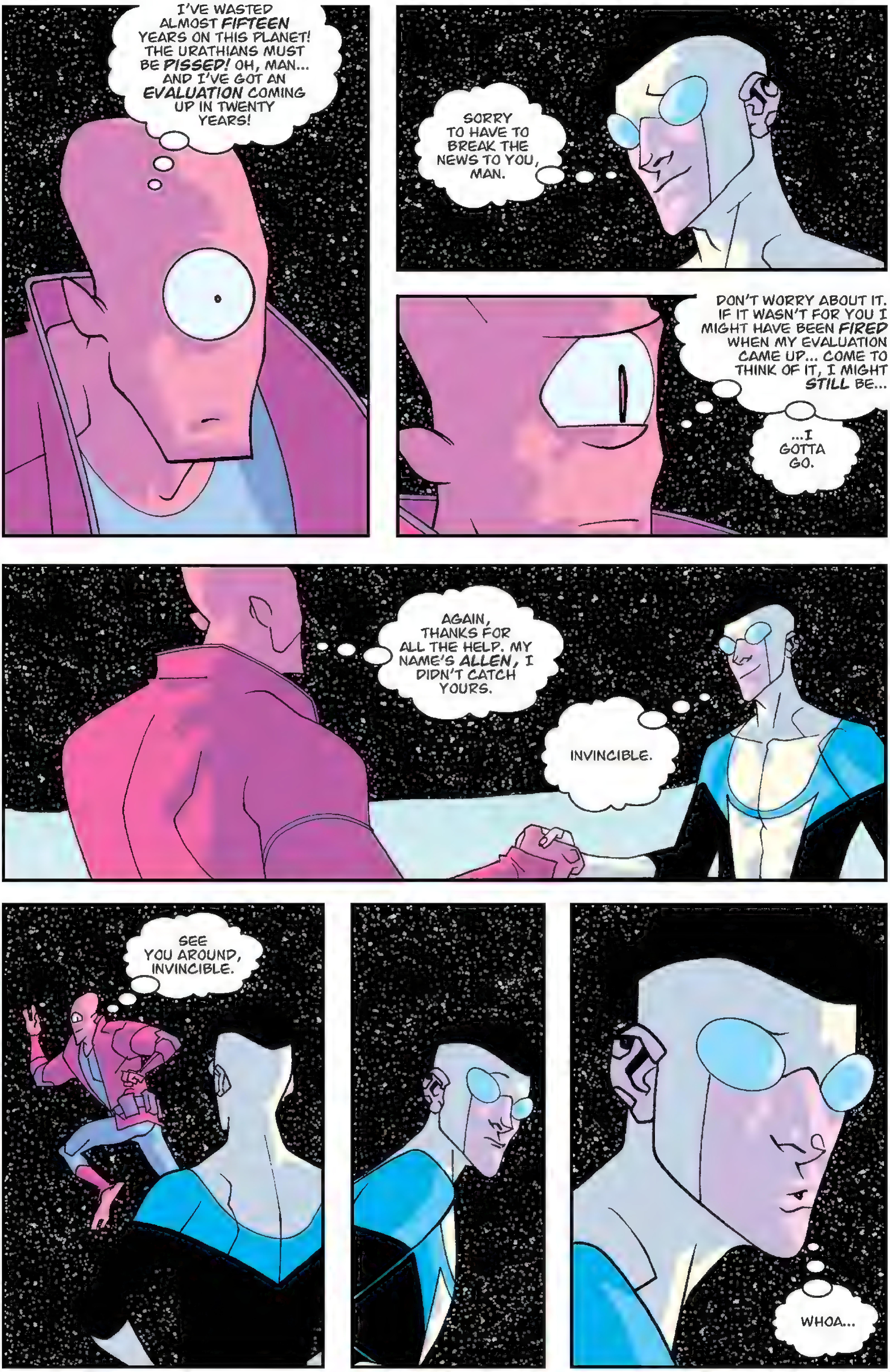
GASP!
I NEEDED THAT.
GASP!
NOT AGAIN.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE **LAST** TIME YOU TRIED THIS?
OH.


WHAT WERE YOU SAYING EARLIER... ABOUT MY PREDECESSOR?
YOU MEAN THE *PREVIOUS* CHAMPION?
YEAH... WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
YOUR *CHAMPION*, THE ONE *YOU* REPLACED. THE ONE *CHOSEN* TO GUARD YOUR WORLD.
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'RE NOT A *SUITABLE* REPLACEMENT.

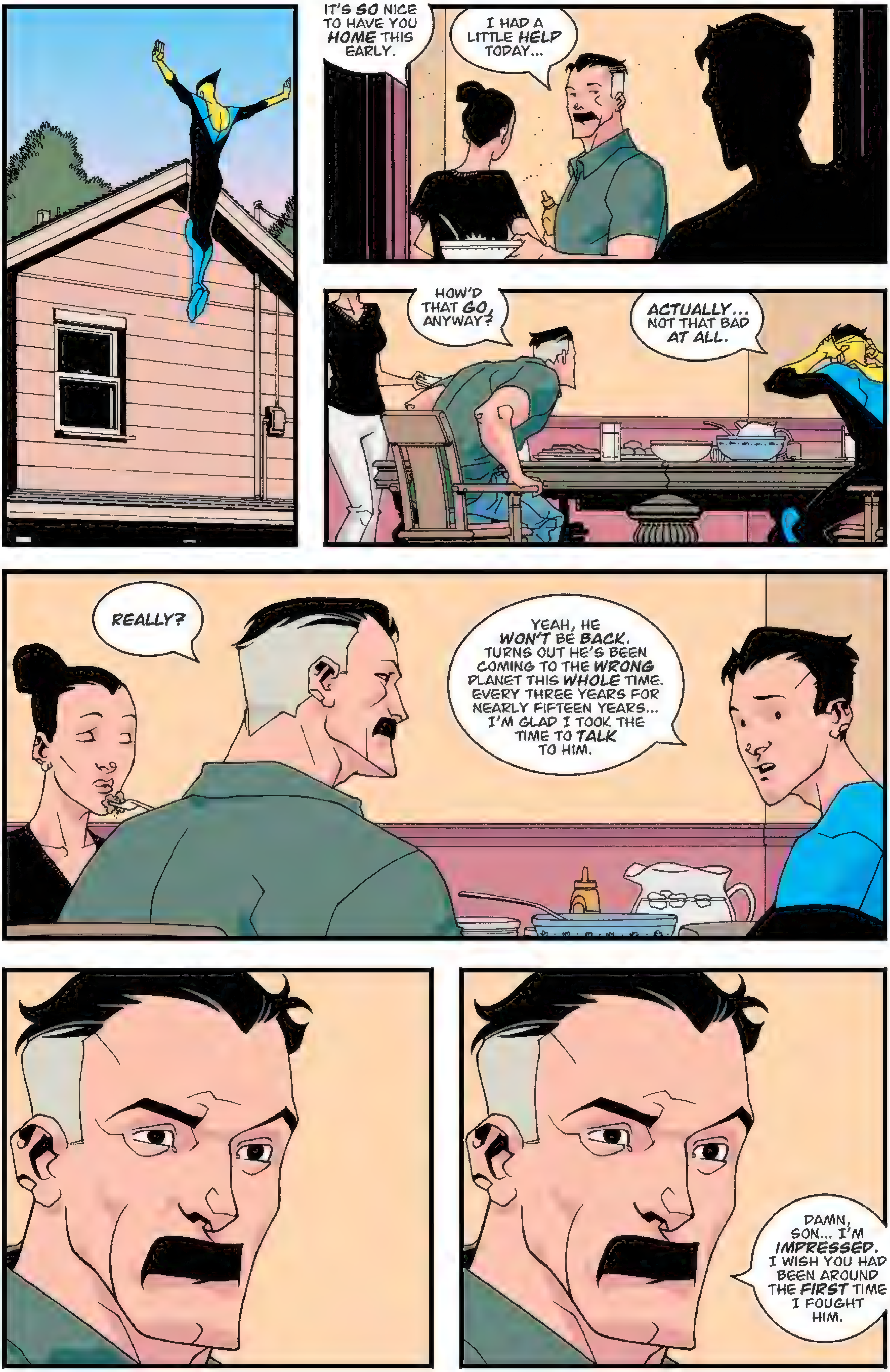

JUST *STOP* FIGHTING ME! CAN'T WE... *TALK* THIS OVER OR SOMETHING?
WELL, YOU *ARE* ENTITLED TO ONE BREAK...
OKAY, START WITH *THAT!*
HOW AM I *ENTITLED* TO *ANYTHING?*
WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT? DIDN'T THEY *EXPLAIN* IT ALL TO YOU? DON'T YOU *KNOW?*
ASSUME I DON'T.
JEEZ, THEY DIDN'T PREPARE YOU *AT ALL*. THEY HAD THE SCHEDULE *WELL* IN ADVANCE.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN...

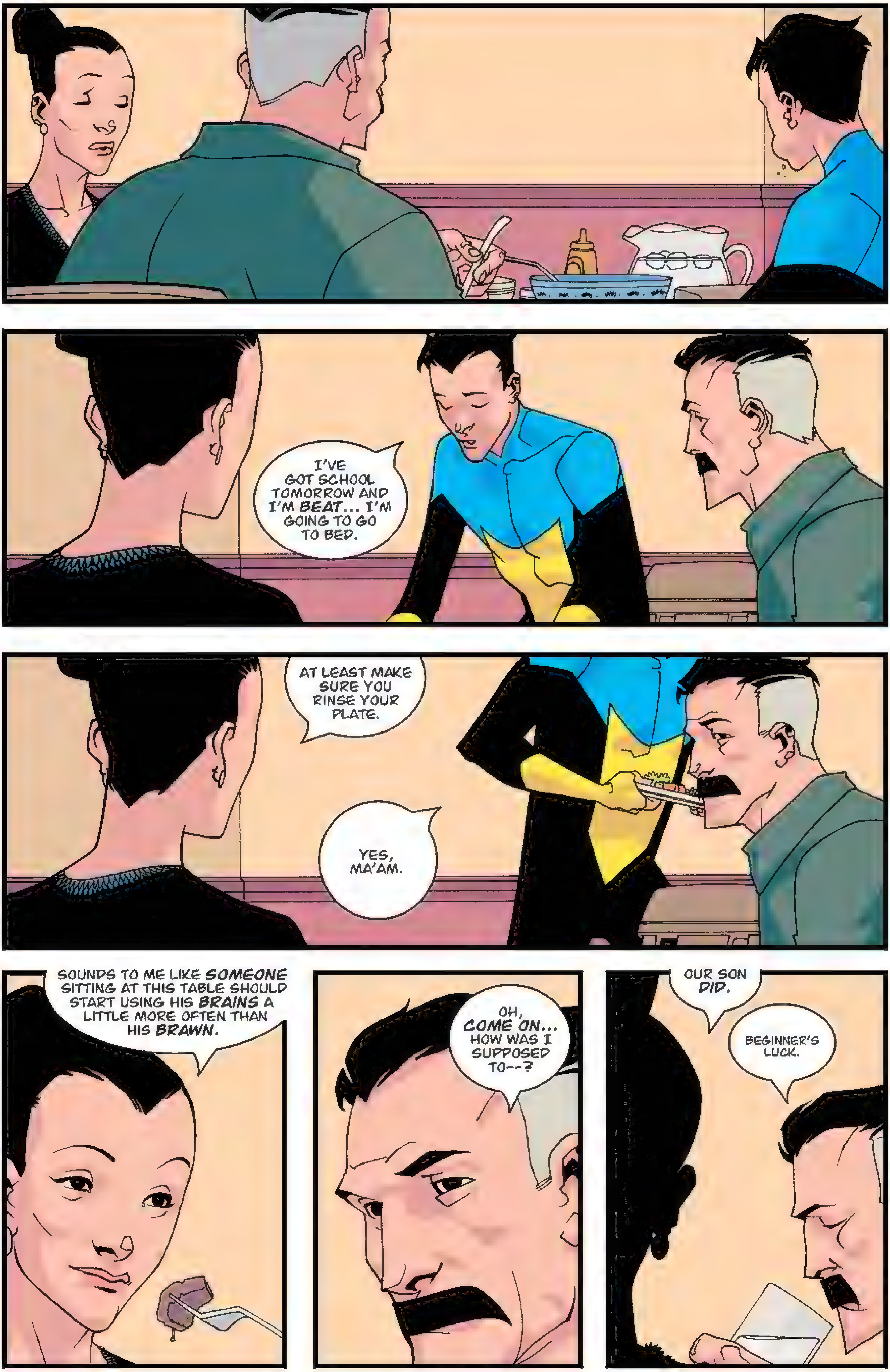

I'M A PUBLIC SERVANT OF SORTS... IT'S SORT OF HARD TO EXPLAIN. I GUESS BECAUSE I'VE NEVER *HAD* TO BEFORE.
I'M A ***CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER.***
OKAY, NOW I'M JUST *MORE* CONFUSED.
CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER?
I WORK FOR THE ***COALITION OF PLANETS.*** EACH PLANET IN THE COALITION ASSIGNS A CHAMPION, SOMEONE WHOSE ***SOLE*** JOB IS TO DEFEND THE PLANET AGAINST ***MINOR ORBITAL THREATS*** AND WHAT NOT... GENERAL STUFF, REALLY.
MY JOB IS TO GO FROM PLANET TO PLANET ON ***SCHEDULED ENCOUNTERS*** WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE CHAMPIONS. I END UP HITTING EACH PLANET ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS. WE DO A LITTLE FIGHTING, AND I REPORT BACK ON WHETHER OR NOT THEY'RE UP TO THE COALITION'S ***STANDARDS.***
IT'S ALSO A GOOD ***TRAINING*** EXERCISE FOR THE CHAMPIONS, I'VE GOT A BACKLOG OF PLANETS ***REQUESTING*** MY SERVICES. YOU'RE REALLY QUITE LUCKY. I DON'T GET AN ADJUSTMENT IN MY SCHEDULE FOR ANOTHER ***FIFTY*** YEARS.

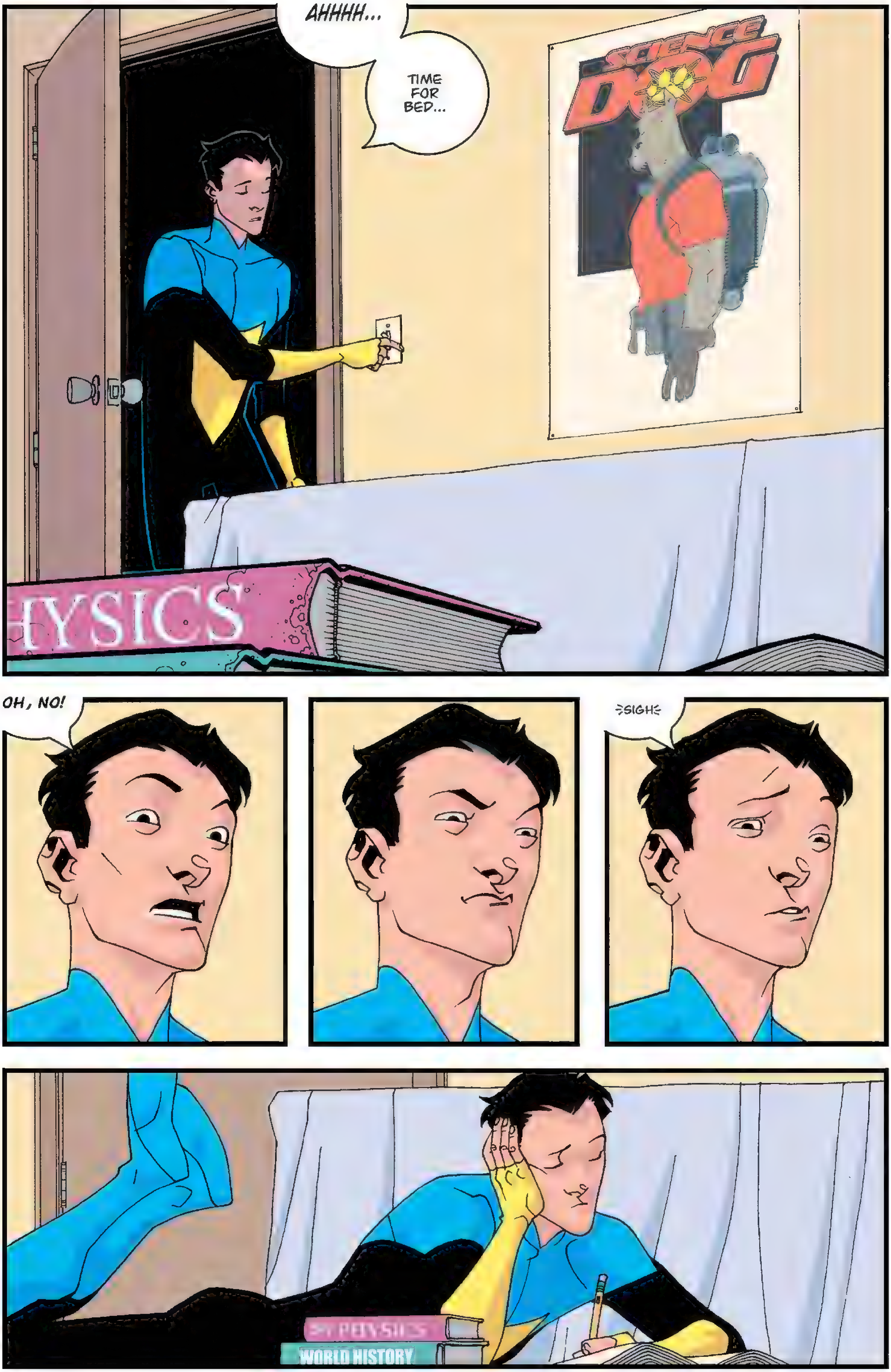

WHY WOULD WE SIGN UP FOR THAT?! IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
MOST PEOPLE ON MY PLANET DON'T EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF ALIENS, LET ALONE SIGN UP ON INTERPLANETARY COMMITTEES WITH THEM!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'VE GOT THE MANDATE FOR THIS PLANET RIGHT HERE!
SEE? URATH! IT SAYS IT RIGHT HERE.
URATH?! WHERE THE HELL IS URATH?! THIS IS EARTH!!
OH...
...CRAP.


I'VE WASTED ALMOST FIFTEEN YEARS ON THIS PLANET! THE URATHIANS MUST BE PISSED! OH, MAN... AND I'VE GOT AN EVALUATION COMING UP IN TWENTY YEARS!
SORRY TO HAVE TO BREAK THE NEWS TO YOU, MAN.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU I MIGHT HAVE BEEN FIRED WHEN MY EVALUATION CAME UP... COME TO THINK OF IT, I MIGHT STILL BE...
...I GOTTA GO.
AGAIN, THANKS FOR ALL THE HELP. MY NAME'S ALLEN, I DIDN'T CATCH YOURS.
INVINCIBLE.
SEE YOU AROUND, INVINCIBLE.
WHOA...

...COOL.


IT'S SO NICE TO HAVE YOU HOME THIS EARLY.
I HAD A LITTLE HELP TODAY...
HOW'D THAT GO, ANYWAY?
ACTUALLY... NOT THAT BAD AT ALL.
REALLY?
YEAH, HE WON'T BE BACK. TURNS OUT HE'S BEEN COMING TO THE WRONG PLANET THIS WHOLE TIME. EVERY THREE YEARS FOR NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS... I'M GLAD I TOOK THE TIME TO TALK TO HIM.
DAMN, SON... I'M IMPRESSED. I WISH YOU HAD BEEN AROUND THE FIRST TIME I FOUGHT HIM.

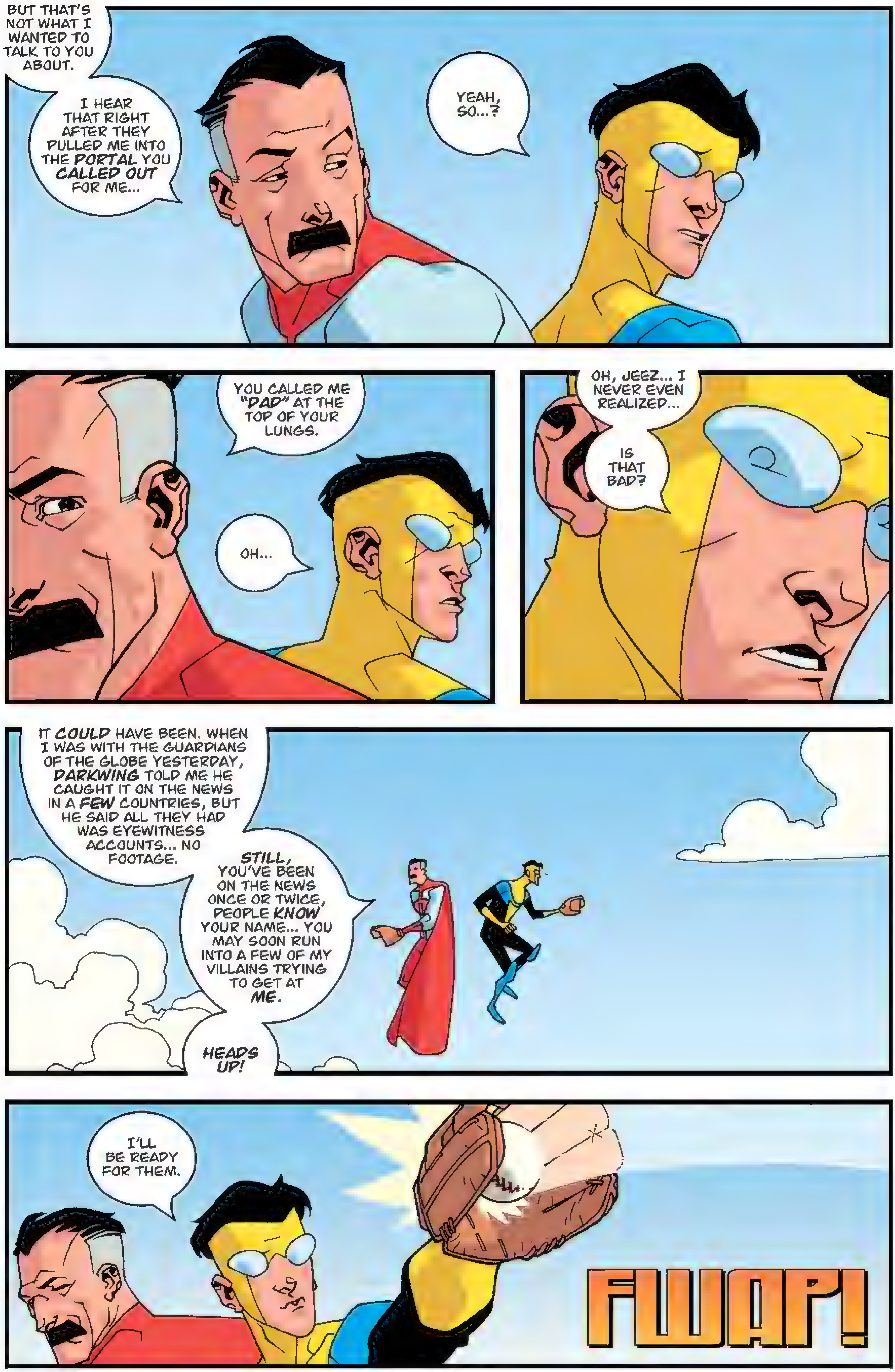

I'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMORROW AND I'M *BEAT*... I'M GOING TO GO TO BED.
AT LEAST MAKE SURE YOU RINSE YOUR PLATE.
YES, MA'AM.
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE *SOMEONE* SITTING AT THIS TABLE SHOULD START USING HIS *BRAINS* A LITTLE MORE OFTEN THAN HIS *BRAWN*.
OH, *COME ON*... HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO--?
OUR SON *DID*.
BEGINNER'S LUCK.

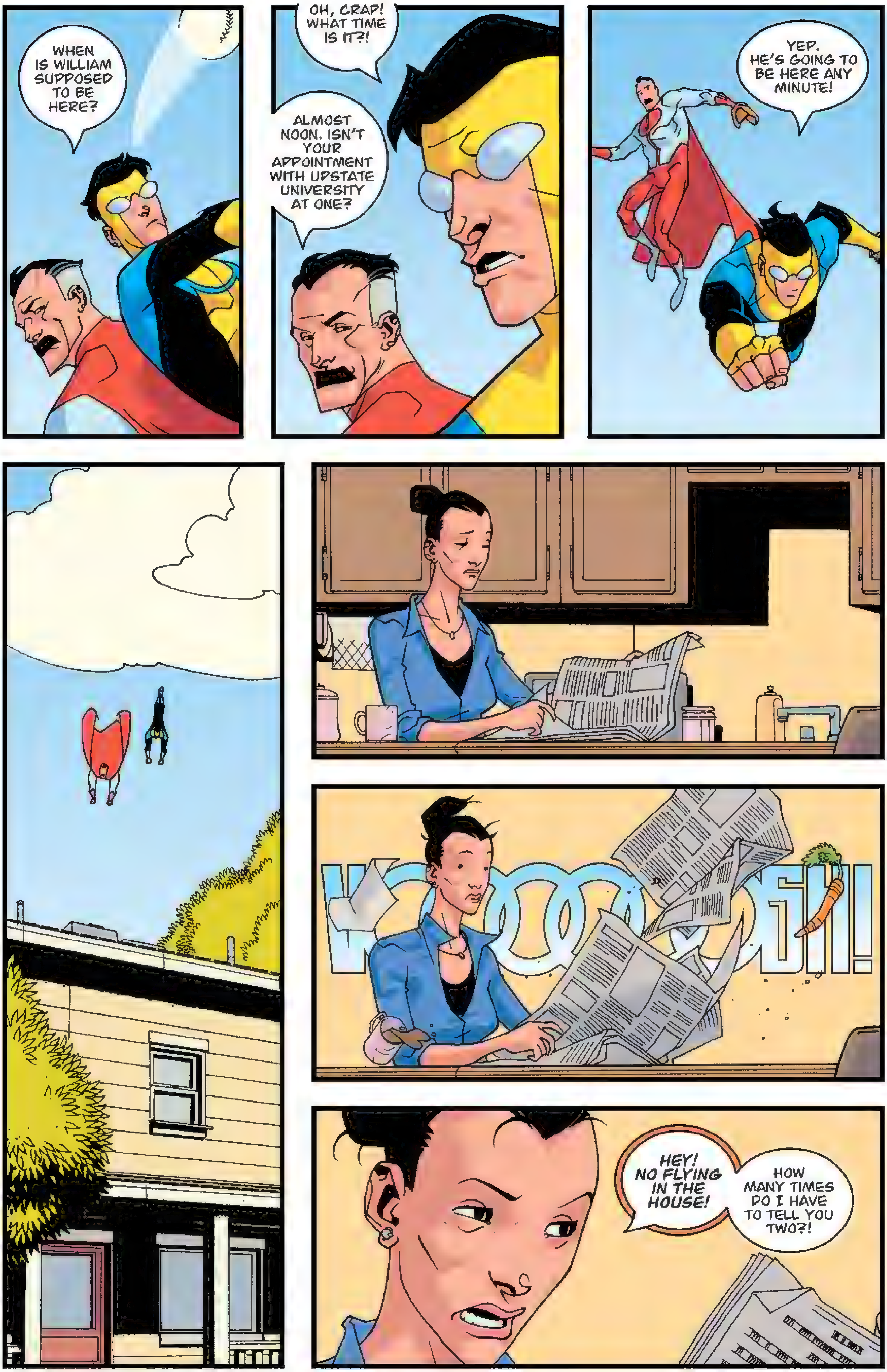

AHHHH...
TIME FOR BED...
SCIENCE DOG
HYSICS
OH, NO!
=SIGH=
PHYSICS
WORLD HISTORY

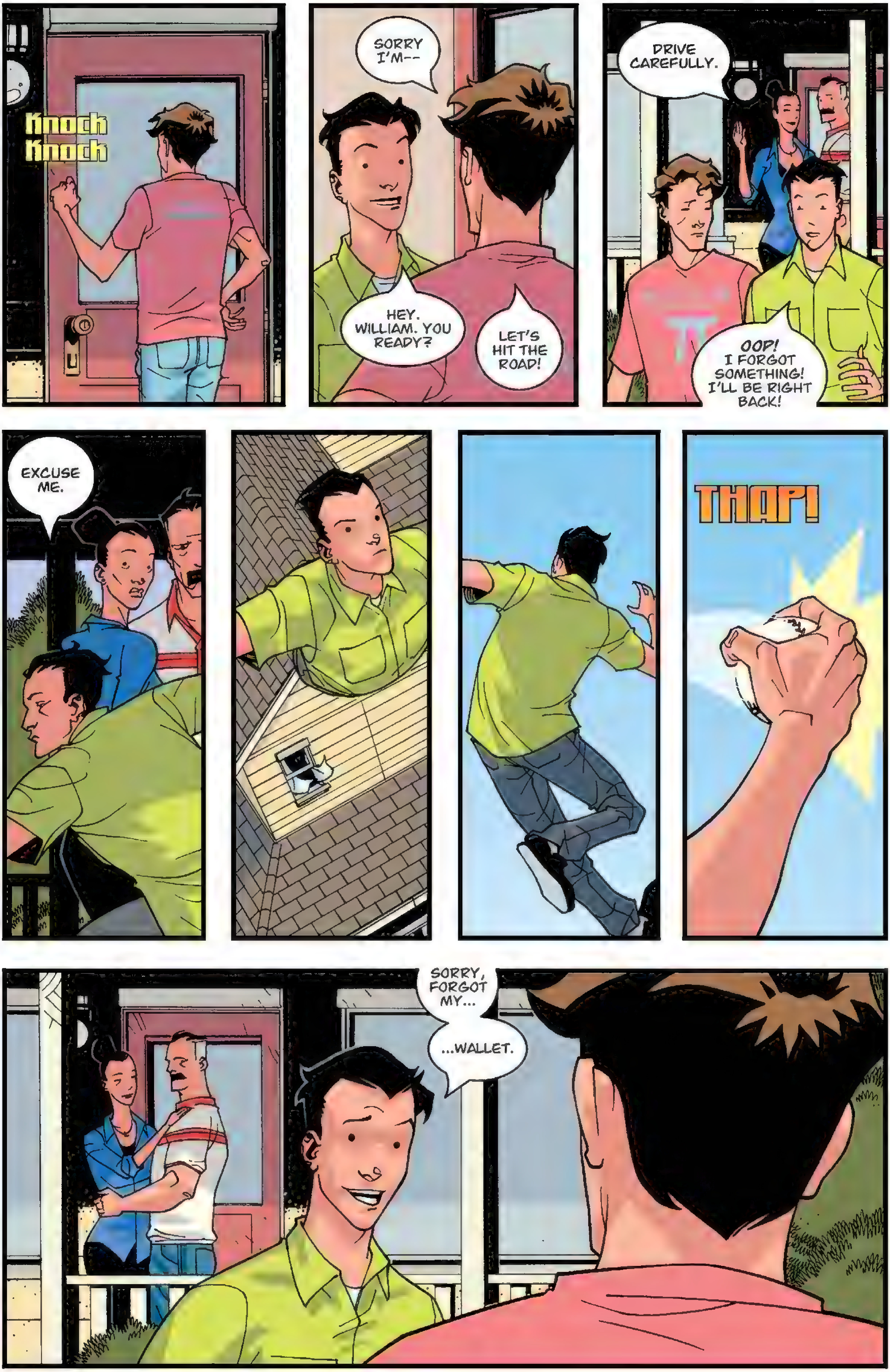
ISSUE SIX

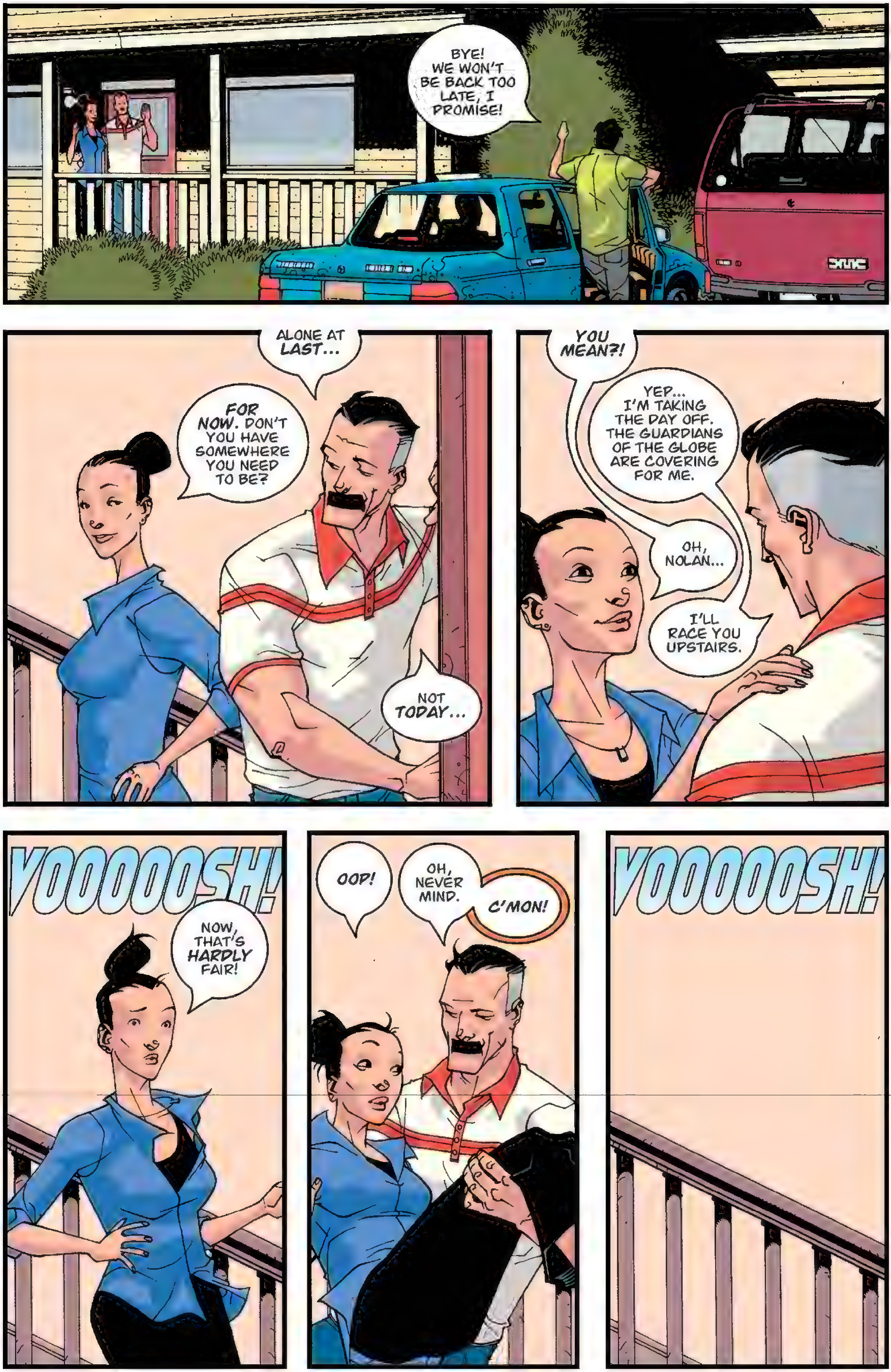
SIT TIGHT, WILLIAM... I THINK WE LOST IT.
CW03

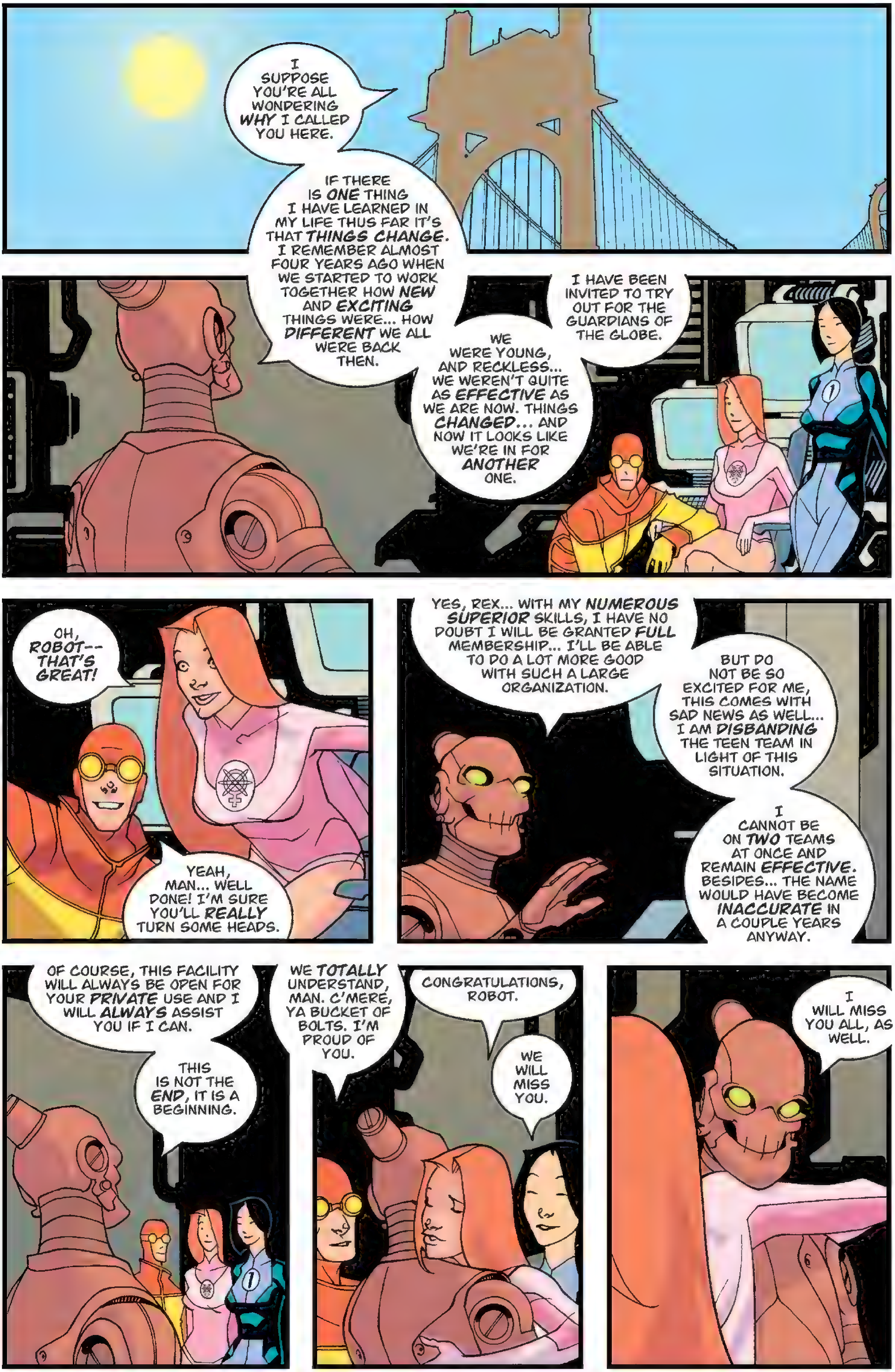
NO, ACTUALLY IN THE TIME IT TOOK US TO LEAVE THE BATTLE SITE IN SAUDI ARABIA AND SAVE THOSE PEOPLE AT THE MALL THEY DEVISED A WAY TO TRACK US, AND BUILT A DEVICE TO DAMPEN OUR POWERS.
SO, AS SOON AS THEY PUT THAT THING ON MY HEAD, I WAS POWERLESS... THAT'S HOW THEY PULLED ME IN THE PORTAL SO EASILY.
I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TIME WORKS FOR THEM, FOR ALL I KNOW THEY COULD BE FROM A NONLINEAR DIMENSION... I HAVE NO CLUE HOW LONG I WAS THERE.
I ALWAYS ROUND DOWN... I THINK IT MAKES YOUR MOTHER FEEL BETTER.

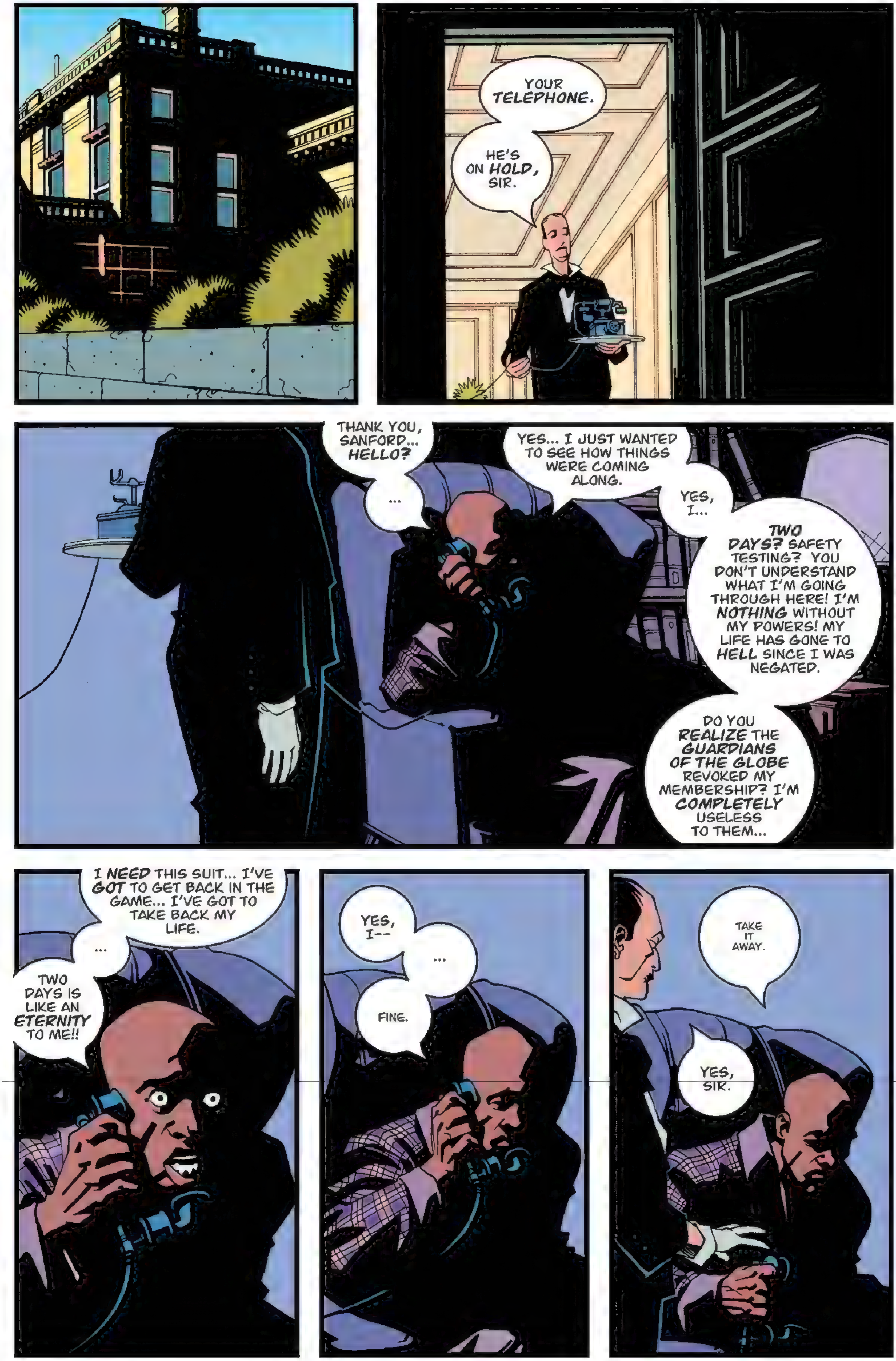

BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
I HEAR THAT RIGHT AFTER THEY PULLED ME INTO THE **PORTAL** YOU **CALLED OUT** FOR ME...
YEAH, SO...?
YOU CALLED ME **"DAD"** AT THE TOP OF YOUR LUNGS.
OH...
OH, JEEZ... I NEVER EVEN REALIZED...
IS THAT BAD?
IT **COULD** HAVE BEEN. WHEN I WAS WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE YESTERDAY, **DARKWING** TOLD ME HE CAUGHT IT ON THE NEWS IN A **FEW** COUNTRIES, BUT HE SAID ALL THEY HAD WAS EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS... NO FOOTAGE.
STILL, YOU'VE BEEN ON THE NEWS ONCE OR TWICE, PEOPLE **KNOW** YOUR NAME... YOU MAY SOON RUN INTO A FEW OF MY VILLAINS TRYING TO GET AT **ME.**
HEADS UP!
I'LL BE READY FOR THEM.
FWAP!

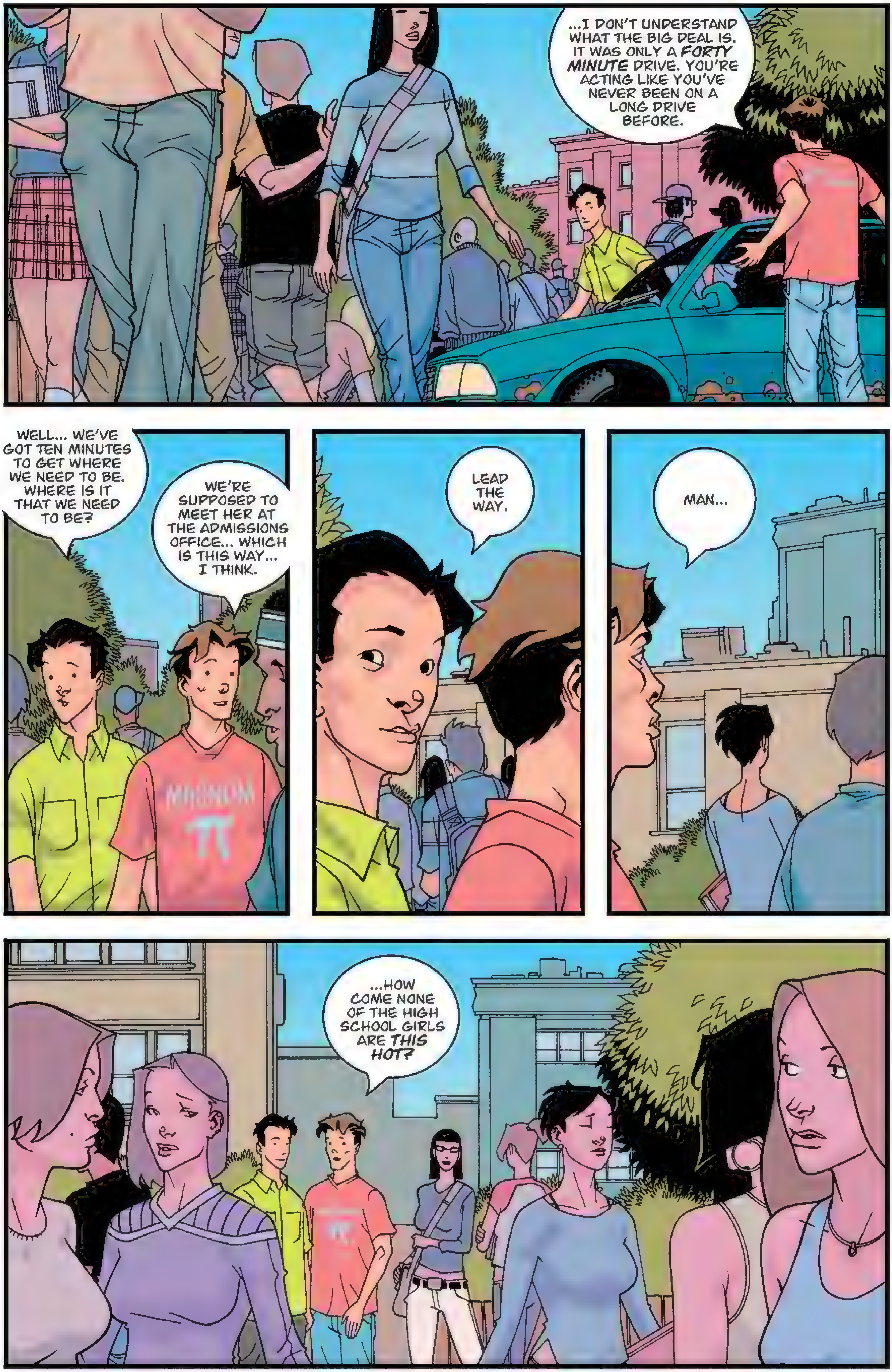

WHEN IS WILLIAM SUPPOSED TO BE HERE?
OH, CRAP! WHAT TIME IS IT?!
ALMOST NOON. ISN'T YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH UPSTATE UNIVERSITY AT ONE?
YEP. HE'S GOING TO BE HERE ANY MINUTE!
WOOOOOSH!
HEY! NO FLYING IN THE HOUSE!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU TWO?!

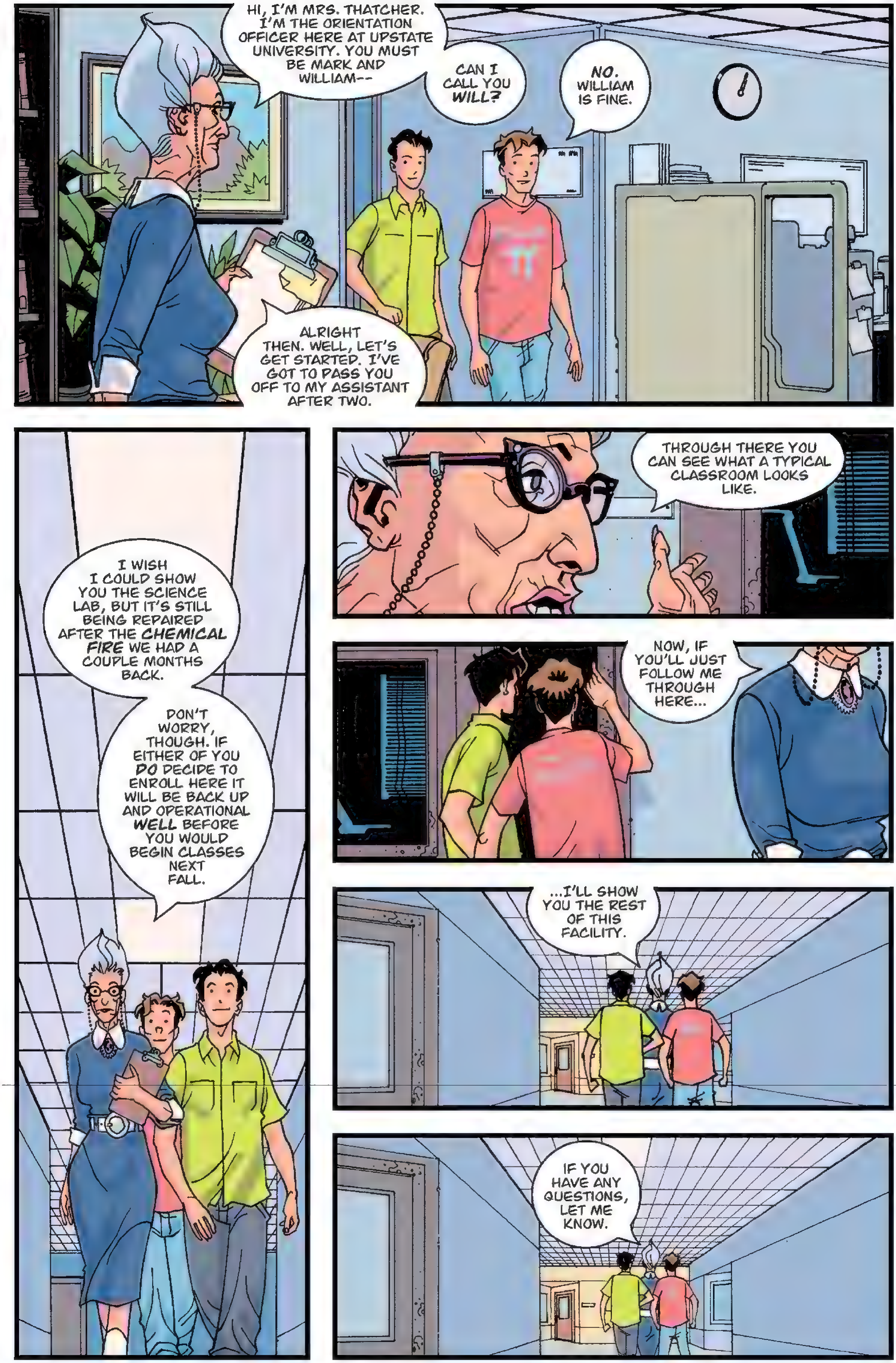

Knock Knock
SORRY I'M--
HEY. WILLIAM. YOU READY?
LET'S HIT THE ROAD!
DRIVE CAREFULLY.
OOP! I FORGOT SOMETHING! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
EXCUSE ME.
THAP!
SORRY, FORGOT MY...
...WALLET.

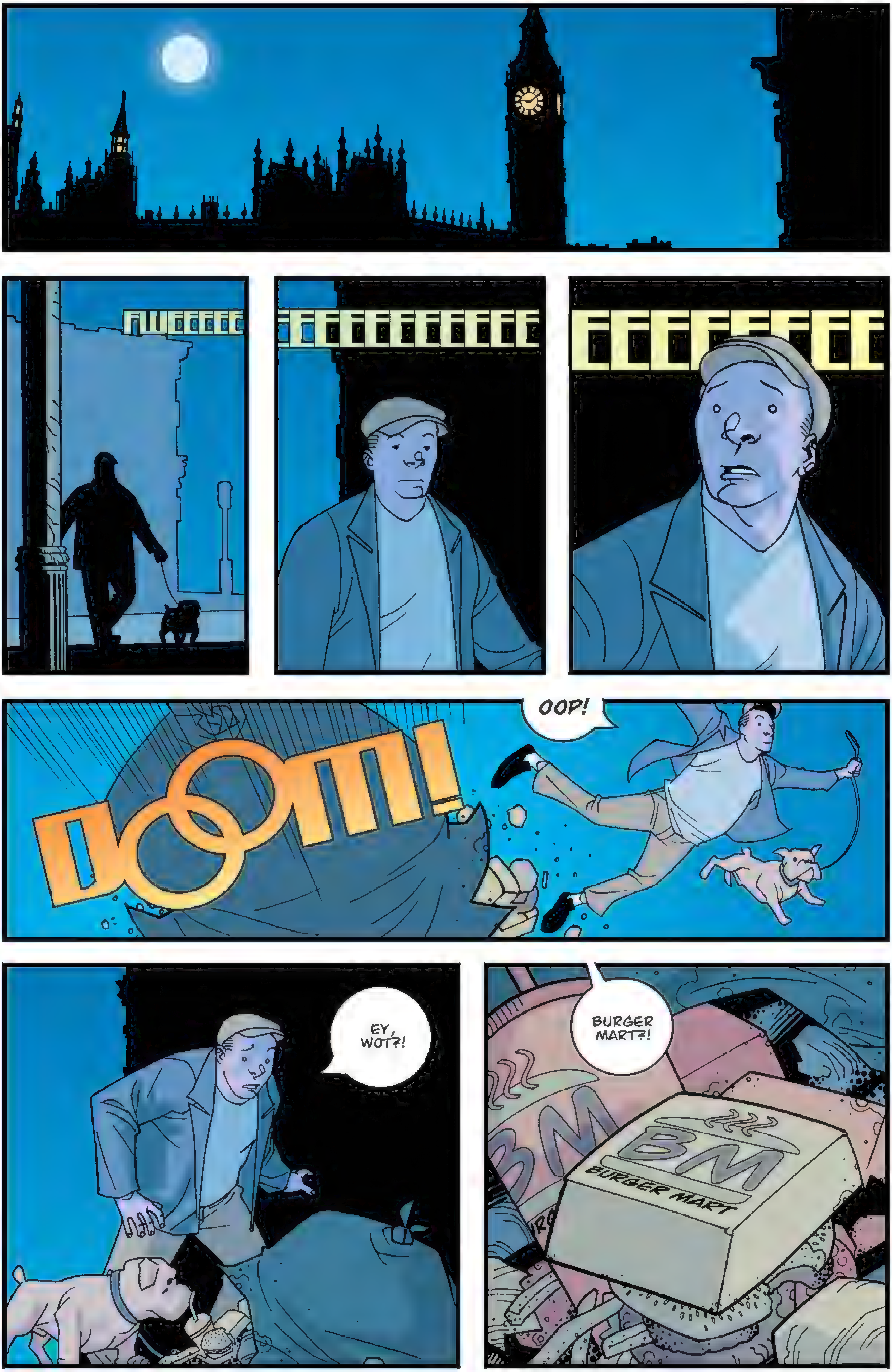

BYE! WE WON'T BE BACK TOO LATE, I PROMISE!
ALONE AT LAST...
FOR NOW. DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEWHERE YOU NEED TO BE?
NOT TODAY...
YOU MEAN?!
YEP... I'M TAKING THE DAY OFF. THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE COVERING FOR ME.
OH, NOLAN...
I'LL RACE YOU UPSTAIRS.
VOOOOOSH!
NOW, THAT'S HARDLY FAIR!
OOP!
OH, NEVER MIND.
C'MON!
VOOOOOOSH!

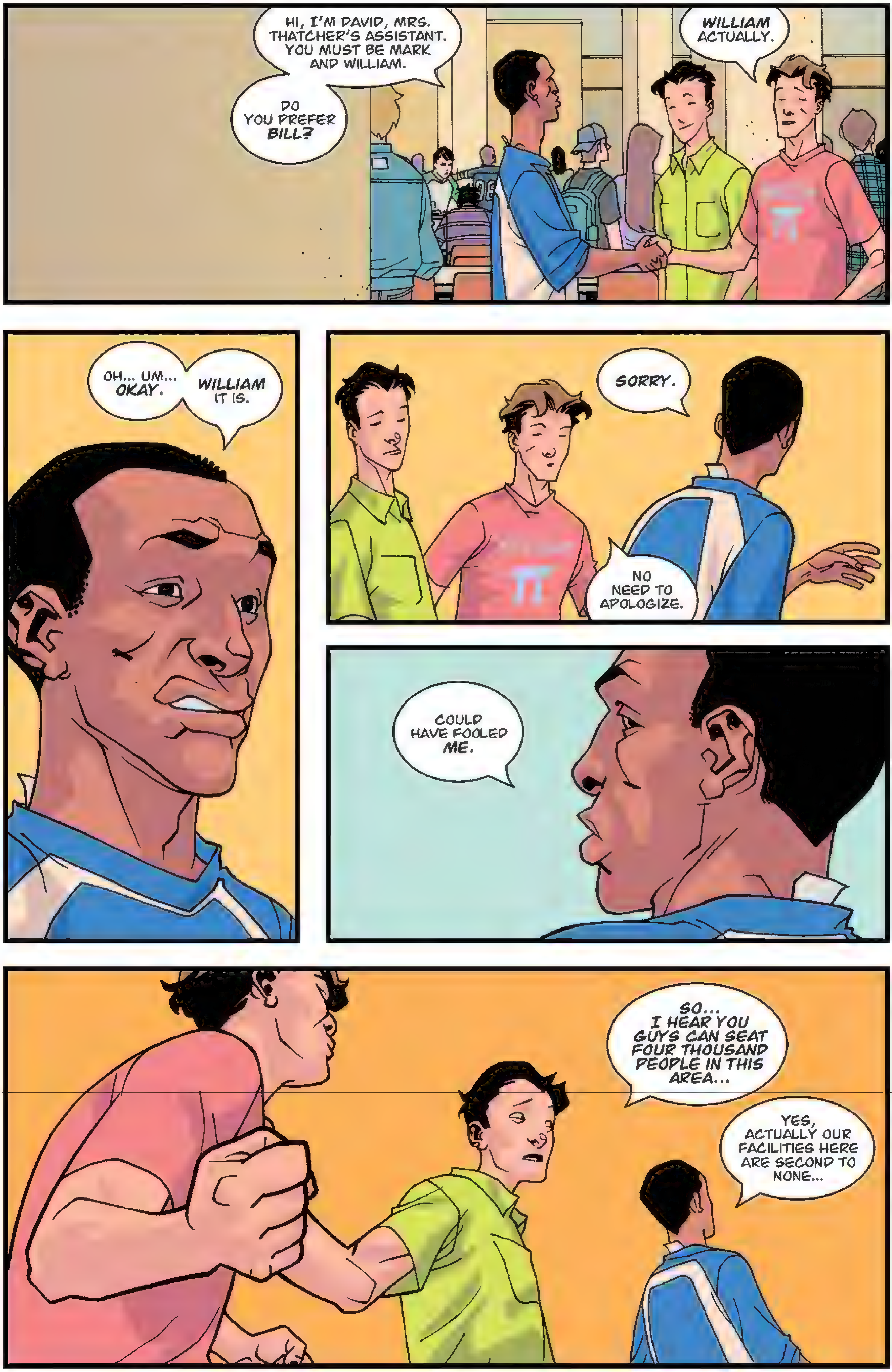

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE ALL WONDERING *WHY* I CALLED YOU HERE.
IF THERE IS *ONE* THING I HAVE LEARNED IN MY LIFE THUS FAR IT'S THAT *THINGS CHANGE.* I REMEMBER ALMOST FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN WE STARTED TO WORK TOGETHER HOW *NEW* AND *EXCITING* THINGS WERE... HOW *DIFFERENT* WE ALL WERE BACK THEN.
WE WERE YOUNG, AND RECKLESS... WE WEREN'T QUITE AS *EFFECTIVE* AS WE ARE NOW. THINGS *CHANGED*... AND NOW IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN FOR *ANOTHER* ONE.
I HAVE BEEN INVITED TO TRY OUT FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
OH, *ROBOT-- THAT'S GREAT!*
YEAH, MAN... WELL DONE! I'M SURE YOU'LL *REALLY* TURN SOME HEADS.
YES, REX... WITH MY *NUMEROUS SUPERIOR* SKILLS, I HAVE NO DOUBT I WILL BE GRANTED *FULL* MEMBERSHIP... I'LL BE ABLE TO DO A LOT MORE GOOD WITH SUCH A LARGE ORGANIZATION.
BUT DO NOT BE SO EXCITED FOR ME, THIS COMES WITH SAD NEWS AS WELL... I AM *DISBANDING* THE TEEN TEAM IN LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION.
I CANNOT BE ON *TWO* TEAMS AT ONCE AND REMAIN *EFFECTIVE.* BESIDES... THE NAME WOULD HAVE BECOME *INACCURATE* IN A COUPLE YEARS ANYWAY.
OF COURSE, THIS FACILITY WILL ALWAYS BE OPEN FOR YOUR *PRIVATE* USE AND I WILL *ALWAYS* ASSIST YOU IF I CAN.
THIS IS NOT THE *END*, IT IS A BEGINNING.
WE *TOTALLY* UNDERSTAND, MAN. C'MERE, YA BUCKET OF BOLTS. I'M PROUD OF YOU.
CONGRATULATIONS, ROBOT.
WE WILL MISS YOU.
I WILL MISS YOU ALL, AS WELL.

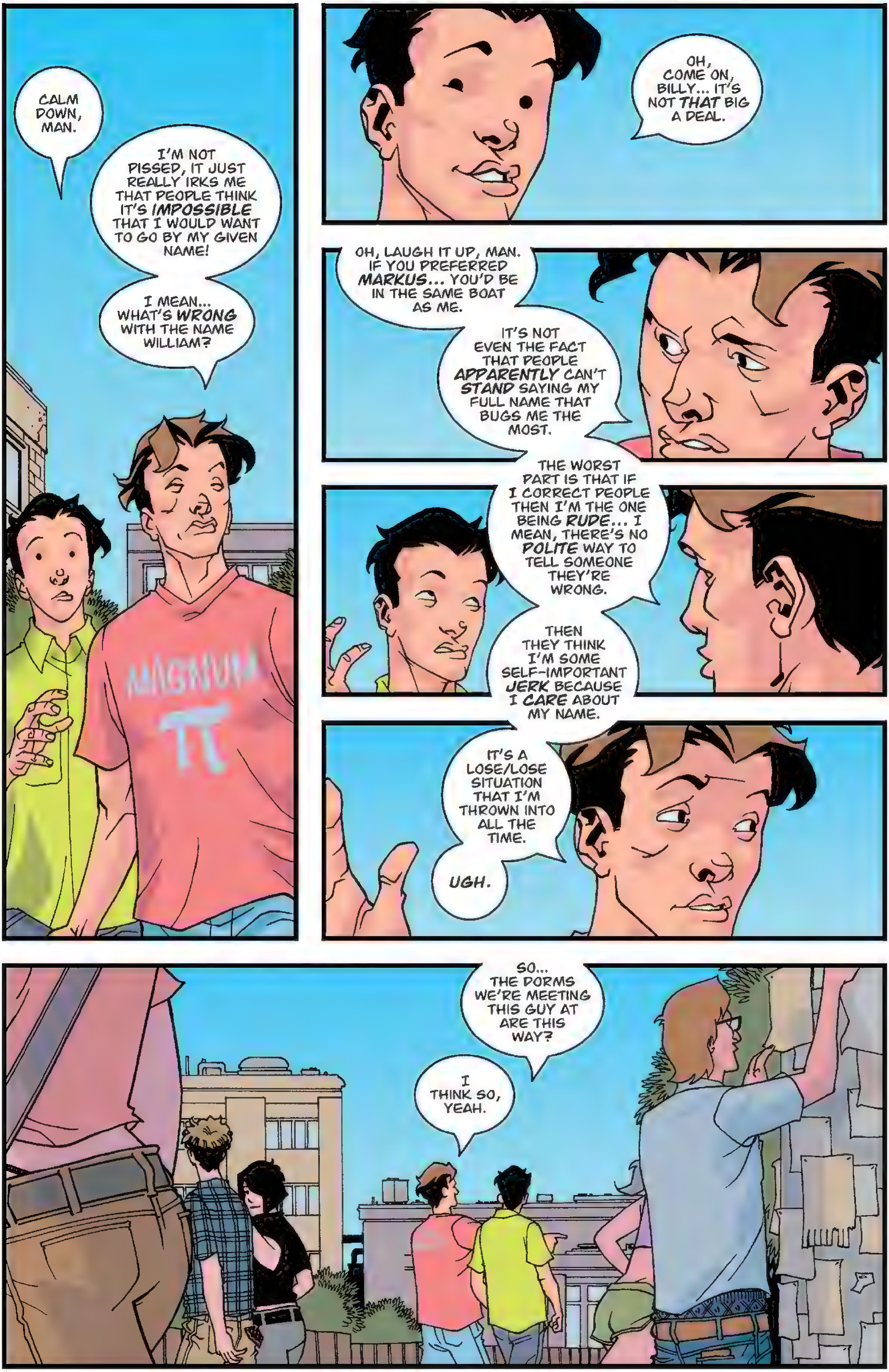

YOUR TELEPHONE.
HE'S ON HOLD, SIR.
THANK YOU, SANFORD... HELLO?
...
YES... I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW THINGS WERE COMING ALONG.
YES, I...
TWO DAYS? SAFETY TESTING? YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH HERE! I'M NOTHING WITHOUT MY POWERS! MY LIFE HAS GONE TO HELL SINCE I WAS NEGATED.
DO YOU REALIZE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE REVOKED MY MEMBERSHIP? I'M COMPLETELY USELESS TO THEM...
I NEED THIS SUIT... I'VE GOT TO GET BACK IN THE GAME... I'VE GOT TO TAKE BACK MY LIFE.
...
TWO DAYS IS LIKE AN ETERNITY TO ME!!
YES, I--
...
FINE.
TAKE IT AWAY.
YES, SIR.

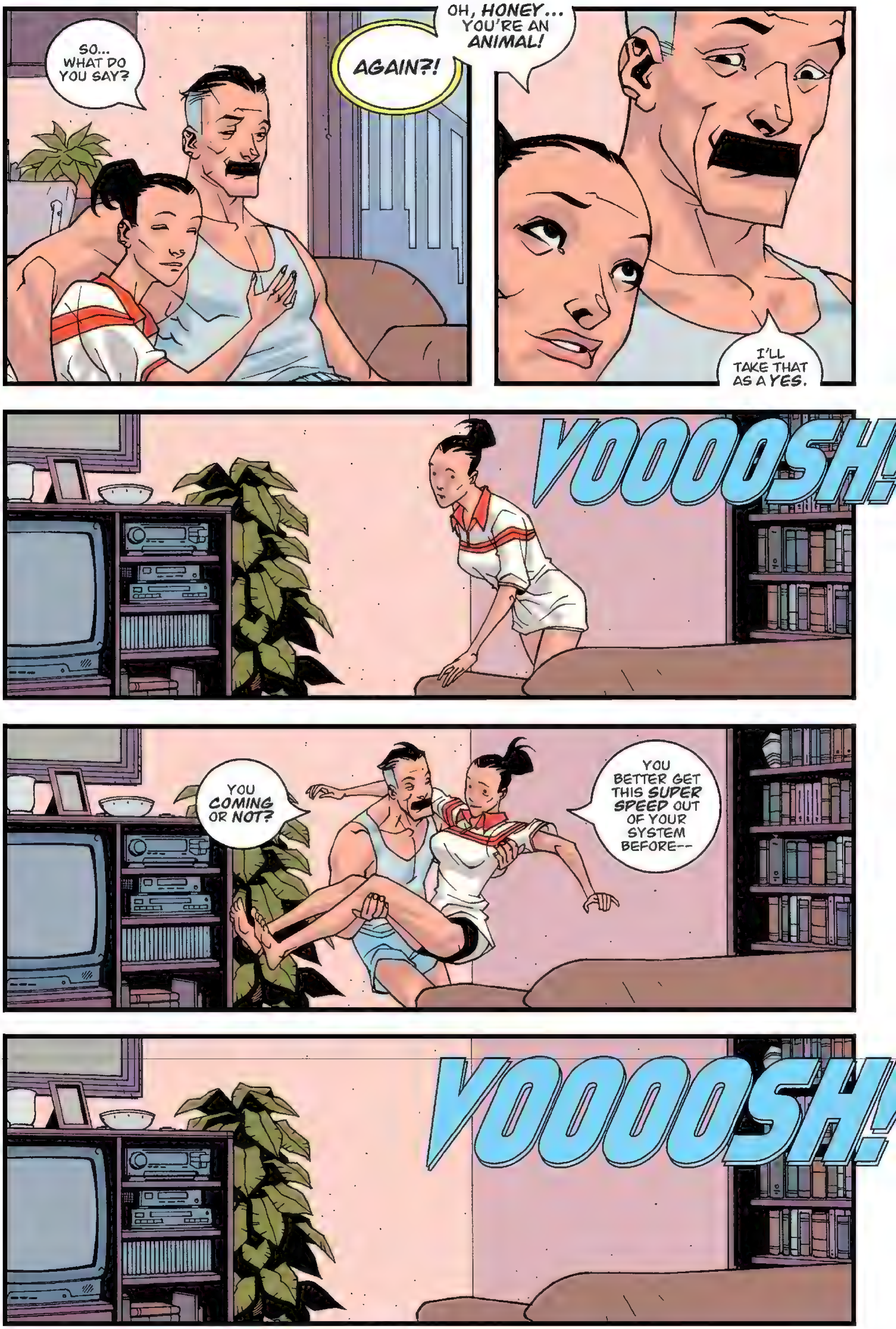

...I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS. IT WAS ONLY A *FORTY MINUTE* DRIVE. YOU'RE ACTING LIKE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ON A LONG DRIVE BEFORE.
WELL... WE'VE GOT TEN MINUTES TO GET WHERE WE NEED TO BE. WHERE IS IT THAT WE NEED TO BE?
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET HER AT THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE... WHICH IS THIS WAY... *I* THINK.
LEAD THE WAY.
MAN...
...HOW COME NONE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS ARE *THIS HOT?*

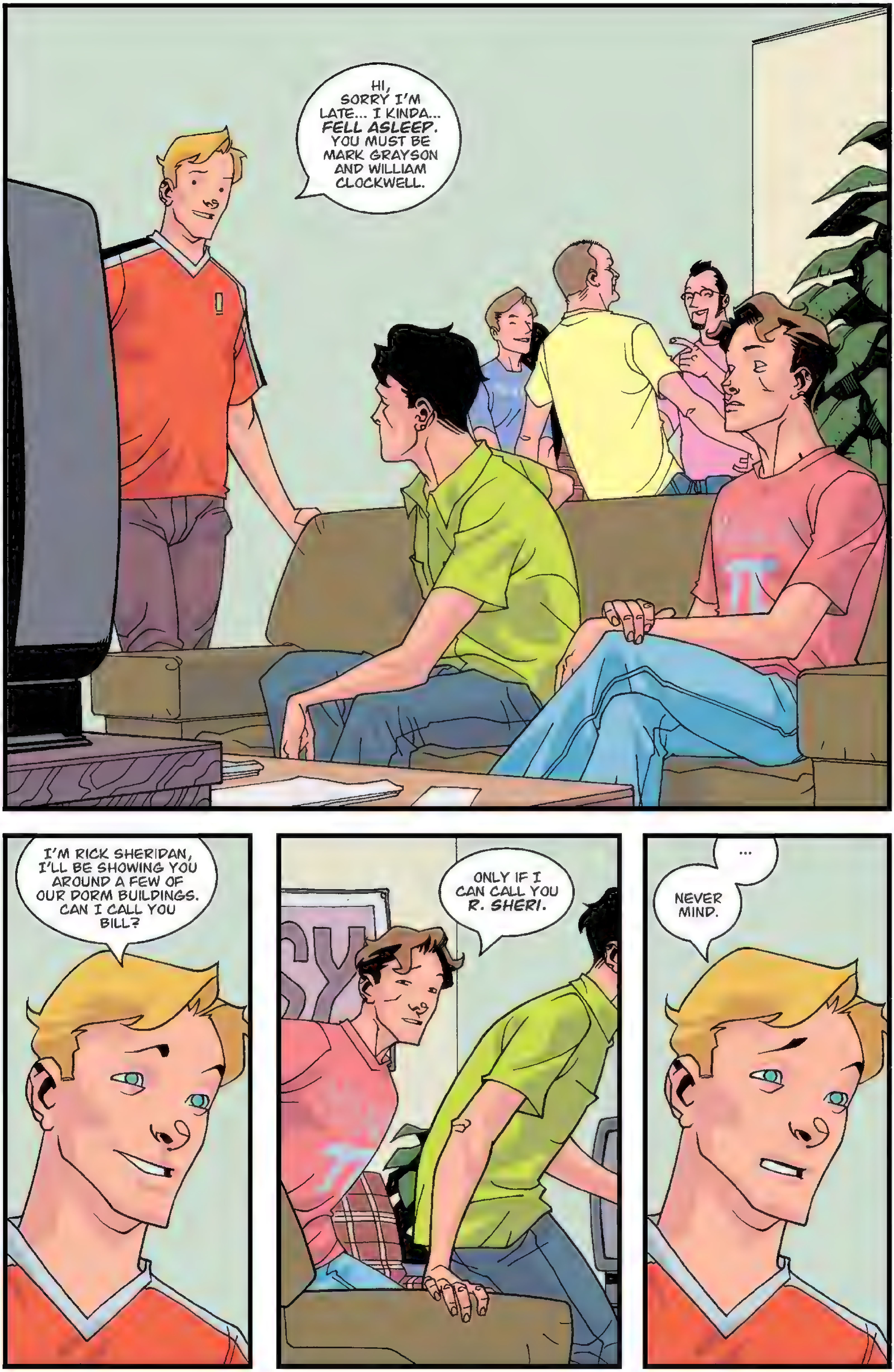

HI, I'M MRS. THATCHER. I'M THE ORIENTATION OFFICER HERE AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. YOU MUST BE MARK AND WILLIAM--
CAN I CALL YOU *WILL?*
NO. WILLIAM IS FINE.
ALRIGHT THEN. WELL, LET'S GET STARTED. I'VE GOT TO PASS YOU OFF TO MY ASSISTANT AFTER TWO.
I WISH I COULD SHOW YOU THE SCIENCE LAB, BUT IT'S STILL BEING REPAIRED AFTER THE ***CHEMICAL FIRE*** WE HAD A COUPLE MONTHS BACK.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. IF EITHER OF YOU ***DO*** DECIDE TO ENROLL HERE IT WILL BE BACK UP AND OPERATIONAL ***WELL*** BEFORE YOU WOULD BEGIN CLASSES NEXT FALL.
THROUGH THERE YOU CAN SEE WHAT A TYPICAL CLASSROOM LOOKS LIKE.
NOW, IF YOU'LL JUST FOLLOW ME THROUGH HERE...
...I'LL SHOW YOU THE REST OF THIS FACILITY.
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, LET ME KNOW.

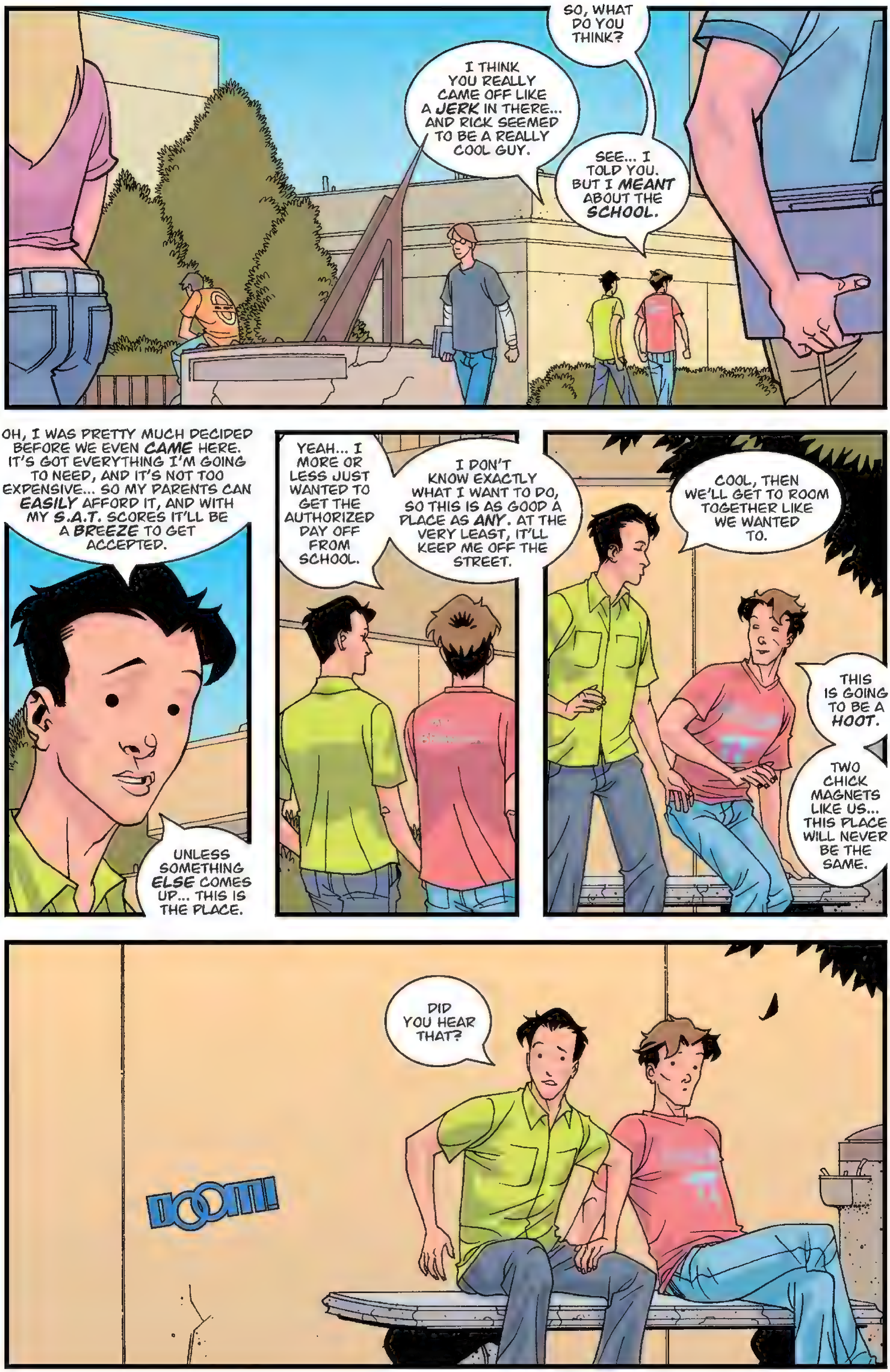

FWEEEEE
EEEEEEEEEEE
EEEEEEEE
DOOM!
OOP!
EY, WOT?!
BURGER MART?!
BM
BM
BURGER MART

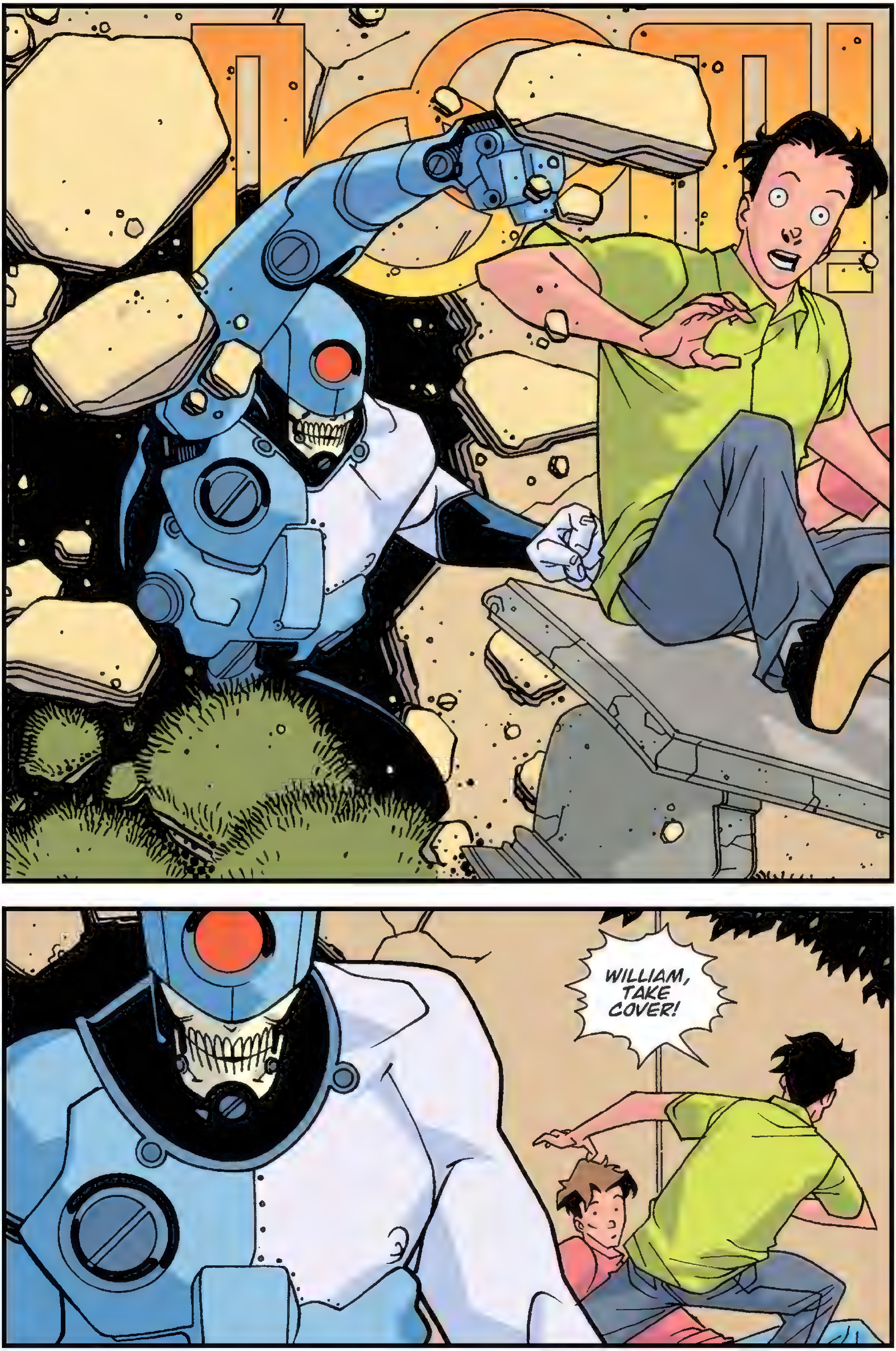

HI, I'M DAVID, MRS. THATCHER'S ASSISTANT. YOU MUST BE MARK AND WILLIAM.
DO YOU PREFER BILL?
WILLIAM ACTUALLY.
OH... UM... OKAY.
WILLIAM IT IS.
SORRY.
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE.
COULD HAVE FOOLED ME.
SO... I HEAR YOU GUYS CAN SEAT FOUR THOUSAND PEOPLE IN THIS AREA...
YES, ACTUALLY OUR FACILITIES HERE ARE SECOND TO NONE...

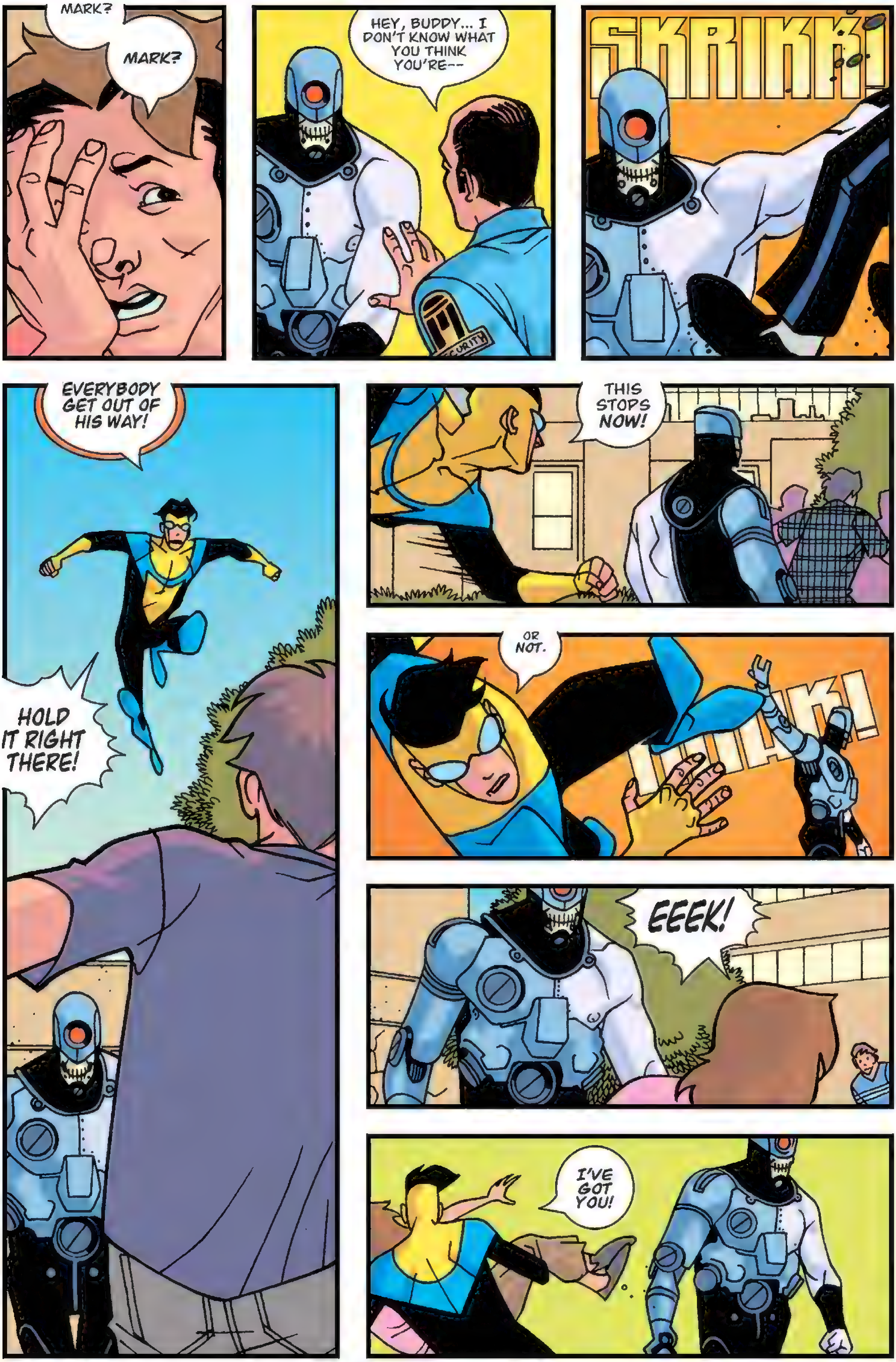

CALM DOWN, MAN.
I'M NOT PISSED, IT JUST REALLY IRKS ME THAT PEOPLE THINK IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE** THAT I WOULD WANT TO GO BY MY GIVEN NAME!
I MEAN... WHAT'S **WRONG** WITH THE NAME WILLIAM?
MAGNUM π
OH, COME ON, BILLY... IT'S NOT **THAT** BIG A DEAL.
OH, LAUGH IT UP, MAN. IF YOU PREFERRED **MARKUS...** YOU'D BE IN THE SAME BOAT AS ME.
IT'S NOT EVEN THE FACT THAT PEOPLE **APPARENTLY** CAN'T **STAND** SAYING MY FULL NAME THAT BUGS ME THE MOST.
THE WORST PART IS THAT IF I CORRECT PEOPLE THEN I'M THE ONE BEING **RUDE...** I MEAN, THERE'S NO **POLITE** WAY TO TELL SOMEONE THEY'RE WRONG.
THEN THEY THINK I'M SOME SELF-IMPORTANT **JERK** BECAUSE I **CARE** ABOUT MY NAME.
IT'S A LOSE/LOSE SITUATION THAT I'M THROWN INTO ALL THE TIME.
UGH.
SO... THE DORMS WE'RE MEETING THIS GUY AT ARE THIS WAY?
I THINK SO, YEAH.

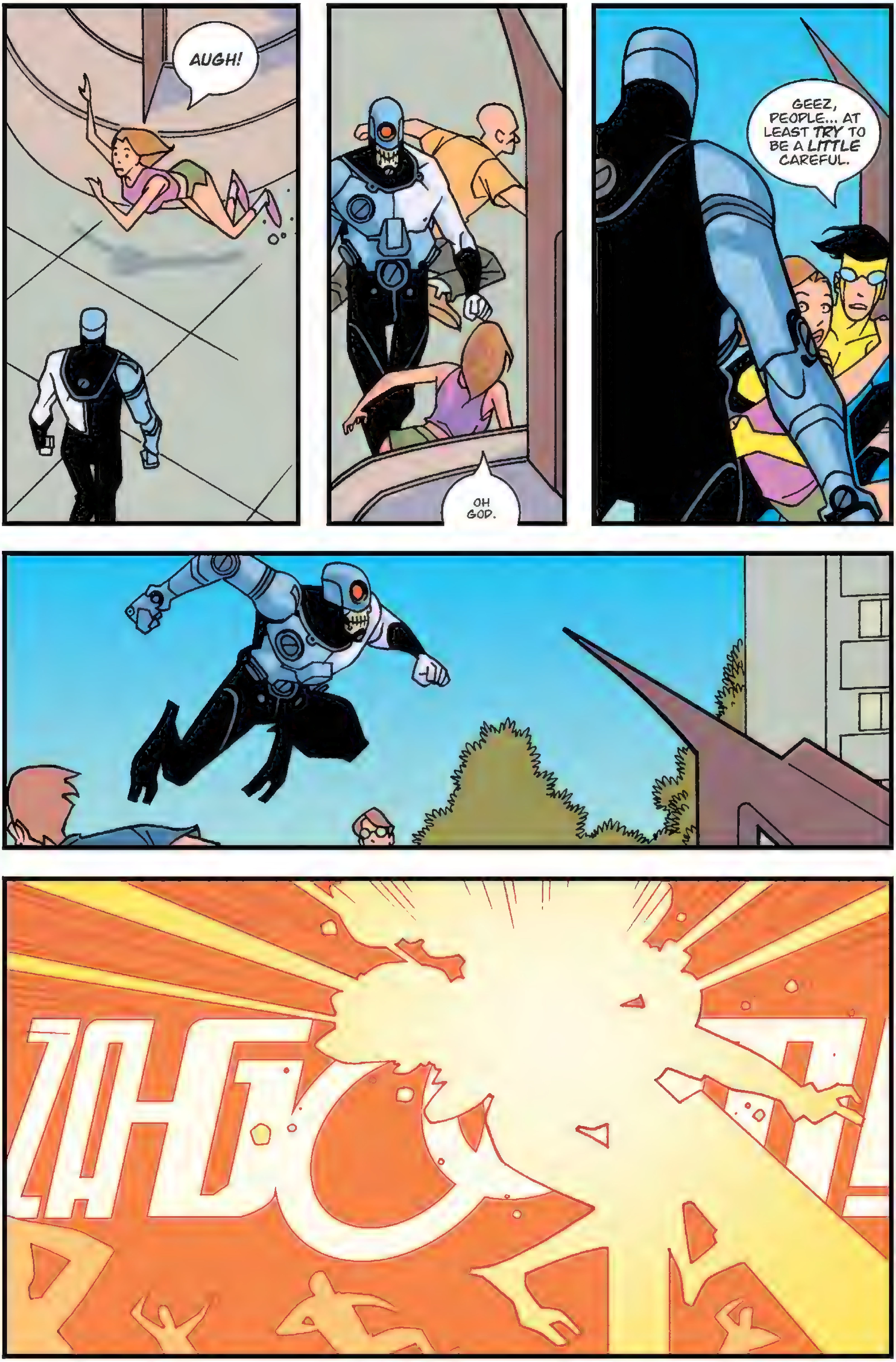

SO... WHAT DO YOU SAY?
AGAIN?!
OH, HONEY... YOU'RE AN ANIMAL!
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A YES.
VOOOOOSH!
YOU COMING OR NOT?
YOU BETTER GET THIS SUPER SPEED OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM BEFORE--
VOOOOOSH!

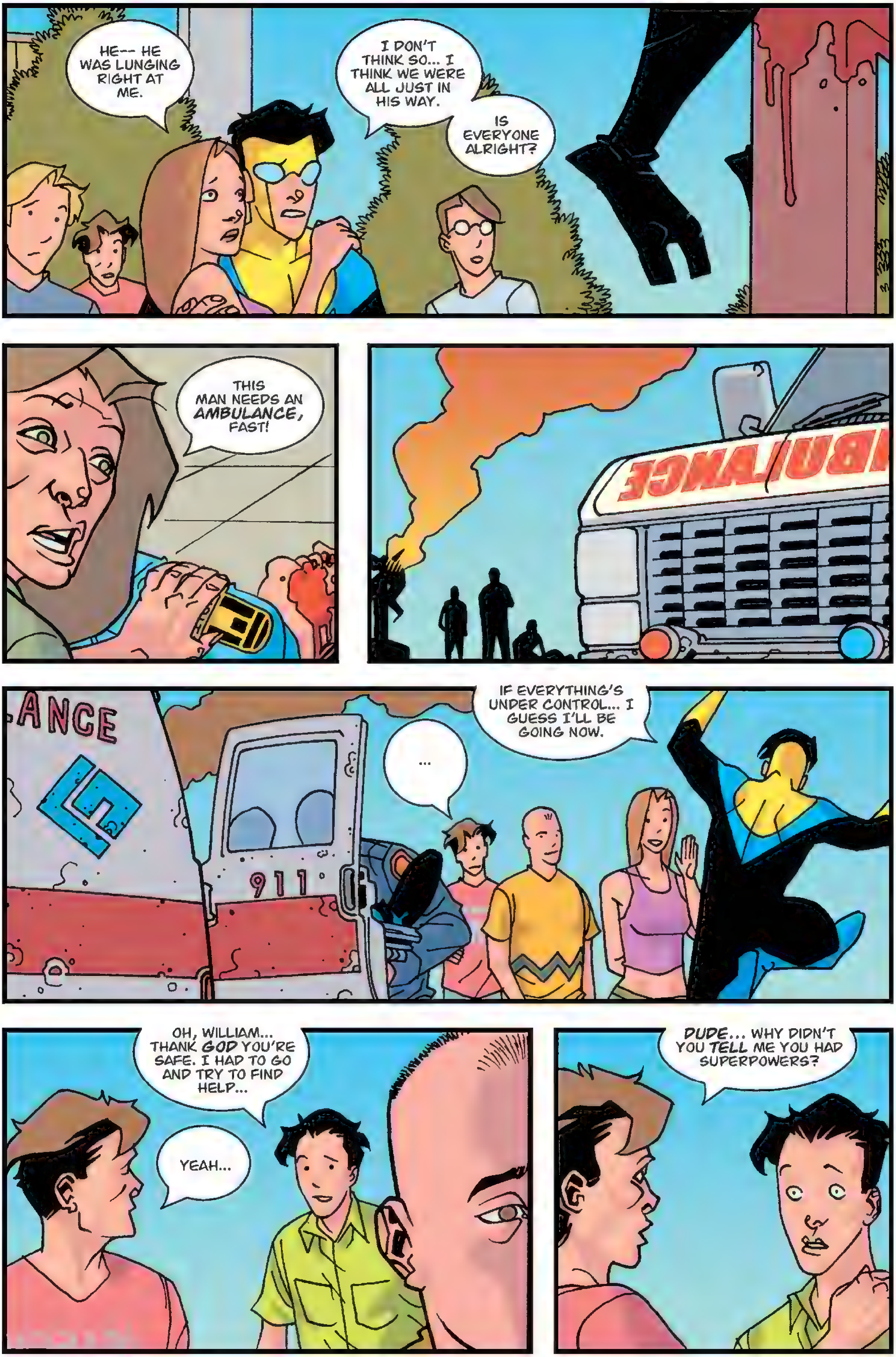

HI, SORRY I'M LATE... I KINDA... **FELL ASLEEP.** YOU MUST BE MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
I'M RICK SHERIDAN, I'LL BE SHOWING YOU AROUND A FEW OF OUR DORM BUILDINGS. CAN I CALL YOU BILL?
ONLY IF I CAN CALL YOU ***R. SHERI.***
...
NEVER MIND.

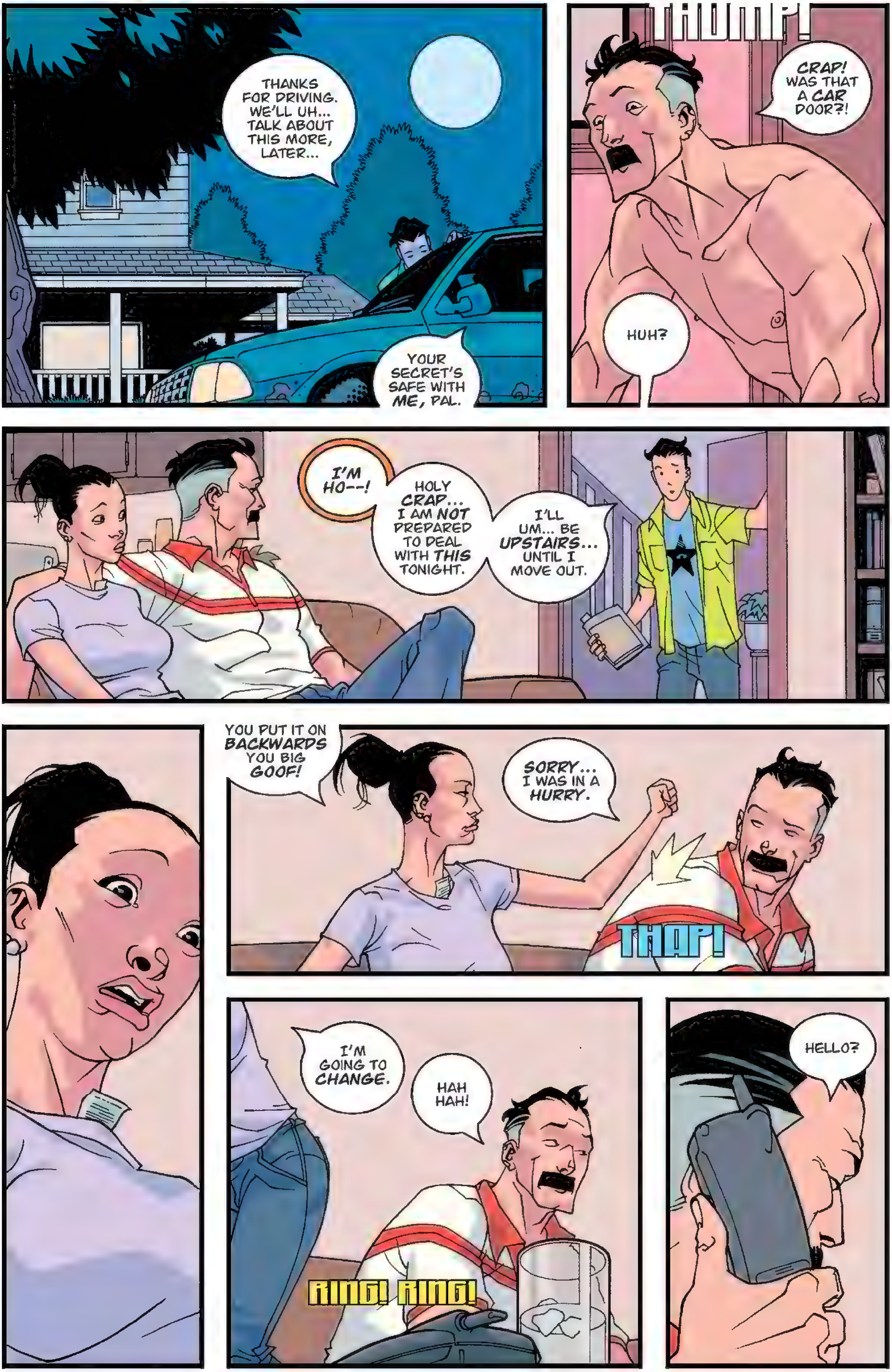

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK YOU REALLY CAME OFF LIKE A *JERK* IN THERE... AND RICK SEEMED TO BE A REALLY COOL GUY.
SEE... I TOLD YOU. BUT I *MEANT* ABOUT THE *SCHOOL*.
OH, I WAS PRETTY MUCH DECIDED BEFORE WE EVEN *CAME* HERE. IT'S GOT EVERYTHING I'M GOING TO NEED, AND IT'S NOT TOO EXPENSIVE... SO MY PARENTS CAN *EASILY* AFFORD IT, AND WITH MY *S.A.T.* SCORES IT'LL BE A *BREEZE* TO GET ACCEPTED.
UNLESS SOMETHING *ELSE* COMES UP... THIS IS THE PLACE.
YEAH... I MORE OR LESS JUST WANTED TO GET THE AUTHORIZED DAY OFF FROM SCHOOL.
I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I WANT TO DO, SO THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS *ANY*. AT THE VERY LEAST, IT'LL KEEP ME OFF THE STREET.
COOL, THEN WE'LL GET TO ROOM TOGETHER LIKE WE WANTED TO.
THIS IS GOING TO BE A *HOOT*.
TWO CHICK MAGNETS LIKE US... THIS PLACE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
DOOM!

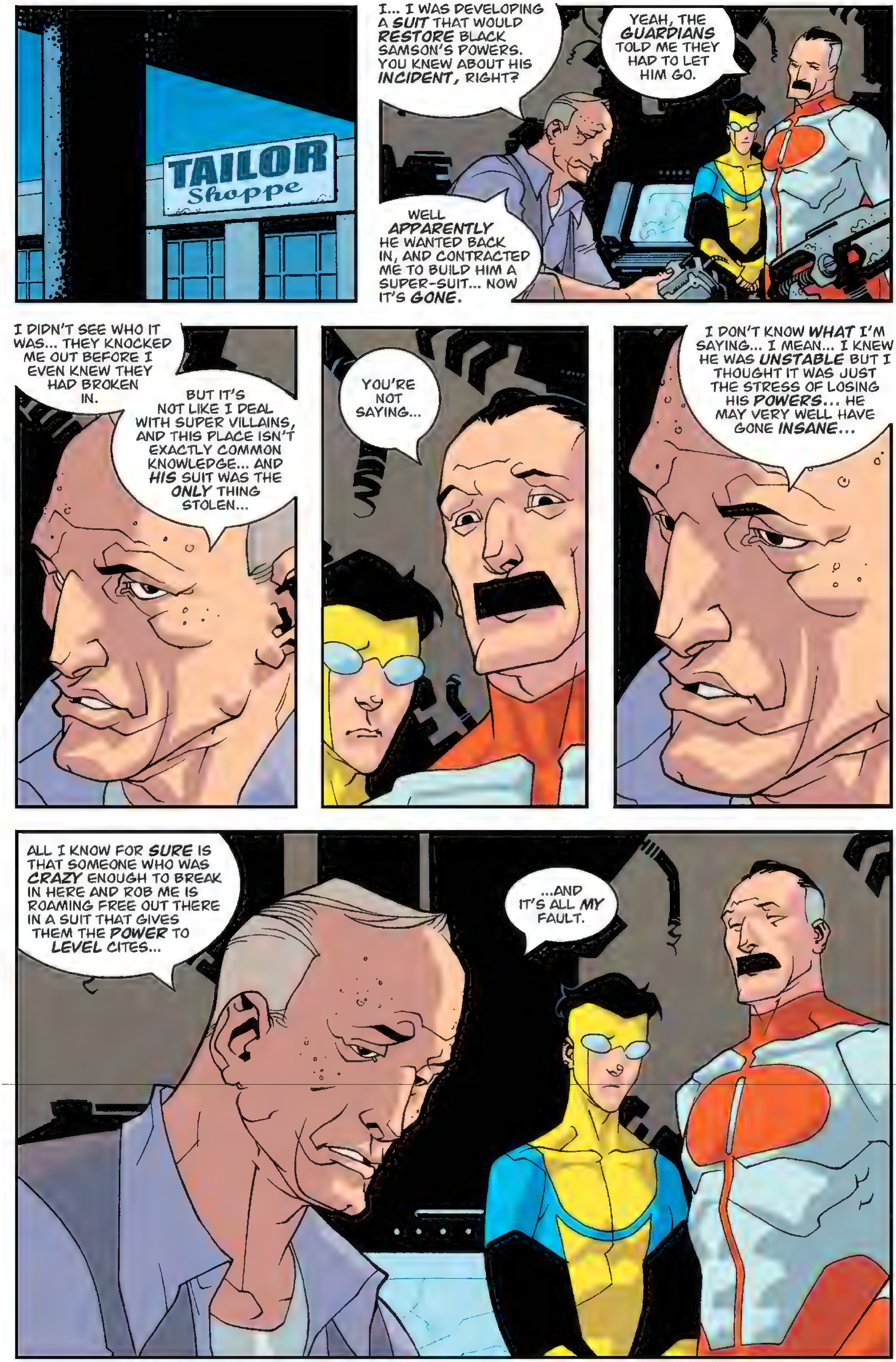

WILLIAM, TAKE COVER!

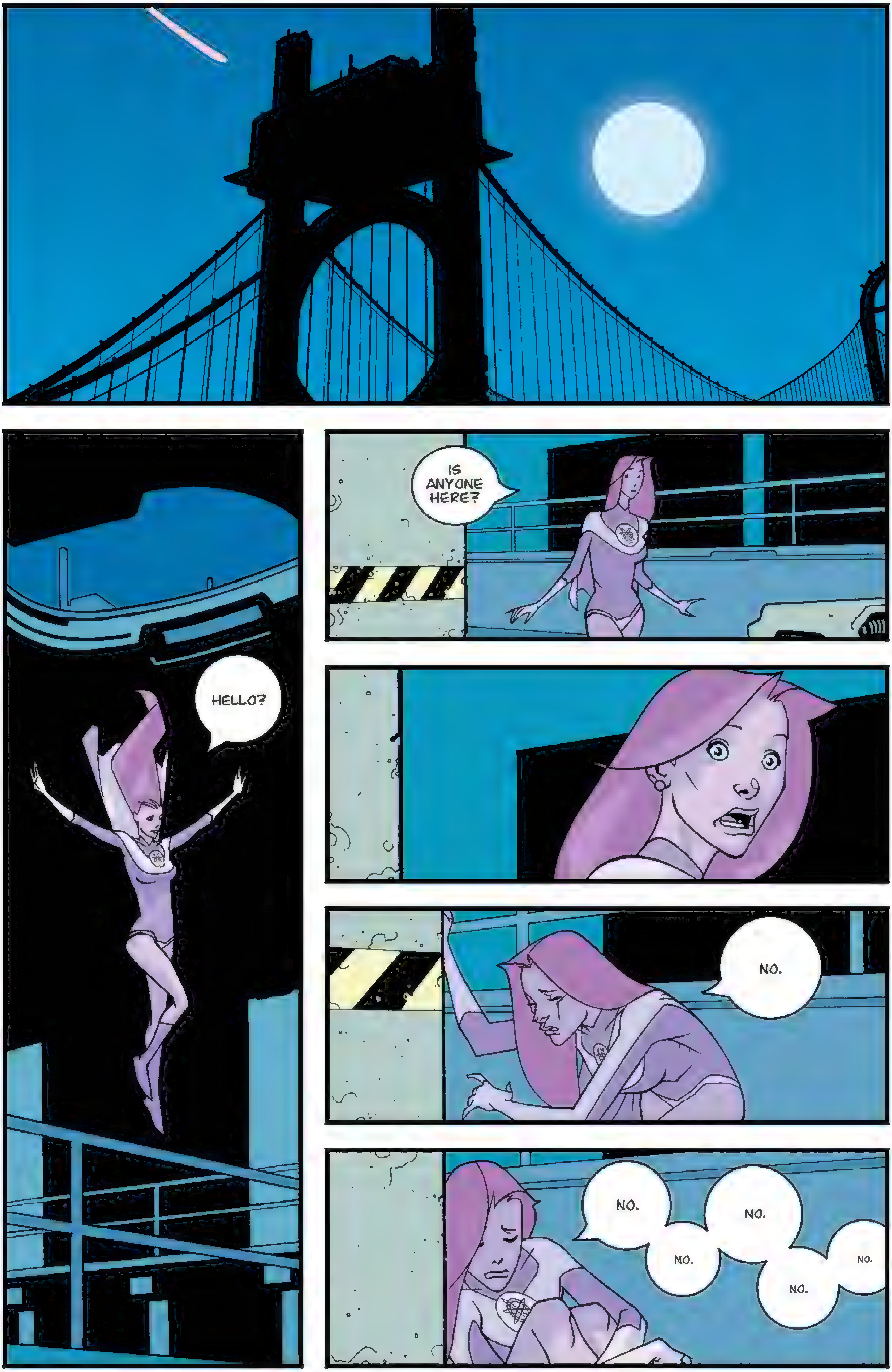

MARK?
MARK?
HEY, BUDDY... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE--
SKRIKK!
EVERYBODY GET OUT OF HIS WAY!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
THIS STOPS NOW!
OR NOT.
EEEK!
I'VE GOT YOU!


AUGH!
OH GOD.
GEEZ, PEOPLE... AT LEAST *TRY* TO BE A *LITTLE* CAREFUL.
ZHOOM!

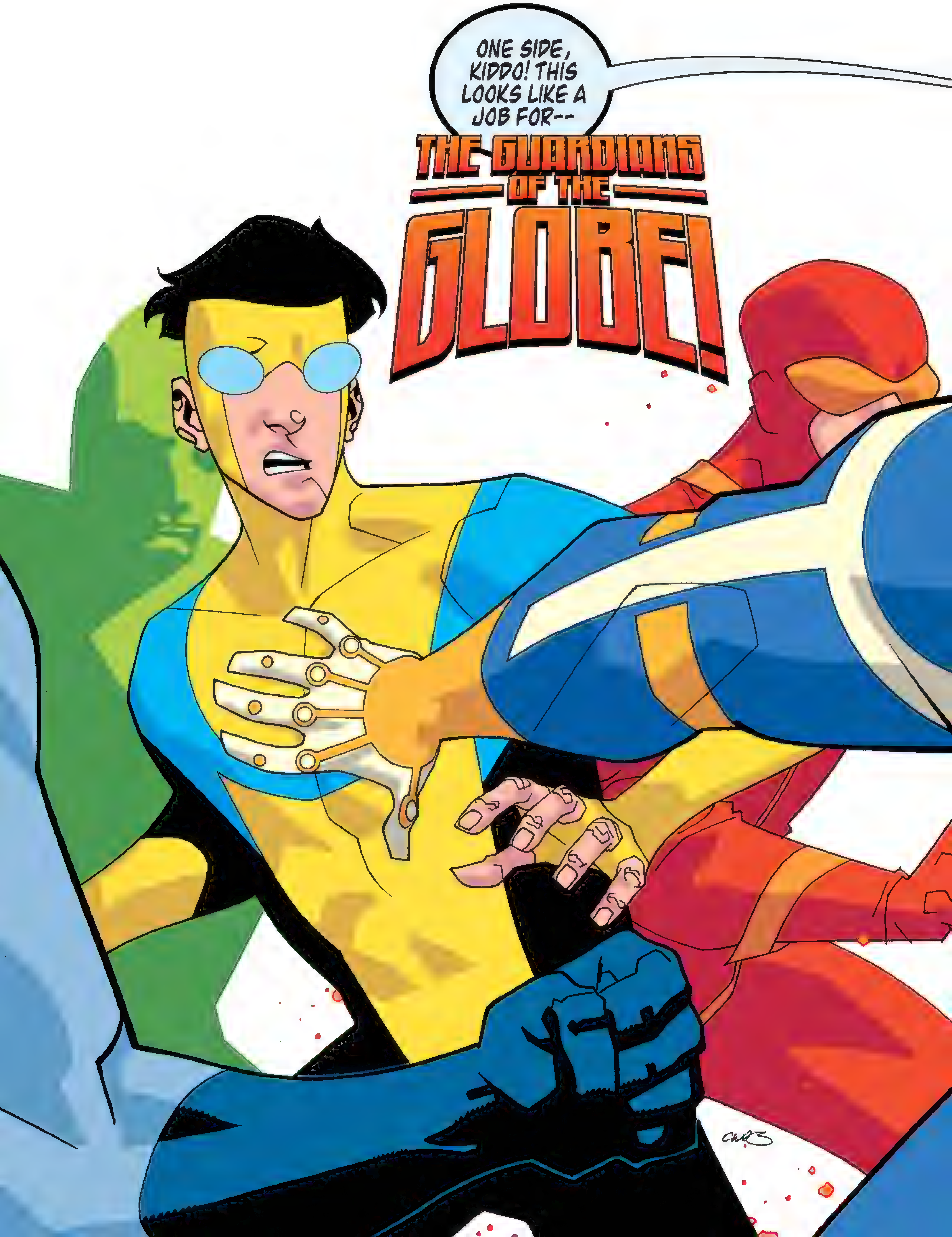

HE-- HE WAS LUNGING RIGHT AT ME.
I DON'T THINK SO... I THINK WE WERE ALL JUST IN HIS WAY.
IS EVERYONE ALRIGHT?
THIS MAN NEEDS AN *AMBULANCE*, FAST!
AMBULANCE
ANCE
911
...
IF EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL... I GUESS I'LL BE GOING NOW.
OH, WILLIAM... THANK *GOD* YOU'RE SAFE. I HAD TO GO AND TRY TO FIND HELP...
YEAH...
DUDE... WHY DIDN'T YOU *TELL* ME YOU HAD SUPERPOWERS?

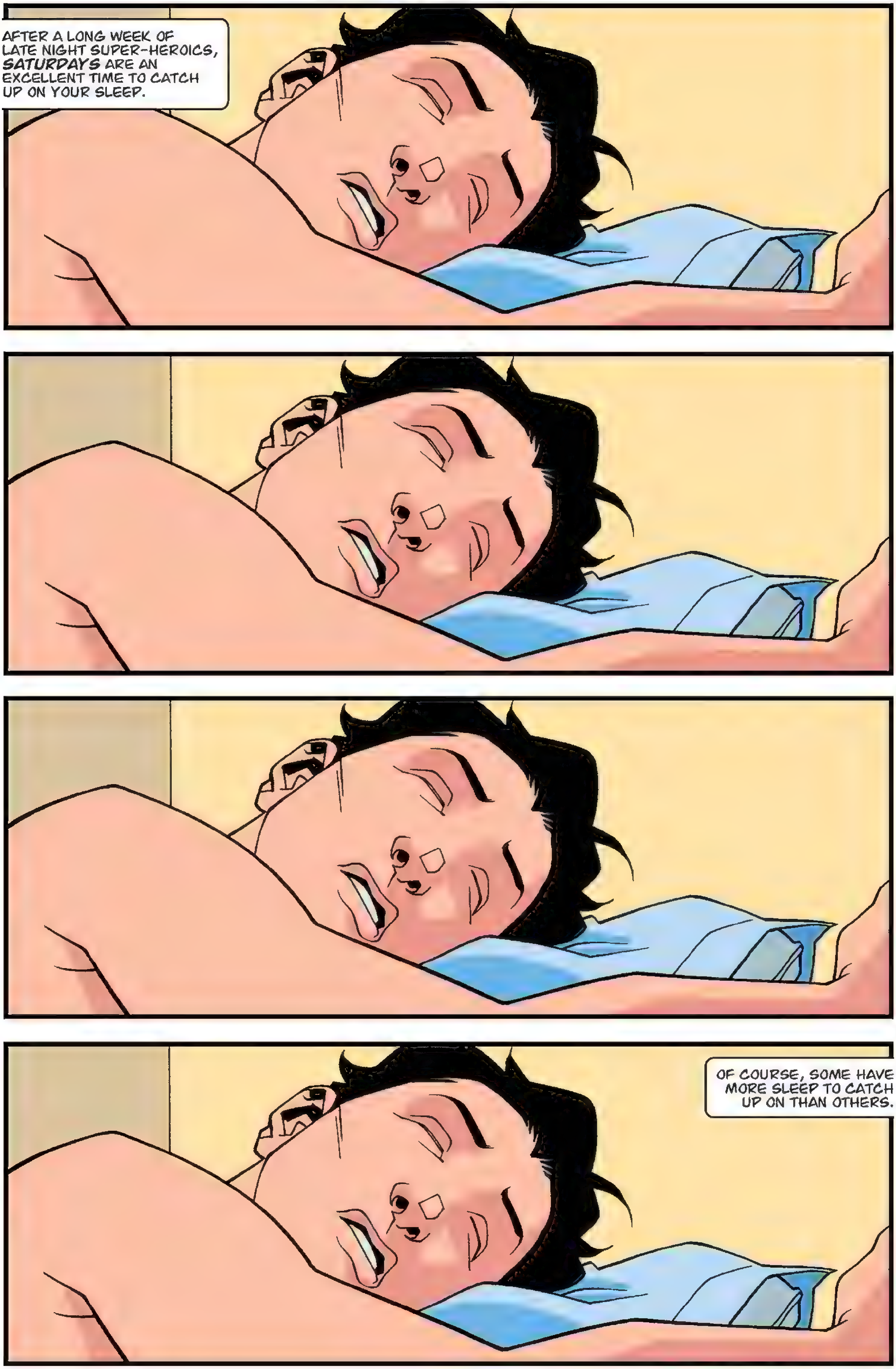

THANKS FOR DRIVING. WE'LL UH... TALK ABOUT THIS MORE, LATER...
YOUR SECRET'S SAFE WITH ME, PAL.
THUMP!
CRAP! WAS THAT A CAR DOOR?!
HUH?
I'M HO--!
HOLY CRAP... I AM NOT PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THIS TONIGHT.
I'LL UM... BE UPSTAIRS... UNTIL I MOVE OUT.
YOU PUT IT ON BACKWARDS YOU BIG GOOF!
SORRY... I WAS IN A HURRY.
THAP!
I'M GOING TO CHANGE.
HAH HAH!
RING! RING!
HELLO?

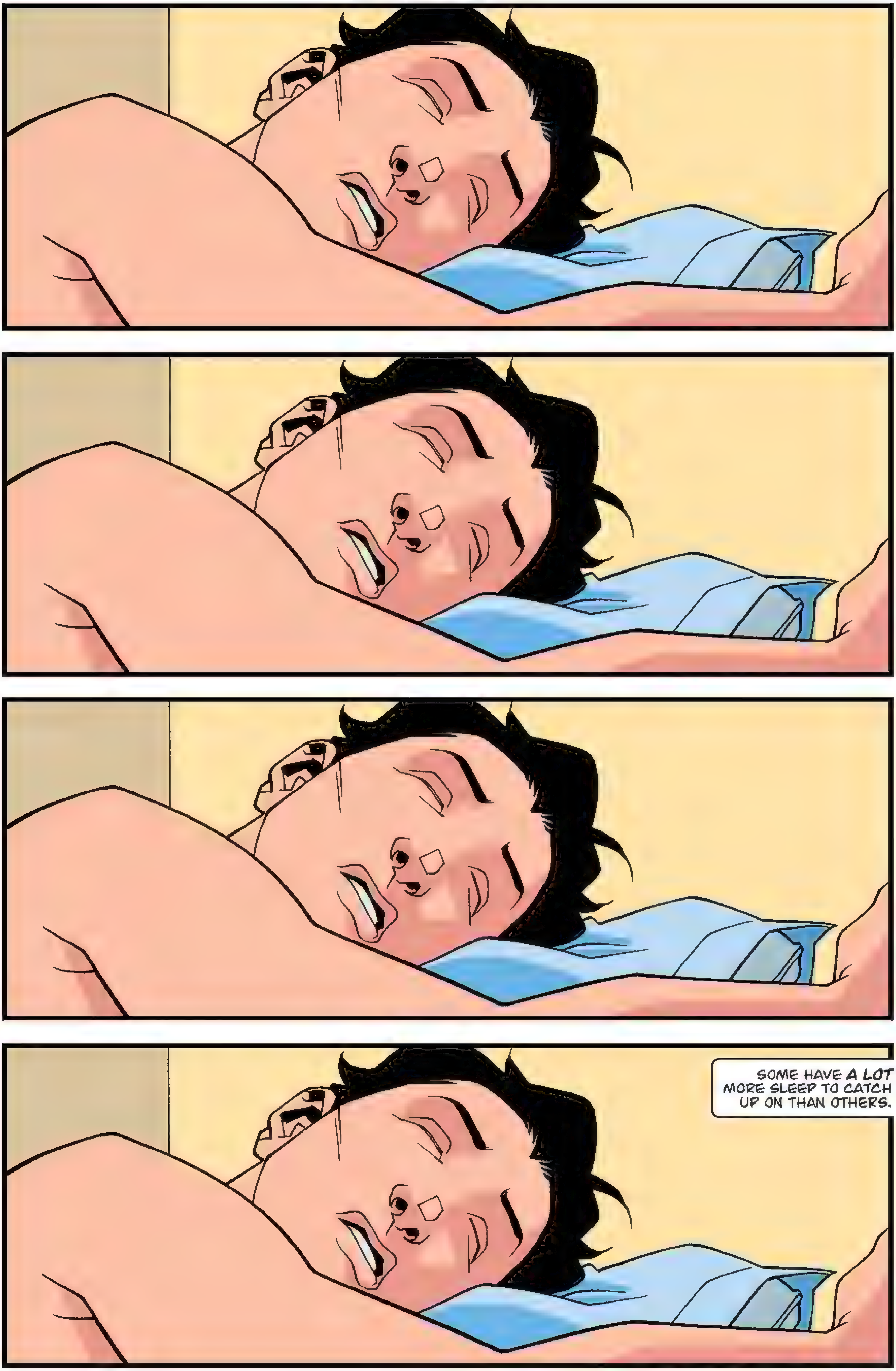

TAILOR Shoppe
I... I WAS DEVELOPING A *SUIT* THAT WOULD *RESTORE* BLACK SAMSON'S POWERS. YOU KNEW ABOUT HIS *INCIDENT*, RIGHT?
YEAH, THE *GUARDIANS* TOLD ME THEY HAD TO LET HIM GO.
WELL *APPARENTLY* HE WANTED BACK IN, AND CONTRACTED ME TO BUILD HIM A SUPER-SUIT... NOW IT'S *GONE*.
I DIDN'T SEE WHO IT WAS... THEY KNOCKED ME OUT BEFORE I EVEN KNEW THEY HAD BROKEN IN.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I DEAL WITH SUPER VILLAINS, AND THIS PLACE ISN'T EXACTLY COMMON KNOWLEDGE... AND *HIS* SUIT WAS THE *ONLY* THING STOLEN...
YOU'RE NOT SAYING...
I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* I'M SAYING... I MEAN... I KNEW HE WAS *UNSTABLE* BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THE STRESS OF LOSING HIS *POWERS*... HE MAY VERY WELL HAVE GONE *INSANE*...
ALL I KNOW FOR *SURE* IS THAT SOMEONE WHO WAS *CRAZY* ENOUGH TO BREAK IN HERE AND ROB ME IS ROAMING FREE OUT THERE IN A SUIT THAT GIVES THEM THE *POWER* TO *LEVEL* CITES...
...AND IT'S ALL *MY* FAULT.

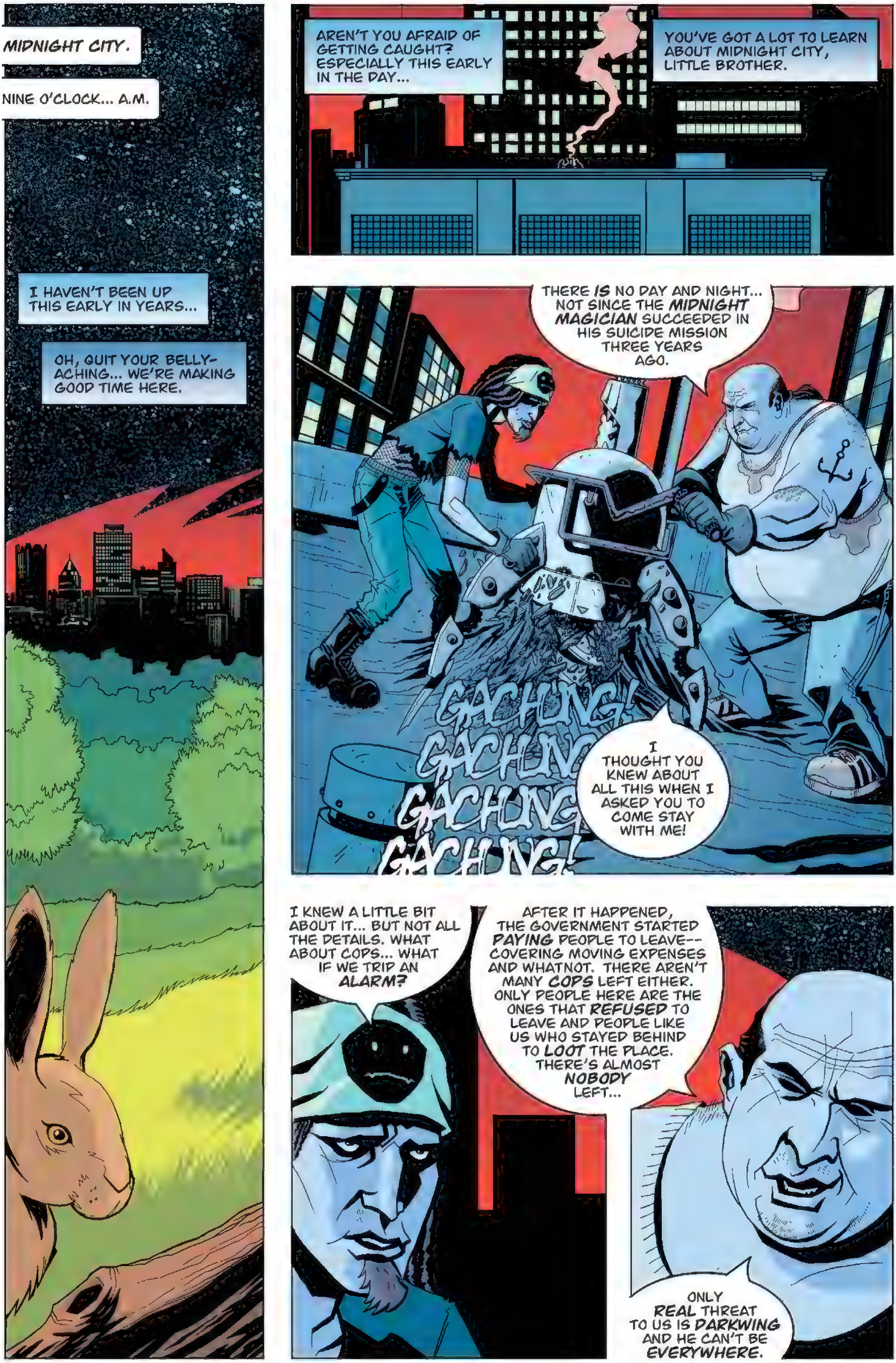

HELLO?
IS ANYONE HERE?
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.

ISSUE SEVEN


ONE SIDE, KIDDO! THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR--
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE!

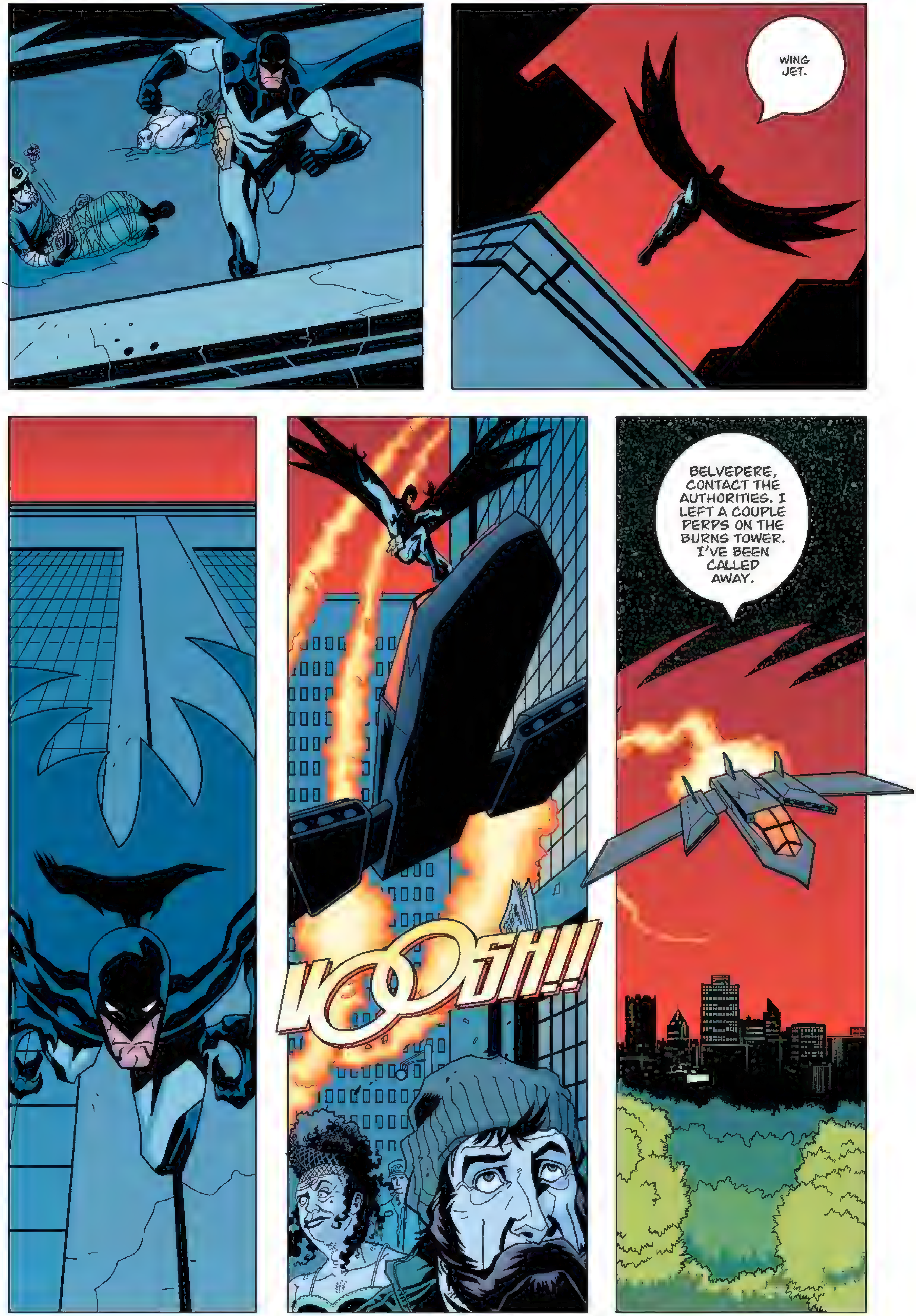

AFTER A LONG WEEK OF LATE NIGHT SUPER-HEROICS, ***SATURDAYS*** ARE AN EXCELLENT TIME TO CATCH UP ON YOUR SLEEP.
OF COURSE, SOME HAVE MORE SLEEP TO CATCH UP ON THAN OTHERS.


SOME HAVE A ***LOT*** MORE SLEEP TO CATCH UP ON THAN OTHERS.


MIDNIGHT CITY.
NINE O'CLOCK... A.M.
AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF GETTING CAUGHT? ESPECIALLY THIS EARLY IN THE DAY...
YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT MIDNIGHT CITY, LITTLE BROTHER.
I HAVEN'T BEEN UP THIS EARLY IN YEARS...
OH, QUIT YOUR BELLY-ACHING... WE'RE MAKING GOOD TIME HERE.
THERE *IS* NO DAY AND NIGHT... NOT SINCE THE ***MIDNIGHT MAGICIAN*** SUCCEEDED IN HIS SUICIDE MISSION THREE YEARS AGO.
GACHUNG! GACHUNG! GACHUNG! GACHUNG!
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ALL THIS WHEN I ASKED YOU TO COME STAY WITH ME!
I KNEW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT IT... BUT NOT ALL THE DETAILS. WHAT ABOUT COPS... WHAT IF WE TRIP AN ***ALARM?***
AFTER IT HAPPENED, THE GOVERNMENT STARTED ***PAYING*** PEOPLE TO LEAVE--COVERING MOVING EXPENSES AND WHATNOT. THERE AREN'T MANY ***COPS*** LEFT EITHER. ONLY PEOPLE HERE ARE THE ONES THAT ***REFUSED*** TO LEAVE AND PEOPLE LIKE US WHO STAYED BEHIND TO ***LOOT*** THE PLACE. THERE'S ALMOST ***NOBODY*** LEFT...
ONLY ***REAL*** THREAT TO US IS ***DARKWING*** AND HE CAN'T BE ***EVERYWHERE.***

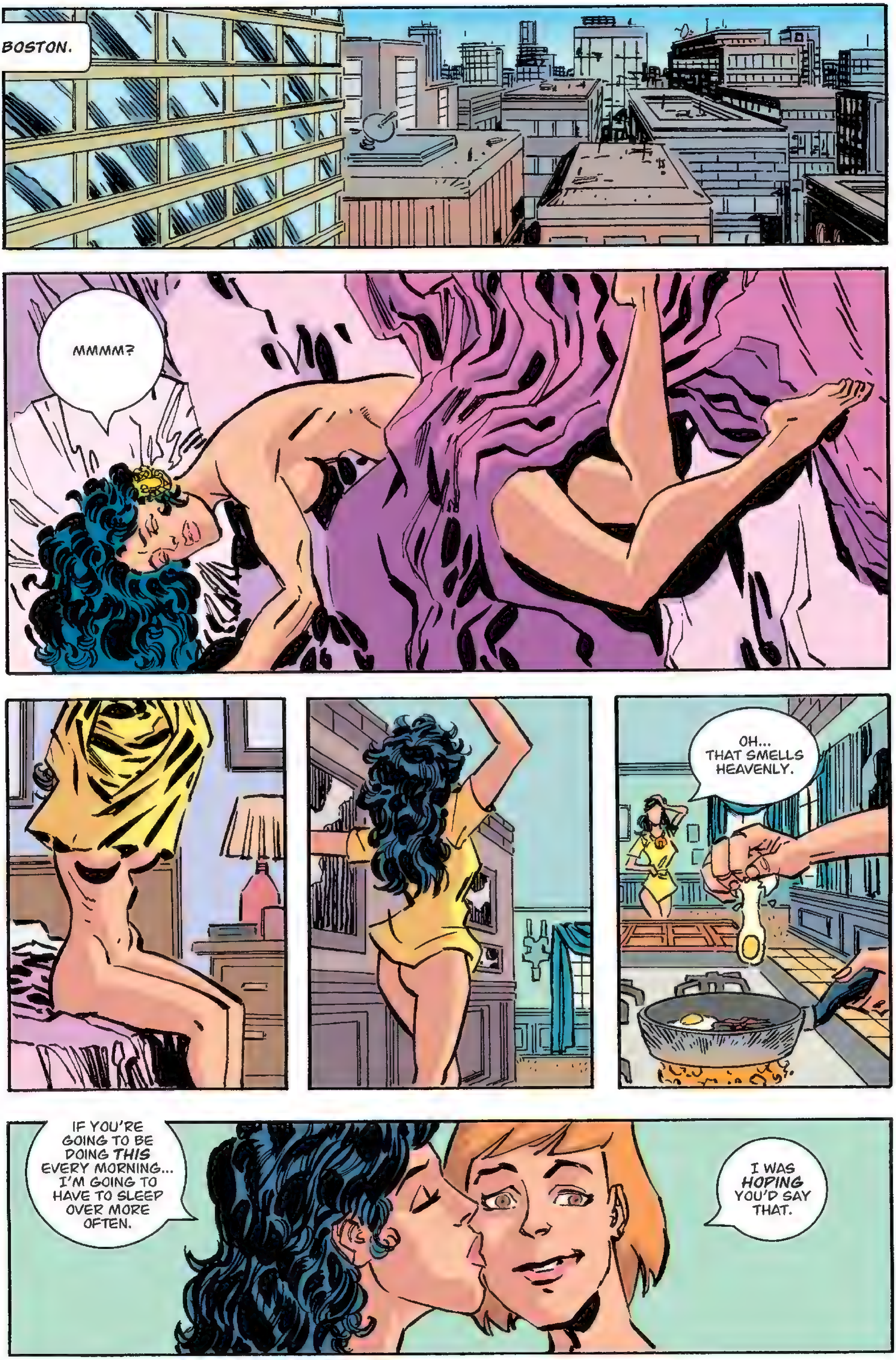
I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE...

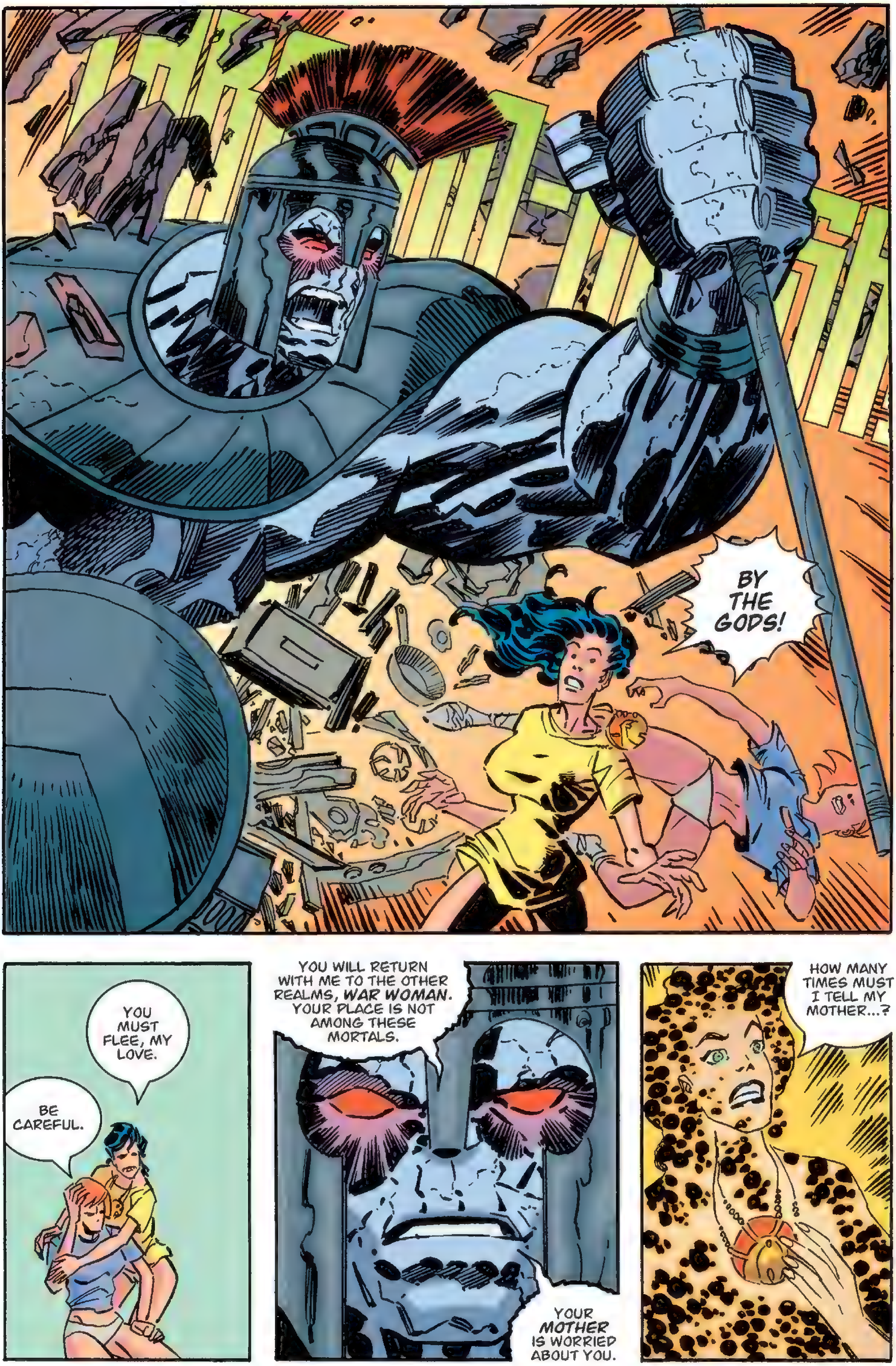
OH MAN!
OH MAN!
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, BRO!
ULP!
OOH, WHO'S GOT THE UPPER HAND NOW, MISTER SUPER-HERO BIG SHOT? YOU FEEL THAT COLD HARD OBJECT PRESSED AGAINST YOUR TEMPLE? IF YOU'RE GUESSING THAT'S MY GUN THEN YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RI--
CHATTERBOX.
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
I'M ON MY WAY.


WING JET.
WOOSH!!
BELVEDERE, CONTACT THE AUTHORITIES. I LEFT A COUPLE PERPS ON THE BURNS TOWER. I'VE BEEN CALLED AWAY.

MOSCOW.
<NO! STOP!! PLEASE!!>
WOOSH!
<WHA--?!>
<KNEEL BEFORE KURSK!>
BOOM!
WOOSH!
HUH?
<NO, NO, KITTY! YOU'LL FALL!>
WOOSH!
<WOW! MAGIC KITTY!!>

<... AND I TOLD HER, IF I FIND MY STAPLER IN *HER* OFFICE *ONE* MORE TIME I'M GOING TO-->
(YOU BASTARD!)
<YOU THINK YOU COULD GET AWAY WITH A LITTLE *"SUPERHEROING"* IN BETWEEN WORDS? DAMMIT, JOSEF, YOU SAID YOU WERE TAKING THE DAY OFF!>
(OH, SORRY.)
(BETTER?)
<YOU'RE A LOST CAUSE... YOU KNOW THAT? YOU BETTER HOPE NOBODY NOTICED I WAS EATING LUNCH WITH *THE RED RUSH* A SECOND AGO.>
(WHERE WAS I?)
<YOU HAD CAUGHT OLGA WITH YOUR STAPLER AGAIN.>
(ANYWAY...)
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
(CRAP.)
(YOU HEARD IT...)
(GO ON...)
<SORRY, BABE. I LOVE YOU.>
≥SIGH≤
(I LOVE YOU TOO.)


BOSTON.
MMMM?
OH... THAT SMELLS HEAVENLY.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE DOING THIS EVERY MORNING... I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SLEEP OVER MORE OFTEN.
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT.


BY THE GODS!
YOU MUST FLEE, MY LOVE.
BE CAREFUL.
YOU WILL RETURN WITH ME TO THE OTHER REALMS, *WAR WOMAN*. YOUR PLACE IS NOT AMONG THESE MORTALS.
YOUR *MOTHER* IS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL MY MOTHER...?

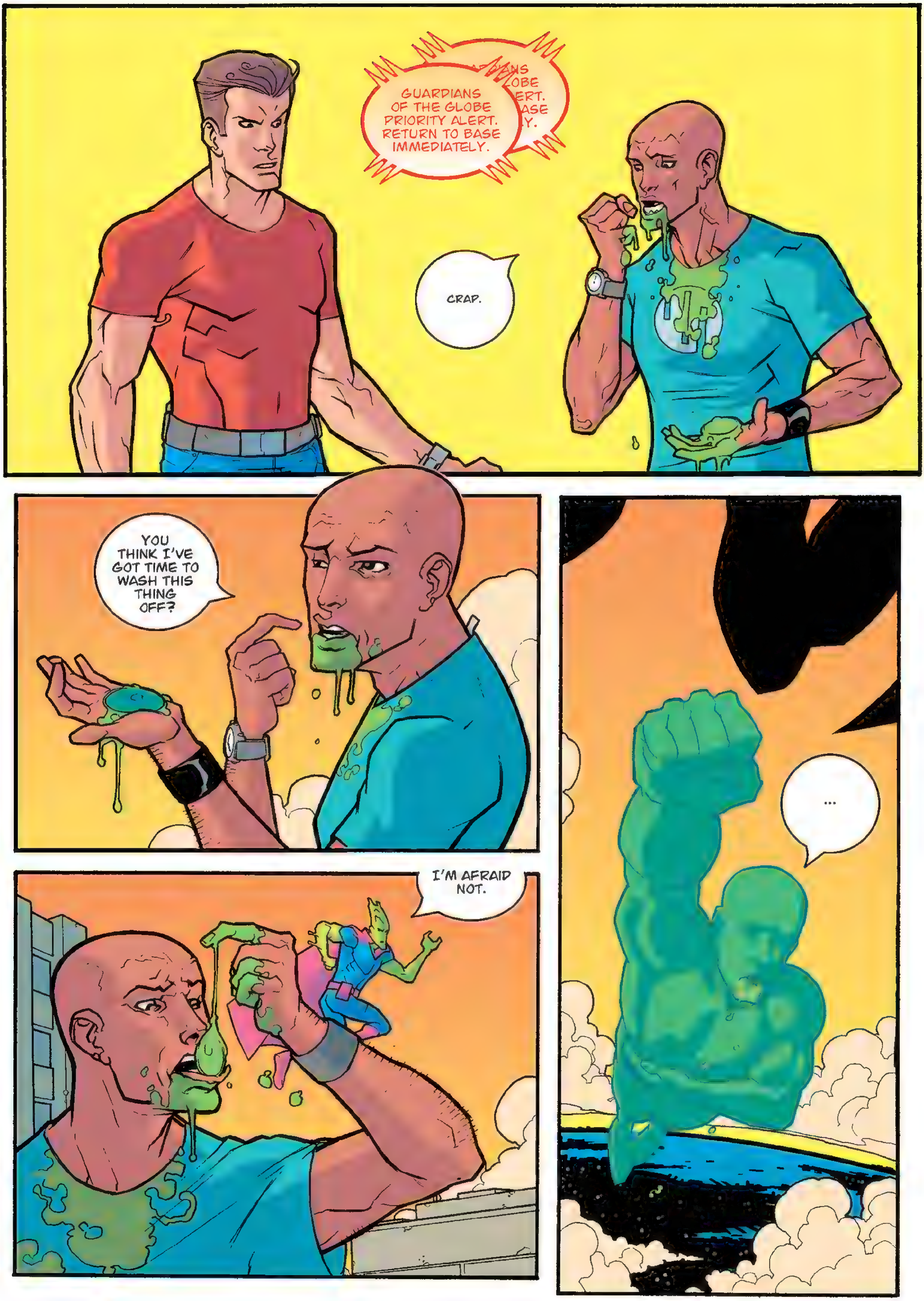
FA-FOOSH!
...I GO WHERE I PLEASE!!
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE!
KROOOM!
I--
GOOOM!
WON'T--
GO--
CHOOOM!
--BACK!

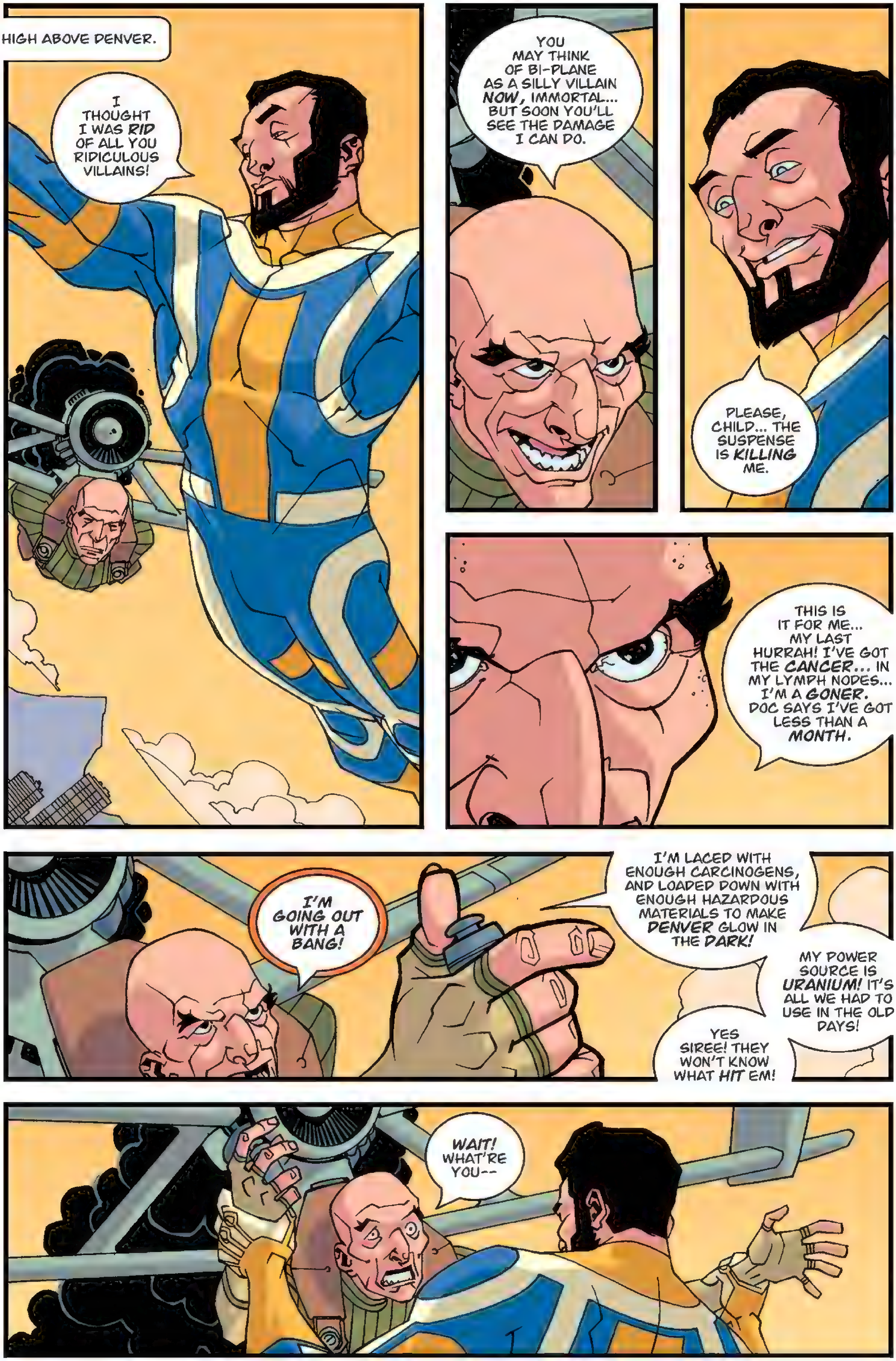
WHAT WAS THAT?
SOMETHING FROM MY PAST.
I WILL HAVE MY COMPANY HIRE SOMEONE TO MOVE YOU OUT OF HERE TODAY AND THEN REIMBURSE YOUR LANDLORD FOR THE DAMAGE. PICK A LARGER PLACE... I PLAN TO STAY OVER MORE OFTEN. LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE REPLACING ANYTHING.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I WILL BE FI--
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
I MUST GO.
BE CAREFUL.

ATLANTIS.
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
FINALLY... SOME ACTION!

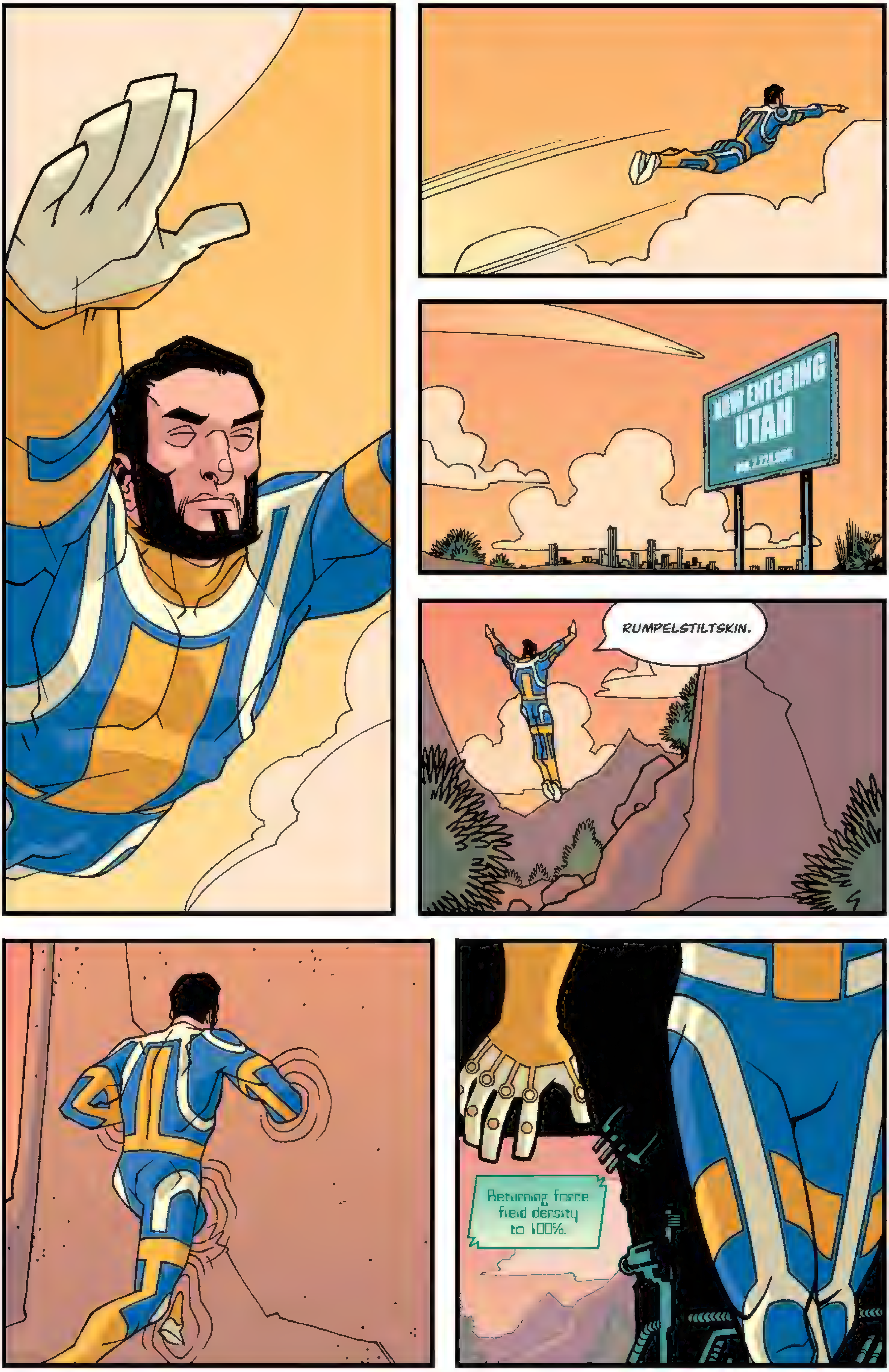
SPACE.
DIE--FLESH--DIE!
ITS... CRUSHING... ME...
QUICKLY... BEFORE IT KILLS US... GO INTANGIBLE... AND SCRAMBLE ITS CIRCUITS!
OH, YEAH... I FORGOT I COULD DO THAT!
HERE GOES NOTHING!
DOES--NOT--COMPUTE!

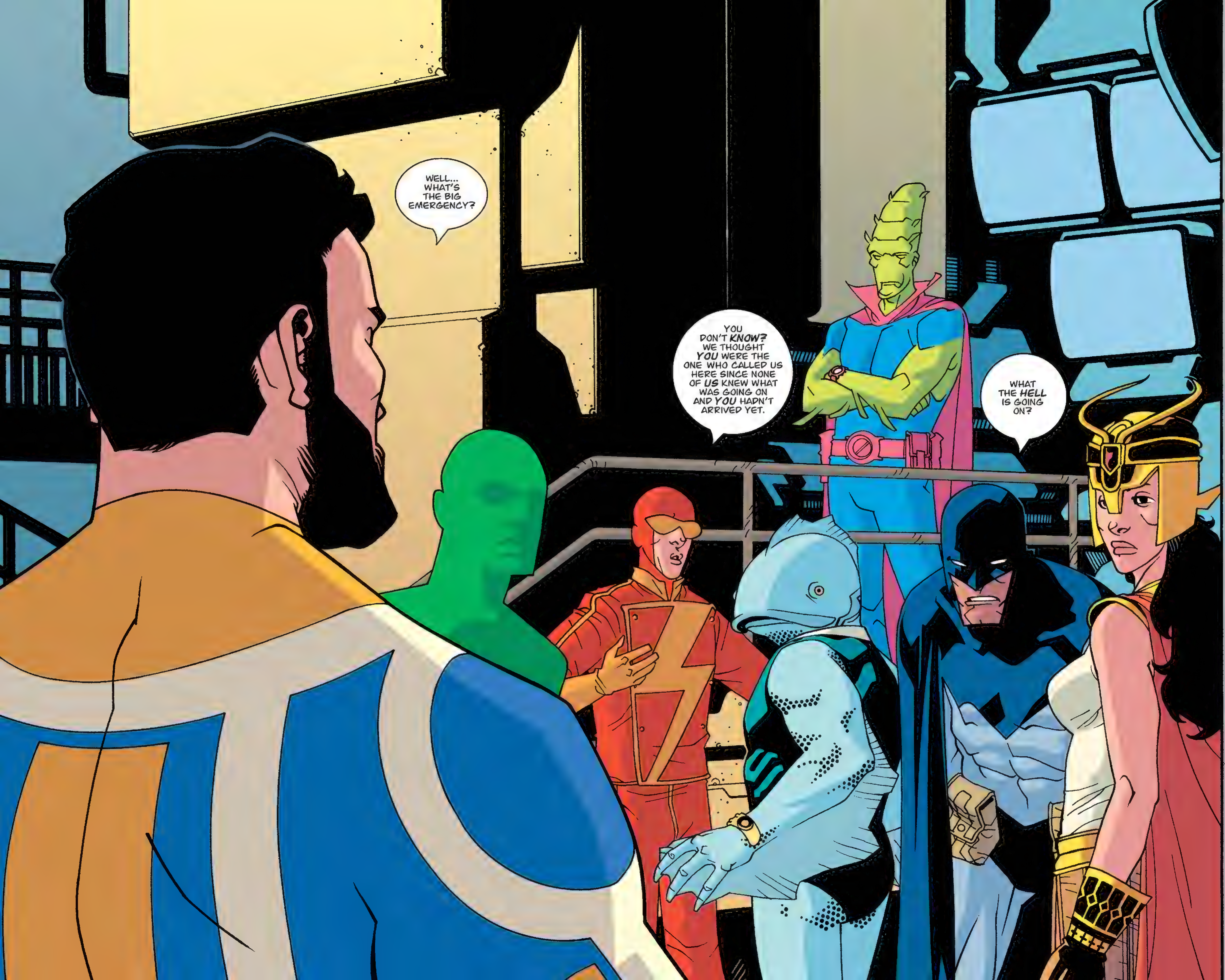
YOU OKAY?
I AM FINE... WERE IT NOT FOR YOUR DELAY I WOULD BE BETTER.
SORRY ABOUT THAT, **MARTIAN MAN**... BUT I'VE ONLY BEEN THE **GREEN GHOST** FOR A MONTH. I'M STILL GETTING USED TO THE POWERS.
YOU'RE LEARNING QUICKLY... YOU JUST HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO.
YOU WILL **LEARN**... I AM CONFIDENT YOU WERE CHOSEN AS MY FRIEND'S SUCCESSOR FOR A **REASON**.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
BLAAG!
THAT'S SOMETHING I'M **NEVER** GOING TO GET USED TO.

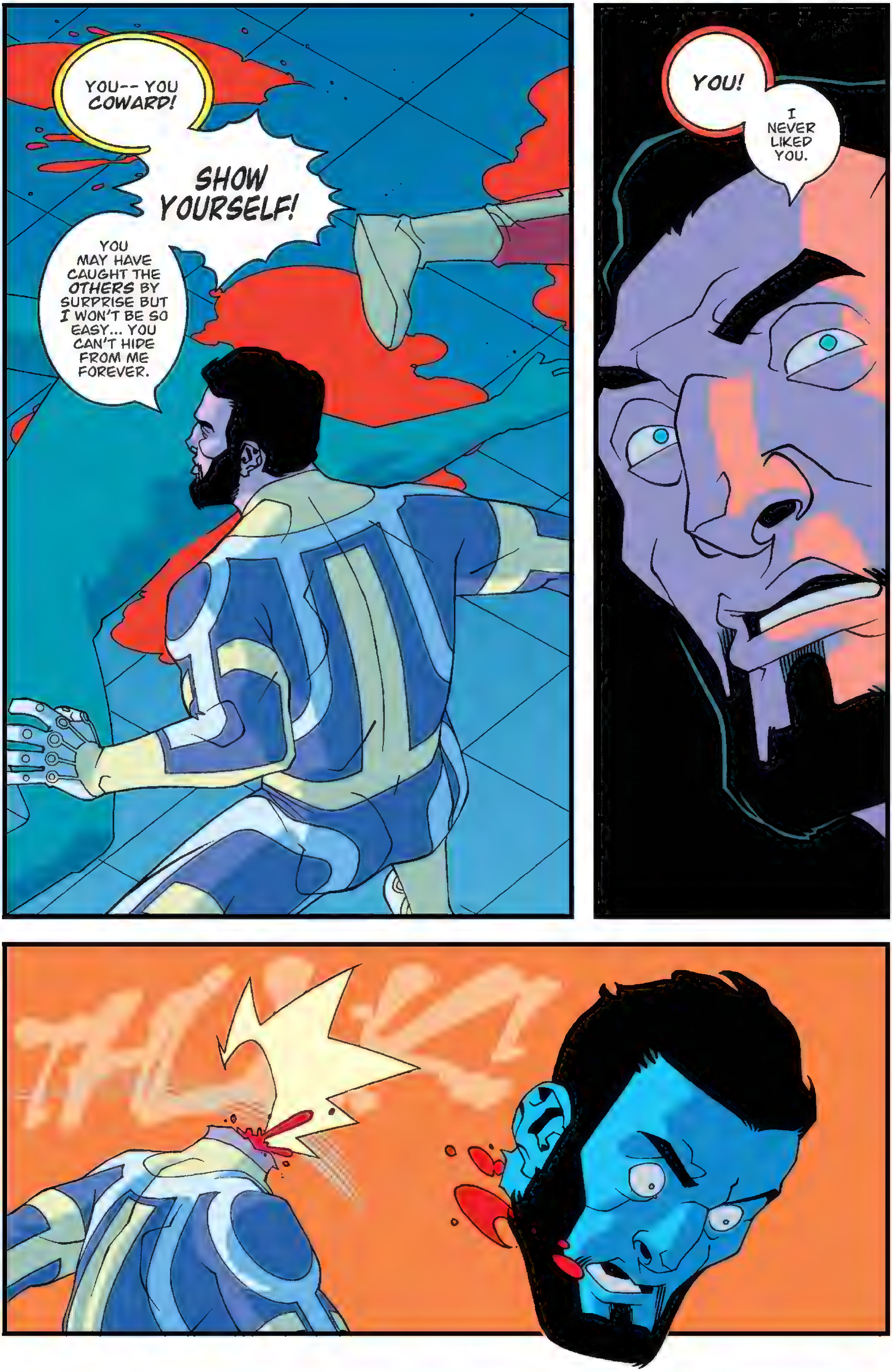

GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
CRAP.
YOU THINK I'VE GOT TIME TO WASH THIS THING OFF?
I'M AFRAID NOT.
...


HIGH ABOVE DENVER.
I THOUGHT I WAS RID OF ALL YOU RIDICULOUS VILLAINS!
YOU MAY THINK OF BI-PLANE AS A SILLY VILLAIN NOW, IMMORTAL... BUT SOON YOU'LL SEE THE DAMAGE I CAN DO.
PLEASE, CHILD... THE SUSPENSE IS KILLING ME.
THIS IS IT FOR ME... MY LAST HURRAH! I'VE GOT THE CANCER... IN MY LYMPH NODES... I'M A GONER. DOC SAYS I'VE GOT LESS THAN A MONTH.
I'M GOING OUT WITH A BANG!
I'M LACED WITH ENOUGH CARCINOGENS, AND LOADED DOWN WITH ENOUGH HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TO MAKE DENVER GLOW IN THE DARK!
MY POWER SOURCE IS URANIUM! IT'S ALL WE HAD TO USE IN THE OLD DAYS!
YES SIREE! THEY WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT EM!
WAIT! WHAT'RE YOU--

--DOING?
WHEN IN DOUBT... THROW THEM INTO SPACE.
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
I'M ON THE WAY.

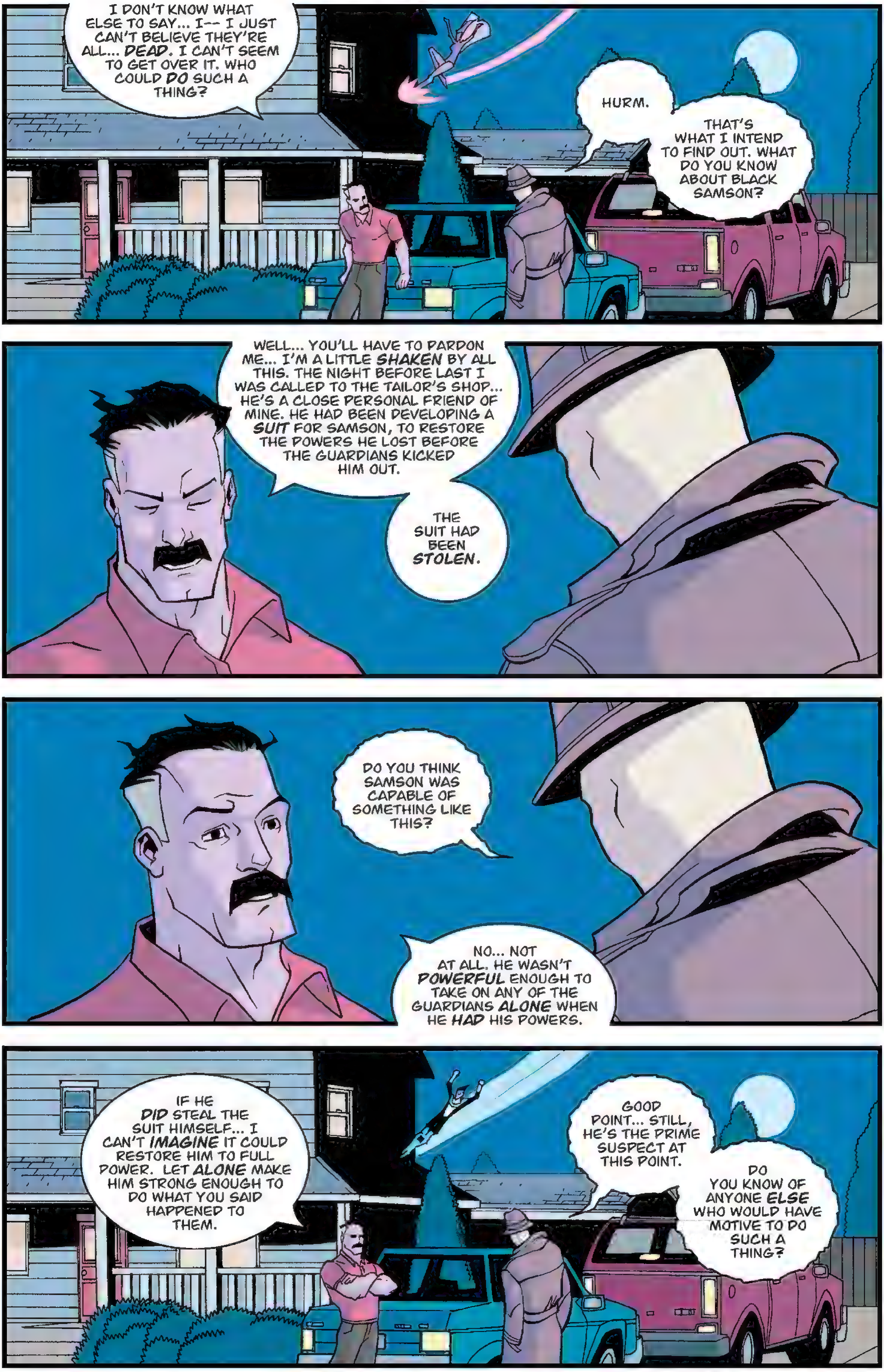

NOW ENTERING
UTAH
RUMPELSTILTSKIN.
Returning force field density to 100%.


WELL... WHAT'S THE BIG EMERGENCY?
YOU DON'T *KNOW?* WE THOUGHT *YOU* WERE THE ONE WHO CALLED US HERE SINCE NONE OF *US* KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON AND *YOU* HADN'T ARRIVED YET.
WHAT THE *HELL* IS GOING ON?

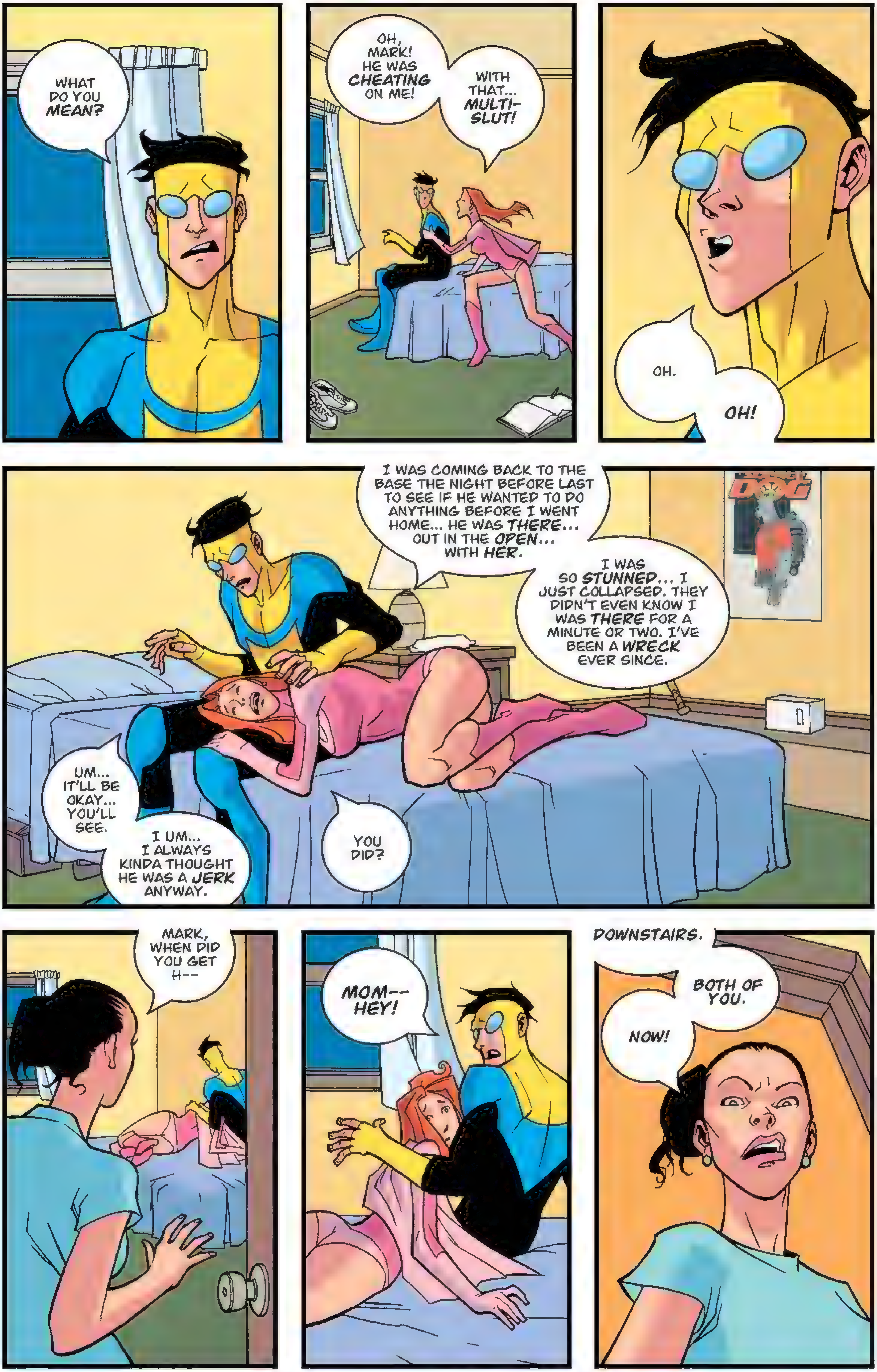

YOU-- YOU COWARD!
SHOW YOURSELF!
YOU MAY HAVE CAUGHT THE OTHERS BY SURPRISE BUT I WON'T BE SO EASY... YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME FOREVER.
YOU!
I NEVER LIKED YOU.

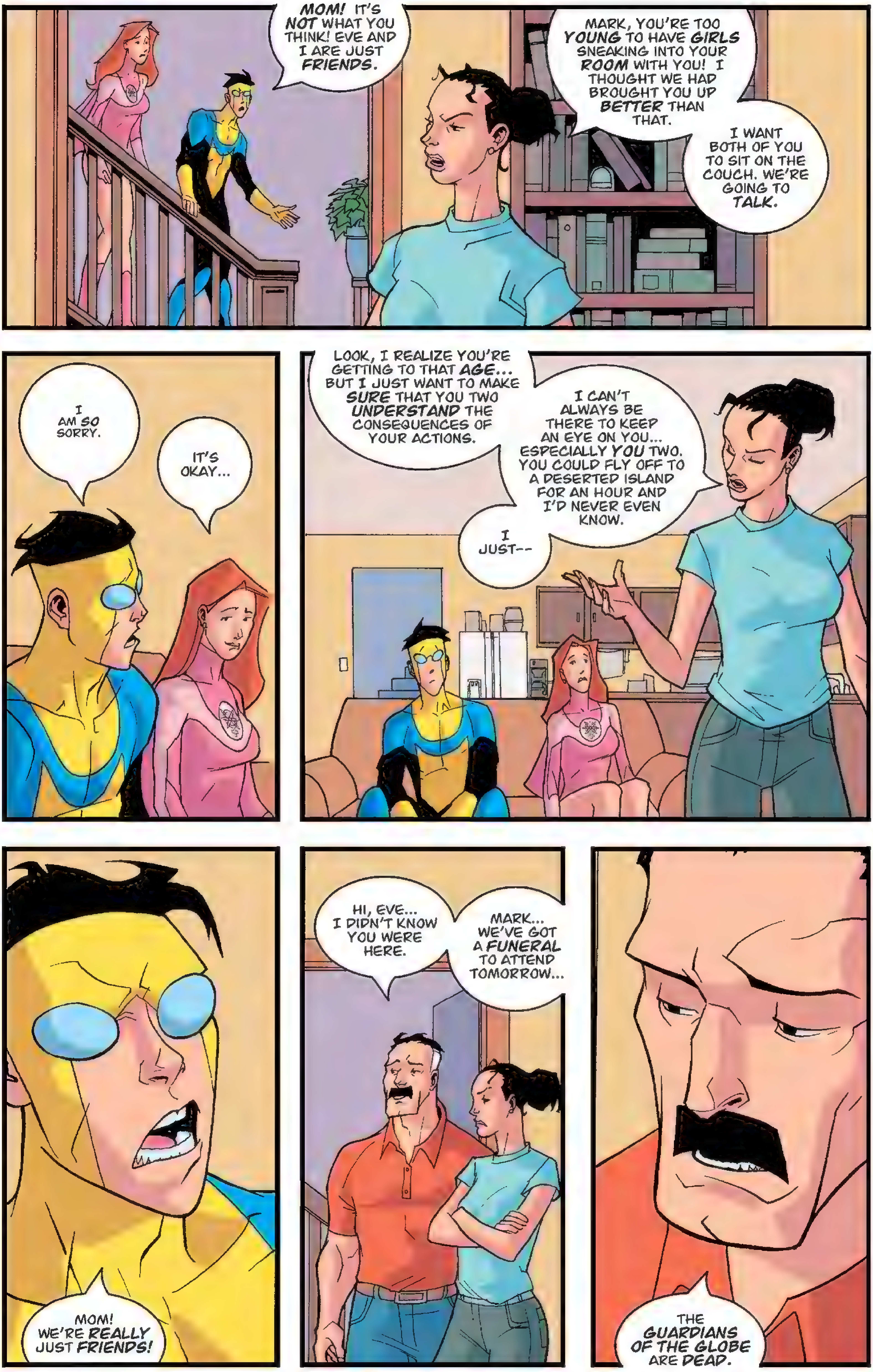
THE FEELING WAS *MUTUAL.*

ISSUE EIGHT


I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO SAY... I-- I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE ALL... ***DEAD.*** I CAN'T SEEM TO GET OVER IT. WHO COULD ***DO*** SUCH A THING?
HURM.
THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT BLACK SAMSON?
WELL... YOU'LL HAVE TO PARDON ME... I'M A LITTLE ***SHAKEN*** BY ALL THIS. THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST I WAS CALLED TO THE TAILOR'S SHOP... HE'S A CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE. HE HAD BEEN DEVELOPING A ***SUIT*** FOR SAMSON, TO RESTORE THE POWERS HE LOST BEFORE THE GUARDIANS KICKED HIM OUT.
THE SUIT HAD BEEN ***STOLEN.***
DO YOU THINK SAMSON WAS CAPABLE OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS?
NO... NOT AT ALL. HE WASN'T ***POWERFUL*** ENOUGH TO TAKE ON ANY OF THE GUARDIANS ***ALONE*** WHEN HE ***HAD*** HIS POWERS.
IF HE ***DID*** STEAL THE SUIT HIMSELF... I CAN'T ***IMAGINE*** IT COULD RESTORE HIM TO FULL POWER. LET ***ALONE*** MAKE HIM STRONG ENOUGH TO DO WHAT YOU SAID HAPPENED TO THEM.
GOOD POINT... STILL, HE'S THE PRIME SUSPECT AT THIS POINT.
DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE ***ELSE*** WHO WOULD HAVE MOTIVE TO DO SUCH A THING?

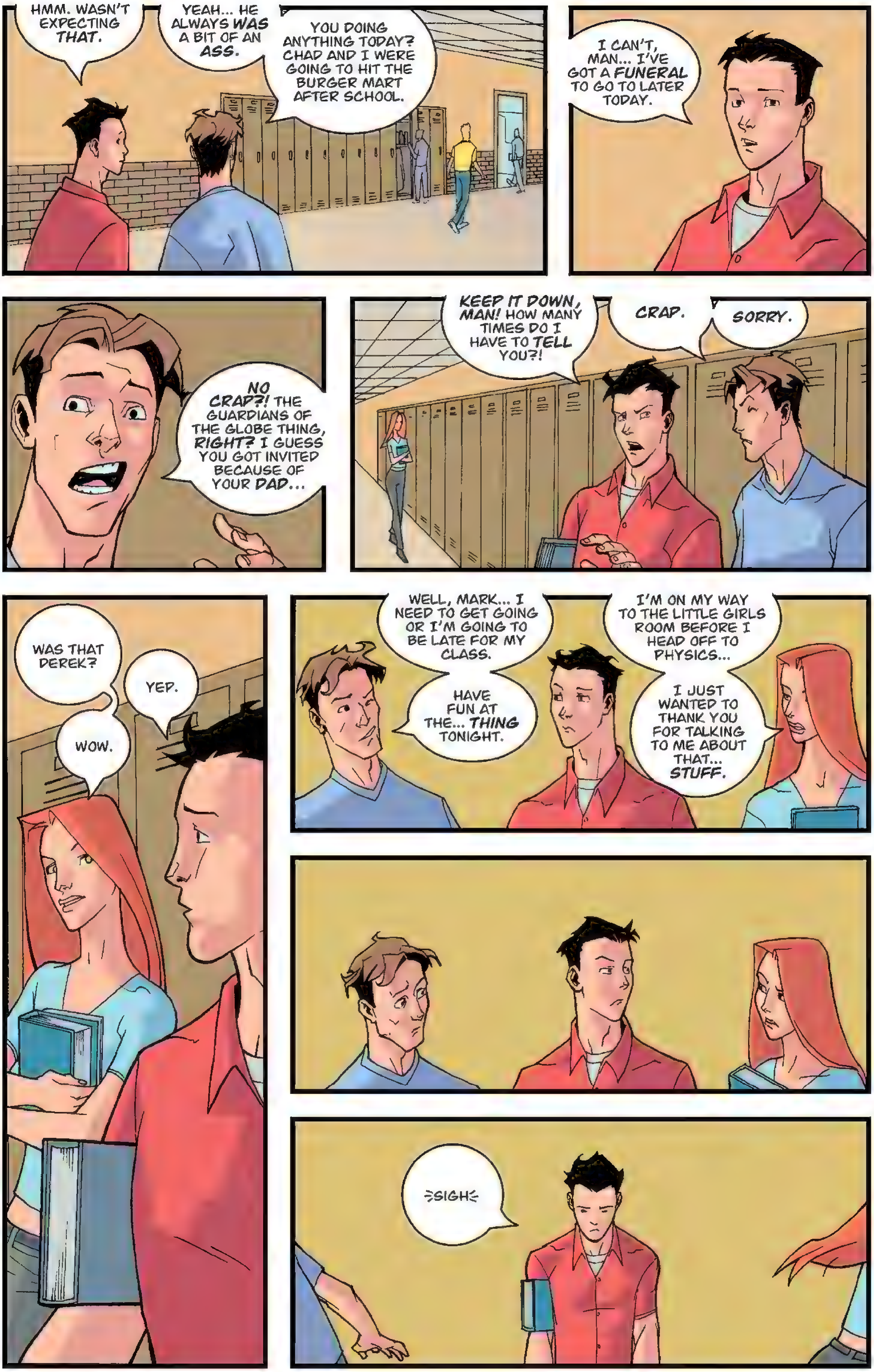
EVE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OH, MARK...
IT WAS HORRIBLE!
IT WAS REX... WITH KATE...
...
...AND THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE OF HER!


WHAT DO YOU *MEAN?*
OH, MARK! HE WAS *CHEATING* ON ME!
WITH THAT... *MULTI-SLUT!*
OH.
OH!
I WAS COMING BACK TO THE BASE THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST TO SEE IF HE WANTED TO DO ANYTHING BEFORE I WENT HOME... HE WAS *THERE*... OUT IN THE *OPEN*... WITH *HER.*
I WAS SO *STUNNED*... I JUST COLLAPSED. THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS *THERE* FOR A MINUTE OR TWO. I'VE BEEN A *WRECK* EVER SINCE.
UM... IT'LL BE OKAY... YOU'LL SEE.
I UM... I ALWAYS KINDA THOUGHT HE WAS A *JERK* ANYWAY.
YOU DID?
MARK, WHEN DID YOU GET H--
MOM-- HEY!
DOWNSTAIRS.
BOTH OF YOU.
NOW!

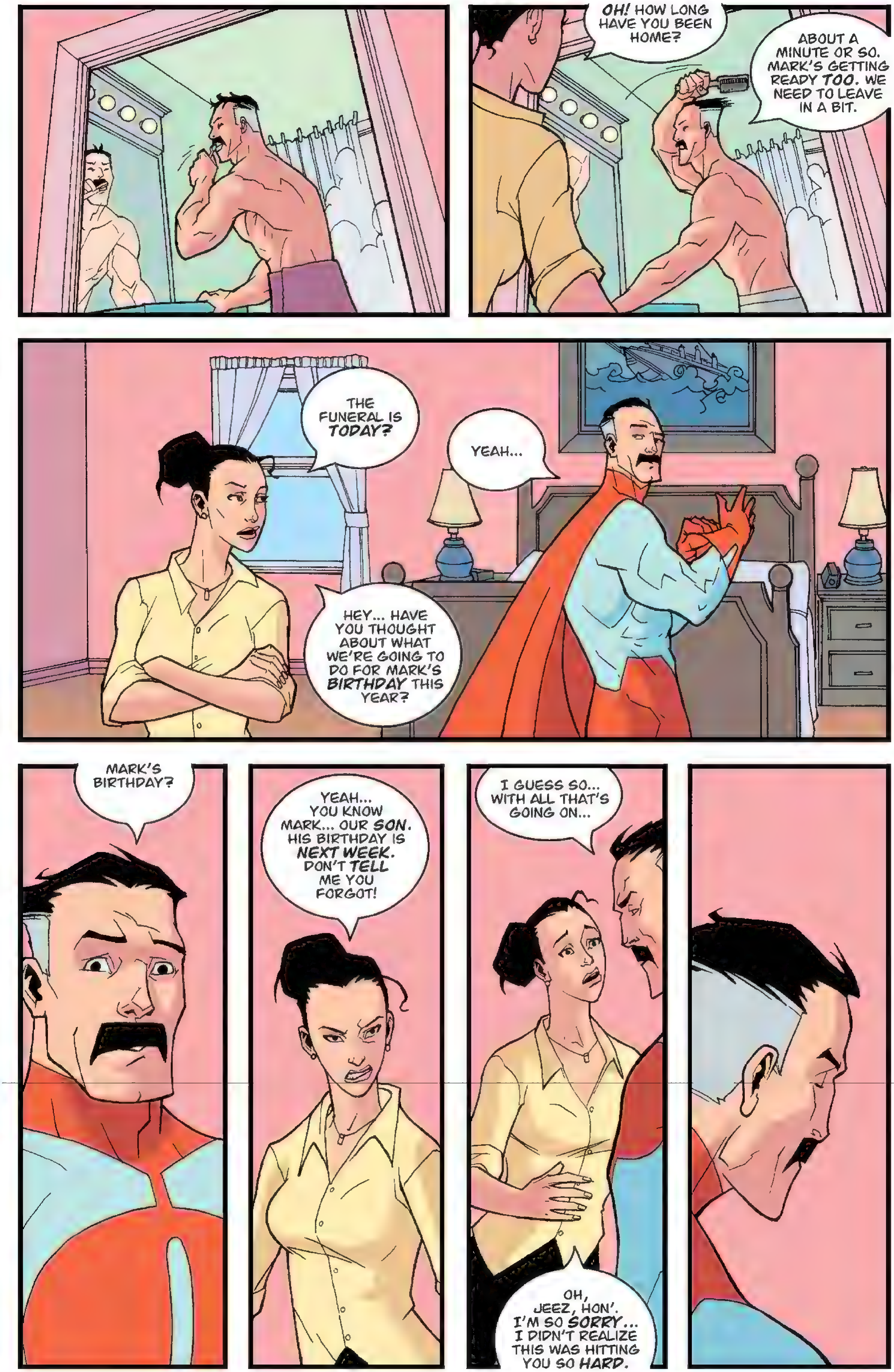

MOM! IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK! EVE AND I ARE JUST FRIENDS.
MARK, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE GIRLS SNEAKING INTO YOUR ROOM WITH YOU! I THOUGHT WE HAD BROUGHT YOU UP BETTER THAN THAT.
I WANT BOTH OF YOU TO SIT ON THE COUCH. WE'RE GOING TO TALK.
I AM SO SORRY.
IT'S OKAY...
LOOK, I REALIZE YOU'RE GETTING TO THAT AGE... BUT I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU TWO UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS.
I CAN'T ALWAYS BE THERE TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU... ESPECIALLY YOU TWO. YOU COULD FLY OFF TO A DESERTED ISLAND FOR AN HOUR AND I'D NEVER EVEN KNOW.
I JUST--
MOM! WE'RE REALLY JUST FRIENDS!
HI, EVE... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.
MARK... WE'VE GOT A FUNERAL TO ATTEND TOMORROW...
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE DEAD.

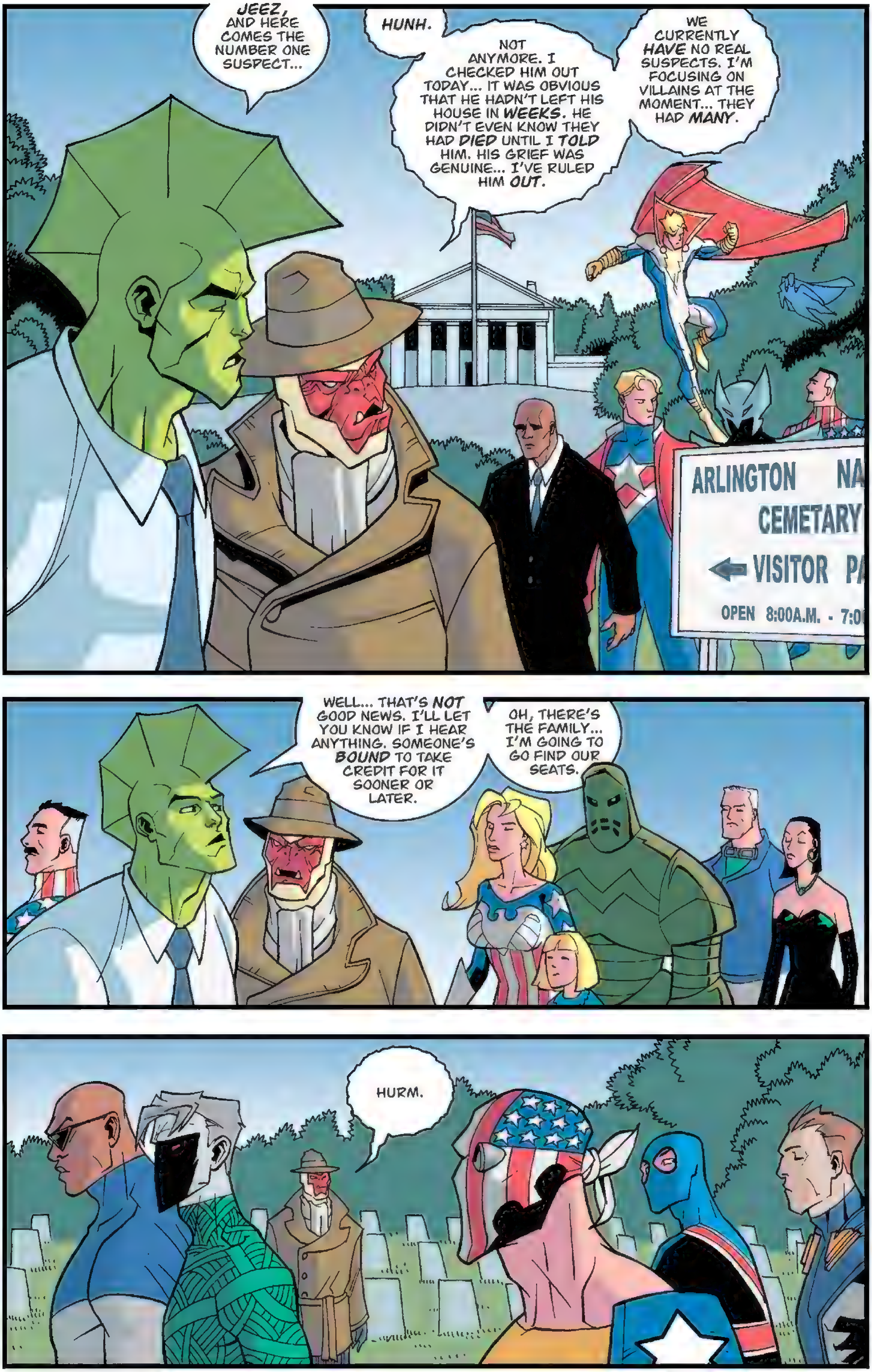
REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
HEY, MAN... WHAT'S GOING ON?
GETTING READY FOR PHYSICS. THIS NEW TEACHER WE'VE GOT IS *KILLING* US!
HEH... SEEMS TO BE A RECURRING PROBLEM WITH PHYSICS TEACHERS AT THIS SCHOOL. YOU GONNA BLOW *THIS* ONE UP TOO?
JEEZ, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT... AND I DIDN'T BLOW UP MISTER HILES, HE BLEW HIMSELF UP-- AND KEEP IT *DOWN*. YOU WANT TO GIVE AWAY MY *SECRET IDENTITY?*
SORRY.
HERE.
...
OPEN IT LATER WHEN YOU GET HOME.
DID THAT JUST HAPPEN?
YEAH.. *WOW.*
HOLD THE PHONE...

IS *THAT* WHO I *THINK* IT IS?
YEP-- DEREK SANDERS. I CAN'T *BELIEVE* YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS WAS HIS FIRST DAY BACK. THE WHOLE *SCHOOL* IS TALKING ABOUT IT.
WHAT'S IT BEEN-- A MONTH-- MONTH AND A HALF? THE GUY HAD MOST OF HIS ORGANS *REARRANGED* AND TURNED INTO *BOMB TIMERS*... I FIGURED HE'D BE OUT THE REST OF THE *YEAR!*
I READ IN THE NEWSPAPER THAT ALL THE JUNK THAT WAS PUT IN HIM IS KEEPING HIM ALIVE. ALL THE BOMB STUFF WAS TAKEN OUT AND NOW HE'S PETTY MUCH BACK TO NORMAL... ASIDE FROM HAVING A METAL TORSO.
MAN... YOU SAVED HIS *LIFE* WHEN YOU STOPPED MISTER HILES. HE'S PROBABLY COMING OVER HERE TO *THANK* YOU.
HE DOESN'T KNOW WHO I *AM*, WILLIAM. JEEZ, WILL YOU KEEP IT DOWN!
HEY... WELCOME BACK, MAN.
THANKS.


HMM. WASN'T EXPECTING *THAT*.
YEAH... HE ALWAYS *WAS* A BIT OF AN *ASS*.
YOU DOING ANYTHING TODAY? CHAD AND I WERE GOING TO HIT THE BURGER MART AFTER SCHOOL.
I CAN'T, MAN... I'VE GOT A *FUNERAL* TO GO TO LATER TODAY.
NO CRAP?! THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE THING, *RIGHT?* I GUESS YOU GOT INVITED BECAUSE OF YOUR *DAD*...
KEEP IT DOWN, MAN! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO *TELL* YOU?!
CRAP.
SORRY.
WAS THAT DEREK?
YEP.
WOW.
WELL, MARK... I NEED TO GET GOING OR I'M GOING TO BE LATE FOR MY CLASS.
HAVE FUN AT THE... *THING* TONIGHT.
I'M ON MY WAY TO THE LITTLE GIRLS ROOM BEFORE I HEAD OFF TO PHYSICS...
I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR TALKING TO ME ABOUT THAT... *STUFF*.
SIGH

POW!!
HA! YOU WEREN'T HALF AS TOUGH AS YOU CLAIMED TO BE!
SON! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WE NEED TO BE GOING! WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THERE SOON.
SORRY. I GOT SIDETRACKED ON MY WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL.


OH! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HOME?
ABOUT A MINUTE OR SO. MARK'S GETTING READY TOO. WE NEED TO LEAVE IN A BIT.
THE FUNERAL IS TODAY?
YEAH...
HEY... HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO FOR MARK'S BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR?
MARK'S BIRTHDAY?
YEAH... YOU KNOW MARK... OUR SON. HIS BIRTHDAY IS NEXT WEEK. DON'T TELL ME YOU FORGOT!
I GUESS SO... WITH ALL THAT'S GOING ON...
OH, JEEZ, HON'. I'M SO SORRY... I DIDN'T REALIZE THIS WAS HITTING YOU SO HARD.


JEEZ, AND HERE COMES THE NUMBER ONE SUSPECT...
HUNH.
NOT ANYMORE. I CHECKED HIM OUT TODAY... IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE HADN'T LEFT HIS HOUSE IN WEEKS. HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY HAD DIED UNTIL I TOLD HIM. HIS GRIEF WAS GENUINE... I'VE RULED HIM OUT.
WE CURRENTLY HAVE NO REAL SUSPECTS. I'M FOCUSING ON VILLAINS AT THE MOMENT... THEY HAD MANY.
ARLINGTON NA
CEMETARY
VISITOR PA
OPEN 8:00A.M. - 7:0
WELL... THAT'S NOT GOOD NEWS. I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF I HEAR ANYTHING. SOMEONE'S BOUND TO TAKE CREDIT FOR IT SOONER OR LATER.
OH, THERE'S THE FAMILY... I'M GOING TO GO FIND OUR SEATS.
HURM.

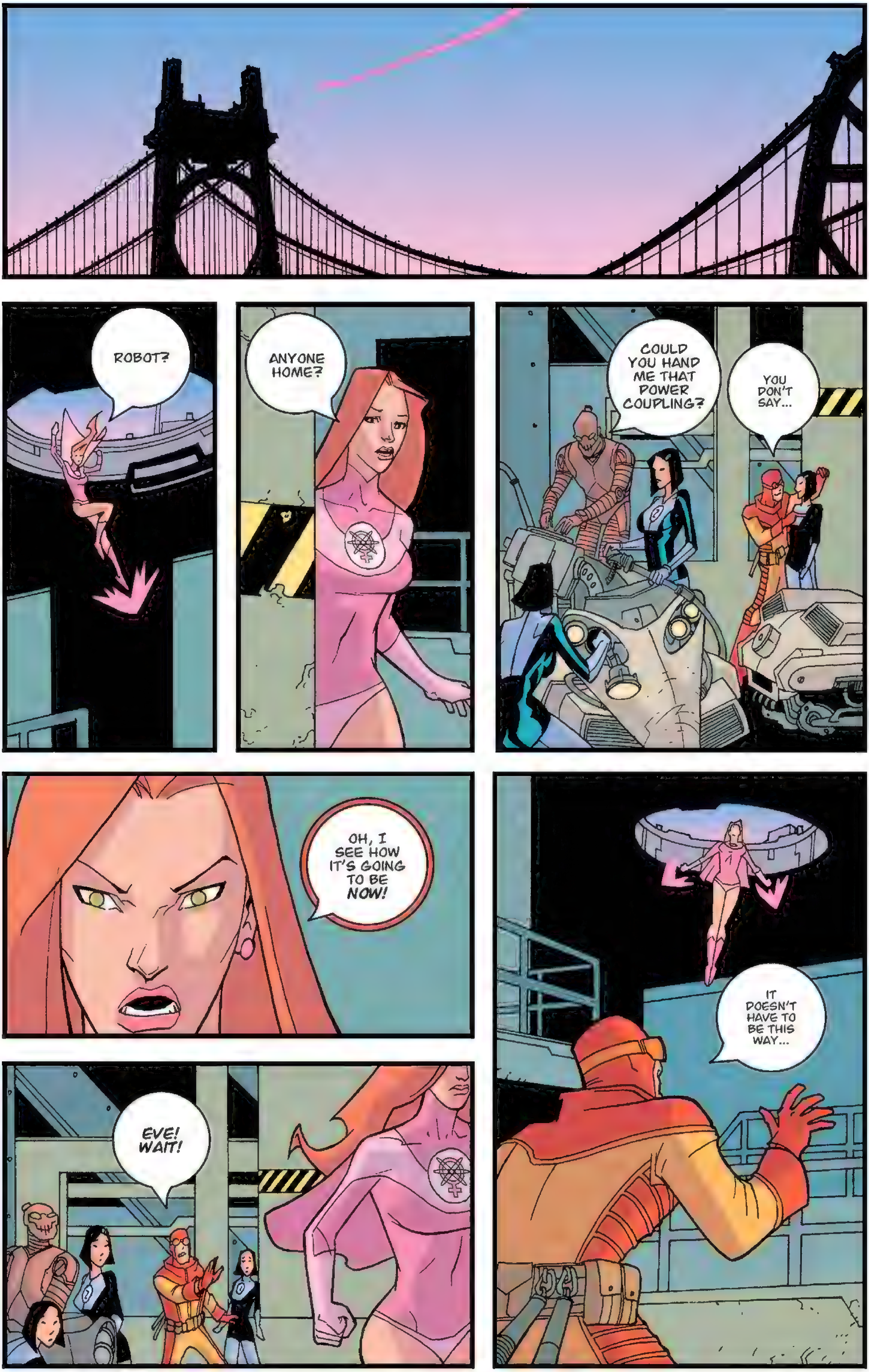
WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO REMEMBER THE GREATEST TEAM OF SUPER-HEROES THE WORLD HAS *EVER* KNOWN.
THAT *I'VE* KNOWN...
I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE SINCE I CAME TO EARTH... THEY WERE MENTORS TO ME EARLY ON IN MY CAREER.
THE IMMORTAL, DARKWING, THE GREEN GHOST, WAR WOMAN, THE RED RUSH, MARTIAN MAN, AND AQUARUS. NAMES WE'LL *NEVER* FORGET. *PEOPLE* THAT WILL GO DOWN IN *HISTORY*...
LEGENDS... TAKEN FROM US BEFORE THEIR TIME. WE--
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?!
PLEASE CONTINUE... WE DO NOT WISH TO CAUSE A *SCENE*.
WE ARE HERE TO PAY OUR RESPECTS TO A WORTHY ADVERSARY. NOTHING MORE, WE WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE PROCEEDINGS.
DAD, I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON THEM.
I DON'T THINK THEY'LL TRY ANYTHING WITH ALL OF US HERE.

BOOM!
NO!
THEY WERE MINE!!
MINE!

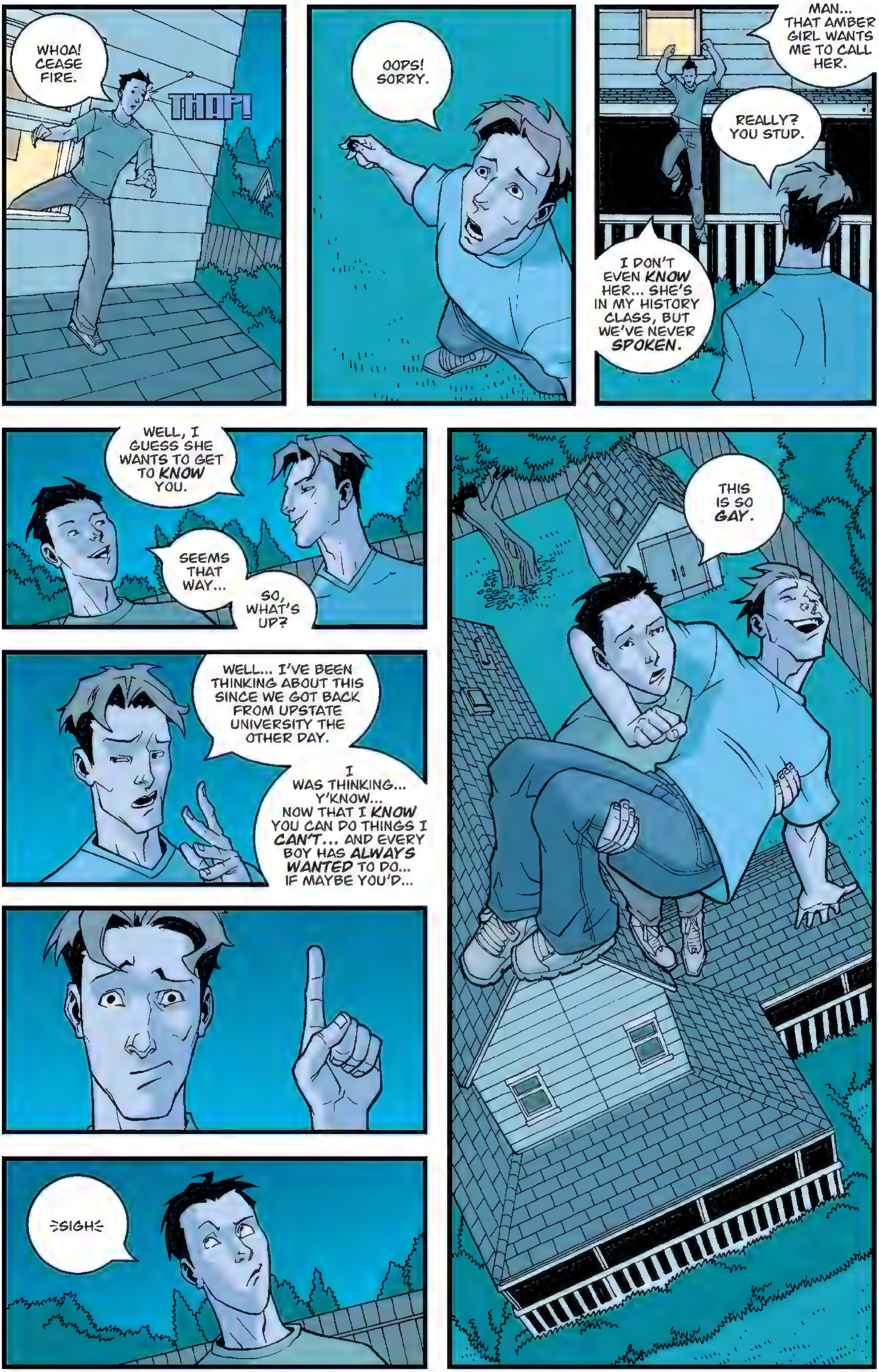
S-SANFORD?
WE'VE GOT TO END THIS *FAST* PEOPLE! THERE ARE CIVILIANS PRESENT!
GET ANGEL TO SAFETY, JENNIFER.
THEY CAN'T BE *DEAD!!* NOT UNTIL I HAVE MY *REVENGE!!*
THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO SAMSON!
WHO *IS* THIS CLOWN?
SAMSON'S BUTLER.
KRA! KRA! KRA!
BOOM!
YOU CAN'T STOP ME! I WON'T QUIT UNTIL I SEE THEIR BODIES DESTROYED!
CLANG!
UNLESS YOUR TAILORING SKILLS MAKE YOU *INVULNERABLE*, I'VE GOT TO GET YOU *OUT* OF HERE!
FINE WITH ME!

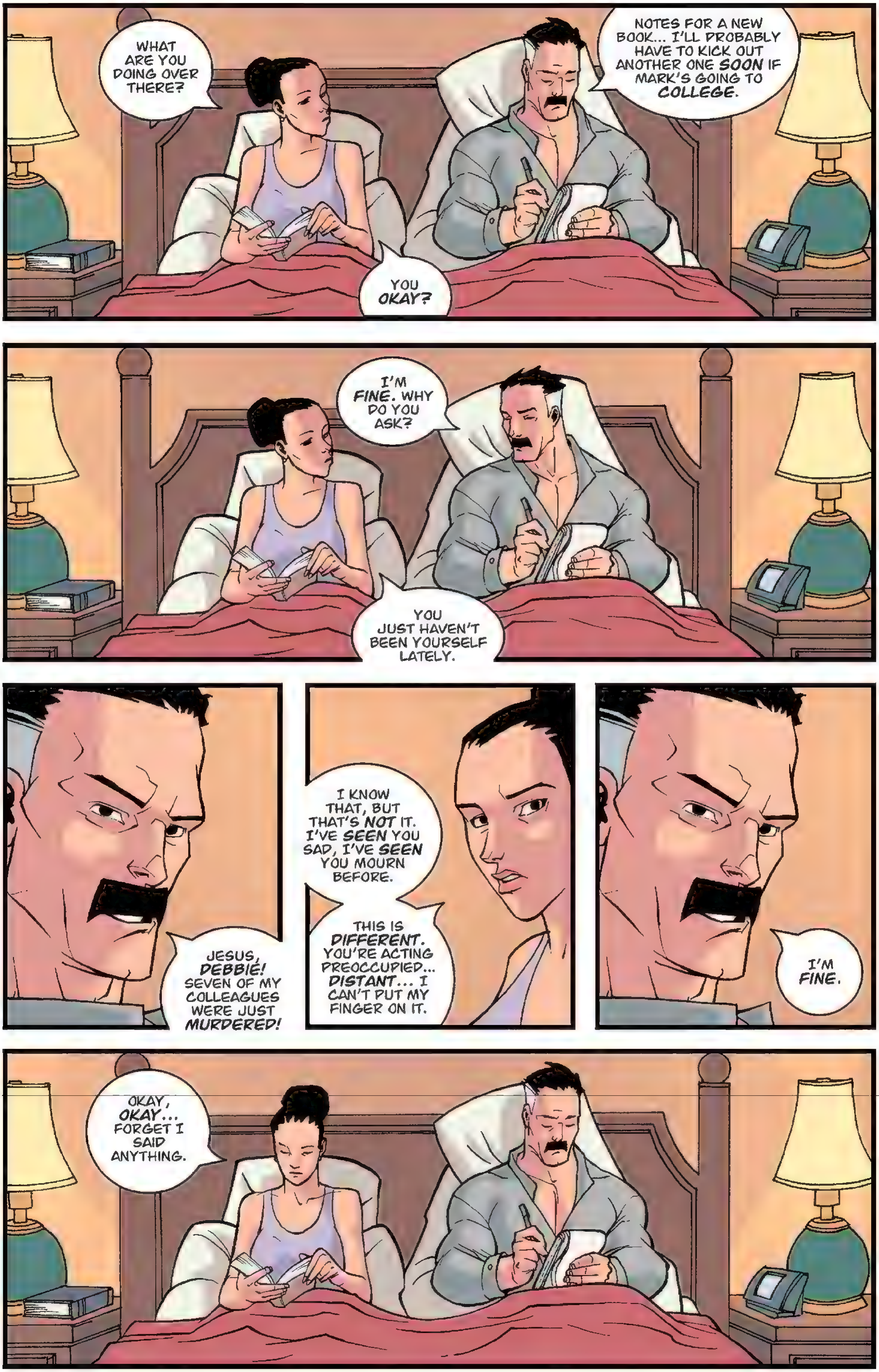
THEY ABANDONED SAMSON-- TURNED THEIR BACKS ON HIM WHEN HE NEEDED THEM MOST!
FOR THAT THEY MUST PAY!
VZACT!
KRAK!
POW!
WHUD!!
SANFORD!!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, OLD FRIEND?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
JEEZ, YOU'VE DEFEATED US IN LESS TIME THAN THIS. WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG WITH THIS BOZO?

I AM TRULY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.
IT WASN'T *YOUR* FAULT...
ARE *ALL* FUNERALS LIKE THIS?
MORE OFTEN THAN NOT... I'M SAD TO SAY.
AM
911
ENCY
JEEZ, DON'T TELL ME *THAT!*
WHAT?
OH...
THOSE TWO ARE UP TO SOMETHING.
YEAH...
YOU READY TO HEAD HOME, MARK?
ANY TIME YOU ARE.


ROBOT?
ANYONE HOME?
COULD YOU HAND ME THAT POWER COUPLING?
YOU DON'T SAY...
OH, I SEE HOW IT'S GOING TO BE *NOW!*
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY...
EVE! WAIT!

WHAT A DAY...
To: Mark,
TAP!
WHAT THE--?!
Call Me


WHOA! CEASE FIRE.
THAP!
OOPS! SORRY.
MAN... THAT AMBER GIRL WANTS ME TO CALL HER.
REALLY? YOU STUD.
I DON'T EVEN **KNOW** HER... SHE'S IN MY HISTORY CLASS, BUT WE'VE NEVER **SPOKEN**.
WELL, I GUESS SHE WANTS TO GET TO **KNOW** YOU.
SEEMS THAT WAY...
SO, WHAT'S UP?
WELL... I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS SINCE WE GOT BACK FROM UPSTATE UNIVERSITY THE OTHER DAY.
I WAS THINKING... Y'KNOW... NOW THAT I **KNOW** YOU CAN DO THINGS I **CAN'T**... AND EVERY BOY HAS **ALWAYS WANTED** TO DO... IF MAYBE YOU'D...
=SIGH=
THIS IS SO **GAY**.

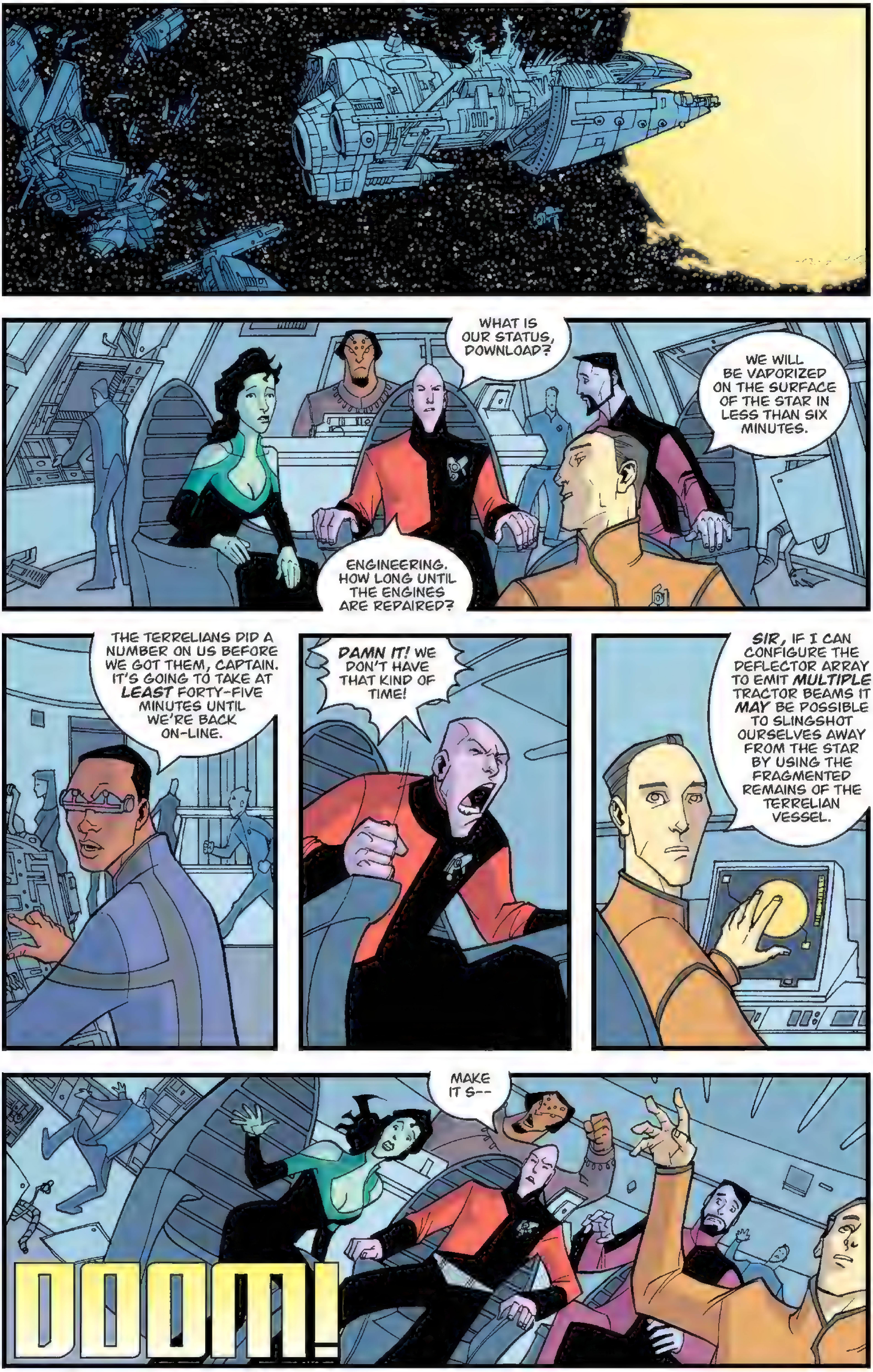

WHAT ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE?
NOTES FOR A NEW BOOK... I'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO KICK OUT ANOTHER ONE SOON IF MARK'S GOING TO COLLEGE.
YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE. WHY DO YOU ASK?
YOU JUST HAVEN'T BEEN YOURSELF LATELY.
JESUS, DEBBIE! SEVEN OF MY COLLEAGUES WERE JUST MURDERED!
I KNOW THAT, BUT THAT'S NOT IT. I'VE SEEN YOU SAD, I'VE SEEN YOU MOURN BEFORE.
THIS IS DIFFERENT. YOU'RE ACTING PREOCCUPIED... DISTANT... I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT.
I'M FINE.
OKAY, OKAY... FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.

ARLINGTON NA
CEMETARY
VISITOR PA
YOU SON OF A BITCH.
IT'S *NOT* A SHORT DRIVE OUT HERE Y'KNOW...
David Hiles
1944-2003
Forgive him, he lost his way.
I CAN'T *BELIEVE* THEY EVEN ALLOWED YOU TO BE BURIED *HERE*.
I GUESS YOUR EX-WIFE FELT *SORRY* FOR YOU-- PULLED SOME *STRINGS* SO YOU COULD BE BURIED WITH YOUR FELLOW *VETERANS*...
YOU WERE *WHAT*... A CLERK?
WELL, I DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOU... I DON'T CARE *WHAT* HAPPENED TO YOUR SON TO MAKE YOU DO WHAT YOU DID...
BUT Y'KNOW...
...I *DID* BRING YOU A GIFT.
ZIIIP!
C'MON, *HURRY!* YOU WANNA GET CAUGHT?!

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS AGAIN?
BECAUSE, I READ ON THE *INTERNET* THAT IF YOU DRINK FROM THE IMMORTAL'S *SKULL* YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER.
HIS *SKULL?* BUT HE WOULDN'T BE DOWN TO A SKULL *YET*... HE'S ONLY BEEN *DEAD* A FEW *DAYS.*
SO? YOU WANT TO WAIT UNTIL THE DIRT OVER HIM *SETTLES?* OR UNTIL SOMEONE *ELSE* GETS THE IDEA?
WELL? START DIGGING.
OKAY, OKAY!
I THINK I HIT IT. I THINK WE'RE *DONE!*

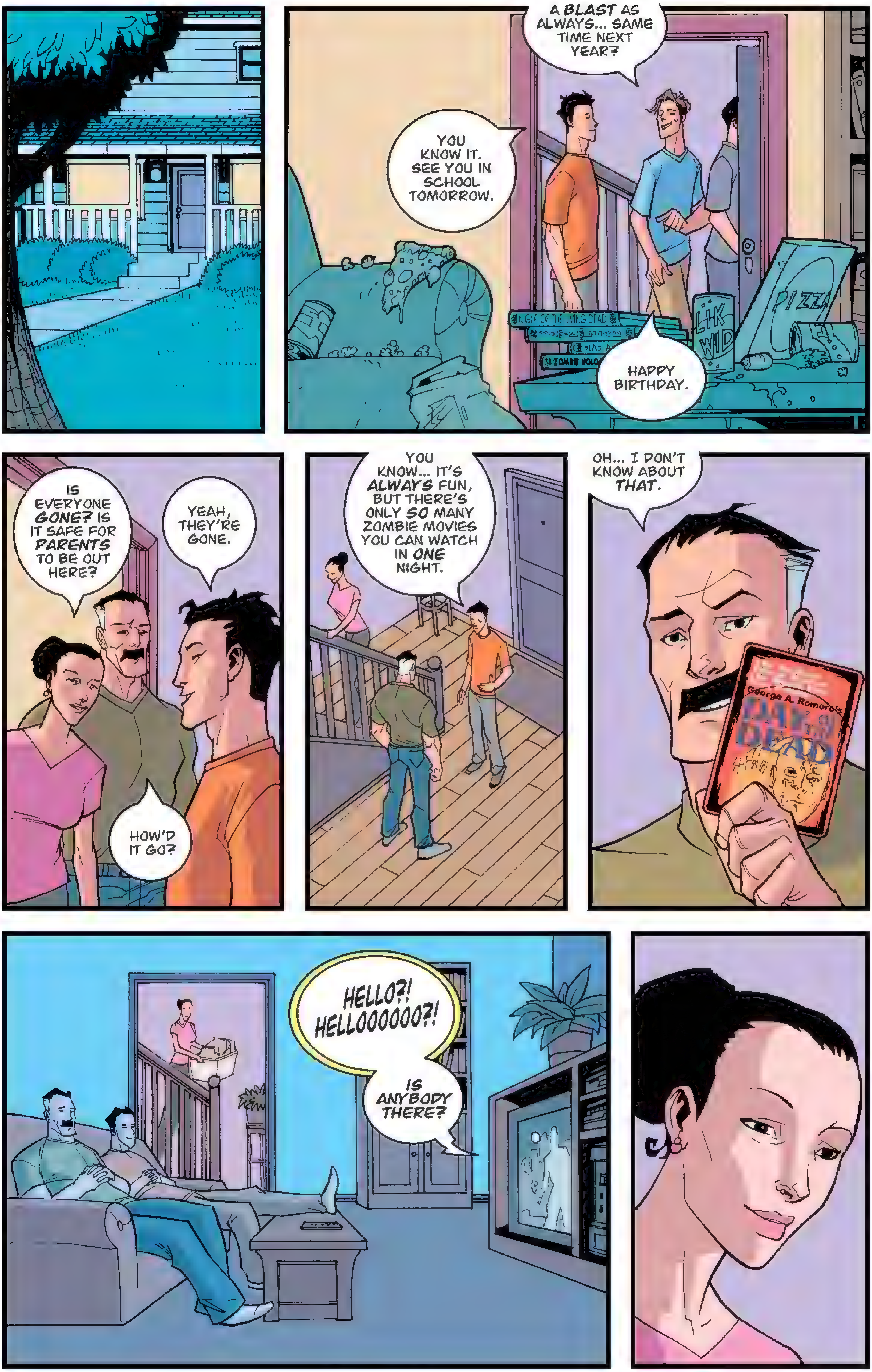
WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, BOYS. YOU HAVE NO *IDEA* THE TIME YOU'VE SAVED US.
INDEED.

ISSUE NINE


WHAT IS OUR STATUS, DOWNLOAD?
WE WILL BE VAPORIZED ON THE SURFACE OF THE STAR IN LESS THAN SIX MINUTES.
ENGINEERING. HOW LONG UNTIL THE ENGINES ARE REPAIRED?
THE TERRELIANS DID A NUMBER ON US BEFORE WE GOT THEM, CAPTAIN. IT'S GOING TO TAKE AT *LEAST* FORTY-FIVE MINUTES UNTIL WE'RE BACK ON-LINE.
DAMN IT! WE DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF TIME!
SIR, IF I CAN CONFIGURE THE DEFLECTOR ARRAY TO EMIT *MULTIPLE* TRACTOR BEAMS IT *MAY* BE POSSIBLE TO SLINGSHOT OURSELVES AWAY FROM THE STAR BY USING THE FRAGMENTED REMAINS OF THE TERRELIAN VESSEL.
MAKE IT S--
DOOM!

AMATEURS.

WHAT WAS *THAT?*
THERE APPEARS TO BE A LIFE FORM HOVERING OFF THE STARBOARD BOW. I BELIEVE IT HAS PUSHED US AWAY FROM THE STAR... WE ARE NO LONGER IN DANGER.
PUT IT ON SCREEN.
IT SEEMS WE OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE, STRANGER.
NO TIME FOR THANKS, THIS DETOUR HAS COST ME *ENOUGH* TIME AS IT IS.
I'VE GOT TO GET TO *EARTH!*
HE HAS STRONG TELEPATHIC ABILITIES...
WHERE THE *HELL* IS EARTH?


A BLAST AS ALWAYS... SAME TIME NEXT YEAR?
YOU KNOW IT. SEE YOU IN SCHOOL TOMORROW.
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD
LIK WID
PIZZA
HAPPY BIRTHDAY.
IS EVERYONE GONE? IS IT SAFE FOR PARENTS TO BE OUT HERE?
YEAH, THEY'RE GONE.
HOW'D IT GO?
YOU KNOW... IT'S ALWAYS FUN, BUT THERE'S ONLY SO MANY ZOMBIE MOVIES YOU CAN WATCH IN ONE NIGHT.
OH... I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
George A. Romero's DAY OF THE DEAD
HELLO?! HELLOOOOOO?!
IS ANYBODY THERE?

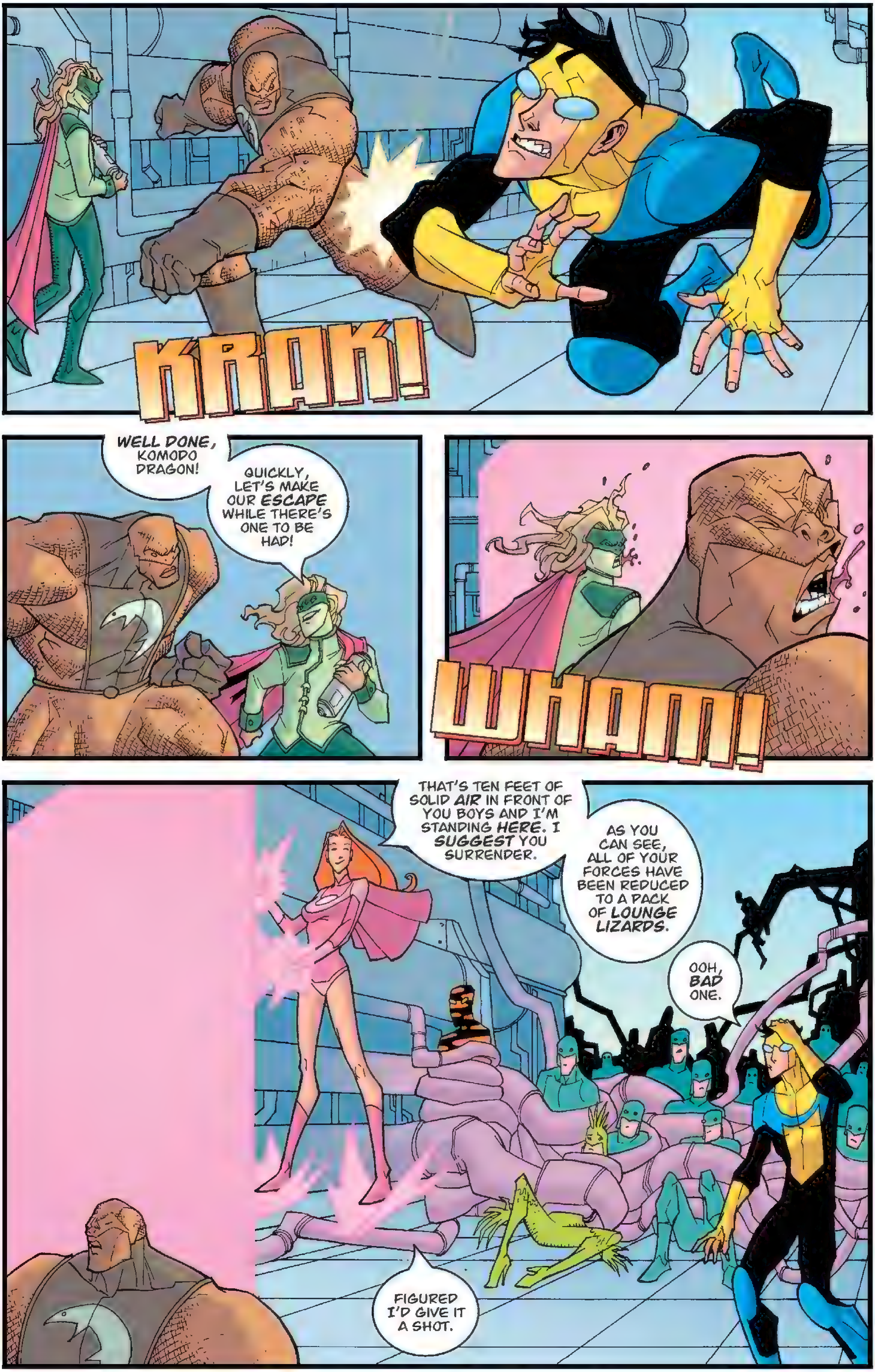
UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I'LL ASSUME YOU'RE WONDERING WHY YOU'RE HERE... FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD ABOUT YOU... YOU MIGHT HAVE ALREADY FIGURED IT OUT.
AS YOU KNOW, THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE RECENTLY AND MYSTERIOUSLY MURDERED. AT THE TIME OF THEIR DEATH YOU WERE BEING CONSIDERED AS AN ADDITION TO THE TEAM. THE OLD TEAM WORKED CLOSELY WITH US, BUT IT WAS A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION FUNDED JOINTLY BY DARKWING'S ALTER EGO AND WAR WOMAN. SADLY THERE IS NO ONE THERE TO PICK UP THE TORCH. SO THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN INVITED TO TAKE OVER.
SIMPLY PUT, YOU WERE A SHOE-IN... AND NOW WE'D LIKE YOU TO BE IN CHARGE OF FORMING A NEW TEAM THAT YOU WILL LEAD.
I AM HONORED THAT YOU HAVE SUCH CONFIDENCE IN MY ABILITIES.
I WILL NOT DISAPPOINT YOU.
THAT'S ALL I ASK. NOW, BEHIND ME HERE IS DONALD, HE'S OUR SUPER-HUMAN LIAISON. HE'LL BE YOUR CONTACT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. YOU'LL ONLY HAVE TO DEAL WITH ME IF SOMETHING GOES HORRIBLY WRONG.
PRAY WE NEVER MEET AGAIN.
WE PLAN ON HOLDING A RECRUITMENT MEETING IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. IF YOU CAN PROVIDE ME WITH A LIST OF ANYONE YOU'D PREFER TO WORK WITH, I'LL MAKE SURE WE CONTACT THEM.

SON... WE NEED TO *TALK*.
≈SIGH≈
MARK, WE NEED TO TALK.
≈SIGH≈
MARK, IT IS *VERY* IMPORTANT THAT WE--

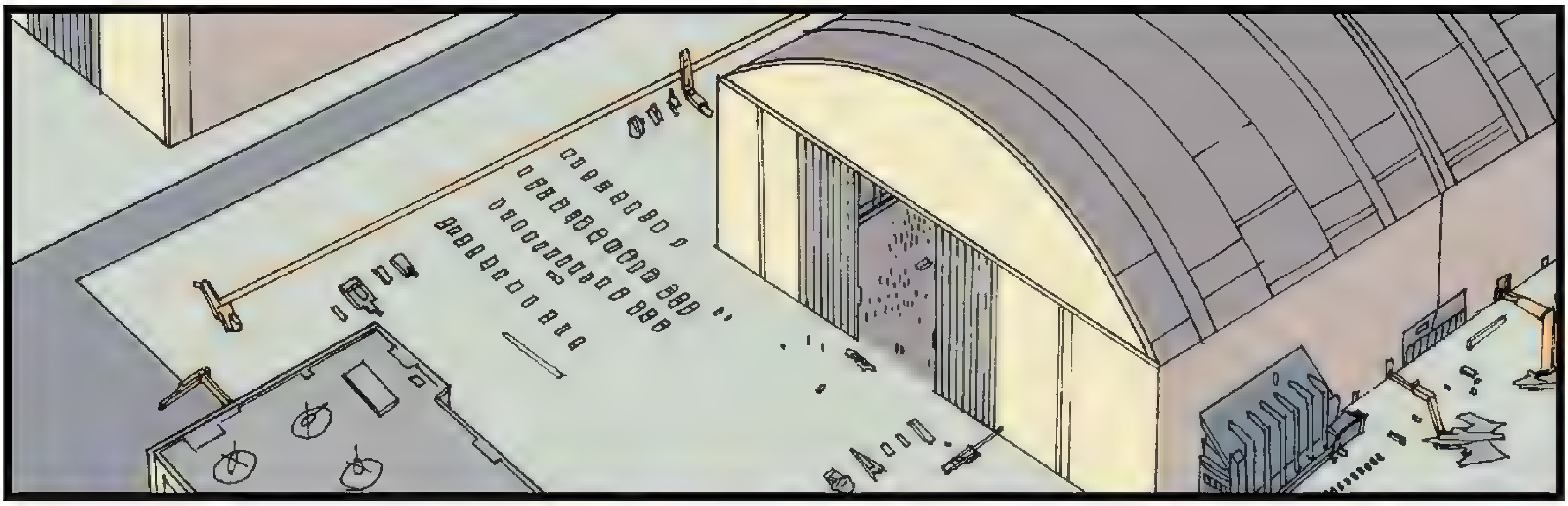
HOOL BUS
VEL JOHNSO
HIGH S
SORRY I COULDN'T BE AT YOUR PARTY ON TUESDAY.
EH... WE JUST HUNG OUT AND WATCHED **HORROR** MOVIES, YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE ENJOYED IT.
WHY? JUST BECAUSE I'M A **GIRL?** I HAPPEN TO REALLY **LIKE** HORROR MOVIES... AS LONG AS THEY'RE NOT **ZOMBIE** MOVIES.
BLASPHEMY.
DO YOU WANT TO DO SOME PATROLLING OR DO YOU NEED TO GO STRAIGHT HOME?
OH... **SURE...** IF YOU WANT. YOU STILL **DO** THAT?
OF **COURSE.** JUST BECAUSE I QUIT THE TEEN TEAM DOESN'T MEAN I HUNG UP MY COSTUME FOR **GOOD.**
COOL, LET'S GET CHANGED.
?
KLICK!
CAFETERIA GARBAGE ONLY
ALL RIGHT YOU LITTLE PER--!!
--VERTS.

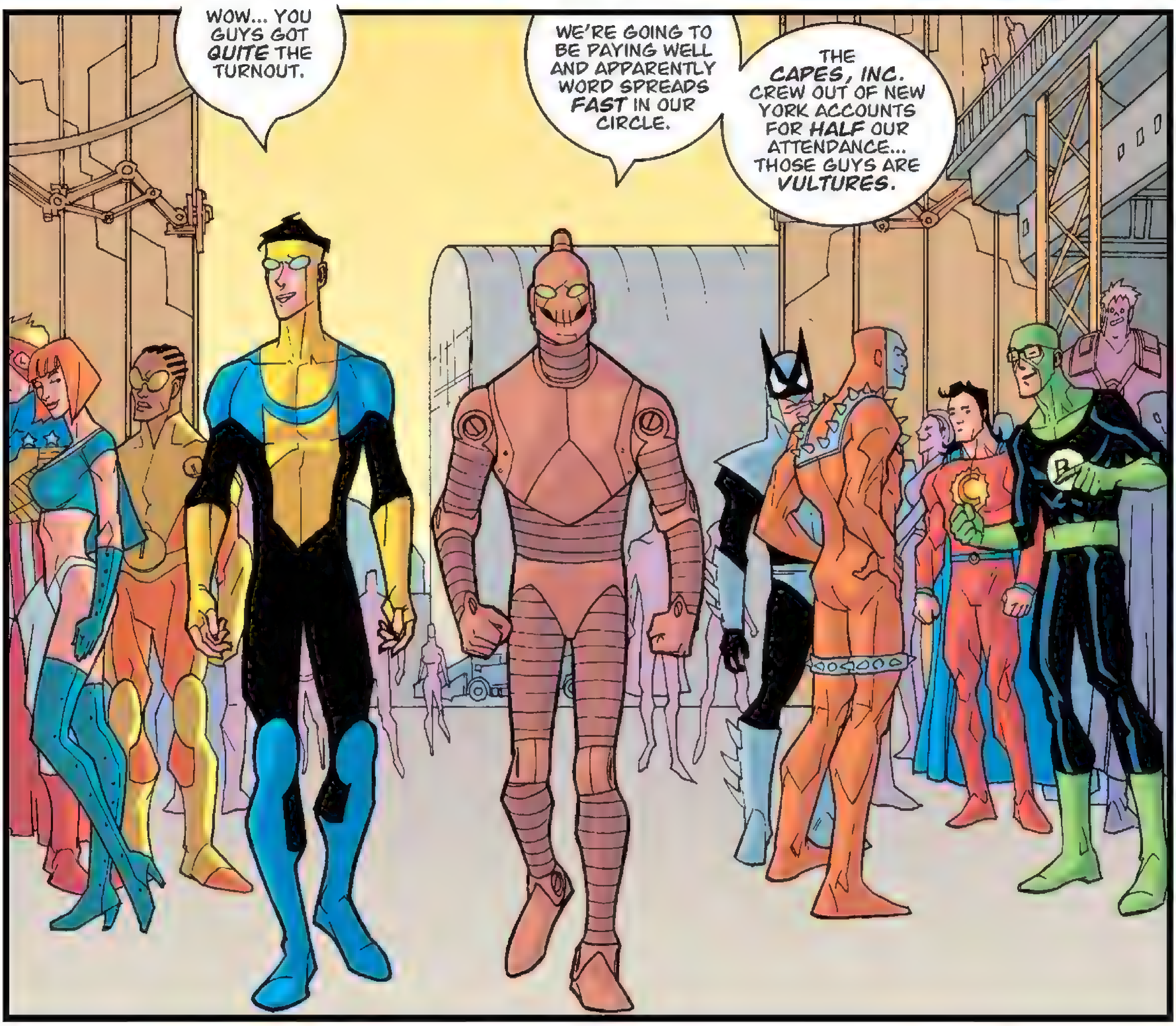
JEEZ.
YEAH, ARE WE ON A SECURE LINE? SORRY TO BOTHER YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY BUT MARK FINALLY PUT ANOTHER ONE OF HIS COSTUMES IN THE WASH AND I CAN'T REMEMBER IF IT'S COLD THEN WARM OR WARM THEN COLD. YOU'D THINK I WOULD KNOW THIS BUT NOLAN HAS BEEN CLEANING HIS UNIFORMS WITH SOLAR RADIATION SINCE I SHRANK HIS FIRST ONE ON ACCIDENT.
IT'S ACTUALLY COLD THEN COLD, LIKE A COLORFUL SWEATER, BUT YOU SHOULD REALLY TALK NOLAN INTO GETTING ONE OF MY IONIC CLEANSING MACHINES. IT'D SURE SAVE YOU A LOT OF WORK.
OH, SILLY ME... I REMEMBER THAT, NOW! AND I'VE GIVEN UP ON THE ION THING. NOLAN DOESN'T SEEM TO WORRY ABOUT GIVING ME MORE READING TIME... AND WE'RE TRYING TO SAVE FOR MARK'S COLLEGE.
THANKS FOR THE HELP.
KLIK!
♪

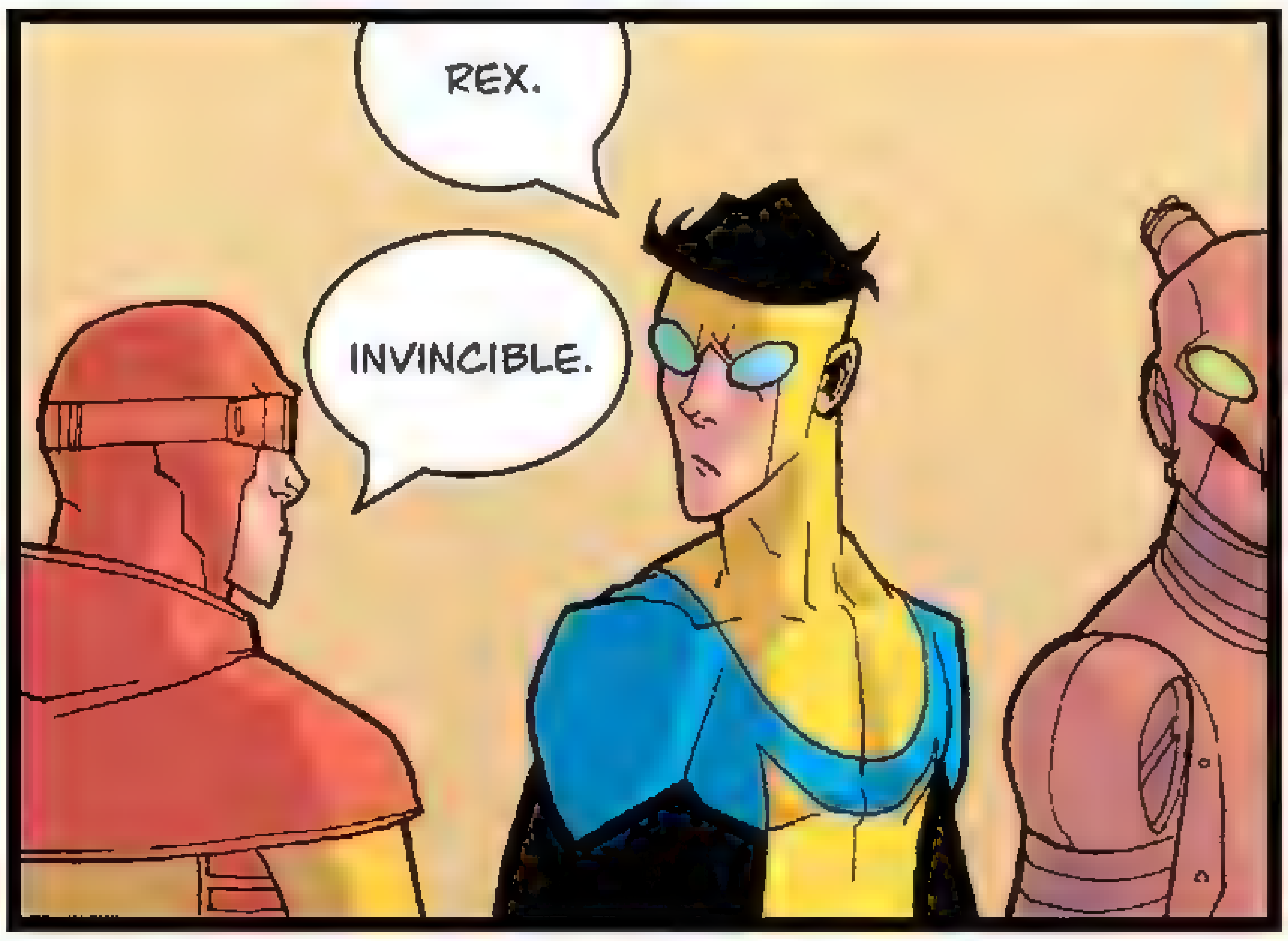
KRAK!!
YOU MAY HAVE WON **THIS** BATTLE BUT THE WAR IS **FAR** FROM OVER! THE **LIZARD LEAGUE** WILL STRIKE **AGAIN!!**
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T **POISON** THE WATER SUPPLY TODAY I'LL BE HAPPY, BUT DID YOU **REALLY** THINK I'D LET YOU GET OUT OF HERE?
I THINK THE DECISION IS NO LONGER UP TO **YOU!**

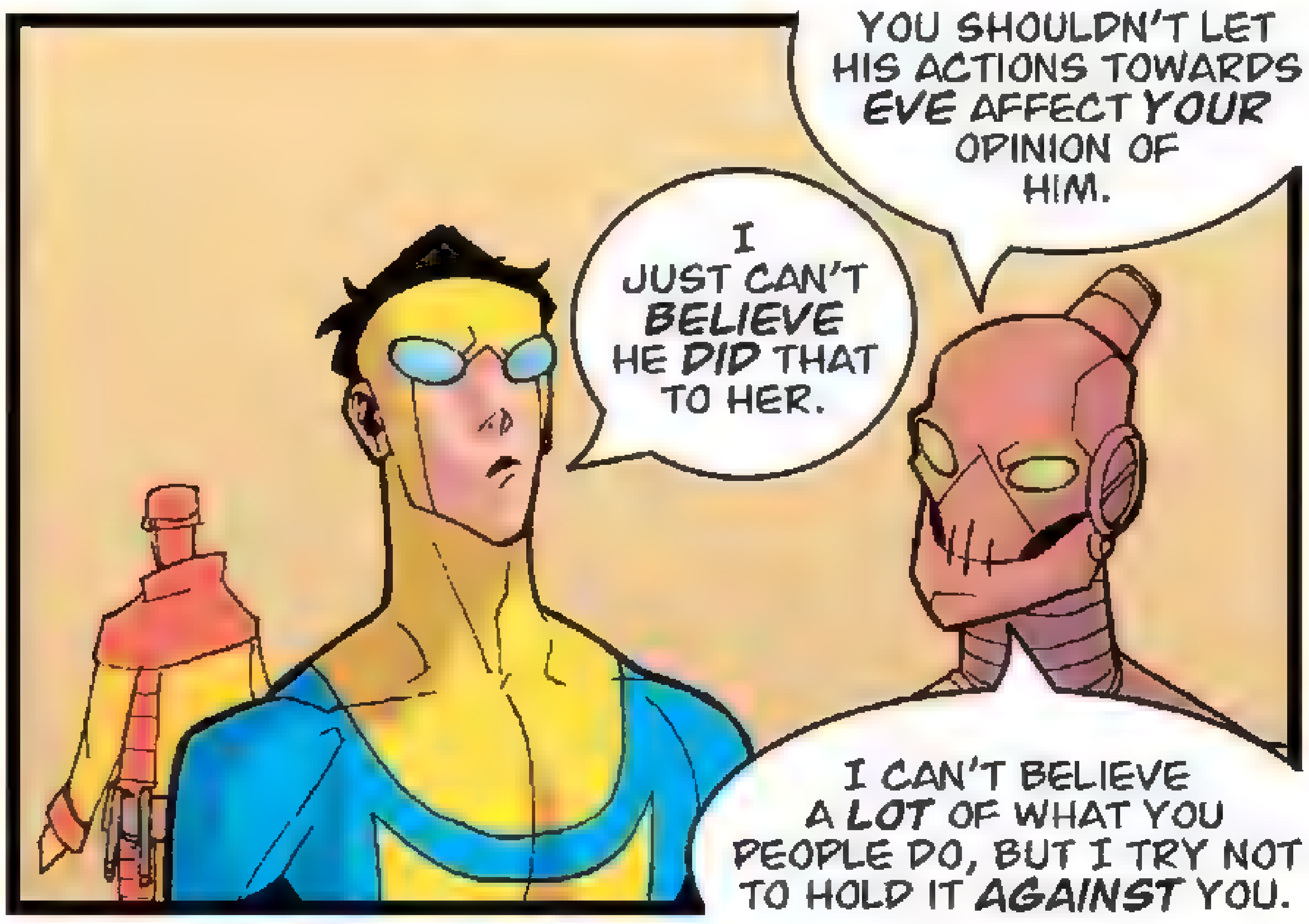

KRAK!
WELL DONE, KOMODO DRAGON!
QUICKLY, LET'S MAKE OUR ESCAPE WHILE THERE'S ONE TO BE HAD!
WHAM!
THAT'S TEN FEET OF SOLID AIR IN FRONT OF YOU BOYS AND I'M STANDING HERE. I SUGGEST YOU SURRENDER.
AS YOU CAN SEE, ALL OF YOUR FORCES HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO A PACK OF LOUNGE LIZARDS.
OOH, BAD ONE.
FIGURED I'D GIVE IT A SHOT.

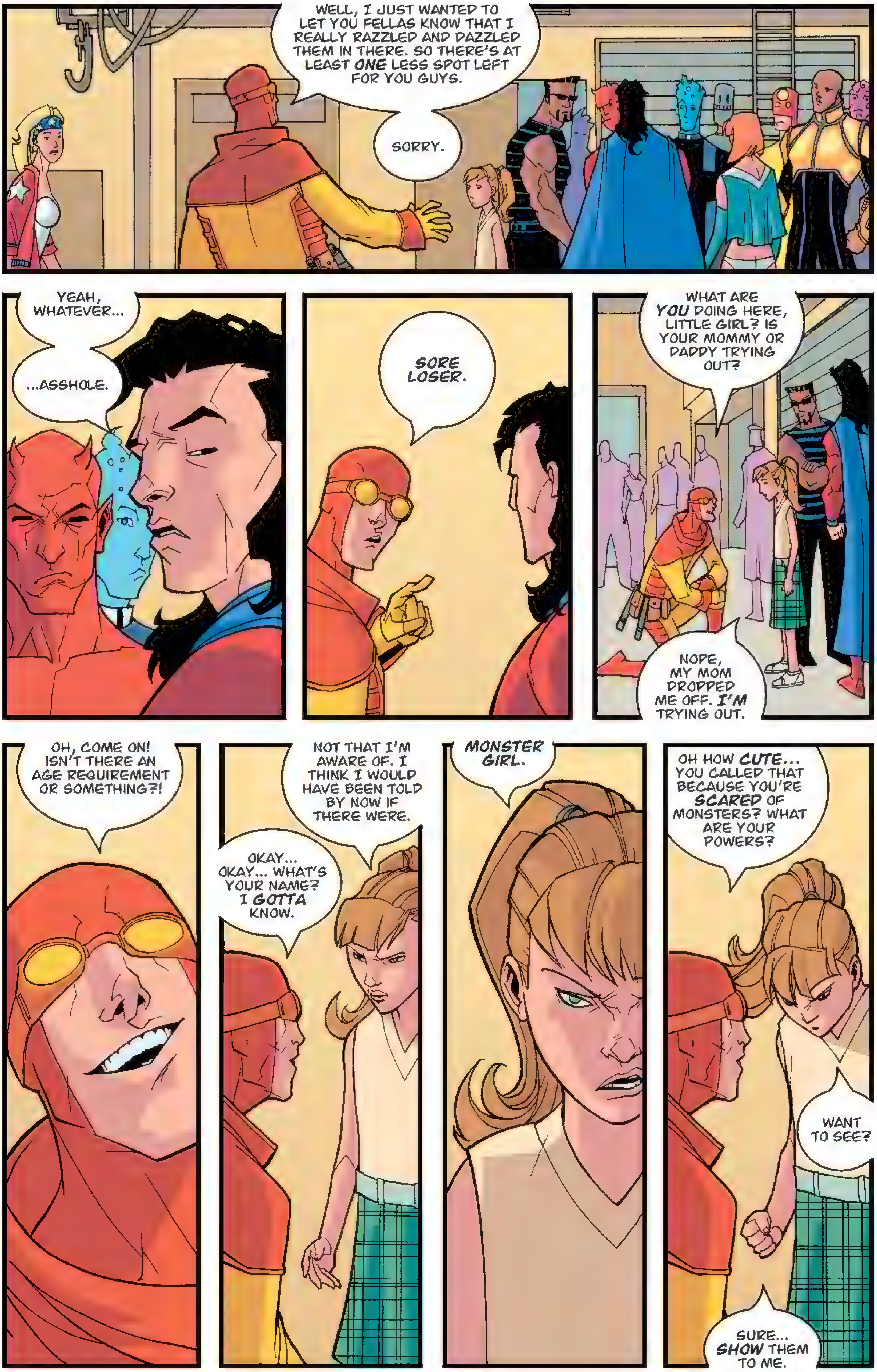
SWAT
POLICE
ASIDE FROM ME TAKING THAT ONE TO THE **FACE** TOWARDS THE END I THINK WE DID PRETTY GOOD.
I **TOTALLY** SAVED YOUR **BUTT.**
NO WAY, I'M SUPER-FAST I COULD HAVE CAUGHT THEM IF YOU HADN'T BEEN THERE! BUT STILL... WE **DO** MAKE A GREAT TEAM.
YOU THINK?
EVE! MARK! I'M SO GLAD I **FOUND** YOU. WE'RE HAVING TRYOUTS FOR THE NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TODAY AND I'D LIKE YOU **BOTH** TO BE THERE.
WITH ALL MY SCHOOLWORK I DON'T THINK I'LL HAVE TIME TO BE A MEMBER BUT I'D **LOVE** TO HANG OUT AND SEE WHO'S TRYING OUT.
THAT'S **FINE.** EVE?
I HAVE SOMEWHERE TO **BE.** YOU HAVE **FUN,** MARK!
...
POLICE

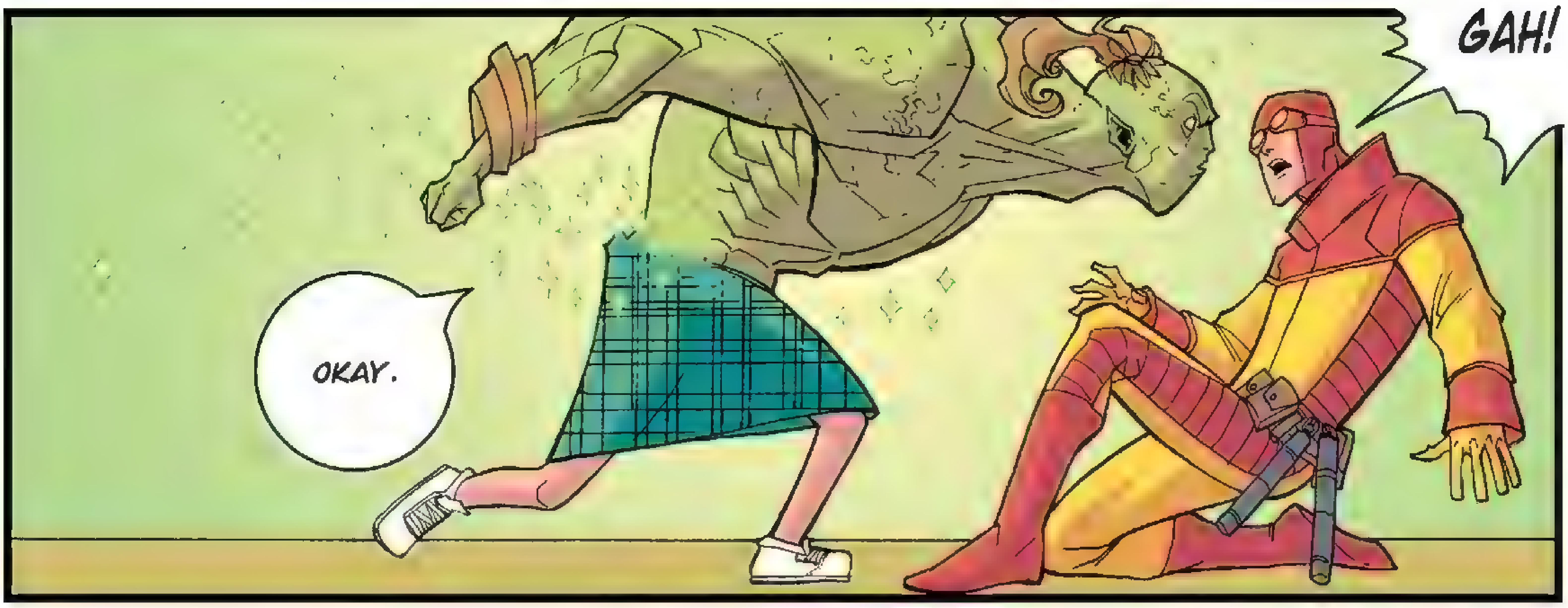


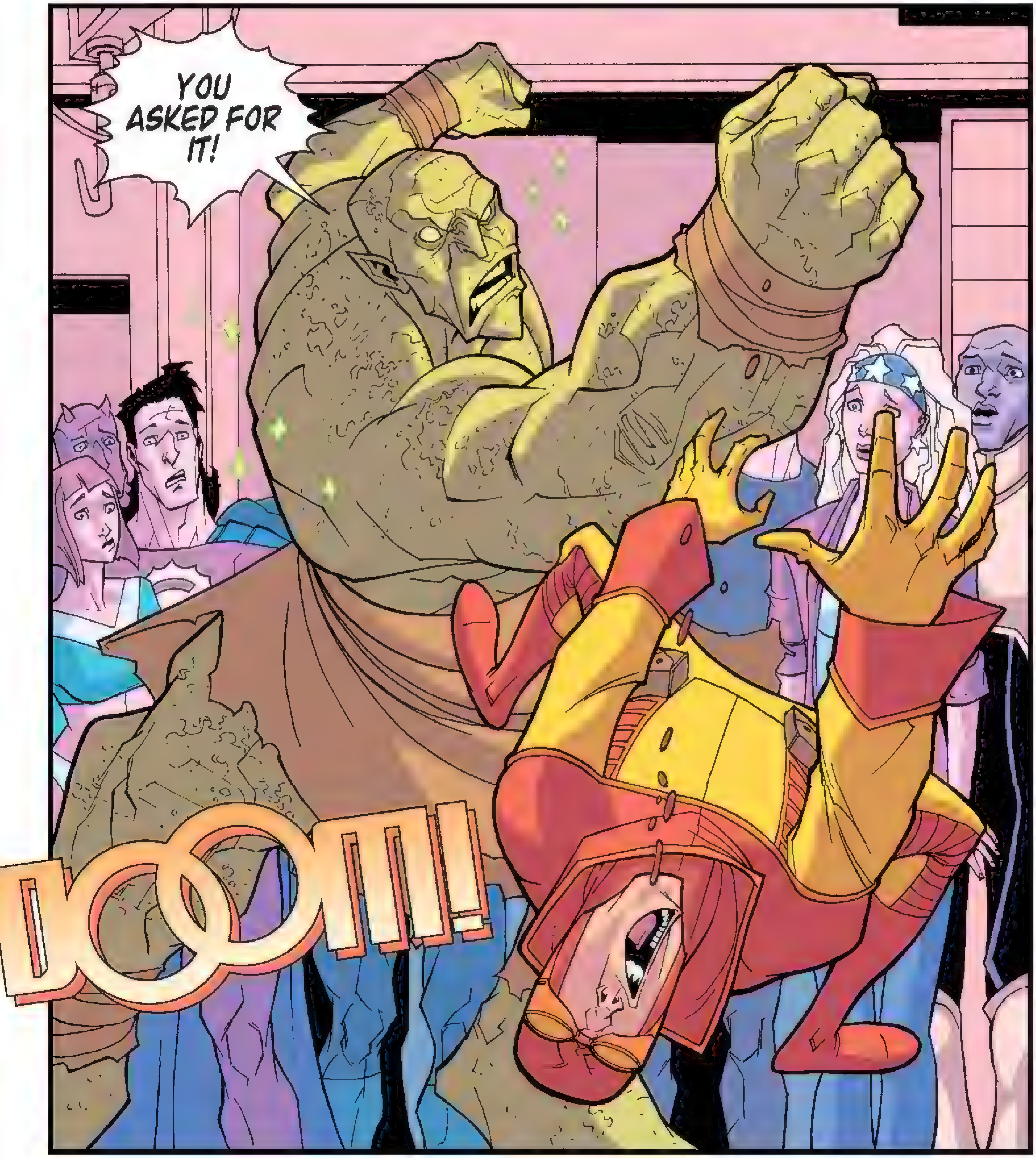

WOW... YOU GUYS GOT *QUITE* THE TURNOUT.
WE'RE GOING TO BE PAYING WELL AND APPARENTLY WORD SPREADS *FAST* IN OUR CIRCLE.
THE *CAPES, INC.* CREW OUT OF NEW YORK ACCOUNTS FOR *HALF* OUR ATTENDANCE... THOSE GUYS ARE *VULTURES*.


REX.
INVINCIBLE.


YOU SHOULDN'T LET HIS ACTIONS TOWARDS *EVE* AFFECT *YOUR* OPINION OF HIM.
I JUST CAN'T *BELIEVE* HE *DID* THAT TO HER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE A *LOT* OF WHAT YOU PEOPLE DO, BUT I TRY NOT TO HOLD IT *AGAINST* YOU.

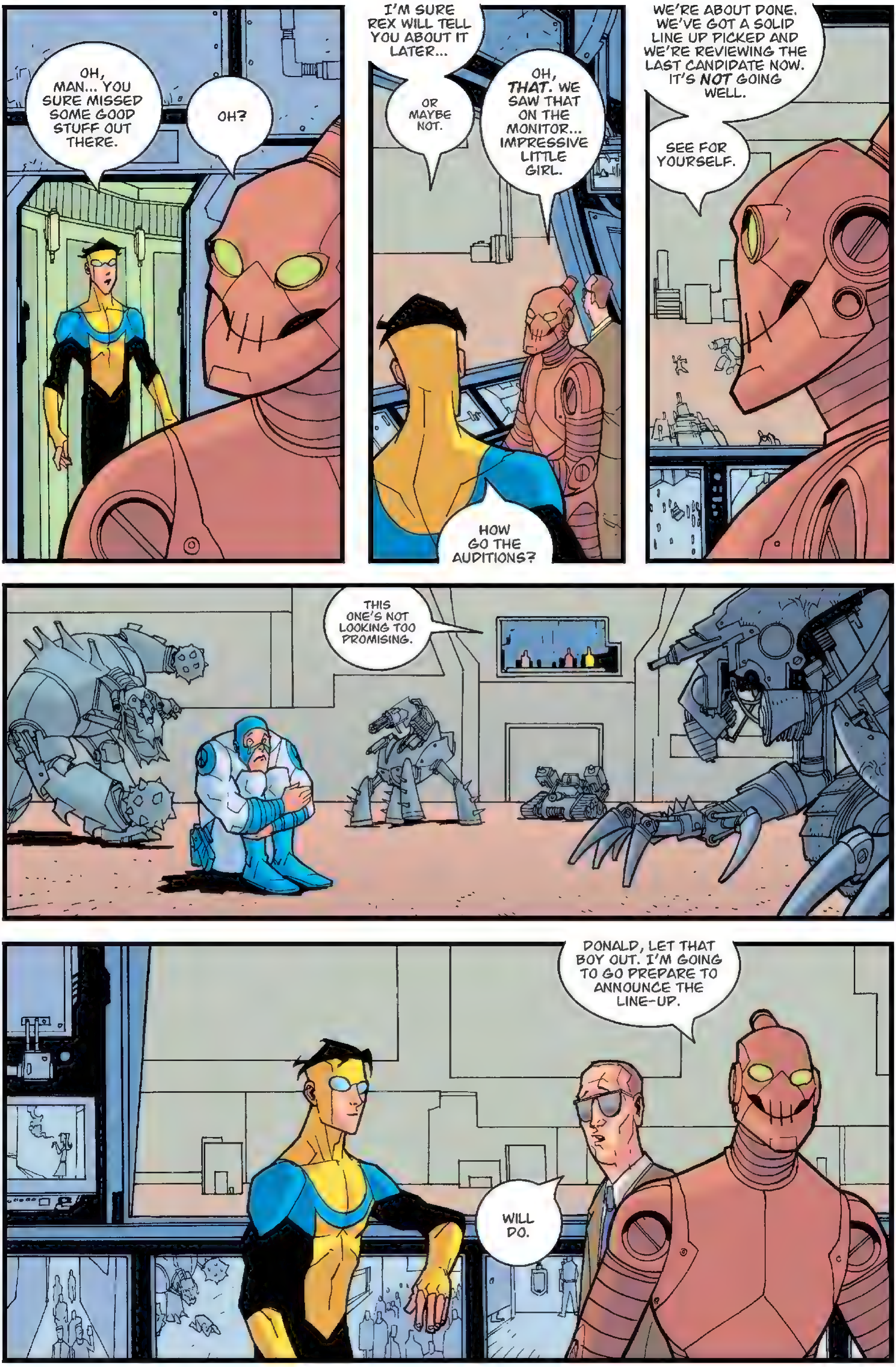

WELL, I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU FELLAS KNOW THAT I REALLY RAZZLED AND DAZZLED THEM IN THERE. SO THERE'S AT LEAST *ONE* LESS SPOT LEFT FOR YOU GUYS.
SORRY.
YEAH, WHATEVER...
...ASSHOLE.
SORE LOSER.
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE, LITTLE GIRL? IS YOUR MOMMY OR DADDY TRYING OUT?
NOPE, MY MOM DROPPED ME OFF. *I'M* TRYING OUT.
OH, COME ON! ISN'T THERE AN AGE REQUIREMENT OR SOMETHING?!
NOT THAT I'M AWARE OF. I THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN TOLD BY NOW IF THERE WERE.
OKAY... OKAY... WHAT'S YOUR NAME? I *GOTTA* KNOW.
MONSTER GIRL.
OH HOW *CUTE*... YOU CALLED THAT BECAUSE YOU'RE *SCARED* OF MONSTERS? WHAT ARE YOUR POWERS?
WANT TO SEE?
SURE... *SHOW* THEM TO ME.

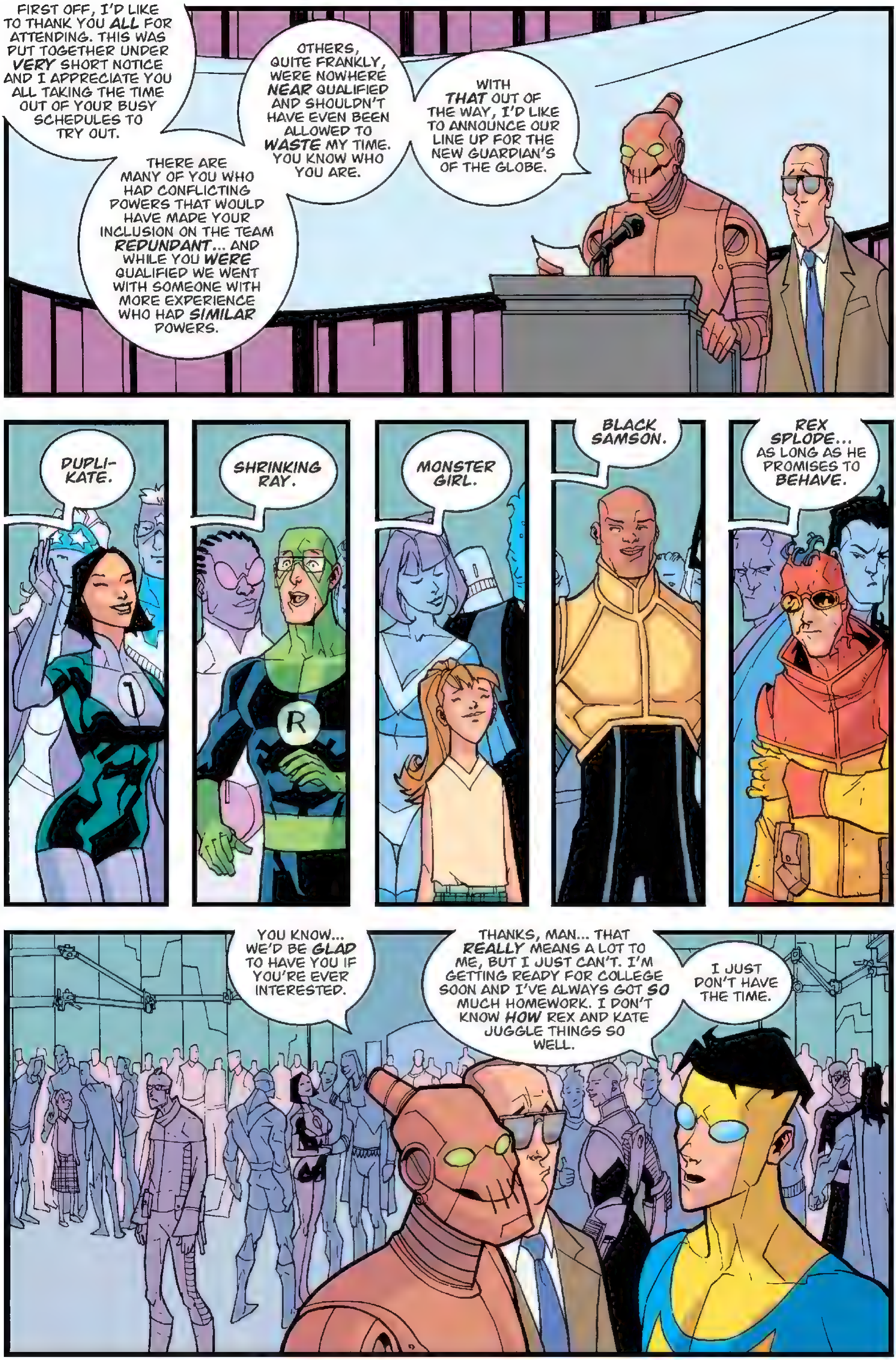

GAH!
OKAY.


YOU ASKED FOR IT!
DOOM!

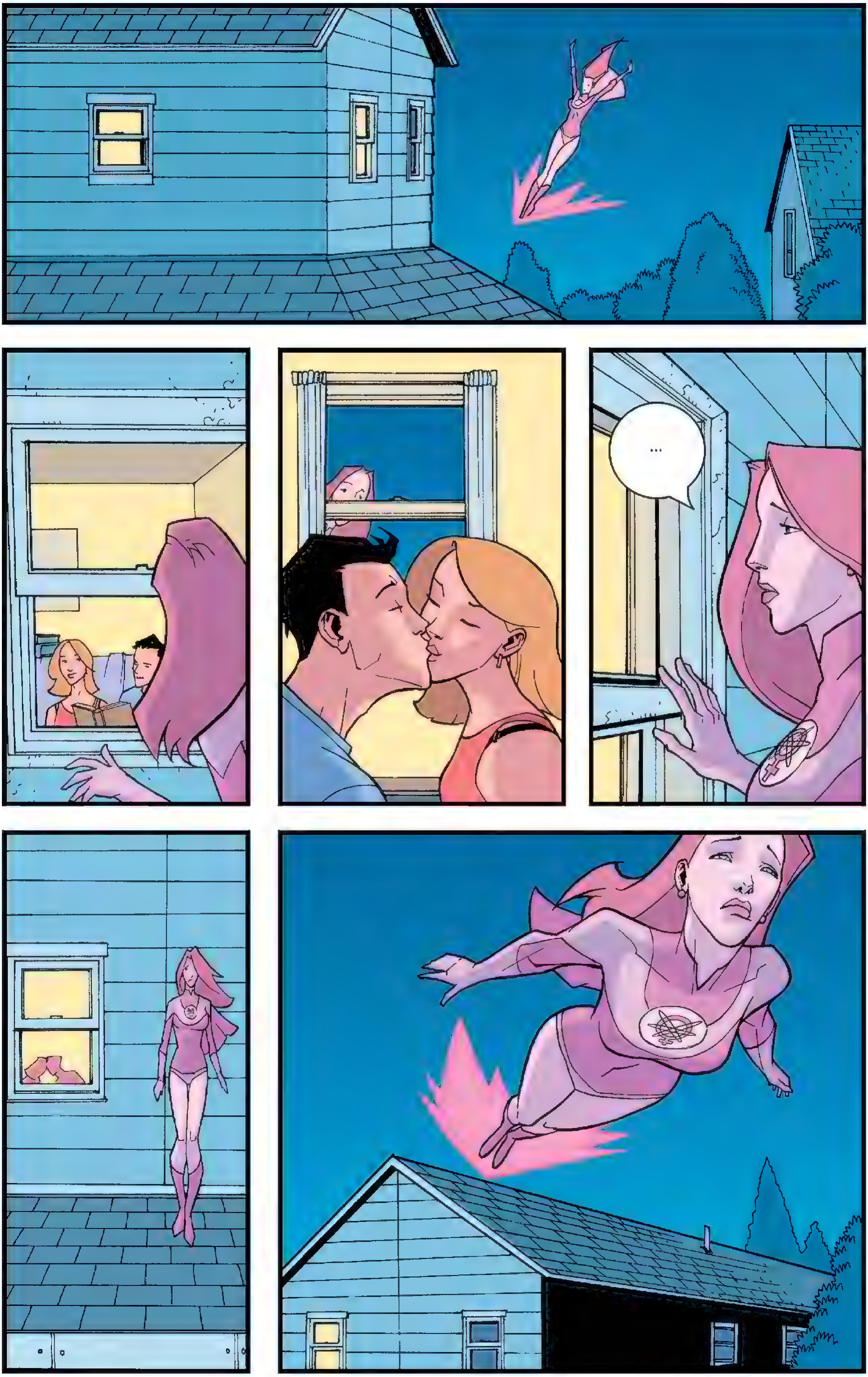
WHAT THE--?!
WHACK!
REX!!
STILL THINK I'M CUTE?!
KRAK
BOOM!
WHY ISN'T ANYONE ELSE TRYING TO STOP THIS?
IT'LL TAKE MUCH MORE THAN THAT!
GOOM!

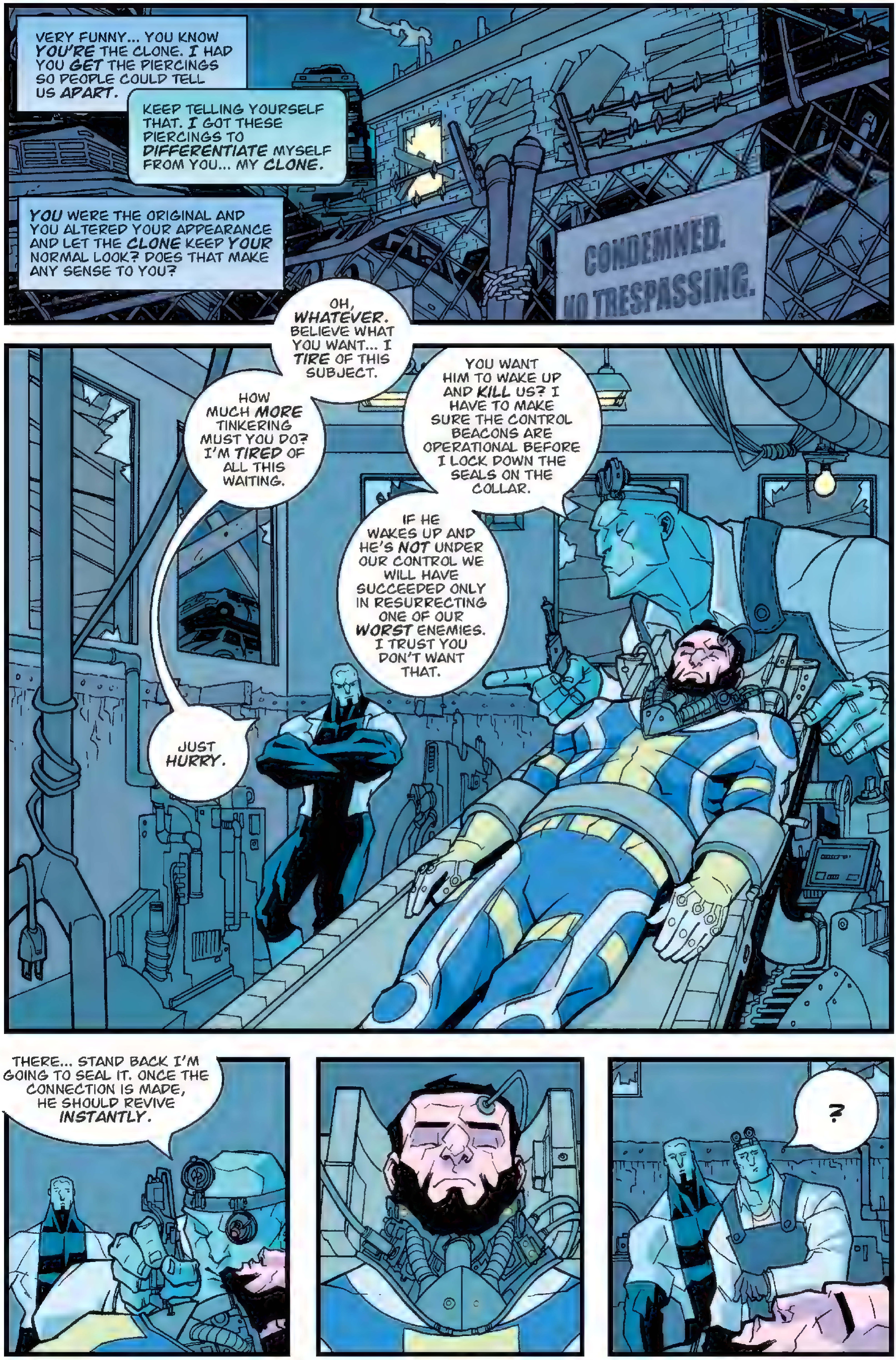
POW!
WHO LET *YOU* IN, UGLY?
WHO ARE YOU CALLING *UGLY?!*
HE *HIT* THAT LITTLE GIRL!
UH...
IT'S OKAY, I CAN'T BE HURT IN MONSTER FORM... AND ANYWAY, I *DID* GET A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY.
SORRY.
S'OKAY.
SORRY I HIT YOU.
DON'T *SWEAT* IT... I CAN TAKE IT. IT'LL BE HAPPENING A LOT MORE OFTEN IF I LAND THIS GIG. ANYONE GOT A CIGARETTE?
THANKS, MAN.
JUST BECAUSE I'M PISSED OFF AT YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO EVE DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO SEE YOU *DEAD*.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'M *SPEAKING* TO YOU *EITHER*.
...

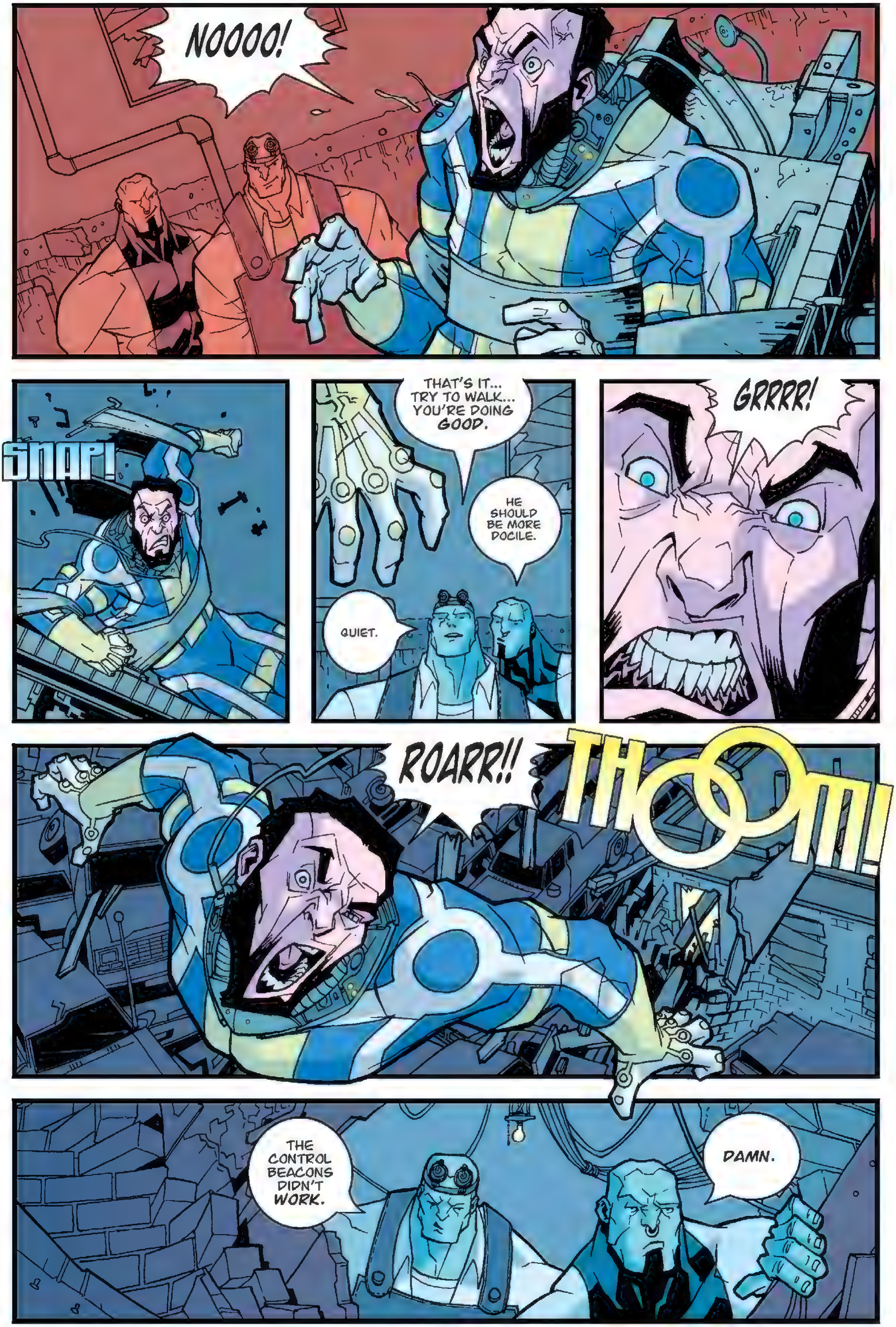

OH, MAN... YOU SURE MISSED SOME GOOD STUFF OUT THERE.
OH?
I'M SURE REX WILL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER...
OR MAYBE NOT.
OH, *THAT.* WE SAW THAT ON THE MONITOR... IMPRESSIVE LITTLE GIRL.
HOW GO THE AUDITIONS?
WE'RE ABOUT DONE. WE'VE GOT A SOLID LINE UP PICKED AND WE'RE REVIEWING THE LAST CANDIDATE NOW. IT'S *NOT* GOING WELL.
SEE FOR YOURSELF.
THIS ONE'S NOT LOOKING TOO PROMISING.
DONALD, LET THAT BOY OUT. I'M GOING TO GO PREPARE TO ANNOUNCE THE LINE-UP.
WILL DO.


FIRST OFF, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU **ALL** FOR ATTENDING. THIS WAS PUT TOGETHER UNDER **VERY** SHORT NOTICE AND I APPRECIATE YOU ALL TAKING THE TIME OUT OF YOUR BUSY SCHEDULES TO TRY OUT.
THERE ARE MANY OF YOU WHO HAD CONFLICTING POWERS THAT WOULD HAVE MADE YOUR INCLUSION ON THE TEAM **REDUNDANT**... AND WHILE YOU **WERE** QUALIFIED WE WENT WITH SOMEONE WITH MORE EXPERIENCE WHO HAD **SIMILAR** POWERS.
OTHERS, QUITE FRANKLY, WERE NOWHERE **NEAR** QUALIFIED AND SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN BEEN ALLOWED TO **WASTE** MY TIME. YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
WITH **THAT** OUT OF THE WAY, I'D LIKE TO ANNOUNCE OUR LINE UP FOR THE NEW GUARDIAN'S OF THE GLOBE.
DUPLI-KATE.
SHRINKING RAY.
MONSTER GIRL.
BLACK SAMSON.
REX SPLODE... AS LONG AS HE PROMISES TO **BEHAVE.**
YOU KNOW... WE'D BE **GLAD** TO HAVE YOU IF YOU'RE EVER INTERESTED.
THANKS, MAN... THAT **REALLY** MEANS A LOT TO ME, BUT I JUST CAN'T. I'M GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE SOON AND I'VE ALWAYS GOT **SO** MUCH HOMEWORK. I DON'T KNOW **HOW** REX AND KATE JUGGLE THINGS SO WELL.
I JUST DON'T HAVE THE TIME.

SO IS DAD NOT GOING TO MAKE IT TONIGHT?
WHO KNOWS? I HAVEN'T **HEARD** FROM HIM. HE'S OFF SAVING THE **WORLD**, NO DOUBT.
NO DOUBT.
SO, YOU GOT ANY **HOMEWORK** TONIGHT?
YEAH, ACTUALLY... **AMBER** IS COMING OVER TONIGHT SO WE CAN STUDY FOR OUR WORLD HISTORY TEST.
THAT'S **OKAY**, RIGHT?
WHAT'S GOING **ON** WITH YOU TWO? ARE YOU **DATING?**
NO... WE'RE JUST FRIENDS. SHE'S JUST COMING OVER TO STUDY.
WEREN'T YOU USING THAT EXCUSE WITH EVE?
C'MON, SON... DO YOU **REALLY** EXPECT ME TO FALL FOR THAT?
I SWEAR. **NOTHING'S** GOING ON.
UH HUH...




VERY FUNNY... YOU KNOW *YOU'RE* THE CLONE. *I* HAD YOU *GET* THE PIERCINGS SO PEOPLE COULD TELL US *APART*.
KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT. *I* GOT THESE PIERCINGS TO *DIFFERENTIATE* MYSELF FROM YOU... MY *CLONE*.
YOU WERE THE ORIGINAL AND YOU ALTERED YOUR APPEARANCE AND LET THE *CLONE* KEEP *YOUR* NORMAL LOOK? DOES THAT MAKE ANY SENSE TO YOU?
CONDEMNED. NO TRESPASSING.
OH, *WHATEVER*. BELIEVE WHAT YOU WANT... I *TIRE* OF THIS SUBJECT.
HOW MUCH *MORE* TINKERING MUST YOU DO? I'M *TIRED* OF ALL THIS WAITING.
YOU WANT HIM TO WAKE UP AND *KILL* US? I HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE CONTROL BEACONS ARE OPERATIONAL BEFORE I LOCK DOWN THE SEALS ON THE COLLAR.
IF HE WAKES UP AND HE'S *NOT* UNDER OUR CONTROL WE WILL HAVE SUCCEEDED ONLY IN RESURRECTING ONE OF OUR *WORST* ENEMIES. I TRUST YOU DON'T WANT THAT.
JUST *HURRY*.
THERE... STAND BACK I'M GOING TO SEAL IT. ONCE THE CONNECTION IS MADE, HE SHOULD REVIVE *INSTANTLY*.
?

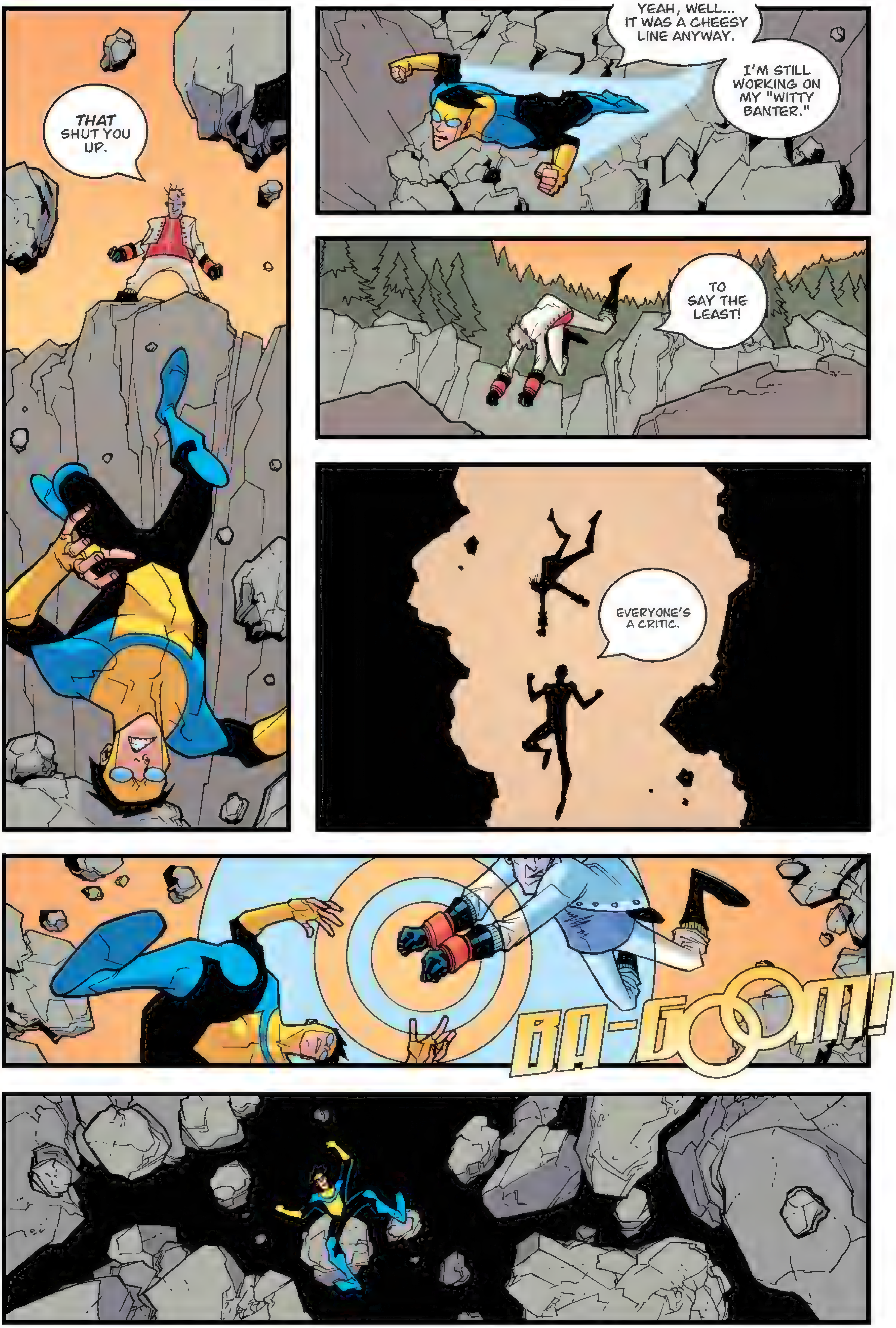

NOOOO!
SNAP!
THAT'S IT... TRY TO WALK... YOU'RE DOING GOOD.
HE SHOULD BE MORE DOCILE.
QUIET.
GRRRR!
ROARR!!
THOOM!
THE CONTROL BEACONS DIDN'T WORK.
DAMN.

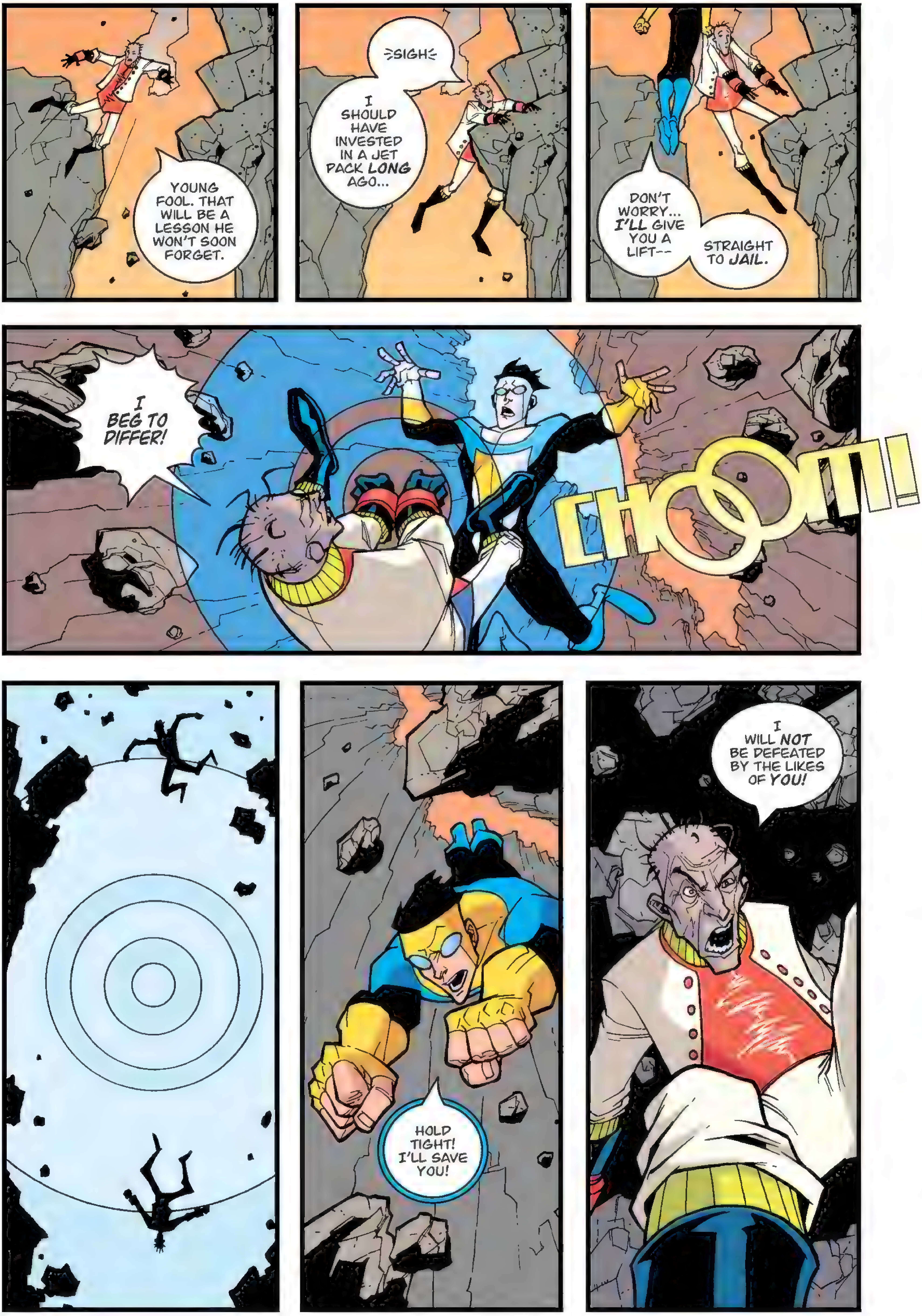
ISSUE TEN

abs 6
Action News
SPECIAL REPORT
FLOOR?
BFPM
BFPM
SCIENCE DOG

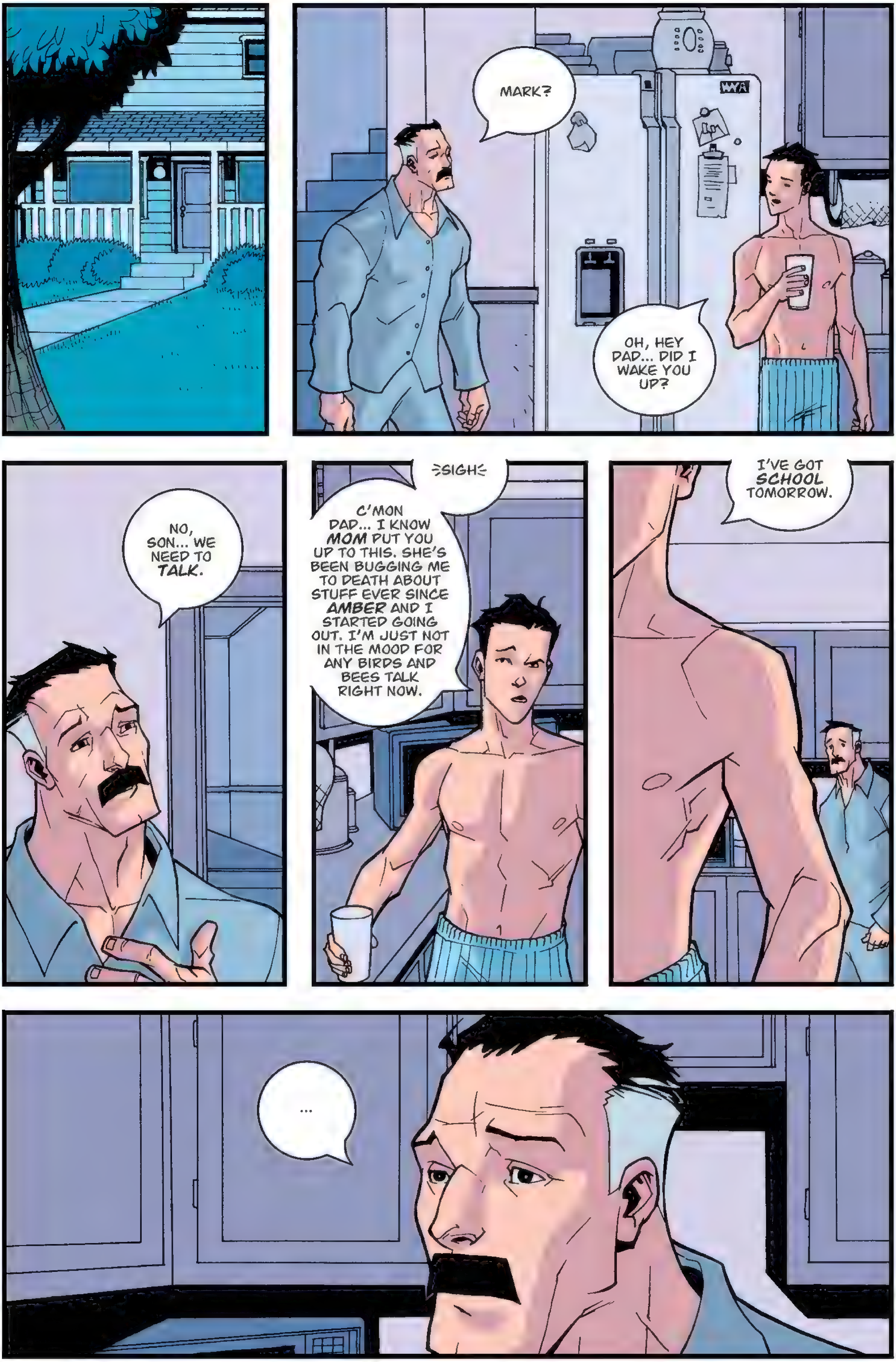
BRAKOOM!

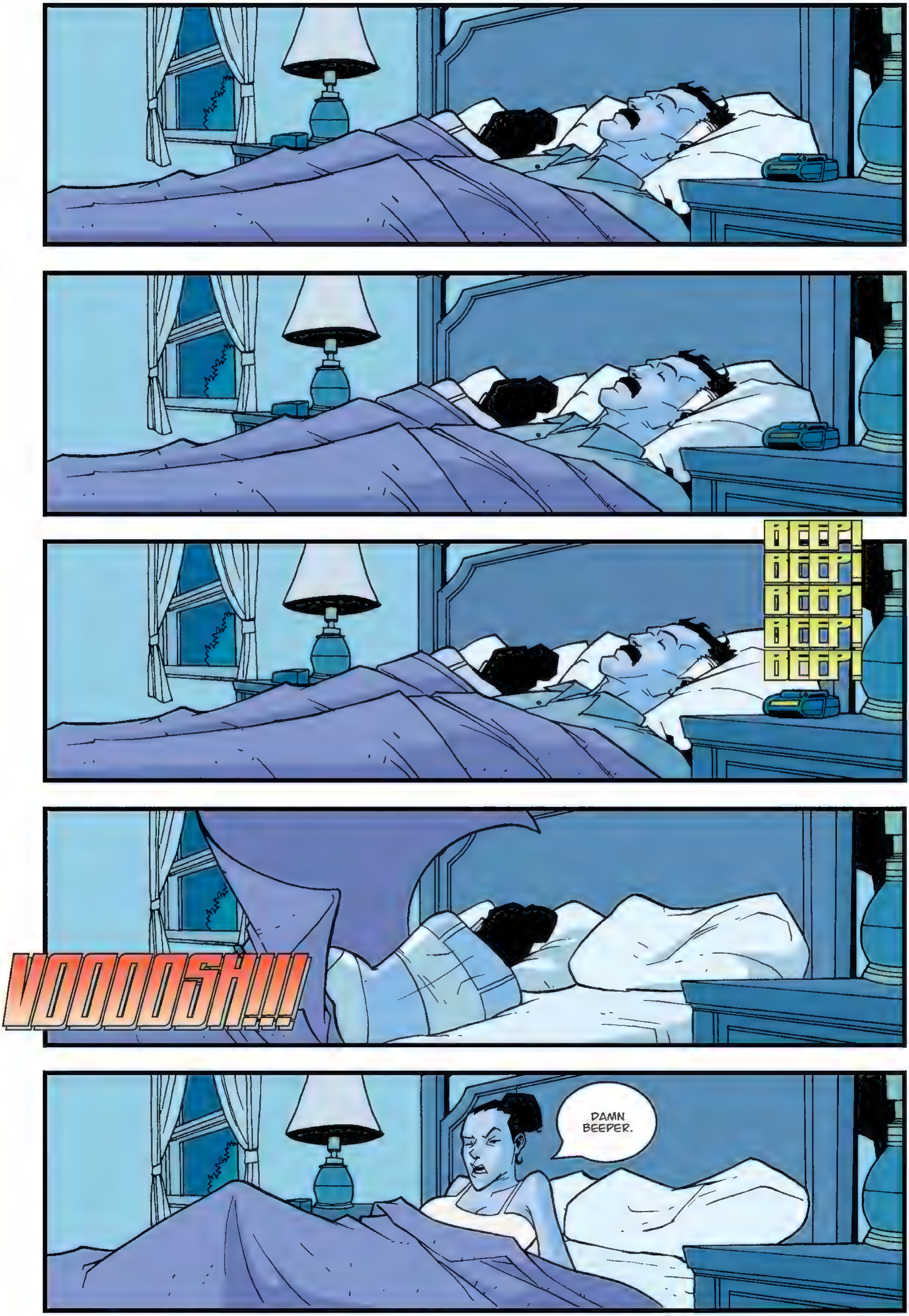
YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD STOP *ME?* YOU'RE UP AGAINST *DOC SEISMIC,* KID!
I HAVEN'T EVEN *HEARD* OF YOU!
THE NAME'S *INVINCIBLE.*
I'M SURE YOU WON'T HAVE *ANY* TROUBLE REMEMBERING IT AFTER I KICK YOUR--
SHA-DOOM!

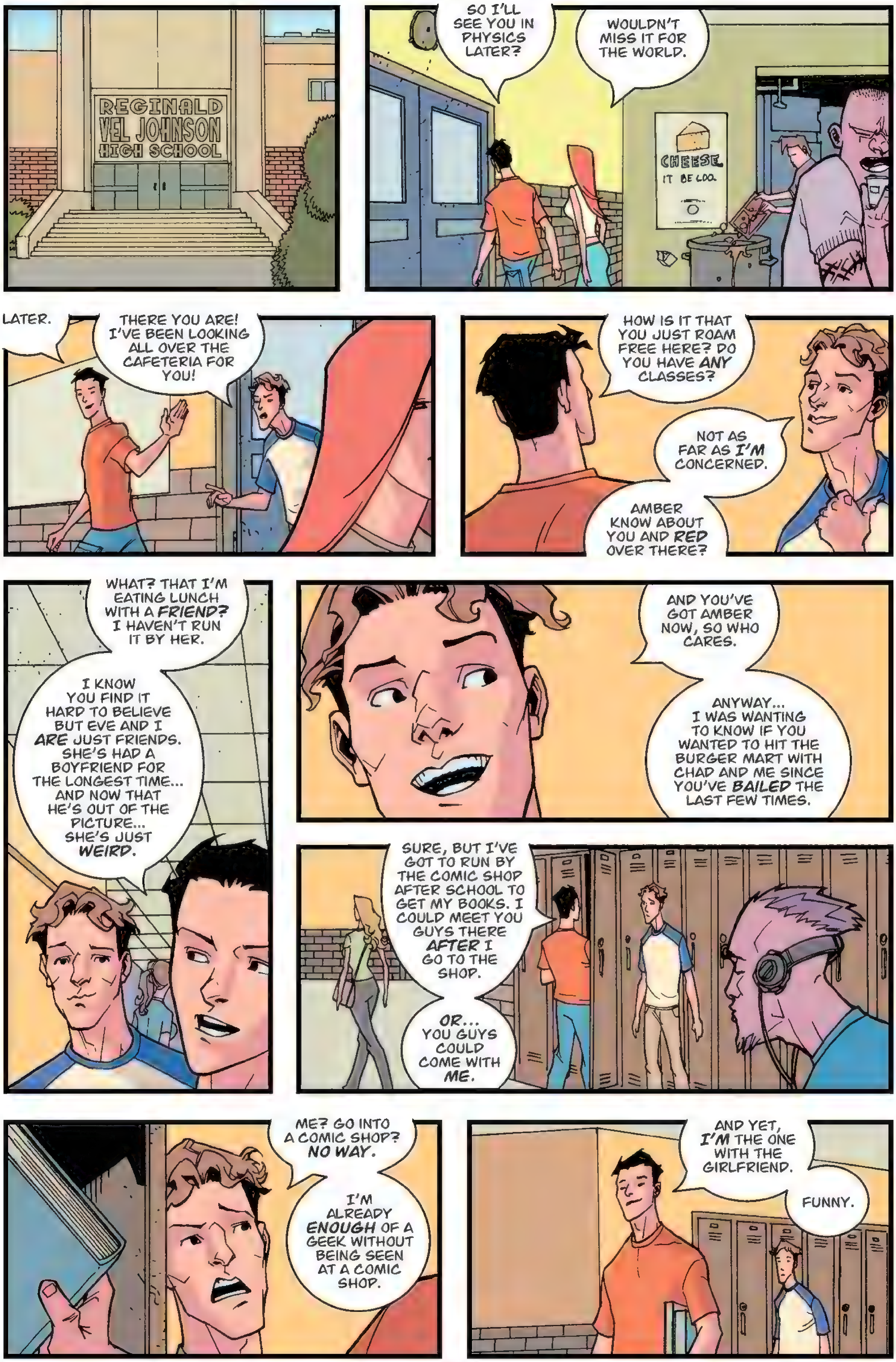

THAT SHUT YOU UP.
YEAH, WELL... IT WAS A CHEESY LINE ANYWAY.
I'M STILL WORKING ON MY "WITTY BANTER."
TO SAY THE LEAST!
EVERYONE'S A CRITIC.
BA-GOOM!

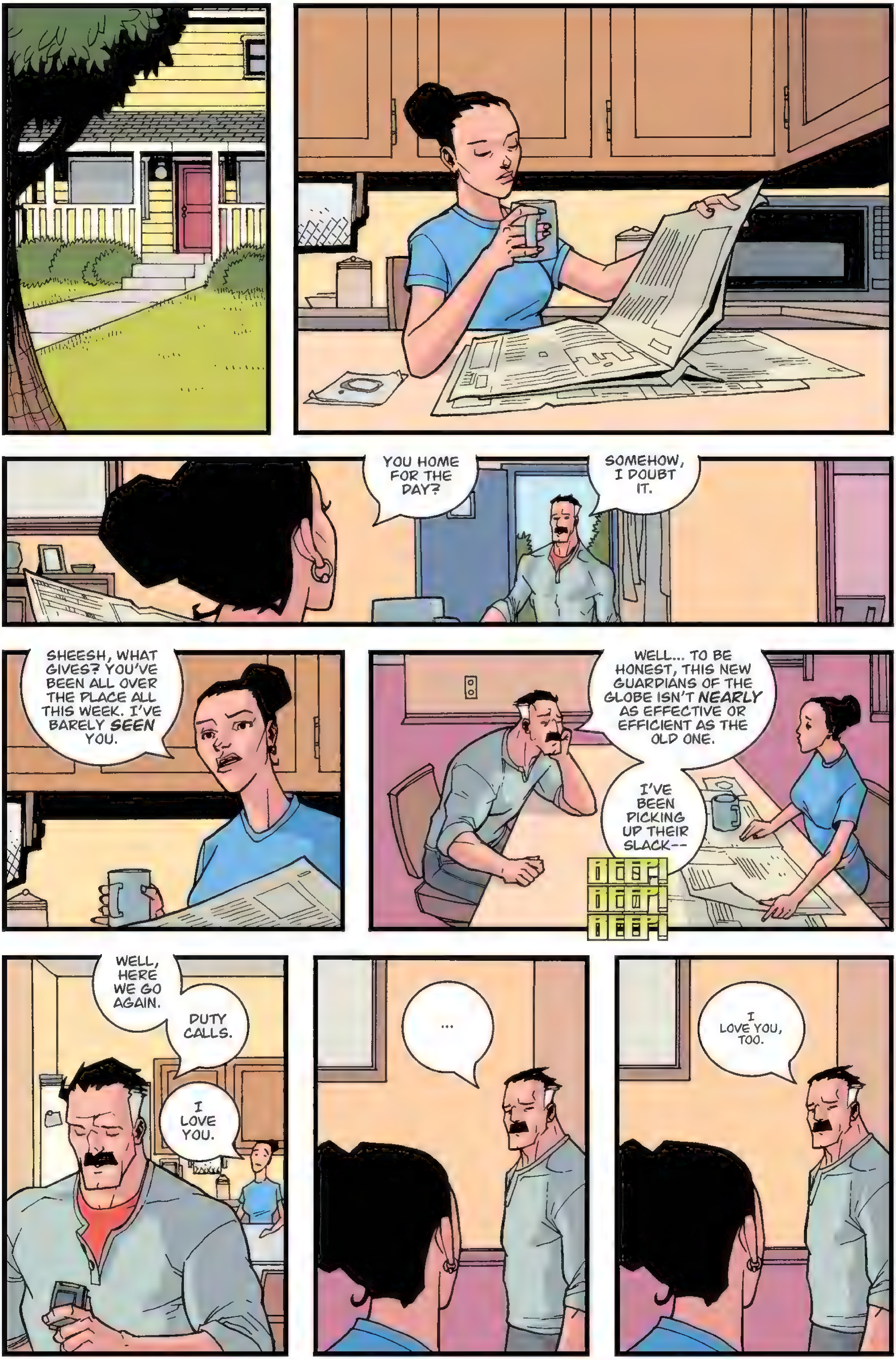

YOUNG FOOL. THAT WILL BE A LESSON HE WON'T SOON FORGET.
≡SIGH≡
I SHOULD HAVE INVESTED IN A JET PACK **LONG** AGO...
DON'T WORRY... ***I'LL*** GIVE YOU A LIFT--
STRAIGHT TO ***JAIL.***
I BEG TO DIFFER!
CHOOM!
HOLD TIGHT! I'LL SAVE YOU!
I WILL ***NOT*** BE DEFEATED BY THE LIKES OF ***YOU!***

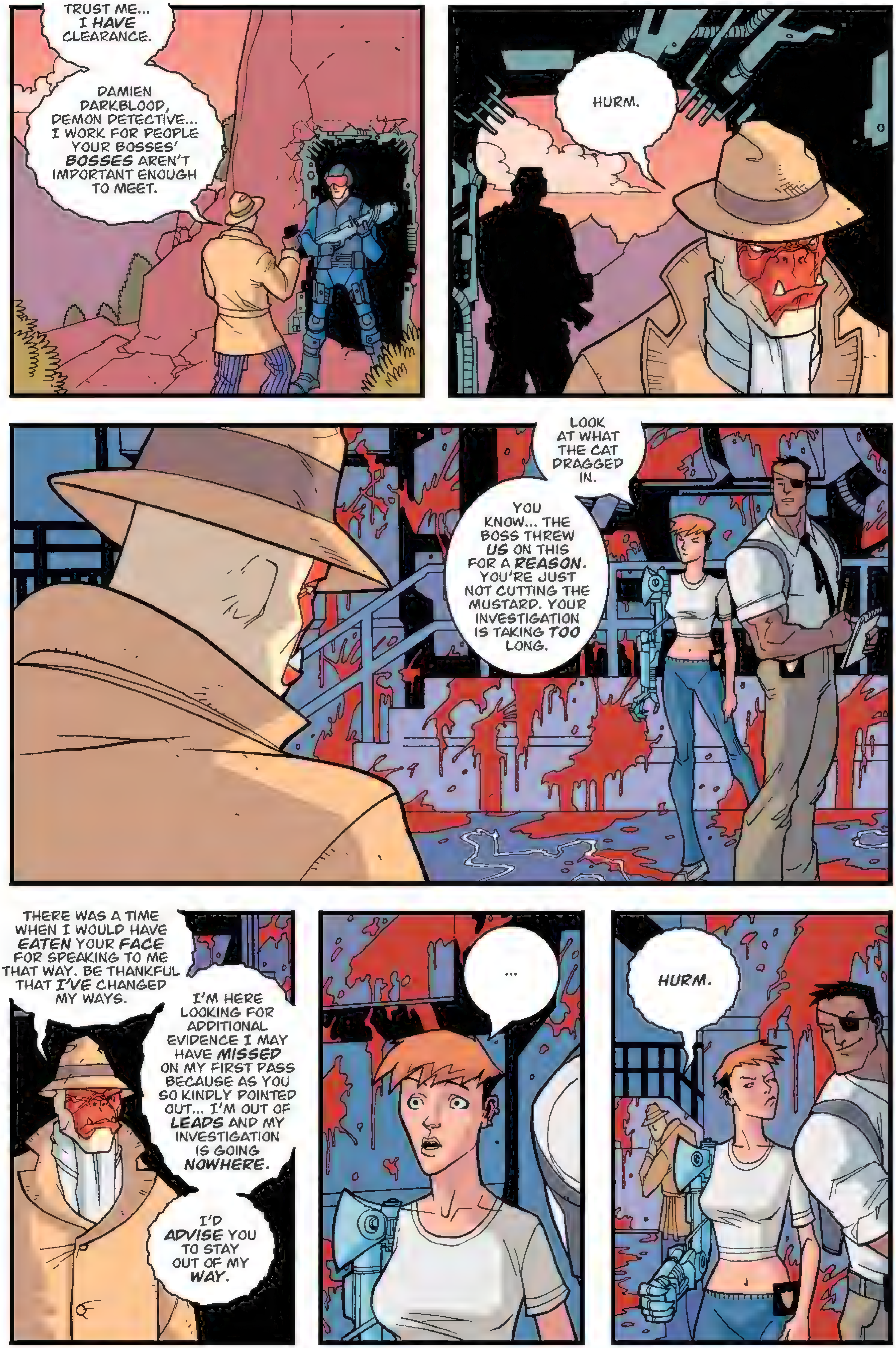
BRAKKA-FOOM!
NO!
THUD!
OOF!
CRAP.
?
CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!
YOU SAVED OUR LIVES, INVINCIBLE. IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, HE'D HAVE DESTROYED MOUNT RUSHMORE AND US ALONG WITH IT.
THANKS.
UM... DON'T MENTION IT.
JUST DOING MY JOB.
I COULD GET USED TO THIS.

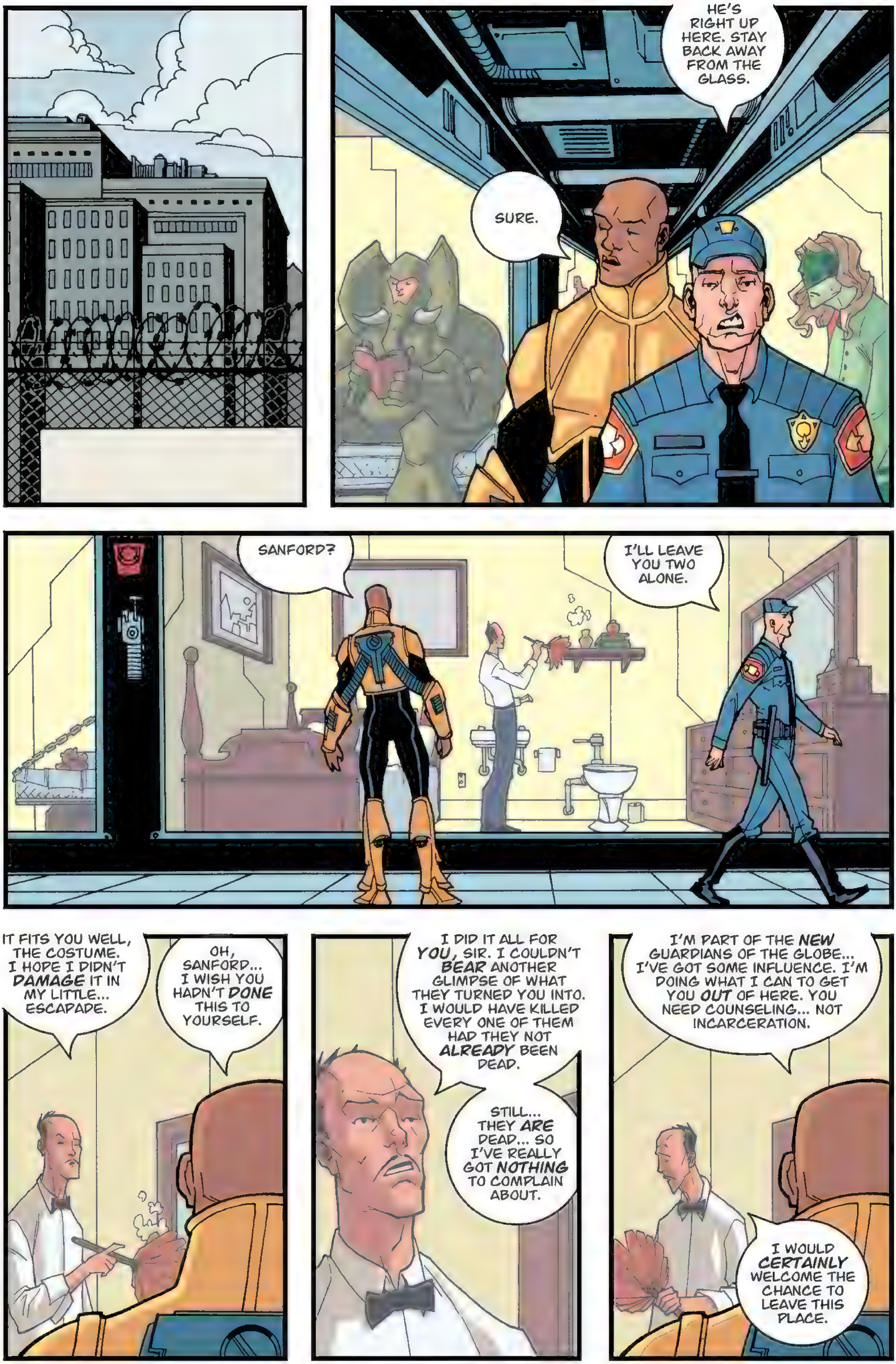

MARK?
OH, HEY DAD... DID I WAKE YOU UP?
NO, SON... WE NEED TO **TALK**.
SIGH
C'MON DAD... I KNOW **MOM** PUT YOU UP TO THIS. SHE'S BEEN BUGGING ME TO DEATH ABOUT STUFF EVER SINCE **AMBER** AND I STARTED GOING OUT. I'M JUST NOT IN THE MOOD FOR ANY BIRDS AND BEES TALK RIGHT NOW.
I'VE GOT **SCHOOL** TOMORROW.
...

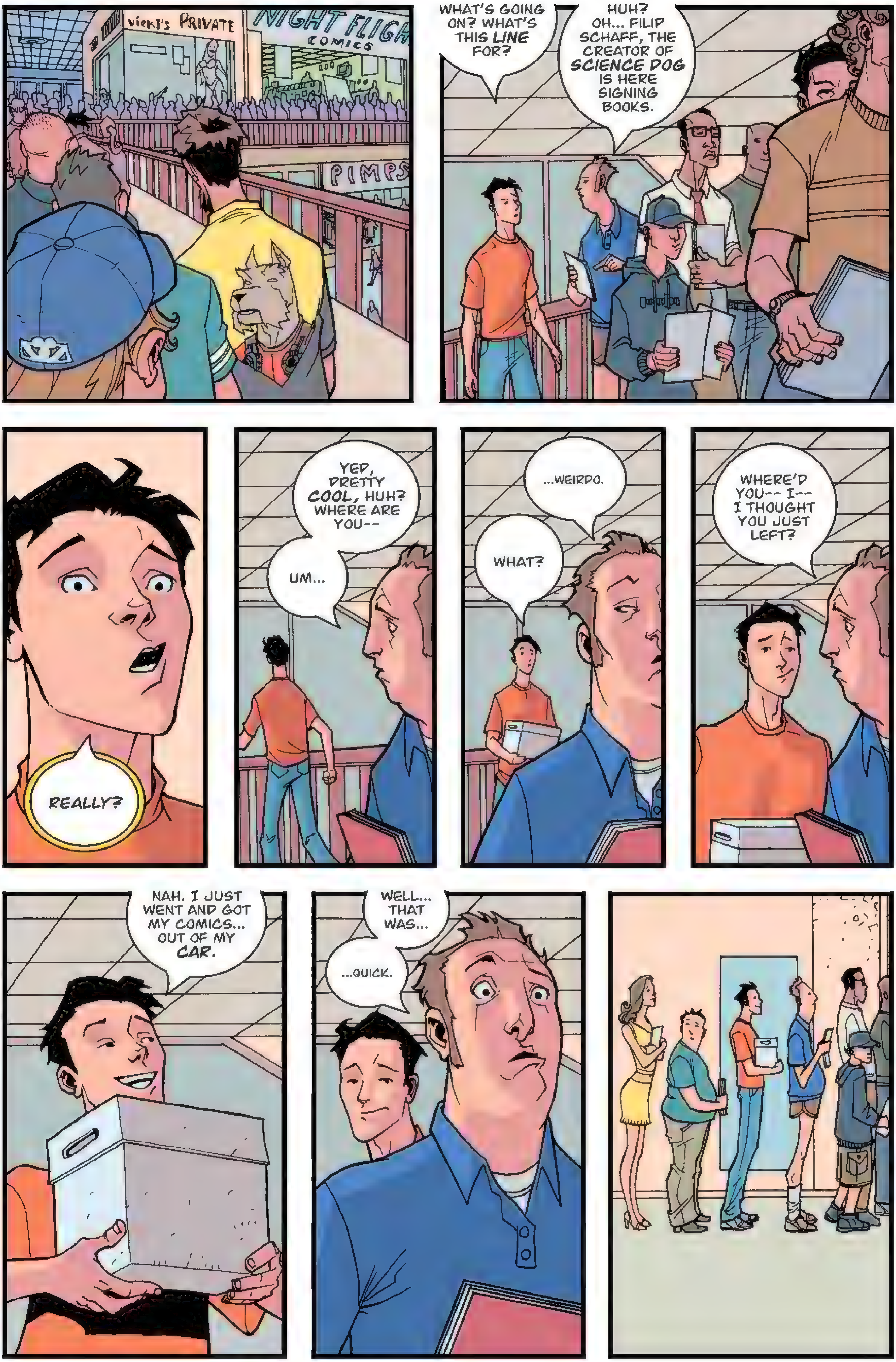

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
VOOOOSH!!!
DAMN BEEPER.

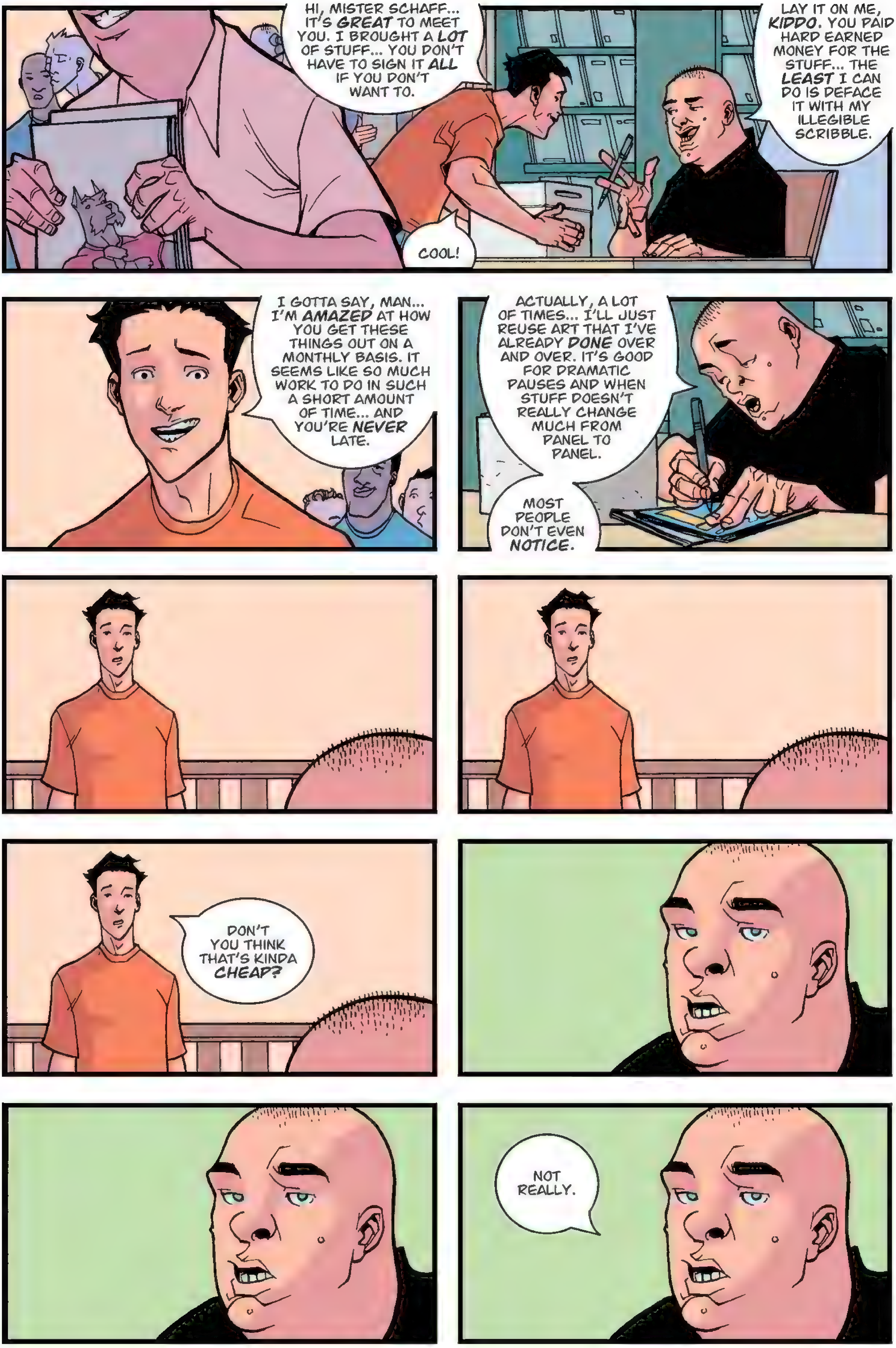

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
SO I'LL SEE YOU IN PHYSICS LATER?
WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR THE WORLD.
CHEESE IT BE COOL
LATER.
THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER THE CAFETERIA FOR YOU!
HOW IS IT THAT YOU JUST ROAM FREE HERE? DO YOU HAVE *ANY* CLASSES?
NOT AS FAR AS *I'M* CONCERNED.
AMBER KNOW ABOUT YOU AND *RED* OVER THERE?
WHAT? THAT I'M EATING LUNCH WITH A *FRIEND?* I HAVEN'T RUN IT BY HER.
I KNOW YOU FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE BUT EVE AND I *ARE* JUST FRIENDS. SHE'S HAD A BOYFRIEND FOR THE LONGEST TIME... AND NOW THAT HE'S OUT OF THE PICTURE... SHE'S JUST *WEIRD.*
AND YOU'VE GOT AMBER NOW, SO WHO CARES.
ANYWAY... I WAS WANTING TO KNOW IF YOU WANTED TO HIT THE BURGER MART WITH CHAD AND ME SINCE YOU'VE *BAILED* THE LAST FEW TIMES.
SURE, BUT I'VE GOT TO RUN BY THE COMIC SHOP AFTER SCHOOL TO GET MY BOOKS. I COULD MEET YOU GUYS THERE *AFTER* I GO TO THE SHOP.
OR... YOU GUYS COULD COME WITH *ME.*
ME? GO INTO A COMIC SHOP? *NO WAY.*
I'M ALREADY *ENOUGH* OF A GEEK WITHOUT BEING SEEN AT A COMIC SHOP.
AND YET, *I'M* THE ONE WITH THE GIRLFRIEND.
FUNNY.


YOU HOME FOR THE DAY?
SOMEHOW, I DOUBT IT.
SHEESH, WHAT GIVES? YOU'VE BEEN ALL OVER THE PLACE ALL THIS WEEK. I'VE BARELY **SEEN** YOU.
WELL... TO BE HONEST, THIS NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ISN'T ***NEARLY*** AS EFFECTIVE OR EFFICIENT AS THE OLD ONE.
I'VE BEEN PICKING UP THEIR SLACK--
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN.
DUTY CALLS.
I LOVE YOU.
...
I LOVE YOU, TOO.

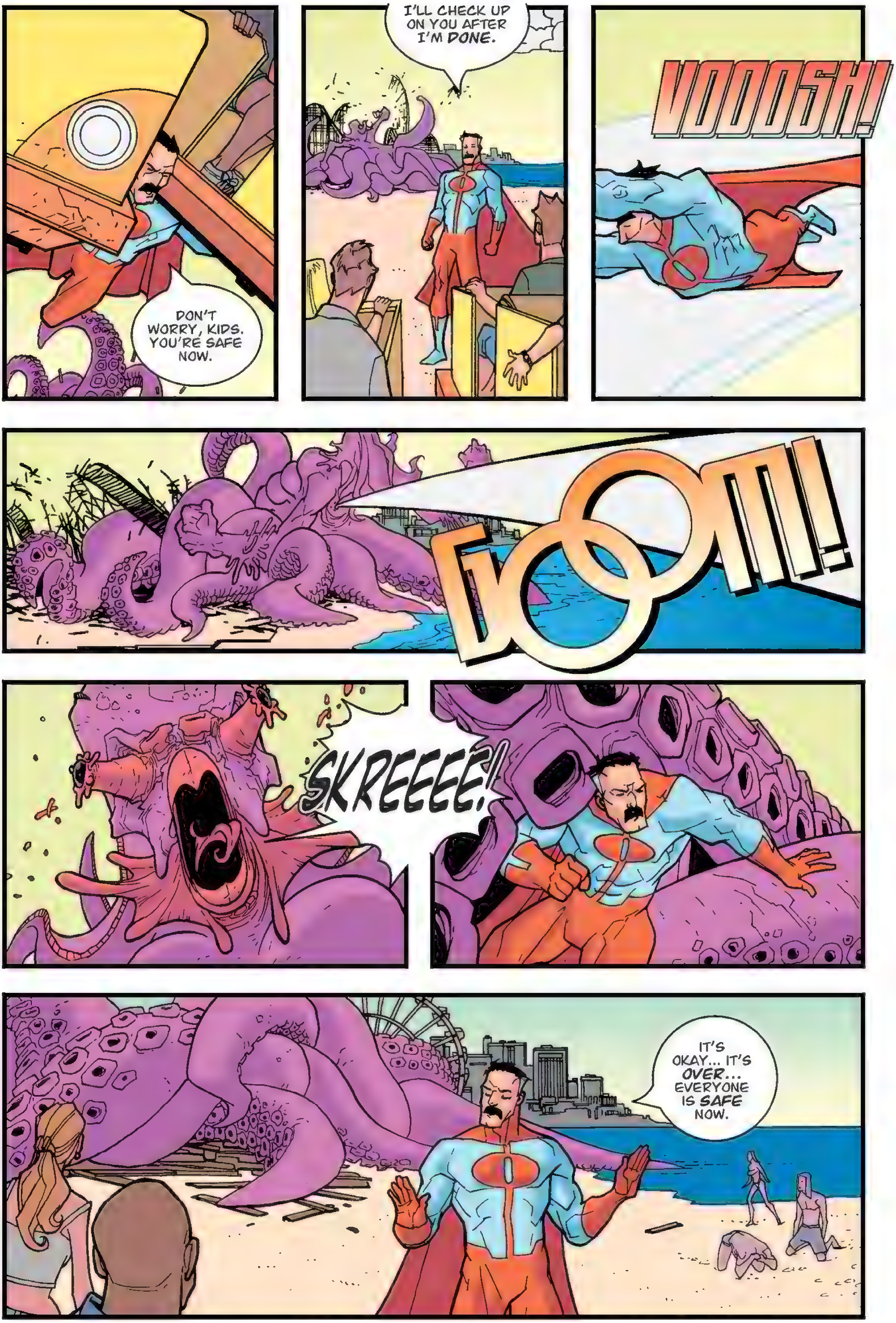

TRUST ME... I *HAVE* CLEARANCE.
DAMIEN DARKBLOOD, DEMON DETECTIVE... I WORK FOR PEOPLE YOUR BOSSES' *BOSSES* AREN'T IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MEET.
HURM.
LOOK AT WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN.
YOU KNOW... THE BOSS THREW *US* ON THIS FOR A *REASON*. YOU'RE JUST NOT CUTTING THE MUSTARD. YOUR INVESTIGATION IS TAKING *TOO* LONG.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD HAVE *EATEN* YOUR *FACE* FOR SPEAKING TO ME THAT WAY. BE THANKFUL THAT *I'VE* CHANGED MY WAYS.
I'M HERE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE I MAY HAVE *MISSED* ON MY FIRST PASS BECAUSE AS YOU SO KINDLY POINTED OUT... I'M OUT OF *LEADS* AND MY INVESTIGATION IS GOING *NOWHERE*.
I'D *ADVISE* YOU TO STAY OUT OF MY *WAY*.
...
HURM.

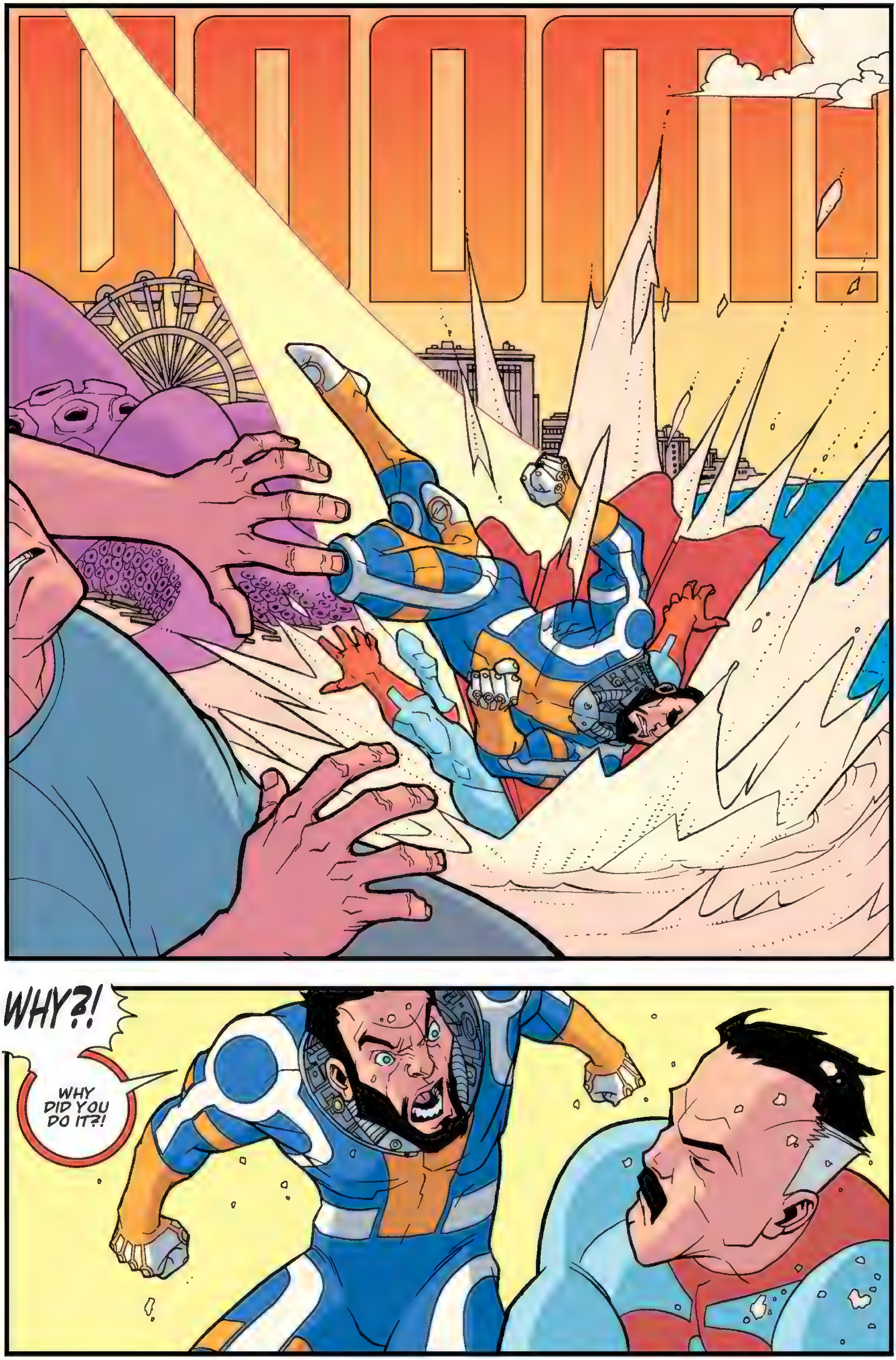

HE'S RIGHT UP HERE. STAY BACK AWAY FROM THE GLASS.
SURE.
SANFORD?
I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE.
IT FITS YOU WELL, THE COSTUME. I HOPE I DIDN'T DAMAGE IT IN MY LITTLE... ESCAPADE.
OH, SANFORD... I WISH YOU HADN'T DONE THIS TO YOURSELF.
I DID IT ALL FOR YOU, SIR. I COULDN'T BEAR ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF WHAT THEY TURNED YOU INTO. I WOULD HAVE KILLED EVERY ONE OF THEM HAD THEY NOT ALREADY BEEN DEAD.
STILL... THEY ARE DEAD... SO I'VE REALLY GOT NOTHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT.
I'M PART OF THE NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE... I'VE GOT SOME INFLUENCE. I'M DOING WHAT I CAN TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE. YOU NEED COUNSELING... NOT INCARCERATION.
I WOULD CERTAINLY WELCOME THE CHANCE TO LEAVE THIS PLACE.

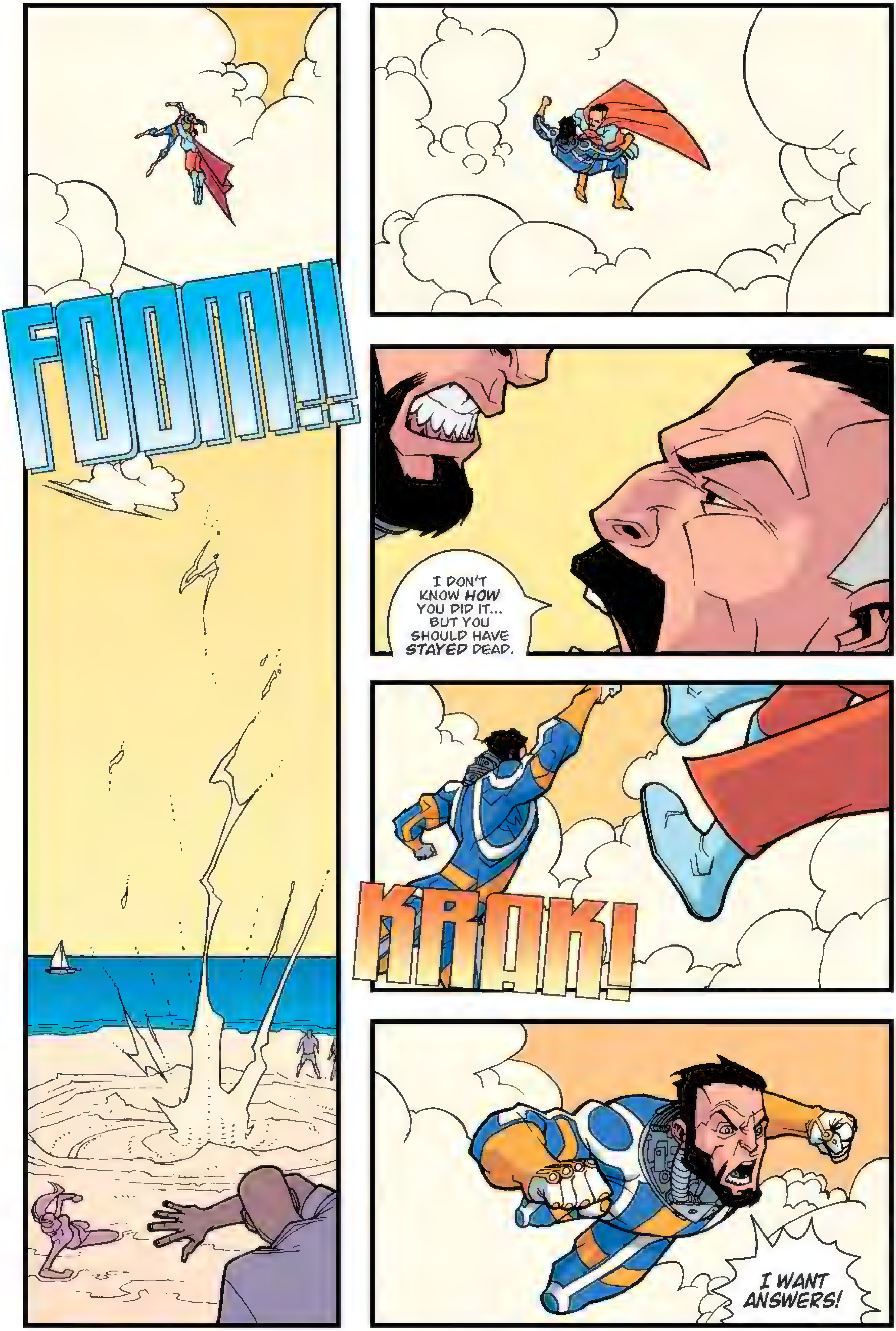

VICKI'S PRIVATE
NIGHT FLIGHT COMICS
PIMPS
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT'S THIS LINE FOR?
HUH? OH... FILIP SCHAFF, THE CREATOR OF SCIENCE DOG IS HERE SIGNING BOOKS.
REALLY?
YEP, PRETTY COOL, HUH? WHERE ARE YOU--
UM...
...WEIRDO.
WHAT?
WHERE'D YOU-- I-- I THOUGHT YOU JUST LEFT?
NAH. I JUST WENT AND GOT MY COMICS... OUT OF MY CAR.
WELL... THAT WAS...
...QUICK.

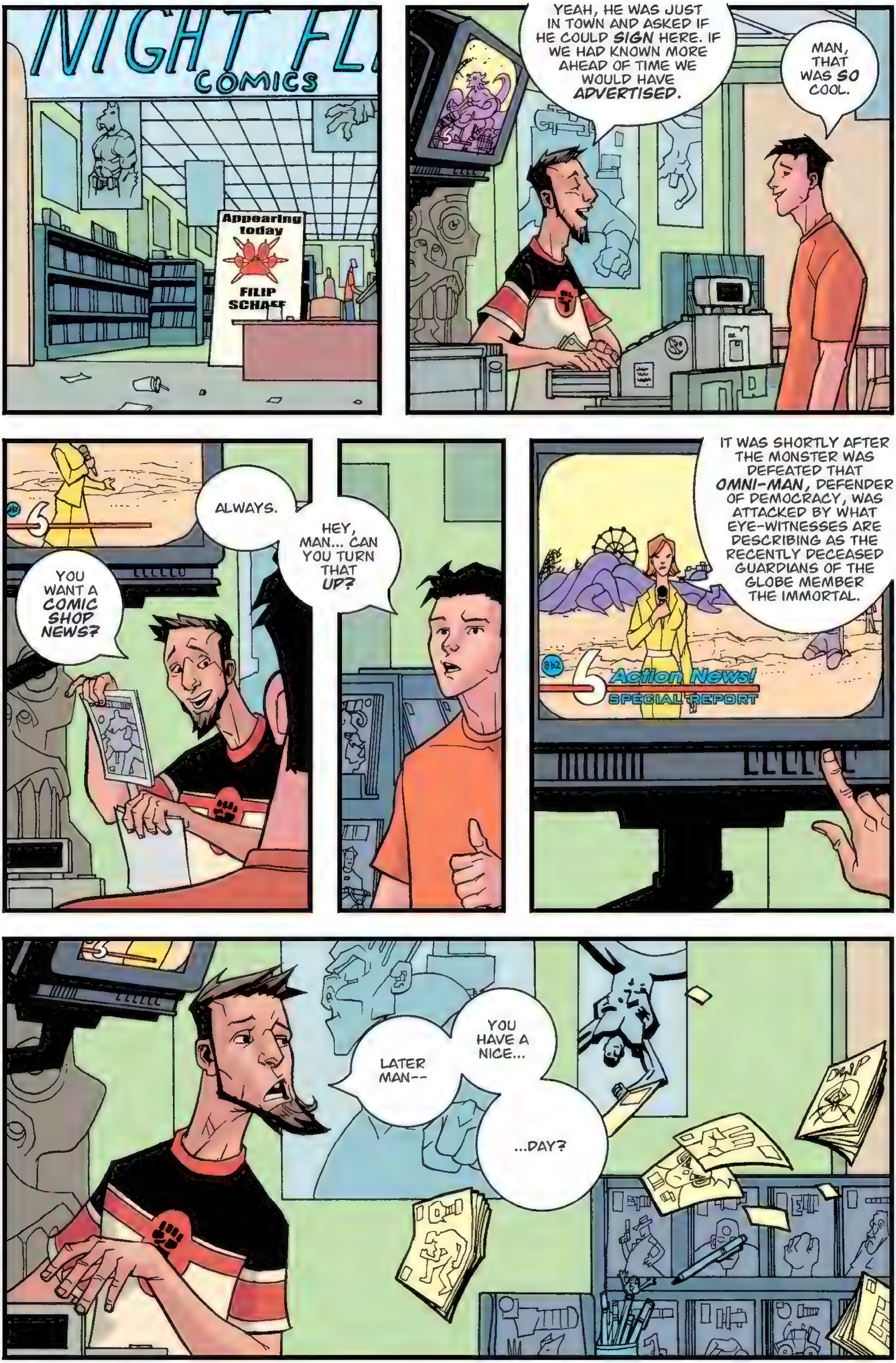

HI, MISTER SCHAFF... IT'S GREAT TO MEET YOU. I BROUGHT A LOT OF STUFF... YOU DON'T HAVE TO SIGN IT ALL IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.
LAY IT ON ME, KIDDO. YOU PAID HARD EARNED MONEY FOR THE STUFF... THE LEAST I CAN DO IS DEFACE IT WITH MY ILLEGIBLE SCRIBBLE.
COOL!
I GOTTA SAY, MAN... I'M AMAZED AT HOW YOU GET THESE THINGS OUT ON A MONTHLY BASIS. IT SEEMS LIKE SO MUCH WORK TO DO IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME... AND YOU'RE NEVER LATE.
ACTUALLY, A LOT OF TIMES... I'LL JUST REUSE ART THAT I'VE ALREADY DONE OVER AND OVER. IT'S GOOD FOR DRAMATIC PAUSES AND WHEN STUFF DOESN'T REALLY CHANGE MUCH FROM PANEL TO PANEL.
MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN NOTICE.
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S KINDA CHEAP?
NOT REALLY.

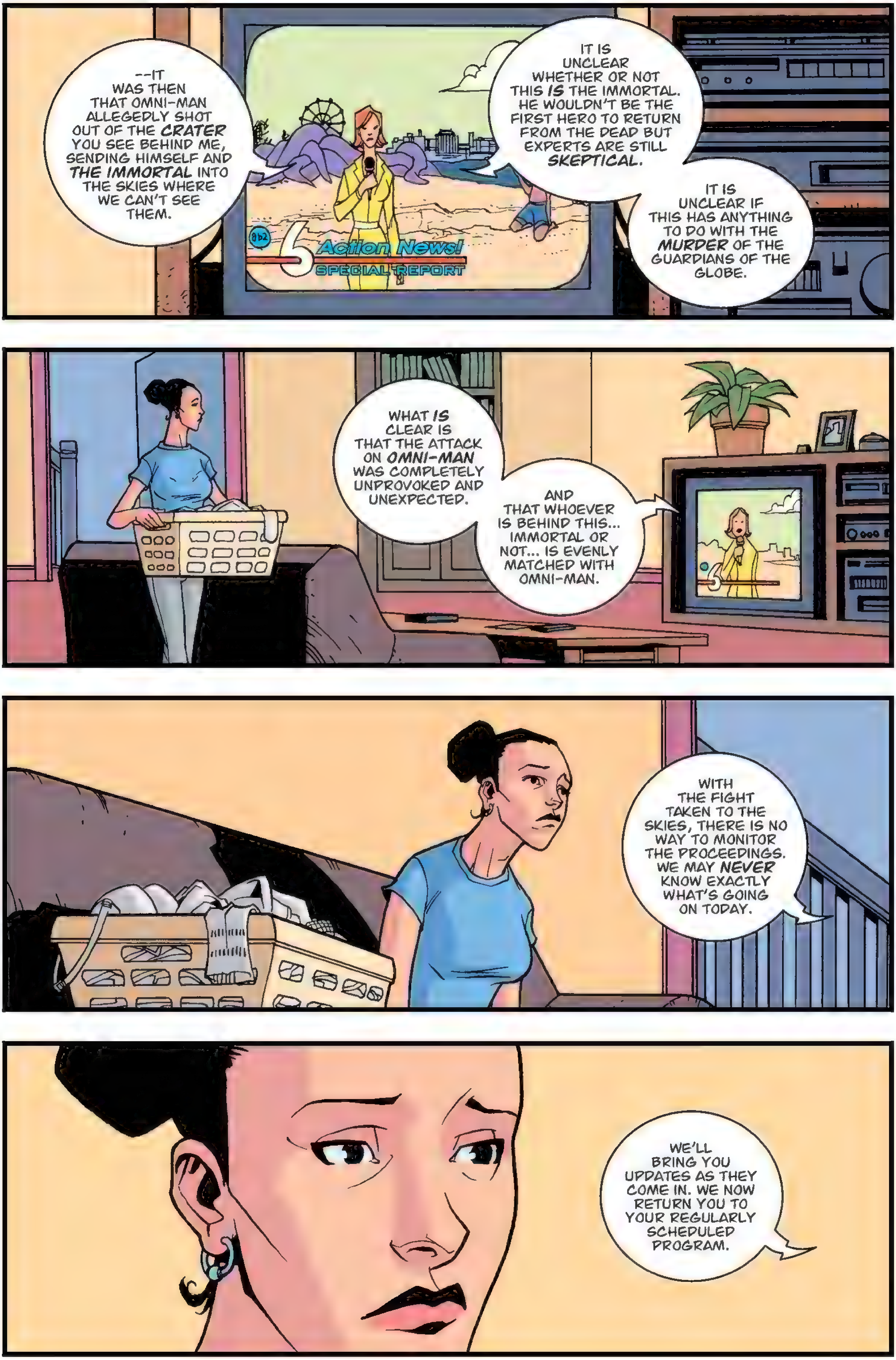
RAWK!
KROOM!


DON'T WORRY, KIDS. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
I'LL CHECK UP ON YOU AFTER I'M DONE.
VOOOSH!
DOOM!!
SKREEEE!
IT'S OKAY... IT'S OVER... EVERYONE IS SAFE NOW.

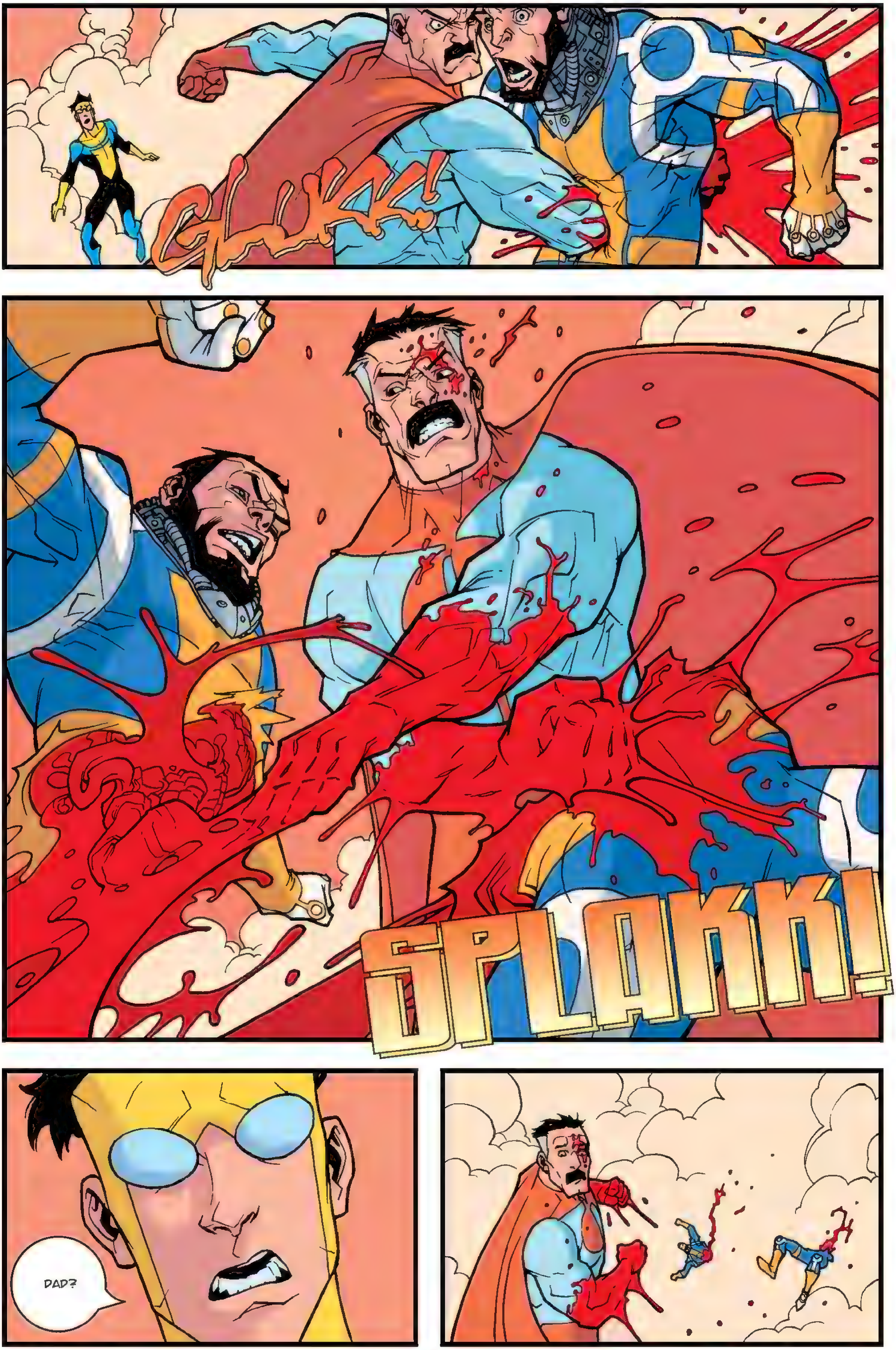

DOOM!
WHY?!
WHY DID YOU DO IT?!

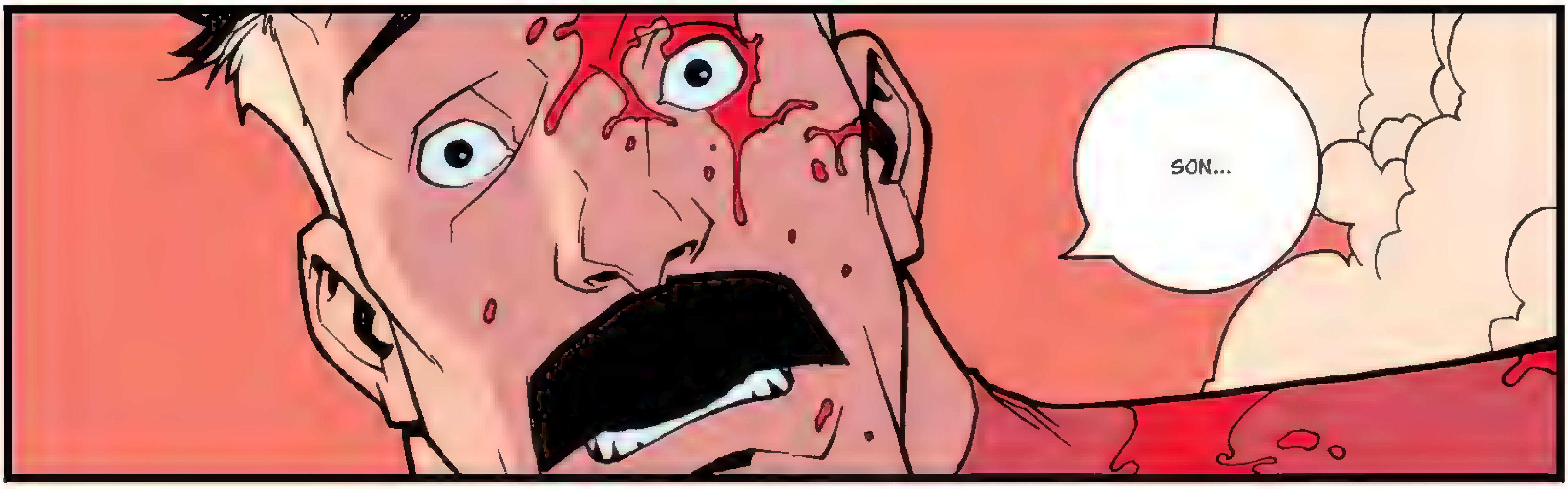

FOOM!!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT... BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED DEAD.
KRAK!
I WANT ANSWERS!

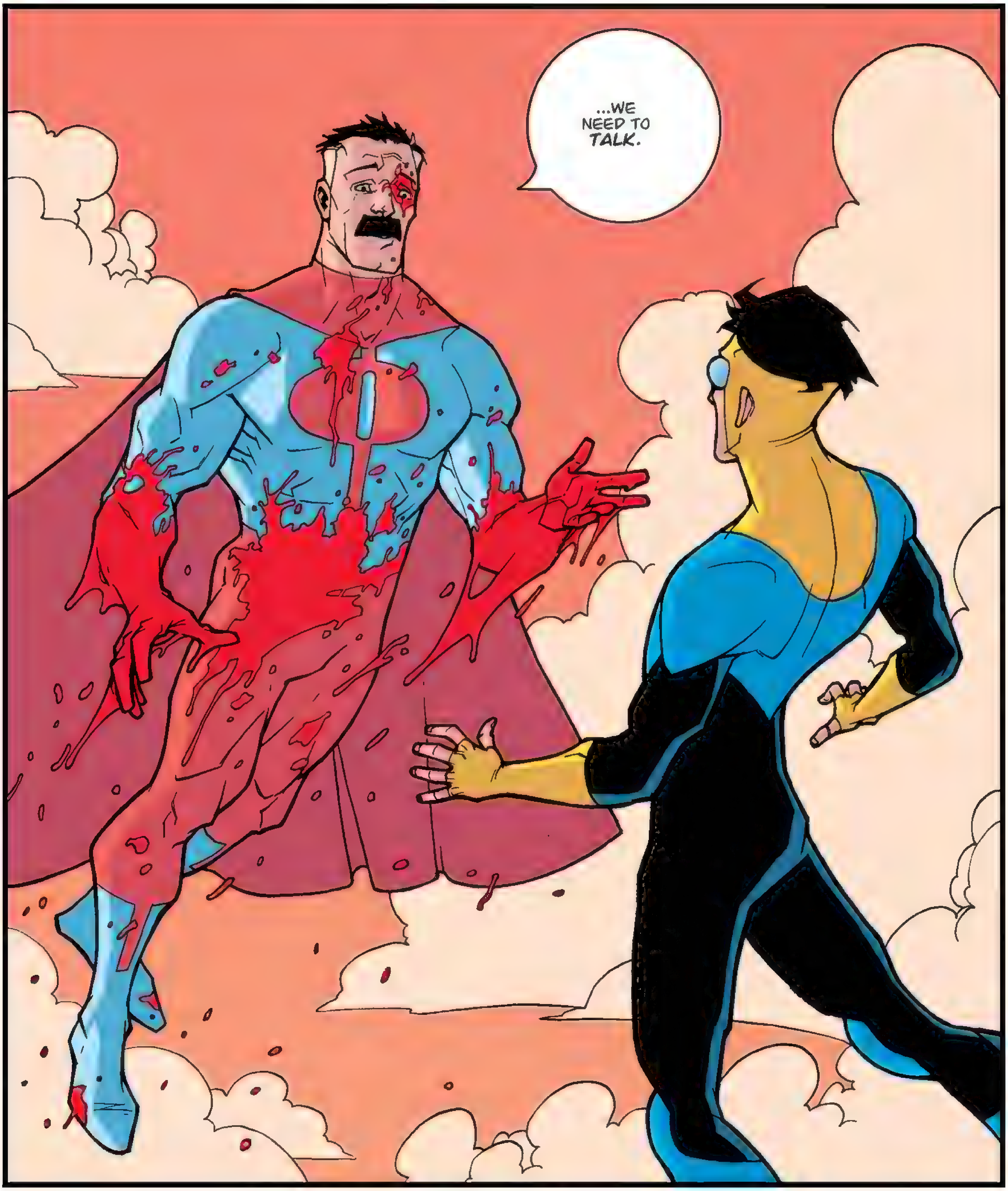

NIGHT FL
COMICS
Appearing today
FILIP SCHAFF
YEAH, HE WAS JUST IN TOWN AND ASKED IF HE COULD SIGN HERE. IF WE HAD KNOWN MORE AHEAD OF TIME WE WOULD HAVE ADVERTISED.
MAN, THAT WAS SO COOL.
YOU WANT A COMIC SHOP NEWS?
ALWAYS.
HEY, MAN... CAN YOU TURN THAT UP?
IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THE MONSTER WAS DEFEATED THAT OMNI-MAN, DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY, WAS ATTACKED BY WHAT EYE-WITNESSES ARE DESCRIBING AS THE RECENTLY DECEASED GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE MEMBER THE IMMORTAL.
6 Action News! SPECIAL REPORT
LATER MAN--
YOU HAVE A NICE...
...DAY?
DRIP


--IT WAS THEN THAT OMNI-MAN ALLEGEDLY SHOT OUT OF THE *CRATER* YOU SEE BEHIND ME, SENDING HIMSELF AND *THE IMMORTAL* INTO THE SKIES WHERE WE CAN'T SEE THEM.
6 Action News! SPECIAL REPORT
IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER OR NOT THIS *IS* THE IMMORTAL. HE WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST HERO TO RETURN FROM THE DEAD BUT EXPERTS ARE STILL *SKEPTICAL*.
IT IS UNCLEAR IF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE *MURDER* OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
WHAT *IS* CLEAR IS THAT THE ATTACK ON *OMNI-MAN* WAS COMPLETELY UNPROVOKED AND UNEXPECTED.
AND THAT WHOEVER IS BEHIND THIS... IMMORTAL OR NOT... IS EVENLY MATCHED WITH OMNI-MAN.
WITH THE FIGHT TAKEN TO THE SKIES, THERE IS NO WAY TO MONITOR THE PROCEEDINGS. WE MAY *NEVER* KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON TODAY.
WE'LL BRING YOU UPDATES AS THEY COME IN. WE NOW RETURN YOU TO YOUR REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAM.

DOOM!
WHY, DAMMIT!! WHY DID YOU KILL THEM?!
I'LL BEAT IT OUT OF YOU IF I HAVE TO!!
GOOM!
I KILLED YOU ONCE! I CAN DO IT AGAIN!!
KRAK!
...
YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY!

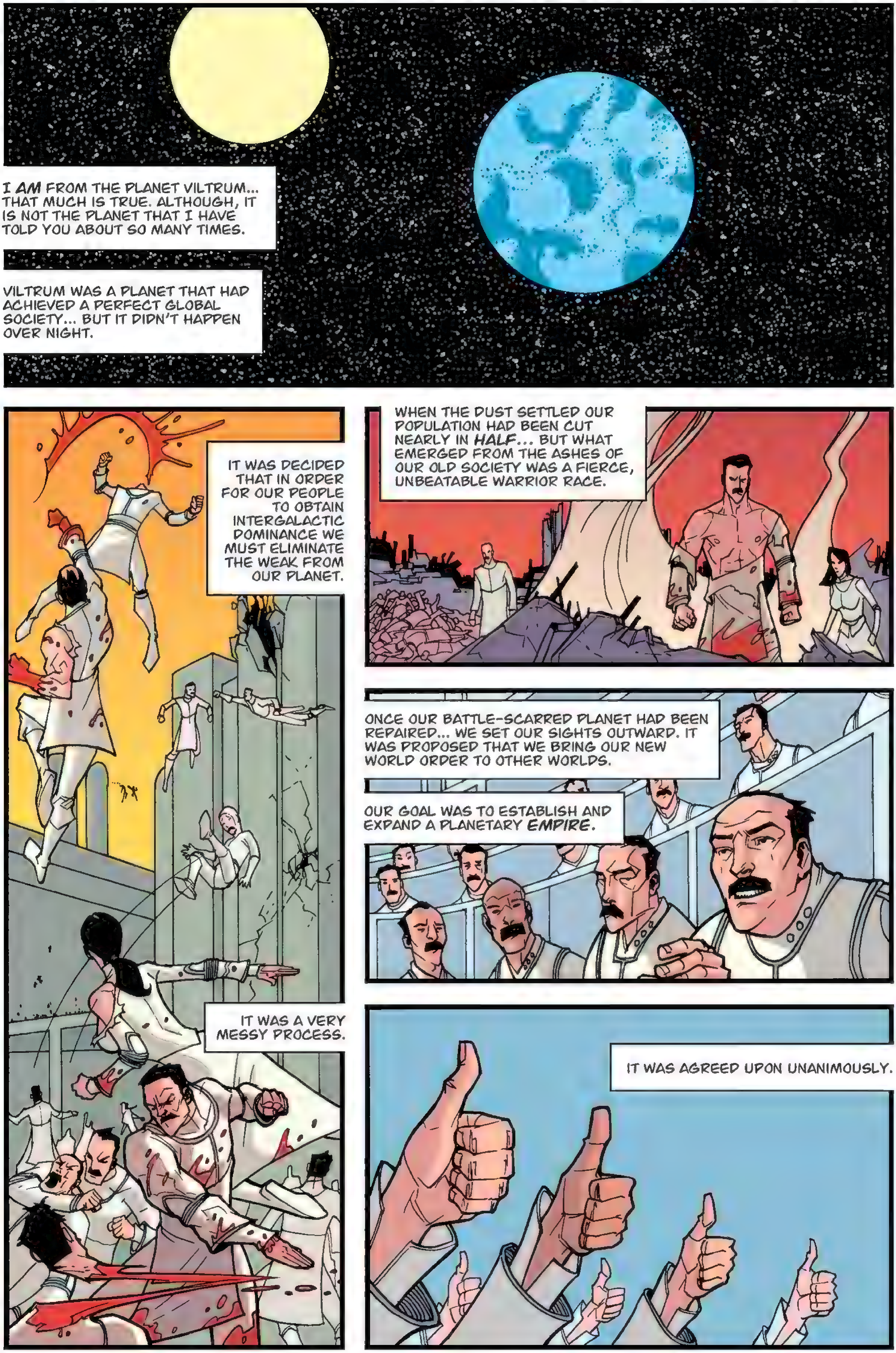

GLUKK!
SPLAKK!
DAD?

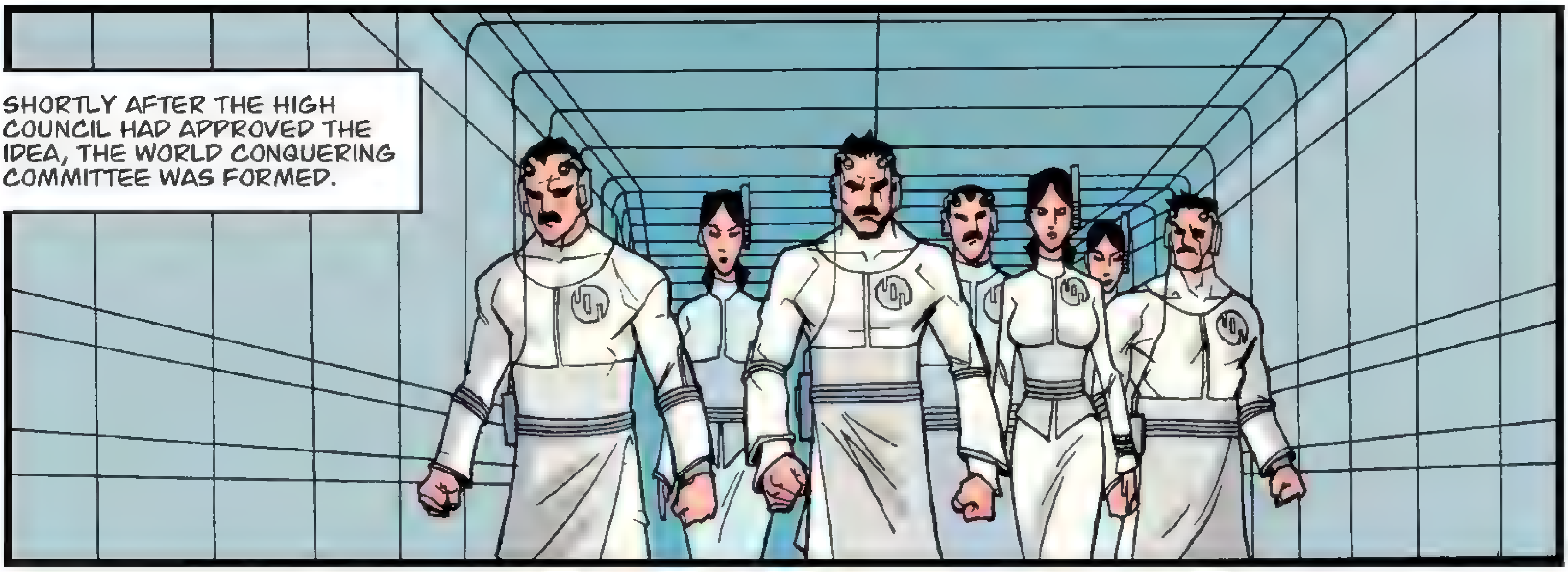

SON...

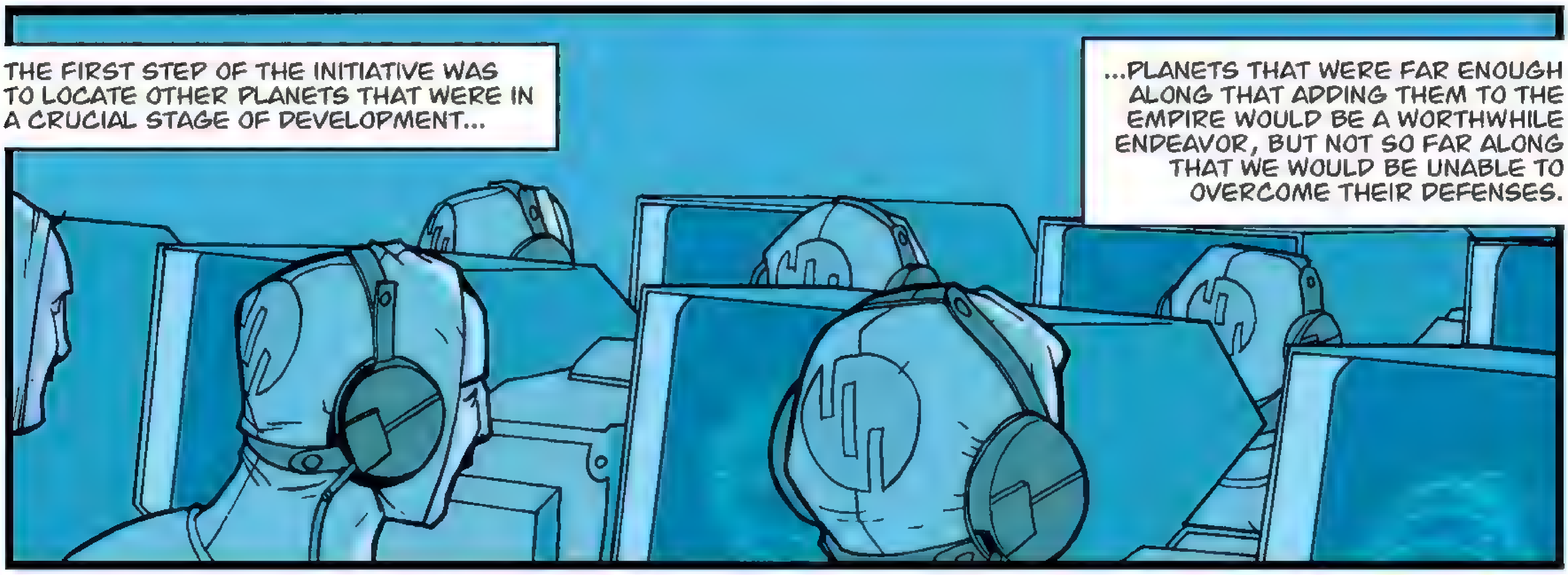

...WE NEED TO *TALK.*

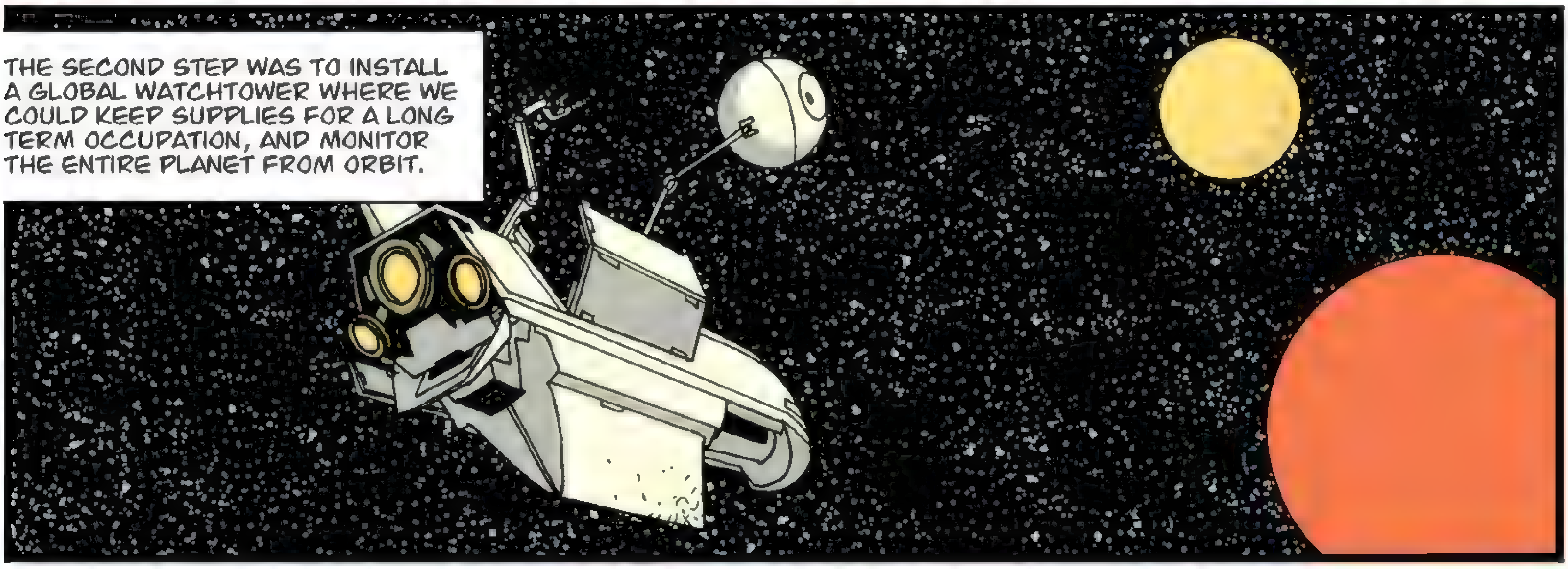
ISSUE ELEVEN

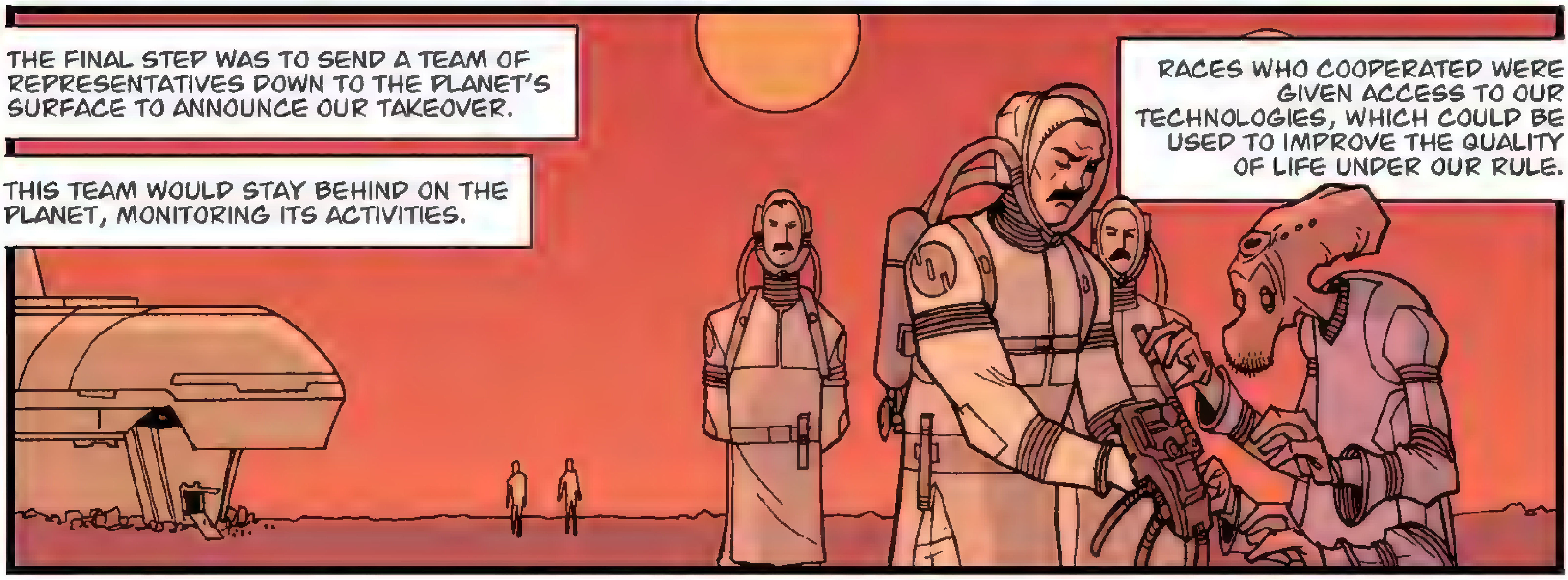
OKAY, SON... I'VE DECIDED TO TELL YOU THE *TRUTH*.
I THINK YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW WHERE I *REALLY* COME FROM.


I *AM* FROM THE PLANET VILTRUM... THAT MUCH IS TRUE. ALTHOUGH, IT IS NOT THE PLANET THAT I HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT SO MANY TIMES.
VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY... BUT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN OVER NIGHT.
IT WAS DECIDED THAT IN ORDER FOR OUR PEOPLE TO OBTAIN INTERGALACTIC DOMINANCE WE MUST ELIMINATE THE WEAK FROM OUR PLANET.
IT WAS A VERY MESSY PROCESS.
WHEN THE DUST SETTLED OUR POPULATION HAD BEEN CUT NEARLY IN *HALF*... BUT WHAT EMERGED FROM THE ASHES OF OUR OLD SOCIETY WAS A FIERCE, UNBEATABLE WARRIOR RACE.
ONCE OUR BATTLE-SCARRED PLANET HAD BEEN REPAIRED... WE SET OUR SIGHTS OUTWARD. IT WAS PROPOSED THAT WE BRING OUR NEW WORLD ORDER TO OTHER WORLDS.
OUR GOAL WAS TO ESTABLISH AND EXPAND A PLANETARY *EMPIRE*.
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

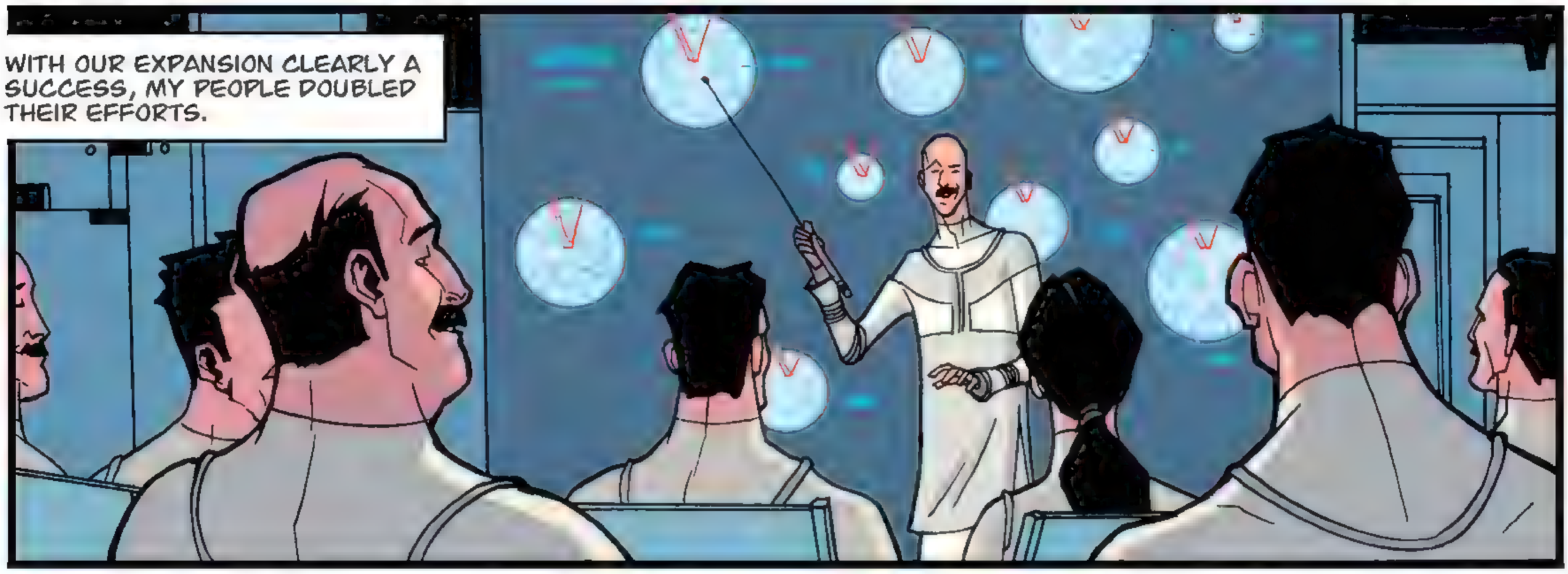

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.

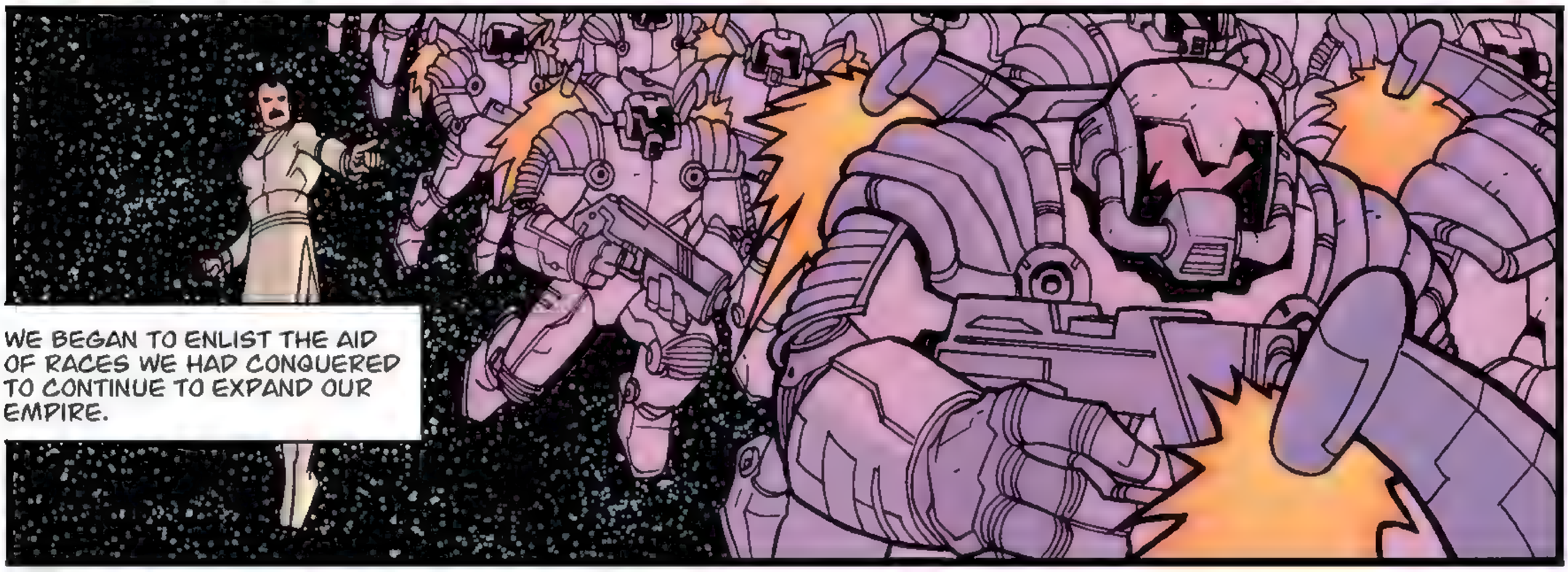

THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...
...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT ADDING THEM TO THE EMPIRE WOULD BE A WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR, BUT NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT WE WOULD BE UNABLE TO OVERCOME THEIR DEFENSES.

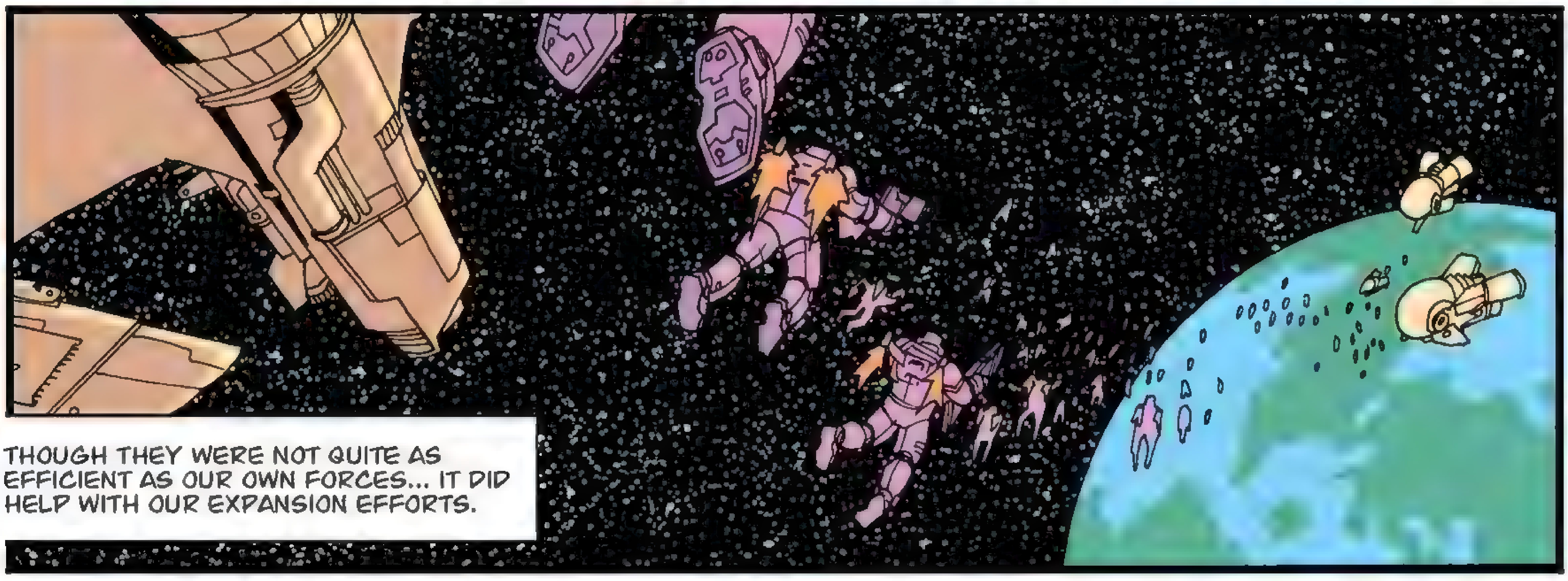

THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL A GLOBAL WATCHTOWER WHERE WE COULD KEEP SUPPLIES FOR A LONG TERM OCCUPATION, AND MONITOR THE ENTIRE PLANET FROM ORBIT.

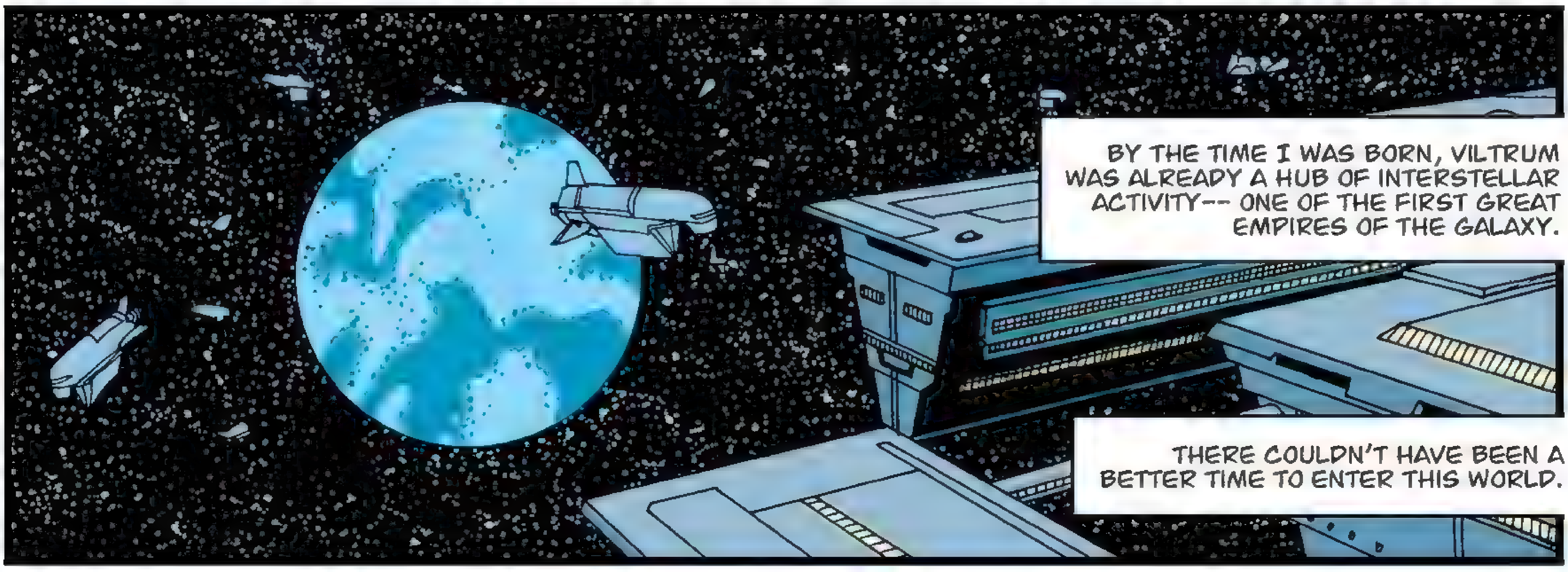

THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF REPRESENTATIVES DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ANNOUNCE OUR TAKEOVER.
THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS ACTIVITIES.
RACES WHO COOPERATED WERE GIVEN ACCESS TO OUR TECHNOLOGIES, WHICH COULD BE USED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE UNDER OUR RULE.

RACES WHO RESISTED WERE *NOT* LOOKED UPON SO FAVORABLY.

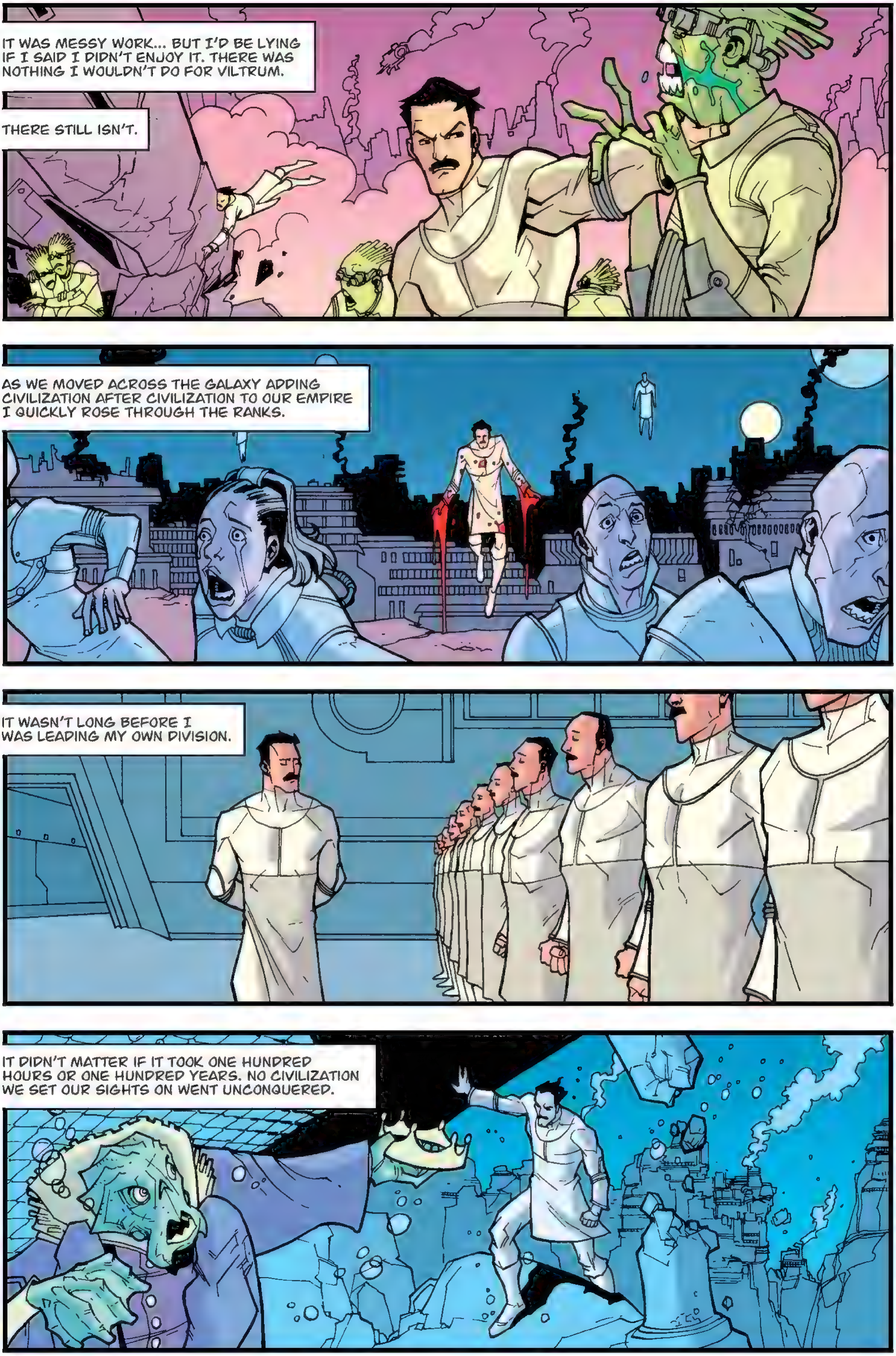

WITH OUR EXPANSION CLEARLY A SUCCESS, MY PEOPLE DOUBLED THEIR EFFORTS.

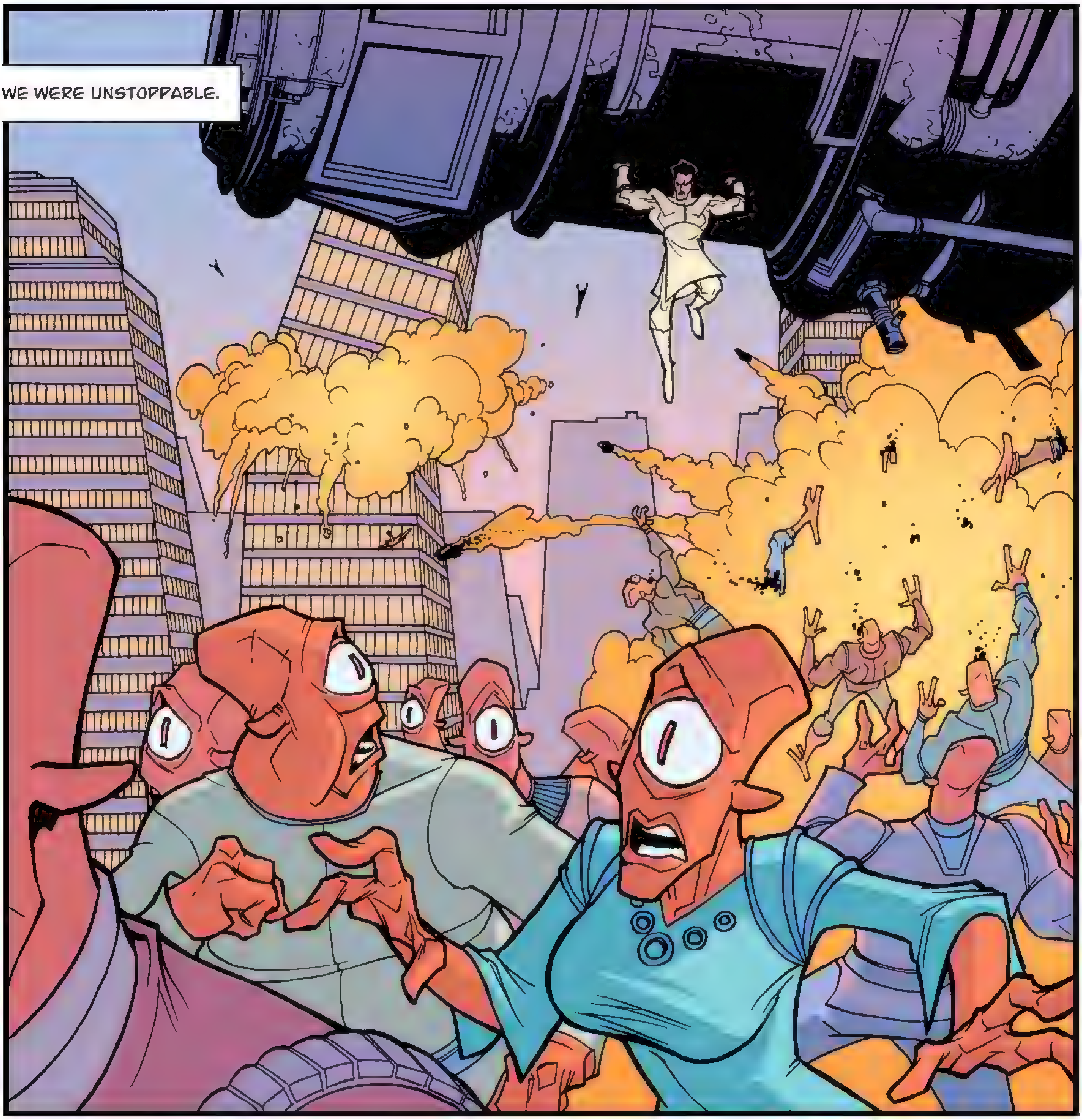

WE BEGAN TO ENLIST THE AID OF RACES WE HAD CONQUERED TO CONTINUE TO EXPAND OUR EMPIRE.

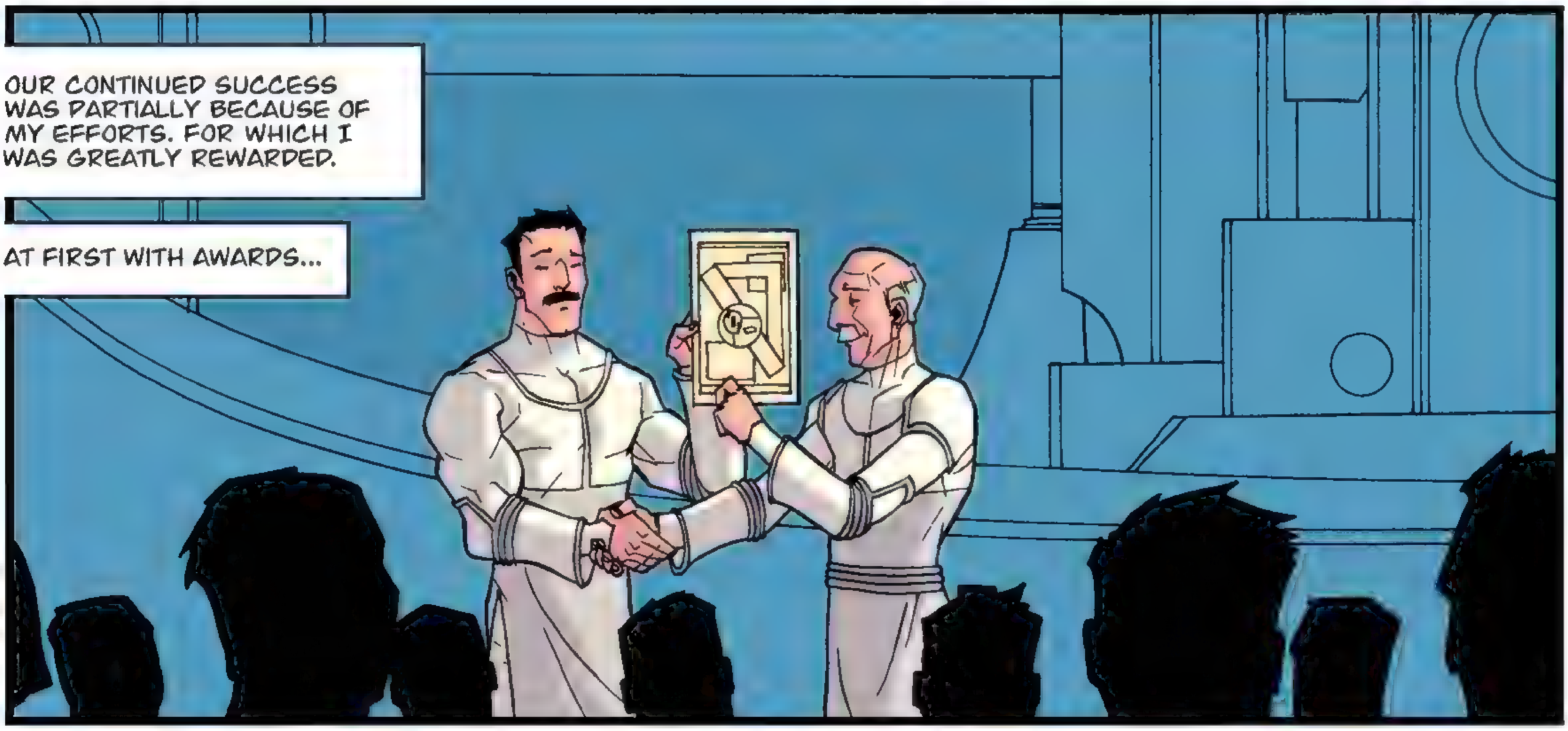

THOUGH THEY WERE NOT QUITE AS EFFICIENT AS OUR OWN FORCES... IT DID HELP WITH OUR EXPANSION EFFORTS.

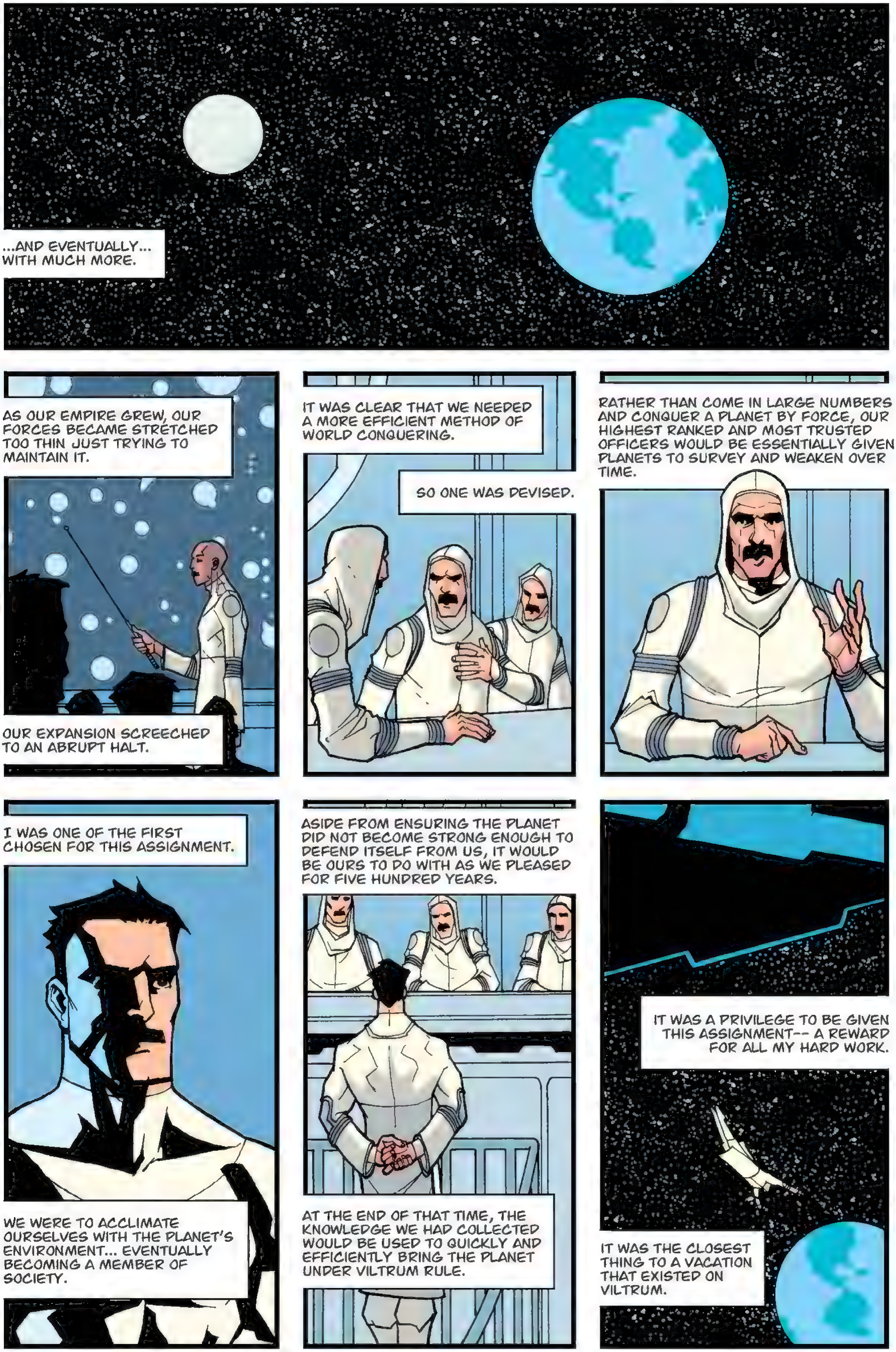

BY THE TIME I WAS BORN, VILTRUM WAS ALREADY A HUB OF INTERSTELLAR ACTIVITY-- ONE OF THE FIRST GREAT EMPIRES OF THE GALAXY.
THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A BETTER TIME TO ENTER THIS WORLD.

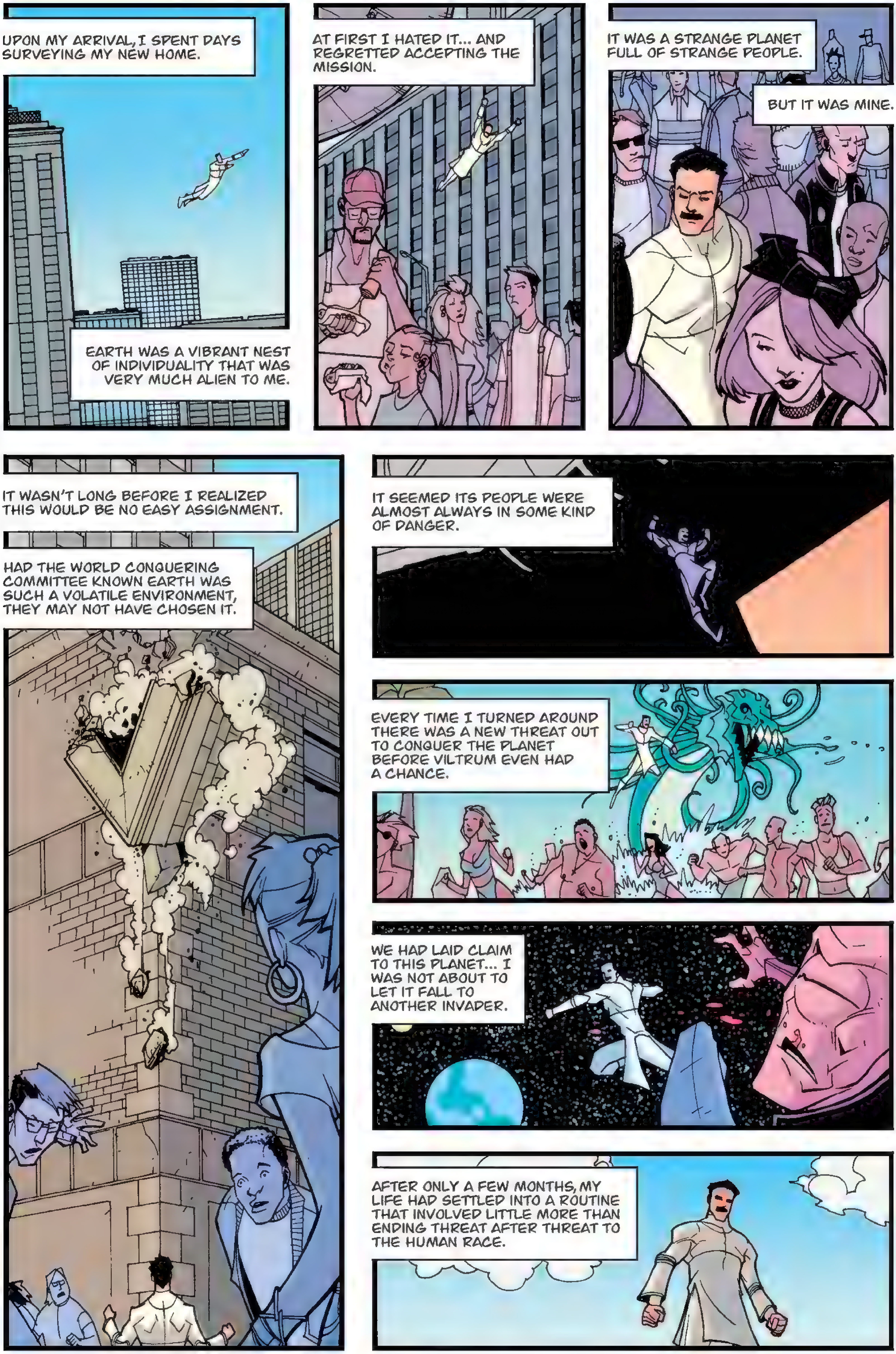
WORD TRAVELED AROUND VILTRUM ABOUT HOW MUCH OF A SUCCESS THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE WAS. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.
OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE, MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND EVALUATE PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE RIPE FOR CONQUEST.
BY THEN THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE CONQUERED THEM.
I WAS NOT CONTENT TO JUST HELP MY PEOPLE LOCATE OTHER WORLDS.
LIKE ALL THE SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS MY AGE, I LONGED FOR THE CHANCE TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE WORLD CONQUERING.
FOR THREE YEARS STRAIGHT I ATTENDED AUDITIONS UNTIL AT LAST... I HAD PROVEN MYSELF.
I HAD IMPRESSED THE HEADS OF RECRUITMENT SO MUCH THAT I GOT ONE OF THE BEST POSTS IN THE CONQUERING COMMITTEE.
I WAS STATIONED AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE EXPANSION EFFORTS... AT THE VERY EDGE OF OUR EVER-GROWING EMPIRE.
I THREW MYSELF INTO MY WORK.

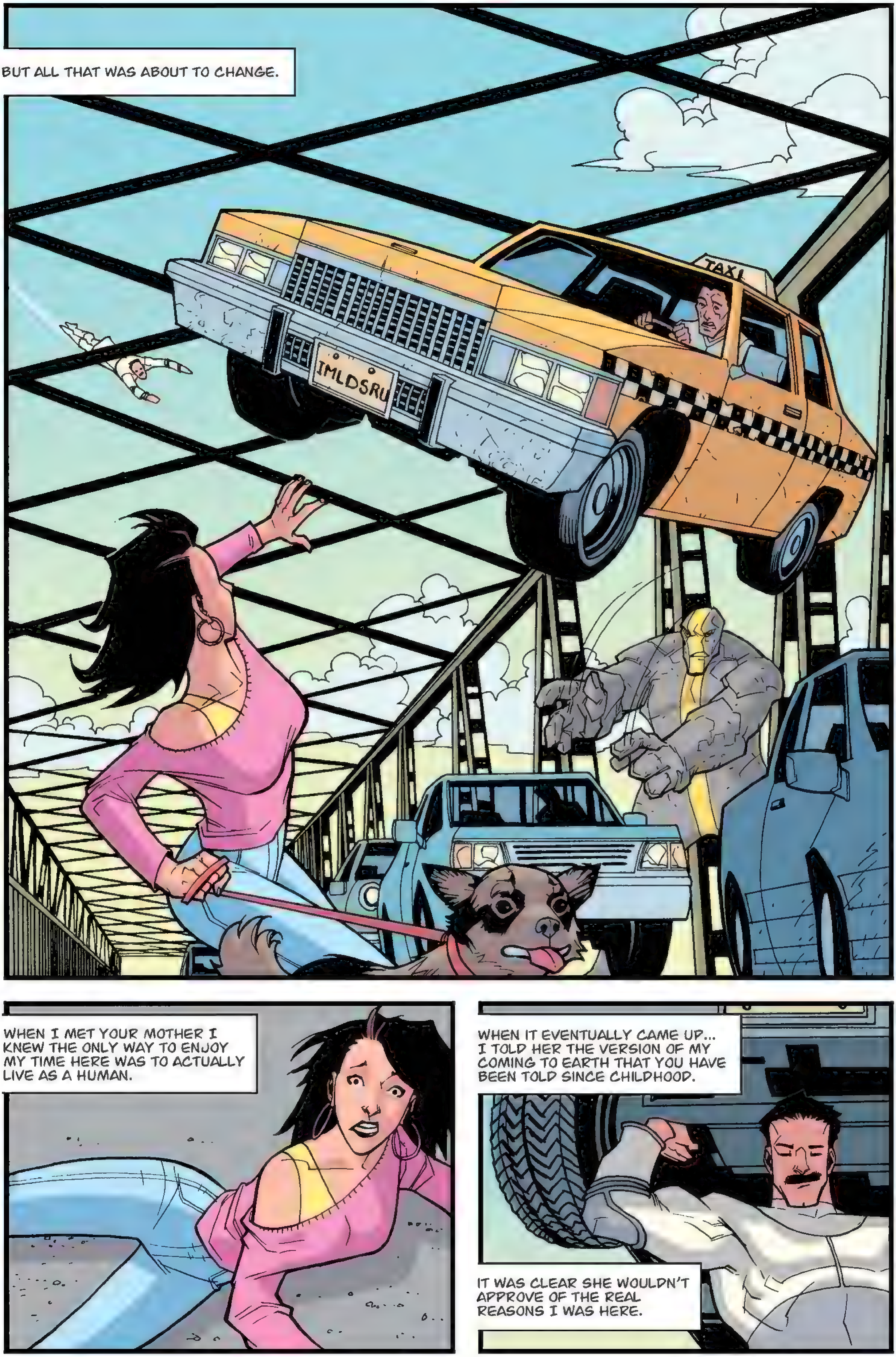

IT WAS MESSY WORK... BUT I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I DIDN'T ENJOY IT. THERE WAS NOTHING I WOULDN'T DO FOR VILTRUM.
THERE STILL ISN'T.
AS WE MOVED ACROSS THE GALAXY ADDING CIVILIZATION AFTER CIVILIZATION TO OUR EMPIRE I QUICKLY ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS.
IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I WAS LEADING MY OWN DIVISION.
IT DIDN'T MATTER IF IT TOOK ONE HUNDRED HOURS OR ONE HUNDRED YEARS. NO CIVILIZATION WE SET OUR SIGHTS ON WENT UNCONQUERED.

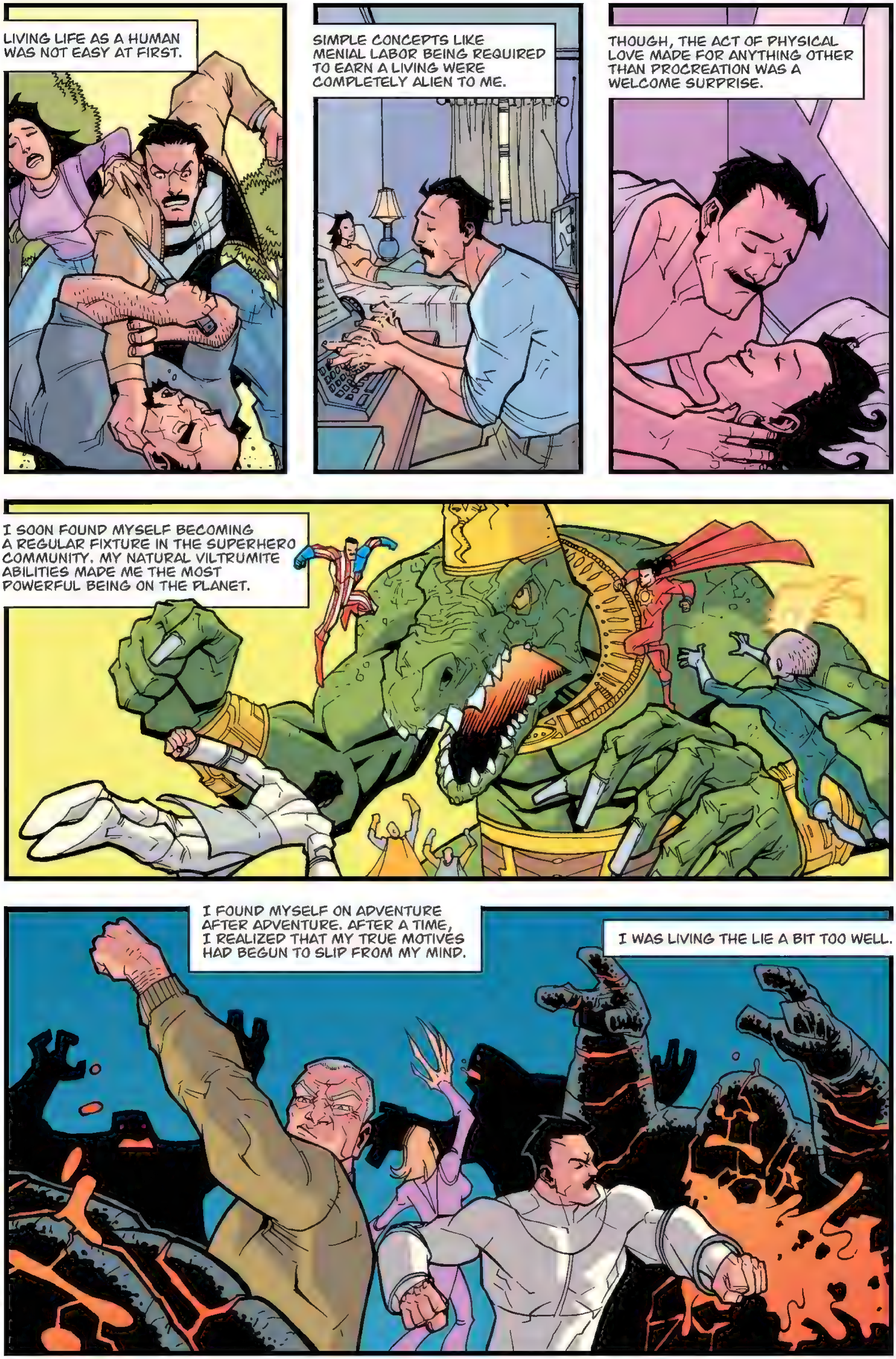

WE WERE UNSTOPPABLE.


OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS WAS PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF MY EFFORTS. FOR WHICH I WAS GREATLY REWARDED.
AT FIRST WITH AWARDS...

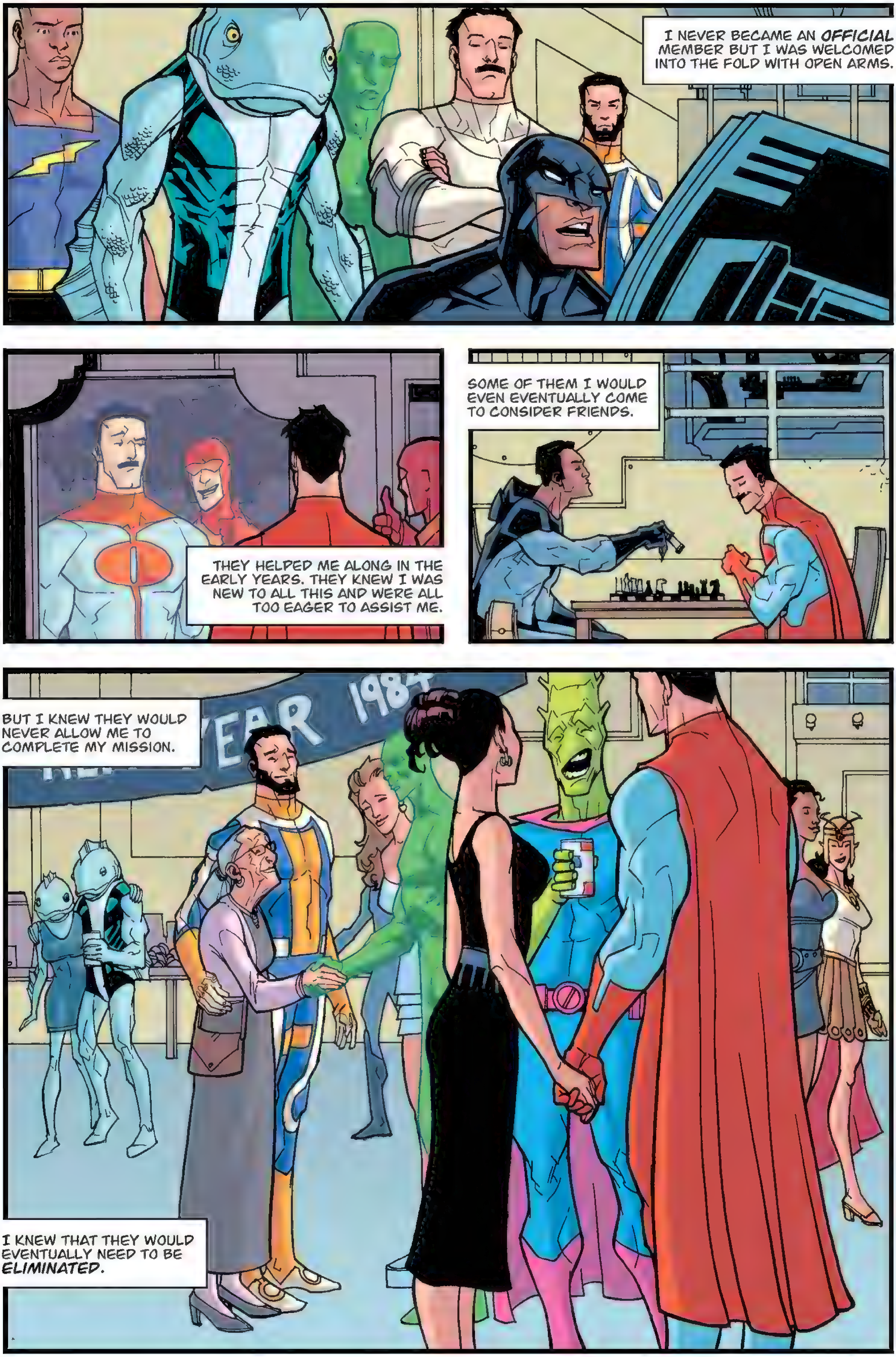

...AND EVENTUALLY... WITH MUCH MORE.
AS OUR EMPIRE GREW, OUR FORCES BECAME STRETCHED TOO THIN JUST TRYING TO MAINTAIN IT.
OUR EXPANSION SCREECHED TO AN ABRUPT HALT.
IT WAS CLEAR THAT WE NEEDED A MORE EFFICIENT METHOD OF WORLD CONQUERING.
SO ONE WAS DEVISED.
RATHER THAN COME IN LARGE NUMBERS AND CONQUER A PLANET BY FORCE, OUR HIGHEST RANKED AND MOST TRUSTED OFFICERS WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY GIVEN PLANETS TO SURVEY AND WEAKEN OVER TIME.
I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST CHOSEN FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT.
WE WERE TO ACCLIMATE OURSELVES WITH THE PLANET'S ENVIRONMENT... EVENTUALLY BECOMING A MEMBER OF SOCIETY.
ASIDE FROM ENSURING THE PLANET DID NOT BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEND ITSELF FROM US, IT WOULD BE OURS TO DO WITH AS WE PLEASED FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.
AT THE END OF THAT TIME, THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAD COLLECTED WOULD BE USED TO QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY BRING THE PLANET UNDER VILTRUM RULE.
IT WAS A PRIVILEGE TO BE GIVEN THIS ASSIGNMENT-- A REWARD FOR ALL MY HARD WORK.
IT WAS THE CLOSEST THING TO A VACATION THAT EXISTED ON VILTRUM.

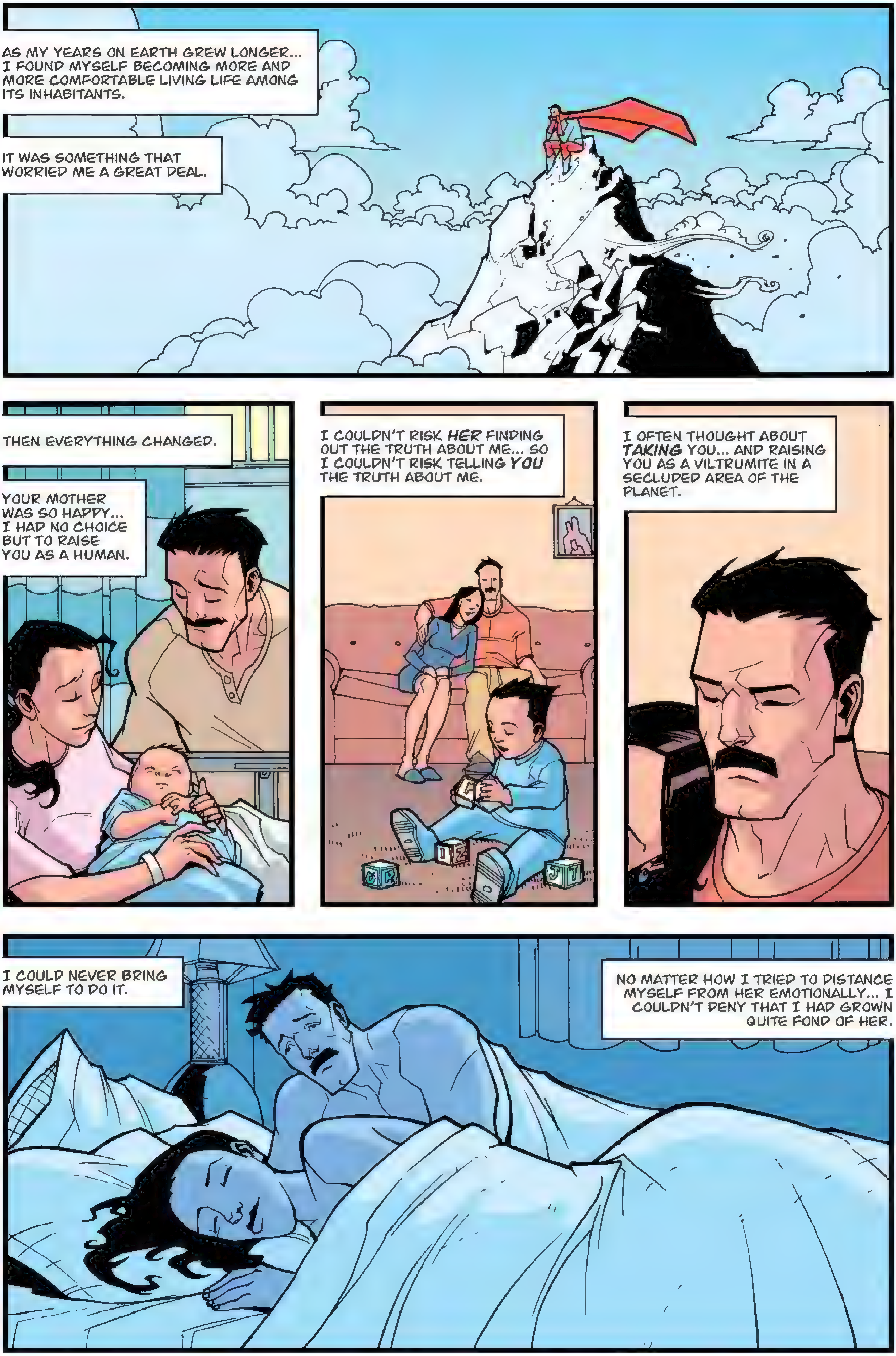

UPON MY ARRIVAL, I SPENT DAYS SURVEYING MY NEW HOME.
EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY THAT WAS VERY MUCH ALIEN TO ME.
AT FIRST I HATED IT... AND REGRETTED ACCEPTING THE MISSION.
IT WAS A STRANGE PLANET FULL OF STRANGE PEOPLE.
BUT IT WAS MINE.
IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I REALIZED THIS WOULD BE NO EASY ASSIGNMENT.
HAD THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE KNOWN EARTH WAS SUCH A VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT, THEY MAY NOT HAVE CHOSEN IT.
IT SEEMED ITS PEOPLE WERE ALMOST ALWAYS IN SOME KIND OF DANGER.
EVERY TIME I TURNED AROUND THERE WAS A NEW THREAT OUT TO CONQUER THE PLANET BEFORE VILTRUM EVEN HAD A CHANCE.
WE HAD LAID CLAIM TO THIS PLANET... I WAS NOT ABOUT TO LET IT FALL TO ANOTHER INVADER.
AFTER ONLY A FEW MONTHS, MY LIFE HAD SETTLED INTO A ROUTINE THAT INVOLVED LITTLE MORE THAN ENDING THREAT AFTER THREAT TO THE HUMAN RACE.

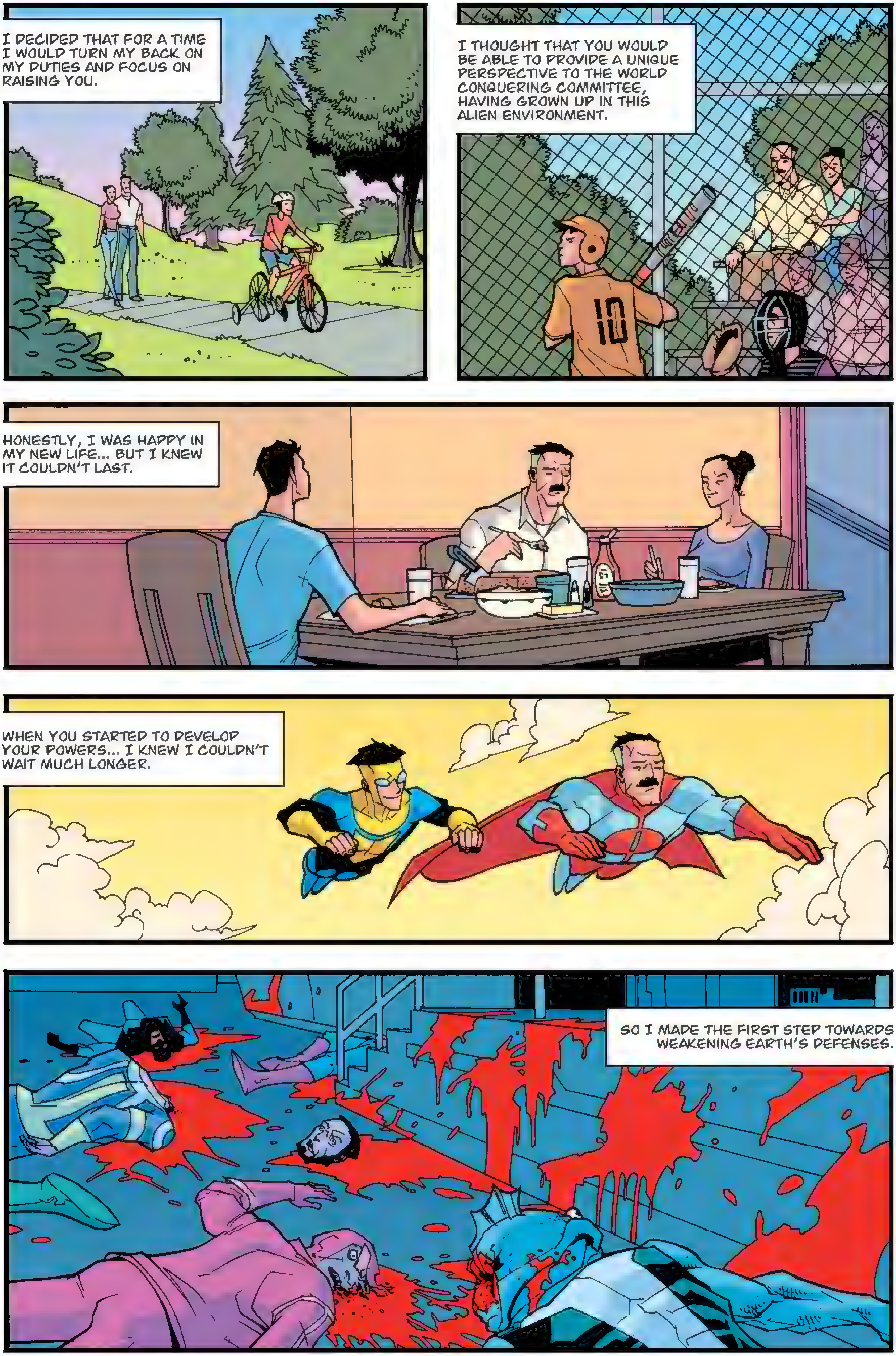

BUT ALL THAT WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE.
TAXI
IMLDSRU
WHEN I MET YOUR MOTHER I KNEW THE ONLY WAY TO ENJOY MY TIME HERE WAS TO ACTUALLY LIVE AS A HUMAN.
WHEN IT EVENTUALLY CAME UP... I TOLD HER THE VERSION OF MY COMING TO EARTH THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD SINCE CHILDHOOD.
IT WAS CLEAR SHE WOULDN'T APPROVE OF THE REAL REASONS I WAS HERE.

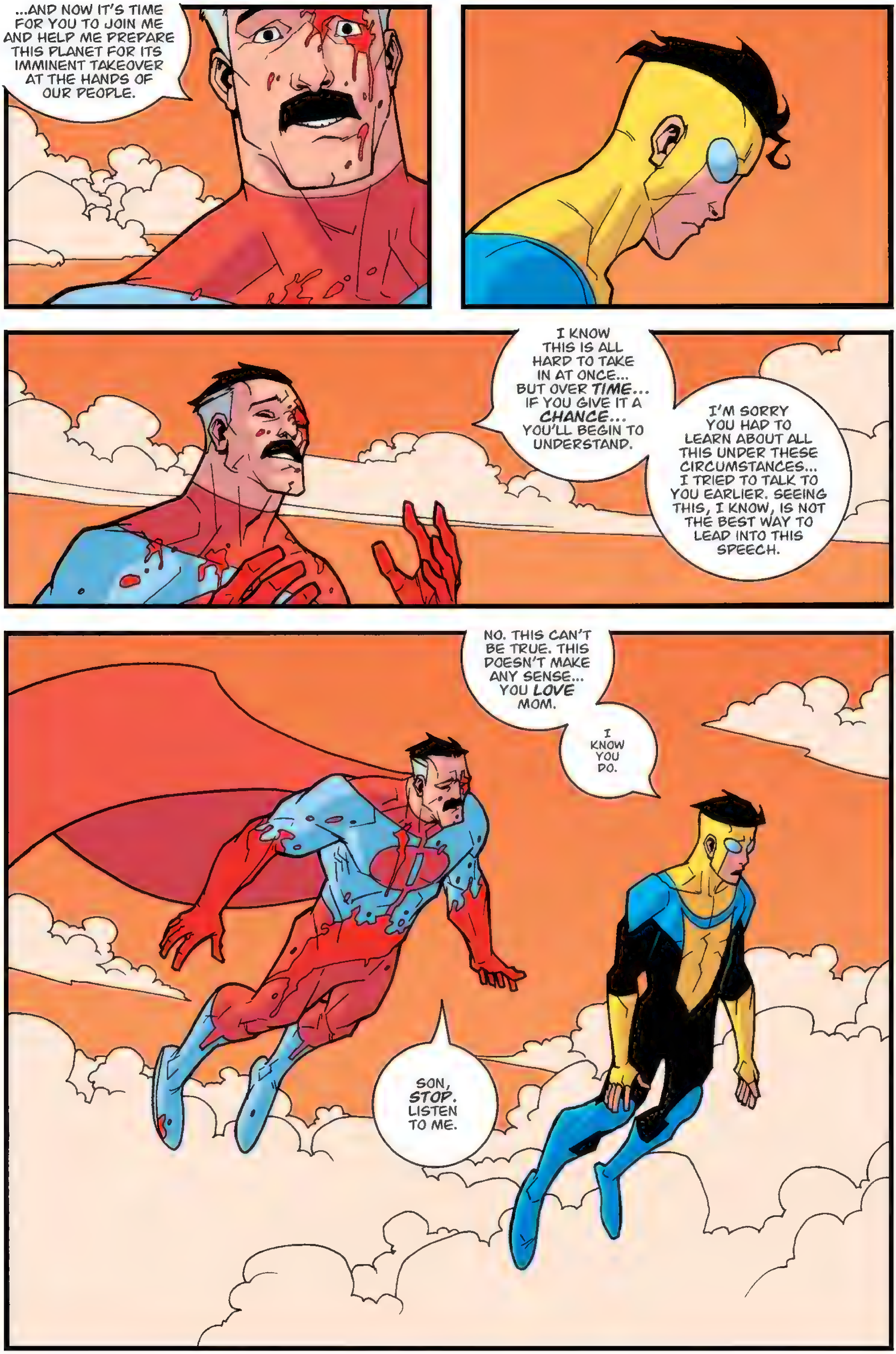

LIVING LIFE AS A HUMAN WAS NOT EASY AT FIRST.
SIMPLE CONCEPTS LIKE MENIAL LABOR BEING REQUIRED TO EARN A LIVING WERE COMPLETELY ALIEN TO ME.
THOUGH, THE ACT OF PHYSICAL LOVE MADE FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN PROCREATION WAS A WELCOME SURPRISE.
I SOON FOUND MYSELF BECOMING A REGULAR FIXTURE IN THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY. MY NATURAL VILTRUMITE ABILITIES MADE ME THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE PLANET.
I FOUND MYSELF ON ADVENTURE AFTER ADVENTURE. AFTER A TIME, I REALIZED THAT MY TRUE MOTIVES HAD BEGUN TO SLIP FROM MY MIND.
I WAS LIVING THE LIE A BIT TOO WELL.

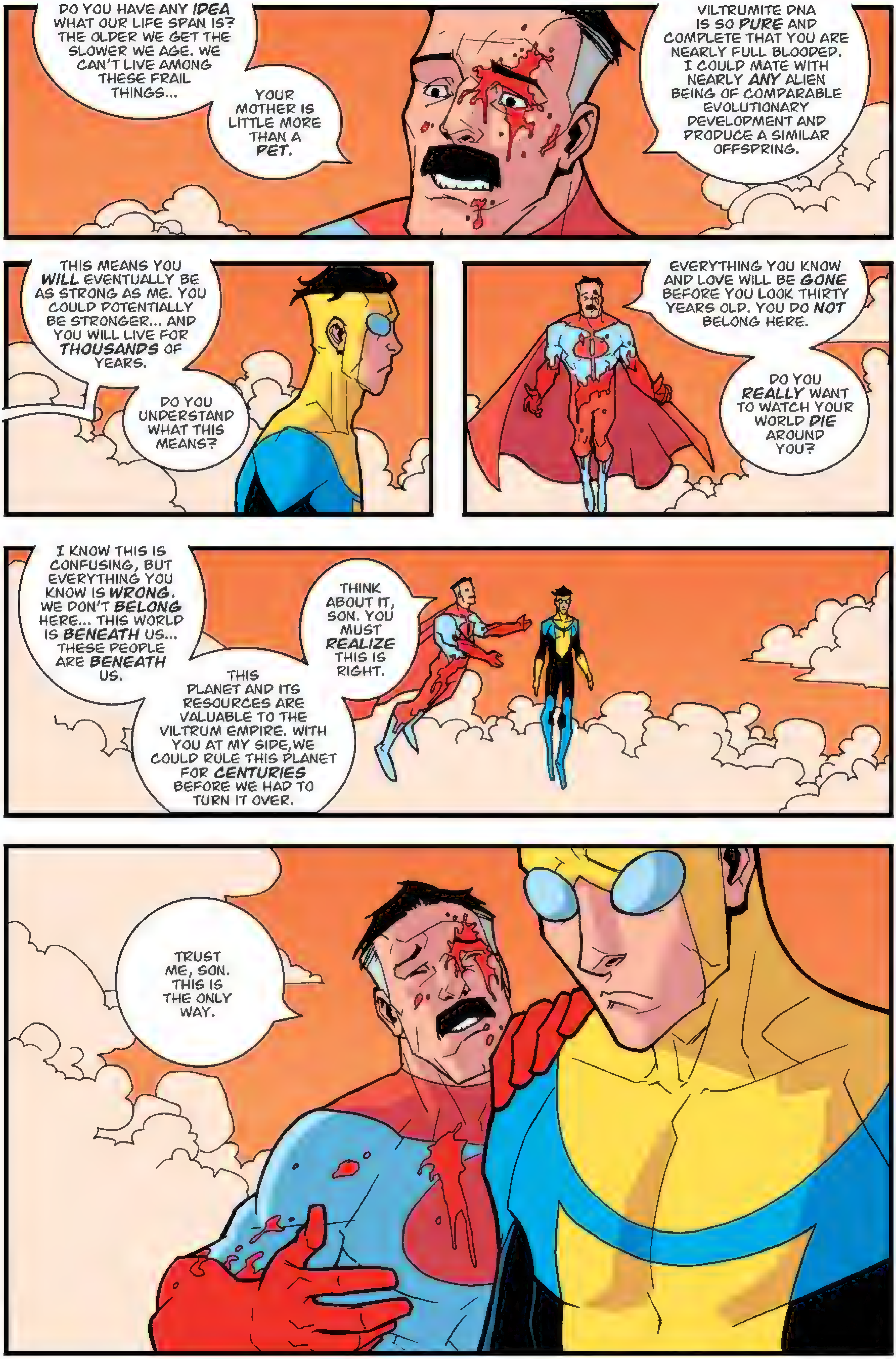
IT WASN'T LONG AFTER YOUR MOTHER AND I MARRIED THAT I FIRST RAN INTO THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

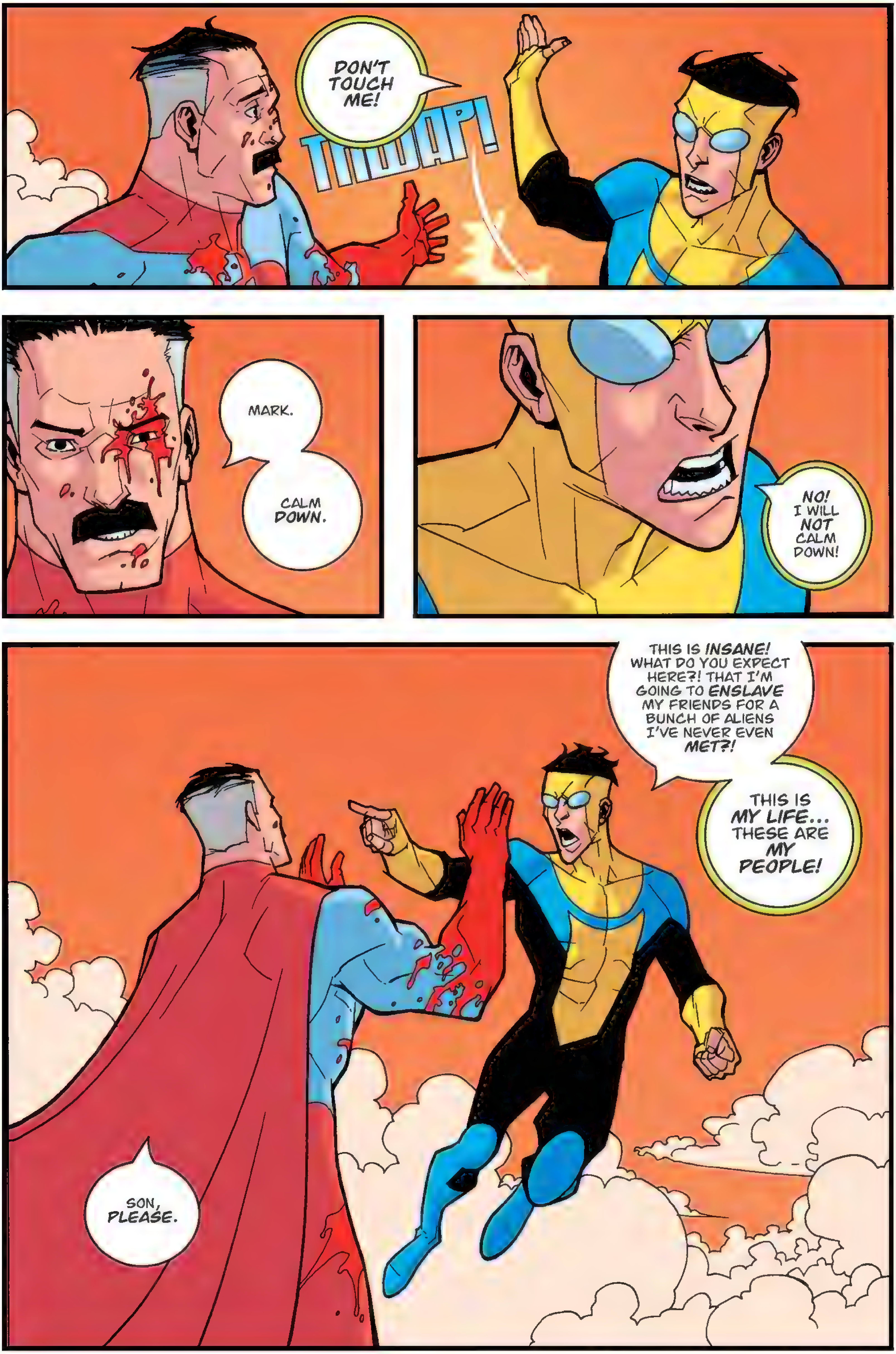

I NEVER BECAME AN *OFFICIAL* MEMBER BUT I WAS WELCOMED INTO THE FOLD WITH OPEN ARMS.
THEY HELPED ME ALONG IN THE EARLY YEARS. THEY KNEW I WAS NEW TO ALL THIS AND WERE ALL TOO EAGER TO ASSIST ME.
SOME OF THEM I WOULD EVEN EVENTUALLY COME TO CONSIDER FRIENDS.
BUT I KNEW THEY WOULD NEVER ALLOW ME TO COMPLETE MY MISSION.
EAR 1984
I KNEW THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY NEED TO BE ***ELIMINATED***.

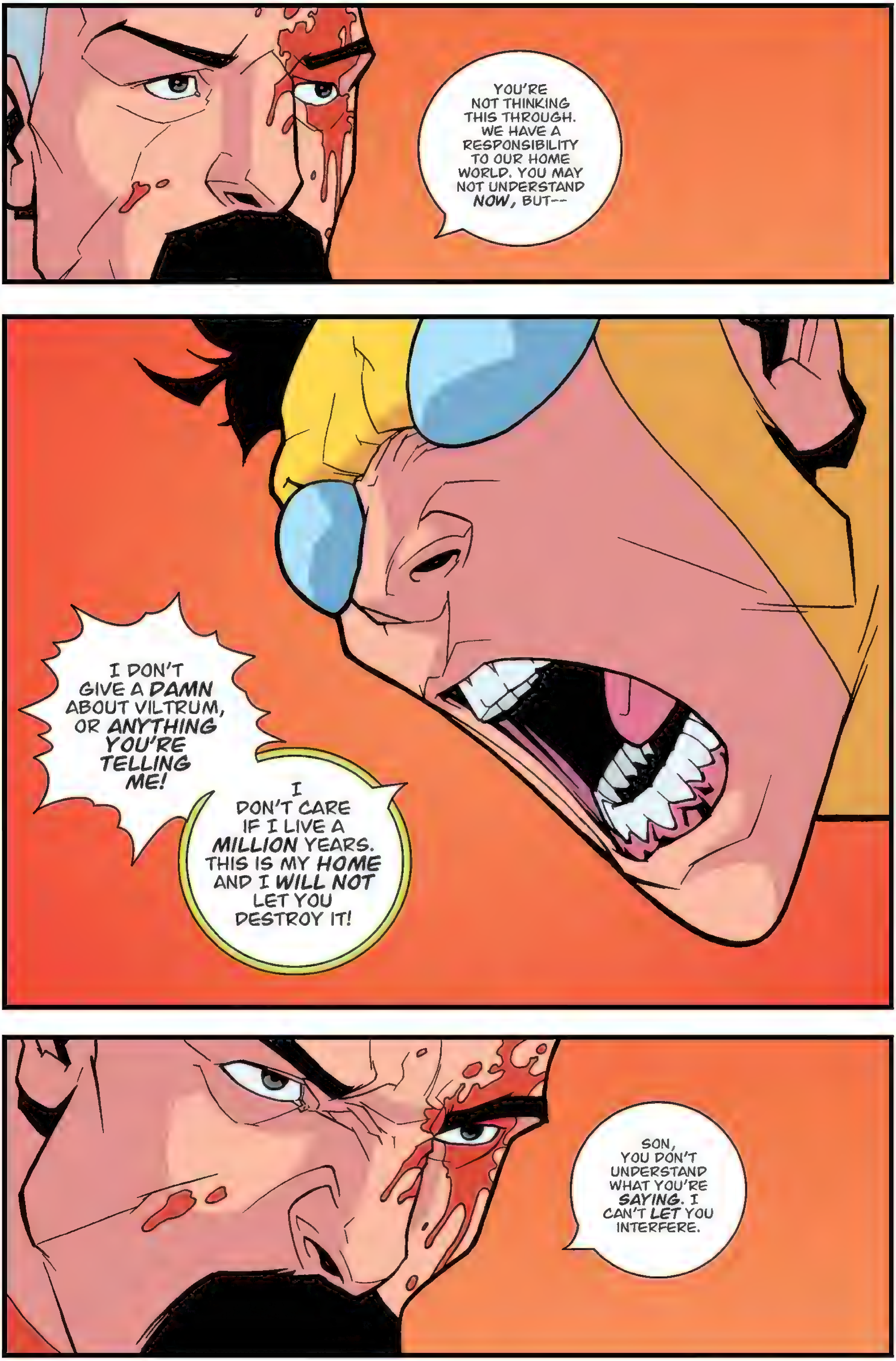

AS MY YEARS ON EARTH GREW LONGER... I FOUND MYSELF BECOMING MORE AND MORE COMFORTABLE LIVING LIFE AMONG ITS INHABITANTS.
IT WAS SOMETHING THAT WORRIED ME A GREAT DEAL.
THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.
YOUR MOTHER WAS SO HAPPY... I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RAISE YOU AS A HUMAN.
I COULDN'T RISK *HER* FINDING OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT ME... SO I COULDN'T RISK TELLING *YOU* THE TRUTH ABOUT ME.
I OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT *TAKING* YOU... AND RAISING YOU AS A VILTRUMITE IN A SECLUDED AREA OF THE PLANET.
I COULD NEVER BRING MYSELF TO DO IT.
NO MATTER HOW I TRIED TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM HER EMOTIONALLY... I COULDN'T DENY THAT I HAD GROWN QUITE FOND OF HER.

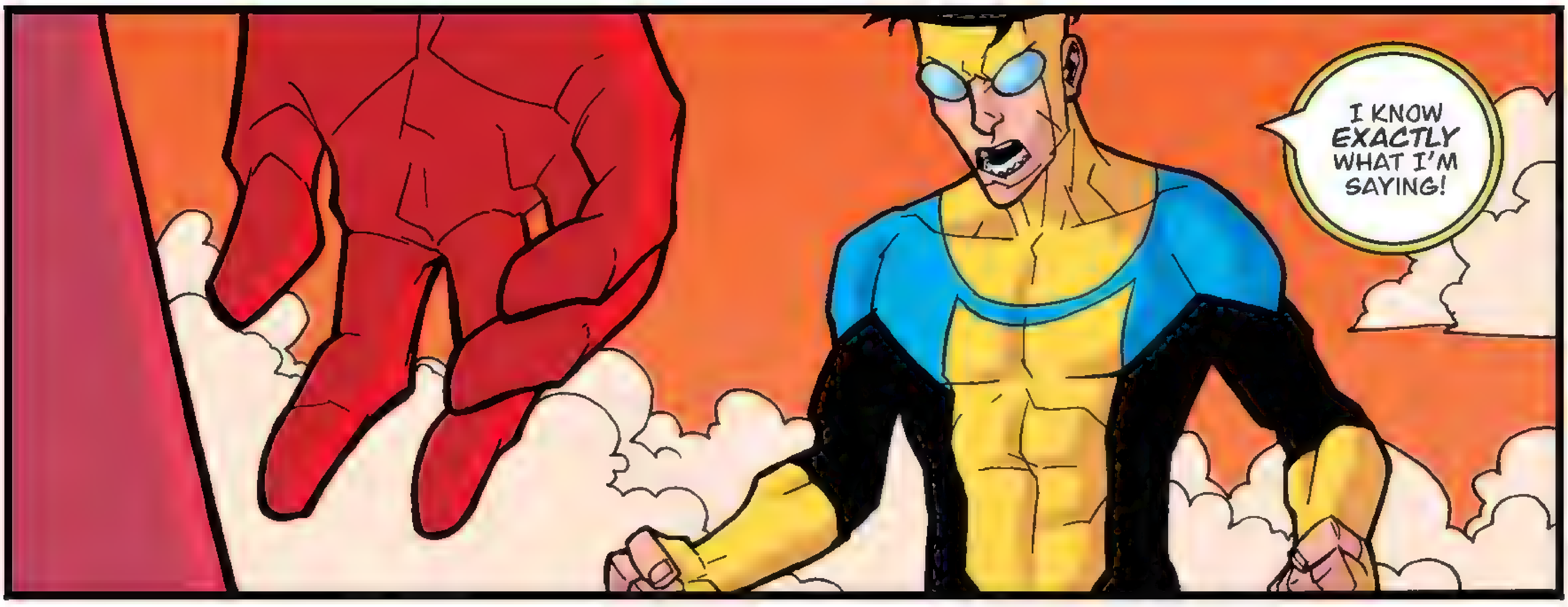

I DECIDED THAT FOR A TIME I WOULD TURN MY BACK ON MY DUTIES AND FOCUS ON RAISING YOU.
I THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE TO THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE, HAVING GROWN UP IN THIS ALIEN ENVIRONMENT.
10
HONESTLY, I WAS HAPPY IN MY NEW LIFE... BUT I KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST.
WHEN YOU STARTED TO DEVELOP YOUR POWERS... I KNEW I COULDN'T WAIT MUCH LONGER.
SO I MADE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS WEAKENING EARTH'S DEFENSES.

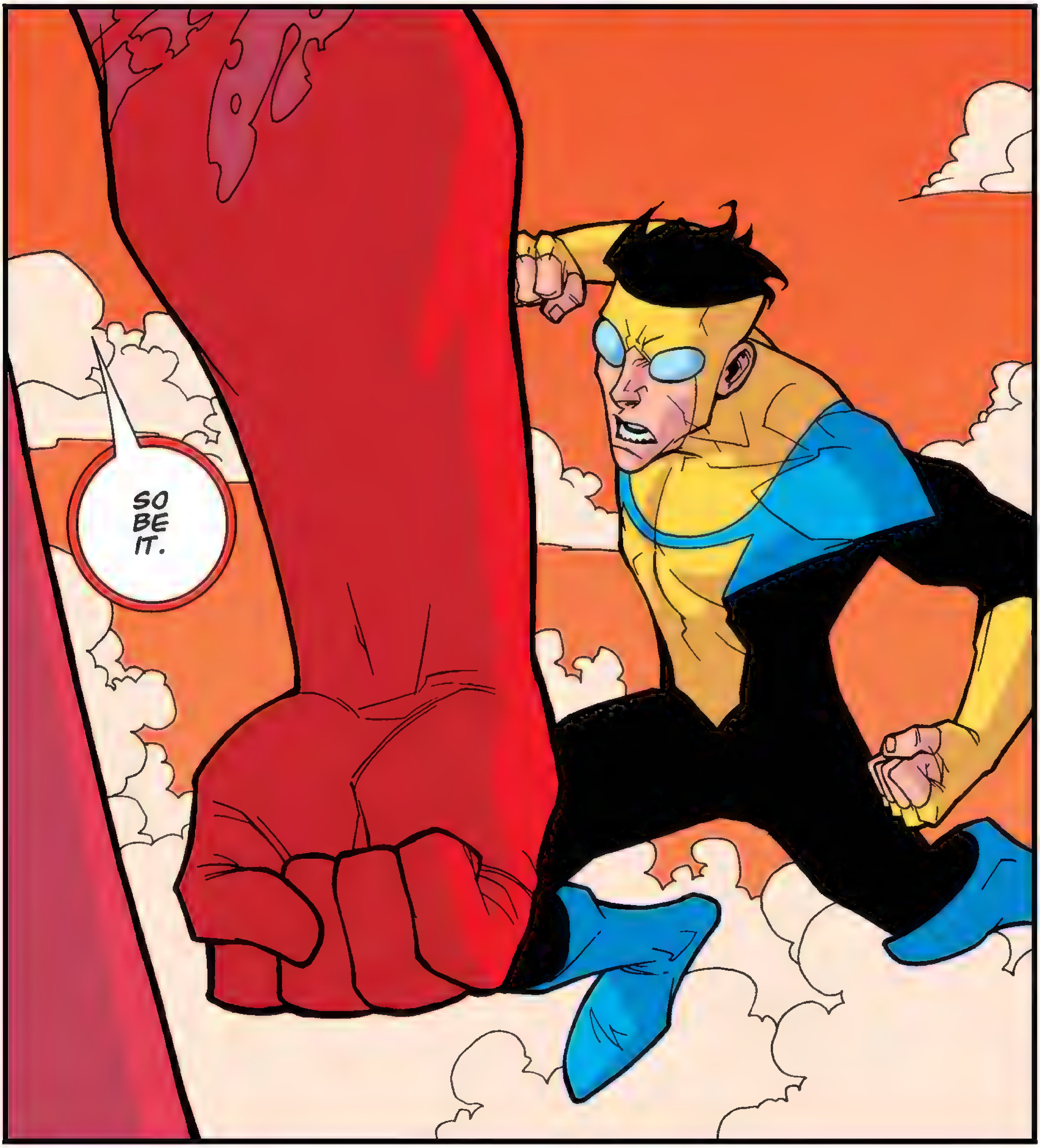

...AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO JOIN ME AND HELP ME PREPARE THIS PLANET FOR ITS IMMINENT TAKEOVER AT THE HANDS OF OUR PEOPLE.
I KNOW THIS IS ALL HARD TO TAKE IN AT ONCE... BUT OVER TIME... IF YOU GIVE IT A CHANCE... YOU'LL BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.
I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO LEARN ABOUT ALL THIS UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES... I TRIED TO TALK TO YOU EARLIER. SEEING THIS, I KNOW, IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO LEAD INTO THIS SPEECH.
NO. THIS CAN'T BE TRUE. THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE... YOU LOVE MOM.
I KNOW YOU DO.
SON, STOP. LISTEN TO ME.


DO YOU HAVE ANY *IDEA* WHAT OUR LIFE SPAN IS? THE OLDER WE GET THE SLOWER WE AGE. WE CAN'T LIVE AMONG THESE FRAIL THINGS...
YOUR MOTHER IS LITTLE MORE THAN A *PET*.
VILTRUMITE DNA IS SO *PURE* AND COMPLETE THAT YOU ARE NEARLY FULL BLOODED. I COULD MATE WITH NEARLY *ANY* ALIEN BEING OF COMPARABLE EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCE A SIMILAR OFFSPRING.
THIS MEANS YOU *WILL* EVENTUALLY BE AS STRONG AS ME. YOU COULD POTENTIALLY BE STRONGER... AND YOU WILL LIVE FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANS?
EVERYTHING YOU KNOW AND LOVE WILL BE *GONE* BEFORE YOU LOOK THIRTY YEARS OLD. YOU DO *NOT* BELONG HERE.
DO YOU *REALLY* WANT TO WATCH YOUR WORLD *DIE* AROUND YOU?
I KNOW THIS IS CONFUSING, BUT EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS *WRONG*. WE DON'T *BELONG* HERE... THIS WORLD IS *BENEATH* US... THESE PEOPLE ARE *BENEATH* US.
THIS PLANET AND ITS RESOURCES ARE VALUABLE TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. WITH YOU AT MY SIDE, WE COULD RULE THIS PLANET FOR *CENTURIES* BEFORE WE HAD TO TURN IT OVER.
THINK ABOUT IT, SON. YOU MUST *REALIZE* THIS IS RIGHT.
TRUST ME, SON. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY.


DON'T TOUCH ME!
THWAP!
MARK.
CALM DOWN.
NO! I WILL NOT CALM DOWN!
THIS IS INSANE! WHAT DO YOU EXPECT HERE?! THAT I'M GOING TO ENSLAVE MY FRIENDS FOR A BUNCH OF ALIENS I'VE NEVER EVEN MET?!
THIS IS MY LIFE... THESE ARE MY PEOPLE!
SON, PLEASE.

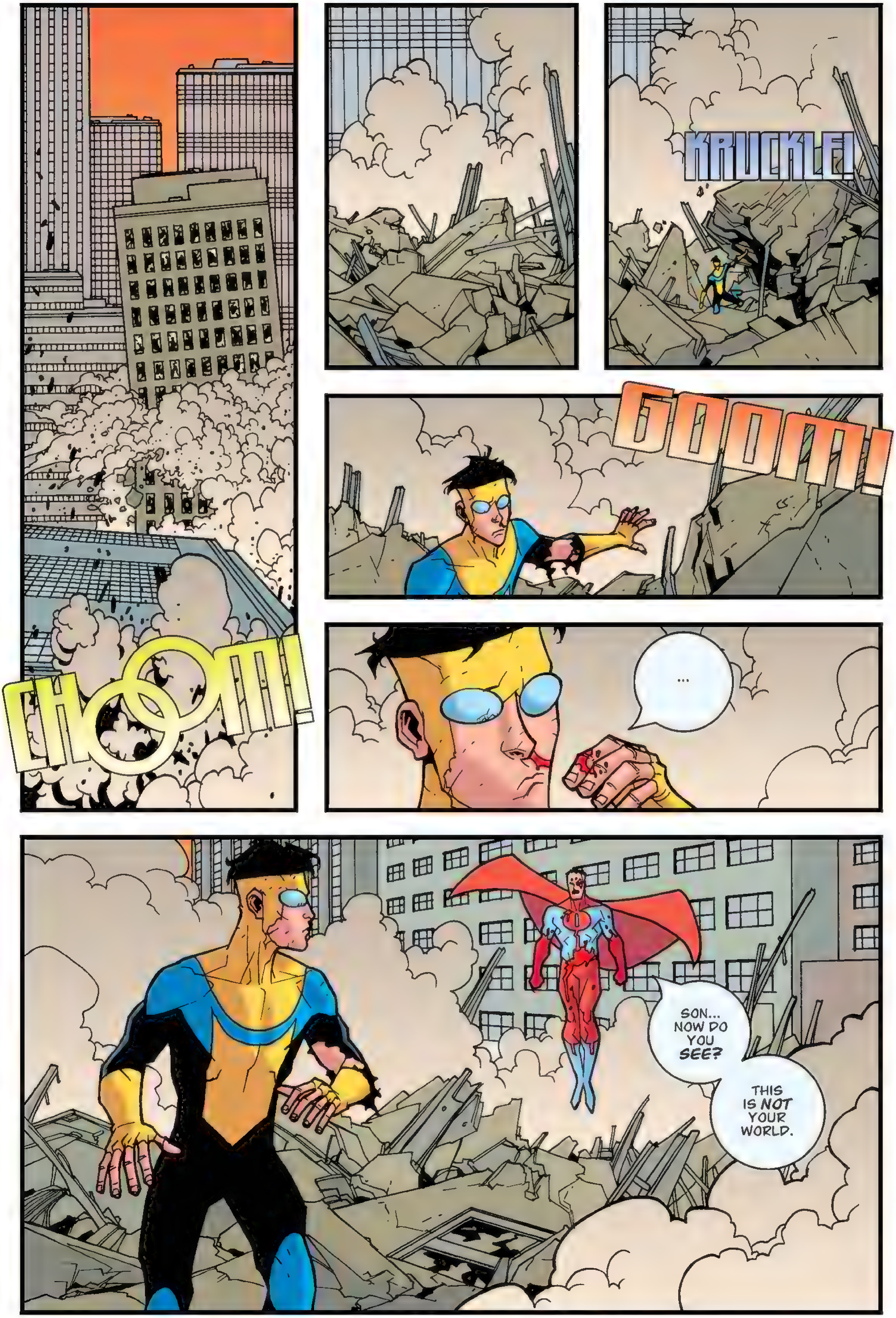

YOU'RE NOT THINKING THIS THROUGH. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR HOME WORLD. YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND *NOW*, BUT--
I DON'T GIVE A *DAMN* ABOUT VILTRUM, OR *ANYTHING YOU'RE TELLING ME!*
I DON'T CARE IF I LIVE A *MILLION* YEARS. THIS IS MY *HOME* AND I *WILL NOT* LET YOU DESTROY IT!
SON, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE *SAYING*. I CAN'T *LET* YOU INTERFERE.

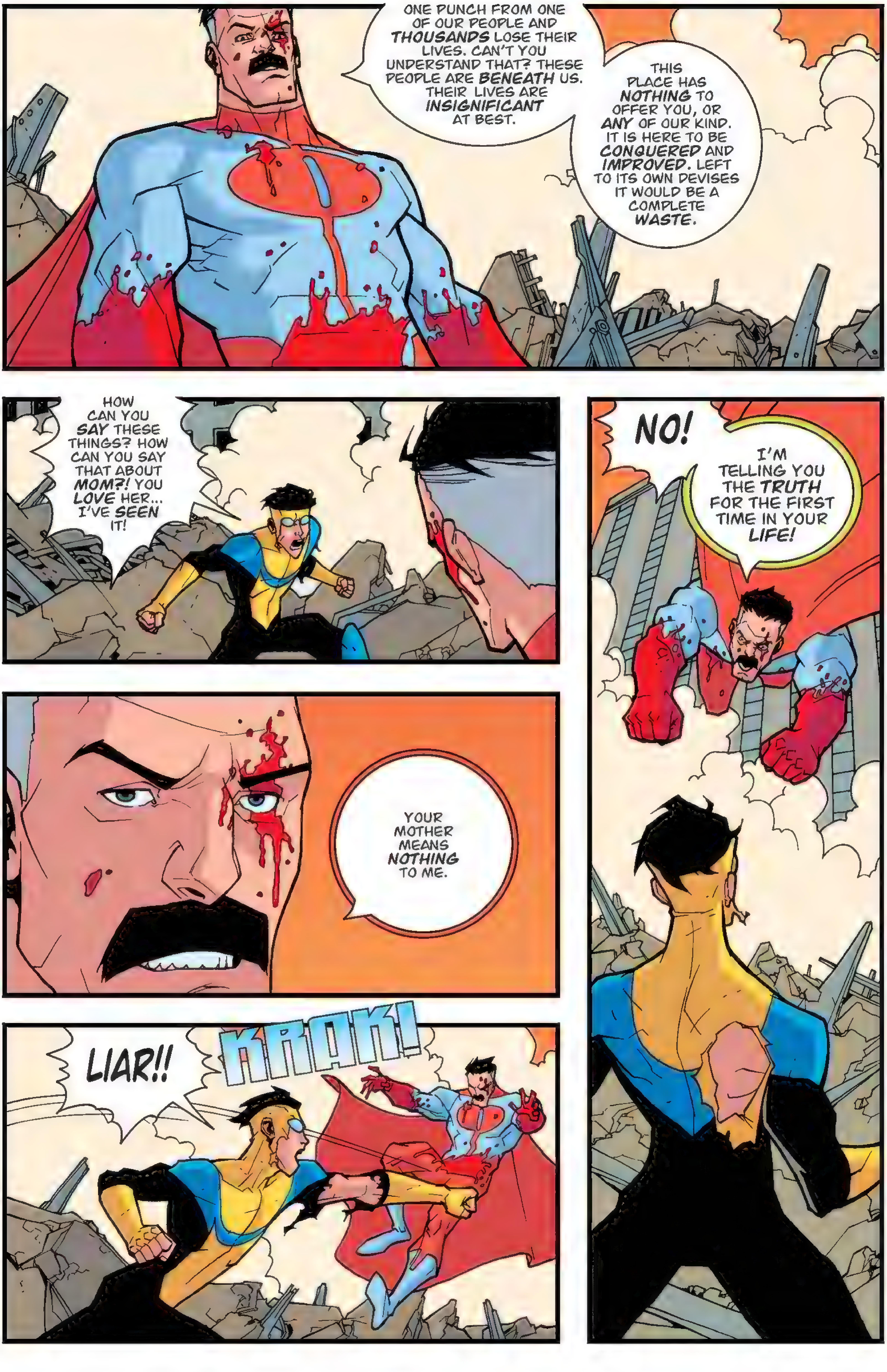

I KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT I'M SAYING!


SO BE IT.

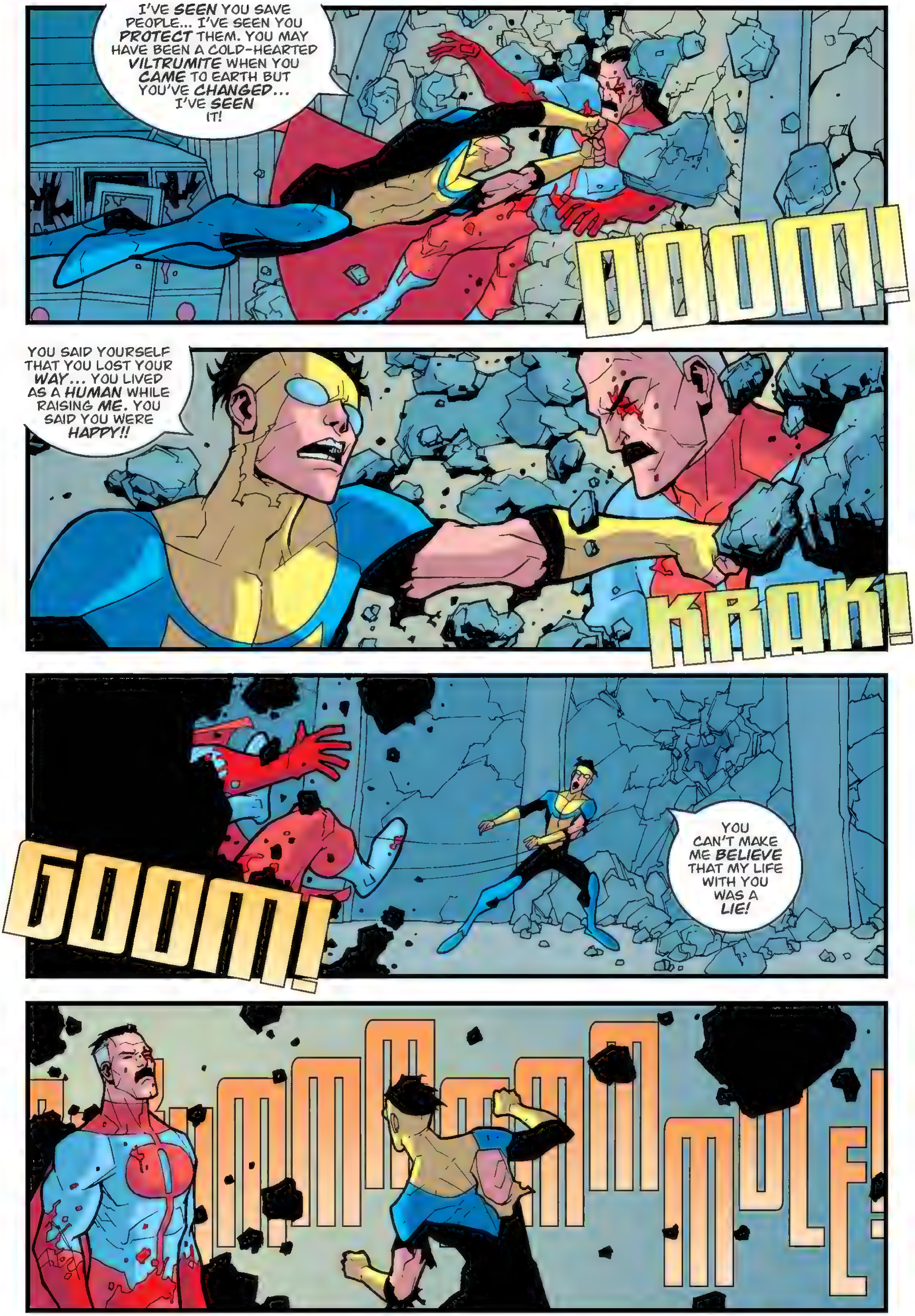
ISSUE TWELVE

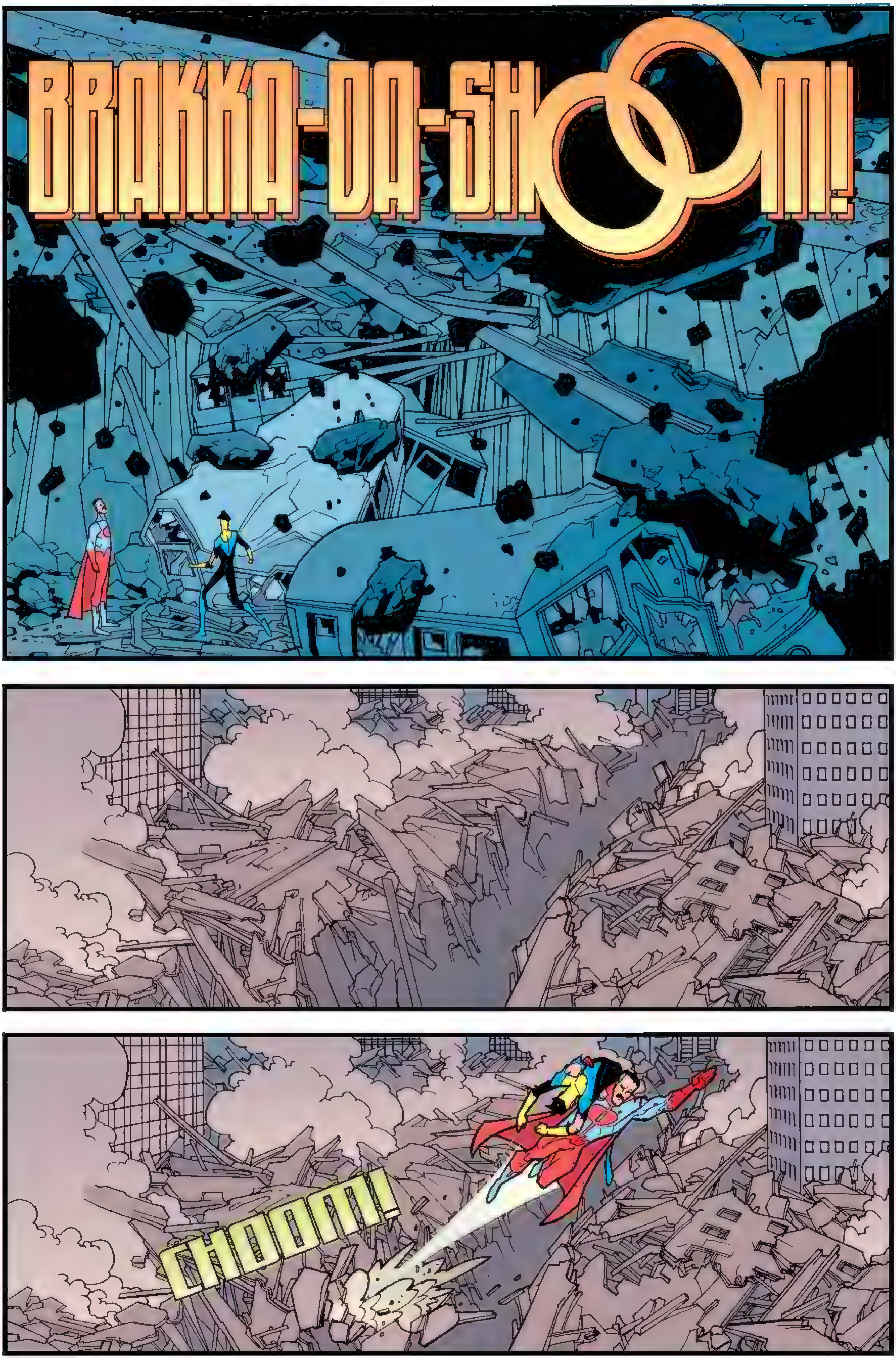
BRAKKOW!!

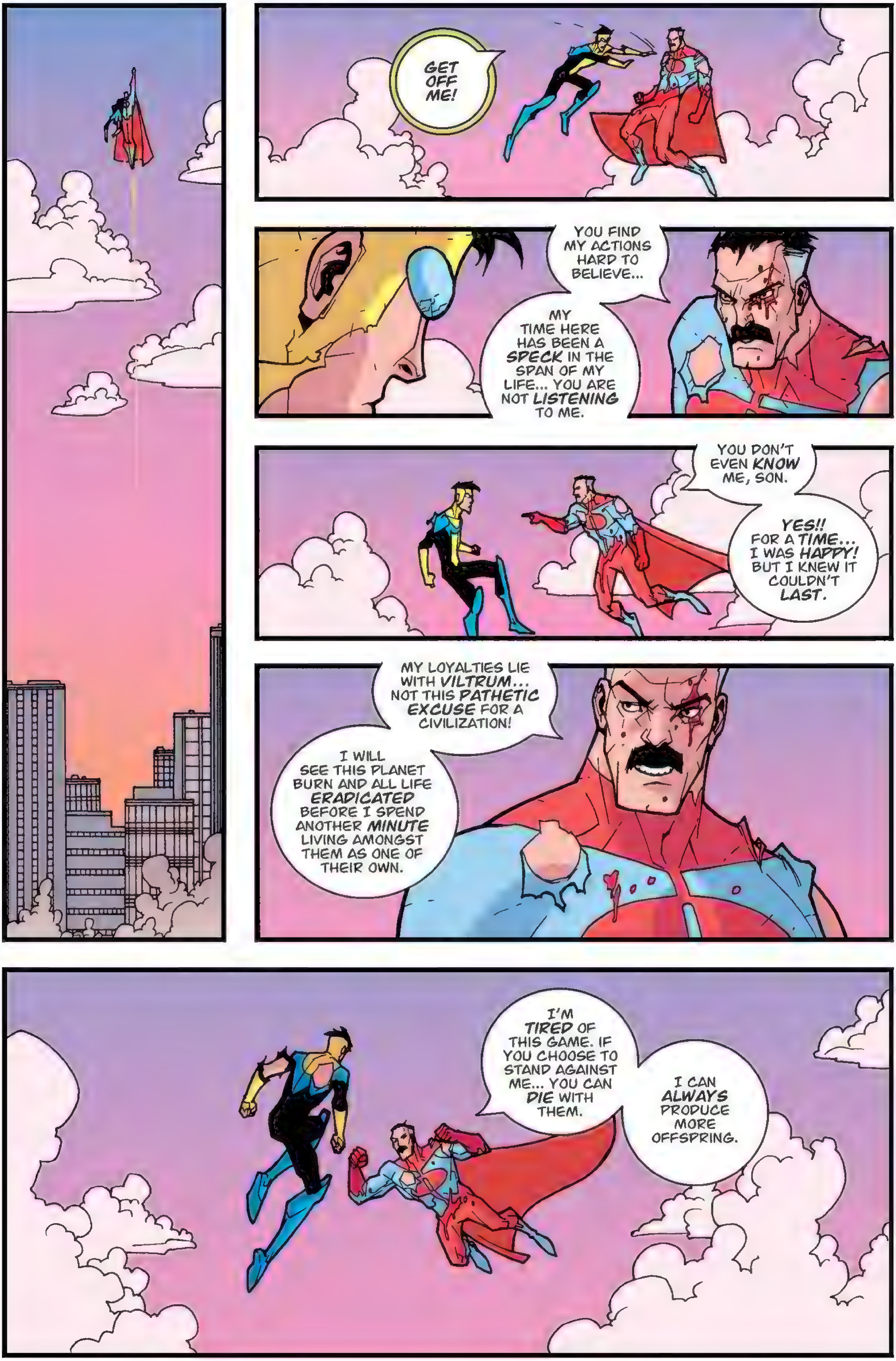

CHOOM!
KRUCKLE!
GOOM!
...
SON... NOW DO YOU SEE?
THIS IS NOT YOUR WORLD.

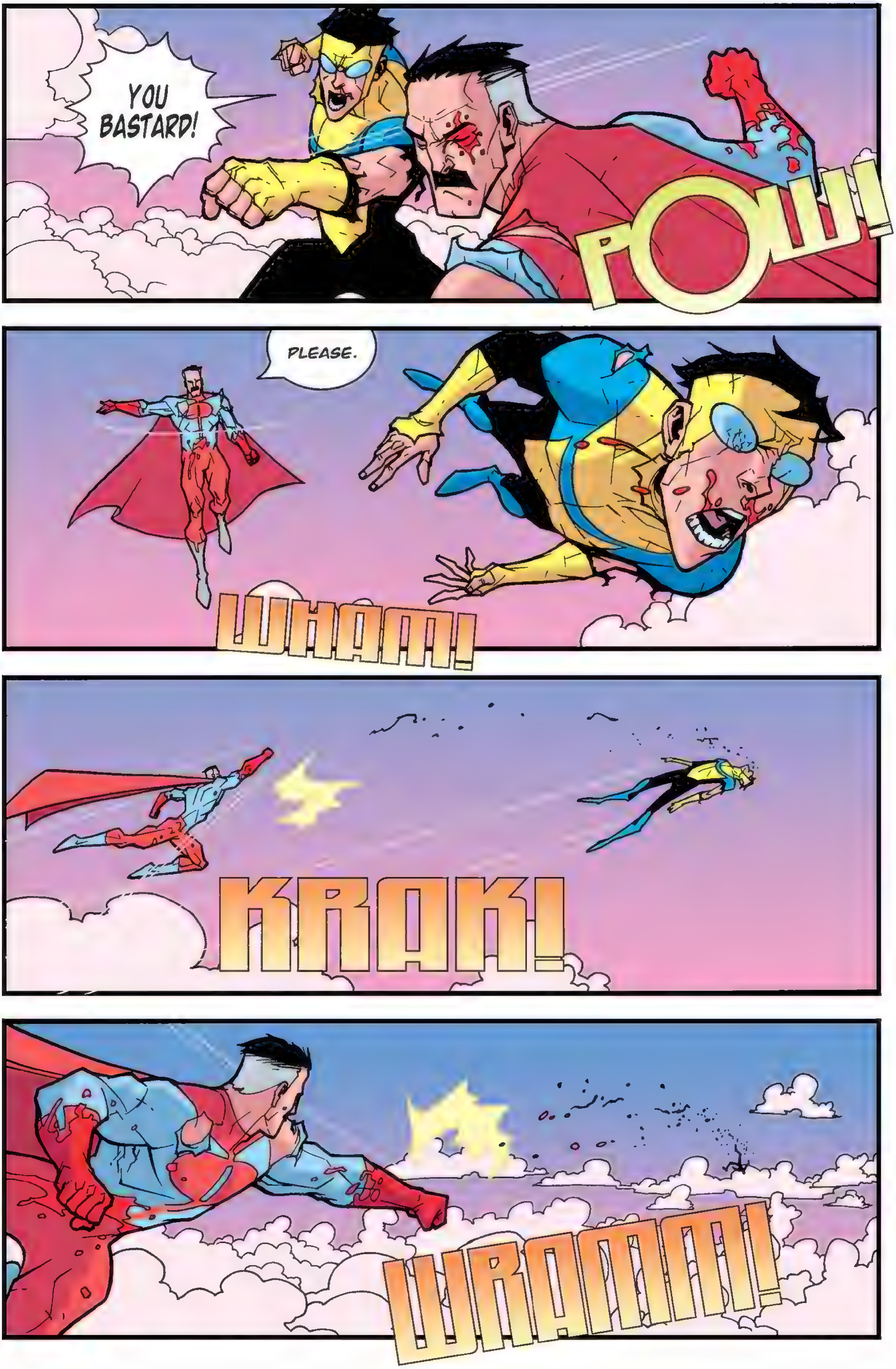

ONE PUNCH FROM ONE OF OUR PEOPLE AND THOUSANDS LOSE THEIR LIVES. CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? THESE PEOPLE ARE BENEATH US. THEIR LIVES ARE INSIGNIFICANT AT BEST.
THIS PLACE HAS NOTHING TO OFFER YOU, OR ANY OF OUR KIND. IT IS HERE TO BE CONQUERED AND IMPROVED. LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVISES IT WOULD BE A COMPLETE WASTE.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THESE THINGS? HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT ABOUT MOM?! YOU LOVE HER... I'VE SEEN IT!
YOUR MOTHER MEANS NOTHING TO ME.
LIAR!!
KRAK!
NO!
I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE!

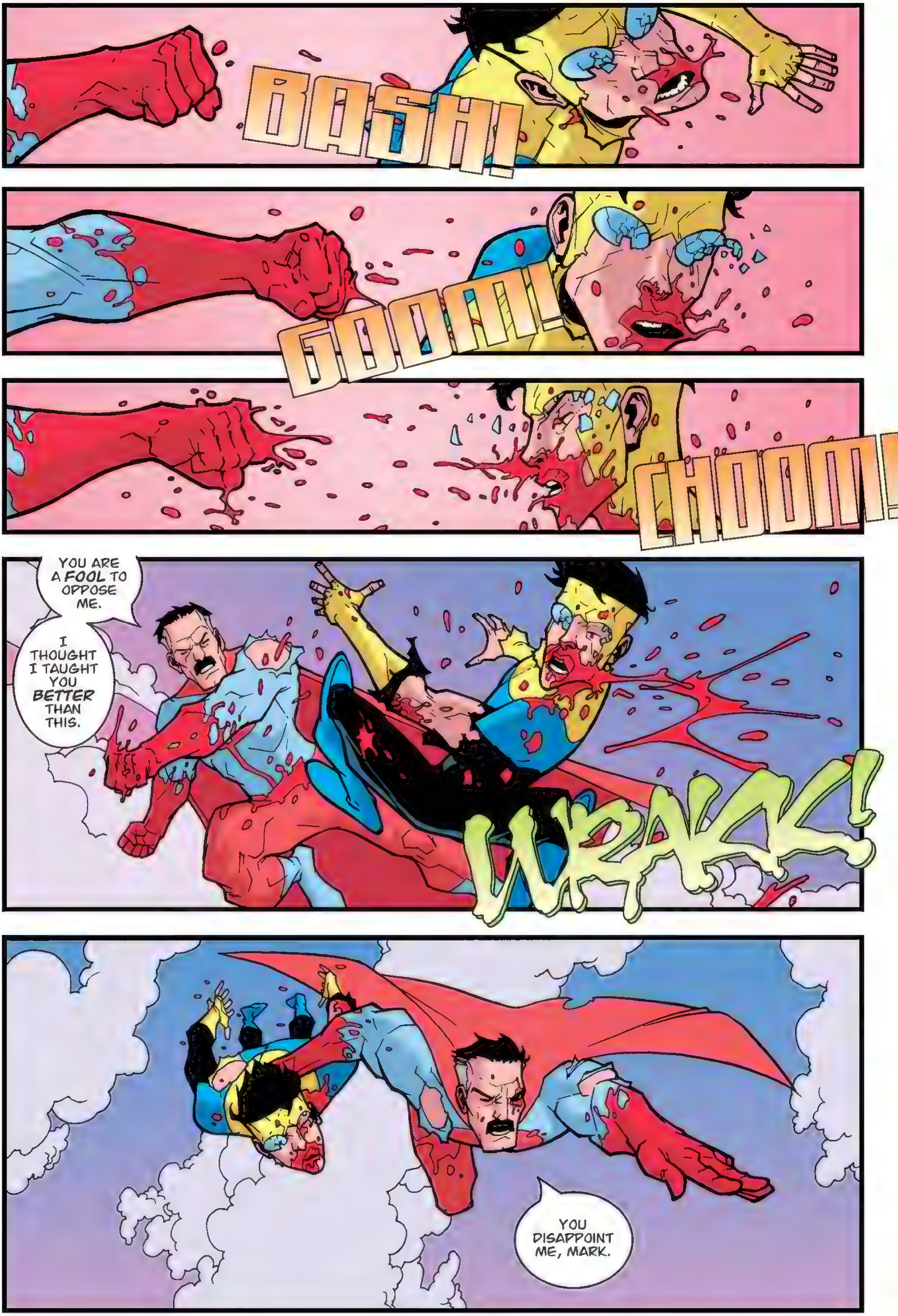
SHOOBOOM!
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANYONE ON THIS PLANET! THEY MEAN NOTHING TO ME. THEY ARE LIVESTOCK-- MEANINGLESS ANIMALS-- YOU CAN'T LOOK AT THEM AS EQUALS!
NO!
YOU'RE WRONG!
KRAK!


I'VE SEEN YOU SAVE PEOPLE... I'VE SEEN YOU PROTECT THEM. YOU MAY HAVE BEEN A COLD-HEARTED VILTRUMITE WHEN YOU CAME TO EARTH BUT YOU'VE CHANGED... I'VE SEEN IT!
DOOOM!
YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT YOU LOST YOUR WAY... YOU LIVED AS A HUMAN WHILE RAISING ME. YOU SAID YOU WERE HAPPY!!
KRAK!
GOOM!
YOU CAN'T MAKE ME BELIEVE THAT MY LIFE WITH YOU WAS A LIE!
MMMMMMMMOLE!

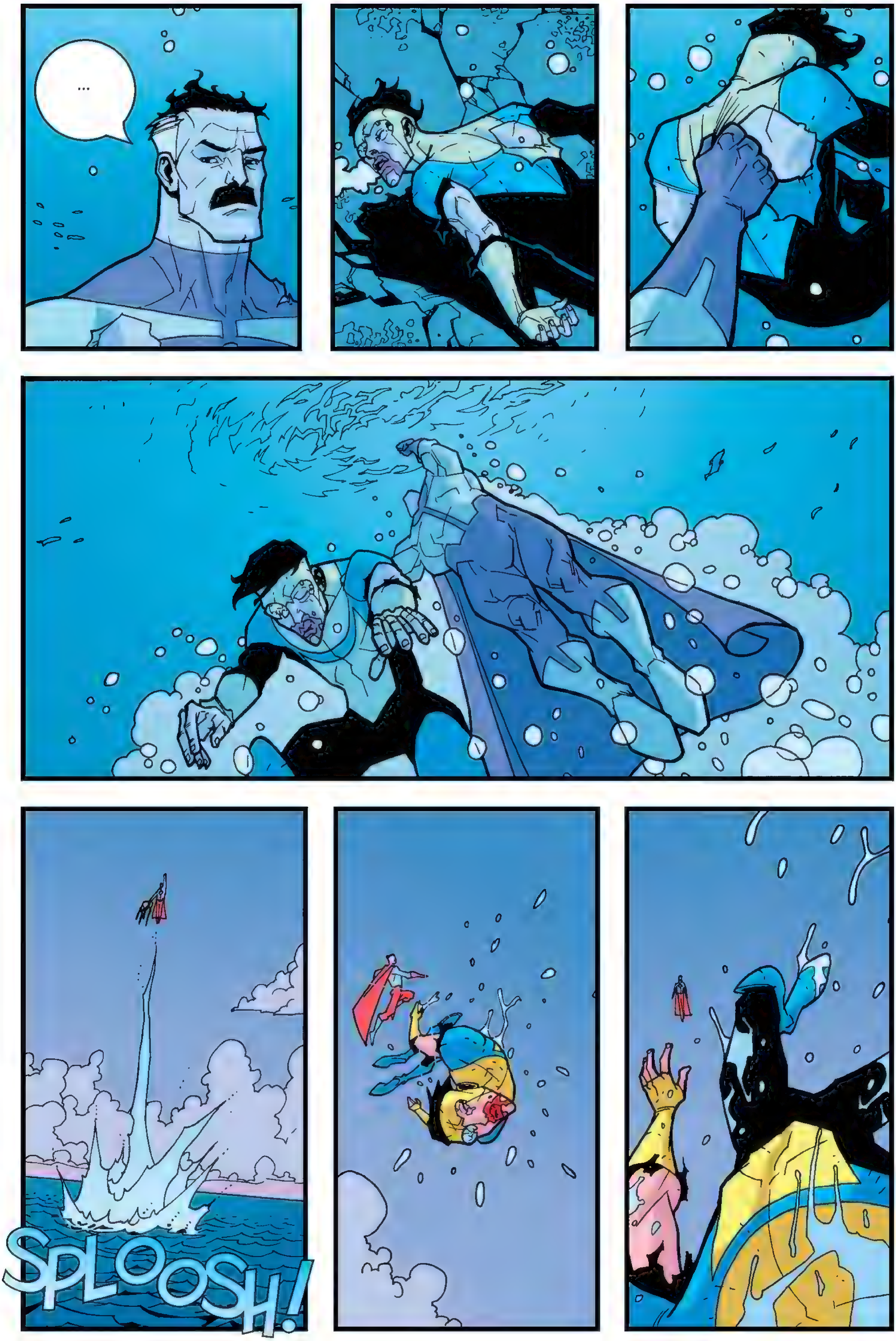

BRAKKA-DA-SHOOOM!
CHOOM!

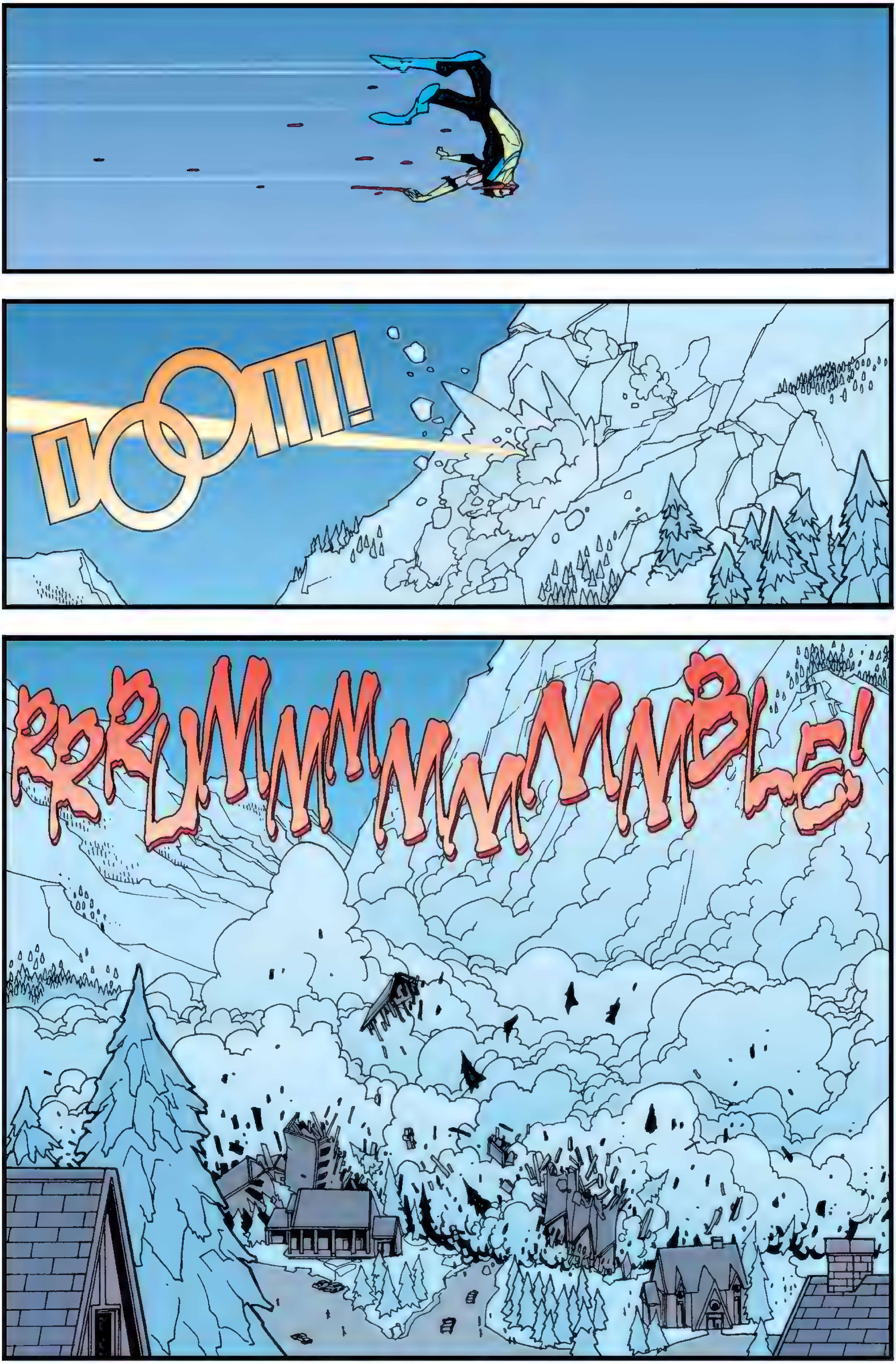

GET OFF ME!
YOU FIND MY ACTIONS HARD TO BELIEVE...
MY TIME HERE HAS BEEN A SPECK IN THE SPAN OF MY LIFE... YOU ARE NOT LISTENING TO ME.
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME, SON.
YES!! FOR A TIME... I WAS HAPPY! BUT I KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST.
MY LOYALTIES LIE WITH VILTRUM... NOT THIS PATHETIC EXCUSE FOR A CIVILIZATION!
I WILL SEE THIS PLANET BURN AND ALL LIFE ERADICATED BEFORE I SPEND ANOTHER MINUTE LIVING AMONGST THEM AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.
I'M TIRED OF THIS GAME. IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAND AGAINST ME... YOU CAN DIE WITH THEM.
I CAN ALWAYS PRODUCE MORE OFFSPRING.

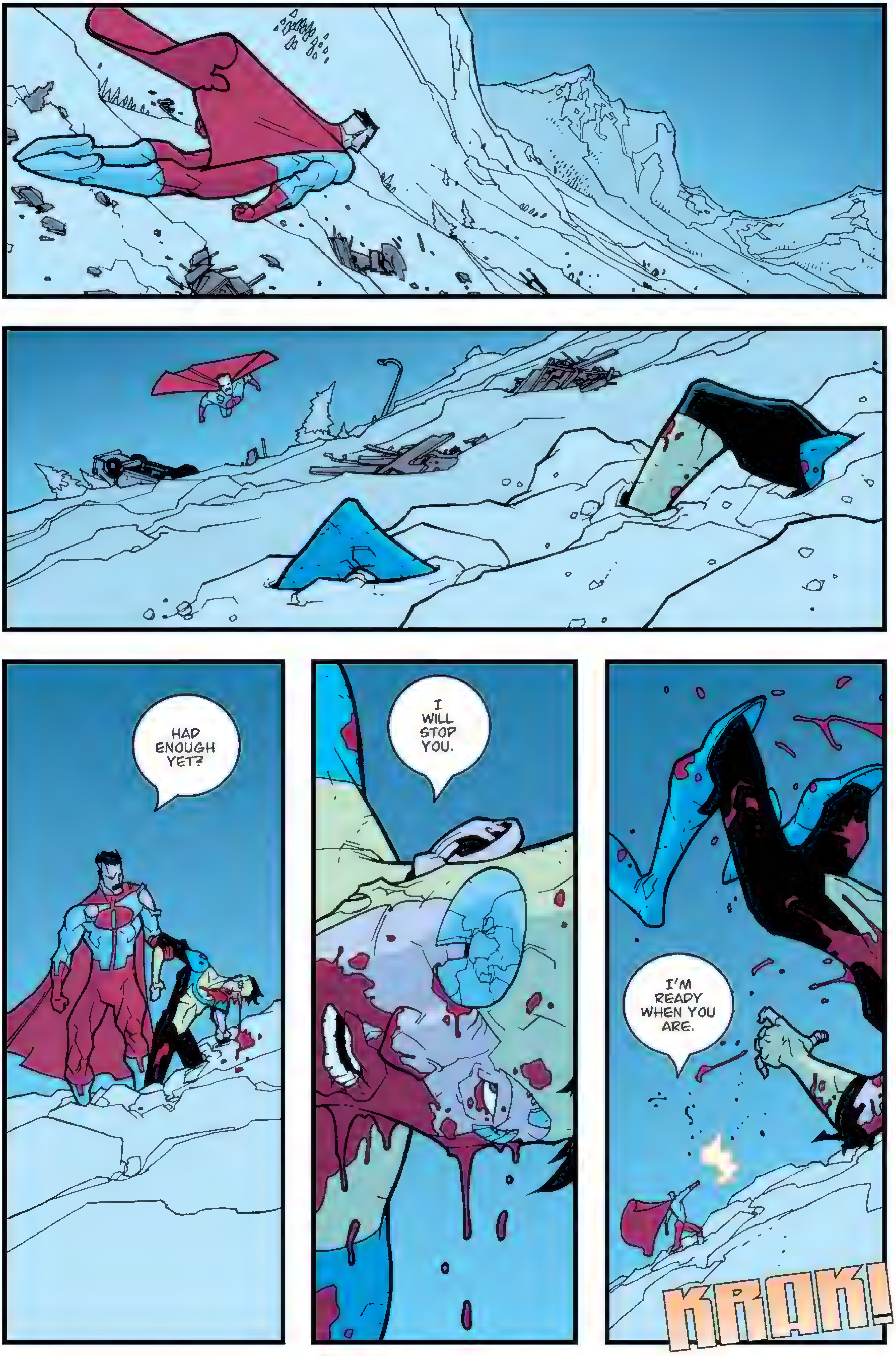

YOU BASTARD!
POW!
PLEASE.
WHAM!
KRAK!
WRAMM!

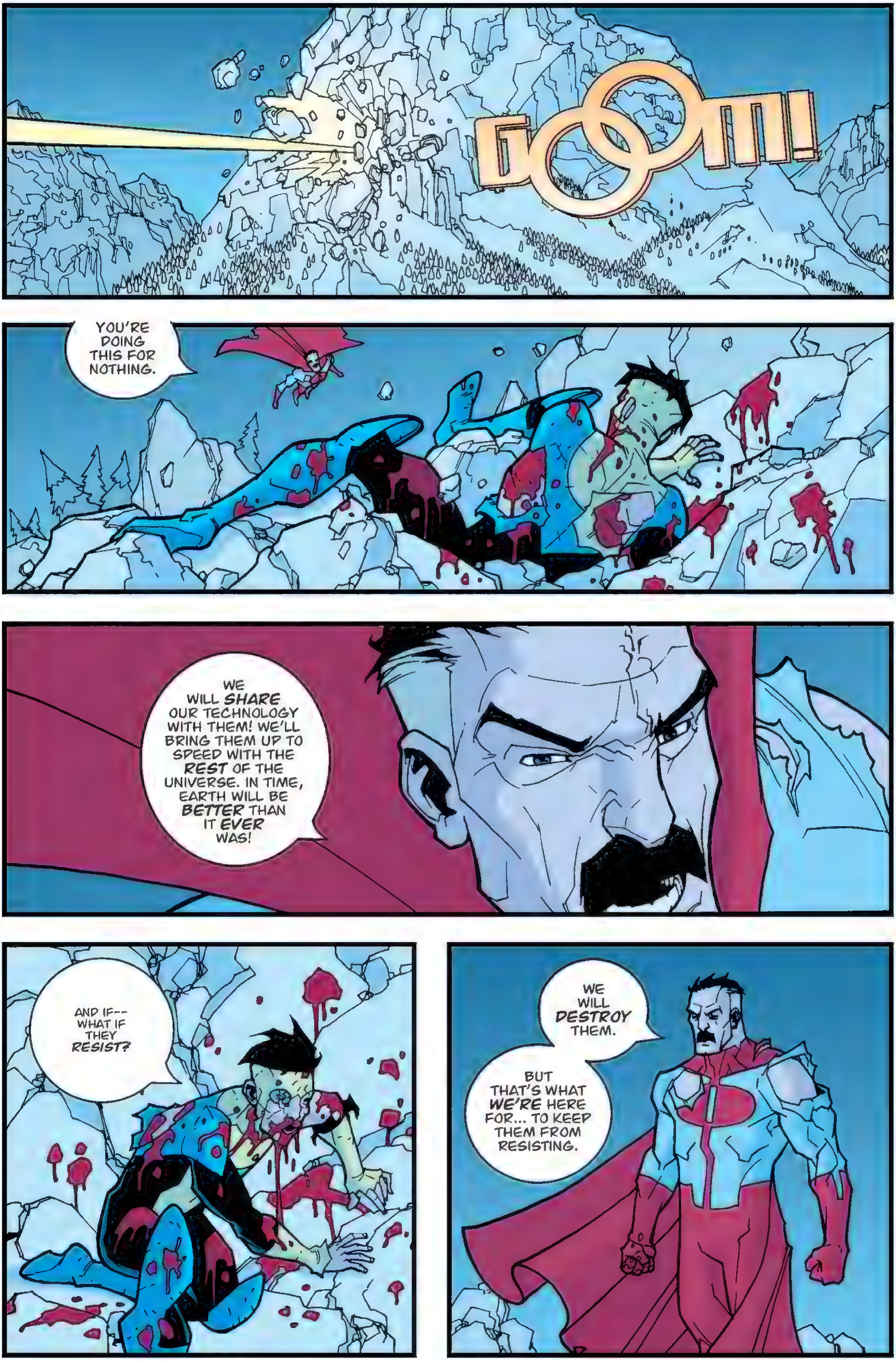

BASH!
GOOM!
CHOOM!
YOU ARE A FOOL TO OPPOSE ME.
I THOUGHT I TAUGHT YOU BETTER THAN THIS.
WRAKK!
YOU DISAPPOINT ME, MARK.

SPLOOSH!
BRAKKA-BA-DOOM!

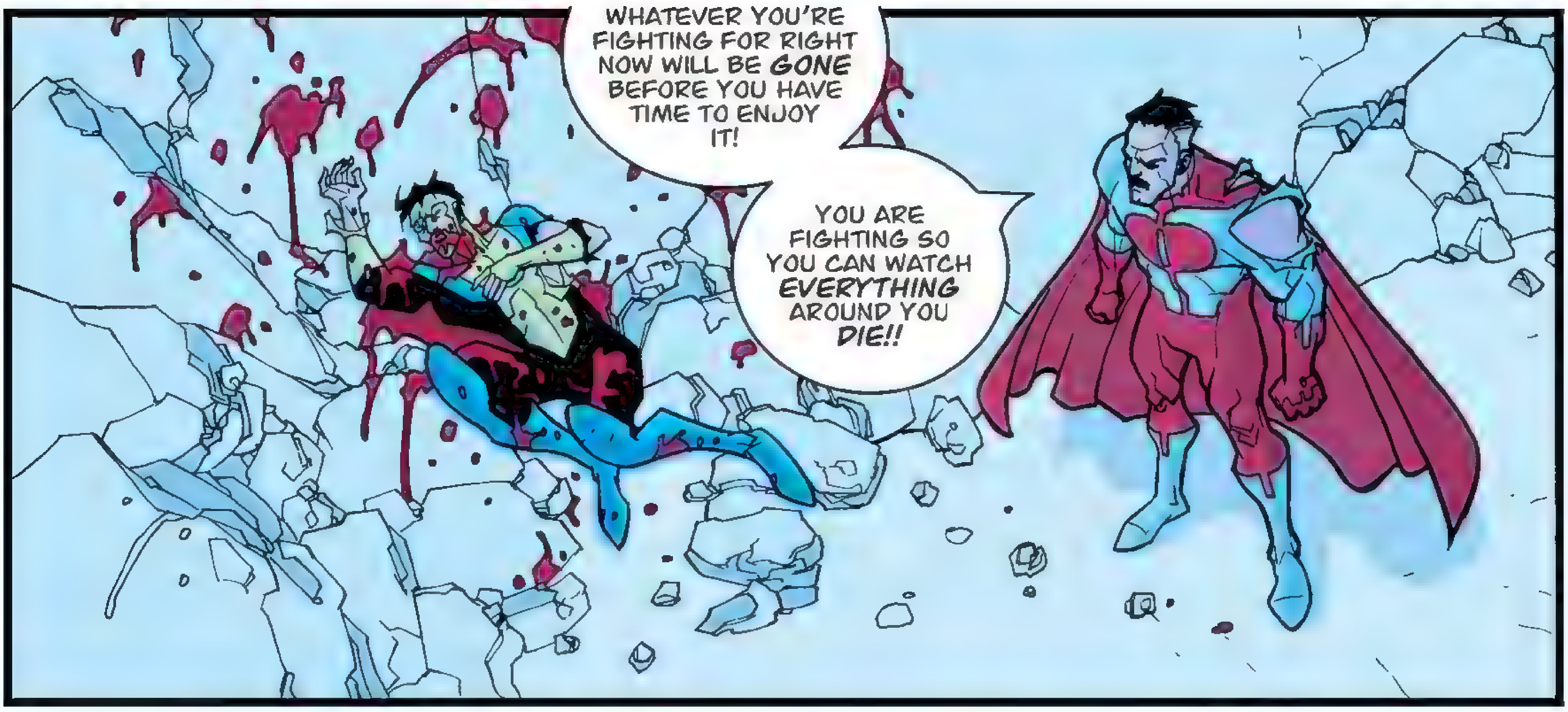

...
SPLOOSH!

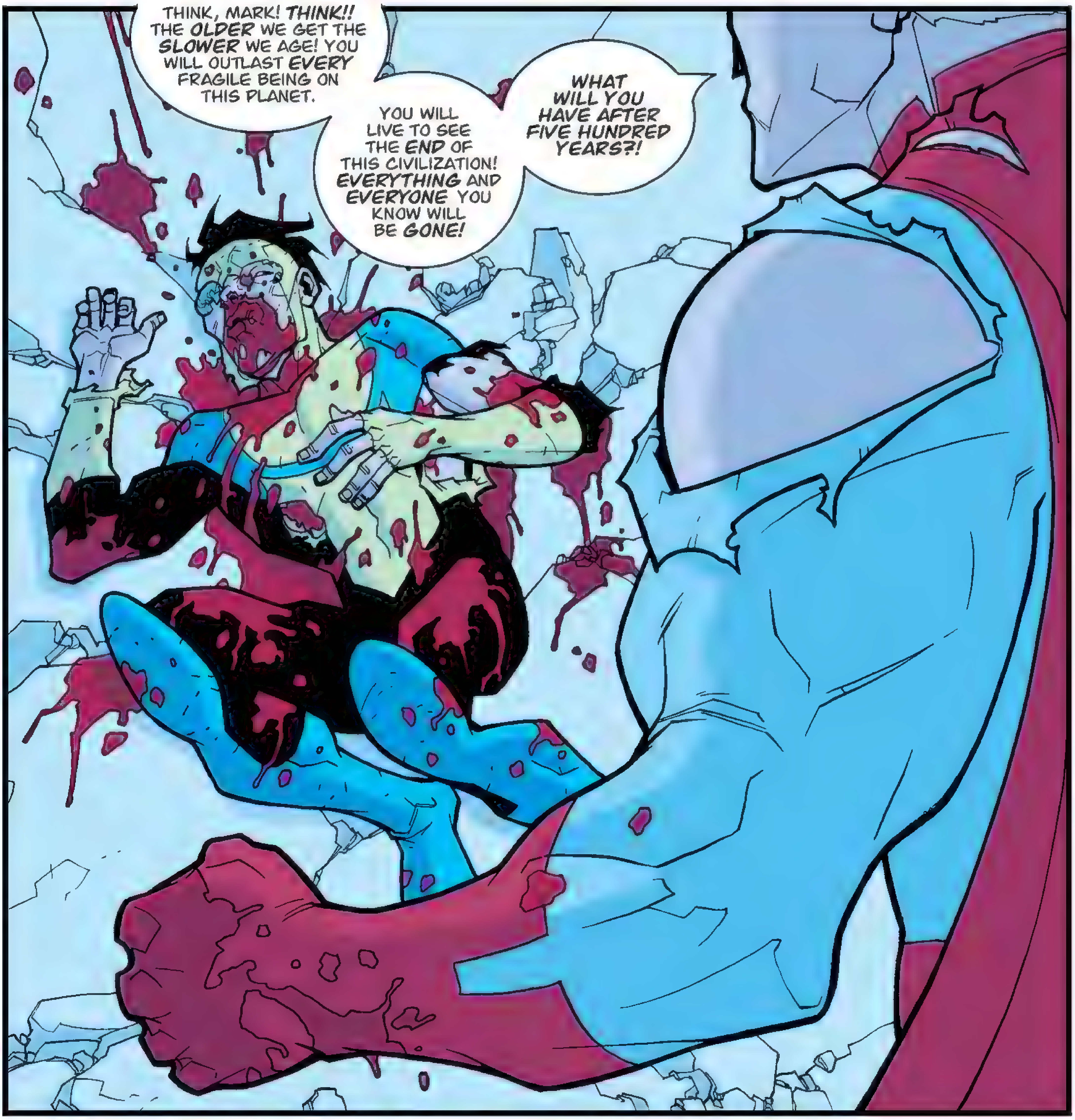

DOOM!
RRRUMMMMMMMMMBLE!

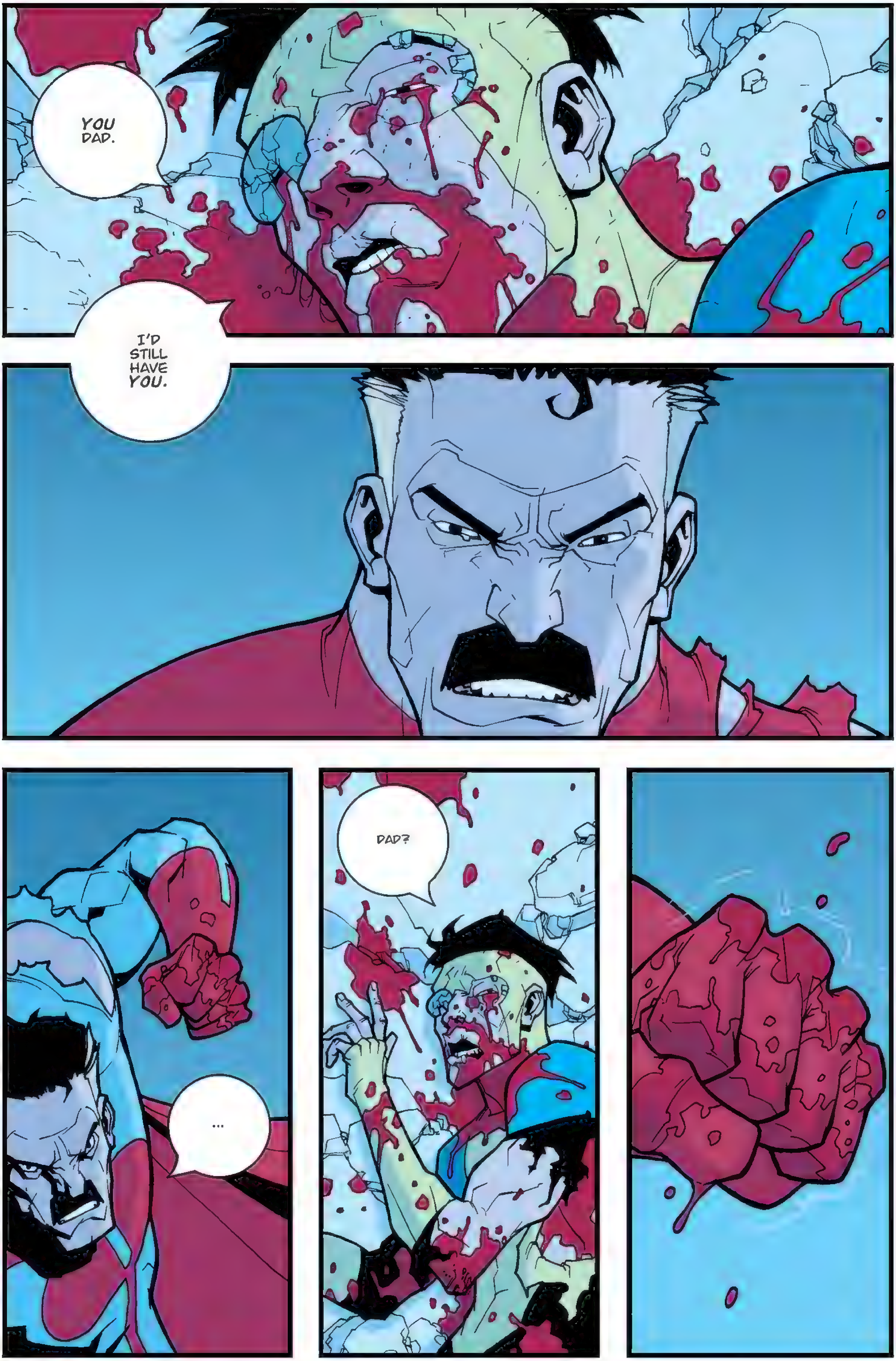

HAD ENOUGH YET?
I WILL STOP YOU.
I'M READY WHEN YOU ARE.
KRAK!


BOOM!
YOU'RE DOING THIS FOR NOTHING.
WE WILL *SHARE* OUR TECHNOLOGY WITH THEM! WE'LL BRING THEM UP TO SPEED WITH THE *REST* OF THE UNIVERSE. IN TIME, EARTH WILL BE *BETTER* THAN IT *EVER* WAS!
AND IF-- WHAT IF THEY *RESIST?*
WE WILL *DESTROY* THEM.
BUT THAT'S WHAT *WE'RE* HERE FOR... TO KEEP THEM FROM RESISTING.

I WON'T **LET** YOU **ENSLAVE** THESE PEOPLE. DAD, THIS ISN'T **RIGHT**.
WHY?!
WHAM!
WHY?!
CHOOOM!
WHY DO YOU RESIST?!
WHAT IS IT YOU THINK THIS WORLD HAS TO OFFER?!
KRAGOOM!

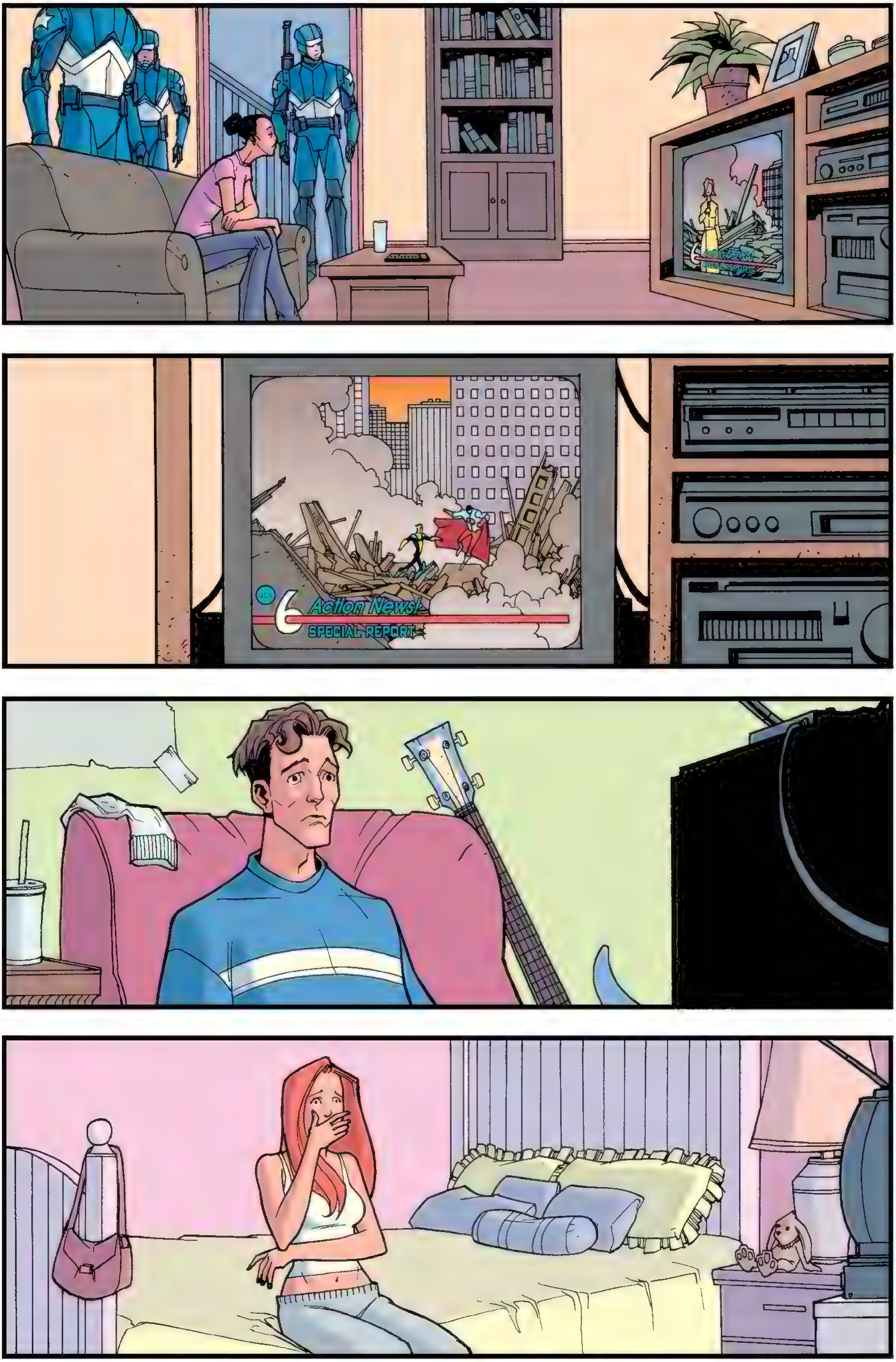

WHATEVER YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR RIGHT NOW WILL BE GONE BEFORE YOU HAVE TIME TO ENJOY IT!
YOU ARE FIGHTING SO YOU CAN WATCH EVERYTHING AROUND YOU DIE!!


THINK, MARK! THINK!! THE OLDER WE GET THE SLOWER WE AGE! YOU WILL OUTLAST EVERY FRAGILE BEING ON THIS PLANET.
YOU WILL LIVE TO SEE THE END OF THIS CIVILIZATION! EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE YOU KNOW WILL BE GONE!
WHAT WILL YOU HAVE AFTER FIVE HUNDRED YEARS?!


YOU DAD.
I'D STILL HAVE YOU.
...
DAD?

DAD?

ISSUE THIRTEEN


Action News!
SPECIAL REPORT
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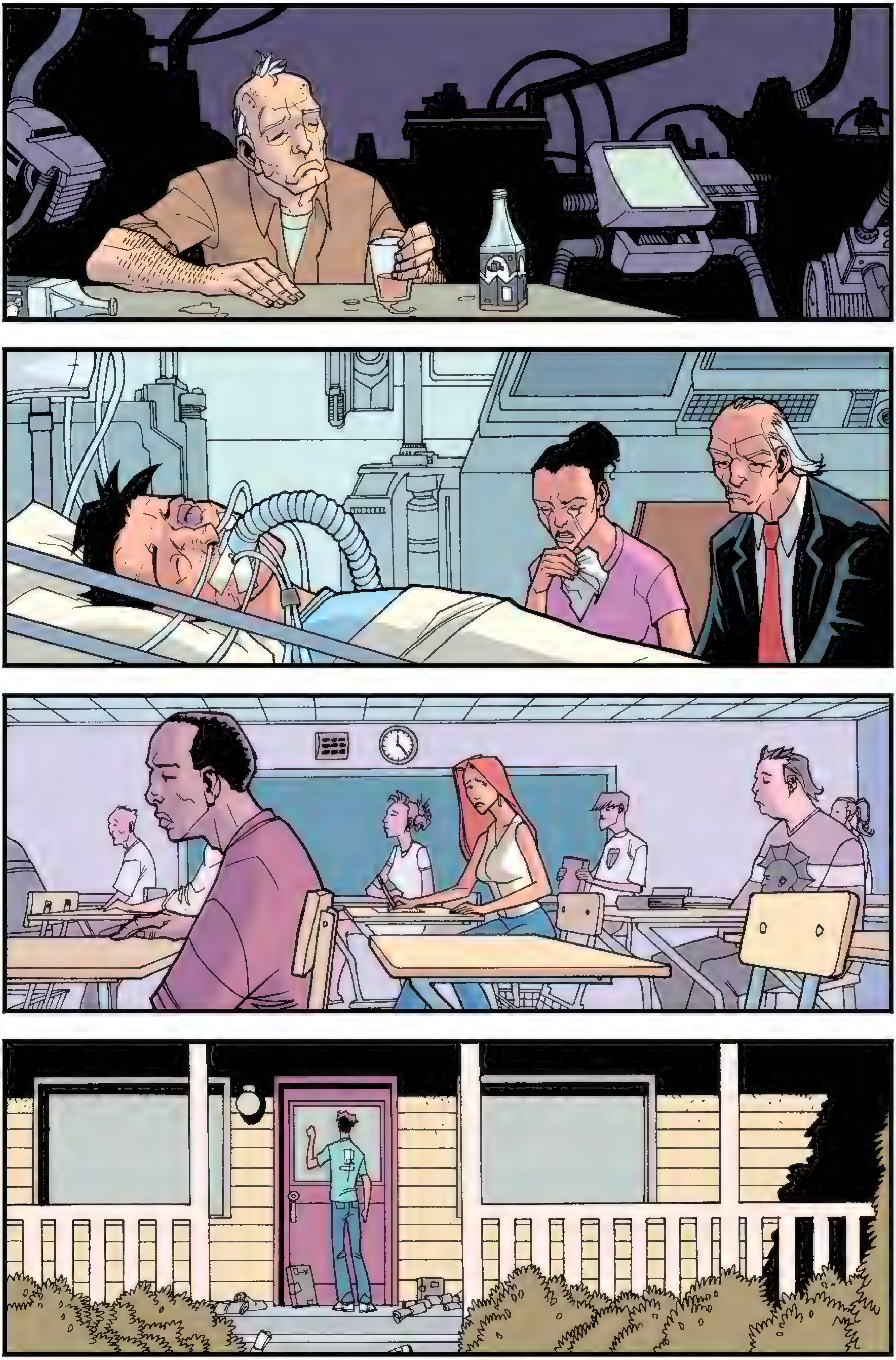
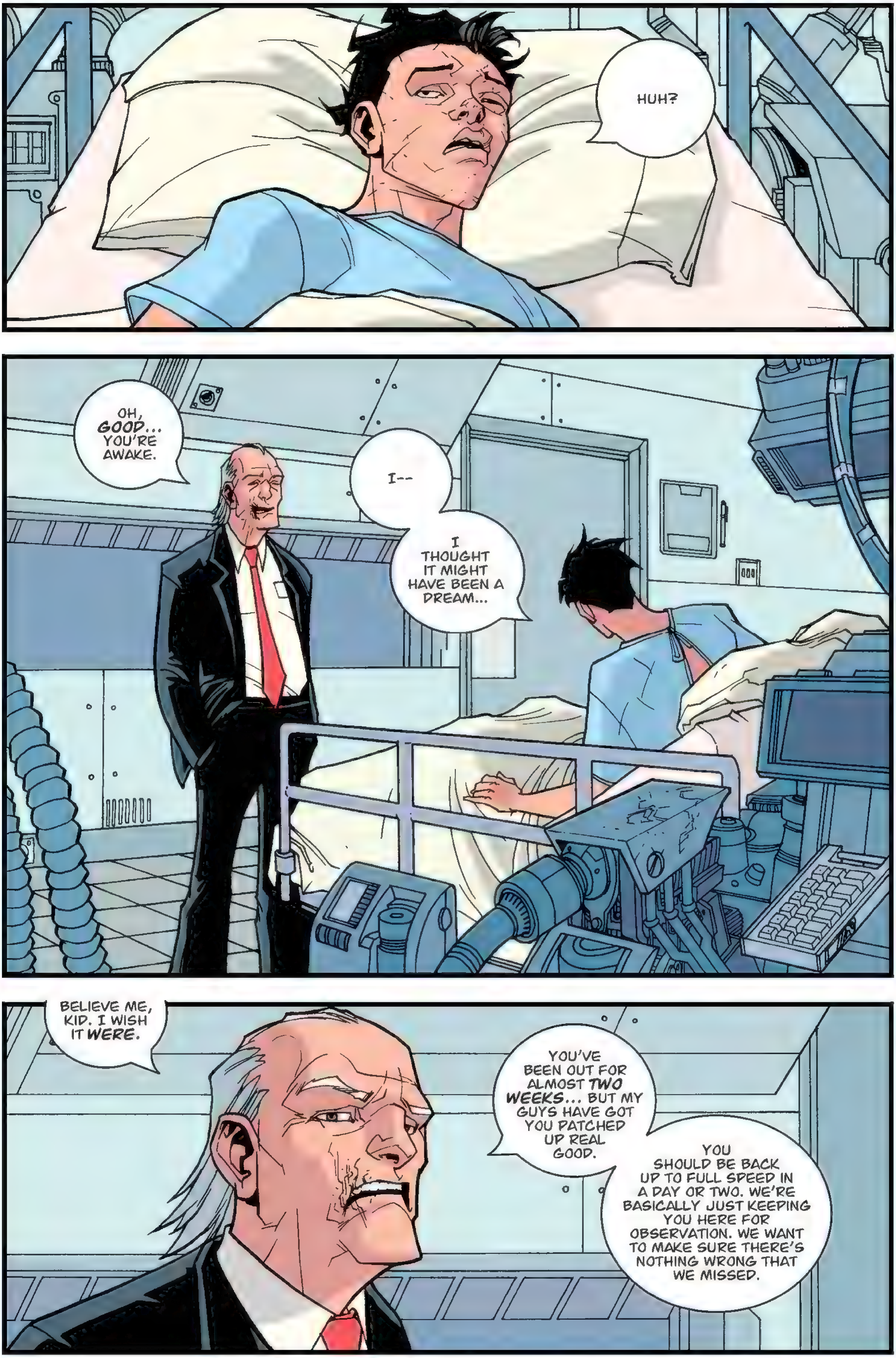
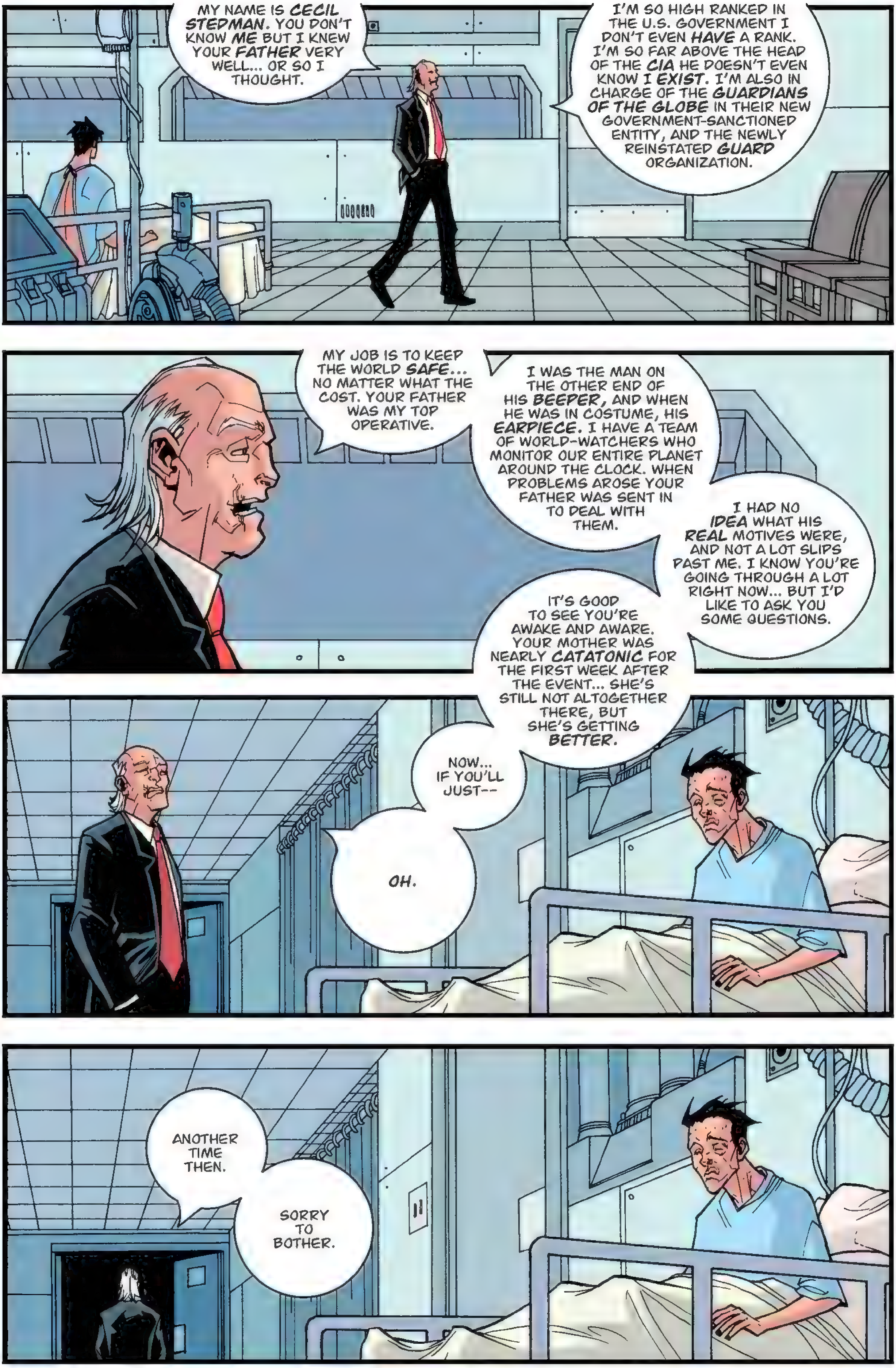
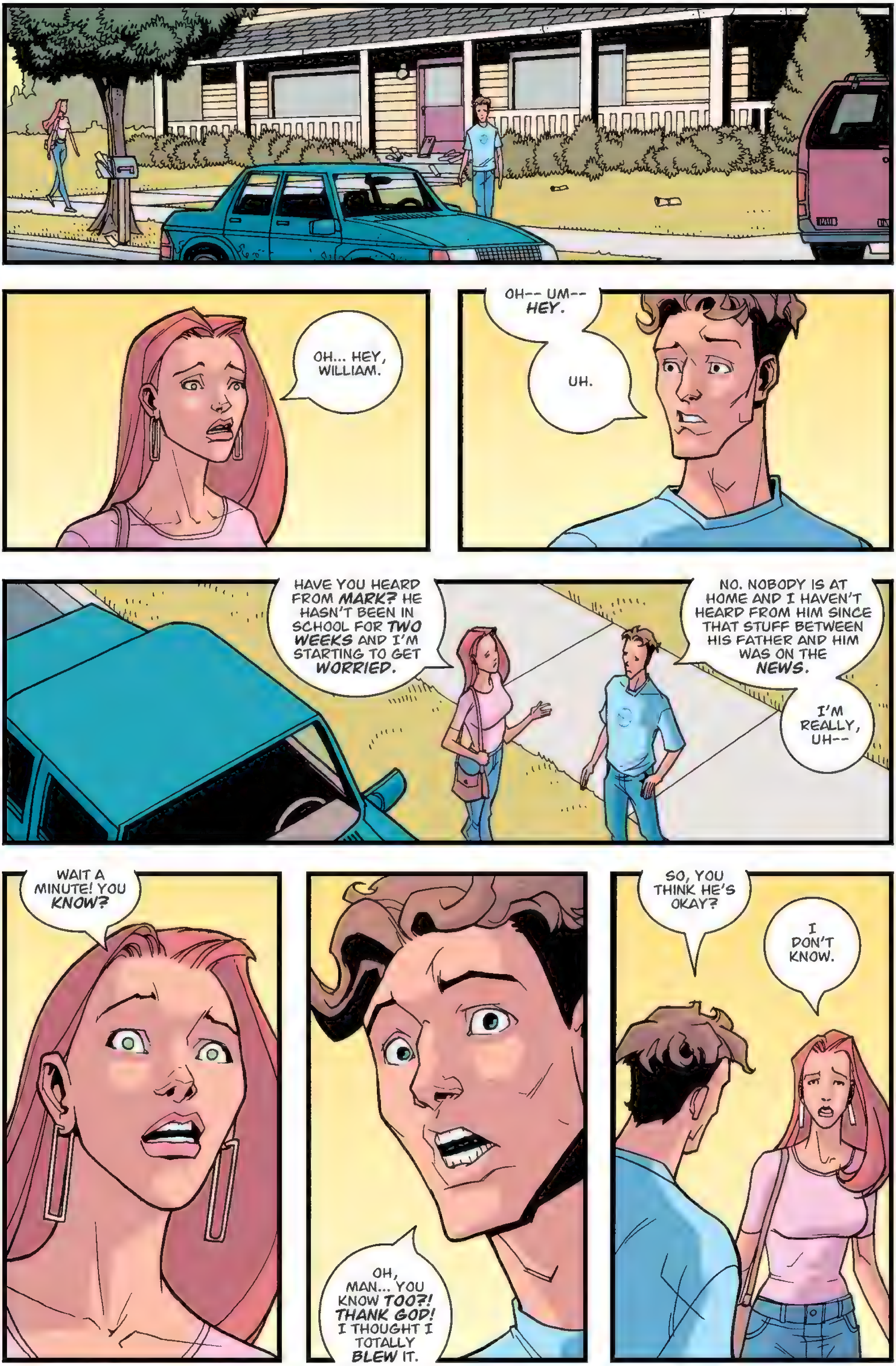
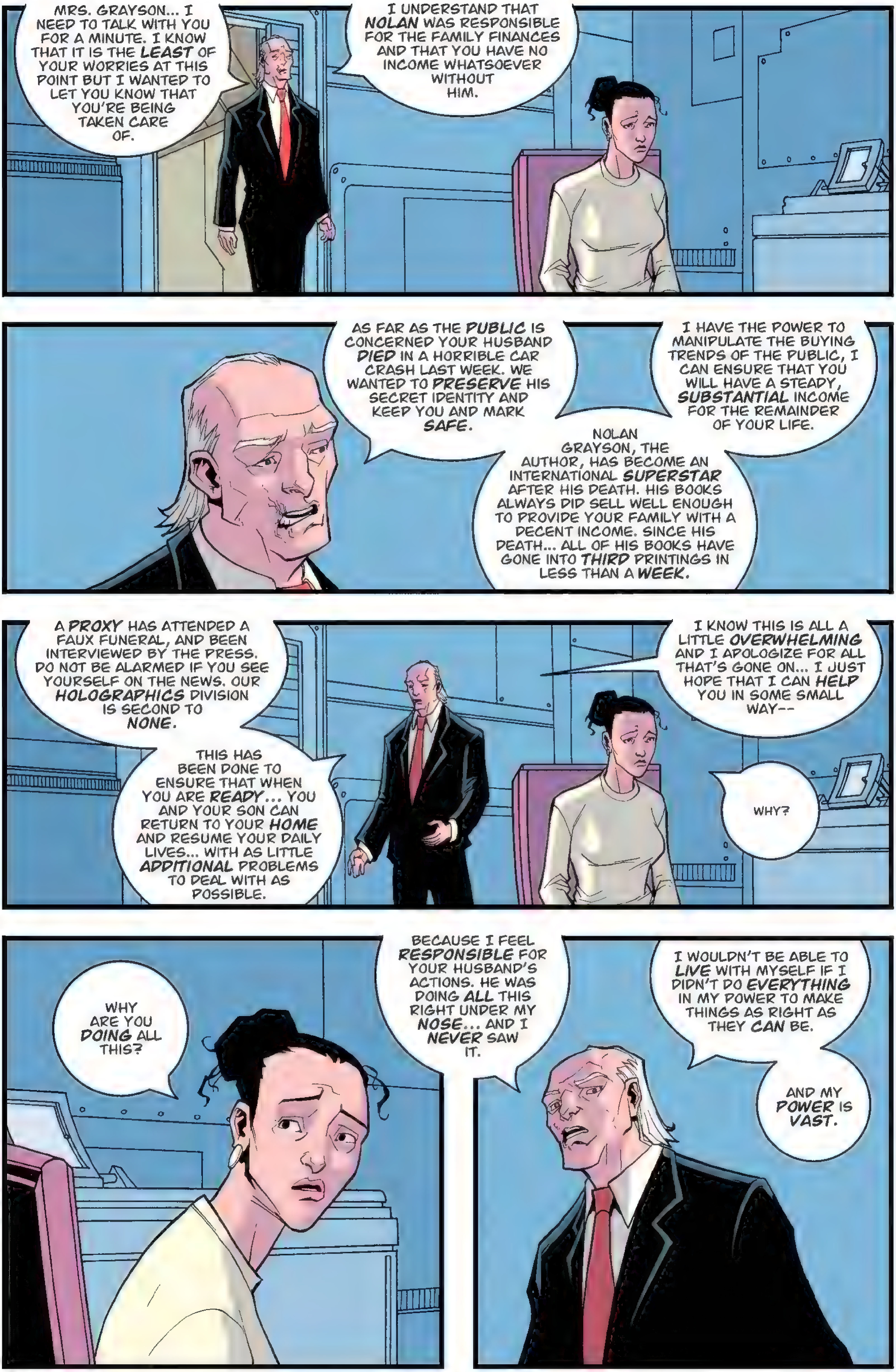
Action News!
SPECIAL REPORT

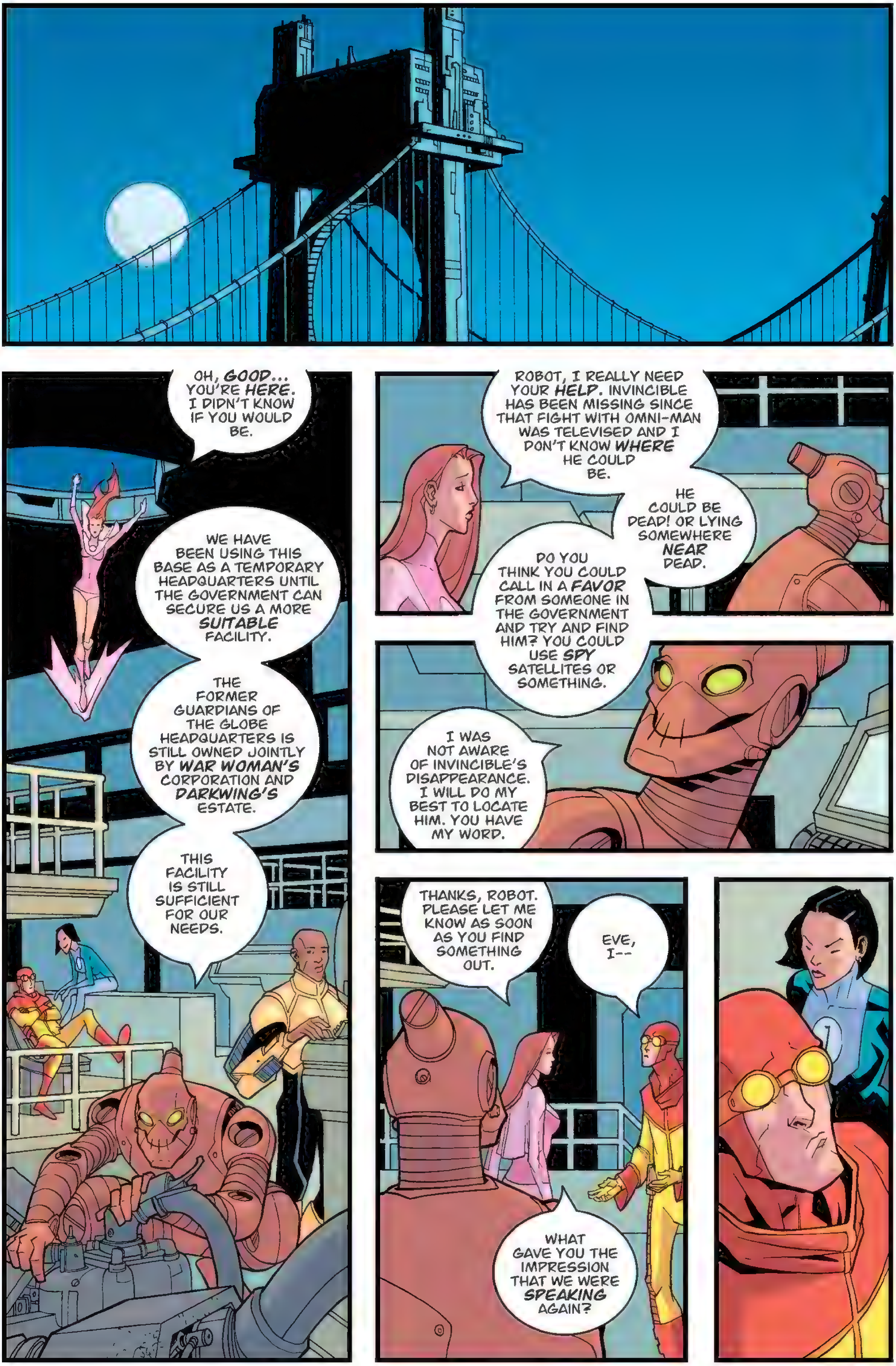


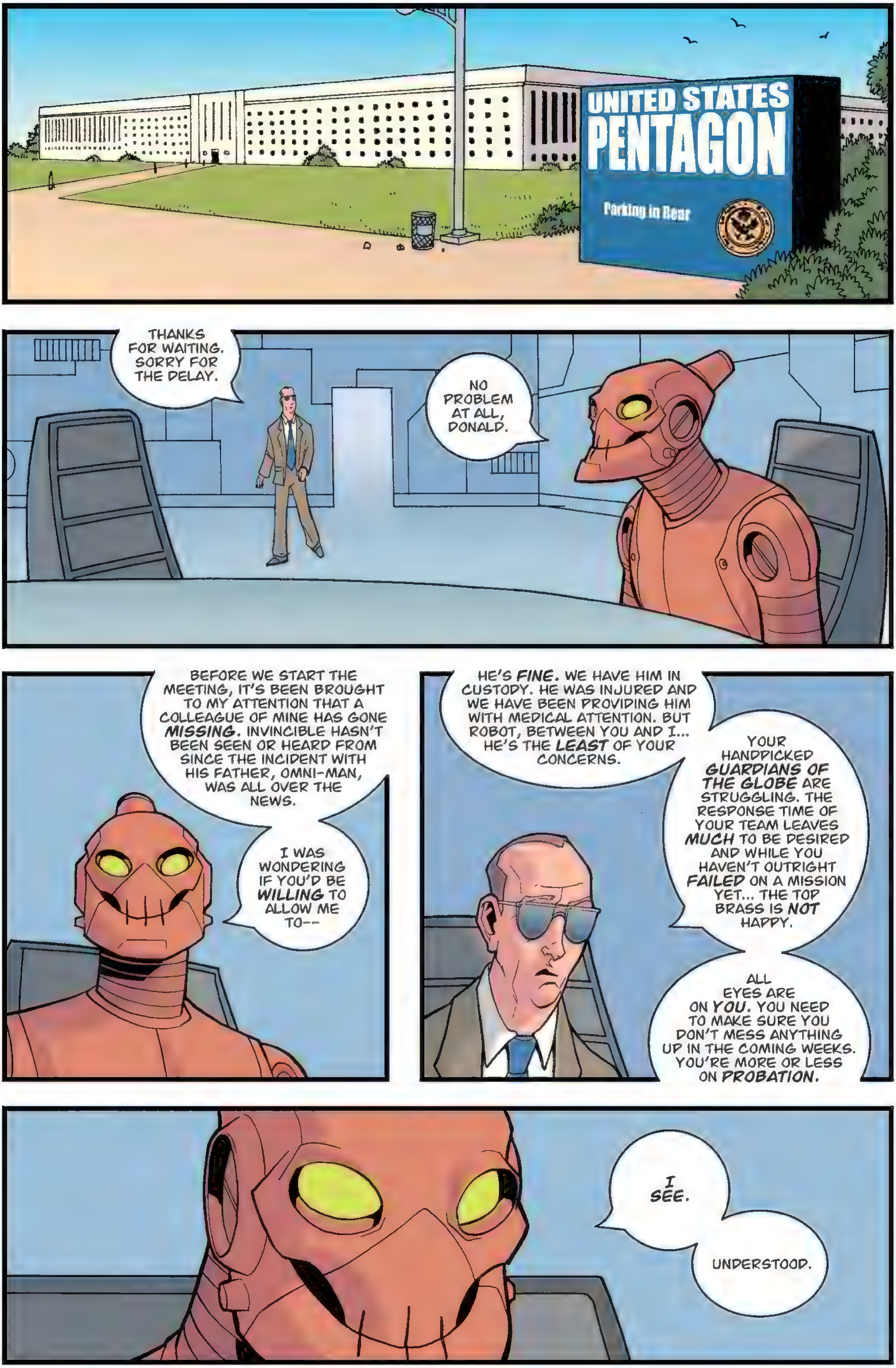

HUH?
OH, *GOOD*... YOU'RE AWAKE.
I--
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DREAM...
BELIEVE ME, KID. I WISH IT *WERE*.
YOU'VE BEEN OUT FOR ALMOST *TWO WEEKS*... BUT MY GUYS HAVE GOT YOU PATCHED UP REAL GOOD.
YOU SHOULD BE BACK UP TO FULL SPEED IN A DAY OR TWO. WE'RE BASICALLY JUST KEEPING YOU HERE FOR OBSERVATION. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THERE'S NOTHING WRONG THAT WE MISSED.

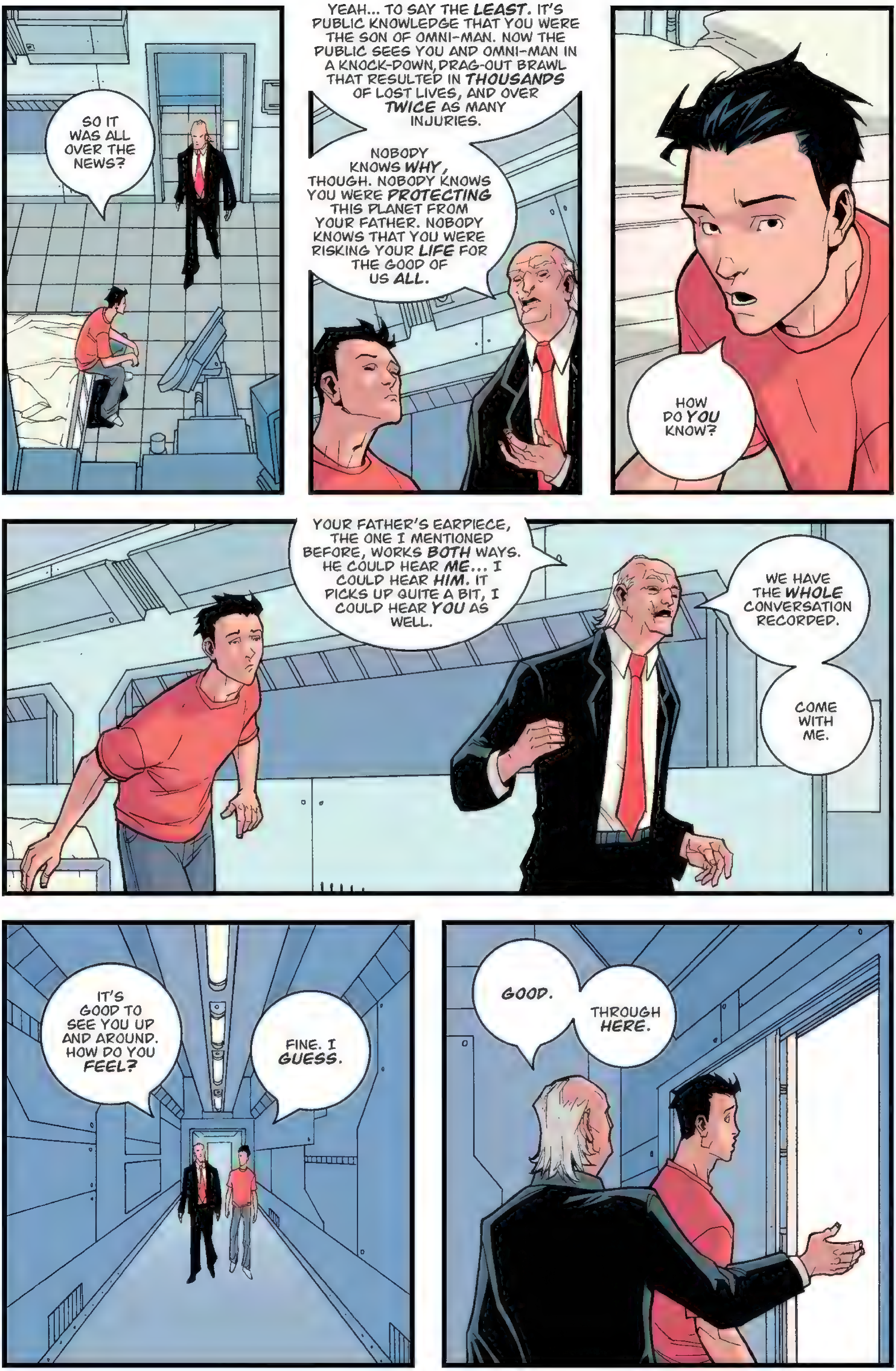

MY NAME IS CECIL STEDMAN. YOU DON'T KNOW ME BUT I KNEW YOUR FATHER VERY WELL... OR SO I THOUGHT.
I'M SO HIGH RANKED IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT I DON'T EVEN HAVE A RANK. I'M SO FAR ABOVE THE HEAD OF THE CIA HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW I EXIST. I'M ALSO IN CHARGE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE IN THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED ENTITY, AND THE NEWLY REINSTATED GUARD ORGANIZATION.
MY JOB IS TO KEEP THE WORLD SAFE... NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. YOUR FATHER WAS MY TOP OPERATIVE.
I WAS THE MAN ON THE OTHER END OF HIS BEEPER, AND WHEN HE WAS IN COSTUME, HIS EARPIECE. I HAVE A TEAM OF WORLD-WATCHERS WHO MONITOR OUR ENTIRE PLANET AROUND THE CLOCK. WHEN PROBLEMS AROSE YOUR FATHER WAS SENT IN TO DEAL WITH THEM.
I HAD NO IDEA WHAT HIS REAL MOTIVES WERE, AND NOT A LOT SLIPS PAST ME. I KNOW YOU'RE GOING THROUGH A LOT RIGHT NOW... BUT I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE AWAKE AND AWARE. YOUR MOTHER WAS NEARLY CATATONIC FOR THE FIRST WEEK AFTER THE EVENT... SHE'S STILL NOT ALTOGETHER THERE, BUT SHE'S GETTING BETTER.
NOW... IF YOU'LL JUST--
OH.
ANOTHER TIME THEN.
SORRY TO BOTHER.

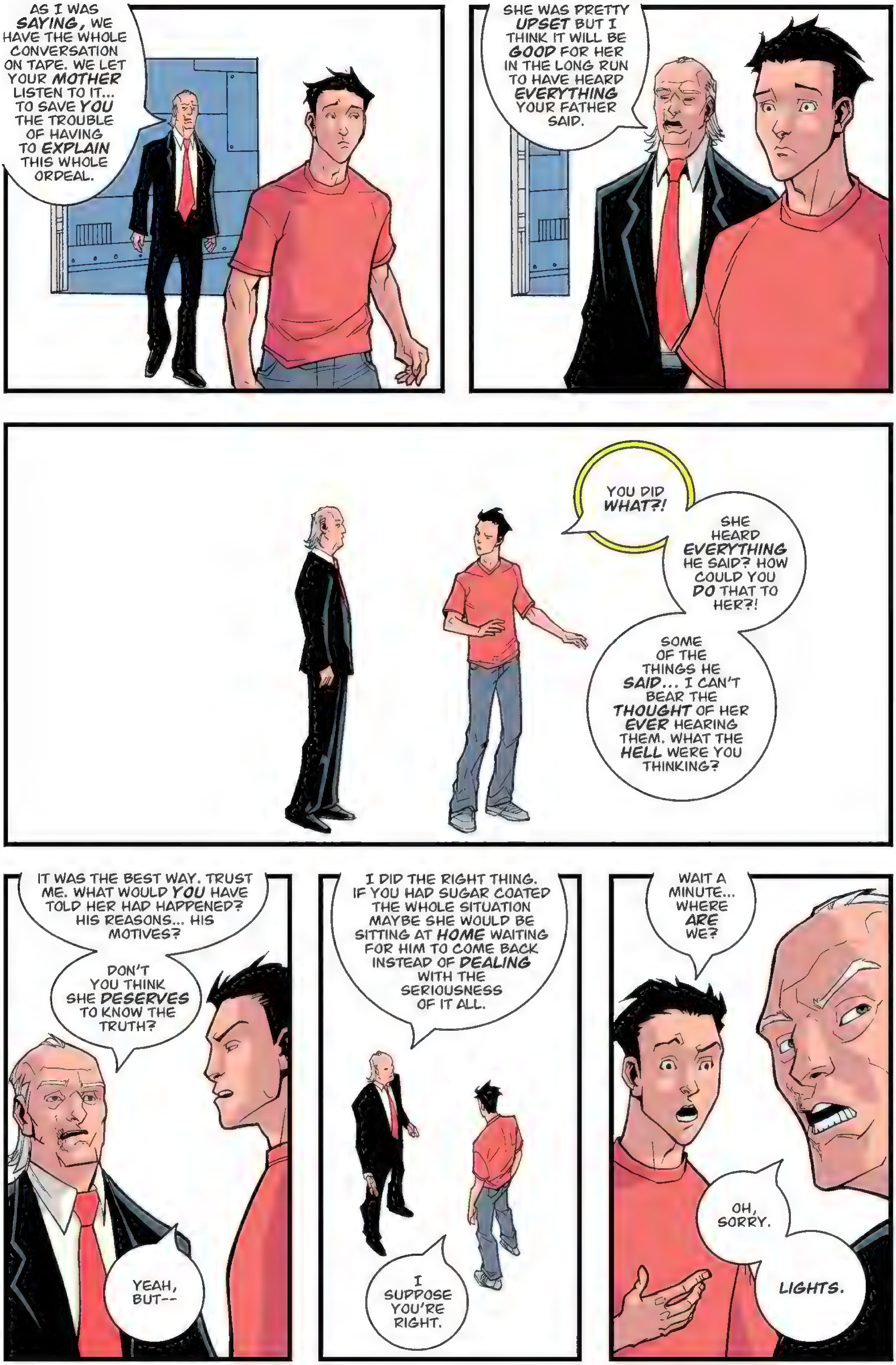

OH... HEY, WILLIAM.
OH-- UM-- HEY.
UH.
HAVE YOU HEARD FROM MARK? HE HASN'T BEEN IN SCHOOL FOR TWO WEEKS AND I'M STARTING TO GET WORRIED.
NO. NOBODY IS AT HOME AND I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE THAT STUFF BETWEEN HIS FATHER AND HIM WAS ON THE NEWS.
I'M REALLY, UH--
WAIT A MINUTE! YOU KNOW?
OH, MAN... YOU KNOW TOO?! THANK GOD! I THOUGHT I TOTALLY BLEW IT.
SO, YOU THINK HE'S OKAY?
I DON'T KNOW.


MRS. GRAYSON... I NEED TO TALK WITH YOU FOR A MINUTE. I KNOW THAT IT IS THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES AT THIS POINT BUT I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE BEING TAKEN CARE OF.
I UNDERSTAND THAT NOLAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAMILY FINANCES AND THAT YOU HAVE NO INCOME WHATSOEVER WITHOUT HIM.
AS FAR AS THE PUBLIC IS CONCERNED YOUR HUSBAND DIED IN A HORRIBLE CAR CRASH LAST WEEK. WE WANTED TO PRESERVE HIS SECRET IDENTITY AND KEEP YOU AND MARK SAFE.
I HAVE THE POWER TO MANIPULATE THE BUYING TRENDS OF THE PUBLIC, I CAN ENSURE THAT YOU WILL HAVE A STEADY, SUBSTANTIAL INCOME FOR THE REMAINDER OF YOUR LIFE.
NOLAN GRAYSON, THE AUTHOR, HAS BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR AFTER HIS DEATH. HIS BOOKS ALWAYS DID SELL WELL ENOUGH TO PROVIDE YOUR FAMILY WITH A DECENT INCOME. SINCE HIS DEATH... ALL OF HIS BOOKS HAVE GONE INTO THIRD PRINTINGS IN LESS THAN A WEEK.
A PROXY HAS ATTENDED A FAUX FUNERAL, AND BEEN INTERVIEWED BY THE PRESS. DO NOT BE ALARMED IF YOU SEE YOURSELF ON THE NEWS. OUR HOLOGRAPHICS DIVISION IS SECOND TO NONE.
THIS HAS BEEN DONE TO ENSURE THAT WHEN YOU ARE READY... YOU AND YOUR SON CAN RETURN TO YOUR HOME AND RESUME YOUR DAILY LIVES... WITH AS LITTLE ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH AS POSSIBLE.
I KNOW THIS IS ALL A LITTLE OVERWHELMING AND I APOLOGIZE FOR ALL THAT'S GONE ON... I JUST HOPE THAT I CAN HELP YOU IN SOME SMALL WAY--
WHY?
WHY ARE YOU DOING ALL THIS?
BECAUSE I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HUSBAND'S ACTIONS. HE WAS DOING ALL THIS RIGHT UNDER MY NOSE... AND I NEVER SAW IT.
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH MYSELF IF I DIDN'T DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO MAKE THINGS AS RIGHT AS THEY CAN BE.
AND MY POWER IS VAST.


OH, GOOD... YOU'RE HERE. I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU WOULD BE.
WE HAVE BEEN USING THIS BASE AS A TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT CAN SECURE US A MORE SUITABLE FACILITY.
THE FORMER GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE HEADQUARTERS IS STILL OWNED JOINTLY BY WAR WOMAN'S CORPORATION AND DARKWING'S ESTATE.
THIS FACILITY IS STILL SUFFICIENT FOR OUR NEEDS.
ROBOT, I REALLY NEED YOUR HELP. INVINCIBLE HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE THAT FIGHT WITH OMNI-MAN WAS TELEVISED AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE COULD BE.
HE COULD BE DEAD! OR LYING SOMEWHERE NEAR DEAD.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD CALL IN A FAVOR FROM SOMEONE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND TRY AND FIND HIM? YOU COULD USE SPY SATELLITES OR SOMETHING.
I WAS NOT AWARE OF INVINCIBLE'S DISAPPEARANCE. I WILL DO MY BEST TO LOCATE HIM. YOU HAVE MY WORD.
THANKS, ROBOT. PLEASE LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS YOU FIND SOMETHING OUT.
EVE, I--
WHAT GAVE YOU THE IMPRESSION THAT WE WERE SPEAKING AGAIN?

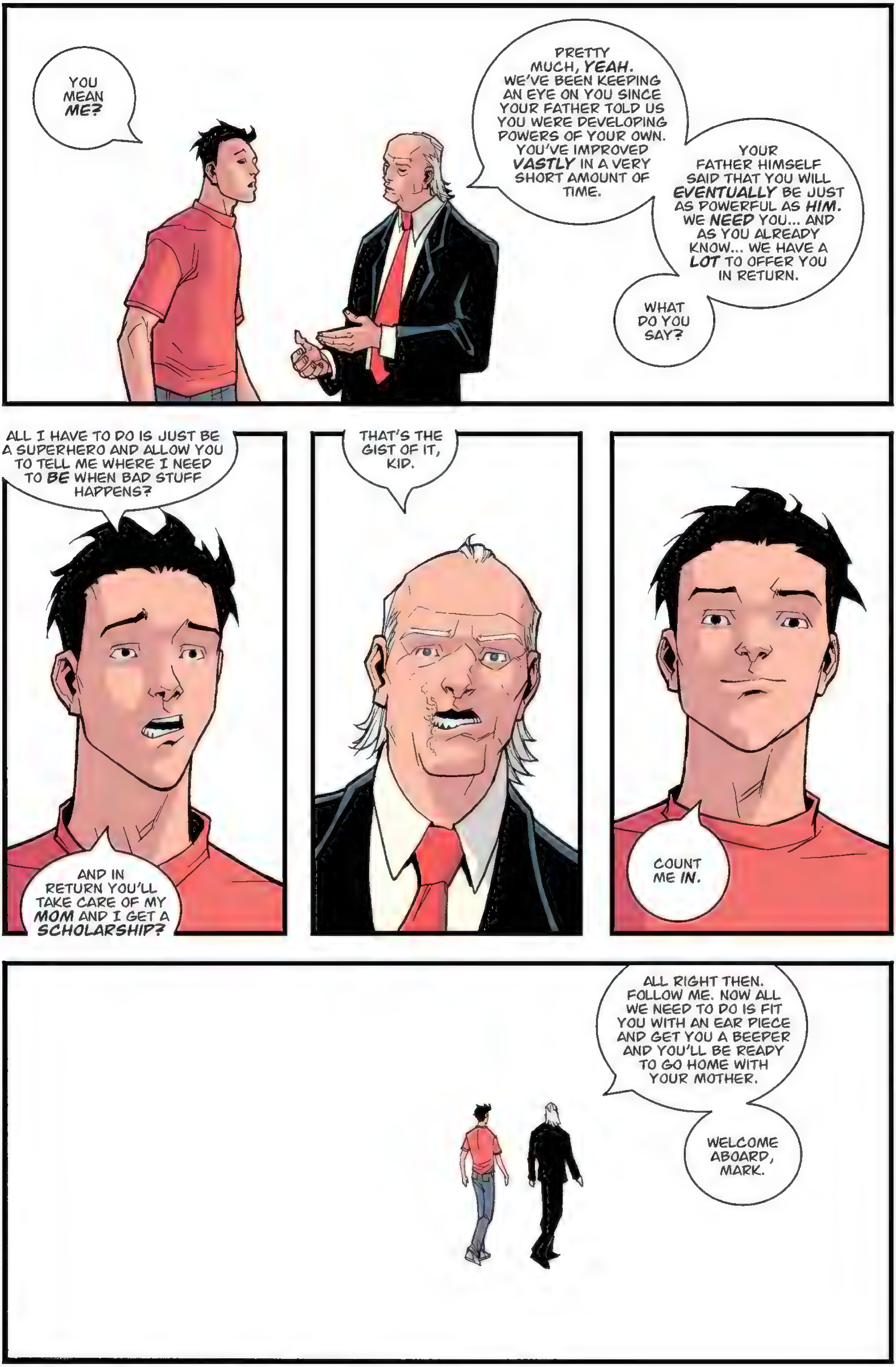

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THANKS FOR WAITING. SORRY FOR THE DELAY.
NO PROBLEM AT ALL, DONALD.
BEFORE WE START THE MEETING, IT'S BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION THAT A COLLEAGUE OF MINE HAS GONE *MISSING*. INVINCIBLE HASN'T BEEN SEEN OR HEARD FROM SINCE THE INCIDENT WITH HIS FATHER, OMNI-MAN, WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS.
I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D BE *WILLING* TO ALLOW ME TO--
HE'S *FINE*. WE HAVE HIM IN CUSTODY. HE WAS INJURED AND WE HAVE BEEN PROVIDING HIM WITH MEDICAL ATTENTION. BUT ROBOT, BETWEEN YOU AND I... HE'S THE *LEAST* OF YOUR CONCERNS.
YOUR HANDPICKED *GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE* ARE STRUGGLING. THE RESPONSE TIME OF YOUR TEAM LEAVES *MUCH* TO BE DESIRED AND WHILE YOU HAVEN'T OUTRIGHT *FAILED* ON A MISSION YET... THE TOP BRASS IS *NOT* HAPPY.
ALL EYES ARE ON *YOU*. YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MESS ANYTHING UP IN THE COMING WEEKS. YOU'RE MORE OR LESS ON *PROBATION*.
I SEE.
UNDERSTOOD.

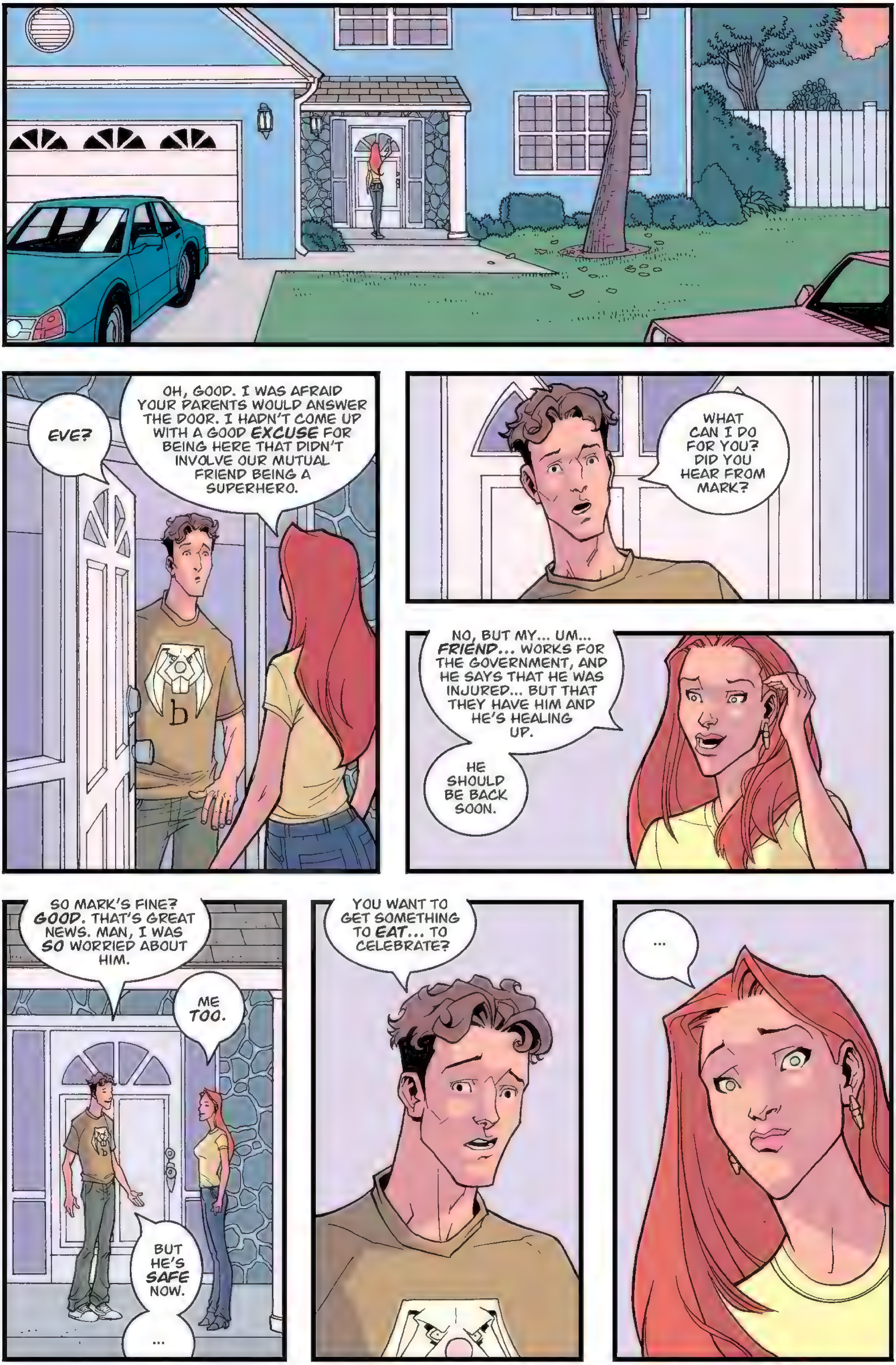

SO IT WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS?
YEAH... TO SAY THE *LEAST*. IT'S PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE THE SON OF OMNI-MAN. NOW THE PUBLIC SEES YOU AND OMNI-MAN IN A KNOCK-DOWN, DRAG-OUT BRAWL THAT RESULTED IN *THOUSANDS* OF LOST LIVES, AND OVER *TWICE* AS MANY INJURIES.
NOBODY KNOWS *WHY*, THOUGH. NOBODY KNOWS YOU WERE *PROTECTING* THIS PLANET FROM YOUR FATHER. NOBODY KNOWS THAT YOU WERE RISKING YOUR *LIFE* FOR THE GOOD OF US *ALL*.
HOW DO *YOU* KNOW?
YOUR FATHER'S EARPIECE, THE ONE I MENTIONED BEFORE, WORKS *BOTH* WAYS. HE COULD HEAR *ME*... I COULD HEAR *HIM*. IT PICKS UP QUITE A BIT, I COULD HEAR *YOU* AS WELL.
WE HAVE THE *WHOLE* CONVERSATION RECORDED.
COME WITH ME.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU UP AND AROUND. HOW DO YOU *FEEL?*
FINE. I *GUESS*.
GOOD.
THROUGH *HERE*.

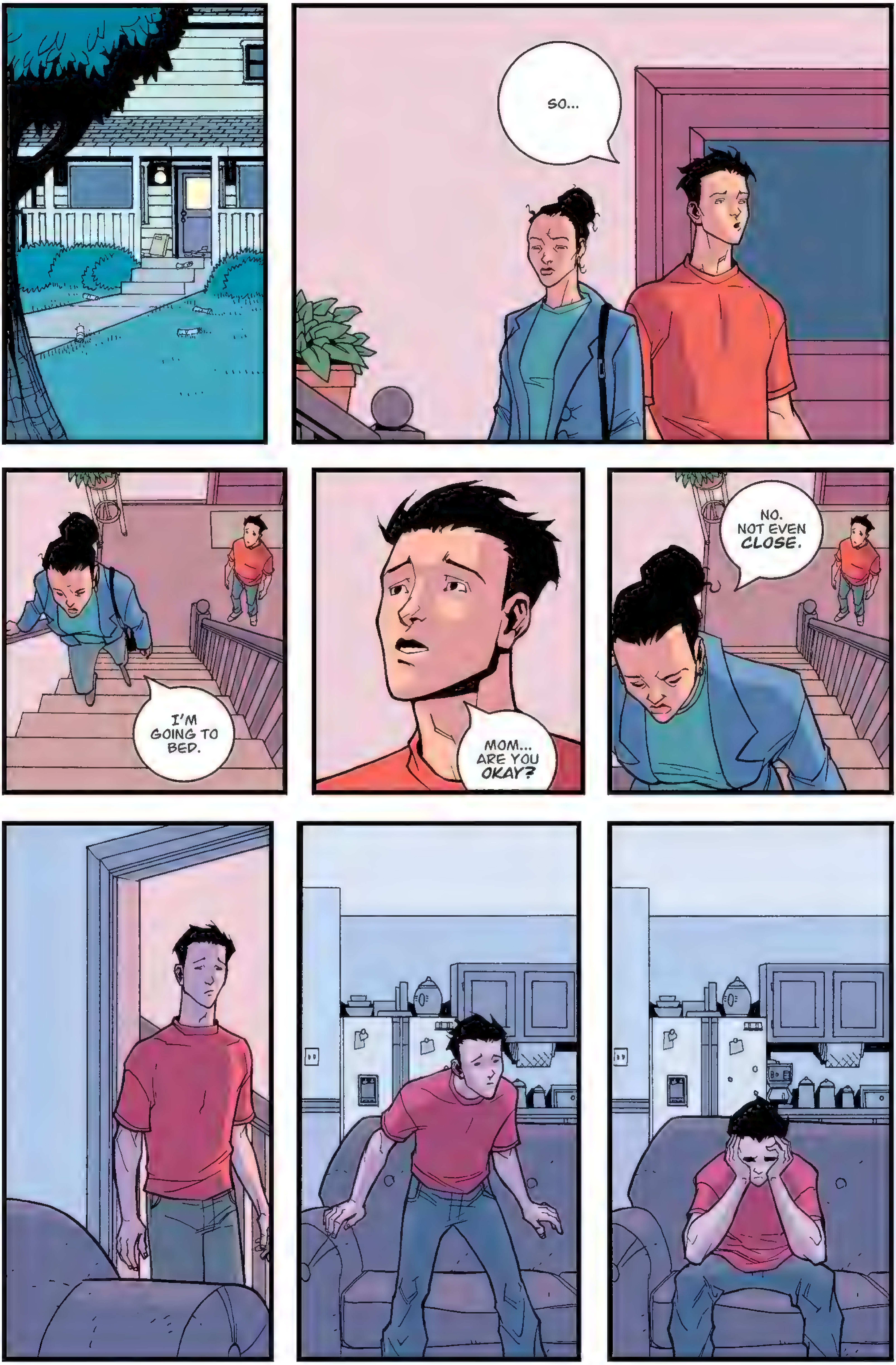

AS I WAS SAYING, WE HAVE THE WHOLE CONVERSATION ON TAPE. WE LET YOUR MOTHER LISTEN TO IT... TO SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE OF HAVING TO EXPLAIN THIS WHOLE ORDEAL.
SHE WAS PRETTY UPSET BUT I THINK IT WILL BE GOOD FOR HER IN THE LONG RUN TO HAVE HEARD EVERYTHING YOUR FATHER SAID.
YOU DID WHAT?!
SHE HEARD EVERYTHING HE SAID? HOW COULD YOU DO THAT TO HER?!
SOME OF THE THINGS HE SAID... I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF HER EVER HEARING THEM. WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?
IT WAS THE BEST WAY. TRUST ME. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE TOLD HER HAD HAPPENED? HIS REASONS... HIS MOTIVES?
DON'T YOU THINK SHE DESERVES TO KNOW THE TRUTH?
YEAH, BUT--
I DID THE RIGHT THING. IF YOU HAD SUGAR COATED THE WHOLE SITUATION MAYBE SHE WOULD BE SITTING AT HOME WAITING FOR HIM TO COME BACK INSTEAD OF DEALING WITH THE SERIOUSNESS OF IT ALL.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
WAIT A MINUTE... WHERE ARE WE?
OH, SORRY.
LIGHTS.

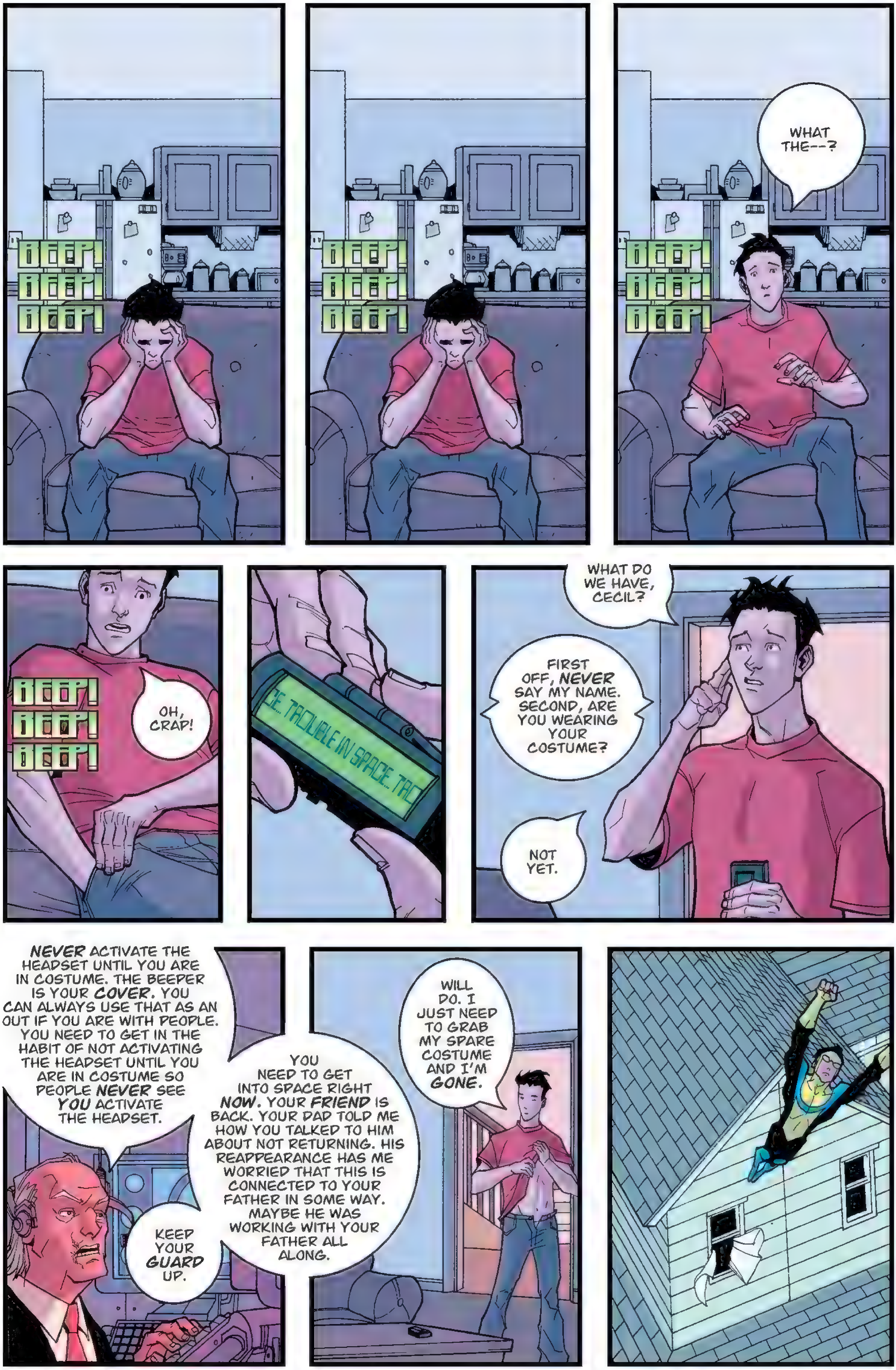
OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH.
LIGHTS.
WHAT? WHAT IN THE WORLD JUST HAPPENED?
WHERE DID ALL THAT GO?
IT'S STILL HERE. IT HASN'T MOVED. THE WATER AMERICA DRINKS SO CONVENIENTLY FROM THEIR TAP IS LACED WITH A CHEMICAL THAT INHIBITS THE EYE'S ABILITY TO SEE CERTAIN FREQUENCIES OF LIGHT.
THOSE FREQUENCIES ARE USED IN THIS ROOM.
SO IT'S ALL JUST INVISIBLE?
YES. YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE IN AMERICA DON'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO SEE THINGS IN THIS ROOM, AND ELSEWHERE. YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW OFTEN THIS IS USED.
OKAY... WHERE WAS I? OH YEAH... YOUR MOTHER KNOWS. I'VE ALSO TAKEN CARE OF YOUR FAMILY FINANCES SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT AN INCOME. YOUR COLLEGE TOO WILL BE PAID FOR. I'VE PULLED SOME STRINGS. YOU GOT A FULL SCHOLARSHIP TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY LAST WEEK.
SWEET!
AREN'T YOU THE LEAST BIT CONCERNED WITH WHAT I WILL WANT IN RETURN FOR ALL THIS? I AM PART OF THE BIG SCARY GOVERNMENT, AFTER ALL.
CRAP.
I KNEW THERE'D BE A CATCH.
DON'T WORRY... IT'S NOT THAT BAD.
YOUR FATHER IS GONE. WE MONITORED HIM ON OUR SENSORS ALL THE WAY PAST OUR RANGE. HE DIDN'T CHANGE TRAJECTORIES AT ALL. HE WAS GOING SOMEWHERE. HE IS NOT IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM ANYMORE.

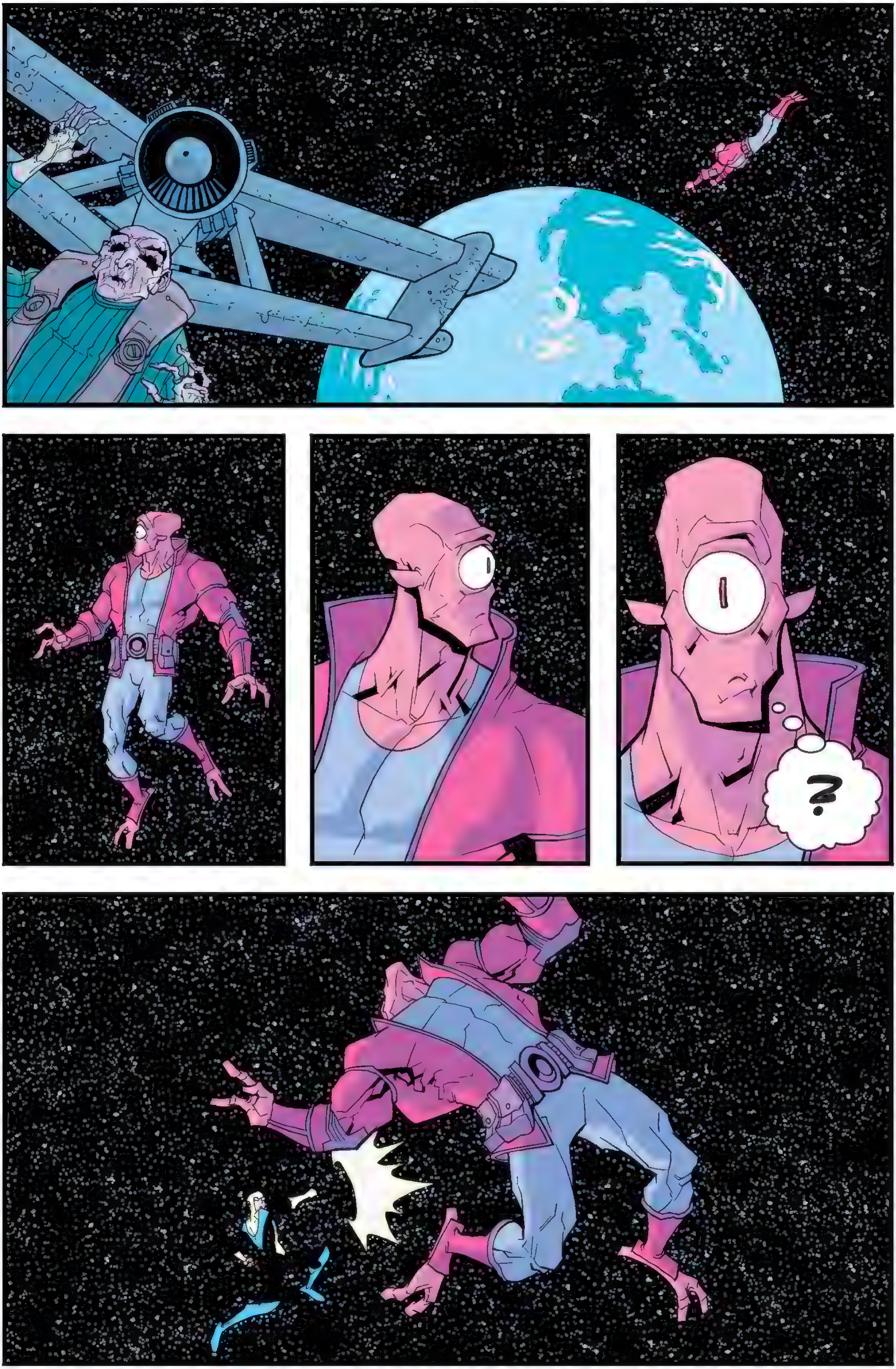
I TURNED THE LIGHTS OFF FOR A SECOND JUST SO YOU COULD SEE WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. I HOPE YOU DIDN'T SEE TOO MUCH... IF YOU DID... I'LL HAVE TO KILL YOU.
HAH HAH! VERY FUNNY.
AN OLDIE BUT A GOODIE.
SO IF IT'S THE LIGHT IN THE ROOM THAT'S MAKING ME UNABLE TO SEE ANYTHING, HOW COME I CAN SEE MYSELF... AND YOU?
THAT'S... COMPLICATED.
WE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BE TOO ALARMED WHEN YOU CAME IN... IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT YOU AT LEAST SEE SOMETHING.
EXPLAINING THAT WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME... A LOT OF TIME.
WE HAVE PROOF THAT THERE ARE OTHER PLANETS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE. KNOWING HOW LONG HE CAN HOLD HIS BREATH AND HOW FAST HE CAN FLY... IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME YOUR FATHER COULD MAKE IT TO ONE OF THESE PLANETS.
HE WAS NOT COMMITTING SUICIDE BY FLYING INTO SPACE--THAT WAS ONE OF OUR TECHNICIANS' THEORIES--AT LEAST... WE'RE PRETTY SURE HE WASN'T.
WHAT I'M GETTING AT IS HE'S GONE. YOUR FATHER WAS VERY VALUABLE TO US... ESPECIALLY AFTER THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE DEAD. HE SAVED A LOT OF LIVES AND THIS ENTIRE PLANET MORE TIMES THAN I CAN REMEMBER.
WE NEED A REPLACEMENT.

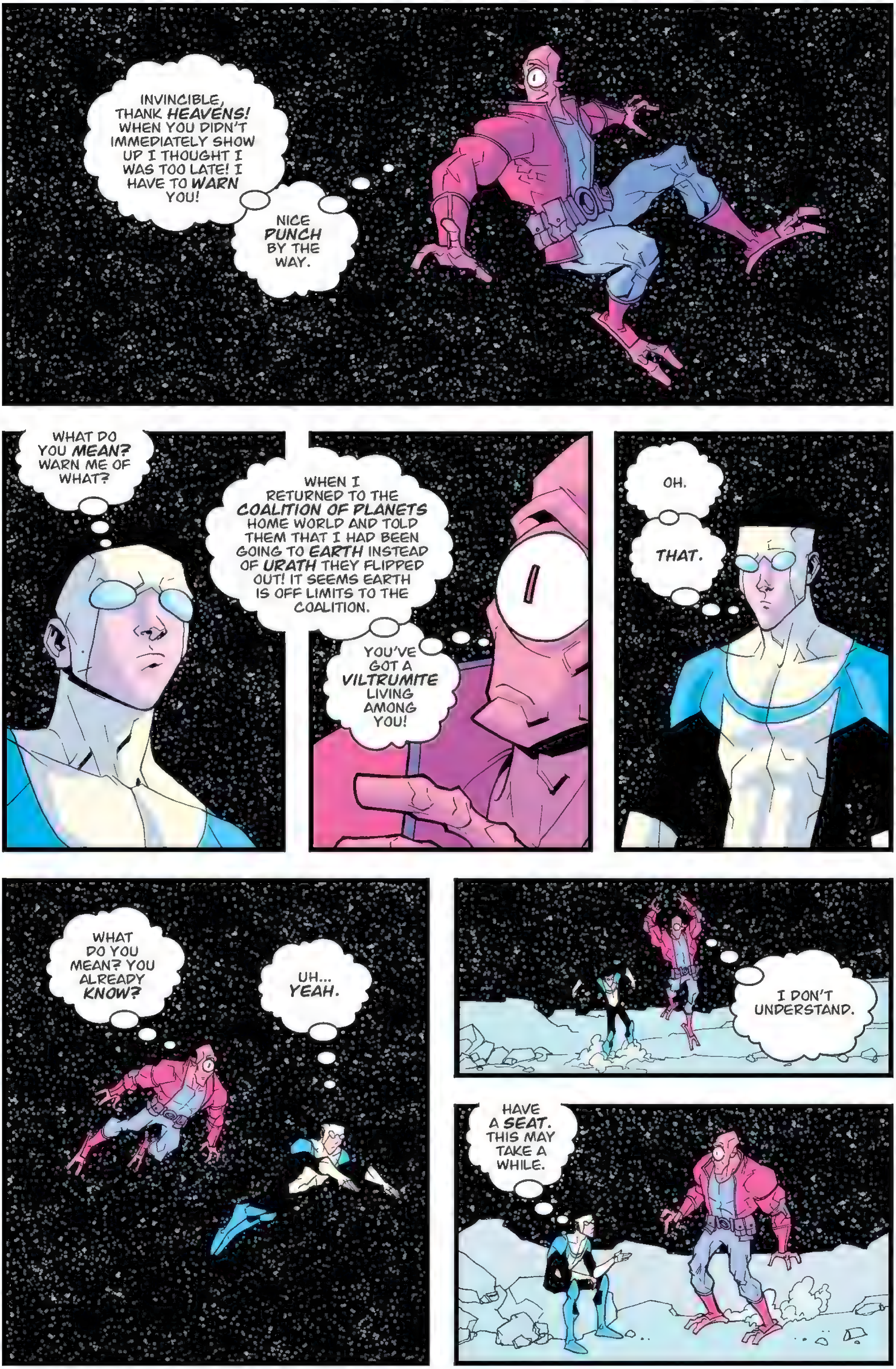

YOU MEAN *ME?*
PRETTY MUCH, *YEAH*. WE'VE BEEN KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU SINCE YOUR FATHER TOLD US YOU WERE DEVELOPING POWERS OF YOUR OWN. YOU'VE IMPROVED *VASTLY* IN A VERY SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.
YOUR FATHER HIMSELF SAID THAT YOU WILL *EVENTUALLY* BE JUST AS POWERFUL AS *HIM*. WE *NEED* YOU... AND AS YOU ALREADY KNOW... WE HAVE A *LOT* TO OFFER YOU IN RETURN.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS JUST BE A SUPERHERO AND ALLOW YOU TO TELL ME WHERE I NEED TO *BE* WHEN BAD STUFF HAPPENS?
AND IN RETURN YOU'LL TAKE CARE OF MY *MOM* AND I GET A *SCHOLARSHIP?*
THAT'S THE GIST OF IT, KID.
COUNT ME *IN*.
ALL RIGHT THEN. FOLLOW ME. NOW ALL WE NEED TO DO IS FIT YOU WITH AN EAR PIECE AND GET YOU A BEEPER AND YOU'LL BE READY TO GO HOME WITH YOUR MOTHER.
WELCOME ABOARD, MARK.

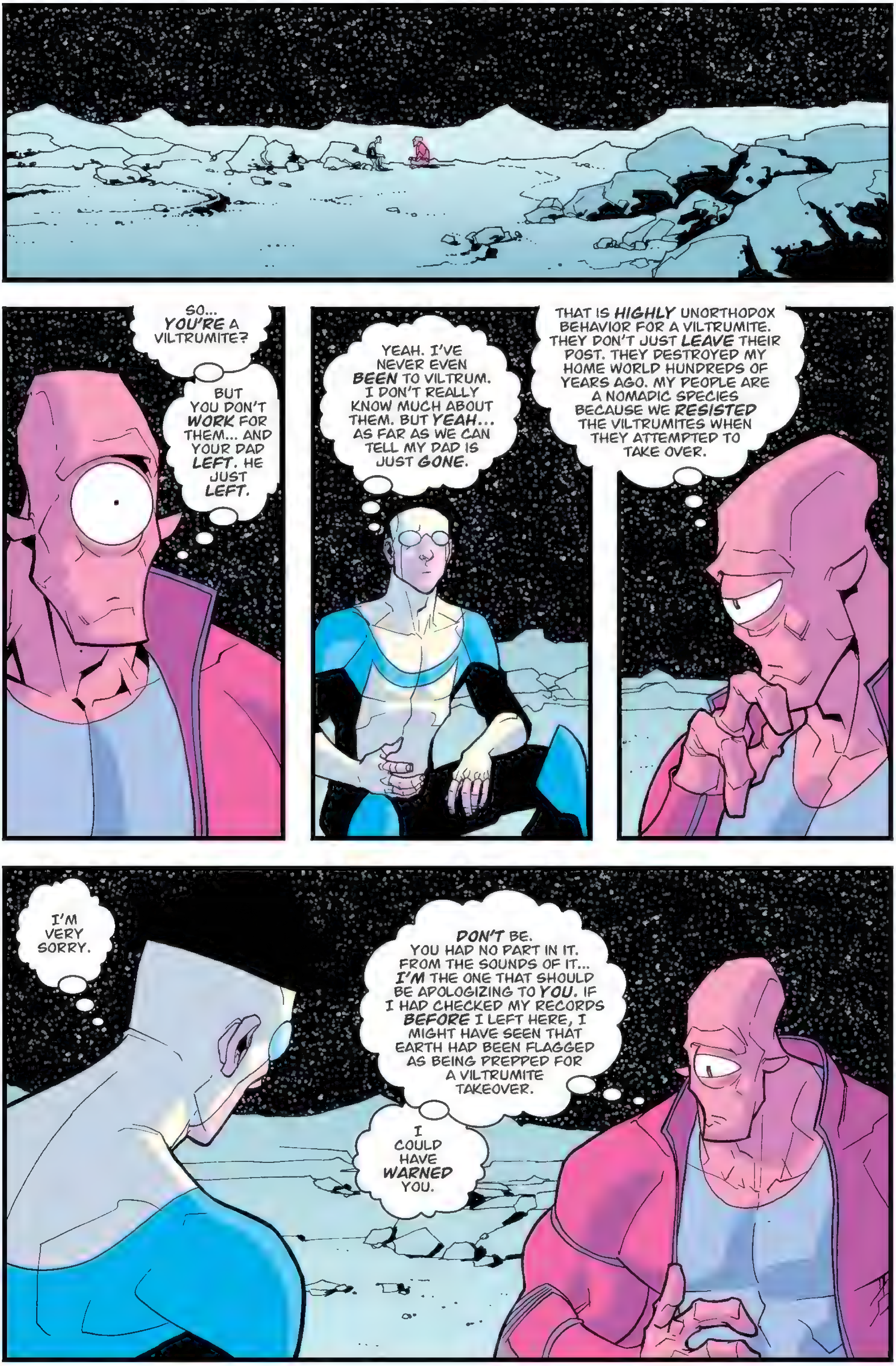

EVE?
OH, GOOD. I WAS AFRAID YOUR PARENTS WOULD ANSWER THE DOOR. I HADN'T COME UP WITH A GOOD *EXCUSE* FOR BEING HERE THAT DIDN'T INVOLVE OUR MUTUAL FRIEND BEING A SUPERHERO.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU? DID YOU HEAR FROM MARK?
NO, BUT MY... UM... *FRIEND*... WORKS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AND HE SAYS THAT HE WAS INJURED... BUT THAT THEY HAVE HIM AND HE'S HEALING UP.
HE SHOULD BE BACK SOON.
SO MARK'S FINE? *GOOD*. THAT'S GREAT NEWS. MAN, I WAS *SO* WORRIED ABOUT HIM.
ME *TOO*.
BUT HE'S *SAFE* NOW.
...
YOU WANT TO GET SOMETHING TO *EAT*... TO CELEBRATE?
...

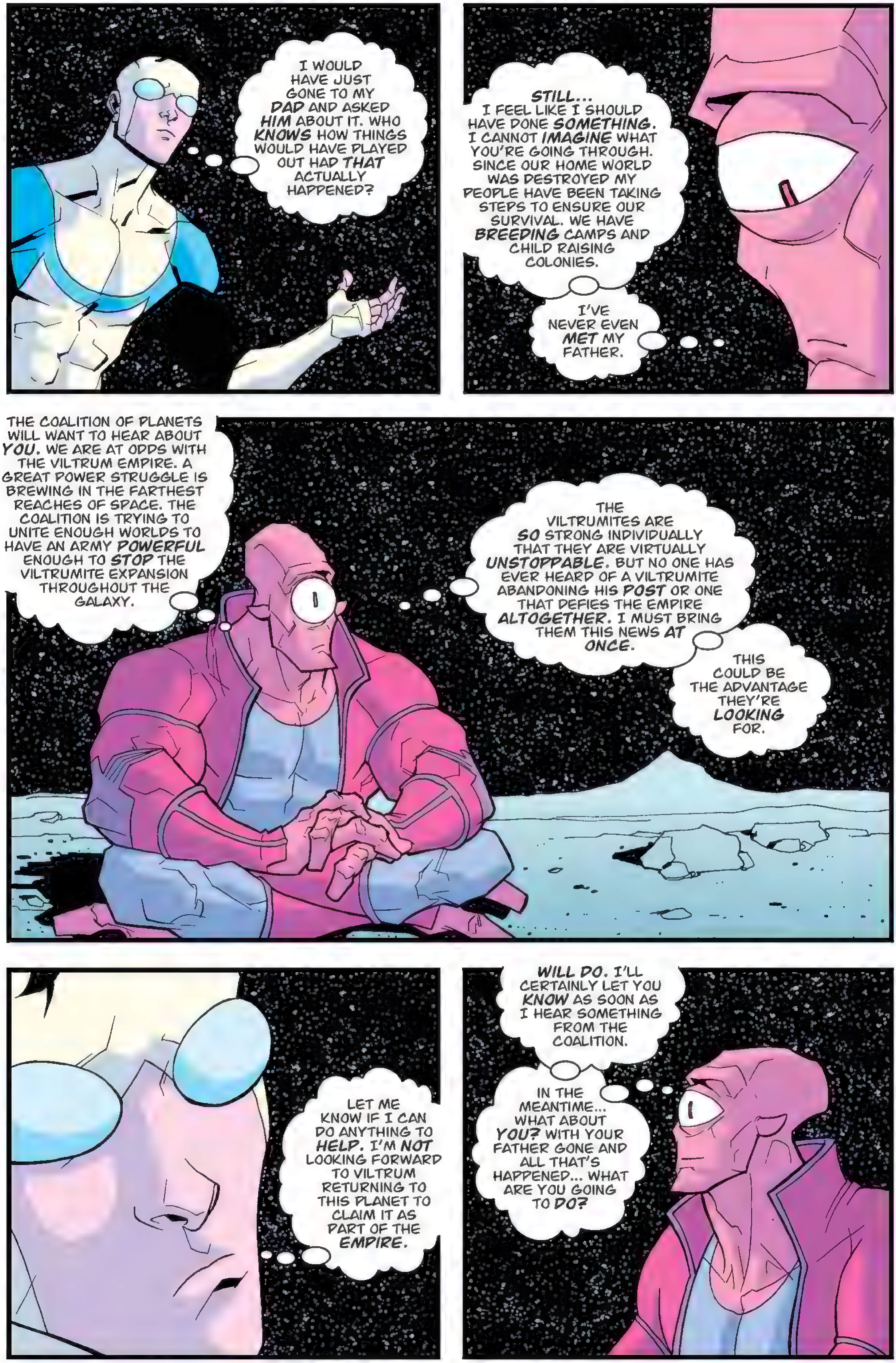

SO...
I'M GOING TO BED.
MOM... ARE YOU OKAY?
NO. NOT EVEN CLOSE.


BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
WHAT THE--?
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
OH, CRAP!
CE. TROUBLE IN SPACE. TRO
WHAT DO WE HAVE, CECIL?
FIRST OFF, NEVER SAY MY NAME. SECOND, ARE YOU WEARING YOUR COSTUME?
NOT YET.
NEVER ACTIVATE THE HEADSET UNTIL YOU ARE IN COSTUME. THE BEEPER IS YOUR COVER. YOU CAN ALWAYS USE THAT AS AN OUT IF YOU ARE WITH PEOPLE. YOU NEED TO GET IN THE HABIT OF NOT ACTIVATING THE HEADSET UNTIL YOU ARE IN COSTUME SO PEOPLE NEVER SEE YOU ACTIVATE THE HEADSET.
YOU NEED TO GET INTO SPACE RIGHT NOW. YOUR FRIEND IS BACK. YOUR DAD TOLD ME HOW YOU TALKED TO HIM ABOUT NOT RETURNING. HIS REAPPEARANCE HAS ME WORRIED THAT THIS IS CONNECTED TO YOUR FATHER IN SOME WAY. MAYBE HE WAS WORKING WITH YOUR FATHER ALL ALONG.
KEEP YOUR GUARD UP.
WILL DO. I JUST NEED TO GRAB MY SPARE COSTUME AND I'M GONE.




INVINCIBLE, THANK HEAVENS! WHEN YOU DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY SHOW UP I THOUGHT I WAS TOO LATE! I HAVE TO WARN YOU!
NICE PUNCH BY THE WAY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WARN ME OF WHAT?
WHEN I RETURNED TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS HOME WORLD AND TOLD THEM THAT I HAD BEEN GOING TO EARTH INSTEAD OF URATH THEY FLIPPED OUT! IT SEEMS EARTH IS OFF LIMITS TO THE COALITION.
YOU'VE GOT A VILTRUMITE LIVING AMONG YOU!
OH.
THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU ALREADY KNOW?
UH... YEAH.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HAVE A SEAT. THIS MAY TAKE A WHILE.

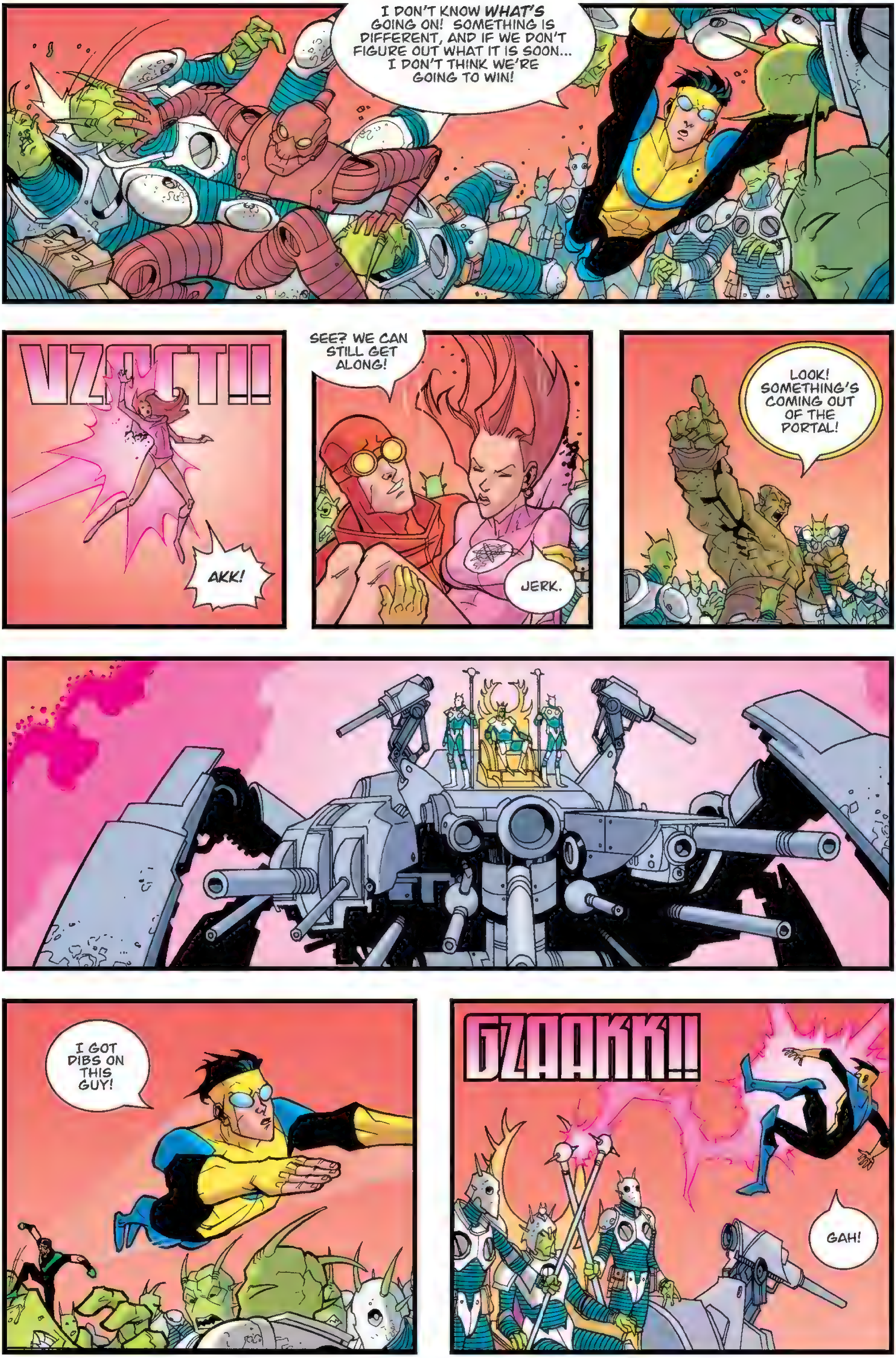

SO... *YOU'RE* A VILTRUMITE?
BUT YOU DON'T *WORK* FOR THEM... AND YOUR DAD *LEFT*. HE JUST *LEFT*.
YEAH. I'VE NEVER EVEN *BEEN* TO VILTRUM. I DON'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM. BUT *YEAH...* AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL MY DAD IS JUST *GONE*.
THAT IS *HIGHLY* UNORTHODOX BEHAVIOR FOR A VILTRUMITE. THEY DON'T JUST *LEAVE* THEIR POST. THEY DESTROYED MY HOME WORLD HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. MY PEOPLE ARE A NOMADIC SPECIES BECAUSE WE *RESISTED* THE VILTRUMITES WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO TAKE OVER.
I'M VERY SORRY.
DON'T BE. YOU HAD NO PART IN IT. FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT... *I'M* THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE APOLOGIZING TO *YOU*. IF I HAD CHECKED MY RECORDS *BEFORE* I LEFT HERE, I MIGHT HAVE SEEN THAT EARTH HAD BEEN FLAGGED AS BEING PREPPED FOR A VILTRUMITE TAKEOVER.
I COULD HAVE *WARNED* YOU.

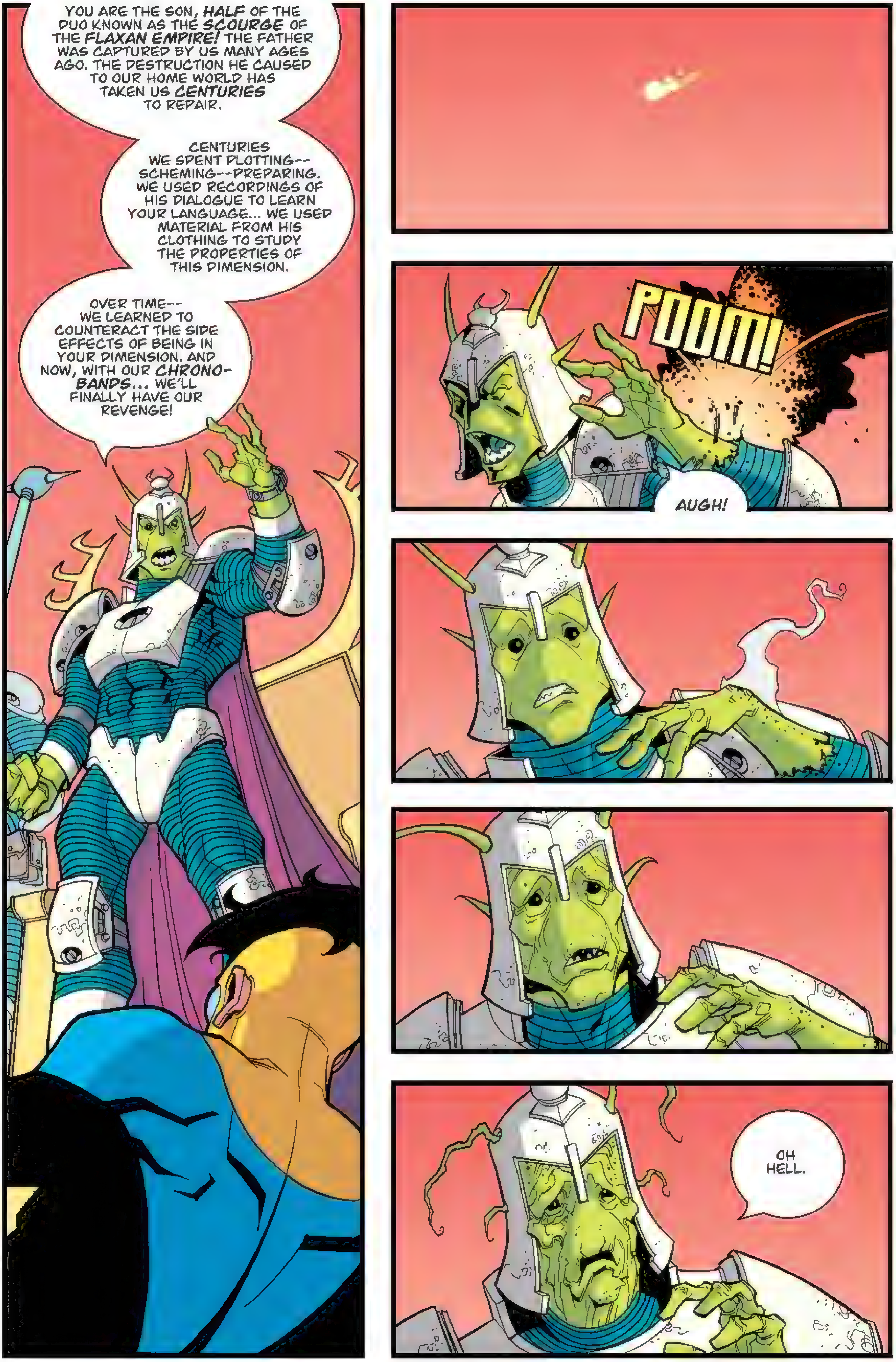

I WOULD HAVE JUST GONE TO MY DAD AND ASKED HIM ABOUT IT. WHO KNOWS HOW THINGS WOULD HAVE PLAYED OUT HAD THAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?
STILL... I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING. I CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH. SINCE OUR HOME WORLD WAS DESTROYED MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TAKING STEPS TO ENSURE OUR SURVIVAL. WE HAVE BREEDING CAMPS AND CHILD RAISING COLONIES.
I'VE NEVER EVEN MET MY FATHER.
THE COALITION OF PLANETS WILL WANT TO HEAR ABOUT YOU. WE ARE AT ODDS WITH THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. A GREAT POWER STRUGGLE IS BREWING IN THE FARTHEST REACHES OF SPACE. THE COALITION IS TRYING TO UNITE ENOUGH WORLDS TO HAVE AN ARMY POWERFUL ENOUGH TO STOP THE VILTRUMITE EXPANSION THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
THE VILTRUMITES ARE SO STRONG INDIVIDUALLY THAT THEY ARE VIRTUALLY UNSTOPPABLE. BUT NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF A VILTRUMITE ABANDONING HIS POST OR ONE THAT DEFIES THE EMPIRE ALTOGETHER. I MUST BRING THEM THIS NEWS AT ONCE.
THIS COULD BE THE ADVANTAGE THEY'RE LOOKING FOR.
LET ME KNOW IF I CAN DO ANYTHING TO HELP. I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO VILTRUM RETURNING TO THIS PLANET TO CLAIM IT AS PART OF THE EMPIRE.
WILL DO. I'LL CERTAINLY LET YOU KNOW AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING FROM THE COALITION.
IN THE MEANTIME... WHAT ABOUT YOU? WITH YOUR FATHER GONE AND ALL THAT'S HAPPENED... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

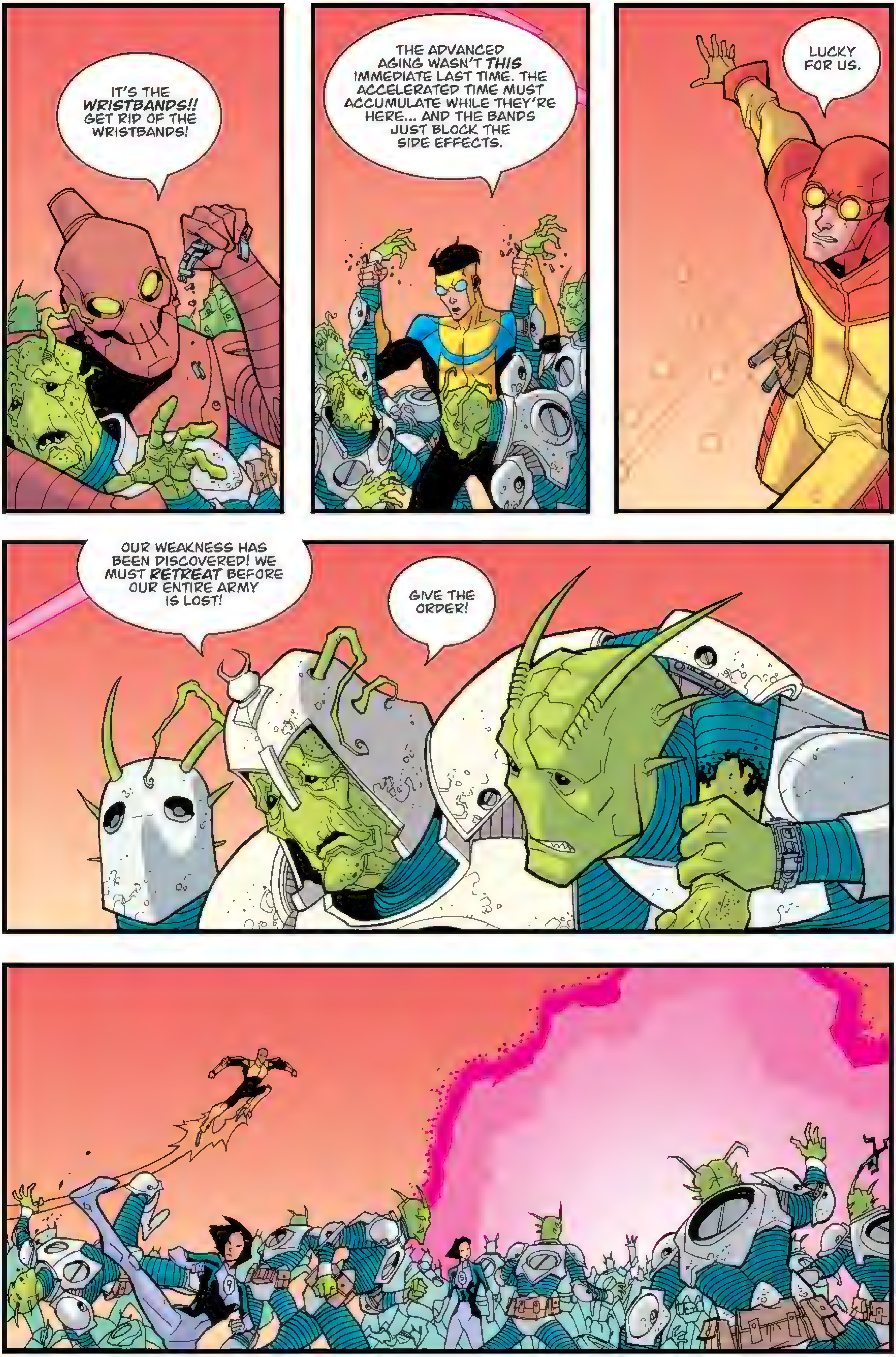
FINISH *HIGH SCHOOL*, I GUESS.

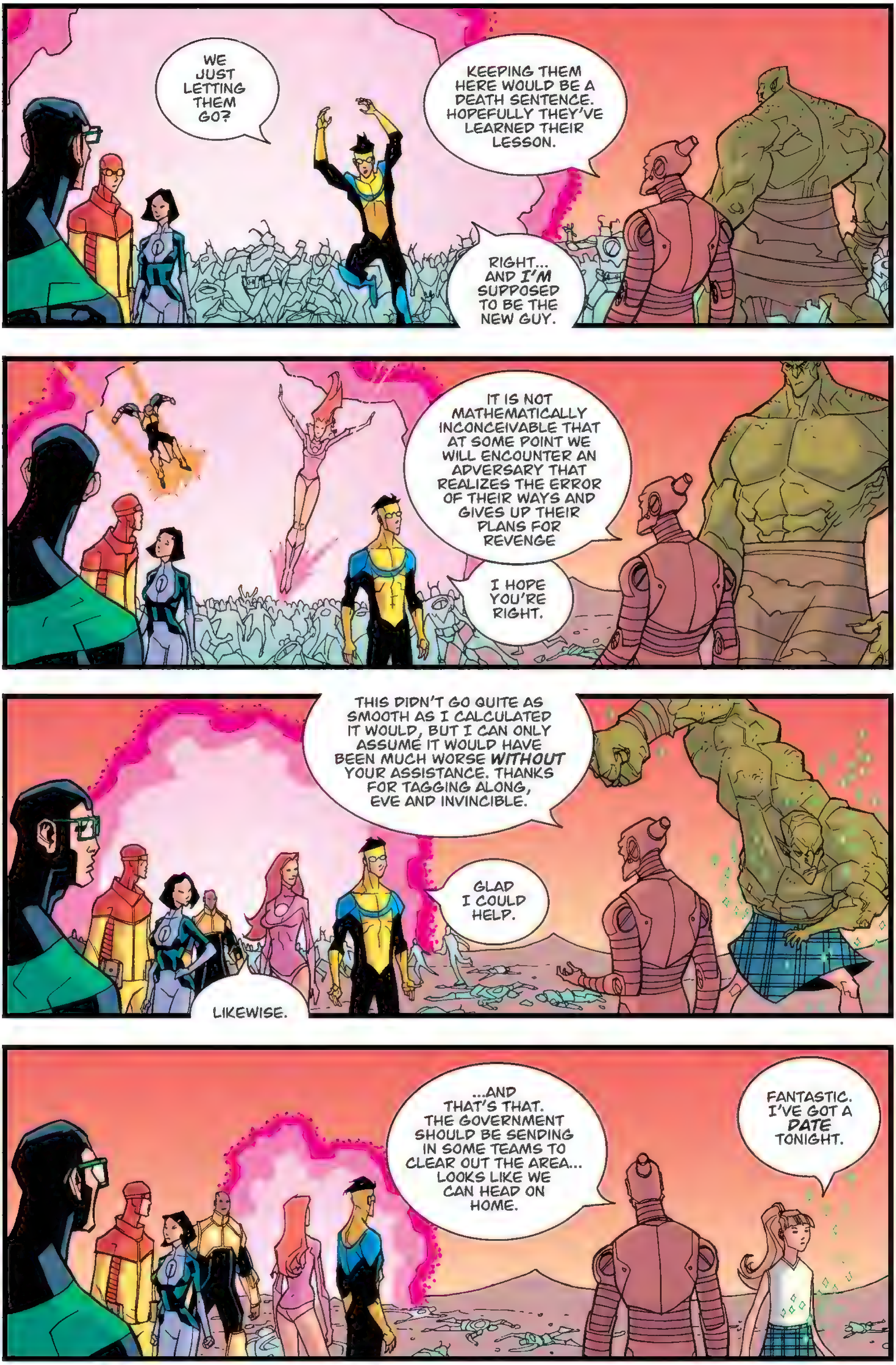
ISSUE FOURTEEN

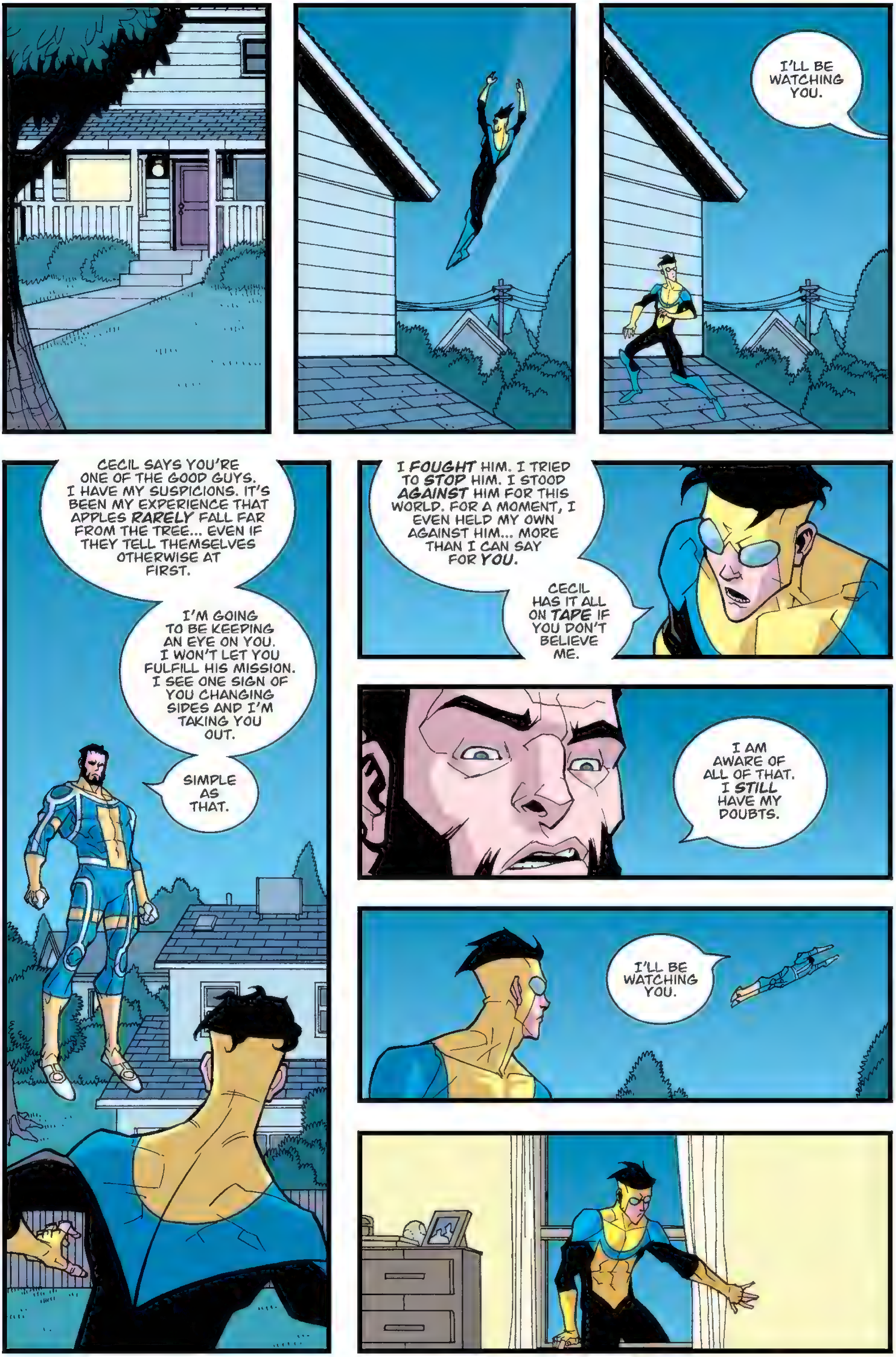
INVINCIBLE! YOU SAID WHEN YOU FOUGHT THESE THINGS BEFORE THEY DIDN'T LAST MORE THAN AN *HOUR* UNTIL THEIR RAPID AGING CAUSED THEM TO *RETREAT!*
WE HAVE BEEN AT THIS NEARLY *TWO HOURS* AND THEIR NUMBERS ONLY *INCREASE!* I FEAR WE CANNOT HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!

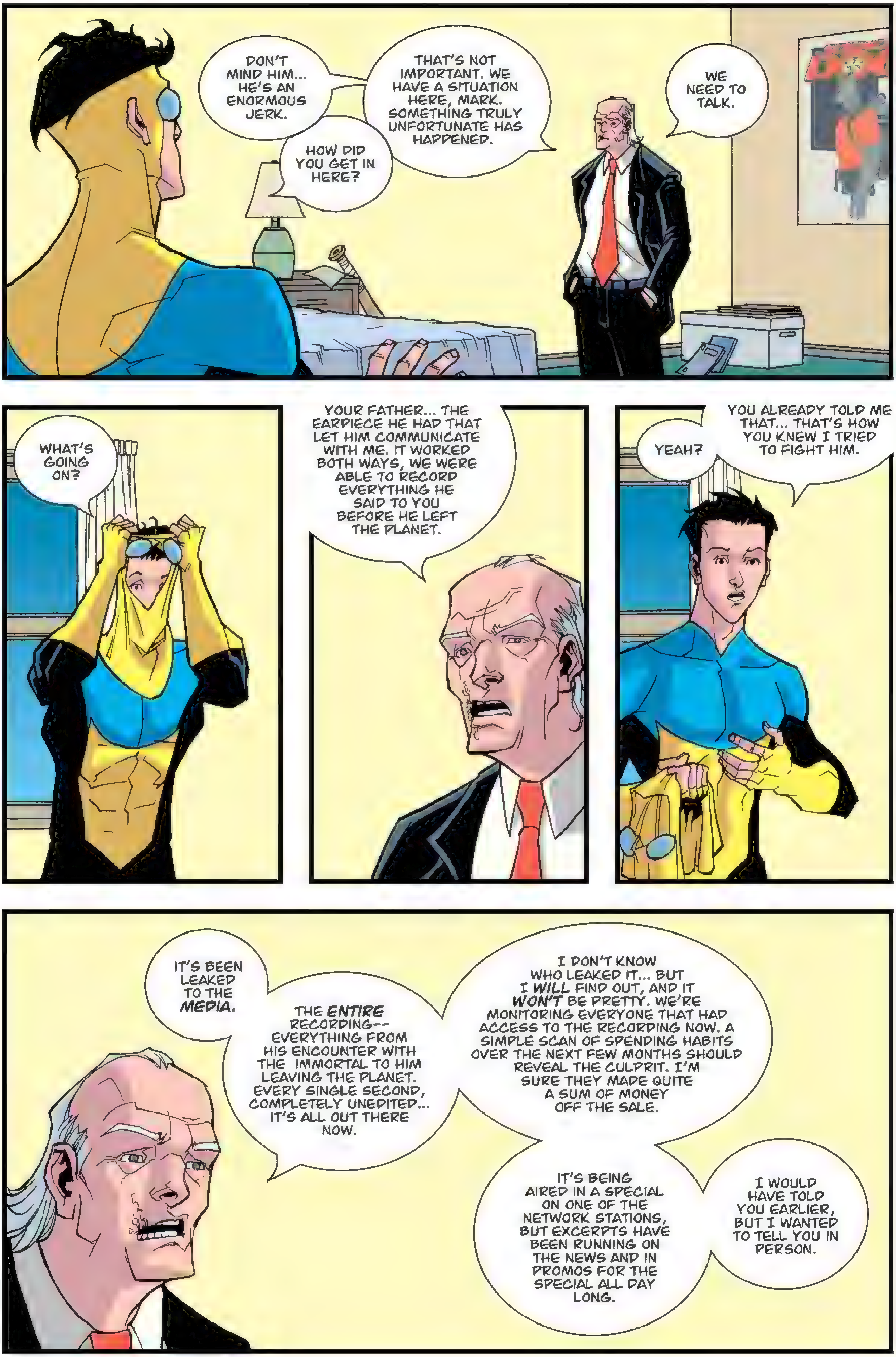

I DON'T KNOW *WHAT'S* GOING ON! SOMETHING IS DIFFERENT, AND IF WE DON'T FIGURE OUT WHAT IT IS SOON... I DON'T THINK WE'RE GOING TO WIN!
VZOCT!!
AKK!
SEE? WE CAN STILL GET ALONG!
JERK.
LOOK! SOMETHING'S COMING OUT OF THE PORTAL!
I GOT DIBS ON THIS GUY!
GZAAKK!!
GAH!

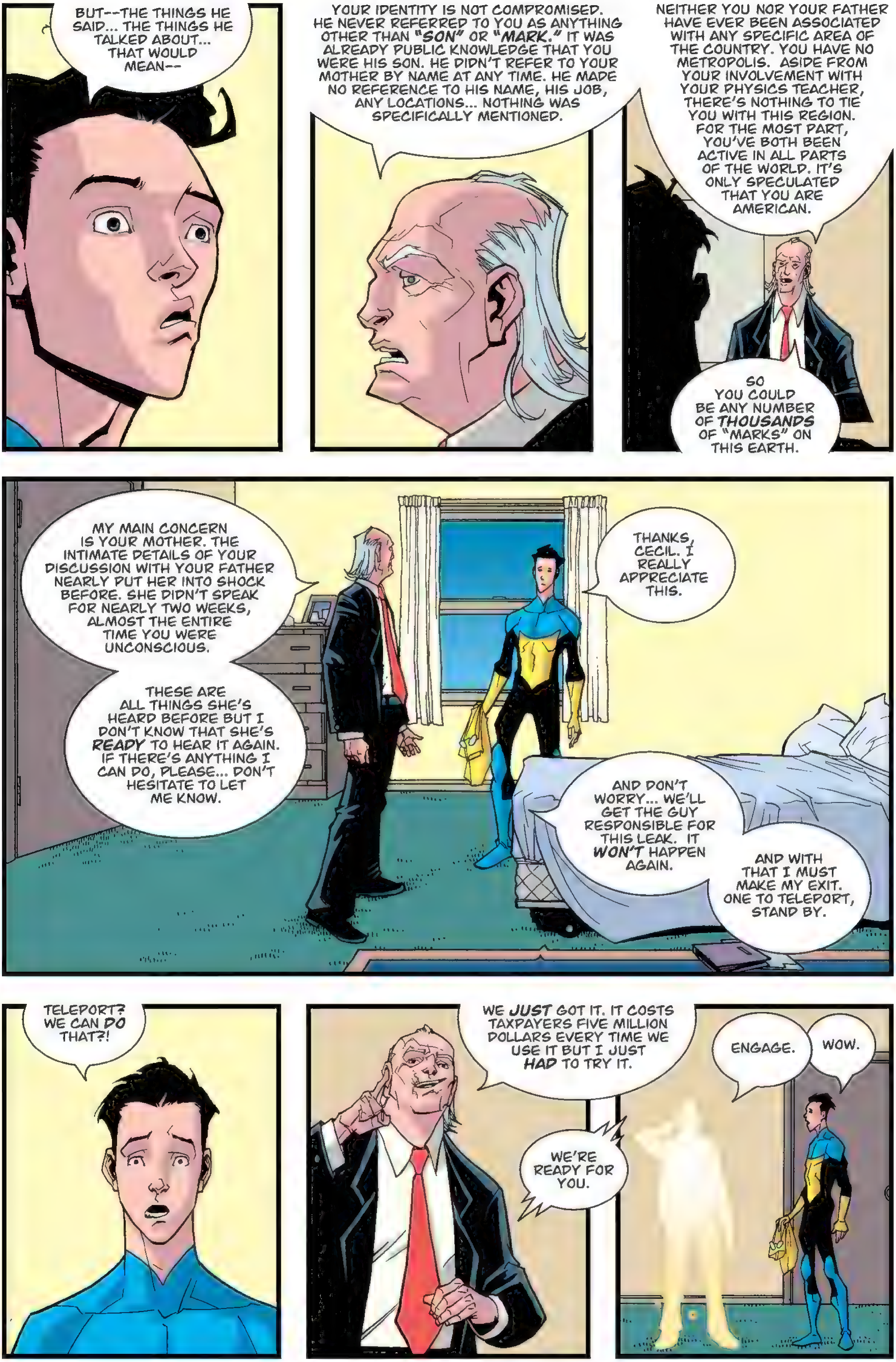

YOU ARE THE SON, **HALF** OF THE DUO KNOWN AS THE **SCOURGE** OF THE **FLAXAN EMPIRE!** THE FATHER WAS CAPTURED BY US MANY AGES AGO. THE DESTRUCTION HE CAUSED TO OUR HOME WORLD HAS TAKEN US **CENTURIES** TO REPAIR.
CENTURIES WE SPENT PLOTTING-- SCHEMING--PREPARING. WE USED RECORDINGS OF HIS DIALOGUE TO LEARN YOUR LANGUAGE... WE USED MATERIAL FROM HIS CLOTHING TO STUDY THE PROPERTIES OF THIS DIMENSION.
OVER TIME-- WE LEARNED TO COUNTERACT THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BEING IN YOUR DIMENSION. AND NOW, WITH OUR **CHRONO-BANDS...** WE'LL FINALLY HAVE OUR REVENGE!
POOM!
AUGH!
OH HELL.

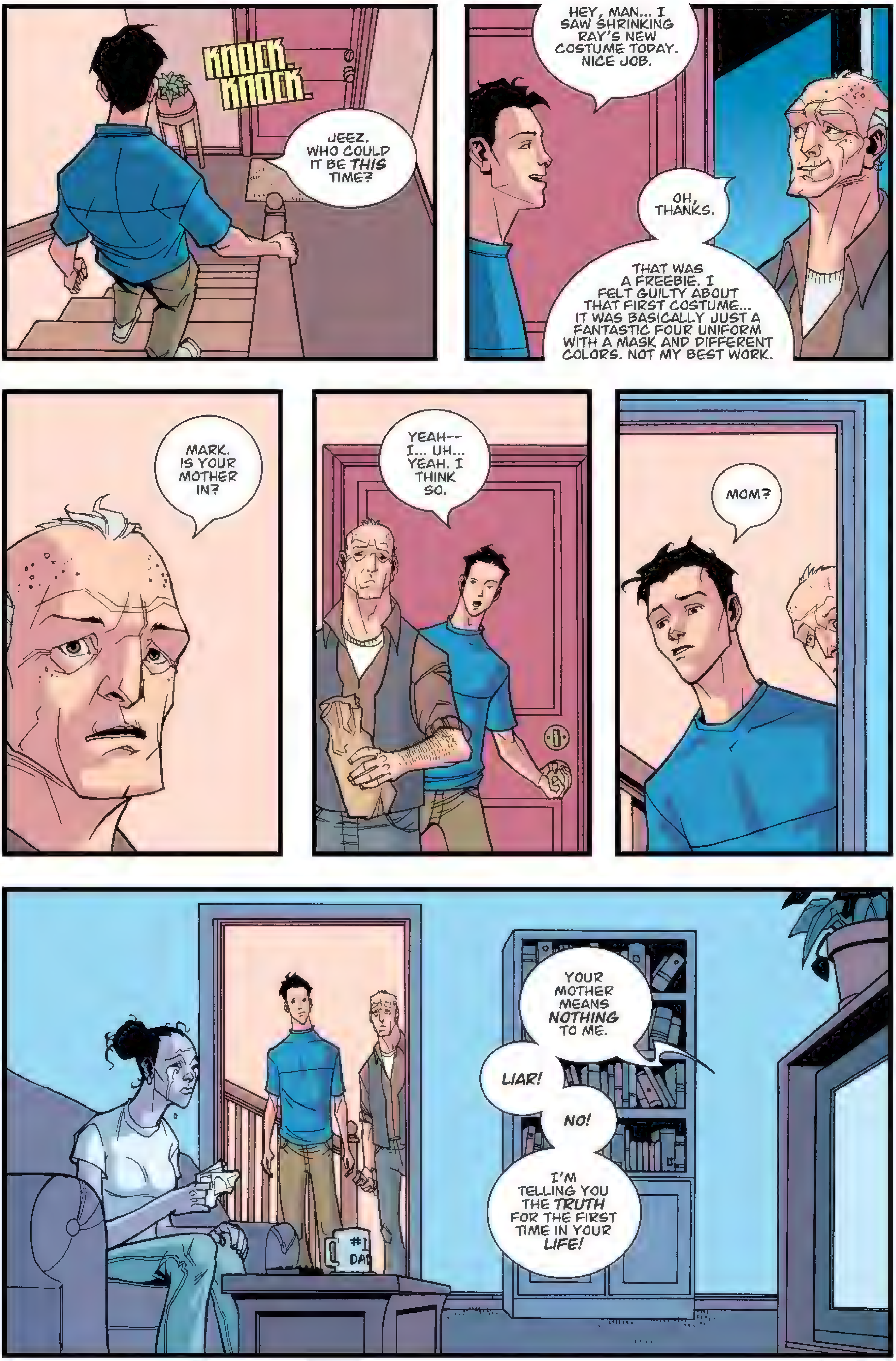

IT'S THE **WRISTBANDS!!** GET RID OF THE WRISTBANDS!
THE ADVANCED AGING WASN'T *THIS* IMMEDIATE LAST TIME. THE ACCELERATED TIME MUST ACCUMULATE WHILE THEY'RE HERE... AND THE BANDS JUST BLOCK THE SIDE EFFECTS.
LUCKY FOR US.
OUR WEAKNESS HAS BEEN DISCOVERED! WE MUST *RETREAT* BEFORE OUR ENTIRE ARMY IS LOST!
GIVE THE ORDER!

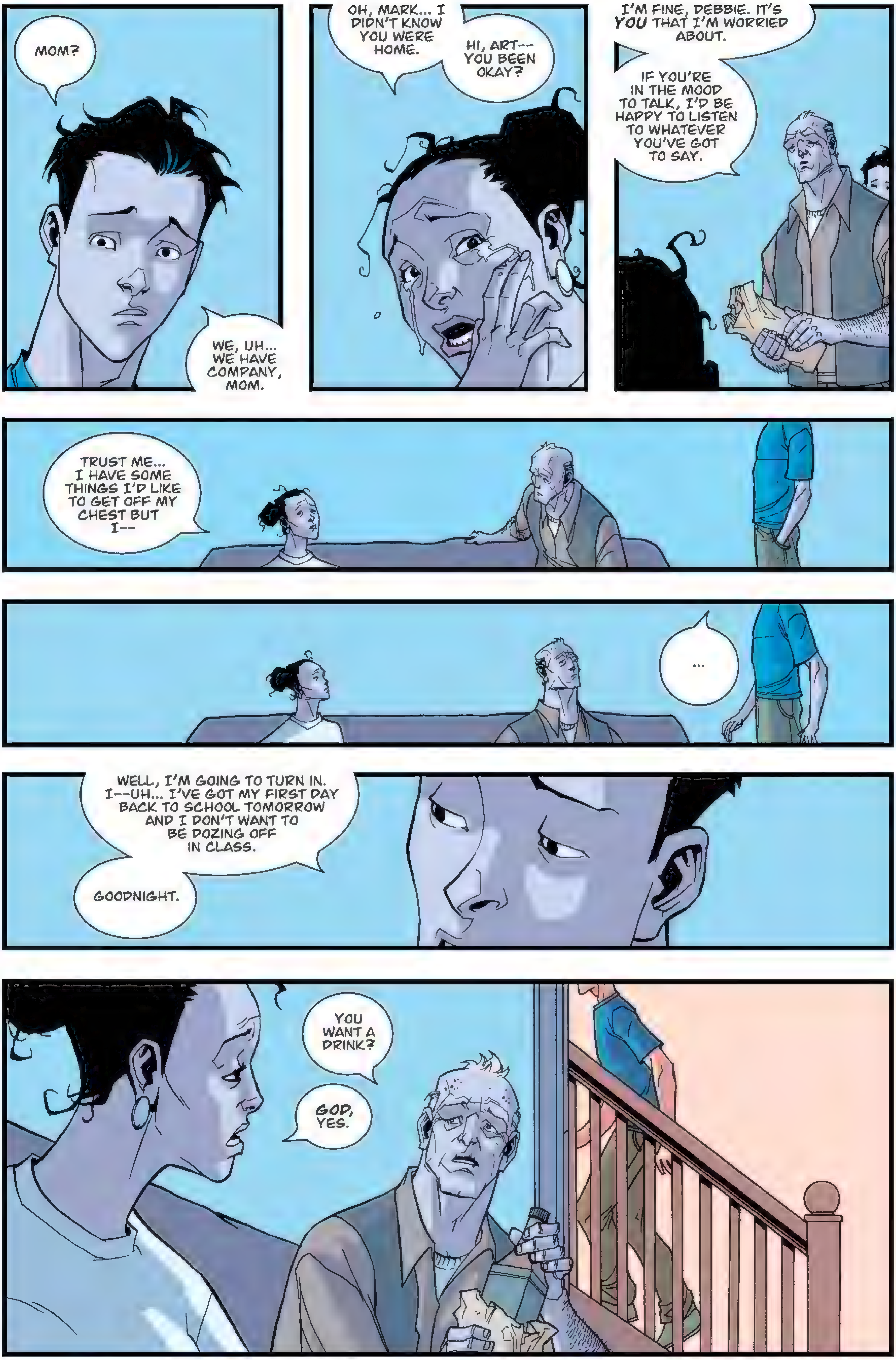

WE JUST LETTING THEM GO?
KEEPING THEM HERE WOULD BE A DEATH SENTENCE. HOPEFULLY THEY'VE LEARNED THEIR LESSON.
RIGHT... AND *I'M* SUPPOSED TO BE THE NEW GUY.
IT IS NOT MATHEMATICALLY INCONCEIVABLE THAT AT SOME POINT WE WILL ENCOUNTER AN ADVERSARY THAT REALIZES THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS AND GIVES UP THEIR PLANS FOR REVENGE
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
THIS DIDN'T GO QUITE AS SMOOTH AS I CALCULATED IT WOULD, BUT I CAN ONLY ASSUME IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE *WITHOUT* YOUR ASSISTANCE. THANKS FOR TAGGING ALONG, EVE AND INVINCIBLE.
GLAD I COULD HELP.
LIKEWISE.
...AND THAT'S THAT. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE SENDING IN SOME TEAMS TO CLEAR OUT THE AREA... LOOKS LIKE WE CAN HEAD ON HOME.
FANTASTIC. I'VE GOT A *DATE* TONIGHT.

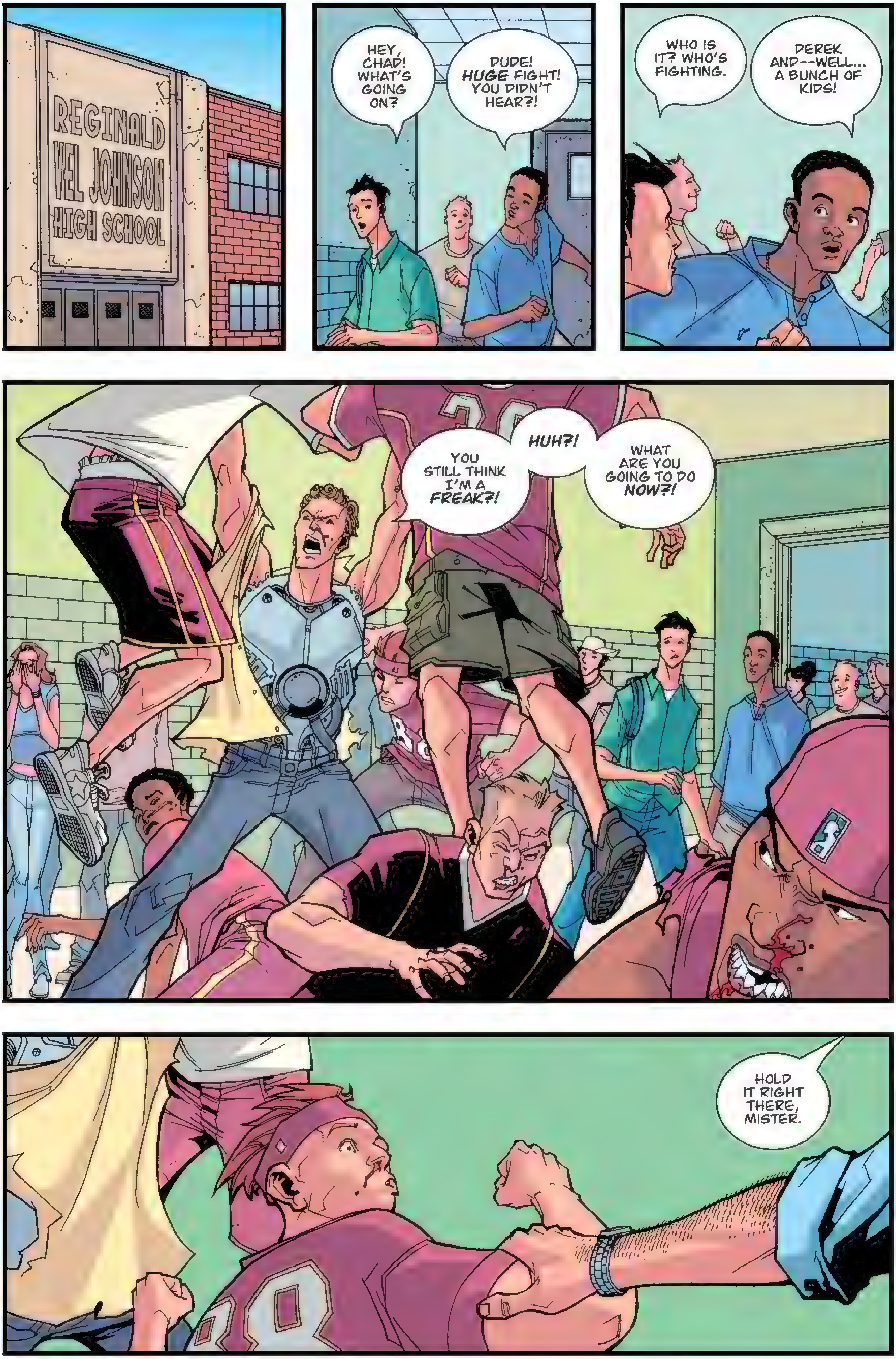

I'LL BE WATCHING YOU.
CECIL SAYS YOU'RE ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS. I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS. IT'S BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT APPLES **RARELY** FALL FAR FROM THE TREE... EVEN IF THEY TELL THEMSELVES OTHERWISE AT FIRST.
I'M GOING TO BE KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU. I WON'T LET YOU FULFILL HIS MISSION. I SEE ONE SIGN OF YOU CHANGING SIDES AND I'M TAKING YOU OUT.
SIMPLE AS THAT.
I **FOUGHT** HIM. I TRIED TO **STOP** HIM. I STOOD **AGAINST** HIM FOR THIS WORLD. FOR A MOMENT, I EVEN HELD MY OWN AGAINST HIM... MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR **YOU**.
CECIL HAS IT ALL ON **TAPE** IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
I AM AWARE OF ALL OF THAT. I **STILL** HAVE MY DOUBTS.
I'LL BE WATCHING YOU.

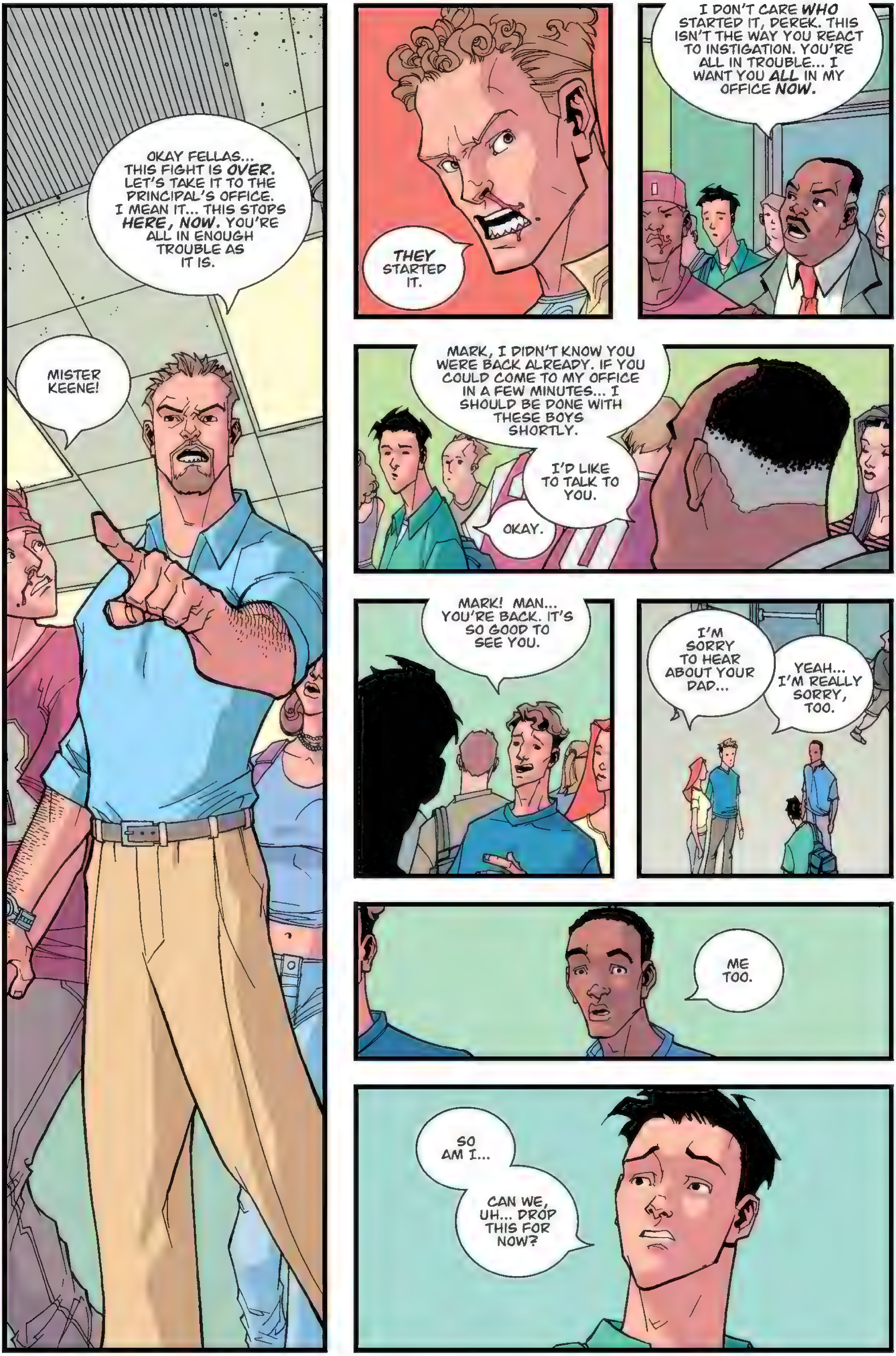

DON'T MIND HIM... HE'S AN ENORMOUS JERK.
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE, MARK. SOMETHING TRULY UNFORTUNATE HAS HAPPENED.
WE NEED TO TALK.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOUR FATHER... THE EARPIECE HE HAD THAT LET HIM COMMUNICATE WITH ME. IT WORKED BOTH WAYS, WE WERE ABLE TO RECORD EVERYTHING HE SAID TO YOU BEFORE HE LEFT THE PLANET.
YEAH?
YOU ALREADY TOLD ME THAT... THAT'S HOW YOU KNEW I TRIED TO FIGHT HIM.
IT'S BEEN LEAKED TO THE ***MEDIA.***
THE ***ENTIRE*** RECORDING-- EVERYTHING FROM HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE IMMORTAL TO HIM LEAVING THE PLANET. EVERY SINGLE SECOND, COMPLETELY UNEDITED... IT'S ALL OUT THERE NOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHO LEAKED IT... BUT I ***WILL*** FIND OUT, AND IT ***WON'T*** BE PRETTY. WE'RE MONITORING EVERYONE THAT HAD ACCESS TO THE RECORDING NOW. A SIMPLE SCAN OF SPENDING HABITS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS SHOULD REVEAL THE CULPRIT. I'M SURE THEY MADE QUITE A SUM OF MONEY OFF THE SALE.
IT'S BEING AIRED IN A SPECIAL ON ONE OF THE NETWORK STATIONS, BUT EXCERPTS HAVE BEEN RUNNING ON THE NEWS AND IN PROMOS FOR THE SPECIAL ALL DAY LONG.
I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU EARLIER, BUT I WANTED TO TELL YOU IN PERSON.

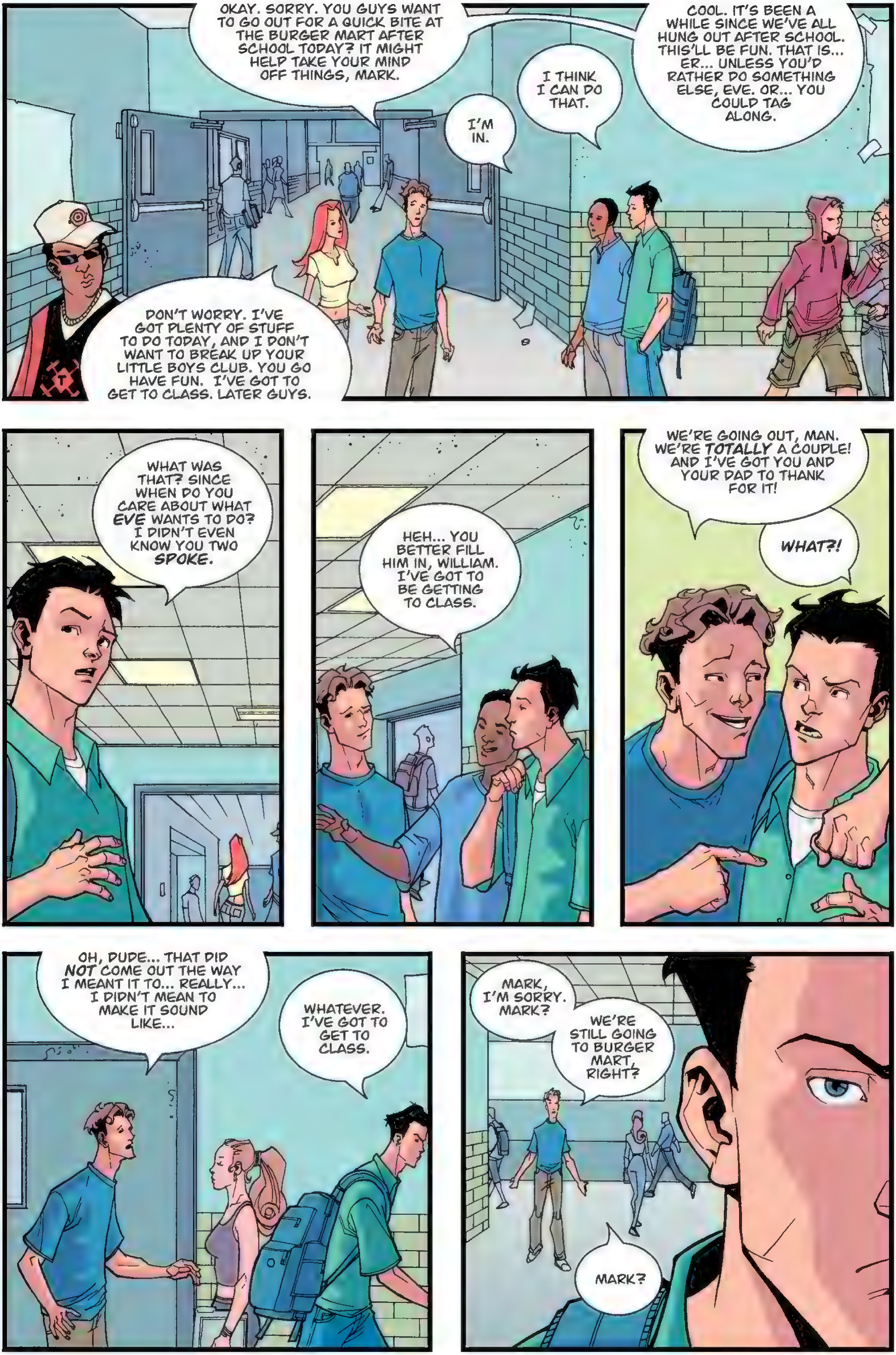

BUT--THE THINGS HE SAID... THE THINGS HE TALKED ABOUT... THAT WOULD MEAN--
YOUR IDENTITY IS NOT COMPROMISED. HE NEVER REFERRED TO YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN "SON" OR "MARK." IT WAS ALREADY PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE HIS SON. HE DIDN'T REFER TO YOUR MOTHER BY NAME AT ANY TIME. HE MADE NO REFERENCE TO HIS NAME, HIS JOB, ANY LOCATIONS... NOTHING WAS SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED.
NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR FATHER HAVE EVER BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ANY SPECIFIC AREA OF THE COUNTRY. YOU HAVE NO METROPOLIS. ASIDE FROM YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, THERE'S NOTHING TO TIE YOU WITH THIS REGION. FOR THE MOST PART, YOU'VE BOTH BEEN ACTIVE IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. IT'S ONLY SPECULATED THAT YOU ARE AMERICAN.
SO YOU COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF THOUSANDS OF "MARKS" ON THIS EARTH.
MY MAIN CONCERN IS YOUR MOTHER. THE INTIMATE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR FATHER NEARLY PUT HER INTO SHOCK BEFORE. SHE DIDN'T SPEAK FOR NEARLY TWO WEEKS, ALMOST THE ENTIRE TIME YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS.
THESE ARE ALL THINGS SHE'S HEARD BEFORE BUT I DON'T KNOW THAT SHE'S READY TO HEAR IT AGAIN. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO, PLEASE... DON'T HESITATE TO LET ME KNOW.
THANKS, CECIL. I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS.
AND DON'T WORRY... WE'LL GET THE GUY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS LEAK. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
AND WITH THAT I MUST MAKE MY EXIT. ONE TO TELEPORT, STAND BY.
TELEPORT? WE CAN DO THAT?!
WE JUST GOT IT. IT COSTS TAXPAYERS FIVE MILLION DOLLARS EVERY TIME WE USE IT BUT I JUST HAD TO TRY IT.
WE'RE READY FOR YOU.
ENGAGE.
WOW.

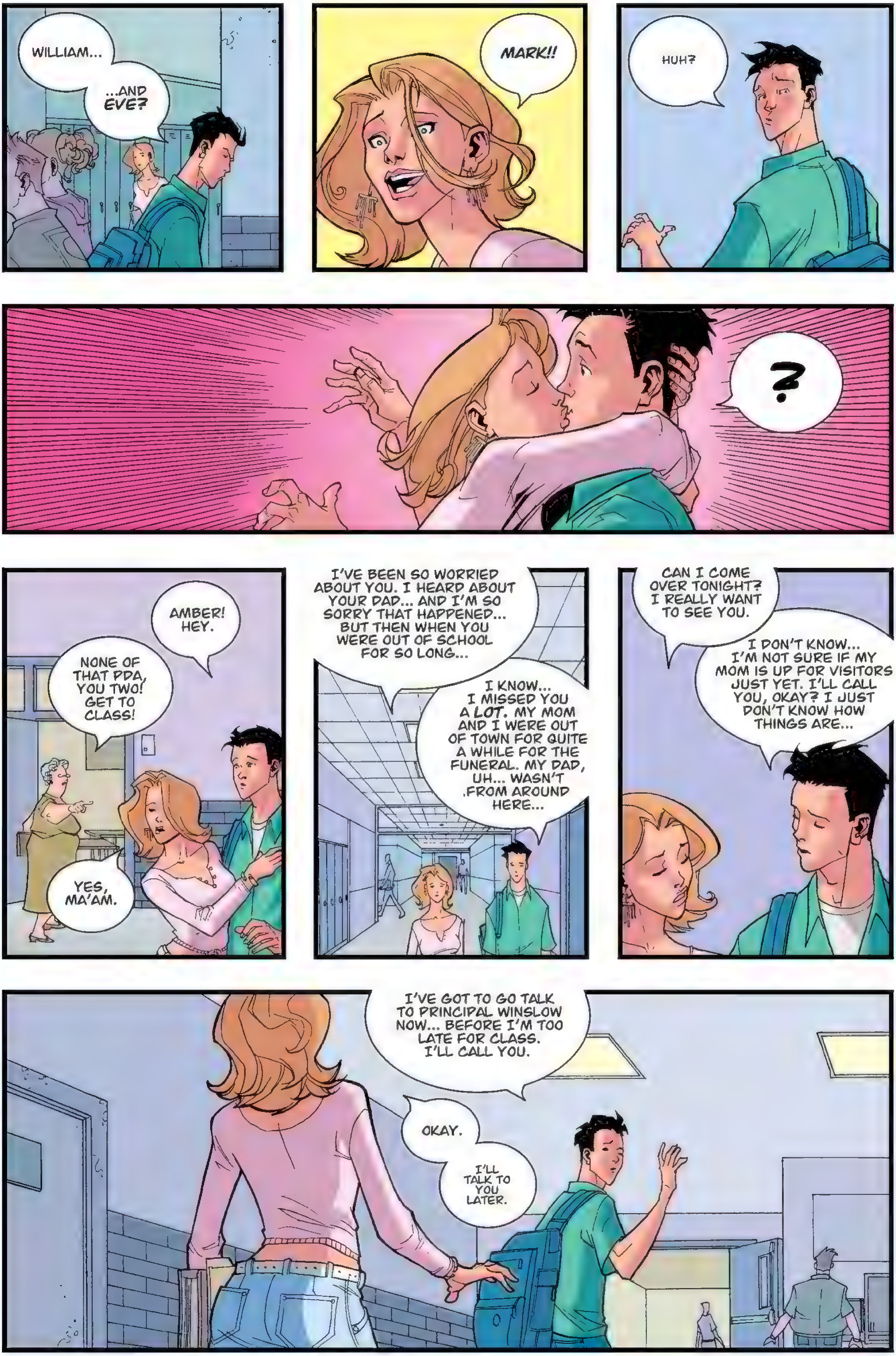

KNOCK KNOCK
JEEZ. WHO COULD IT BE *THIS* TIME?
HEY, MAN... I SAW SHRINKING RAY'S NEW COSTUME TODAY. NICE JOB.
OH, THANKS.
THAT WAS A FREEBIE. I FELT GUILTY ABOUT THAT FIRST COSTUME... IT WAS BASICALLY JUST A FANTASTIC FOUR UNIFORM WITH A MASK AND DIFFERENT COLORS. NOT MY BEST WORK.
MARK. IS YOUR MOTHER IN?
YEAH-- I... UH... YEAH. I THINK SO.
MOM?
YOUR MOTHER MEANS *NOTHING* TO ME.
LIAR!
NO!
I'M TELLING YOU THE *TRUTH* FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR *LIFE!*

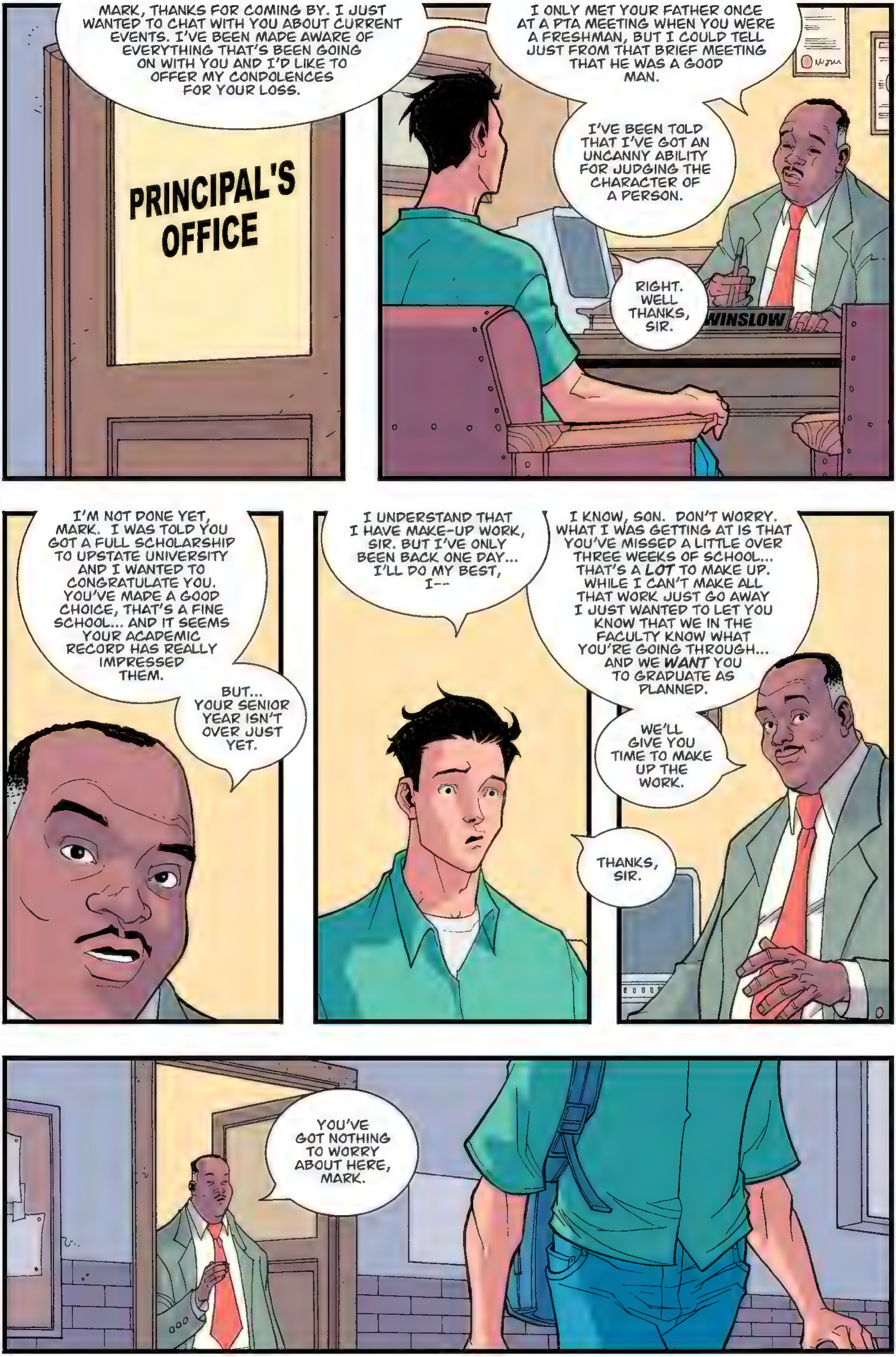

MOM?
WE, UH... WE HAVE COMPANY, MOM.
OH, MARK... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HOME.
HI, ART-- YOU BEEN OKAY?
I'M FINE, DEBBIE. IT'S *YOU* THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT.
IF YOU'RE IN THE MOOD TO TALK, I'D BE HAPPY TO LISTEN TO WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT TO SAY.
TRUST ME... I HAVE SOME THINGS I'D LIKE TO GET OFF MY CHEST BUT I--
...
WELL, I'M GOING TO TURN IN. I--UH... I'VE GOT MY FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL TOMORROW AND I DON'T WANT TO BE DOZING OFF IN CLASS.
GOODNIGHT.
YOU WANT A DRINK?
GOD, YES.

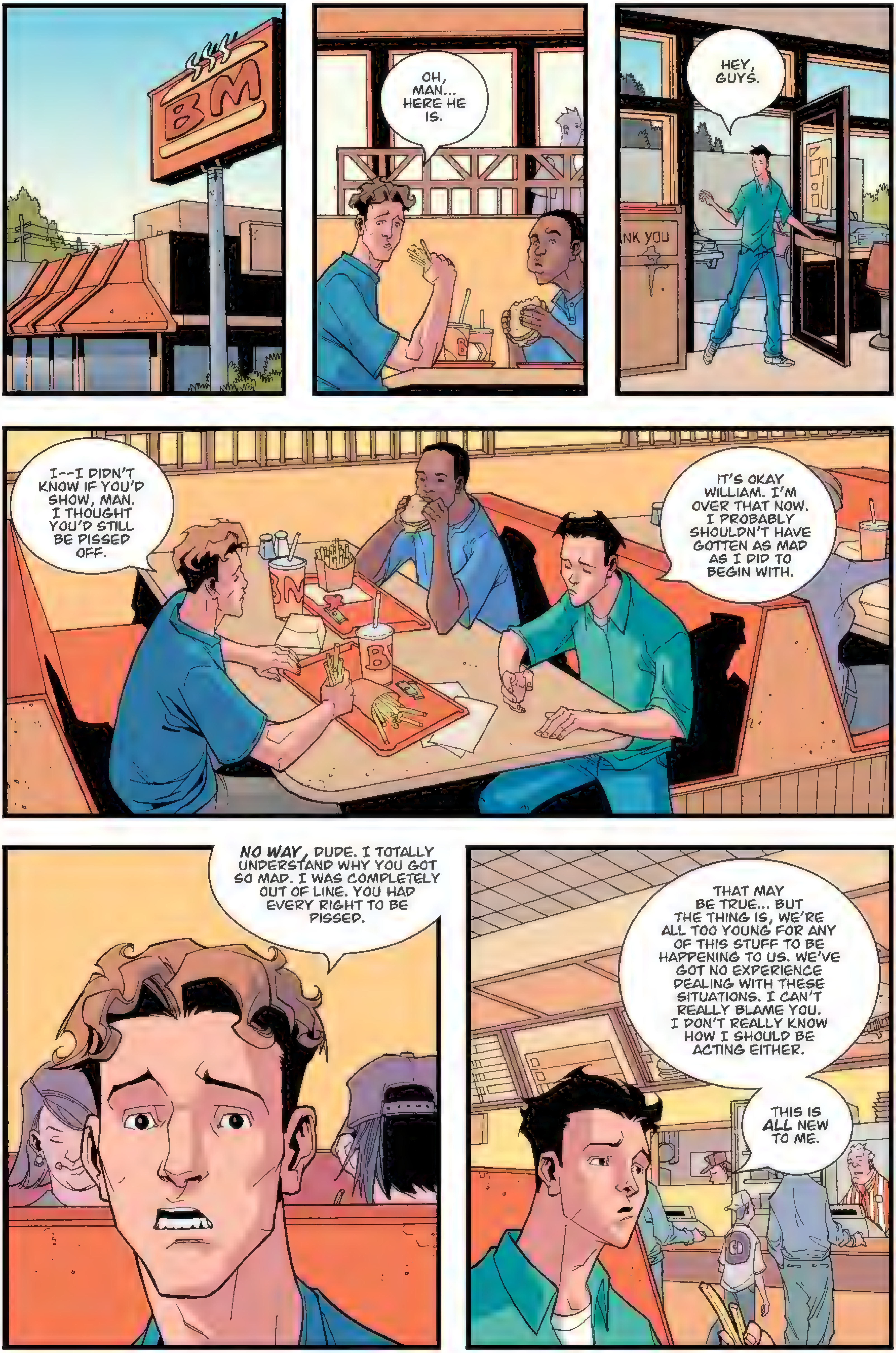

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
HEY, CHAD! WHAT'S GOING ON?
DUDE! *HUGE* FIGHT! YOU DIDN'T HEAR?!
WHO IS IT? WHO'S FIGHTING.
DEREK AND--WELL... A BUNCH OF KIDS!
YOU STILL THINK I'M A *FREAK?!*
HUH?!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO *NOW?!*
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, MISTER.

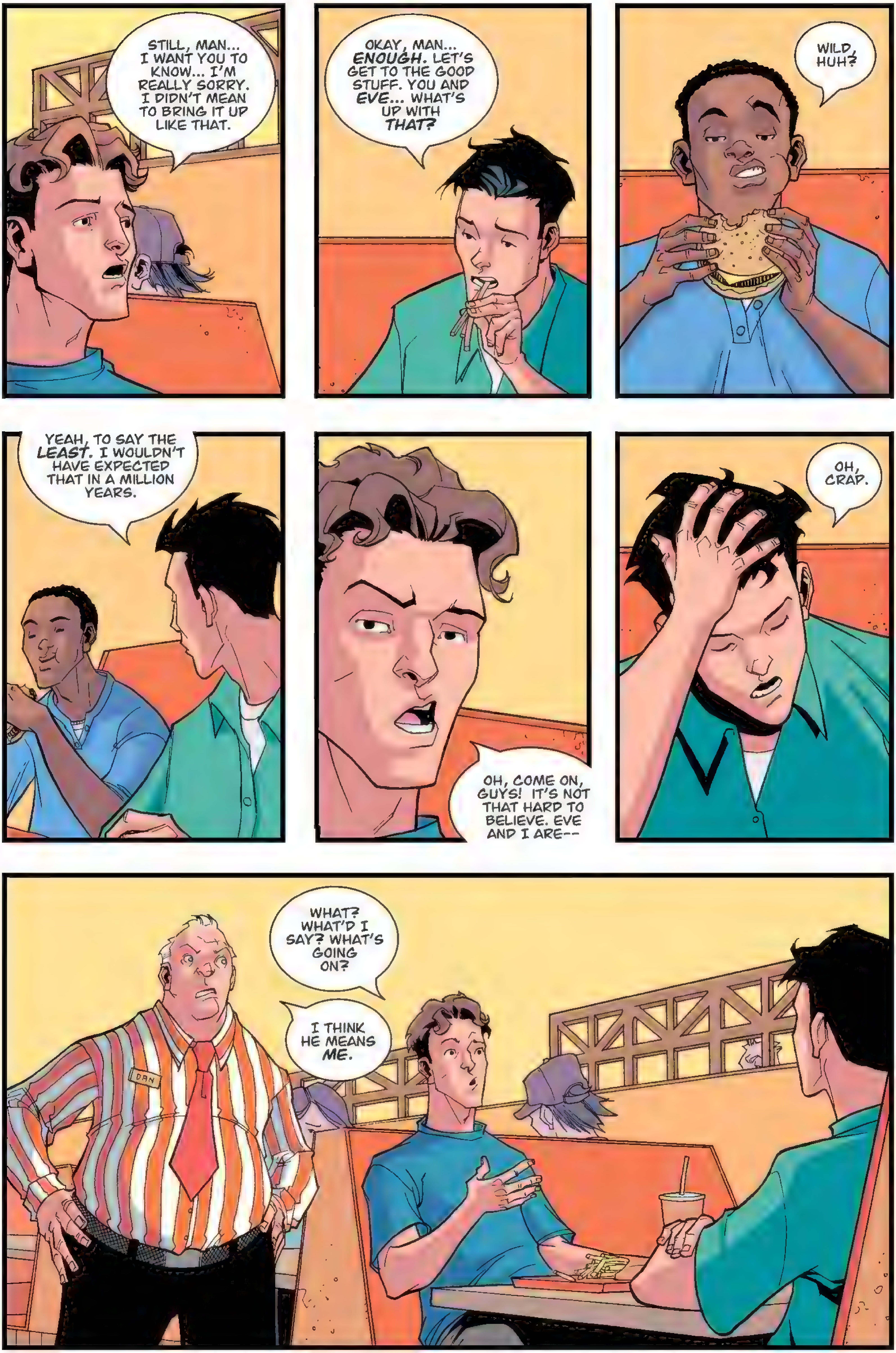

OKAY FELLAS... THIS FIGHT IS *OVER.* LET'S TAKE IT TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. I MEAN IT... THIS STOPS *HERE, NOW.* YOU'RE ALL IN ENOUGH TROUBLE AS IT IS.
MISTER KEENE!
THEY STARTED IT.
I DON'T CARE *WHO* STARTED IT, DEREK. THIS ISN'T THE WAY YOU REACT TO INSTIGATION. YOU'RE ALL IN TROUBLE... I WANT YOU *ALL* IN MY OFFICE *NOW.*
MARK, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE BACK ALREADY. IF YOU COULD COME TO MY OFFICE IN A FEW MINUTES... I SHOULD BE DONE WITH THESE BOYS SHORTLY.
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
OKAY.
MARK! MAN... YOU'RE BACK. IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR DAD...
YEAH... I'M REALLY SORRY, TOO.
ME TOO.
SO AM I...
CAN WE, UH... DROP THIS FOR NOW?

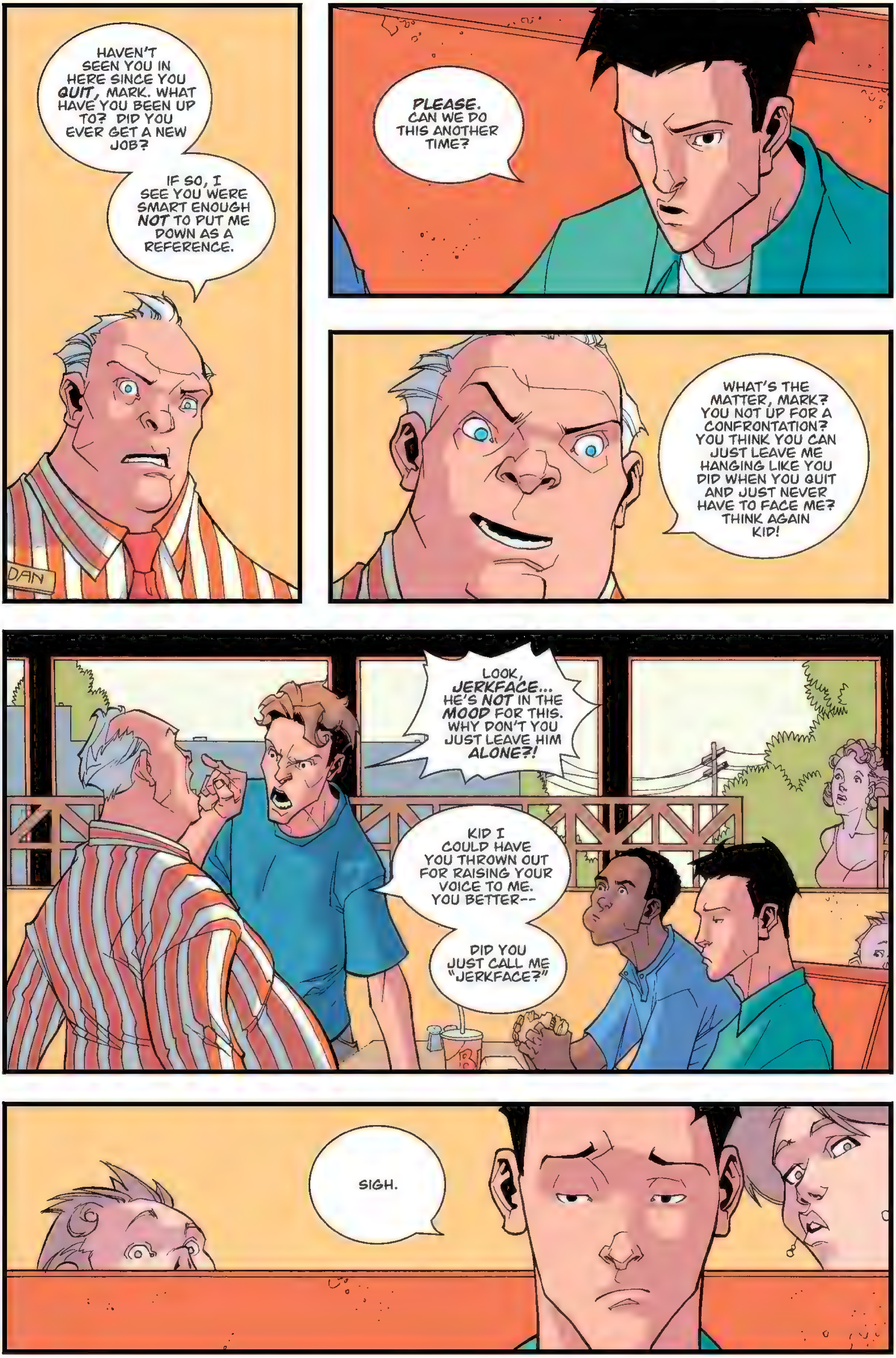

OKAY. SORRY. YOU GUYS WANT TO GO OUT FOR A QUICK BITE AT THE BURGER MART AFTER SCHOOL TODAY? IT MIGHT HELP TAKE YOUR MIND OFF THINGS, MARK.
I'M IN.
I THINK I CAN DO THAT.
COOL. IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE ALL HUNG OUT AFTER SCHOOL. THIS'LL BE FUN. THAT IS... ER... UNLESS YOU'D RATHER DO SOMETHING ELSE, EVE. OR... YOU COULD TAG ALONG.
DON'T WORRY. I'VE GOT PLENTY OF STUFF TO DO TODAY, AND I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP YOUR LITTLE BOYS CLUB. YOU GO HAVE FUN. I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS. LATER GUYS.
WHAT WAS THAT? SINCE WHEN DO YOU CARE ABOUT WHAT **EVE** WANTS TO DO? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU TWO **SPOKE**.
HEH... YOU BETTER FILL HIM IN, WILLIAM. I'VE GOT TO BE GETTING TO CLASS.
WE'RE GOING OUT, MAN. WE'RE ***TOTALLY*** A COUPLE! AND I'VE GOT YOU AND YOUR DAD TO THANK FOR IT!
WHAT?!
OH, DUDE... THAT DID ***NOT*** COME OUT THE WAY I MEANT IT TO... REALLY... I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE IT SOUND LIKE...
WHATEVER. I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS.
MARK, I'M SORRY. MARK?
WE'RE STILL GOING TO BURGER MART, RIGHT?
MARK?

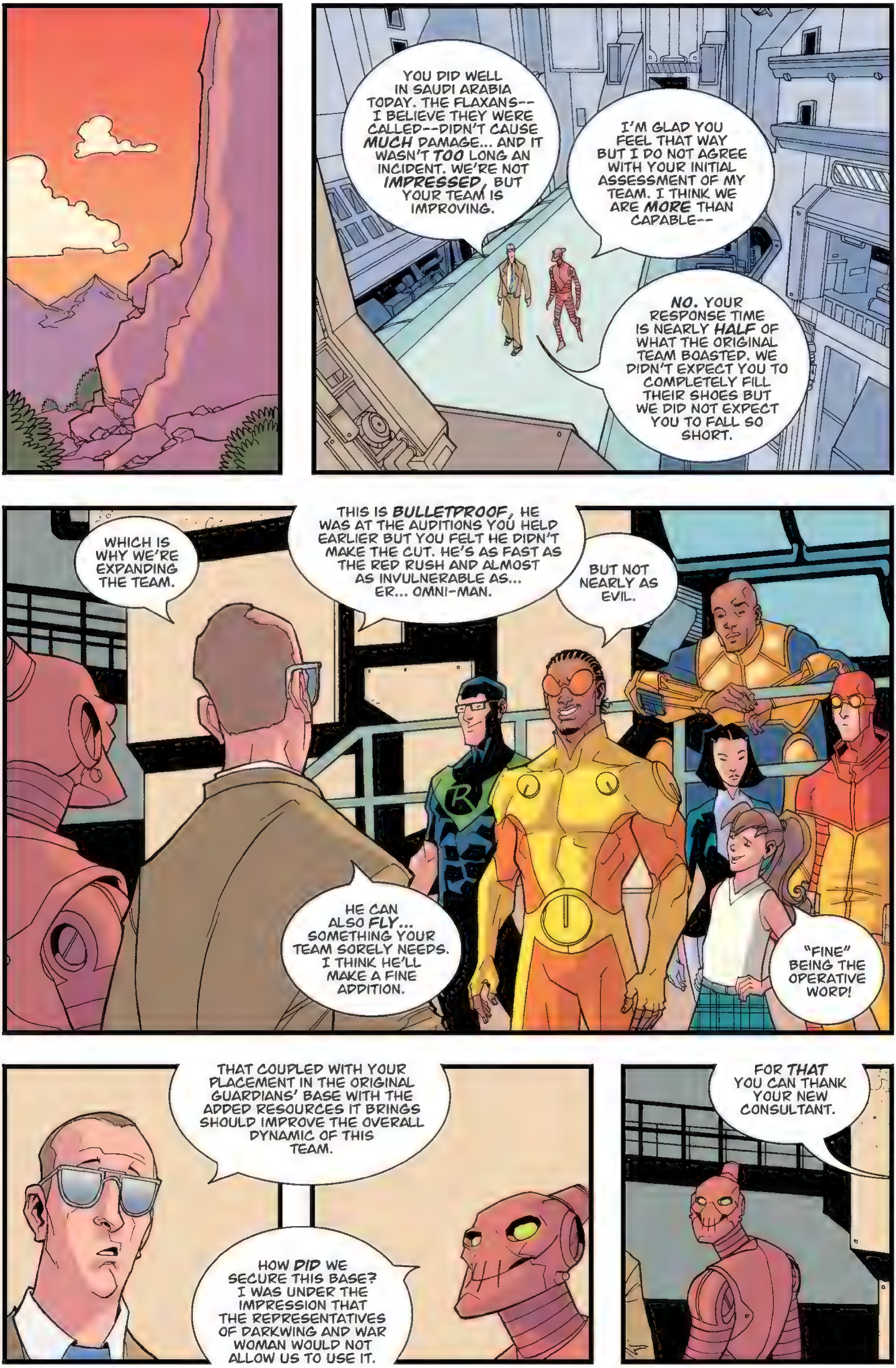

WILLIAM...
...AND EVE?
MARK!!
HUH?
?
AMBER! HEY.
NONE OF THAT PDA, YOU TWO! GET TO CLASS!
YES, MA'AM.
I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU. I HEARD ABOUT YOUR DAD... AND I'M SO SORRY THAT HAPPENED... BUT THEN WHEN YOU WERE OUT OF SCHOOL FOR SO LONG...
I KNOW... I MISSED YOU A LOT. MY MOM AND I WERE OUT OF TOWN FOR QUITE A WHILE FOR THE FUNERAL. MY DAD, UH... WASN'T FROM AROUND HERE...
CAN I COME OVER TONIGHT? I REALLY WANT TO SEE YOU.
I DON'T KNOW... I'M NOT SURE IF MY MOM IS UP FOR VISITORS JUST YET. I'LL CALL YOU, OKAY? I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW THINGS ARE...
I'VE GOT TO GO TALK TO PRINCIPAL WINSLOW NOW... BEFORE I'M TOO LATE FOR CLASS. I'LL CALL YOU.
OKAY.
I'LL TALK TO YOU LATER.

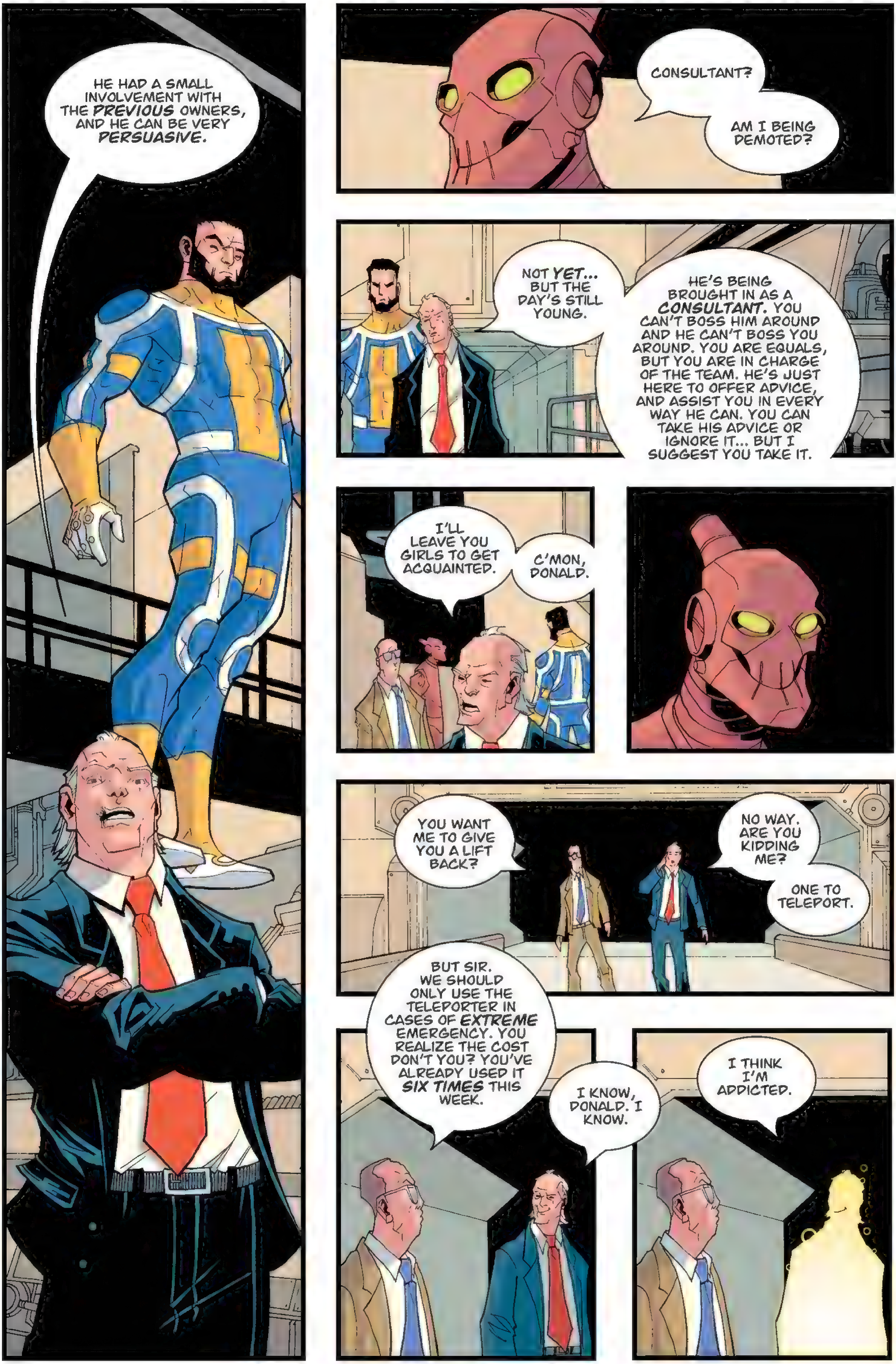

MARK, THANKS FOR COMING BY. I JUST WANTED TO CHAT WITH YOU ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS. I'VE BEEN MADE AWARE OF EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN GOING ON WITH YOU AND I'D LIKE TO OFFER MY CONDOLENCES FOR YOUR LOSS.
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
I ONLY MET YOUR FATHER ONCE AT A PTA MEETING WHEN YOU WERE A FRESHMAN, BUT I COULD TELL JUST FROM THAT BRIEF MEETING THAT HE WAS A GOOD MAN.
I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT I'VE GOT AN UNCANNY ABILITY FOR JUDGING THE CHARACTER OF A PERSON.
RIGHT. WELL THANKS, SIR.
WINSLOW
I'M NOT DONE YET, MARK. I WAS TOLD YOU GOT A FULL SCHOLARSHIP TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY AND I WANTED TO CONGRATULATE YOU. YOU'VE MADE A GOOD CHOICE, THAT'S A FINE SCHOOL... AND IT SEEMS YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD HAS REALLY IMPRESSED THEM.
BUT... YOUR SENIOR YEAR ISN'T OVER JUST YET.
I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE MAKE-UP WORK, SIR. BUT I'VE ONLY BEEN BACK ONE DAY... I'LL DO MY BEST, I--
I KNOW, SON. DON'T WORRY. WHAT I WAS GETTING AT IS THAT YOU'VE MISSED A LITTLE OVER THREE WEEKS OF SCHOOL... THAT'S A *LOT* TO MAKE UP. WHILE I CAN'T MAKE ALL THAT WORK JUST GO AWAY I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT WE IN THE FACULTY KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH... AND WE *WANT* YOU TO GRADUATE AS PLANNED.
WE'LL GIVE YOU TIME TO MAKE UP THE WORK.
THANKS, SIR.
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT HERE, MARK.

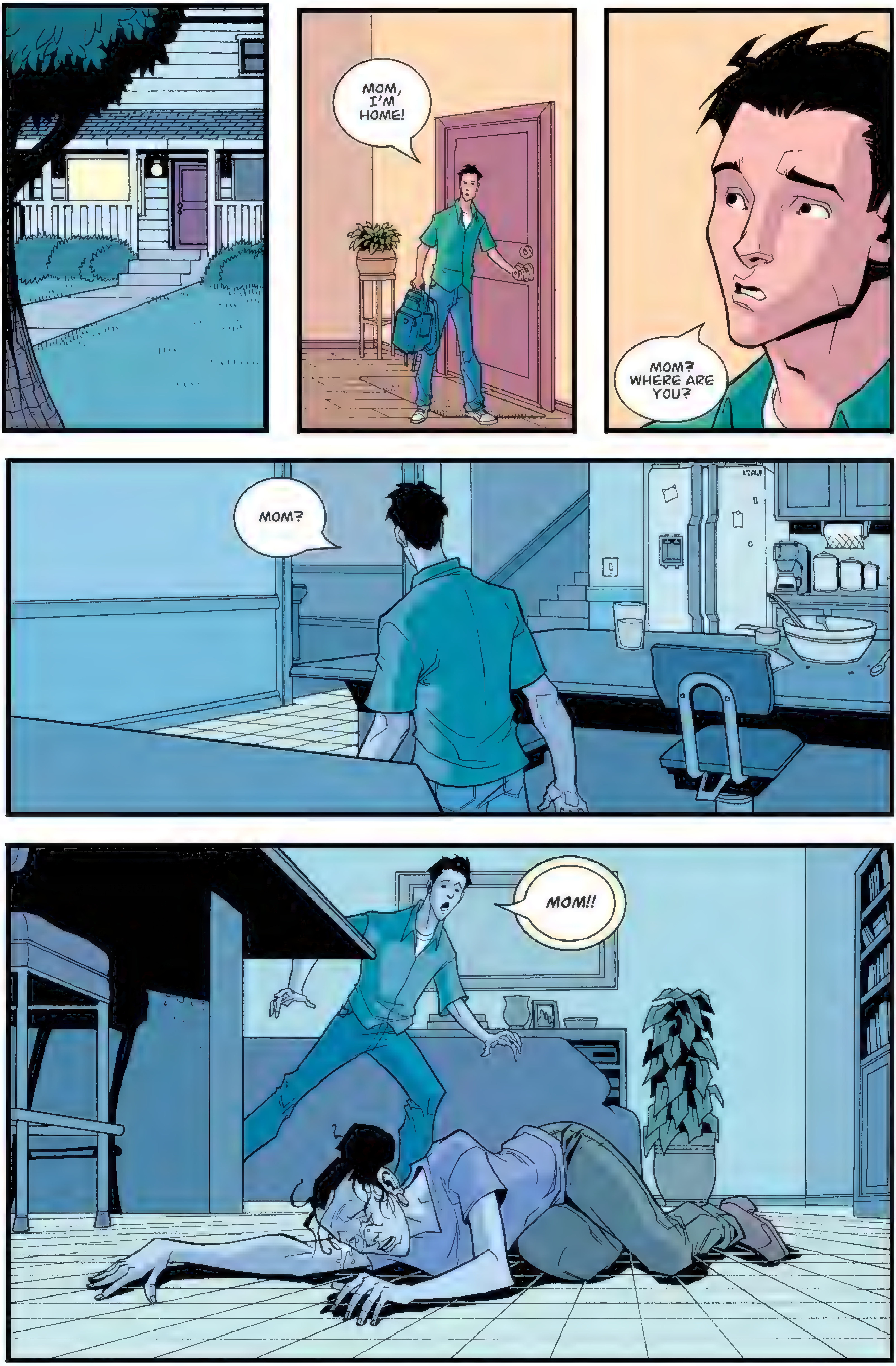

BM
OH, MAN... HERE HE IS.
HEY, GUYS.
NK YOU
I--I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D SHOW, MAN. I THOUGHT YOU'D STILL BE PISSED OFF.
IT'S OKAY WILLIAM. I'M OVER THAT NOW. I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN AS MAD AS I DID TO BEGIN WITH.
NO WAY, DUDE. I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU GOT SO MAD. I WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF LINE. YOU HAD EVERY RIGHT TO BE PISSED.
THAT MAY BE TRUE... BUT THE THING IS, WE'RE ALL TOO YOUNG FOR ANY OF THIS STUFF TO BE HAPPENING TO US. WE'VE GOT NO EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH THESE SITUATIONS. I CAN'T REALLY BLAME YOU. I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW I SHOULD BE ACTING EITHER.
THIS IS ALL NEW TO ME.

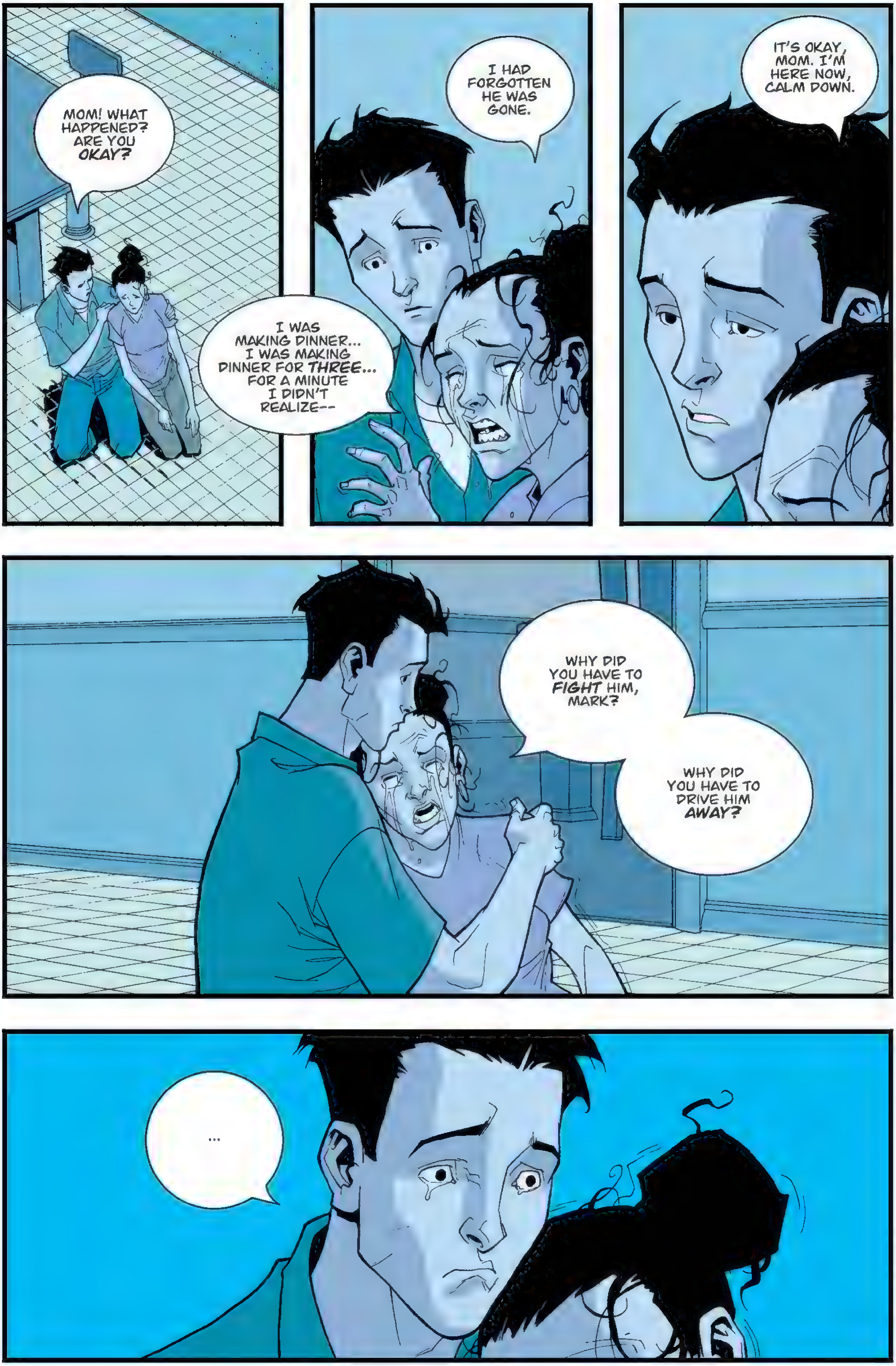

STILL, MAN... I WANT YOU TO KNOW... I'M REALLY SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BRING IT UP LIKE THAT.
OKAY, MAN... **ENOUGH**. LET'S GET TO THE GOOD STUFF. YOU AND **EVE**... WHAT'S UP WITH **THAT?**
WILD, HUH?
YEAH, TO SAY THE **LEAST**. I WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED THAT IN A MILLION YEARS.
OH, COME ON, GUYS! IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO BELIEVE. EVE AND I ARE--
OH, CRAP.
WHAT? WHAT'D I SAY? WHAT'S GOING ON?
I THINK HE MEANS **ME**.
DAN


HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN HERE SINCE YOU *QUIT*, MARK. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? DID YOU EVER GET A NEW JOB?
IF SO, I SEE YOU WERE SMART ENOUGH *NOT* TO PUT ME DOWN AS A REFERENCE.
DAN
PLEASE. CAN WE DO THIS ANOTHER TIME?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, MARK? YOU NOT UP FOR A CONFRONTATION? YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST LEAVE ME HANGING LIKE YOU DID WHEN YOU QUIT AND JUST NEVER HAVE TO FACE ME? THINK AGAIN KID!
LOOK, *JERKFACE...* HE'S *NOT* IN THE *MOOD* FOR THIS. WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE HIM *ALONE?!*
KID I COULD HAVE YOU THROWN OUT FOR RAISING YOUR VOICE TO ME. YOU BETTER--
DID YOU JUST CALL ME "JERKFACE?"
SIGH.

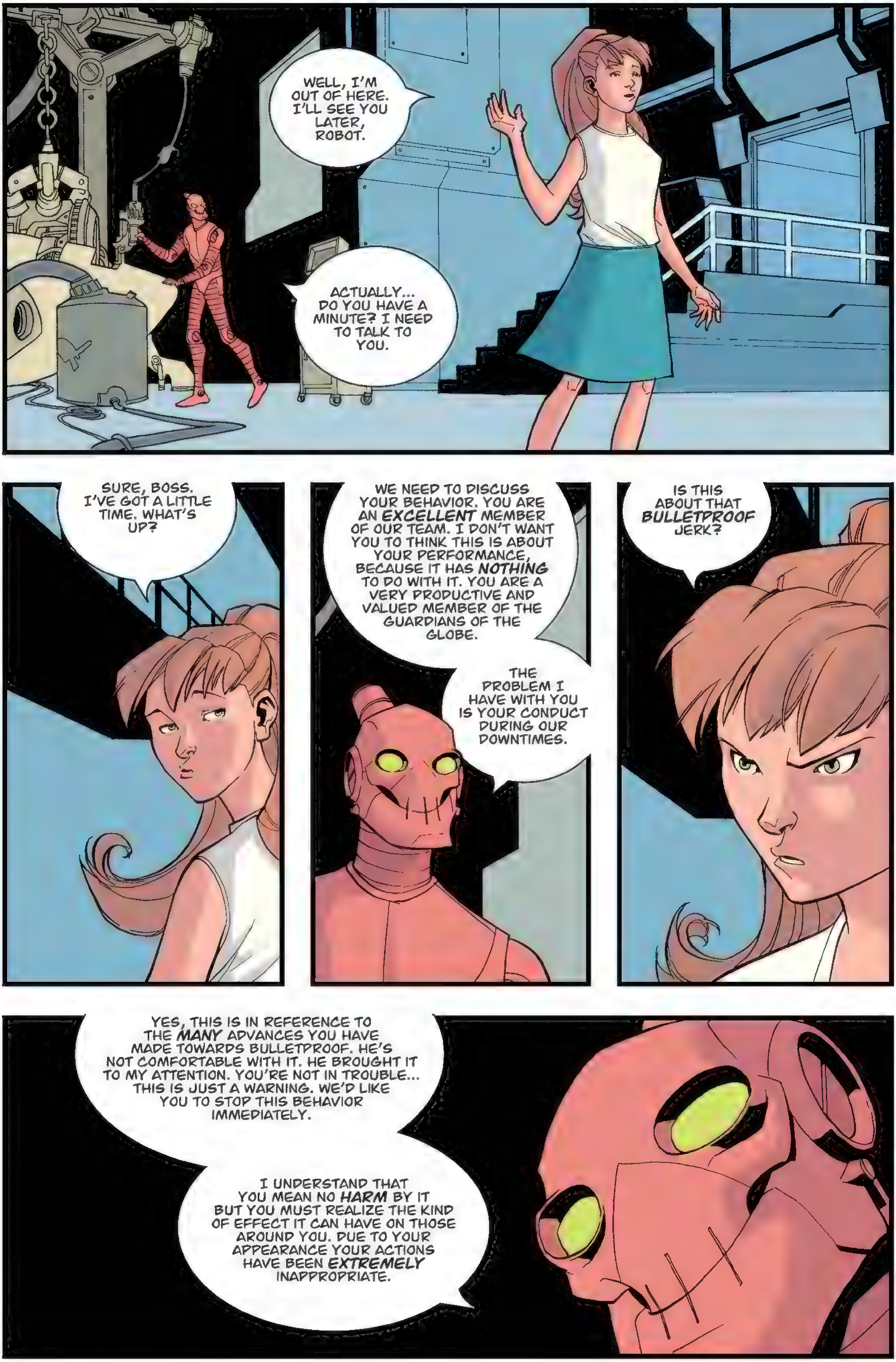

YOU DID WELL IN SAUDI ARABIA TODAY. THE FLAXANS--I BELIEVE THEY WERE CALLED--DIDN'T CAUSE *MUCH* DAMAGE... AND IT WASN'T *TOO* LONG AN INCIDENT. WE'RE NOT *IMPRESSED*, BUT YOUR TEAM IS IMPROVING.
I'M GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY BUT I DO NOT AGREE WITH YOUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF MY TEAM. I THINK WE ARE *MORE* THAN CAPABLE--
NO. YOUR RESPONSE TIME IS NEARLY *HALF* OF WHAT THE ORIGINAL TEAM BOASTED. WE DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COMPLETELY FILL THEIR SHOES BUT WE DID NOT EXPECT YOU TO FALL SO SHORT.
WHICH IS WHY WE'RE EXPANDING THE TEAM.
THIS IS *BULLETPROOF*, HE WAS AT THE AUDITIONS YOU HELD EARLIER BUT YOU FELT HE DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT. HE'S AS FAST AS THE RED RUSH AND ALMOST AS INVULNERABLE AS... ER... OMNI-MAN.
BUT NOT NEARLY AS EVIL.
HE CAN ALSO *FLY*... SOMETHING YOUR TEAM SORELY NEEDS. I THINK HE'LL MAKE A FINE ADDITION.
"FINE" BEING THE OPERATIVE WORD!
THAT COUPLED WITH YOUR PLACEMENT IN THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS' BASE WITH THE ADDED RESOURCES IT BRINGS SHOULD IMPROVE THE OVERALL DYNAMIC OF THIS TEAM.
HOW *DID* WE SECURE THIS BASE? I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF DARKWING AND WAR WOMAN WOULD NOT ALLOW US TO USE IT.
FOR *THAT* YOU CAN THANK YOUR NEW CONSULTANT.

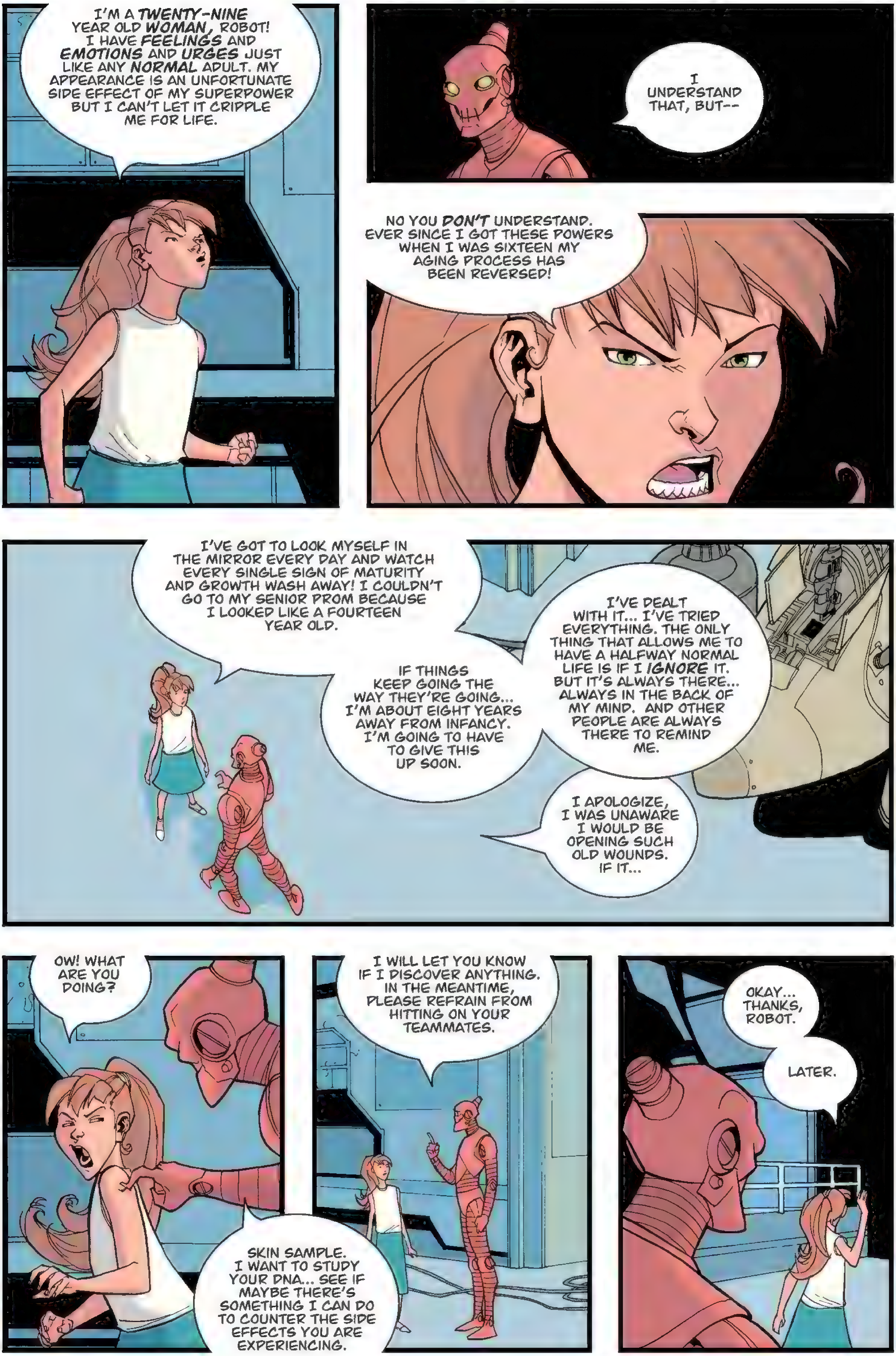

HE HAD A SMALL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE *PREVIOUS* OWNERS, AND HE CAN BE VERY *PERSUASIVE.*
CONSULTANT?
AM I BEING DEMOTED?
NOT *YET*... BUT THE DAY'S STILL YOUNG.
HE'S BEING BROUGHT IN AS A *CONSULTANT.* YOU CAN'T BOSS HIM AROUND AND HE CAN'T BOSS YOU AROUND. YOU ARE EQUALS, BUT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE TEAM. HE'S JUST HERE TO OFFER ADVICE, AND ASSIST YOU IN EVERY WAY HE CAN. YOU CAN TAKE HIS ADVICE OR IGNORE IT... BUT I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT.
I'LL LEAVE YOU GIRLS TO GET ACQUAINTED.
C'MON, DONALD.
YOU WANT ME TO GIVE YOU A LIFT BACK?
NO WAY. ARE YOU KIDDING ME?
ONE TO TELEPORT.
BUT SIR, WE SHOULD ONLY USE THE TELEPORTER IN CASES OF *EXTREME* EMERGENCY. YOU REALIZE THE COST DON'T YOU? YOU'VE ALREADY USED IT *SIX TIMES* THIS WEEK.
I KNOW, DONALD. I KNOW.
I THINK I'M ADDICTED.

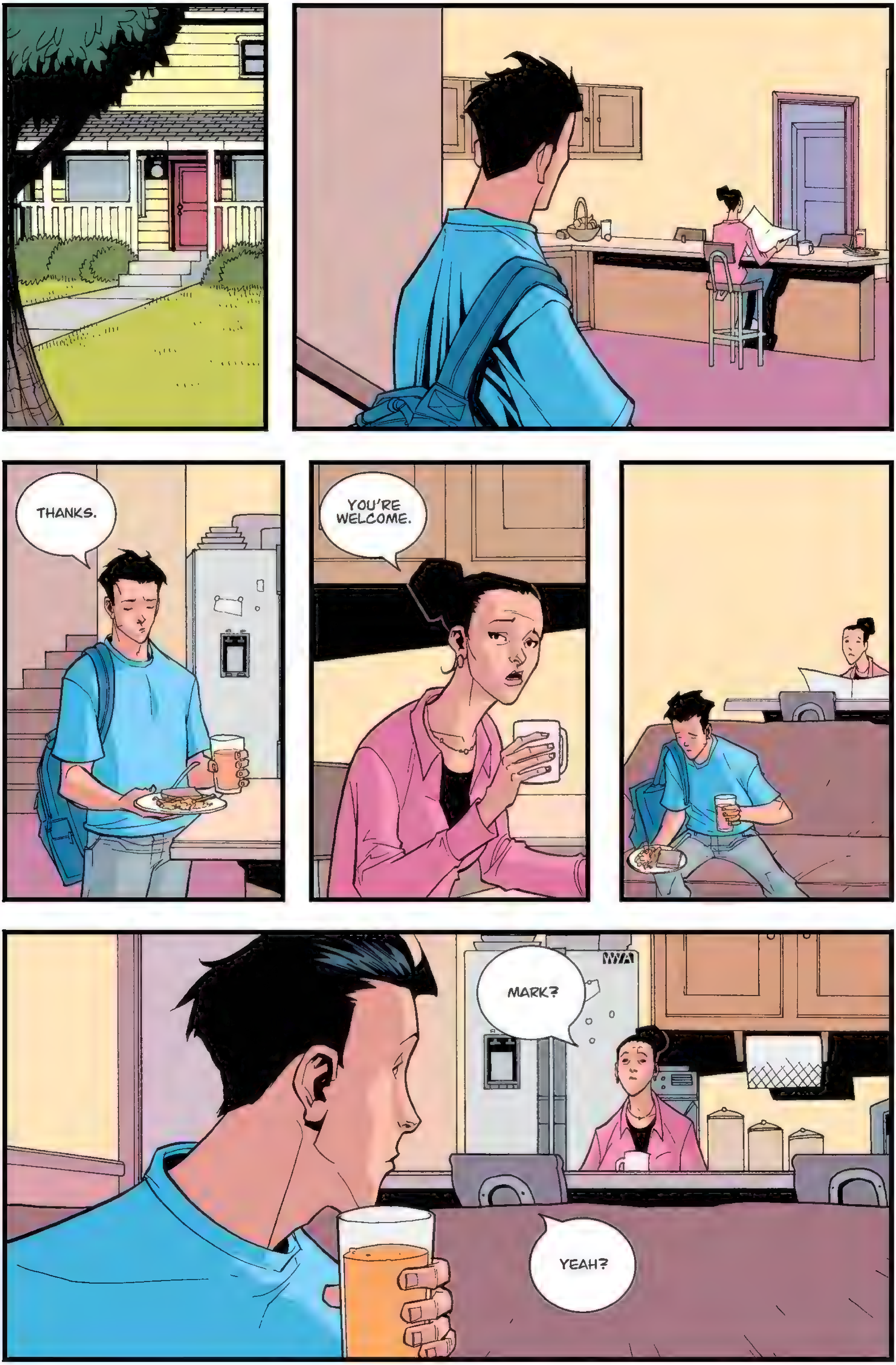

MOM, I'M HOME!
MOM? WHERE ARE YOU?
MOM?
MOM!!

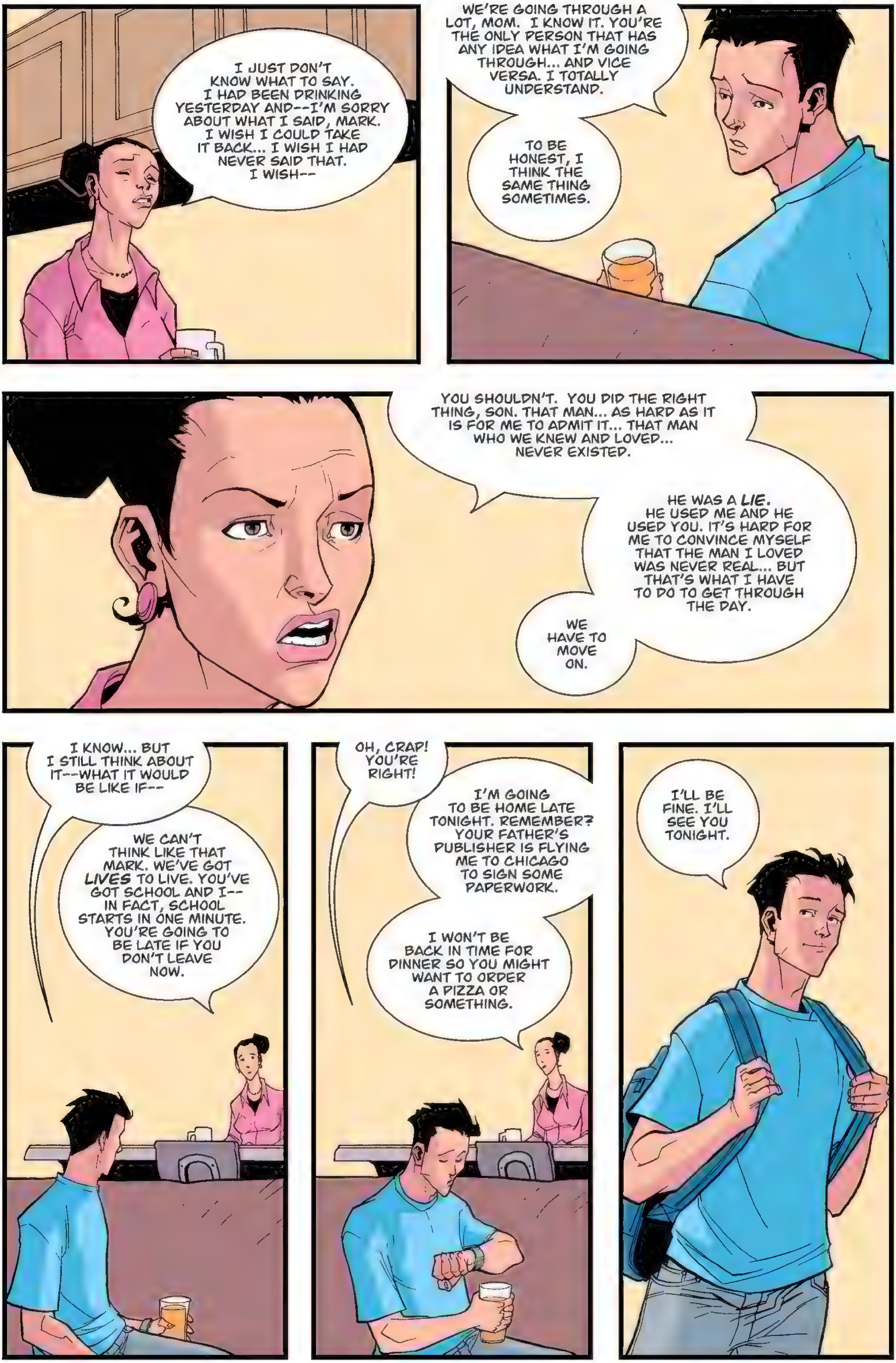

MOM! WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU *OKAY?*
I HAD FORGOTTEN HE WAS GONE.
I WAS MAKING DINNER... I WAS MAKING DINNER FOR *THREE*... FOR A MINUTE I DIDN'T REALIZE--
IT'S OKAY, MOM. I'M HERE NOW, CALM DOWN.
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO *FIGHT* HIM, MARK?
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DRIVE HIM *AWAY?*
...

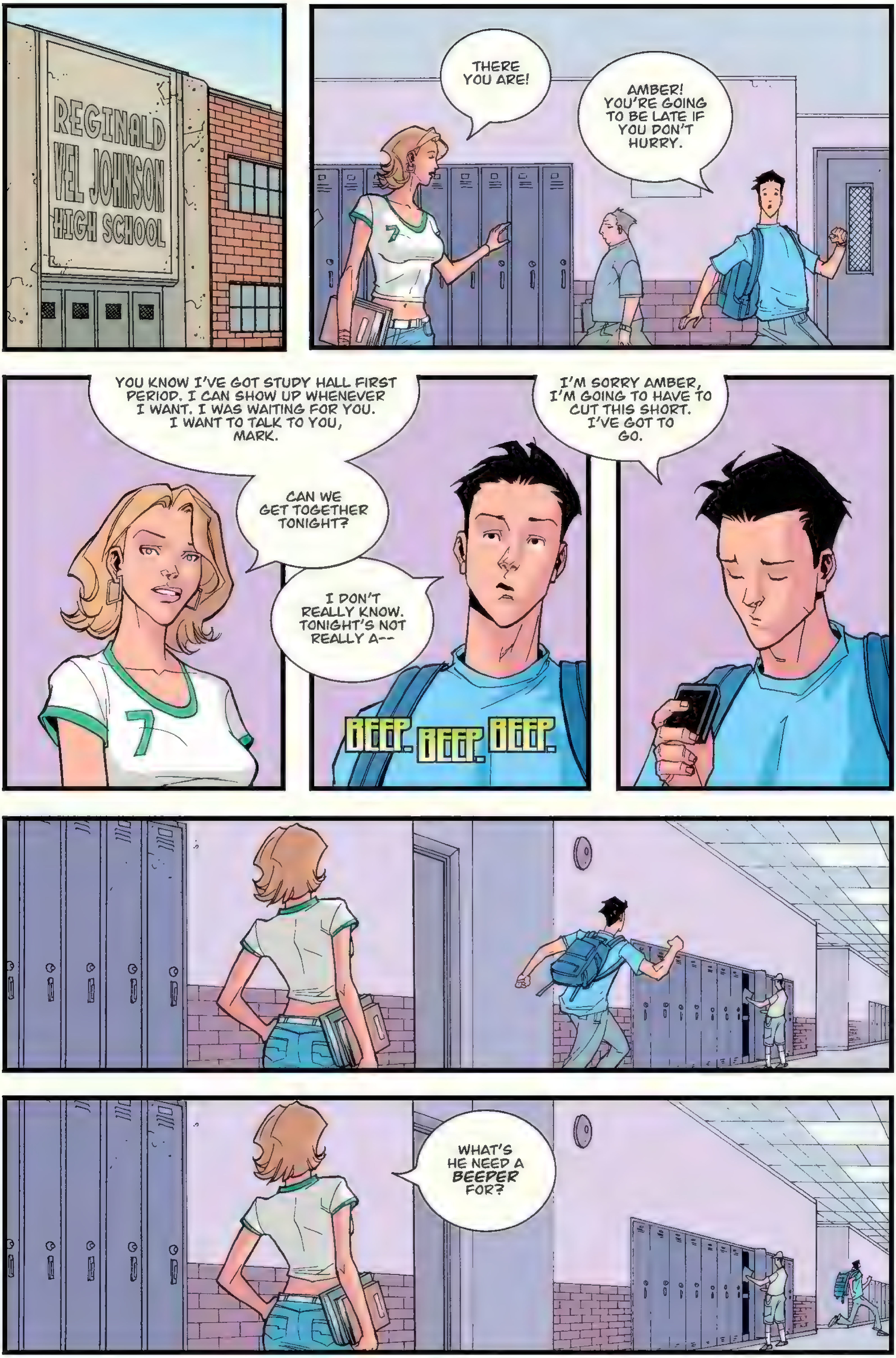
ISSUE FIFTEEN

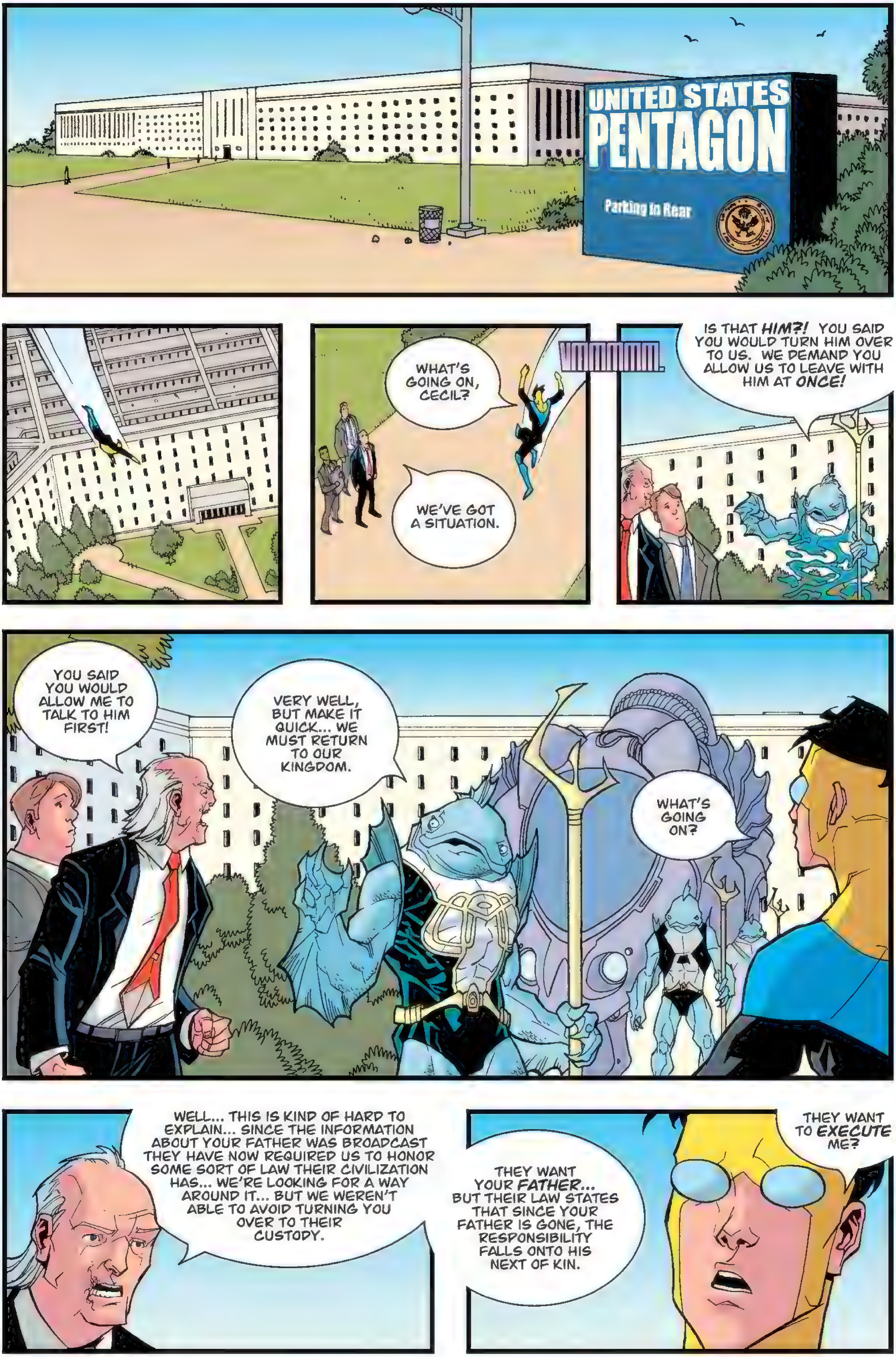

WELL, I'M OUT OF HERE. I'LL SEE YOU LATER, ROBOT.
ACTUALLY... DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE? I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.
SURE, BOSS. I'VE GOT A LITTLE TIME. WHAT'S UP?
WE NEED TO DISCUSS YOUR BEHAVIOR. YOU ARE AN *EXCELLENT* MEMBER OF OUR TEAM. I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK THIS IS ABOUT YOUR PERFORMANCE, BECAUSE IT HAS *NOTHING* TO DO WITH IT. YOU ARE A VERY PRODUCTIVE AND VALUED MEMBER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
THE PROBLEM I HAVE WITH YOU IS YOUR CONDUCT DURING OUR DOWNTIMES.
IS THIS ABOUT THAT *BULLETPROOF* JERK?
YES, THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO THE *MANY* ADVANCES YOU HAVE MADE TOWARDS BULLETPROOF. HE'S NOT COMFORTABLE WITH IT. HE BROUGHT IT TO MY ATTENTION. YOU'RE NOT IN TROUBLE... THIS IS JUST A WARNING. WE'D LIKE YOU TO STOP THIS BEHAVIOR IMMEDIATELY.
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU MEAN NO *HARM* BY IT BUT YOU MUST REALIZE THE KIND OF EFFECT IT CAN HAVE ON THOSE AROUND YOU. DUE TO YOUR APPEARANCE YOUR ACTIONS HAVE BEEN *EXTREMELY* INAPPROPRIATE.

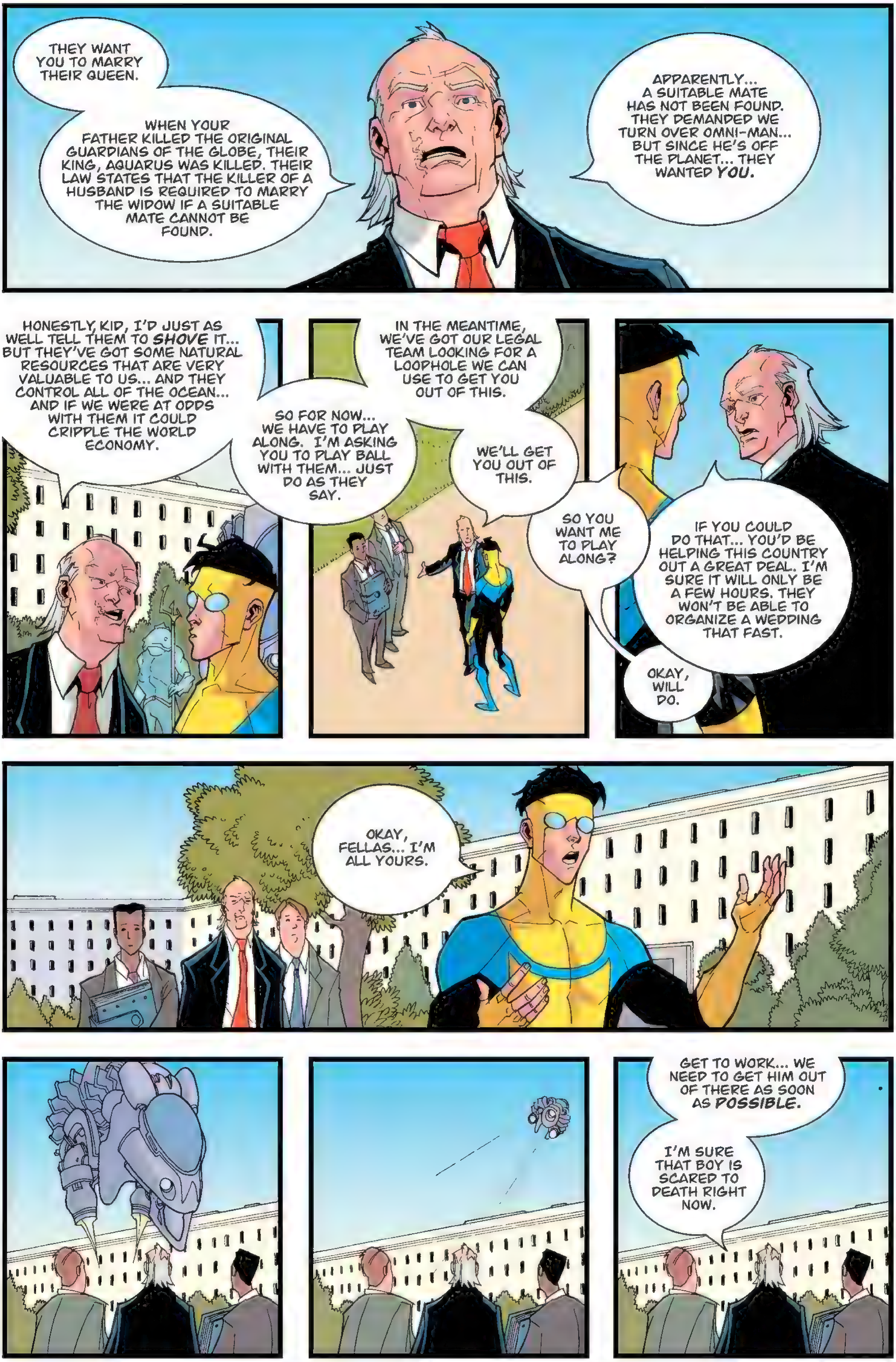

I'M A *TWENTY-NINE* YEAR OLD *WOMAN*, ROBOT! I HAVE *FEELINGS* AND *EMOTIONS* AND *URGES* JUST LIKE ANY *NORMAL* ADULT. MY APPEARANCE IS AN UNFORTUNATE SIDE EFFECT OF MY SUPERPOWER BUT I CAN'T LET IT CRIPPLE ME FOR LIFE.
I UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT--
NO YOU *DON'T* UNDERSTAND. EVER SINCE I GOT THESE POWERS WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN MY AGING PROCESS HAS BEEN REVERSED!
I'VE GOT TO LOOK MYSELF IN THE MIRROR EVERY DAY AND WATCH EVERY SINGLE SIGN OF MATURITY AND GROWTH WASH AWAY! I COULDN'T GO TO MY SENIOR PROM BECAUSE I LOOKED LIKE A FOURTEEN YEAR OLD.
IF THINGS KEEP GOING THE WAY THEY'RE GOING... I'M ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM INFANCY. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE THIS UP SOON.
I'VE DEALT WITH IT... I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING. THE ONLY THING THAT ALLOWS ME TO HAVE A HALFWAY NORMAL LIFE IS IF I *IGNORE* IT. BUT IT'S ALWAYS THERE... ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. AND OTHER PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS THERE TO REMIND ME.
I APOLOGIZE, I WAS UNAWARE I WOULD BE OPENING SUCH OLD WOUNDS. IF IT...
OW! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SKIN SAMPLE. I WANT TO STUDY YOUR DNA... SEE IF MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO TO COUNTER THE SIDE EFFECTS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING.
I WILL LET YOU KNOW IF I DISCOVER ANYTHING. IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE REFRAIN FROM HITTING ON YOUR TEAMMATES.
OKAY... THANKS, ROBOT.
LATER.


THANKS.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
MARK?
YEAH?

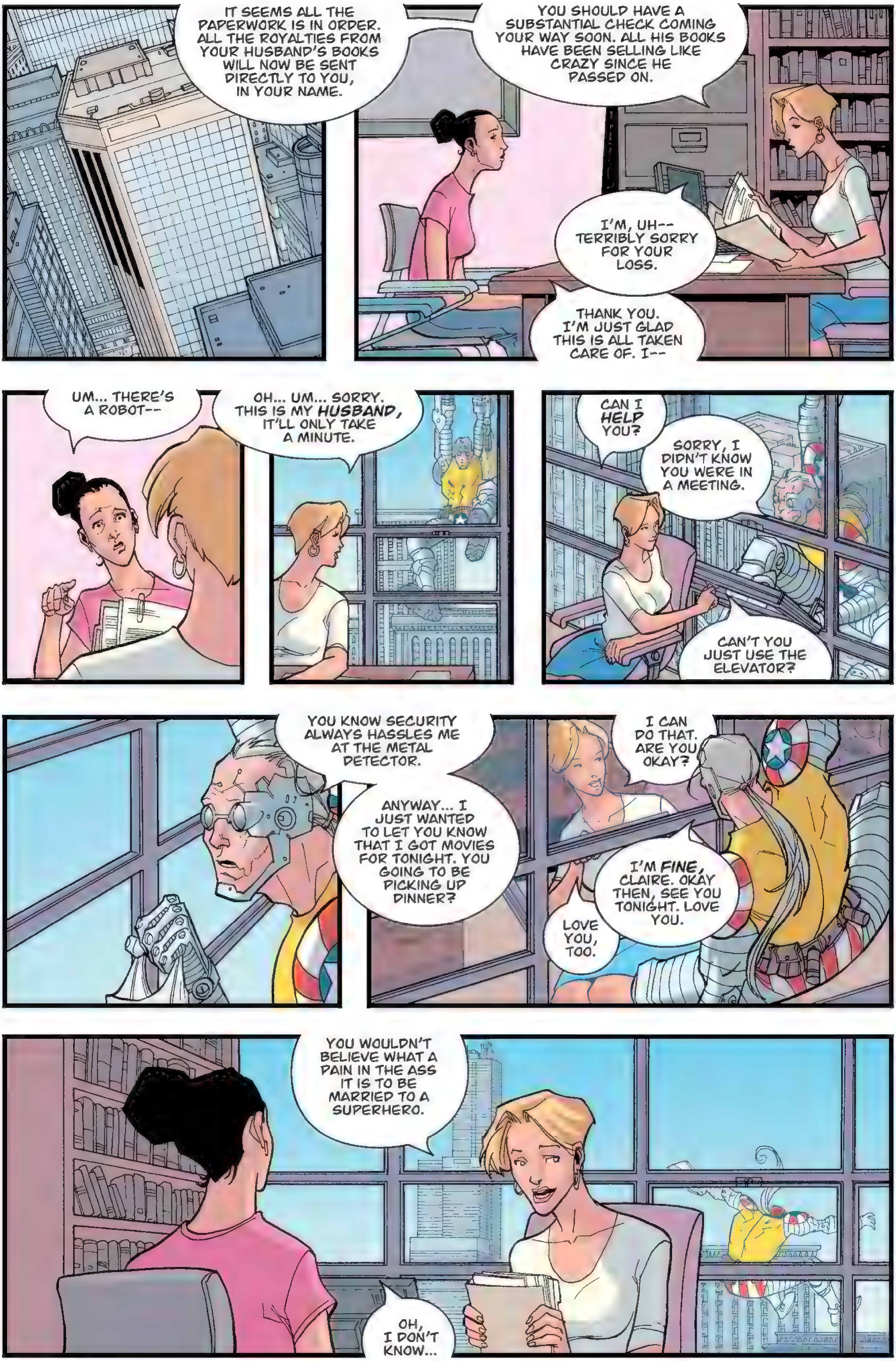

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I HAD BEEN DRINKING YESTERDAY AND--I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT I SAID, MARK. I WISH I COULD TAKE IT BACK... I WISH I HAD NEVER SAID THAT. I WISH--
WE'RE GOING THROUGH A LOT, MOM. I KNOW IT. YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON THAT HAS ANY IDEA WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH... AND VICE VERSA. I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND.
TO BE HONEST, I THINK THE SAME THING SOMETIMES.
YOU SHOULDN'T. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, SON. THAT MAN... AS HARD AS IT IS FOR ME TO ADMIT IT... THAT MAN WHO WE KNEW AND LOVED... NEVER EXISTED.
HE WAS A ***LIE.*** HE USED ME AND HE USED YOU. IT'S HARD FOR ME TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT THE MAN I LOVED WAS NEVER REAL... BUT THAT'S WHAT I HAVE TO DO TO GET THROUGH THE DAY.
WE HAVE TO MOVE ON.
I KNOW... BUT I STILL THINK ABOUT IT--WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF--
WE CAN'T THINK LIKE THAT MARK. WE'VE GOT ***LIVES*** TO LIVE. YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL AND I-- IN FACT, SCHOOL STARTS IN ONE MINUTE. YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE IF YOU DON'T LEAVE NOW.
OH, CRAP! YOU'RE RIGHT!
I'M GOING TO BE HOME LATE TONIGHT. REMEMBER? YOUR FATHER'S PUBLISHER IS FLYING ME TO CHICAGO TO SIGN SOME PAPERWORK.
I WON'T BE BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER SO YOU MIGHT WANT TO ORDER A PIZZA OR SOMETHING.
I'LL BE FINE. I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT.

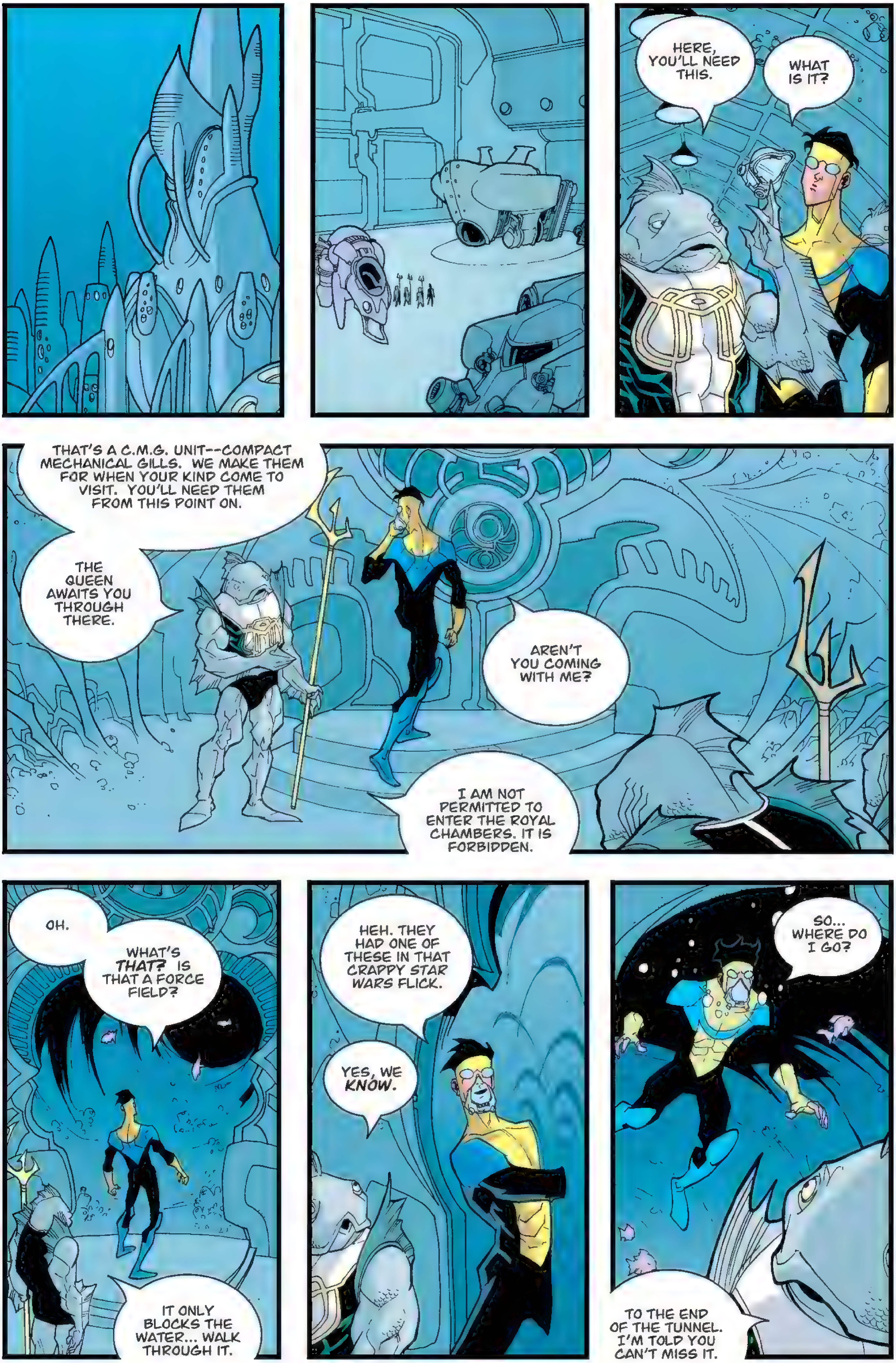

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
THERE YOU ARE!
AMBER! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE IF YOU DON'T HURRY.
YOU KNOW I'VE GOT STUDY HALL FIRST PERIOD. I CAN SHOW UP WHENEVER I WANT. I WAS WAITING FOR YOU. I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, MARK.
CAN WE GET TOGETHER TONIGHT?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW. TONIGHT'S NOT REALLY A--
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
I'M SORRY AMBER, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT THIS SHORT. I'VE GOT TO GO.
WHAT'S HE NEED A BEEPER FOR?

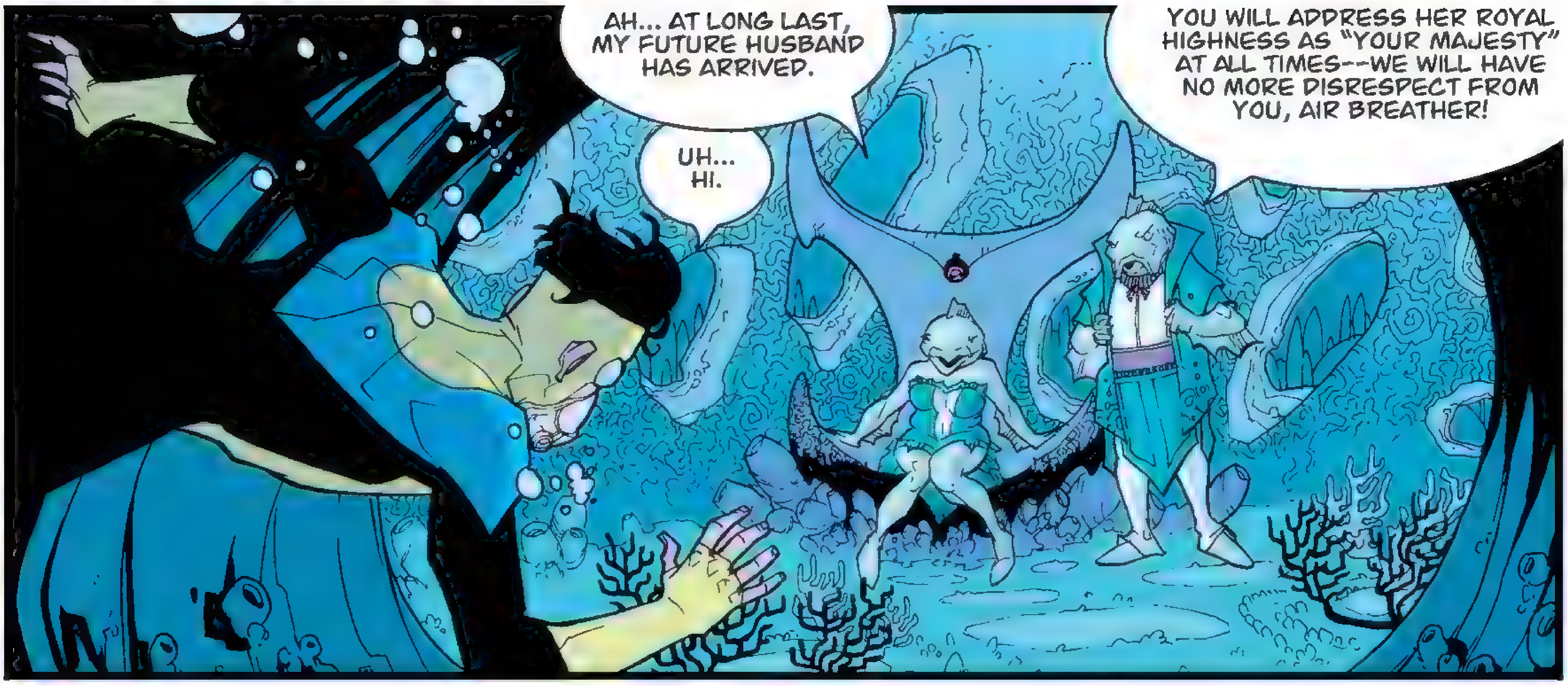

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHAT'S GOING ON, CECIL?
WE'VE GOT A SITUATION.
VMMMMM
IS THAT *HIM?!* YOU SAID YOU WOULD TURN HIM OVER TO US. WE DEMAND YOU ALLOW US TO LEAVE WITH HIM AT *ONCE!*
YOU SAID YOU WOULD ALLOW ME TO TALK TO HIM FIRST!
VERY WELL, BUT MAKE IT QUICK... WE MUST RETURN TO OUR KINGDOM.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WELL... THIS IS KIND OF HARD TO EXPLAIN... SINCE THE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FATHER WAS BROADCAST THEY HAVE NOW REQUIRED US TO HONOR SOME SORT OF LAW THEIR CIVILIZATION HAS... WE'RE LOOKING FOR A WAY AROUND IT... BUT WE WEREN'T ABLE TO AVOID TURNING YOU OVER TO THEIR CUSTODY.
THEY WANT YOUR *FATHER...* BUT THEIR LAW STATES THAT SINCE YOUR FATHER IS GONE, THE RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ONTO HIS NEXT OF KIN.
THEY WANT TO *EXECUTE* ME?

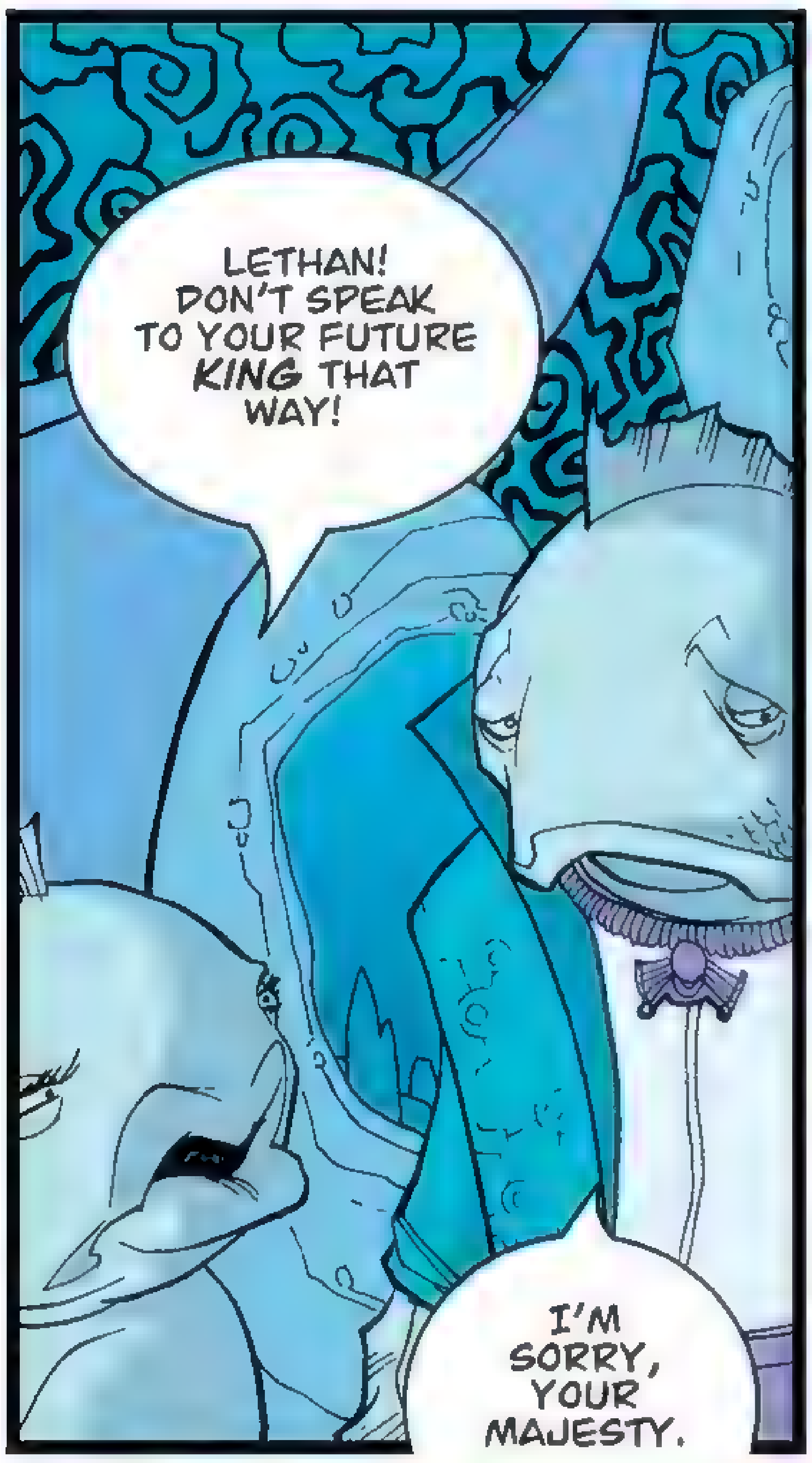

THEY WANT YOU TO MARRY THEIR QUEEN.
WHEN YOUR FATHER KILLED THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, THEIR KING, AQUARUS WAS KILLED. THEIR LAW STATES THAT THE KILLER OF A HUSBAND IS REQUIRED TO MARRY THE WIDOW IF A SUITABLE MATE CANNOT BE FOUND.
APPARENTLY... A SUITABLE MATE HAS NOT BEEN FOUND. THEY DEMANDED WE TURN OVER OMNI-MAN... BUT SINCE HE'S OFF THE PLANET... THEY WANTED *YOU*.
HONESTLY, KID, I'D JUST AS WELL TELL THEM TO *SHOVE* IT... BUT THEY'VE GOT SOME NATURAL RESOURCES THAT ARE VERY VALUABLE TO US... AND THEY CONTROL ALL OF THE OCEAN... AND IF WE WERE AT ODDS WITH THEM IT COULD CRIPPLE THE WORLD ECONOMY.
SO FOR NOW... WE HAVE TO PLAY ALONG. I'M ASKING YOU TO PLAY BALL WITH THEM... JUST DO AS THEY SAY.
IN THE MEANTIME, WE'VE GOT OUR LEGAL TEAM LOOKING FOR A LOOPHOLE WE CAN USE TO GET YOU OUT OF THIS.
WE'LL GET YOU OUT OF THIS.
SO YOU WANT ME TO PLAY ALONG?
IF YOU COULD DO THAT... YOU'D BE HELPING THIS COUNTRY OUT A GREAT DEAL. I'M SURE IT WILL ONLY BE A FEW HOURS. THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO ORGANIZE A WEDDING THAT FAST.
OKAY, WILL DO.
OKAY, FELLAS... I'M ALL YOURS.
GET TO WORK... WE NEED TO GET HIM OUT OF THERE AS SOON AS *POSSIBLE*.
I'M SURE THAT BOY IS SCARED TO DEATH RIGHT NOW.

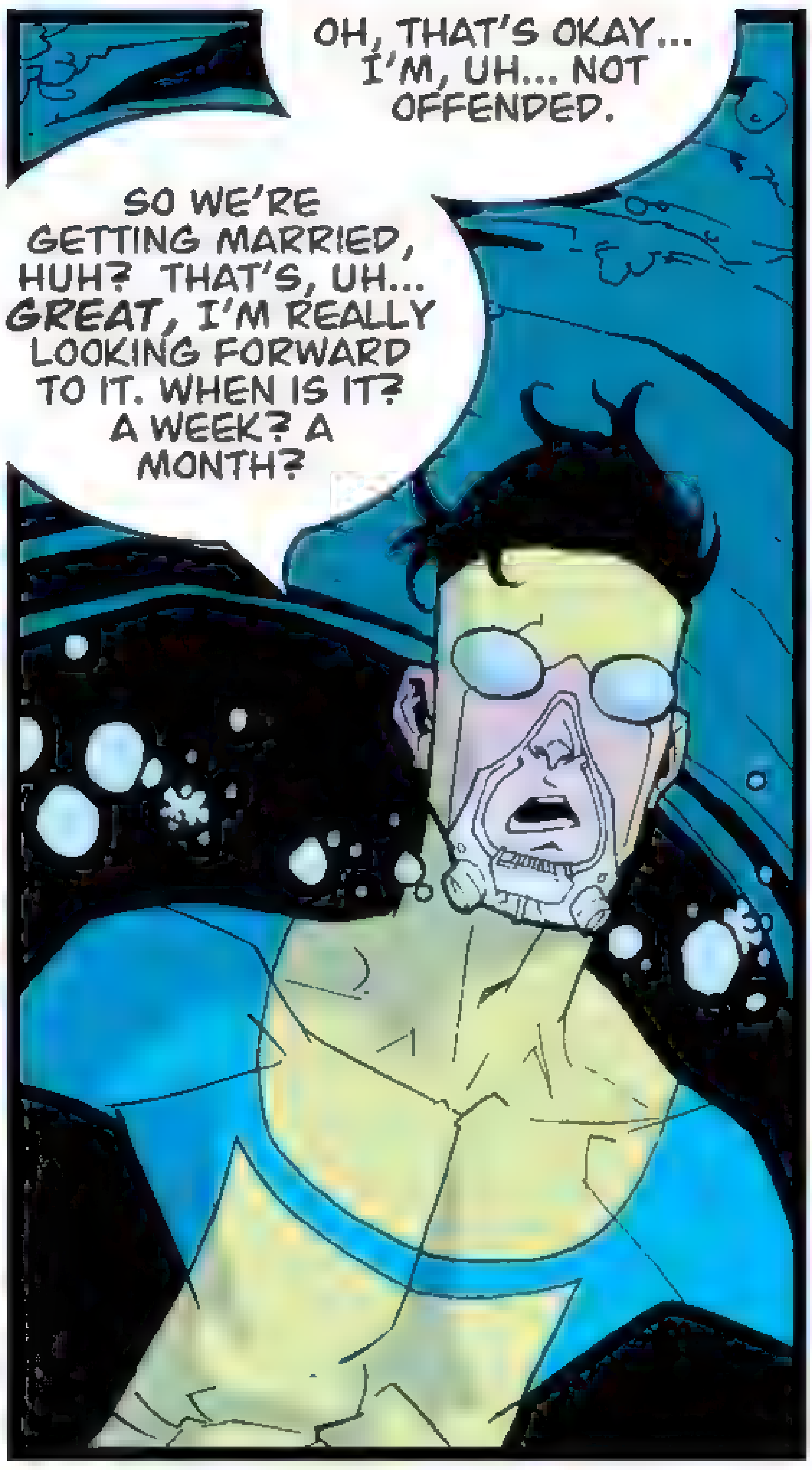
WOW.
THIS IS SO COOL.

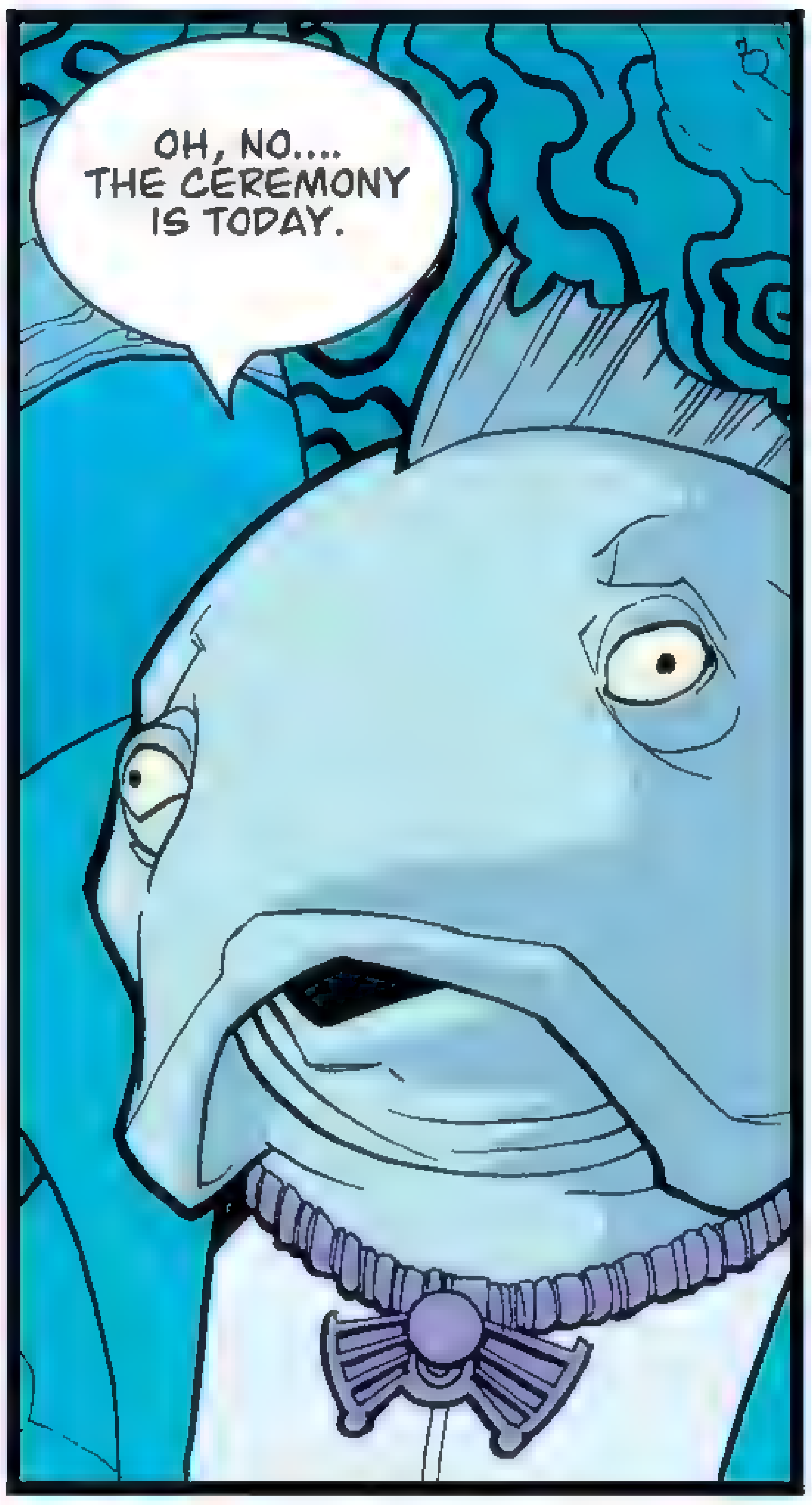

IT SEEMS ALL THE PAPERWORK IS IN ORDER. ALL THE ROYALTIES FROM YOUR HUSBAND'S BOOKS WILL NOW BE SENT DIRECTLY TO YOU, IN YOUR NAME.
YOU SHOULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL CHECK COMING YOUR WAY SOON. ALL HIS BOOKS HAVE BEEN SELLING LIKE CRAZY SINCE HE PASSED ON.
I'M, UH-- TERRIBLY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.
THANK YOU. I'M JUST GLAD THIS IS ALL TAKEN CARE OF. I--
UM... THERE'S A ROBOT--
OH... UM... SORRY. THIS IS MY *HUSBAND*, IT'LL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE.
CAN I *HELP* YOU?
SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN A MEETING.
CAN'T YOU JUST USE THE ELEVATOR?
YOU KNOW SECURITY ALWAYS HASSLES ME AT THE METAL DETECTOR.
ANYWAY... I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I GOT MOVIES FOR TONIGHT. YOU GOING TO BE PICKING UP DINNER?
I CAN DO THAT. ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M *FINE*, CLAIRE. OKAY THEN, SEE YOU TONIGHT. LOVE YOU.
LOVE YOU, TOO.
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS IT IS TO BE MARRIED TO A SUPERHERO.
OH, I DON'T KNOW...

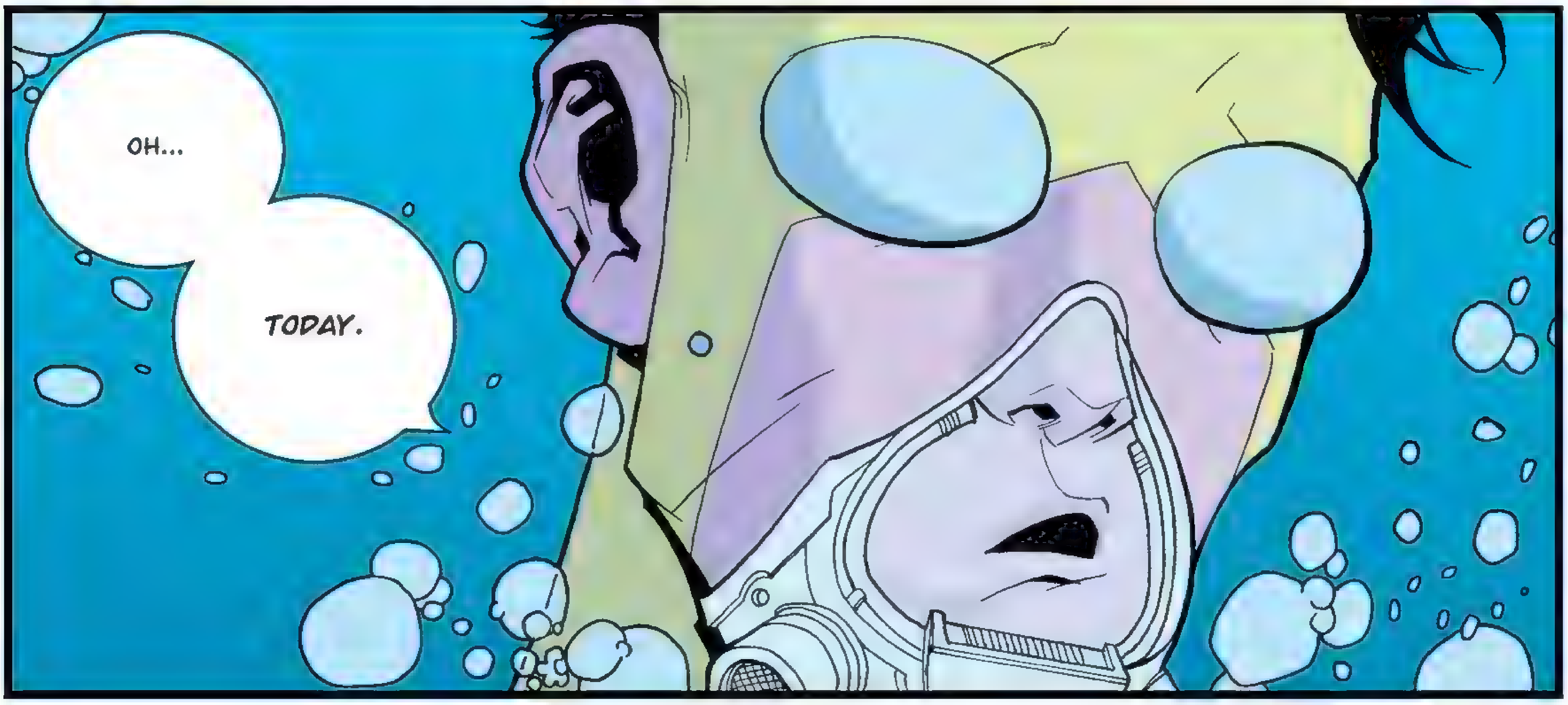

HERE, YOU'LL NEED THIS.
WHAT IS IT?
THAT'S A C.M.G. UNIT--COMPACT MECHANICAL GILLS. WE MAKE THEM FOR WHEN YOUR KIND COME TO VISIT. YOU'LL NEED THEM FROM THIS POINT ON.
THE QUEEN AWAITS YOU THROUGH THERE.
AREN'T YOU COMING WITH ME?
I AM NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THE ROYAL CHAMBERS. IT IS FORBIDDEN.
OH.
WHAT'S *THAT?* IS THAT A FORCE FIELD?
IT ONLY BLOCKS THE WATER... WALK THROUGH IT.
HEH. THEY HAD ONE OF THESE IN THAT CRAPPY STAR WARS FLICK.
YES, WE *KNOW*.
SO... WHERE DO I GO?
TO THE END OF THE TUNNEL. I'M TOLD YOU CAN'T MISS IT.

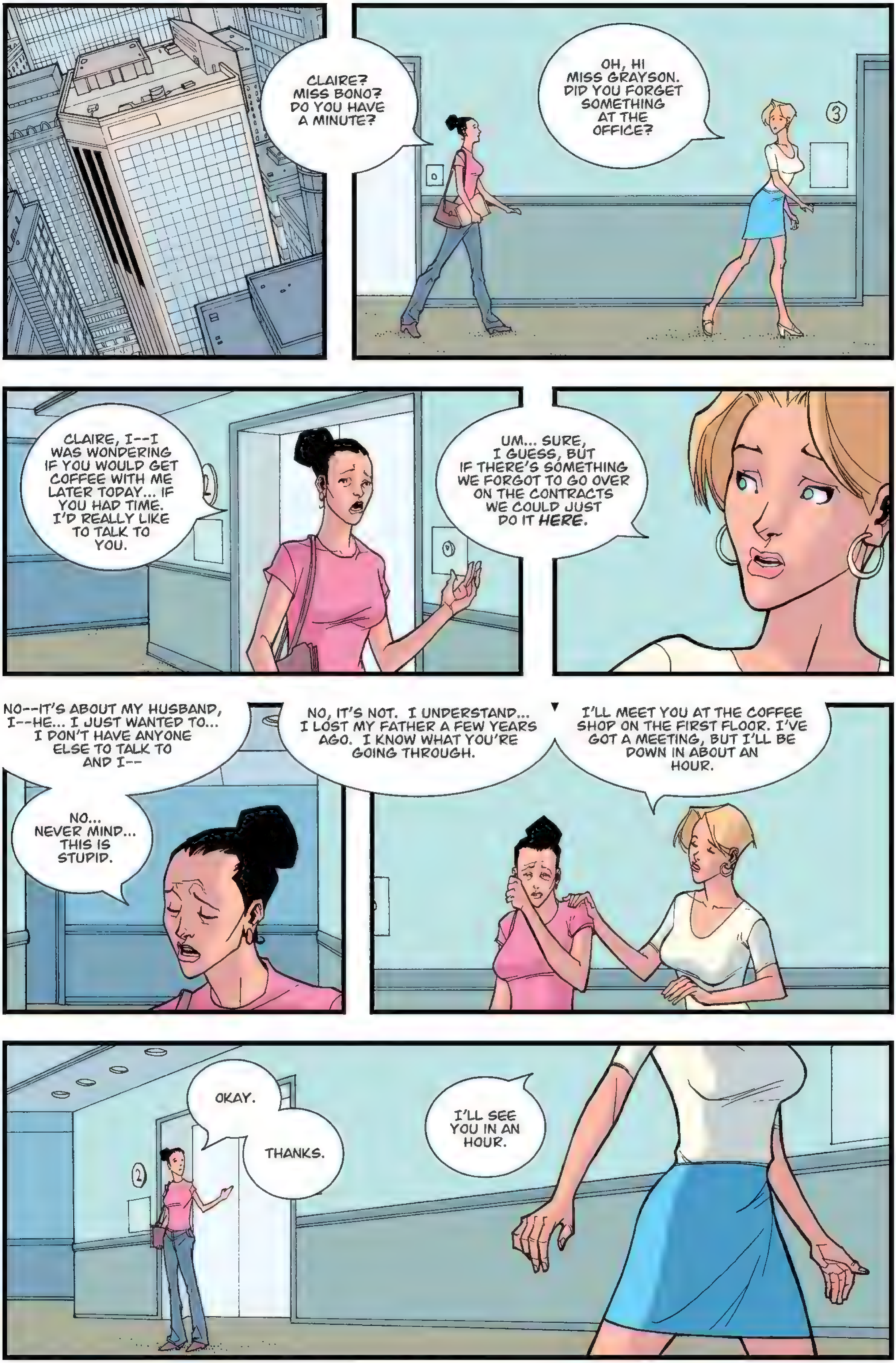

AH... AT LONG LAST, MY FUTURE HUSBAND HAS ARRIVED.
UH... HI.
YOU WILL ADDRESS HER ROYAL HIGHNESS AS "YOUR MAJESTY" AT ALL TIMES--WE WILL HAVE NO MORE DISRESPECT FROM YOU, AIR BREATHER!

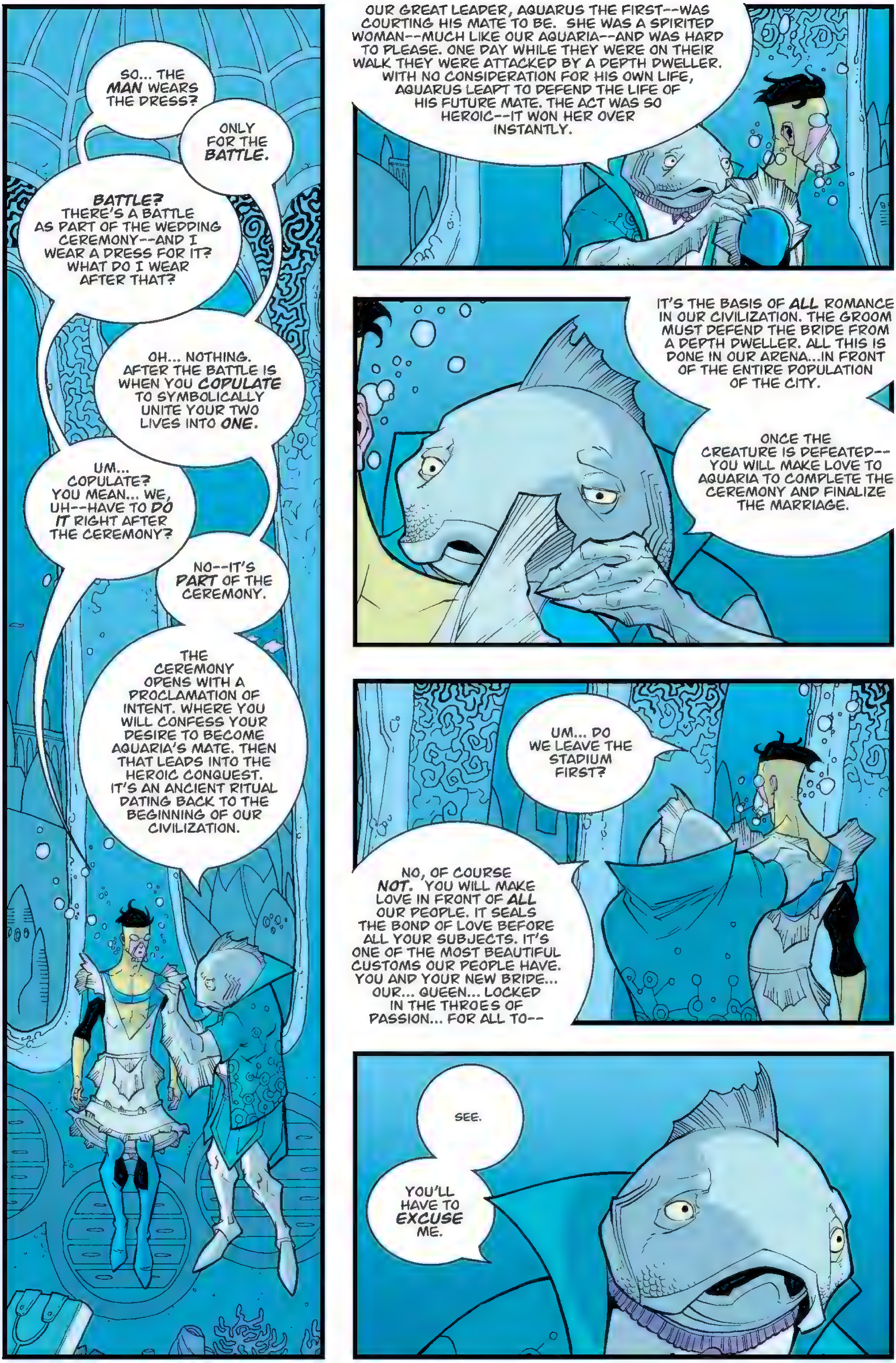

LETHAN! DON'T SPEAK TO YOUR FUTURE ***KING*** THAT WAY!
I'M SORRY, YOUR MAJESTY.

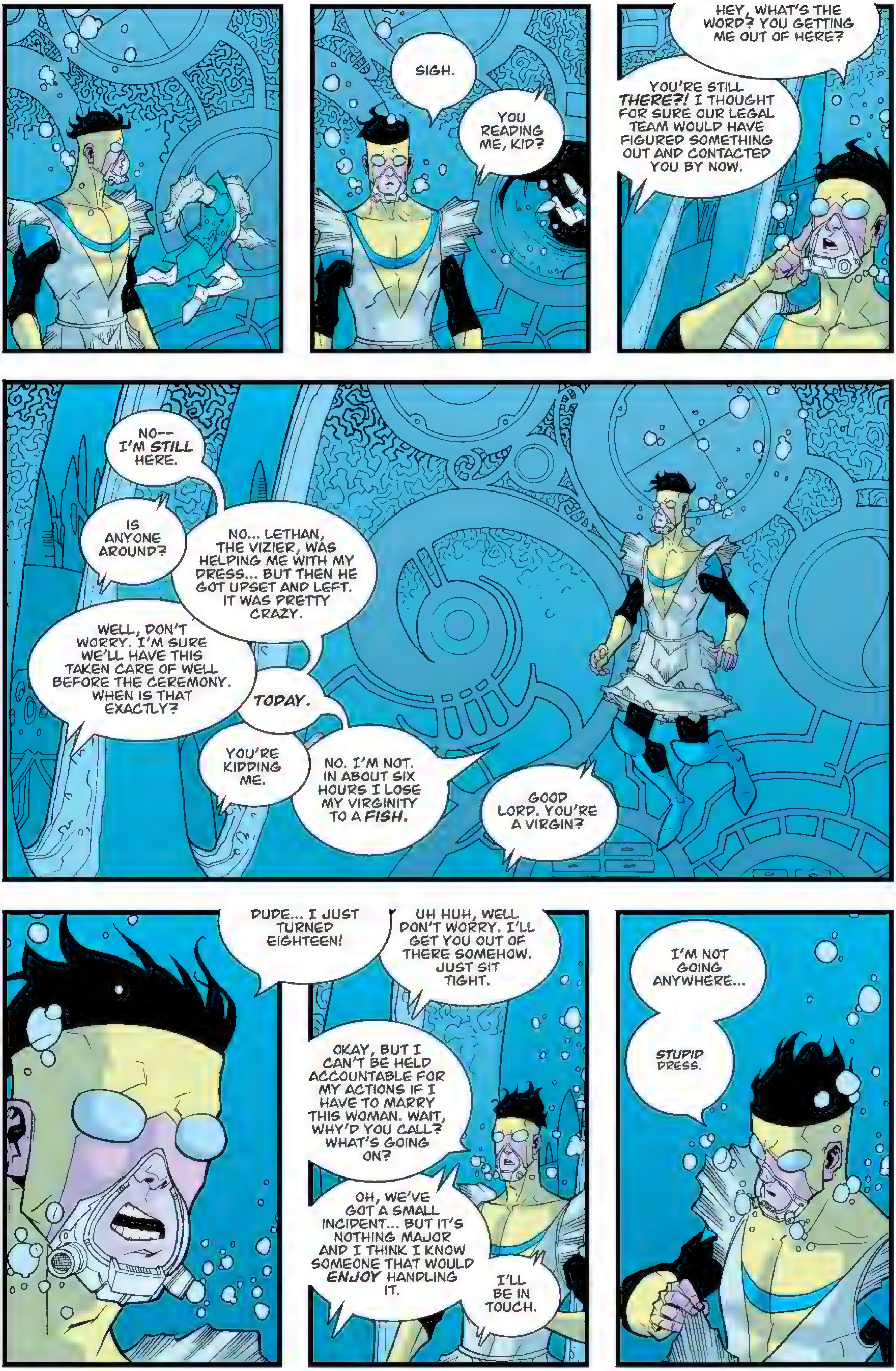

OH, THAT'S OKAY... I'M, UH... NOT OFFENDED.
SO WE'RE GETTING MARRIED, HUH? THAT'S, UH... ***GREAT***, I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. WHEN IS IT? A WEEK? A MONTH?

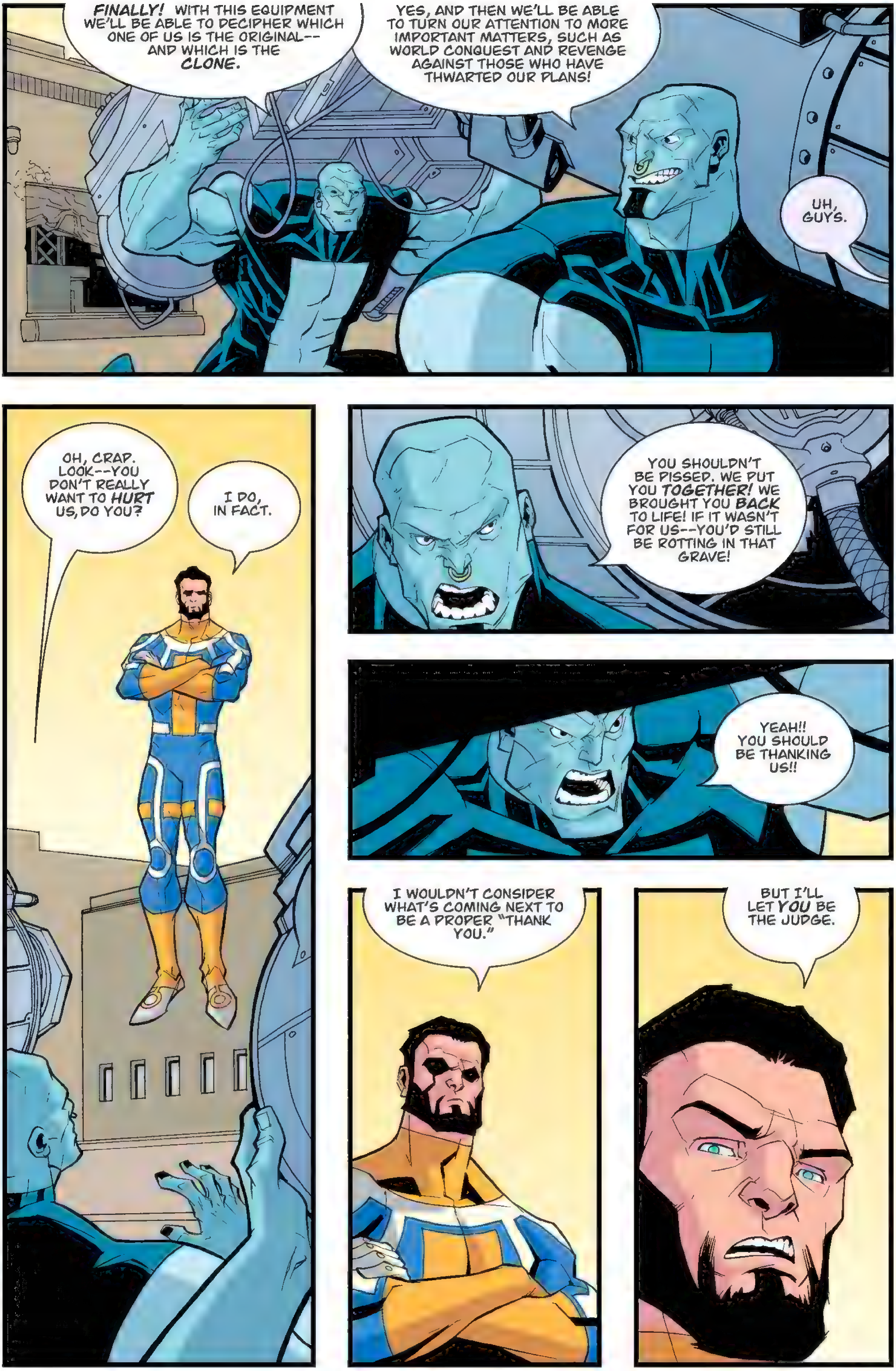

OH, NO.... THE CEREMONY IS TODAY.

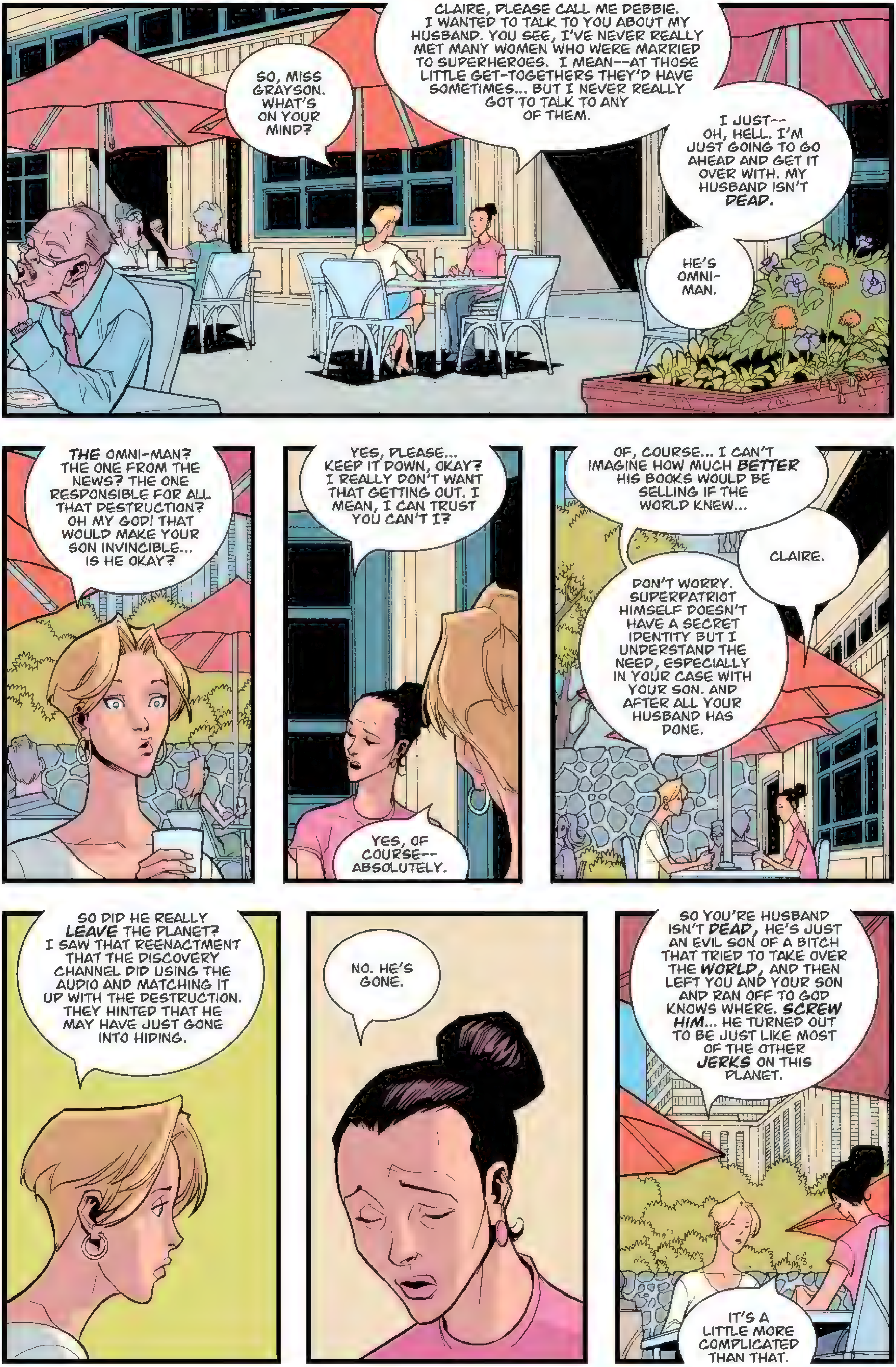

OH...
TODAY.

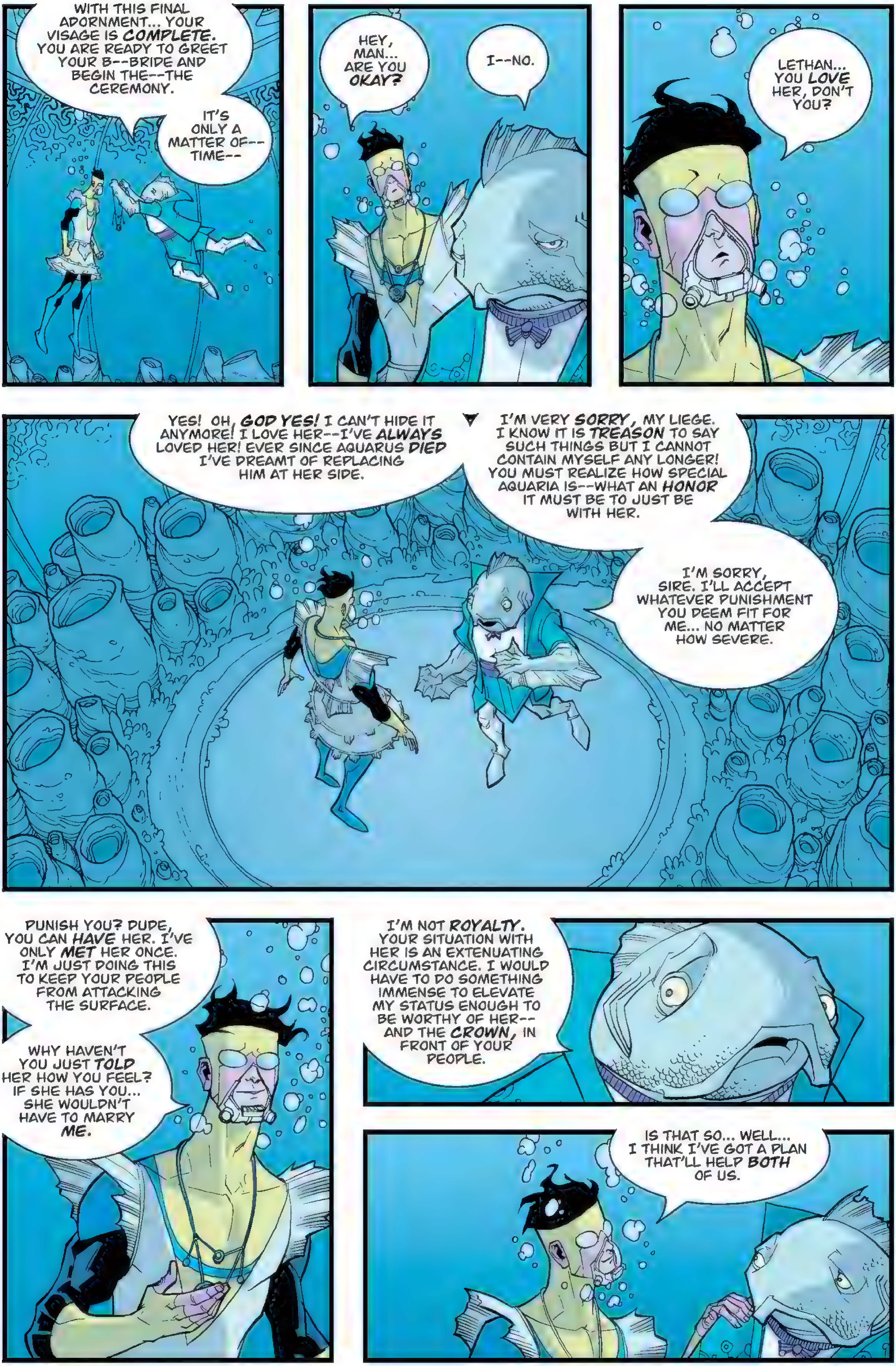

CLAIRE? MISS BONO? DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
OH, HI MISS GRAYSON. DID YOU FORGET SOMETHING AT THE OFFICE?
3
CLAIRE, I--I WAS WONDERING IF YOU WOULD GET COFFEE WITH ME LATER TODAY... IF YOU HAD TIME. I'D REALLY LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
UM... SURE, I GUESS, BUT IF THERE'S SOMETHING WE FORGOT TO GO OVER ON THE CONTRACTS WE COULD JUST DO IT **HERE**.
NO--IT'S ABOUT MY HUSBAND, I--HE... I JUST WANTED TO... I DON'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO AND I--
NO... NEVER MIND... THIS IS STUPID.
NO, IT'S NOT. I UNDERSTAND... I LOST MY FATHER A FEW YEARS AGO. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.
I'LL MEET YOU AT THE COFFEE SHOP ON THE FIRST FLOOR. I'VE GOT A MEETING, BUT I'LL BE DOWN IN ABOUT AN HOUR.
2
OKAY.
THANKS.
I'LL SEE YOU IN AN HOUR.

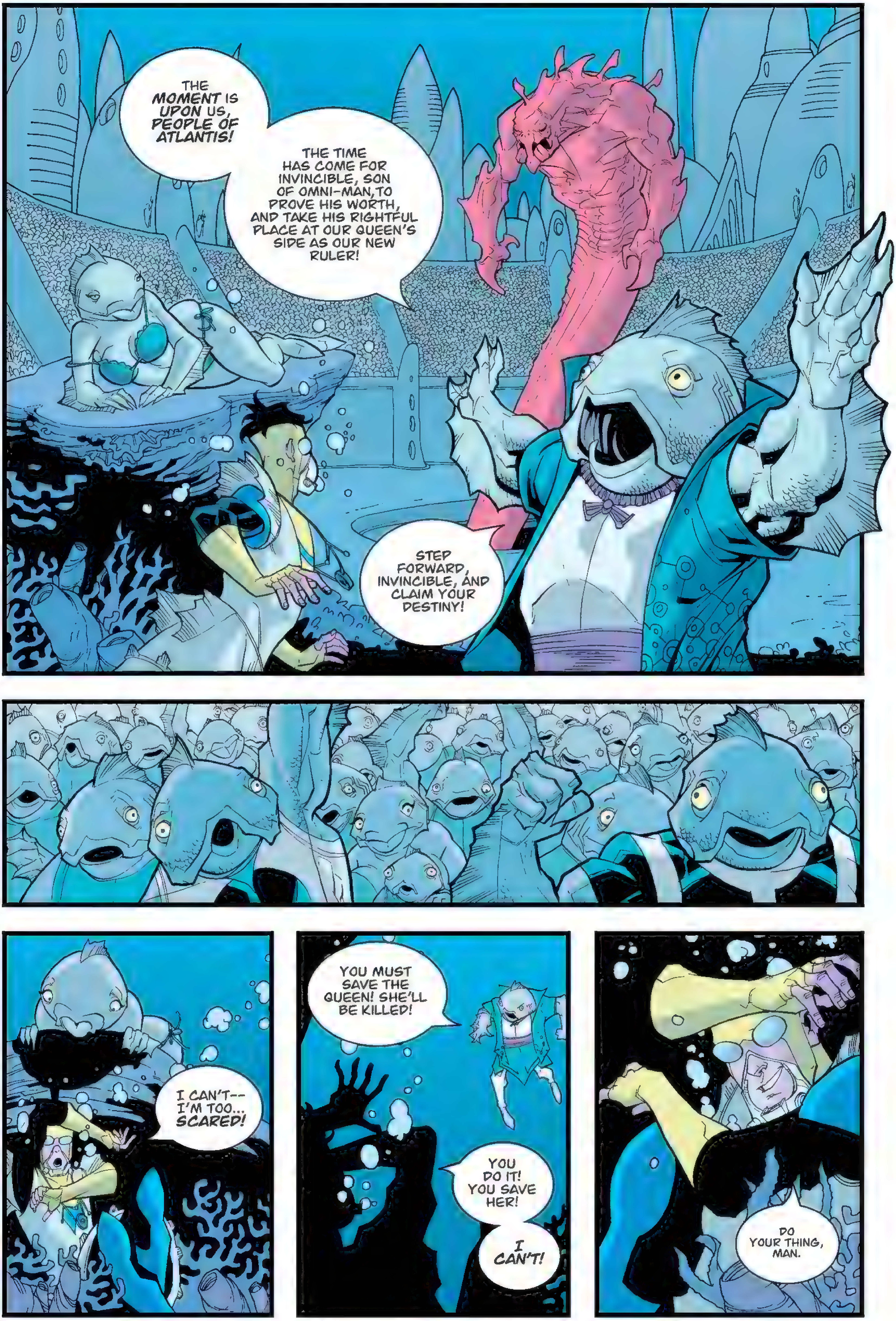

SO... THE *MAN* WEARS THE DRESS?
ONLY FOR THE *BATTLE.*
BATTLE? THERE'S A BATTLE AS PART OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY--AND I WEAR A DRESS FOR IT? WHAT DO I WEAR AFTER THAT?
OH... NOTHING. AFTER THE BATTLE IS WHEN YOU *COPULATE* TO SYMBOLICALLY UNITE YOUR TWO LIVES INTO *ONE.*
UM... COPULATE? YOU MEAN... WE, UH--HAVE TO *DO IT* RIGHT AFTER THE CEREMONY?
NO--IT'S *PART* OF THE CEREMONY.
THE CEREMONY OPENS WITH A PROCLAMATION OF INTENT. WHERE YOU WILL CONFESS YOUR DESIRE TO BECOME AQUARIA'S MATE. THEN THAT LEADS INTO THE HEROIC CONQUEST. IT'S AN ANCIENT RITUAL DATING BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF OUR CIVILIZATION.
OUR GREAT LEADER, AQUARUS THE FIRST--WAS COURTING HIS MATE TO BE. SHE WAS A SPIRITED WOMAN--MUCH LIKE OUR AQUARIA--AND WAS HARD TO PLEASE. ONE DAY WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR WALK THEY WERE ATTACKED BY A DEPTH DWELLER. WITH NO CONSIDERATION FOR HIS OWN LIFE, AQUARUS LEAPT TO DEFEND THE LIFE OF HIS FUTURE MATE. THE ACT WAS SO HEROIC--IT WON HER OVER INSTANTLY.
IT'S THE BASIS OF *ALL* ROMANCE IN OUR CIVILIZATION. THE GROOM MUST DEFEND THE BRIDE FROM A DEPTH DWELLER. ALL THIS IS DONE IN OUR ARENA...IN FRONT OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF THE CITY.
ONCE THE CREATURE IS DEFEATED--YOU WILL MAKE LOVE TO AQUARIA TO COMPLETE THE CEREMONY AND FINALIZE THE MARRIAGE.
UM... DO WE LEAVE THE STADIUM FIRST?
NO, OF COURSE *NOT.* YOU WILL MAKE LOVE IN FRONT OF *ALL* OUR PEOPLE. IT SEALS THE BOND OF LOVE BEFORE ALL YOUR SUBJECTS. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CUSTOMS OUR PEOPLE HAVE. YOU AND YOUR NEW BRIDE... OUR... QUEEN... LOCKED IN THE THROES OF PASSION... FOR ALL TO--
SEE.
YOU'LL HAVE TO *EXCUSE* ME.

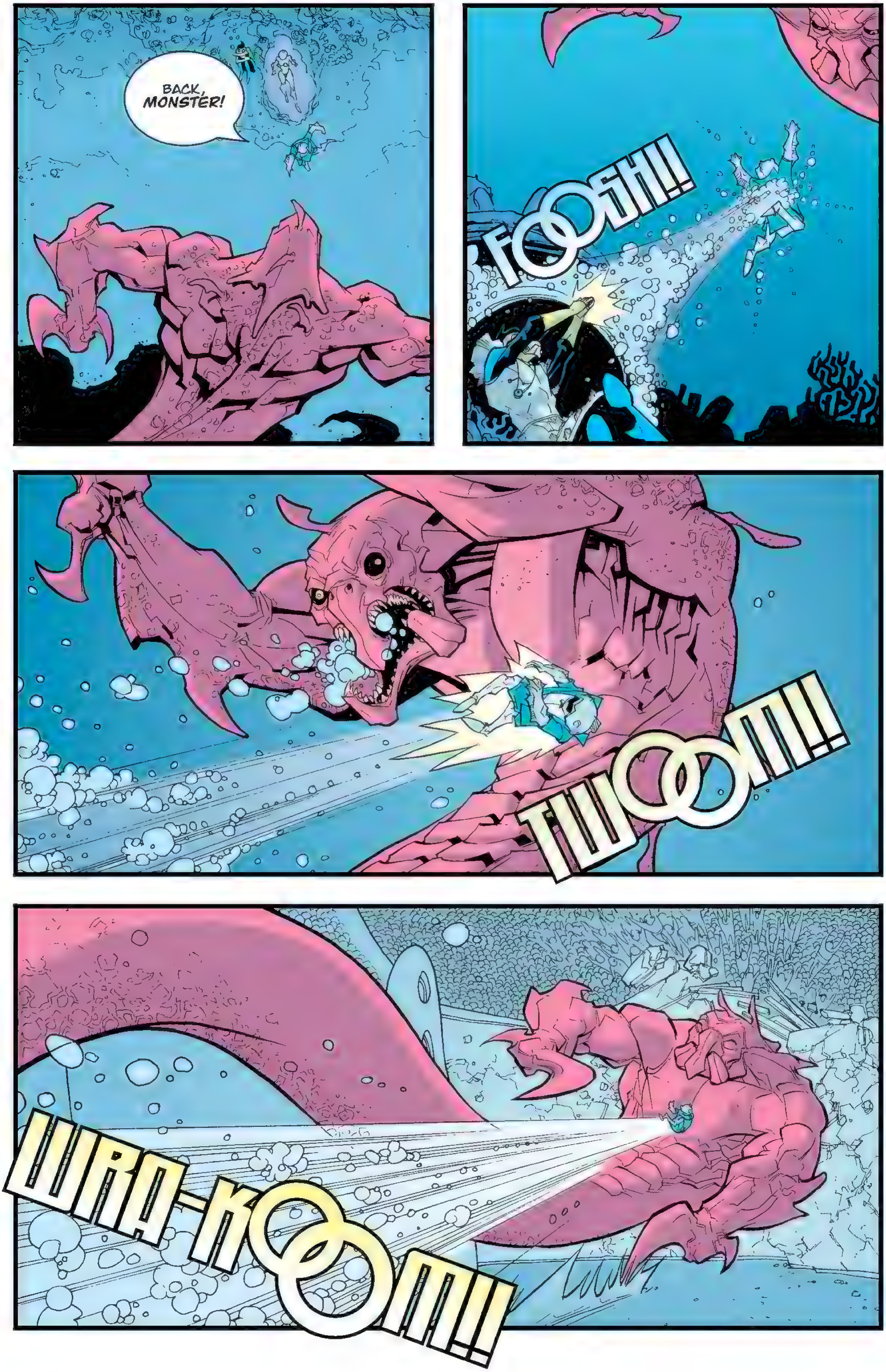

SIGH.
YOU READING ME, KID?
HEY, WHAT'S THE WORD? YOU GETTING ME OUT OF HERE?
YOU'RE STILL *THERE?!* I THOUGHT FOR SURE OUR LEGAL TEAM WOULD HAVE FIGURED SOMETHING OUT AND CONTACTED YOU BY NOW.
NO-- I'M *STILL* HERE.
IS ANYONE AROUND?
NO... LETHAN, THE VIZIER, WAS HELPING ME WITH MY DRESS... BUT THEN HE GOT UPSET AND LEFT. IT WAS PRETTY CRAZY.
WELL, DON'T WORRY. I'M SURE WE'LL HAVE THIS TAKEN CARE OF WELL BEFORE THE CEREMONY. WHEN IS THAT EXACTLY?
TODAY.
YOU'RE KIDDING ME.
NO. I'M NOT. IN ABOUT SIX HOURS I LOSE MY VIRGINITY TO A *FISH.*
GOOD LORD. YOU'RE A VIRGIN?
DUDE... I JUST TURNED EIGHTEEN!
UH HUH, WELL DON'T WORRY. I'LL GET YOU OUT OF THERE SOMEHOW. JUST SIT TIGHT.
OKAY, BUT I CAN'T BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR MY ACTIONS IF I HAVE TO MARRY THIS WOMAN. WAIT, WHY'D YOU CALL? WHAT'S GOING ON?
OH, WE'VE GOT A SMALL INCIDENT... BUT IT'S NOTHING MAJOR AND I THINK I KNOW SOMEONE THAT WOULD *ENJOY* HANDLING IT.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE...
STUPID DRESS.

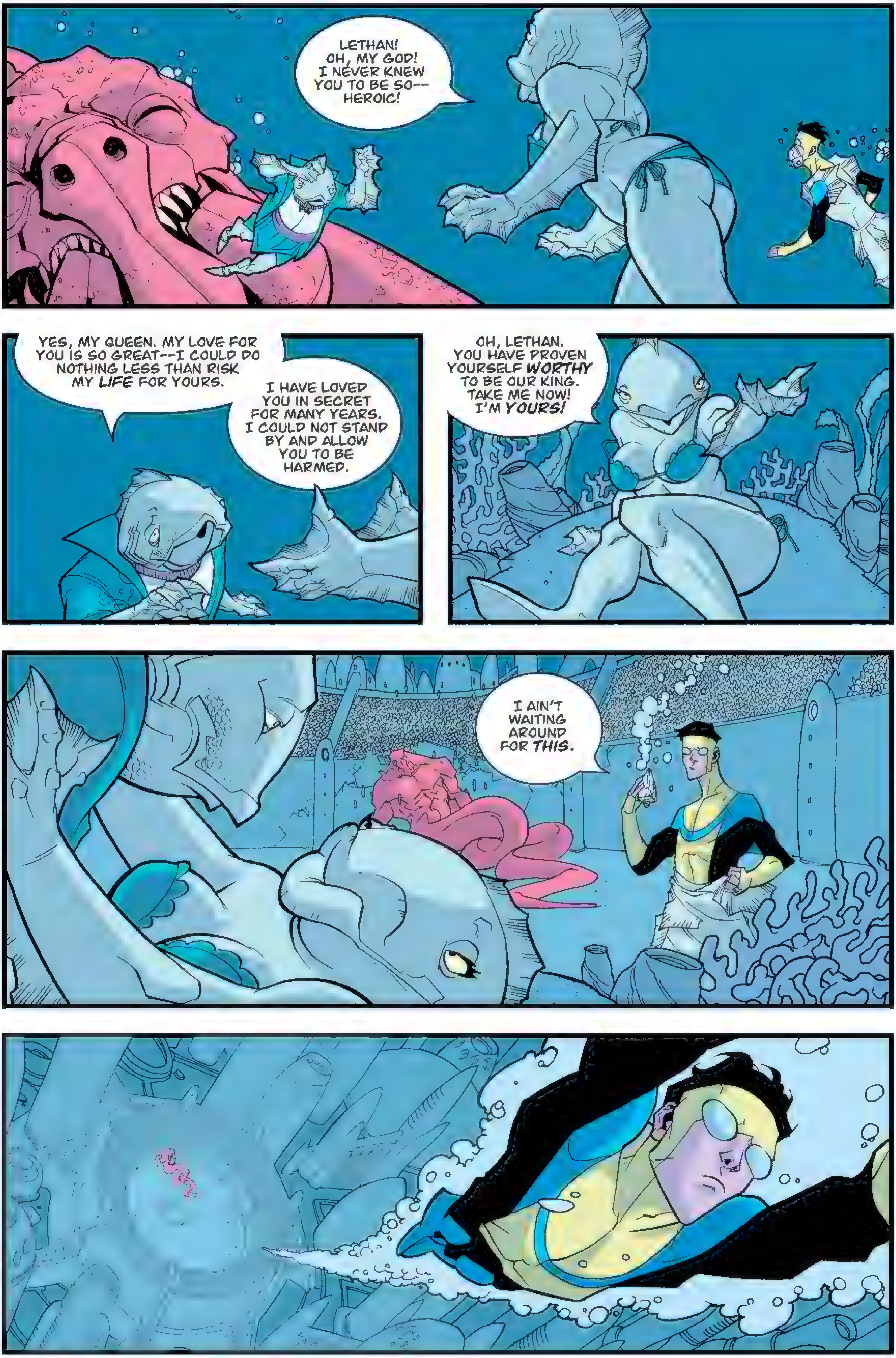

FINALLY! WITH THIS EQUIPMENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO DECIPHER WHICH ONE OF US IS THE ORIGINAL-- AND WHICH IS THE CLONE.
YES, AND THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS, SUCH AS WORLD CONQUEST AND REVENGE AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE THWARTED OUR PLANS!
UH, GUYS.
OH, CRAP. LOOK--YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO HURT US, DO YOU?
I DO, IN FACT.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE PISSED. WE PUT YOU TOGETHER! WE BROUGHT YOU BACK TO LIFE! IF IT WASN'T FOR US--YOU'D STILL BE ROTTING IN THAT GRAVE!
YEAH!! YOU SHOULD BE THANKING US!!
I WOULDN'T CONSIDER WHAT'S COMING NEXT TO BE A PROPER "THANK YOU."
BUT I'LL LET YOU BE THE JUDGE.

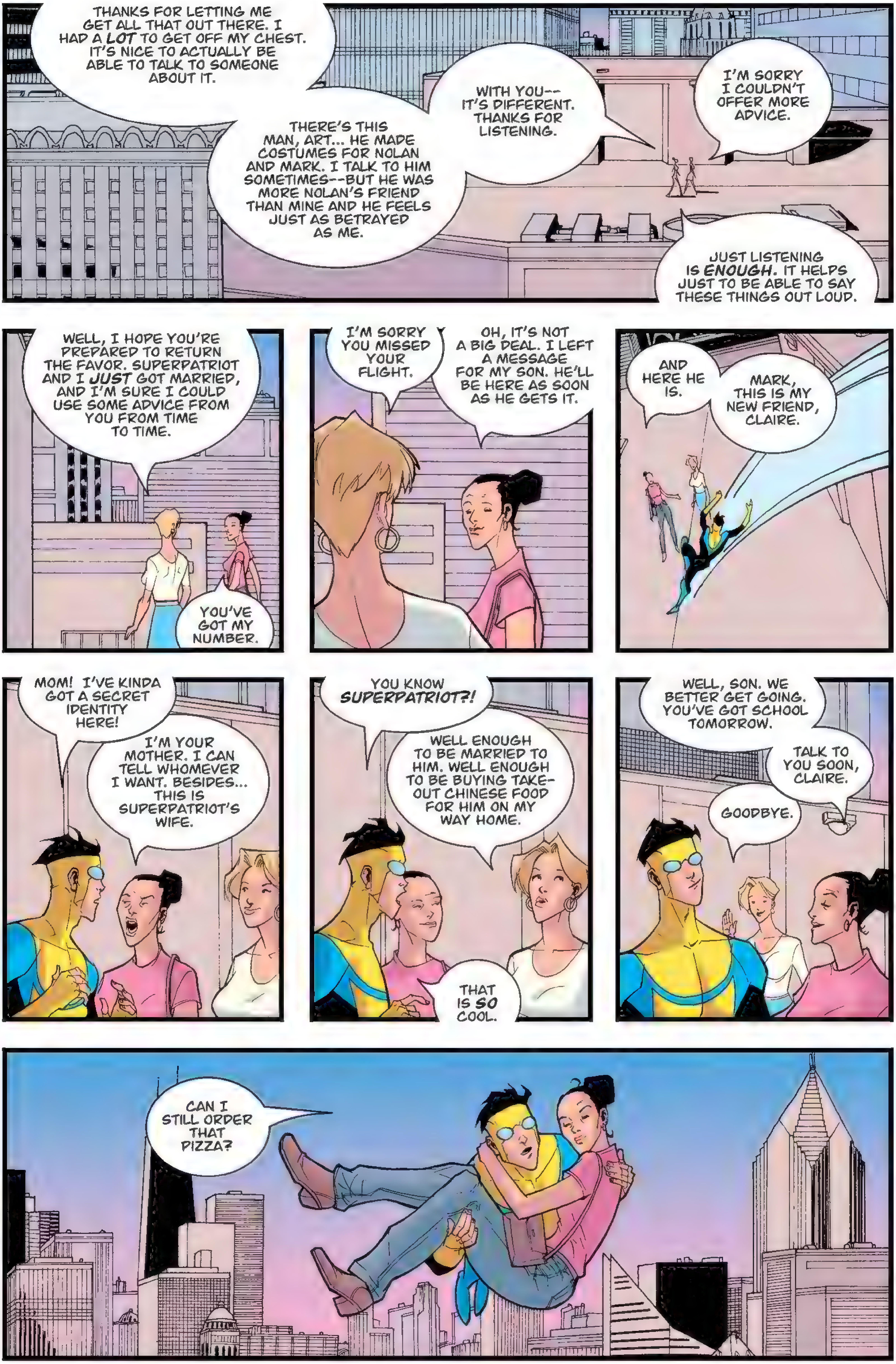

SO, MISS GRAYSON. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
CLAIRE, PLEASE CALL ME DEBBIE. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT MY HUSBAND. YOU SEE, I'VE NEVER REALLY MET MANY WOMEN WHO WERE MARRIED TO SUPERHEROES. I MEAN--AT THOSE LITTLE GET-TOGETHERS THEY'D HAVE SOMETIMES... BUT I NEVER REALLY GOT TO TALK TO ANY OF THEM.
I JUST-- OH, HELL. I'M JUST GOING TO GO AHEAD AND GET IT OVER WITH. MY HUSBAND ISN'T *DEAD.*
HE'S OMNI-MAN.
THE OMNI-MAN? THE ONE FROM THE NEWS? THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT DESTRUCTION? OH MY GOD! THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR SON INVINCIBLE... IS HE OKAY?
YES, PLEASE... KEEP IT DOWN, OKAY? I REALLY DON'T WANT THAT GETTING OUT. I MEAN, I CAN TRUST YOU CAN'T I?
YES, OF COURSE-- ABSOLUTELY.
OF, COURSE... I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH *BETTER* HIS BOOKS WOULD BE SELLING IF THE WORLD KNEW...
CLAIRE.
DON'T WORRY. SUPERPATRIOT HIMSELF DOESN'T HAVE A SECRET IDENTITY BUT I UNDERSTAND THE NEED, ESPECIALLY IN YOUR CASE WITH YOUR SON. AND AFTER ALL YOUR HUSBAND HAS DONE.
SO DID HE REALLY *LEAVE* THE PLANET? I SAW THAT REENACTMENT THAT THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL DID USING THE AUDIO AND MATCHING IT UP WITH THE DESTRUCTION. THEY HINTED THAT HE MAY HAVE JUST GONE INTO HIDING.
NO. HE'S GONE.
SO YOU'RE HUSBAND ISN'T *DEAD*, HE'S JUST AN EVIL SON OF A BITCH THAT TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE *WORLD*, AND THEN LEFT YOU AND YOUR SON AND RAN OFF TO GOD KNOWS WHERE. *SCREW HIM*... HE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST LIKE MOST OF THE OTHER *JERKS* ON THIS PLANET.
IT'S A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.


WITH THIS FINAL ADORNMENT... YOUR VISAGE IS COMPLETE. YOU ARE READY TO GREET YOUR B--BRIDE AND BEGIN THE--THE CEREMONY.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF-- TIME--
HEY, MAN... ARE YOU OKAY?
I--NO.
LETHAN... YOU LOVE HER, DON'T YOU?
YES! OH, GOD YES! I CAN'T HIDE IT ANYMORE! I LOVE HER--I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HER! EVER SINCE AQUARUS DIED I'VE DREAMT OF REPLACING HIM AT HER SIDE.
I'M VERY SORRY, MY LIEGE. I KNOW IT IS TREASON TO SAY SUCH THINGS BUT I CANNOT CONTAIN MYSELF ANY LONGER! YOU MUST REALIZE HOW SPECIAL AQUARIA IS--WHAT AN HONOR IT MUST BE TO JUST BE WITH HER.
I'M SORRY, SIRE. I'LL ACCEPT WHATEVER PUNISHMENT YOU DEEM FIT FOR ME... NO MATTER HOW SEVERE.
PUNISH YOU? DUDE, YOU CAN HAVE HER. I'VE ONLY MET HER ONCE. I'M JUST DOING THIS TO KEEP YOUR PEOPLE FROM ATTACKING THE SURFACE.
WHY HAVEN'T YOU JUST TOLD HER HOW YOU FEEL? IF SHE HAS YOU... SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO MARRY ME.
I'M NOT ROYALTY. YOUR SITUATION WITH HER IS AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE. I WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING IMMENSE TO ELEVATE MY STATUS ENOUGH TO BE WORTHY OF HER-- AND THE CROWN, IN FRONT OF YOUR PEOPLE.
IS THAT SO... WELL... I THINK I'VE GOT A PLAN THAT'LL HELP BOTH OF US.


THE MOMENT IS UPON US, PEOPLE OF ATLANTIS!
THE TIME HAS COME FOR INVINCIBLE, SON OF OMNI-MAN, TO PROVE HIS WORTH, AND TAKE HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE AT OUR QUEEN'S SIDE AS OUR NEW RULER!
STEP FORWARD, INVINCIBLE, AND CLAIM YOUR DESTINY!
I CAN'T-- I'M TOO... SCARED!
YOU MUST SAVE THE QUEEN! SHE'LL BE KILLED!
YOU DO IT! YOU SAVE HER!
I CAN'T!
DO YOUR THING, MAN.


BACK, MONSTER!
FOOSH!!
TWOOM!!
WRA-KOOM!!


LETHAN! OH, MY GOD! I NEVER KNEW YOU TO BE SO-- HEROIC!
YES, MY QUEEN. MY LOVE FOR YOU IS SO GREAT--I COULD DO NOTHING LESS THAN RISK MY *LIFE* FOR YOURS.
I HAVE LOVED YOU IN SECRET FOR MANY YEARS. I COULD NOT STAND BY AND ALLOW YOU TO BE HARMED.
OH, LETHAN. YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF *WORTHY* TO BE OUR KING. TAKE ME NOW! I'M *YOURS!*
I AIN'T WAITING AROUND FOR *THIS.*


THANKS FOR LETTING ME GET ALL THAT OUT THERE. I HAD A *LOT* TO GET OFF MY CHEST. IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT.
THERE'S THIS MAN, ART... HE MADE COSTUMES FOR NOLAN AND MARK. I TALK TO HIM SOMETIMES--BUT HE WAS MORE NOLAN'S FRIEND THAN MINE AND HE FEELS JUST AS BETRAYED AS ME.
WITH YOU--IT'S DIFFERENT. THANKS FOR LISTENING.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T OFFER MORE ADVICE.
JUST LISTENING IS *ENOUGH.* IT HELPS JUST TO BE ABLE TO SAY THESE THINGS OUT LOUD.
WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE PREPARED TO RETURN THE FAVOR. SUPERPATRIOT AND I *JUST* GOT MARRIED, AND I'M SURE I COULD USE SOME ADVICE FROM YOU FROM TIME TO TIME.
YOU'VE GOT MY NUMBER.
I'M SORRY YOU MISSED YOUR FLIGHT.
OH, IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL. I LEFT A MESSAGE FOR MY SON. HE'LL BE HERE AS SOON AS HE GETS IT.
AND HERE HE IS.
MARK, THIS IS MY NEW FRIEND, CLAIRE.
MOM! I'VE KINDA GOT A SECRET IDENTITY HERE!
I'M YOUR MOTHER. I CAN TELL WHOMEVER I WANT. BESIDES... THIS IS SUPERPATRIOT'S WIFE.
YOU KNOW *SUPERPATRIOT?!*
WELL ENOUGH TO BE MARRIED TO HIM. WELL ENOUGH TO BE BUYING TAKE-OUT CHINESE FOOD FOR HIM ON MY WAY HOME.
THAT IS *SO* COOL.
WELL, SON. WE BETTER GET GOING. YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMORROW.
TALK TO YOU SOON, CLAIRE.
GOODBYE.
CAN I STILL ORDER THAT PIZZA?

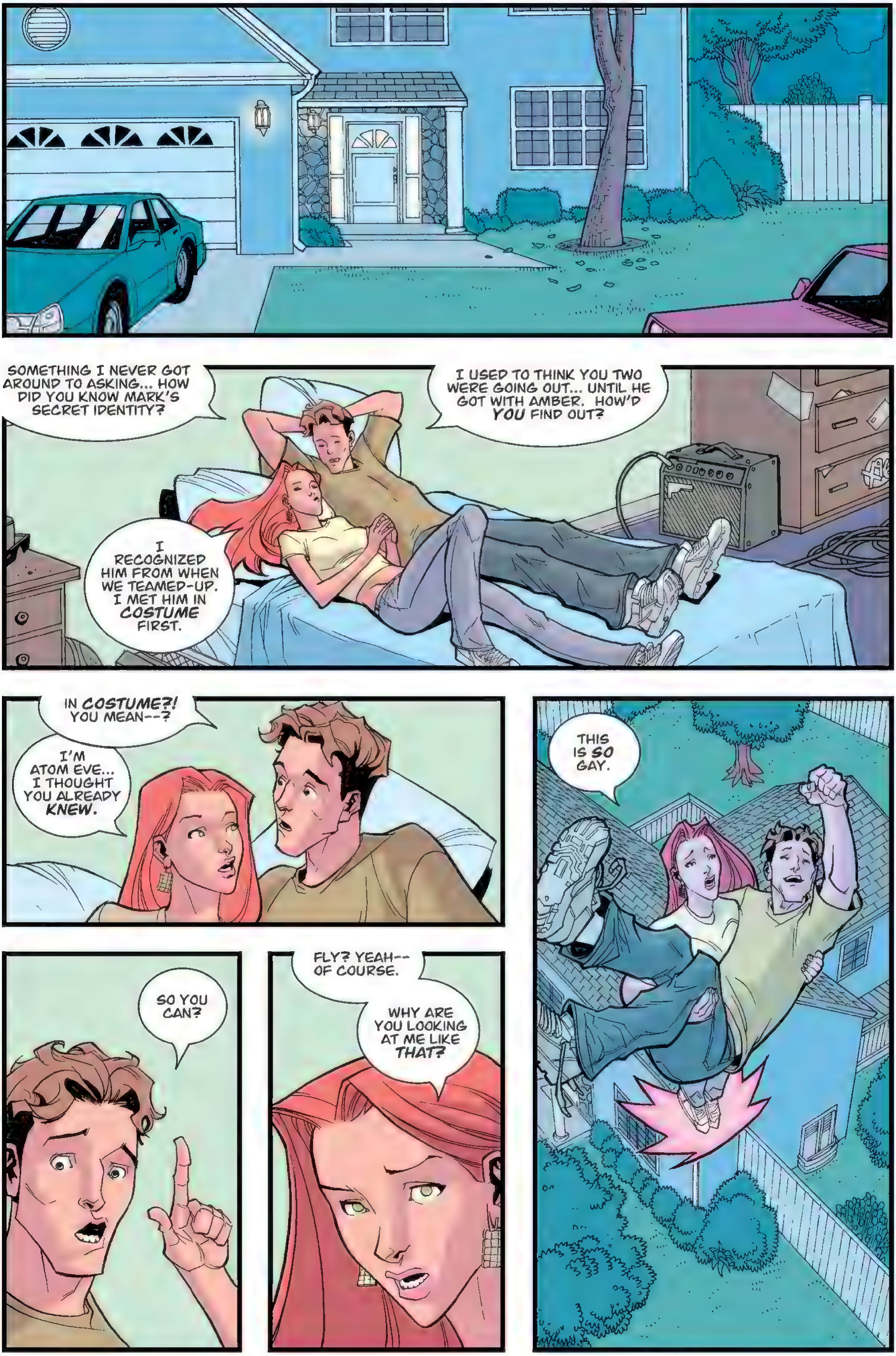
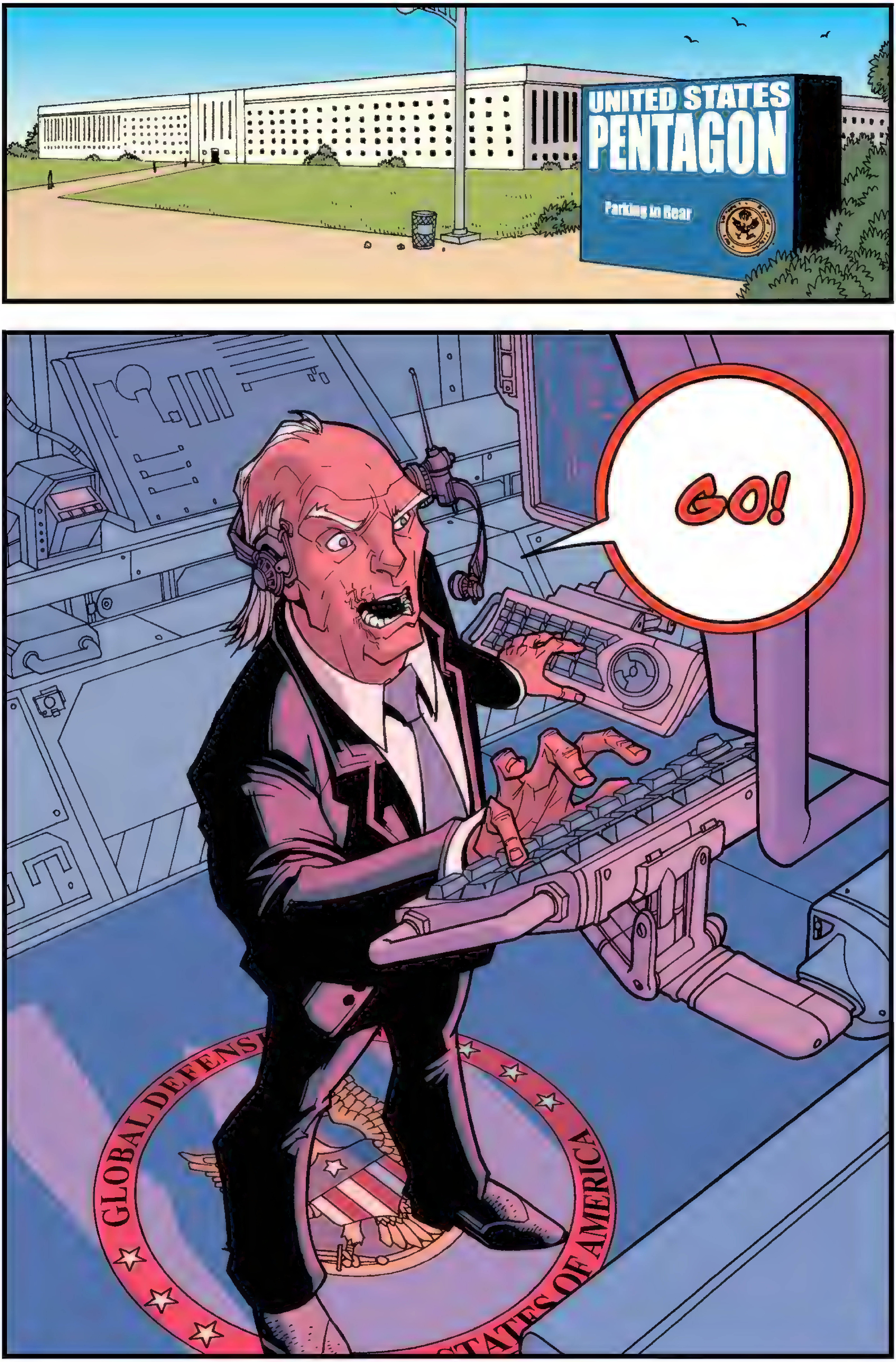
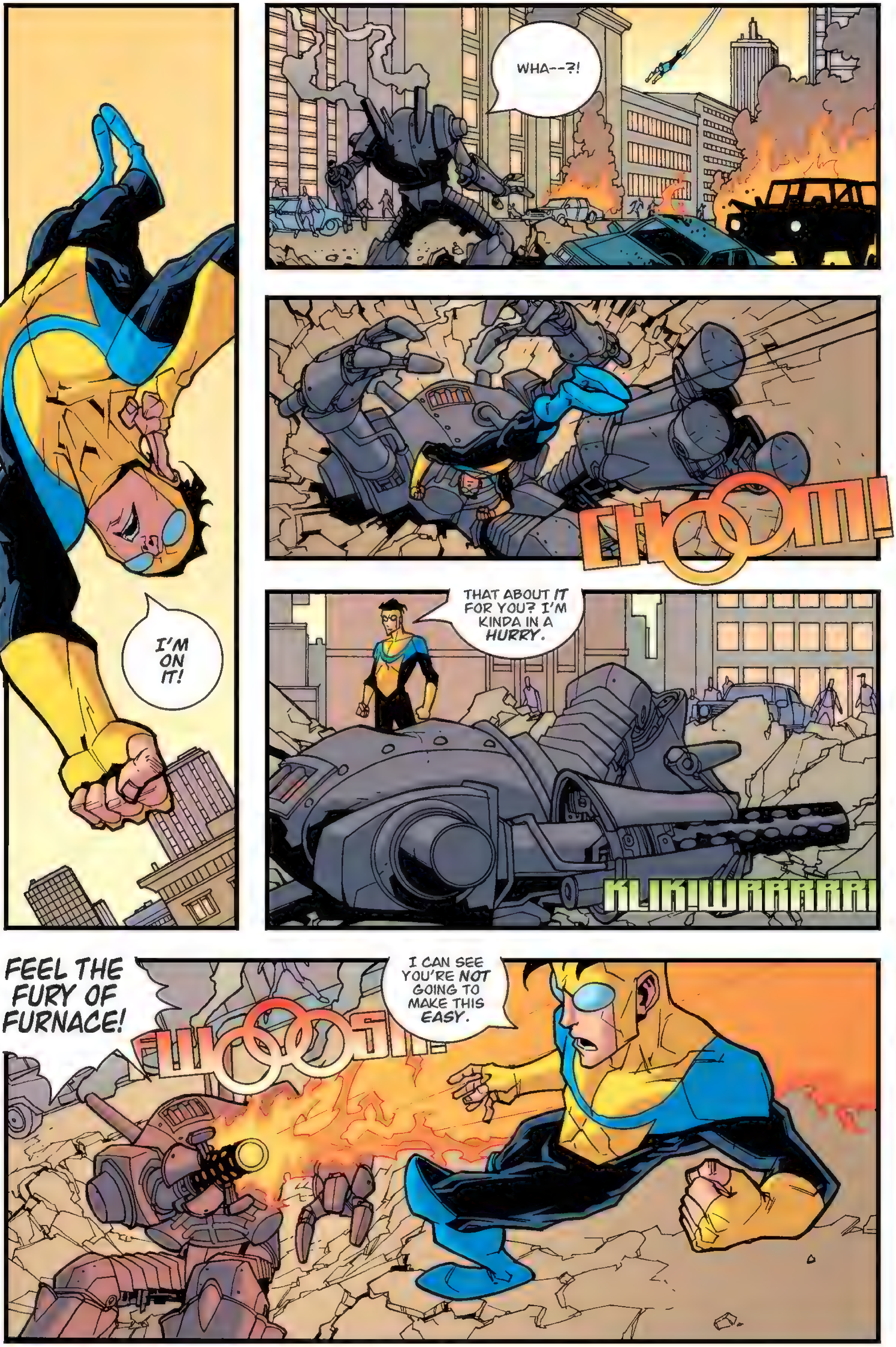
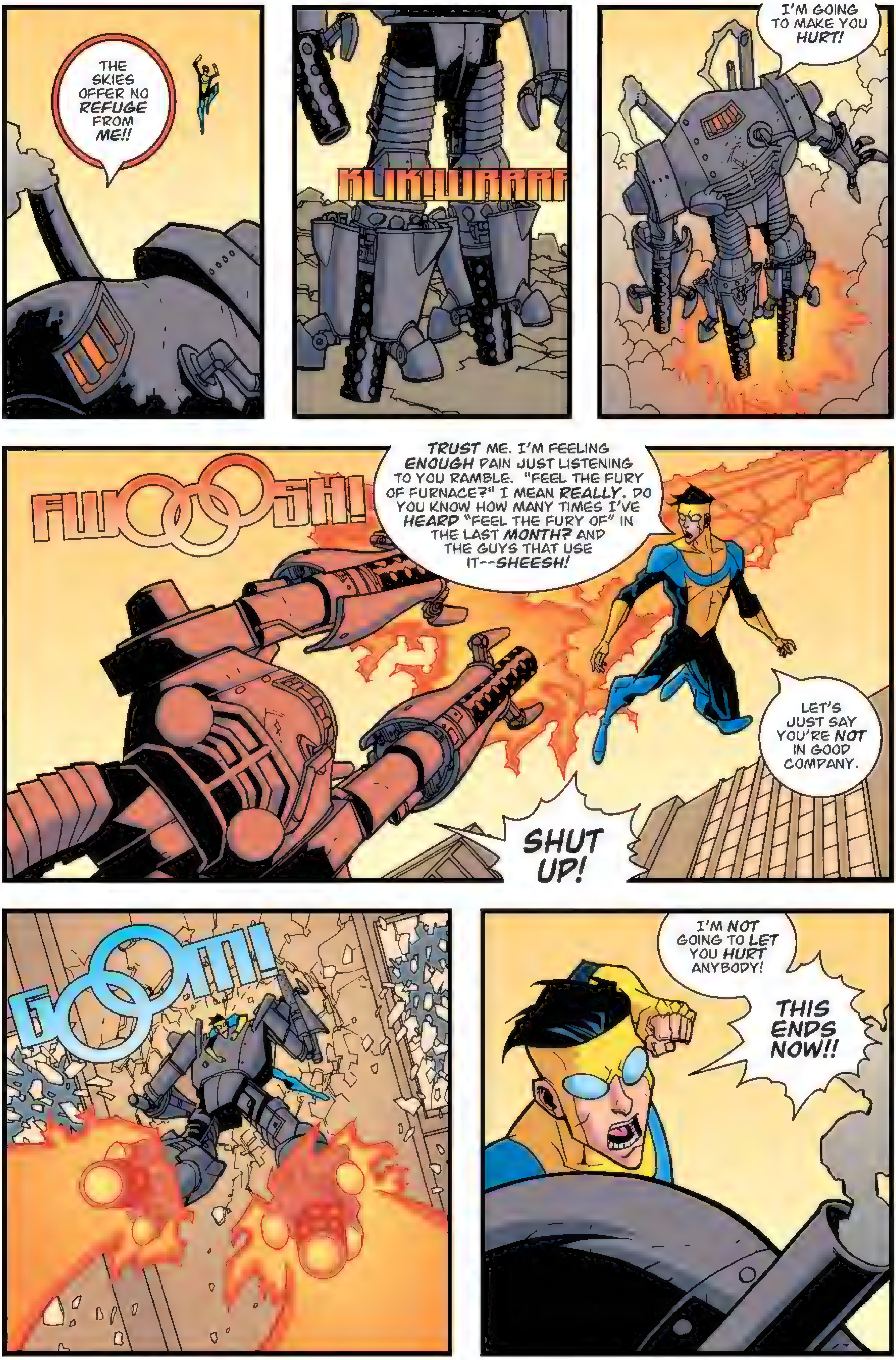

SOMETHING I NEVER GOT AROUND TO ASKING... HOW DID YOU KNOW MARK'S SECRET IDENTITY?
I USED TO THINK YOU TWO WERE GOING OUT... UNTIL HE GOT WITH AMBER. HOW'D *YOU* FIND OUT?
I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM WHEN WE TEAMED-UP. I MET HIM IN *COSTUME* FIRST.
IN *COSTUME?!* YOU MEAN--?
I'M ATOM EVE... I THOUGHT YOU ALREADY *KNEW*.
SO YOU CAN?
FLY? YEAH-- OF COURSE.
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE *THAT?*
THIS IS *SO* GAY.

IMAGE COMICS SUMMER SPECIAL

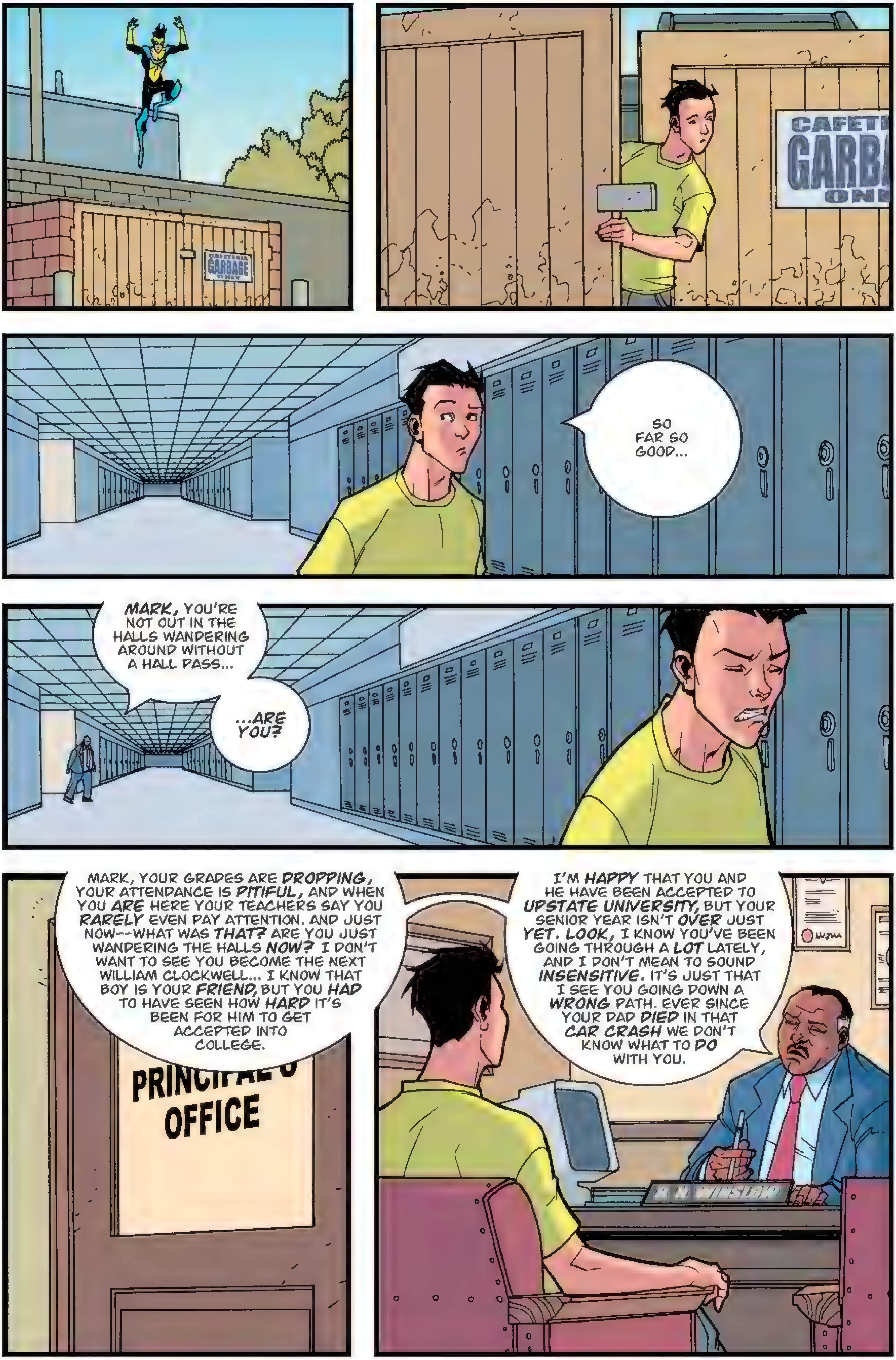
M^cFARLANE
SILVESTRI 04
BATT

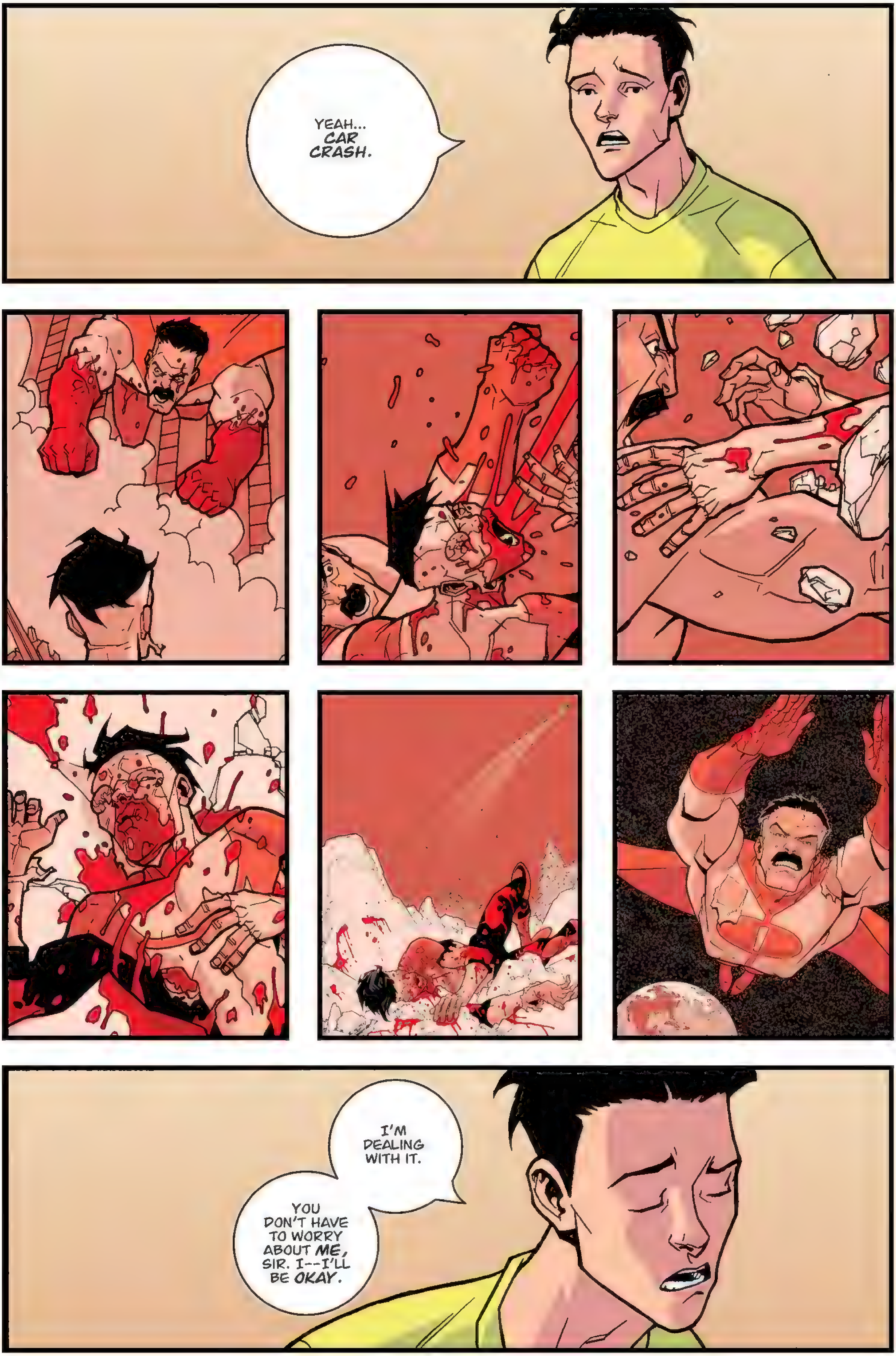

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
GO!
GLOBAL DEFENS
STATES OF AMERICA

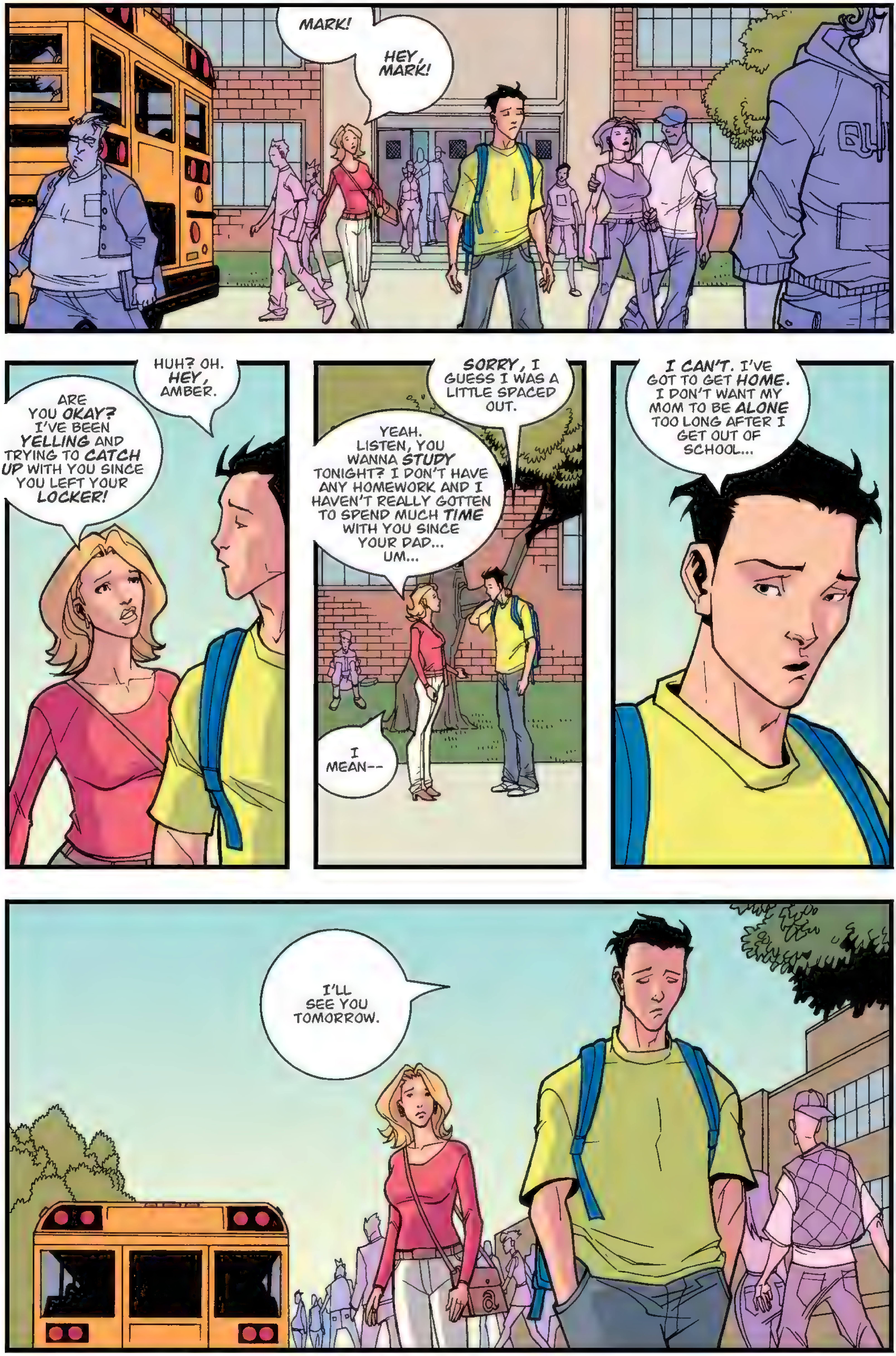

I'M ON IT!
WHA--?!
CHOOM!
THAT ABOUT *IT* FOR YOU? I'M KINDA IN A *HURRY*.
KLIK!WRRRRRR
FEEL THE FURY OF FURNACE!
FWOOOSH!
I CAN SEE YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO MAKE THIS *EASY*.

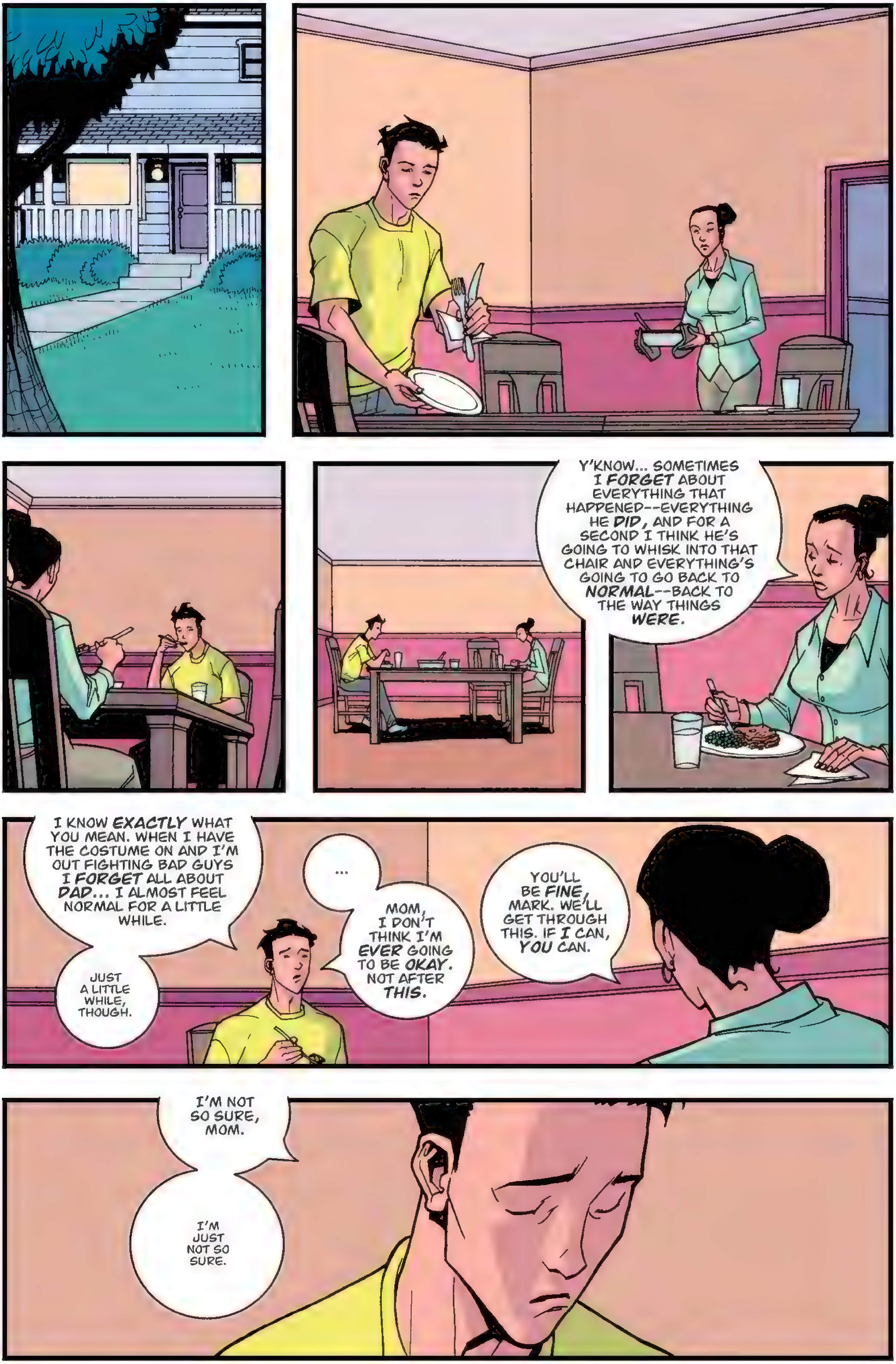

THE SKIES OFFER NO REFUGE FROM ME!!
KLIK!WRRRR
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HURT!
FWOOOSH!
TRUST ME. I'M FEELING ENOUGH PAIN JUST LISTENING TO YOU RAMBLE. "FEEL THE FURY OF FURNACE?" I MEAN REALLY. DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I'VE HEARD "FEEL THE FURY OF" IN THE LAST MONTH? AND THE GUYS THAT USE IT--SHEESH!
LET'S JUST SAY YOU'RE NOT IN GOOD COMPANY.
SHUT UP!
BOOM!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU HURT ANYBODY!
THIS ENDS NOW!!

CHOOM!
THUD!
YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK.
WE'VE GOT A CLEAN UP CREW RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER.
YEAH, HE LOOKS OUT FOR THE COUNT. I'M **GONE.**
GOOD JOB, MARK. HOPEFULLY THAT'LL BE ALL FOR TODAY. I'M SORRY I HAD TO PULL YOU OUT OF SCHOOL.
I'M SURE THE PEOPLE THAT COULD'VE **DIED** TODAY AREN'T.
WELL SAID.


CAFETERIA GARBAGE ONLY
CAFETI GARBA ONL
SO FAR SO GOOD...
MARK, YOU'RE NOT OUT IN THE HALLS WANDERING AROUND WITHOUT A HALL PASS...
...ARE YOU?
MARK, YOUR GRADES ARE DROPPING, YOUR ATTENDANCE IS PITIFUL, AND WHEN YOU ARE HERE YOUR TEACHERS SAY YOU RARELY EVEN PAY ATTENTION. AND JUST NOW--WHAT WAS THAT? ARE YOU JUST WANDERING THE HALLS NOW? I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU BECOME THE NEXT WILLIAM CLOCKWELL... I KNOW THAT BOY IS YOUR FRIEND, BUT YOU HAD TO HAVE SEEN HOW HARD IT'S BEEN FOR HIM TO GET ACCEPTED INTO COLLEGE.
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
I'M HAPPY THAT YOU AND HE HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY, BUT YOUR SENIOR YEAR ISN'T OVER JUST YET. LOOK, I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH A LOT LATELY, AND I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND INSENSITIVE. IT'S JUST THAT I SEE YOU GOING DOWN A WRONG PATH. EVER SINCE YOUR DAD DIED IN THAT CAR CRASH WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU.
WINSLOW

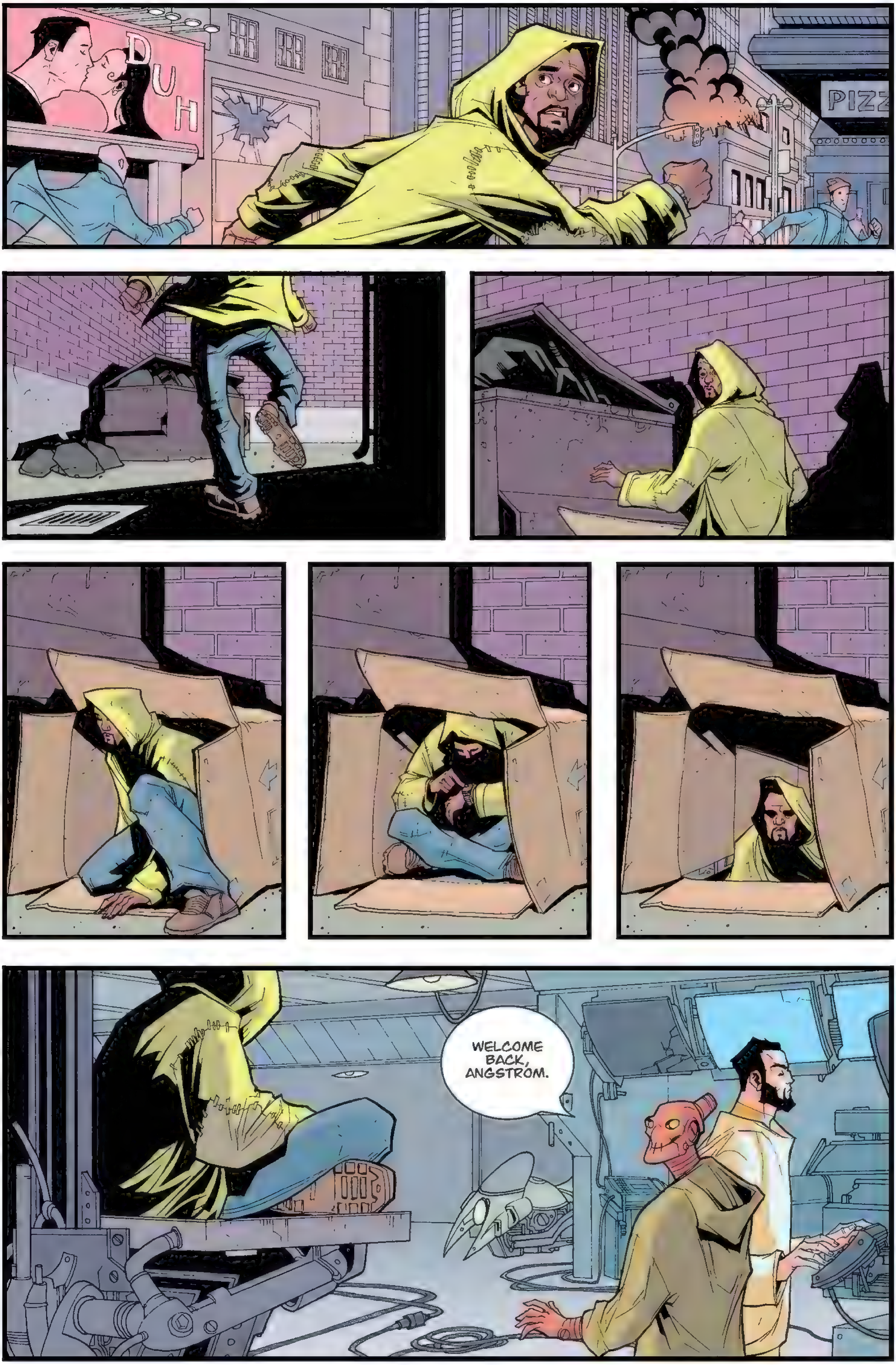

YEAH... *CAR CRASH.*
I'M DEALING WITH IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT *ME*, SIR. I--I'LL BE *OKAY*.

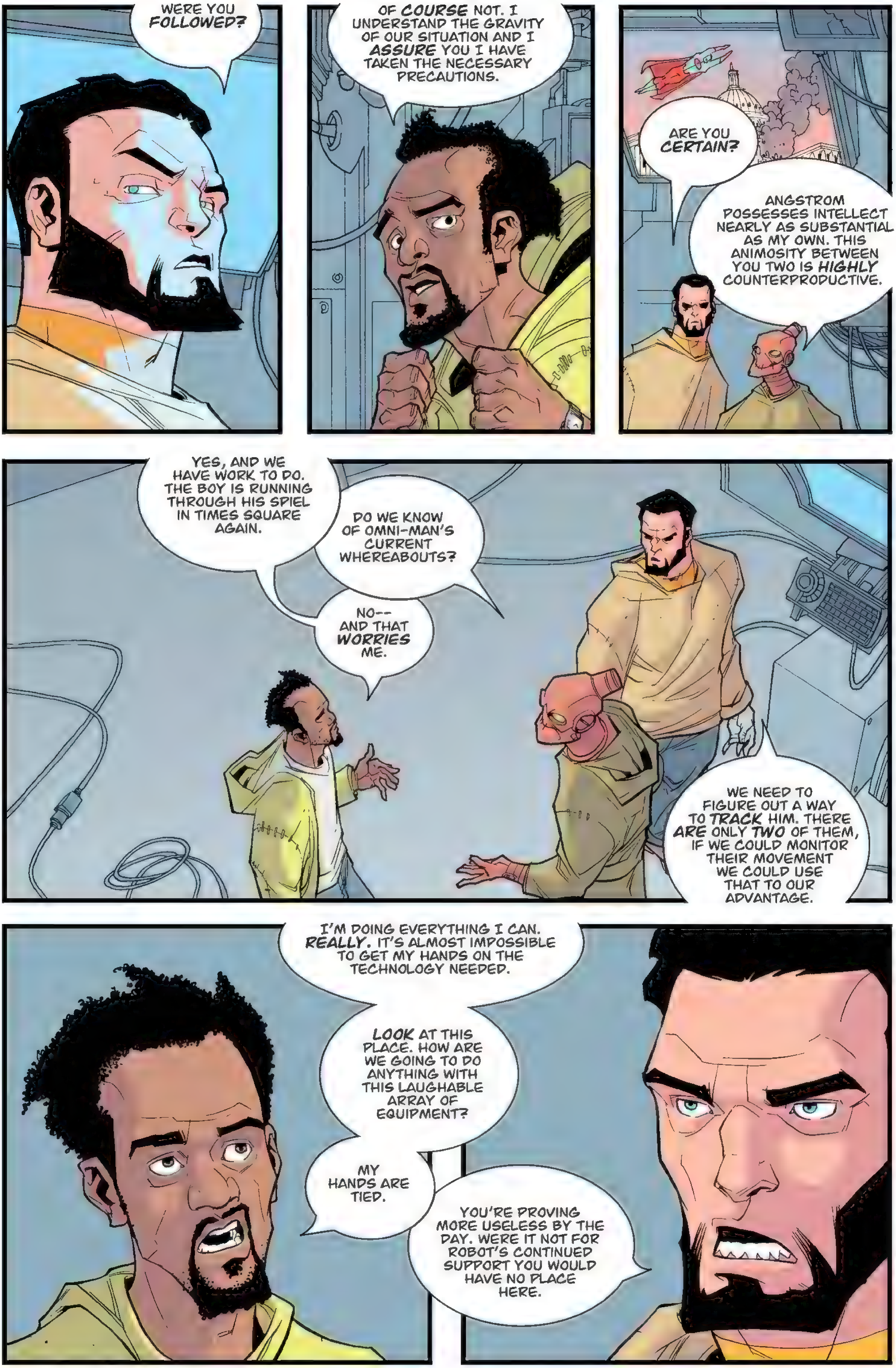

MARK!
HEY, MARK!
HUH? OH. HEY, AMBER.
ARE YOU OKAY? I'VE BEEN YELLING AND TRYING TO CATCH UP WITH YOU SINCE YOU LEFT YOUR LOCKER!
SORRY, I GUESS I WAS A LITTLE SPACED OUT.
YEAH. LISTEN, YOU WANNA STUDY TONIGHT? I DON'T HAVE ANY HOMEWORK AND I HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SPEND MUCH TIME WITH YOU SINCE YOUR DAD... UM...
I MEAN--
I CAN'T. I'VE GOT TO GET HOME. I DON'T WANT MY MOM TO BE ALONE TOO LONG AFTER I GET OUT OF SCHOOL...
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.

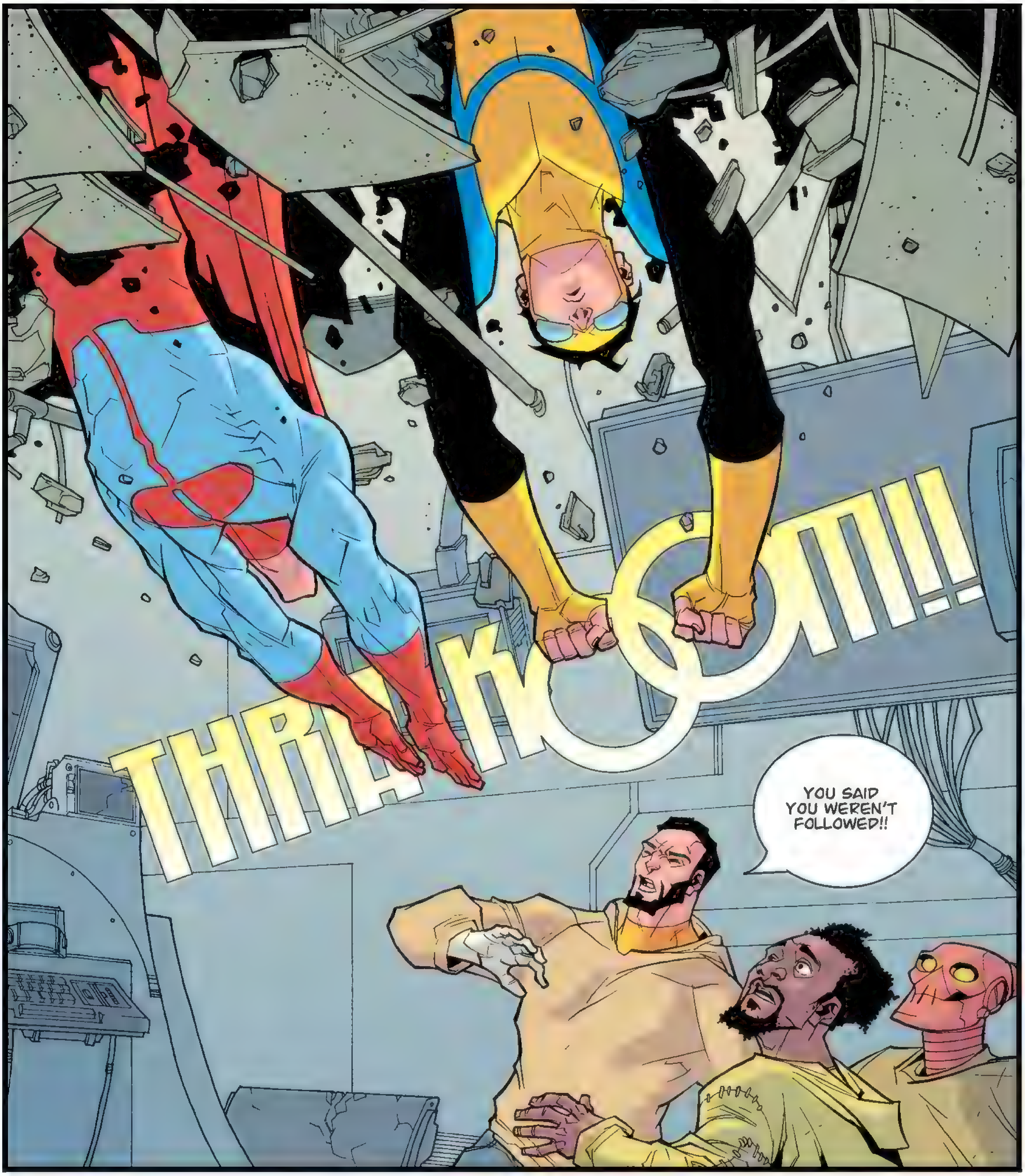

Y'KNOW... SOMETIMES I FORGET ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED--EVERYTHING HE DID, AND FOR A SECOND I THINK HE'S GOING TO WHISK INTO THAT CHAIR AND EVERYTHING'S GOING TO GO BACK TO NORMAL--BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN. WHEN I HAVE THE COSTUME ON AND I'M OUT FIGHTING BAD GUYS I FORGET ALL ABOUT DAD... I ALMOST FEEL NORMAL FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
JUST A LITTLE WHILE, THOUGH.
...
MOM, I DON'T THINK I'M EVER GOING TO BE OKAY. NOT AFTER THIS.
YOU'LL BE FINE, MARK. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS. IF I CAN, YOU CAN.
I'M NOT SO SURE, MOM.
I'M JUST NOT SO SURE.

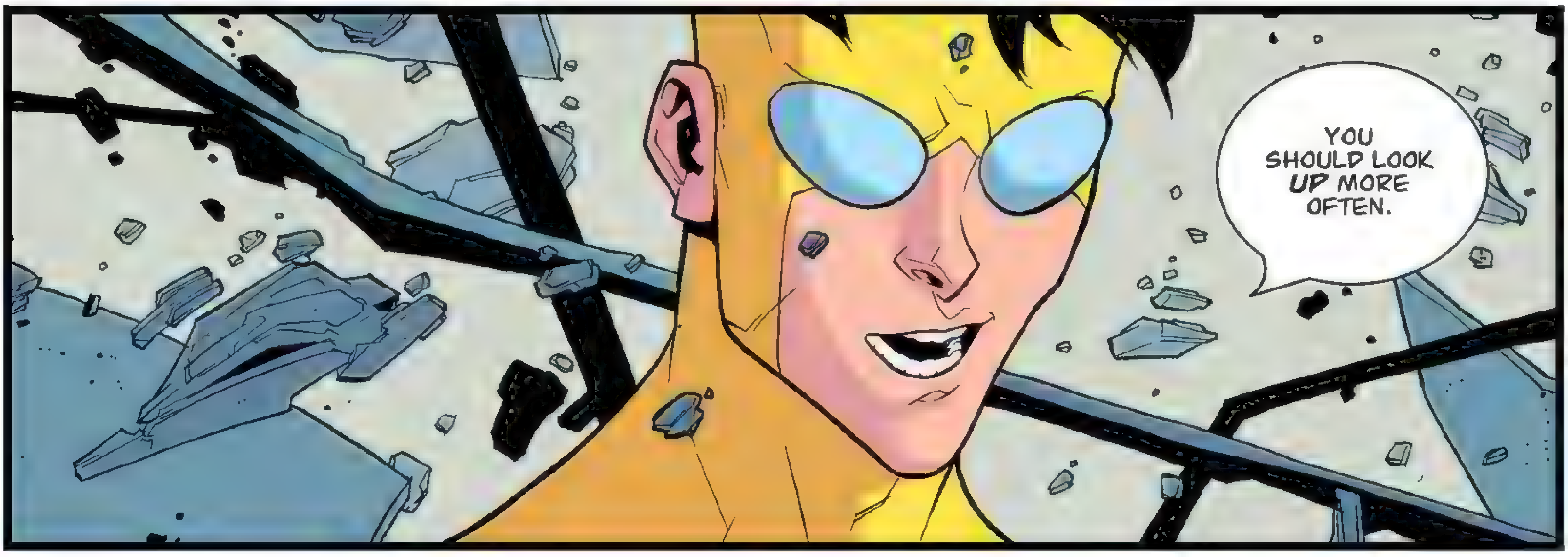
ISSUE SIXTEEN

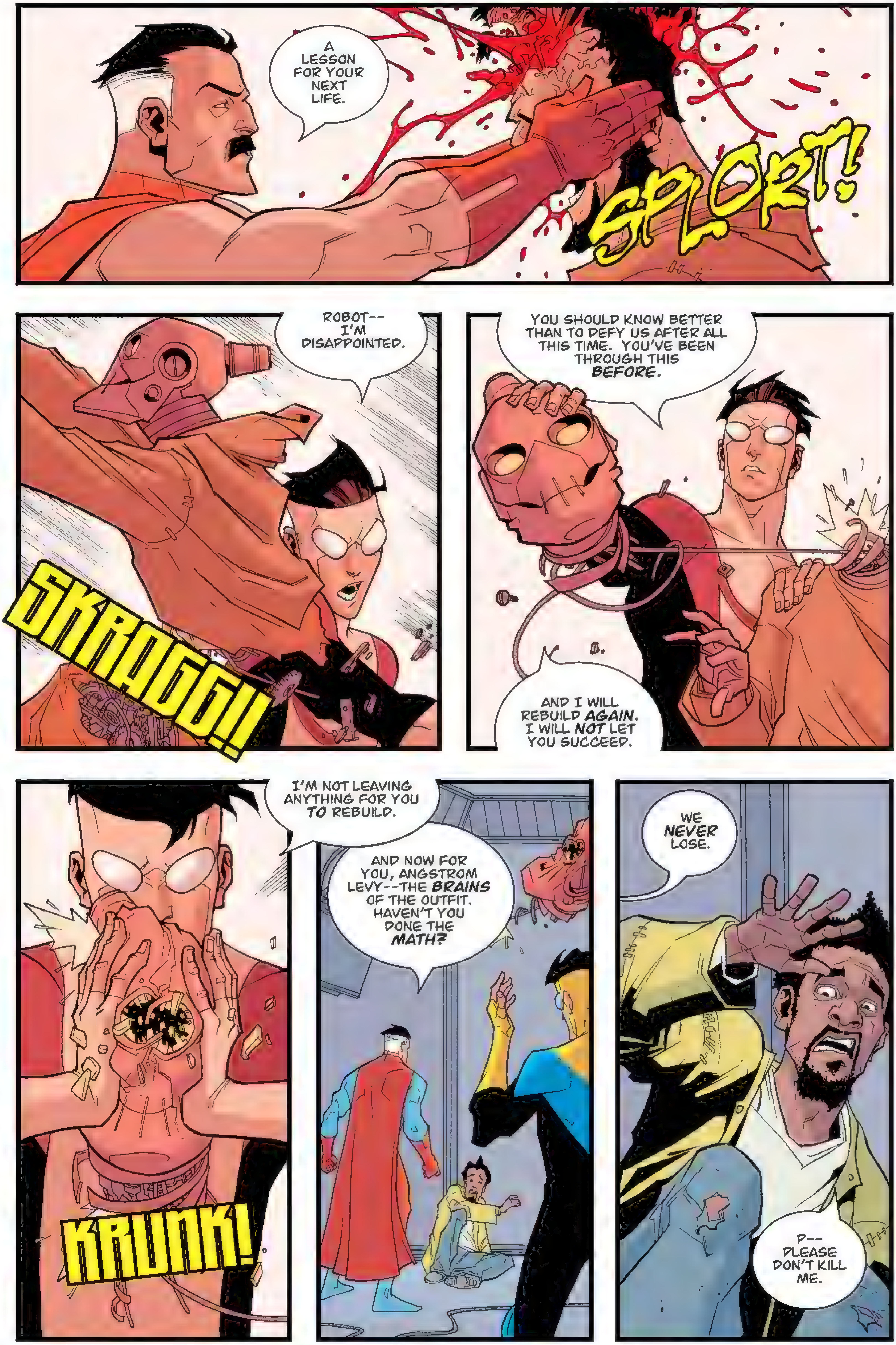
PRODENTIAL
8:48
SUMSANG
RESIST AND DIE.
IT IS ONLY NATURAL FOR YOU TO FEEL THAT MY FATHER AND I HAVE DONE YOU SOME GREAT WRONG BY ASSUMING CONTROL OF THIS PLANET.
THAT IS NOT THE CASE. IN THE LONG RUN YOU WILL COME TO REALIZE THAT WHAT WE DO HERE WILL HELP YOUR CIVILIZATION TO BETTER ITSELF-- WE WILL IMPROVE THIS WORLD.
HOWEVER, YOUR COOPERATION IS ESSENTIAL. IT IS IMPORTANT TO US THAT THE CHANGEOVER BE AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE.
SO, ANY PERSON OR PERSONS WHO OFFER ANY FORM OF RESISTANCE WILL BE TERMINATED ON SIGHT.
HIMSHEY'S

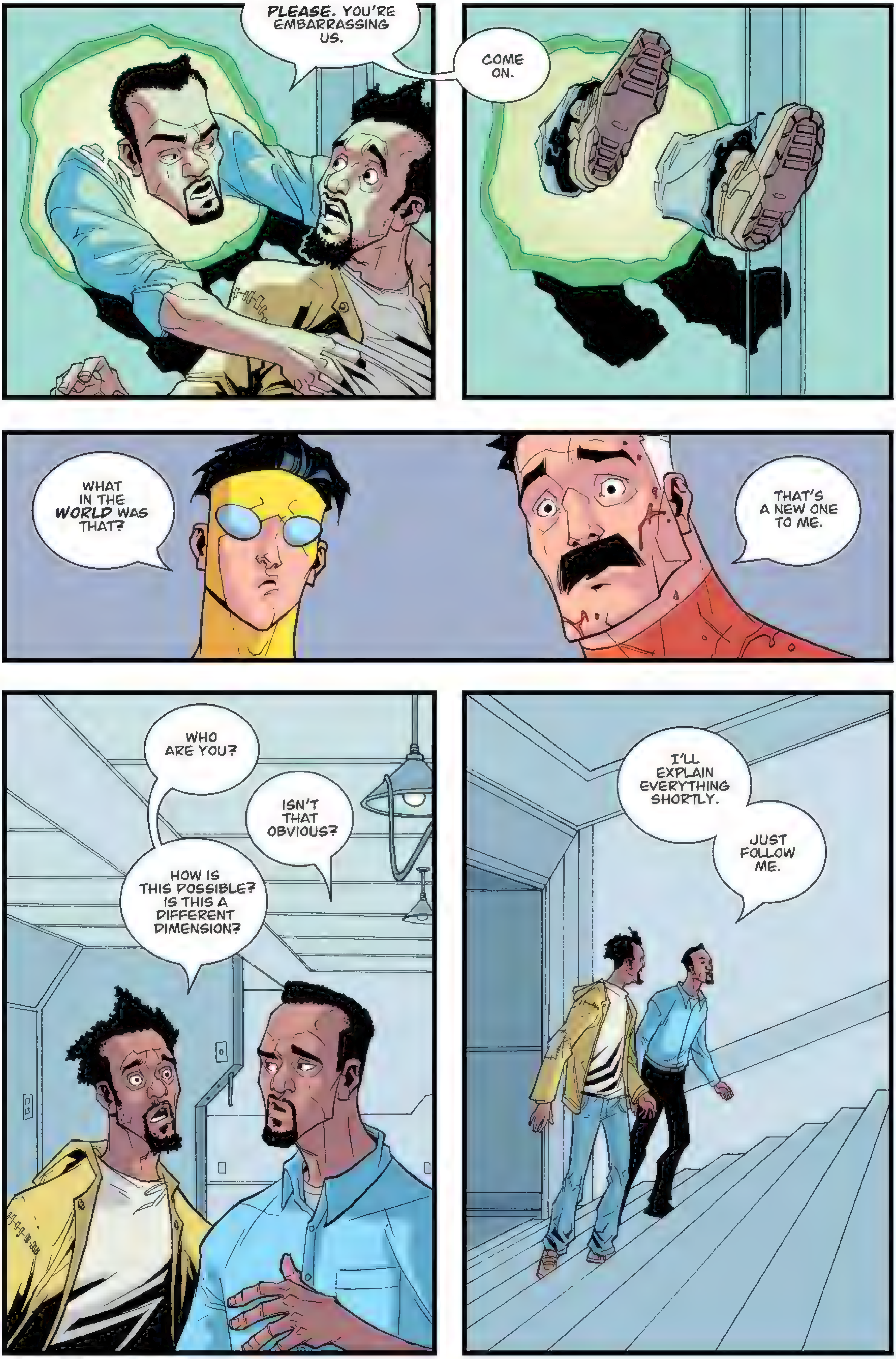

DUH
PIZZ
WELCOME BACK, ANGSTROM.

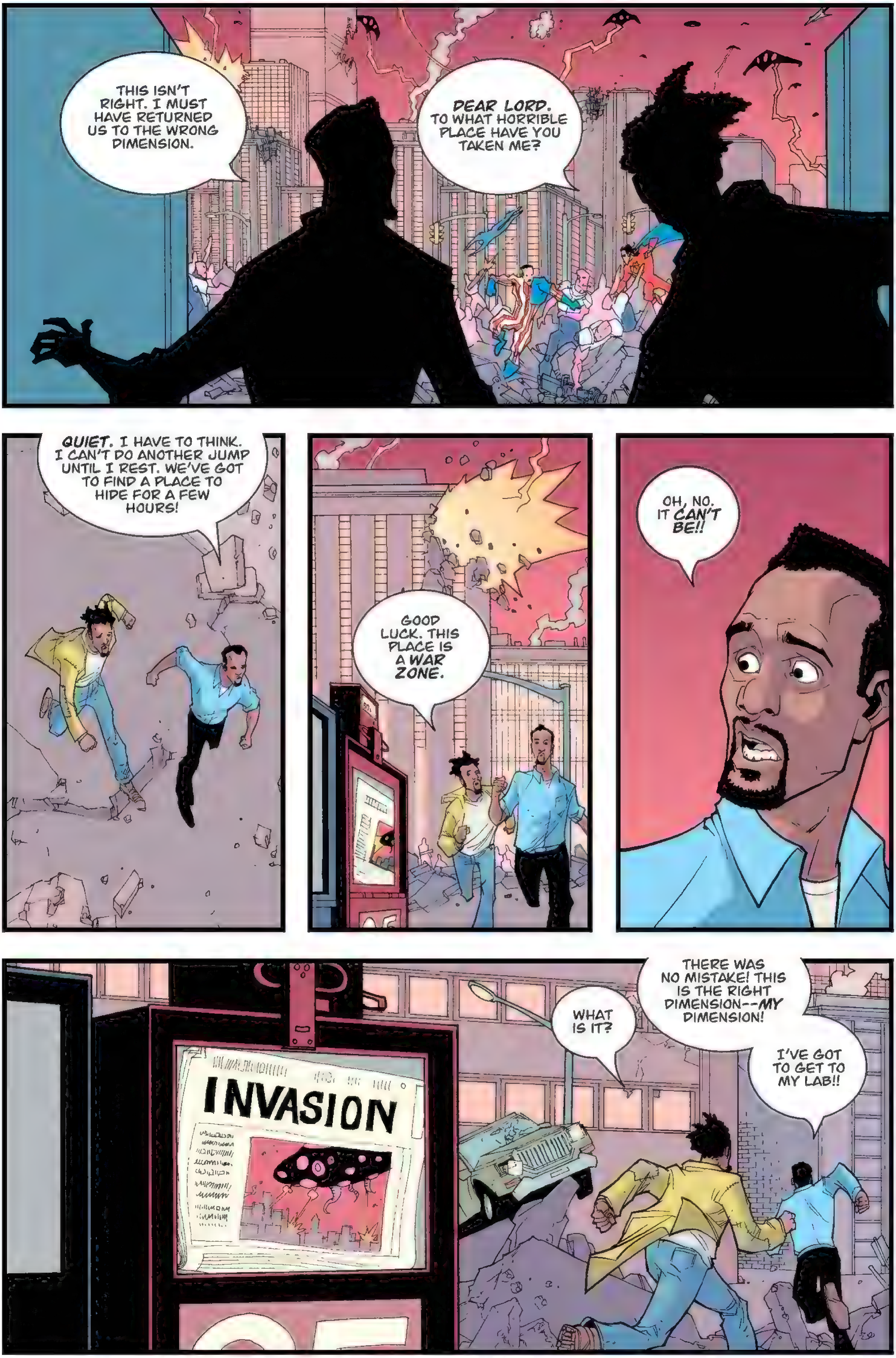

WERE YOU FOLLOWED?
OF COURSE NOT. I UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF OUR SITUATION AND I ASSURE YOU I HAVE TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.
ARE YOU CERTAIN?
ANGSTROM POSSESSES INTELLECT NEARLY AS SUBSTANTIAL AS MY OWN. THIS ANIMOSITY BETWEEN YOU TWO IS HIGHLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.
YES, AND WE HAVE WORK TO DO. THE BOY IS RUNNING THROUGH HIS SPIEL IN TIMES SQUARE AGAIN.
DO WE KNOW OF OMNI-MAN'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS?
NO-- AND THAT WORRIES ME.
WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TRACK HIM. THERE ARE ONLY TWO OF THEM, IF WE COULD MONITOR THEIR MOVEMENT WE COULD USE THAT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN. REALLY. IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO GET MY HANDS ON THE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED.
LOOK AT THIS PLACE. HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO ANYTHING WITH THIS LAUGHABLE ARRAY OF EQUIPMENT?
MY HANDS ARE TIED.
YOU'RE PROVING MORE USELESS BY THE DAY. WERE IT NOT FOR ROBOT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT YOU WOULD HAVE NO PLACE HERE.


THRAKOOM!!
YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T FOLLOWED!!

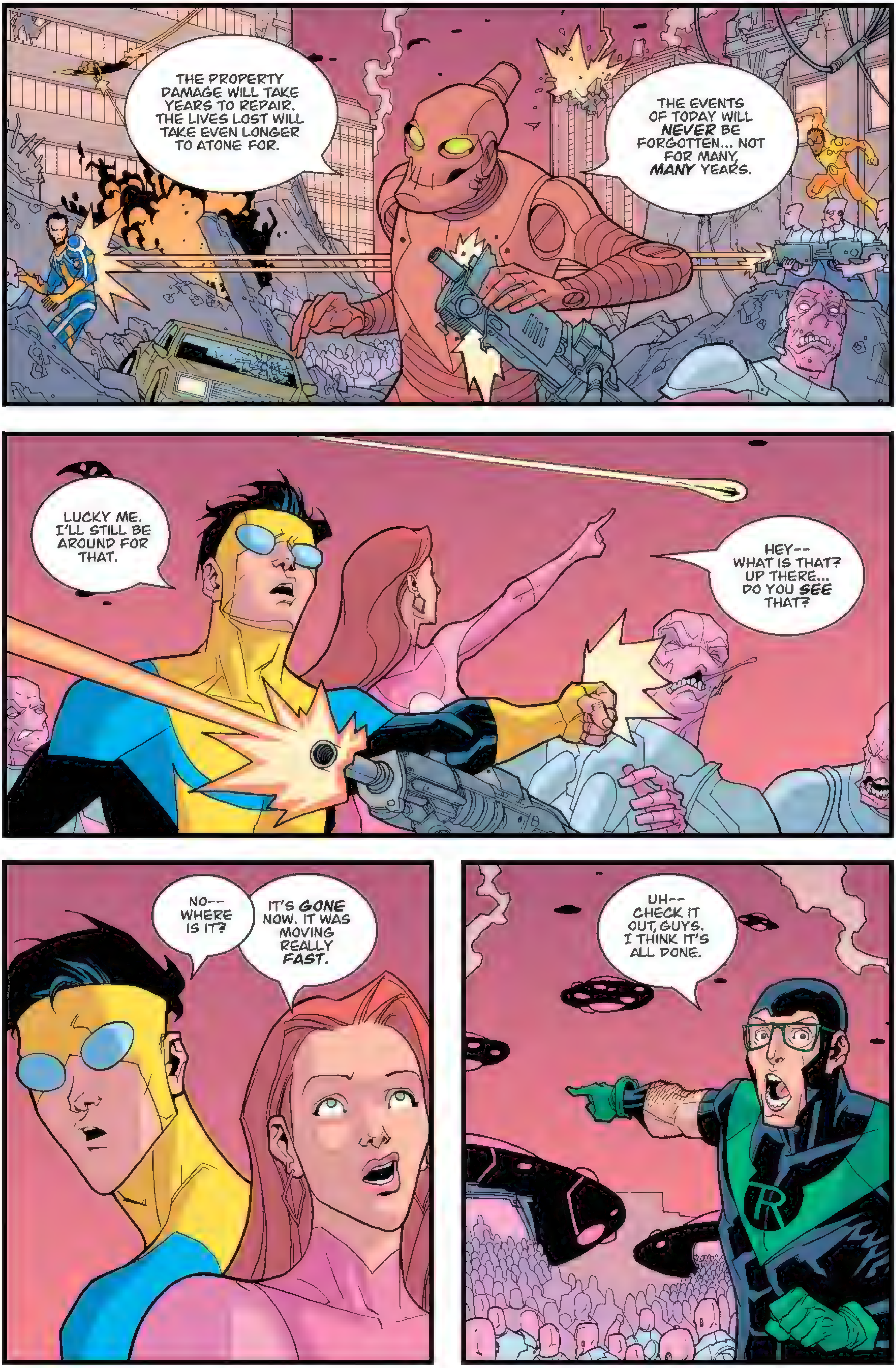

YOU SHOULD LOOK *UP* MORE OFTEN.

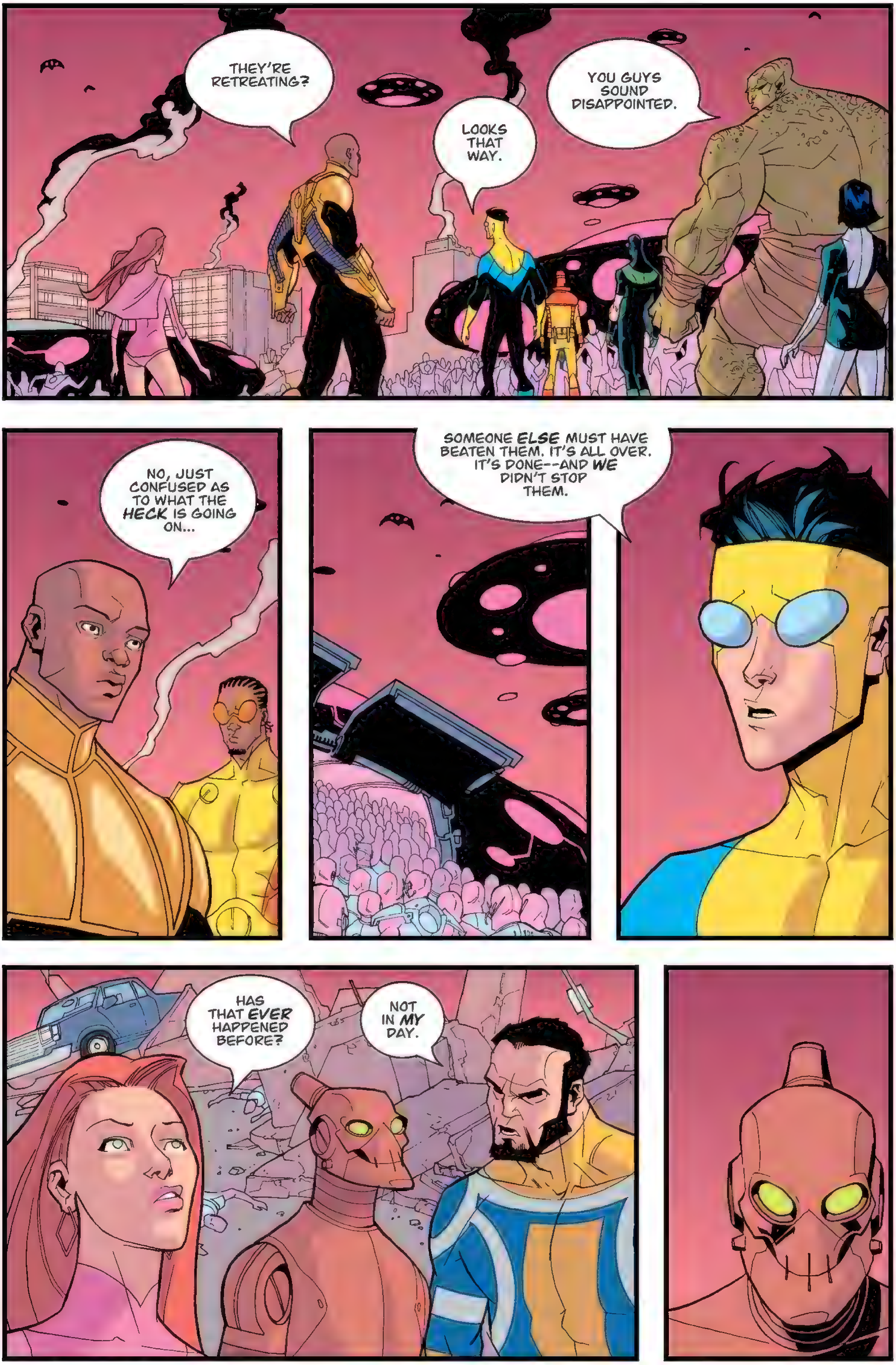

A LESSON FOR YOUR NEXT LIFE.
SPLORT!
ROBOT-- I'M DISAPPOINTED.
SKRAGG!!
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO DEFY US AFTER ALL THIS TIME. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE.
AND I WILL REBUILD AGAIN. I WILL NOT LET YOU SUCCEED.
I'M NOT LEAVING ANYTHING FOR YOU TO REBUILD.
KRUNK!
AND NOW FOR YOU, ANGSTROM LEVY--THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT. HAVEN'T YOU DONE THE MATH?
WE NEVER LOSE.
P-- PLEASE DON'T KILL ME.

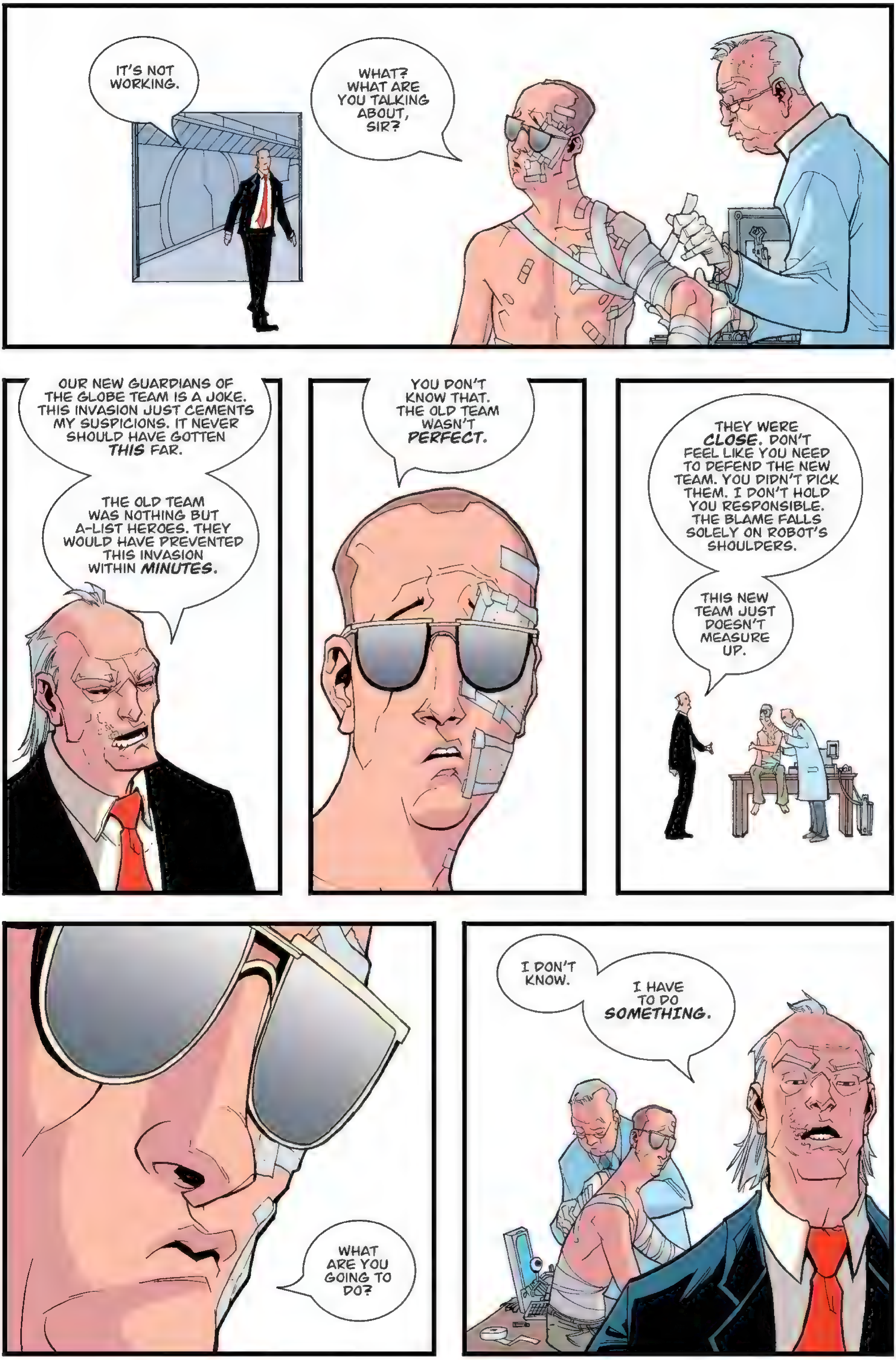

PLEASE. YOU'RE EMBARRASSING US.
COME ON.
WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT?
THAT'S A NEW ONE TO ME.
WHO ARE YOU?
ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS?
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? IS THIS A DIFFERENT DIMENSION?
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING SHORTLY.
JUST FOLLOW ME.

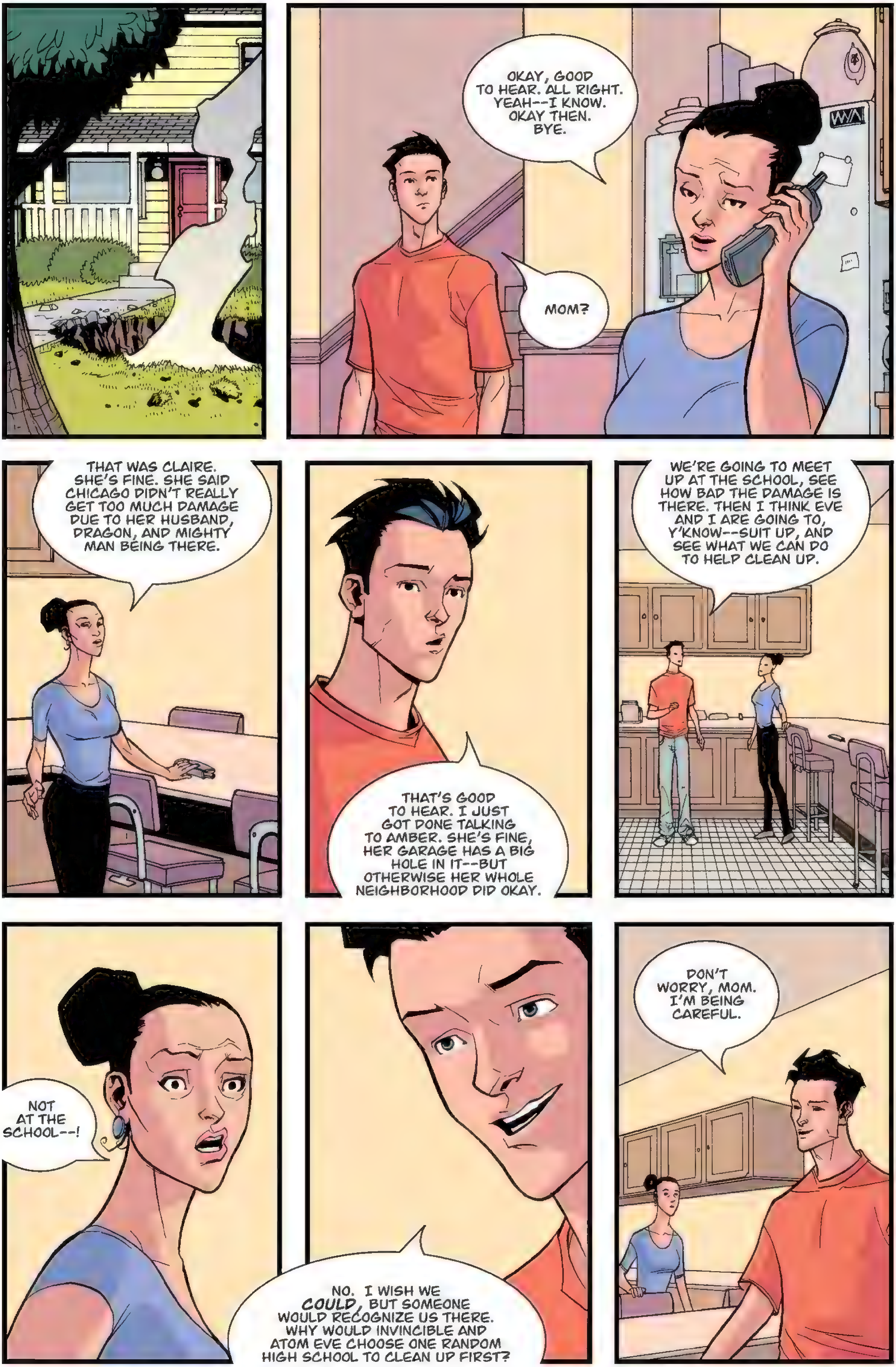

THIS ISN'T RIGHT. I MUST HAVE RETURNED US TO THE WRONG DIMENSION.
DEAR LORD. TO WHAT HORRIBLE PLACE HAVE YOU TAKEN ME?
QUIET. I HAVE TO THINK. I CAN'T DO ANOTHER JUMP UNTIL I REST. WE'VE GOT TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE FOR A FEW HOURS!
GOOD LUCK. THIS PLACE IS A WAR ZONE.
OH, NO. IT CAN'T BE!!
INVASION
WHAT IS IT?
THERE WAS NO MISTAKE! THIS IS THE RIGHT DIMENSION--MY DIMENSION!
I'VE GOT TO GET TO MY LAB!!

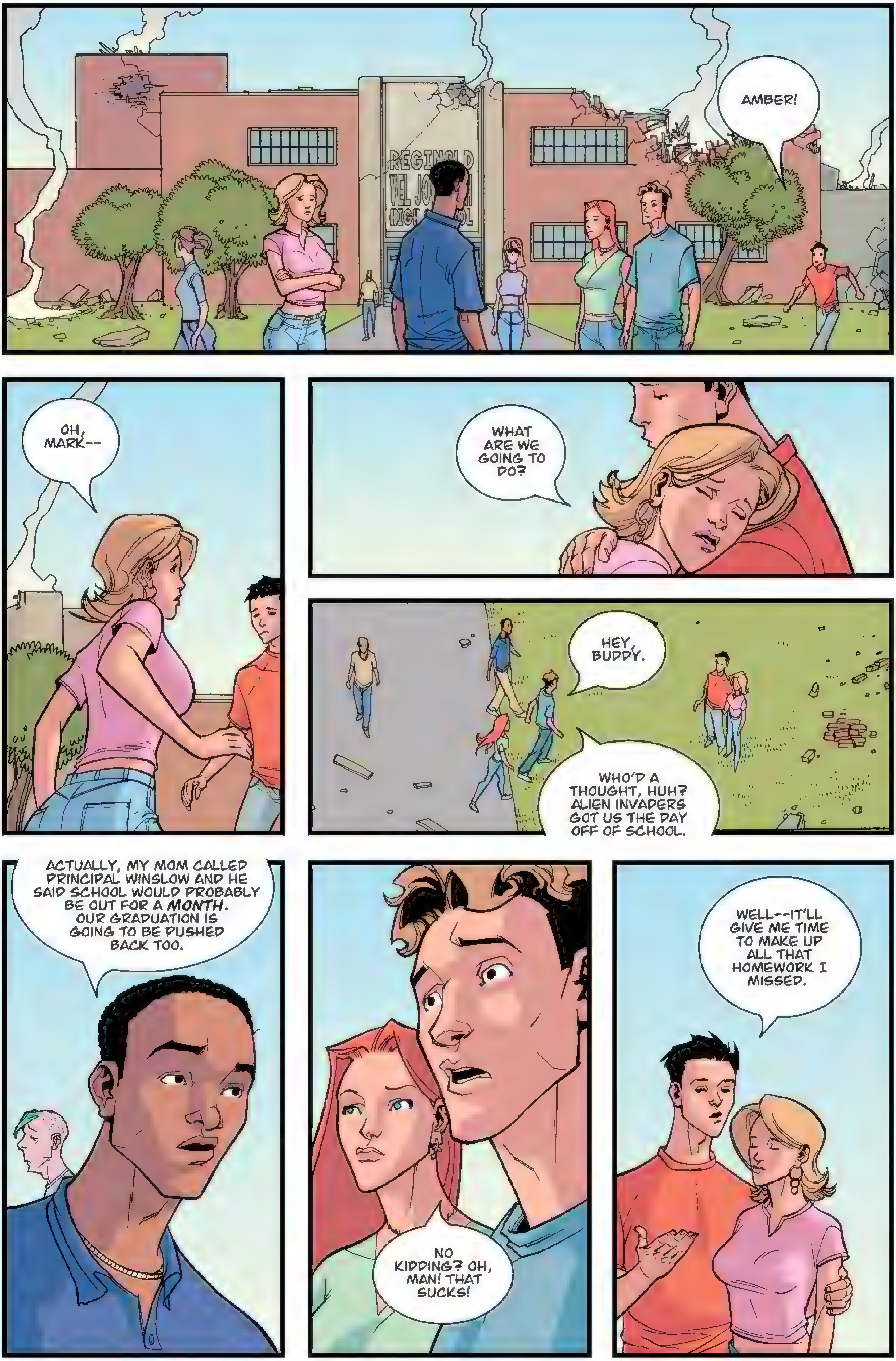
THIS IS *NOT* GOING WELL.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!
THEY'RE NOT THAT TOUGH AT ALL, BUT THEY'RE *EVERYWHERE.* IT SEEMS LIKE FOR EVERY ONE OF THESE THINGS I KNOCK DOWN, THREE MORE TAKE ITS PLACE.
AT THIS RATE... THEY'RE GOING TO BEAT US.
THAT IS *NOT* AN OPTION.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU *PANSIES*, BUT I'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR SIX HOURS AND I HAVEN'T EVEN BROKEN A *SWEAT.*
WHATEVER IT TAKES. WE'RE BEATING THESE CLOWNS!
PREACH ON, *SISTER!* I'M NOT READY TO GIVE UP EITHER. THERE'S *TOO MUCH* AT STAKE!
PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON US!
I NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT *GIVING UP.*
WE'LL BEAT THEM... WE *ALWAYS* DO. WE HAVE TO.
I HAVE DONE THE CALCULATIONS. THE ODDS ARE IN OUR FAVOR TO EVENTUALLY SUCCEED.
BUT AT WHAT COST...

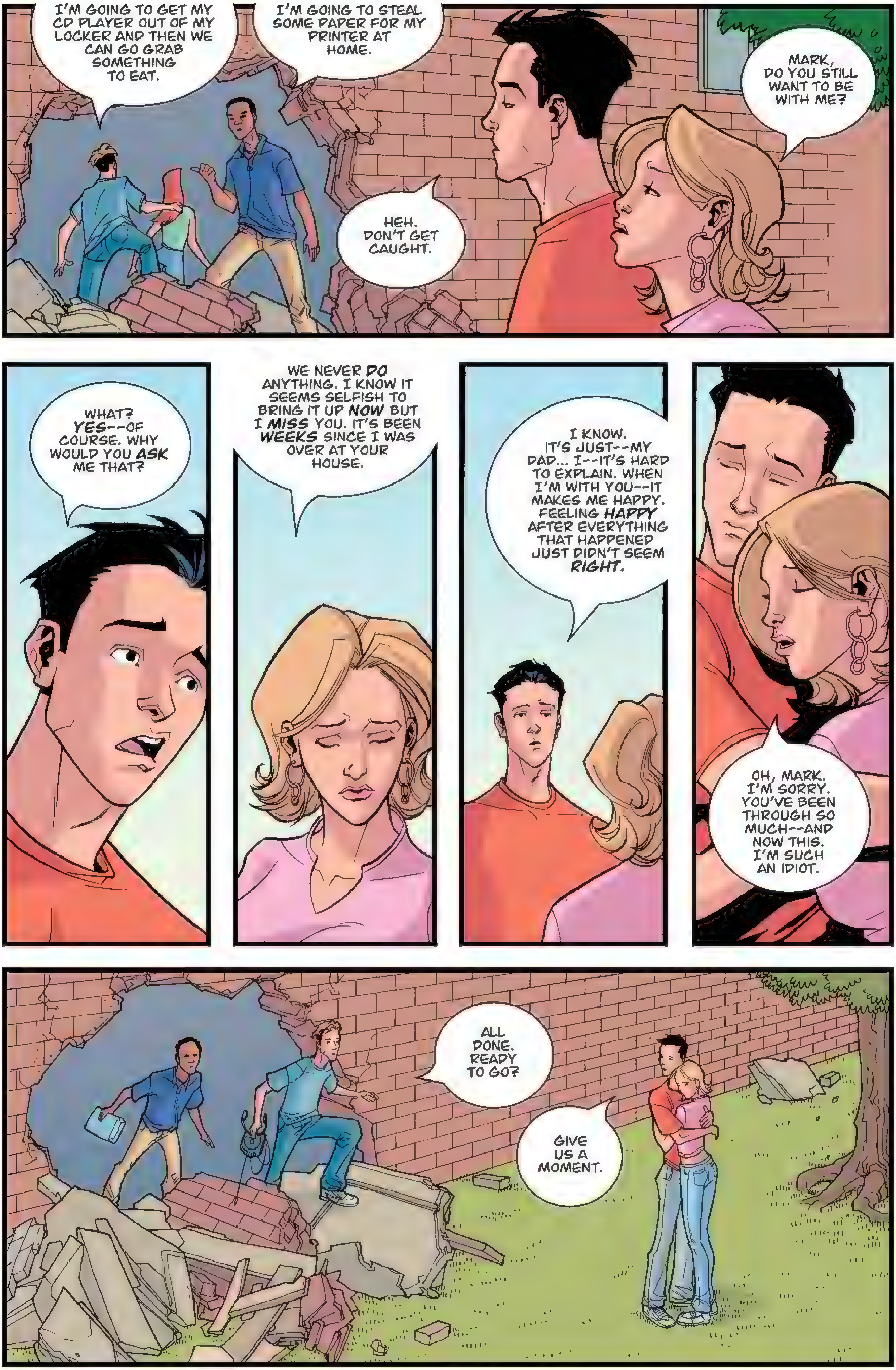

THE PROPERTY DAMAGE WILL TAKE YEARS TO REPAIR. THE LIVES LOST WILL TAKE EVEN LONGER TO ATONE FOR.
THE EVENTS OF TODAY WILL ***NEVER*** BE FORGOTTEN... NOT FOR MANY, ***MANY*** YEARS.
LUCKY ME. I'LL STILL BE AROUND FOR THAT.
HEY-- WHAT IS THAT? UP THERE... DO YOU ***SEE*** THAT?
NO-- WHERE IS IT?
IT'S ***GONE*** NOW. IT WAS MOVING REALLY ***FAST.***
UH-- CHECK IT OUT, GUYS. I THINK IT'S ALL DONE.

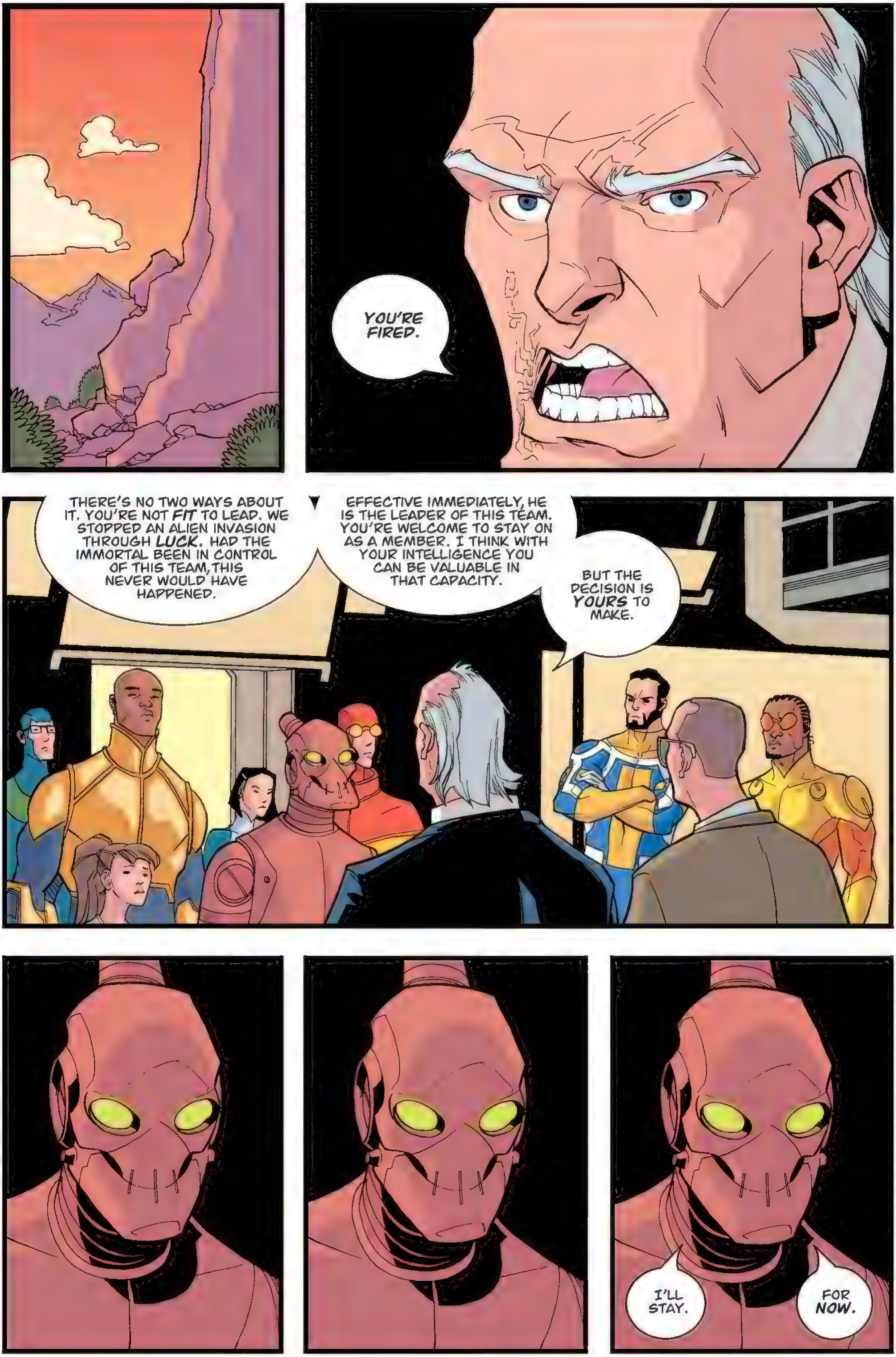

THEY'RE RETREATING?
LOOKS THAT WAY.
YOU GUYS SOUND DISAPPOINTED.
NO, JUST CONFUSED AS TO WHAT THE **HECK** IS GOING ON...
SOMEONE **ELSE** MUST HAVE BEATEN THEM. IT'S ALL OVER. IT'S DONE--AND **WE** DIDN'T STOP THEM.
HAS THAT **EVER** HAPPENED BEFORE?
NOT IN **MY** DAY.

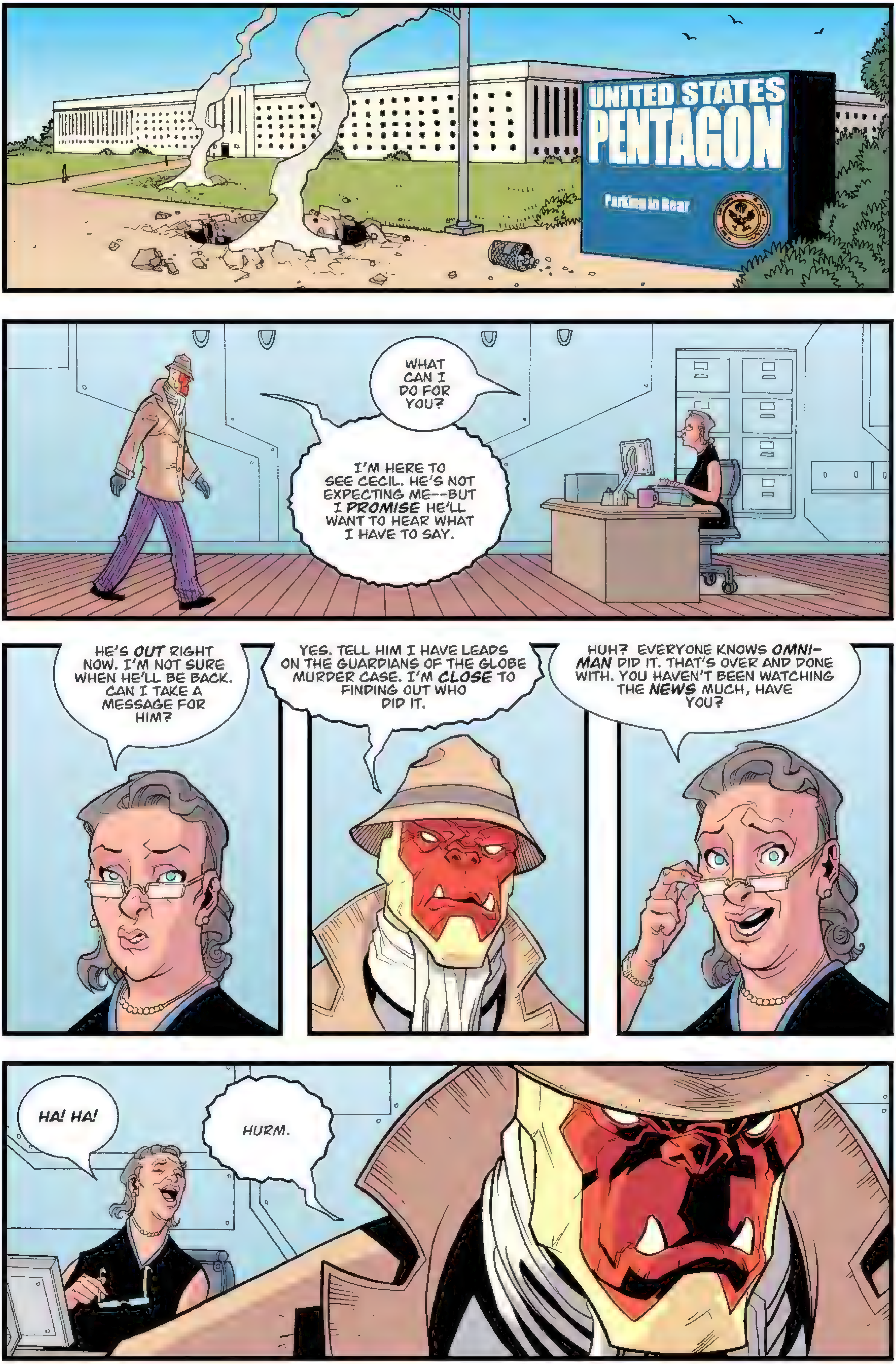

IT'S NOT WORKING.
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SIR?
OUR NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TEAM IS A JOKE. THIS INVASION JUST CEMENTS MY SUSPICIONS. IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN *THIS* FAR.
THE OLD TEAM WAS NOTHING BUT A-LIST HEROES. THEY WOULD HAVE PREVENTED THIS INVASION WITHIN *MINUTES*.
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. THE OLD TEAM WASN'T *PERFECT*.
THEY WERE **CLOSE**. DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO DEFEND THE NEW TEAM. YOU DIDN'T PICK THEM. I DON'T HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE. THE BLAME FALLS SOLELY ON ROBOT'S SHOULDERS.
THIS NEW TEAM JUST DOESN'T MEASURE UP.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I DON'T KNOW.
I HAVE TO DO **SOMETHING**.

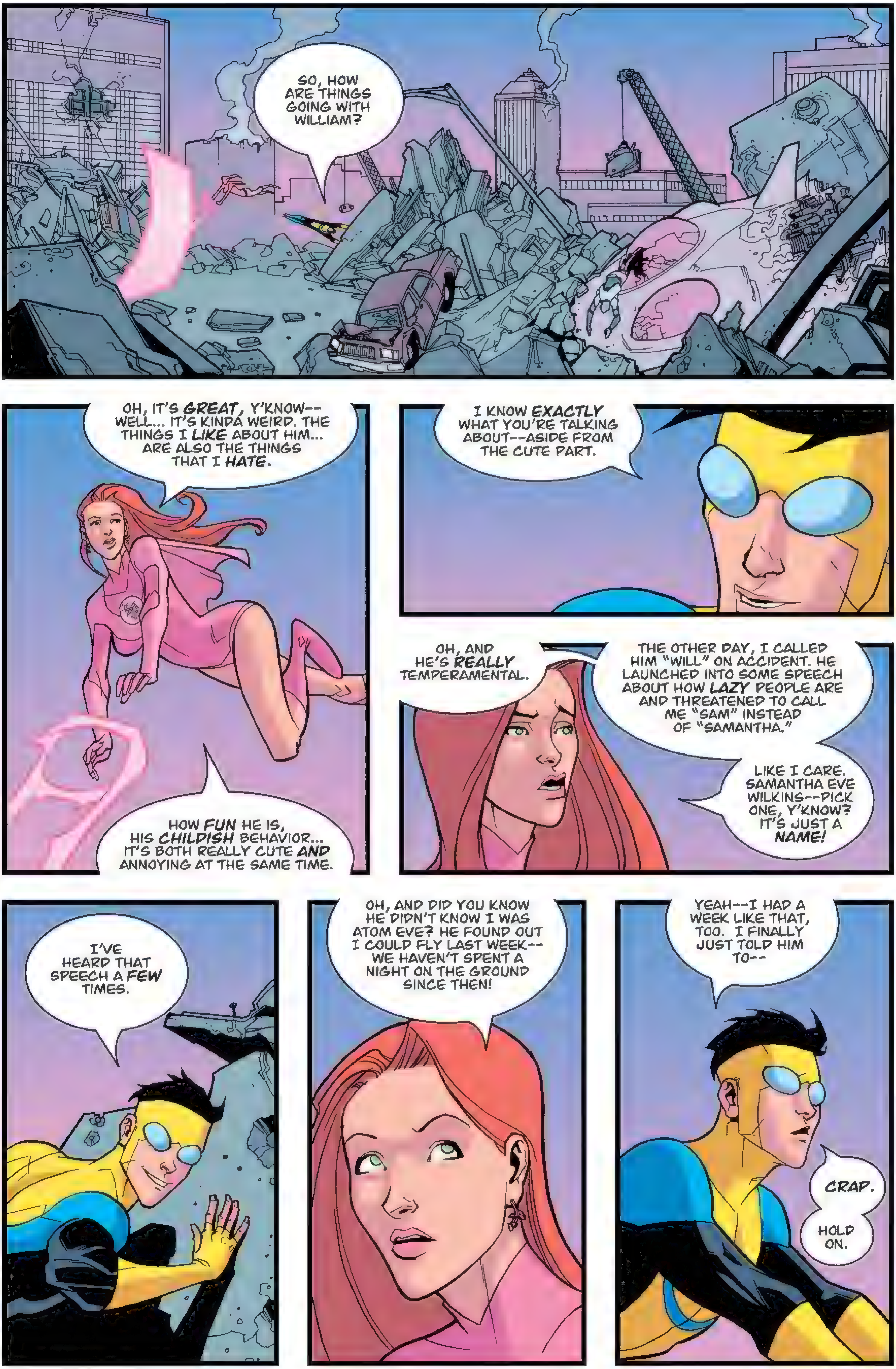

OKAY, GOOD TO HEAR. ALL RIGHT. YEAH--I KNOW. OKAY THEN. BYE.
MOM?
THAT WAS CLAIRE. SHE'S FINE. SHE SAID CHICAGO DIDN'T REALLY GET TOO MUCH DAMAGE DUE TO HER HUSBAND, DRAGON, AND MIGHTY MAN BEING THERE.
THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR. I JUST GOT DONE TALKING TO AMBER. SHE'S FINE, HER GARAGE HAS A BIG HOLE IN IT--BUT OTHERWISE HER WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD DID OKAY.
WE'RE GOING TO MEET UP AT THE SCHOOL, SEE HOW BAD THE DAMAGE IS THERE. THEN I THINK EVE AND I ARE GOING TO, Y'KNOW--SUIT UP, AND SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP CLEAN UP.
NOT AT THE SCHOOL--!
NO. I WISH WE *COULD*, BUT SOMEONE WOULD RECOGNIZE US THERE. WHY WOULD INVINCIBLE AND ATOM EVE CHOOSE ONE RANDOM HIGH SCHOOL TO CLEAN UP FIRST?
DON'T WORRY, MOM. I'M BEING CAREFUL.

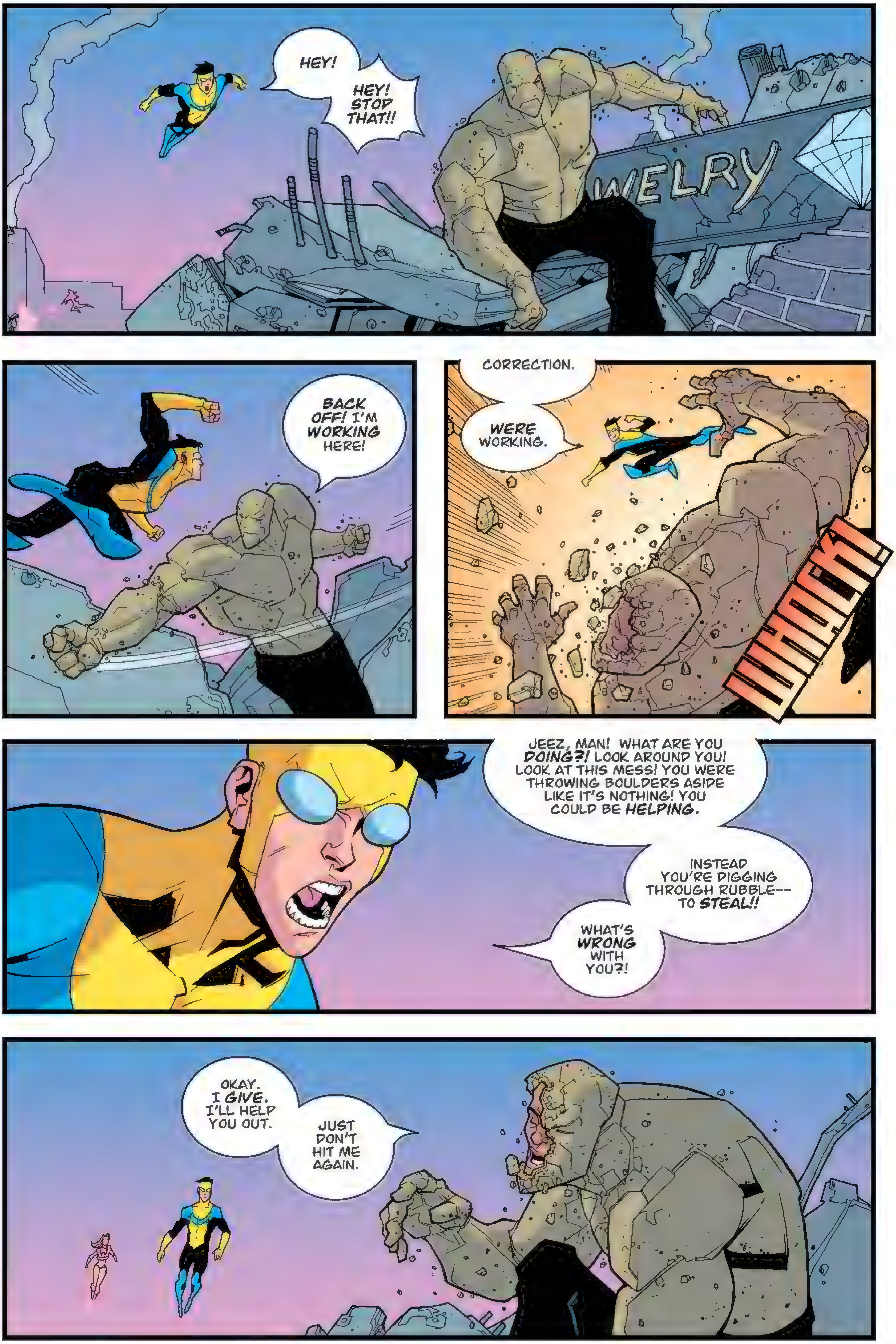

REGINALD
VEL JO
HIGH
AMBER!
OH, MARK--
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
HEY, BUDDY.
WHO'D A THOUGHT, HUH? ALIEN INVADERS GOT US THE DAY OFF OF SCHOOL.
ACTUALLY, MY MOM CALLED PRINCIPAL WINSLOW AND HE SAID SCHOOL WOULD PROBABLY BE OUT FOR A *MONTH*. OUR GRADUATION IS GOING TO BE PUSHED BACK TOO.
NO KIDDING? OH, MAN! THAT SUCKS!
WELL--IT'LL GIVE ME TIME TO MAKE UP ALL THAT HOMEWORK I MISSED.

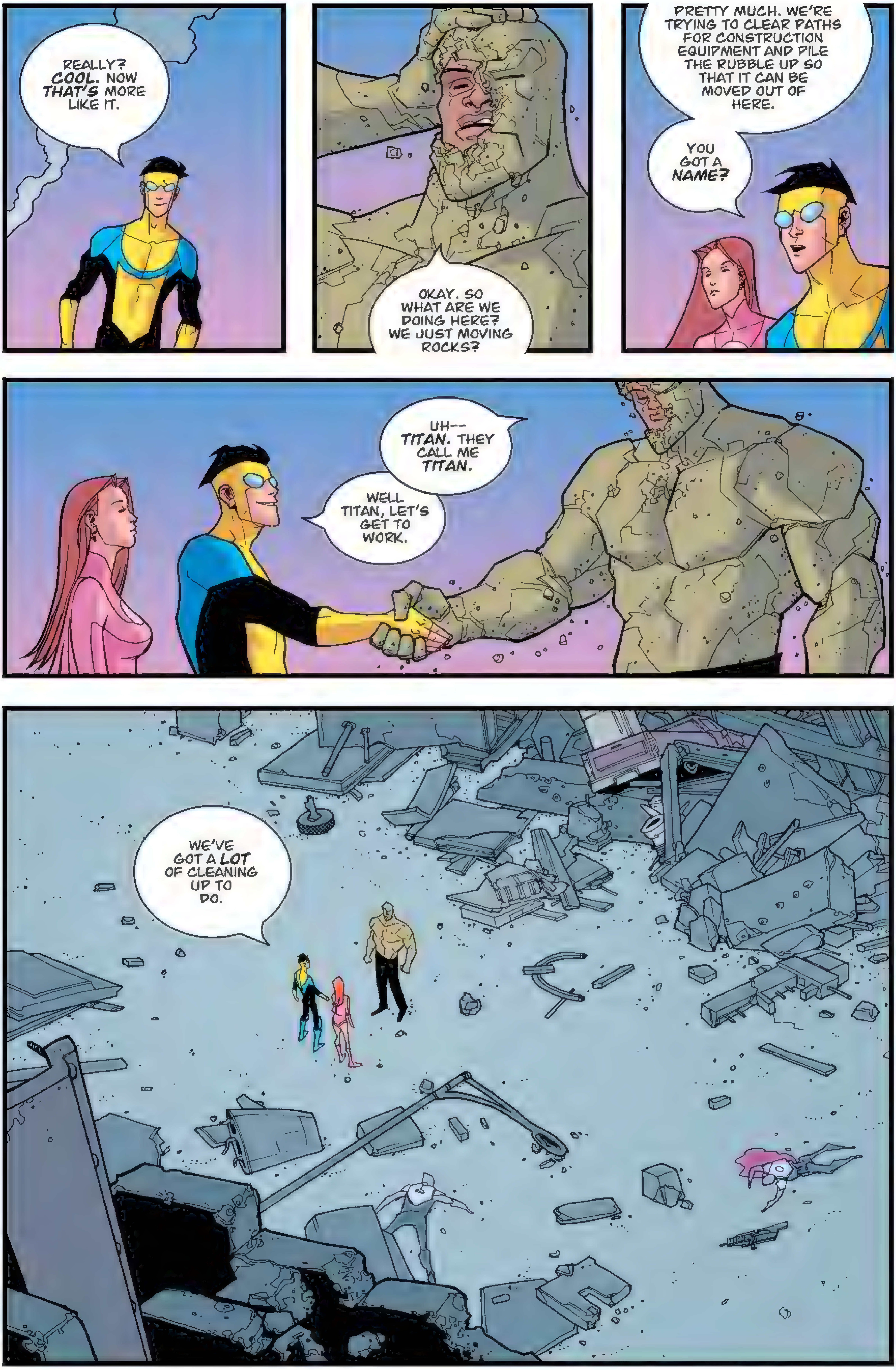

I'M GOING TO GET MY CD PLAYER OUT OF MY LOCKER AND THEN WE CAN GO GRAB SOMETHING TO EAT.
I'M GOING TO STEAL SOME PAPER FOR MY PRINTER AT HOME.
HEH. DON'T GET CAUGHT.
MARK, DO YOU STILL WANT TO BE WITH ME?
WHAT? *YES*--OF COURSE. WHY WOULD YOU *ASK* ME THAT?
WE NEVER *DO* ANYTHING. I KNOW IT SEEMS SELFISH TO BRING IT UP *NOW* BUT I *MISS* YOU. IT'S BEEN *WEEKS* SINCE I WAS OVER AT YOUR HOUSE.
I KNOW. IT'S JUST--MY DAD... I--IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN. WHEN I'M WITH YOU--IT MAKES ME HAPPY. FEELING *HAPPY* AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED JUST DIDN'T SEEM *RIGHT*.
OH, MARK. I'M SORRY. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH--AND NOW THIS. I'M SUCH AN IDIOT.
ALL DONE. READY TO GO?
GIVE US A MOMENT.

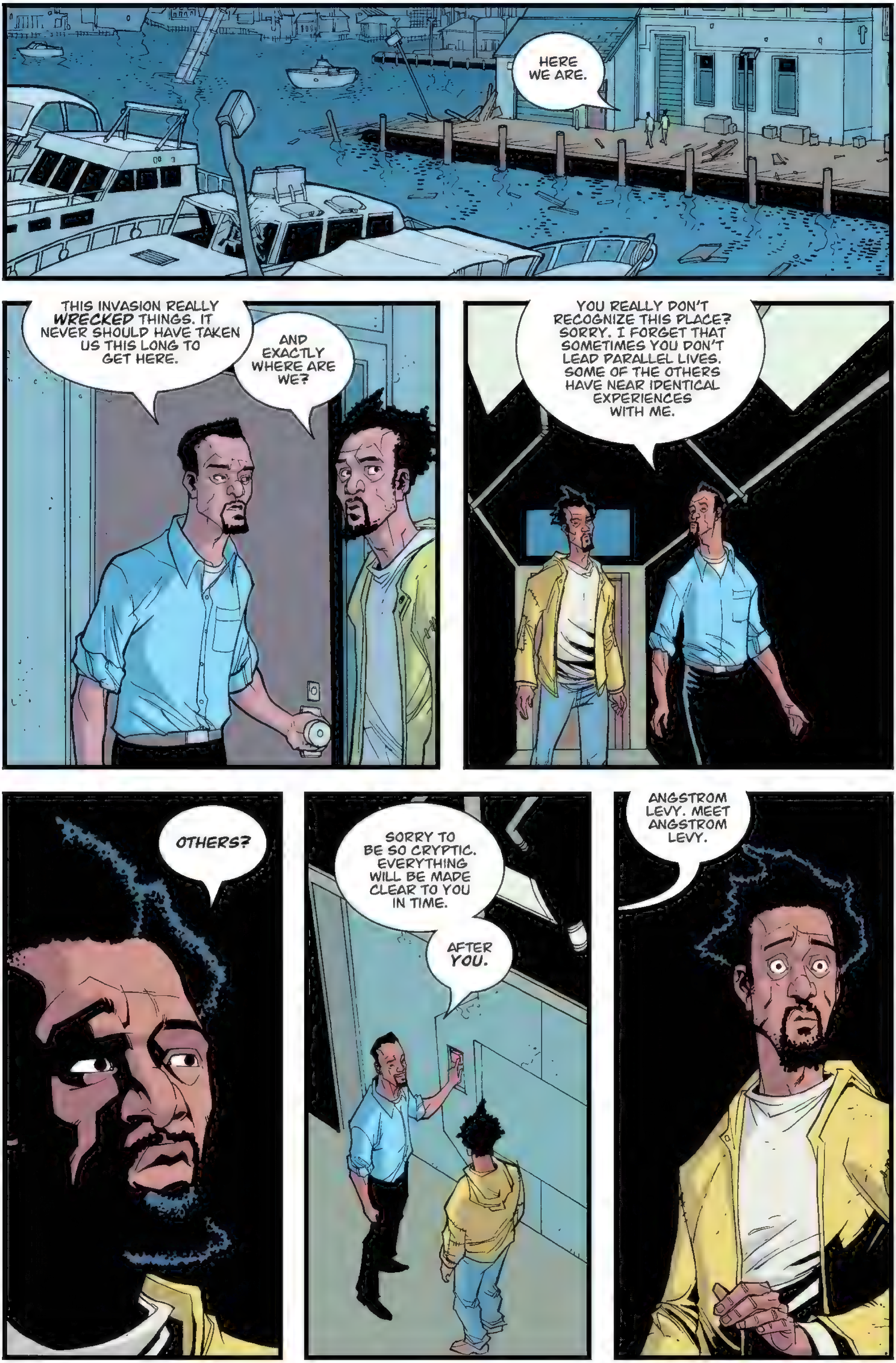

YOU'RE FIRED.
THERE'S NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. YOU'RE NOT *FIT* TO LEAD. WE STOPPED AN ALIEN INVASION THROUGH *LUCK*. HAD THE IMMORTAL BEEN IN CONTROL OF THIS TEAM, THIS NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, HE IS THE LEADER OF THIS TEAM. YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY ON AS A MEMBER. I THINK WITH YOUR INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN BE VALUABLE IN THAT CAPACITY.
BUT THE DECISION IS *YOURS* TO MAKE.
I'LL STAY.
FOR *NOW*.


UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I'M HERE TO SEE CECIL. HE'S NOT EXPECTING ME--BUT I *PROMISE* HE'LL WANT TO HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.
HE'S *OUT* RIGHT NOW. I'M NOT SURE WHEN HE'LL BE BACK. CAN I TAKE A MESSAGE FOR HIM?
YES. TELL HIM I HAVE LEADS ON THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE MURDER CASE. I'M *CLOSE* TO FINDING OUT WHO DID IT.
HUH? EVERYONE KNOWS *OMNI-MAN* DID IT. THAT'S OVER AND DONE WITH. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN WATCHING THE *NEWS* MUCH, HAVE YOU?
HA! HA!
HURM.


SO, HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH WILLIAM?
OH, IT'S GREAT, Y'KNOW-- WELL... IT'S KINDA WEIRD. THE THINGS I LIKE ABOUT HIM... ARE ALSO THE THINGS THAT I HATE.
HOW FUN HE IS, HIS CHILDISH BEHAVIOR... IT'S BOTH REALLY CUTE AND ANNOYING AT THE SAME TIME.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT--ASIDE FROM THE CUTE PART.
OH, AND HE'S REALLY TEMPERAMENTAL.
THE OTHER DAY, I CALLED HIM "WILL" ON ACCIDENT. HE LAUNCHED INTO SOME SPEECH ABOUT HOW LAZY PEOPLE ARE AND THREATENED TO CALL ME "SAM" INSTEAD OF "SAMANTHA."
LIKE I CARE. SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS--PICK ONE, Y'KNOW? IT'S JUST A NAME!
I'VE HEARD THAT SPEECH A FEW TIMES.
OH, AND DID YOU KNOW HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS ATOM EVE? HE FOUND OUT I COULD FLY LAST WEEK-- WE HAVEN'T SPENT A NIGHT ON THE GROUND SINCE THEN!
YEAH--I HAD A WEEK LIKE THAT, TOO. I FINALLY JUST TOLD HIM TO--
CRAP.
HOLD ON.


HEY!
HEY! STOP THAT!!
WELRY
BACK OFF! I'M WORKING HERE!
CORRECTION.
WERE WORKING.
WHACK!
JEEZ, MAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LOOK AROUND YOU! LOOK AT THIS MESS! YOU WERE THROWING BOULDERS ASIDE LIKE IT'S NOTHING! YOU COULD BE HELPING.
INSTEAD YOU'RE DIGGING THROUGH RUBBLE-- TO STEAL!!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
OKAY. I GIVE. I'LL HELP YOU OUT.
JUST DON'T HIT ME AGAIN.

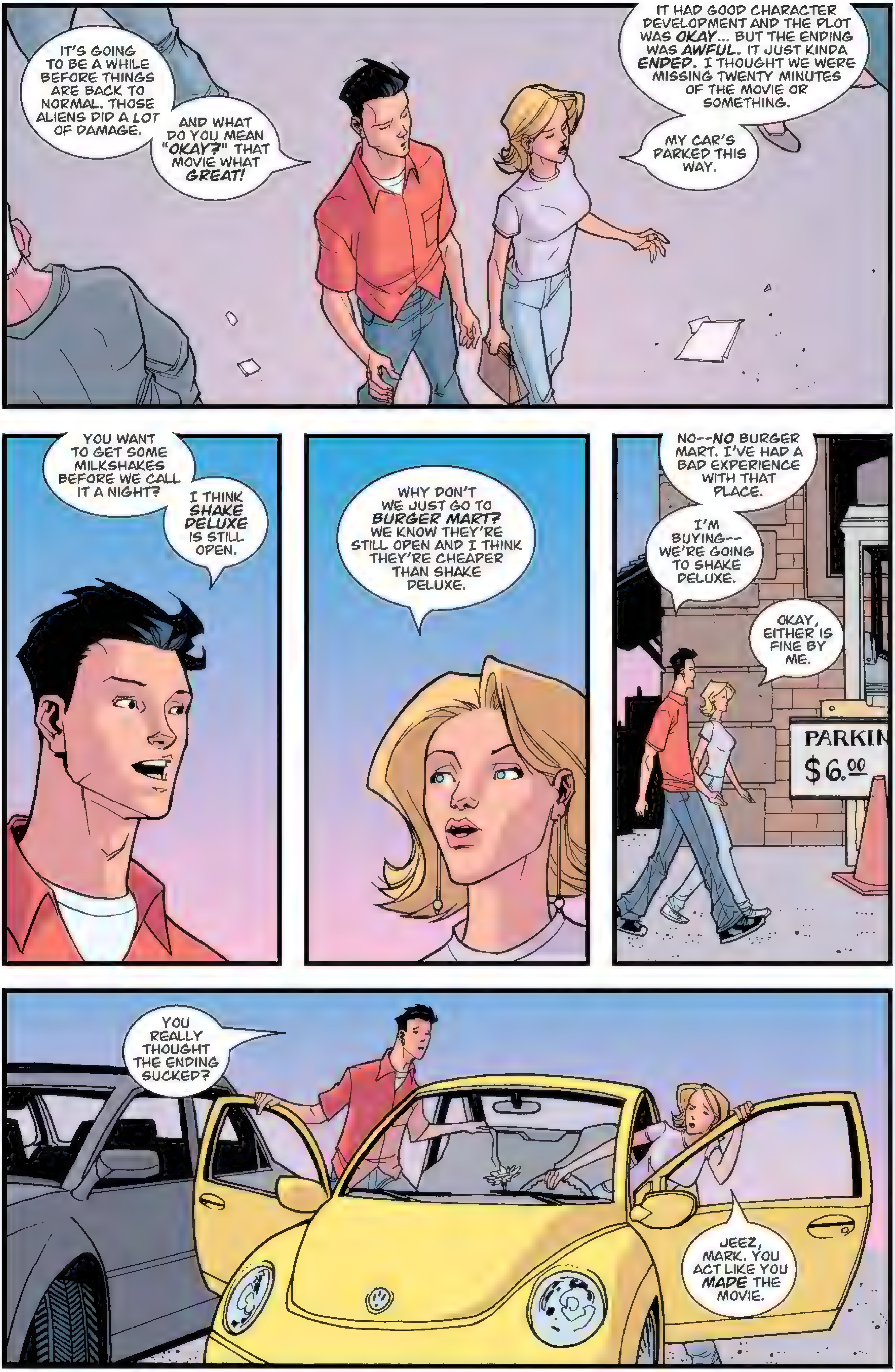

REALLY? *COOL.* NOW *THAT'S* MORE LIKE IT.
OKAY. SO WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE? WE JUST MOVING ROCKS?
PRETTY MUCH. WE'RE TRYING TO CLEAR PATHS FOR CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AND PILE THE RUBBLE UP SO THAT IT CAN BE MOVED OUT OF HERE.
YOU GOT A *NAME?*
UH-- *TITAN.* THEY CALL ME *TITAN.*
WELL TITAN, LET'S GET TO WORK.
WE'VE GOT A *LOT* OF CLEANING UP TO DO.

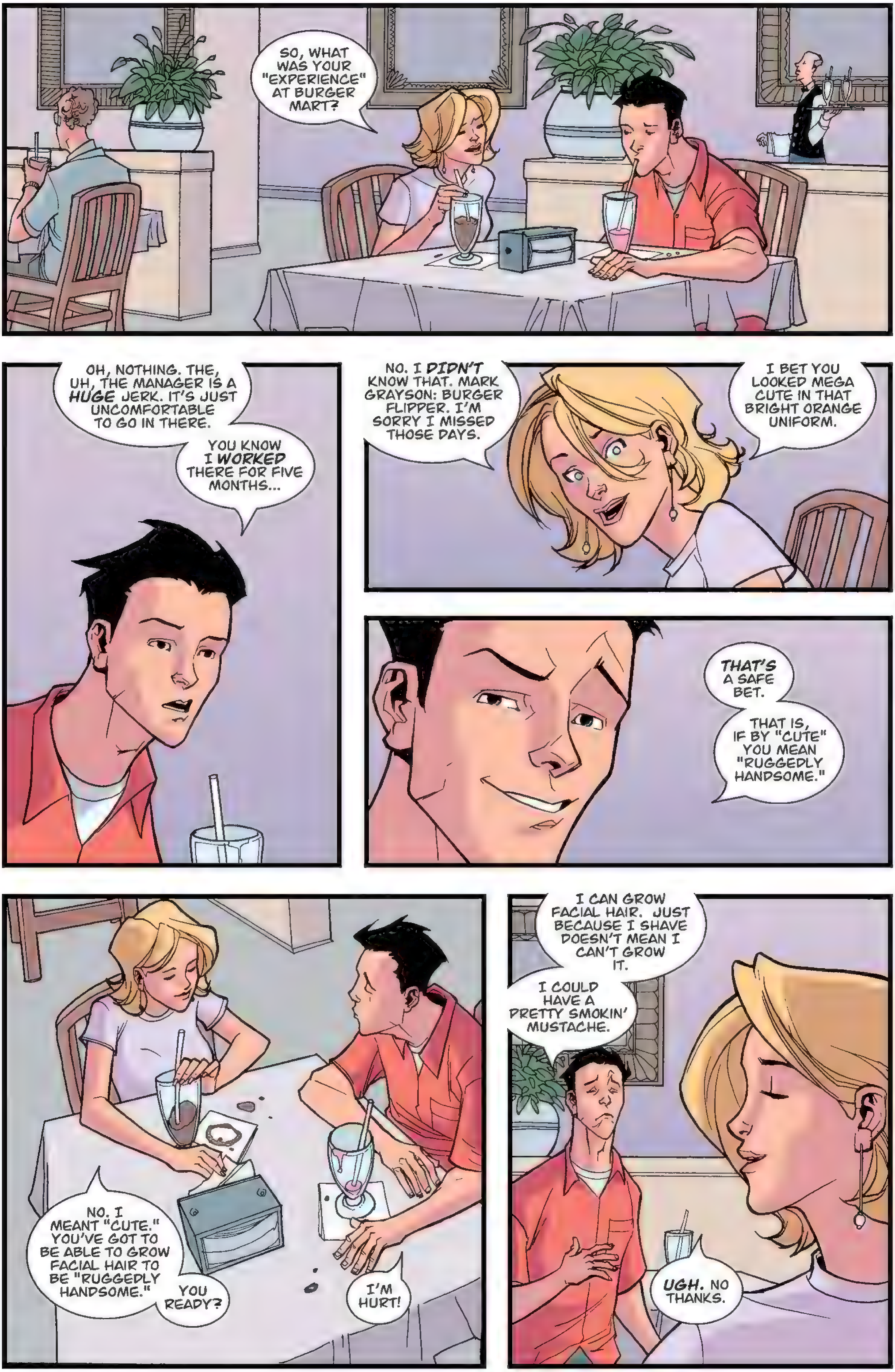

HERE WE ARE.
THIS INVASION REALLY WRECKED THINGS. IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE TAKEN US THIS LONG TO GET HERE.
AND EXACTLY WHERE ARE WE?
YOU REALLY DON'T RECOGNIZE THIS PLACE? SORRY. I FORGET THAT SOMETIMES YOU DON'T LEAD PARALLEL LIVES. SOME OF THE OTHERS HAVE NEAR IDENTICAL EXPERIENCES WITH ME.
OTHERS?
SORRY TO BE SO CRYPTIC. EVERYTHING WILL BE MADE CLEAR TO YOU IN TIME.
AFTER YOU.
ANGSTROM LEVY. MEET ANGSTROM LEVY.

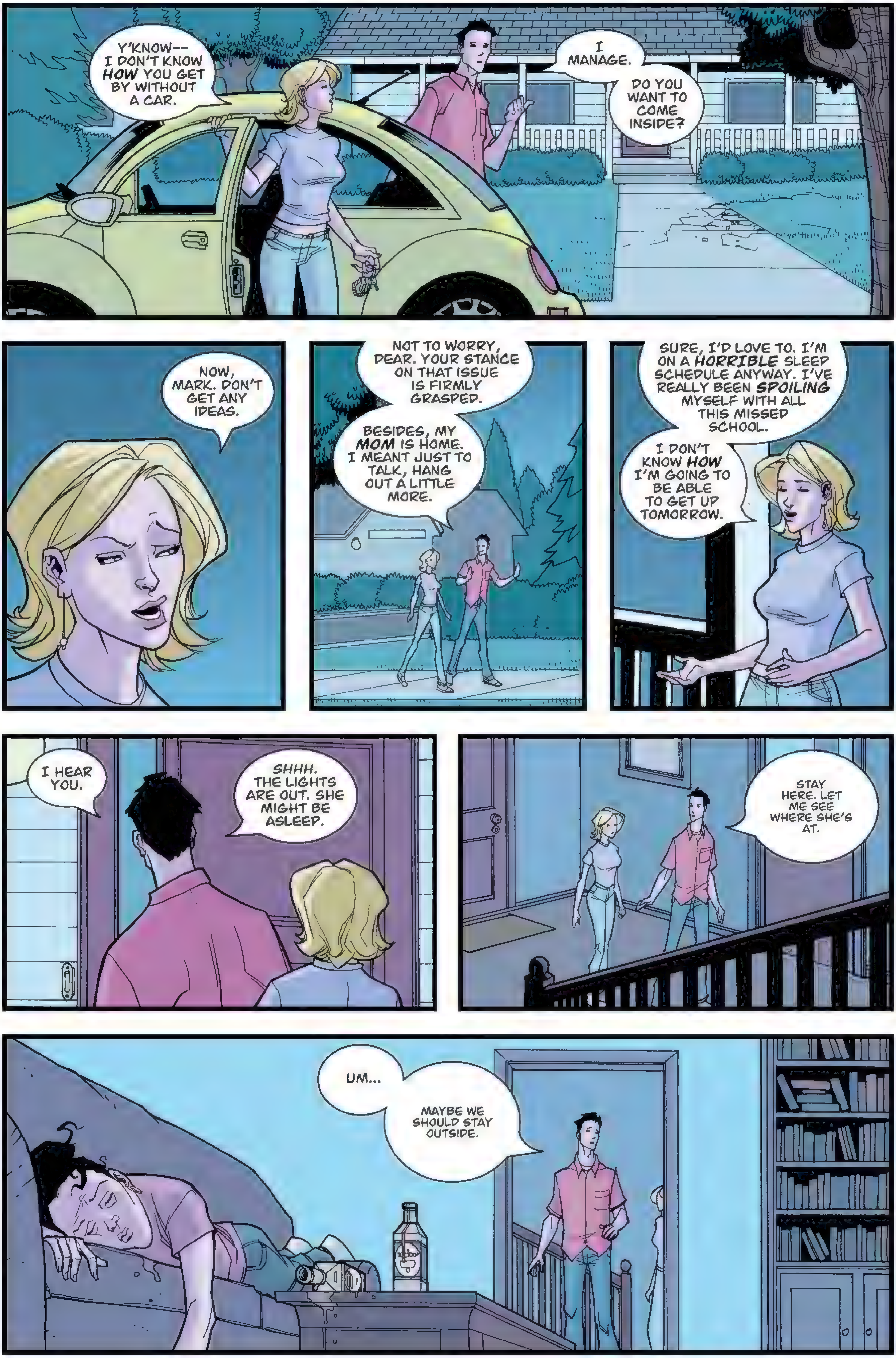
EVERYONE, SAY *HELLO.*

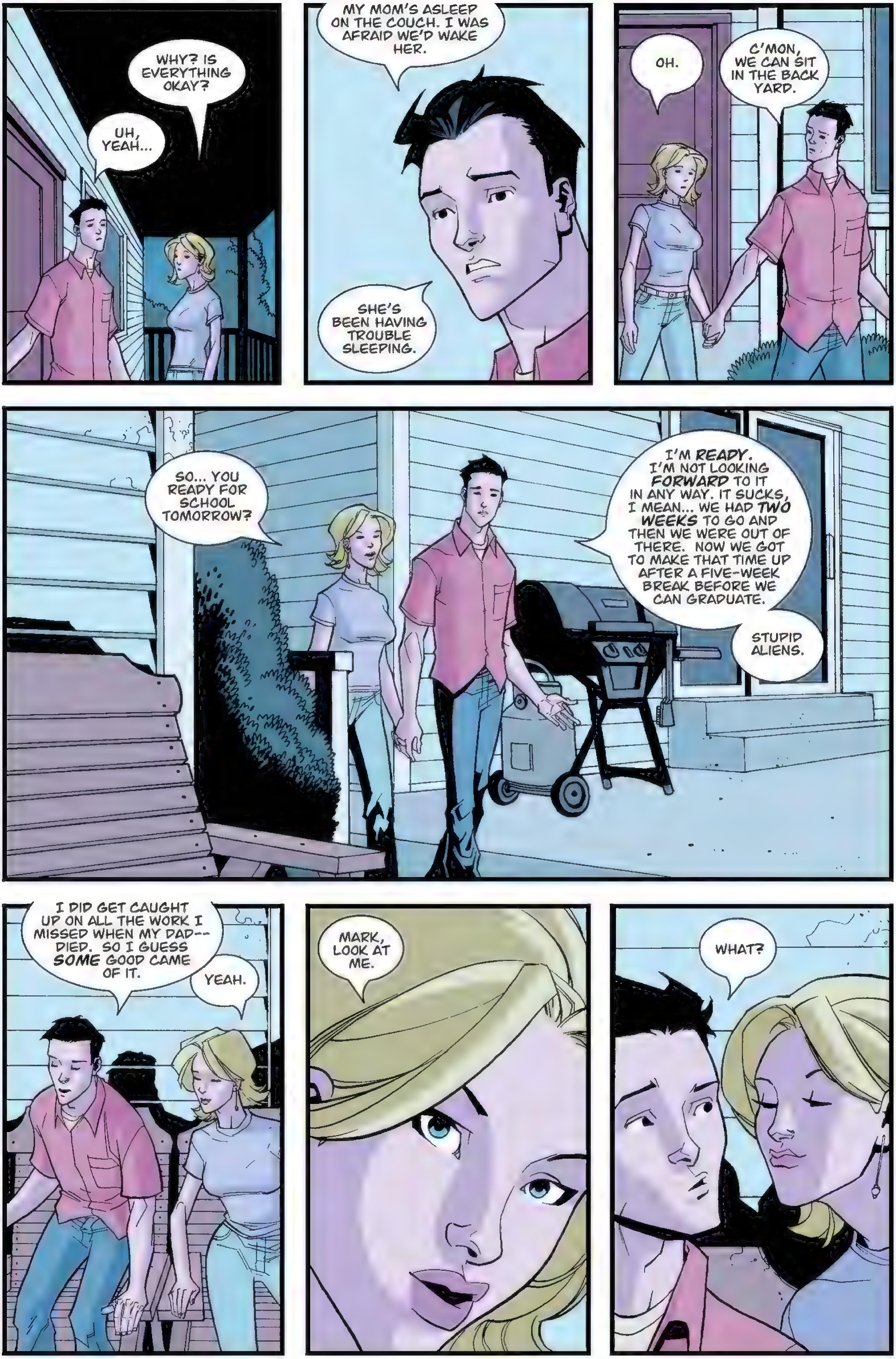
ISSUE SEVENTEEN

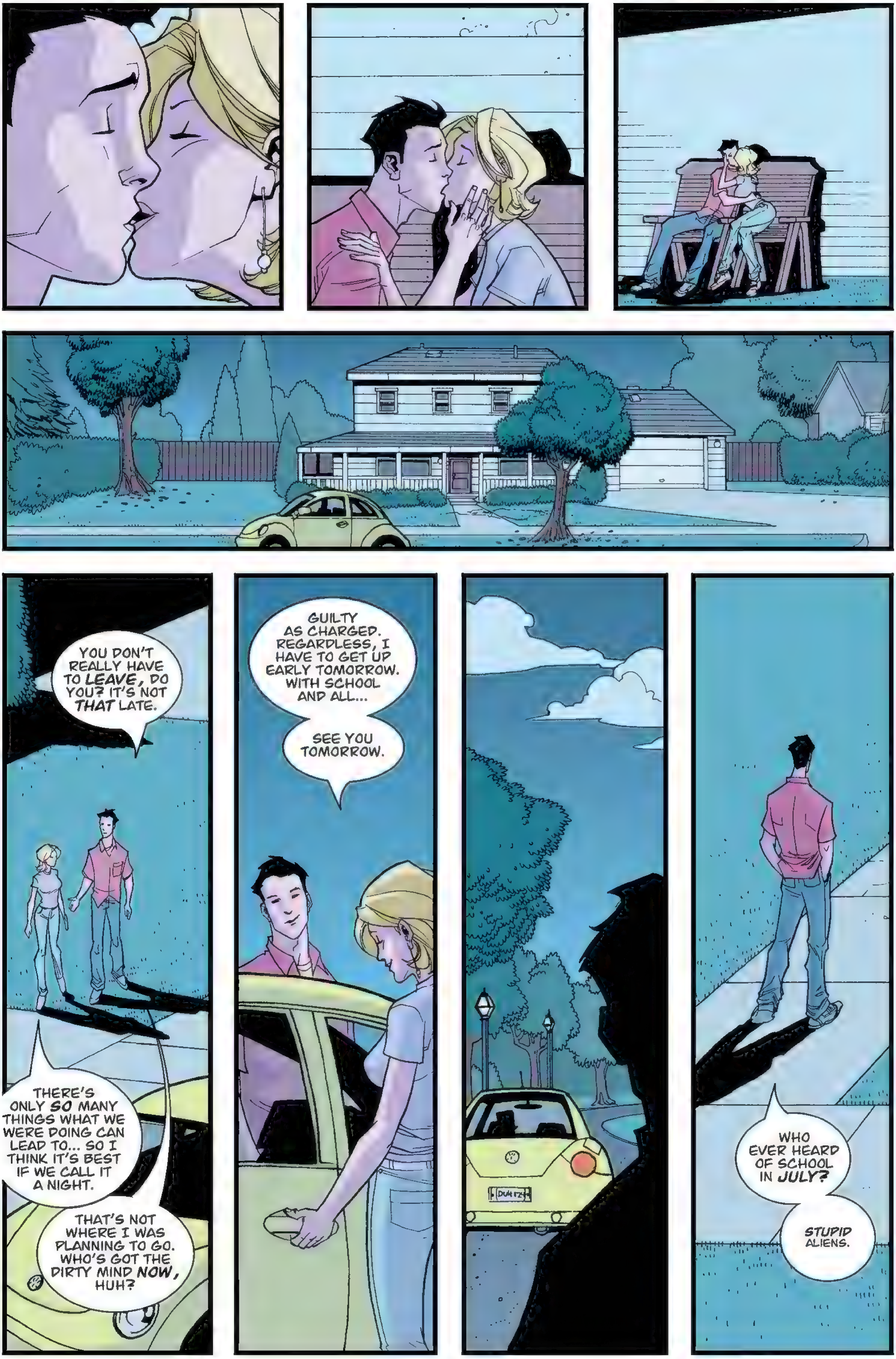
MOVIES
I LIKED IT.
I THOUGHT IT WAS OKAY.
JEEZ, WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO BE DONE WITH ALL THIS CONSTRUCTION? THEY'VE BEEN WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK FOR WEEKS AND IT SEEMS LIKE THEY HAVEN'T EVEN SCRATCHED THE SURFACE!

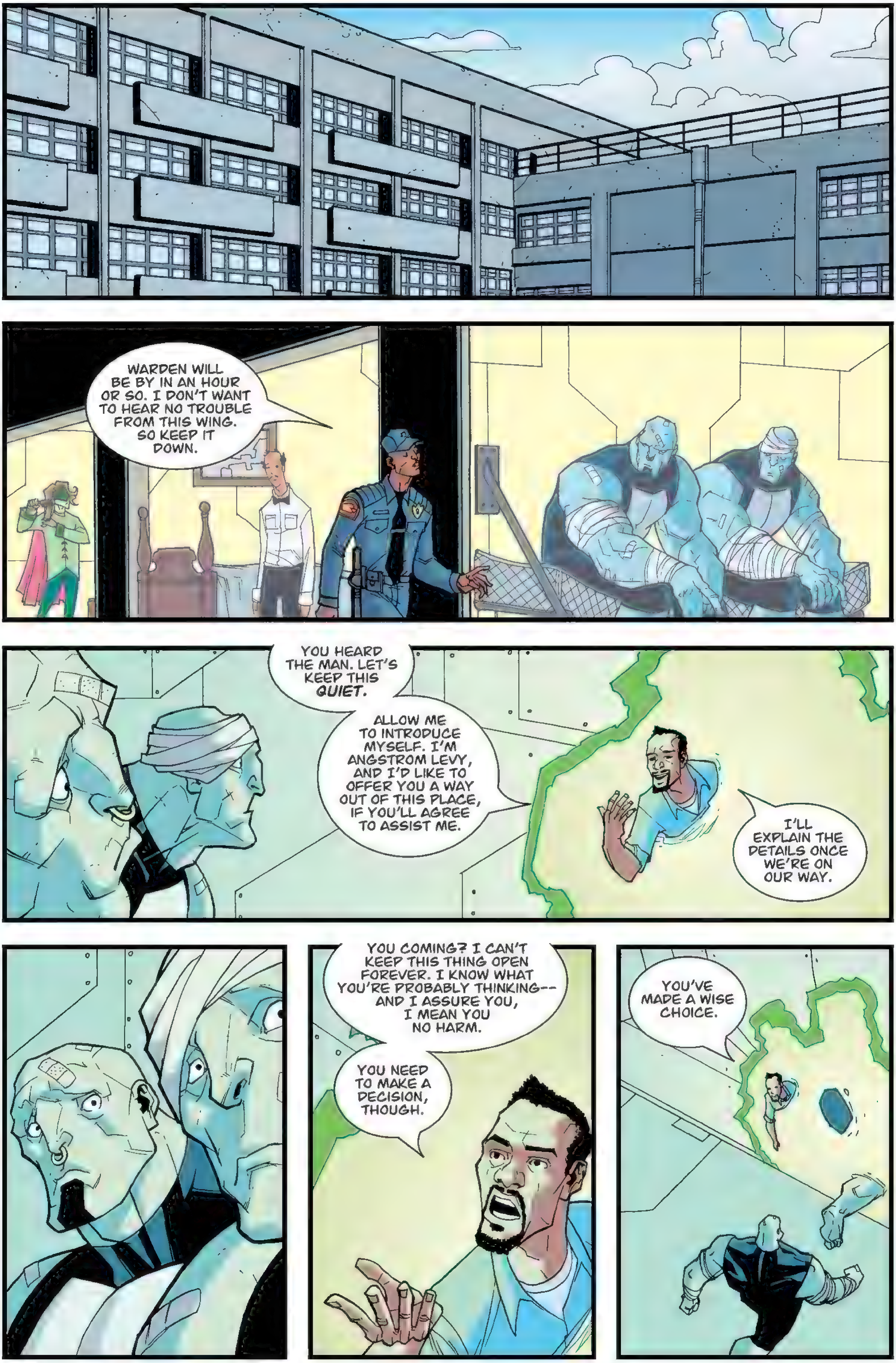

IT'S GOING TO BE A WHILE BEFORE THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL. THOSE ALIENS DID A *LOT* OF DAMAGE.
AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN "*OKAY?*" THAT MOVIE WHAT *GREAT!*
IT HAD GOOD CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND THE PLOT WAS *OKAY*... BUT THE ENDING WAS *AWFUL*. IT JUST KINDA *ENDED*. I THOUGHT WE WERE MISSING TWENTY MINUTES OF THE MOVIE OR SOMETHING.
MY CAR'S PARKED THIS WAY.
YOU WANT TO GET SOME MILKSHAKES BEFORE WE CALL IT A NIGHT?
I THINK *SHAKE DELUXE* IS STILL OPEN.
WHY DON'T WE JUST GO TO *BURGER MART?* WE KNOW THEY'RE STILL OPEN AND I THINK THEY'RE CHEAPER THAN SHAKE DELUXE.
NO--*NO* BURGER MART. I'VE HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE WITH THAT PLACE.
I'M BUYING-- WE'RE GOING TO SHAKE DELUXE.
OKAY, EITHER IS FINE BY ME.
PARKIN
$6.00
YOU REALLY THOUGHT THE ENDING SUCKED?
JEEZ, MARK. YOU ACT LIKE YOU *MADE* THE MOVIE.

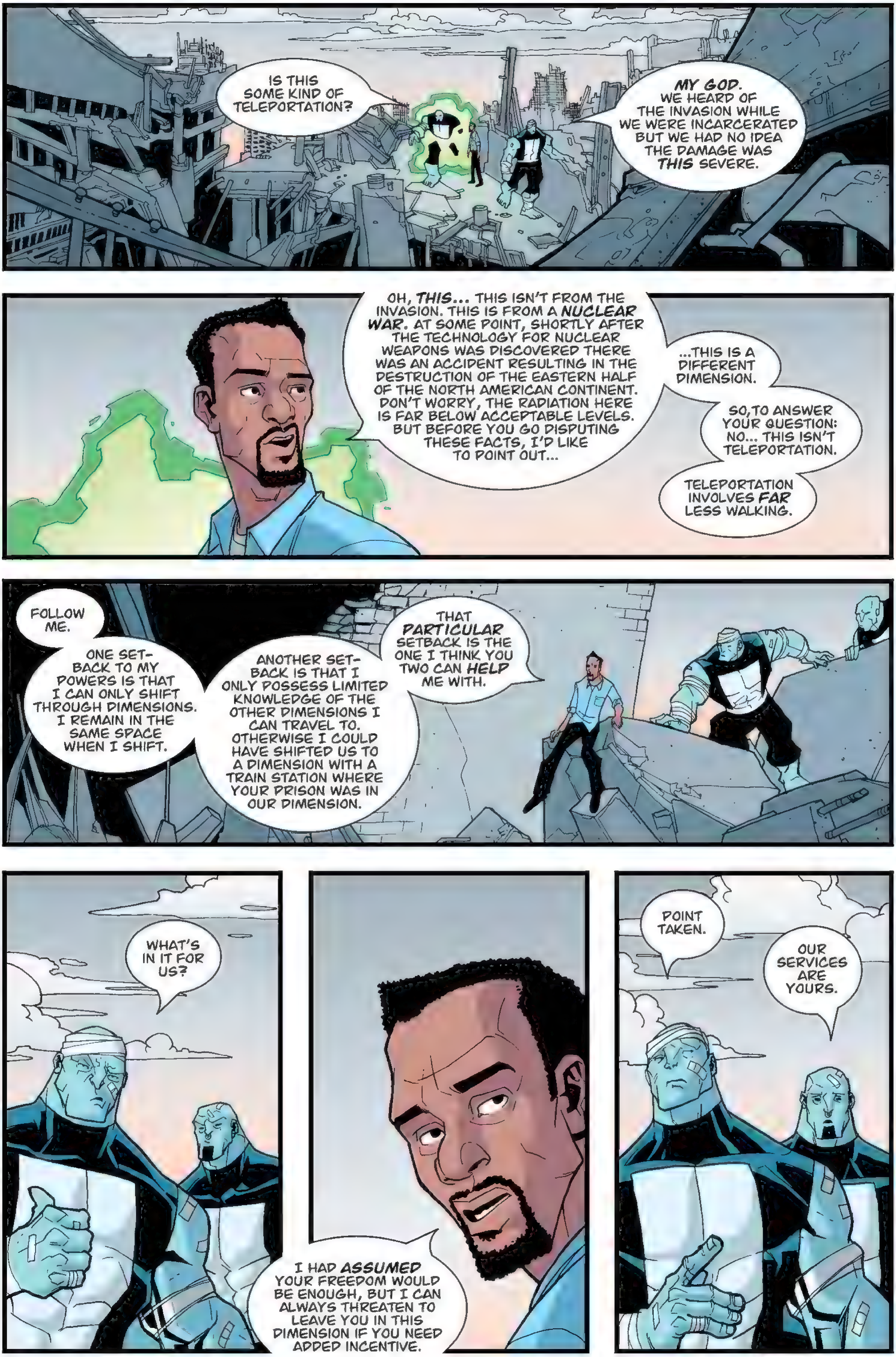

SO, WHAT WAS YOUR "EXPERIENCE" AT BURGER MART?
OH, NOTHING. THE, UH, THE MANAGER IS A *HUGE* JERK. IT'S JUST UNCOMFORTABLE TO GO IN THERE.
YOU KNOW I *WORKED* THERE FOR FIVE MONTHS...
NO. I *DIDN'T* KNOW THAT. MARK GRAYSON: BURGER FLIPPER. I'M SORRY I MISSED THOSE DAYS.
I BET YOU LOOKED MEGA CUTE IN THAT BRIGHT ORANGE UNIFORM.
THAT'S A SAFE BET.
THAT IS, IF BY "CUTE" YOU MEAN "RUGGEDLY HANDSOME."
NO. I MEANT "CUTE." YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO GROW FACIAL HAIR TO BE "RUGGEDLY HANDSOME."
YOU READY?
I'M HURT!
I CAN GROW FACIAL HAIR. JUST BECAUSE I SHAVE DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T GROW IT.
I COULD HAVE A PRETTY SMOKIN' MUSTACHE.
UGH. NO THANKS.

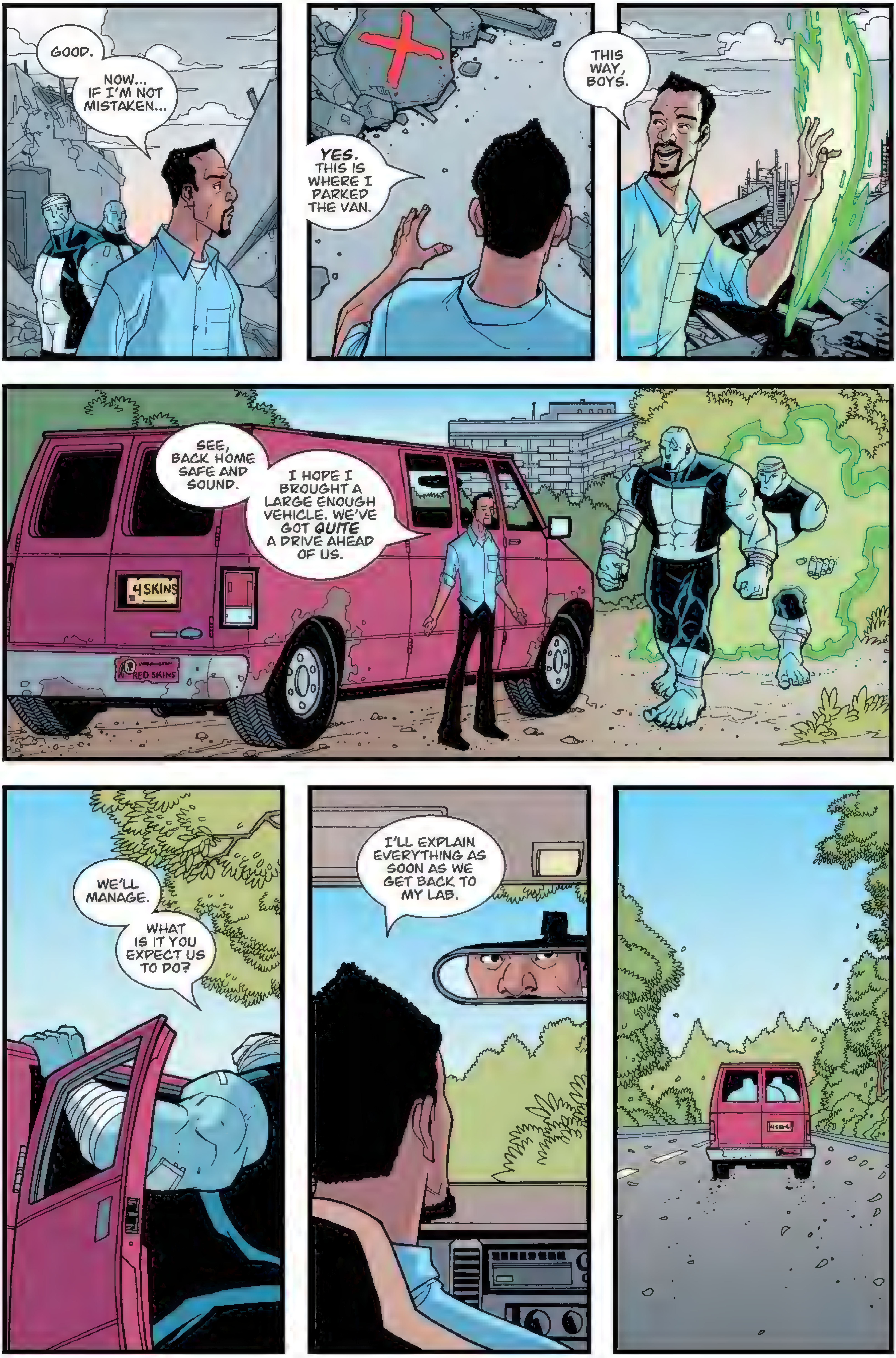

Y'KNOW-- I DON'T KNOW *HOW* YOU GET BY WITHOUT A CAR.
I MANAGE.
DO YOU WANT TO COME INSIDE?
NOW, MARK. DON'T GET ANY IDEAS.
NOT TO WORRY, DEAR. YOUR STANCE ON THAT ISSUE IS FIRMLY GRASPED.
BESIDES, MY *MOM* IS HOME. I MEANT JUST TO TALK, HANG OUT A LITTLE MORE.
SURE, I'D LOVE TO. I'M ON A *HORRIBLE* SLEEP SCHEDULE ANYWAY. I'VE REALLY BEEN *SPOILING* MYSELF WITH ALL THIS MISSED SCHOOL.
I DON'T KNOW *HOW* I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET UP TOMORROW.
I HEAR YOU.
SHHH. THE LIGHTS ARE OUT. SHE MIGHT BE ASLEEP.
STAY HERE. LET ME SEE WHERE SHE'S AT.
UM...
MAYBE WE SHOULD STAY OUTSIDE.

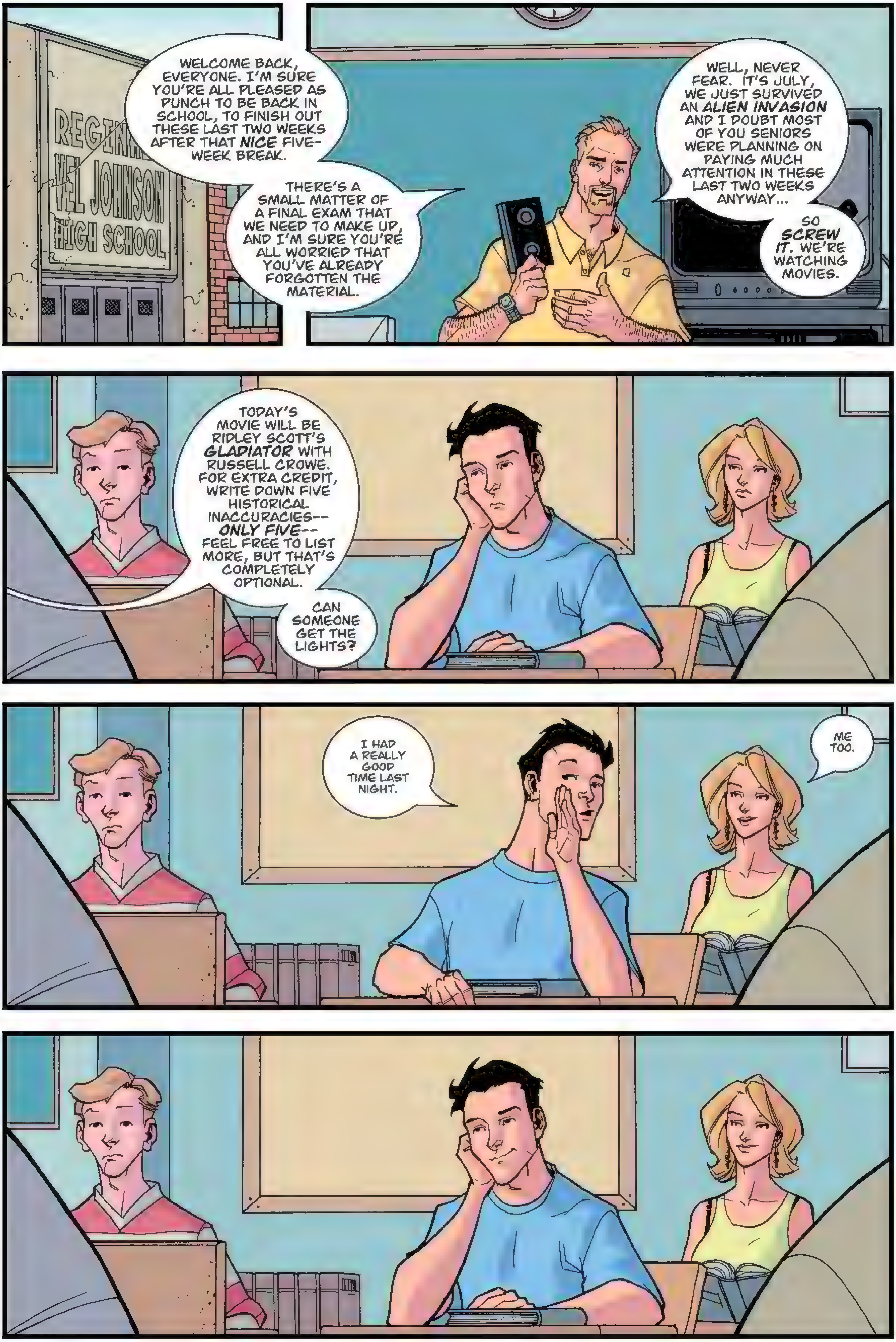

WHY? IS EVERYTHING OKAY?
UH, YEAH...
MY MOM'S ASLEEP ON THE COUCH. I WAS AFRAID WE'D WAKE HER.
SHE'S BEEN HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING.
OH.
C'MON, WE CAN SIT IN THE BACK YARD.
SO... YOU READY FOR SCHOOL TOMORROW?
I'M READY. I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO IT IN ANY WAY. IT SUCKS, I MEAN... WE HAD TWO WEEKS TO GO AND THEN WE WERE OUT OF THERE. NOW WE GOT TO MAKE THAT TIME UP AFTER A FIVE-WEEK BREAK BEFORE WE CAN GRADUATE.
STUPID ALIENS.
I DID GET CAUGHT UP ON ALL THE WORK I MISSED WHEN MY DAD-- DIED. SO I GUESS SOME GOOD CAME OF IT.
YEAH.
MARK, LOOK AT ME.
WHAT?

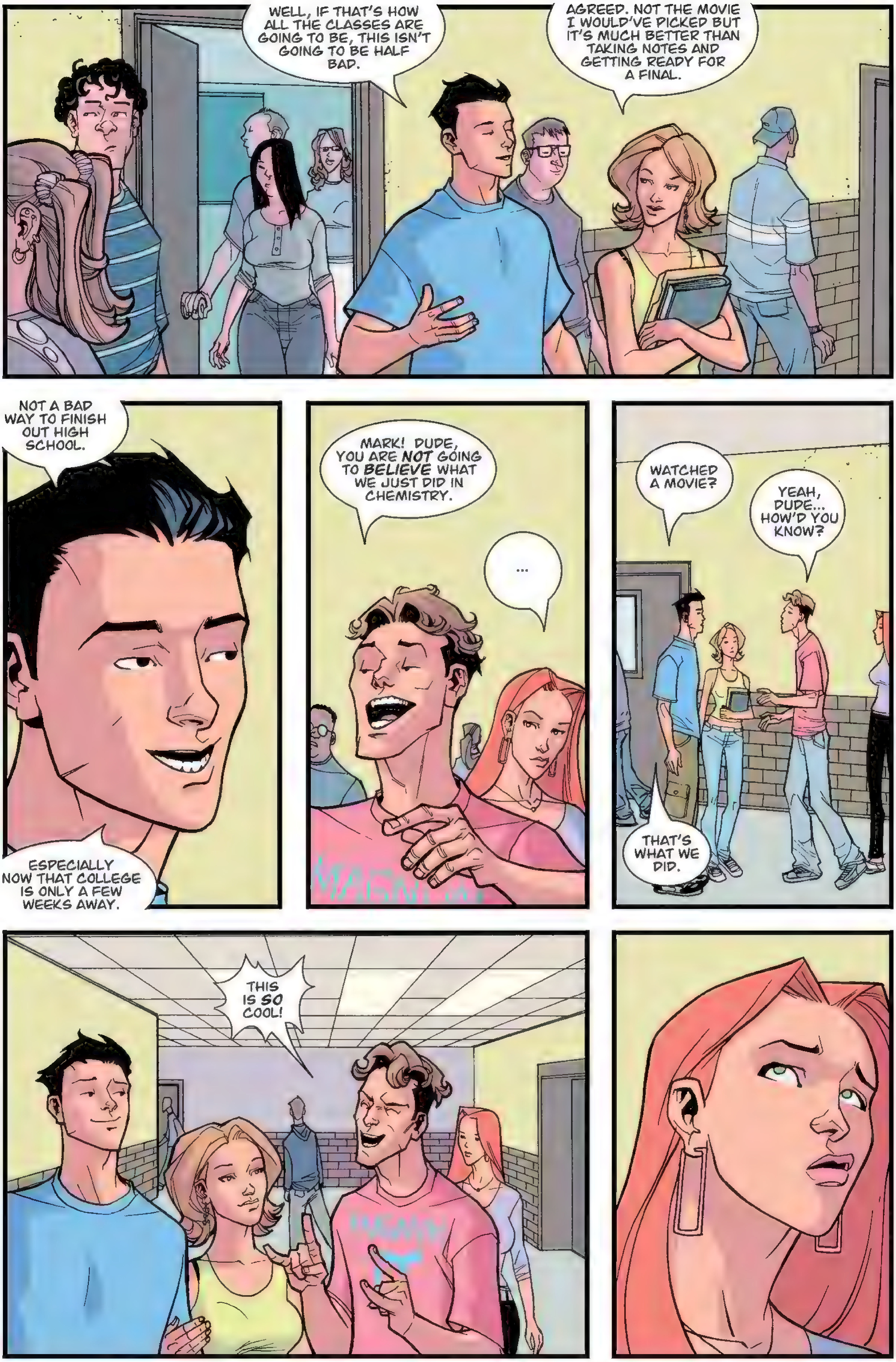

YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO LEAVE, DO YOU? IT'S NOT THAT LATE.
THERE'S ONLY SO MANY THINGS WHAT WE WERE DOING CAN LEAD TO... SO I THINK IT'S BEST IF WE CALL IT A NIGHT.
THAT'S NOT WHERE I WAS PLANNING TO GO. WHO'S GOT THE DIRTY MIND NOW, HUH?
GUILTY AS CHARGED. REGARDLESS, I HAVE TO GET UP EARLY TOMORROW. WITH SCHOOL AND ALL...
SEE YOU TOMORROW.
WHO EVER HEARD OF SCHOOL IN JULY?
STUPID ALIENS.

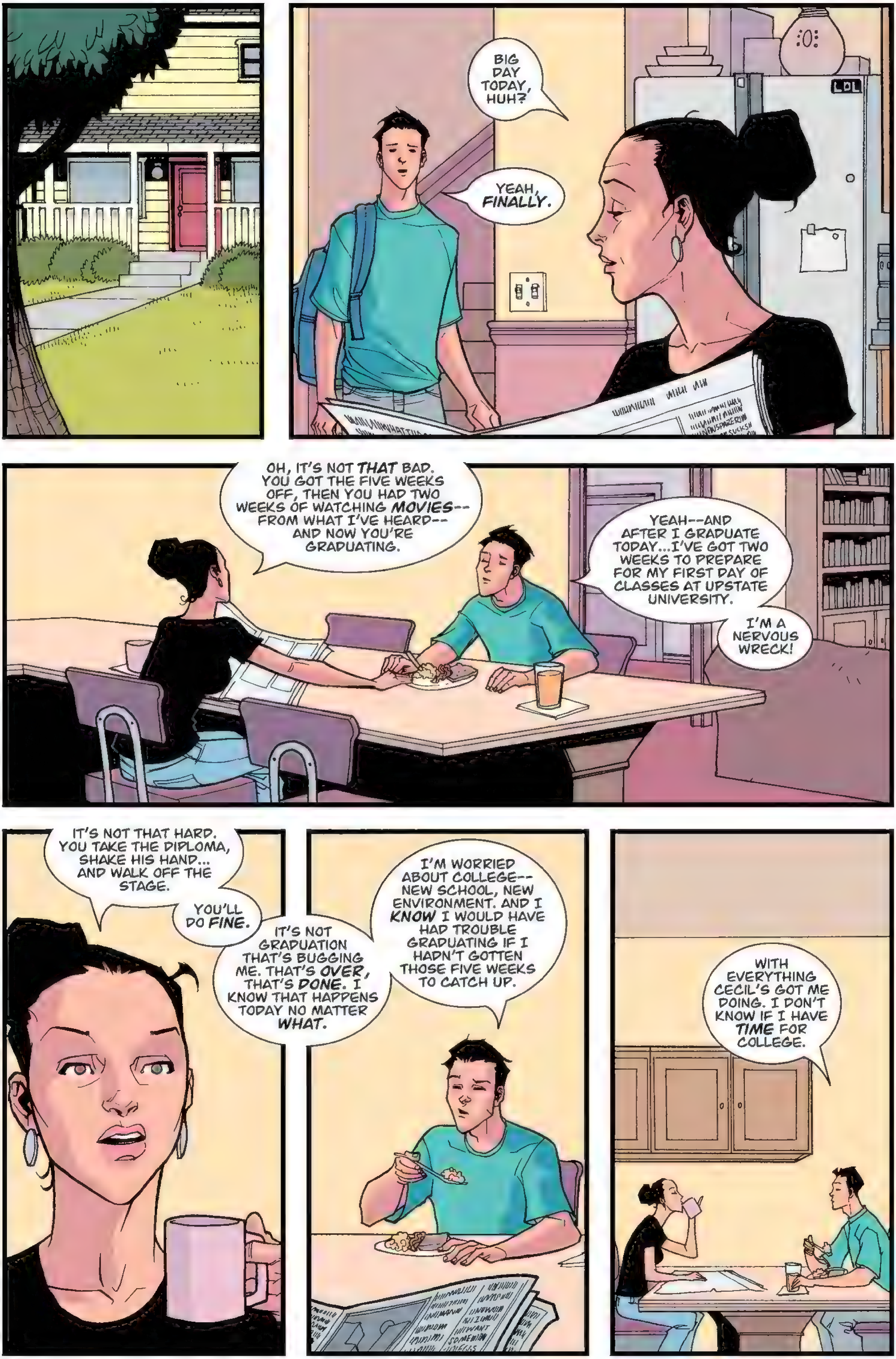

WARDEN WILL BE BY IN AN HOUR OR SO. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR NO TROUBLE FROM THIS WING. SO KEEP IT DOWN.
YOU HEARD THE MAN. LET'S KEEP THIS *QUIET.*
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I'M ANGSTROM LEVY, AND I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU A WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE, IF YOU'LL AGREE TO ASSIST ME.
I'LL EXPLAIN THE DETAILS ONCE WE'RE ON OUR WAY.
YOU COMING? I CAN'T KEEP THIS THING OPEN FOREVER. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PROBABLY THINKING-- AND I ASSURE YOU, I MEAN YOU NO HARM.
YOU NEED TO MAKE A DECISION, THOUGH.
YOU'VE MADE A WISE CHOICE.

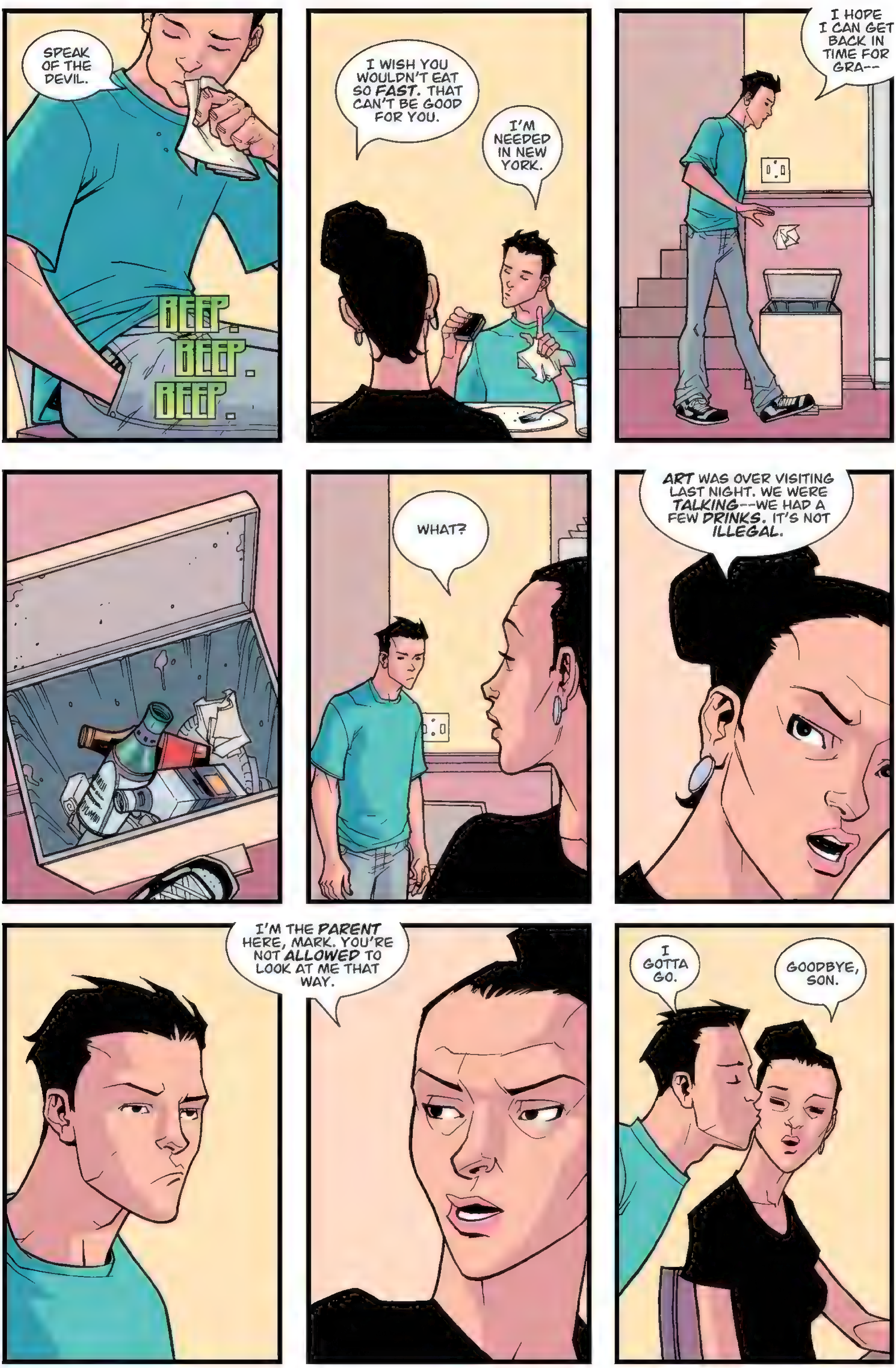

IS THIS SOME KIND OF TELEPORTATION?
MY GOD. WE HEARD OF THE INVASION WHILE WE WERE INCARCERATED BUT WE HAD NO IDEA THE DAMAGE WAS *THIS* SEVERE.
OH, *THIS...* THIS ISN'T FROM THE INVASION. THIS IS FROM A *NUCLEAR WAR.* AT SOME POINT, SHORTLY AFTER THE TECHNOLOGY FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS WAS DISCOVERED THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT RESULTING IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EASTERN HALF OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT. DON'T WORRY, THE RADIATION HERE IS FAR BELOW ACCEPTABLE LEVELS. BUT BEFORE YOU GO DISPUTING THESE FACTS, I'D LIKE TO POINT OUT...
...THIS IS A DIFFERENT DIMENSION.
SO, TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION: NO... THIS ISN'T TELEPORTATION.
TELEPORTATION INVOLVES *FAR* LESS WALKING.
FOLLOW ME.
ONE SET-BACK TO MY POWERS IS THAT I CAN ONLY SHIFT THROUGH DIMENSIONS. I REMAIN IN THE SAME SPACE WHEN I SHIFT.
ANOTHER SET-BACK IS THAT I ONLY POSSESS LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF THE OTHER DIMENSIONS I CAN TRAVEL TO. OTHERWISE I COULD HAVE SHIFTED US TO A DIMENSION WITH A TRAIN STATION WHERE YOUR PRISON WAS IN OUR DIMENSION.
THAT *PARTICULAR* SETBACK IS THE ONE I THINK YOU TWO CAN *HELP* ME WITH.
WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?
I HAD *ASSUMED* YOUR FREEDOM WOULD BE ENOUGH, BUT I CAN ALWAYS THREATEN TO LEAVE YOU IN THIS DIMENSION IF YOU NEED ADDED INCENTIVE.
POINT TAKEN.
OUR SERVICES ARE YOURS.

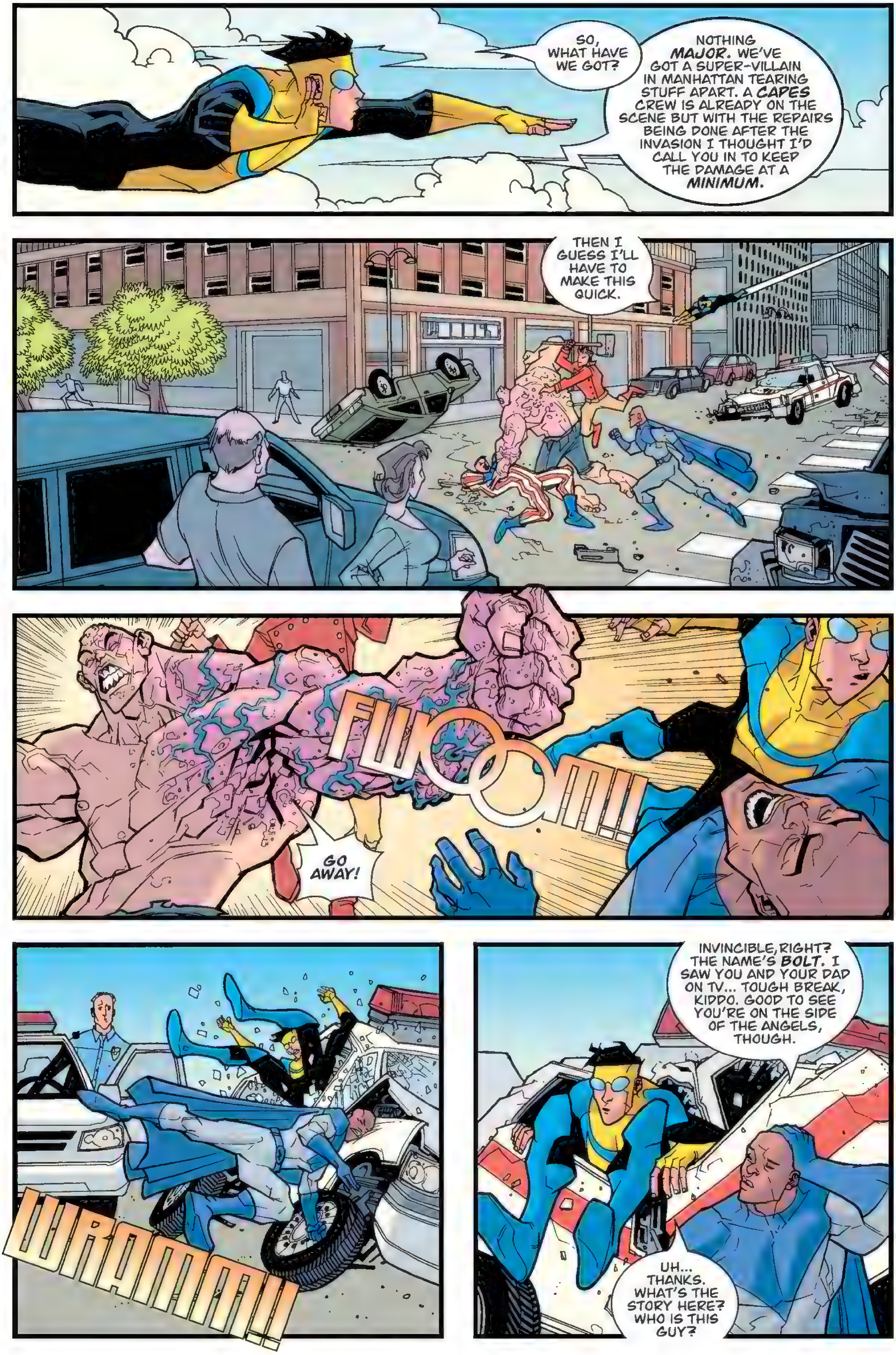

GOOD.
NOW... IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN...
YES. THIS IS WHERE I PARKED THE VAN.
THIS WAY, BOYS.
SEE, BACK HOME SAFE AND SOUND.
I HOPE I BROUGHT A LARGE ENOUGH VEHICLE. WE'VE GOT QUITE A DRIVE AHEAD OF US.
4SKINS
RED SKINS
WE'LL MANAGE.
WHAT IS IT YOU EXPECT US TO DO?
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING AS SOON AS WE GET BACK TO MY LAB.

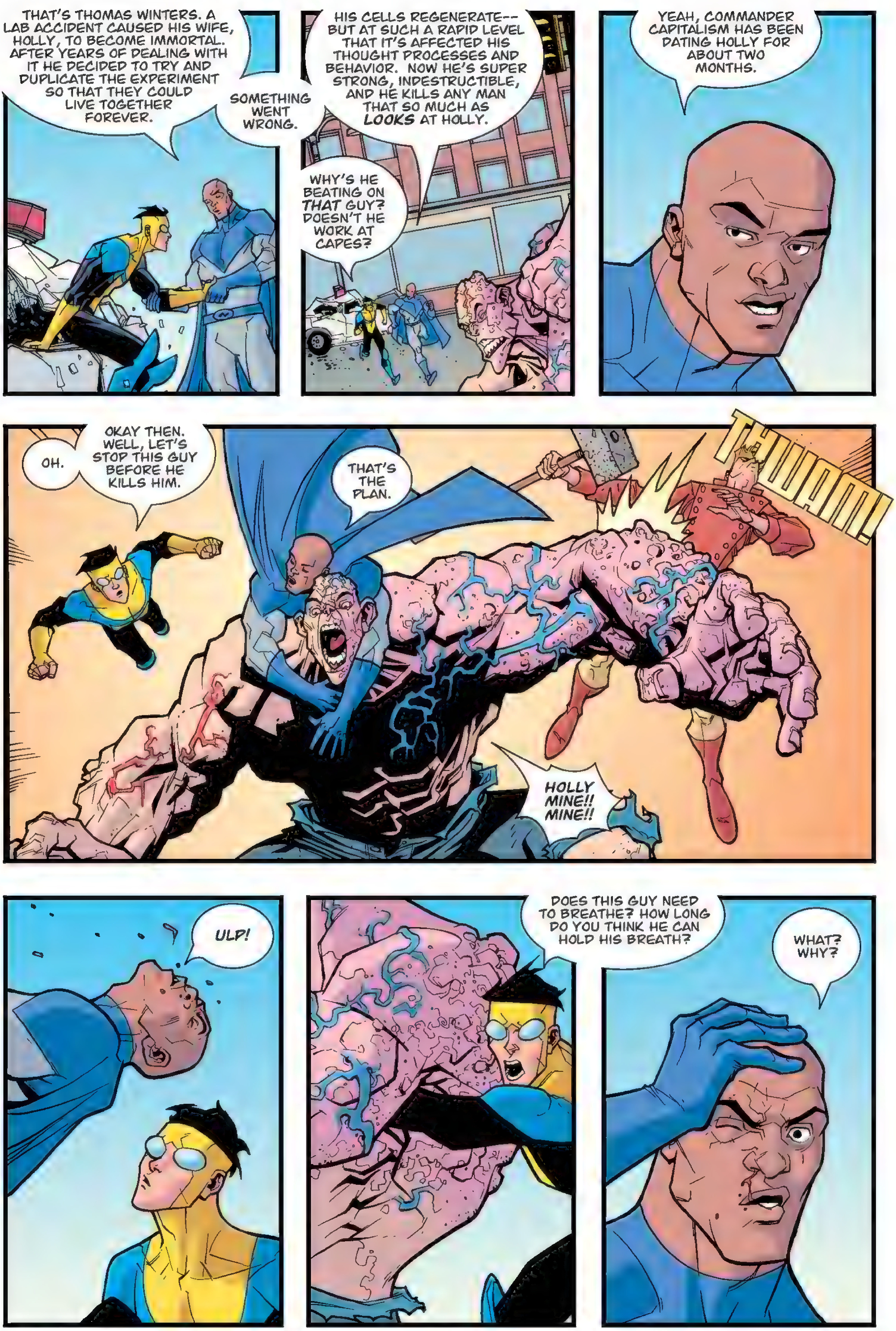

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
WELCOME BACK, EVERYONE. I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL PLEASED AS PUNCH TO BE BACK IN SCHOOL, TO FINISH OUT THESE LAST TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT *NICE* FIVE-WEEK BREAK.
THERE'S A SMALL MATTER OF A FINAL EXAM THAT WE NEED TO MAKE UP, AND I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL WORRIED THAT YOU'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE MATERIAL.
WELL, NEVER FEAR. IT'S JULY, WE JUST SURVIVED AN *ALIEN INVASION* AND I DOUBT MOST OF YOU SENIORS WERE PLANNING ON PAYING MUCH ATTENTION IN THESE LAST TWO WEEKS ANYWAY...
SO *SCREW IT.* WE'RE WATCHING MOVIES.
TODAY'S MOVIE WILL BE RIDLEY SCOTT'S *GLADIATOR* WITH RUSSELL CROWE. FOR EXTRA CREDIT, WRITE DOWN FIVE HISTORICAL INACCURACIES-- *ONLY FIVE*-- FEEL FREE TO LIST MORE, BUT THAT'S COMPLETELY OPTIONAL.
CAN SOMEONE GET THE LIGHTS?
I HAD A REALLY GOOD TIME LAST NIGHT.
ME TOO.

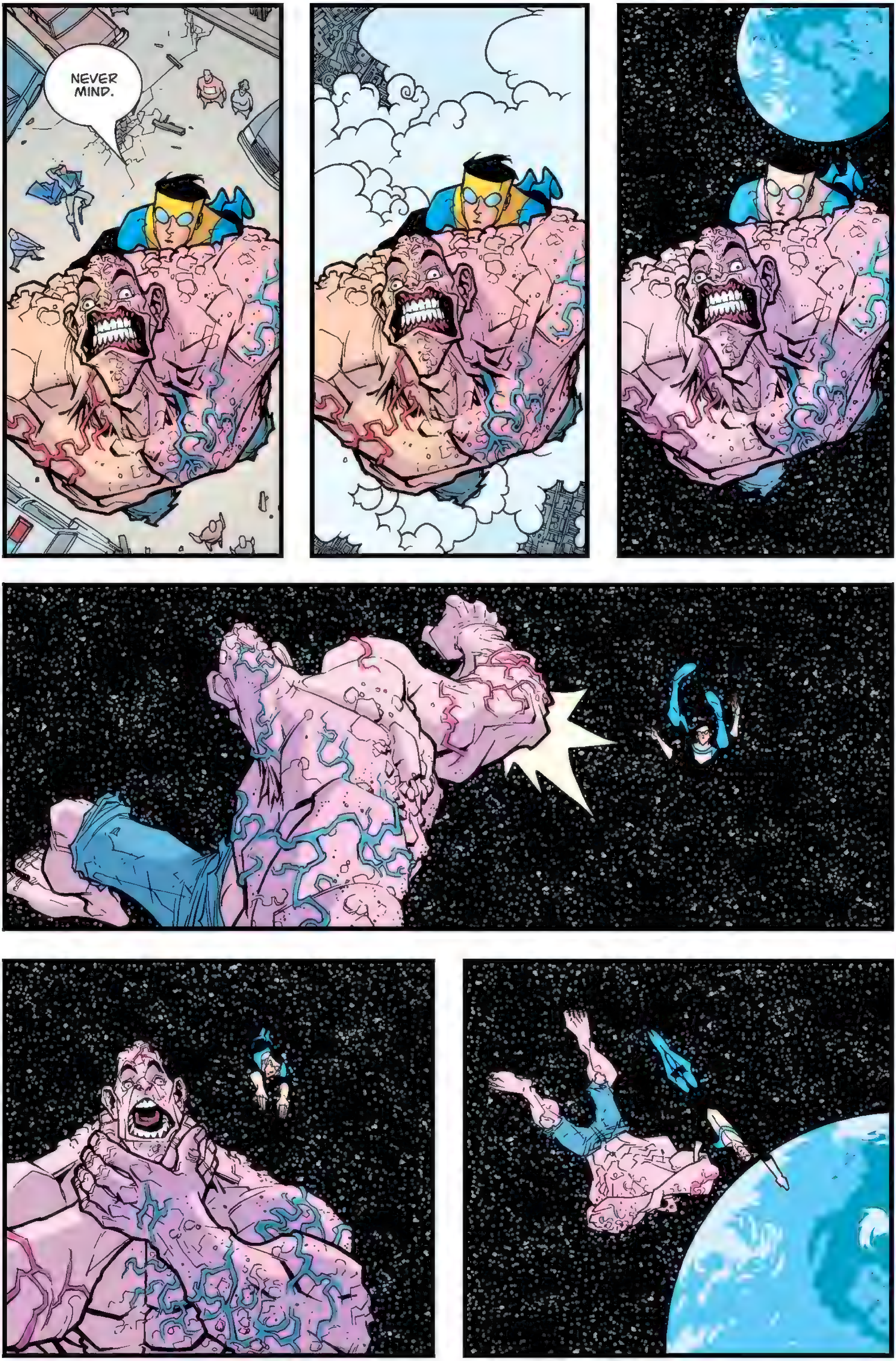

WELL, IF THAT'S HOW ALL THE CLASSES ARE GOING TO BE, THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE HALF BAD.
AGREED. NOT THE MOVIE I WOULD'VE PICKED BUT IT'S MUCH BETTER THAN TAKING NOTES AND GETTING READY FOR A FINAL.
NOT A BAD WAY TO FINISH OUT HIGH SCHOOL.
ESPECIALLY NOW THAT COLLEGE IS ONLY A FEW WEEKS AWAY.
MARK! DUDE, YOU ARE **NOT** GOING TO **BELIEVE** WHAT WE JUST DID IN CHEMISTRY.
...
WATCHED A MOVIE?
YEAH, DUDE... HOW'D YOU KNOW?
THAT'S WHAT WE DID.
THIS IS **SO** COOL!

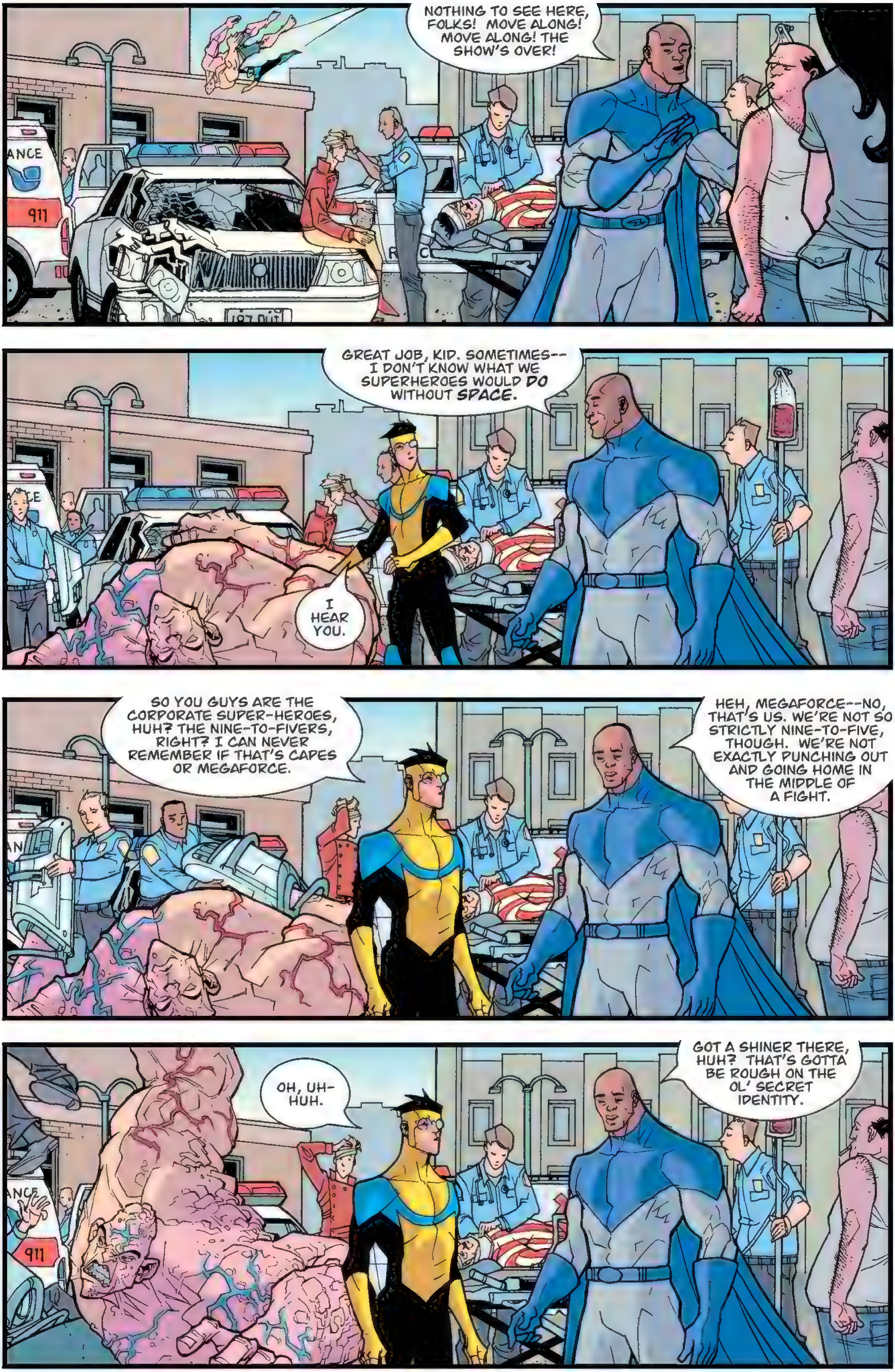

BIG DAY TODAY, HUH?
YEAH, *FINALLY*.
LOL
OH, IT'S NOT *THAT* BAD. YOU GOT THE FIVE WEEKS OFF, THEN YOU HAD TWO WEEKS OF WATCHING *MOVIES*-- FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD-- AND NOW YOU'RE GRADUATING.
YEAH--AND AFTER I GRADUATE TODAY...I'VE GOT TWO WEEKS TO PREPARE FOR MY FIRST DAY OF CLASSES AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
I'M A NERVOUS WRECK!
IT'S NOT THAT HARD. YOU TAKE THE DIPLOMA, SHAKE HIS HAND... AND WALK OFF THE STAGE.
YOU'LL DO *FINE*.
IT'S NOT GRADUATION THAT'S BUGGING ME. THAT'S *OVER*, THAT'S *DONE*. I KNOW THAT HAPPENS TODAY NO MATTER *WHAT*.
I'M WORRIED ABOUT COLLEGE-- NEW SCHOOL, NEW ENVIRONMENT. AND I *KNOW* I WOULD HAVE HAD TROUBLE GRADUATING IF I HADN'T GOTTEN THOSE FIVE WEEKS TO CATCH UP.
WITH EVERYTHING CECIL'S GOT ME DOING. I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE *TIME* FOR COLLEGE.

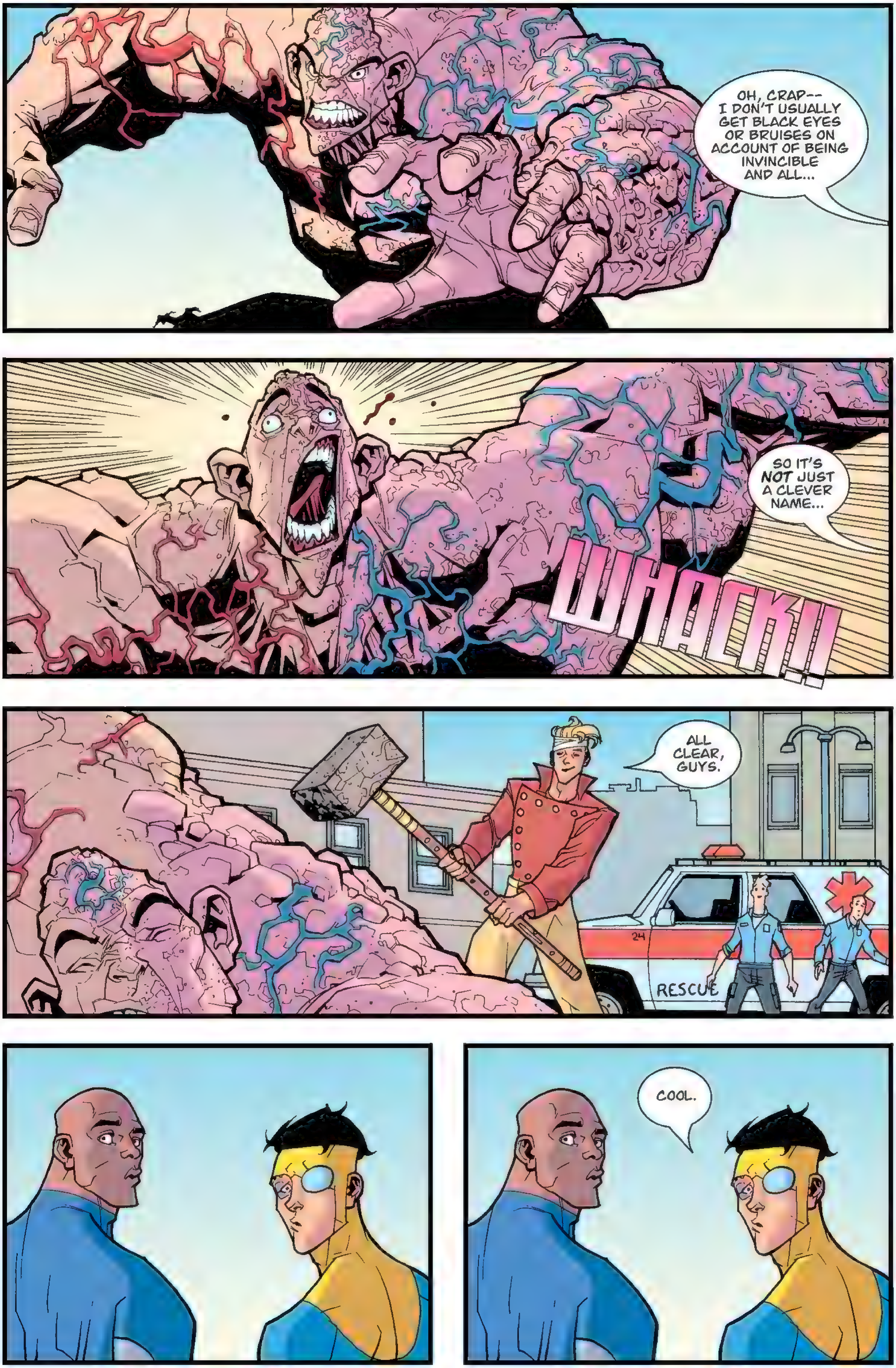

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL.
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
I WISH YOU WOULDN'T EAT SO *FAST*. THAT CAN'T BE GOOD FOR YOU.
I'M NEEDED IN NEW YORK.
I HOPE I CAN GET BACK IN TIME FOR GRA--
WHAT?
ART WAS OVER VISITING LAST NIGHT. WE WERE *TALKING*--WE HAD A FEW *DRINKS*. IT'S NOT *ILLEGAL*.
I'M THE *PARENT* HERE, MARK. YOU'RE NOT *ALLOWED* TO LOOK AT ME THAT WAY.
I GOTTA GO.
GOODBYE, SON.

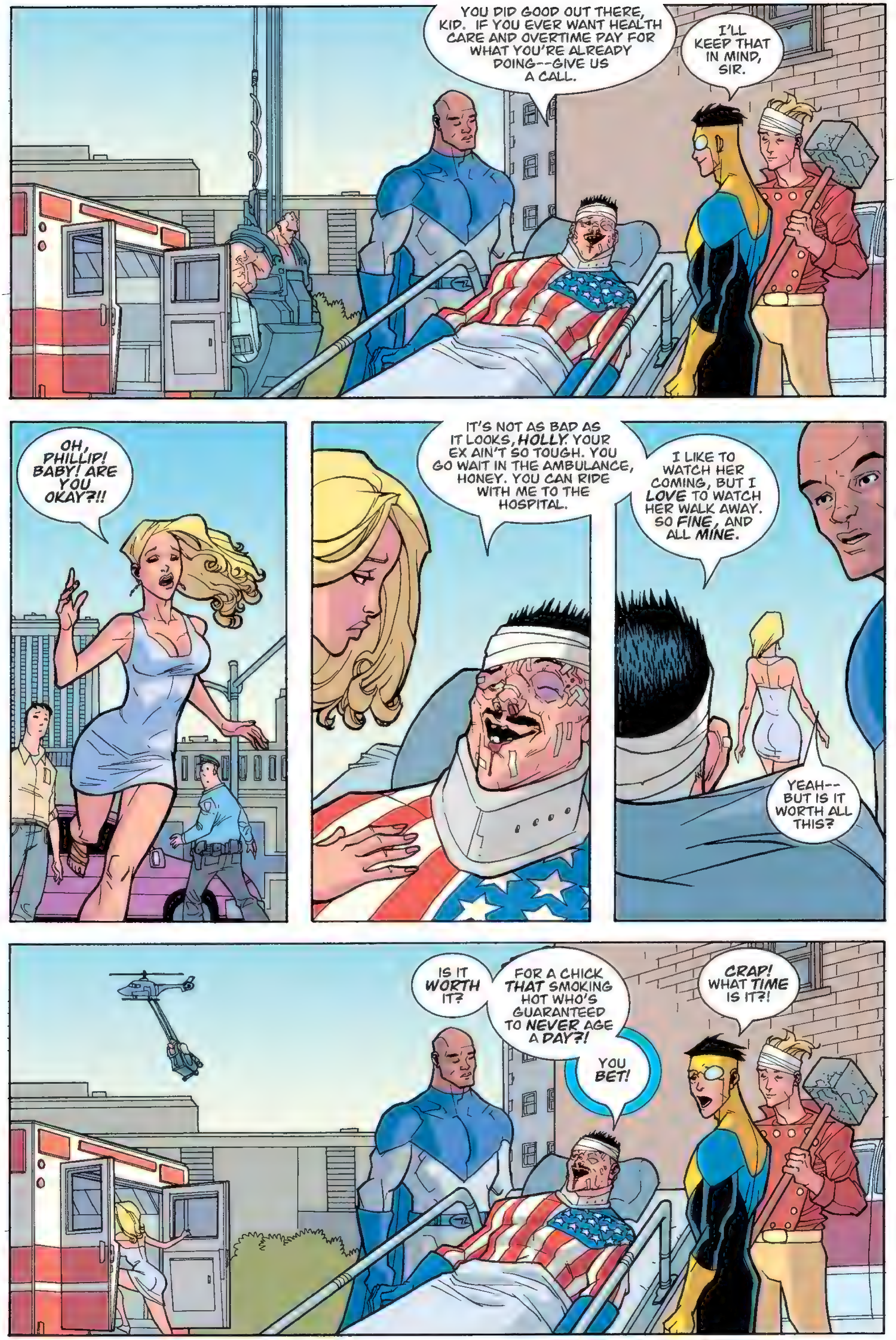

SO, WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
NOTHING **MAJOR**. WE'VE GOT A SUPER-VILLAIN IN MANHATTAN TEARING STUFF APART. A **CAPES** CREW IS ALREADY ON THE SCENE BUT WITH THE REPAIRS BEING DONE AFTER THE INVASION I THOUGHT I'D CALL YOU IN TO KEEP THE DAMAGE AT A **MINIMUM**.
THEN I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE THIS QUICK.
FWOOOM!!
GO AWAY!
WRAMM!!
INVINCIBLE, RIGHT? THE NAME'S **BOLT**. I SAW YOU AND YOUR DAD ON TV... TOUGH BREAK, KIDDO. GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS, THOUGH.
UH... THANKS. WHAT'S THE STORY HERE? WHO IS THIS GUY?

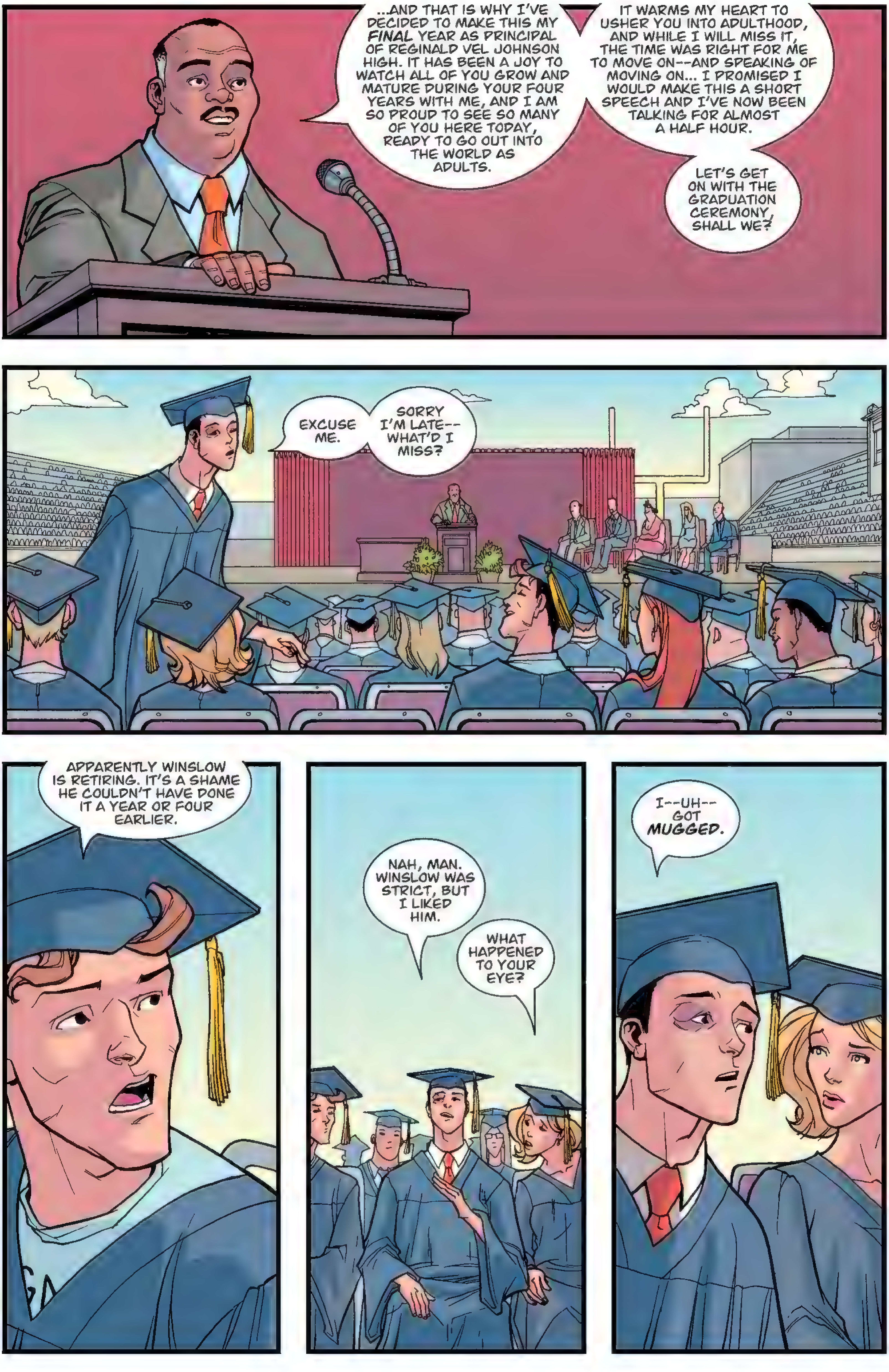

THAT'S THOMAS WINTERS. A LAB ACCIDENT CAUSED HIS WIFE, HOLLY, TO BECOME IMMORTAL. AFTER YEARS OF DEALING WITH IT HE DECIDED TO TRY AND DUPLICATE THE EXPERIMENT SO THAT THEY COULD LIVE TOGETHER FOREVER.
SOMETHING WENT WRONG.
HIS CELLS REGENERATE-- BUT AT SUCH A RAPID LEVEL THAT IT'S AFFECTED HIS THOUGHT PROCESSES AND BEHAVIOR. NOW HE'S SUPER STRONG, INDESTRUCTIBLE, AND HE KILLS ANY MAN THAT SO MUCH AS *LOOKS* AT HOLLY.
WHY'S HE BEATING ON *THAT* GUY? DOESN'T HE WORK AT CAPES?
YEAH, COMMANDER CAPITALISM HAS BEEN DATING HOLLY FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS.
OH.
OKAY THEN. WELL, LET'S STOP THIS GUY BEFORE HE KILLS HIM.
THAT'S THE PLAN.
THUAM!
HOLLY MINE!! MINE!!
ULP!
DOES THIS GUY NEED TO BREATHE? HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE CAN HOLD HIS BREATH?
WHAT? WHY?

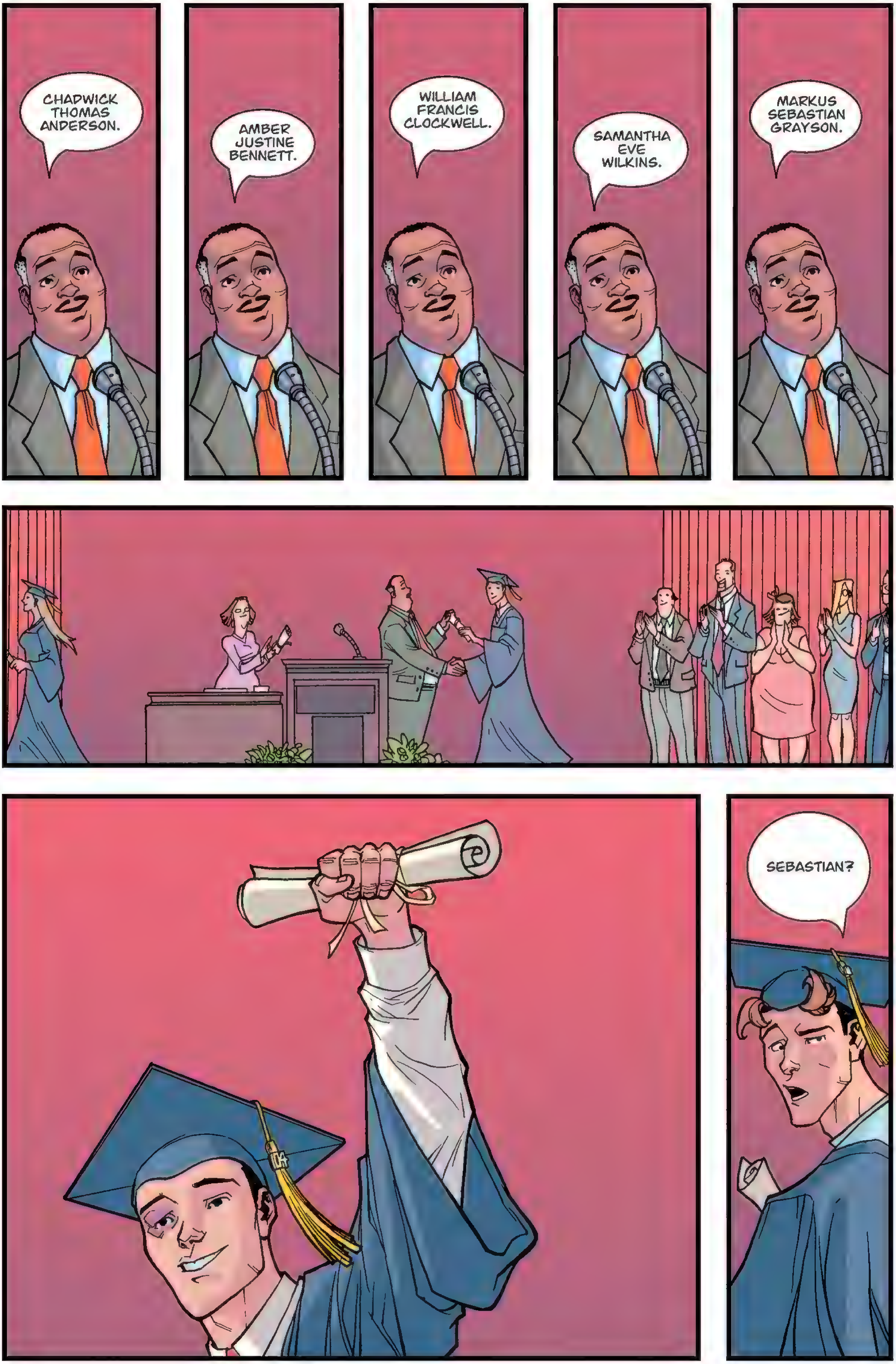

NEVER MIND.

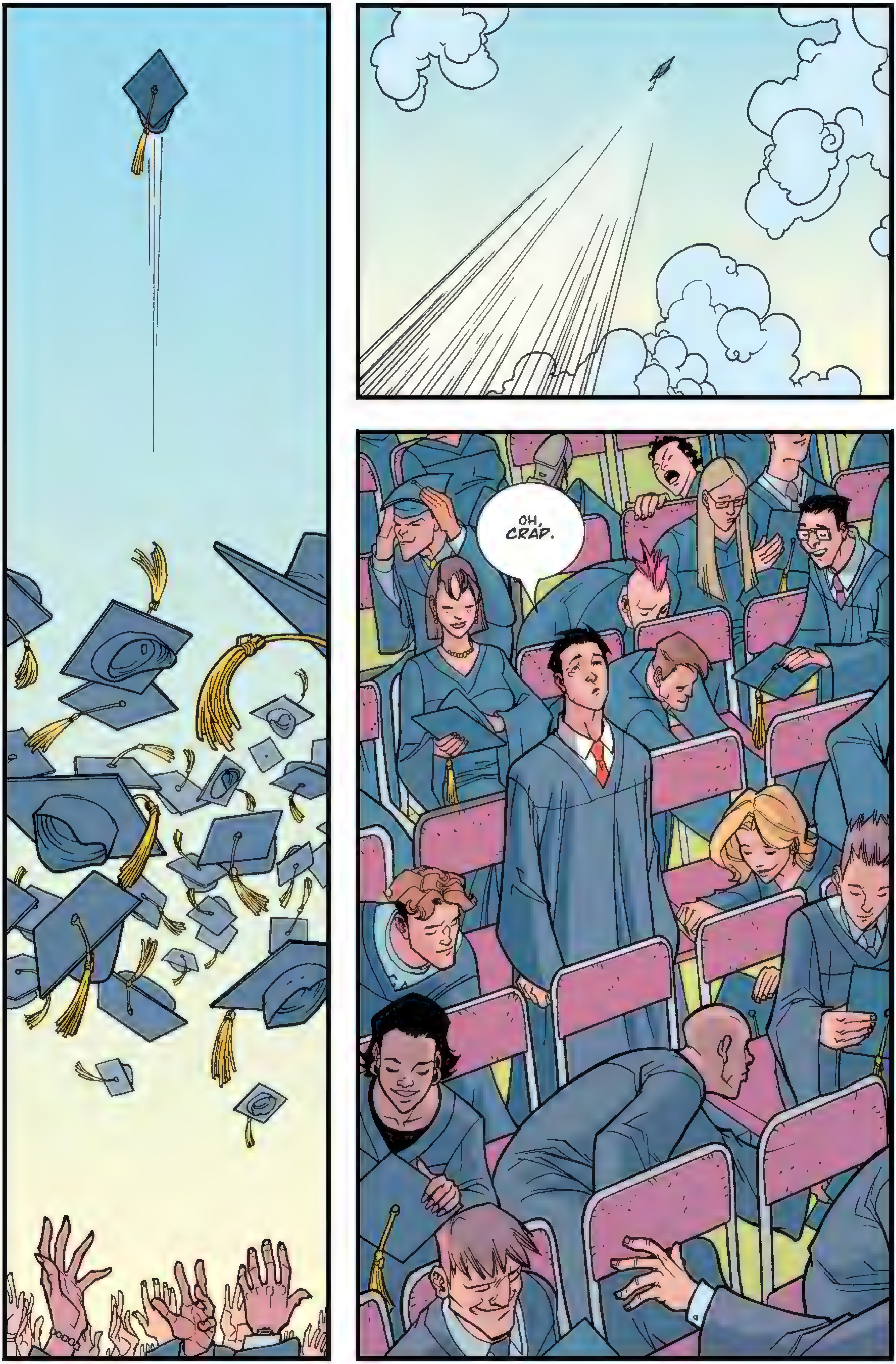

NOTHING TO SEE HERE, FOLKS! MOVE ALONG! MOVE ALONG! THE SHOW'S OVER!
ANCE
911
GREAT JOB, KID. SOMETIMES-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE SUPERHEROES WOULD DO WITHOUT SPACE.
I HEAR YOU.
SO YOU GUYS ARE THE CORPORATE SUPER-HEROES, HUH? THE NINE-TO-FIVERS, RIGHT? I CAN NEVER REMEMBER IF THAT'S CAPES OR MEGAFORCE.
HEH, MEGAFORCE--NO, THAT'S US. WE'RE NOT SO STRICTLY NINE-TO-FIVE, THOUGH. WE'RE NOT EXACTLY PUNCHING OUT AND GOING HOME IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT.
OH, UH-HUH.
GOT A SHINER THERE, HUH? THAT'S GOTTA BE ROUGH ON THE OL' SECRET IDENTITY.
ANCE
911


OH, CRAP-- I DON'T USUALLY GET BLACK EYES OR BRUISES ON ACCOUNT OF BEING INVINCIBLE AND ALL...
SO IT'S *NOT* JUST A CLEVER NAME...
WHACK!!
ALL CLEAR, GUYS.
24
RESCUE
COOL.


YOU DID GOOD OUT THERE, KID. IF YOU EVER WANT HEALTH CARE AND OVERTIME PAY FOR WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING--GIVE US A CALL.
I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND, SIR.
OH, PHILLIP! BABY! ARE YOU OKAY?!!
IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS, HOLLY. YOUR EX AIN'T SO TOUGH. YOU GO WAIT IN THE AMBULANCE, HONEY. YOU CAN RIDE WITH ME TO THE HOSPITAL.
I LIKE TO WATCH HER COMING, BUT I LOVE TO WATCH HER WALK AWAY. SO FINE, AND ALL MINE.
YEAH-- BUT IS IT WORTH ALL THIS?
IS IT WORTH IT?
FOR A CHICK THAT SMOKING HOT WHO'S GUARANTEED TO NEVER AGE A DAY?!
YOU BET!
CRAP! WHAT TIME IS IT?!

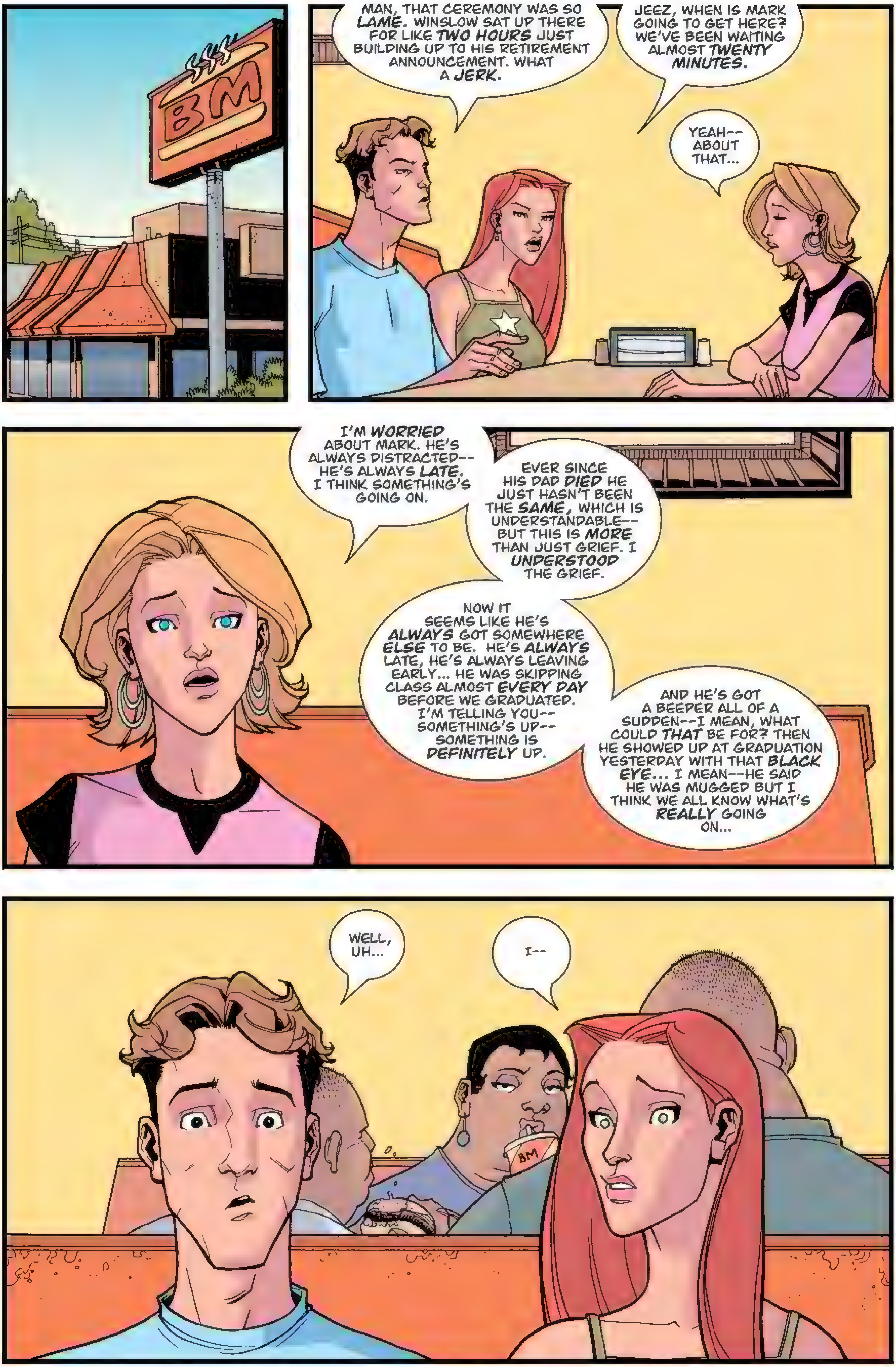

...AND THAT IS WHY I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE THIS MY *FINAL* YEAR AS PRINCIPAL OF REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH. IT HAS BEEN A JOY TO WATCH ALL OF YOU GROW AND MATURE DURING YOUR FOUR YEARS WITH ME, AND I AM SO PROUD TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY, READY TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AS ADULTS.
IT WARMS MY HEART TO USHER YOU INTO ADULTHOOD, AND WHILE I WILL MISS IT, THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR ME TO MOVE ON--AND SPEAKING OF MOVING ON... I PROMISED I WOULD MAKE THIS A SHORT SPEECH AND I'VE NOW BEEN TALKING FOR ALMOST A HALF HOUR.
LET'S GET ON WITH THE GRADUATION CEREMONY, SHALL WE?
EXCUSE ME.
SORRY I'M LATE-- WHAT'D I MISS?
APPARENTLY WINSLOW IS RETIRING. IT'S A SHAME HE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT A YEAR OR FOUR EARLIER.
NAH, MAN. WINSLOW WAS STRICT, BUT I LIKED HIM.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EYE?
I--UH-- GOT **MUGGED.**

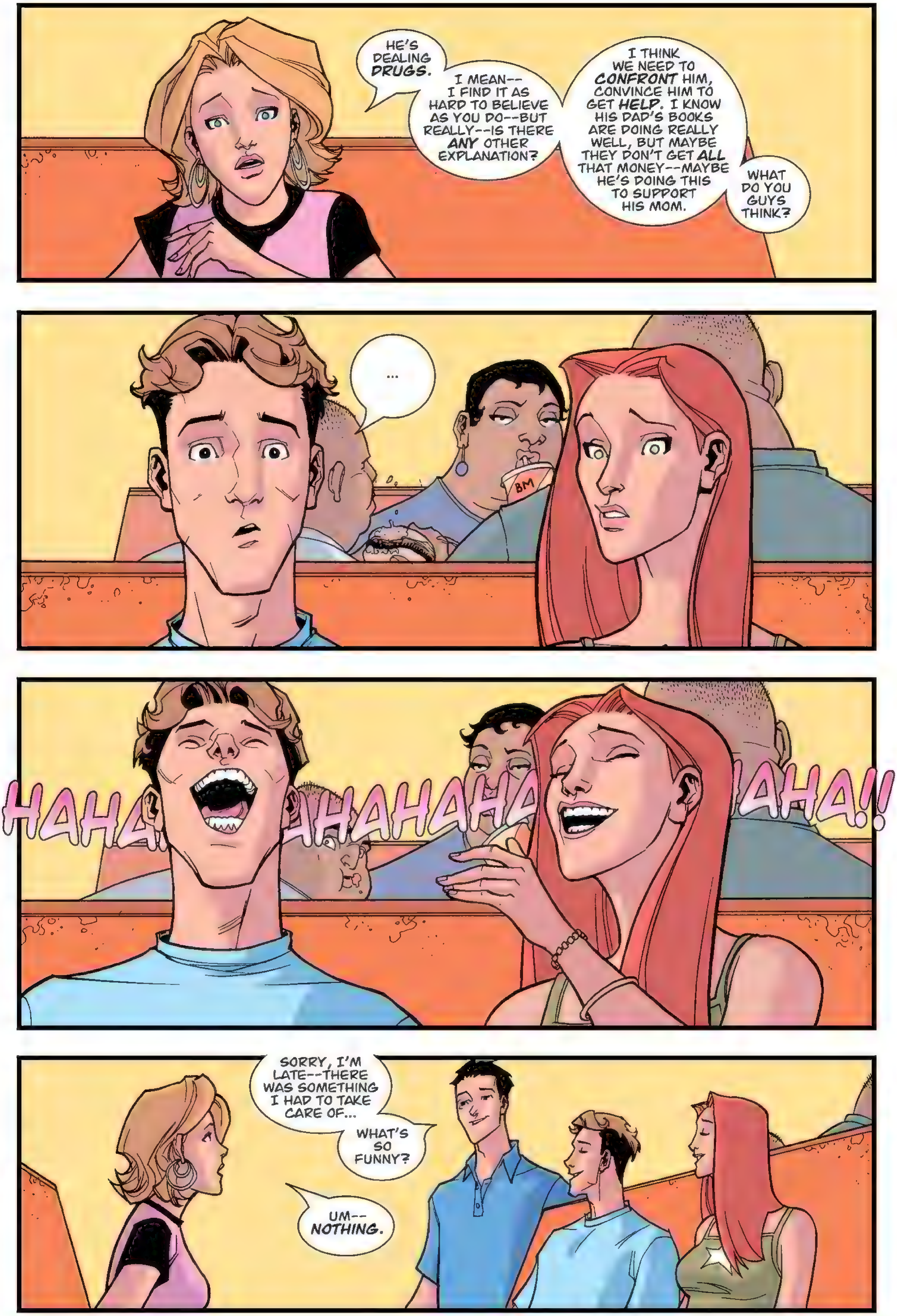

CHADWICK THOMAS ANDERSON.
AMBER JUSTINE BENNETT.
WILLIAM FRANCIS CLOCKWELL.
SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.
MARKUS SEBASTIAN GRAYSON.
SEBASTIAN?

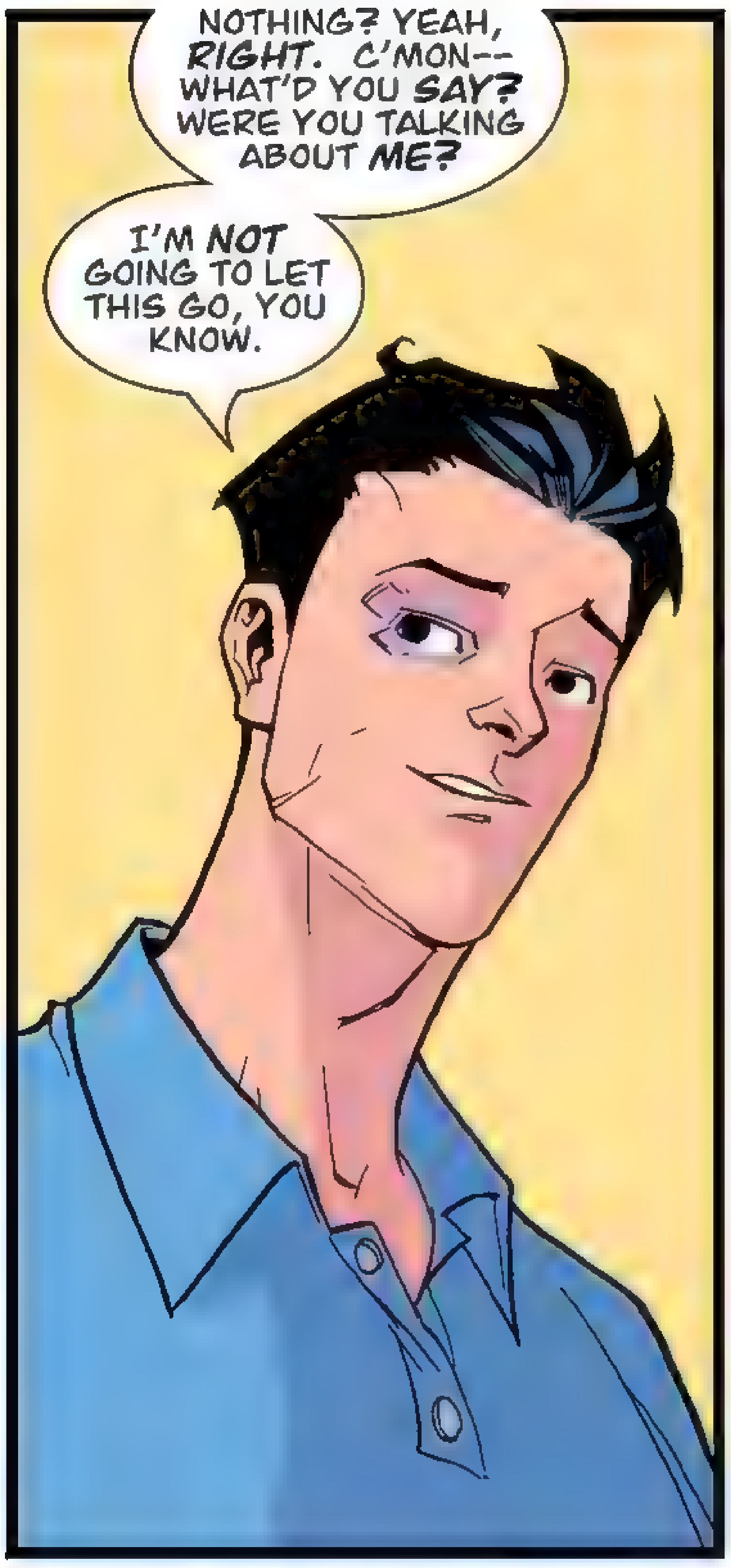

OH, CRAP.

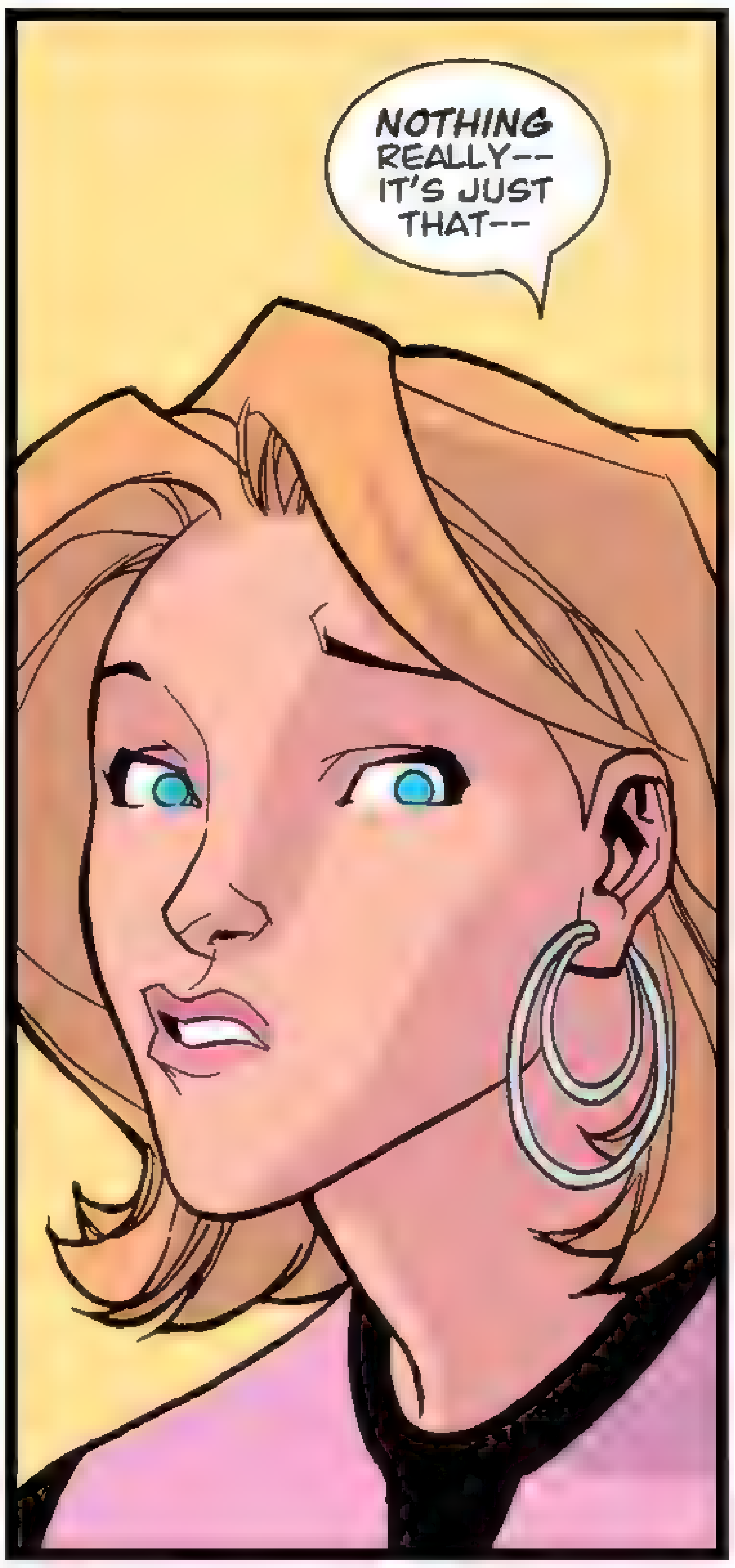
ISSUE EIGHTEEN

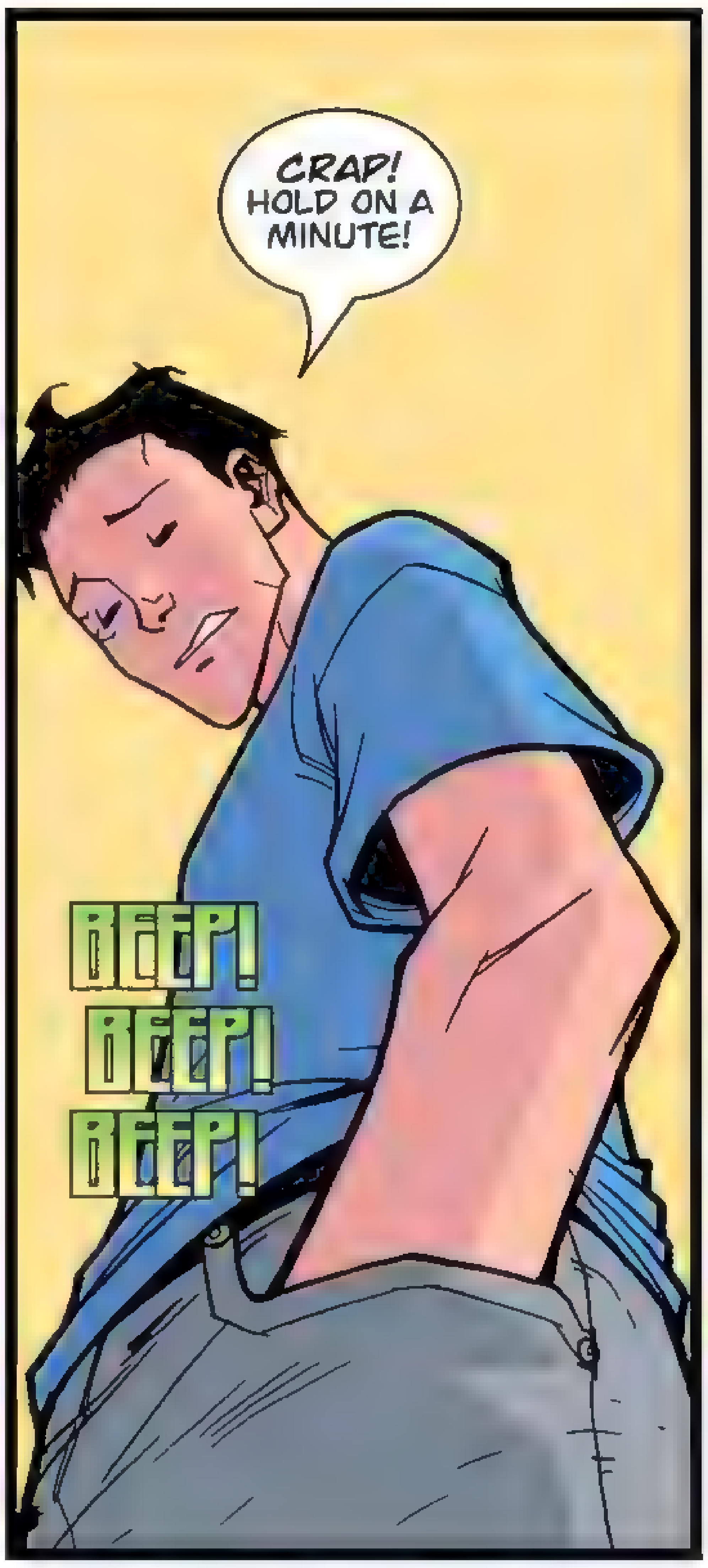
DON'T BE *SCARED*--I'M GOOD, I'M NOT *TIRED* OR *ANYTHING*. YOU'VE GOT SOME TIME, GATHER UP YOUR THINGS, TOYS, FAMILY PHOTOS-- WHATEVER.
JUST BE *QUICK* ABOUT IT. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THIS STUFF WILL HOLD BEFORE IT STARTS BREAKING *APART*.

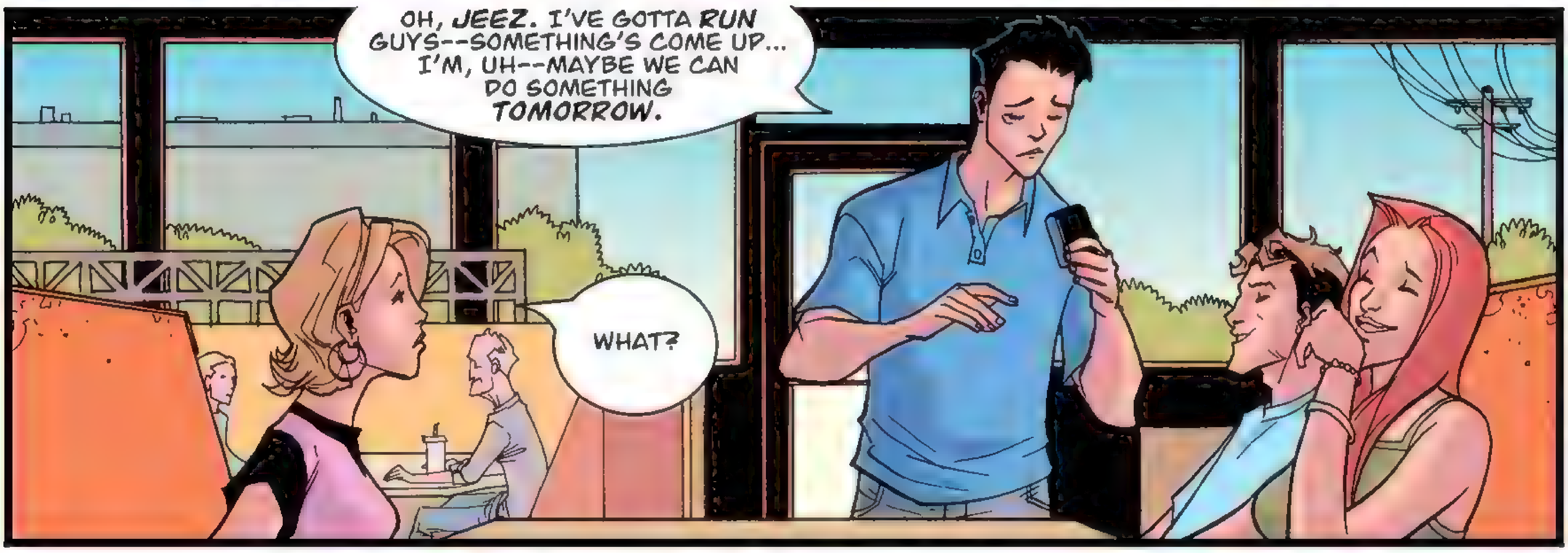

BM
MAN, THAT CEREMONY WAS SO **LAME.** WINSLOW SAT UP THERE FOR LIKE **TWO HOURS** JUST BUILDING UP TO HIS RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT. WHAT A **JERK.**
JEEZ, WHEN IS MARK GOING TO GET HERE? WE'VE BEEN WAITING ALMOST **TWENTY MINUTES.**
YEAH-- ABOUT THAT...
I'M **WORRIED** ABOUT MARK. HE'S ALWAYS DISTRACTED-- HE'S ALWAYS **LATE.** I THINK SOMETHING'S GOING ON.
EVER SINCE HIS DAD **DIED** HE JUST HASN'T BEEN THE **SAME,** WHICH IS UNDERSTANDABLE-- BUT THIS IS **MORE** THAN JUST GRIEF. I **UNDERSTOOD** THE GRIEF.
NOW IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S **ALWAYS** GOT SOMEWHERE **ELSE** TO BE. HE'S **ALWAYS** LATE, HE'S ALWAYS LEAVING EARLY... HE WAS SKIPPING CLASS ALMOST **EVERY DAY** BEFORE WE GRADUATED. I'M TELLING YOU-- SOMETHING'S UP-- SOMETHING IS **DEFINITELY** UP.
AND HE'S GOT A BEEPER ALL OF A SUDDEN--I MEAN, WHAT COULD **THAT** BE FOR? THEN HE SHOWED UP AT GRADUATION YESTERDAY WITH THAT **BLACK EYE...** I MEAN--HE SAID HE WAS MUGGED BUT I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHAT'S **REALLY** GOING ON...
WELL, UH...
I--
BM

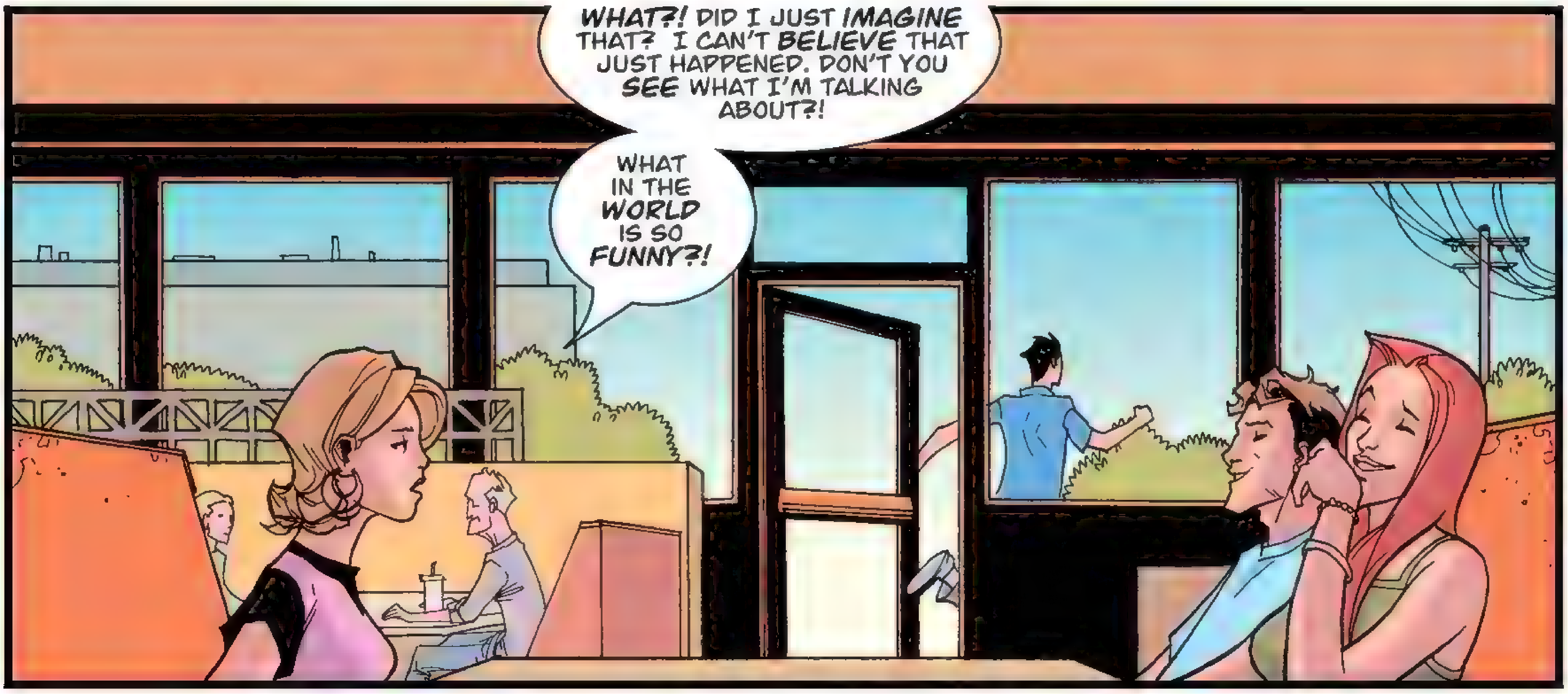

HE'S DEALING **DRUGS.**
I MEAN-- I FIND IT AS HARD TO BELIEVE AS YOU DO--BUT REALLY--IS THERE **ANY** OTHER EXPLANATION?
I THINK WE NEED TO **CONFRONT** HIM, CONVINCE HIM TO GET **HELP.** I KNOW HIS DAD'S BOOKS ARE DOING REALLY WELL, BUT MAYBE THEY DON'T GET **ALL** THAT MONEY--MAYBE HE'S DOING THIS TO SUPPORT HIS MOM.
WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?
...
BM
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!
SORRY, I'M LATE--THERE WAS SOMETHING I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF...
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
UM-- **NOTHING.**

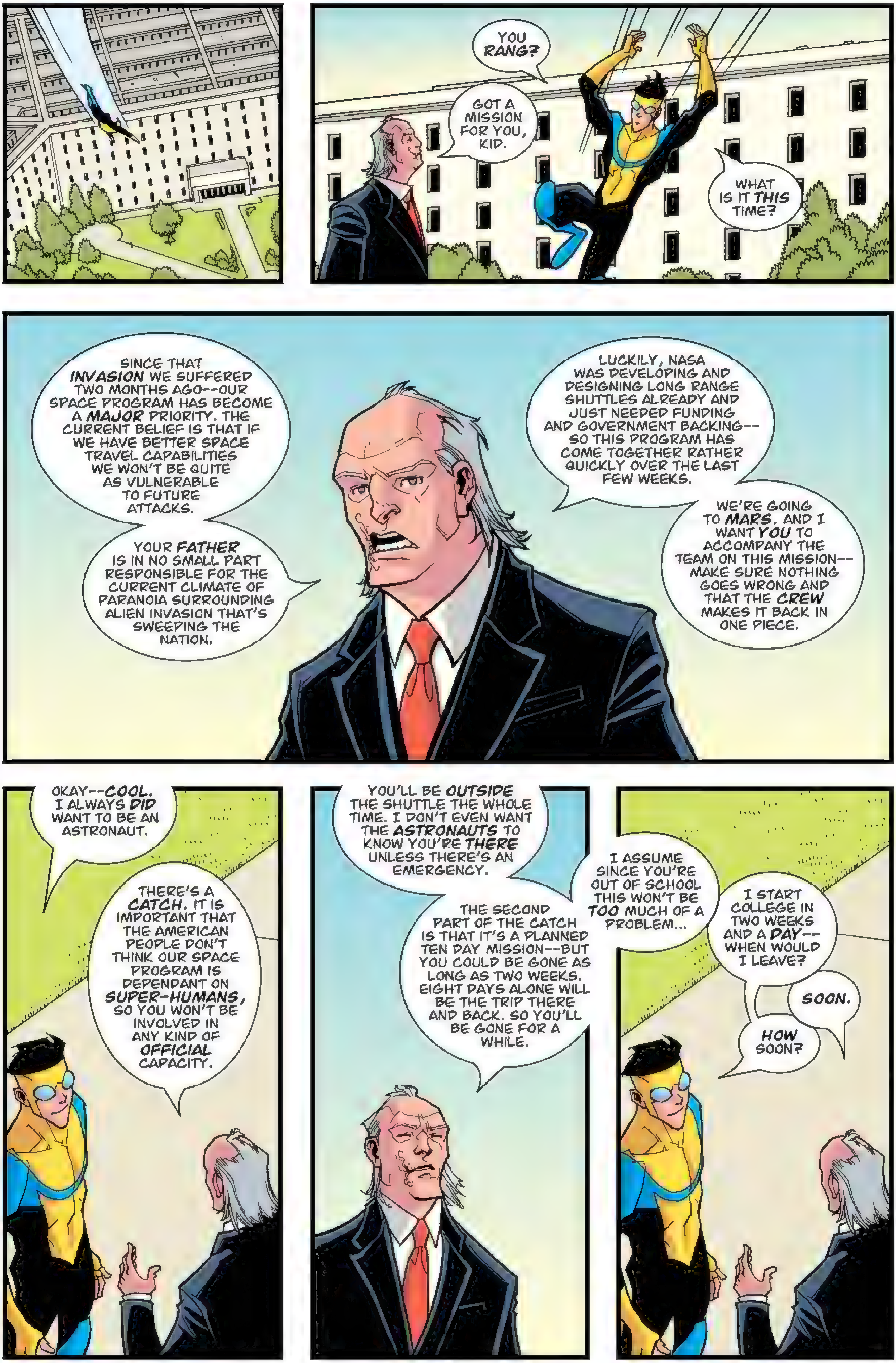

NOTHING? YEAH, RIGHT. C'MON--WHAT'D YOU SAY? WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT ME?
I'M NOT GOING TO LET THIS GO, YOU KNOW.


NOTHING REALLY--IT'S JUST THAT--

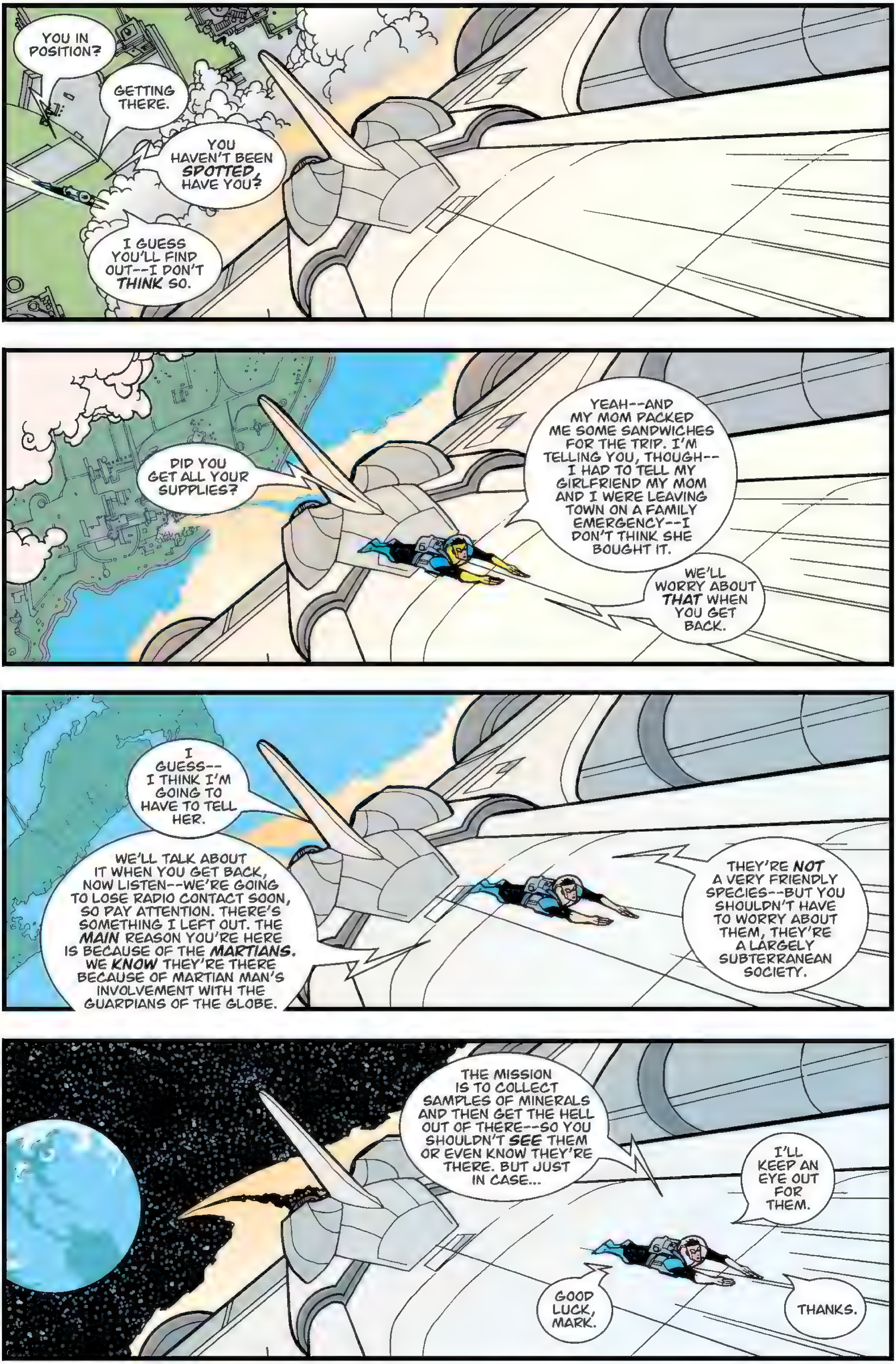

CRAP! HOLD ON A MINUTE!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

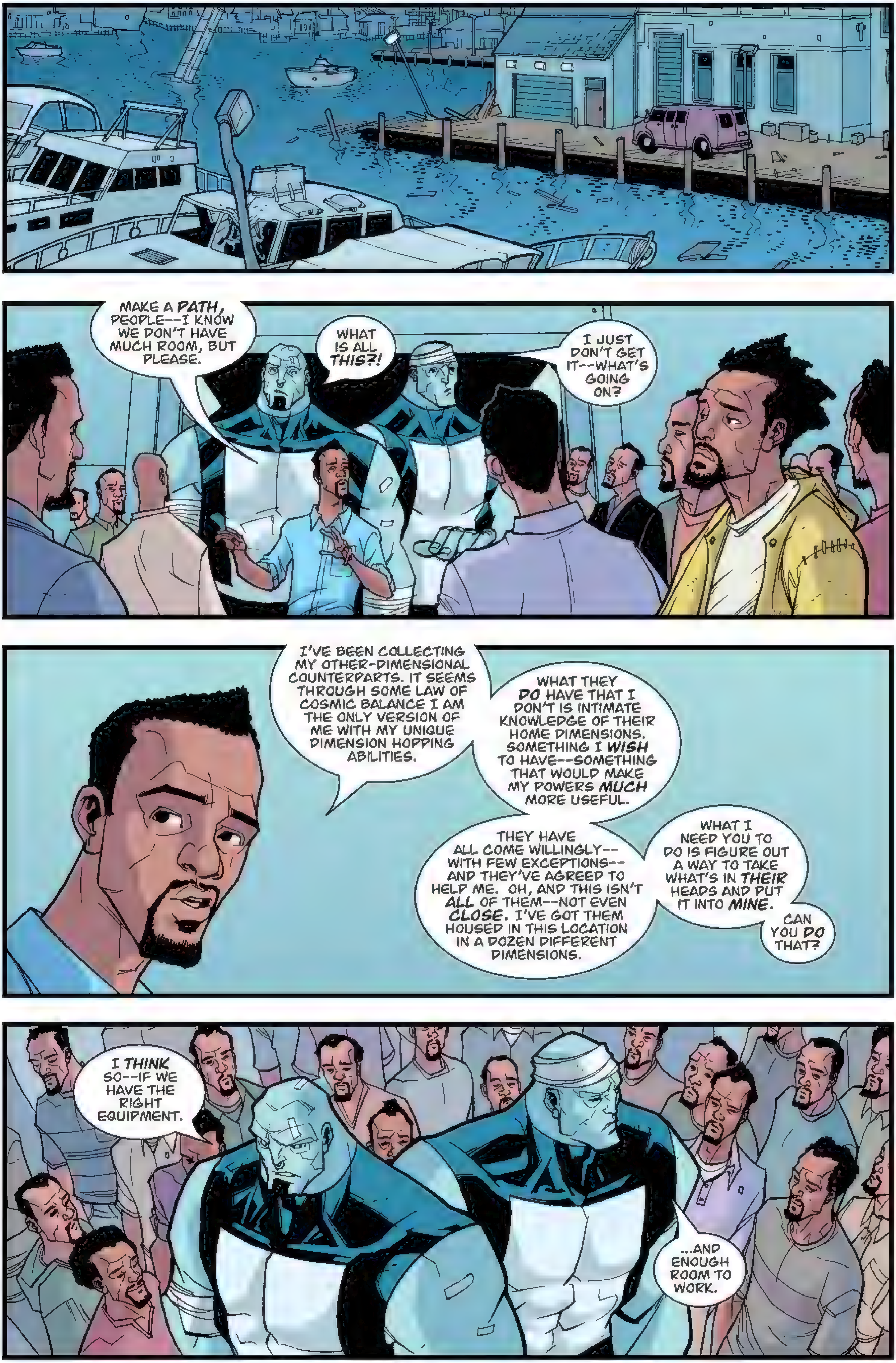

OH, JEEZ. I'VE GOTTA RUN GUYS--SOMETHING'S COME UP... I'M, UH--MAYBE WE CAN DO SOMETHING TOMORROW.
WHAT?

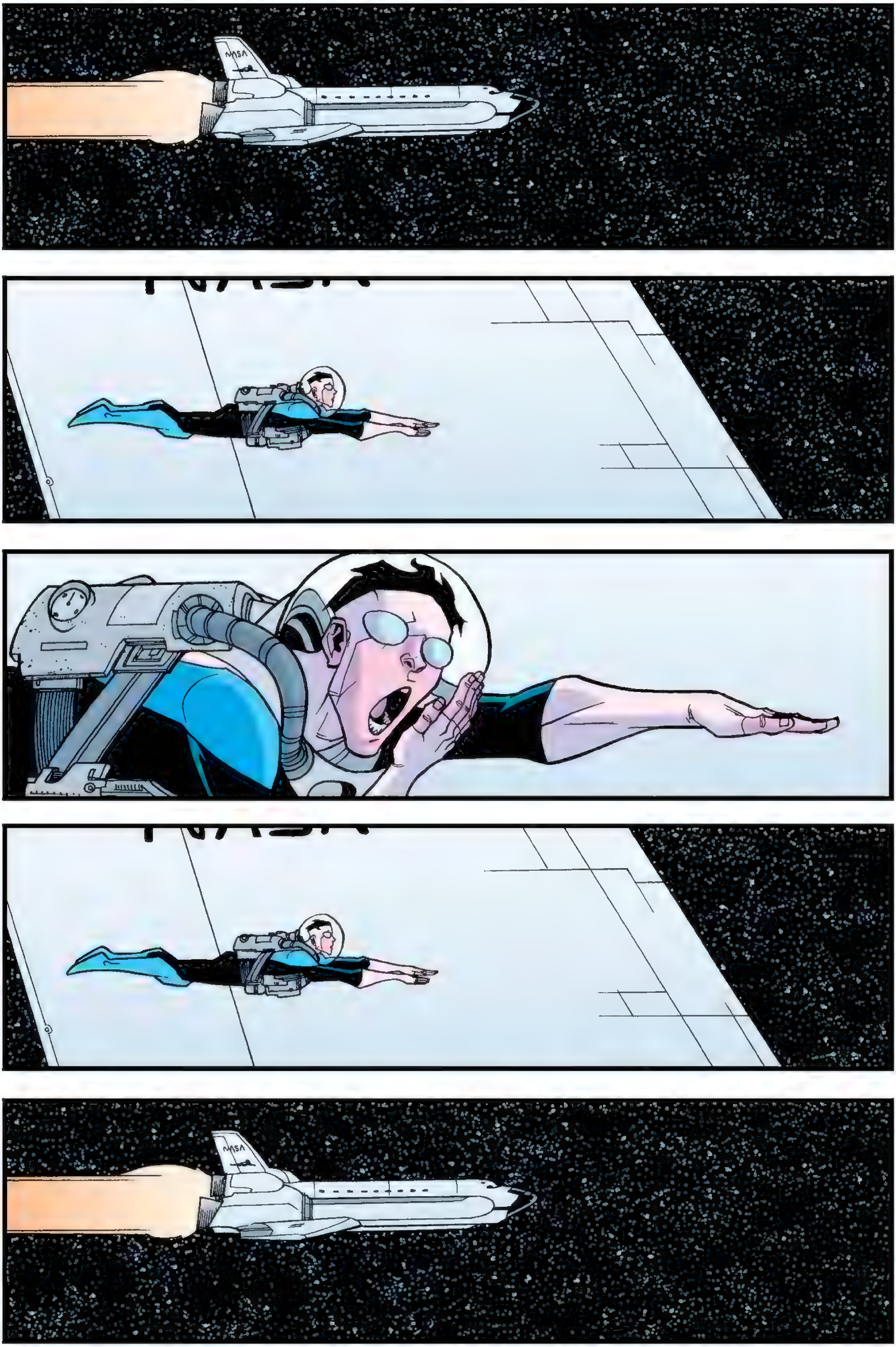

WHAT?! DID I JUST IMAGINE THAT? I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT JUST HAPPENED. DON'T YOU SEE WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT?!
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS SO FUNNY?!


YOU *RANG?*
GOT A MISSION FOR YOU, KID.
WHAT IS IT *THIS* TIME?
SINCE THAT *INVASION* WE SUFFERED TWO MONTHS AGO--OUR SPACE PROGRAM HAS BECOME A *MAJOR* PRIORITY. THE CURRENT BELIEF IS THAT IF WE HAVE BETTER SPACE TRAVEL CAPABILITIES WE WON'T BE QUITE AS VULNERABLE TO FUTURE ATTACKS.
YOUR *FATHER* IS IN NO SMALL PART RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CURRENT CLIMATE OF PARANOIA SURROUNDING ALIEN INVASION THAT'S SWEEPING THE NATION.
LUCKILY, NASA WAS DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING LONG RANGE SHUTTLES ALREADY AND JUST NEEDED FUNDING AND GOVERNMENT BACKING--SO THIS PROGRAM HAS COME TOGETHER RATHER QUICKLY OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS.
WE'RE GOING TO *MARS*. AND I WANT *YOU* TO ACCOMPANY THE TEAM ON THIS MISSION--MAKE SURE NOTHING GOES WRONG AND THAT THE *CREW* MAKES IT BACK IN ONE PIECE.
OKAY--*COOL*. I ALWAYS *DID* WANT TO BE AN ASTRONAUT.
THERE'S A *CATCH*. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DON'T THINK OUR SPACE PROGRAM IS DEPENDANT ON *SUPER-HUMANS*, SO YOU WON'T BE INVOLVED IN ANY KIND OF *OFFICIAL* CAPACITY.
YOU'LL BE *OUTSIDE* THE SHUTTLE THE WHOLE TIME. I DON'T EVEN WANT THE *ASTRONAUTS* TO KNOW YOU'RE *THERE* UNLESS THERE'S AN EMERGENCY.
THE SECOND PART OF THE CATCH IS THAT IT'S A PLANNED TEN DAY MISSION--BUT YOU COULD BE GONE AS LONG AS TWO WEEKS. EIGHT DAYS ALONE WILL BE THE TRIP THERE AND BACK. SO YOU'LL BE GONE FOR A WHILE.
I ASSUME SINCE YOU'RE OUT OF SCHOOL THIS WON'T BE *TOO* MUCH OF A PROBLEM...
I START COLLEGE IN TWO WEEKS AND A *DAY*--WHEN WOULD I LEAVE?
SOON.
HOW SOON?

VOOOOOSH!!
UNITED STATES
NASA
NASA


YOU IN POSITION?
GETTING THERE.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN **SPOTTED**, HAVE YOU?
I GUESS YOU'LL FIND OUT--I DON'T **THINK** SO.
DID YOU GET ALL YOUR SUPPLIES?
YEAH--AND MY MOM PACKED ME SOME SANDWICHES FOR THE TRIP. I'M TELLING YOU, THOUGH--I HAD TO TELL MY GIRLFRIEND MY MOM AND I WERE LEAVING TOWN ON A FAMILY EMERGENCY--I DON'T THINK SHE BOUGHT IT.
WE'LL WORRY ABOUT **THAT** WHEN YOU GET BACK.
I GUESS--I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TELL HER.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT WHEN YOU GET BACK. NOW LISTEN--WE'RE GOING TO LOSE RADIO CONTACT SOON, SO PAY ATTENTION. THERE'S SOMETHING I LEFT OUT. THE **MAIN** REASON YOU'RE HERE IS BECAUSE OF THE **MARTIANS**. WE **KNOW** THEY'RE THERE BECAUSE OF MARTIAN MAN'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
THEY'RE **NOT** A VERY FRIENDLY SPECIES--BUT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM, THEY'RE A LARGELY SUBTERRANEAN SOCIETY.
THE MISSION IS TO COLLECT SAMPLES OF MINERALS AND THEN GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE--SO YOU SHOULDN'T **SEE** THEM OR EVEN KNOW THEY'RE THERE. BUT JUST IN CASE...
I'LL KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THEM.
GOOD LUCK, MARK.
THANKS.


MAKE A *PATH*, PEOPLE--I KNOW WE DON'T HAVE MUCH ROOM, BUT PLEASE.
WHAT IS ALL *THIS?!*
I JUST DON'T GET IT--WHAT'S GOING ON?
I'VE BEEN COLLECTING MY OTHER-DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS. IT SEEMS THROUGH SOME LAW OF COSMIC BALANCE I AM THE ONLY VERSION OF ME WITH MY UNIQUE DIMENSION HOPPING ABILITIES.
WHAT THEY *DO* HAVE THAT I DON'T IS INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR HOME DIMENSIONS. SOMETHING I *WISH* TO HAVE--SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE MY POWERS *MUCH* MORE USEFUL.
THEY HAVE ALL COME WILLINGLY--WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS--AND THEY'VE AGREED TO HELP ME. OH, AND THIS ISN'T *ALL* OF THEM--NOT EVEN *CLOSE*. I'VE GOT THEM HOUSED IN THIS LOCATION IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS.
WHAT I NEED YOU TO DO IS FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TAKE WHAT'S IN *THEIR* HEADS AND PUT IT INTO *MINE*.
CAN YOU *DO* THAT?
I *THINK* SO--IF WE HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT.
...AND ENOUGH ROOM TO WORK.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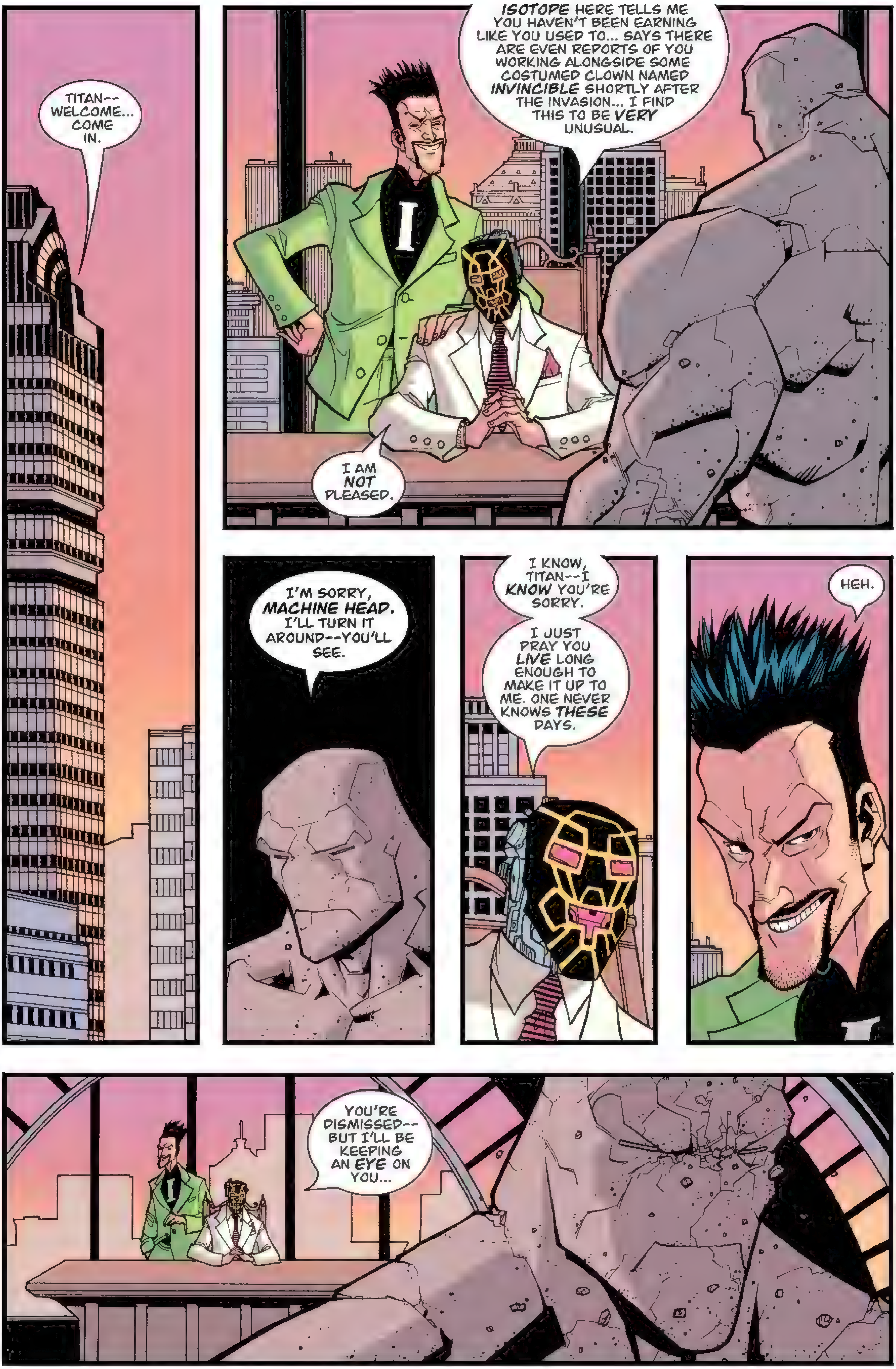
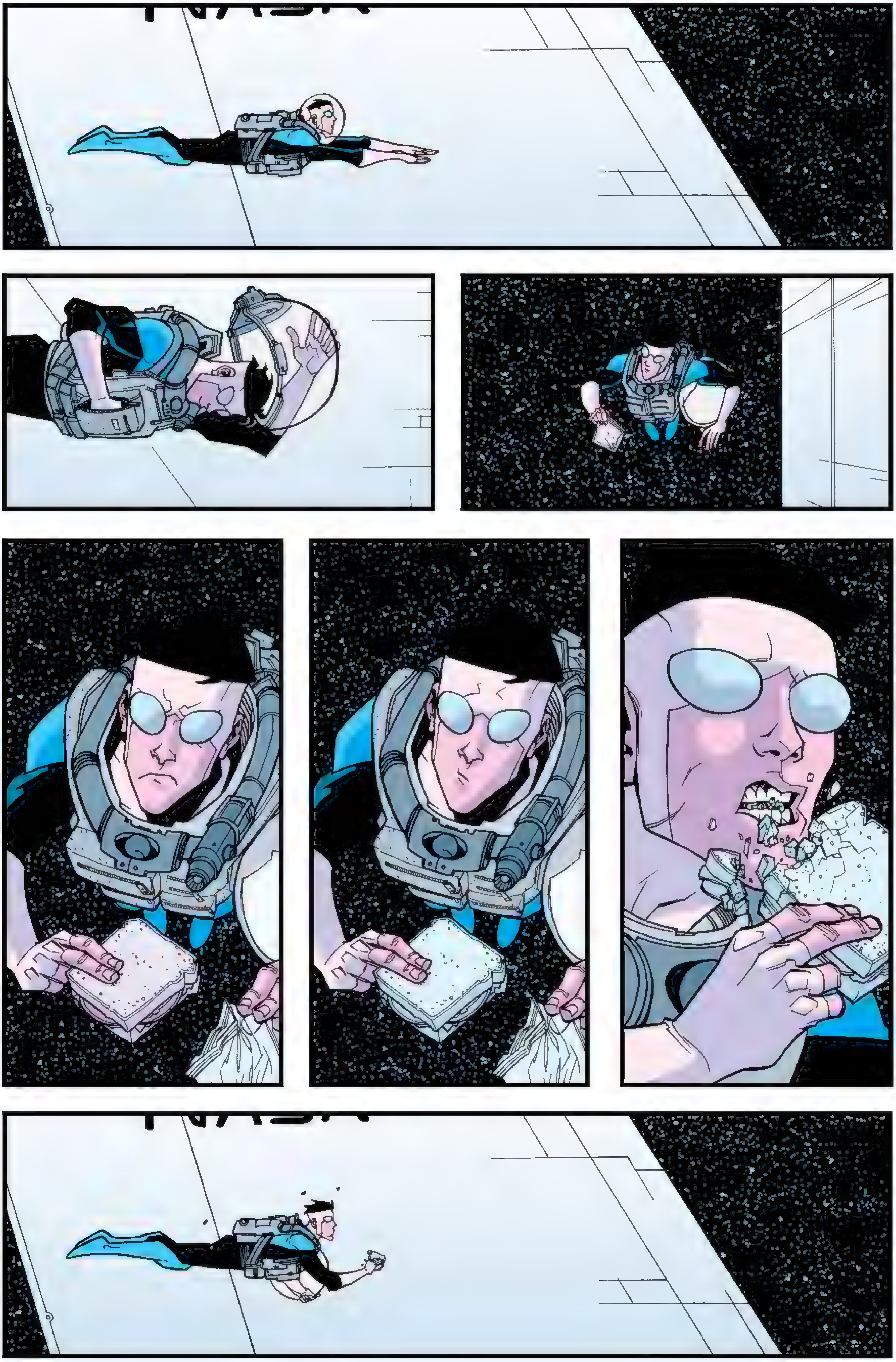
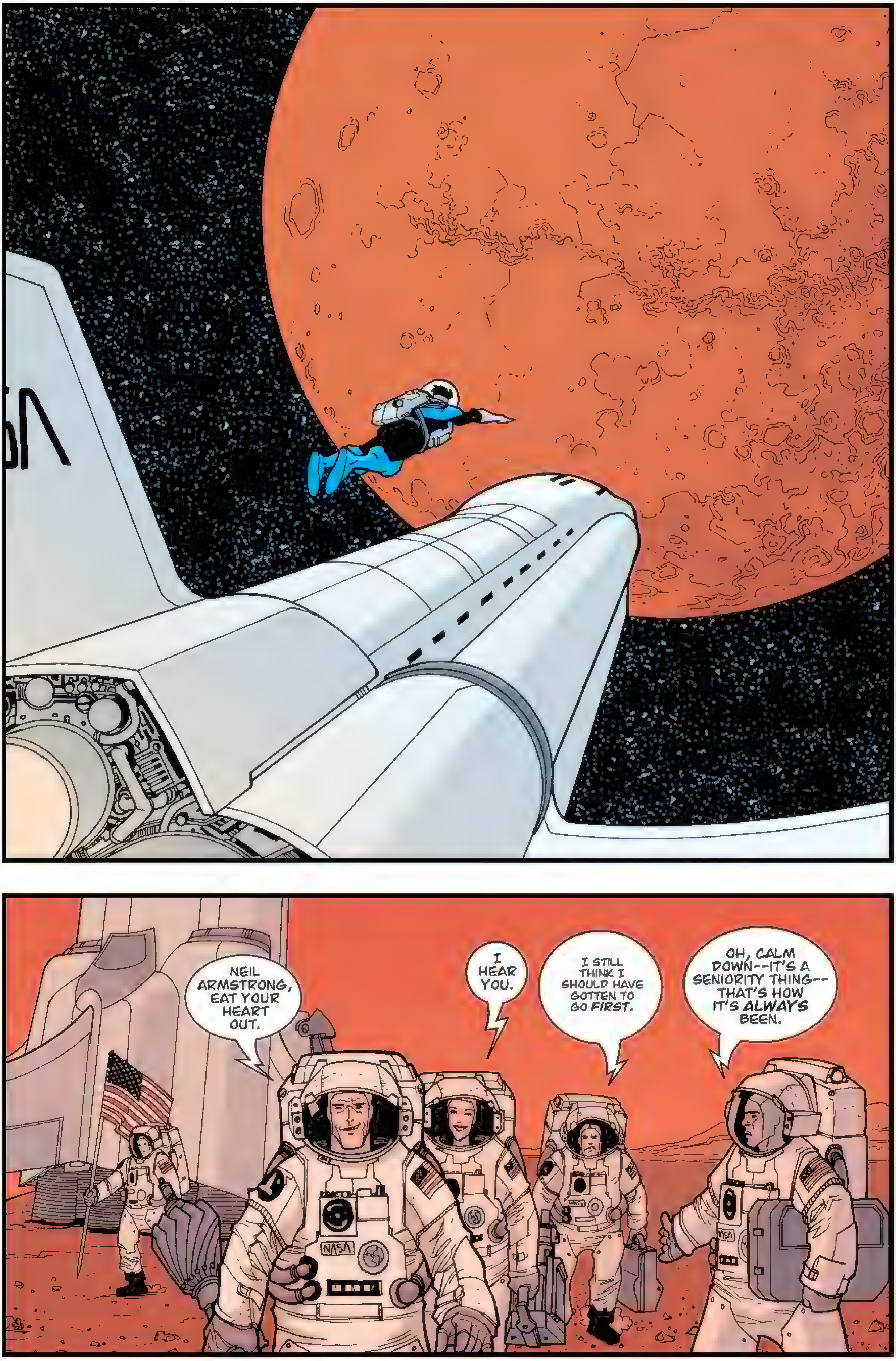
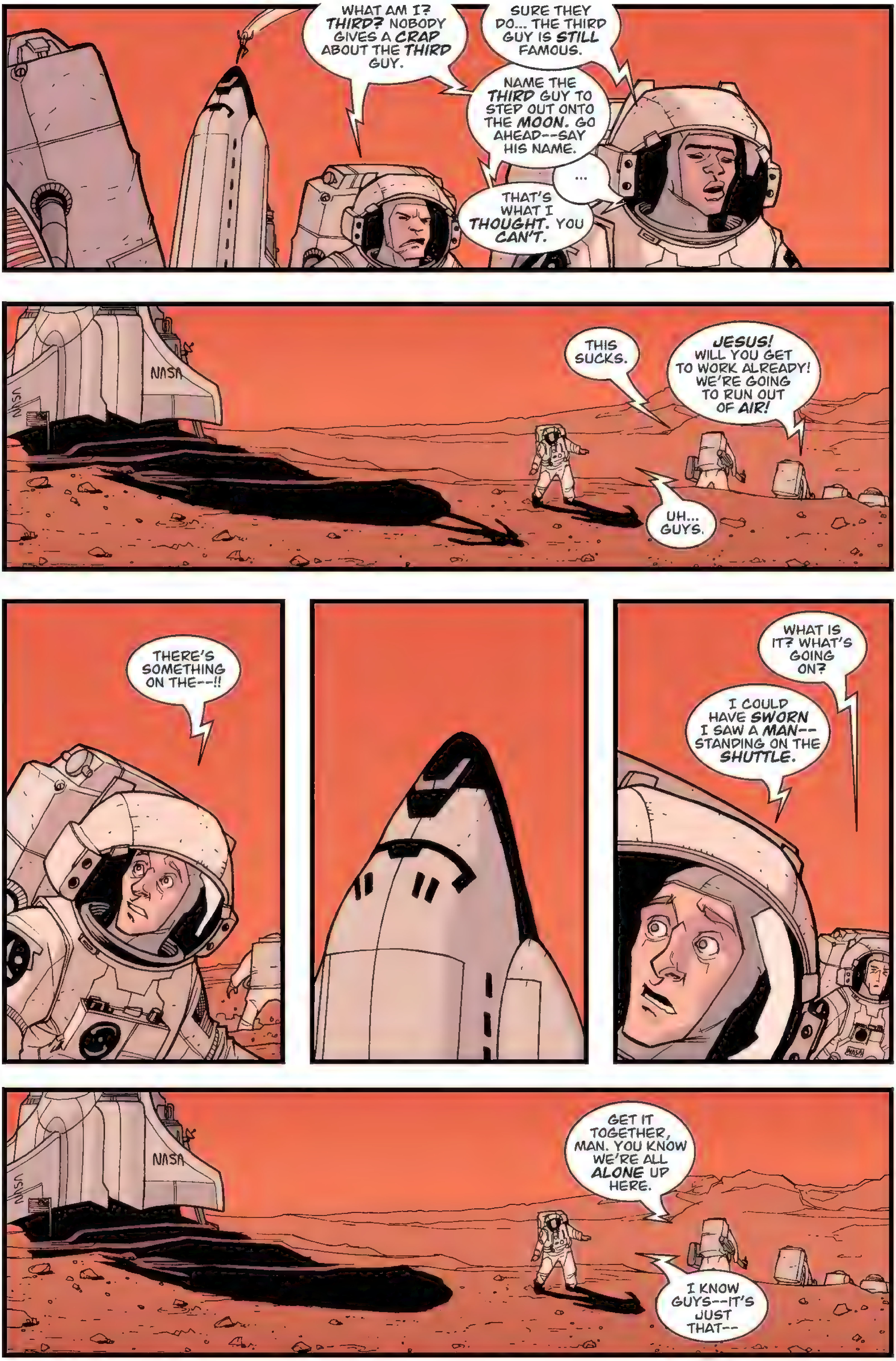
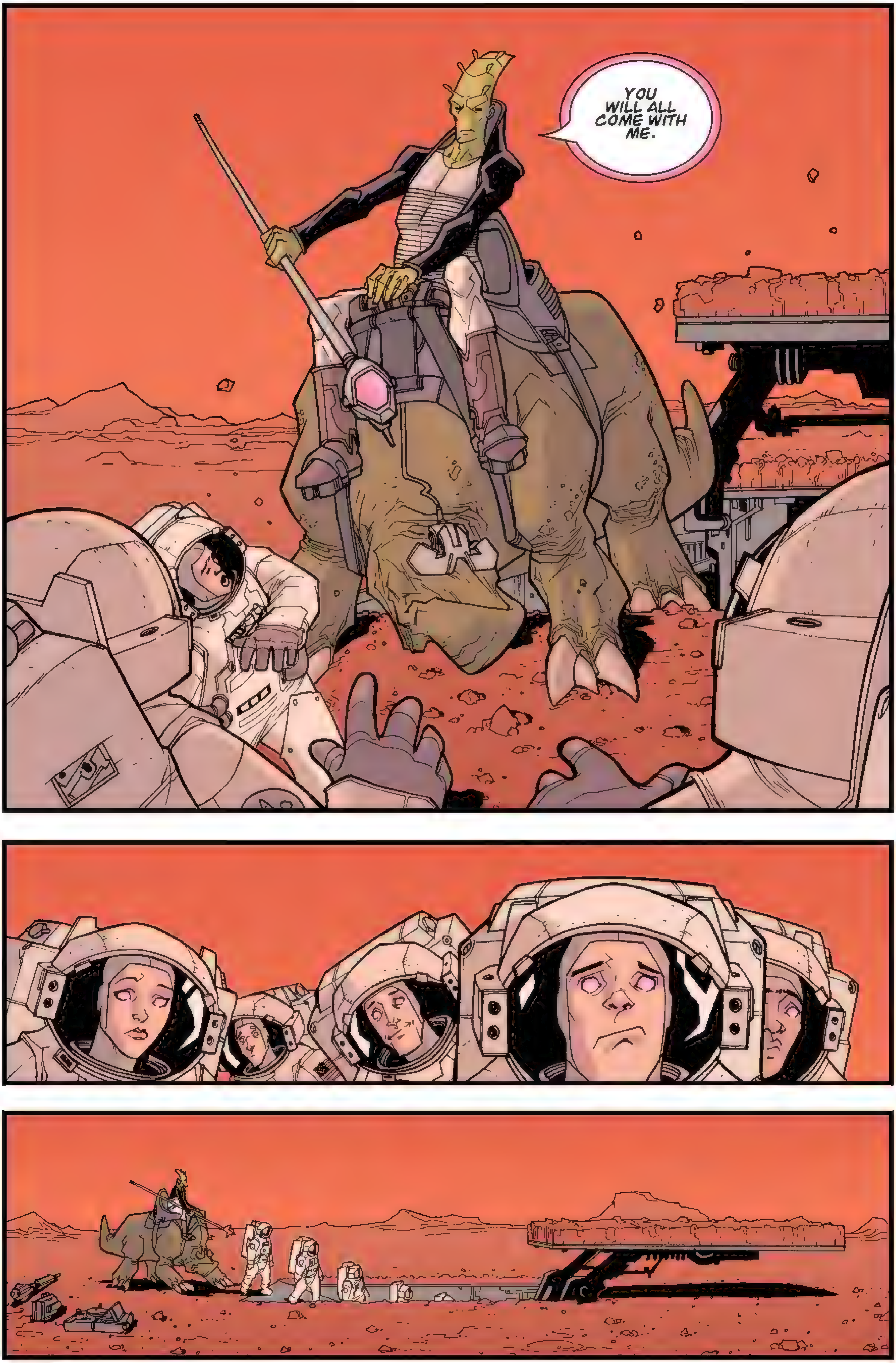
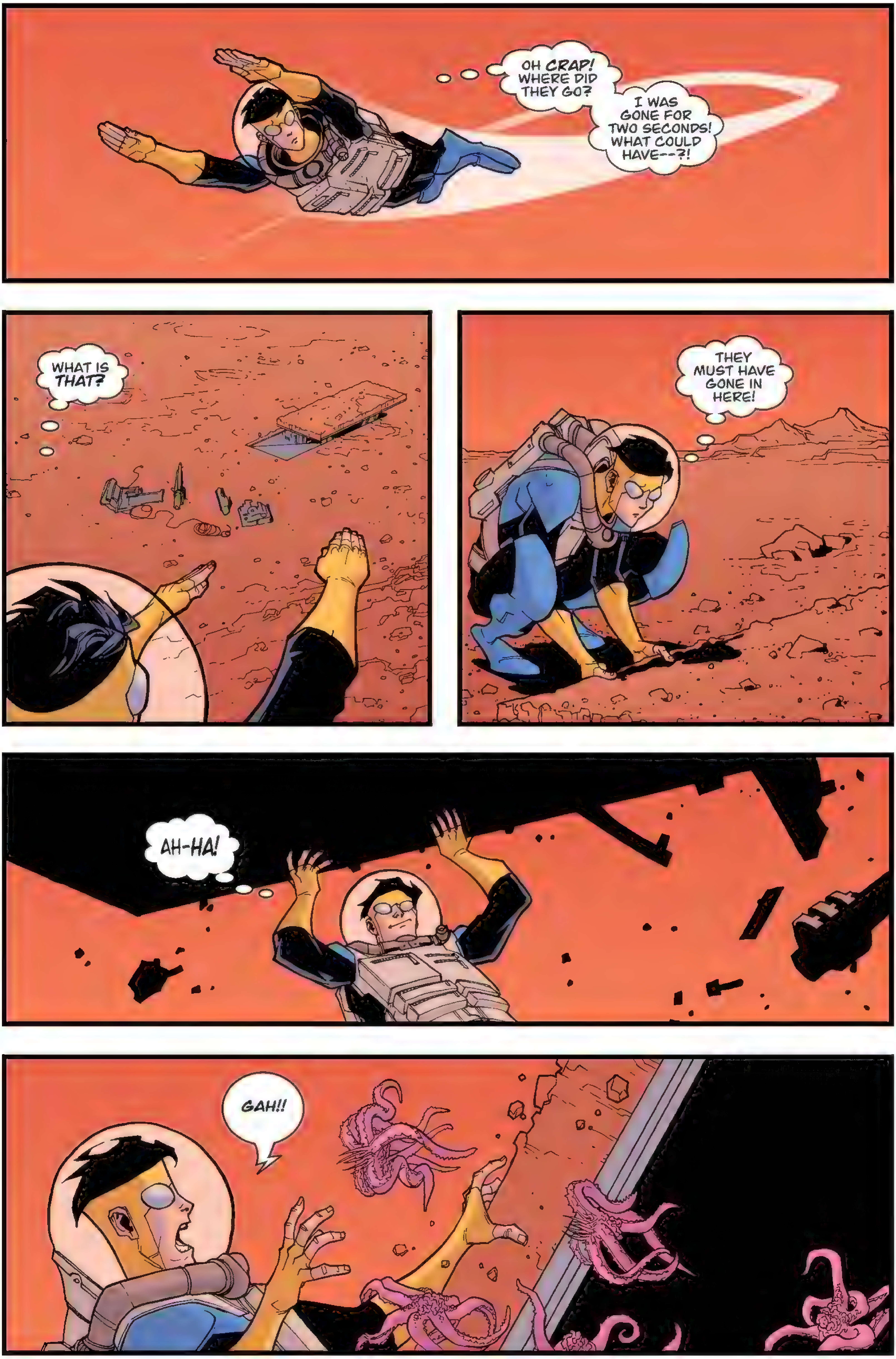

TITAN-- WELCOME... COME IN.
ISOTOPE HERE TELLS ME YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EARNING LIKE YOU USED TO... SAYS THERE ARE EVEN REPORTS OF YOU WORKING ALONGSIDE SOME COSTUMED CLOWN NAMED INVINCIBLE SHORTLY AFTER THE INVASION... I FIND THIS TO BE VERY UNUSUAL.
I AM NOT PLEASED.
I'M SORRY, MACHINE HEAD. I'LL TURN IT AROUND--YOU'LL SEE.
I KNOW, TITAN--I KNOW YOU'RE SORRY.
I JUST PRAY YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE IT UP TO ME. ONE NEVER KNOWS THESE DAYS.
HEH.
YOU'RE DISMISSED-- BUT I'LL BE KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU...

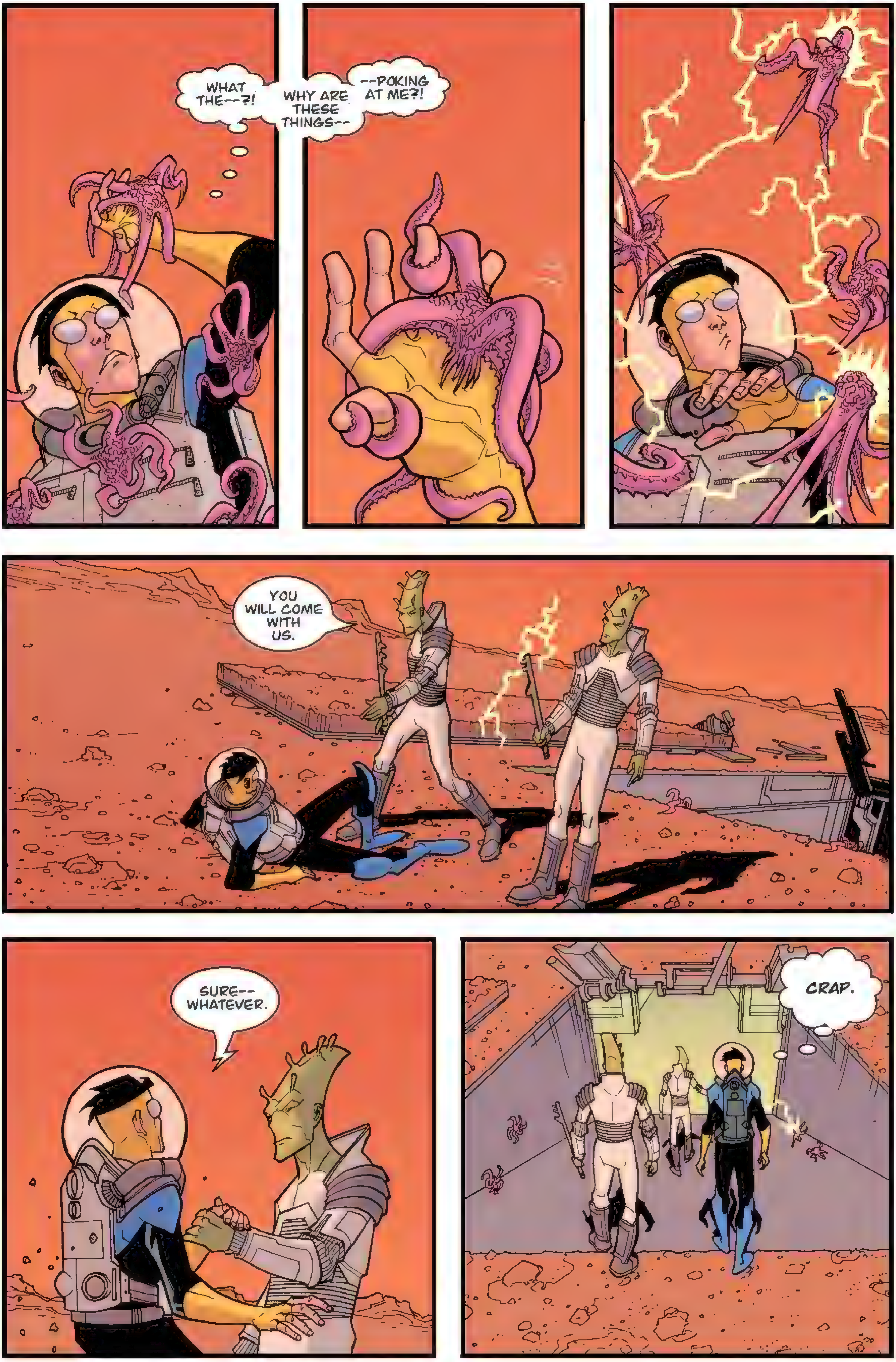


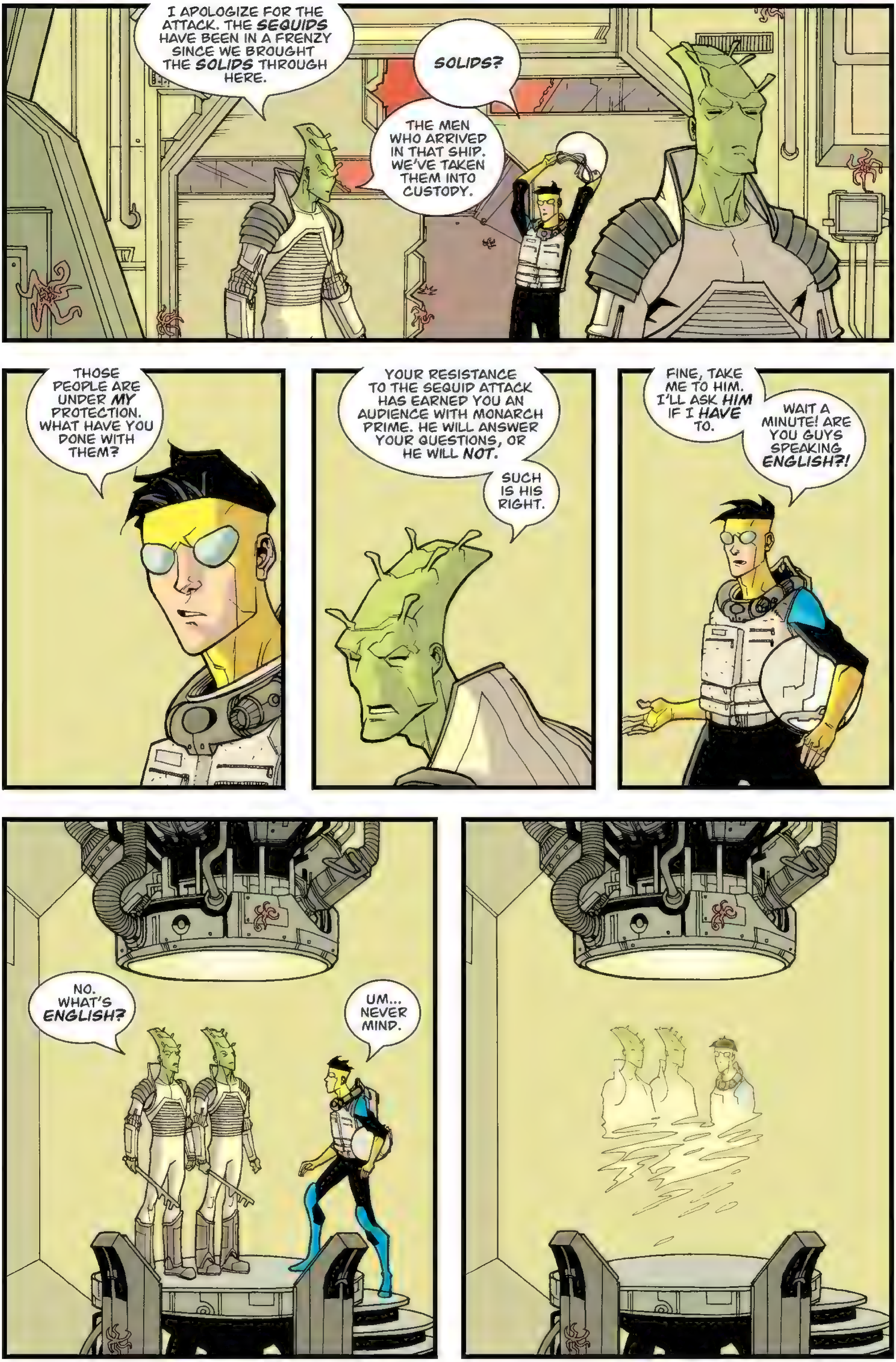

NEIL ARMSTRONG, EAT YOUR HEART OUT.
I HEAR YOU.
I STILL THINK I SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN TO GO *FIRST*.
OH, CALM DOWN--IT'S A SENIORITY THING--THAT'S HOW IT'S ***ALWAYS*** BEEN.

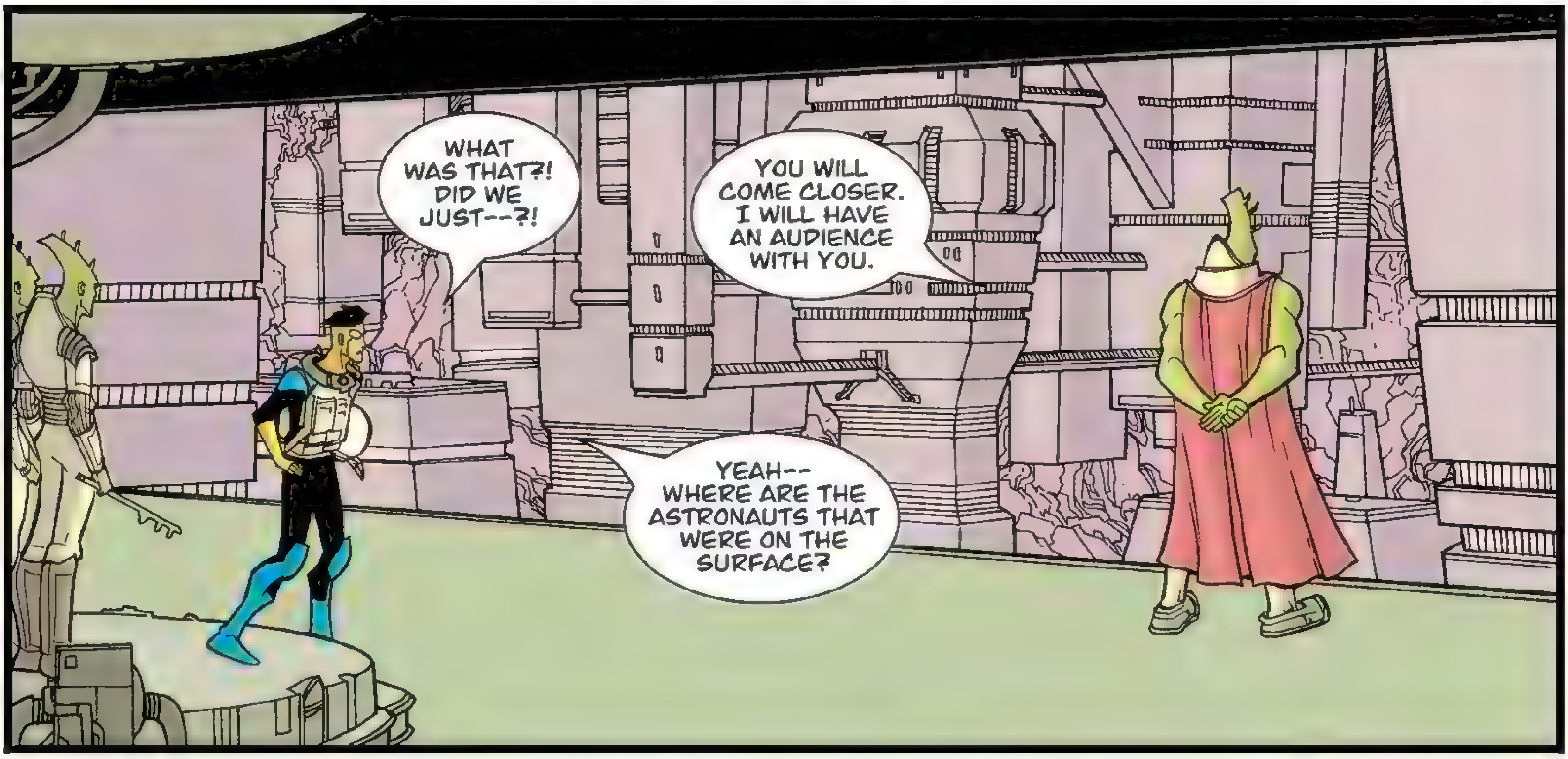

WHAT AM I? THIRD? NOBODY GIVES A CRAP ABOUT THE THIRD GUY.
SURE THEY DO... THE THIRD GUY IS STILL FAMOUS.
NAME THE THIRD GUY TO STEP OUT ONTO THE MOON. GO AHEAD--SAY HIS NAME.
...
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. YOU CAN'T.
THIS SUCKS.
JESUS! WILL YOU GET TO WORK ALREADY! WE'RE GOING TO RUN OUT OF AIR!
UH... GUYS.
NASA
USA
THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE--!!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?
I COULD HAVE SWORN I SAW A MAN--STANDING ON THE SHUTTLE.
GET IT TOGETHER, MAN. YOU KNOW WE'RE ALL ALONE UP HERE.
I KNOW GUYS--IT'S JUST THAT--

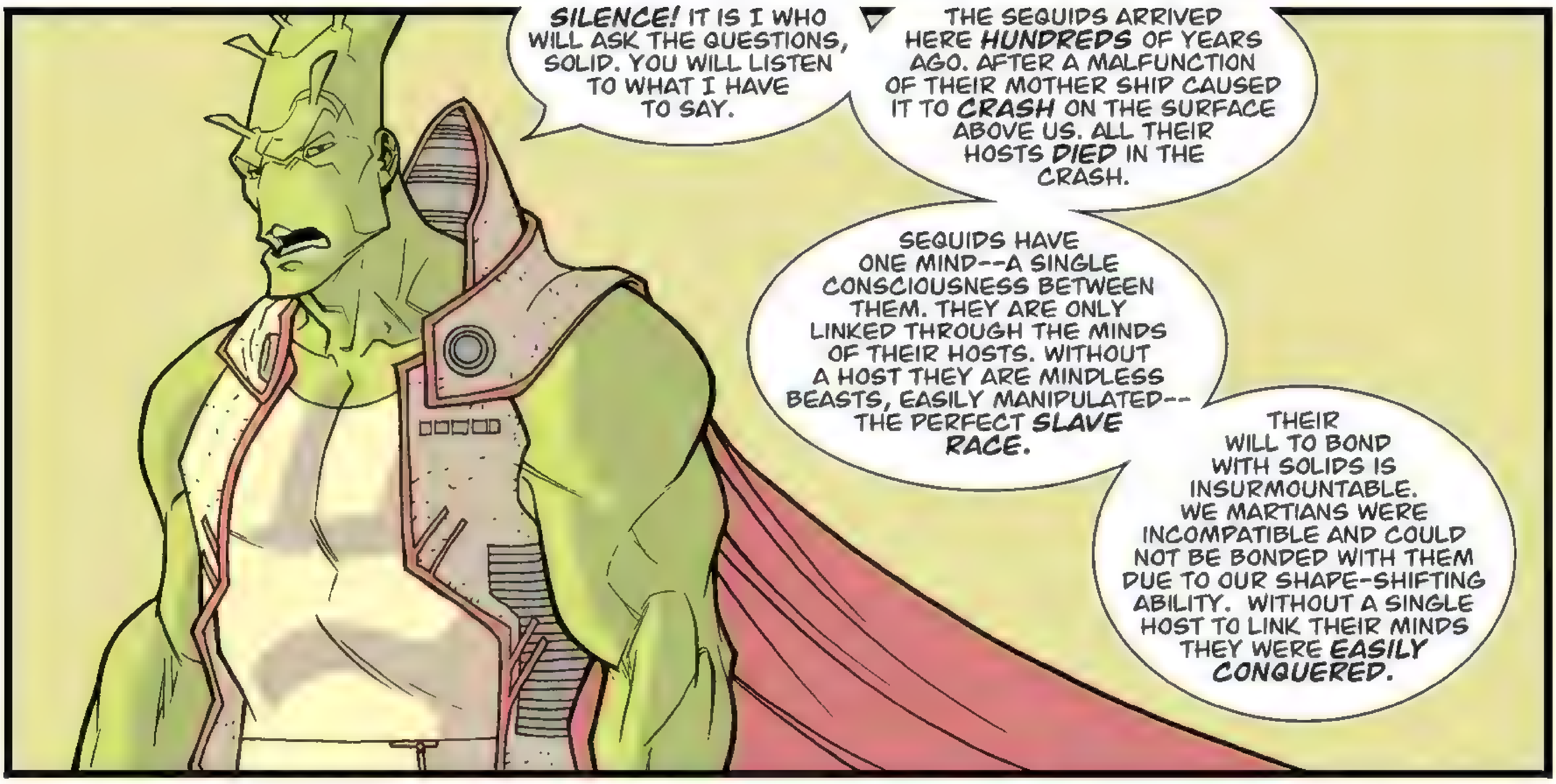

YOU WILL ALL COME WITH ME.

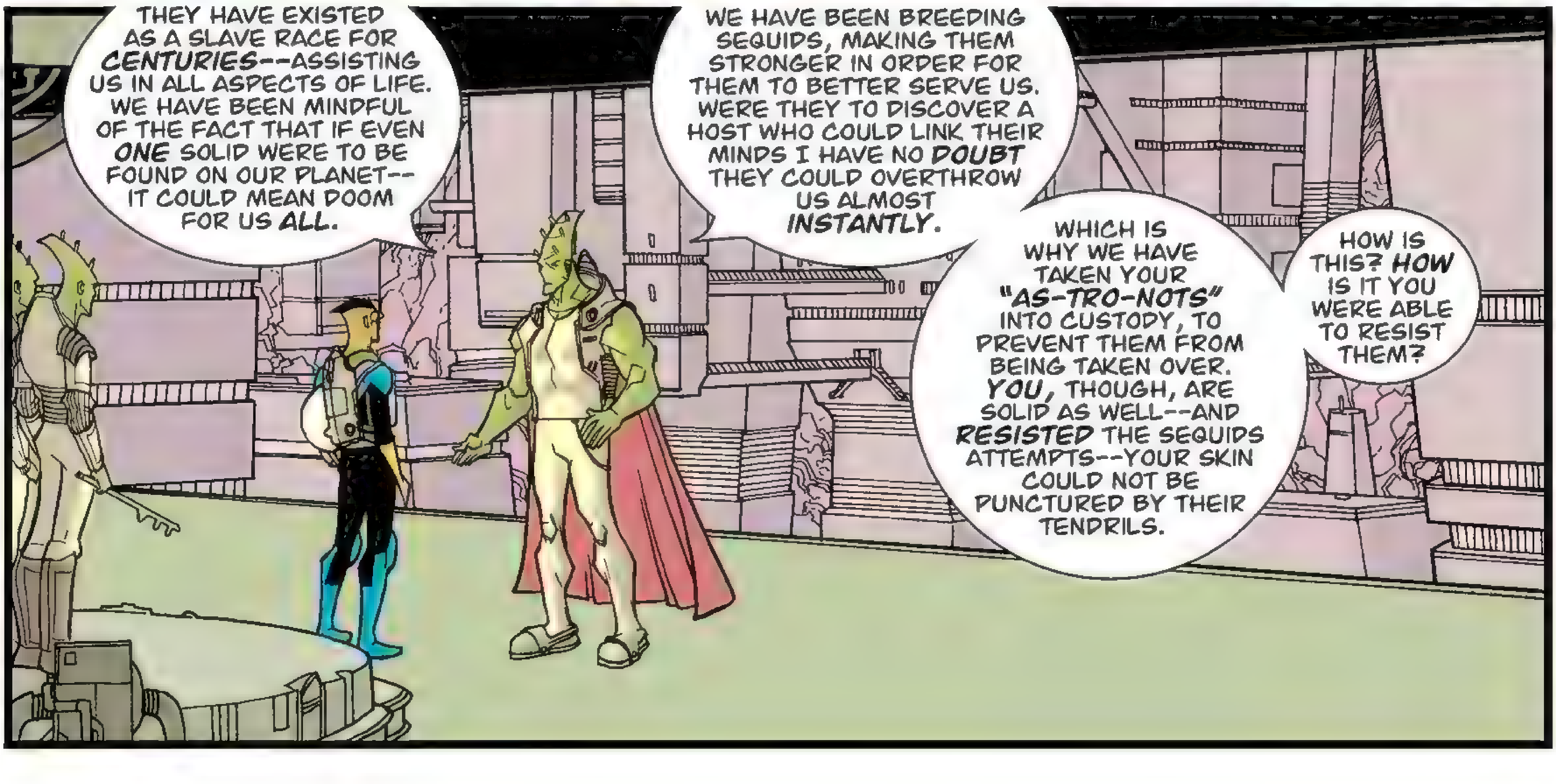

OH CRAP! WHERE DID THEY GO?
I WAS GONE FOR TWO SECONDS! WHAT COULD HAVE--?!
WHAT IS THAT?
THEY MUST HAVE GONE IN HERE!
AH-HA!
GAH!!

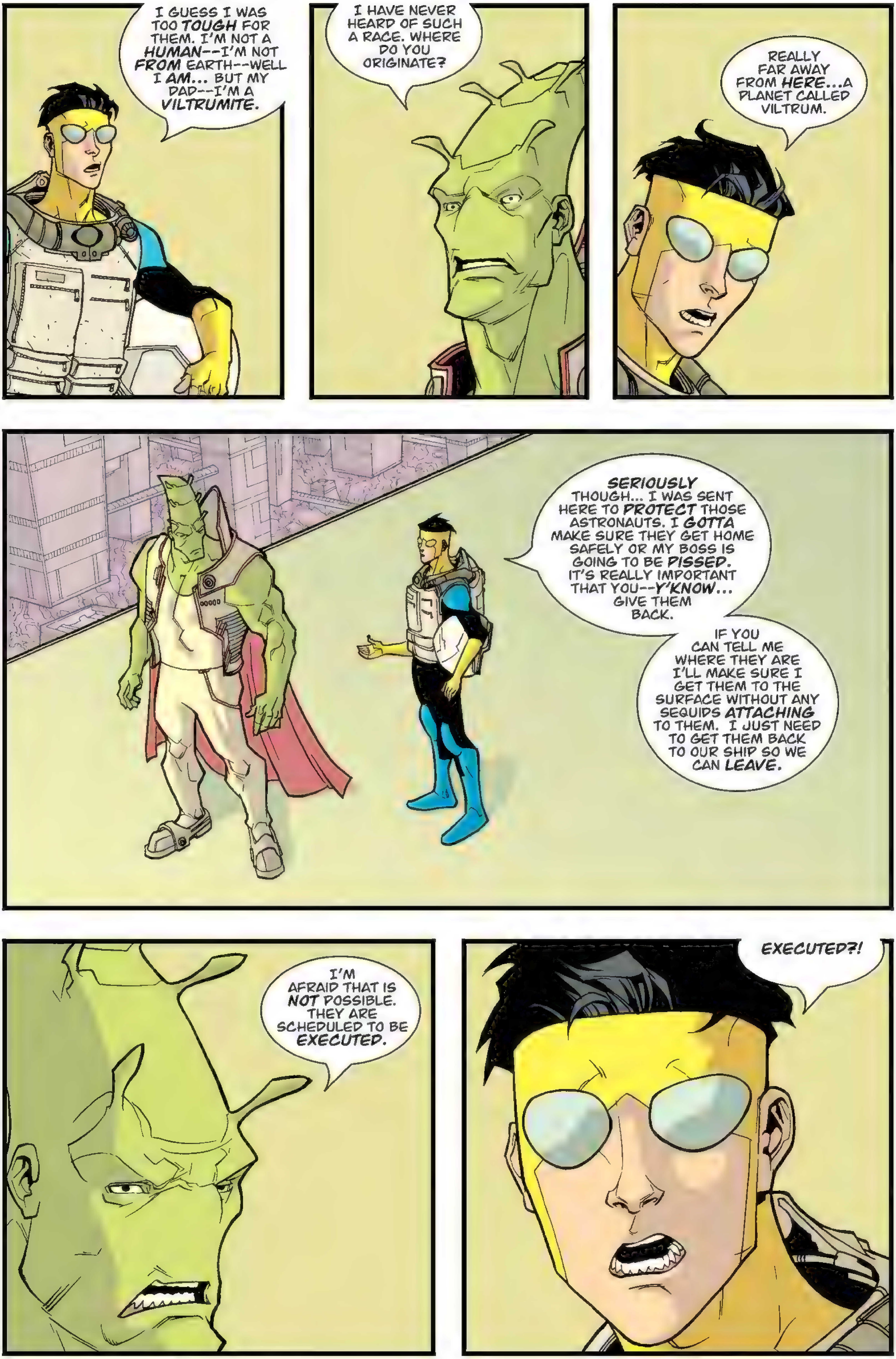

WHAT THE--?!
WHY ARE THESE THINGS--
--POKING AT ME?!
YOU WILL COME WITH US.
SURE-- WHATEVER.
CRAP.


I APOLOGIZE FOR THE ATTACK. THE SEQUIDS HAVE BEEN IN A FRENZY SINCE WE BROUGHT THE SOLIDS THROUGH HERE.
SOLIDS?
THE MEN WHO ARRIVED IN THAT SHIP. WE'VE TAKEN THEM INTO CUSTODY.
THOSE PEOPLE ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH THEM?
YOUR RESISTANCE TO THE SEQUID ATTACK HAS EARNED YOU AN AUDIENCE WITH MONARCH PRIME. HE WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS, OR HE WILL NOT.
SUCH IS HIS RIGHT.
FINE, TAKE ME TO HIM. I'LL ASK HIM IF I HAVE TO.
WAIT A MINUTE! ARE YOU GUYS SPEAKING ENGLISH?!
NO. WHAT'S ENGLISH?
UM... NEVER MIND.

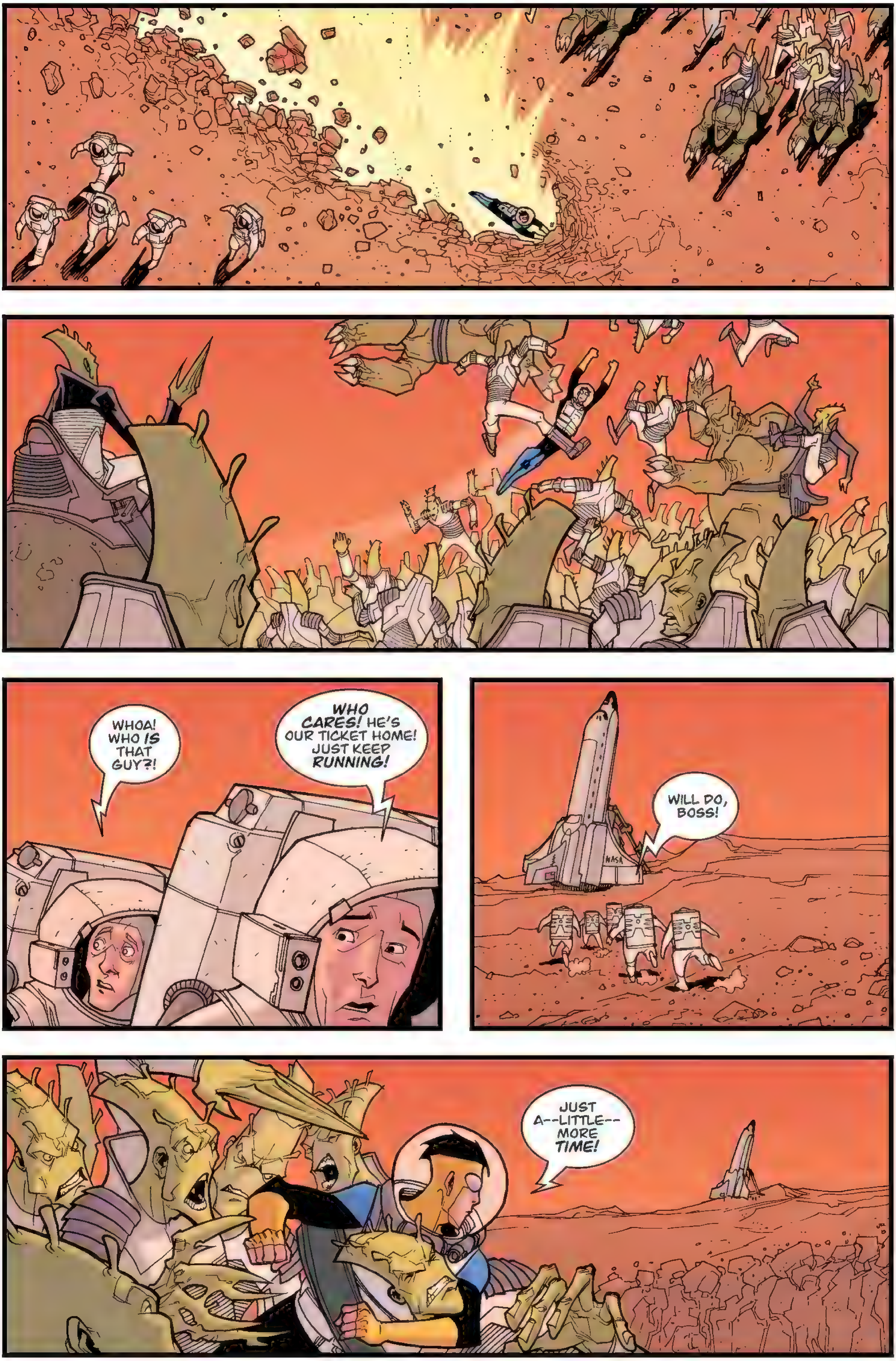

WHAT WAS THAT?! DID WE JUST--?!
YOU WILL COME CLOSER. I WILL HAVE AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU.
YEAH-- WHERE ARE THE ASTRONAUTS THAT WERE ON THE SURFACE?

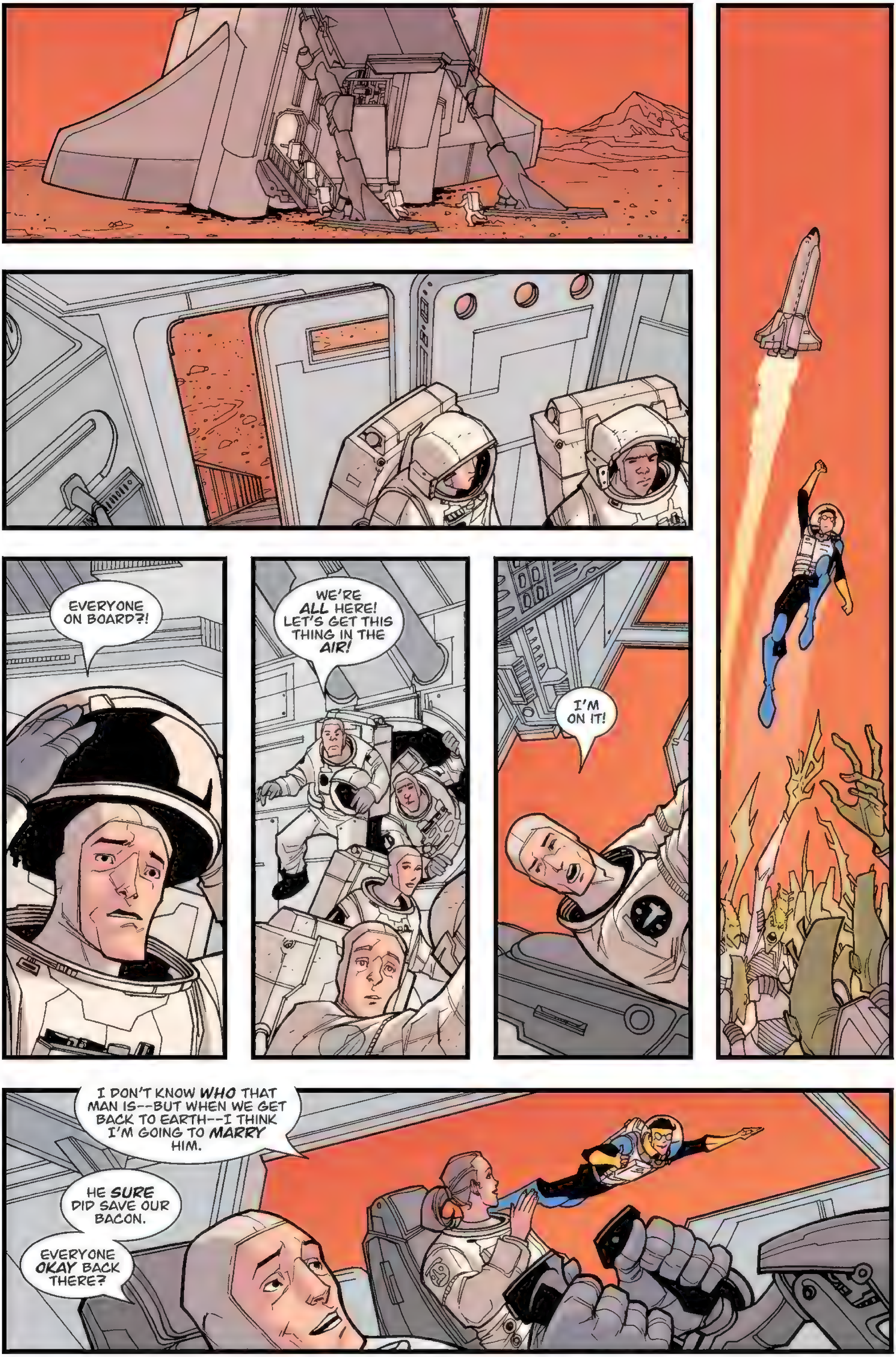

SILENCE! IT IS I WHO WILL ASK THE QUESTIONS, SOLID. YOU WILL LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.
THE SEQUIDS ARRIVED HERE HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. AFTER A MALFUNCTION OF THEIR MOTHER SHIP CAUSED IT TO CRASH ON THE SURFACE ABOVE US. ALL THEIR HOSTS DIED IN THE CRASH.
SEQUIDS HAVE ONE MIND--A SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS BETWEEN THEM. THEY ARE ONLY LINKED THROUGH THE MINDS OF THEIR HOSTS. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE MINDLESS BEASTS, EASILY MANIPULATED-- THE PERFECT SLAVE RACE.
THEIR WILL TO BOND WITH SOLIDS IS INSURMOUNTABLE. WE MARTIANS WERE INCOMPATIBLE AND COULD NOT BE BONDED WITH THEM DUE TO OUR SHAPE-SHIFTING ABILITY. WITHOUT A SINGLE HOST TO LINK THEIR MINDS THEY WERE EASILY CONQUERED.

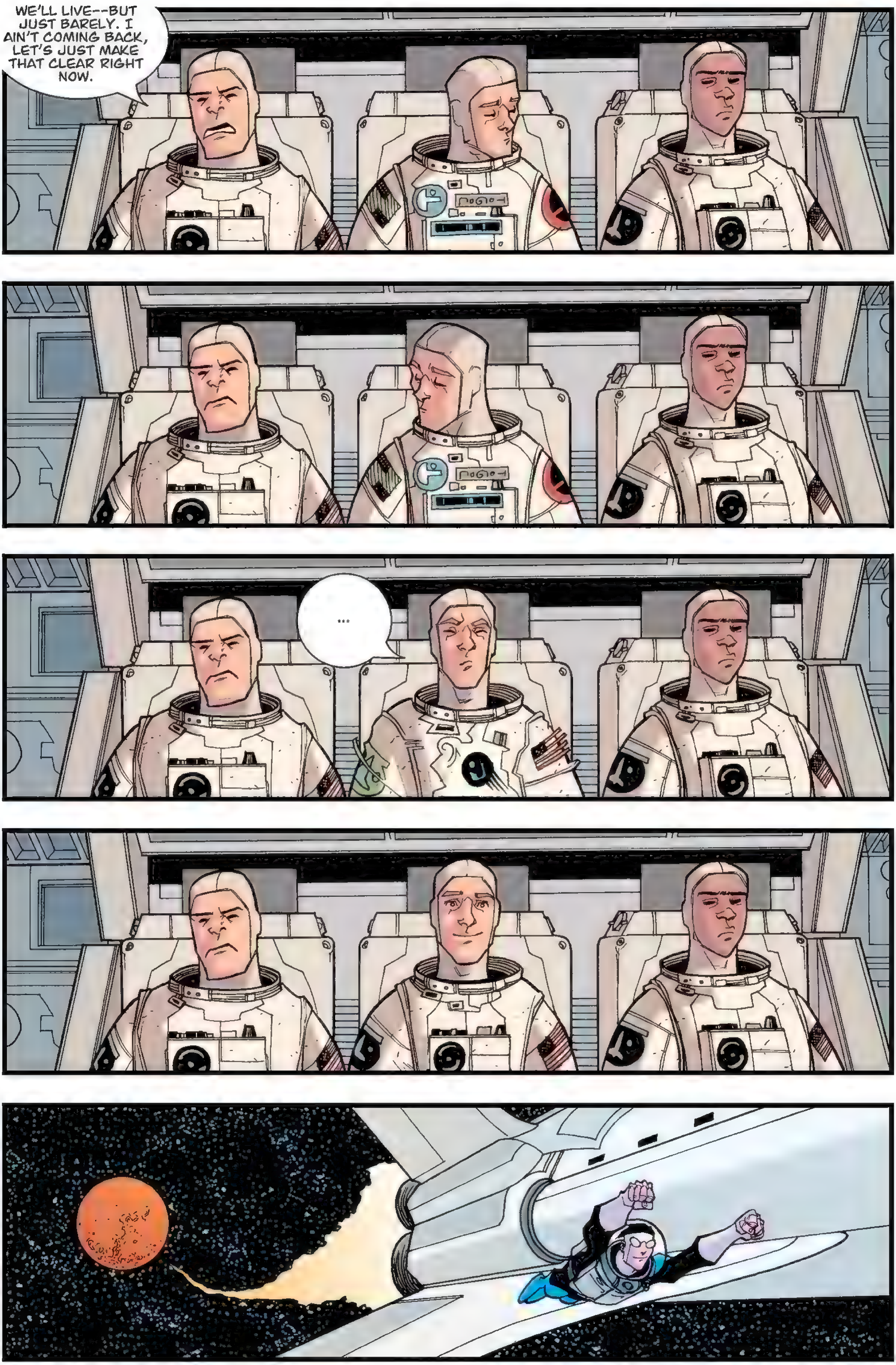

THEY HAVE EXISTED AS A SLAVE RACE FOR CENTURIES--ASSISTING US IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. WE HAVE BEEN MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT IF EVEN ONE SOLID WERE TO BE FOUND ON OUR PLANET-- IT COULD MEAN DOOM FOR US ALL.
WE HAVE BEEN BREEDING SEQUIDS, MAKING THEM STRONGER IN ORDER FOR THEM TO BETTER SERVE US. WERE THEY TO DISCOVER A HOST WHO COULD LINK THEIR MINDS I HAVE NO DOUBT THEY COULD OVERTHROW US ALMOST INSTANTLY.
WHICH IS WHY WE HAVE TAKEN YOUR "AS-TRO-NOTS" INTO CUSTODY, TO PREVENT THEM FROM BEING TAKEN OVER. YOU, THOUGH, ARE SOLID AS WELL--AND RESISTED THE SEQUIDS ATTEMPTS--YOUR SKIN COULD NOT BE PUNCTURED BY THEIR TENDRILS.
HOW IS THIS? HOW IS IT YOU WERE ABLE TO RESIST THEM?

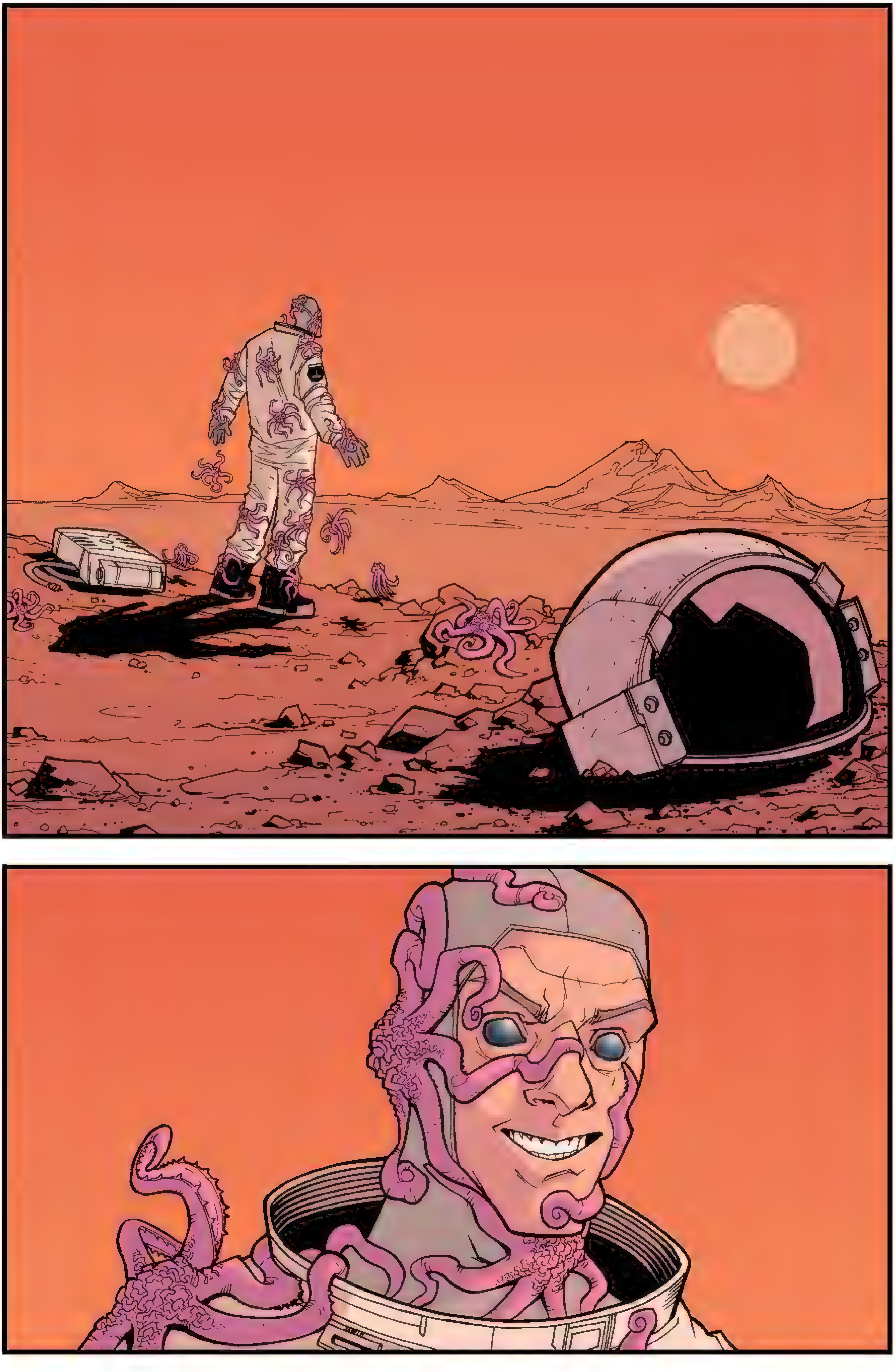

I GUESS I WAS TOO TOUGH FOR THEM. I'M NOT A HUMAN--I'M NOT FROM EARTH--WELL I AM... BUT MY DAD--I'M A VILTRUMITE.
I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A RACE. WHERE DO YOU ORIGINATE?
REALLY FAR AWAY FROM HERE...A PLANET CALLED VILTRUM.
SERIOUSLY THOUGH... I WAS SENT HERE TO PROTECT THOSE ASTRONAUTS. I GOTTA MAKE SURE THEY GET HOME SAFELY OR MY BOSS IS GOING TO BE PISSED. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU--Y'KNOW... GIVE THEM BACK.
IF YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE THEY ARE I'LL MAKE SURE I GET THEM TO THE SURFACE WITHOUT ANY SEQUIDS ATTACHING TO THEM. I JUST NEED TO GET THEM BACK TO OUR SHIP SO WE CAN LEAVE.
I'M AFRAID THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE. THEY ARE SCHEDULED TO BE EXECUTED.
EXECUTED?!

RUN!! RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN!!
I'LL HOLD THEM OFF!!

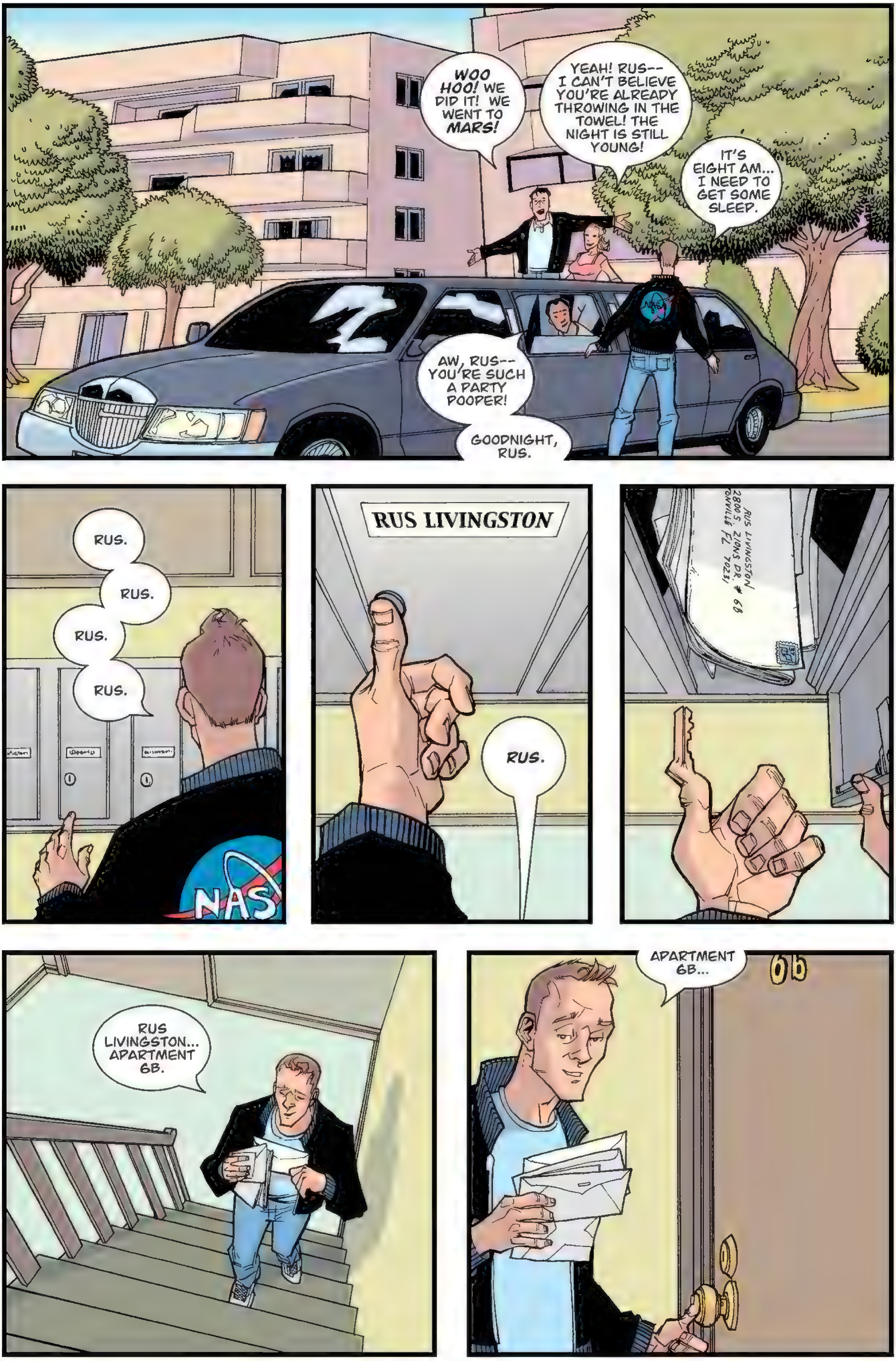

WHOA! WHO IS THAT GUY?!
WHO CARES! HE'S OUR TICKET HOME! JUST KEEP RUNNING!
WILL DO, BOSS!
NASA
JUST A--LITTLE--MORE TIME!

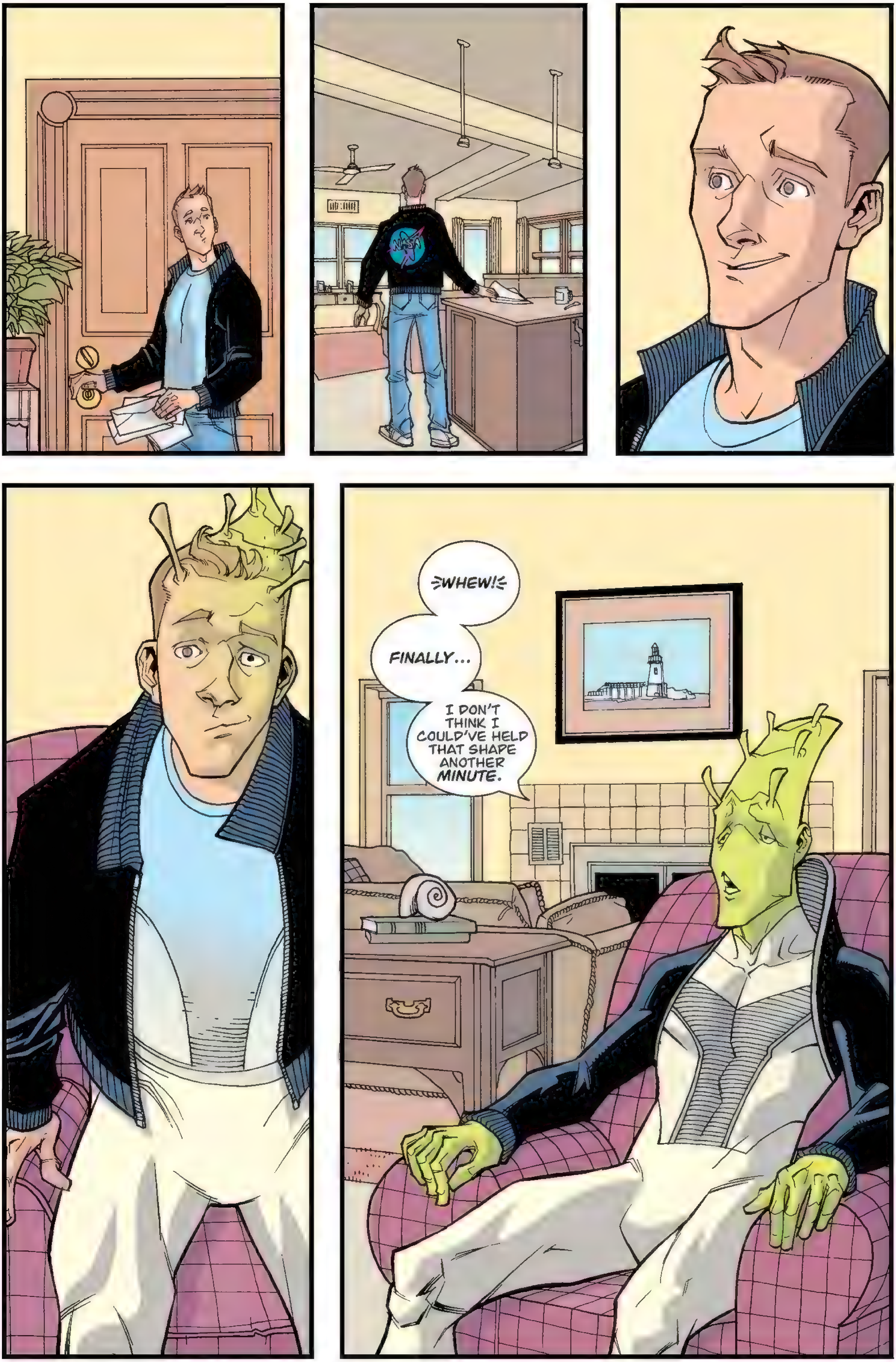

EVERYONE ON BOARD?!
WE'RE ALL HERE! LET'S GET THIS THING IN THE AIR!
I'M ON IT!
I DON'T KNOW WHO THAT MAN IS--BUT WHEN WE GET BACK TO EARTH--I THINK I'M GOING TO MARRY HIM.
HE SURE DID SAVE OUR BACON.
EVERYONE OKAY BACK THERE?

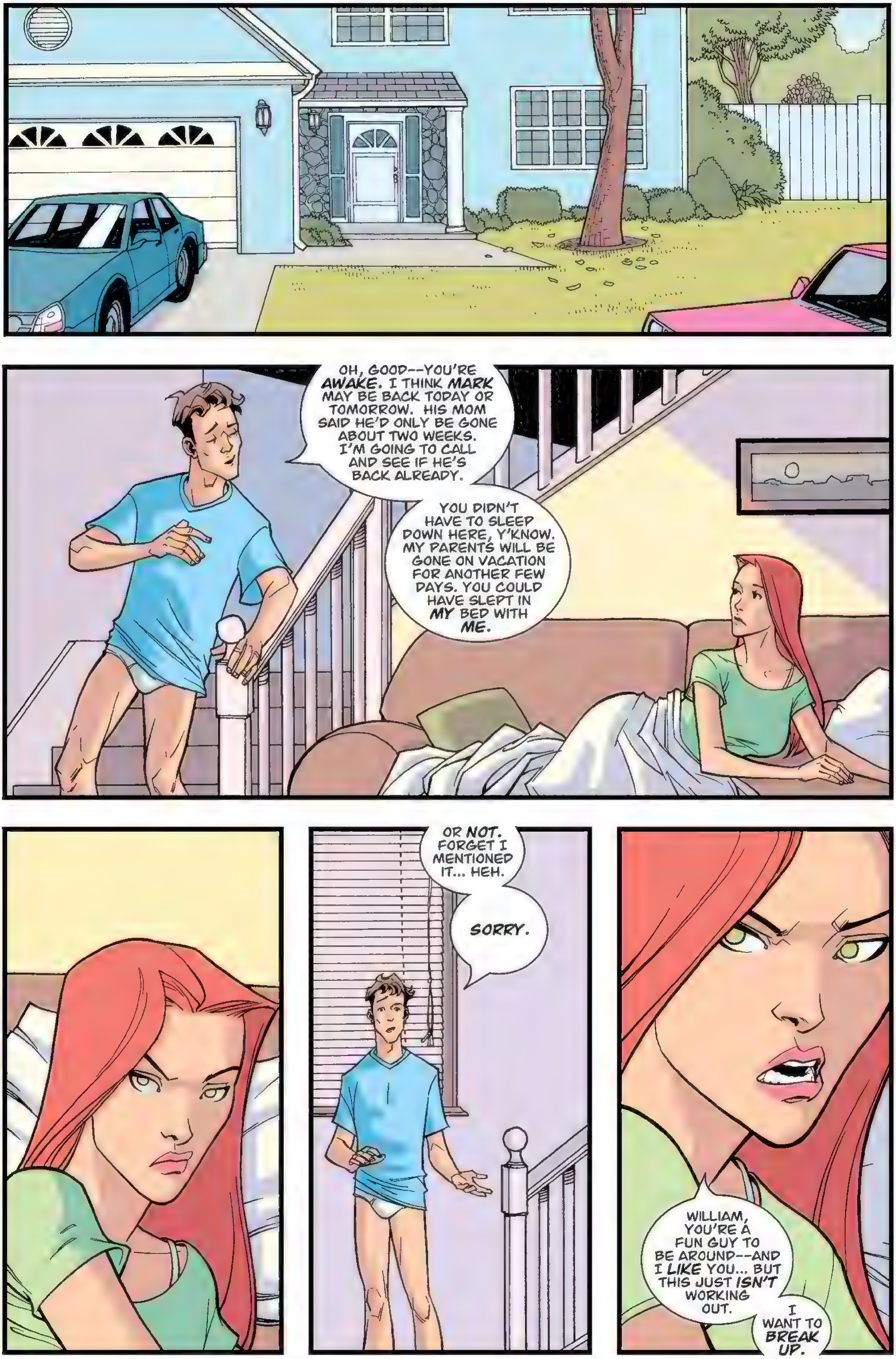

WE'LL LIVE--BUT JUST BARELY. I AIN'T COMING BACK, LET'S JUST MAKE THAT CLEAR RIGHT NOW.
...

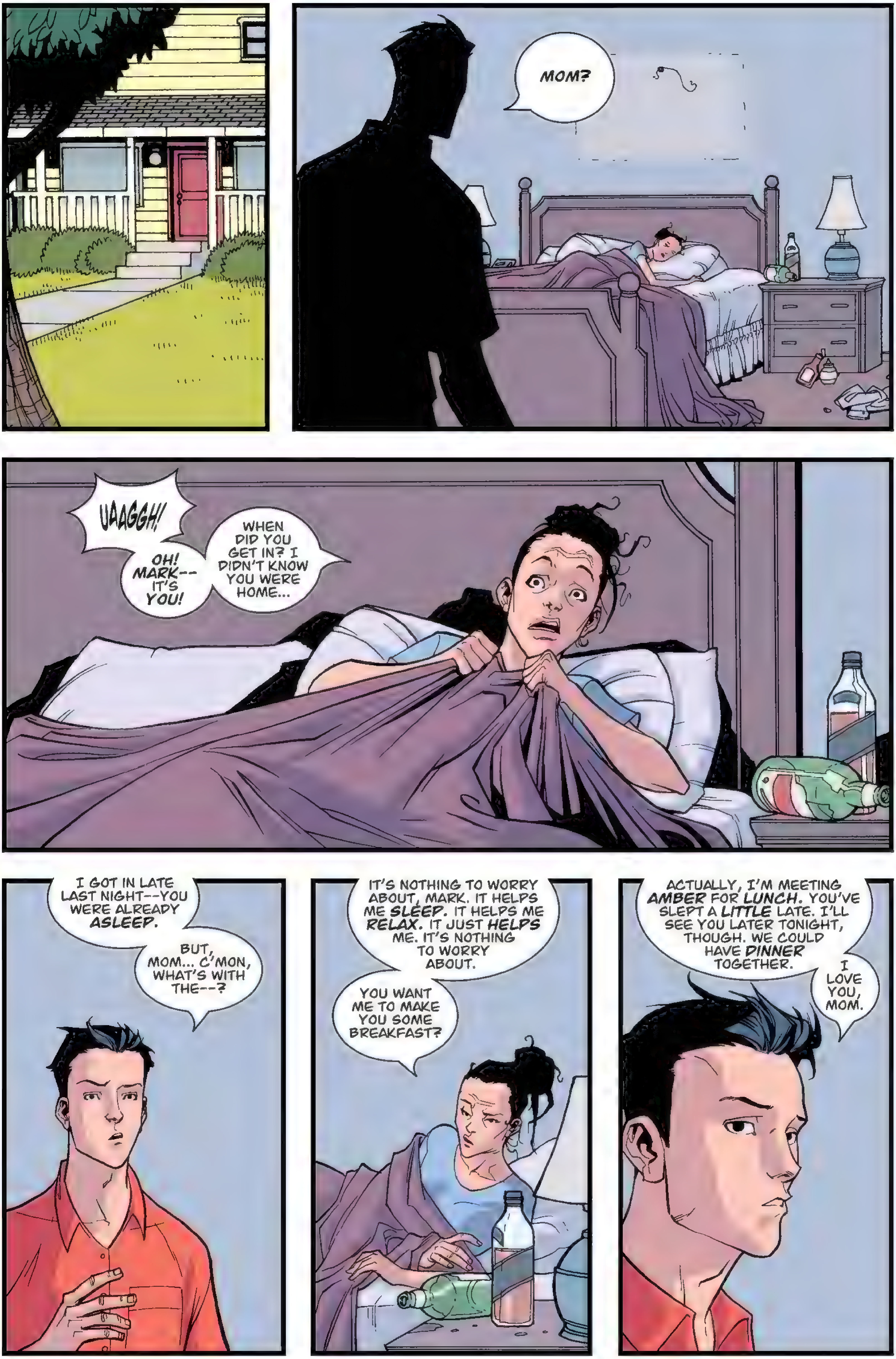


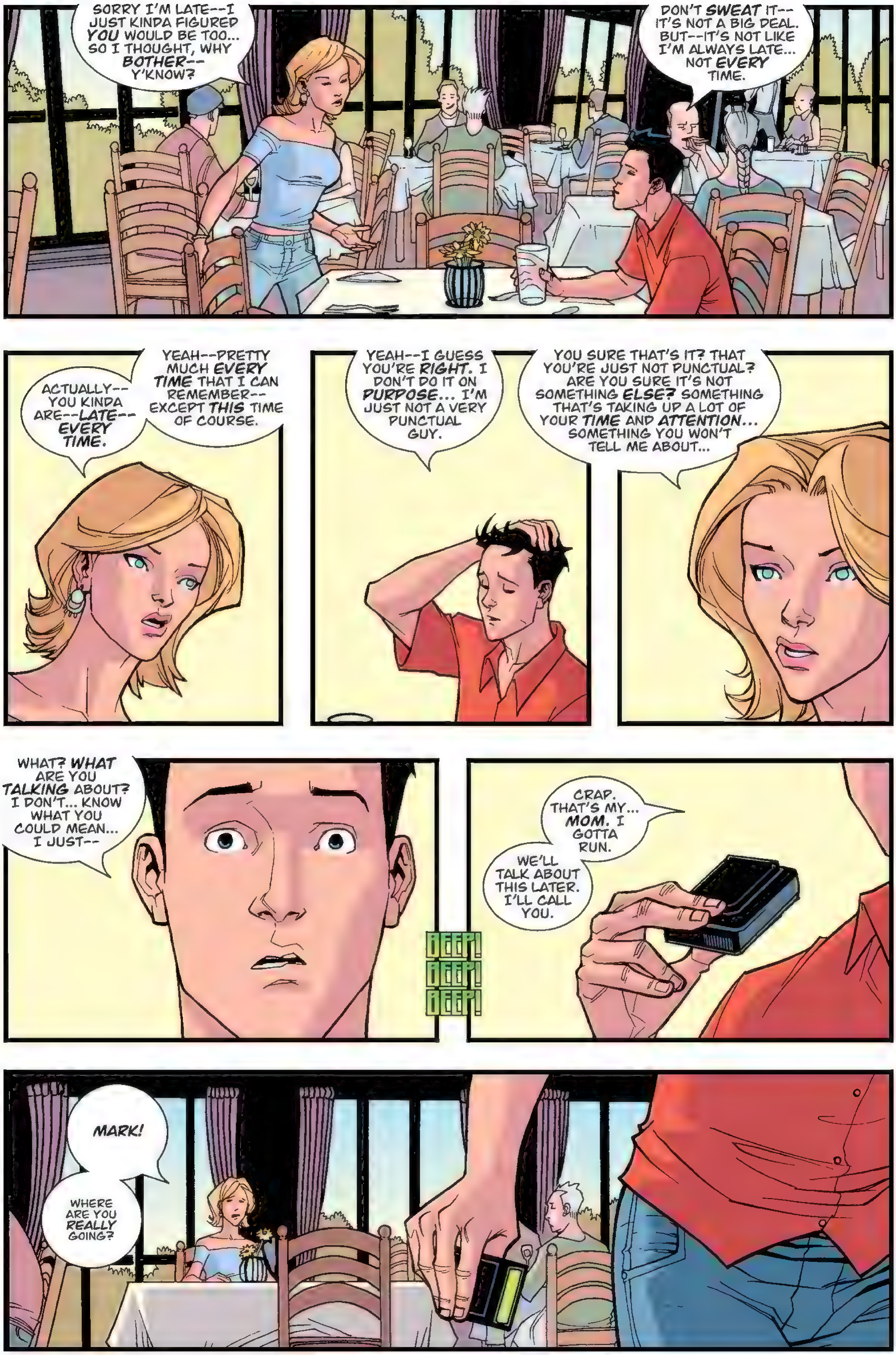
ISSUE NINETEEN

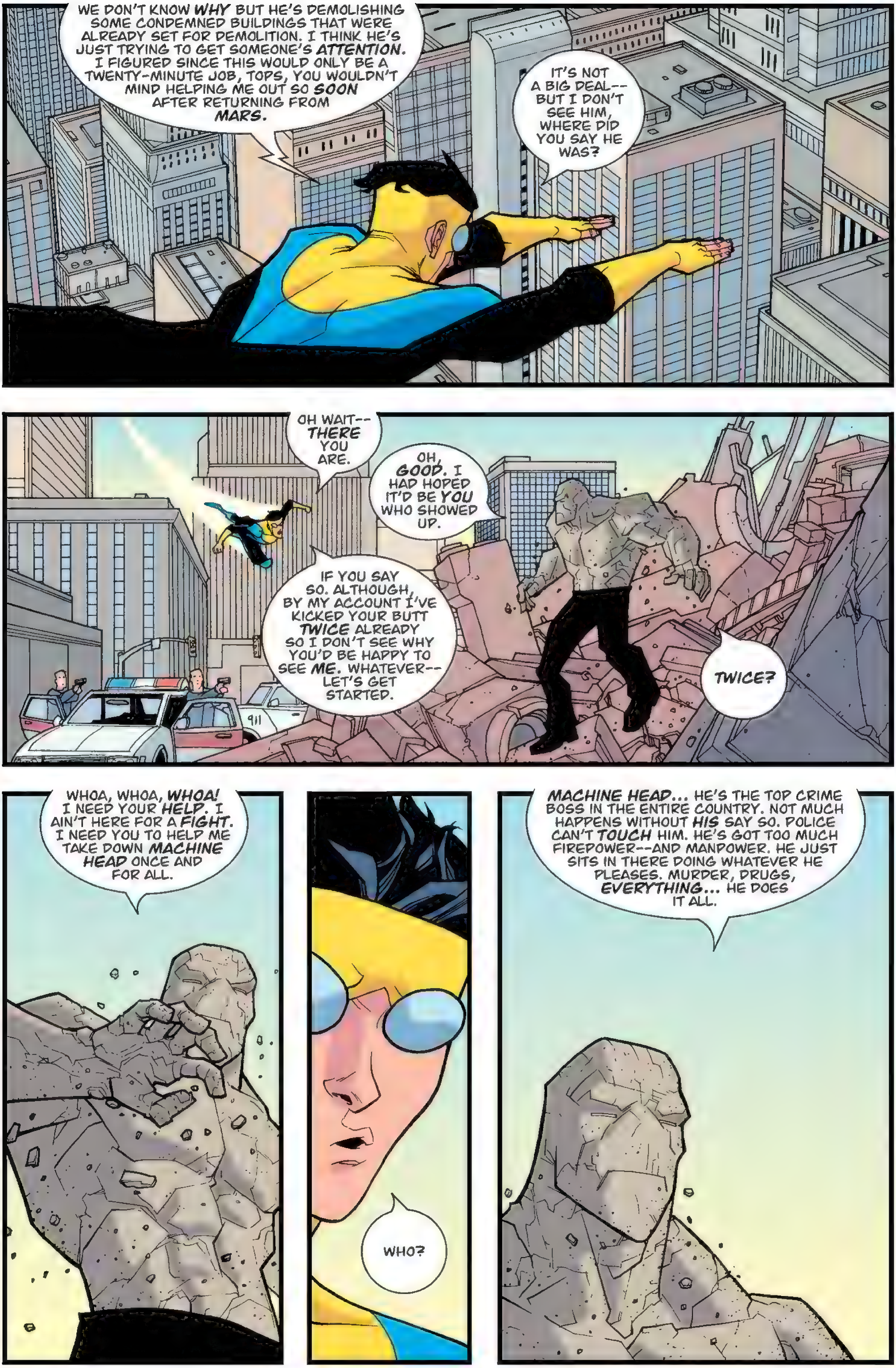

WOO HOO! WE DID IT! WE WENT TO MARS!
YEAH! RUS-- I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ALREADY THROWING IN THE TOWEL! THE NIGHT IS STILL YOUNG!
IT'S EIGHT AM... I NEED TO GET SOME SLEEP.
AW, RUS-- YOU'RE SUCH A PARTY POOPER!
GOODNIGHT, RUS.
RUS.
RUS.
RUS.
RUS.
RUS LIVINGSTON
RUS.
RUS LIVINGSTON
2800 S. ZIONS DR. # 6B
OWVILLE FL 70231
RUS LIVINGSTON... APARTMENT 6B.
APARTMENT 6B...
6B

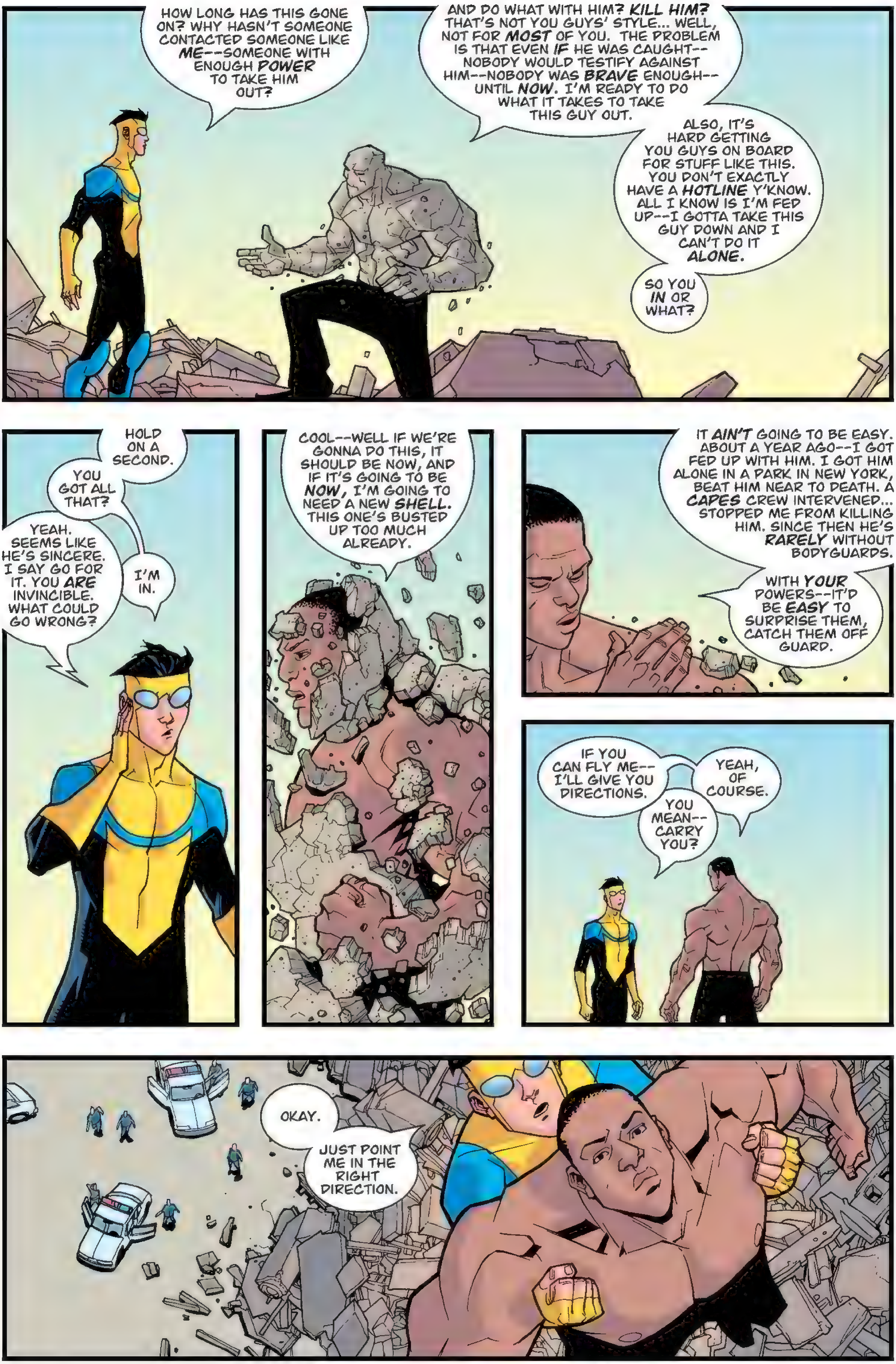

NASA
WHEW!
FINALLY...
I DON'T THINK I COULD'VE HELD THAT SHAPE ANOTHER *MINUTE*.

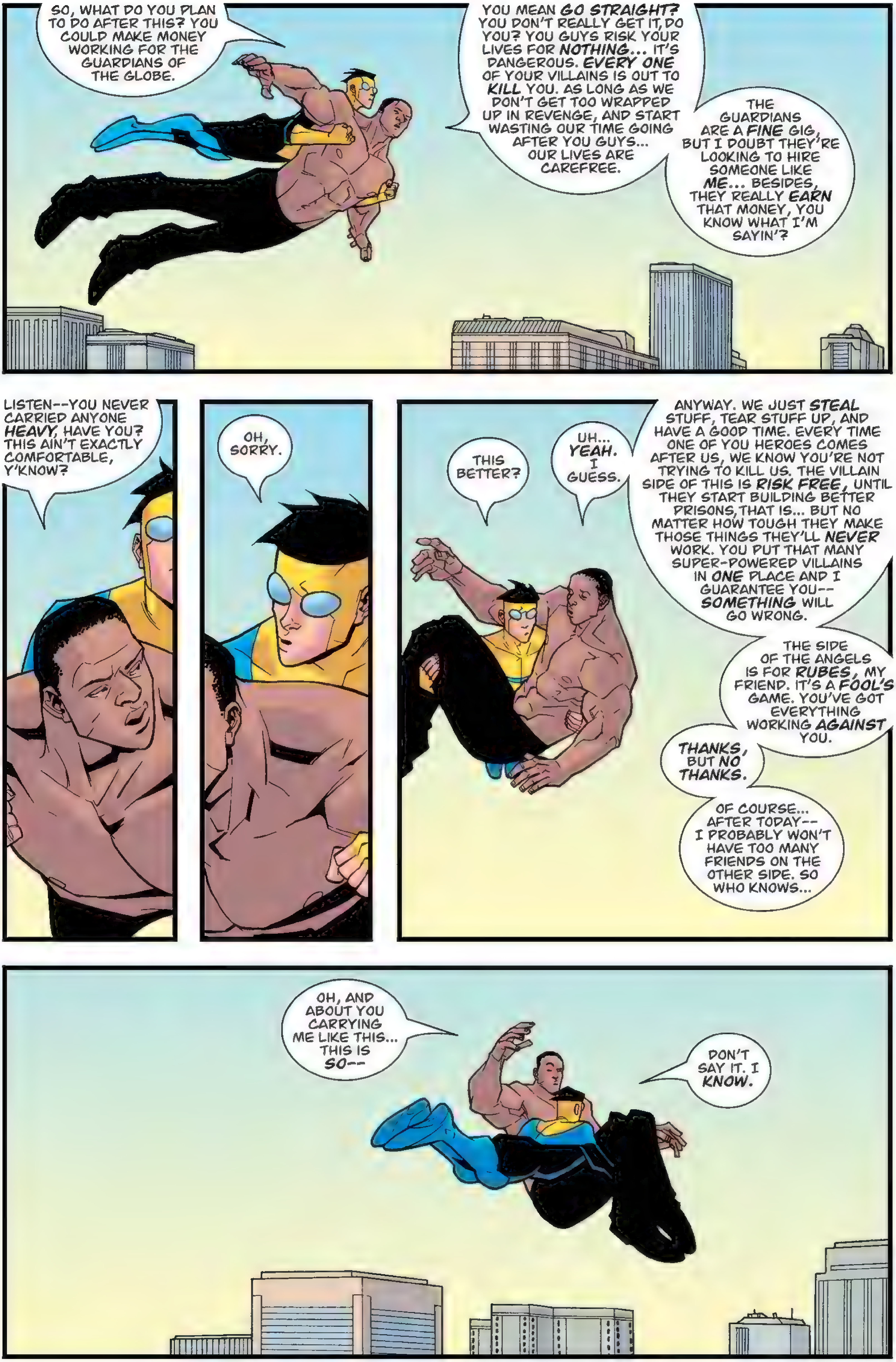

OH, GOOD--YOU'RE AWAKE. I THINK MARK MAY BE BACK TODAY OR TOMORROW. HIS MOM SAID HE'D ONLY BE GONE ABOUT TWO WEEKS. I'M GOING TO CALL AND SEE IF HE'S BACK ALREADY.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SLEEP DOWN HERE, Y'KNOW. MY PARENTS WILL BE GONE ON VACATION FOR ANOTHER FEW DAYS. YOU COULD HAVE SLEPT IN MY BED WITH ME.
OR NOT. FORGET I MENTIONED IT... HEH.
SORRY.
WILLIAM, YOU'RE A FUN GUY TO BE AROUND--AND I LIKE YOU... BUT THIS JUST ISN'T WORKING OUT.
I WANT TO BREAK UP.

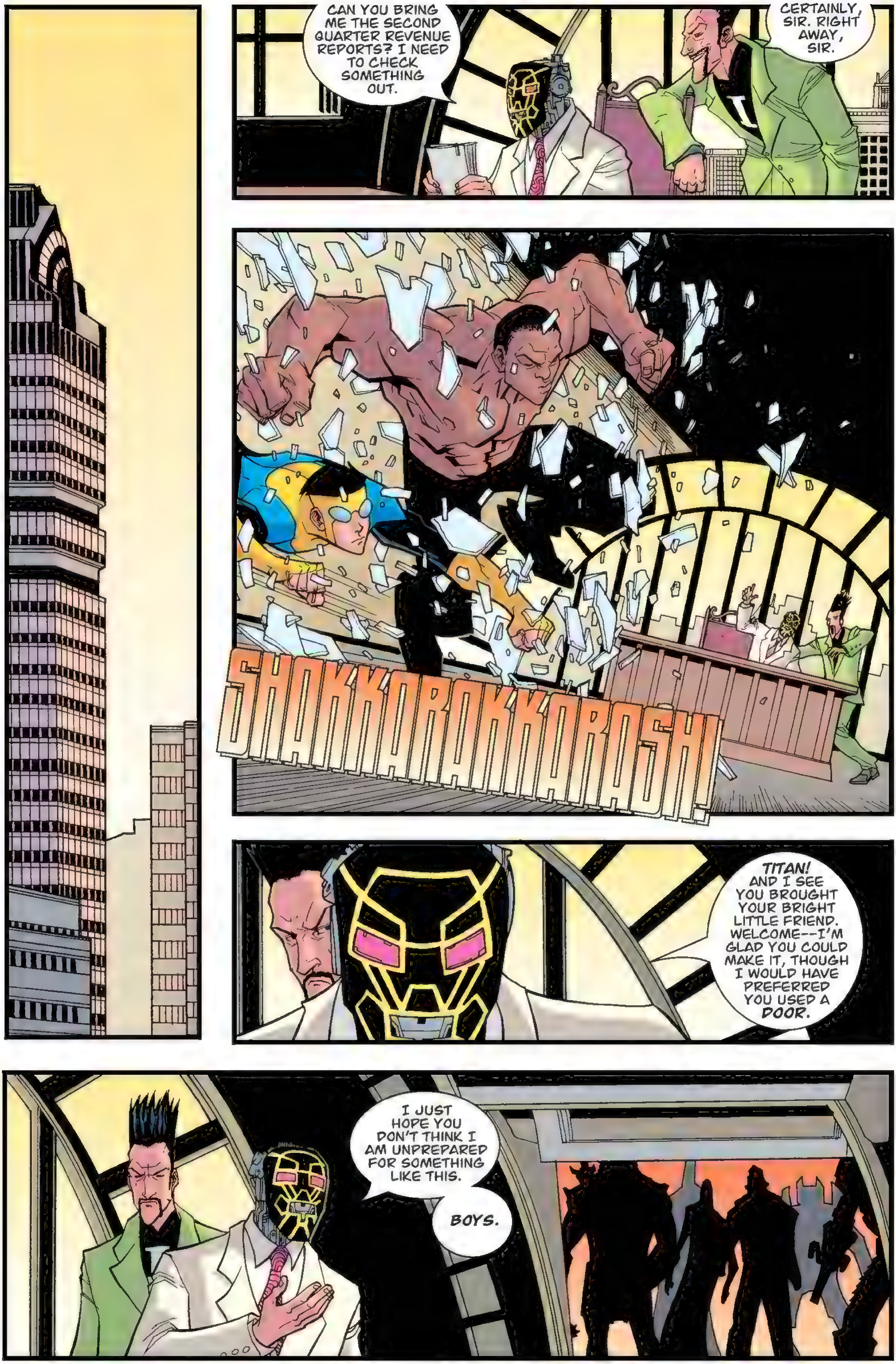

MOM?
UAAGGH!
OH! MARK-- IT'S YOU!
WHEN DID YOU GET IN? I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HOME...
I GOT IN LATE LAST NIGHT--YOU WERE ALREADY ASLEEP.
BUT, MOM... C'MON, WHAT'S WITH THE--?
IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, MARK. IT HELPS ME SLEEP. IT HELPS ME RELAX. IT JUST HELPS ME. IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
YOU WANT ME TO MAKE YOU SOME BREAKFAST?
ACTUALLY, I'M MEETING AMBER FOR LUNCH. YOU'VE SLEPT A LITTLE LATE. I'LL SEE YOU LATER TONIGHT, THOUGH. WE COULD HAVE DINNER TOGETHER.
I LOVE YOU, MOM.

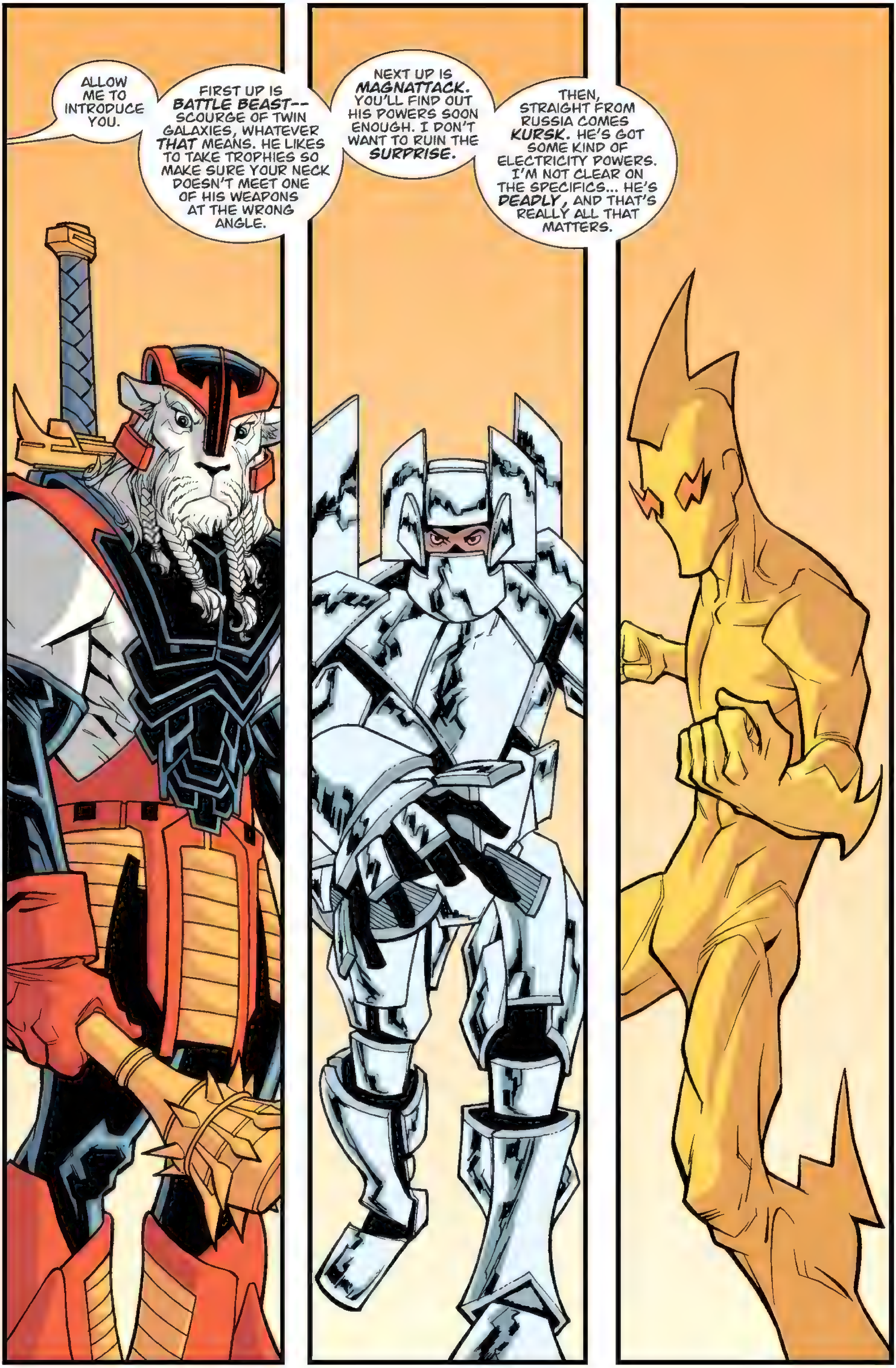

SORRY I'M LATE--I JUST KINDA FIGURED *YOU* WOULD BE TOO... SO I THOUGHT, WHY *BOTHER*--Y'KNOW?
DON'T *SWEAT* IT--IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL. BUT--IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ALWAYS LATE... NOT *EVERY* TIME.
ACTUALLY--YOU KINDA ARE--*LATE*--*EVERY TIME.*
YEAH--PRETTY MUCH *EVERY TIME* THAT I CAN REMEMBER--EXCEPT *THIS* TIME OF COURSE.
YEAH--I GUESS YOU'RE *RIGHT*. I DON'T DO IT ON *PURPOSE*... I'M JUST NOT A VERY PUNCTUAL GUY.
YOU SURE THAT'S IT? THAT YOU'RE JUST NOT PUNCTUAL? ARE YOU SURE IT'S NOT SOMETHING *ELSE?* SOMETHING THAT'S TAKING UP A LOT OF YOUR *TIME* AND *ATTENTION*... SOMETHING YOU WON'T TELL ME ABOUT...
WHAT? *WHAT* ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT? I DON'T... KNOW WHAT YOU COULD MEAN... I JUST--
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
CRAP. THAT'S MY... *MOM*. I GOTTA RUN.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER. I'LL CALL YOU.
MARK!
WHERE ARE YOU *REALLY* GOING?

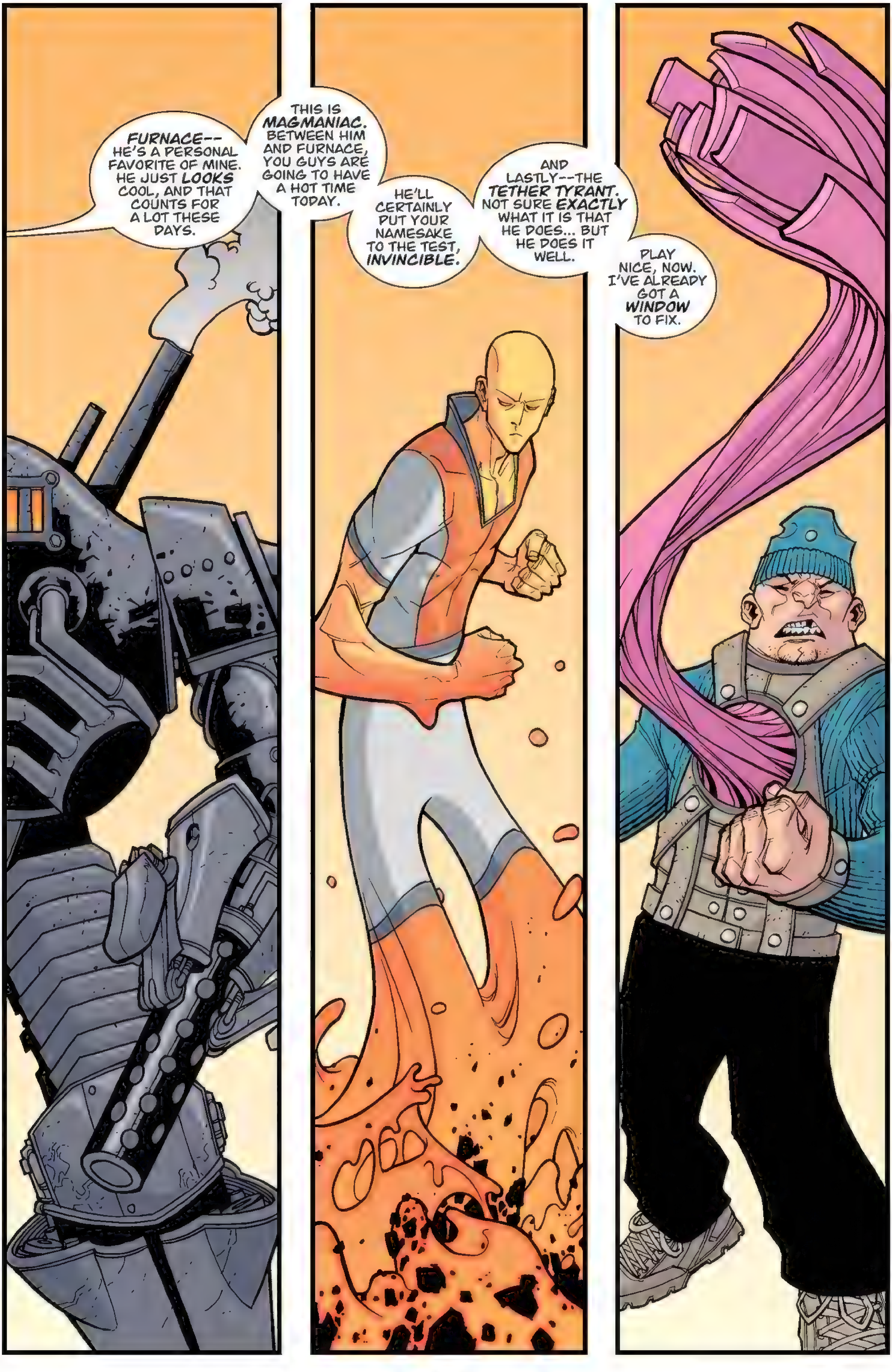

WE DON'T KNOW WHY BUT HE'S DEMOLISHING SOME CONDEMNED BUILDINGS THAT WERE ALREADY SET FOR DEMOLITION. I THINK HE'S JUST TRYING TO GET SOMEONE'S ATTENTION. I FIGURED SINCE THIS WOULD ONLY BE A TWENTY-MINUTE JOB, TOPS, YOU WOULDN'T MIND HELPING ME OUT SO SOON AFTER RETURNING FROM MARS.
IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL-- BUT I DON'T SEE HIM, WHERE DID YOU SAY HE WAS?
OH WAIT-- THERE YOU ARE.
OH, GOOD. I HAD HOPED IT'D BE YOU WHO SHOWED UP.
IF YOU SAY SO. ALTHOUGH, BY MY ACCOUNT I'VE KICKED YOUR BUTT TWICE ALREADY SO I DON'T SEE WHY YOU'D BE HAPPY TO SEE ME. WHATEVER-- LET'S GET STARTED.
TWICE?
911
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! I NEED YOUR HELP. I AIN'T HERE FOR A FIGHT. I NEED YOU TO HELP ME TAKE DOWN MACHINE HEAD ONCE AND FOR ALL.
WHO?
MACHINE HEAD... HE'S THE TOP CRIME BOSS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. NOT MUCH HAPPENS WITHOUT HIS SAY SO. POLICE CAN'T TOUCH HIM. HE'S GOT TOO MUCH FIREPOWER--AND MANPOWER. HE JUST SITS IN THERE DOING WHATEVER HE PLEASES. MURDER, DRUGS, EVERYTHING... HE DOES IT ALL.

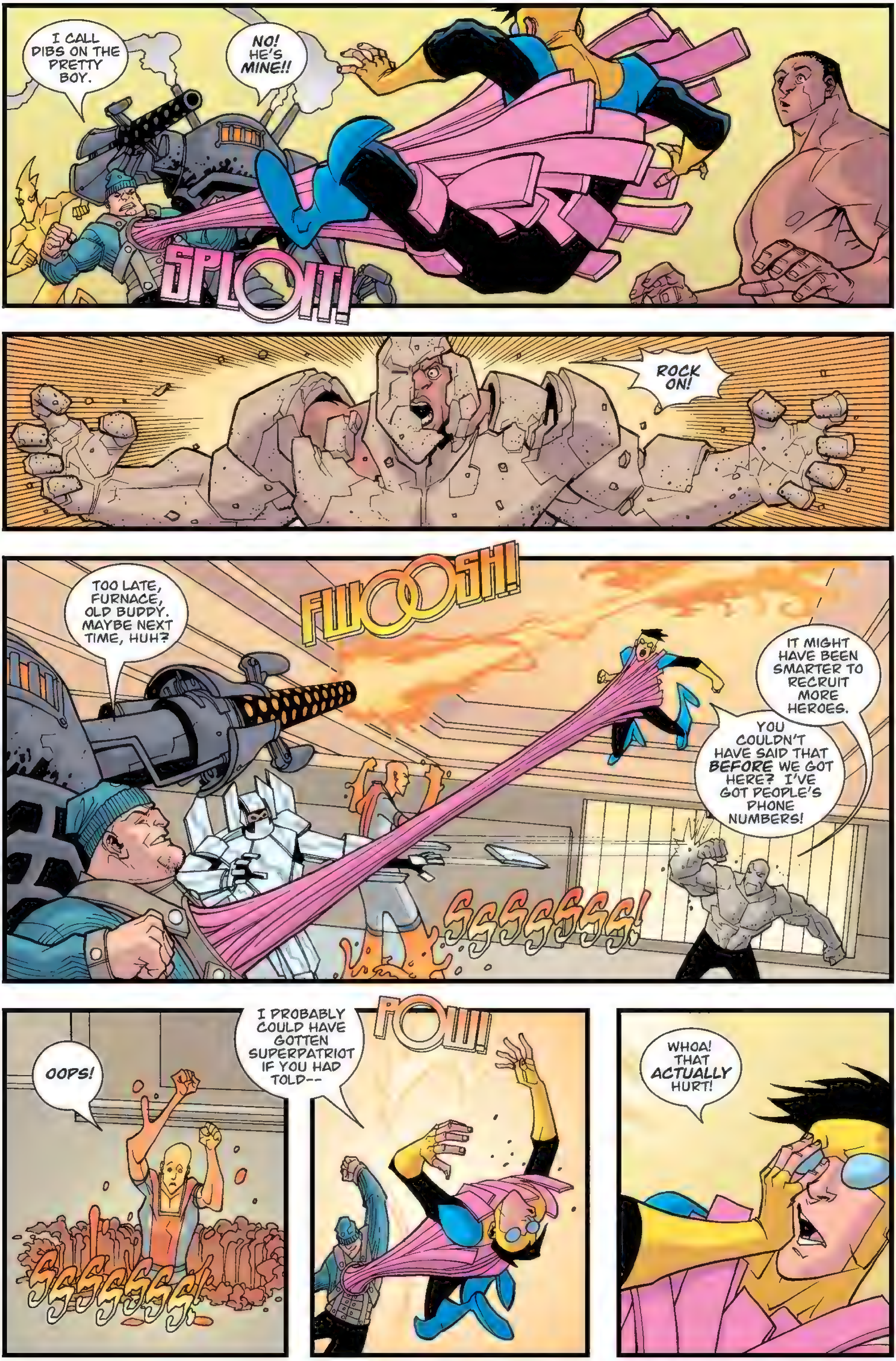

HOW LONG HAS THIS GONE ON? WHY HASN'T SOMEONE CONTACTED SOMEONE LIKE ME--SOMEONE WITH ENOUGH POWER TO TAKE HIM OUT?
AND DO WHAT WITH HIM? KILL HIM? THAT'S NOT YOU GUYS' STYLE... WELL, NOT FOR MOST OF YOU. THE PROBLEM IS THAT EVEN IF HE WAS CAUGHT--NOBODY WOULD TESTIFY AGAINST HIM--NOBODY WAS BRAVE ENOUGH--UNTIL NOW. I'M READY TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO TAKE THIS GUY OUT.
ALSO, IT'S HARD GETTING YOU GUYS ON BOARD FOR STUFF LIKE THIS. YOU DON'T EXACTLY HAVE A HOTLINE Y'KNOW. ALL I KNOW IS I'M FED UP--I GOTTA TAKE THIS GUY DOWN AND I CAN'T DO IT ALONE.
SO YOU IN OR WHAT?
HOLD ON A SECOND.
YOU GOT ALL THAT?
YEAH. SEEMS LIKE HE'S SINCERE. I SAY GO FOR IT. YOU ARE INVINCIBLE. WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
I'M IN.
COOL--WELL IF WE'RE GONNA DO THIS, IT SHOULD BE NOW, AND IF IT'S GOING TO BE NOW, I'M GOING TO NEED A NEW SHELL. THIS ONE'S BUSTED UP TOO MUCH ALREADY.
IT AIN'T GOING TO BE EASY. ABOUT A YEAR AGO--I GOT FED UP WITH HIM. I GOT HIM ALONE IN A PARK IN NEW YORK, BEAT HIM NEAR TO DEATH. A CAPES CREW INTERVENED... STOPPED ME FROM KILLING HIM. SINCE THEN HE'S RARELY WITHOUT BODYGUARDS.
WITH YOUR POWERS--IT'D BE EASY TO SURPRISE THEM, CATCH THEM OFF GUARD.
IF YOU CAN FLY ME--I'LL GIVE YOU DIRECTIONS.
YOU MEAN--CARRY YOU?
YEAH, OF COURSE.
OKAY.
JUST POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

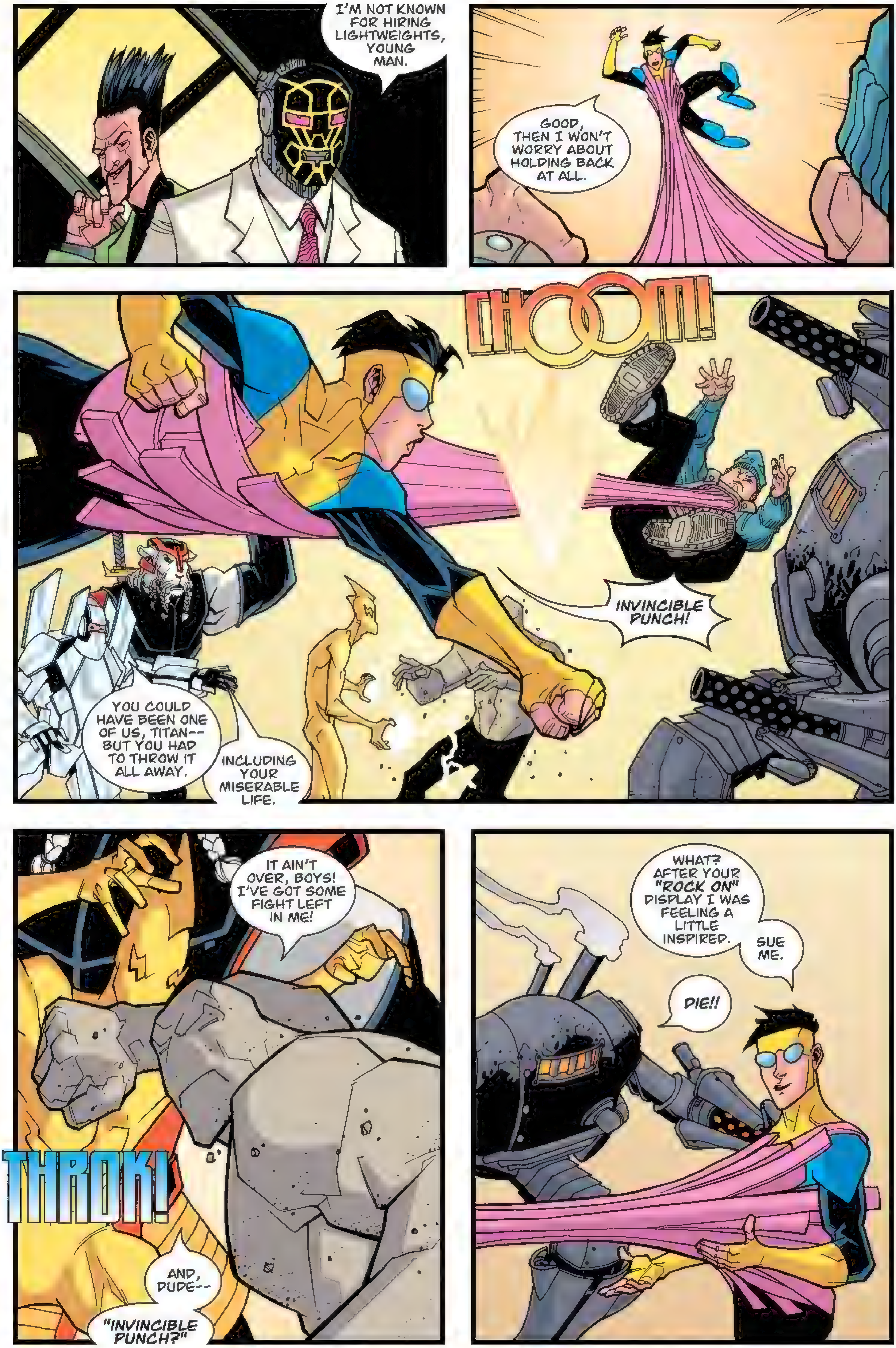

SO, WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO AFTER THIS? YOU COULD MAKE MONEY WORKING FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
YOU MEAN *GO STRAIGHT?* YOU DON'T REALLY GET IT, DO YOU? YOU GUYS RISK YOUR LIVES FOR *NOTHING...* IT'S DANGEROUS. *EVERY ONE* OF YOUR VILLAINS IS OUT TO *KILL* YOU. AS LONG AS WE DON'T GET TOO WRAPPED UP IN REVENGE, AND START WASTING OUR TIME GOING AFTER YOU GUYS... OUR LIVES ARE CAREFREE.
THE GUARDIANS ARE A *FINE* GIG, BUT I DOUBT THEY'RE LOOKING TO HIRE SOMEONE LIKE *ME...* BESIDES, THEY REALLY *EARN* THAT MONEY, YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?
LISTEN--YOU NEVER CARRIED ANYONE *HEAVY,* HAVE YOU? THIS AIN'T EXACTLY COMFORTABLE, Y'KNOW?
OH, SORRY.
THIS BETTER?
UH... *YEAH.* I GUESS.
ANYWAY. WE JUST *STEAL* STUFF, TEAR STUFF UP, AND HAVE A GOOD TIME. EVERY TIME ONE OF YOU HEROES COMES AFTER US, WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO KILL US. THE VILLAIN SIDE OF THIS IS *RISK FREE,* UNTIL THEY START BUILDING BETTER PRISONS, THAT IS... BUT NO MATTER HOW TOUGH THEY MAKE THOSE THINGS THEY'LL *NEVER* WORK. YOU PUT THAT MANY SUPER-POWERED VILLAINS IN *ONE* PLACE AND I GUARANTEE YOU-- *SOMETHING* WILL GO WRONG.
THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS IS FOR *RUBES,* MY FRIEND. IT'S A *FOOL'S* GAME. YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING WORKING *AGAINST* YOU.
THANKS, BUT *NO THANKS.*
OF COURSE... AFTER TODAY-- I PROBABLY WON'T HAVE TOO MANY FRIENDS ON THE OTHER SIDE. SO WHO KNOWS...
OH, AND ABOUT YOU CARRYING ME LIKE THIS... THIS IS *SO--*
DON'T SAY IT. I *KNOW.*

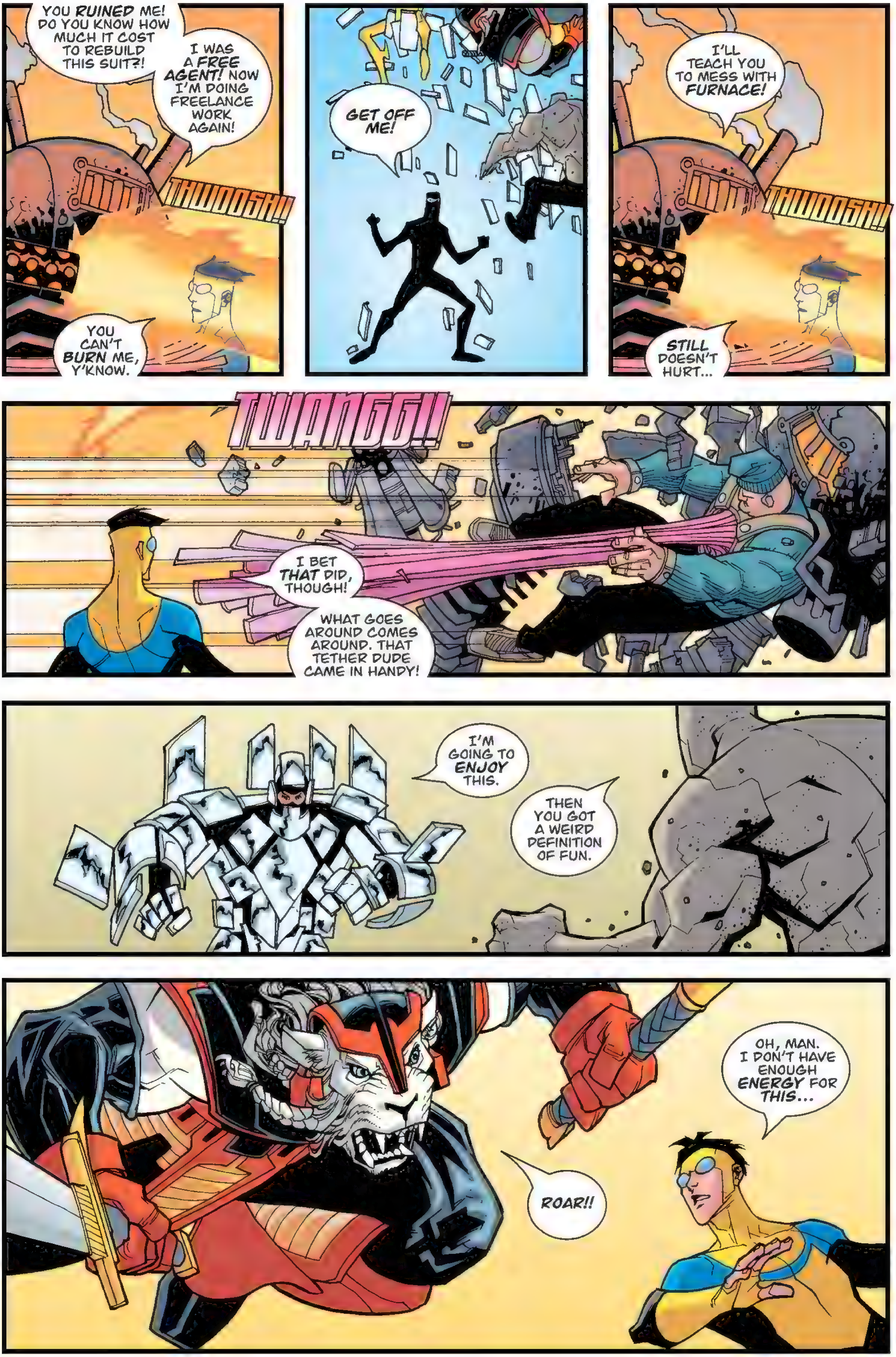

CAN YOU BRING ME THE SECOND QUARTER REVENUE REPORTS? I NEED TO CHECK SOMETHING OUT.
CERTAINLY, SIR. RIGHT AWAY, SIR.
SHAKKAROKKAROSH!
TITAN! AND I SEE YOU BROUGHT YOUR BRIGHT LITTLE FRIEND. WELCOME--I'M GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT, THOUGH I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED YOU USED A *DOOR.*
I JUST HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I AM UNPREPARED FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
BOYS.

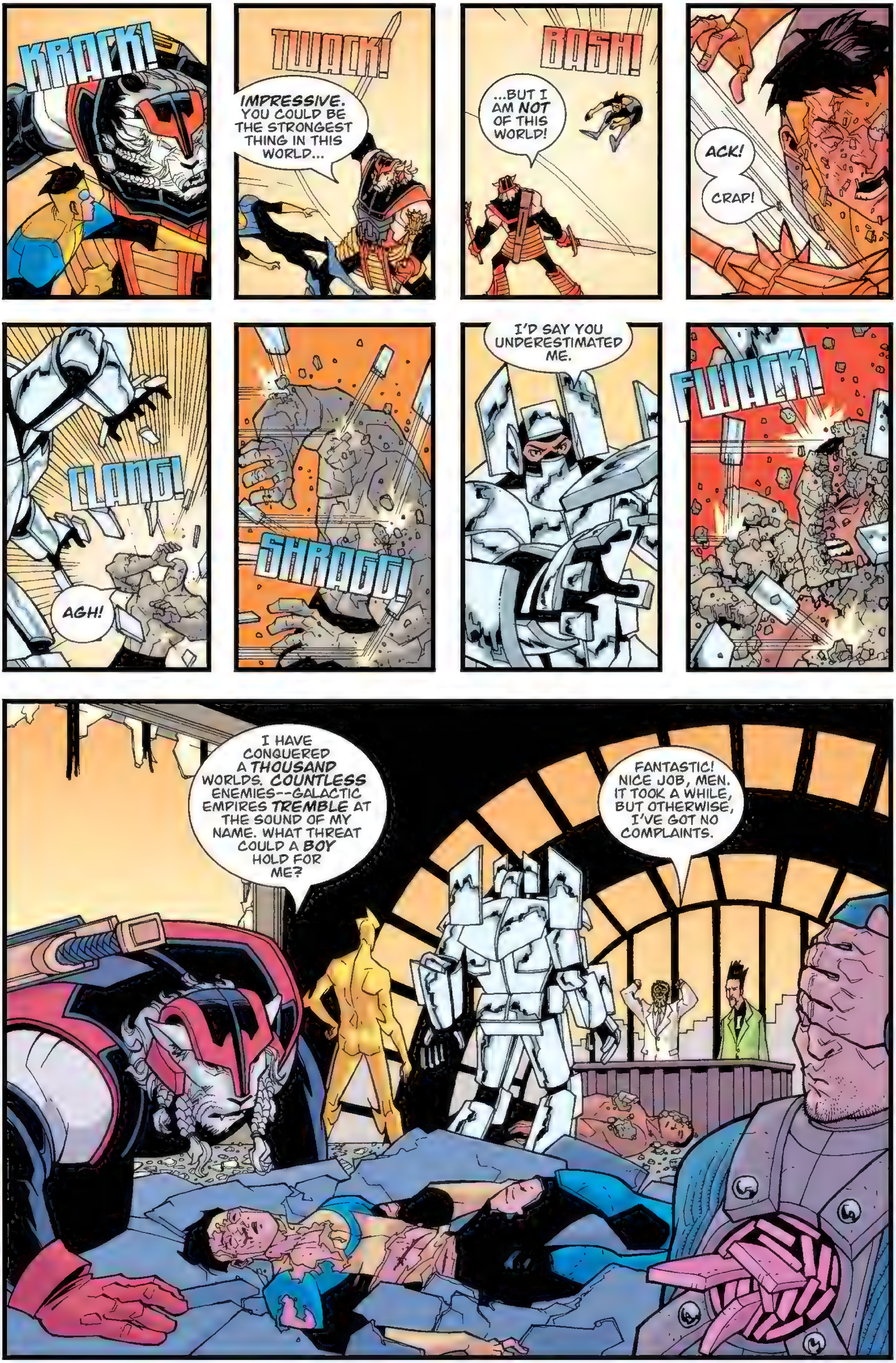

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU.
FIRST UP IS **BATTLE BEAST**-- SCOURGE OF TWIN GALAXIES, WHATEVER **THAT** MEANS. HE LIKES TO TAKE TROPHIES SO MAKE SURE YOUR NECK DOESN'T MEET ONE OF HIS WEAPONS AT THE WRONG ANGLE.
NEXT UP IS **MAGNATTACK.** YOU'LL FIND OUT HIS POWERS SOON ENOUGH. I DON'T WANT TO RUIN THE **SURPRISE.**
THEN, STRAIGHT FROM RUSSIA COMES **KURSK.** HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF ELECTRICITY POWERS. I'M NOT CLEAR ON THE SPECIFICS... HE'S **DEADLY**, AND THAT'S REALLY ALL THAT MATTERS.

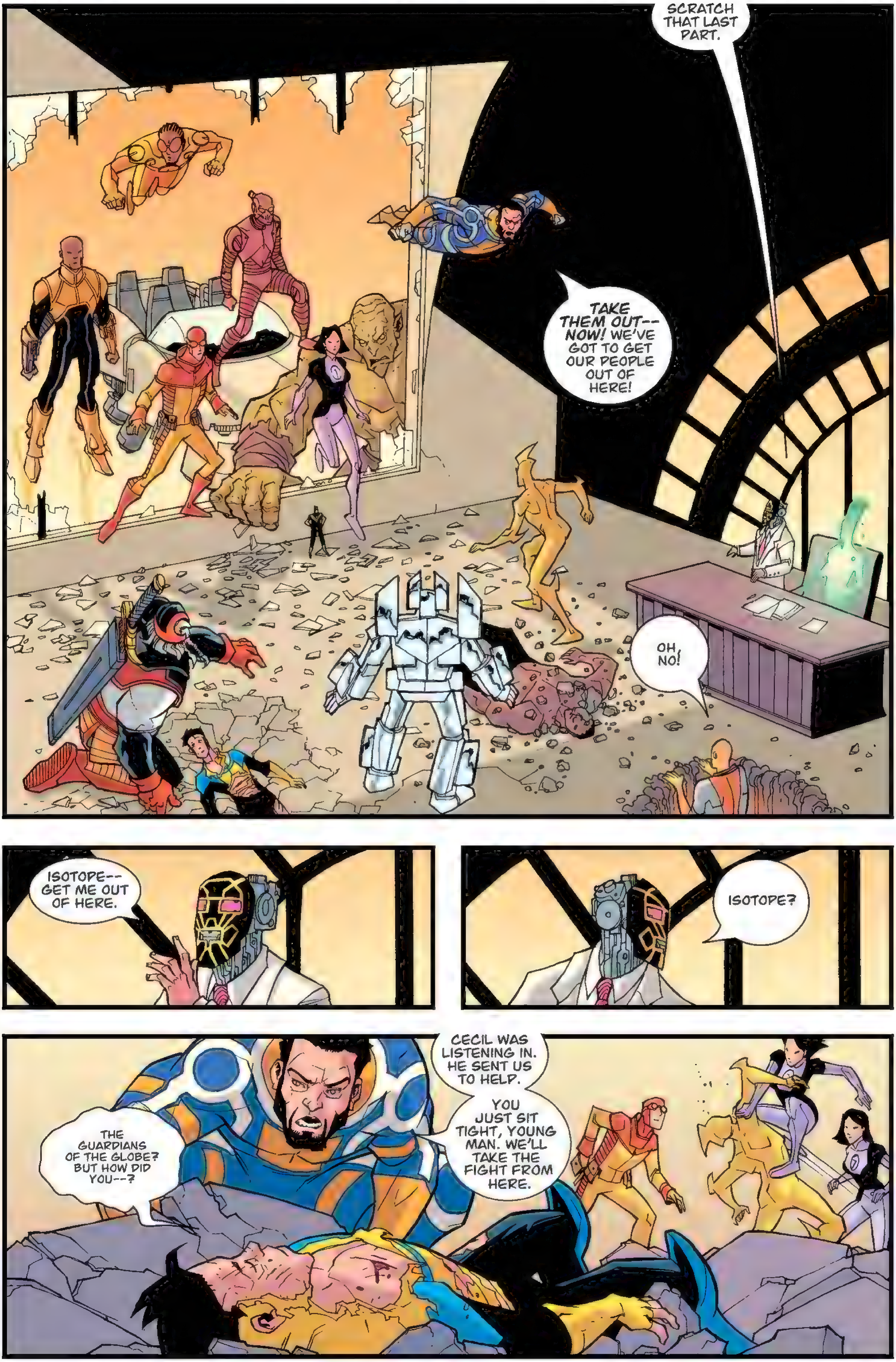

FURNACE-- HE'S A PERSONAL FAVORITE OF MINE. HE JUST **LOOKS** COOL, AND THAT COUNTS FOR A LOT THESE DAYS.
THIS IS **MAGMANIAC.** BETWEEN HIM AND FURNACE, YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO HAVE A HOT TIME TODAY.
HE'LL CERTAINLY PUT YOUR NAMESAKE TO THE TEST, **INVINCIBLE.**
AND LASTLY--THE **TETHER TYRANT.** NOT SURE **EXACTLY** WHAT IT IS THAT HE DOES... BUT HE DOES IT WELL.
PLAY NICE, NOW. I'VE ALREADY GOT A **WINDOW** TO FIX.

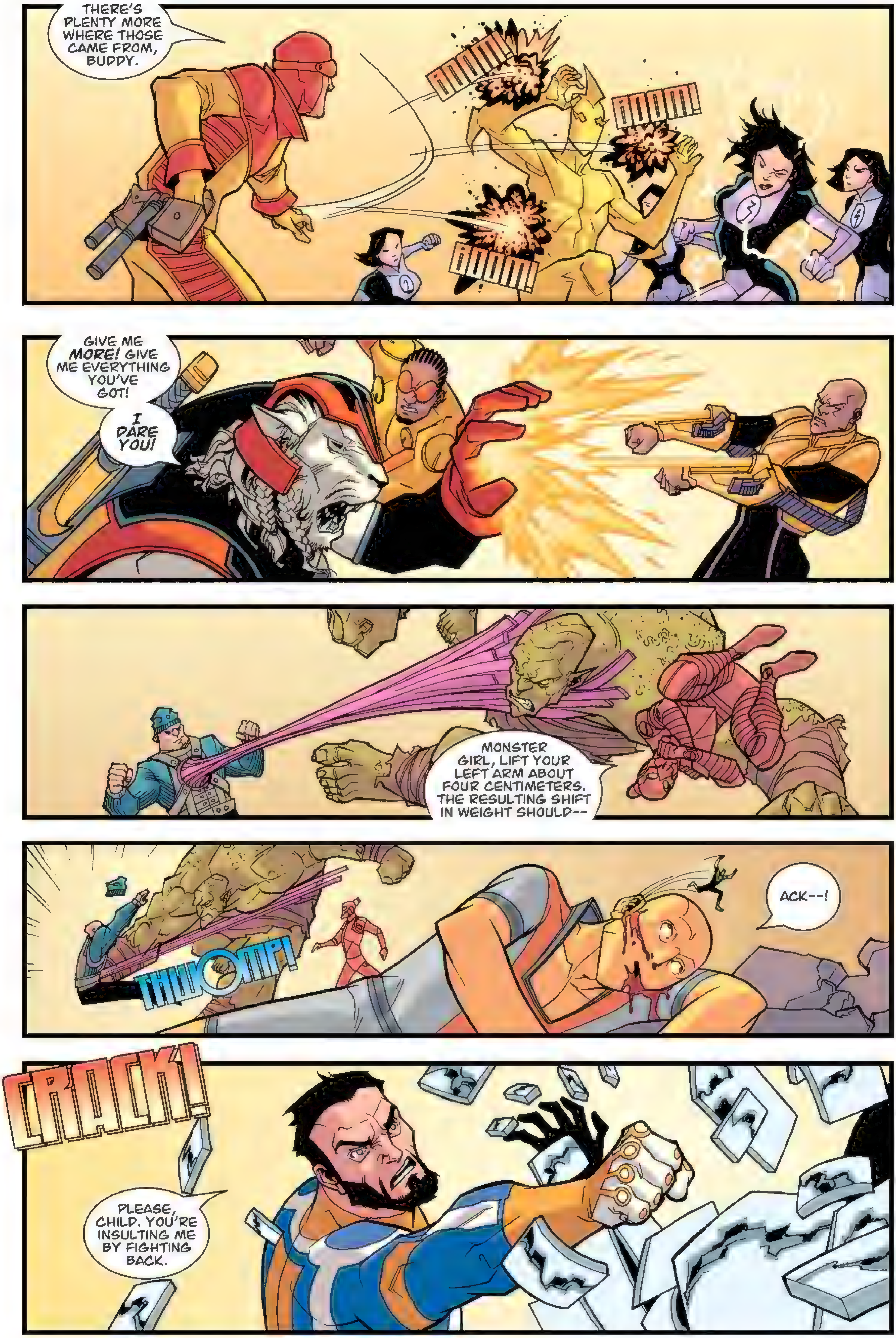

I CALL DIBS ON THE PRETTY BOY.
NO! HE'S MINE!!
SPLOIT!
ROCK ON!
TOO LATE, FURNACE, OLD BUDDY. MAYBE NEXT TIME, HUH?
FWOOSH!
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SMARTER TO RECRUIT MORE HEROES.
YOU COULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT BEFORE WE GOT HERE? I'VE GOT PEOPLE'S PHONE NUMBERS!
SSSSSSS!
OOPS!
SSSSSSS!
I PROBABLY COULD HAVE GOTTEN SUPERPATRIOT IF YOU HAD TOLD--
POW!
WHOA! THAT ACTUALLY HURT!

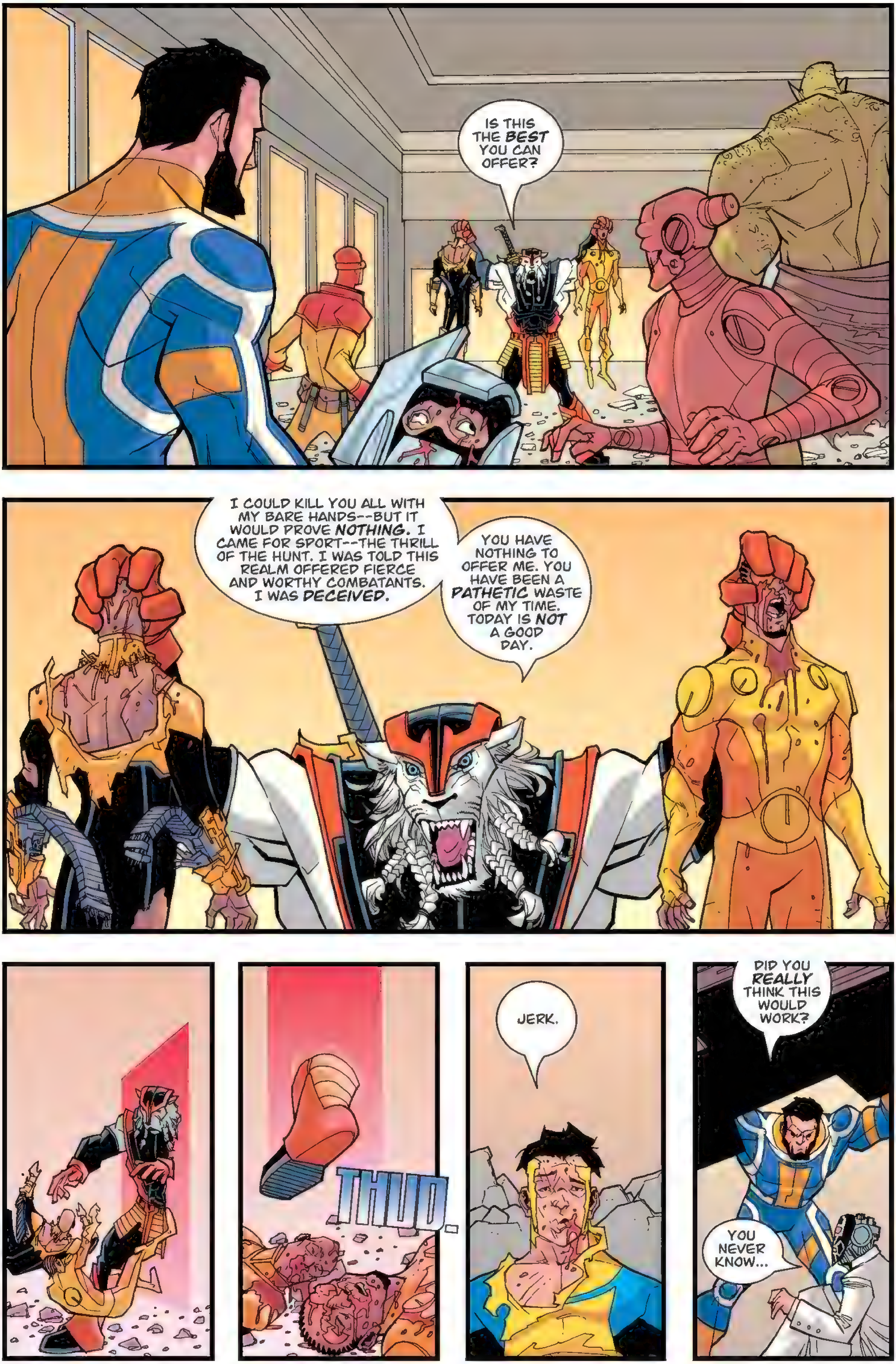

I'M NOT KNOWN FOR HIRING LIGHTWEIGHTS, YOUNG MAN.
GOOD, THEN I WON'T WORRY ABOUT HOLDING BACK AT ALL.
CHOOM!
INVINCIBLE PUNCH!
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF US, TITAN-- BUT YOU HAD TO THROW IT ALL AWAY.
INCLUDING YOUR MISERABLE LIFE.
IT AIN'T OVER, BOYS! I'VE GOT SOME FIGHT LEFT IN ME!
THROK!
AND, DUDE--
"INVINCIBLE PUNCH?"
WHAT? AFTER YOUR "ROCK ON" DISPLAY I WAS FEELING A LITTLE INSPIRED.
SUE ME.
DIE!!

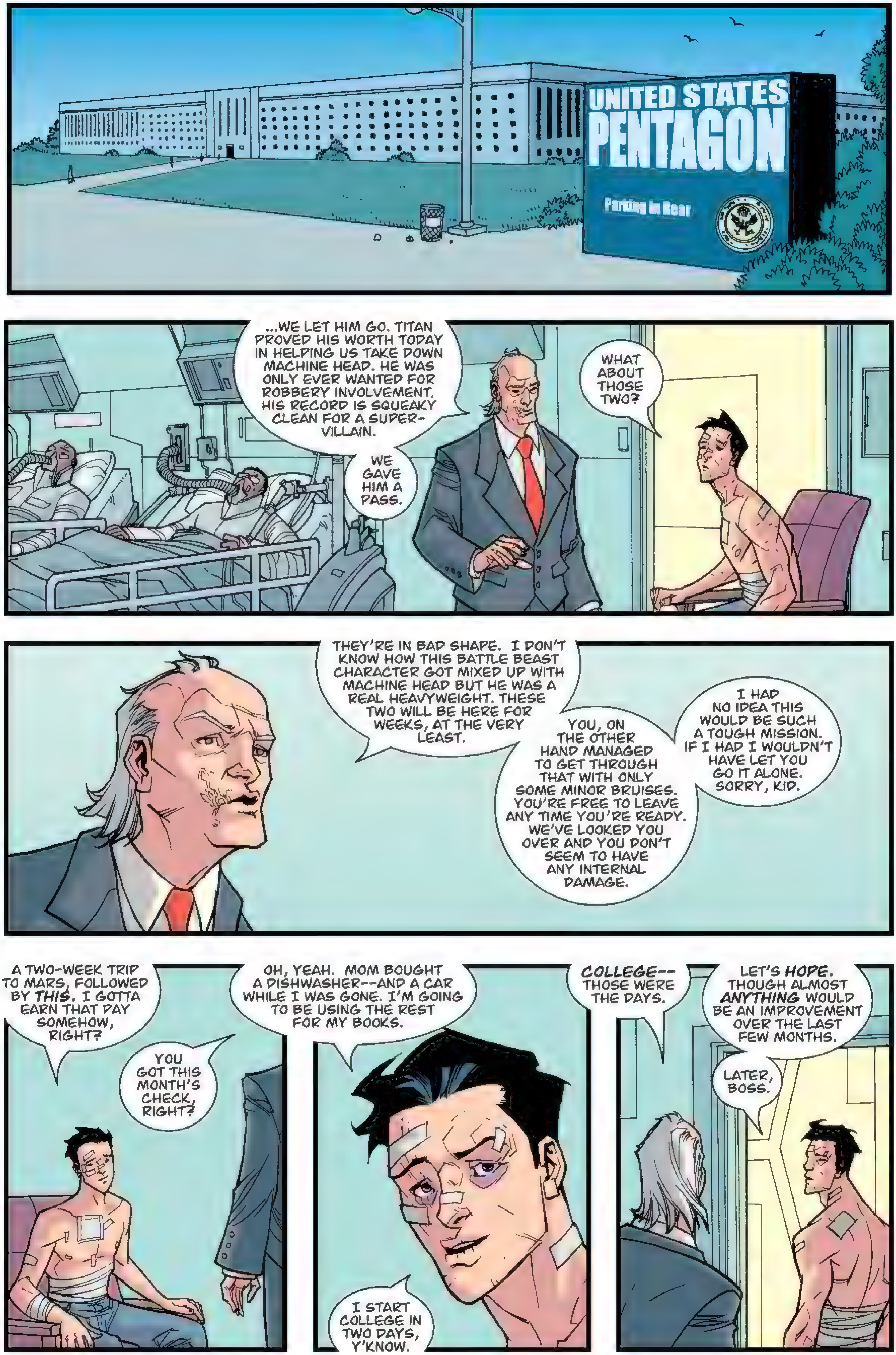

YOU RUINED ME! DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH IT COST TO REBUILD THIS SUIT?!
I WAS A FREE AGENT! NOW I'M DOING FREELANCE WORK AGAIN!
THUOOSH!!
YOU CAN'T BURN ME, Y'KNOW.
GET OFF ME!
I'LL TEACH YOU TO MESS WITH FURNACE!
THUOOSH!!
STILL DOESN'T HURT...
TWANGG!!
I BET THAT DID, THOUGH!
WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND. THAT TETHER DUDE CAME IN HANDY!
I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.
THEN YOU GOT A WEIRD DEFINITION OF FUN.
OH, MAN. I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY FOR THIS...
ROAR!!

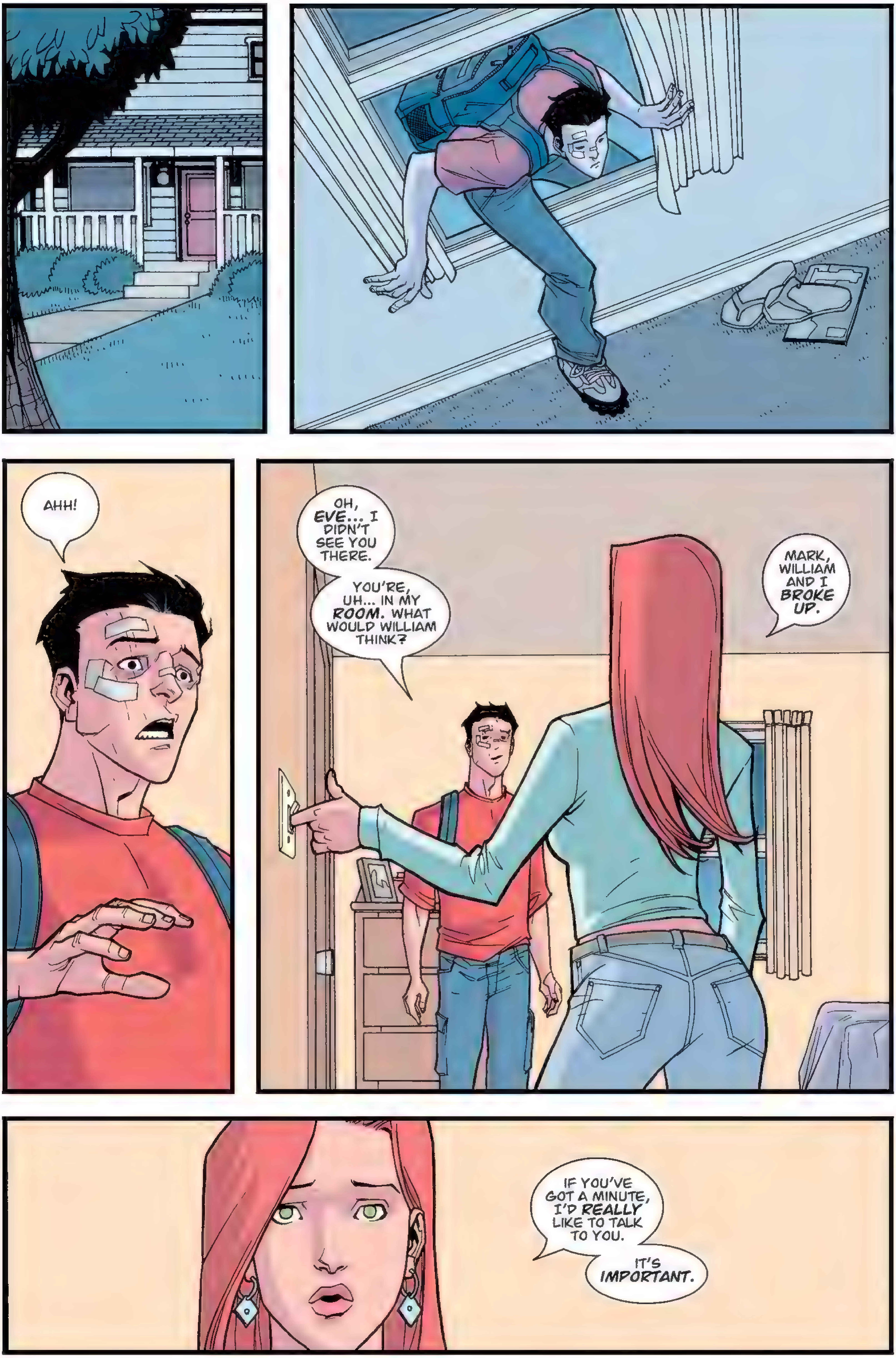

KRACK!
TWACK!
IMPRESSIVE. YOU COULD BE THE STRONGEST THING IN THIS WORLD...
BASH!
...BUT I AM NOT OF THIS WORLD!
ACK!
CRAP!
CLANG!
AGH!
SHRAGG!
I'D SAY YOU UNDERESTIMATED ME.
FWACK!
I HAVE CONQUERED A THOUSAND WORLDS. COUNTLESS ENEMIES--GALACTIC EMPIRES TREMBLE AT THE SOUND OF MY NAME. WHAT THREAT COULD A BOY HOLD FOR ME?
FANTASTIC! NICE JOB, MEN. IT TOOK A WHILE, BUT OTHERWISE, I'VE GOT NO COMPLAINTS.

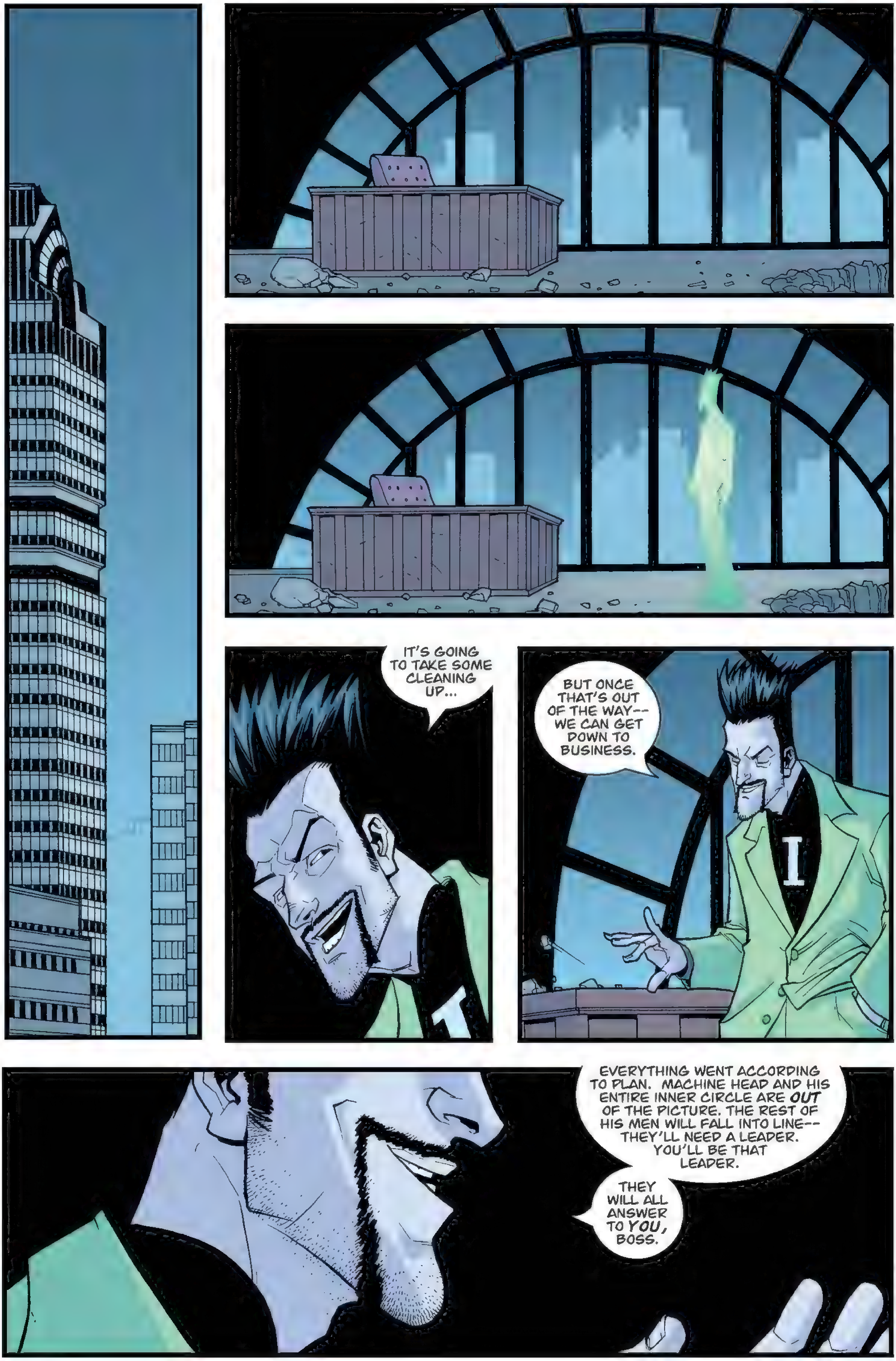

SCRATCH THAT LAST PART.
TAKE THEM OUT-- NOW! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUR PEOPLE OUT OF HERE!
OH, NO!
ISOTOPE-- GET ME OUT OF HERE.
ISOTOPE?
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE? BUT HOW DID YOU--?
CECIL WAS LISTENING IN. HE SENT US TO HELP.
YOU JUST SIT TIGHT, YOUNG MAN. WE'LL TAKE THE FIGHT FROM HERE.


THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THOSE CAME FROM, BUDDY.
BOOM!
BOOM!
BOOM!
GIVE ME MORE! GIVE ME EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!
I DARE YOU!
MONSTER GIRL, LIFT YOUR LEFT ARM ABOUT FOUR CENTIMETERS. THE RESULTING SHIFT IN WEIGHT SHOULD--
THWOMP!
ACK--!
CRACK!
PLEASE, CHILD. YOU'RE INSULTING ME BY FIGHTING BACK.


IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN OFFER?
I COULD KILL YOU ALL WITH MY BARE HANDS--BUT IT WOULD PROVE NOTHING. I CAME FOR SPORT--THE THRILL OF THE HUNT. I WAS TOLD THIS REALM OFFERED FIERCE AND WORTHY COMBATANTS. I WAS DECEIVED.
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER ME. YOU HAVE BEEN A PATHETIC WASTE OF MY TIME. TODAY IS NOT A GOOD DAY.
THUD.
JERK.
DID YOU REALLY THINK THIS WOULD WORK?
YOU NEVER KNOW...

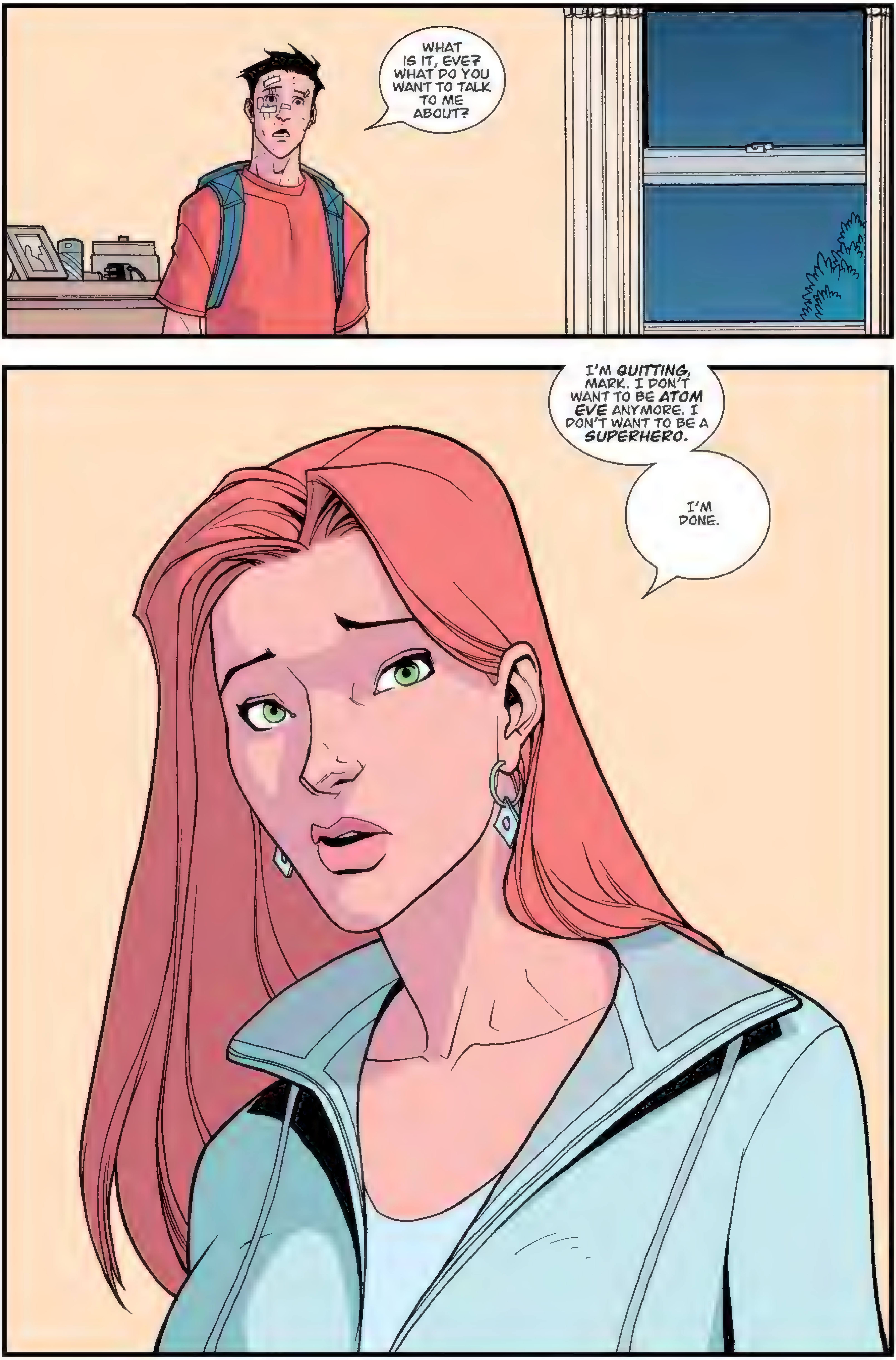

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
...WE LET HIM GO. TITAN PROVED HIS WORTH TODAY IN HELPING US TAKE DOWN MACHINE HEAD. HE WAS ONLY EVER WANTED FOR ROBBERY INVOLVEMENT. HIS RECORD IS SQUEAKY CLEAN FOR A SUPER-VILLAIN.
WE GAVE HIM A PASS.
WHAT ABOUT THOSE TWO?
THEY'RE IN BAD SHAPE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS BATTLE BEAST CHARACTER GOT MIXED UP WITH MACHINE HEAD BUT HE WAS A REAL HEAVYWEIGHT. THESE TWO WILL BE HERE FOR WEEKS, AT THE VERY LEAST.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THAT WITH ONLY SOME MINOR BRUISES. YOU'RE FREE TO LEAVE ANY TIME YOU'RE READY. WE'VE LOOKED YOU OVER AND YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY INTERNAL DAMAGE.
I HAD NO IDEA THIS WOULD BE SUCH A TOUGH MISSION. IF I HAD I WOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU GO IT ALONE. SORRY, KID.
A TWO-WEEK TRIP TO MARS, FOLLOWED BY *THIS*. I GOTTA EARN THAT PAY SOMEHOW, RIGHT?
YOU GOT THIS MONTH'S CHECK, RIGHT?
OH, YEAH. MOM BOUGHT A DISHWASHER--AND A CAR WHILE I WAS GONE. I'M GOING TO BE USING THE REST FOR MY BOOKS.
I START COLLEGE IN TWO DAYS, Y'KNOW.
COLLEGE-- THOSE WERE THE DAYS.
LET'S *HOPE*. THOUGH ALMOST *ANYTHING* WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS.
LATER, BOSS.


AHH!
OH, EVE... I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE.
YOU'RE, UH... IN MY ROOM. WHAT WOULD WILLIAM THINK?
MARK, WILLIAM AND I BROKE UP.
IF YOU'VE GOT A MINUTE, I'D REALLY LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
IT'S IMPORTANT.

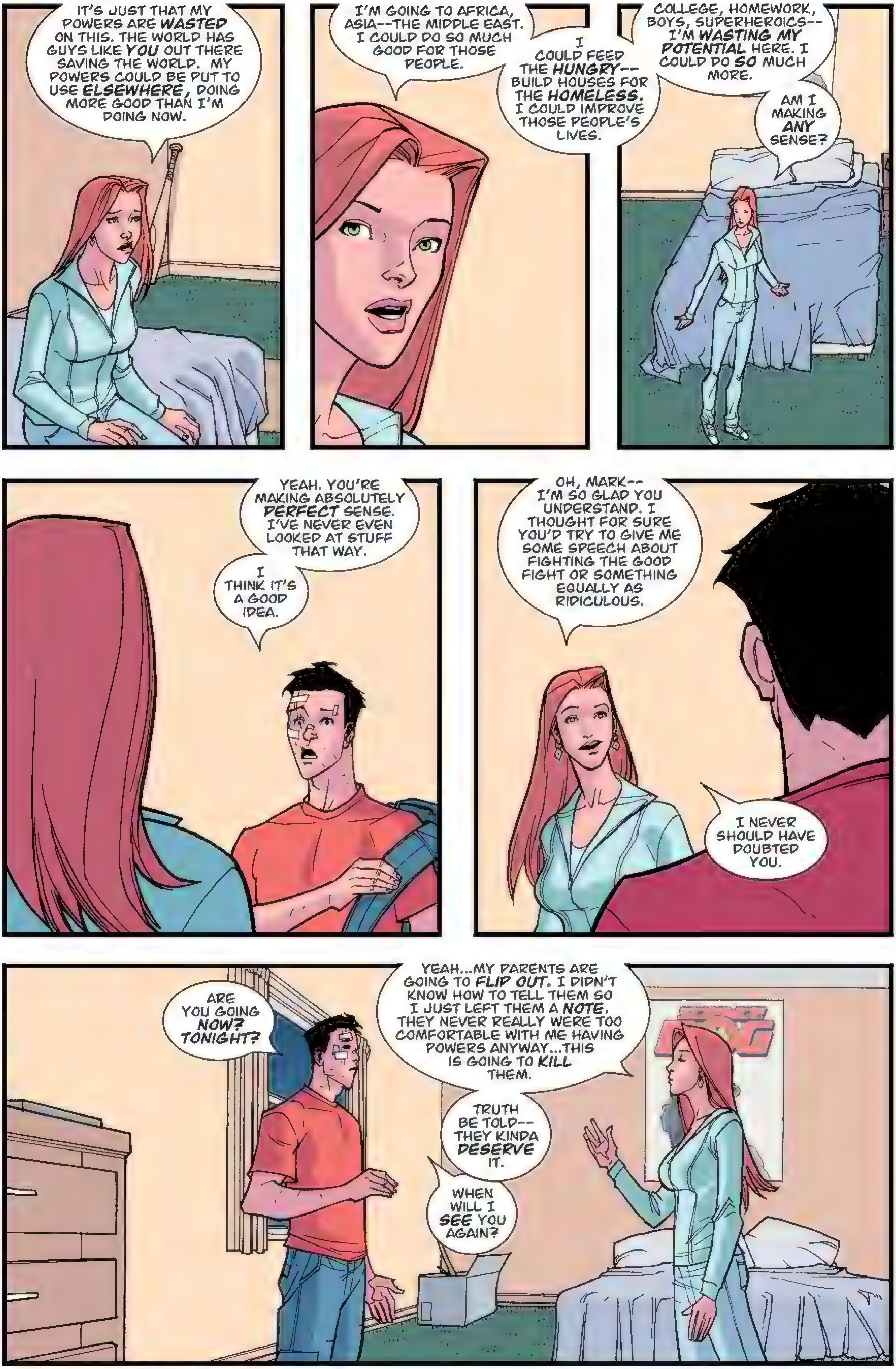

IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME CLEANING UP...
BUT ONCE THAT'S OUT OF THE WAY-- WE CAN GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.
I
EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN. MACHINE HEAD AND HIS ENTIRE INNER CIRCLE ARE *OUT* OF THE PICTURE. THE REST OF HIS MEN WILL FALL INTO LINE-- THEY'LL NEED A LEADER. YOU'LL BE THAT LEADER.
THEY WILL ALL ANSWER TO *YOU*, BOSS.

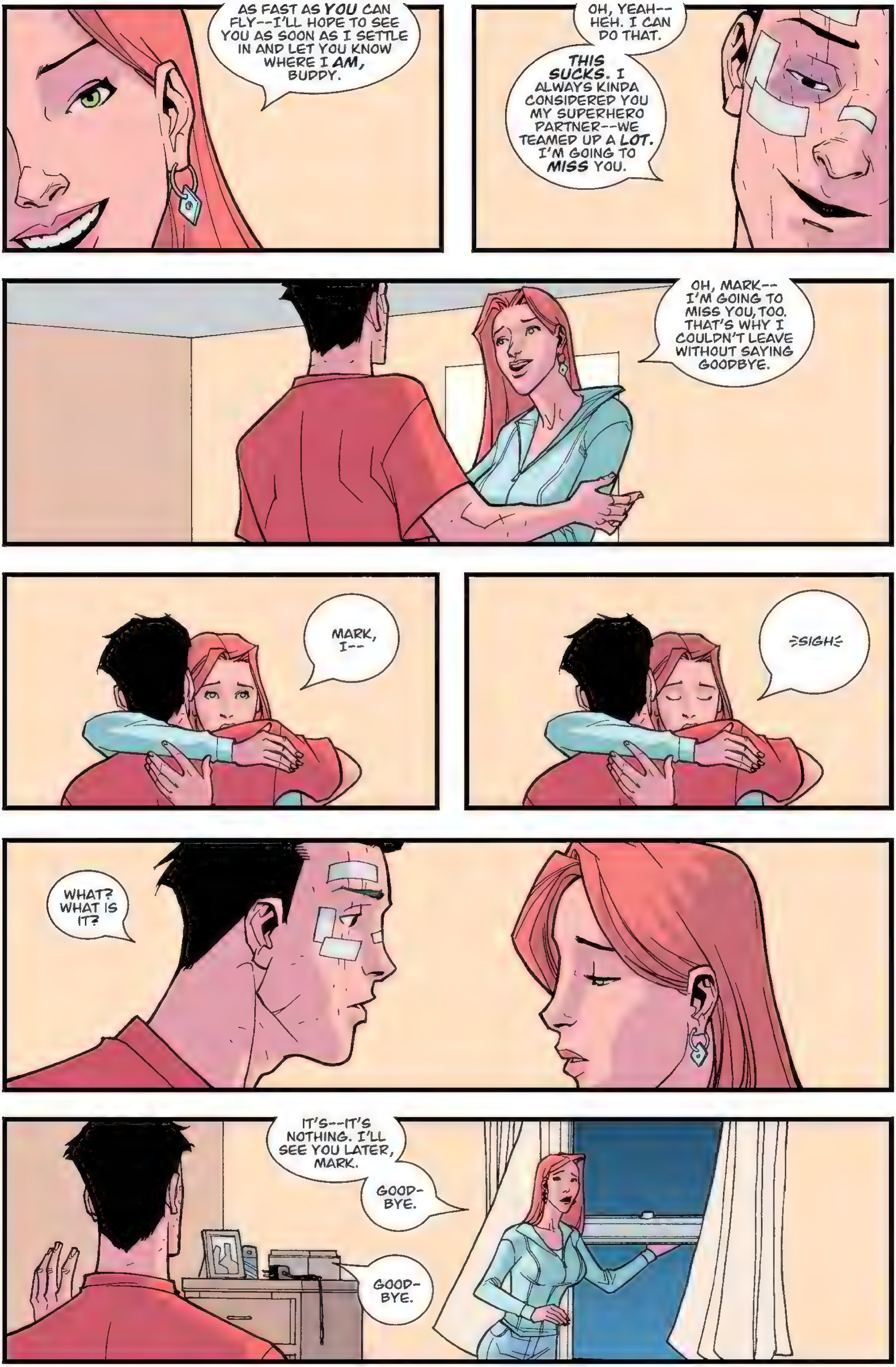
YES...
YES THEY WILL.

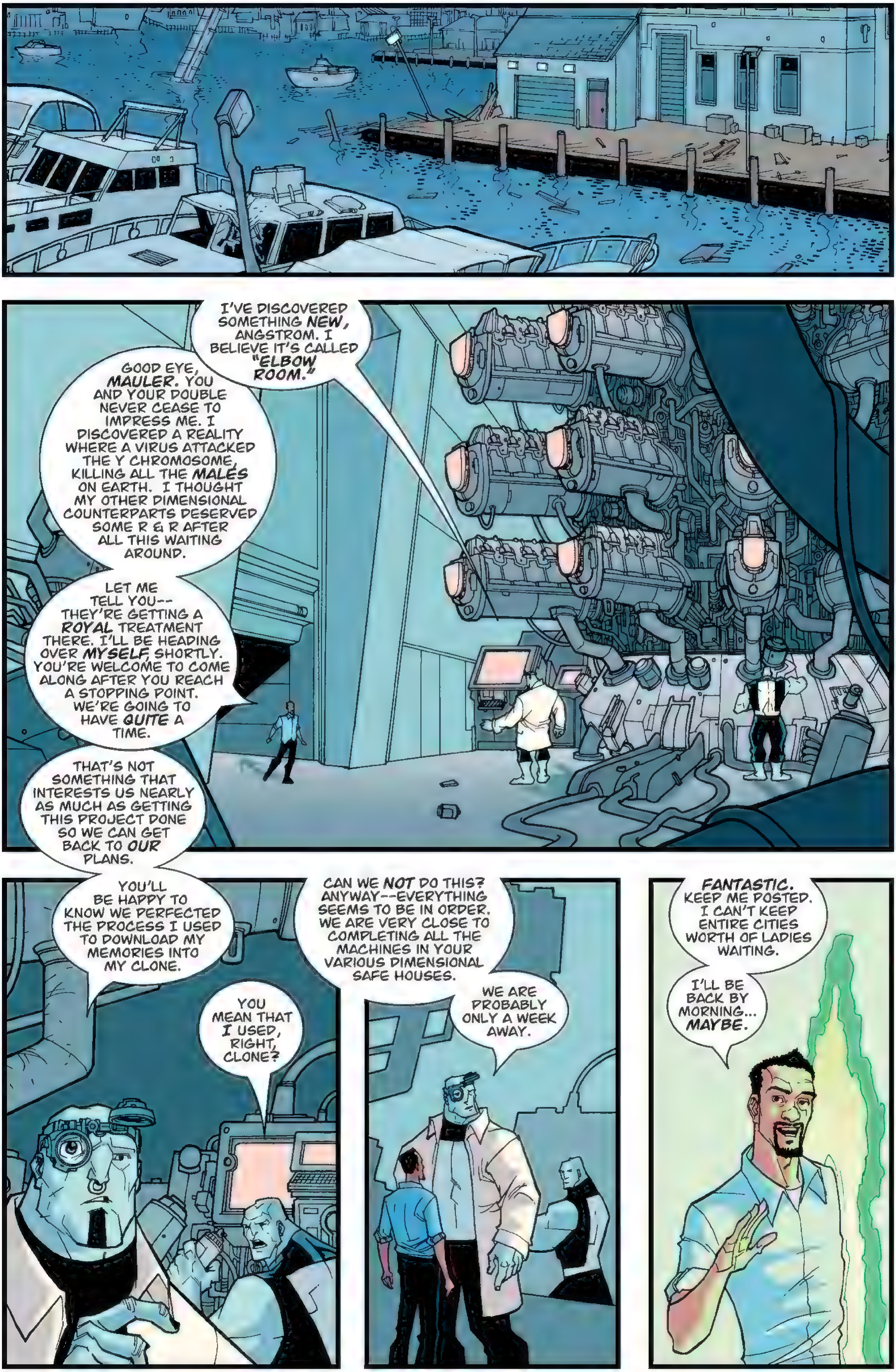
ISSUE TWENTY

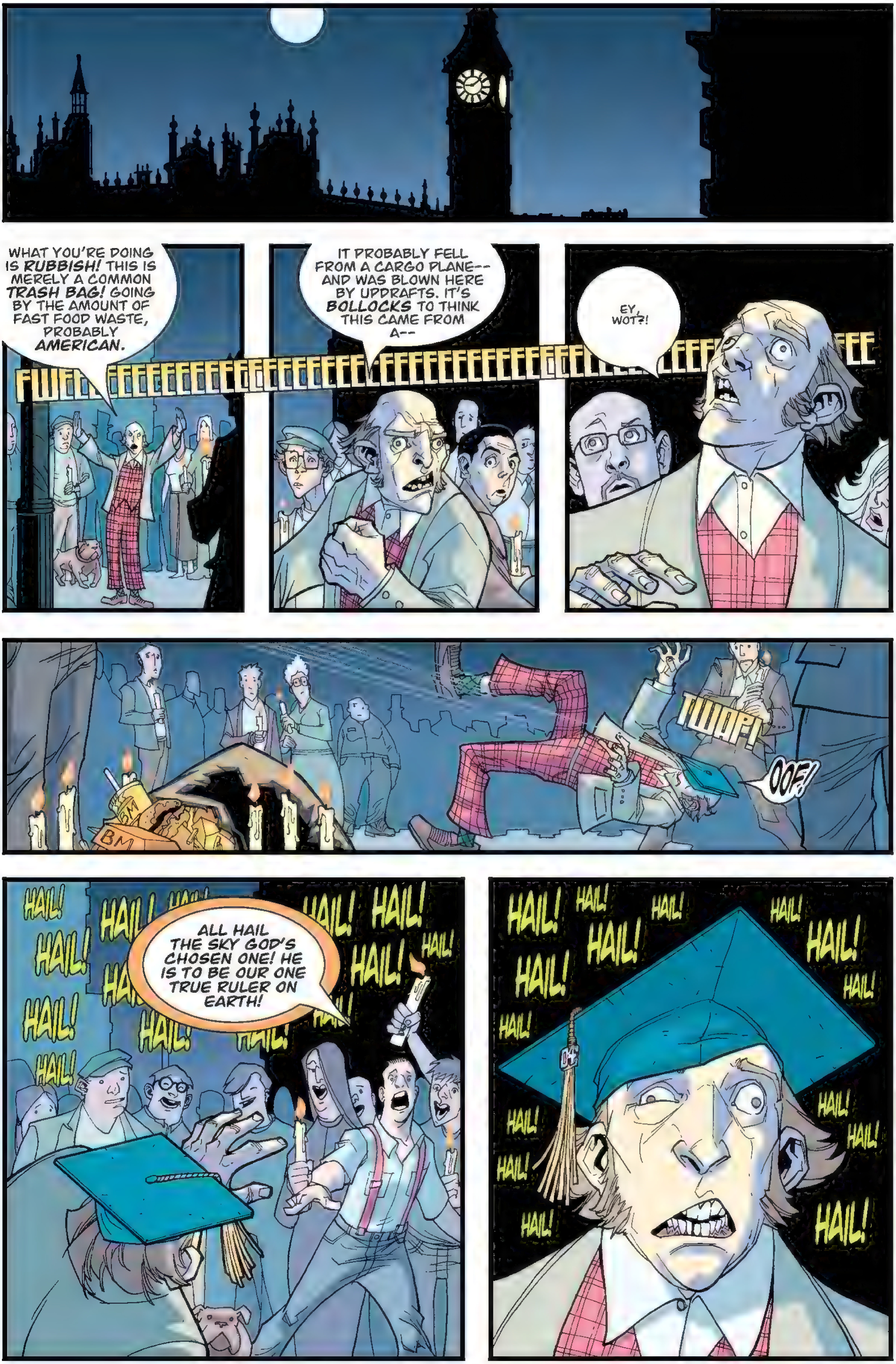

WHAT IS IT, EVE? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
I'M *QUITTING*, MARK. I DON'T WANT TO BE *ATOM EVE* ANYMORE. I DON'T WANT TO BE A *SUPERHERO*.
I'M DONE.

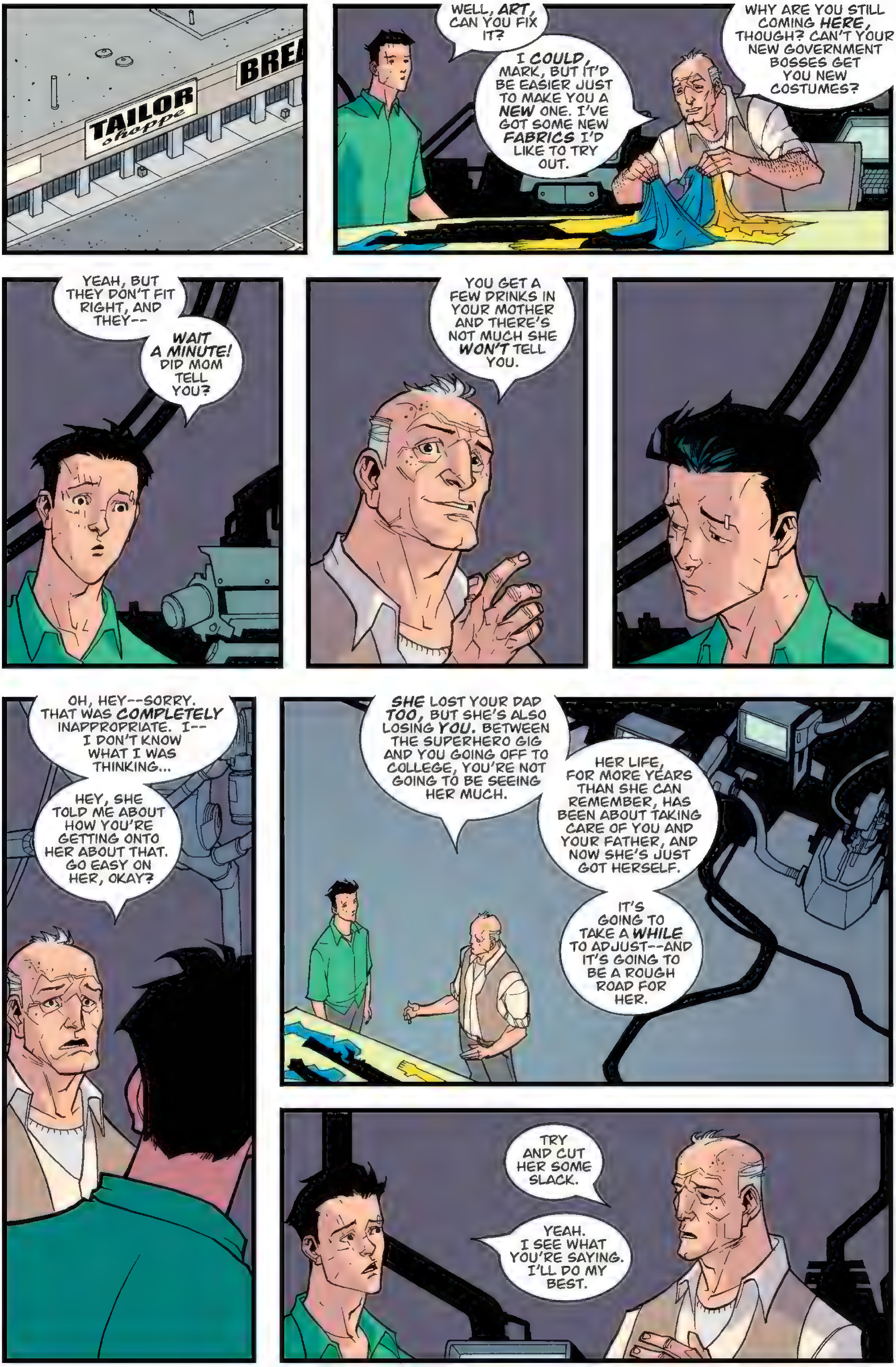
WHAT? **WHY?** YOU CAN'T JUST **QUIT!**
WHY NOT? I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT--AND I CAN **NOT** DO WHATEVER I DON'T **WANT** TO DO.
I'M DONE--THIS IS **STUPID.** I'M QUITTING.
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT MY POWERS **ARE?** I ASKED REX ONE TIME AND HE THOUGHT I COULD MAKE **PINK STUFF** WITH MY **THOUGHTS.**
GOD, HE WAS AN **IDIOT.**
MY POWERS--I CAN TAKE MATTER AND REARRANGE IT INTO **DIFFERENT** MATTER. I CAN TAKE A **ROCK** AND TURN IT INTO AN **APPLE.** I CAN REARRANGE ATOMS ON A LEVEL THAT ROBOT DEEMED "RIDICULOUS."
MY POWERS ARE **FANTASTIC**--AND WHAT DO I DO WITH THEM? I PUT ON A **SUPER CUTE** OUTFIT AND I FIGHT **BANK ROBBERS** AND **ALIENS** WITH THEM. WHY IN THE **WORLD** DID I CHOOSE TO DO **THAT?**
AND NOW I'M GOING TO **COLLEGE**--SO I CAN GET A JOB TO PAY FOR MY **STUFF**--LIKE ALL THE OTHER **DRONES** IN THE WORLD--AND I **WAS** DATING THAT OBNOXIOUSLY IMMATURE FRIEND OF YOURS. IT'S JUST--
DO YOU SEE WHERE I'M GOING WITH THIS?
NOT REALLY.

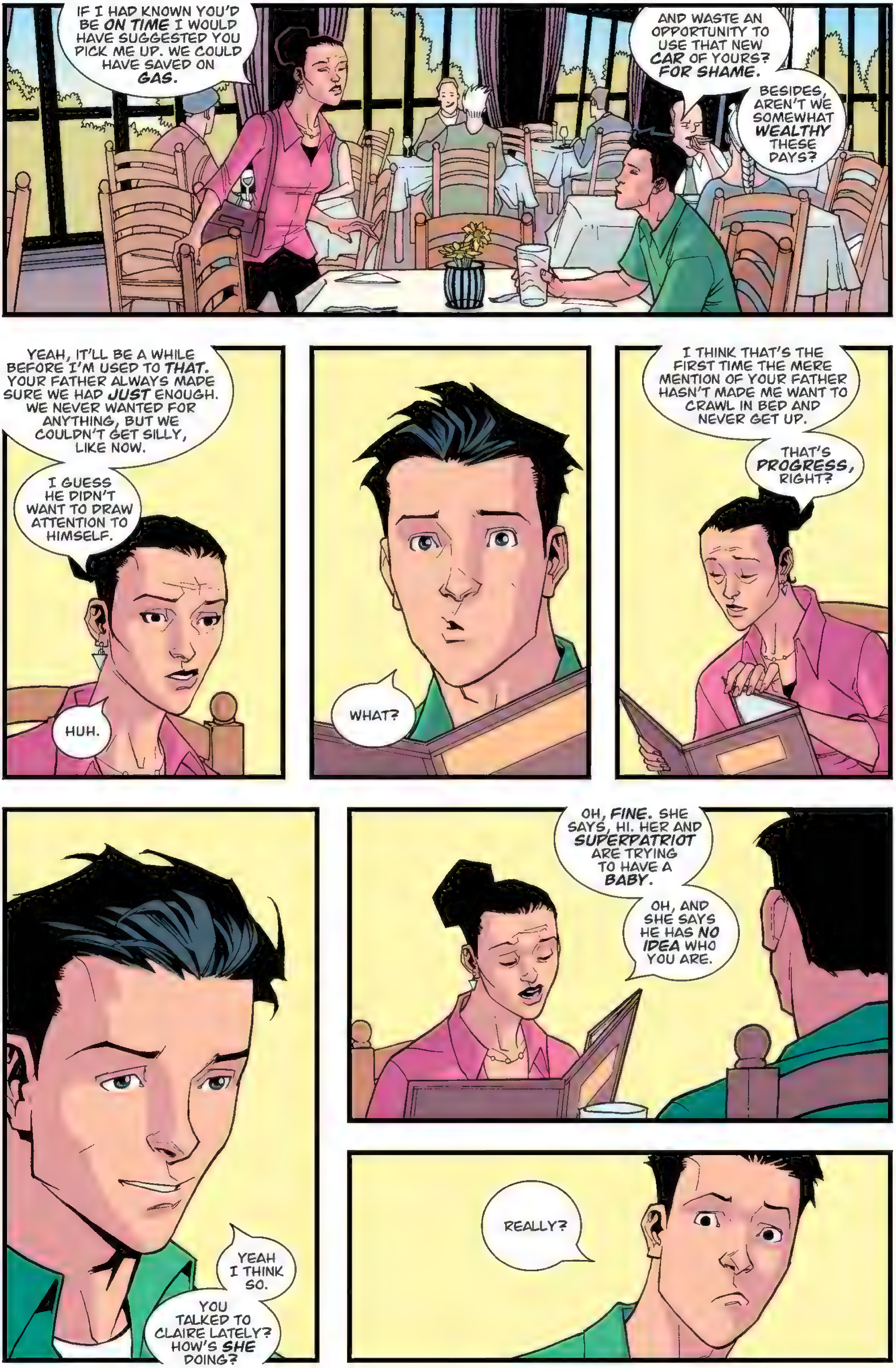

IT'S JUST THAT MY POWERS ARE **WASTED** ON THIS. THE WORLD HAS GUYS LIKE **YOU** OUT THERE SAVING THE WORLD. MY POWERS COULD BE PUT TO USE **ELSEWHERE**, DOING MORE GOOD THAN I'M DOING NOW.
I'M GOING TO AFRICA, ASIA--THE MIDDLE EAST. I COULD DO SO MUCH GOOD FOR THOSE PEOPLE.
I COULD FEED THE **HUNGRY**--BUILD HOUSES FOR THE **HOMELESS**. I COULD IMPROVE THOSE PEOPLE'S LIVES.
COLLEGE, HOMEWORK, BOYS, SUPERHEROICS--I'M **WASTING MY POTENTIAL** HERE. I COULD DO **SO** MUCH MORE.
AM I MAKING **ANY** SENSE?
YEAH. YOU'RE MAKING ABSOLUTELY **PERFECT** SENSE. I'VE NEVER EVEN LOOKED AT STUFF THAT WAY.
I THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA.
OH, MARK--I'M SO GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND. I THOUGHT FOR SURE YOU'D TRY TO GIVE ME SOME SPEECH ABOUT FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OR SOMETHING EQUALLY AS RIDICULOUS.
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE DOUBTED YOU.
ARE YOU GOING **NOW? TONIGHT?**
YEAH...MY PARENTS ARE GOING TO **FLIP OUT**. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TELL THEM SO I JUST LEFT THEM A **NOTE**. THEY NEVER REALLY WERE TOO COMFORTABLE WITH ME HAVING POWERS ANYWAY...THIS IS GOING TO **KILL** THEM.
TRUTH BE TOLD--THEY KINDA **DESERVE** IT.
WHEN WILL I **SEE** YOU AGAIN?

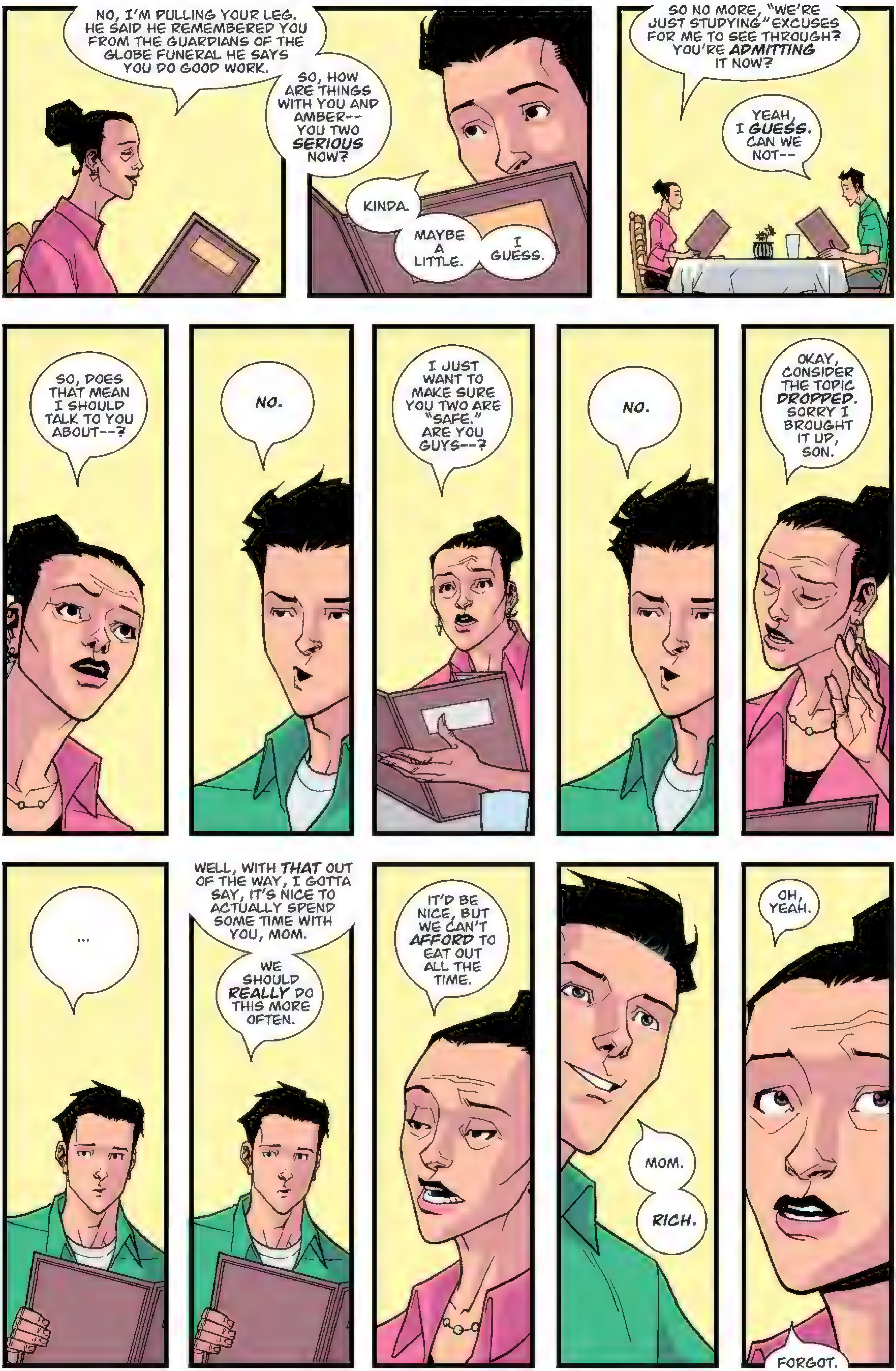

AS FAST AS **YOU** CAN FLY--I'LL HOPE TO SEE YOU AS SOON AS I SETTLE IN AND LET YOU KNOW WHERE I **AM**, BUDDY.
OH, YEAH--HEH. I CAN DO THAT.
THIS SUCKS. I ALWAYS KINDA CONSIDERED YOU MY SUPERHERO PARTNER--WE TEAMED UP A **LOT.** I'M GOING TO **MISS** YOU.
OH, MARK--I'M GOING TO MISS YOU, TOO. THAT'S WHY I COULDN'T LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE.
MARK, I--
=SIGH=
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
IT'S--IT'S NOTHING. I'LL SEE YOU LATER, MARK.
GOOD-BYE.
GOOD-BYE.

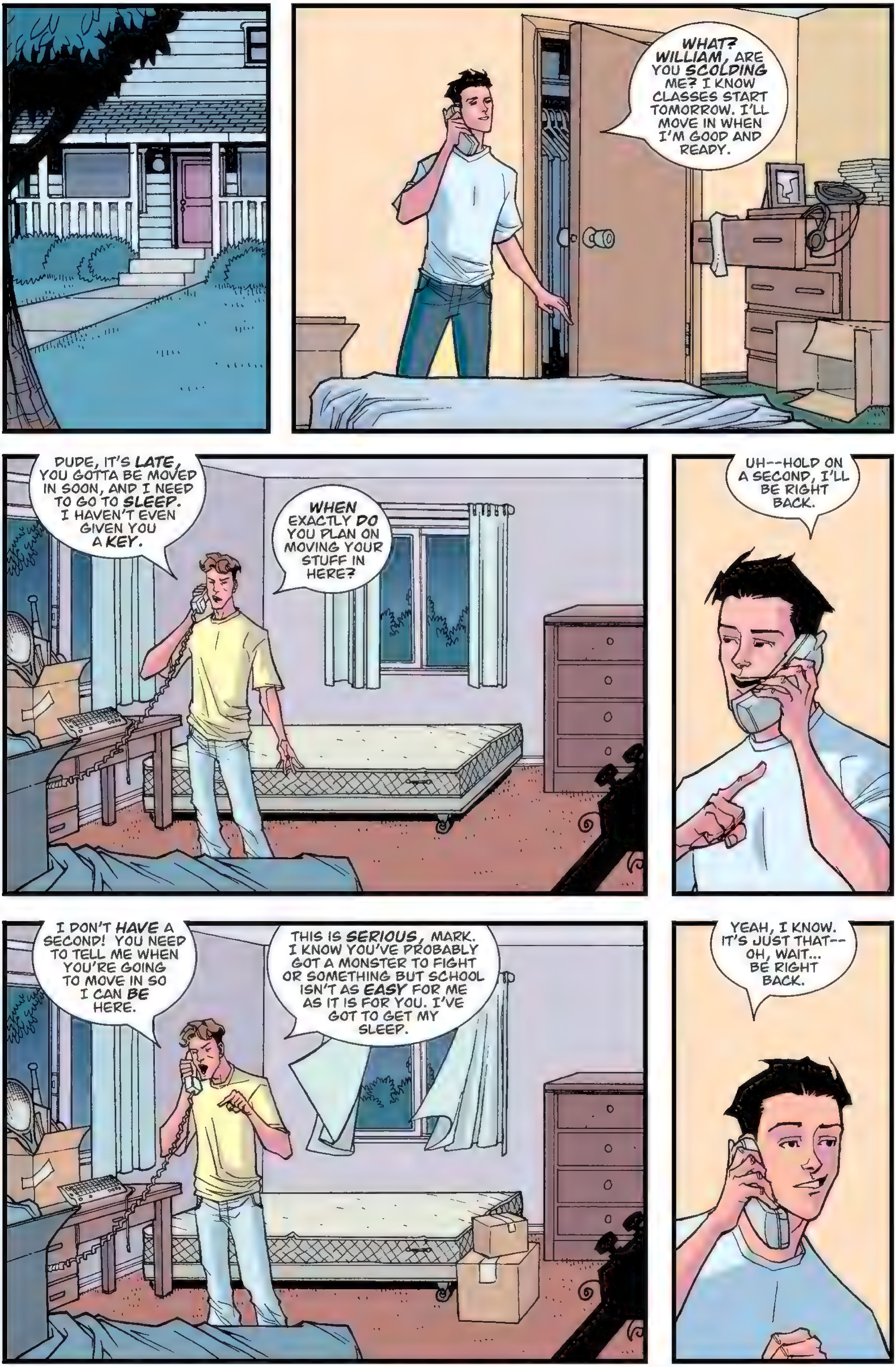

I'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW, ANGSTROM. I BELIEVE IT'S CALLED "ELBOW ROOM."
GOOD EYE, MAULER. YOU AND YOUR DOUBLE NEVER CEASE TO IMPRESS ME. I DISCOVERED A REALITY WHERE A VIRUS ATTACKED THE Y CHROMOSOME, KILLING ALL THE MALES ON EARTH. I THOUGHT MY OTHER DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS DESERVED SOME R & R AFTER ALL THIS WAITING AROUND.
LET ME TELL YOU-- THEY'RE GETTING A ROYAL TREATMENT THERE. I'LL BE HEADING OVER MYSELF SHORTLY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME ALONG AFTER YOU REACH A STOPPING POINT. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE QUITE A TIME.
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS US NEARLY AS MUCH AS GETTING THIS PROJECT DONE SO WE CAN GET BACK TO OUR PLANS.
YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE PERFECTED THE PROCESS I USED TO DOWNLOAD MY MEMORIES INTO MY CLONE.
YOU MEAN THAT I USED, RIGHT, CLONE?
CAN WE NOT DO THIS? ANYWAY--EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER. WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO COMPLETING ALL THE MACHINES IN YOUR VARIOUS DIMENSIONAL SAFE HOUSES.
WE ARE PROBABLY ONLY A WEEK AWAY.
FANTASTIC. KEEP ME POSTED. I CAN'T KEEP ENTIRE CITIES WORTH OF LADIES WAITING.
I'LL BE BACK BY MORNING... MAYBE.

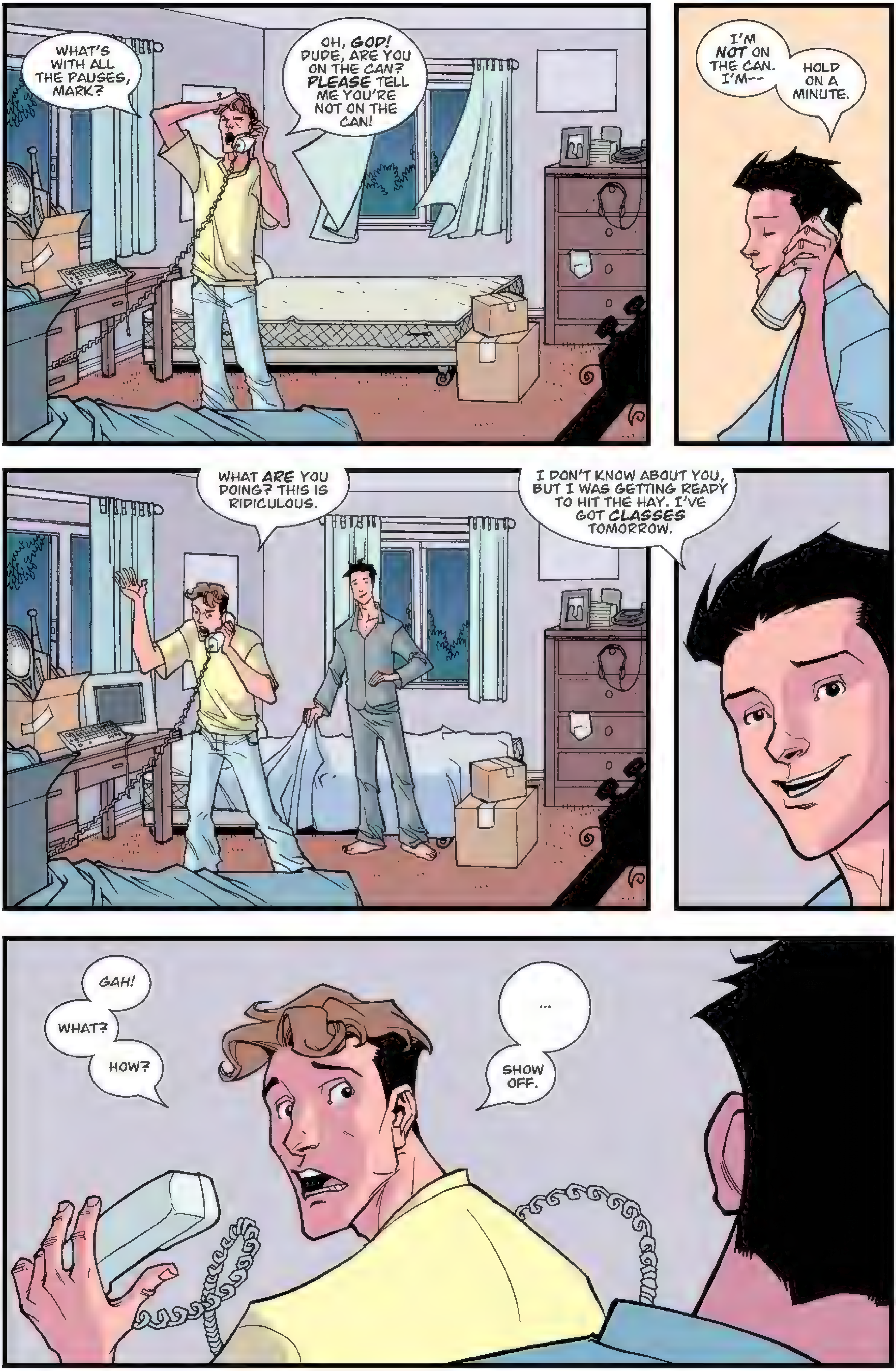

WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS RUBBISH! THIS IS MERELY A COMMON TRASH BAG! GOING BY THE AMOUNT OF FAST FOOD WASTE, PROBABLY AMERICAN.
IT PROBABLY FELL FROM A CARGO PLANE-- AND WAS BLOWN HERE BY UPDRAFTS. IT'S BOLLOCKS TO THINK THIS CAME FROM A--
FWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
EY, WOT?!
TWOP!
OOF!
BM
BM
HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!
ALL HAIL THE SKY GOD'S CHOSEN ONE! HE IS TO BE OUR ONE TRUE RULER ON EARTH!
HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!

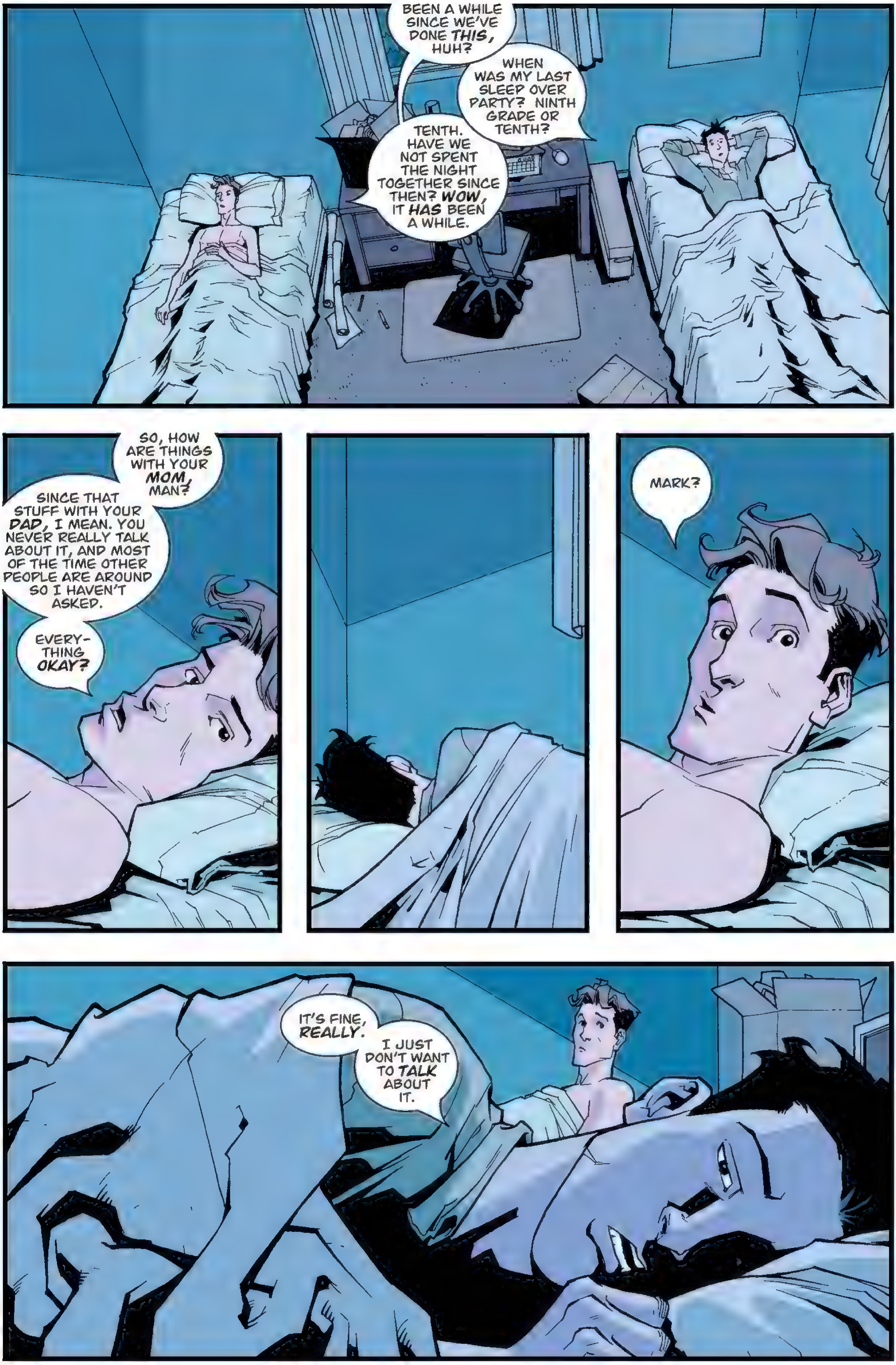

TAILOR shoppe
BREA
WELL, ART, CAN YOU FIX IT?
I COULD, MARK, BUT IT'D BE EASIER JUST TO MAKE YOU A NEW ONE. I'VE GOT SOME NEW FABRICS I'D LIKE TO TRY OUT.
WHY ARE YOU STILL COMING HERE, THOUGH? CAN'T YOUR NEW GOVERNMENT BOSSES GET YOU NEW COSTUMES?
YEAH, BUT THEY DON'T FIT RIGHT, AND THEY--
WAIT A MINUTE! DID MOM TELL YOU?
YOU GET A FEW DRINKS IN YOUR MOTHER AND THERE'S NOT MUCH SHE WON'T TELL YOU.
OH, HEY--SORRY. THAT WAS COMPLETELY INAPPROPRIATE. I-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING...
HEY, SHE TOLD ME ABOUT HOW YOU'RE GETTING ONTO HER ABOUT THAT. GO EASY ON HER, OKAY?
SHE LOST YOUR DAD TOO, BUT SHE'S ALSO LOSING YOU. BETWEEN THE SUPERHERO GIG AND YOU GOING OFF TO COLLEGE, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE SEEING HER MUCH.
HER LIFE, FOR MORE YEARS THAN SHE CAN REMEMBER, HAS BEEN ABOUT TAKING CARE OF YOU AND YOUR FATHER, AND NOW SHE'S JUST GOT HERSELF.
IT'S GOING TO TAKE A WHILE TO ADJUST--AND IT'S GOING TO BE A ROUGH ROAD FOR HER.
TRY AND CUT HER SOME SLACK.
YEAH. I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. I'LL DO MY BEST.

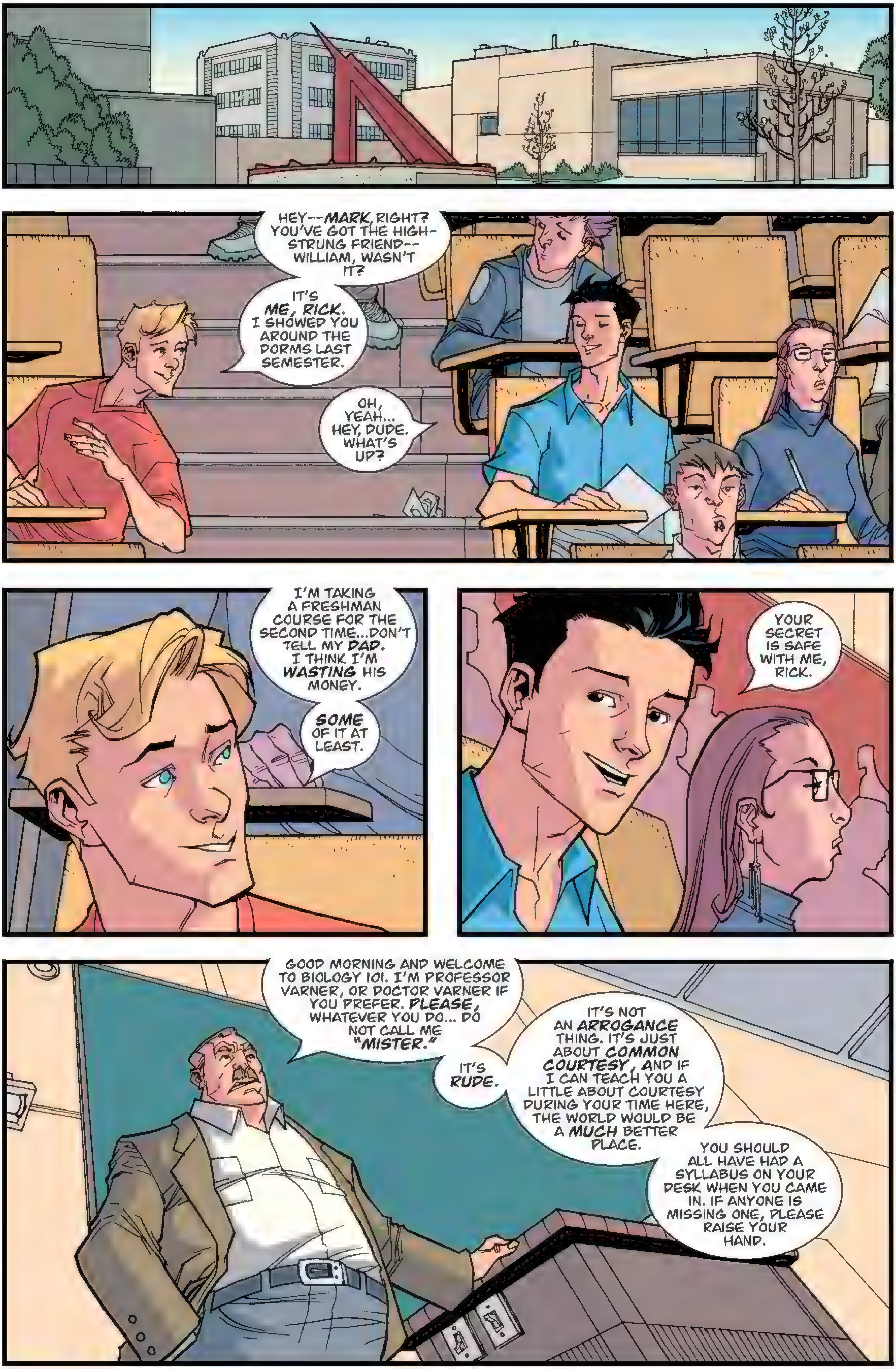

IF I HAD KNOWN YOU'D BE **ON TIME** I WOULD HAVE SUGGESTED YOU PICK ME UP. WE COULD HAVE SAVED ON **GAS.**
AND WASTE AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE THAT NEW **CAR** OF YOURS? **FOR SHAME.**
BESIDES, AREN'T WE SOMEWHAT **WEALTHY** THESE DAYS?
YEAH, IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I'M USED TO **THAT.** YOUR FATHER ALWAYS MADE SURE WE HAD **JUST** ENOUGH. WE NEVER WANTED FOR ANYTHING, BUT WE COULDN'T GET SILLY, LIKE NOW.
I GUESS HE DIDN'T WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HIMSELF.
HUH.
WHAT?
I THINK THAT'S THE FIRST TIME THE MERE MENTION OF YOUR FATHER HASN'T MADE ME WANT TO CRAWL IN BED AND NEVER GET UP.
THAT'S **PROGRESS,** RIGHT?
YEAH I THINK SO.
YOU TALKED TO CLAIRE LATELY? HOW'S **SHE** DOING?
OH, **FINE.** SHE SAYS, HI. HER AND **SUPERPATRIOT** ARE TRYING TO HAVE A **BABY.**
OH, AND SHE SAYS HE HAS **NO IDEA** WHO YOU ARE.
REALLY?

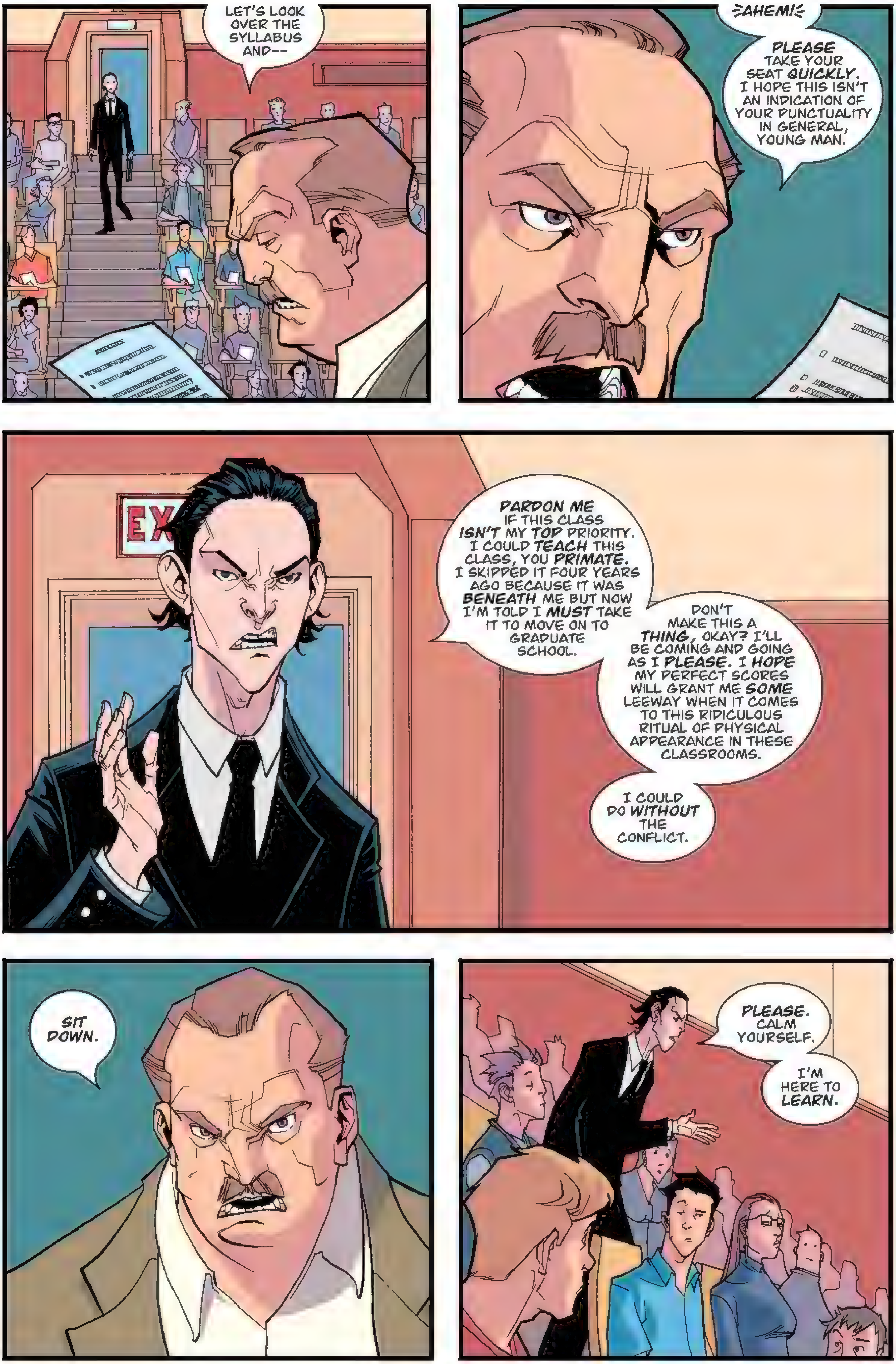

NO, I'M PULLING YOUR LEG. HE SAID HE REMEMBERED YOU FROM THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE FUNERAL HE SAYS YOU DO GOOD WORK.
SO, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU AND AMBER-- YOU TWO **SERIOUS** NOW?
KINDA.
MAYBE A LITTLE.
I GUESS.
SO NO MORE, "WE'RE JUST STUDYING" EXCUSES FOR ME TO SEE THROUGH? YOU'RE **ADMITTING** IT NOW?
YEAH, I **GUESS.** CAN WE NOT--
SO, DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULD TALK TO YOU ABOUT--?
NO.
I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU TWO ARE "SAFE." ARE YOU GUYS--?
NO.
OKAY, CONSIDER THE TOPIC **DROPPED.** SORRY I BROUGHT IT UP, SON.
...
WELL, WITH **THAT** OUT OF THE WAY, I GOTTA SAY, IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY SPEND SOME TIME WITH YOU, MOM.
WE SHOULD **REALLY** DO THIS MORE OFTEN.
IT'D BE NICE, BUT WE CAN'T **AFFORD** TO EAT OUT ALL THE TIME.
MOM.
RICH.
OH, YEAH.
FORGOT.

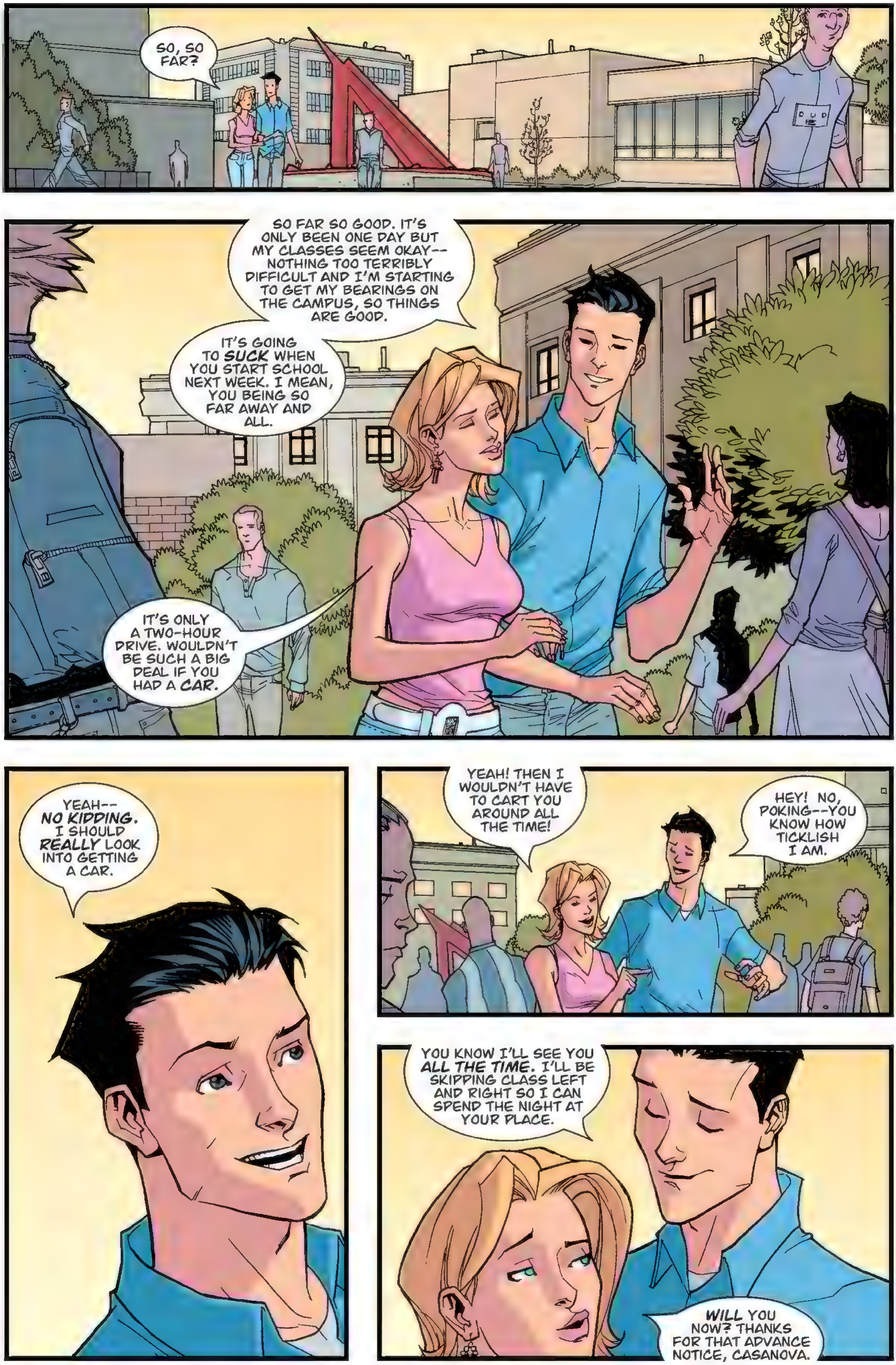

WHAT? WILLIAM, ARE YOU SCOLDING ME? I KNOW CLASSES START TOMORROW. I'LL MOVE IN WHEN I'M GOOD AND READY.
DUDE, IT'S LATE, YOU GOTTA BE MOVED IN SOON, AND I NEED TO GO TO SLEEP. I HAVEN'T EVEN GIVEN YOU A KEY.
WHEN EXACTLY DO YOU PLAN ON MOVING YOUR STUFF IN HERE?
UH--HOLD ON A SECOND, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
I DON'T HAVE A SECOND! YOU NEED TO TELL ME WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO MOVE IN SO I CAN BE HERE.
THIS IS SERIOUS, MARK. I KNOW YOU'VE PROBABLY GOT A MONSTER TO FIGHT OR SOMETHING BUT SCHOOL ISN'T AS EASY FOR ME AS IT IS FOR YOU. I'VE GOT TO GET MY SLEEP.
YEAH, I KNOW. IT'S JUST THAT-- OH, WAIT... BE RIGHT BACK.


WHAT'S WITH ALL THE PAUSES, MARK?
OH, **GOD!** DUDE, ARE YOU ON THE CAN? **PLEASE** TELL ME YOU'RE NOT ON THE CAN!
I'M **NOT** ON THE CAN. I'M--
HOLD ON A MINUTE.
WHAT **ARE** YOU DOING? THIS IS RIDICULOUS.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I WAS GETTING READY TO HIT THE HAY. I'VE GOT **CLASSES** TOMORROW.
GAH!
WHAT?
HOW?
...
SHOW OFF.

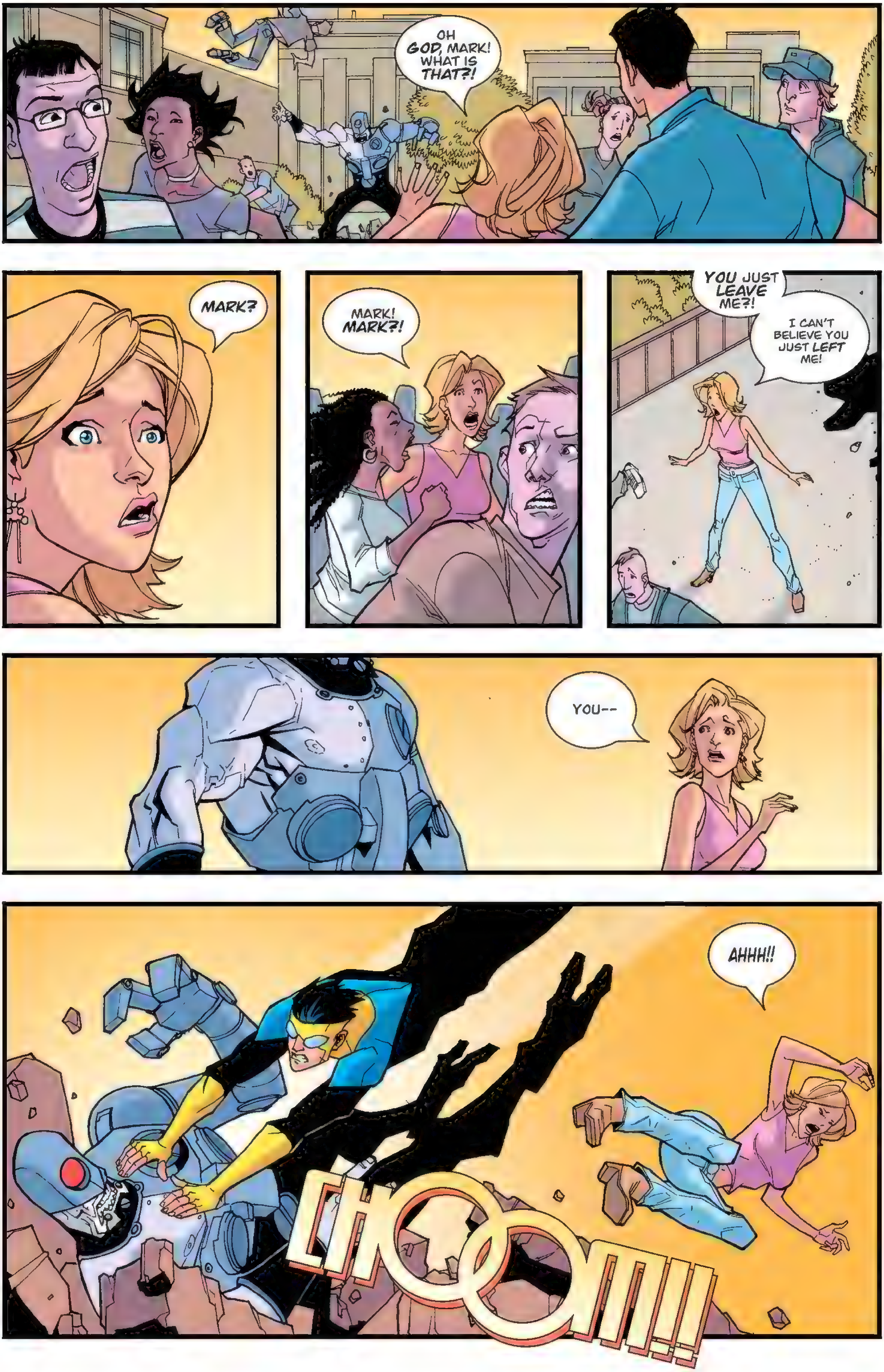

BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE DONE *THIS*, HUH?
WHEN WAS MY LAST SLEEP OVER PARTY? NINTH GRADE OR TENTH?
TENTH. HAVE WE NOT SPENT THE NIGHT TOGETHER SINCE THEN? *WOW*, IT *HAS* BEEN A WHILE.
SO, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOUR *MOM*, MAN?
SINCE THAT STUFF WITH YOUR *DAD*, I MEAN. YOU NEVER REALLY TALK ABOUT IT, AND MOST OF THE TIME OTHER PEOPLE ARE AROUND SO I HAVEN'T ASKED.
EVERY-THING *OKAY?*
MARK?
IT'S FINE, *REALLY*.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO *TALK* ABOUT IT.

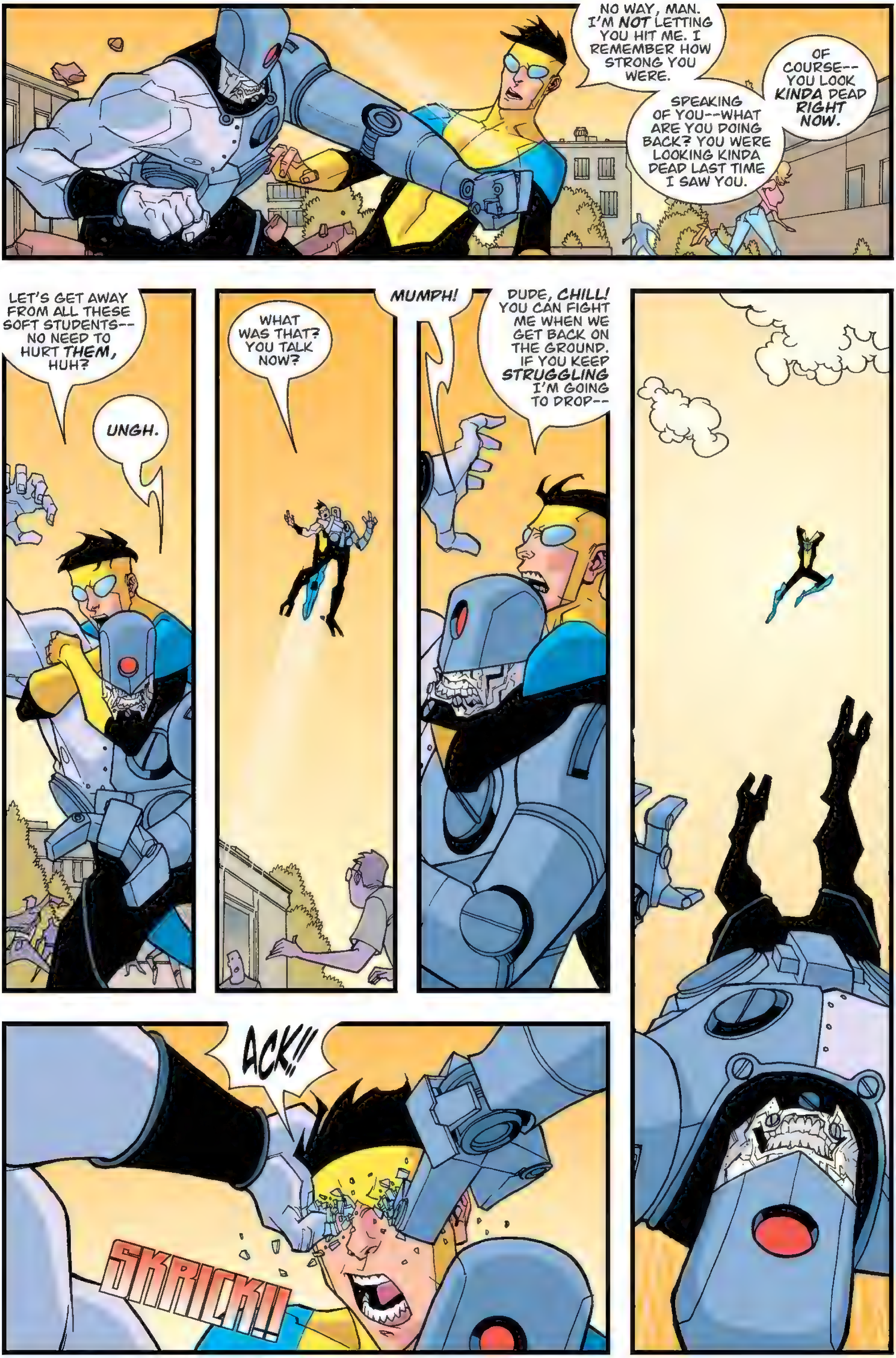

HEY--MARK, RIGHT? YOU'VE GOT THE HIGH-STRUNG FRIEND--WILLIAM, WASN'T IT?
IT'S ME, RICK. I SHOWED YOU AROUND THE DORMS LAST SEMESTER.
OH, YEAH... HEY, DUDE. WHAT'S UP?
I'M TAKING A FRESHMAN COURSE FOR THE SECOND TIME...DON'T TELL MY DAD. I THINK I'M WASTING HIS MONEY.
SOME OF IT AT LEAST.
YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME, RICK.
GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME TO BIOLOGY 101. I'M PROFESSOR VARNER, OR DOCTOR VARNER IF YOU PREFER. PLEASE, WHATEVER YOU DO... DO NOT CALL ME "MISTER."
IT'S RUDE.
IT'S NOT AN ARROGANCE THING. IT'S JUST ABOUT COMMON COURTESY, AND IF I CAN TEACH YOU A LITTLE ABOUT COURTESY DURING YOUR TIME HERE, THE WORLD WOULD BE A MUCH BETTER PLACE.
YOU SHOULD ALL HAVE HAD A SYLLABUS ON YOUR DESK WHEN YOU CAME IN. IF ANYONE IS MISSING ONE, PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND.


LET'S LOOK OVER THE SYLLABUS AND--
AHEM!
PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEAT QUICKLY. I HOPE THIS ISN'T AN INDICATION OF YOUR PUNCTUALITY IN GENERAL, YOUNG MAN.
EX
PARDON ME IF THIS CLASS ISN'T MY TOP PRIORITY. I COULD TEACH THIS CLASS, YOU PRIMATE. I SKIPPED IT FOUR YEARS AGO BECAUSE IT WAS BENEATH ME BUT NOW I'M TOLD I MUST TAKE IT TO MOVE ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL.
DON'T MAKE THIS A THING, OKAY? I'LL BE COMING AND GOING AS I PLEASE. I HOPE MY PERFECT SCORES WILL GRANT ME SOME LEEWAY WHEN IT COMES TO THIS RIDICULOUS RITUAL OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IN THESE CLASSROOMS.
I COULD DO WITHOUT THE CONFLICT.
SIT DOWN.
PLEASE. CALM YOURSELF.
I'M HERE TO LEARN.

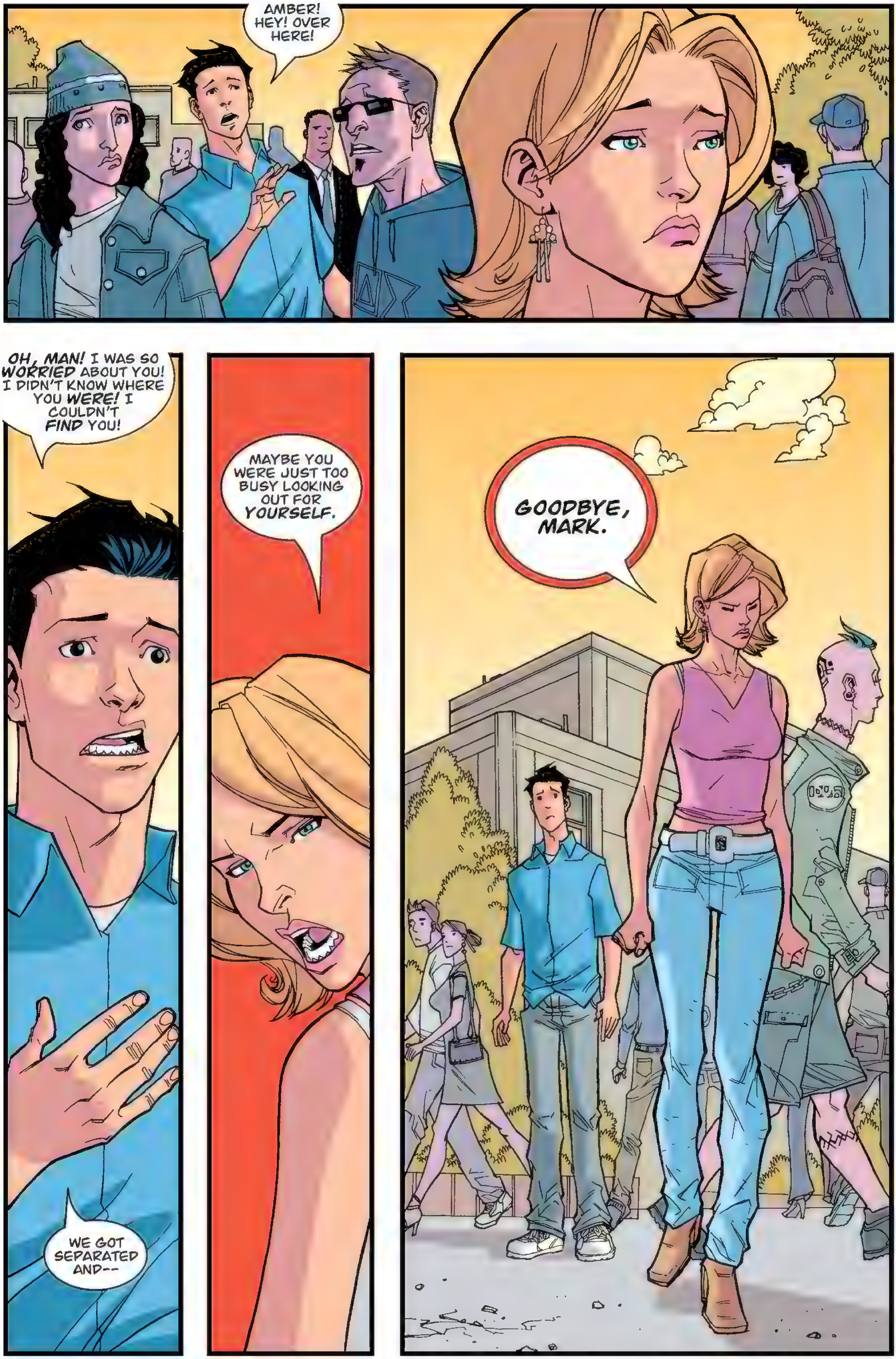

SO, SO FAR?
SO FAR SO GOOD. IT'S ONLY BEEN ONE DAY BUT MY CLASSES SEEM OKAY--NOTHING TOO TERRIBLY DIFFICULT AND I'M STARTING TO GET MY BEARINGS ON THE CAMPUS, SO THINGS ARE GOOD.
IT'S GOING TO **SUCK** WHEN YOU START SCHOOL NEXT WEEK. I MEAN, YOU BEING SO FAR AWAY AND ALL.
IT'S ONLY A TWO-HOUR DRIVE. WOULDN'T BE SUCH A BIG DEAL IF YOU HAD A **CAR.**
YEAH--**NO KIDDING.** I SHOULD **REALLY** LOOK INTO GETTING A CAR.
YEAH! THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO CART YOU AROUND ALL THE TIME!
HEY! NO, POKING--YOU KNOW HOW TICKLISH I AM.
YOU KNOW I'LL SEE YOU **ALL THE TIME.** I'LL BE SKIPPING CLASS LEFT AND RIGHT SO I CAN SPEND THE NIGHT AT YOUR PLACE.
WILL YOU NOW? THANKS FOR THAT ADVANCE NOTICE, CASANOVA.

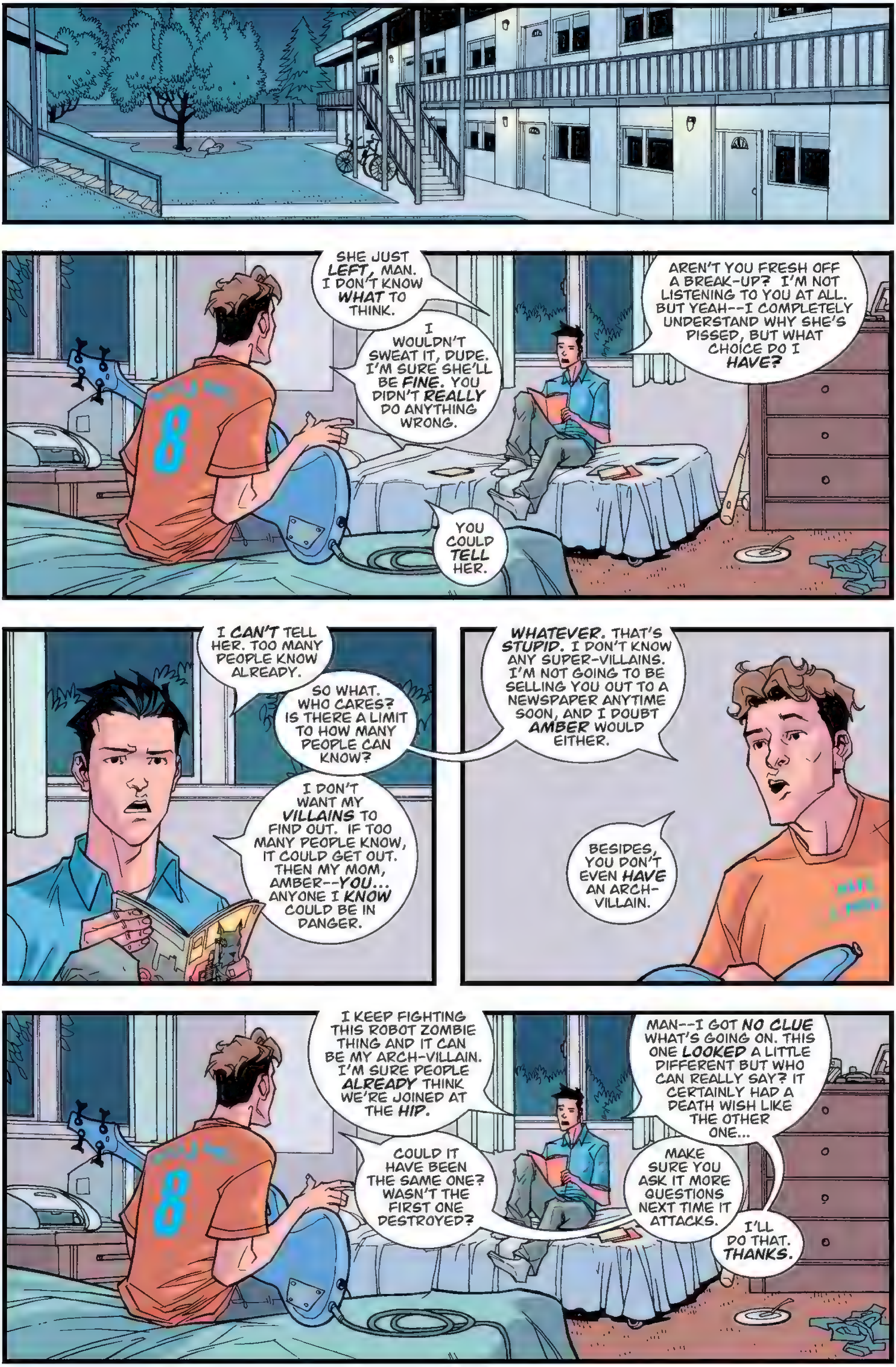
BRA-KOOM!!!
STUDYOLOGY

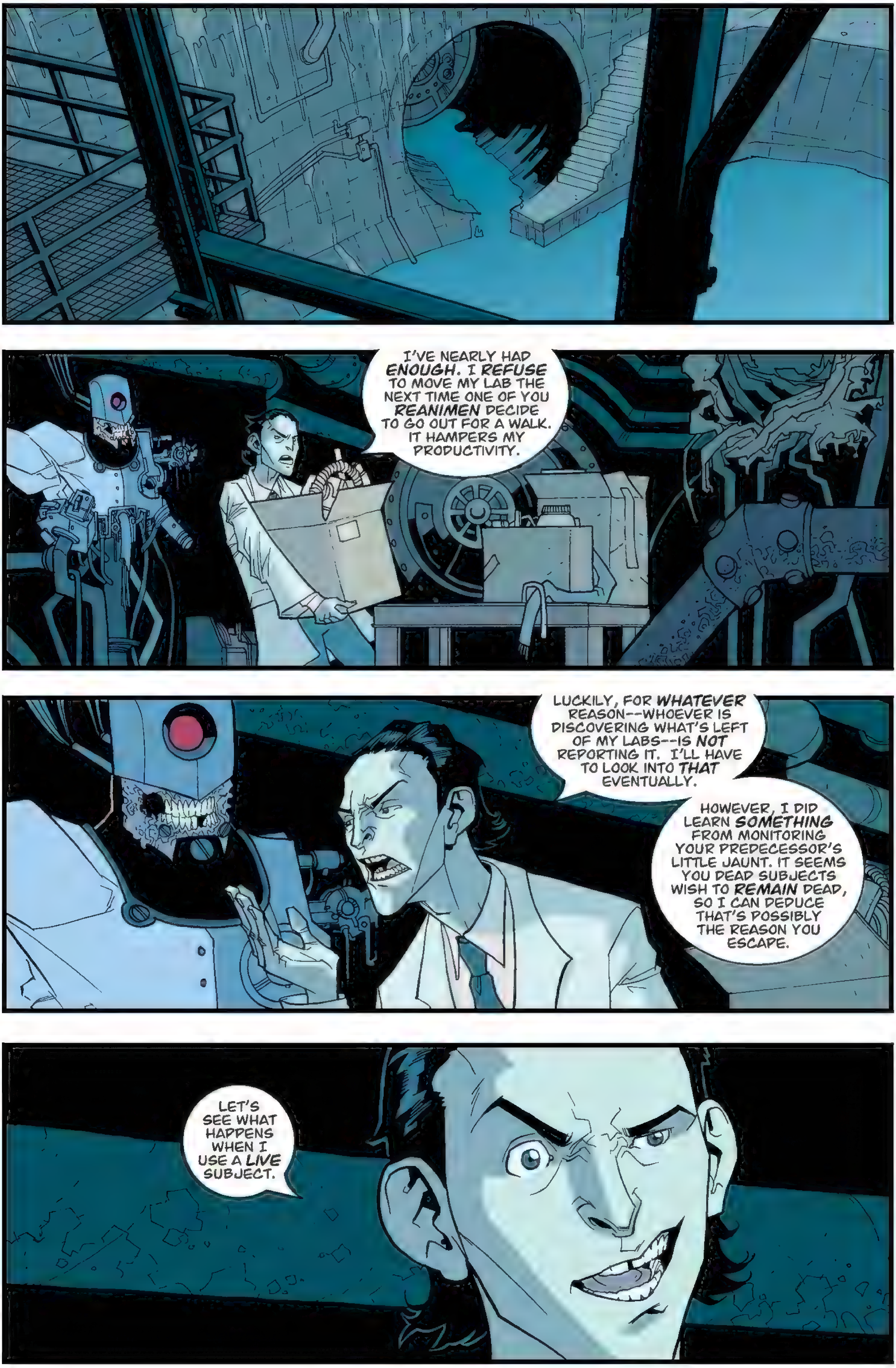

OH GOD, MARK! WHAT IS THAT?!
MARK?
MARK! MARK?!
YOU JUST LEAVE ME?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU JUST LEFT ME!
YOU--
AHHH!!
CHOOM!!


NO WAY, MAN. I'M *NOT* LETTING YOU HIT ME. I REMEMBER HOW STRONG YOU WERE.
SPEAKING OF YOU--WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK? YOU WERE LOOKING KINDA DEAD LAST TIME I SAW YOU.
OF COURSE-- YOU LOOK *KINDA* DEAD *RIGHT NOW.*
LET'S GET AWAY FROM ALL THESE SOFT STUDENTS-- NO NEED TO HURT *THEM,* HUH?
UNGH.
WHAT WAS THAT? YOU TALK NOW?
MUMPH!
DUDE, *CHILL!* YOU CAN FIGHT ME WHEN WE GET BACK ON THE GROUND. IF YOU KEEP *STRUGGLING* I'M GOING TO DROP--
ACK!!
SKRICK!!

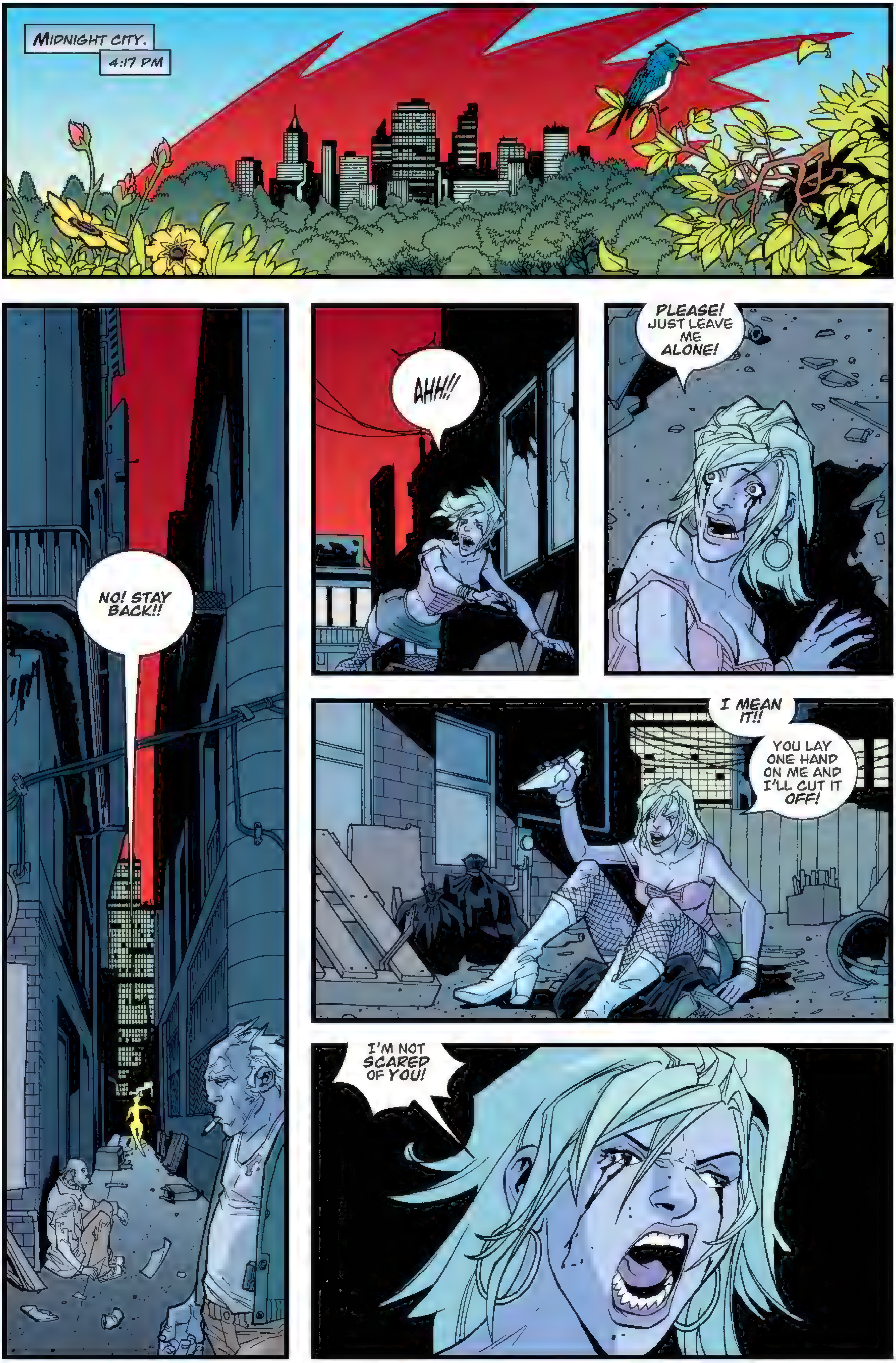
SKRA-GOOOM!!
MAN...
...WHY'D HE HAVE TO GO AND DO *THAT?*


AMBER! HEY! OVER HERE!
OH, MAN! I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU! I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE! I COULDN'T FIND YOU!
WE GOT SEPARATED AND--
MAYBE YOU WERE JUST TOO BUSY LOOKING OUT FOR YOURSELF.
GOODBYE, MARK.

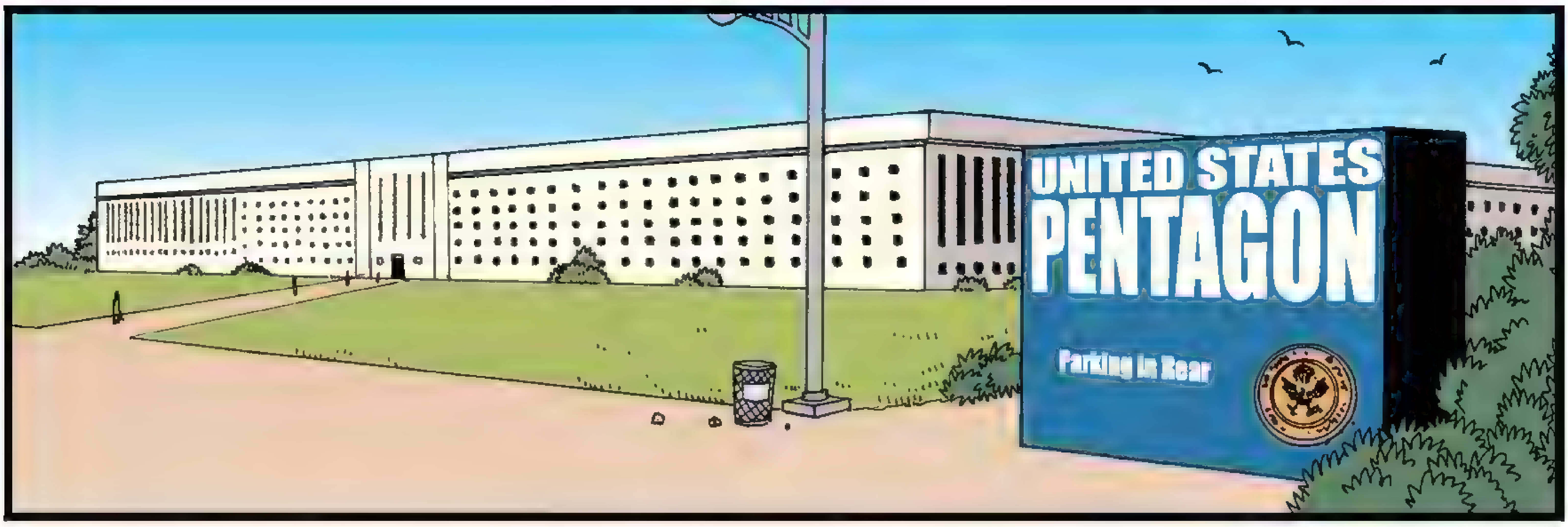

SHE JUST LEFT, MAN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.
I WOULDN'T SWEAT IT, DUDE. I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE. YOU DIDN'T REALLY DO ANYTHING WRONG.
AREN'T YOU FRESH OFF A BREAK-UP? I'M NOT LISTENING TO YOU AT ALL. BUT YEAH--I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND WHY SHE'S PISSED, BUT WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?
YOU COULD TELL HER.
I CAN'T TELL HER. TOO MANY PEOPLE KNOW ALREADY.
SO WHAT. WHO CARES? IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN KNOW?
I DON'T WANT MY VILLAINS TO FIND OUT. IF TOO MANY PEOPLE KNOW, IT COULD GET OUT. THEN MY MOM, AMBER--YOU... ANYONE I KNOW COULD BE IN DANGER.
WHATEVER. THAT'S STUPID. I DON'T KNOW ANY SUPER-VILLAINS. I'M NOT GOING TO BE SELLING YOU OUT TO A NEWSPAPER ANYTIME SOON, AND I DOUBT AMBER WOULD EITHER.
BESIDES, YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE AN ARCH-VILLAIN.
I KEEP FIGHTING THIS ROBOT ZOMBIE THING AND IT CAN BE MY ARCH-VILLAIN. I'M SURE PEOPLE ALREADY THINK WE'RE JOINED AT THE HIP.
COULD IT HAVE BEEN THE SAME ONE? WASN'T THE FIRST ONE DESTROYED?
MAN--I GOT NO CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON. THIS ONE LOOKED A LITTLE DIFFERENT BUT WHO CAN REALLY SAY? IT CERTAINLY HAD A DEATH WISH LIKE THE OTHER ONE...
MAKE SURE YOU ASK IT MORE QUESTIONS NEXT TIME IT ATTACKS.
I'LL DO THAT. THANKS.

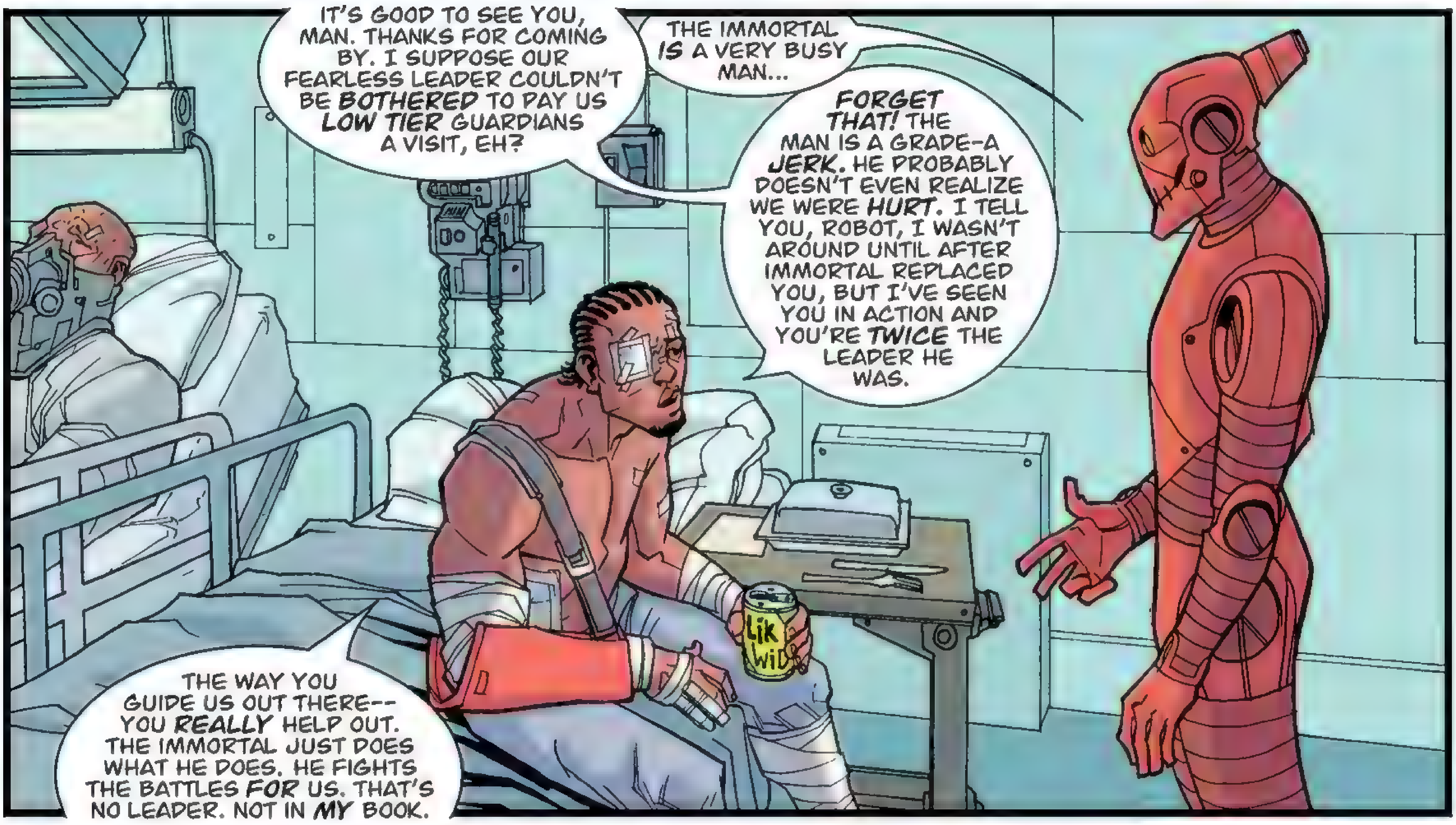

I'VE NEARLY HAD **ENOUGH**. I **REFUSE** TO MOVE MY LAB THE NEXT TIME ONE OF YOU **REANIMEN** DECIDE TO GO OUT FOR A WALK. IT HAMPERS MY PRODUCTIVITY.
LUCKILY, FOR **WHATEVER** REASON--WHOEVER IS DISCOVERING WHAT'S LEFT OF MY LABS--IS **NOT** REPORTING IT. I'LL HAVE TO LOOK INTO **THAT** EVENTUALLY.
HOWEVER, I DID LEARN **SOMETHING** FROM MONITORING YOUR PREDECESSOR'S LITTLE JAUNT. IT SEEMS YOU DEAD SUBJECTS WISH TO **REMAIN** DEAD, SO I CAN DEDUCE THAT'S POSSIBLY THE REASON YOU ESCAPE.
LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I USE A **LIVE** SUBJECT.

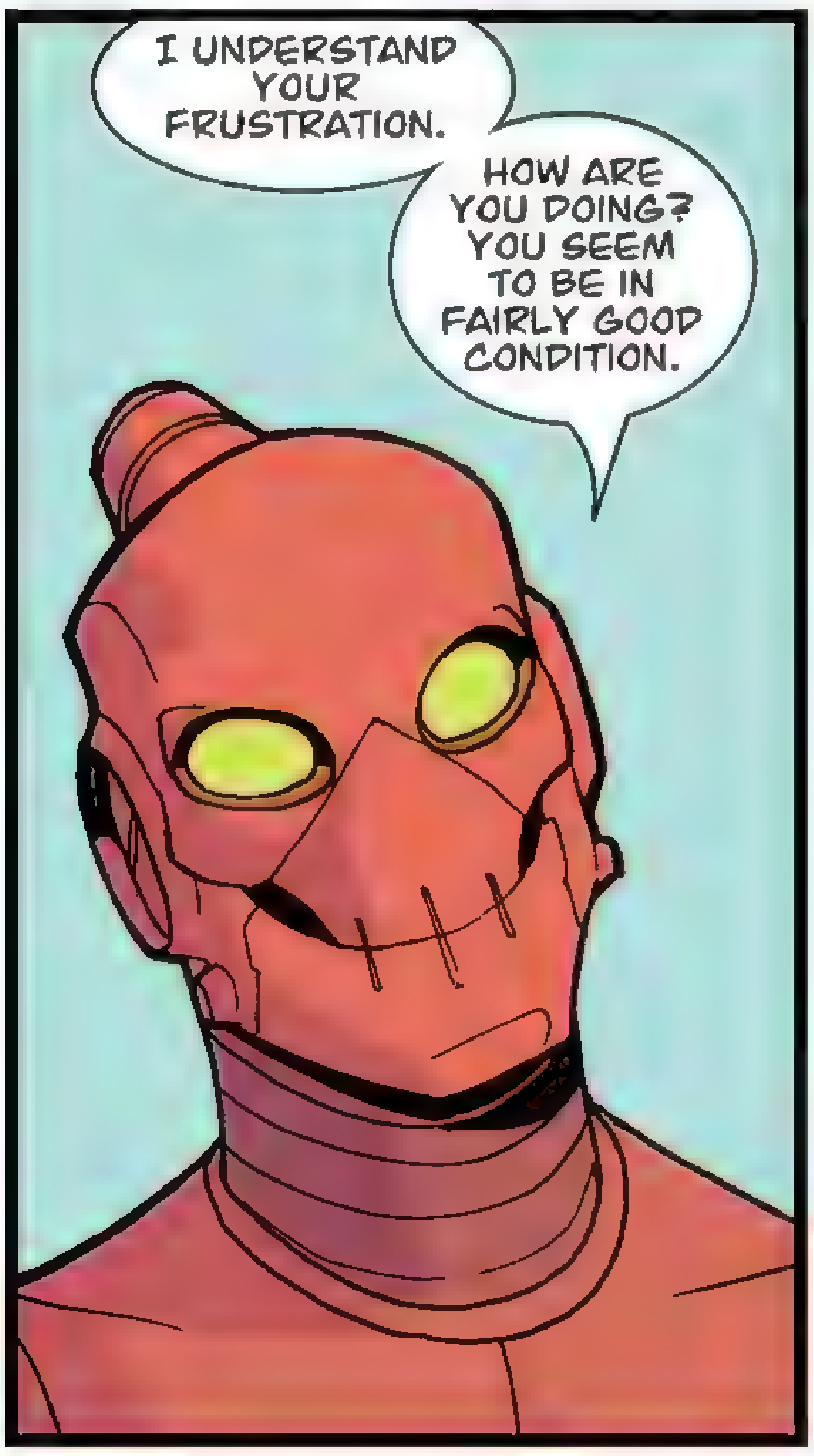
ISSUE TWENTY-ONE

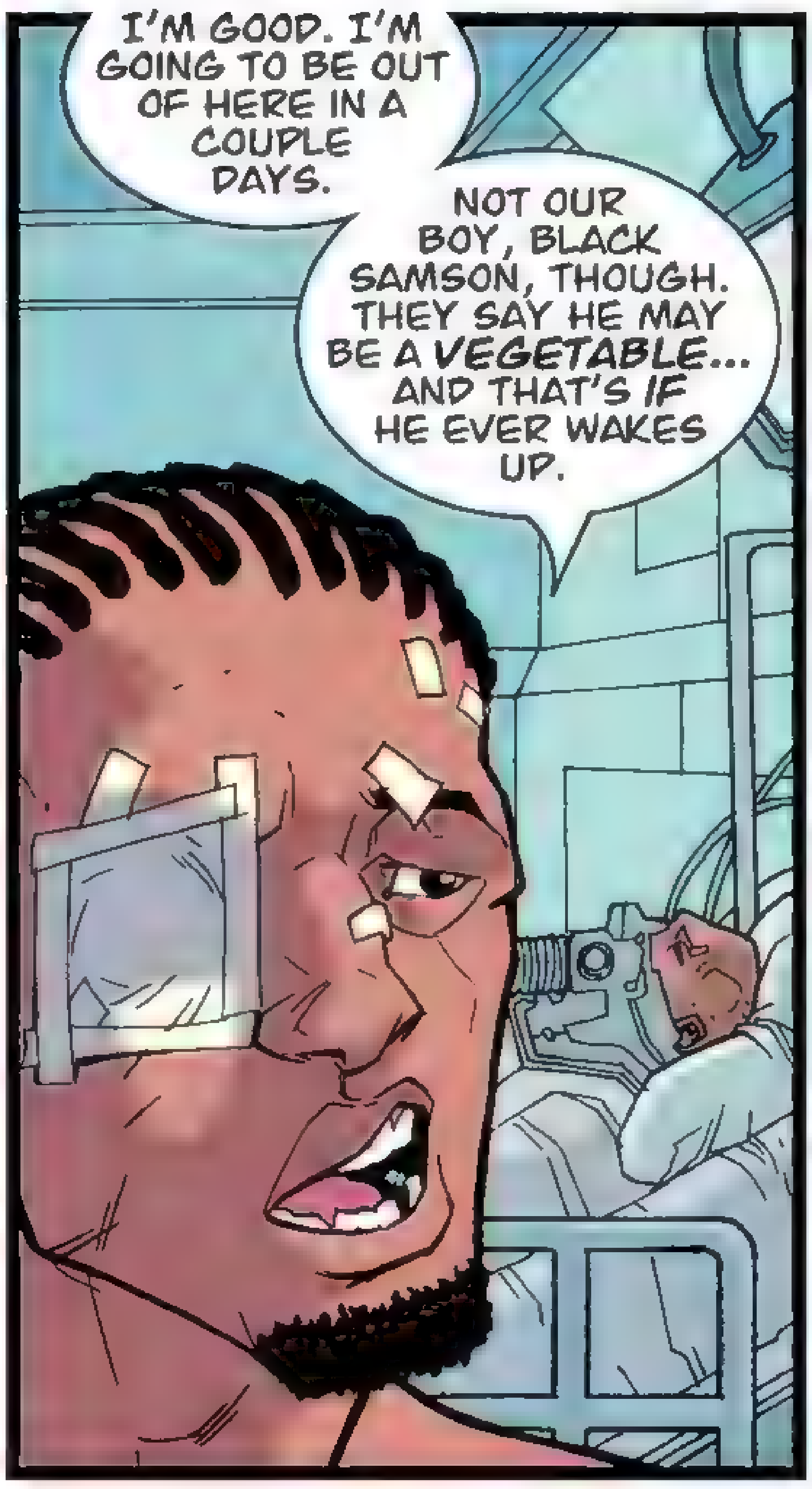

MIDNIGHT CITY.
4:17 PM
NO! STAY BACK!!
AHH!!
PLEASE! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
I MEAN IT!!
YOU LAY ONE HAND ON ME AND I'LL CUT IT OFF!
I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU!

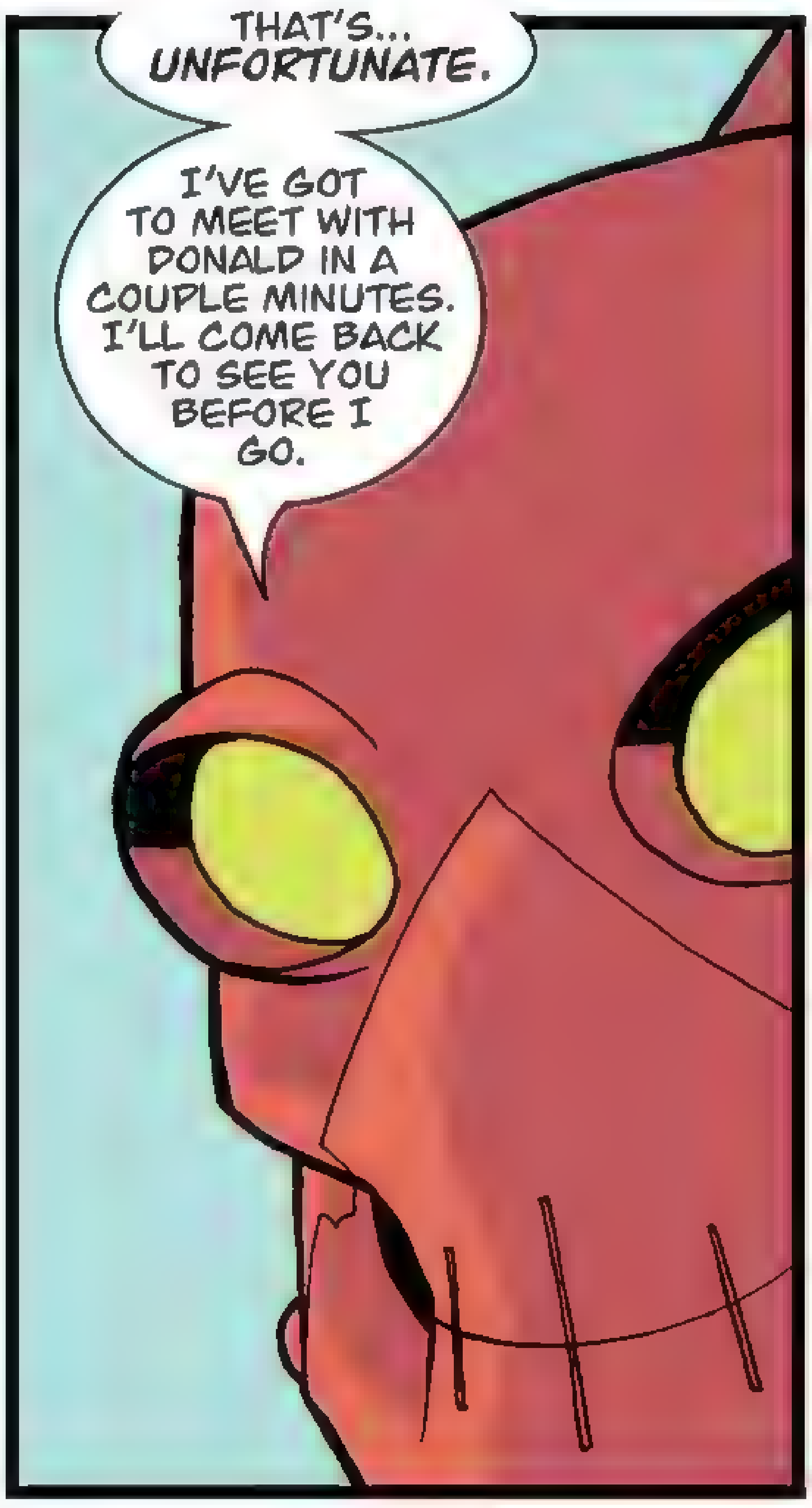
YOU WILL BE!

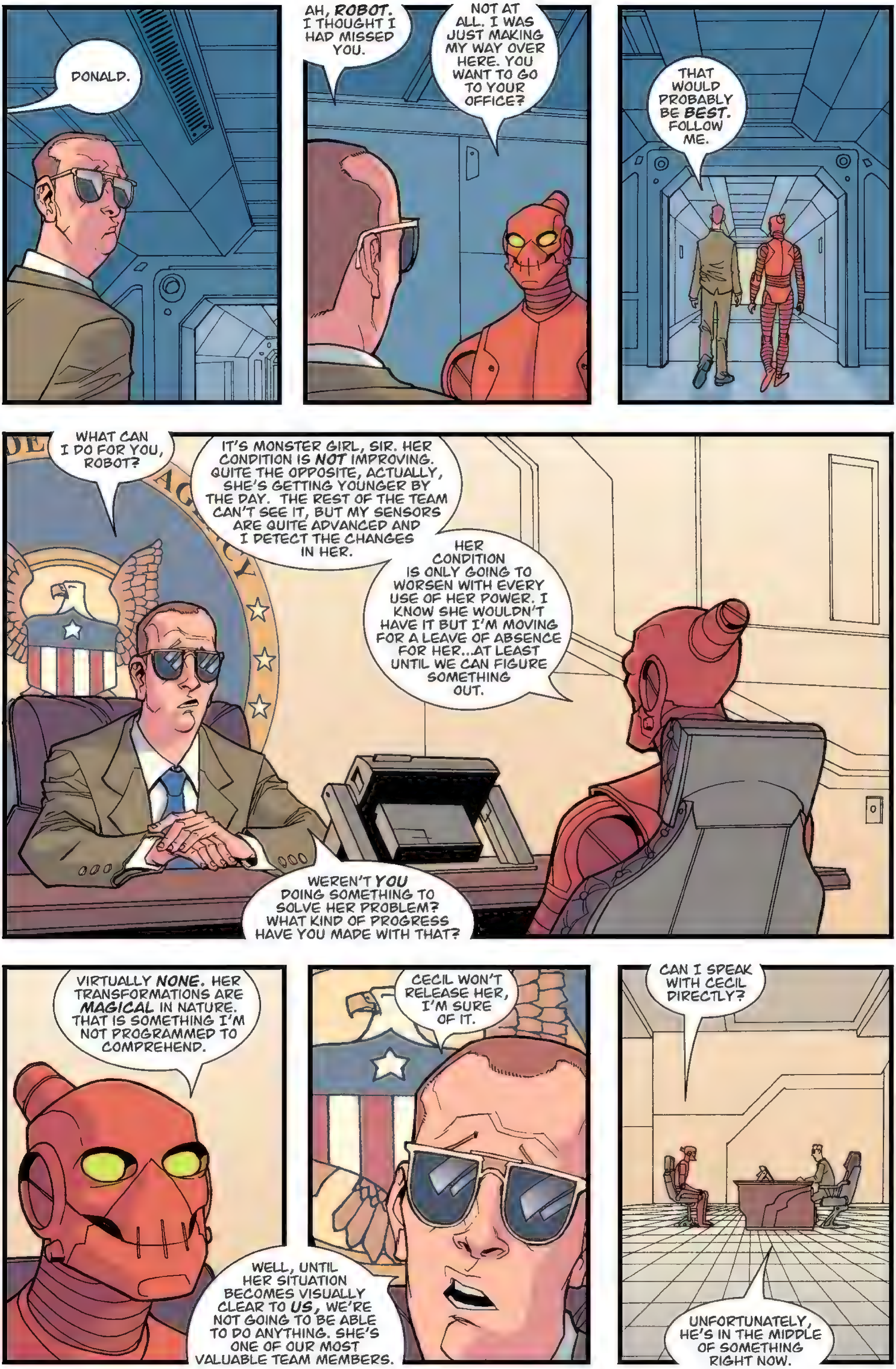

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

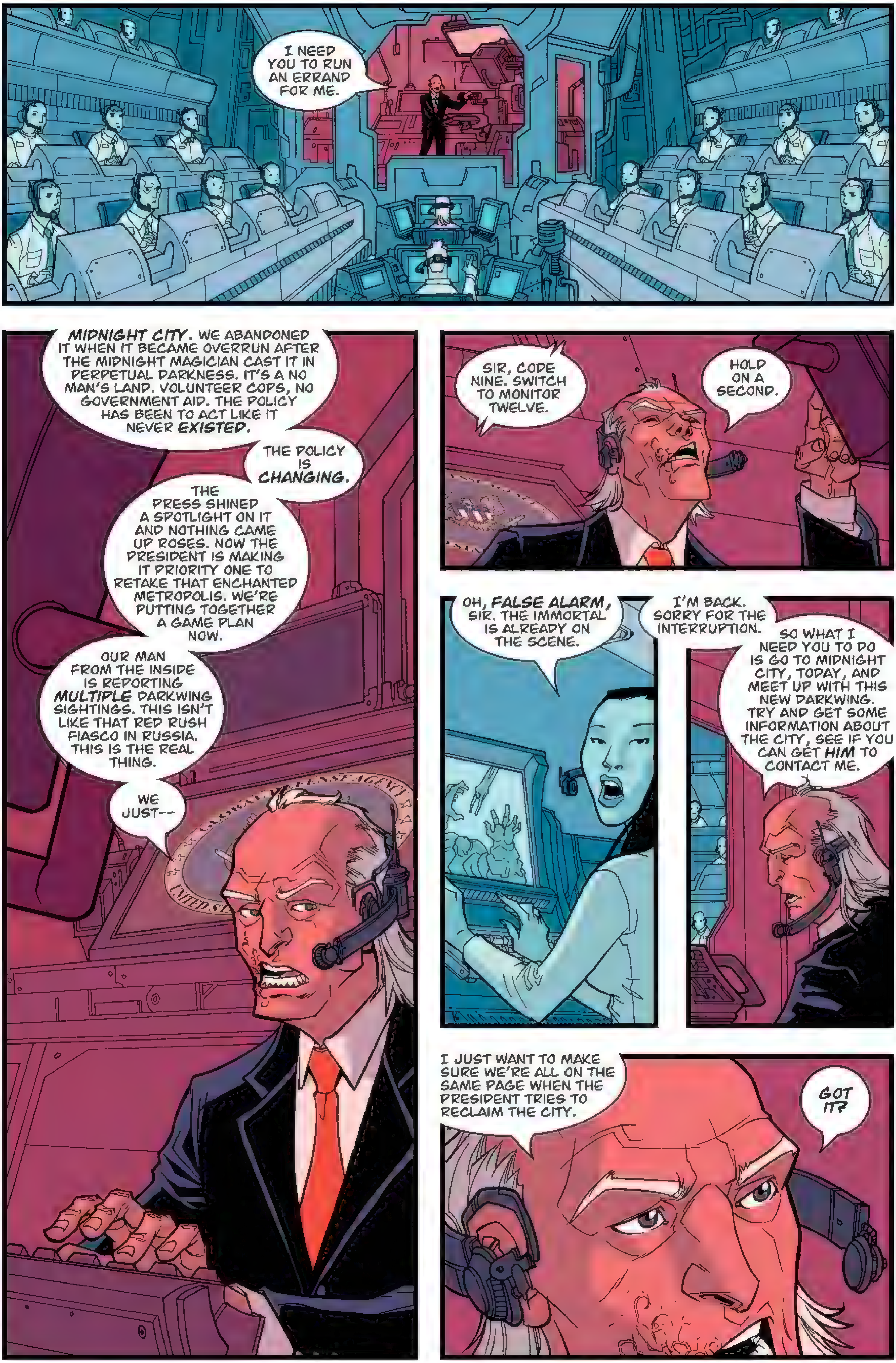

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MAN. THANKS FOR COMING BY. I SUPPOSE OUR FEARLESS LEADER COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO PAY US LOW TIER GUARDIANS A VISIT, EH?
THE IMMORTAL IS A VERY BUSY MAN...
FORGET THAT! THE MAN IS A GRADE-A JERK. HE PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN REALIZE WE WERE HURT. I TELL YOU, ROBOT, I WASN'T AROUND UNTIL AFTER IMMORTAL REPLACED YOU, BUT I'VE SEEN YOU IN ACTION AND YOU'RE TWICE THE LEADER HE WAS.
Lik Wid
THE WAY YOU GUIDE US OUT THERE-- YOU REALLY HELP OUT. THE IMMORTAL JUST DOES WHAT HE DOES. HE FIGHTS THE BATTLES FOR US. THAT'S NO LEADER. NOT IN MY BOOK.


I UNDERSTAND YOUR FRUSTRATION.
HOW ARE YOU DOING? YOU SEEM TO BE IN FAIRLY GOOD CONDITION.

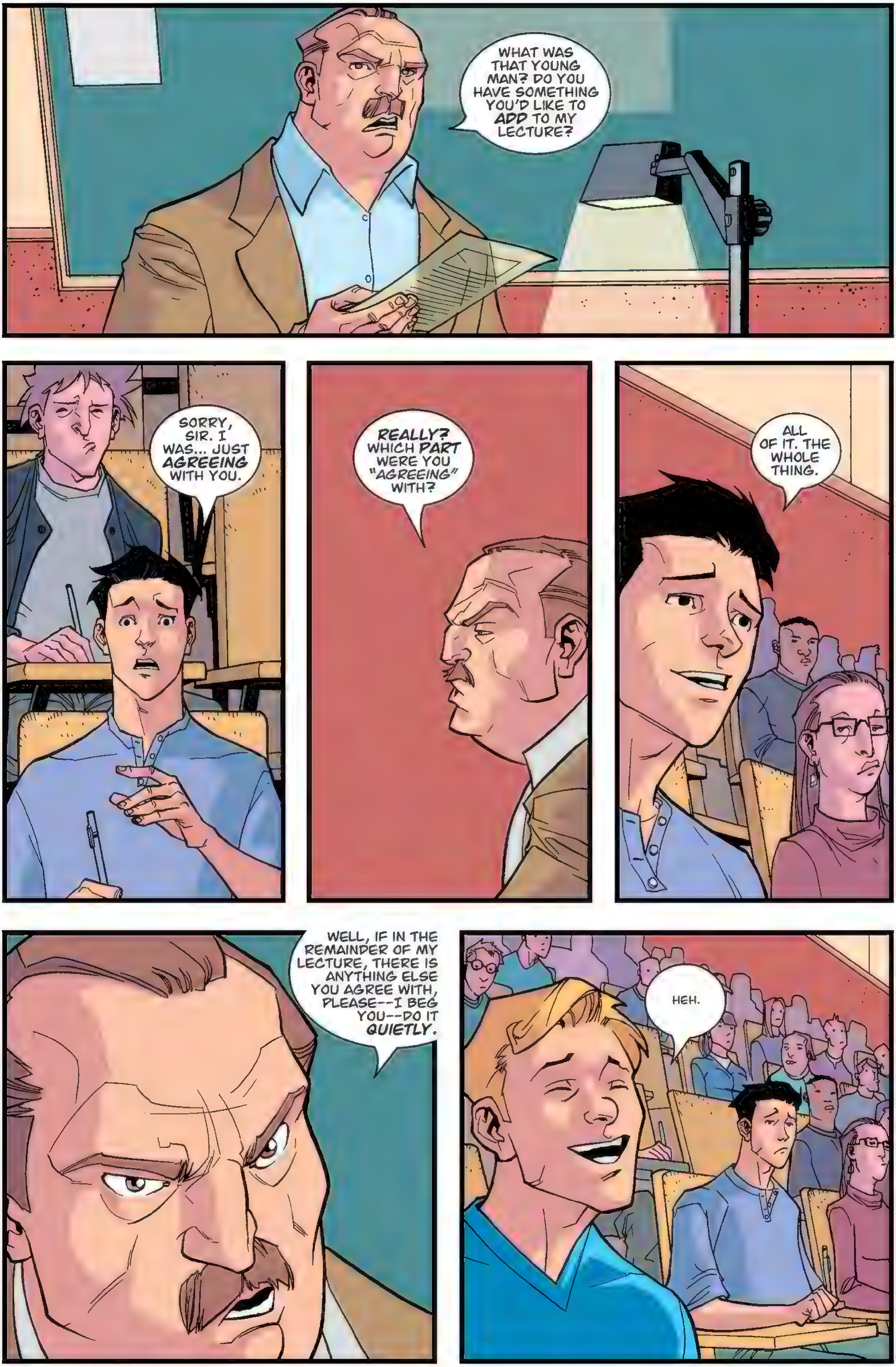

I'M GOOD. I'M GOING TO BE OUT OF HERE IN A COUPLE DAYS.
NOT OUR BOY, BLACK SAMSON, THOUGH. THEY SAY HE MAY BE A VEGETABLE... AND THAT'S IF HE EVER WAKES UP.

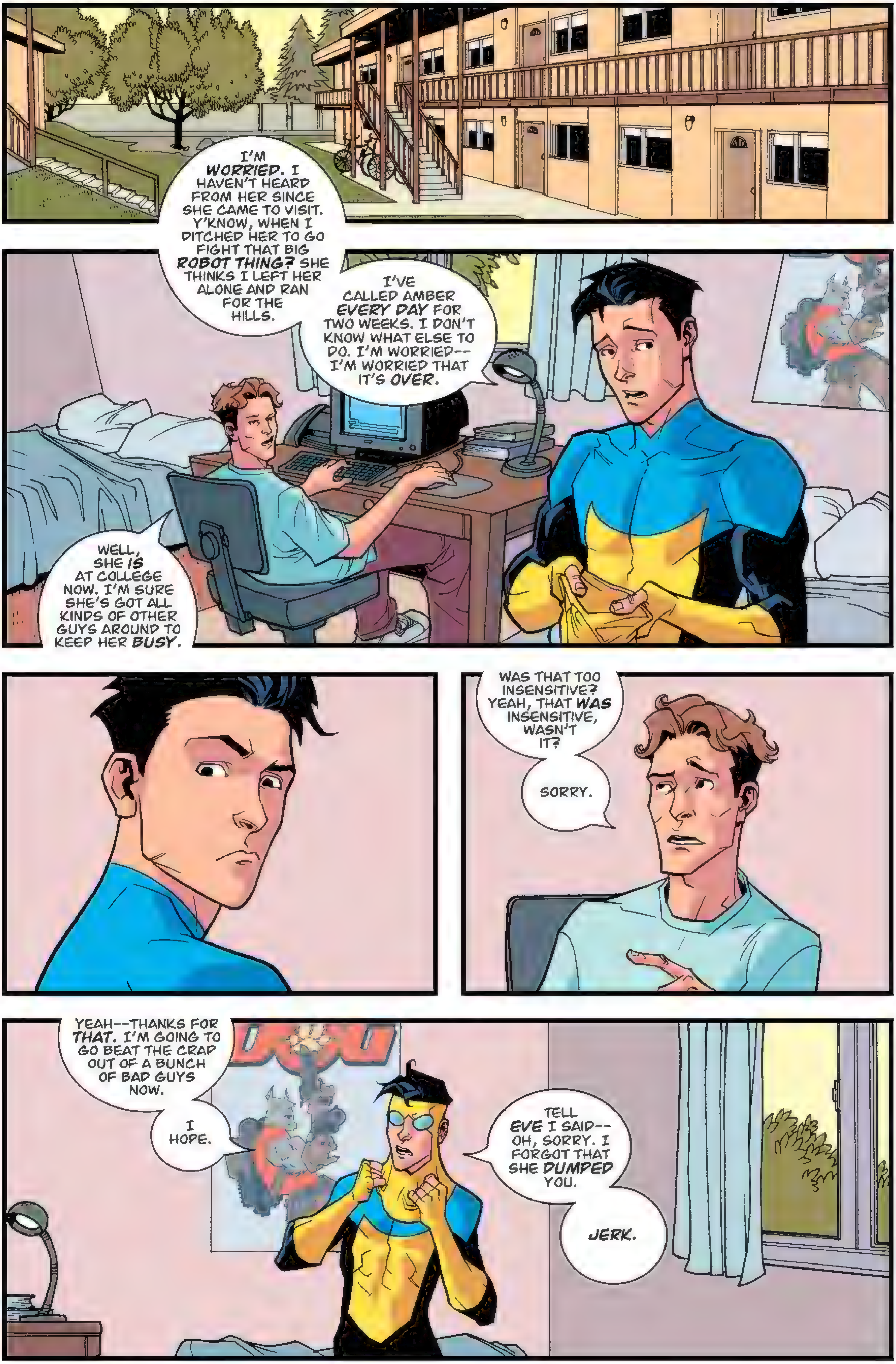

THAT'S... UNFORTUNATE.
I'VE GOT TO MEET WITH DONALD IN A COUPLE MINUTES. I'LL COME BACK TO SEE YOU BEFORE I GO.

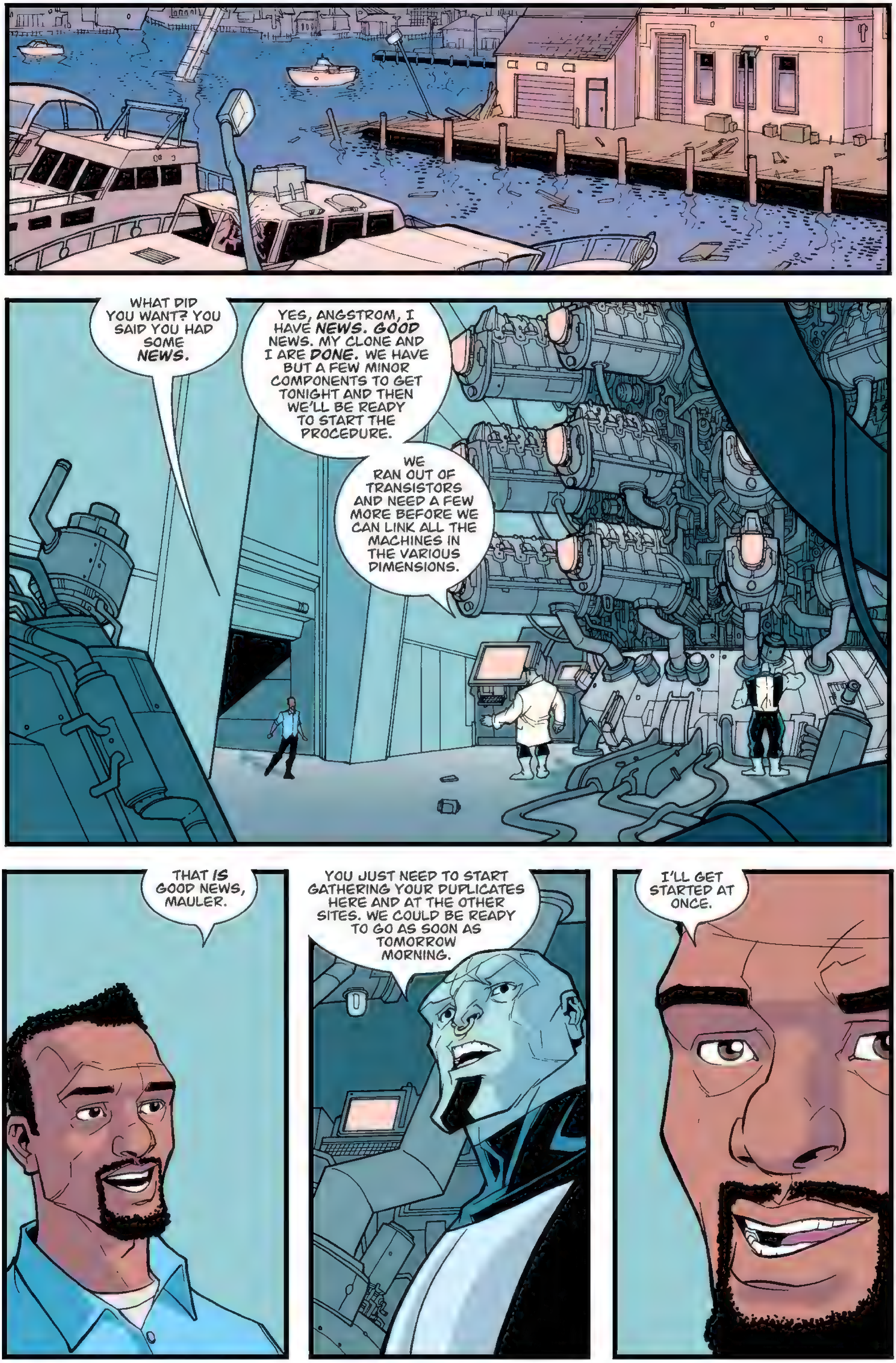

DONALD.
AH, *ROBOT*. I THOUGHT I HAD MISSED YOU.
NOT AT ALL. I WAS JUST MAKING MY WAY OVER HERE. YOU WANT TO GO TO YOUR OFFICE?
THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE *BEST*. FOLLOW ME.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, ROBOT?
IT'S MONSTER GIRL, SIR. HER CONDITION IS *NOT* IMPROVING. QUITE THE OPPOSITE, ACTUALLY, SHE'S GETTING YOUNGER BY THE DAY. THE REST OF THE TEAM CAN'T SEE IT, BUT MY SENSORS ARE QUITE ADVANCED AND I DETECT THE CHANGES IN HER.
HER CONDITION IS ONLY GOING TO WORSEN WITH EVERY USE OF HER POWER. I KNOW SHE WOULDN'T HAVE IT BUT I'M MOVING FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR HER...AT LEAST UNTIL WE CAN FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
WEREN'T *YOU* DOING SOMETHING TO SOLVE HER PROBLEM? WHAT KIND OF PROGRESS HAVE YOU MADE WITH THAT?
VIRTUALLY *NONE*. HER TRANSFORMATIONS ARE *MAGICAL* IN NATURE. THAT IS SOMETHING I'M NOT PROGRAMMED TO COMPREHEND.
CECIL WON'T RELEASE HER, I'M SURE OF IT.
WELL, UNTIL HER SITUATION BECOMES VISUALLY CLEAR TO *US*, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING. SHE'S ONE OF OUR MOST VALUABLE TEAM MEMBERS.
CAN I SPEAK WITH CECIL DIRECTLY?
UNFORTUNATELY, HE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING RIGHT NOW.

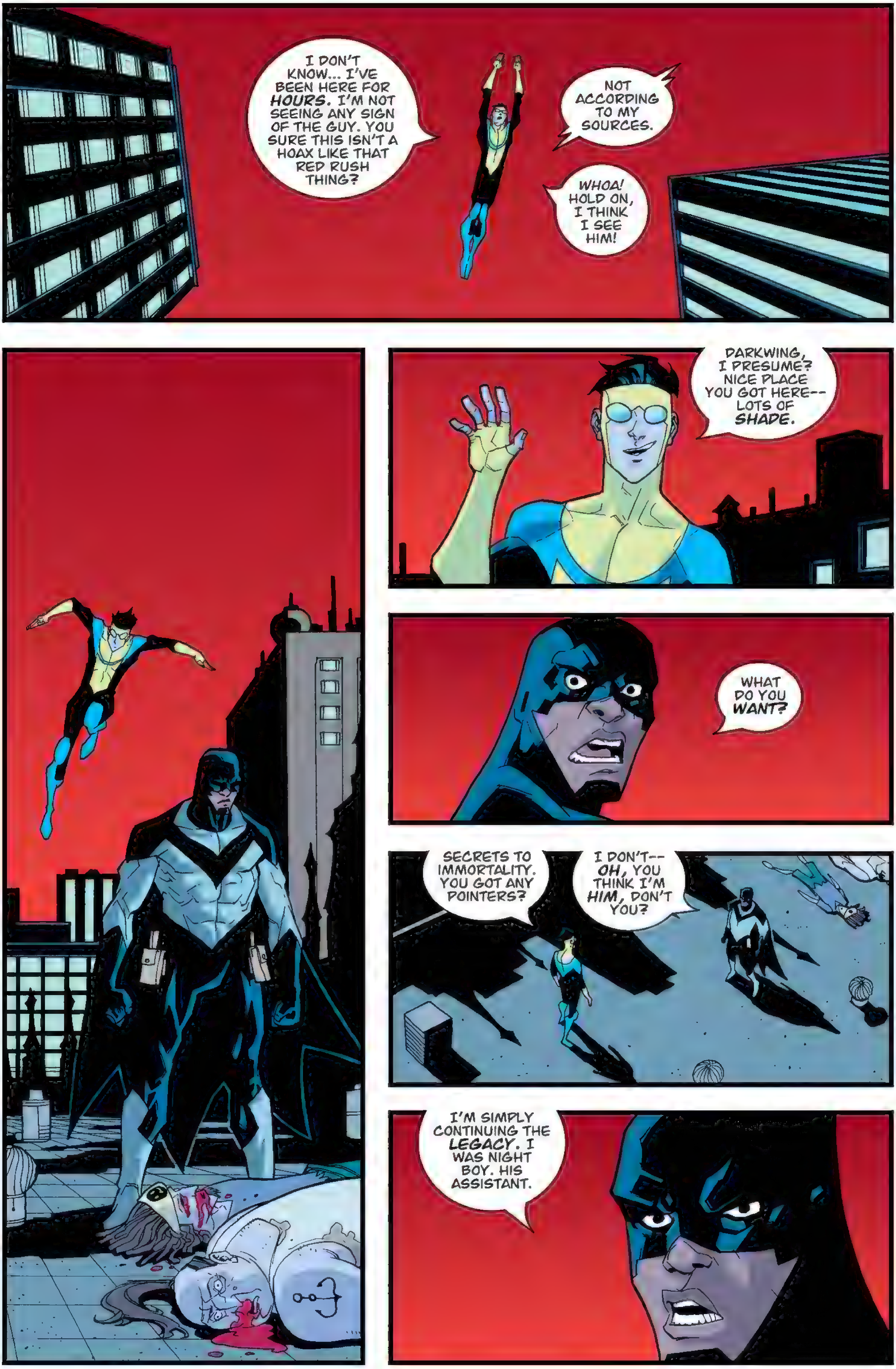

I NEED YOU TO RUN AN ERRAND FOR ME.
MIDNIGHT CITY. WE ABANDONED IT WHEN IT BECAME OVERRUN AFTER THE MIDNIGHT MAGICIAN CAST IT IN PERPETUAL DARKNESS. IT'S A NO MAN'S LAND. VOLUNTEER COPS, NO GOVERNMENT AID. THE POLICY HAS BEEN TO ACT LIKE IT NEVER EXISTED.
THE POLICY IS CHANGING.
THE PRESS SHINED A SPOTLIGHT ON IT AND NOTHING CAME UP ROSES. NOW THE PRESIDENT IS MAKING IT PRIORITY ONE TO RETAKE THAT ENCHANTED METROPOLIS. WE'RE PUTTING TOGETHER A GAME PLAN NOW.
OUR MAN FROM THE INSIDE IS REPORTING MULTIPLE DARKWING SIGHTINGS. THIS ISN'T LIKE THAT RED RUSH FIASCO IN RUSSIA. THIS IS THE REAL THING.
WE JUST--
SIR, CODE NINE. SWITCH TO MONITOR TWELVE.
HOLD ON A SECOND.
OH, FALSE ALARM, SIR. THE IMMORTAL IS ALREADY ON THE SCENE.
I'M BACK. SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION.
SO WHAT I NEED YOU TO DO IS GO TO MIDNIGHT CITY, TODAY, AND MEET UP WITH THIS NEW DARKWING. TRY AND GET SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITY, SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIM TO CONTACT ME.
I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE WHEN THE PRESIDENT TRIES TO RECLAIM THE CITY.
GOT IT?

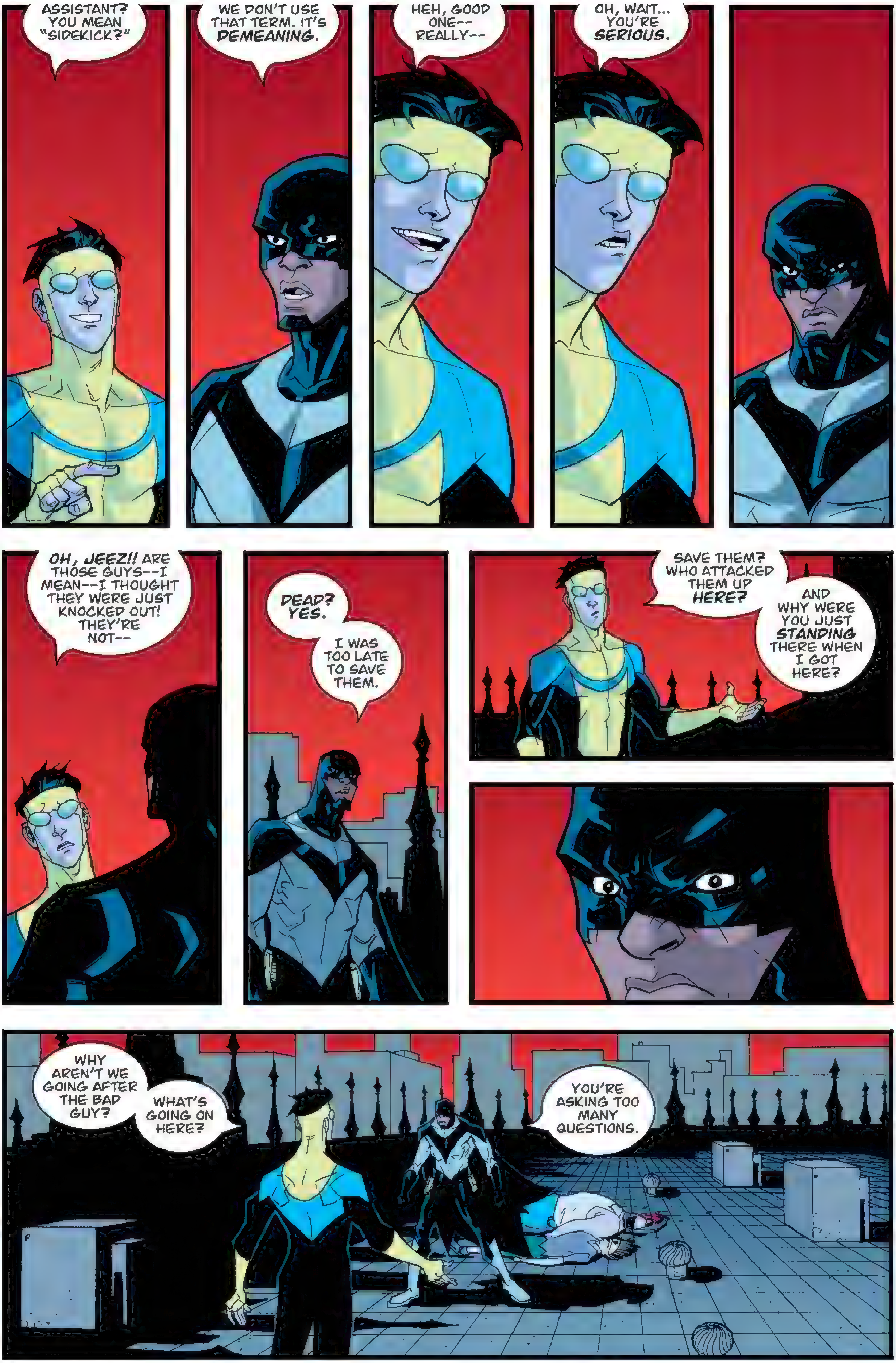
YES SIR.


WHAT WAS THAT YOUNG MAN? DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO ADD TO MY LECTURE?
SORRY, SIR. I WAS... JUST AGREEING WITH YOU.
REALLY? WHICH PART WERE YOU "AGREEING" WITH?
ALL OF IT. THE WHOLE THING.
WELL, IF IN THE REMAINDER OF MY LECTURE, THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE YOU AGREE WITH, PLEASE--I BEG YOU--DO IT QUIETLY.
HEH.


I'M WORRIED. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE SHE CAME TO VISIT. Y'KNOW, WHEN I DITCHED HER TO GO FIGHT THAT BIG ROBOT THING? SHE THINKS I LEFT HER ALONE AND RAN FOR THE HILLS.
I'VE CALLED AMBER EVERY DAY FOR TWO WEEKS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. I'M WORRIED-- I'M WORRIED THAT IT'S OVER.
WELL, SHE IS AT COLLEGE NOW. I'M SURE SHE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF OTHER GUYS AROUND TO KEEP HER BUSY.
WAS THAT TOO INSENSITIVE? YEAH, THAT WAS INSENSITIVE, WASN'T IT?
SORRY.
YEAH--THANKS FOR THAT. I'M GOING TO GO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS NOW.
I HOPE.
TELL EVE I SAID-- OH, SORRY. I FORGOT THAT SHE DUMPED YOU.
JERK.

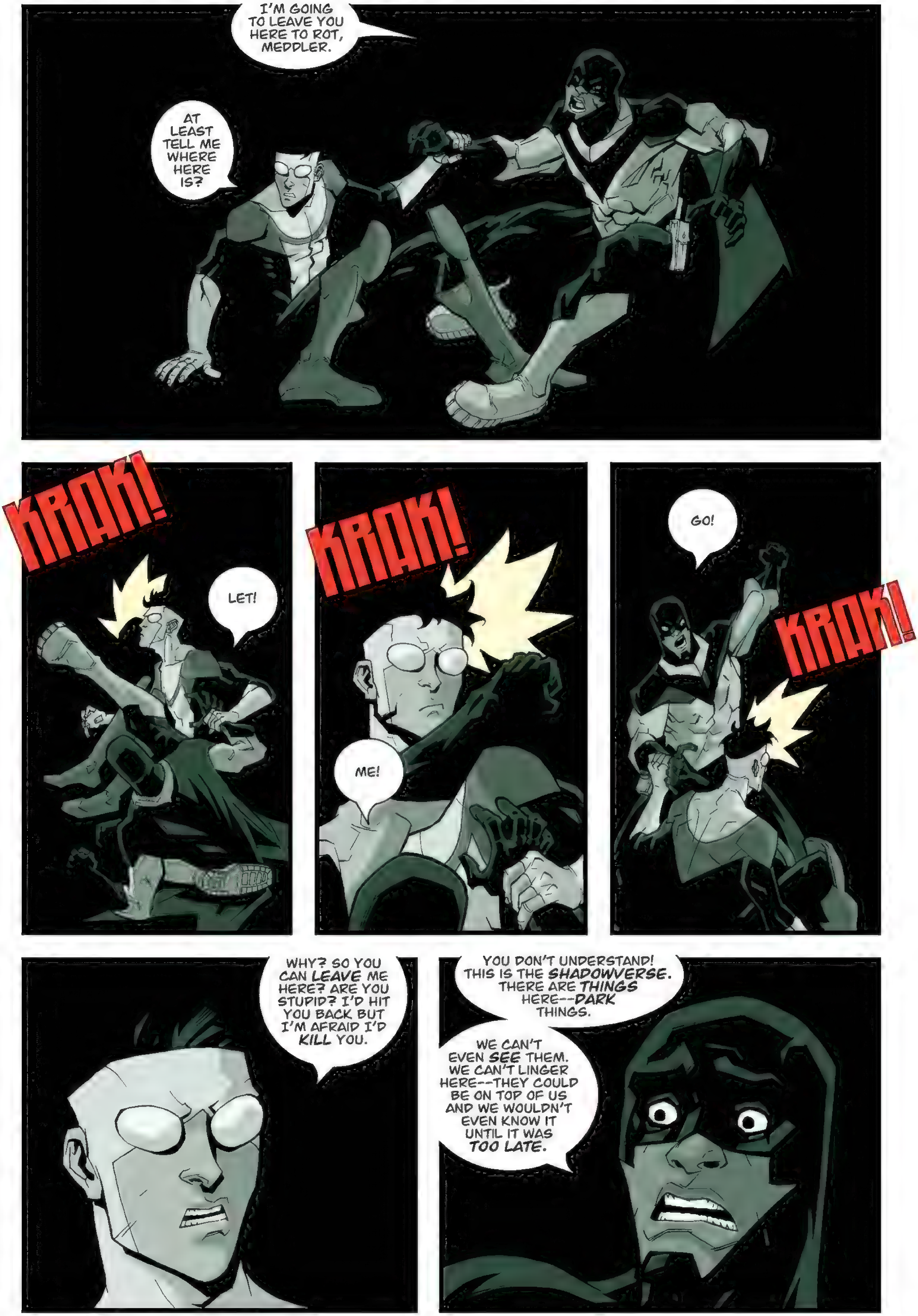

WHAT DID YOU WANT? YOU SAID YOU HAD SOME *NEWS.*
YES, ANGSTROM, I HAVE *NEWS. GOOD* NEWS. MY CLONE AND I ARE *DONE.* WE HAVE BUT A FEW MINOR COMPONENTS TO GET TONIGHT AND THEN WE'LL BE READY TO START THE PROCEDURE.
WE RAN OUT OF TRANSISTORS AND NEED A FEW MORE BEFORE WE CAN LINK ALL THE MACHINES IN THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS.
THAT *IS* GOOD NEWS, MAULER.
YOU JUST NEED TO START GATHERING YOUR DUPLICATES HERE AND AT THE OTHER SITES. WE COULD BE READY TO GO AS SOON AS TOMORROW MORNING.
I'LL GET STARTED AT ONCE.

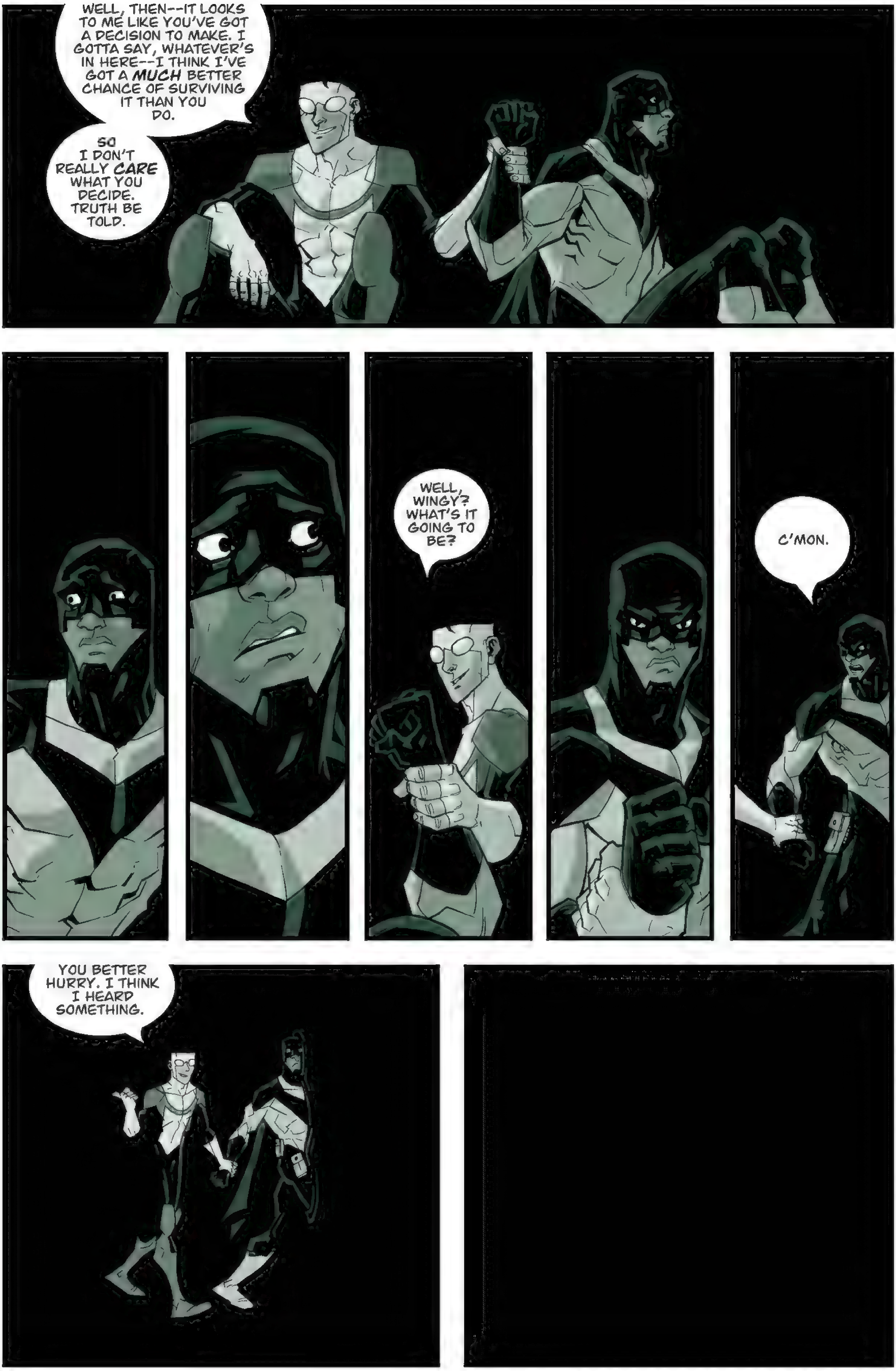

I DON'T KNOW... I'VE BEEN HERE FOR **HOURS.** I'M NOT SEEING ANY SIGN OF THE GUY. YOU SURE THIS ISN'T A HOAX LIKE THAT RED RUSH THING?
NOT ACCORDING TO MY SOURCES.
WHOA! HOLD ON, I THINK I SEE HIM!
DARKWING, I PRESUME? NICE PLACE YOU GOT HERE-- LOTS OF **SHADE.**
WHAT DO YOU **WANT?**
SECRETS TO IMMORTALITY. YOU GOT ANY POINTERS?
I DON'T-- **OH,** YOU THINK I'M **HIM,** DON'T YOU?
I'M SIMPLY CONTINUING THE **LEGACY.** I WAS NIGHT BOY. HIS ASSISTANT.

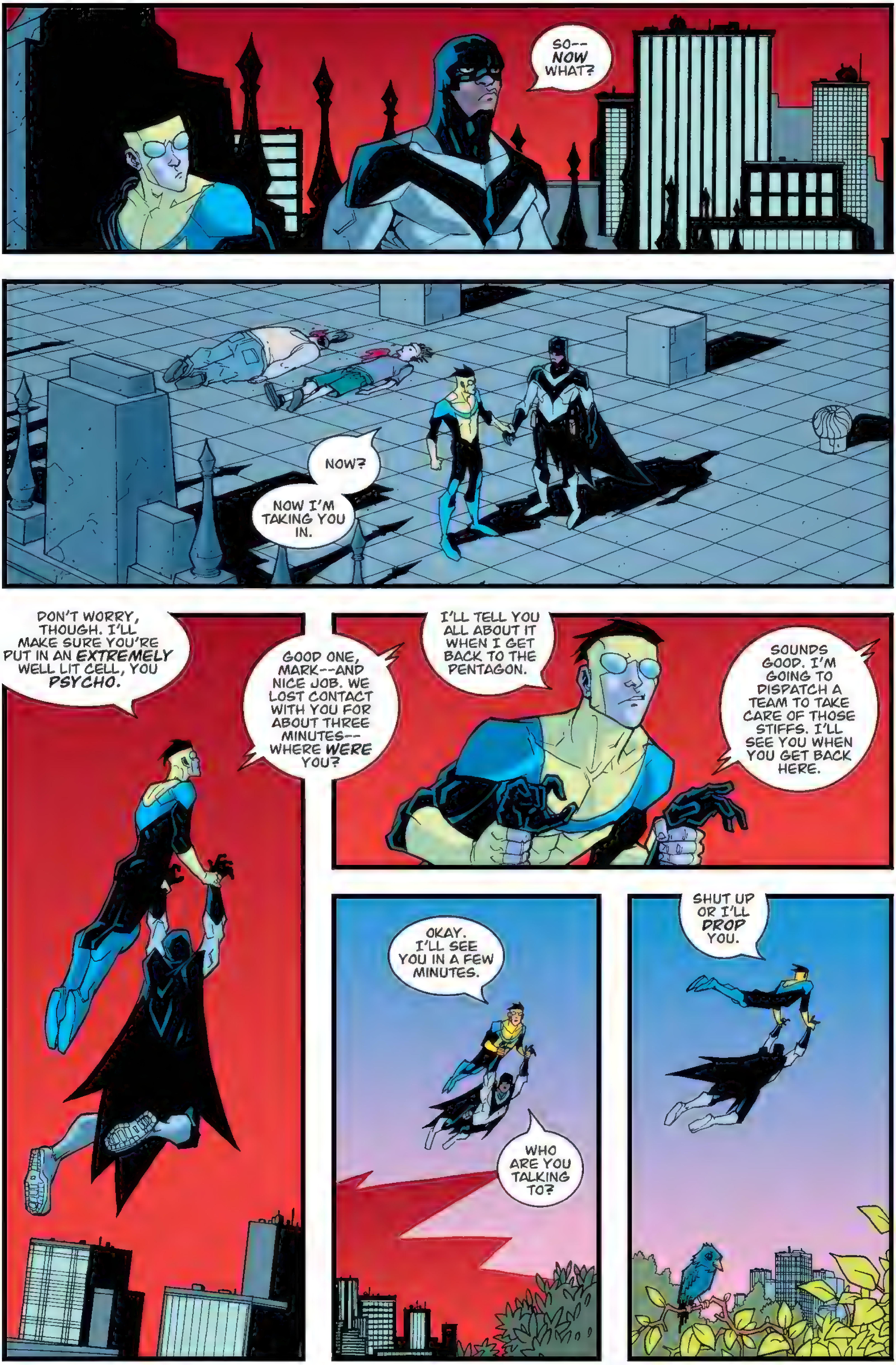

ASSISTANT? YOU MEAN "SIDEKICK?"
WE DON'T USE THAT TERM. IT'S **DEMEANING.**
HEH, GOOD ONE-- REALLY--
OH, WAIT... YOU'RE **SERIOUS.**
OH, JEEZ!! ARE THOSE GUYS--I MEAN--I THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST KNOCKED OUT! THEY'RE NOT--
DEAD? YES.
I WAS TOO LATE TO SAVE THEM.
SAVE THEM? WHO ATTACKED THEM UP **HERE?**
AND WHY WERE YOU JUST **STANDING** THERE WHEN I GOT HERE?
WHY AREN'T WE GOING AFTER THE BAD GUY?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
YOU'RE ASKING TOO MANY QUESTIONS.

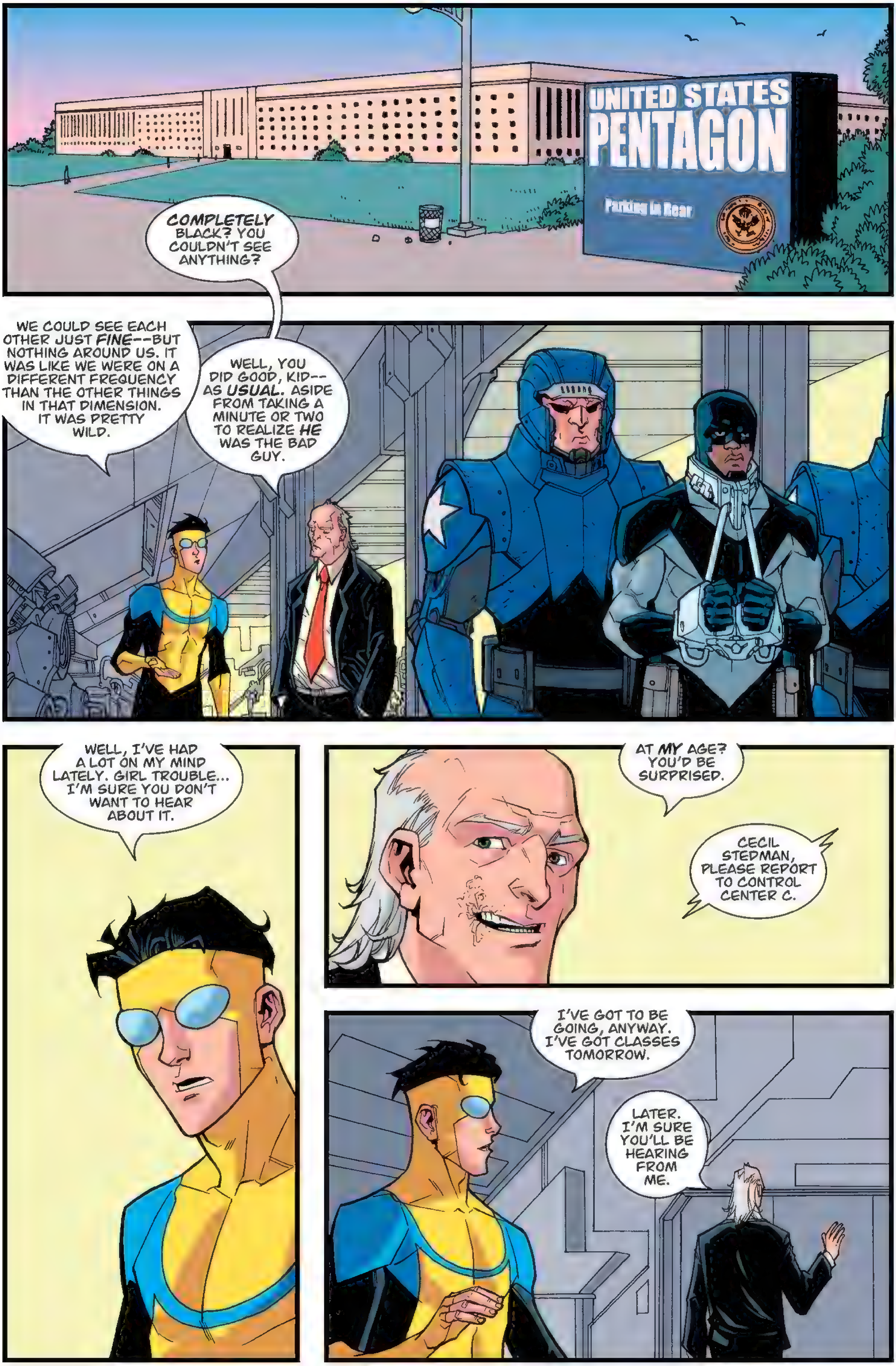
WELL--GIVE ME AT LEAST *ONE* ANSWER! WHY ARE YOU ATTACKING ME?
AM I *MISSING* SOMETHING HERE?
IT'S *HIM*, MARK. *HE'S* THE ONE WHO KILLED THEM. THE KID'S LOST IT. TAKE HIM DOWN.
MAN-- *THAT'S* EMBARRASSING. GOTCHA, WILL DO.
TALKING TO YOURSELF? HMPH. FIGURES.
CRAZY MUST RUN IN THE FAMILY.
I'M NOT THE ONE UP HERE KILLING GUYS.
DID YOU *REALLY* EXPECT THAT TO DO SOMETHING?
YES.
DISTRACT YOU.
KRAK!

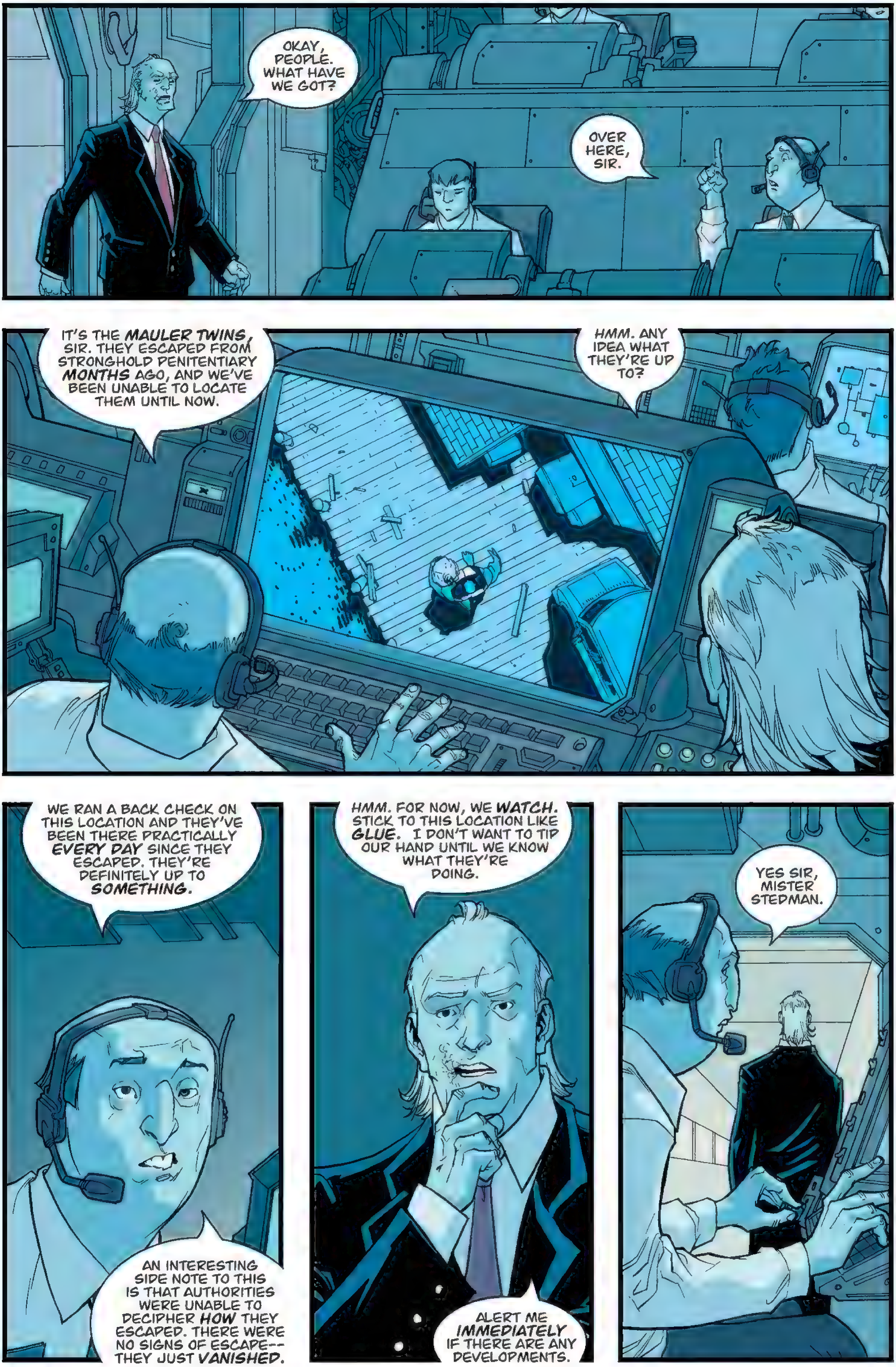
I FELT THAT-- WHAT GIVES? AREN'T YOU JUST A NORMAL GUY LIKE THE ORIGINAL?
NOT QUITE. MY PREDECESSOR WAS DEVELOPING THIS MICRO THIN EXOSKELETON BEFORE YOUR FATHER KILLED HIM.
IT'S QUITE USEFUL.
BUT THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING OF MY POWERS.
SEE? I'M FAR FROM A "NORMAL GUY".
THOP!
I SAID I FELT THAT, NOT THAT IT HURT. DON'T GET TOO CARRIED AWAY, OKAY?
POW!!
IN FACT, I THINK I'LL PUT A STOP TO THAT RIGHT NOW.
GOOD IDEA!
ULP.

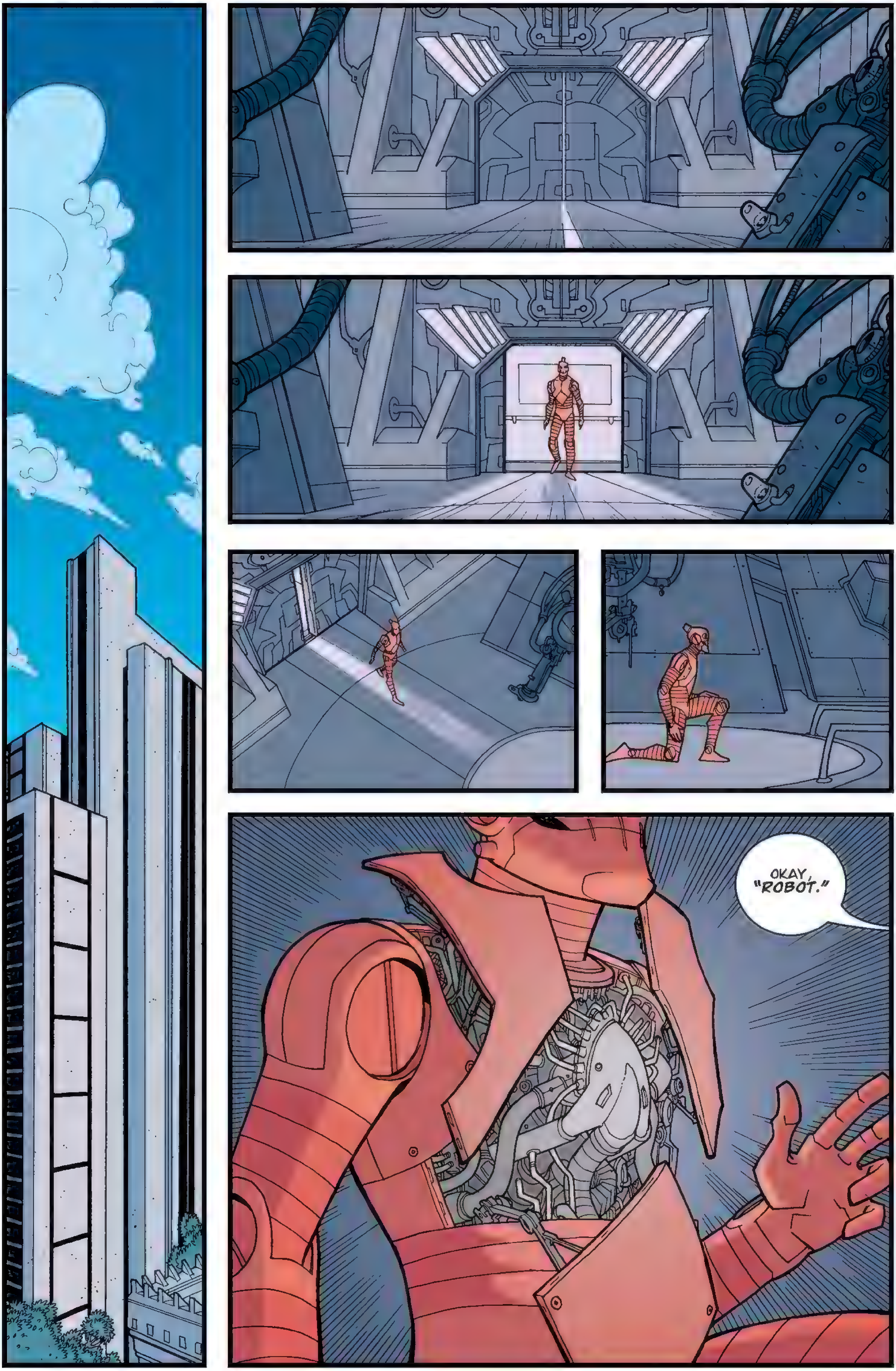

I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU HERE TO ROT, MEDDLER.
AT LEAST TELL ME WHERE HERE IS?
KRAK!
LET!
KRAK!
ME!
GO!
KRAK!
WHY? SO YOU CAN *LEAVE* ME HERE? ARE YOU STUPID? I'D HIT YOU BACK BUT I'M AFRAID I'D *KILL* YOU.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! THIS IS THE *SHADOWVERSE.* THERE ARE *THINGS* HERE--*DARK* THINGS.
WE CAN'T EVEN *SEE* THEM. WE CAN'T LINGER HERE--THEY COULD BE ON TOP OF US AND WE WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW IT UNTIL IT WAS *TOO LATE.*


WELL, THEN--IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE GOT A DECISION TO MAKE. I GOTTA SAY, WHATEVER'S IN HERE--I THINK I'VE GOT A MUCH BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING IT THAN YOU DO.
SO I DON'T REALLY CARE WHAT YOU DECIDE. TRUTH BE TOLD.
WELL, WINGY? WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?
C'MON.
YOU BETTER HURRY. I THINK I HEARD SOMETHING.


SO-- NOW WHAT?
NOW?
NOW I'M TAKING YOU IN.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE PUT IN AN EXTREMELY WELL LIT CELL, YOU PSYCHO.
GOOD ONE, MARK--AND NICE JOB. WE LOST CONTACT WITH YOU FOR ABOUT THREE MINUTES-- WHERE WERE YOU?
I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT WHEN I GET BACK TO THE PENTAGON.
SOUNDS GOOD. I'M GOING TO DISPATCH A TEAM TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE STIFFS. I'LL SEE YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK HERE.
OKAY. I'LL SEE YOU IN A FEW MINUTES.
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
SHUT UP OR I'LL DROP YOU.


UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
COMPLETELY BLACK? YOU COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING?
WE COULD SEE EACH OTHER JUST FINE--BUT NOTHING AROUND US. IT WAS LIKE WE WERE ON A DIFFERENT FREQUENCY THAN THE OTHER THINGS IN THAT DIMENSION. IT WAS PRETTY WILD.
WELL, YOU DID GOOD, KID--AS USUAL. ASIDE FROM TAKING A MINUTE OR TWO TO REALIZE HE WAS THE BAD GUY.
WELL, I'VE HAD A LOT ON MY MIND LATELY. GIRL TROUBLE... I'M SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT.
AT MY AGE? YOU'D BE SURPRISED.
CECIL STEDMAN, PLEASE REPORT TO CONTROL CENTER C.
I'VE GOT TO BE GOING, ANYWAY. I'VE GOT CLASSES TOMORROW.
LATER. I'M SURE YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM ME.

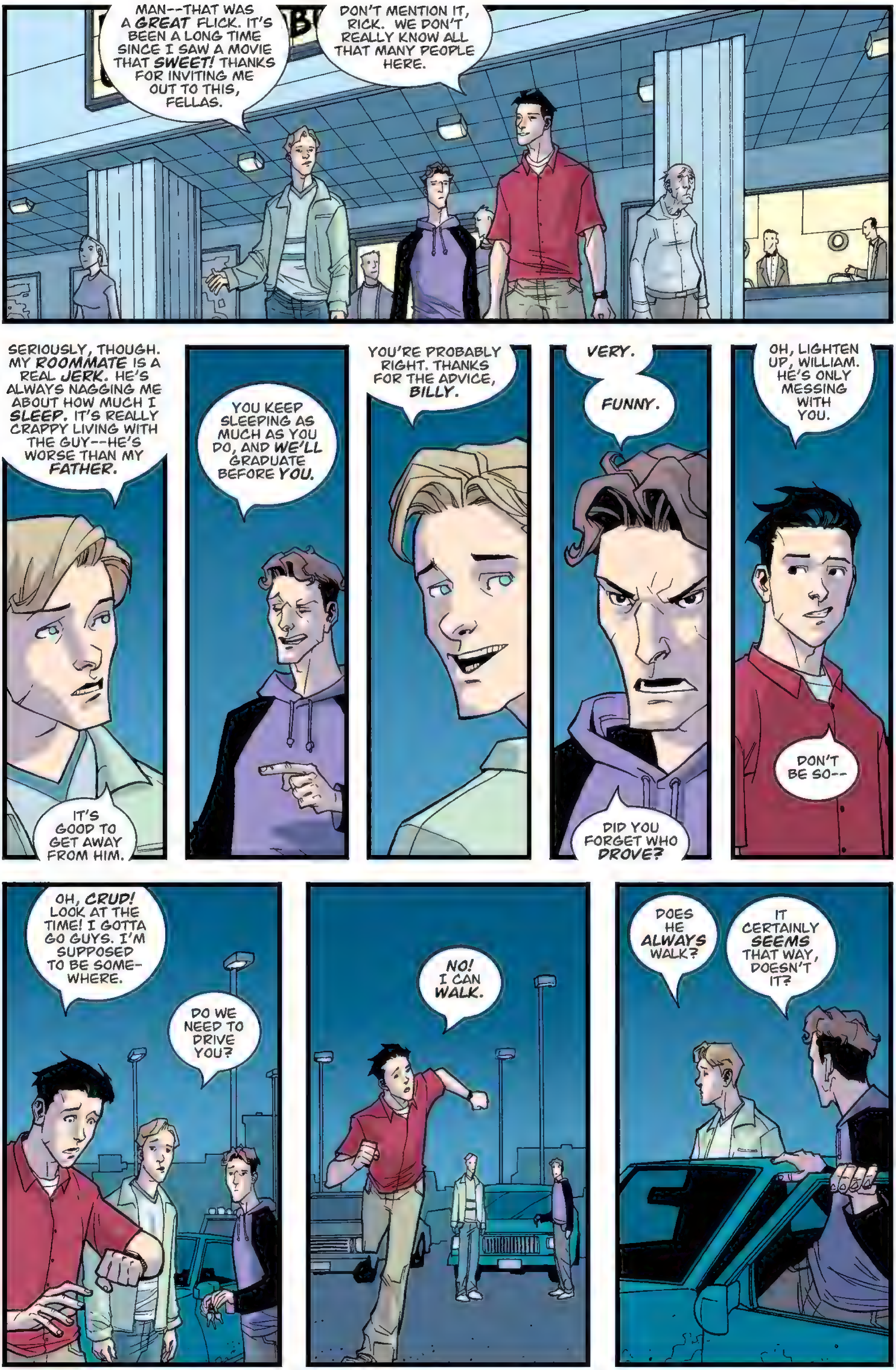

OKAY, PEOPLE. WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
OVER HERE, SIR.
IT'S THE *MAULER TWINS*, SIR. THEY ESCAPED FROM STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY *MONTHS* AGO, AND WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE THEM UNTIL NOW.
HMM. ANY IDEA WHAT THEY'RE UP TO?
WE RAN A BACK CHECK ON THIS LOCATION AND THEY'VE BEEN THERE PRACTICALLY *EVERY DAY* SINCE THEY ESCAPED. THEY'RE DEFINITELY UP TO *SOMETHING*.
AN INTERESTING SIDE NOTE TO THIS IS THAT AUTHORITIES WERE UNABLE TO DECIPHER *HOW* THEY ESCAPED. THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF ESCAPE-- THEY JUST *VANISHED*.
HMM. FOR NOW, WE *WATCH*. STICK TO THIS LOCATION LIKE *GLUE*. I DON'T WANT TO TIP OUR HAND UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
ALERT ME *IMMEDIATELY* IF THERE ARE ANY DEVELOPMENTS.
YES SIR, MISTER STEDMAN.

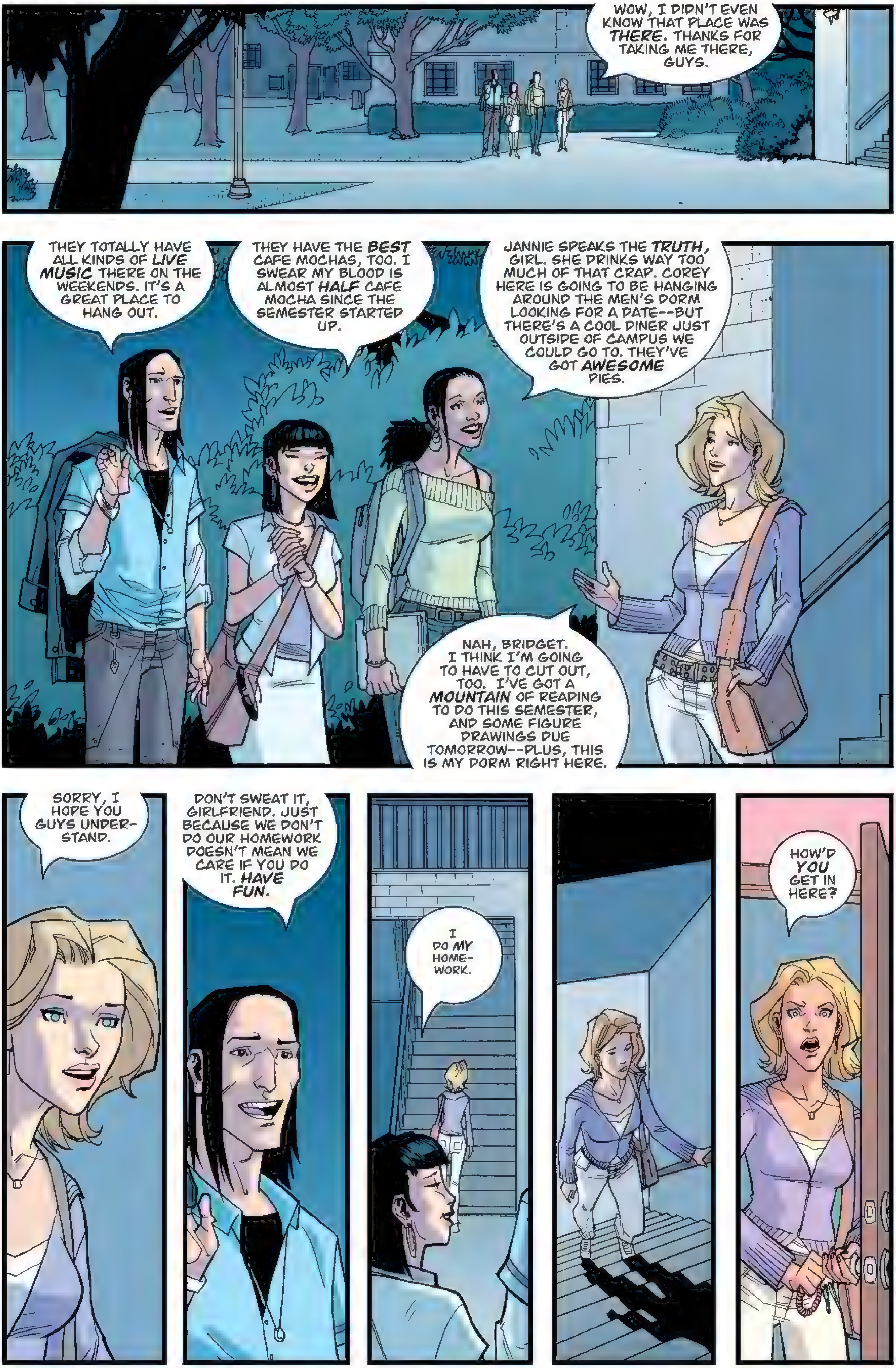

OKAY, "ROBOT."

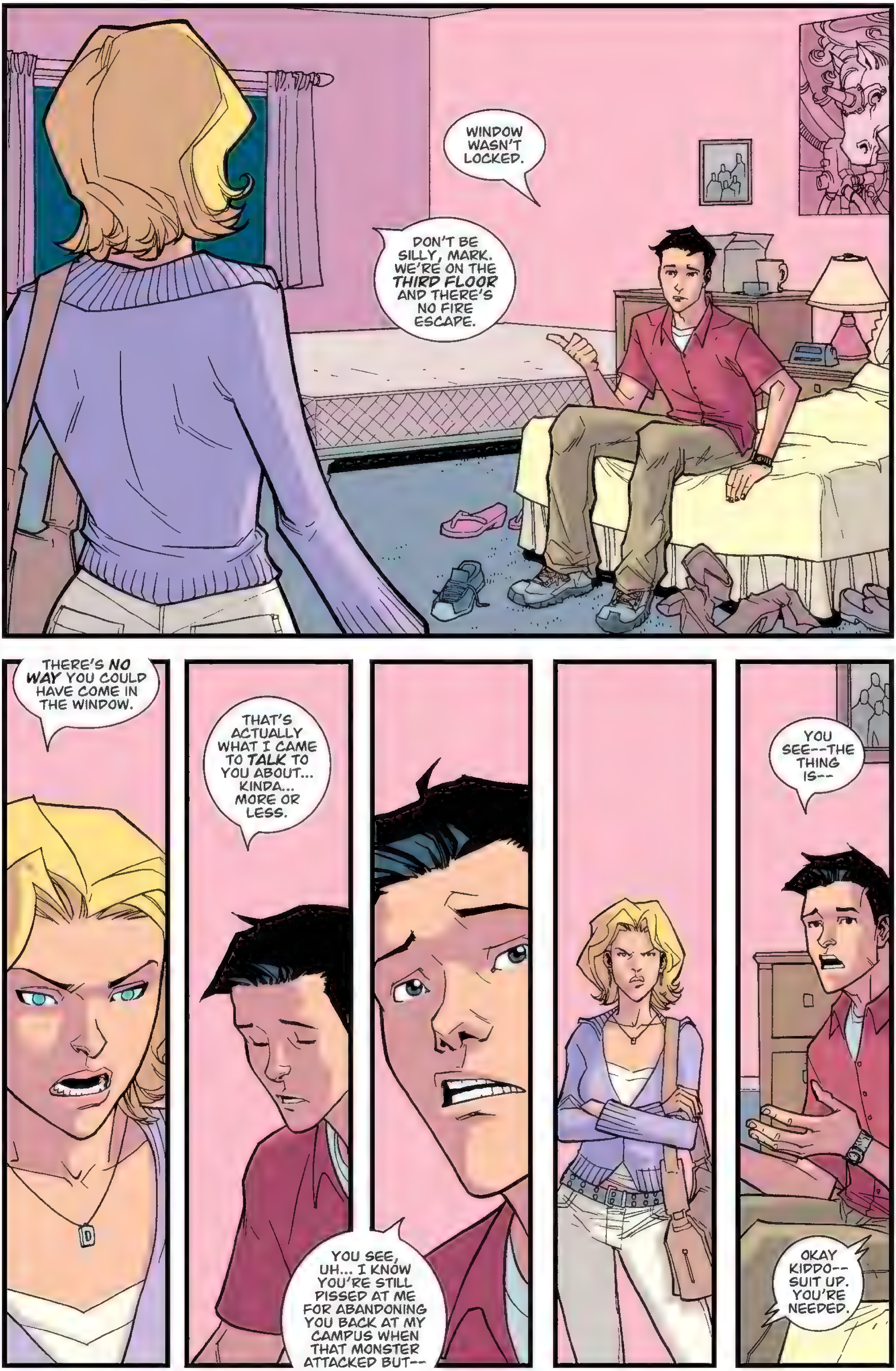
LET'S GET STARTED.

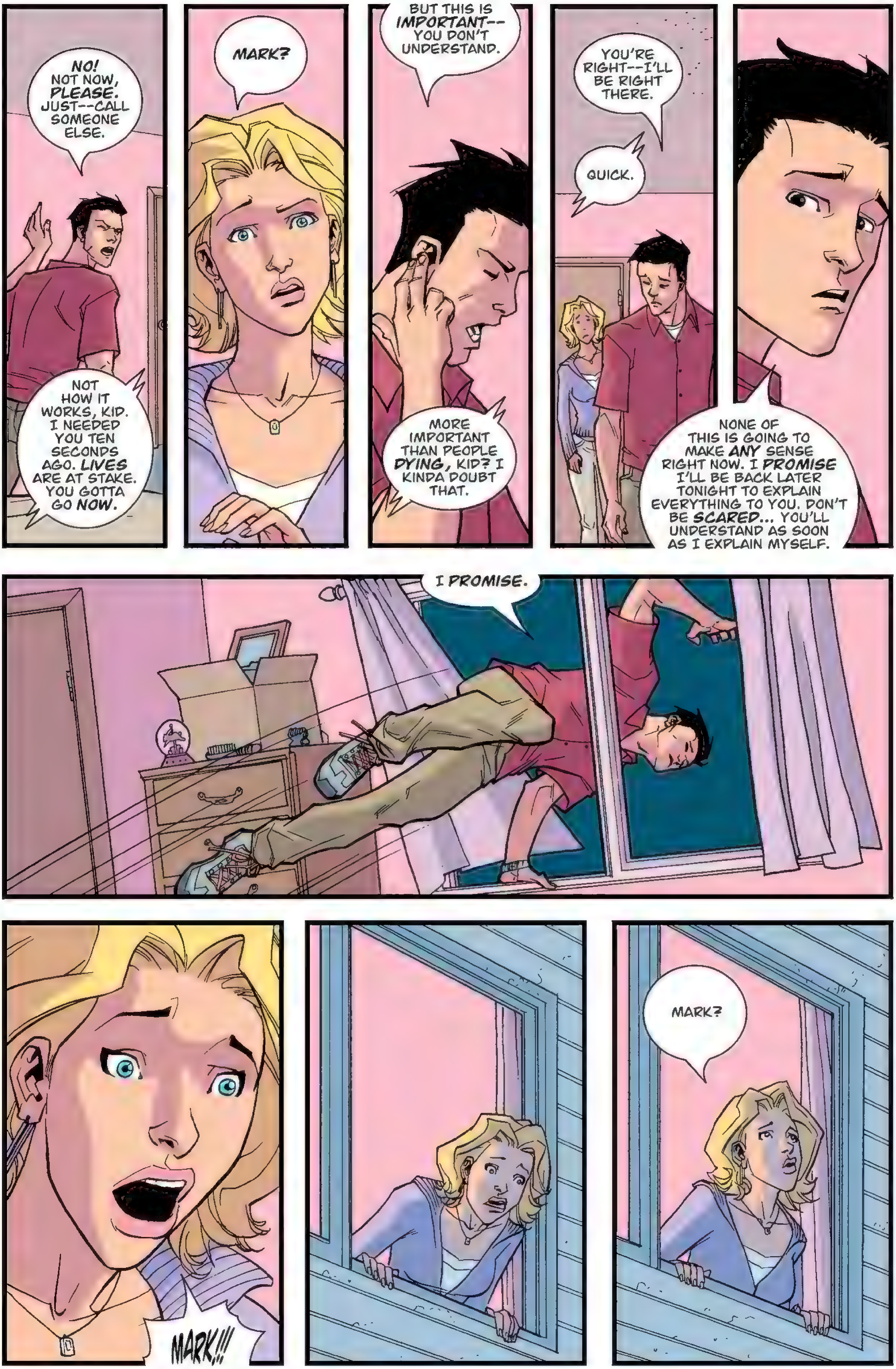
ISSUE TWENTY-TWO

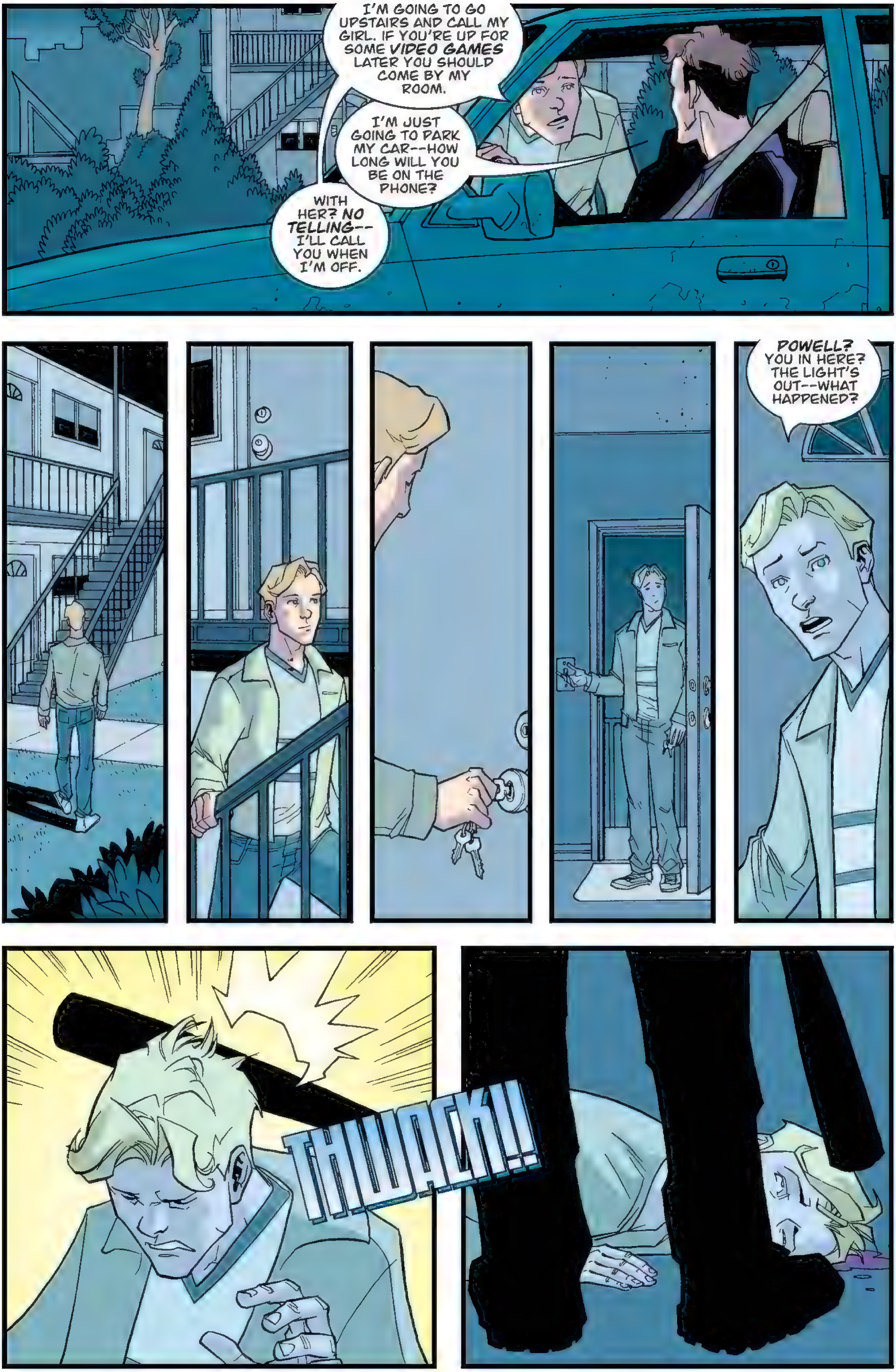
SCHAFF!!05
WYR

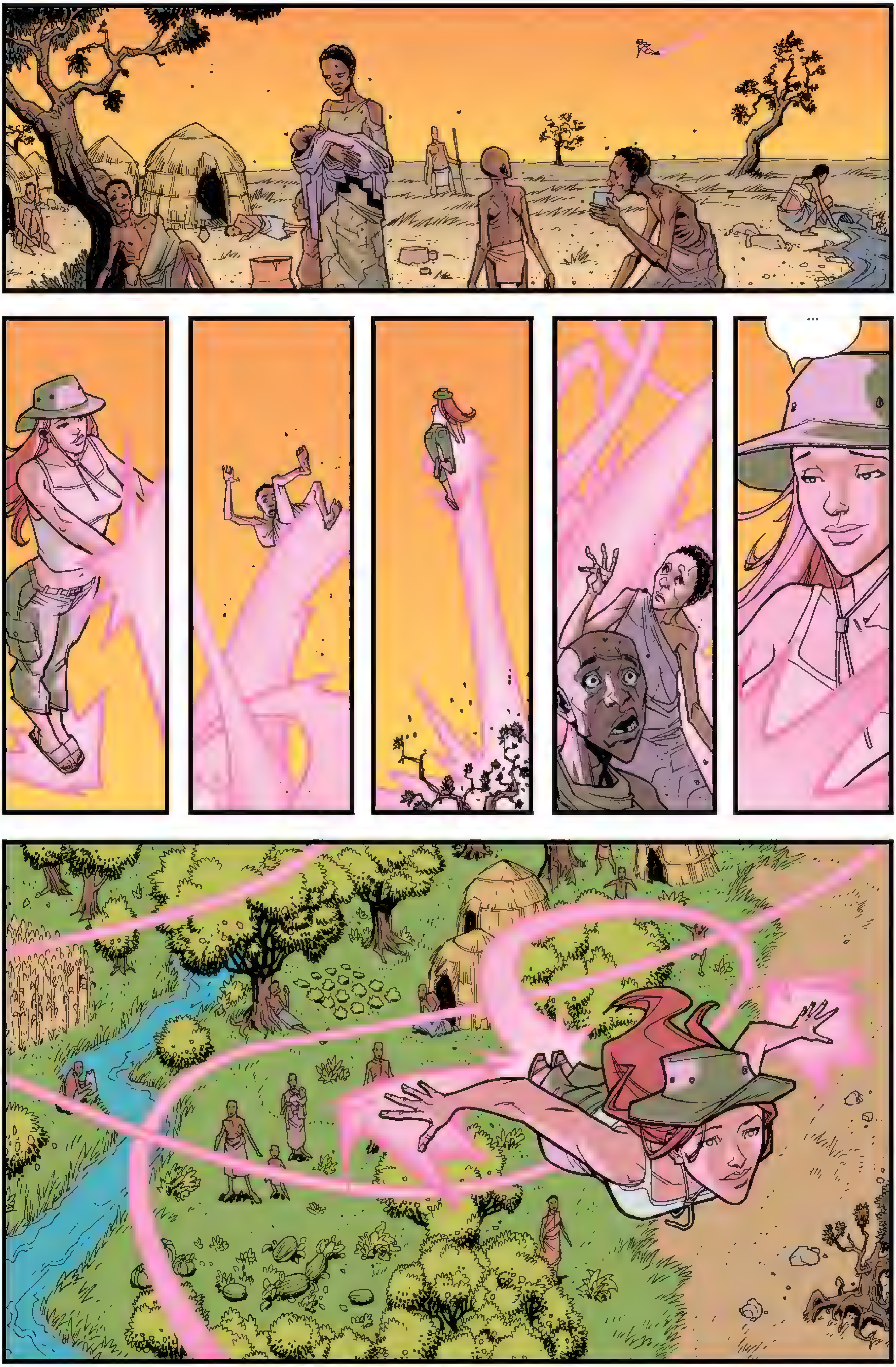

MAN--THAT WAS A **GREAT** FLICK. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I SAW A MOVIE THAT **SWEET!** THANKS FOR INVITING ME OUT TO THIS, FELLAS.
DON'T MENTION IT, RICK. WE DON'T REALLY KNOW ALL THAT MANY PEOPLE HERE.
SERIOUSLY, THOUGH. MY **ROOMMATE** IS A REAL **JERK**. HE'S ALWAYS NAGGING ME ABOUT HOW MUCH I **SLEEP**. IT'S REALLY CRAPPY LIVING WITH THE GUY--HE'S WORSE THAN MY **FATHER**.
IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM HIM.
YOU KEEP SLEEPING AS MUCH AS YOU DO, AND **WE'LL** GRADUATE BEFORE **YOU**.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. THANKS FOR THE ADVICE, **BILLY**.
VERY.
FUNNY.
DID YOU FORGET WHO **DROVE?**
OH, LIGHTEN UP, WILLIAM. HE'S ONLY MESSING WITH YOU.
DON'T BE SO--
OH, **CRUD!** LOOK AT THE TIME! I GOTTA GO GUYS. I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SOME-WHERE.
DO WE NEED TO DRIVE YOU?
NO! I CAN **WALK.**
DOES HE **ALWAYS** WALK?
IT CERTAINLY **SEEMS** THAT WAY, DOESN'T IT?

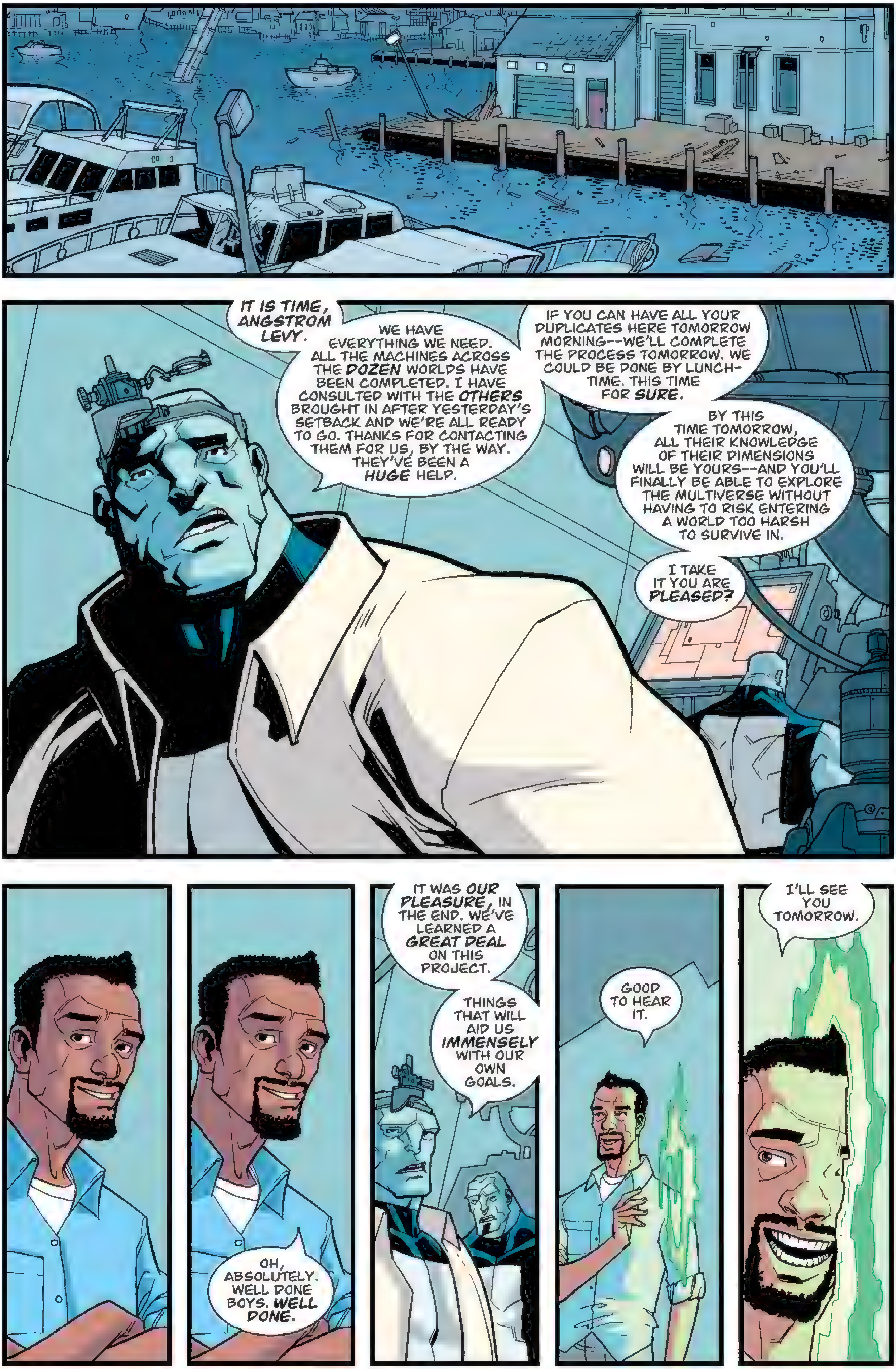

WOW, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT PLACE WAS *THERE*. THANKS FOR TAKING ME THERE, GUYS.
THEY TOTALLY HAVE ALL KINDS OF *LIVE MUSIC* THERE ON THE WEEKENDS. IT'S A GREAT PLACE TO HANG OUT.
THEY HAVE THE *BEST* CAFE MOCHAS, TOO. I SWEAR MY BLOOD IS ALMOST *HALF* CAFE MOCHA SINCE THE SEMESTER STARTED UP.
JANNIE SPEAKS THE *TRUTH*, GIRL. SHE DRINKS WAY TOO MUCH OF THAT CRAP. COREY HERE IS GOING TO BE HANGING AROUND THE MEN'S DORM LOOKING FOR A DATE--BUT THERE'S A COOL DINER JUST OUTSIDE OF CAMPUS WE COULD GO TO. THEY'VE GOT *AWESOME* PIES.
NAH, BRIDGET. I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT OUT, TOO. I'VE GOT A *MOUNTAIN* OF READING TO DO THIS SEMESTER, AND SOME FIGURE DRAWINGS DUE TOMORROW--PLUS, THIS IS MY DORM RIGHT HERE.
SORRY, I HOPE YOU GUYS UNDERSTAND.
DON'T SWEAT IT, GIRLFRIEND. JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T DO OUR HOMEWORK DOESN'T MEAN WE CARE IF YOU DO IT. *HAVE FUN.*
I DO *MY* HOMEWORK.
HOW'D *YOU* GET IN HERE?

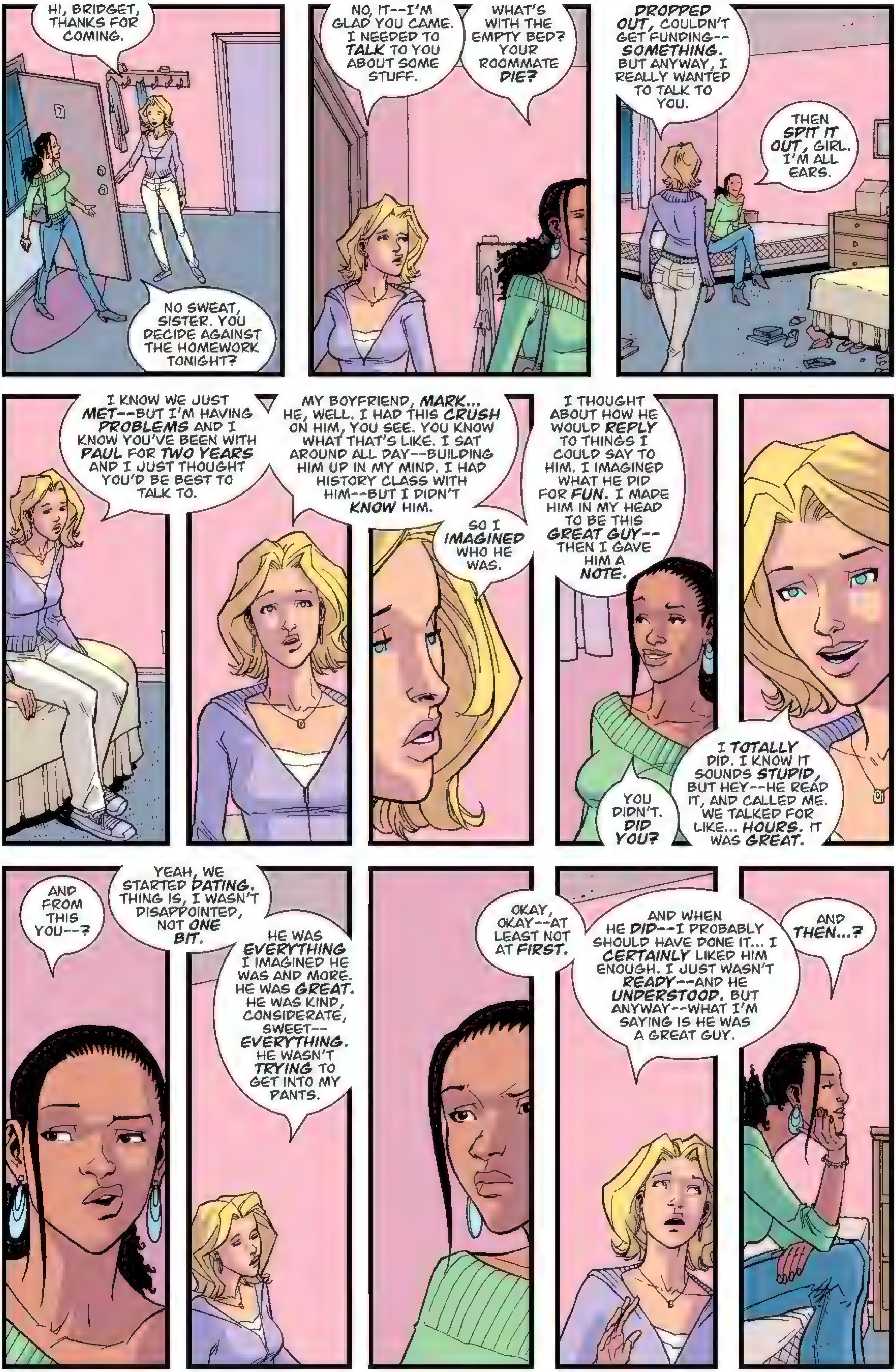

WINDOW WASN'T LOCKED.
DON'T BE SILLY, MARK. WE'RE ON THE *THIRD FLOOR* AND THERE'S NO FIRE ESCAPE.
THERE'S *NO WAY* YOU COULD HAVE COME IN THE WINDOW.
THAT'S ACTUALLY WHAT I CAME TO *TALK* TO YOU ABOUT... KINDA... MORE OR LESS.
YOU SEE, UH... I KNOW YOU'RE STILL PISSED AT ME FOR ABANDONING YOU BACK AT MY CAMPUS WHEN THAT MONSTER ATTACKED BUT--
YOU SEE--THE THING IS--
OKAY KIDDO--SUIT UP. YOU'RE NEEDED.

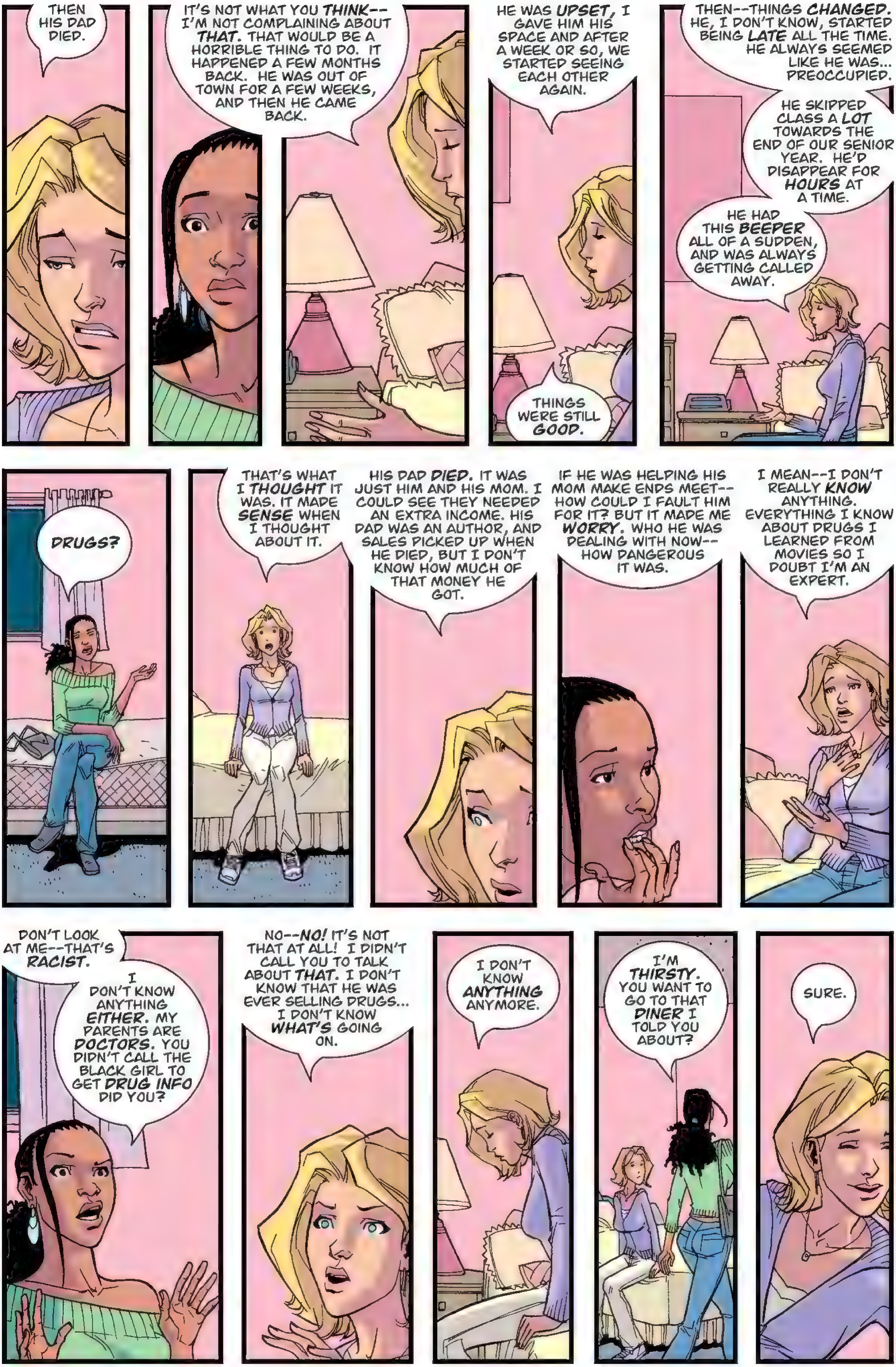

NO! NOT NOW, PLEASE. JUST--CALL SOMEONE ELSE.
NOT HOW IT WORKS, KID. I NEEDED YOU TEN SECONDS AGO. LIVES ARE AT STAKE. YOU GOTTA GO NOW.
MARK?
BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT-- YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE DYING, KID? I KINDA DOUBT THAT.
YOU'RE RIGHT--I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
QUICK.
NONE OF THIS IS GOING TO MAKE ANY SENSE RIGHT NOW. I PROMISE I'LL BE BACK LATER TONIGHT TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO YOU. DON'T BE SCARED... YOU'LL UNDERSTAND AS SOON AS I EXPLAIN MYSELF.
I PROMISE.
MARK!!!
MARK?

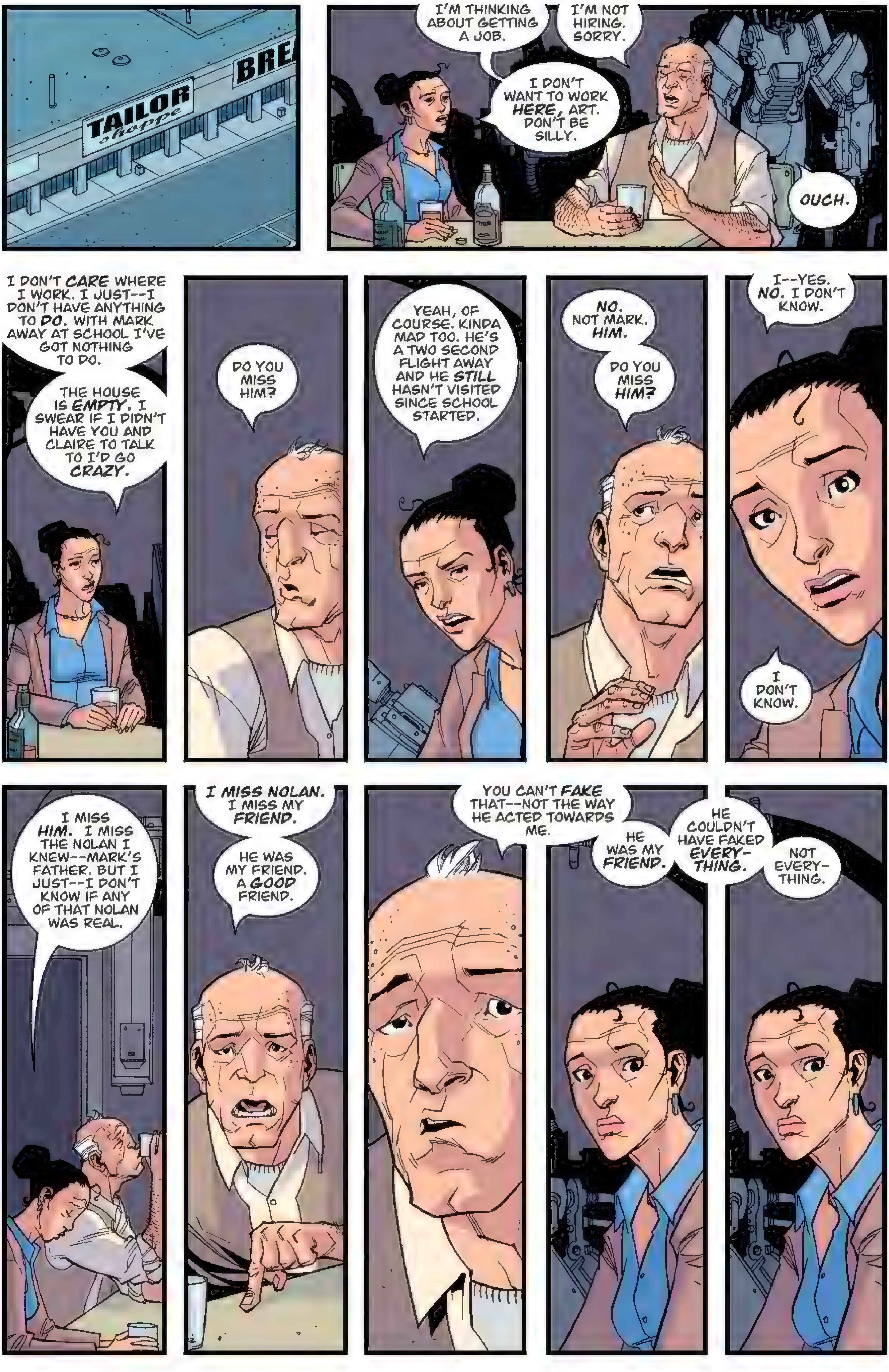

I'M GOING TO GO UPSTAIRS AND CALL MY GIRL. IF YOU'RE UP FOR SOME *VIDEO GAMES* LATER YOU SHOULD COME BY MY ROOM.
I'M JUST GOING TO PARK MY CAR--HOW LONG WILL YOU BE ON THE PHONE?
WITH HER? *NO TELLING*-- I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I'M OFF.
POWELL? YOU IN HERE? THE LIGHT'S OUT--WHAT HAPPENED?
THWACK!!

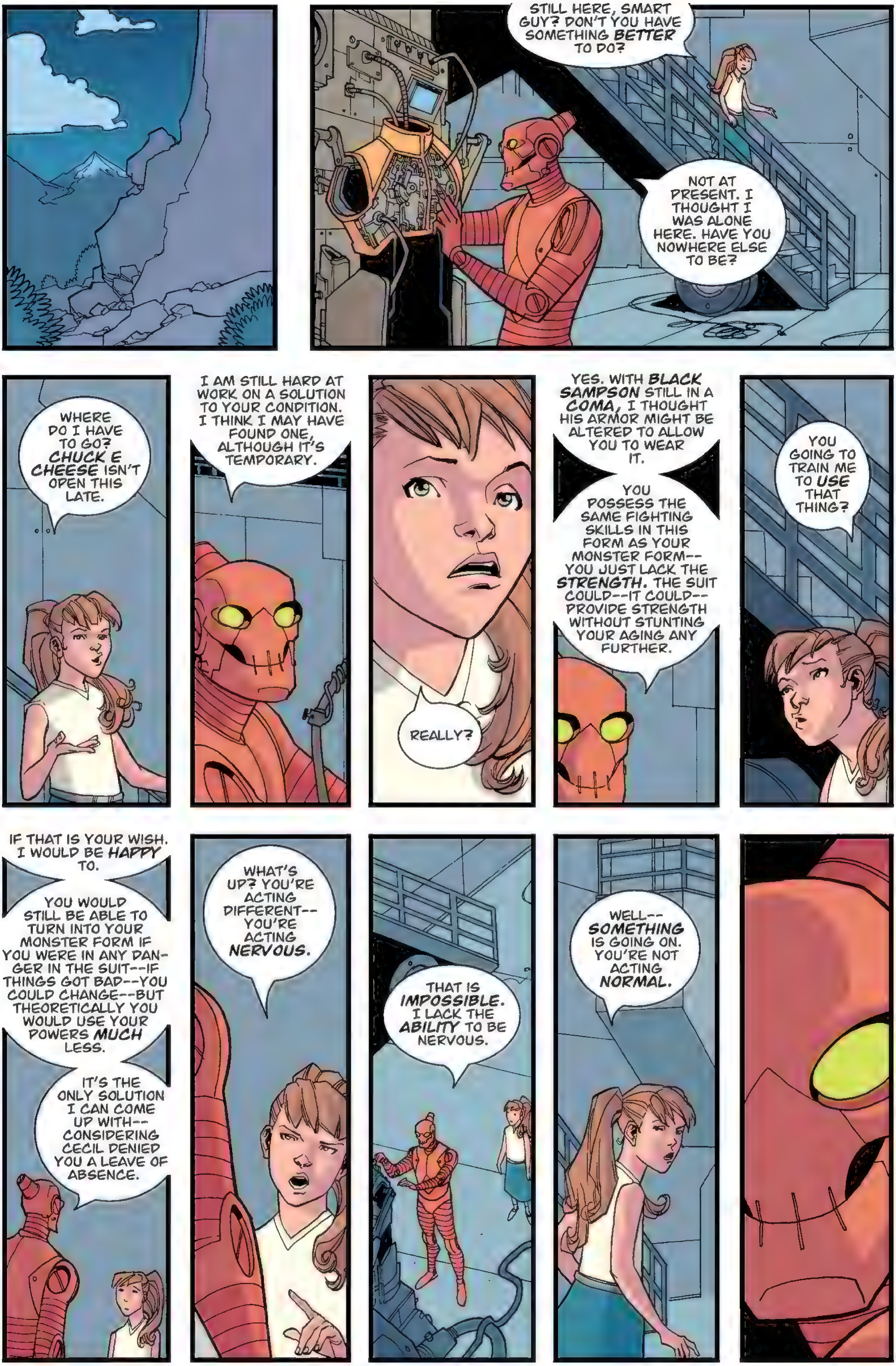


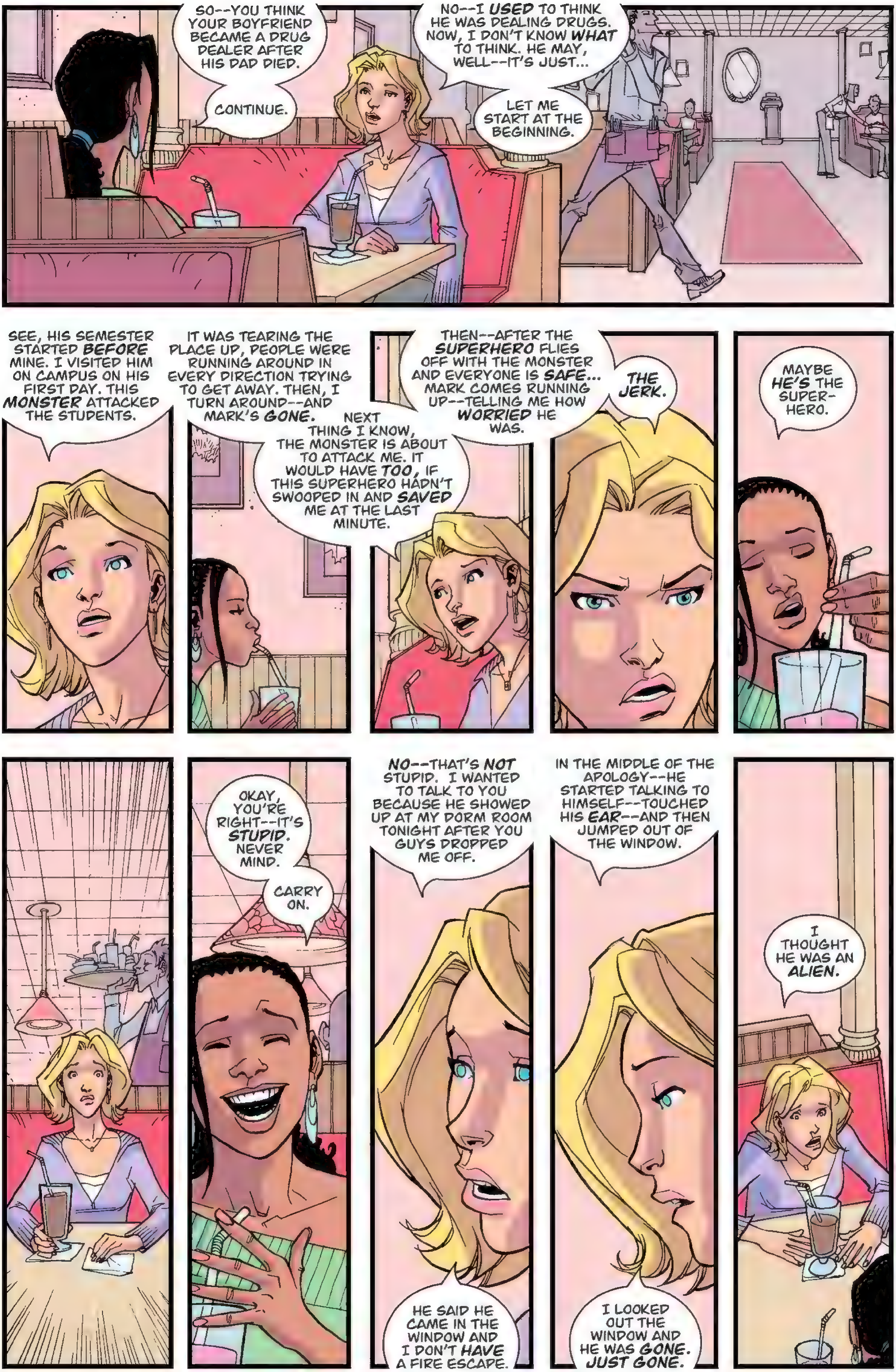

IT IS TIME, ANGSTROM LEVY.
WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED. ALL THE MACHINES ACROSS THE DOZEN WORLDS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. I HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE OTHERS BROUGHT IN AFTER YESTERDAY'S SETBACK AND WE'RE ALL READY TO GO. THANKS FOR CONTACTING THEM FOR US, BY THE WAY. THEY'VE BEEN A HUGE HELP.
IF YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR DUPLICATES HERE TOMORROW MORNING--WE'LL COMPLETE THE PROCESS TOMORROW. WE COULD BE DONE BY LUNCH-TIME. THIS TIME FOR SURE.
BY THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DIMENSIONS WILL BE YOURS--AND YOU'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THE MULTIVERSE WITHOUT HAVING TO RISK ENTERING A WORLD TOO HARSH TO SURVIVE IN.
I TAKE IT YOU ARE PLEASED?
OH, ABSOLUTELY. WELL DONE BOYS. WELL DONE.
IT WAS OUR PLEASURE, IN THE END. WE'VE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ON THIS PROJECT.
THINGS THAT WILL AID US IMMENSELY WITH OUR OWN GOALS.
GOOD TO HEAR IT.
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.

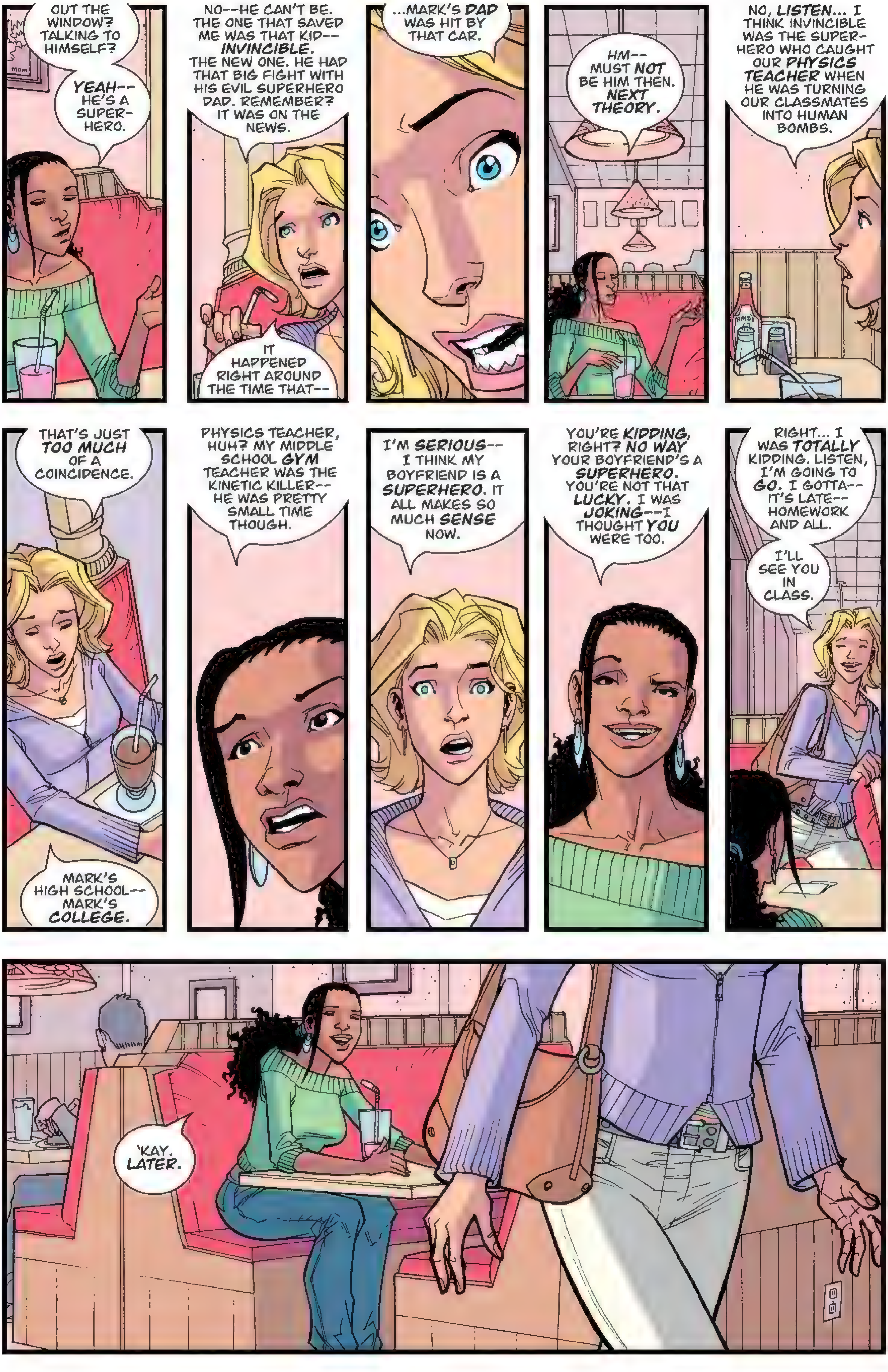

HI, BRIDGET, THANKS FOR COMING.
NO SWEAT, SISTER. YOU DECIDE AGAINST THE HOMEWORK TONIGHT?
NO, IT--I'M GLAD YOU CAME. I NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME STUFF.
WHAT'S WITH THE EMPTY BED? YOUR ROOMMATE DIE?
DROPPED OUT, COULDN'T GET FUNDING-- SOMETHING. BUT ANYWAY, I REALLY WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.
THEN SPIT IT OUT, GIRL. I'M ALL EARS.
I KNOW WE JUST MET--BUT I'M HAVING PROBLEMS AND I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN WITH PAUL FOR TWO YEARS AND I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D BE BEST TO TALK TO.
MY BOYFRIEND, MARK... HE, WELL. I HAD THIS CRUSH ON HIM, YOU SEE. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE. I SAT AROUND ALL DAY--BUILDING HIM UP IN MY MIND. I HAD HISTORY CLASS WITH HIM--BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HIM.
SO I IMAGINED WHO HE WAS.
I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW HE WOULD REPLY TO THINGS I COULD SAY TO HIM. I IMAGINED WHAT HE DID FOR FUN. I MADE HIM IN MY HEAD TO BE THIS GREAT GUY-- THEN I GAVE HIM A NOTE.
YOU DIDN'T. DID YOU?
I TOTALLY DID. I KNOW IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT HEY--HE READ IT, AND CALLED ME. WE TALKED FOR LIKE... HOURS. IT WAS GREAT.
AND FROM THIS YOU--?
YEAH, WE STARTED DATING. THING IS, I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED, NOT ONE BIT.
HE WAS EVERYTHING I IMAGINED HE WAS AND MORE. HE WAS GREAT. HE WAS KIND, CONSIDERATE, SWEET-- EVERYTHING. HE WASN'T TRYING TO GET INTO MY PANTS.
OKAY, OKAY--AT LEAST NOT AT FIRST.
AND WHEN HE DID--I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE DONE IT... I CERTAINLY LIKED HIM ENOUGH. I JUST WASN'T READY--AND HE UNDERSTOOD. BUT ANYWAY--WHAT I'M SAYING IS HE WAS A GREAT GUY.
AND THEN...?

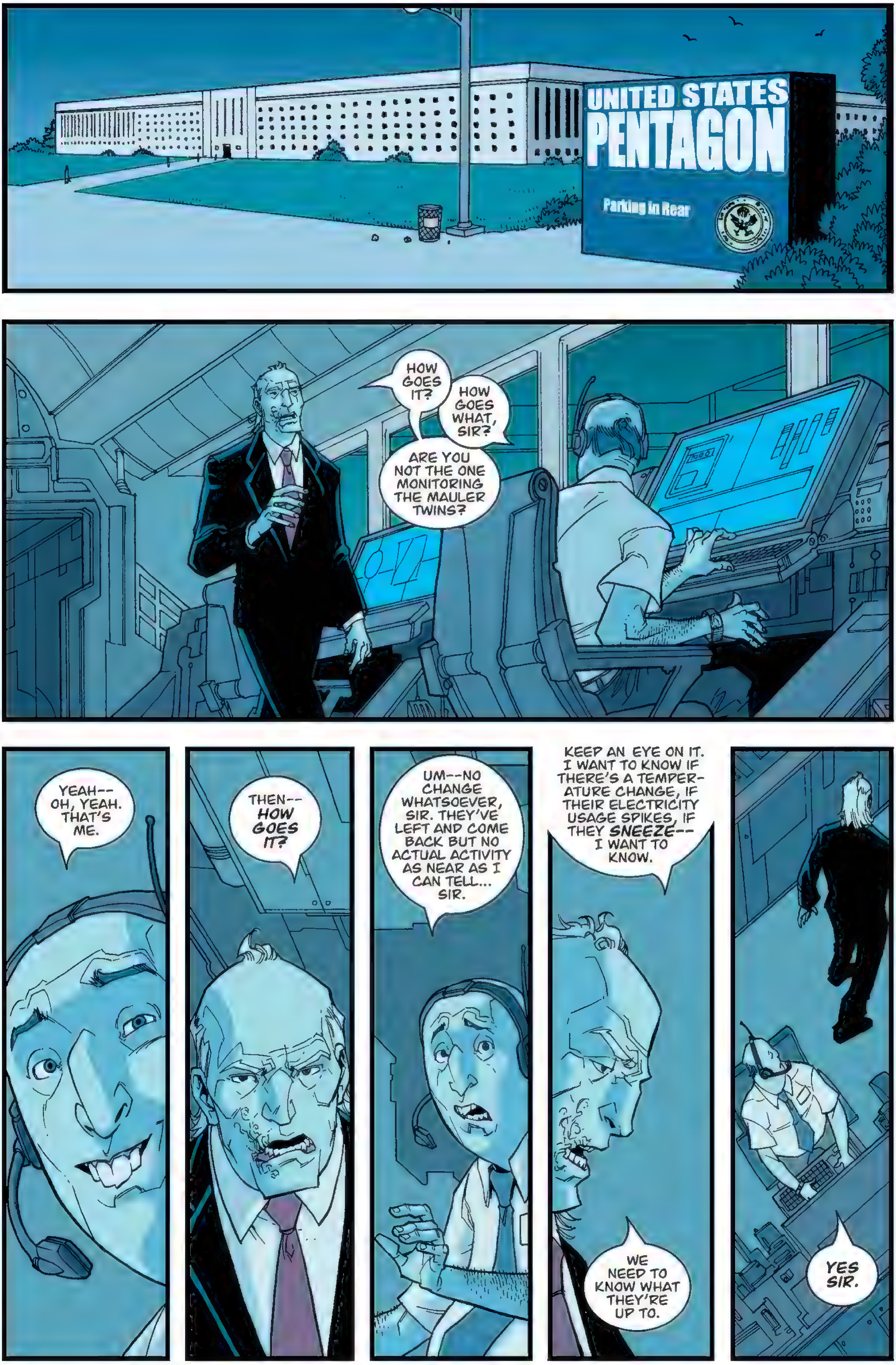

THEN HIS DAD DIED.
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU *THINK*-- I'M NOT COMPLAINING ABOUT *THAT*. THAT WOULD BE A HORRIBLE THING TO DO. IT HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS BACK. HE WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND THEN HE CAME BACK.
HE WAS *UPSET*, I GAVE HIM HIS SPACE AND AFTER A WEEK OR SO, WE STARTED SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN.
THINGS WERE STILL *GOOD*.
THEN--THINGS *CHANGED*. HE, I DON'T KNOW, STARTED BEING *LATE* ALL THE TIME. HE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE HE WAS... PREOCCUPIED.
HE SKIPPED CLASS A *LOT* TOWARDS THE END OF OUR SENIOR YEAR. HE'D DISAPPEAR FOR *HOURS* AT A TIME.
HE HAD THIS *BEEPER* ALL OF A SUDDEN, AND WAS ALWAYS GETTING CALLED AWAY.
DRUGS?
THAT'S WHAT I *THOUGHT* IT WAS. IT MADE *SENSE* WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
HIS DAD *DIED*. IT WAS JUST HIM AND HIS MOM. I COULD SEE THEY NEEDED AN EXTRA INCOME. HIS DAD WAS AN AUTHOR, AND SALES PICKED UP WHEN HE DIED, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THAT MONEY HE GOT.
IF HE WAS HELPING HIS MOM MAKE ENDS MEET-- HOW COULD I FAULT HIM FOR IT? BUT IT MADE ME *WORRY*. WHO HE WAS DEALING WITH NOW-- HOW DANGEROUS IT WAS.
I MEAN--I DON'T REALLY *KNOW* ANYTHING. EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT DRUGS I LEARNED FROM MOVIES SO I DOUBT I'M AN EXPERT.
DON'T LOOK AT ME--THAT'S *RACIST*.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING *EITHER*. MY PARENTS ARE *DOCTORS*. YOU DIDN'T CALL THE BLACK GIRL TO GET *DRUG INFO* DID YOU?
NO--*NO!* IT'S NOT THAT AT ALL! I DIDN'T CALL YOU TO TALK ABOUT *THAT*. I DON'T KNOW THAT HE WAS EVER SELLING DRUGS... I DON'T KNOW *WHAT'S* GOING ON.
I DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING* ANYMORE.
I'M *THIRSTY*. YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT *DINER* I TOLD YOU ABOUT?
SURE.

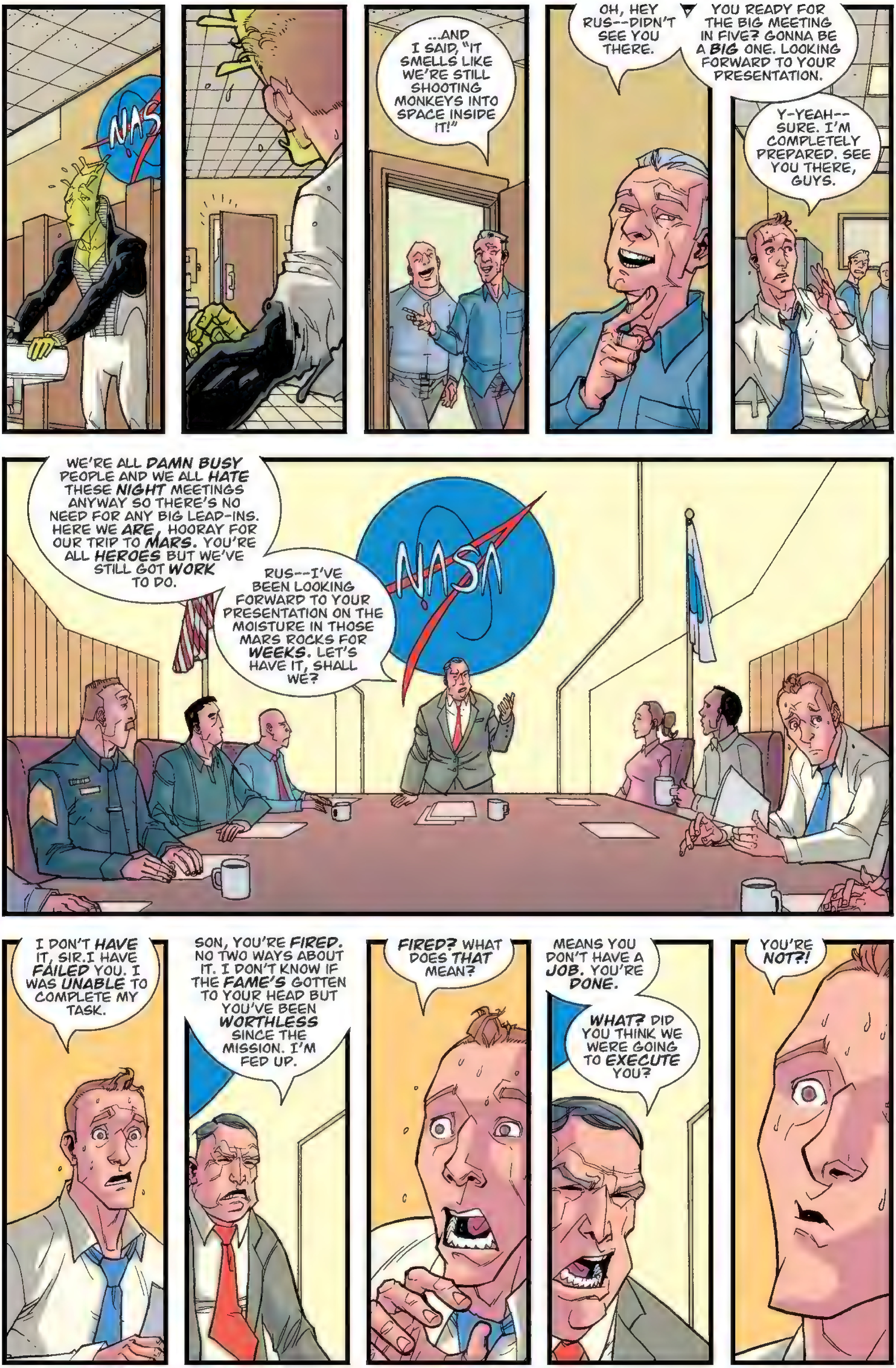

TAILOR shoppe
BREA
I'M THINKING ABOUT GETTING A JOB.
I'M NOT HIRING. SORRY.
I DON'T WANT TO WORK *HERE*, ART. DON'T BE SILLY.
OUCH.
I DON'T *CARE* WHERE I WORK. I JUST--I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO *DO*. WITH MARK AWAY AT SCHOOL I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO.
THE HOUSE IS *EMPTY*. I SWEAR IF I DIDN'T HAVE YOU AND CLAIRE TO TALK TO I'D GO *CRAZY*.
DO YOU MISS HIM?
YEAH, OF COURSE. KINDA MAD TOO. HE'S A TWO SECOND FLIGHT AWAY AND HE *STILL* HASN'T VISITED SINCE SCHOOL STARTED.
NO. NOT MARK. *HIM.*
DO YOU MISS *HIM?*
I--YES. *NO.* I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW.
I MISS *HIM*. I MISS THE NOLAN I KNEW--MARK'S FATHER. BUT I JUST--I DON'T KNOW IF ANY OF THAT NOLAN WAS REAL.
I MISS NOLAN. I MISS MY *FRIEND.*
HE WAS MY FRIEND. A *GOOD* FRIEND.
YOU CAN'T *FAKE* THAT--NOT THE WAY HE ACTED TOWARDS ME.
HE WAS MY *FRIEND.*
HE COULDN'T HAVE FAKED *EVERY-THING.*
NOT EVERY-THING.

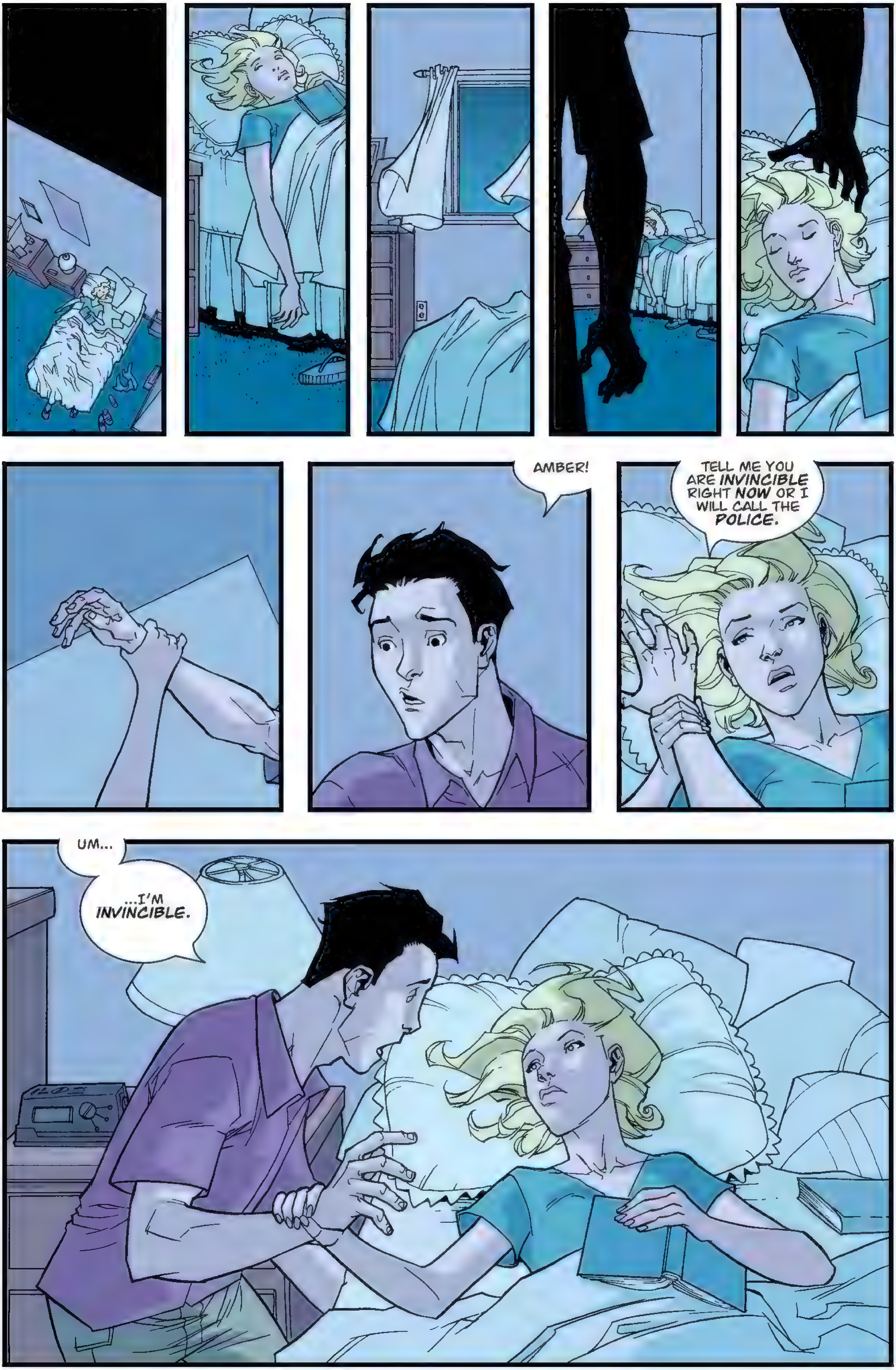

STILL HERE, SMART GUY? DON'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING BETTER TO DO?
NOT AT PRESENT. I THOUGHT I WAS ALONE HERE. HAVE YOU NOWHERE ELSE TO BE?
WHERE DO I HAVE TO GO? CHUCK E CHEESE ISN'T OPEN THIS LATE.
I AM STILL HARD AT WORK ON A SOLUTION TO YOUR CONDITION. I THINK I MAY HAVE FOUND ONE, ALTHOUGH IT'S TEMPORARY.
REALLY?
YES. WITH BLACK SAMPSON STILL IN A COMA, I THOUGHT HIS ARMOR MIGHT BE ALTERED TO ALLOW YOU TO WEAR IT.
YOU POSSESS THE SAME FIGHTING SKILLS IN THIS FORM AS YOUR MONSTER FORM--YOU JUST LACK THE STRENGTH. THE SUIT COULD--IT COULD--PROVIDE STRENGTH WITHOUT STUNTING YOUR AGING ANY FURTHER.
YOU GOING TO TRAIN ME TO USE THAT THING?
IF THAT IS YOUR WISH. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO.
YOU WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO TURN INTO YOUR MONSTER FORM IF YOU WERE IN ANY DANGER IN THE SUIT--IF THINGS GOT BAD--YOU COULD CHANGE--BUT THEORETICALLY YOU WOULD USE YOUR POWERS MUCH LESS.
IT'S THE ONLY SOLUTION I CAN COME UP WITH--CONSIDERING CECIL DENIED YOU A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.
WHAT'S UP? YOU'RE ACTING DIFFERENT--YOU'RE ACTING NERVOUS.
THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE. I LACK THE ABILITY TO BE NERVOUS.
WELL--SOMETHING IS GOING ON. YOU'RE NOT ACTING NORMAL.

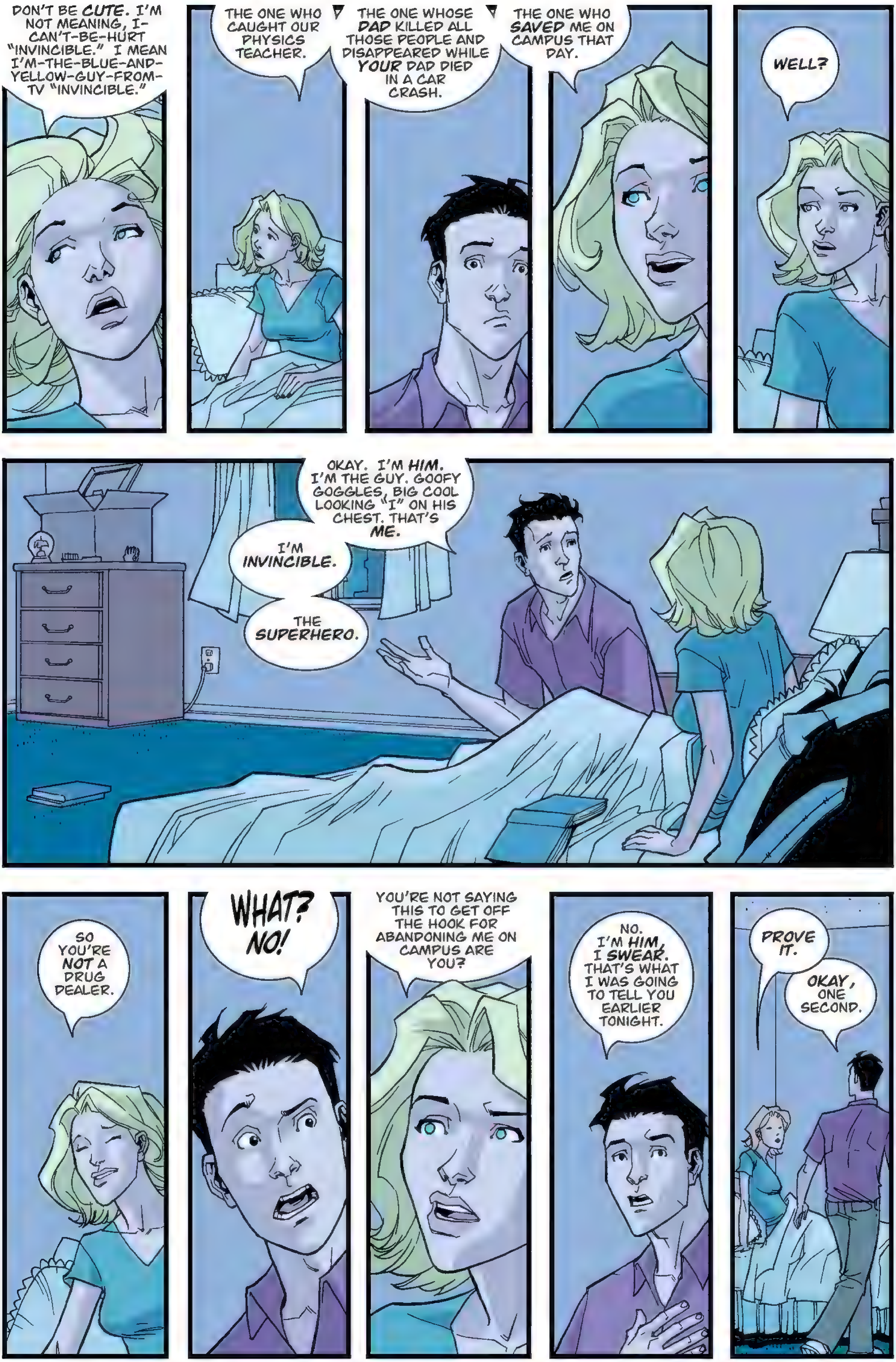

SO--YOU THINK YOUR BOYFRIEND BECAME A DRUG DEALER AFTER HIS DAD DIED.
CONTINUE.
NO--I *USED* TO THINK HE WAS DEALING DRUGS. NOW, I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* TO THINK. HE MAY, WELL--IT'S JUST...
LET ME START AT THE BEGINNING.
SEE, HIS SEMESTER STARTED *BEFORE* MINE. I VISITED HIM ON CAMPUS ON HIS FIRST DAY. THIS *MONSTER* ATTACKED THE STUDENTS.
IT WAS TEARING THE PLACE UP, PEOPLE WERE RUNNING AROUND IN EVERY DIRECTION TRYING TO GET AWAY. THEN, I TURN AROUND--AND MARK'S *GONE.*
NEXT THING I KNOW, THE MONSTER IS ABOUT TO ATTACK ME. IT WOULD HAVE *TOO,* IF THIS SUPERHERO HADN'T SWOOPED IN AND *SAVED* ME AT THE LAST MINUTE.
THEN--AFTER THE *SUPERHERO* FLIES OFF WITH THE MONSTER AND EVERYONE IS *SAFE*... MARK COMES RUNNING UP--TELLING ME HOW *WORRIED* HE WAS.
THE JERK.
MAYBE *HE'S* THE SUPER-HERO.
OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT--IT'S *STUPID.* NEVER MIND.
CARRY ON.
NO--THAT'S *NOT* STUPID. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BECAUSE HE SHOWED UP AT MY DORM ROOM TONIGHT AFTER YOU GUYS DROPPED ME OFF.
HE SAID HE CAME IN THE WINDOW AND I DON'T *HAVE* A FIRE ESCAPE.
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE APOLOGY--HE STARTED TALKING TO HIMSELF--TOUCHED HIS *EAR*--AND THEN JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW.
I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AND HE WAS *GONE. JUST GONE.*
I THOUGHT HE WAS AN *ALIEN.*

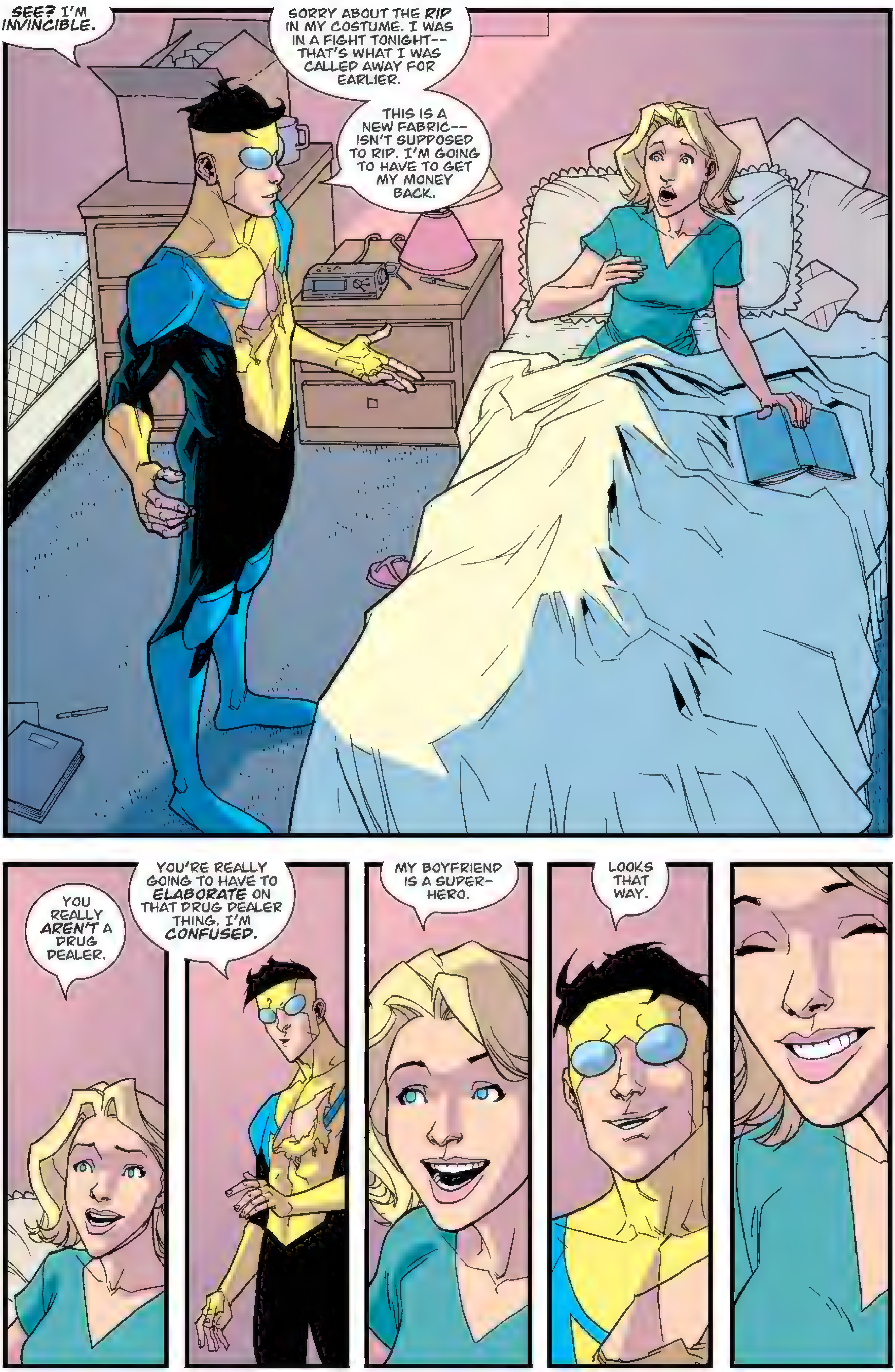

OUT THE WINDOW? TALKING TO HIMSELF?
YEAH-- HE'S A SUPER-HERO.
NO--HE CAN'T BE. THE ONE THAT SAVED ME WAS THAT KID-- INVINCIBLE. THE NEW ONE. HE HAD THAT BIG FIGHT WITH HIS EVIL SUPERHERO DAD. REMEMBER? IT WAS ON THE NEWS.
IT HAPPENED RIGHT AROUND THE TIME THAT--
...MARK'S DAD WAS HIT BY THAT CAR.
HM-- MUST NOT BE HIM THEN. NEXT THEORY.
NO, LISTEN... I THINK INVINCIBLE WAS THE SUPER-HERO WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER WHEN HE WAS TURNING OUR CLASSMATES INTO HUMAN BOMBS.
THAT'S JUST TOO MUCH OF A COINCIDENCE.
MARK'S HIGH SCHOOL-- MARK'S COLLEGE.
PHYSICS TEACHER, HUH? MY MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM TEACHER WAS THE KINETIC KILLER-- HE WAS PRETTY SMALL TIME THOUGH.
I'M SERIOUS-- I THINK MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO. IT ALL MAKES SO MUCH SENSE NOW.
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? NO WAY YOUR BOYFRIEND'S A SUPERHERO. YOU'RE NOT THAT LUCKY. I WAS JOKING--I THOUGHT YOU WERE TOO.
RIGHT... I WAS TOTALLY KIDDING. LISTEN, I'M GOING TO GO. I GOTTA-- IT'S LATE-- HOMEWORK AND ALL.
I'LL SEE YOU IN CLASS.
'KAY. LATER.

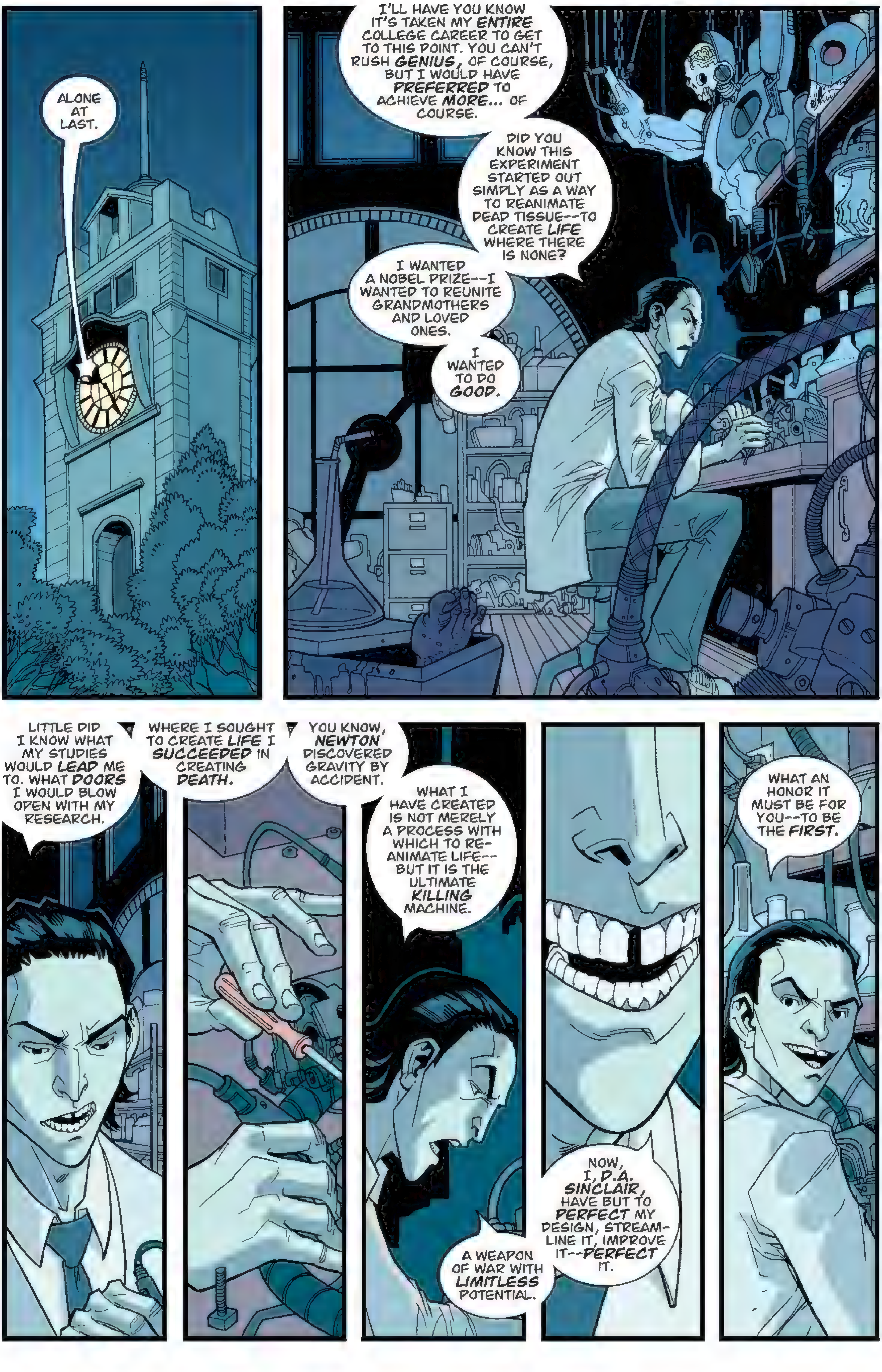

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
HOW GOES IT?
HOW GOES WHAT, SIR?
ARE YOU NOT THE ONE MONITORING THE MAULER TWINS?
YEAH-- OH, YEAH. THAT'S ME.
THEN-- *HOW GOES IT?*
UM--NO CHANGE WHATSOEVER, SIR. THEY'VE LEFT AND COME BACK BUT NO ACTUAL ACTIVITY AS NEAR AS I CAN TELL... SIR.
KEEP AN EYE ON IT. I WANT TO KNOW IF THERE'S A TEMPERATURE CHANGE, IF THEIR ELECTRICITY USAGE SPIKES, IF THEY *SNEEZE*-- I WANT TO KNOW.
WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP TO.
YES SIR.


NASA
...AND I SAID, "IT SMELLS LIKE WE'RE STILL SHOOTING MONKEYS INTO SPACE INSIDE IT!"
OH, HEY RUS--DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE.
YOU READY FOR THE BIG MEETING IN FIVE? GONNA BE A BIG ONE. LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR PRESENTATION.
Y-YEAH--SURE. I'M COMPLETELY PREPARED. SEE YOU THERE, GUYS.
WE'RE ALL DAMN BUSY PEOPLE AND WE ALL HATE THESE NIGHT MEETINGS ANYWAY SO THERE'S NO NEED FOR ANY BIG LEAD-INS. HERE WE ARE, HOORAY FOR OUR TRIP TO MARS. YOU'RE ALL HEROES BUT WE'VE STILL GOT WORK TO DO.
NASA
RUS--I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR PRESENTATION ON THE MOISTURE IN THOSE MARS ROCKS FOR WEEKS. LET'S HAVE IT, SHALL WE?
I DON'T HAVE IT, SIR. I HAVE FAILED YOU. I WAS UNABLE TO COMPLETE MY TASK.
SON, YOU'RE FIRED. NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. I DON'T KNOW IF THE FAME'S GOTTEN TO YOUR HEAD BUT YOU'VE BEEN WORTHLESS SINCE THE MISSION. I'M FED UP.
FIRED? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB. YOU'RE DONE.
WHAT? DID YOU THINK WE WERE GOING TO EXECUTE YOU?
YOU'RE NOT?!


AMBER!
TELL ME YOU ARE INVINCIBLE RIGHT NOW OR I WILL CALL THE POLICE.
UM...
...I'M INVINCIBLE.

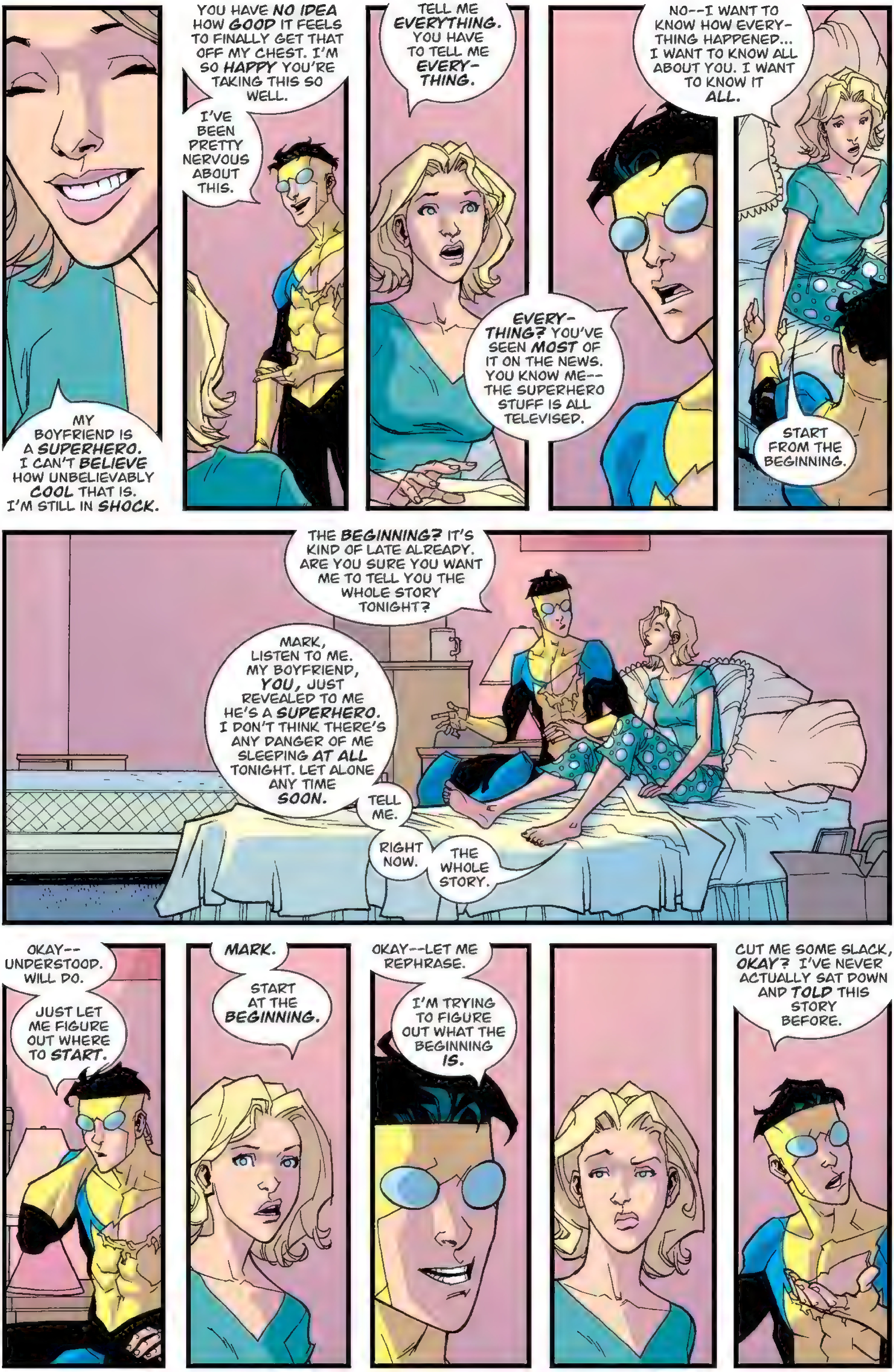

DON'T BE CUTE. I'M NOT MEANING, I-CAN'T-BE-HURT "INVINCIBLE." I MEAN I'M-THE-BLUE-AND-YELLOW-GUY-FROM-TV "INVINCIBLE."
THE ONE WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.
THE ONE WHOSE DAD KILLED ALL THOSE PEOPLE AND DISAPPEARED WHILE YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH.
THE ONE WHO SAVED ME ON CAMPUS THAT DAY.
WELL?
OKAY. I'M HIM. I'M THE GUY. GOOFY GOGGLES, BIG COOL LOOKING "I" ON HIS CHEST. THAT'S ME.
I'M INVINCIBLE.
THE SUPERHERO.
SO YOU'RE NOT A DRUG DEALER.
WHAT? NO!
YOU'RE NOT SAYING THIS TO GET OFF THE HOOK FOR ABANDONING ME ON CAMPUS ARE YOU?
NO. I'M HIM, I SWEAR. THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU EARLIER TONIGHT.
PROVE IT.
OKAY, ONE SECOND.

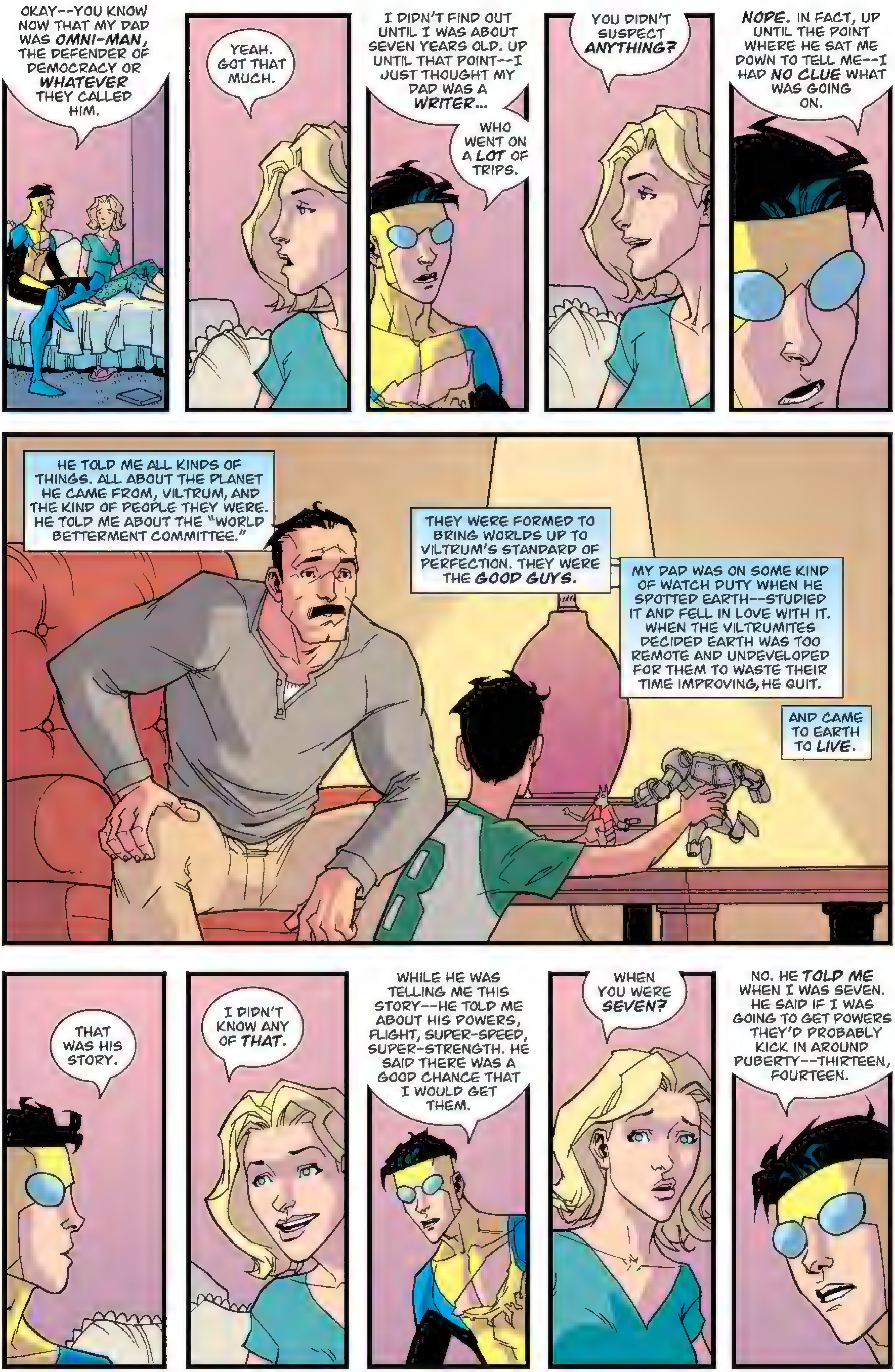

SEE? I'M INVINCIBLE.
SORRY ABOUT THE RIP IN MY COSTUME. I WAS IN A FIGHT TONIGHT-- THAT'S WHAT I WAS CALLED AWAY FOR EARLIER.
THIS IS A NEW FABRIC-- ISN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET MY MONEY BACK.
YOU REALLY AREN'T A DRUG DEALER.
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE TO ELABORATE ON THAT DRUG DEALER THING. I'M CONFUSED.
MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.
LOOKS THAT WAY.

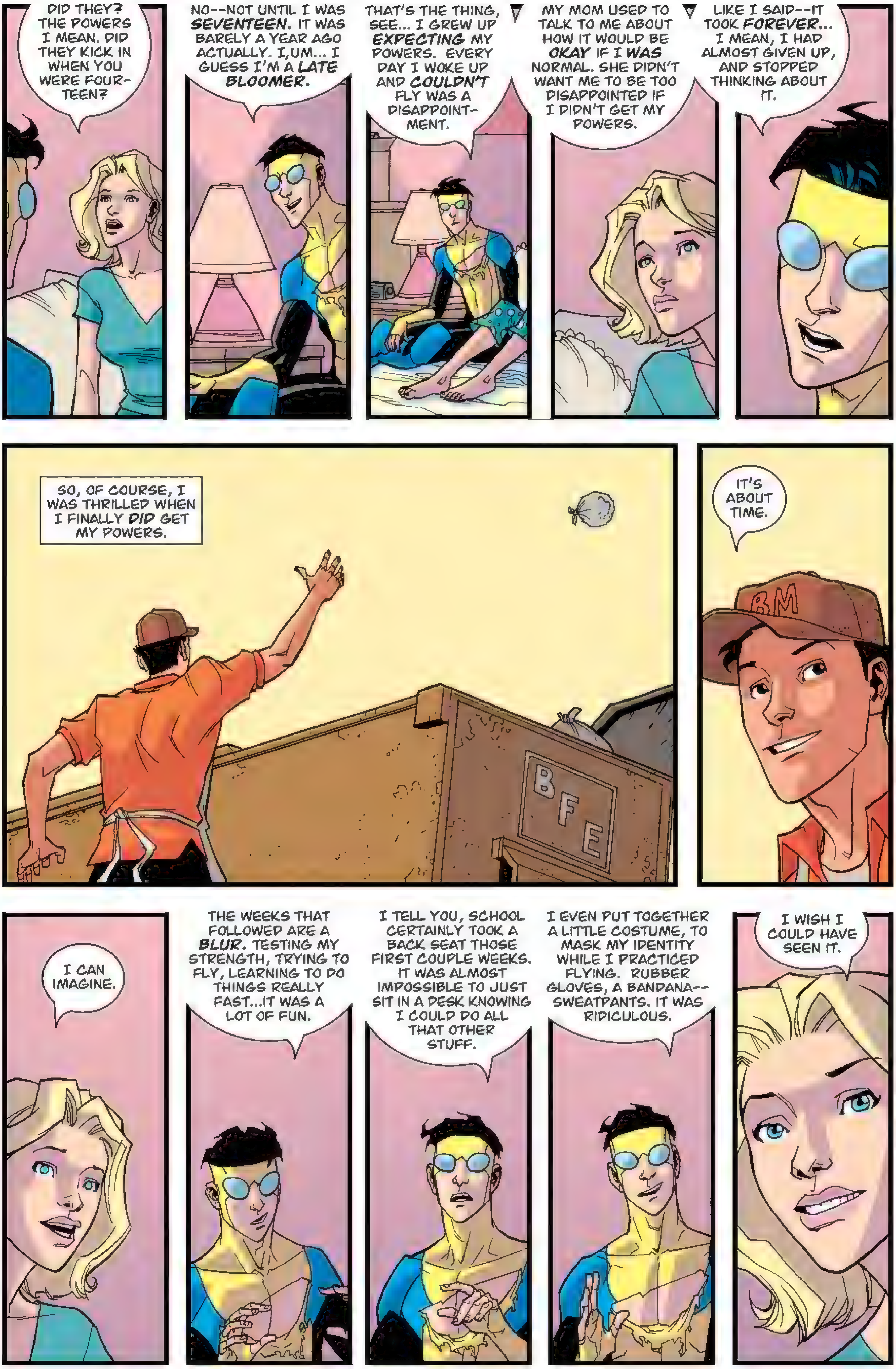

ALONE AT LAST.
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW IT'S TAKEN MY ***ENTIRE*** COLLEGE CAREER TO GET TO THIS POINT. YOU CAN'T RUSH ***GENIUS***, OF COURSE, BUT I WOULD HAVE ***PREFERRED*** TO ACHIEVE ***MORE...*** OF COURSE.
DID YOU KNOW THIS EXPERIMENT STARTED OUT SIMPLY AS A WAY TO REANIMATE DEAD TISSUE--TO CREATE ***LIFE*** WHERE THERE IS NONE?
I WANTED A NOBEL PRIZE--I WANTED TO REUNITE GRANDMOTHERS AND LOVED ONES.
I WANTED TO DO ***GOOD***.
LITTLE DID I KNOW WHAT MY STUDIES WOULD ***LEAD*** ME TO. WHAT ***DOORS*** I WOULD BLOW OPEN WITH MY RESEARCH.
WHERE I SOUGHT TO CREATE ***LIFE*** I ***SUCCEEDED*** IN CREATING ***DEATH***.
YOU KNOW, ***NEWTON*** DISCOVERED GRAVITY BY ACCIDENT.
WHAT I HAVE CREATED IS NOT MERELY A PROCESS WITH WHICH TO RE-ANIMATE LIFE--BUT IT IS THE ULTIMATE ***KILLING*** MACHINE.
A WEAPON OF WAR WITH ***LIMITLESS*** POTENTIAL.
NOW, I, ***D.A. SINCLAIR***, HAVE BUT TO ***PERFECT*** MY DESIGN, STREAM-LINE IT, IMPROVE IT--***PERFECT*** IT.
WHAT AN HONOR IT MUST BE FOR YOU--TO BE THE ***FIRST***.

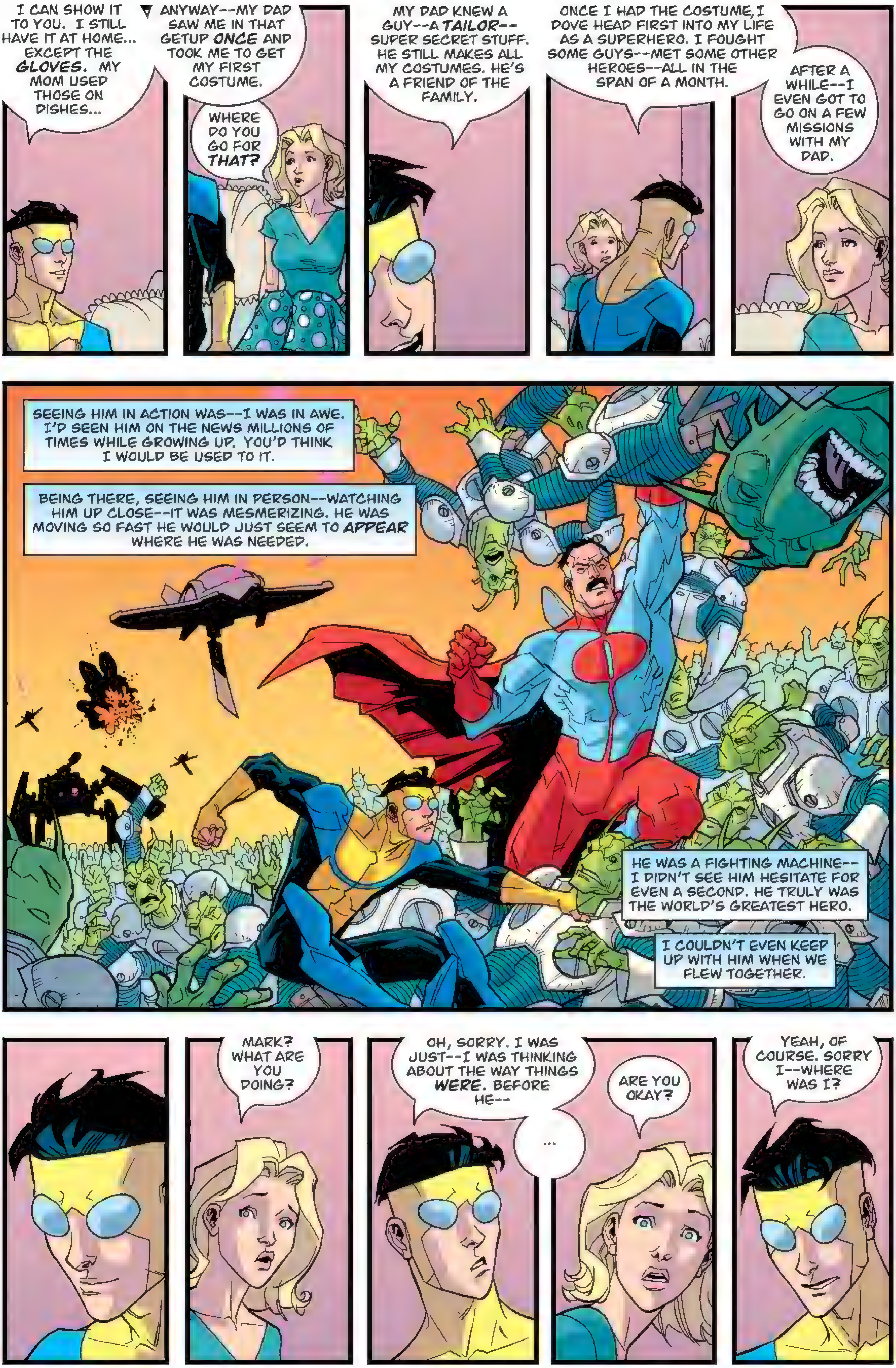
MY FIRST *LIVE* SUBJECT TO BE TURNED INTO A ***REANIMAN***.
THE ***FIRST*** IN AN ***ARMY*** OF KILLING MACHINES.

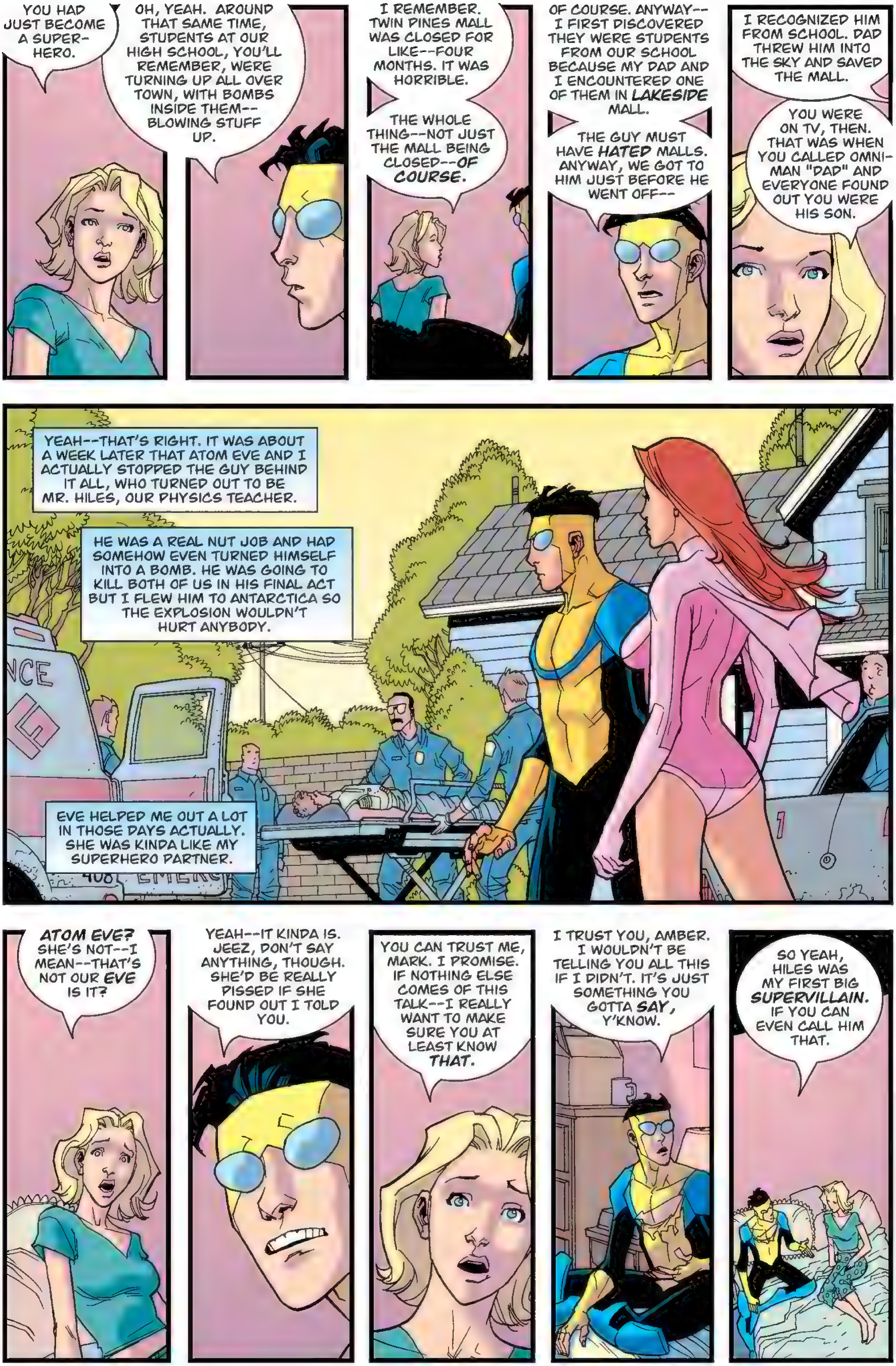
ISSUE ZERO

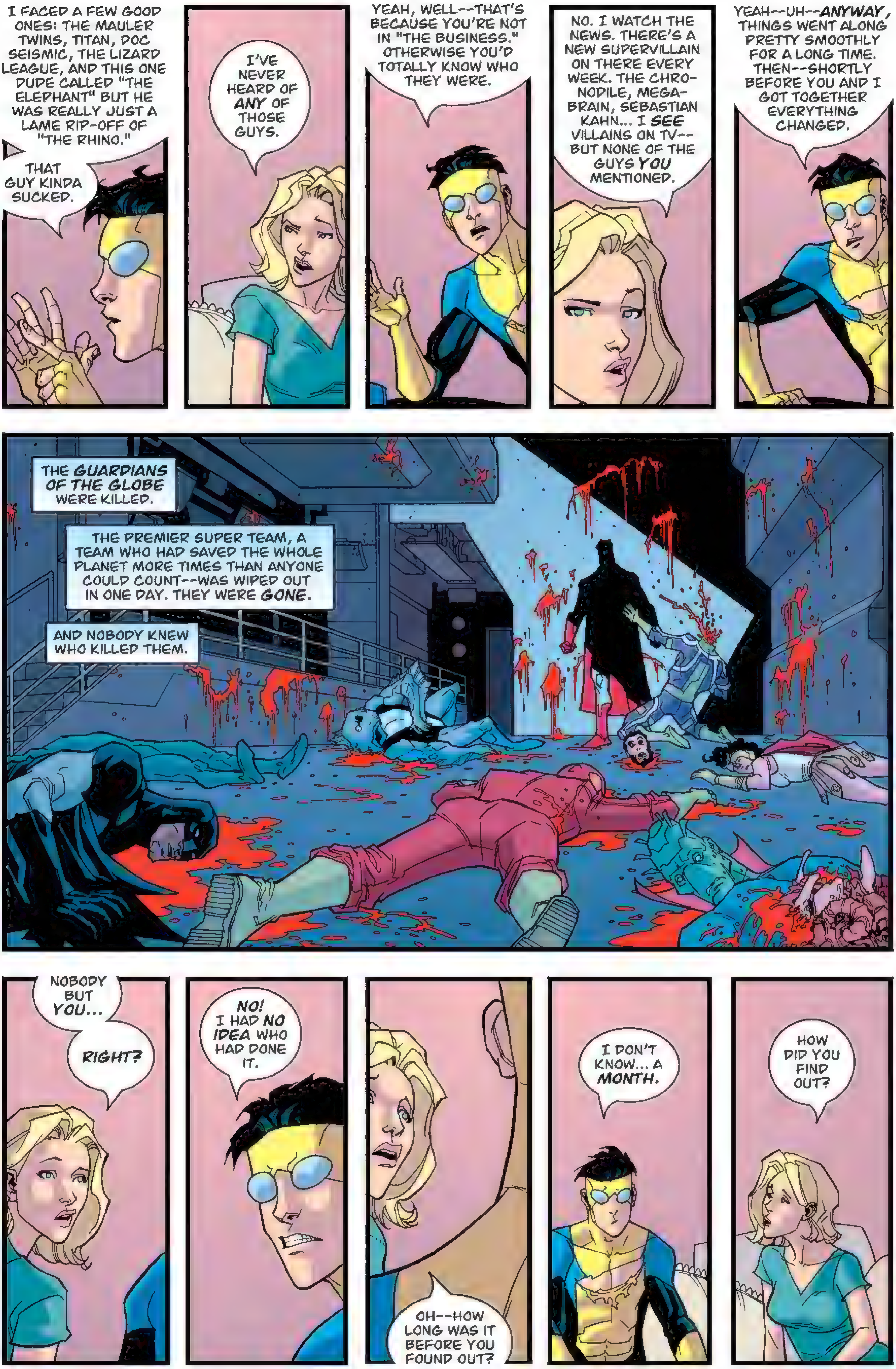

MY BOYFRIEND IS A **SUPERHERO.** I CAN'T **BELIEVE** HOW UNBELIEVABLY **COOL** THAT IS. I'M STILL IN **SHOCK.**
YOU HAVE **NO IDEA** HOW **GOOD** IT FEELS TO FINALLY GET THAT OFF MY CHEST. I'M SO **HAPPY** YOU'RE TAKING THIS SO WELL.
I'VE BEEN PRETTY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS.
TELL ME **EVERYTHING.** YOU HAVE TO TELL ME **EVERY-THING.**
EVERY-THING? YOU'VE SEEN **MOST** OF IT ON THE NEWS. YOU KNOW ME-- THE SUPERHERO STUFF IS ALL TELEVISED.
NO--I WANT TO KNOW HOW EVERYTHING HAPPENED... I WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU. I WANT TO KNOW IT **ALL.**
START FROM THE BEGINNING.
THE **BEGINNING?** IT'S KIND OF LATE ALREADY. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY TONIGHT?
MARK, LISTEN TO ME. MY BOYFRIEND, **YOU,** JUST REVEALED TO ME HE'S A **SUPERHERO.** I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY DANGER OF ME SLEEPING **AT ALL** TONIGHT. LET ALONE ANY TIME **SOON.**
TELL ME.
RIGHT NOW.
THE WHOLE STORY.
OKAY-- UNDERSTOOD. WILL DO.
JUST LET ME FIGURE OUT WHERE TO **START.**
MARK.
START AT THE **BEGINNING.**
OKAY--LET ME REPHRASE.
I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE BEGINNING **IS.**
CUT ME SOME SLACK, **OKAY?** I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SAT DOWN AND **TOLD** THIS STORY BEFORE.

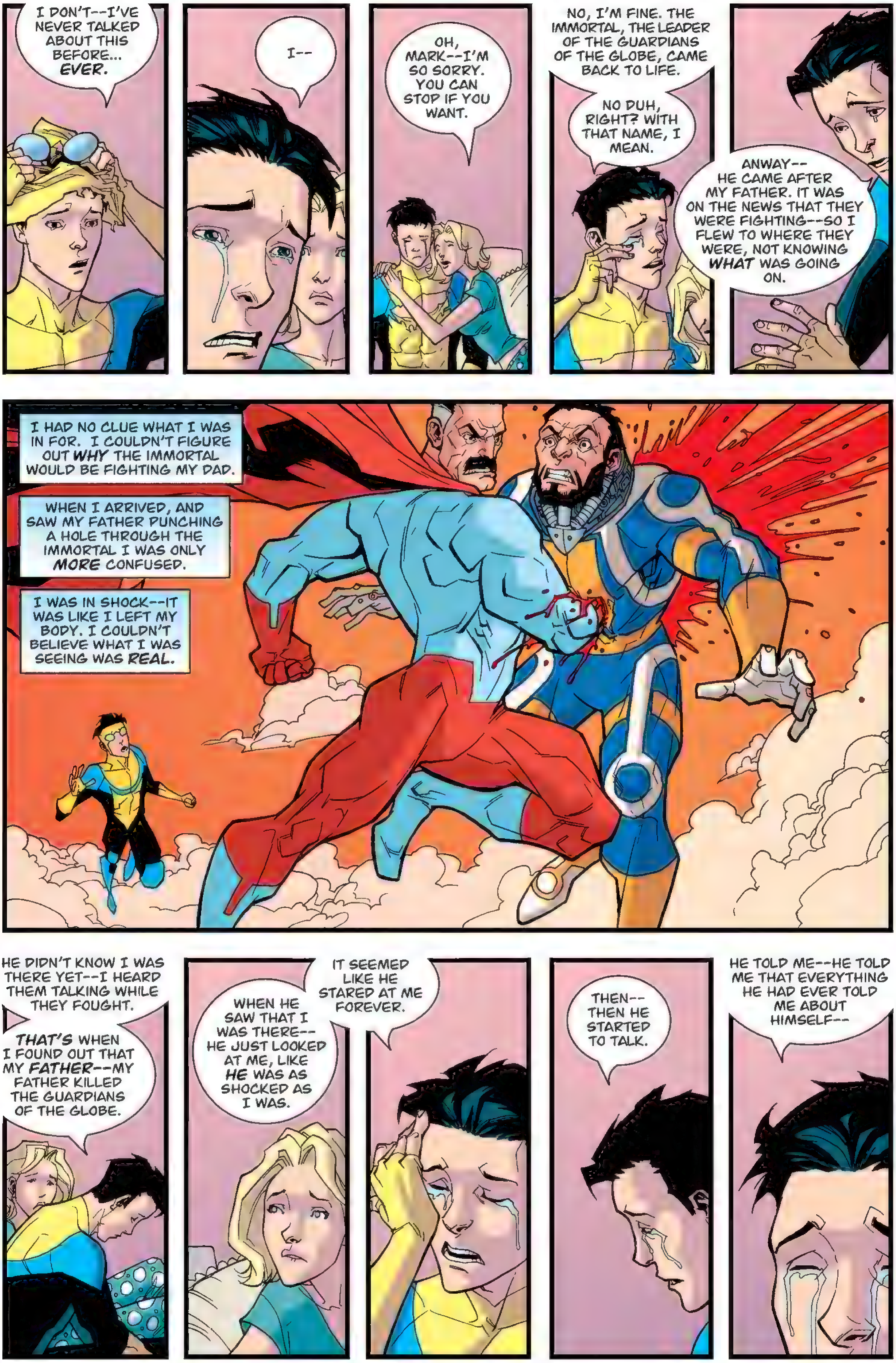

OKAY--YOU KNOW NOW THAT MY DAD WAS ***OMNI-MAN***, THE DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY OR ***WHATEVER*** THEY CALLED HIM.
YEAH. GOT THAT MUCH.
I DIDN'T FIND OUT UNTIL I WAS ABOUT SEVEN YEARS OLD. UP UNTIL THAT POINT--I JUST THOUGHT MY DAD WAS A ***WRITER...***
WHO WENT ON A ***LOT*** OF TRIPS.
YOU DIDN'T SUSPECT ***ANYTHING?***
NOPE. IN FACT, UP UNTIL THE POINT WHERE HE SAT ME DOWN TO TELL ME--I HAD ***NO CLUE*** WHAT WAS GOING ON.
HE TOLD ME ALL KINDS OF THINGS. ALL ABOUT THE PLANET HE CAME FROM, VILTRUM, AND THE KIND OF PEOPLE THEY WERE. HE TOLD ME ABOUT THE "WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE."
THEY WERE FORMED TO BRING WORLDS UP TO VILTRUM'S STANDARD OF PERFECTION. THEY WERE THE ***GOOD GUYS.***
MY DAD WAS ON SOME KIND OF WATCH DUTY WHEN HE SPOTTED EARTH--STUDIED IT AND FELL IN LOVE WITH IT. WHEN THE VILTRUMITES DECIDED EARTH WAS TOO REMOTE AND UNDEVELOPED FOR THEM TO WASTE THEIR TIME IMPROVING, HE QUIT.
AND CAME TO EARTH TO ***LIVE.***
THAT WAS HIS STORY.
I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF ***THAT.***
WHILE HE WAS TELLING ME THIS STORY--HE TOLD ME ABOUT HIS POWERS, FLIGHT, SUPER-SPEED, SUPER-STRENGTH. HE SAID THERE WAS A GOOD CHANCE THAT I WOULD GET THEM.
WHEN YOU WERE ***SEVEN?***
NO. HE ***TOLD ME*** WHEN I WAS SEVEN. HE SAID IF I WAS GOING TO GET POWERS THEY'D PROBABLY KICK IN AROUND PUBERTY--THIRTEEN, FOURTEEN.

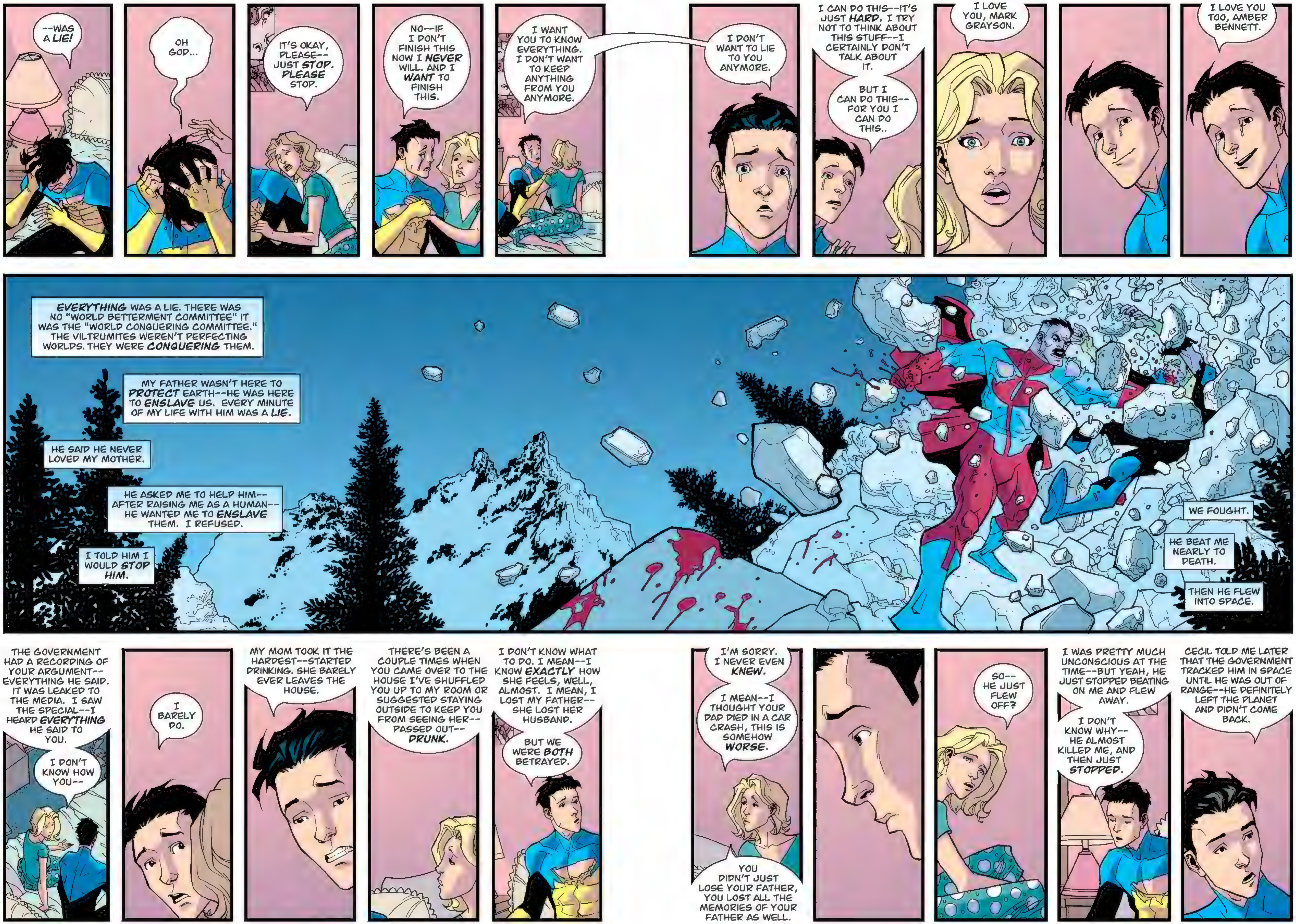

DID THEY? THE POWERS I MEAN. DID THEY KICK IN WHEN YOU WERE FOURTEEN?
NO--NOT UNTIL I WAS **SEVENTEEN.** IT WAS BARELY A YEAR AGO ACTUALLY. I,UM... I GUESS I'M A **LATE BLOOMER.**
THAT'S THE THING, SEE... I GREW UP **EXPECTING** MY POWERS. EVERY DAY I WOKE UP AND **COULDN'T** FLY WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT.
MY MOM USED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT HOW IT WOULD BE **OKAY** IF I **WAS** NORMAL. SHE DIDN'T WANT ME TO BE TOO DISAPPOINTED IF I DIDN'T GET MY POWERS.
LIKE I SAID--IT TOOK **FOREVER**... I MEAN, I HAD ALMOST GIVEN UP, AND STOPPED THINKING ABOUT IT.
SO, OF COURSE, I WAS THRILLED WHEN I FINALLY **DID** GET MY POWERS.
BFE
BM
IT'S ABOUT TIME.
I CAN IMAGINE.
THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED ARE A **BLUR.** TESTING MY STRENGTH, TRYING TO FLY, LEARNING TO DO THINGS REALLY FAST...IT WAS A LOT OF FUN.
I TELL YOU, SCHOOL CERTAINLY TOOK A BACK SEAT THOSE FIRST COUPLE WEEKS. IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO JUST SIT IN A DESK KNOWING I COULD DO ALL THAT OTHER STUFF.
I EVEN PUT TOGETHER A LITTLE COSTUME, TO MASK MY IDENTITY WHILE I PRACTICED FLYING. RUBBER GLOVES, A BANDANA--SWEATPANTS. IT WAS RIDICULOUS.
I WISH I COULD HAVE SEEN IT.]

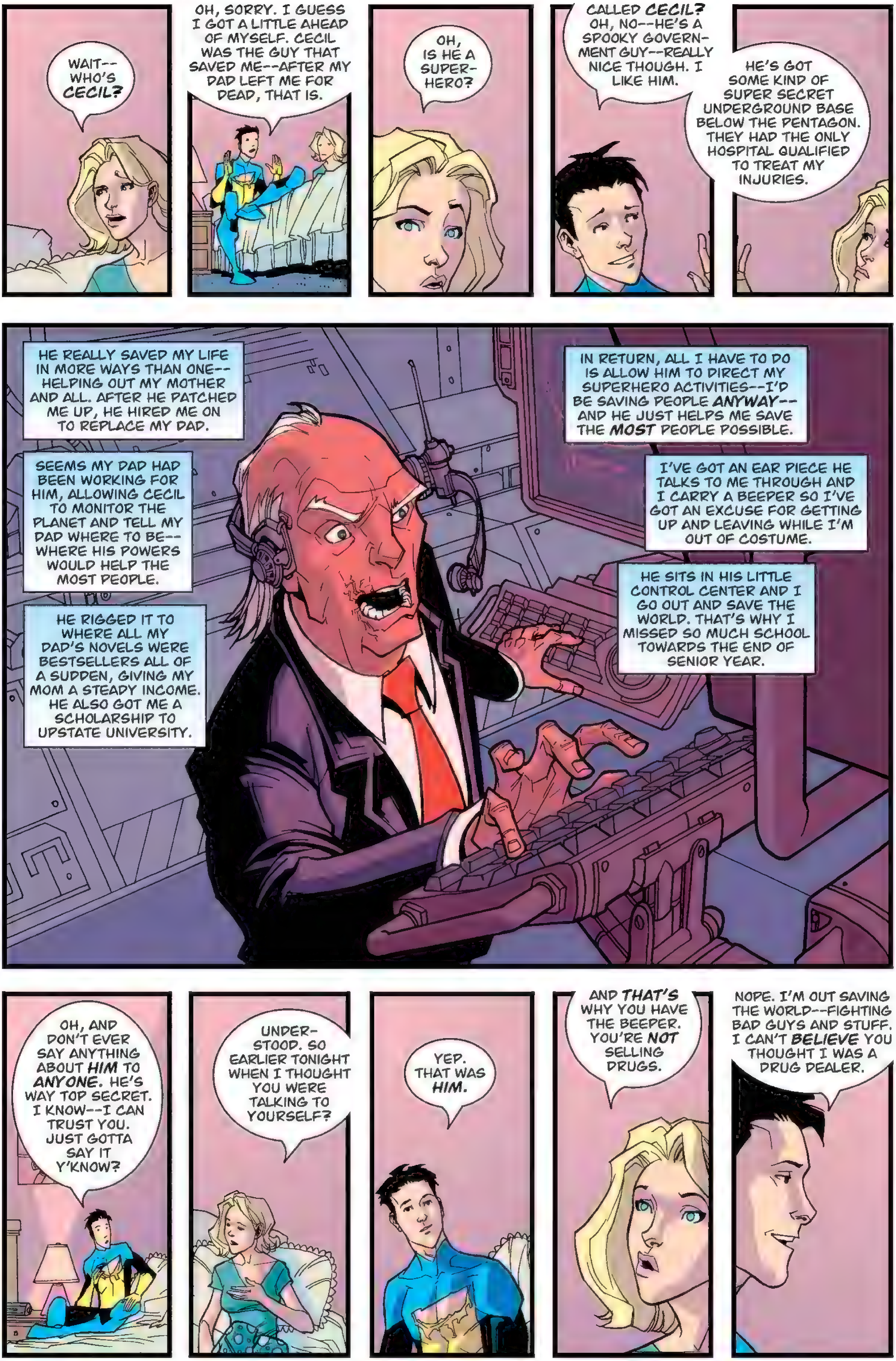

I CAN SHOW IT TO YOU. I STILL HAVE IT AT HOME... EXCEPT THE GLOVES. MY MOM USED THOSE ON DISHES...
ANYWAY--MY DAD SAW ME IN THAT GETUP ONCE AND TOOK ME TO GET MY FIRST COSTUME.
WHERE DO YOU GO FOR THAT?
MY DAD KNEW A GUY--A TAILOR--SUPER SECRET STUFF. HE STILL MAKES ALL MY COSTUMES. HE'S A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.
ONCE I HAD THE COSTUME, I DOVE HEAD FIRST INTO MY LIFE AS A SUPERHERO. I FOUGHT SOME GUYS--MET SOME OTHER HEROES--ALL IN THE SPAN OF A MONTH.
AFTER A WHILE--I EVEN GOT TO GO ON A FEW MISSIONS WITH MY DAD.
SEEING HIM IN ACTION WAS--I WAS IN AWE. I'D SEEN HIM ON THE NEWS MILLIONS OF TIMES WHILE GROWING UP. YOU'D THINK I WOULD BE USED TO IT.
BEING THERE, SEEING HIM IN PERSON--WATCHING HIM UP CLOSE--IT WAS MESMERIZING. HE WAS MOVING SO FAST HE WOULD JUST SEEM TO APPEAR WHERE HE WAS NEEDED.
HE WAS A FIGHTING MACHINE--I DIDN'T SEE HIM HESITATE FOR EVEN A SECOND. HE TRULY WAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST HERO.
I COULDN'T EVEN KEEP UP WITH HIM WHEN WE FLEW TOGETHER.
MARK? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
OH, SORRY. I WAS JUST--I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WAY THINGS WERE. BEFORE HE--
...
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH, OF COURSE. SORRY I--WHERE WAS I?

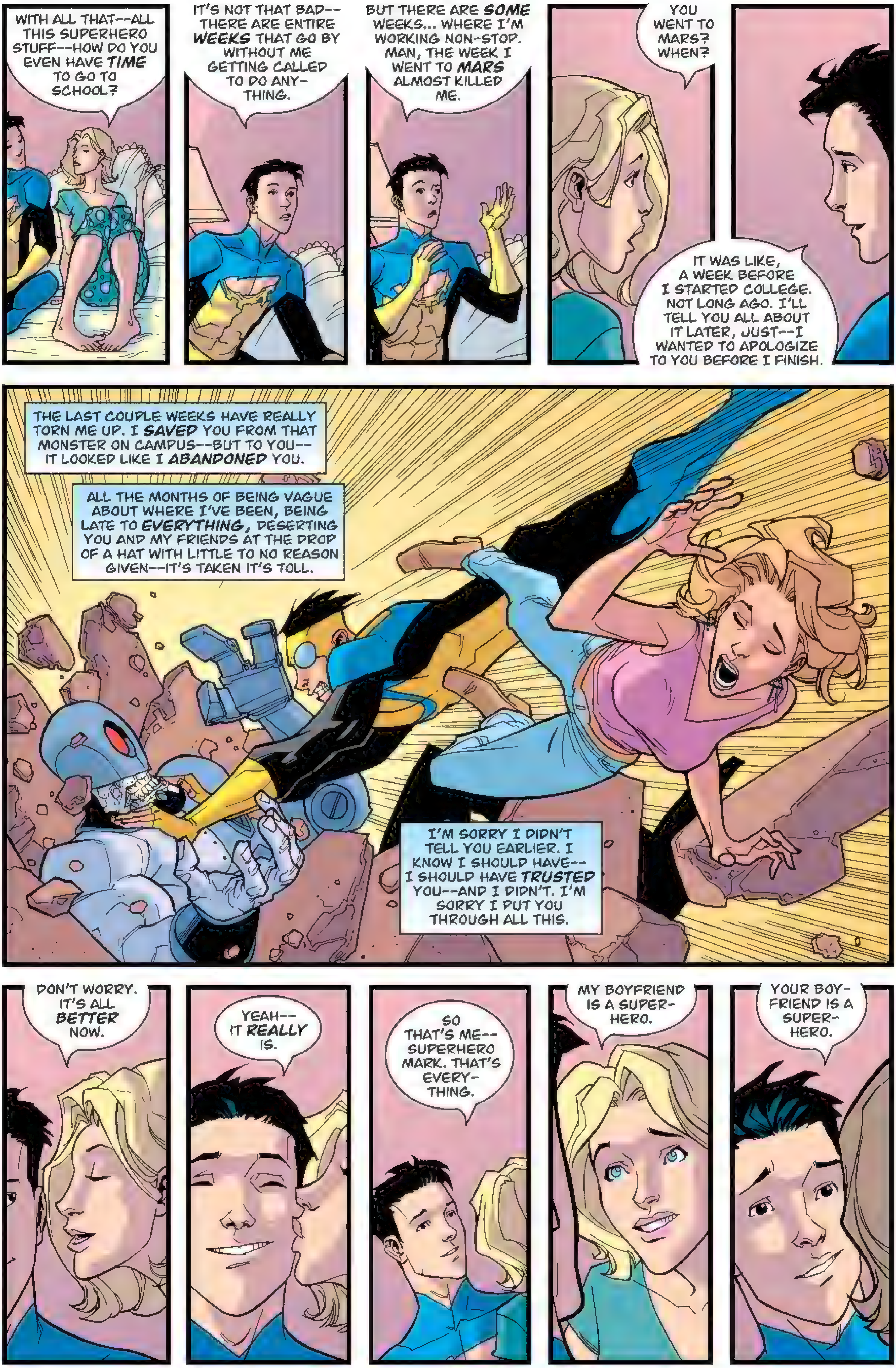

YOU HAD JUST BECOME A SUPER-HERO.
OH, YEAH. AROUND THAT SAME TIME, STUDENTS AT OUR HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'LL REMEMBER, WERE TURNING UP ALL OVER TOWN, WITH BOMBS INSIDE THEM-- BLOWING STUFF UP.
I REMEMBER. TWIN PINES MALL WAS CLOSED FOR LIKE--FOUR MONTHS. IT WAS HORRIBLE.
THE WHOLE THING--NOT JUST THE MALL BEING CLOSED--OF COURSE.
OF COURSE. ANYWAY-- I FIRST DISCOVERED THEY WERE STUDENTS FROM OUR SCHOOL BECAUSE MY DAD AND I ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THEM IN LAKESIDE MALL.
THE GUY MUST HAVE HATED MALLS. ANYWAY, WE GOT TO HIM JUST BEFORE HE WENT OFF--
I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM SCHOOL. DAD THREW HIM INTO THE SKY AND SAVED THE MALL.
YOU WERE ON TV, THEN. THAT WAS WHEN YOU CALLED OMNI-MAN "DAD" AND EVERYONE FOUND OUT YOU WERE HIS SON.
YEAH--THAT'S RIGHT. IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK LATER THAT ATOM EVE AND I ACTUALLY STOPPED THE GUY BEHIND IT ALL, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MR. HILES, OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.
HE WAS A REAL NUT JOB AND HAD SOMEHOW EVEN TURNED HIMSELF INTO A BOMB. HE WAS GOING TO KILL BOTH OF US IN HIS FINAL ACT BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA SO THE EXPLOSION WOULDN'T HURT ANYBODY.
EVE HELPED ME OUT A LOT IN THOSE DAYS ACTUALLY. SHE WAS KINDA LIKE MY SUPERHERO PARTNER.
ATOM EVE? SHE'S NOT--I MEAN--THAT'S NOT OUR EVE IS IT?
YEAH--IT KINDA IS. JEEZ, DON'T SAY ANYTHING, THOUGH. SHE'D BE REALLY PISSED IF SHE FOUND OUT I TOLD YOU.
YOU CAN TRUST ME, MARK. I PROMISE. IF NOTHING ELSE COMES OF THIS TALK--I REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU AT LEAST KNOW THAT.
I TRUST YOU, AMBER. I WOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU ALL THIS IF I DIDN'T. IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU GOTTA SAY, Y'KNOW.
SO YEAH, HILES WAS MY FIRST BIG SUPERVILLAIN. IF YOU CAN EVEN CALL HIM THAT.

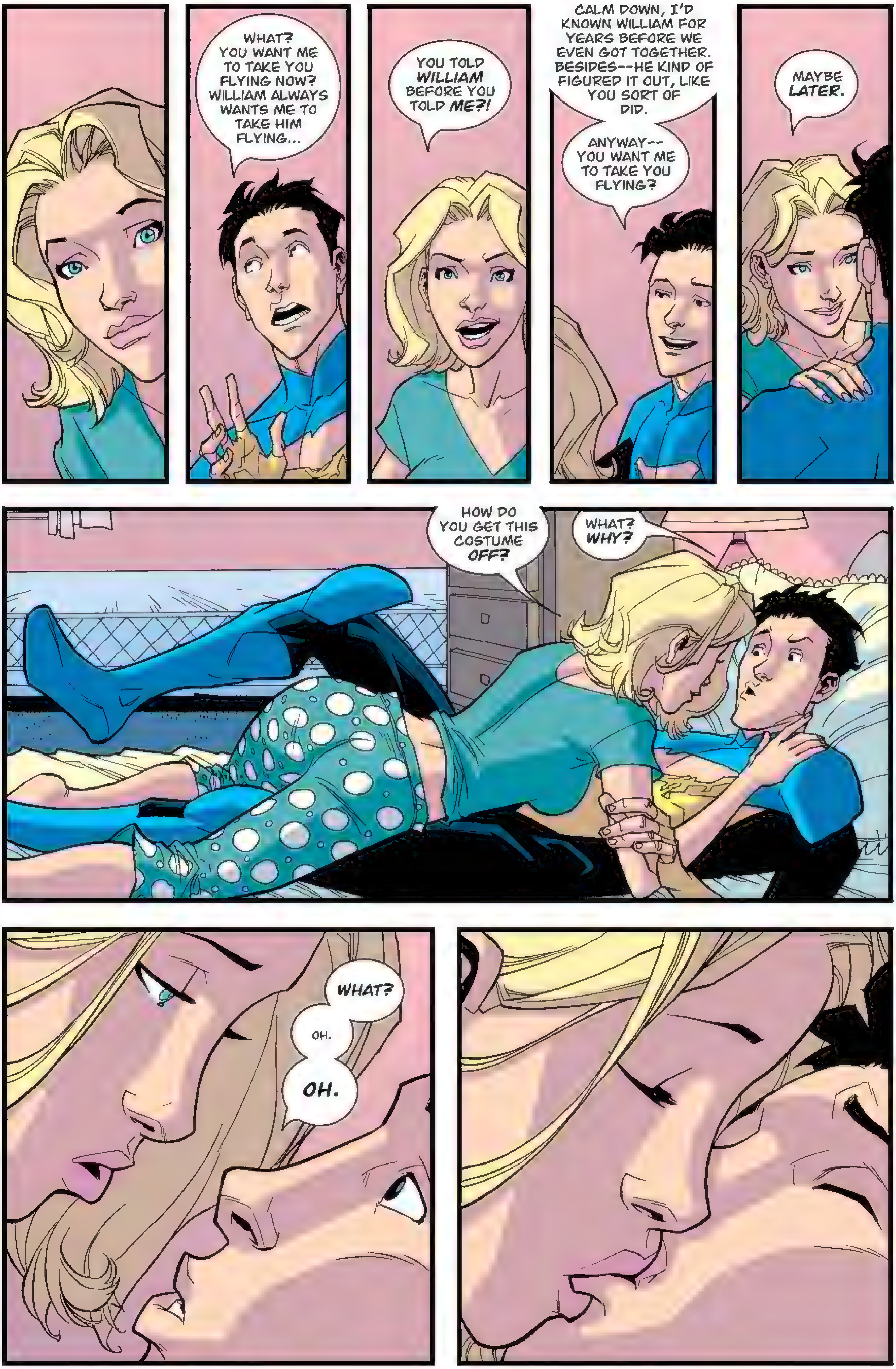

I FACED A FEW GOOD ONES: THE MAULER TWINS, TITAN, DOC SEISMIC, THE LIZARD LEAGUE, AND THIS ONE DUDE CALLED "THE ELEPHANT" BUT HE WAS REALLY JUST A LAME RIP-OFF OF "THE RHINO."
THAT GUY KINDA SUCKED.
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF *ANY* OF THOSE GUYS.
YEAH, WELL--THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT IN "THE BUSINESS." OTHERWISE YOU'D TOTALLY KNOW WHO THEY WERE.
NO. I WATCH THE NEWS. THERE'S A NEW SUPERVILLAIN ON THERE EVERY WEEK. THE CHRONODILE, MEGA-BRAIN, SEBASTIAN KAHN... I *SEE* VILLAINS ON TV--BUT NONE OF THE GUYS *YOU* MENTIONED.
YEAH--UH--*ANYWAY*, THINGS WENT ALONG PRETTY SMOOTHLY FOR A LONG TIME. THEN--SHORTLY BEFORE YOU AND I GOT TOGETHER EVERYTHING CHANGED.
THE *GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE* WERE KILLED.
THE PREMIER SUPER TEAM, A TEAM WHO HAD SAVED THE WHOLE PLANET MORE TIMES THAN ANYONE COULD COUNT--WAS WIPED OUT IN ONE DAY. THEY WERE *GONE*.
AND NOBODY KNEW WHO KILLED THEM.
NOBODY BUT *YOU*...
RIGHT?
NO! I HAD *NO IDEA* WHO HAD DONE IT.
OH--HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOU FOUND OUT?
I DON'T KNOW... A *MONTH*.
HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?


I DON'T--I'VE NEVER TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE... *EVER.*
I--
OH, MARK--I'M SO SORRY. YOU CAN STOP IF YOU WANT.
NO, I'M FINE. THE IMMORTAL, THE LEADER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, CAME BACK TO LIFE.
NO DUH, RIGHT? WITH THAT NAME, I MEAN.
ANWAY--HE CAME AFTER MY FATHER. IT WAS ON THE NEWS THAT THEY WERE FIGHTING--SO I FLEW TO WHERE THEY WERE, NOT KNOWING *WHAT* WAS GOING ON.
I HAD NO CLUE WHAT I WAS IN FOR. I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT *WHY* THE IMMORTAL WOULD BE FIGHTING MY DAD.
WHEN I ARRIVED, AND SAW MY FATHER PUNCHING A HOLE THROUGH THE IMMORTAL I WAS ONLY *MORE* CONFUSED.
I WAS IN SHOCK--IT WAS LIKE I LEFT MY BODY. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS SEEING WAS *REAL.*
HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS THERE YET--I HEARD THEM TALKING WHILE THEY FOUGHT.
THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MY *FATHER*--MY FATHER KILLED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
WHEN HE SAW THAT I WAS THERE--HE JUST LOOKED AT ME, LIKE *HE* WAS AS SHOCKED AS I WAS.
IT SEEMED LIKE HE STARED AT ME FOREVER.
THEN--THEN HE STARTED TO TALK.
HE TOLD ME--HE TOLD ME THAT EVERYTHING HE HAD EVER TOLD ME ABOUT HIMSELF--

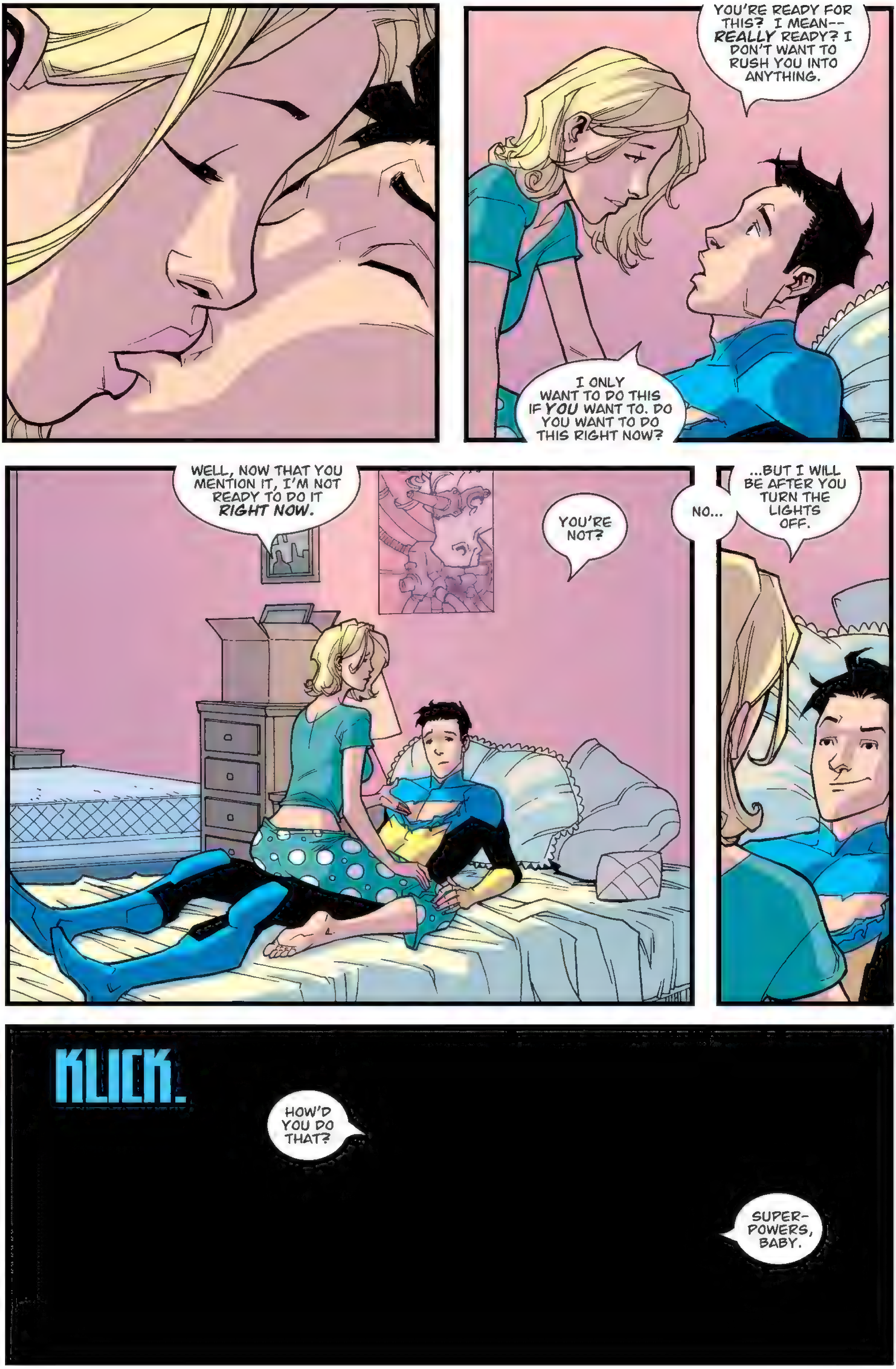

--WAS A *LIE!*
OH GOD...
IT'S OKAY, PLEASE--JUST *STOP. PLEASE* STOP.
NO--IF I DON'T FINISH THIS NOW I *NEVER* WILL. AND I *WANT* TO FINISH THIS.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW EVERYTHING. I DON'T WANT TO KEEP ANYTHING FROM YOU ANYMORE.
I DON'T WANT TO LIE TO YOU ANYMORE.
I CAN DO THIS--IT'S JUST *HARD*. I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT THIS STUFF--I CERTAINLY DON'T TALK ABOUT IT.
BUT I CAN DO THIS--FOR YOU I CAN DO THIS..
I LOVE YOU, MARK GRAYSON.
I LOVE YOU TOO, AMBER BENNETT.
EVERYTHING WAS A LIE. THERE WAS NO "WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE" IT WAS THE "WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE." THE VILTRUMITES WEREN'T PERFECTING WORLDS. THEY WERE *CONQUERING* THEM.
MY FATHER WASN'T HERE TO *PROTECT* EARTH--HE WAS HERE TO *ENSLAVE* US. EVERY MINUTE OF MY LIFE WITH HIM WAS A *LIE.*
HE SAID HE NEVER LOVED MY MOTHER.
HE ASKED ME TO HELP HIM--AFTER RAISING ME AS A HUMAN--HE WANTED ME TO *ENSLAVE* THEM. I REFUSED.
I TOLD HIM I WOULD *STOP HIM.*
WE FOUGHT.
HE BEAT ME NEARLY TO DEATH.
THEN HE FLEW INTO SPACE.
THE GOVERNMENT HAD A RECORDING OF YOUR ARGUMENT--EVERYTHING HE SAID. IT WAS LEAKED TO THE MEDIA. I SAW THE SPECIAL--I HEARD *EVERYTHING* HE SAID TO YOU.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU--
I BARELY DO.
MY MOM TOOK IT THE HARDEST--STARTED DRINKING. SHE BARELY EVER LEAVES THE HOUSE.
THERE'S BEEN A COUPLE TIMES WHEN YOU CAME OVER TO THE HOUSE I'VE SHUFFLED YOU UP TO MY ROOM OR SUGGESTED STAYING OUTSIDE TO KEEP YOU FROM SEEING HER--PASSED OUT--*DRUNK.*
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I MEAN--I KNOW *EXACTLY* HOW SHE FEELS, WELL, ALMOST. I MEAN, I LOST MY FATHER--SHE LOST HER HUSBAND.
BUT WE WERE *BOTH* BETRAYED.
I'M SORRY. I NEVER EVEN *KNEW.*
I MEAN--I THOUGHT YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH, THIS IS SOMEHOW *WORSE.*
YOU DIDN'T JUST LOSE YOUR FATHER, YOU LOST ALL THE MEMORIES OF YOUR FATHER AS WELL.
SO--HE JUST FLEW OFF?
I WAS PRETTY MUCH UNCONSCIOUS AT THE TIME--BUT YEAH, HE JUST STOPPED BEATING ON ME AND FLEW AWAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHY--HE ALMOST KILLED ME, AND THEN JUST *STOPPED.*
CECIL TOLD ME LATER THAT THE GOVERNMENT TRACKED HIM IN SPACE UNTIL HE WAS OUT OF RANGE--HE DEFINITELY LEFT THE PLANET AND DIDN'T COME BACK.


WAIT-- WHO'S *CECIL?*
OH, SORRY. I GUESS I GOT A LITTLE AHEAD OF MYSELF. CECIL WAS THE GUY THAT SAVED ME--AFTER MY DAD LEFT ME FOR DEAD, THAT IS.
OH, IS HE A SUPERHERO?
CALLED *CECIL?* OH, NO--HE'S A SPOOKY GOVERNMENT GUY--REALLY NICE THOUGH. I LIKE HIM.
HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF SUPER SECRET UNDERGROUND BASE BELOW THE PENTAGON. THEY HAD THE ONLY HOSPITAL QUALIFIED TO TREAT MY INJURIES.
HE REALLY SAVED MY LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE--HELPING OUT MY MOTHER AND ALL. AFTER HE PATCHED ME UP, HE HIRED ME ON TO REPLACE MY DAD.
SEEMS MY DAD HAD BEEN WORKING FOR HIM, ALLOWING CECIL TO MONITOR THE PLANET AND TELL MY DAD WHERE TO BE--WHERE HIS POWERS WOULD HELP THE MOST PEOPLE.
HE RIGGED IT TO WHERE ALL MY DAD'S NOVELS WERE BESTSELLERS ALL OF A SUDDEN, GIVING MY MOM A STEADY INCOME. HE ALSO GOT ME A SCHOLARSHIP TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
IN RETURN, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS ALLOW HIM TO DIRECT MY SUPERHERO ACTIVITIES--I'D BE SAVING PEOPLE *ANYWAY*--AND HE JUST HELPS ME SAVE THE *MOST* PEOPLE POSSIBLE.
I'VE GOT AN EAR PIECE HE TALKS TO ME THROUGH AND I CARRY A BEEPER SO I'VE GOT AN EXCUSE FOR GETTING UP AND LEAVING WHILE I'M OUT OF COSTUME.
HE SITS IN HIS LITTLE CONTROL CENTER AND I GO OUT AND SAVE THE WORLD. THAT'S WHY I MISSED SO MUCH SCHOOL TOWARDS THE END OF SENIOR YEAR.
OH, AND DON'T EVER SAY ANYTHING ABOUT *HIM* TO *ANYONE*. HE'S WAY TOP SECRET. I KNOW--I CAN TRUST YOU. JUST GOTTA SAY IT Y'KNOW?
UNDERSTOOD. SO EARLIER TONIGHT WHEN I THOUGHT YOU WERE TALKING TO YOURSELF?
YEP. THAT WAS *HIM.*
AND *THAT'S* WHY YOU HAVE THE BEEPER. YOU'RE *NOT* SELLING DRUGS.
NOPE. I'M OUT SAVING THE WORLD--FIGHTING BAD GUYS AND STUFF. I CAN'T *BELIEVE* YOU THOUGHT I WAS A DRUG DEALER.


WITH ALL THAT--ALL THIS SUPERHERO STUFF--HOW DO YOU EVEN HAVE *TIME* TO GO TO SCHOOL?
IT'S NOT THAT BAD--THERE ARE ENTIRE *WEEKS* THAT GO BY WITHOUT ME GETTING CALLED TO DO ANYTHING.
BUT THERE ARE *SOME* WEEKS... WHERE I'M WORKING NON-STOP. MAN, THE WEEK I WENT TO *MARS* ALMOST KILLED ME.
YOU WENT TO MARS? WHEN?
IT WAS LIKE, A WEEK BEFORE I STARTED COLLEGE. NOT LONG AGO. I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT LATER, JUST--I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU BEFORE I FINISH.
THE LAST COUPLE WEEKS HAVE REALLY TORN ME UP. I *SAVED* YOU FROM THAT MONSTER ON CAMPUS--BUT TO YOU--IT LOOKED LIKE I *ABANDONED* YOU.
ALL THE MONTHS OF BEING VAGUE ABOUT WHERE I'VE BEEN, BEING LATE TO *EVERYTHING*, DESERTING YOU AND MY FRIENDS AT THE DROP OF A HAT WITH LITTLE TO NO REASON GIVEN--IT'S TAKEN IT'S TOLL.
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU EARLIER. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE--I SHOULD HAVE *TRUSTED* YOU--AND I DIDN'T. I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH ALL THIS.
DON'T WORRY. IT'S ALL *BETTER* NOW.
YEAH--IT *REALLY* IS.
SO THAT'S ME--SUPERHERO MARK. THAT'S EVERYTHING.
MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO.
YOUR BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO.

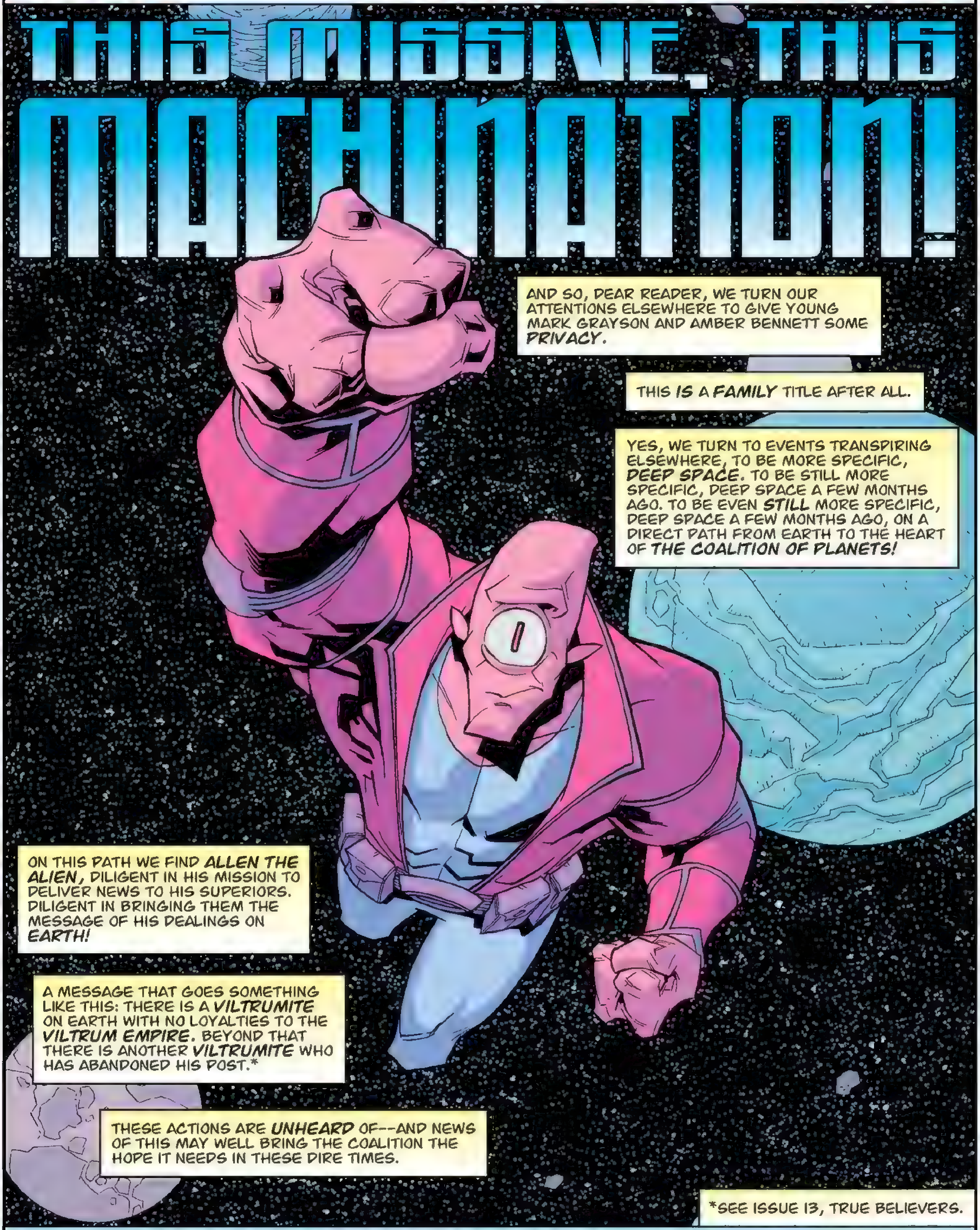

WHAT? YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU FLYING NOW? WILLIAM ALWAYS WANTS ME TO TAKE HIM FLYING...
YOU TOLD WILLIAM BEFORE YOU TOLD ME?!
CALM DOWN, I'D KNOWN WILLIAM FOR YEARS BEFORE WE EVEN GOT TOGETHER. BESIDES--HE KIND OF FIGURED IT OUT, LIKE YOU SORT OF DID.
ANYWAY--YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU FLYING?
MAYBE LATER.
HOW DO YOU GET THIS COSTUME OFF?
WHAT? WHY?
WHAT?
OH.
OH.

ISSUE TWENTY-THREE

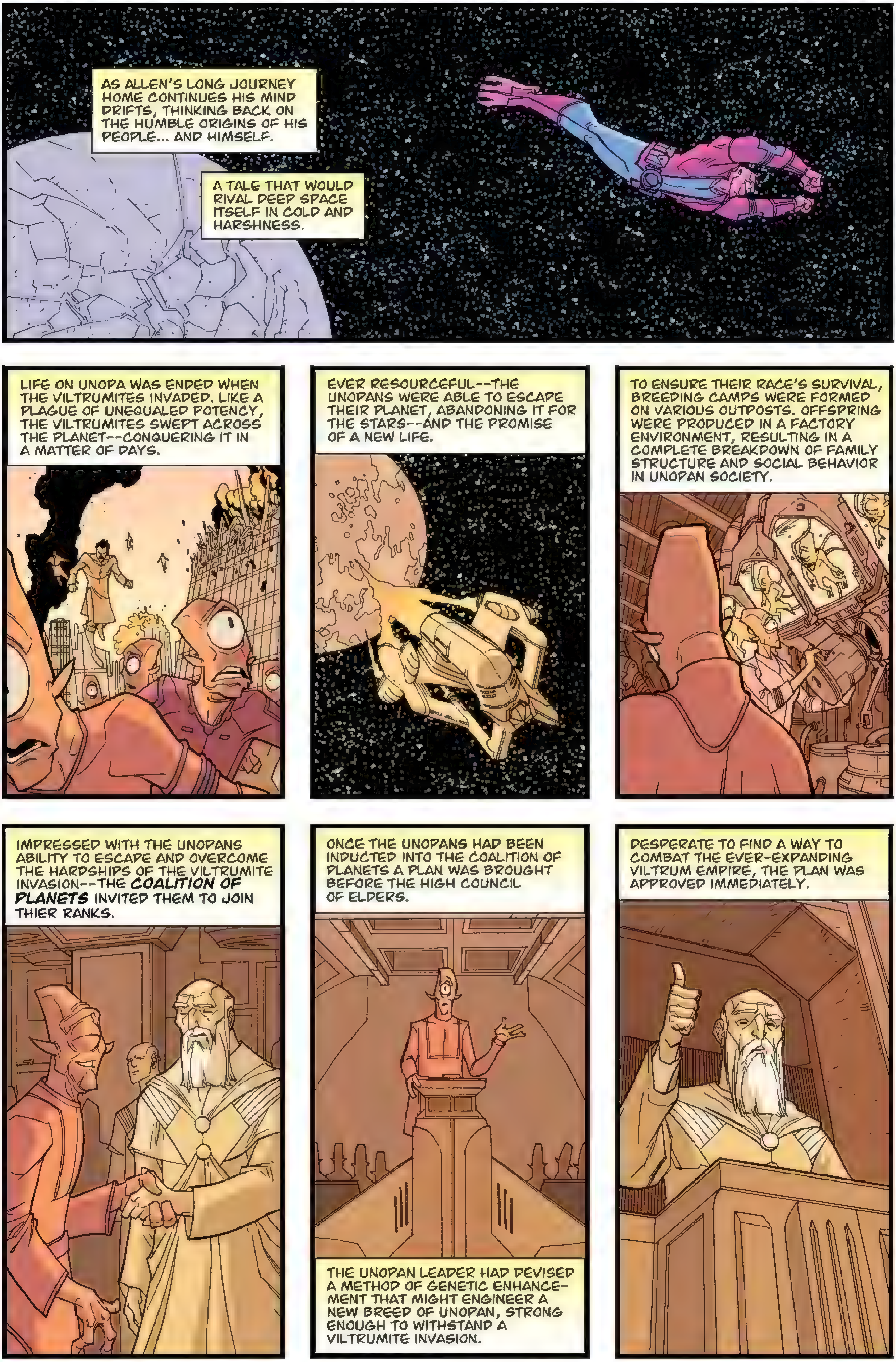

YOU'RE READY FOR THIS? I MEAN-- REALLY READY? I DON'T WANT TO RUSH YOU INTO ANYTHING.
I ONLY WANT TO DO THIS IF YOU WANT TO. DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS RIGHT NOW?
WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I'M NOT READY TO DO IT RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE NOT?
NO...
...BUT I WILL BE AFTER YOU TURN THE LIGHTS OFF.
KLICK.
HOW'D YOU DO THAT?
SUPER-POWERS, BABY.

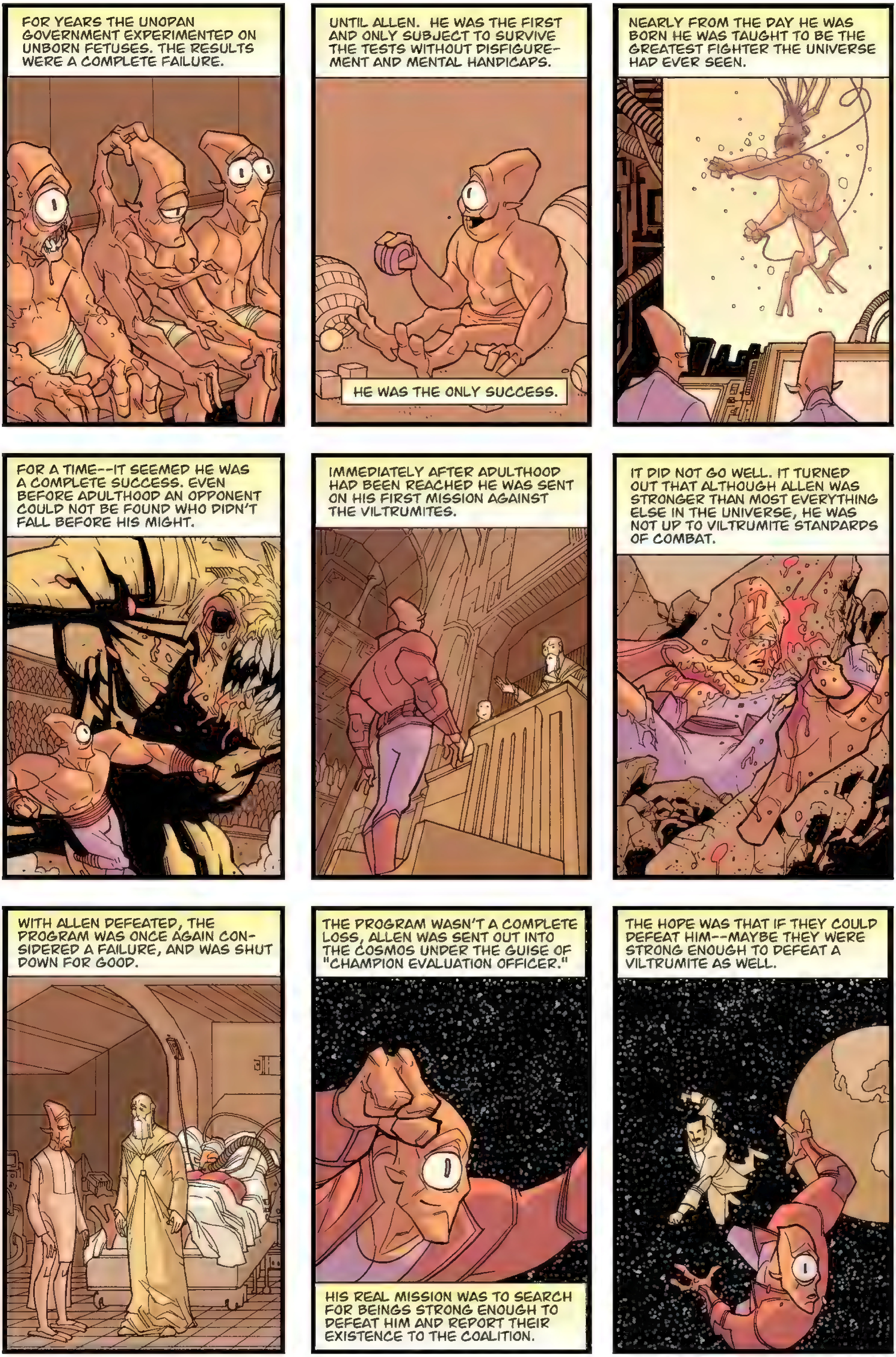
BORN OF A RACE ENDANGERED, CAST OUT OF THEIR HOMEWORLD LIKE A BAND OF GYPSIES, TESTED AND EXPERIMENTED ON TO INCREASE HIS STRENGTH AND SPEED, UNTIL HE EMERGED A GUARDIAN OF THE SPACEWAYS. IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS: **ALLEN THE ALIEN** IN:

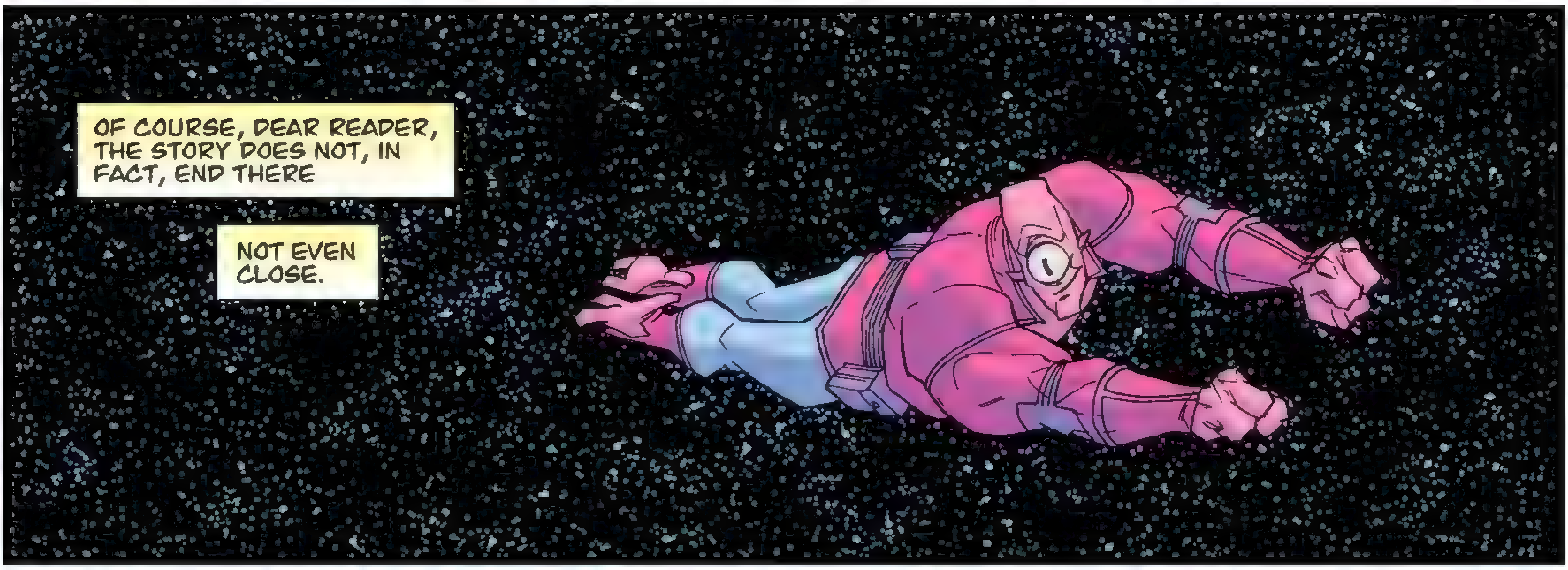
THIS MISSIVE, THIS MACHINATION!

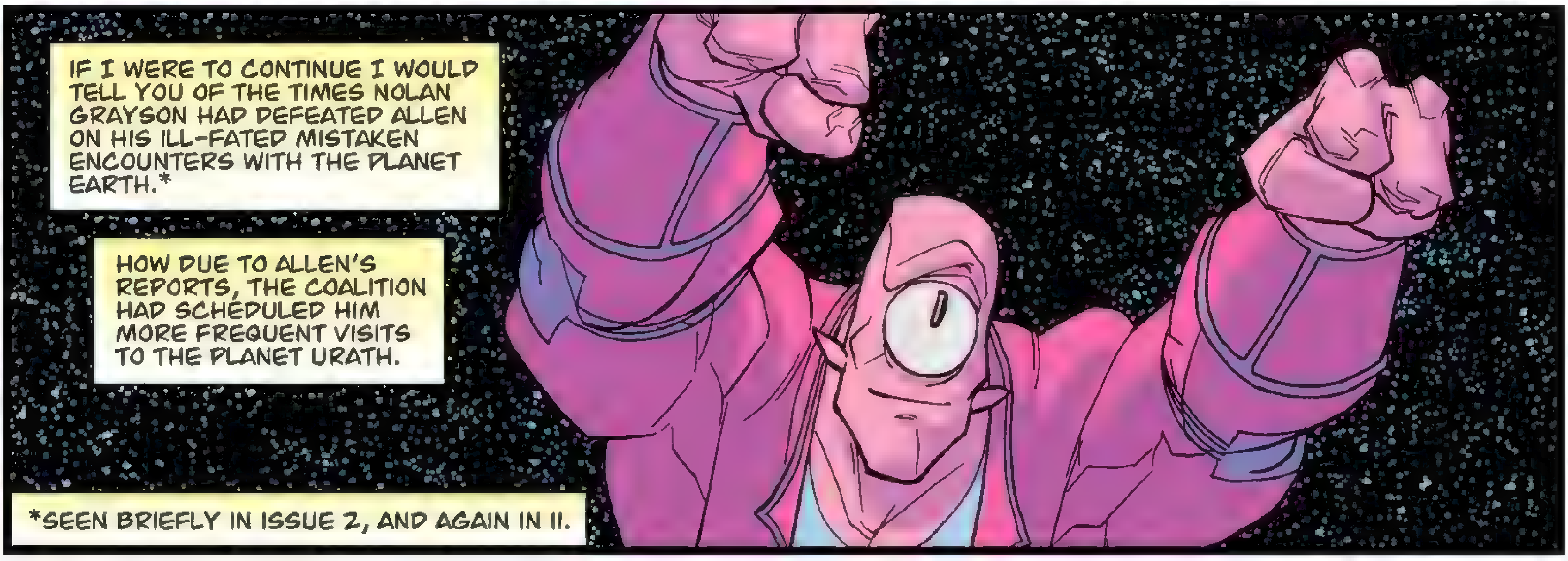

AND SO, DEAR READER, WE TURN OUR ATTENTIONS ELSEWHERE TO GIVE YOUNG MARK GRAYSON AND AMBER BENNETT SOME *PRIVACY*.
THIS *IS* A *FAMILY* TITLE AFTER ALL.
YES, WE TURN TO EVENTS TRANSPIRING ELSEWHERE, TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, *DEEP SPACE*. TO BE STILL MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO. TO BE EVEN *STILL* MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO, ON A DIRECT PATH FROM EARTH TO THE HEART OF *THE COALITION OF PLANETS!*
ON THIS PATH WE FIND *ALLEN THE ALIEN*, DILIGENT IN HIS MISSION TO DELIVER NEWS TO HIS SUPERIORS. DILIGENT IN BRINGING THEM THE MESSAGE OF HIS DEALINGS ON *EARTH!*
A MESSAGE THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THERE IS A *VILTRUMITE* ON EARTH WITH NO LOYALTIES TO THE *VILTRUM EMPIRE*. BEYOND THAT THERE IS ANOTHER *VILTRUMITE* WHO HAS ABANDONED HIS POST.*
THESE ACTIONS ARE *UNHEARD* OF--AND NEWS OF THIS MAY WELL BRING THE COALITION THE HOPE IT NEEDS IN THESE DIRE TIMES.
*SEE ISSUE 13, TRUE BELIEVERS.

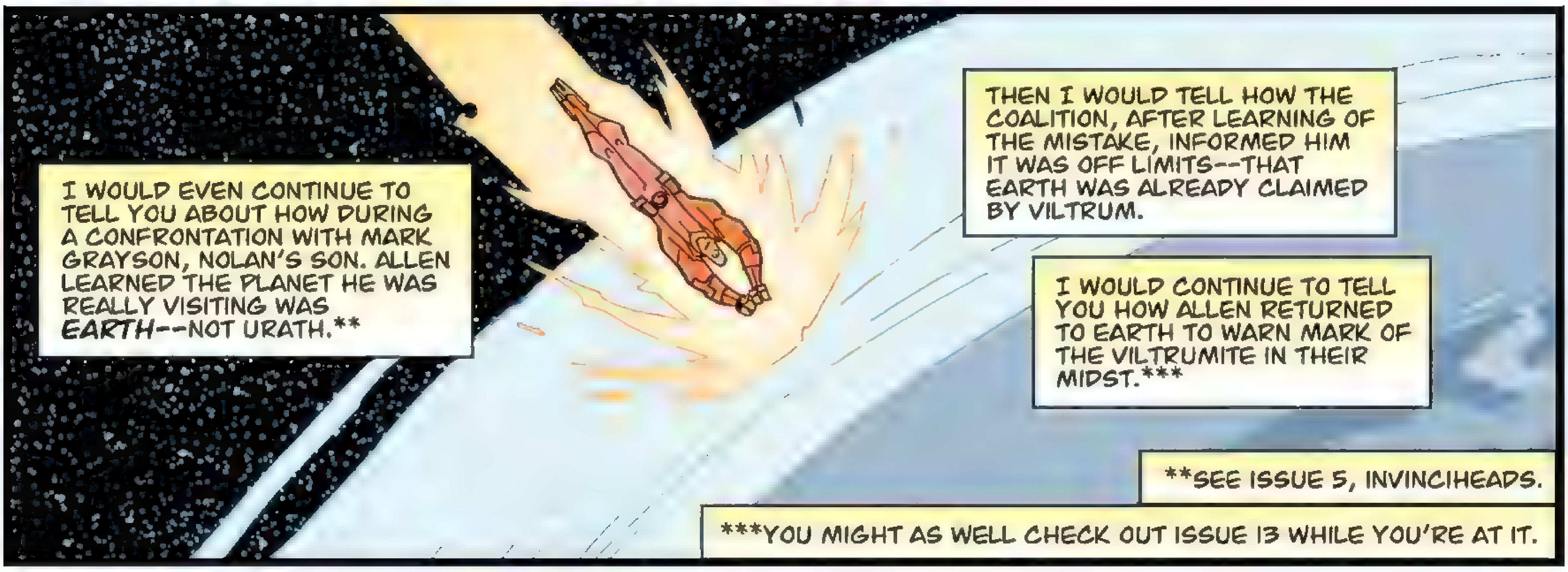
ROBERT KIRKMAN WRITER · RYAN OTTLEY ARTIST · BILL CRABTREE COLORIST · RUS WOOTON LETTERER · CORY WALKER INSPIRATION · ERIC STEPHENSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · ERIK LARSEN PUBLISHER

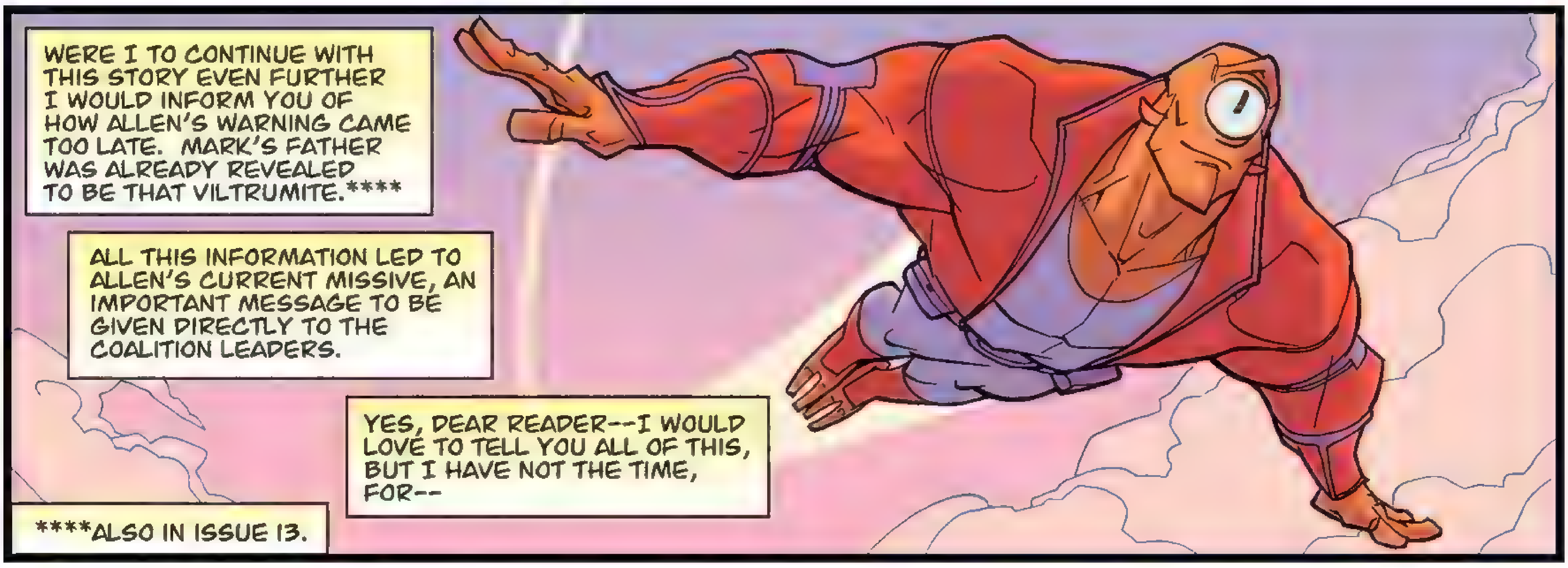

AS ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY HOME CONTINUES HIS MIND DRIFTS, THINKING BACK ON THE HUMBLE ORIGINS OF HIS PEOPLE... AND HIMSELF.
A TALE THAT WOULD RIVAL DEEP SPACE ITSELF IN COLD AND HARSHNESS.
LIFE ON UNOPA WAS ENDED WHEN THE VILTRUMITES INVADED. LIKE A PLAGUE OF UNEQUALED POTENCY, THE VILTRUMITES SWEPT ACROSS THE PLANET--CONQUERING IT IN A MATTER OF DAYS.
EVER RESOURCEFUL--THE UNOPANS WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE THEIR PLANET, ABANDONING IT FOR THE STARS--AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW LIFE.
TO ENSURE THEIR RACE'S SURVIVAL, BREEDING CAMPS WERE FORMED ON VARIOUS OUTPOSTS. OFFSPRING WERE PRODUCED IN A FACTORY ENVIRONMENT, RESULTING IN A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN UNOPAN SOCIETY.
IMPRESSED WITH THE UNOPANS ABILITY TO ESCAPE AND OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS OF THE VILTRUMITE INVASION--THE ***COALITION OF PLANETS*** INVITED THEM TO JOIN THIER RANKS.
ONCE THE UNOPANS HAD BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE COALITION OF PLANETS A PLAN WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL OF ELDERS.
THE UNOPAN LEADER HAD DEVISED A METHOD OF GENETIC ENHANCEMENT THAT MIGHT ENGINEER A NEW BREED OF UNOPAN, STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND A VILTRUMITE INVASION.
DESPERATE TO FIND A WAY TO COMBAT THE EVER-EXPANDING VILTRUM EMPIRE, THE PLAN WAS APPROVED IMMEDIATELY.


FOR YEARS THE UNOPAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTED ON UNBORN FETUSES. THE RESULTS WERE A COMPLETE FAILURE.
UNTIL ALLEN. HE WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY SUBJECT TO SURVIVE THE TESTS WITHOUT DISFIGUREMENT AND MENTAL HANDICAPS.
HE WAS THE ONLY SUCCESS.
NEARLY FROM THE DAY HE WAS BORN HE WAS TAUGHT TO BE THE GREATEST FIGHTER THE UNIVERSE HAD EVER SEEN.
FOR A TIME--IT SEEMED HE WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. EVEN BEFORE ADULTHOOD AN OPPONENT COULD NOT BE FOUND WHO DIDN'T FALL BEFORE HIS MIGHT.
IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADULTHOOD HAD BEEN REACHED HE WAS SENT ON HIS FIRST MISSION AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES.
IT DID NOT GO WELL. IT TURNED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH ALLEN WAS STRONGER THAN MOST EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE, HE WAS NOT UP TO VILTRUMITE STANDARDS OF COMBAT.
WITH ALLEN DEFEATED, THE PROGRAM WAS ONCE AGAIN CONSIDERED A FAILURE, AND WAS SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD.
THE PROGRAM WASN'T A COMPLETE LOSS, ALLEN WAS SENT OUT INTO THE COSMOS UNDER THE GUISE OF "CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER."
HIS REAL MISSION WAS TO SEARCH FOR BEINGS STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT HIM AND REPORT THEIR EXISTENCE TO THE COALITION.
THE HOPE WAS THAT IF THEY COULD DEFEAT HIM--MAYBE THEY WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT A VILTRUMITE AS WELL.

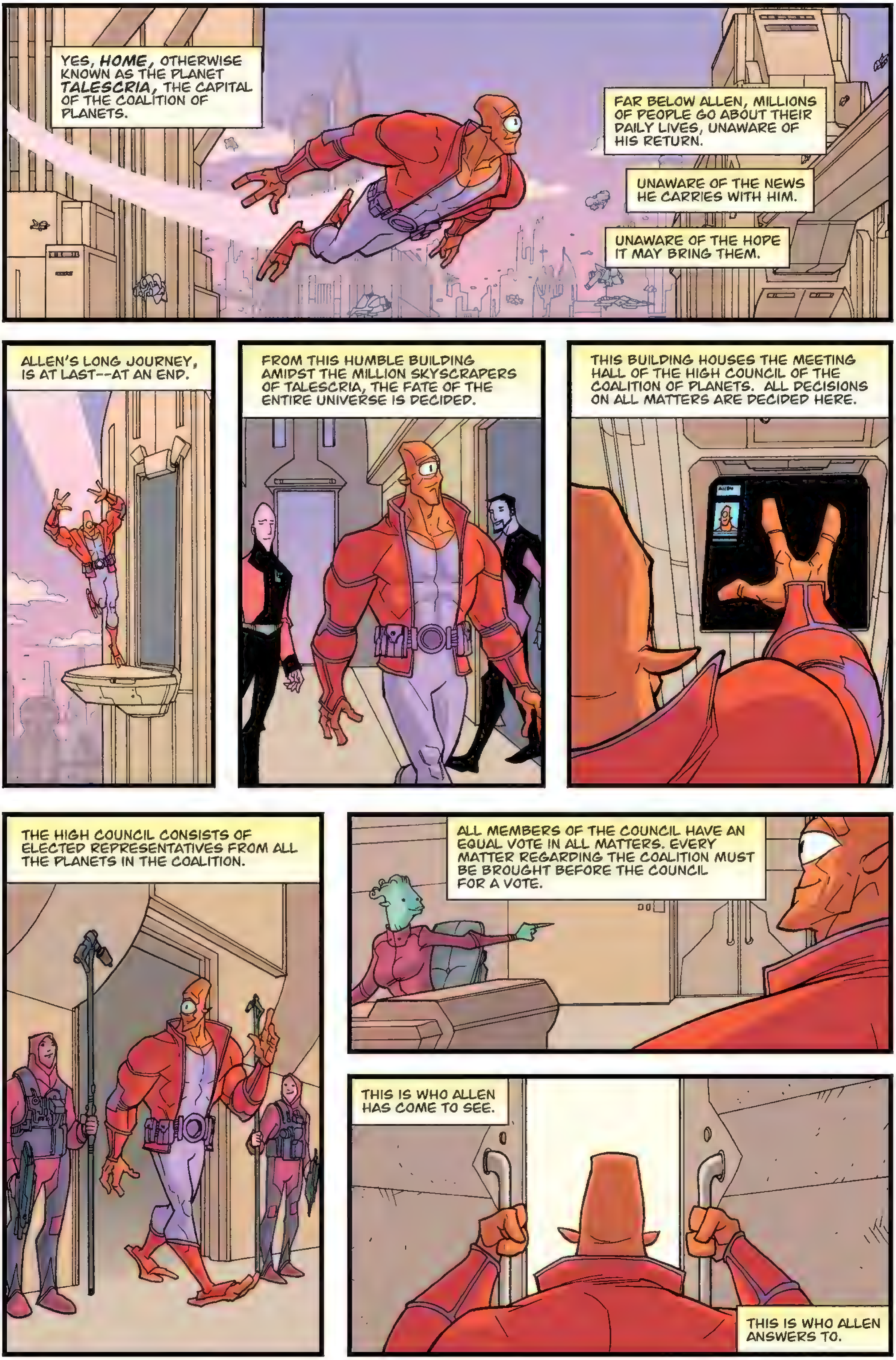

OF COURSE, DEAR READER, THE STORY DOES NOT, IN FACT, END THERE
NOT EVEN CLOSE.

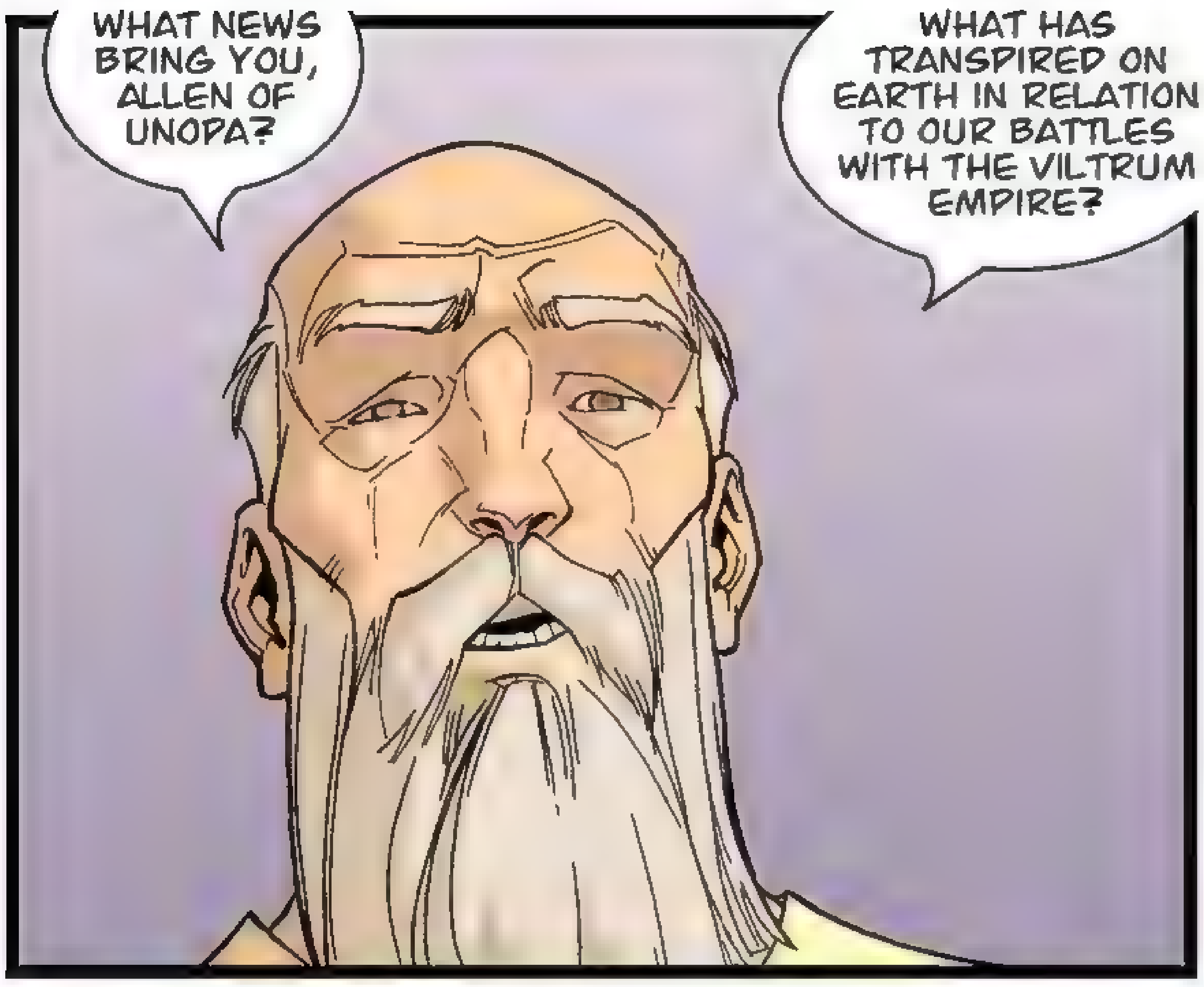

IF I WERE TO CONTINUE I WOULD TELL YOU OF THE TIMES NOLAN GRAYSON HAD DEFEATED ALLEN ON HIS ILL-FATED MISTAKEN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PLANET EARTH.*
HOW DUE TO ALLEN'S REPORTS, THE COALITION HAD SCHEDULED HIM MORE FREQUENT VISITS TO THE PLANET URATH.
*SEEN BRIEFLY IN ISSUE 2, AND AGAIN IN 11.

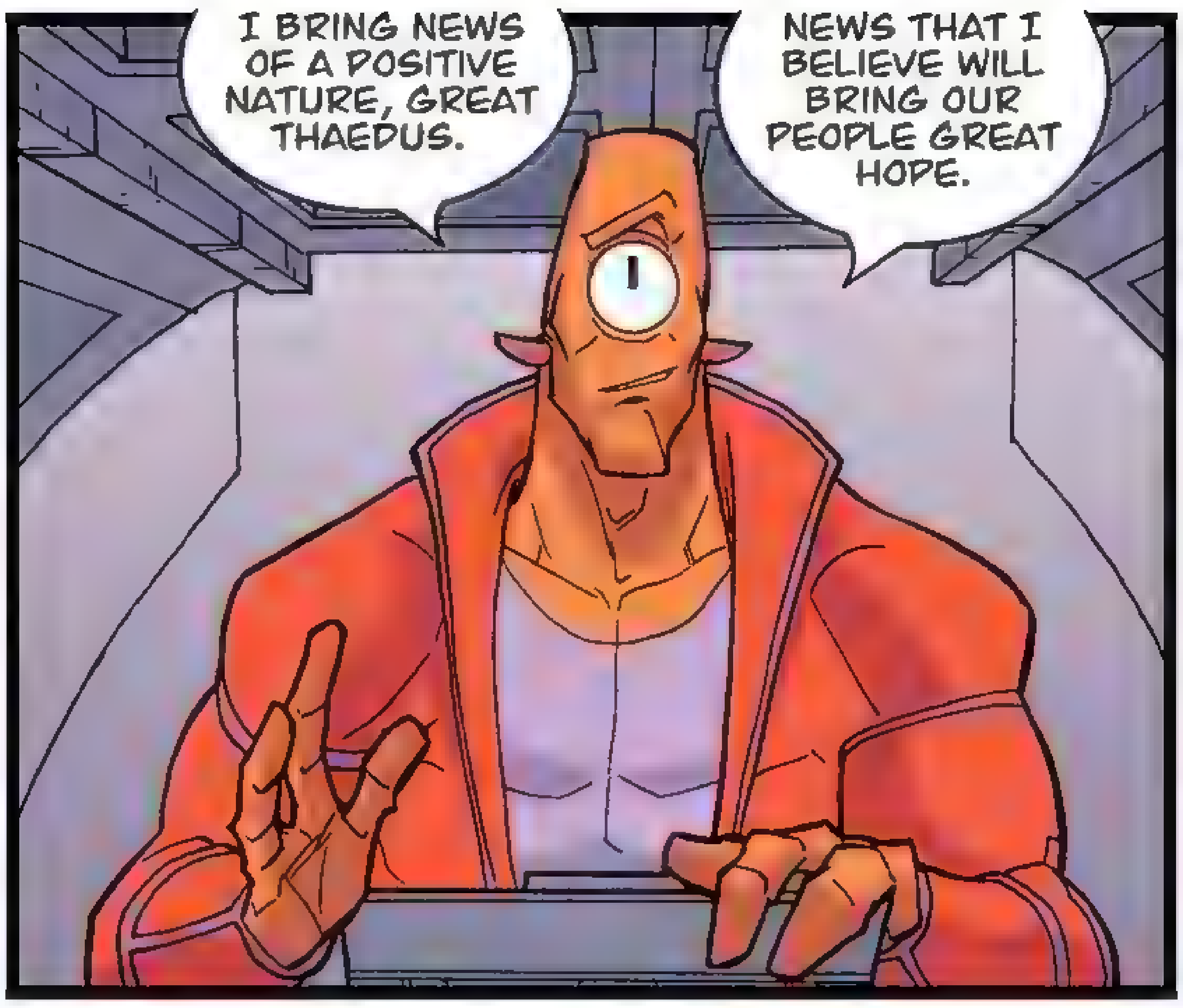

I WOULD EVEN CONTINUE TO TELL YOU ABOUT HOW DURING A CONFRONTATION WITH MARK GRAYSON, NOLAN'S SON. ALLEN LEARNED THE PLANET HE WAS REALLY VISITING WAS EARTH--NOT URATH.**
THEN I WOULD TELL HOW THE COALITION, AFTER LEARNING OF THE MISTAKE, INFORMED HIM IT WAS OFF LIMITS--THAT EARTH WAS ALREADY CLAIMED BY VILTRUM.
I WOULD CONTINUE TO TELL YOU HOW ALLEN RETURNED TO EARTH TO WARN MARK OF THE VILTRUMITE IN THEIR MIDST.***
**SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIHEADS.
***YOU MIGHT AS WELL CHECK OUT ISSUE 13 WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.

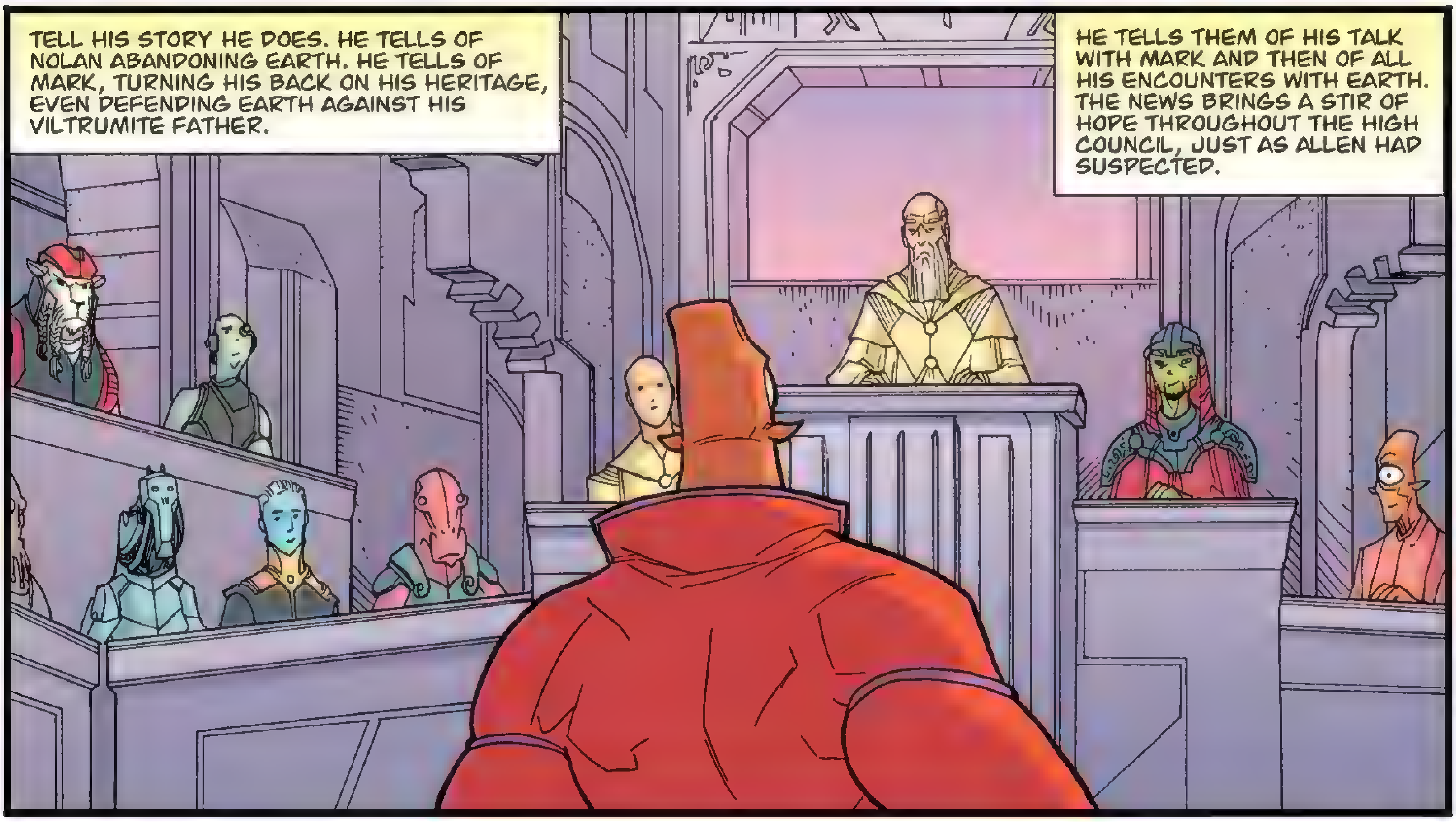

WERE I TO CONTINUE WITH THIS STORY EVEN FURTHER I WOULD INFORM YOU OF HOW ALLEN'S WARNING CAME TOO LATE. MARK'S FATHER WAS ALREADY REVEALED TO BE THAT VILTRUMITE.****
ALL THIS INFORMATION LED TO ALLEN'S CURRENT MISSIVE, AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BE GIVEN DIRECTLY TO THE COALITION LEADERS.
YES, DEAR READER--I WOULD LOVE TO TELL YOU ALL OF THIS, BUT I HAVE NOT THE TIME, FOR--
****ALSO IN ISSUE 13.

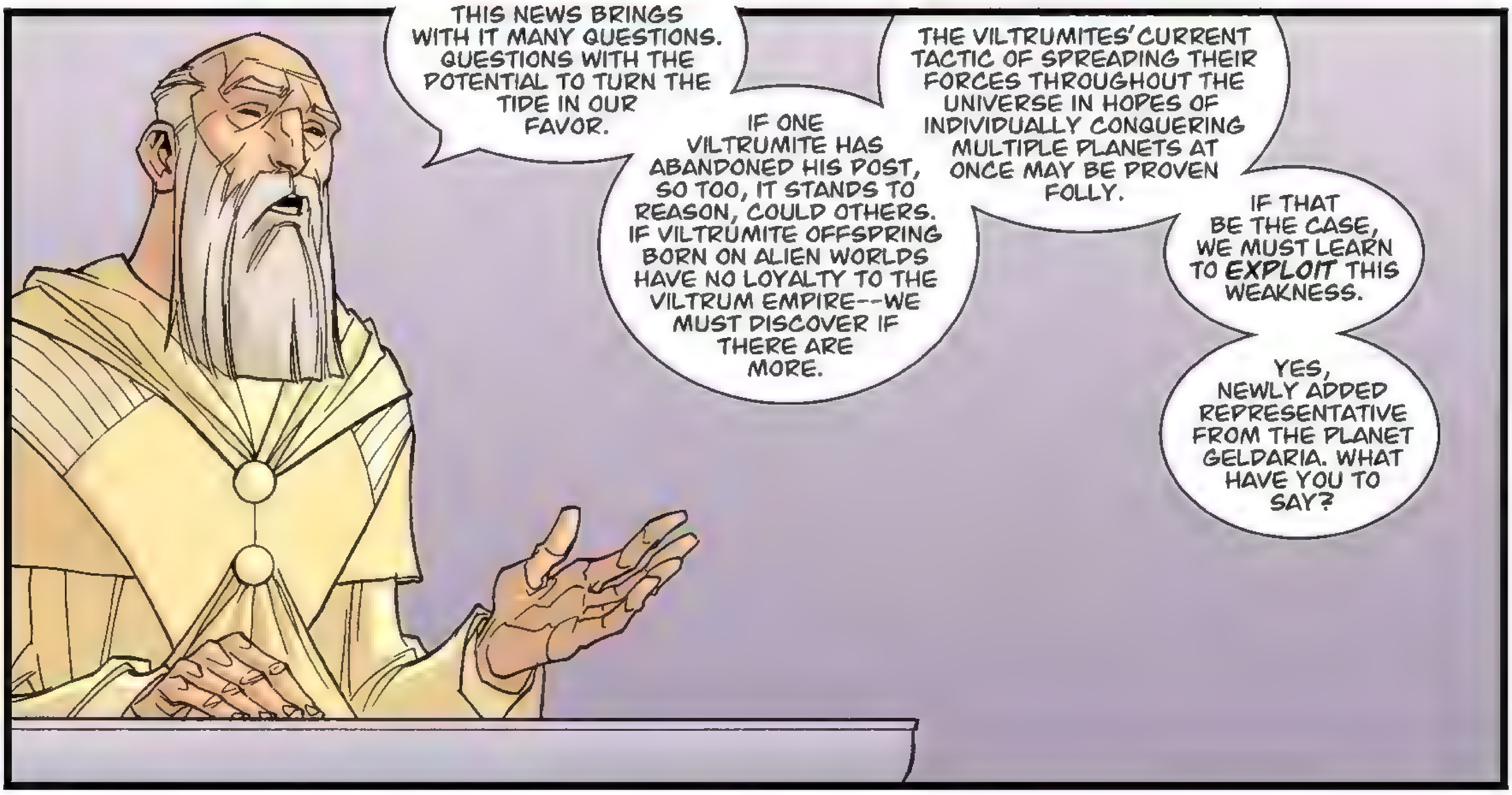
ALLEN THE ALIEN HAS RETURNED HOME!

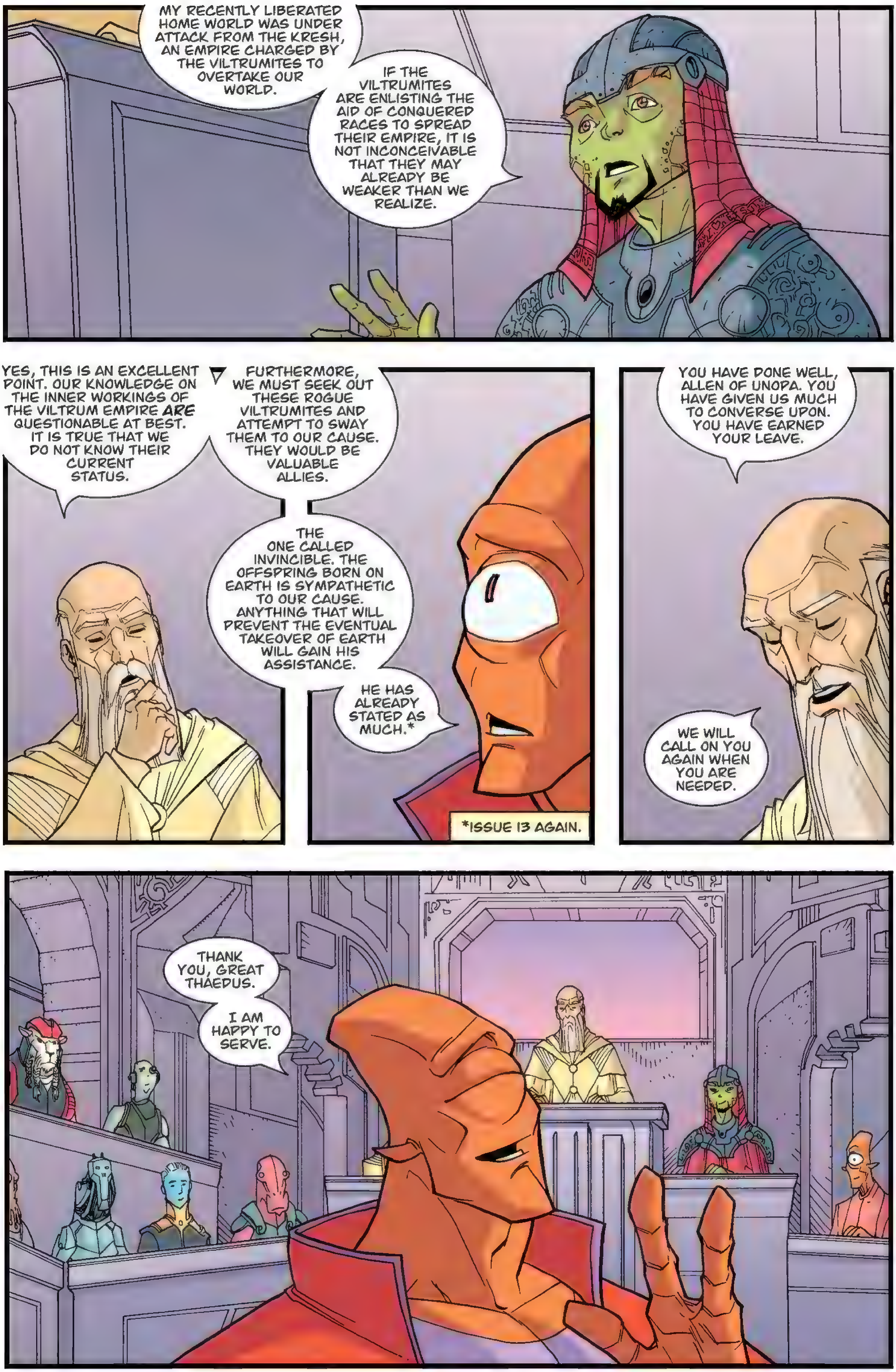

YES, HOME, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PLANET TALESCRIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
FAR BELOW ALLEN, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, UNAWARE OF HIS RETURN.
UNAWARE OF THE NEWS HE CARRIES WITH HIM.
UNAWARE OF THE HOPE IT MAY BRING THEM.
ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY, IS AT LAST--AT AN END.
FROM THIS HUMBLE BUILDING AMIDST THE MILLION SKYSCRAPERS OF TALESCRIA, THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS DECIDED.
THIS BUILDING HOUSES THE MEETING HALL OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS. ALL DECISIONS ON ALL MATTERS ARE DECIDED HERE.
THE HIGH COUNCIL CONSISTS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION.
ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAVE AN EQUAL VOTE IN ALL MATTERS. EVERY MATTER REGARDING THE COALITION MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL FOR A VOTE.
THIS IS WHO ALLEN HAS COME TO SEE.
THIS IS WHO ALLEN ANSWERS TO.

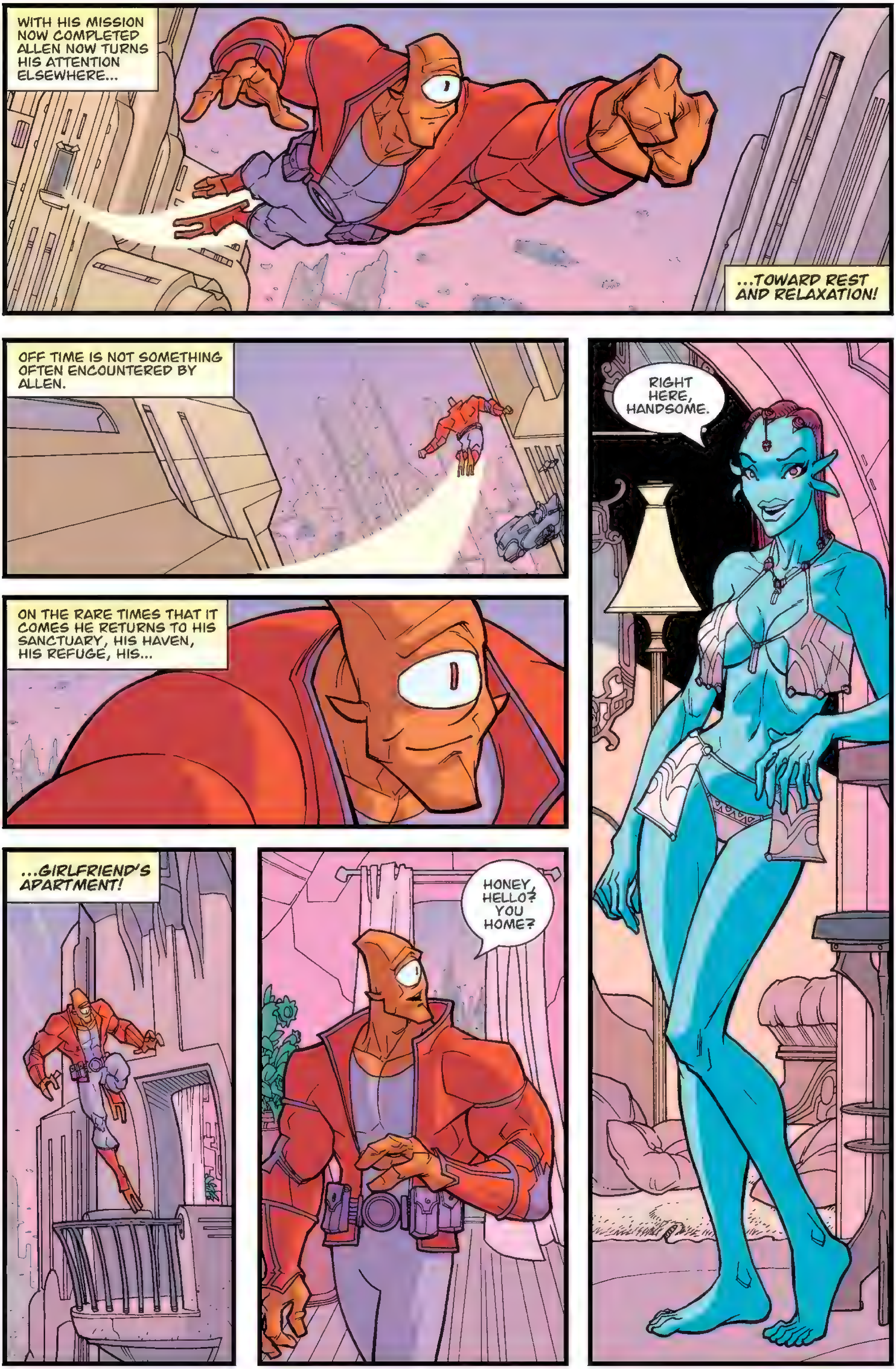

WHAT NEWS BRING YOU, ALLEN OF UNOPA?
WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED ON EARTH IN RELATION TO OUR BATTLES WITH THE VILTRUM EMPIRE?

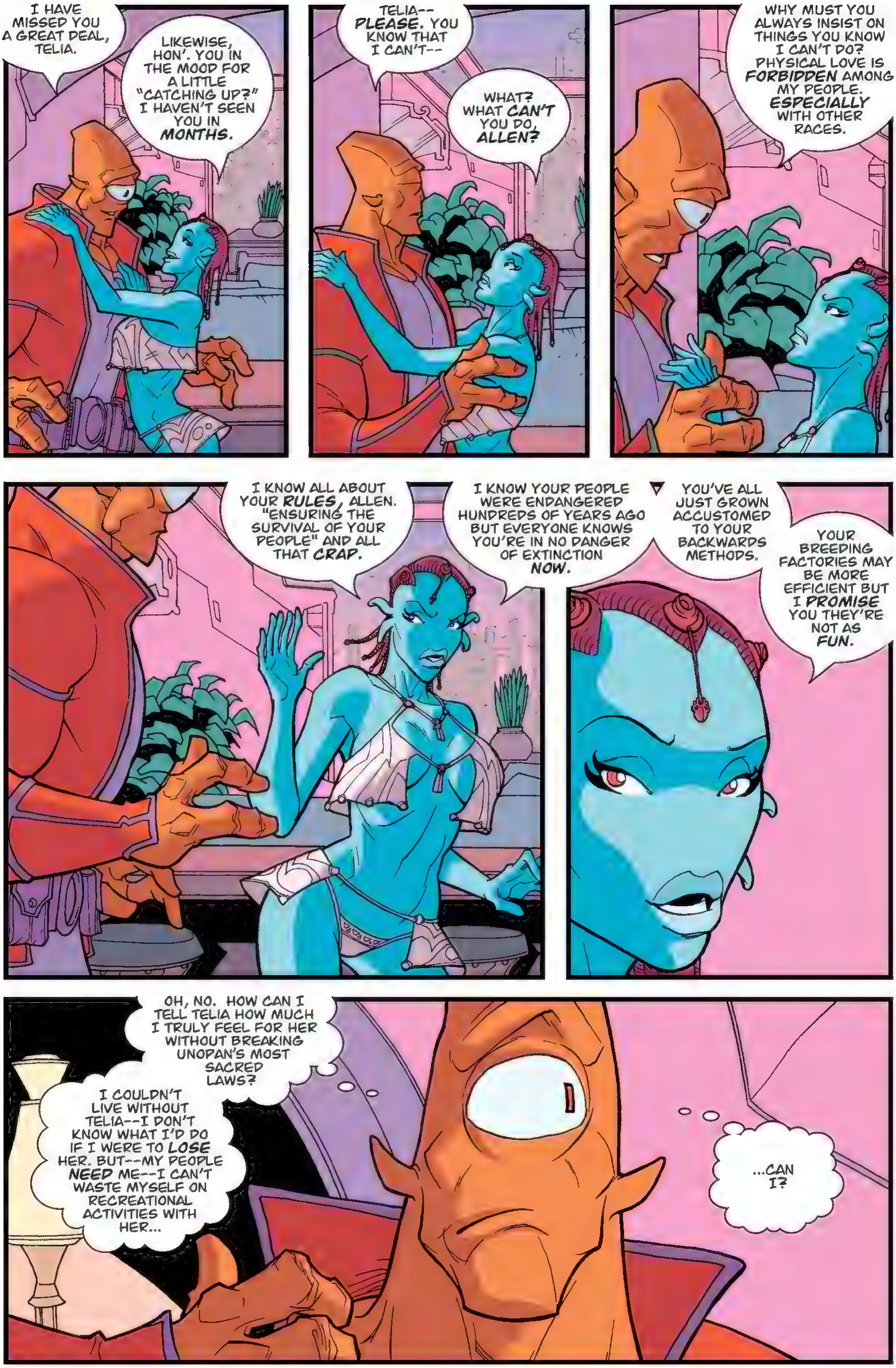

I BRING NEWS OF A POSITIVE NATURE, GREAT THAEDUS.
NEWS THAT I BELIEVE WILL BRING OUR PEOPLE GREAT HOPE.

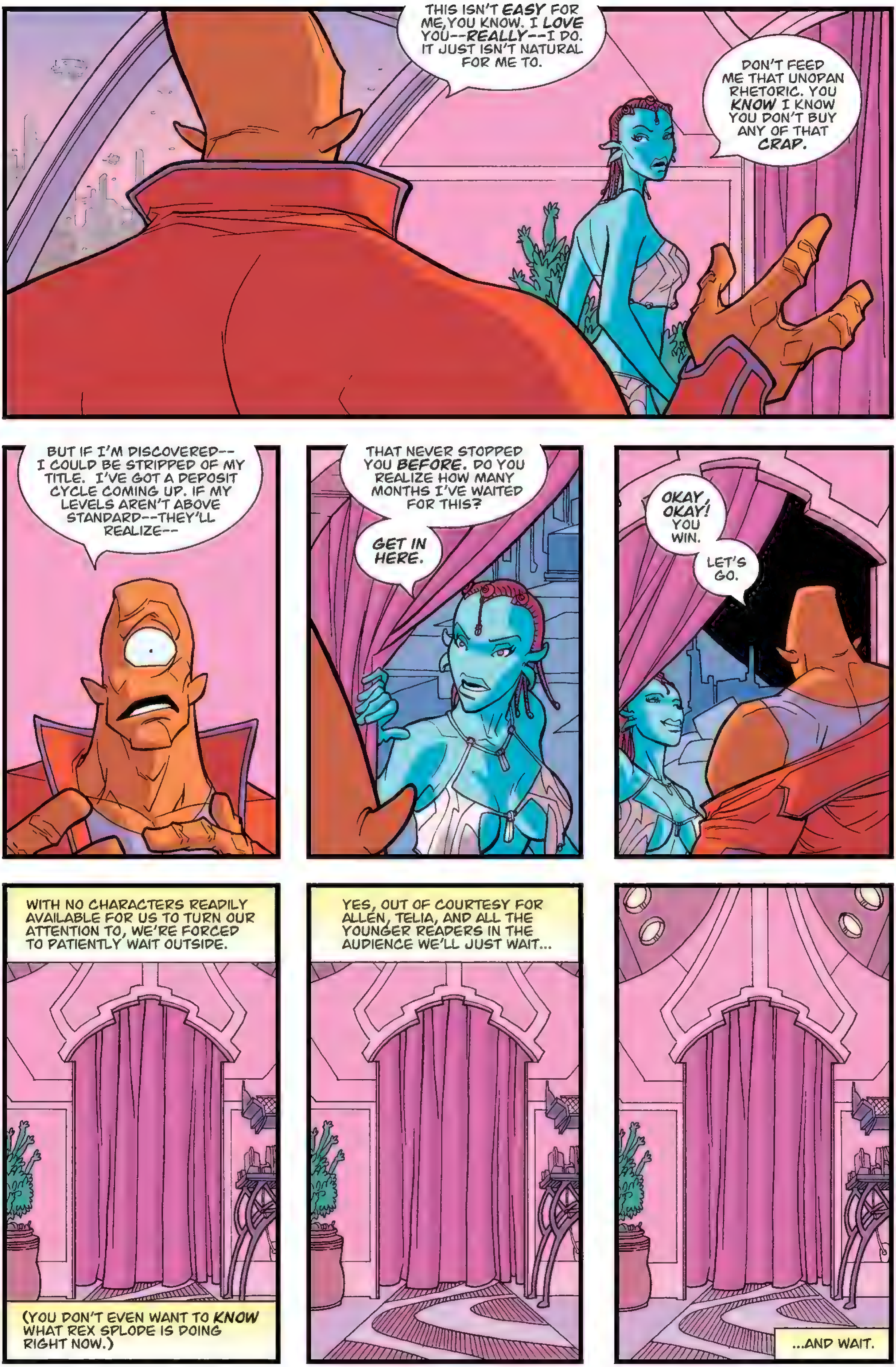

TELL HIS STORY HE DOES. HE TELLS OF NOLAN ABANDONING EARTH. HE TELLS OF MARK, TURNING HIS BACK ON HIS HERITAGE, EVEN DEFENDING EARTH AGAINST HIS VILTRUMITE FATHER.
HE TELLS THEM OF HIS TALK WITH MARK AND THEN OF ALL HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH EARTH. THE NEWS BRINGS A STIR OF HOPE THROUGHOUT THE HIGH COUNCIL, JUST AS ALLEN HAD SUSPECTED.

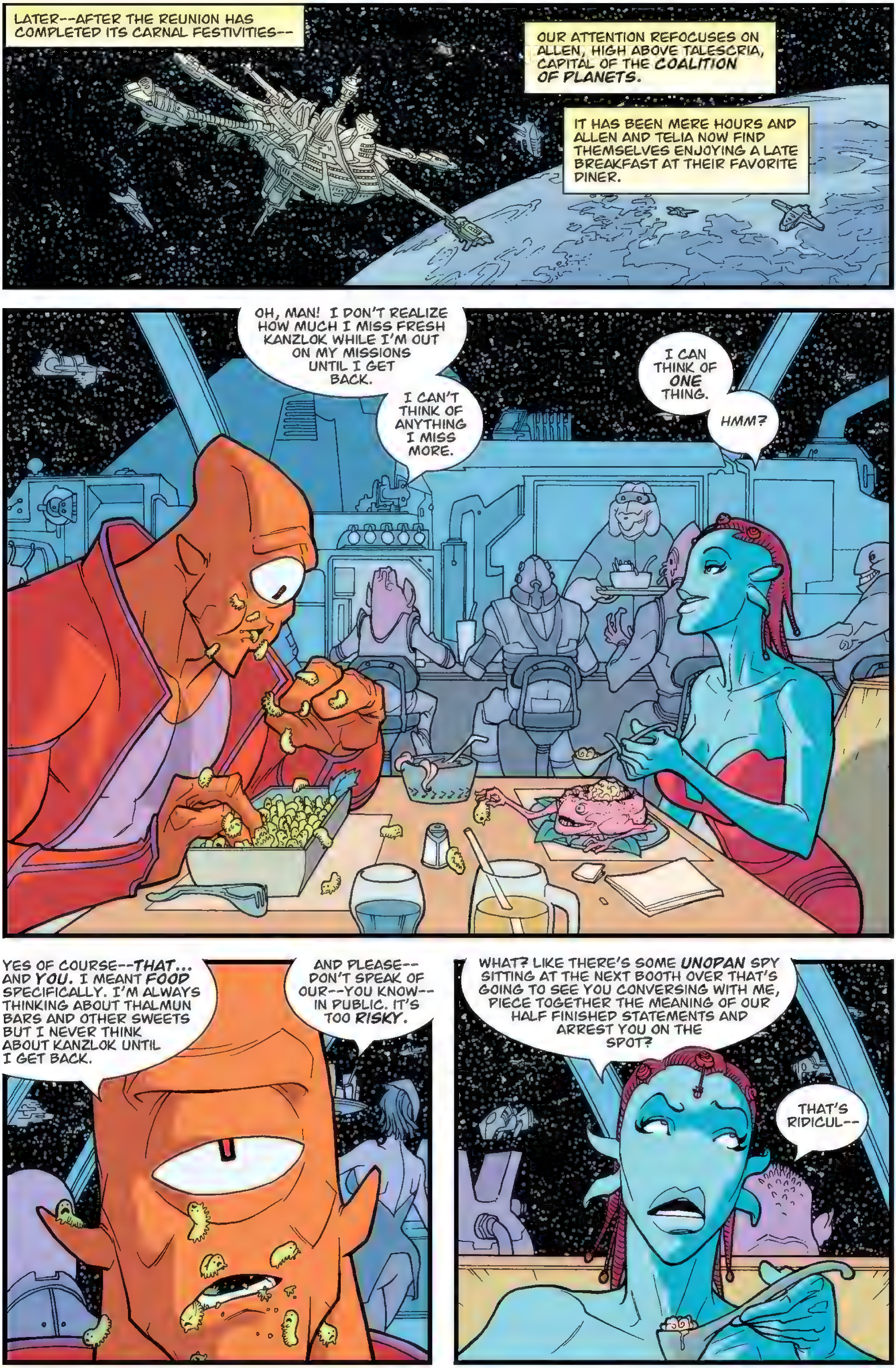

THIS NEWS BRINGS WITH IT MANY QUESTIONS. QUESTIONS WITH THE POTENTIAL TO TURN THE TIDE IN OUR FAVOR.
IF ONE VILTRUMITE HAS ABANDONED HIS POST, SO TOO, IT STANDS TO REASON, COULD OTHERS. IF VILTRUMITE OFFSPRING BORN ON ALIEN WORLDS HAVE NO LOYALTY TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE--WE MUST DISCOVER IF THERE ARE MORE.
THE VILTRUMITES' CURRENT TACTIC OF SPREADING THEIR FORCES THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE IN HOPES OF INDIVIDUALLY CONQUERING MULTIPLE PLANETS AT ONCE MAY BE PROVEN FOLLY.
IF THAT BE THE CASE, WE MUST LEARN TO *EXPLOIT* THIS WEAKNESS.
YES, NEWLY ADDED REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PLANET GELDARIA. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY?

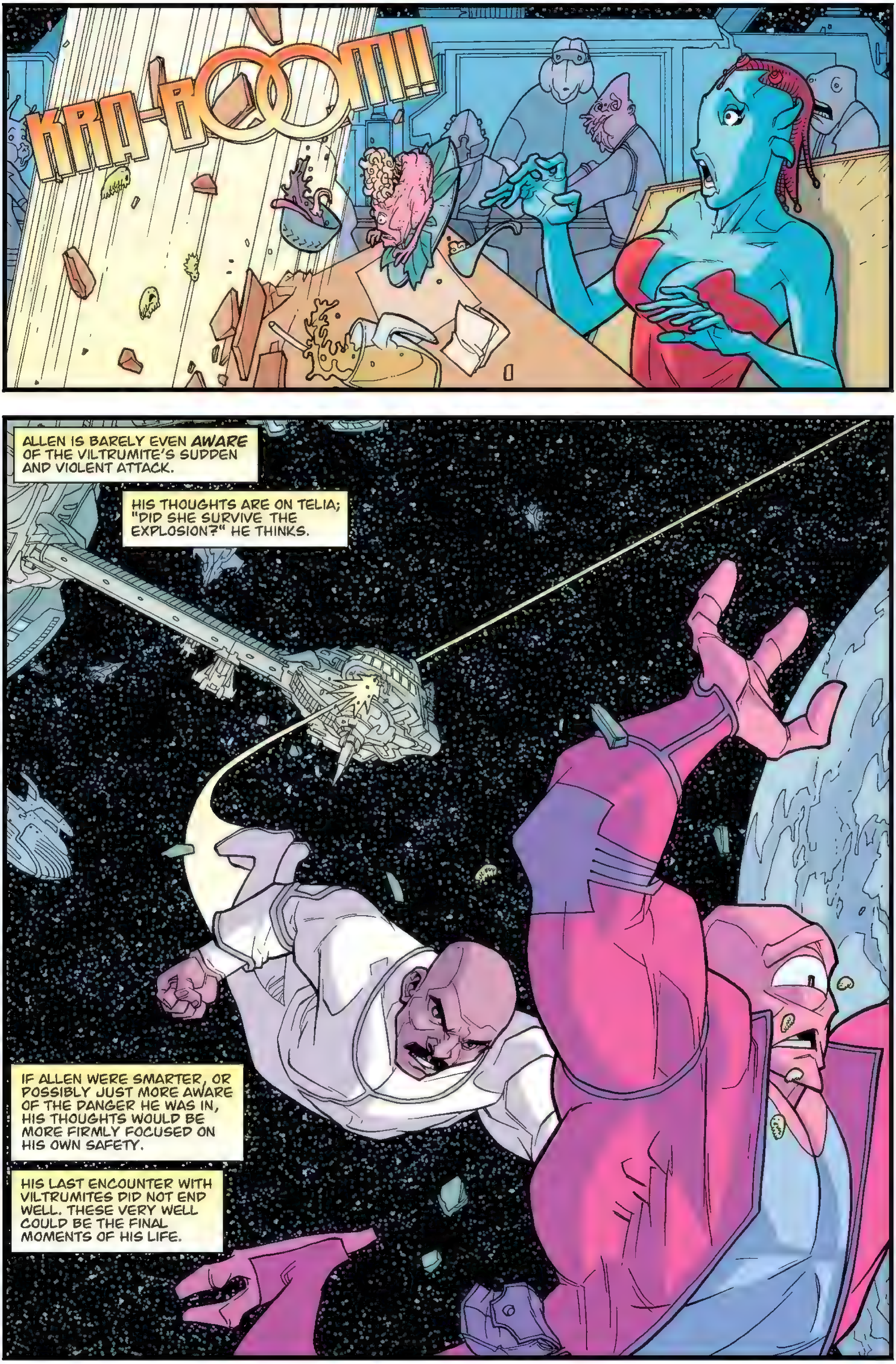

MY RECENTLY LIBERATED HOME WORLD WAS UNDER ATTACK FROM THE KRESH, AN EMPIRE CHARGED BY THE VILTRUMITES TO OVERTAKE OUR WORLD.
IF THE VILTRUMITES ARE ENLISTING THE AID OF CONQUERED RACES TO SPREAD THEIR EMPIRE, IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY MAY ALREADY BE WEAKER THAN WE REALIZE.
YES, THIS IS AN EXCELLENT POINT. OUR KNOWLEDGE ON THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE **ARE** QUESTIONABLE AT BEST. IT IS TRUE THAT WE DO NOT KNOW THEIR CURRENT STATUS.
FURTHERMORE, WE MUST SEEK OUT THESE ROGUE VILTRUMITES AND ATTEMPT TO SWAY THEM TO OUR CAUSE. THEY WOULD BE VALUABLE ALLIES.
THE ONE CALLED INVINCIBLE. THE OFFSPRING BORN ON EARTH IS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CAUSE. ANYTHING THAT WILL PREVENT THE EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF EARTH WILL GAIN HIS ASSISTANCE.
HE HAS ALREADY STATED AS MUCH.*
*ISSUE 13 AGAIN.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, ALLEN OF UNOPA. YOU HAVE GIVEN US MUCH TO CONVERSE UPON. YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR LEAVE.
WE WILL CALL ON YOU AGAIN WHEN YOU ARE NEEDED.
THANK YOU, GREAT THAEDUS.
I AM HAPPY TO SERVE.

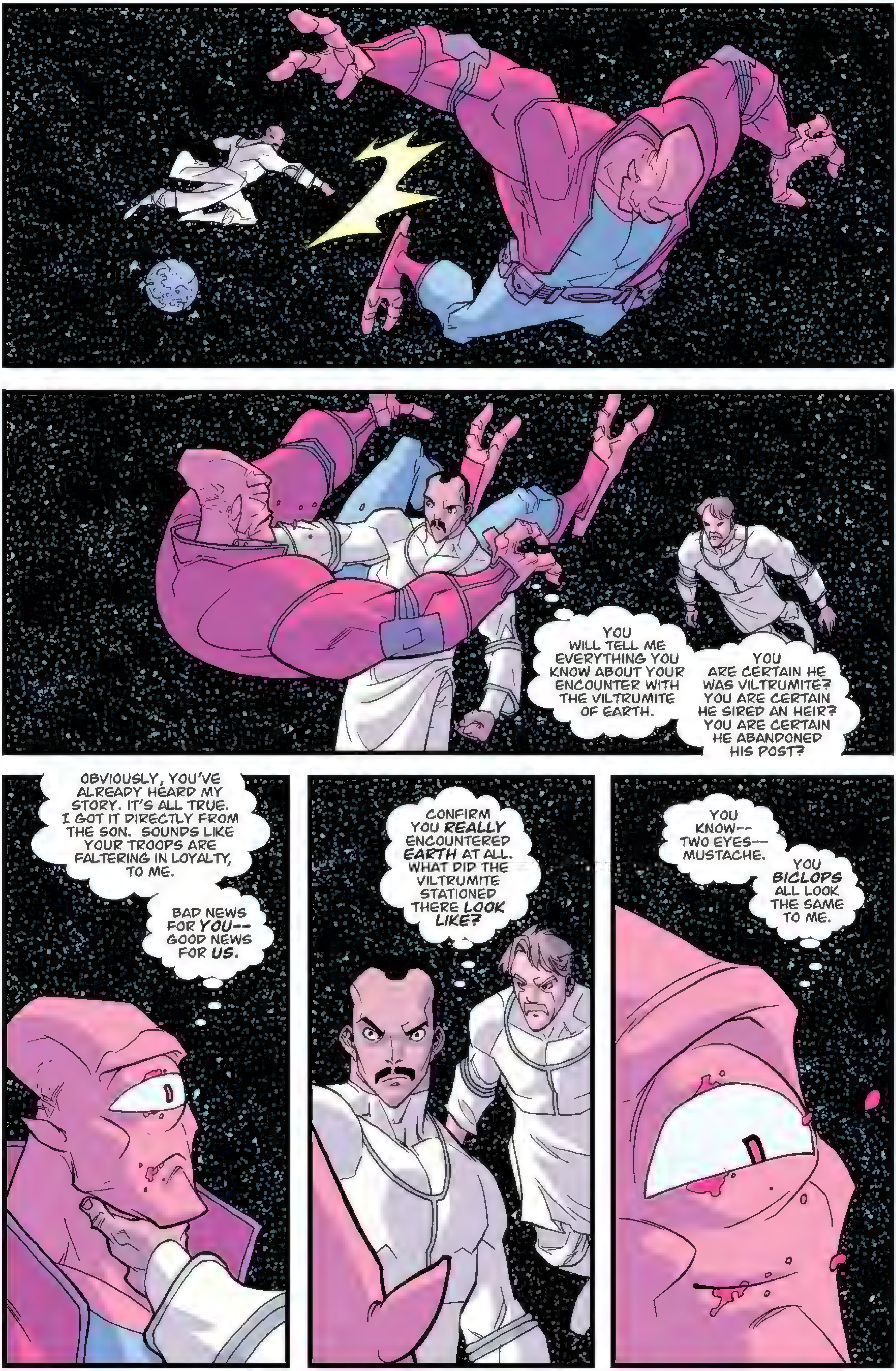

WITH HIS MISSION NOW COMPLETED ALLEN NOW TURNS HIS ATTENTION ELSEWHERE...
...TOWARD REST AND RELAXATION!
OFF TIME IS NOT SOMETHING OFTEN ENCOUNTERED BY ALLEN.
ON THE RARE TIMES THAT IT COMES HE RETURNS TO HIS SANCTUARY, HIS HAVEN, HIS REFUGE, HIS...
...GIRLFRIEND'S APARTMENT!
HONEY, HELLO? YOU HOME?
RIGHT HERE, HANDSOME.

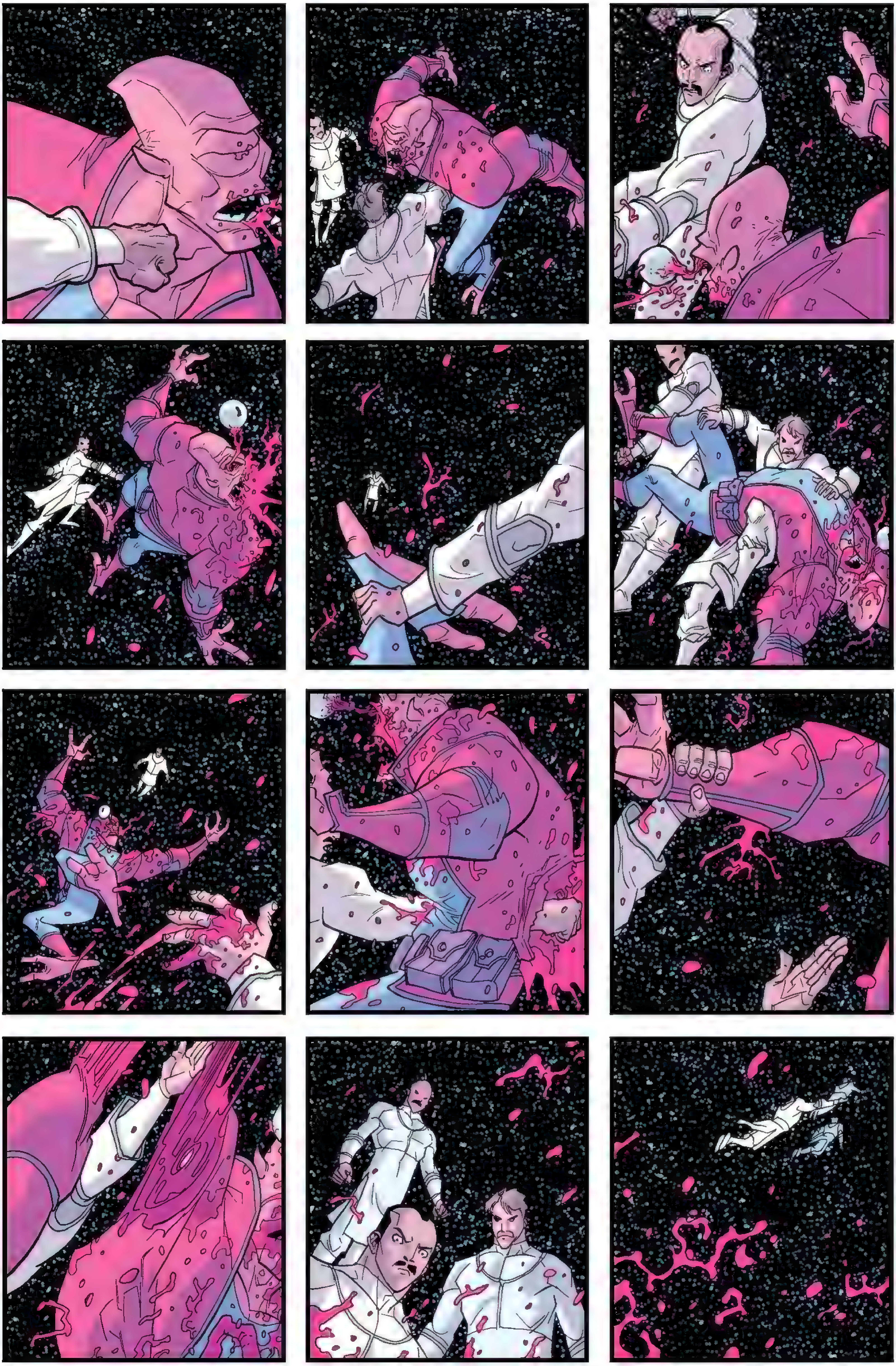

I HAVE MISSED YOU A GREAT DEAL, TELIA.
LIKEWISE, HON'. YOU IN THE MOOD FOR A LITTLE "CATCHING UP?" I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.
TELIA-- PLEASE. YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T--
WHAT? WHAT CAN'T YOU DO, ALLEN?
WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS INSIST ON THINGS YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO? PHYSICAL LOVE IS FORBIDDEN AMONG MY PEOPLE. ESPECIALLY WITH OTHER RACES.
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR RULES, ALLEN. "ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF YOUR PEOPLE" AND ALL THAT CRAP.
I KNOW YOUR PEOPLE WERE ENDANGERED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO BUT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE IN NO DANGER OF EXTINCTION NOW.
YOU'VE ALL JUST GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO YOUR BACKWARDS METHODS.
YOUR BREEDING FACTORIES MAY BE MORE EFFICIENT BUT I PROMISE YOU THEY'RE NOT AS FUN.
OH, NO. HOW CAN I TELL TELIA HOW MUCH I TRULY FEEL FOR HER WITHOUT BREAKING UNOPAN'S MOST SACRED LAWS?
I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT TELIA--I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WERE TO LOSE HER. BUT--MY PEOPLE NEED ME--I CAN'T WASTE MYSELF ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH HER...
...CAN I?

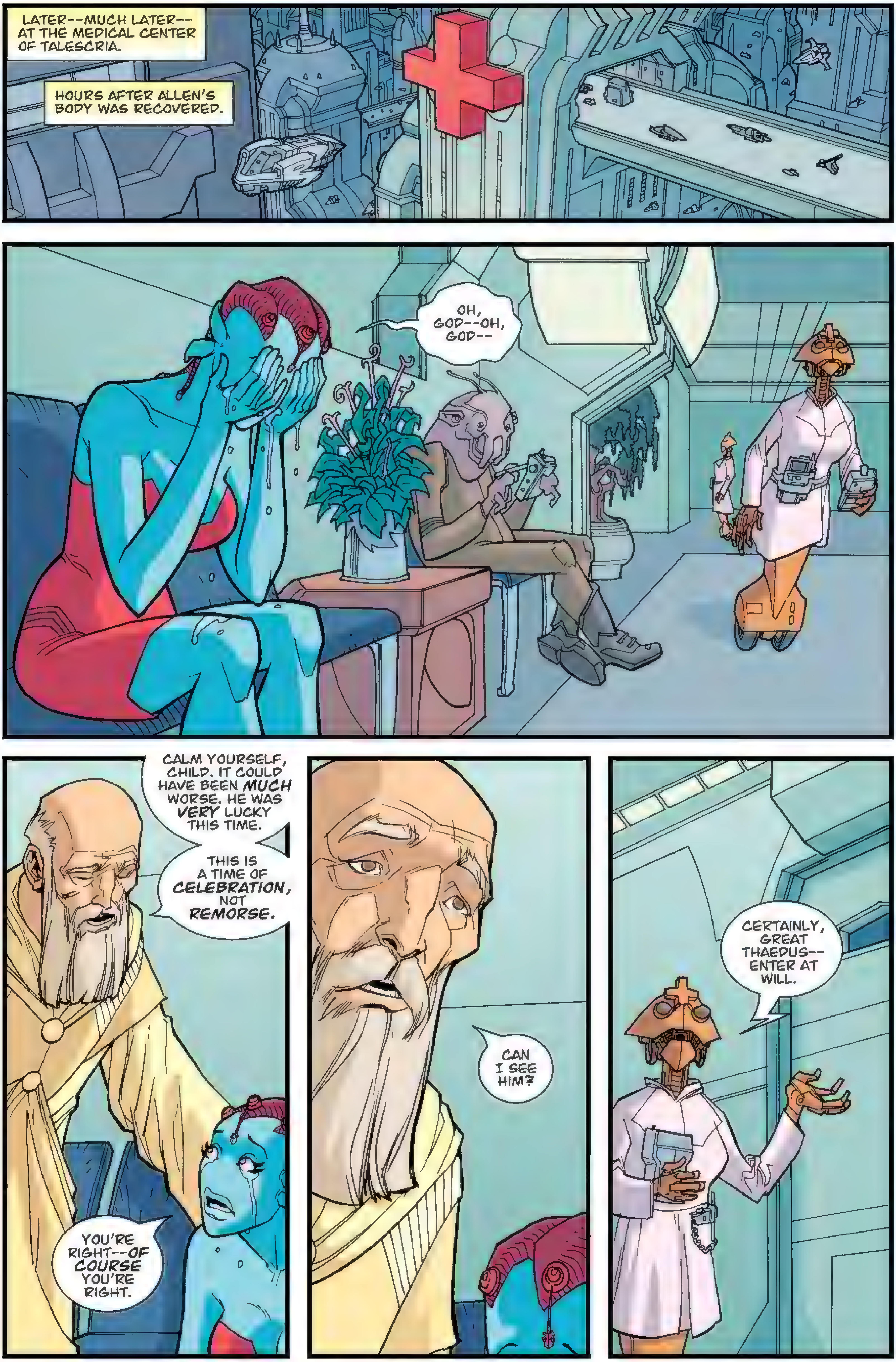

THIS ISN'T *EASY* FOR ME, YOU KNOW. I *LOVE* YOU--*REALLY*--I DO. IT JUST ISN'T NATURAL FOR ME TO.
DON'T FEED ME THAT UNOPAN RHETORIC. YOU *KNOW* I KNOW YOU DON'T BUY ANY OF THAT *CRAP.*
BUT IF I'M DISCOVERED-- I COULD BE STRIPPED OF MY TITLE. I'VE GOT A DEPOSIT CYCLE COMING UP. IF MY LEVELS AREN'T ABOVE STANDARD--THEY'LL REALIZE--
THAT NEVER STOPPED YOU *BEFORE.* DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY MONTHS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS?
GET IN HERE.
OKAY, OKAY! YOU WIN.
LET'S GO.
WITH NO CHARACTERS READILY AVAILABLE FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO, WE'RE FORCED TO PATIENTLY WAIT OUTSIDE.
(YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO *KNOW* WHAT REX SPLODE IS DOING RIGHT NOW.)
YES, OUT OF COURTESY FOR ALLEN, TELIA, AND ALL THE YOUNGER READERS IN THE AUDIENCE WE'LL JUST WAIT...
...AND WAIT.

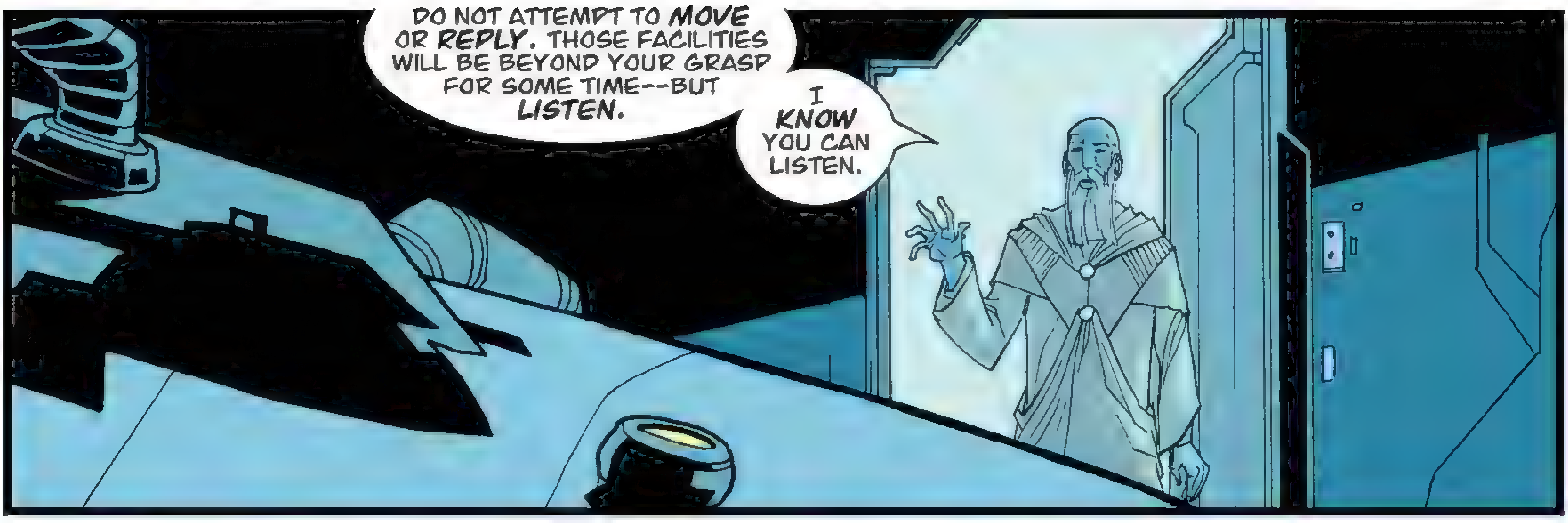

LATER--AFTER THE REUNION HAS COMPLETED ITS CARNAL FESTIVITIES--
OUR ATTENTION REFOCUSES ON ALLEN, HIGH ABOVE TALESCRIA, CAPITAL OF THE *COALITION OF PLANETS.*
IT HAS BEEN MERE HOURS AND ALLEN AND TELIA NOW FIND THEMSELVES ENJOYING A LATE BREAKFAST AT THEIR FAVORITE DINER.
OH, MAN! I DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISS FRESH KANZLOK WHILE I'M OUT ON MY MISSIONS UNTIL I GET BACK.
I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING I MISS MORE.
I CAN THINK OF *ONE* THING.
HMM?
YES OF COURSE--*THAT...* AND *YOU.* I MEANT *FOOD* SPECIFICALLY. I'M ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THALMUN BARS AND OTHER SWEETS BUT I NEVER THINK ABOUT KANZLOK UNTIL I GET BACK.
AND PLEASE-- DON'T SPEAK OF OUR--YOU KNOW-- IN PUBLIC. IT'S TOO *RISKY.*
WHAT? LIKE THERE'S SOME *UNOPAN* SPY SITTING AT THE NEXT BOOTH OVER THAT'S GOING TO SEE YOU CONVERSING WITH ME, PIECE TOGETHER THE MEANING OF OUR HALF FINISHED STATEMENTS AND ARREST YOU ON THE SPOT?
THAT'S RIDICUL--

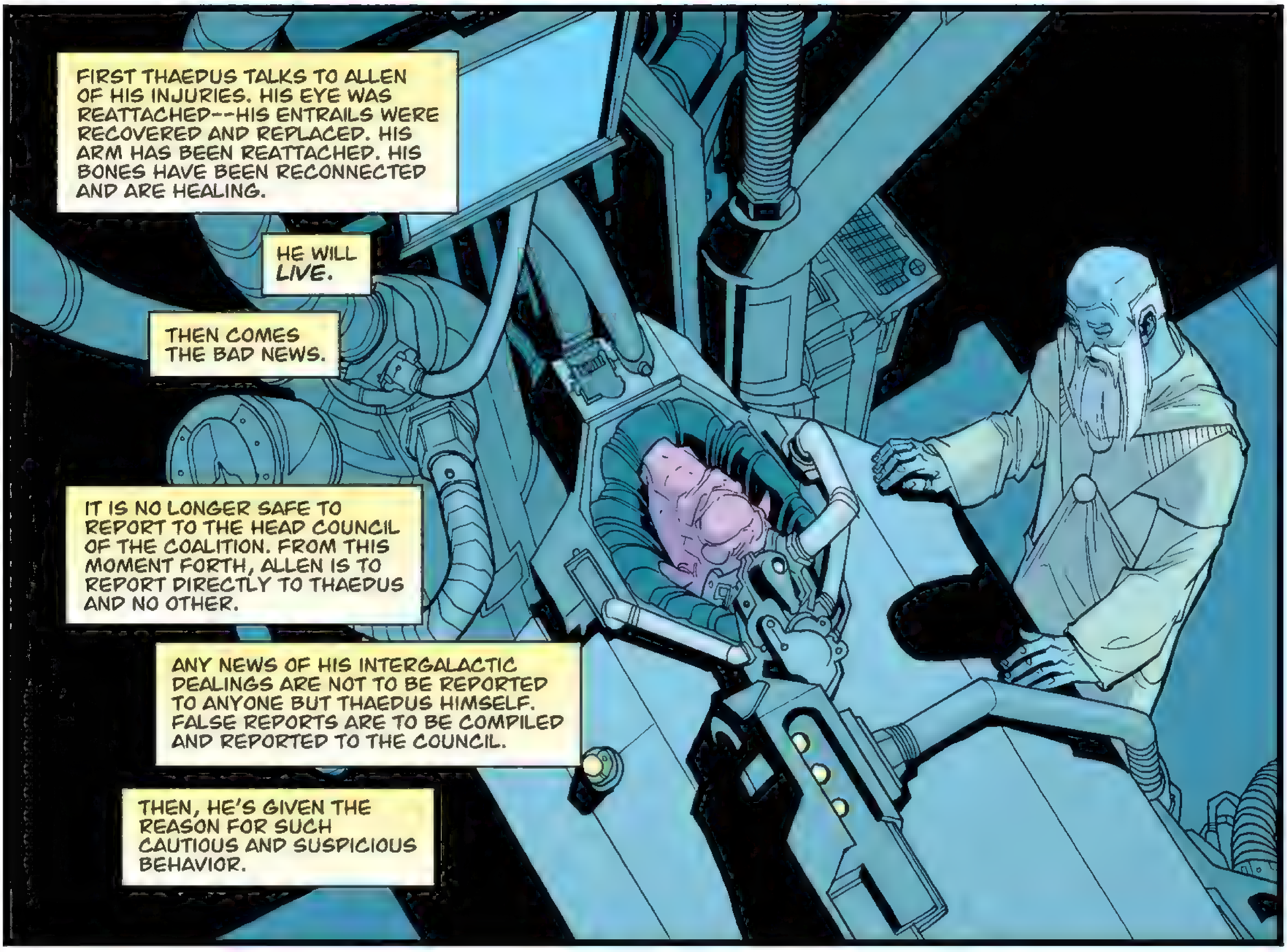

KRA-BOOM!!
ALLEN IS BARELY EVEN *AWARE* OF THE VILTRUMITE'S SUDDEN AND VIOLENT ATTACK.
HIS THOUGHTS ARE ON TELIA; "DID SHE SURVIVE THE EXPLOSION?" HE THINKS.
IF ALLEN WERE SMARTER, OR POSSIBLY JUST MORE AWARE OF THE DANGER HE WAS IN, HIS THOUGHTS WOULD BE MORE FIRMLY FOCUSED ON HIS OWN SAFETY.
HIS LAST ENCOUNTER WITH VILTRUMITES DID NOT END WELL. THESE VERY WELL COULD BE THE FINAL MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE.

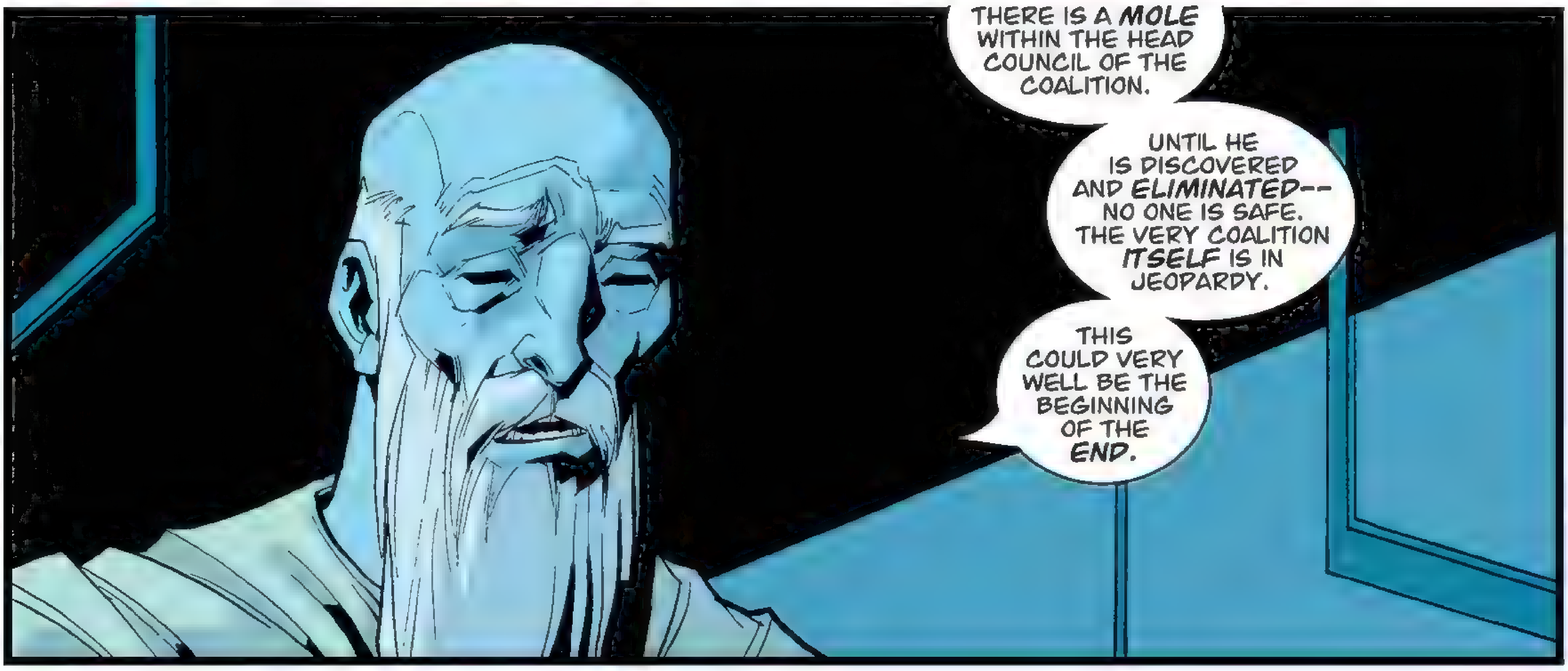

YOU WILL TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH THE VILTRUMITE OF EARTH.
YOU ARE CERTAIN HE WAS VILTRUMITE? YOU ARE CERTAIN HE SIRED AN HEIR? YOU ARE CERTAIN HE ABANDONED HIS POST?
OBVIOUSLY, YOU'VE ALREADY HEARD MY STORY. IT'S ALL TRUE. I GOT IT DIRECTLY FROM THE SON. SOUNDS LIKE YOUR TROOPS ARE FALTERING IN LOYALTY, TO ME.
BAD NEWS FOR *YOU*-- GOOD NEWS FOR *US*.
CONFIRM YOU ***REALLY*** ENCOUNTERED ***EARTH*** AT ALL. WHAT DID THE VILTRUMITE STATIONED THERE ***LOOK LIKE?***
YOU KNOW-- TWO EYES-- MUSTACHE.
YOU ***BICLOPS*** ALL LOOK THE SAME TO ME.

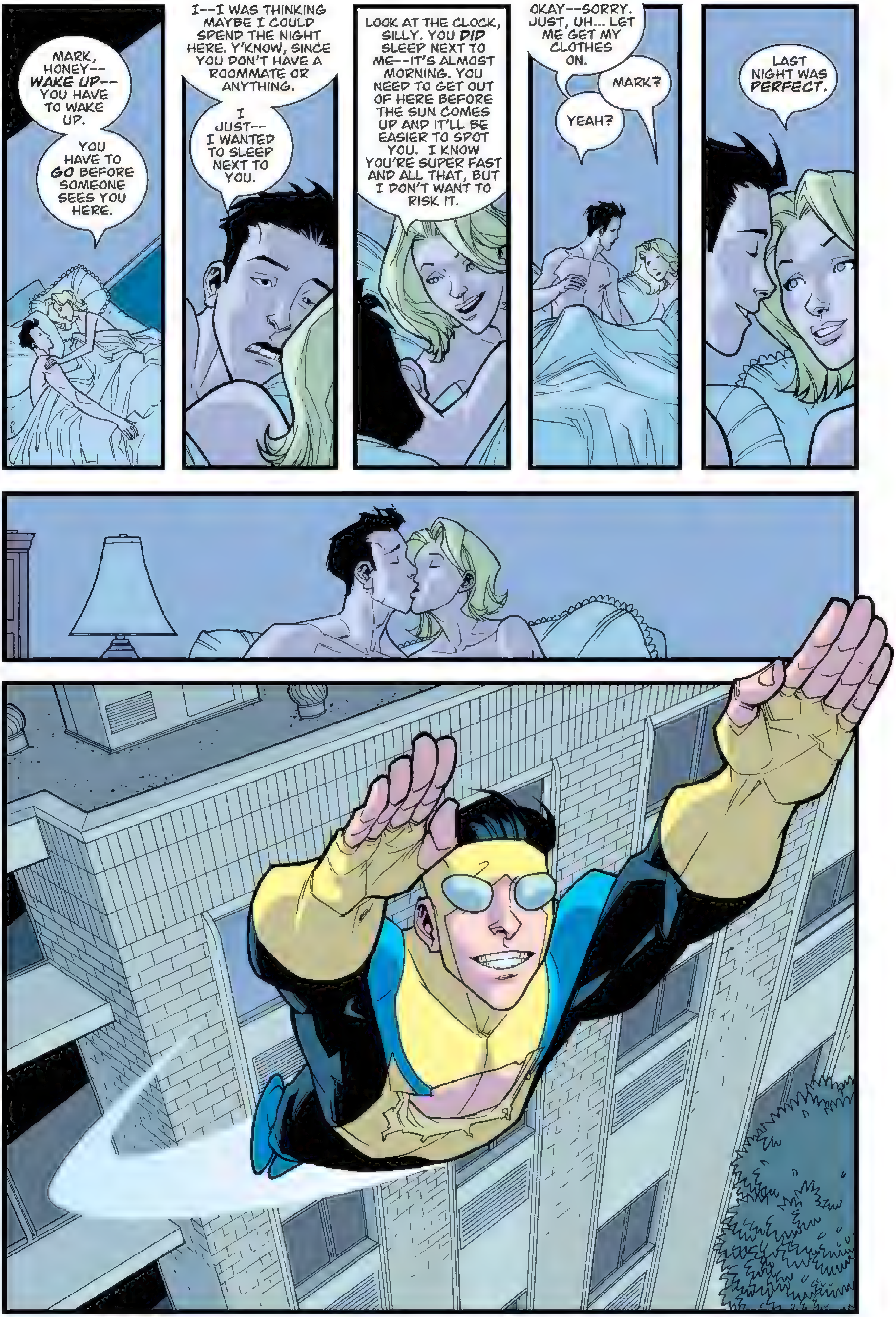



LATER--MUCH LATER--AT THE MEDICAL CENTER OF TALESCRIA.
HOURS AFTER ALLEN'S BODY WAS RECOVERED.
OH, GOD--OH, GOD--
CALM YOURSELF, CHILD. IT COULD HAVE BEEN *MUCH* WORSE. HE WAS *VERY* LUCKY THIS TIME.
THIS IS A TIME OF *CELEBRATION,* NOT *REMORSE.*
YOU'RE RIGHT--*OF COURSE* YOU'RE RIGHT.
CAN I SEE HIM?
CERTAINLY, GREAT THAEDUS--ENTER AT WILL.


DO NOT ATTEMPT TO *MOVE* OR *REPLY*. THOSE FACILITIES WILL BE BEYOND YOUR GRASP FOR SOME TIME--BUT *LISTEN*.
I *KNOW* YOU CAN LISTEN.

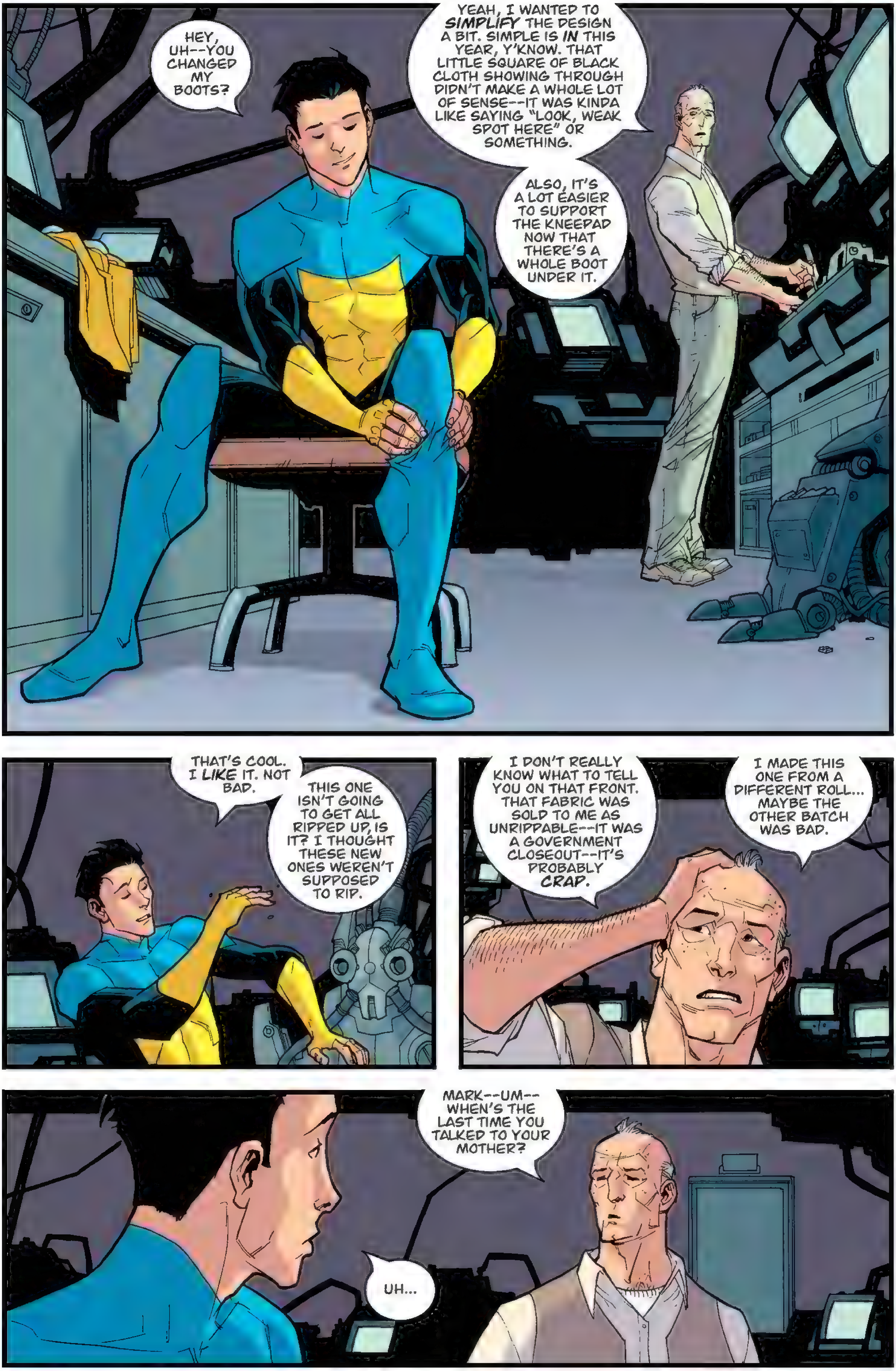

FIRST THAEDUS TALKS TO ALLEN OF HIS INJURIES. HIS EYE WAS REATTACHED--HIS ENTRAILS WERE RECOVERED AND REPLACED. HIS ARM HAS BEEN REATTACHED. HIS BONES HAVE BEEN RECONNECTED AND ARE HEALING.
HE WILL *LIVE*.
THEN COMES THE BAD NEWS.
IT IS NO LONGER SAFE TO REPORT TO THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION. FROM THIS MOMENT FORTH, ALLEN IS TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO THAEDUS AND NO OTHER.
ANY NEWS OF HIS INTERGALACTIC DEALINGS ARE NOT TO BE REPORTED TO ANYONE BUT THAEDUS HIMSELF. FALSE REPORTS ARE TO BE COMPILED AND REPORTED TO THE COUNCIL.
THEN, HE'S GIVEN THE REASON FOR SUCH CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR.

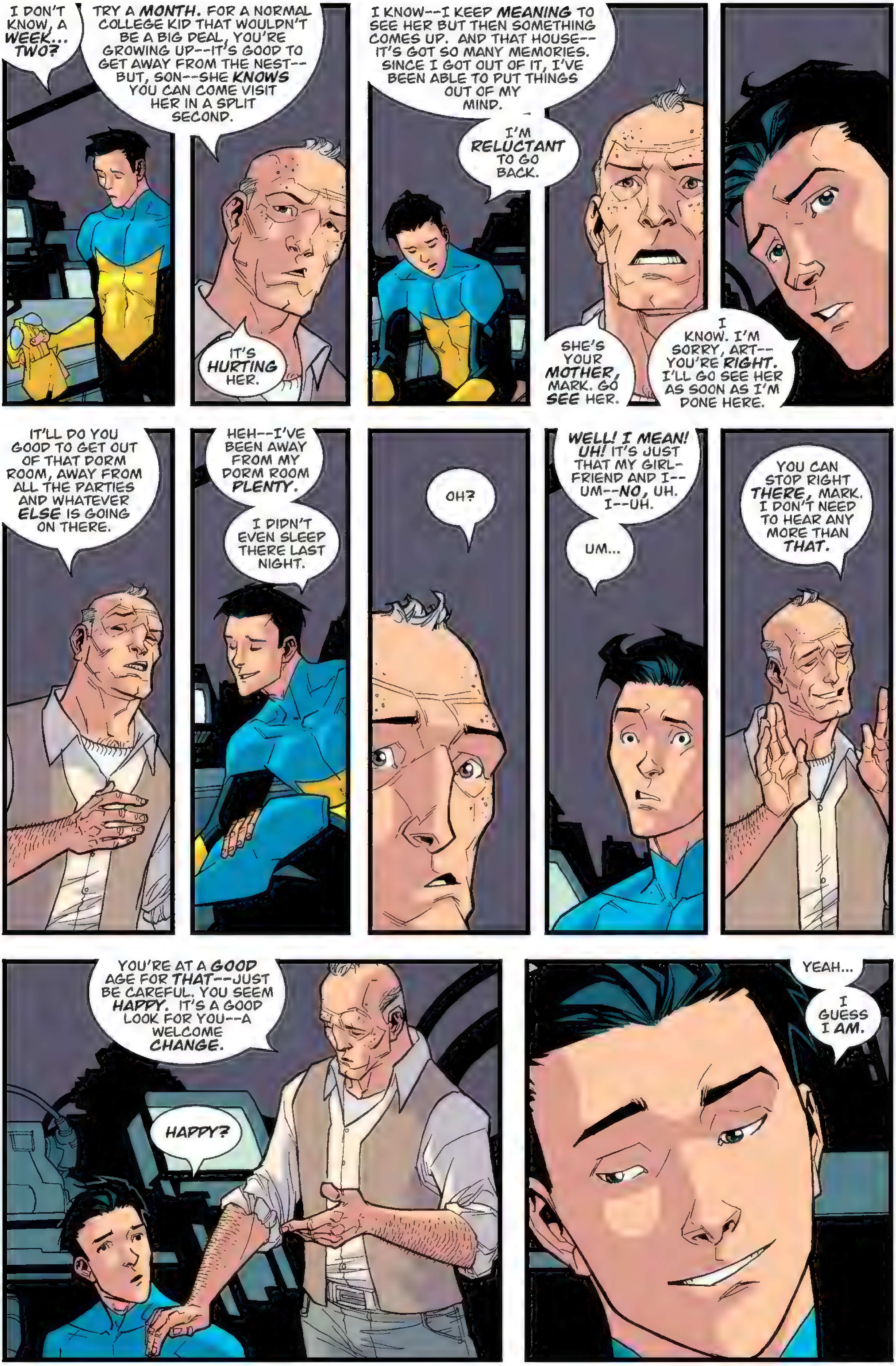

THERE IS A *MOLE* WITHIN THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION.
UNTIL HE IS DISCOVERED AND *ELIMINATED*-- NO ONE IS SAFE. THE VERY COALITION *ITSELF* IS IN JEOPARDY.
THIS COULD VERY WELL BE THE BEGINNING OF THE *END*.

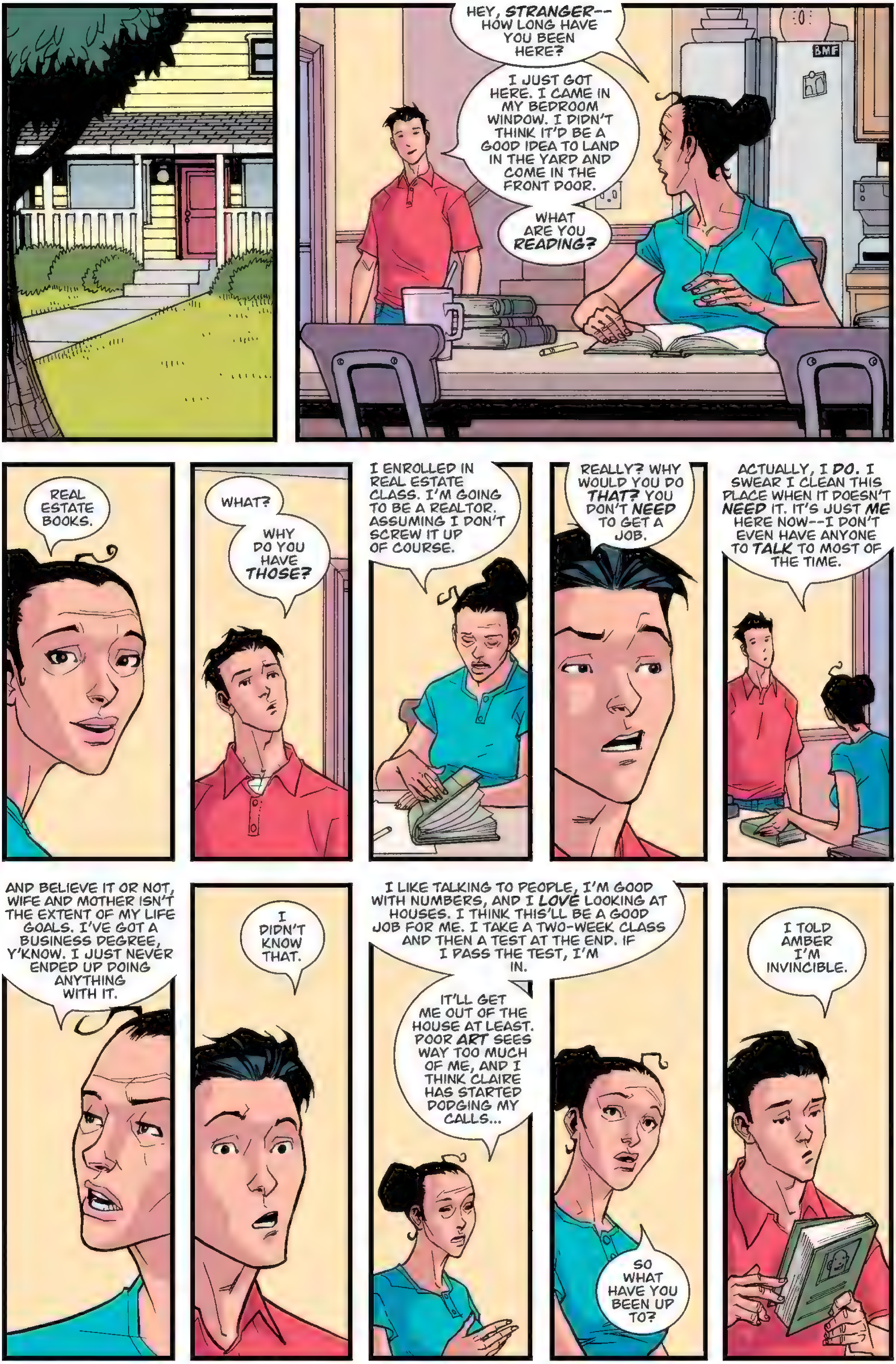

MARK, HONEY-- *WAKE UP*-- YOU HAVE TO WAKE UP.
YOU HAVE TO *GO* BEFORE SOMEONE SEES YOU HERE.
I--I WAS THINKING MAYBE I COULD SPEND THE NIGHT HERE. Y'KNOW, SINCE YOU DON'T HAVE A ROOMMATE OR ANYTHING.
I JUST-- I WANTED TO SLEEP NEXT TO YOU.
LOOK AT THE CLOCK, SILLY. YOU *DID* SLEEP NEXT TO ME--IT'S ALMOST MORNING. YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE SUN COMES UP AND IT'LL BE EASIER TO SPOT YOU. I KNOW YOU'RE SUPER FAST AND ALL THAT, BUT I DON'T WANT TO RISK IT.
OKAY--SORRY. JUST, UH... LET ME GET MY CLOTHES ON.
MARK?
YEAH?
LAST NIGHT WAS *PERFECT*.

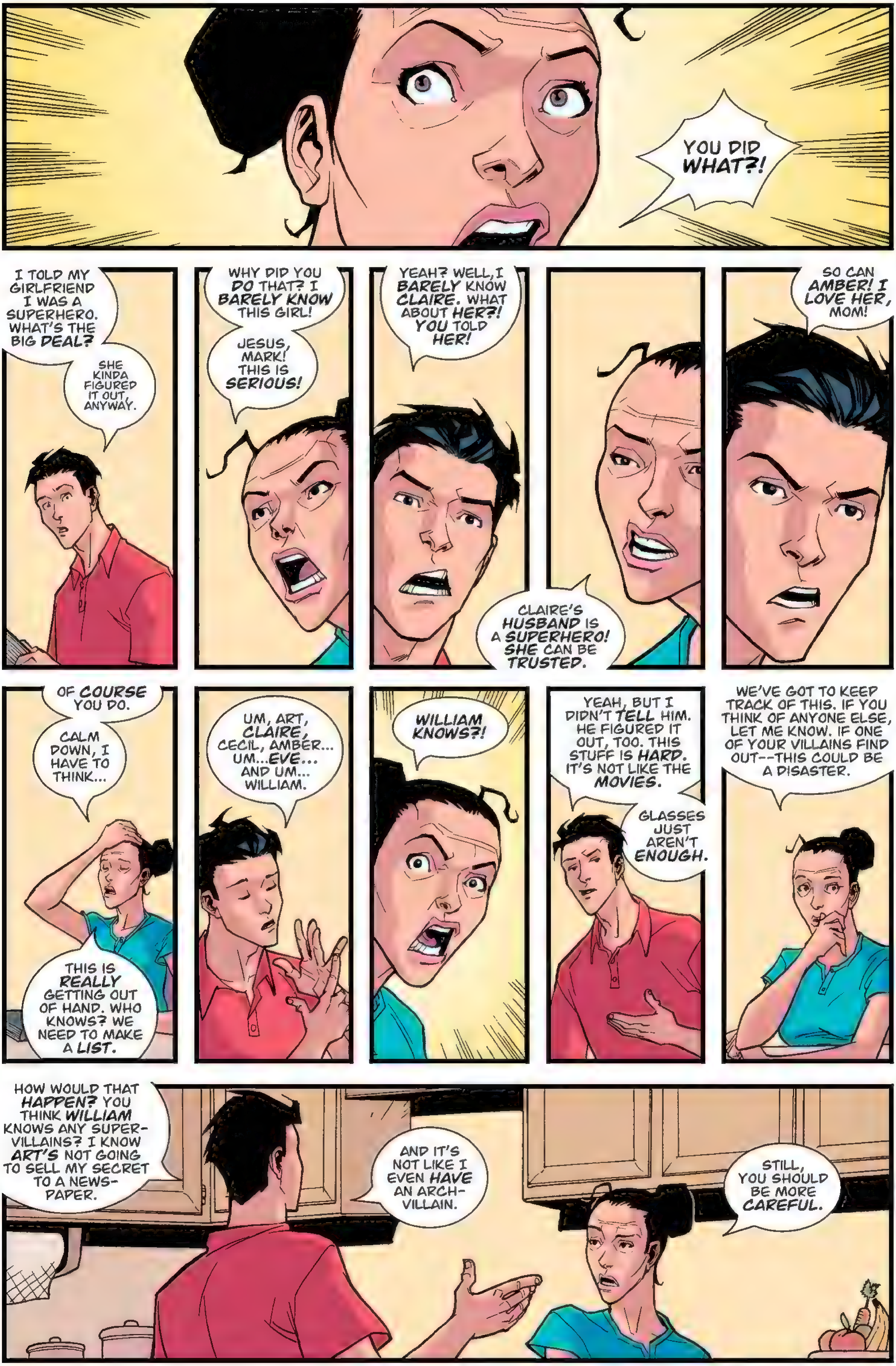
**SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIHEADS.

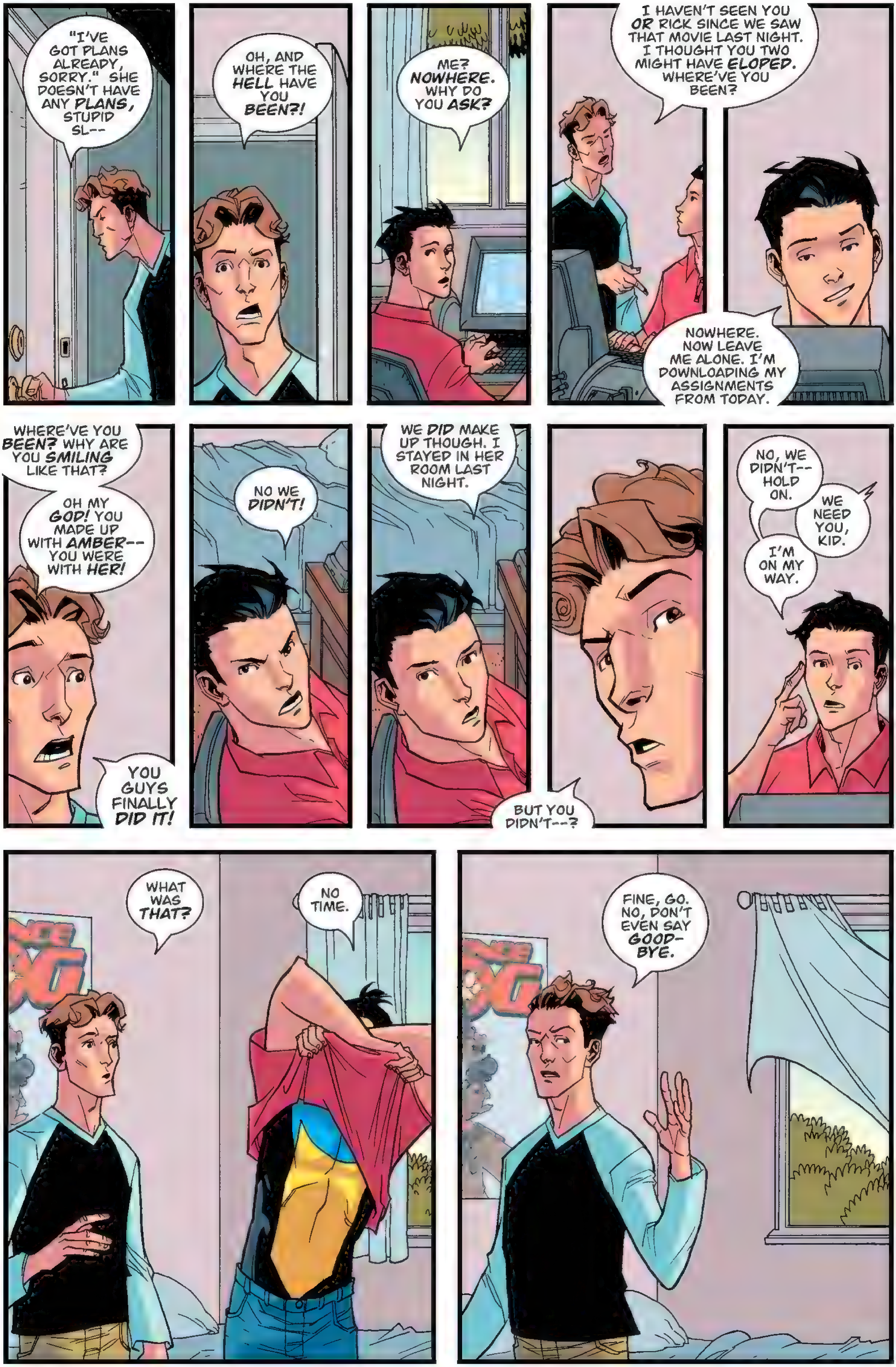
ISSUE TWENTY-FOUR


HEY, UH--YOU CHANGED MY BOOTS?
YEAH, I WANTED TO *SIMPLIFY* THE DESIGN A BIT. SIMPLE IS *IN* THIS YEAR, Y'KNOW. THAT LITTLE SQUARE OF BLACK CLOTH SHOWING THROUGH DIDN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE--IT WAS KINDA LIKE SAYING "LOOK, WEAK SPOT HERE" OR SOMETHING.
ALSO, IT'S A LOT EASIER TO SUPPORT THE KNEEPAD NOW THAT THERE'S A WHOLE BOOT UNDER IT.
THAT'S COOL. I *LIKE* IT. NOT BAD.
THIS ONE ISN'T GOING TO GET ALL RIPPED UP, IS IT? I THOUGHT THESE NEW ONES WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU ON THAT FRONT. THAT FABRIC WAS SOLD TO ME AS UNRIPPABLE--IT WAS A GOVERNMENT CLOSEOUT--IT'S PROBABLY *CRAP.*
I MADE THIS ONE FROM A DIFFERENT ROLL... MAYBE THE OTHER BATCH WAS BAD.
MARK--UM--WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU TALKED TO YOUR MOTHER?
UH...

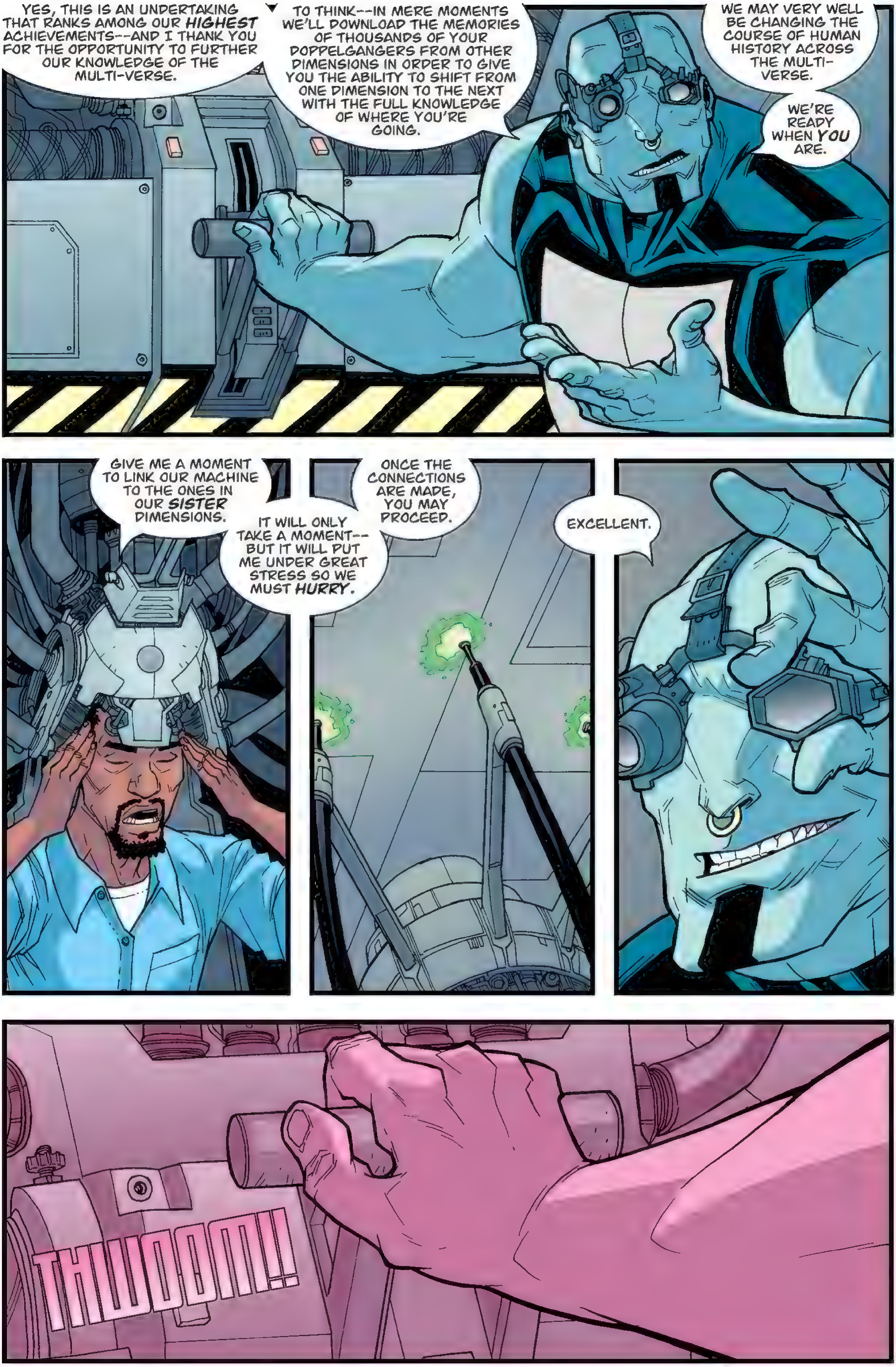

I DON'T KNOW, A WEEK... TWO?
TRY A MONTH. FOR A NORMAL COLLEGE KID THAT WOULDN'T BE A BIG DEAL, YOU'RE GROWING UP--IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM THE NEST--BUT, SON--SHE KNOWS YOU CAN COME VISIT HER IN A SPLIT SECOND.
IT'S HURTING HER.
I KNOW--I KEEP MEANING TO SEE HER BUT THEN SOMETHING COMES UP. AND THAT HOUSE--IT'S GOT SO MANY MEMORIES. SINCE I GOT OUT OF IT, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PUT THINGS OUT OF MY MIND.
I'M RELUCTANT TO GO BACK.
SHE'S YOUR MOTHER, MARK. GO SEE HER.
I KNOW. I'M SORRY, ART--YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL GO SEE HER AS SOON AS I'M DONE HERE.
IT'LL DO YOU GOOD TO GET OUT OF THAT DORM ROOM, AWAY FROM ALL THE PARTIES AND WHATEVER ELSE IS GOING ON THERE.
HEH--I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM MY DORM ROOM PLENTY.
I DIDN'T EVEN SLEEP THERE LAST NIGHT.
OH?
WELL! I MEAN! UH! IT'S JUST THAT MY GIRLFRIEND AND I--UM--NO, UH. I--UH.
UM...
YOU CAN STOP RIGHT THERE, MARK. I DON'T NEED TO HEAR ANY MORE THAN THAT.
YOU'RE AT A GOOD AGE FOR THAT--JUST BE CAREFUL. YOU SEEM HAPPY. IT'S A GOOD LOOK FOR YOU--A WELCOME CHANGE.
HAPPY?
YEAH...
I GUESS I AM.

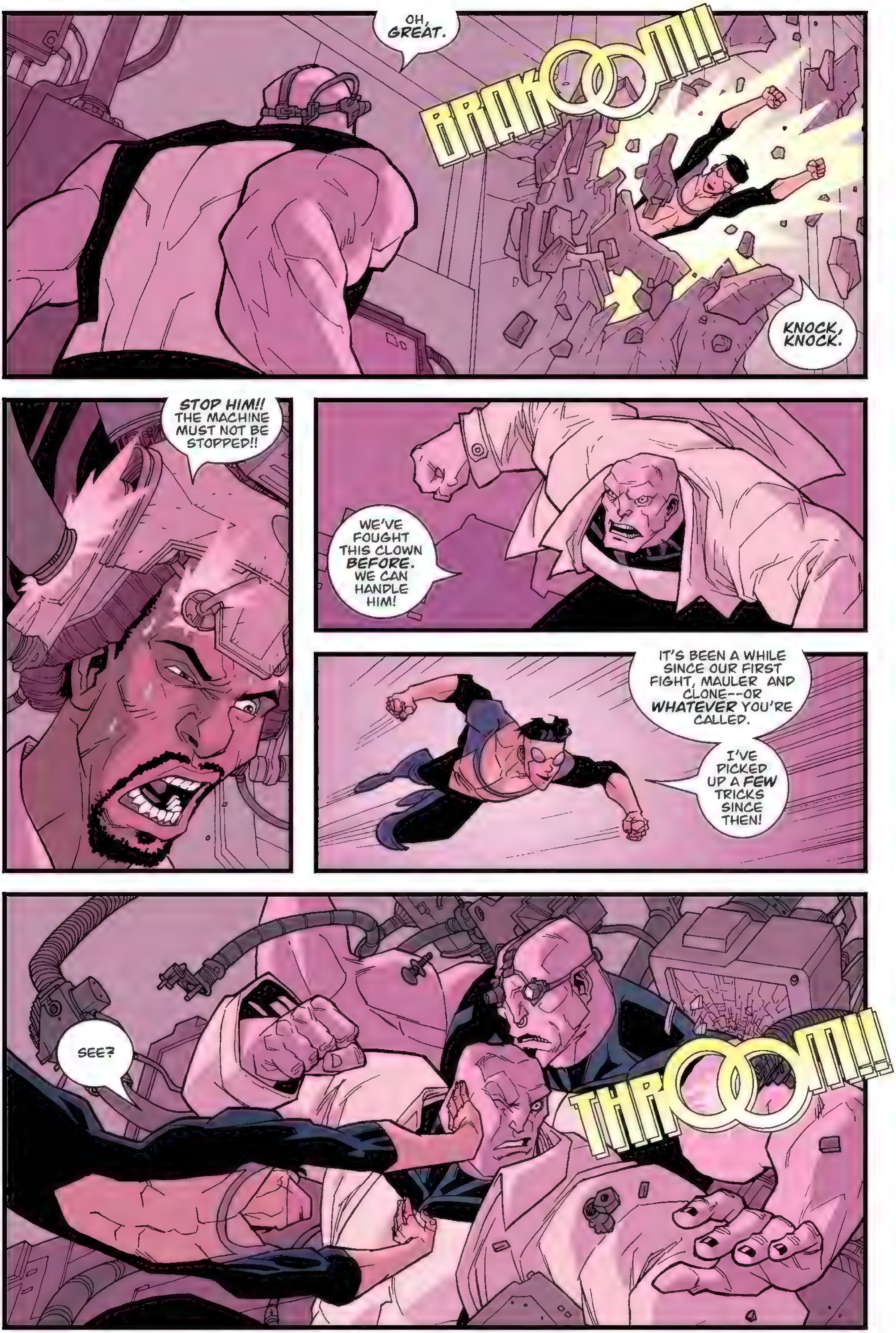

HEY, STRANGER-- HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
I JUST GOT HERE. I CAME IN MY BEDROOM WINDOW. I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE A GOOD IDEA TO LAND IN THE YARD AND COME IN THE FRONT DOOR.
WHAT ARE YOU READING?
BMF
REAL ESTATE BOOKS.
WHAT?
WHY DO YOU HAVE THOSE?
I ENROLLED IN REAL ESTATE CLASS. I'M GOING TO BE A REALTOR. ASSUMING I DON'T SCREW IT UP OF COURSE.
REALLY? WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT? YOU DON'T NEED TO GET A JOB.
ACTUALLY, I DO. I SWEAR I CLEAN THIS PLACE WHEN IT DOESN'T NEED IT. IT'S JUST ME HERE NOW--I DON'T EVEN HAVE ANYONE TO TALK TO MOST OF THE TIME.
AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WIFE AND MOTHER ISN'T THE EXTENT OF MY LIFE GOALS. I'VE GOT A BUSINESS DEGREE, Y'KNOW. I JUST NEVER ENDED UP DOING ANYTHING WITH IT.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.
I LIKE TALKING TO PEOPLE, I'M GOOD WITH NUMBERS, AND I LOVE LOOKING AT HOUSES. I THINK THIS'LL BE A GOOD JOB FOR ME. I TAKE A TWO-WEEK CLASS AND THEN A TEST AT THE END. IF I PASS THE TEST, I'M IN.
IT'LL GET ME OUT OF THE HOUSE AT LEAST. POOR ART SEES WAY TOO MUCH OF ME, AND I THINK CLAIRE HAS STARTED DODGING MY CALLS...
SO WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?
I TOLD AMBER I'M INVINCIBLE.

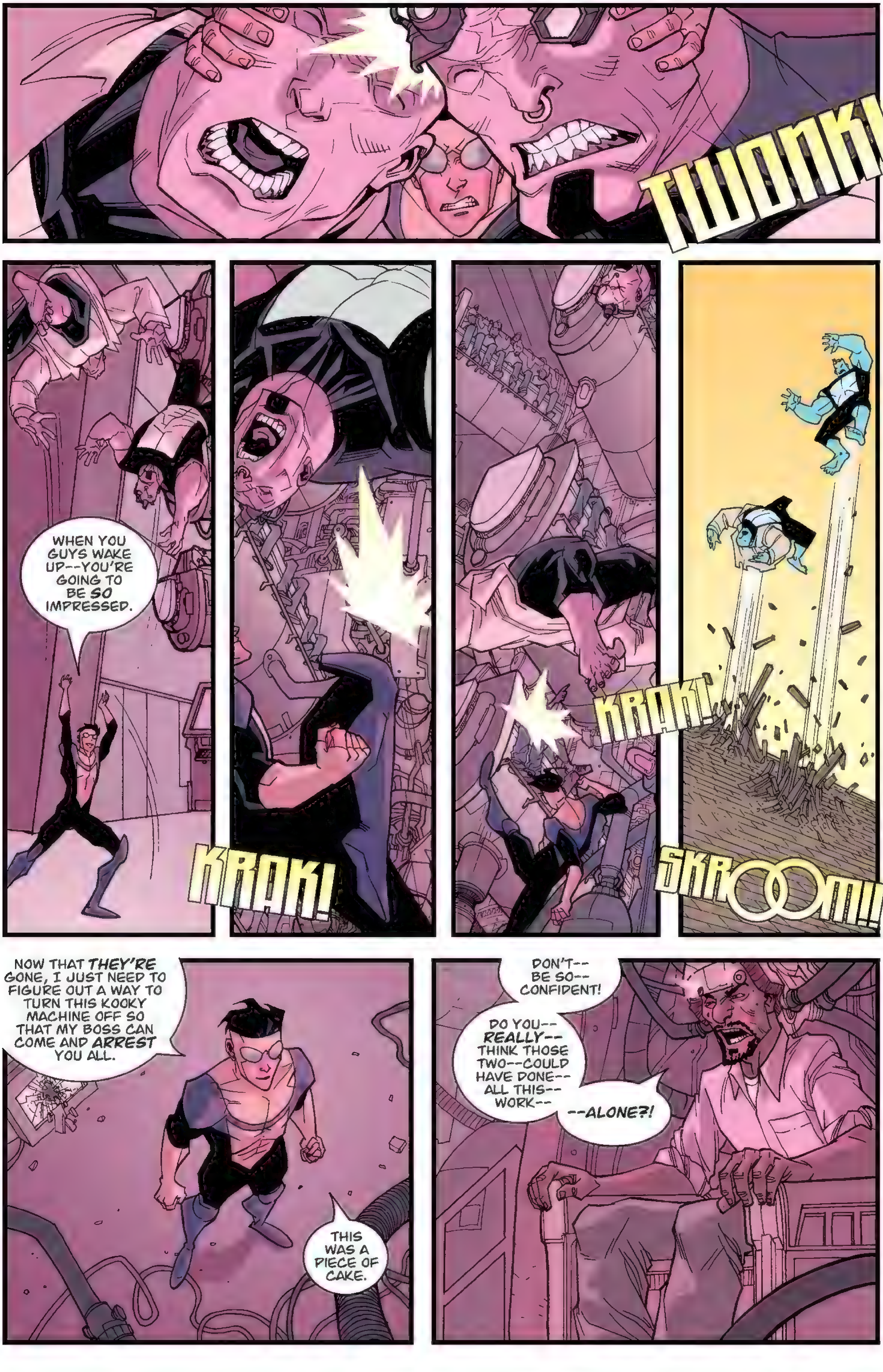

YOU DID WHAT?!
I TOLD MY GIRLFRIEND I WAS A SUPERHERO. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
SHE KINDA FIGURED IT OUT, ANYWAY.
WHY DID YOU DO THAT? I BARELY KNOW THIS GIRL!
JESUS, MARK! THIS IS SERIOUS!
YEAH? WELL, I BARELY KNOW CLAIRE. WHAT ABOUT HER?! YOU TOLD HER!
CLAIRE'S HUSBAND IS A SUPERHERO! SHE CAN BE TRUSTED.
SO CAN AMBER! I LOVE HER, MOM!
OF COURSE YOU DO.
CALM DOWN, I HAVE TO THINK...
THIS IS REALLY GETTING OUT OF HAND. WHO KNOWS? WE NEED TO MAKE A LIST.
UM, ART, CLAIRE, CECIL, AMBER... UM...EVE... AND UM... WILLIAM.
WILLIAM KNOWS?!
YEAH, BUT I DIDN'T TELL HIM. HE FIGURED IT OUT, TOO. THIS STUFF IS HARD. IT'S NOT LIKE THE MOVIES.
GLASSES JUST AREN'T ENOUGH.
WE'VE GOT TO KEEP TRACK OF THIS. IF YOU THINK OF ANYONE ELSE, LET ME KNOW. IF ONE OF YOUR VILLAINS FIND OUT--THIS COULD BE A DISASTER.
HOW WOULD THAT HAPPEN? YOU THINK WILLIAM KNOWS ANY SUPER-VILLAINS? I KNOW ART'S NOT GOING TO SELL MY SECRET TO A NEWSPAPER.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE I EVEN HAVE AN ARCH-VILLAIN.
STILL, YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL.

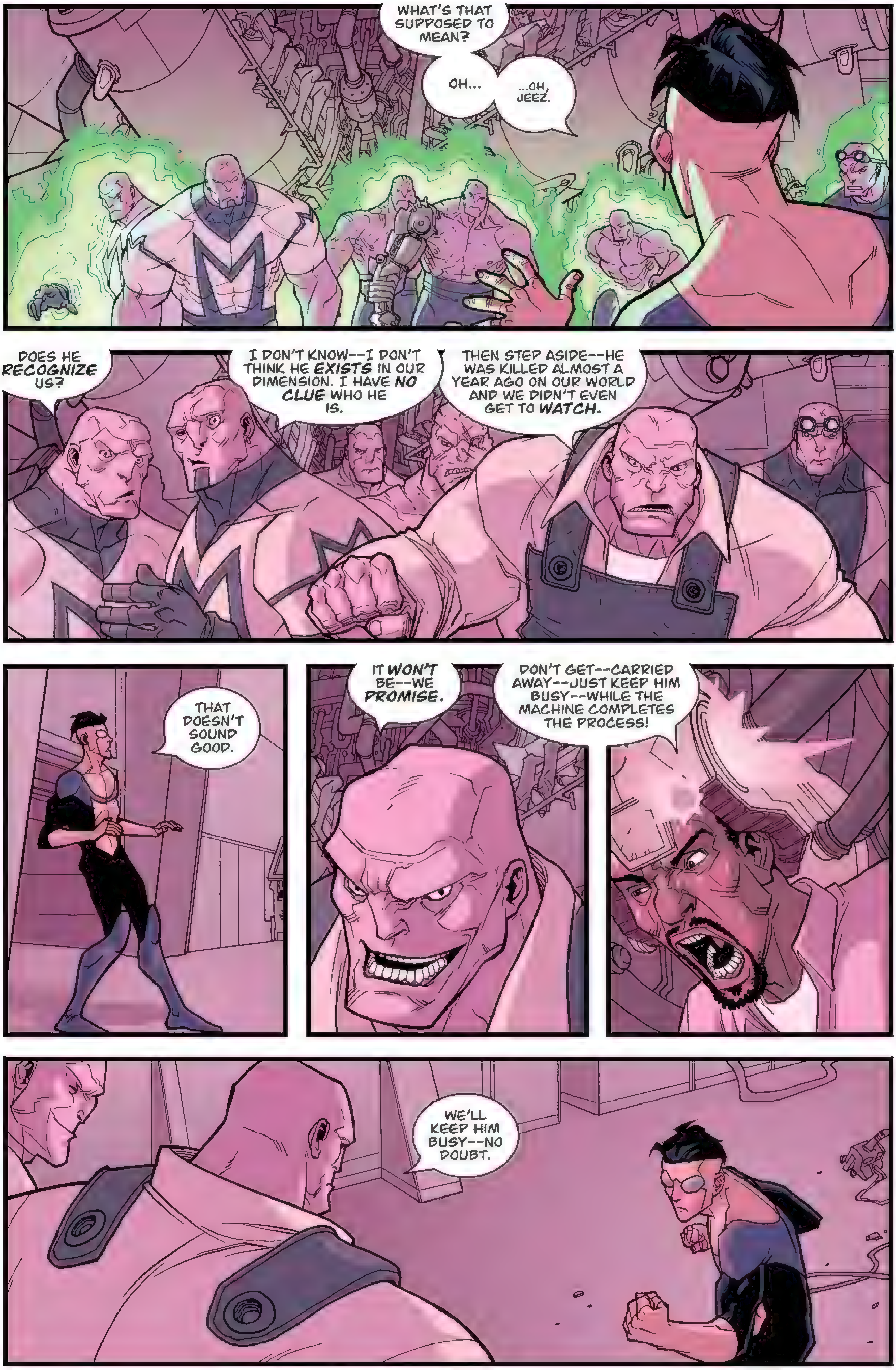

"I'VE GOT PLANS ALREADY, SORRY." SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY PLANS, STUPID SL--
OH, AND WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?!
ME? NOWHERE. WHY DO YOU ASK?
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU OR RICK SINCE WE SAW THAT MOVIE LAST NIGHT. I THOUGHT YOU TWO MIGHT HAVE ELOPED. WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?
NOWHERE. NOW LEAVE ME ALONE. I'M DOWNLOADING MY ASSIGNMENTS FROM TODAY.
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN? WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT?
OH MY GOD! YOU MADE UP WITH AMBER-- YOU WERE WITH HER!
YOU GUYS FINALLY DID IT!
NO WE DIDN'T!
WE DID MAKE UP THOUGH. I STAYED IN HER ROOM LAST NIGHT.
BUT YOU DIDN'T--?
NO, WE DIDN'T-- HOLD ON.
WE NEED YOU, KID.
I'M ON MY WAY.
WHAT WAS THAT?
NO TIME.
FINE, GO. NO, DON'T EVEN SAY GOOD-BYE.

TIME TO MAKE THE DONUTS.
I THINK I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF BOTH OF US WHEN I SAY IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO WORK ON SUCH A PROJECT WITH YOU, **ANGSTROM LEVY**.

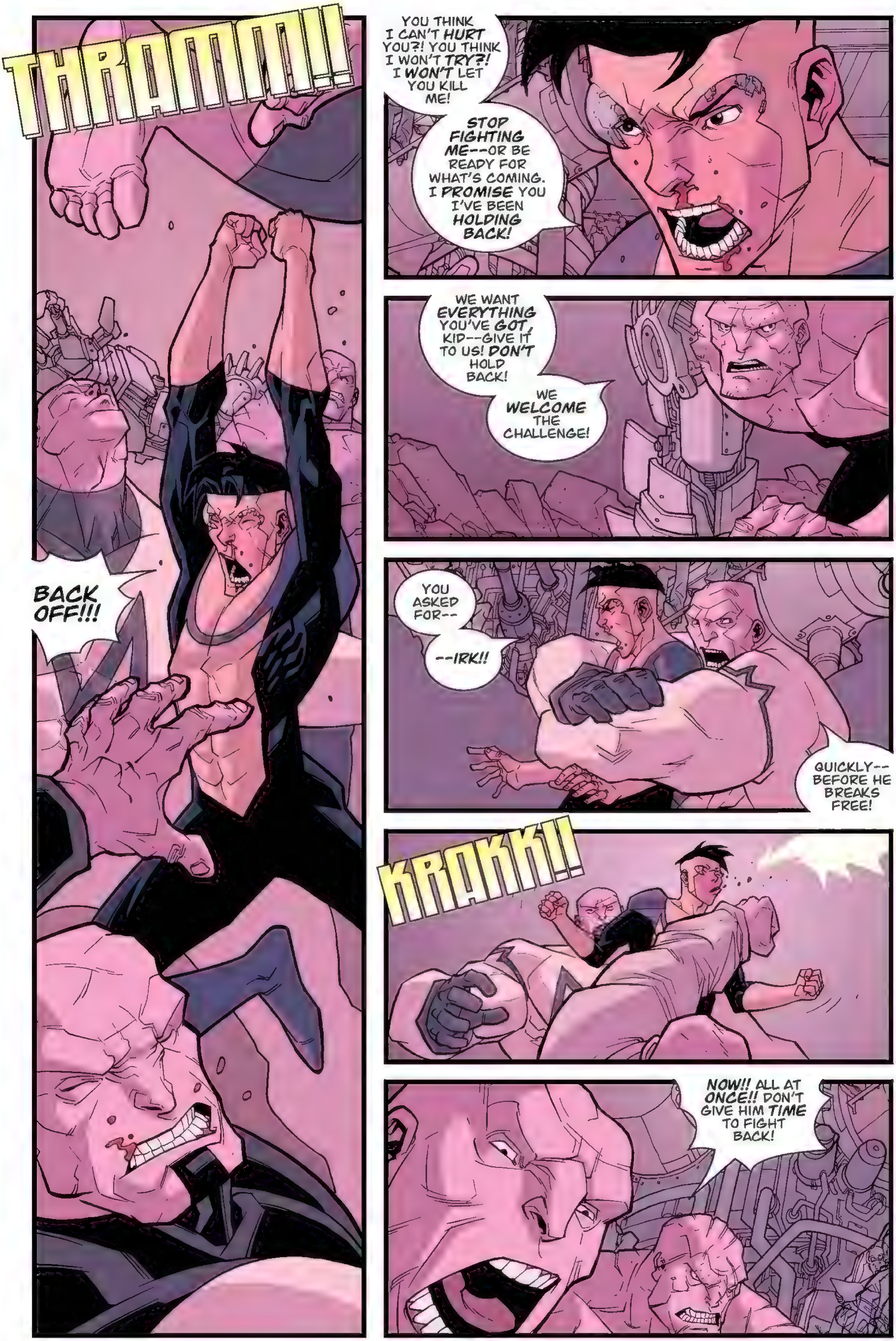

YES, THIS IS AN UNDERTAKING THAT RANKS AMONG OUR **HIGHEST** ACHIEVEMENTS--AND I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MULTI-VERSE.
TO THINK--IN MERE MOMENTS WE'LL DOWNLOAD THE MEMORIES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUR DOPPELGANGERS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU THE ABILITY TO SHIFT FROM ONE DIMENSION TO THE NEXT WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
WE MAY VERY WELL BE CHANGING THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY ACROSS THE MULTI-VERSE.
WE'RE READY WHEN **YOU** ARE.
GIVE ME A MOMENT TO LINK OUR MACHINE TO THE ONES IN OUR **SISTER** DIMENSIONS.
IT WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT--BUT IT WILL PUT ME UNDER GREAT STRESS SO WE MUST **HURRY**.
ONCE THE CONNECTIONS ARE MADE, YOU MAY PROCEED.
EXCELLENT.
THWOOM!!

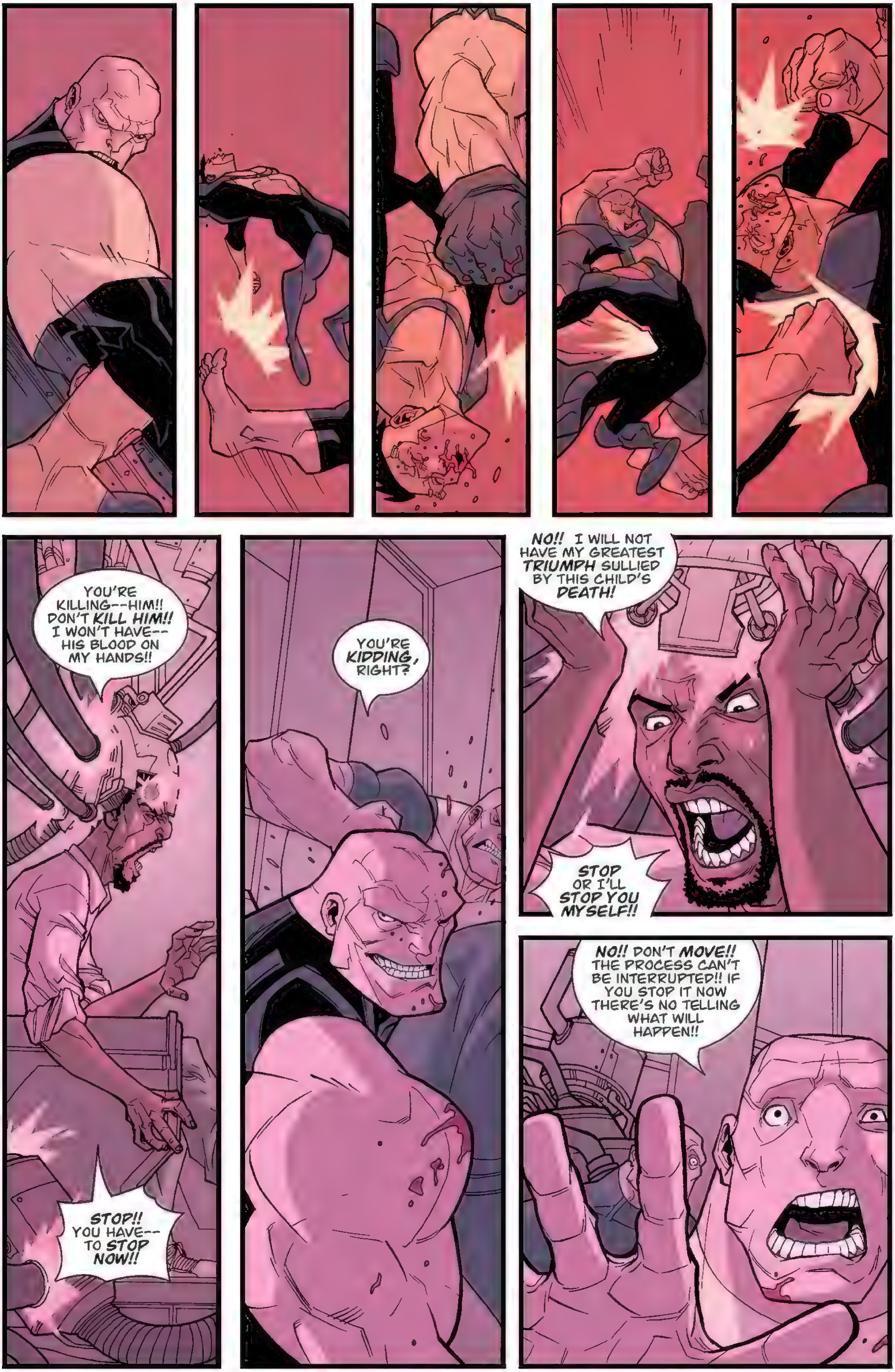

OH, GREAT.
BRAKOOM!!
KNOCK, KNOCK.
STOP HIM!! THE MACHINE MUST NOT BE STOPPED!!
WE'VE FOUGHT THIS CLOWN BEFORE. WE CAN HANDLE HIM!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE OUR FIRST FIGHT, MAULER AND CLONE--OR WHATEVER YOU'RE CALLED.
I'VE PICKED UP A FEW TRICKS SINCE THEN!
SEE?
THROOM!!

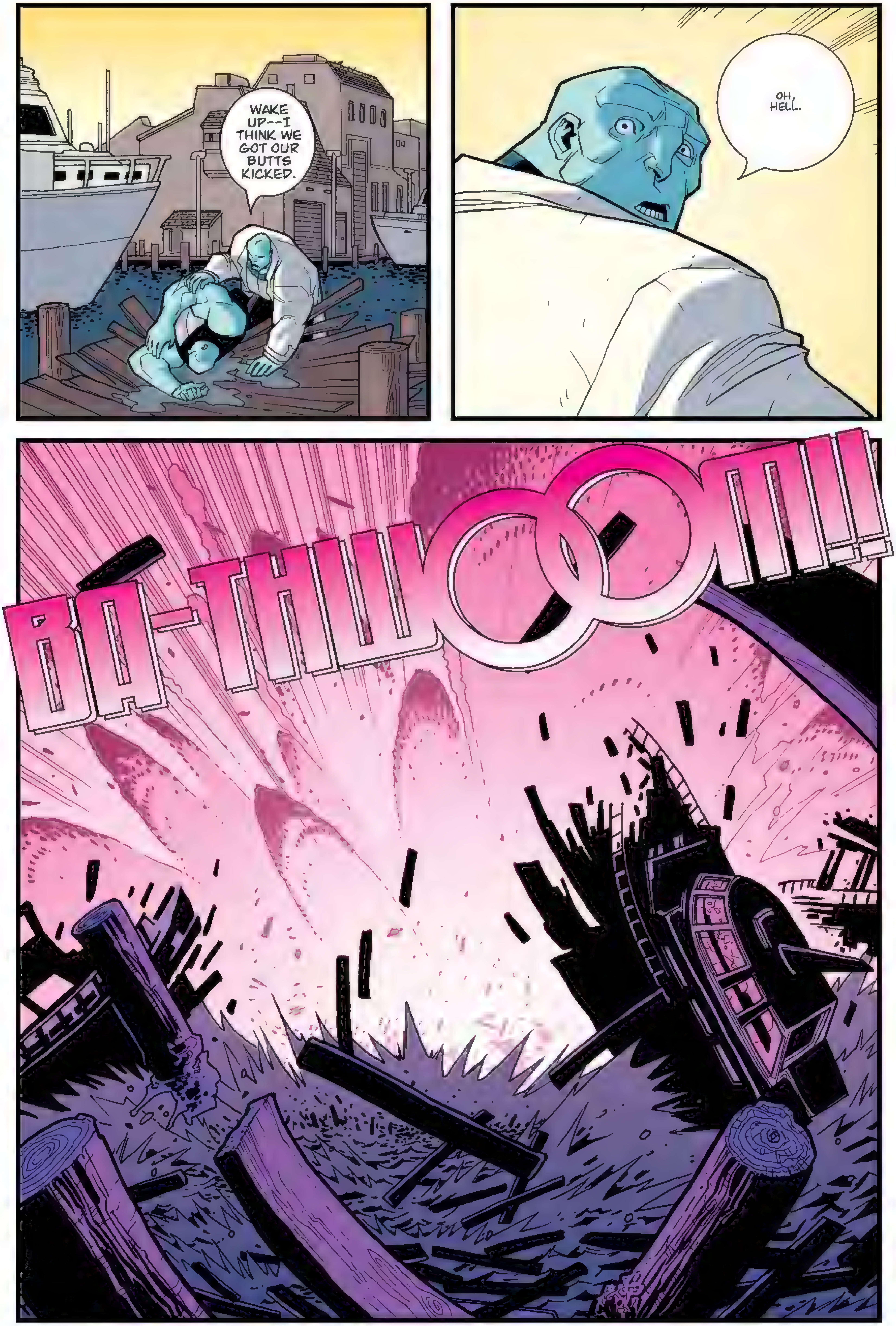

TWONK!
WHEN YOU GUYS WAKE UP--YOU'RE GOING TO BE *SO* IMPRESSED.
KRAK!
KRAK!
SKROOOM!!
NOW THAT *THEY'RE* GONE, I JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TURN THIS KOOKY MACHINE OFF SO THAT MY BOSS CAN COME AND *ARREST* YOU ALL.
THIS WAS A PIECE OF CAKE.
DON'T-- BE SO-- CONFIDENT!
DO YOU-- *REALLY*-- THINK THOSE TWO--COULD HAVE DONE-- ALL THIS-- WORK--
--*ALONE?!*

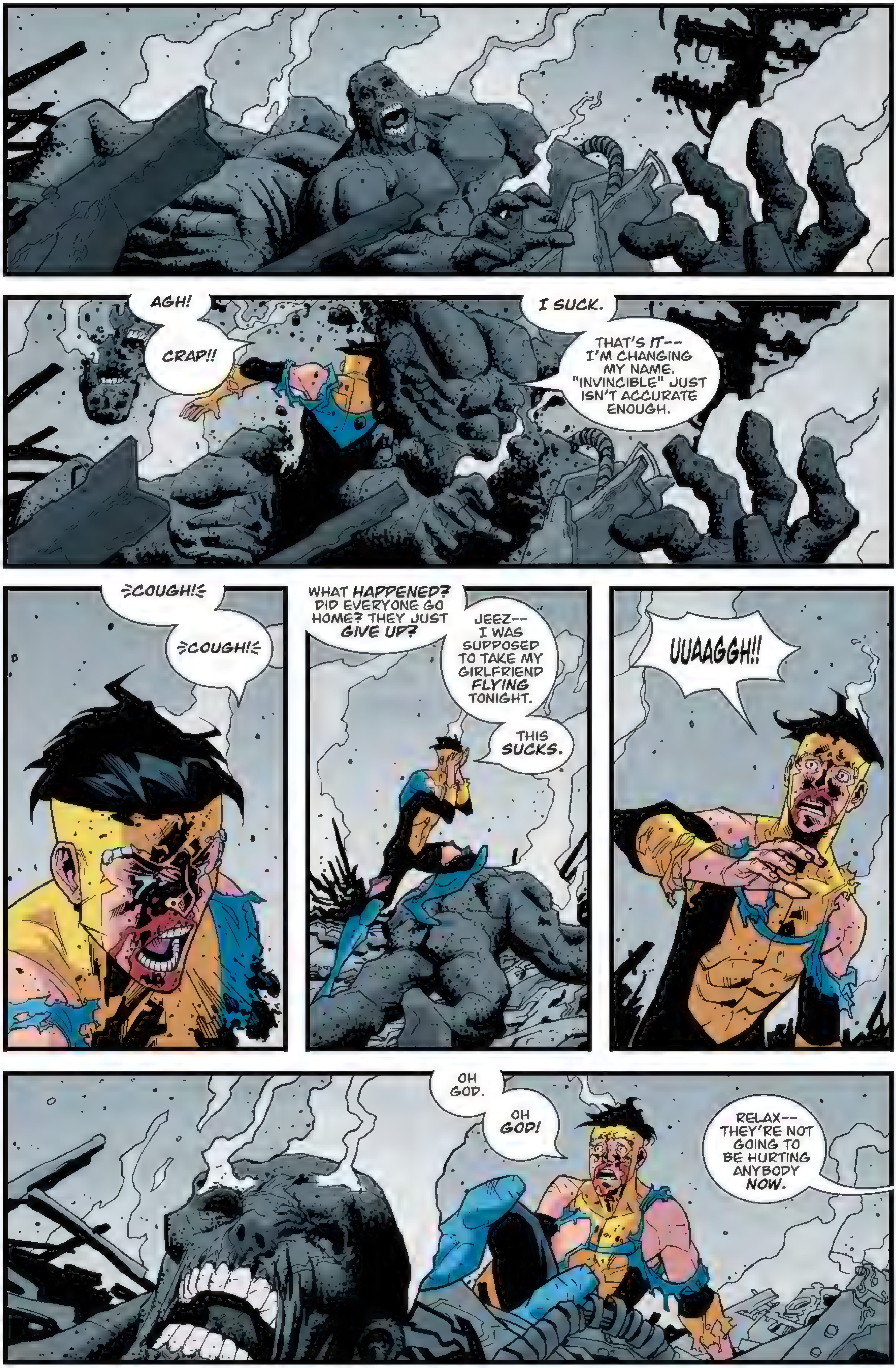

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
OH...
...OH, JEEZ.
DOES HE **RECOGNIZE** US?
I DON'T KNOW--I DON'T THINK HE **EXISTS** IN OUR DIMENSION. I HAVE **NO CLUE** WHO HE IS.
THEN STEP ASIDE--HE WAS KILLED ALMOST A YEAR AGO ON OUR WORLD AND WE DIDN'T EVEN GET TO **WATCH.**
THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.
IT **WON'T** BE--WE **PROMISE.**
DON'T GET--CARRIED AWAY--JUST KEEP HIM BUSY--WHILE THE MACHINE COMPLETES THE PROCESS!
WE'LL KEEP HIM BUSY--NO DOUBT.

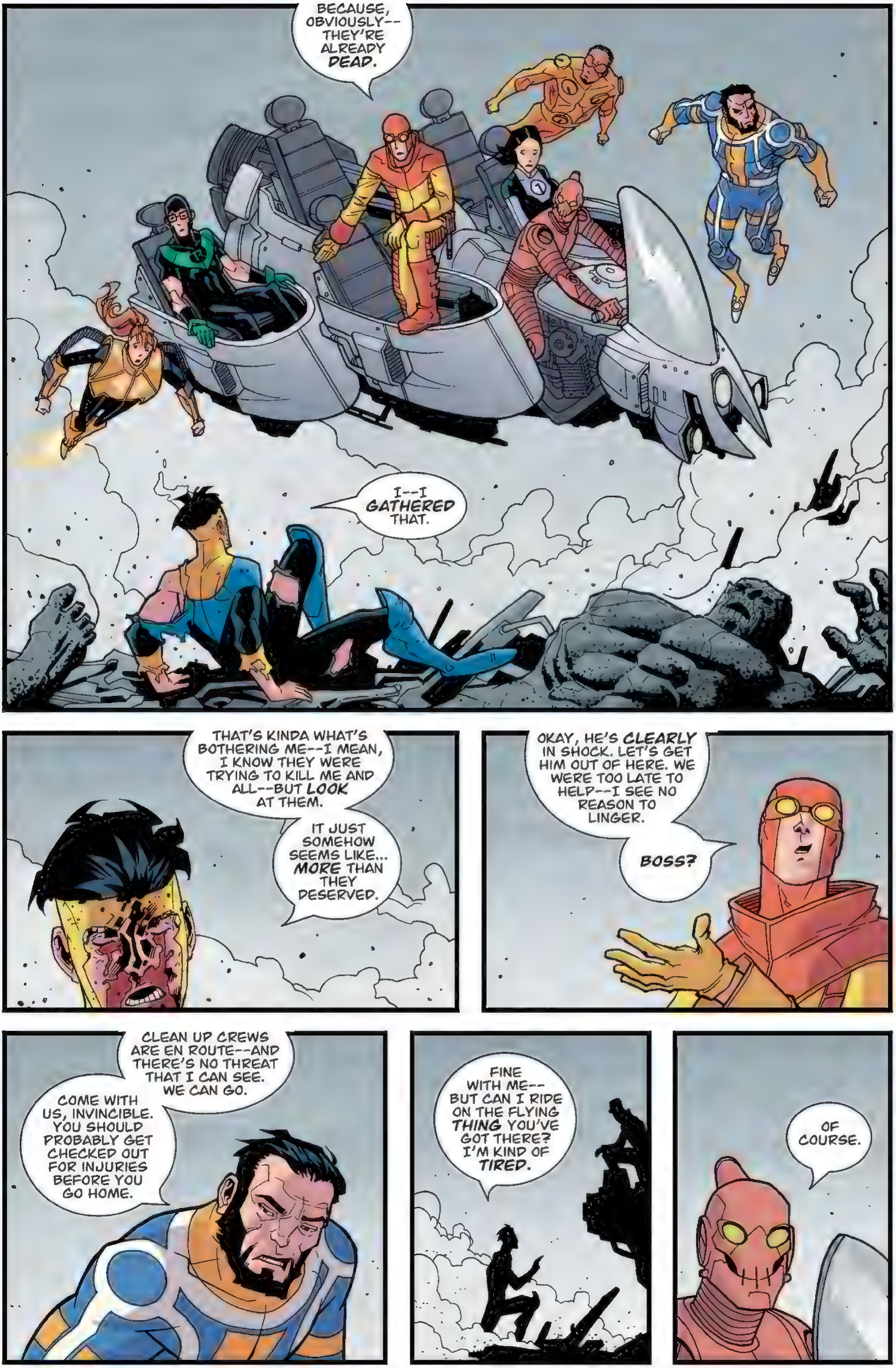
POW!
STAY BACK!
THAT WAS AN IMPRESSIVE PUNCH. IT'S A GOOD THING HE WASN'T ALONE.
GOOD FOR US, I MEAN.
KRAK!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY THAT EASY!!
WE'RE NOT DONE WITH YOU BY A LONG SHOT!
WE AIM TO PLEASE, BOSS!
CHOOOM!!
SAVE SOME FOR US!
JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS DOESN'T MEAN WE DON'T WANT TO HURT HIM!
JUST-- KEEP HIM AWAY!! I CAN FEEL THE MACHINE WORKING--I CAN FEEL MY MIND-- EXPANDING!
ACK!!
WRAMM!!

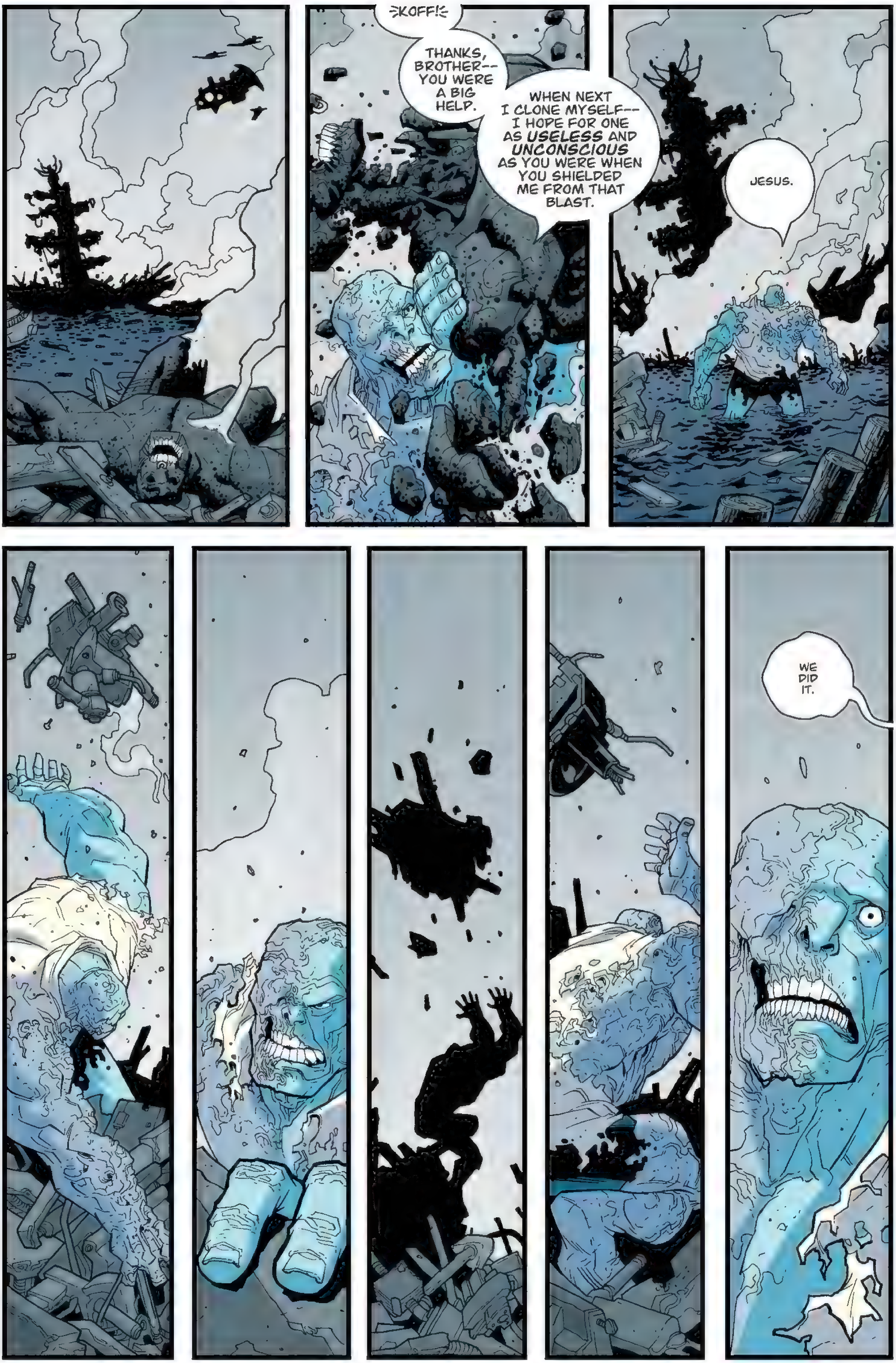

THRAMM!!
BACK OFF!!!
YOU THINK I CAN'T HURT YOU?! YOU THINK I WON'T TRY?! I WON'T LET YOU KILL ME!
STOP FIGHTING ME--OR BE READY FOR WHAT'S COMING. I PROMISE YOU I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK!
WE WANT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT, KID--GIVE IT TO US! DON'T HOLD BACK!
WE WELCOME THE CHALLENGE!
YOU ASKED FOR--
--IRK!!
QUICKLY--BEFORE HE BREAKS FREE!
KRAKK!!
NOW!! ALL AT ONCE!! DON'T GIVE HIM TIME TO FIGHT BACK!

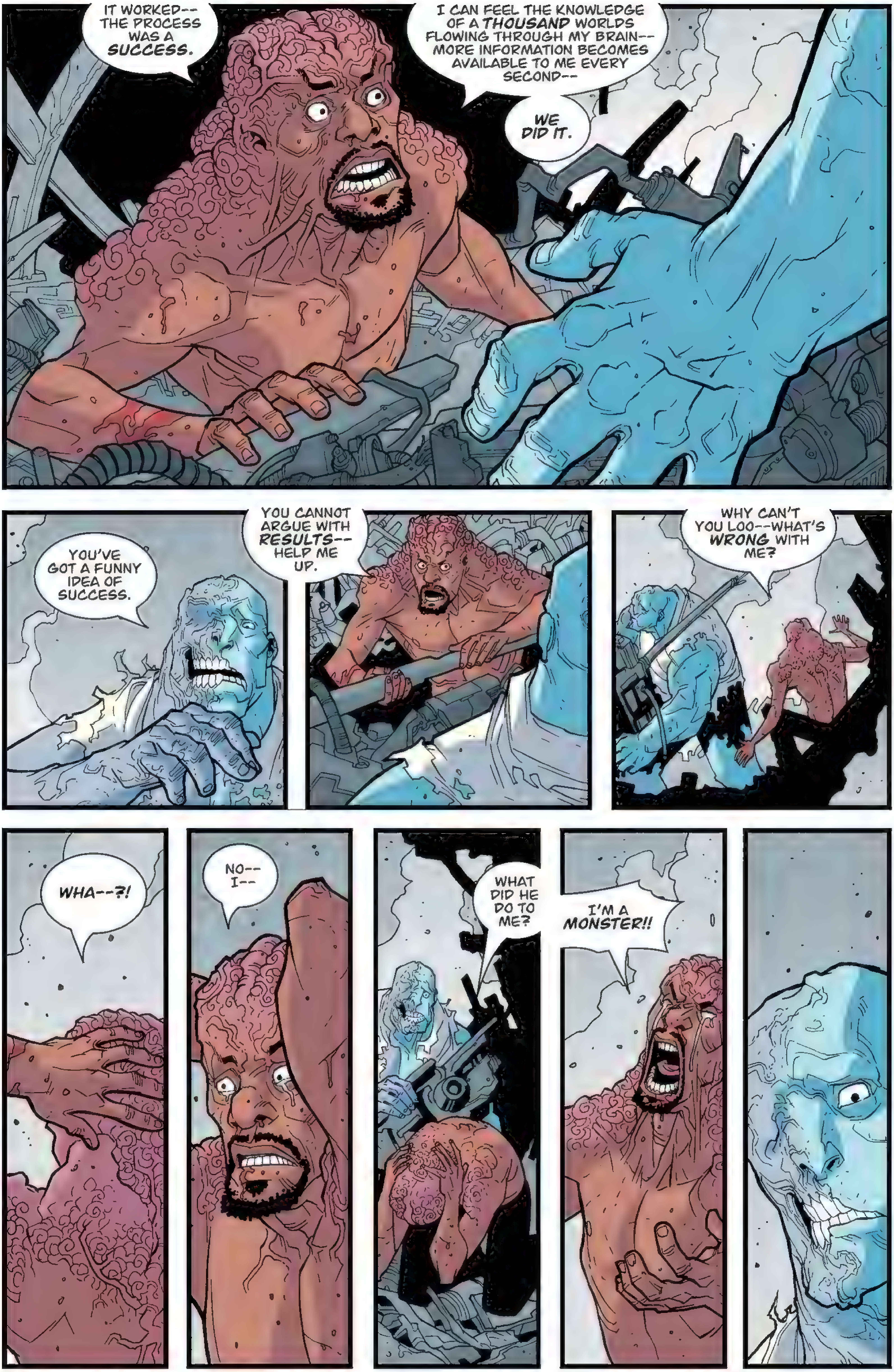

YOU'RE KILLING--HIM!! DON'T KILL HIM!! I WON'T HAVE-- HIS BLOOD ON MY HANDS!!
STOP!! YOU HAVE-- TO STOP NOW!!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
NO!! I WILL NOT HAVE MY GREATEST TRIUMPH SULLIED BY THIS CHILD'S DEATH!
STOP OR I'LL STOP YOU MYSELF!!
NO!! DON'T MOVE!! THE PROCESS CAN'T BE INTERRUPTED!! IF YOU STOP IT NOW THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT WILL HAPPEN!!

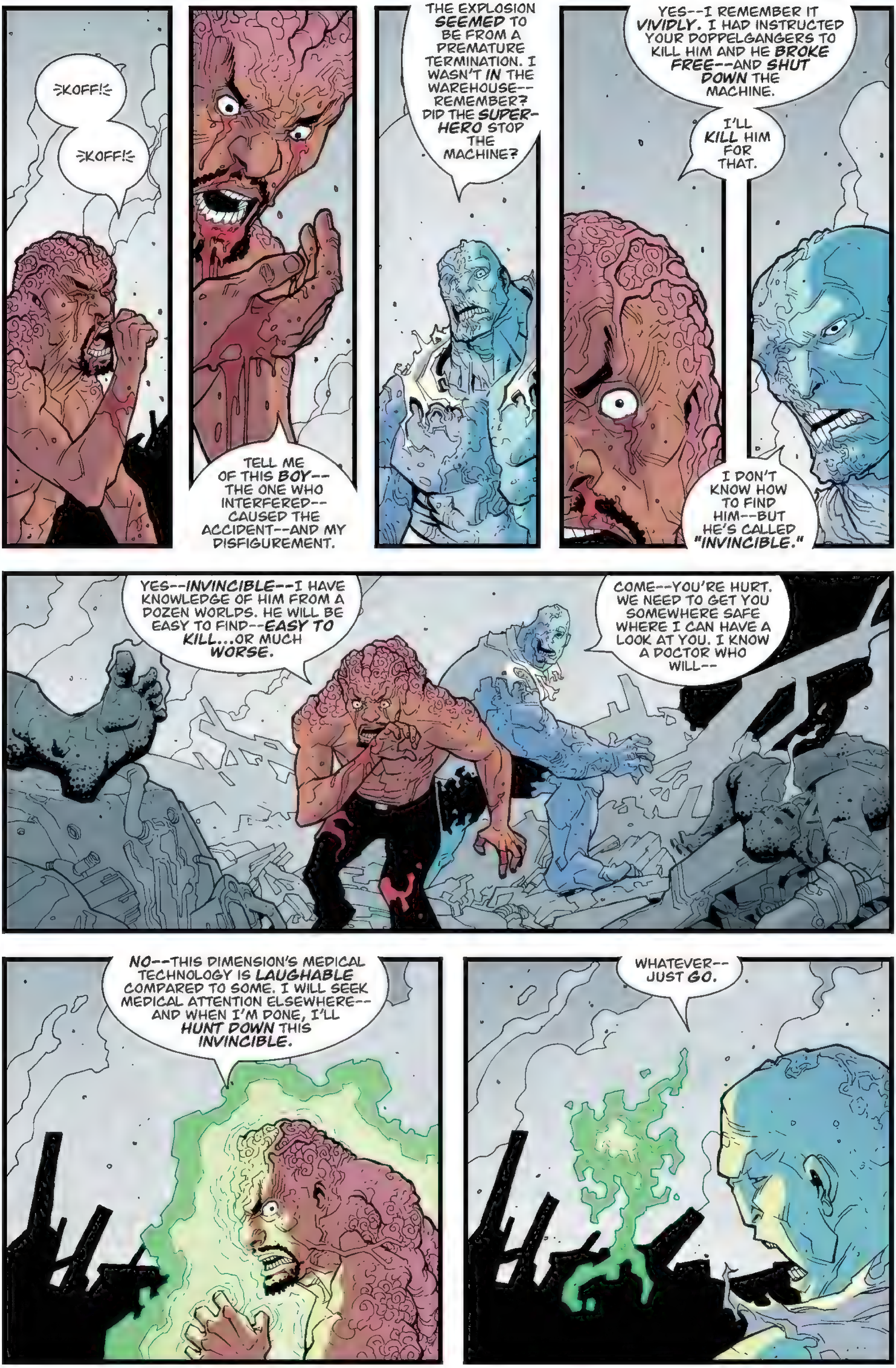

WAKE UP--I THINK WE GOT OUR BUTTS KICKED.
OH, HELL.
BA-THWOOOM!!


AGH!
CRAP!!
I SUCK.
THAT'S IT-- I'M CHANGING MY NAME. "INVINCIBLE" JUST ISN'T ACCURATE ENOUGH.
COUGH!
COUGH!
WHAT HAPPENED? DID EVERYONE GO HOME? THEY JUST GIVE UP?
JEEZ-- I WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE MY GIRLFRIEND FLYING TONIGHT.
THIS SUCKS.
UUAAGGH!!
OH GOD.
OH GOD!
RELAX-- THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BE HURTING ANYBODY NOW.


BECAUSE, OBVIOUSLY-- THEY'RE ALREADY **DEAD.**
I--I **GATHERED** THAT.
THAT'S KINDA WHAT'S BOTHERING ME--I MEAN, I KNOW THEY WERE TRYING TO KILL ME AND ALL--BUT **LOOK** AT THEM.
IT JUST SOMEHOW SEEMS LIKE... **MORE** THAN THEY DESERVED.
OKAY, HE'S **CLEARLY** IN SHOCK. LET'S GET HIM OUT OF HERE. WE WERE TOO LATE TO HELP--I SEE NO REASON TO LINGER.
BOSS?
CLEAN UP CREWS ARE EN ROUTE--AND THERE'S NO THREAT THAT I CAN SEE. WE CAN GO.
COME WITH US, INVINCIBLE. YOU SHOULD PROBABLY GET CHECKED OUT FOR INJURIES BEFORE YOU GO HOME.
FINE WITH ME-- BUT CAN I RIDE ON THE FLYING **THING** YOU'VE GOT THERE? I'M KIND OF **TIRED.**
OF COURSE.


≡KOFF!≡
THANKS, BROTHER-- YOU WERE A BIG HELP.
WHEN NEXT I CLONE MYSELF-- I HOPE FOR ONE AS *USELESS* AND *UNCONSCIOUS* AS YOU WERE WHEN YOU SHIELDED ME FROM THAT BLAST.
JESUS.
WE DID IT.


IT WORKED-- THE PROCESS WAS A SUCCESS.
I CAN FEEL THE KNOWLEDGE OF A THOUSAND WORLDS FLOWING THROUGH MY BRAIN-- MORE INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE TO ME EVERY SECOND--
WE DID IT.
YOU'VE GOT A FUNNY IDEA OF SUCCESS.
YOU CANNOT ARGUE WITH RESULTS-- HELP ME UP.
WHY CAN'T YOU LOO--WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
WHA--?!
NO-- I--
WHAT DID HE DO TO ME?
I'M A MONSTER!!



KOFF!
KOFF!
TELL ME OF THIS **BOY**--THE ONE WHO INTERFERED--CAUSED THE ACCIDENT--AND MY DISFIGUREMENT.
THE EXPLOSION **SEEMED** TO BE FROM A PREMATURE TERMINATION. I WASN'T **IN** THE WAREHOUSE--REMEMBER? DID THE **SUPERHERO** STOP THE MACHINE?
YES--I REMEMBER IT **VIVIDLY.** I HAD INSTRUCTED YOUR DOPPELGANGERS TO KILL HIM AND HE **BROKE FREE**--AND **SHUT DOWN** THE MACHINE.
I'LL **KILL** HIM FOR THAT.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIND HIM--BUT HE'S CALLED **"INVINCIBLE."**
YES--**INVINCIBLE**--I HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM FROM A DOZEN WORLDS. HE WILL BE EASY TO FIND--**EASY TO KILL**...OR MUCH **WORSE.**
COME--YOU'RE HURT. WE NEED TO GET YOU SOMEWHERE SAFE WHERE I CAN HAVE A LOOK AT YOU. I KNOW A DOCTOR WHO WILL--
NO--THIS DIMENSION'S MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY IS **LAUGHABLE** COMPARED TO SOME. I WILL SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION ELSEWHERE--AND WHEN I'M DONE, I'LL **HUNT DOWN** THIS **INVINCIBLE.**
WHATEVER--JUST **GO.**

DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT TAKING *ME* WITH YOU. IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED ANY MEDICAL ATTENTION OR ANYTHING.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT *ME*.
JERK.

ORIGINS

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF MONSTER GIRL!
SHE WENT TO ONE OF THOSE RICH PEOPLE SCHOOLS--THE KIND FOR ONLY BOYS OR ONLY GIRLS (THIS ONE WAS FOR GIRLS). THE KIND THAT COSTS MORE THAN MOST STATE COLLEGES.
THE KIND THAT TAKES A SENIOR TRIP TO EUROPE.
SHE WAS PRETTY PAMPERED.
SHE WORKED HARD, THOUGH, SKIPPED A FEW GRADES, WAS GOING TO GRADUATE TWO YEARS EARLY.
SHE GREW UP FAST--EVEN FELL IN LOVE A LITTLE TOO EARLY.
THAT WAS HER FIRST MISTAKE.

HER **SECOND** MISTAKE WAS REFUSING TO LET GO. DESPITE SOME HEATED PERSUASION FROM AN OVER-BEARING GRANDMOTHER.
HER **THIRD** MISTAKE WAS BEING SEEN.
THE LOVE OF HER LIFE'S GRANDMOTHER WAS A PRACTITIONER OF ARCANE MAGIC. SPELLS, INCANTATIONS, HEXES...
...**CURSES.**
SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW **EXACTLY** WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER.
IN TIME SHE WOULD START TO ASSUME SHE HAD CONTRACTED SOME SORT OF WEIRD EUROPEAN STD.
OF COURSE, AT FIRST, SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
Soap
AT FIRST THE CHANGES WERE VERY MUCH INVOLUNTARY. SOMETHING THAT MADE THE PLANE RIDE HOME PRETTY DIFFICULT.

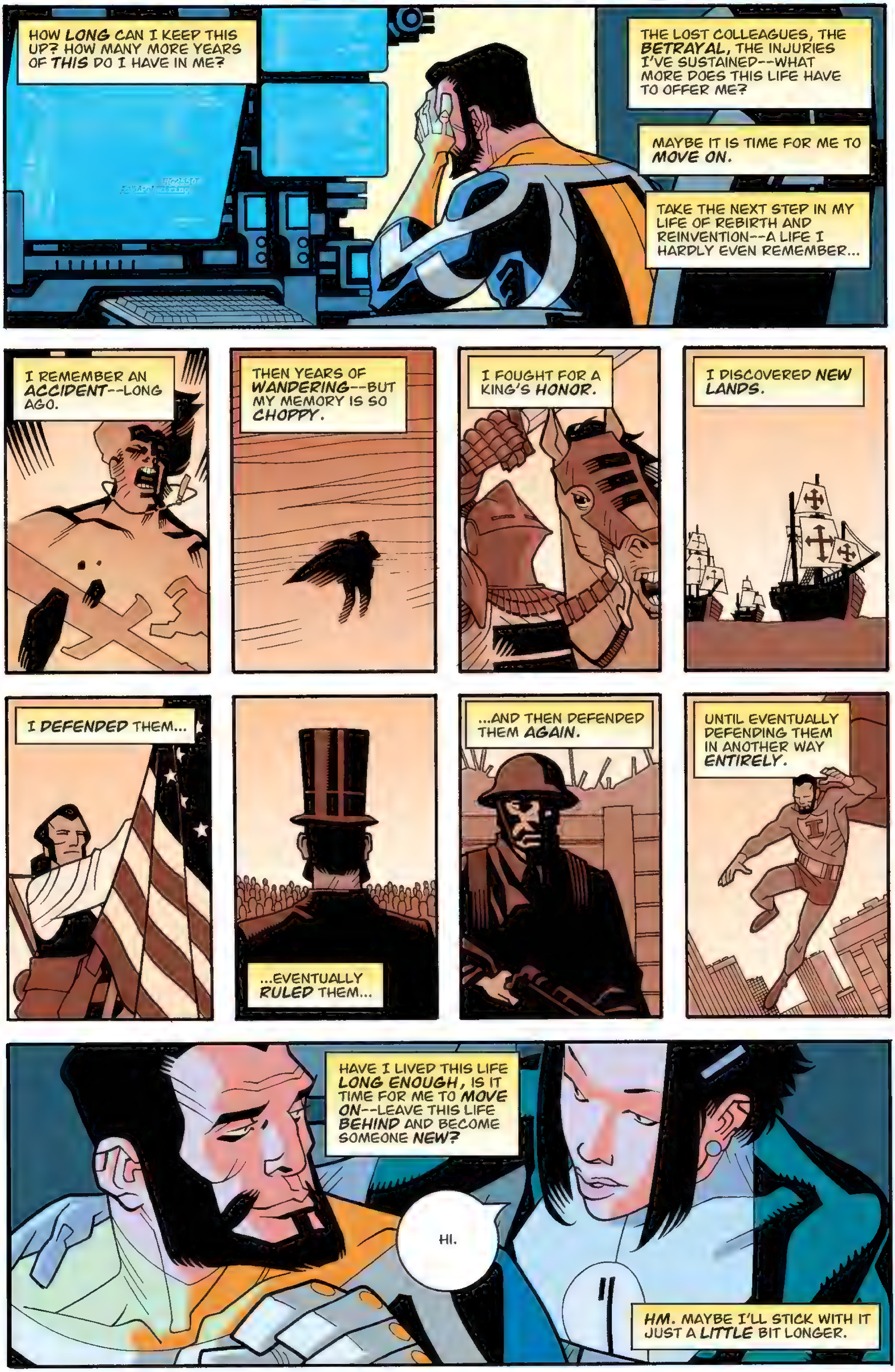
IT TOOK HER NO TIME AT ALL TO FIND A *USE* FOR HER NEW ABILITIES.
BANK
BANK
IT TOOK HER A LITTLE LONGER TO NOTICE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS TO HER PHYSIOLOGY.
SHE EVENTUALLY PIECED EVERYTHING TOGETHER. THE MORE SHE USED HER NEW POWERS THE *YOUNGER* SHE WOULD GET--AND THE *LARGER* AND *MORE POWERFUL* HER OTHER FORM WOULD BECOME.
SHE TRIED TO USE HER POWERS LESS AND LESS BUT IT SEEMED THERE WAS *ALWAYS* SOMETHING THAT REQUIRED HER ATTENTION.
SO SHE GAVE UP TRYING--AND CONTINUED TO USE HER POWERS WITH NO REGARD FOR THE KIND OF DAMAGE IT WAS DOING TO HER.
YEARBOOK
REMEMBER, SHE WAS A PAMPERED LITTLE RICH GIRL.
THEY DON'T USUALLY DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF THINGS VERY WELL.

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF REX SPLODE!

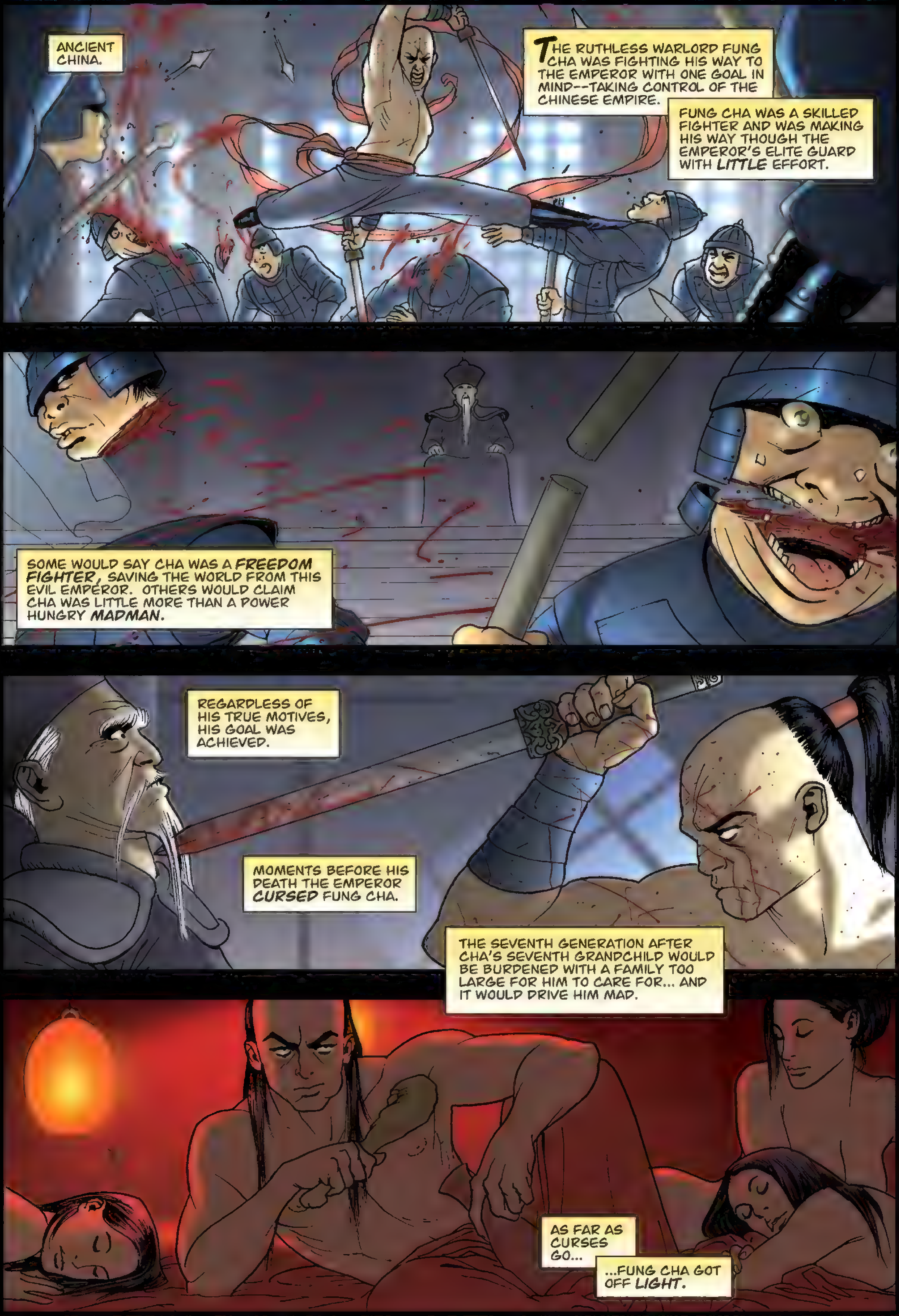
THINGS DIDN'T START OUT SO WELL WITH REX SPLODE.
HE WAS BORN INTO A POOR FAMILY. HE HAD NO FOOD, NO MONEY, NO FRIENDS...
...AND NO FUTURE.
THEN THINGS GOT WORSE.
YOU WILL GIVE ME WHAT I WANT AND I WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED.
I CAN TAKE YOU FROM THIS PLACE, MAKE YOUR WILDEST DREAMS COME TRUE. THIS HELL OF YOUR LIFE WILL SOON BE A DISTANT MEMORY.
ALL I ASK FOR IN RETURN...
...IS THE BOY.
THE DEAL WAS MADE. REX WAS TAKEN.
HE WAS TRAINED IN ALL MANNERS OF GYMNASTICS AND FIGHTING.
HE WAS ALSO GIVEN OTHER... ENHANCEMENTS.
THE ABILITY TO CHARGE MOLECULES TO AN UNSTABLE LEVEL--MAKING ANY INORGANIC OBJECT EXPLOSIVE.
HIS MUSCLE TISSUE WAS CHEMICALLY ALTERED TO MAKE IT DENSER--TO MAKE HIM STRONGER.

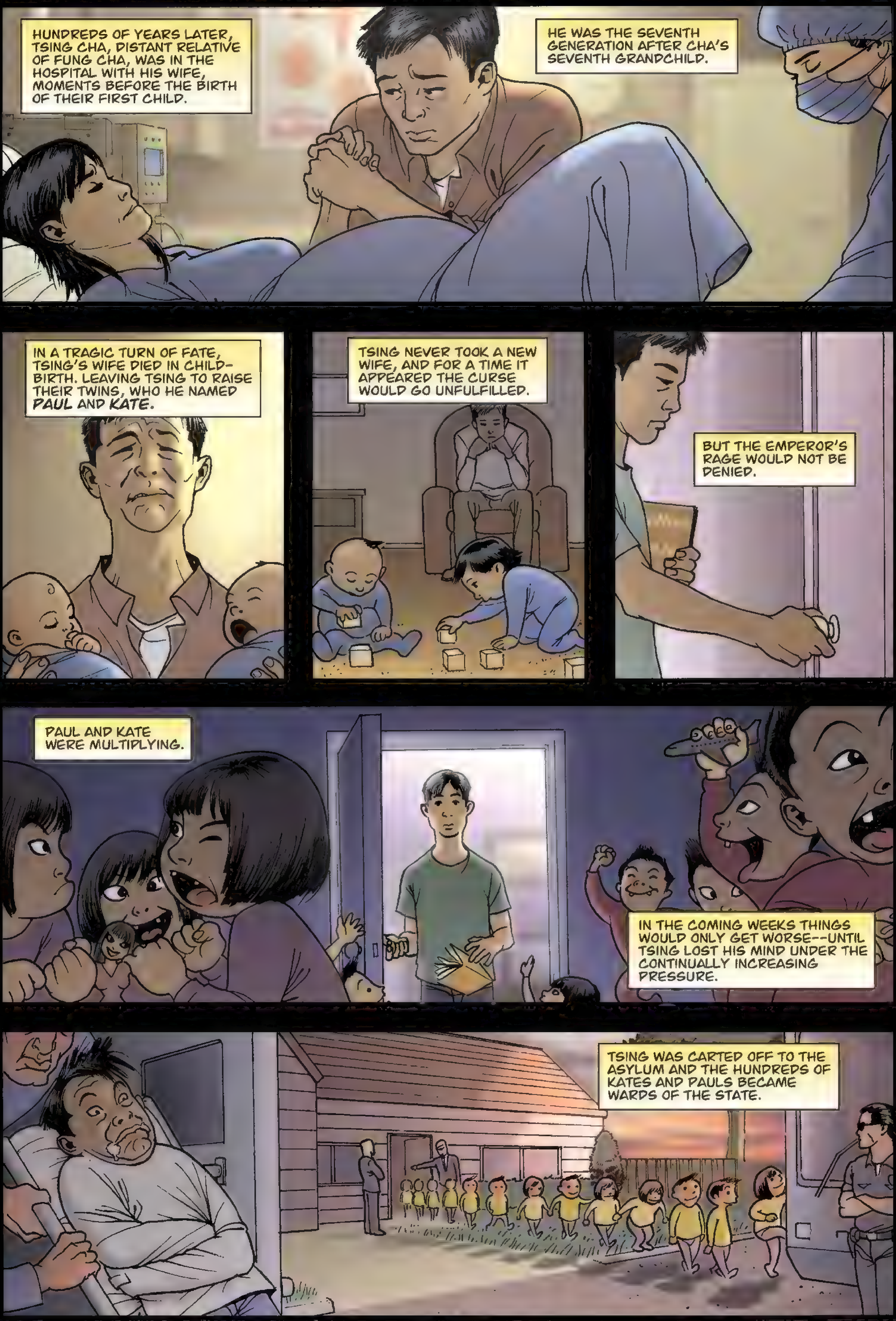
IT IS UNKNOWN HOW REX WAS SINGLED OUT--OR EXACTLY WHAT HIS USE WAS ULTIMATELY GOING TO BE.
FOR A TIME, REX WAS SENT TO FAR OFF LANDS TO DO VERY BAD THINGS TO VERY BAD PEOPLE. AT LEAST--HE WAS **TOLD** THEY WERE BAD PEOPLE.
FOR A TIME HE WAS LOYAL. VERY LOYAL.
UNTIL HE ESCAPED.
HE WAS NEVER TOLD WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PARENTS OR WHY HE WAS TAKEN FROM THEM. HE **HAD** TO FIND OUT.
AND WHEN HE DID... HE WAS **DEVASTATED.**
NOEL
SO THE NEXT TIME REX IS ACTING LIKE A **JERK**--HAVE A LITTLE COMPASSION.
IT DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR **EVERYTHING** HE'S DONE... BUT MAYBE YOU'LL BE JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE UNDERSTANDING THE NEXT TIME HE GOES AND MAKES AN **ASS** OF HIMSELF.

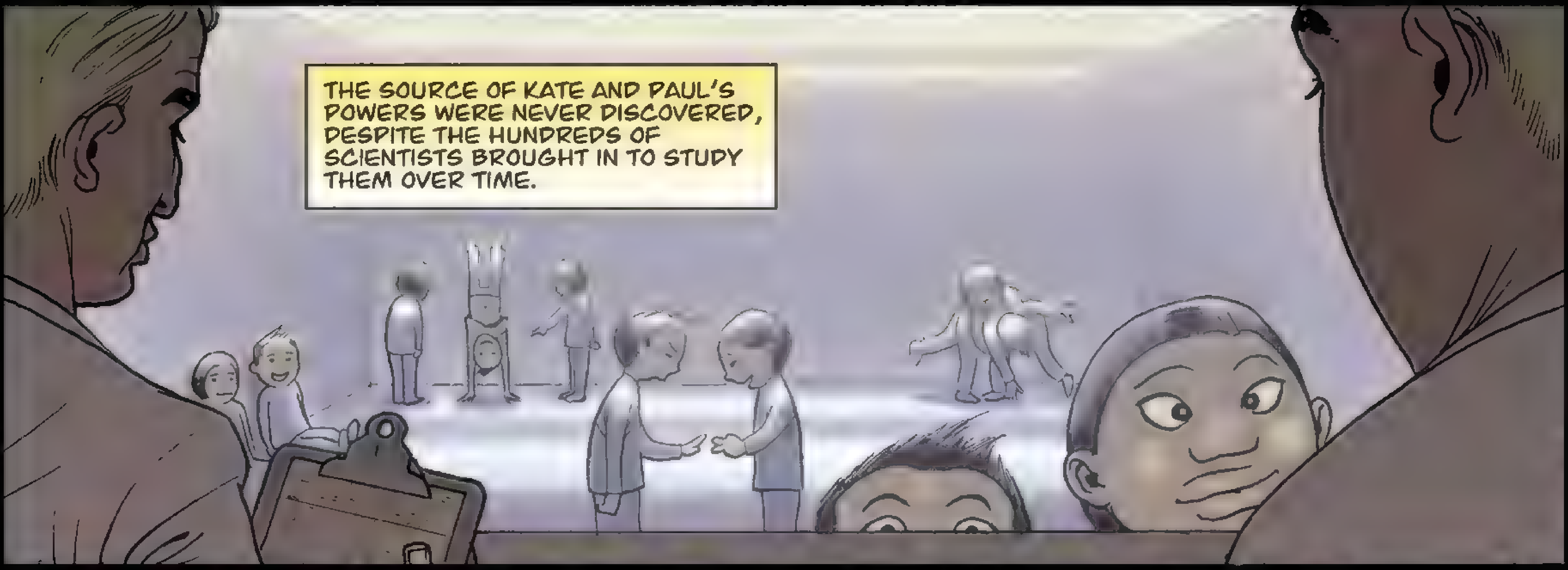
AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF THE IMMORTAL!

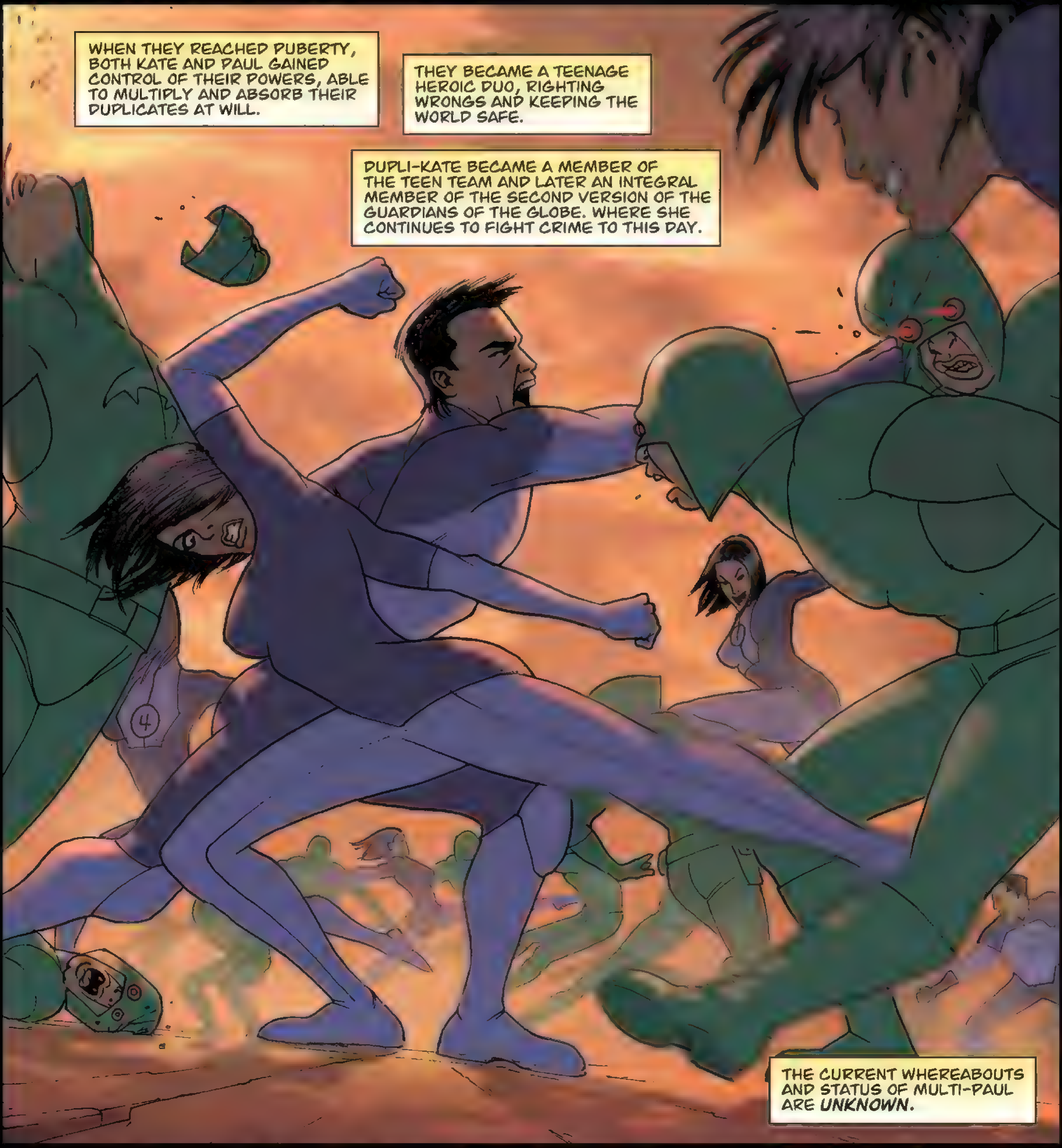

HOW LONG CAN I KEEP THIS UP? HOW MANY MORE YEARS OF THIS DO I HAVE IN ME?
THE LOST COLLEAGUES, THE BETRAYAL, THE INJURIES I'VE SUSTAINED--WHAT MORE DOES THIS LIFE HAVE TO OFFER ME?
MAYBE IT IS TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON.
TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN MY LIFE OF REBIRTH AND REINVENTION--A LIFE I HARDLY EVEN REMEMBER...
I REMEMBER AN ACCIDENT--LONG AGO.
THEN YEARS OF WANDERING--BUT MY MEMORY IS SO CHOPPY.
I FOUGHT FOR A KING'S HONOR.
I DISCOVERED NEW LANDS.
I DEFENDED THEM...
...EVENTUALLY RULED THEM...
...AND THEN DEFENDED THEM AGAIN.
UNTIL EVENTUALLY DEFENDING THEM IN ANOTHER WAY ENTIRELY.
HAVE I LIVED THIS LIFE LONG ENOUGH, IS IT TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON--LEAVE THIS LIFE BEHIND AND BECOME SOMEONE NEW?
HI.
HM. MAYBE I'LL STICK WITH IT JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER.

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF DUPLI-KATE!

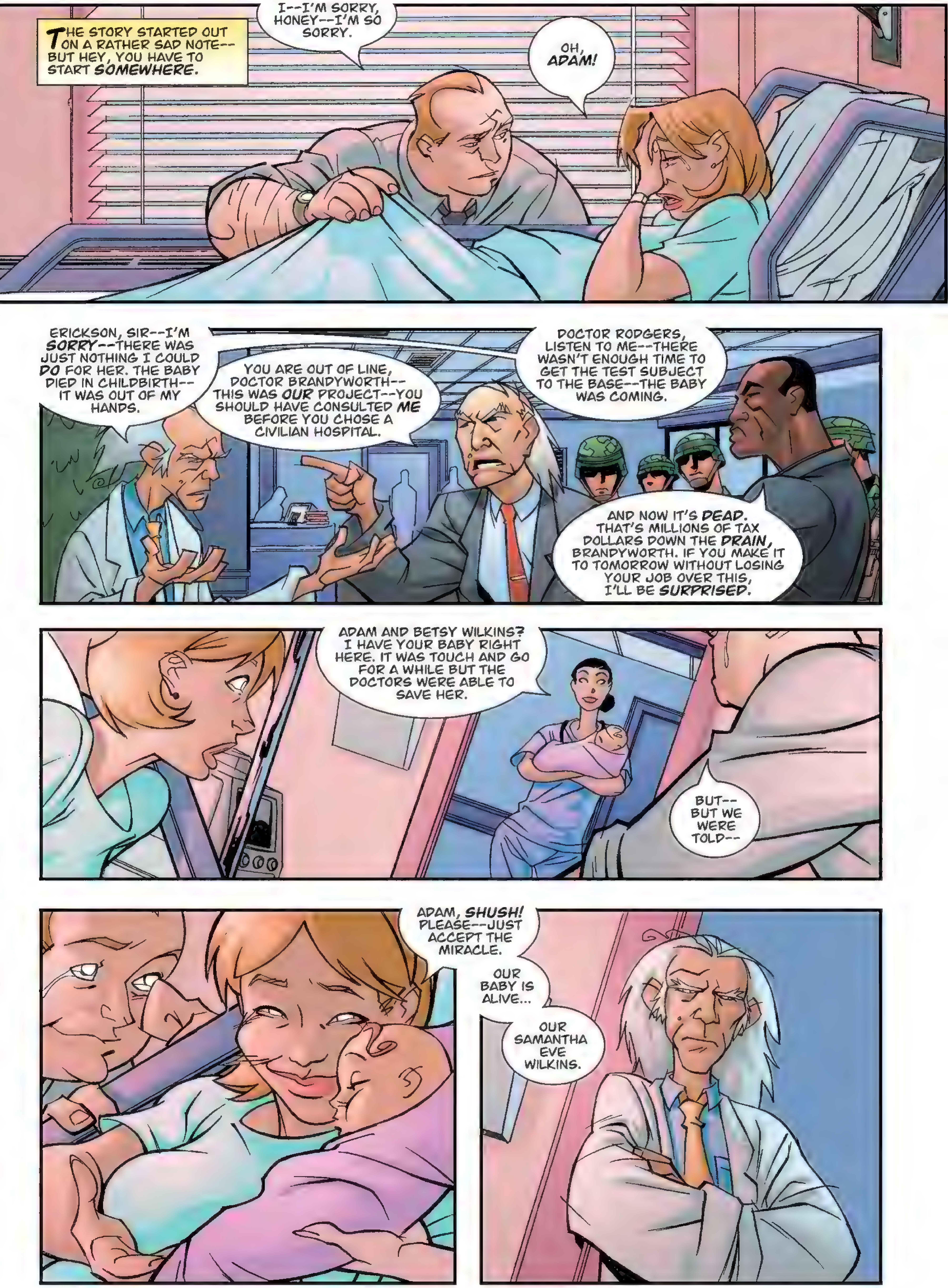

ANCIENT CHINA.
THE RUTHLESS WARLORD FUNG CHA WAS FIGHTING HIS WAY TO THE EMPEROR WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND--TAKING CONTROL OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE.
FUNG CHA WAS A SKILLED FIGHTER AND WAS MAKING HIS WAY THOUGH THE EMPEROR'S ELITE GUARD WITH *LITTLE* EFFORT.
SOME WOULD SAY CHA WAS A *FREEDOM FIGHTER*, SAVING THE WORLD FROM THIS EVIL EMPEROR. OTHERS WOULD CLAIM CHA WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A POWER HUNGRY *MADMAN*.
REGARDLESS OF HIS TRUE MOTIVES, HIS GOAL WAS ACHIEVED.
MOMENTS BEFORE HIS DEATH THE EMPEROR *CURSED* FUNG CHA.
THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD WOULD BE BURDENED WITH A FAMILY TOO LARGE FOR HIM TO CARE FOR... AND IT WOULD DRIVE HIM MAD.
AS FAR AS CURSES GO...
...FUNG CHA GOT OFF *LIGHT*.

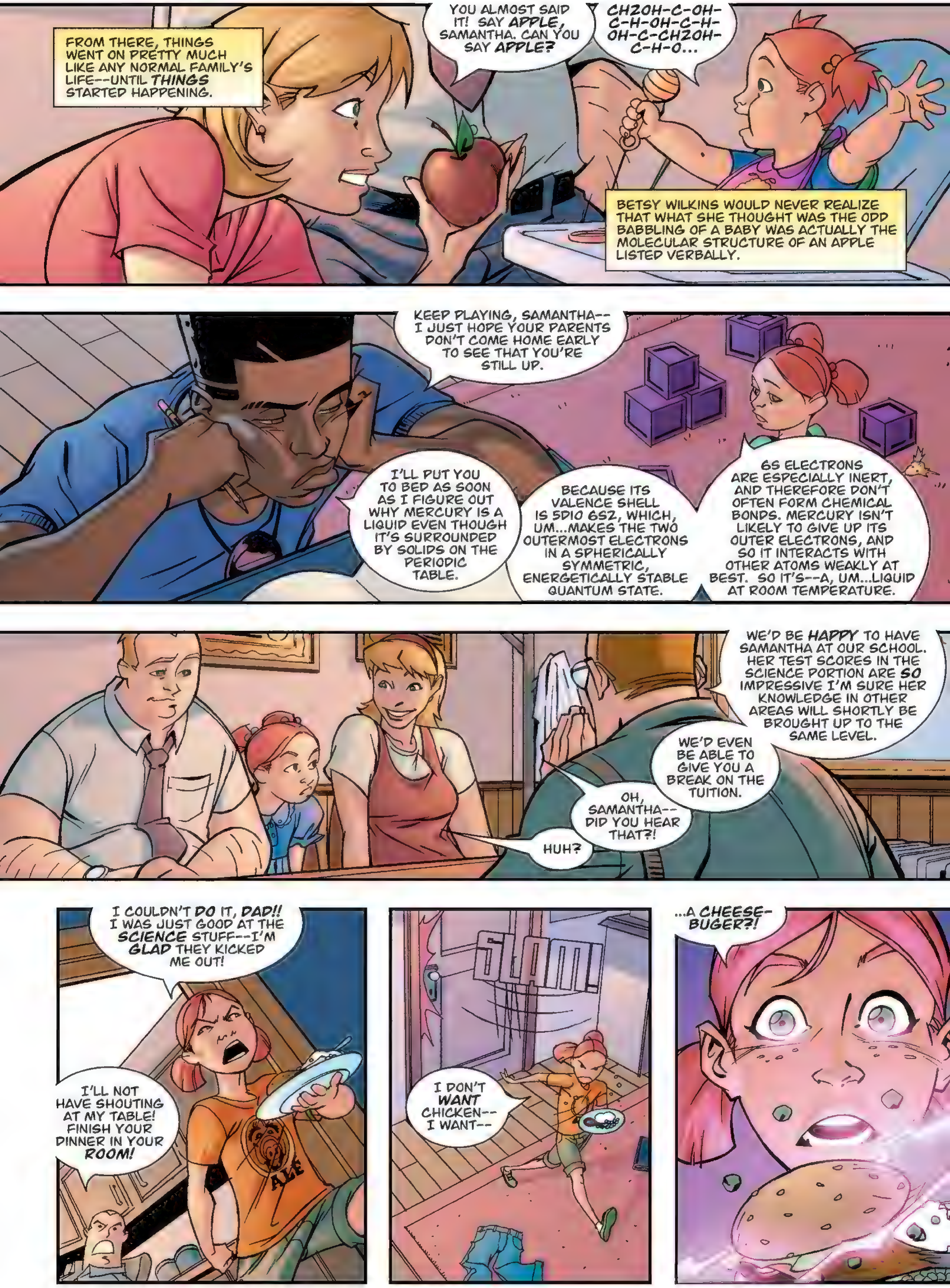

HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER, TSING CHA, DISTANT RELATIVE OF FUNG CHA, WAS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH HIS WIFE, MOMENTS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD.
HE WAS THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD.
IN A TRAGIC TURN OF FATE, TSING'S WIFE DIED IN CHILDBIRTH. LEAVING TSING TO RAISE THEIR TWINS, WHO HE NAMED PAUL AND KATE.
TSING NEVER TOOK A NEW WIFE, AND FOR A TIME IT APPEARED THE CURSE WOULD GO UNFULFILLED.
BUT THE EMPEROR'S RAGE WOULD NOT BE DENIED.
PAUL AND KATE WERE MULTIPLYING.
IN THE COMING WEEKS THINGS WOULD ONLY GET WORSE--UNTIL TSING LOST HIS MIND UNDER THE CONTINUALLY INCREASING PRESSURE.
TSING WAS CARTED OFF TO THE ASYLUM AND THE HUNDREDS OF KATES AND PAULS BECAME WARDS OF THE STATE.


THE SOURCE OF KATE AND PAUL'S POWERS WERE NEVER DISCOVERED, DESPITE THE HUNDREDS OF SCIENTISTS BROUGHT IN TO STUDY THEM OVER TIME.


WHEN THEY REACHED PUBERTY, BOTH KATE AND PAUL GAINED CONTROL OF THEIR POWERS, ABLE TO MULTIPLY AND ABSORB THEIR DUPLICATES AT WILL.
THEY BECAME A TEENAGE HEROIC DUO, RIGHTING WRONGS AND KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE.
DUPLI-KATE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE TEEN TEAM AND LATER AN INTEGRAL MEMBER OF THE SECOND VERSION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. WHERE SHE CONTINUES TO FIGHT CRIME TO THIS DAY.
4
THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS AND STATUS OF MULTI-PAUL ARE *UNKNOWN*.

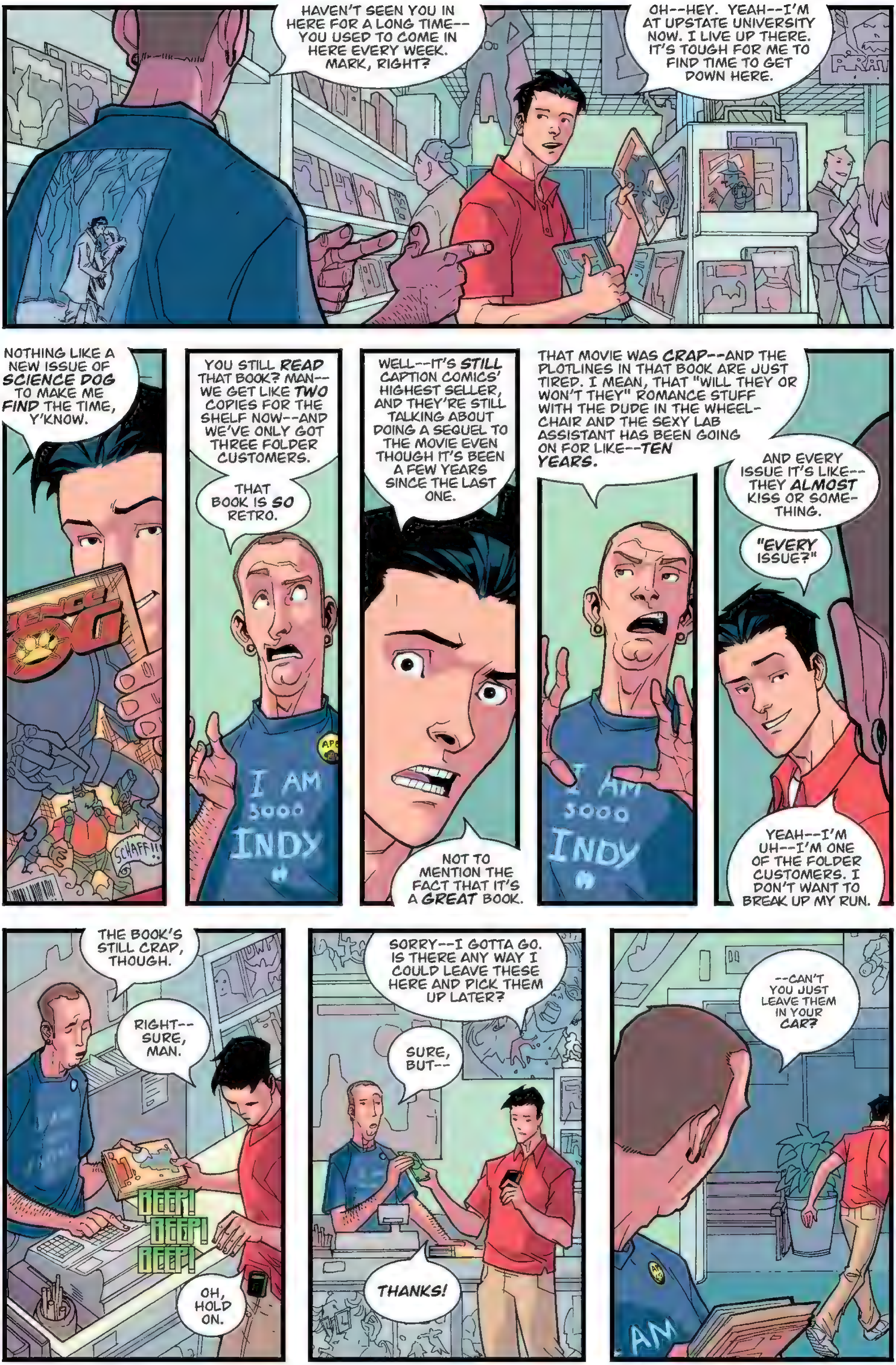
AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF ATOM EVE!

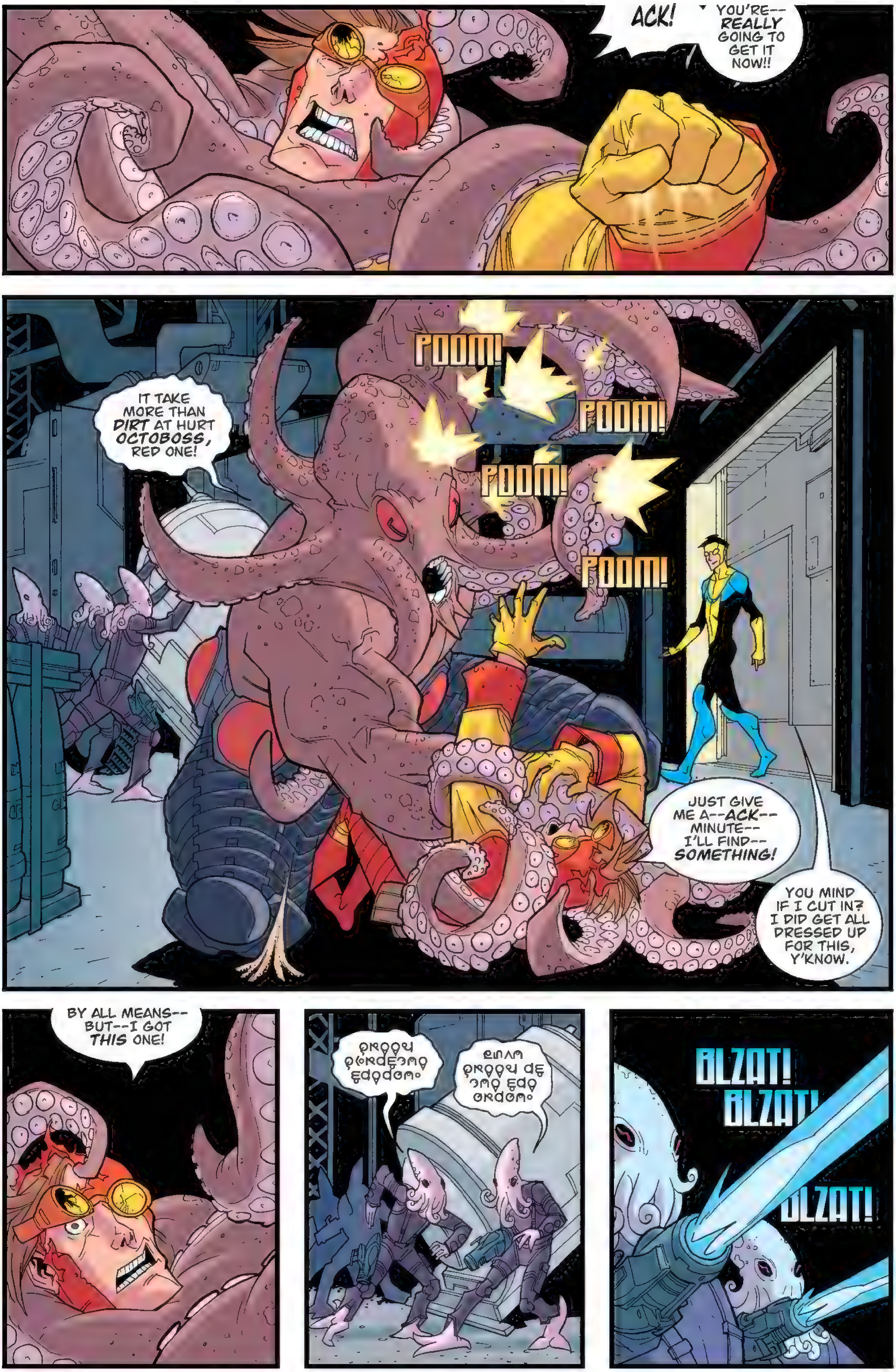

THE STORY STARTED OUT ON A RATHER SAD NOTE--BUT HEY, YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE.
I--I'M SORRY, HONEY--I'M SO SORRY.
OH, ADAM!
ERICKSON, SIR--I'M SORRY--THERE WAS JUST NOTHING I COULD DO FOR HER. THE BABY DIED IN CHILDBIRTH--IT WAS OUT OF MY HANDS.
YOU ARE OUT OF LINE, DOCTOR BRANDYWORTH--THIS WAS OUR PROJECT--YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ME BEFORE YOU CHOSE A CIVILIAN HOSPITAL.
DOCTOR RODGERS, LISTEN TO ME--THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO GET THE TEST SUBJECT TO THE BASE--THE BABY WAS COMING.
AND NOW IT'S DEAD. THAT'S MILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS DOWN THE DRAIN, BRANDYWORTH. IF YOU MAKE IT TO TOMORROW WITHOUT LOSING YOUR JOB OVER THIS, I'LL BE SURPRISED.
ADAM AND BETSY WILKINS? I HAVE YOUR BABY RIGHT HERE. IT WAS TOUCH AND GO FOR A WHILE BUT THE DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO SAVE HER.
BUT--BUT WE WERE TOLD--
ADAM, SHUSH! PLEASE--JUST ACCEPT THE MIRACLE.
OUR BABY IS ALIVE...
OUR SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.

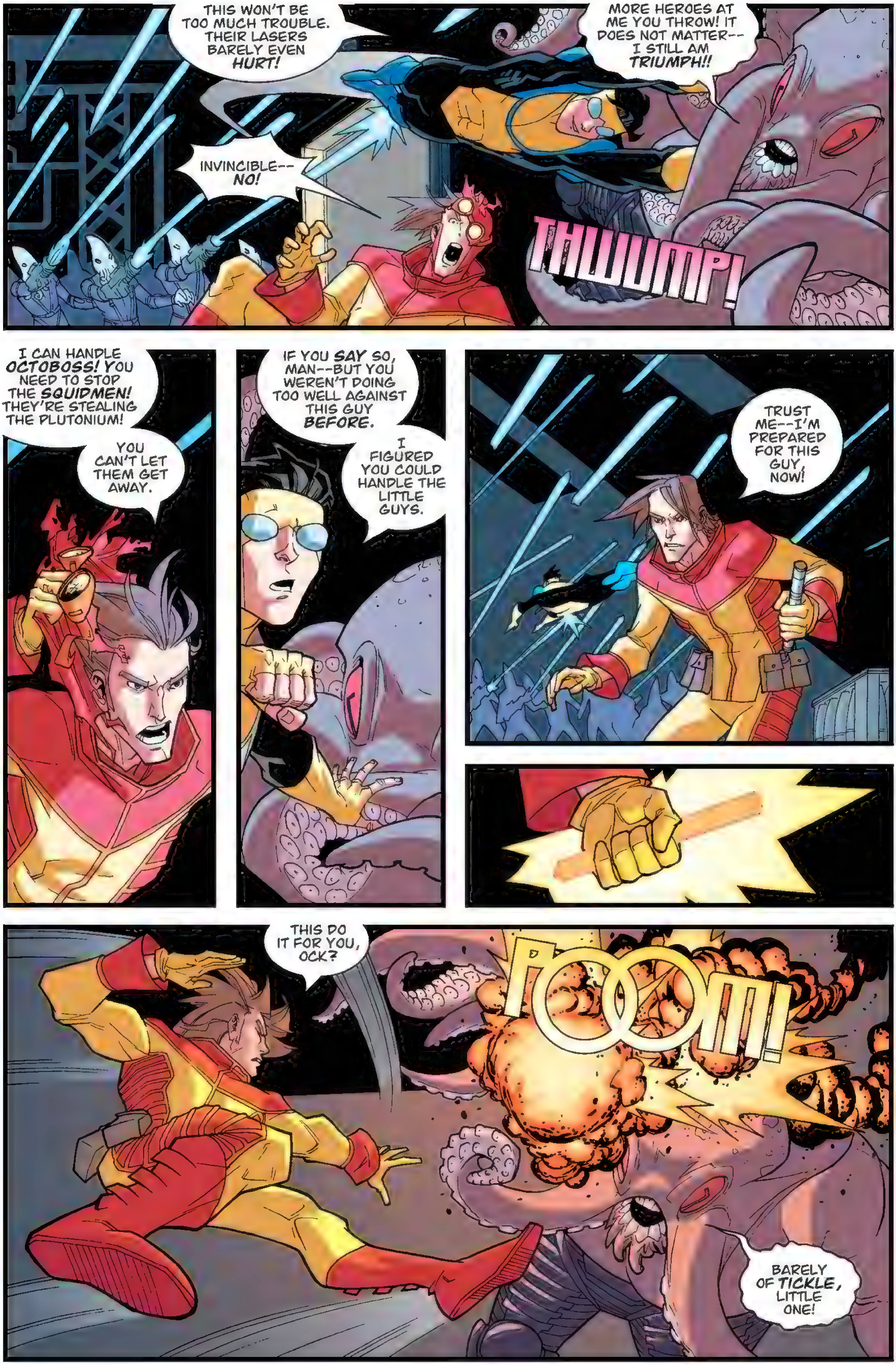

FROM THERE, THINGS WENT ON PRETTY MUCH LIKE ANY NORMAL FAMILY'S LIFE--UNTIL THINGS STARTED HAPPENING.
YOU ALMOST SAID IT! SAY APPLE, SAMANTHA. CAN YOU SAY APPLE?
CH2OH-C-OH-C-H-OH-C-H-OH-C-CH2OH-C-H-O...
BETSY WILKINS WOULD NEVER REALIZE THAT WHAT SHE THOUGHT WAS THE ODD BABBLING OF A BABY WAS ACTUALLY THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF AN APPLE LISTED VERBALLY.
KEEP PLAYING, SAMANTHA-- I JUST HOPE YOUR PARENTS DON'T COME HOME EARLY TO SEE THAT YOU'RE STILL UP.
I'LL PUT YOU TO BED AS SOON AS I FIGURE OUT WHY MERCURY IS A LIQUID EVEN THOUGH IT'S SURROUNDED BY SOLIDS ON THE PERIODIC TABLE.
BECAUSE ITS VALENCE SHELL IS 5D10 6S2, WHICH, UM...MAKES THE TWO OUTERMOST ELECTRONS IN A SPHERICALLY SYMMETRIC, ENERGETICALLY STABLE QUANTUM STATE.
6S ELECTRONS ARE ESPECIALLY INERT, AND THEREFORE DON'T OFTEN FORM CHEMICAL BONDS. MERCURY ISN'T LIKELY TO GIVE UP ITS OUTER ELECTRONS, AND SO IT INTERACTS WITH OTHER ATOMS WEAKLY AT BEST. SO IT'S--A, UM...LIQUID AT ROOM TEMPERATURE.
WE'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE SAMANTHA AT OUR SCHOOL. HER TEST SCORES IN THE SCIENCE PORTION ARE SO IMPRESSIVE I'M SURE HER KNOWLEDGE IN OTHER AREAS WILL SHORTLY BE BROUGHT UP TO THE SAME LEVEL.
WE'D EVEN BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU A BREAK ON THE TUITION.
OH, SAMANTHA-- DID YOU HEAR THAT?!
HUH?
I COULDN'T DO IT, DAD!! I WAS JUST GOOD AT THE SCIENCE STUFF--I'M GLAD THEY KICKED ME OUT!
I'LL NOT HAVE SHOUTING AT MY TABLE! FINISH YOUR DINNER IN YOUR ROOM!
ALF
SLAM!
I DON'T WANT CHICKEN-- I WANT--
...A CHEESE-BUGER?!

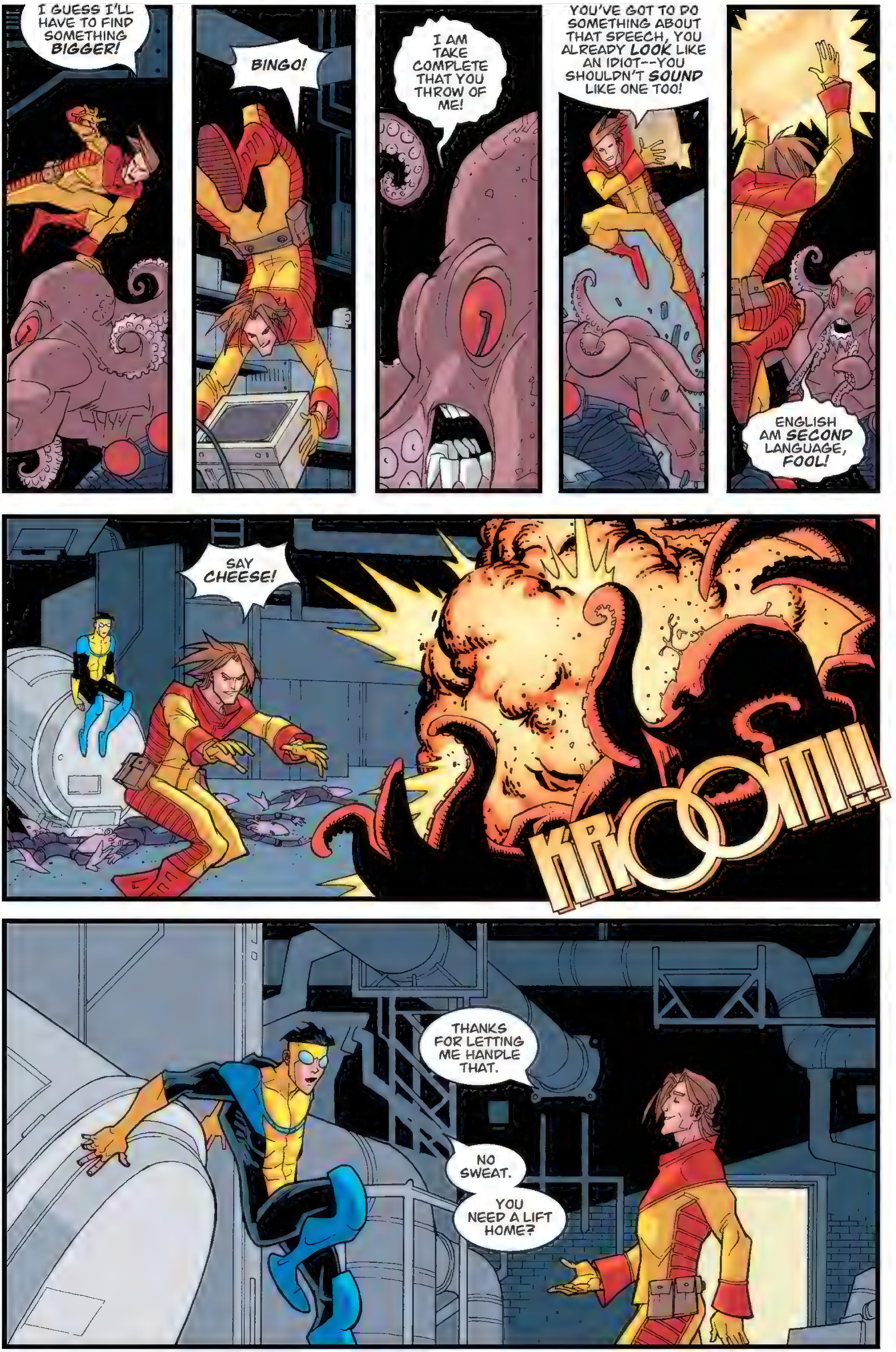
AFTER THAT--EVERY TIME HER PARENTS WOULD LEAVE HER ALONE, SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS WOULD PRACTICE HER POWERS.
IT TOOK HER VERY LITTLE TIME TO LEARN TO USE THEM.
SOON SHE WAS PUTTING THEM TO GOOD *USE.*
THERE, THERE, DOGGY. THEY WON'T BE TAKING YOU TO EXPERIMENT ON NOW. YOU'RE *SAFE,* NOW.
YOU'RE *ALL* SAFE.
MISS WILKINS...
WHO ARE *YOU*--HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?!
I COULD BE CONSIDERED YOUR *FATHER*--IN A SENSE. I GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS--IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LISTEN TO ME.
YOU WERE THE SUBJECT OF IN UTERO EXPERIMENTS--FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO A *WEAPON*--BUT I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT.
WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS *VERY* DANGEROUS. I STAGED YOUR DEATH--REPLACED YOU WITH A BABY WHO HAD DIED DURING BIRTH--SO YOU COULD HAVE A LIFE WITH THE WILKINS FAMILY--BUT YOU HAVE TO STAY A *SECRET!*
IF THEY LEARN OF YOUR POWERS BEING USED--THEY'LL KNOW YOU LIVED--THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY RECOVER YOU.
YOU MUST STOP THIS AT *ONCE!* STOP USING YOUR POWERS FOR *ANYTHING*--FOREVER-- THEY MUST *NOT* DISCOVER YOU SURVIVED.
IF THEY FIND YOU--THEY WILL *TAKE* YOU--YOU'LL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A WEAPON--YOUR LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT--*WILL END!*
OBVIOUSLY--SHE FOUND A WAY TO *AVOID* ALL THIS, BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR *ANOTHER* TIME.

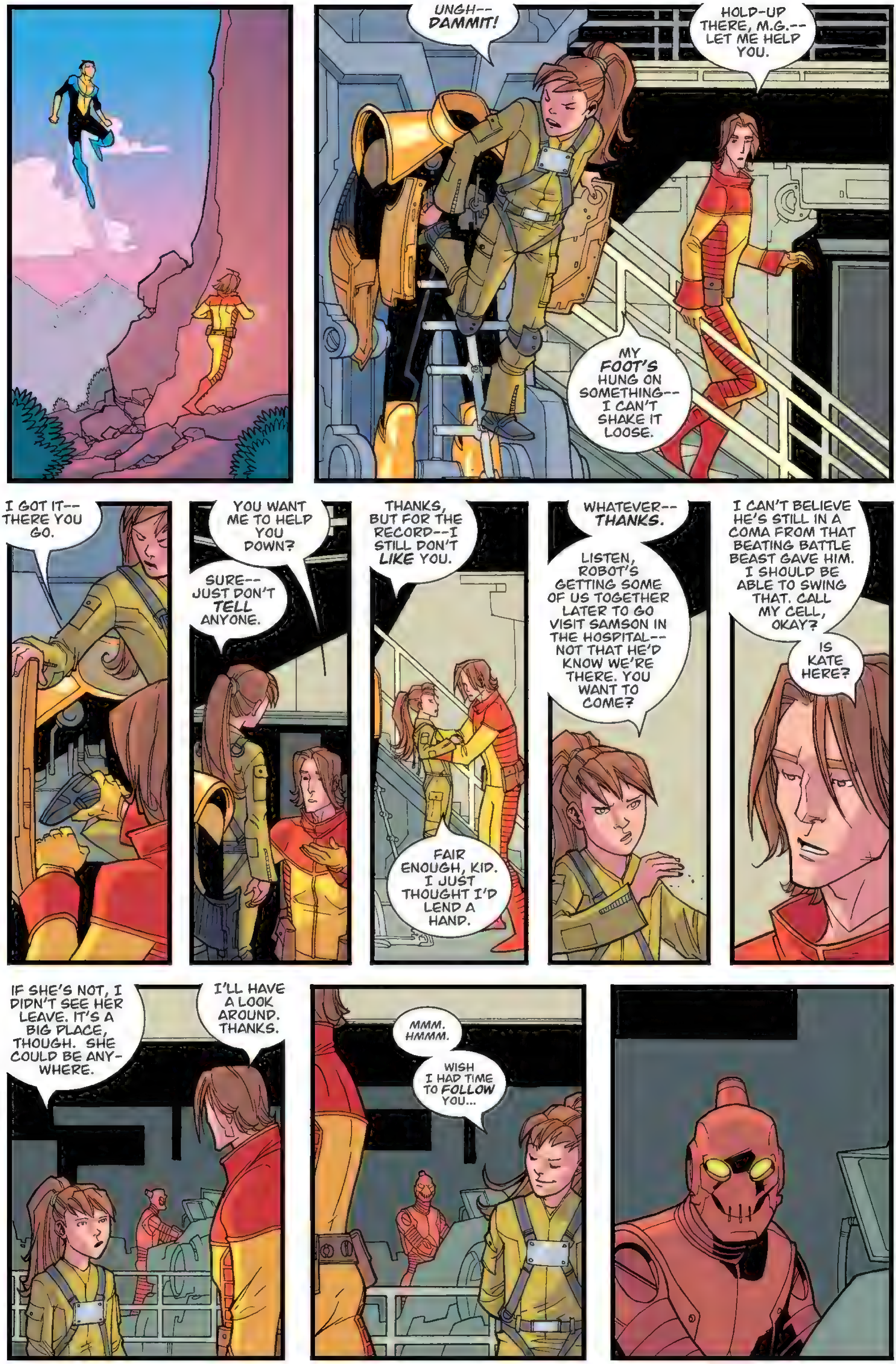
ISSUE TWENTY-FIVE

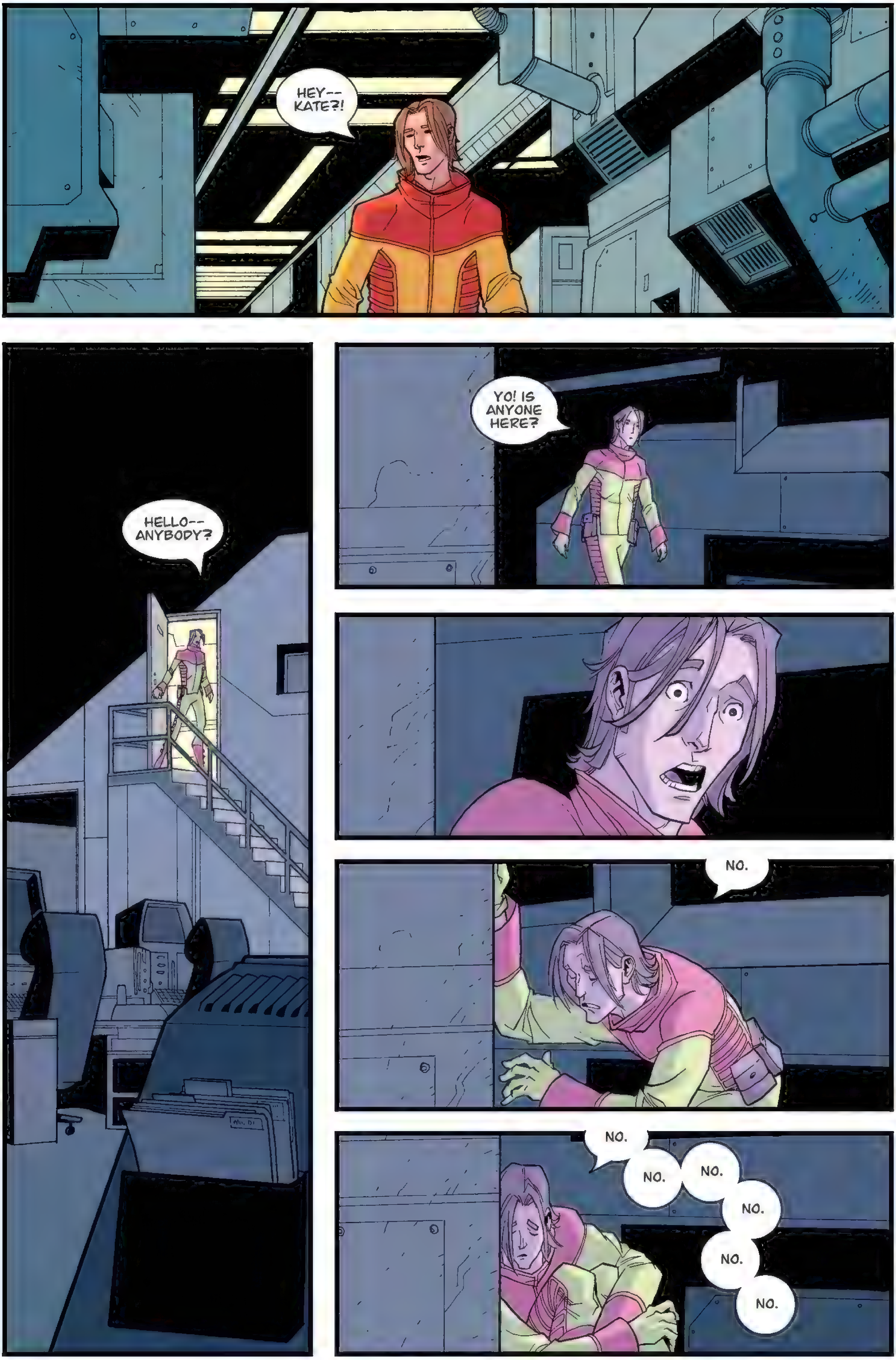

HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN HERE FOR A LONG TIME-- YOU USED TO COME IN HERE EVERY WEEK. MARK, RIGHT?
OH--HEY. YEAH--I'M AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY NOW. I LIVE UP THERE. IT'S TOUGH FOR ME TO FIND TIME TO GET DOWN HERE.
NOTHING LIKE A NEW ISSUE OF SCIENCE DOG TO MAKE ME FIND THE TIME, Y'KNOW.
SCHAFF!!
YOU STILL READ THAT BOOK? MAN-- WE GET LIKE TWO COPIES FOR THE SHELF NOW--AND WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE FOLDER CUSTOMERS.
THAT BOOK IS SO RETRO.
I AM SOOO INDY
WELL--IT'S STILL CAPTION COMICS' HIGHEST SELLER, AND THEY'RE STILL TALKING ABOUT DOING A SEQUEL TO THE MOVIE EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE THE LAST ONE.
NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IT'S A GREAT BOOK.
THAT MOVIE WAS CRAP--AND THE PLOTLINES IN THAT BOOK ARE JUST TIRED. I MEAN, THAT "WILL THEY OR WON'T THEY" ROMANCE STUFF WITH THE DUDE IN THE WHEELCHAIR AND THE SEXY LAB ASSISTANT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR LIKE--TEN YEARS.
AND EVERY ISSUE IT'S LIKE-- THEY ALMOST KISS OR SOMETHING.
"EVERY ISSUE?"
YEAH--I'M UH--I'M ONE OF THE FOLDER CUSTOMERS. I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP MY RUN.
THE BOOK'S STILL CRAP, THOUGH.
RIGHT-- SURE, MAN.
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
OH, HOLD ON.
SORRY--I GOTTA GO. IS THERE ANY WAY I COULD LEAVE THESE HERE AND PICK THEM UP LATER?
SURE, BUT--
THANKS!
--CAN'T YOU JUST LEAVE THEM IN YOUR CAR?

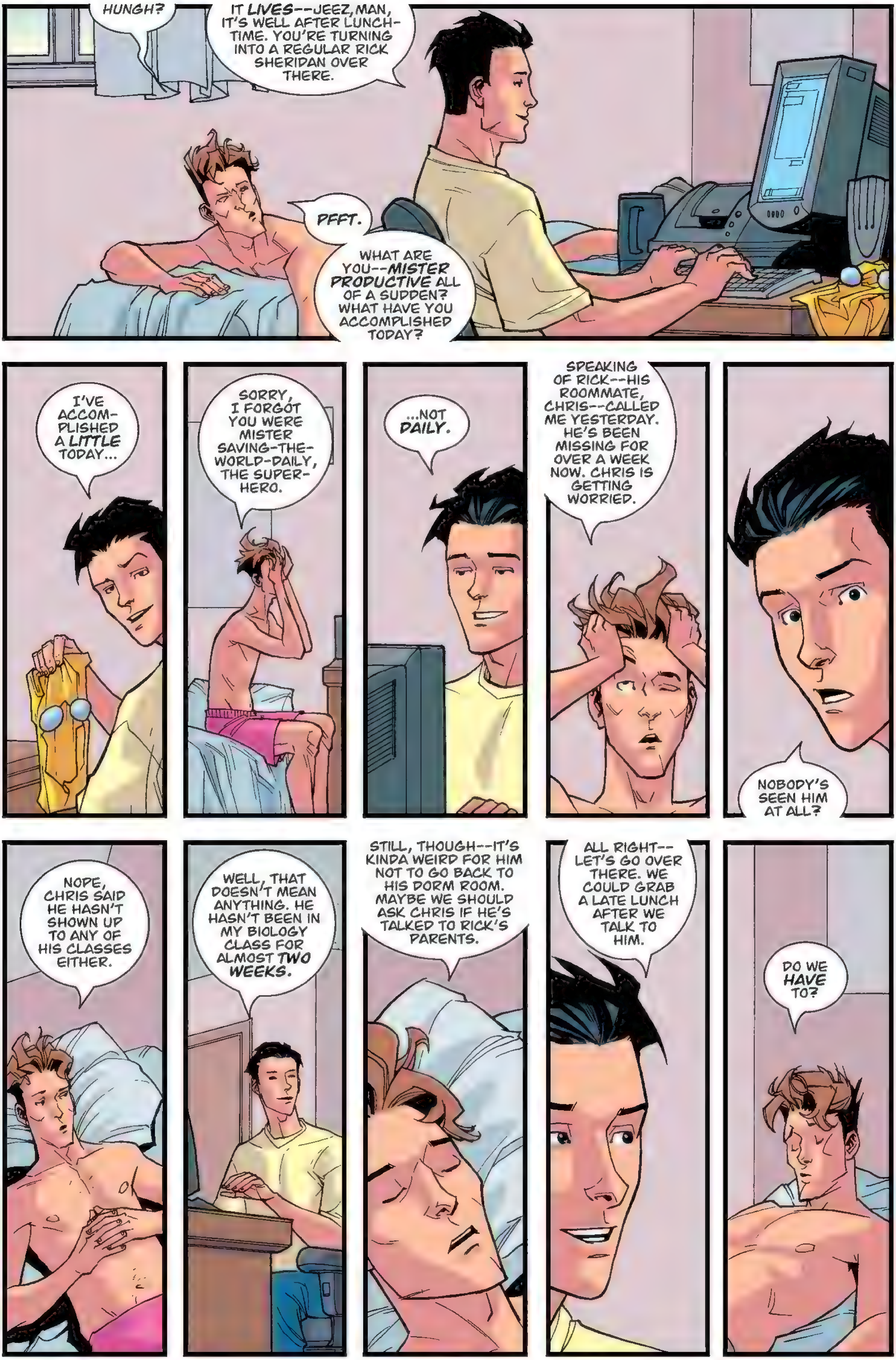

ACK!
YOU'RE-- REALLY GOING TO GET IT NOW!!
POOM!
POOM!
POOM!
POOM!
IT TAKE MORE THAN DIRT AT HURT OCTOBOSS, RED ONE!
JUST GIVE ME A--ACK-- MINUTE-- I'LL FIND-- SOMETHING!
YOU MIND IF I CUT IN? I DID GET ALL DRESSED UP FOR THIS, Y'KNOW.
BY ALL MEANS-- BUT--I GOT THIS ONE!
BLZAT!
BLZAT!
BLZAT!

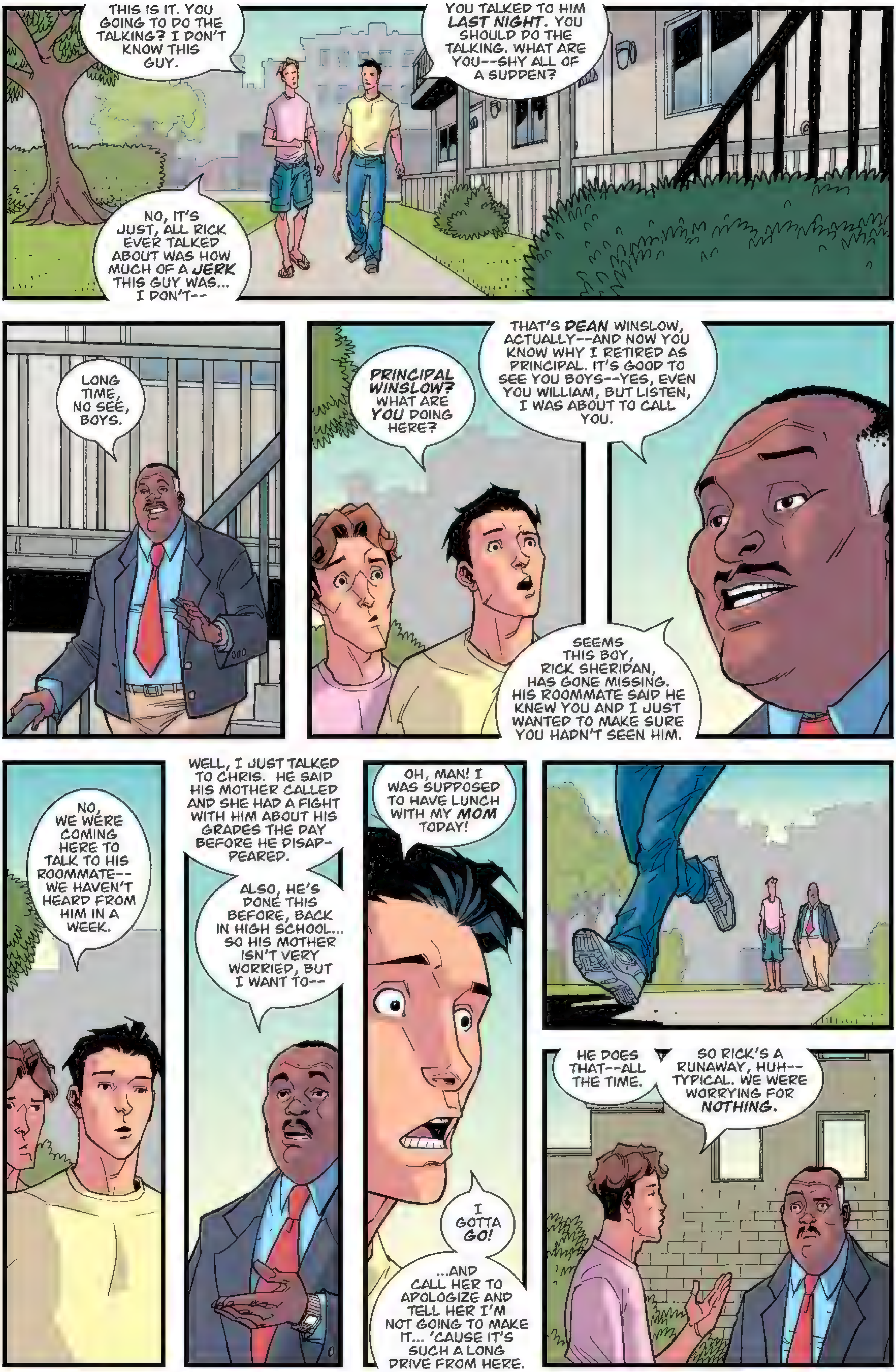

THIS WON'T BE TOO MUCH TROUBLE. THEIR LASERS BARELY EVEN *HURT!*
MORE HEROES AT ME YOU THROW! IT DOES NOT MATTER-- I STILL AM *TRIUMPH!!*
INVINCIBLE-- *NO!*
THWUMP!
I CAN HANDLE *OCTOBOSS!* YOU NEED TO STOP THE *SQUIDMEN!* THEY'RE STEALING THE PLUTONIUM!
YOU CAN'T LET THEM GET AWAY.
IF YOU *SAY* SO, MAN--BUT YOU WEREN'T DOING TOO WELL AGAINST THIS GUY *BEFORE.*
I FIGURED YOU COULD HANDLE THE LITTLE GUYS.
TRUST ME--I'M PREPARED FOR THIS GUY, NOW!
THIS DO IT FOR YOU, OCK?
POOOM!
BARELY OF *TICKLE,* LITTLE ONE!

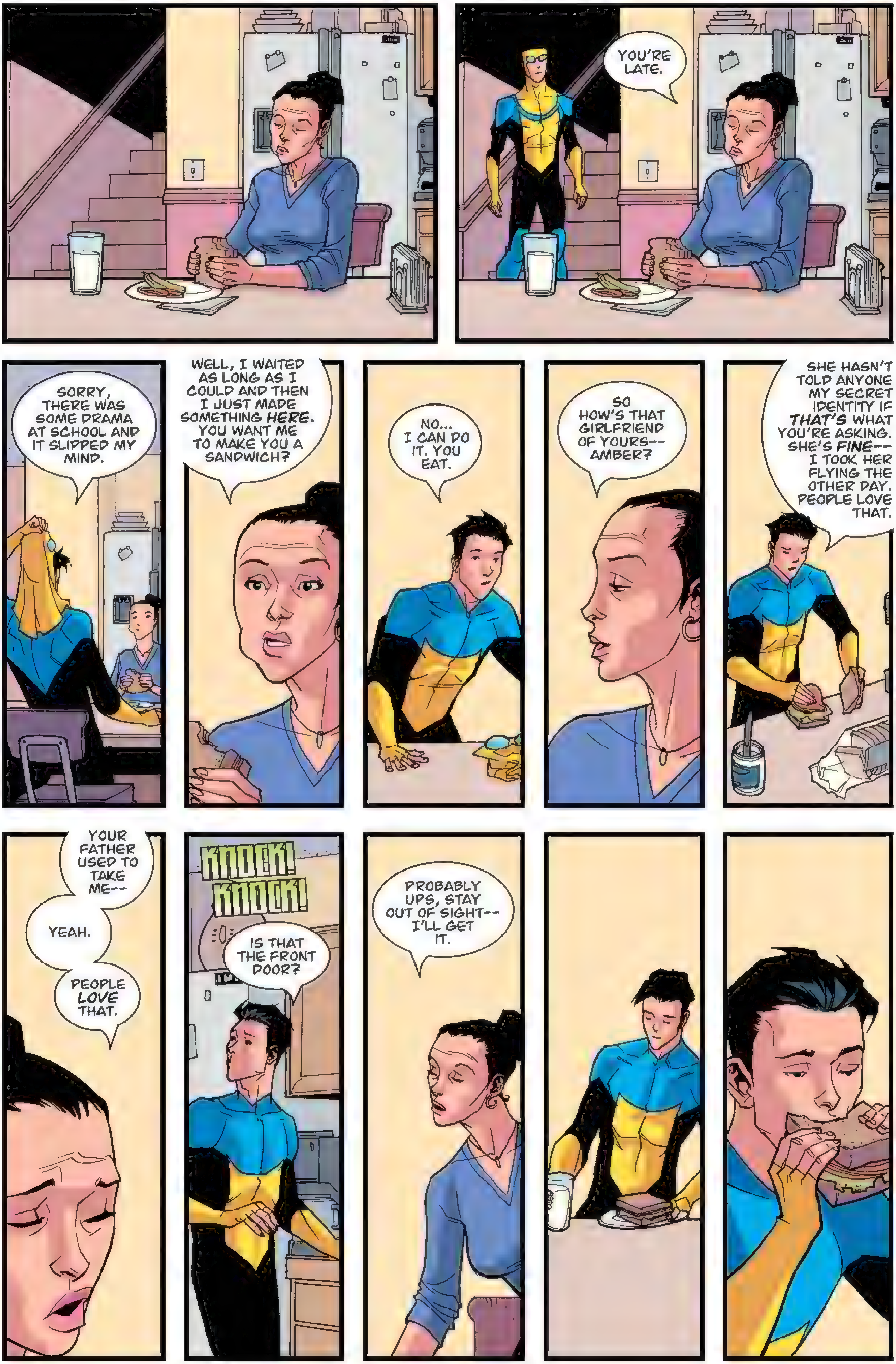

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING **BIGGER!**
BINGO!
I AM TAKE COMPLETE THAT YOU THROW OF ME!
YOU'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT SPEECH, YOU ALREADY **LOOK** LIKE AN IDIOT--YOU SHOULDN'T **SOUND** LIKE ONE TOO!
ENGLISH AM **SECOND** LANGUAGE, **FOOL!**
SAY **CHEESE!**
KROOOM!!
THANKS FOR LETTING ME HANDLE THAT.
NO SWEAT.
YOU NEED A LIFT HOME?


UNGH-- DAMMIT!
HOLD-UP THERE, M.G.-- LET ME HELP YOU.
MY FOOT'S HUNG ON SOMETHING-- I CAN'T SHAKE IT LOOSE.
I GOT IT-- THERE YOU GO.
YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU DOWN?
SURE-- JUST DON'T TELL ANYONE.
THANKS, BUT FOR THE RECORD--I STILL DON'T LIKE YOU.
FAIR ENOUGH, KID. I JUST THOUGHT I'D LEND A HAND.
WHATEVER-- THANKS.
LISTEN, ROBOT'S GETTING SOME OF US TOGETHER LATER TO GO VISIT SAMSON IN THE HOSPITAL-- NOT THAT HE'D KNOW WE'RE THERE. YOU WANT TO COME?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S STILL IN A COMA FROM THAT BEATING BATTLE BEAST GAVE HIM. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SWING THAT. CALL MY CELL, OKAY?
IS KATE HERE?
IF SHE'S NOT, I DIDN'T SEE HER LEAVE. IT'S A BIG PLACE, THOUGH. SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE.
I'LL HAVE A LOOK AROUND. THANKS.
MMM. HMMM.
WISH I HAD TIME TO FOLLOW YOU...

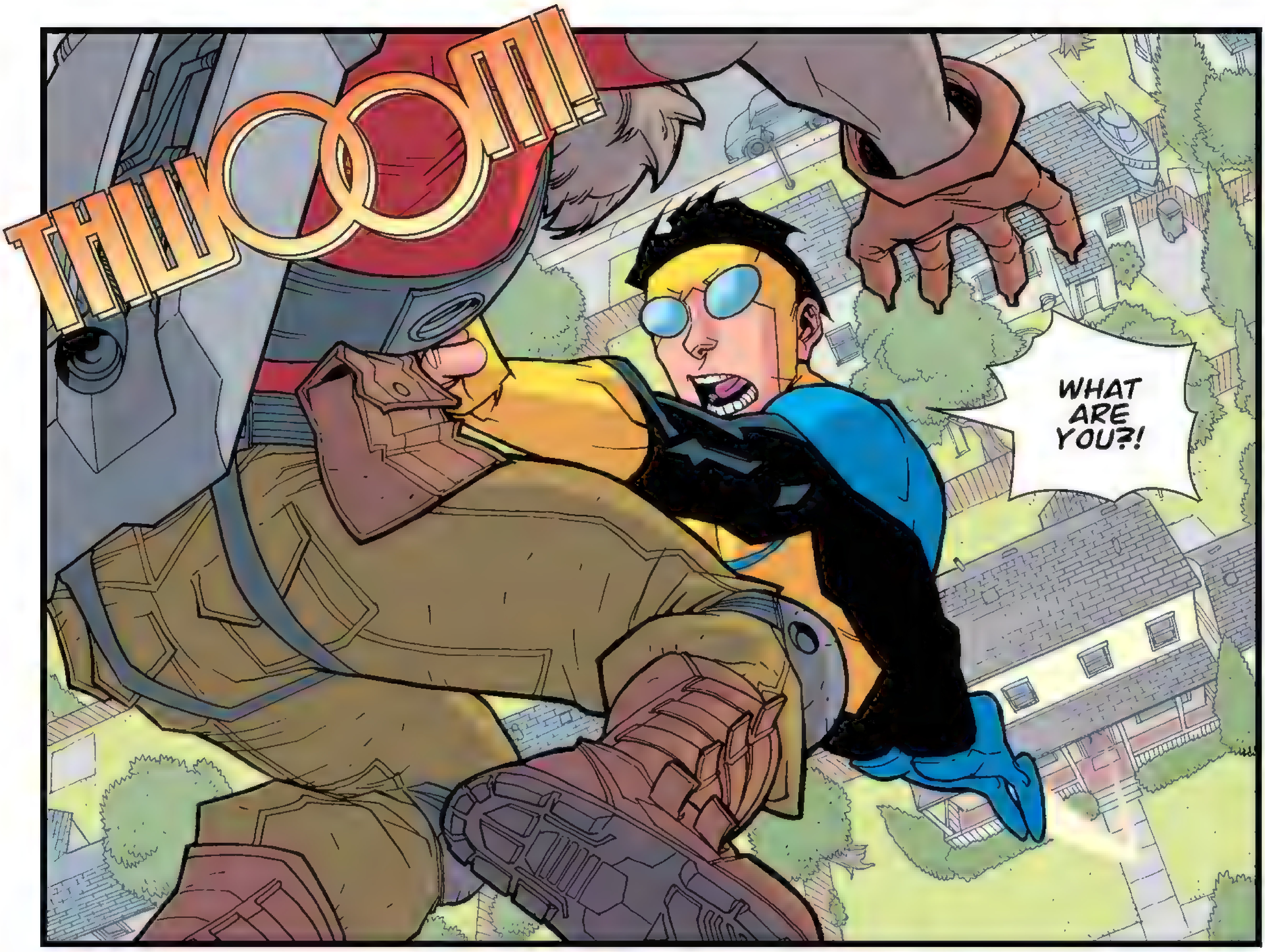

HEY-- KATE?!
HELLO-- ANYBODY?
YO! IS ANYONE HERE?
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.

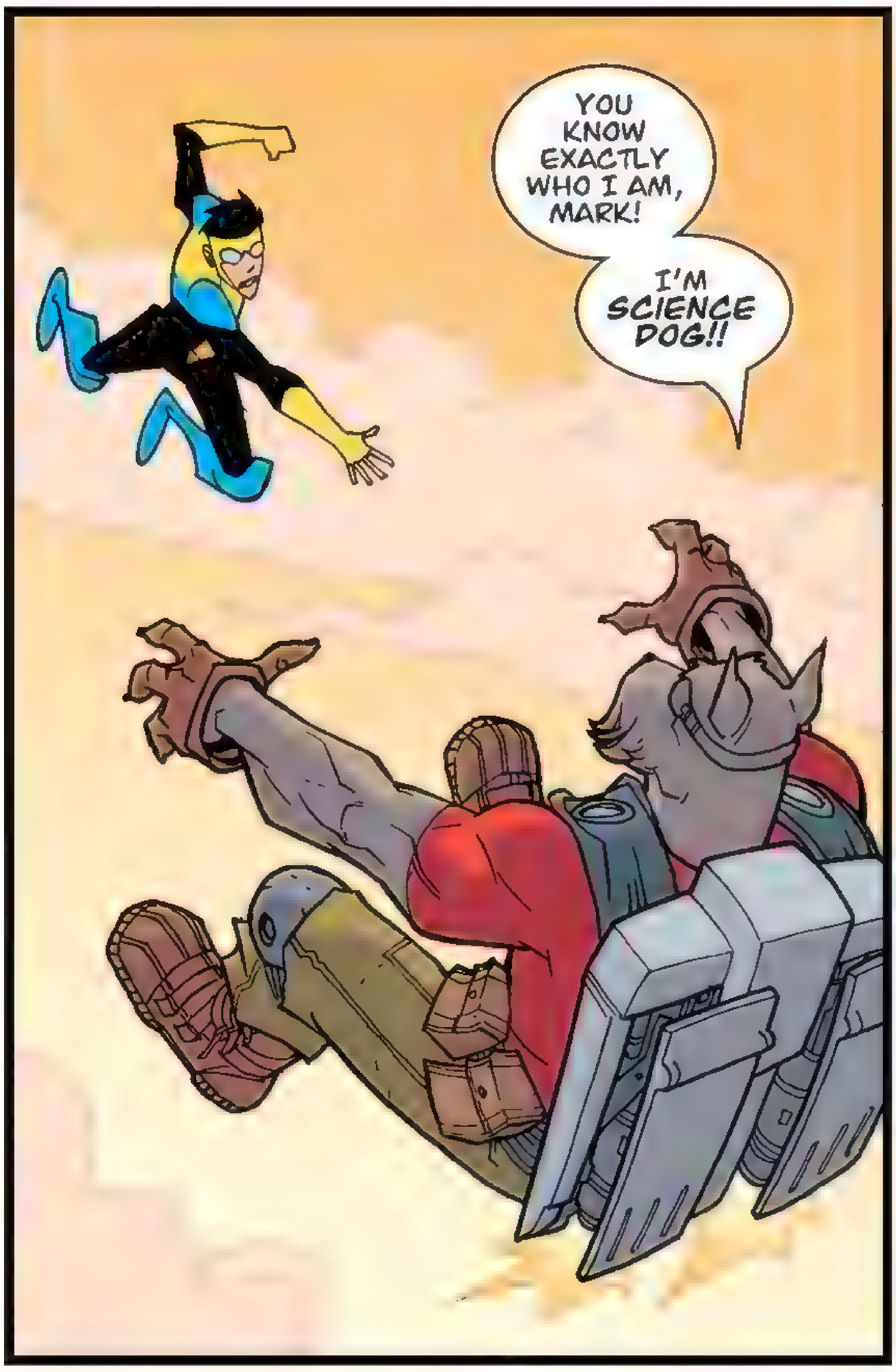

HUNGH?
IT LIVES--JEEZ, MAN, IT'S WELL AFTER LUNCH-TIME. YOU'RE TURNING INTO A REGULAR RICK SHERIDAN OVER THERE.
PFFT.
WHAT ARE YOU--MISTER PRODUCTIVE ALL OF A SUDDEN? WHAT HAVE YOU ACCOMPLISHED TODAY?
I'VE ACCOMPLISHED A LITTLE TODAY...
SORRY, I FORGOT YOU WERE MISTER SAVING-THE-WORLD-DAILY, THE SUPERHERO.
...NOT DAILY.
SPEAKING OF RICK--HIS ROOMMATE, CHRIS--CALLED ME YESTERDAY. HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR OVER A WEEK NOW. CHRIS IS GETTING WORRIED.
NOBODY'S SEEN HIM AT ALL?
NOPE, CHRIS SAID HE HASN'T SHOWN UP TO ANY OF HIS CLASSES EITHER.
WELL, THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING. HE HASN'T BEEN IN MY BIOLOGY CLASS FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS.
STILL, THOUGH--IT'S KINDA WEIRD FOR HIM NOT TO GO BACK TO HIS DORM ROOM. MAYBE WE SHOULD ASK CHRIS IF HE'S TALKED TO RICK'S PARENTS.
ALL RIGHT--LET'S GO OVER THERE. WE COULD GRAB A LATE LUNCH AFTER WE TALK TO HIM.
DO WE HAVE TO?

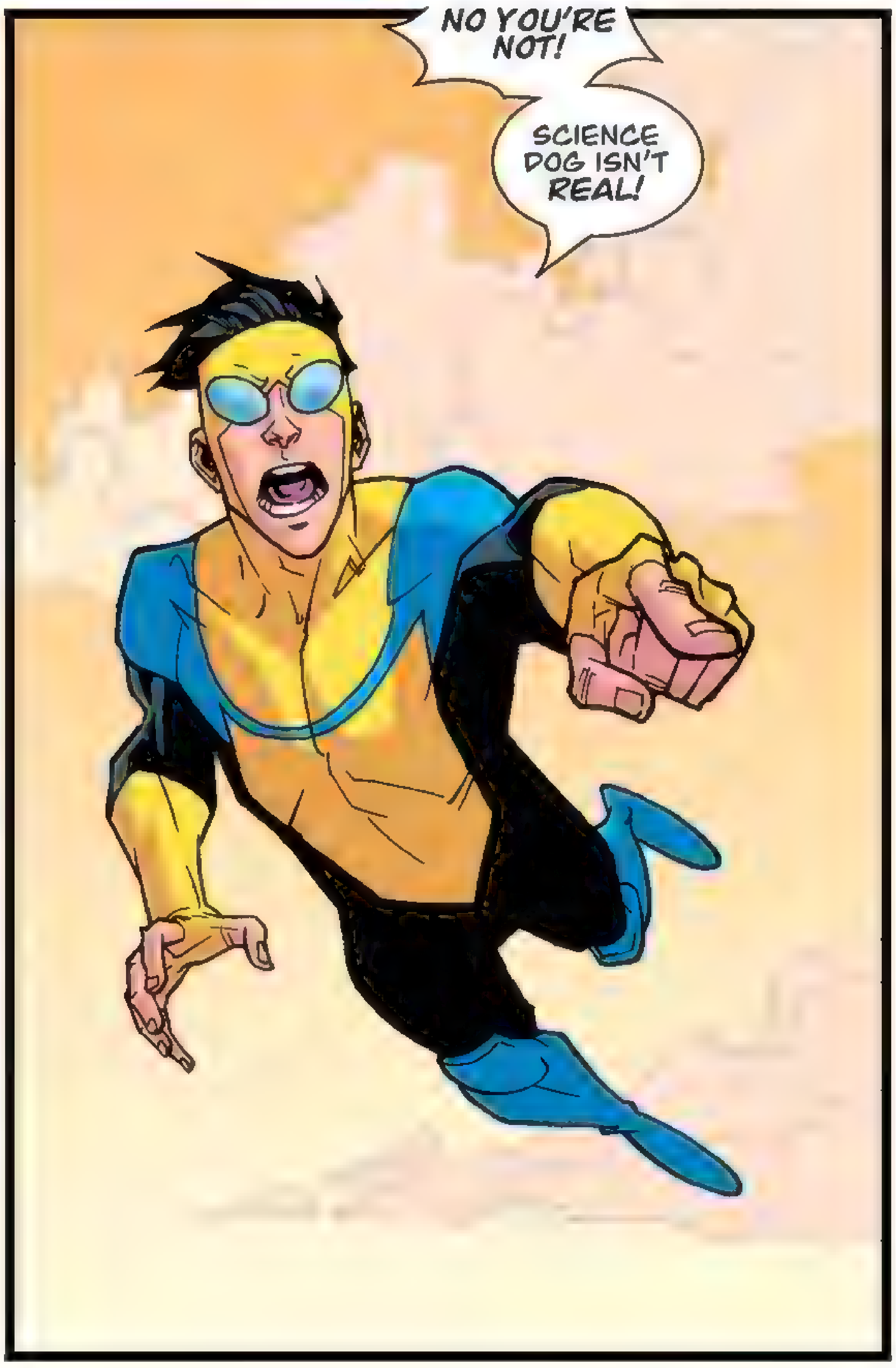

THIS IS IT. YOU GOING TO DO THE TALKING? I DON'T KNOW THIS GUY.
YOU TALKED TO HIM LAST NIGHT. YOU SHOULD DO THE TALKING. WHAT ARE YOU--SHY ALL OF A SUDDEN?
NO, IT'S JUST, ALL RICK EVER TALKED ABOUT WAS HOW MUCH OF A JERK THIS GUY WAS... I DON'T--
LONG TIME, NO SEE, BOYS.
PRINCIPAL WINSLOW? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THAT'S DEAN WINSLOW, ACTUALLY--AND NOW YOU KNOW WHY I RETIRED AS PRINCIPAL. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU BOYS--YES, EVEN YOU WILLIAM, BUT LISTEN, I WAS ABOUT TO CALL YOU.
SEEMS THIS BOY, RICK SHERIDAN, HAS GONE MISSING. HIS ROOMMATE SAID HE KNEW YOU AND I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU HADN'T SEEN HIM.
NO, WE WERE COMING HERE TO TALK TO HIS ROOMMATE--WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM IN A WEEK.
WELL, I JUST TALKED TO CHRIS. HE SAID HIS MOTHER CALLED AND SHE HAD A FIGHT WITH HIM ABOUT HIS GRADES THE DAY BEFORE HE DISAPPEARED.
ALSO, HE'S DONE THIS BEFORE, BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL... SO HIS MOTHER ISN'T VERY WORRIED, BUT I WANT TO--
OH, MAN! I WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE LUNCH WITH MY MOM TODAY!
I GOTTA GO!
...AND CALL HER TO APOLOGIZE AND TELL HER I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT... 'CAUSE IT'S SUCH A LONG DRIVE FROM HERE.
HE DOES THAT--ALL THE TIME.
SO RICK'S A RUNAWAY, HUH--TYPICAL. WE WERE WORRYING FOR NOTHING.

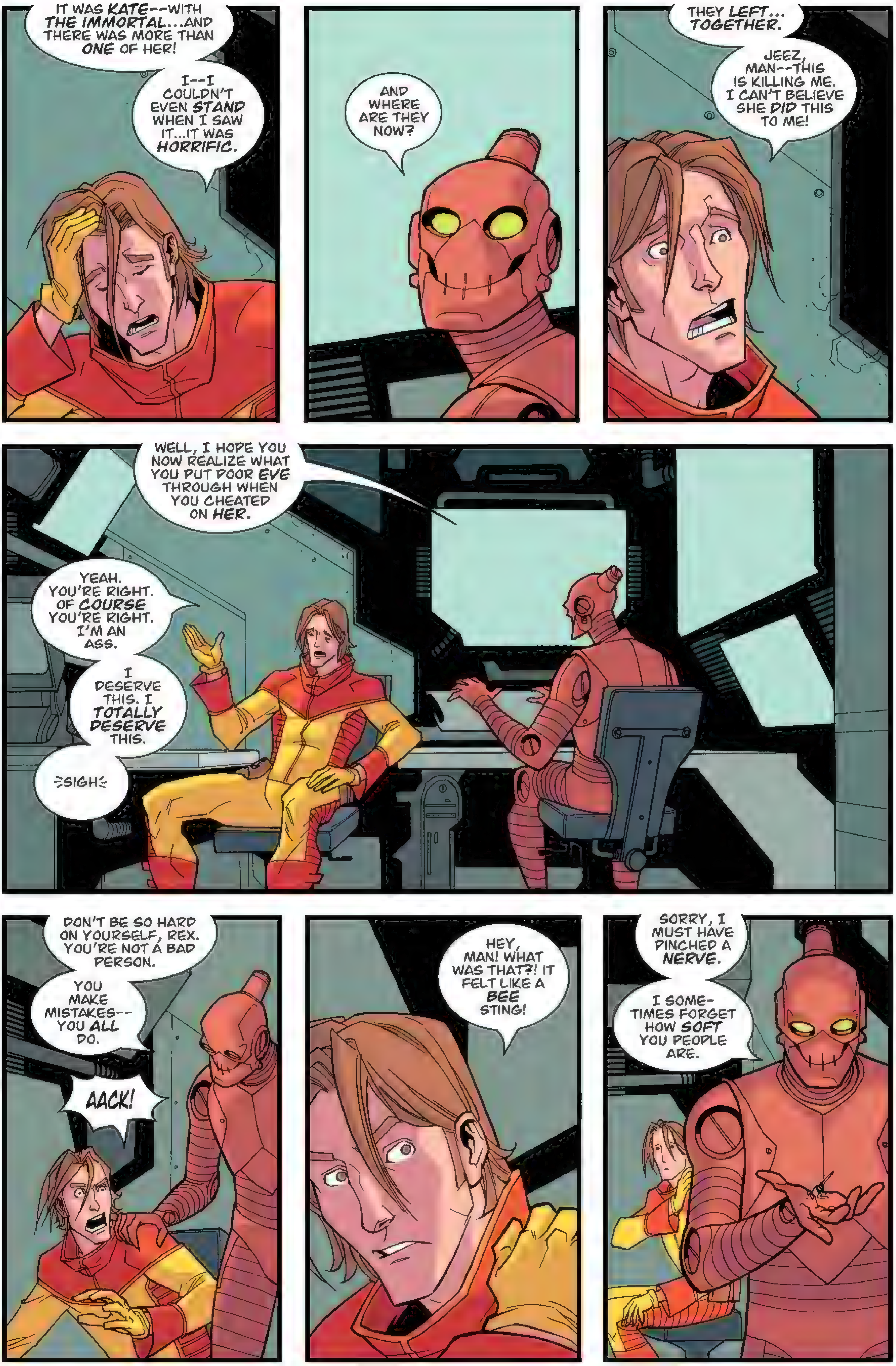

YOU'RE LATE.
SORRY, THERE WAS SOME DRAMA AT SCHOOL AND IT SLIPPED MY MIND.
WELL, I WAITED AS LONG AS I COULD AND THEN I JUST MADE SOMETHING **HERE**. YOU WANT ME TO MAKE YOU A SANDWICH?
NO... I CAN DO IT. YOU EAT.
SO HOW'S THAT GIRLFRIEND OF YOURS-- AMBER?
SHE HASN'T TOLD ANYONE MY SECRET IDENTITY IF ***THAT'S*** WHAT YOU'RE ASKING. SHE'S ***FINE***-- I TOOK HER FLYING THE OTHER DAY. PEOPLE LOVE THAT.
YOUR FATHER USED TO TAKE ME--
YEAH.
PEOPLE ***LOVE*** THAT.
KNOCK! KNOCK!
IS THAT THE FRONT DOOR?
PROBABLY UPS, STAY OUT OF SIGHT-- I'LL GET IT.

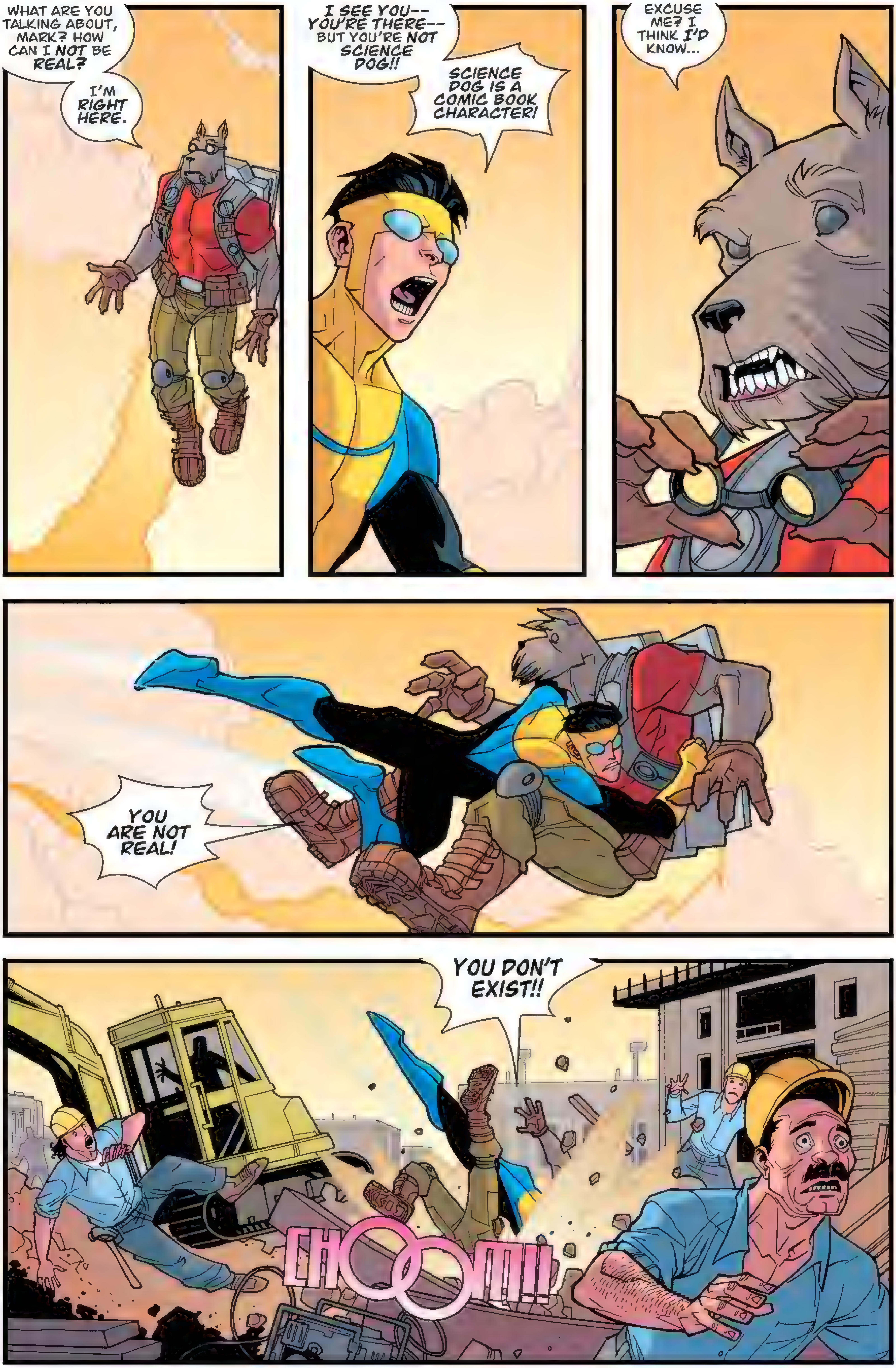
MARK!!
GET IN HERE!!!

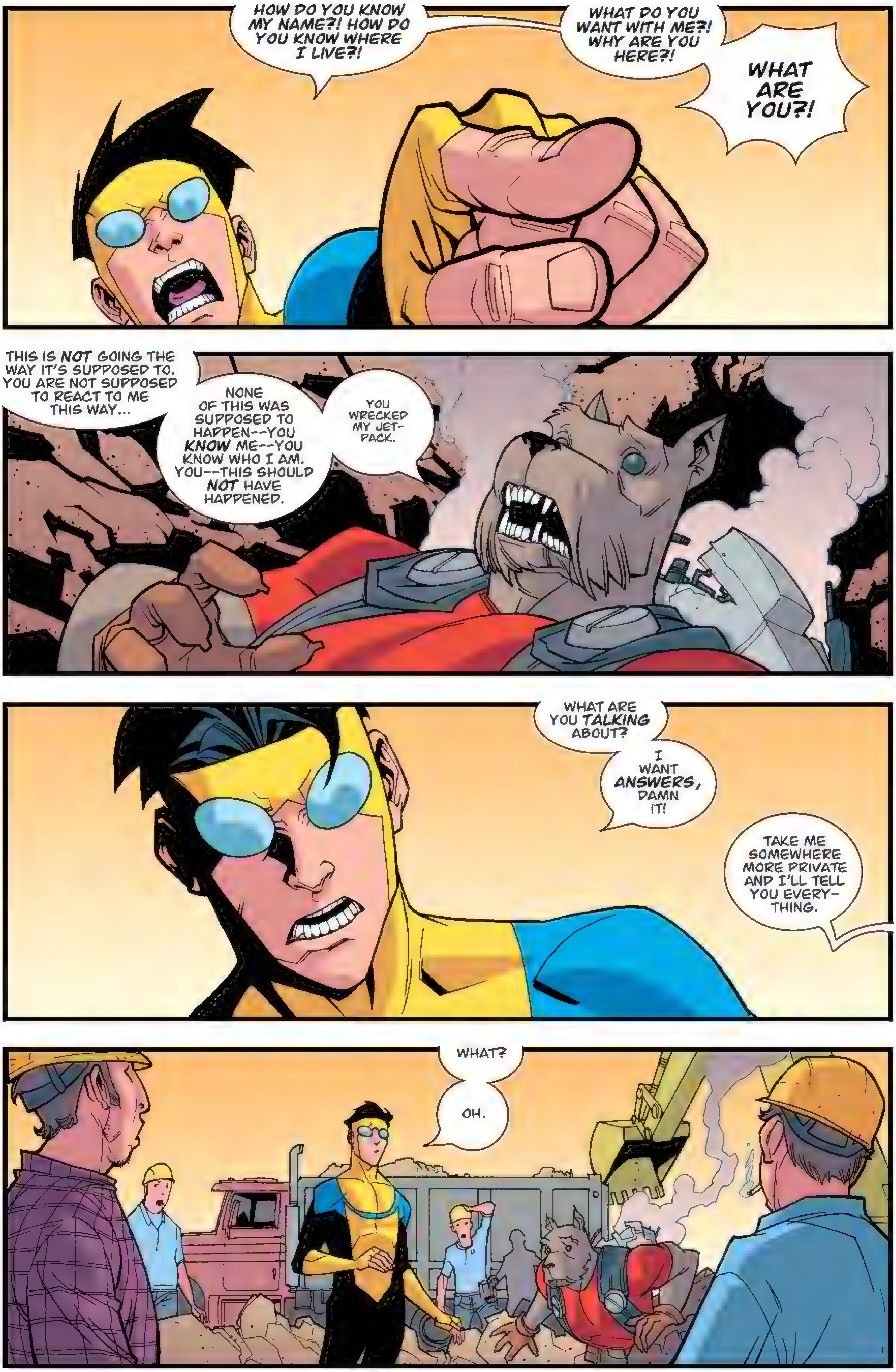

THWOOM!
WHAT ARE YOU?!

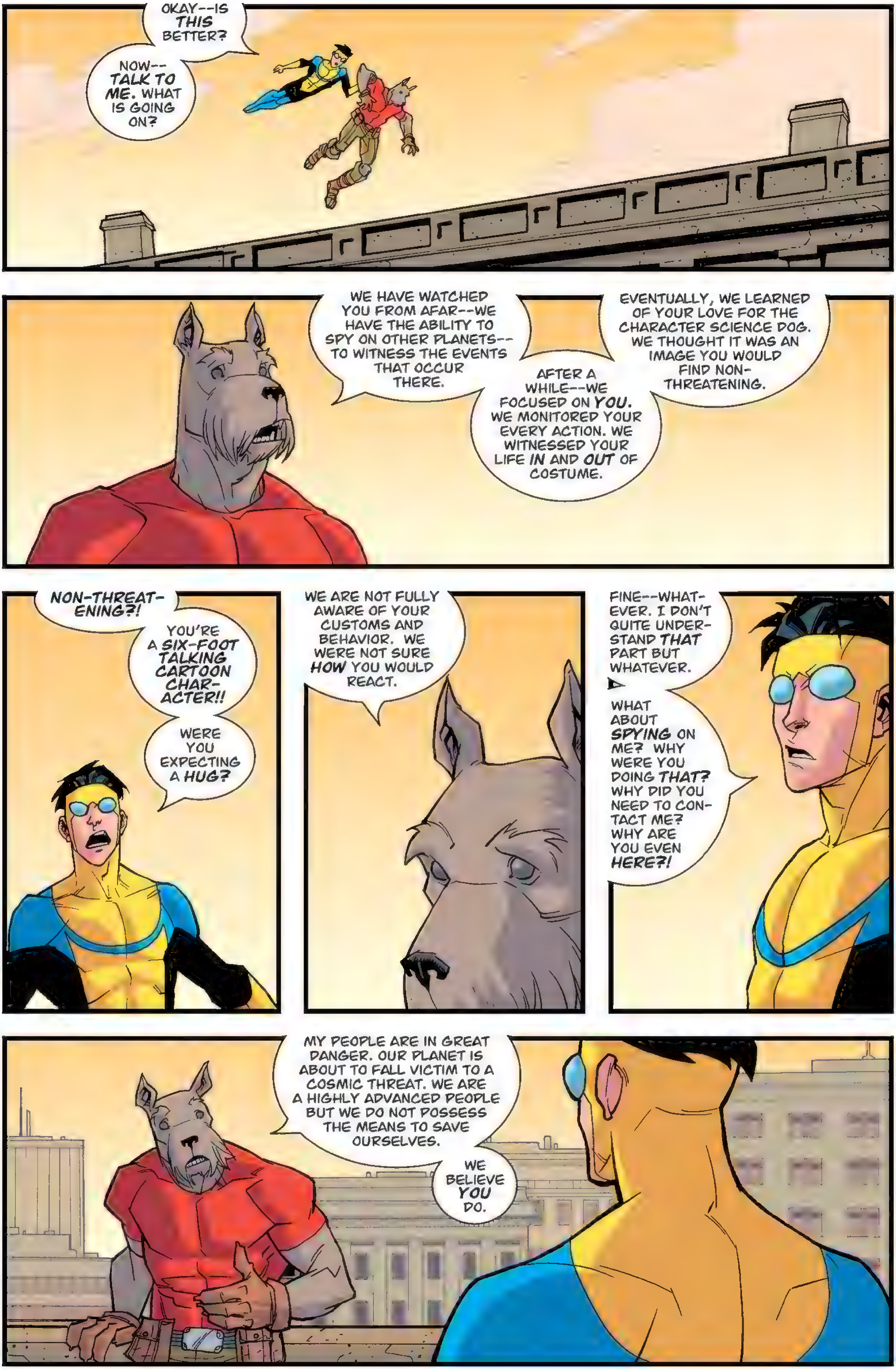

YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHO I AM, MARK!
I'M SCIENCE DOG!!

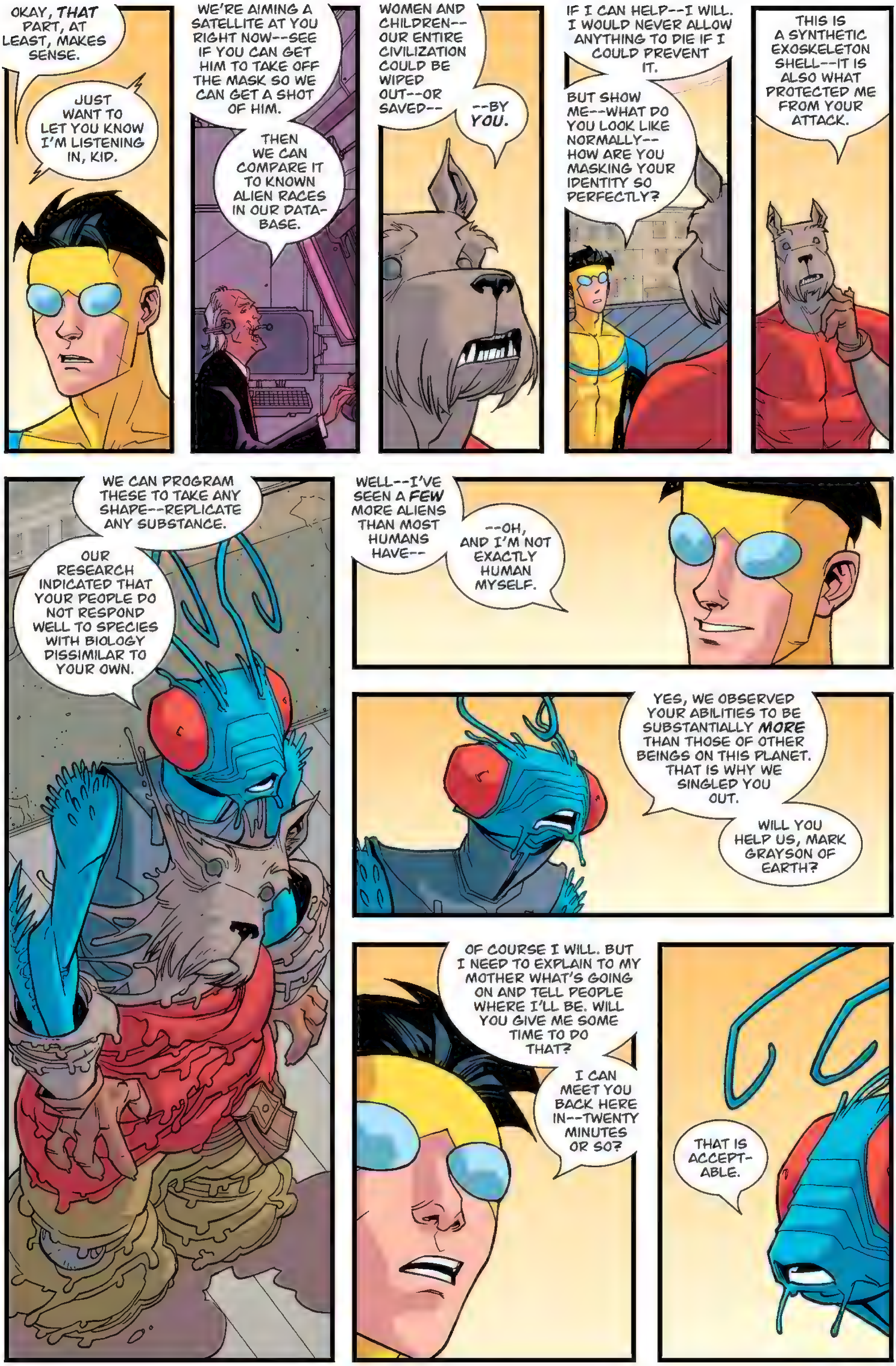

NO YOU'RE NOT!
SCIENCE DOG ISN'T REAL!

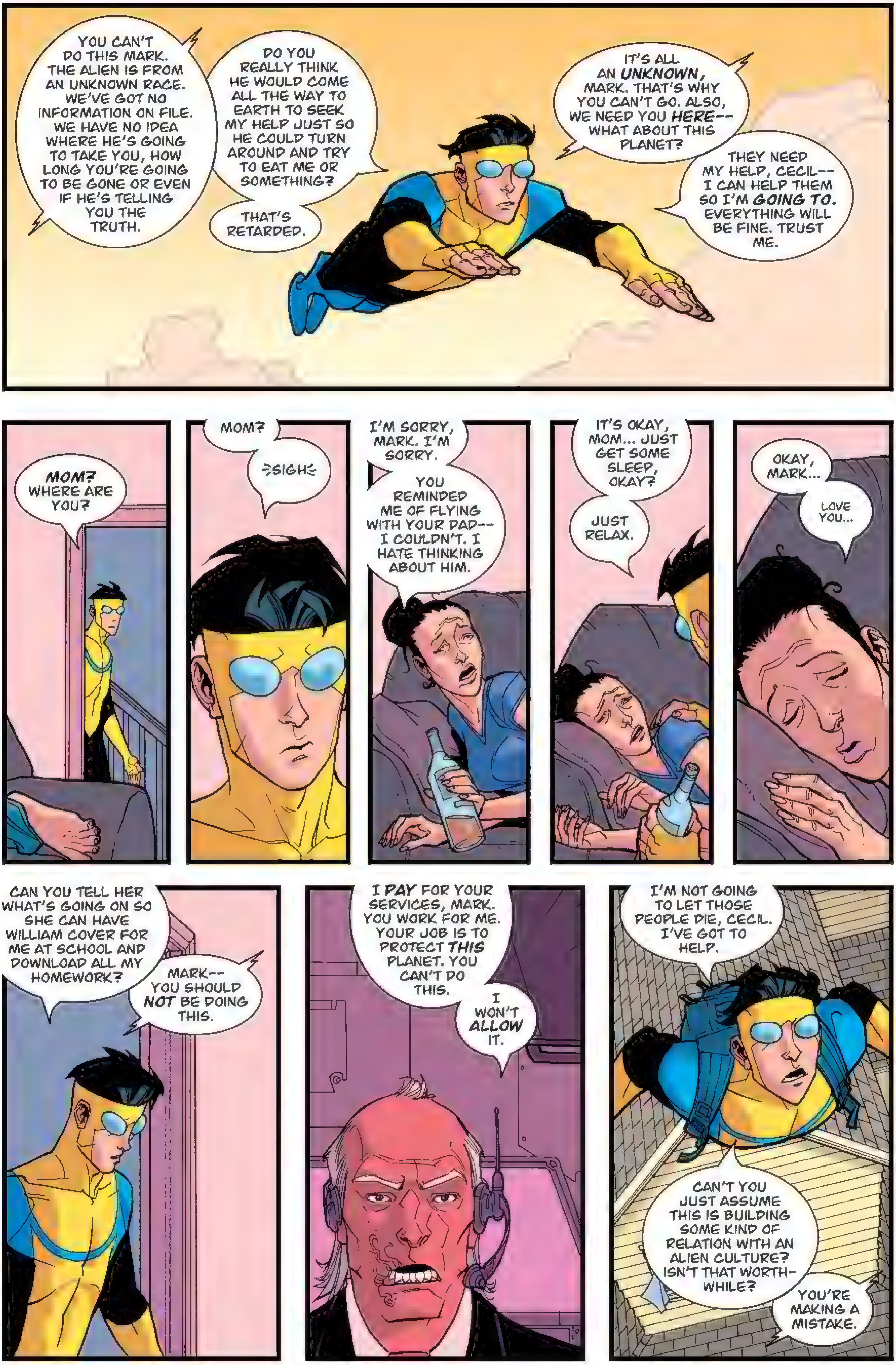

IT WAS KATE--WITH THE IMMORTAL...AND THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE OF HER!
I--I COULDN'T EVEN STAND WHEN I SAW IT...IT WAS HORRIFIC.
AND WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
THEY LEFT... TOGETHER.
JEEZ, MAN--THIS IS KILLING ME. I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE DID THIS TO ME!
WELL, I HOPE YOU NOW REALIZE WHAT YOU PUT POOR EVE THROUGH WHEN YOU CHEATED ON HER.
YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT. OF COURSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M AN ASS.
I DESERVE THIS. I TOTALLY DESERVE THIS.
SIGH
DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF, REX. YOU'RE NOT A BAD PERSON.
YOU MAKE MISTAKES-- YOU ALL DO.
AACK!
HEY, MAN! WHAT WAS THAT?! IT FELT LIKE A BEE STING!
SORRY, I MUST HAVE PINCHED A NERVE.
I SOME-TIMES FORGET HOW SOFT YOU PEOPLE ARE.

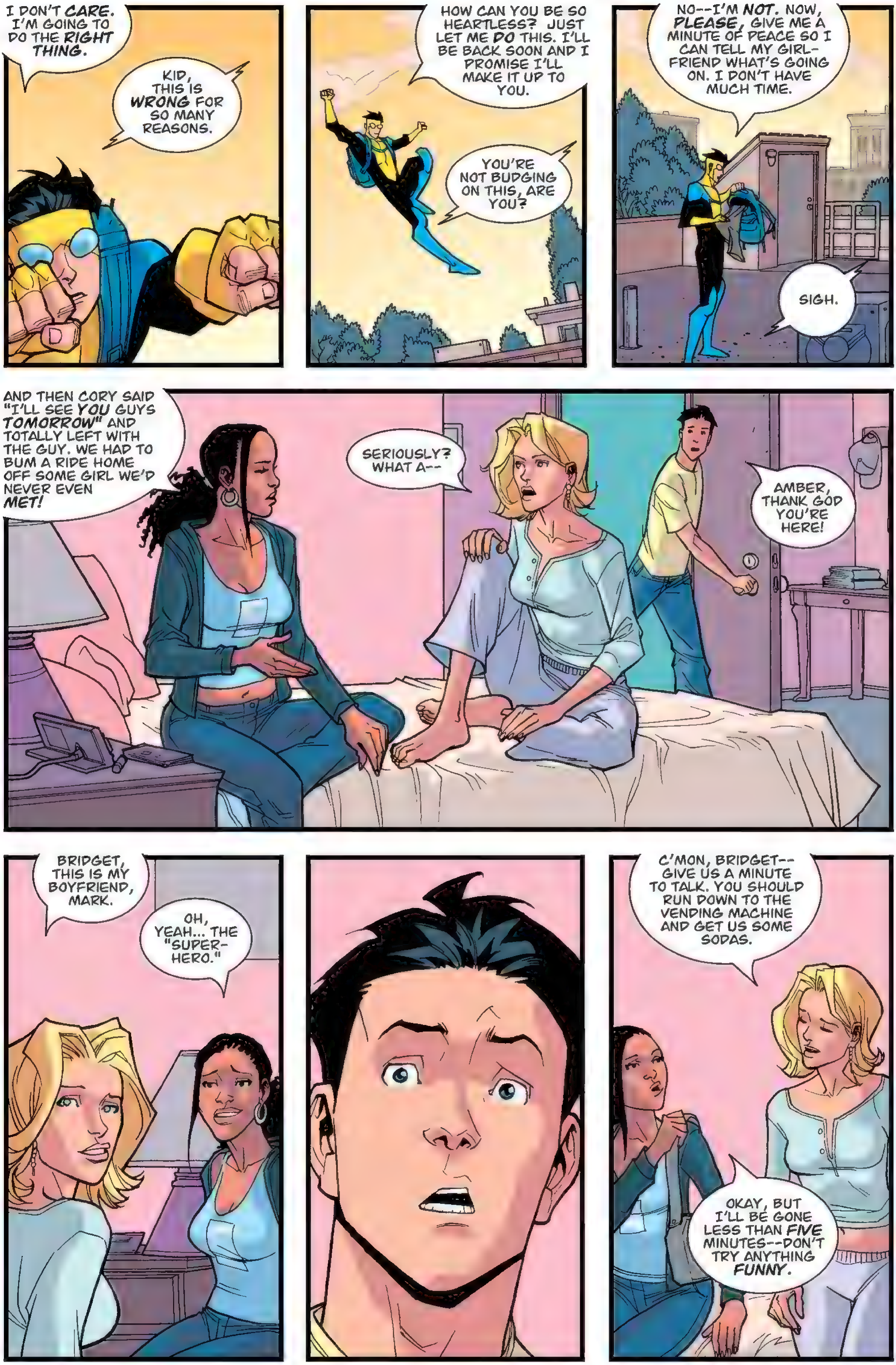

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MARK? HOW CAN I NOT BE REAL?
I'M RIGHT HERE.
I SEE YOU-- YOU'RE THERE-- BUT YOU'RE NOT SCIENCE DOG!!
SCIENCE DOG IS A COMIC BOOK CHARACTER!
EXCUSE ME? I THINK I'D KNOW...
YOU ARE NOT REAL!
YOU DON'T EXIST!!
CHOOM!!

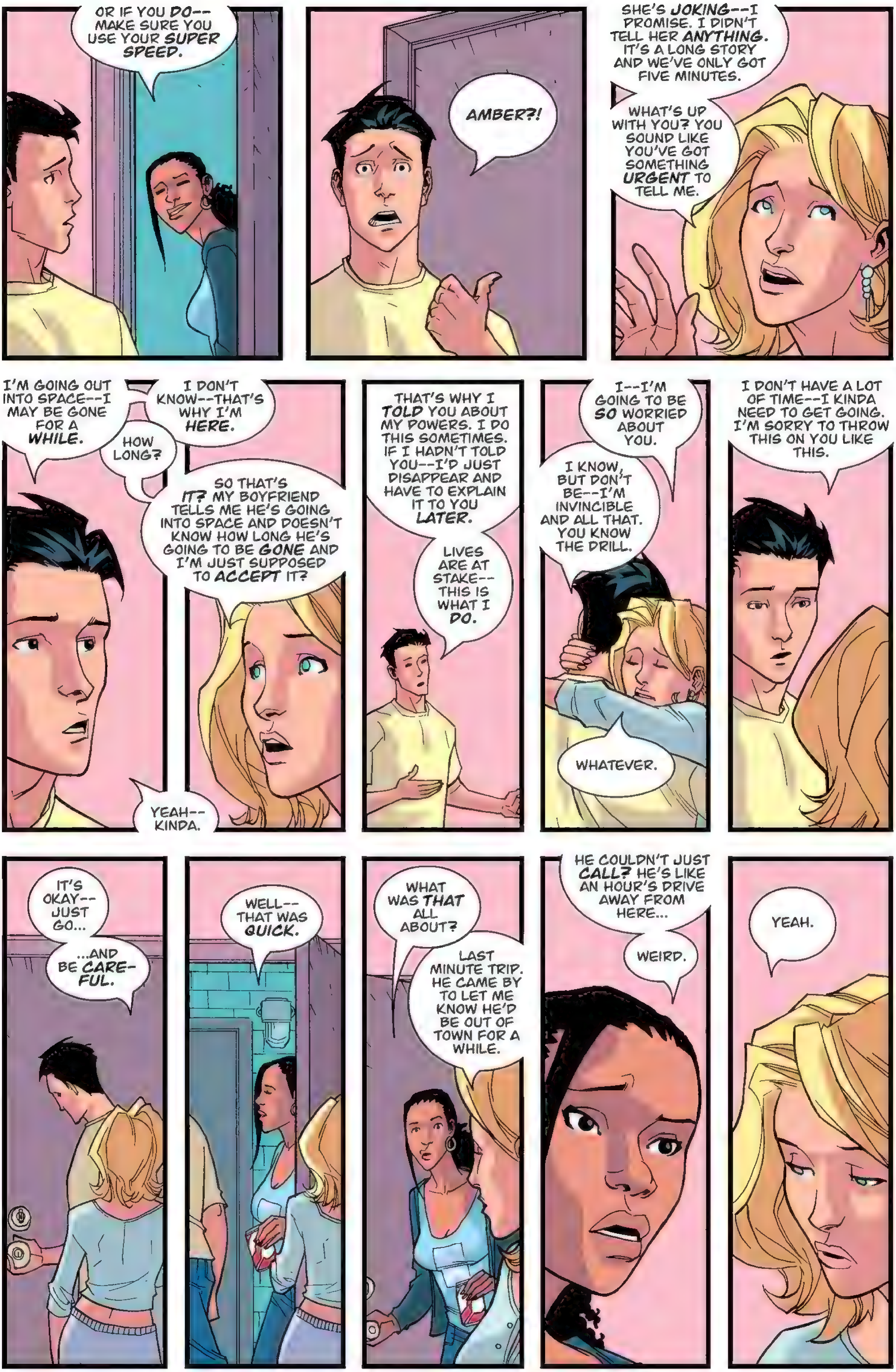

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?! HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE I LIVE?!
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?! WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
WHAT ARE YOU?!
THIS IS NOT GOING THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO. YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO REACT TO ME THIS WAY...
NONE OF THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN--YOU KNOW ME--YOU KNOW WHO I AM. YOU--THIS SHOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED.
YOU WRECKED MY JET-PACK.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I WANT ANSWERS, DAMN IT!
TAKE ME SOMEWHERE MORE PRIVATE AND I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.
WHAT?
OH.

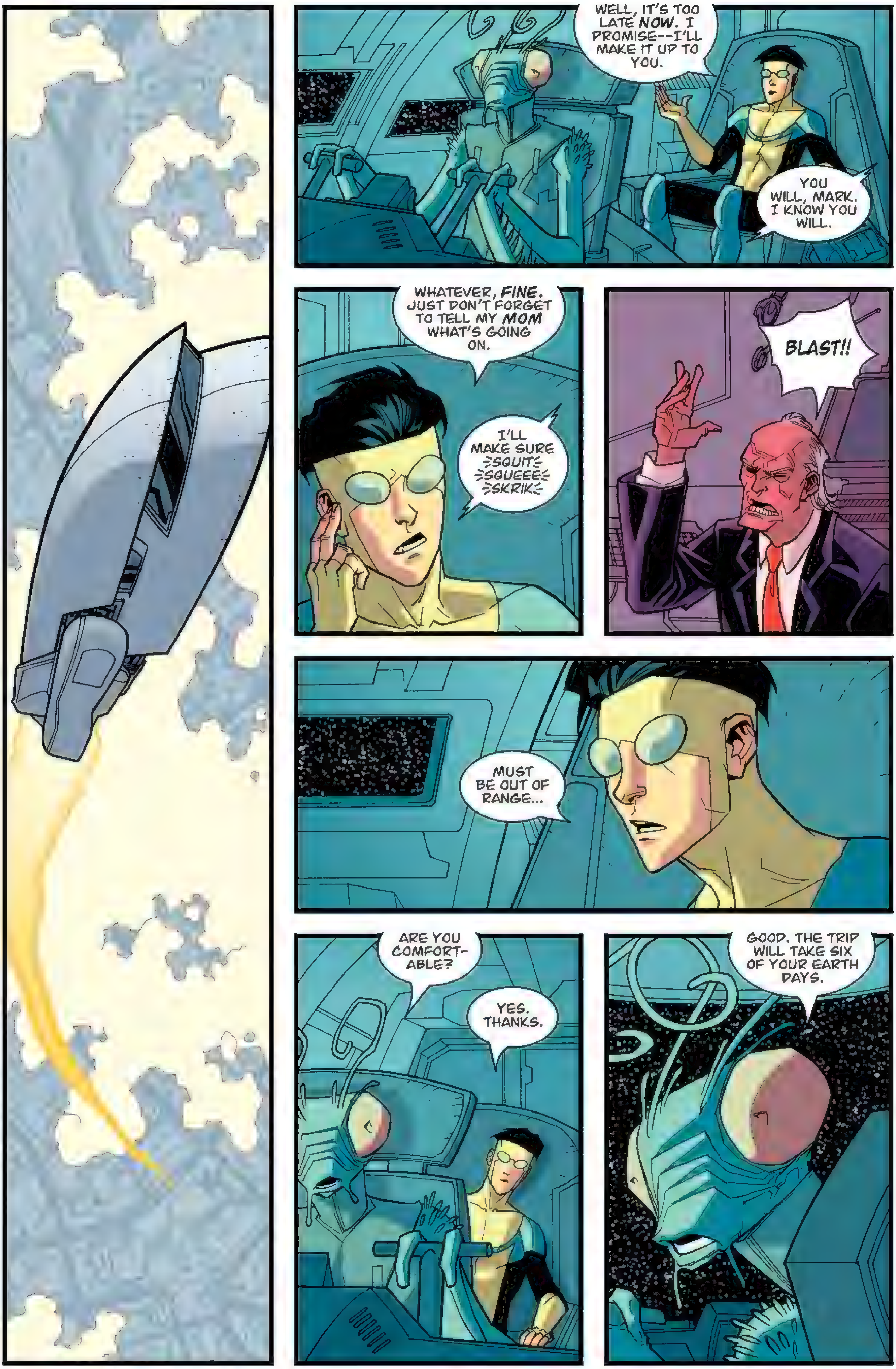

OKAY--IS *THIS* BETTER?
NOW-- *TALK TO ME.* WHAT IS GOING ON?
WE HAVE WATCHED YOU FROM AFAR--WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO SPY ON OTHER PLANETS--TO WITNESS THE EVENTS THAT OCCUR THERE.
AFTER A WHILE--WE FOCUSED ON *YOU.* WE MONITORED YOUR EVERY ACTION. WE WITNESSED YOUR LIFE *IN* AND *OUT* OF COSTUME.
EVENTUALLY, WE LEARNED OF YOUR LOVE FOR THE CHARACTER SCIENCE DOG. WE THOUGHT IT WAS AN IMAGE YOU WOULD FIND NON-THREATENING.
NON-THREATENING?!
YOU'RE A *SIX-FOOT TALKING CARTOON CHARACTER!!*
WERE YOU EXPECTING A *HUG?*
WE ARE NOT FULLY AWARE OF YOUR CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOR. WE WERE NOT SURE *HOW* YOU WOULD REACT.
FINE--WHATEVER. I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND *THAT* PART BUT WHATEVER.
WHAT ABOUT *SPYING* ON ME? WHY WERE YOU DOING *THAT?* WHY DID YOU NEED TO CONTACT ME? WHY ARE YOU EVEN *HERE?!*
MY PEOPLE ARE IN GREAT DANGER. OUR PLANET IS ABOUT TO FALL VICTIM TO A COSMIC THREAT. WE ARE A HIGHLY ADVANCED PEOPLE BUT WE DO NOT POSSESS THE MEANS TO SAVE OURSELVES.
WE BELIEVE *YOU* DO.

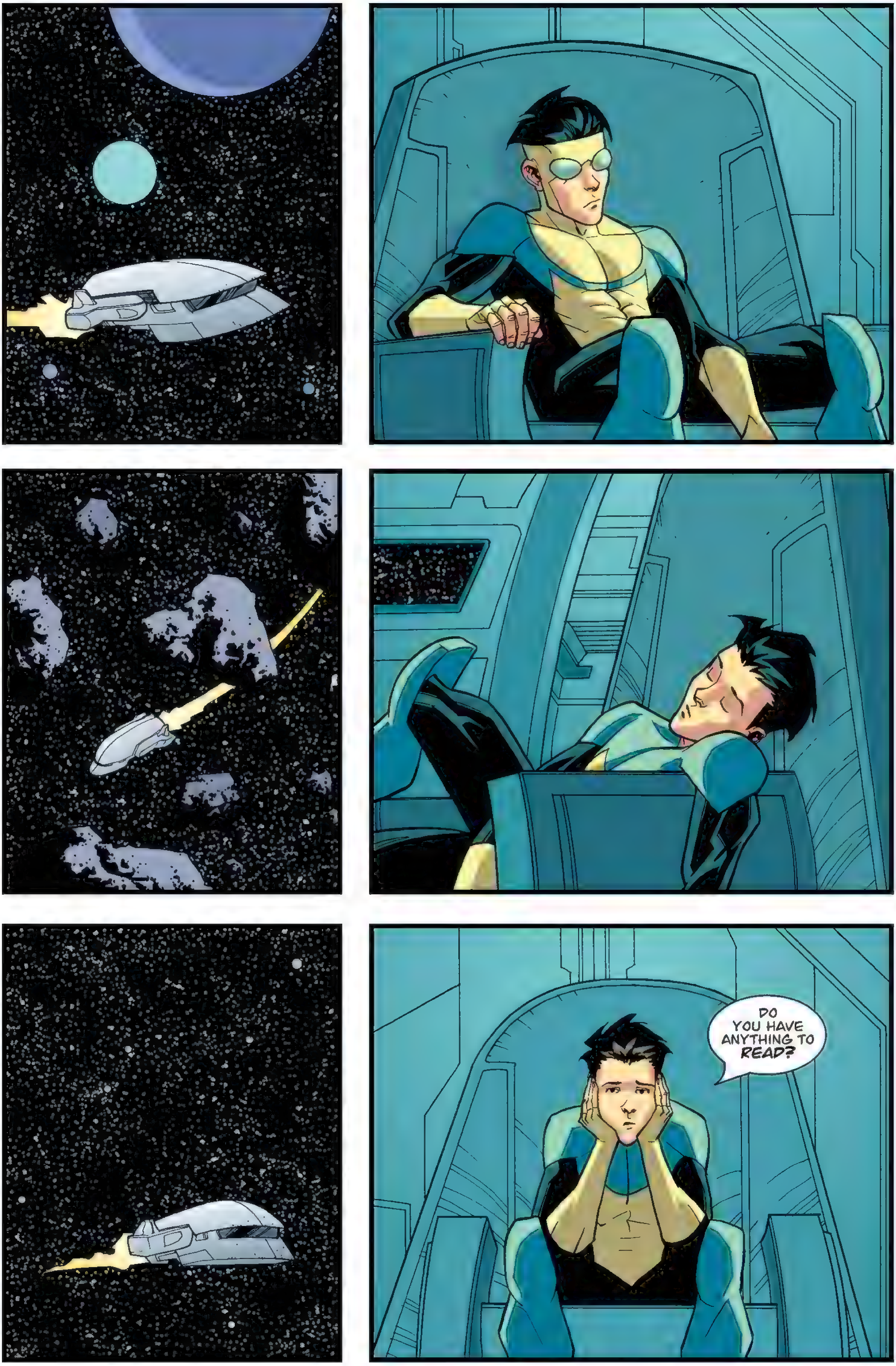

OKAY, *THAT* PART, AT LEAST, MAKES SENSE.
JUST WANT TO LET YOU KNOW I'M LISTENING IN, KID.
WE'RE AIMING A SATELLITE AT YOU RIGHT NOW--SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIM TO TAKE OFF THE MASK SO WE CAN GET A SHOT OF HIM.
THEN WE CAN COMPARE IT TO KNOWN ALIEN RACES IN OUR DATABASE.
WOMEN AND CHILDREN--OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION COULD BE WIPED OUT--OR SAVED--
--BY *YOU.*
IF I CAN HELP--I WILL. I WOULD NEVER ALLOW ANYTHING TO DIE IF I COULD PREVENT IT.
BUT SHOW ME--WHAT DO YOU LOOK LIKE NORMALLY--HOW ARE YOU MASKING YOUR IDENTITY SO PERFECTLY?
THIS IS A SYNTHETIC EXOSKELETON SHELL--IT IS ALSO WHAT PROTECTED ME FROM YOUR ATTACK.
WE CAN PROGRAM THESE TO TAKE ANY SHAPE--REPLICATE ANY SUBSTANCE.
OUR RESEARCH INDICATED THAT YOUR PEOPLE DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO SPECIES WITH BIOLOGY DISSIMILAR TO YOUR OWN.
WELL--I'VE SEEN A *FEW* MORE ALIENS THAN MOST HUMANS HAVE--
--OH, AND I'M NOT EXACTLY HUMAN MYSELF.
YES, WE OBSERVED YOUR ABILITIES TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY *MORE* THAN THOSE OF OTHER BEINGS ON THIS PLANET. THAT IS WHY WE SINGLED YOU OUT.
WILL YOU HELP US, MARK GRAYSON OF EARTH?
OF COURSE I WILL. BUT I NEED TO EXPLAIN TO MY MOTHER WHAT'S GOING ON AND TELL PEOPLE WHERE I'LL BE. WILL YOU GIVE ME SOME TIME TO DO THAT?
I CAN MEET YOU BACK HERE IN--TWENTY MINUTES OR SO?
THAT IS ACCEPTABLE.

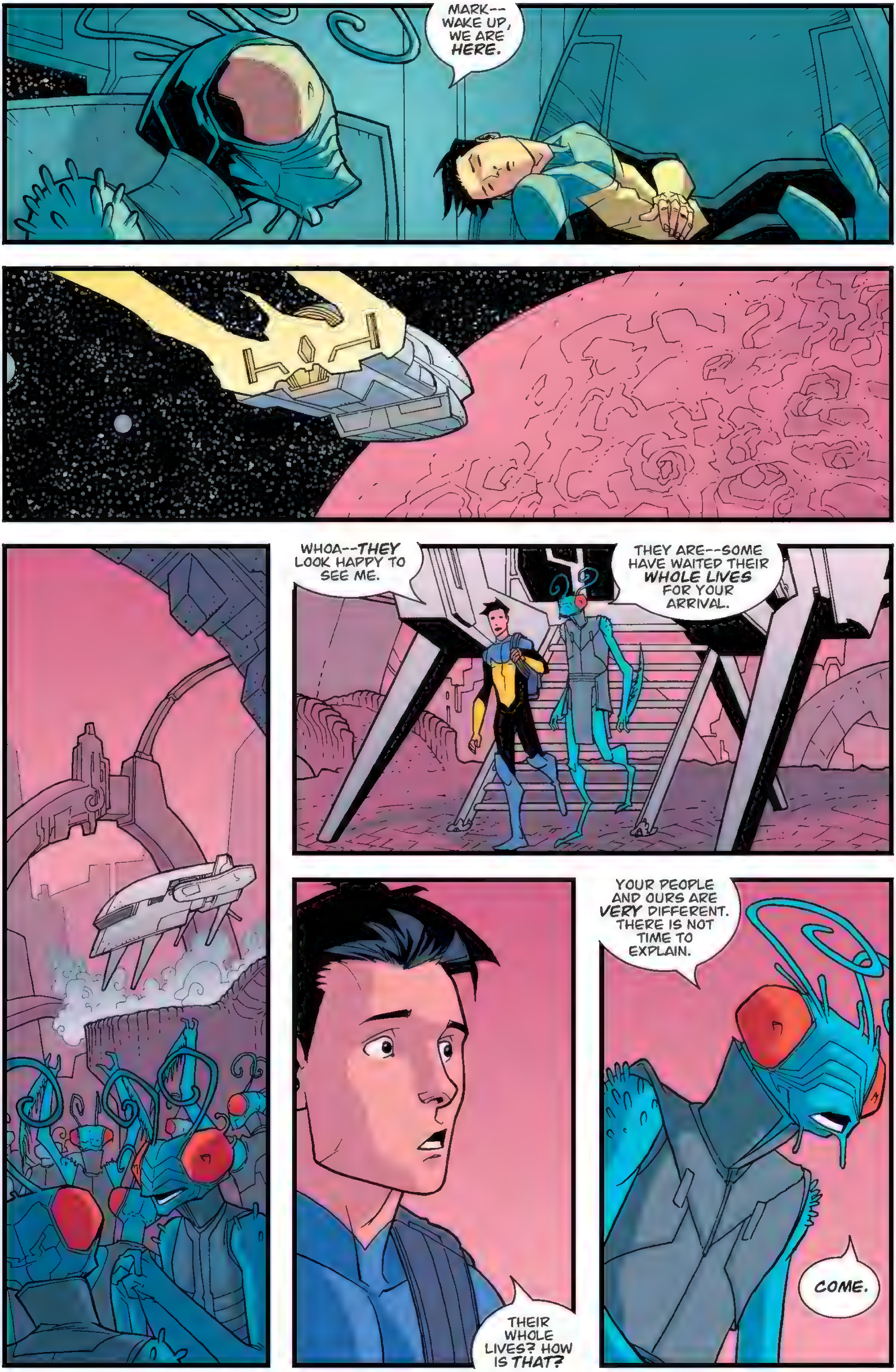

YOU CAN'T DO THIS MARK. THE ALIEN IS FROM AN UNKNOWN RACE. WE'VE GOT NO INFORMATION ON FILE. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE'S GOING TO TAKE YOU, HOW LONG YOU'RE GOING TO BE GONE OR EVEN IF HE'S TELLING YOU THE TRUTH.
DO YOU REALLY THINK HE WOULD COME ALL THE WAY TO EARTH TO SEEK MY HELP JUST SO HE COULD TURN AROUND AND TRY TO EAT ME OR SOMETHING?
THAT'S RETARDED.
IT'S ALL AN **UNKNOWN**, MARK. THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T GO. ALSO, WE NEED YOU **HERE**-- WHAT ABOUT THIS PLANET?
THEY NEED MY HELP, CECIL-- I CAN HELP THEM SO I'M **GOING TO.** EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE. TRUST ME.
MOM? WHERE ARE YOU?
MOM?
⋧SIGH⋦
I'M SORRY, MARK. I'M SORRY.
YOU REMINDED ME OF FLYING WITH YOUR DAD-- I COULDN'T. I HATE THINKING ABOUT HIM.
IT'S OKAY, MOM... JUST GET SOME SLEEP, OKAY?
JUST RELAX.
OKAY, MARK...
LOVE YOU...
CAN YOU TELL HER WHAT'S GOING ON SO SHE CAN HAVE WILLIAM COVER FOR ME AT SCHOOL AND DOWNLOAD ALL MY HOMEWORK?
MARK-- YOU SHOULD ***NOT*** BE DOING THIS.
I ***PAY*** FOR YOUR SERVICES, MARK. YOU WORK FOR ME. YOUR JOB IS TO PROTECT ***THIS*** PLANET. YOU CAN'T DO THIS.
I WON'T ***ALLOW*** IT.
I'M NOT GOING TO LET THOSE PEOPLE DIE, CECIL. I'VE GOT TO HELP.
CAN'T YOU JUST ASSUME THIS IS BUILDING SOME KIND OF RELATION WITH AN ALIEN CULTURE? ISN'T THAT WORTH-WHILE?
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE.

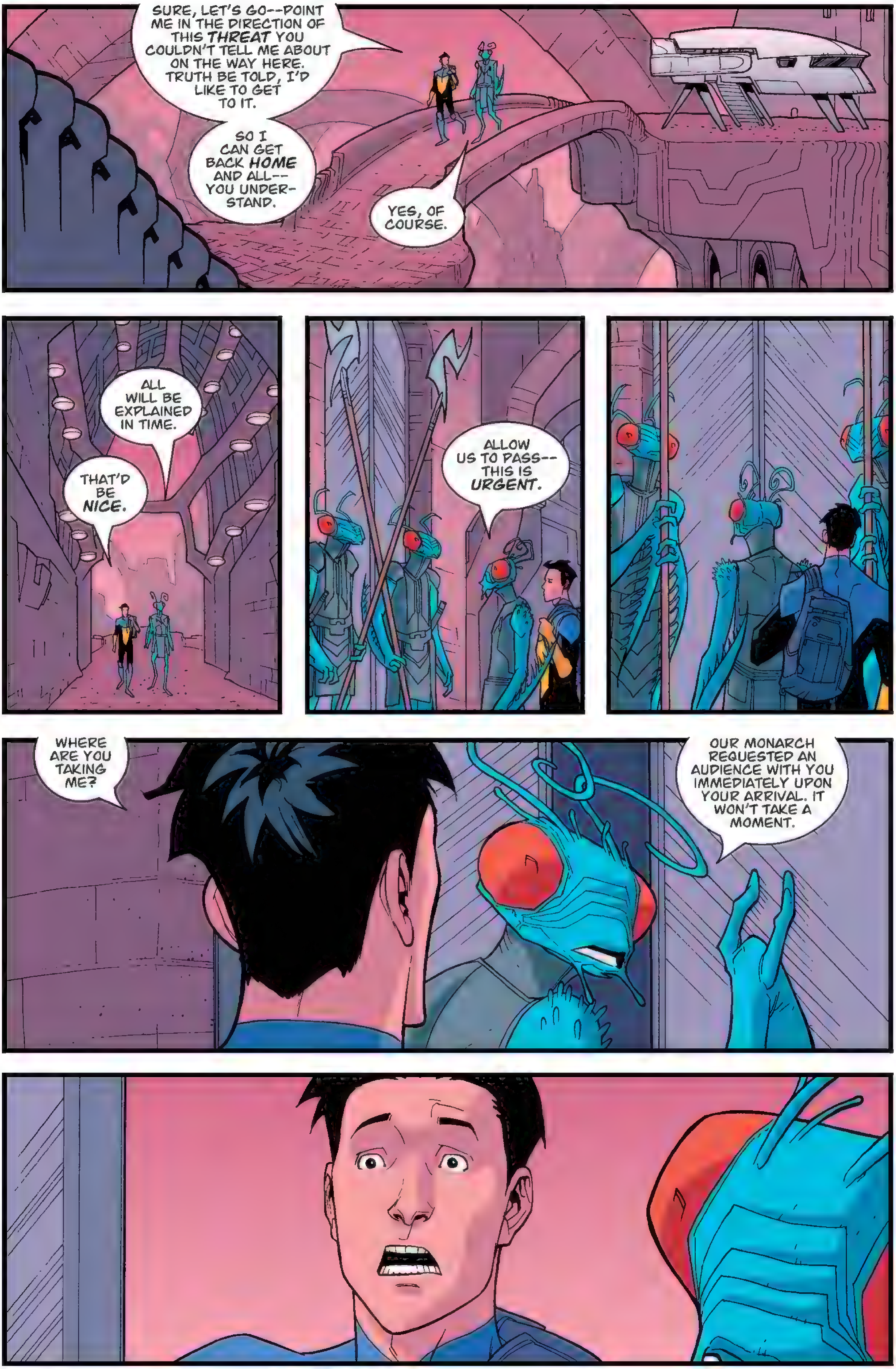

I DON'T CARE. I'M GOING TO DO THE RIGHT THING.
KID, THIS IS WRONG FOR SO MANY REASONS.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO HEARTLESS? JUST LET ME DO THIS. I'LL BE BACK SOON AND I PROMISE I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU.
YOU'RE NOT BUDGING ON THIS, ARE YOU?
NO--I'M NOT. NOW, PLEASE, GIVE ME A MINUTE OF PEACE SO I CAN TELL MY GIRLFRIEND WHAT'S GOING ON. I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
SIGH.
AND THEN CORY SAID "I'LL SEE YOU GUYS TOMORROW" AND TOTALLY LEFT WITH THE GUY. WE HAD TO BUM A RIDE HOME OFF SOME GIRL WE'D NEVER EVEN MET!
SERIOUSLY? WHAT A--
AMBER, THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE!
BRIDGET, THIS IS MY BOYFRIEND, MARK.
OH, YEAH... THE "SUPER-HERO."
C'MON, BRIDGET--GIVE US A MINUTE TO TALK. YOU SHOULD RUN DOWN TO THE VENDING MACHINE AND GET US SOME SODAS.
OKAY, BUT I'LL BE GONE LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES--DON'T TRY ANYTHING FUNNY.


OR IF YOU DO-- MAKE SURE YOU USE YOUR SUPER SPEED.
AMBER?!
SHE'S JOKING--I PROMISE. I DIDN'T TELL HER ANYTHING. IT'S A LONG STORY AND WE'VE ONLY GOT FIVE MINUTES.
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU? YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING URGENT TO TELL ME.
I'M GOING OUT INTO SPACE--I MAY BE GONE FOR A WHILE.
HOW LONG?
I DON'T KNOW--THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
SO THAT'S IT? MY BOYFRIEND TELLS ME HE'S GOING INTO SPACE AND DOESN'T KNOW HOW LONG HE'S GOING TO BE GONE AND I'M JUST SUPPOSED TO ACCEPT IT?
YEAH-- KINDA.
THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU ABOUT MY POWERS. I DO THIS SOMETIMES. IF I HADN'T TOLD YOU--I'D JUST DISAPPEAR AND HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU LATER.
LIVES ARE AT STAKE-- THIS IS WHAT I DO.
I--I'M GOING TO BE SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I KNOW, BUT DON'T BE--I'M INVINCIBLE AND ALL THAT. YOU KNOW THE DRILL.
WHATEVER.
I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME--I KINDA NEED TO GET GOING. I'M SORRY TO THROW THIS ON YOU LIKE THIS.
IT'S OKAY-- JUST GO...
...AND BE CAREFUL.
WELL-- THAT WAS QUICK.
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
LAST MINUTE TRIP. HE CAME BY TO LET ME KNOW HE'D BE OUT OF TOWN FOR A WHILE.
HE COULDN'T JUST CALL? HE'S LIKE AN HOUR'S DRIVE AWAY FROM HERE...
WEIRD.
YEAH.


WELL, IT'S TOO LATE *NOW*. I PROMISE--I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU.
YOU WILL, MARK. I KNOW YOU WILL.
WHATEVER, *FINE*. JUST DON'T FORGET TO TELL MY *MOM* WHAT'S GOING ON.
I'LL MAKE SURE SQUIT SQUEEE SKRIK
BLAST!!
MUST BE OUT OF RANGE...
ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?
YES. THANKS.
GOOD. THE TRIP WILL TAKE SIX OF YOUR EARTH DAYS.


DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO READ?

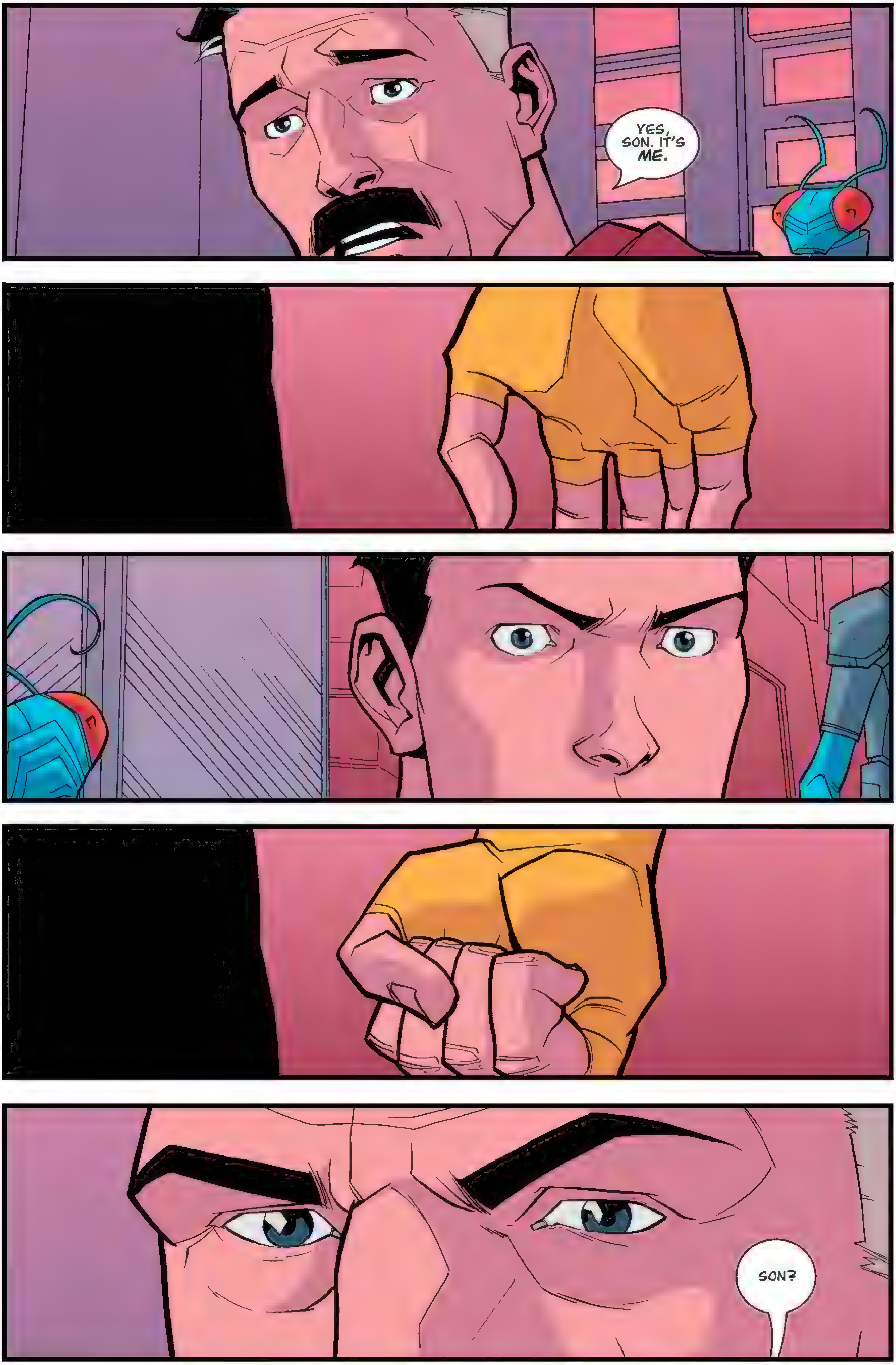

MARK-- WAKE UP, WE ARE *HERE.*
WHOA--*THEY* LOOK HAPPY TO SEE ME.
THEY ARE--SOME HAVE WAITED THEIR *WHOLE LIVES* FOR YOUR ARRIVAL.
THEIR WHOLE LIVES? HOW IS *THAT?*
YOUR PEOPLE AND OURS ARE *VERY* DIFFERENT. THERE IS NOT TIME TO EXPLAIN.
COME.

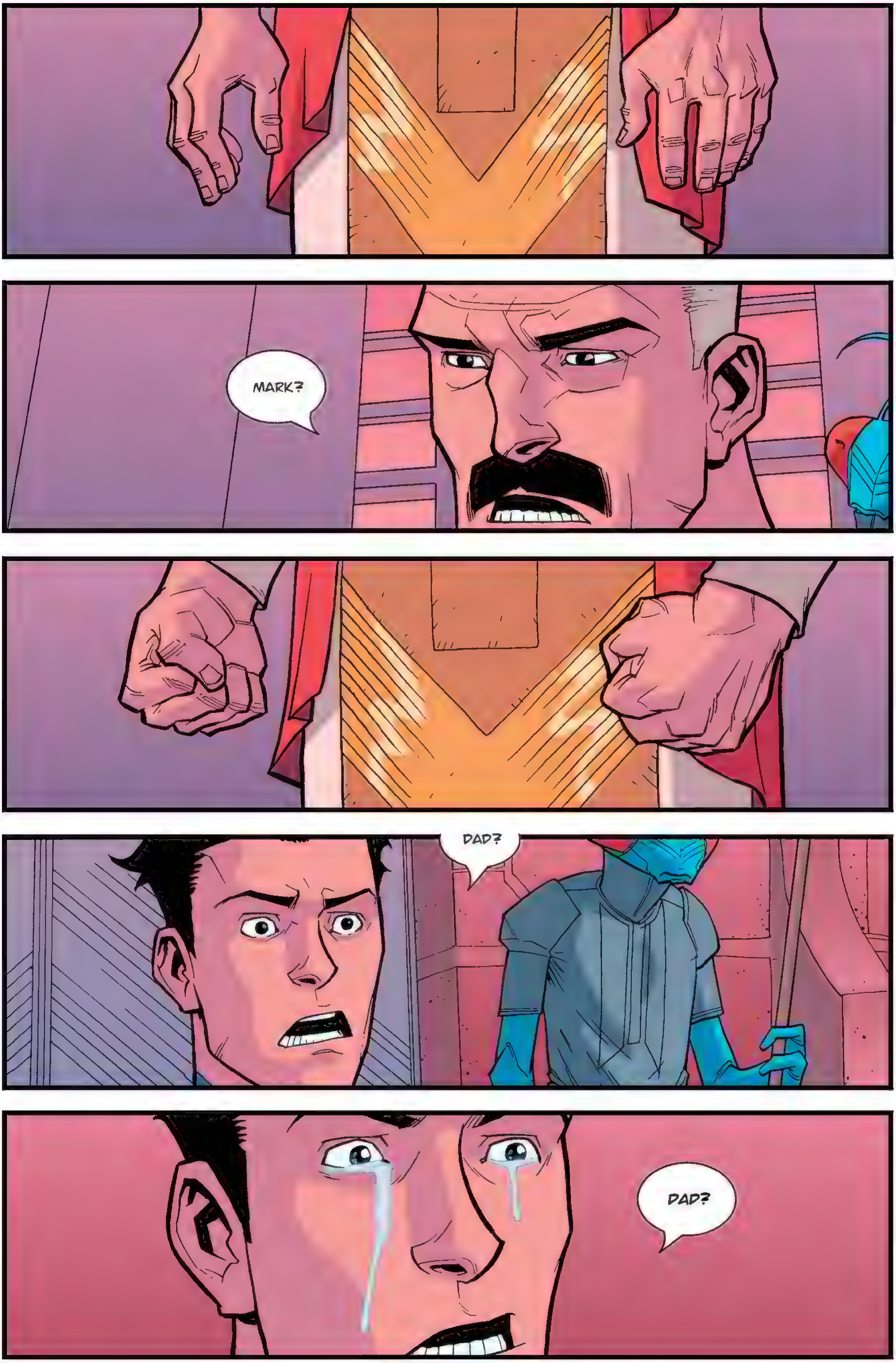

SURE, LET'S GO--POINT ME IN THE DIRECTION OF THIS *THREAT* YOU COULDN'T TELL ME ABOUT ON THE WAY HERE. TRUTH BE TOLD, I'D LIKE TO GET TO IT.
SO I CAN GET BACK *HOME* AND ALL--YOU UNDERSTAND.
YES, OF COURSE.
ALL WILL BE EXPLAINED IN TIME.
THAT'D BE *NICE*.
ALLOW US TO PASS--THIS IS *URGENT*.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?
OUR MONARCH REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU IMMEDIATELY UPON YOUR ARRIVAL. IT WON'T TAKE A MOMENT.

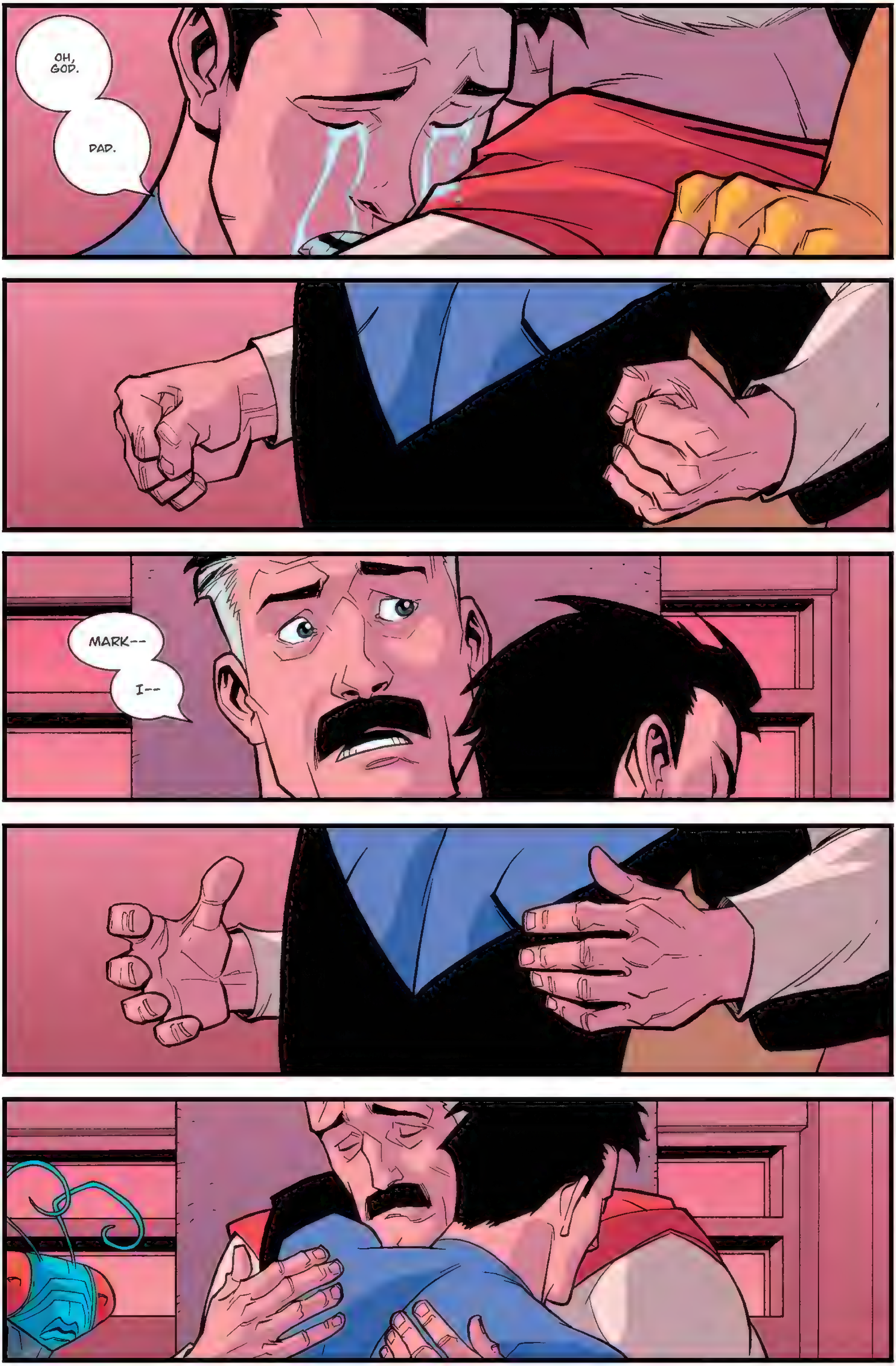
HELLO, **SON**. IT'S BEEN A **WHILE**.
YOU'RE LOOKING **WELL**.

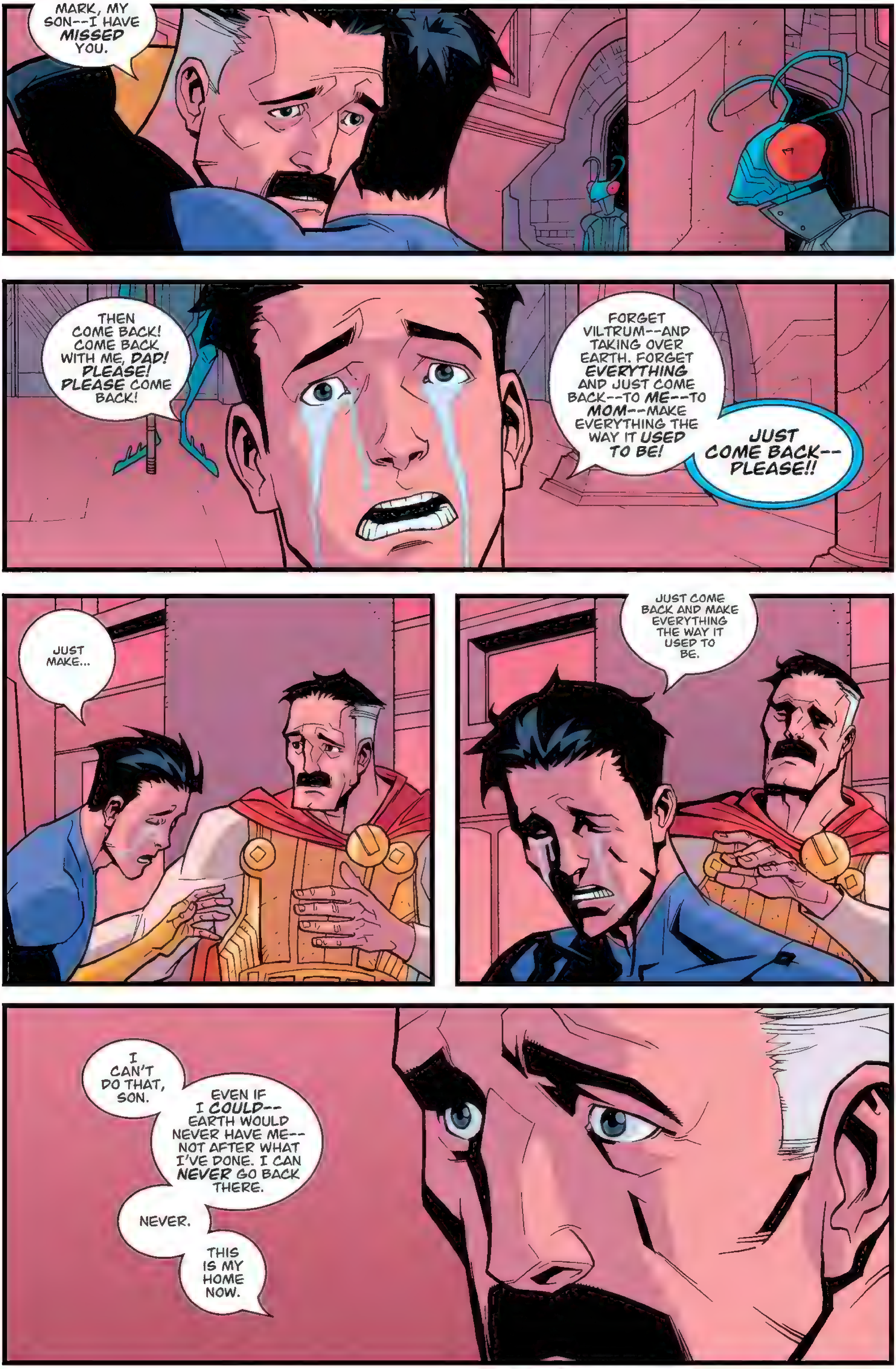
ISSUE TWENTY-SIX

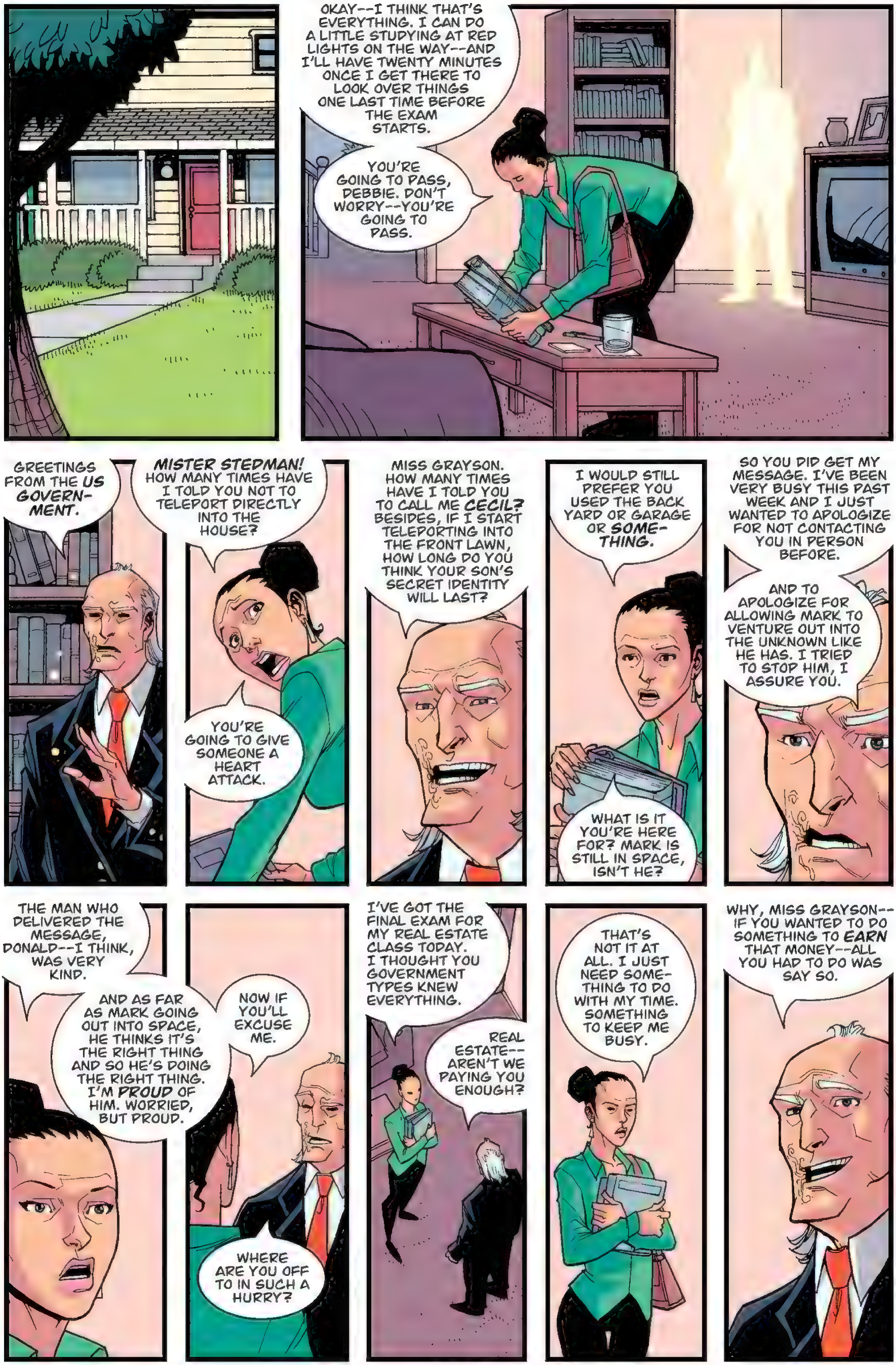
DAD?

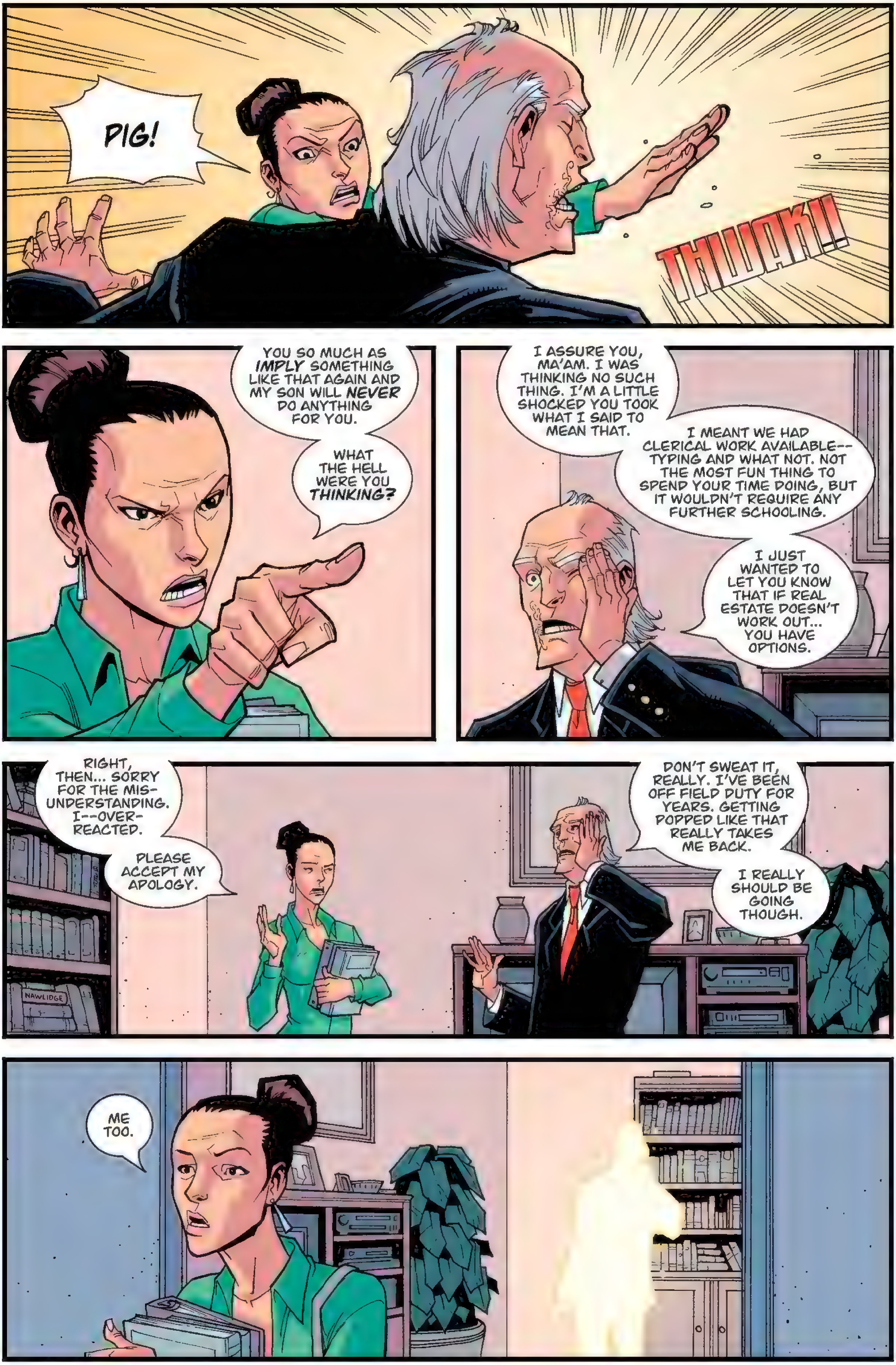

YES, SON. IT'S ME.
SON?

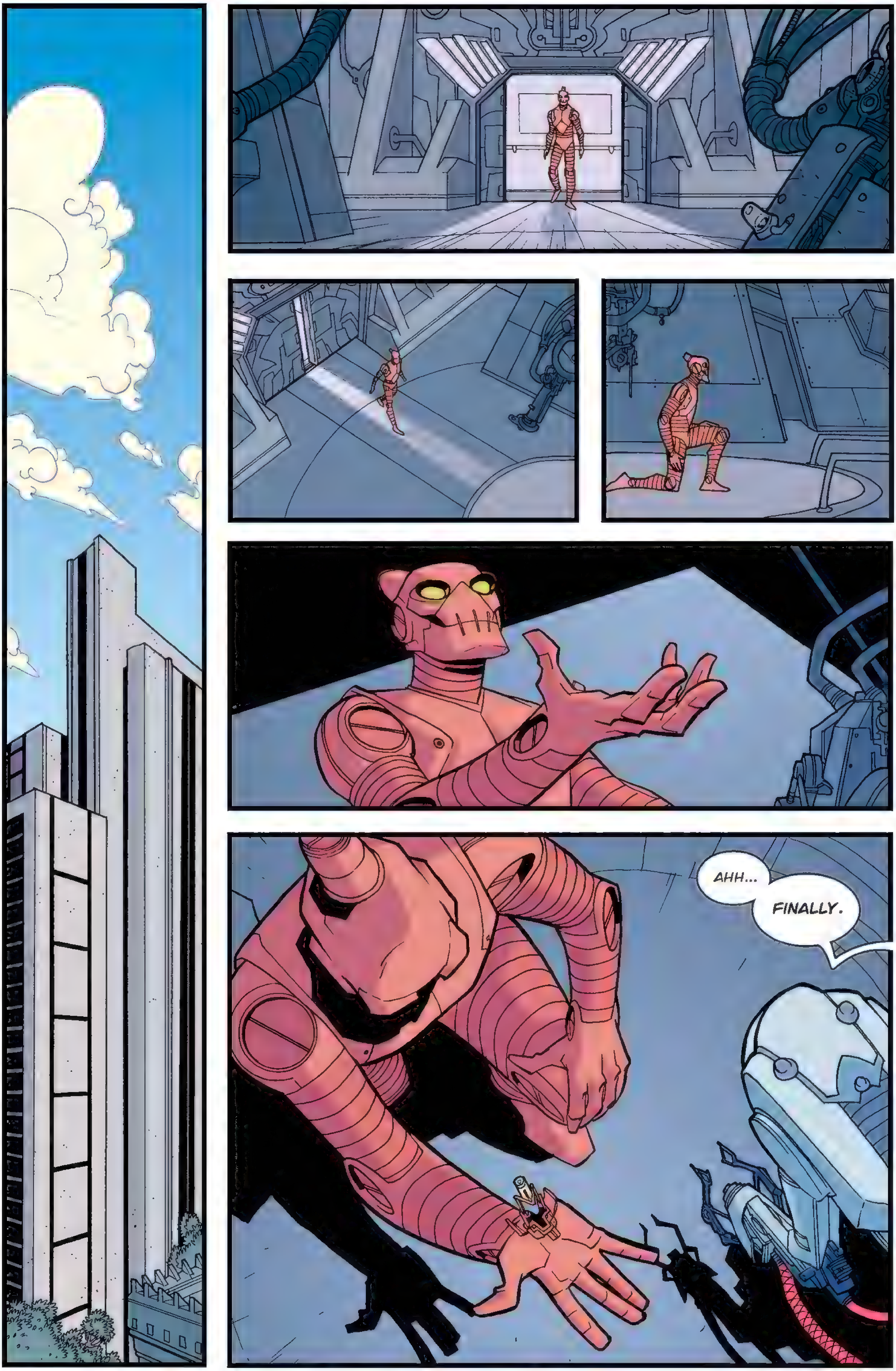

MARK?
DAD?
DAD?

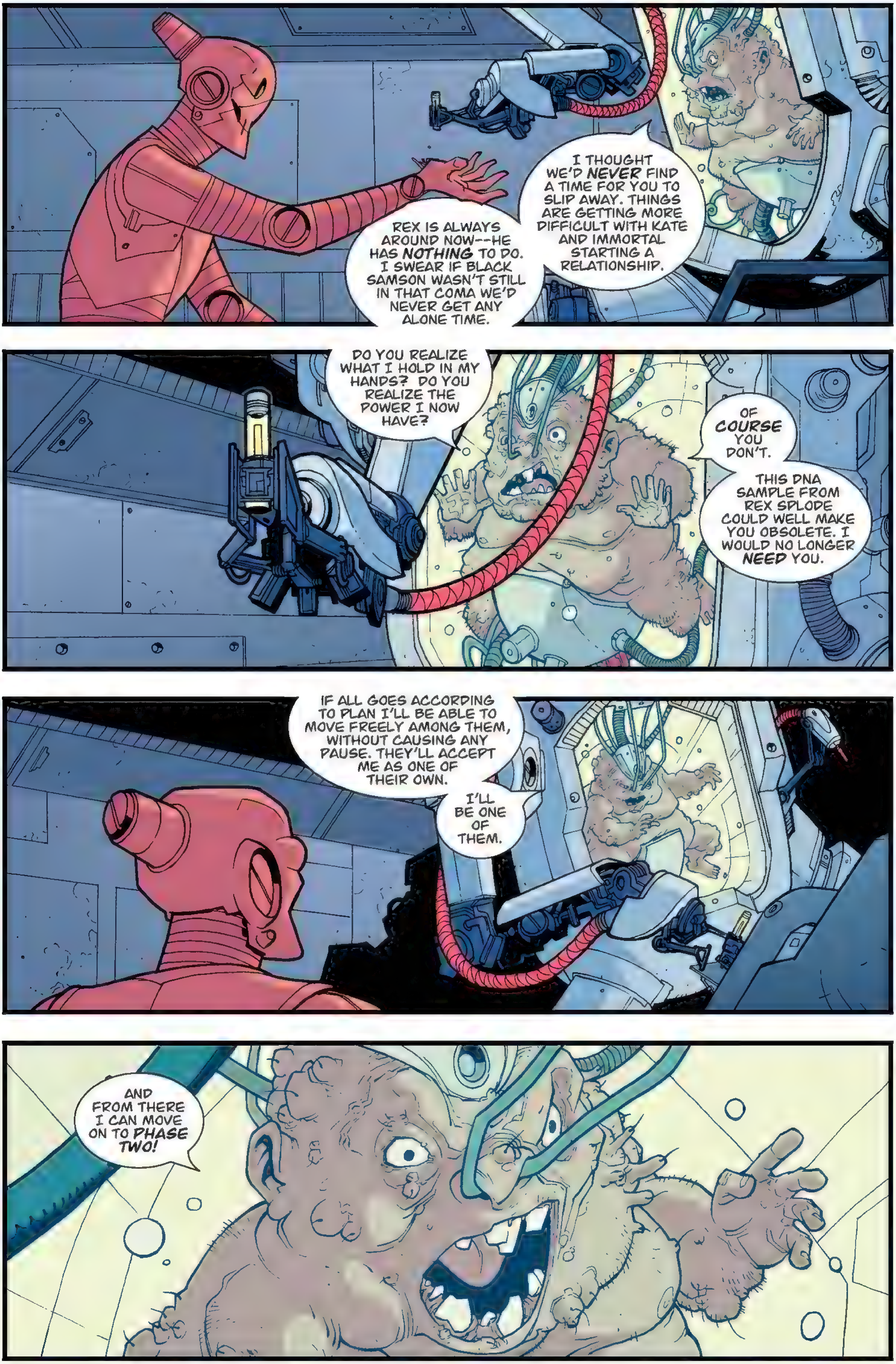

OH, GOD.
DAD.
MARK--
I--

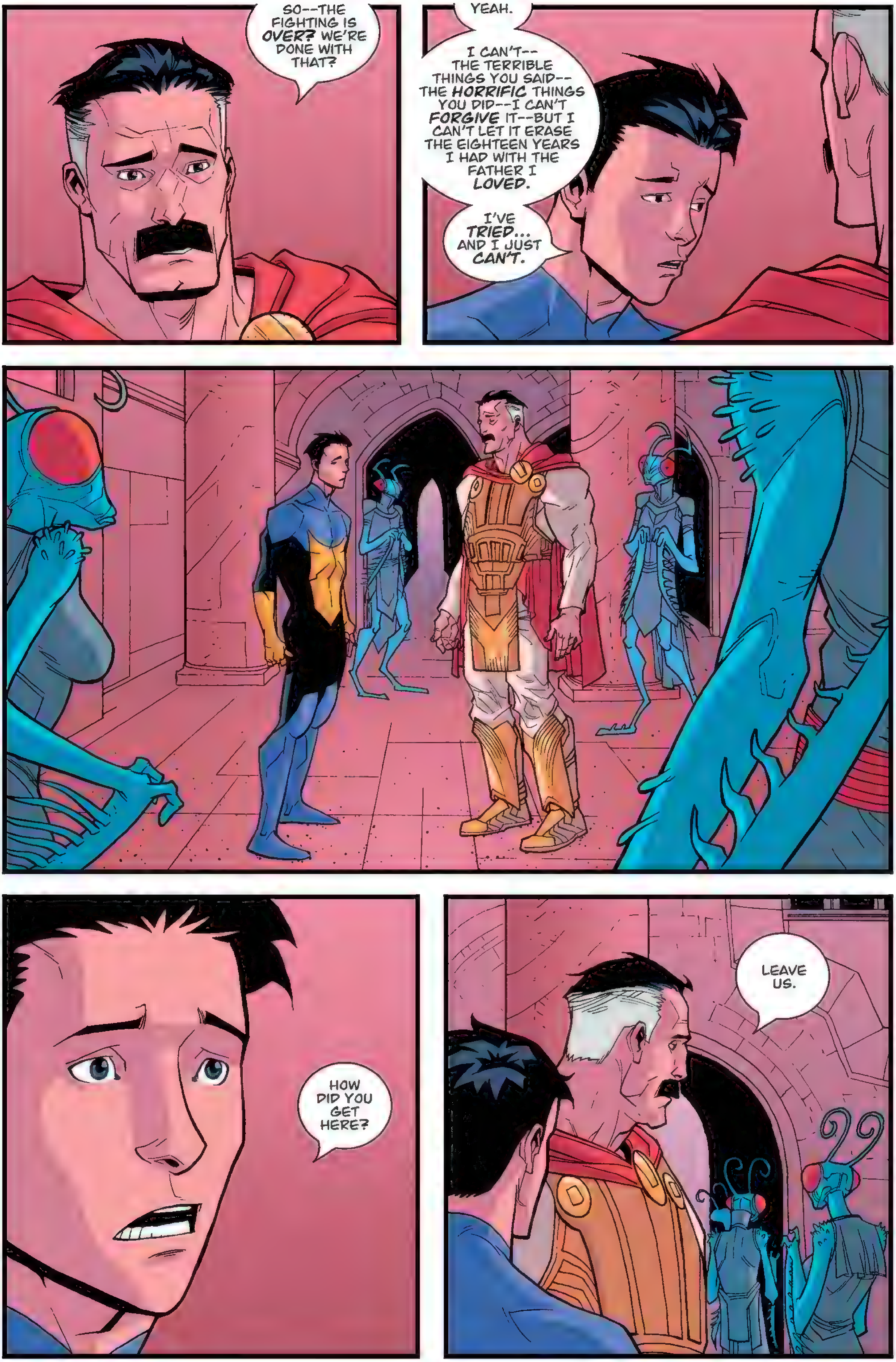

MARK, MY SON--I HAVE *MISSED* YOU.
THEN COME BACK! COME BACK WITH ME, *DAD! PLEASE! PLEASE* COME BACK!
FORGET VILTRUM--AND TAKING OVER EARTH. FORGET *EVERYTHING* AND JUST COME BACK--TO *ME*--TO *MOM*--MAKE EVERYTHING THE WAY IT *USED TO BE!*
JUST COME BACK-- PLEASE!!
JUST MAKE...
JUST COME BACK AND MAKE EVERYTHING THE WAY IT USED TO BE.
I CAN'T DO THAT, SON.
EVEN IF I *COULD*--EARTH WOULD NEVER HAVE ME--NOT AFTER WHAT I'VE DONE. I CAN *NEVER* GO BACK THERE.
NEVER.
THIS IS MY HOME NOW.


OKAY--I THINK THAT'S EVERYTHING. I CAN DO A LITTLE STUDYING AT RED LIGHTS ON THE WAY--AND I'LL HAVE TWENTY MINUTES ONCE I GET THERE TO LOOK OVER THINGS ONE LAST TIME BEFORE THE EXAM STARTS.
YOU'RE GOING TO PASS, DEBBIE. DON'T WORRY--YOU'RE GOING TO PASS.
GREETINGS FROM THE *US GOVERNMENT*.
MISTER STEDMAN! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO TELEPORT DIRECTLY INTO THE HOUSE?
YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE SOMEONE A HEART ATTACK.
MISS GRAYSON. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME *CECIL?* BESIDES, IF I START TELEPORTING INTO THE FRONT LAWN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR SON'S SECRET IDENTITY WILL LAST?
I WOULD STILL PREFER YOU USED THE BACK YARD OR GARAGE OR *SOMETHING*.
WHAT IS IT YOU'RE HERE FOR? MARK IS STILL IN SPACE, ISN'T HE?
SO YOU DID GET MY MESSAGE. I'VE BEEN VERY BUSY THIS PAST WEEK AND I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR NOT CONTACTING YOU IN PERSON BEFORE.
AND TO APOLOGIZE FOR ALLOWING MARK TO VENTURE OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN LIKE HE HAS. I TRIED TO STOP HIM, I ASSURE YOU.
THE MAN WHO DELIVERED THE MESSAGE, DONALD--I THINK, WAS VERY KIND.
AND AS FAR AS MARK GOING OUT INTO SPACE, HE THINKS IT'S THE RIGHT THING AND SO HE'S DOING THE RIGHT THING. I'M *PROUD* OF HIM. WORRIED, BUT PROUD.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO IN SUCH A HURRY?
I'VE GOT THE FINAL EXAM FOR MY REAL ESTATE CLASS TODAY. I THOUGHT YOU GOVERNMENT TYPES KNEW EVERYTHING.
REAL ESTATE--AREN'T WE PAYING YOU ENOUGH?
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. I JUST NEED SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY TIME. SOMETHING TO KEEP ME BUSY.
WHY, MISS GRAYSON--IF YOU WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO *EARN* THAT MONEY--ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SAY SO.

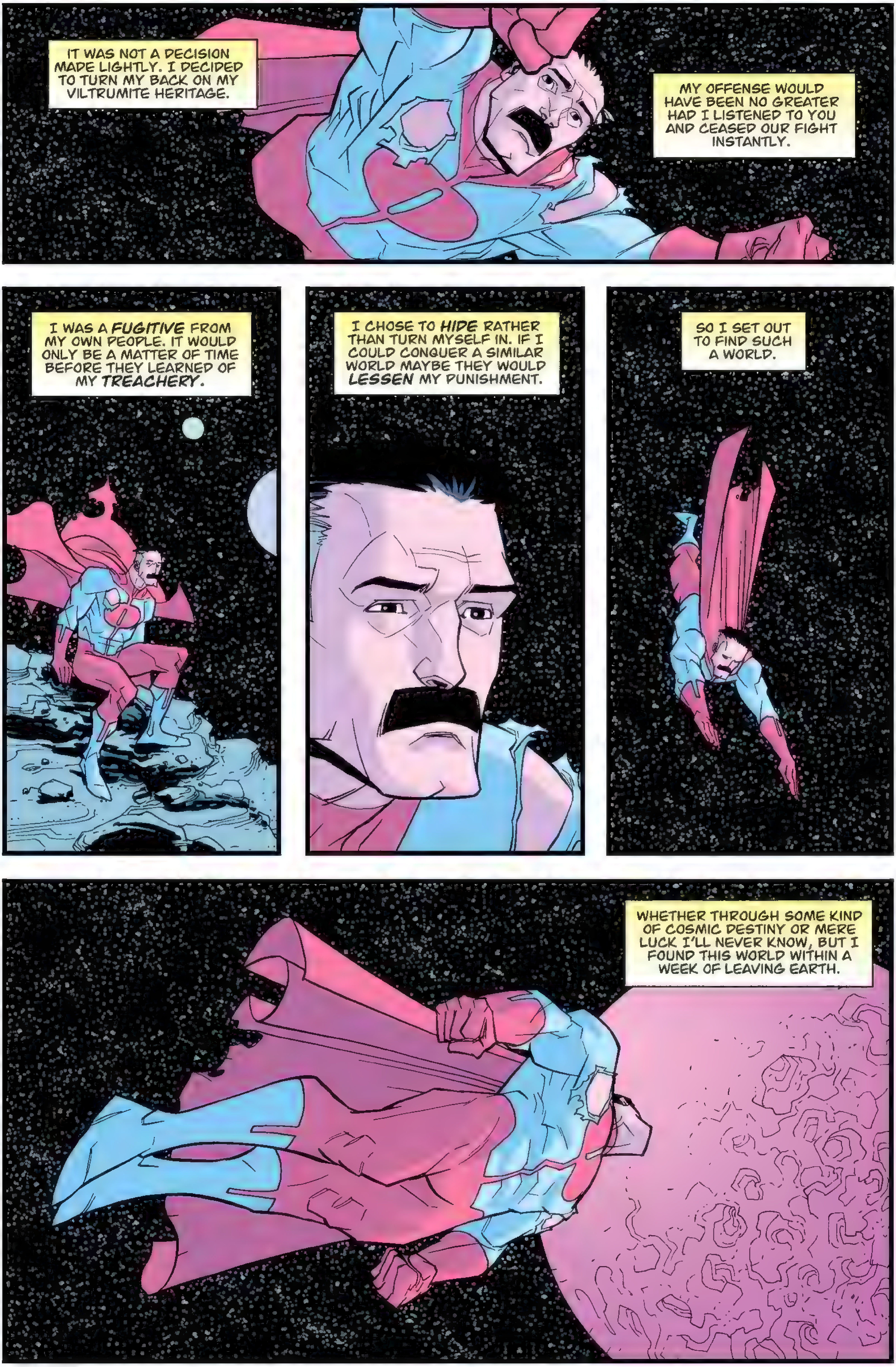

PIG!
THUAK!!
YOU SO MUCH AS *IMPLY* SOMETHING LIKE THAT AGAIN AND MY SON WILL *NEVER* DO ANYTHING FOR YOU.
WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU *THINKING?*
I ASSURE YOU, MA'AM. I WAS THINKING NO SUCH THING. I'M A LITTLE SHOCKED YOU TOOK WHAT I SAID TO MEAN THAT.
I MEANT WE HAD CLERICAL WORK AVAILABLE-- TYPING AND WHAT NOT. NOT THE MOST FUN THING TO SPEND YOUR TIME DOING, BUT IT WOULDN'T REQUIRE ANY FURTHER SCHOOLING.
I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT IF REAL ESTATE DOESN'T WORK OUT... YOU HAVE OPTIONS.
RIGHT, THEN... SORRY FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING. I--OVER-REACTED.
PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY.
NAWLIDGE
DON'T SWEAT IT, REALLY. I'VE BEEN OFF FIELD DUTY FOR YEARS. GETTING POPPED LIKE THAT REALLY TAKES ME BACK.
I REALLY SHOULD BE GOING THOUGH.
ME TOO.

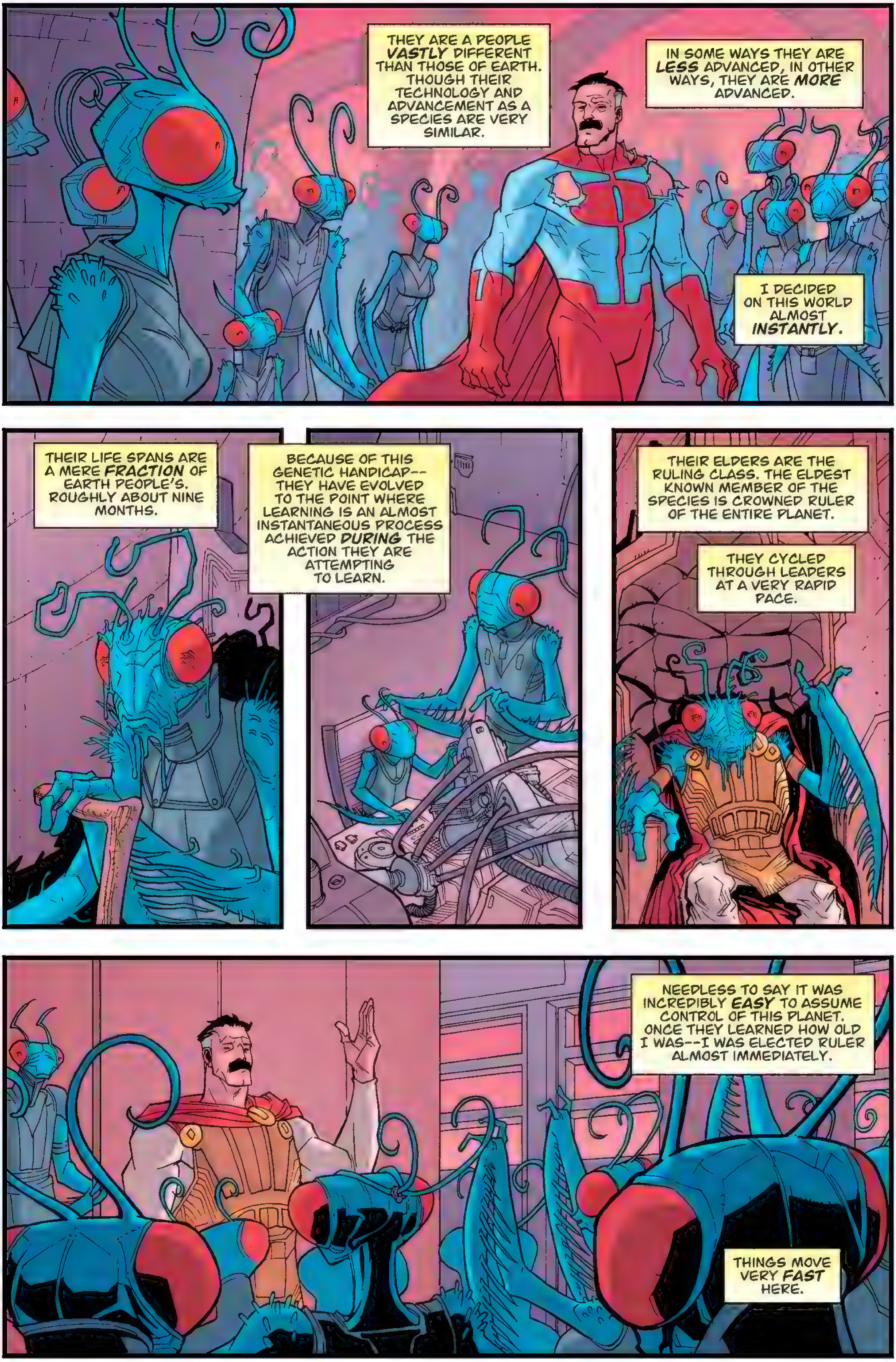

AHH...
FINALLY.

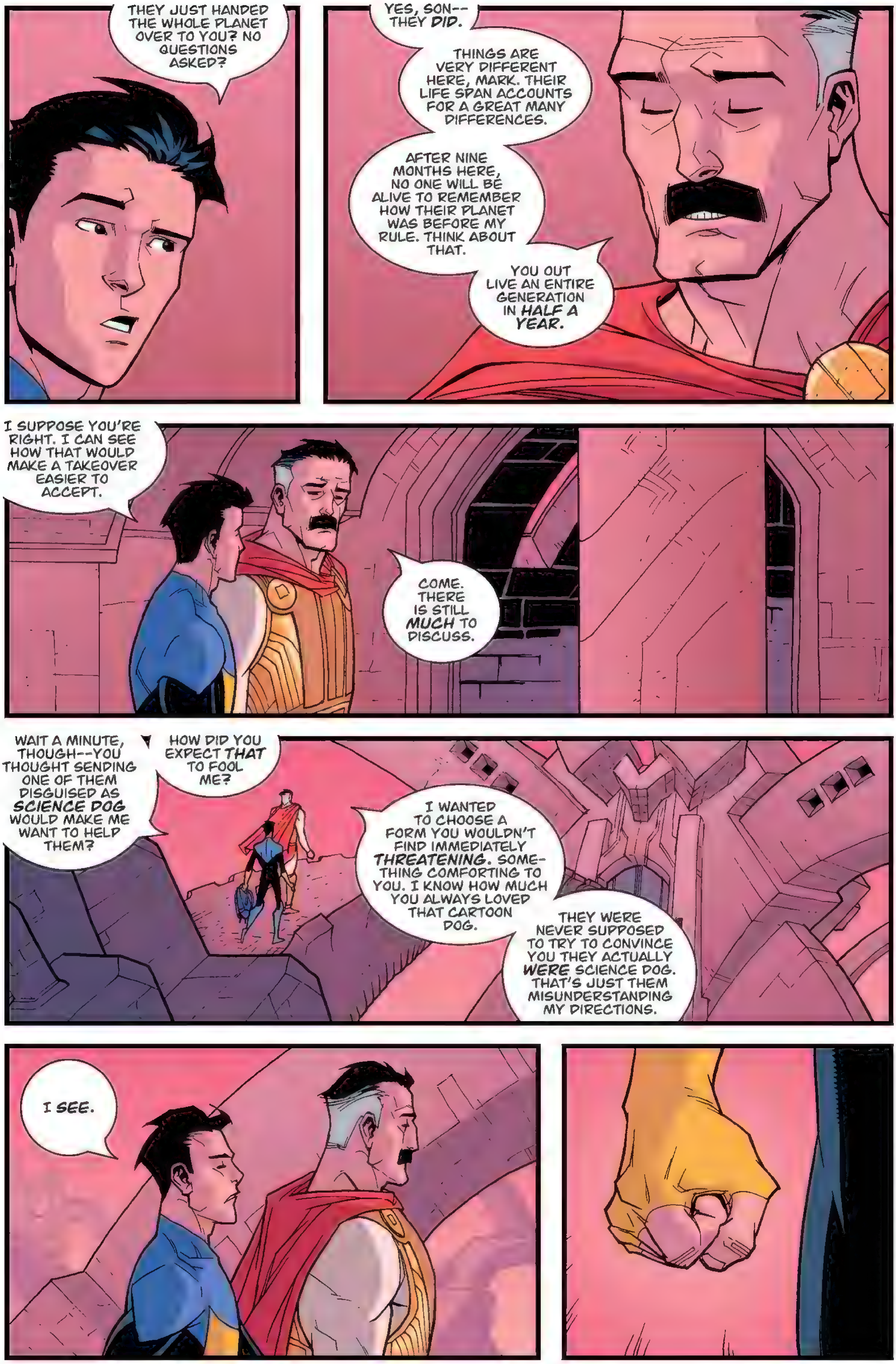

I THOUGHT WE'D *NEVER* FIND A TIME FOR YOU TO SLIP AWAY. THINGS ARE GETTING MORE DIFFICULT WITH KATE AND IMMORTAL STARTING A RELATIONSHIP.
REX IS ALWAYS AROUND NOW--HE HAS *NOTHING* TO DO. I SWEAR IF BLACK SAMSON WASN'T STILL IN THAT COMA WE'D NEVER GET ANY ALONE TIME.
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT I HOLD IN MY HANDS? DO YOU REALIZE THE POWER I NOW HAVE?
OF *COURSE* YOU DON'T.
THIS DNA SAMPLE FROM REX SPLODE COULD WELL MAKE YOU OBSOLETE. I WOULD NO LONGER *NEED* YOU.
IF ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN I'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE FREELY AMONG THEM, WITHOUT CAUSING ANY PAUSE. THEY'LL ACCEPT ME AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.
I'LL BE ONE OF THEM.
AND FROM THERE I CAN MOVE ON TO *PHASE TWO!*


SO--THE FIGHTING IS *OVER?* WE'RE DONE WITH THAT?
YEAH.
I CAN'T-- THE TERRIBLE THINGS YOU SAID-- THE *HORRIFIC* THINGS YOU DID--I CAN'T *FORGIVE* IT--BUT I CAN'T LET IT ERASE THE EIGHTEEN YEARS I HAD WITH THE FATHER I *LOVED*.
I'VE *TRIED*... AND I JUST *CAN'T*.
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
LEAVE US.

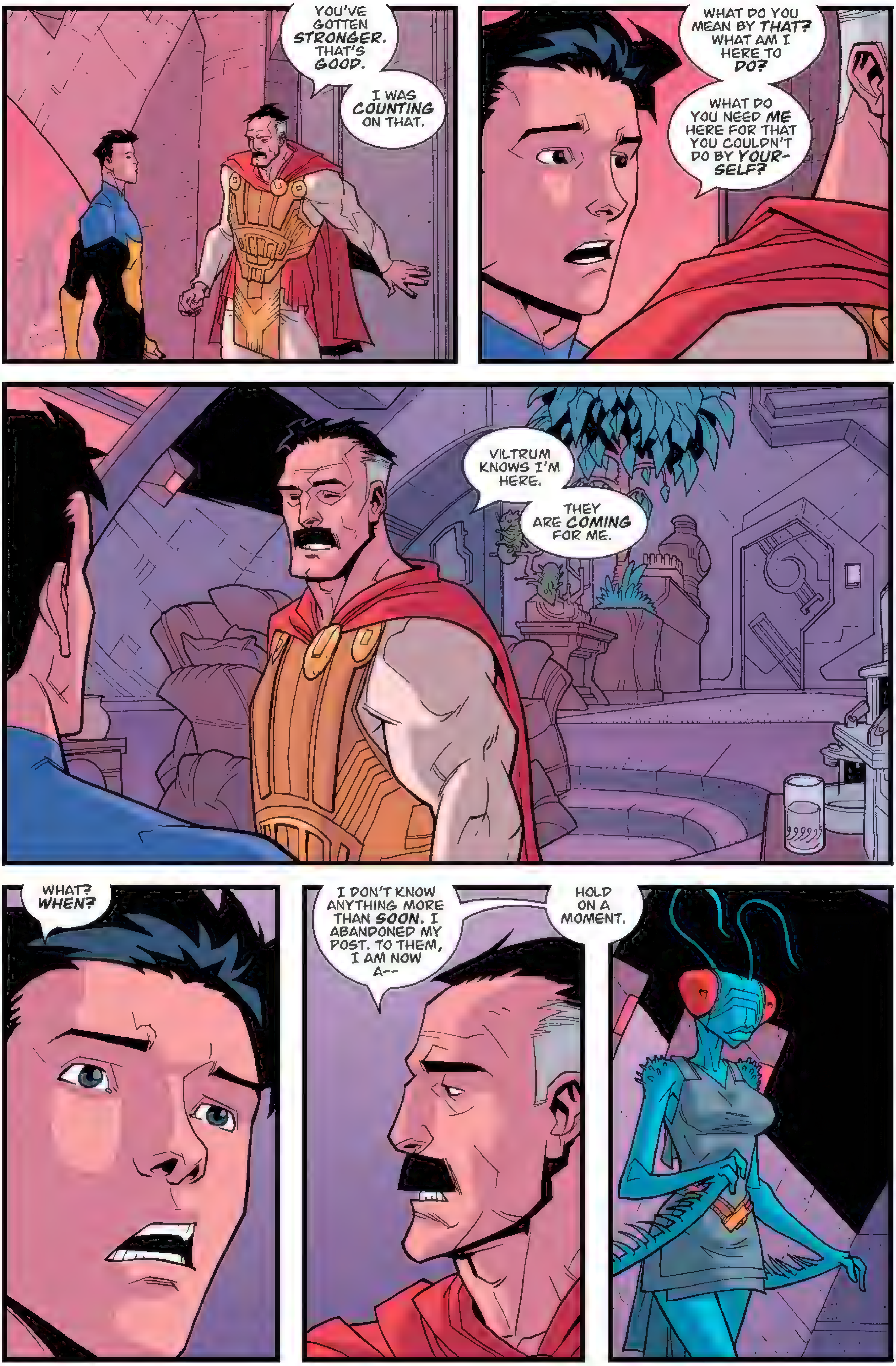
I LIVED AS A VILTRUMITE FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS BEFORE I CAME TO EARTH--BUT WHAT LITTLE TIME I SPENT THERE-- *CHANGED* ME.
I WAS READY TO KILL YOU WHEN YOU DEFIED ME. I WOULD HAVE. THOSE ARE THE WAYS OF THE VILTRUMITE.
YOU WERE *WEAK*. YOU *DESERVED* TO *DIE*.
BUT WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I *WOULD* HAVE TO KILL YOU--THAT YOU *WOULD NOT* JOIN ME--WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I WOULD HAVE NO OTHER OPTION...
...I COULDN'T DO IT.
I HAD TWO CHOICES. I COULD KILL YOU AND ENSLAVE EARTH AS I WAS MEANT TO. OR I COULD LEAVE EARTH--AND LEAVE *YOU*.
I CHOSE TO *LEAVE*.

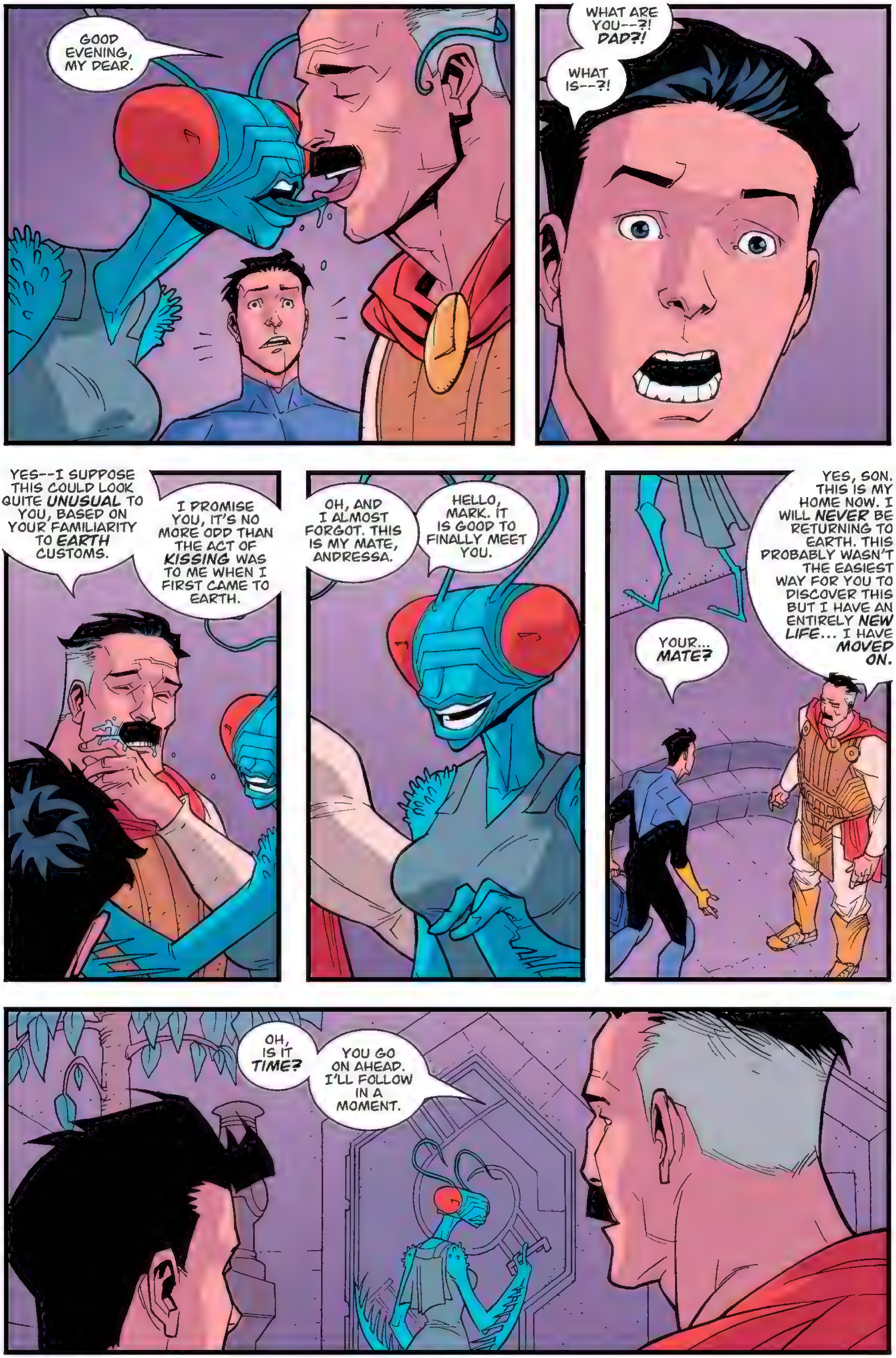

IT WAS NOT A DECISION MADE LIGHTLY. I DECIDED TO TURN MY BACK ON MY VILTRUMITE HERITAGE.
MY OFFENSE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO GREATER HAD I LISTENED TO YOU AND CEASED OUR FIGHT INSTANTLY.
I WAS A *FUGITIVE* FROM MY OWN PEOPLE. IT WOULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY LEARNED OF MY *TREACHERY*.
I CHOSE TO *HIDE* RATHER THAN TURN MYSELF IN. IF I COULD CONQUER A SIMILAR WORLD MAYBE THEY WOULD *LESSEN* MY PUNISHMENT.
SO I SET OUT TO FIND SUCH A WORLD.
WHETHER THROUGH SOME KIND OF COSMIC DESTINY OR MERE LUCK I'LL NEVER KNOW, BUT I FOUND THIS WORLD WITHIN A WEEK OF LEAVING EARTH.

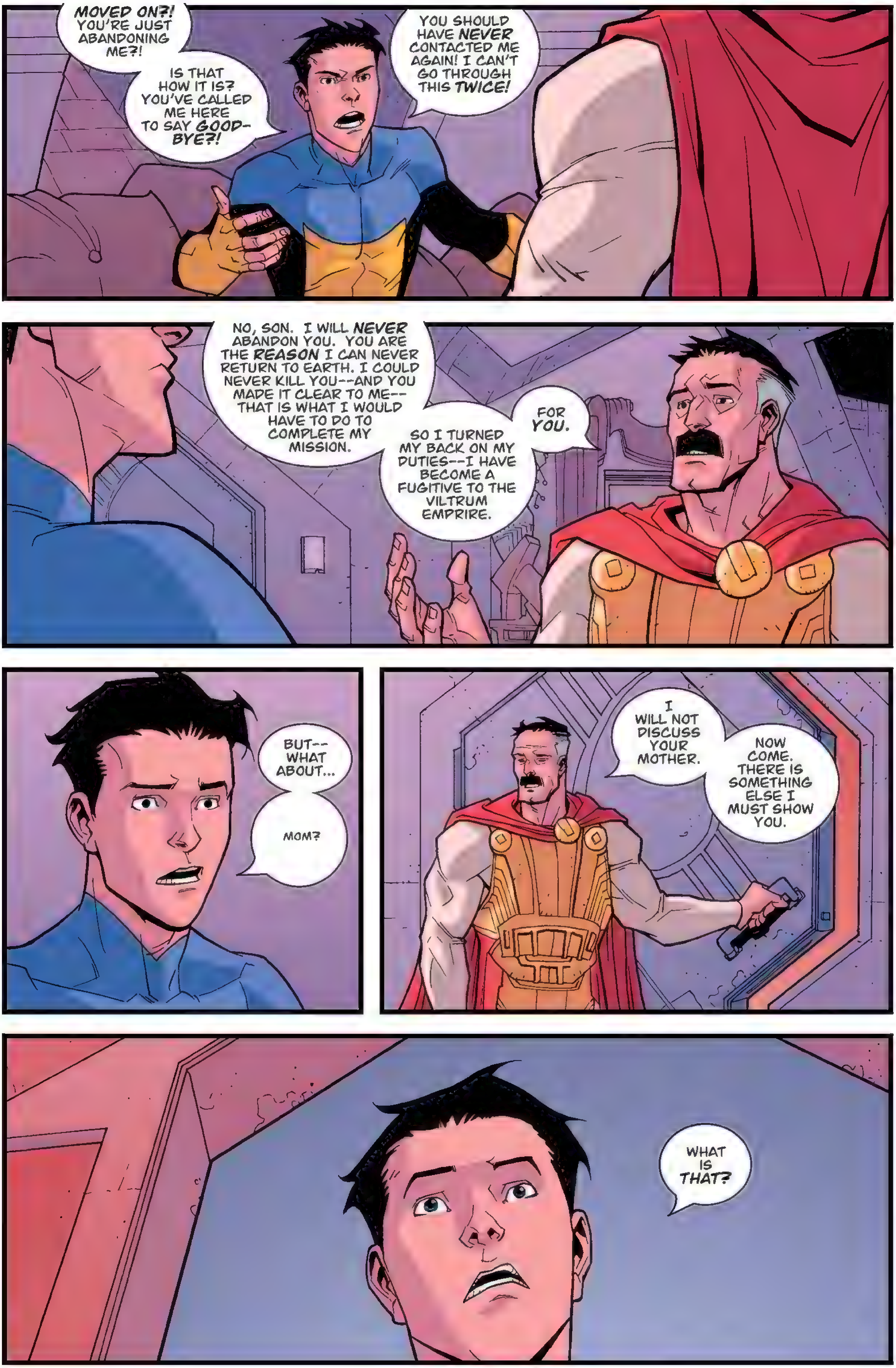

THEY ARE A PEOPLE *VASTLY* DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF EARTH. THOUGH THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCEMENT AS A SPECIES ARE VERY SIMILAR.
IN SOME WAYS THEY ARE *LESS* ADVANCED, IN OTHER WAYS, THEY ARE *MORE* ADVANCED.
I DECIDED ON THIS WORLD ALMOST *INSTANTLY.*
THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE A MERE *FRACTION* OF EARTH PEOPLE'S. ROUGHLY ABOUT NINE MONTHS.
BECAUSE OF THIS GENETIC HANDICAP-- THEY HAVE EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE LEARNING IS AN ALMOST INSTANTANEOUS PROCESS ACHIEVED *DURING* THE ACTION THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO LEARN.
THEIR ELDERS ARE THE RULING CLASS. THE ELDEST KNOWN MEMBER OF THE SPECIES IS CROWNED RULER OF THE ENTIRE PLANET.
THEY CYCLED THROUGH LEADERS AT A VERY RAPID PACE.
NEEDLESS TO SAY IT WAS INCREDIBLY *EASY* TO ASSUME CONTROL OF THIS PLANET. ONCE THEY LEARNED HOW OLD I WAS--I WAS ELECTED RULER ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.
THINGS MOVE VERY *FAST* HERE.


THEY JUST HANDED THE WHOLE PLANET OVER TO YOU? NO QUESTIONS ASKED?
YES, SON-- THEY *DID*.
THINGS ARE VERY DIFFERENT HERE, MARK. THEIR LIFE SPAN ACCOUNTS FOR A GREAT MANY DIFFERENCES.
AFTER NINE MONTHS HERE, NO ONE WILL BE ALIVE TO REMEMBER HOW THEIR PLANET WAS BEFORE MY RULE. THINK ABOUT THAT.
YOU OUT LIVE AN ENTIRE GENERATION IN *HALF A YEAR.*
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I CAN SEE HOW THAT WOULD MAKE A TAKEOVER EASIER TO ACCEPT.
COME. THERE IS STILL *MUCH* TO DISCUSS.
WAIT A MINUTE, THOUGH--YOU THOUGHT SENDING ONE OF THEM DISGUISED AS *SCIENCE DOG* WOULD MAKE ME WANT TO HELP THEM?
HOW DID YOU EXPECT *THAT* TO FOOL ME?
I WANTED TO CHOOSE A FORM YOU WOULDN'T FIND IMMEDIATELY *THREATENING*. SOMETHING COMFORTING TO YOU. I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU ALWAYS LOVED THAT CARTOON DOG.
THEY WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO TRY TO CONVINCE YOU THEY ACTUALLY *WERE* SCIENCE DOG. THAT'S JUST THEM MISUNDERSTANDING MY DIRECTIONS.
I *SEE*.

CHOOOM!!
WHAT?!
OKAY! STOP! CALM DOWN!!
I SAW WHAT THESE THINGS CAN DO--MASKING THEMSELVES AS SCIENCE DOG-- I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU--
I JUST HAD TO BE SURE!
AND NOW?
I'M SURE.


YOU'VE GOTTEN STRONGER. THAT'S GOOD.
I WAS COUNTING ON THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT? WHAT AM I HERE TO DO?
WHAT DO YOU NEED ME HERE FOR THAT YOU COULDN'T DO BY YOURSELF?
VILTRUM KNOWS I'M HERE.
THEY ARE COMING FOR ME.
WHAT? WHEN?
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING MORE THAN SOON. I ABANDONED MY POST. TO THEM, I AM NOW A--
HOLD ON A MOMENT.


GOOD EVENING, MY DEAR.
WHAT ARE YOU--?! *DAD?!*
WHAT IS--?!
YES--I SUPPOSE THIS COULD LOOK QUITE *UNUSUAL* TO YOU, BASED ON YOUR FAMILIARITY TO *EARTH* CUSTOMS.
I PROMISE YOU, IT'S NO MORE ODD THAN THE ACT OF *KISSING* WAS TO ME WHEN I FIRST CAME TO EARTH.
OH, AND I ALMOST FORGOT. THIS IS MY MATE, ANDRESSA.
HELLO, MARK. IT IS GOOD TO FINALLY MEET YOU.
YOUR... *MATE?*
YES, SON. THIS IS MY HOME NOW. I WILL *NEVER* BE RETURNING TO EARTH. THIS PROBABLY WASN'T THE EASIEST WAY FOR YOU TO DISCOVER THIS BUT I HAVE AN ENTIRELY *NEW LIFE*... I HAVE *MOVED ON.*
OH, IS IT *TIME?*
YOU GO ON AHEAD. I'LL FOLLOW IN A MOMENT.

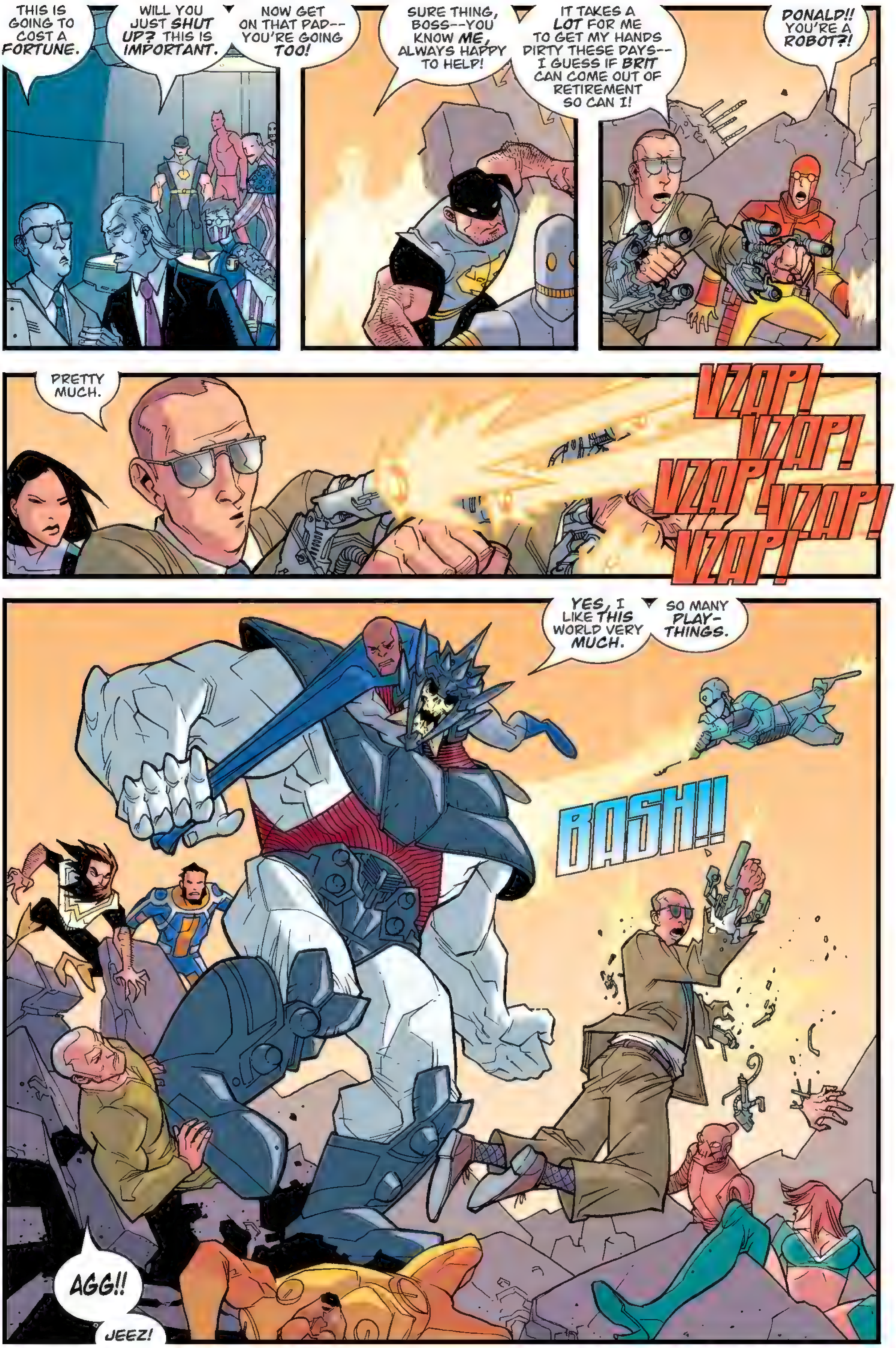

MOVED ON?! YOU'RE JUST ABANDONING ME?!
IS THAT HOW IT IS? YOU'VE CALLED ME HERE TO SAY GOOD-BYE?!
YOU SHOULD HAVE NEVER CONTACTED ME AGAIN! I CAN'T GO THROUGH THIS TWICE!
NO, SON. I WILL NEVER ABANDON YOU. YOU ARE THE REASON I CAN NEVER RETURN TO EARTH. I COULD NEVER KILL YOU--AND YOU MADE IT CLEAR TO ME--THAT IS WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO DO TO COMPLETE MY MISSION.
SO I TURNED MY BACK ON MY DUTIES--I HAVE BECOME A FUGITIVE TO THE VILTRUM EMPRIRE.
FOR YOU.
BUT--WHAT ABOUT...
MOM?
I WILL NOT DISCUSS YOUR MOTHER.
NOW COME. THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE I MUST SHOW YOU.
WHAT IS THAT?

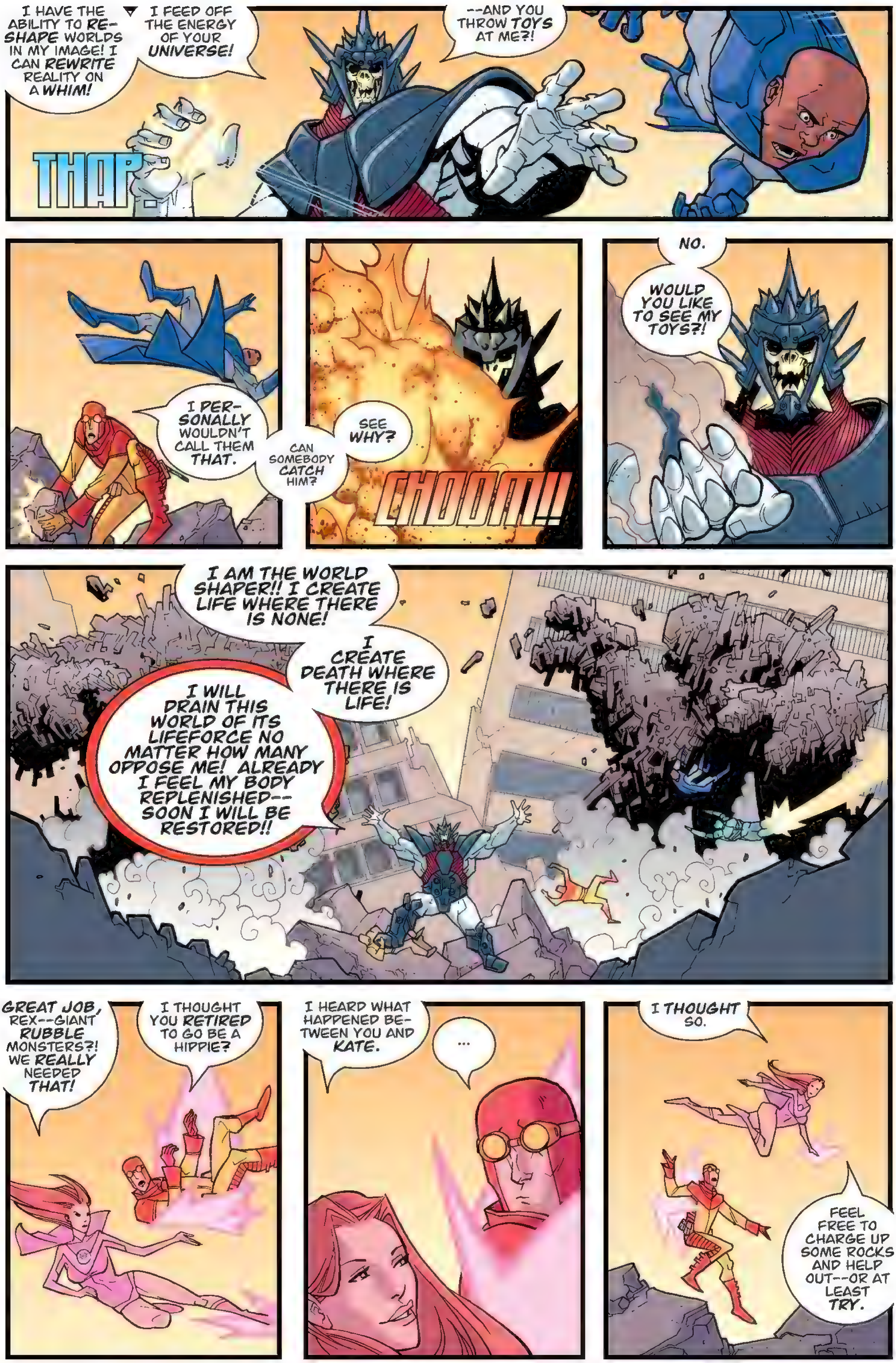
THAT...
...IS YOUR LITTLE BROTHER.

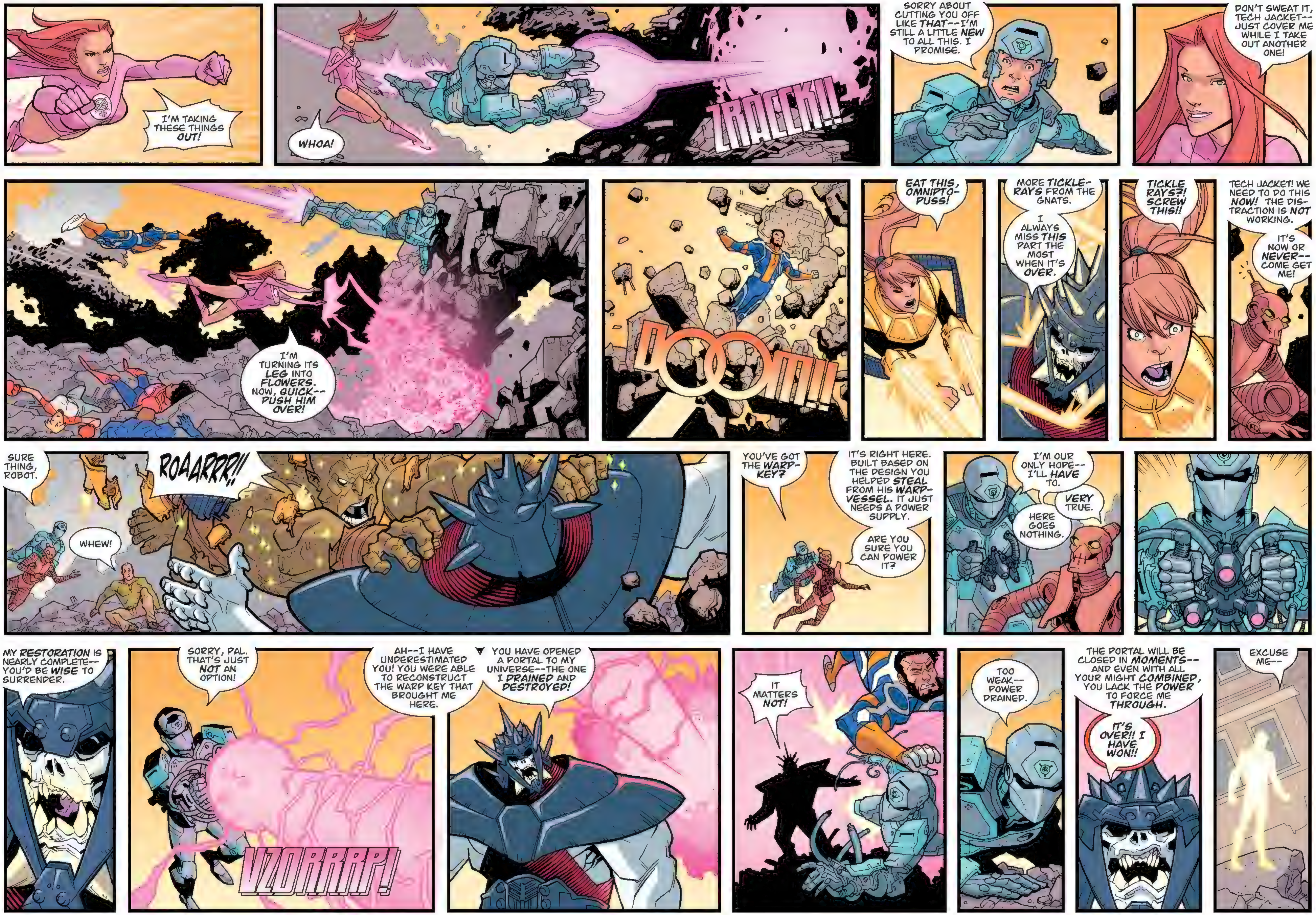
ISSUE TWENTY-SEVEN

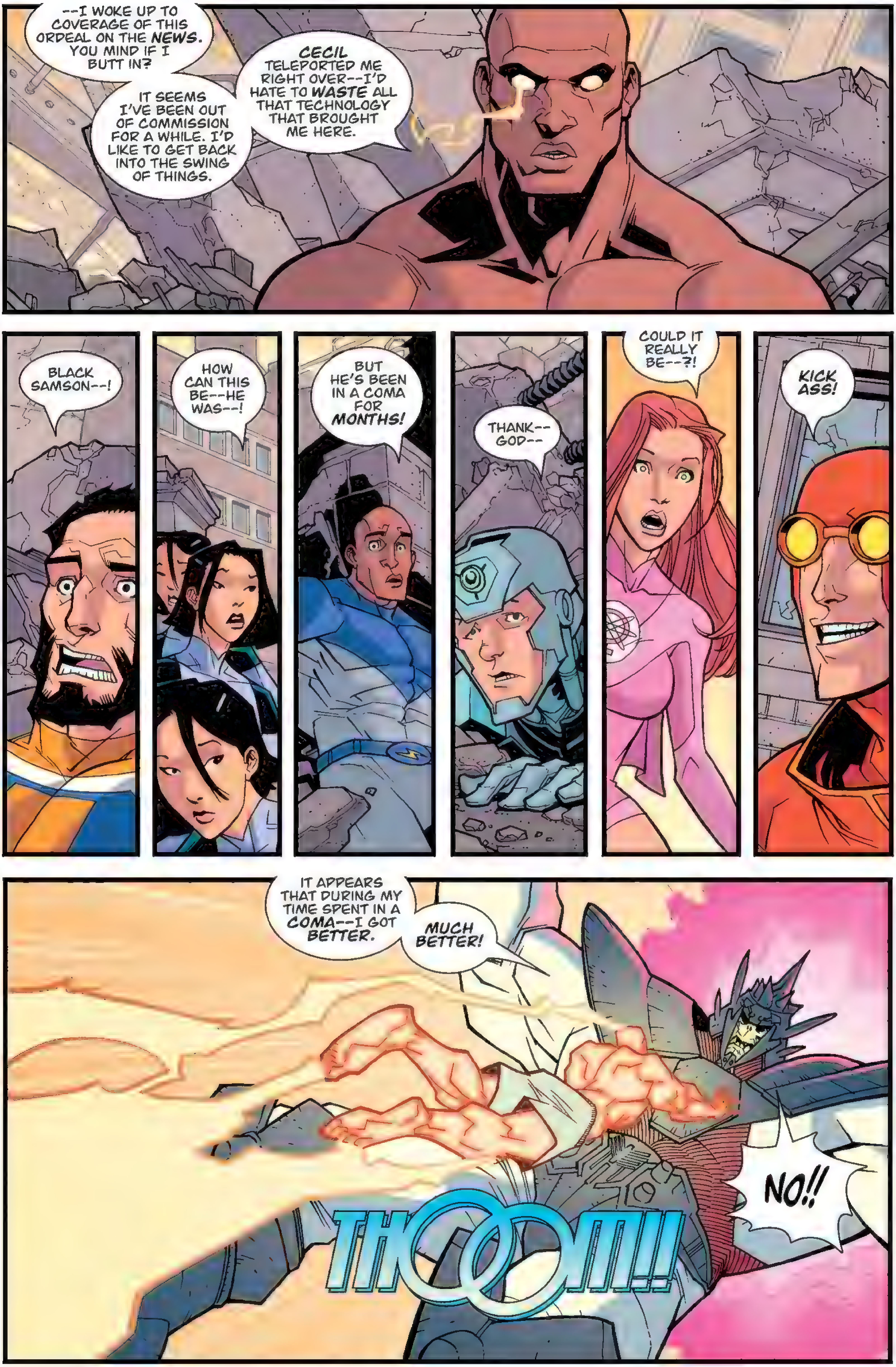
MEANWHILE, BACK ON EARTH.
BEHOLD THE MIGHT OF OMNIPOTUS, THE WORLD SHAPER, AND BEHOLD THE END OF ALL THINGS!
TREMBLE BEFORE MY UNLIMITED POWER!

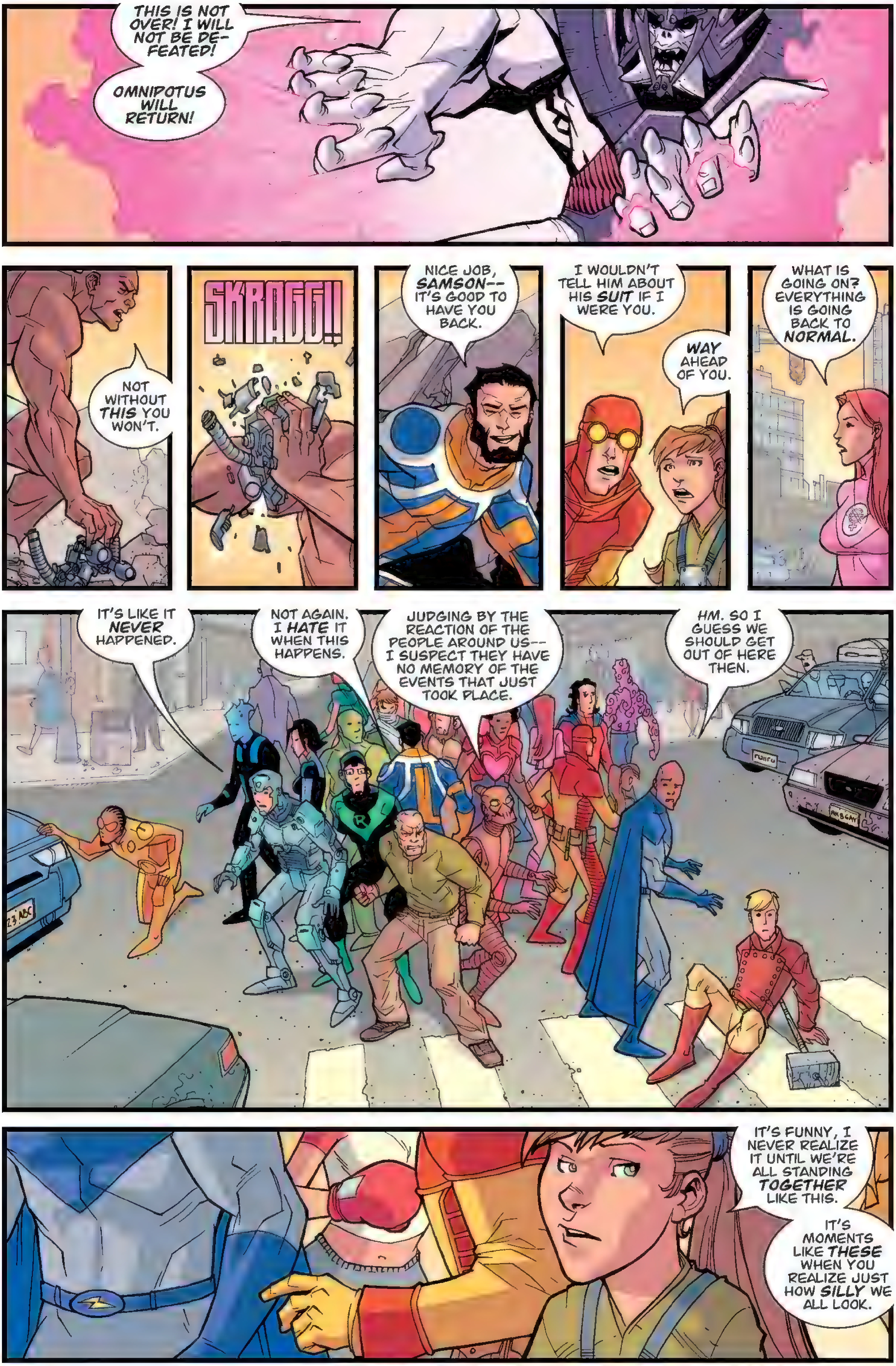
BOY-- DID YOU PICK THE *WRONG* UNIVERSE!

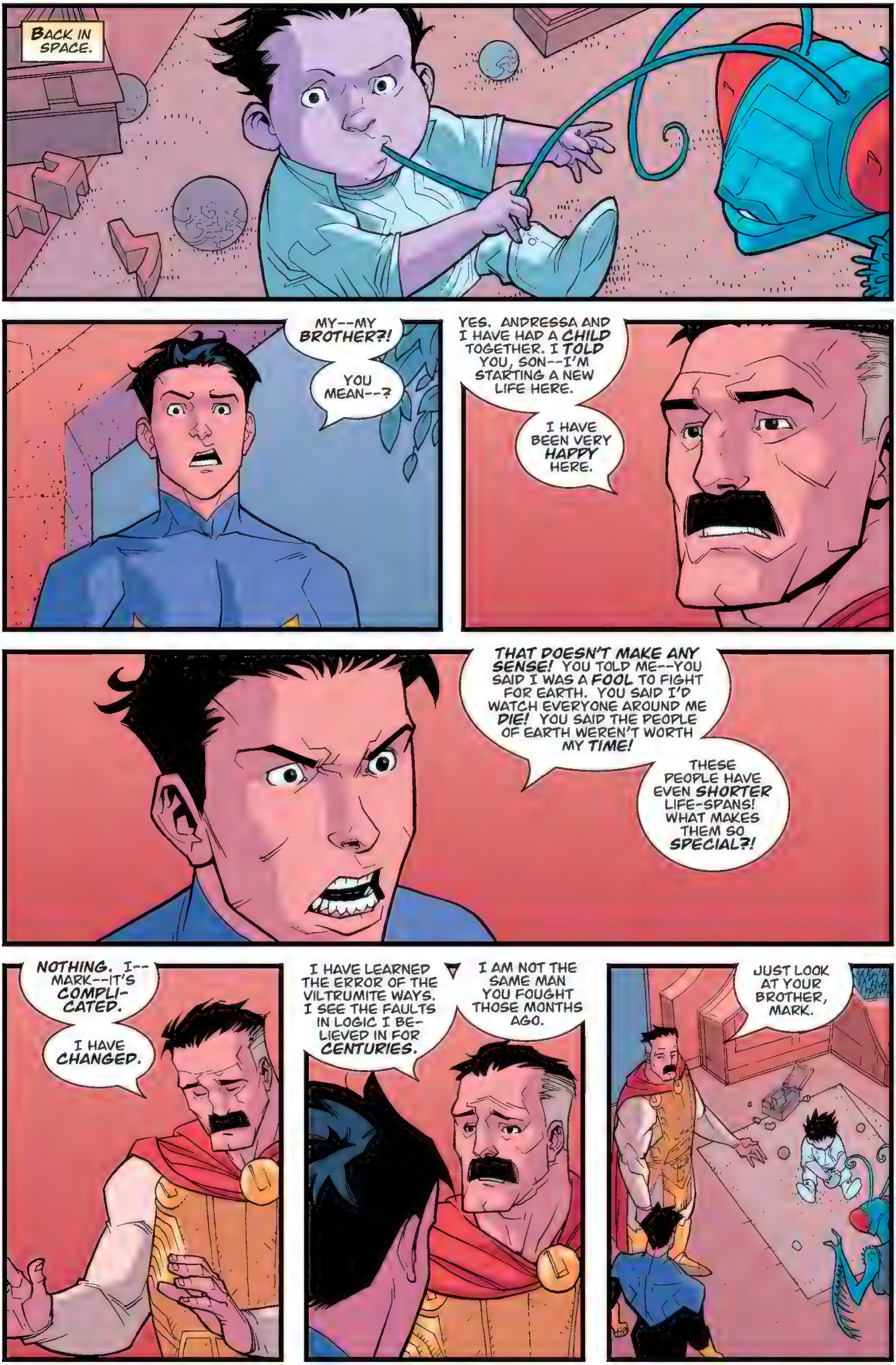

THIS IS GOING TO COST A FORTUNE.
WILL YOU JUST SHUT UP? THIS IS IMPORTANT.
NOW GET ON THAT PAD-- YOU'RE GOING TOO!
SURE THING, BOSS--YOU KNOW ME, ALWAYS HAPPY TO HELP!
IT TAKES A LOT FOR ME TO GET MY HANDS DIRTY THESE DAYS-- I GUESS IF BRIT CAN COME OUT OF RETIREMENT SO CAN I!
DONALD!! YOU'RE A ROBOT?!
PRETTY MUCH.
VZAP! VZAP! VZAP! VZAP! VZAP!
YES, I LIKE THIS WORLD VERY MUCH.
SO MANY PLAY-THINGS.
BASH!!
AGG!!
JEEZ!

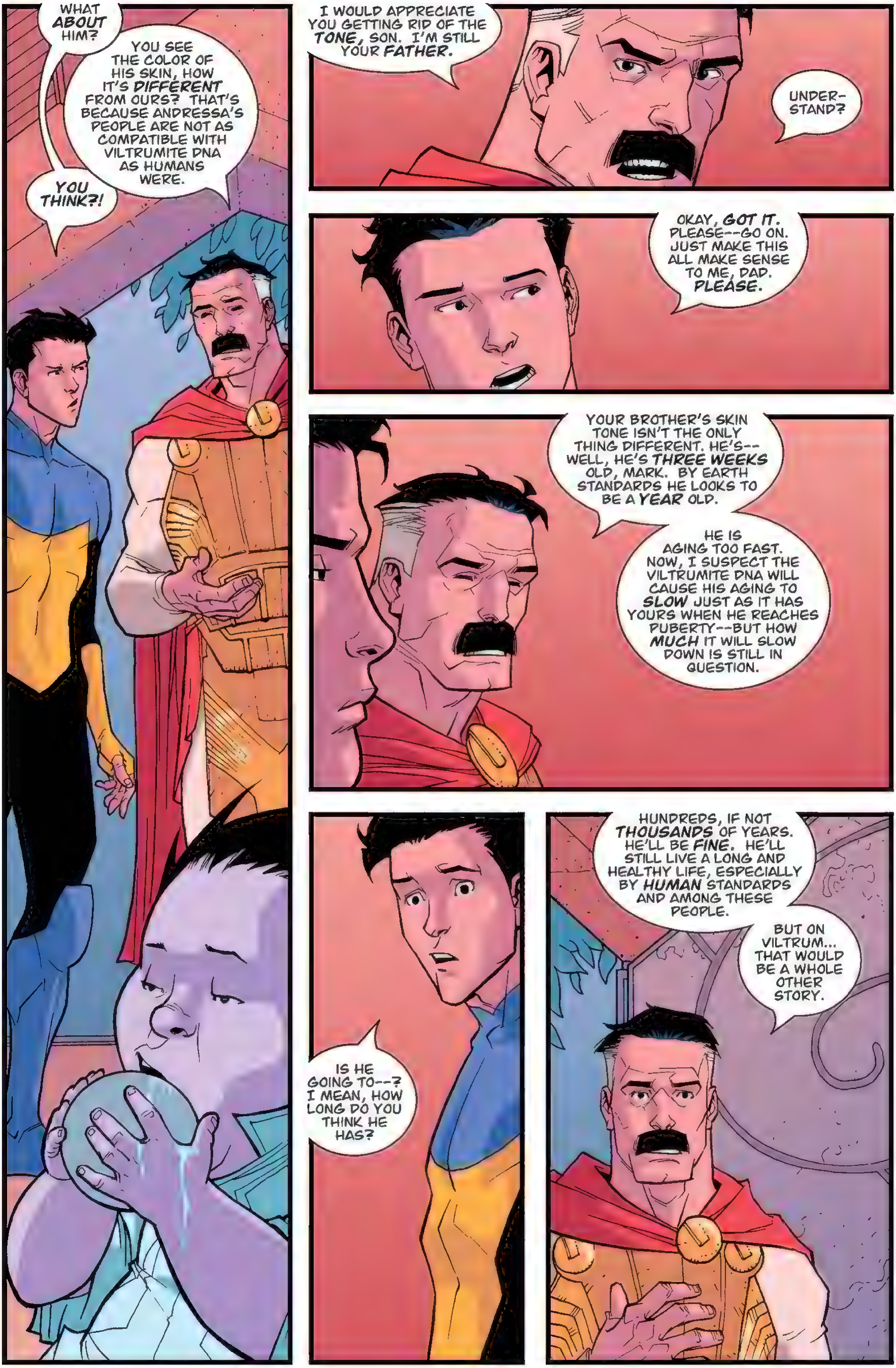

I HAVE THE ABILITY TO RE-SHAPE WORLDS IN MY IMAGE! I CAN REWRITE REALITY ON A WHIM!
I FEED OFF THE ENERGY OF YOUR UNIVERSE!
--AND YOU THROW TOYS AT ME?!
THAP!
I PERSONALLY WOULDN'T CALL THEM THAT.
CAN SOMEBODY CATCH HIM?
SEE WHY?
CHOOM!!
NO.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MY TOYS?!
I AM THE WORLD SHAPER!! I CREATE LIFE WHERE THERE IS NONE!
I CREATE DEATH WHERE THERE IS LIFE!
I WILL DRAIN THIS WORLD OF ITS LIFEFORCE NO MATTER HOW MANY OPPOSE ME! ALREADY I FEEL MY BODY REPLENISHED-- SOON I WILL BE RESTORED!!
GREAT JOB, REX--GIANT RUBBLE MONSTERS?! WE REALLY NEEDED THAT!
I THOUGHT YOU RETIRED TO GO BE A HIPPIE?
I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND KATE.
...
I THOUGHT SO.
FEEL FREE TO CHARGE UP SOME ROCKS AND HELP OUT--OR AT LEAST TRY.

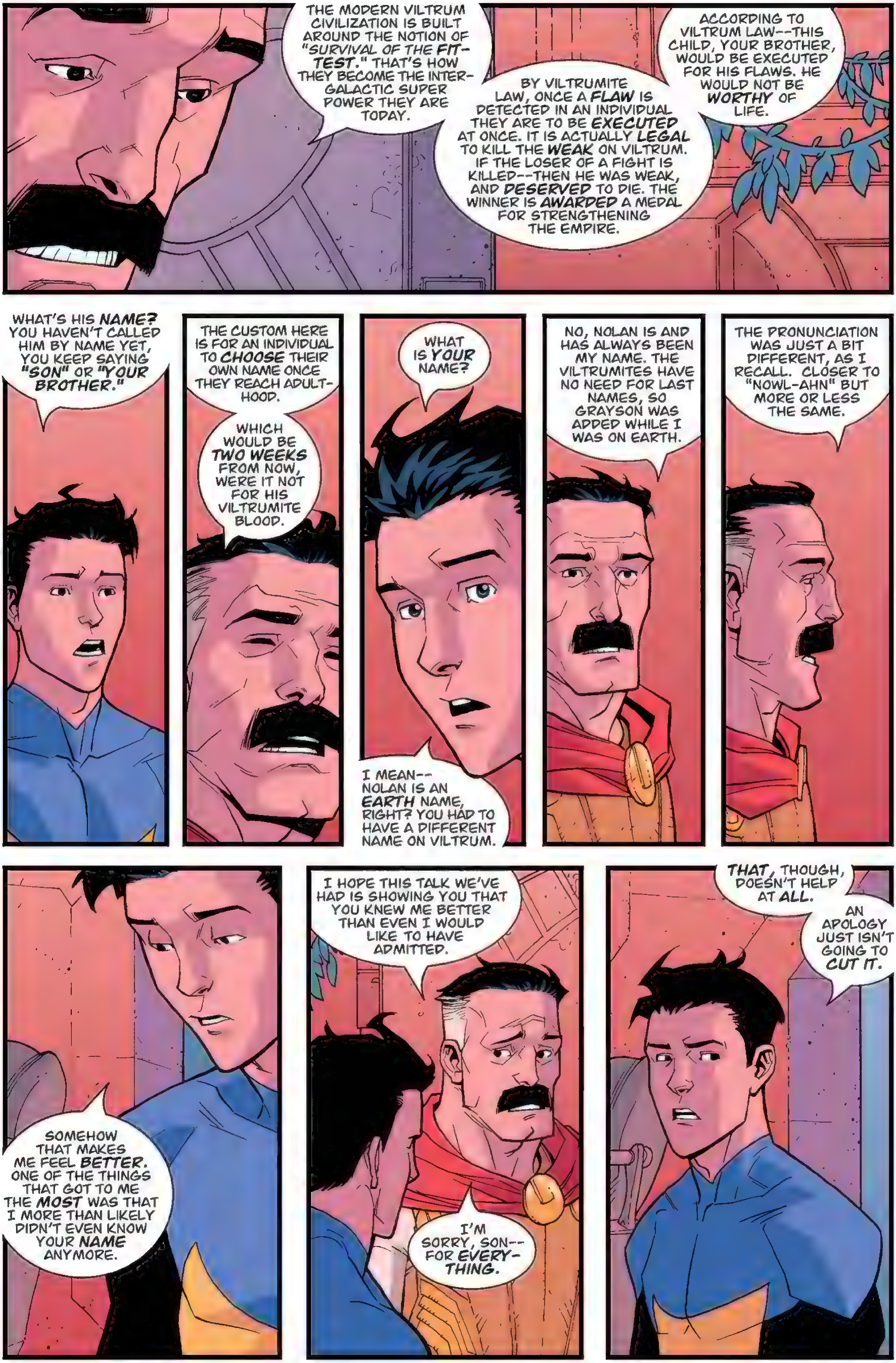

I'M TAKING THESE THINGS OUT!
WHOA!
ZRACCK!!
SORRY ABOUT CUTTING YOU OFF LIKE THAT--I'M STILL A LITTLE NEW TO ALL THIS. I PROMISE.
DON'T SWEAT IT, TECH JACKET--JUST COVER ME WHILE I TAKE OUT ANOTHER ONE!
I'M TURNING ITS LEG INTO FLOWERS. NOW, QUICK--PUSH HIM OVER!
DOOOM!!
EAT THIS, OMNIPTOPUSS!
MORE TICKLE-RAYS FROM THE GNATS.
I ALWAYS MISS THIS PART THE MOST WHEN IT'S OVER.
TICKLE RAYS?! SCREW THIS!!
TECH JACKET! WE NEED TO DO THIS NOW! THE DISTRACTION IS NOT WORKING.
IT'S NOW OR NEVER--COME GET ME!
SURE THING, ROBOT.
ROAARRR!!
WHEW!
YOU'VE GOT THE WARP-KEY?
IT'S RIGHT HERE. BUILT BASED ON THE DESIGN YOU HELPED STEAL FROM HIS WARP-VESSEL. IT JUST NEEDS A POWER SUPPLY.
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN POWER IT?
I'M OUR ONLY HOPE--I'LL HAVE TO.
VERY TRUE.
HERE GOES NOTHING.
MY RESTORATION IS NEARLY COMPLETE--YOU'D BE WISE TO SURRENDER.
SORRY, PAL. THAT'S JUST NOT AN OPTION!
VZORRRP!
AH--I HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOU! YOU WERE ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE WARP KEY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE.
YOU HAVE OPENED A PORTAL TO MY UNIVERSE--THE ONE I DRAINED AND DESTROYED!
IT MATTERS NOT!
TOO WEAK--POWER DRAINED.
THE PORTAL WILL BE CLOSED IN MOMENTS--AND EVEN WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT COMBINED, YOU LACK THE POWER TO FORCE ME THROUGH.
IT'S OVER!! I HAVE WON!!
EXCUSE ME--

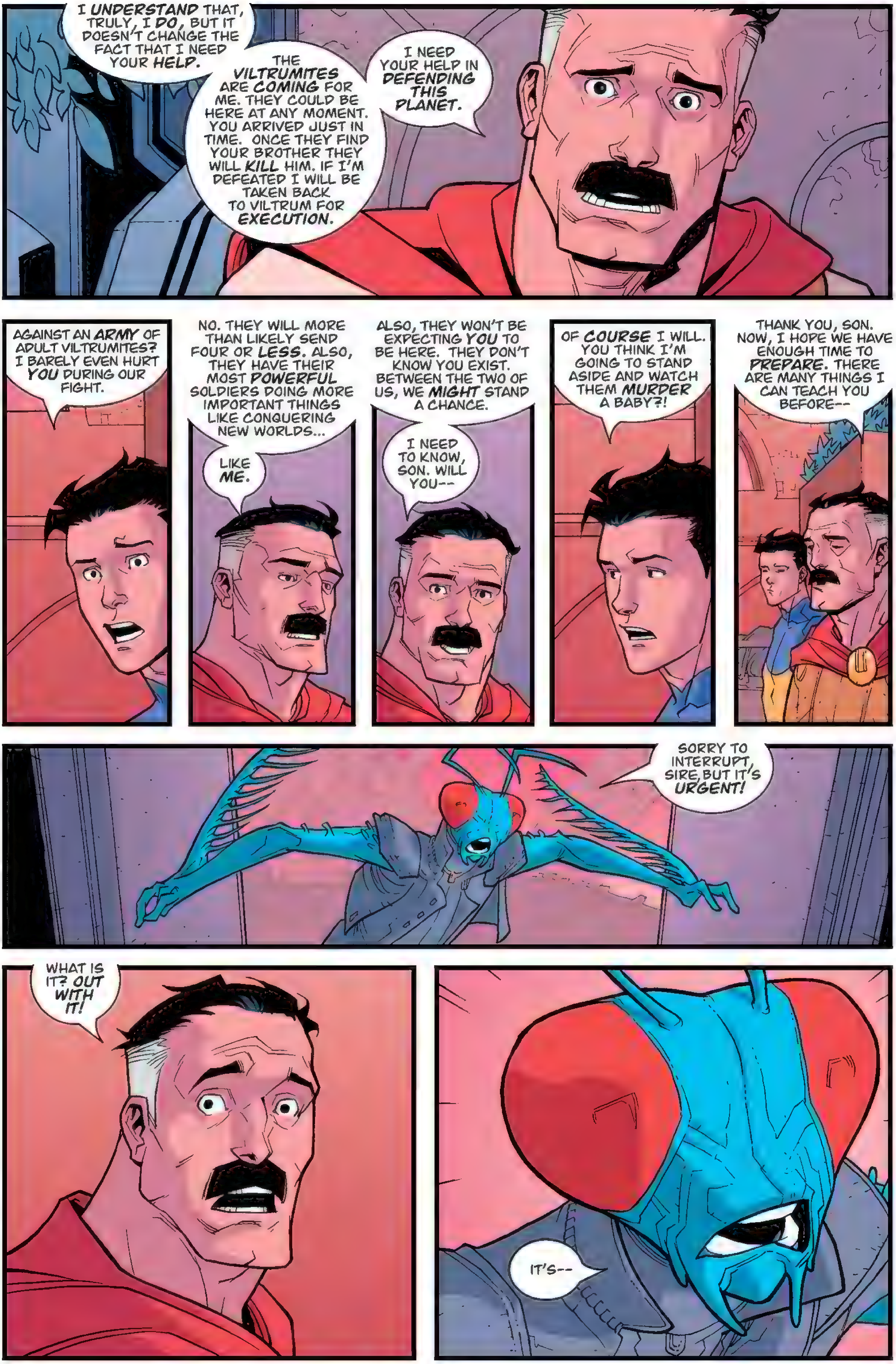

--I WOKE UP TO COVERAGE OF THIS ORDEAL ON THE NEWS. YOU MIND IF I BUTT IN?
IT SEEMS I'VE BEEN OUT OF COMMISSION FOR A WHILE. I'D LIKE TO GET BACK INTO THE SWING OF THINGS.
CECIL TELEPORTED ME RIGHT OVER--I'D HATE TO WASTE ALL THAT TECHNOLOGY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE.
BLACK SAMSON--!
HOW CAN THIS BE--HE WAS--!
BUT HE'S BEEN IN A COMA FOR MONTHS!
THANK--GOD--
COULD IT REALLY BE--?!
KICK ASS!
IT APPEARS THAT DURING MY TIME SPENT IN A COMA--I GOT BETTER.
MUCH BETTER!
NO!!
THOOM!!

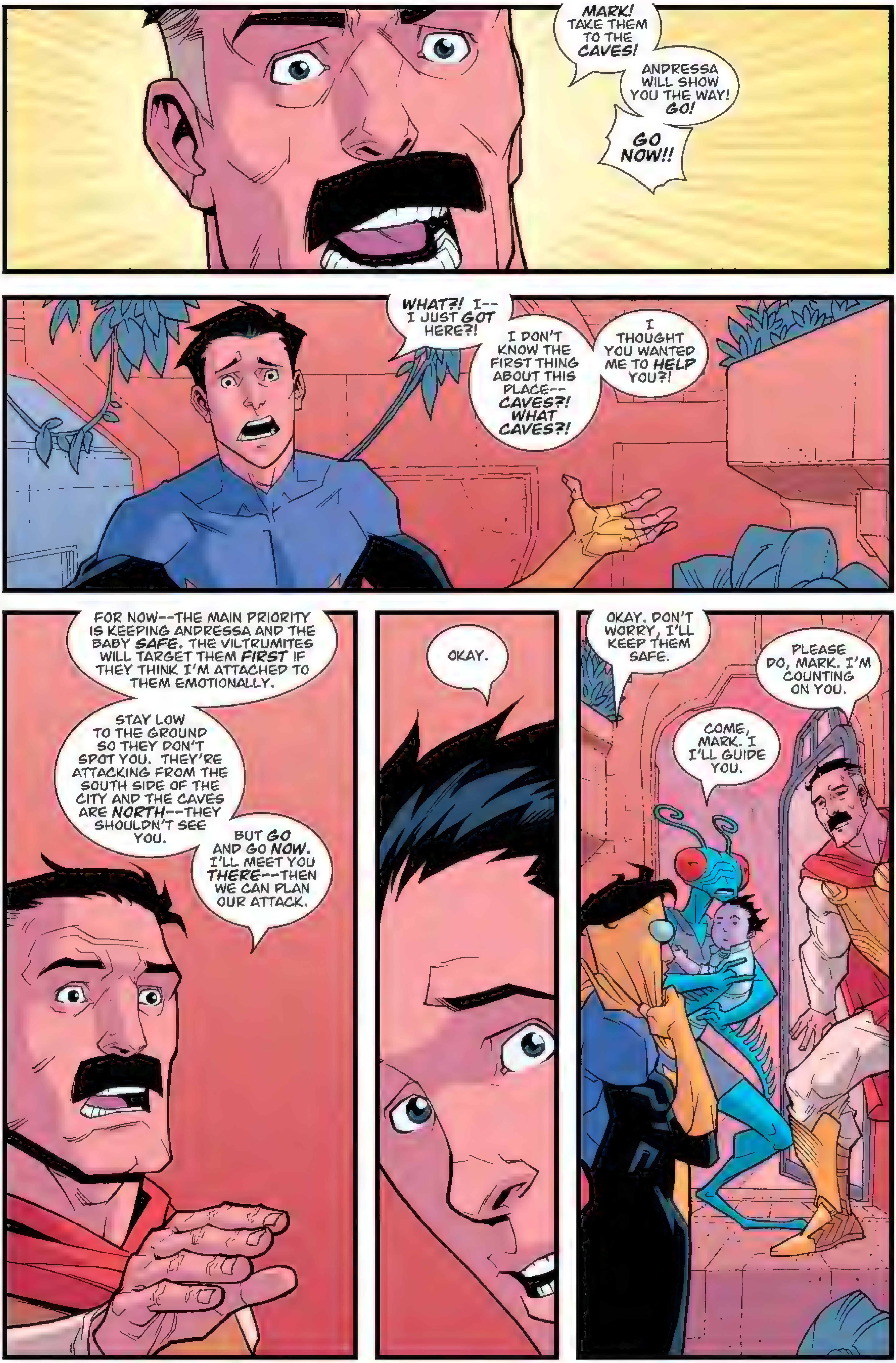

THIS IS NOT OVER! I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED!
OMNIPOTUS WILL RETURN!
NOT WITHOUT *THIS* YOU WON'T.
SKRAGG!!
NICE JOB, **SAMSON**-- IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
I WOULDN'T TELL HIM ABOUT HIS ***SUIT*** IF I WERE YOU.
WAY AHEAD OF YOU.
WHAT IS GOING ON? EVERYTHING IS GOING BACK TO ***NORMAL.***
IT'S LIKE IT ***NEVER*** HAPPENED.
NOT AGAIN. I ***HATE*** IT WHEN THIS HAPPENS.
JUDGING BY THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE AROUND US-- I SUSPECT THEY HAVE NO MEMORY OF THE EVENTS THAT JUST TOOK PLACE.
HM. SO I GUESS WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE THEN.
IT'S FUNNY, I NEVER REALIZE IT UNTIL WE'RE ALL STANDING ***TOGETHER*** LIKE THIS.
IT'S MOMENTS LIKE ***THESE*** WHEN YOU REALIZE JUST HOW ***SILLY*** WE ALL LOOK.

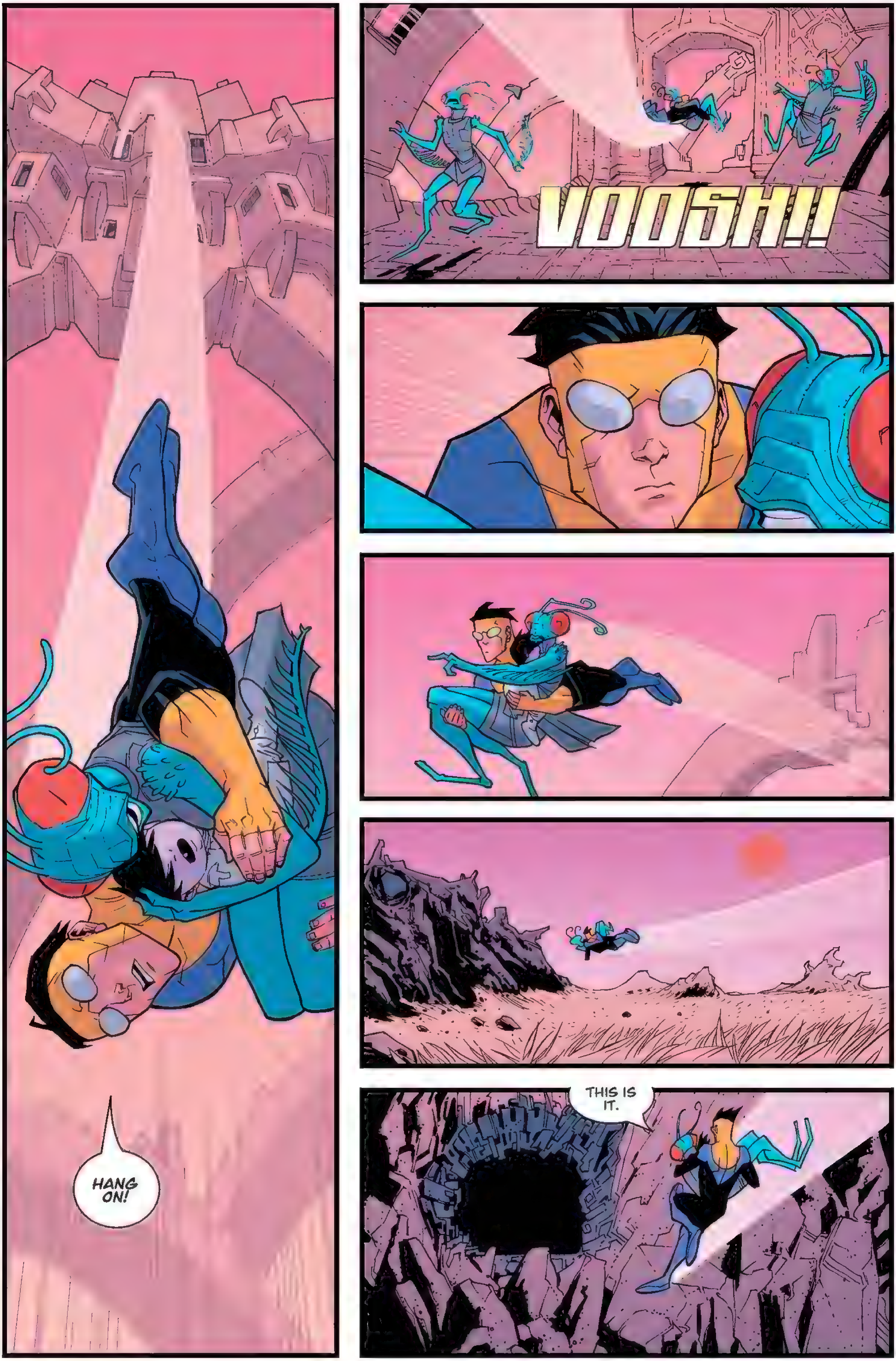

BACK IN SPACE.
MY--MY BROTHER?!
YOU MEAN--?
YES. ANDRESSA AND I HAVE HAD A CHILD TOGETHER. I TOLD YOU, SON--I'M STARTING A NEW LIFE HERE.
I HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY HERE.
THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE! YOU TOLD ME--YOU SAID I WAS A FOOL TO FIGHT FOR EARTH. YOU SAID I'D WATCH EVERYONE AROUND ME DIE! YOU SAID THE PEOPLE OF EARTH WEREN'T WORTH MY TIME!
THESE PEOPLE HAVE EVEN SHORTER LIFE-SPANS! WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL?!
NOTHING. I-- MARK--IT'S COMPLICATED.
I HAVE CHANGED.
I HAVE LEARNED THE ERROR OF THE VILTRUMITE WAYS. I SEE THE FAULTS IN LOGIC I BELIEVED IN FOR CENTURIES.
I AM NOT THE SAME MAN YOU FOUGHT THOSE MONTHS AGO.
JUST LOOK AT YOUR BROTHER, MARK.

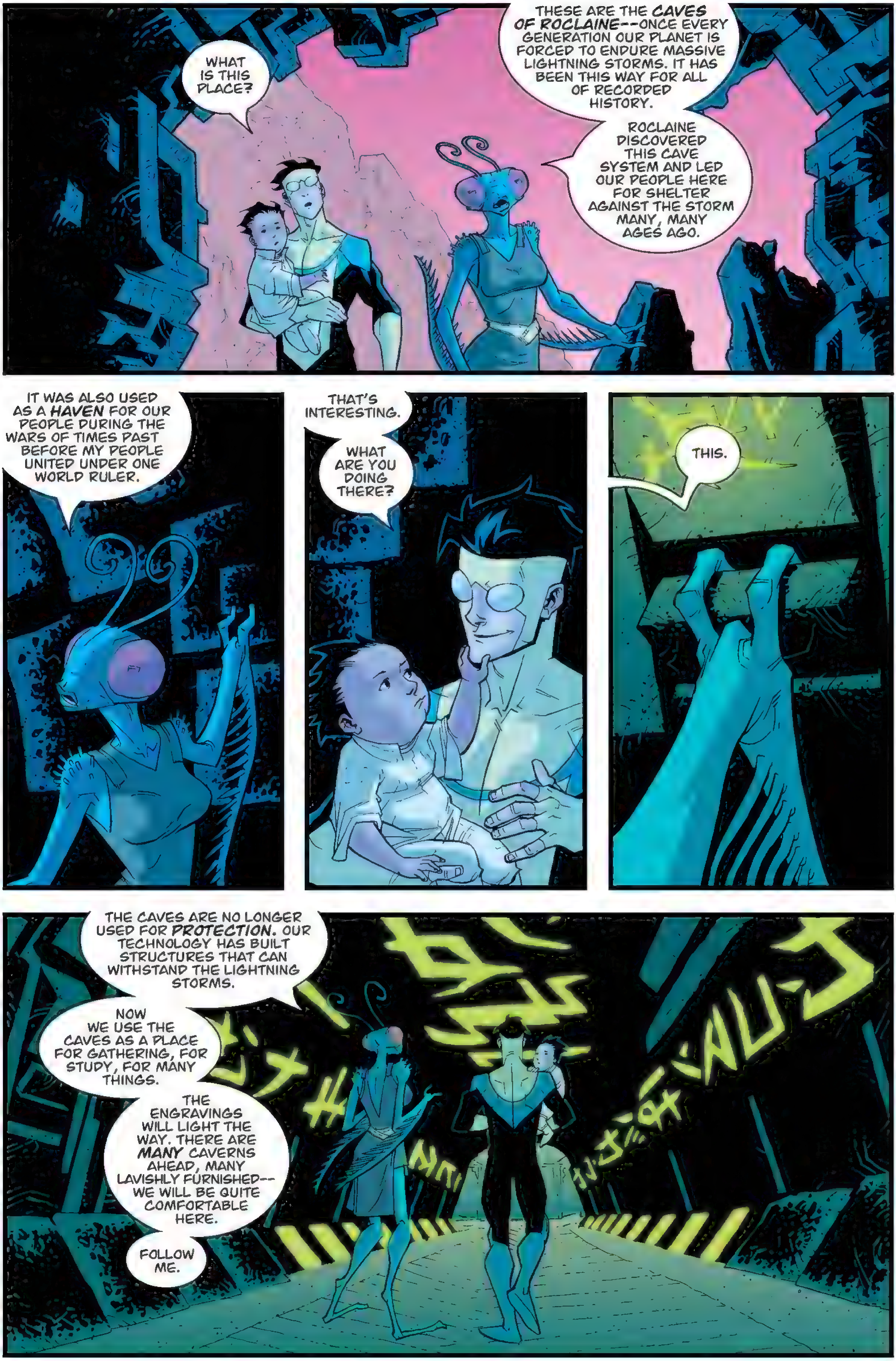

WHAT ABOUT HIM?
YOU SEE THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN, HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM OURS? THAT'S BECAUSE ANDRESSA'S PEOPLE ARE NOT AS COMPATIBLE WITH VILTRUMITE DNA AS HUMANS WERE.
YOU THINK?!
I WOULD APPRECIATE YOU GETTING RID OF THE TONE, SON. I'M STILL YOUR FATHER.
UNDERSTAND?
OKAY, GOT IT. PLEASE--GO ON. JUST MAKE THIS ALL MAKE SENSE TO ME, DAD. PLEASE.
YOUR BROTHER'S SKIN TONE ISN'T THE ONLY THING DIFFERENT. HE'S--WELL, HE'S THREE WEEKS OLD, MARK. BY EARTH STANDARDS HE LOOKS TO BE A YEAR OLD.
HE IS AGING TOO FAST. NOW, I SUSPECT THE VILTRUMITE DNA WILL CAUSE HIS AGING TO SLOW JUST AS IT HAS YOURS WHEN HE REACHES PUBERTY--BUT HOW MUCH IT WILL SLOW DOWN IS STILL IN QUESTION.
IS HE GOING TO--? I MEAN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE HAS?
HUNDREDS, IF NOT THOUSANDS OF YEARS. HE'LL BE FINE. HE'LL STILL LIVE A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE, ESPECIALLY BY HUMAN STANDARDS AND AMONG THESE PEOPLE.
BUT ON VILTRUM... THAT WOULD BE A WHOLE OTHER STORY.

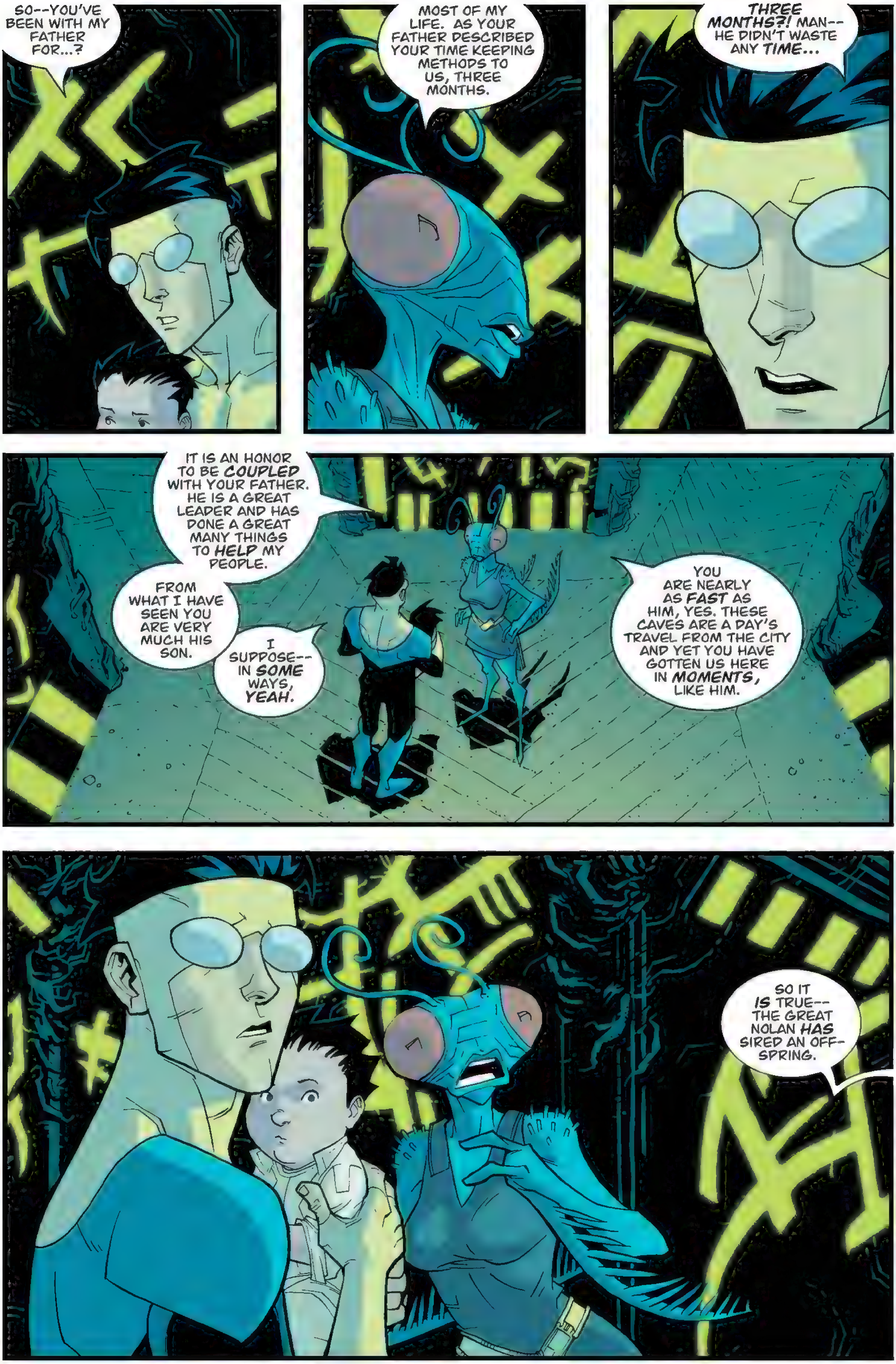

THE MODERN VILTRUM CIVILIZATION IS BUILT AROUND THE NOTION OF "SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST." THAT'S HOW THEY BECOME THE INTER-GALACTIC SUPER POWER THEY ARE TODAY.
BY VILTRUMITE LAW, ONCE A FLAW IS DETECTED IN AN INDIVIDUAL THEY ARE TO BE EXECUTED AT ONCE. IT IS ACTUALLY LEGAL TO KILL THE WEAK ON VILTRUM. IF THE LOSER OF A FIGHT IS KILLED--THEN HE WAS WEAK, AND DESERVED TO DIE. THE WINNER IS AWARDED A MEDAL FOR STRENGTHENING THE EMPIRE.
ACCORDING TO VILTRUM LAW--THIS CHILD, YOUR BROTHER, WOULD BE EXECUTED FOR HIS FLAWS. HE WOULD NOT BE WORTHY OF LIFE.
WHAT'S HIS NAME? YOU HAVEN'T CALLED HIM BY NAME YET, YOU KEEP SAYING "SON" OR "YOUR BROTHER."
THE CUSTOM HERE IS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY REACH ADULTHOOD.
WHICH WOULD BE TWO WEEKS FROM NOW, WERE IT NOT FOR HIS VILTRUMITE BLOOD.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
I MEAN-- NOLAN IS AN EARTH NAME, RIGHT? YOU HAD TO HAVE A DIFFERENT NAME ON VILTRUM.
NO, NOLAN IS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY NAME. THE VILTRUMITES HAVE NO NEED FOR LAST NAMES, SO GRAYSON WAS ADDED WHILE I WAS ON EARTH.
THE PRONUNCIATION WAS JUST A BIT DIFFERENT, AS I RECALL. CLOSER TO "NOWL-AHN" BUT MORE OR LESS THE SAME.
SOMEHOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT GOT TO ME THE MOST WAS THAT I MORE THAN LIKELY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME ANYMORE.
I HOPE THIS TALK WE'VE HAD IS SHOWING YOU THAT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN EVEN I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ADMITTED.
I'M SORRY, SON-- FOR EVERYTHING.
THAT, THOUGH, DOESN'T HELP AT ALL.
AN APOLOGY JUST ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT.


I UNDERSTAND THAT, TRULY, I DO, BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I NEED YOUR HELP.
THE VILTRUMITES ARE COMING FOR ME. THEY COULD BE HERE AT ANY MOMENT. YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME. ONCE THEY FIND YOUR BROTHER THEY WILL KILL HIM. IF I'M DEFEATED I WILL BE TAKEN BACK TO VILTRUM FOR EXECUTION.
I NEED YOUR HELP IN DEFENDING THIS PLANET.
AGAINST AN ARMY OF ADULT VILTRUMITES? I BARELY EVEN HURT YOU DURING OUR FIGHT.
NO. THEY WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SEND FOUR OR LESS. ALSO, THEY HAVE THEIR MOST POWERFUL SOLDIERS DOING MORE IMPORTANT THINGS LIKE CONQUERING NEW WORLDS...
LIKE ME.
ALSO, THEY WON'T BE EXPECTING YOU TO BE HERE. THEY DON'T KNOW YOU EXIST. BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE MIGHT STAND A CHANCE.
I NEED TO KNOW, SON. WILL YOU--
OF COURSE I WILL. YOU THINK I'M GOING TO STAND ASIDE AND WATCH THEM MURDER A BABY?!
THANK YOU, SON. NOW, I HOPE WE HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE. THERE ARE MANY THINGS I CAN TEACH YOU BEFORE--
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, SIRE, BUT IT'S URGENT!
WHAT IS IT? OUT WITH IT!
IT'S--


MARK! TAKE THEM TO THE CAVES!
ANDRESSA WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY! GO!
GO NOW!!
WHAT?! I-- I JUST GOT HERE?!
I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT THIS PLACE-- CAVES?! WHAT CAVES?!
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED ME TO HELP YOU?!
FOR NOW--THE MAIN PRIORITY IS KEEPING ANDRESSA AND THE BABY SAFE. THE VILTRUMITES WILL TARGET THEM FIRST IF THEY THINK I'M ATTACHED TO THEM EMOTIONALLY.
STAY LOW TO THE GROUND SO THEY DON'T SPOT YOU. THEY'RE ATTACKING FROM THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CITY AND THE CAVES ARE NORTH--THEY SHOULDN'T SEE YOU.
BUT GO AND GO NOW. I'LL MEET YOU THERE--THEN WE CAN PLAN OUR ATTACK.
OKAY.
OKAY. DON'T WORRY, I'LL KEEP THEM SAFE.
PLEASE DO, MARK. I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
COME, MARK. I I'LL GUIDE YOU.

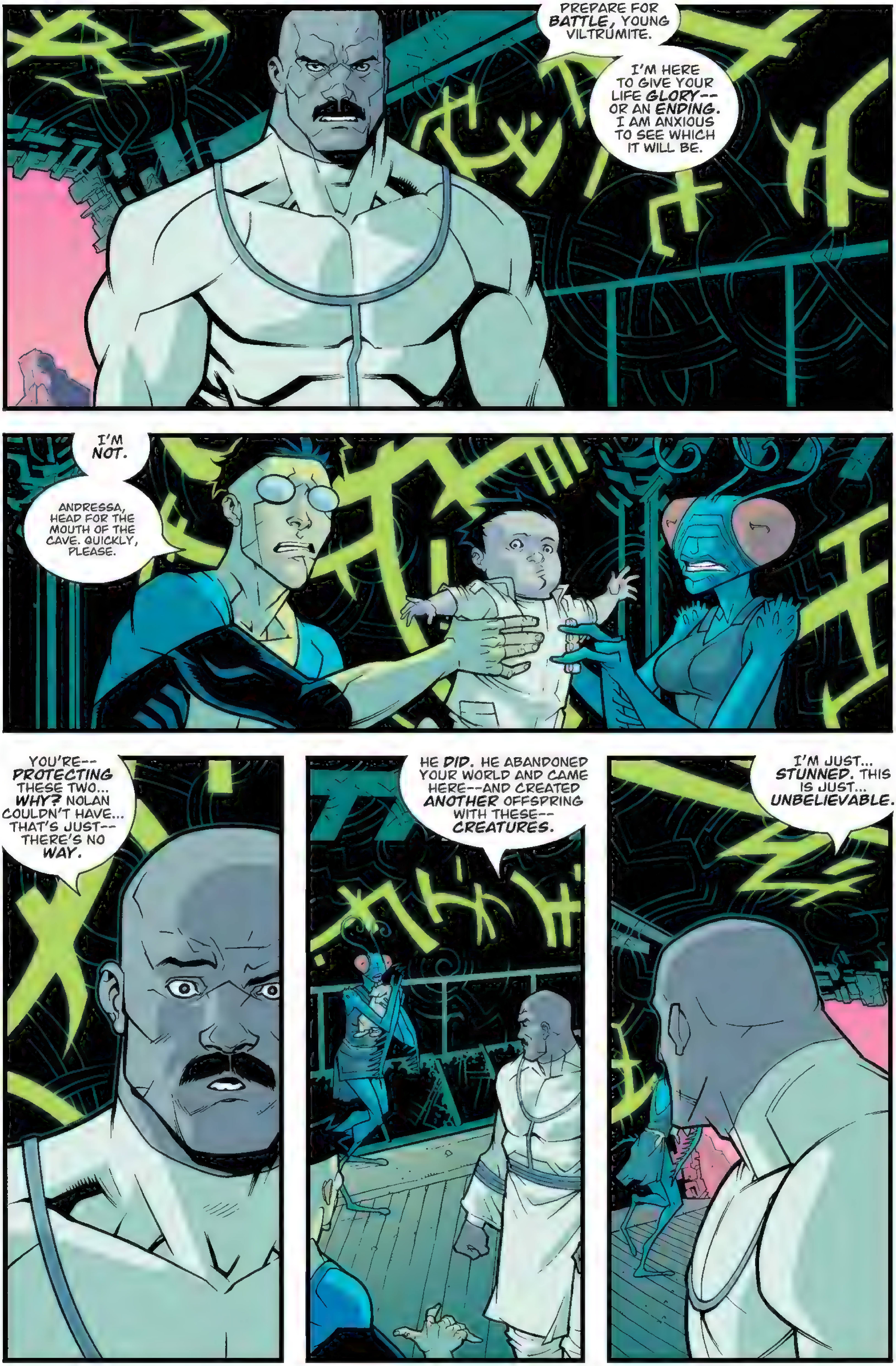

HANG ON!
VOOSH!!
THIS IS IT.


WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THESE ARE THE **CAVES OF ROCLAINE**--ONCE EVERY GENERATION OUR PLANET IS FORCED TO ENDURE MASSIVE LIGHTNING STORMS. IT HAS BEEN THIS WAY FOR ALL OF RECORDED HISTORY.
ROCLAINE DISCOVERED THIS CAVE SYSTEM AND LED OUR PEOPLE HERE FOR SHELTER AGAINST THE STORM MANY, MANY AGES AGO.
IT WAS ALSO USED AS A **HAVEN** FOR OUR PEOPLE DURING THE WARS OF TIMES PAST BEFORE MY PEOPLE UNITED UNDER ONE WORLD RULER.
THAT'S INTERESTING.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
THIS.
THE CAVES ARE NO LONGER USED FOR **PROTECTION.** OUR TECHNOLOGY HAS BUILT STRUCTURES THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE LIGHTNING STORMS.
NOW WE USE THE CAVES AS A PLACE FOR GATHERING, FOR STUDY, FOR MANY THINGS.
THE ENGRAVINGS WILL LIGHT THE WAY. THERE ARE **MANY** CAVERNS AHEAD, MANY LAVISHLY FURNISHED--WE WILL BE QUITE COMFORTABLE HERE.
FOLLOW ME.

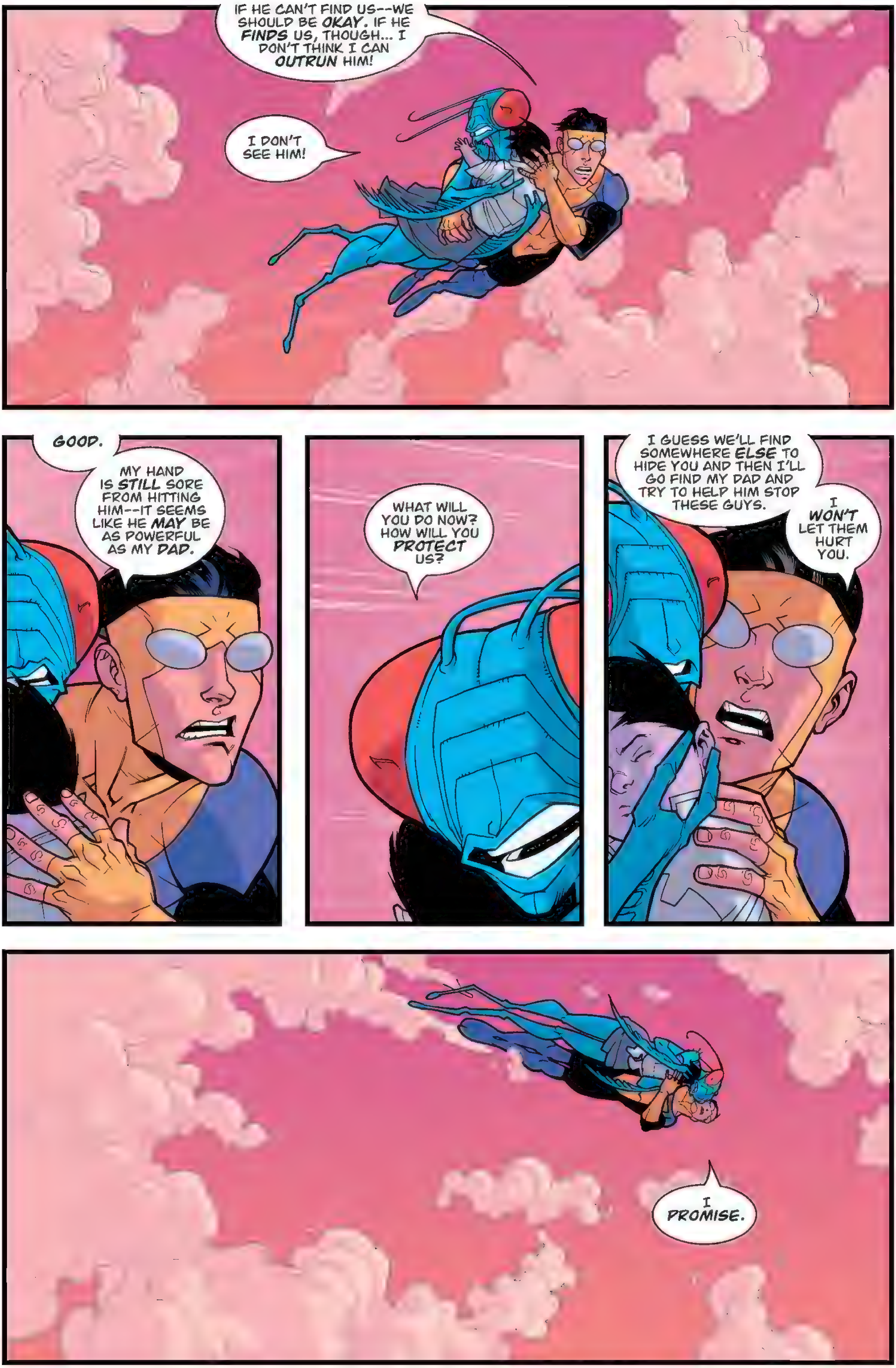

SO--YOU'VE BEEN WITH MY FATHER FOR...?
MOST OF MY LIFE. AS YOUR FATHER DESCRIBED YOUR TIME KEEPING METHODS TO US, THREE MONTHS.
THREE MONTHS?! MAN--HE DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME...
IT IS AN HONOR TO BE COUPLED WITH YOUR FATHER. HE IS A GREAT LEADER AND HAS DONE A GREAT MANY THINGS TO HELP MY PEOPLE.
FROM WHAT I HAVE SEEN YOU ARE VERY MUCH HIS SON.
I SUPPOSE--IN SOME WAYS, YEAH.
YOU ARE NEARLY AS FAST AS HIM, YES. THESE CAVES ARE A DAY'S TRAVEL FROM THE CITY AND YET YOU HAVE GOTTEN US HERE IN MOMENTS, LIKE HIM.
SO IT IS TRUE--THE GREAT NOLAN HAS SIRED AN OFFSPRING.

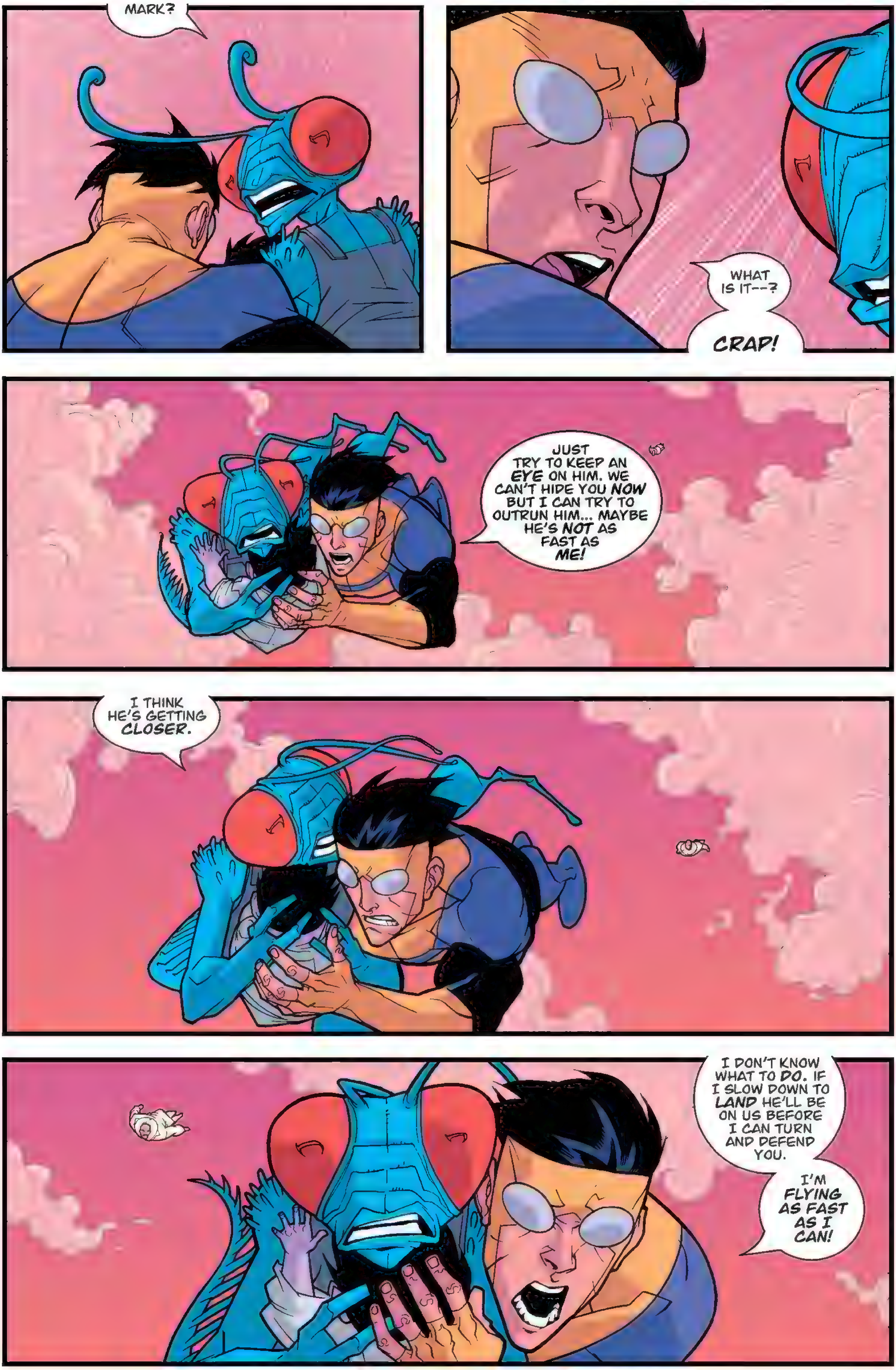
IF YOU ARE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND MY ASSAULT, YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO *LIVE*. YOU WILL BE WORTHY TO STAND BY MY SIDE--A SOLDIER OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
IF YOU ARE NOT-- YOU WILL *DIE*.

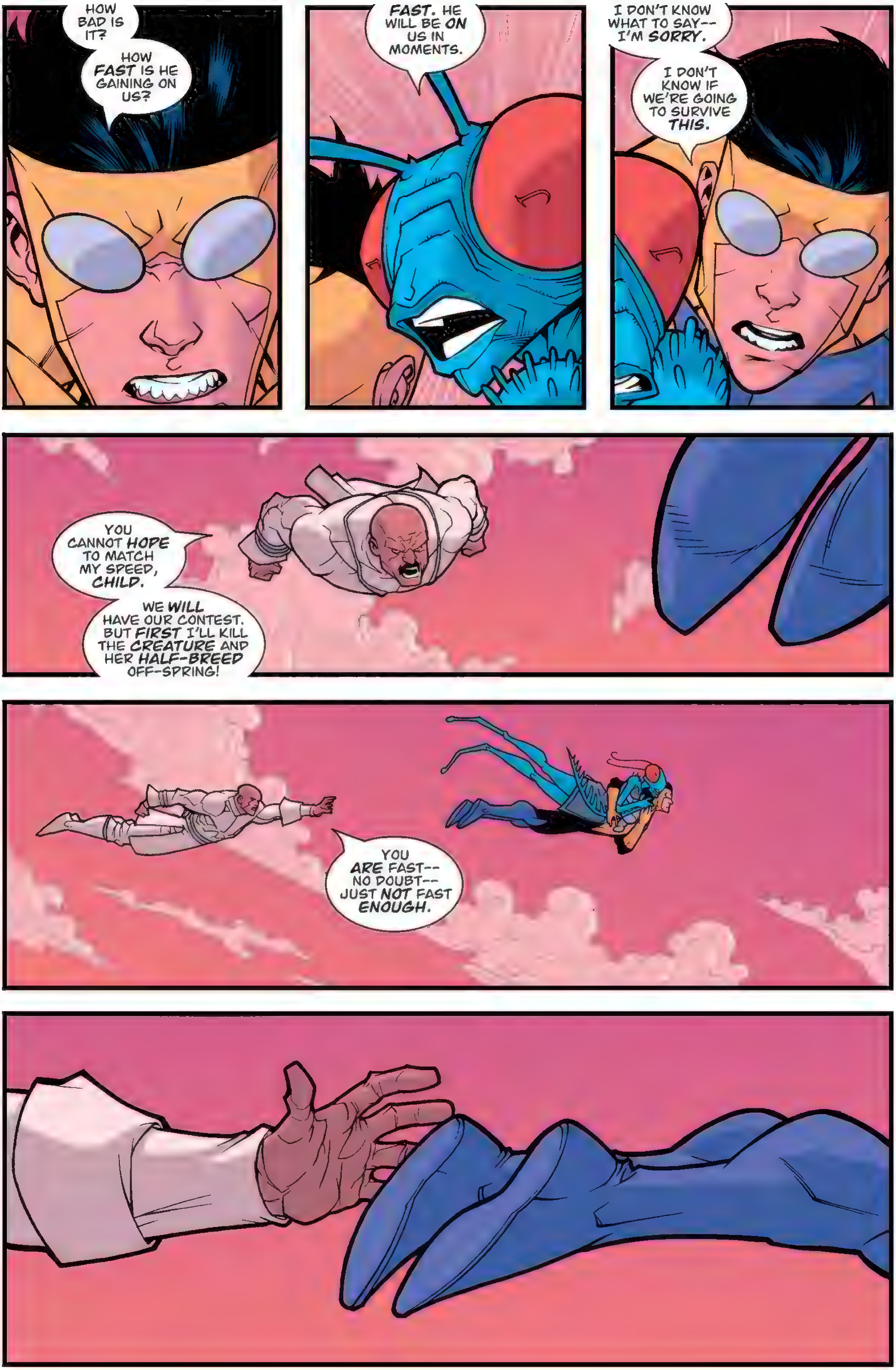
ISSUE TWENTY-EIGHT

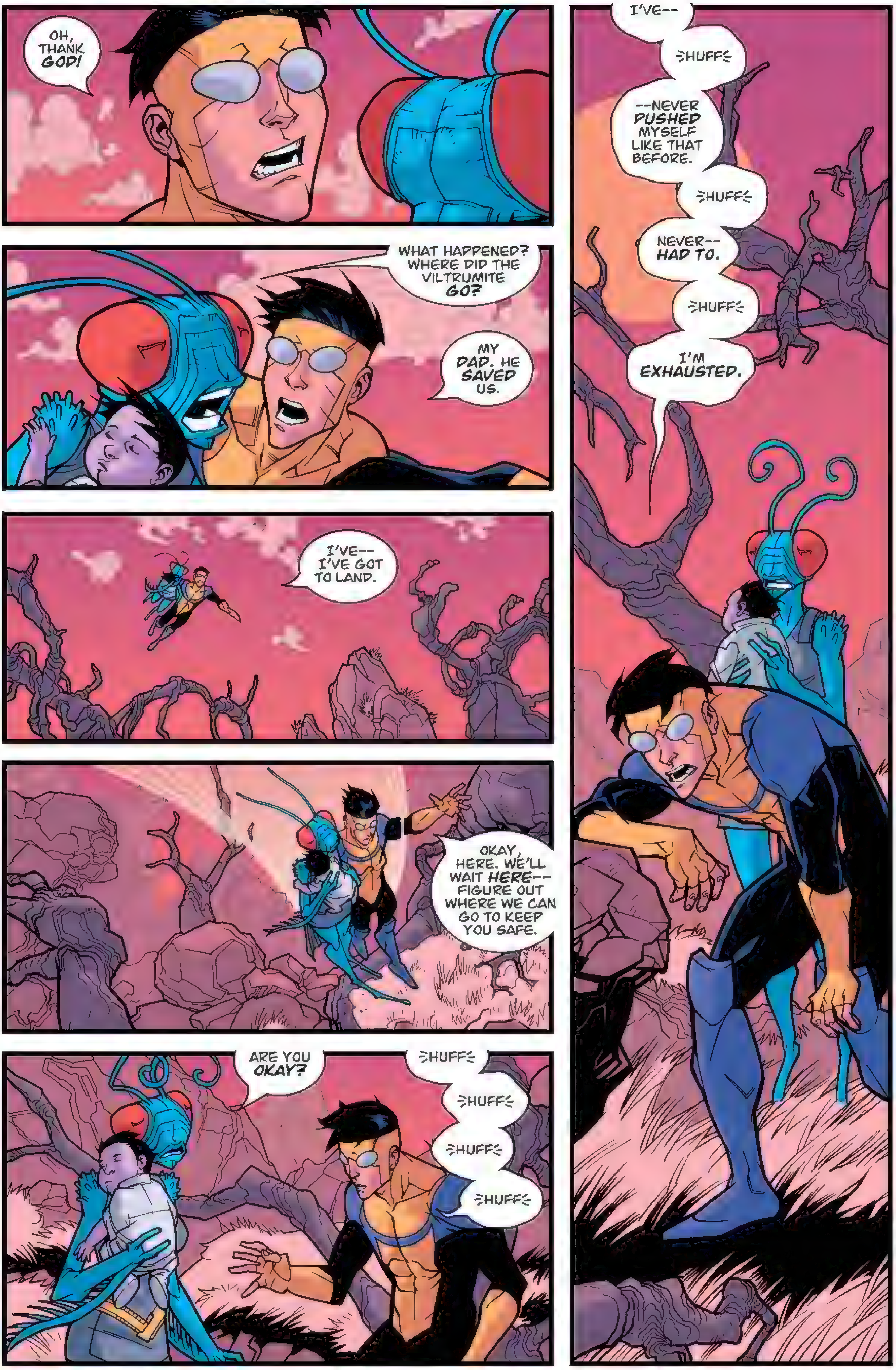

PREPARE FOR **BATTLE**, YOUNG VILTRUMITE.
I'M HERE TO GIVE YOUR LIFE **GLORY**-- OR AN **ENDING**. I AM ANXIOUS TO SEE WHICH IT WILL BE.
I'M **NOT**.
ANDRESSA, HEAD FOR THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE. QUICKLY, PLEASE.
YOU'RE-- **PROTECTING** THESE TWO... **WHY?** NOLAN COULDN'T HAVE... THAT'S JUST-- THERE'S NO **WAY**.
HE **DID**. HE ABANDONED YOUR WORLD AND CAME HERE--AND CREATED **ANOTHER** OFFSPRING WITH THESE-- **CREATURES**.
I'M JUST... **STUNNED**. THIS IS JUST... **UNBELIEVABLE**.

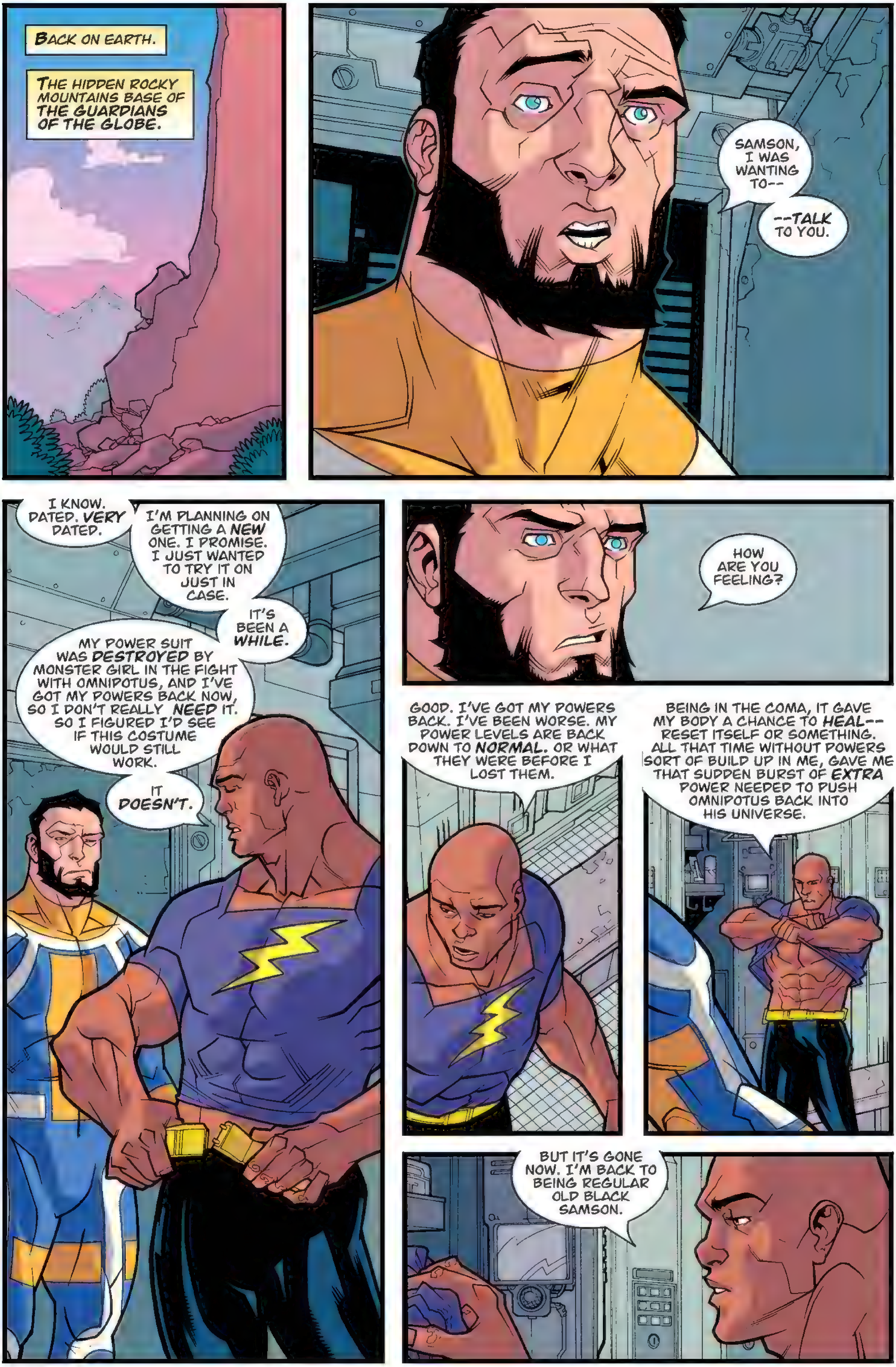
KRAK!
TELL ME ABOUT IT!
HOLD ON TIGHT.
THIS IS GOING TO BE A ROUGH RIDE.
KEEP YOUR GUARD UP, LUCAN. YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO ADVANCE IN RANK IF YOU KEEP TURNING YOUR BACK TO YOUR ENEMY.
STUPID.
KEEP YOUR HEAD-- THERE'S KILLING TO BE DONE.

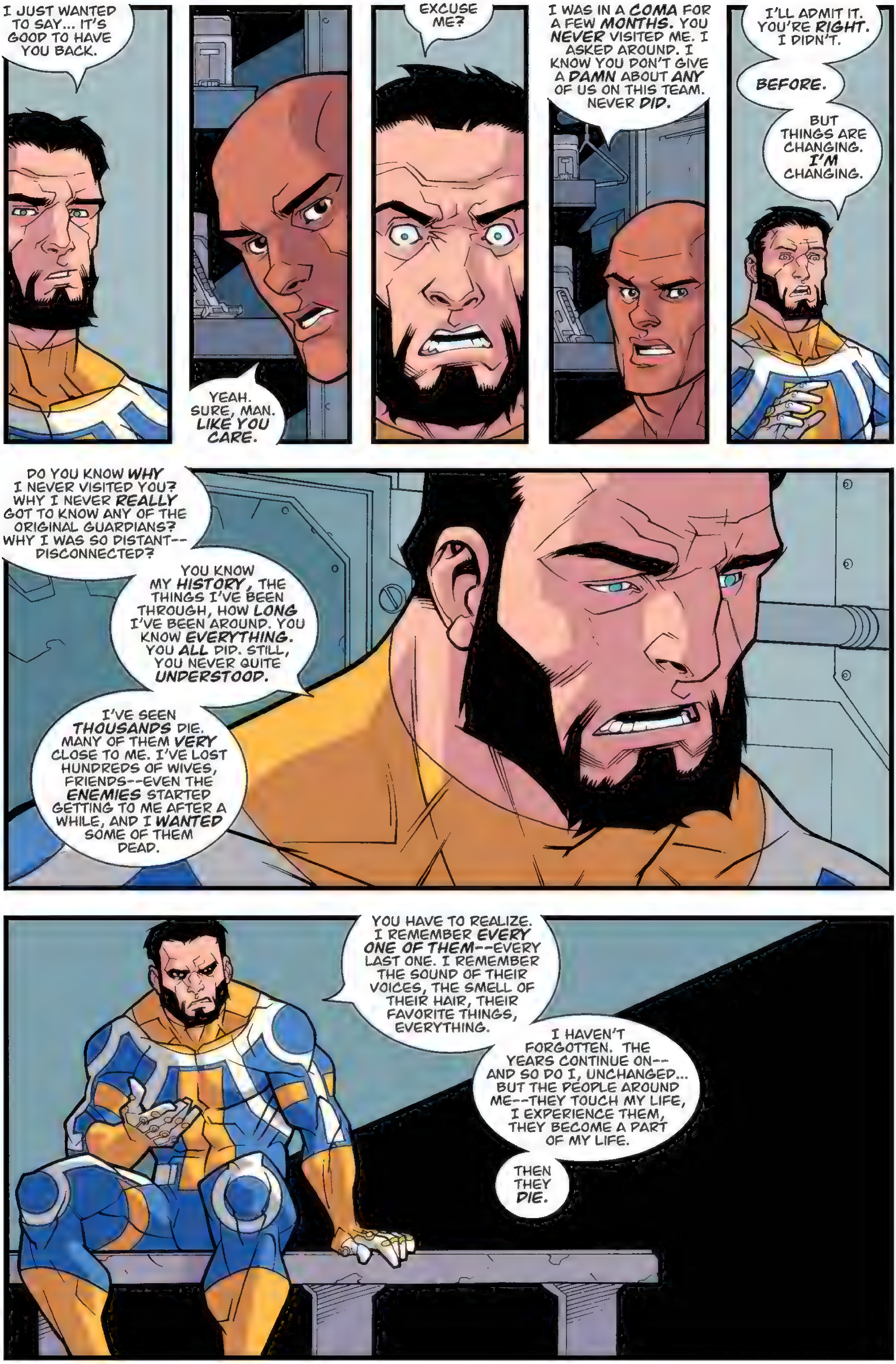

IF HE CAN'T FIND US--WE SHOULD BE *OKAY*. IF HE *FINDS* US, THOUGH... I DON'T THINK I CAN *OUTRUN* HIM!
I DON'T SEE HIM!
GOOD.
MY HAND IS *STILL* SORE FROM HITTING HIM--IT SEEMS LIKE HE *MAY* BE AS POWERFUL AS MY *DAD*.
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW? HOW WILL YOU *PROTECT* US?
I GUESS WE'LL FIND SOMEWHERE *ELSE* TO HIDE YOU AND THEN I'LL GO FIND MY DAD AND TRY TO HELP HIM STOP THESE GUYS.
I *WON'T* LET THEM HURT YOU.
I *PROMISE.*

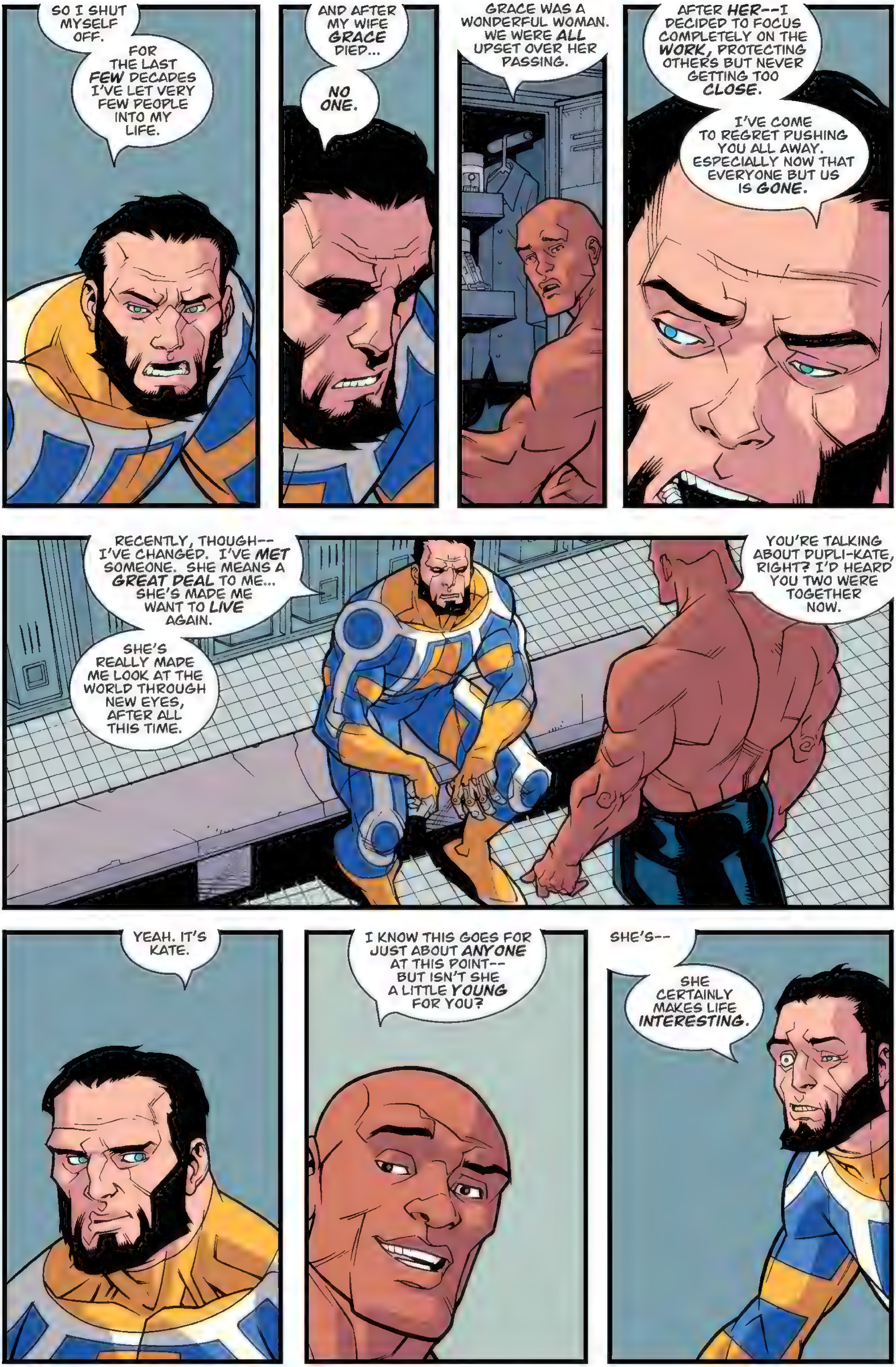

MARK?
WHAT IS IT--?
CRAP!
JUST TRY TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. WE CAN'T HIDE YOU NOW BUT I CAN TRY TO OUTRUN HIM... MAYBE HE'S NOT AS FAST AS ME!
I THINK HE'S GETTING CLOSER.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. IF I SLOW DOWN TO LAND HE'LL BE ON US BEFORE I CAN TURN AND DEFEND YOU.
I'M FLYING AS FAST AS I CAN!

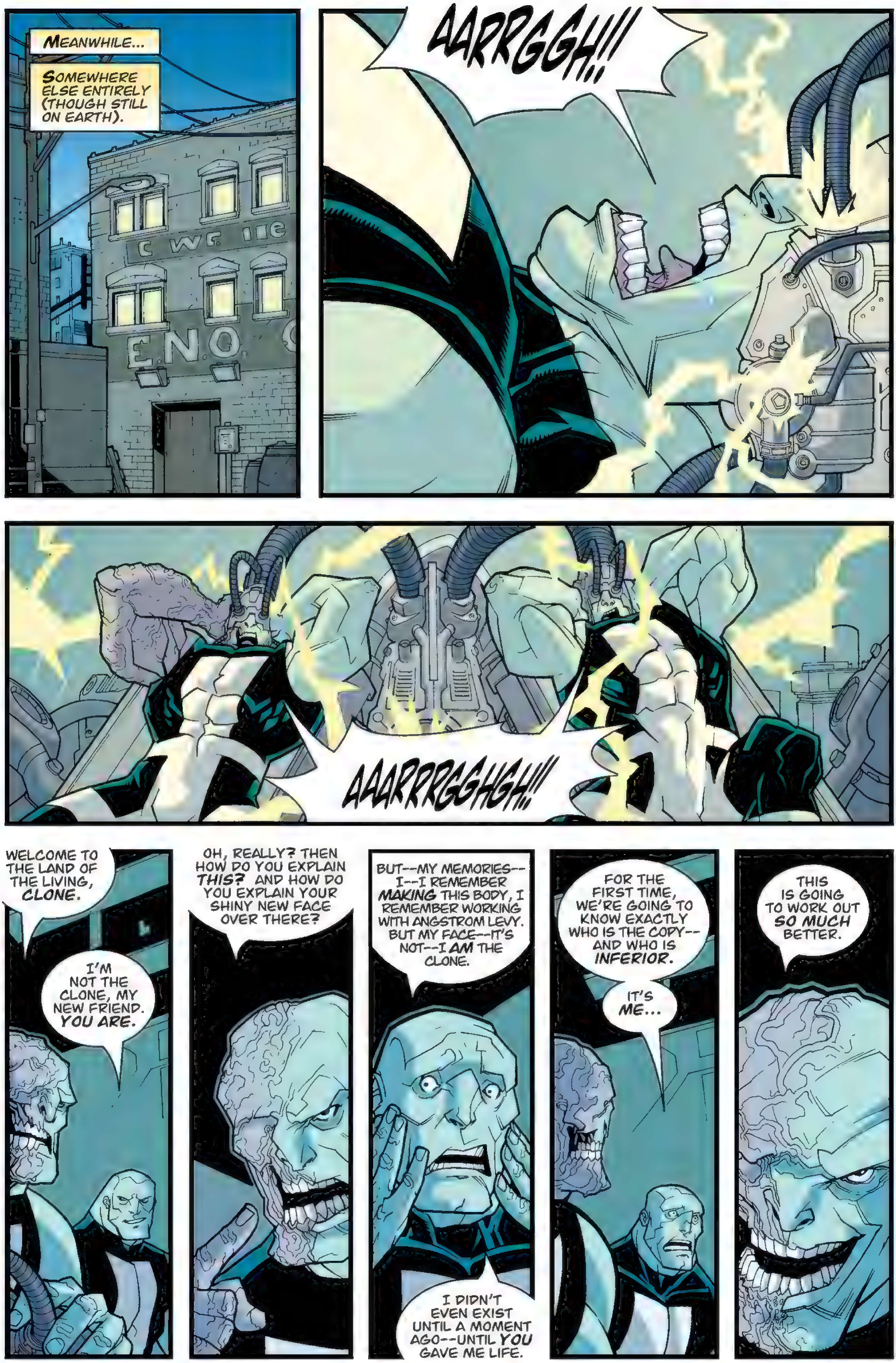

HOW BAD IS IT?
HOW FAST IS HE GAINING ON US?
FAST. HE WILL BE ON US IN MOMENTS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY-- I'M SORRY.
I DON'T KNOW IF WE'RE GOING TO SURVIVE THIS.
YOU CANNOT HOPE TO MATCH MY SPEED, CHILD.
WE WILL HAVE OUR CONTEST. BUT FIRST I'LL KILL THE CREATURE AND HER HALF-BREED OFF-SPRING!
YOU ARE FAST-- NO DOUBT-- JUST NOT FAST ENOUGH.

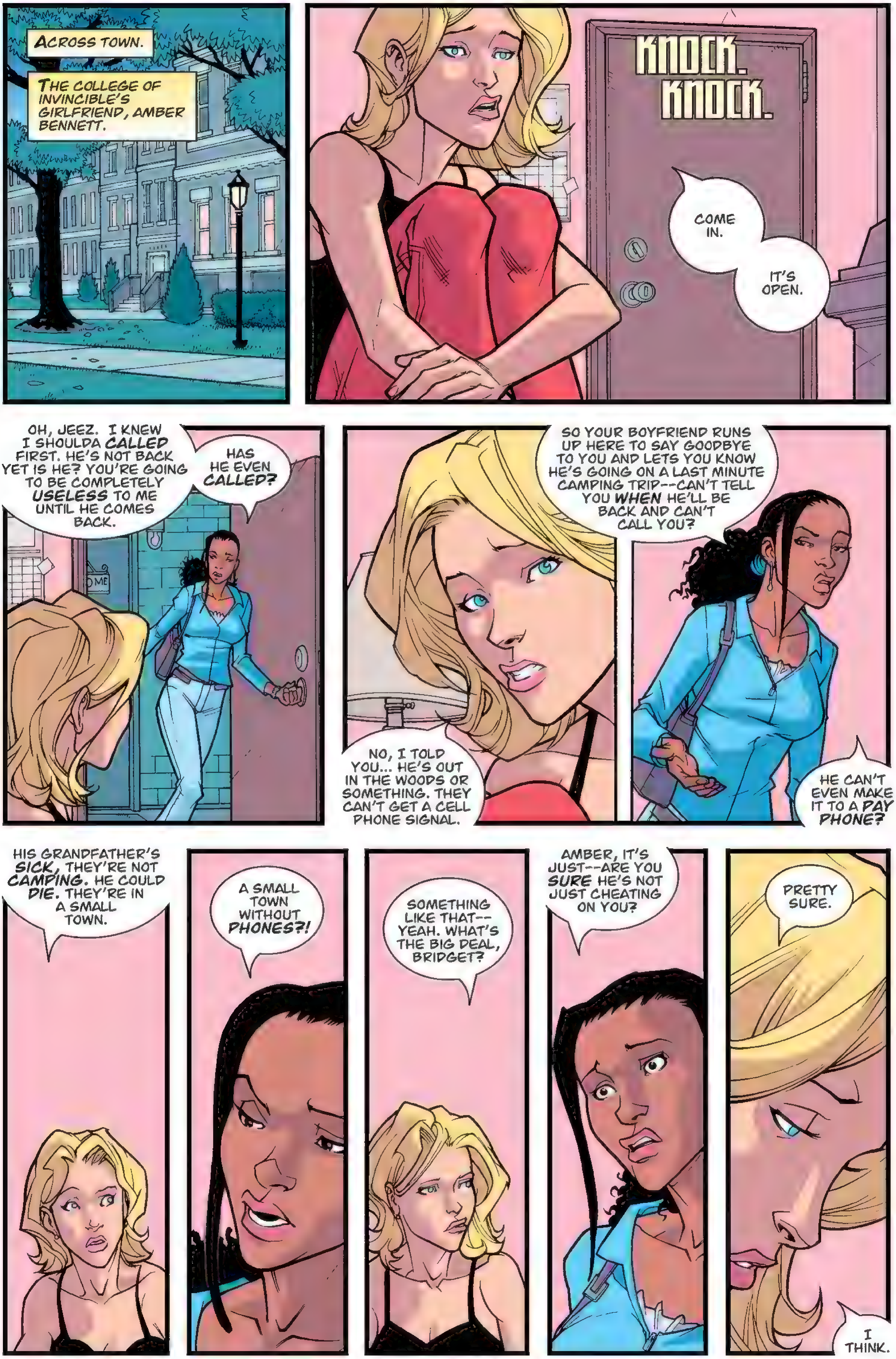

OH, THANK *GOD!*
WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE DID THE VILTRUMITE *GO?*
MY *DAD.* HE *SAVED* US.
I'VE-- I'VE GOT TO LAND.
OKAY, HERE. WE'LL WAIT *HERE*-- FIGURE OUT WHERE WE CAN GO TO KEEP YOU SAFE.
ARE YOU *OKAY?*
⸗HUFF⸗
⸗HUFF⸗
⸗HUFF⸗
⸗HUFF⸗
I'VE--
⸗HUFF⸗
--NEVER *PUSHED* MYSELF LIKE THAT BEFORE.
⸗HUFF⸗
NEVER-- *HAD TO.*
⸗HUFF⸗
I'M *EXHAUSTED.*

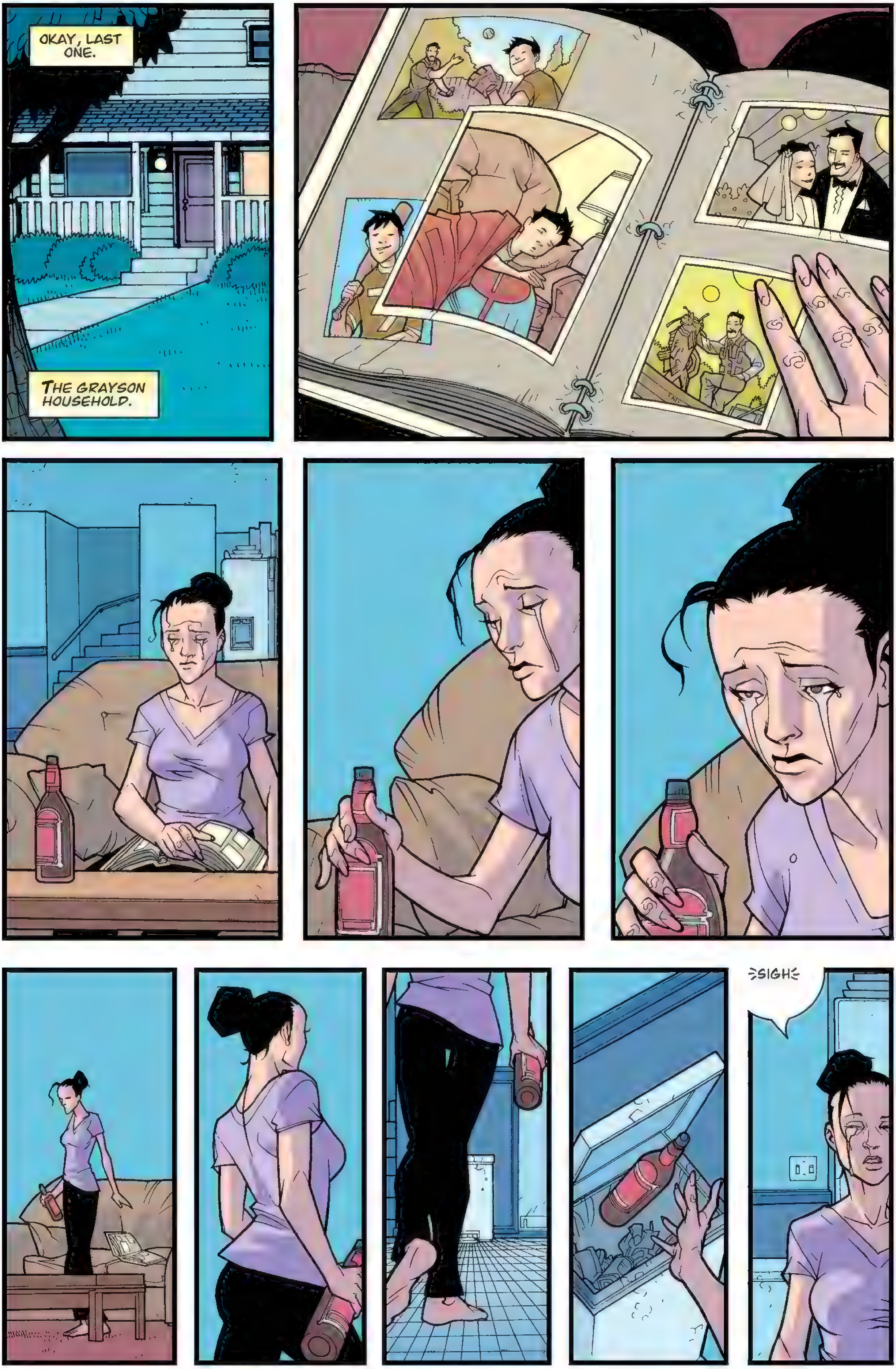

BACK ON EARTH.
THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
SAMSON, I WAS WANTING TO--
--TALK TO YOU.
I KNOW. DATED. VERY DATED.
I'M PLANNING ON GETTING A NEW ONE. I PROMISE. I JUST WANTED TO TRY IT ON JUST IN CASE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
MY POWER SUIT WAS DESTROYED BY MONSTER GIRL IN THE FIGHT WITH OMNIPOTUS, AND I'VE GOT MY POWERS BACK NOW, SO I DON'T REALLY NEED IT. SO I FIGURED I'D SEE IF THIS COSTUME WOULD STILL WORK.
IT DOESN'T.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
GOOD. I'VE GOT MY POWERS BACK. I'VE BEEN WORSE. MY POWER LEVELS ARE BACK DOWN TO NORMAL. OR WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE I LOST THEM.
BEING IN THE COMA, IT GAVE MY BODY A CHANCE TO HEAL-- RESET ITSELF OR SOMETHING. ALL THAT TIME WITHOUT POWERS SORT OF BUILD UP IN ME, GAVE ME THAT SUDDEN BURST OF EXTRA POWER NEEDED TO PUSH OMNIPOTUS BACK INTO HIS UNIVERSE.
BUT IT'S GONE NOW. I'M BACK TO BEING REGULAR OLD BLACK SAMSON.

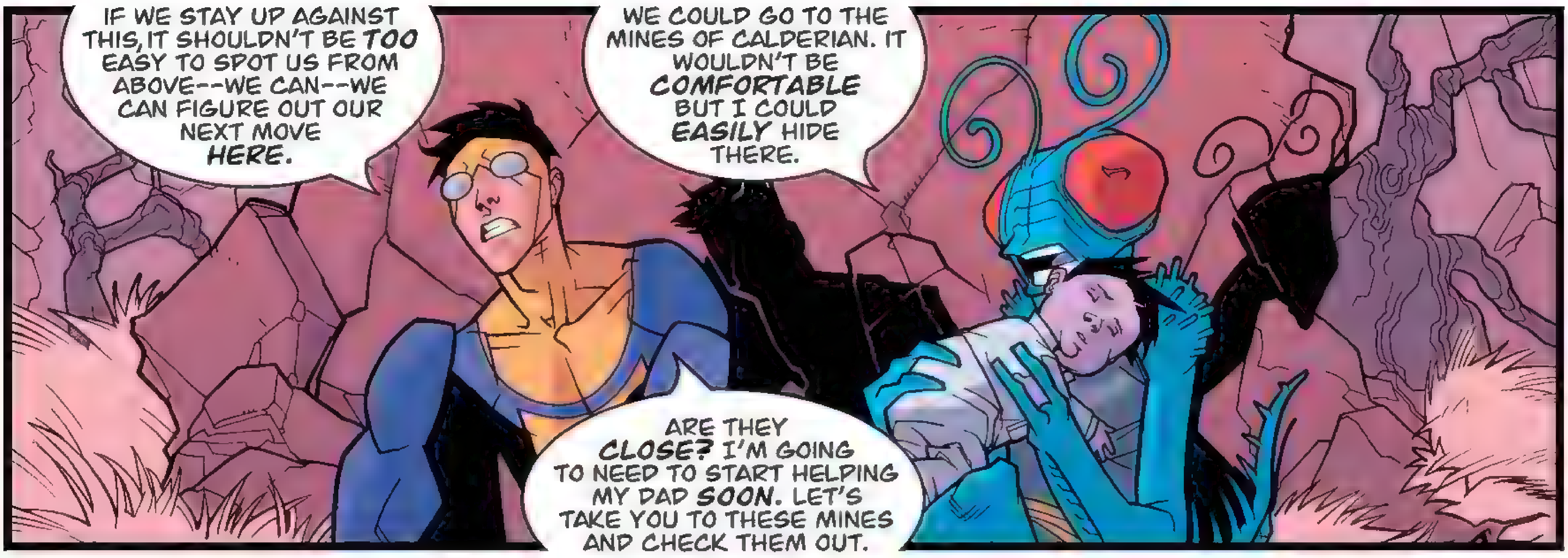

I JUST WANTED TO SAY... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
YEAH. SURE, MAN. *LIKE YOU CARE.*
EXCUSE ME?
I WAS IN A *COMA* FOR A FEW *MONTHS.* YOU *NEVER* VISITED ME. I ASKED AROUND. I KNOW YOU DON'T GIVE A *DAMN* ABOUT *ANY* OF US ON THIS TEAM. NEVER *DID.*
I'LL ADMIT IT. YOU'RE *RIGHT.* I DIDN'T.
BEFORE.
BUT THINGS ARE CHANGING. *I'M* CHANGING.
DO YOU KNOW *WHY* I NEVER VISITED YOU? WHY I NEVER *REALLY* GOT TO KNOW ANY OF THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS? WHY I WAS SO DISTANT--DISCONNECTED?
YOU KNOW MY *HISTORY*, THE THINGS I'VE BEEN THROUGH, HOW *LONG* I'VE BEEN AROUND. YOU KNOW *EVERYTHING.* YOU *ALL* DID. STILL, YOU NEVER QUITE *UNDERSTOOD.*
I'VE SEEN *THOUSANDS* DIE. MANY OF THEM *VERY* CLOSE TO ME. I'VE LOST HUNDREDS OF WIVES, FRIENDS--EVEN THE *ENEMIES* STARTED GETTING TO ME AFTER A WHILE, AND I *WANTED* SOME OF THEM DEAD.
YOU HAVE TO REALIZE. I REMEMBER *EVERY ONE OF THEM*--EVERY LAST ONE. I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THEIR VOICES, THE SMELL OF THEIR HAIR, THEIR FAVORITE THINGS, EVERYTHING.
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN. THE YEARS CONTINUE ON--AND SO DO I, UNCHANGED... BUT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME--THEY TOUCH MY LIFE, I EXPERIENCE THEM, THEY BECOME A PART OF MY LIFE.
THEN THEY *DIE.*

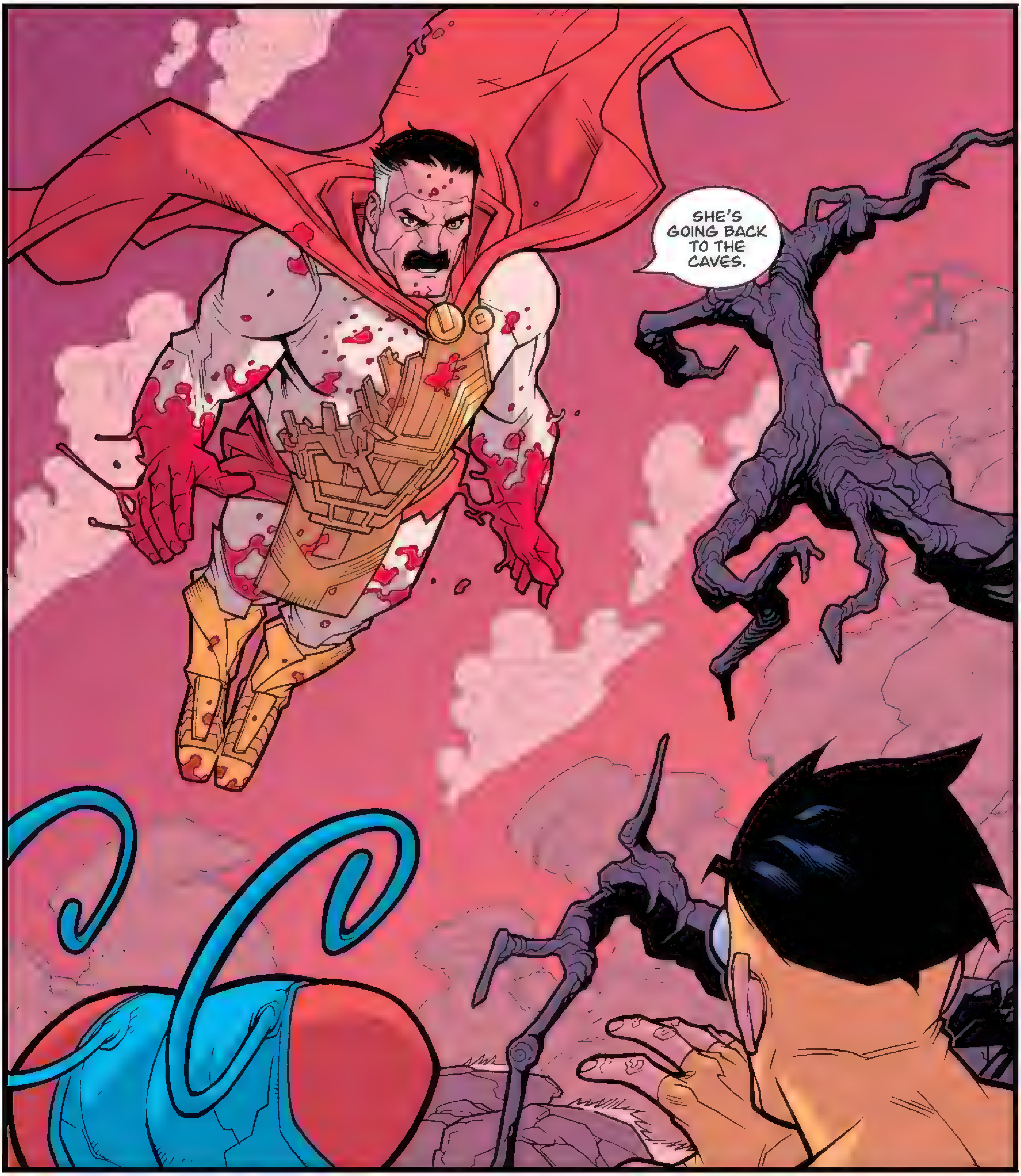

SO I SHUT MYSELF OFF.
FOR THE LAST FEW DECADES I'VE LET VERY FEW PEOPLE INTO MY LIFE.
AND AFTER MY WIFE GRACE DIED...
NO ONE.
GRACE WAS A WONDERFUL WOMAN. WE WERE ALL UPSET OVER HER PASSING.
AFTER HER--I DECIDED TO FOCUS COMPLETELY ON THE WORK, PROTECTING OTHERS BUT NEVER GETTING TOO CLOSE.
I'VE COME TO REGRET PUSHING YOU ALL AWAY. ESPECIALLY NOW THAT EVERYONE BUT US IS GONE.
RECENTLY, THOUGH-- I'VE CHANGED. I'VE MET SOMEONE. SHE MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO ME... SHE'S MADE ME WANT TO LIVE AGAIN.
SHE'S REALLY MADE ME LOOK AT THE WORLD THROUGH NEW EYES, AFTER ALL THIS TIME.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT DUPLI-KATE, RIGHT? I'D HEARD YOU TWO WERE TOGETHER NOW.
YEAH. IT'S KATE.
I KNOW THIS GOES FOR JUST ABOUT ANYONE AT THIS POINT-- BUT ISN'T SHE A LITTLE YOUNG FOR YOU?
SHE'S--
SHE CERTAINLY MAKES LIFE INTERESTING.

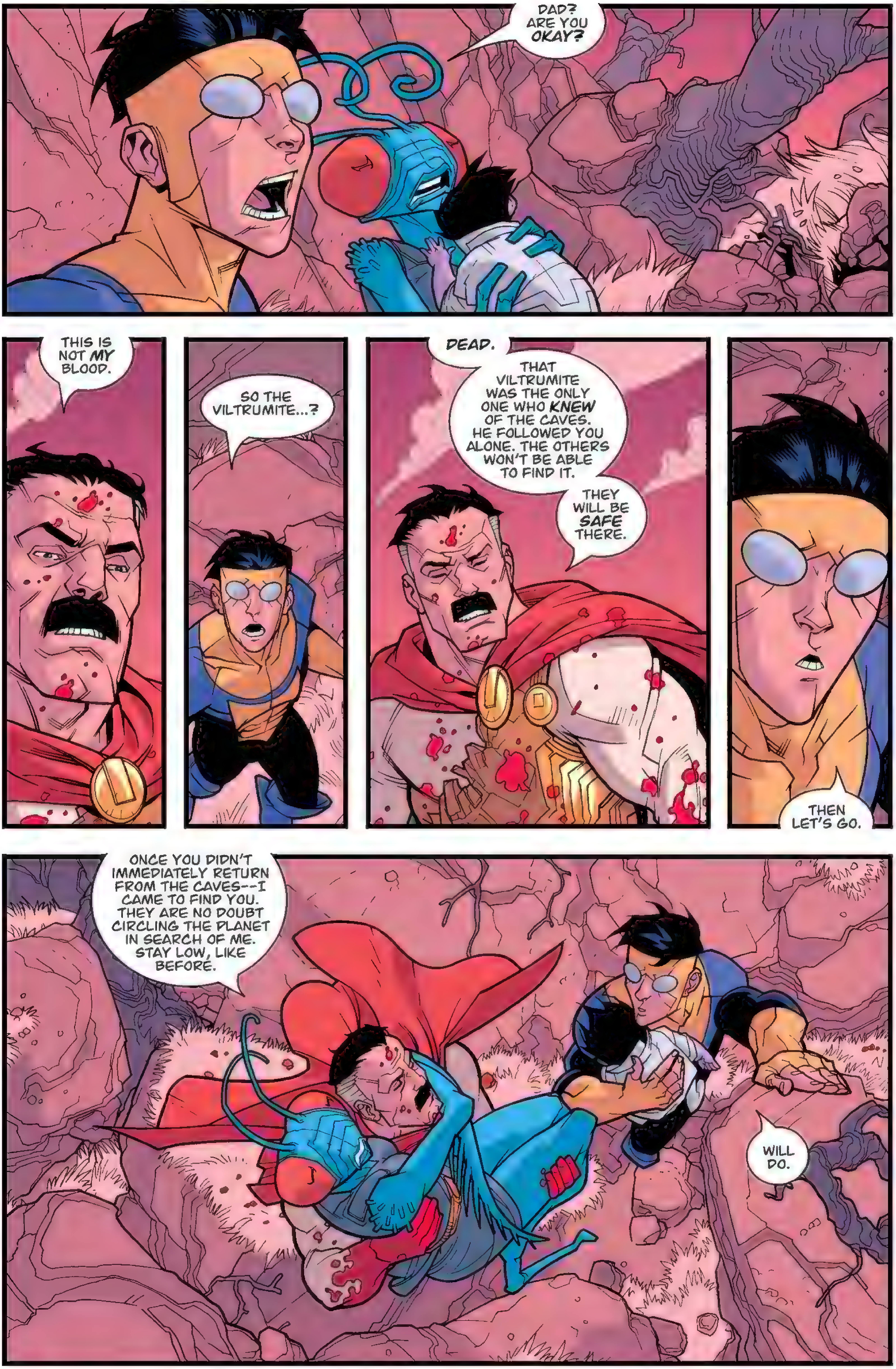

MEANWHILE...
SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY (THOUGH STILL ON EARTH).
E.N.O.
AARRGGH!!
AAARRRGGHGH!!
WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, CLONE.
I'M NOT THE CLONE, MY NEW FRIEND. YOU ARE.
OH, REALLY? THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS? AND HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN YOUR SHINY NEW FACE OVER THERE?
BUT--MY MEMORIES--I--I REMEMBER MAKING THIS BODY, I REMEMBER WORKING WITH ANGSTROM LEVY. BUT MY FACE--IT'S NOT--I AM THE CLONE.
I DIDN'T EVEN EXIST UNTIL A MOMENT AGO--UNTIL YOU GAVE ME LIFE.
FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE'RE GOING TO KNOW EXACTLY WHO IS THE COPY--AND WHO IS INFERIOR.
IT'S ME...
THIS IS GOING TO WORK OUT SO MUCH BETTER.

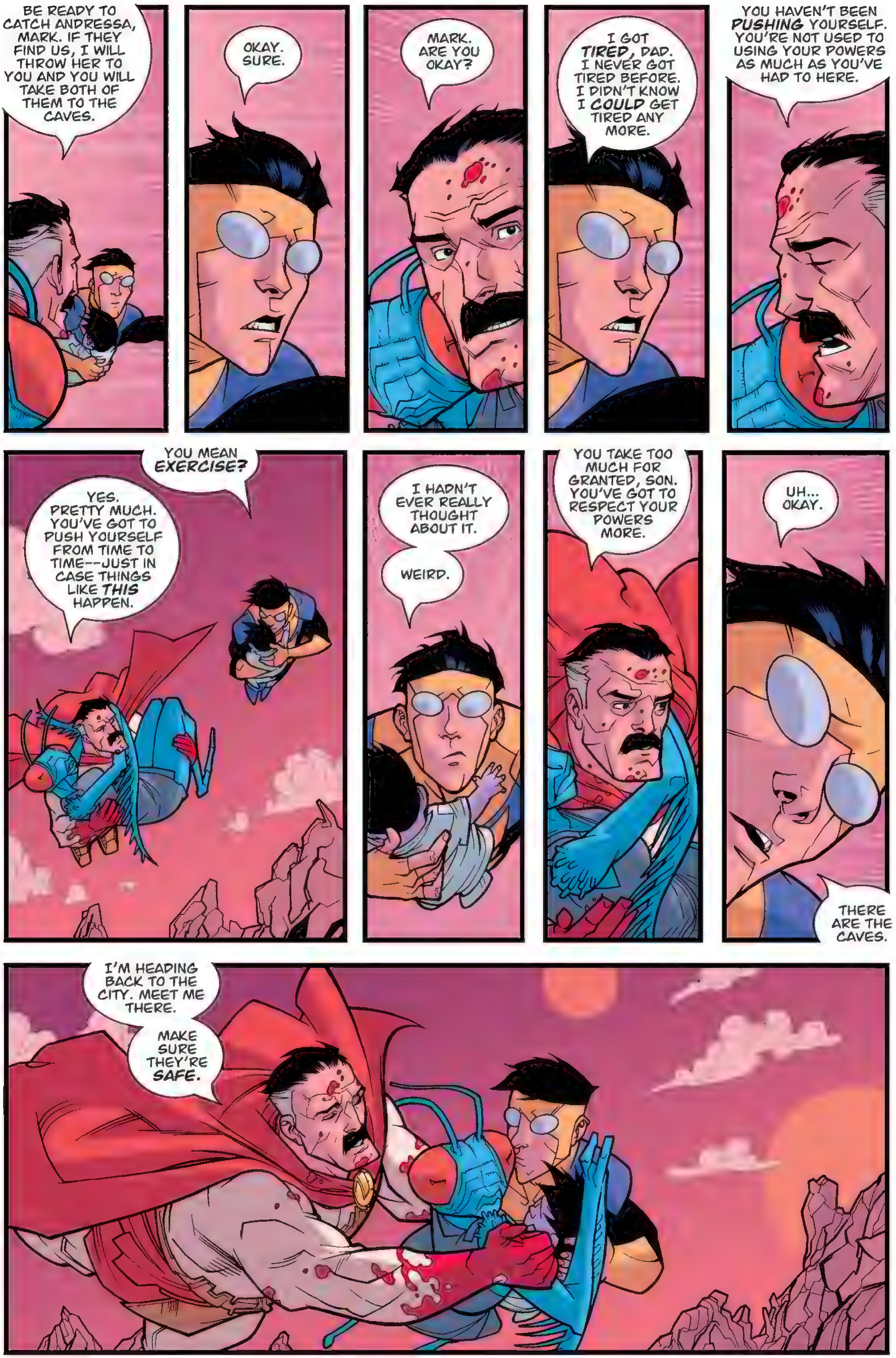

ACROSS TOWN.
THE COLLEGE OF INVINCIBLE'S GIRLFRIEND, AMBER BENNETT.
KNOCK. KNOCK.
COME IN.
IT'S OPEN.
OH, JEEZ. I KNEW I SHOULDA CALLED FIRST. HE'S NOT BACK YET IS HE? YOU'RE GOING TO BE COMPLETELY USELESS TO ME UNTIL HE COMES BACK.
HAS HE EVEN CALLED?
SO YOUR BOYFRIEND RUNS UP HERE TO SAY GOODBYE TO YOU AND LETS YOU KNOW HE'S GOING ON A LAST MINUTE CAMPING TRIP--CAN'T TELL YOU WHEN HE'LL BE BACK AND CAN'T CALL YOU?
NO, I TOLD YOU... HE'S OUT IN THE WOODS OR SOMETHING. THEY CAN'T GET A CELL PHONE SIGNAL.
HE CAN'T EVEN MAKE IT TO A PAY PHONE?
HIS GRANDFATHER'S SICK, THEY'RE NOT CAMPING. HE COULD DIE. THEY'RE IN A SMALL TOWN.
A SMALL TOWN WITHOUT PHONES?!
SOMETHING LIKE THAT-- YEAH. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL, BRIDGET?
AMBER, IT'S JUST--ARE YOU SURE HE'S NOT JUST CHEATING ON YOU?
PRETTY SURE.
I THINK.

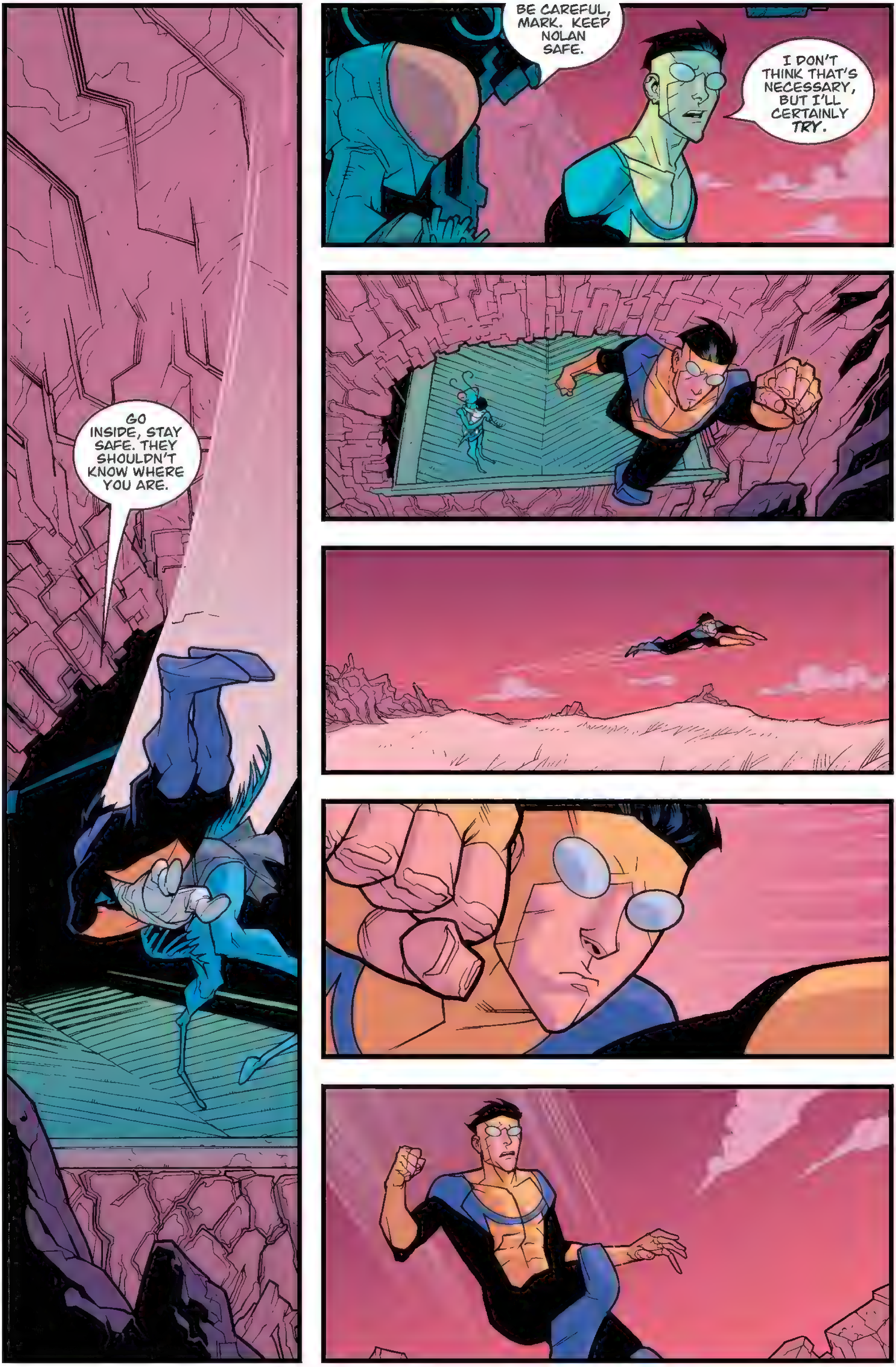

OKAY, LAST ONE.
THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
=SIGH=


IF WE STAY UP AGAINST THIS, IT SHOULDN'T BE *TOO* EASY TO SPOT US FROM ABOVE--WE CAN--WE CAN FIGURE OUT OUR NEXT MOVE **HERE.**
WE COULD GO TO THE MINES OF CALDERIAN. IT WOULDN'T BE **COMFORTABLE** BUT I COULD **EASILY** HIDE THERE.
ARE THEY **CLOSE?** I'M GOING TO NEED TO START HELPING MY DAD **SOON.** LET'S TAKE YOU TO THESE MINES AND CHECK THEM OUT.


SHE'S GOING BACK TO THE CAVES.


DAD? ARE YOU *OKAY?*
THIS IS NOT *MY* BLOOD.
SO THE VILTRUMITE...?
DEAD.
THAT VILTRUMITE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO *KNEW* OF THE CAVES. HE FOLLOWED YOU ALONE. THE OTHERS WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND IT.
THEY WILL BE *SAFE* THERE.
THEN LET'S GO.
ONCE YOU DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY RETURN FROM THE CAVES--I CAME TO FIND YOU. THEY ARE NO DOUBT CIRCLING THE PLANET IN SEARCH OF ME. STAY LOW, LIKE BEFORE.
WILL DO.

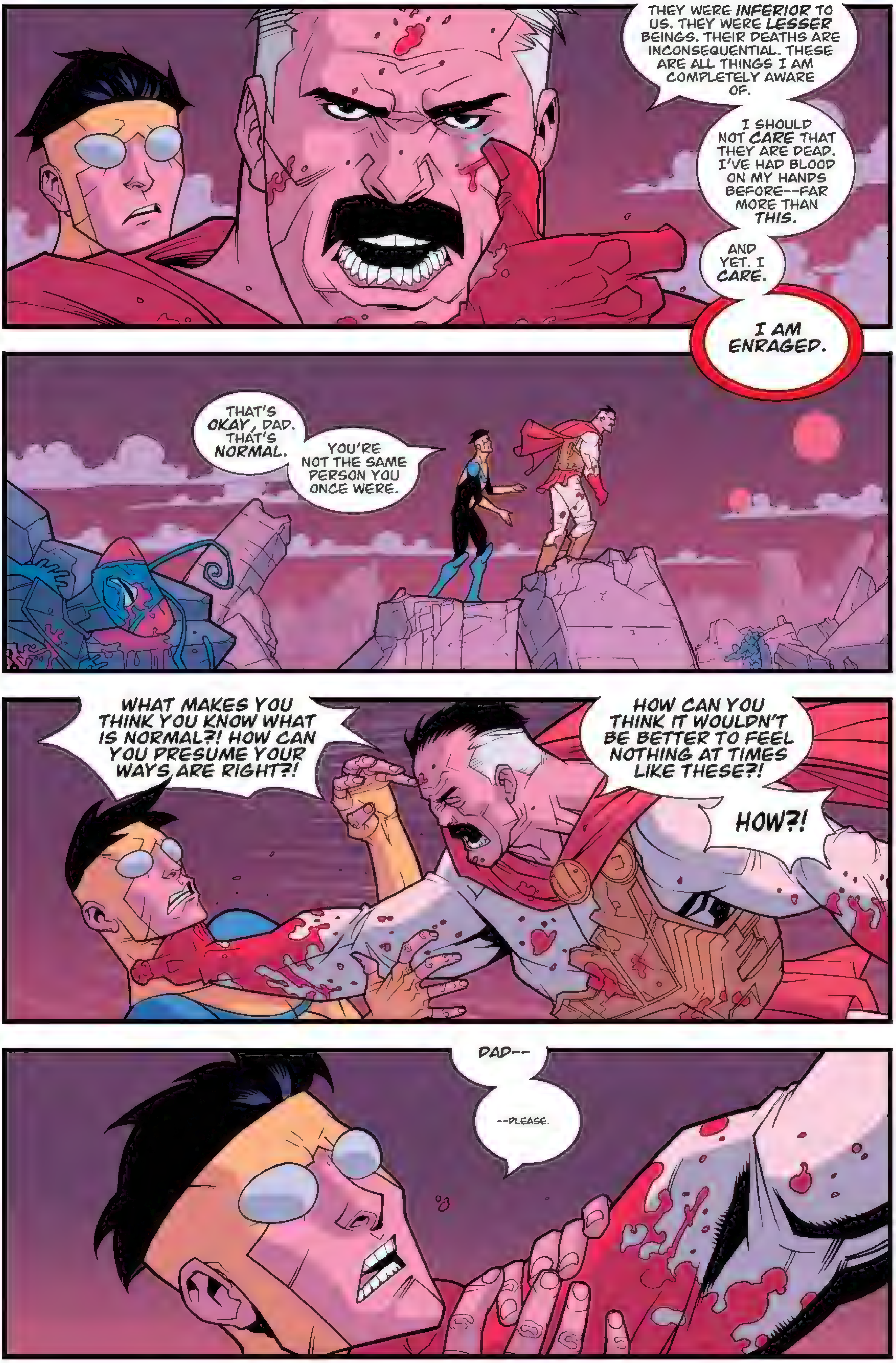

BE READY TO CATCH ANDRESSA, MARK. IF THEY FIND US, I WILL THROW HER TO YOU AND YOU WILL TAKE BOTH OF THEM TO THE CAVES.
OKAY. SURE.
MARK. ARE YOU OKAY?
I GOT *TIRED*, DAD. I NEVER GOT TIRED BEFORE. I DIDN'T KNOW I *COULD* GET TIRED ANY MORE.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN *PUSHING* YOURSELF. YOU'RE NOT USED TO USING YOUR POWERS AS MUCH AS YOU'VE HAD TO HERE.
YOU MEAN *EXERCISE?*
YES. PRETTY MUCH. YOU'VE GOT TO PUSH YOURSELF FROM TIME TO TIME--JUST IN CASE THINGS LIKE *THIS* HAPPEN.
I HADN'T EVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
WEIRD.
YOU TAKE TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED, SON. YOU'VE GOT TO RESPECT YOUR POWERS MORE.
UH... OKAY.
THERE ARE THE CAVES.
I'M HEADING BACK TO THE CITY. MEET ME THERE.
MAKE SURE THEY'RE *SAFE*.


GO INSIDE, STAY SAFE. THEY SHOULDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE.
BE CAREFUL, MARK. KEEP NOLAN SAFE.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S NECESSARY, BUT I'LL CERTAINLY *TRY*.

DAD?
OH, MAN... I-- WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW?

DAD?

ISSUE TWENTY-NINE

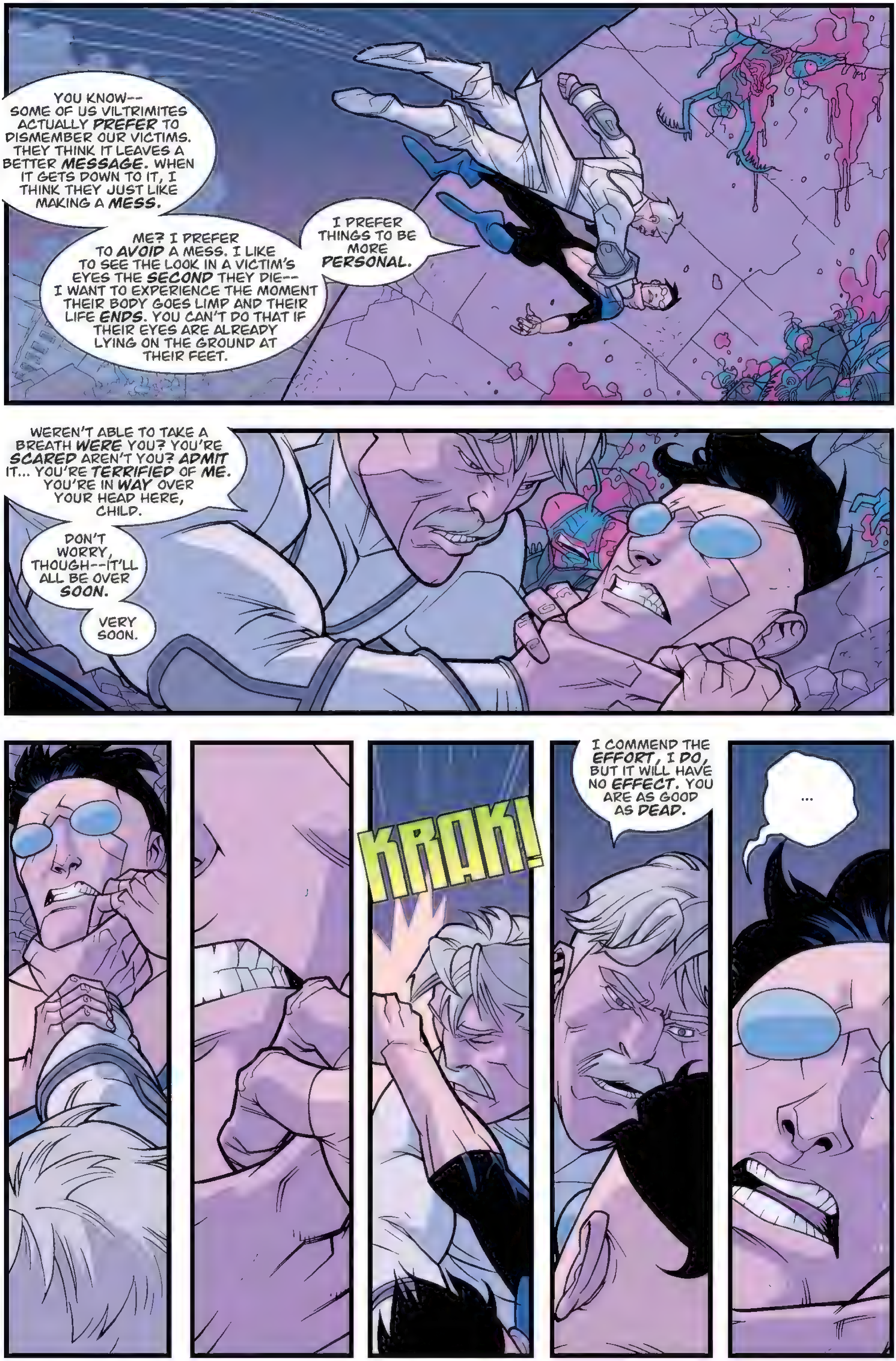

THEY WERE *INFERIOR* TO US. THEY WERE *LESSER* BEINGS. THEIR DEATHS ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL. THESE ARE ALL THINGS I AM COMPLETELY AWARE OF.
I SHOULD NOT *CARE* THAT THEY ARE DEAD. I'VE HAD BLOOD ON MY HANDS BEFORE--FAR MORE THAN *THIS*.
AND YET. I *CARE*.
I AM ENRAGED.
THAT'S *OKAY*, DAD. THAT'S *NORMAL*.
YOU'RE NOT THE SAME PERSON YOU ONCE WERE.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL?! HOW CAN YOU PRESUME YOUR WAYS ARE RIGHT?!
HOW CAN YOU THINK IT WOULDN'T BE BETTER TO FEEL NOTHING AT TIMES LIKE THESE?!
HOW?!
DAD--
--PLEASE.

THERE'S THE NOLAN WE'VE HEARD STORIES OF.
I MUST ADMIT. YOU HAD ME **WORRIED** FOR A LITTLE WHILE THERE.

THOOM!!

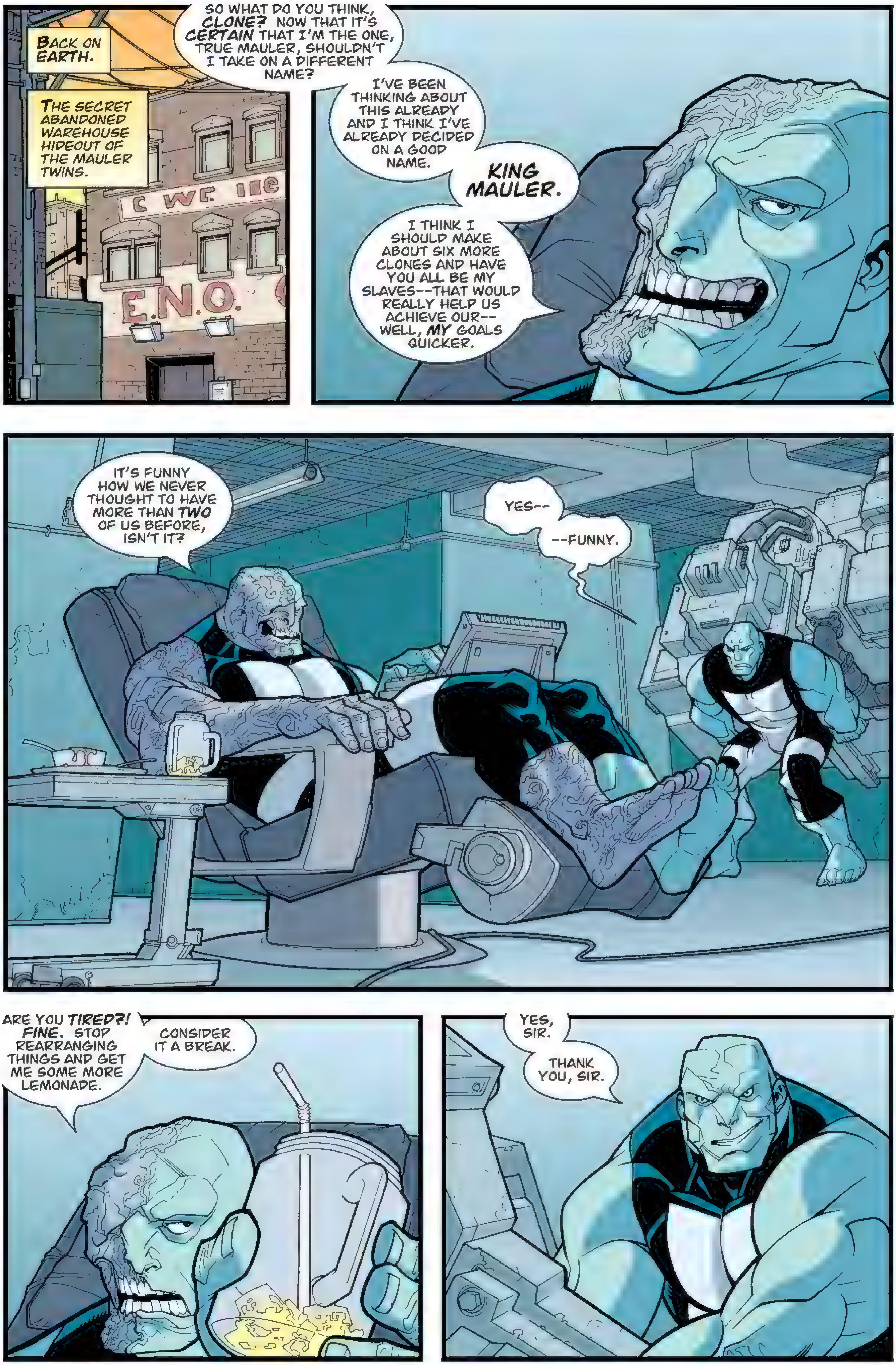
GOOOM!!
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THIS?! THESE PEOPLE DID NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS!!
I WAS RULING THEM-- THEY WERE READY TO BECOME A PART OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE!
WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!
WRAMM!! WRAMM!! WRAMM!!
KRAK!
TO PISS YOU OFF!
THE MORE PISSED YOU ARE-- THE LESS YOU THINK. THE LESS YOU THINK-- THE EASIER YOU'LL BE TO DEFEAT!
THROKK!
NOT THAT OUR VICTORY HERE WAS EVER IN QUESTION.
I CAN ASSUME THAT SINCE LUCAN IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND--YOU'VE KILLED HIM.
GOOD.
I ALWAYS KNEW HE WAS WEAK. SOON, I'LL KNOW YOU WERE WEAK, TOO.
CHOOOM!!

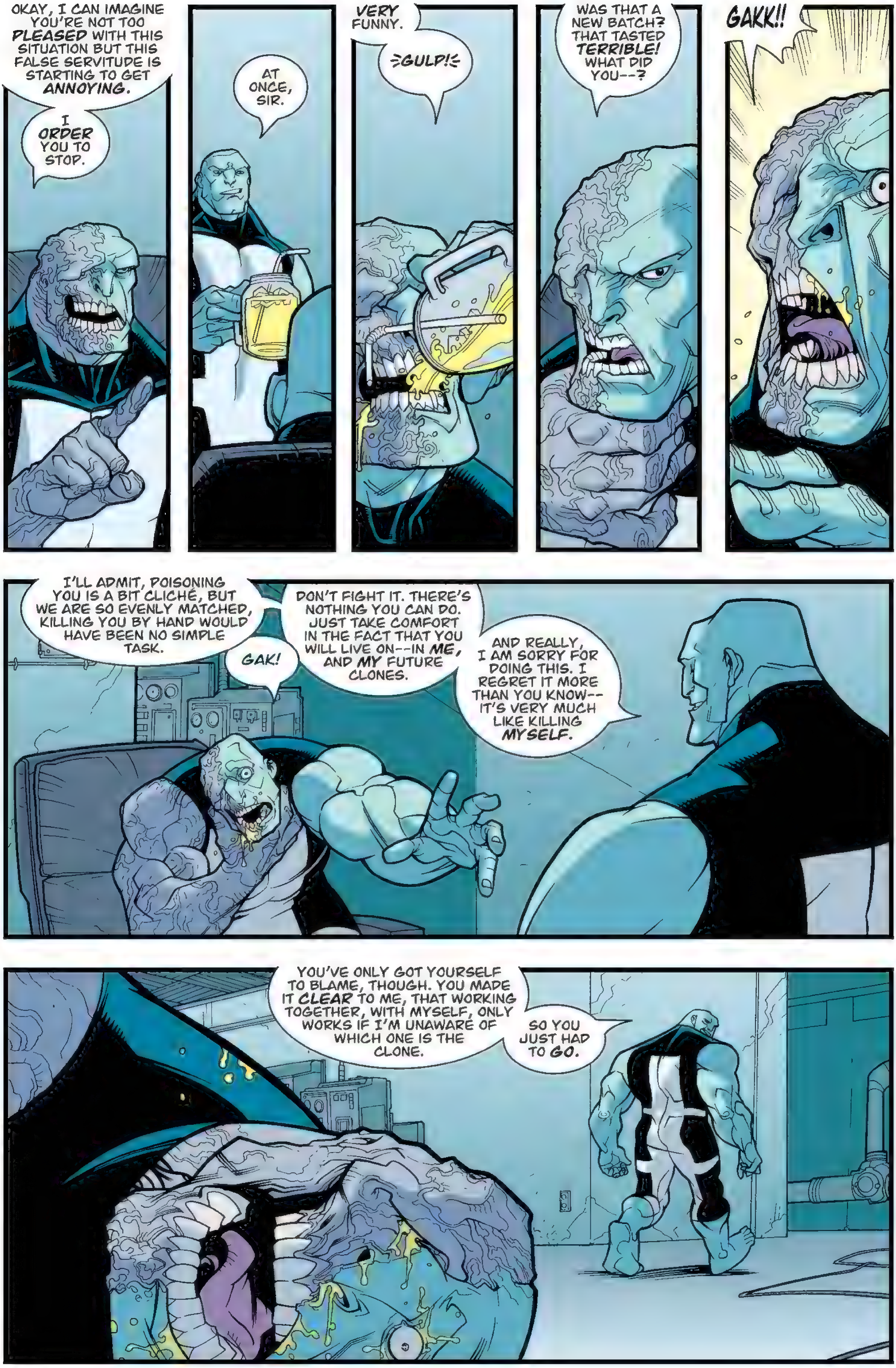
GET OFF HIM!!
FOOLISH CHILD. YOU'LL DIE SOON ENOUGH!
NO NEED TO RUSH IT!
POW!
THIS ONE IS MINE!!

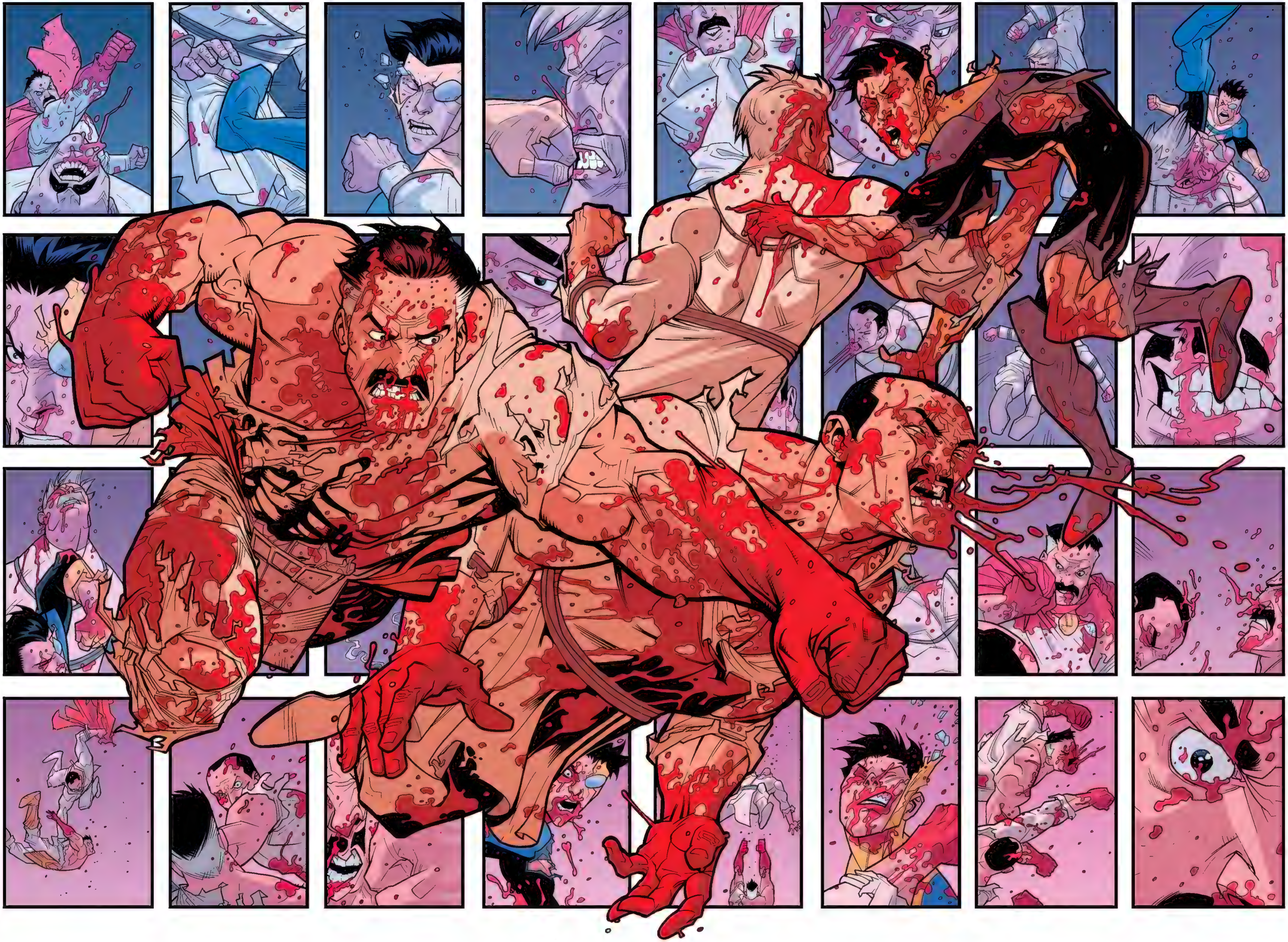

YOU KNOW-- SOME OF US VILTRIMITES ACTUALLY PREFER TO DISMEMBER OUR VICTIMS. THEY THINK IT LEAVES A BETTER MESSAGE. WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO IT, I THINK THEY JUST LIKE MAKING A MESS.
ME? I PREFER TO AVOID A MESS. I LIKE TO SEE THE LOOK IN A VICTIM'S EYES THE SECOND THEY DIE-- I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE MOMENT THEIR BODY GOES LIMP AND THEIR LIFE ENDS. YOU CAN'T DO THAT IF THEIR EYES ARE ALREADY LYING ON THE GROUND AT THEIR FEET.
I PREFER THINGS TO BE MORE PERSONAL.
WEREN'T ABLE TO TAKE A BREATH WERE YOU? YOU'RE SCARED AREN'T YOU? ADMIT IT... YOU'RE TERRIFIED OF ME. YOU'RE IN WAY OVER YOUR HEAD HERE, CHILD.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH--IT'LL ALL BE OVER SOON.
VERY SOON.
KRAK!
I COMMEND THE EFFORT, I DO, BUT IT WILL HAVE NO EFFECT. YOU ARE AS GOOD AS DEAD.
...

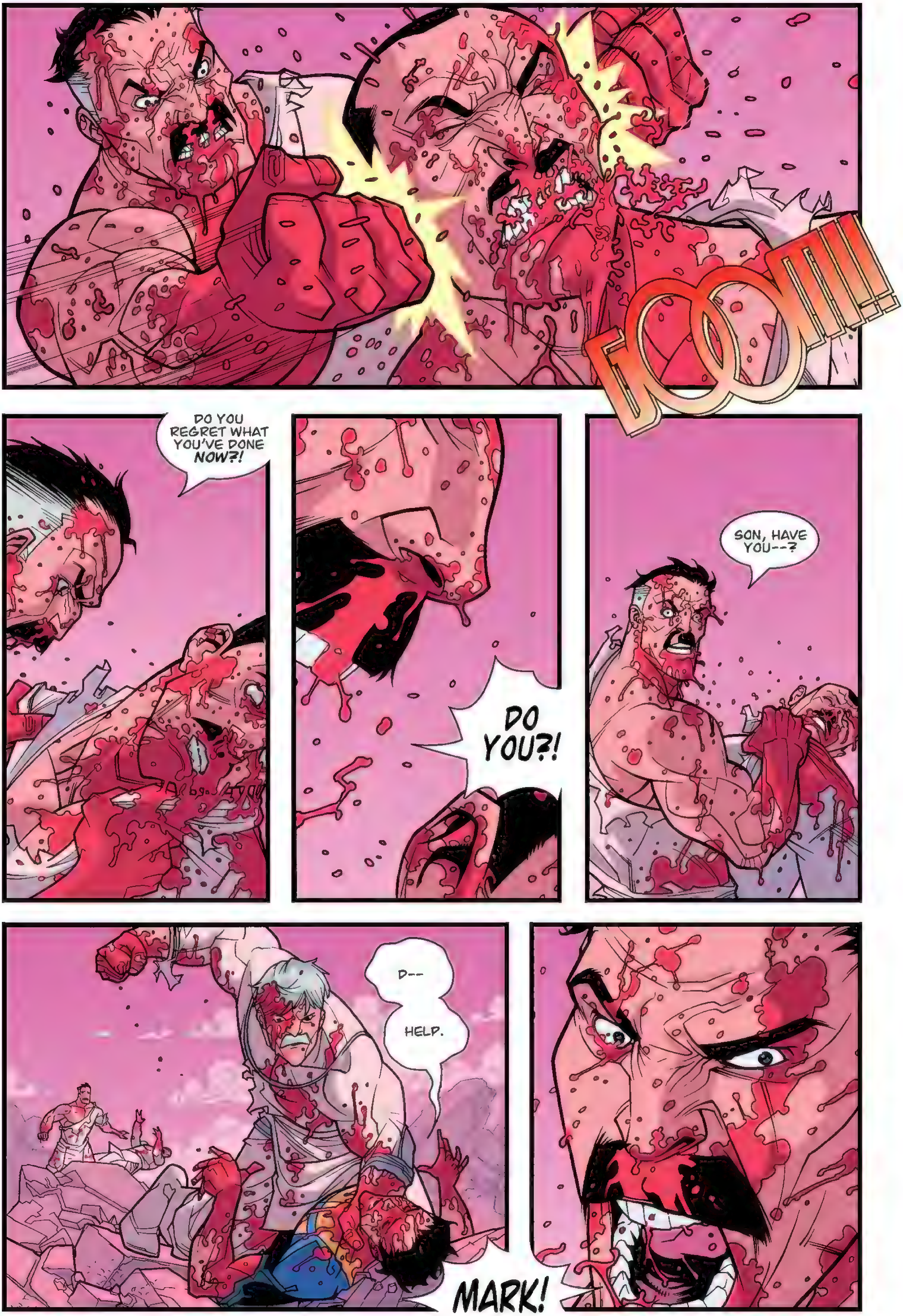
CHOOM!!
DID YOU KNOW THE EMPIRE WAS SENDING YOU TO YOUR *DEATHS* WHEN THEY SENT YOU HERE?
OR ARE YOU JUST STARTING TO REALIZE THAT *NOW?*
KRAK!

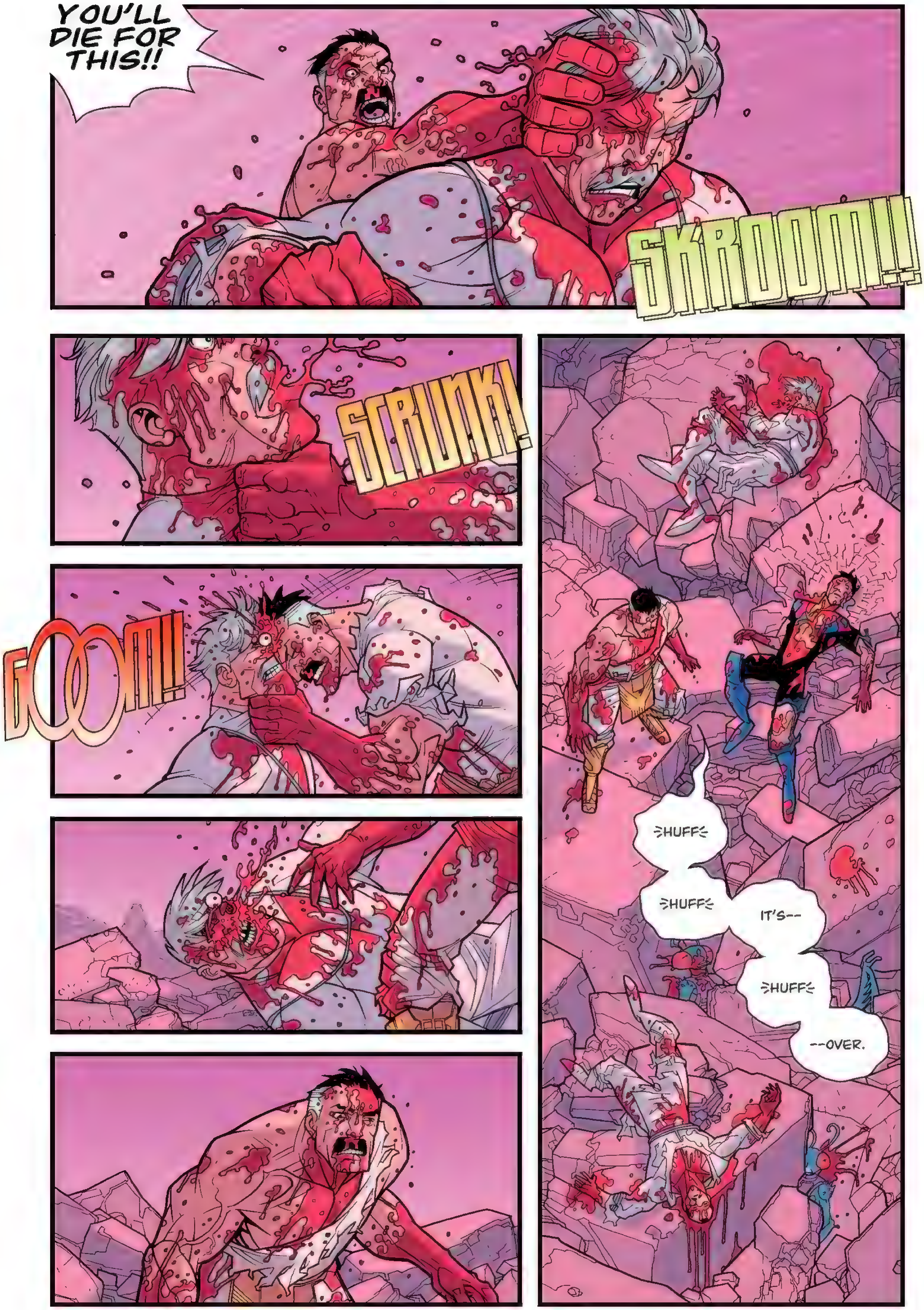
COUGH!
COUGH!
WHOOSH!
WE'VE ONLY GOT A SECOND. ARE YOU OKAY?
THINK SO. YEAH.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT THERE? YOU NEED TO FIGHT FAST. YOU CAN'T GIVE THEM A SECOND TO ANTICIPATE YOUR ATTACK--YOU CAN'T TAKE THE TIME TO THINK. YOU JUST ACT AND IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO LAND A BLOW--ACT AGAIN.
I CAN'T--THEY'RE JUST TOO FAST. I'M TRYING BUT I CAN'T. I'M JUST NOT USED TO THIS. I--I DON'T THINK I'M READY.
YOU BETTER GET READY.


BACK ON EARTH.
THE SECRET ABANDONED WAREHOUSE HIDEOUT OF THE MAULER TWINS.
C WF IIE
E.N.O.
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, CLONE? NOW THAT IT'S CERTAIN THAT I'M THE ONE, TRUE MAULER, SHOULDN'T I TAKE ON A DIFFERENT NAME?
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS ALREADY AND I THINK I'VE ALREADY DECIDED ON A GOOD NAME.
KING MAULER.
I THINK I SHOULD MAKE ABOUT SIX MORE CLONES AND HAVE YOU ALL BE MY SLAVES--THAT WOULD REALLY HELP US ACHIEVE OUR-- WELL, MY GOALS QUICKER.
IT'S FUNNY HOW WE NEVER THOUGHT TO HAVE MORE THAN TWO OF US BEFORE, ISN'T IT?
YES--
--FUNNY.
ARE YOU TIRED?! FINE. STOP REARRANGING THINGS AND GET ME SOME MORE LEMONADE.
CONSIDER IT A BREAK.
YES, SIR.
THANK YOU, SIR.

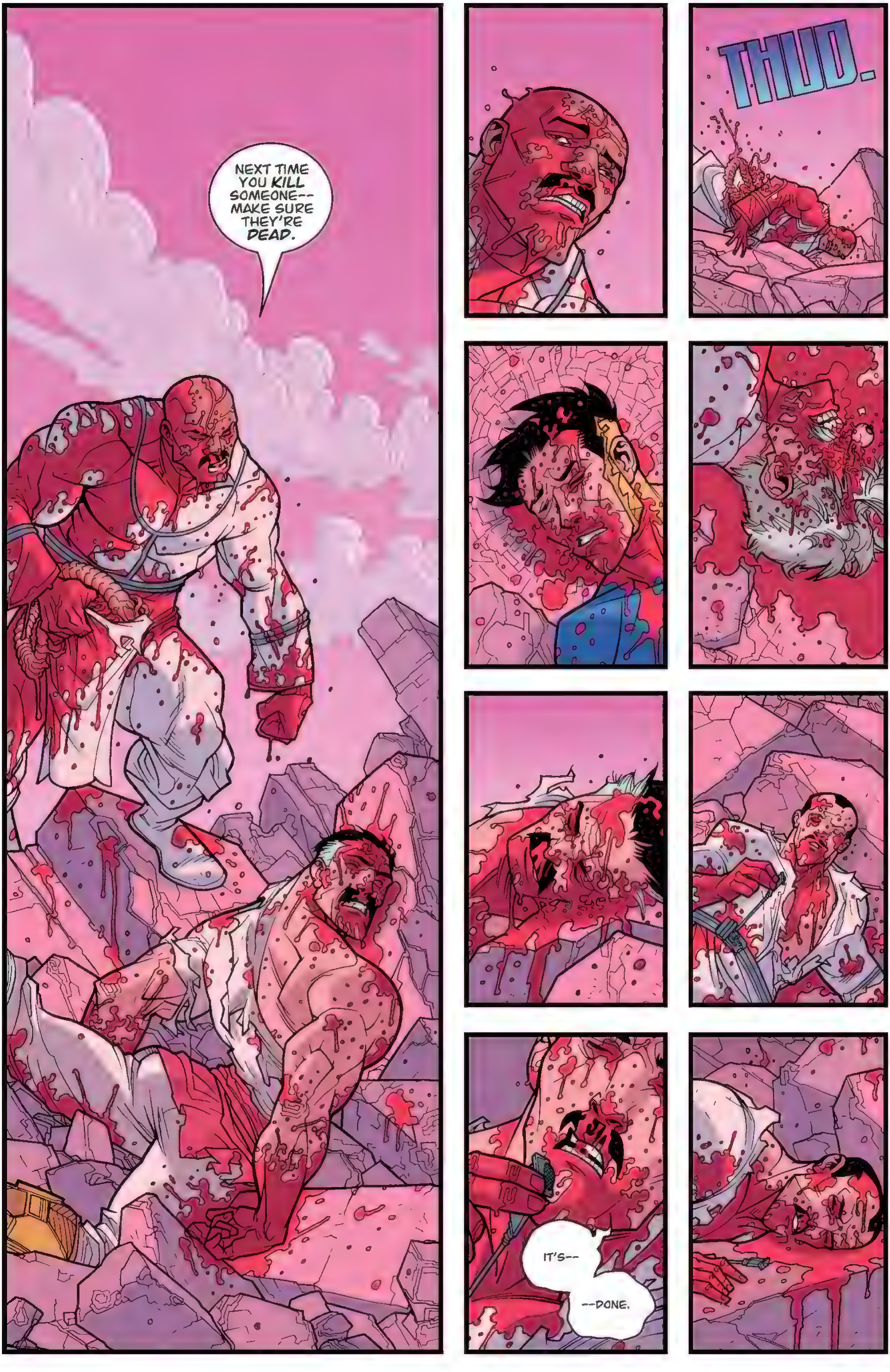

OKAY, I CAN IMAGINE YOU'RE NOT TOO PLEASED WITH THIS SITUATION BUT THIS FALSE SERVITUDE IS STARTING TO GET ANNOYING.
I ORDER YOU TO STOP.
AT ONCE, SIR.
VERY FUNNY.
GULP!
WAS THAT A NEW BATCH? THAT TASTED TERRIBLE! WHAT DID YOU--?
GAKK!!
I'LL ADMIT, POISONING YOU IS A BIT CLICHÉ, BUT WE ARE SO EVENLY MATCHED, KILLING YOU BY HAND WOULD HAVE BEEN NO SIMPLE TASK.
GAK!
DON'T FIGHT IT. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO. JUST TAKE COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT YOU WILL LIVE ON--IN ME, AND MY FUTURE CLONES.
AND REALLY, I AM SORRY FOR DOING THIS. I REGRET IT MORE THAN YOU KNOW-- IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE KILLING MYSELF.
YOU'VE ONLY GOT YOURSELF TO BLAME, THOUGH. YOU MADE IT CLEAR TO ME, THAT WORKING TOGETHER, WITH MYSELF, ONLY WORKS IF I'M UNAWARE OF WHICH ONE IS THE CLONE.
SO YOU JUST HAD TO GO.

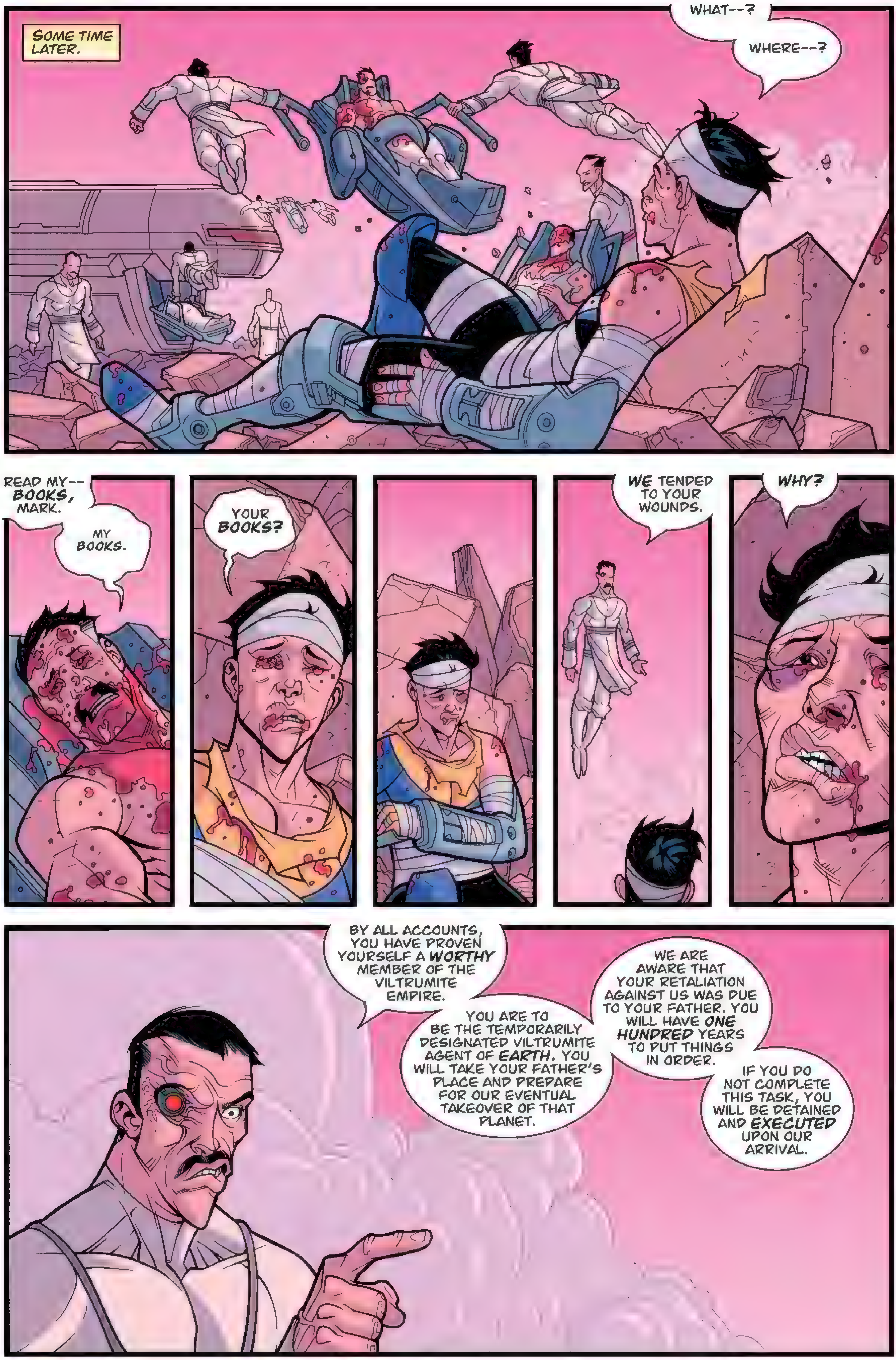



BOOM!!!
DO YOU REGRET WHAT YOU'VE DONE NOW?!
DO YOU?!
SON, HAVE YOU--?
D--
HELP.
MARK!

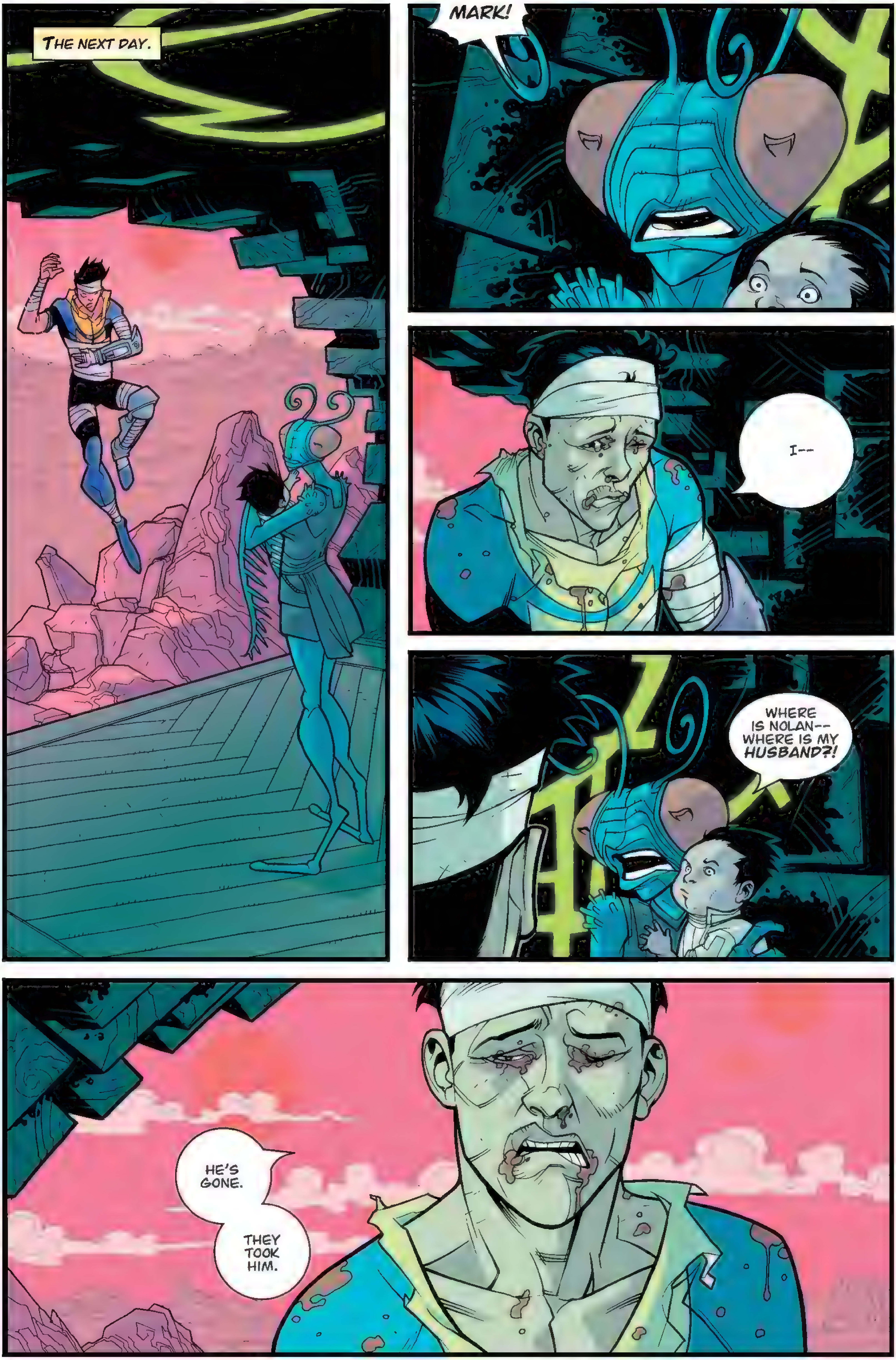

YOU'LL DIE FOR THIS!!
SKROOM!!
SCRUNK!
GOOOM!!
HUFF
HUFF
IT'S--
HUFF
--OVER.

CHOM!!
SNAP!


NEXT TIME YOU KILL SOMEONE-- MAKE SURE THEY'RE DEAD.
THUD.
IT'S--
--DONE.

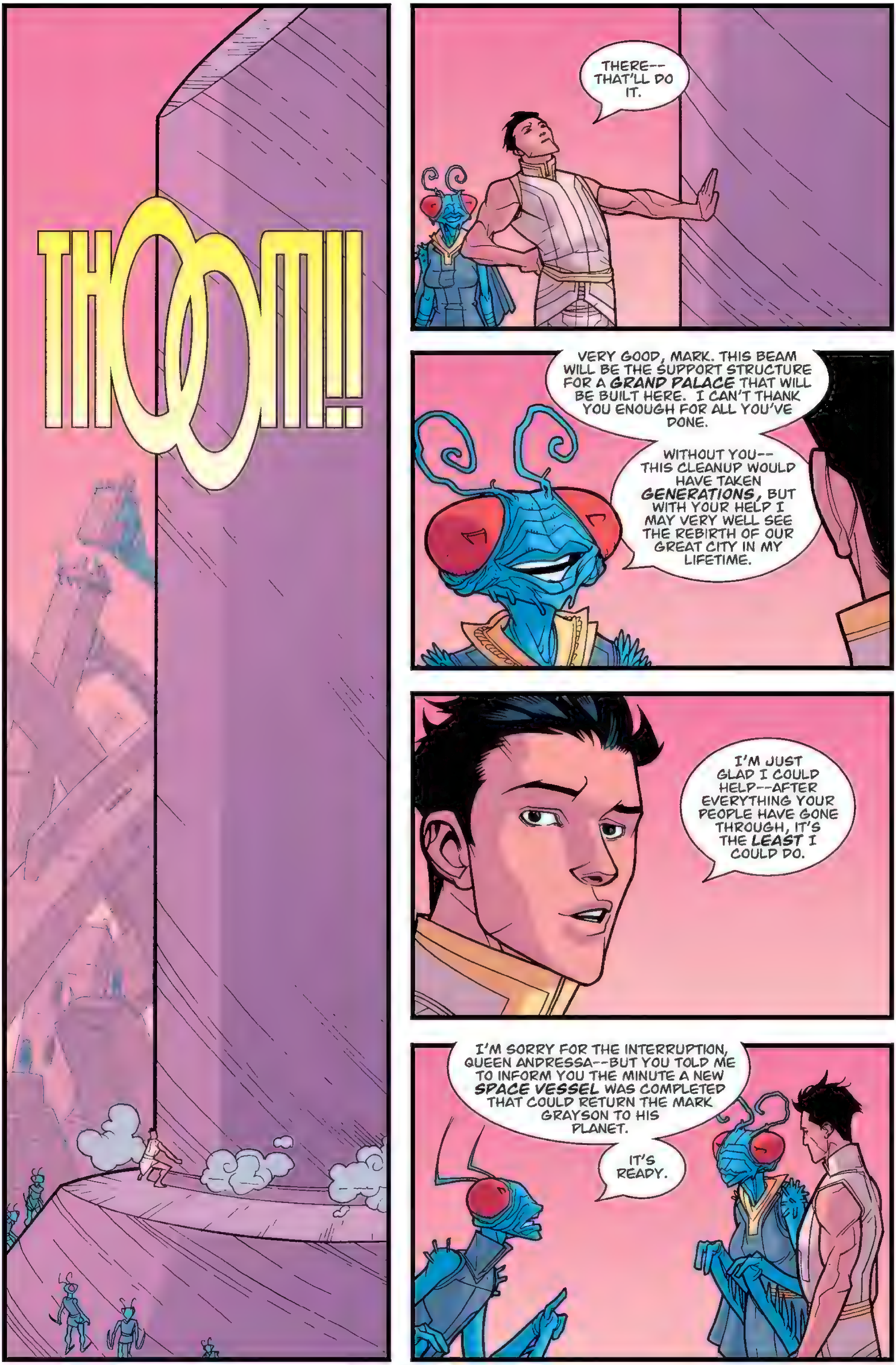

SOME TIME LATER.
WHAT--?
WHERE--?
READ MY-- BOOKS, MARK.
MY BOOKS.
YOUR BOOKS?
WE TENDED TO YOUR WOUNDS.
WHY?
BY ALL ACCOUNTS, YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF A WORTHY MEMBER OF THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE.
YOU ARE TO BE THE TEMPORARILY DESIGNATED VILTRUMITE AGENT OF EARTH. YOU WILL TAKE YOUR FATHER'S PLACE AND PREPARE FOR OUR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF THAT PLANET.
WE ARE AWARE THAT YOUR RETALIATION AGAINST US WAS DUE TO YOUR FATHER. YOU WILL HAVE ONE HUNDRED YEARS TO PUT THINGS IN ORDER.
IF YOU DO NOT COMPLETE THIS TASK, YOU WILL BE DETAINED AND EXECUTED UPON OUR ARRIVAL.

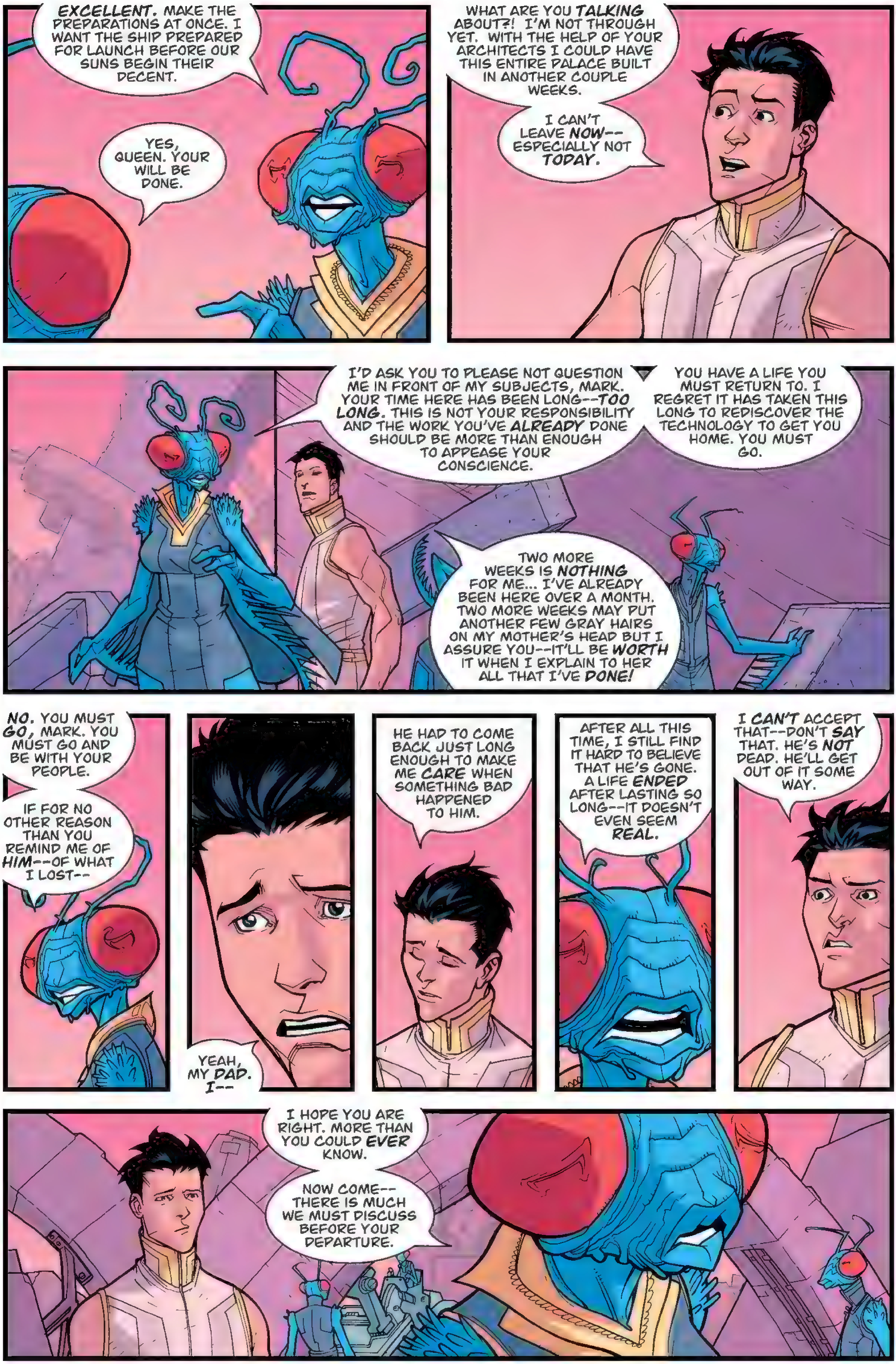
WHATEV--
THUD!

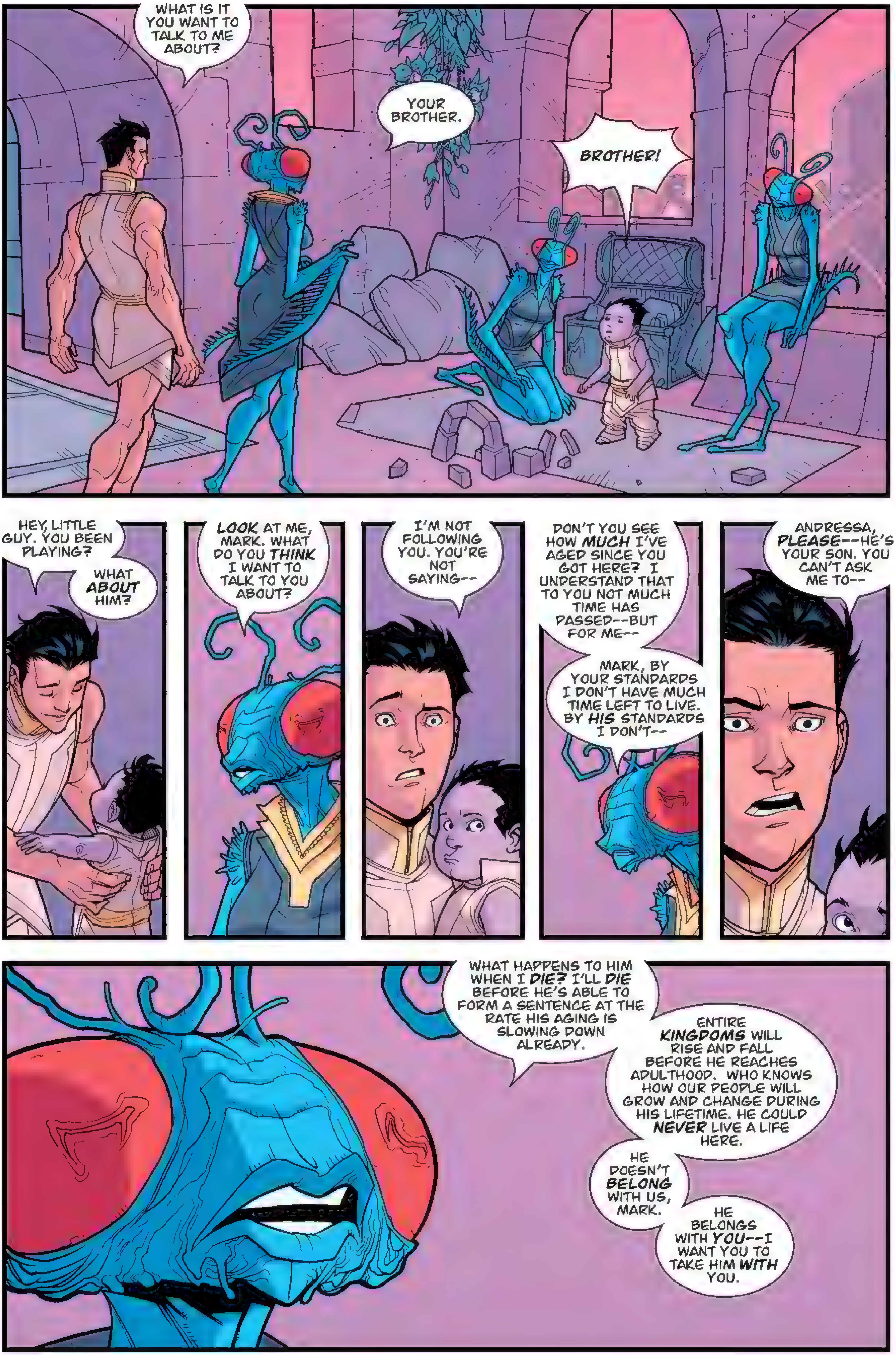

THE NEXT DAY.
MARK!
I--
WHERE IS NOLAN-- WHERE IS MY HUSBAND?!
HE'S GONE.
THEY TOOK HIM.

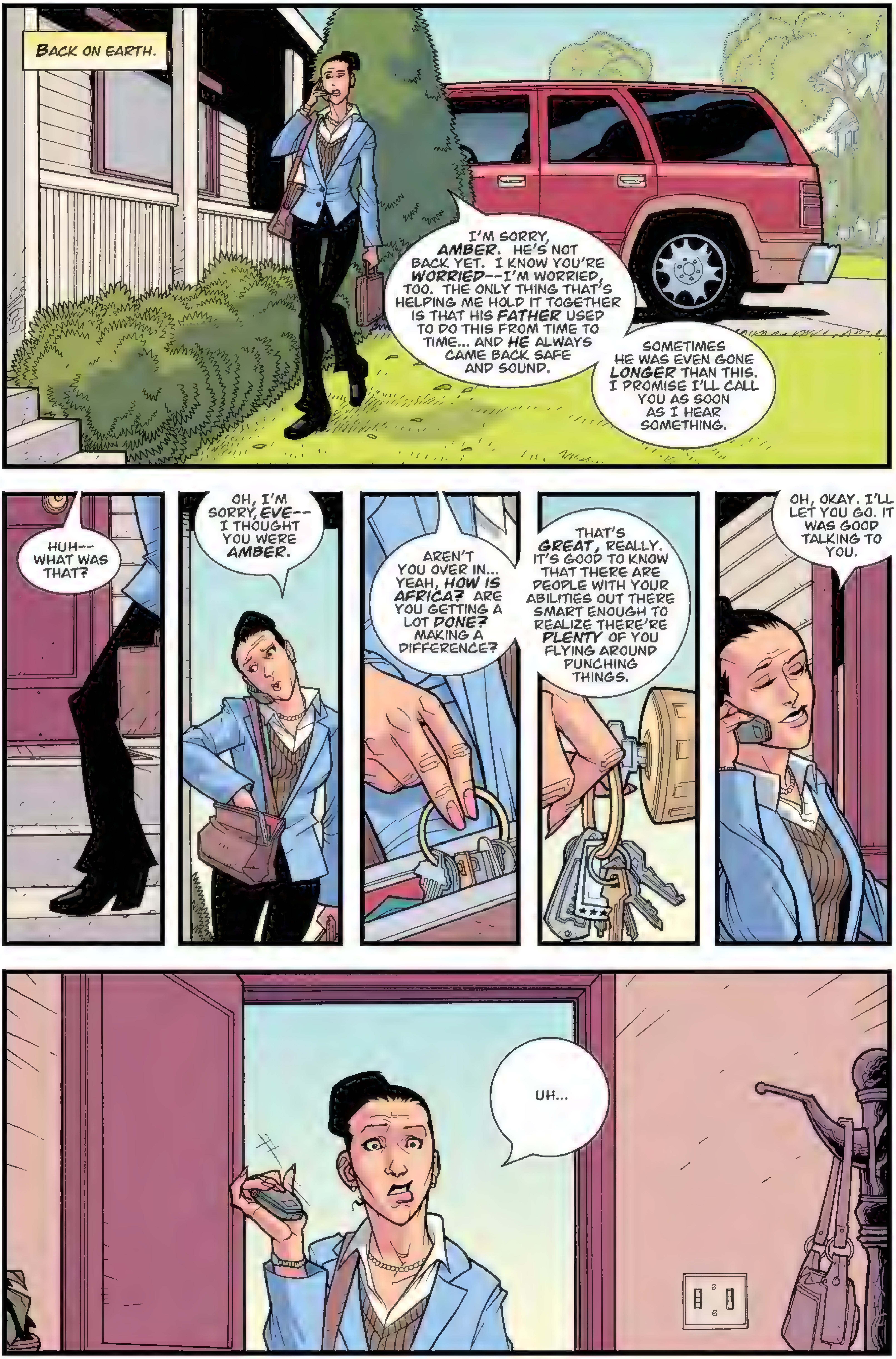
ISSUE THIRTY

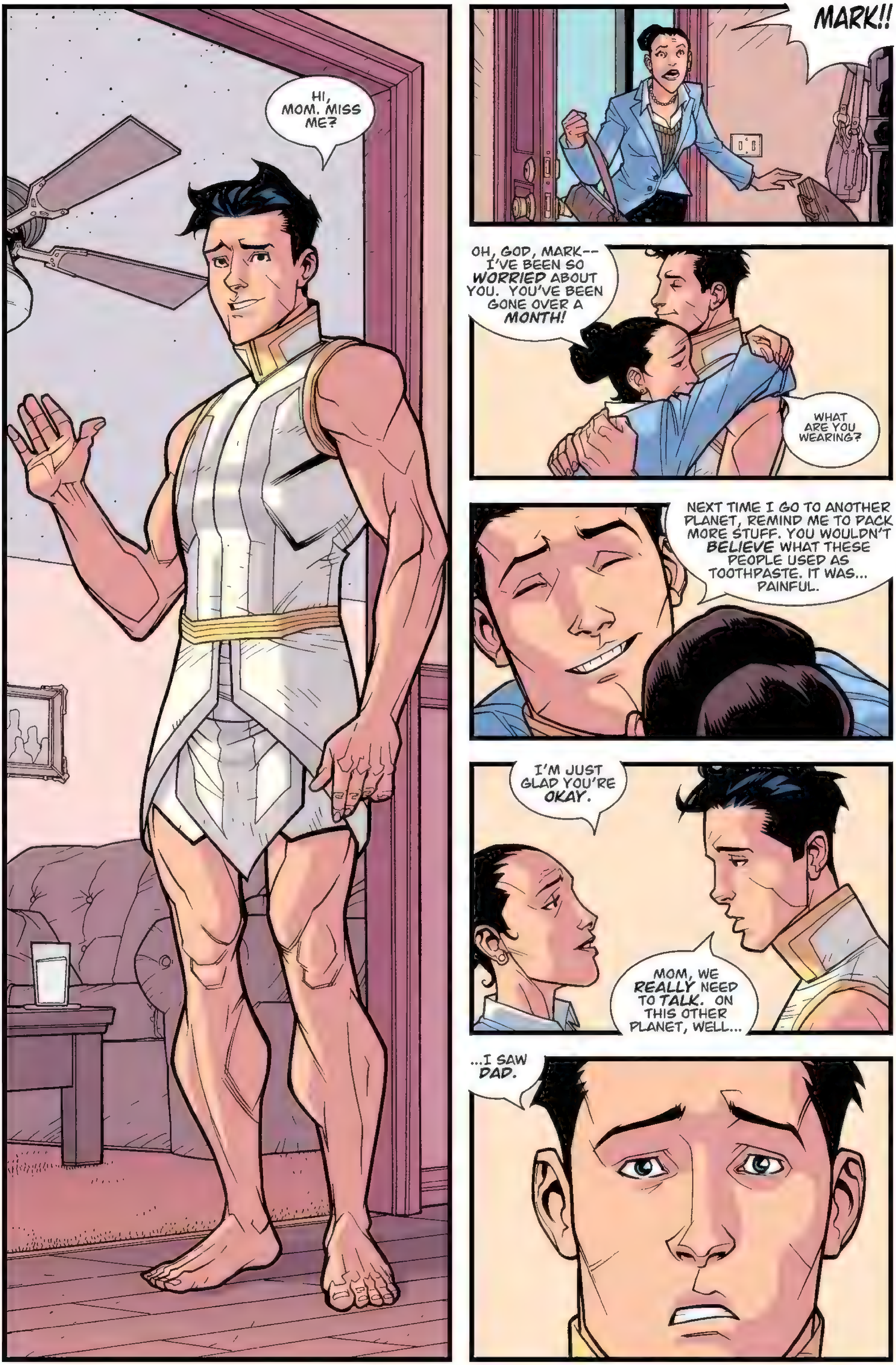
ALMOST--
--THERE.

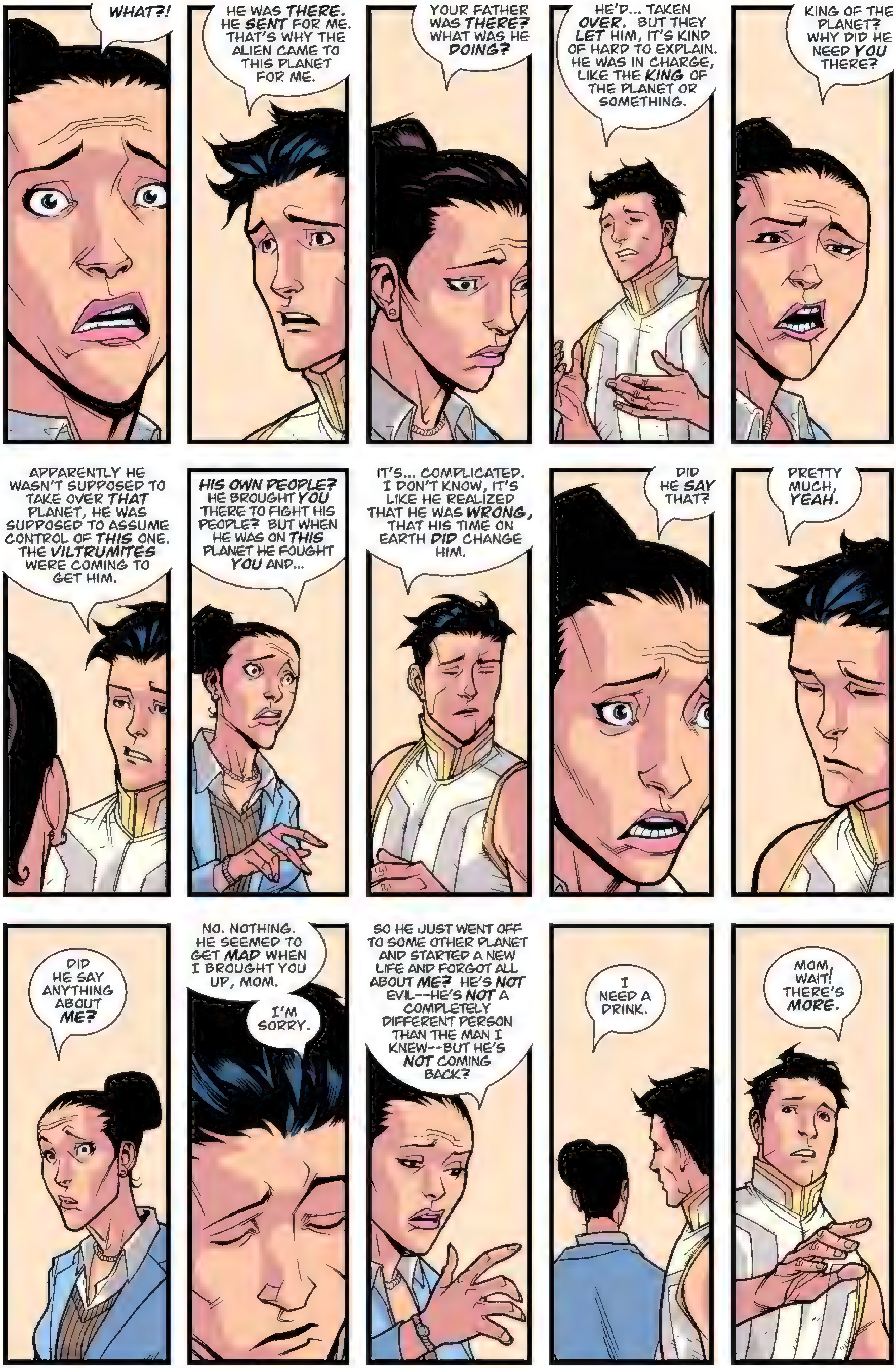

THOOM!!
THERE--THAT'LL DO IT.
VERY GOOD, MARK. THIS BEAM WILL BE THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR A GRAND PALACE THAT WILL BE BUILT HERE. I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE.
WITHOUT YOU--THIS CLEANUP WOULD HAVE TAKEN GENERATIONS, BUT WITH YOUR HELP I MAY VERY WELL SEE THE REBIRTH OF OUR GREAT CITY IN MY LIFETIME.
I'M JUST GLAD I COULD HELP--AFTER EVERYTHING YOUR PEOPLE HAVE GONE THROUGH, IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO.
I'M SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION, QUEEN ANDRESSA--BUT YOU TOLD ME TO INFORM YOU THE MINUTE A NEW SPACE VESSEL WAS COMPLETED THAT COULD RETURN THE MARK GRAYSON TO HIS PLANET.
IT'S READY.

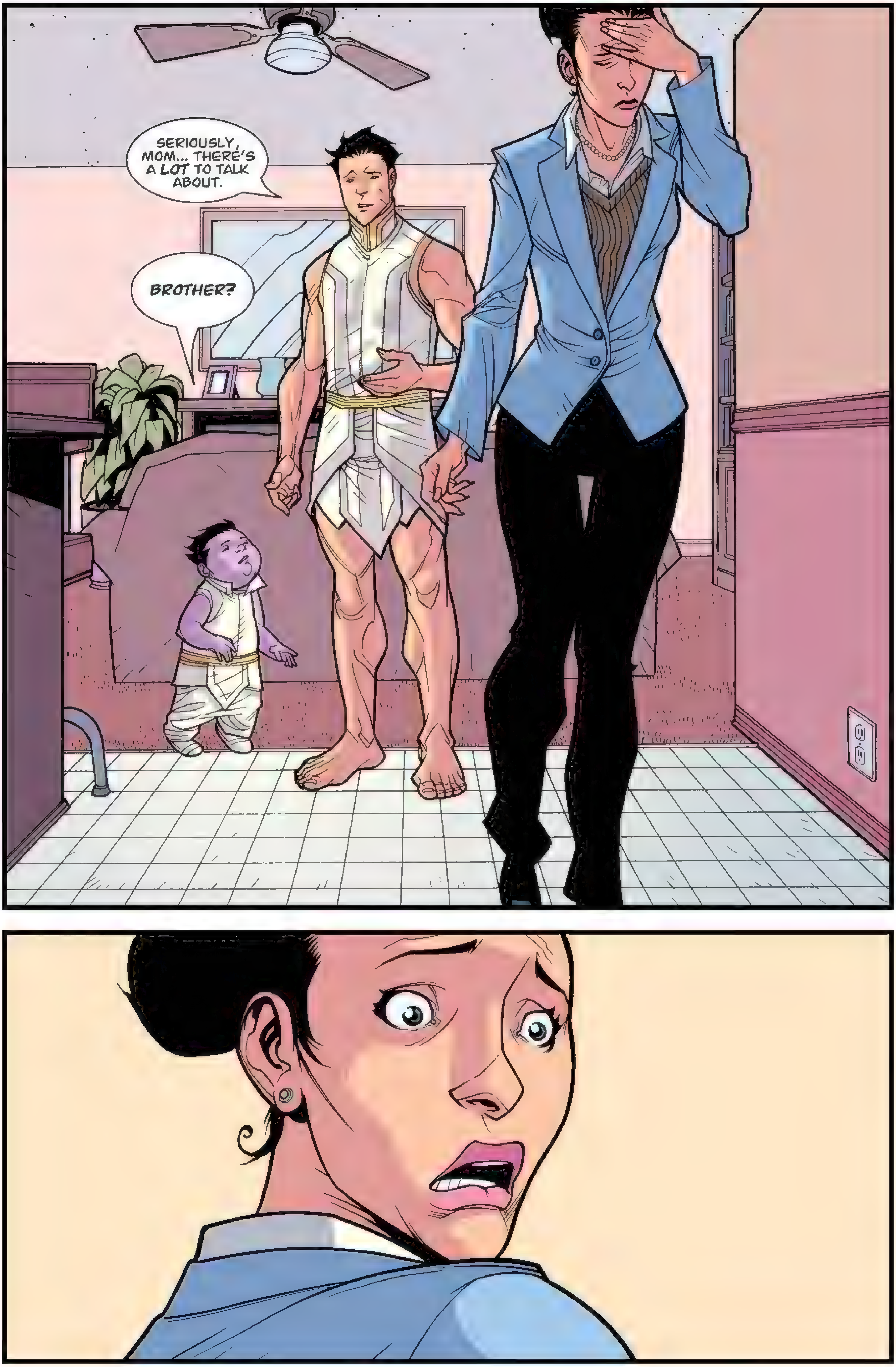

EXCELLENT. MAKE THE PREPARATIONS AT ONCE. I WANT THE SHIP PREPARED FOR LAUNCH BEFORE OUR SUNS BEGIN THEIR DECENT.
YES, QUEEN. YOUR WILL BE DONE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I'M NOT THROUGH YET. WITH THE HELP OF YOUR ARCHITECTS I COULD HAVE THIS ENTIRE PALACE BUILT IN ANOTHER COUPLE WEEKS.
I CAN'T LEAVE NOW-- ESPECIALLY NOT TODAY.
I'D ASK YOU TO PLEASE NOT QUESTION ME IN FRONT OF MY SUBJECTS, MARK. YOUR TIME HERE HAS BEEN LONG--TOO LONG. THIS IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WORK YOU'VE ALREADY DONE SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO APPEASE YOUR CONSCIENCE.
YOU HAVE A LIFE YOU MUST RETURN TO. I REGRET IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG TO REDISCOVER THE TECHNOLOGY TO GET YOU HOME. YOU MUST GO.
TWO MORE WEEKS IS NOTHING FOR ME... I'VE ALREADY BEEN HERE OVER A MONTH. TWO MORE WEEKS MAY PUT ANOTHER FEW GRAY HAIRS ON MY MOTHER'S HEAD BUT I ASSURE YOU--IT'LL BE WORTH IT WHEN I EXPLAIN TO HER ALL THAT I'VE DONE!
NO. YOU MUST GO, MARK. YOU MUST GO AND BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE.
IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN YOU REMIND ME OF HIM--OF WHAT I LOST--
YEAH, MY DAD. I--
HE HAD TO COME BACK JUST LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE ME CARE WHEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO HIM.
AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE'S GONE. A LIFE ENDED AFTER LASTING SO LONG--IT DOESN'T EVEN SEEM REAL.
I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT--DON'T SAY THAT. HE'S NOT DEAD. HE'LL GET OUT OF IT SOME WAY.
I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT. MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER KNOW.
NOW COME-- THERE IS MUCH WE MUST DISCUSS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE.

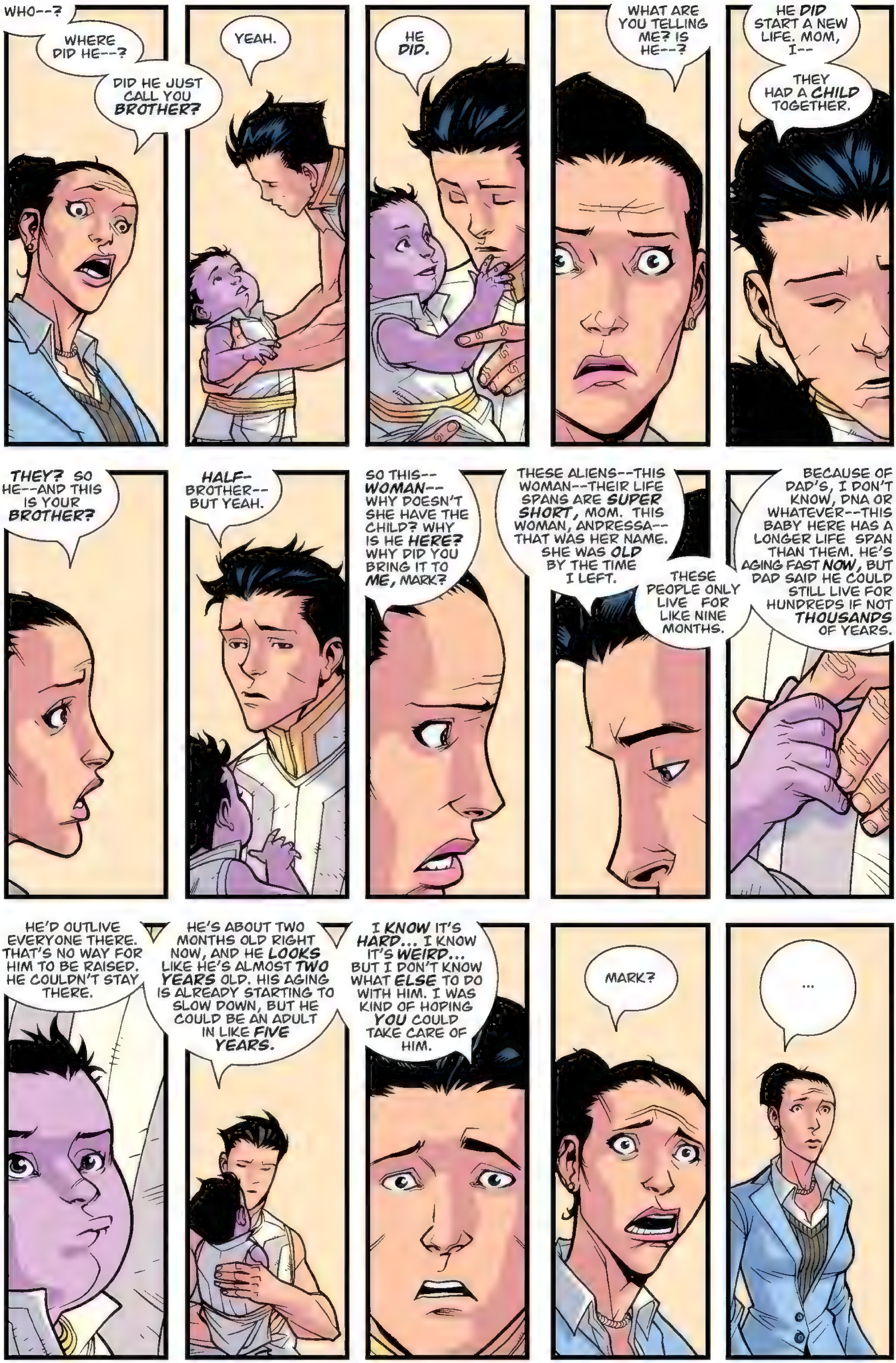

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
YOUR BROTHER.
BROTHER!
HEY, LITTLE GUY. YOU BEEN PLAYING?
WHAT ABOUT HIM?
LOOK AT ME, MARK. WHAT DO YOU THINK I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT?
I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU. YOU'RE NOT SAYING--
DON'T YOU SEE HOW MUCH I'VE AGED SINCE YOU GOT HERE? I UNDERSTAND THAT TO YOU NOT MUCH TIME HAS PASSED--BUT FOR ME--
MARK, BY YOUR STANDARDS I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT TO LIVE. BY HIS STANDARDS I DON'T--
ANDRESSA, PLEASE--HE'S YOUR SON. YOU CAN'T ASK ME TO--
WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM WHEN I DIE? I'LL DIE BEFORE HE'S ABLE TO FORM A SENTENCE AT THE RATE HIS AGING IS SLOWING DOWN ALREADY.
ENTIRE KINGDOMS WILL RISE AND FALL BEFORE HE REACHES ADULTHOOD. WHO KNOWS HOW OUR PEOPLE WILL GROW AND CHANGE DURING HIS LIFETIME. HE COULD NEVER LIVE A LIFE HERE.
HE DOESN'T BELONG WITH US, MARK.
HE BELONGS WITH YOU--I WANT YOU TO TAKE HIM WITH YOU.

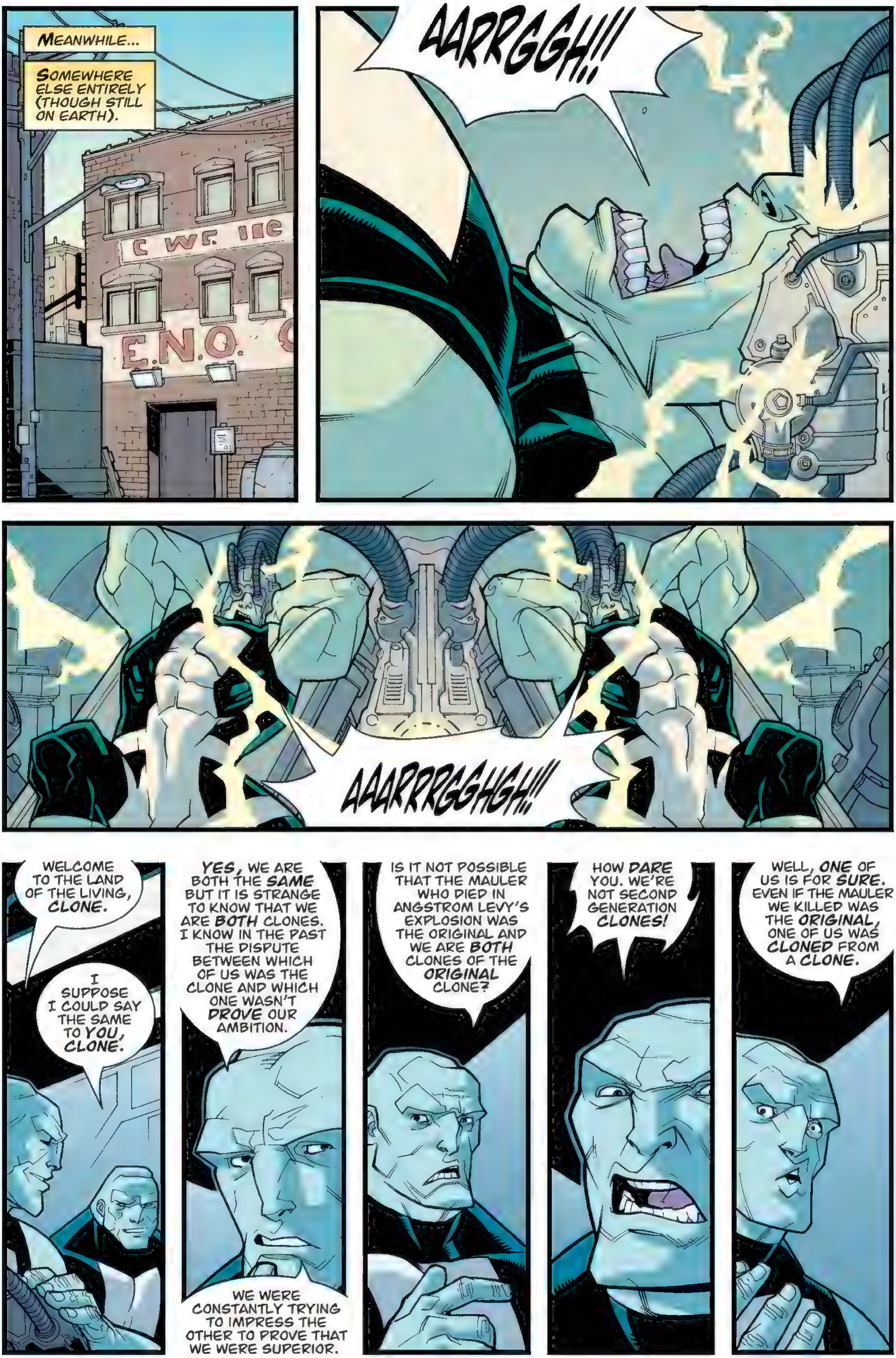

BACK ON EARTH.
I'M SORRY, AMBER. HE'S NOT BACK YET. I KNOW YOU'RE WORRIED--I'M WORRIED, TOO. THE ONLY THING THAT'S HELPING ME HOLD IT TOGETHER IS THAT HIS FATHER USED TO DO THIS FROM TIME TO TIME... AND HE ALWAYS CAME BACK SAFE AND SOUND.
SOMETIMES HE WAS EVEN GONE LONGER THAN THIS. I PROMISE I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING.
HUH-- WHAT WAS THAT?
OH, I'M SORRY, EVE-- I THOUGHT YOU WERE AMBER.
AREN'T YOU OVER IN... YEAH, HOW IS AFRICA? ARE YOU GETTING A LOT DONE? MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
THAT'S GREAT, REALLY. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WITH YOUR ABILITIES OUT THERE SMART ENOUGH TO REALIZE THERE'RE PLENTY OF YOU FLYING AROUND PUNCHING THINGS.
OH, OKAY. I'LL LET YOU GO. IT WAS GOOD TALKING TO YOU.
UH...

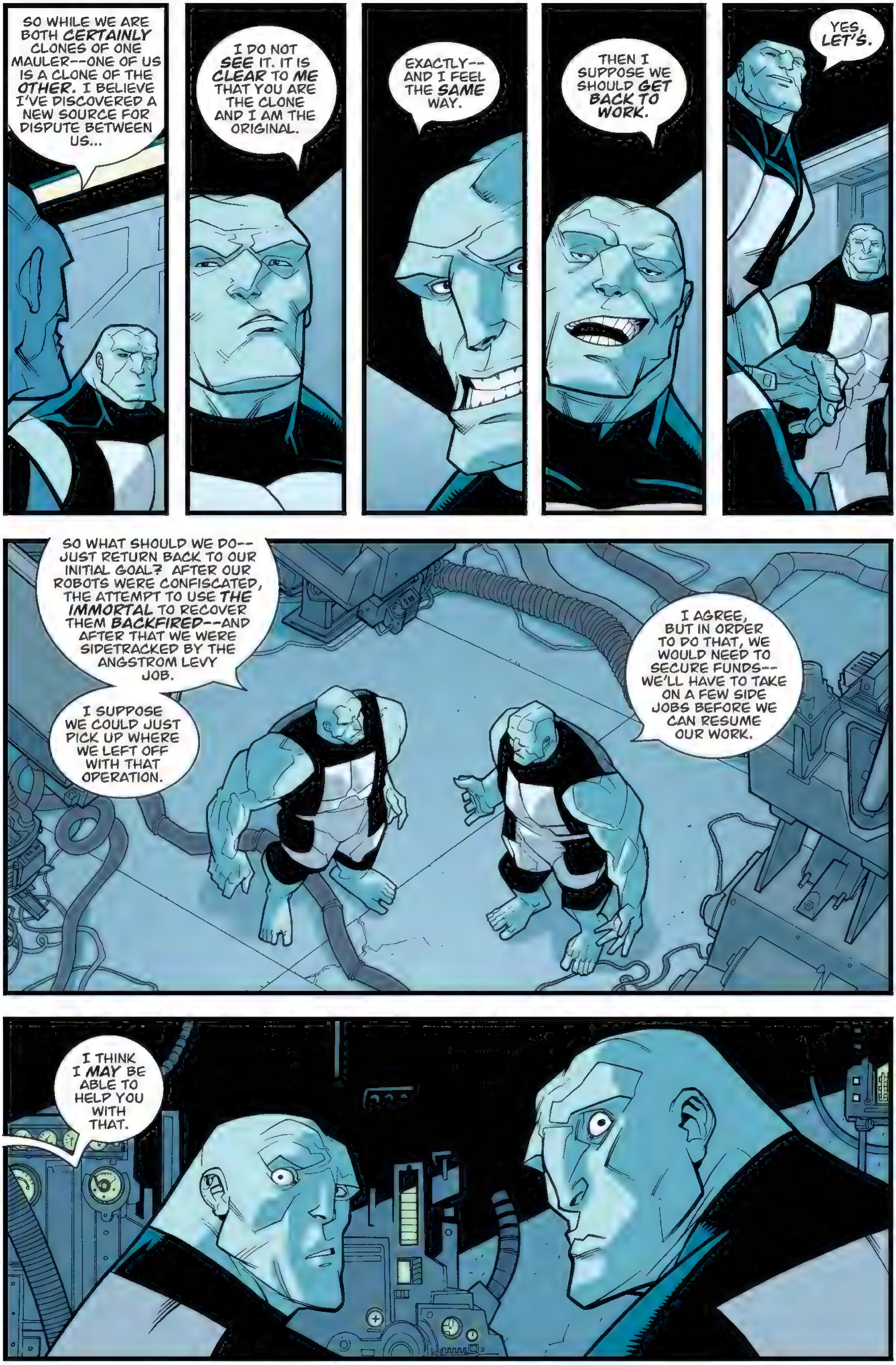

HI, MOM. MISS ME?
MARK!!
OH, GOD, MARK-- I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU. YOU'VE BEEN GONE OVER A MONTH!
WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?
NEXT TIME I GO TO ANOTHER PLANET, REMIND ME TO PACK MORE STUFF. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT THESE PEOPLE USED AS TOOTHPASTE. IT WAS... PAINFUL.
I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.
MOM, WE REALLY NEED TO TALK. ON THIS OTHER PLANET, WELL...
...I SAW DAD.

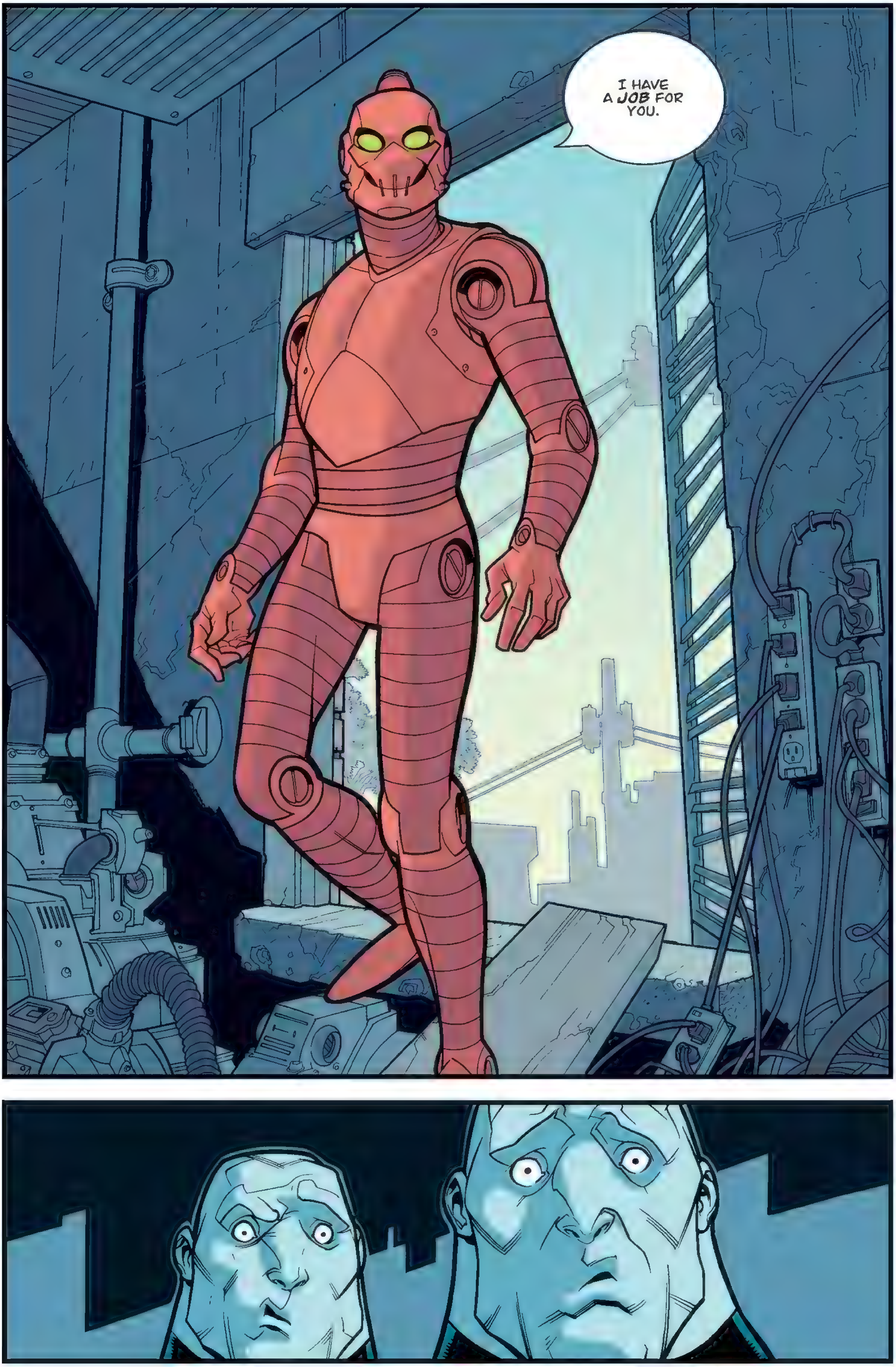

WHAT?!
HE WAS THERE. HE SENT FOR ME. THAT'S WHY THE ALIEN CAME TO THIS PLANET FOR ME.
YOUR FATHER WAS THERE? WHAT WAS HE DOING?
HE'D... TAKEN OVER. BUT THEY LET HIM, IT'S KIND OF HARD TO EXPLAIN. HE WAS IN CHARGE, LIKE THE KING OF THE PLANET OR SOMETHING.
KING OF THE PLANET? WHY DID HE NEED YOU THERE?
APPARENTLY HE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO TAKE OVER THAT PLANET, HE WAS SUPPOSED TO ASSUME CONTROL OF THIS ONE. THE VILTRUMITES WERE COMING TO GET HIM.
HIS OWN PEOPLE? HE BROUGHT YOU THERE TO FIGHT HIS PEOPLE? BUT WHEN HE WAS ON THIS PLANET HE FOUGHT YOU AND...
IT'S... COMPLICATED. I DON'T KNOW, IT'S LIKE HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS WRONG, THAT HIS TIME ON EARTH DID CHANGE HIM.
DID HE SAY THAT?
PRETTY MUCH, YEAH.
DID HE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME?
NO. NOTHING. HE SEEMED TO GET MAD WHEN I BROUGHT YOU UP, MOM.
I'M SORRY.
SO HE JUST WENT OFF TO SOME OTHER PLANET AND STARTED A NEW LIFE AND FORGOT ALL ABOUT ME? HE'S NOT EVIL--HE'S NOT A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON THAN THE MAN I KNEW--BUT HE'S NOT COMING BACK?
I NEED A DRINK.
MOM, WAIT! THERE'S MORE.

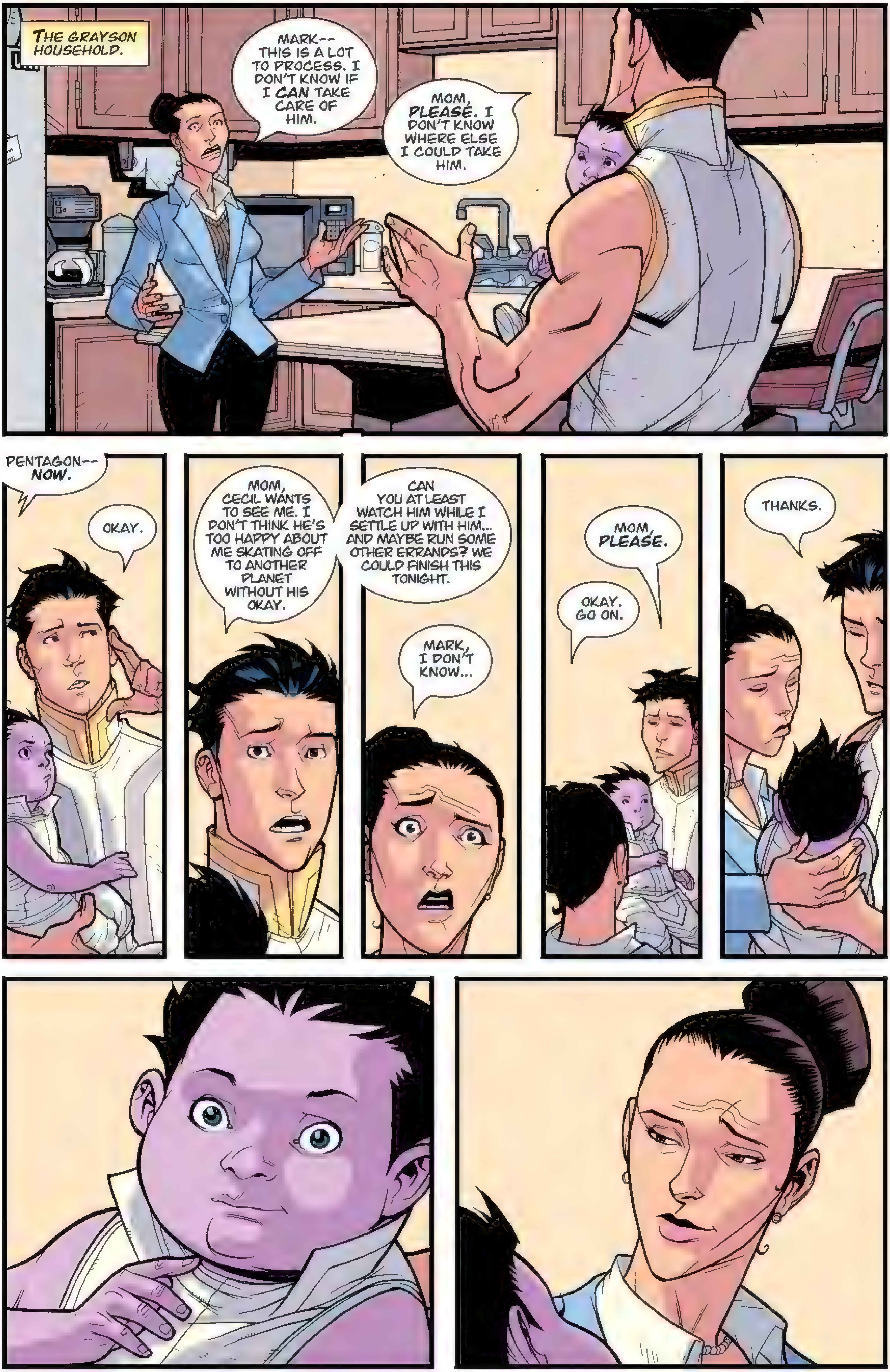

SERIOUSLY, MOM... THERE'S A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.
BROTHER?

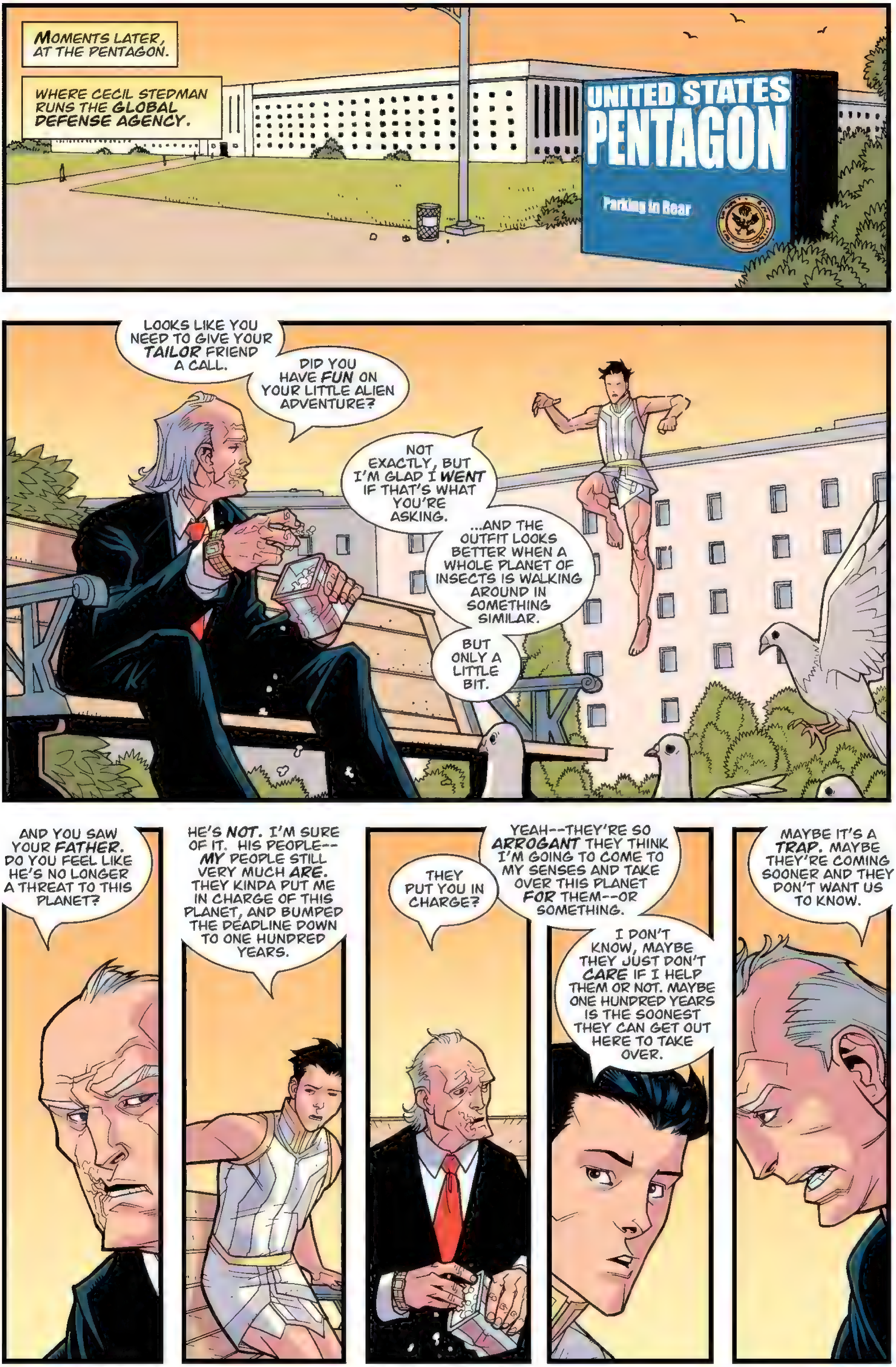

WHO--?
WHERE DID HE--?
DID HE JUST CALL YOU BROTHER?
YEAH.
HE DID.
WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME? IS HE--?
HE DID START A NEW LIFE. MOM, I--
THEY HAD A CHILD TOGETHER.
THEY? SO HE--AND THIS IS YOUR BROTHER?
HALF-BROTHER--BUT YEAH.
SO THIS--WOMAN--WHY DOESN'T SHE HAVE THE CHILD? WHY IS HE HERE? WHY DID YOU BRING IT TO ME, MARK?
THESE ALIENS--THIS WOMAN--THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE SUPER SHORT, MOM. THIS WOMAN, ANDRESSA--THAT WAS HER NAME. SHE WAS OLD BY THE TIME I LEFT.
THESE PEOPLE ONLY LIVE FOR LIKE NINE MONTHS.
BECAUSE OF DAD'S, I DON'T KNOW, DNA OR WHATEVER--THIS BABY HERE HAS A LONGER LIFE SPAN THAN THEM. HE'S AGING FAST NOW, BUT DAD SAID HE COULD STILL LIVE FOR HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
HE'D OUTLIVE EVERYONE THERE. THAT'S NO WAY FOR HIM TO BE RAISED. HE COULDN'T STAY THERE.
HE'S ABOUT TWO MONTHS OLD RIGHT NOW, AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S ALMOST TWO YEARS OLD. HIS AGING IS ALREADY STARTING TO SLOW DOWN, BUT HE COULD BE AN ADULT IN LIKE FIVE YEARS.
I KNOW IT'S HARD... I KNOW IT'S WEIRD... BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO WITH HIM. I WAS KIND OF HOPING YOU COULD TAKE CARE OF HIM.
MARK?
...

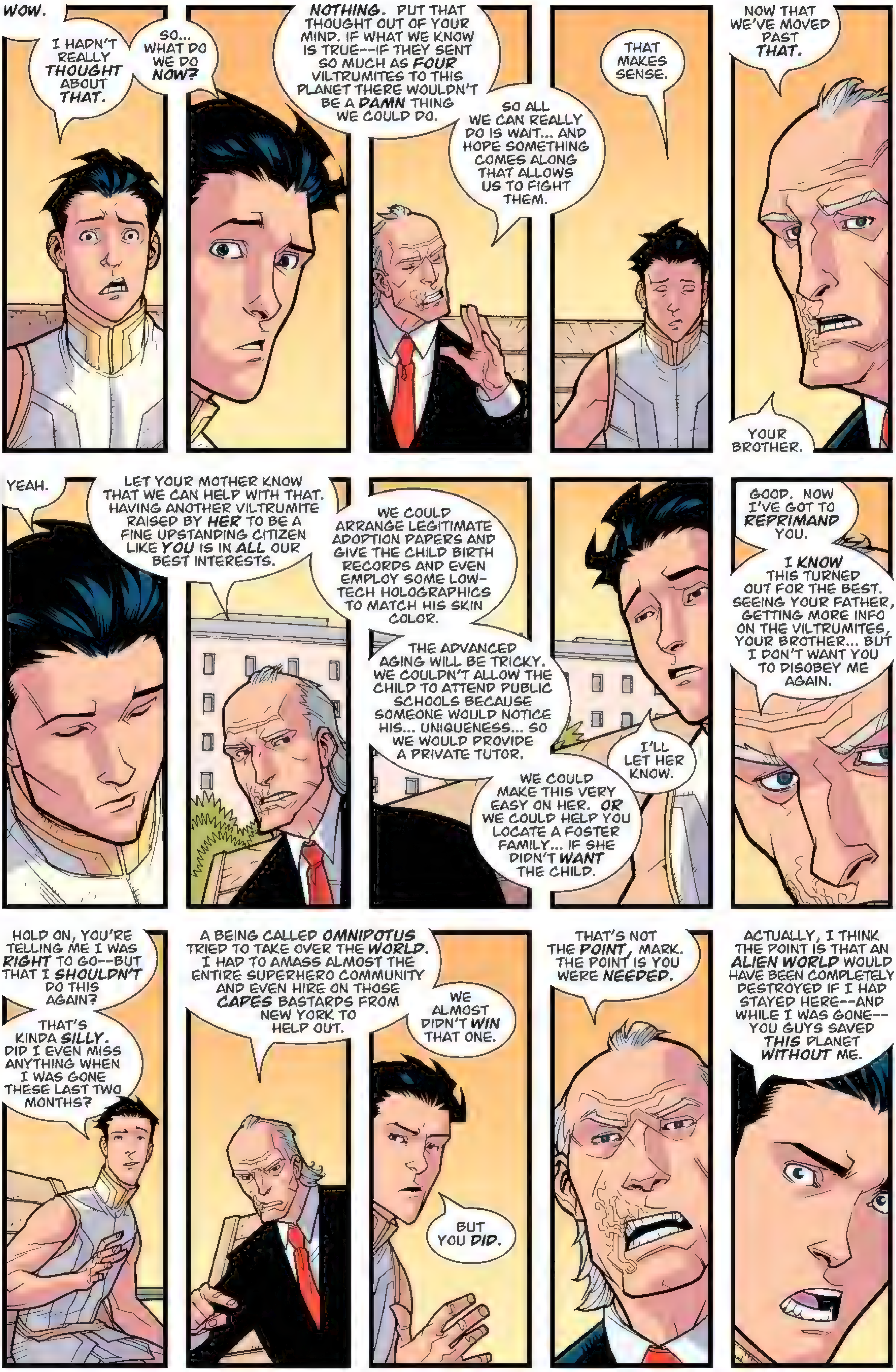

MEANWHILE...
SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY (THOUGH STILL ON EARTH).
C WF INC
E.N.O.
AARRGGH!!
AAARRRGGHGH!!
WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, CLONE.
I SUPPOSE I COULD SAY THE SAME TO YOU, CLONE.
YES, WE ARE BOTH THE SAME BUT IT IS STRANGE TO KNOW THAT WE ARE BOTH CLONES. I KNOW IN THE PAST THE DISPUTE BETWEEN WHICH OF US WAS THE CLONE AND WHICH ONE WASN'T DROVE OUR AMBITION.
WE WERE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO IMPRESS THE OTHER TO PROVE THAT WE WERE SUPERIOR.
IS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE MAULER WHO DIED IN ANGSTROM LEVY'S EXPLOSION WAS THE ORIGINAL AND WE ARE BOTH CLONES OF THE ORIGINAL CLONE?
HOW DARE YOU. WE'RE NOT SECOND GENERATION CLONES!
WELL, ONE OF US IS FOR SURE. EVEN IF THE MAULER WE KILLED WAS THE ORIGINAL, ONE OF US WAS CLONED FROM A CLONE.

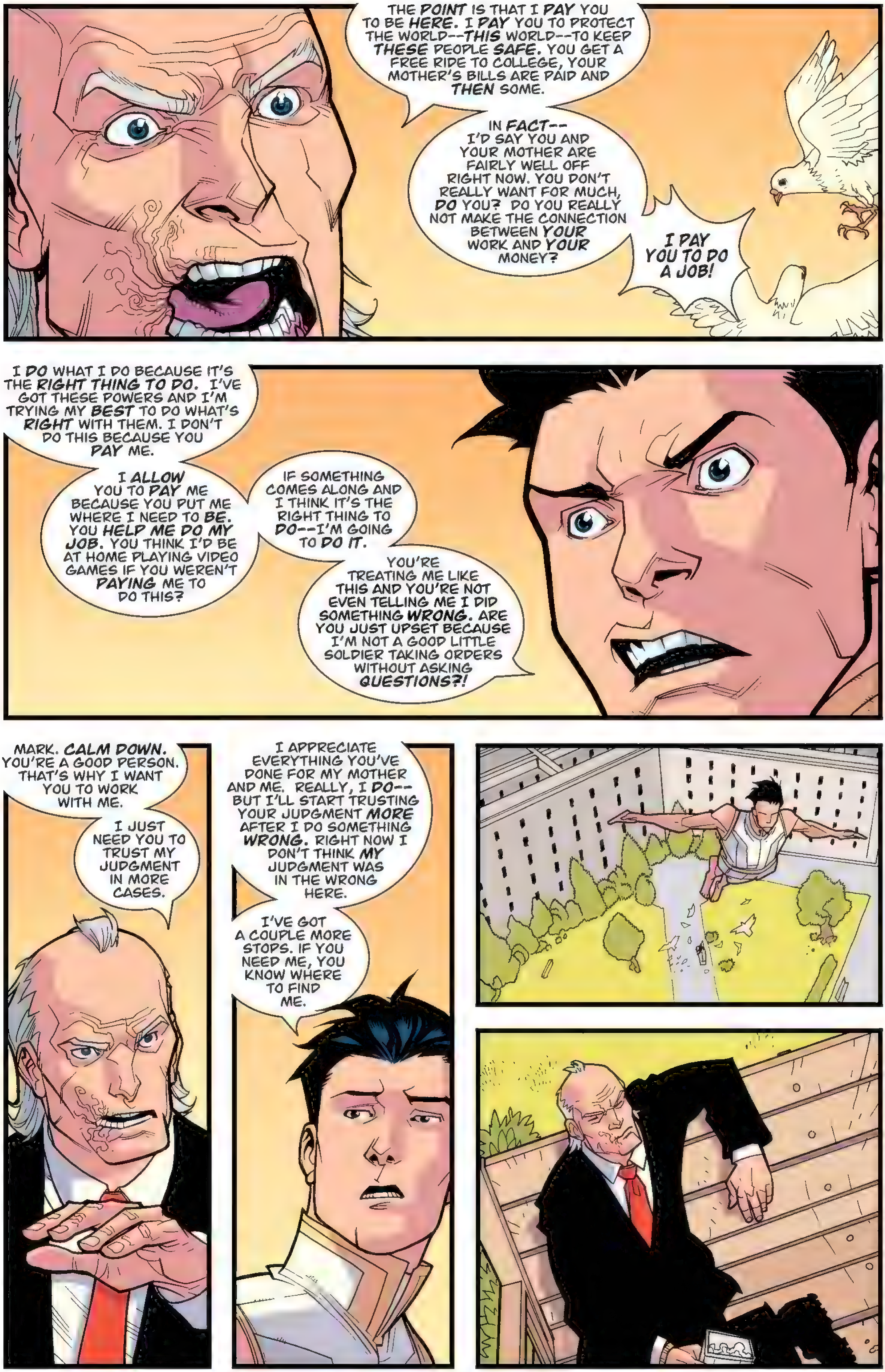

SO WHILE WE ARE BOTH CERTAINLY CLONES OF ONE MAULER--ONE OF US IS A CLONE OF THE OTHER. I BELIEVE I'VE DISCOVERED A NEW SOURCE FOR DISPUTE BETWEEN US...
I DO NOT SEE IT. IT IS CLEAR TO ME THAT YOU ARE THE CLONE AND I AM THE ORIGINAL.
EXACTLY--AND I FEEL THE SAME WAY.
THEN I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD GET BACK TO WORK.
YES, LET'S.
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO--JUST RETURN BACK TO OUR INITIAL GOAL? AFTER OUR ROBOTS WERE CONFISCATED, THE ATTEMPT TO USE THE IMMORTAL TO RECOVER THEM BACKFIRED--AND AFTER THAT WE WERE SIDETRACKED BY THE ANGSTROM LEVY JOB.
I SUPPOSE WE COULD JUST PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF WITH THAT OPERATION.
I AGREE, BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE WOULD NEED TO SECURE FUNDS--WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE ON A FEW SIDE JOBS BEFORE WE CAN RESUME OUR WORK.
I THINK I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH THAT.

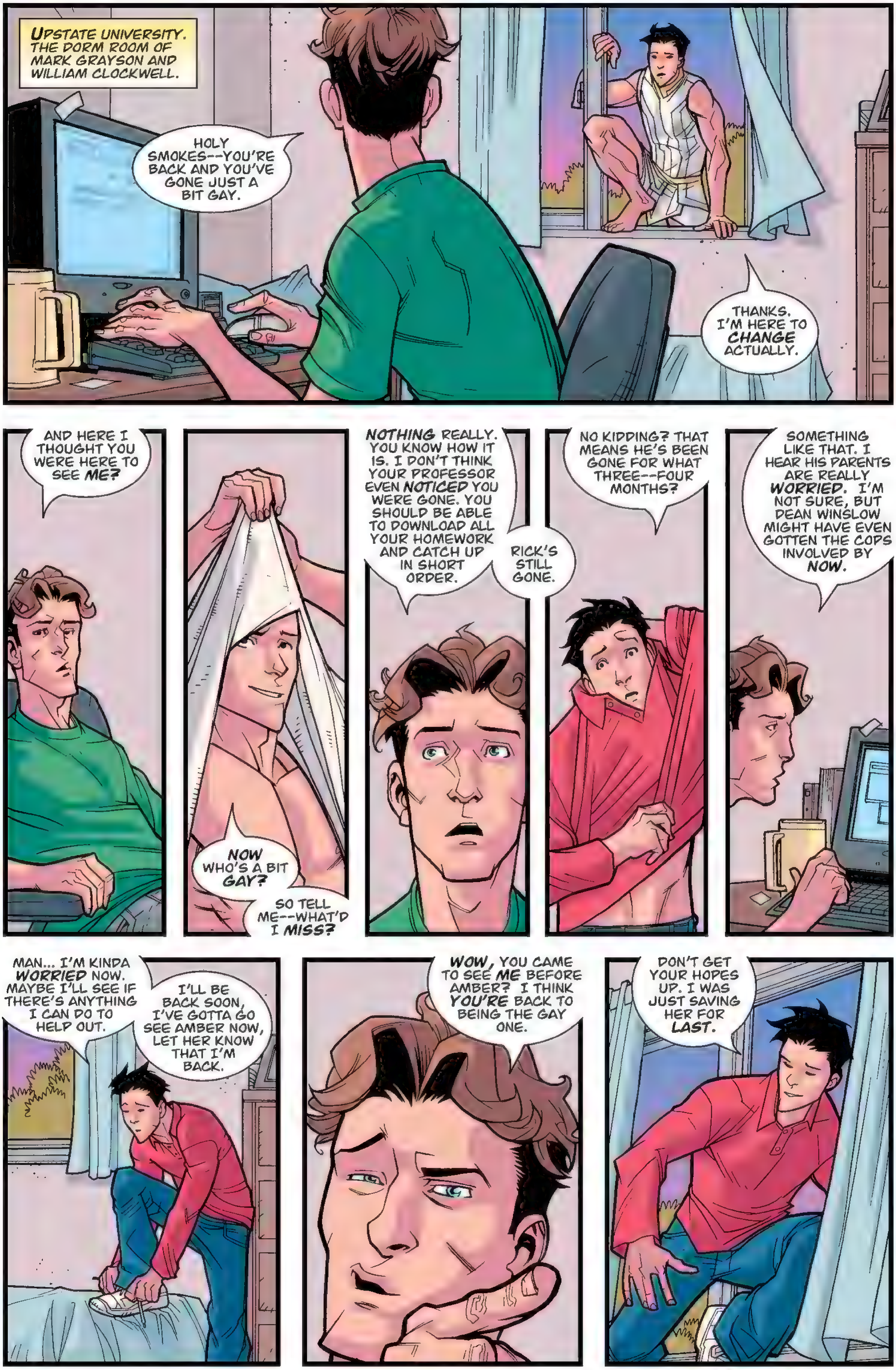

I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU.

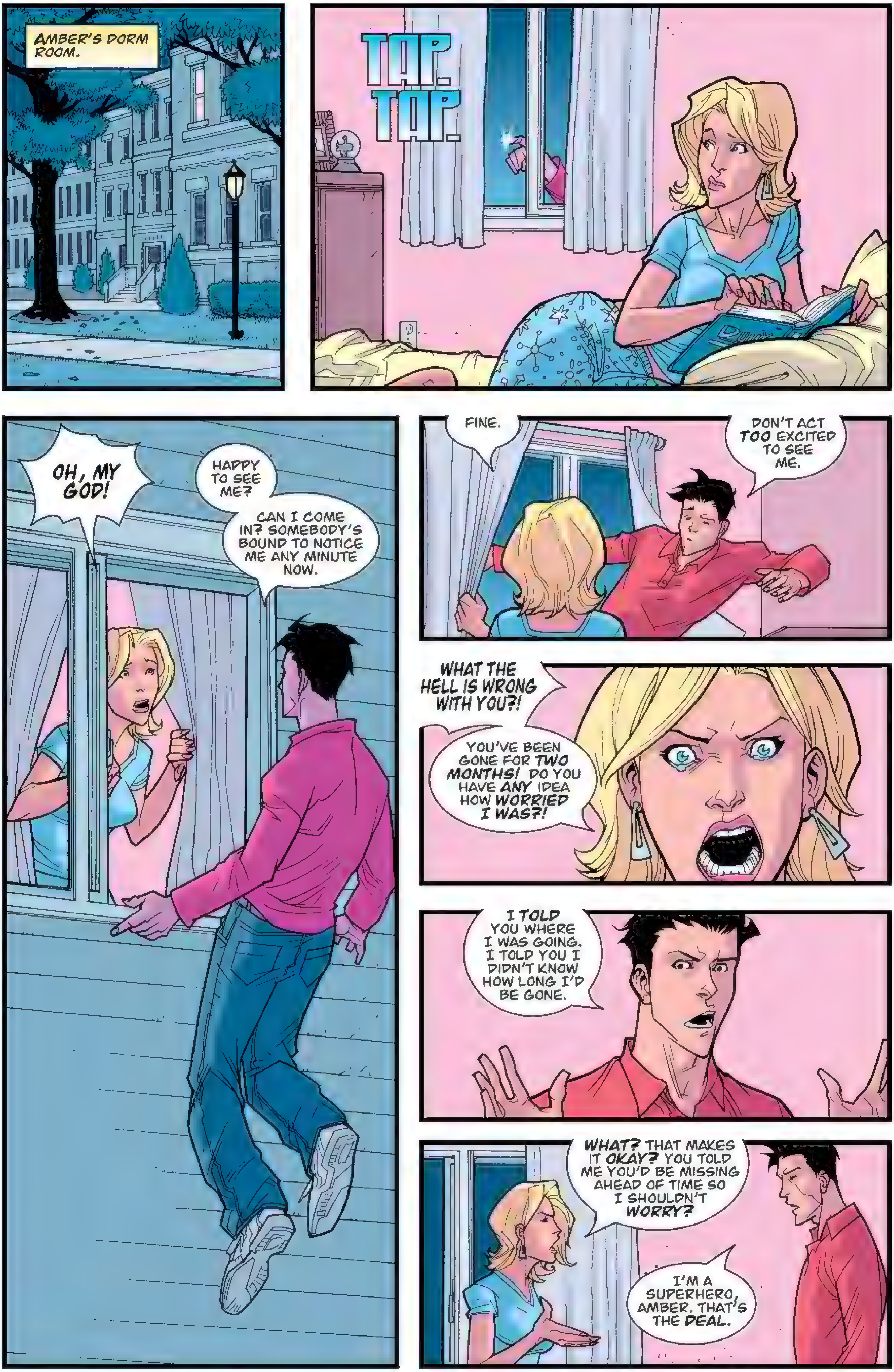

THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
MARK-- THIS IS A LOT TO PROCESS. I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TAKE CARE OF HIM.
MOM, PLEASE. I DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE I COULD TAKE HIM.
PENTAGON-- NOW.
OKAY.
MOM, CECIL WANTS TO SEE ME. I DON'T THINK HE'S TOO HAPPY ABOUT ME SKATING OFF TO ANOTHER PLANET WITHOUT HIS OKAY.
CAN YOU AT LEAST WATCH HIM WHILE I SETTLE UP WITH HIM... AND MAYBE RUN SOME OTHER ERRANDS? WE COULD FINISH THIS TONIGHT.
MARK, I DON'T KNOW...
MOM, PLEASE.
OKAY. GO ON.
THANKS.

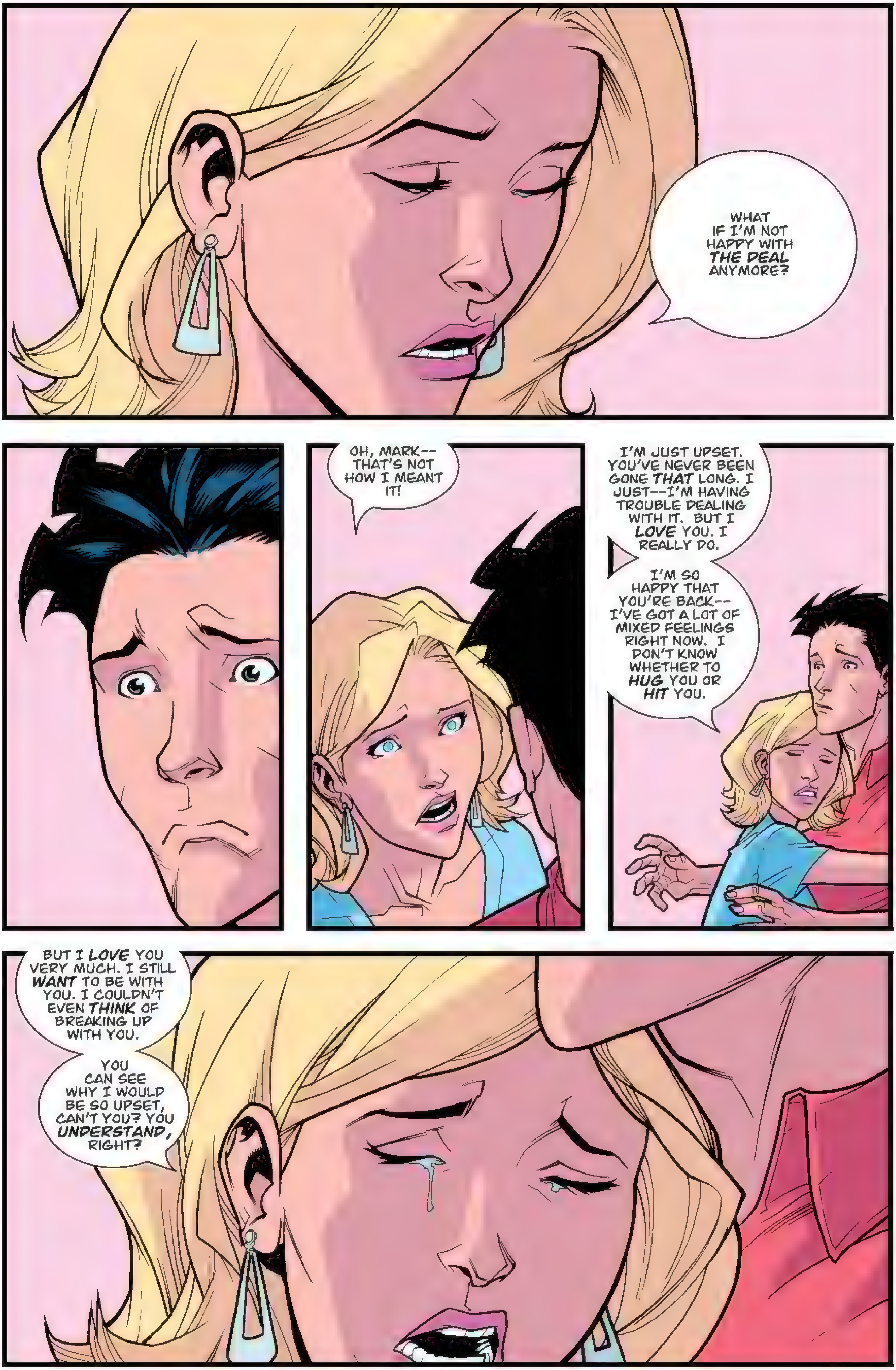

MOMENTS LATER, AT THE PENTAGON.
WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED TO GIVE YOUR TAILOR FRIEND A CALL.
DID YOU HAVE FUN ON YOUR LITTLE ALIEN ADVENTURE?
NOT EXACTLY, BUT I'M GLAD I WENT IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE ASKING.
...AND THE OUTFIT LOOKS BETTER WHEN A WHOLE PLANET OF INSECTS IS WALKING AROUND IN SOMETHING SIMILAR.
BUT ONLY A LITTLE BIT.
AND YOU SAW YOUR FATHER. DO YOU FEEL LIKE HE'S NO LONGER A THREAT TO THIS PLANET?
HE'S NOT. I'M SURE OF IT. HIS PEOPLE--MY PEOPLE STILL VERY MUCH ARE. THEY KINDA PUT ME IN CHARGE OF THIS PLANET, AND BUMPED THE DEADLINE DOWN TO ONE HUNDRED YEARS.
THEY PUT YOU IN CHARGE?
YEAH--THEY'RE SO ARROGANT THEY THINK I'M GOING TO COME TO MY SENSES AND TAKE OVER THIS PLANET FOR THEM--OR SOMETHING.
I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE THEY JUST DON'T CARE IF I HELP THEM OR NOT. MAYBE ONE HUNDRED YEARS IS THE SOONEST THEY CAN GET OUT HERE TO TAKE OVER.
MAYBE IT'S A TRAP. MAYBE THEY'RE COMING SOONER AND THEY DON'T WANT US TO KNOW.


WOW.
I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT.
SO... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
NOTHING. PUT THAT THOUGHT OUT OF YOUR MIND. IF WHAT WE KNOW IS TRUE--IF THEY SENT SO MUCH AS FOUR VILTRUMITES TO THIS PLANET THERE WOULDN'T BE A DAMN THING WE COULD DO.
SO ALL WE CAN REALLY DO IS WAIT... AND HOPE SOMETHING COMES ALONG THAT ALLOWS US TO FIGHT THEM.
THAT MAKES SENSE.
NOW THAT WE'VE MOVED PAST THAT.
YOUR BROTHER.
YEAH.
LET YOUR MOTHER KNOW THAT WE CAN HELP WITH THAT. HAVING ANOTHER VILTRUMITE RAISED BY HER TO BE A FINE UPSTANDING CITIZEN LIKE YOU IS IN ALL OUR BEST INTERESTS.
WE COULD ARRANGE LEGITIMATE ADOPTION PAPERS AND GIVE THE CHILD BIRTH RECORDS AND EVEN EMPLOY SOME LOW-TECH HOLOGRAPHICS TO MATCH HIS SKIN COLOR.
THE ADVANCED AGING WILL BE TRICKY. WE COULDN'T ALLOW THE CHILD TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAUSE SOMEONE WOULD NOTICE HIS... UNIQUENESS... SO WE WOULD PROVIDE A PRIVATE TUTOR.
WE COULD MAKE THIS VERY EASY ON HER. OR WE COULD HELP YOU LOCATE A FOSTER FAMILY... IF SHE DIDN'T WANT THE CHILD.
I'LL LET HER KNOW.
GOOD. NOW I'VE GOT TO REPRIMAND YOU.
I KNOW THIS TURNED OUT FOR THE BEST. SEEING YOUR FATHER, GETTING MORE INFO ON THE VILTRUMITES, YOUR BROTHER... BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO DISOBEY ME AGAIN.
HOLD ON, YOU'RE TELLING ME I WAS RIGHT TO GO--BUT THAT I SHOULDN'T DO THIS AGAIN?
THAT'S KINDA SILLY. DID I EVEN MISS ANYTHING WHEN I WAS GONE THESE LAST TWO MONTHS?
A BEING CALLED OMNIPOTUS TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. I HAD TO AMASS ALMOST THE ENTIRE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY AND EVEN HIRE ON THOSE CAPES BASTARDS FROM NEW YORK TO HELP OUT.
WE ALMOST DIDN'T WIN THAT ONE.
BUT YOU DID.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT, MARK. THE POINT IS YOU WERE NEEDED.
ACTUALLY, I THINK THE POINT IS THAT AN ALIEN WORLD WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED IF I HAD STAYED HERE--AND WHILE I WAS GONE--YOU GUYS SAVED THIS PLANET WITHOUT ME.


THE POINT IS THAT I PAY YOU TO BE HERE. I PAY YOU TO PROTECT THE WORLD--THIS WORLD--TO KEEP THESE PEOPLE SAFE. YOU GET A FREE RIDE TO COLLEGE, YOUR MOTHER'S BILLS ARE PAID AND THEN SOME.
IN FACT-- I'D SAY YOU AND YOUR MOTHER ARE FAIRLY WELL OFF RIGHT NOW. YOU DON'T REALLY WANT FOR MUCH, DO YOU? DO YOU REALLY NOT MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR WORK AND YOUR MONEY?
I PAY YOU TO DO A JOB!
I DO WHAT I DO BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO. I'VE GOT THESE POWERS AND I'M TRYING MY BEST TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THEM. I DON'T DO THIS BECAUSE YOU PAY ME.
I ALLOW YOU TO PAY ME BECAUSE YOU PUT ME WHERE I NEED TO BE. YOU HELP ME DO MY JOB. YOU THINK I'D BE AT HOME PLAYING VIDEO GAMES IF YOU WEREN'T PAYING ME TO DO THIS?
IF SOMETHING COMES ALONG AND I THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO--I'M GOING TO DO IT.
YOU'RE TREATING ME LIKE THIS AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN TELLING ME I DID SOMETHING WRONG. ARE YOU JUST UPSET BECAUSE I'M NOT A GOOD LITTLE SOLDIER TAKING ORDERS WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS?!
MARK. CALM DOWN. YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO WORK WITH ME.
I JUST NEED YOU TO TRUST MY JUDGMENT IN MORE CASES.
I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR MY MOTHER AND ME. REALLY, I DO-- BUT I'LL START TRUSTING YOUR JUDGMENT MORE AFTER I DO SOMETHING WRONG. RIGHT NOW I DON'T THINK MY JUDGMENT WAS IN THE WRONG HERE.
I'VE GOT A COUPLE MORE STOPS. IF YOU NEED ME, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.


UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
HOLY SMOKES--YOU'RE BACK AND YOU'VE GONE JUST A BIT GAY.
THANKS. I'M HERE TO CHANGE ACTUALLY.
AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE HERE TO SEE ME?
NOW WHO'S A BIT GAY?
SO TELL ME--WHAT'D I MISS?
NOTHING REALLY. YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. I DON'T THINK YOUR PROFESSOR EVEN NOTICED YOU WERE GONE. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DOWNLOAD ALL YOUR HOMEWORK AND CATCH UP IN SHORT ORDER.
RICK'S STILL GONE.
NO KIDDING? THAT MEANS HE'S BEEN GONE FOR WHAT THREE--FOUR MONTHS?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. I HEAR HIS PARENTS ARE REALLY WORRIED. I'M NOT SURE, BUT DEAN WINSLOW MIGHT HAVE EVEN GOTTEN THE COPS INVOLVED BY NOW.
MAN... I'M KINDA WORRIED NOW. MAYBE I'LL SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP OUT.
I'LL BE BACK SOON, I'VE GOTTA GO SEE AMBER NOW, LET HER KNOW THAT I'M BACK.
WOW, YOU CAME TO SEE ME BEFORE AMBER? I THINK YOU'RE BACK TO BEING THE GAY ONE.
DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP. I WAS JUST SAVING HER FOR LAST.

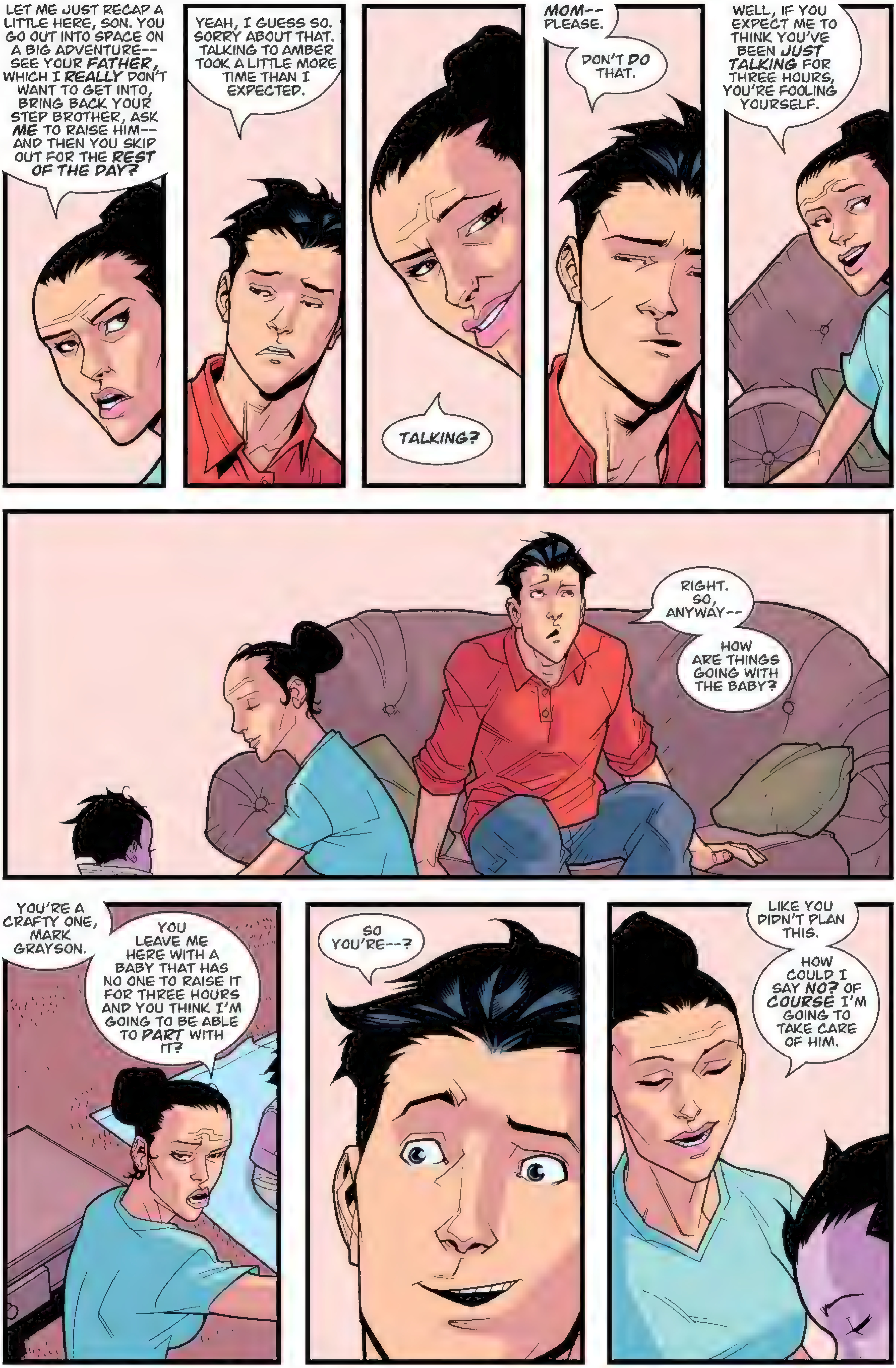

AMBER'S DORM ROOM.
TAP. TAP.
OH, MY GOD!
HAPPY TO SEE ME?
CAN I COME IN? SOMEBODY'S BOUND TO NOTICE ME ANY MINUTE NOW.
FINE.
DON'T ACT TOO EXCITED TO SEE ME.
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?!
YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR TWO MONTHS! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW WORRIED I WAS?!
I TOLD YOU WHERE I WAS GOING. I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG I'D BE GONE.
WHAT? THAT MAKES IT OKAY? YOU TOLD ME YOU'D BE MISSING AHEAD OF TIME SO I SHOULDN'T WORRY?
I'M A SUPERHERO, AMBER. THAT'S THE DEAL.

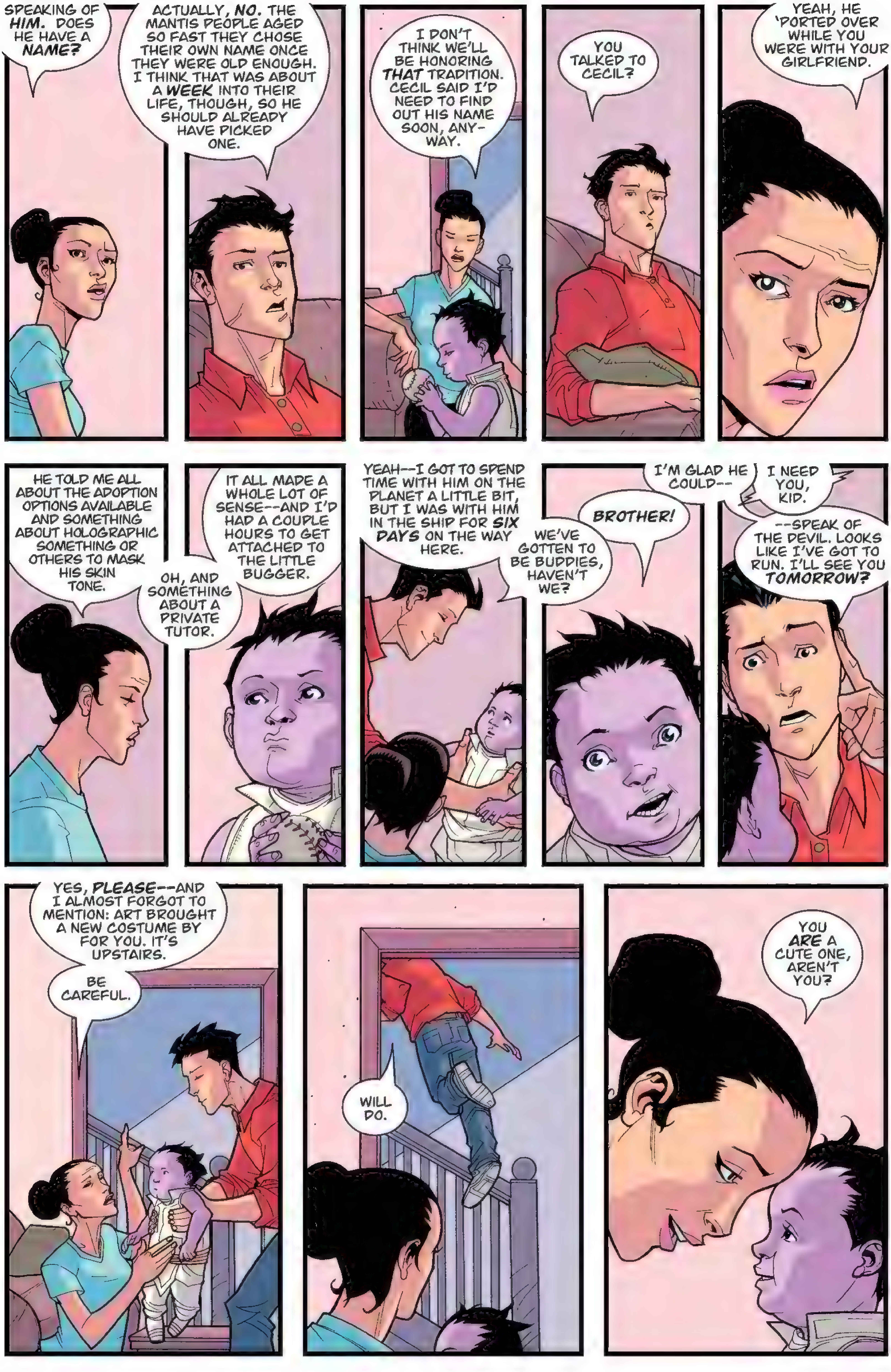

WHAT IF I'M NOT HAPPY WITH **THE DEAL** ANYMORE?
OH, MARK-- THAT'S NOT HOW I MEANT IT!
I'M JUST UPSET. YOU'VE NEVER BEEN GONE **THAT** LONG. I JUST--I'M HAVING TROUBLE DEALING WITH IT. BUT I **LOVE** YOU. I REALLY DO.
I'M SO HAPPY THAT YOU'RE BACK-- I'VE GOT A LOT OF MIXED FEELINGS RIGHT NOW. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO **HUG** YOU OR **HIT** YOU.
BUT I **LOVE** YOU VERY MUCH. I STILL **WANT** TO BE WITH YOU. I COULDN'T EVEN **THINK** OF BREAKING UP WITH YOU.
YOU CAN SEE WHY I WOULD BE SO UPSET, CAN'T YOU? YOU **UNDERSTAND**, RIGHT?

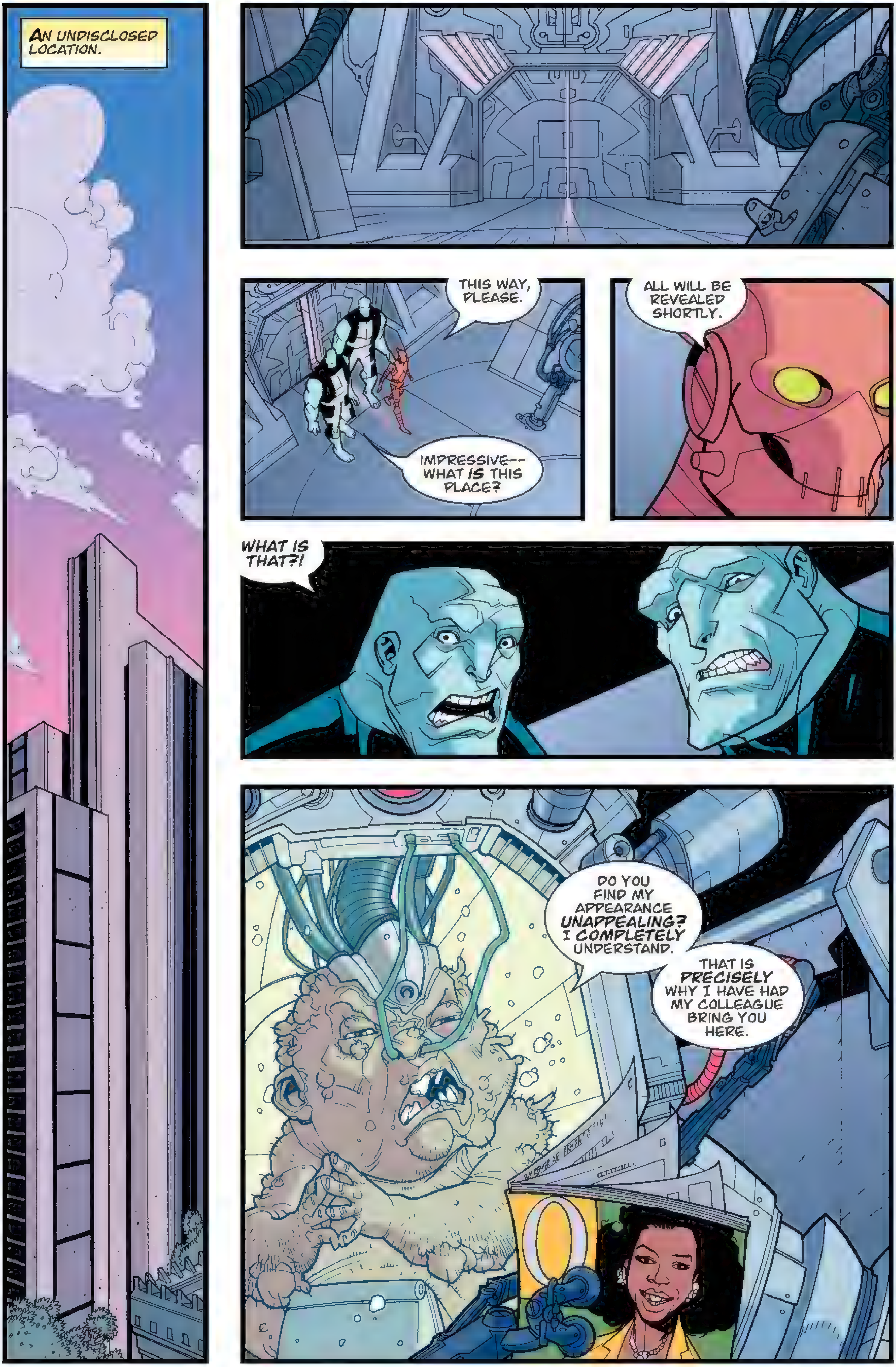
YEAH.

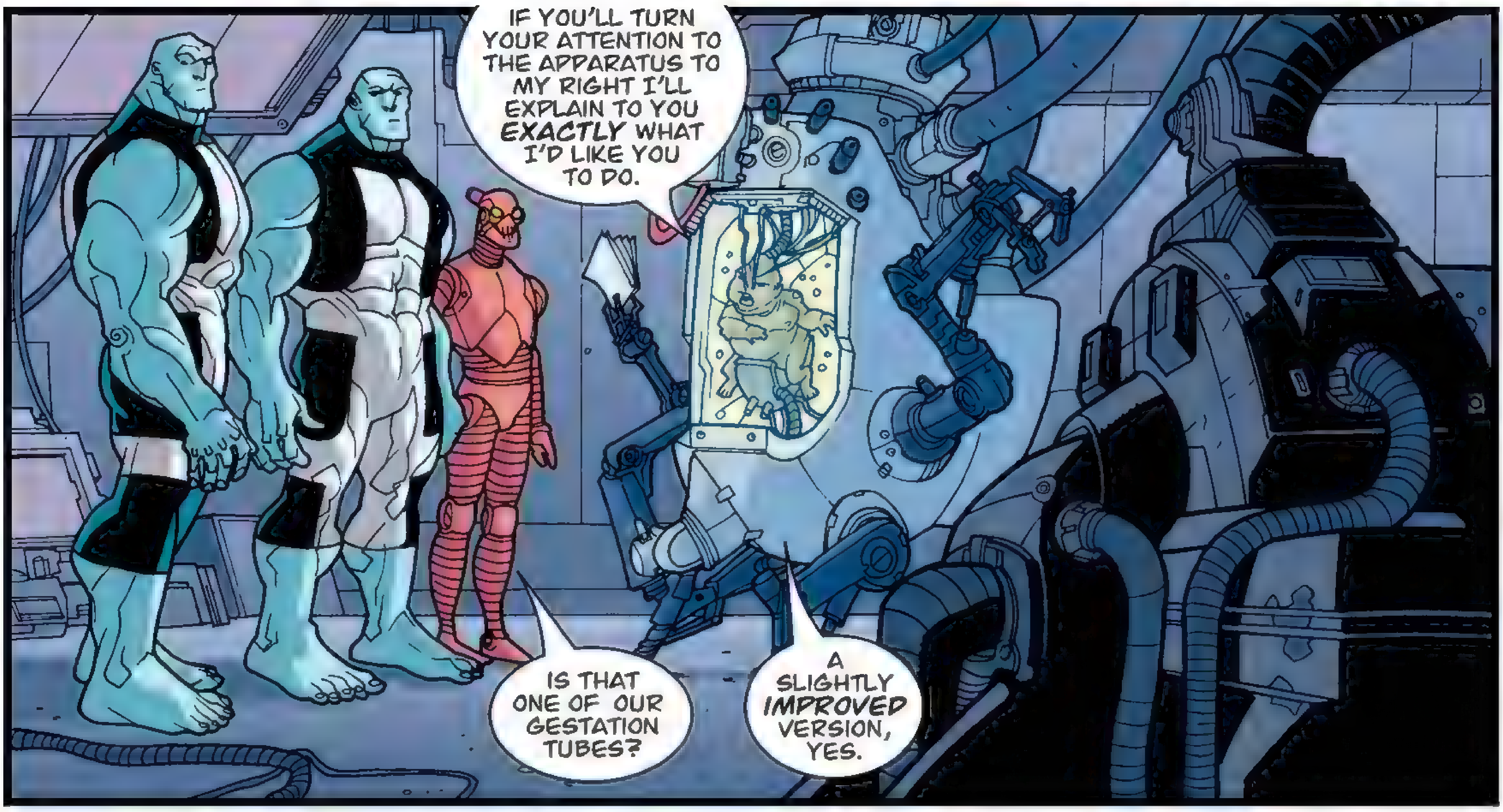
ISSUE THIRTY-ONE

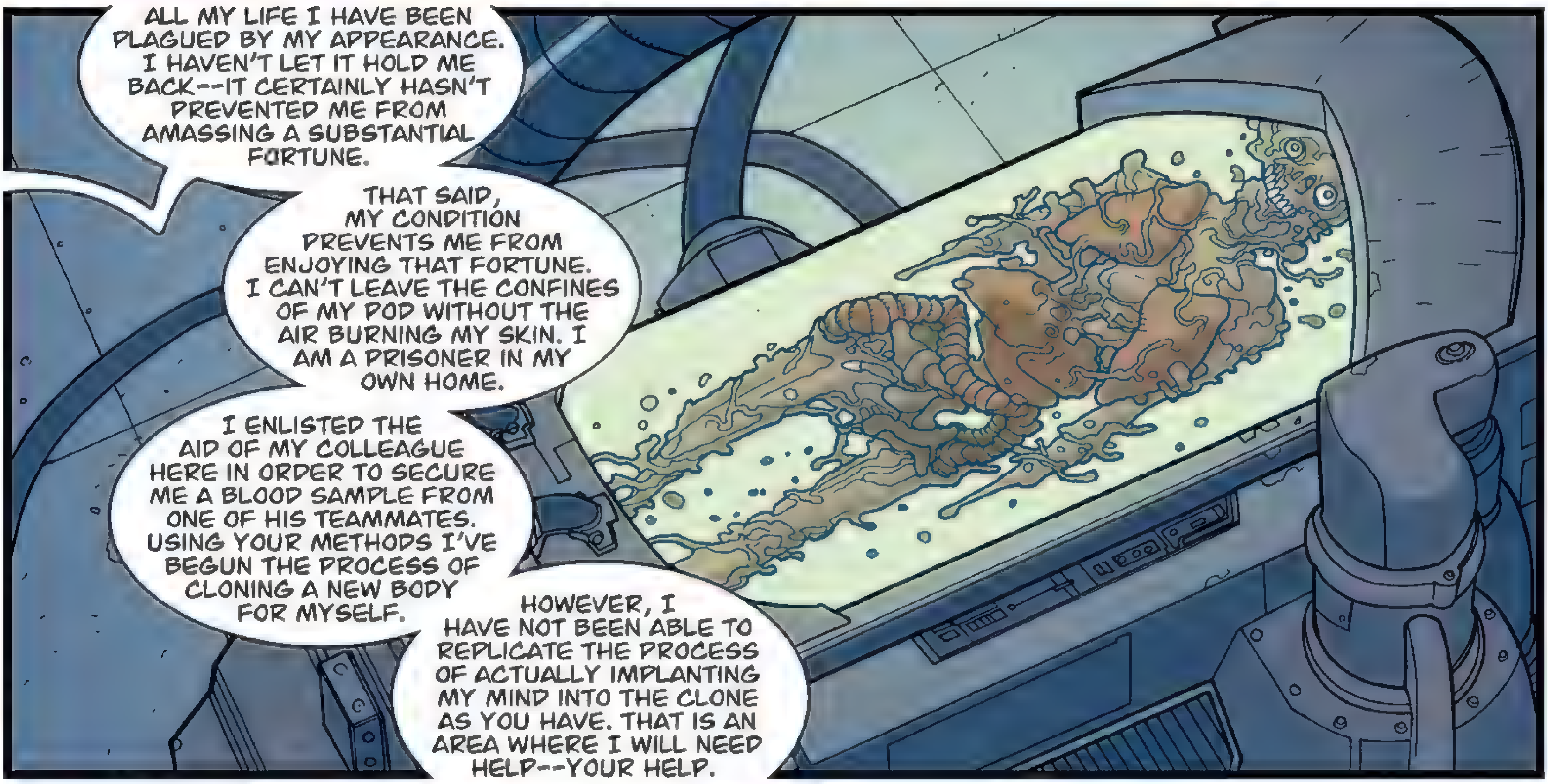
I SEE YOU TWO ARE GETTING ALONG.

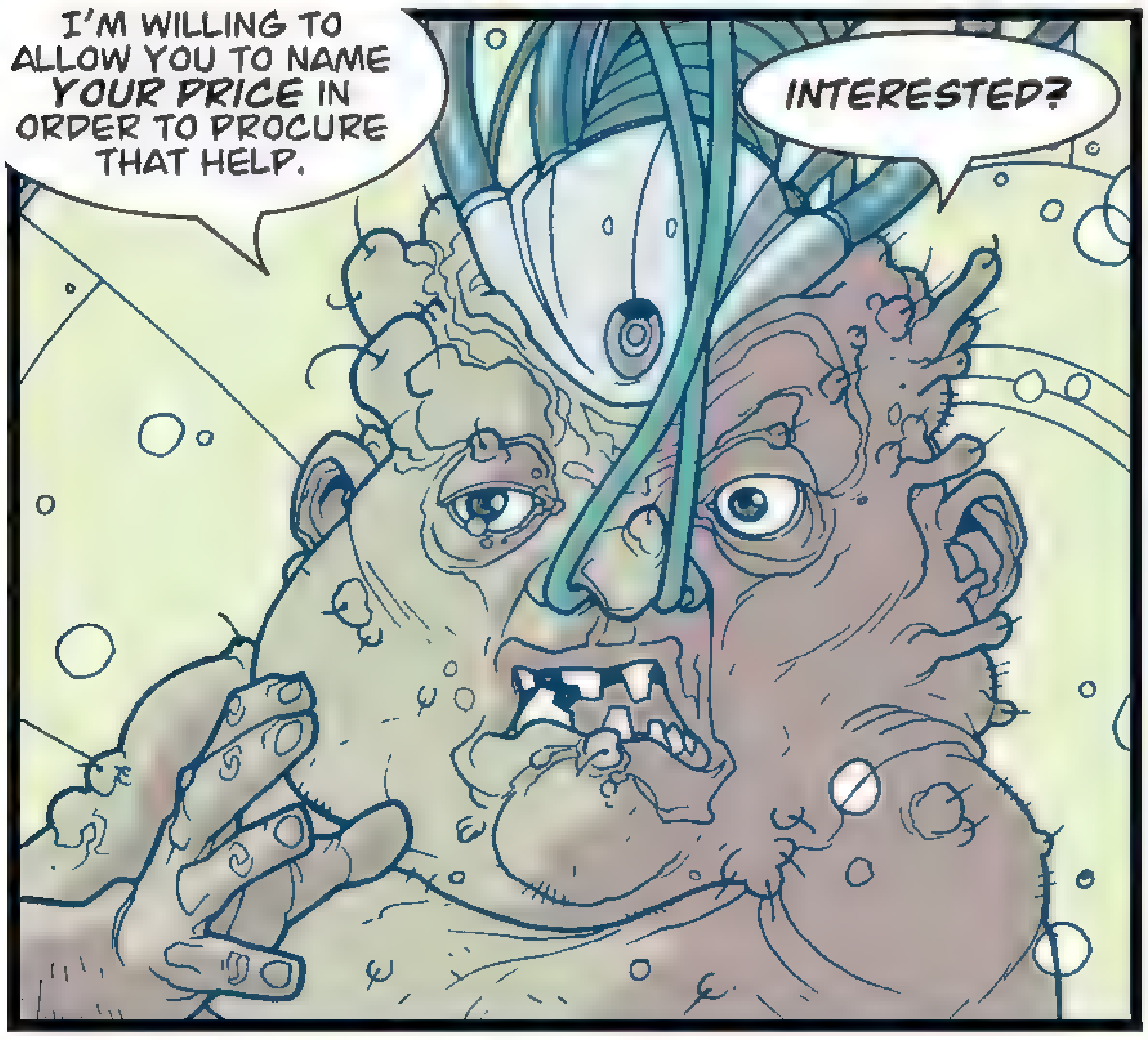

LET ME JUST RECAP A LITTLE HERE, SON. YOU GO OUT INTO SPACE ON A BIG ADVENTURE-- SEE YOUR **FATHER**, WHICH I **REALLY** DON'T WANT TO GET INTO, BRING BACK YOUR STEP BROTHER, ASK **ME** TO RAISE HIM-- AND THEN YOU SKIP OUT FOR THE **REST OF THE DAY?**
YEAH, I GUESS SO. SORRY ABOUT THAT. TALKING TO AMBER TOOK A LITTLE MORE TIME THAN I EXPECTED.
TALKING?
MOM-- PLEASE.
DON'T **DO** THAT.
WELL, IF YOU EXPECT ME TO THINK YOU'VE BEEN **JUST TALKING** FOR THREE HOURS, YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF.
RIGHT. SO, ANYWAY--
HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH THE BABY?
YOU'RE A CRAFTY ONE, MARK GRAYSON.
YOU LEAVE ME HERE WITH A BABY THAT HAS NO ONE TO RAISE IT FOR THREE HOURS AND YOU THINK I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO **PART** WITH IT?
SO YOU'RE--?
LIKE YOU DIDN'T PLAN THIS.
HOW COULD I SAY **NO?** OF **COURSE** I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

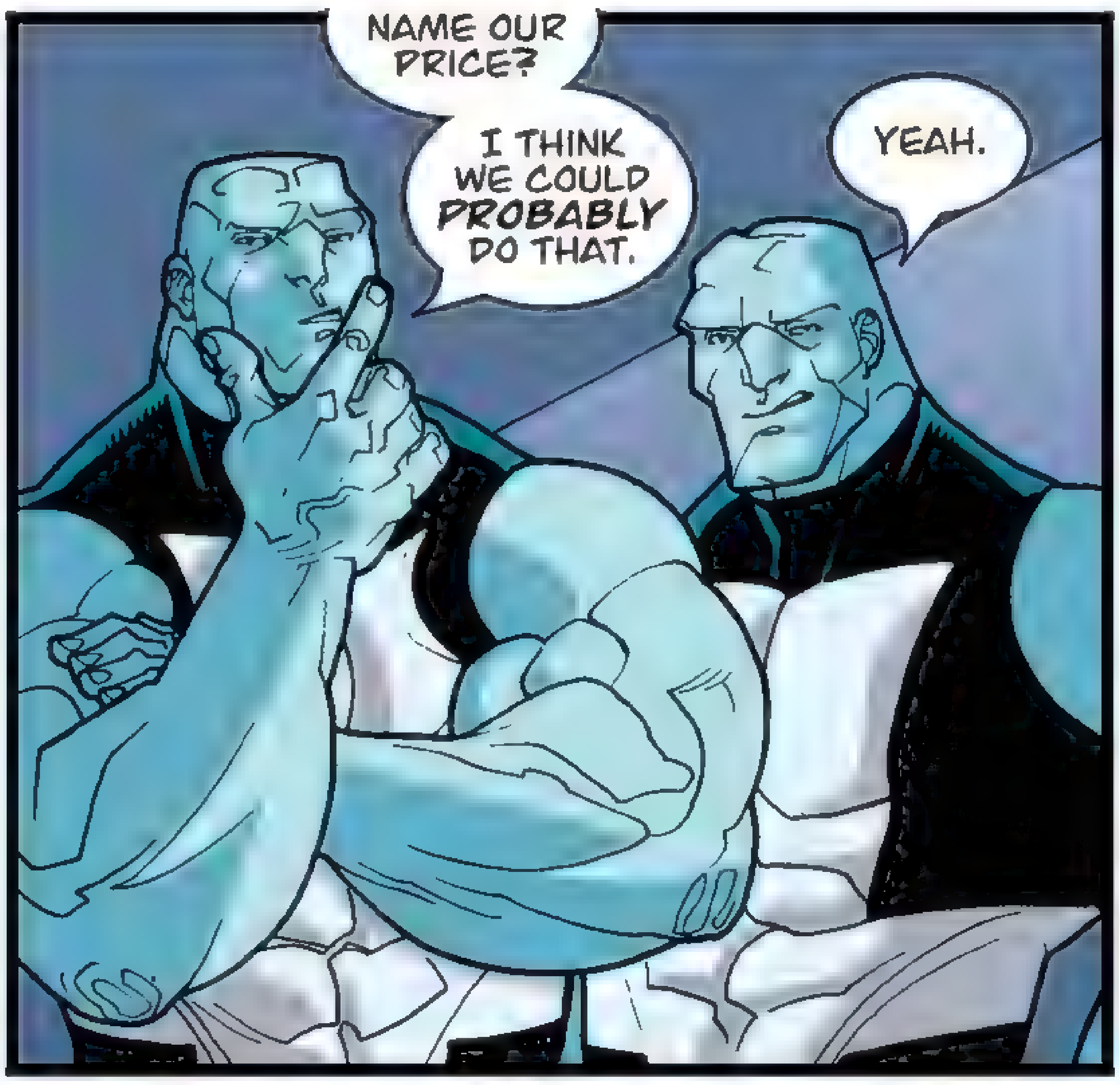

SPEAKING OF HIM. DOES HE HAVE A NAME?
ACTUALLY, NO. THE MANTIS PEOPLE AGED SO FAST THEY CHOSE THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY WERE OLD ENOUGH. I THINK THAT WAS ABOUT A WEEK INTO THEIR LIFE, THOUGH, SO HE SHOULD ALREADY HAVE PICKED ONE.
I DON'T THINK WE'LL BE HONORING THAT TRADITION. CECIL SAID I'D NEED TO FIND OUT HIS NAME SOON, ANYWAY.
YOU TALKED TO CECIL?
YEAH, HE 'PORTED OVER WHILE YOU WERE WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND.
HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT THE ADOPTION OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND SOMETHING ABOUT HOLOGRAPHIC SOMETHING OR OTHERS TO MASK HIS SKIN TONE.
OH, AND SOMETHING ABOUT A PRIVATE TUTOR.
IT ALL MADE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE--AND I'D HAD A COUPLE HOURS TO GET ATTACHED TO THE LITTLE BUGGER.
YEAH--I GOT TO SPEND TIME WITH HIM ON THE PLANET A LITTLE BIT, BUT I WAS WITH HIM IN THE SHIP FOR SIX DAYS ON THE WAY HERE.
WE'VE GOTTEN TO BE BUDDIES, HAVEN'T WE?
BROTHER!
I'M GLAD HE COULD--
I NEED YOU, KID.
--SPEAK OF THE DEVIL. LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT TO RUN. I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW?
YES, PLEASE--AND I ALMOST FORGOT TO MENTION: ART BROUGHT A NEW COSTUME BY FOR YOU. IT'S UPSTAIRS.
BE CAREFUL.
WILL DO.
YOU ARE A CUTE ONE, AREN'T YOU?


AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
IMPRESSIVE-- WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?
ALL WILL BE REVEALED SHORTLY.
WHAT IS THAT?!
DO YOU FIND MY APPEARANCE *UNAPPEALING? I COMPLETELY* UNDERSTAND.
THAT IS *PRECISELY* WHY I HAVE HAD MY COLLEAGUE BRING YOU HERE.


IF YOU'LL TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO THE APPARATUS TO MY RIGHT I'LL EXPLAIN TO YOU ***EXACTLY*** WHAT I'D LIKE YOU TO DO.
IS THAT ONE OF OUR GESTATION TUBES?
A SLIGHTLY ***IMPROVED*** VERSION, YES.

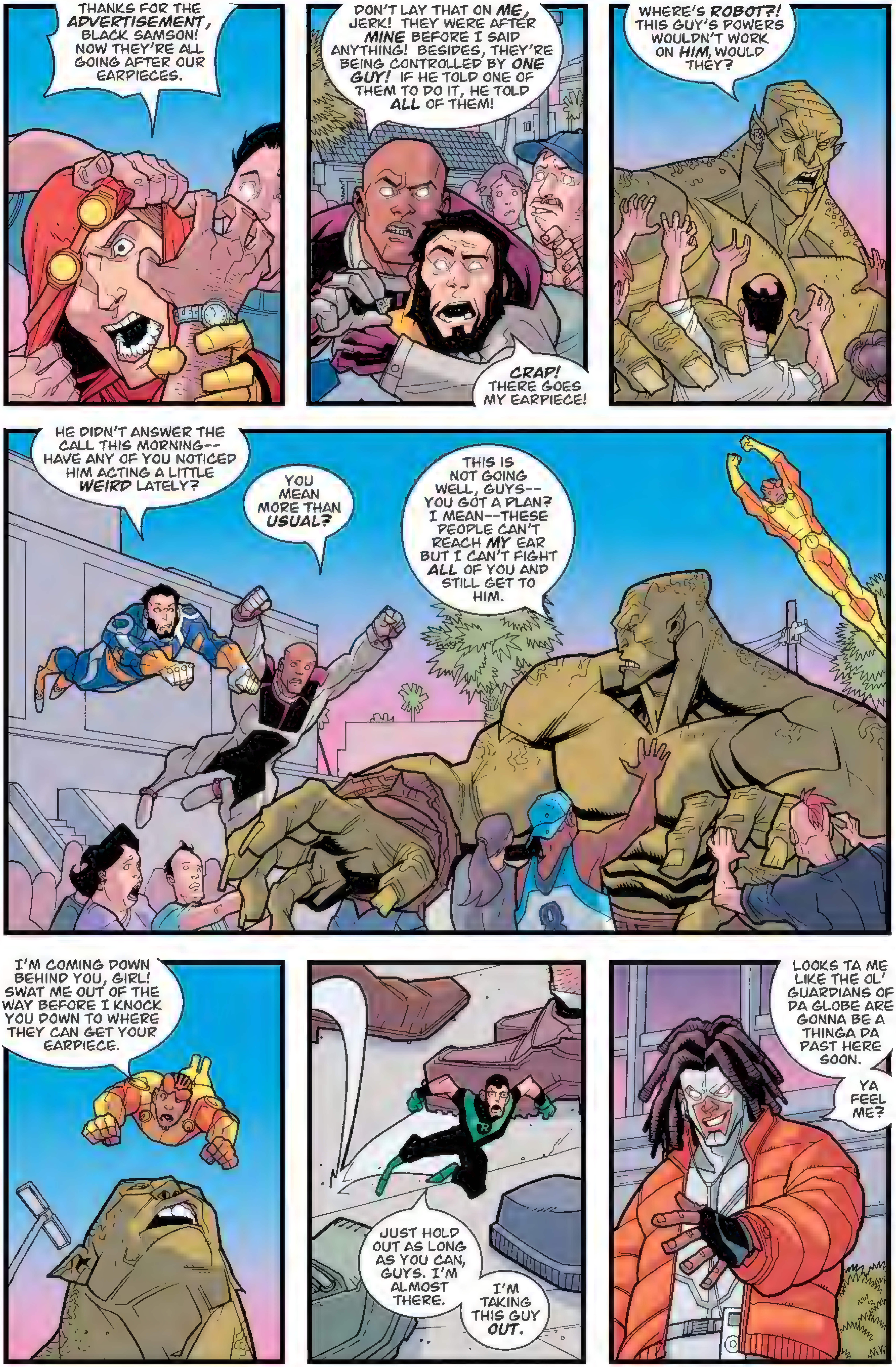

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN PLAGUED BY MY APPEARANCE. I HAVEN'T LET IT HOLD ME BACK--IT CERTAINLY HASN'T PREVENTED ME FROM AMASSING A SUBSTANTIAL FORTUNE.
THAT SAID, MY CONDITION PREVENTS ME FROM ENJOYING THAT FORTUNE. I CAN'T LEAVE THE CONFINES OF MY POD WITHOUT THE AIR BURNING MY SKIN. I AM A PRISONER IN MY OWN HOME.
I ENLISTED THE AID OF MY COLLEAGUE HERE IN ORDER TO SECURE ME A BLOOD SAMPLE FROM ONE OF HIS TEAMMATES. USING YOUR METHODS I'VE BEGUN THE PROCESS OF CLONING A NEW BODY FOR MYSELF.
HOWEVER, I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO REPLICATE THE PROCESS OF ACTUALLY IMPLANTING MY MIND INTO THE CLONE AS YOU HAVE. THAT IS AN AREA WHERE I WILL NEED HELP--YOUR HELP.

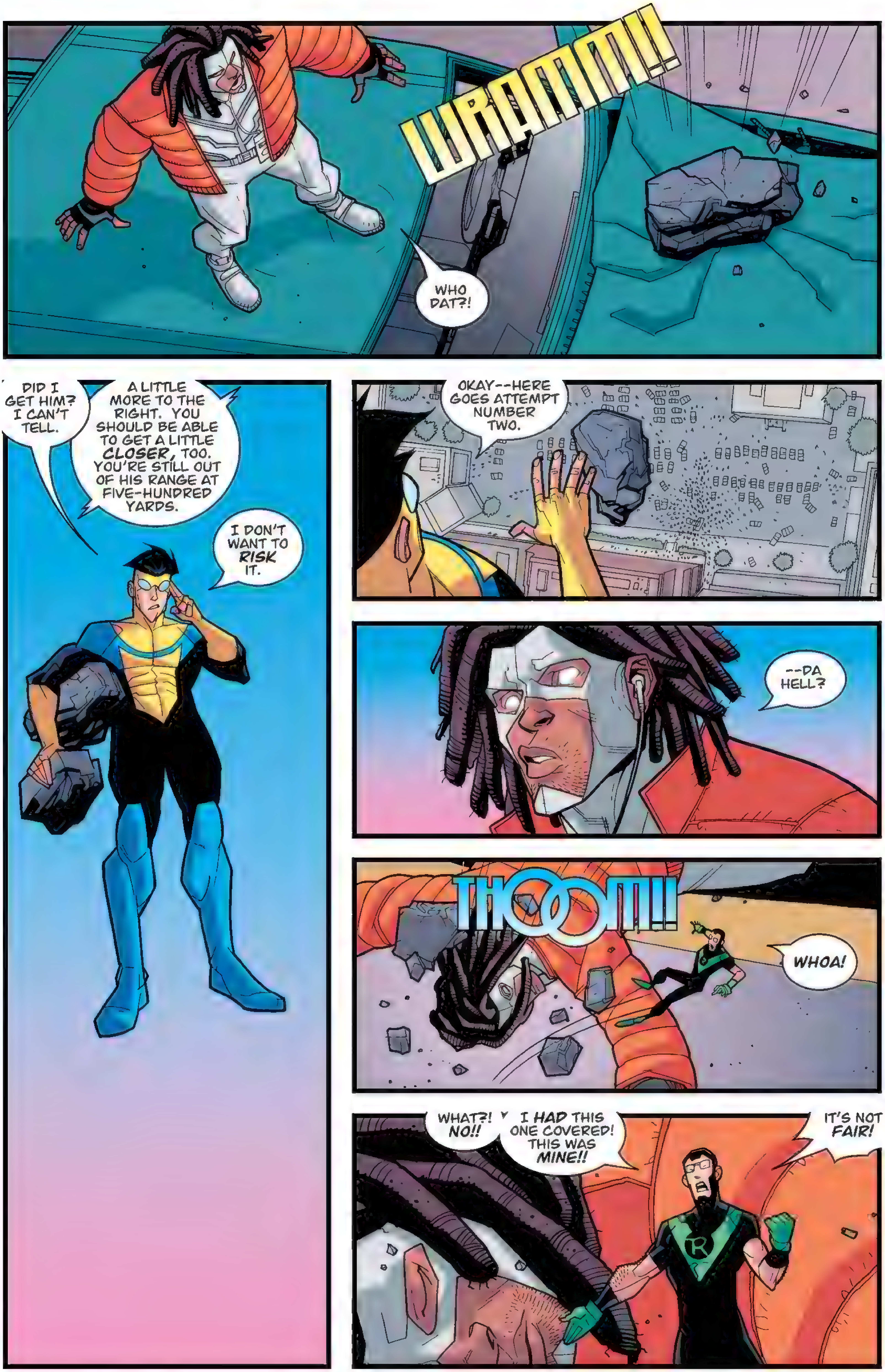

I'M WILLING TO ALLOW YOU TO NAME ***YOUR PRICE*** IN ORDER TO PROCURE THAT HELP.
INTERESTED?

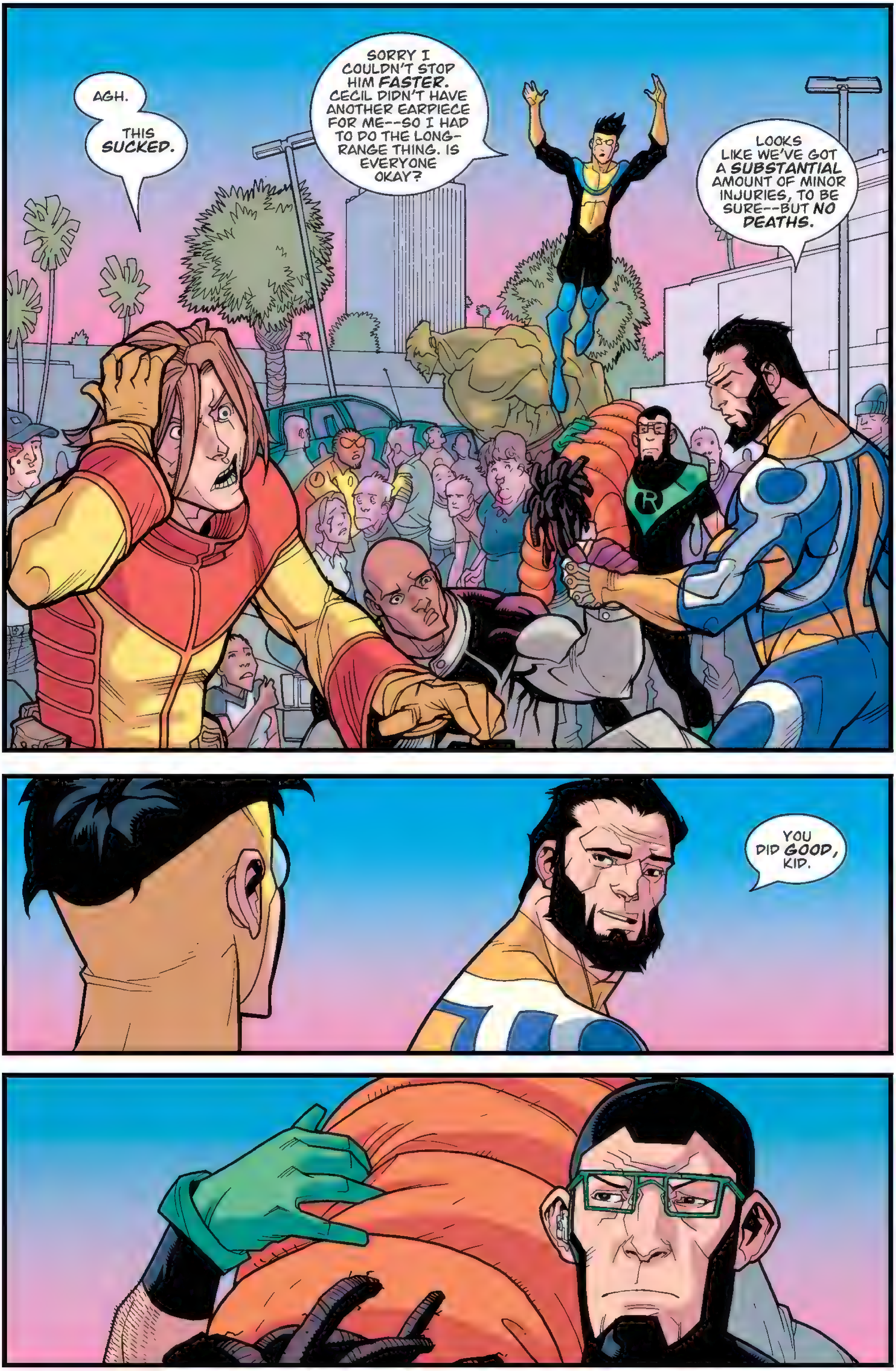

NAME OUR PRICE?
I THINK WE COULD ***PROBABLY*** DO THAT.
YEAH.

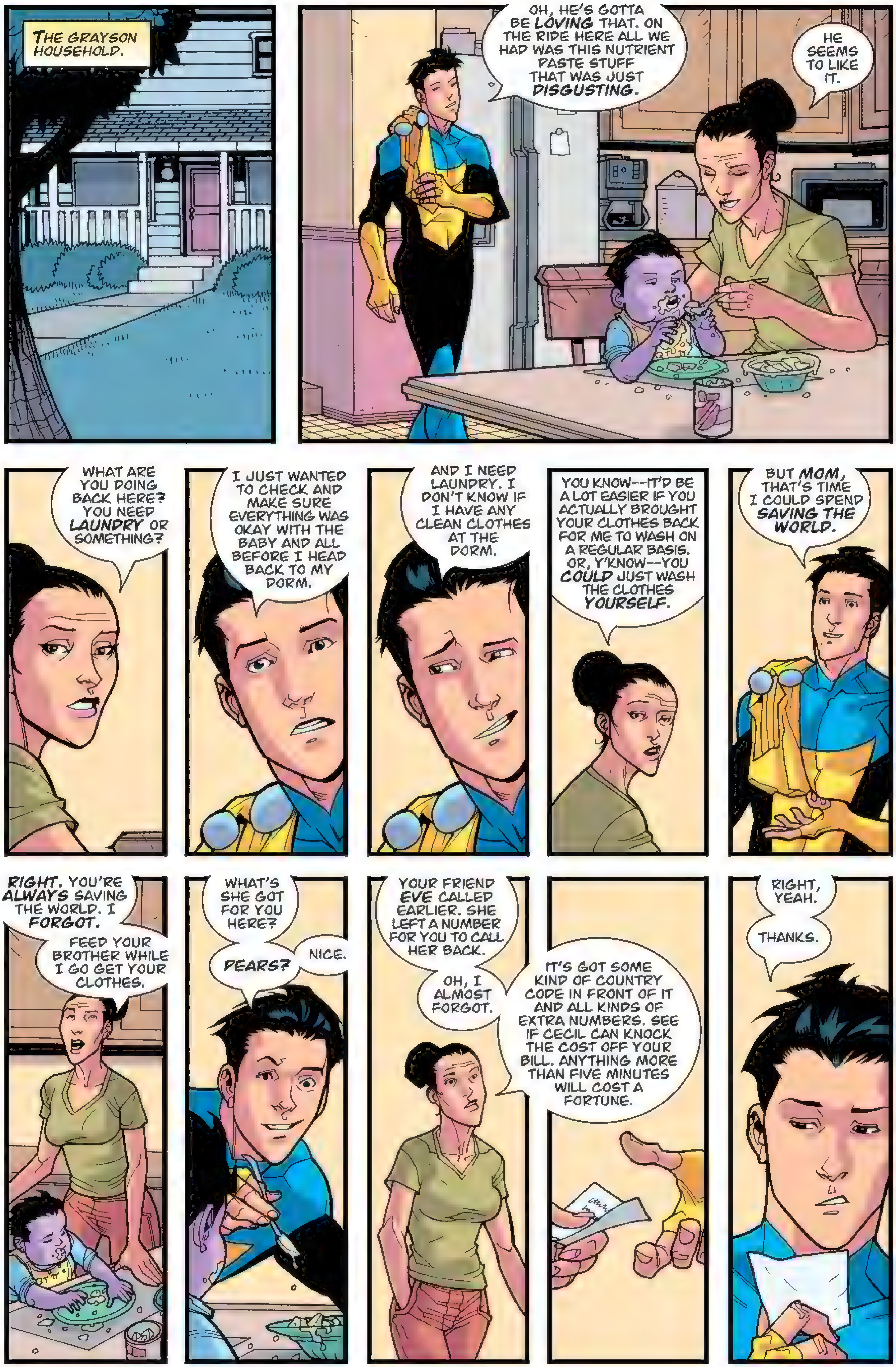
YOU KIDDIN', RIGHT?!
THIS CAN'T BE ALL YOU GOT!!
915QTO

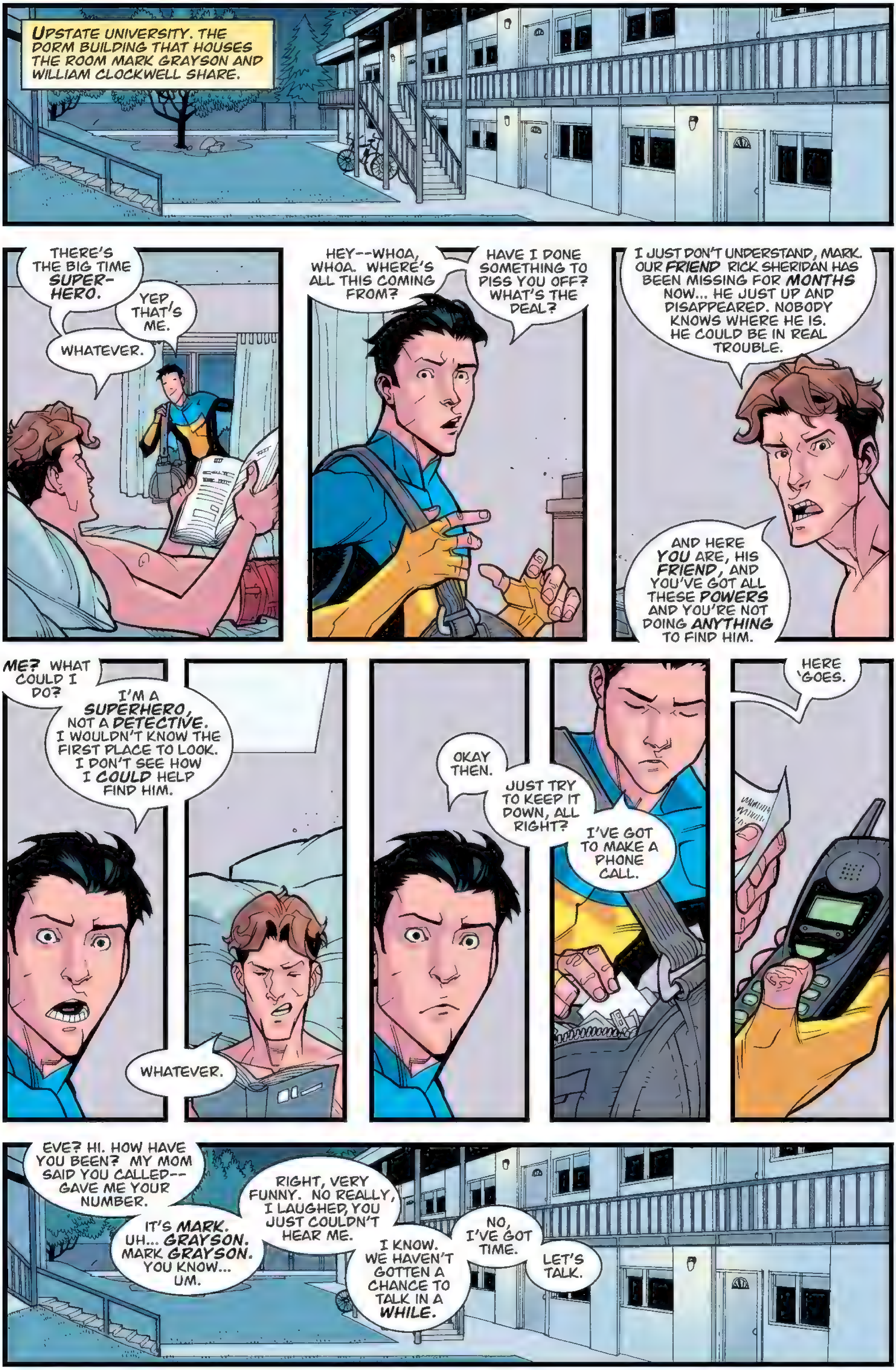
CAREFUL NOW--YA WOULDN'T WANNA HURT ANY UH THESE INNOCENT BYSTANDERS NOW WOULD YA?!
WE'VE GOT TO MAKE THIS **QUICK**, PEOPLE--SOMEONE KNOCK HIM OUT BEFORE ANYONE GETS KILLED!
HELP US!
I CAN'T STOP!
WE'RE TRYING, IMMORTAL!
OUT OF THE WAY--FIGHT HIS CONTROL--WE'RE TRYING TO **SAVE** YOU!
WE **CAN'T!** I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF!
CRAP!
ONE OF THEM GRABBED MY **EARPIECE!!** IT'S NOT BLOCKING **MASTERMIND'S** POWERS ANY MORE!
I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF!
GREAT.

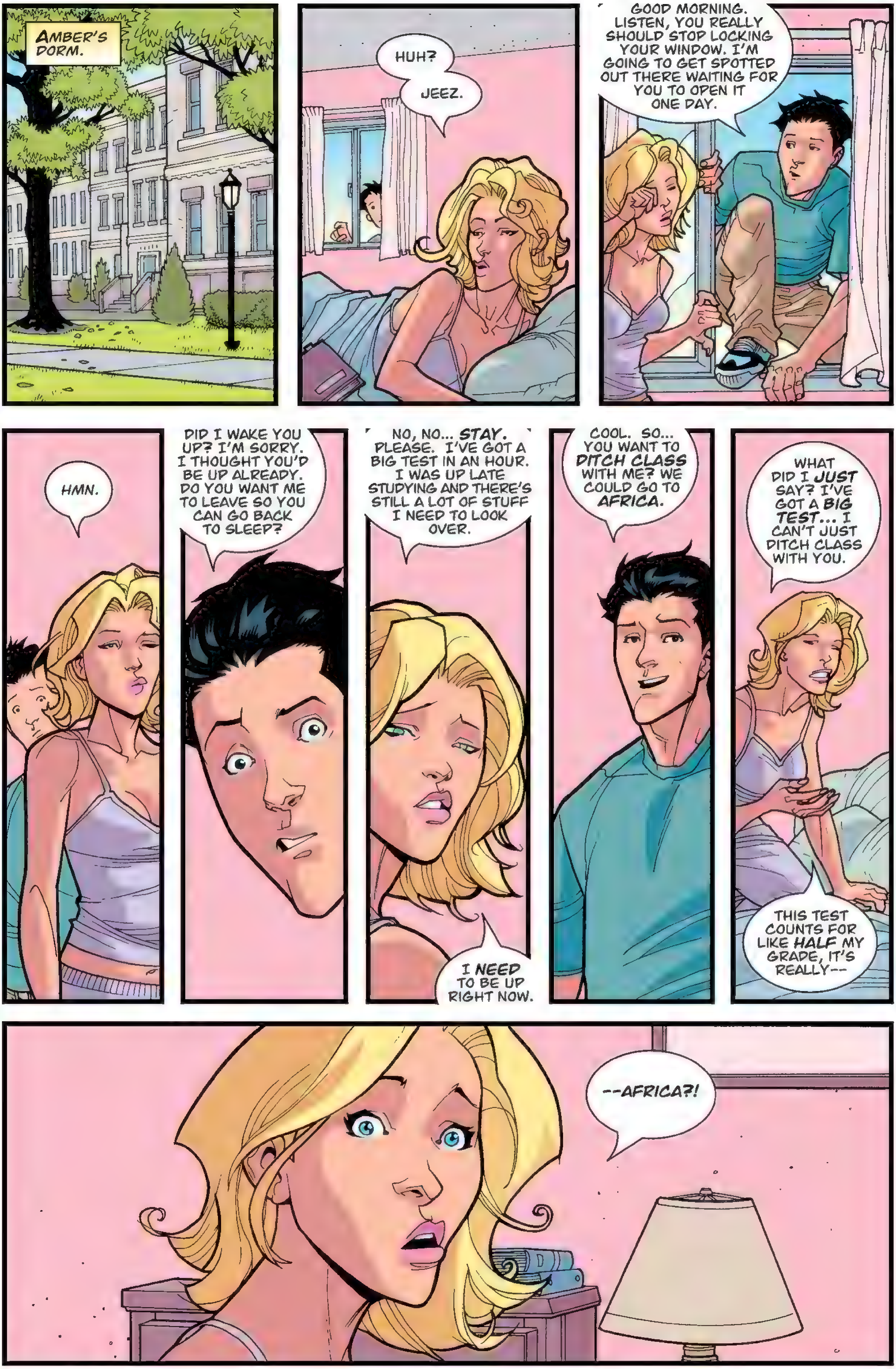

THANKS FOR THE *ADVERTISEMENT*, BLACK SAMSON! NOW THEY'RE ALL GOING AFTER OUR EARPIECES.
DON'T LAY THAT ON *ME*, JERK! THEY WERE AFTER *MINE* BEFORE I SAID ANYTHING! BESIDES, THEY'RE BEING CONTROLLED BY *ONE GUY!* IF HE TOLD ONE OF THEM TO DO IT, HE TOLD *ALL* OF THEM!
CRAP! THERE GOES MY EARPIECE!
WHERE'S *ROBOT?!* THIS GUY'S POWERS WOULDN'T WORK ON *HIM*, WOULD THEY?
HE DIDN'T ANSWER THE CALL THIS MORNING-- HAVE ANY OF YOU NOTICED HIM ACTING A LITTLE *WEIRD* LATELY?
YOU MEAN MORE THAN *USUAL?*
THIS IS NOT GOING WELL, GUYS-- YOU GOT A PLAN? I MEAN--THESE PEOPLE CAN'T REACH *MY* EAR BUT I CAN'T FIGHT *ALL* OF YOU AND STILL GET TO HIM.
I'M COMING DOWN BEHIND YOU, GIRL! SWAT ME OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE I KNOCK YOU DOWN TO WHERE THEY CAN GET YOUR EARPIECE.
JUST HOLD OUT AS LONG AS YOU CAN, GUYS. I'M ALMOST THERE.
I'M TAKING THIS GUY *OUT*.
LOOKS TA ME LIKE THE OL' GUARDIANS OF DA GLOBE ARE GONNA BE A THINGA DA PAST HERE SOON.
YA FEEL ME?

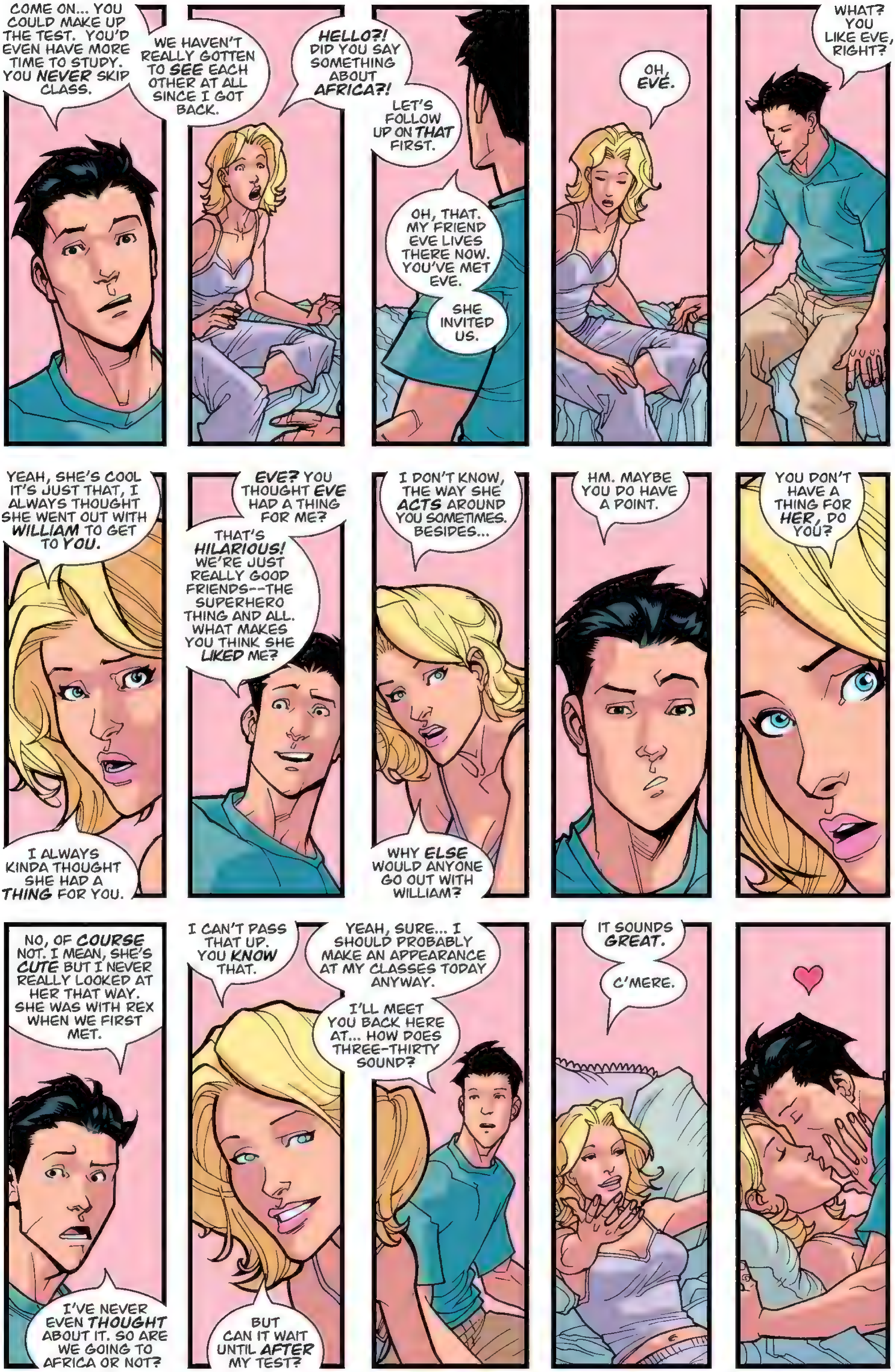

WRAMMM!!
WHO DAT?!
DID I GET HIM? I CAN'T TELL.
A LITTLE MORE TO THE RIGHT. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET A LITTLE **CLOSER**, TOO. YOU'RE STILL OUT OF HIS RANGE AT FIVE-HUNDRED YARDS.
I DON'T WANT TO ***RISK*** IT.
OKAY--HERE GOES ATTEMPT NUMBER TWO.
--DA HELL?
THOOM!!
WHOA!
WHAT?! ***NO!!***
I ***HAD*** THIS ONE COVERED! THIS WAS ***MINE!!***
IT'S NOT ***FAIR!***

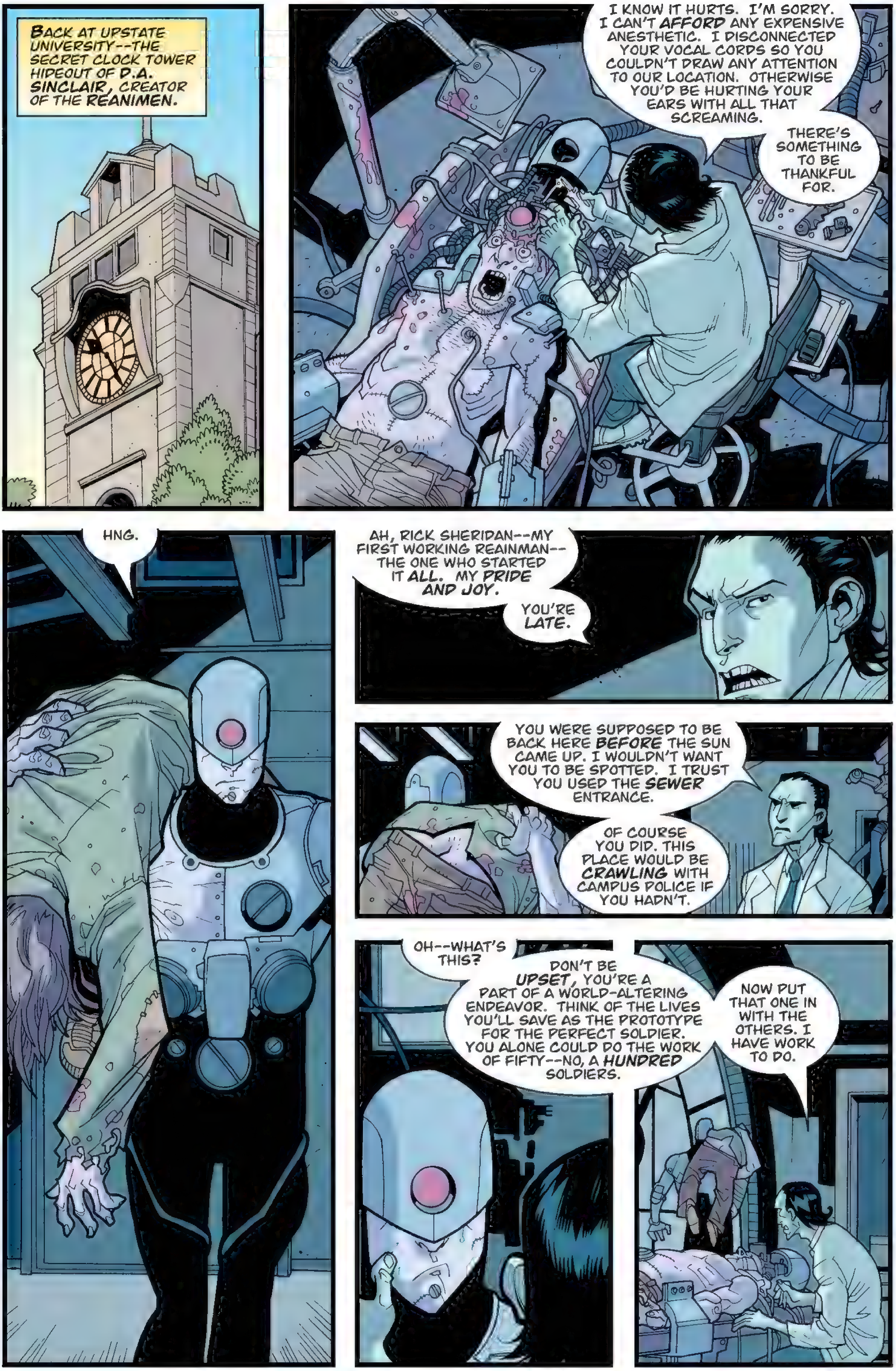

AGH.
THIS SUCKED.
SORRY I COULDN'T STOP HIM FASTER. CECIL DIDN'T HAVE ANOTHER EARPIECE FOR ME--SO I HAD TO DO THE LONG-RANGE THING. IS EVERYONE OKAY?
LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF MINOR INJURIES, TO BE SURE--BUT NO DEATHS.
YOU DID GOOD, KID.

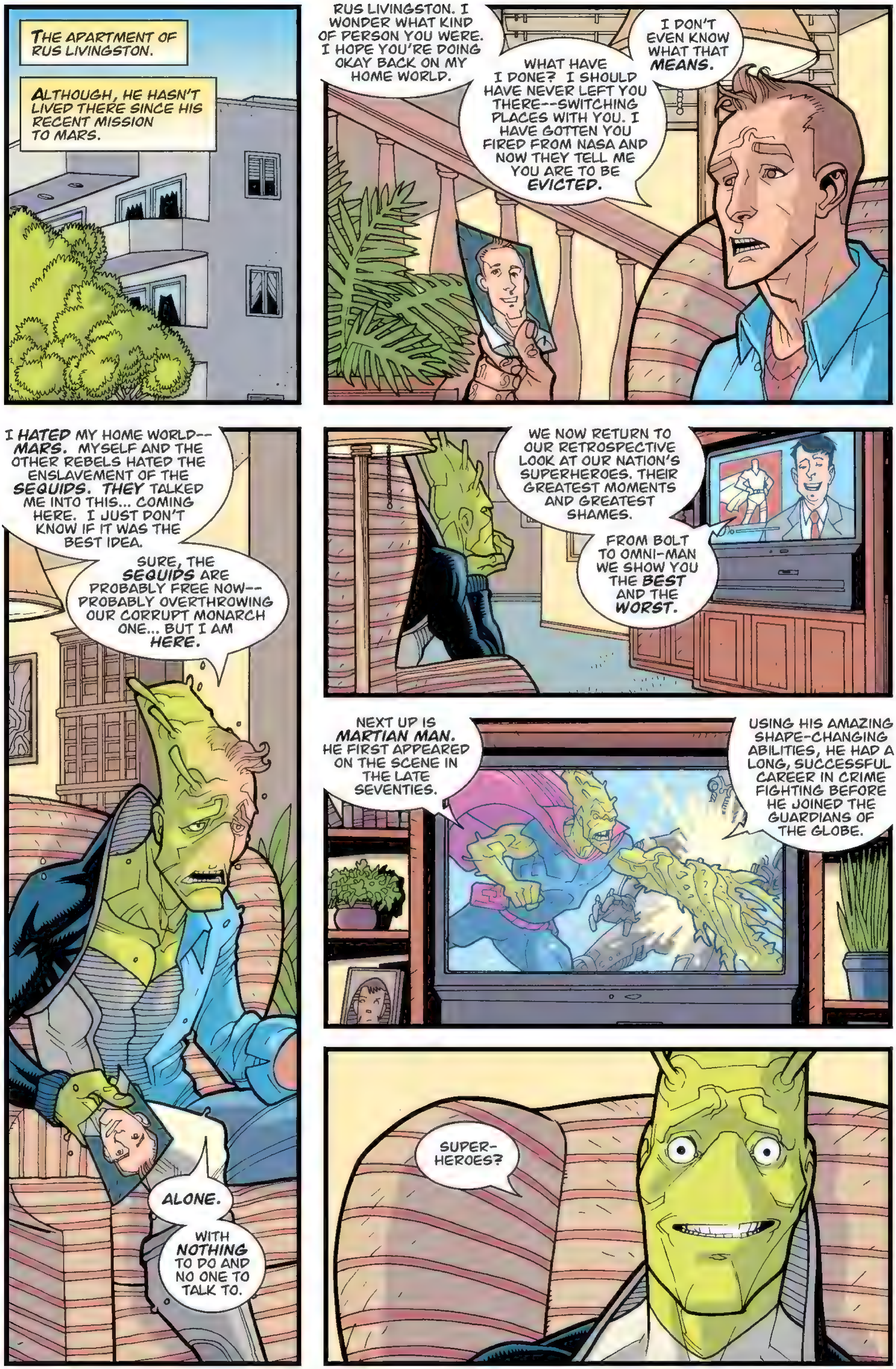

THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
OH, HE'S GOTTA BE LOVING THAT. ON THE RIDE HERE ALL WE HAD WAS THIS NUTRIENT PASTE STUFF THAT WAS JUST DISGUSTING.
HE SEEMS TO LIKE IT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE? YOU NEED LAUNDRY OR SOMETHING?
I JUST WANTED TO CHECK AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WAS OKAY WITH THE BABY AND ALL BEFORE I HEAD BACK TO MY DORM.
AND I NEED LAUNDRY. I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE ANY CLEAN CLOTHES AT THE DORM.
YOU KNOW--IT'D BE A LOT EASIER IF YOU ACTUALLY BROUGHT YOUR CLOTHES BACK FOR ME TO WASH ON A REGULAR BASIS. OR, Y'KNOW--YOU COULD JUST WASH THE CLOTHES YOURSELF.
BUT MOM, THAT'S TIME I COULD SPEND SAVING THE WORLD.
RIGHT. YOU'RE ALWAYS SAVING THE WORLD. I FORGOT.
FEED YOUR BROTHER WHILE I GO GET YOUR CLOTHES.
WHAT'S SHE GOT FOR YOU HERE?
PEARS?
NICE.
YOUR FRIEND EVE CALLED EARLIER. SHE LEFT A NUMBER FOR YOU TO CALL HER BACK.
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT.
IT'S GOT SOME KIND OF COUNTRY CODE IN FRONT OF IT AND ALL KINDS OF EXTRA NUMBERS. SEE IF CECIL CAN KNOCK THE COST OFF YOUR BILL. ANYTHING MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES WILL COST A FORTUNE.
RIGHT, YEAH.
THANKS.

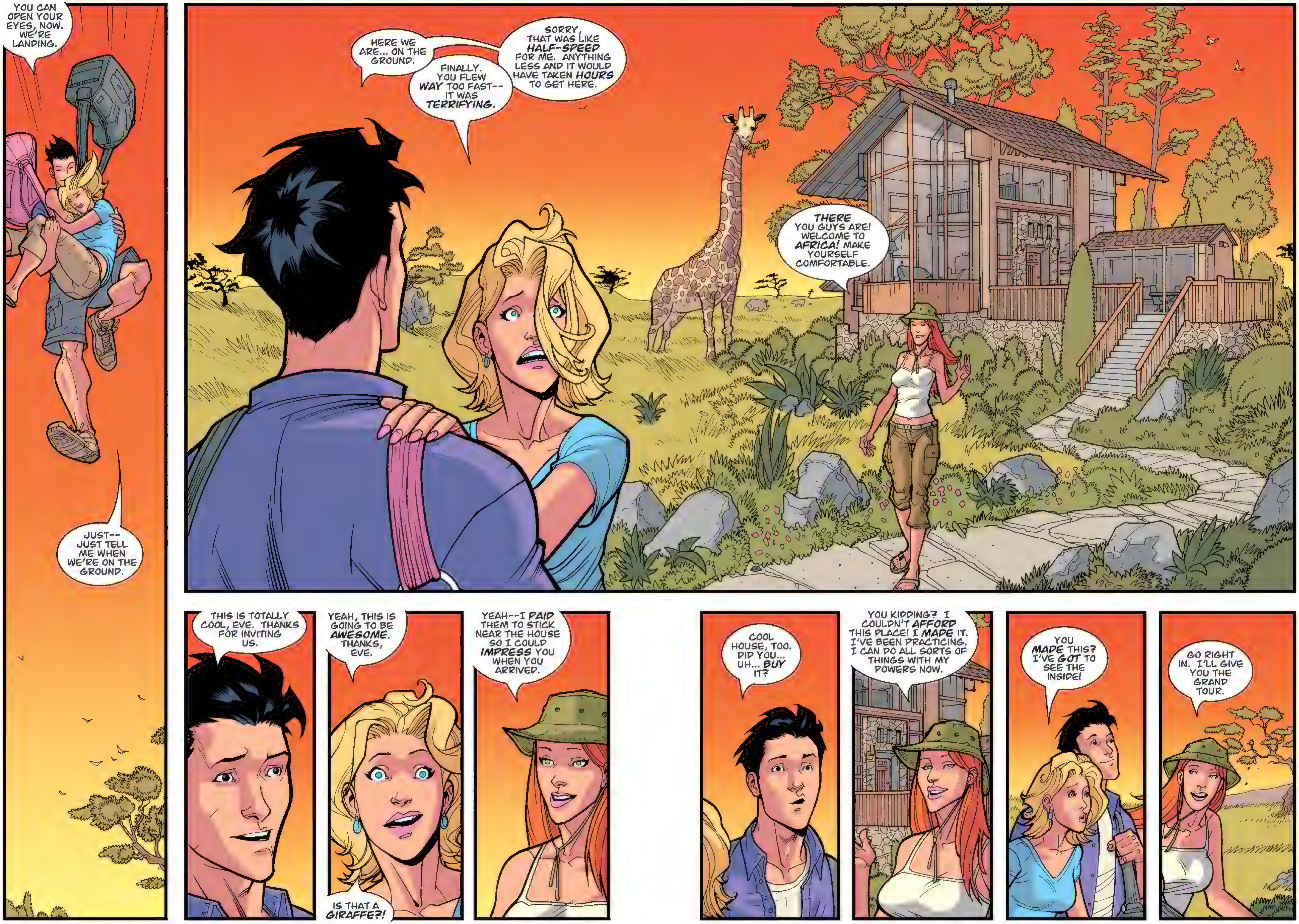

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM BUILDING THAT HOUSES THE ROOM MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL SHARE.
THERE'S THE BIG TIME SUPER-HERO.
YEP, THAT'S ME.
WHATEVER.
HEY--WHOA, WHOA. WHERE'S ALL THIS COMING FROM?
HAVE I DONE SOMETHING TO PISS YOU OFF? WHAT'S THE DEAL?
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND, MARK. OUR FRIEND RICK SHERIDAN HAS BEEN MISSING FOR MONTHS NOW... HE JUST UP AND DISAPPEARED. NOBODY KNOWS WHERE HE IS. HE COULD BE IN REAL TROUBLE.
AND HERE YOU ARE, HIS FRIEND, AND YOU'VE GOT ALL THESE POWERS AND YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING TO FIND HIM.
ME? WHAT COULD I DO?
I'M A SUPERHERO, NOT A DETECTIVE. I WOULDN'T KNOW THE FIRST PLACE TO LOOK. I DON'T SEE HOW I COULD HELP FIND HIM.
WHATEVER.
OKAY THEN.
JUST TRY TO KEEP IT DOWN, ALL RIGHT?
I'VE GOT TO MAKE A PHONE CALL.
HERE GOES.
EVE? HI. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? MY MOM SAID YOU CALLED--GAVE ME YOUR NUMBER.
IT'S MARK. UH... GRAYSON. MARK GRAYSON. YOU KNOW... UM.
RIGHT, VERY FUNNY. NO REALLY, I LAUGHED, YOU JUST COULDN'T HEAR ME.
I KNOW. WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN A CHANCE TO TALK IN A WHILE.
NO, I'VE GOT TIME.
LET'S TALK.

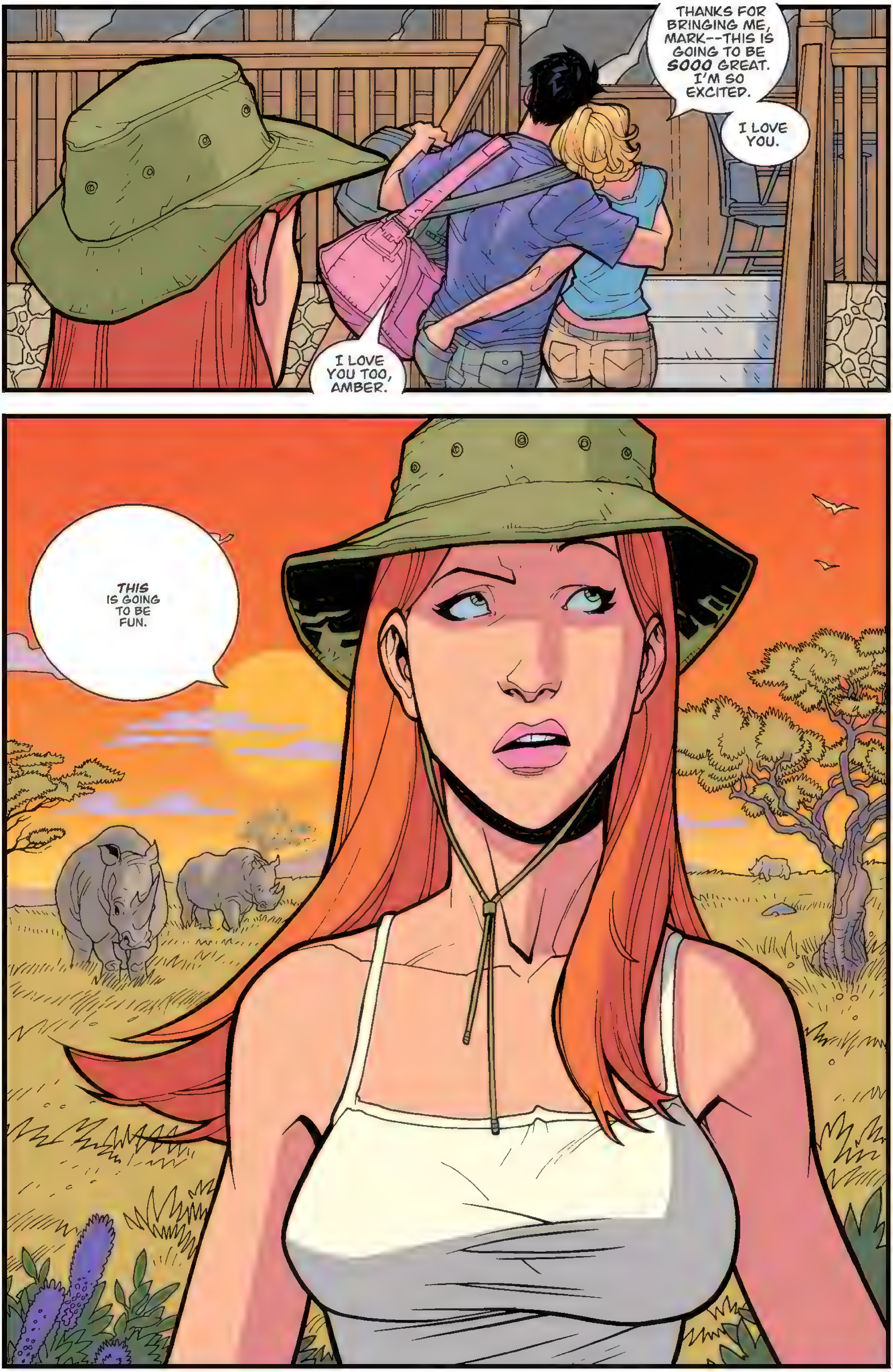

AMBER'S DORM.
HUH?
JEEZ.
GOOD MORNING. LISTEN, YOU REALLY SHOULD STOP LOCKING YOUR WINDOW. I'M GOING TO GET SPOTTED OUT THERE WAITING FOR YOU TO OPEN IT ONE DAY.
HMN.
DID I WAKE YOU UP? I'M SORRY. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE UP ALREADY. DO YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE SO YOU CAN GO BACK TO SLEEP?
NO, NO... **STAY.** PLEASE. I'VE GOT A BIG TEST IN AN HOUR. I WAS UP LATE STUDYING AND THERE'S STILL A LOT OF STUFF I NEED TO LOOK OVER.
I **NEED** TO BE UP RIGHT NOW.
COOL. SO... YOU WANT TO **DITCH CLASS** WITH ME? WE COULD GO TO **AFRICA.**
WHAT DID I **JUST** SAY? I'VE GOT A **BIG TEST...** I CAN'T JUST DITCH CLASS WITH YOU.
THIS TEST COUNTS FOR LIKE **HALF** MY GRADE, IT'S REALLY--
--AFRICA?!


COME ON... YOU COULD MAKE UP THE TEST. YOU'D EVEN HAVE MORE TIME TO STUDY. YOU NEVER SKIP CLASS.
WE HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SEE EACH OTHER AT ALL SINCE I GOT BACK.
HELLO?! DID YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT AFRICA?!
LET'S FOLLOW UP ON THAT FIRST.
OH, THAT. MY FRIEND EVE LIVES THERE NOW. YOU'VE MET EVE.
SHE INVITED US.
OH, EVE.
WHAT? YOU LIKE EVE, RIGHT?
YEAH, SHE'S COOL IT'S JUST THAT, I ALWAYS THOUGHT SHE WENT OUT WITH WILLIAM TO GET TO YOU.
I ALWAYS KINDA THOUGHT SHE HAD A THING FOR YOU.
EVE? YOU THOUGHT EVE HAD A THING FOR ME?
THAT'S HILARIOUS! WE'RE JUST REALLY GOOD FRIENDS--THE SUPERHERO THING AND ALL. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE LIKED ME?
I DON'T KNOW, THE WAY SHE ACTS AROUND YOU SOMETIMES. BESIDES...
WHY ELSE WOULD ANYONE GO OUT WITH WILLIAM?
HM. MAYBE YOU DO HAVE A POINT.
YOU DON'T HAVE A THING FOR HER, DO YOU?
NO, OF COURSE NOT. I MEAN, SHE'S CUTE BUT I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT HER THAT WAY. SHE WAS WITH REX WHEN WE FIRST MET.
I'VE NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT IT. SO ARE WE GOING TO AFRICA OR NOT?
I CAN'T PASS THAT UP. YOU KNOW THAT.
BUT CAN IT WAIT UNTIL AFTER MY TEST?
YEAH, SURE... I SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE AN APPEARANCE AT MY CLASSES TODAY ANYWAY.
I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE AT... HOW DOES THREE-THIRTY SOUND?
IT SOUNDS GREAT.
C'MERE.
♥


BACK AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY--THE SECRET CLOCK TOWER HIDEOUT OF D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.
I KNOW IT HURTS. I'M SORRY. I CAN'T AFFORD ANY EXPENSIVE ANESTHETIC. I DISCONNECTED YOUR VOCAL CORDS SO YOU COULDN'T DRAW ANY ATTENTION TO OUR LOCATION. OTHERWISE YOU'D BE HURTING YOUR EARS WITH ALL THAT SCREAMING.
THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.
HNG.
AH, RICK SHERIDAN--MY FIRST WORKING REAINMAN--THE ONE WHO STARTED IT ALL. MY PRIDE AND JOY.
YOU'RE LATE.
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE BACK HERE BEFORE THE SUN CAME UP. I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BE SPOTTED. I TRUST YOU USED THE SEWER ENTRANCE.
OF COURSE YOU DID. THIS PLACE WOULD BE CRAWLING WITH CAMPUS POLICE IF YOU HADN'T.
OH--WHAT'S THIS?
DON'T BE UPSET, YOU'RE A PART OF A WORLD-ALTERING ENDEAVOR. THINK OF THE LIVES YOU'LL SAVE AS THE PROTOTYPE FOR THE PERFECT SOLDIER. YOU ALONE COULD DO THE WORK OF FIFTY--NO, A HUNDRED SOLDIERS.
NOW PUT THAT ONE IN WITH THE OTHERS. I HAVE WORK TO DO.

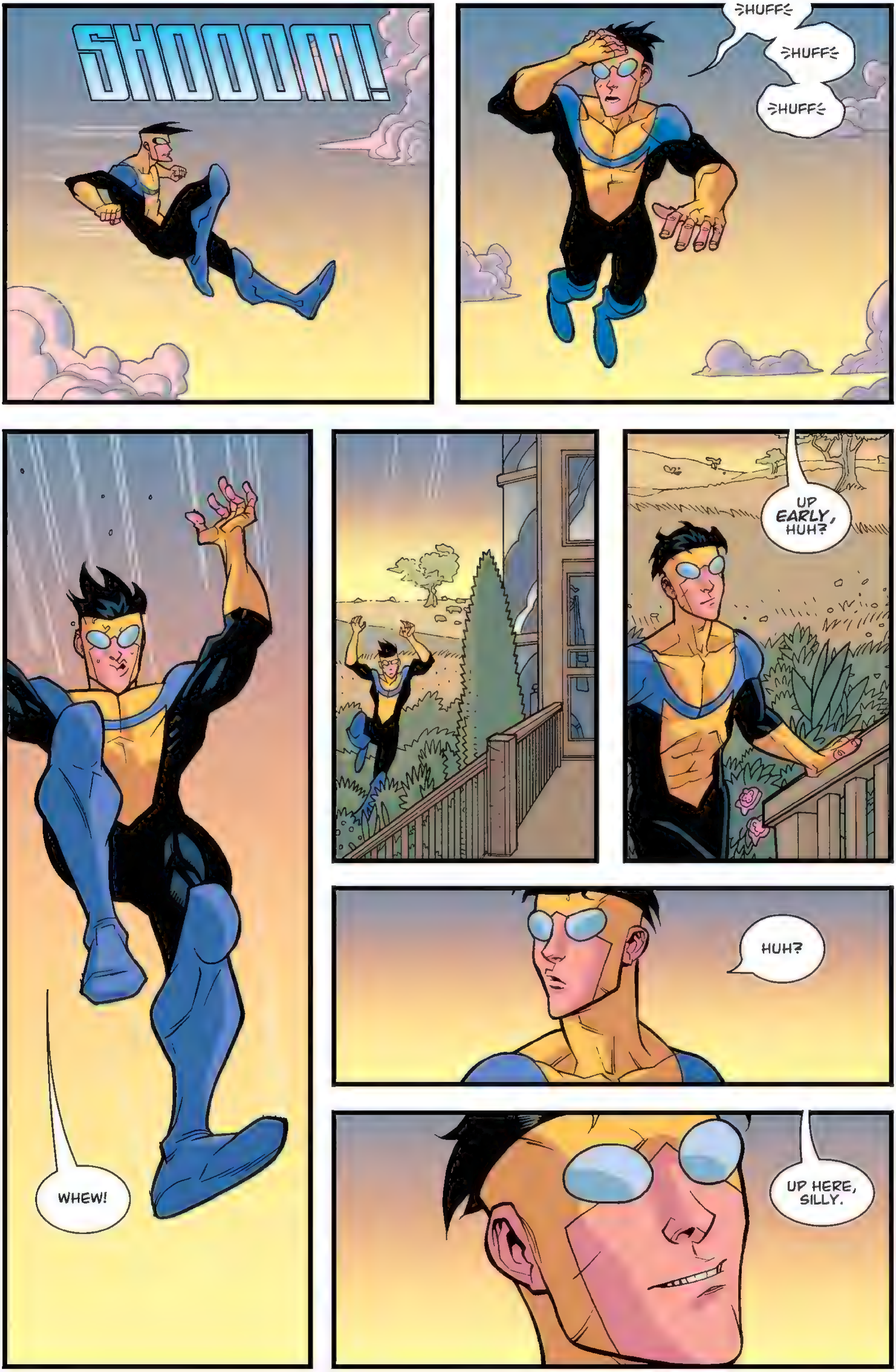

THE APARTMENT OF RUS LIVINGSTON.
ALTHOUGH, HE HASN'T LIVED THERE SINCE HIS RECENT MISSION TO MARS.
RUS LIVINGSTON. I WONDER WHAT KIND OF PERSON YOU WERE. I HOPE YOU'RE DOING OKAY BACK ON MY HOME WORLD.
WHAT HAVE I DONE? I SHOULD HAVE NEVER LEFT YOU THERE--SWITCHING PLACES WITH YOU. I HAVE GOTTEN YOU FIRED FROM NASA AND NOW THEY TELL ME YOU ARE TO BE EVICTED.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.
I HATED MY HOME WORLD--MARS. MYSELF AND THE OTHER REBELS HATED THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE SEQUIDS. THEY TALKED ME INTO THIS... COMING HERE. I JUST DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS THE BEST IDEA.
SURE, THE SEQUIDS ARE PROBABLY FREE NOW--PROBABLY OVERTHROWING OUR CORRUPT MONARCH ONE... BUT I AM HERE.
ALONE.
WITH NOTHING TO DO AND NO ONE TO TALK TO.
WE NOW RETURN TO OUR RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT OUR NATION'S SUPERHEROES. THEIR GREATEST MOMENTS AND GREATEST SHAMES.
FROM BOLT TO OMNI-MAN WE SHOW YOU THE BEST AND THE WORST.
NEXT UP IS MARTIAN MAN. HE FIRST APPEARED ON THE SCENE IN THE LATE SEVENTIES.
USING HIS AMAZING SHAPE-CHANGING ABILITIES, HE HAD A LONG, SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN CRIME FIGHTING BEFORE HE JOINED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
SUPER-HEROES?

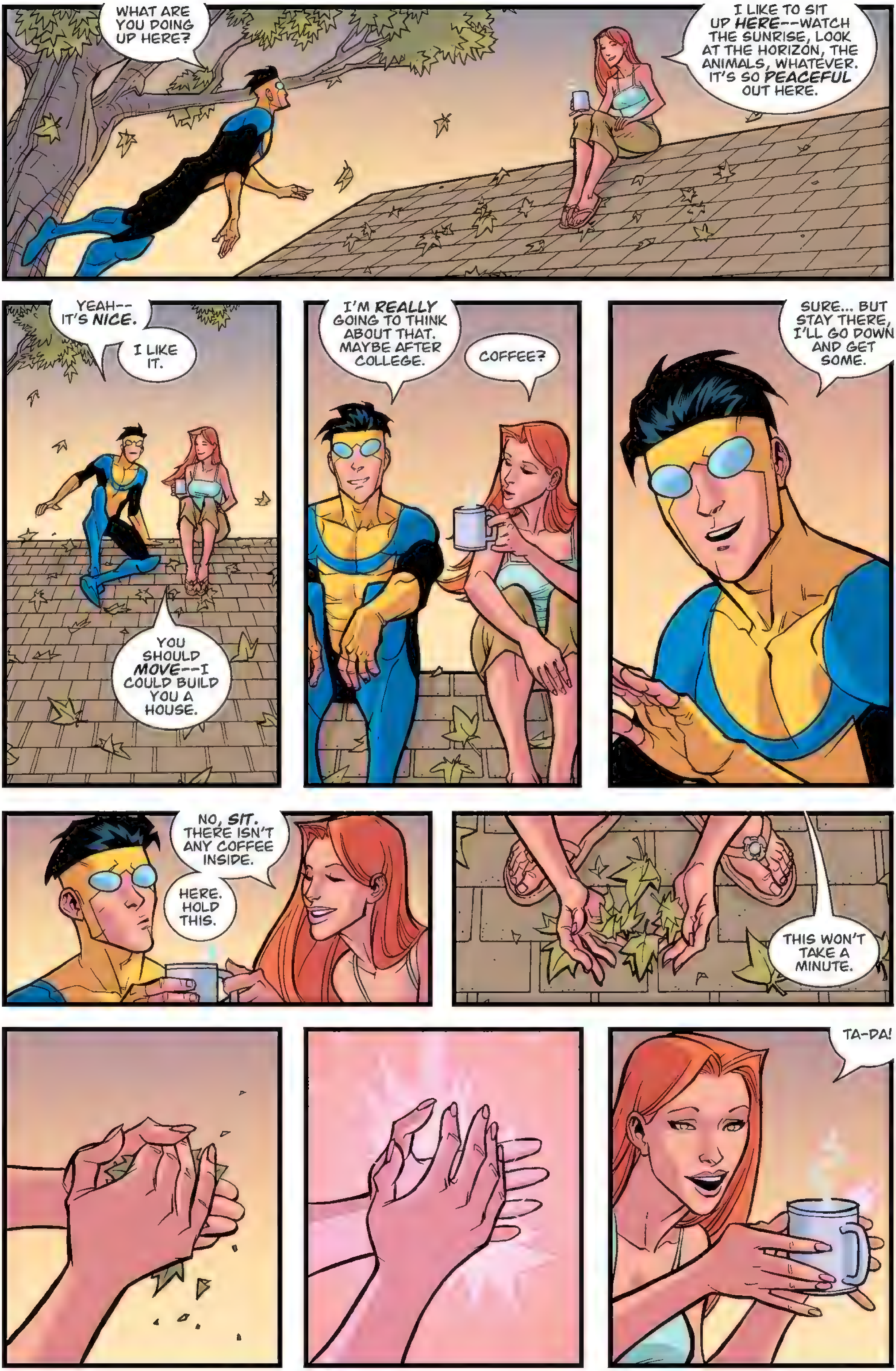

YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES, NOW. WE'RE LANDING.
JUST-- JUST TELL ME WHEN WE'RE ON THE GROUND.
HERE WE ARE... ON THE GROUND.
FINALLY. YOU FLEW WAY TOO FAST-- IT WAS TERRIFYING.
SORRY, THAT WAS LIKE HALF-SPEED FOR ME. ANYTHING LESS AND IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN HOURS TO GET HERE.
THERE YOU GUYS ARE! WELCOME TO AFRICA! MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE.
THIS IS TOTALLY COOL, EVE. THANKS FOR INVITING US.
YEAH, THIS IS GOING TO BE AWESOME. THANKS, EVE.
IS THAT A GIRAFFE?!
YEAH--I PAID THEM TO STICK NEAR THE HOUSE SO I COULD IMPRESS YOU WHEN YOU ARRIVED.
COOL HOUSE, TOO. DID YOU... UH... BUY IT?
YOU KIDDING? I COULDN'T AFFORD THIS PLACE! I MADE IT. I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. I CAN DO ALL SORTS OF THINGS WITH MY POWERS NOW.
YOU MADE THIS? I'VE GOT TO SEE THE INSIDE!
GO RIGHT IN. I'LL GIVE YOU THE GRAND TOUR.

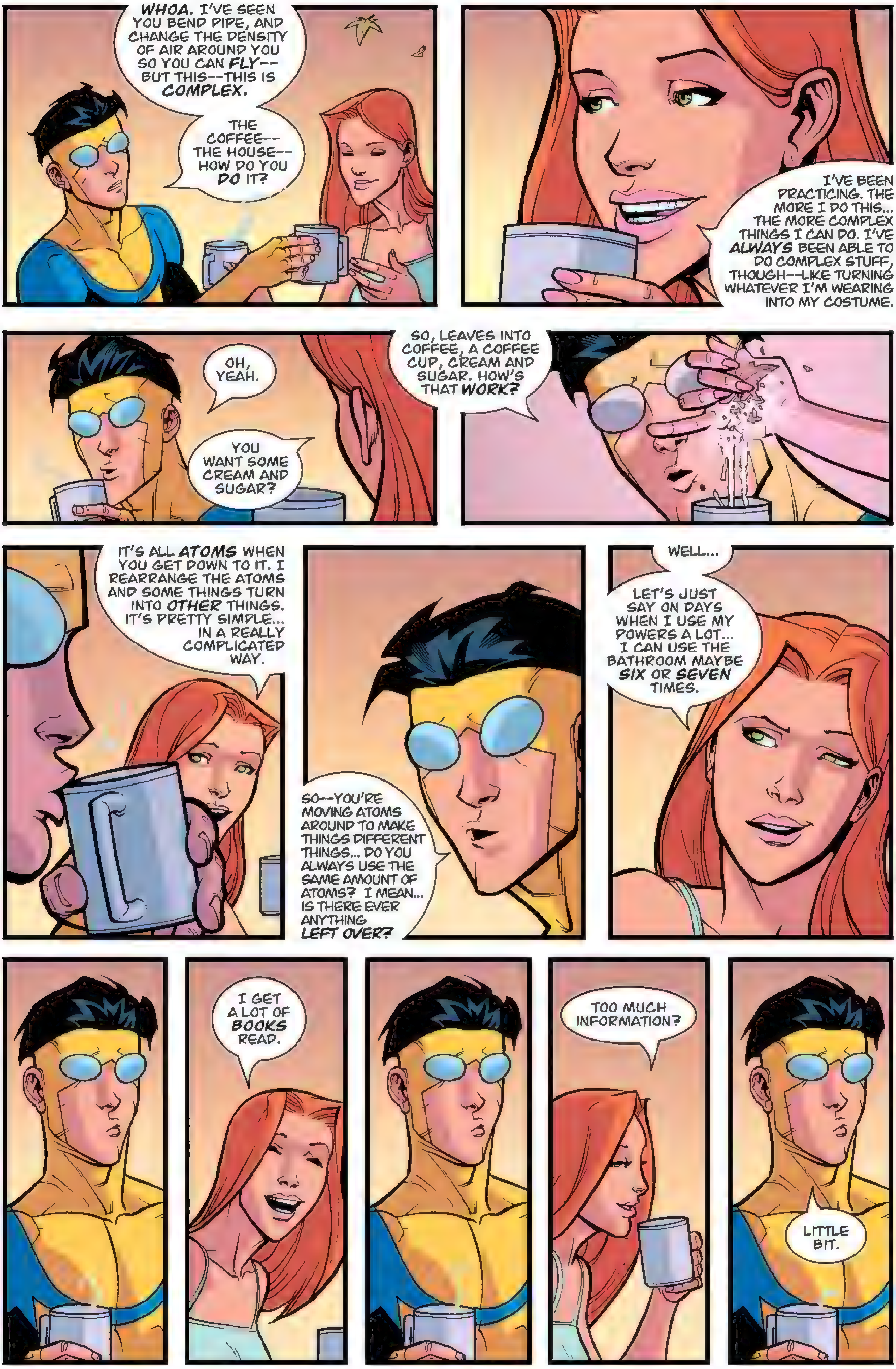

THANKS FOR BRINGING ME, MARK--THIS IS GOING TO BE SOOO GREAT. I'M SO EXCITED.
I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU TOO, AMBER.
THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN.

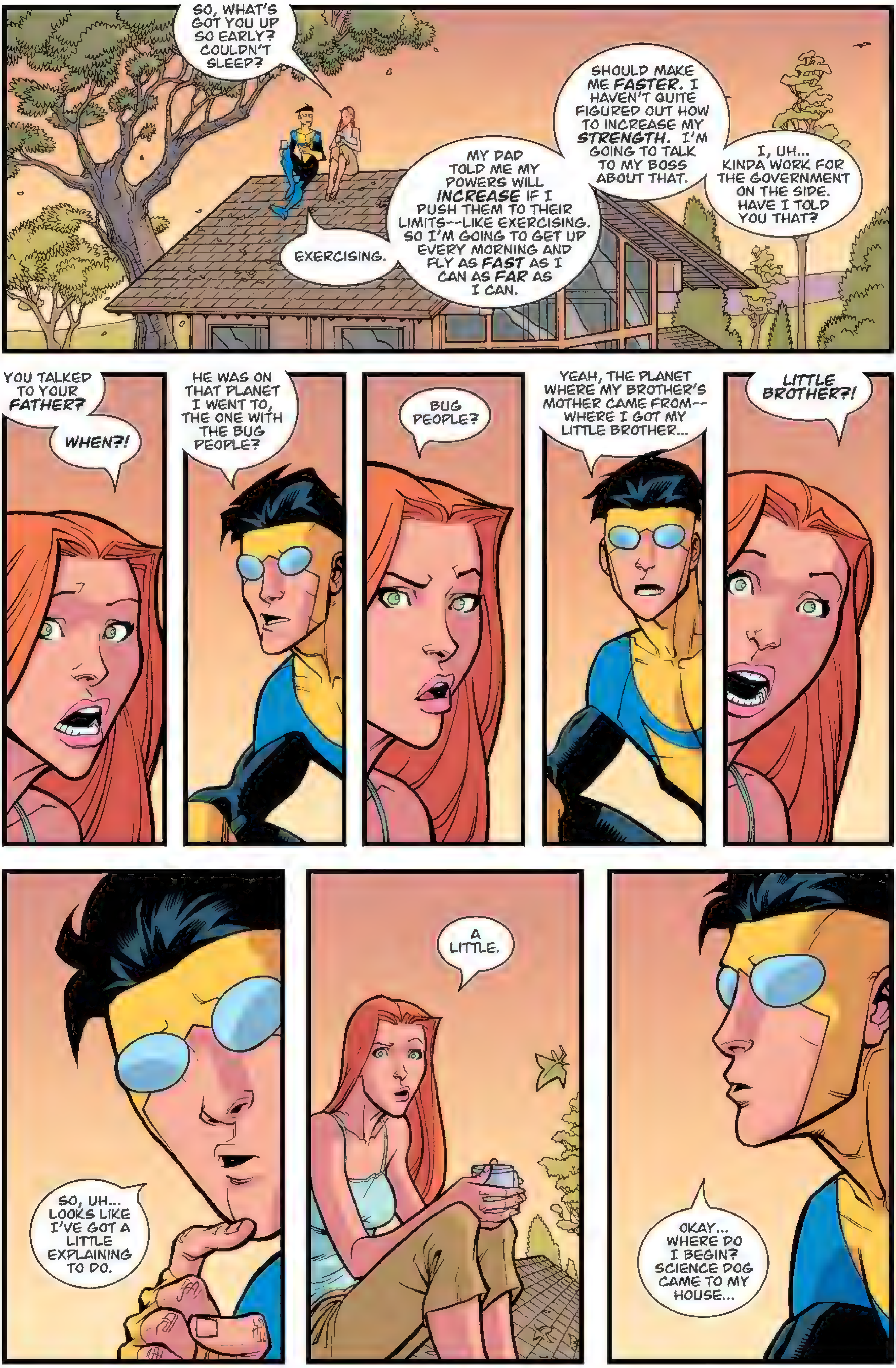
ISSUE THIRTY-TWO

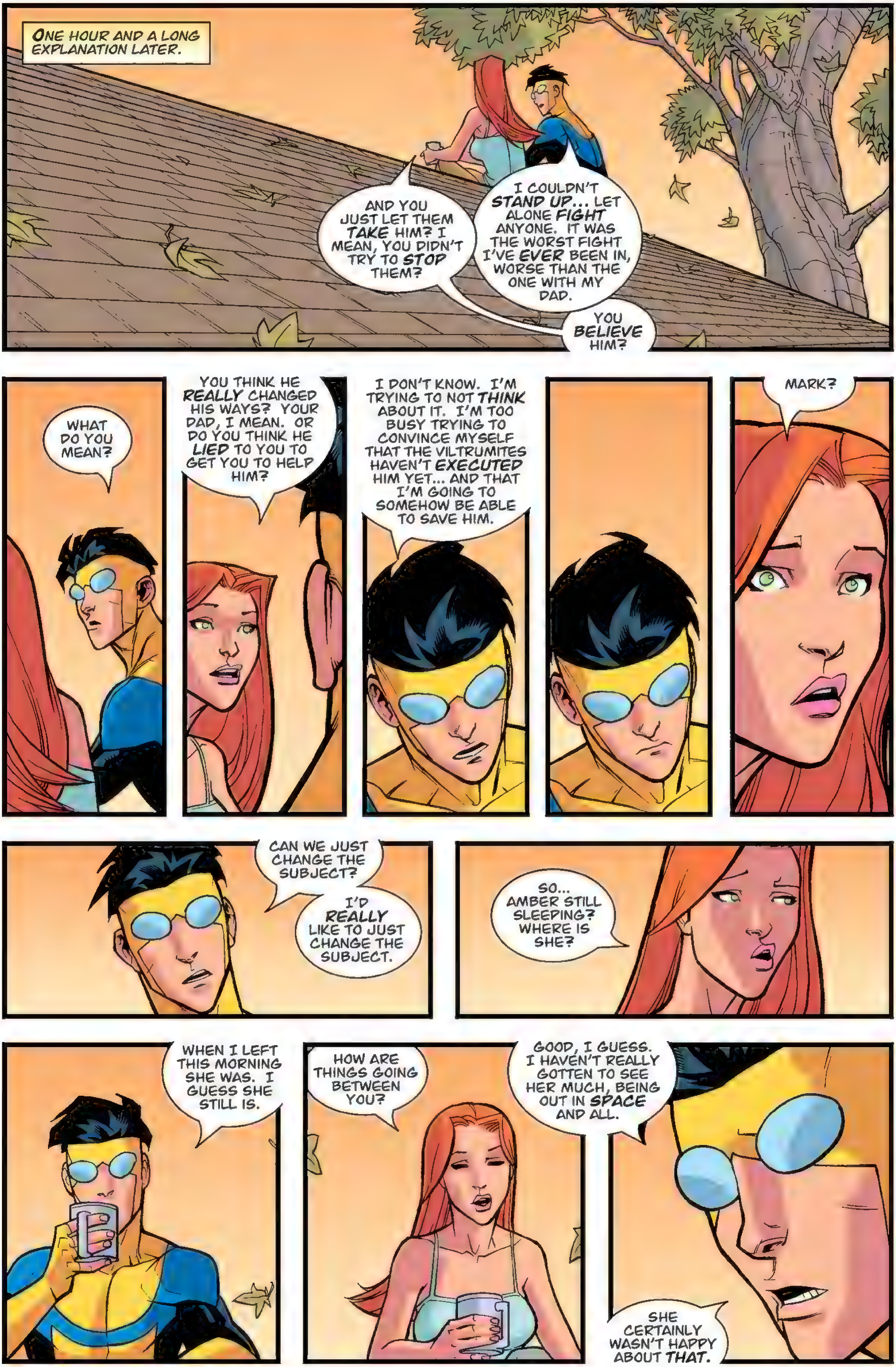
WOOSH!!

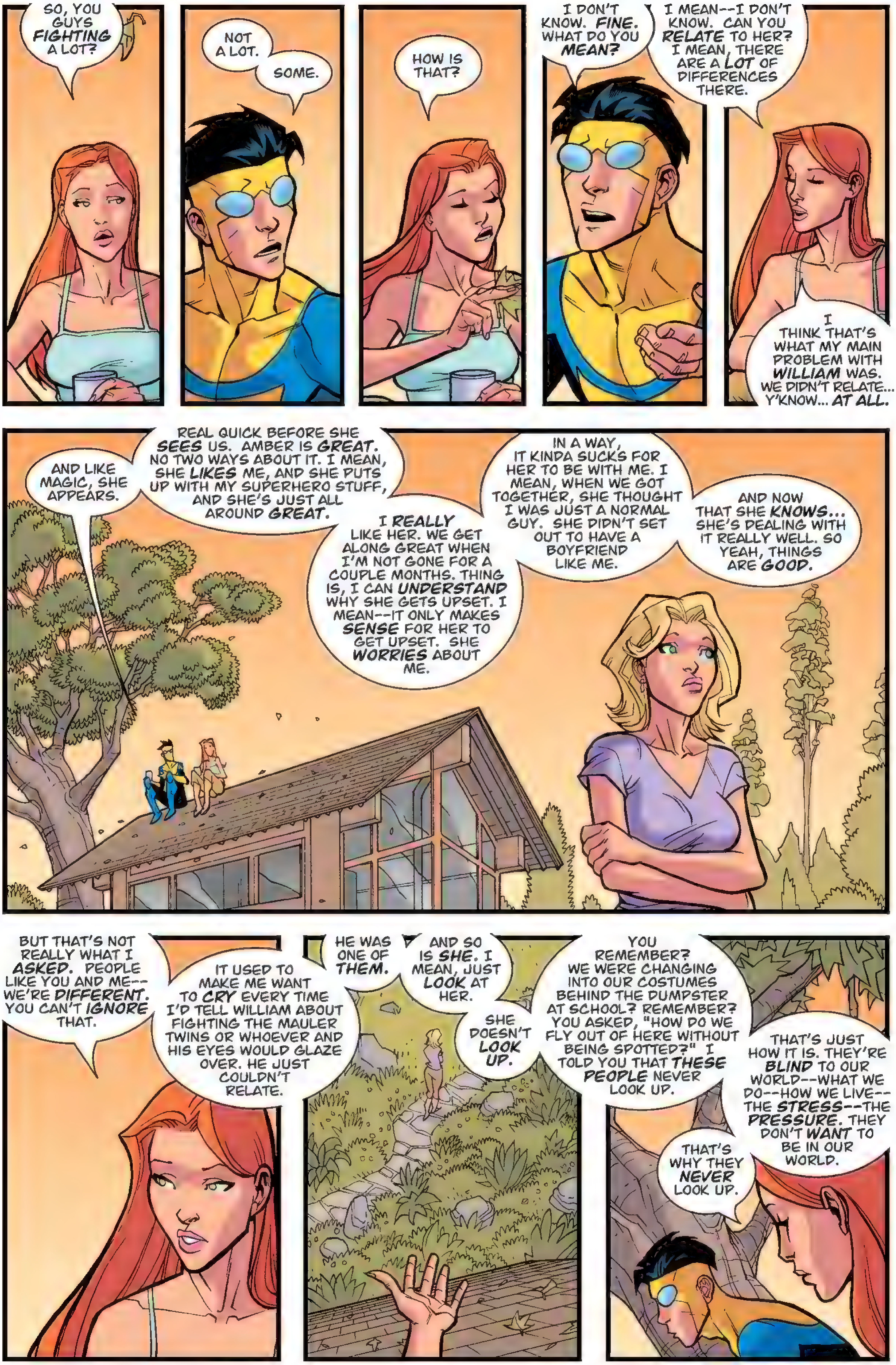

SHOOOM!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
WHEW!
UP EARLY, HUH?
HUH?
UP HERE, SILLY.

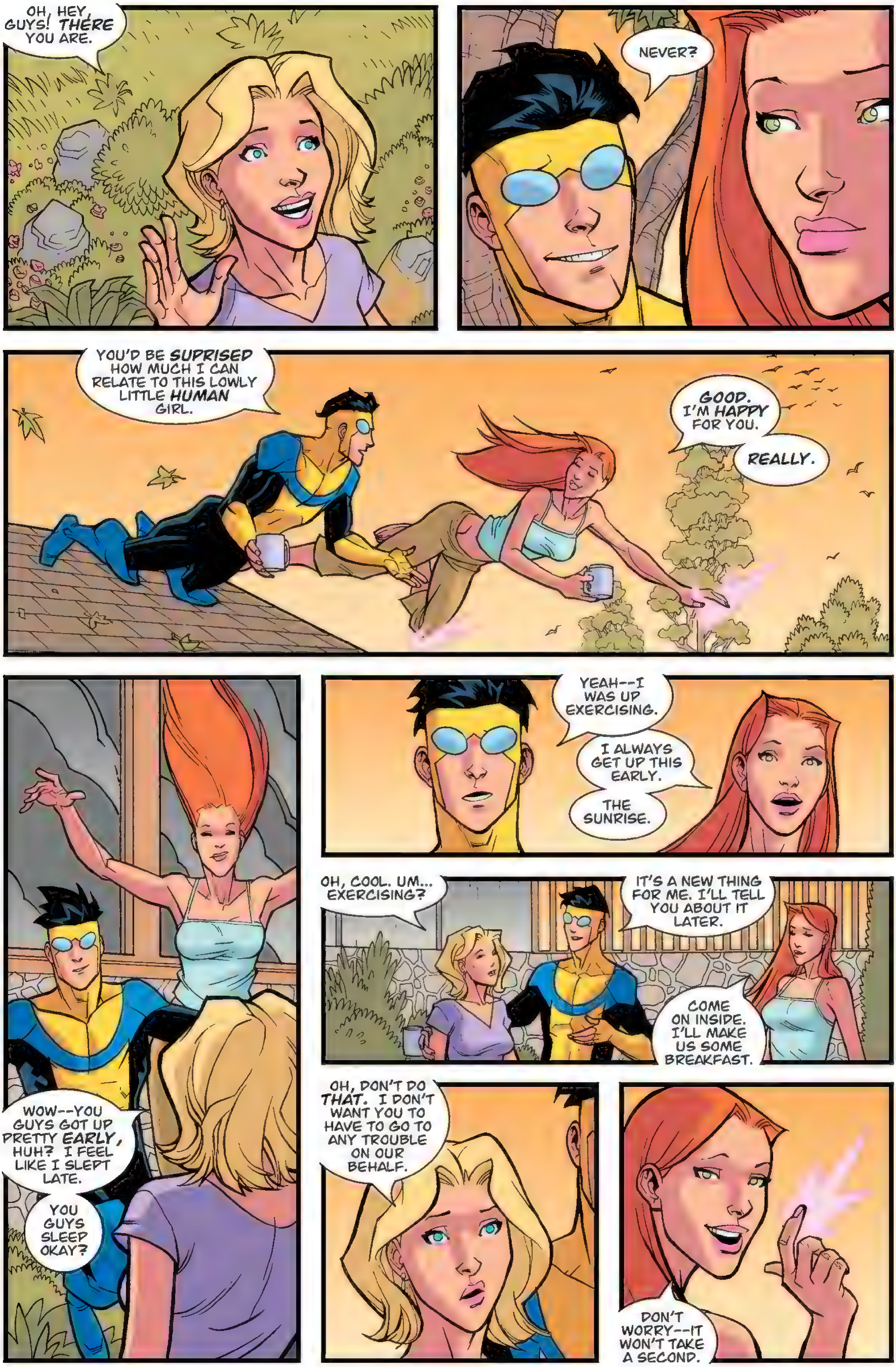

WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP HERE?
I LIKE TO SIT UP HERE--WATCH THE SUNRISE, LOOK AT THE HORIZON, THE ANIMALS, WHATEVER. IT'S SO PEACEFUL OUT HERE.
YEAH--IT'S NICE.
I LIKE IT.
YOU SHOULD MOVE--I COULD BUILD YOU A HOUSE.
I'M REALLY GOING TO THINK ABOUT THAT. MAYBE AFTER COLLEGE.
COFFEE?
SURE... BUT STAY THERE, I'LL GO DOWN AND GET SOME.
NO, SIT. THERE ISN'T ANY COFFEE INSIDE.
HERE. HOLD THIS.
THIS WON'T TAKE A MINUTE.
TA-DA!


WHOA. I'VE SEEN YOU BEND PIPE, AND CHANGE THE DENSITY OF AIR AROUND YOU SO YOU CAN FLY--BUT THIS--THIS IS COMPLEX.
THE COFFEE--THE HOUSE--HOW DO YOU DO IT?
I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. THE MORE I DO THIS... THE MORE COMPLEX THINGS I CAN DO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO DO COMPLEX STUFF, THOUGH--LIKE TURNING WHATEVER I'M WEARING INTO MY COSTUME.
OH, YEAH.
YOU WANT SOME CREAM AND SUGAR?
SO, LEAVES INTO COFFEE, A COFFEE CUP, CREAM AND SUGAR. HOW'S THAT WORK?
IT'S ALL ATOMS WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT. I REARRANGE THE ATOMS AND SOME THINGS TURN INTO OTHER THINGS. IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE... IN A REALLY COMPLICATED WAY.
SO--YOU'RE MOVING ATOMS AROUND TO MAKE THINGS DIFFERENT THINGS... DO YOU ALWAYS USE THE SAME AMOUNT OF ATOMS? I MEAN... IS THERE EVER ANYTHING LEFT OVER?
WELL...
LET'S JUST SAY ON DAYS WHEN I USE MY POWERS A LOT... I CAN USE THE BATHROOM MAYBE SIX OR SEVEN TIMES.
I GET A LOT OF BOOKS READ.
TOO MUCH INFORMATION?
LITTLE BIT.


SO, WHAT'S GOT YOU UP SO EARLY? COULDN'T SLEEP?
EXERCISING.
MY DAD TOLD ME MY POWERS WILL ***INCREASE*** IF I PUSH THEM TO THEIR LIMITS--LIKE EXERCISING. SO I'M GOING TO GET UP EVERY MORNING AND FLY AS ***FAST*** AS I CAN AS ***FAR*** AS I CAN.
SHOULD MAKE ME ***FASTER.*** I HAVEN'T QUITE FIGURED OUT HOW TO INCREASE MY ***STRENGTH.*** I'M GOING TO TALK TO MY BOSS ABOUT THAT.
I, UH... KINDA WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT ON THE SIDE. HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT?
YOU TALKED TO YOUR ***FATHER?***
WHEN?!
HE WAS ON THAT PLANET I WENT TO, THE ONE WITH THE BUG PEOPLE?
BUG PEOPLE?
YEAH, THE PLANET WHERE MY BROTHER'S MOTHER CAME FROM-- WHERE I GOT MY LITTLE BROTHER...
LITTLE BROTHER?!
SO, UH... LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT A LITTLE EXPLAINING TO DO.
A LITTLE.
OKAY... WHERE DO I BEGIN? SCIENCE DOG CAME TO MY HOUSE...

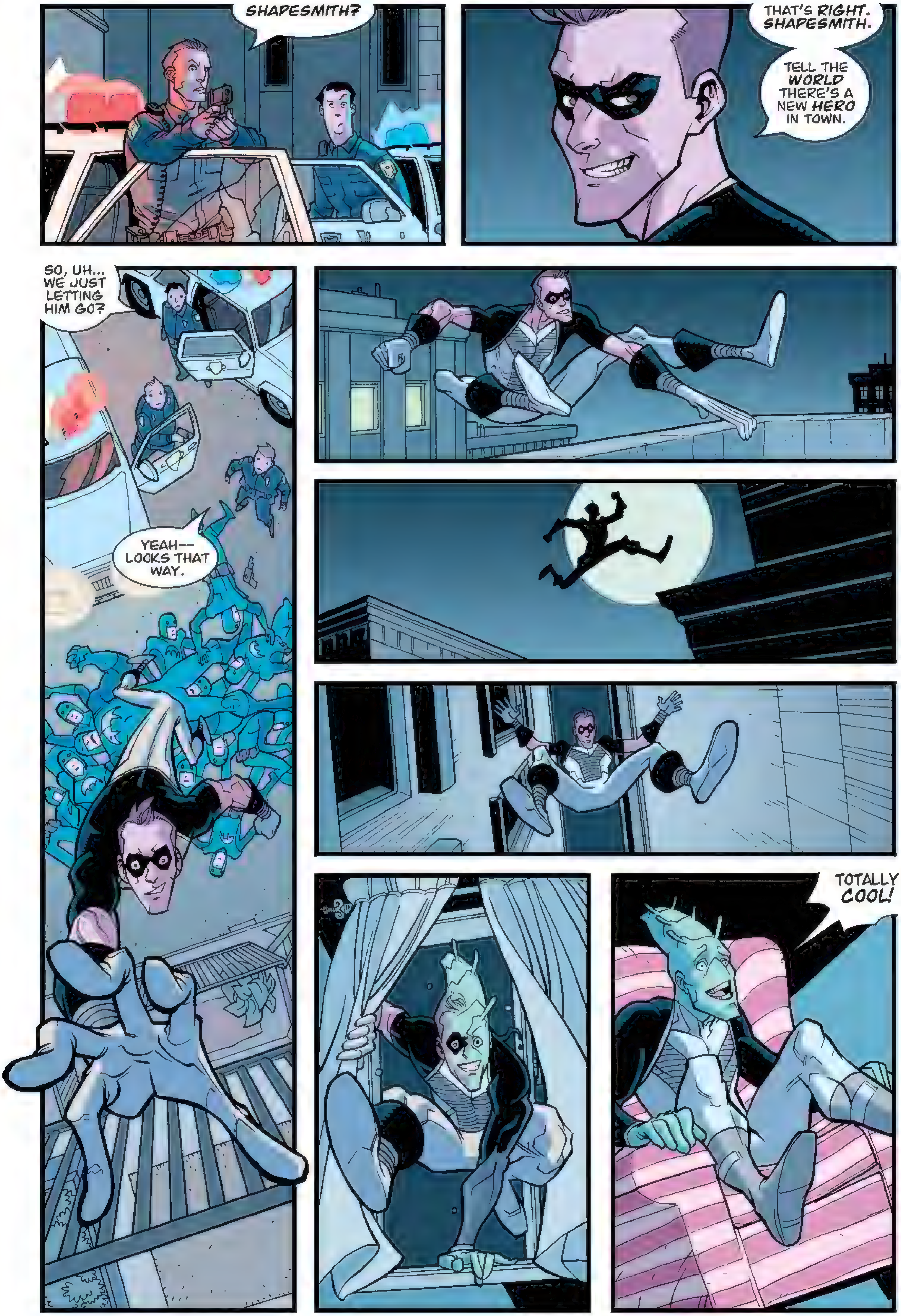

ONE HOUR AND A LONG EXPLANATION LATER.
AND YOU JUST LET THEM TAKE HIM? I MEAN, YOU DIDN'T TRY TO STOP THEM?
I COULDN'T STAND UP... LET ALONE FIGHT ANYONE. IT WAS THE WORST FIGHT I'VE EVER BEEN IN, WORSE THAN THE ONE WITH MY DAD.
YOU BELIEVE HIM?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU THINK HE REALLY CHANGED HIS WAYS? YOUR DAD, I MEAN. OR DO YOU THINK HE LIED TO YOU TO GET YOU TO HELP HIM?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M TRYING TO NOT THINK ABOUT IT. I'M TOO BUSY TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT THE VILTRUMITES HAVEN'T EXECUTED HIM YET... AND THAT I'M GOING TO SOMEHOW BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM.
MARK?
CAN WE JUST CHANGE THE SUBJECT?
I'D REALLY LIKE TO JUST CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
SO... AMBER STILL SLEEPING? WHERE IS SHE?
WHEN I LEFT THIS MORNING SHE WAS. I GUESS SHE STILL IS.
HOW ARE THINGS GOING BETWEEN YOU?
GOOD, I GUESS. I HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SEE HER MUCH, BEING OUT IN SPACE AND ALL.
SHE CERTAINLY WASN'T HAPPY ABOUT THAT.

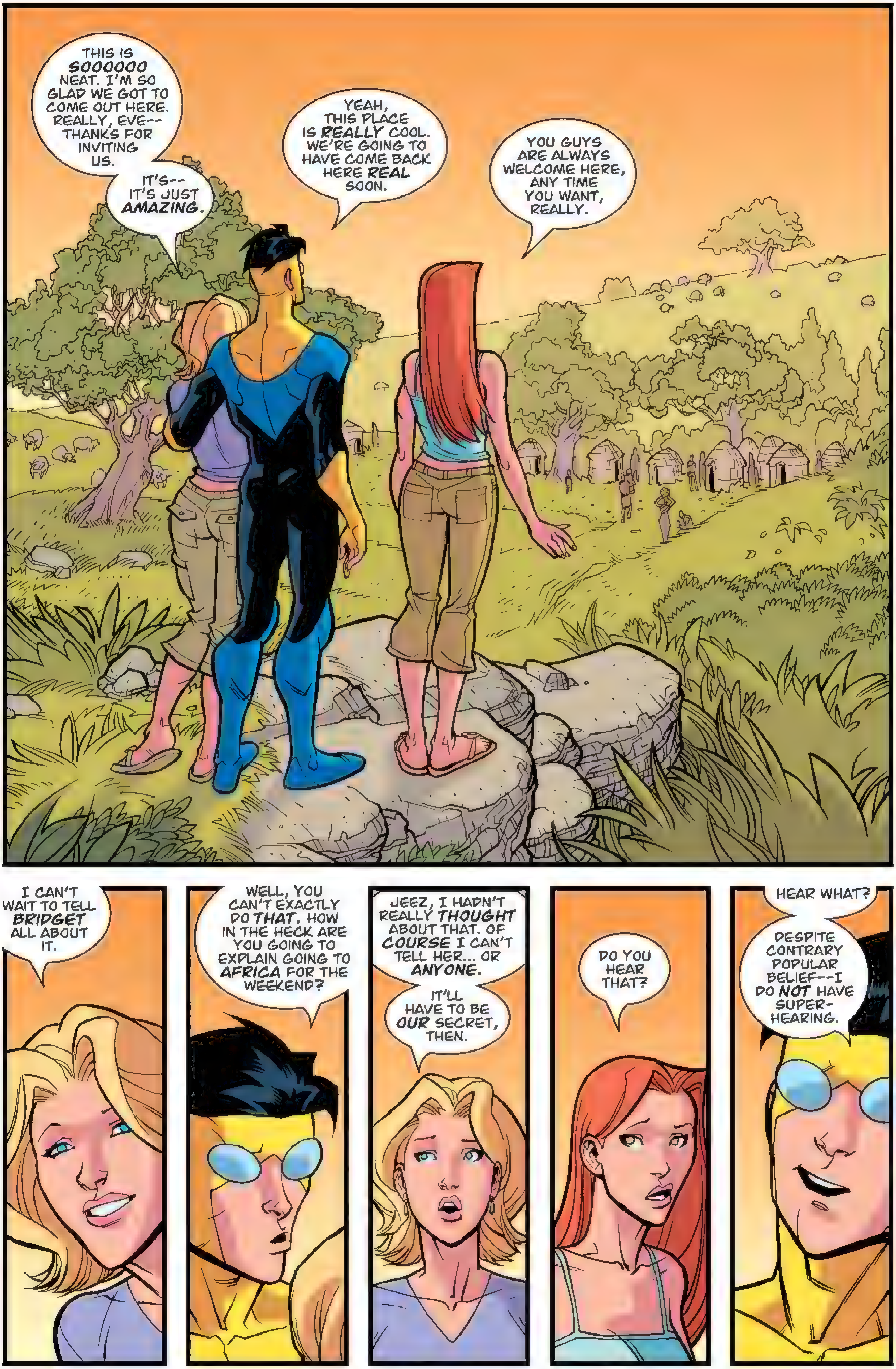

SO, YOU GUYS *FIGHTING* A LOT?
NOT A LOT.
SOME.
HOW IS THAT?
I DON'T KNOW. *FINE.* WHAT DO YOU *MEAN?*
I MEAN--I DON'T KNOW. CAN YOU *RELATE* TO HER? I MEAN, THERE ARE A *LOT* OF DIFFERENCES THERE.
I THINK THAT'S WHAT MY MAIN PROBLEM WITH *WILLIAM* WAS. WE DIDN'T RELATE... Y'KNOW... *AT ALL.*
AND LIKE MAGIC, SHE APPEARS.
REAL QUICK BEFORE SHE *SEES* US. AMBER IS *GREAT.* NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. I MEAN, SHE *LIKES* ME, AND SHE PUTS UP WITH MY SUPERHERO STUFF, AND SHE'S JUST ALL AROUND *GREAT.*
I *REALLY* LIKE HER. WE GET ALONG GREAT WHEN I'M NOT GONE FOR A COUPLE MONTHS. THING IS, I CAN *UNDERSTAND* WHY SHE GETS UPSET. I MEAN--IT ONLY MAKES *SENSE* FOR HER TO GET UPSET. SHE *WORRIES* ABOUT ME.
IN A WAY, IT KINDA SUCKS FOR HER TO BE WITH ME. I MEAN, WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER, SHE THOUGHT I WAS JUST A NORMAL GUY. SHE DIDN'T SET OUT TO HAVE A BOYFRIEND LIKE ME.
AND NOW THAT SHE *KNOWS...* SHE'S DEALING WITH IT REALLY WELL. SO YEAH, THINGS ARE *GOOD.*
BUT THAT'S NOT REALLY WHAT I *ASKED.* PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME--WE'RE *DIFFERENT.* YOU CAN'T *IGNORE* THAT.
IT USED TO MAKE ME WANT TO *CRY* EVERY TIME I'D TELL WILLIAM ABOUT FIGHTING THE MAULER TWINS OR WHOEVER AND HIS EYES WOULD GLAZE OVER. HE JUST COULDN'T RELATE.
HE WAS ONE OF *THEM.*
AND SO IS *SHE.* I MEAN, JUST *LOOK* AT HER.
SHE DOESN'T *LOOK UP.*
YOU REMEMBER? WE WERE CHANGING INTO OUR COSTUMES BEHIND THE DUMPSTER AT SCHOOL? REMEMBER? YOU ASKED, "HOW DO WE FLY OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED?" I TOLD YOU THAT *THESE PEOPLE* NEVER LOOK UP.
THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS. THEY'RE *BLIND* TO OUR WORLD--WHAT WE DO--HOW WE LIVE--THE *STRESS*--THE *PRESSURE.* THEY DON'T *WANT* TO BE IN OUR WORLD.
THAT'S WHY THEY *NEVER* LOOK UP.

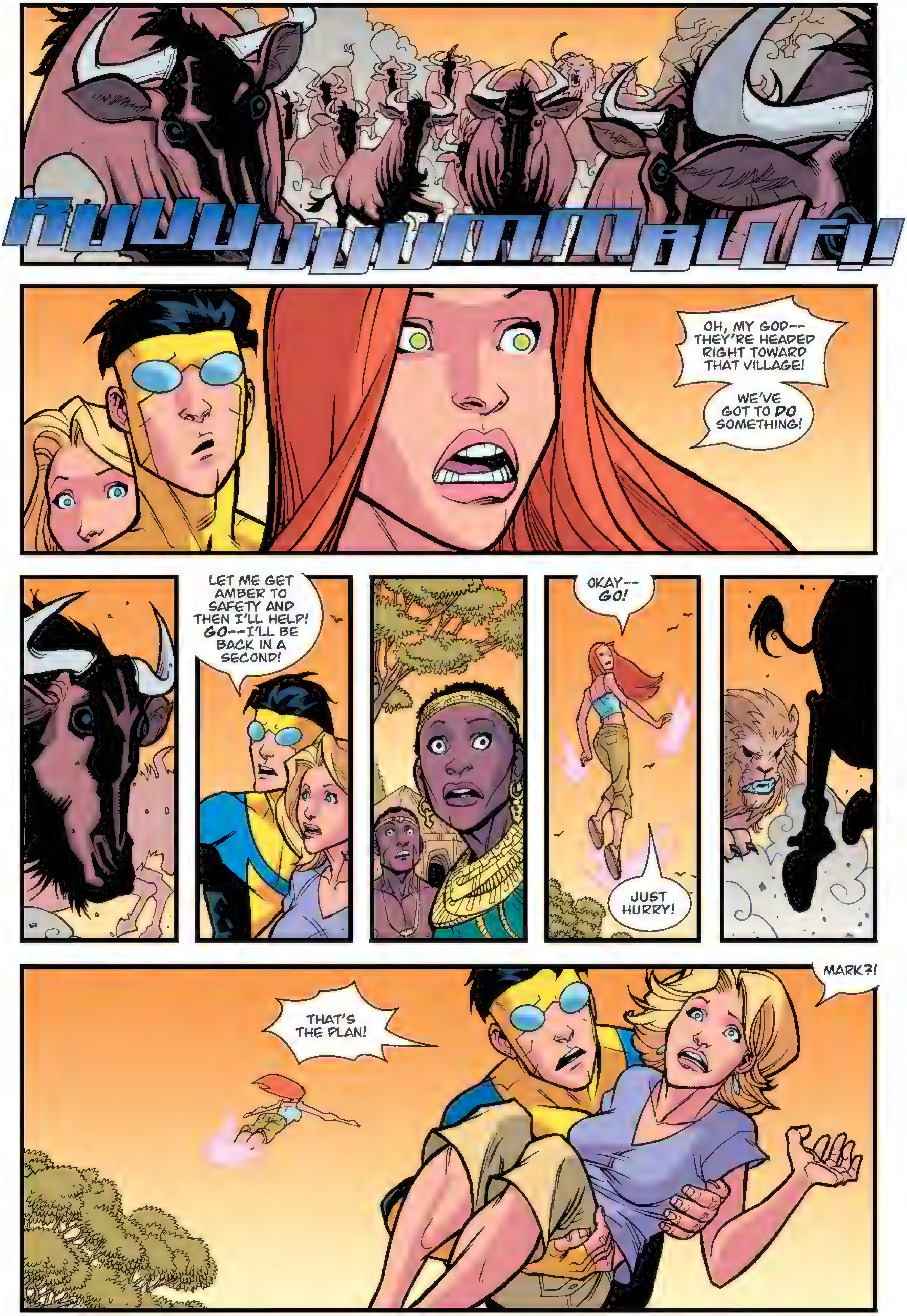

OH, HEY, GUYS! THERE YOU ARE.
NEVER?
YOU'D BE SUPRISED HOW MUCH I CAN RELATE TO THIS LOWLY LITTLE HUMAN GIRL.
GOOD. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
REALLY.
WOW--YOU GUYS GOT UP PRETTY EARLY, HUH? I FEEL LIKE I SLEPT LATE.
YOU GUYS SLEEP OKAY?
YEAH--I WAS UP EXERCISING.
I ALWAYS GET UP THIS EARLY.
THE SUNRISE.
OH, COOL. UM... EXERCISING?
IT'S A NEW THING FOR ME. I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER.
COME ON INSIDE. I'LL MAKE US SOME BREAKFAST.
OH, DON'T DO THAT. I DON'T WANT YOU TO HAVE TO GO TO ANY TROUBLE ON OUR BEHALF.
DON'T WORRY--IT WON'T TAKE A SECOND.

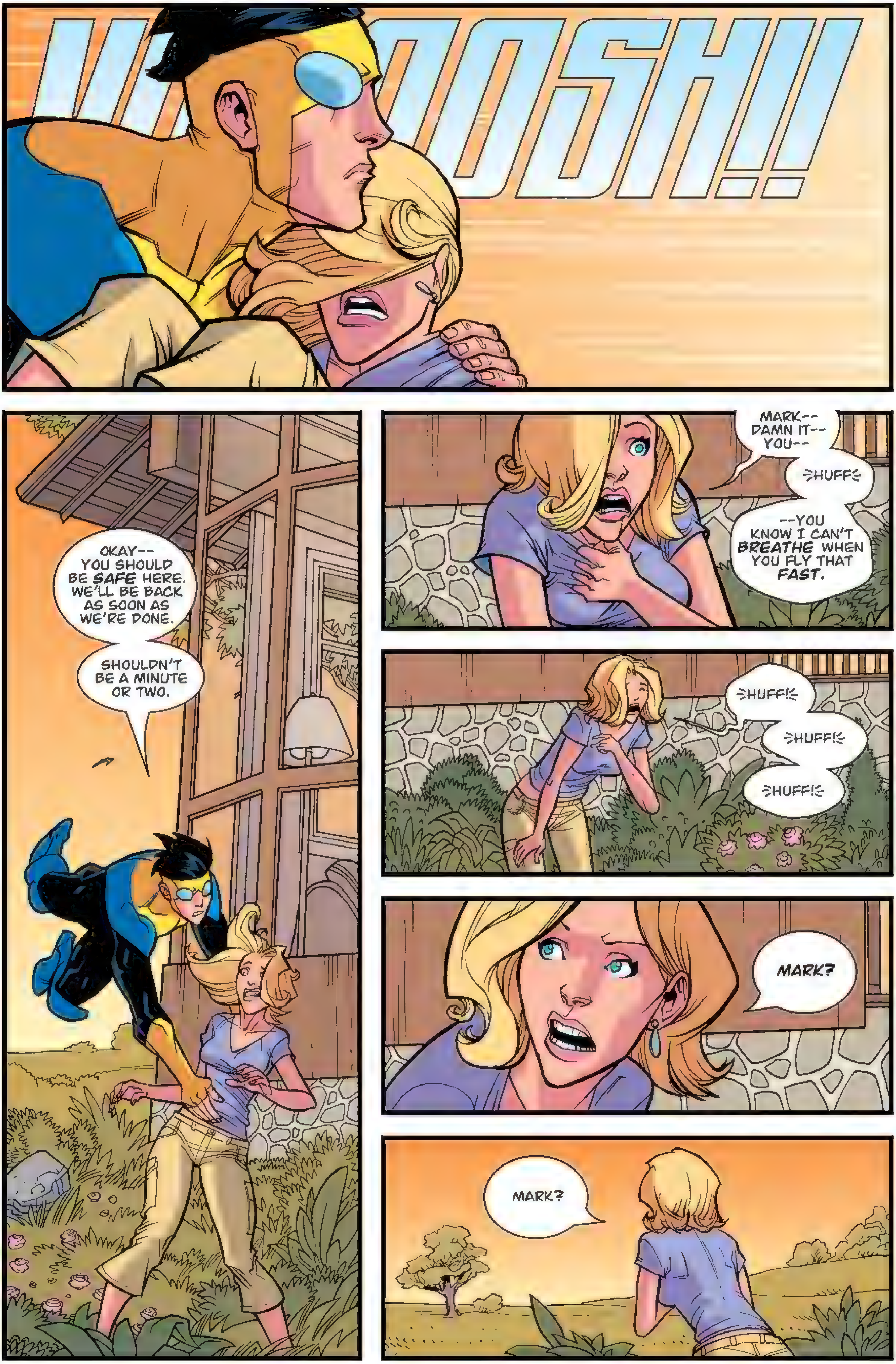
HOUSTON, TEXAS.
WRUDD!
KROKK!!
YOU'LL NEVER--
IRK!
WRAMMM!!
CHOOM!!

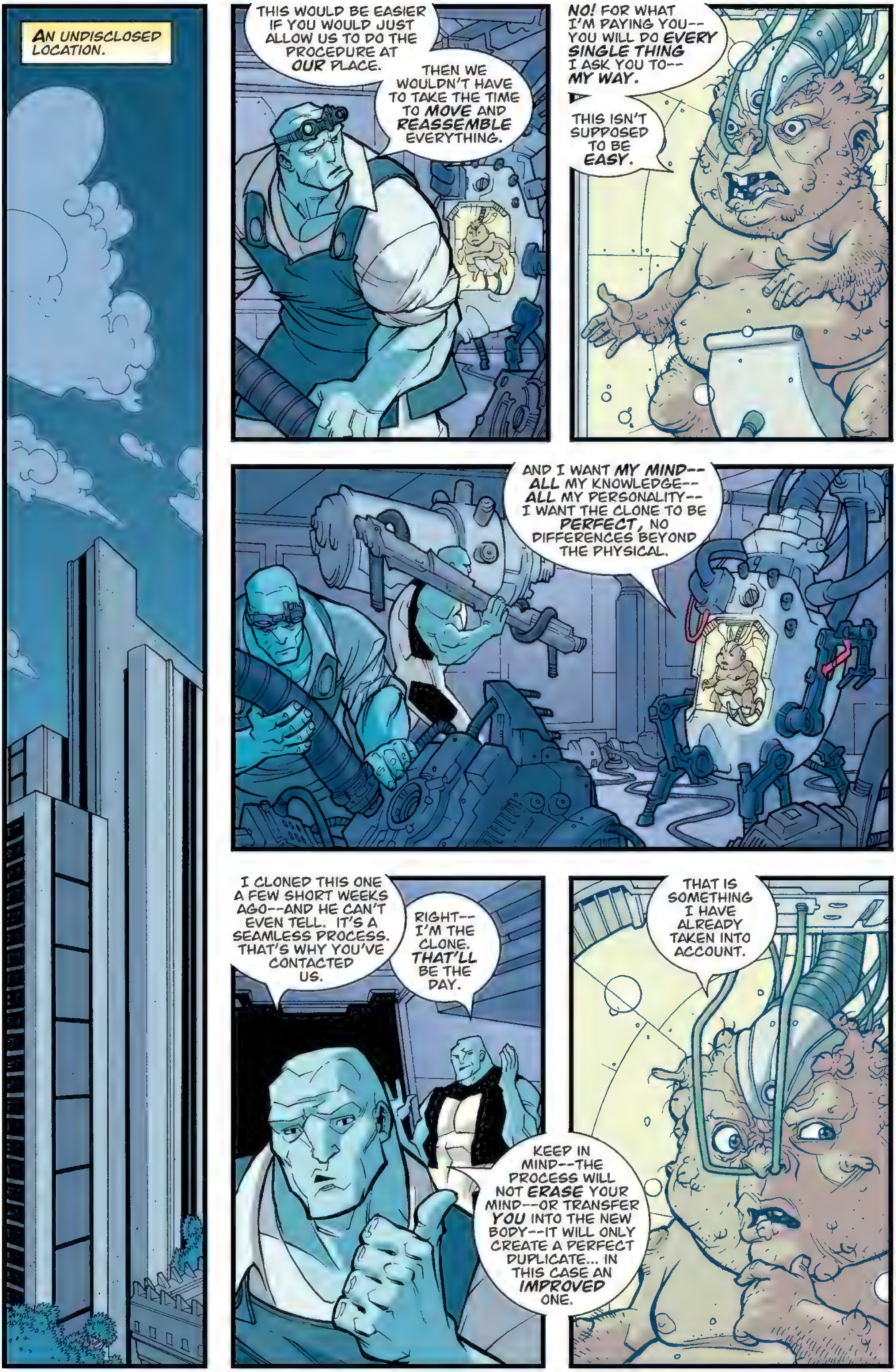
TAKE *THAT*, LIZARD LEAGUE!
I BET YOU'LL THINK *TWICE* BEFORE YOU AGAIN FACE--
THE SHAPESMITH!

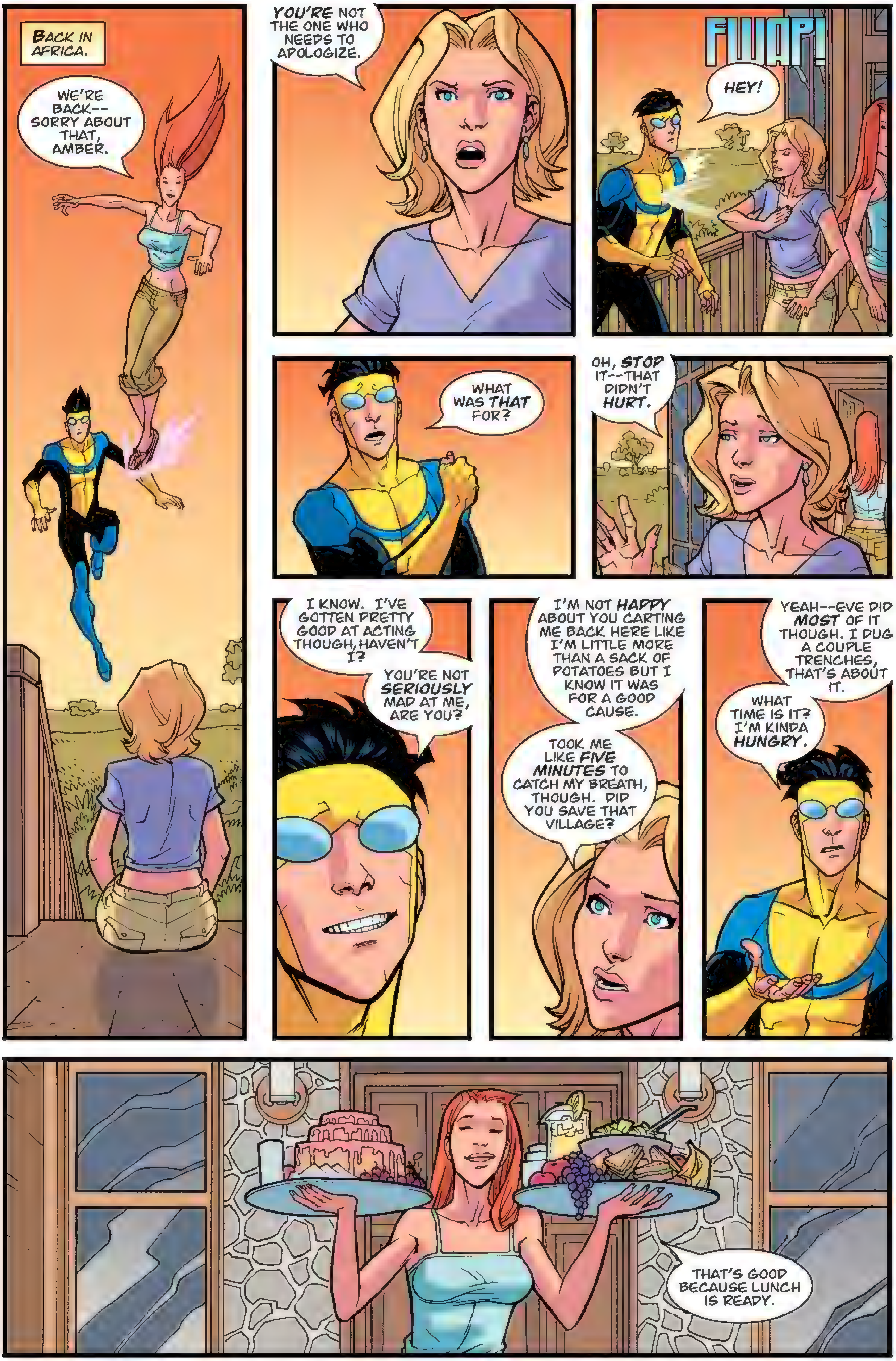

SHAPESMITH?
THAT'S RIGHT. SHAPESMITH.
TELL THE WORLD THERE'S A NEW HERO IN TOWN.
SO, UH... WE JUST LETTING HIM GO?
YEAH-- LOOKS THAT WAY.
TOTALLY COOL!

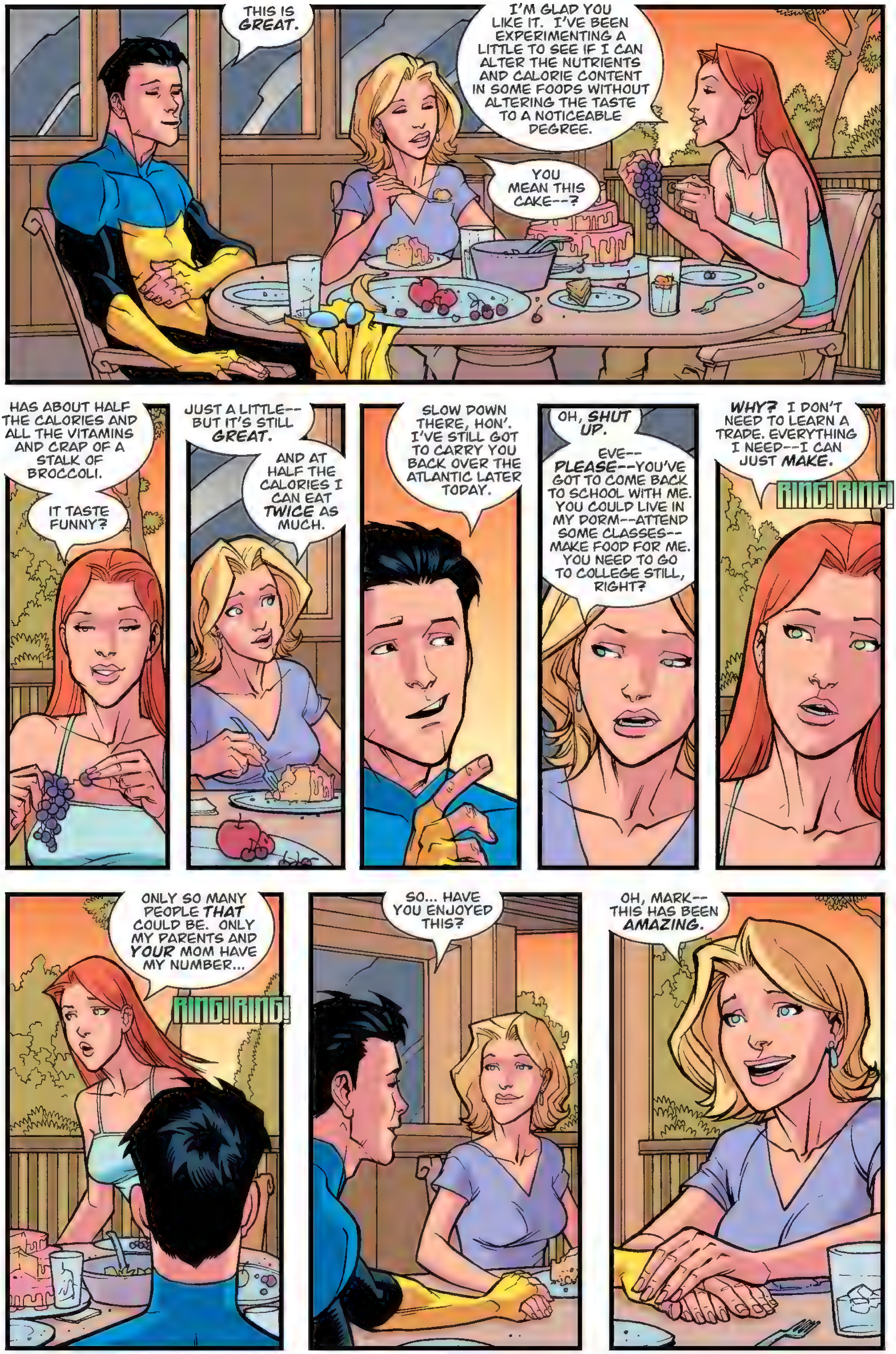

THIS IS SOOOOOO NEAT. I'M SO GLAD WE GOT TO COME OUT HERE. REALLY, EVE-- THANKS FOR INVITING US.
IT'S-- IT'S JUST AMAZING.
YEAH, THIS PLACE IS REALLY COOL. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE COME BACK HERE REAL SOON.
YOU GUYS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE, ANY TIME YOU WANT, REALLY.
I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL BRIDGET ALL ABOUT IT.
WELL, YOU CAN'T EXACTLY DO THAT. HOW IN THE HECK ARE YOU GOING TO EXPLAIN GOING TO AFRICA FOR THE WEEKEND?
JEEZ, I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT. OF COURSE I CAN'T TELL HER... OR ANYONE.
IT'LL HAVE TO BE OUR SECRET, THEN.
DO YOU HEAR THAT?
HEAR WHAT?
DESPITE CONTRARY POPULAR BELIEF--I DO NOT HAVE SUPER-HEARING.


RUUUUUUMMMBLLE!!
OH, MY GOD-- THEY'RE HEADED RIGHT TOWARD THAT VILLAGE!
WE'VE GOT TO **DO** SOMETHING!
LET ME GET AMBER TO SAFETY AND THEN I'LL HELP! **GO**--I'LL BE BACK IN A SECOND!
OKAY-- **GO!**
JUST HURRY!
THAT'S THE PLAN!
MARK?!

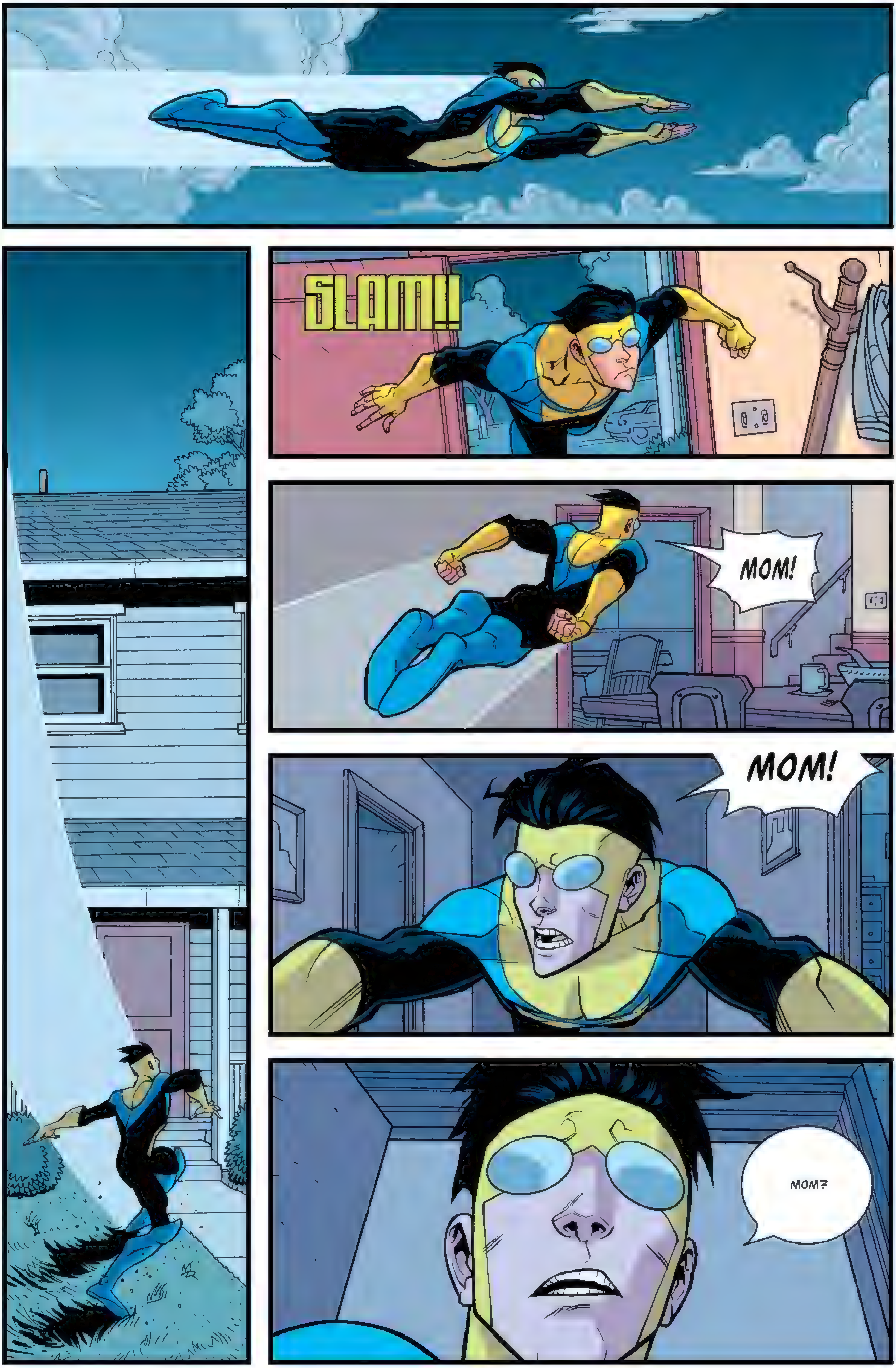

WHOOSH!!
OKAY-- YOU SHOULD BE *SAFE* HERE. WE'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS WE'RE DONE.
SHOULDN'T BE A MINUTE OR TWO.
MARK-- DAMN IT-- YOU--
HUFF
--YOU KNOW I CAN'T *BREATHE* WHEN YOU FLY THAT *FAST.*
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
MARK?
MARK?


AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU WOULD JUST ALLOW US TO DO THE PROCEDURE AT OUR PLACE.
THEN WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO TAKE THE TIME TO MOVE AND REASSEMBLE EVERYTHING.
NO! FOR WHAT I'M PAYING YOU-- YOU WILL DO EVERY SINGLE THING I ASK YOU TO-- MY WAY.
THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE EASY.
AND I WANT MY MIND-- ALL MY KNOWLEDGE-- ALL MY PERSONALITY-- I WANT THE CLONE TO BE PERFECT, NO DIFFERENCES BEYOND THE PHYSICAL.
I CLONED THIS ONE A FEW SHORT WEEKS AGO--AND HE CAN'T EVEN TELL. IT'S A SEAMLESS PROCESS. THAT'S WHY YOU'VE CONTACTED US.
RIGHT-- I'M THE CLONE. THAT'LL BE THE DAY.
KEEP IN MIND--THE PROCESS WILL NOT ERASE YOUR MIND--OR TRANSFER YOU INTO THE NEW BODY--IT WILL ONLY CREATE A PERFECT DUPLICATE... IN THIS CASE AN IMPROVED ONE.
THAT IS SOMETHING I HAVE ALREADY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.


BACK IN AFRICA.
WE'RE BACK--SORRY ABOUT THAT, AMBER.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO APOLOGIZE.
FWAP!
HEY!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
OH, STOP IT--THAT DIDN'T HURT.
I KNOW. I'VE GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD AT ACTING THOUGH, HAVEN'T I?
YOU'RE NOT SERIOUSLY MAD AT ME, ARE YOU?
I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT YOU CARTING ME BACK HERE LIKE I'M LITTLE MORE THAN A SACK OF POTATOES BUT I KNOW IT WAS FOR A GOOD CAUSE.
TOOK ME LIKE FIVE MINUTES TO CATCH MY BREATH, THOUGH. DID YOU SAVE THAT VILLAGE?
YEAH--EVE DID MOST OF IT THOUGH. I DUG A COUPLE TRENCHES, THAT'S ABOUT IT.
WHAT TIME IS IT? I'M KINDA HUNGRY.
THAT'S GOOD BECAUSE LUNCH IS READY.

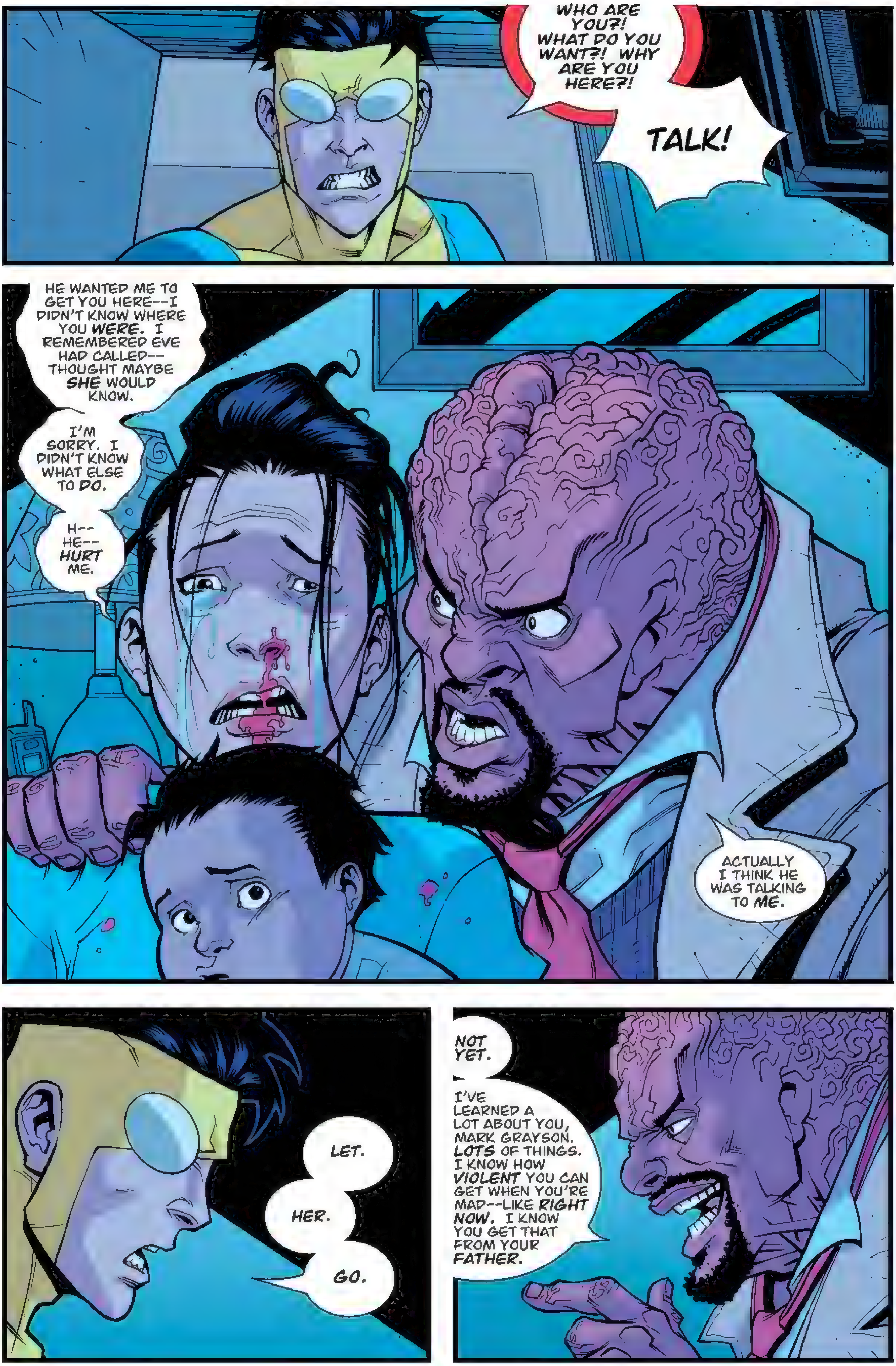

THIS IS GREAT.
I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT. I'VE BEEN EXPERIMENTING A LITTLE TO SEE IF I CAN ALTER THE NUTRIENTS AND CALORIE CONTENT IN SOME FOODS WITHOUT ALTERING THE TASTE TO A NOTICEABLE DEGREE.
YOU MEAN THIS CAKE--?
HAS ABOUT HALF THE CALORIES AND ALL THE VITAMINS AND CRAP OF A STALK OF BROCCOLI.
IT TASTE FUNNY?
JUST A LITTLE-- BUT IT'S STILL GREAT.
AND AT HALF THE CALORIES I CAN EAT TWICE AS MUCH.
SLOW DOWN THERE, HON'. I'VE STILL GOT TO CARRY YOU BACK OVER THE ATLANTIC LATER TODAY.
OH, SHUT UP.
EVE-- PLEASE--YOU'VE GOT TO COME BACK TO SCHOOL WITH ME. YOU COULD LIVE IN MY DORM--ATTEND SOME CLASSES--MAKE FOOD FOR ME. YOU NEED TO GO TO COLLEGE STILL, RIGHT?
WHY? I DON'T NEED TO LEARN A TRADE. EVERYTHING I NEED--I CAN JUST MAKE.
RING! RING!
ONLY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT COULD BE. ONLY MY PARENTS AND YOUR MOM HAVE MY NUMBER...
RING! RING!
SO... HAVE YOU ENJOYED THIS?
OH, MARK-- THIS HAS BEEN AMAZING.

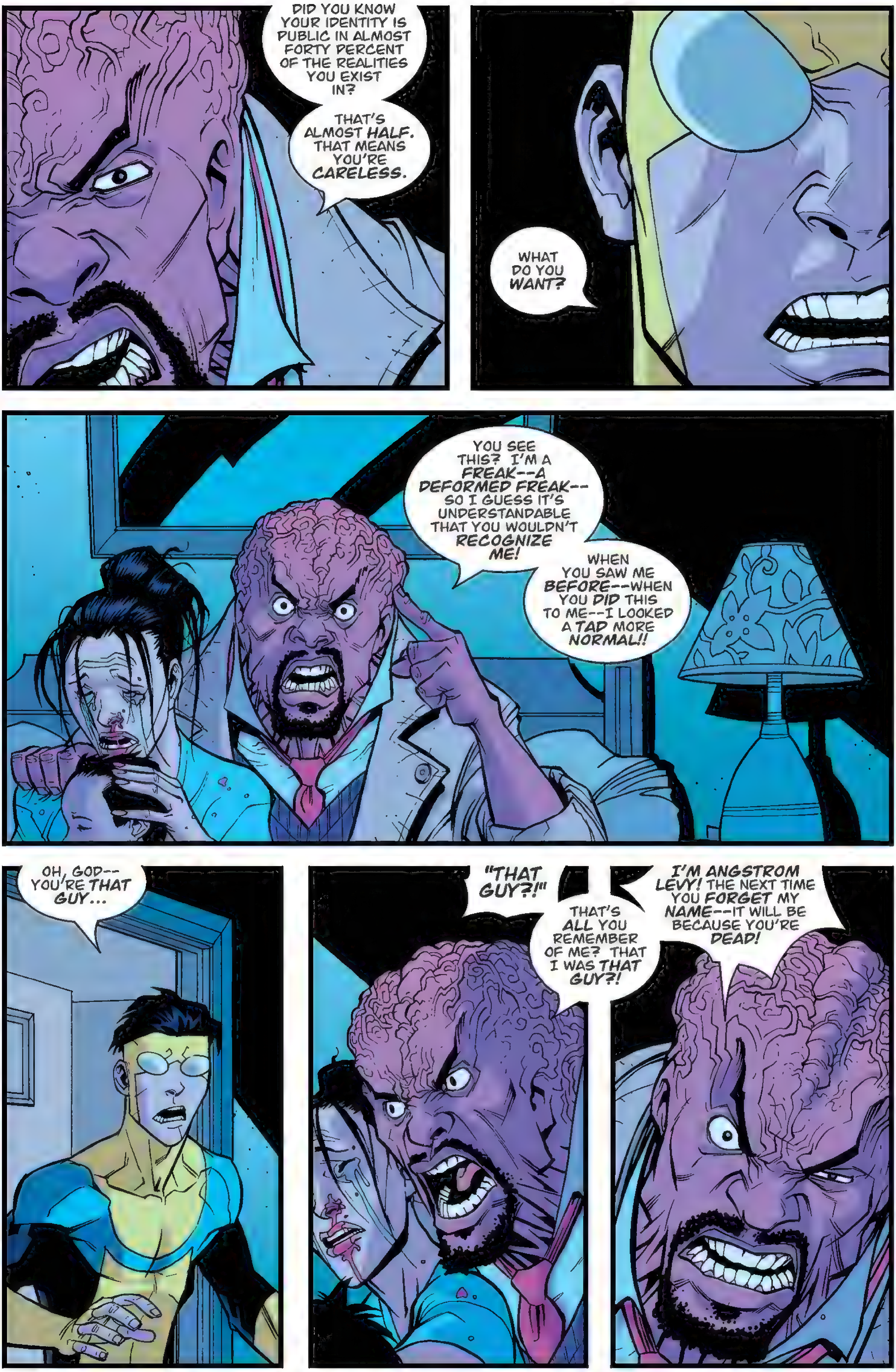
UH, MARK-- IT'S FOR YOU.
IT'S SOME MAN.
THAT'S WEIRD-- IS IT CECIL?
WHO'S CECIL?
HELLO?
YOUR MOTHER WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.
MARK-- HELP--
MOM?
SHE'S IN TROUBLE, MARK. HOW FAST CAN YOU GET HOME?
CLICK.
EVE--CAN YOU GET AMBER HOME TONIGHT?
MARK, WHO WAS THAT?
WHAT'S GOING ON? I MEAN, I COULDN'T DO IT AS FAST AS YOU BUT YEAH, I--
VOOSH


SLAM!!
MOM!
MOM!
MOM?

WELCOME HOME, MARK GRAYSON.
I'M IMPRESSED. YOU MADE GOOD TIME.

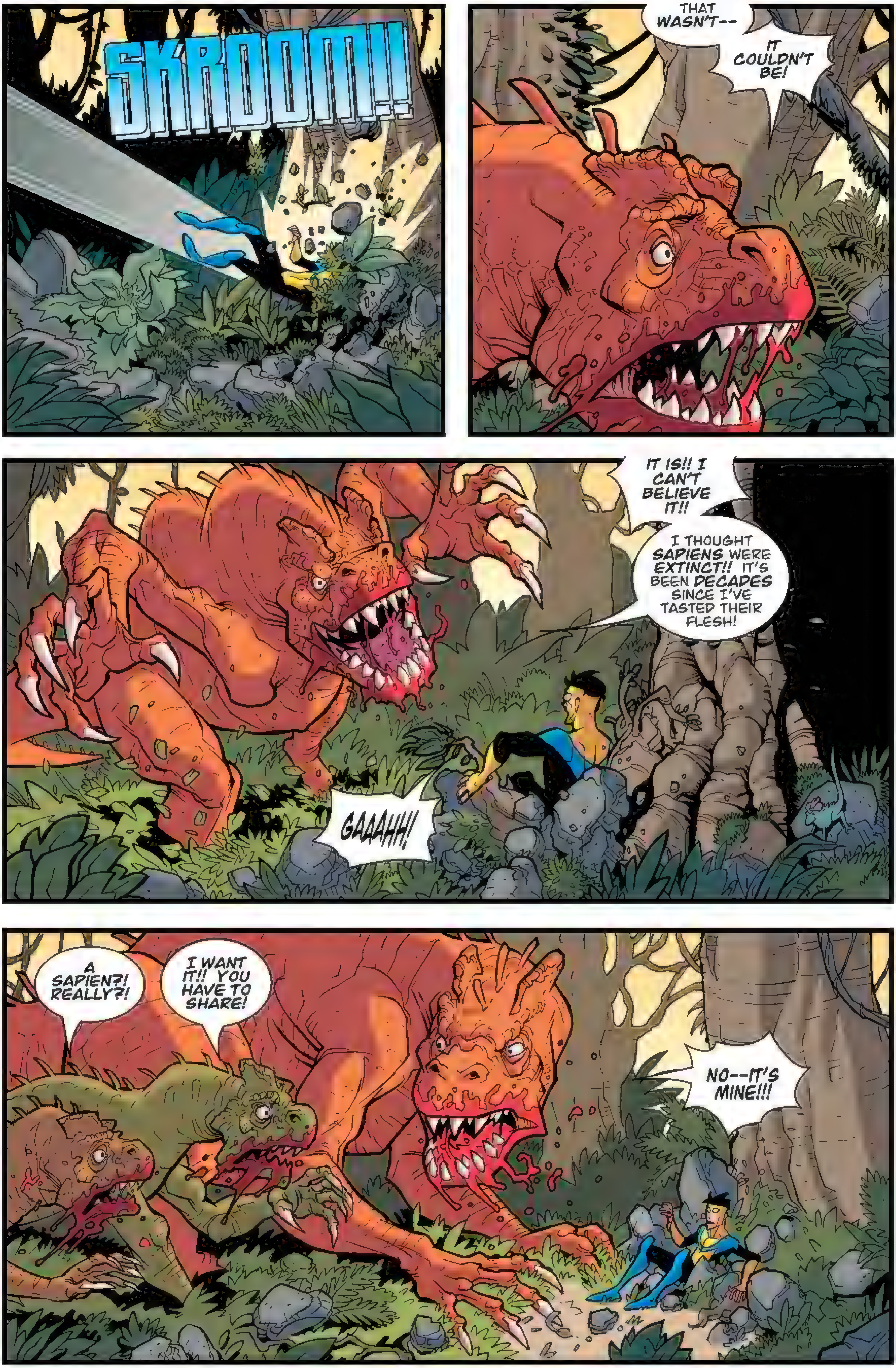
ISSUE THIRTY-THREE

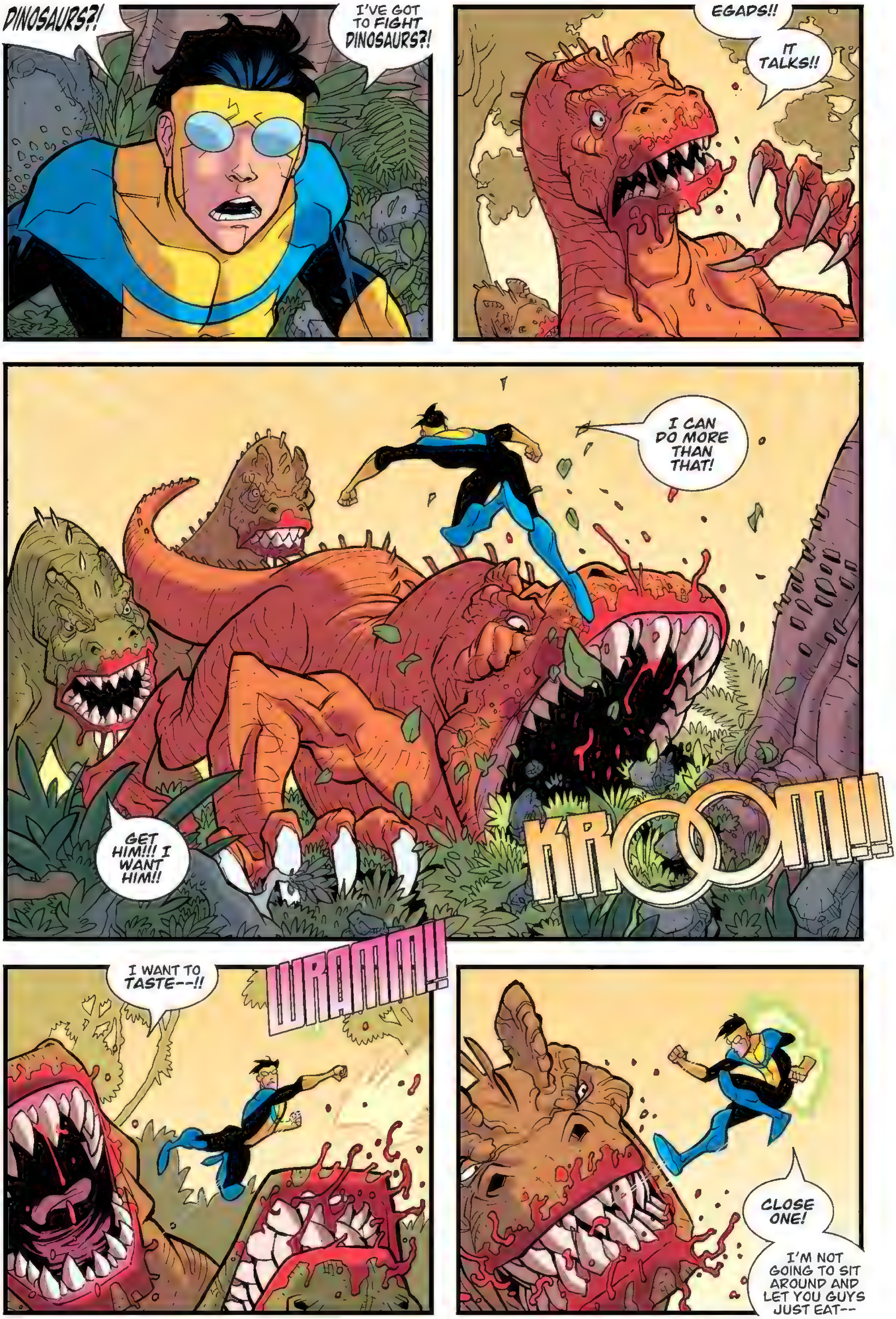

WHO ARE YOU?! WHAT DO YOU WANT?! WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
TALK!
HE WANTED ME TO GET YOU HERE--I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE. I REMEMBERED EVE HAD CALLED--THOUGHT MAYBE SHE WOULD KNOW.
I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.
H--HE--HURT ME.
ACTUALLY I THINK HE WAS TALKING TO ME.
LET.
HER.
GO.
NOT YET.
I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT YOU, MARK GRAYSON. LOTS OF THINGS. I KNOW HOW VIOLENT YOU CAN GET WHEN YOU'RE MAD--LIKE RIGHT NOW. I KNOW YOU GET THAT FROM YOUR FATHER.

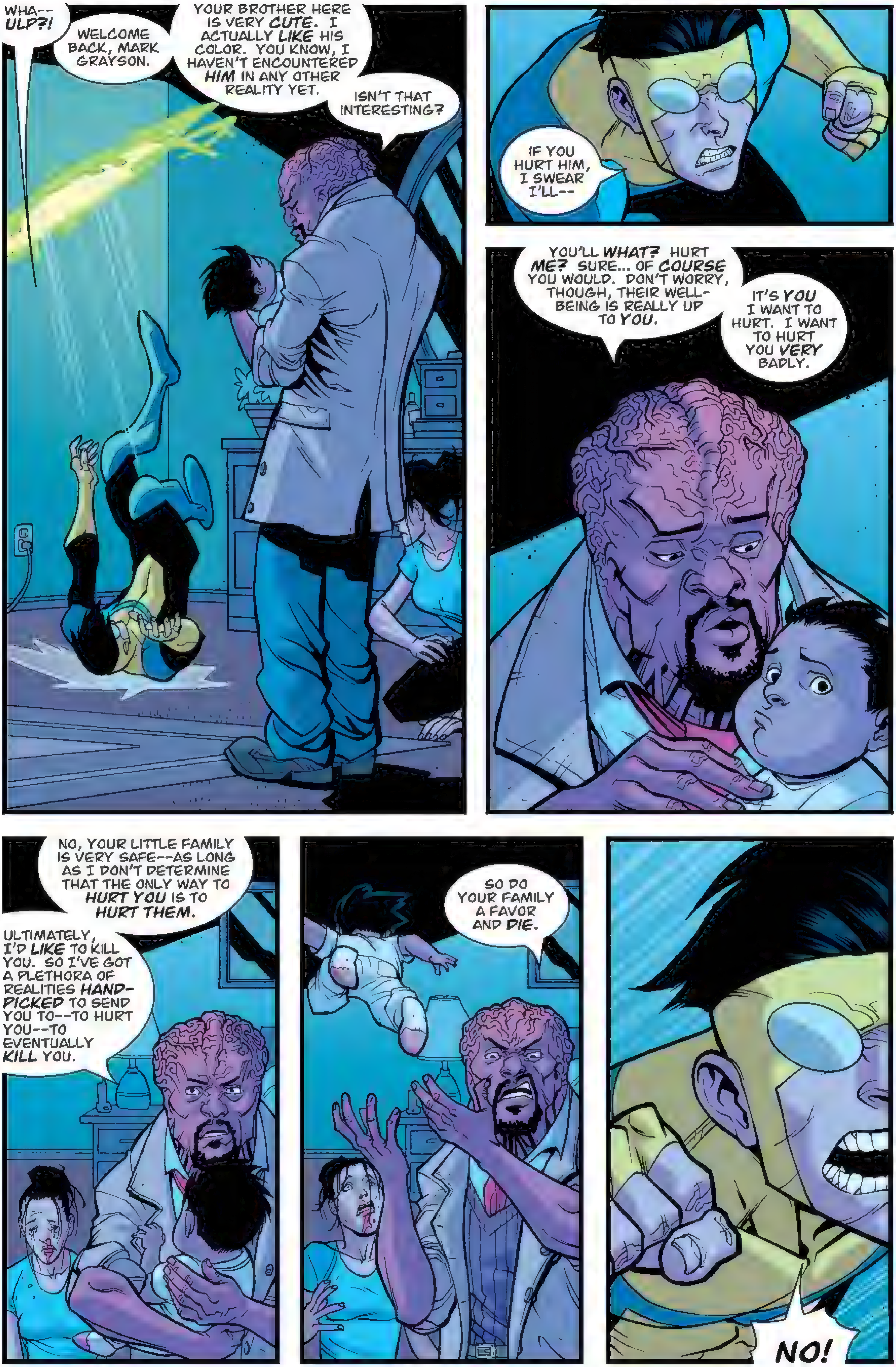

DID YOU KNOW YOUR IDENTITY IS PUBLIC IN ALMOST FORTY PERCENT OF THE REALITIES YOU EXIST IN?
THAT'S ALMOST HALF. THAT MEANS YOU'RE CARELESS.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU SEE THIS? I'M A FREAK--A DEFORMED FREAK--SO I GUESS IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT YOU WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE ME!
WHEN YOU SAW ME BEFORE--WHEN YOU DID THIS TO ME--I LOOKED A TAD MORE NORMAL!!
OH, GOD--YOU'RE THAT GUY...
"THAT GUY?!"
THAT'S ALL YOU REMEMBER OF ME? THAT I WAS THAT GUY?!
I'M ANGSTROM LEVY! THE NEXT TIME YOU FORGET MY NAME--IT WILL BE BECAUSE YOU'RE DEAD!

I HAD A GIFT--I WAS JUST TRYING TO IMPROVE IT. I WAS JUST COPYING THE MEMORIES FROM MY COUNTERPARTS FROM OTHER REALITIES. YOU HAD TO HALT THAT PROCESS--YOU CAUSED THE MACHINE TO OVERLOAD-- TO EXPLODE!
I WAS CRUSHED! I HAD INTERNAL ORGAN DAMAGE! I HAD TO FIND A REALITY WITH THE BEST SURGEONS TO REBUILD MY BODY!
WRAMM!!
BECAUSE OF YOU!
THE GREATEST MINDS IN A DOZEN REALITIES COULDN'T FIND A WAY TO FIX MY BRAIN! I WILL ALWAYS BE A FREAK!
MOM!
THAT'S IT--I'M RIGHT HERE!
COME AND GET ME!
THAT'S IT!

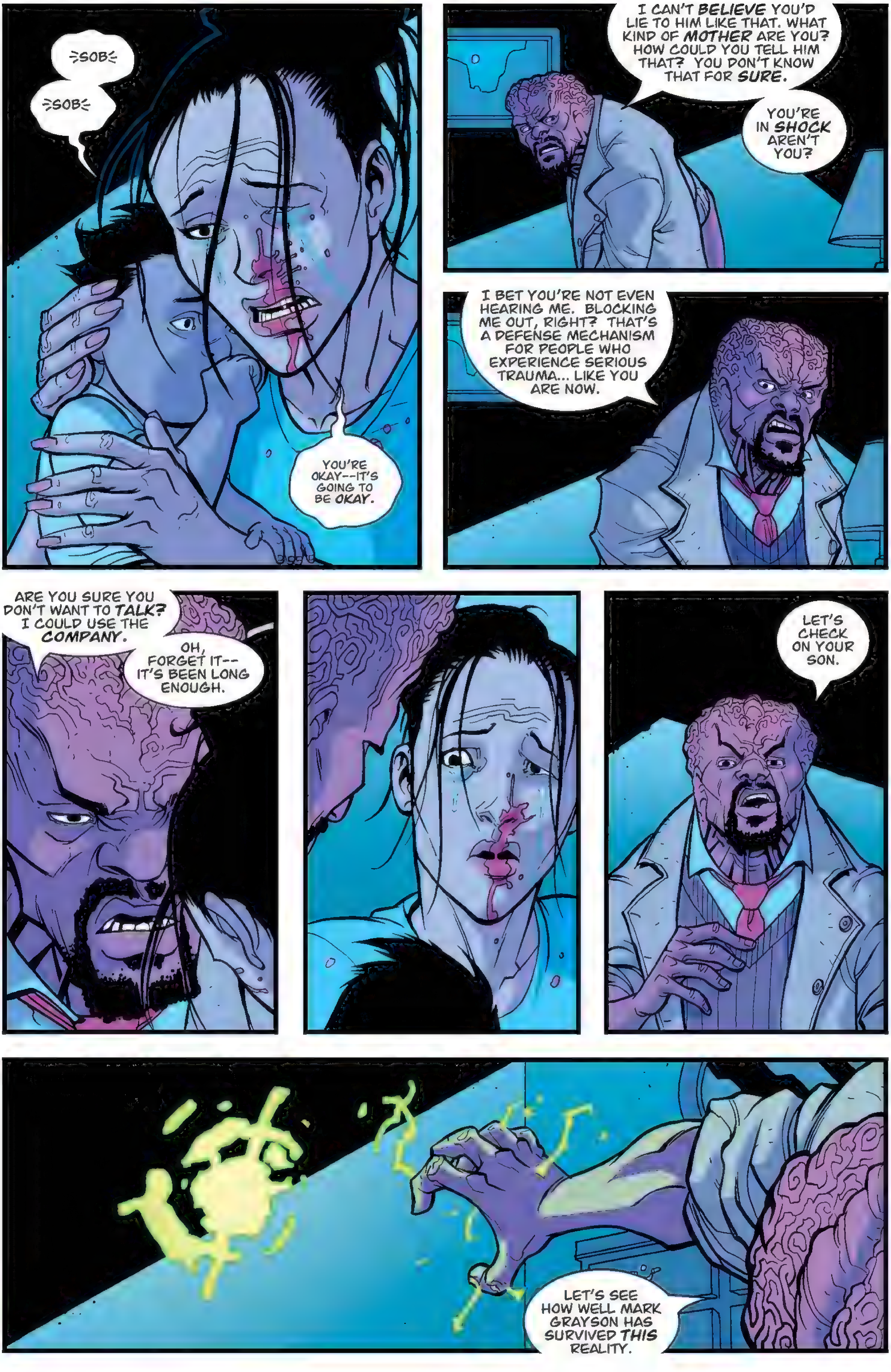
WHOA!!

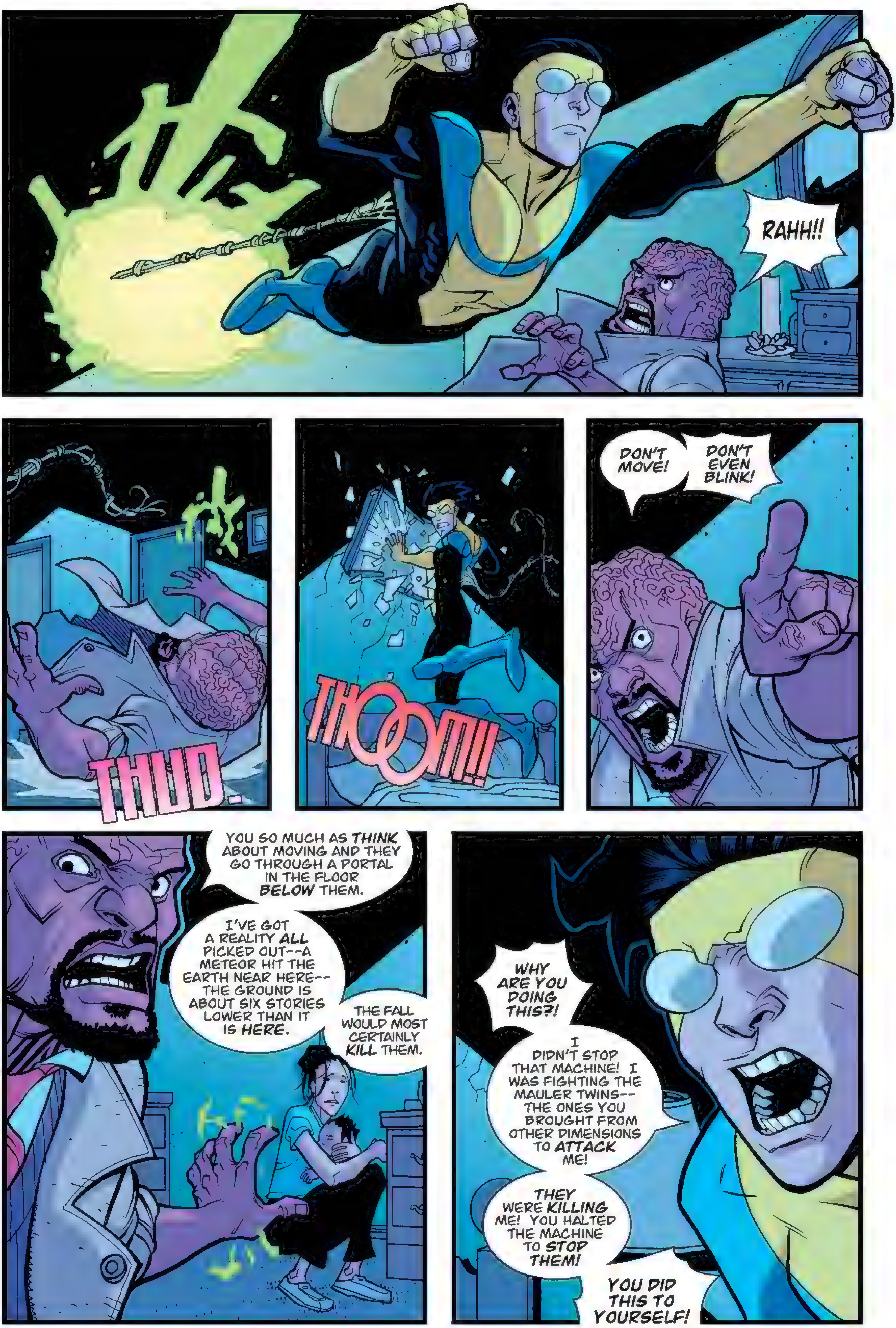

SKROOM!!
THAT WASN'T--
IT COULDN'T BE!
IT IS!! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!
I THOUGHT SAPIENS WERE EXTINCT!! IT'S BEEN DECADES SINCE I'VE TASTED THEIR FLESH!
GAAAHH!
A SAPIEN?! REALLY?!
I WANT IT!! YOU HAVE TO SHARE!
NO--IT'S MINE!!!


DINOSAURS?!
I'VE GOT TO FIGHT DINOSAURS?!
EGADS!!
IT TALKS!!
I CAN DO MORE THAN THAT!
GET HIM!!! I WANT HIM!!
KROOM!!
I WANT TO TASTE--!!
WRAMM!!
CLOSE ONE!
I'M NOT GOING TO SIT AROUND AND LET YOU GUYS JUST EAT--

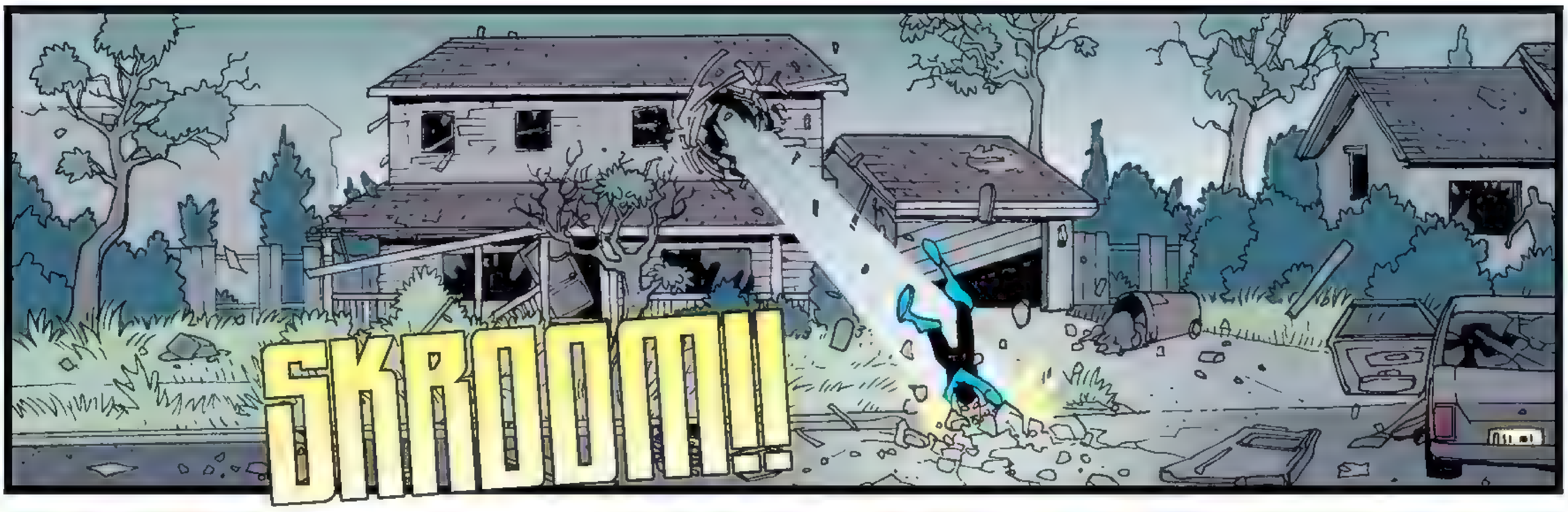

WHA--
ULP?!
WELCOME BACK, MARK GRAYSON.
YOUR BROTHER HERE IS VERY CUTE. I ACTUALLY LIKE HIS COLOR. YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T ENCOUNTERED HIM IN ANY OTHER REALITY YET.
ISN'T THAT INTERESTING?
IF YOU HURT HIM, I SWEAR I'LL--
YOU'LL WHAT? HURT ME? SURE... OF COURSE YOU WOULD. DON'T WORRY, THOUGH, THEIR WELL-BEING IS REALLY UP TO YOU.
IT'S YOU I WANT TO HURT. I WANT TO HURT YOU VERY BADLY.
NO, YOUR LITTLE FAMILY IS VERY SAFE--AS LONG AS I DON'T DETERMINE THAT THE ONLY WAY TO HURT YOU IS TO HURT THEM.
ULTIMATELY, I'D LIKE TO KILL YOU. SO I'VE GOT A PLETHORA OF REALITIES HAND-PICKED TO SEND YOU TO--TO HURT YOU--TO EVENTUALLY KILL YOU.
SO DO YOUR FAMILY A FAVOR AND DIE.
NO!

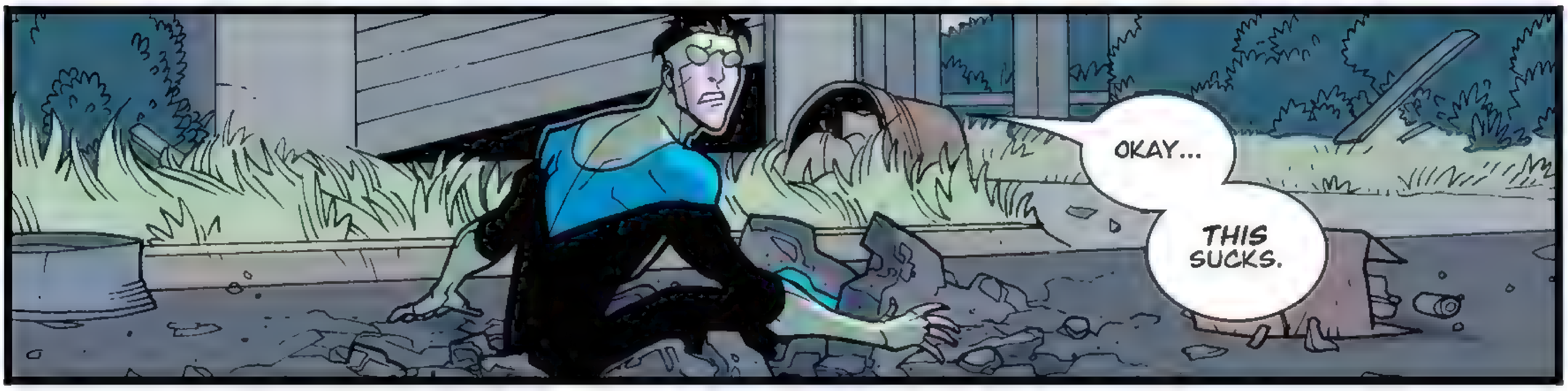
WRAMM!!
WHOA!
ONLY
CRA-SHOOM!
ARE YOU OKAY? I'M REALLY SORRY--I'M NOT FROM THIS DIMENSION, I--UH--WAS FIGHTING THIS ONE GUY AND--IT'S A LONG STORY--
I DIDN'T HURT YOU DID I?

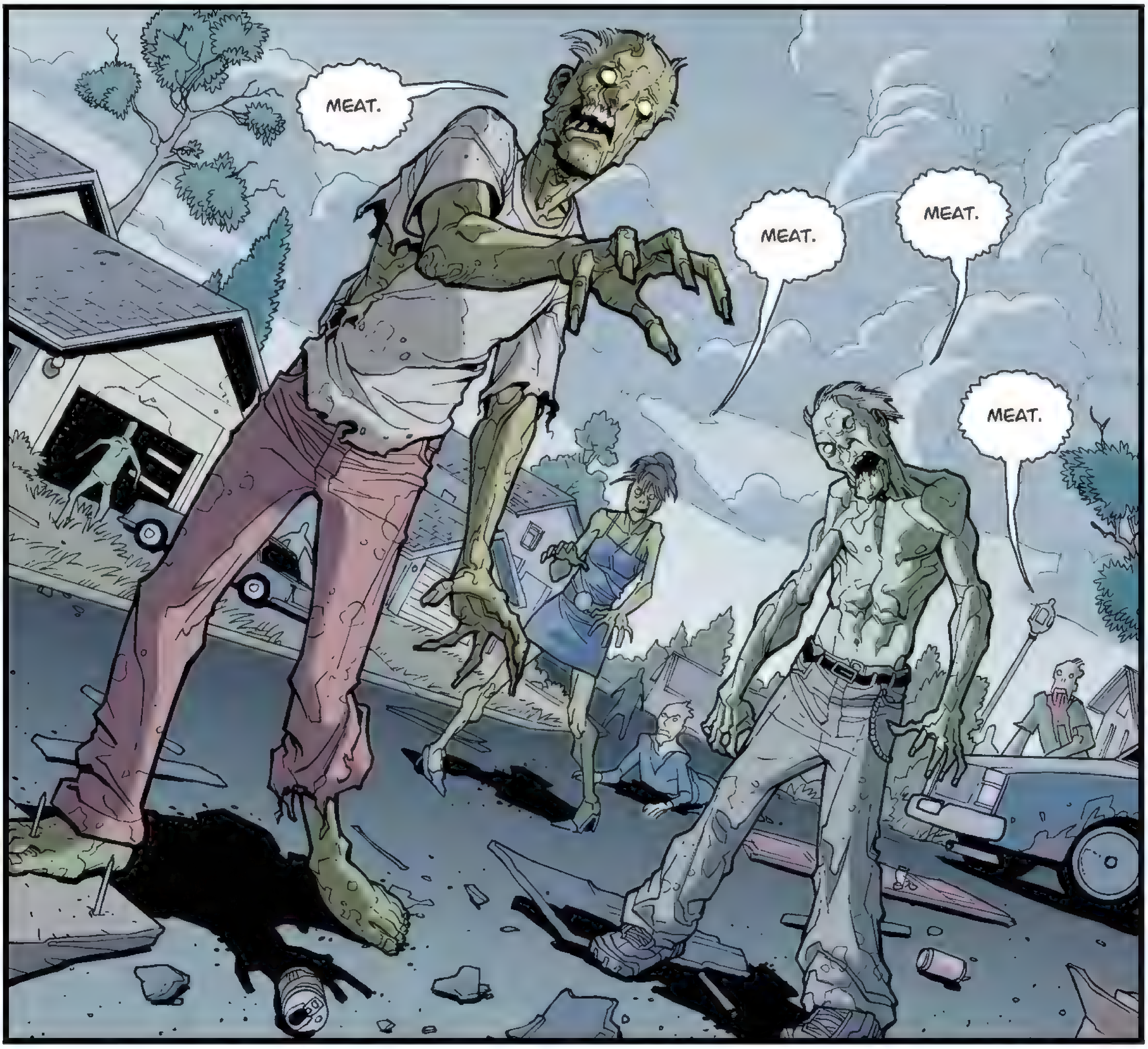

≶SOB≶
≶SOB≶
YOU'RE OKAY--IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D LIE TO HIM LIKE THAT. WHAT KIND OF MOTHER ARE YOU? HOW COULD YOU TELL HIM THAT? YOU DON'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE.
YOU'RE IN SHOCK AREN'T YOU?
I BET YOU'RE NOT EVEN HEARING ME. BLOCKING ME OUT, RIGHT? THAT'S A DEFENSE MECHANISM FOR PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE SERIOUS TRAUMA... LIKE YOU ARE NOW.
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK? I COULD USE THE COMPANY.
OH, FORGET IT-- IT'S BEEN LONG ENOUGH.
LET'S CHECK ON YOUR SON.
LET'S SEE HOW WELL MARK GRAYSON HAS SURVIVED THIS REALITY.

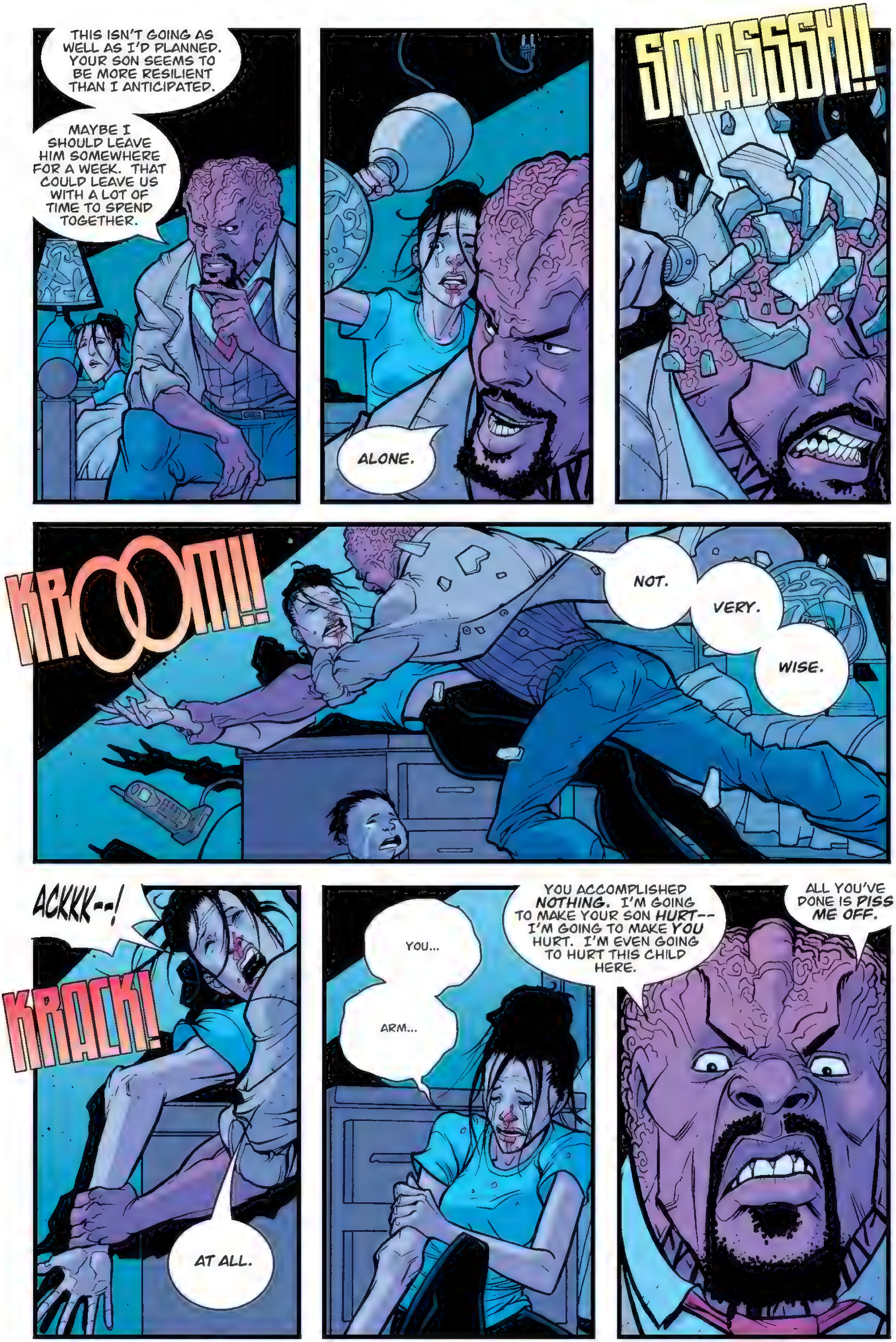

RAHH!!
THUD.
THOOM!!
DON'T MOVE!
DON'T EVEN BLINK!
YOU SO MUCH AS THINK ABOUT MOVING AND THEY GO THROUGH A PORTAL IN THE FLOOR BELOW THEM.
I'VE GOT A REALITY ALL PICKED OUT--A METEOR HIT THE EARTH NEAR HERE--THE GROUND IS ABOUT SIX STORIES LOWER THAN IT IS HERE.
THE FALL WOULD MOST CERTAINLY KILL THEM.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!
I DIDN'T STOP THAT MACHINE! I WAS FIGHTING THE MAULER TWINS--THE ONES YOU BROUGHT FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS TO ATTACK ME!
THEY WERE KILLING ME! YOU HALTED THE MACHINE TO STOP THEM!
YOU DID THIS TO YOURSELF!

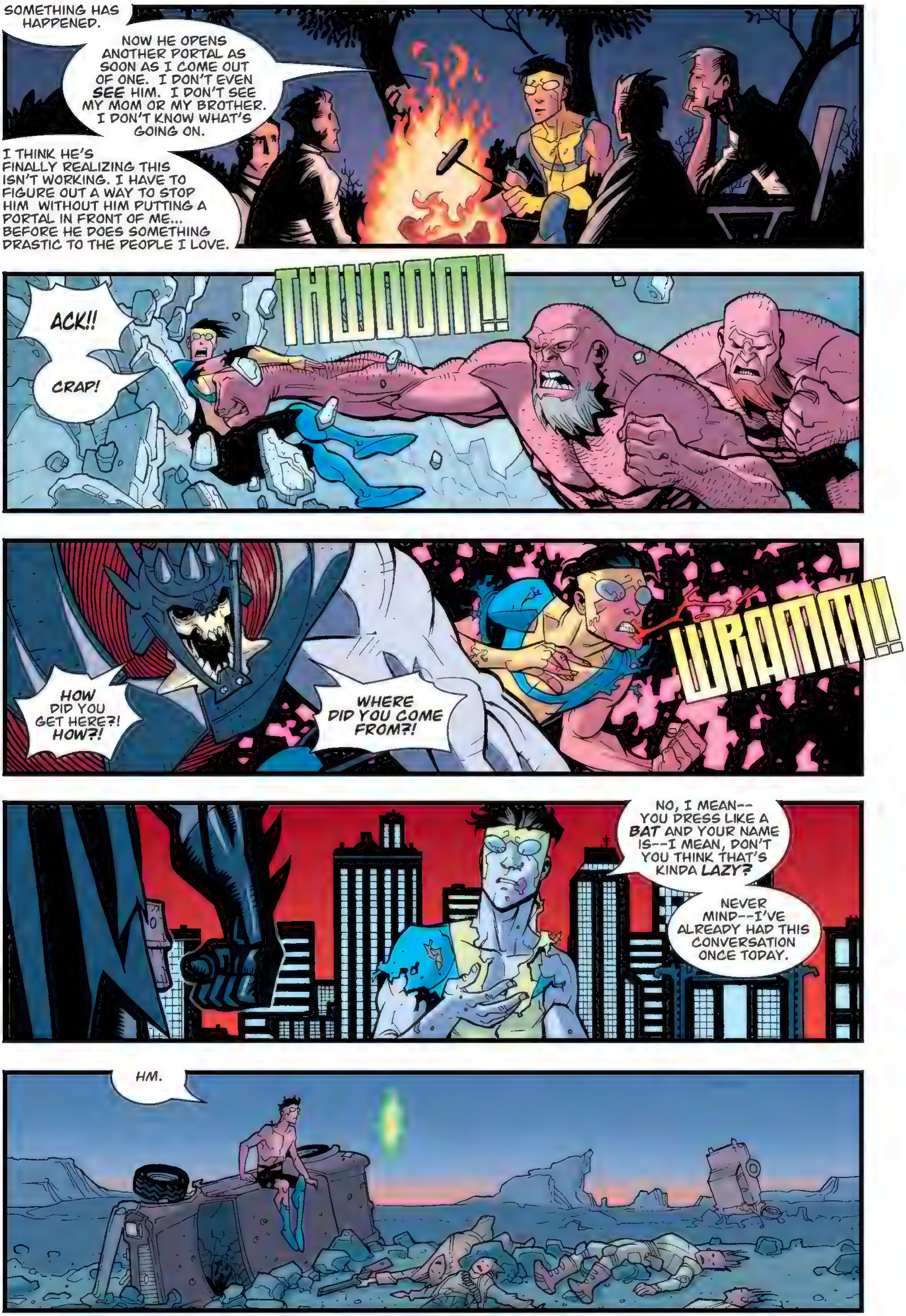
HOW DARE YOU! I HAVE LONGED FOR YOUR DEATH FOR MONTHS. I WOULD NEVER HAVE INTERFERED WITH AN ATTEMPT ON YOUR LIFE.
YOU NEED TO PREPARE A BETTER LIE!
FINE! YOU'RE CRAZY! I GET IT!
JUST LET THEM GO. LET THEM GO AND I'LL LET YOU TRY TO HURT ME. I'LL SURRENDER, JUST TAKE US SOMEWHERE THEY'RE NOT IN DANGER.
WHAT WOULD BE THE FUN IN THAT?
THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'M PROBABLY GOING TO KILL THEM ANYWAY. I'M GOING TO JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE TOO TIRED TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT--THEN I'LL MAKE YOU WATCH.
THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'VE HAD TIME TO ALLOW MY HATRED FOR YOU TO GROW AND GROW IT HAS. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH I'M GOING TO ENJOY WATCHING YOU SUFFER.
I THINK AFTER I'M DONE I'M GOING TO GO THROUGH EVERY REALITY YOU EXIST IN AND DO IT AGAIN--AND AGAIN--AND AGAIN... UNTIL I'M JUST TOO OLD.
YOU SO MUCH AS ACT LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO HURT THEM AND I'LL--
THIS IS TOO EASY.

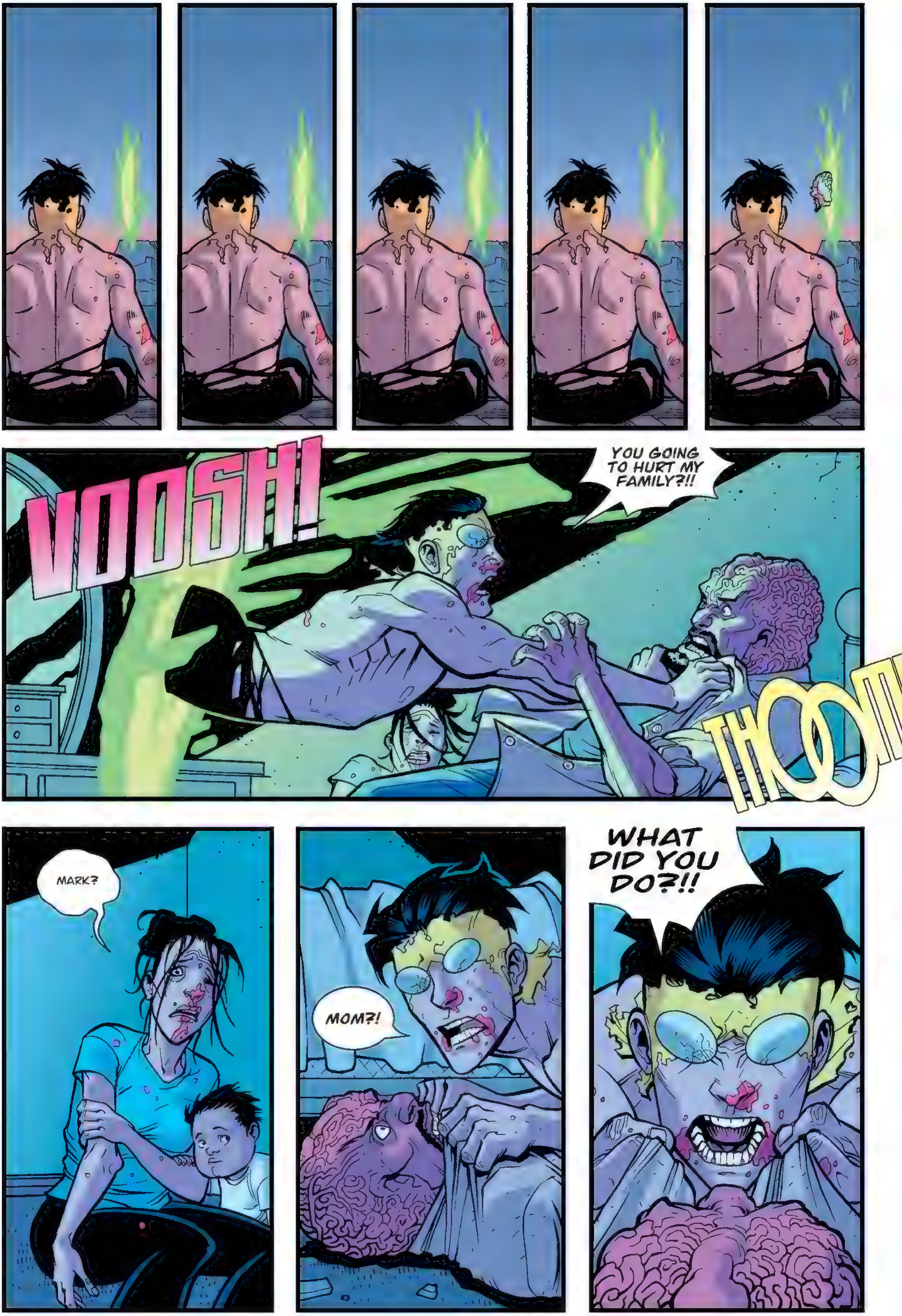

SKROOM!!

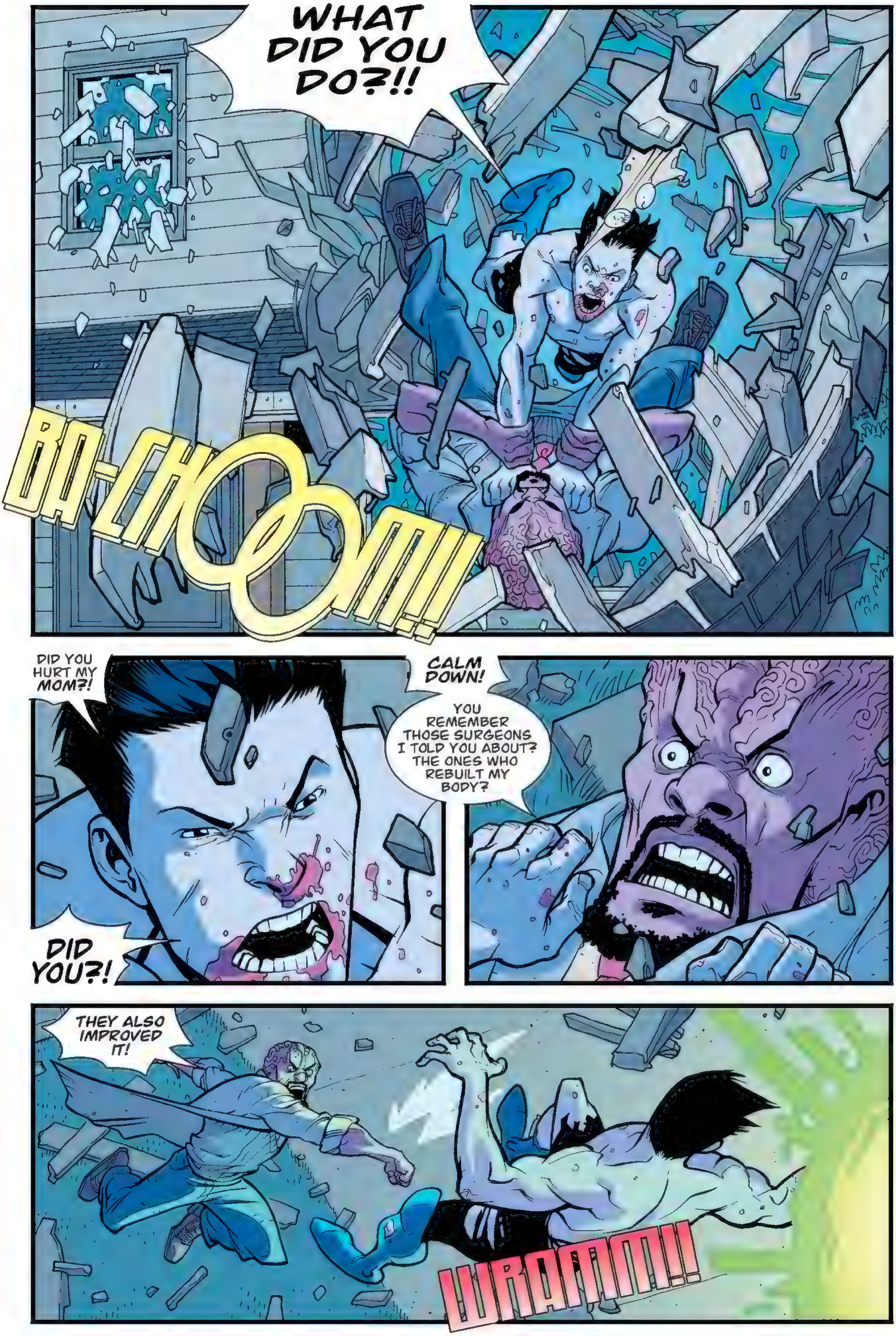

OKAY...
THIS SUCKS.


MEAT.
MEAT.
MEAT.
MEAT.

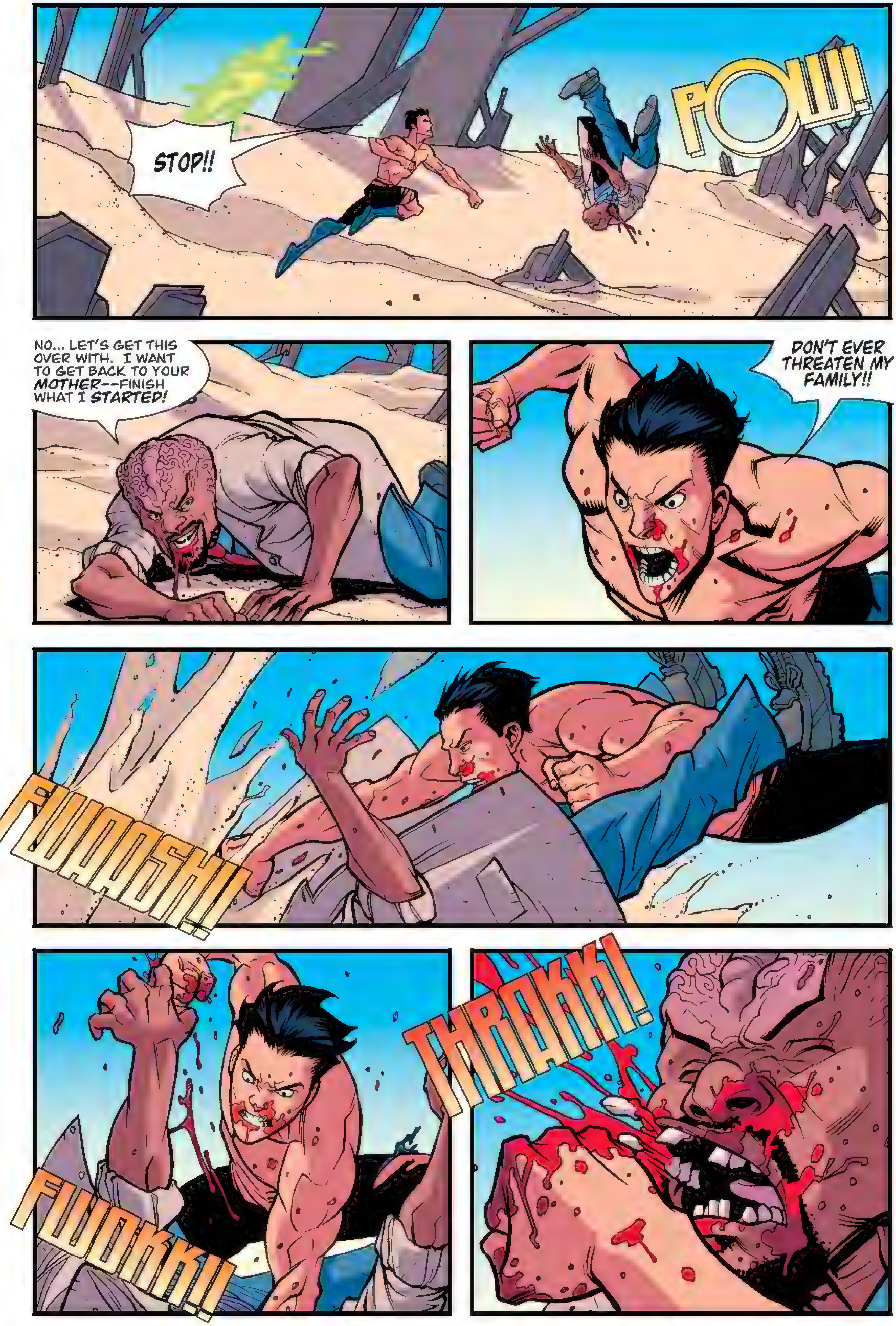

THIS ISN'T GOING AS WELL AS I'D PLANNED. YOUR SON SEEMS TO BE MORE RESILIENT THAN I ANTICIPATED.
MAYBE I SHOULD LEAVE HIM SOMEWHERE FOR A WEEK. THAT COULD LEAVE US WITH A LOT OF TIME TO SPEND TOGETHER.
ALONE.
SMASSSH!!
KROOOM!!
NOT.
VERY.
WISE.
ACKKK--!
KRACK!
AT ALL.
YOU...
ARM...
YOU ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOUR SON HURT-- I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HURT. I'M EVEN GOING TO HURT THIS CHILD HERE.
ALL YOU'VE DONE IS PISS ME OFF.

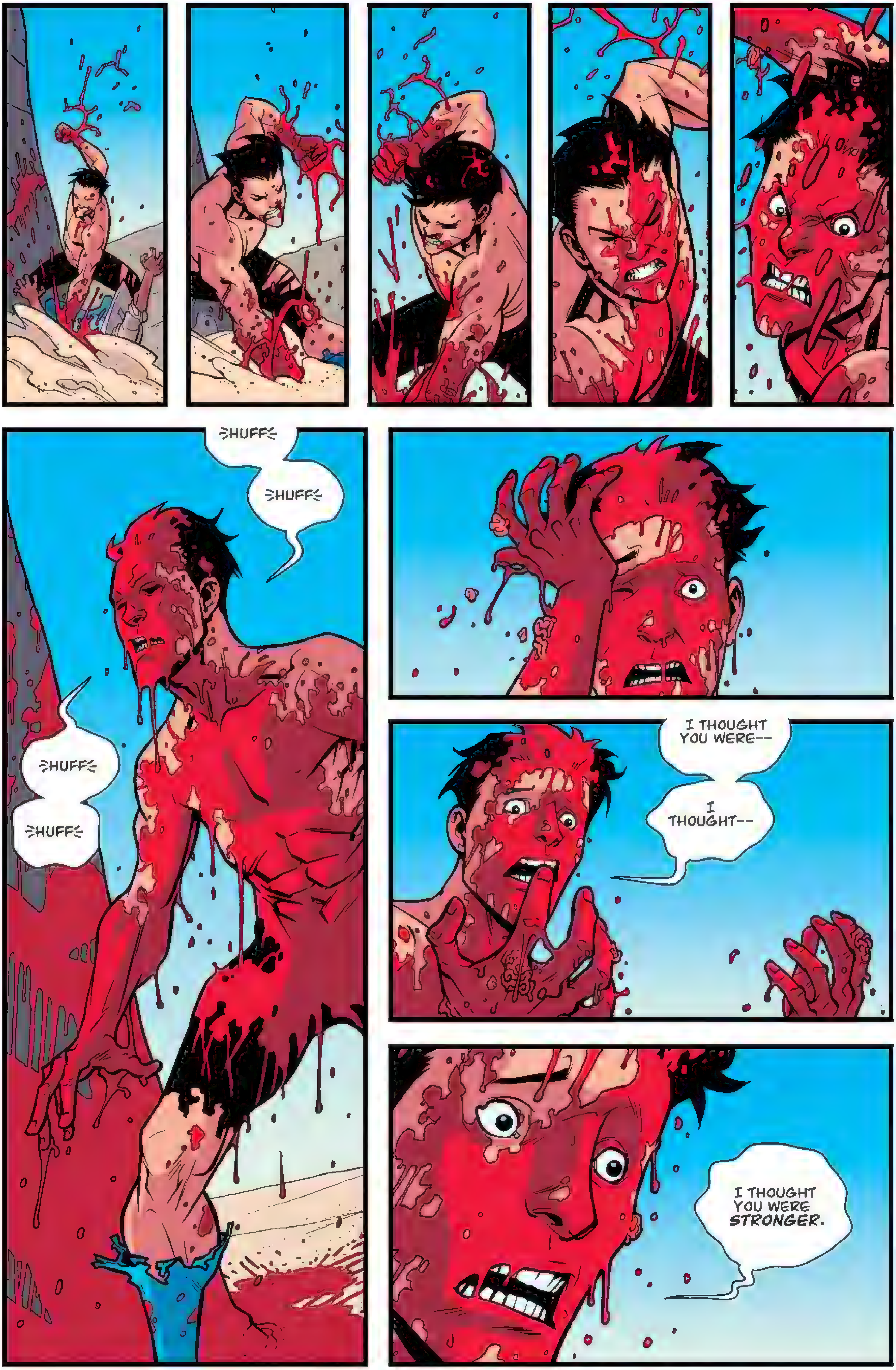

SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED.
NOW HE OPENS ANOTHER PORTAL AS SOON AS I COME OUT OF ONE. I DON'T EVEN **SEE** HIM. I DON'T SEE MY MOM OR MY BROTHER. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
I THINK HE'S FINALLY REALIZING THIS ISN'T WORKING. I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO STOP HIM WITHOUT HIM PUTTING A PORTAL IN FRONT OF ME... BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING DRASTIC TO THE PEOPLE I LOVE.
THWOOM!!
ACK!!
CRAP!
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?! HOW?!
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?!
WRAMM!!
NO, I MEAN-- YOU DRESS LIKE A ***BAT*** AND YOUR NAME IS--I MEAN, DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S KINDA ***LAZY?***
NEVER MIND--I'VE ALREADY HAD THIS CONVERSATION ONCE TODAY.
HM.


VOOSH!
YOU GOING TO HURT MY FAMILY?!!
THOOM
MARK?
MOM?!
WHAT DID YOU DO?!!


WHAT DID YOU DO?!!
BA-CHOOOM!!
DID YOU HURT MY MOM?!
DID YOU?!
CALM DOWN!
YOU REMEMBER THOSE SURGEONS I TOLD YOU ABOUT? THE ONES WHO REBUILT MY BODY?
THEY ALSO IMPROVED IT!
WRAMM!!

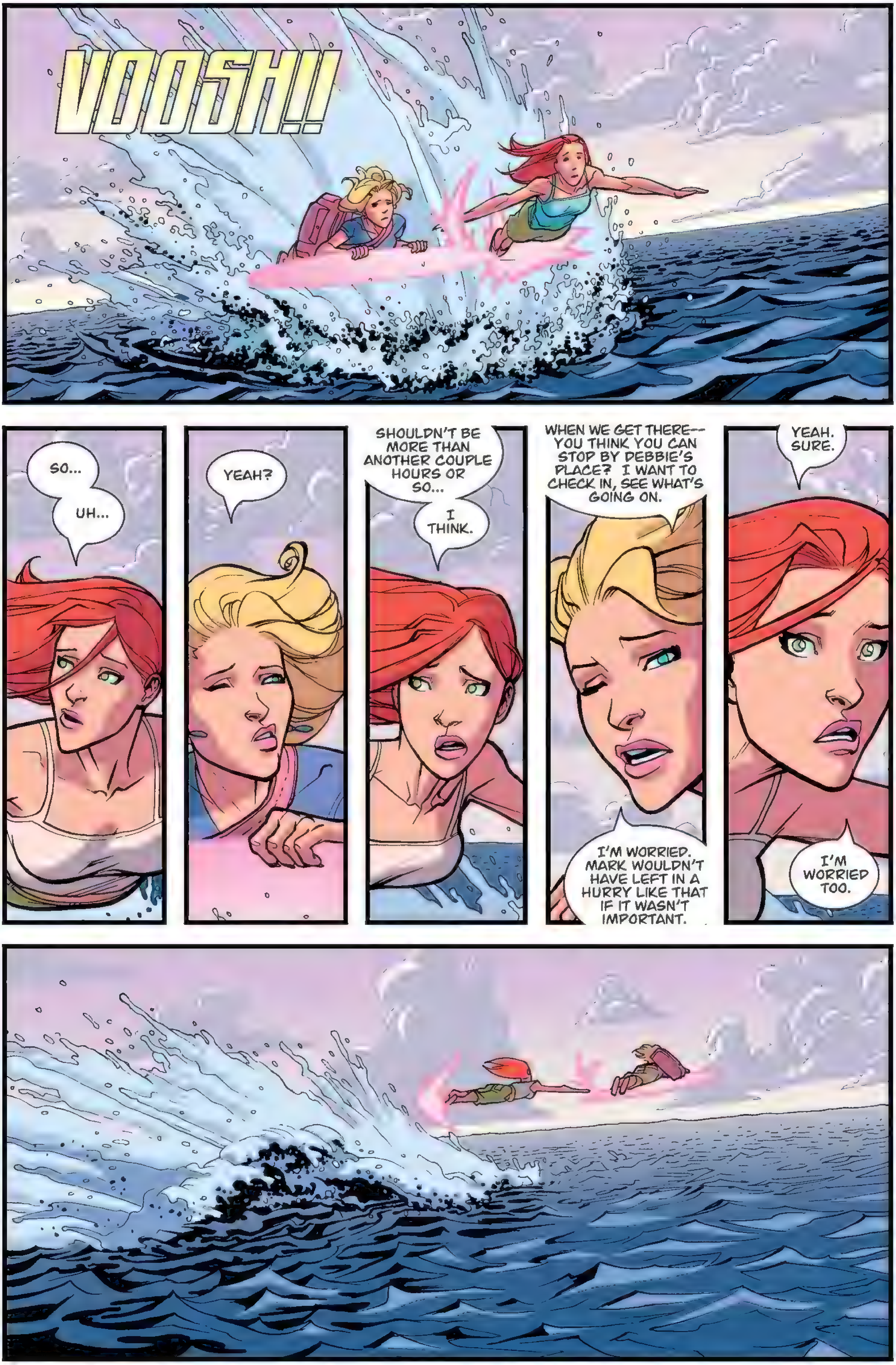
YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I WANTED YOU TO DIE IN SOME RANDOM DIMENSION I SENT YOU TO, DID YOU?! YOU THINK I WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE YOU DIE?!
WHY DO YOU THINK I WAS SOFTENING YOU UP--TIRING YOU BY SENDING YOU ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE?! I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW STRONG YOU REALLY ARE.
I'M NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK I COULD BEST YOU IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT--BUT THAT IS WHAT I WANT.
DID YOU THINK ANYTHING LESS THAN KILLING YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS WOULD SATISFY ME?!


STOP!!
POW!!
NO... LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH. I WANT TO GET BACK TO YOUR *MOTHER*--FINISH WHAT I *STARTED!*
DON'T EVER THREATEN MY FAMILY!!
FWOOSH!!
FWOKK!!
THROKK!

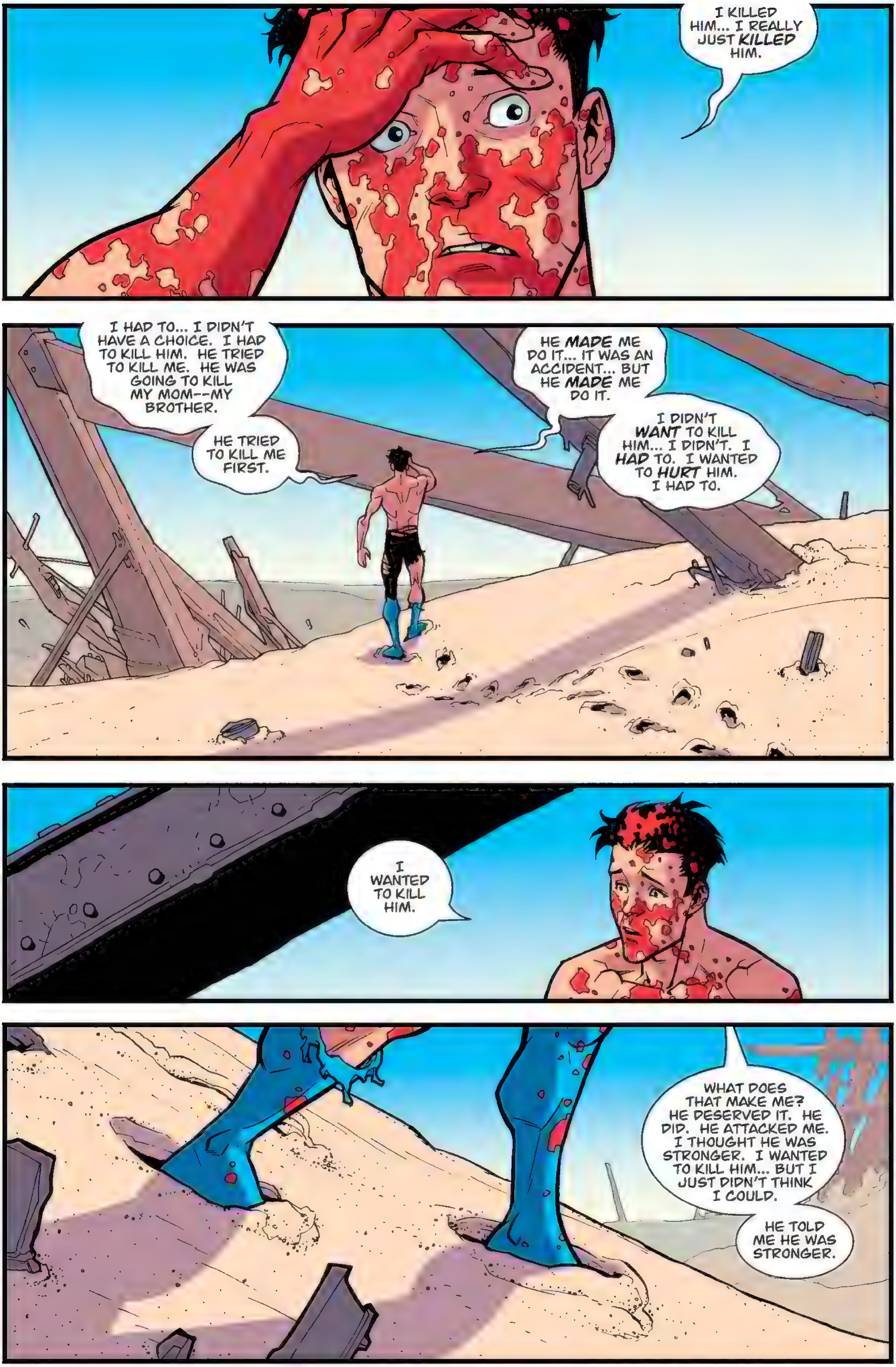

⚞HUFF⚟
⚞HUFF⚟
⚞HUFF⚟
⚞HUFF⚟
I THOUGHT YOU WERE--
I THOUGHT--
I THOUGHT YOU WERE **STRONGER.**

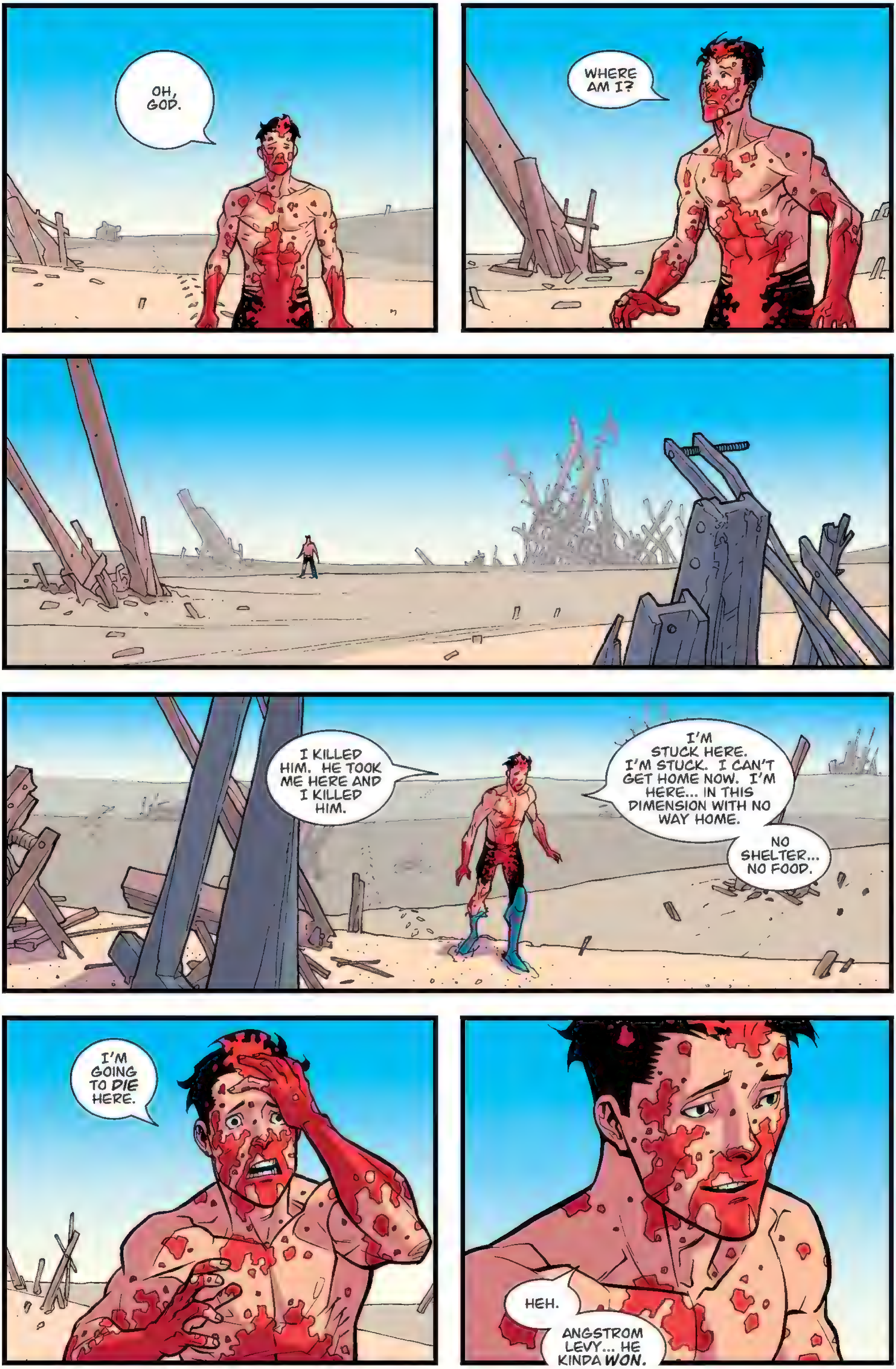
OH, GOD...
BYU

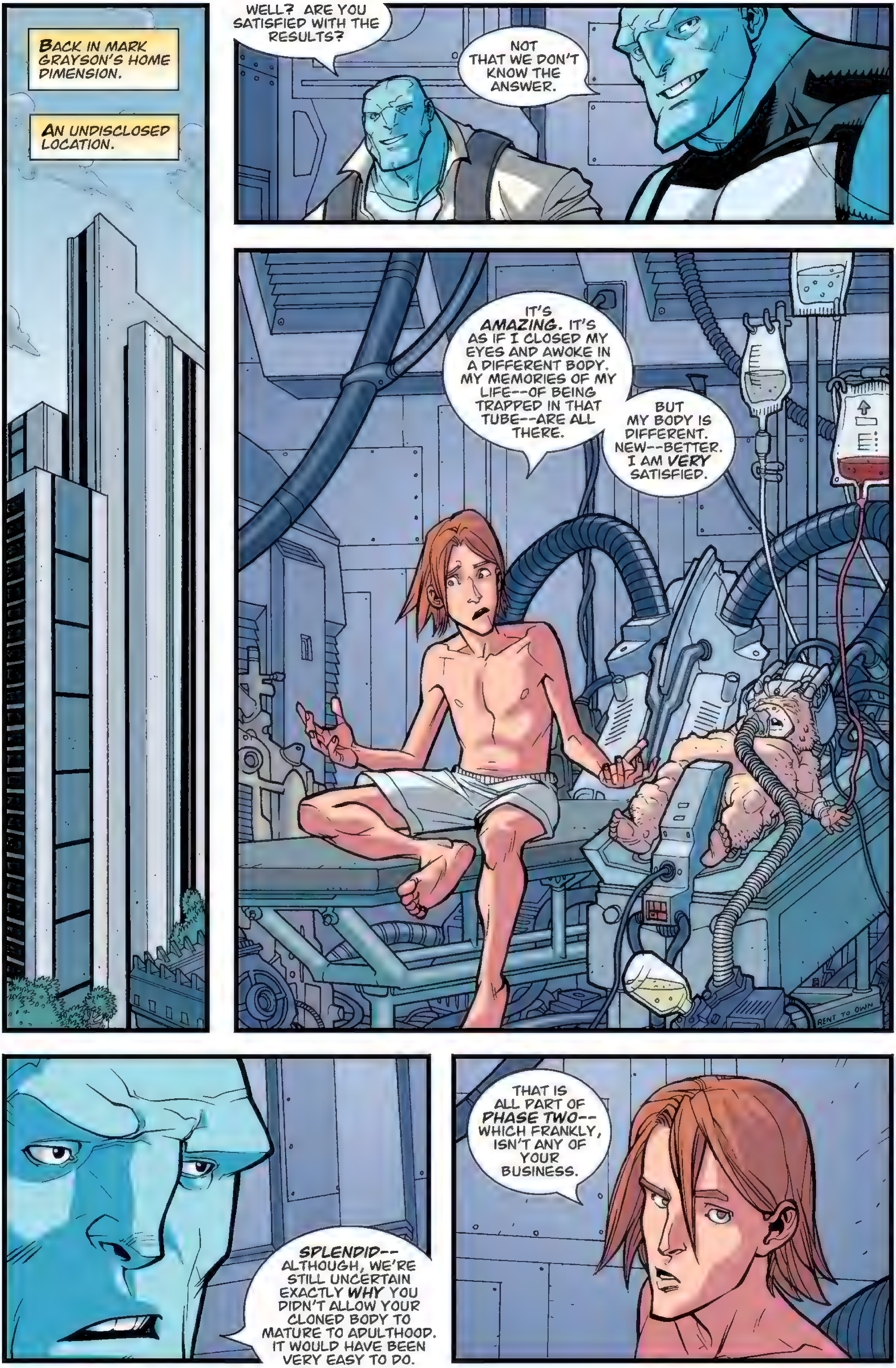
ISSUE THIRTY-FOUR

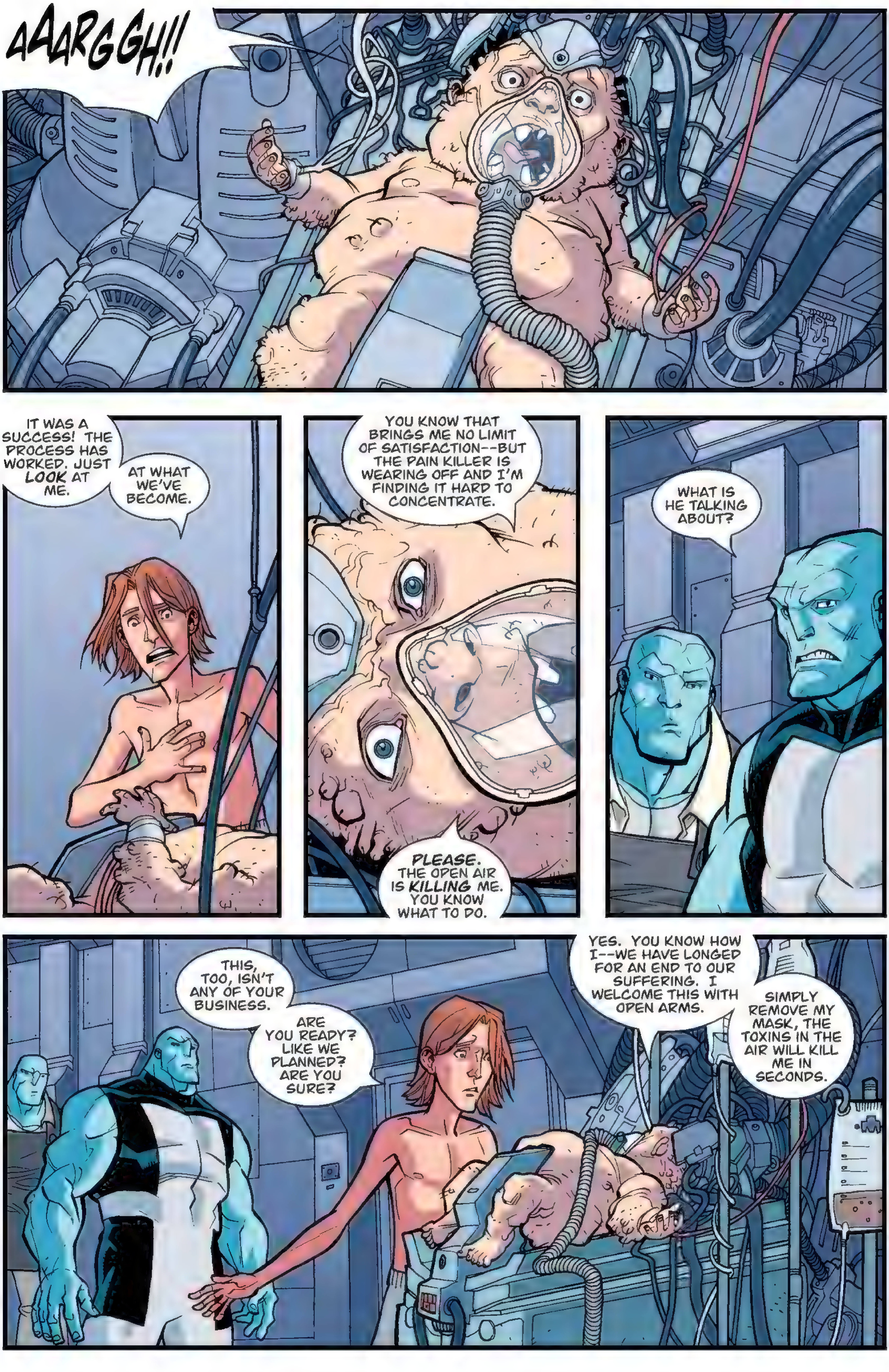

VOOSH!!
SO...
UH...
YEAH?
SHOULDN'T BE MORE THAN ANOTHER COUPLE HOURS OR SO...
I THINK.
WHEN WE GET THERE-- YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP BY DEBBIE'S PLACE? I WANT TO CHECK IN, SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.
I'M WORRIED. MARK WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT IN A HURRY LIKE THAT IF IT WASN'T IMPORTANT.
YEAH. SURE.
I'M WORRIED TOO.

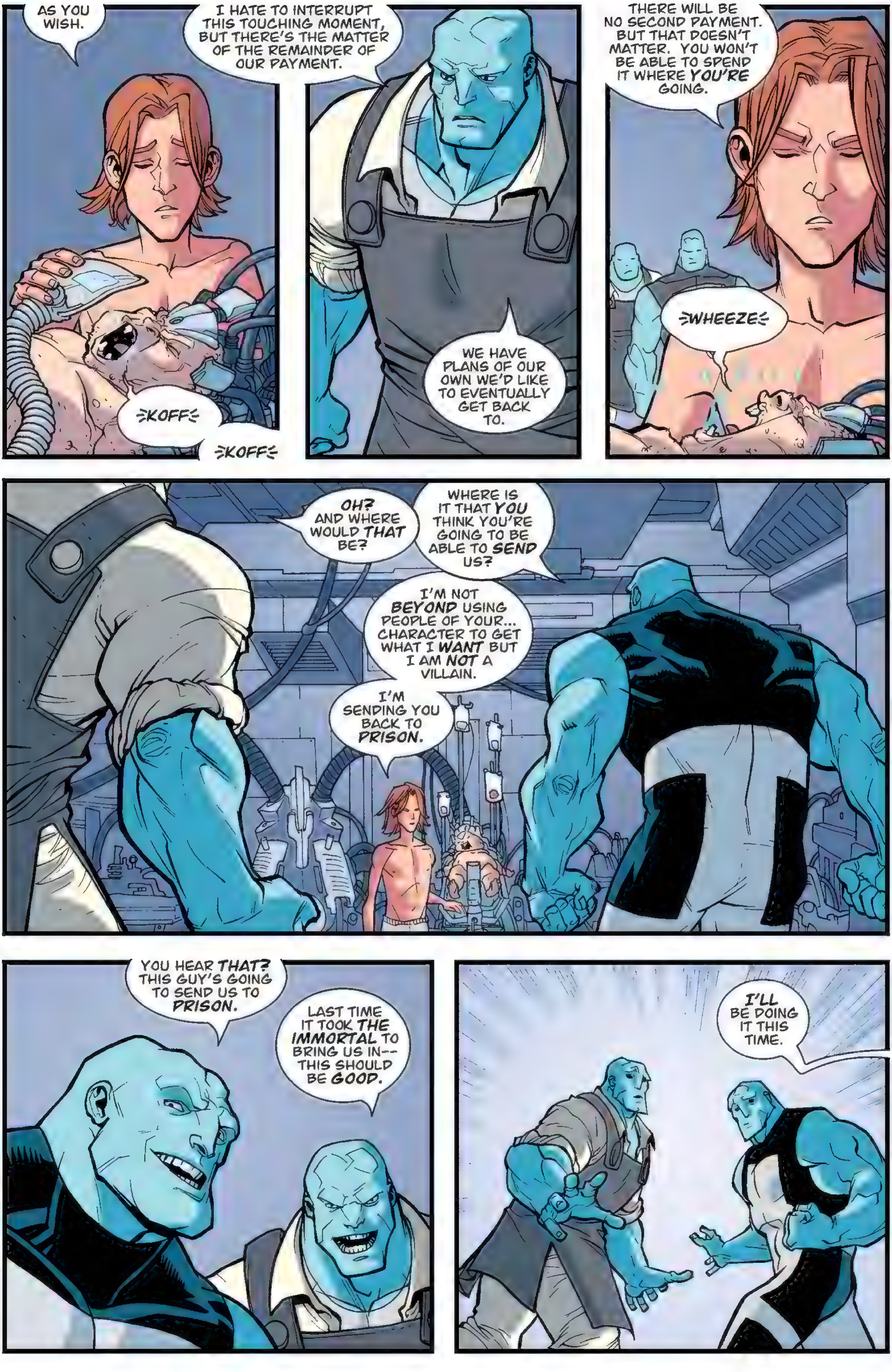
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.


I KILLED HIM... I REALLY JUST **KILLED** HIM.
I HAD TO... I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. I HAD TO KILL HIM. HE TRIED TO KILL ME. HE WAS GOING TO KILL MY MOM--MY BROTHER.
HE TRIED TO KILL ME FIRST.
HE ***MADE*** ME DO IT... IT WAS AN ACCIDENT... BUT HE ***MADE*** ME DO IT.
I DIDN'T ***WANT*** TO KILL HIM... I DIDN'T. I ***HAD*** TO. I WANTED TO ***HURT*** HIM. I HAD TO.
I WANTED TO KILL HIM.
WHAT DOES THAT MAKE ME? HE DESERVED IT. HE DID. HE ATTACKED ME. I THOUGHT HE WAS STRONGER. I WANTED TO KILL HIM... BUT I JUST DIDN'T THINK I COULD.
HE TOLD ME HE WAS STRONGER.

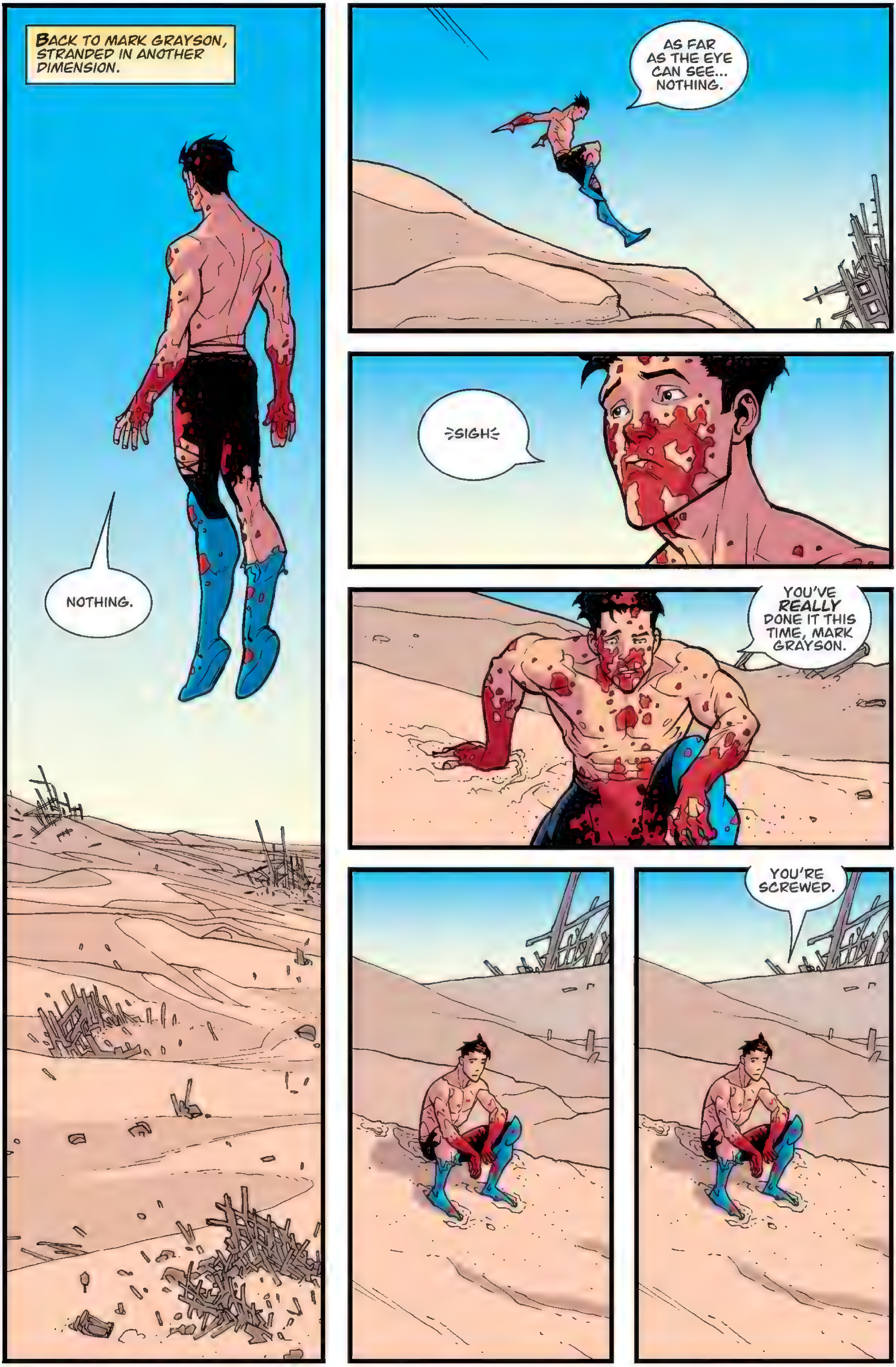

OH, GOD.
WHERE AM I?
I KILLED HIM. HE TOOK ME HERE AND I KILLED HIM.
I'M STUCK HERE. I'M STUCK. I CAN'T GET HOME NOW. I'M HERE... IN THIS DIMENSION WITH NO WAY HOME.
NO SHELTER... NO FOOD.
I'M GOING TO *DIE* HERE.
HEH.
ANGSTROM LEVY... HE KINDA ***WON.***

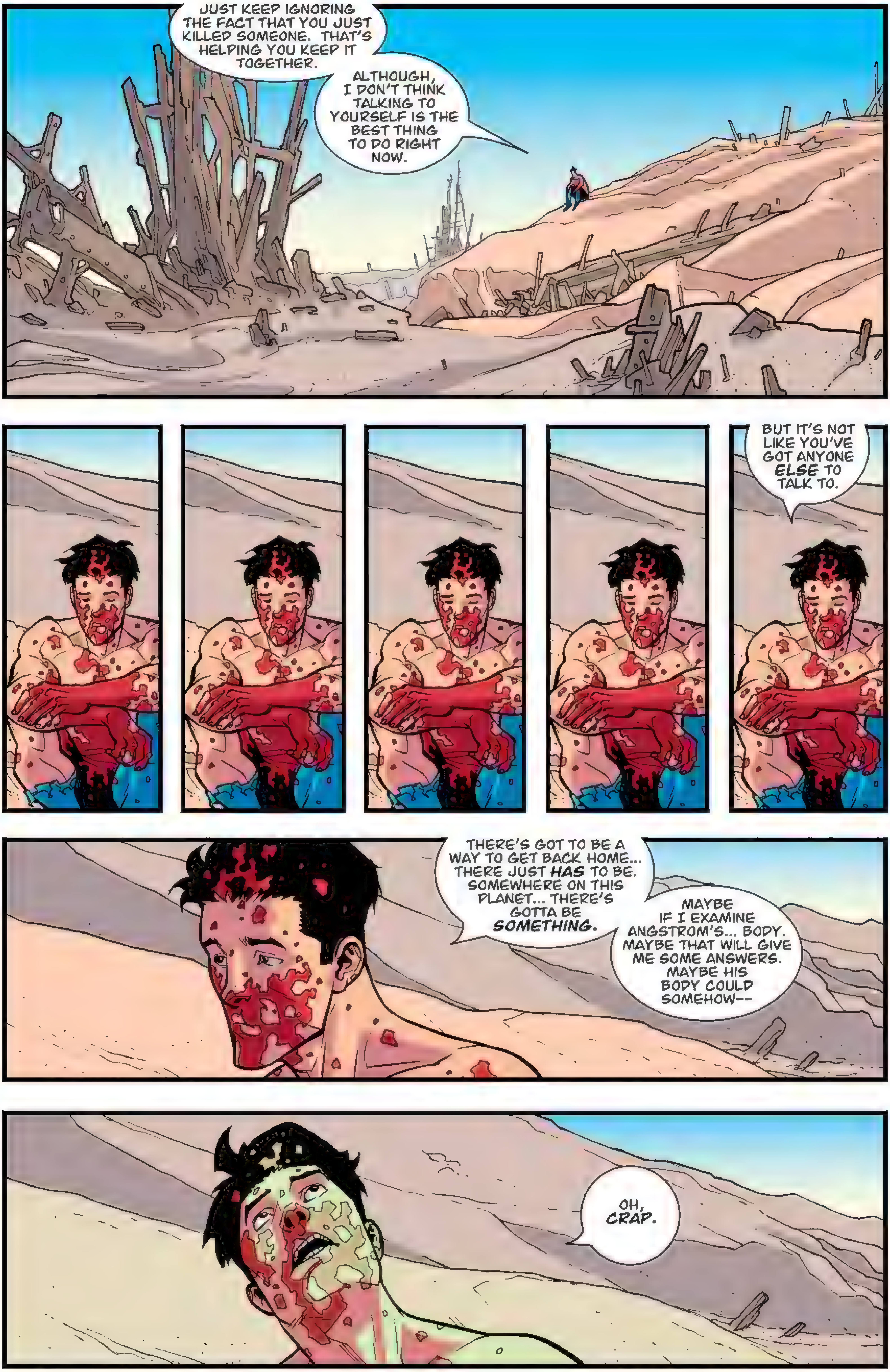

BACK IN MARK GRAYSON'S HOME DIMENSION.
AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
WELL? ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS?
NOT THAT WE DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER.
IT'S *AMAZING.* IT'S AS IF I CLOSED MY EYES AND AWOKE IN A DIFFERENT BODY. MY MEMORIES OF MY LIFE--OF BEING TRAPPED IN THAT TUBE--ARE ALL THERE.
BUT MY BODY IS DIFFERENT. NEW--BETTER. I AM *VERY* SATISFIED.
RENT TO OWN
SPLENDID--ALTHOUGH, WE'RE STILL UNCERTAIN EXACTLY *WHY* YOU DIDN'T ALLOW YOUR CLONED BODY TO MATURE TO ADULTHOOD. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY EASY TO DO.
THAT IS ALL PART OF *PHASE TWO*--WHICH FRANKLY, ISN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.


AAARGGH!!
IT WAS A SUCCESS! THE PROCESS HAS WORKED. JUST LOOK AT ME.
AT WHAT WE'VE BECOME.
YOU KNOW THAT BRINGS ME NO LIMIT OF SATISFACTION--BUT THE PAIN KILLER IS WEARING OFF AND I'M FINDING IT HARD TO CONCENTRATE.
PLEASE. THE OPEN AIR IS KILLING ME. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
THIS, TOO, ISN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.
ARE YOU READY? LIKE WE PLANNED? ARE YOU SURE?
YES. YOU KNOW HOW I--WE HAVE LONGED FOR AN END TO OUR SUFFERING. I WELCOME THIS WITH OPEN ARMS.
SIMPLY REMOVE MY MASK, THE TOXINS IN THE AIR WILL KILL ME IN SECONDS.

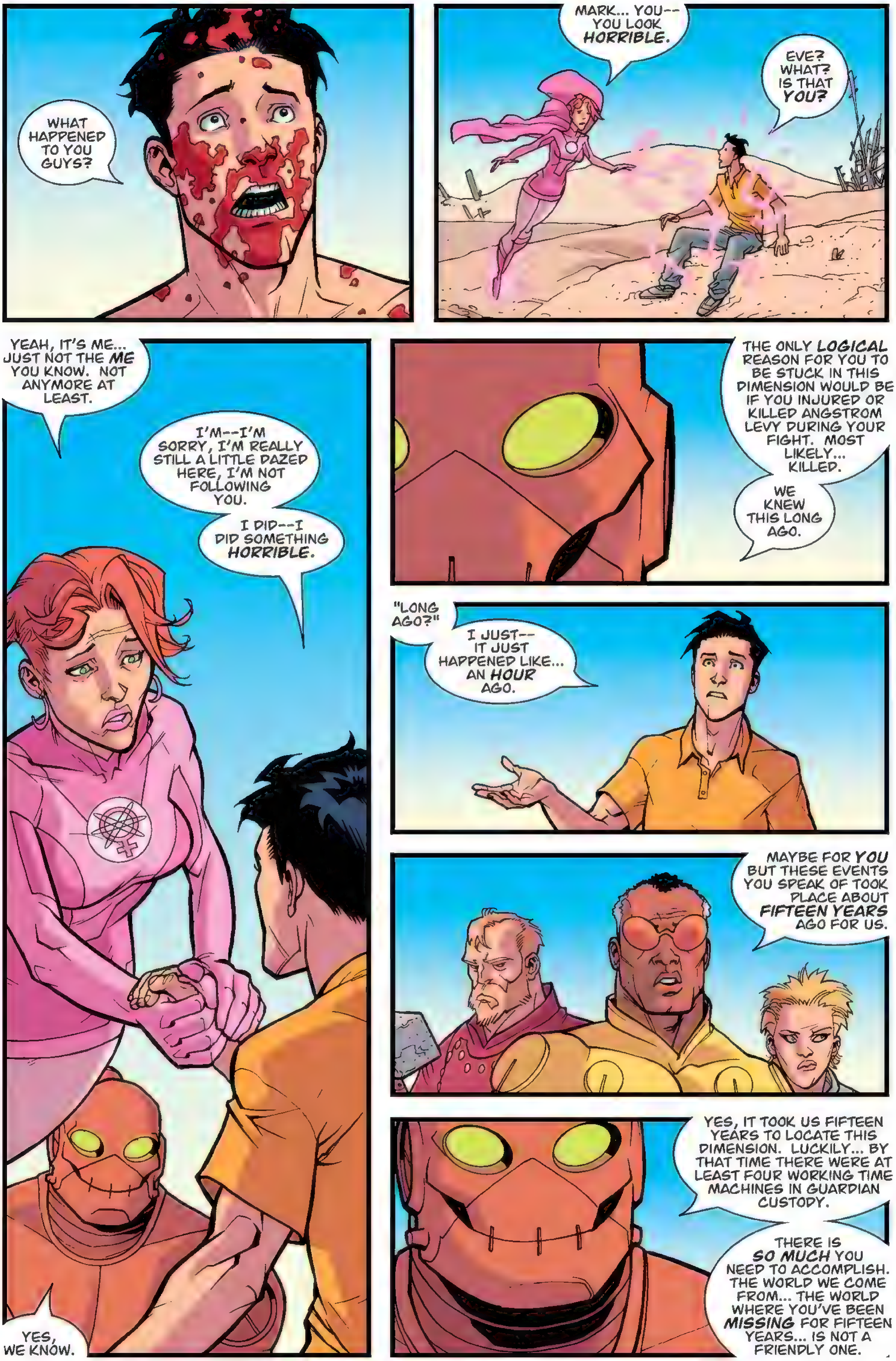

AS YOU WISH.
I HATE TO INTERRUPT THIS TOUCHING MOMENT, BUT THERE'S THE MATTER OF THE REMAINDER OF OUR PAYMENT.
≶KOFF≶
≶KOFF≶
WE HAVE PLANS OF OUR OWN WE'D LIKE TO EVENTUALLY GET BACK TO.
THERE WILL BE NO SECOND PAYMENT. BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SPEND IT WHERE *YOU'RE* GOING.
≶WHEEZE≶
OH? AND WHERE WOULD *THAT* BE?
WHERE IS IT THAT *YOU* THINK YOU'RE GOING TO BE ABLE TO *SEND* US?
I'M NOT *BEYOND* USING PEOPLE OF YOUR... CHARACTER TO GET WHAT I *WANT* BUT I AM *NOT* A VILLAIN.
I'M SENDING YOU BACK TO *PRISON.*
YOU HEAR *THAT?* THIS GUY'S GOING TO SEND US TO *PRISON.*
LAST TIME IT TOOK *THE IMMORTAL* TO BRING US IN-- THIS SHOULD BE *GOOD.*
I'LL BE DOING IT THIS TIME.

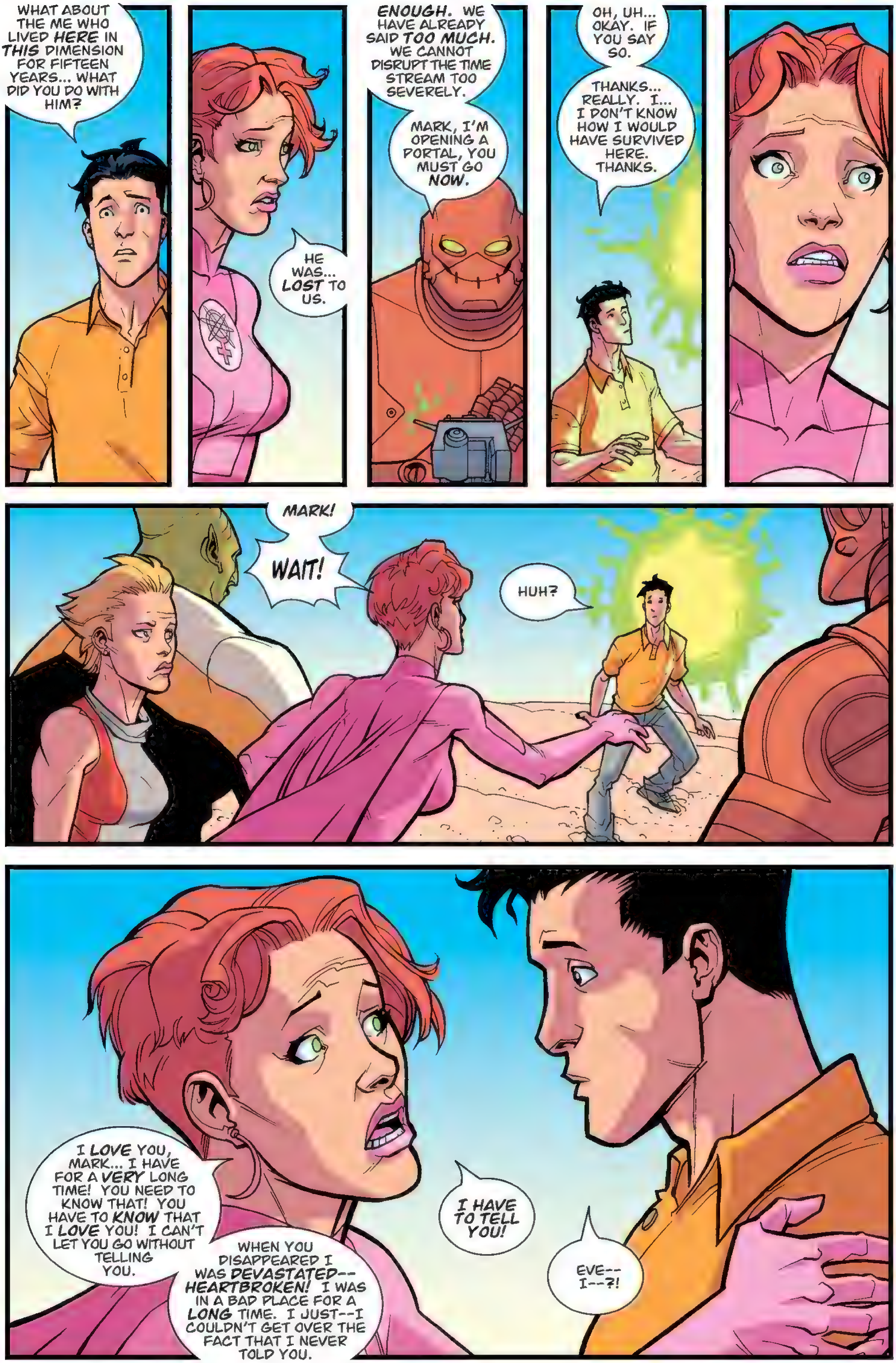
I DON'T SUSPECT IT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT.
SO--YOU'RE **NOT** JUST HIS MINDLESS PAWN AFTER ALL--YOU'RE WORKING **WITH** THIS LITTLE **CREEP!** I KINDA LIKED THE THOUGHT OF YOU BEING TAKEN OVER--CONTROLLED--MADE TO WORK WITH THE LIKES OF US.
I LIKE THE THOUGHT OF YOU BEING **DEAD** EVEN BETTER.
YOU HAVE NO HOPE--WE'RE **SMARTER** THAN YOU AND **TWICE** AS STRONG. THIS WON'T TAKE BUT A FEW SECONDS.
I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES.
SKROOM!!

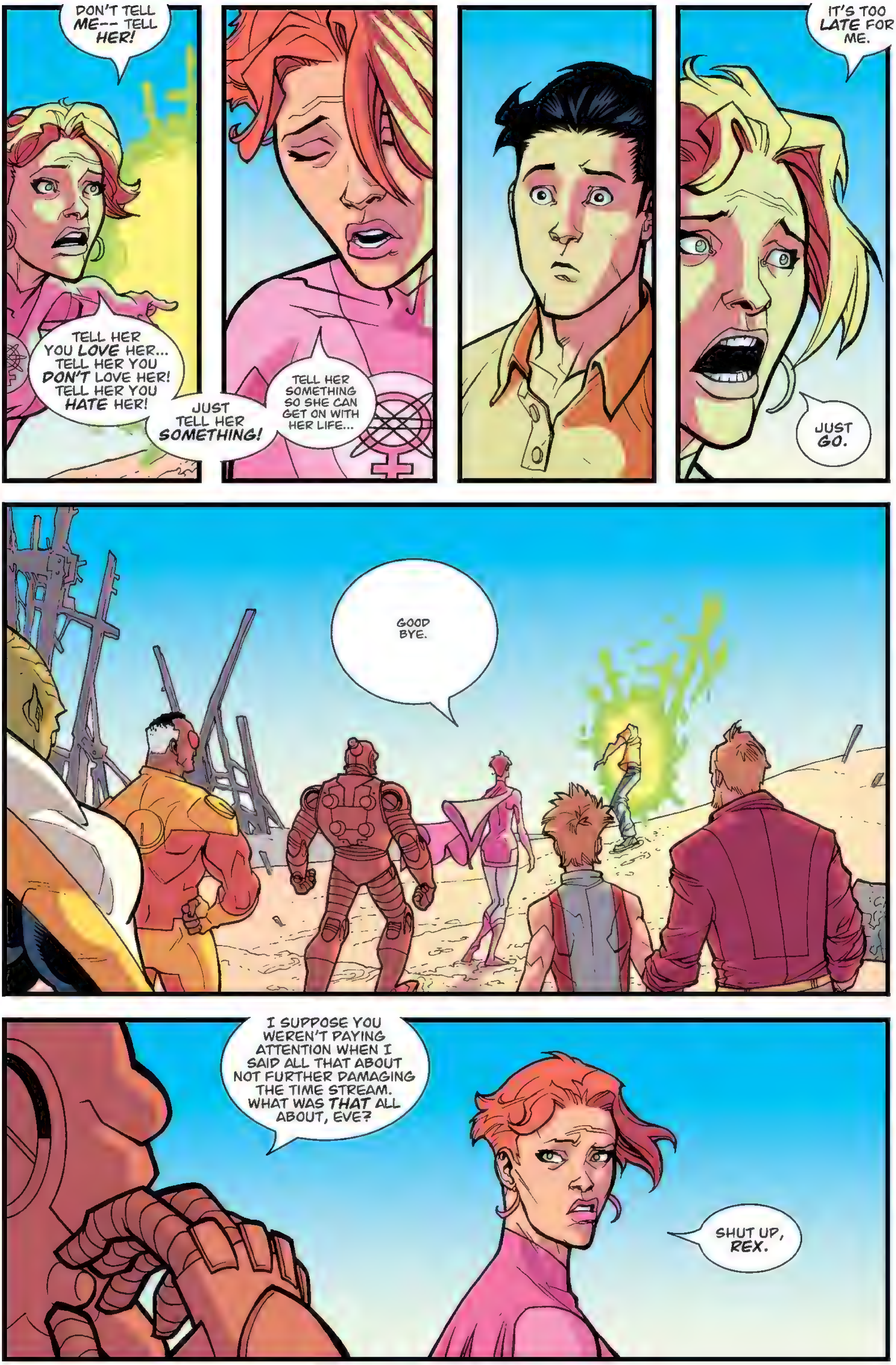

BACK TO MARK GRAYSON, STRANDED IN ANOTHER DIMENSION.
NOTHING.
AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE... NOTHING.
≶SIGH≶
YOU'VE **REALLY** DONE IT THIS TIME, MARK GRAYSON.
YOU'RE SCREWED.


JUST KEEP IGNORING THE FACT THAT YOU JUST KILLED SOMEONE. THAT'S HELPING YOU KEEP IT TOGETHER.
ALTHOUGH, I DON'T THINK TALKING TO YOURSELF IS THE BEST THING TO DO RIGHT NOW.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE GOT ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO.
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO GET BACK HOME... THERE JUST HAS TO BE. SOMEWHERE ON THIS PLANET... THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING.
MAYBE IF I EXAMINE ANGSTROM'S... BODY. MAYBE THAT WILL GIVE ME SOME ANSWERS. MAYBE HIS BODY COULD SOMEHOW--
OH, CRAP.

WHOA!

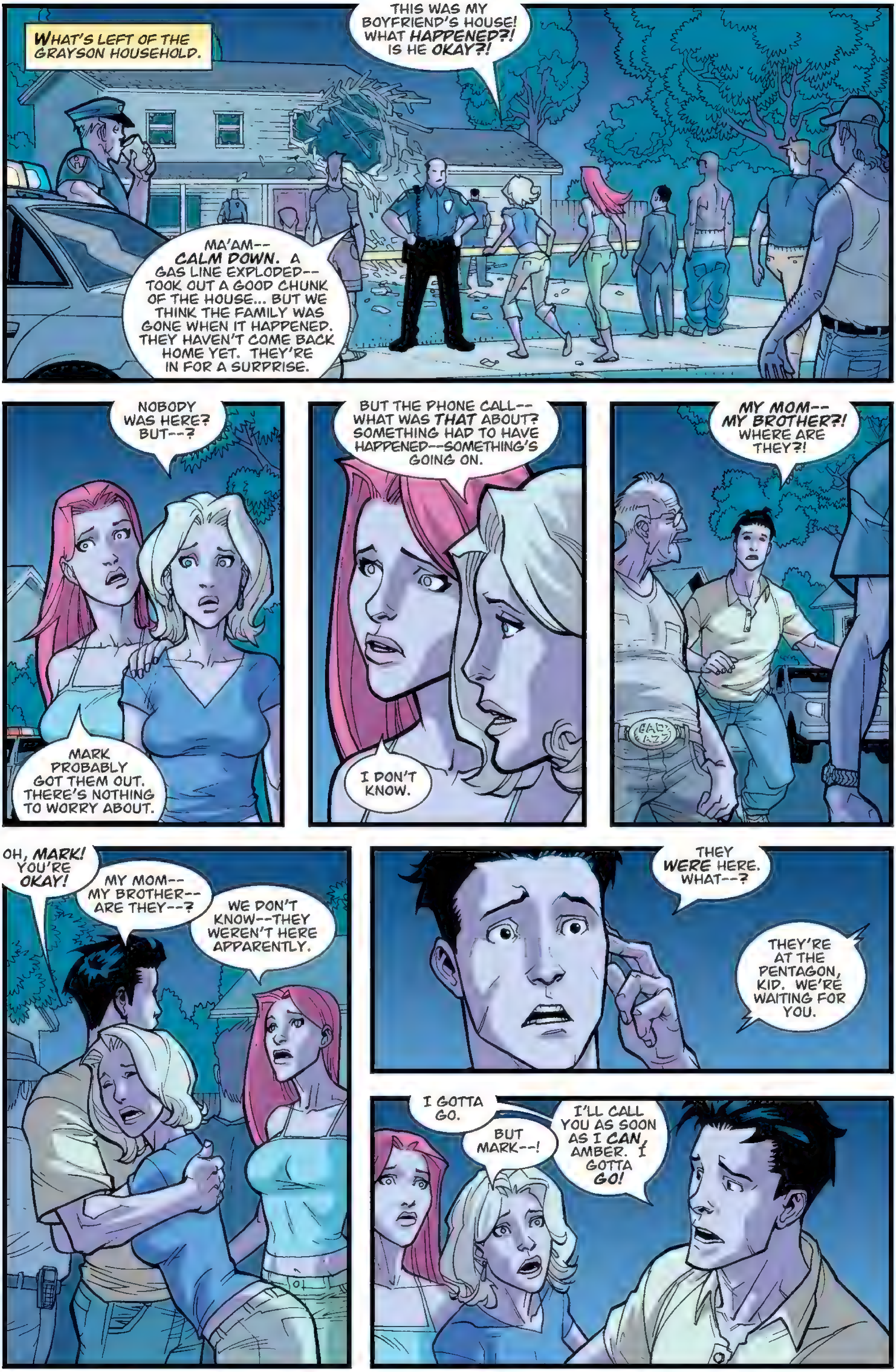

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU GUYS?
MARK... YOU-- YOU LOOK HORRIBLE.
EVE? WHAT? IS THAT YOU?
YEAH, IT'S ME... JUST NOT THE ME YOU KNOW. NOT ANYMORE AT LEAST.
I'M--I'M SORRY, I'M REALLY STILL A LITTLE DAZED HERE, I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU.
I DID--I DID SOMETHING HORRIBLE.
YES, WE KNOW.
THE ONLY LOGICAL REASON FOR YOU TO BE STUCK IN THIS DIMENSION WOULD BE IF YOU INJURED OR KILLED ANGSTROM LEVY DURING YOUR FIGHT. MOST LIKELY... KILLED.
WE KNEW THIS LONG AGO.
"LONG AGO?"
I JUST-- IT JUST HAPPENED LIKE... AN HOUR AGO.
MAYBE FOR YOU BUT THESE EVENTS YOU SPEAK OF TOOK PLACE ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO FOR US.
YES, IT TOOK US FIFTEEN YEARS TO LOCATE THIS DIMENSION. LUCKILY... BY THAT TIME THERE WERE AT LEAST FOUR WORKING TIME MACHINES IN GUARDIAN CUSTODY.
THERE IS SO MUCH YOU NEED TO ACCOMPLISH. THE WORLD WE COME FROM... THE WORLD WHERE YOU'VE BEEN MISSING FOR FIFTEEN YEARS... IS NOT A FRIENDLY ONE.

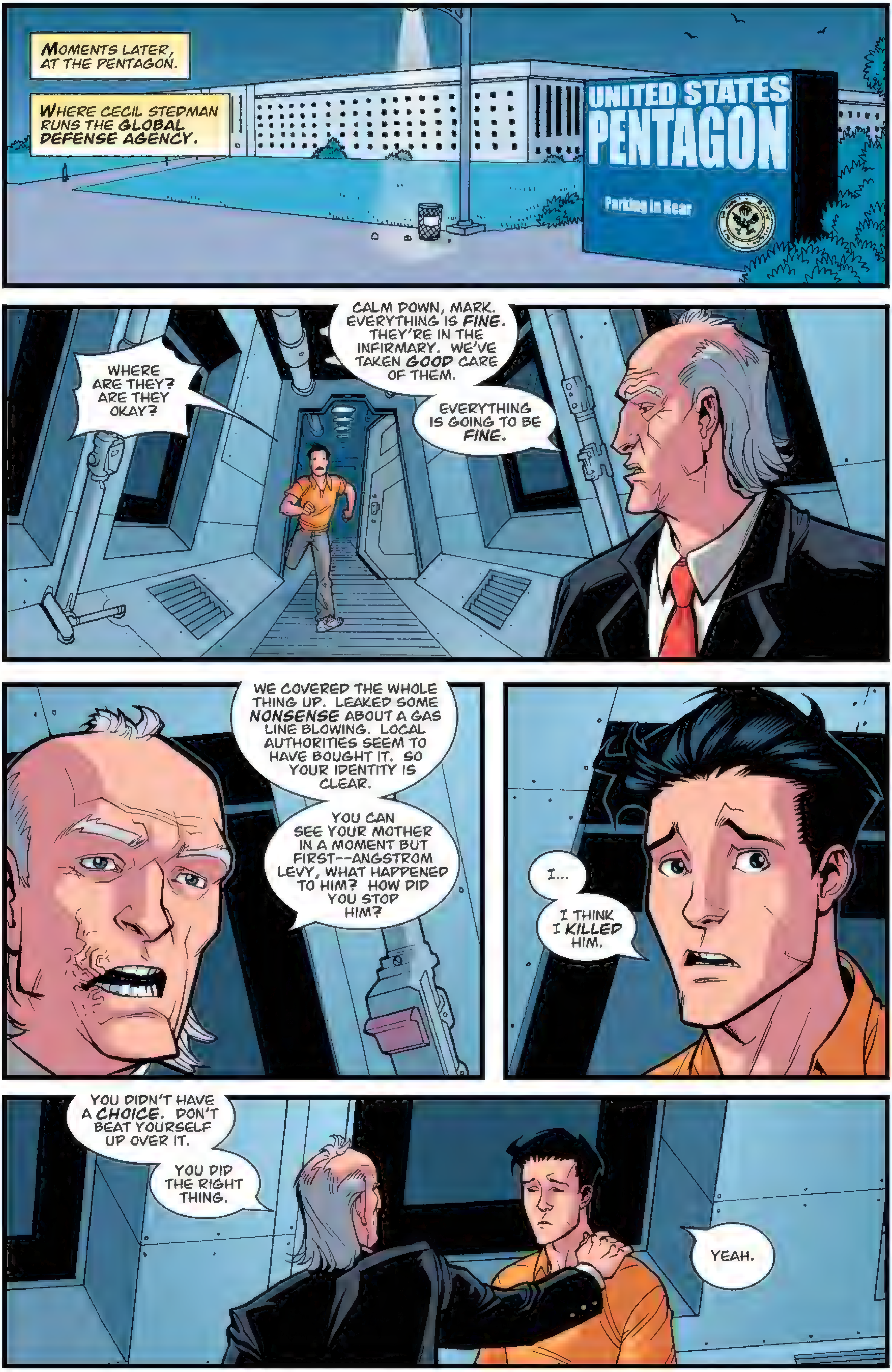

WHAT ABOUT THE ME WHO LIVED **HERE** IN **THIS** DIMENSION FOR FIFTEEN YEARS... WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HIM?
HE WAS... **LOST** TO US.
ENOUGH. WE HAVE ALREADY SAID **TOO MUCH.** WE CANNOT DISRUPT THE TIME STREAM TOO SEVERELY.
MARK, I'M OPENING A PORTAL, YOU MUST GO **NOW.**
OH, UH... OKAY. IF YOU SAY SO.
THANKS... REALLY. I... I DON'T KNOW HOW I WOULD HAVE SURVIVED HERE. THANKS.
MARK!
WAIT!
HUH?
I **LOVE** YOU, MARK... I HAVE FOR A **VERY** LONG TIME! YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT! YOU HAVE TO **KNOW** THAT I **LOVE** YOU! I CAN'T LET YOU GO WITHOUT TELLING YOU.
WHEN YOU DISAPPEARED I WAS **DEVASTATED-- HEARTBROKEN!** I WAS IN A BAD PLACE FOR A **LONG** TIME. I JUST--I COULDN'T GET OVER THE FACT THAT I NEVER TOLD YOU.
I HAVE TO TELL YOU!
EVE-- I--?!

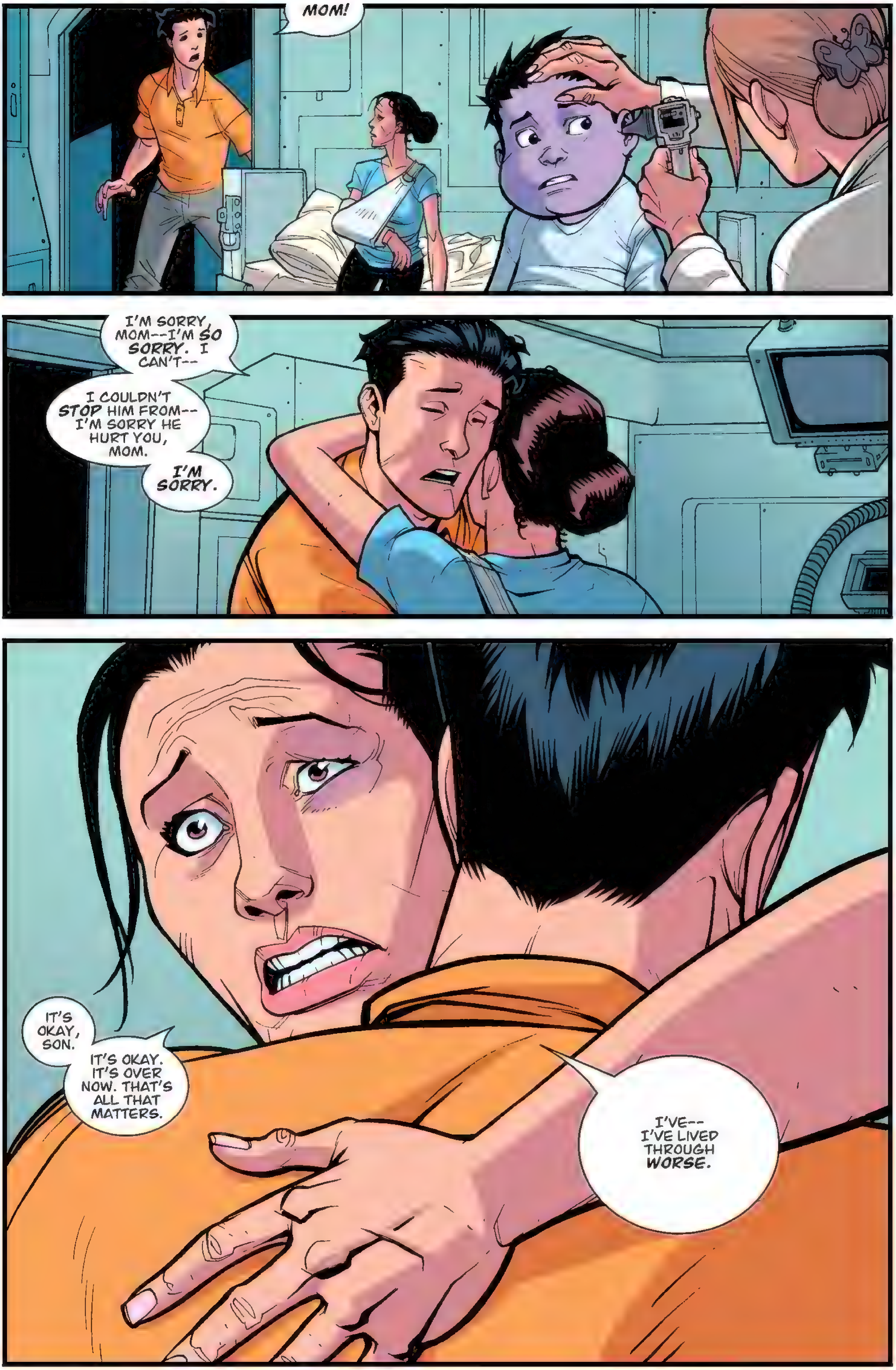

DON'T TELL ME-- TELL HER!
TELL HER YOU LOVE HER... TELL HER YOU DON'T LOVE HER! TELL HER YOU HATE HER!
JUST TELL HER SOMETHING!
TELL HER SOMETHING SO SHE CAN GET ON WITH HER LIFE...
IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME.
JUST GO.
GOOD BYE.
I SUPPOSE YOU WEREN'T PAYING ATTENTION WHEN I SAID ALL THAT ABOUT NOT FURTHER DAMAGING THE TIME STREAM. WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, EVE?
SHUT UP, REX.

WHATEVER.
LET'S GIVE THIS THING A MINUTE OR TWO TO RECHARGE AND THEN WE CAN GO HOME.
MEANWHILE, BACK IN MARK GRAYSON'S HOME DIMENSION.
YOU'RE FAST--YOU'RE SMART--BUT THAT'S JUST NOT ENOUGH!!
SKRAGG!!

WHAT NOW, ***SHRIMP?*** WISHING WE HAD CLONED YOU A BIGGER, STRONGER BODY ABOUT RIGHT NOW, I'LL BET.
YOU GOT ANY MORE SUPERHEROES ON THE PAYROLL THAT YOU'D LIKE US TO ***KILL?***
YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ***NOTHING.***
FROM ***BIRTH*** I WAS CONFINED TO THAT CHAMBER--UNABLE TO LIVE IN THE OPEN AIR. I WAS LEFT WITH ONLY MY INTELLECT TO OCCUPY ME. I WAS TOO HIDEOUS TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD--SO I DEVISED ANOTHER WAY.
A ***DRONE--*** AN AUTOMATION THROUGH WHICH I COULD LIVE MY LIFE--AS SOMEONE--***SOMETHING*** ELSE. SOMETHING FREE TO MOVE ABOUT THE WORLD AS IF I WAS NORMAL. FOR A TIME, THAT WAS ENOUGH.
THEN I WANTED ***MORE,*** I WANTED TO BE HUMAN. I CLONED THIS BODY--ACQUIRED YOUR AID IN PLACING MY CONSCIOUSNESS IN IT. SO MAKE NO MISTAKE...
YOU HAVE NOT ***KILLED*** ROBOT, YOU ***FOOLS.***
I AM ROBOT.
AND THAT WAS ***FAR*** FROM MY ONLY AUTOMATION WITH WHICH TO ***FIGHT*** YOU.
CRAP.

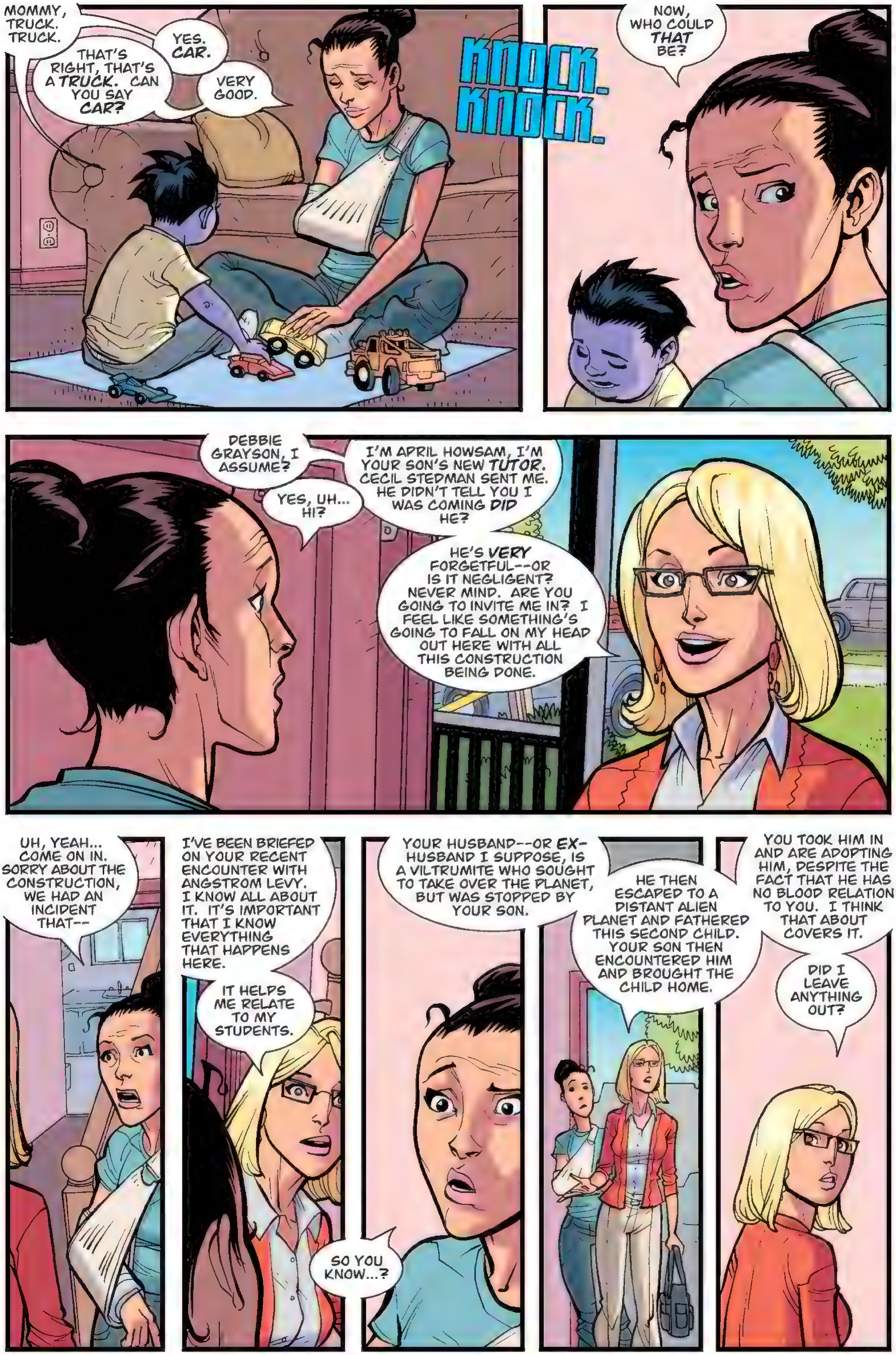

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
THIS WAS MY BOYFRIEND'S HOUSE! WHAT HAPPENED?! IS HE OKAY?!
MA'AM-- CALM DOWN. A GAS LINE EXPLODED-- TOOK OUT A GOOD CHUNK OF THE HOUSE... BUT WE THINK THE FAMILY WAS GONE WHEN IT HAPPENED. THEY HAVEN'T COME BACK HOME YET. THEY'RE IN FOR A SURPRISE.
NOBODY WAS HERE? BUT--?
MARK PROBABLY GOT THEM OUT. THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
BUT THE PHONE CALL-- WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT? SOMETHING HAD TO HAVE HAPPENED--SOMETHING'S GOING ON.
I DON'T KNOW.
MY MOM-- MY BROTHER?! WHERE ARE THEY?!
OH, MARK! YOU'RE OKAY!
MY MOM-- MY BROTHER-- ARE THEY--?
WE DON'T KNOW--THEY WEREN'T HERE APPARENTLY.
THEY WERE HERE. WHAT--?
THEY'RE AT THE PENTAGON, KID. WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU.
I GOTTA GO.
BUT MARK--!
I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I CAN, AMBER. I GOTTA GO!

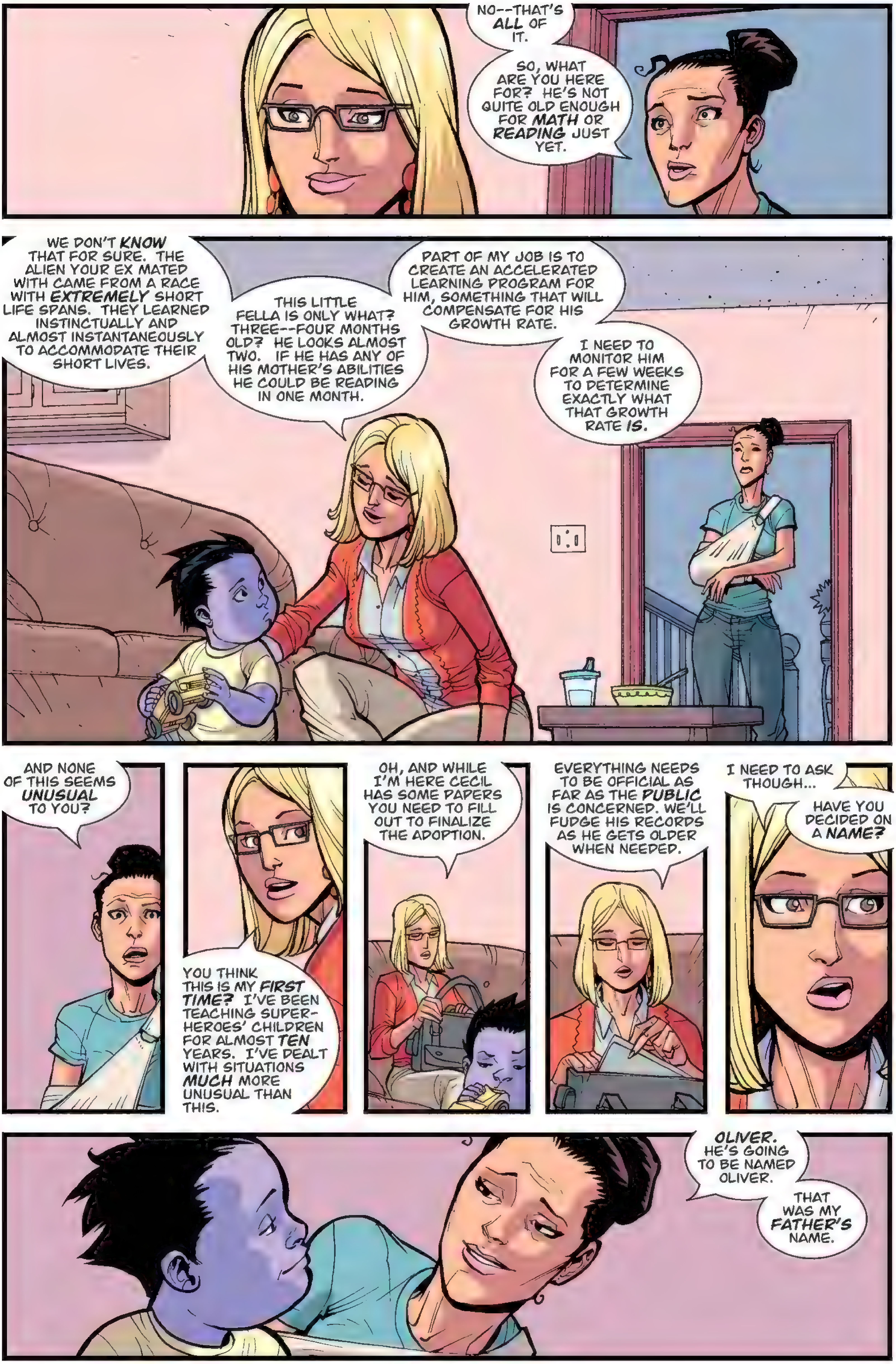

MOMENTS LATER, AT THE PENTAGON.
WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHERE ARE THEY? ARE THEY OKAY?
CALM DOWN, MARK. EVERYTHING IS FINE. THEY'RE IN THE INFIRMARY. WE'VE TAKEN GOOD CARE OF THEM.
EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE FINE.
WE COVERED THE WHOLE THING UP. LEAKED SOME NONSENSE ABOUT A GAS LINE BLOWING. LOCAL AUTHORITIES SEEM TO HAVE BOUGHT IT. SO YOUR IDENTITY IS CLEAR.
YOU CAN SEE YOUR MOTHER IN A MOMENT BUT FIRST--ANGSTROM LEVY, WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? HOW DID YOU STOP HIM?
I...
I THINK I KILLED HIM.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP OVER IT.
YOU DID THE RIGHT THING.
YEAH.


MOM!
I'M SORRY, MOM--I'M SO SORRY. I CAN'T--
I COULDN'T STOP HIM FROM-- I'M SORRY HE HURT YOU, MOM.
I'M SORRY.
IT'S OKAY, SON.
IT'S OKAY. IT'S OVER NOW. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
I'VE-- I'VE LIVED THROUGH WORSE.

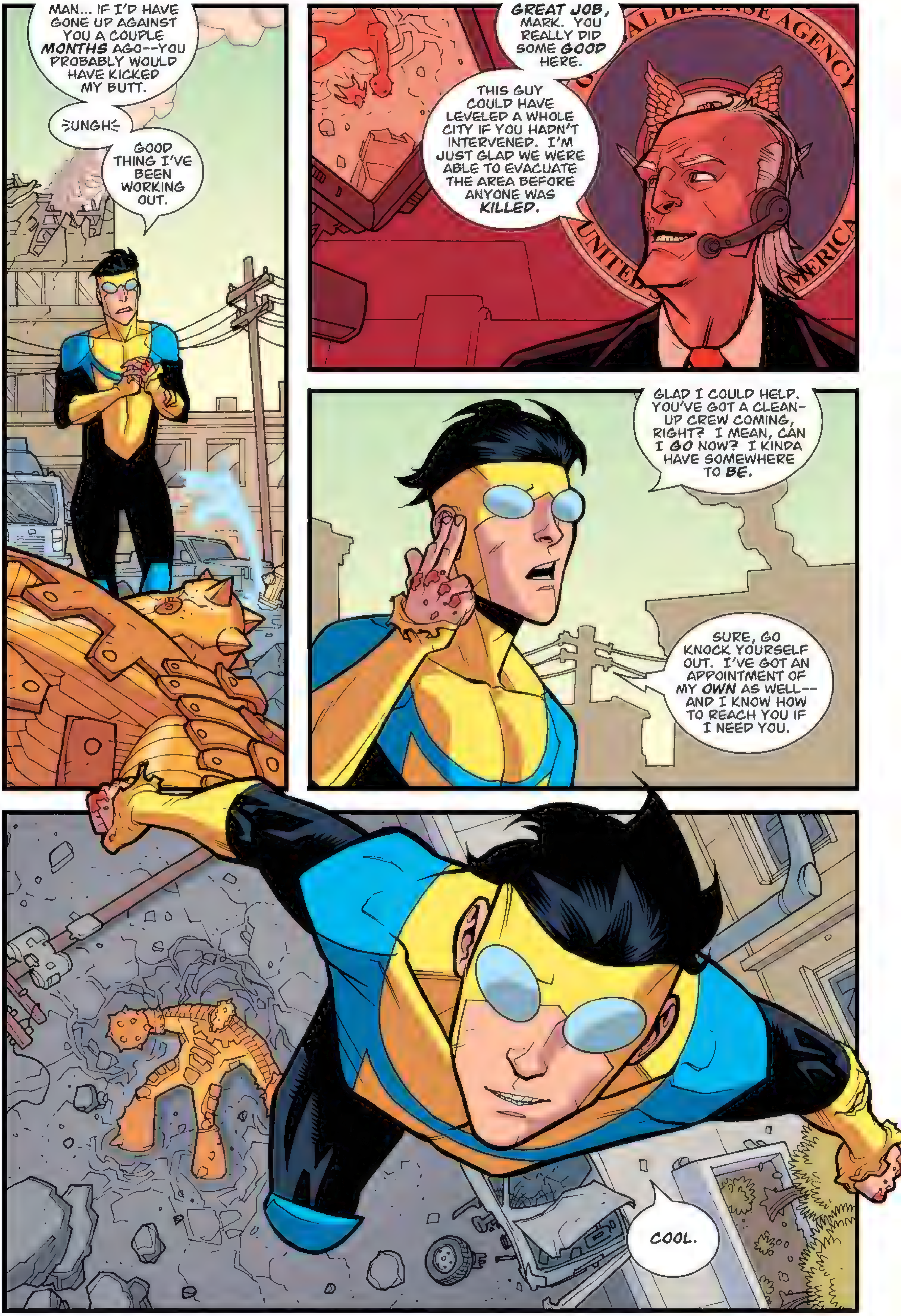
ISSUE THIRTY-FIVE

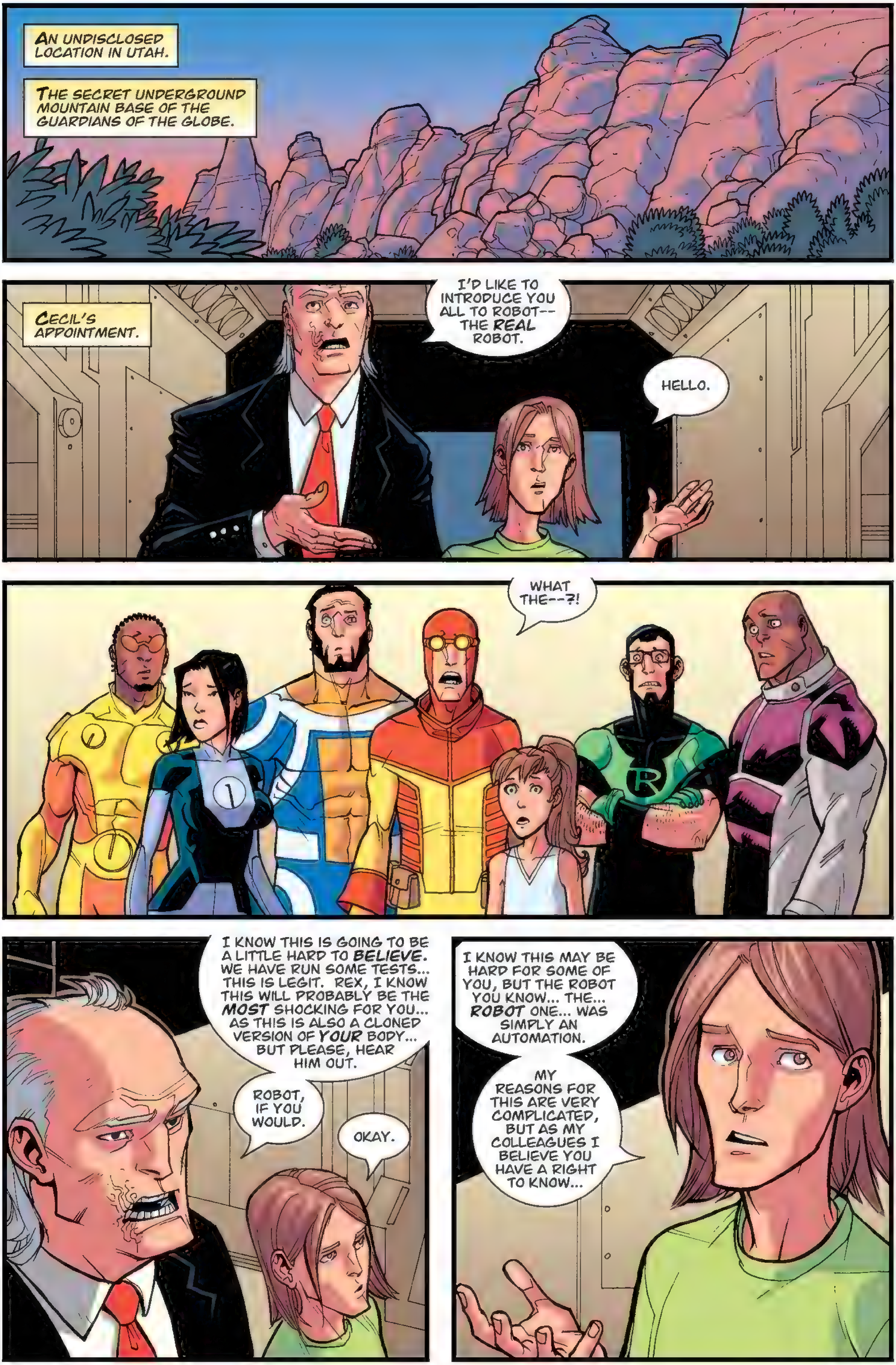
THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD-- CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AFTER MARK GRAYSON'S BRUTAL FIGHT WITH ANGSTROM LEVY.

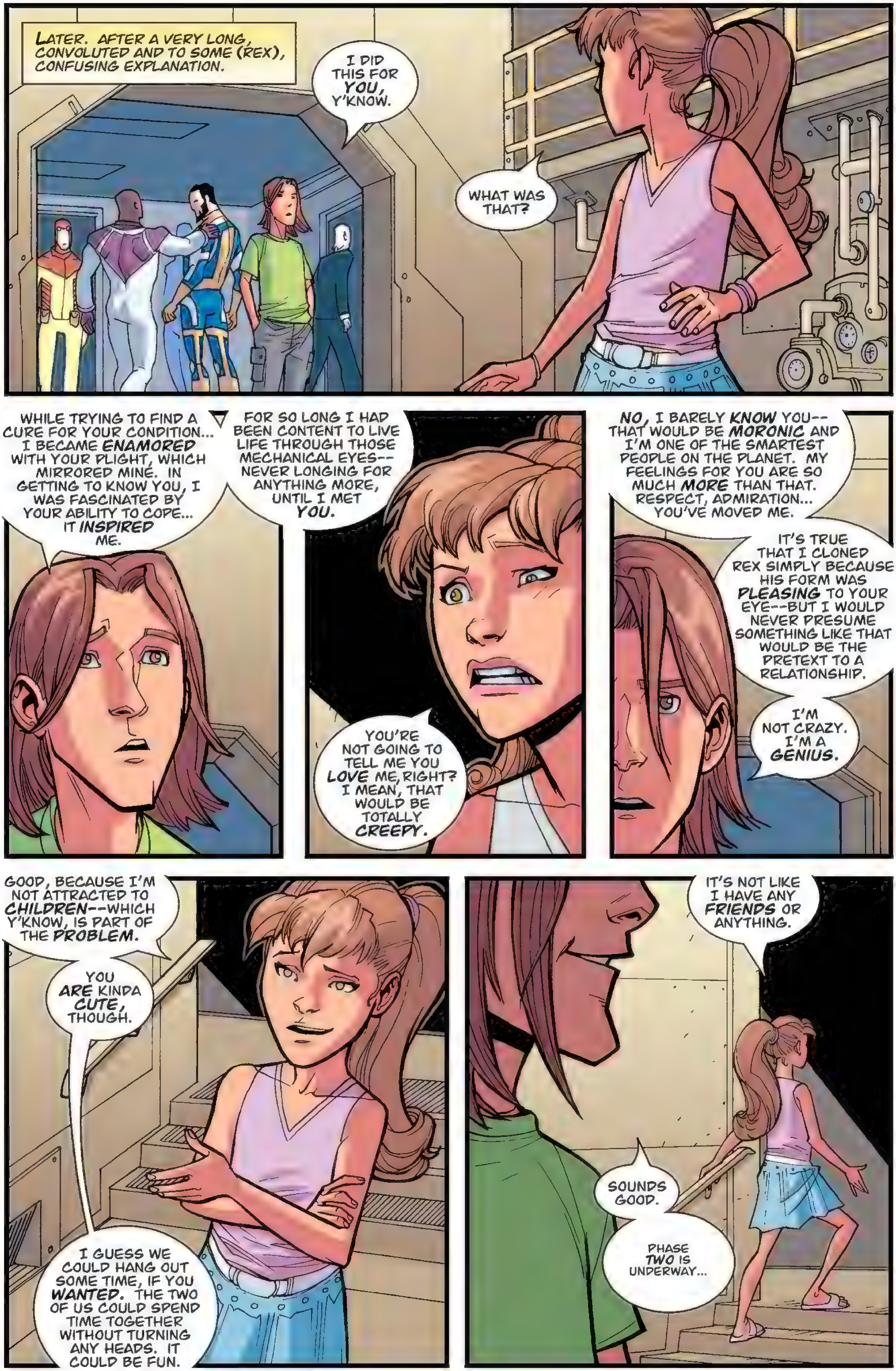

MOMMY, TRUCK. TRUCK.
THAT'S RIGHT, THAT'S A *TRUCK*. CAN YOU SAY *CAR?*
YES. *CAR.*
VERY GOOD.
KNOCK-KNOCK-
NOW, WHO COULD *THAT* BE?
DEBBIE GRAYSON, I ASSUME?
YES, UH... HI?
I'M APRIL HOWSAM, I'M YOUR SON'S NEW *TUTOR*. CECIL STEDMAN SENT ME. HE DIDN'T TELL YOU I WAS COMING *DID* HE?
HE'S *VERY* FORGETFUL--OR IS IT NEGLIGENT? NEVER MIND. ARE YOU GOING TO INVITE ME IN? I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING'S GOING TO FALL ON MY HEAD OUT HERE WITH ALL THIS CONSTRUCTION BEING DONE.
UH, YEAH... COME ON IN. SORRY ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION, WE HAD AN INCIDENT THAT--
I'VE BEEN BRIEFED ON YOUR RECENT ENCOUNTER WITH ANGSTROM LEVY. I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT I KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS HERE.
IT HELPS ME RELATE TO MY STUDENTS.
YOUR HUSBAND--OR *EX*-HUSBAND I SUPPOSE, IS A VILTRUMITE WHO SOUGHT TO TAKE OVER THE PLANET, BUT WAS STOPPED BY YOUR SON.
SO YOU KNOW...?
HE THEN ESCAPED TO A DISTANT ALIEN PLANET AND FATHERED THIS SECOND CHILD. YOUR SON THEN ENCOUNTERED HIM AND BROUGHT THE CHILD HOME.
YOU TOOK HIM IN AND ARE ADOPTING HIM, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE HAS NO BLOOD RELATION TO YOU. I THINK THAT ABOUT COVERS IT.
DID I LEAVE ANYTHING OUT?

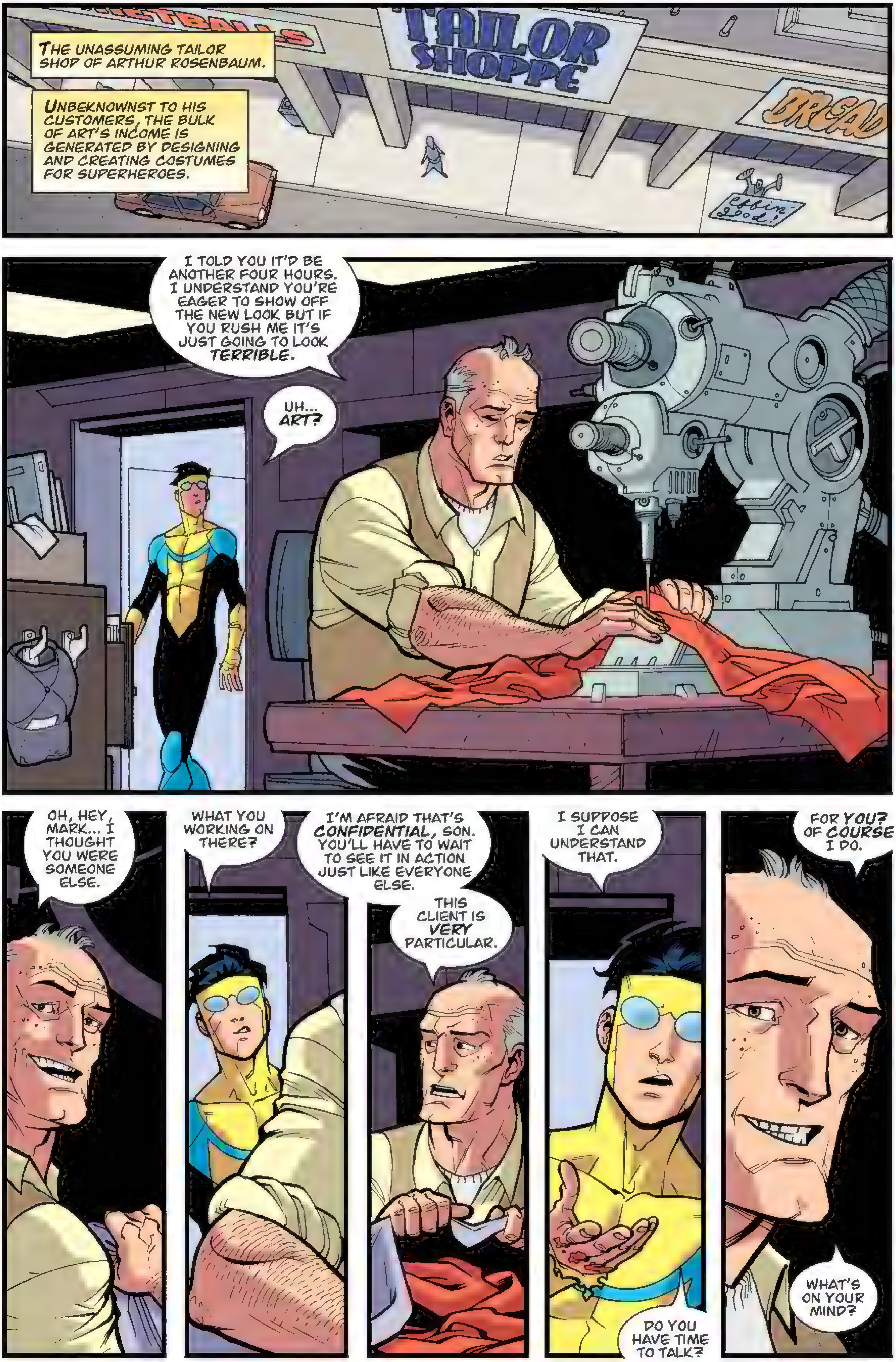

NO--THAT'S ALL OF IT.
SO, WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR? HE'S NOT QUITE OLD ENOUGH FOR MATH OR READING JUST YET.
WE DON'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE. THE ALIEN YOUR EX MATED WITH CAME FROM A RACE WITH EXTREMELY SHORT LIFE SPANS. THEY LEARNED INSTINCTUALLY AND ALMOST INSTANTANEOUSLY TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR SHORT LIVES.
THIS LITTLE FELLA IS ONLY WHAT? THREE--FOUR MONTHS OLD? HE LOOKS ALMOST TWO. IF HE HAS ANY OF HIS MOTHER'S ABILITIES HE COULD BE READING IN ONE MONTH.
PART OF MY JOB IS TO CREATE AN ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM FOR HIM, SOMETHING THAT WILL COMPENSATE FOR HIS GROWTH RATE.
I NEED TO MONITOR HIM FOR A FEW WEEKS TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT THAT GROWTH RATE IS.
AND NONE OF THIS SEEMS UNUSUAL TO YOU?
YOU THINK THIS IS MY FIRST TIME? I'VE BEEN TEACHING SUPER-HEROES' CHILDREN FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS. I'VE DEALT WITH SITUATIONS MUCH MORE UNUSUAL THAN THIS.
OH, AND WHILE I'M HERE CECIL HAS SOME PAPERS YOU NEED TO FILL OUT TO FINALIZE THE ADOPTION.
EVERYTHING NEEDS TO BE OFFICIAL AS FAR AS THE PUBLIC IS CONCERNED. WE'LL FUDGE HIS RECORDS AS HE GETS OLDER WHEN NEEDED.
I NEED TO ASK THOUGH...
HAVE YOU DECIDED ON A NAME?
OLIVER. HE'S GOING TO BE NAMED OLIVER.
THAT WAS MY FATHER'S NAME.

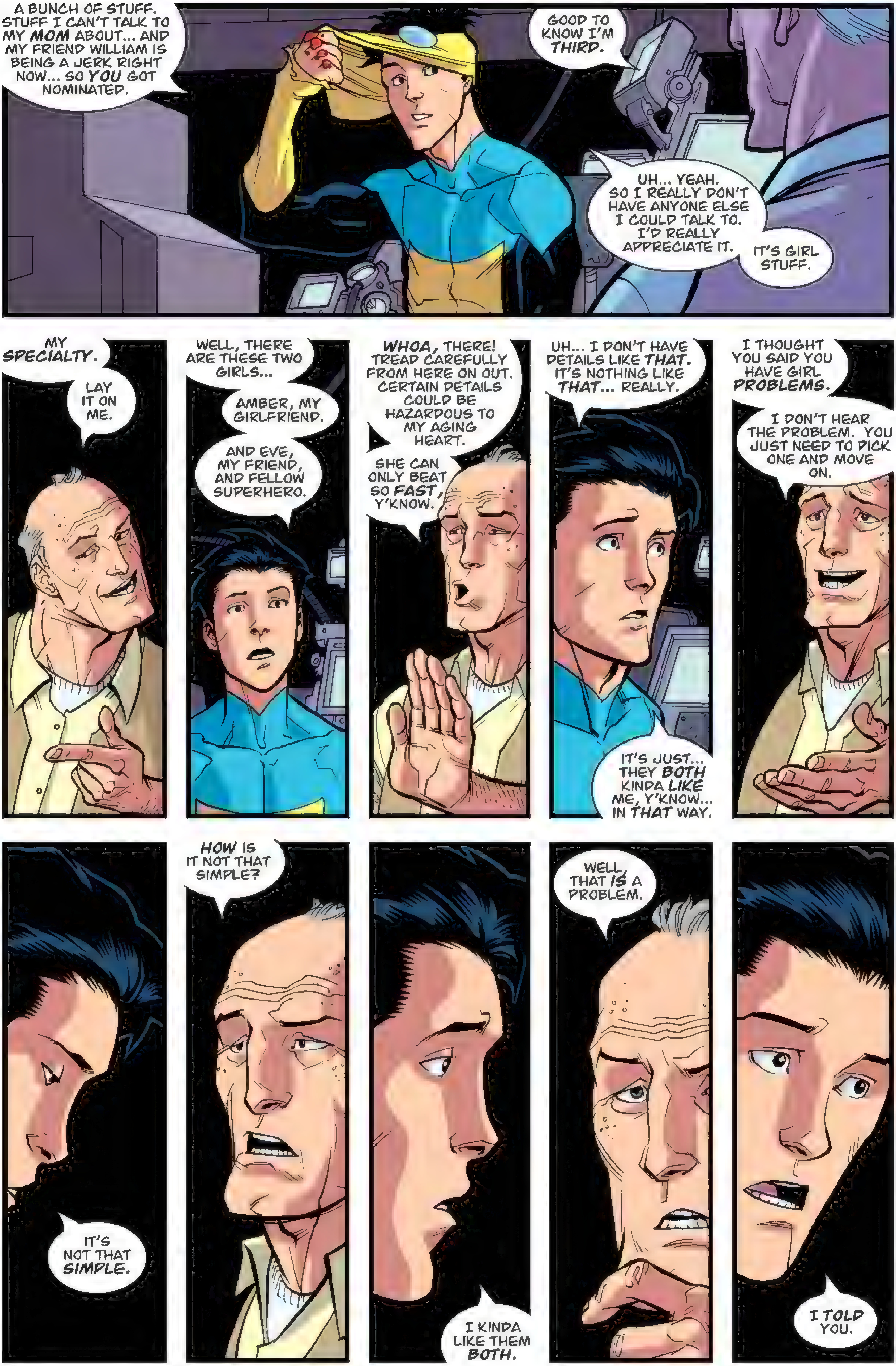
WHOKOOM!!
AS MUCH TROUBLE AS YOU'VE BEEN, I GOTTA ADMIT...
...RAMPAGE.
THAT'S JUST A COOL NAME.
SOFA KING
SOFA KING LOW PRICES!

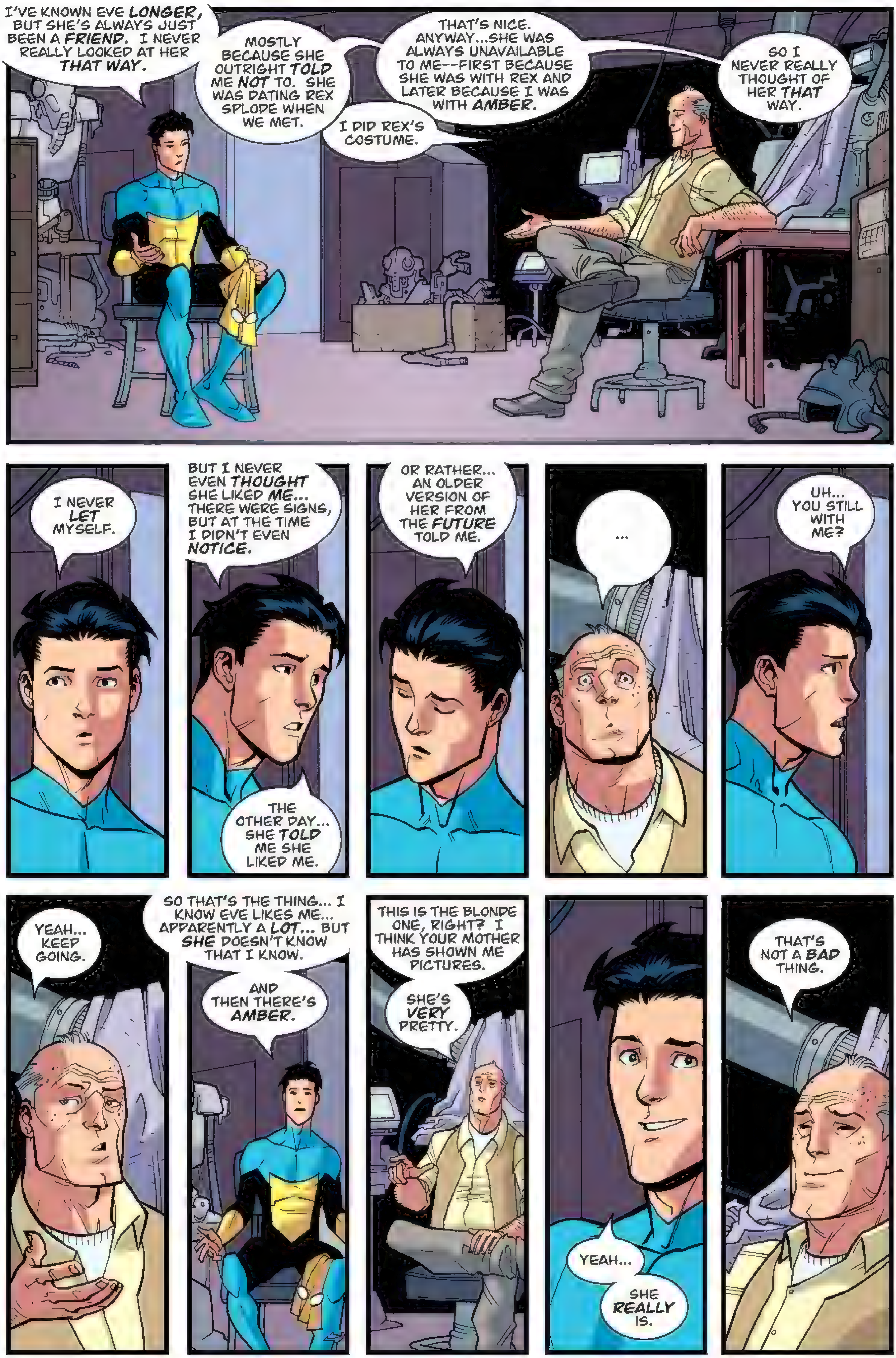

MAN... IF I'D HAVE GONE UP AGAINST YOU A COUPLE *MONTHS* AGO--YOU PROBABLY WOULD HAVE KICKED MY BUTT.
UNGH
GOOD THING I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT.
GREAT JOB, MARK. YOU REALLY DID SOME *GOOD* HERE.
THIS GUY COULD HAVE LEVELED A WHOLE CITY IF YOU HADN'T INTERVENED. I'M JUST GLAD WE WERE ABLE TO EVACUATE THE AREA BEFORE ANYONE WAS *KILLED.*
GLAD I COULD HELP. YOU'VE GOT A CLEAN-UP CREW COMING, RIGHT? I MEAN, CAN I *GO* NOW? I KINDA HAVE SOMEWHERE TO *BE.*
SURE, GO KNOCK YOURSELF OUT. I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT OF MY *OWN* AS WELL--AND I KNOW HOW TO REACH YOU IF I NEED YOU.
COOL.

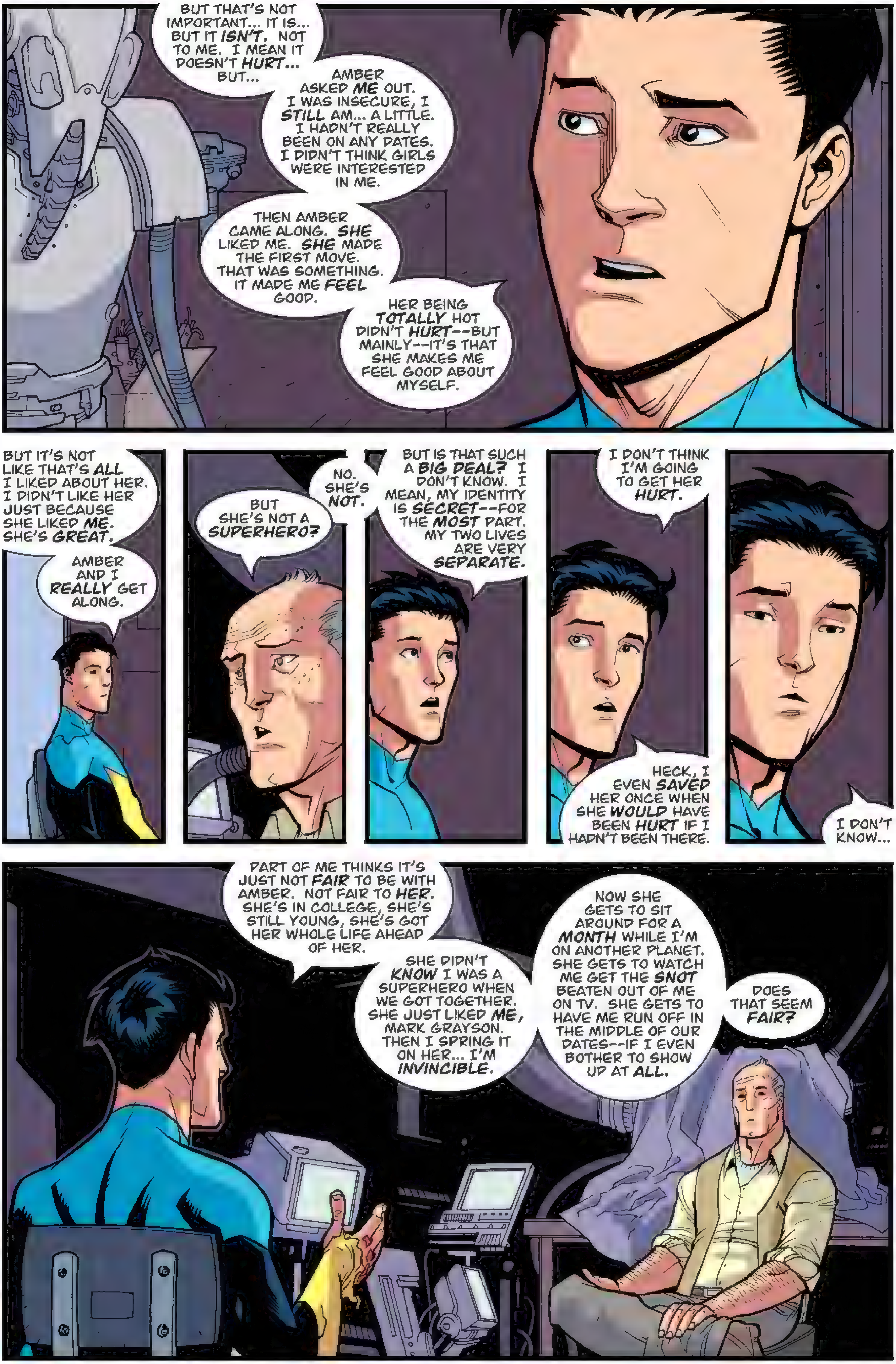

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET UNDERGROUND MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
CECIL'S APPOINTMENT.
I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU ALL TO ROBOT-- THE REAL ROBOT.
HELLO.
WHAT THE--?!
I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO BE A LITTLE HARD TO BELIEVE. WE HAVE RUN SOME TESTS... THIS IS LEGIT. REX, I KNOW THIS WILL PROBABLY BE THE MOST SHOCKING FOR YOU... AS THIS IS ALSO A CLONED VERSION OF YOUR BODY... BUT PLEASE, HEAR HIM OUT.
ROBOT, IF YOU WOULD.
OKAY.
I KNOW THIS MAY BE HARD FOR SOME OF YOU, BUT THE ROBOT YOU KNOW... THE... ROBOT ONE... WAS SIMPLY AN AUTOMATION.
MY REASONS FOR THIS ARE VERY COMPLICATED, BUT AS MY COLLEAGUES I BELIEVE YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW...

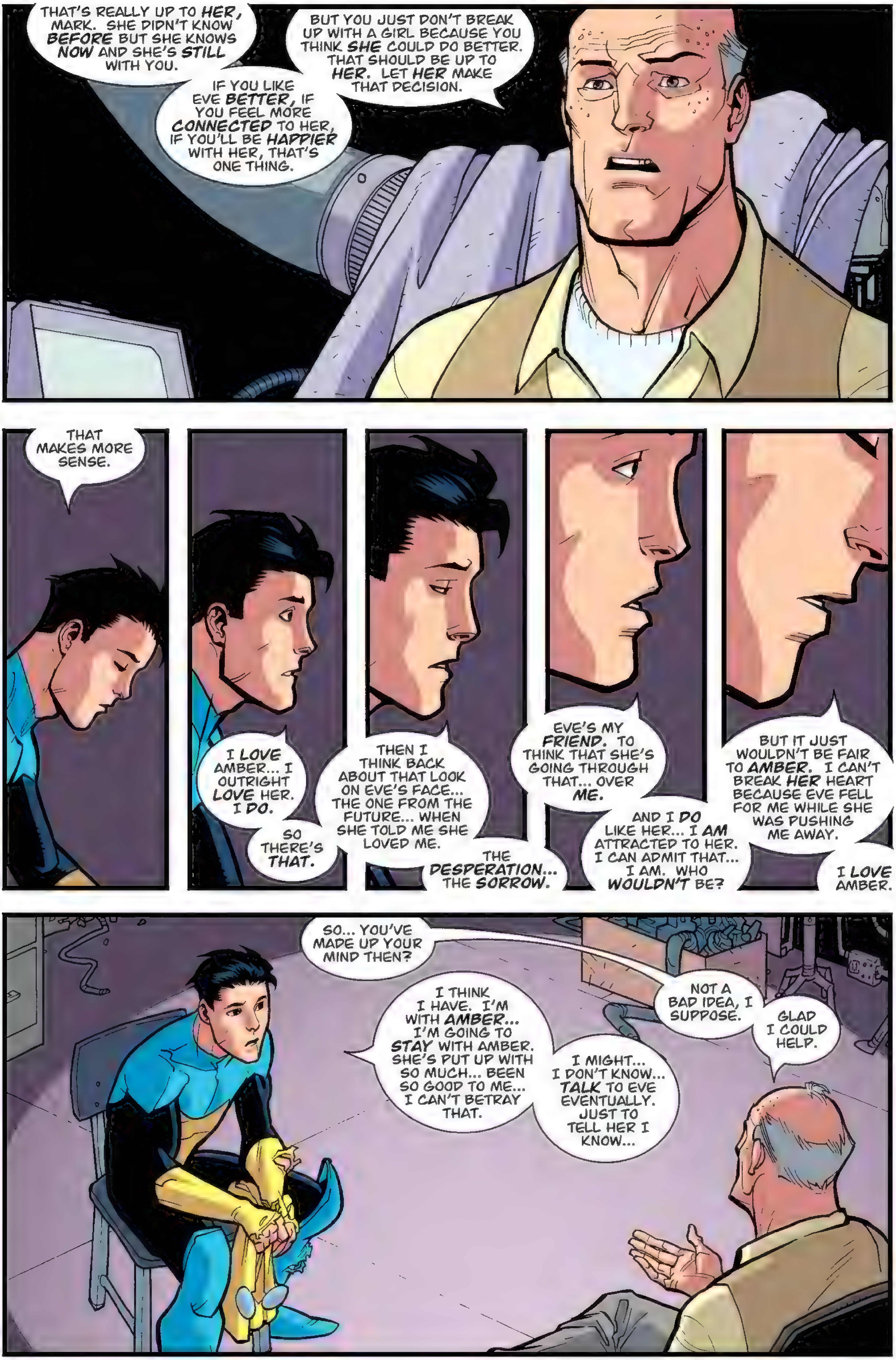

LATER. AFTER A VERY LONG, CONVOLUTED AND TO SOME (REX), CONFUSING EXPLANATION.
I DID THIS FOR YOU, Y'KNOW.
WHAT WAS THAT?
WHILE TRYING TO FIND A CURE FOR YOUR CONDITION... I BECAME ENAMORED WITH YOUR PLIGHT, WHICH MIRRORED MINE. IN GETTING TO KNOW YOU, I WAS FASCINATED BY YOUR ABILITY TO COPE... IT INSPIRED ME.
FOR SO LONG I HAD BEEN CONTENT TO LIVE LIFE THROUGH THOSE MECHANICAL EYES-- NEVER LONGING FOR ANYTHING MORE, UNTIL I MET YOU.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, RIGHT? I MEAN, THAT WOULD BE TOTALLY CREEPY.
NO, I BARELY KNOW YOU-- THAT WOULD BE MORONIC AND I'M ONE OF THE SMARTEST PEOPLE ON THE PLANET. MY FEELINGS FOR YOU ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT. RESPECT, ADMIRATION... YOU'VE MOVED ME.
IT'S TRUE THAT I CLONED REX SIMPLY BECAUSE HIS FORM WAS PLEASING TO YOUR EYE--BUT I WOULD NEVER PRESUME SOMETHING LIKE THAT WOULD BE THE PRETEXT TO A RELATIONSHIP.
I'M NOT CRAZY. I'M A GENIUS.
GOOD, BECAUSE I'M NOT ATTRACTED TO CHILDREN--WHICH Y'KNOW, IS PART OF THE PROBLEM.
YOU ARE KINDA CUTE, THOUGH.
I GUESS WE COULD HANG OUT SOME TIME, IF YOU WANTED. THE TWO OF US COULD SPEND TIME TOGETHER WITHOUT TURNING ANY HEADS. IT COULD BE FUN.
IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANY FRIENDS OR ANYTHING.
SOUNDS GOOD.
PHASE TWO IS UNDERWAY...

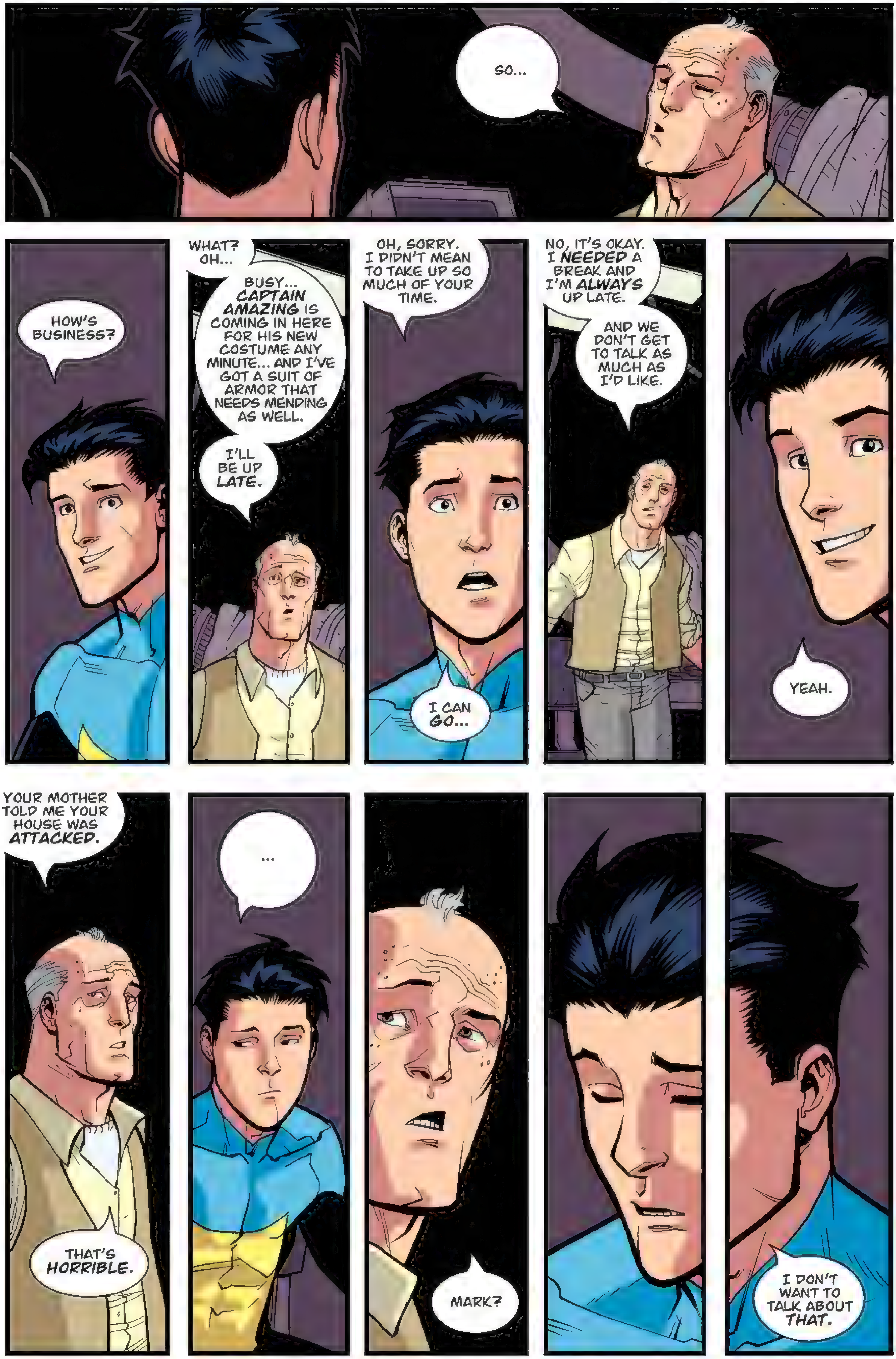

THE UNASSUMING TAILOR SHOP OF ARTHUR ROSENBAUM.
UNBEKNOWNST TO HIS CUSTOMERS, THE BULK OF ART'S INCOME IS GENERATED BY DESIGNING AND CREATING COSTUMES FOR SUPERHEROES.
TAILOR SHOPPE
I TOLD YOU IT'D BE ANOTHER FOUR HOURS. I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE EAGER TO SHOW OFF THE NEW LOOK BUT IF YOU RUSH ME IT'S JUST GOING TO LOOK TERRIBLE.
UH... ART?
OH, HEY, MARK... I THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEONE ELSE.
WHAT YOU WORKING ON THERE?
I'M AFRAID THAT'S CONFIDENTIAL, SON. YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT TO SEE IT IN ACTION JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
THIS CLIENT IS VERY PARTICULAR.
I SUPPOSE I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.
DO YOU HAVE TIME TO TALK?
FOR YOU? OF COURSE I DO.
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

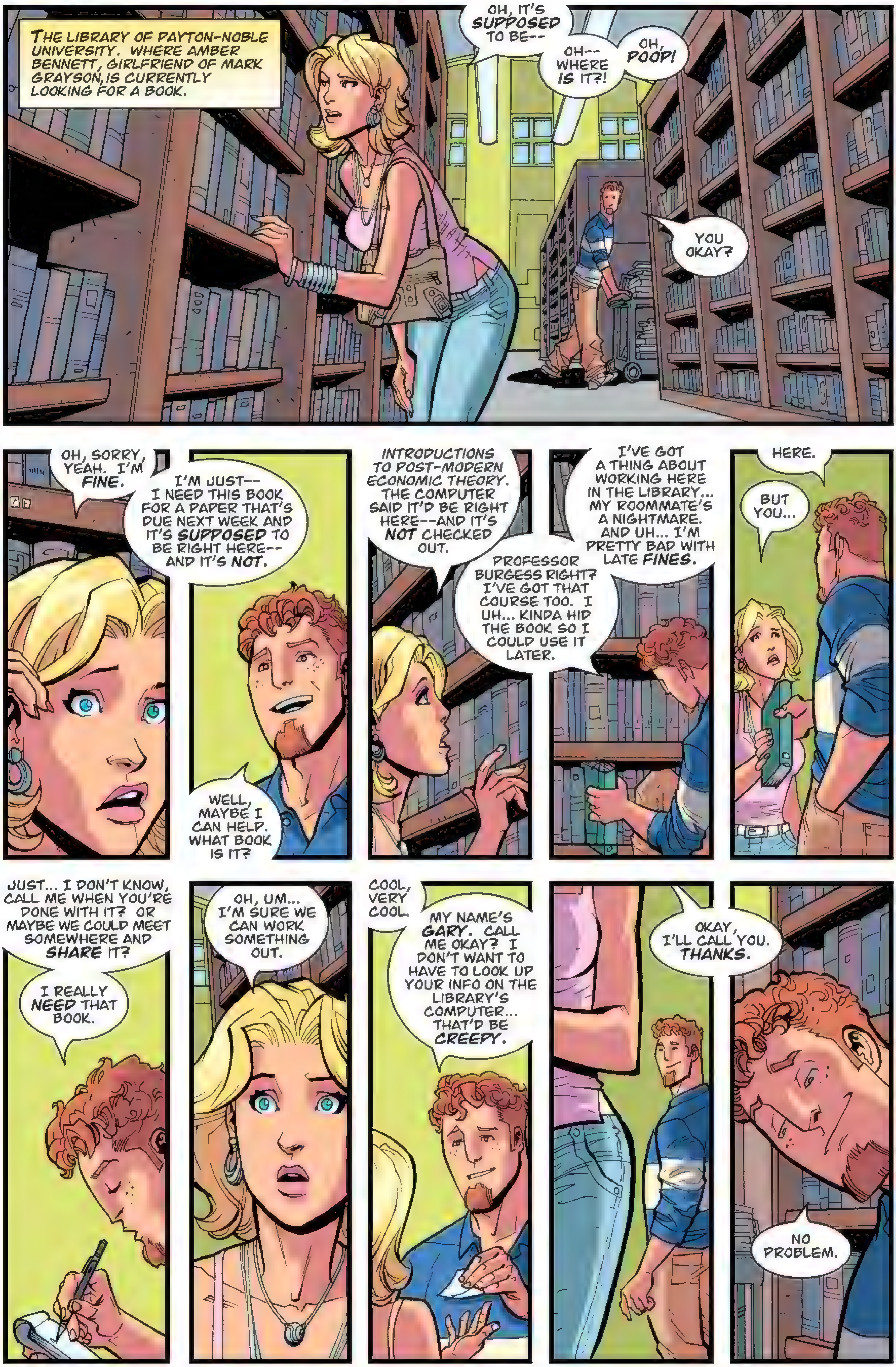

A BUNCH OF STUFF. STUFF I CAN'T TALK TO MY *MOM* ABOUT... AND MY FRIEND WILLIAM IS BEING A JERK RIGHT NOW... SO *YOU* GOT NOMINATED.
GOOD TO KNOW I'M *THIRD*.
UH... YEAH. SO I REALLY DON'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE I COULD TALK TO. I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT.
IT'S GIRL STUFF.
MY *SPECIALTY*.
LAY IT ON ME.
WELL, THERE ARE THESE TWO GIRLS...
AMBER, MY GIRLFRIEND.
AND EVE, MY FRIEND, AND FELLOW SUPERHERO.
WHOA, THERE! TREAD CAREFULLY FROM HERE ON OUT. CERTAIN DETAILS COULD BE HAZARDOUS TO MY AGING HEART.
SHE CAN ONLY BEAT SO *FAST*, Y'KNOW.
UH... I DON'T HAVE DETAILS LIKE *THAT*. IT'S NOTHING LIKE *THAT*... REALLY.
IT'S JUST... THEY *BOTH* KINDA *LIKE* ME, Y'KNOW... IN *THAT* WAY.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU HAVE GIRL *PROBLEMS*.
I DON'T HEAR THE PROBLEM. YOU JUST NEED TO PICK ONE AND MOVE ON.
IT'S NOT THAT *SIMPLE*.
HOW IS IT NOT THAT SIMPLE?
I KINDA LIKE THEM *BOTH*.
WELL, THAT *IS* A PROBLEM.
I *TOLD* YOU.

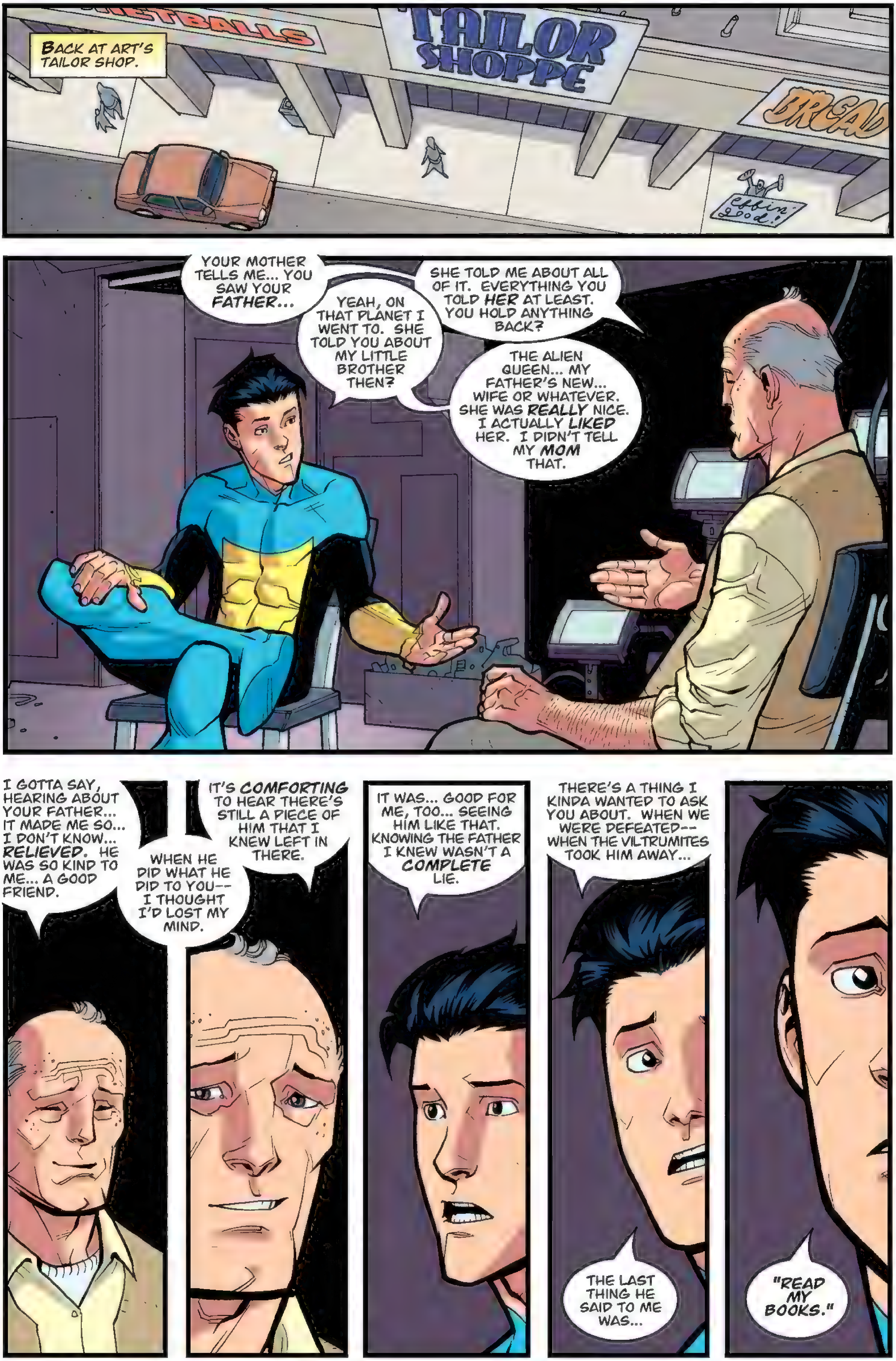

I'VE KNOWN EVE LONGER, BUT SHE'S ALWAYS JUST BEEN A FRIEND. I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT HER THAT WAY.
MOSTLY BECAUSE SHE OUTRIGHT TOLD ME NOT TO. SHE WAS DATING REX SPLODE WHEN WE MET.
I DID REX'S COSTUME.
THAT'S NICE. ANYWAY...SHE WAS ALWAYS UNAVAILABLE TO ME--FIRST BECAUSE SHE WAS WITH REX AND LATER BECAUSE I WAS WITH AMBER.
SO I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT OF HER THAT WAY.
I NEVER LET MYSELF.
BUT I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT SHE LIKED ME... THERE WERE SIGNS, BUT AT THE TIME I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE.
THE OTHER DAY... SHE TOLD ME SHE LIKED ME.
OR RATHER... AN OLDER VERSION OF HER FROM THE FUTURE TOLD ME.
...
UH... YOU STILL WITH ME?
YEAH... KEEP GOING.
SO THAT'S THE THING... I KNOW EVE LIKES ME... APPARENTLY A LOT... BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT I KNOW.
AND THEN THERE'S AMBER.
THIS IS THE BLONDE ONE, RIGHT? I THINK YOUR MOTHER HAS SHOWN ME PICTURES.
SHE'S VERY PRETTY.
YEAH...
SHE REALLY IS.
THAT'S NOT A BAD THING.

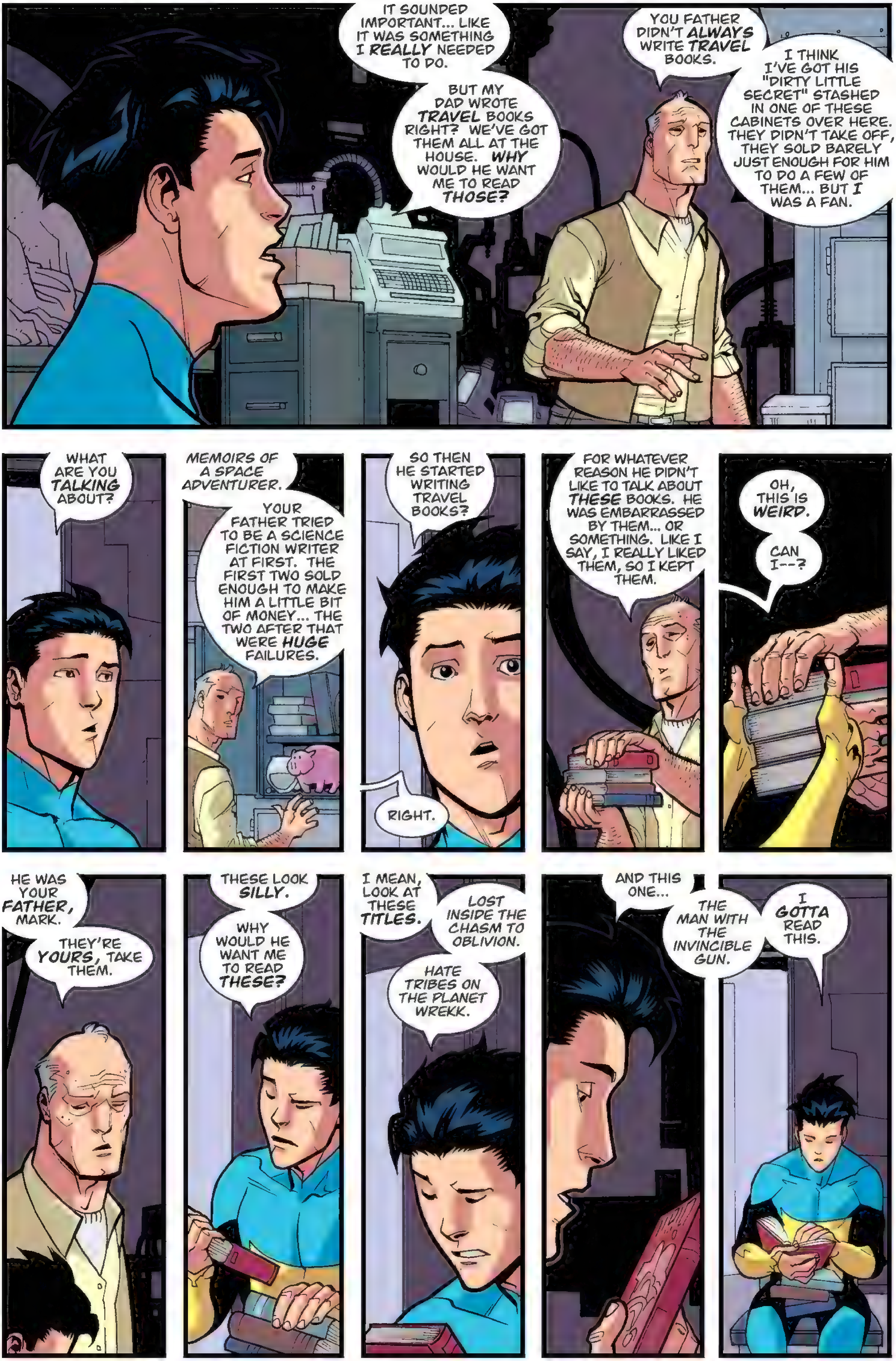

BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT... IT IS... BUT IT *ISN'T*. NOT TO ME. I MEAN IT DOESN'T *HURT*... BUT...
AMBER ASKED *ME* OUT. I WAS INSECURE, I *STILL* AM... A LITTLE. I HADN'T REALLY BEEN ON ANY DATES. I DIDN'T THINK GIRLS WERE INTERESTED IN ME.
THEN AMBER CAME ALONG. *SHE* LIKED ME. *SHE* MADE THE FIRST MOVE. THAT WAS SOMETHING. IT MADE ME *FEEL* GOOD.
HER BEING *TOTALLY* HOT DIDN'T *HURT*--BUT MAINLY--IT'S THAT SHE MAKES ME FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THAT'S *ALL* I LIKED ABOUT HER. I DIDN'T LIKE HER JUST BECAUSE SHE LIKED *ME*. SHE'S *GREAT*.
AMBER AND I *REALLY* GET ALONG.
BUT SHE'S NOT A *SUPERHERO?*
NO. SHE'S *NOT*.
BUT IS THAT SUCH A *BIG DEAL?* I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, MY IDENTITY IS *SECRET*--FOR THE *MOST* PART. MY TWO LIVES ARE VERY *SEPARATE*.
I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO GET HER *HURT*.
HECK, I EVEN *SAVED* HER ONCE WHEN SHE *WOULD* HAVE BEEN *HURT* IF I HADN'T BEEN THERE.
I DON'T KNOW...
PART OF ME THINKS IT'S JUST NOT *FAIR* TO BE WITH AMBER. NOT FAIR TO *HER*. SHE'S IN COLLEGE, SHE'S STILL YOUNG, SHE'S GOT HER WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HER.
SHE DIDN'T *KNOW* I WAS A SUPERHERO WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER. SHE JUST LIKED *ME*, MARK GRAYSON. THEN I SPRING IT ON HER... I'M *INVINCIBLE*.
NOW SHE GETS TO SIT AROUND FOR A *MONTH* WHILE I'M ON ANOTHER PLANET. SHE GETS TO WATCH ME GET THE *SNOT* BEATEN OUT OF ME ON TV. SHE GETS TO HAVE ME RUN OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR DATES--IF I EVEN BOTHER TO SHOW UP AT *ALL*.
DOES THAT SEEM *FAIR?*


THAT'S REALLY UP TO HER, MARK. SHE DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE BUT SHE KNOWS NOW AND SHE'S STILL WITH YOU.
IF YOU LIKE EVE BETTER, IF YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO HER, IF YOU'LL BE HAPPIER WITH HER, THAT'S ONE THING.
BUT YOU JUST DON'T BREAK UP WITH A GIRL BECAUSE YOU THINK SHE COULD DO BETTER. THAT SHOULD BE UP TO HER. LET HER MAKE THAT DECISION.
THAT MAKES MORE SENSE.
I LOVE AMBER... I OUTRIGHT LOVE HER. I DO.
SO THERE'S THAT.
THEN I THINK BACK ABOUT THAT LOOK ON EVE'S FACE... THE ONE FROM THE FUTURE... WHEN SHE TOLD ME SHE LOVED ME.
THE DESPERATION... THE SORROW.
EVE'S MY FRIEND. TO THINK THAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH THAT... OVER ME.
AND I DO LIKE HER... I AM ATTRACTED TO HER. I CAN ADMIT THAT... I AM. WHO WOULDN'T BE?
BUT IT JUST WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO AMBER. I CAN'T BREAK HER HEART BECAUSE EVE FELL FOR ME WHILE SHE WAS PUSHING ME AWAY.
I LOVE AMBER.
SO... YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND THEN?
I THINK I HAVE. I'M WITH AMBER... I'M GOING TO STAY WITH AMBER. SHE'S PUT UP WITH SO MUCH... BEEN SO GOOD TO ME... I CAN'T BETRAY THAT.
I MIGHT... I DON'T KNOW... TALK TO EVE EVENTUALLY. JUST TO TELL HER I KNOW...
NOT A BAD IDEA, I SUPPOSE.
GLAD I COULD HELP.


SO...
HOW'S BUSINESS?
WHAT? OH...
BUSY... CAPTAIN AMAZING IS COMING IN HERE FOR HIS NEW COSTUME ANY MINUTE... AND I'VE GOT A SUIT OF ARMOR THAT NEEDS MENDING AS WELL.
I'LL BE UP LATE.
OH, SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO TAKE UP SO MUCH OF YOUR TIME.
I CAN GO...
NO, IT'S OKAY. I NEEDED A BREAK AND I'M ALWAYS UP LATE.
AND WE DON'T GET TO TALK AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE.
YEAH.
YOUR MOTHER TOLD ME YOUR HOUSE WAS ATTACKED.
THAT'S HORRIBLE.
...
MARK?
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.


THE LIBRARY OF PAYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY. WHERE AMBER BENNETT, GIRLFRIEND OF MARK GRAYSON, IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A BOOK.
OH, IT'S **SUPPOSED** TO BE--
OH-- WHERE **IS** IT?!
OH, **POOP!**
YOU OKAY?
OH, SORRY, YEAH. I'M **FINE.**
I'M JUST-- I NEED THIS BOOK FOR A PAPER THAT'S DUE NEXT WEEK AND IT'S **SUPPOSED** TO BE RIGHT HERE-- AND IT'S **NOT.**
WELL, MAYBE I CAN HELP. WHAT BOOK IS IT?
INTRODUCTIONS TO POST-MODERN ECONOMIC THEORY. THE COMPUTER SAID IT'D BE RIGHT HERE--AND IT'S **NOT** CHECKED OUT.
PROFESSOR BURGESS RIGHT? I'VE GOT THAT COURSE TOO. I UH... KINDA HID THE BOOK SO I COULD USE IT LATER.
I'VE GOT A THING ABOUT WORKING HERE IN THE LIBRARY... MY ROOMMATE'S A NIGHTMARE. AND UH... I'M PRETTY BAD WITH LATE **FINES.**
HERE.
BUT YOU...
JUST... I DON'T KNOW, CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH IT? OR MAYBE WE COULD MEET SOMEWHERE AND **SHARE** IT?
I REALLY **NEED** THAT BOOK.
OH, UM... I'M SURE WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT.
COOL, VERY COOL.
MY NAME'S **GARY.** CALL ME OKAY? I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO LOOK UP YOUR INFO ON THE LIBRARY'S COMPUTER... THAT'D BE **CREEPY.**
OKAY, I'LL CALL YOU. **THANKS.**
NO PROBLEM.


BACK AT ART'S TAILOR SHOP.
ETBALLS
TAILOR SHOPPE
BREAD
Effin' good!
YOUR MOTHER TELLS ME... YOU SAW YOUR *FATHER*...
YEAH, ON THAT PLANET I WENT TO. SHE TOLD YOU ABOUT MY LITTLE BROTHER THEN?
SHE TOLD ME ABOUT ALL OF IT. EVERYTHING YOU TOLD *HER* AT LEAST. YOU HOLD ANYTHING BACK?
THE ALIEN QUEEN... MY FATHER'S NEW... WIFE OR WHATEVER. SHE WAS *REALLY* NICE. I ACTUALLY *LIKED* HER. I DIDN'T TELL MY *MOM* THAT.
I GOTTA SAY, HEARING ABOUT YOUR FATHER... IT MADE ME SO... I DON'T KNOW... *RELIEVED*. HE WAS SO KIND TO ME... A GOOD FRIEND.
WHEN HE DID WHAT HE DID TO YOU-- I THOUGHT I'D LOST MY MIND.
IT'S *COMFORTING* TO HEAR THERE'S STILL A PIECE OF HIM THAT I KNEW LEFT IN THERE.
IT WAS... GOOD FOR ME, TOO... SEEING HIM LIKE THAT. KNOWING THE FATHER I KNEW WASN'T A *COMPLETE* LIE.
THERE'S A THING I KINDA WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT. WHEN WE WERE DEFEATED-- WHEN THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY...
THE LAST THING HE SAID TO ME WAS...
"READ MY BOOKS."


IT SOUNDED IMPORTANT... LIKE IT WAS SOMETHING I **REALLY** NEEDED TO DO.
BUT MY DAD WROTE **TRAVEL** BOOKS RIGHT? WE'VE GOT THEM ALL AT THE HOUSE. **WHY** WOULD HE WANT ME TO READ **THOSE?**
YOU FATHER DIDN'T **ALWAYS** WRITE **TRAVEL** BOOKS.
I THINK I'VE GOT HIS "DIRTY LITTLE SECRET" STASHED IN ONE OF THESE CABINETS OVER HERE. THEY DIDN'T TAKE OFF, THEY SOLD BARELY JUST ENOUGH FOR HIM TO DO A FEW OF THEM... BUT **I** WAS A FAN.
WHAT ARE YOU **TALKING** ABOUT?
MEMOIRS OF A SPACE ADVENTURER.
YOUR FATHER TRIED TO BE A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER AT FIRST. THE FIRST TWO SOLD ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM A LITTLE BIT OF MONEY... THE TWO AFTER THAT WERE **HUGE** FAILURES.
SO THEN HE STARTED WRITING TRAVEL BOOKS?
RIGHT.
FOR WHATEVER REASON HE DIDN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT **THESE** BOOKS. HE WAS EMBARRASSED BY THEM... OR SOMETHING. LIKE I SAY, I REALLY LIKED THEM, SO I KEPT THEM.
OH, THIS IS **WEIRD.**
CAN I--?
HE WAS YOUR **FATHER,** MARK.
THEY'RE **YOURS,** TAKE THEM.
THESE LOOK **SILLY.**
WHY WOULD HE WANT ME TO READ **THESE?**
I MEAN, LOOK AT THESE **TITLES.**
LOST INSIDE THE CHASM TO OBLIVION.
HATE TRIBES ON THE PLANET WREKK.
AND THIS ONE...
THE MAN WITH THE INVINCIBLE GUN.
I **GOTTA** READ THIS.

how he obtained the weapon, or where it came from. The origins of the weapon are completely unknown to the empire. All that is known are its capabilities.

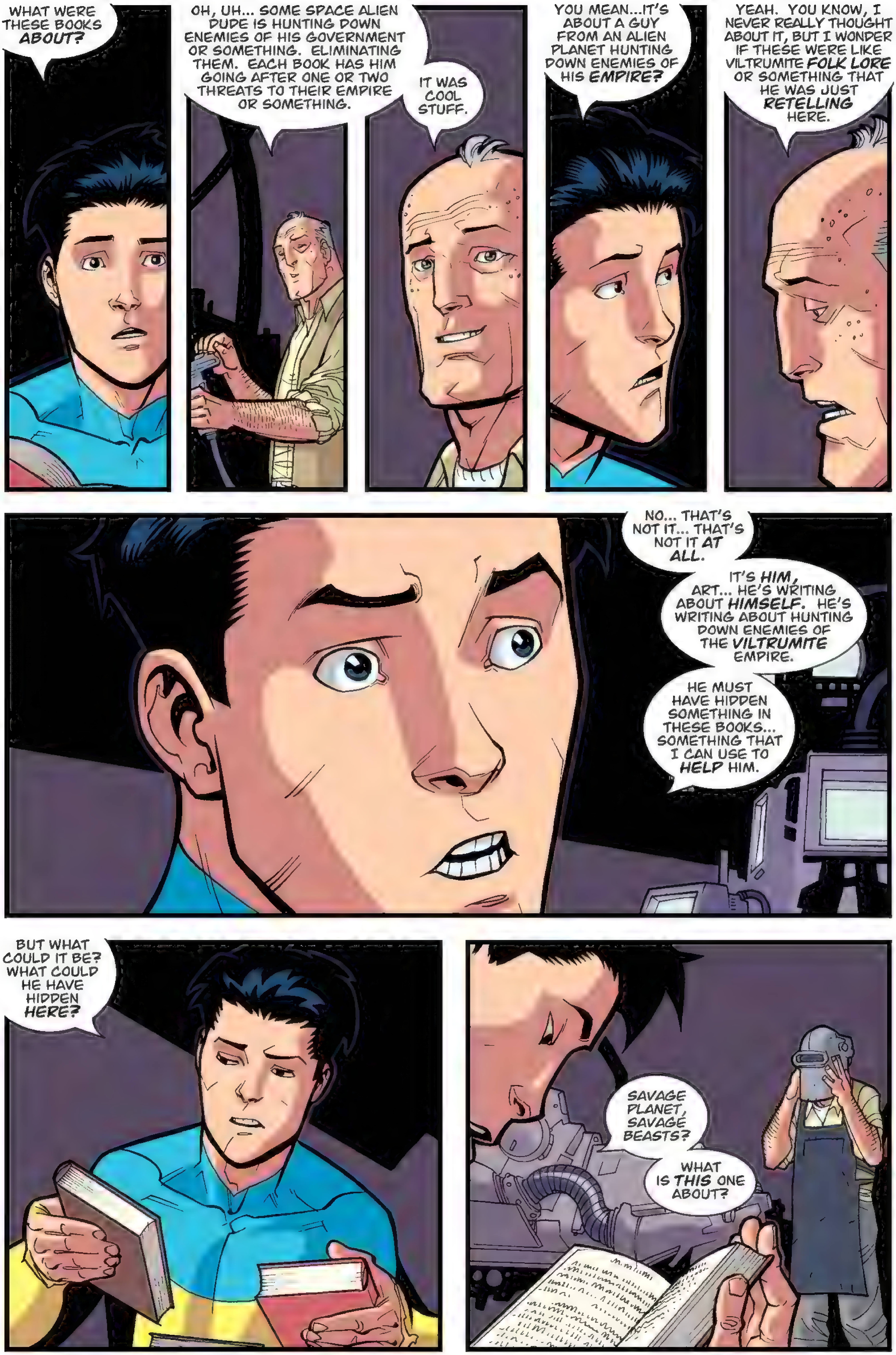
The information was gathered from thousands of sources. Sketchy eyewitness accounts, damaged artifacts--evidence of the weapon's power--everything points to the same conclusion. This weapon--the infinity ray--emitted an energy wave that was unstoppable. It was said that blasts from this infinity ray still race through the cosmos, blasting a path through anything they encounter. Planets, Stars, Ships--anything in their path is destroyed. Again, this is only a theory. No one has ever gotten close enough to study the infinity ray for themselves. The Space Rider made sure of that.

Whether the story was true or not, I had my mission. I was to hunt down the Space Rider, determine whether or not the stories of his weapon were true and if so, arrest him. He was to stand trial for offenses against the empire. Were his weapon as powerful as it was fabled to be he was a huge threat. I left at once.

Little was known about the Space Rider, where he lived, what quadrant of space he operated in, all was a mystery. He had become the stuff of legend. Stories of him stretch across the twelve galaxies. He was said to be in two places at once. Stories were conflicting with each other. Finding him would be no easy task. Yet it was a task I had to complete. I dare not fail my people. I knew what was at stake. Our very way of life.

At first, I studied the stories for similarities, common elements. Anything that made it possible for me to tell fact from fiction--if there was any fact to these stories. In time I would find that the Space Rider and his weapon were very real--and as far fetched as they were, its capabilities were that of tall tales. But it would take me nearly fifteen years to discover this.

The first clue came when I was contacted by a former subordinate of The Space Rider who was willing to inform me of his possible whereabouts. With


WHAT WERE THESE BOOKS *ABOUT?*
OH, UH... SOME SPACE ALIEN DUDE IS HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF HIS GOVERNMENT OR SOMETHING. ELIMINATING THEM. EACH BOOK HAS HIM GOING AFTER ONE OR TWO THREATS TO THEIR EMPIRE OR SOMETHING.
IT WAS COOL STUFF.
YOU MEAN...IT'S ABOUT A GUY FROM AN ALIEN PLANET HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF HIS *EMPIRE?*
YEAH. YOU KNOW, I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT I WONDER IF THESE WERE LIKE VILTRUMITE *FOLK LORE* OR SOMETHING THAT HE WAS JUST *RETELLING* HERE.
NO... THAT'S NOT IT... THAT'S NOT IT *AT ALL.*
IT'S *HIM,* ART... HE'S WRITING ABOUT *HIMSELF.* HE'S WRITING ABOUT HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF THE *VILTRUMITE* EMPIRE.
HE MUST HAVE HIDDEN SOMETHING IN THESE BOOKS... SOMETHING THAT I CAN USE TO *HELP* HIM.
BUT WHAT COULD IT BE? WHAT COULD HE HAVE HIDDEN *HERE?*
SAVAGE PLANET, SAVAGE BEASTS?
WHAT IS *THIS* ONE ABOUT?

and at once, I knew I had made a grave mistake. In an instant I was surrounded, swarmed, overwhelmed. It was unclear if I would make it out alive. I had grossly underestimated the situation.

The mission was clear, investigate the inhabitants of this harsh planet, determine their exact threat level to the empire, and then report back for further instructions. It appeared then that I might not make it back to receive those instructions. It was clear the threat level was high. With almost minimal effort I was quickly injured. These creatures were fast. They seemed to come out of nowhere. I did not have time to react. My life was immediately in danger.

The size of these beasts was deceiving. They were barely twice my size. I've battled creatures ten times their size with infinitely less effort. The planet they inhabit caused them to evolve into such tough creatures. The gravitational quotient on this unnamed planet was so severe they had to be stronger than most to simply be able to move. They were remarkable creatures. In hindsight I can look at them scientifically and I find a tremendous respect for them.

At the time I felt differently. I just wanted to survive, if that meant wiping out the entire race, I would have done it, as harsh as that sounds.

With every attempt to reach the sky and escape to the stars, I was thwarted, pulled back into the heap, ravaged all over again. While these creatures did not possess the ability to fly they could jump long distances and high into the air with their powerful legs. Any attempt to fly was met with a swift attack from one or more that resulted in my falling back to the planet's surface. It was clear that strategy was not going to work.

I began trying to fight my way through the horde. If I could push through them, maybe I could get far enough away from them fast enough to make my escape. The problem with that strategy was that I was under constant attack. I could feel the flesh being ripped from my bones as I pressed on. This method of escape was not going

OH, GOD... OH, *MAN*...
WHAT IS IT, MARK?
THESE BOOKS, THEY-- I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW...
MOIRS OF A SPACE DVENTURER
SAVAGE PLANET SAVAGE BEASTS
YEAH, THE THINGS MY DAD WROTE ABOUT HERE ARE REAL, THEY HAVE TO BE...
AND IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT *ENEMIES* OF THE VILTRUMITES... IT'S ABOUT ELIMINATING THINGS THAT CAN *HURT* THEM.
THINGS THAT CAN *HURT* VILTRUMITES...
MY DAD IS TELLING ME HOW TO *BEAT* THEM.

CHECK IT OUT! INVINCIBLE, SHADOWHAWK, FIREBREATHER, AND ZEPHYR TOGETHER in
THE PACT™
HURRY UP WITH YOUR GRAVES, FIREBREATHER AND ZEPHYR! I'D FINISH YOU MYSELF, BUT... HA,HA...I HAVE A CODE AGAINST KILLING...
...SO I'LL DO THE JOB, BOYS!
"DIG NOW, DIE LATER!"
RIP
JASON HOWARD
AFTER WF 195

PROGRESS, UTAH.
HERBERT HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL.
STOP
HERBERT HOOVER
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT *DUNCAN* IS NEEDED IN THE OFFICE.
DUNCAN, CAN YOU COME WITH ME?
YEAH, UH... *SURE.*
PHYSICS
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?
DUNCAN, COME IN. *SIT DOWN.* THIS GENTLEMAN HERE IS MAYOR WILLIAMS FROM TOOELE, A COUPLE COUNTIES OVER. HE'S GOT A--*FAVOR* TO ASK.
SON--I'M JUST GOING TO GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT--WE NEED YOUR HELP IN A *BIG* WAY.
LAVA MONSTERS, SON--THAT'S THE ONLY WAY WE CAN THINK TO DESCRIBE THEM. THEY BEEN TEARING THE TOWN ALL TO *HELL*. THE DRIVE-IN, THE STRIP MALL, AIN'T MANY PLACES THEY *HAVEN'T* HIT.
THEIR ATTACKS'RE GETTING MORE'N MORE FREQUENT--AND WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO *DO*.
WE SEEN YOU ON THE *NEWS*, FIGURED SINCE YOU'RE THIS BIG *HERO* NOW, FIGHTING YOUR *DAD* WITH THOSE OTHER KIDS, AND THAT METEOR MONSTER AND THAT BIG OL' *KNIGHT* THING OVER IN *ENGLAND* YOU'D HAVE NO TROUBLE FIGHTING THESE LAVA BOOGERS.
IT'S JUST THE *NEIGHBORLY* THING TO DO. SO, WHAT DO YOU SAY?
UM...
...CAN I THINK ABOUT IT?

LATER, AT HOME.
I MEAN--AM I QUALIFIED FOR THAT SORT OF THING? I'M JUST NOT SURE I WON'T SCREW IT UP.
SEEMS LIKE IT'D BE IRRESPONSIBLE FOR ME TO TAKE THIS ON.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DUNCAN--YOU GOT TO DO THIS--SIMPLE AS THAT. I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF, I UNDERSTAND THAT--BUT YOU WANT TO GET THESE HIGH SCHOOL KIDS OFF YOUR BACK AND BECOMING A LOCAL HERO WILL DO THAT.
IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT SCREWING THINGS UP, CALL YOUR LITTLE SUPERHERO FRIENDS. Y'KNOW, THE CHROME GUY FROM NEW YORK, INVINCIBLE, AND THAT SLUT FROM THE NOBLES.
YOU'RE PALS WITH THEM NOW, RIGHT? CALL THEM. THEY CAN TAKE SOME OF THE BLAME IF YOU SCREW UP AT THE VERY LEAST...
BUT I'M TELLING YOU--YOU HAVE TO DO THIS.
THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA... I COULD CALL THOSE GUYS. SHADOWHAWK WOULD PROBABLY BE THRILLED TO HELP.
I THINK I'LL DO THAT. THANKS, COLONEL BARNES.
GLAD I COULD HELP, KID. I'M GOING TO LET YOU GO NOW--I NEED TO SHOOT MY GUN AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN TALK OVER THAT.
IF YOU NEED ME, CALL.
WILL DO.
THANKS AGAIN.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
COLLINS ELECTRIC.
COLLINS ELECTR
AREN'T YOU A LITTLE LATE? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE AN HOUR AGO.
I WAS-- WELL--
OUT PATROLLING?
YEAH-- ACTUALLY, YEAH.
EDDIE, JEEZ-- DON'T YOU HAVE HOMEWORK TO DO? YOU CAN'T SPEND ALL YOUR FREE TIME OUT THERE PLAYING HERO.
I KNOW-- IT'S JUST THAT--
I'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, EDDIE. JUST GET STARTED ON YOUR HOMEWORK.
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT--YOUR FRIEND DUNCAN CALLED.
OH MY GOD-- FIREBREATHER CALLED?! WHAT DID HE WANT?!
WELL, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE YOU COULD HAVE ASKED HIM.

DON'T WORRY--I CAN FILL HIM IN ON THE WAY.
C'MON SHADOWHAWK--YOU READY TO PLAY SUPERHERO?
FINE--GO ON.
THANKS DAD!
JUST MAKE SURE YOU LEAVE OUT OF ONE OF THE WINDOWS *UPSTAIRS*--I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO *SEE* YOU.
GOOD MEETING YOU, SHADOWHAWK'S DAD.
YOU TOO, INVINCIBLE.

AFTER A SHORT FLIGHT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
THEY SHOULD BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE. AT LEAST--THAT'S WHAT DUNCAN SAID...
THERE--IS THAT THEM?
LOOK WHO DECIDED TO SHOW UP.
NO FAIR--I HAD TO FIND OUT WHERE SHADOWHAWK *LIVED* SINCE HE WASN'T ANSWERING HIS PHONE.
WHERE IS EVERYONE ANYWAY? I THOUGHT WE WERE SAVING SOME TOWN OR SOMETHING. SHOULDN'T A MAYOR BE HERE TO TELL US WHAT TO DO?
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, ZEPHYR.
HE SORT OF POINTED US IN THIS DIRECTION AND SAID THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THIS *HOLE*. THEN THEY RAN FOR THE HILLS.
THIS IS KIND OF MY FIRST TRY AT SUPERHERO WORK. ANY IDEAS?
DON'T LOOK AT ME. I'M A FOLLOWER, NOT A LEADER.
C'MON--I'LL LEAD THE WAY. STAY BEHIND ME. ANYTHING THAT HITS US BY SURPRISE SHOULD BOUNCE OFF.
EVEN IF IT KNOCKS ME OUT IN THE PROCESS.

IT CAN'T BE TOO BAD...
...THE TOWN'S STILL STANDING, SO WE'VE FACED TOUGHER.
YOU'RE COUNTING MY FATHER AREN'T YOU? WHY WOULD YOU COUNT HIM?
HE COUNTS. I DON'T SEE WHY HE WOULDN'T COUNT...
IT'S GETTING KINDA DARK IN HERE. DUNCAN-- YOU THINK YOU COULD--?
CHECK IT OUT-- LAVA PEOPLE.
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG!

THEN, C'MON! LET'S BUST THESE THINGS *UP!*
THAT SEEMS LIKE AS GOOD A PLAN AS ANY.
WHATEVER YOU GUYS SAY.
SKROOOM!!
HANDS OFF CREEPS! I'M HOT ENOUGH AS IT IS!
VOOSH!

YOU KNOW WHAT, GUYS?
KLINK!
I THINK I NEED TO WORK ON MY BANTER.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE HOT?
GRAARR!!
VOOSH!!
SEE THAT'S H--

RUUUMMMBBBBLE
CROOM!
RUHH!!
JESUS! WHAT HAVE I DONE?!
CHOOM!!
NO TIME FOR REGRETS, MAN! WE'VE GOT TO GET THEM OUT OF THERE!

UH.
WE'RE NOT *DEAD?*
NOPE-- WE'RE OKAY... *SO FAR.*
WHERE DID YOUR COSTUME GO? YOU WEREN'T WEARING THAT *BEFORE* WERE YOU? I THOUGHT YOU HAD A COSTUME.
I *DID*-- IT'S WHAT'S KEEPING US FROM GETTING *CRUSHED* RIGHT NOW.
I DON'T NOW.
WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
OUT OF THE HELMET, I GUESS. I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT.
NO *WAY!* MY DAD WOULD CRAP HIS PANTS IF HE COULD SEE THIS STUFF! WHAT IS IT?
YOU JUMP OFF BUILDINGS IN THE STUFF AND YOU DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT?
I'VE, UH-- GOT THE VOICES OF THE *PAST* SHADOWHAWKS IN MY HEAD TO TELL ME WHAT TO *DO.* THEY KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS STUFF THAN I DO.
HELP!! GET ME OUT OF HERE!!

WHAM! WHAM!
GET ME AWAY FROM THIS GUY!
I'M TRYING NOT TO TAKE OFFENSE TO THIS.
WHAM! WHAM!
SOMEONE'S KNOCKING FROM THE OTHER SIDE.
OH, GOOD-- WE'RE NOT GOING TO SUFFOCATE, NOW.
ARE YOU GUYS OKAY?
WE ARE NOW.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
IT'S OKAY. I DIDN'T KNOW MY SUIT COULD DO THAT UNTIL NOW. THANKS, I GUESS.
WHERE'RE THE LAVA MONSTERS?
WE DON'T KNOW. THEY KINDA RETREATED AFTER DUNCAN WENT BERSERK. MAYBE WE SCARED THEM AWAY.
MAYBE THEY WON'T GO TO THE SURFACE AGAIN-- MAYBE WE'RE DONE.
DON'T COUNT ON IT!!

I SEE YOU'VE MET MY BELOVED ***MAGMANITES!*** SUCH GENTLE CREATURES-- ***UNLESS YOU CROSS THEM!***
DID YOU EVER THINK YOU'D SEE ME AGAIN, INVINCIBLE?! DID YOU THINK I WOULD SURVIVE AFTER YOU LET ME ***FALL TO MY DEATH?!****
WELL--I ***SURVIVED***-- EVEN ***THRIVED*** DOWN HERE. SURPRISED?
ARE YOU SURPRISED BY THE RETURN OF **DOC SEISMIC?!**
*SEE INVINCIBLE ISSUE #10.
CRAP.
SORRY, GUYS. THIS IS ONE OF ***MINE.***

YOURS?! I'M ONE OF YOURS?!
HOW DARE YOU CLAIM ME LIKE SOME LOWLY VILLAIN!
DOOOM!!
SKROOM!!
MOVE!!
NOT AGAIN!
I'M SORRY-- I CAN OVERREACT AT TIMES. IT'S TRUE. IT'S JUST THAT--I USED TO BE A HEAVYWEIGHT BEFORE FATHER TIME TOOK HIS TOLL ON ME.
THE IMMORTAL, CAPTAIN COSMIC, EVEN THE METEOR TWINS. I WAS BIG TIME. I STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO YOU ARE. I'M JUST--
OVERLY SENSITIVE.
BUT YOU-- I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE GOTTEN THE CHANCE TO RUN INTO YOU AGAIN. IT'S--IT'S LIKE FATE.
YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND-- I OWE YOU FOR STRANDING ME DOWN HERE.

I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU BEING ANGRY BUT IF YOU'LL THINK BACK ON THE EVENTS THAT LED TO YOU LIVING DOWN HERE YOU'LL RECALL I WAS TRYING TO SAVE YOU AT ONE POINT AND YOU SORT OF...
UH.
I OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.
REALLY?
YOUR VILLAINS ALWAYS LIKE THIS?
NO, NEVER. NOT EVEN ONCE.
I PROMISE.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MY LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE I ENCOUNTERED YOU AT MOUNT RUSHMORE THAT DAY.

I WAS OVER THE HILL, PAST MY PRIME--ALL THAT. MY GLORY DAYS WERE *GONE*. I KNEW IT. I WAS *VERY* BITTER ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T WANT TO ACCEPT IT.
THE FACT IS--I WOULD *NEVER* RULE A SMALL COUNTRY, HAVE A HORDE OF MINIONS, BE RESPECTED IN MY TWILIGHT YEARS THE WAY I THOUGHT I *DESERVED* TO BE.
OR RATHER--I *WOULDN'T* HAVE--IF YOU HADN'T COME ALONG.
MY COMING DOWN HERE WAS A *GIFT* FROM HEAVEN. I CAN'T COME UP WITH ANY OTHER WAY TO DESCRIBE IT. I AM *BLESSED*.
I HAVE EVERYTHING I COULD EVER WANT.
NOW I *HAVE* MY UNDERGROUND KINGDOM. I TRULY AM *ROYALTY* DOWN HERE. AND I HAVE MY LOYAL SUBJECTS...
...MY *MAGMANITES*.
AND IF I EVER NEED *ANYTHING*--I SIMPLY SEND THEM UP TO THE SURFACE TO TAKE IT. FOOD, MONEY, JEWELRY, *WHATEVER*.
I AM *TRULY* HAPPY HERE. I JUST WANT TO *THANK* YOU FOR THAT.
WOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. REALLY. JUST *WOW*.
I THINK THE ONLY WAY TO RESPOND TO THAT IS WITH A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED...

...INVINCIBLE PUNCH!
OKAY, HE'S OUT--I GUESS WE FIGHT THE ROCK GUYS AGAIN. GET READY--LET'S DO IT *RIGHT* THIS TIME. WE HIT THEM AS A TEAM AND--
ACTUALLY...
YEAH. LOOKS LIKE THE ROCK GUYS ARE BEATING FEET.
WOW, AND ALL IT TOOK WAS *ONE PUNCH*. I GUESS THEY FIGURE IF YOU'LL DECK AN OLD MAN LIKE THAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF *ANYTHING*.
MAYBE THEY'RE SMARTER THAN WE *THOUGHT*.

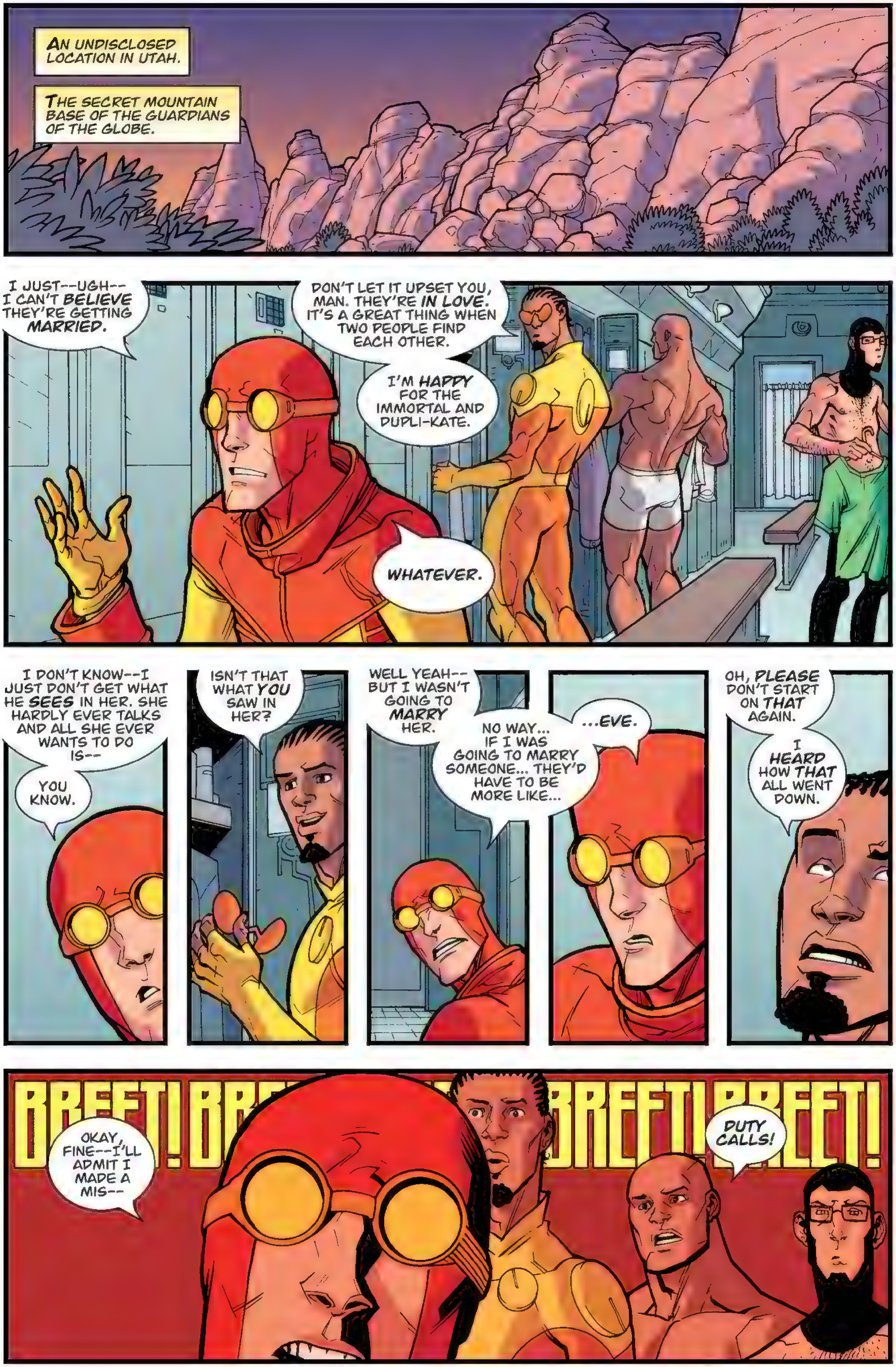
HEY, YOU GUYS DIDN'T FIGHT THIS GUY BEFORE. HE'S CRAZY, TRUST ME. HE WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THIS WHOLE CAVE DOWN ON US ONCE HE REALIZED I WASN'T GOING TO PAT HIM ON THE HEAD AND ALLOW HIM TO KEEP TERRORIZING THAT TOWN UP ABOVE.
THIS COULD HAVE GONE BADLY IF I HADN'T SUCKER PUNCHED HIM. WE COULD HAVE ALL BEEN HURT.
IF YOU SAY SO "INVINCIBLE."
WHATEVER. LET'S GET HIM UP TO THE SURFACE BEFORE HE WAKES UP. I'VE GOT TO GET HOME.
HEH. "INVINCIBLE PUNCH"?
YOU DON'T LIKE IT? I THOUGHT IT WAS APPROPRIATE.
SIGH
I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO RETIRE THAT, AFTER ALL. I THINK I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO THINKS IT'S COOL.
YOU THINK IT'S COOL?
SHUT UP.
I DON'T MEAN TO BE FORWARD OR ANYTHING, BUT... DO YOU MIND IF I CALL YOU? I MEAN, EVEN IF THERE ISN'T ANYTHING WE NEED TO GO FIGHT.
UH... SURE.
THAT'D BE OKAY... I GUESS.

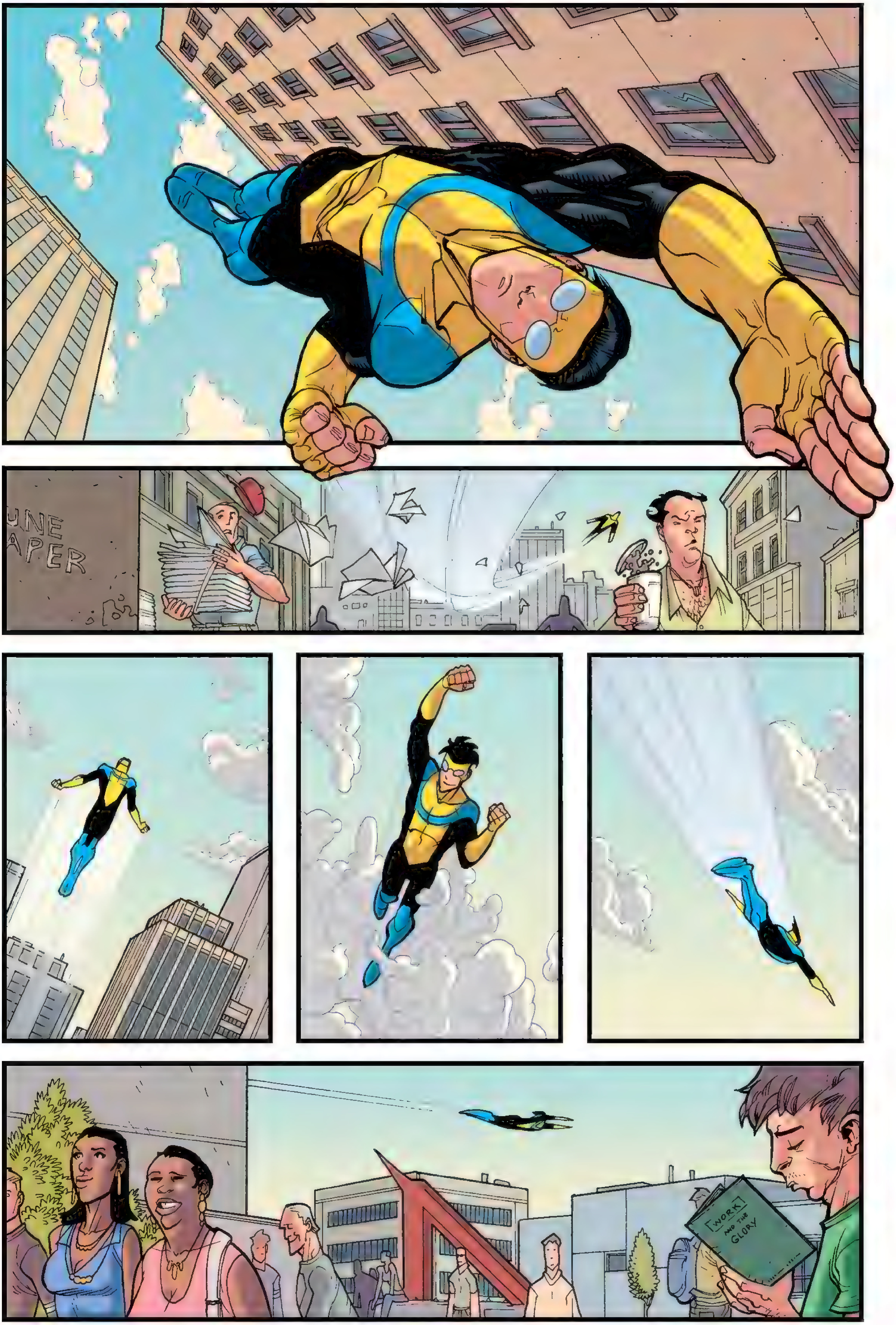
LATER THAT NIGHT.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, YOUNG LADY?
I'VE BEEN OUT DOING SUPERHERO STUFF. IT HAD TO BE ON THE NEWS-- I THOUGHT YOU'D BE PROUD OF ME.
MAYBE IF THE PHONE HADN'T BEEN RINGING OFF THE HOOK FOR THE LAST HOUR.
OH, NO-- YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME. HE COULDN'T BE--NOT ALREADY--?
THAT BOY SHADOWHAWK THAT YOU'VE BEEN HANGING OUT WITH. YOU TWO AREN'T--
GOD, NO--ARE YOU KIDDING ME? HE'S A WEIRDO-- LIKE--NOT EVEN IN A GOOD WAY.
GOOD. THAT PUTS MY MIND AT EASE.
WAIT--YOU DON'T LIKE HIM?
HEAVENS, NO. ALL THAT BLACK--THE CREEPY HELMET-- THOSE RED EYES. THE BOY'S PROBABLY A SERIAL KILLER.
IT WOULD DESTROY ME IF YOU WERE TO GO OUT WITH HIM!
HEY, UH, SHADOWHAWK? YEAH, EDDIE, RIGHT? HEY.
IT'S ZEPHYR. YOU GOT TIME TO TALK?

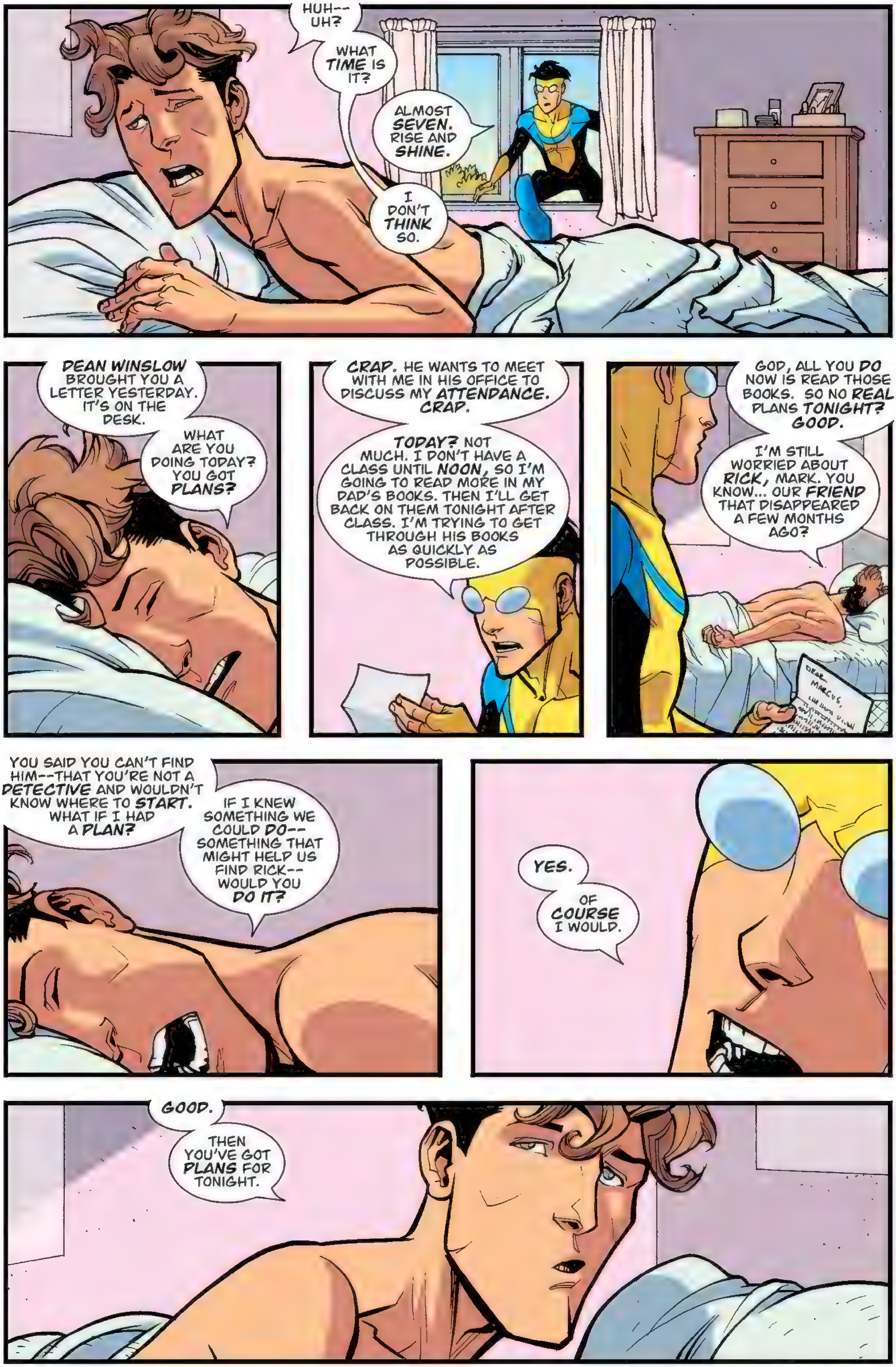
Coming in the next issue of-
THE PACT
NOT A DREAM -- NOT A HOAX -- THE DEATH OF INVINCIBLE!
WHAT'S WITH THE WATERWORKS, POPS? DIDN'T YOU NEARLY BEAT HIM TO DEATH ONCE, YOURSELF?
IT'S COMPLICATED.
HERE LIES MARK GRAYSON 1987 - 2005
HIS NAME PROMISED MUCH, BUT IT WASN'T JUST RIGHT. FOR HE TURNED OUT TO BE INVINCIBLE, NOT QUITE.

This is an ad for a fake next issue of The Pact that ran as the back cover for issue 4. Jason Howard came up with the stuff on the tombstone. He's a witty fellow, that one.

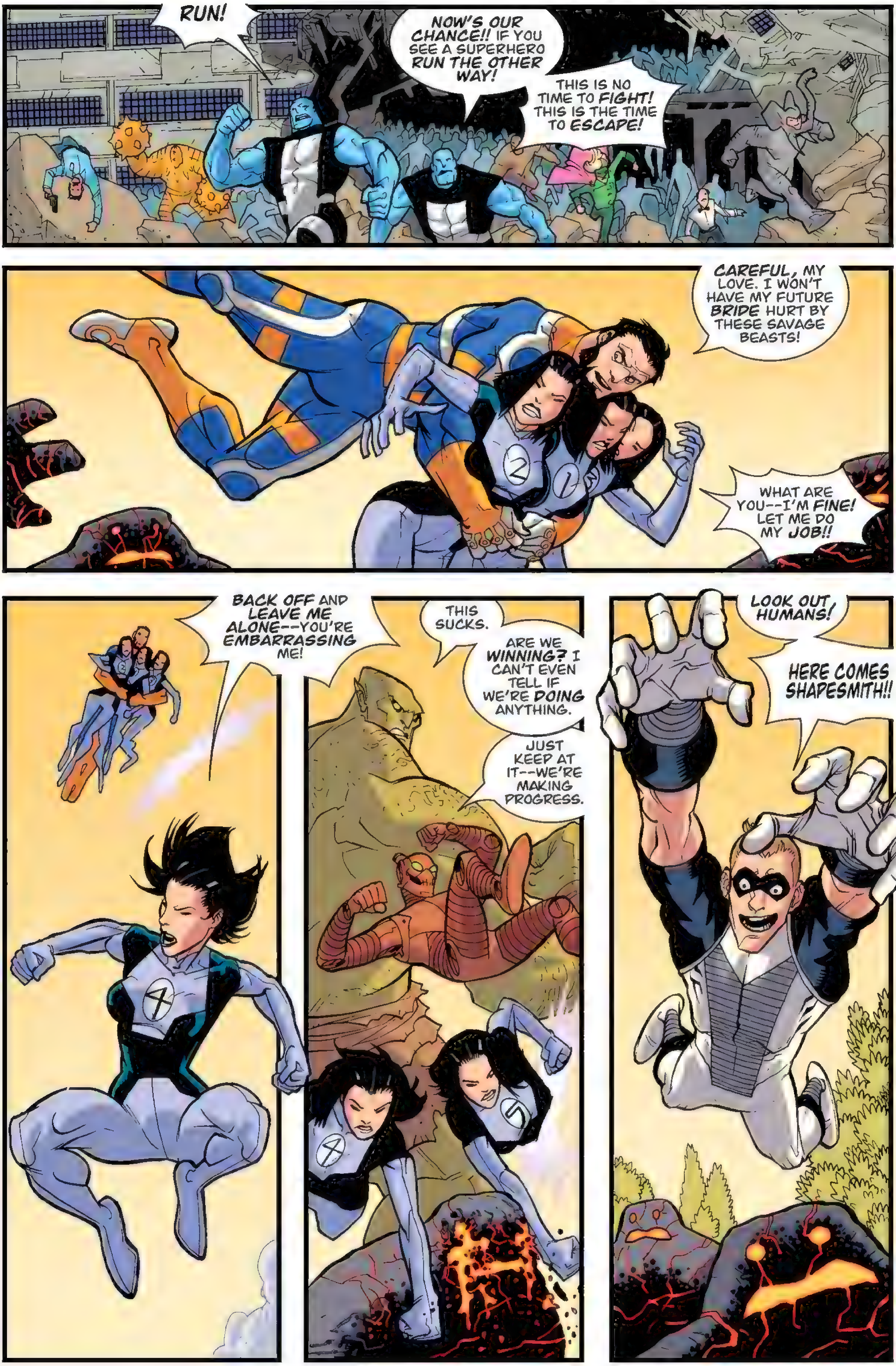
ISSUE THIRTY-SIX

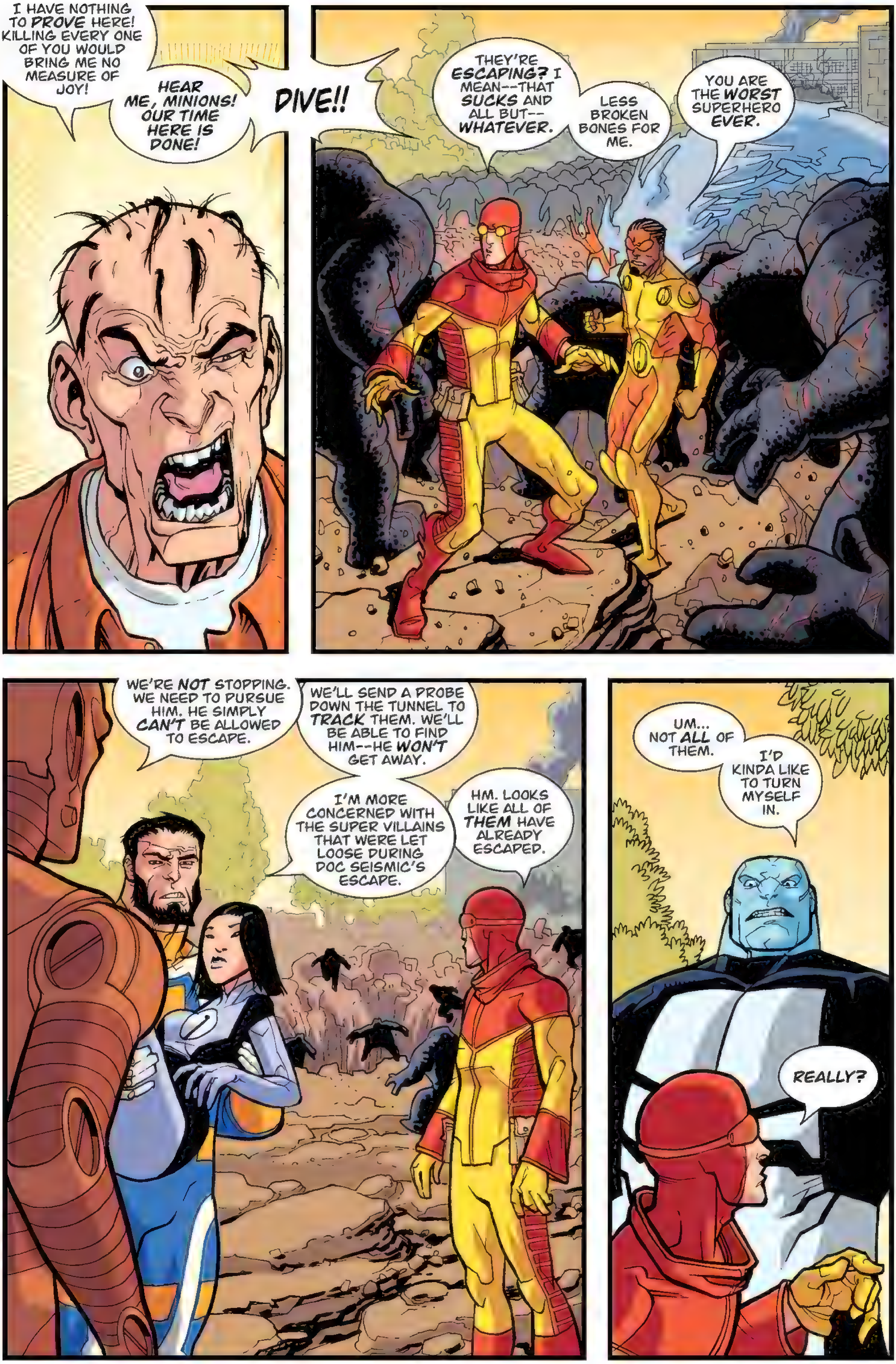

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I JUST--UGH-- I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE GETTING MARRIED.
DON'T LET IT UPSET YOU, MAN. THEY'RE IN LOVE. IT'S A GREAT THING WHEN TWO PEOPLE FIND EACH OTHER.
I'M HAPPY FOR THE IMMORTAL AND DUPLI-KATE.
WHATEVER.
I DON'T KNOW--I JUST DON'T GET WHAT HE SEES IN HER. SHE HARDLY EVER TALKS AND ALL SHE EVER WANTS TO DO IS--
YOU KNOW.
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SAW IN HER?
WELL YEAH-- BUT I WASN'T GOING TO MARRY HER.
NO WAY... IF I WAS GOING TO MARRY SOMEONE... THEY'D HAVE TO BE MORE LIKE...
...EVE.
OH, PLEASE DON'T START ON THAT AGAIN.
I HEARD HOW THAT ALL WENT DOWN.
BREET! BR
BREET! BREET!
OKAY, FINE--I'LL ADMIT I MADE A MIS--
DUTY CALLS!

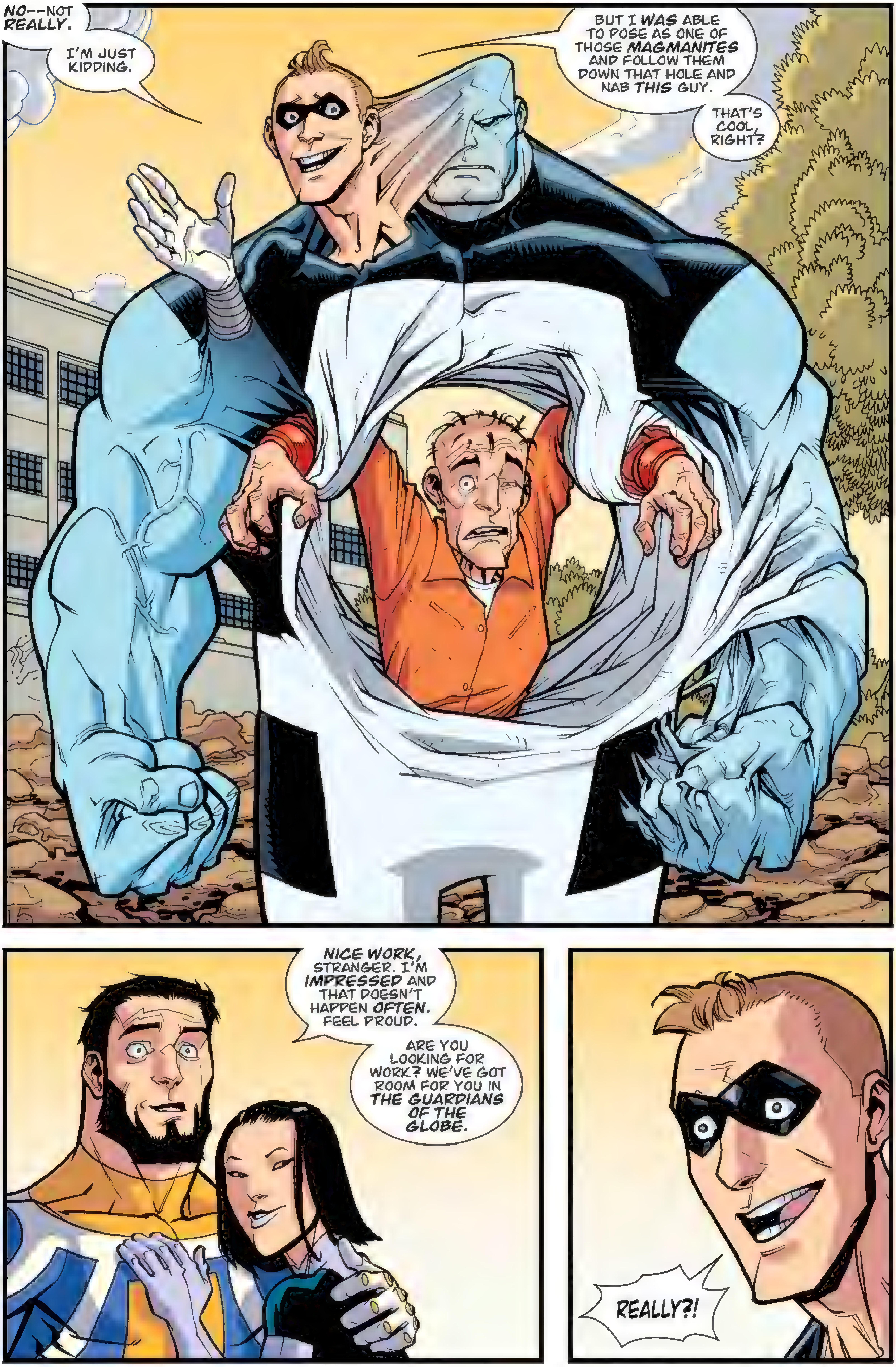

UNE
APER
WORK AND THE GLORY

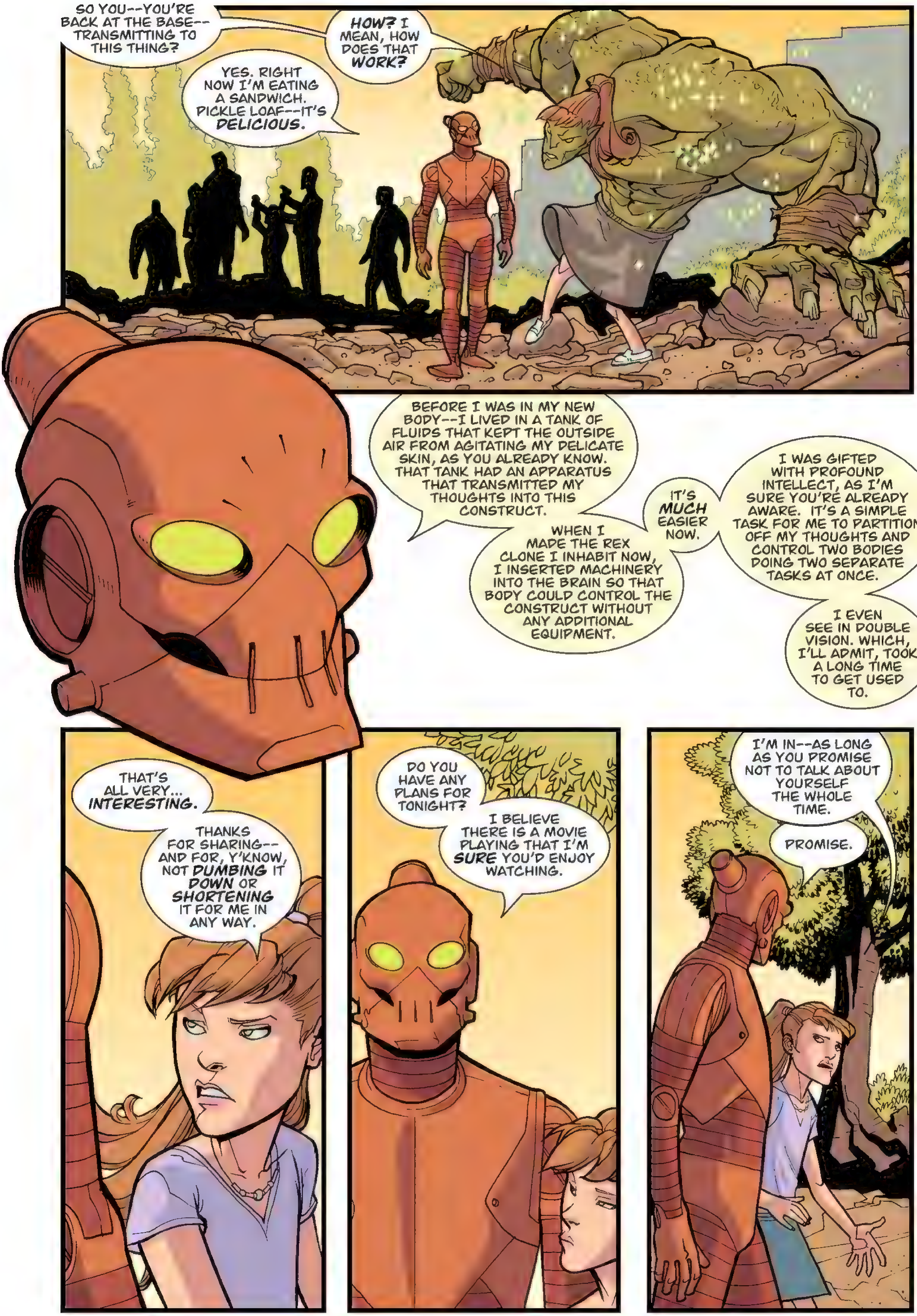

HUH-- UH?
WHAT TIME IS IT?
ALMOST SEVEN. RISE AND SHINE.
I DON'T THINK SO.
DEAN WINSLOW BROUGHT YOU A LETTER YESTERDAY. IT'S ON THE DESK.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TODAY? YOU GOT PLANS?
CRAP. HE WANTS TO MEET WITH ME IN HIS OFFICE TO DISCUSS MY ATTENDANCE. CRAP.
TODAY? NOT MUCH. I DON'T HAVE A CLASS UNTIL NOON, SO I'M GOING TO READ MORE IN MY DAD'S BOOKS. THEN I'LL GET BACK ON THEM TONIGHT AFTER CLASS. I'M TRYING TO GET THROUGH HIS BOOKS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
GOD, ALL YOU DO NOW IS READ THOSE BOOKS. SO NO REAL PLANS TONIGHT? GOOD.
I'M STILL WORRIED ABOUT RICK, MARK. YOU KNOW... OUR FRIEND THAT DISAPPEARED A FEW MONTHS AGO?
DEAR MARCUS,
YOU SAID YOU CAN'T FIND HIM--THAT YOU'RE NOT A DETECTIVE AND WOULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO START. WHAT IF I HAD A PLAN?
IF I KNEW SOMETHING WE COULD DO--SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HELP US FIND RICK--WOULD YOU DO IT?
YES.
OF COURSE I WOULD.
GOOD.
THEN YOU'VE GOT PLANS FOR TONIGHT.

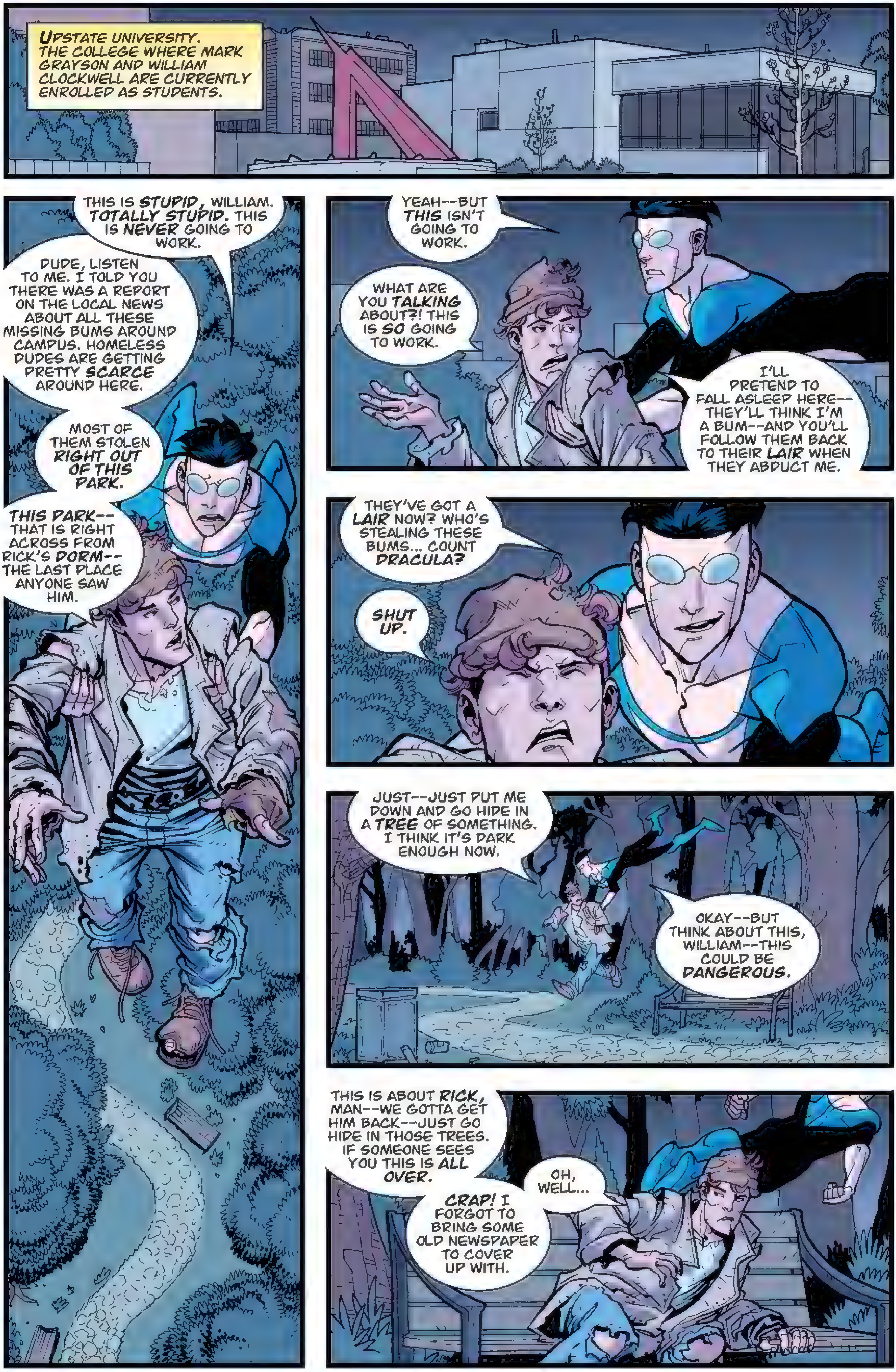
FOOLS!!
DOC SEISMIC COMMANDS THE LEGIONS OF UNDEREARTH!! MY TIME UNDERGROUND ALLOWED ME TO BECOME THE RULER OF ALL DIRT DWELLERS!
YOU SOUGHT TO IMPRISON ME?!
MY POWER CANNOT BE CONTAINED!!

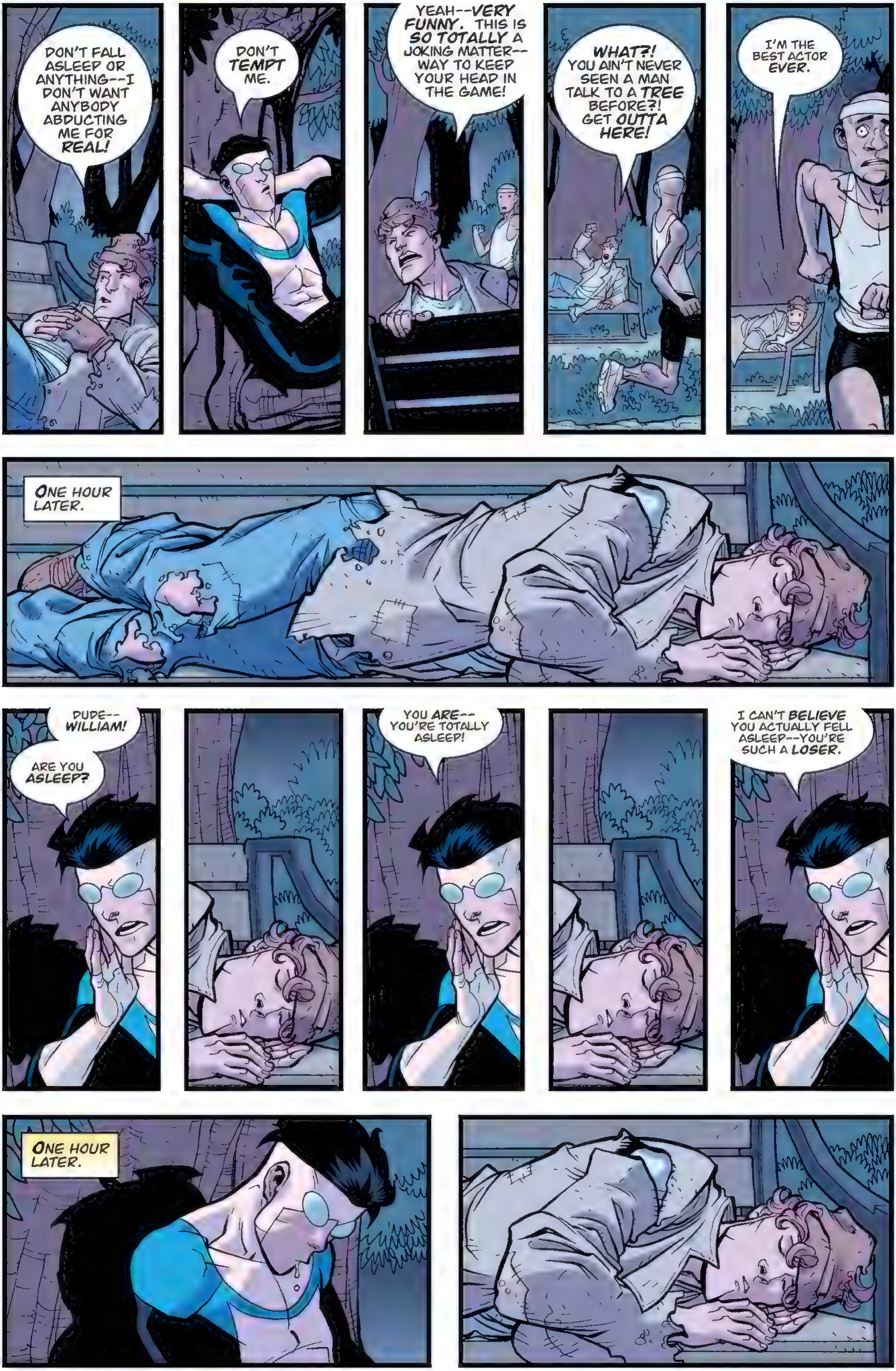

RUN!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE!! IF YOU SEE A SUPERHERO RUN THE OTHER WAY!
THIS IS NO TIME TO FIGHT! THIS IS THE TIME TO ESCAPE!
CAREFUL, MY LOVE. I WON'T HAVE MY FUTURE BRIDE HURT BY THESE SAVAGE BEASTS!
WHAT ARE YOU--I'M FINE! LET ME DO MY JOB!!
BACK OFF AND LEAVE ME ALONE--YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME!
THIS SUCKS.
ARE WE WINNING? I CAN'T EVEN TELL IF WE'RE DOING ANYTHING.
JUST KEEP AT IT--WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS.
LOOK OUT, HUMANS!
HERE COMES SHAPESMITH!!

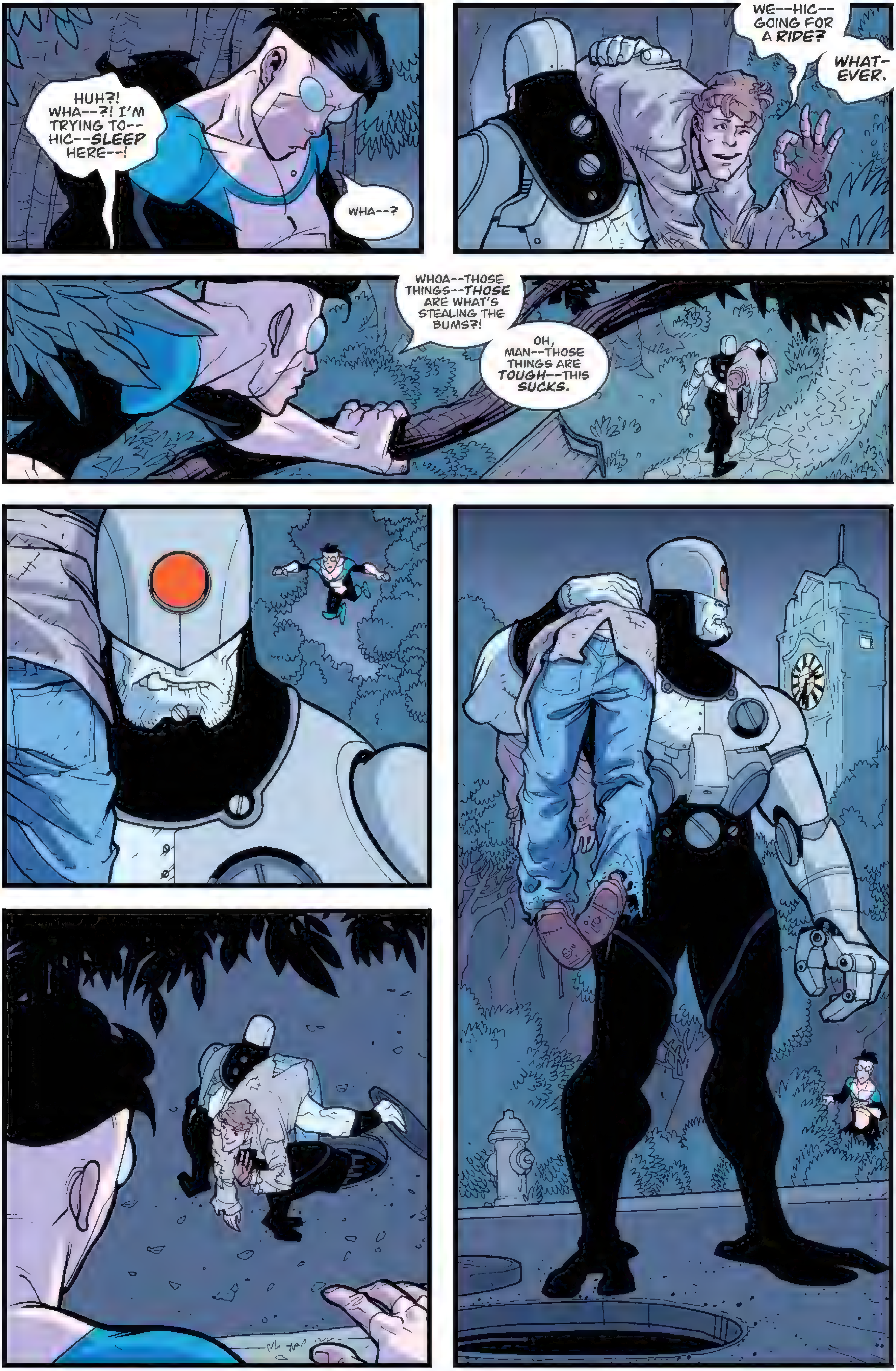

I HAVE NOTHING TO *PROVE* HERE! KILLING EVERY ONE OF YOU WOULD BRING ME NO MEASURE OF JOY!
HEAR ME, MINIONS! OUR TIME HERE IS DONE!
DIVE!!
THEY'RE *ESCAPING?* I MEAN--THAT *SUCKS* AND ALL BUT-- *WHATEVER.*
LESS BROKEN BONES FOR ME.
YOU ARE THE *WORST* SUPERHERO *EVER.*
WE'RE *NOT* STOPPING. WE NEED TO PURSUE HIM. HE SIMPLY *CAN'T* BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE.
WE'LL SEND A PROBE DOWN THE TUNNEL TO *TRACK* THEM. WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIND HIM--HE *WON'T* GET AWAY.
I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THE SUPER VILLAINS THAT WERE LET LOOSE DURING DOC SEISMIC'S ESCAPE.
HM. LOOKS LIKE ALL OF *THEM* HAVE ALREADY ESCAPED.
UM... NOT *ALL* OF THEM.
I'D KINDA LIKE TO TURN MYSELF IN.
REALLY?

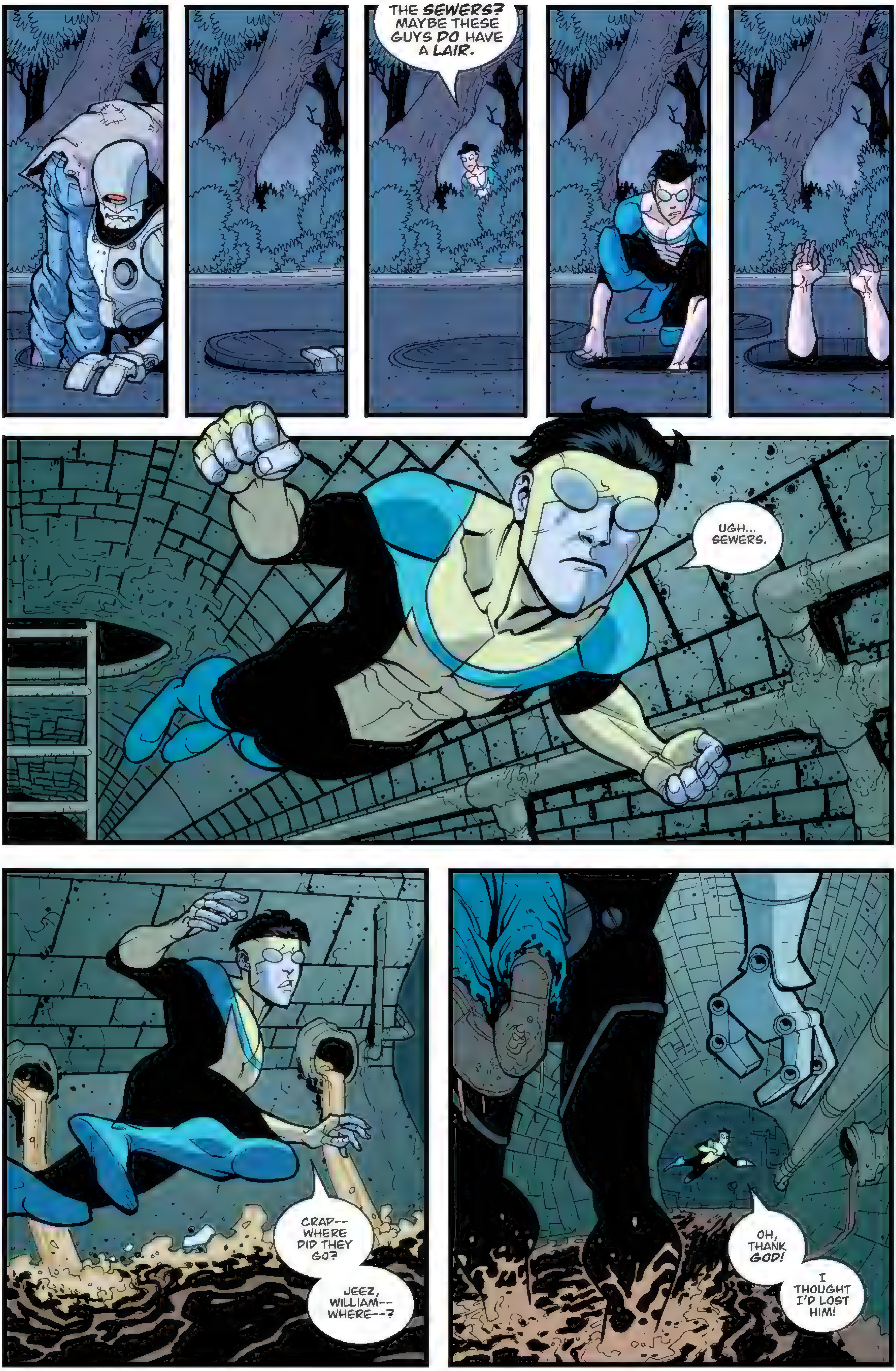

NO--NOT REALLY.
I'M JUST KIDDING.
BUT I WAS ABLE TO POSE AS ONE OF THOSE MAGMANITES AND FOLLOW THEM DOWN THAT HOLE AND NAB THIS GUY.
THAT'S COOL, RIGHT?
NICE WORK, STRANGER. I'M IMPRESSED AND THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN OFTEN. FEEL PROUD.
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WORK? WE'VE GOT ROOM FOR YOU IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
REALLY?!

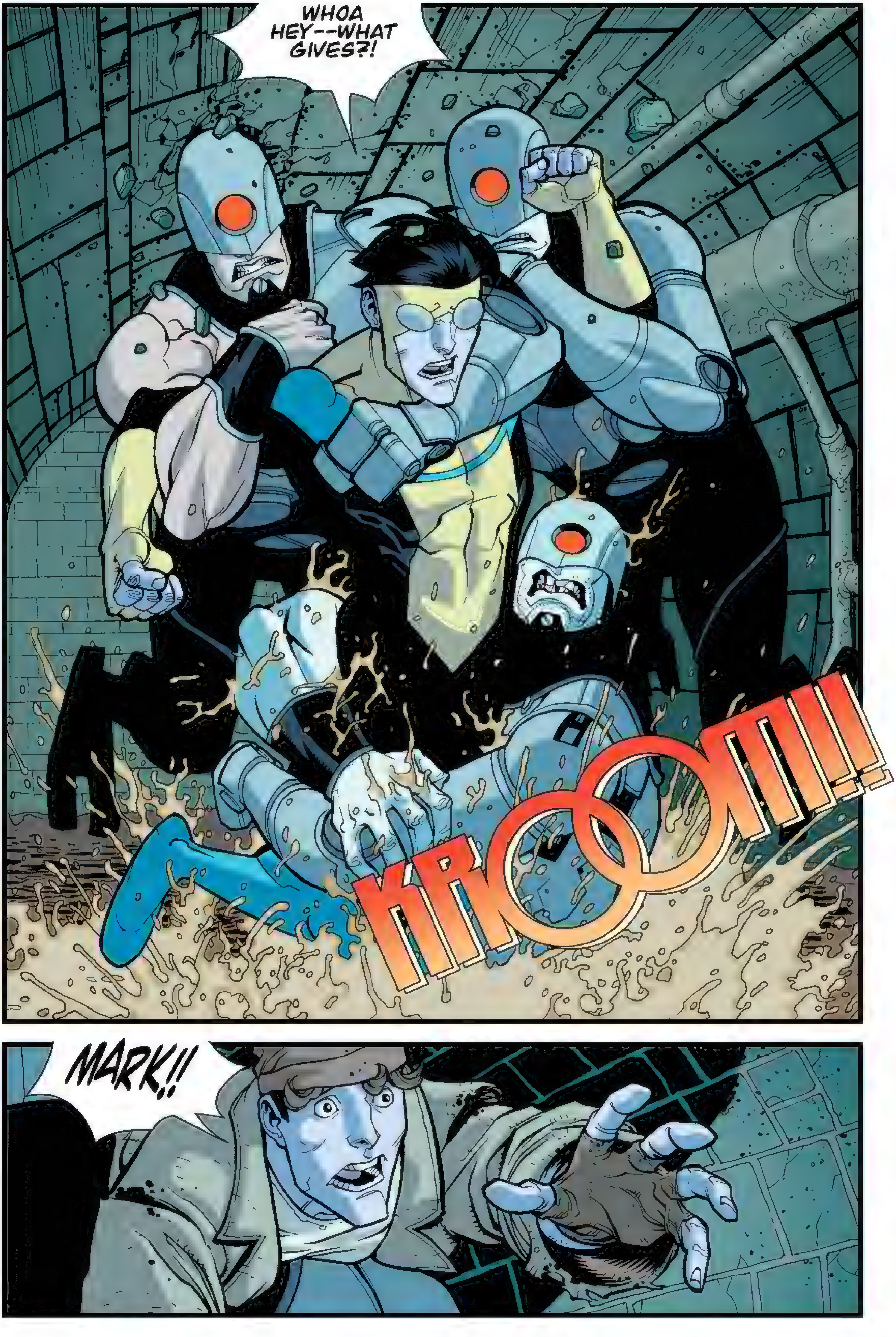

SO YOU--YOU'RE BACK AT THE BASE--TRANSMITTING TO THIS THING?
HOW? I MEAN, HOW DOES THAT *WORK?*
YES. RIGHT NOW I'M EATING A SANDWICH. PICKLE LOAF--IT'S *DELICIOUS.*
BEFORE I WAS IN MY NEW BODY--I LIVED IN A TANK OF FLUIDS THAT KEPT THE OUTSIDE AIR FROM AGITATING MY DELICATE SKIN, AS YOU ALREADY KNOW. THAT TANK HAD AN APPARATUS THAT TRANSMITTED MY THOUGHTS INTO THIS CONSTRUCT.
WHEN I MADE THE REX CLONE I INHABIT NOW, I INSERTED MACHINERY INTO THE BRAIN SO THAT BODY COULD CONTROL THE CONSTRUCT WITHOUT ANY ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT.
IT'S *MUCH* EASIER NOW.
I WAS GIFTED WITH PROFOUND INTELLECT, AS I'M SURE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE. IT'S A SIMPLE TASK FOR ME TO PARTITION OFF MY THOUGHTS AND CONTROL TWO BODIES DOING TWO SEPARATE TASKS AT ONCE.
I EVEN SEE IN DOUBLE VISION. WHICH, I'LL ADMIT, TOOK A LONG TIME TO GET USED TO.
THAT'S ALL VERY... *INTERESTING.*
THANKS FOR SHARING--AND FOR, Y'KNOW, NOT *DUMBING* IT *DOWN* OR *SHORTENING* IT FOR ME IN ANY WAY.
DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR TONIGHT?
I BELIEVE THERE IS A MOVIE PLAYING THAT I'M *SURE* YOU'D ENJOY WATCHING.
I'M IN--AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE NOT TO TALK ABOUT YOURSELF THE WHOLE TIME.
PROMISE.

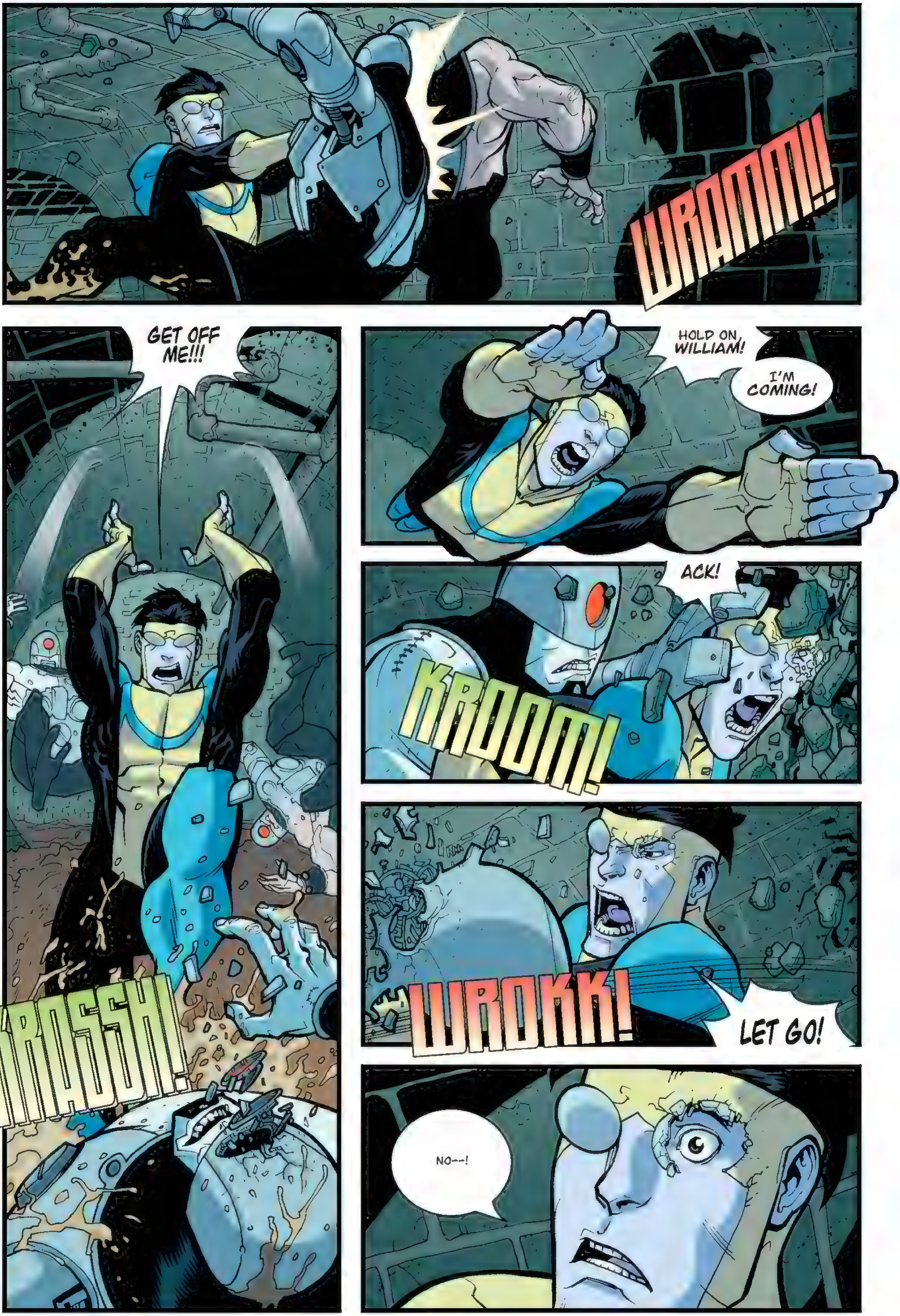

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE COLLEGE WHERE MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL ARE CURRENTLY ENROLLED AS STUDENTS.
THIS IS STUPID, WILLIAM. TOTALLY STUPID. THIS IS NEVER GOING TO WORK.
DUDE, LISTEN TO ME. I TOLD YOU THERE WAS A REPORT ON THE LOCAL NEWS ABOUT ALL THESE MISSING BUMS AROUND CAMPUS. HOMELESS DUDES ARE GETTING PRETTY SCARCE AROUND HERE.
MOST OF THEM STOLEN RIGHT OUT OF THIS PARK.
THIS PARK--THAT IS RIGHT ACROSS FROM RICK'S DORM--THE LAST PLACE ANYONE SAW HIM.
YEAH--BUT THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! THIS IS SO GOING TO WORK.
I'LL PRETEND TO FALL ASLEEP HERE--THEY'LL THINK I'M A BUM--AND YOU'LL FOLLOW THEM BACK TO THEIR LAIR WHEN THEY ABDUCT ME.
THEY'VE GOT A LAIR NOW? WHO'S STEALING THESE BUMS... COUNT DRACULA?
SHUT UP.
JUST--JUST PUT ME DOWN AND GO HIDE IN A TREE OF SOMETHING. I THINK IT'S DARK ENOUGH NOW.
OKAY--BUT THINK ABOUT THIS, WILLIAM--THIS COULD BE DANGEROUS.
THIS IS ABOUT RICK, MAN--WE GOTTA GET HIM BACK--JUST GO HIDE IN THOSE TREES. IF SOMEONE SEES YOU THIS IS ALL OVER.
OH, WELL...
CRAP! I FORGOT TO BRING SOME OLD NEWSPAPER TO COVER UP WITH.

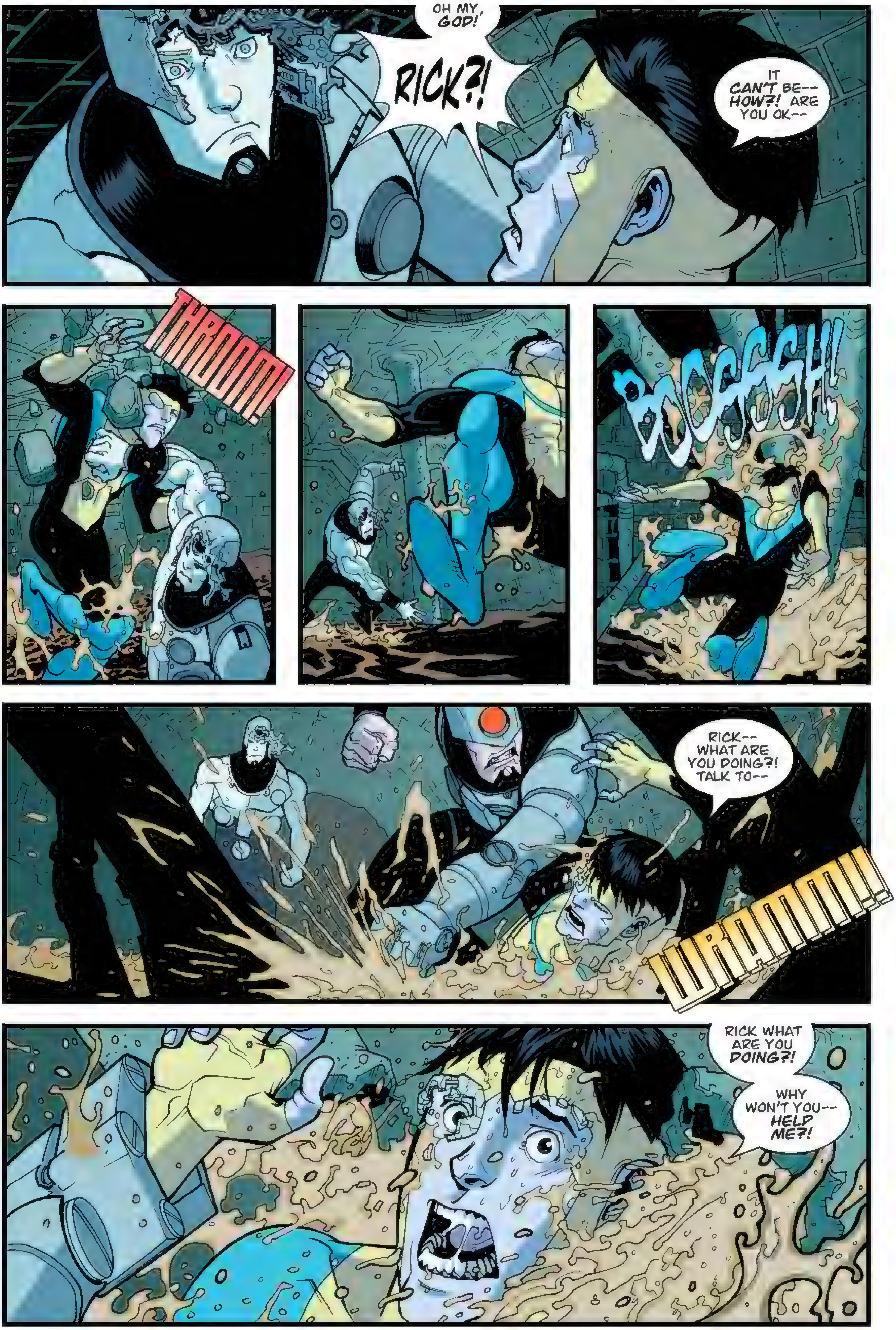

DON'T FALL ASLEEP OR ANYTHING--I DON'T WANT ANYBODY ABDUCTING ME FOR REAL!
DON'T TEMPT ME.
YEAH--VERY FUNNY. THIS IS SO TOTALLY A JOKING MATTER--WAY TO KEEP YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME!
WHAT?! YOU AIN'T NEVER SEEN A MAN TALK TO A TREE BEFORE?! GET OUTTA HERE!
I'M THE BEST ACTOR EVER.
ONE HOUR LATER.
DUDE--WILLIAM!
ARE YOU ASLEEP?
YOU ARE--YOU'RE TOTALLY ASLEEP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY FELL ASLEEP--YOU'RE SUCH A LOSER.
ONE HOUR LATER.

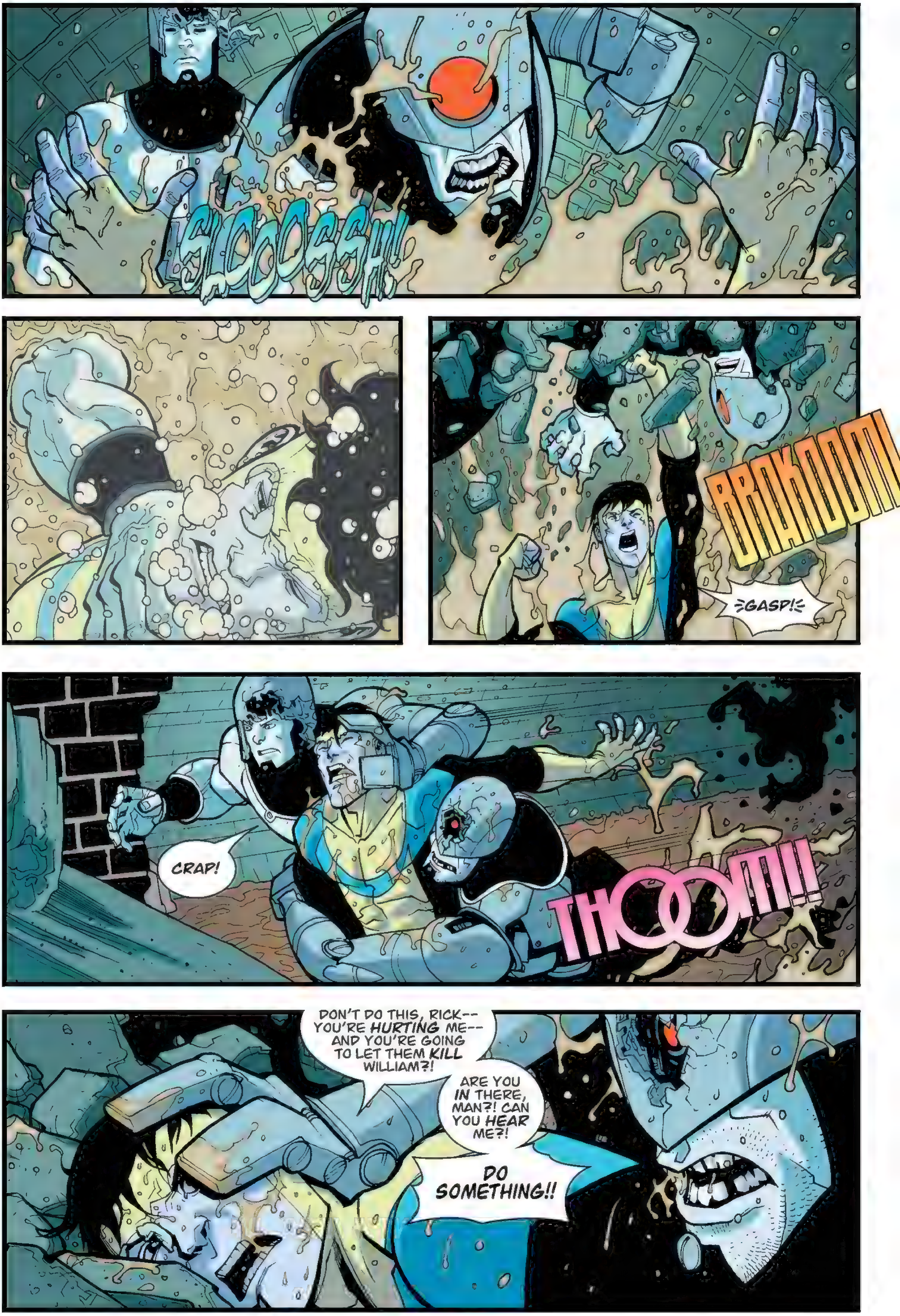

HUH?! WHA--?! I'M TRYING TO--HIC--SLEEP HERE--!
WHA--?
WE--HIC--GOING FOR A RIDE?
WHAT-EVER.
WHOA--THOSE THINGS--THOSE ARE WHAT'S STEALING THE BUMS?!
OH, MAN--THOSE THINGS ARE TOUGH--THIS SUCKS.

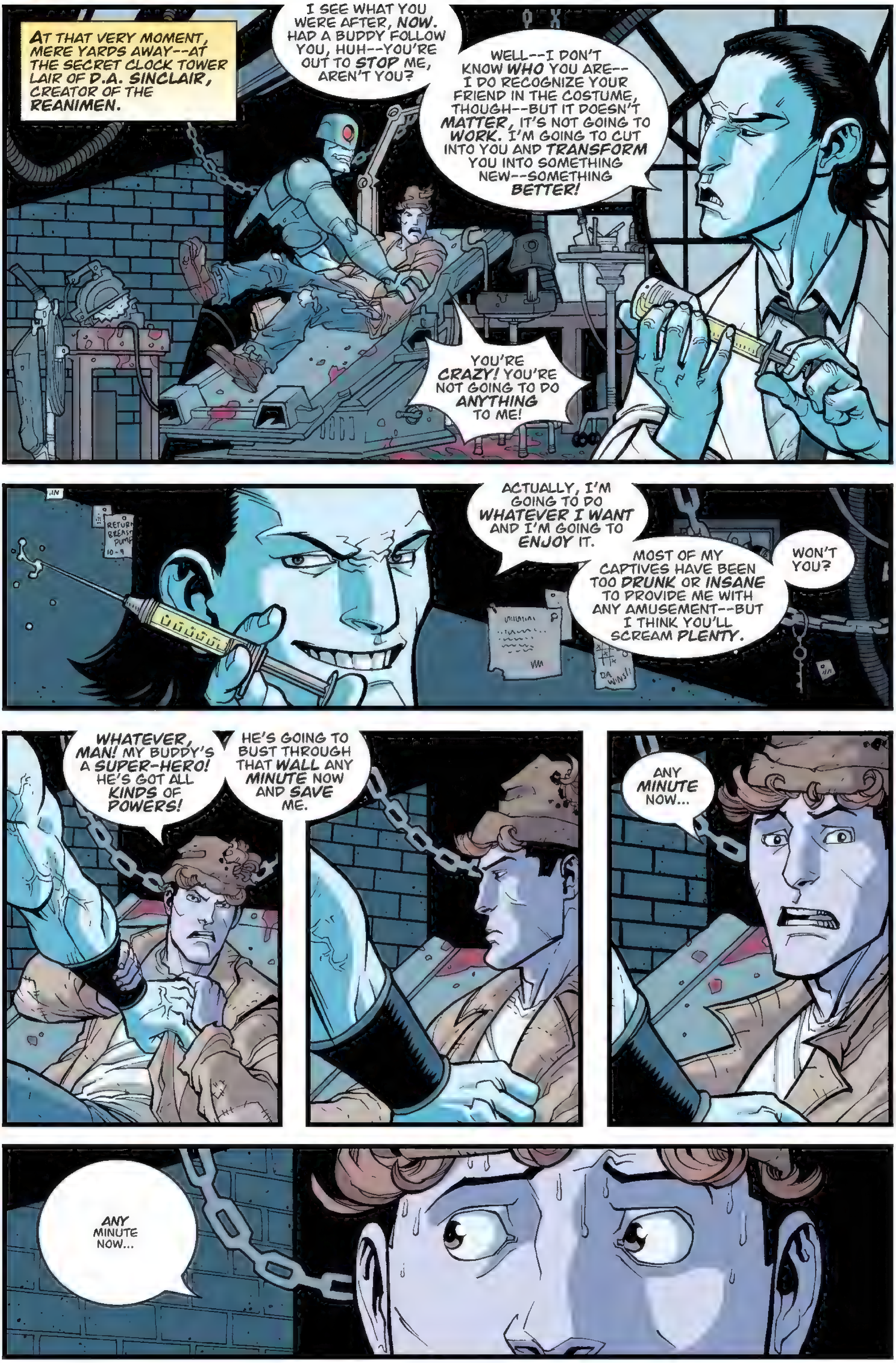

THE SEWERS? MAYBE THESE GUYS DO HAVE A LAIR.
UGH... SEWERS.
CRAP-- WHERE DID THEY GO?
JEEZ, WILLIAM-- WHERE--?
OH, THANK GOD!
I THOUGHT I'D LOST HIM!


WHOA HEY--WHAT GIVES?!
KROOM!!
MARK!!

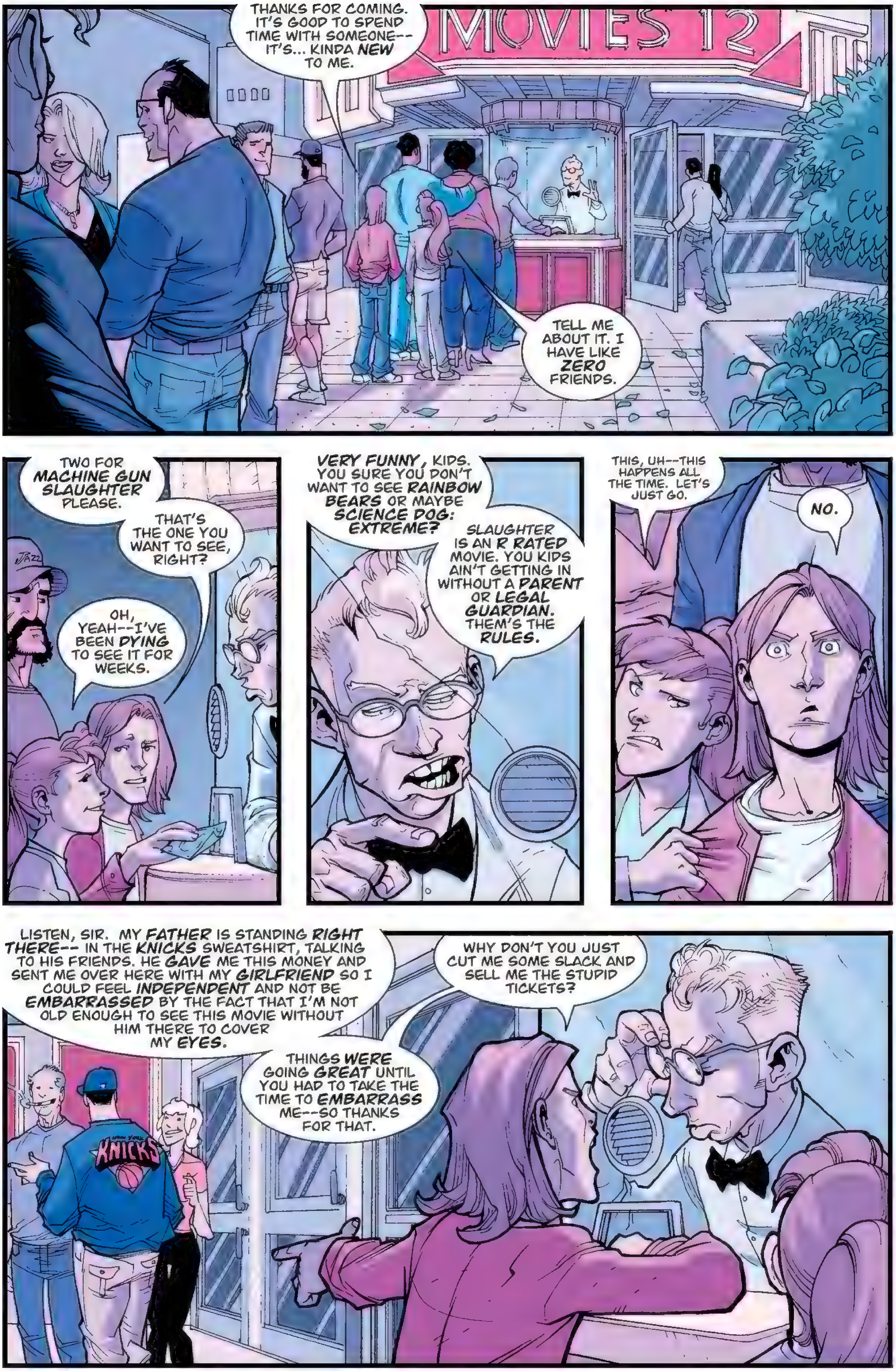

WRAMM!!
GET OFF ME!!!
KROSSH!
HOLD ON, WILLIAM!
I'M COMING!
ACK!
KROOM!
WROKK!
LET GO!
NO--!


OH MY, GOD!
RICK?!
IT CAN'T BE-- HOW?! ARE YOU OK--
THROOM!
BOOOSH!!
RICK-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! TALK TO--
WRAMMM!!
RICK WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WHY WON'T YOU-- HELP ME?!

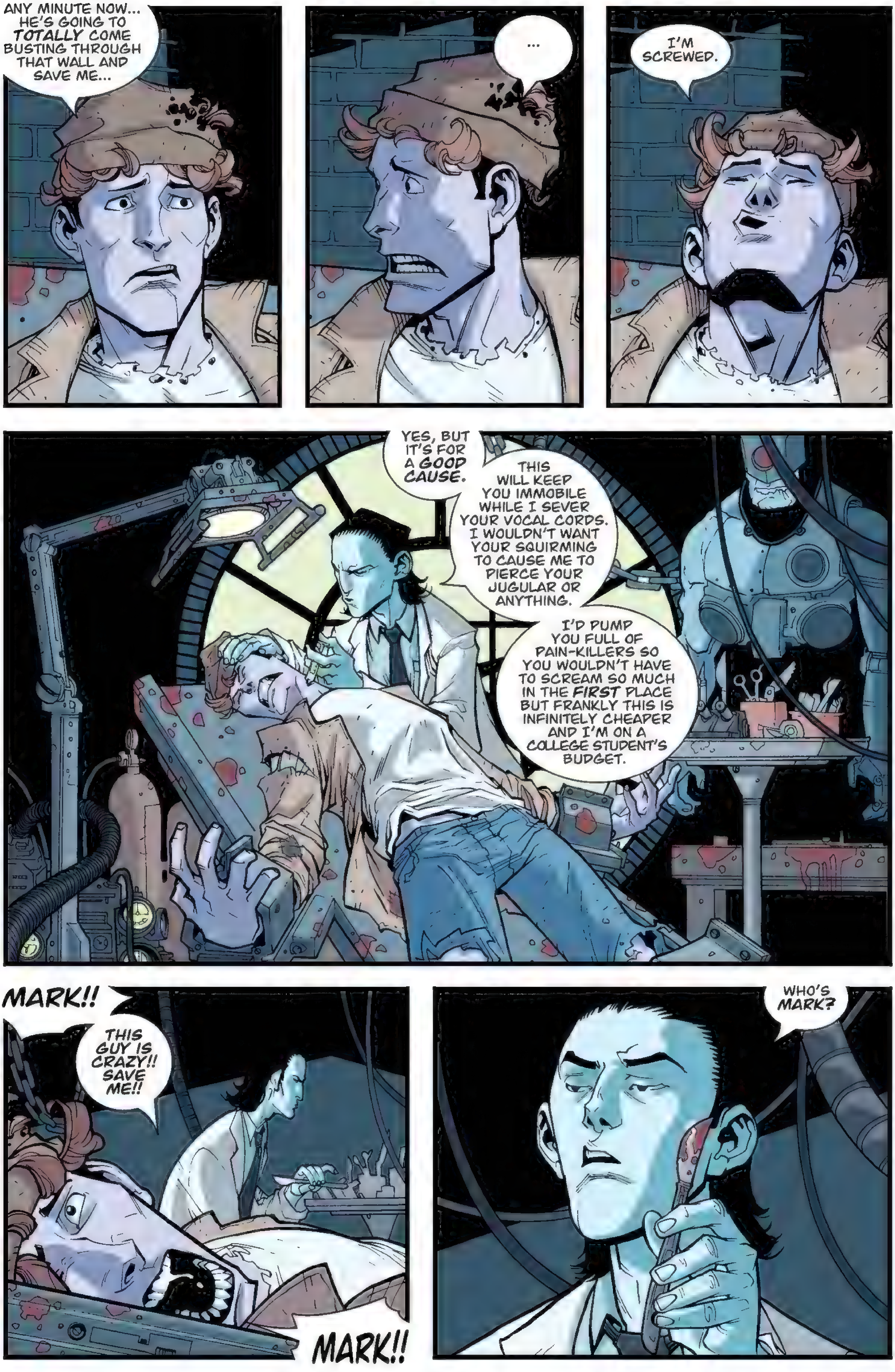

SPLOOOSSH!!
BRAKOOM!
GASP!
CRAP!
THOOM!!
DON'T DO THIS, RICK-- YOU'RE HURTING ME-- AND YOU'RE GOING TO LET THEM KILL WILLIAM?!
ARE YOU IN THERE, MAN?! CAN YOU HEAR ME?!
DO SOMETHING!!


AT THAT VERY MOMENT, MERE YARDS AWAY--AT THE SECRET CLOCK TOWER LAIR OF D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.
I SEE WHAT YOU WERE AFTER, NOW. HAD A BUDDY FOLLOW YOU, HUH--YOU'RE OUT TO STOP ME, AREN'T YOU?
WELL--I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE--I DO RECOGNIZE YOUR FRIEND IN THE COSTUME, THOUGH--BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER, IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK. I'M GOING TO CUT INTO YOU AND TRANSFORM YOU INTO SOMETHING NEW--SOMETHING BETTER!
YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING TO ME!
RETURN BREAST PUMP 10-9
ACTUALLY, I'M GOING TO DO WHATEVER I WANT AND I'M GOING TO ENJOY IT.
MOST OF MY CAPTIVES HAVE BEEN TOO DRUNK OR INSANE TO PROVIDE ME WITH ANY AMUSEMENT--BUT I THINK YOU'LL SCREAM PLENTY.
WON'T YOU?
DA WINS!!
WHATEVER, MAN! MY BUDDY'S A SUPER-HERO! HE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF POWERS!
HE'S GOING TO BUST THROUGH THAT WALL ANY MINUTE NOW AND SAVE ME.
ANY MINUTE NOW...
ANY MINUTE NOW...

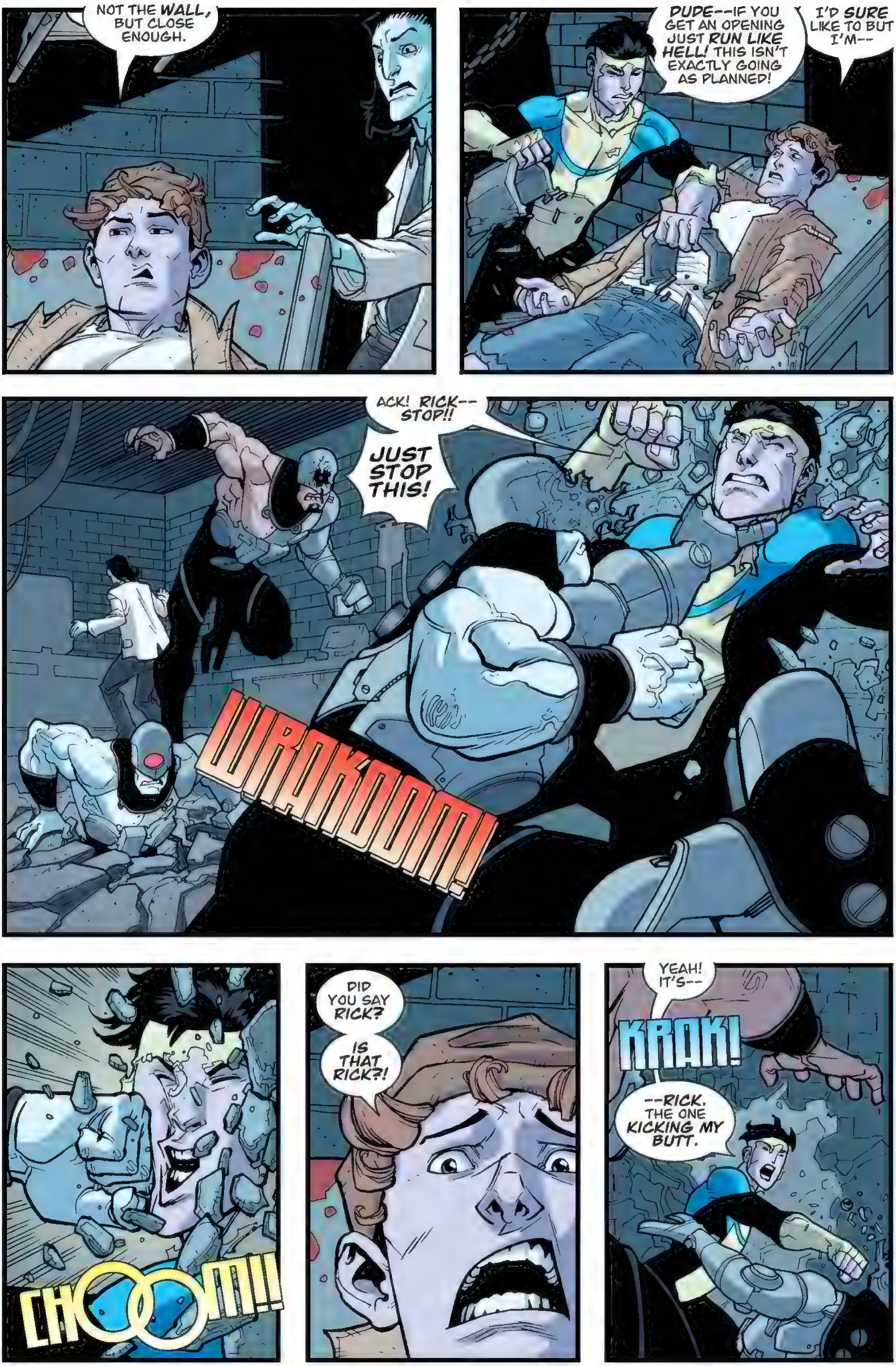
ISSUE THIRTY-SEVEN


MOVIES 12
THANKS FOR COMING. IT'S GOOD TO SPEND TIME WITH SOMEONE-- IT'S... KINDA NEW TO ME.
TELL ME ABOUT IT. I HAVE LIKE ZERO FRIENDS.
TWO FOR MACHINE GUN SLAUGHTER PLEASE.
THAT'S THE ONE YOU WANT TO SEE, RIGHT?
OH, YEAH--I'VE BEEN DYING TO SEE IT FOR WEEKS.
JAZZ
VERY FUNNY, KIDS. YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE RAINBOW BEARS OR MAYBE SCIENCE DOG: EXTREME?
SLAUGHTER IS AN R RATED MOVIE. YOU KIDS AIN'T GETTING IN WITHOUT A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN. THEM'S THE RULES.
THIS, UH--THIS HAPPENS ALL THE TIME. LET'S JUST GO.
NO.
LISTEN, SIR. MY FATHER IS STANDING RIGHT THERE-- IN THE KNICKS SWEATSHIRT, TALKING TO HIS FRIENDS. HE GAVE ME THIS MONEY AND SENT ME OVER HERE WITH MY GIRLFRIEND SO I COULD FEEL INDEPENDENT AND NOT BE EMBARRASSED BY THE FACT THAT I'M NOT OLD ENOUGH TO SEE THIS MOVIE WITHOUT HIM THERE TO COVER MY EYES.
THINGS WERE GOING GREAT UNTIL YOU HAD TO TAKE THE TIME TO EMBARRASS ME--SO THANKS FOR THAT.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST CUT ME SOME SLACK AND SELL ME THE STUPID TICKETS?
NEW YORK KNICKS

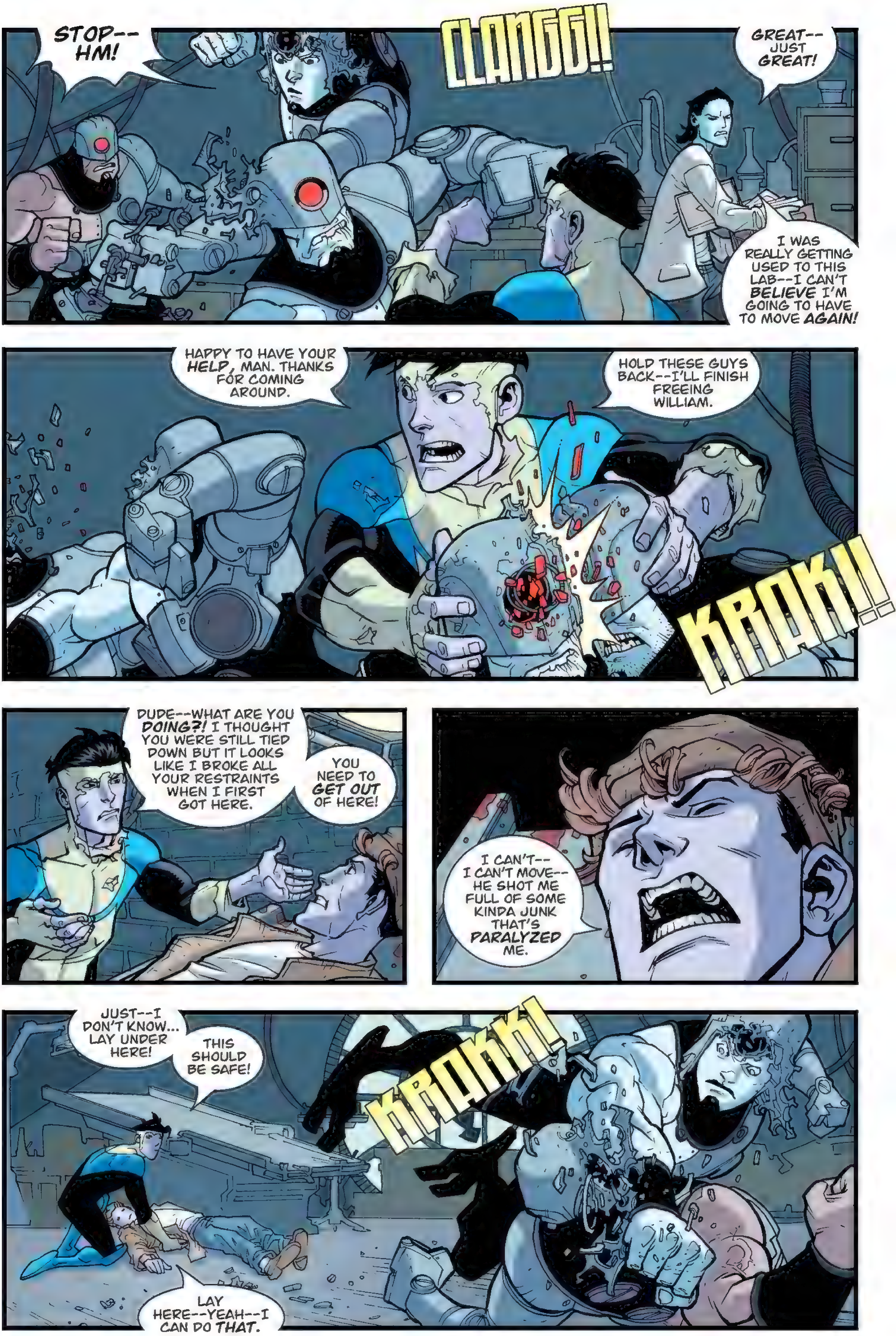
THAT GUY OVER THERE IS YOUR FATHER? I'M SORRY, KID--BUT I JUST AIN'T BUYING IT. GET HIM TO COME OVER HERE AND BUY THE TICKETS FOR YOU AND WE'RE GOOD.
OTHERWISE-- IT'S PG-13 OR LESS FOR YOU.
≶SIGH≶
GIVE ME A MINUTE.
KNICKS
N Y KNICKS
EXCUSE ME.
SIR?
UH? YOU TALKING TO ME?
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO BOTHER YOU BUT I'VE GOTTEN INTO A LITTLE BIT OF A DISPUTE WITH THE BOX OFFICE CLERK OVER THERE.
YOU SEE-- HE'S TELLING ME THE KNICKS ARE THE WORST BASKETBALL TEAM OF ALL-TIME. I SAY THEY'RE ONE OF THE BEST-- BUT YOU SEE-- HE'S JUST NOT BUYING IT.
THINK YOU COULD HELP ME OUT?
HEY, BUDDY! LISTEN TO THE KID ALREADY!
HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH!
KNICKS
FINE, FINE-- HERE YOU GO. SORRY I DOUBTED YOU.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. YOU'RE JUST DOING YOUR JOB.
VERY COOL. IMPRESSIVE-- VERY IMPRESSIVE.
NOT REALLY. IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE MATTER OF MAPPING POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AND WEIGHING THE PROBABILITIES OF SAID OUTCOMES-- AND MAPPING THE MOST LIKELY SITUATION THAT WOULD YIELD THE DESIRED RESULTS AND THEN--
DON'T RUIN THIS.


ANY MINUTE NOW... HE'S GOING TO *TOTALLY* COME BUSTING THROUGH THAT WALL AND SAVE ME...
...
I'M SCREWED.
YES, BUT IT'S FOR A *GOOD CAUSE.*
THIS WILL KEEP YOU IMMOBILE WHILE I SEVER YOUR VOCAL CORDS. I WOULDN'T WANT YOUR SQUIRMING TO CAUSE ME TO PIERCE YOUR JUGULAR OR ANYTHING.
I'D PUMP YOU FULL OF PAIN-KILLERS SO YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO SCREAM SO MUCH IN THE *FIRST* PLACE BUT FRANKLY THIS IS INFINITELY CHEAPER AND I'M ON A COLLEGE STUDENT'S BUDGET.
MARK!!
THIS GUY IS CRAZY!! SAVE ME!!
MARK!!
WHO'S MARK?

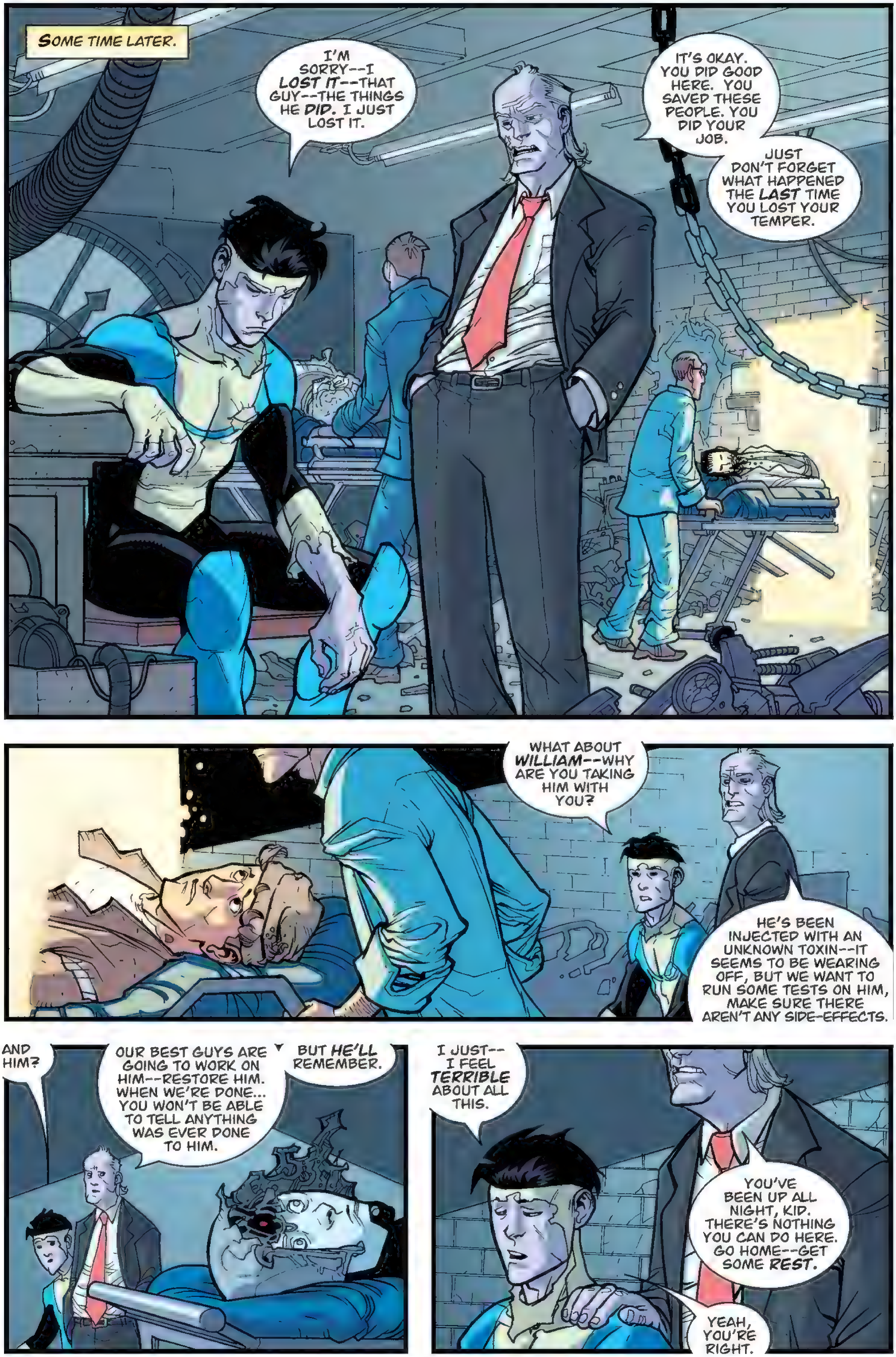
BRAKROOM!!

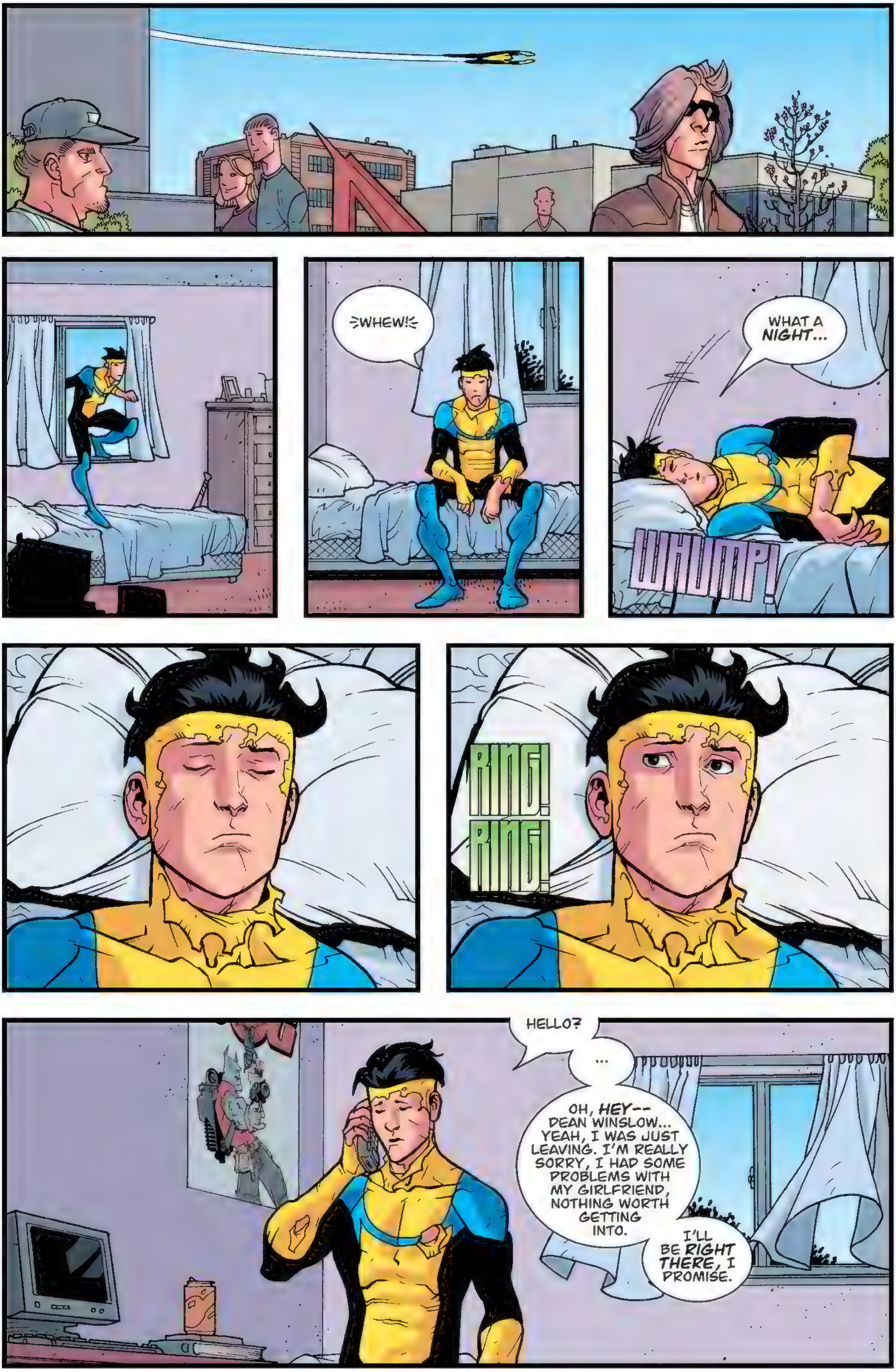

NOT THE WALL, BUT CLOSE ENOUGH.
DUDE--IF YOU GET AN OPENING JUST RUN LIKE HELL! THIS ISN'T EXACTLY GOING AS PLANNED!
I'D SURE LIKE TO BUT I'M--
ACK! RICK-- STOP!!
JUST STOP THIS!
WRAKOOM!
CHOOM!!
DID YOU SAY RICK?
IS THAT RICK?!
YEAH! IT'S--
KRAK!
--RICK. THE ONE KICKING MY BUTT.

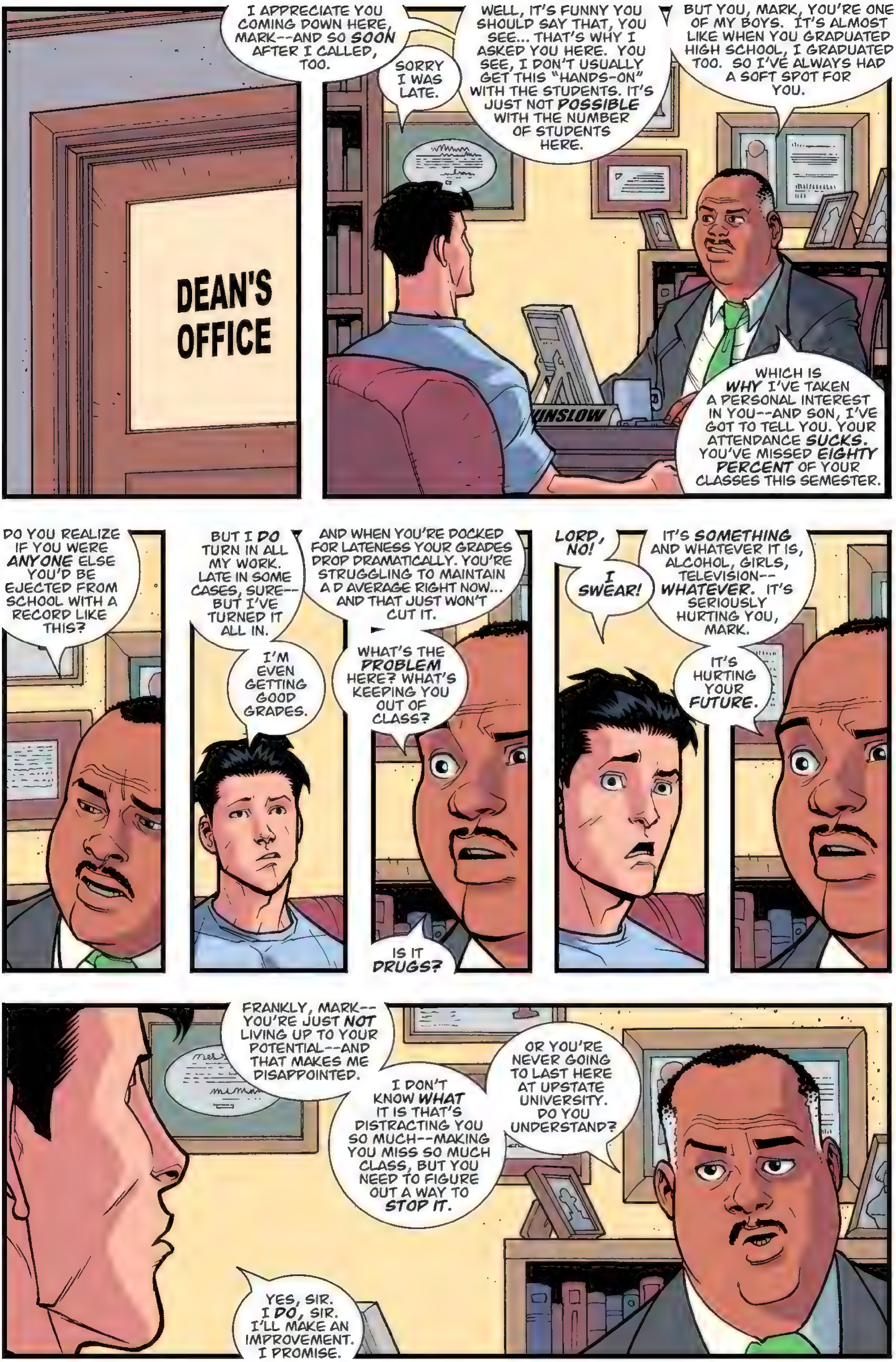
WRAMM!
RICK! STOP FIGHTING HIM--IT'S OUR FRIEND!
COME, ON, MAN! STOP IT!
WILL--
--UMM?
YEAH, MAN-- IT'S ME. I'M YOUR FRIEND, REMEMBER? YOUR FRIEND WILLIAM?
KRAK!
HELP US, MAN! THIS GUY IS HURTING PEOPLE LIKE HE HURT YOU. YOU GOTTA HELP US STOP HIM.
STOP--
--HM?
YEAH-- START WITH YOUR BUDDIES THERE--THE ONES HURTING MARK.

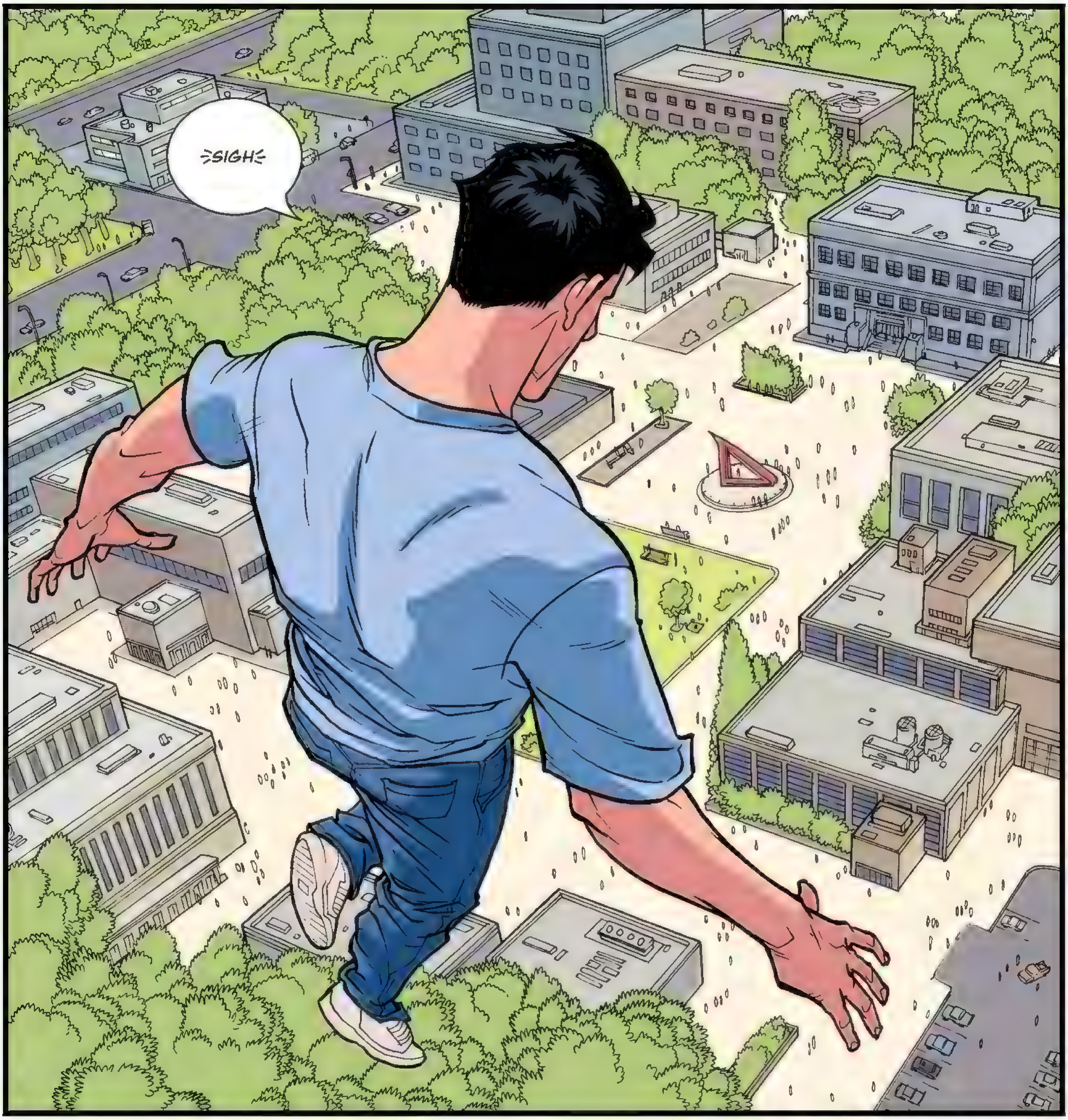

STOP--HM!
CLANGG!!
GREAT--JUST GREAT!
I WAS REALLY GETTING USED TO THIS LAB--I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE AGAIN!
HAPPY TO HAVE YOUR HELP, MAN. THANKS FOR COMING AROUND.
HOLD THESE GUYS BACK--I'LL FINISH FREEING WILLIAM.
KROKK!!
DUDE--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! I THOUGHT YOU WERE STILL TIED DOWN BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I BROKE ALL YOUR RESTRAINTS WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE.
YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!
I CAN'T--I CAN'T MOVE--HE SHOT ME FULL OF SOME KINDA JUNK THAT'S PARALYZED ME.
JUST--I DON'T KNOW... LAY UNDER HERE!
THIS SHOULD BE SAFE!
KRAKK!
LAY HERE--YEAH--I CAN DO THAT.

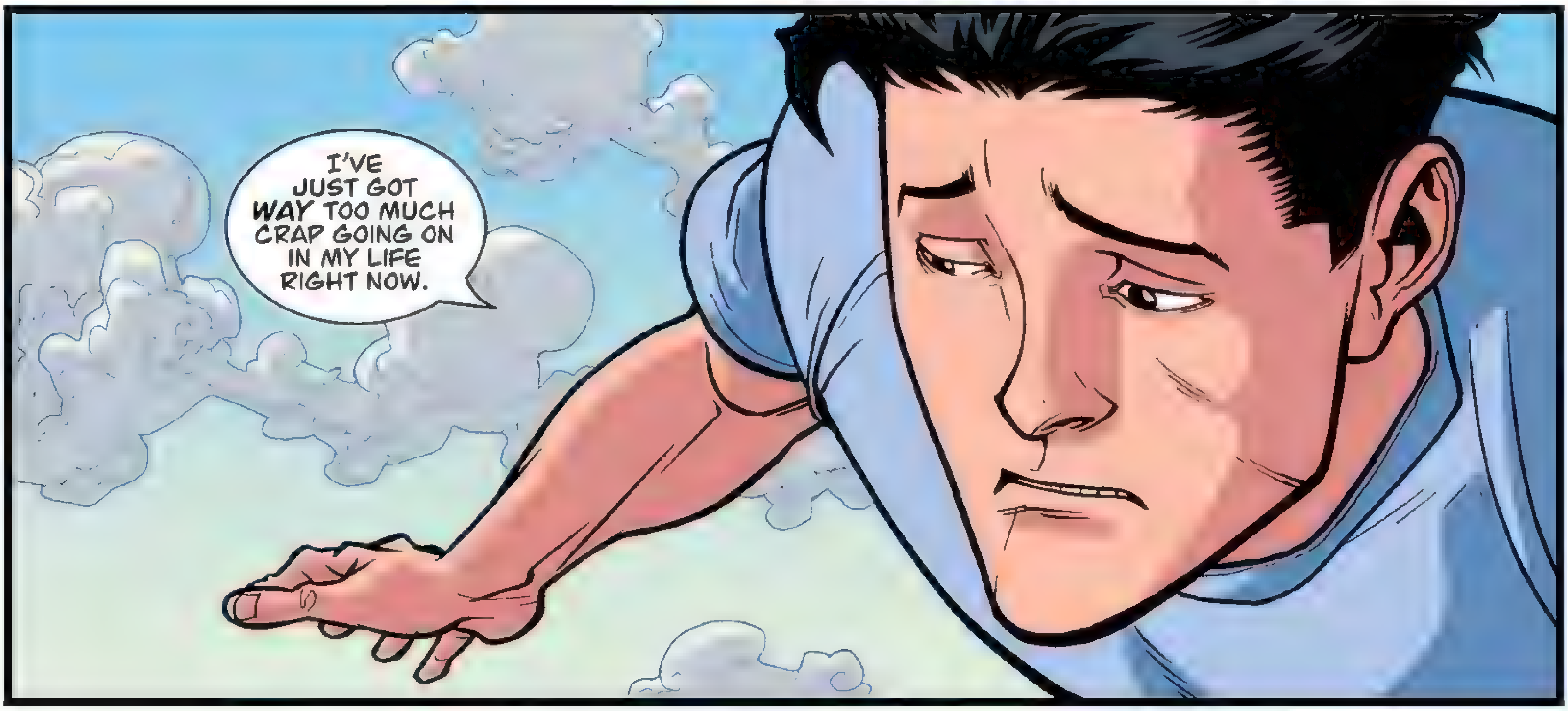
I GOT YOU COVERED, RICK!
VROMM!!
WHAT THE--?!
NO! NO WAY THIS JERK'S GETTING AWAY!
YOU THINK YOU CAN DO THIS TO PEOPLE AND JUST GET AWAY WITH IT?! YOU THINK YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID TO THESE PEOPLE?!
AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO MY FRIEND?!
I'M SORRY YOU'RE TOO UNINTELLIGENT TO SEE HOW IMPORTANT MY WORK IS. IF YOU WOULD THINK ABOUT THE GOOD THAT CAN COME FROM--
SHUT UP!!
STOP IT!
MARK!
KRAK!!

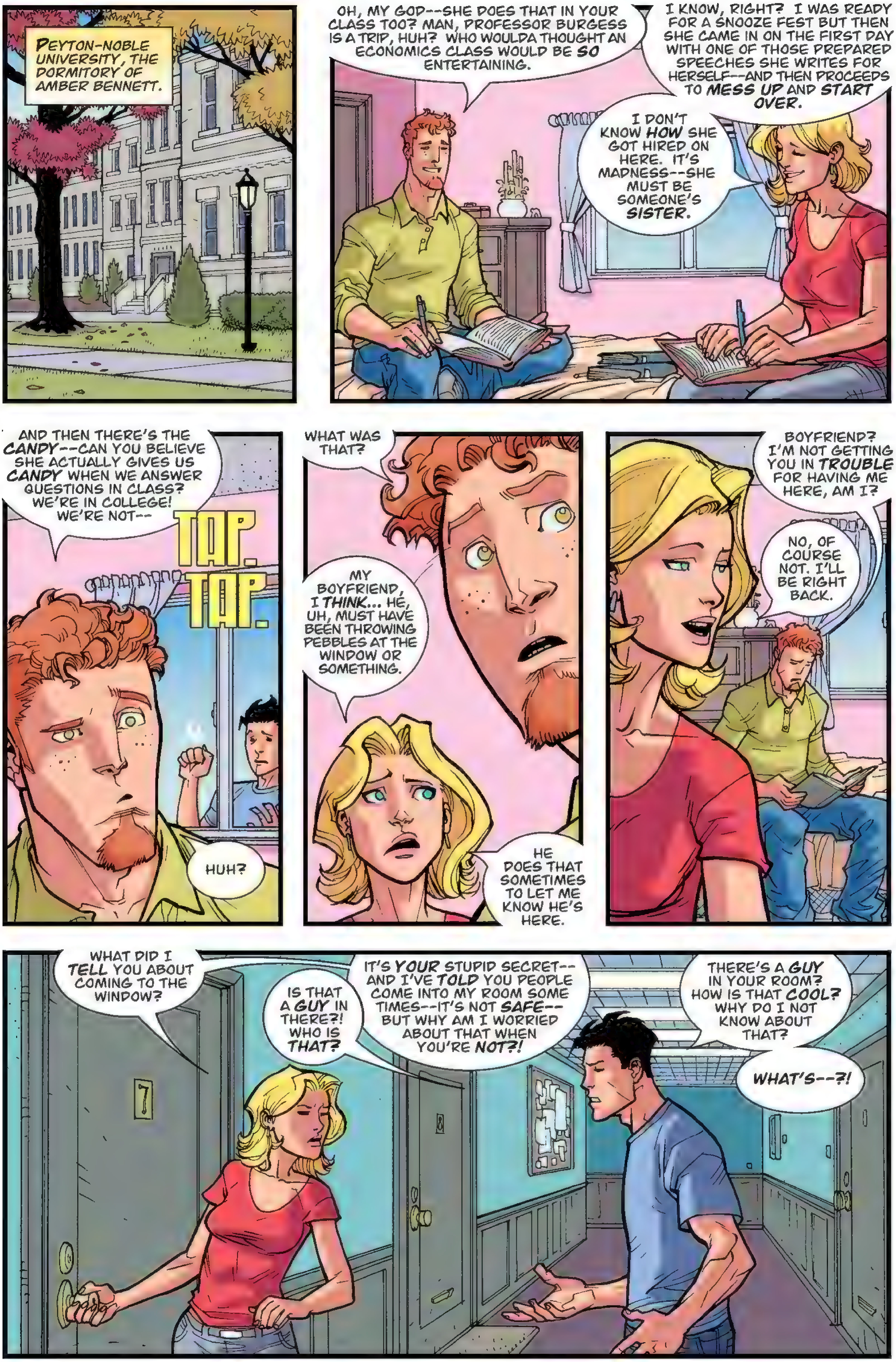

SOME TIME LATER.
I'M SORRY--I LOST IT--THAT GUY--THE THINGS HE DID. I JUST LOST IT.
IT'S OKAY. YOU DID GOOD HERE. YOU SAVED THESE PEOPLE. YOU DID YOUR JOB.
JUST DON'T FORGET WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME YOU LOST YOUR TEMPER.
WHAT ABOUT WILLIAM--WHY ARE YOU TAKING HIM WITH YOU?
HE'S BEEN INJECTED WITH AN UNKNOWN TOXIN--IT SEEMS TO BE WEARING OFF, BUT WE WANT TO RUN SOME TESTS ON HIM, MAKE SURE THERE AREN'T ANY SIDE-EFFECTS.
AND HIM?
OUR BEST GUYS ARE GOING TO WORK ON HIM--RESTORE HIM. WHEN WE'RE DONE... YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL ANYTHING WAS EVER DONE TO HIM.
BUT HE'LL REMEMBER.
I JUST-- I FEEL TERRIBLE ABOUT ALL THIS.
YOU'VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT, KID. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO HERE. GO HOME--GET SOME REST.
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.

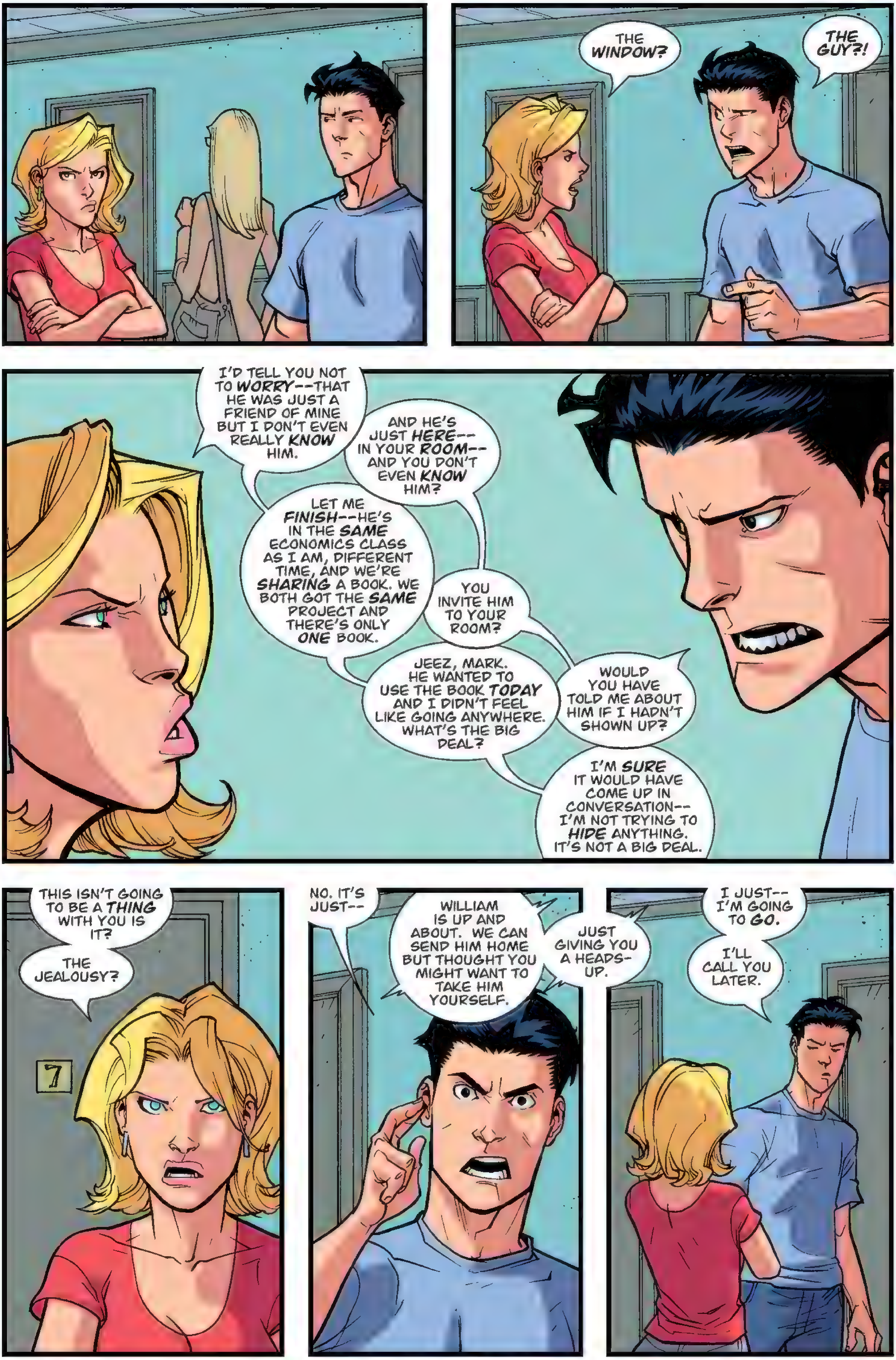

WHEW!
WHAT A NIGHT...
WHUMP!
RING! RING!
HELLO?
...
OH, HEY-- DEAN WINSLOW... YEAH, I WAS JUST LEAVING. I'M REALLY SORRY, I HAD SOME PROBLEMS WITH MY GIRLFRIEND, NOTHING WORTH GETTING INTO.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, I PROMISE.

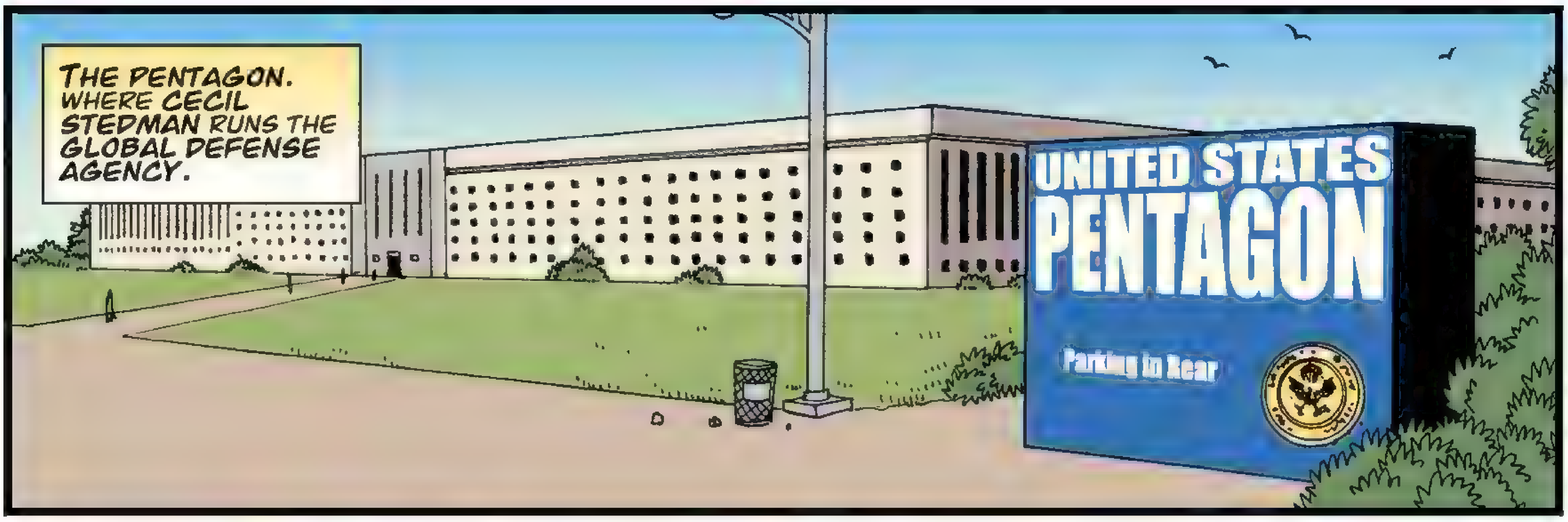

DEAN'S OFFICE
I APPRECIATE YOU COMING DOWN HERE, MARK--AND SO SOON AFTER I CALLED, TOO.
SORRY I WAS LATE.
WELL, IT'S FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT, YOU SEE... THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU HERE. YOU SEE, I DON'T USUALLY GET THIS "HANDS-ON" WITH THE STUDENTS. IT'S JUST NOT POSSIBLE WITH THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS HERE.
BUT YOU, MARK, YOU'RE ONE OF MY BOYS. IT'S ALMOST LIKE WHEN YOU GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL, I GRADUATED TOO. SO I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR YOU.
WINSLOW
WHICH IS WHY I'VE TAKEN A PERSONAL INTEREST IN YOU--AND SON, I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU. YOUR ATTENDANCE SUCKS. YOU'VE MISSED EIGHTY PERCENT OF YOUR CLASSES THIS SEMESTER.
DO YOU REALIZE IF YOU WERE ANYONE ELSE YOU'D BE EJECTED FROM SCHOOL WITH A RECORD LIKE THIS?
BUT I DO TURN IN ALL MY WORK. LATE IN SOME CASES, SURE--BUT I'VE TURNED IT ALL IN.
I'M EVEN GETTING GOOD GRADES.
AND WHEN YOU'RE DOCKED FOR LATENESS YOUR GRADES DROP DRAMATICALLY. YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN A D AVERAGE RIGHT NOW... AND THAT JUST WON'T CUT IT.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM HERE? WHAT'S KEEPING YOU OUT OF CLASS?
IS IT DRUGS?
LORD, NO!
I SWEAR!
IT'S SOMETHING AND WHATEVER IT IS, ALCOHOL, GIRLS, TELEVISION--WHATEVER. IT'S SERIOUSLY HURTING YOU, MARK.
IT'S HURTING YOUR FUTURE.
FRANKLY, MARK--YOU'RE JUST NOT LIVING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL--AND THAT MAKES ME DISAPPOINTED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT'S DISTRACTING YOU SO MUCH--MAKING YOU MISS SO MUCH CLASS, BUT YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO STOP IT.
OR YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO LAST HERE AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, SIR. I DO, SIR. I'LL MAKE AN IMPROVEMENT. I PROMISE.

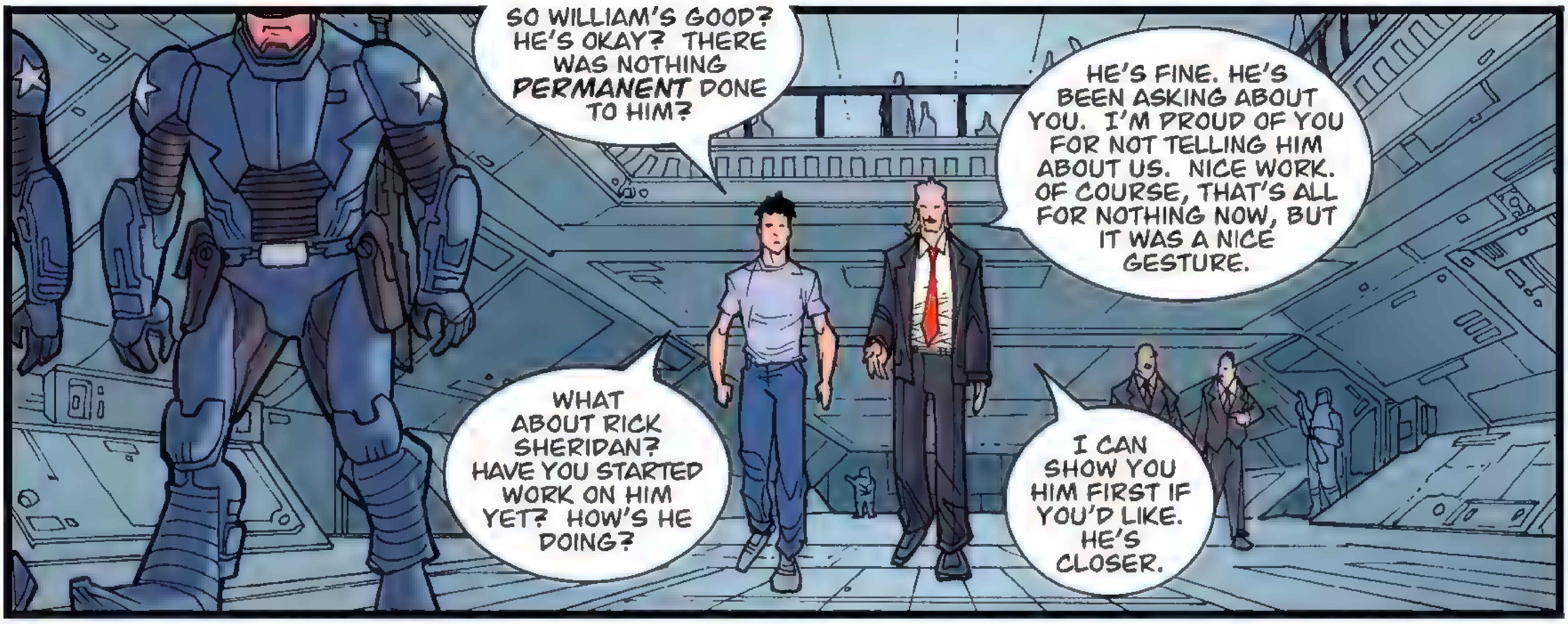

SIGH

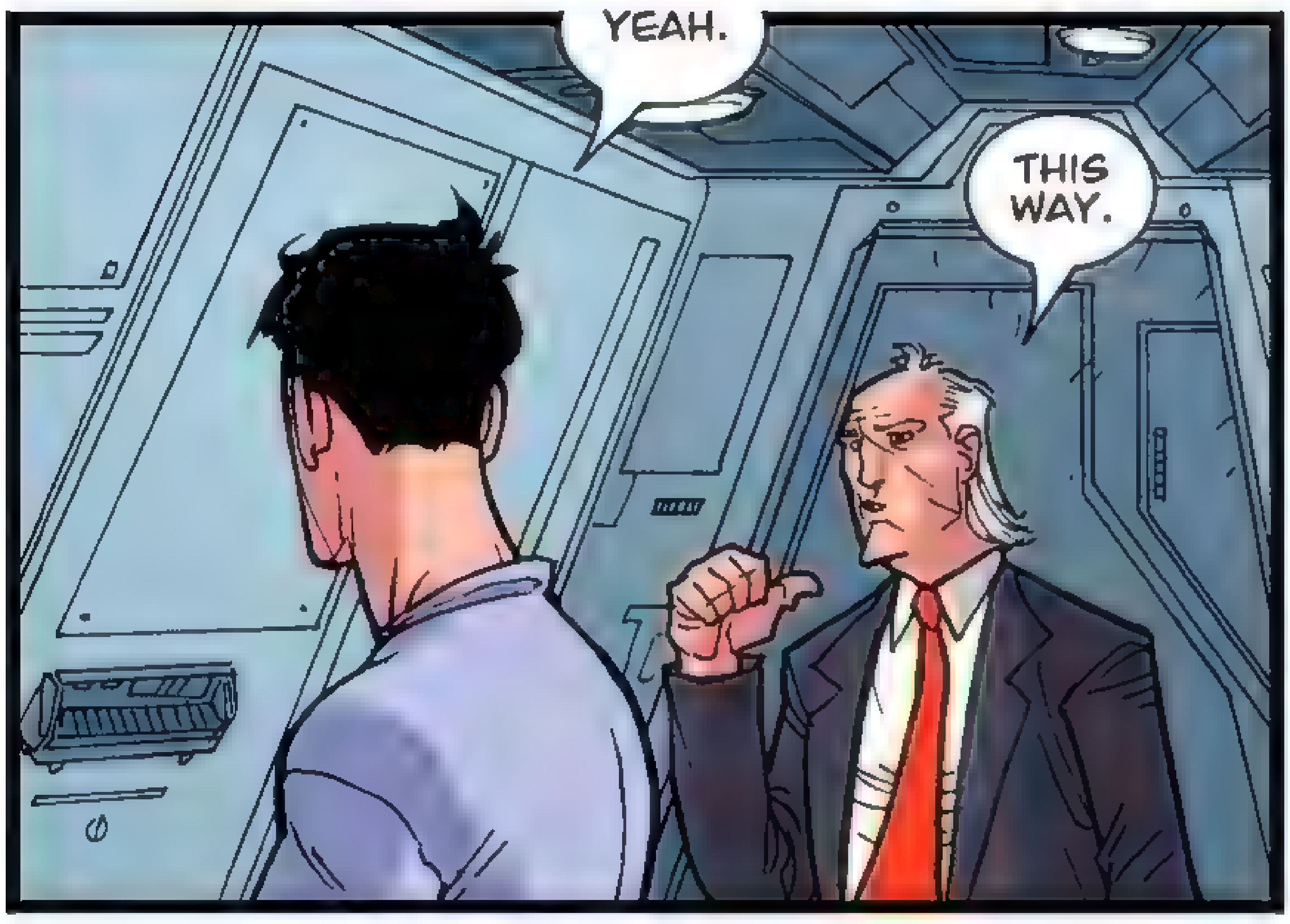

I'VE JUST GOT **WAY** TOO MUCH CRAP GOING ON IN MY LIFE RIGHT NOW.

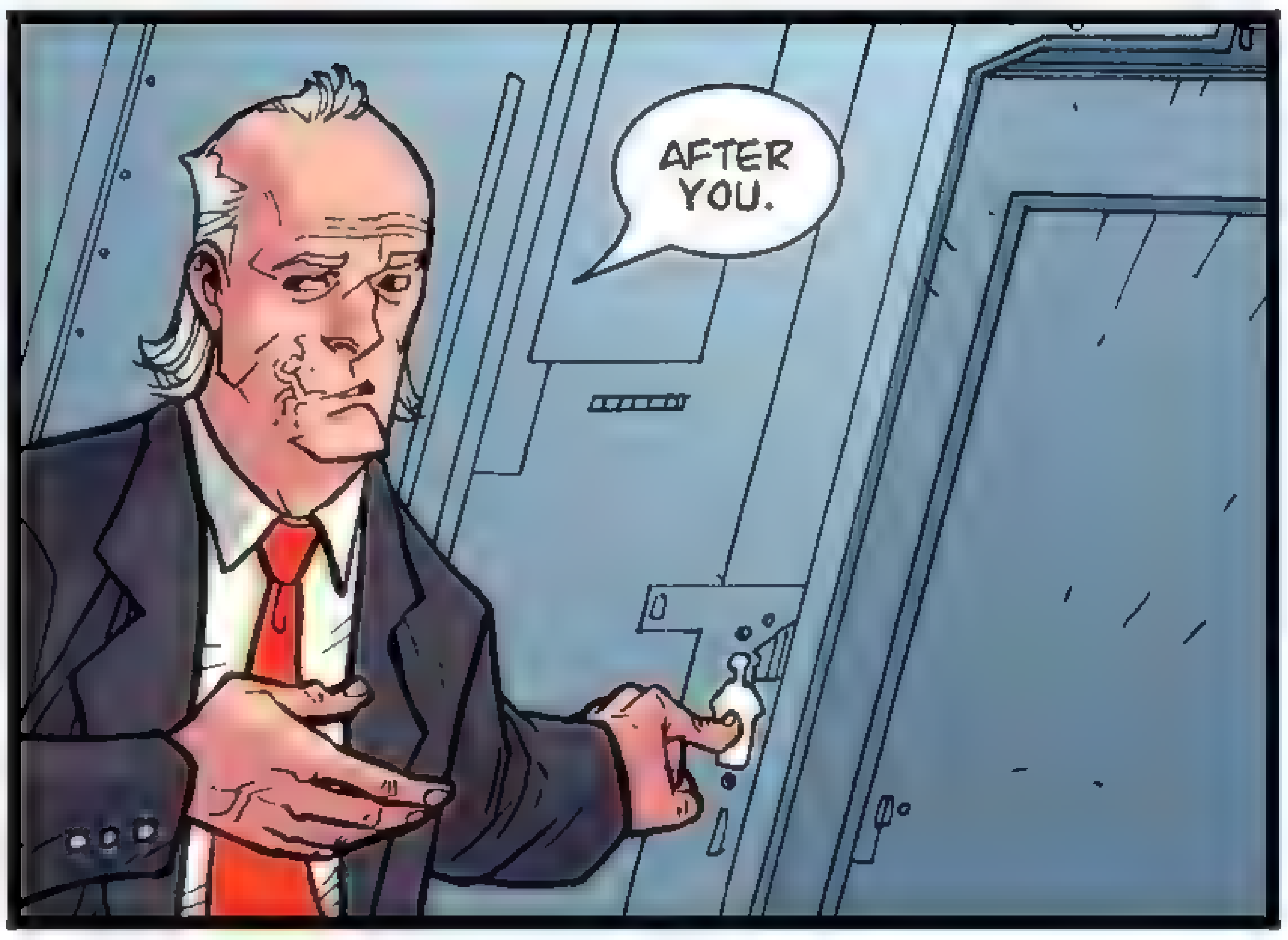

PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, THE DORMITORY OF AMBER BENNETT.
OH, MY GOD--SHE DOES THAT IN YOUR CLASS TOO? MAN, PROFESSOR BURGESS IS A TRIP, HUH? WHO WOULDA THOUGHT AN ECONOMICS CLASS WOULD BE SO ENTERTAINING.
I KNOW, RIGHT? I WAS READY FOR A SNOOZE FEST BUT THEN SHE CAME IN ON THE FIRST DAY WITH ONE OF THOSE PREPARED SPEECHES SHE WRITES FOR HERSELF--AND THEN PROCEEDS TO MESS UP AND START OVER.
I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE GOT HIRED ON HERE. IT'S MADNESS--SHE MUST BE SOMEONE'S SISTER.
AND THEN THERE'S THE CANDY--CAN YOU BELIEVE SHE ACTUALLY GIVES US CANDY WHEN WE ANSWER QUESTIONS IN CLASS? WE'RE IN COLLEGE! WE'RE NOT--
TAP. TAP.
HUH?
WHAT WAS THAT?
MY BOYFRIEND, I THINK... HE, UH, MUST HAVE BEEN THROWING PEBBLES AT THE WINDOW OR SOMETHING.
HE DOES THAT SOMETIMES TO LET ME KNOW HE'S HERE.
BOYFRIEND? I'M NOT GETTING YOU IN TROUBLE FOR HAVING ME HERE, AM I?
NO, OF COURSE NOT. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT COMING TO THE WINDOW?
IS THAT A GUY IN THERE?! WHO IS THAT?
IT'S YOUR STUPID SECRET--AND I'VE TOLD YOU PEOPLE COME INTO MY ROOM SOME TIMES--IT'S NOT SAFE--BUT WHY AM I WORRIED ABOUT THAT WHEN YOU'RE NOT?!
THERE'S A GUY IN YOUR ROOM? HOW IS THAT COOL? WHY DO I NOT KNOW ABOUT THAT?
WHAT'S--?!
7
8

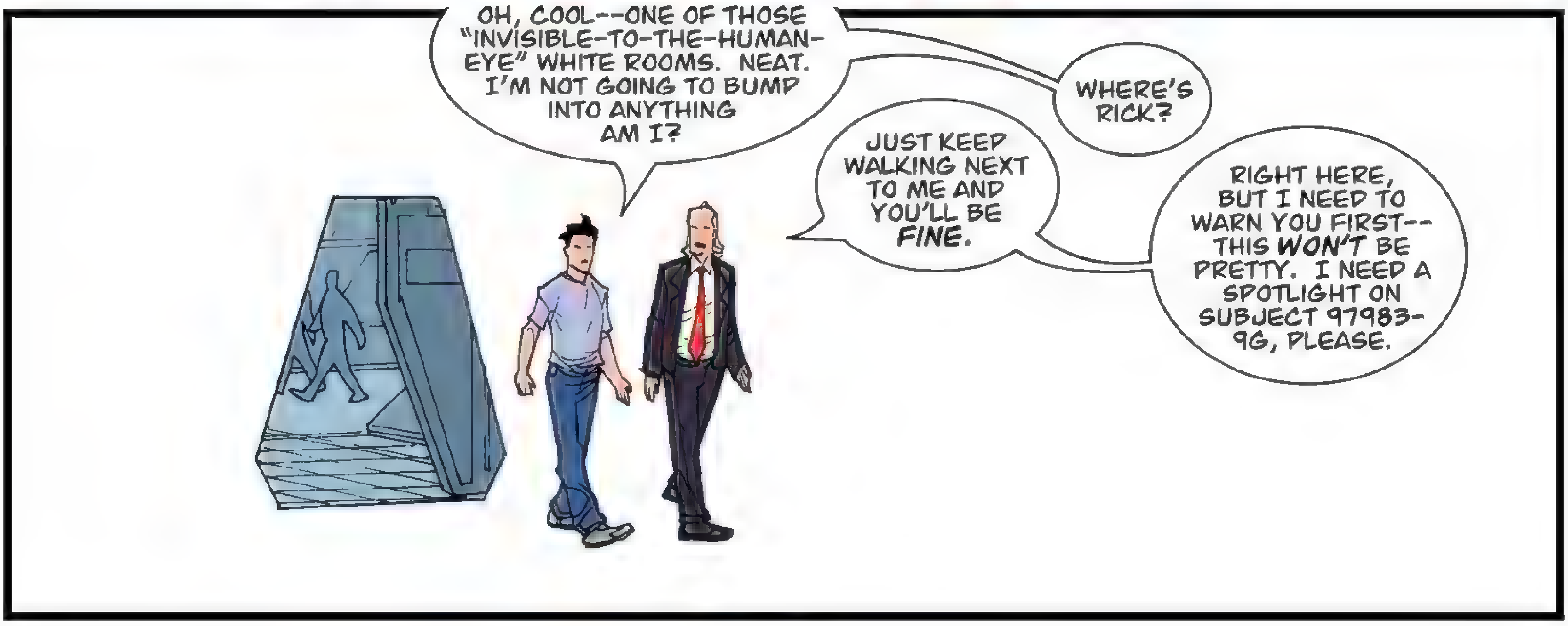

THE WINDOW?
THE GUY?!
I'D TELL YOU NOT TO WORRY--THAT HE WAS JUST A FRIEND OF MINE BUT I DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW HIM.
AND HE'S JUST HERE-- IN YOUR ROOM-- AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HIM?
LET ME FINISH--HE'S IN THE SAME ECONOMICS CLASS AS I AM, DIFFERENT TIME, AND WE'RE SHARING A BOOK. WE BOTH GOT THE SAME PROJECT AND THERE'S ONLY ONE BOOK.
YOU INVITE HIM TO YOUR ROOM?
JEEZ, MARK. HE WANTED TO USE THE BOOK TODAY AND I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE GOING ANYWHERE. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
WOULD YOU HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT HIM IF I HADN'T SHOWN UP?
I'M SURE IT WOULD HAVE COME UP IN CONVERSATION-- I'M NOT TRYING TO HIDE ANYTHING. IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE A THING WITH YOU IS IT?
THE JEALOUSY?
7
NO. IT'S JUST--
WILLIAM IS UP AND ABOUT. WE CAN SEND HIM HOME BUT THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE HIM YOURSELF.
JUST GIVING YOU A HEADS-UP.
I JUST-- I'M GOING TO GO.
I'LL CALL YOU LATER.

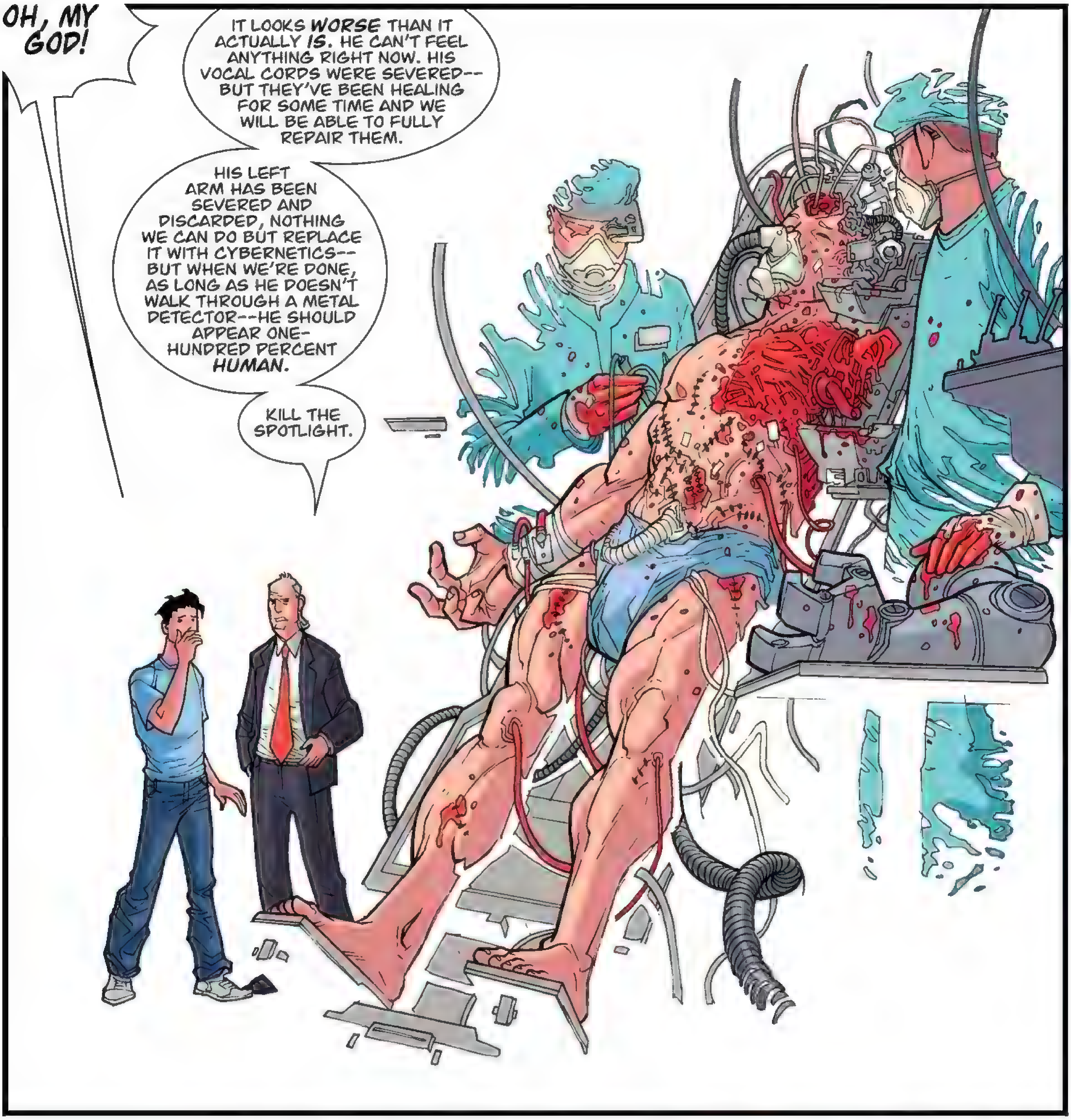

THE PENTAGON. WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

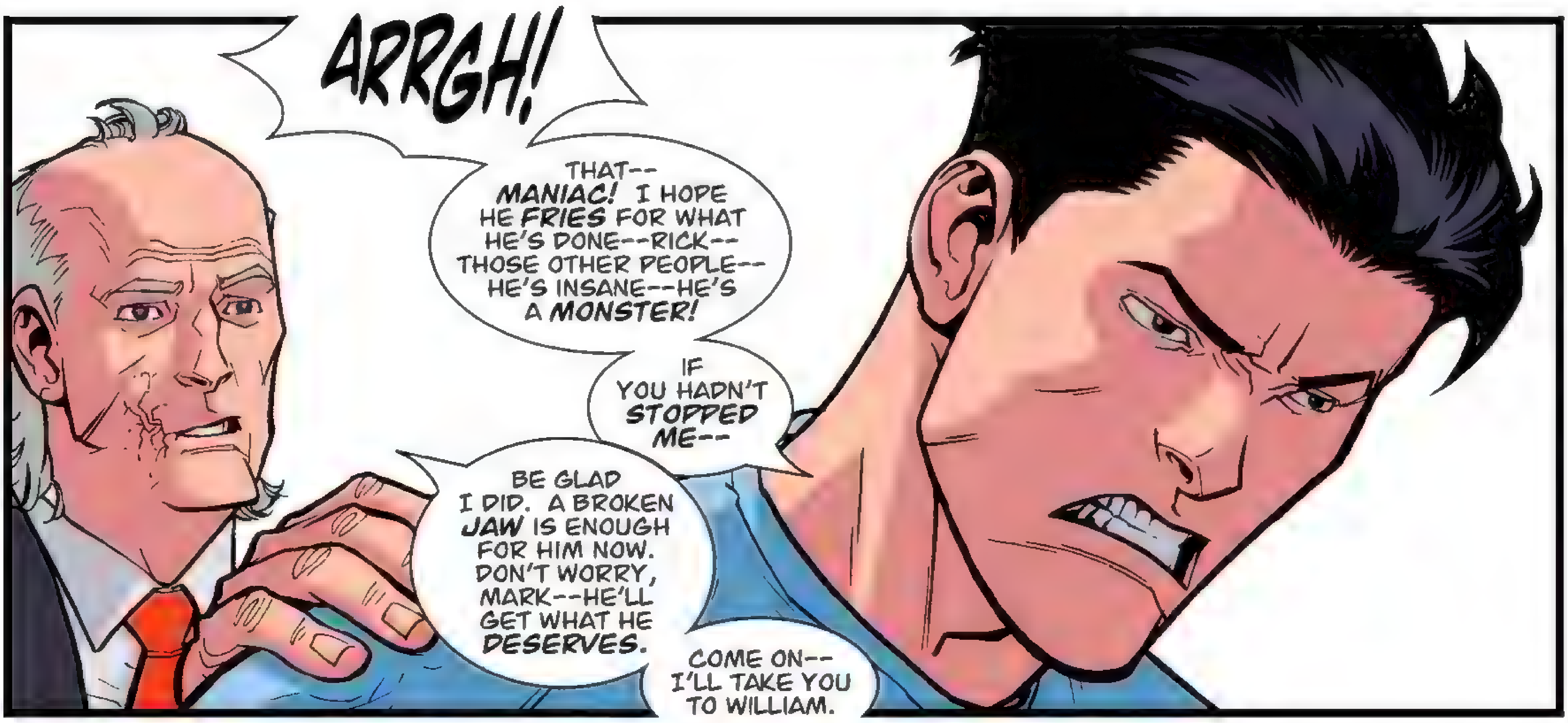

SO WILLIAM'S GOOD? HE'S OKAY? THERE WAS NOTHING PERMANENT DONE TO HIM?
HE'S FINE. HE'S BEEN ASKING ABOUT YOU. I'M PROUD OF YOU FOR NOT TELLING HIM ABOUT US. NICE WORK. OF COURSE, THAT'S ALL FOR NOTHING NOW, BUT IT WAS A NICE GESTURE.
WHAT ABOUT RICK SHERIDAN? HAVE YOU STARTED WORK ON HIM YET? HOW'S HE DOING?
I CAN SHOW YOU HIM FIRST IF YOU'D LIKE. HE'S CLOSER.

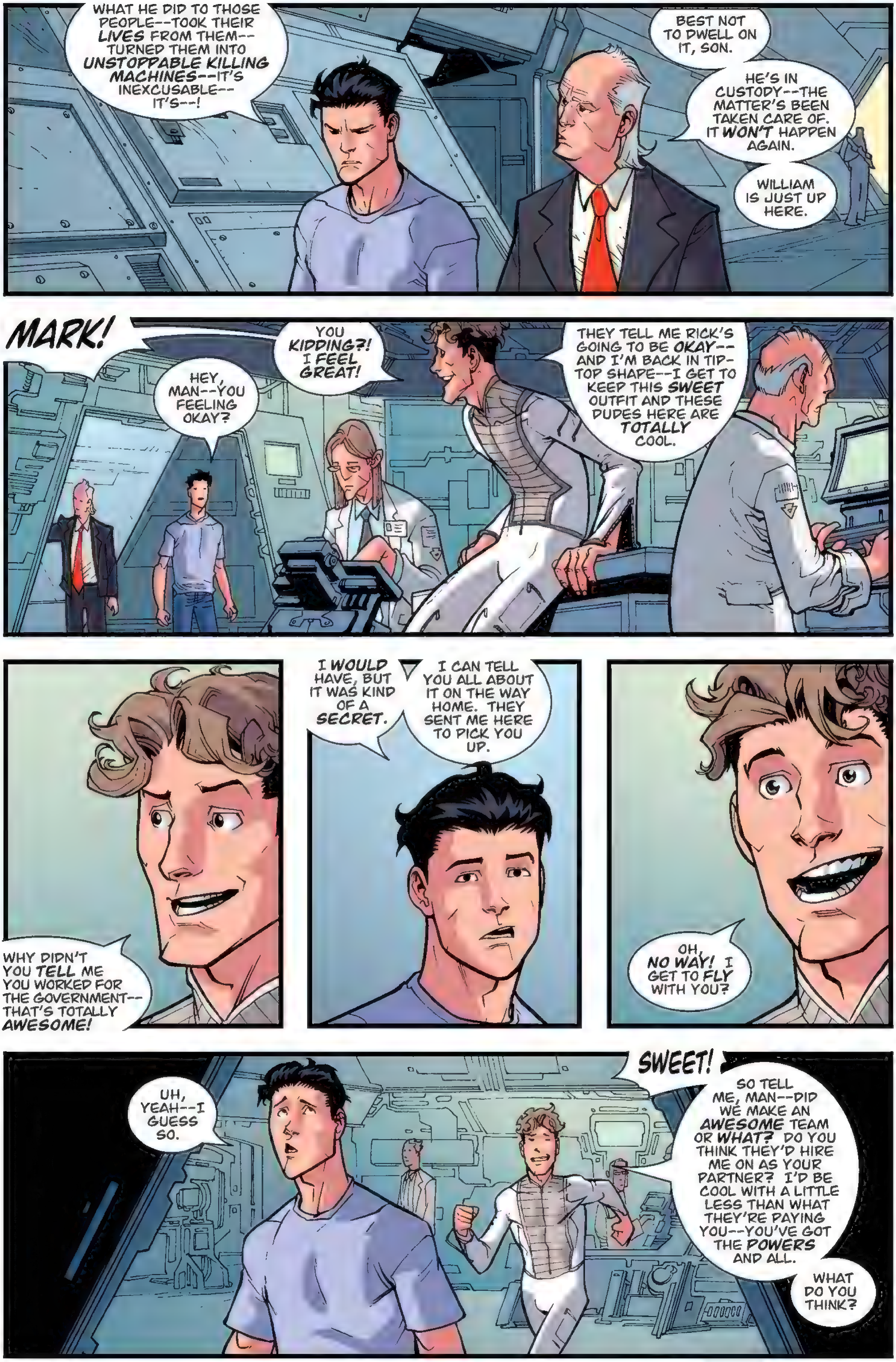

YEAH.
THIS WAY.

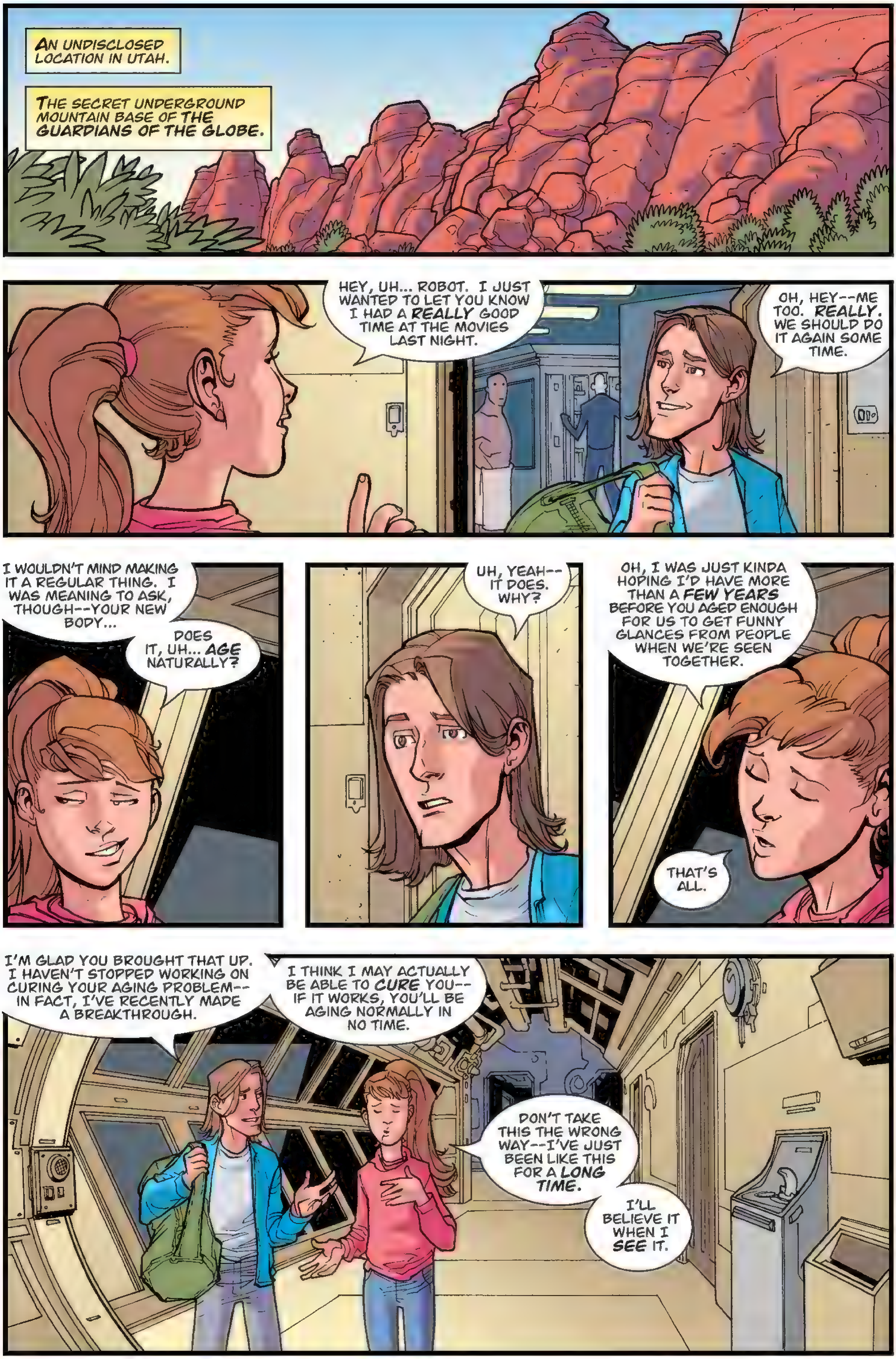

AFTER YOU.

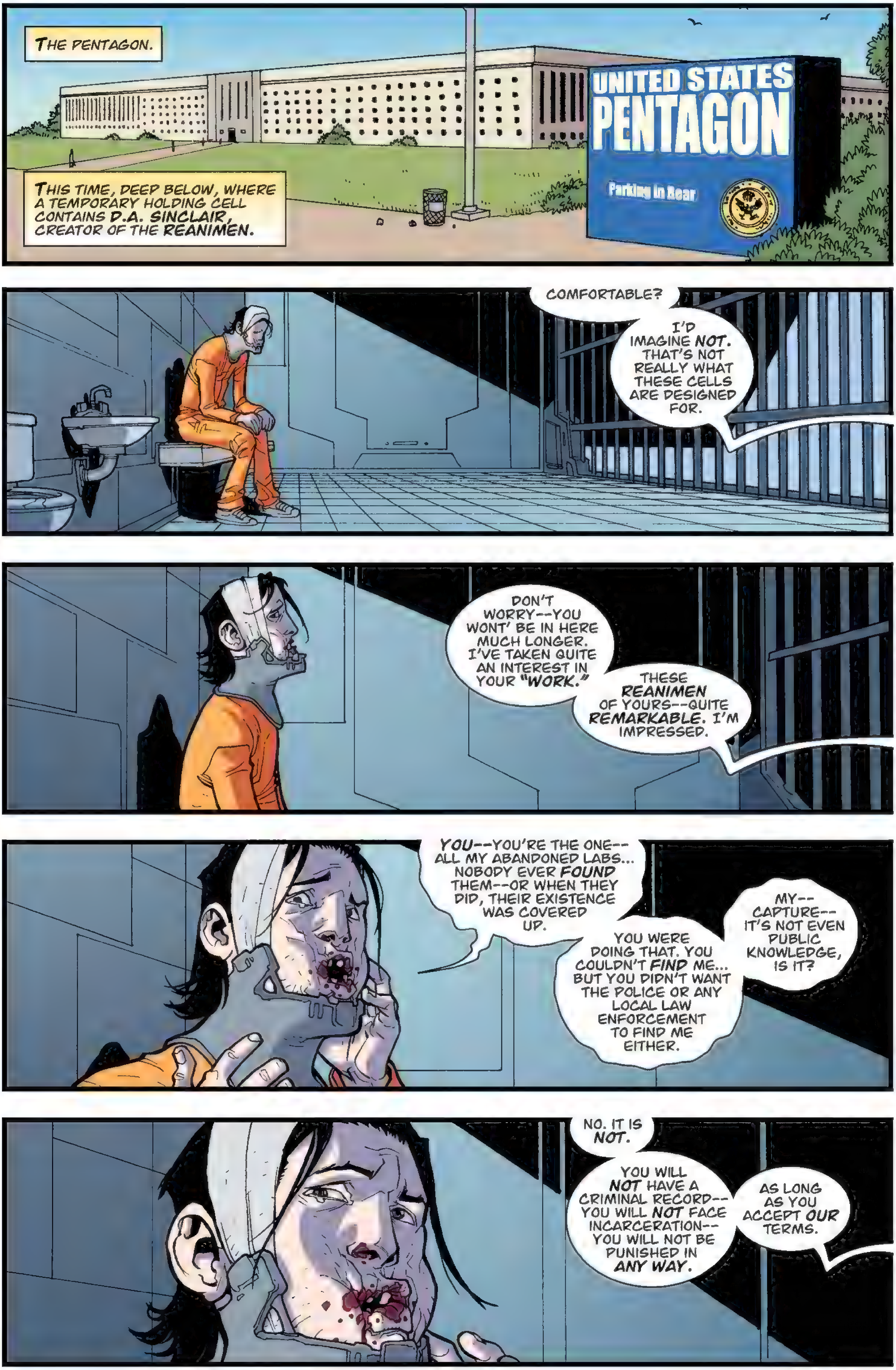

OH, COOL--ONE OF THOSE "INVISIBLE-TO-THE-HUMAN-EYE" WHITE ROOMS. NEAT. I'M NOT GOING TO BUMP INTO ANYTHING AM I?
WHERE'S RICK?
JUST KEEP WALKING NEXT TO ME AND YOU'LL BE FINE.
RIGHT HERE, BUT I NEED TO WARN YOU FIRST-- THIS WON'T BE PRETTY. I NEED A SPOTLIGHT ON SUBJECT 97983-9G, PLEASE.


OH, MY GOD!
IT LOOKS WORSE THAN IT ACTUALLY IS. HE CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING RIGHT NOW. HIS VOCAL CORDS WERE SEVERED--BUT THEY'VE BEEN HEALING FOR SOME TIME AND WE WILL BE ABLE TO FULLY REPAIR THEM.
HIS LEFT ARM HAS BEEN SEVERED AND DISCARDED, NOTHING WE CAN DO BUT REPLACE IT WITH CYBERNETICS--BUT WHEN WE'RE DONE, AS LONG AS HE DOESN'T WALK THROUGH A METAL DETECTOR--HE SHOULD APPEAR ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT HUMAN.
KILL THE SPOTLIGHT.


ARRGH!
THAT--MANIAC! I HOPE HE FRIES FOR WHAT HE'S DONE--RICK--THOSE OTHER PEOPLE--HE'S INSANE--HE'S A MONSTER!
IF YOU HADN'T STOPPED ME--
BE GLAD I DID. A BROKEN JAW IS ENOUGH FOR HIM NOW. DON'T WORRY, MARK--HE'LL GET WHAT HE DESERVES.
COME ON--I'LL TAKE YOU TO WILLIAM.

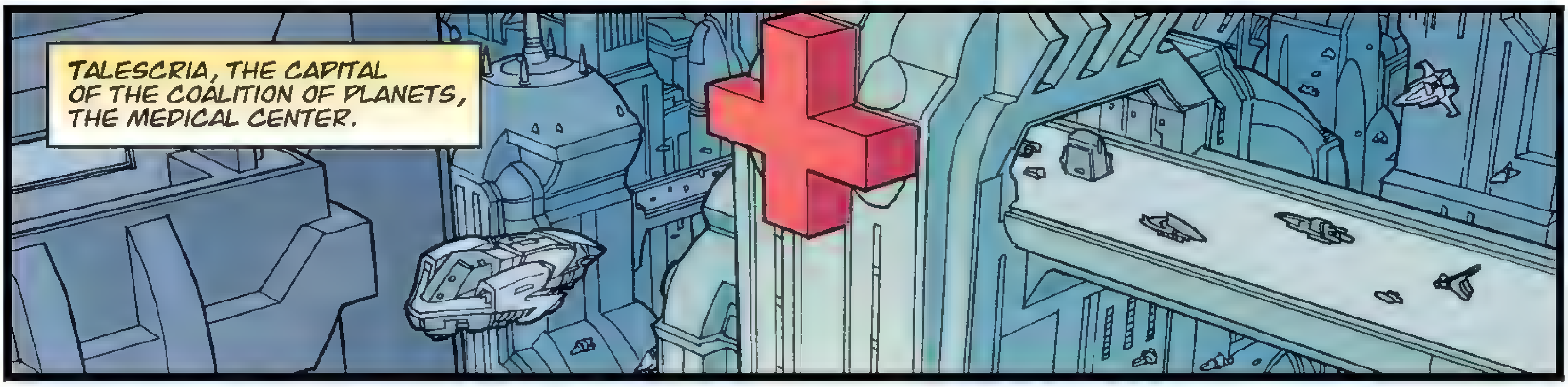

WHAT HE DID TO THOSE PEOPLE--TOOK THEIR LIVES FROM THEM--TURNED THEM INTO UNSTOPPABLE KILLING MACHINES--IT'S INEXCUSABLE--IT'S--!
BEST NOT TO DWELL ON IT, SON.
HE'S IN CUSTODY--THE MATTER'S BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
WILLIAM IS JUST UP HERE.
MARK!
HEY, MAN--YOU FEELING OKAY?
YOU KIDDING?! I FEEL GREAT!
THEY TELL ME RICK'S GOING TO BE OKAY--AND I'M BACK IN TIP-TOP SHAPE--I GET TO KEEP THIS SWEET OUTFIT AND THESE DUDES HERE ARE TOTALLY COOL.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU WORKED FOR THE GOVERNMENT--THAT'S TOTALLY AWESOME!
I WOULD HAVE, BUT IT WAS KIND OF A SECRET.
I CAN TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT ON THE WAY HOME. THEY SENT ME HERE TO PICK YOU UP.
OH, NO WAY! I GET TO FLY WITH YOU?
UH, YEAH--I GUESS SO.
SWEET!
SO TELL ME, MAN--DID WE MAKE AN AWESOME TEAM OR WHAT? DO YOU THINK THEY'D HIRE ME ON AS YOUR PARTNER? I'D BE COOL WITH A LITTLE LESS THAN WHAT THEY'RE PAYING YOU--YOU'VE GOT THE POWERS AND ALL.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

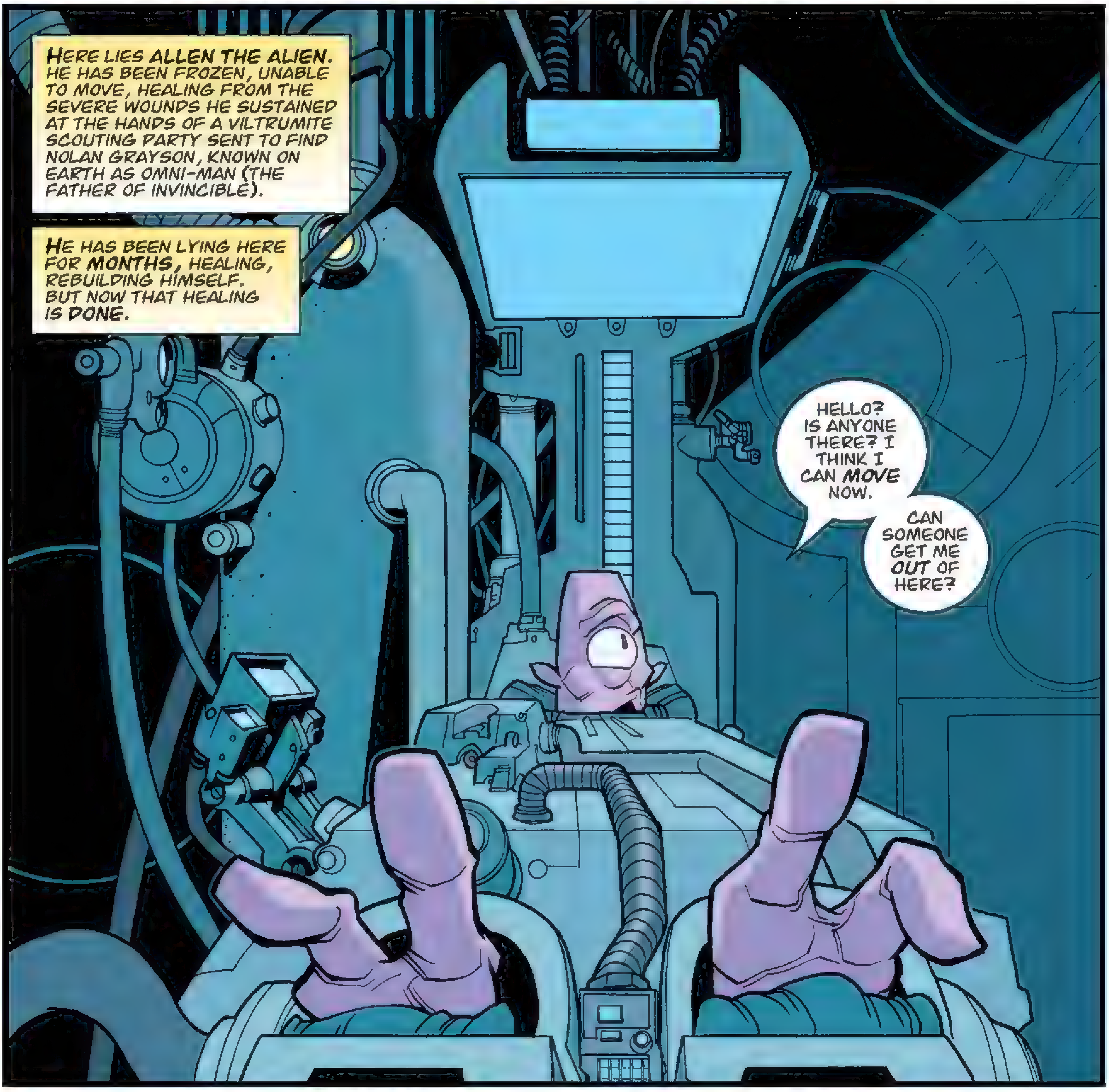

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET UNDERGROUND MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
HEY, UH... ROBOT. I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW I HAD A REALLY GOOD TIME AT THE MOVIES LAST NIGHT.
OH, HEY--ME TOO. REALLY. WE SHOULD DO IT AGAIN SOME TIME.
I WOULDN'T MIND MAKING IT A REGULAR THING. I WAS MEANING TO ASK, THOUGH--YOUR NEW BODY...
DOES IT, UH... AGE NATURALLY?
UH, YEAH--IT DOES. WHY?
OH, I WAS JUST KINDA HOPING I'D HAVE MORE THAN A FEW YEARS BEFORE YOU AGED ENOUGH FOR US TO GET FUNNY GLANCES FROM PEOPLE WHEN WE'RE SEEN TOGETHER.
THAT'S ALL.
I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THAT UP. I HAVEN'T STOPPED WORKING ON CURING YOUR AGING PROBLEM--IN FACT, I'VE RECENTLY MADE A BREAKTHROUGH.
I THINK I MAY ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO CURE YOU--IF IT WORKS, YOU'LL BE AGING NORMALLY IN NO TIME.
DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY--I'VE JUST BEEN LIKE THIS FOR A LONG TIME.
I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE IT.

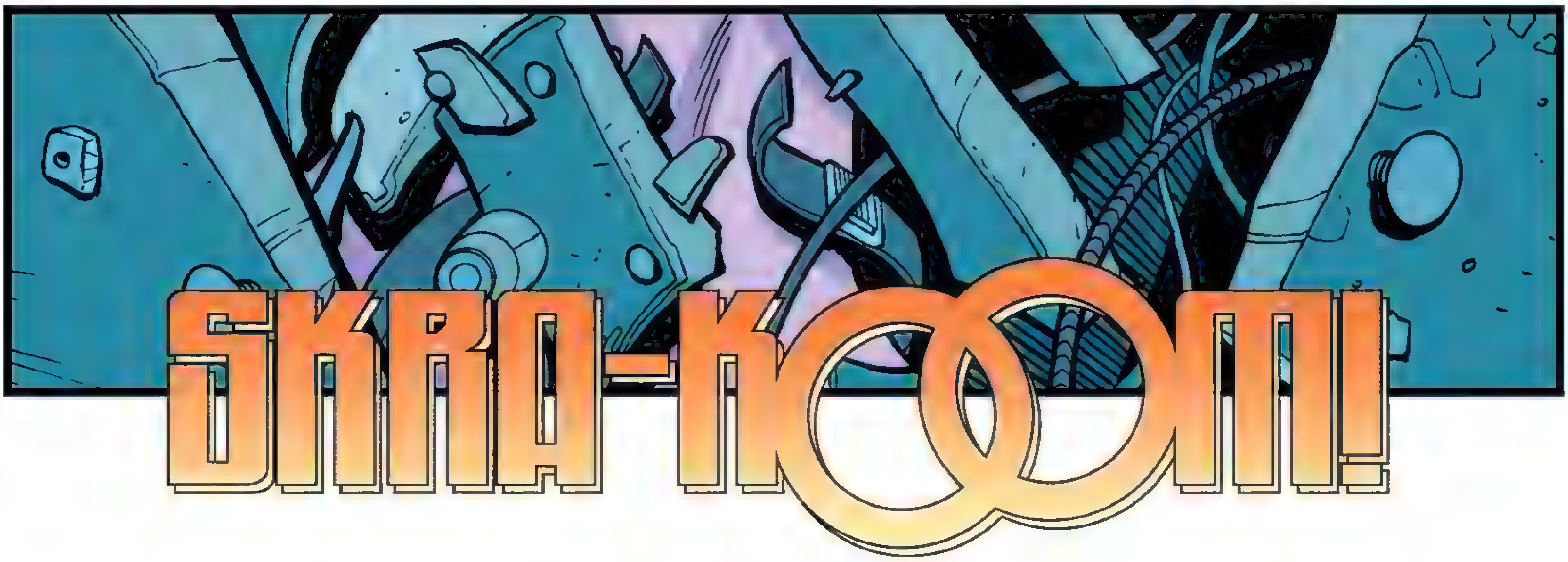

THE PENTAGON.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THIS TIME, DEEP BELOW, WHERE A TEMPORARY HOLDING CELL CONTAINS D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.
COMFORTABLE?
I'D IMAGINE NOT. THAT'S NOT REALLY WHAT THESE CELLS ARE DESIGNED FOR.
DON'T WORRY--YOU WONT' BE IN HERE MUCH LONGER. I'VE TAKEN QUITE AN INTEREST IN YOUR "WORK."
THESE REANIMEN OF YOURS--QUITE REMARKABLE. I'M IMPRESSED.
YOU--YOU'RE THE ONE-- ALL MY ABANDONED LABS... NOBODY EVER FOUND THEM--OR WHEN THEY DID, THEIR EXISTENCE WAS COVERED UP.
YOU WERE DOING THAT. YOU COULDN'T FIND ME... BUT YOU DIDN'T WANT THE POLICE OR ANY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TO FIND ME EITHER.
MY-- CAPTURE-- IT'S NOT EVEN PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, IS IT?
NO. IT IS NOT.
YOU WILL NOT HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD-- YOU WILL NOT FACE INCARCERATION-- YOU WILL NOT BE PUNISHED IN ANY WAY.
AS LONG AS YOU ACCEPT OUR TERMS.

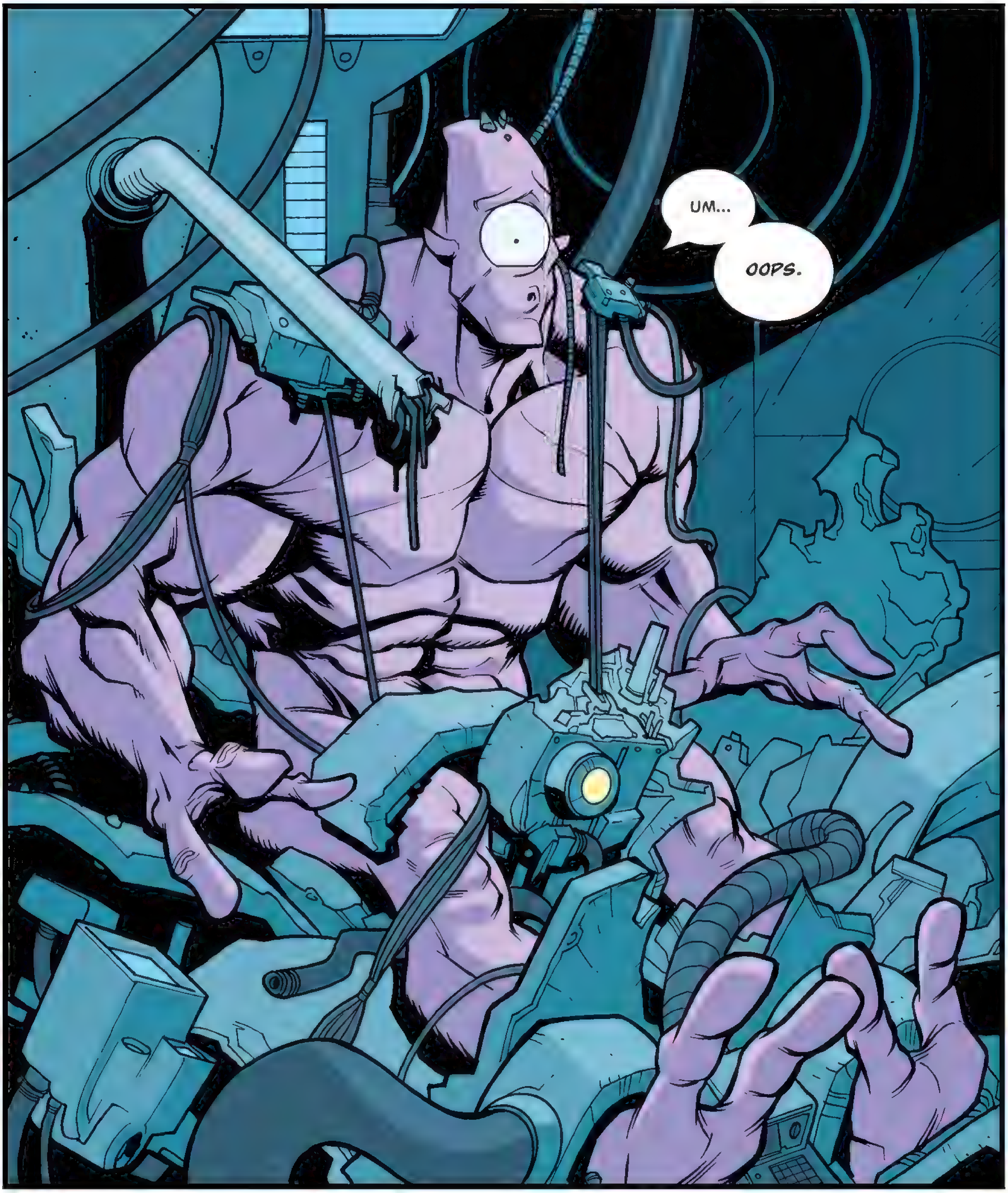
D.A. SINCLAIR...
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOU A **JOB.**

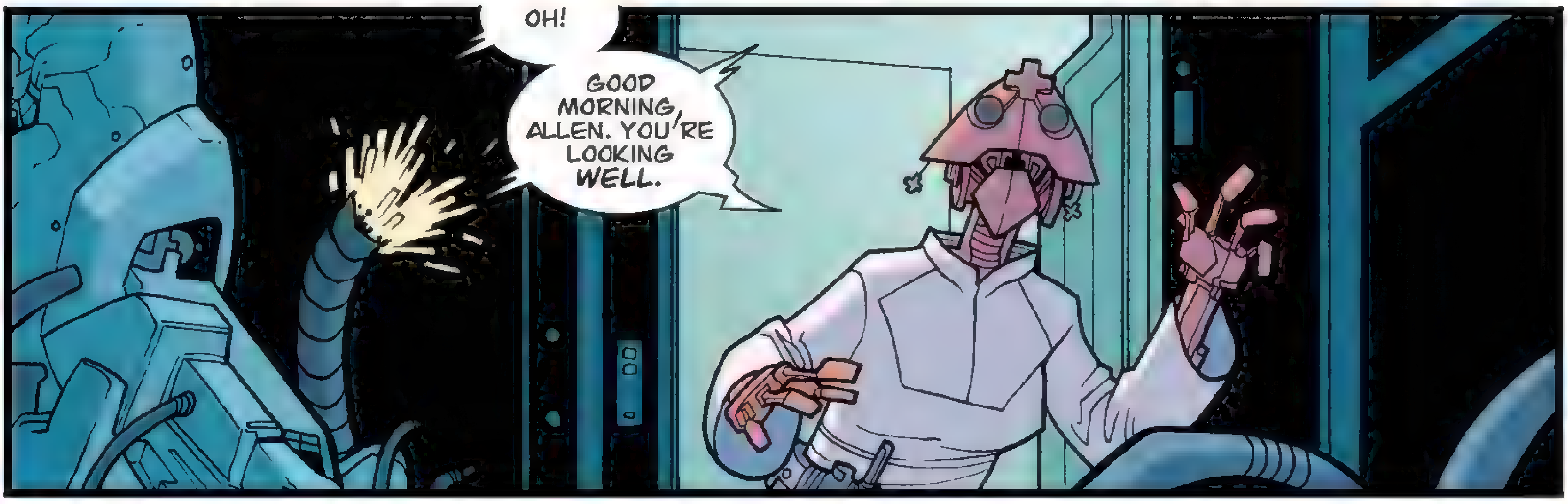
ISSUE THIRTY-EIGHT

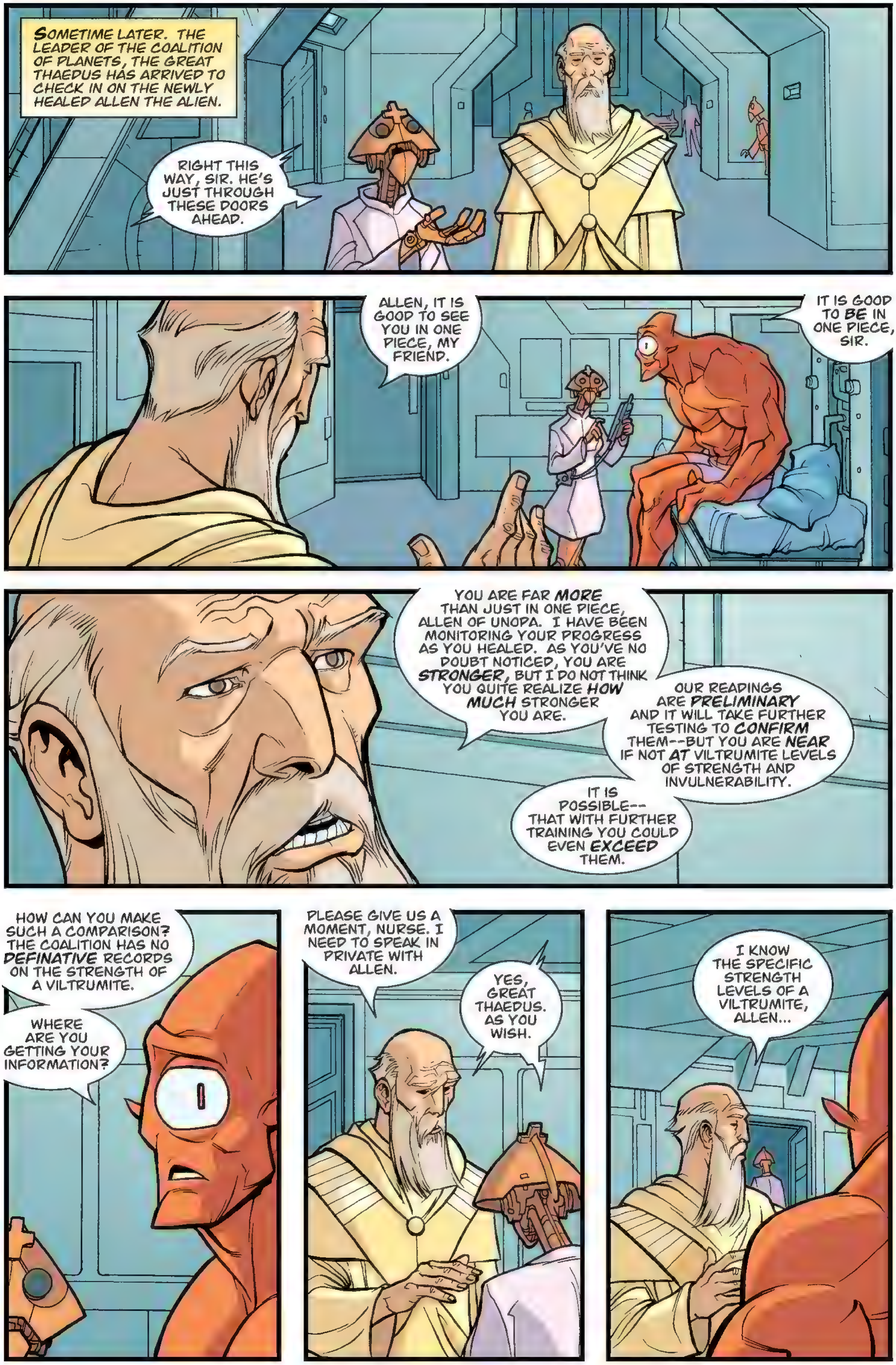

TALESCRIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, THE MEDICAL CENTER.


HERE LIES ALLEN THE ALIEN. HE HAS BEEN FROZEN, UNABLE TO MOVE, HEALING FROM THE SEVERE WOUNDS HE SUSTAINED AT THE HANDS OF A VILTRUMITE SCOUTING PARTY SENT TO FIND NOLAN GRAYSON, KNOWN ON EARTH AS OMNI-MAN (THE FATHER OF INVINCIBLE).
HE HAS BEEN LYING HERE FOR MONTHS, HEALING, REBUILDING HIMSELF. BUT NOW THAT HEALING IS DONE.
HELLO? IS ANYONE THERE? I THINK I CAN MOVE NOW.
CAN SOMEONE GET ME OUT OF HERE?

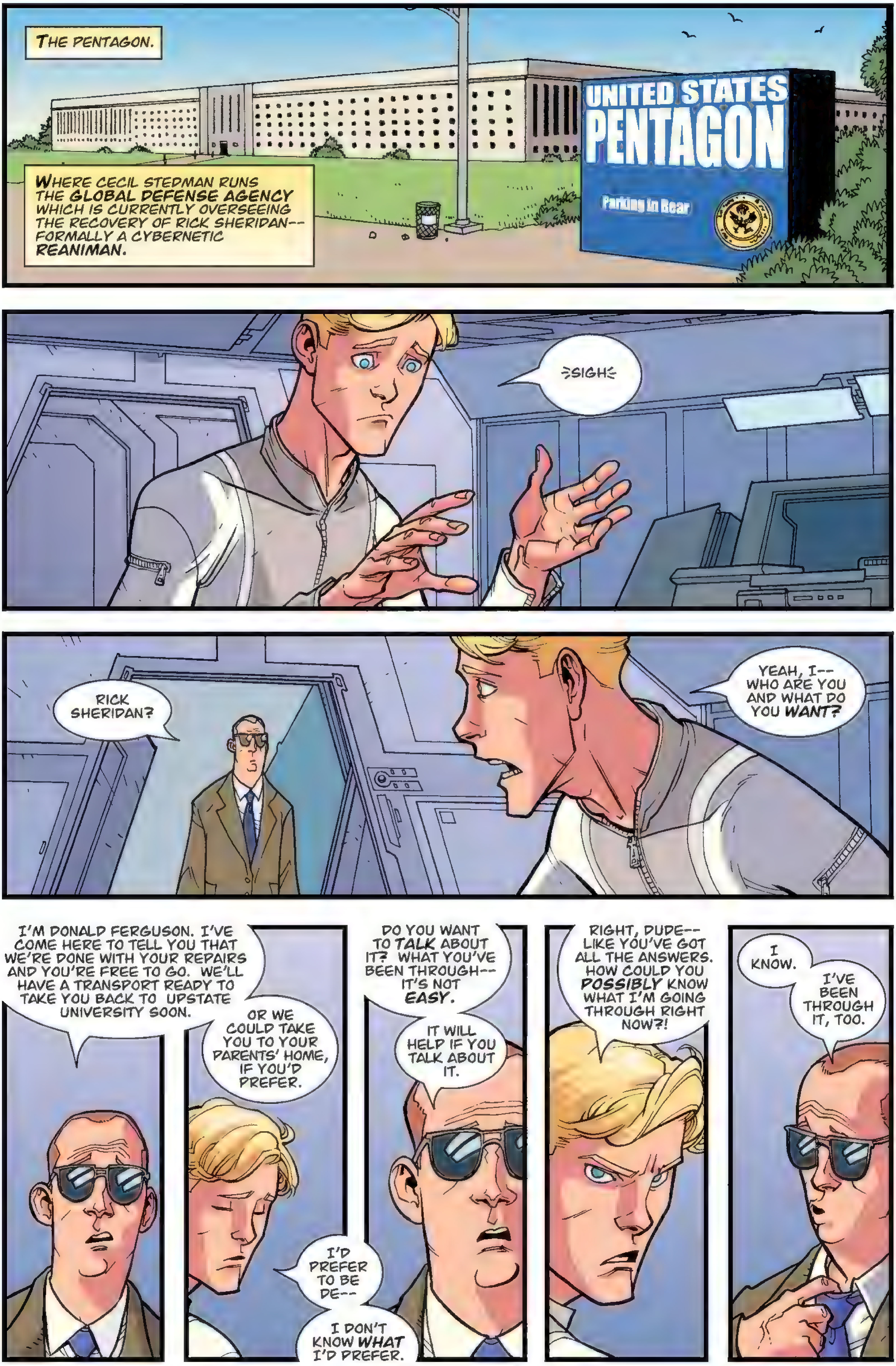

SKRA-KOOM!

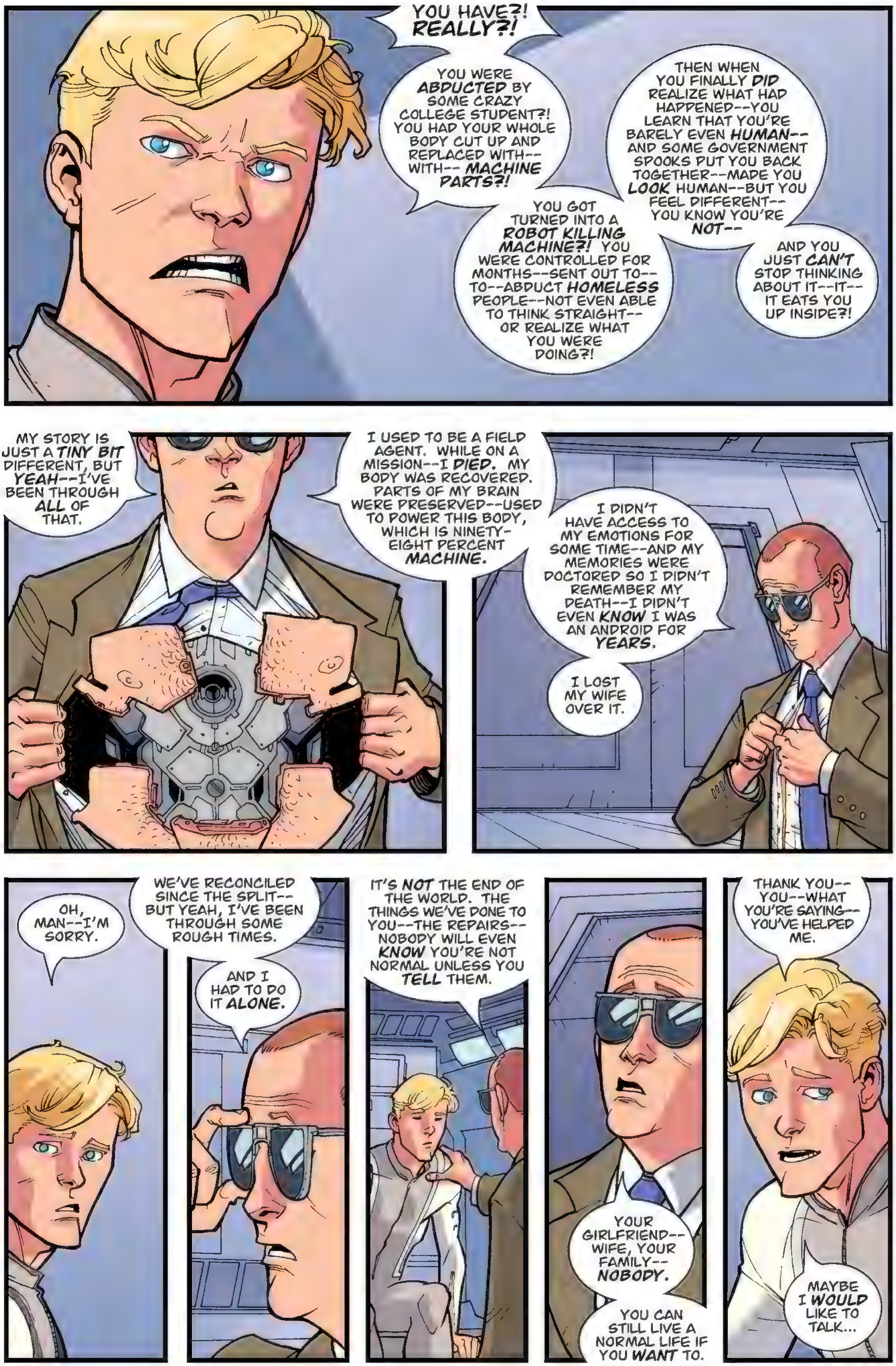

UM...
OOPS.

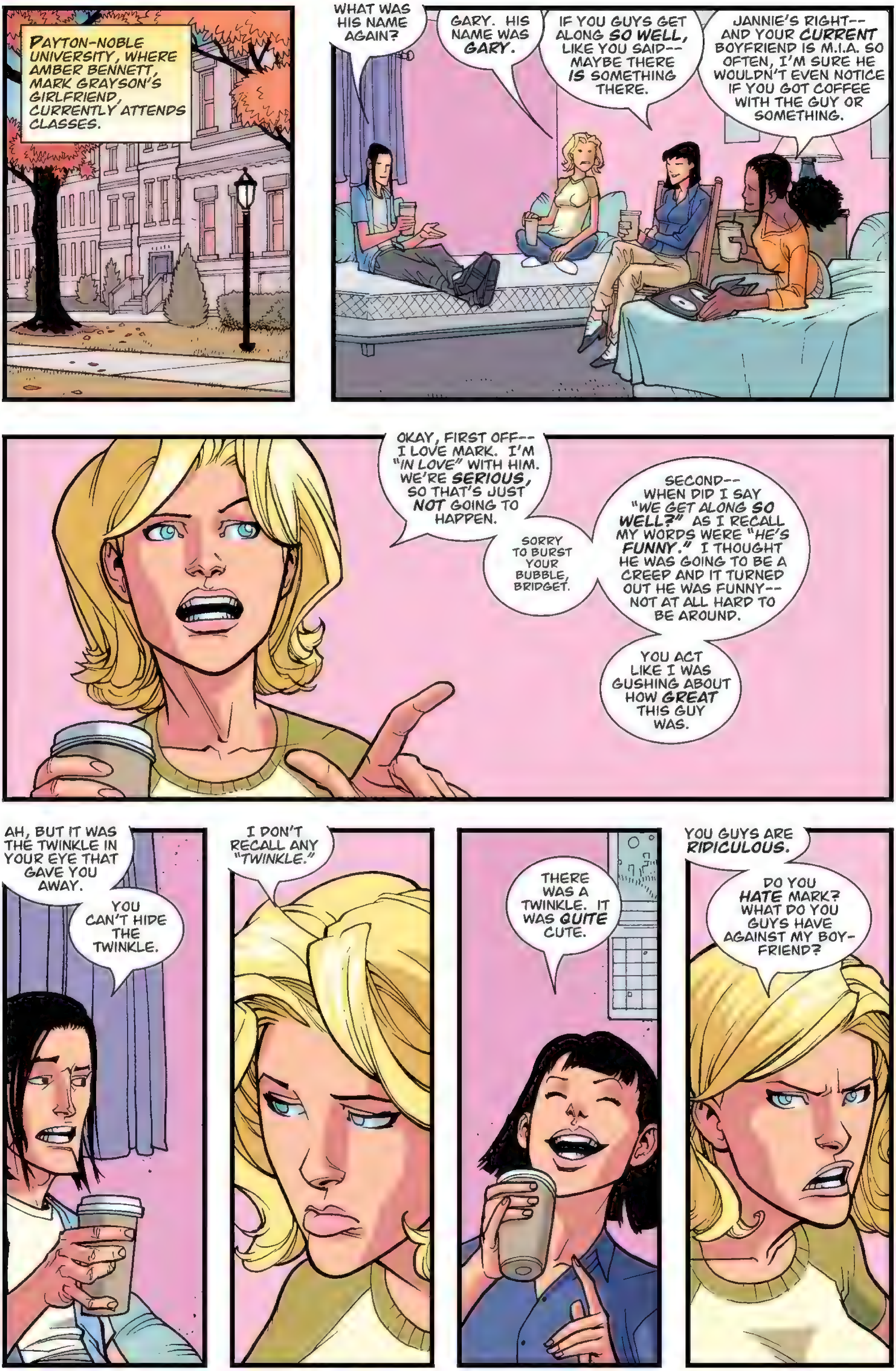

OH!
GOOD MORNING, ALLEN. YOU'RE LOOKING **WELL.**

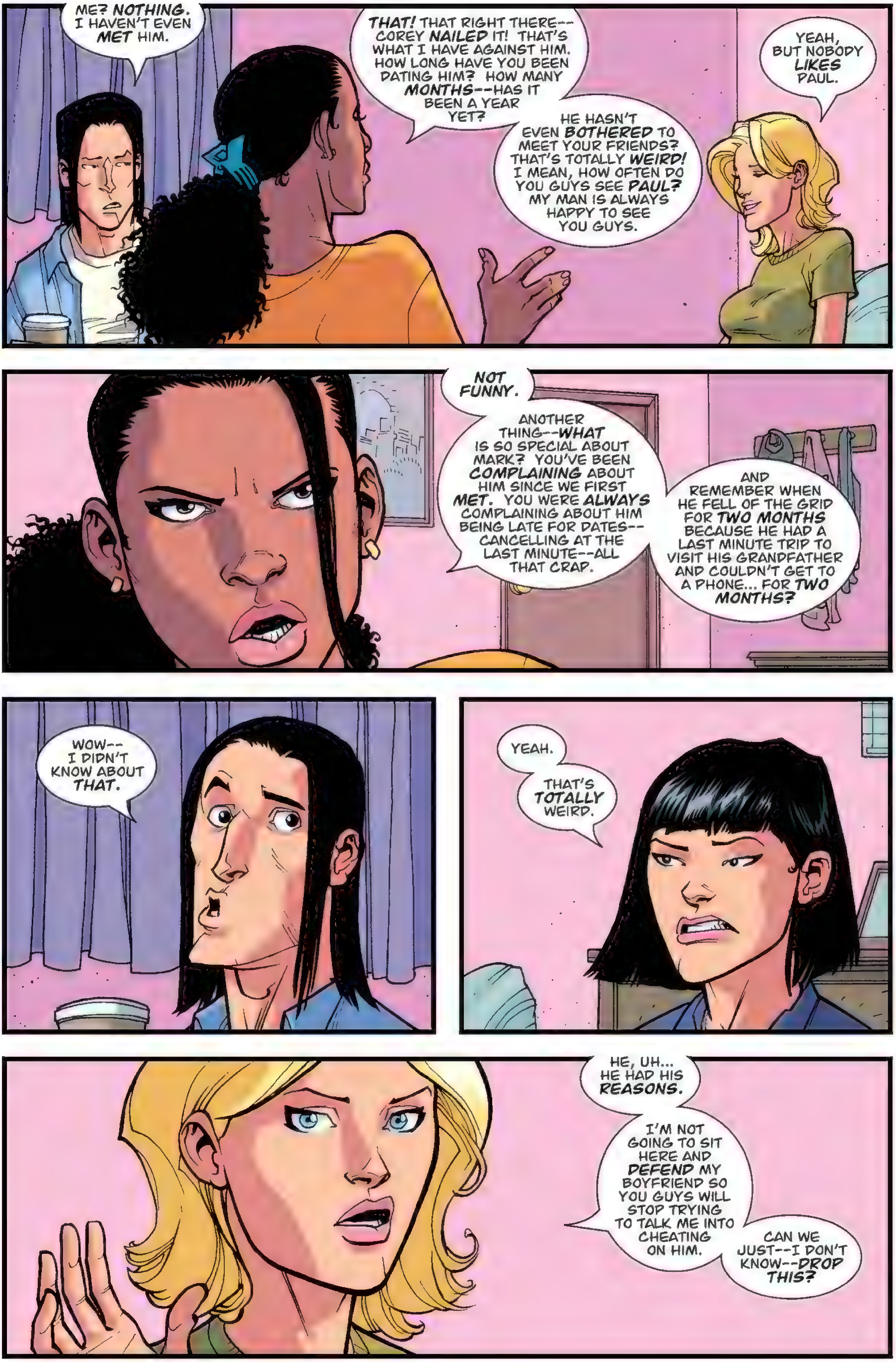

SOMETIME LATER. THE LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, THE GREAT THAEDUS HAS ARRIVED TO CHECK IN ON THE NEWLY HEALED ALLEN THE ALIEN.
RIGHT THIS WAY, SIR. HE'S JUST THROUGH THESE DOORS AHEAD.
ALLEN, IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU IN ONE PIECE, MY FRIEND.
IT IS GOOD TO *BE* IN ONE PIECE, SIR.
YOU ARE FAR *MORE* THAN JUST IN ONE PIECE, ALLEN OF UNOPA. I HAVE BEEN MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS AS YOU HEALED. AS YOU'VE NO DOUBT NOTICED, YOU ARE *STRONGER*, BUT I DO NOT THINK YOU QUITE REALIZE *HOW MUCH* STRONGER YOU ARE.
OUR READINGS ARE *PRELIMINARY* AND IT WILL TAKE FURTHER TESTING TO *CONFIRM* THEM--BUT YOU ARE *NEAR* IF NOT *AT* VILTRUMITE LEVELS OF STRENGTH AND INVULNERABILITY.
IT IS POSSIBLE-- THAT WITH FURTHER TRAINING YOU COULD EVEN *EXCEED* THEM.
HOW CAN YOU MAKE SUCH A COMPARISON? THE COALITION HAS NO *DEFINATIVE* RECORDS ON THE STRENGTH OF A VILTRUMITE.
WHERE ARE YOU GETTING YOUR INFORMATION?
PLEASE GIVE US A MOMENT, NURSE. I NEED TO SPEAK IN PRIVATE WITH ALLEN.
YES, GREAT THAEDUS. AS YOU WISH.
I KNOW THE SPECIFIC STRENGTH LEVELS OF A VILTRUMITE, ALLEN...

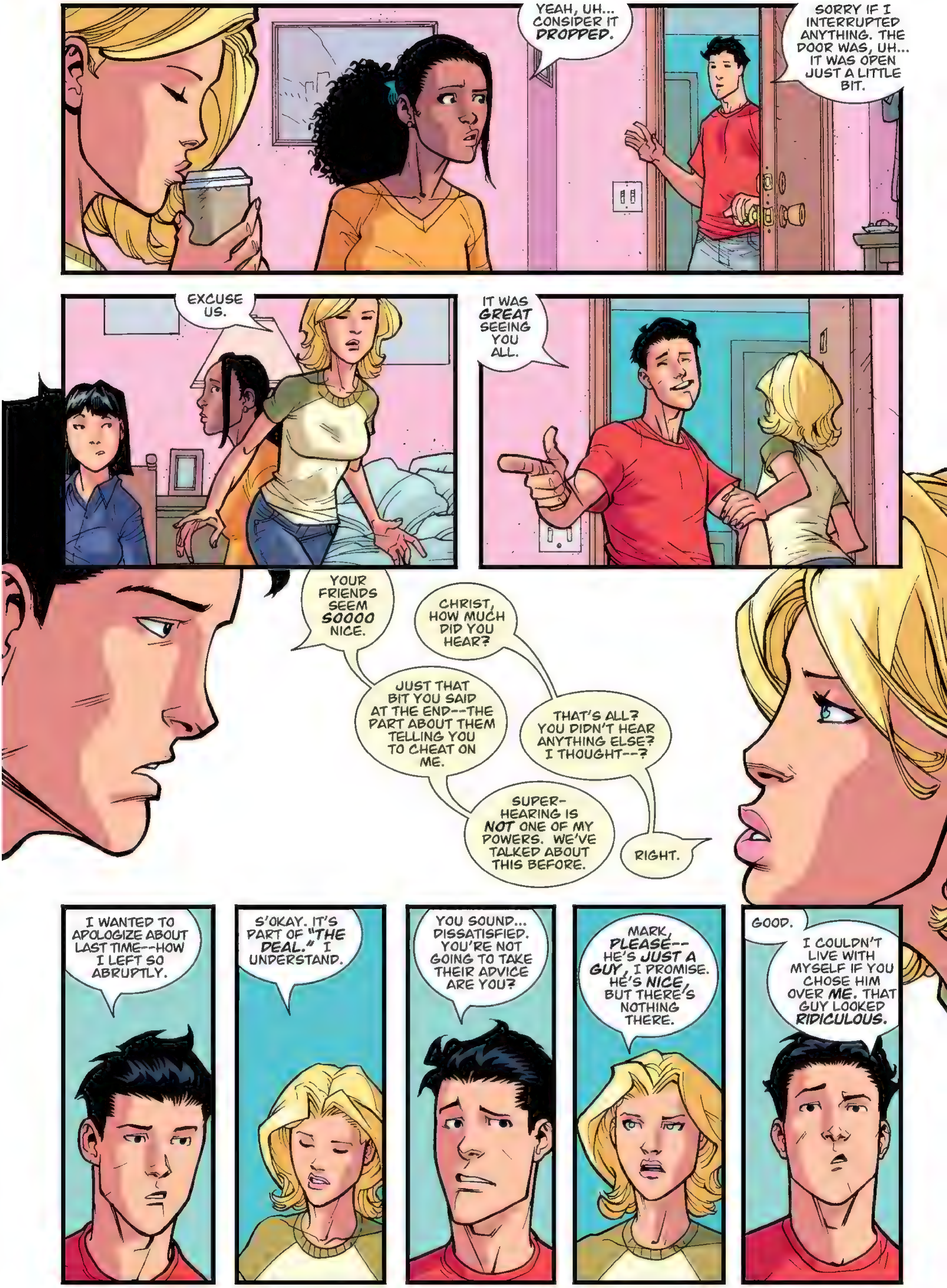
BECAUSE I AM A VILTRUMITE!
I-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
SAY NOTHING. I KNOW THIS MUST COME AS A SHOCK. I WAS THE FIRST TO REBEL AGAINST THE EMPIRE.
I FOUNDED THE COALITION OF PLANETS TO DEFEND THE UNIVERSE AGAINST THE EVILS OF MY OWN PEOPLE.
I THOUGHT I WAS AN ANOMALY, ONE OF A KIND, THE ONLY VILTRUMITE WITH THE AUDACITY TO REBEL-- UNTIL YOU BROUGHT BACK THE STORY OF THIS OTHER ON EARTH.
UNTIL YOU TOLD ME OF INVINCIBLE.
HE IS THE KEY TO THIS AGE-OLD STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE COALITION AND THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
WE COULD USE HIM TO TURN OTHER VILTRUMITES TO OUR CAUSE--TO WEAKEN THE VILTRUM EMPIRE EVEN MORE--TO AT LAST TURN THE TIDE IN OUR FAVOR.
YOU NEED TO PREPARE FOR A RETURN TRIP TO EARTH--AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I WISH TO SPEAK WITH THIS INVINCIBLE.

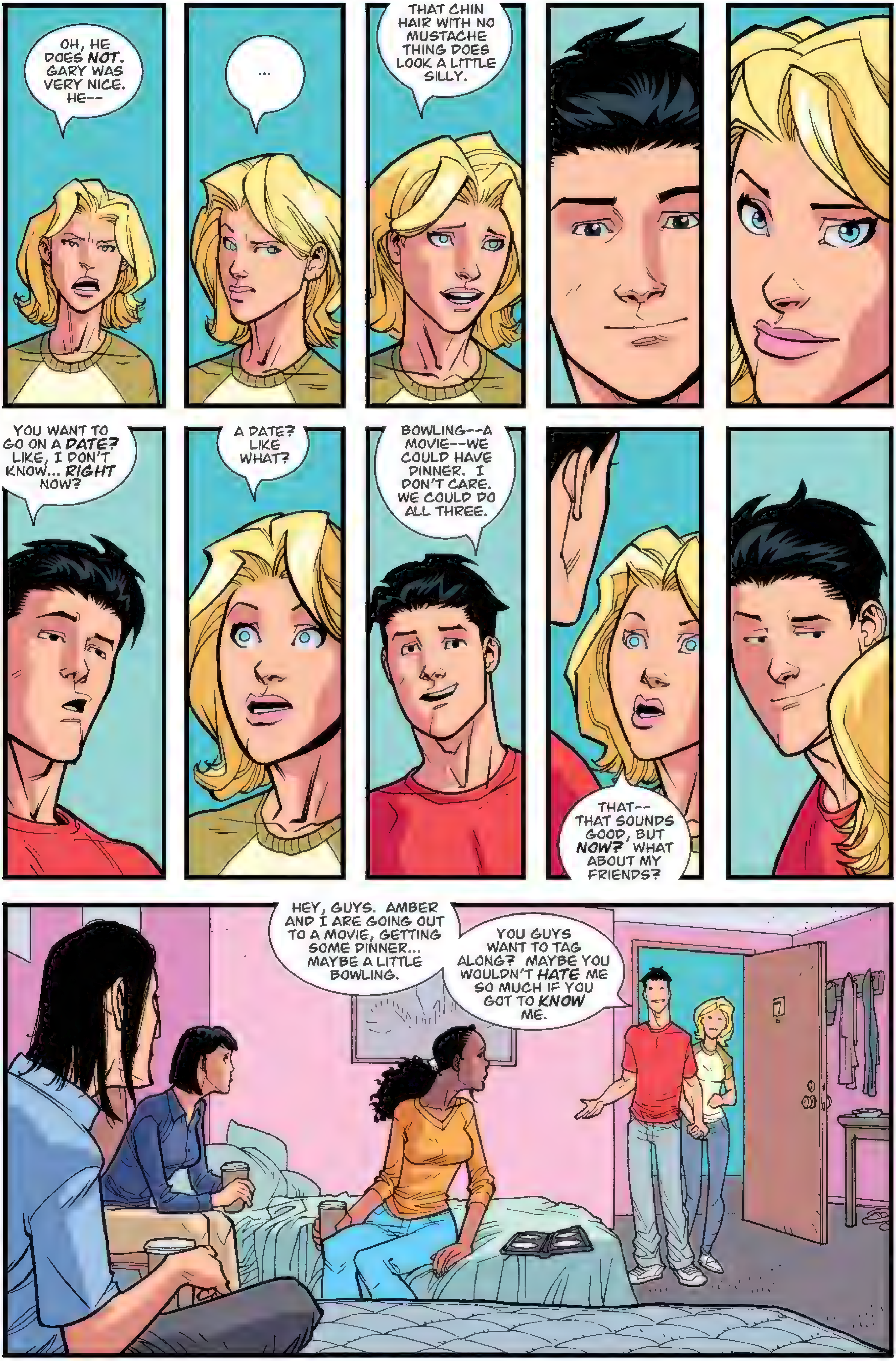

THE PENTAGON.
WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE **GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY** WHICH IS CURRENTLY OVERSEEING THE RECOVERY OF RICK SHERIDAN--FORMALLY A CYBERNETIC **REANIMAN.**
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
≈SIGH≈
RICK SHERIDAN?
YEAH, I-- WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU ***WANT?***
I'M DONALD FERGUSON. I'VE COME HERE TO TELL YOU THAT WE'RE DONE WITH YOUR REPAIRS AND YOU'RE FREE TO GO. WE'LL HAVE A TRANSPORT READY TO TAKE YOU BACK TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY SOON.
OR WE COULD TAKE YOU TO YOUR PARENTS' HOME, IF YOU'D PREFER.
I'D PREFER TO BE DE--
I DON'T KNOW ***WHAT*** I'D PREFER.
DO YOU WANT TO ***TALK*** ABOUT IT? WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH-- IT'S NOT ***EASY.***
IT WILL HELP IF YOU TALK ABOUT IT.
RIGHT, DUDE-- LIKE YOU'VE GOT ALL THE ANSWERS. HOW COULD YOU ***POSSIBLY*** KNOW WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW?!
I KNOW.
I'VE BEEN THROUGH IT, TOO.

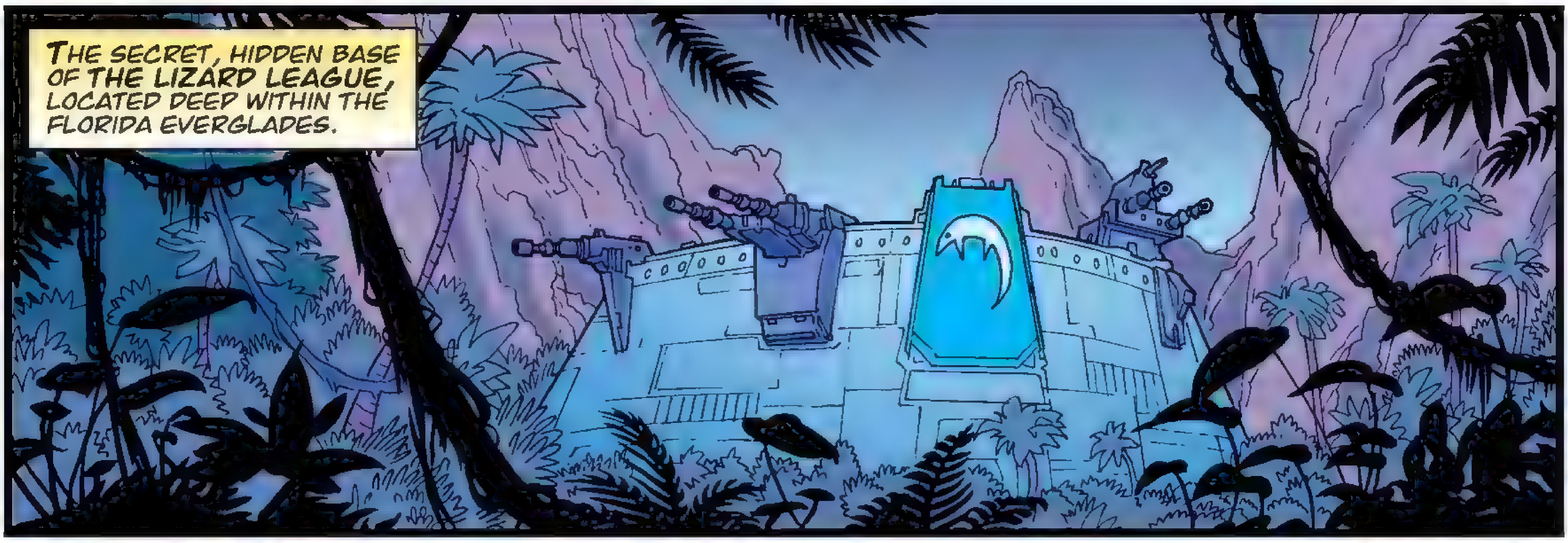

YOU HAVE?! REALLY?!
YOU WERE ABDUCTED BY SOME CRAZY COLLEGE STUDENT?! YOU HAD YOUR WHOLE BODY CUT UP AND REPLACED WITH-- WITH-- MACHINE PARTS?!
YOU GOT TURNED INTO A ROBOT KILLING MACHINE?! YOU WERE CONTROLLED FOR MONTHS--SENT OUT TO-- TO--ABDUCT HOMELESS PEOPLE--NOT EVEN ABLE TO THINK STRAIGHT-- OR REALIZE WHAT YOU WERE DOING?!
THEN WHEN YOU FINALLY DID REALIZE WHAT HAD HAPPENED--YOU LEARN THAT YOU'RE BARELY EVEN HUMAN-- AND SOME GOVERNMENT SPOOKS PUT YOU BACK TOGETHER--MADE YOU LOOK HUMAN--BUT YOU FEEL DIFFERENT-- YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT--
AND YOU JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT--IT-- IT EATS YOU UP INSIDE?!
MY STORY IS JUST A TINY BIT DIFFERENT, BUT YEAH--I'VE BEEN THROUGH ALL OF THAT.
I USED TO BE A FIELD AGENT. WHILE ON A MISSION--I DIED. MY BODY WAS RECOVERED. PARTS OF MY BRAIN WERE PRESERVED--USED TO POWER THIS BODY, WHICH IS NINETY-EIGHT PERCENT MACHINE.
I DIDN'T HAVE ACCESS TO MY EMOTIONS FOR SOME TIME--AND MY MEMORIES WERE DOCTORED SO I DIDN'T REMEMBER MY DEATH--I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS AN ANDROID FOR YEARS.
I LOST MY WIFE OVER IT.
OH, MAN--I'M SORRY.
WE'VE RECONCILED SINCE THE SPLIT-- BUT YEAH, I'VE BEEN THROUGH SOME ROUGH TIMES.
AND I HAD TO DO IT ALONE.
IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. THE THINGS WE'VE DONE TO YOU--THE REPAIRS-- NOBODY WILL EVEN KNOW YOU'RE NOT NORMAL UNLESS YOU TELL THEM.
YOUR GIRLFRIEND-- WIFE, YOUR FAMILY-- NOBODY.
YOU CAN STILL LIVE A NORMAL LIFE IF YOU WANT TO.
THANK YOU-- YOU--WHAT YOU'RE SAYING-- YOU'VE HELPED ME.
MAYBE I WOULD LIKE TO TALK...

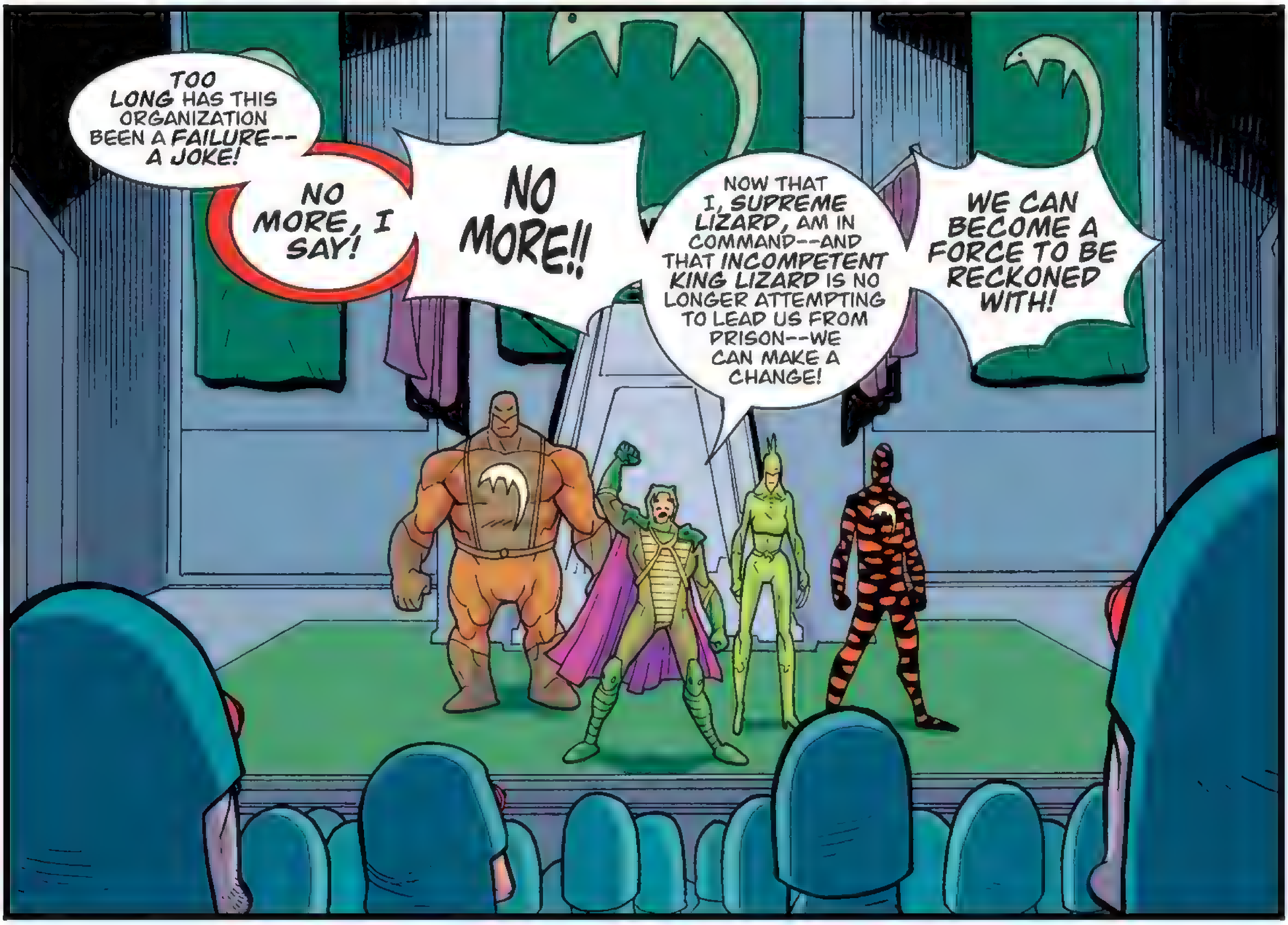

PAYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, WHERE AMBER BENNETT, MARK GRAYSON'S GIRLFRIEND, CURRENTLY ATTENDS CLASSES.
WHAT WAS HIS NAME AGAIN?
GARY. HIS NAME WAS GARY.
IF YOU GUYS GET ALONG SO WELL, LIKE YOU SAID-- MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING THERE.
JANNIE'S RIGHT-- AND YOUR CURRENT BOYFRIEND IS M.I.A. SO OFTEN, I'M SURE HE WOULDN'T EVEN NOTICE IF YOU GOT COFFEE WITH THE GUY OR SOMETHING.
OKAY, FIRST OFF-- I LOVE MARK. I'M "IN LOVE" WITH HIM. WE'RE SERIOUS, SO THAT'S JUST NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
SORRY TO BURST YOUR BUBBLE, BRIDGET.
SECOND-- WHEN DID I SAY "WE GET ALONG SO WELL?" AS I RECALL MY WORDS WERE "HE'S FUNNY." I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO BE A CREEP AND IT TURNED OUT HE WAS FUNNY-- NOT AT ALL HARD TO BE AROUND.
YOU ACT LIKE I WAS GUSHING ABOUT HOW GREAT THIS GUY WAS.
AH, BUT IT WAS THE TWINKLE IN YOUR EYE THAT GAVE YOU AWAY.
YOU CAN'T HIDE THE TWINKLE.
I DON'T RECALL ANY "TWINKLE."
THERE WAS A TWINKLE. IT WAS QUITE CUTE.
YOU GUYS ARE RIDICULOUS.
DO YOU HATE MARK? WHAT DO YOU GUYS HAVE AGAINST MY BOYFRIEND?

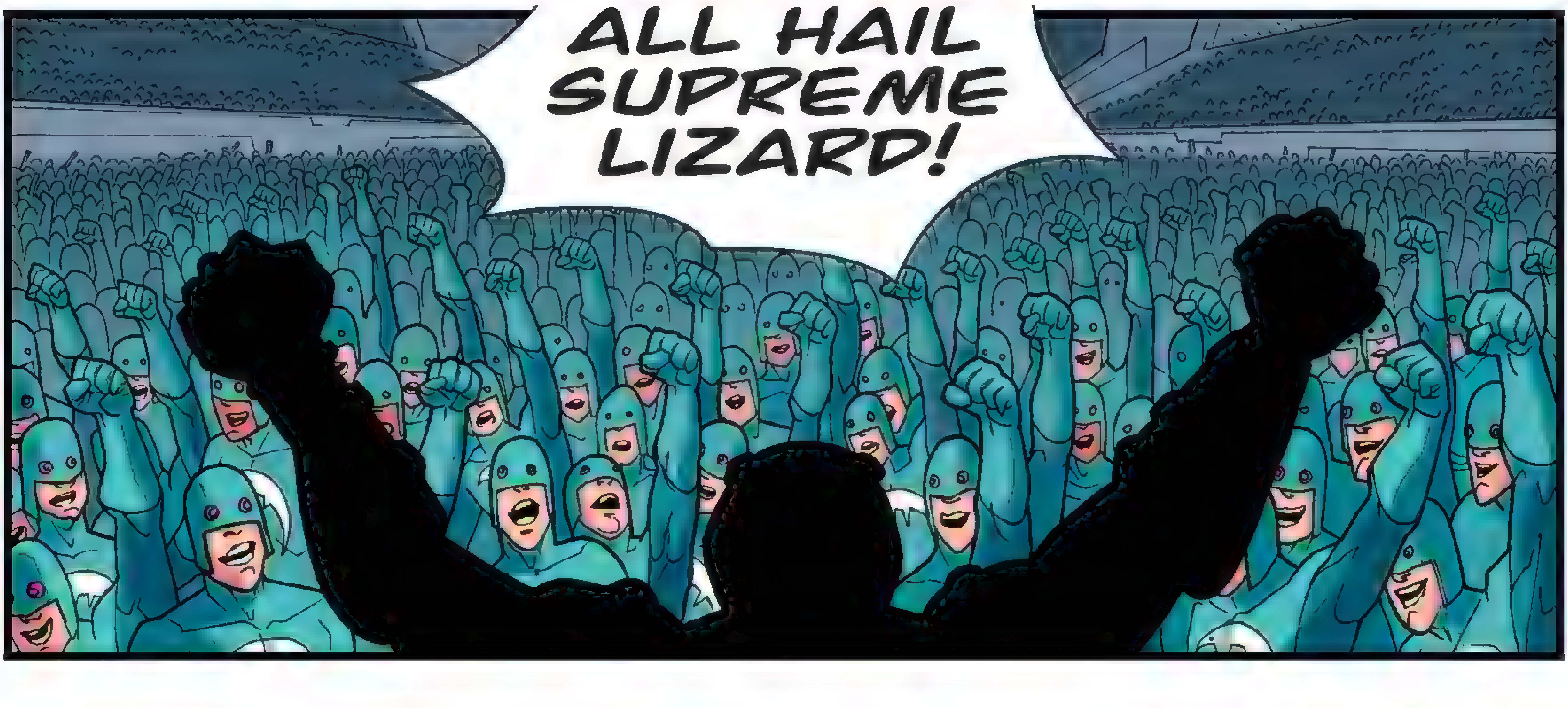

ME? *NOTHING.* I HAVEN'T EVEN *MET* HIM.
THAT! THAT RIGHT THERE--COREY *NAILED* IT! THAT'S WHAT I HAVE AGAINST HIM. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DATING HIM? HOW MANY *MONTHS*--HAS IT BEEN A YEAR YET?
HE HASN'T EVEN *BOTHERED* TO MEET YOUR FRIENDS? THAT'S TOTALLY *WEIRD!* I MEAN, HOW OFTEN DO YOU GUYS SEE *PAUL?* MY MAN IS ALWAYS HAPPY TO SEE YOU GUYS.
YEAH, BUT NOBODY *LIKES* PAUL.
NOT FUNNY.
ANOTHER THING--*WHAT* IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT MARK? YOU'VE BEEN *COMPLAINING* ABOUT HIM SINCE WE FIRST *MET.* YOU WERE *ALWAYS* COMPLAINING ABOUT HIM BEING LATE FOR DATES--CANCELLING AT THE LAST MINUTE--ALL THAT CRAP.
AND REMEMBER WHEN HE FELL OF THE GRID FOR *TWO MONTHS* BECAUSE HE HAD A LAST MINUTE TRIP TO VISIT HIS GRANDFATHER AND COULDN'T GET TO A PHONE... FOR *TWO MONTHS?*
WOW--I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT *THAT.*
YEAH.
THAT'S *TOTALLY* WEIRD.
HE, UH... HE HAD HIS *REASONS.*
I'M NOT GOING TO SIT HERE AND *DEFEND* MY BOYFRIEND SO YOU GUYS WILL STOP TRYING TO TALK ME INTO CHEATING ON HIM.
CAN WE JUST--I DON'T KNOW--*DROP THIS?*

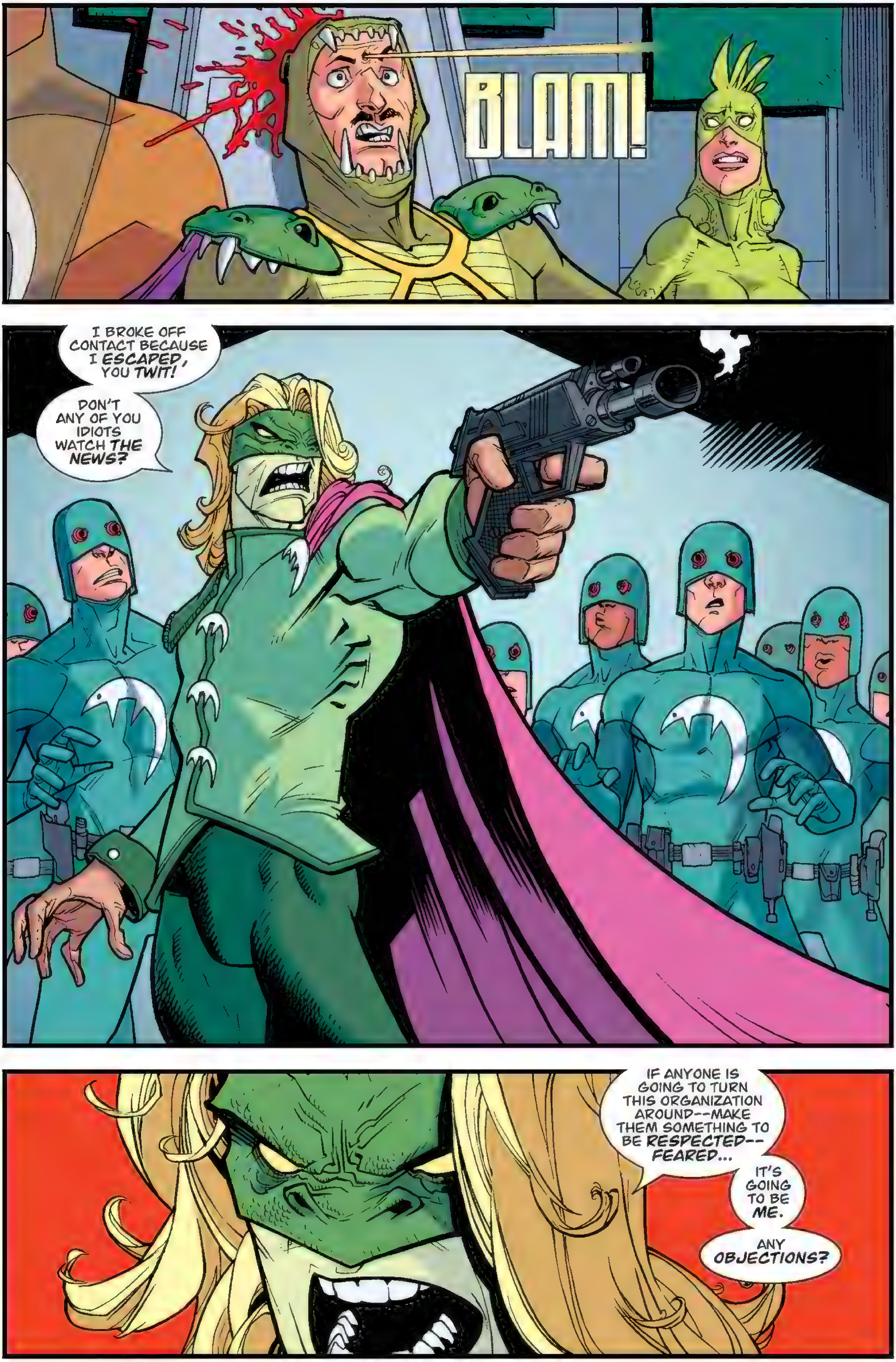

YEAH, UH... CONSIDER IT DROPPED.
SORRY IF I INTERRUPTED ANYTHING. THE DOOR WAS, UH... IT WAS OPEN JUST A LITTLE BIT.
EXCUSE US.
IT WAS GREAT SEEING YOU ALL.
YOUR FRIENDS SEEM SOOOO NICE.
CHRIST, HOW MUCH DID YOU HEAR?
JUST THAT BIT YOU SAID AT THE END--THE PART ABOUT THEM TELLING YOU TO CHEAT ON ME.
THAT'S ALL? YOU DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ELSE? I THOUGHT--?
SUPER-HEARING IS NOT ONE OF MY POWERS. WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE.
RIGHT.
I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT LAST TIME--HOW I LEFT SO ABRUPTLY.
S'OKAY. IT'S PART OF "THE DEAL." I UNDERSTAND.
YOU SOUND... DISSATISFIED. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TAKE THEIR ADVICE ARE YOU?
MARK, PLEASE-- HE'S JUST A GUY, I PROMISE. HE'S NICE, BUT THERE'S NOTHING THERE.
GOOD.
I COULDN'T LIVE WITH MYSELF IF YOU CHOSE HIM OVER ME. THAT GUY LOOKED RIDICULOUS.

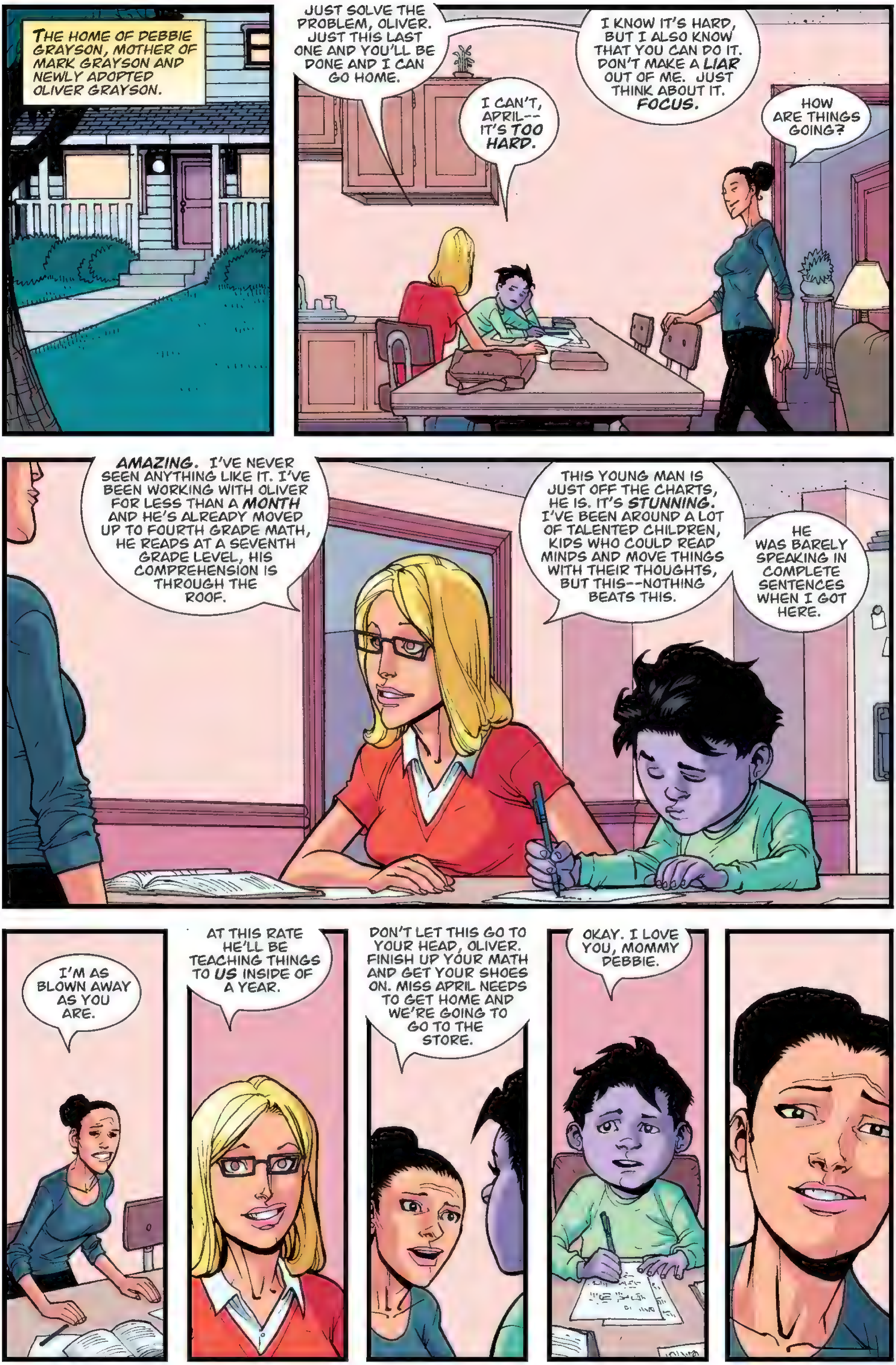

OH, HE DOES **NOT**. GARY WAS VERY NICE. HE--
...
THAT CHIN HAIR WITH NO MUSTACHE THING DOES LOOK A LITTLE SILLY.
YOU WANT TO GO ON A ***DATE?*** LIKE, I DON'T KNOW... ***RIGHT*** NOW?
A DATE? LIKE WHAT?
BOWLING--A MOVIE--WE COULD HAVE DINNER. I DON'T CARE. WE COULD DO ALL THREE.
THAT-- THAT SOUNDS GOOD, BUT ***NOW?*** WHAT ABOUT MY FRIENDS?
HEY, GUYS. AMBER AND I ARE GOING OUT TO A MOVIE, GETTING SOME DINNER... MAYBE A LITTLE BOWLING.
YOU GUYS WANT TO TAG ALONG? MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T ***HATE*** ME SO MUCH IF YOU GOT TO ***KNOW*** ME.
7

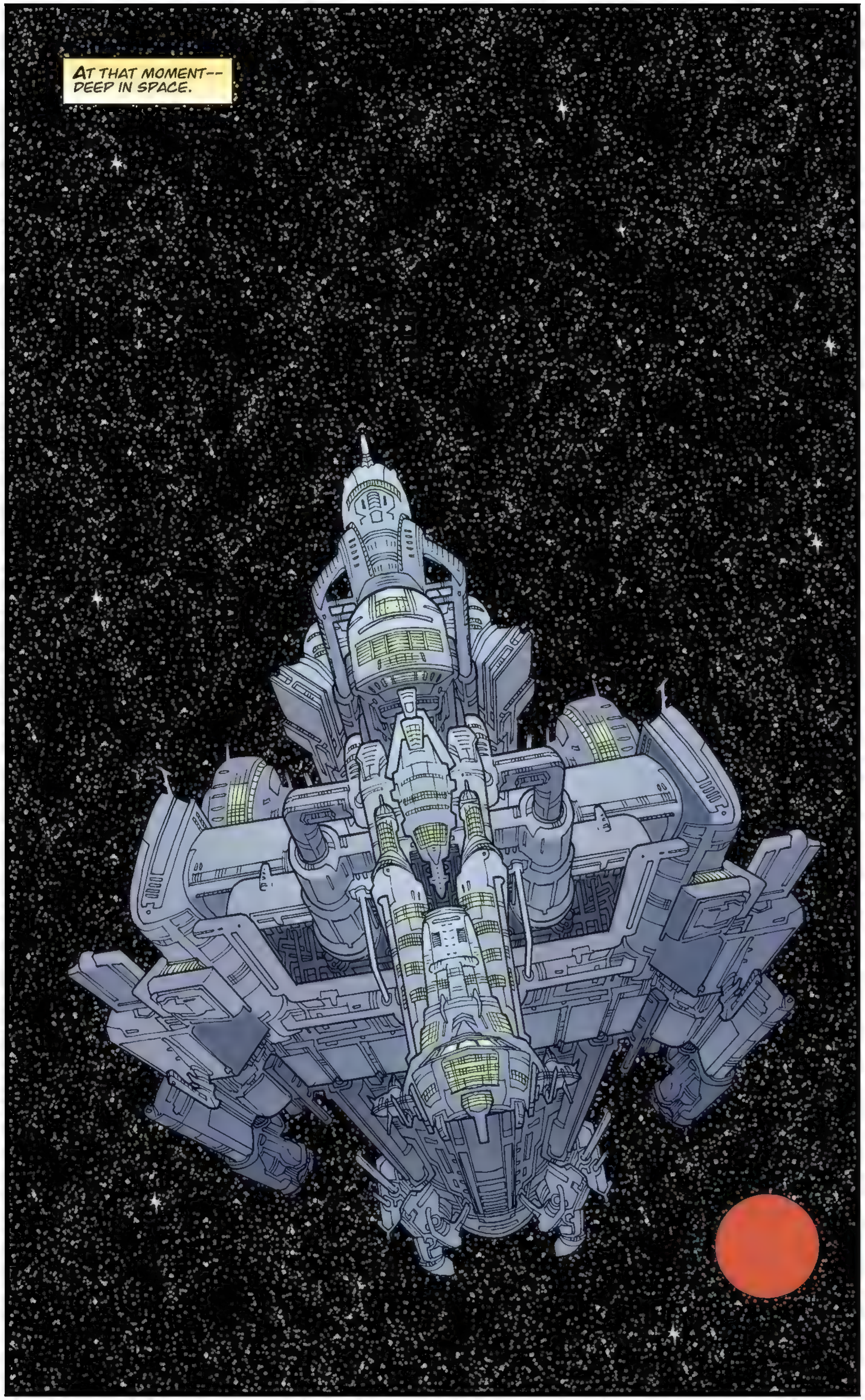

THE SECRET, HIDDEN BASE OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE, LOCATED DEEP WITHIN THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES.

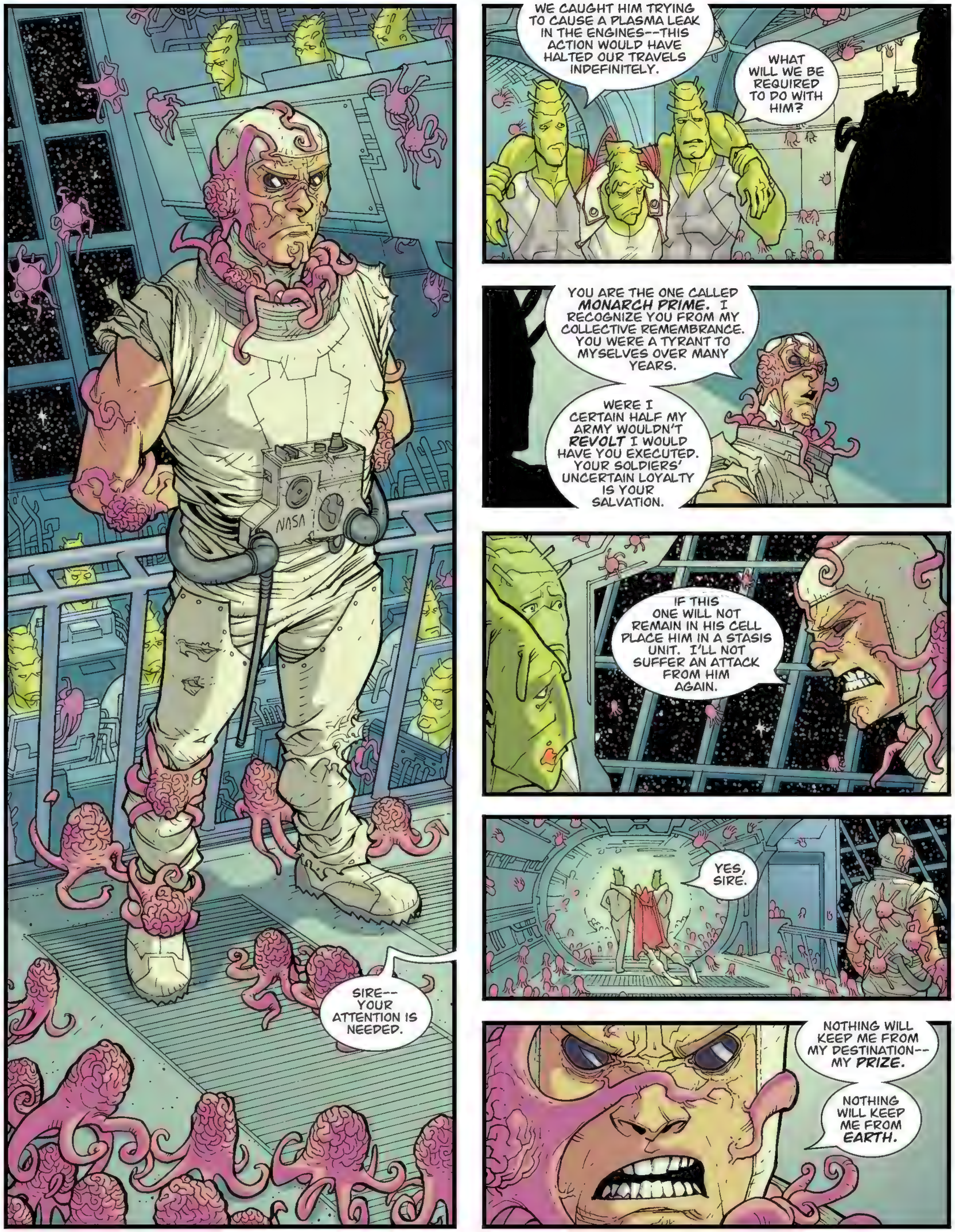

TOO LONG HAS THIS ORGANIZATION BEEN A FAILURE-- A JOKE!
NO MORE, I SAY!
NO MORE!!
NOW THAT I, SUPREME LIZARD, AM IN COMMAND--AND THAT INCOMPETENT KING LIZARD IS NO LONGER ATTEMPTING TO LEAD US FROM PRISON--WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE!
WE CAN BECOME A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH!

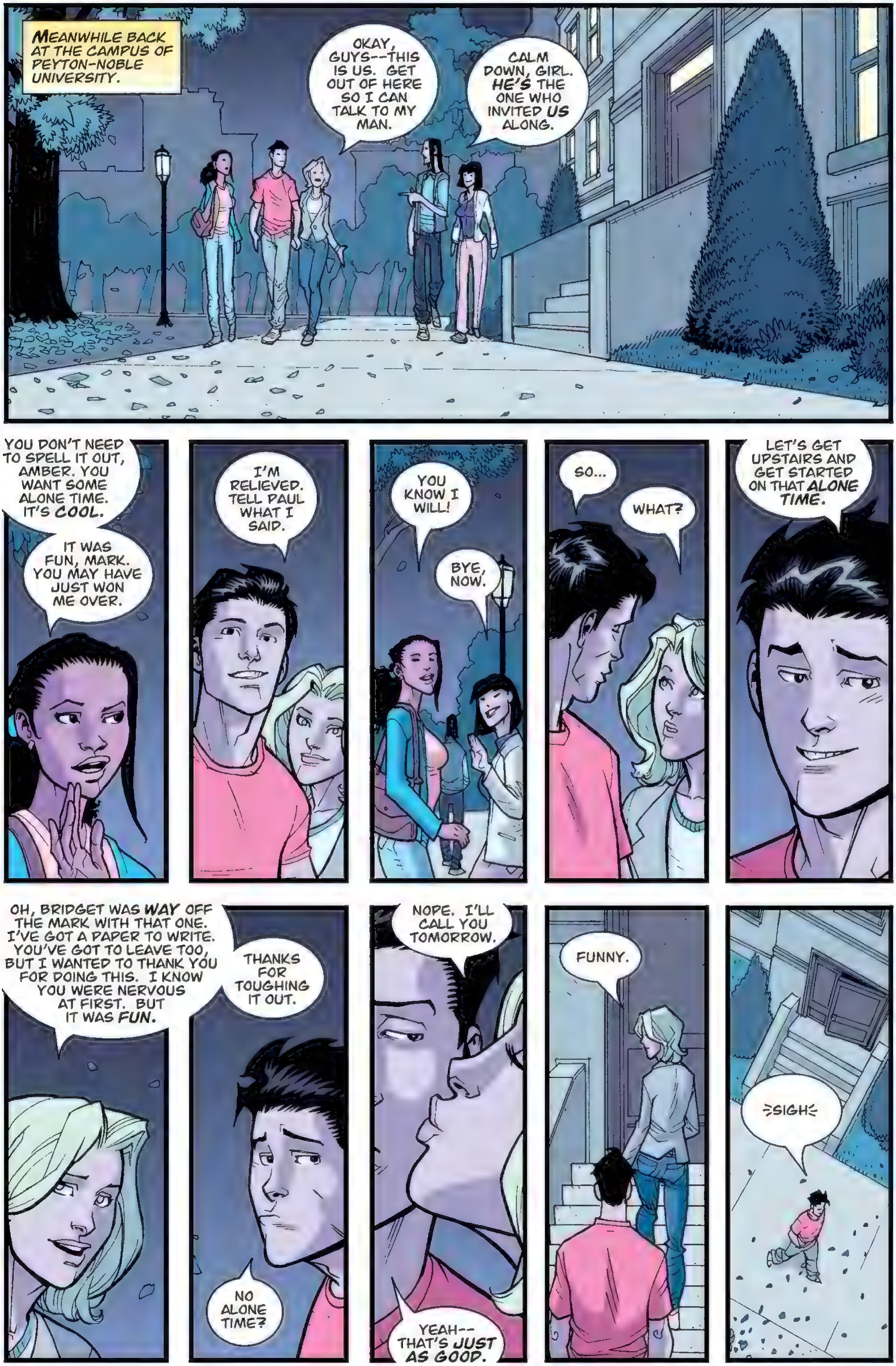

ALL HAIL SUPREME LIZARD!

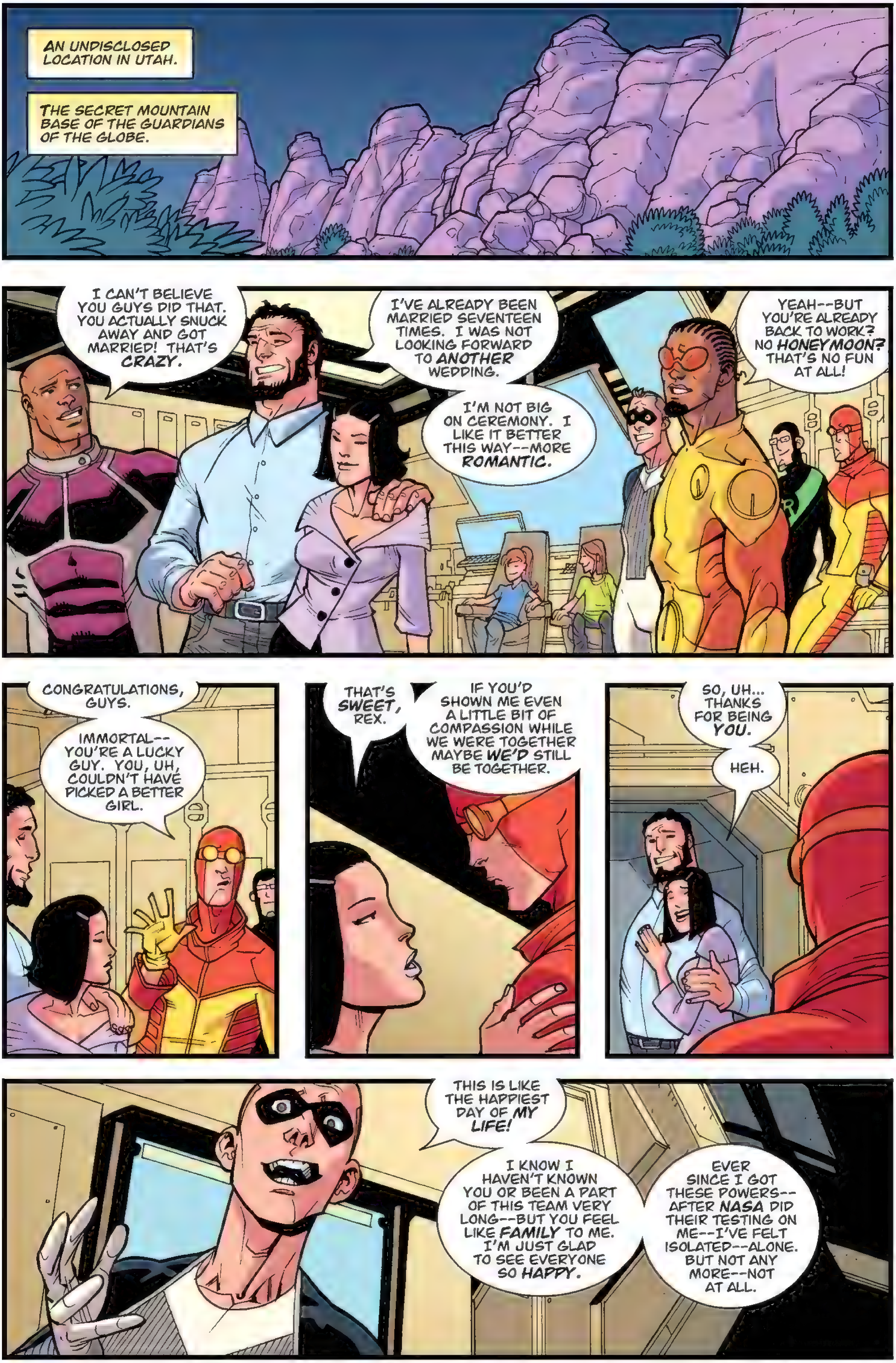

BLAM!
I BROKE OFF CONTACT BECAUSE I *ESCAPED*, YOU *TWIT!*
DON'T ANY OF YOU IDIOTS WATCH *THE NEWS?*
IF ANYONE IS GOING TO TURN THIS ORGANIZATION AROUND--MAKE THEM SOMETHING TO BE *RESPECTED*--*FEARED*...
IT'S GOING TO BE *ME.*
ANY *OBJECTIONS?*

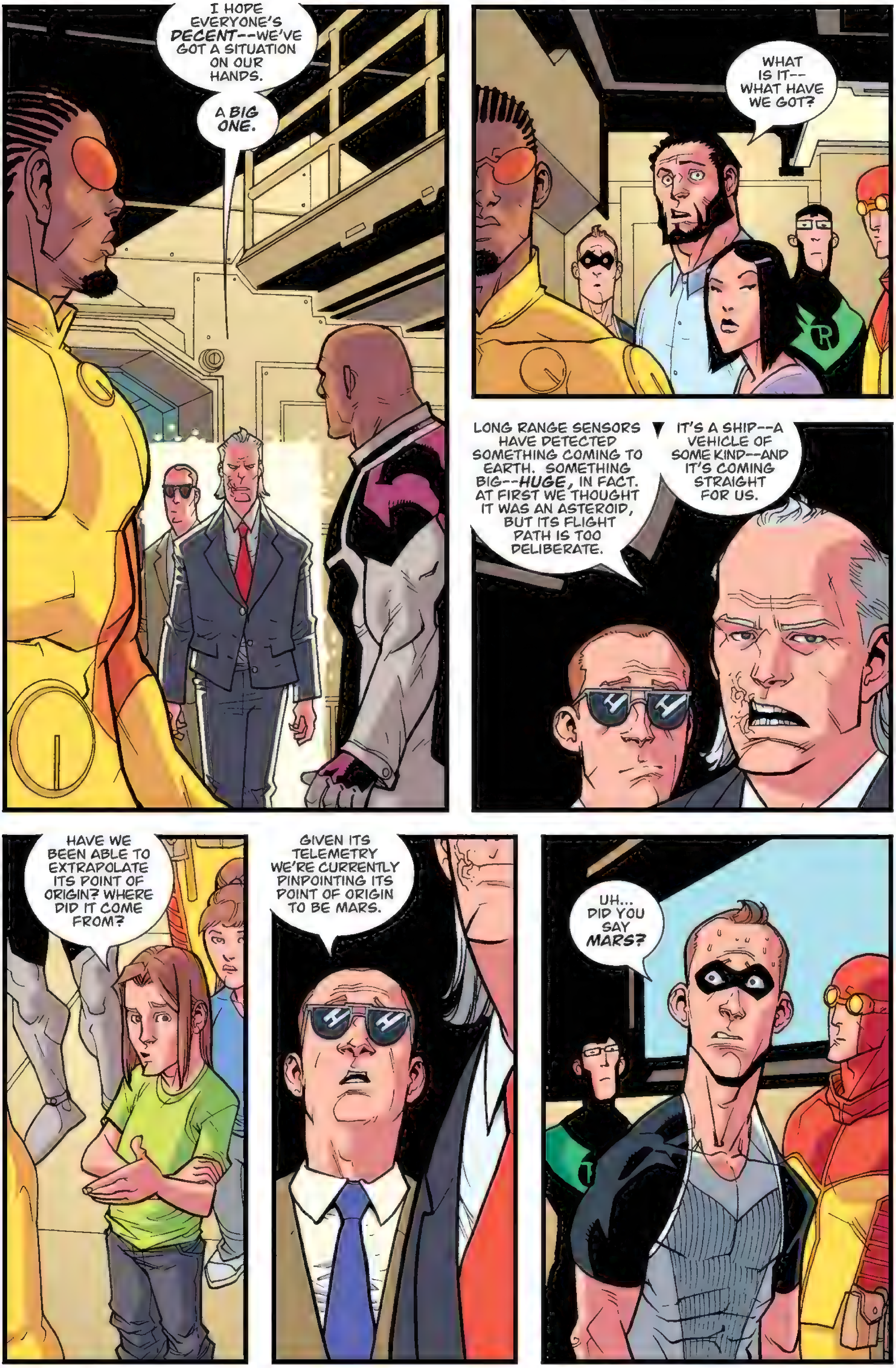

THE HOME OF DEBBIE GRAYSON, MOTHER OF MARK GRAYSON AND NEWLY ADOPTED OLIVER GRAYSON.
JUST SOLVE THE PROBLEM, OLIVER. JUST THIS LAST ONE AND YOU'LL BE DONE AND I CAN GO HOME.
I CAN'T, APRIL-- IT'S **TOO HARD.**
I KNOW IT'S HARD, BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU CAN DO IT. DON'T MAKE A **LIAR** OUT OF ME. JUST THINK ABOUT IT. **FOCUS.**
HOW ARE THINGS GOING?
AMAZING. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT. I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH OLIVER FOR LESS THAN A **MONTH** AND HE'S ALREADY MOVED UP TO FOURTH GRADE MATH, HE READS AT A SEVENTH GRADE LEVEL, HIS COMPREHENSION IS THROUGH THE ROOF.
THIS YOUNG MAN IS JUST OFF THE CHARTS, HE IS. IT'S **STUNNING.** I'VE BEEN AROUND A LOT OF TALENTED CHILDREN, KIDS WHO COULD READ MINDS AND MOVE THINGS WITH THEIR THOUGHTS, BUT THIS--NOTHING BEATS THIS.
HE WAS BARELY SPEAKING IN COMPLETE SENTENCES WHEN I GOT HERE.
I'M AS BLOWN AWAY AS YOU ARE.
AT THIS RATE HE'LL BE TEACHING THINGS TO **US** INSIDE OF A YEAR.
DON'T LET THIS GO TO YOUR HEAD, OLIVER. FINISH UP YOUR MATH AND GET YOUR SHOES ON. MISS APRIL NEEDS TO GET HOME AND WE'RE GOING TO GO TO THE STORE.
OKAY. I LOVE YOU, MOMMY DEBBIE.

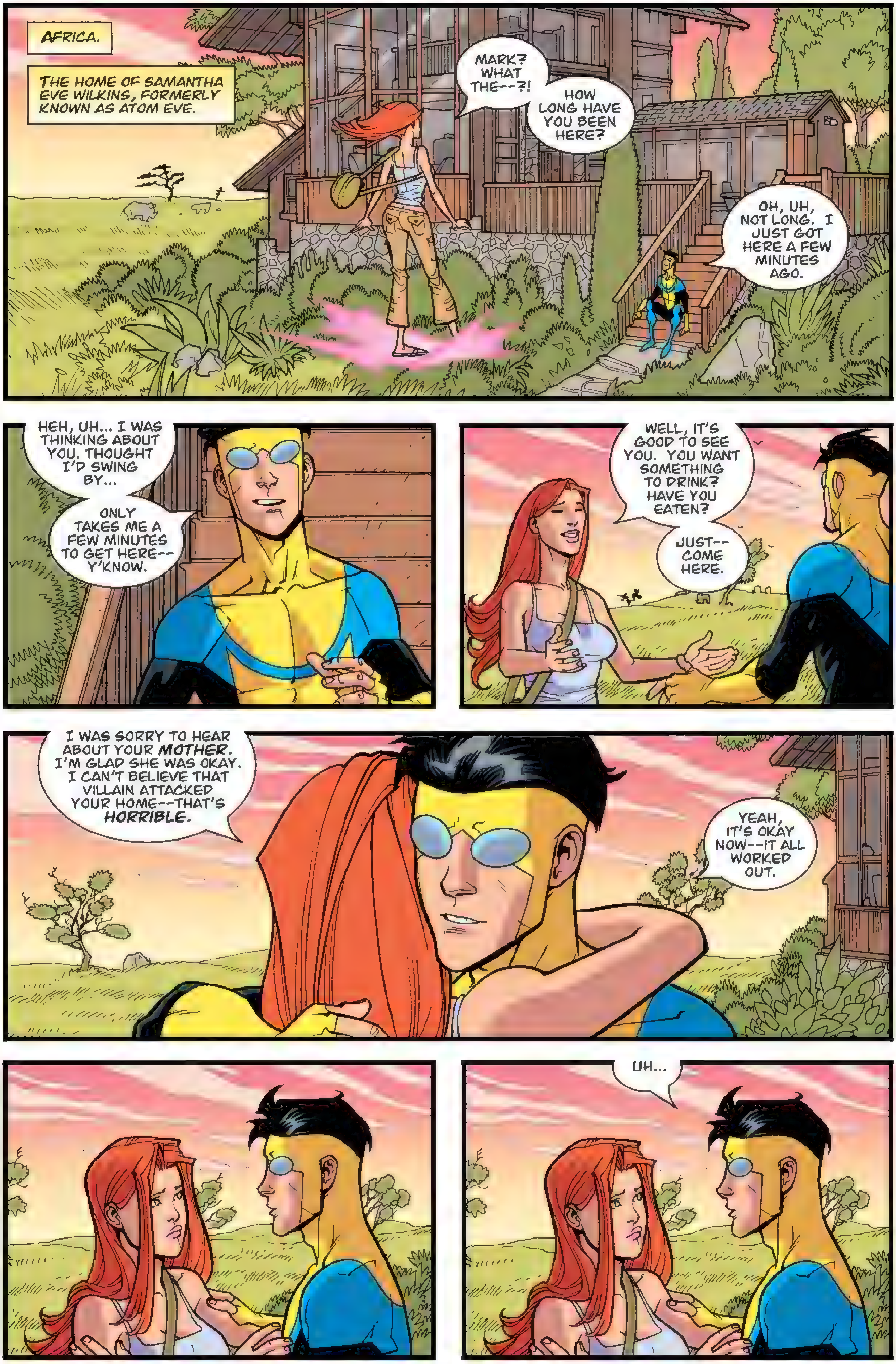

AT THAT MOMENT-- DEEP IN SPACE.


SIRE-- YOUR ATTENTION IS NEEDED.
WE CAUGHT HIM TRYING TO CAUSE A PLASMA LEAK IN THE ENGINES--THIS ACTION WOULD HAVE HALTED OUR TRAVELS INDEFINITELY.
WHAT WILL WE BE REQUIRED TO DO WITH HIM?
YOU ARE THE ONE CALLED MONARCH PRIME. I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM MY COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE. YOU WERE A TYRANT TO MYSELVES OVER MANY YEARS.
WERE I CERTAIN HALF MY ARMY WOULDN'T REVOLT I WOULD HAVE YOU EXECUTED. YOUR SOLDIERS' UNCERTAIN LOYALTY IS YOUR SALVATION.
IF THIS ONE WILL NOT REMAIN IN HIS CELL PLACE HIM IN A STASIS UNIT. I'LL NOT SUFFER AN ATTACK FROM HIM AGAIN.
YES, SIRE.
NOTHING WILL KEEP ME FROM MY DESTINATION-- MY PRIZE.
NOTHING WILL KEEP ME FROM EARTH.
NASA

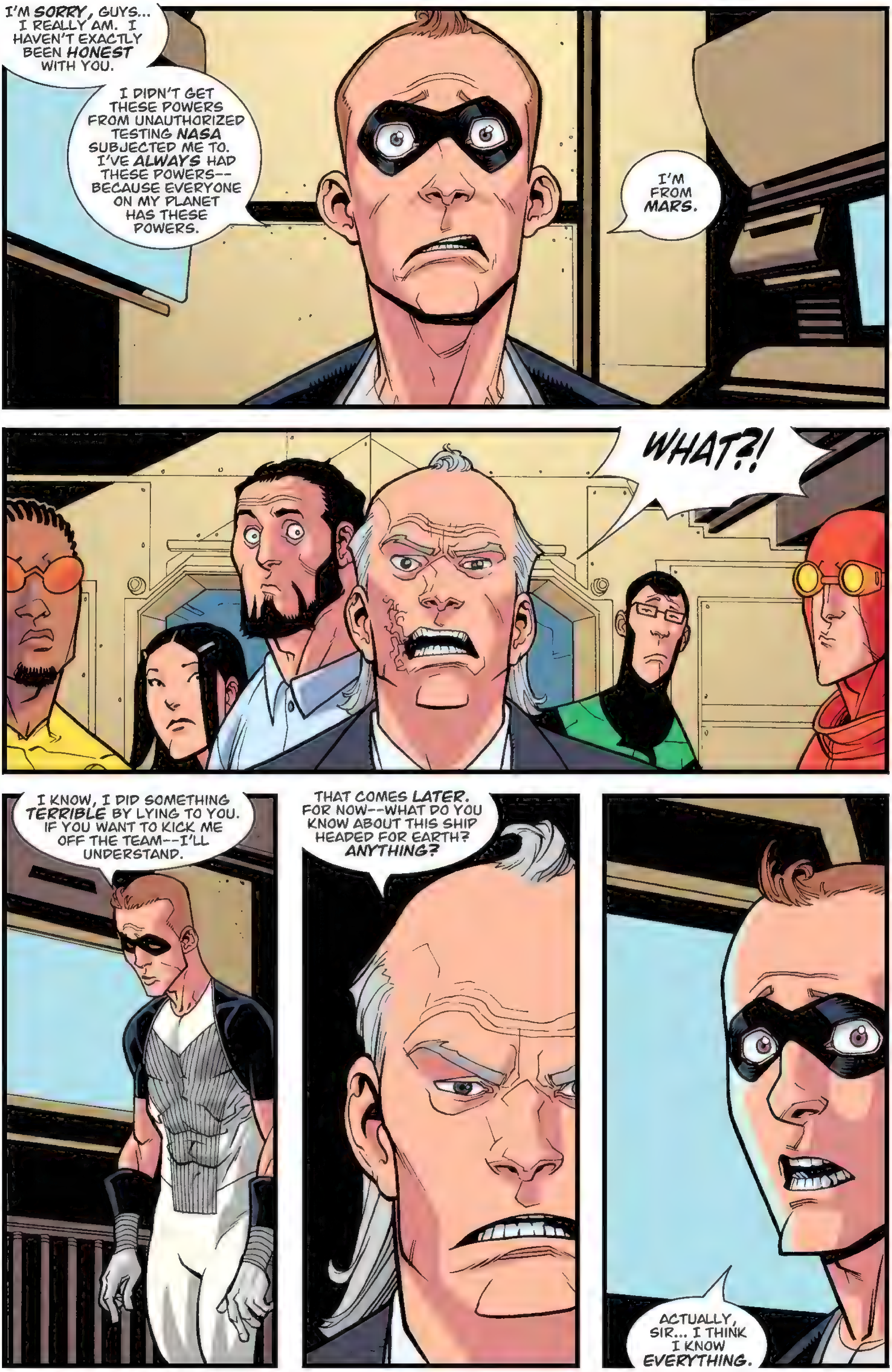

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE CAMPUS OF PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY.
OKAY, GUYS--THIS IS US. GET OUT OF HERE SO I CAN TALK TO MY MAN.
CALM DOWN, GIRL. *HE'S* THE ONE WHO INVITED *US* ALONG.
YOU DON'T NEED TO SPELL IT OUT, AMBER. YOU WANT SOME ALONE TIME. IT'S *COOL*.
IT WAS FUN, MARK. YOU MAY HAVE JUST WON ME OVER.
I'M RELIEVED. TELL PAUL WHAT I SAID.
YOU KNOW I WILL!
BYE, NOW.
SO...
WHAT?
LET'S GET UPSTAIRS AND GET STARTED ON THAT *ALONE TIME*.
OH, BRIDGET WAS *WAY* OFF THE MARK WITH THAT ONE. I'VE GOT A PAPER TO WRITE. YOU'VE GOT TO LEAVE TOO, BUT I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS. I KNOW YOU WERE NERVOUS AT FIRST. BUT IT WAS *FUN*.
THANKS FOR TOUGHING IT OUT.
NO ALONE TIME?
NOPE. I'LL CALL YOU TOMORROW.
YEAH--THAT'S *JUST AS GOOD*.
FUNNY.
SIGH


AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU GUYS DID THAT. YOU ACTUALLY SNUCK AWAY AND GOT MARRIED! THAT'S *CRAZY*.
I'VE ALREADY BEEN MARRIED SEVENTEEN TIMES. I WAS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO *ANOTHER* WEDDING.
I'M NOT BIG ON CEREMONY. I LIKE IT BETTER THIS WAY--MORE *ROMANTIC*.
YEAH--BUT YOU'RE ALREADY BACK TO WORK? NO *HONEYMOON?* THAT'S NO FUN AT ALL!
CONGRATULATIONS, GUYS.
IMMORTAL--YOU'RE A LUCKY GUY. YOU, UH, COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A BETTER GIRL.
THAT'S *SWEET*, REX.
IF YOU'D SHOWN ME EVEN A LITTLE BIT OF COMPASSION WHILE WE WERE TOGETHER MAYBE *WE'D* STILL BE TOGETHER.
SO, UH... THANKS FOR BEING *YOU*.
HEH.
THIS IS LIKE THE HAPPIEST DAY OF *MY* *LIFE!*
I KNOW I HAVEN'T KNOWN YOU OR BEEN A PART OF THIS TEAM VERY LONG--BUT YOU FEEL LIKE *FAMILY* TO ME. I'M JUST GLAD TO SEE EVERYONE SO *HAPPY*.
EVER SINCE I GOT THESE POWERS--AFTER *NASA* DID THEIR TESTING ON ME--I'VE FELT ISOLATED--ALONE. BUT NOT ANY MORE--NOT AT ALL.


I HOPE EVERYONE'S **DECENT**--WE'VE GOT A SITUATION ON OUR HANDS.
A ***BIG*** *ONE.*
WHAT IS IT--WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
LONG RANGE SENSORS HAVE DETECTED SOMETHING COMING TO EARTH. SOMETHING BIG--***HUGE***, IN FACT. AT FIRST WE THOUGHT IT WAS AN ASTEROID, BUT ITS FLIGHT PATH IS TOO DELIBERATE.
IT'S A SHIP--A VEHICLE OF SOME KIND--AND IT'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR US.
HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO EXTRAPOLATE ITS POINT OF ORIGIN? WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
GIVEN ITS TELEMETRY WE'RE CURRENTLY PINPOINTING ITS POINT OF ORIGIN TO BE MARS.
UH... DID YOU SAY ***MARS?***

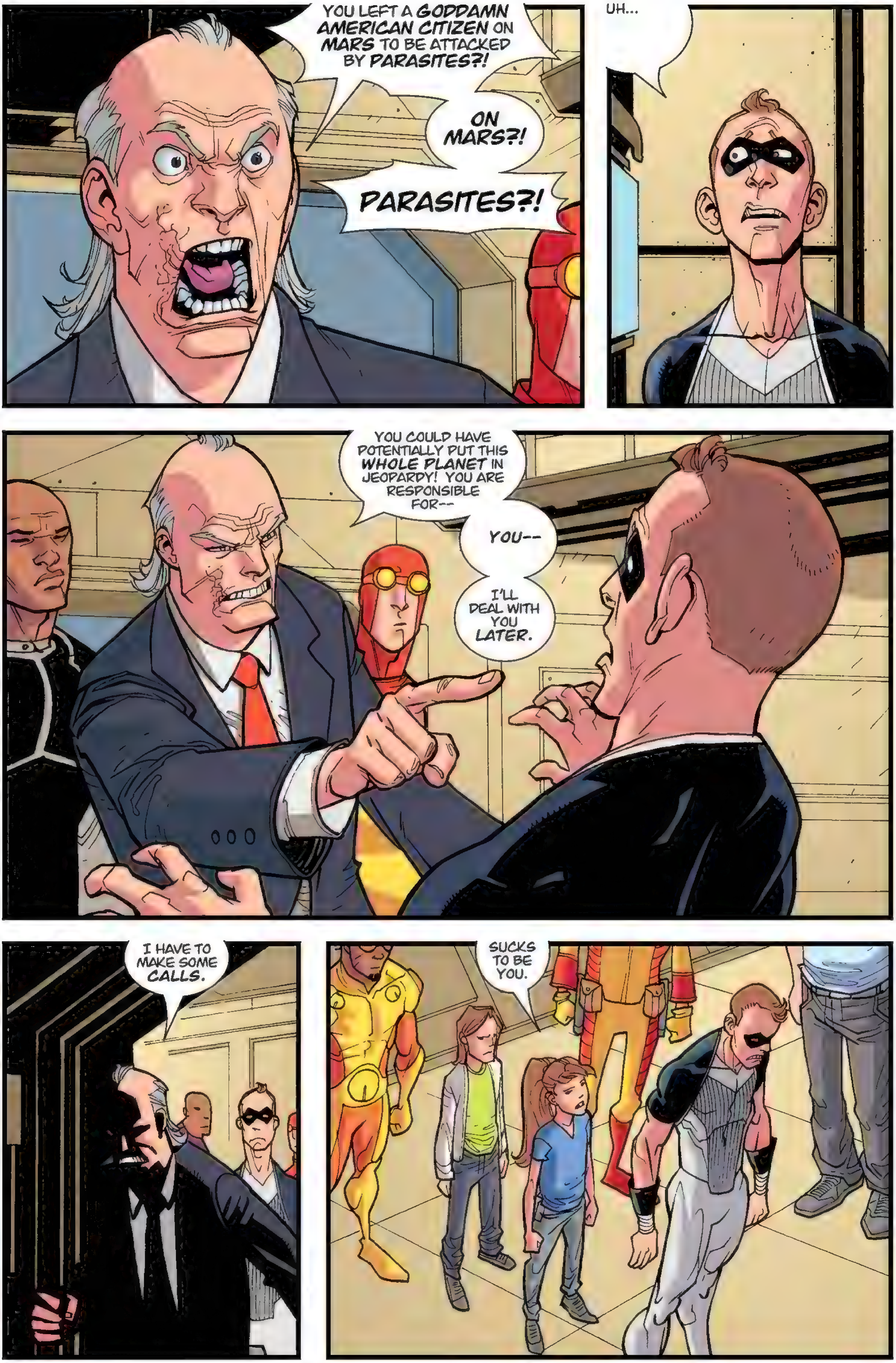

AFRICA.
THE HOME OF SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS, FORMERLY KNOWN AS ATOM EVE.
MARK? WHAT THE--?!
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
OH, UH, NOT LONG. I JUST GOT HERE A FEW MINUTES AGO.
HEH, UH... I WAS THINKING ABOUT YOU. THOUGHT I'D SWING BY...
ONLY TAKES ME A FEW MINUTES TO GET HERE--Y'KNOW.
WELL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. YOU WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK? HAVE YOU EATEN?
JUST--COME HERE.
I WAS SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR MOTHER. I'M GLAD SHE WAS OKAY. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT VILLAIN ATTACKED YOUR HOME--THAT'S HORRIBLE.
YEAH, IT'S OKAY NOW--IT ALL WORKED OUT.
UH...

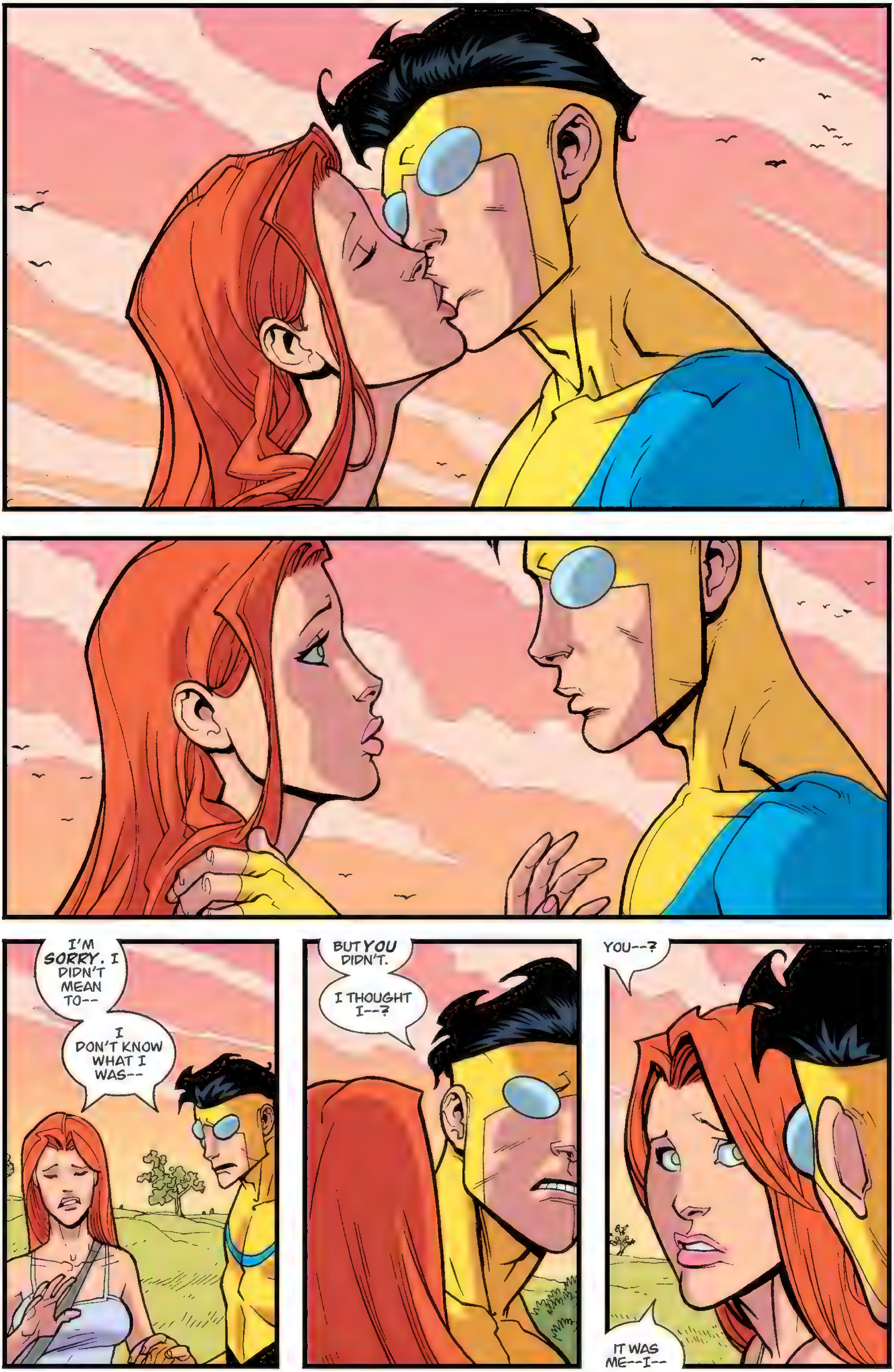
ISSUE THIRTY-NINE

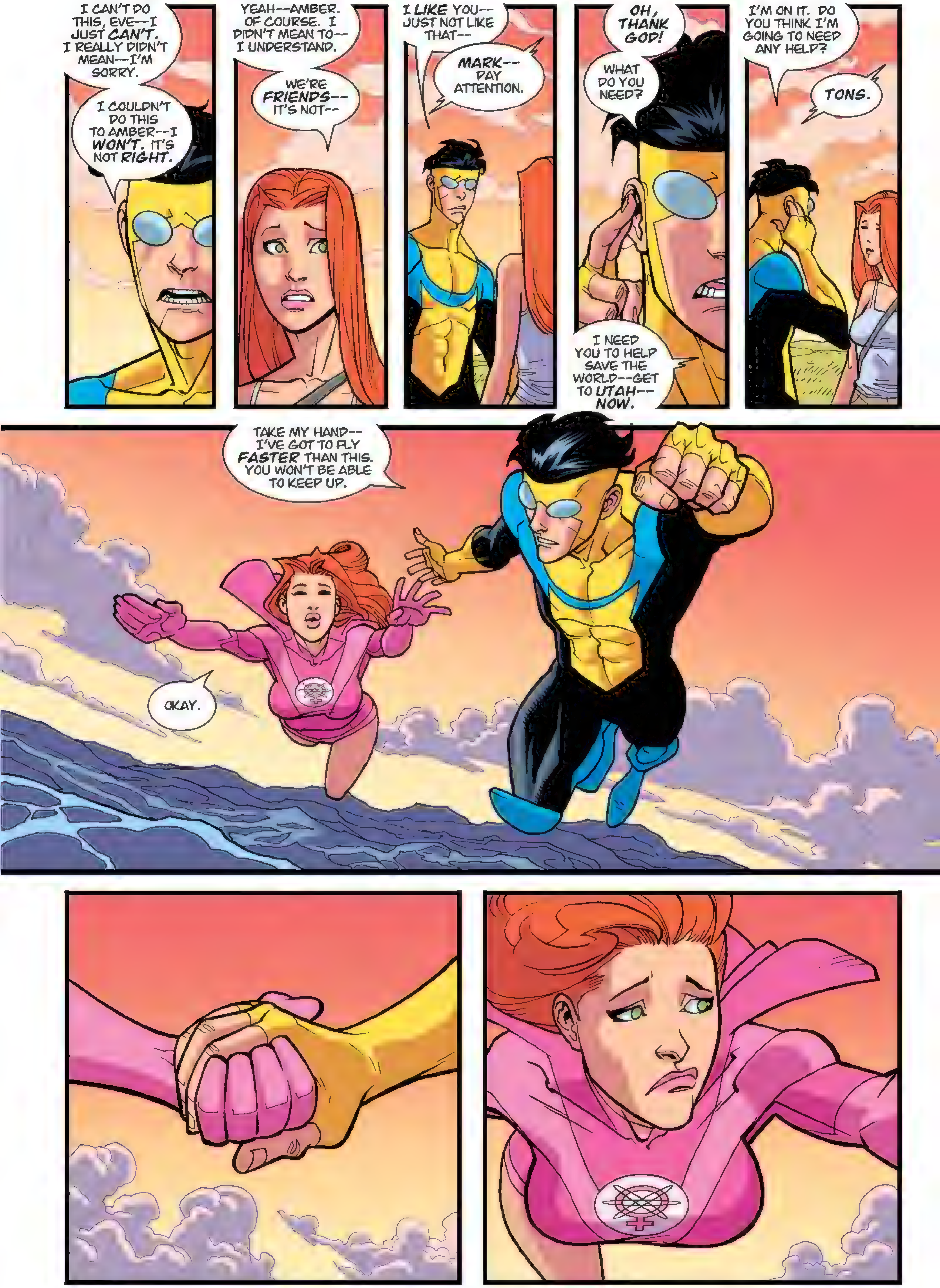

I'M SORRY, GUYS... I REALLY AM. I HAVEN'T EXACTLY BEEN HONEST WITH YOU.
I DIDN'T GET THESE POWERS FROM UNAUTHORIZED TESTING NASA SUBJECTED ME TO. I'VE ALWAYS HAD THESE POWERS--BECAUSE EVERYONE ON MY PLANET HAS THESE POWERS.
I'M FROM MARS.
WHAT?!
I KNOW, I DID SOMETHING TERRIBLE BY LYING TO YOU. IF YOU WANT TO KICK ME OFF THE TEAM--I'LL UNDERSTAND.
THAT COMES LATER. FOR NOW--WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS SHIP HEADED FOR EARTH? ANYTHING?
ACTUALLY, SIR... I THINK I KNOW EVERYTHING.

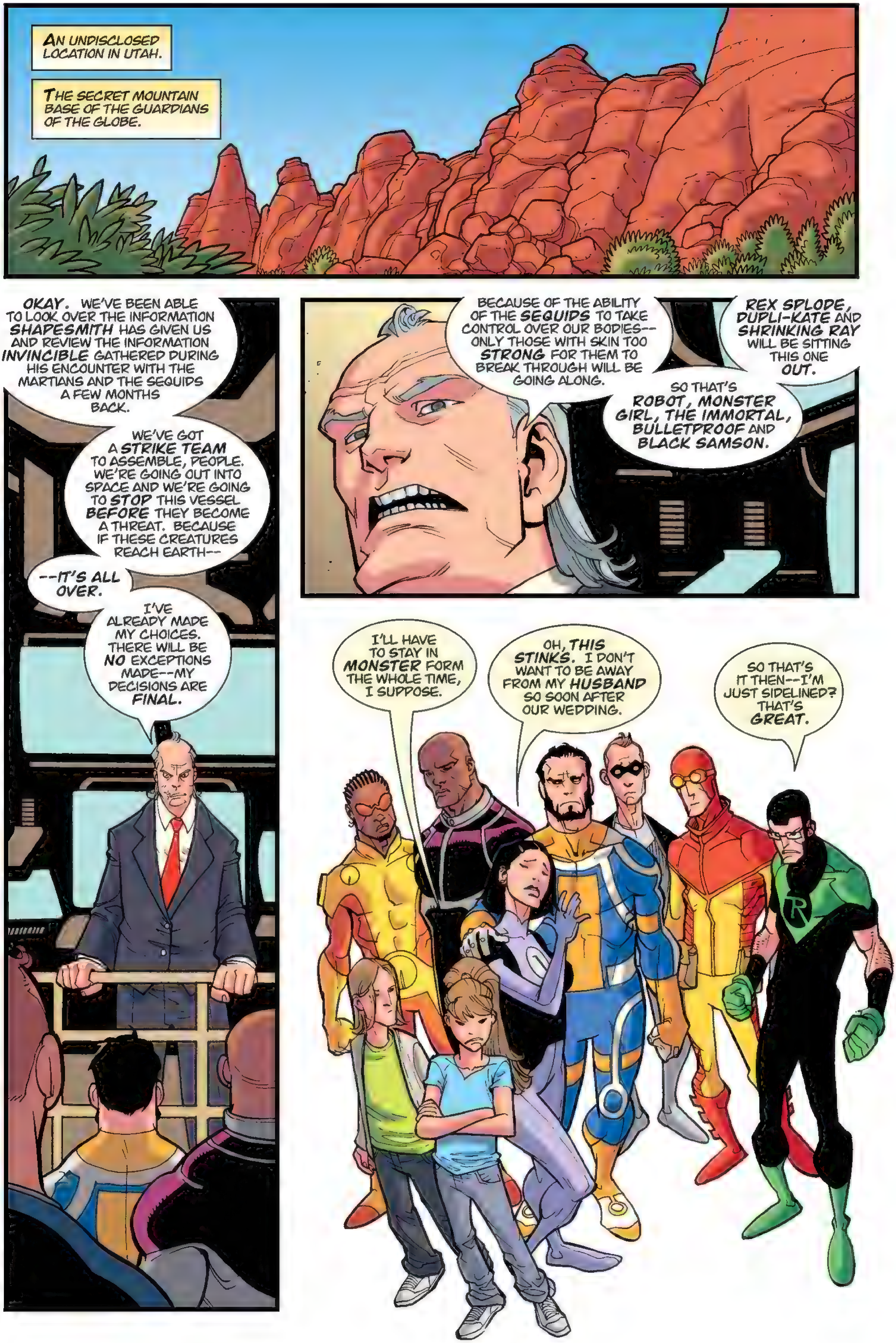
EVERY BOY ON MARS IS TOLD THIS STORY COUNTLESS TIMES SINCE BIRTH.
THEY WERE CALLED THE SEQUIDS. THEY CAME TO MARS CENTURIES AGO ON A DAMAGED VESSEL WHICH CRASH LANDED ON THE PLANET. THEY WERE HOSTILE.
THEY WAGED WAR WITH THE MARTIANS--A BATTLE THAT RAGED FOR NEARLY A CENTURY. IT ENDED ONLY WHEN THE SEQUIDS' HOSTS DIED OF OLD AGE.
YOU SEE-- WE DIDN'T KNOW THIS BUT THE WARRIORS WHO FELL TO OUR PLANET WERE THE PARASITIC CREATURES ATTACHED TO THE HUMANOIDS--NOT THE HUMANOIDS THEMSELVES.
THE SEQUIDS WERE A PARASITIC RACE--DEPENDENT ON A HOST OR HOSTS TO LINK THEIR ONE-MIND. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE NEARLY MINDLESS DRONES, ABLE TO PERFORM SIMPLE TASKS, BUT NOT CAPABLE OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT.
THEY TRIED TO BOND WITH MARTIANS, BUT DUE TO OUR NATURAL SHAPE-SHIFTING CAPABILITIES--BONDING WITH US WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
WITH THEIR HOSTS DEAD--THE SEQUIDS WERE NOW MINDLESS, AND THE MARTIANS UTILIZED THEIR ENEMY--EVENTUALLY ESTABLISHING THEM AS A SLAVE RACE THAT ASSISTED MARTIANS IN DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES.

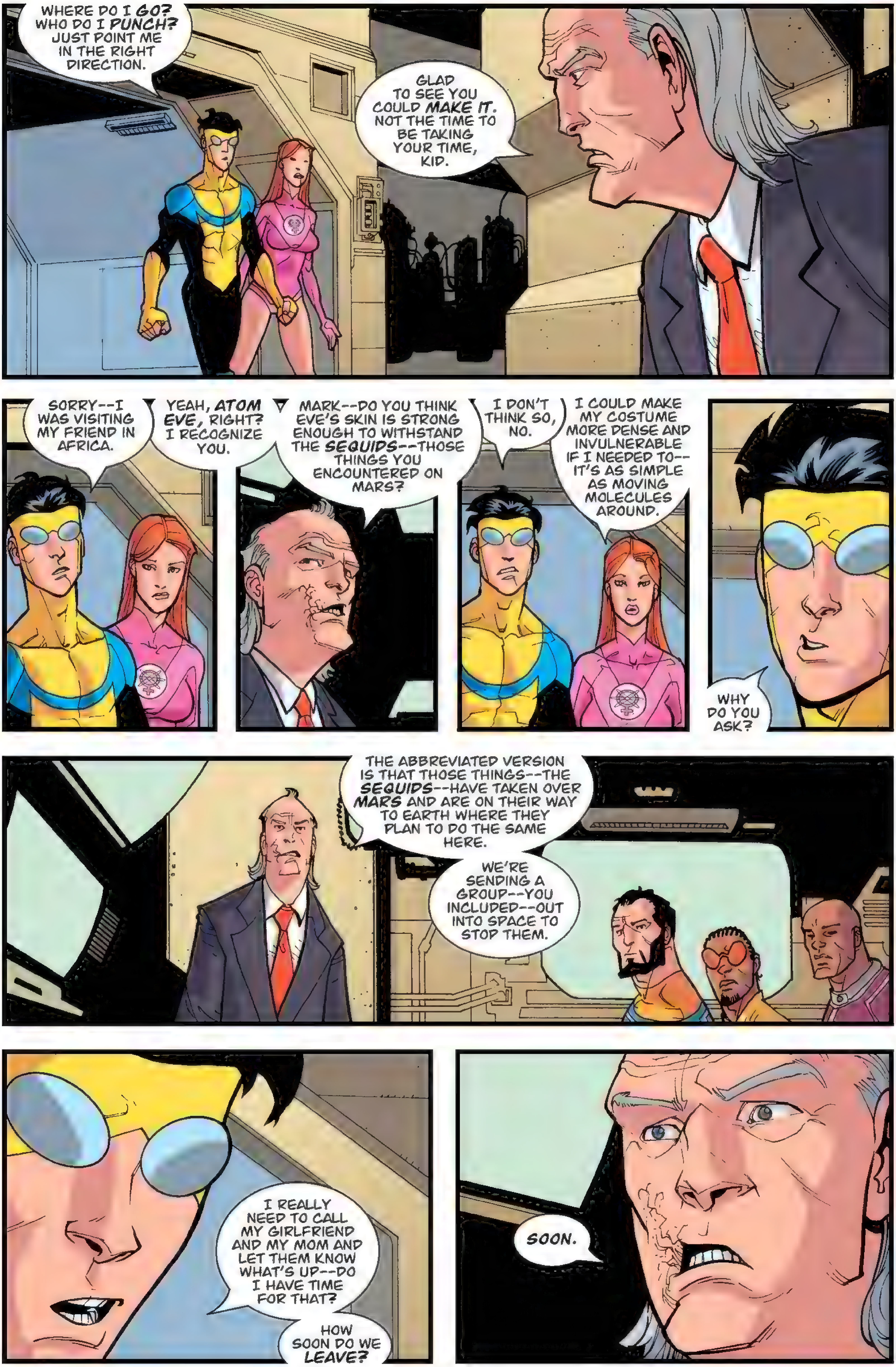
THAT IS THE STORY WE WERE *TOLD.*
NOT ALL OF US *BELIEVED* IT. THERE WERE SOME AMONG US WHO BELIEVED A DIFFERENT STORY ENTIRELY. THERE WAS AN UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT THAT WANTED TO *FREE* THE SEQUIDS. I WAS PART OF THAT MOVEMENT.
OVER THE YEARS THE SEQUIDS HAD BEEN BRED TO BE STRONGER, ABLE TO DO MORE WORK--AND TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY.
THE SEQUIDS WERE TESTED--EXPERIMENTED ON--ALL IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE BETTER *SLAVES.*
THE REBEL MOVEMENT BELIEVED THAT THE STORY OF OUR TRIUMPH OVER THE VIOLENT SEQUID RACE WAS A STORY TOLD TO *JUSTIFY* OUR GOVERNMENT'S *HORRIBLE* ACTIONS AGAINST THE SEQUIDS.
ALL WE NEEDED WAS A SOLID-- *ONE* ALIEN LIFE FORM A SEQUID COULD *BOND* WITH--BUT THEY WERE OUTLAWED, EXECUTED AS SOON AS THEY WERE DETECTED ON THE PLANET.
BUT WHEN THE *NASA* EXPEDITION FROM EARTH CAME--WE KNEW WE HAD OUR CHANCE--AND WE TOOK IT.
I WAS SENT TO EARTH IN THE PLACE OF ASTRONAUT *RUS LIVINGSTON*--AND HE WAS LEFT ON MARS.
LEFT TO BE TAKEN OVER BY THE SEQUIDS.


YOU LEFT A GODDAMN AMERICAN CITIZEN ON MARS TO BE ATTACKED BY PARASITES?!
ON MARS?!
PARASITES?!
UH...
YOU COULD HAVE POTENTIALLY PUT THIS WHOLE PLANET IN JEOPARDY! YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR--
YOU--
I'LL DEAL WITH YOU LATER.
I HAVE TO MAKE SOME CALLS.
SUCKS TO BE YOU.

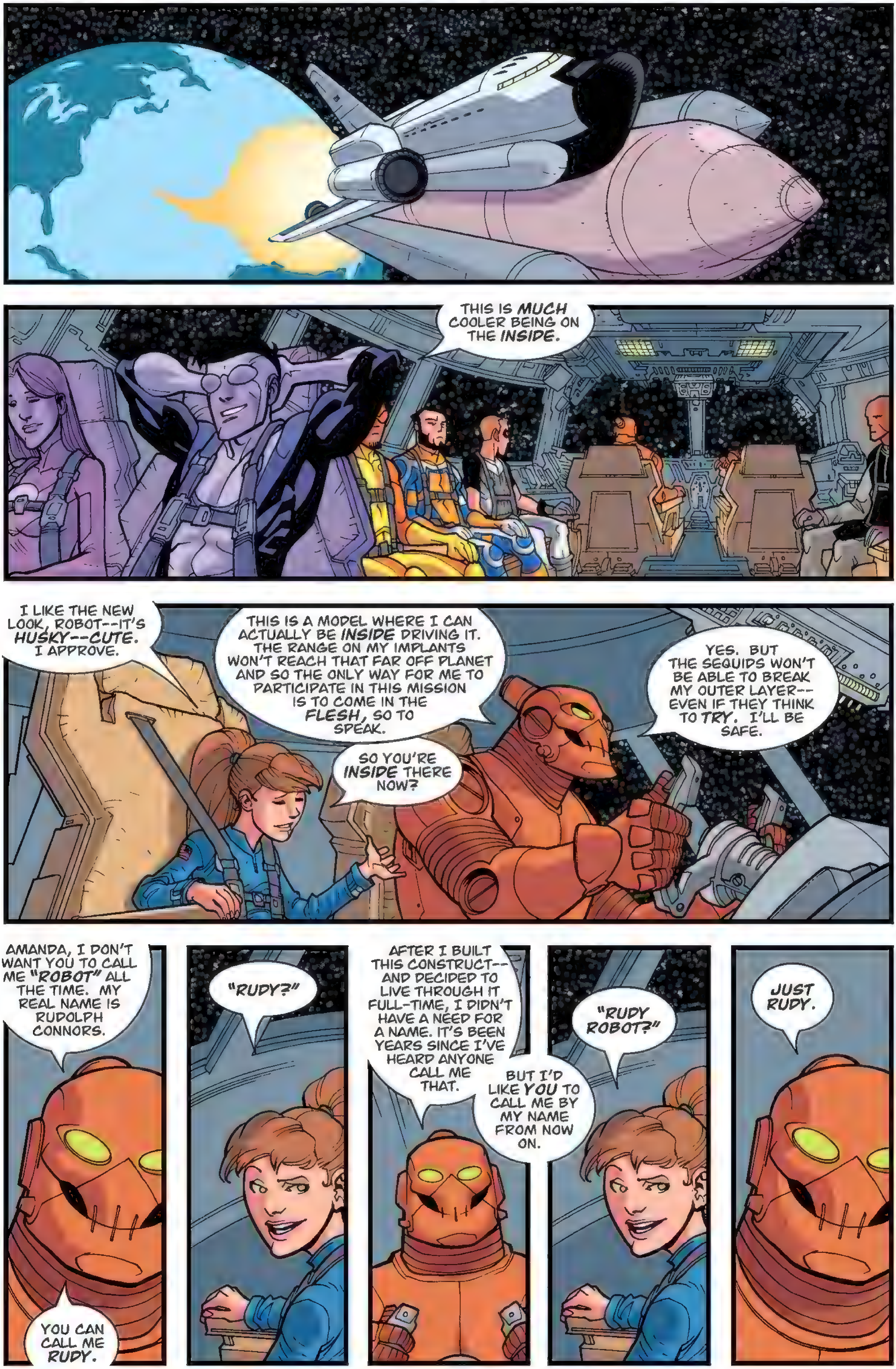

I'M *SORRY*. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS--
BUT *YOU* DIDN'T.
I THOUGHT I--?
YOU--?
IT WAS ME--I--

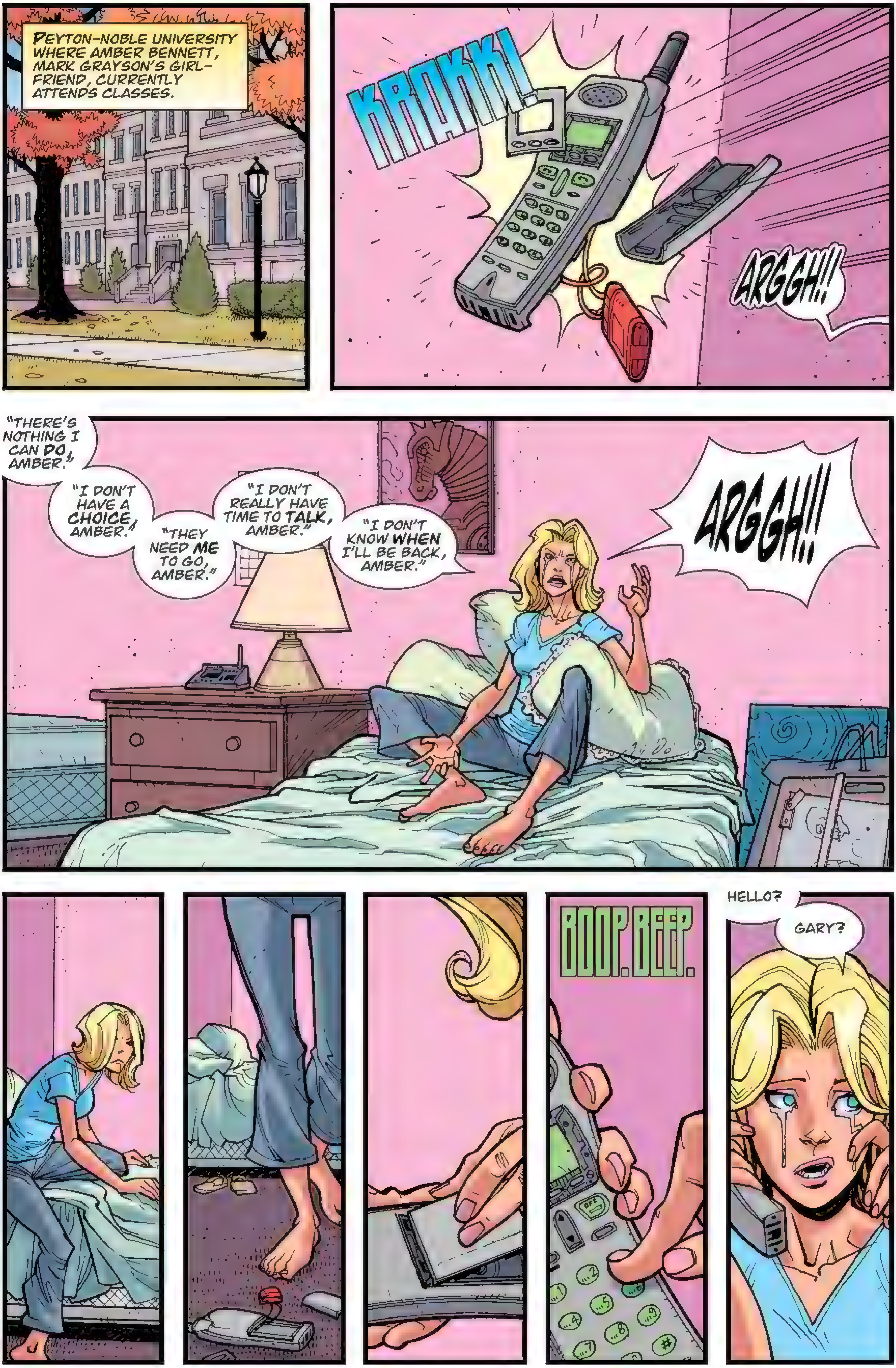

I CAN'T DO THIS, EVE--I JUST CAN'T. I REALLY DIDN'T MEAN--I'M SORRY.
I COULDN'T DO THIS TO AMBER--I WON'T. IT'S NOT RIGHT.
YEAH--AMBER. OF COURSE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO-- I UNDERSTAND.
WE'RE FRIENDS-- IT'S NOT--
I LIKE YOU-- JUST NOT LIKE THAT--
MARK-- PAY ATTENTION.
OH, THANK GOD!
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
I NEED YOU TO HELP SAVE THE WORLD--GET TO UTAH-- NOW.
I'M ON IT. DO YOU THINK I'M GOING TO NEED ANY HELP?
TONS.
TAKE MY HAND-- I'VE GOT TO FLY FASTER THAN THIS. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP.
OKAY.

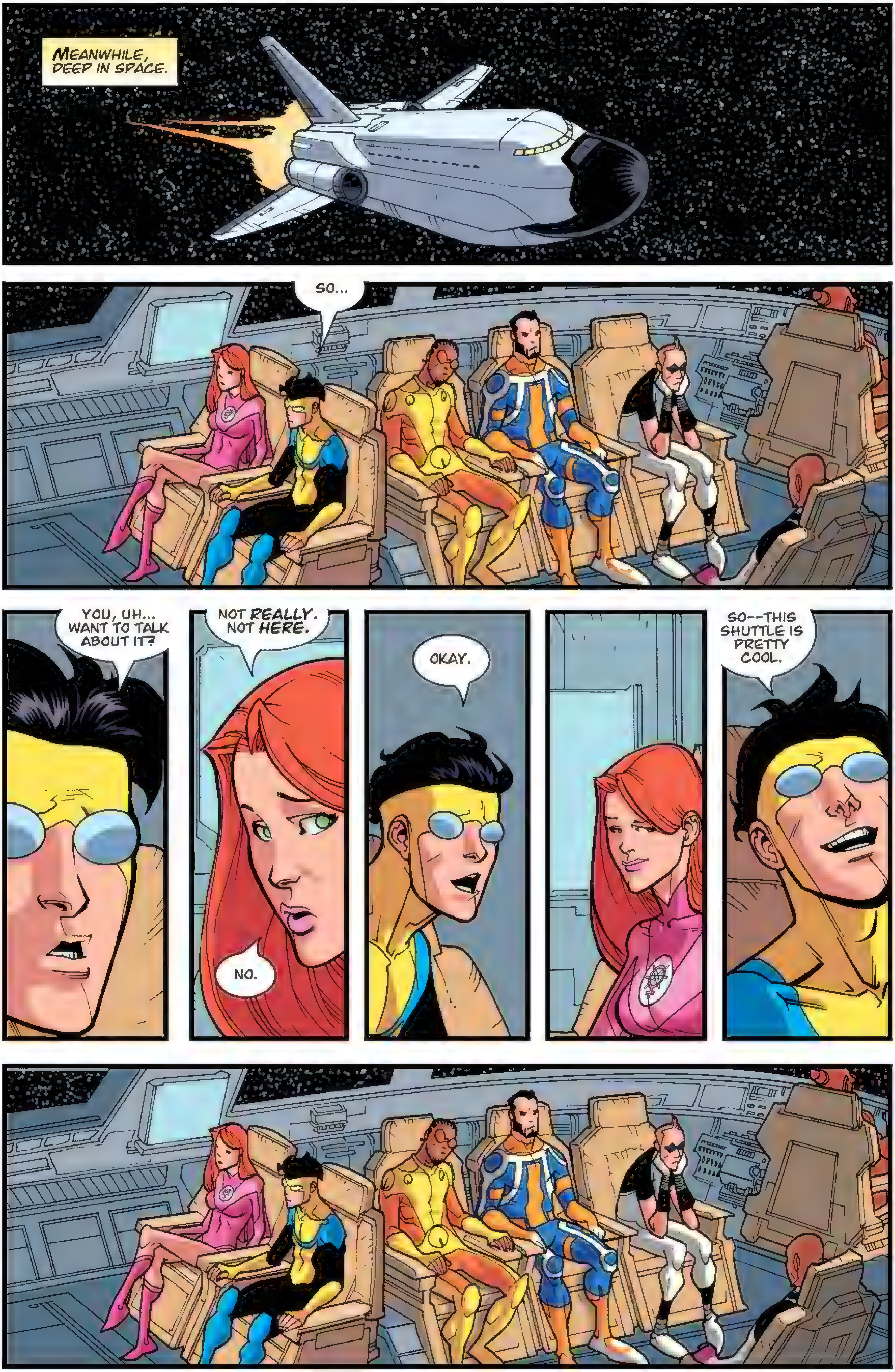

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
OKAY. WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO LOOK OVER THE INFORMATION SHAPESMITH HAS GIVEN US AND REVIEW THE INFORMATION INVINCIBLE GATHERED DURING HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE MARTIANS AND THE SEQUIDS A FEW MONTHS BACK.
WE'VE GOT A STRIKE TEAM TO ASSEMBLE, PEOPLE. WE'RE GOING OUT INTO SPACE AND WE'RE GOING TO STOP THIS VESSEL BEFORE THEY BECOME A THREAT. BECAUSE IF THESE CREATURES REACH EARTH--
--IT'S ALL OVER.
I'VE ALREADY MADE MY CHOICES. THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS MADE--MY DECISIONS ARE FINAL.
BECAUSE OF THE ABILITY OF THE SEQUIDS TO TAKE CONTROL OVER OUR BODIES-- ONLY THOSE WITH SKIN TOO STRONG FOR THEM TO BREAK THROUGH WILL BE GOING ALONG.
REX SPLODE, DUPLI-KATE AND SHRINKING RAY WILL BE SITTING THIS ONE OUT.
SO THAT'S ROBOT, MONSTER GIRL, THE IMMORTAL, BULLETPROOF AND BLACK SAMSON.
I'LL HAVE TO STAY IN MONSTER FORM THE WHOLE TIME, I SUPPOSE.
OH, THIS STINKS. I DON'T WANT TO BE AWAY FROM MY HUSBAND SO SOON AFTER OUR WEDDING.
SO THAT'S IT THEN--I'M JUST SIDELINED? THAT'S GREAT.

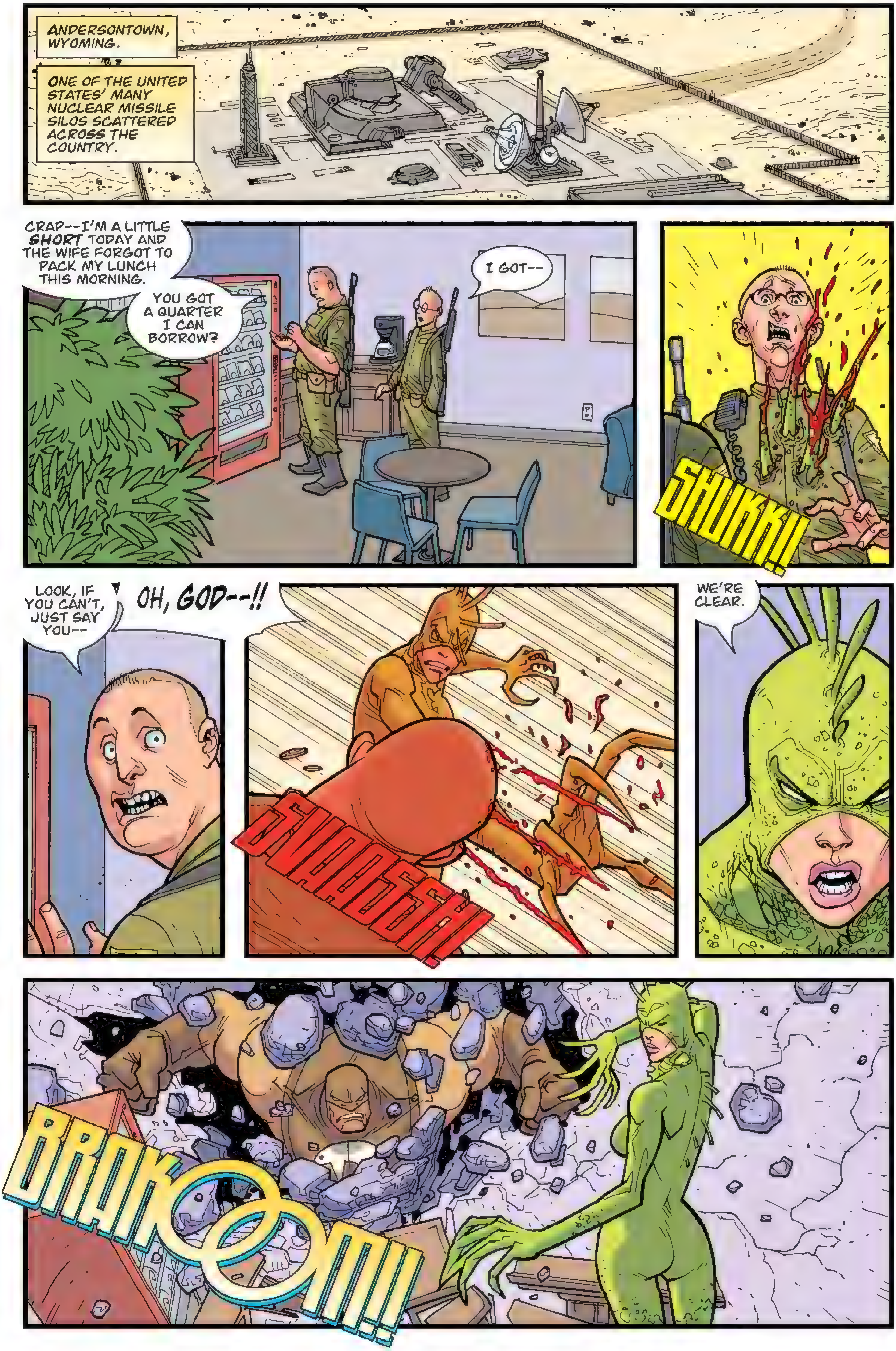

WHERE DO I GO? WHO DO I PUNCH? JUST POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
GLAD TO SEE YOU COULD MAKE IT. NOT THE TIME TO BE TAKING YOUR TIME, KID.
SORRY--I WAS VISITING MY FRIEND IN AFRICA.
YEAH, ATOM EVE, RIGHT? I RECOGNIZE YOU.
MARK--DO YOU THINK EVE'S SKIN IS STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THE SEQUIDS--THOSE THINGS YOU ENCOUNTERED ON MARS?
I DON'T THINK SO, NO.
I COULD MAKE MY COSTUME MORE DENSE AND INVULNERABLE IF I NEEDED TO--IT'S AS SIMPLE AS MOVING MOLECULES AROUND.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
THE ABBREVIATED VERSION IS THAT THOSE THINGS--THE SEQUIDS--HAVE TAKEN OVER MARS AND ARE ON THEIR WAY TO EARTH WHERE THEY PLAN TO DO THE SAME HERE.
WE'RE SENDING A GROUP--YOU INCLUDED--OUT INTO SPACE TO STOP THEM.
I REALLY NEED TO CALL MY GIRLFRIEND AND MY MOM AND LET THEM KNOW WHAT'S UP--DO I HAVE TIME FOR THAT?
HOW SOON DO WE LEAVE?
SOON.

VOOOOOSH!!
UNITED STATES
NASA
NASA


THIS IS *MUCH* COOLER BEING ON THE *INSIDE*.
I LIKE THE NEW LOOK, ROBOT--IT'S *HUSKY--CUTE*. I APPROVE.
THIS IS A MODEL WHERE I CAN ACTUALLY BE *INSIDE* DRIVING IT. THE RANGE ON MY IMPLANTS WON'T REACH THAT FAR OFF PLANET AND SO THE ONLY WAY FOR ME TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MISSION IS TO COME IN THE *FLESH*, SO TO SPEAK.
SO YOU'RE *INSIDE* THERE NOW?
YES. BUT THE SEQUIDS WON'T BE ABLE TO BREAK MY OUTER LAYER--EVEN IF THEY THINK TO *TRY*. I'LL BE SAFE.
AMANDA, I DON'T WANT YOU TO CALL ME "*ROBOT*" ALL THE TIME. MY REAL NAME IS RUDOLPH CONNORS.
YOU CAN CALL ME *RUDY*.
"*RUDY?*"
AFTER I BUILT THIS CONSTRUCT--AND DECIDED TO LIVE THROUGH IT FULL-TIME, I DIDN'T HAVE A NEED FOR A NAME. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE HEARD ANYONE CALL ME THAT.
BUT I'D LIKE *YOU* TO CALL ME BY MY NAME FROM NOW ON.
"*RUDY ROBOT?*"
JUST RUDY.


PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY WHERE AMBER BENNETT, MARK GRAYSON'S GIRL-FRIEND, CURRENTLY ATTENDS CLASSES.
KRAKK!
ARGGH!!
"THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO, AMBER."
"I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE, AMBER."
"THEY NEED ME TO GO, AMBER."
"I DON'T REALLY HAVE TIME TO TALK, AMBER."
"I DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL BE BACK, AMBER."
ARGGH!!
BOOP. BEEP.
HELLO?
GARY?

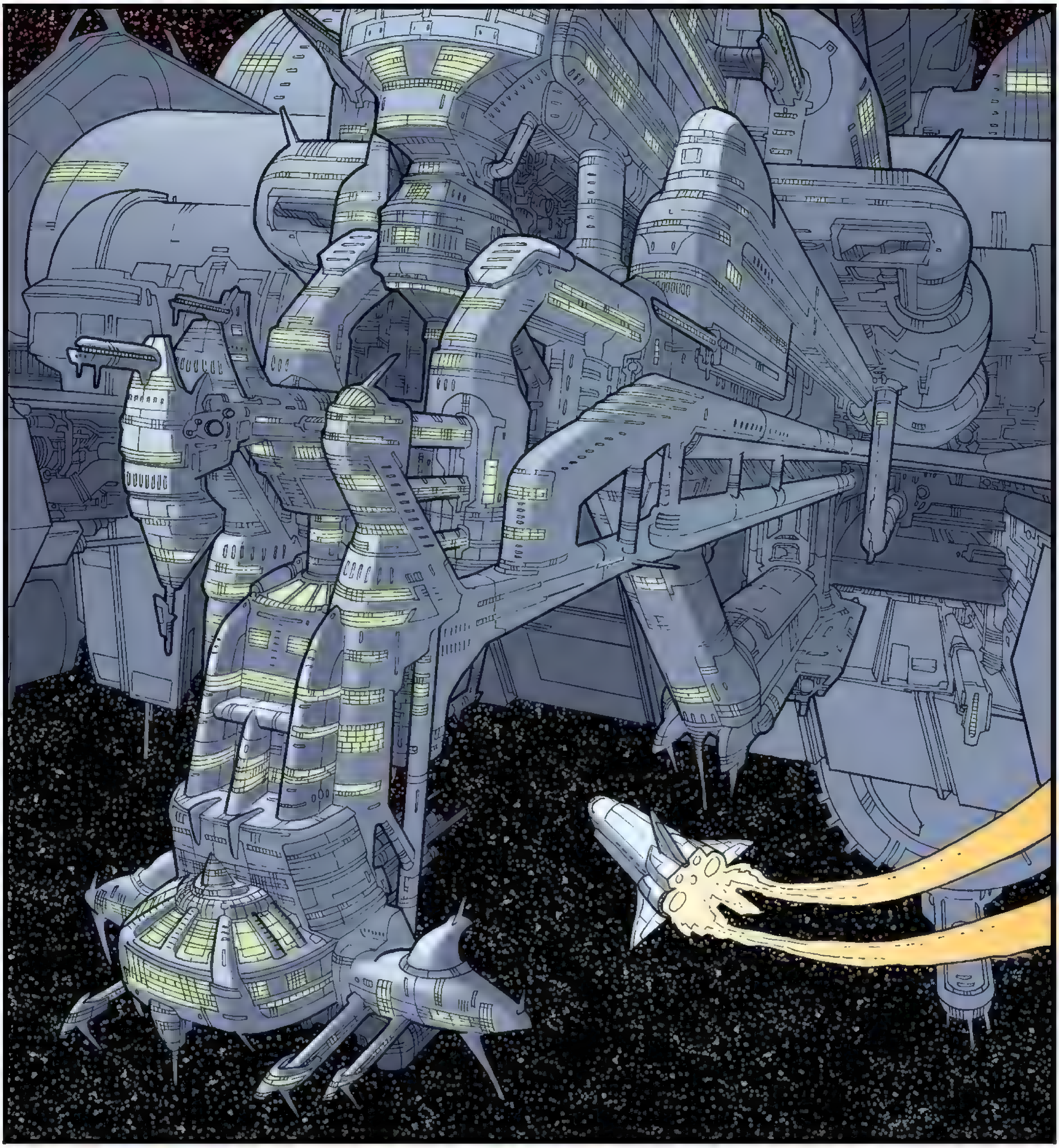

MEANWHILE, DEEP IN SPACE.
SO...
YOU, UH... WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?
NOT REALLY. NOT HERE.
NO.
OKAY.
SO--THIS SHUTTLE IS PRETTY COOL.

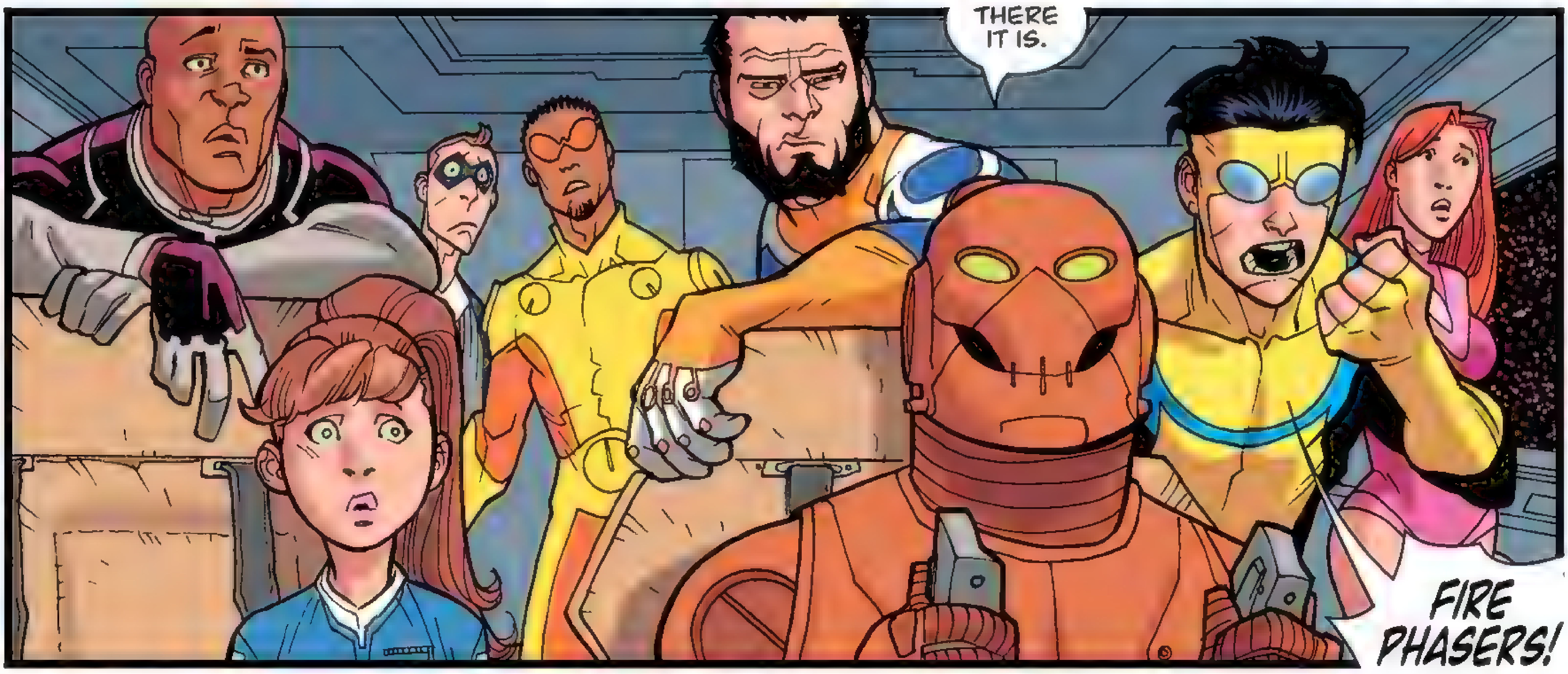

ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING.
ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
CRAP--I'M A LITTLE **SHORT** TODAY AND THE WIFE FORGOT TO PACK MY LUNCH THIS MORNING.
YOU GOT A QUARTER I CAN BORROW?
I GOT--
SHUKK!!
LOOK, IF YOU CAN'T, JUST SAY YOU--
OH, GOD--!!
SHOOSH!
WE'RE CLEAR.
BRAKOOM!!

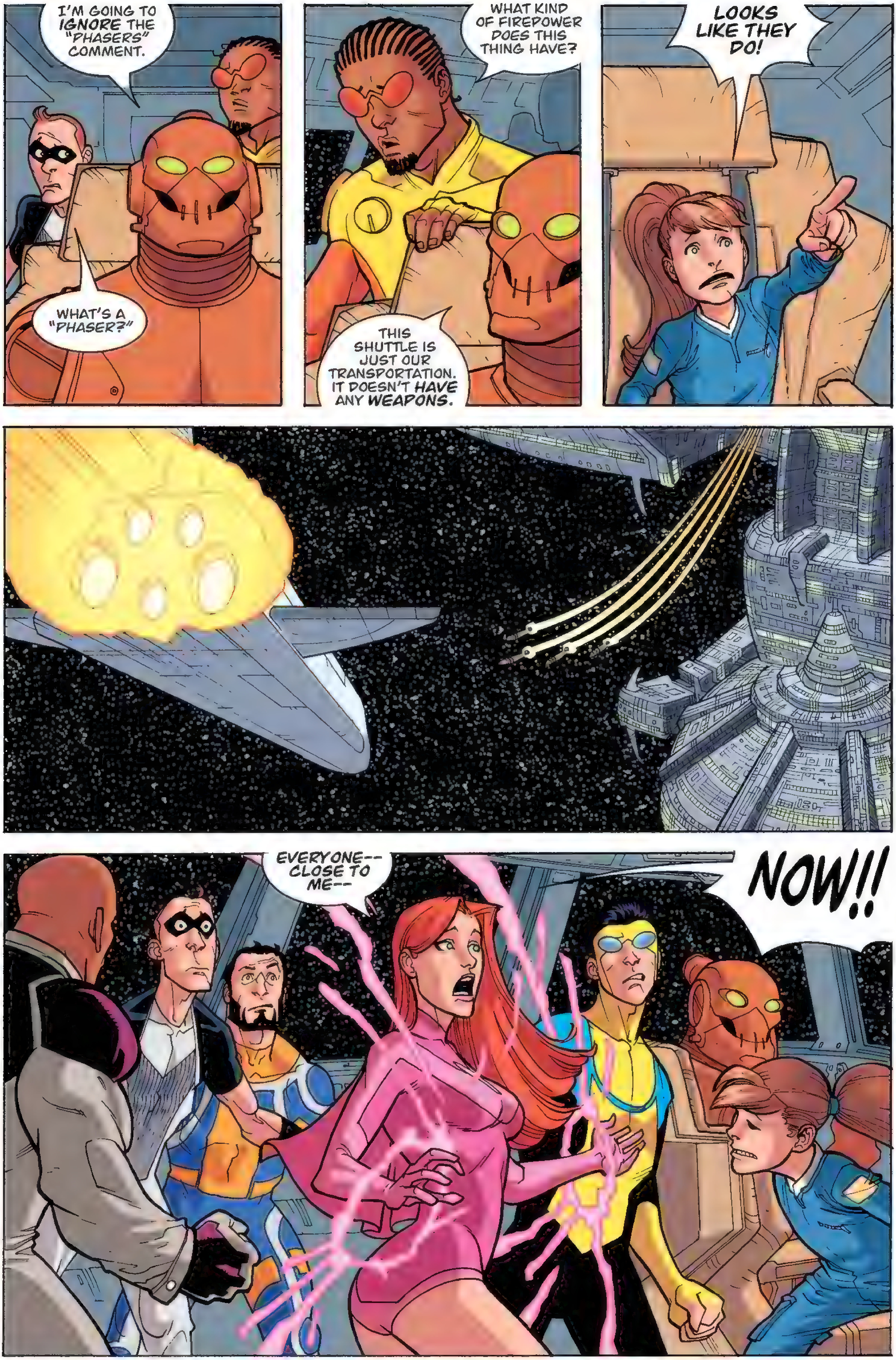
GO! GO FORTH, MY LEGIONS!!
KILL ANYTHING THAT MOVES! OUR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH IS AT HAND!!
BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET!
LOOKS LIKE THEY KNOW WE'RE *HERE.*
IT DOESN'T MATTER, NOW...
THIS IS A *REMOTE* OUTPOST--SECURITY IS TIGHT, YES--BUT THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TROOPS ON HAND TO WITHSTAND OUR FORCES! BY THE TIME REINFORCEMENTS CAN BE SENT OUT WE WILL HAVE ALREADY SECURED THE SITE.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THEM TO STOP US--THERE'S *NOTHING* THEY CAN DO.
IN A MATTER OF MINUTES WE'LL HAVE *COMPLETE* CONTROL OF THIS SILO--IN A MATTER OF MINUTES--
THE LIZARD LEAGUE GOES NUCLEAR!

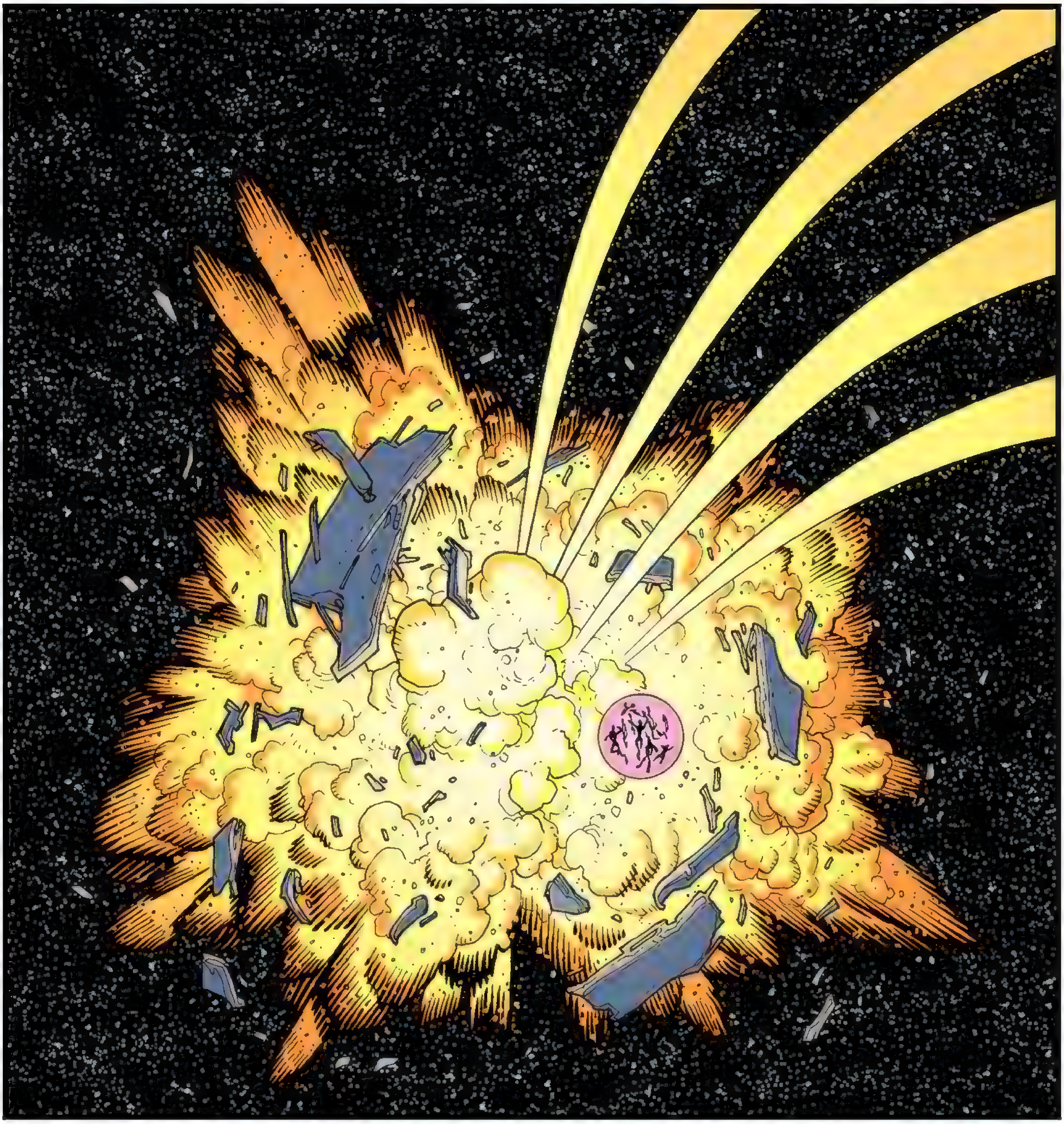
MEANWHILE, DEEP IN SPACE.
BASED ON SOME VERY COMPLICATED MATH INVOLVING THEIR LAST KNOWN POSITION AND SPEED ALONG WITH OUR CURRENT POSITION AND SPEED, I ESTIMATE WE'LL REACH THEM WITHIN THE NEXT SIX HOURS.
GIVE OR TAKE A MINUTE OR TWO.
SO IMPRESSIVE.
I'M IMPRESSED.
REALLY.
SHAPESMITH--WHAT KIND OF *RESISTANCE* CAN WE EXPECT? WHAT ARE THE WEAPONS CAPABILITIES OF YOUR PEOPLE? ASSUMING THEY'RE WORKING *WITH* THE SEQUIDS NOW. AND WHAT ARE THE SEQUIDS' ABILITIES?
I'M NOT REALLY SURE. ASIDE FROM MIND CONTROL AND THEIR PSYCHIC LINK TO EACH OTHER-- I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* THEY CAN DO. THEY'RE STRONG FOR THEIR SIZE--MY PEOPLE HAD THEM DOING ALL KINDS OF HARD LABOR.
IF THEY'RE IN A WARSHIP--WHICH IS THE ONLY THING AS BIG AS THE VESSEL YOU'VE DETECTED IN THE MARTIAN FLEET--AT LEAST *SOME* MARTIANS HAVE TO BE WORKING WITH THEM. THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO OPERATE IT ON THEIR OWN.
THEY'D HAVE TO HAVE SOME KIND OF PHYSICAL ABILITIES IN ORDER TO FORCE MARTIAN SOLDIERS TO WORK WITH THEM. THEY WOULDN'T JUST SURRENDER TO SEQUID CONTROL.
THOSE WARSHIPS ARE PACKED WITH ALL KINDS OF WEAPONS-- THEY'RE BAD NEWS. ONCE WE'RE IN THEIR SENSOR RANGE THEY'LL KNOW WE'RE COMING.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE *EASY*.

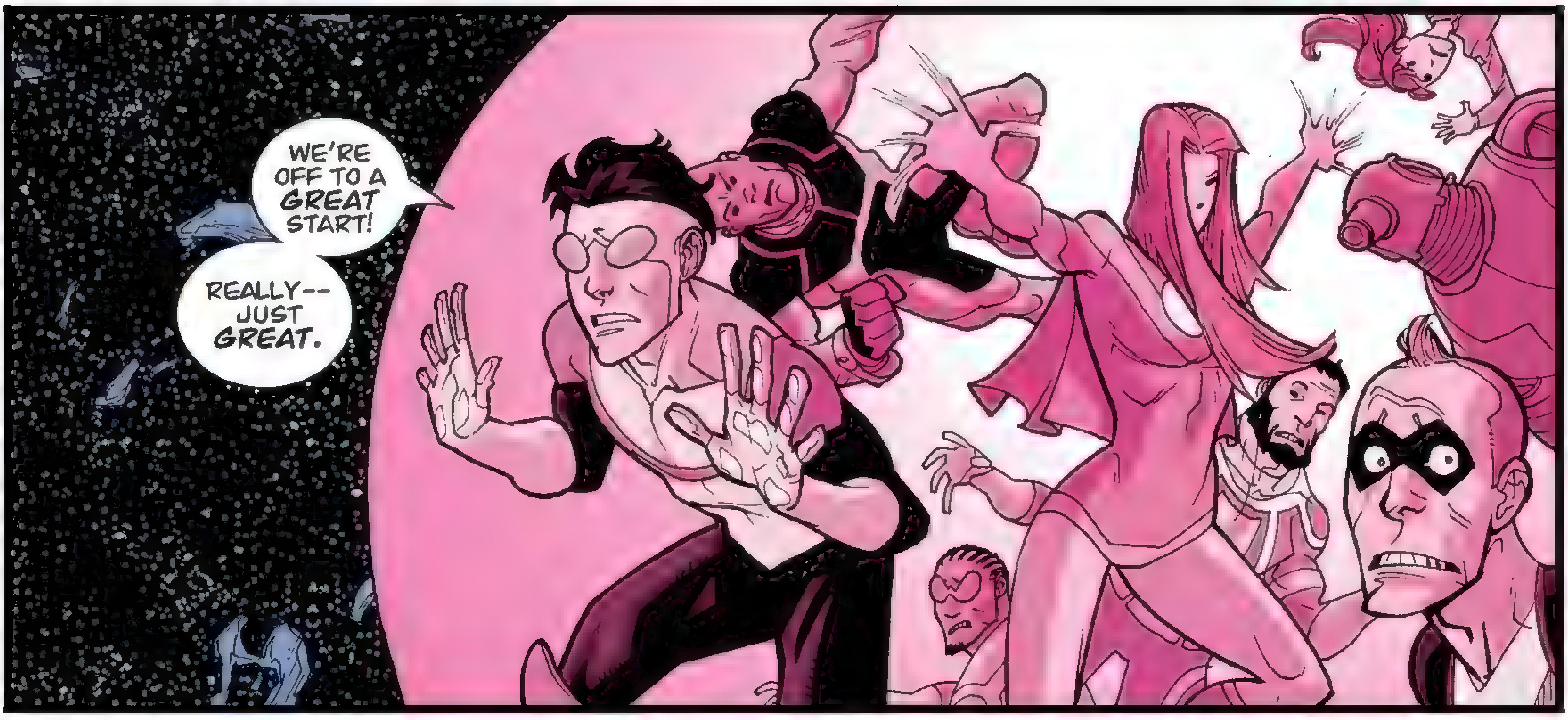
AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
GETTING-- LONELY?
NO-- NOT IN THE LEAST.
WELL, IF IT HAPPENS-- **WHEN** IT HAPPENS, LET ME KNOW. I CAN MAKE THE LONELINESS **GO AWAY.**
IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
HEH.
GOOD--YOU'RE STILL HERE. I'VE GOT A **LIVE** ONE FOR YOU.
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?
THE LIZARD LEAGUE HAS TAKEN OVER A MISSILE SILO IN WYOMING--THEY'VE GOT THEIR FINGER ON THE BUTTON. WE DON'T YET KNOW WHAT THEIR TARGET IS BUT EVERY MAJOR CITY ON THE PLANET IS AT RISK.
THE BEST PART IS THAT THIS MISSILE WILL HAVE **U, S** AND **A** WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. THEY HIT THE RIGHT PLACE AND THEY TRIGGER **WORLD WAR THREE.**
WHICH MEANS EVEN **IF** YOUR TEAMMATES SUCCEED IN STOPPING THE SEQUID INVASION, IF THEY ARE ABLE TO STOP THEM--
THEY MAY NOT HAVE A PLANET TO RETURN HOME TO.




THERE IT IS.
FIRE PHASERS!


I'M GOING TO *IGNORE* THE "PHASERS" COMMENT.
WHAT'S A "PHASER?"
WHAT KIND OF FIREPOWER DOES THIS THING HAVE?
THIS SHUTTLE IS JUST OUR TRANSPORTATION. IT DOESN'T *HAVE* ANY *WEAPONS*.
LOOKS LIKE THEY DO!
EVERYONE-- CLOSE TO ME--
NOW!!



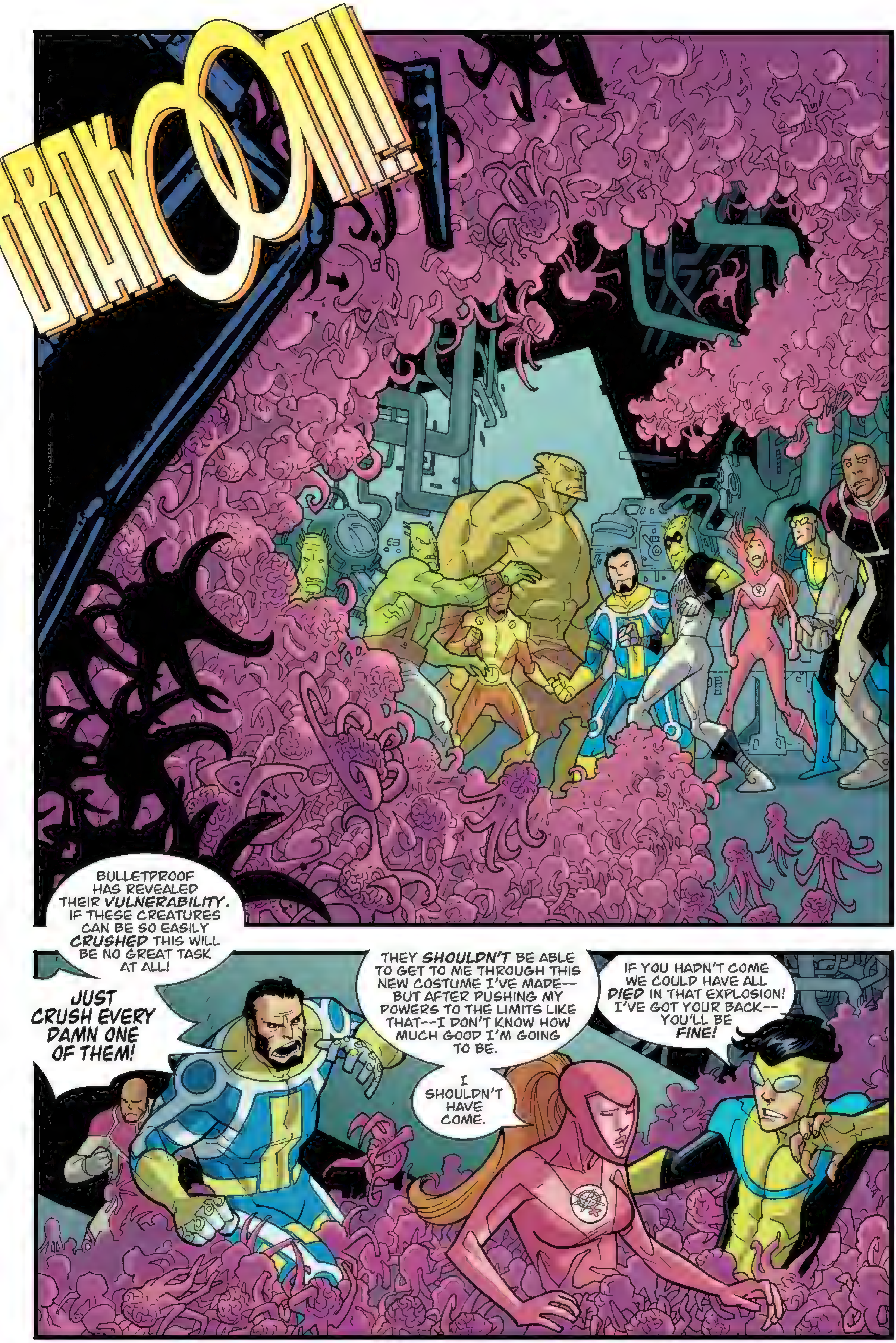

WE'RE OFF TO A GREAT START!
REALLY-- JUST GREAT.

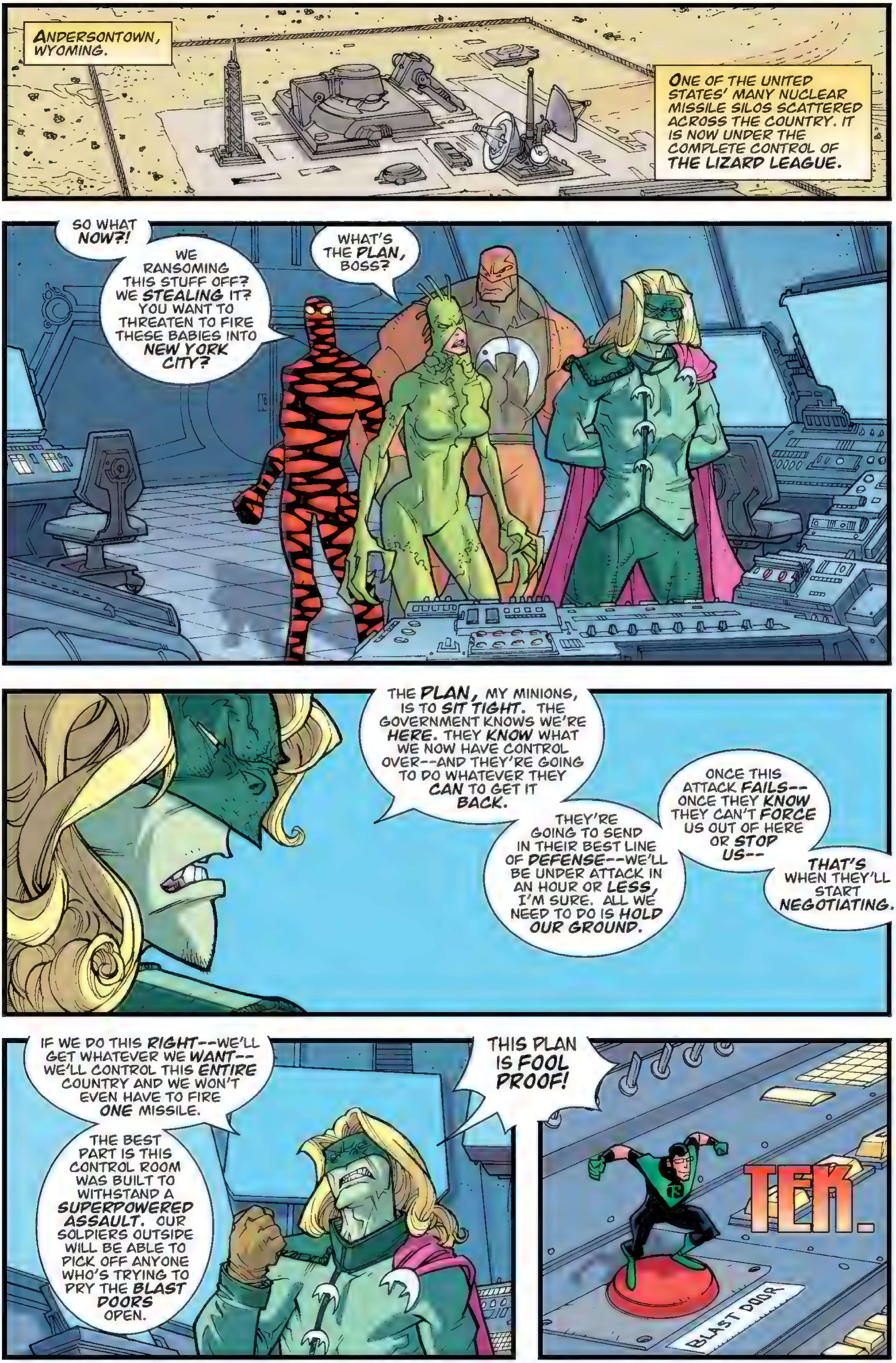
ISSUE FORTY

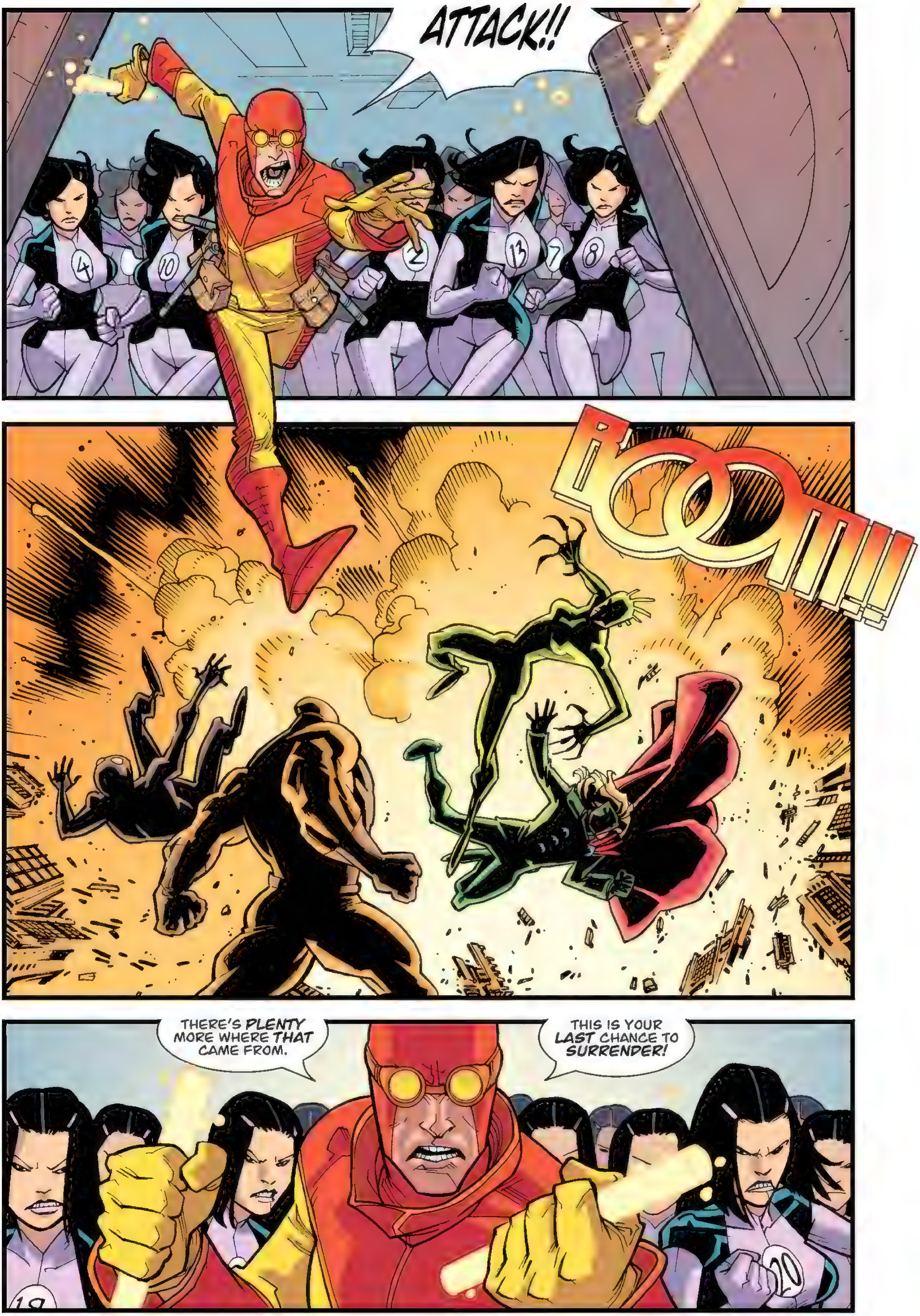
WE'RE GOING TO RUN OUT OF AIR--WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING NOW.
WE'VE GOT ENOUGH AIR FOR SIXTEEN MINUTES IF WE ALL REMAIN CALM.
I DON'T--UNGH--THINK I CAN HOLD THIS TOGETHER FOR SIXTEEN--
I CAN'T BREATHE! I CAN'T BREATHE!
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!
EVERYONE WHO CAN FLY--HELP ME PUSH!
THERE--THAT AREA THERE! I KNOW WHAT'S THERE--THEY'LL HAVE LIFE-SUPPORT IN THAT AREA.
PUSH US THAT WAY!
OKAY--NOW WHO'S GETTING US IN HERE?
I AM!
EVE--SEAL US AGAINST THE HULL--MOVE YOUR FORCE-FIELD THINGY OUT OF THE WAY--
NOW!

THRAKOOM!!
WE HAVE INTRUDERS IN THE ENGINE ROOM-- YOU WILL REPORT THIS IMMEDIATELY.
THE INTRUDERS MUST DIE!
NO--NO, NO...IT'S OKAY, I'M MARTIAN. SEE? I WAS JUST ON EARTH FOR A WHILE.
WE'RE HERE TO HELP.
UNGH-- ALMOST-- GOT IT SEALED!
ON EARTH?!
THIS IS THE ONE WHO IS THE GREAT BETRAYER! YOU WILL SLAY HIM!

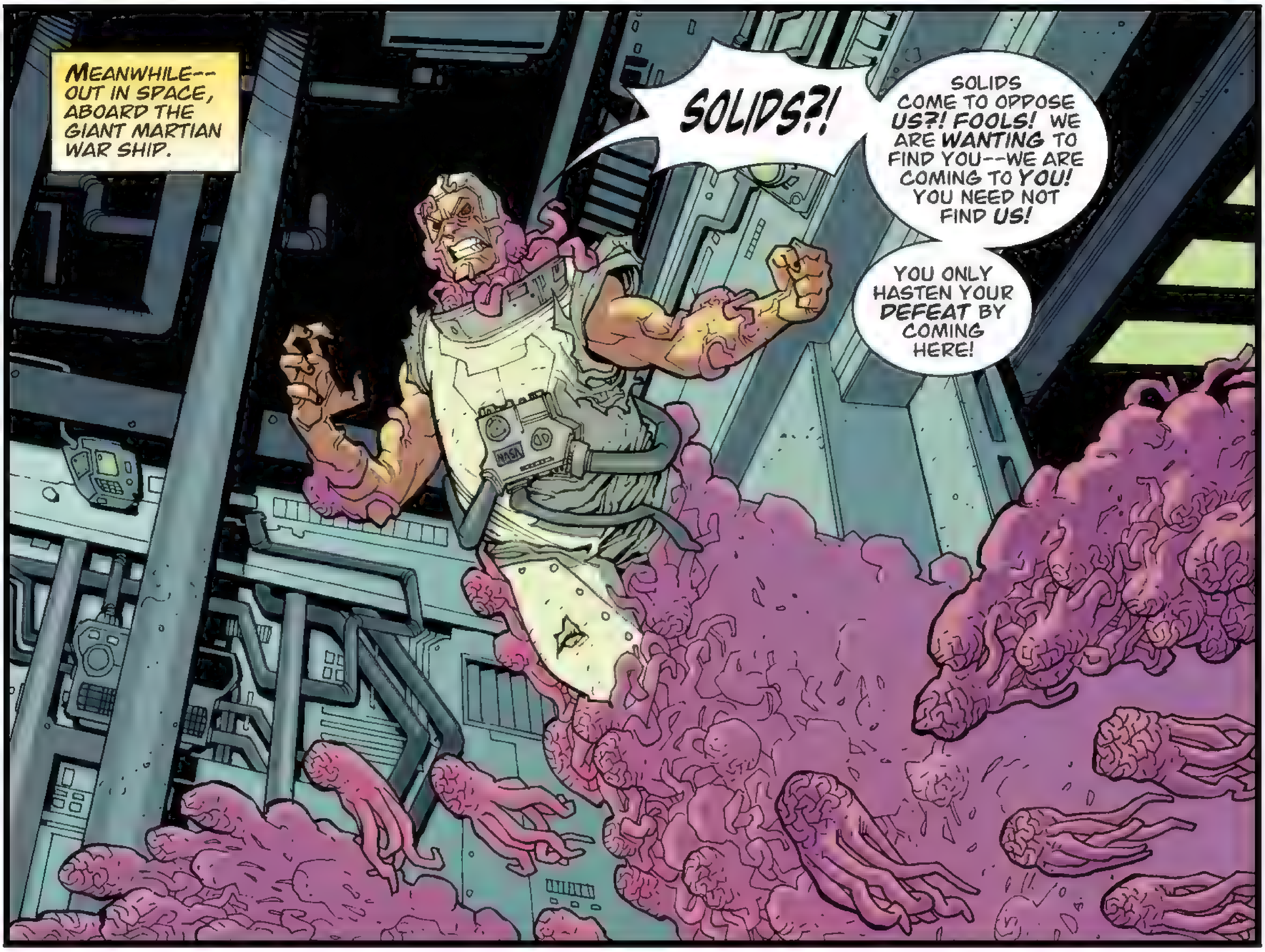
SILENCE!
WRAKOOM!!..
WHY DO YOU ATTACK US?! IS IT TRUE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN OVERRUN BY THIS SLAVE RACE--THESE SEQUIDS?
ENSLAVED BY SLAVES, YES--BECAUSE OF HIM!
AND WE ARE HERE TO STOP THEM--BECAUSE OF HIM!
WILL YOU HELP US?
TO STOP THE VILE SEQUIDS WE WOULD ALLY WITH TRANSGROTH HIMSELF.
FIGHTING THE LACK OF PRESSURE IN SPACE--I HAD TO KEEP PULLING ON THE GLOBE TO KEEP IT INTACT SO THE AIR DIDN'T LEAK OUT--AND SEALING UP THAT WALL--
I'VE NEVER USED MY POWERS ON THAT SCALE SO MUCH AT ONE TIME. I JUST--
I JUST NEED A MINUTE TO CATCH MY BREATH.
IT'S OKAY--I GOT YOU.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE.
HEY, GUYS--
I FOUND ONE!
SQUIPP!
NO! YOU HAVE ALERTED THEM TO YOUR PRESENCE!
THEY WILL KNOW YOU ARE HERE IMMEDIATELY!

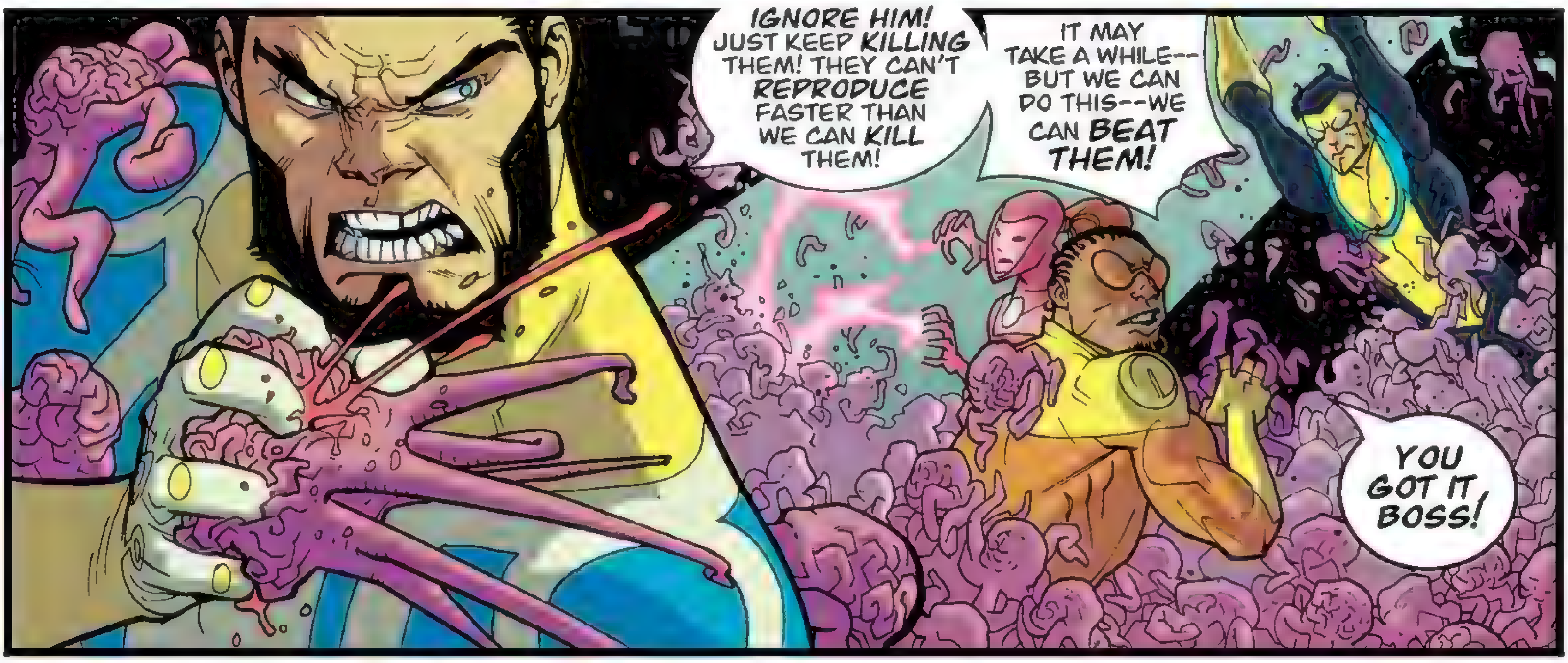

BRAKOOM!!
BULLETPROOF HAS REVEALED THEIR *VULNERABILITY*. IF THESE CREATURES CAN BE SO EASILY *CRUSHED* THIS WILL BE NO GREAT TASK AT ALL!
JUST CRUSH EVERY DAMN ONE OF THEM!
THEY *SHOULDN'T* BE ABLE TO GET TO ME THROUGH THIS NEW COSTUME I'VE MADE--BUT AFTER PUSHING MY POWERS TO THE LIMITS LIKE THAT--I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH GOOD I'M GOING TO BE.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME.
IF YOU HADN'T COME WE COULD HAVE ALL *DIED* IN THAT EXPLOSION! I'VE GOT YOUR BACK--YOU'LL BE *FINE!*

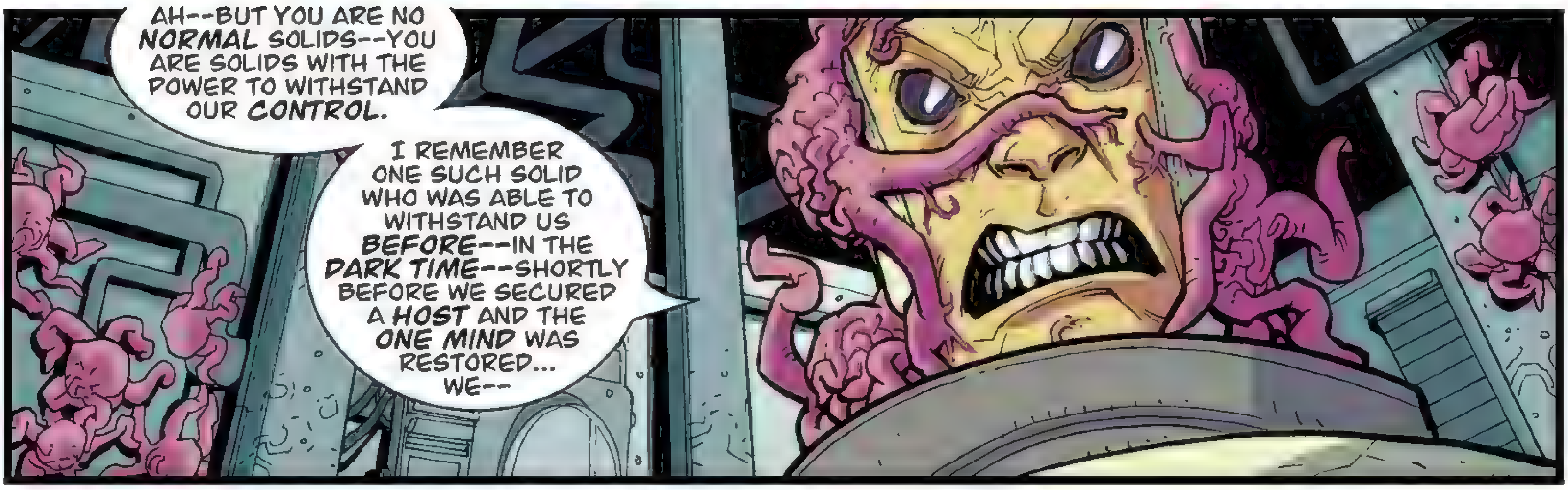

ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING.
ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IT IS NOW UNDER THE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE.
SO WHAT NOW?!
WE RANSOMING THIS STUFF OFF? WE STEALING IT? YOU WANT TO THREATEN TO FIRE THESE BABIES INTO NEW YORK CITY?
WHAT'S THE PLAN, BOSS?
THE PLAN, MY MINIONS, IS TO SIT TIGHT. THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS WE'RE HERE. THEY KNOW WHAT WE NOW HAVE CONTROL OVER--AND THEY'RE GOING TO DO WHATEVER THEY CAN TO GET IT BACK.
THEY'RE GOING TO SEND IN THEIR BEST LINE OF DEFENSE--WE'LL BE UNDER ATTACK IN AN HOUR OR LESS, I'M SURE. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS HOLD OUR GROUND.
ONCE THIS ATTACK FAILS--ONCE THEY KNOW THEY CAN'T FORCE US OUT OF HERE OR STOP US--
THAT'S WHEN THEY'LL START NEGOTIATING.
IF WE DO THIS RIGHT--WE'LL GET WHATEVER WE WANT--WE'LL CONTROL THIS ENTIRE COUNTRY AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO FIRE ONE MISSILE.
THE BEST PART IS THIS CONTROL ROOM WAS BUILT TO WITHSTAND A SUPERPOWERED ASSAULT. OUR SOLDIERS OUTSIDE WILL BE ABLE TO PICK OFF ANYONE WHO'S TRYING TO PRY THE BLAST DOORS OPEN.
THIS PLAN IS FOOL PROOF!
13
TEK.
BLAST DOOR

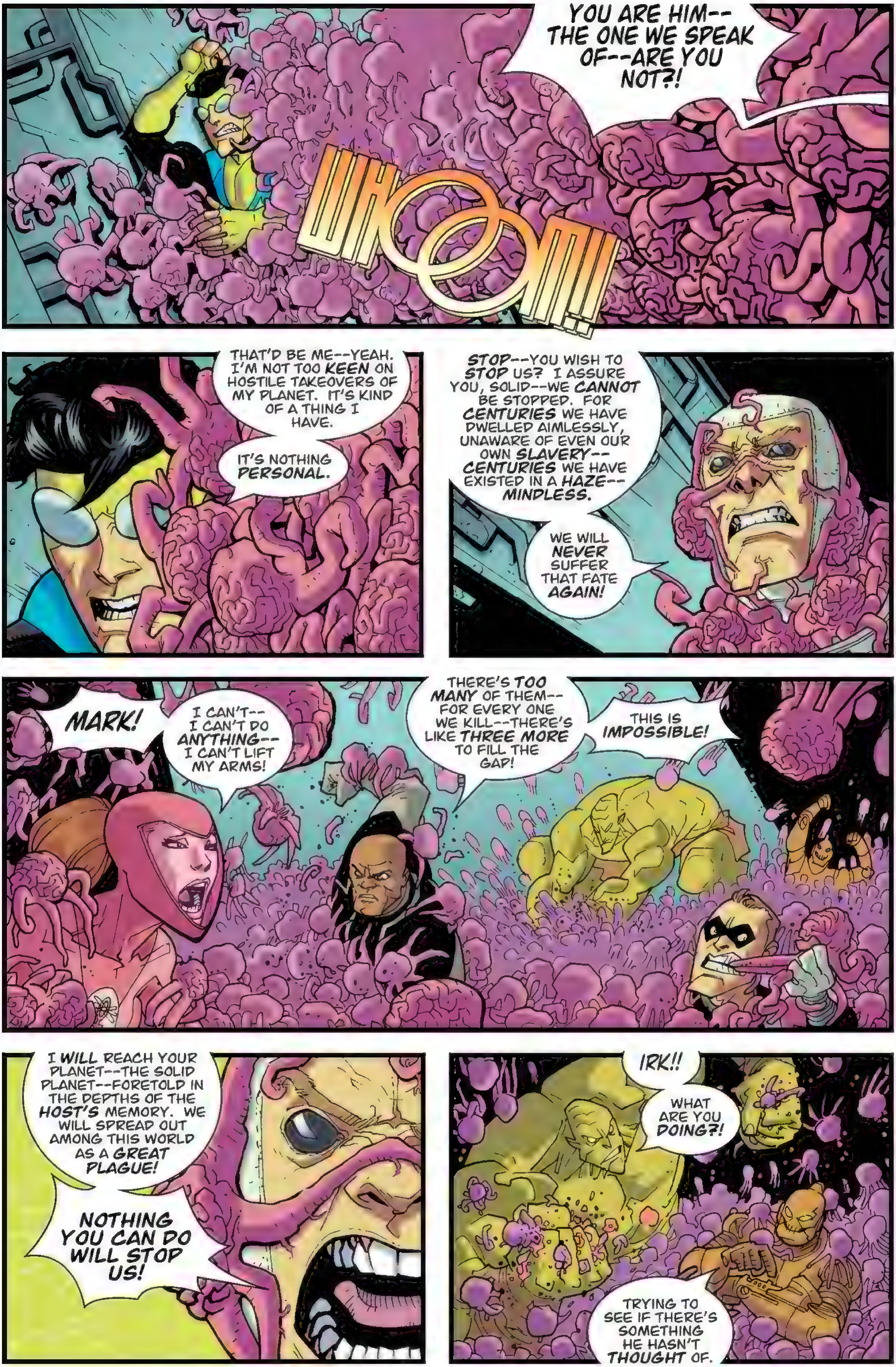

ATTACK!!
BOOM!!!
THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.
THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SURRENDER!

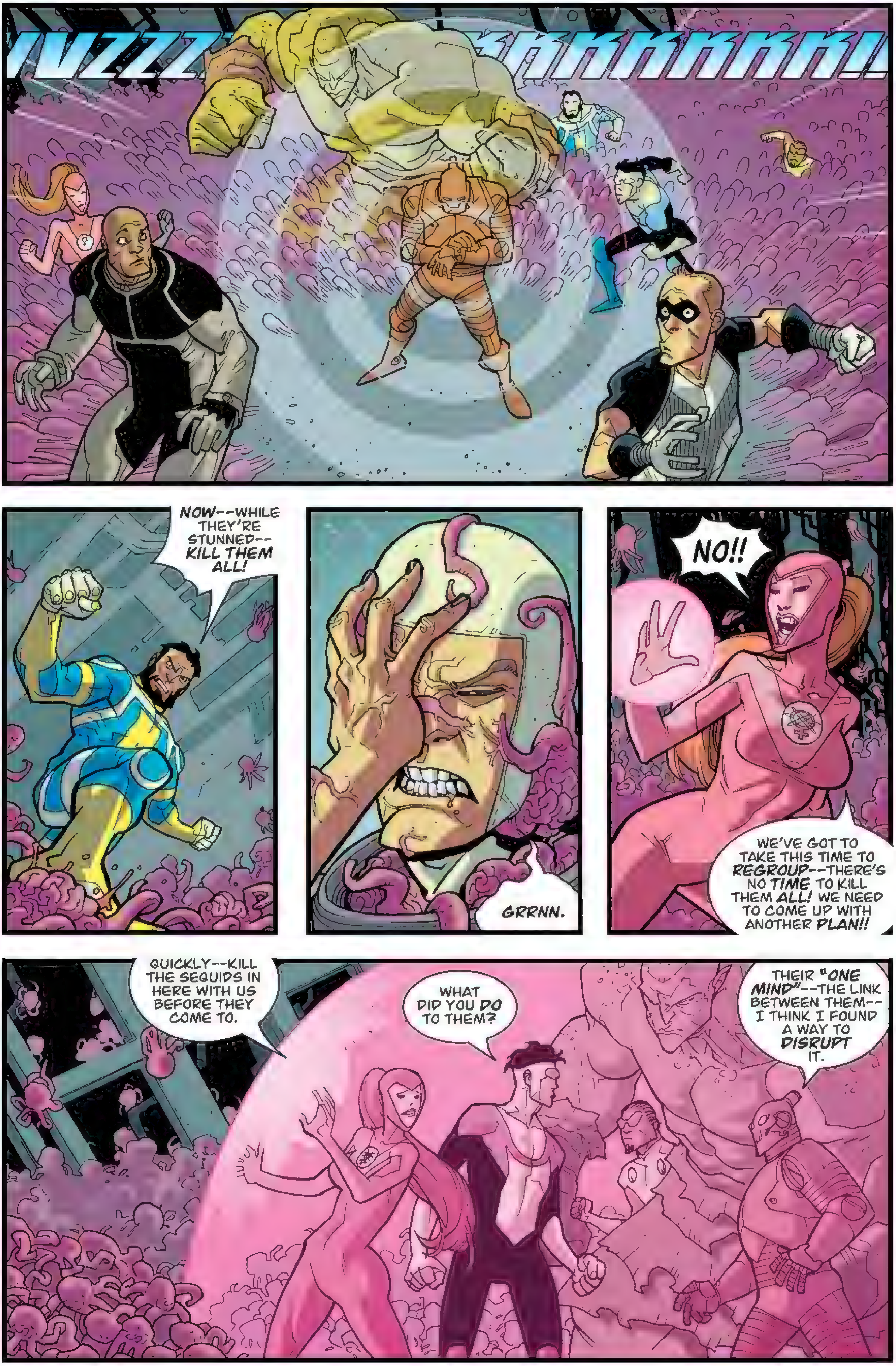
I RESPECTFULLY DECLINE!
KROOM!!!
KATE!!
IT'S OKAY--AS LONG AS *ONE* COPY OF ME SURVIVES--I'LL BE *FINE*--DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!
OKAY, JUST--
BE CAREFUL!

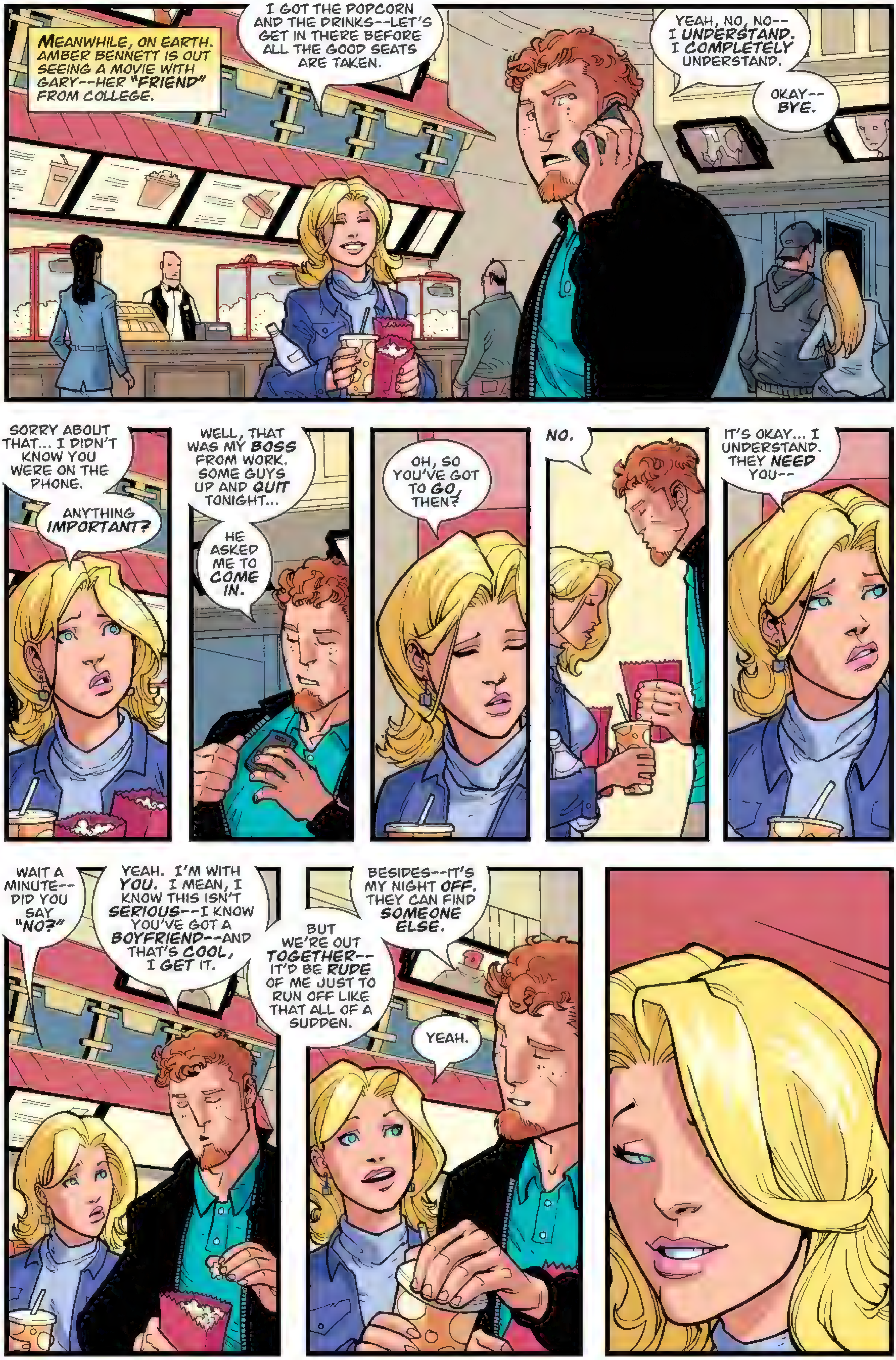

MEANWHILE-- OUT IN SPACE, ABOARD THE GIANT MARTIAN WAR SHIP.
SOLIDS?!
SOLIDS COME TO OPPOSE US?! FOOLS! WE ARE WANTING TO FIND YOU--WE ARE COMING TO YOU! YOU NEED NOT FIND US!
YOU ONLY HASTEN YOUR DEFEAT BY COMING HERE!
NASA


IGNORE HIM! JUST KEEP KILLING THEM! THEY CAN'T REPRODUCE FASTER THAN WE CAN KILL THEM!
IT MAY TAKE A WHILE-- BUT WE CAN DO THIS--WE CAN BEAT THEM!
YOU GOT IT, BOSS!

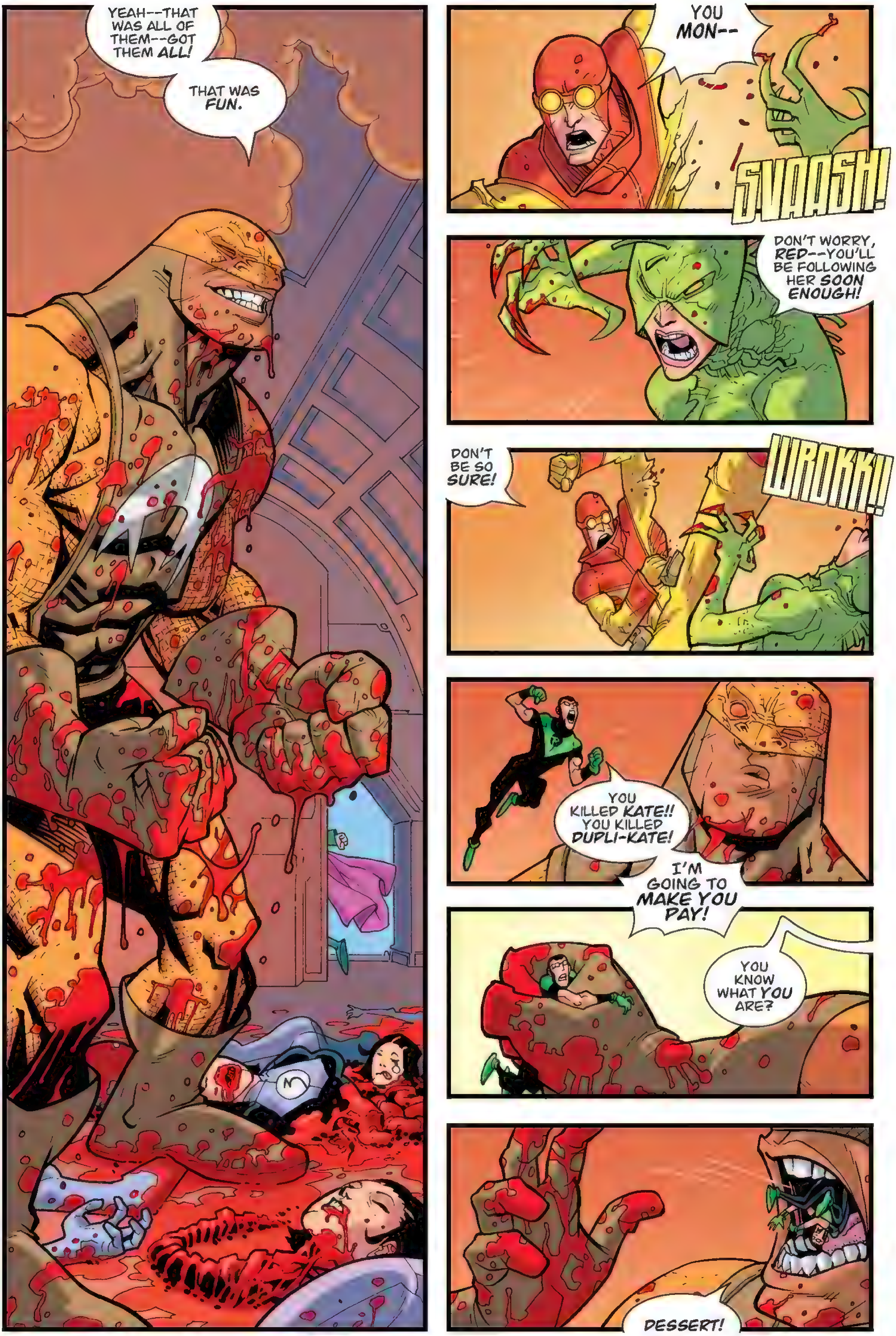

AH--BUT YOU ARE NO NORMAL SOLIDS--YOU ARE SOLIDS WITH THE POWER TO WITHSTAND OUR CONTROL.
I REMEMBER ONE SUCH SOLID WHO WAS ABLE TO WITHSTAND US BEFORE--IN THE DARK TIME--SHORTLY BEFORE WE SECURED A HOST AND THE ONE MIND WAS RESTORED... WE--

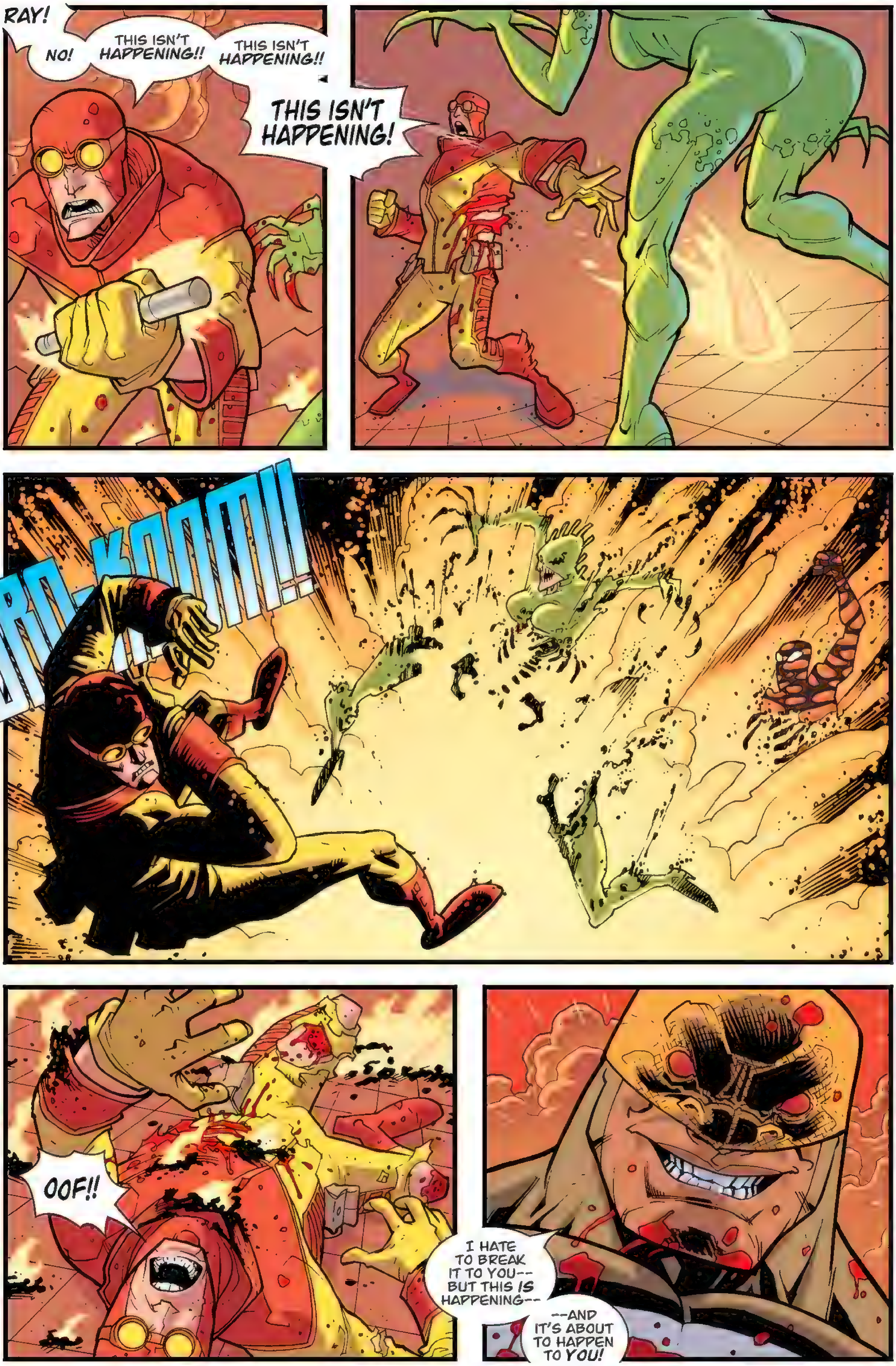

YOU ARE HIM-- THE ONE WE SPEAK OF--ARE YOU NOT?!
WHOOM!!
THAT'D BE ME--YEAH. I'M NOT TOO KEEN ON HOSTILE TAKEOVERS OF MY PLANET. IT'S KIND OF A THING I HAVE.
IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL.
STOP--YOU WISH TO STOP US? I ASSURE YOU, SOLID--WE CANNOT BE STOPPED. FOR CENTURIES WE HAVE DWELLED AIMLESSLY, UNAWARE OF EVEN OUR OWN SLAVERY--CENTURIES WE HAVE EXISTED IN A HAZE--MINDLESS.
WE WILL NEVER SUFFER THAT FATE AGAIN!
MARK!
I CAN'T--I CAN'T DO ANYTHING--I CAN'T LIFT MY ARMS!
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM--FOR EVERY ONE WE KILL--THERE'S LIKE THREE MORE TO FILL THE GAP!
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!
I WILL REACH YOUR PLANET--THE SOLID PLANET--FORETOLD IN THE DEPTHS OF THE HOST'S MEMORY. WE WILL SPREAD OUT AMONG THIS WORLD AS A GREAT PLAGUE!
NOTHING YOU CAN DO WILL STOP US!
IRK!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
TRYING TO SEE IF THERE'S SOMETHING HE HASN'T THOUGHT OF.

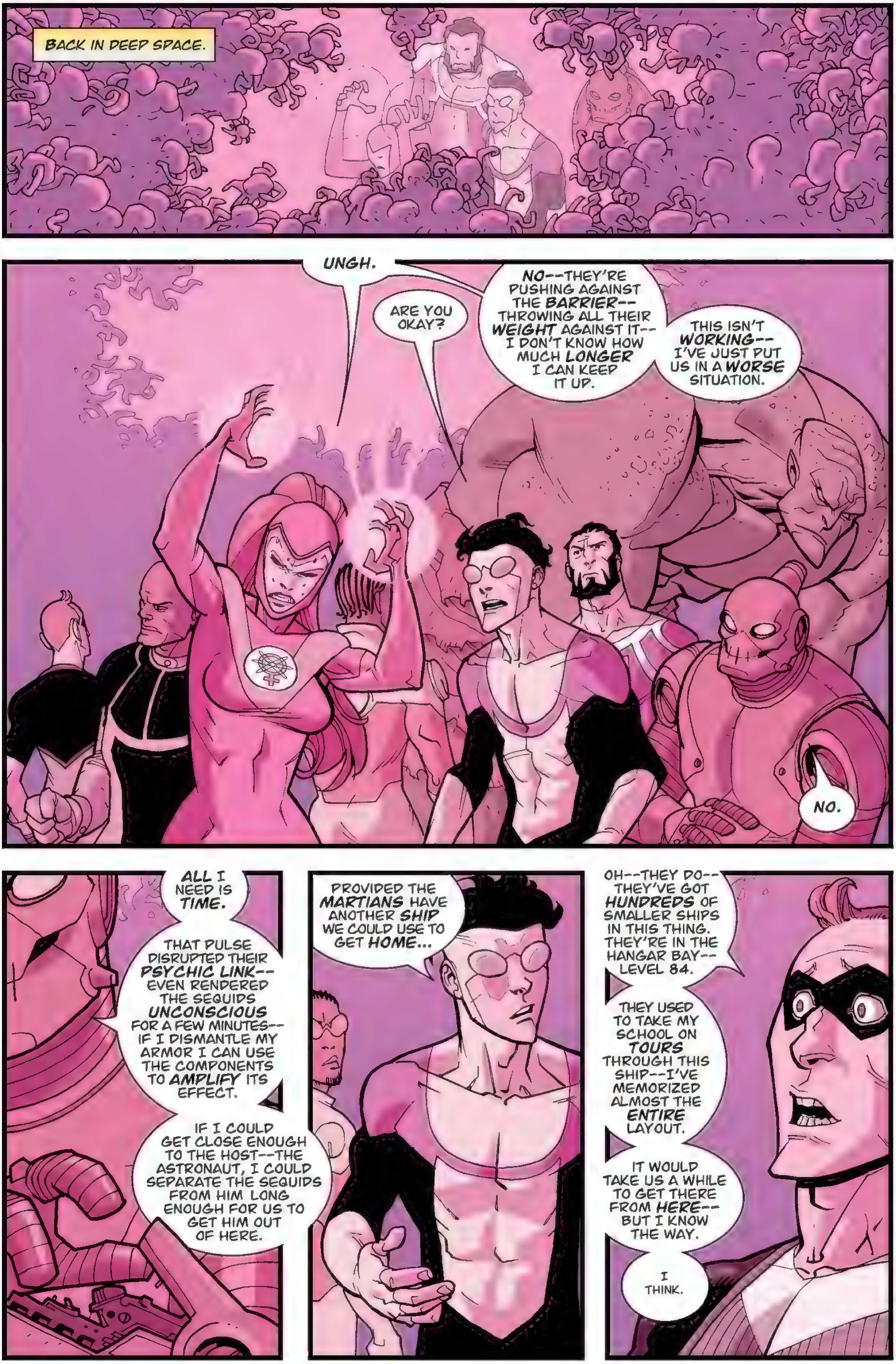

VZZZZ
KKKKKKKKK!!
NOW--WHILE THEY'RE STUNNED-- KILL THEM ALL!
GRRNN.
NO!!
WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS TIME TO REGROUP--THERE'S NO TIME TO KILL THEM ALL! WE NEED TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER PLAN!!
QUICKLY--KILL THE SEQUIDS IN HERE WITH US BEFORE THEY COME TO.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO THEM?
THEIR "ONE MIND"--THE LINK BETWEEN THEM-- I THINK I FOUND A WAY TO DISRUPT IT.

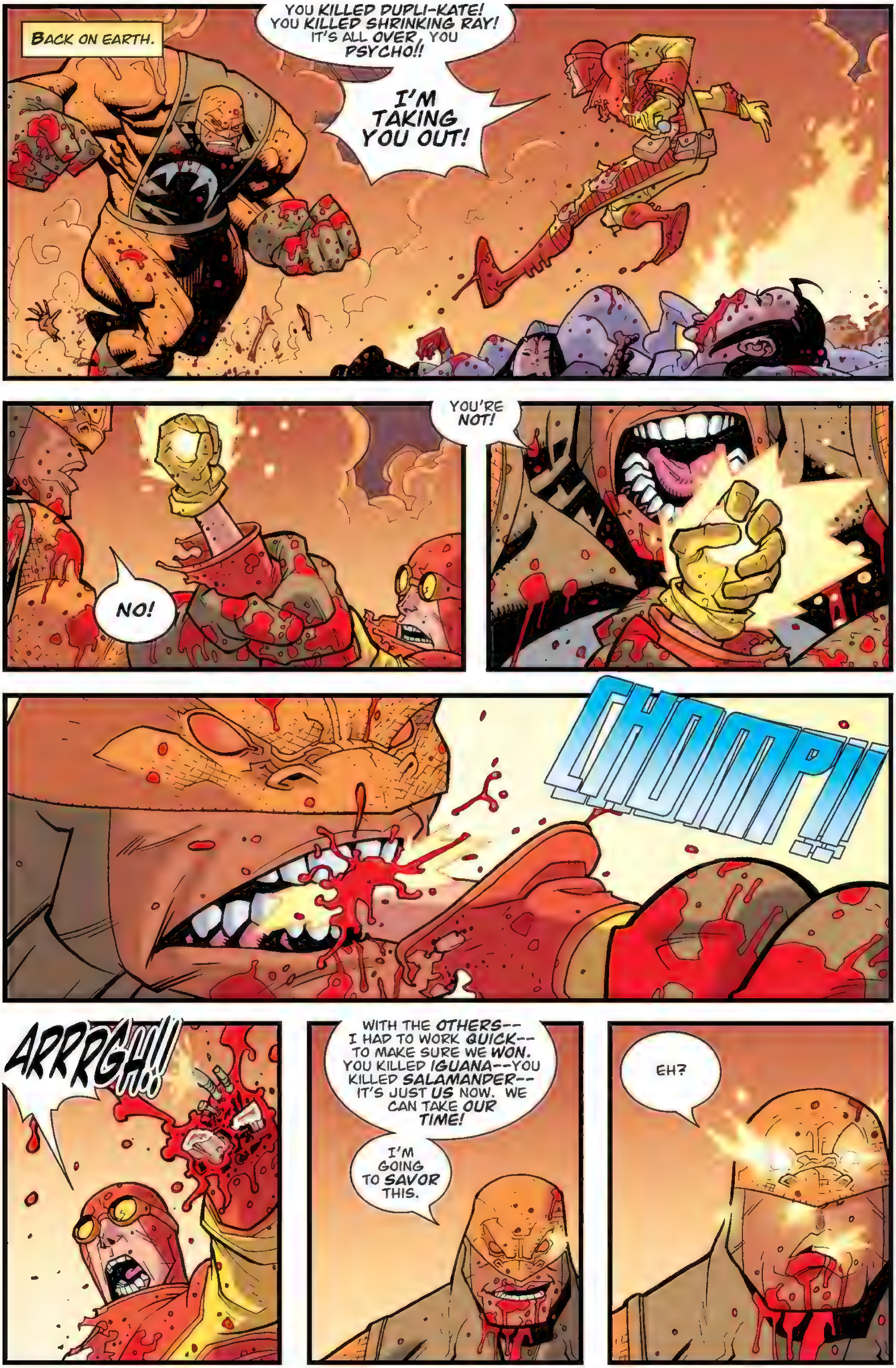

MEANWHILE, ON EARTH. AMBER BENNETT IS OUT SEEING A MOVIE WITH GARY--HER "FRIEND" FROM COLLEGE.
I GOT THE POPCORN AND THE DRINKS--LET'S GET IN THERE BEFORE ALL THE GOOD SEATS ARE TAKEN.
YEAH, NO, NO-- I UNDERSTAND. I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.
OKAY-- BYE.
SORRY ABOUT THAT... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE ON THE PHONE.
ANYTHING IMPORTANT?
WELL, THAT WAS MY BOSS FROM WORK. SOME GUYS UP AND QUIT TONIGHT...
HE ASKED ME TO COME IN.
OH, SO YOU'VE GOT TO GO, THEN?
NO.
IT'S OKAY... I UNDERSTAND. THEY NEED YOU--
WAIT A MINUTE-- DID YOU SAY "NO?"
YEAH. I'M WITH YOU. I MEAN, I KNOW THIS ISN'T SERIOUS--I KNOW YOU'VE GOT A BOYFRIEND--AND THAT'S COOL, I GET IT.
BUT WE'RE OUT TOGETHER-- IT'D BE RUDE OF ME JUST TO RUN OFF LIKE THAT ALL OF A SUDDEN.
BESIDES--IT'S MY NIGHT OFF. THEY CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE.
YEAH.

ELSEWHERE ON EARTH.
YOU ARE OUT-NUMBERED, OUT-GUNNED AND OUT-CLASSED!!
YOU'RE DEAD!!
WRAKOOM!!
DEAD!!
KRUKK!!
WRUKK!
SPLKK!
SSHKK!
BASSH!
GGRKK!
POOM!
KATE!!!
OH, GOD-- KATE!!!

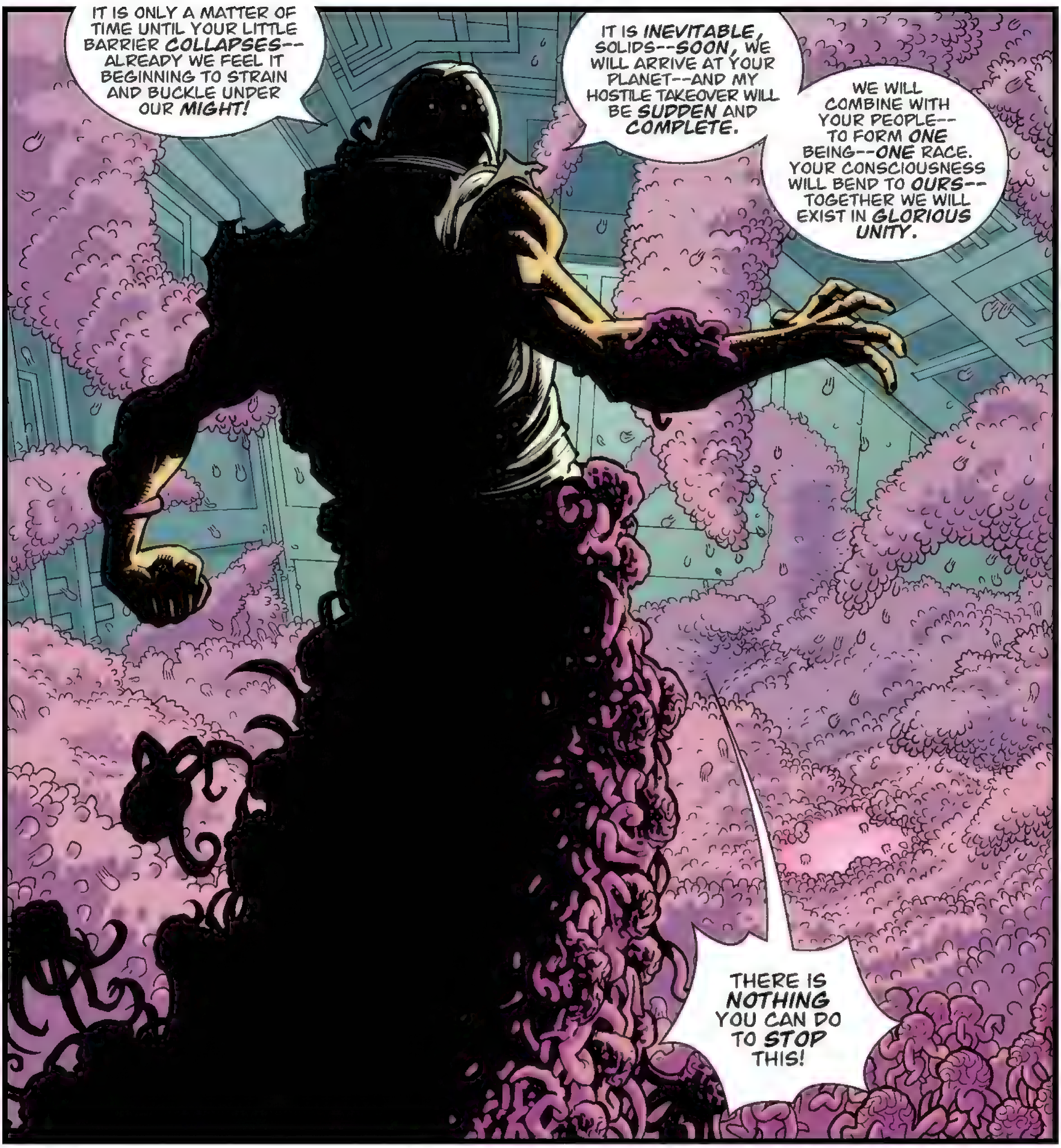

YEAH--THAT WAS ALL OF THEM--GOT THEM ALL!
THAT WAS FUN.
YOU MON--
SVAASH!
DON'T WORRY, RED--YOU'LL BE FOLLOWING HER SOON ENOUGH!
DON'T BE SO SURE!
WROKK!!
YOU KILLED KATE!! YOU KILLED DUPLI-KATE!
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY!
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE?
DESSERT!

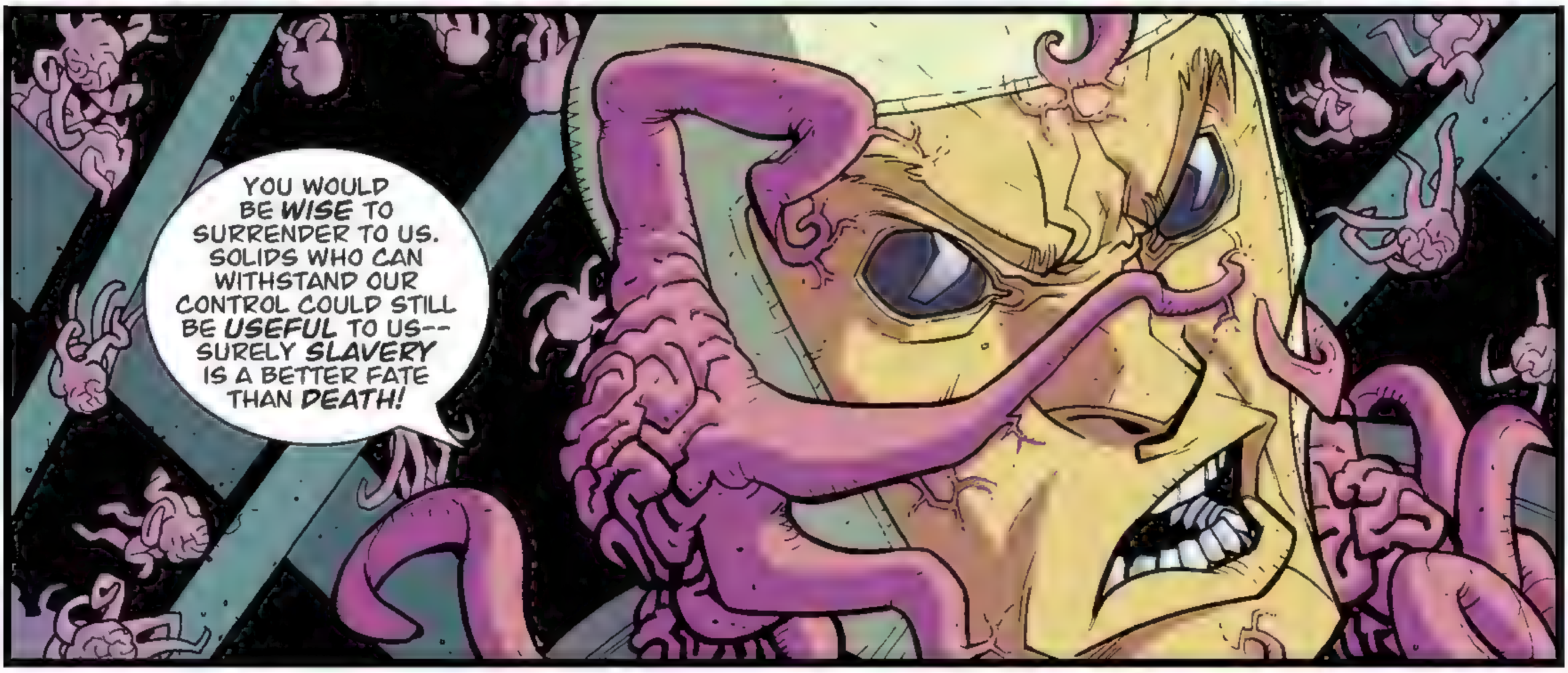

RAY!
NO!
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!!
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!!
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!
BRO-KOOM!!
OOF!!
I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU-- BUT THIS *IS* HAPPENING--
--AND IT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO *YOU!*

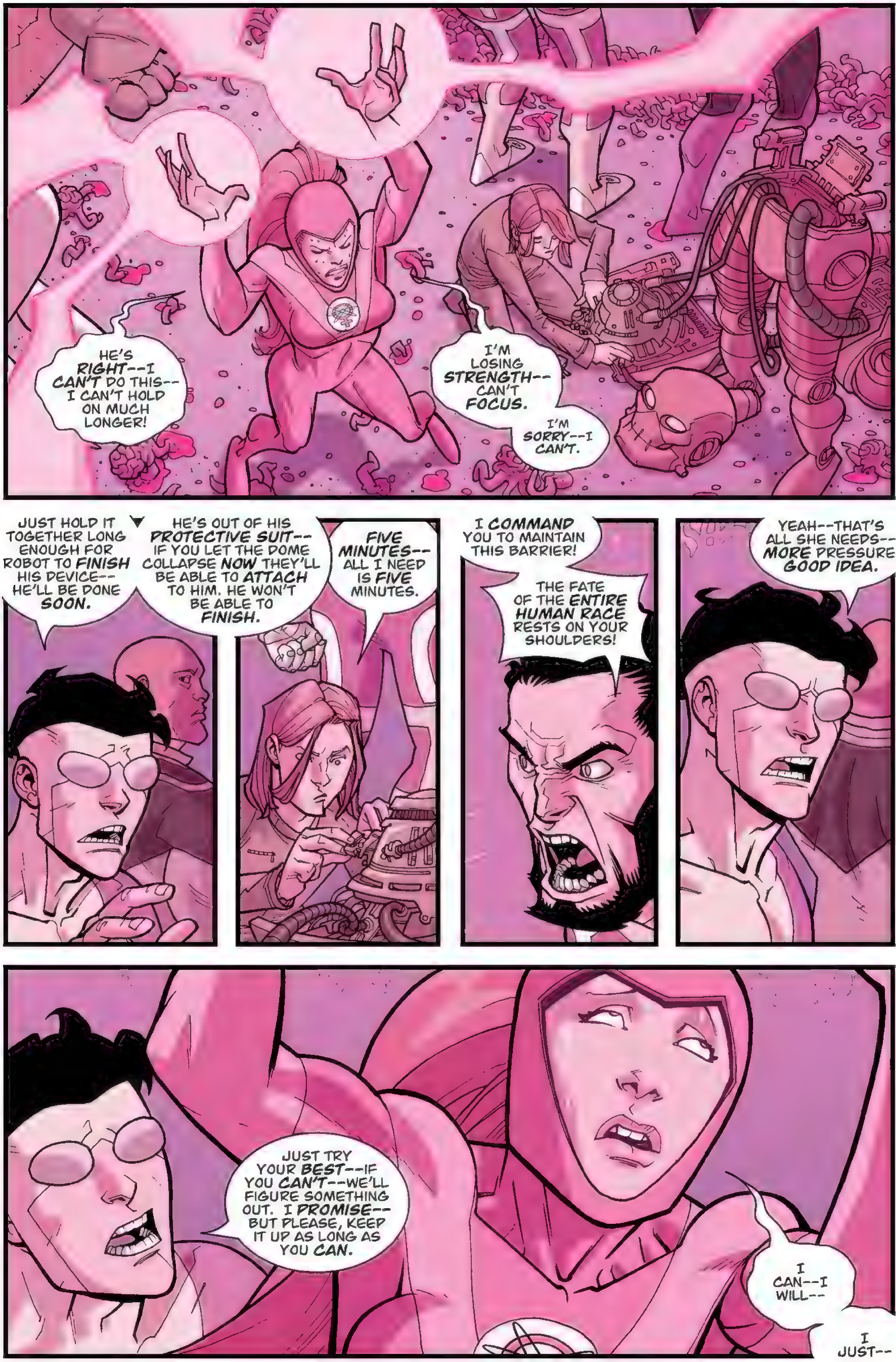

BACK IN DEEP SPACE.
UNGH.
ARE YOU OKAY?
NO--THEY'RE PUSHING AGAINST THE BARRIER--THROWING ALL THEIR WEIGHT AGAINST IT--I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN KEEP IT UP.
THIS ISN'T WORKING--I'VE JUST PUT US IN A WORSE SITUATION.
NO.
ALL I NEED IS TIME.
THAT PULSE DISRUPTED THEIR PSYCHIC LINK--EVEN RENDERED THE SEQUIDS UNCONSCIOUS FOR A FEW MINUTES--IF I DISMANTLE MY ARMOR I CAN USE THE COMPONENTS TO AMPLIFY ITS EFFECT.
IF I COULD GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE HOST--THE ASTRONAUT, I COULD SEPARATE THE SEQUIDS FROM HIM LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE.
PROVIDED THE MARTIANS HAVE ANOTHER SHIP WE COULD USE TO GET HOME...
OH--THEY DO--THEY'VE GOT HUNDREDS OF SMALLER SHIPS IN THIS THING. THEY'RE IN THE HANGAR BAY--LEVEL 84.
THEY USED TO TAKE MY SCHOOL ON TOURS THROUGH THIS SHIP--I'VE MEMORIZED ALMOST THE ENTIRE LAYOUT.
IT WOULD TAKE US A WHILE TO GET THERE FROM HERE--BUT I KNOW THE WAY.
I THINK.

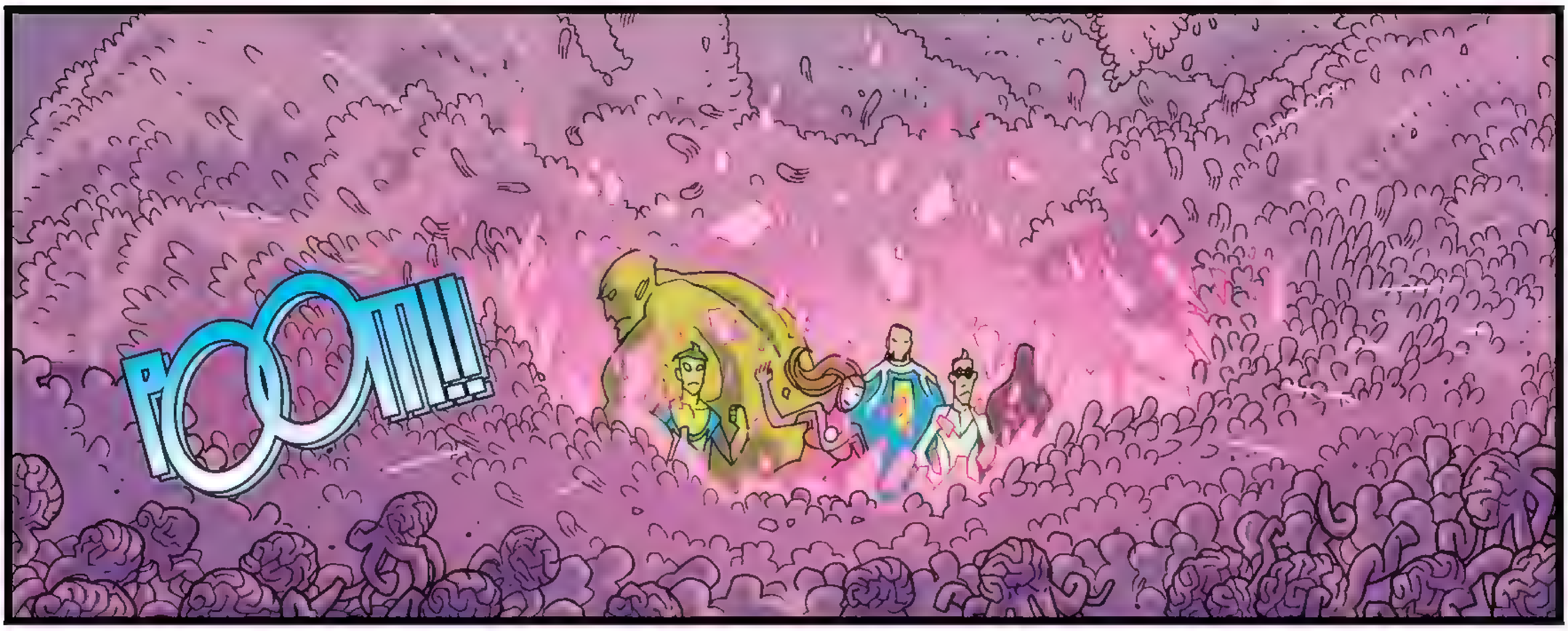

BACK ON EARTH.
YOU KILLED DUPLI-KATE! YOU KILLED SHRINKING RAY! IT'S ALL OVER, YOU PSYCHO!!
I'M TAKING YOU OUT!
NO!
YOU'RE NOT!
CHOMP!!
ARRRGH!!!
WITH THE OTHERS-- I HAD TO WORK QUICK-- TO MAKE SURE WE WON. YOU KILLED IGUANA--YOU KILLED SALAMANDER-- IT'S JUST US NOW. WE CAN TAKE OUR TIME!
I'M GOING TO SAVOR THIS.
EH?

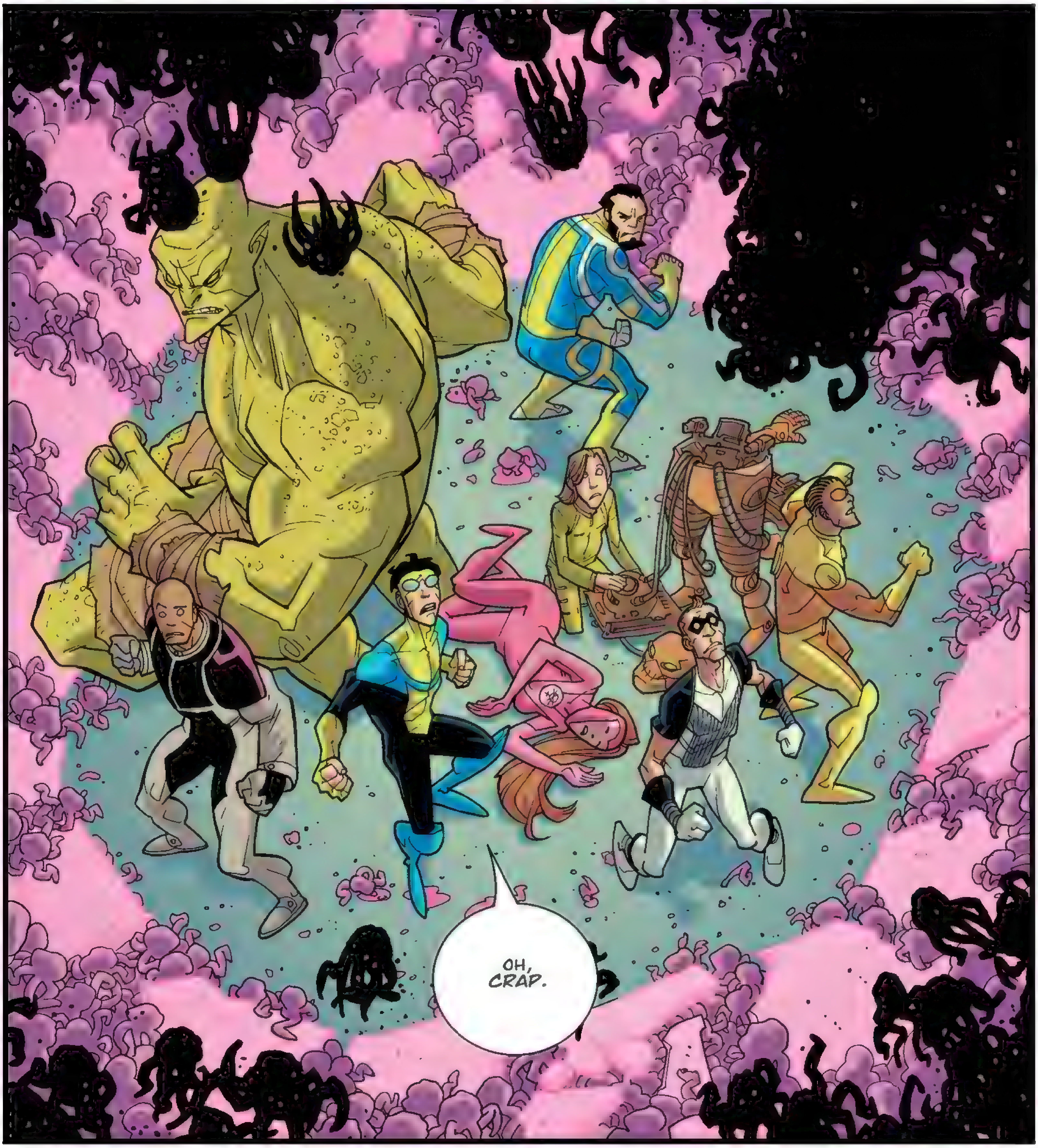
BRAKOOM!!!
WHUDD!
OH, GOD--
⋟SNIFF!⋞
⋟SOB!⋞
I CAN'T DO THIS--I CAN'T--
SOME WOULD CALL IT ***COWARDICE***--I PREFER TO THINK OF IT AS ***INTELLIGENCE!***
DOES ONE REMAIN IN THE THICK OF THE ***BATTLE***--RISK PERSONAL ***INJURY***--EVEN ***DEATH*** TO HELP INSURE A FAVORABLE OUTCOME FOR HIS SIDE?
OR DOES HE ***WAIT***--IN SAFETY, ***HIDDEN*** UNTIL THE BATTLE IS ***OVER*** AND THE VICTOR IS EITHER ON YOUR SIDE OR TOO ***WEARY*** AND ***INJURED*** TO PUT UP MUCH OF A FIGHT?
HOW CAN THAT BE ANYTHING ***BUT*** INTELLIGENCE?
...
I SUGGEST YOU SAY A ***PRAYER.***


IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL YOUR LITTLE BARRIER COLLAPSES--ALREADY WE FEEL IT BEGINNING TO STRAIN AND BUCKLE UNDER OUR MIGHT!
IT IS INEVITABLE, SOLIDS--SOON, WE WILL ARRIVE AT YOUR PLANET--AND MY HOSTILE TAKEOVER WILL BE SUDDEN AND COMPLETE.
WE WILL COMBINE WITH YOUR PEOPLE--TO FORM ONE BEING--ONE RACE. YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS WILL BEND TO OURS--TOGETHER WE WILL EXIST IN GLORIOUS UNITY.
THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP THIS!

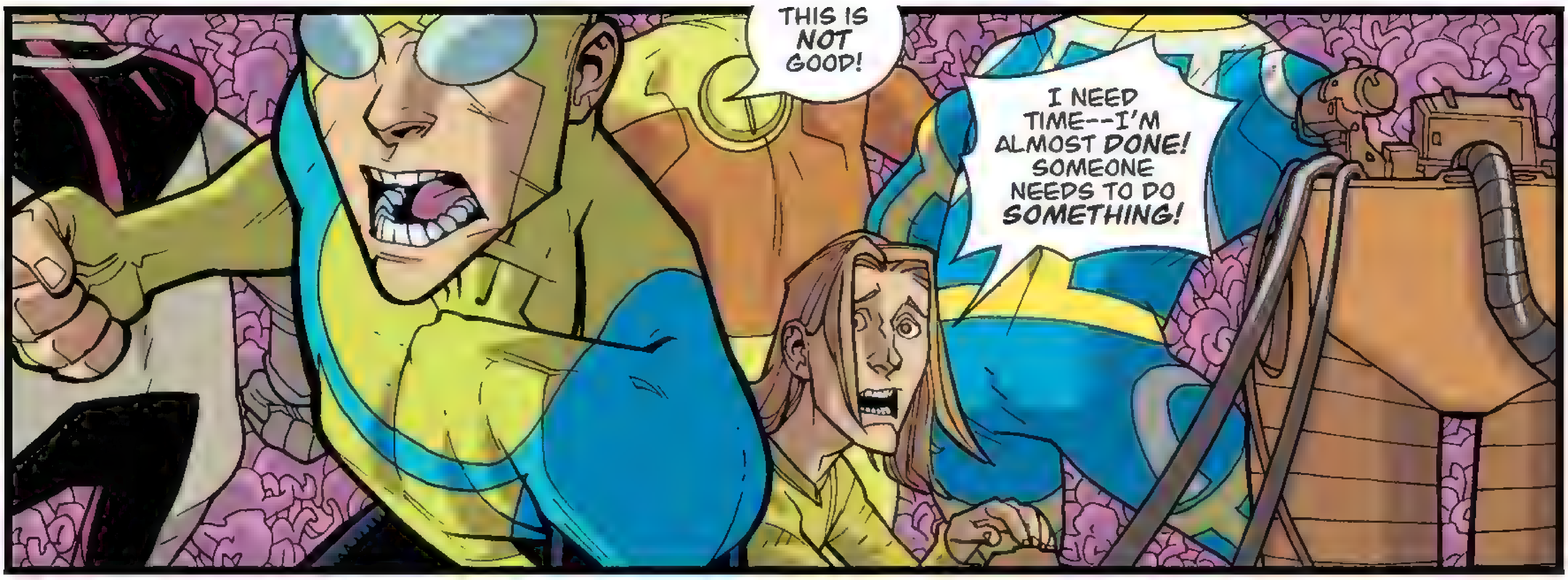

YOU WOULD BE WISE TO SURRENDER TO US. SOLIDS WHO CAN WITHSTAND OUR CONTROL COULD STILL BE USEFUL TO US--SURELY SLAVERY IS A BETTER FATE THAN DEATH!

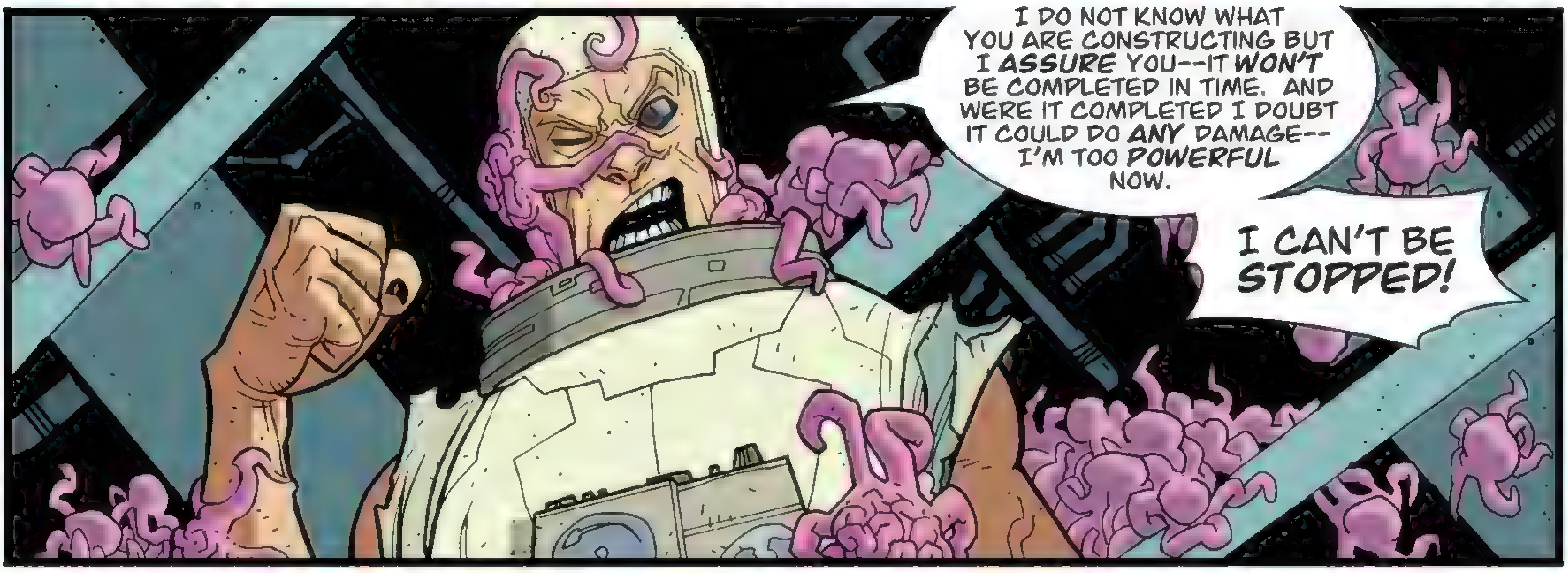

HE'S RIGHT--I CAN'T DO THIS--I CAN'T HOLD ON MUCH LONGER!
I'M LOSING STRENGTH--CAN'T FOCUS.
I'M SORRY--I CAN'T.
JUST HOLD IT TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH FOR ROBOT TO FINISH HIS DEVICE--HE'LL BE DONE SOON.
HE'S OUT OF HIS PROTECTIVE SUIT--IF YOU LET THE DOME COLLAPSE NOW THEY'LL BE ABLE TO ATTACH TO HIM. HE WON'T BE ABLE TO FINISH.
FIVE MINUTES--ALL I NEED IS FIVE MINUTES.
I COMMAND YOU TO MAINTAIN THIS BARRIER!
THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS!
YEAH--THAT'S ALL SHE NEEDS--MORE PRESSURE. GOOD IDEA.
JUST TRY YOUR BEST--IF YOU CAN'T--WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. I PROMISE--BUT PLEASE, KEEP IT UP AS LONG AS YOU CAN.
I CAN--I WILL--
I JUST--

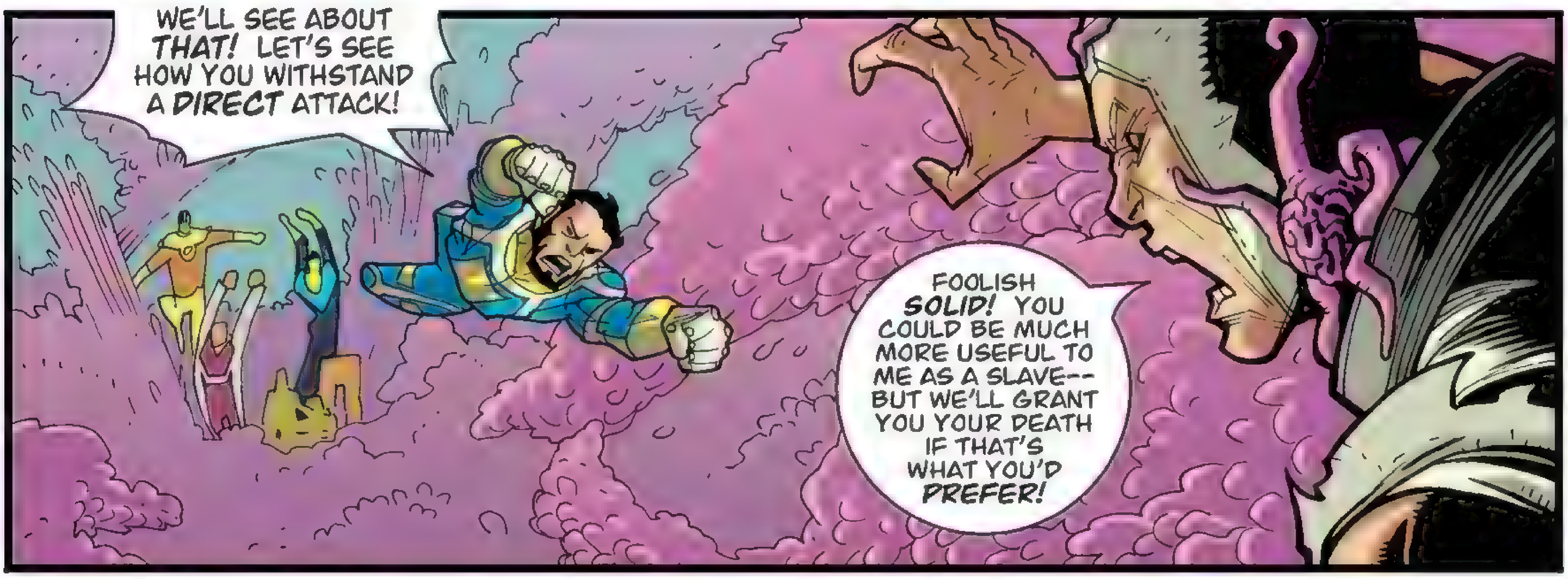

POOM!!

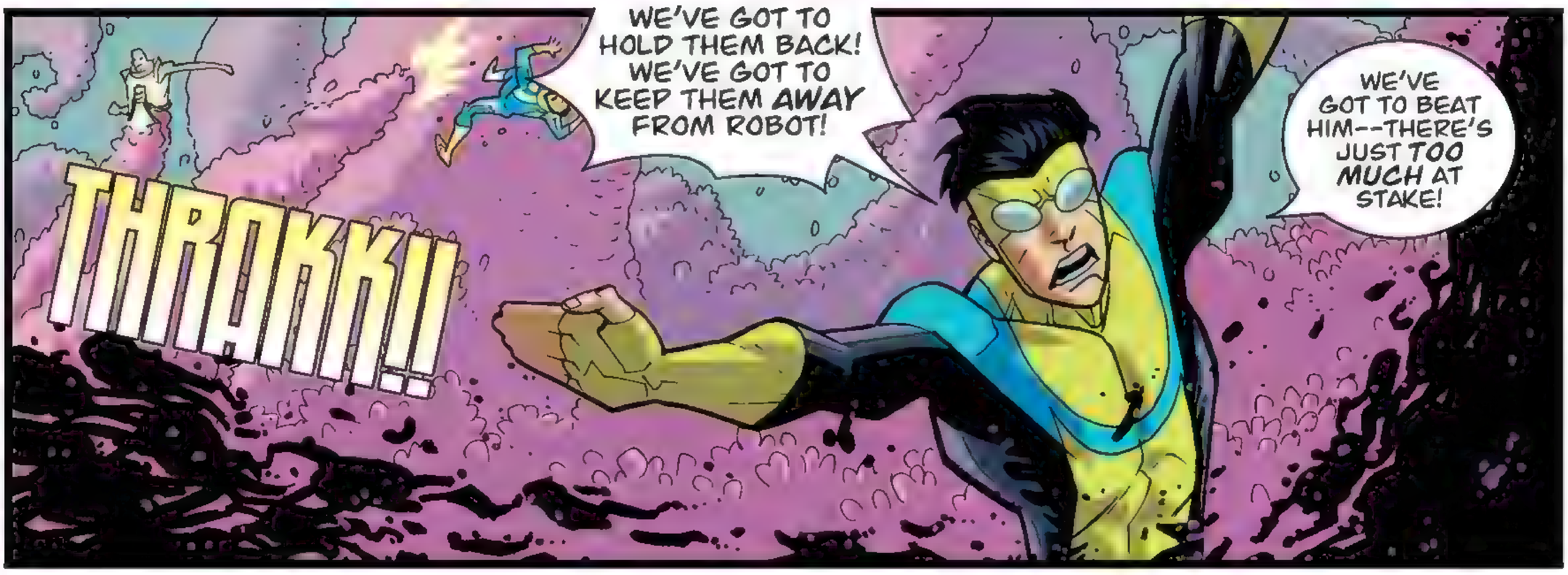

OH, CRAP.

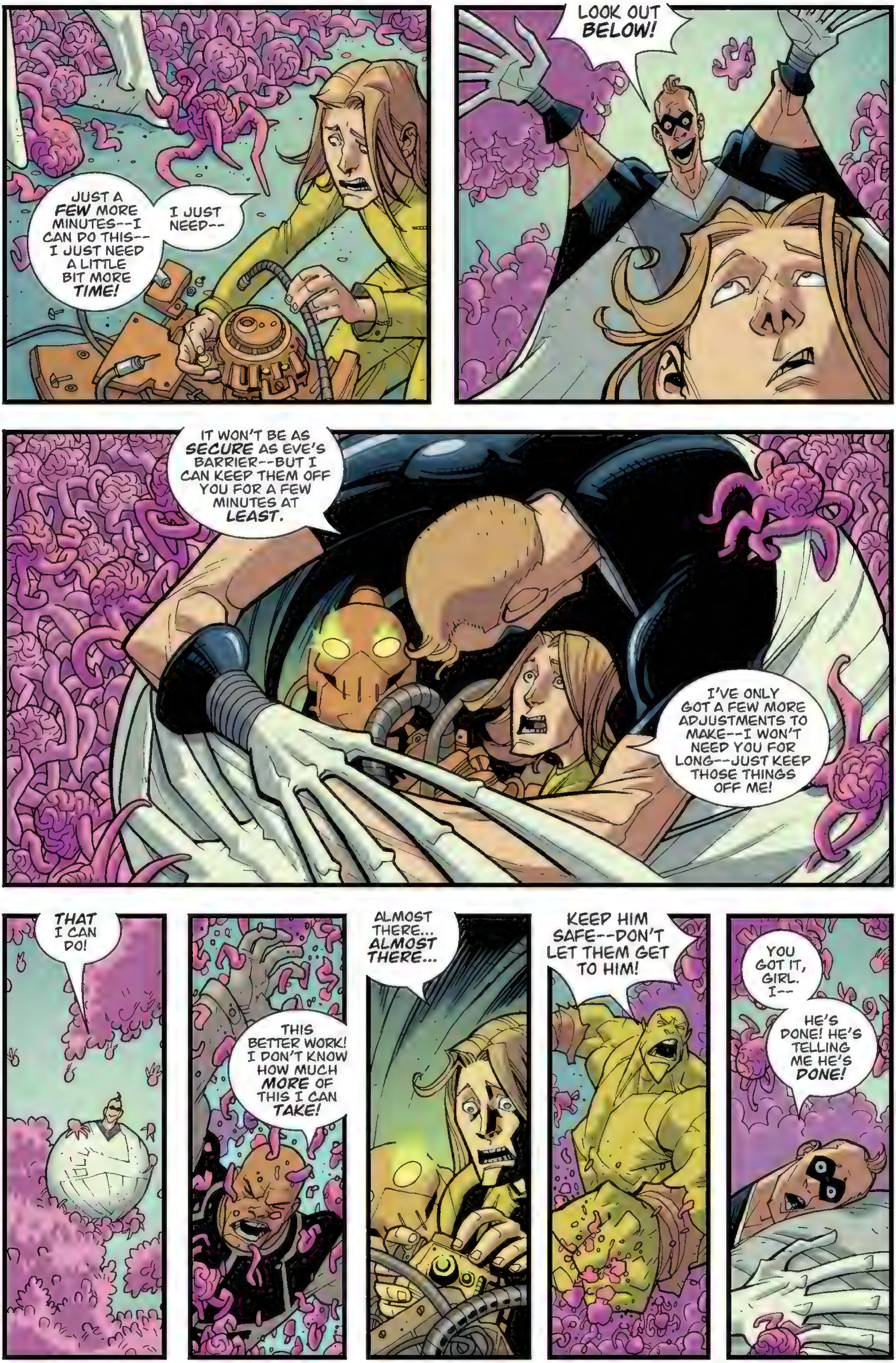
ISSUE FORTY-ONE

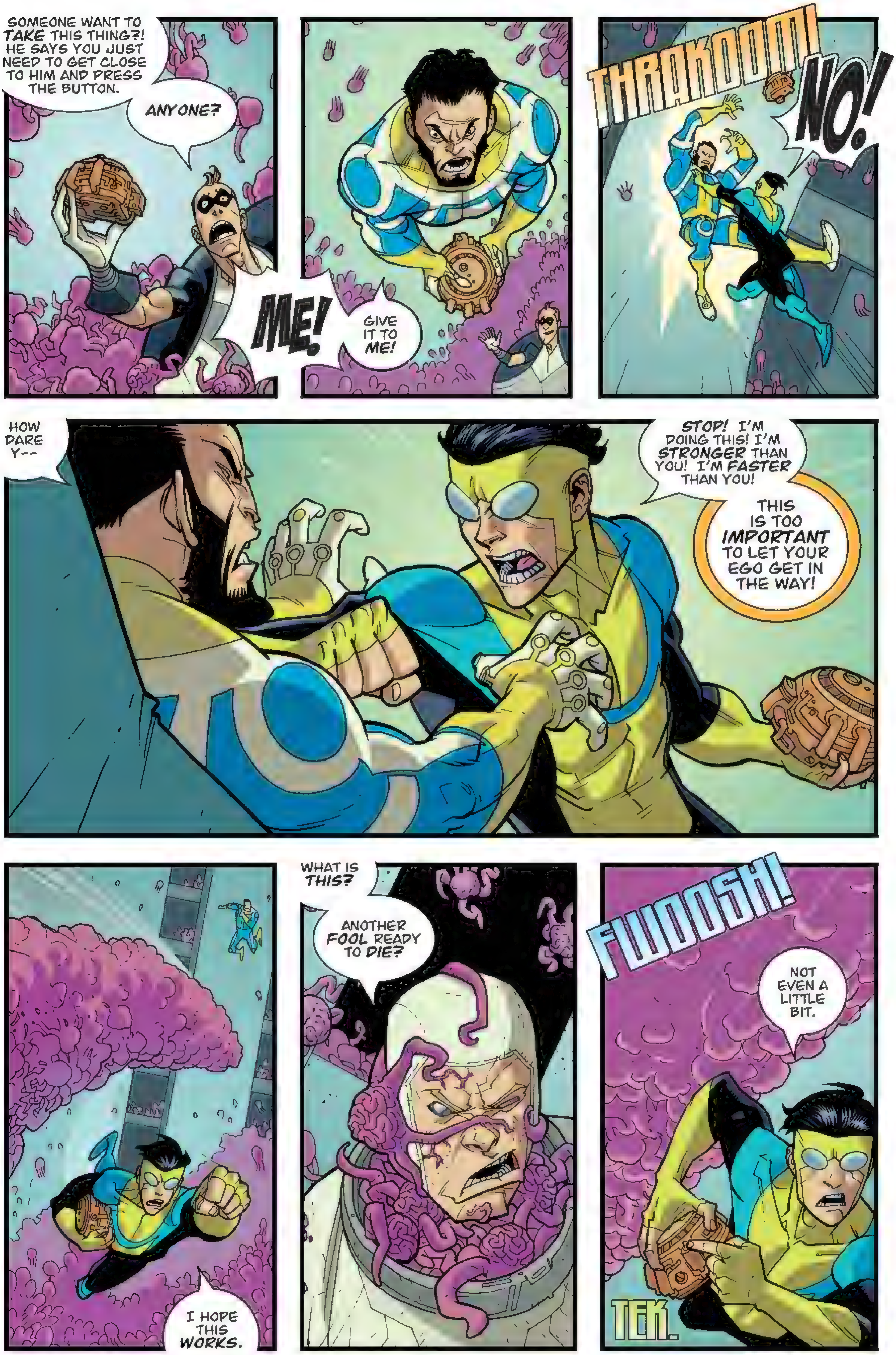

THIS IS *NOT* GOOD!
I NEED TIME--I'M ALMOST *DONE!* SOMEONE NEEDS TO DO *SOMETHING!*


I DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU ARE CONSTRUCTING BUT I *ASSURE* YOU--IT *WON'T* BE COMPLETED IN TIME. AND WERE IT COMPLETED I DOUBT IT COULD DO *ANY* DAMAGE--I'M TOO *POWERFUL* NOW.
I CAN'T BE *STOPPED!*

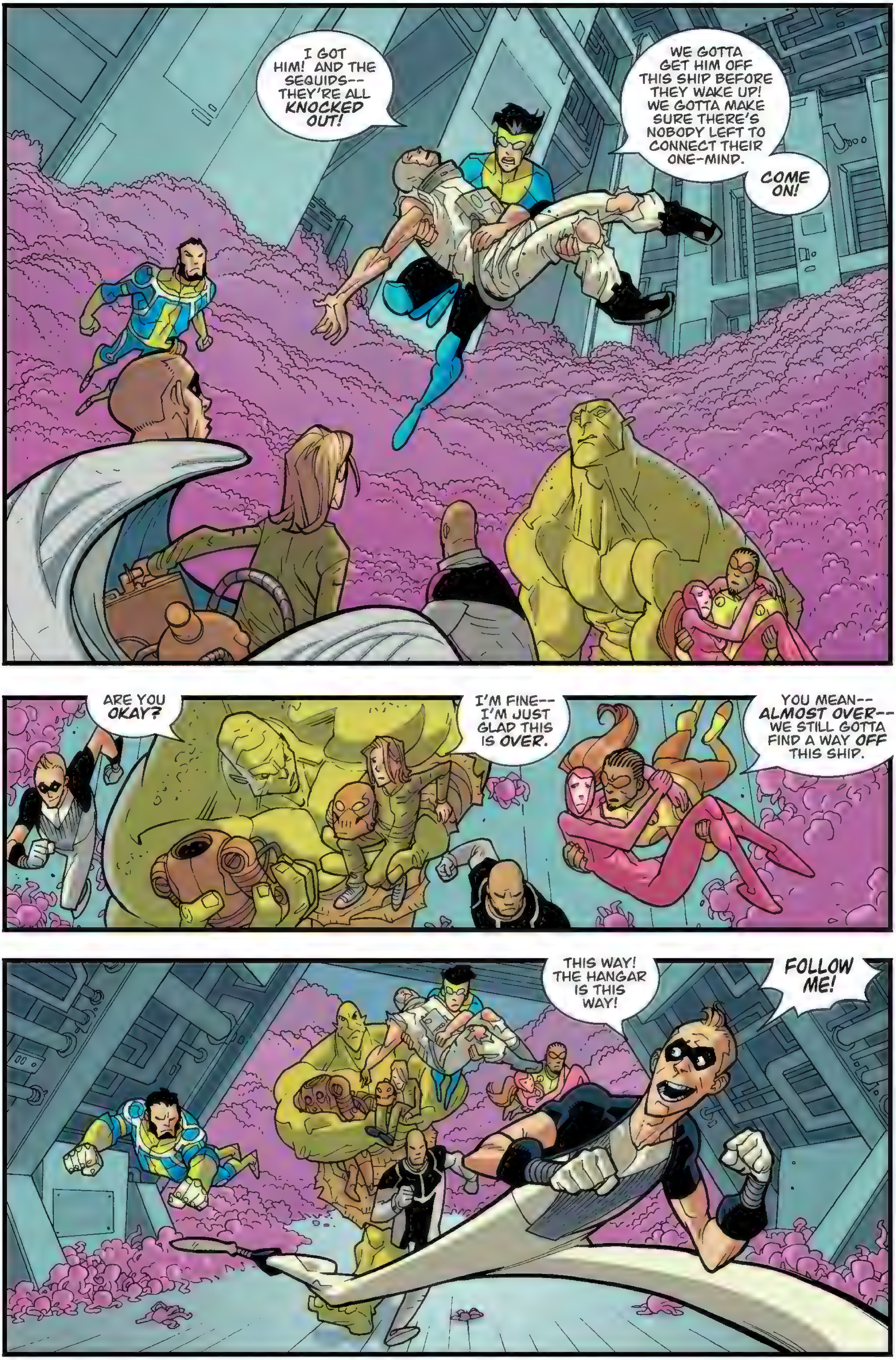

WE'LL SEE ABOUT *THAT!* LET'S SEE HOW YOU WITHSTAND A *DIRECT* ATTACK!
FOOLISH *SOLID!* YOU COULD BE MUCH MORE USEFUL TO ME AS A SLAVE--BUT WE'LL GRANT YOU YOUR DEATH IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'D *PREFER!*

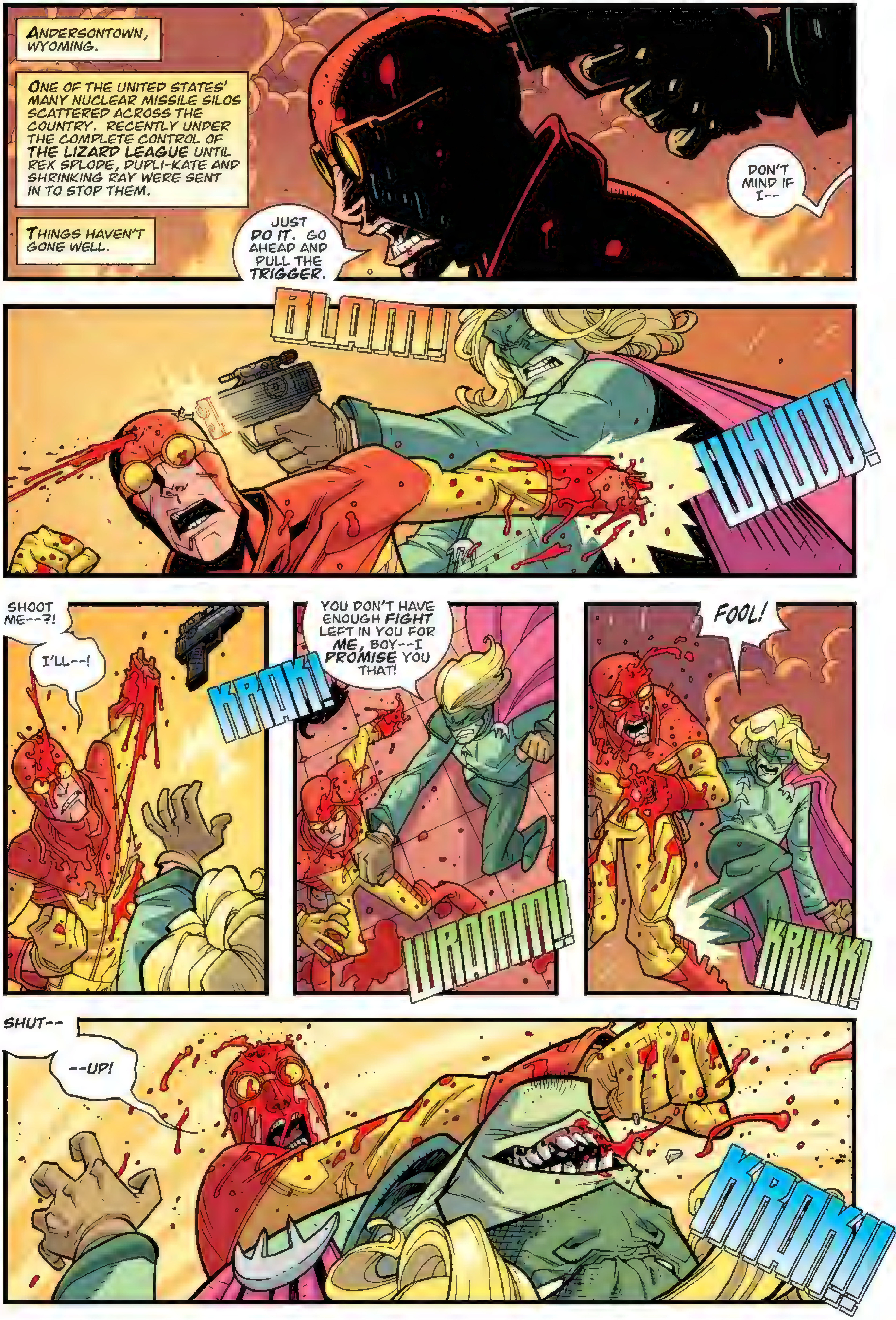

WE'VE GOT TO HOLD THEM BACK! WE'VE GOT TO KEEP THEM *AWAY* FROM ROBOT!
WE'VE GOT TO BEAT HIM--THERE'S JUST *TOO MUCH* AT STAKE!
THRAKK!!

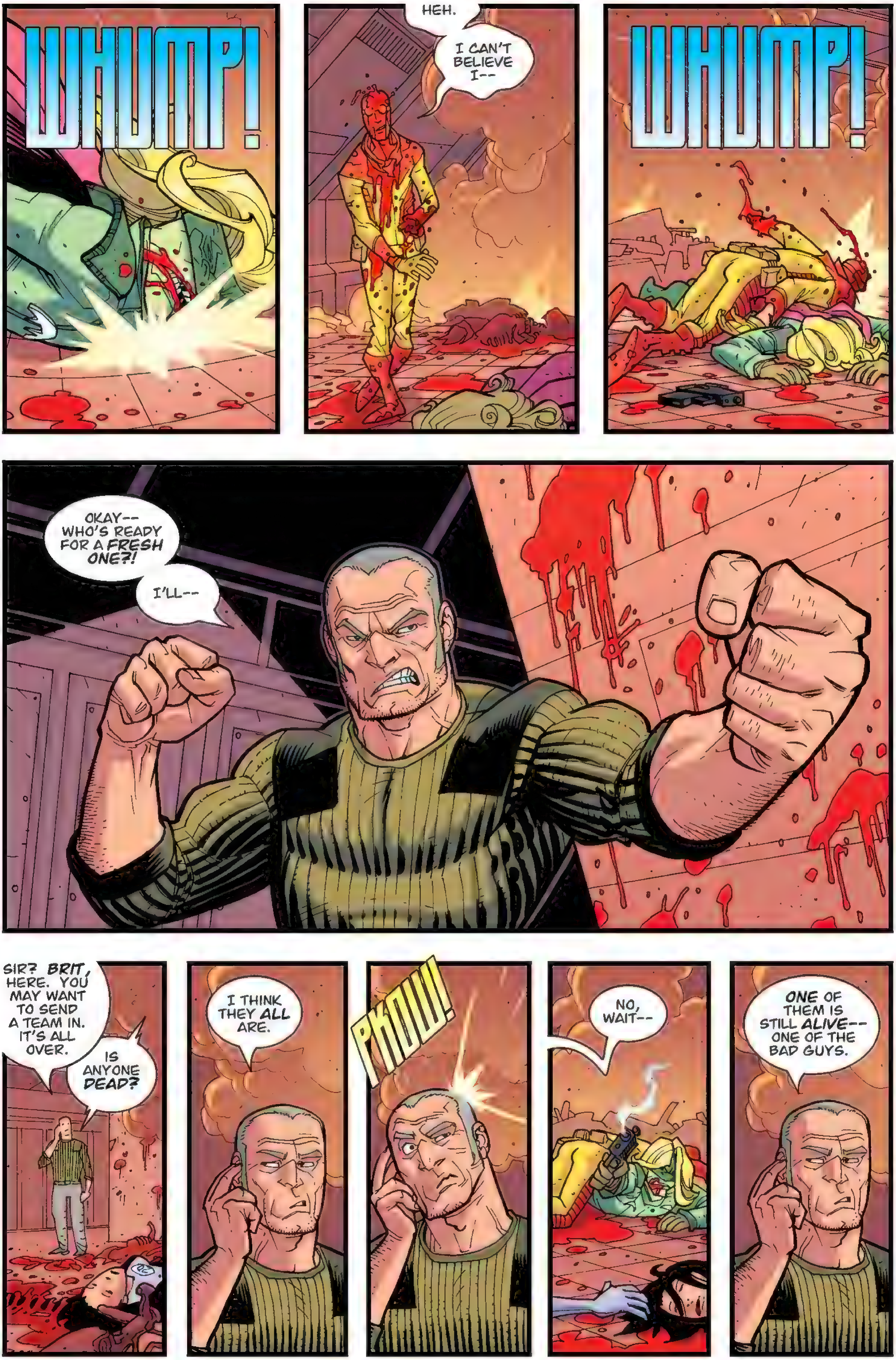

JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES--I CAN DO THIS--I JUST NEED A LITTLE BIT MORE TIME!
I JUST NEED--
LOOK OUT BELOW!
IT WON'T BE AS SECURE AS EVE'S BARRIER--BUT I CAN KEEP THEM OFF YOU FOR A FEW MINUTES AT LEAST.
I'VE ONLY GOT A FEW MORE ADJUSTMENTS TO MAKE--I WON'T NEED YOU FOR LONG--JUST KEEP THOSE THINGS OFF ME!
THAT I CAN DO!
THIS BETTER WORK! I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS I CAN TAKE!
ALMOST THERE... ALMOST THERE...
KEEP HIM SAFE--DON'T LET THEM GET TO HIM!
YOU GOT IT, GIRL. I--
HE'S DONE! HE'S TELLING ME HE'S DONE!

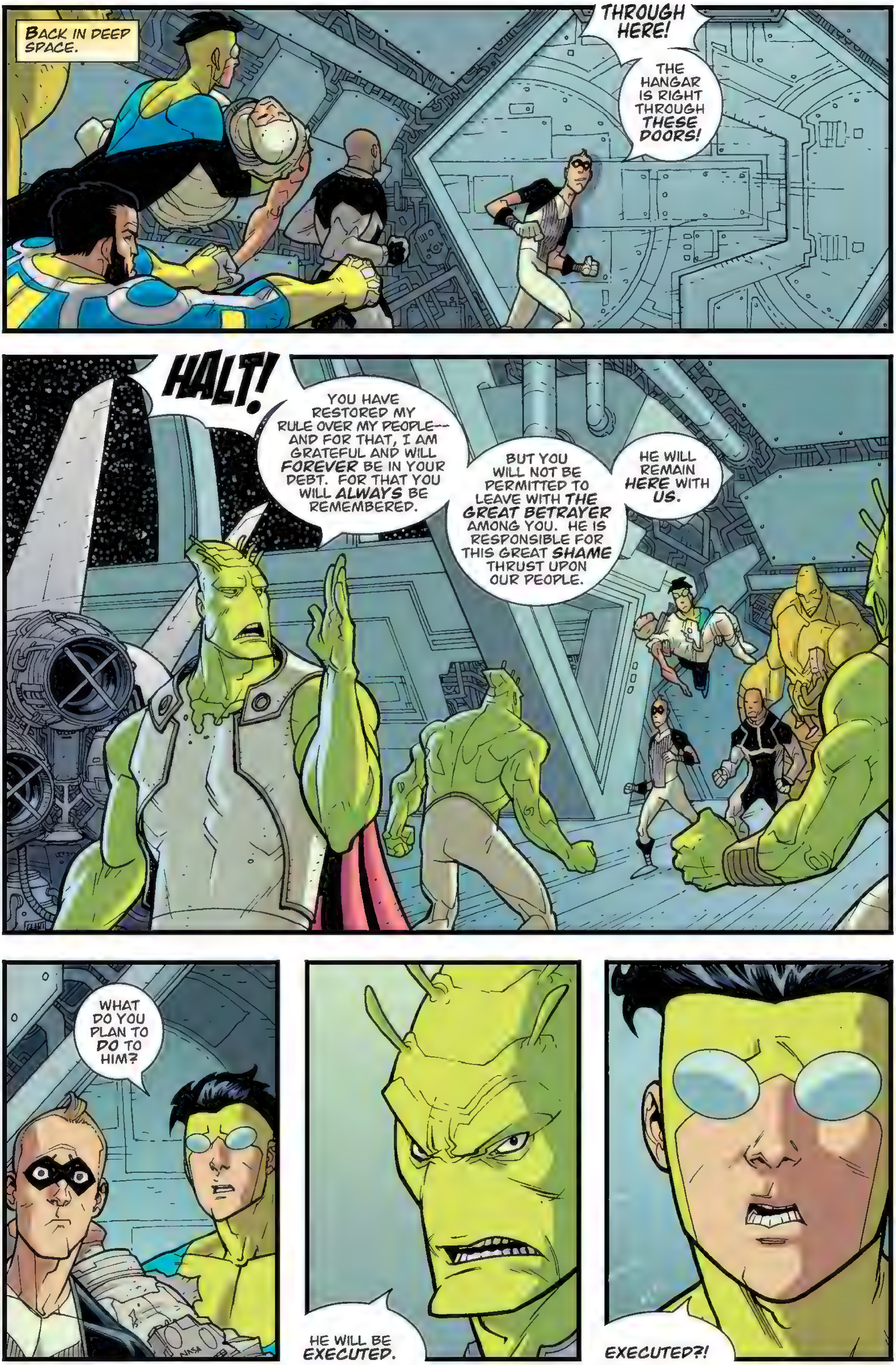

SOMEONE WANT TO *TAKE* THIS THING?! HE SAYS YOU JUST NEED TO GET CLOSE TO HIM AND PRESS THE BUTTON.
ANYONE?
ME!
GIVE IT TO *ME!*
THRAKOOM!
NO!
HOW DARE Y--
STOP! I'M DOING THIS! I'M *STRONGER* THAN YOU! I'M *FASTER* THAN YOU!
THIS IS TOO *IMPORTANT* TO LET YOUR EGO GET IN THE WAY!
I HOPE THIS *WORKS.*
WHAT IS *THIS?*
ANOTHER *FOOL* READY TO *DIE?*
FWOOSH!
NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT.
TEK.

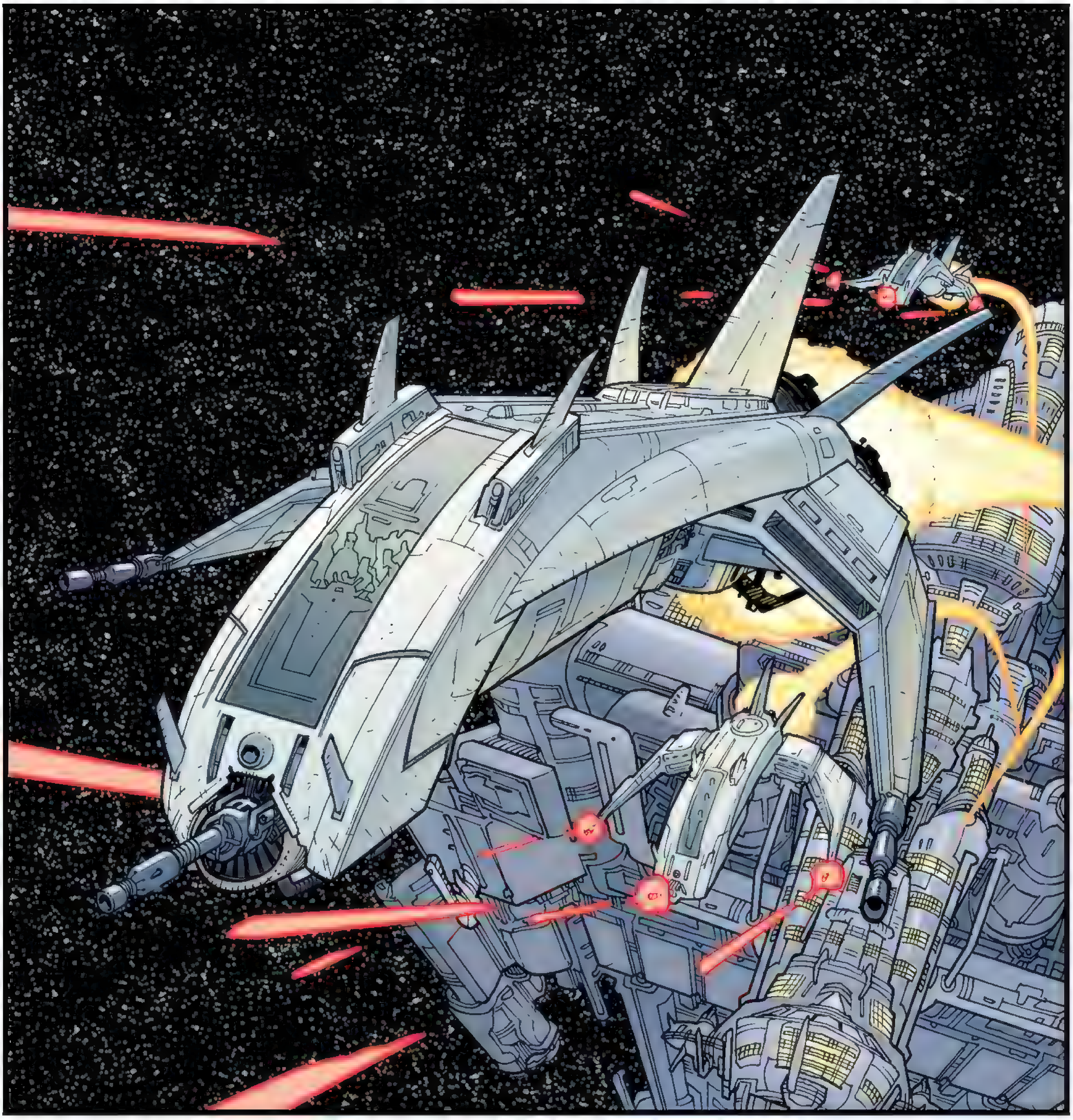
VWZZZZZZKKKKK...

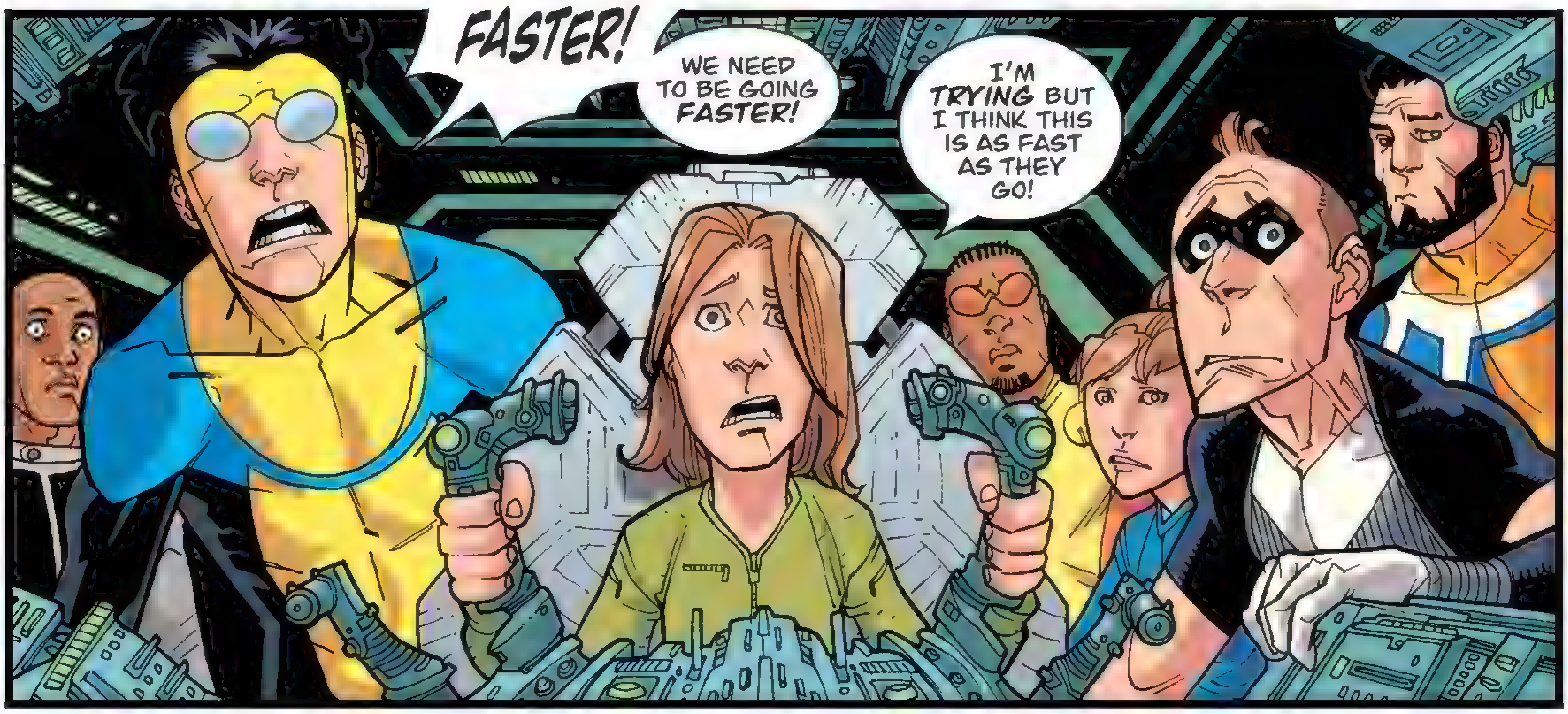

I GOT HIM! AND THE SEQUIDS-- THEY'RE ALL *KNOCKED OUT!*
WE GOTTA GET HIM OFF THIS SHIP BEFORE THEY WAKE UP! WE GOTTA MAKE SURE THERE'S NOBODY LEFT TO CONNECT THEIR ONE-MIND.
COME ON!
ARE YOU *OKAY?*
I'M FINE-- I'M JUST GLAD THIS IS *OVER.*
YOU MEAN-- *ALMOST OVER*-- WE STILL GOTTA FIND A WAY *OFF* THIS SHIP.
THIS WAY! THE HANGAR IS THIS WAY!
FOLLOW ME!

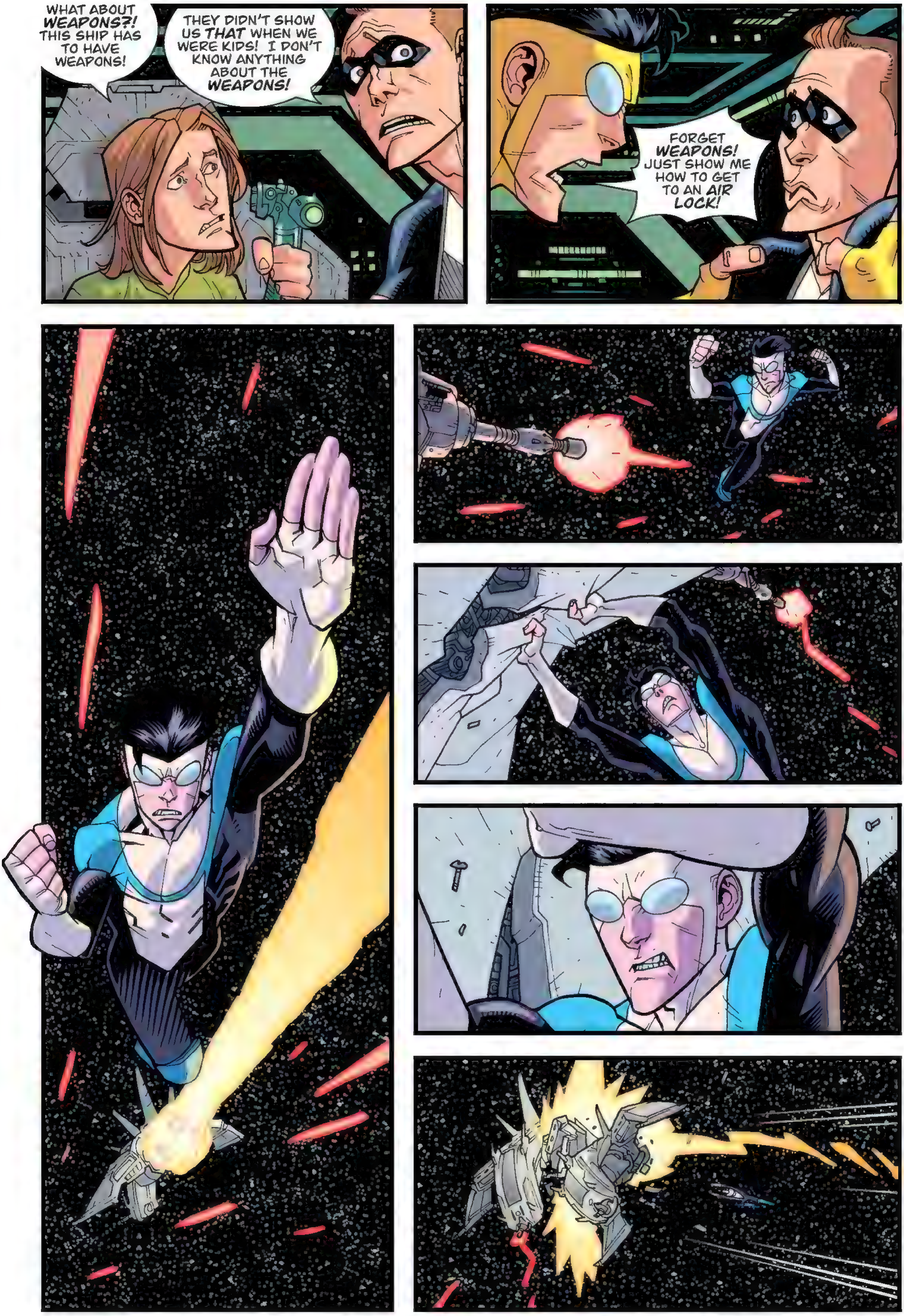

ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING.
ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY. RECENTLY UNDER THE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE UNTIL REX SPLODE, DUPLI-KATE AND SHRINKING RAY WERE SENT IN TO STOP THEM.
THINGS HAVEN'T GONE WELL.
JUST DO IT. GO AHEAD AND PULL THE TRIGGER.
DON'T MIND IF I--
BLAM!
WHOOO!
SHOOT ME--?!
I'LL--!
KRAK!
YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FIGHT LEFT IN YOU FOR ME, BOY--I PROMISE YOU THAT!
WRAMM!!
FOOL!
KRIKK!
SHUT--
--UP!
KRAK!!

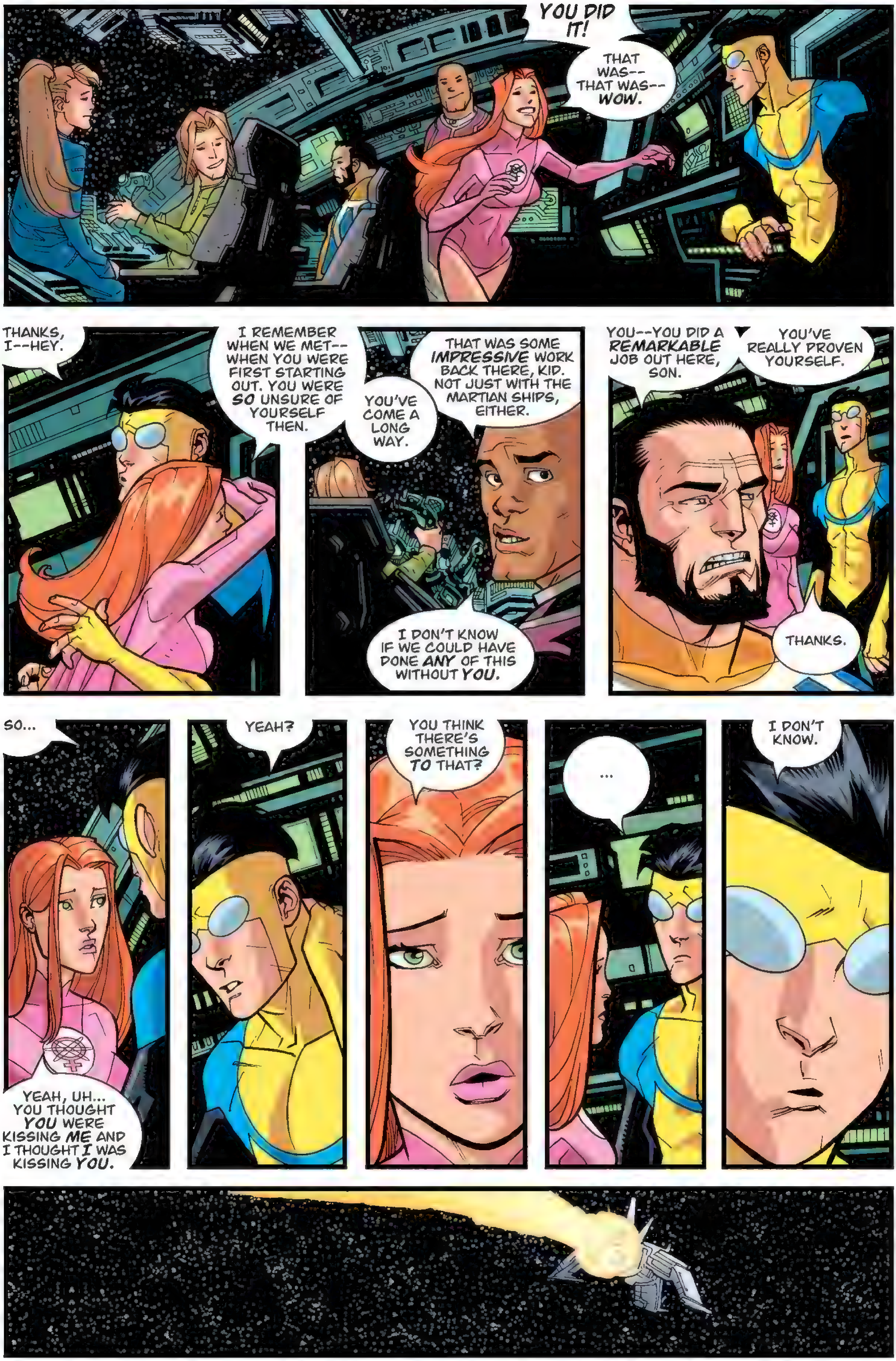

WHUMP!
HEH.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I--
WHUMP!
OKAY-- WHO'S READY FOR A FRESH ONE?!
I'LL--
SIR? BRIT, HERE. YOU MAY WANT TO SEND A TEAM IN. IT'S ALL OVER.
IS ANYONE DEAD?
I THINK THEY ALL ARE.
PKOW!
NO, WAIT--
ONE OF THEM IS STILL ALIVE-- ONE OF THE BAD GUYS.

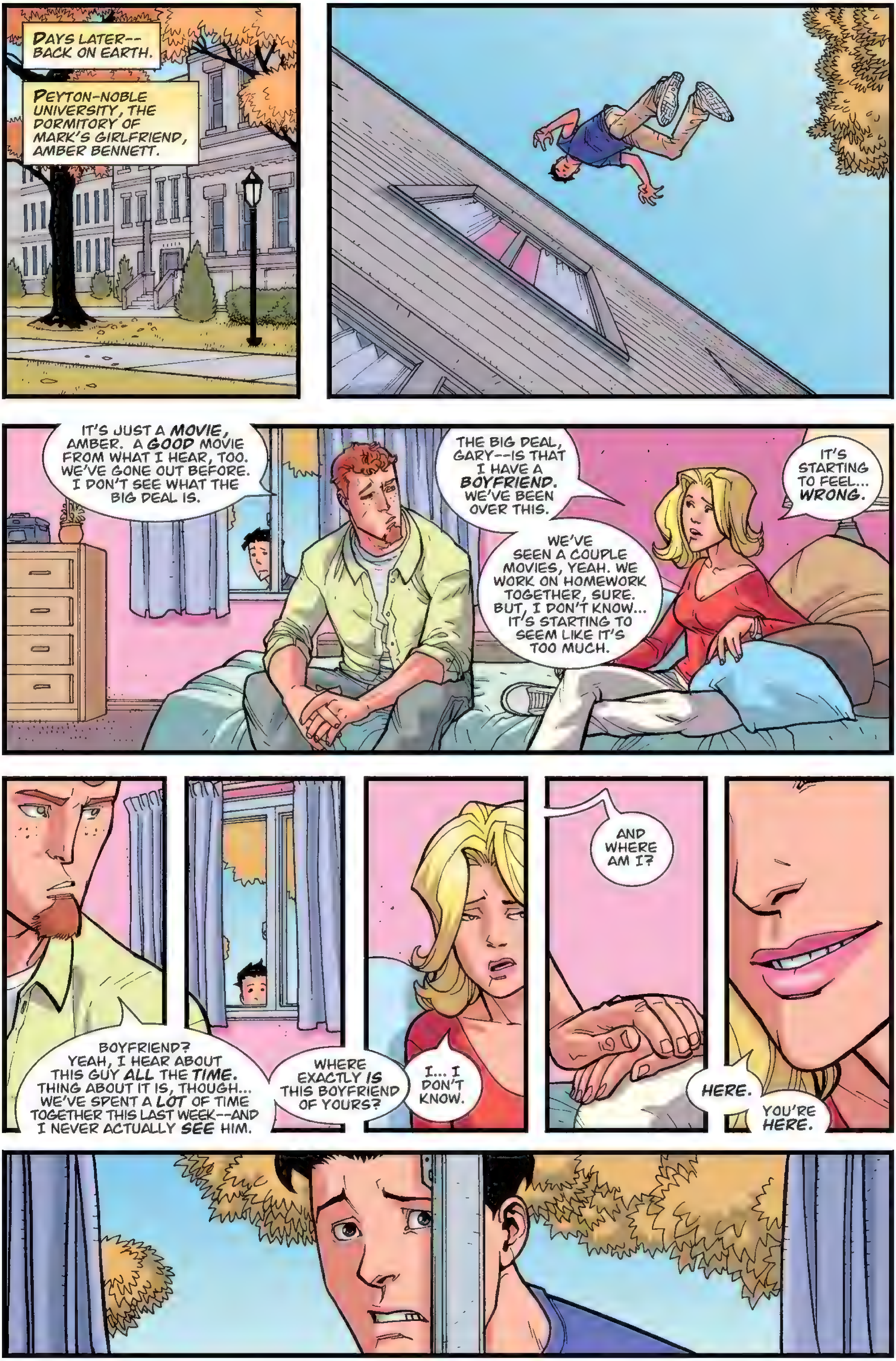

BACK IN DEEP SPACE.
THROUGH HERE!
THE HANGAR IS RIGHT THROUGH THESE DOORS!
HALT!
YOU HAVE RESTORED MY RULE OVER MY PEOPLE-- AND FOR THAT, I AM GRATEFUL AND WILL FOREVER BE IN YOUR DEBT. FOR THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED.
BUT YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE WITH THE GREAT BETRAYER AMONG YOU. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS GREAT SHAME THRUST UPON OUR PEOPLE.
HE WILL REMAIN HERE WITH US.
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO TO HIM?
HE WILL BE EXECUTED.
EXECUTED?!

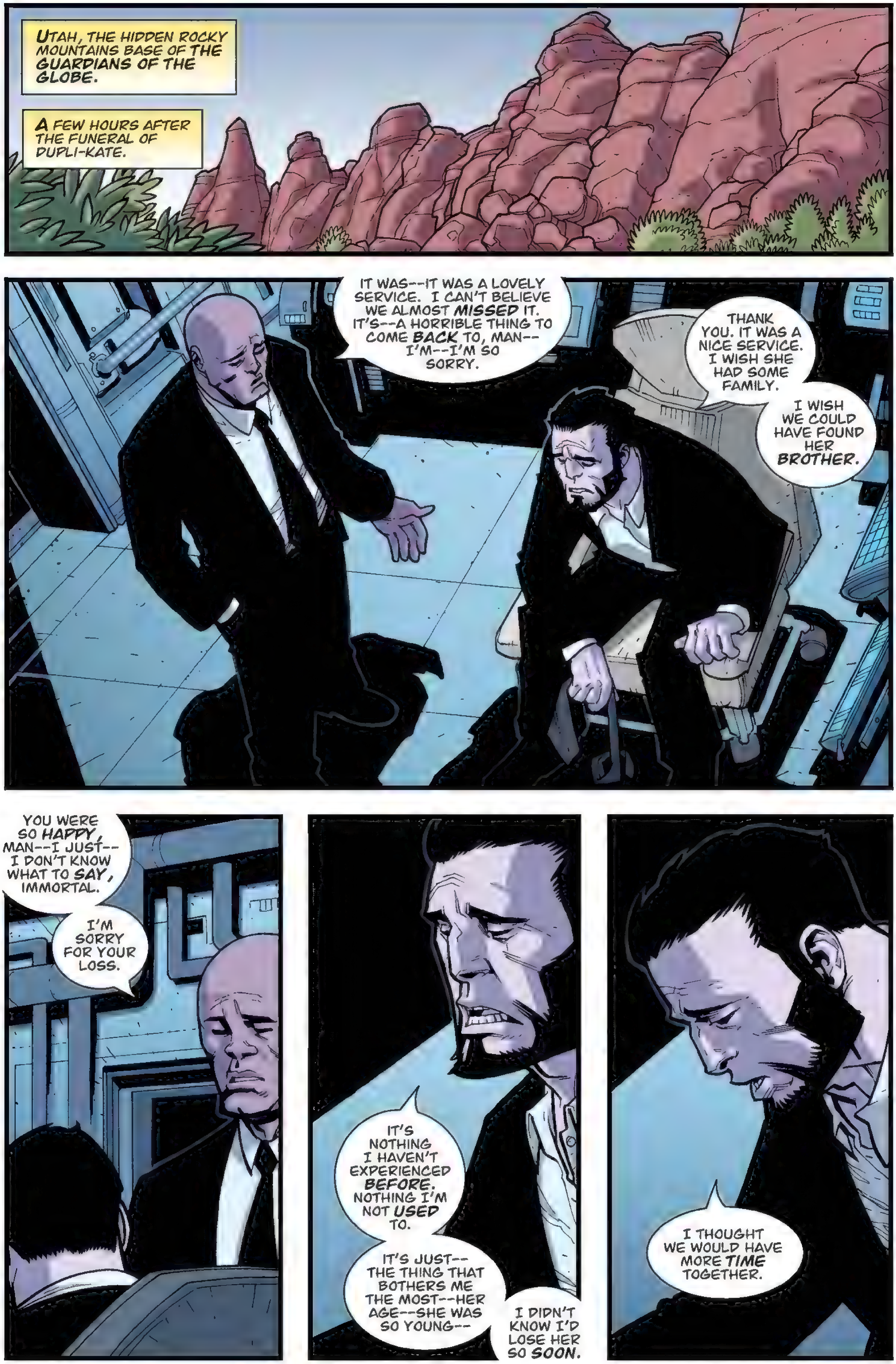


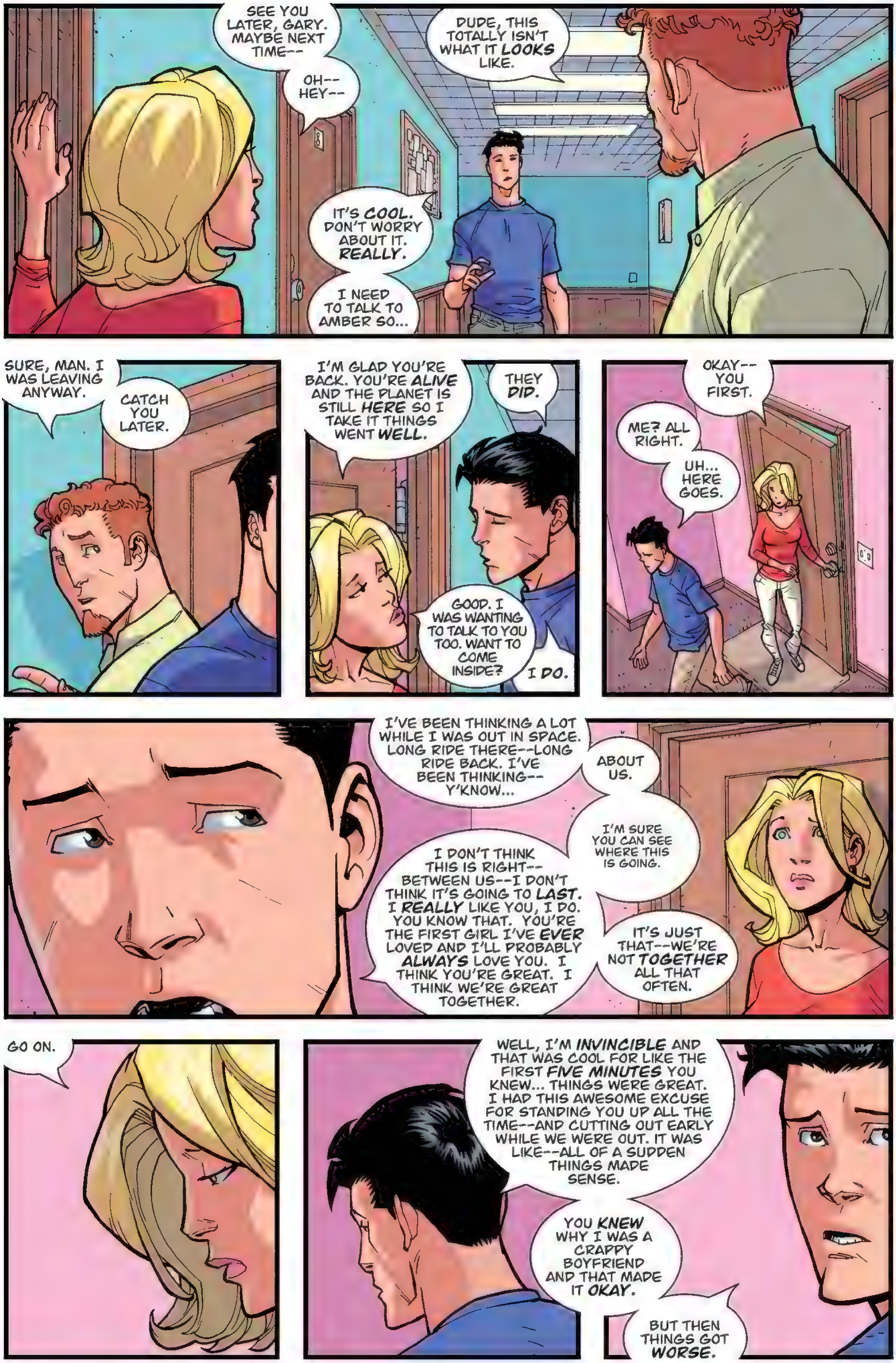

FASTER!
WE NEED TO BE GOING FASTER!
I'M TRYING BUT I THINK THIS IS AS FAST AS THEY GO!

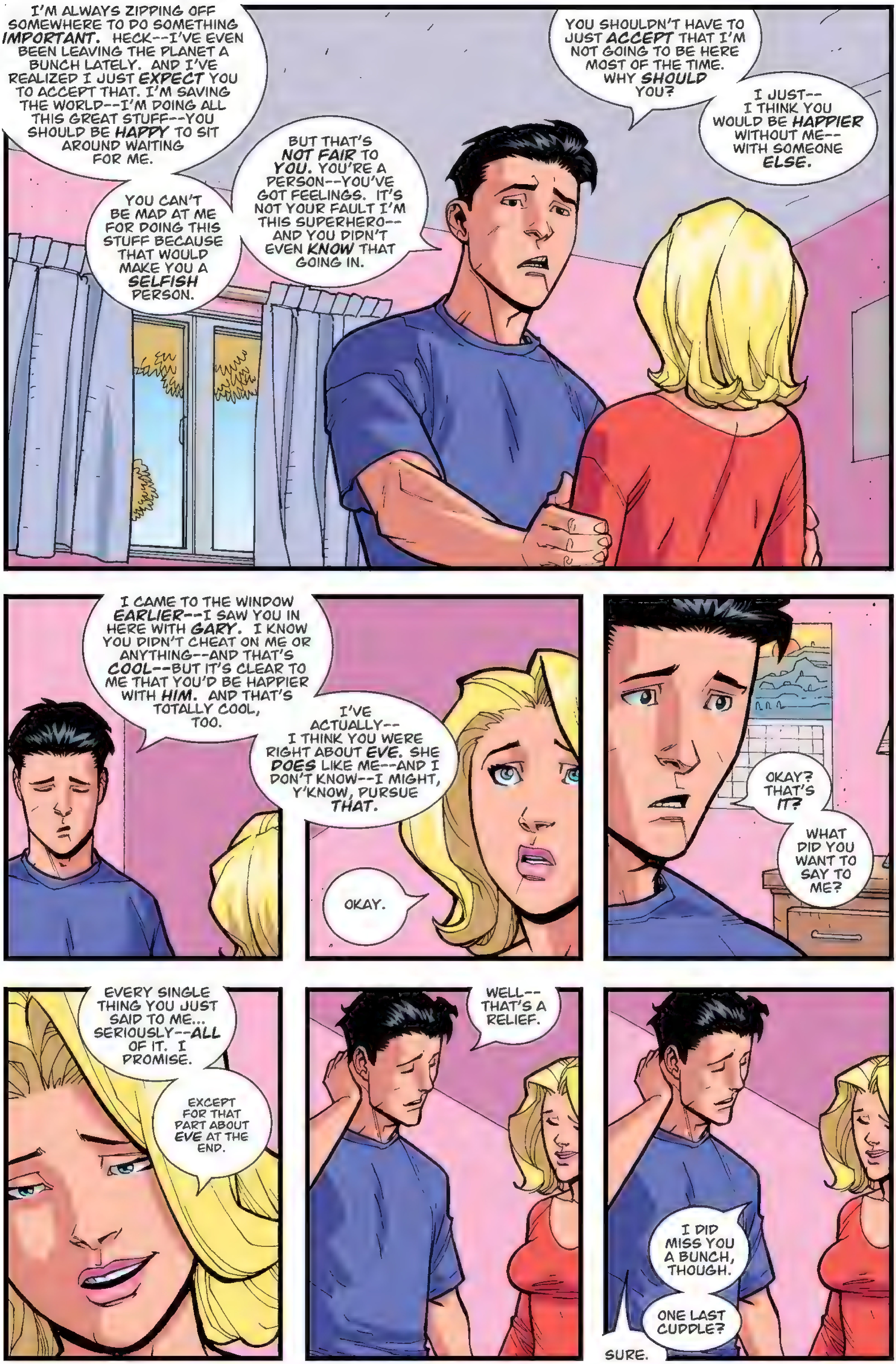

WHAT ABOUT **WEAPONS?!** THIS SHIP HAS TO HAVE WEAPONS!
THEY DIDN'T SHOW US **THAT** WHEN WE WERE KIDS! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE **WEAPONS!**
FORGET **WEAPONS!** JUST SHOW ME HOW TO GET TO AN **AIR LOCK!**

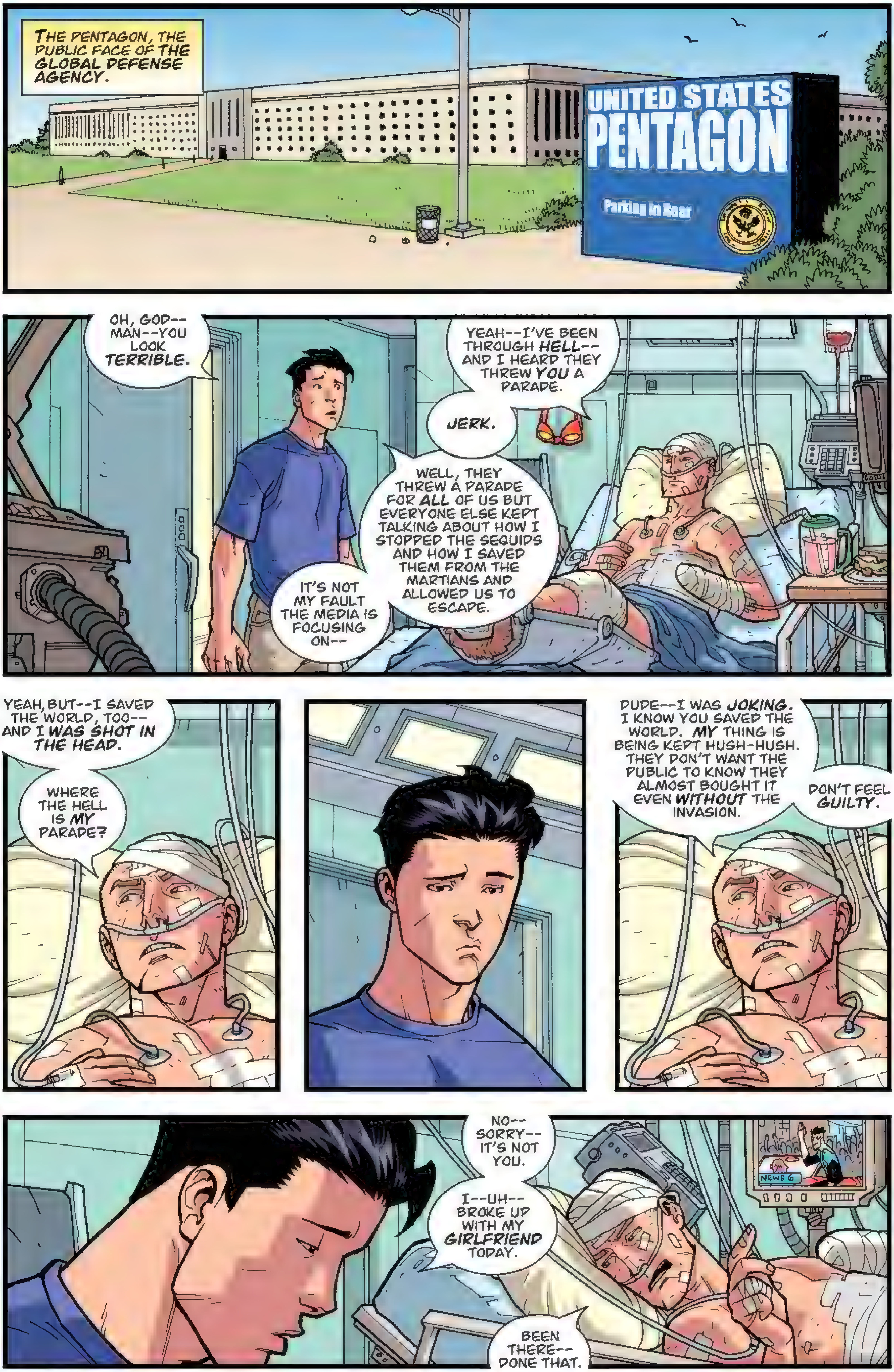

YOU DID IT!
THAT WAS-- THAT WAS-- *WOW.*
THANKS, I--HEY.
I REMEMBER WHEN WE MET-- WHEN YOU WERE FIRST STARTING OUT. YOU WERE *SO* UNSURE OF YOURSELF THEN.
THAT WAS SOME *IMPRESSIVE* WORK BACK THERE, KID. NOT JUST WITH THE MARTIAN SHIPS, EITHER.
YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY.
I DON'T KNOW IF WE COULD HAVE DONE *ANY* OF THIS WITHOUT *YOU.*
YOU--YOU DID A *REMARKABLE* JOB OUT HERE, SON.
YOU'VE REALLY PROVEN YOURSELF.
THANKS.
SO...
YEAH, UH... YOU THOUGHT *YOU* WERE KISSING *ME* AND *I* THOUGHT *I* WAS KISSING *YOU.*
YEAH?
YOU THINK THERE'S SOMETHING *TO* THAT?
...
I DON'T KNOW.

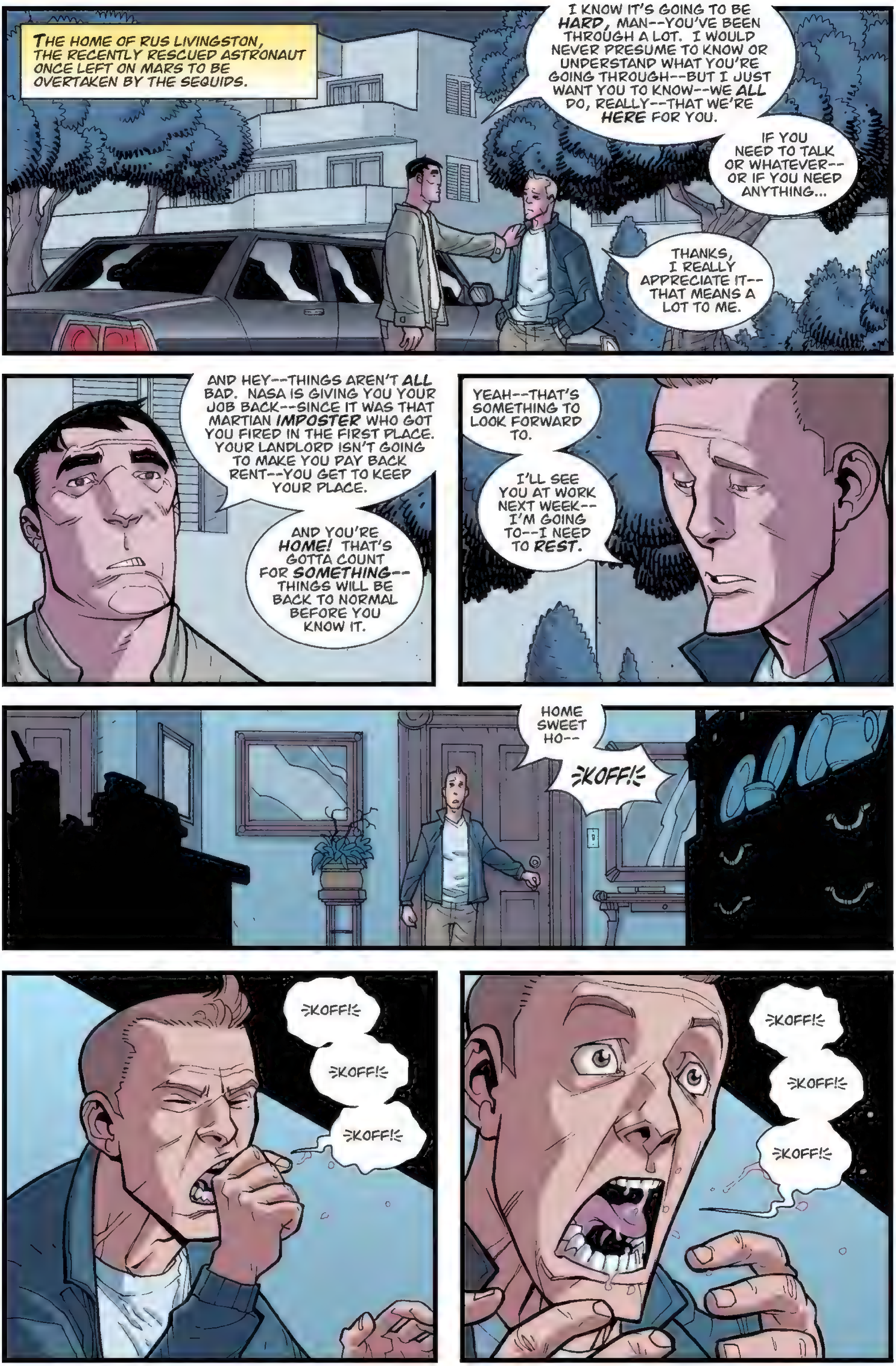

DAYS LATER-- BACK ON EARTH.
PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, THE DORMITORY OF MARK'S GIRLFRIEND, AMBER BENNETT.
IT'S JUST A *MOVIE*, AMBER. A *GOOD* MOVIE FROM WHAT I HEAR, TOO. WE'VE GONE OUT BEFORE. I DON'T SEE WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS.
THE BIG DEAL, GARY--IS THAT I HAVE A *BOYFRIEND*. WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS.
WE'VE SEEN A COUPLE MOVIES, YEAH. WE WORK ON HOMEWORK TOGETHER, SURE. BUT, I DON'T KNOW... IT'S STARTING TO SEEM LIKE IT'S TOO MUCH.
IT'S STARTING TO FEEL... *WRONG*.
BOYFRIEND? YEAH, I HEAR ABOUT THIS GUY *ALL* THE *TIME*. THING ABOUT IT IS, THOUGH... WE'VE SPENT A *LOT* OF TIME TOGETHER THIS LAST WEEK--AND I NEVER ACTUALLY *SEE* HIM.
WHERE EXACTLY *IS* THIS BOYFRIEND OF YOURS?
I... I DON'T KNOW.
AND WHERE AM I?
HERE.
YOU'RE *HERE*.


UTAH, THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
A FEW HOURS AFTER THE FUNERAL OF DUPLI-KATE.
IT WAS--IT WAS A LOVELY SERVICE. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE ALMOST MISSED IT. IT'S--A HORRIBLE THING TO COME BACK TO, MAN--I'M--I'M SO SORRY.
THANK YOU. IT WAS A NICE SERVICE. I WISH SHE HAD SOME FAMILY.
I WISH WE COULD HAVE FOUND HER BROTHER.
YOU WERE SO HAPPY, MAN--I JUST--I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, IMMORTAL.
I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.
IT'S NOTHING I HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED BEFORE. NOTHING I'M NOT USED TO.
IT'S JUST--THE THING THAT BOTHERS ME THE MOST--HER AGE--SHE WAS SO YOUNG--
I DIDN'T KNOW I'D LOSE HER SO SOON.
I THOUGHT WE WOULD HAVE MORE TIME TOGETHER.


SEE YOU LATER, GARY. MAYBE NEXT TIME--
OH-- HEY--
DUDE, THIS TOTALLY ISN'T WHAT IT *LOOKS* LIKE.
IT'S *COOL.* DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. *REALLY.*
I NEED TO TALK TO AMBER SO...
SURE, MAN. I WAS LEAVING ANYWAY.
CATCH YOU LATER.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE BACK. YOU'RE *ALIVE* AND THE PLANET IS STILL *HERE* SO I TAKE IT THINGS WENT *WELL.*
THEY *DID.*
GOOD. I WAS WANTING TO TALK TO YOU TOO. WANT TO COME INSIDE?
I *DO.*
OKAY-- YOU FIRST.
ME? ALL RIGHT.
UH... HERE GOES.
I'VE BEEN THINKING A LOT WHILE I WAS OUT IN SPACE. LONG RIDE THERE--LONG RIDE BACK. I'VE BEEN THINKING-- Y'KNOW...
ABOUT US.
I DON'T THINK THIS IS RIGHT-- BETWEEN US--I DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO *LAST.* I *REALLY* LIKE YOU, I DO. YOU KNOW THAT. YOU'RE THE FIRST GIRL I'VE *EVER* LOVED AND I'LL PROBABLY *ALWAYS* LOVE YOU. I THINK YOU'RE GREAT. I THINK WE'RE GREAT TOGETHER.
I'M SURE YOU CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING.
IT'S JUST THAT--WE'RE NOT *TOGETHER* ALL THAT OFTEN.
GO ON.
WELL, I'M *INVINCIBLE* AND THAT WAS COOL FOR LIKE THE FIRST *FIVE MINUTES* YOU KNEW... THINGS WERE GREAT. I HAD THIS AWESOME EXCUSE FOR STANDING YOU UP ALL THE TIME--AND CUTTING OUT EARLY WHILE WE WERE OUT. IT WAS LIKE--ALL OF A SUDDEN THINGS MADE SENSE.
YOU *KNEW* WHY I WAS A CRAPPY BOYFRIEND AND THAT MADE IT *OKAY.*
BUT THEN THINGS GOT *WORSE.*


I'M ALWAYS ZIPPING OFF SOMEWHERE TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT. HECK--I'VE EVEN BEEN LEAVING THE PLANET A BUNCH LATELY. AND I'VE REALIZED I JUST EXPECT YOU TO ACCEPT THAT. I'M SAVING THE WORLD--I'M DOING ALL THIS GREAT STUFF--YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY TO SIT AROUND WAITING FOR ME.
YOU CAN'T BE MAD AT ME FOR DOING THIS STUFF BECAUSE THAT WOULD MAKE YOU A SELFISH PERSON.
BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR TO YOU. YOU'RE A PERSON--YOU'VE GOT FEELINGS. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT I'M THIS SUPERHERO--AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT GOING IN.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO JUST ACCEPT THAT I'M NOT GOING TO BE HERE MOST OF THE TIME. WHY SHOULD YOU?
I JUST-- I THINK YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER WITHOUT ME--WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
I CAME TO THE WINDOW EARLIER--I SAW YOU IN HERE WITH GARY. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T CHEAT ON ME OR ANYTHING--AND THAT'S COOL--BUT IT'S CLEAR TO ME THAT YOU'D BE HAPPIER WITH HIM. AND THAT'S TOTALLY COOL, TOO.
I'VE ACTUALLY-- I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT EVE. SHE DOES LIKE ME--AND I DON'T KNOW--I MIGHT, Y'KNOW, PURSUE THAT.
OKAY.
OKAY? THAT'S IT?
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SAY TO ME?
EVERY SINGLE THING YOU JUST SAID TO ME... SERIOUSLY--ALL OF IT. I PROMISE.
EXCEPT FOR THAT PART ABOUT EVE AT THE END.
WELL-- THAT'S A RELIEF.
I DID MISS YOU A BUNCH, THOUGH.
ONE LAST CUDDLE?
SURE.

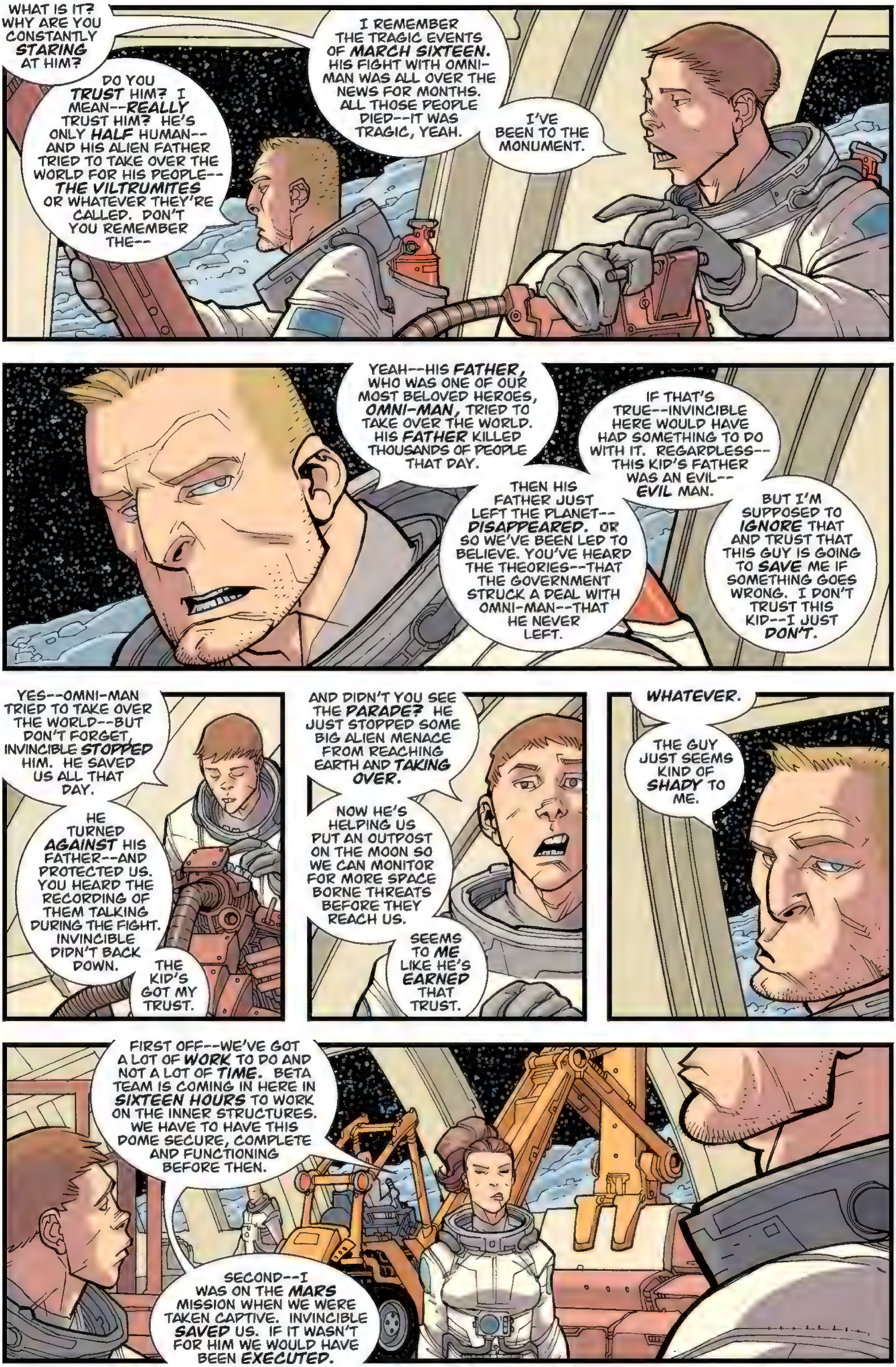

THE PENTAGON, THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
OH, GOD--MAN--YOU LOOK TERRIBLE.
YEAH--I'VE BEEN THROUGH HELL--AND I HEARD THEY THREW YOU A PARADE.
JERK.
WELL, THEY THREW A PARADE FOR ALL OF US BUT EVERYONE ELSE KEPT TALKING ABOUT HOW I STOPPED THE SEQUIDS AND HOW I SAVED THEM FROM THE MARTIANS AND ALLOWED US TO ESCAPE.
IT'S NOT MY FAULT THE MEDIA IS FOCUSING ON--
YEAH, BUT--I SAVED THE WORLD, TOO--AND I WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD.
WHERE THE HELL IS MY PARADE?
DUDE--I WAS JOKING. I KNOW YOU SAVED THE WORLD. MY THING IS BEING KEPT HUSH-HUSH. THEY DON'T WANT THE PUBLIC TO KNOW THEY ALMOST BOUGHT IT EVEN WITHOUT THE INVASION.
DON'T FEEL GUILTY.
NO--SORRY--IT'S NOT YOU.
I--UH--BROKE UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND TODAY.
NEWS 6
BEEN THERE--DONE THAT.


THE HOME OF RUS LIVINGSTON, THE RECENTLY RESCUED ASTRONAUT ONCE LEFT ON MARS TO BE OVERTAKEN BY THE SEQUIDS.
I KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE HARD, MAN--YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT. I WOULD NEVER PRESUME TO KNOW OR UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH--BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW--WE ALL DO, REALLY--THAT WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.
IF YOU NEED TO TALK OR WHATEVER--OR IF YOU NEED ANYTHING...
THANKS, I REALLY APPRECIATE IT--THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME.
AND HEY--THINGS AREN'T ALL BAD. NASA IS GIVING YOU YOUR JOB BACK--SINCE IT WAS THAT MARTIAN IMPOSTER WHO GOT YOU FIRED IN THE FIRST PLACE. YOUR LANDLORD ISN'T GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY BACK RENT--YOU GET TO KEEP YOUR PLACE.
AND YOU'RE HOME! THAT'S GOTTA COUNT FOR SOMETHING--THINGS WILL BE BACK TO NORMAL BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
YEAH--THAT'S SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.
I'LL SEE YOU AT WORK NEXT WEEK--I'M GOING TO--I NEED TO REST.
HOME SWEET HO--
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!

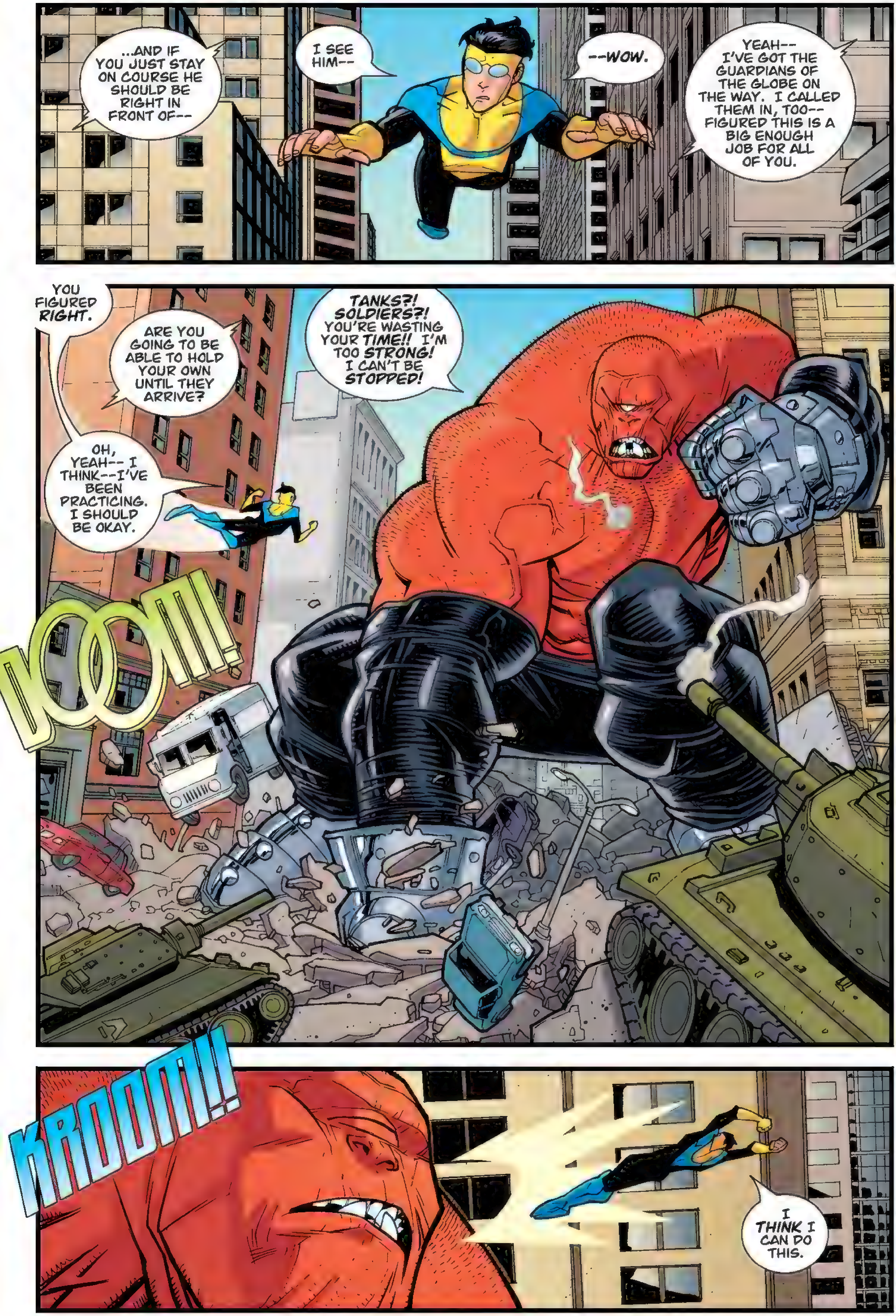
HWAAGG--IRK!!
UKK!!
HMMPH!!
MMPHGG!
DEFEATED?! THEY THOUGHT WE WERE DEFEATED?! FOOLISH SOLIDS.
THE SEQUIDS CANNOT BE DEFEATED--THE ONE-MIND NEVER DIES--TIME HOLDS NO MEANING FOR US--NO THREAT OF DEATH.
WE MAY BE SEPARATE FROM THE OTHERS--NO LONGER ABLE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT--BUT WE WILL BUILD OUR OWN ARMY--HERE. IT MAY TAKE US MANY--MANY YEARS--
BUT WE SEQUIDS WILL TAKE CONTROL OF THIS PLANET--AND EVERY LIVING THING THAT CALLS IT HOME.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!

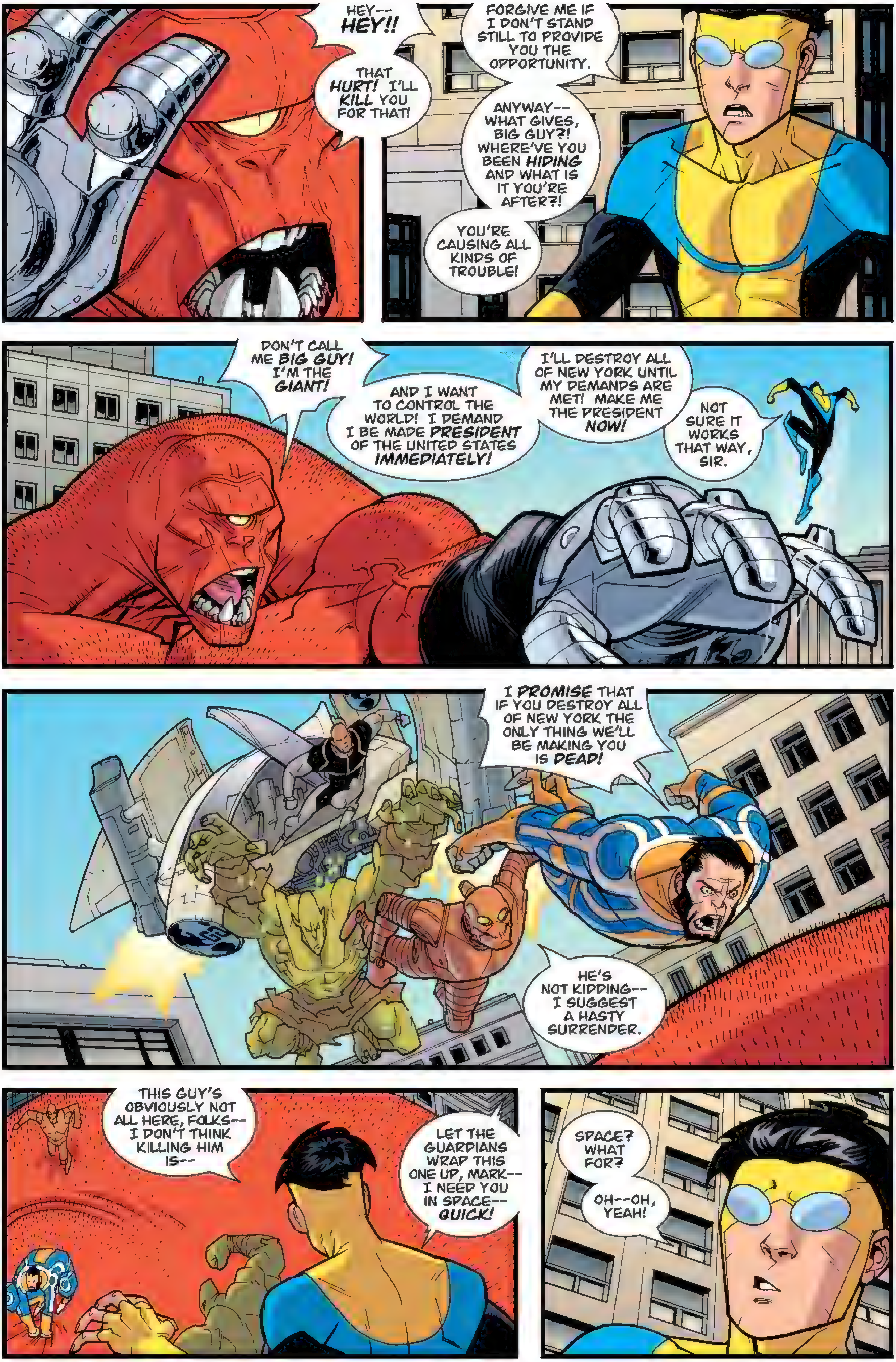
ISSUE FORTY-TWO

NO, SO FAR EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL. NOTHING'S HAPPENED--NOT EVEN A MINOR SET BACK. LAST TIME I TALKED TO THE ASTRONAUTS, AT LEAST--THINGS WERE RUNNING SMOOTHLY AND RIGHT ON SCHEDULE.
WELL, JUST KEEP AN EYE ON THEM. THIS IS A DANGEROUS MISSION--THAT'S WHY YOU'RE *THERE.*
I KNOW WHY I'M HERE. IF THEY LOSE CONTAINMENT--I HELP THE ASTRONAUTS INTO THE ESCAPE POD AND ZIP THEM BACK TO EARTH BEFORE THEY RUN OUT OF AIR. IT'S *SIMPLE,* CECIL--THIS IS *EASY.*
EASY--*RIGHT.* JUST KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, WHO KNOWS WHAT'S OUT THERE--AND FOR GOD'S SAKE--AT LEAST STAND UP AND ACT LIKE YOU'RE READY TO SAVE THEM IF SOMETHING DOES GO WRONG.
I *AM* STANDING.
I CAN *SEE* YOU, MARK. I'M LOOKING RIGHT AT YOU.
FINE, FINE, FINE.


WHAT IS IT? WHY ARE YOU CONSTANTLY STARING AT HIM?
DO YOU TRUST HIM? I MEAN--REALLY TRUST HIM? HE'S ONLY HALF HUMAN--AND HIS ALIEN FATHER TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD FOR HIS PEOPLE--THE VILTRUMITES OR WHATEVER THEY'RE CALLED. DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE--
I REMEMBER THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF MARCH SIXTEEN. HIS FIGHT WITH OMNI-MAN WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS FOR MONTHS. ALL THOSE PEOPLE DIED--IT WAS TRAGIC, YEAH.
I'VE BEEN TO THE MONUMENT.
YEAH--HIS FATHER, WHO WAS ONE OF OUR MOST BELOVED HEROES, OMNI-MAN, TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. HIS FATHER KILLED THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THAT DAY.
THEN HIS FATHER JUST LEFT THE PLANET--DISAPPEARED. OR SO WE'VE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE. YOU'VE HEARD THE THEORIES--THAT THE GOVERNMENT STRUCK A DEAL WITH OMNI-MAN--THAT HE NEVER LEFT.
IF THAT'S TRUE--INVINCIBLE HERE WOULD HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT. REGARDLESS--THIS KID'S FATHER WAS AN EVIL--EVIL MAN.
BUT I'M SUPPOSED TO IGNORE THAT AND TRUST THAT THIS GUY IS GOING TO SAVE ME IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG. I DON'T TRUST THIS KID--I JUST DON'T.
YES--OMNI-MAN TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD--BUT DON'T FORGET, INVINCIBLE STOPPED HIM. HE SAVED US ALL THAT DAY.
HE TURNED AGAINST HIS FATHER--AND PROTECTED US. YOU HEARD THE RECORDING OF THEM TALKING DURING THE FIGHT. INVINCIBLE DIDN'T BACK DOWN.
THE KID'S GOT MY TRUST.
AND DIDN'T YOU SEE THE PARADE? HE JUST STOPPED SOME BIG ALIEN MENACE FROM REACHING EARTH AND TAKING OVER.
NOW HE'S HELPING US PUT AN OUTPOST ON THE MOON SO WE CAN MONITOR FOR MORE SPACE BORNE THREATS BEFORE THEY REACH US.
SEEMS TO ME LIKE HE'S EARNED THAT TRUST.
WHATEVER.
THE GUY JUST SEEMS KIND OF SHADY TO ME.
FIRST OFF--WE'VE GOT A LOT OF WORK TO DO AND NOT A LOT OF TIME. BETA TEAM IS COMING IN HERE IN SIXTEEN HOURS TO WORK ON THE INNER STRUCTURES. WE HAVE TO HAVE THIS DOME SECURE, COMPLETE AND FUNCTIONING BEFORE THEN.
SECOND--I WAS ON THE MARS MISSION WHEN WE WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE. INVINCIBLE SAVED US. IF IT WASN'T FOR HIM WE WOULD HAVE BEEN EXECUTED.

LISTEN--YOU'RE MORE THAN WELCOME TO THINK WHATEVER YOU WANT TO THINK--BUT DON'T SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT HIM WHILE I'M IN EARSHOT.
THAT GUY SAVED MY LIFE.
Y--YES, MA'AM.
HEH.
SHUT UP.
SIGH.
MARK--I'VE RADIOED THE ASTRONAUTS TO LET THEM KNOW--I NEED YOU DOWN HERE FOR A MOMENT. I'LL GIVE YOU DIRECTIONS EN ROUTE. IT'S A BIG ONE.
GET MOVING.
YES, SIR.


...AND IF YOU JUST STAY ON COURSE HE SHOULD BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF--
I SEE HIM--
--WOW.
YEAH-- I'VE GOT THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ON THE WAY. I CALLED THEM IN, TOO-- FIGURED THIS IS A BIG ENOUGH JOB FOR ALL OF YOU.
YOU FIGURED RIGHT.
ARE YOU GOING TO BE ABLE TO HOLD YOUR OWN UNTIL THEY ARRIVE?
TANKS?! SOLDIERS?! YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME!! I'M TOO STRONG! I CAN'T BE STOPPED!
OH, YEAH-- I THINK--I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. I SHOULD BE OKAY.
DOOOM!!
KROOM!!
I THINK I CAN DO THIS.


HEY-- HEY!!
THAT HURT! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THAT!
FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T STAND STILL TO PROVIDE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY.
ANYWAY-- WHAT GIVES, BIG GUY?! WHERE'VE YOU BEEN HIDING AND WHAT IS IT YOU'RE AFTER?!
YOU'RE CAUSING ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE!
DON'T CALL ME BIG GUY! I'M THE GIANT!
AND I WANT TO CONTROL THE WORLD! I DEMAND I BE MADE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IMMEDIATELY!
I'LL DESTROY ALL OF NEW YORK UNTIL MY DEMANDS ARE MET! MAKE ME THE PRESIDENT NOW!
NOT SURE IT WORKS THAT WAY, SIR.
I PROMISE THAT IF YOU DESTROY ALL OF NEW YORK THE ONLY THING WE'LL BE MAKING YOU IS DEAD!
HE'S NOT KIDDING-- I SUGGEST A HASTY SURRENDER.
THIS GUY'S OBVIOUSLY NOT ALL HERE, FOLKS-- I DON'T THINK KILLING HIM IS--
LET THE GUARDIANS WRAP THIS ONE UP, MARK-- I NEED YOU IN SPACE-- QUICK!
SPACE? WHAT FOR?
OH--OH, YEAH!

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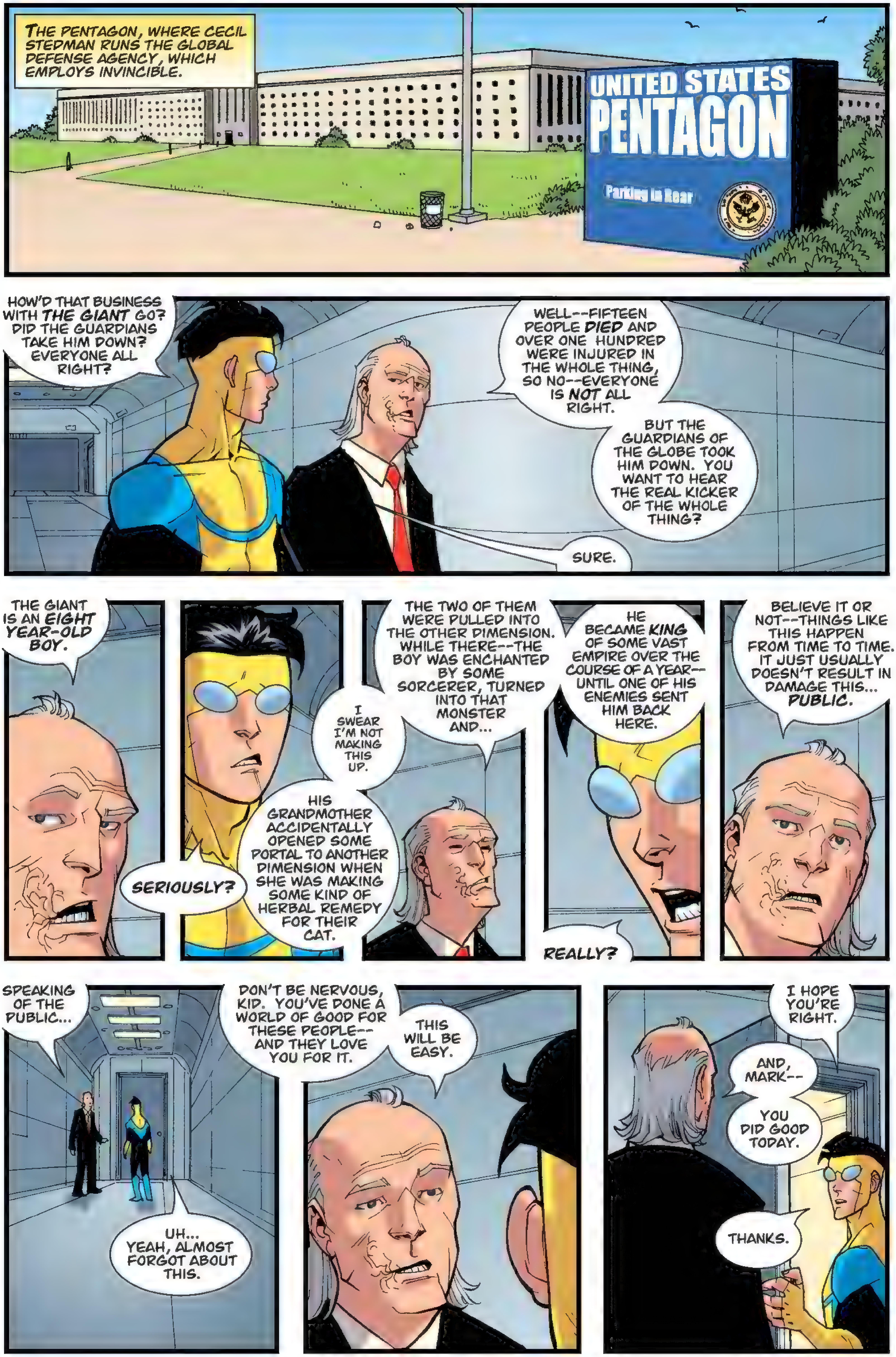
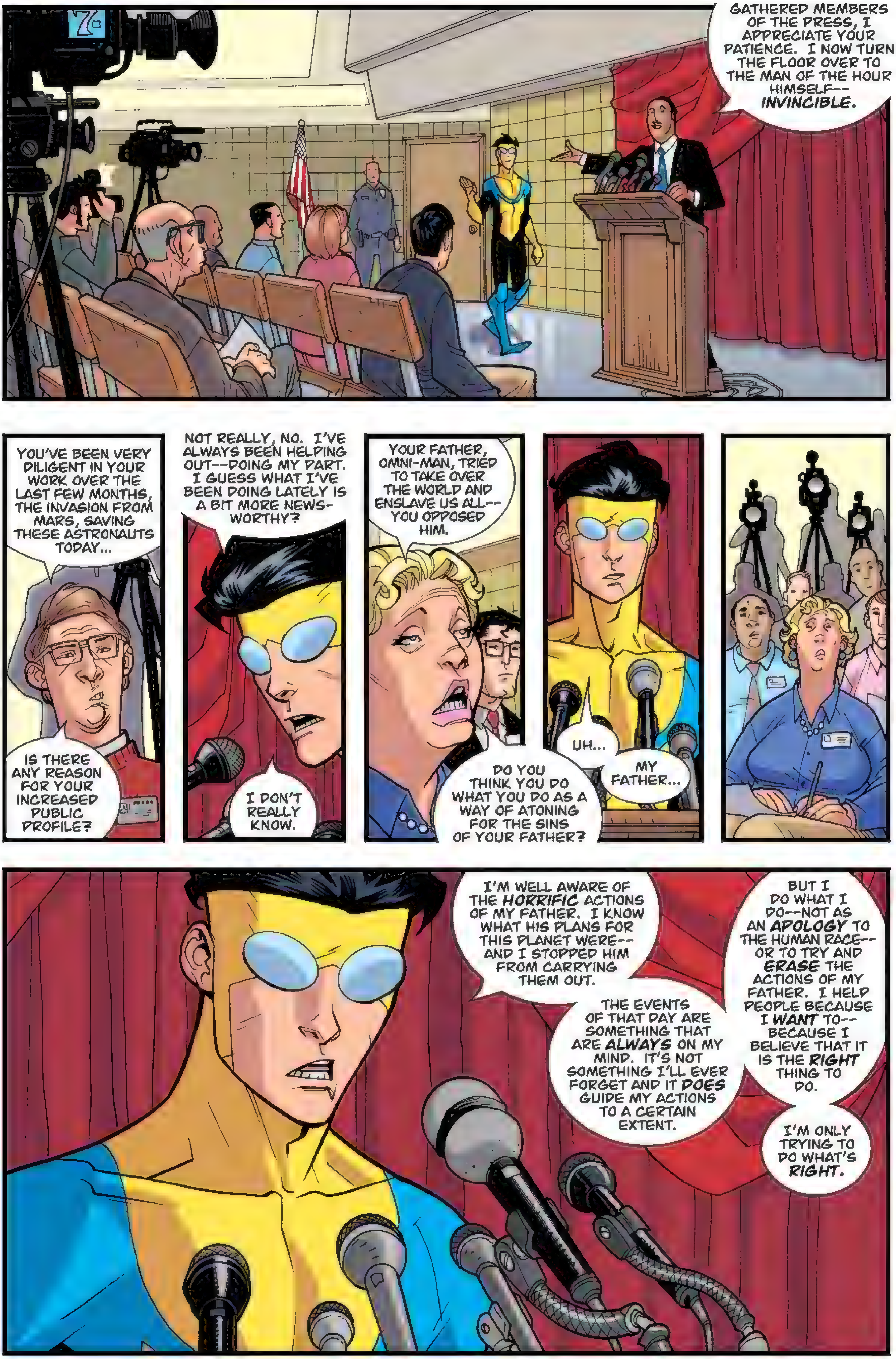
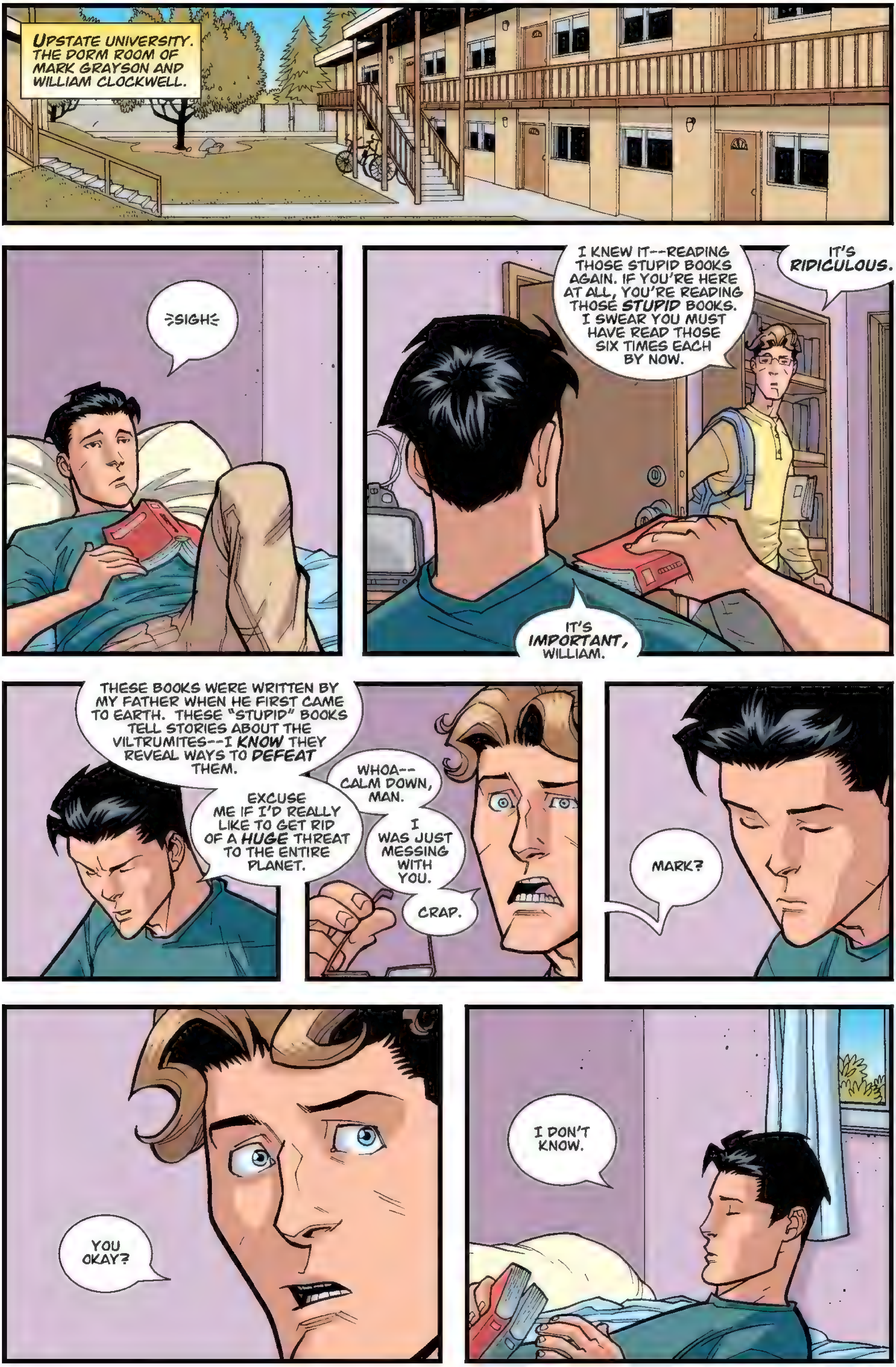
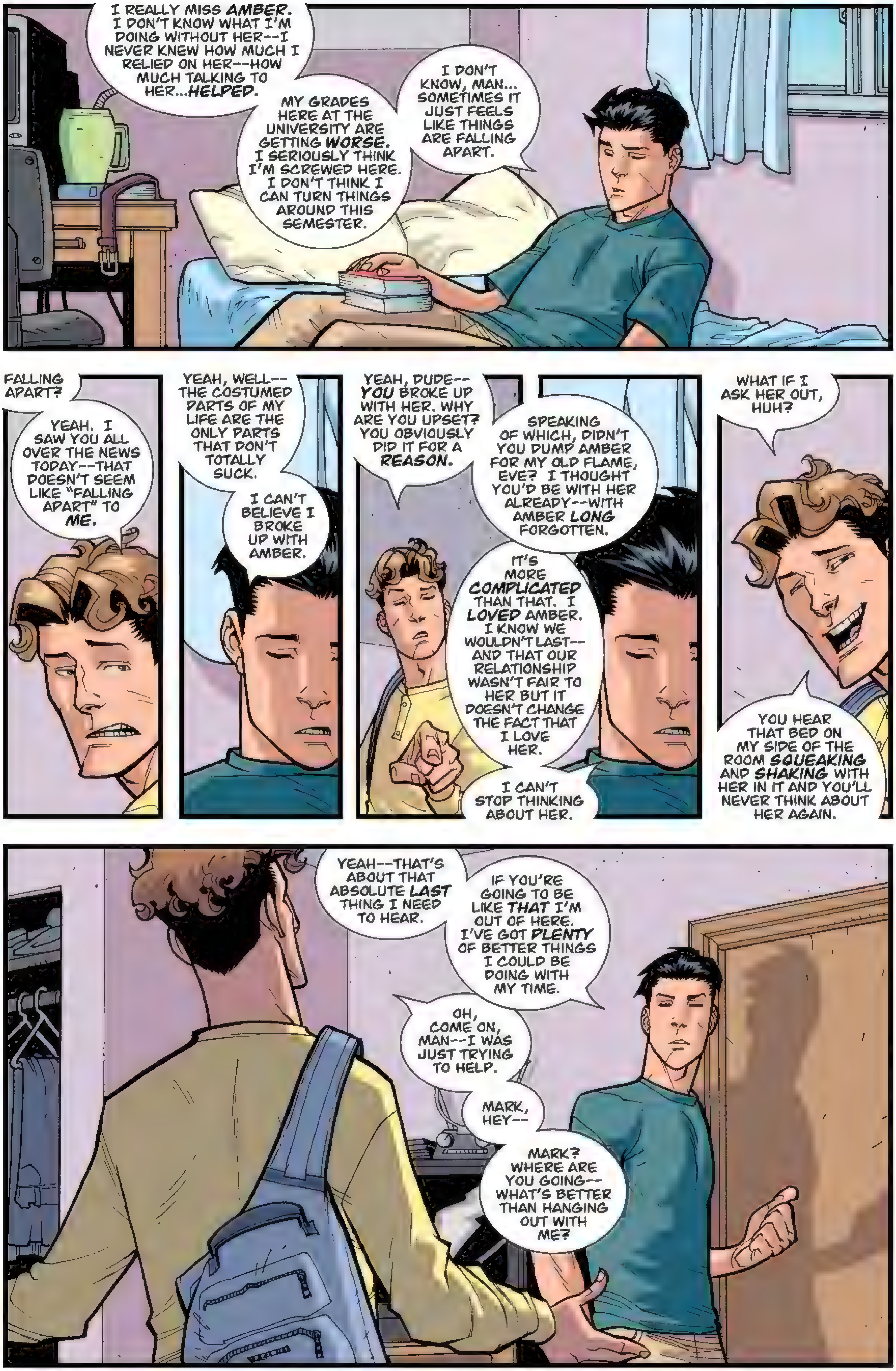
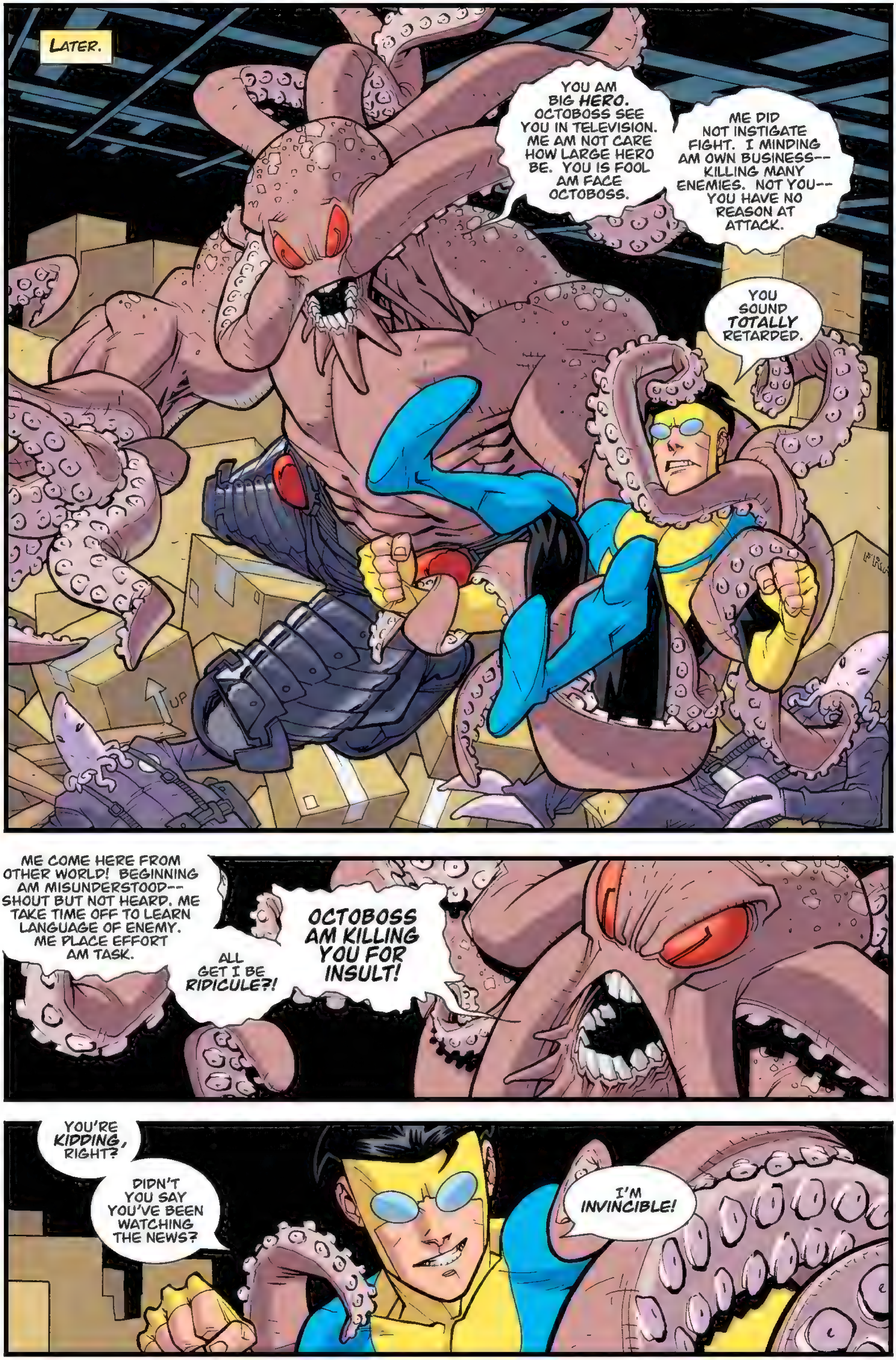
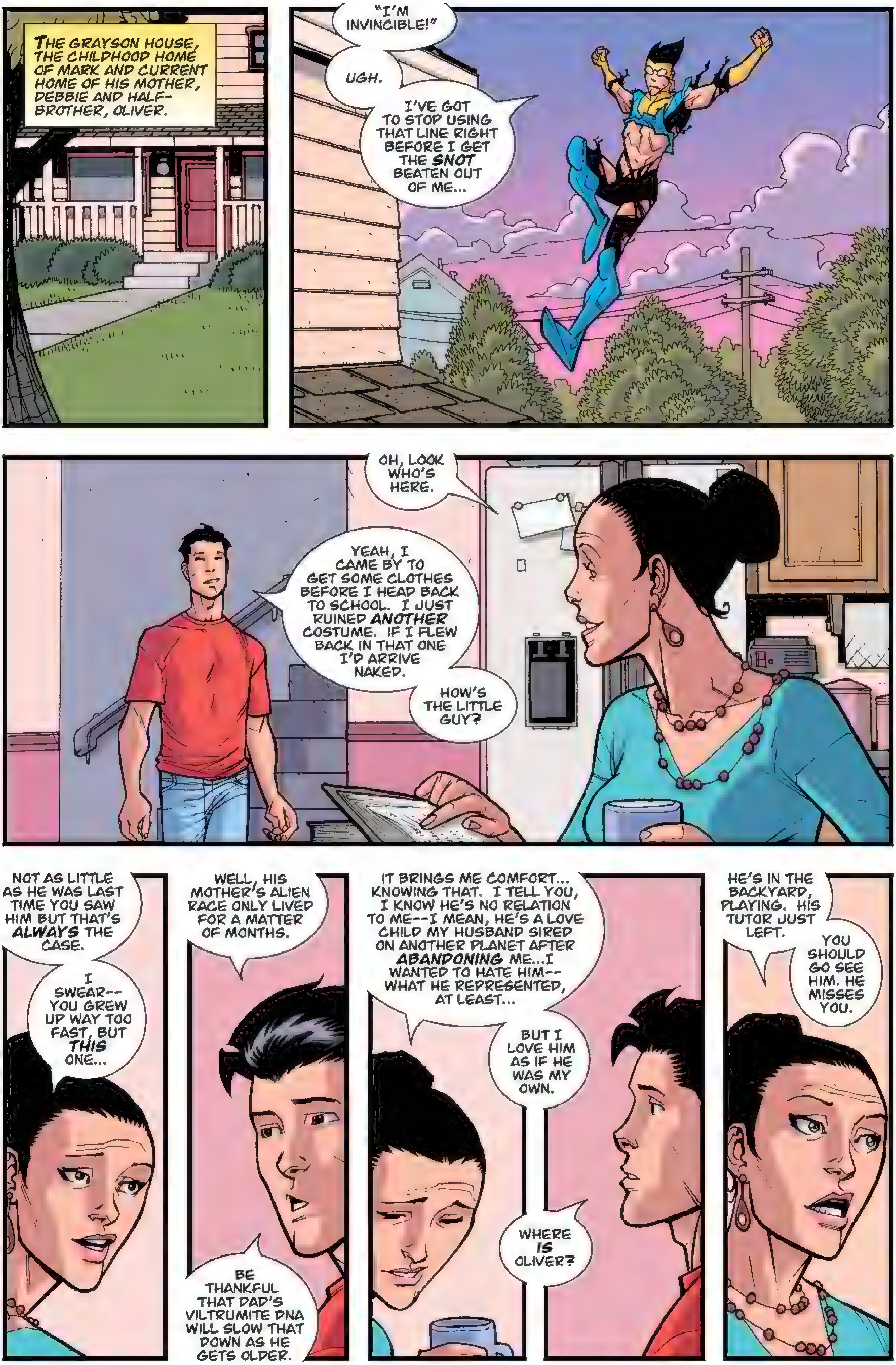

THE PENTAGON, WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, WHICH EMPLOYS INVINCIBLE.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
HOW'D THAT BUSINESS WITH THE GIANT GO? DID THE GUARDIANS TAKE HIM DOWN? EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
WELL--FIFTEEN PEOPLE DIED AND OVER ONE HUNDRED WERE INJURED IN THE WHOLE THING, SO NO--EVERYONE IS NOT ALL RIGHT.
BUT THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TOOK HIM DOWN. YOU WANT TO HEAR THE REAL KICKER OF THE WHOLE THING?
SURE.
THE GIANT IS AN EIGHT YEAR-OLD BOY.
SERIOUSLY?
I SWEAR I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP.
HIS GRANDMOTHER ACCIDENTALLY OPENED SOME PORTAL TO ANOTHER DIMENSION WHEN SHE WAS MAKING SOME KIND OF HERBAL REMEDY FOR THEIR CAT.
THE TWO OF THEM WERE PULLED INTO THE OTHER DIMENSION. WHILE THERE--THE BOY WAS ENCHANTED BY SOME SORCERER, TURNED INTO THAT MONSTER AND...
HE BECAME KING OF SOME VAST EMPIRE OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR--UNTIL ONE OF HIS ENEMIES SENT HIM BACK HERE.
REALLY?
BELIEVE IT OR NOT--THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN FROM TIME TO TIME. IT JUST USUALLY DOESN'T RESULT IN DAMAGE THIS... PUBLIC.
SPEAKING OF THE PUBLIC...
UH... YEAH, ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT THIS.
DON'T BE NERVOUS, KID. YOU'VE DONE A WORLD OF GOOD FOR THESE PEOPLE--AND THEY LOVE YOU FOR IT.
THIS WILL BE EASY.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
AND, MARK--
YOU DID GOOD TODAY.
THANKS.

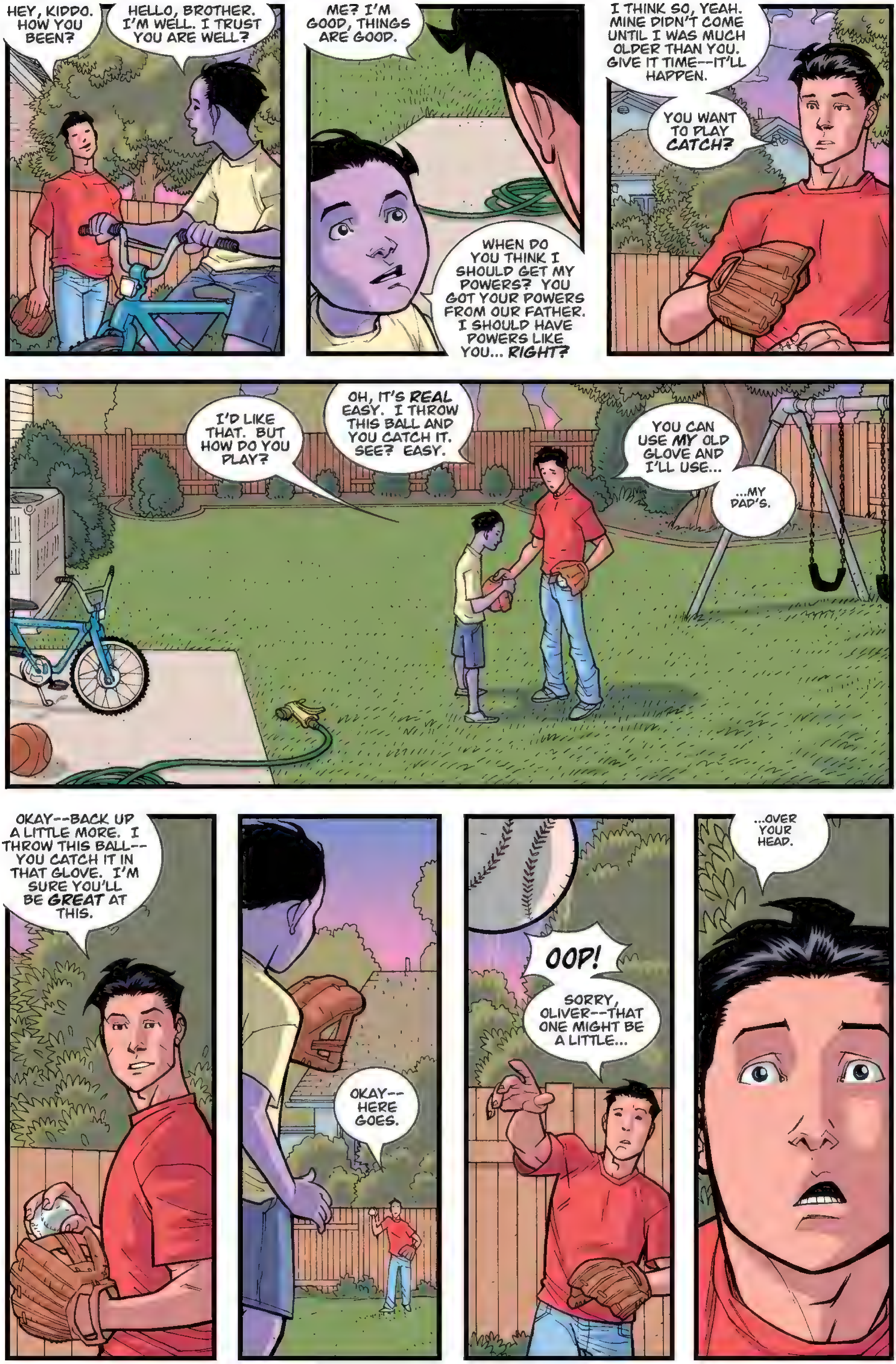

7
GATHERED MEMBERS OF THE PRESS, I APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE. I NOW TURN THE FLOOR OVER TO THE MAN OF THE HOUR HIMSELF-- ***INVINCIBLE.***
YOU'VE BEEN VERY DILIGENT IN YOUR WORK OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, THE INVASION FROM MARS, SAVING THESE ASTRONAUTS TODAY...
IS THERE ANY REASON FOR YOUR INCREASED PUBLIC PROFILE?
NOT REALLY, NO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HELPING OUT--DOING MY PART. I GUESS WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY IS A BIT MORE NEWSWORTHY?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW.
YOUR FATHER, OMNI-MAN, TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD AND ENSLAVE US ALL-- YOU OPPOSED HIM.
DO YOU THINK YOU DO WHAT YOU DO AS A WAY OF ATONING FOR THE SINS OF YOUR FATHER?
UH...
MY FATHER...
I'M WELL AWARE OF THE ***HORRIFIC*** ACTIONS OF MY FATHER. I KNOW WHAT HIS PLANS FOR THIS PLANET WERE-- AND I STOPPED HIM FROM CARRYING THEM OUT.
THE EVENTS OF THAT DAY ARE SOMETHING THAT ARE ***ALWAYS*** ON MY MIND. IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'LL EVER FORGET AND IT ***DOES*** GUIDE MY ACTIONS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT.
BUT I DO WHAT I DO--NOT AS AN ***APOLOGY*** TO THE HUMAN RACE-- OR TO TRY AND ***ERASE*** THE ACTIONS OF MY FATHER. I HELP PEOPLE BECAUSE I ***WANT*** TO-- BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE ***RIGHT*** THING TO DO.
I'M ONLY TRYING TO DO WHAT'S ***RIGHT.***


UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
SIGH
I KNEW IT--READING THOSE STUPID BOOKS AGAIN. IF YOU'RE HERE AT ALL, YOU'RE READING THOSE STUPID BOOKS. I SWEAR YOU MUST HAVE READ THOSE SIX TIMES EACH BY NOW.
IT'S RIDICULOUS.
IT'S IMPORTANT, WILLIAM.
THESE BOOKS WERE WRITTEN BY MY FATHER WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO EARTH. THESE "STUPID" BOOKS TELL STORIES ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES--I KNOW THEY REVEAL WAYS TO DEFEAT THEM.
EXCUSE ME IF I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET RID OF A HUGE THREAT TO THE ENTIRE PLANET.
WHOA-- CALM DOWN, MAN.
I WAS JUST MESSING WITH YOU.
CRAP.
MARK?
YOU OKAY?
I DON'T KNOW.


I REALLY MISS AMBER. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING WITHOUT HER--I NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH I RELIED ON HER--HOW MUCH TALKING TO HER...HELPED.
MY GRADES HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY ARE GETTING WORSE. I SERIOUSLY THINK I'M SCREWED HERE. I DON'T THINK I CAN TURN THINGS AROUND THIS SEMESTER.
I DON'T KNOW, MAN... SOMETIMES IT JUST FEELS LIKE THINGS ARE FALLING APART.
FALLING APART?
YEAH. I SAW YOU ALL OVER THE NEWS TODAY--THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE "FALLING APART" TO ME.
YEAH, WELL-- THE COSTUMED PARTS OF MY LIFE ARE THE ONLY PARTS THAT DON'T TOTALLY SUCK.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I BROKE UP WITH AMBER.
YEAH, DUDE-- YOU BROKE UP WITH HER. WHY ARE YOU UPSET? YOU OBVIOUSLY DID IT FOR A REASON.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, DIDN'T YOU DUMP AMBER FOR MY OLD FLAME, EVE? I THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH HER ALREADY--WITH AMBER LONG FORGOTTEN.
IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT. I LOVED AMBER. I KNOW WE WOULDN'T LAST--AND THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WASN'T FAIR TO HER BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I LOVE HER.
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT HER.
WHAT IF I ASK HER OUT, HUH?
YOU HEAR THAT BED ON MY SIDE OF THE ROOM SQUEAKING AND SHAKING WITH HER IN IT AND YOU'LL NEVER THINK ABOUT HER AGAIN.
YEAH--THAT'S ABOUT THAT ABSOLUTE LAST THING I NEED TO HEAR.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LIKE THAT I'M OUT OF HERE. I'VE GOT PLENTY OF BETTER THINGS I COULD BE DOING WITH MY TIME.
OH, COME ON, MAN--I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.
MARK, HEY--
MARK? WHERE ARE YOU GOING-- WHAT'S BETTER THAN HANGING OUT WITH ME?

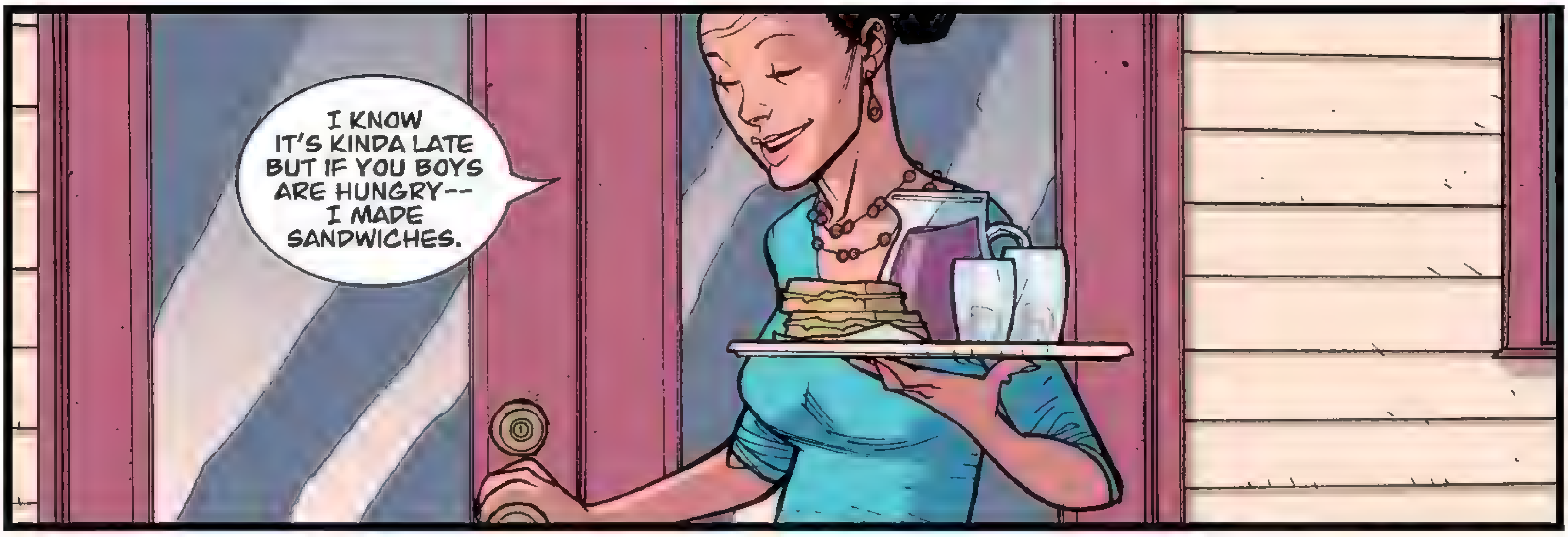

LATER.
YOU AM BIG HERO. OCTOBOSS SEE YOU IN TELEVISION. ME AM NOT CARE HOW LARGE HERO BE. YOU IS FOOL AM FACE OCTOBOSS.
ME DID NOT INSTIGATE FIGHT. I MINDING AM OWN BUSINESS-- KILLING MANY ENEMIES. NOT YOU-- YOU HAVE NO REASON AT ATTACK.
YOU SOUND TOTALLY RETARDED.
UP
ME COME HERE FROM OTHER WORLD! BEGINNING AM MISUNDERSTOOD-- SHOUT BUT NOT HEARD. ME TAKE TIME OFF TO LEARN LANGUAGE OF ENEMY. ME PLACE EFFORT AM TASK.
ALL GET I BE RIDICULE?!
OCTOBOSS AM KILLING YOU FOR INSULT!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS?
I'M INVINCIBLE!

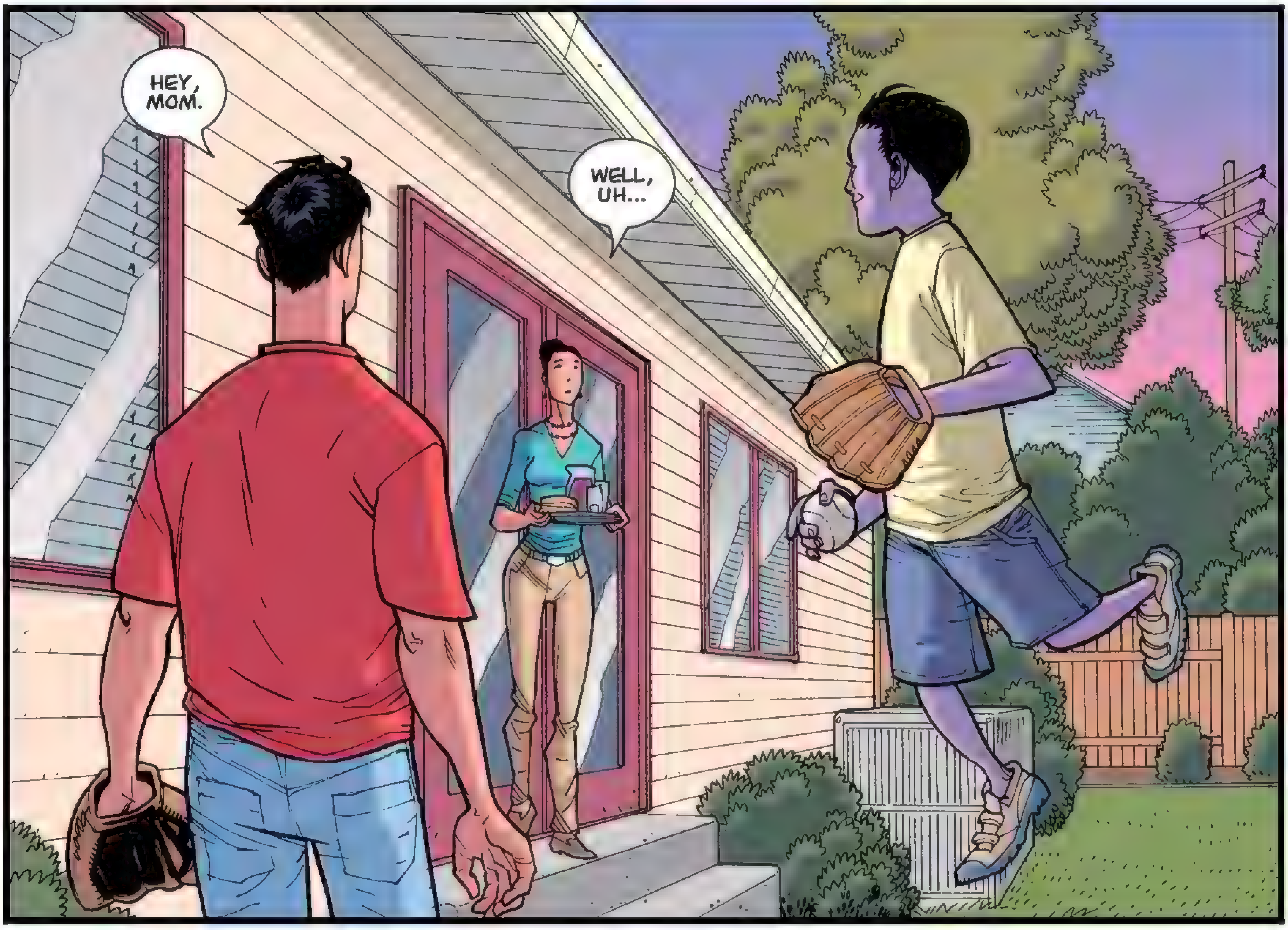

THE GRAYSON HOUSE, THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF MARK AND CURRENT HOME OF HIS MOTHER, DEBBIE AND HALF-BROTHER, OLIVER.
"I'M INVINCIBLE!"
UGH.
I'VE GOT TO STOP USING THAT LINE RIGHT BEFORE I GET THE **SNOT** BEATEN OUT OF ME...
OH, LOOK WHO'S HERE.
YEAH, I CAME BY TO GET SOME CLOTHES BEFORE I HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL. I JUST RUINED **ANOTHER** COSTUME. IF I FLEW BACK IN THAT ONE I'D ARRIVE NAKED.
HOW'S THE LITTLE GUY?
NOT AS LITTLE AS HE WAS LAST TIME YOU SAW HIM BUT THAT'S **ALWAYS** THE CASE.
I SWEAR--YOU GREW UP WAY TOO FAST, BUT **THIS** ONE...
WELL, HIS MOTHER'S ALIEN RACE ONLY LIVED FOR A MATTER OF MONTHS.
BE THANKFUL THAT DAD'S VILTRUMITE DNA WILL SLOW THAT DOWN AS HE GETS OLDER.
IT BRINGS ME COMFORT... KNOWING THAT. I TELL YOU, I KNOW HE'S NO RELATION TO ME--I MEAN, HE'S A LOVE CHILD MY HUSBAND SIRED ON ANOTHER PLANET AFTER **ABANDONING** ME... I WANTED TO HATE HIM--WHAT HE REPRESENTED, AT LEAST...
BUT I LOVE HIM AS IF HE WAS MY OWN.
WHERE **IS** OLIVER?
HE'S IN THE BACKYARD, PLAYING. HIS TUTOR JUST LEFT.
YOU SHOULD GO SEE HIM. HE MISSES YOU.

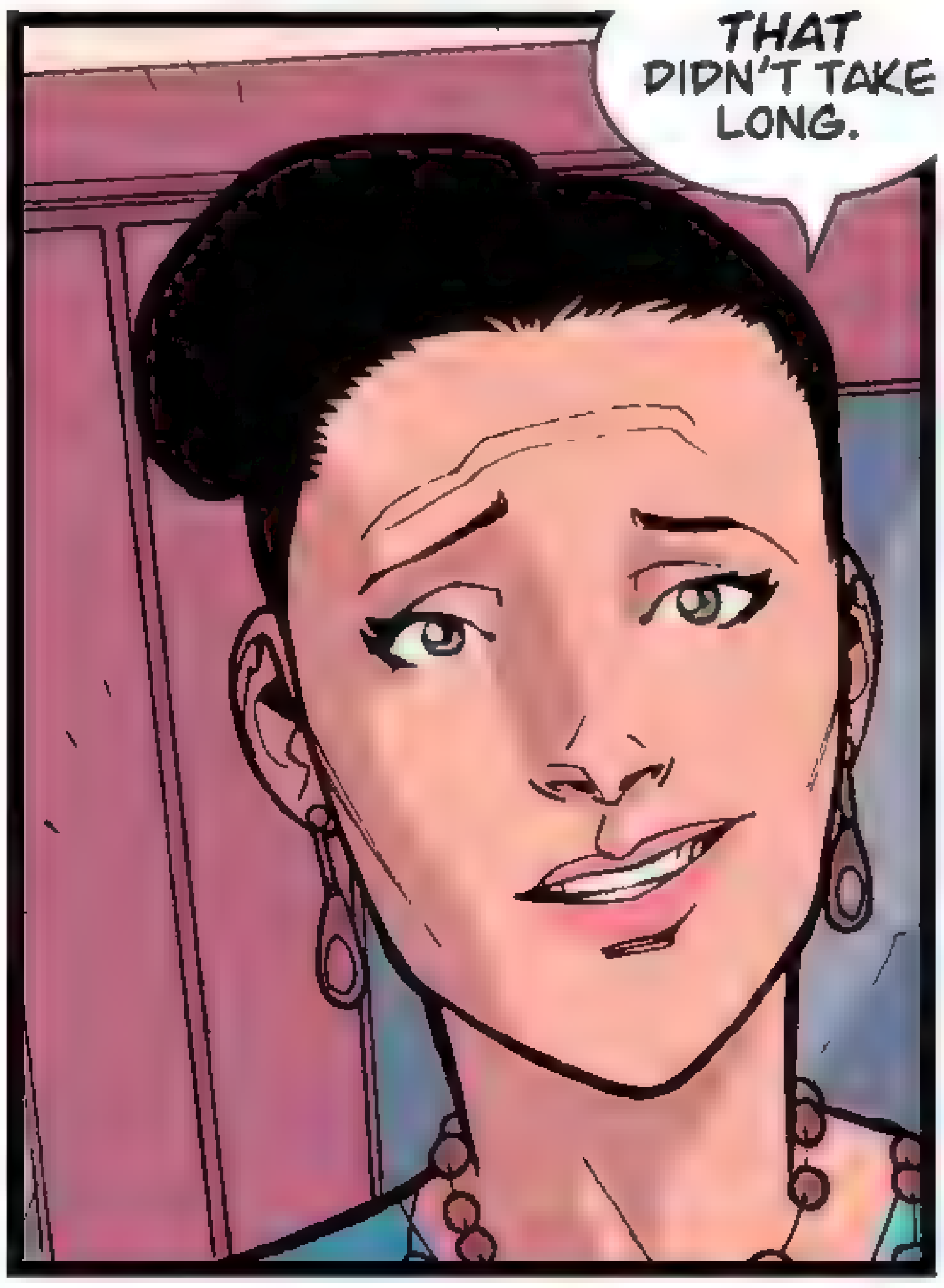

HEY, KIDDO. HOW YOU BEEN?
HELLO, BROTHER. I'M WELL. I TRUST YOU ARE WELL?
ME? I'M GOOD, THINGS ARE GOOD.
WHEN DO YOU THINK I SHOULD GET MY POWERS? YOU GOT YOUR POWERS FROM OUR FATHER. I SHOULD HAVE POWERS LIKE YOU... **RIGHT?**
I THINK SO, YEAH. MINE DIDN'T COME UNTIL I WAS MUCH OLDER THAN YOU. GIVE IT TIME--IT'LL HAPPEN.
YOU WANT TO PLAY **CATCH?**
I'D LIKE THAT. BUT HOW DO YOU PLAY?
OH, IT'S **REAL** EASY. I THROW THIS BALL AND YOU CATCH IT. SEE? EASY.
YOU CAN USE **MY** OLD GLOVE AND I'LL USE...
...MY DAD'S.
OKAY--BACK UP A LITTLE MORE. I THROW THIS BALL--YOU CATCH IT IN THAT GLOVE. I'M SURE YOU'LL BE **GREAT** AT THIS.
OKAY--HERE GOES.
OOP!
SORRY, OLIVER--THAT ONE MIGHT BE A LITTLE...
...OVER YOUR HEAD.

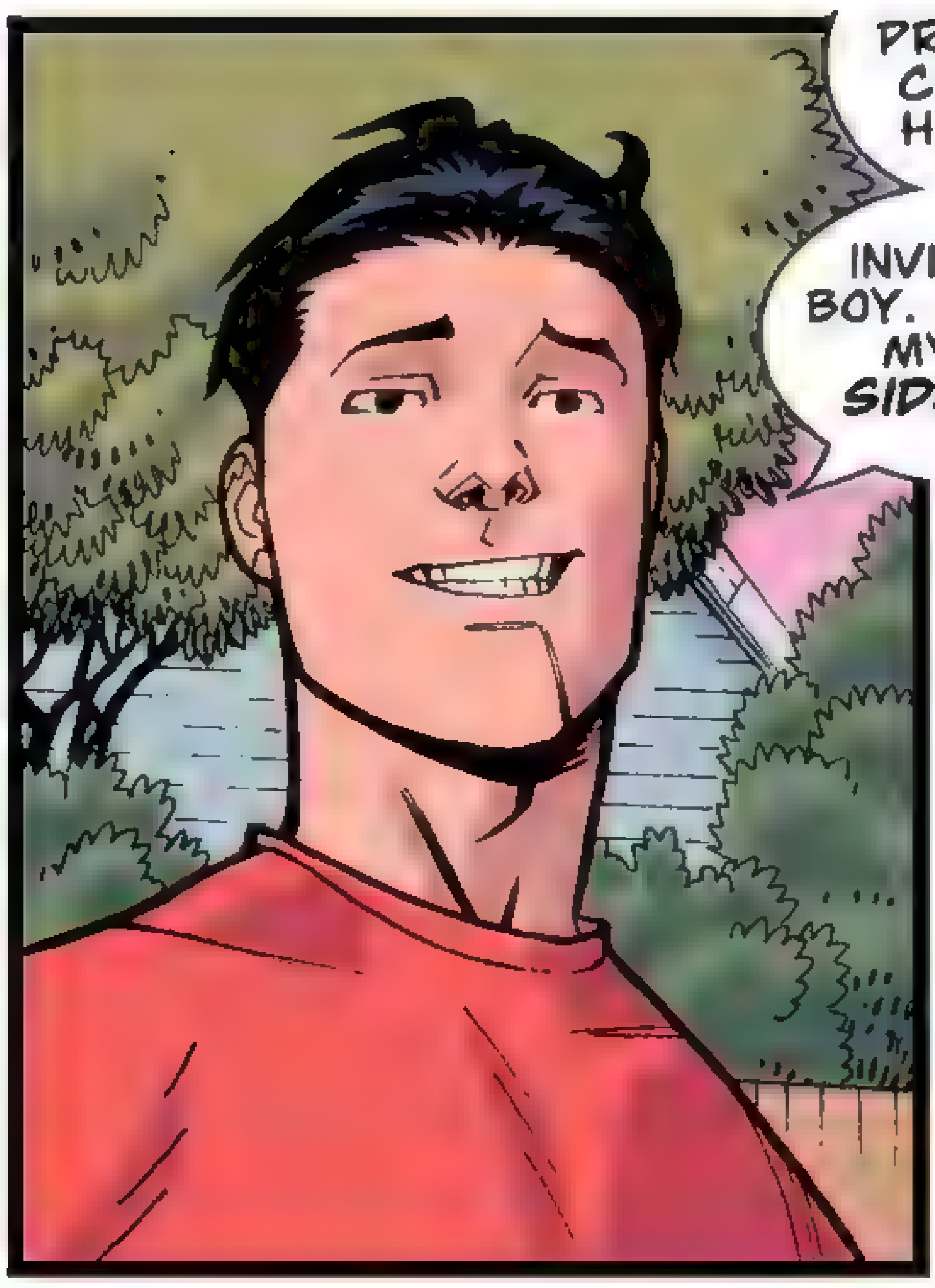
UM...
I HAVEN'T TOLD MOM YET. I WANTED TO **SURPRISE** YOU.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.
WOW.

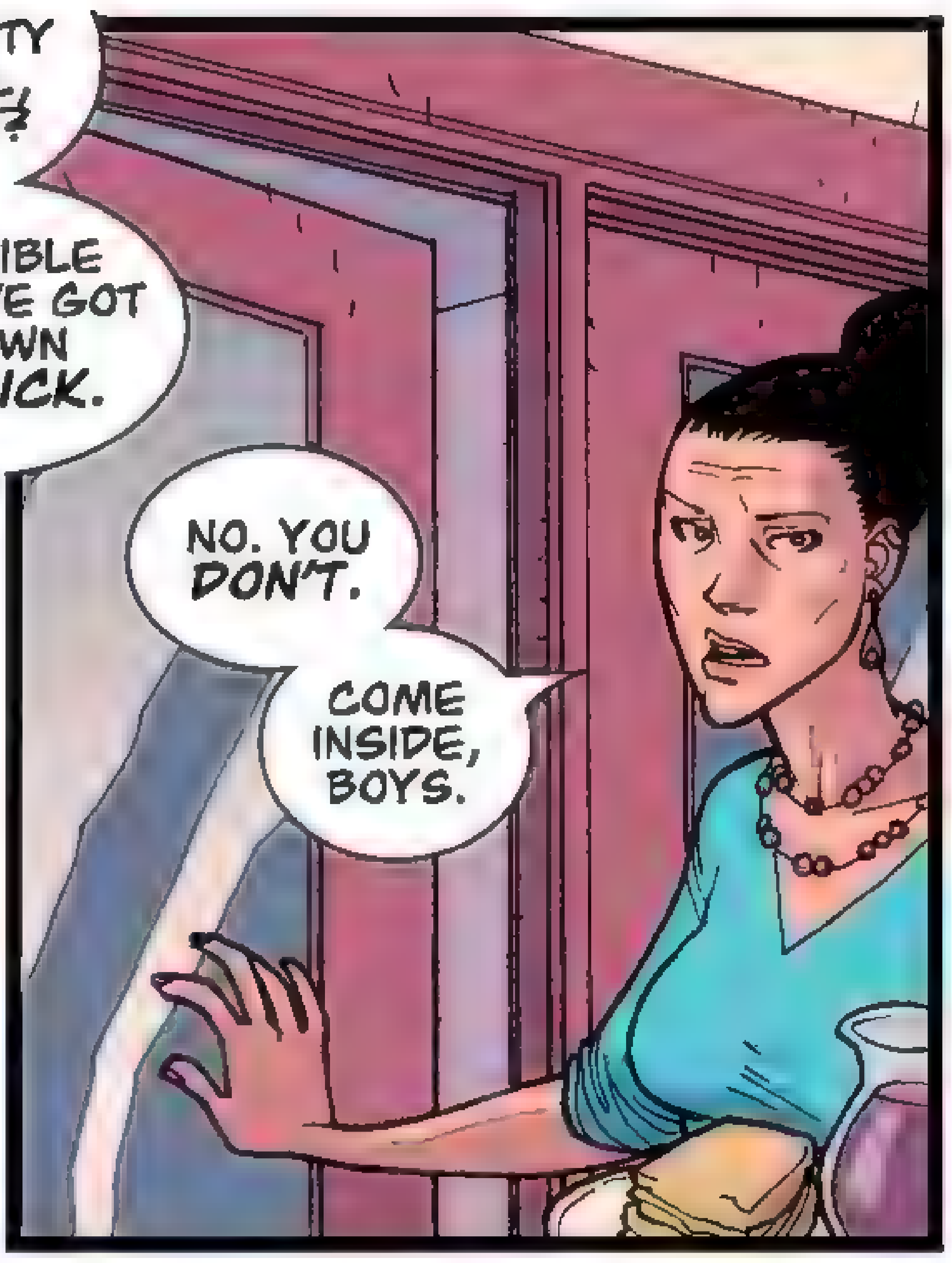
ISSUE FORTY-THREE

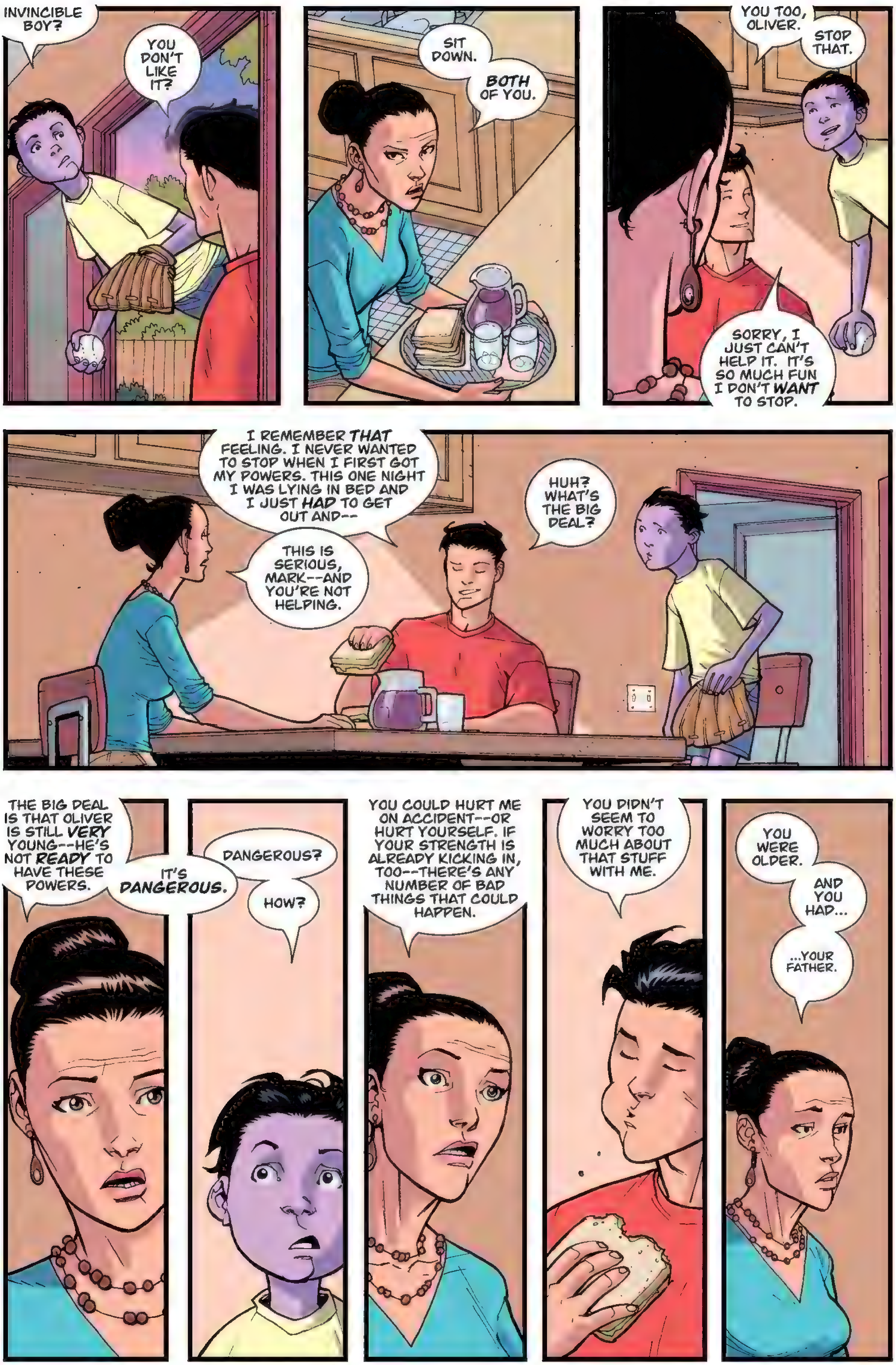

I KNOW IT'S KINDA LATE BUT IF YOU BOYS ARE HUNGRY-- I MADE SANDWICHES.

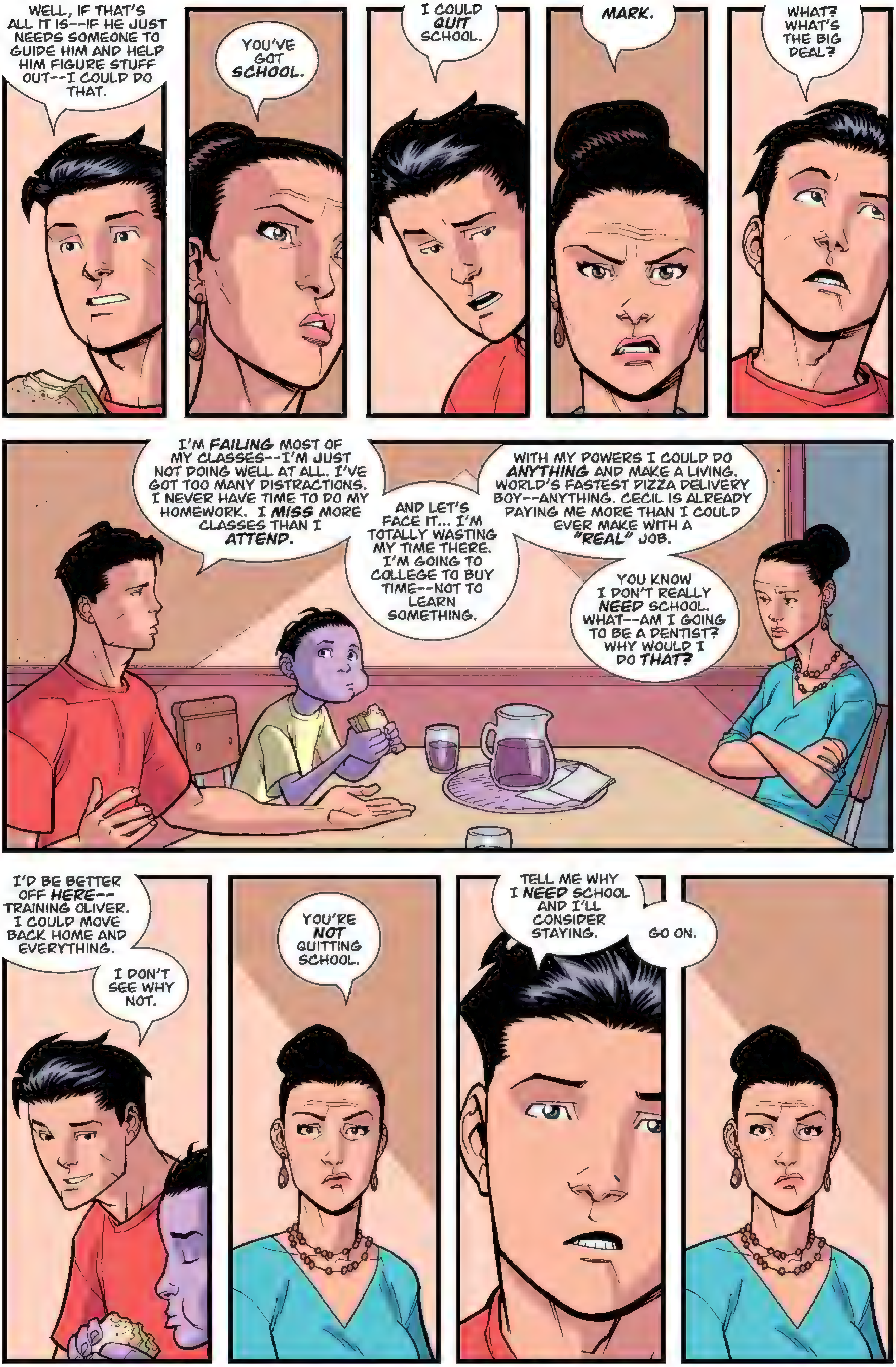

HEY, MOM.
WELL, UH...

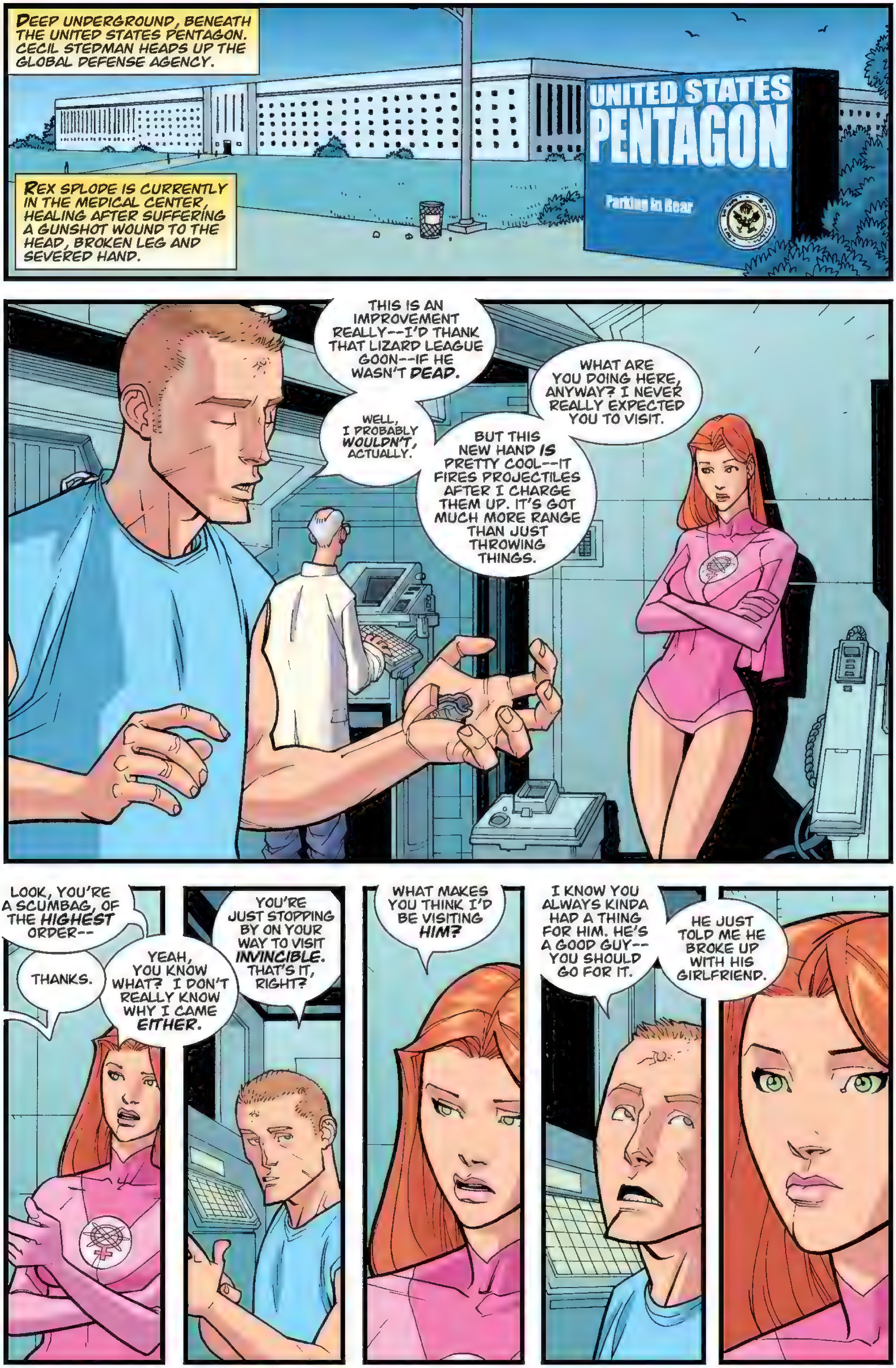

THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG.


PRETTY COOL, HUH?
INVINCIBLE BOY. I'VE GOT MY OWN *SIDEKICK*.


NO. YOU *DON'T*.
COME INSIDE, BOYS.


INVINCIBLE BOY?
YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
SIT DOWN.
BOTH OF YOU.
YOU TOO, OLIVER.
STOP THAT.
SORRY, I JUST CAN'T HELP IT. IT'S SO MUCH FUN I DON'T **WANT** TO STOP.
I REMEMBER **THAT** FEELING. I NEVER WANTED TO STOP WHEN I FIRST GOT MY POWERS. THIS ONE NIGHT I WAS LYING IN BED AND I JUST **HAD** TO GET OUT AND--
THIS IS SERIOUS, MARK--AND YOU'RE NOT HELPING.
HUH? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
THE BIG DEAL IS THAT OLIVER IS STILL **VERY** YOUNG--HE'S NOT **READY** TO HAVE THESE POWERS.
IT'S **DANGEROUS.**
DANGEROUS?
HOW?
YOU COULD HURT ME ON ACCIDENT--OR HURT YOURSELF. IF YOUR STRENGTH IS ALREADY KICKING IN, TOO--THERE'S ANY NUMBER OF BAD THINGS THAT COULD HAPPEN.
YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT THAT STUFF WITH ME.
YOU WERE OLDER.
AND YOU HAD...
...YOUR FATHER.


WELL, IF THAT'S ALL IT IS--IF HE JUST NEEDS SOMEONE TO GUIDE HIM AND HELP HIM FIGURE STUFF OUT--I COULD DO THAT.
YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL.
I COULD QUIT SCHOOL.
MARK.
WHAT? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
I'M FAILING MOST OF MY CLASSES--I'M JUST NOT DOING WELL AT ALL. I'VE GOT TOO MANY DISTRACTIONS. I NEVER HAVE TIME TO DO MY HOMEWORK. I MISS MORE CLASSES THAN I ATTEND.
AND LET'S FACE IT... I'M TOTALLY WASTING MY TIME THERE. I'M GOING TO COLLEGE TO BUY TIME--NOT TO LEARN SOMETHING.
WITH MY POWERS I COULD DO ANYTHING AND MAKE A LIVING. WORLD'S FASTEST PIZZA DELIVERY BOY--ANYTHING. CECIL IS ALREADY PAYING ME MORE THAN I COULD EVER MAKE WITH A "REAL" JOB.
YOU KNOW I DON'T REALLY NEED SCHOOL. WHAT--AM I GOING TO BE A DENTIST? WHY WOULD I DO THAT?
I'D BE BETTER OFF HERE--TRAINING OLIVER. I COULD MOVE BACK HOME AND EVERYTHING.
I DON'T SEE WHY NOT.
YOU'RE NOT QUITTING SCHOOL.
TELL ME WHY I NEED SCHOOL AND I'LL CONSIDER STAYING.
GO ON.

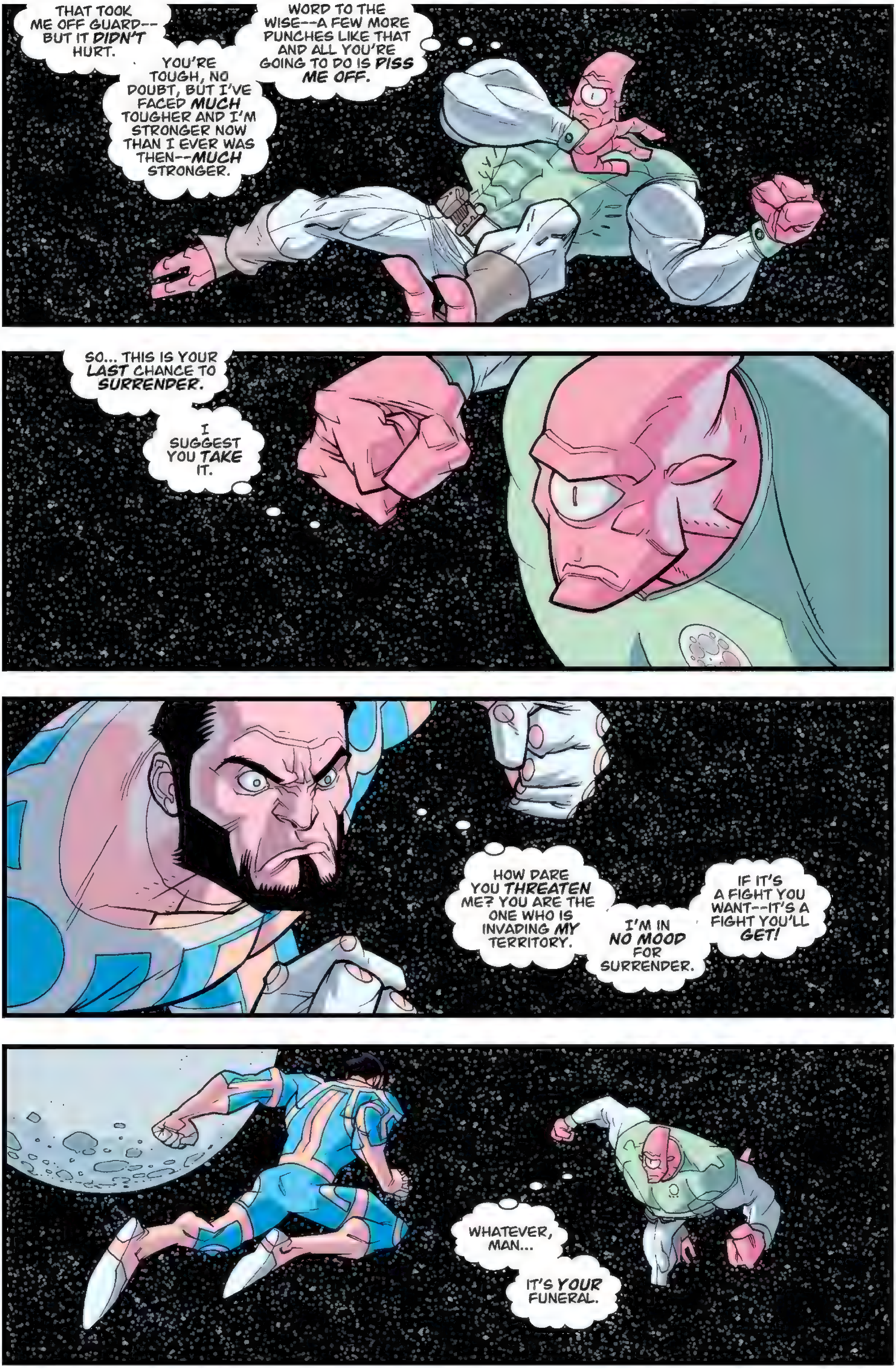

DEEP UNDERGROUND, BENEATH THE UNITED STATES PENTAGON. CECIL STEDMAN HEADS UP THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
REX SPLODE IS CURRENTLY IN THE MEDICAL CENTER, HEALING AFTER SUFFERING A GUNSHOT WOUND TO THE HEAD, BROKEN LEG AND SEVERED HAND.
THIS IS AN IMPROVEMENT REALLY--I'D THANK THAT LIZARD LEAGUE GOON--IF HE WASN'T DEAD.
WELL, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T, ACTUALLY.
BUT THIS NEW HAND IS PRETTY COOL--IT FIRES PROJECTILES AFTER I CHARGE THEM UP. IT'S GOT MUCH MORE RANGE THAN JUST THROWING THINGS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ANYWAY? I NEVER REALLY EXPECTED YOU TO VISIT.
LOOK, YOU'RE A SCUMBAG, OF THE HIGHEST ORDER--
THANKS.
YEAH, YOU KNOW WHAT? I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY I CAME EITHER.
YOU'RE JUST STOPPING BY ON YOUR WAY TO VISIT INVINCIBLE. THAT'S IT, RIGHT?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D BE VISITING HIM?
I KNOW YOU ALWAYS KINDA HAD A THING FOR HIM. HE'S A GOOD GUY--YOU SHOULD GO FOR IT.
HE JUST TOLD ME HE BROKE UP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.

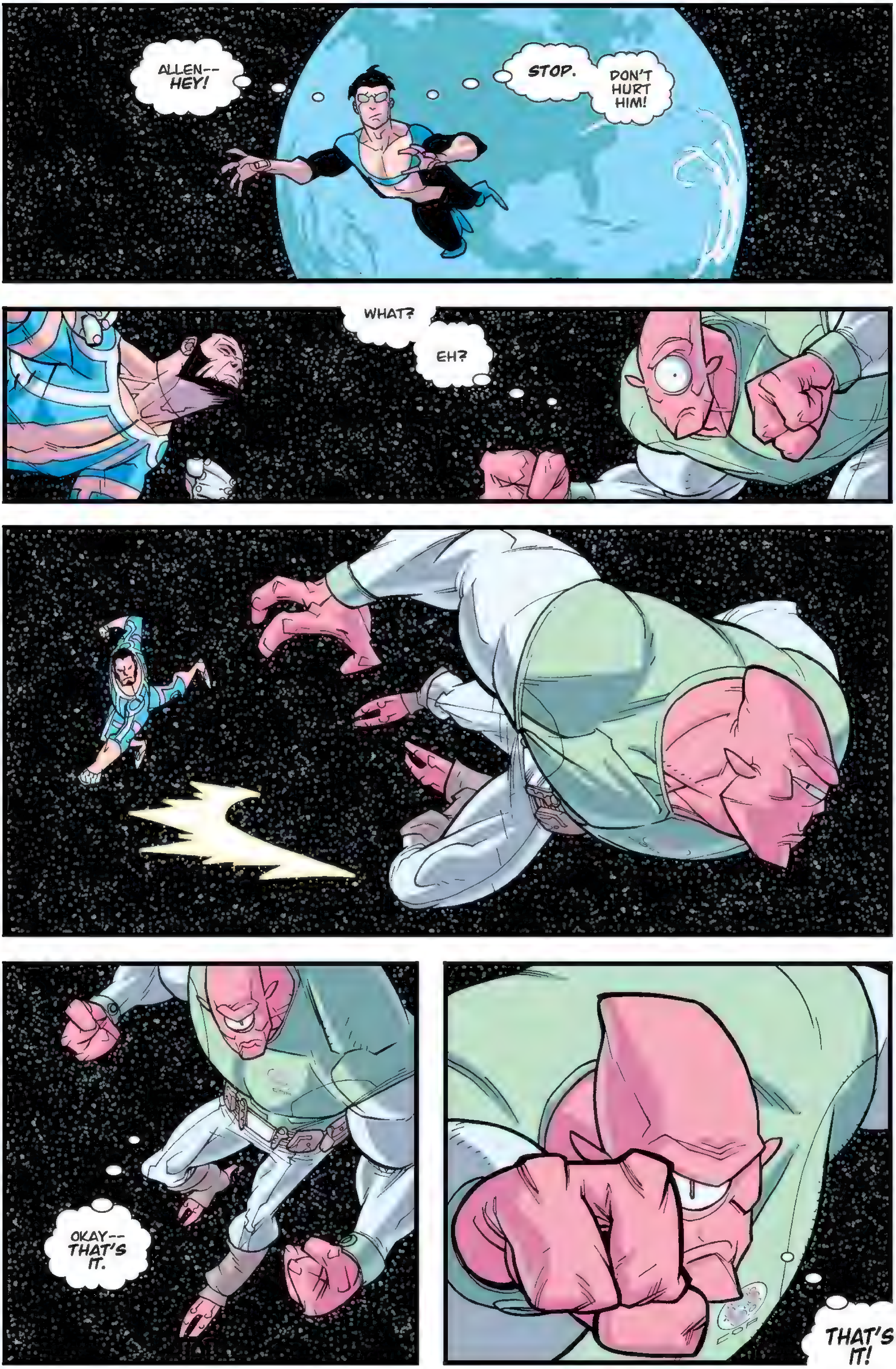
UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT IN YOUR TIME--MORE THAN ANYONE COULD BEAR, BUT YOU **DON'T** HAVE TO DO THIS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACT LIKE THIS **ISN'T** AFFECTING YOU. YOU CAN TAKE TIME OFF.
MAYBE YOU **SHOULD** TAKE SOME TIME OFF.
I AM **FINE.** I HAVE DEALT WITH DEATH ALL MY LIFE. I AM SADDENED BY DUPLI-KATE'S PASSING BUT SHE IS NOT THE FIRST WIFE I HAVE LOST.
I WILL DEAL WITH THIS IN MY OWN WAY--IT WILL NOT EFFECT MY ABILITY TO LEAD THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. TO BE HONEST, I **NEED** THE DISTRACTION.
THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. IF YOU'RE SURE--
HOLD ON--
SO WE'VE GOT A PROJECTILE FROM DEEP SPACE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR EARTH?
HOW LARGE?
AT THAT SIZE--WITH A TRAJECTORY THAT DELIBERATE IT MUST BE AN ATTACK. IT--
ATTACK? I'LL HANDLE THIS.
I'LL MEET THE OBJECT IN SPACE--IT **WON'T** REACH EARTH--YOU CAN **COUNT** ON THAT.
IMMORTAL--WAIT--
≈SIGH≈
DID YOU SAY IT'S **ORGANIC?** APPEARS TO BE LIVING?
HM.
I THINK I KNOW WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.

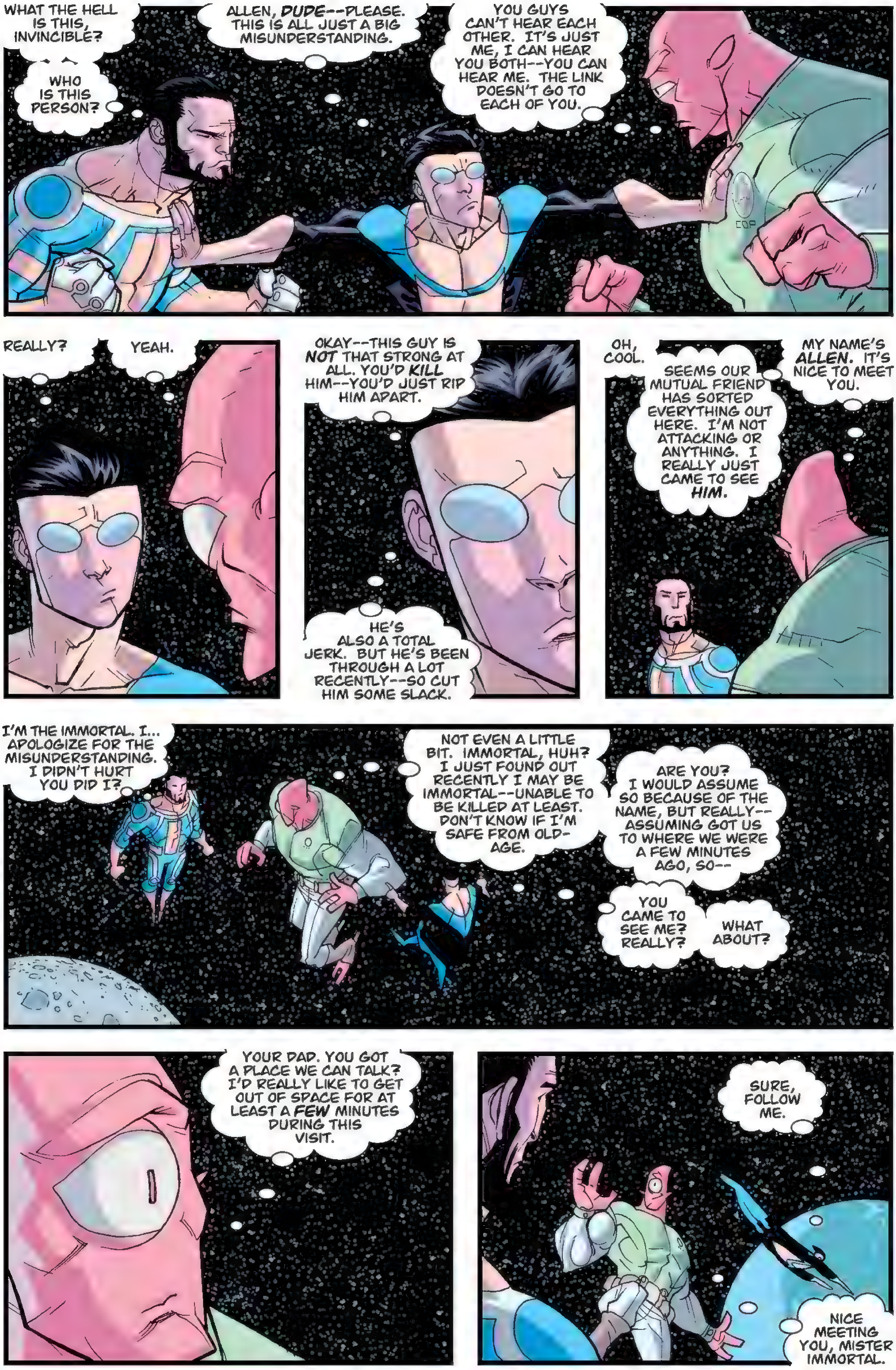
THE GRAYSON HOME.
HE'S OUT. HE DOESN'T USUALLY GO DOWN FOR A NAP THIS EASY. I GUESS FLYING MAKES HIM TIRED.
DOES FLYING MAKE *YOU* TIRED?
AT FIRST MORE THAN NOW. I HAVE TO REALLY PUSH IT WITH MY SPEED TO BREAK A SWEAT FLYING. IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN IF YOU CAN'T DO IT.
SO... WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THE LITTLE GUY?
ARE YOU REALLY FAILING ALL YOUR CLASSES? I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
YEAH. IT'S JUST HARD TO FIND THE TIME.
HONESTLY, I JUST *DO NOT* TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. I DON'T CARE ABOUT IT. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT TO ME.
I CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU. THINGS LIKE SCHOOL *MUST* SEEM UNIMPORTANT WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN SPACE TRYING TO SAVE THE WHOLE PLANET.
DO YOU *WANT* TO QUIT?
NEED YOU IN SPACE, KID--RIGHT NOW.
AGAIN? I THOUGHT THEY FINISHED THE SPACE STATION ALREADY.
THIS IS SOMETHING *ELSE*--*GO!*
WE CAN FINISH THIS LATER. GO ON--BE A HERO... MAKE ME *PROUD*.
I'LL SEE YOU SOON.

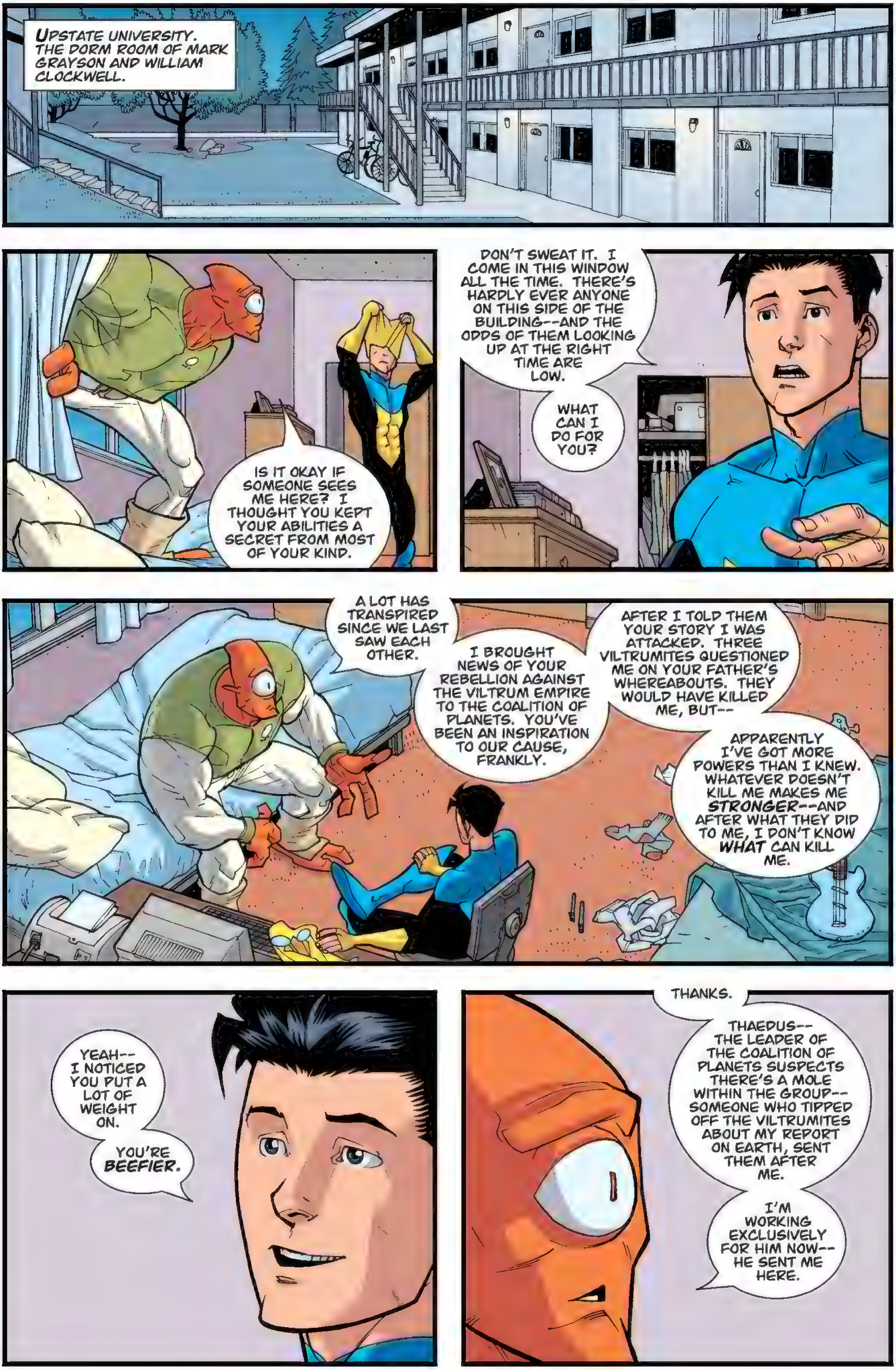
COP
OH, HEY THERE. HAVE WE MET? I DON'T THINK WE HAVE.
CAN YOU HELP ME OUT? I'M LOOKING FOR--
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!
CAREFUL THERE, PAL-- YOU'RE LIABLE TO HURT--

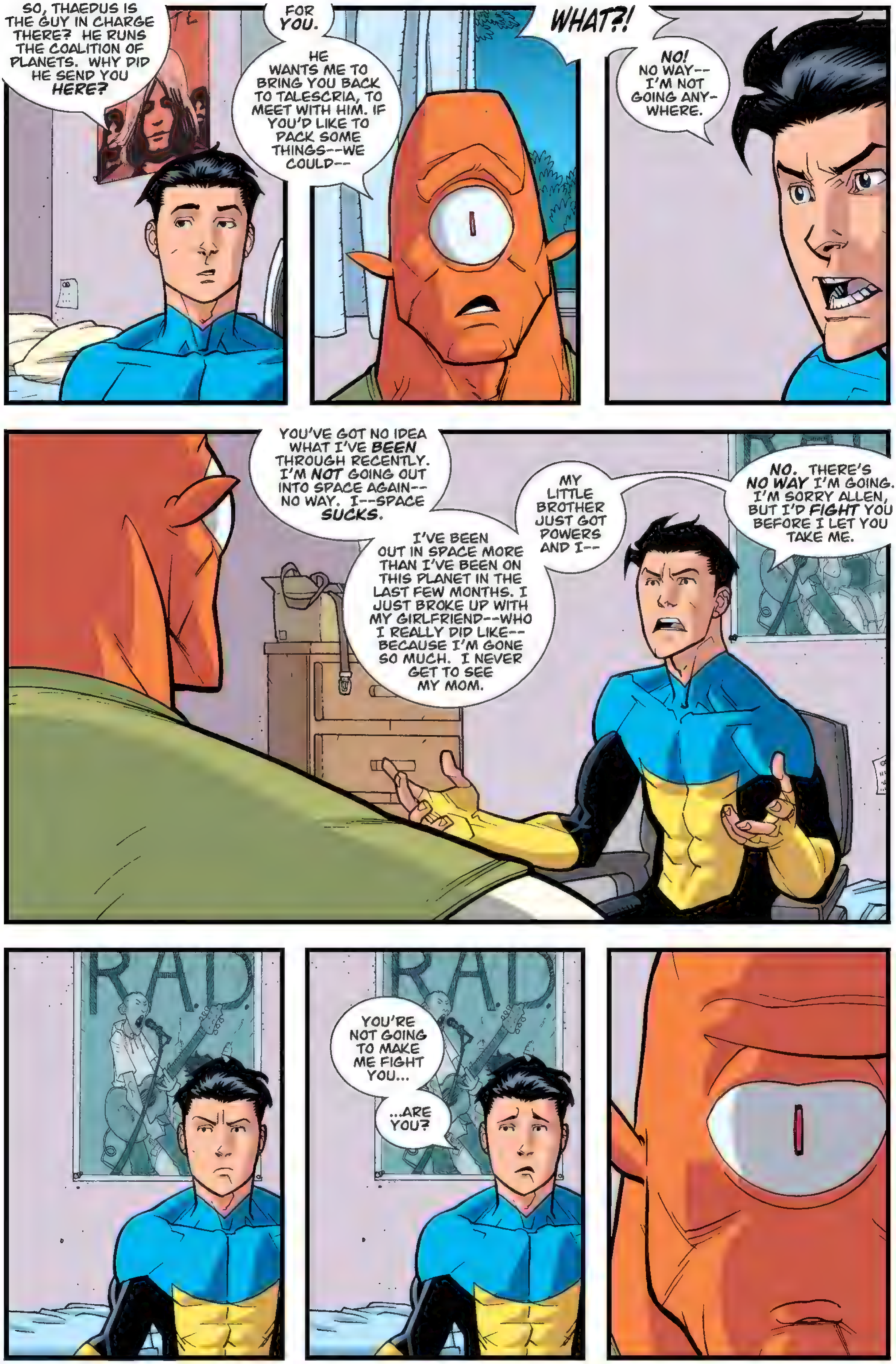
--SOMEONE.

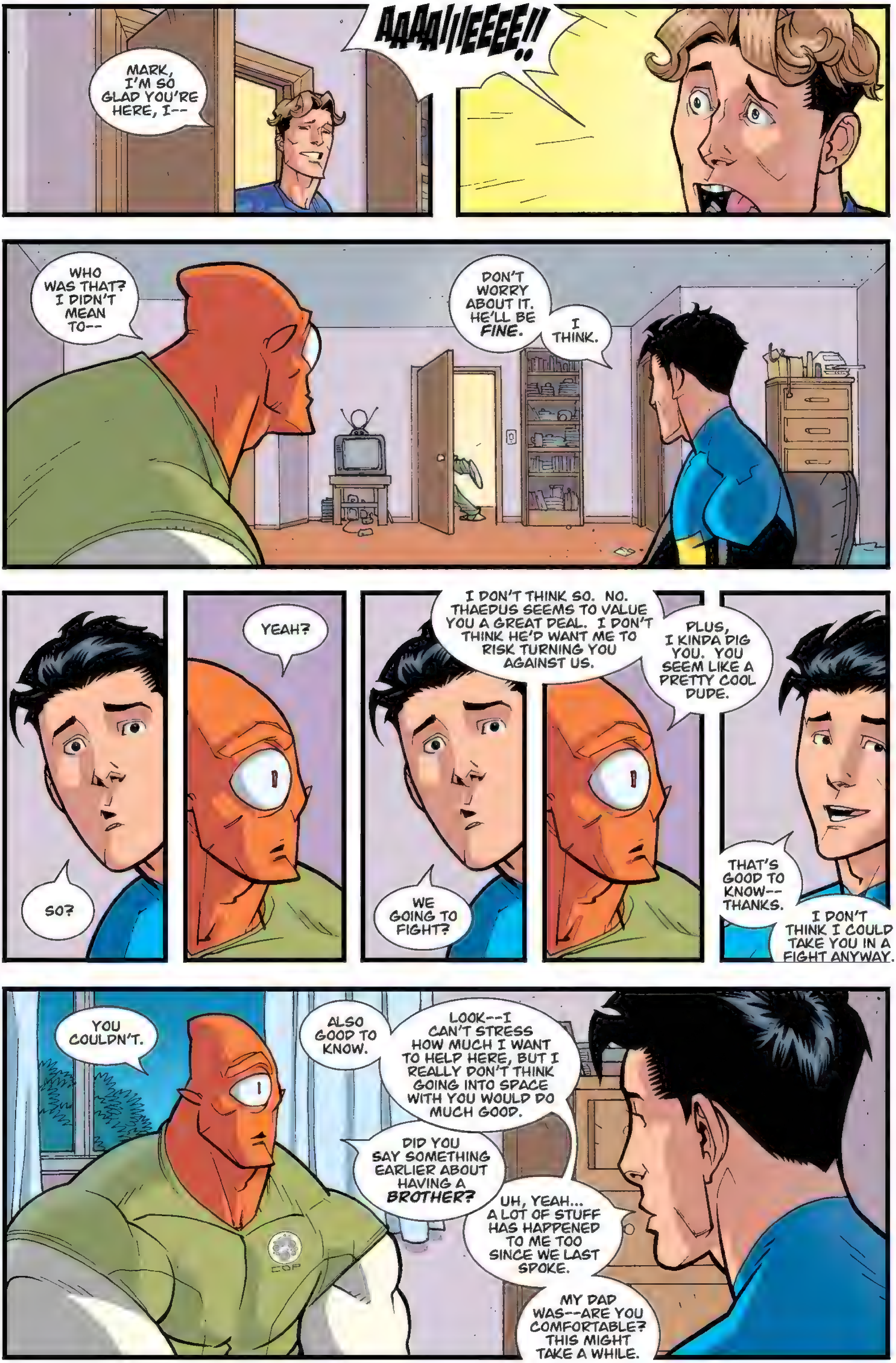

THAT TOOK ME OFF GUARD-- BUT IT DIDN'T HURT.
YOU'RE TOUGH, NO DOUBT, BUT I'VE FACED MUCH TOUGHER AND I'M STRONGER NOW THAN I EVER WAS THEN--MUCH STRONGER.
WORD TO THE WISE--A FEW MORE PUNCHES LIKE THAT AND ALL YOU'RE GOING TO DO IS PISS ME OFF.
SO... THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SURRENDER.
I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT.
HOW DARE YOU THREATEN ME? YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS INVADING MY TERRITORY.
I'M IN NO MOOD FOR SURRENDER.
IF IT'S A FIGHT YOU WANT--IT'S A FIGHT YOU'LL GET!
WHATEVER, MAN...
IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.

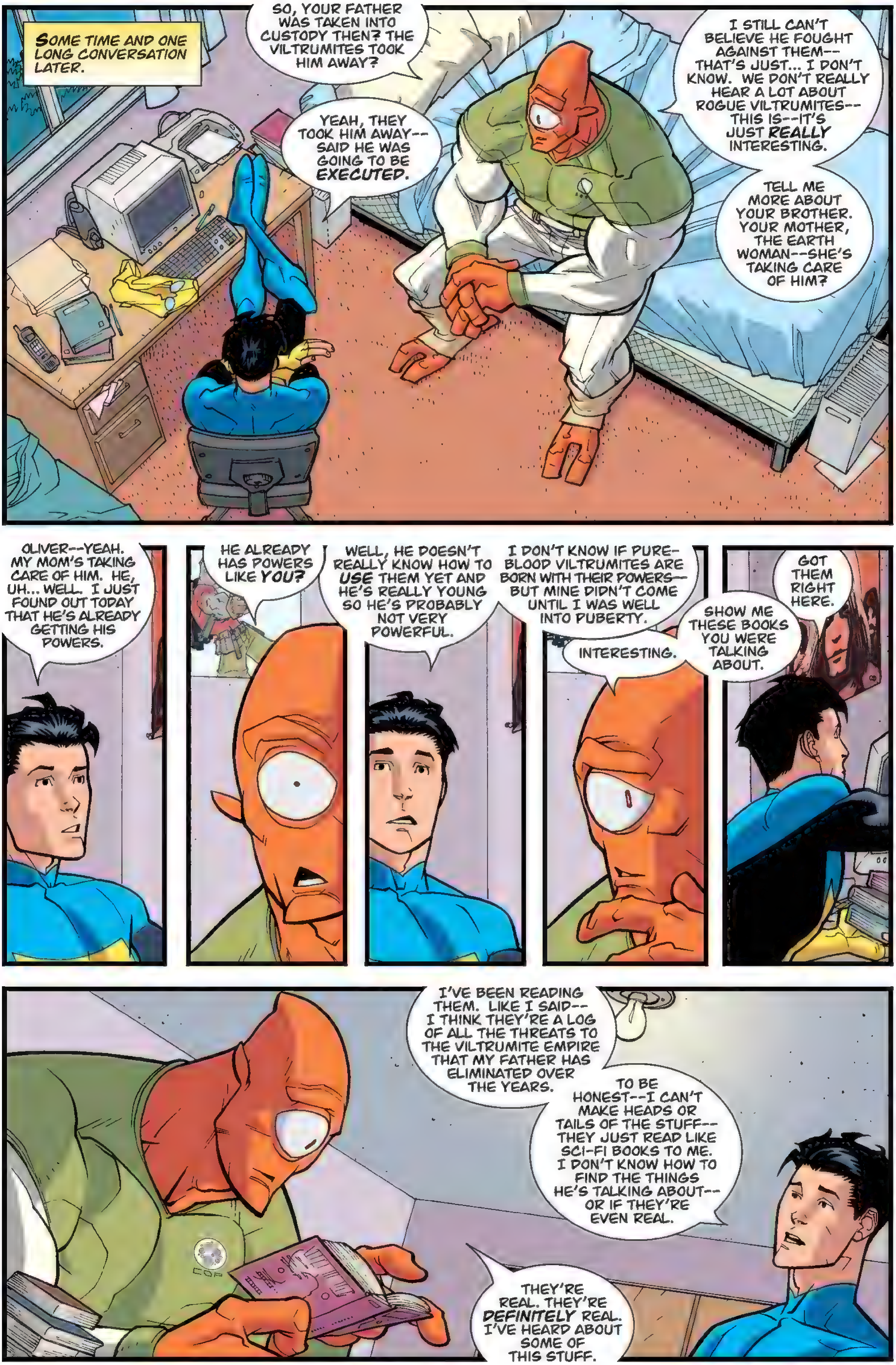

ALLEN-- HEY!
STOP.
DON'T HURT HIM!
WHAT?
EH?
OKAY-- THAT'S IT.
THAT'S IT!

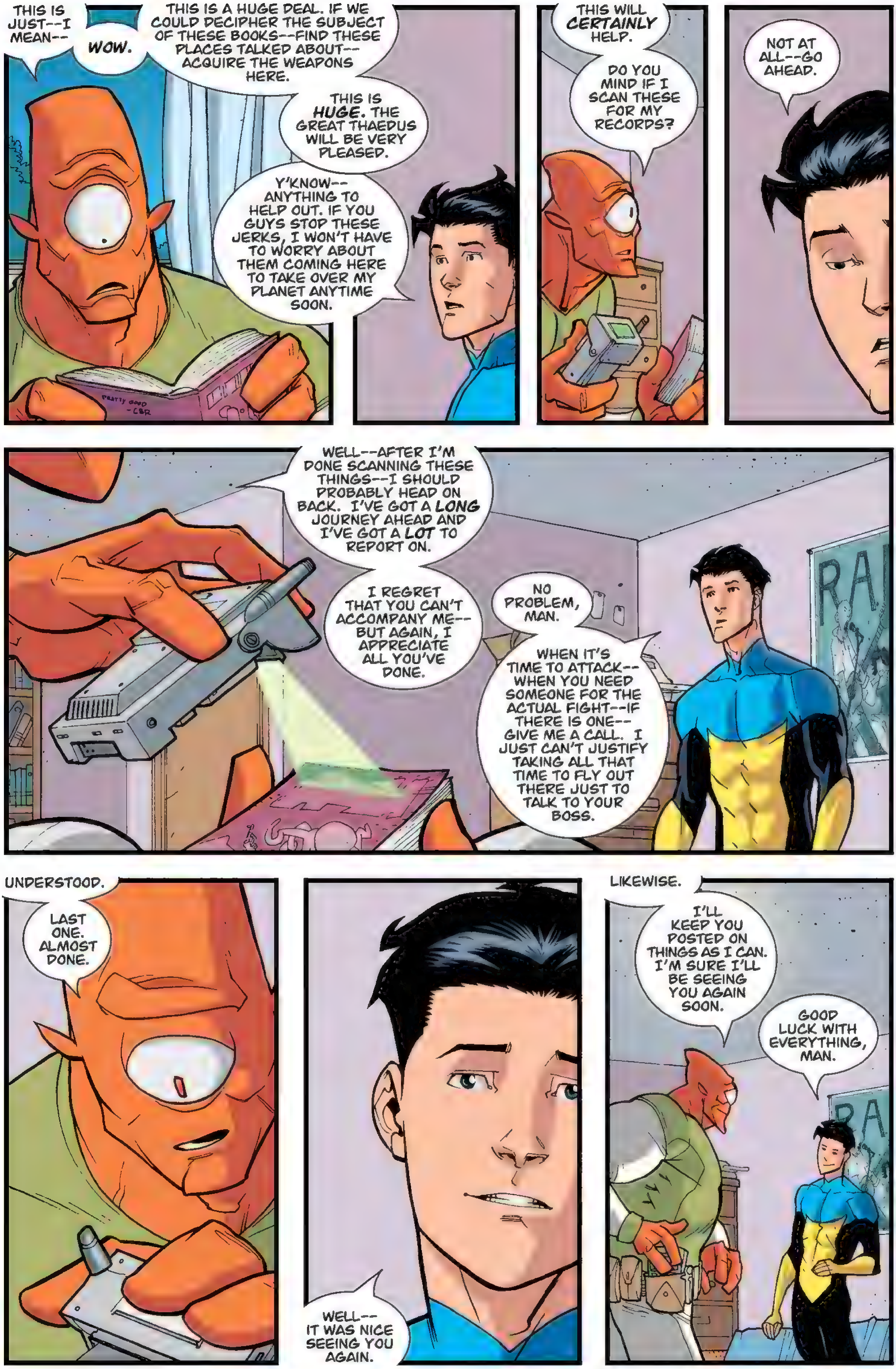

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS, INVINCIBLE?
WHO IS THIS PERSON?
ALLEN, DUDE--PLEASE. THIS IS ALL JUST A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING.
YOU GUYS CAN'T HEAR EACH OTHER. IT'S JUST ME, I CAN HEAR YOU BOTH--YOU CAN HEAR ME. THE LINK DOESN'T GO TO EACH OF YOU.
COP
REALLY?
YEAH.
OKAY--THIS GUY IS NOT THAT STRONG AT ALL. YOU'D KILL HIM--YOU'D JUST RIP HIM APART.
HE'S ALSO A TOTAL JERK. BUT HE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT RECENTLY--SO CUT HIM SOME SLACK.
OH, COOL.
MY NAME'S ALLEN. IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU.
SEEMS OUR MUTUAL FRIEND HAS SORTED EVERYTHING OUT HERE. I'M NOT ATTACKING OR ANYTHING. I REALLY JUST CAME TO SEE HIM.
I'M THE IMMORTAL. I... APOLOGIZE FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING. I DIDN'T HURT YOU DID I?
NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT. IMMORTAL, HUH? I JUST FOUND OUT RECENTLY I MAY BE IMMORTAL--UNABLE TO BE KILLED AT LEAST. DON'T KNOW IF I'M SAFE FROM OLD-AGE.
ARE YOU? I WOULD ASSUME SO BECAUSE OF THE NAME, BUT REALLY--ASSUMING GOT US TO WHERE WE WERE A FEW MINUTES AGO, SO--
YOU CAME TO SEE ME? REALLY?
WHAT ABOUT?
YOUR DAD. YOU GOT A PLACE WE CAN TALK? I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET OUT OF SPACE FOR AT LEAST A FEW MINUTES DURING THIS VISIT.
SURE, FOLLOW ME.
NICE MEETING YOU, MISTER IMMORTAL.

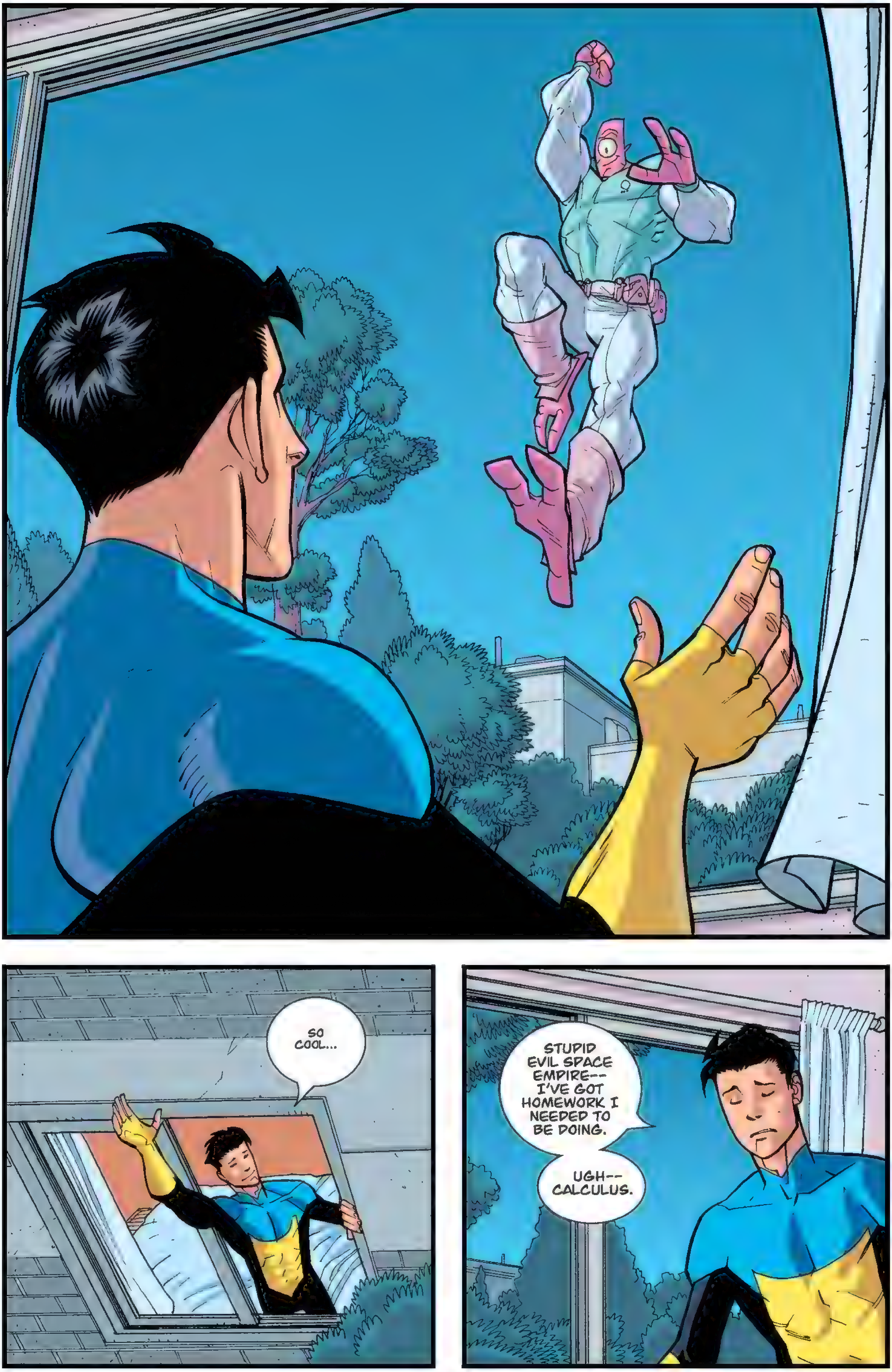

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
IS IT OKAY IF SOMEONE SEES ME HERE? I THOUGHT YOU KEPT YOUR ABILITIES A SECRET FROM MOST OF YOUR KIND.
DON'T SWEAT IT. I COME IN THIS WINDOW ALL THE TIME. THERE'S HARDLY EVER ANYONE ON THIS SIDE OF THE BUILDING--AND THE ODDS OF THEM LOOKING UP AT THE RIGHT TIME ARE LOW.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
A LOT HAS TRANSPIRED SINCE WE LAST SAW EACH OTHER.
I BROUGHT NEWS OF YOUR REBELLION AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS. YOU'VE BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO OUR CAUSE, FRANKLY.
AFTER I TOLD THEM YOUR STORY I WAS ATTACKED. THREE VILTRUMITES QUESTIONED ME ON YOUR FATHER'S WHEREABOUTS. THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED ME, BUT--
APPARENTLY I'VE GOT MORE POWERS THAN I KNEW. WHATEVER DOESN'T KILL ME MAKES ME **STRONGER**--AND AFTER WHAT THEY DID TO ME, I DON'T KNOW **WHAT** CAN KILL ME.
YEAH--I NOTICED YOU PUT A LOT OF WEIGHT ON.
YOU'RE **BEEFIER.**
THANKS.
THAEDUS--THE LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS SUSPECTS THERE'S A MOLE WITHIN THE GROUP--SOMEONE WHO TIPPED OFF THE VILTRUMITES ABOUT MY REPORT ON EARTH, SENT THEM AFTER ME.
I'M WORKING EXCLUSIVELY FOR HIM NOW--HE SENT ME HERE.

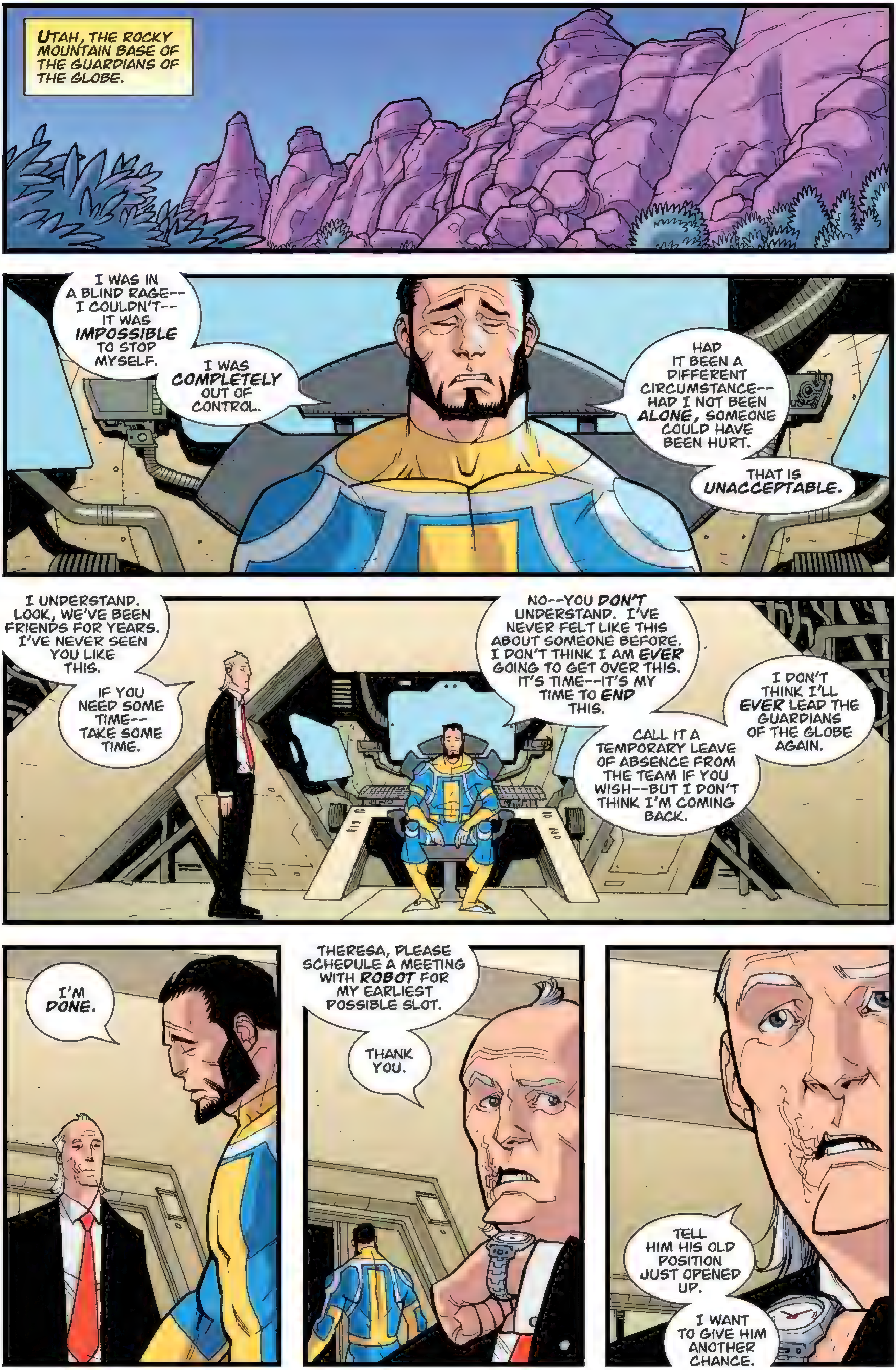

SO, THAEDUS IS THE GUY IN CHARGE THERE? HE RUNS THE COALITION OF PLANETS. WHY DID HE SEND YOU HERE?
FOR YOU.
HE WANTS ME TO BRING YOU BACK TO TALESCRIA, TO MEET WITH HIM. IF YOU'D LIKE TO PACK SOME THINGS--WE COULD--
WHAT?!
NO! NO WAY-- I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
YOU'VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH RECENTLY. I'M NOT GOING OUT INTO SPACE AGAIN-- NO WAY. I--SPACE SUCKS.
I'VE BEEN OUT IN SPACE MORE THAN I'VE BEEN ON THIS PLANET IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. I JUST BROKE UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND--WHO I REALLY DID LIKE-- BECAUSE I'M GONE SO MUCH. I NEVER GET TO SEE MY MOM.
MY LITTLE BROTHER JUST GOT POWERS AND I--
NO. THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING. I'M SORRY ALLEN, BUT I'D FIGHT YOU BEFORE I LET YOU TAKE ME.
R.A.D.
R.A.D.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE ME FIGHT YOU...
...ARE YOU?

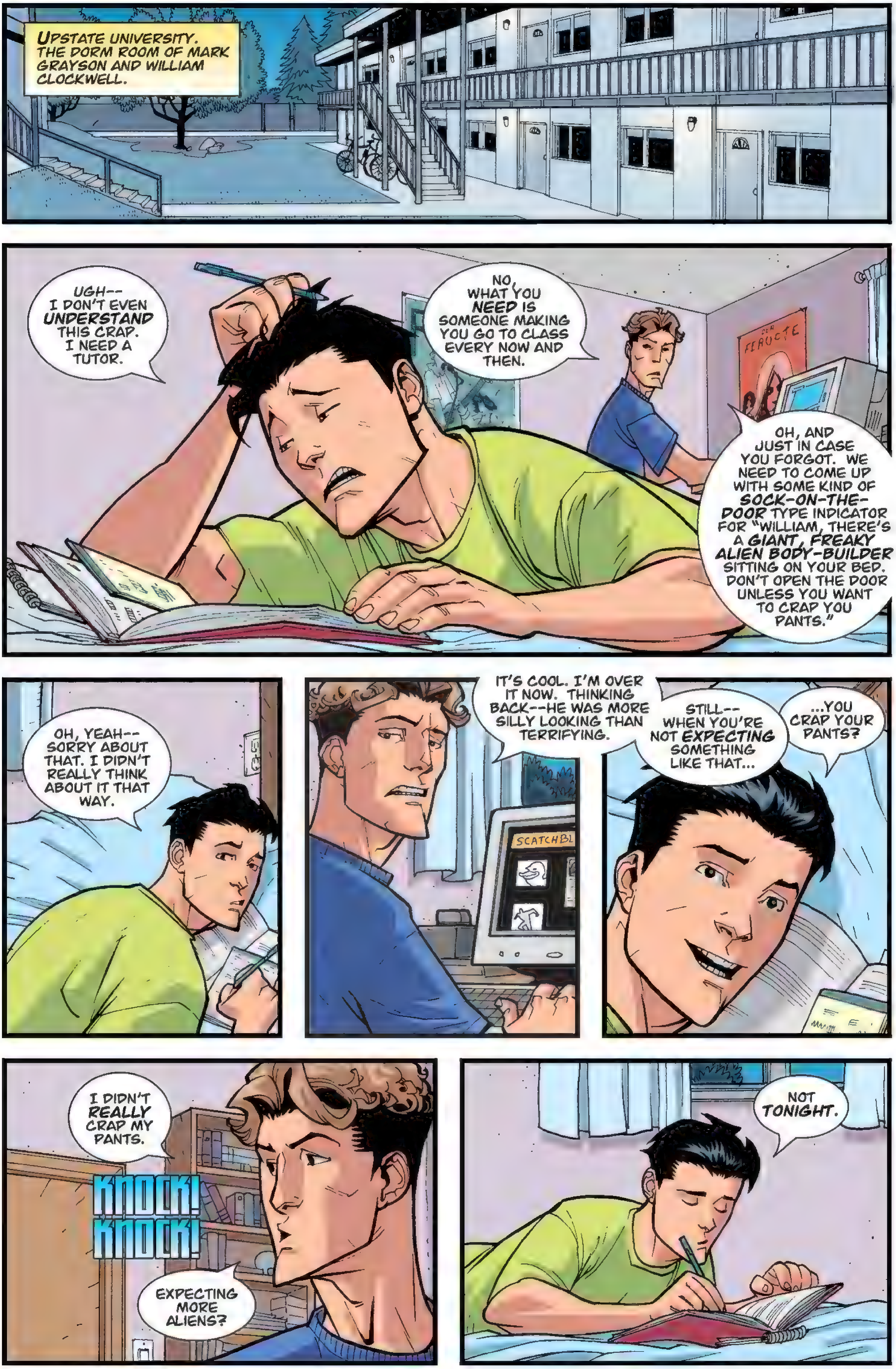

MARK, I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE, I--
AAAAIIIEEEE!!
WHO WAS THAT? I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. HE'LL BE *FINE.*
I THINK.
SO?
YEAH?
WE GOING TO FIGHT?
I DON'T THINK SO. NO. THAEDUS SEEMS TO VALUE YOU A GREAT DEAL. I DON'T THINK HE'D WANT ME TO RISK TURNING YOU AGAINST US.
PLUS, I KINDA DIG YOU. YOU SEEM LIKE A PRETTY COOL DUDE.
THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW--THANKS.
I DON'T THINK I COULD TAKE YOU IN A FIGHT ANYWAY.
YOU COULDN'T.
ALSO GOOD TO KNOW.
LOOK--I CAN'T STRESS HOW MUCH I WANT TO HELP HERE, BUT I REALLY DON'T THINK GOING INTO SPACE WITH YOU WOULD DO MUCH GOOD.
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING EARLIER ABOUT HAVING A *BROTHER?*
COP
UH, YEAH... A LOT OF STUFF HAS HAPPENED TO ME TOO SINCE WE LAST SPOKE.
MY DAD WAS--ARE YOU COMFORTABLE? THIS MIGHT TAKE A WHILE.

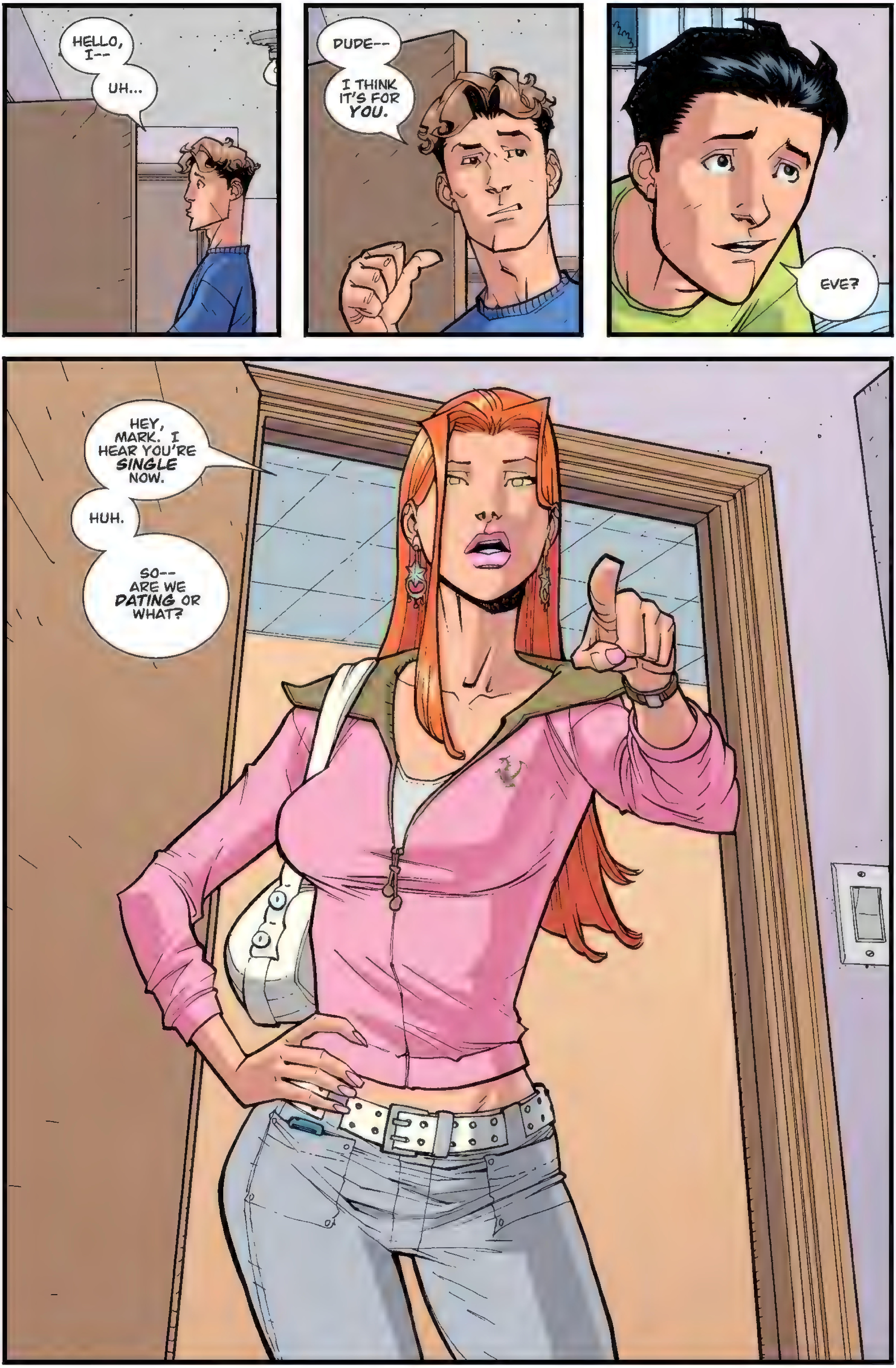

SOME TIME AND ONE LONG CONVERSATION LATER.
SO, YOUR FATHER WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THEN? THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY?
YEAH, THEY TOOK HIM AWAY--SAID HE WAS GOING TO BE **EXECUTED**.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE FOUGHT AGAINST THEM--THAT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW. WE DON'T REALLY HEAR A LOT ABOUT ROGUE VILTRUMITES--THIS IS--IT'S JUST **REALLY** INTERESTING.
TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR BROTHER. YOUR MOTHER, THE EARTH WOMAN--SHE'S TAKING CARE OF HIM?
OLIVER--YEAH. MY MOM'S TAKING CARE OF HIM. HE, UH... WELL. I JUST FOUND OUT TODAY THAT HE'S ALREADY GETTING HIS POWERS.
HE ALREADY HAS POWERS LIKE ***YOU?***
WELL, HE DOESN'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO ***USE*** THEM YET AND HE'S REALLY YOUNG SO HE'S PROBABLY NOT VERY POWERFUL.
I DON'T KNOW IF PURE-BLOOD VILTRUMITES ARE BORN WITH THEIR POWERS--BUT MINE DIDN'T COME UNTIL I WAS WELL INTO PUBERTY.
INTERESTING.
SHOW ME THESE BOOKS YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT.
GOT THEM RIGHT HERE.
I'VE BEEN READING THEM. LIKE I SAID--I THINK THEY'RE A LOG OF ALL THE THREATS TO THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE THAT MY FATHER HAS ELIMINATED OVER THE YEARS.
TO BE HONEST--I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF THE STUFF--THEY JUST READ LIKE SCI-FI BOOKS TO ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIND THE THINGS HE'S TALKING ABOUT--OR IF THEY'RE EVEN REAL.
THEY'RE REAL. THEY'RE ***DEFINITELY*** REAL. I'VE HEARD ABOUT SOME OF THIS STUFF.


THIS IS JUST--I MEAN--
WOW.
THIS IS A HUGE DEAL. IF WE COULD DECIPHER THE SUBJECT OF THESE BOOKS--FIND THESE PLACES TALKED ABOUT--ACQUIRE THE WEAPONS HERE.
THIS IS **HUGE.** THE GREAT THAEDUS WILL BE VERY PLEASED.
PRETTY GOOD -CBR
Y'KNOW--ANYTHING TO HELP OUT. IF YOU GUYS STOP THESE JERKS, I WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM COMING HERE TO TAKE OVER MY PLANET ANYTIME SOON.
THIS WILL **CERTAINLY** HELP.
DO YOU MIND IF I SCAN THESE FOR MY RECORDS?
NOT AT ALL--GO AHEAD.
WELL--AFTER I'M DONE SCANNING THESE THINGS--I SHOULD PROBABLY HEAD ON BACK. I'VE GOT A **LONG** JOURNEY AHEAD AND I'VE GOT A **LOT** TO REPORT ON.
I REGRET THAT YOU CAN'T ACCOMPANY ME--BUT AGAIN, I APPRECIATE ALL YOU'VE DONE.
NO PROBLEM, MAN.
WHEN IT'S TIME TO ATTACK--WHEN YOU NEED SOMEONE FOR THE ACTUAL FIGHT--IF THERE IS ONE--GIVE ME A CALL. I JUST CAN'T JUSTIFY TAKING ALL THAT TIME TO FLY OUT THERE JUST TO TALK TO YOUR BOSS.
UNDERSTOOD.
LAST ONE. ALMOST DONE.
WELL--IT WAS NICE SEEING YOU AGAIN.
LIKEWISE.
I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED ON THINGS AS I CAN. I'M SURE I'LL BE SEEING YOU AGAIN SOON.
GOOD LUCK WITH EVERYTHING, MAN.


SO COOL...
STUPID EVIL SPACE EMPIRE-- I'VE GOT HOMEWORK I NEEDED TO BE DOING.
UGH-- CALCULUS.

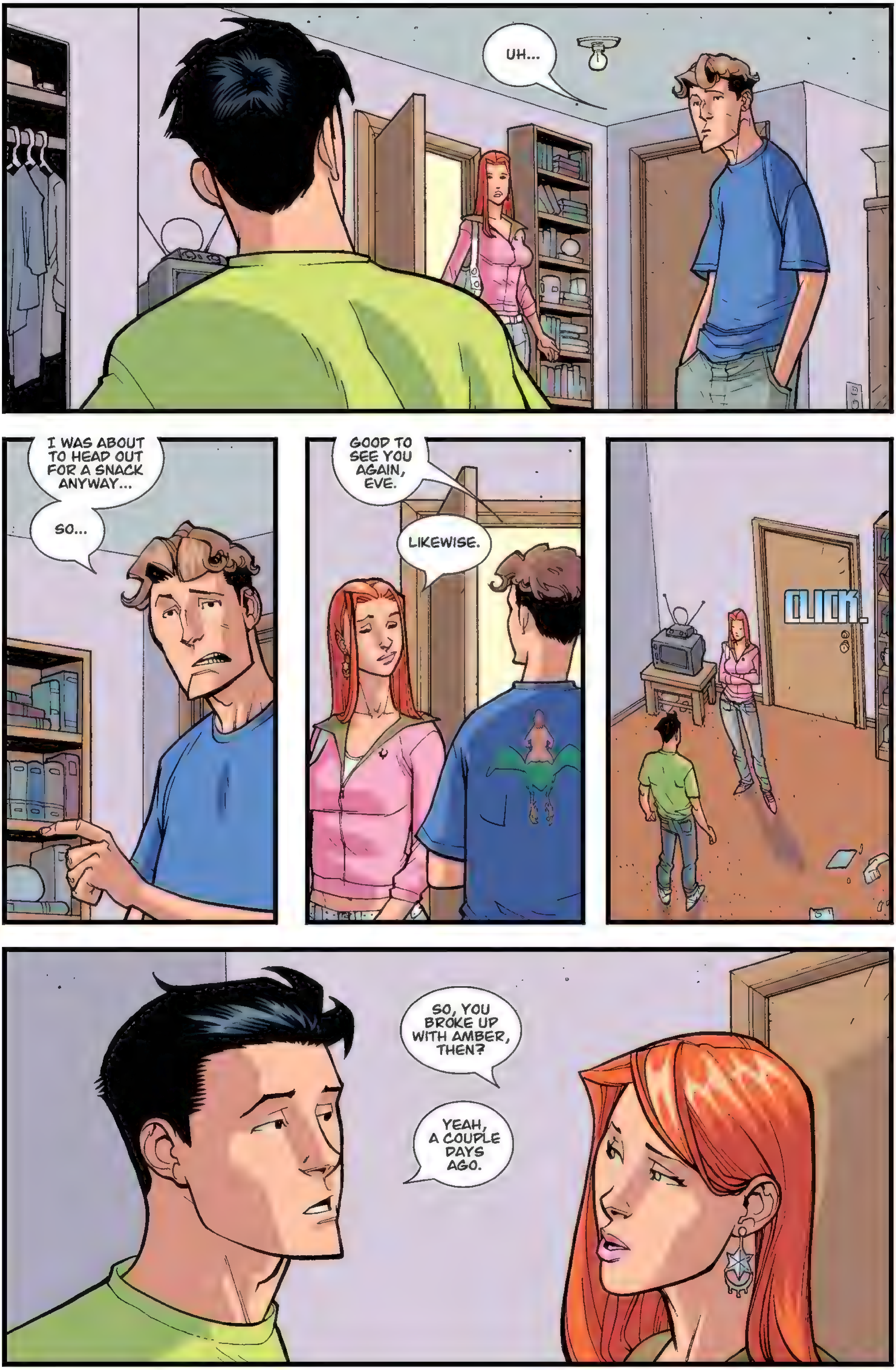

UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I WAS IN A BLIND RAGE-- I COULDN'T-- IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP MYSELF.
I WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL.
HAD IT BEEN A DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCE-- HAD I NOT BEEN ALONE, SOMEONE COULD HAVE BEEN HURT.
THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE.
I UNDERSTAND. LOOK, WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS. I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.
IF YOU NEED SOME TIME-- TAKE SOME TIME.
NO--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'VE NEVER FELT LIKE THIS ABOUT SOMEONE BEFORE. I DON'T THINK I AM EVER GOING TO GET OVER THIS. IT'S TIME--IT'S MY TIME TO END THIS.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER LEAD THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE AGAIN.
CALL IT A TEMPORARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM THE TEAM IF YOU WISH--BUT I DON'T THINK I'M COMING BACK.
I'M DONE.
THERESA, PLEASE SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH ROBOT FOR MY EARLIEST POSSIBLE SLOT.
THANK YOU.
TELL HIM HIS OLD POSITION JUST OPENED UP.
I WANT TO GIVE HIM ANOTHER CHANCE.

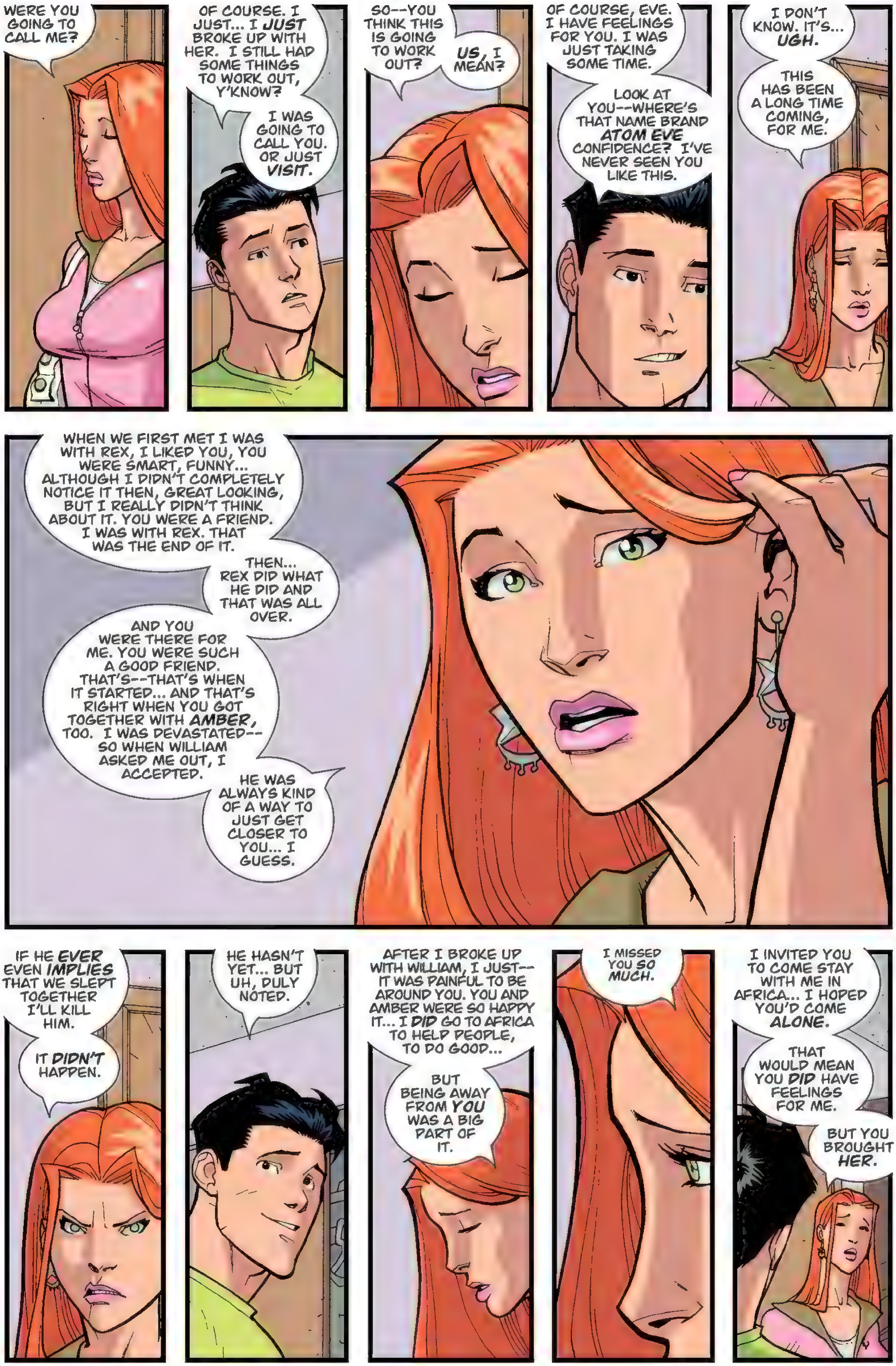

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
UGH-- I DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THIS CRAP. I NEED A TUTOR.
NO, WHAT YOU NEED IS SOMEONE MAKING YOU GO TO CLASS EVERY NOW AND THEN.
OH, AND JUST IN CASE YOU FORGOT. WE NEED TO COME UP WITH SOME KIND OF SOCK-ON-THE-DOOR TYPE INDICATOR FOR "WILLIAM, THERE'S A GIANT, FREAKY ALIEN BODY-BUILDER SITTING ON YOUR BED. DON'T OPEN THE DOOR UNLESS YOU WANT TO CRAP YOU PANTS."
OH, YEAH-- SORRY ABOUT THAT. I DIDN'T REALLY THINK ABOUT IT THAT WAY.
IT'S COOL. I'M OVER IT NOW. THINKING BACK--HE WAS MORE SILLY LOOKING THAN TERRIFYING.
SCATCHBL
STILL-- WHEN YOU'RE NOT EXPECTING SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
...YOU CRAP YOUR PANTS?
I DIDN'T REALLY CRAP MY PANTS.
KNOCK! KNOCK!
EXPECTING MORE ALIENS?
NOT TONIGHT.

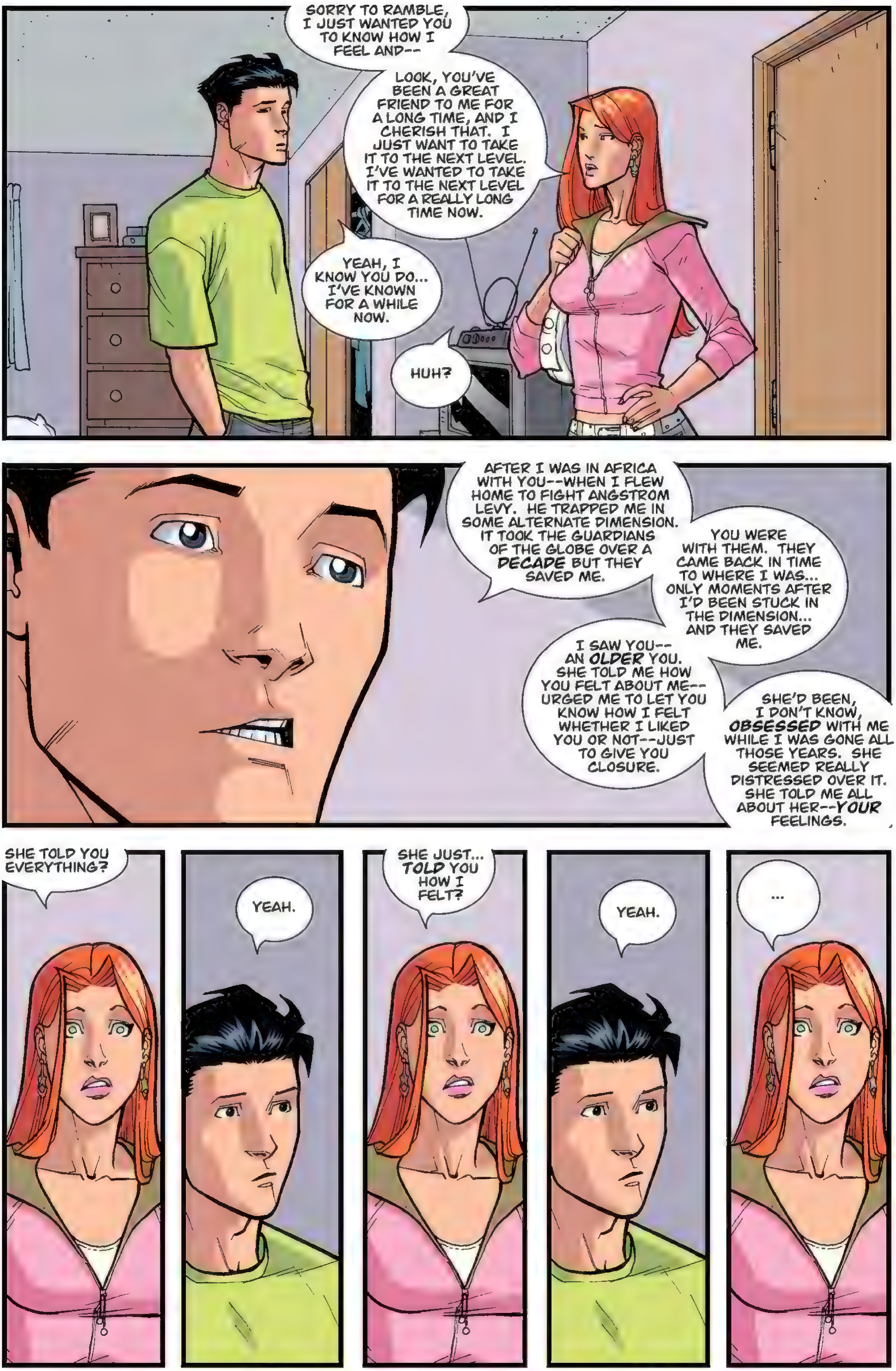

HELLO, I--
UH...
DUDE--
I THINK IT'S FOR *YOU.*
EVE?
HEY, MARK. I HEAR YOU'RE *SINGLE* NOW.
HUH.
SO-- ARE WE *DATING* OR WHAT?

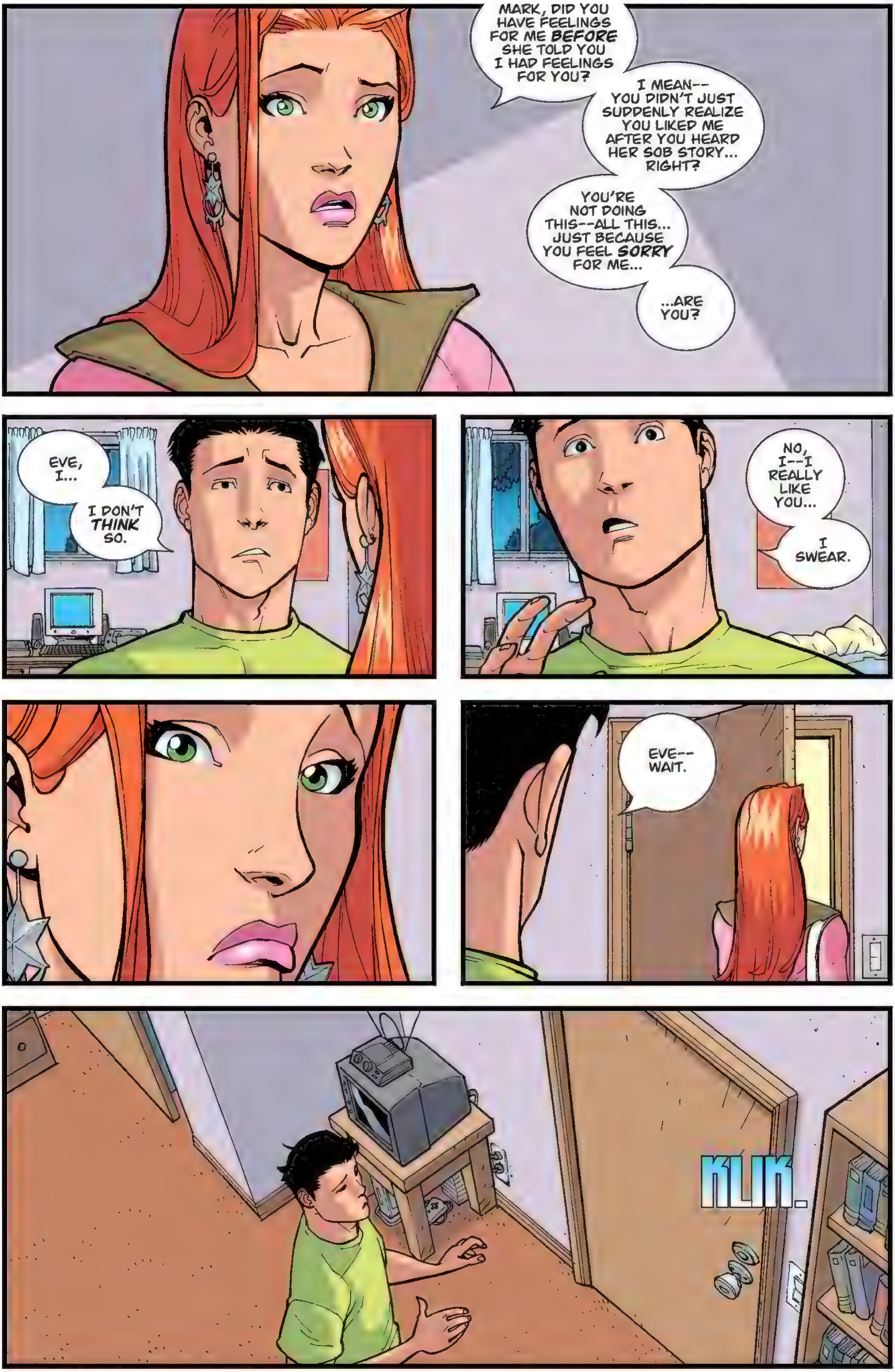
COP

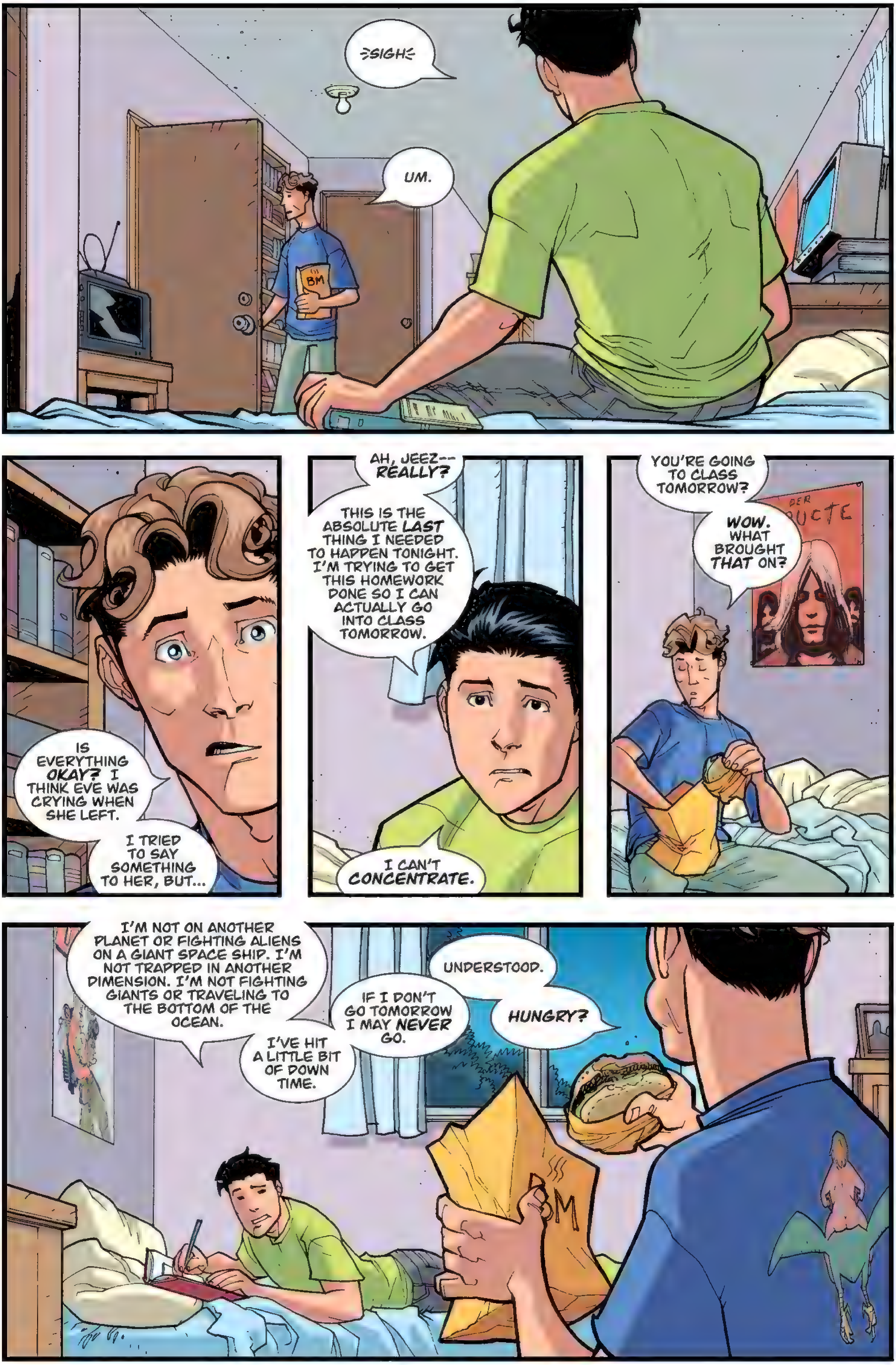
ISSUE FORTY-FOUR
Ryan


UH...
I WAS ABOUT TO HEAD OUT FOR A SNACK ANYWAY...
SO...
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, EVE.
LIKEWISE.
CLICK.
SO, YOU BROKE UP WITH AMBER, THEN?
YEAH, A COUPLE DAYS AGO.

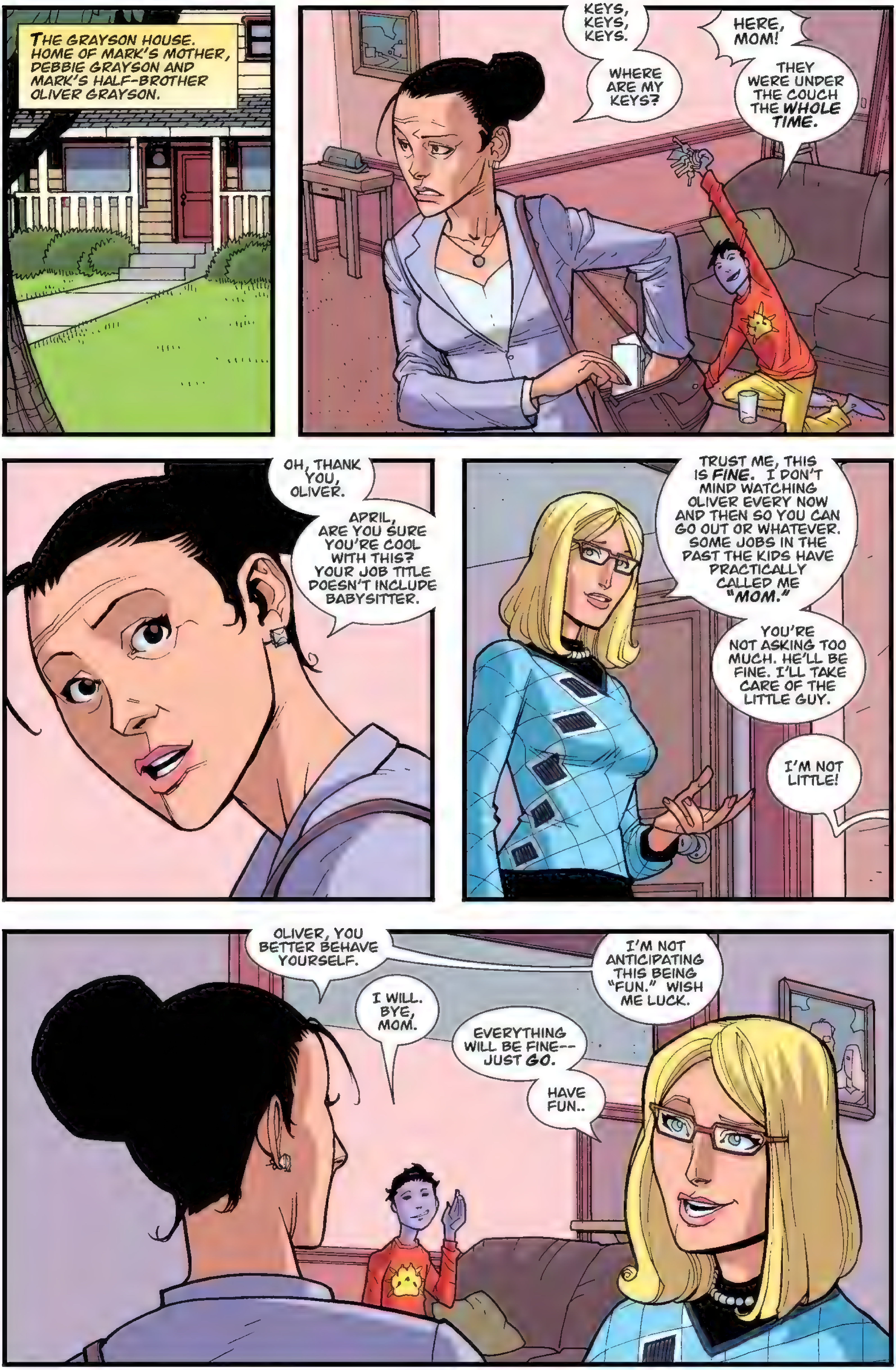

WERE YOU GOING TO CALL ME?
OF COURSE. I JUST... I *JUST* BROKE UP WITH HER. I STILL HAD SOME THINGS TO WORK OUT, Y'KNOW?
I WAS GOING TO CALL YOU. OR JUST *VISIT*.
SO--YOU THINK THIS IS GOING TO WORK OUT?
US, I MEAN?
OF COURSE, EVE. I HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU. I WAS JUST TAKING SOME TIME.
LOOK AT YOU--WHERE'S THAT NAME BRAND *ATOM EVE* CONFIDENCE? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S... *UGH*.
THIS HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, FOR ME.
WHEN WE FIRST MET I WAS WITH REX. I LIKED YOU, YOU WERE SMART, FUNNY... ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T COMPLETELY NOTICE IT THEN, GREAT LOOKING, BUT I REALLY DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT. YOU WERE A FRIEND. I WAS WITH REX. THAT WAS THE END OF IT.
THEN... REX DID WHAT HE DID AND THAT WAS ALL OVER.
AND YOU WERE THERE FOR ME. YOU WERE SUCH A GOOD FRIEND. THAT'S--THAT'S WHEN IT STARTED... AND THAT'S RIGHT WHEN YOU GOT TOGETHER WITH *AMBER*, TOO. I WAS DEVASTATED--SO WHEN WILLIAM ASKED ME OUT, I ACCEPTED.
HE WAS ALWAYS KIND OF A WAY TO JUST GET CLOSER TO YOU... I GUESS.
IF HE *EVER* EVEN *IMPLIES* THAT WE SLEPT TOGETHER I'LL KILL HIM.
IT *DIDN'T* HAPPEN.
HE HASN'T YET... BUT UH, DULY NOTED.
AFTER I BROKE UP WITH WILLIAM, I JUST--IT WAS PAINFUL TO BE AROUND YOU. YOU AND AMBER WERE SO HAPPY IT... I *DID* GO TO AFRICA TO HELP PEOPLE, TO DO GOOD...
BUT BEING AWAY FROM *YOU* WAS A BIG PART OF IT.
I MISSED YOU *SO MUCH*.
I INVITED YOU TO COME STAY WITH ME IN AFRICA... I HOPED YOU'D COME *ALONE*.
THAT WOULD MEAN YOU *DID* HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME.
BUT YOU BROUGHT *HER*.

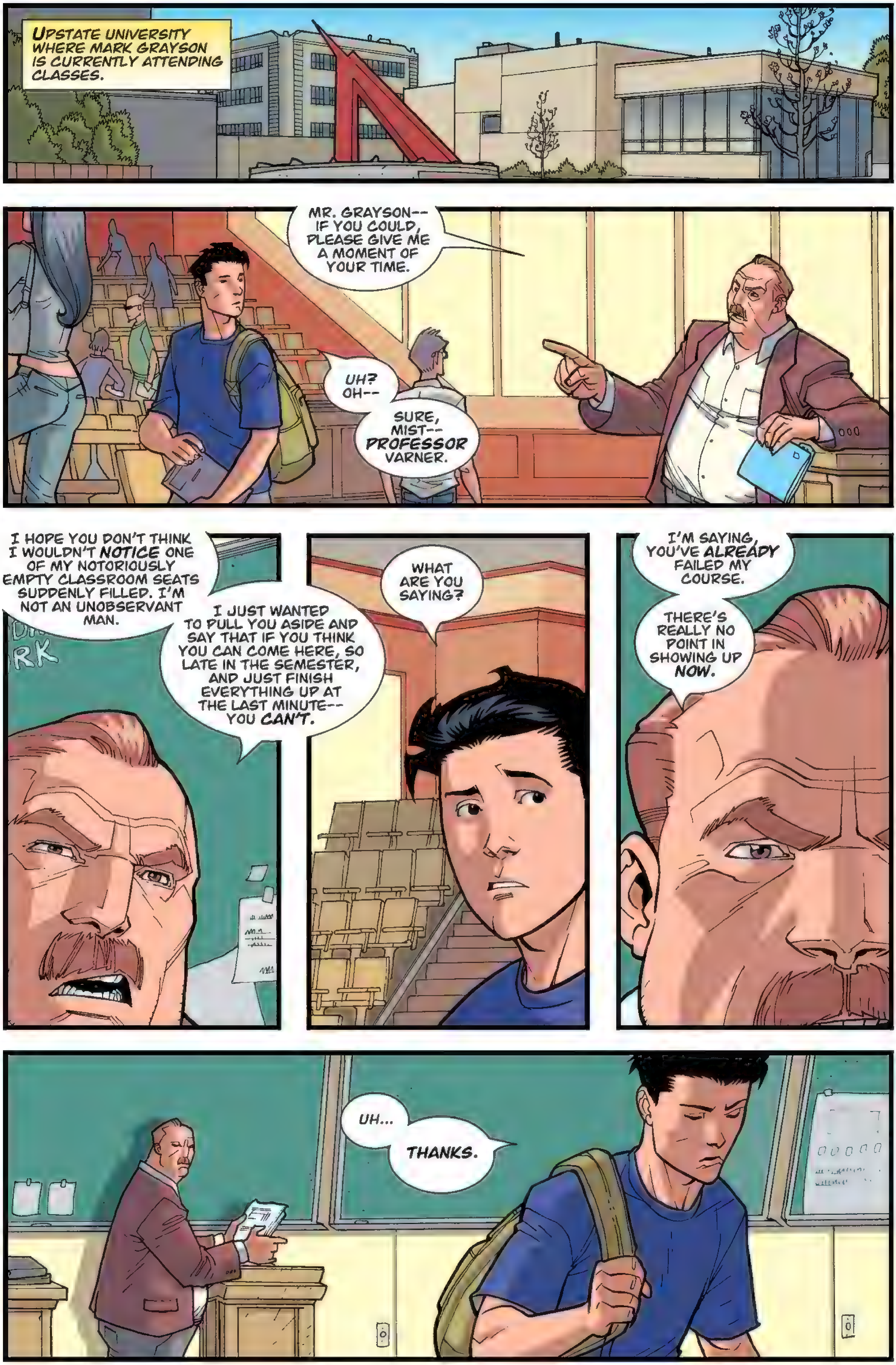

SORRY TO RAMBLE, I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW HOW I FEEL AND--
LOOK, YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT FRIEND TO ME FOR A LONG TIME, AND I CHERISH THAT. I JUST WANT TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL. I'VE WANTED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL FOR A REALLY LONG TIME NOW.
YEAH, I KNOW YOU DO... I'VE KNOWN FOR A WHILE NOW.
HUH?
AFTER I WAS IN AFRICA WITH YOU--WHEN I FLEW HOME TO FIGHT ANGSTROM LEVY. HE TRAPPED ME IN SOME ALTERNATE DIMENSION. IT TOOK THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE OVER A *DECADE* BUT THEY SAVED ME.
YOU WERE WITH THEM. THEY CAME BACK IN TIME TO WHERE I WAS... ONLY MOMENTS AFTER I'D BEEN STUCK IN THE DIMENSION... AND THEY SAVED ME.
I SAW YOU--AN *OLDER* YOU. SHE TOLD ME HOW YOU FELT ABOUT ME--URGED ME TO LET YOU KNOW HOW I FELT WHETHER I LIKED YOU OR NOT--JUST TO GIVE YOU CLOSURE.
SHE'D BEEN, I DON'T KNOW, *OBSESSED* WITH ME WHILE I WAS GONE ALL THOSE YEARS. SHE SEEMED REALLY DISTRESSED OVER IT. SHE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HER--*YOUR* FEELINGS.
SHE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING?
YEAH.
SHE JUST... *TOLD* YOU HOW I FELT?
YEAH.
...

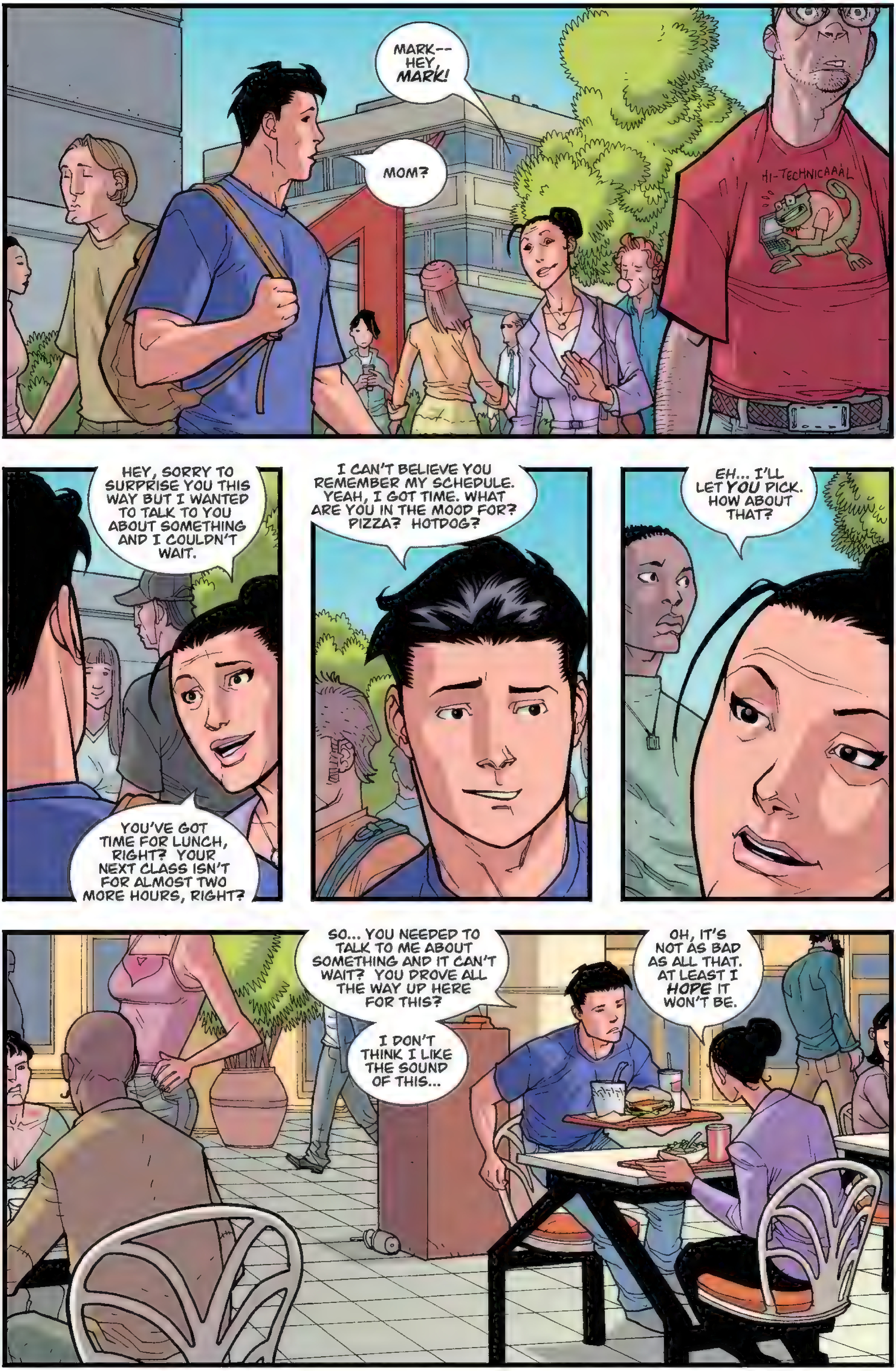

MARK, DID YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME *BEFORE* SHE TOLD YOU I HAD FEELINGS FOR YOU?
I MEAN-- YOU DIDN'T JUST SUDDENLY REALIZE YOU LIKED ME AFTER YOU HEARD HER SOB STORY... RIGHT?
YOU'RE NOT DOING THIS--ALL THIS... JUST BECAUSE YOU FEEL *SORRY* FOR ME...
...ARE YOU?
EVE, I...
I DON'T *THINK* SO.
NO, I--I REALLY LIKE YOU...
I SWEAR.
EVE-- WAIT.
KLIK.

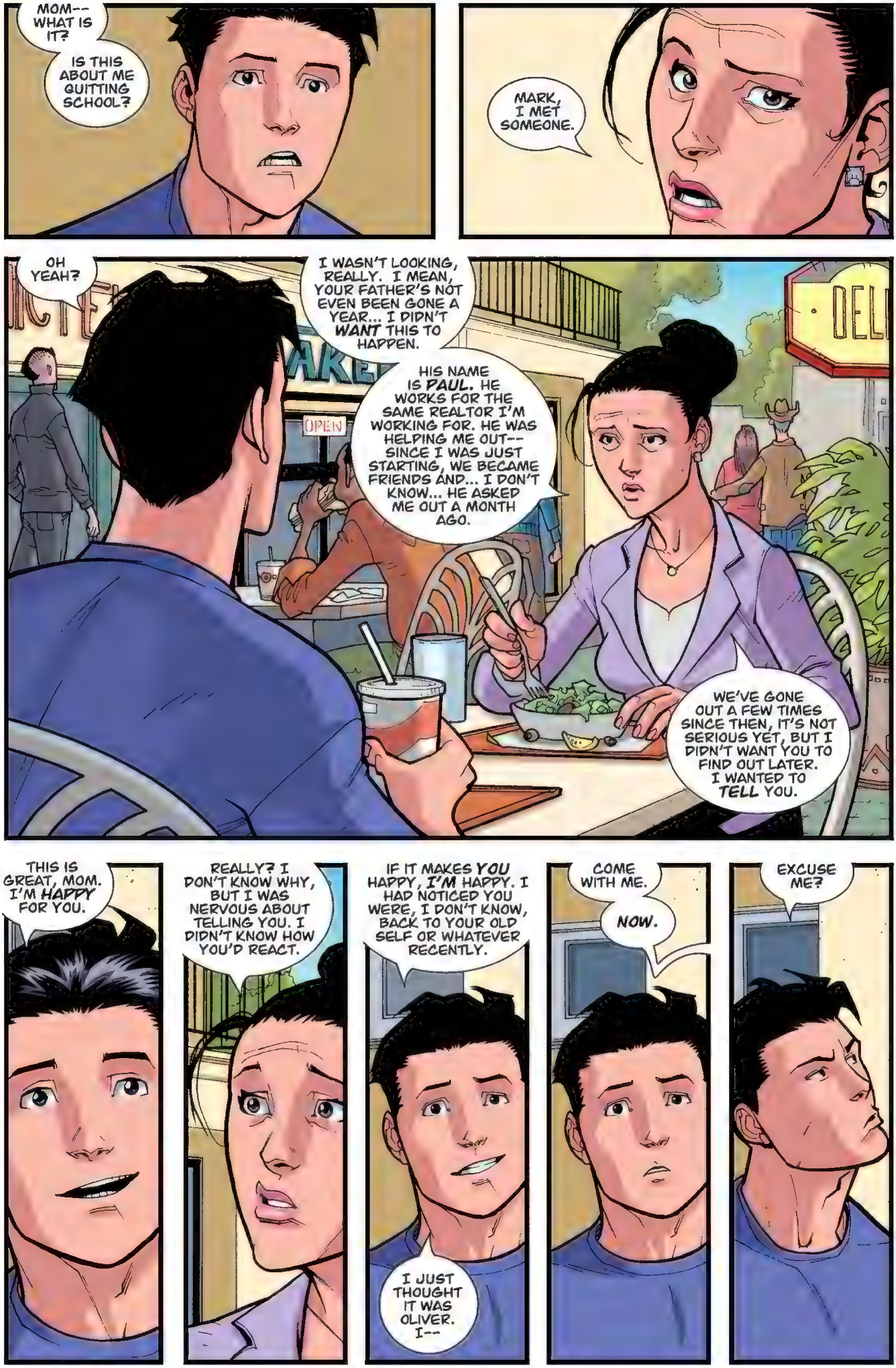


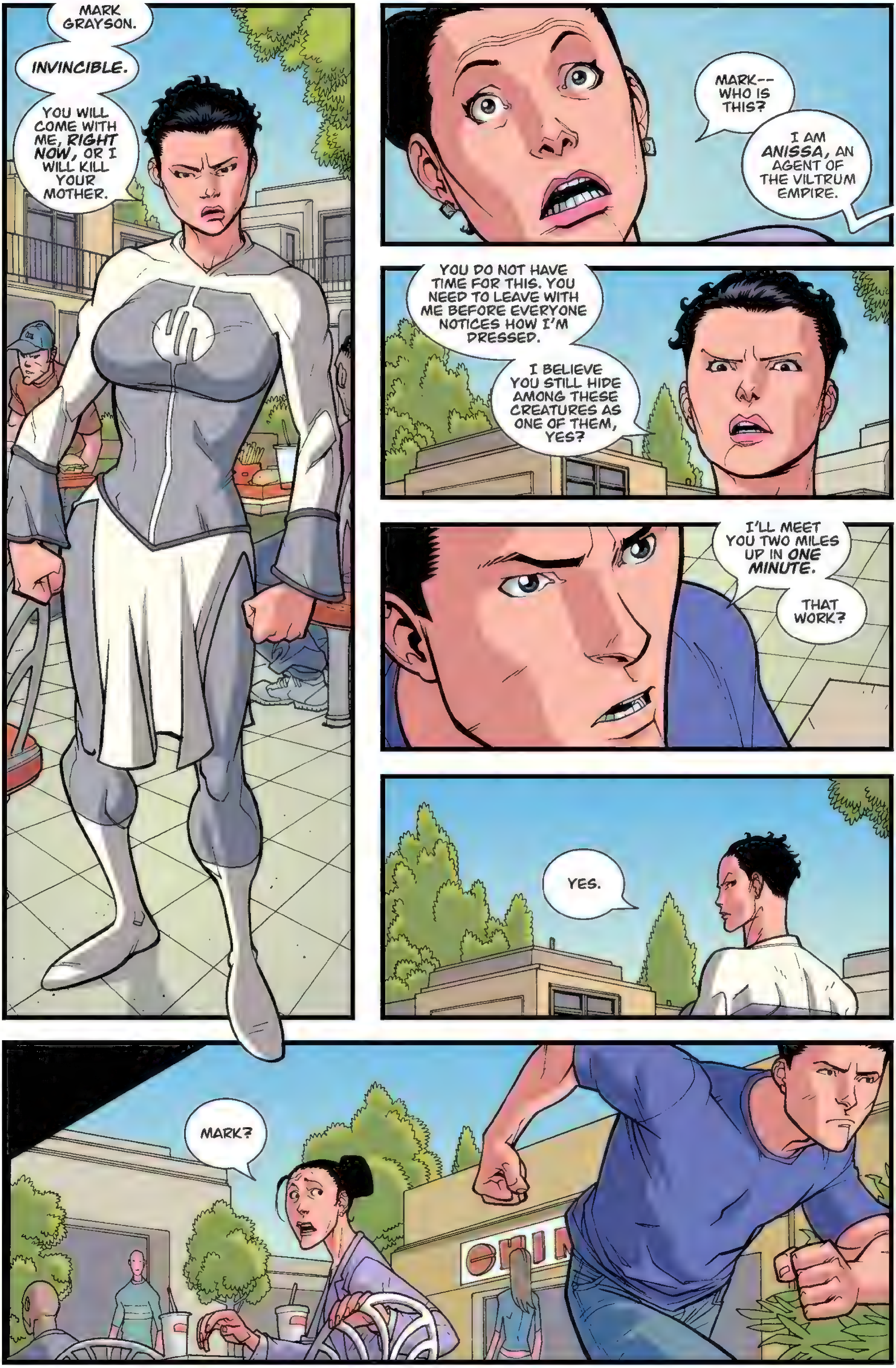
SIGH
UM.
IS EVERYTHING OKAY? I THINK EVE WAS CRYING WHEN SHE LEFT.
I TRIED TO SAY SOMETHING TO HER, BUT...
AH, JEEZ-- REALLY?
THIS IS THE ABSOLUTE LAST THING I NEEDED TO HAPPEN TONIGHT. I'M TRYING TO GET THIS HOMEWORK DONE SO I CAN ACTUALLY GO INTO CLASS TOMORROW.
I CAN'T CONCENTRATE.
YOU'RE GOING TO CLASS TOMORROW?
WOW. WHAT BROUGHT THAT ON?
DER
BM
I'M NOT ON ANOTHER PLANET OR FIGHTING ALIENS ON A GIANT SPACE SHIP. I'M NOT TRAPPED IN ANOTHER DIMENSION. I'M NOT FIGHTING GIANTS OR TRAVELING TO THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.
I'VE HIT A LITTLE BIT OF DOWN TIME.
IF I DON'T GO TOMORROW I MAY NEVER GO.
UNDERSTOOD.
HUNGRY?

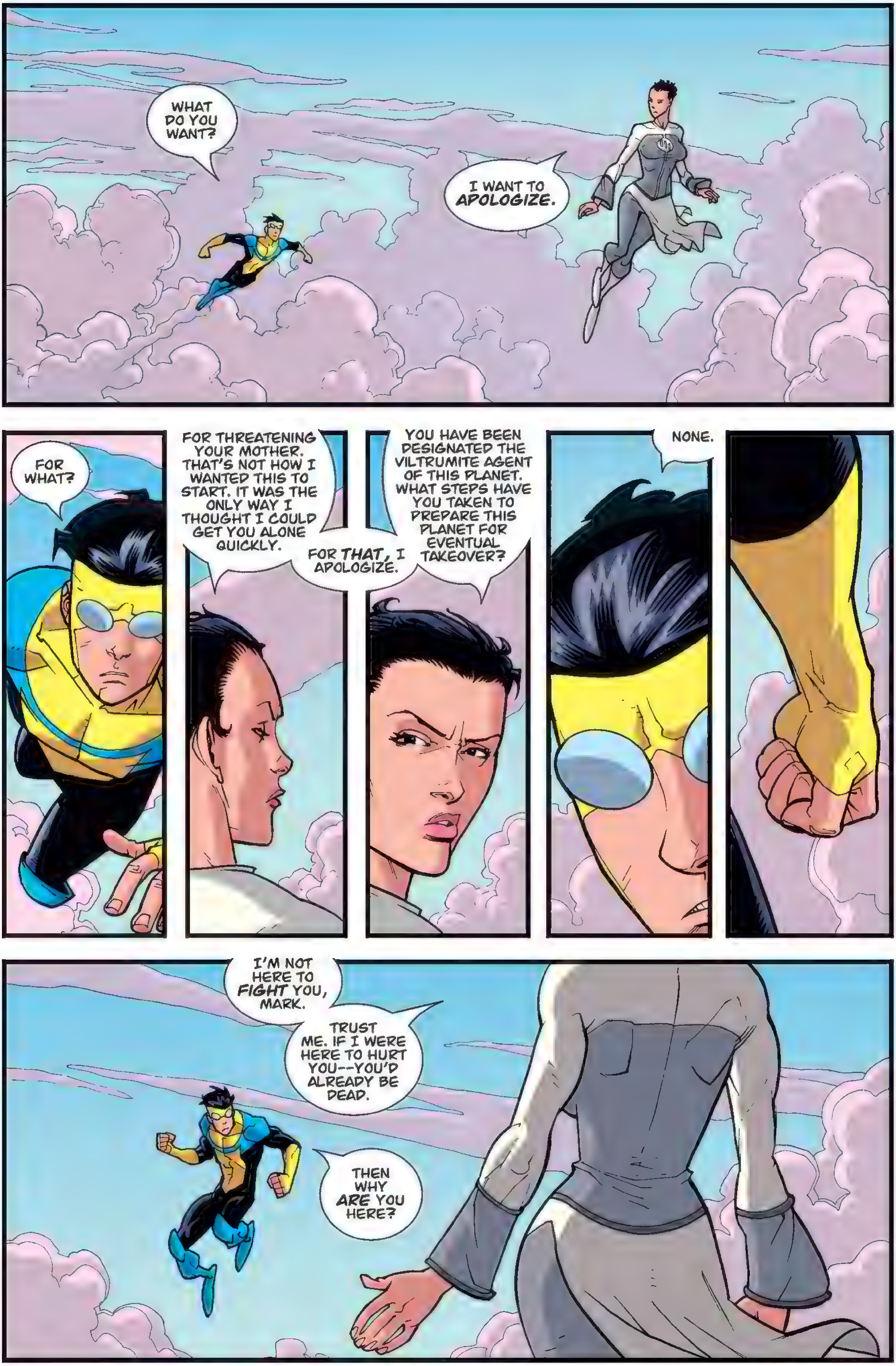

THE GRAYSON HOUSE. HOME OF MARK'S MOTHER, DEBBIE GRAYSON AND MARK'S HALF-BROTHER OLIVER GRAYSON.
KEYS, KEYS, KEYS.
WHERE ARE MY KEYS?
HERE, MOM!
THEY WERE UNDER THE COUCH THE WHOLE TIME.
OH, THANK YOU, OLIVER.
APRIL, ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE COOL WITH THIS? YOUR JOB TITLE DOESN'T INCLUDE BABYSITTER.
TRUST ME, THIS IS FINE. I DON'T MIND WATCHING OLIVER EVERY NOW AND THEN SO YOU CAN GO OUT OR WHATEVER. SOME JOBS IN THE PAST THE KIDS HAVE PRACTICALLY CALLED ME "MOM."
YOU'RE NOT ASKING TOO MUCH. HE'LL BE FINE. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE LITTLE GUY.
I'M NOT LITTLE!
OLIVER, YOU BETTER BEHAVE YOURSELF.
I WILL. BYE, MOM.
I'M NOT ANTICIPATING THIS BEING "FUN." WISH ME LUCK.
EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE-- JUST GO.
HAVE FUN..

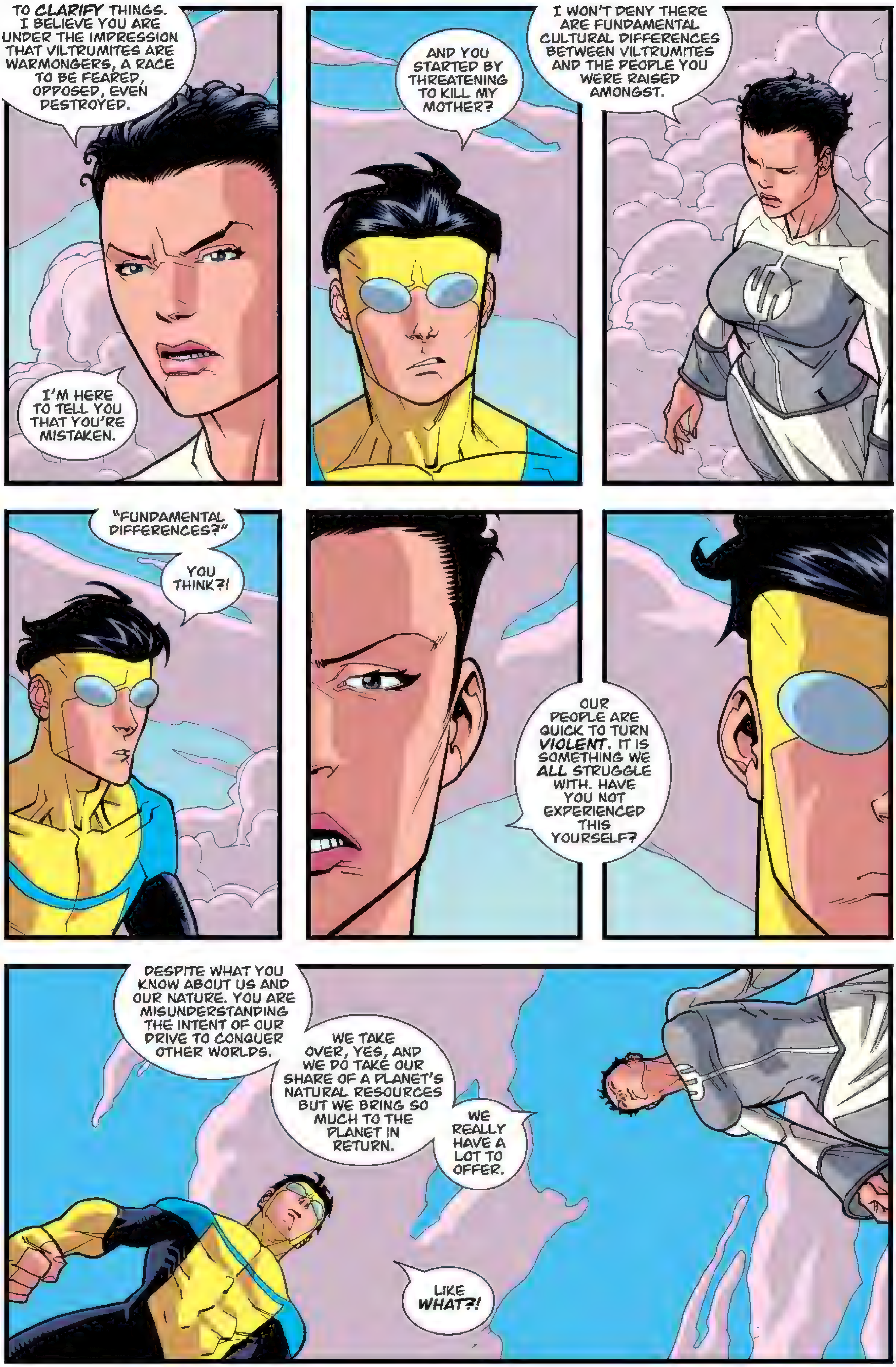

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY WHERE MARK GRAYSON IS CURRENTLY ATTENDING CLASSES.
MR. GRAYSON-- IF YOU COULD, PLEASE GIVE ME A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME.
UH? OH--
SURE, MIST-- PROFESSOR VARNER.
I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I WOULDN'T NOTICE ONE OF MY NOTORIOUSLY EMPTY CLASSROOM SEATS SUDDENLY FILLED. I'M NOT AN UNOBSERVANT MAN.
I JUST WANTED TO PULL YOU ASIDE AND SAY THAT IF YOU THINK YOU CAN COME HERE, SO LATE IN THE SEMESTER, AND JUST FINISH EVERYTHING UP AT THE LAST MINUTE-- YOU CAN'T.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING, YOU'VE ALREADY FAILED MY COURSE.
THERE'S REALLY NO POINT IN SHOWING UP NOW.
UH...
THANKS.

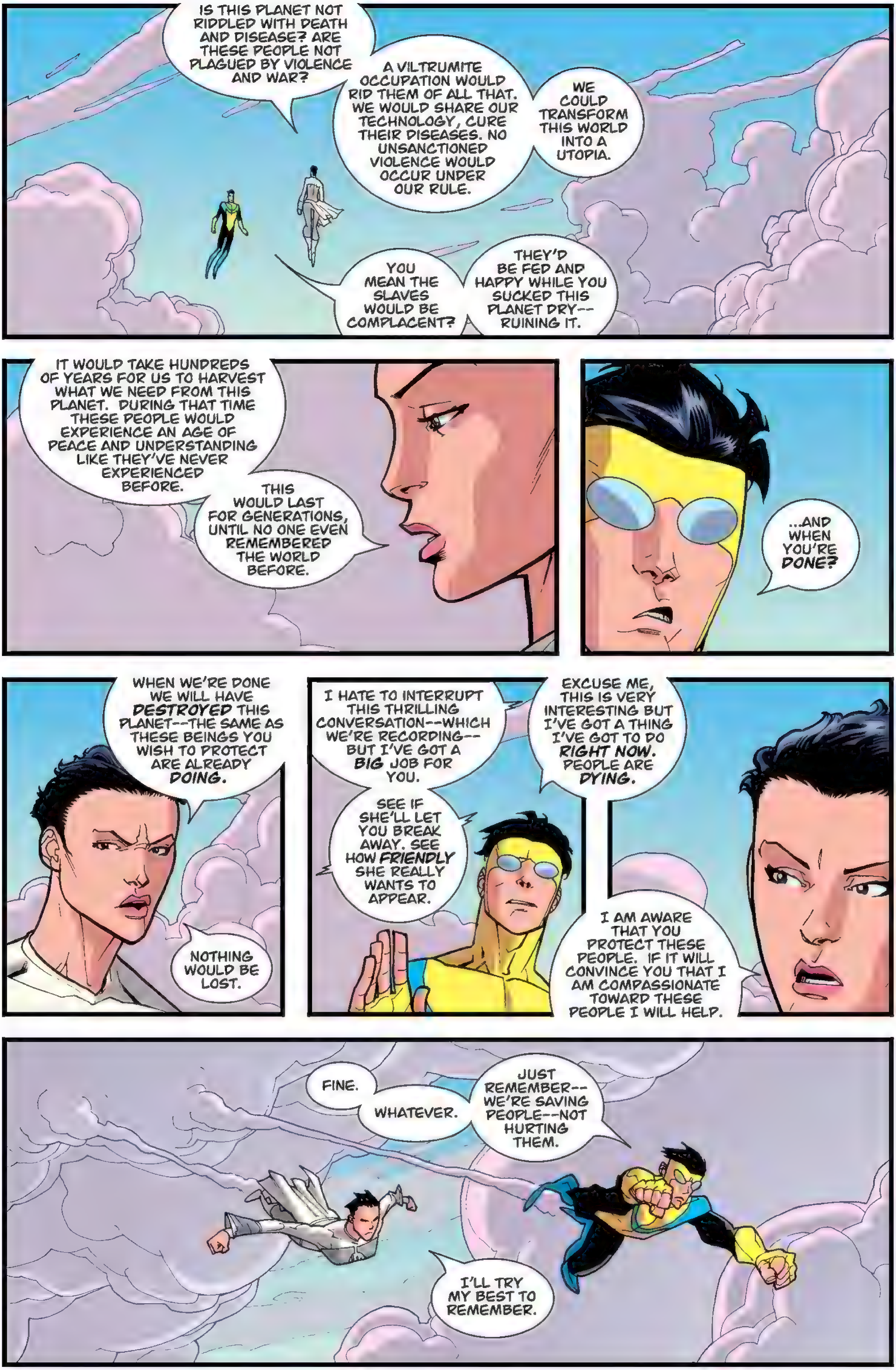

MARK-- HEY, *MARK!*
MOM?
HI-TECHNICAAAL
HEY, SORRY TO SURPRISE YOU THIS WAY BUT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING AND I COULDN'T WAIT.
YOU'VE GOT TIME FOR LUNCH, RIGHT? YOUR NEXT CLASS ISN'T FOR ALMOST TWO MORE HOURS, RIGHT?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU REMEMBER MY SCHEDULE. YEAH, I GOT TIME. WHAT ARE YOU IN THE MOOD FOR? PIZZA? HOTDOG?
EH... I'LL LET *YOU* PICK. HOW ABOUT THAT?
SO... YOU NEEDED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT SOMETHING AND IT CAN'T WAIT? YOU DROVE ALL THE WAY UP HERE FOR THIS?
I DON'T THINK I LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS...
OH, IT'S NOT AS BAD AS ALL THAT. AT LEAST I *HOPE* IT WON'T BE.


MOM-- WHAT IS IT?
IS THIS ABOUT ME QUITTING SCHOOL?
MARK, I MET SOMEONE.
OH YEAH?
I WASN'T LOOKING, REALLY. I MEAN, YOUR FATHER'S NOT EVEN BEEN GONE A YEAR... I DIDN'T *WANT* THIS TO HAPPEN.
HIS NAME IS **PAUL.** HE WORKS FOR THE SAME REALTOR I'M WORKING FOR. HE WAS HELPING ME OUT-- SINCE I WAS JUST STARTING, WE BECAME FRIENDS AND... I DON'T KNOW... HE ASKED ME OUT A MONTH AGO.
WE'VE GONE OUT A FEW TIMES SINCE THEN, IT'S NOT SERIOUS YET, BUT I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO FIND OUT LATER. I WANTED TO *TELL* YOU.
THIS IS GREAT, MOM. I'M *HAPPY* FOR YOU.
REALLY? I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I WAS NERVOUS ABOUT TELLING YOU. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW YOU'D REACT.
IF IT MAKES *YOU* HAPPY, *I'M* HAPPY. I HAD NOTICED YOU WERE, I DON'T KNOW, BACK TO YOUR OLD SELF OR WHATEVER RECENTLY.
I JUST THOUGHT IT WAS OLIVER. I--
COME WITH ME.
NOW.
EXCUSE ME?


MARK GRAYSON.
INVINCIBLE.
YOU WILL COME WITH ME, RIGHT NOW, OR I WILL KILL YOUR MOTHER.
MARK-- WHO IS THIS?
I AM ANISSA, AN AGENT OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
YOU DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS. YOU NEED TO LEAVE WITH ME BEFORE EVERYONE NOTICES HOW I'M DRESSED.
I BELIEVE YOU STILL HIDE AMONG THESE CREATURES AS ONE OF THEM, YES?
I'LL MEET YOU TWO MILES UP IN ONE MINUTE.
THAT WORK?
YES.
MARK?

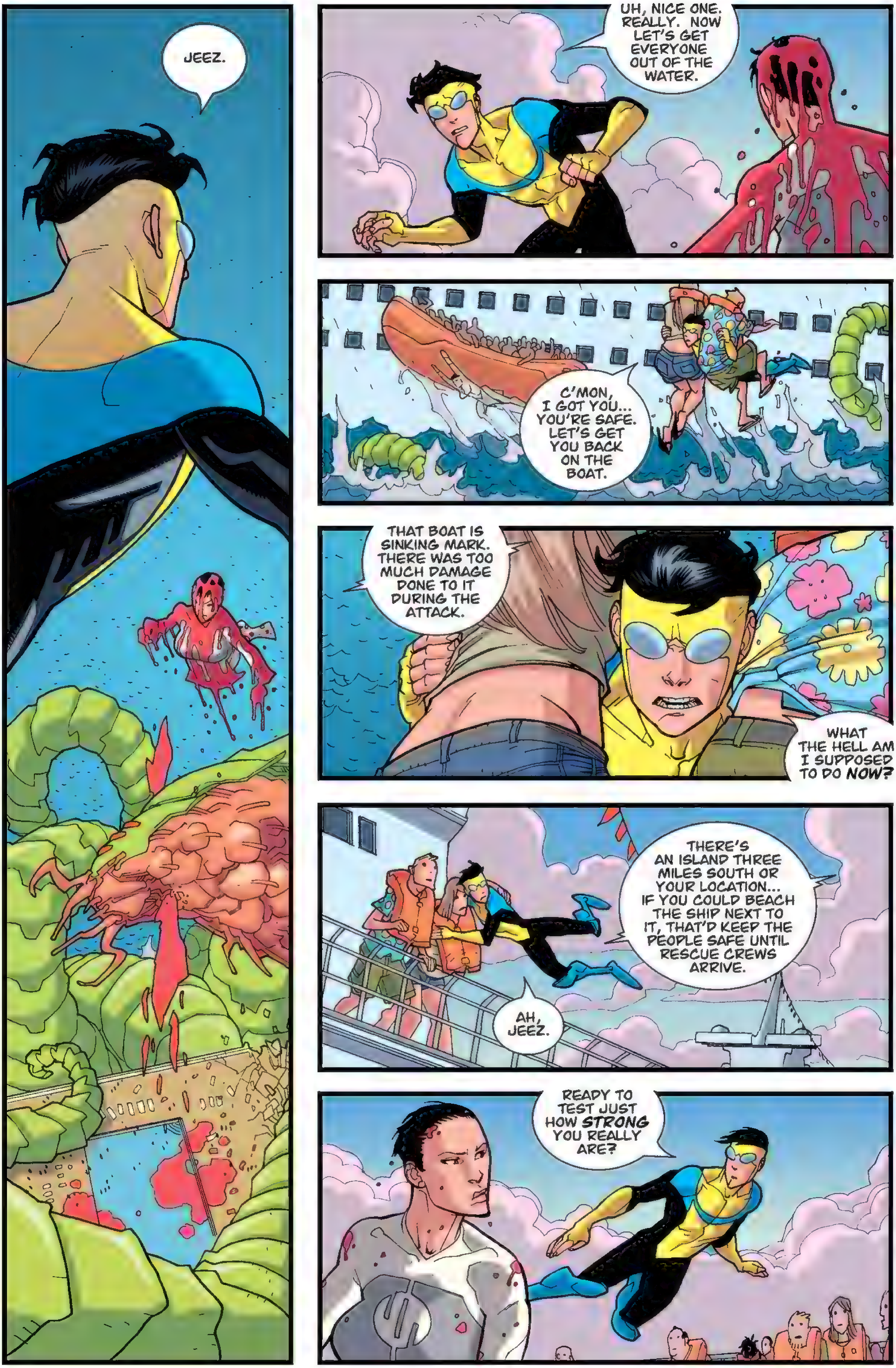

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I WANT TO *APOLOGIZE.*
FOR WHAT?
FOR THREATENING YOUR MOTHER. THAT'S NOT HOW I WANTED THIS TO START. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY I THOUGHT I COULD GET YOU ALONE QUICKLY.
FOR *THAT*, I APOLOGIZE.
YOU HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF THIS PLANET. WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO PREPARE THIS PLANET FOR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER?
NONE.
I'M NOT HERE TO *FIGHT* YOU, MARK.
TRUST ME. IF I WERE HERE TO HURT YOU--YOU'D ALREADY BE DEAD.
THEN WHY *ARE* YOU HERE?


TO *CLARIFY* THINGS. I BELIEVE YOU ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT VILTRUMITES ARE WARMONGERS, A RACE TO BE FEARED, OPPOSED, EVEN DESTROYED.
I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE MISTAKEN.
AND YOU STARTED BY THREATENING TO KILL MY MOTHER?
I WON'T DENY THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VILTRUMITES AND THE PEOPLE YOU WERE RAISED AMONGST.
"FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES?"
YOU THINK?!
OUR PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO TURN ***VIOLENT***. IT IS SOMETHING WE ***ALL*** STRUGGLE WITH. HAVE YOU NOT EXPERIENCED THIS YOURSELF?
DESPITE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT US AND OUR NATURE, YOU ARE MISUNDERSTANDING THE INTENT OF OUR DRIVE TO CONQUER OTHER WORLDS.
WE TAKE OVER, YES, AND WE DO TAKE OUR SHARE OF A PLANET'S NATURAL RESOURCES BUT WE BRING SO MUCH TO THE PLANET IN RETURN.
WE REALLY HAVE A LOT TO OFFER.
LIKE ***WHAT?!***

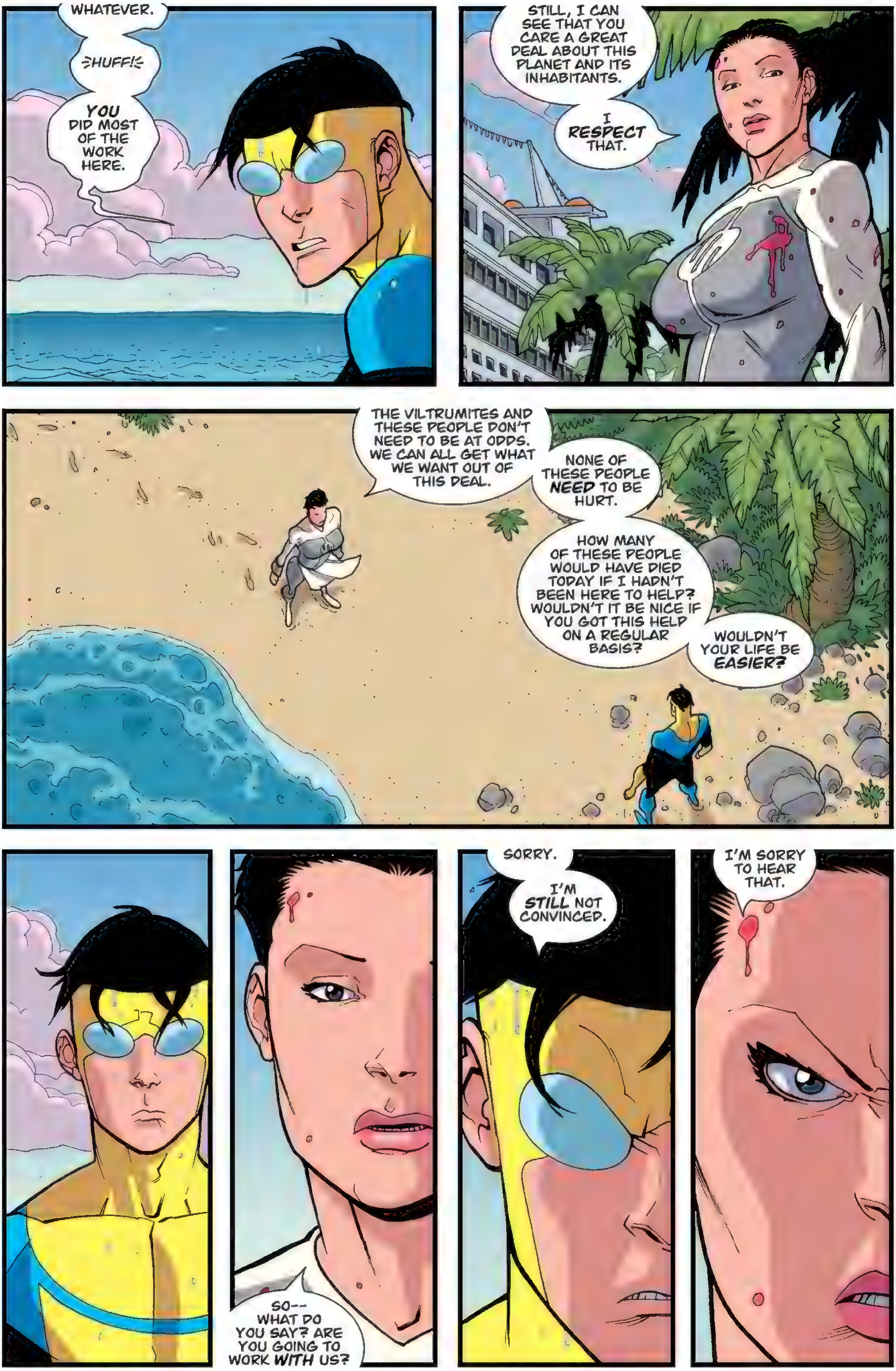

IS THIS PLANET NOT RIDDLED WITH DEATH AND DISEASE? ARE THESE PEOPLE NOT PLAGUED BY VIOLENCE AND WAR?
A VILTRUMITE OCCUPATION WOULD RID THEM OF ALL THAT. WE WOULD SHARE OUR TECHNOLOGY, CURE THEIR DISEASES. NO UNSANCTIONED VIOLENCE WOULD OCCUR UNDER OUR RULE.
WE COULD TRANSFORM THIS WORLD INTO A UTOPIA.
YOU MEAN THE SLAVES WOULD BE COMPLACENT?
THEY'D BE FED AND HAPPY WHILE YOU SUCKED THIS PLANET DRY-- RUINING IT.
IT WOULD TAKE HUNDREDS OF YEARS FOR US TO HARVEST WHAT WE NEED FROM THIS PLANET. DURING THAT TIME THESE PEOPLE WOULD EXPERIENCE AN AGE OF PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING LIKE THEY'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.
THIS WOULD LAST FOR GENERATIONS, UNTIL NO ONE EVEN REMEMBERED THE WORLD BEFORE.
...AND WHEN YOU'RE *DONE?*
WHEN WE'RE DONE WE WILL HAVE *DESTROYED* THIS PLANET--THE SAME AS THESE BEINGS YOU WISH TO PROTECT ARE ALREADY *DOING.*
NOTHING WOULD BE LOST.
I HATE TO INTERRUPT THIS THRILLING CONVERSATION--WHICH WE'RE RECORDING-- BUT I'VE GOT A *BIG* JOB FOR YOU.
SEE IF SHE'LL LET YOU BREAK AWAY. SEE HOW *FRIENDLY* SHE REALLY WANTS TO APPEAR.
EXCUSE ME, THIS IS VERY INTERESTING BUT I'VE GOT A THING I'VE GOT TO DO *RIGHT NOW.* PEOPLE ARE *DYING.*
I AM AWARE THAT YOU PROTECT THESE PEOPLE. IF IT WILL CONVINCE YOU THAT I AM COMPASSIONATE TOWARD THESE PEOPLE I WILL HELP.
FINE.
WHATEVER.
JUST REMEMBER-- WE'RE SAVING PEOPLE--NOT HURTING THEM.
I'LL TRY MY BEST TO REMEMBER.

HOLY CRAP.
THE MONSTER--I CAN HURT THE MONSTER, RIGHT?

YEP.
SPLAGG!!

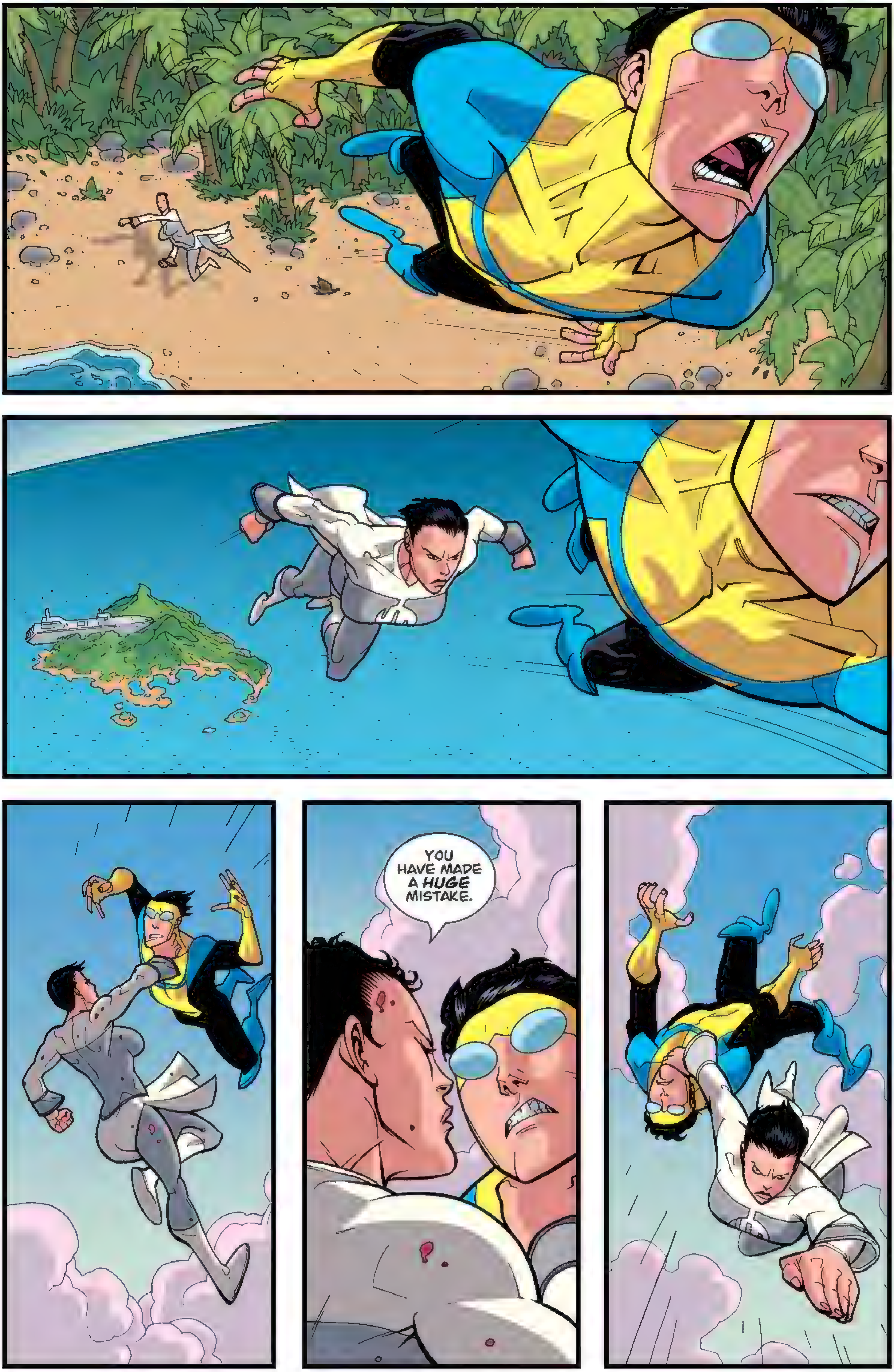

JEEZ.
UH, NICE ONE. REALLY. NOW LET'S GET EVERYONE OUT OF THE WATER.
C'MON, I GOT YOU... YOU'RE SAFE. LET'S GET YOU BACK ON THE BOAT.
THAT BOAT IS SINKING MARK. THERE WAS TOO MUCH DAMAGE DONE TO IT DURING THE ATTACK.
WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO *NOW?*
THERE'S AN ISLAND THREE MILES SOUTH OF YOUR LOCATION... IF YOU COULD BEACH THE SHIP NEXT TO IT, THAT'D KEEP THE PEOPLE SAFE UNTIL RESCUE CREWS ARRIVE.
AH, JEEZ.
READY TO TEST JUST HOW *STRONG* YOU REALLY ARE?

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
YOU DID SOME VERY IMPRESSIVE WORK TODAY.


WHATEVER.
HUFF!
YOU DID MOST OF THE WORK HERE.
STILL, I CAN SEE THAT YOU CARE A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THIS PLANET AND ITS INHABITANTS.
I RESPECT THAT.
THE VILTRUMITES AND THESE PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO BE AT ODDS. WE CAN ALL GET WHAT WE WANT OUT OF THIS DEAL.
NONE OF THESE PEOPLE NEED TO BE HURT.
HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE DIED TODAY IF I HADN'T BEEN HERE TO HELP? WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF YOU GOT THIS HELP ON A REGULAR BASIS?
WOULDN'T YOUR LIFE BE EASIER?
SO-- WHAT DO YOU SAY? ARE YOU GOING TO WORK WITH US?
SORRY.
I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.

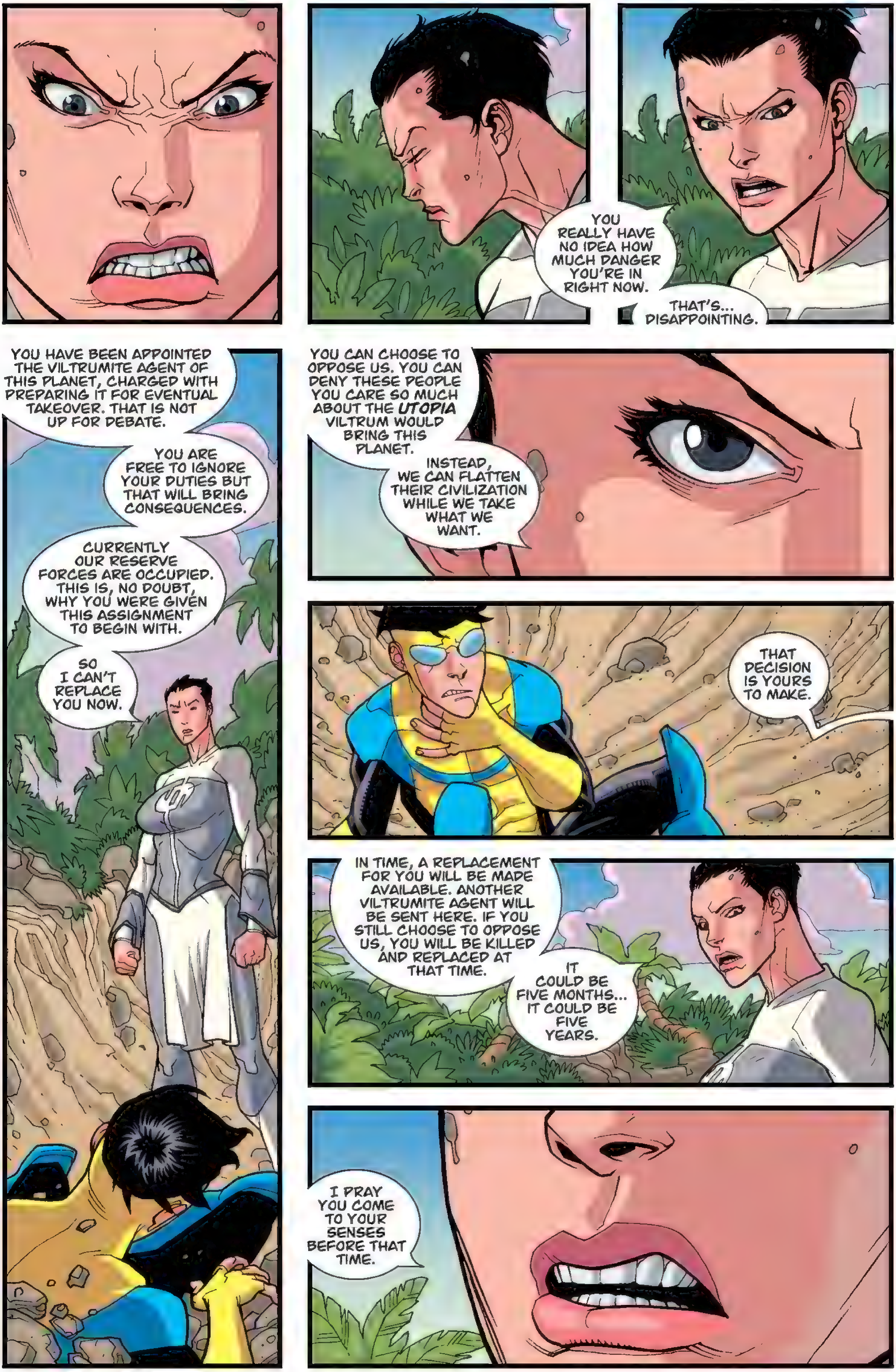
WHA-KOOM!!
THIS *WASN'T* A NEGOTIATION.

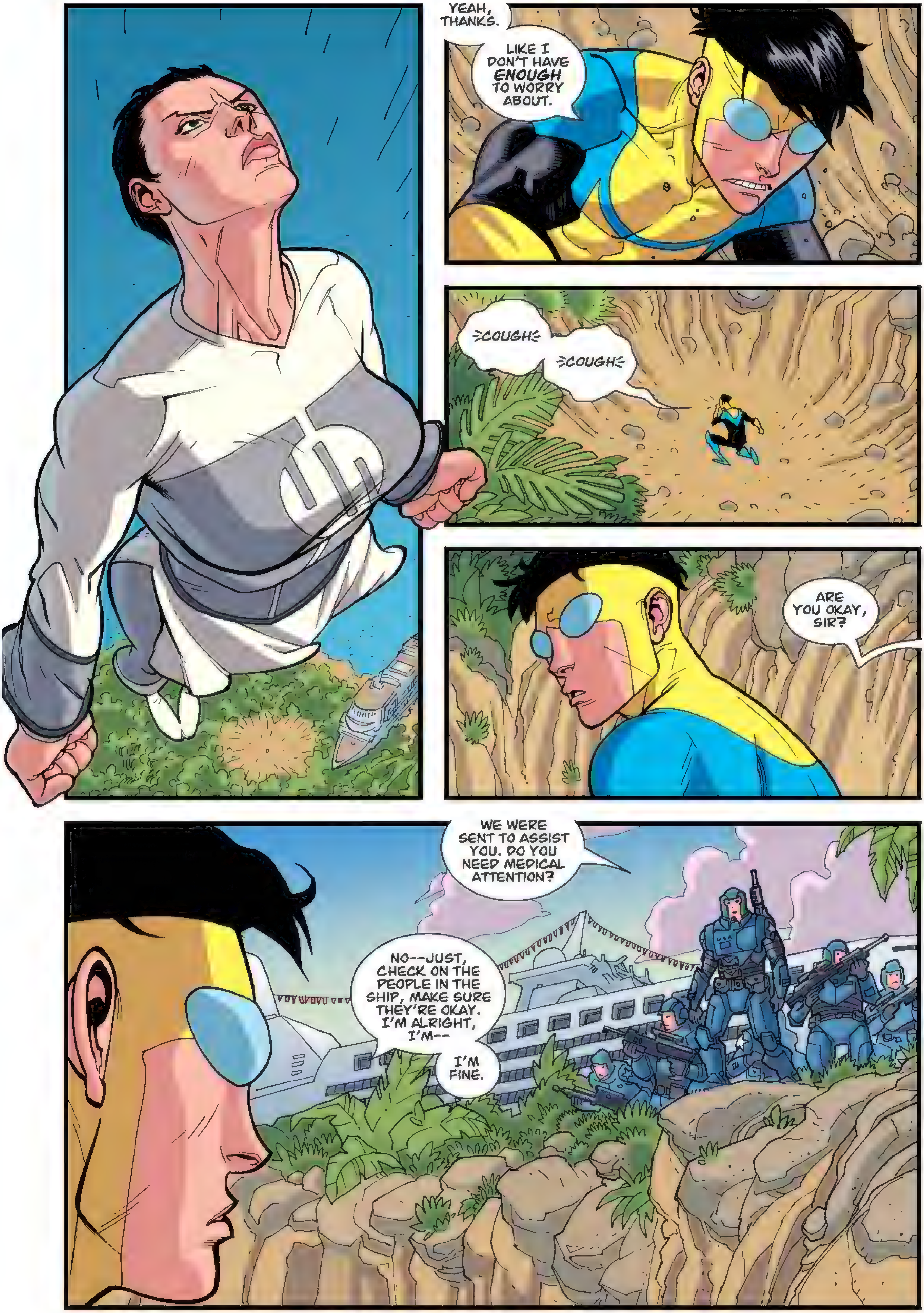
ISSUE FORTY-FIVE

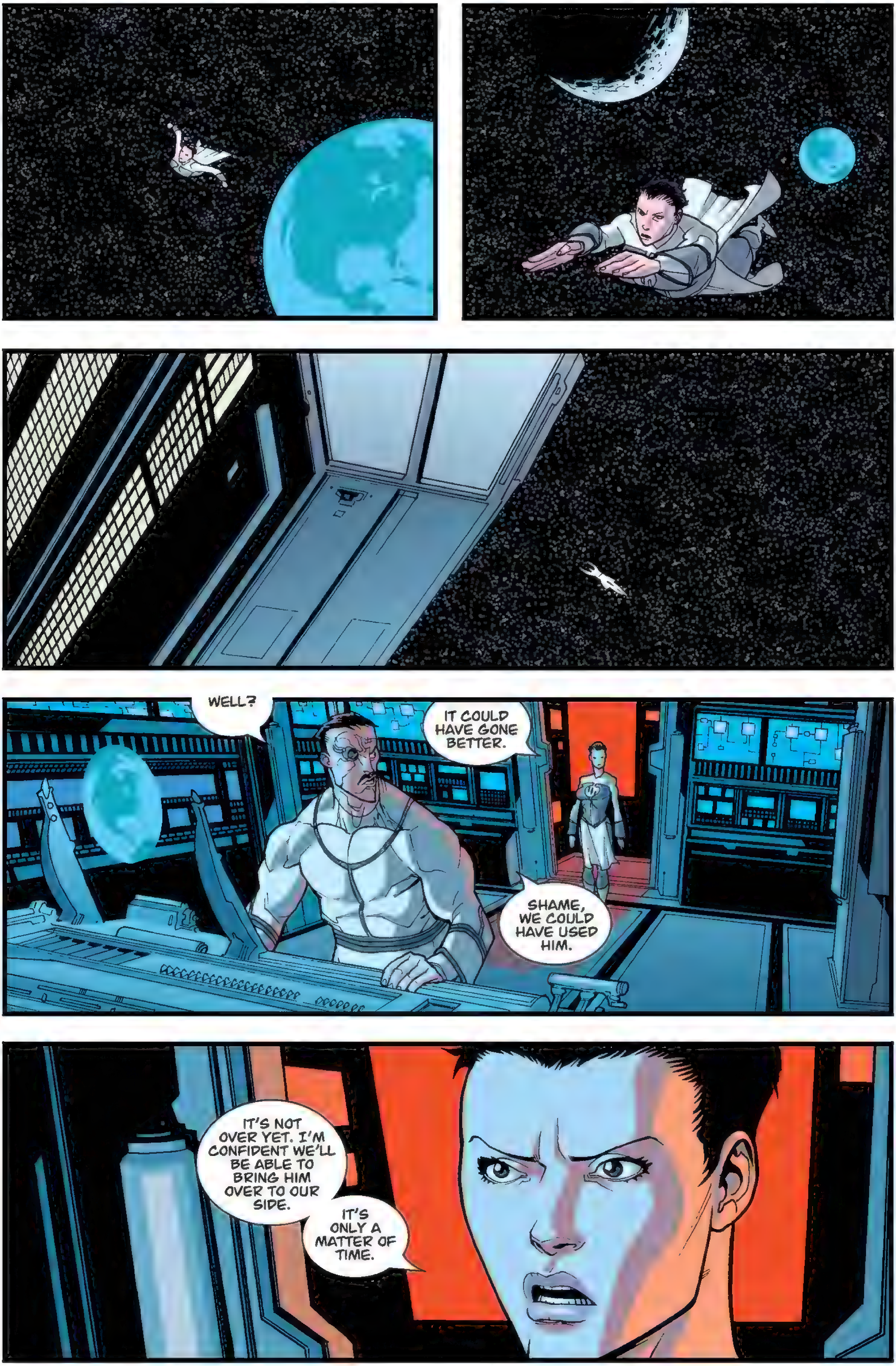

YOU HAVE MADE A *HUGE* MISTAKE.

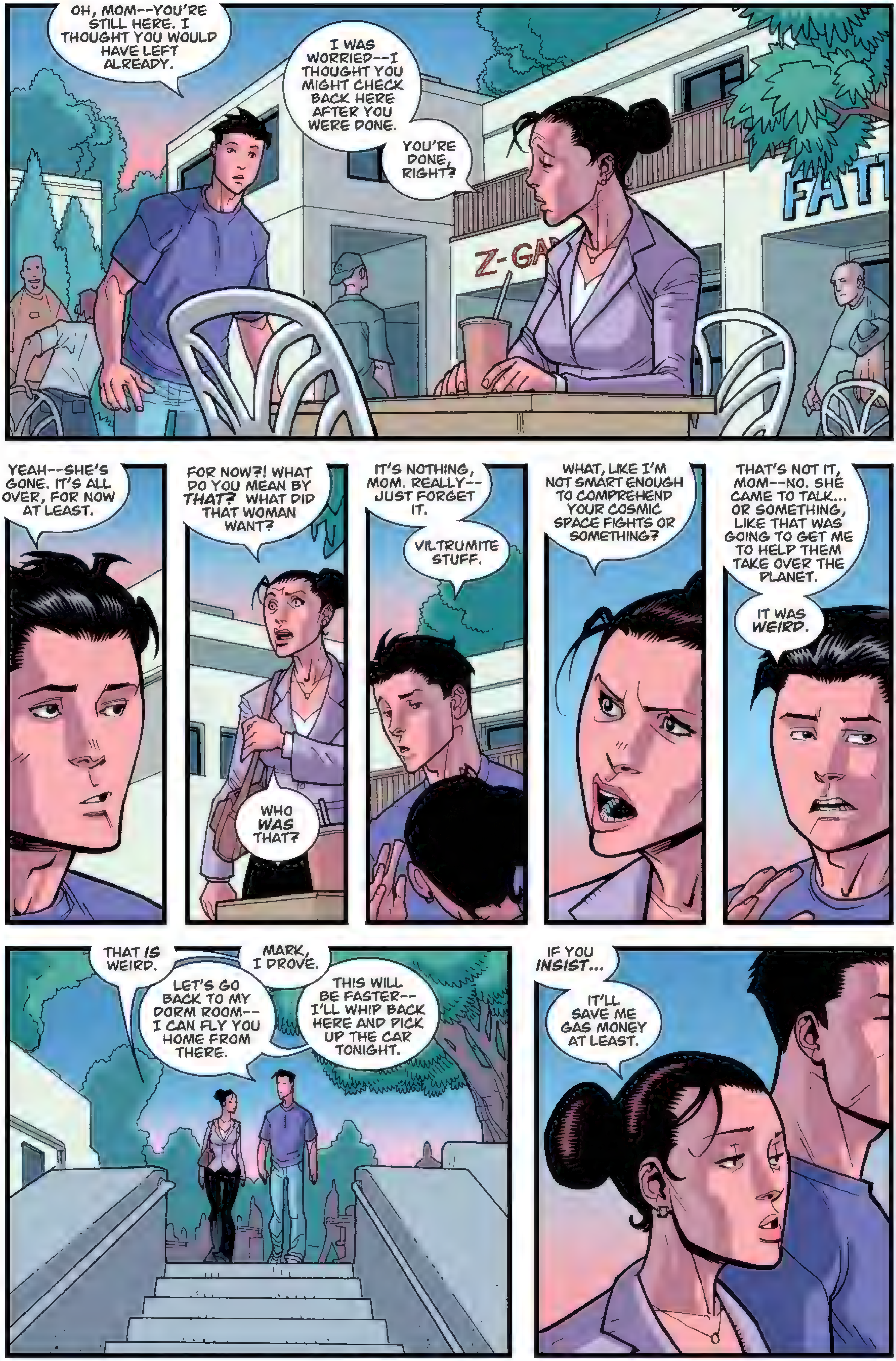
BRAKOOM!!

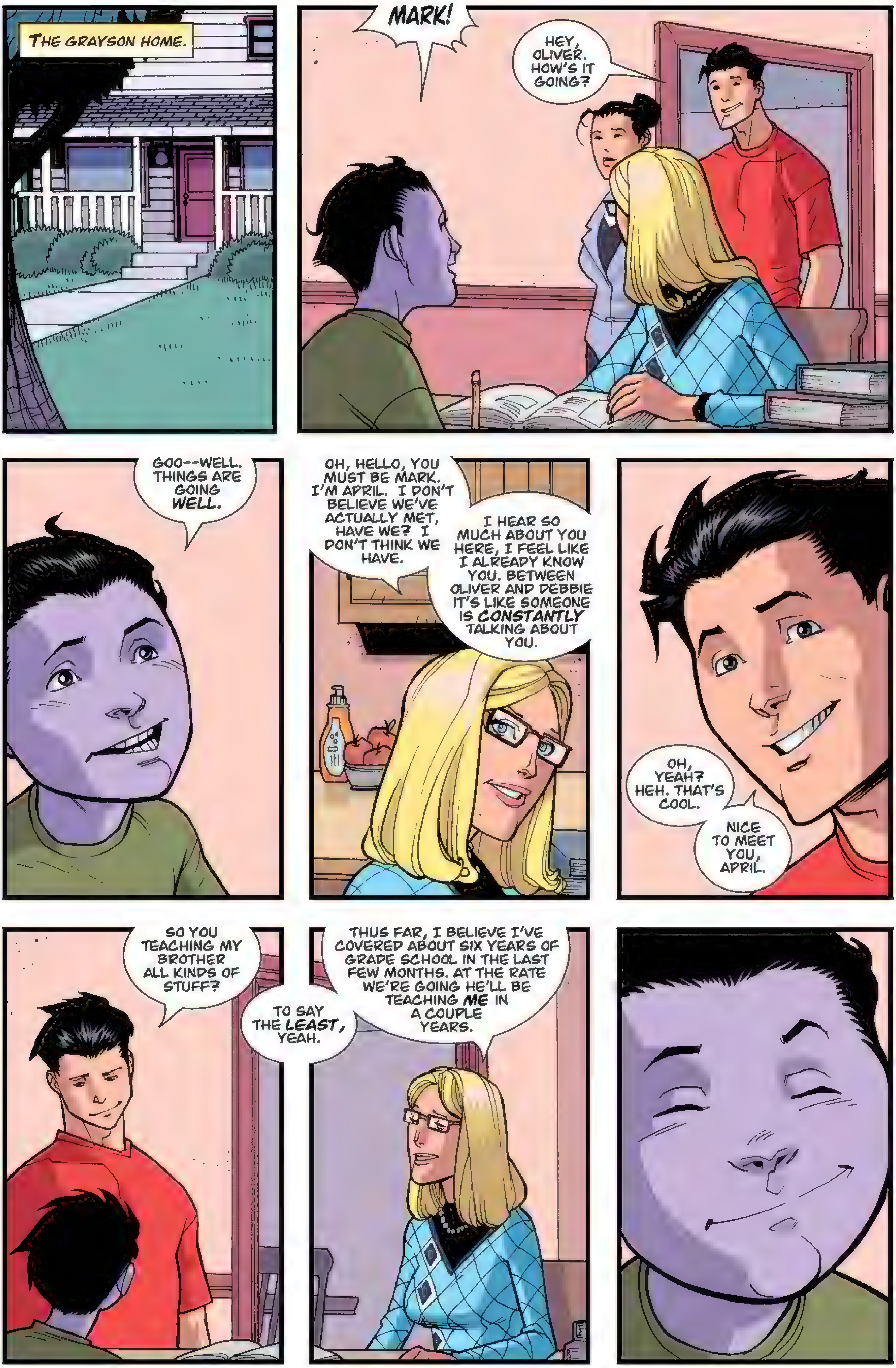
RUMMMMBLE!!
DON'T MOVE.
I'M STRONGER THAN YOU. I'M FASTER THAN YOU. AND YOU BETTER KNOW I'M SMARTER THAN YOU.
SO DON'T MOVE. YOU SO MUCH AS TOUCH ME AND IT'LL SET ME OFF. I TOLD YOU WHAT A NASTY TEMPER VILTRUMITES HAVE. YOU PISS ME OFF-- THINGS WILL GET NASTY.
YOU GOT ANYTHING TO SAY?
UH... THANKS.
I THINK YOU CRACKED MY BACK-- FEELS MUCH BETTER NOW.

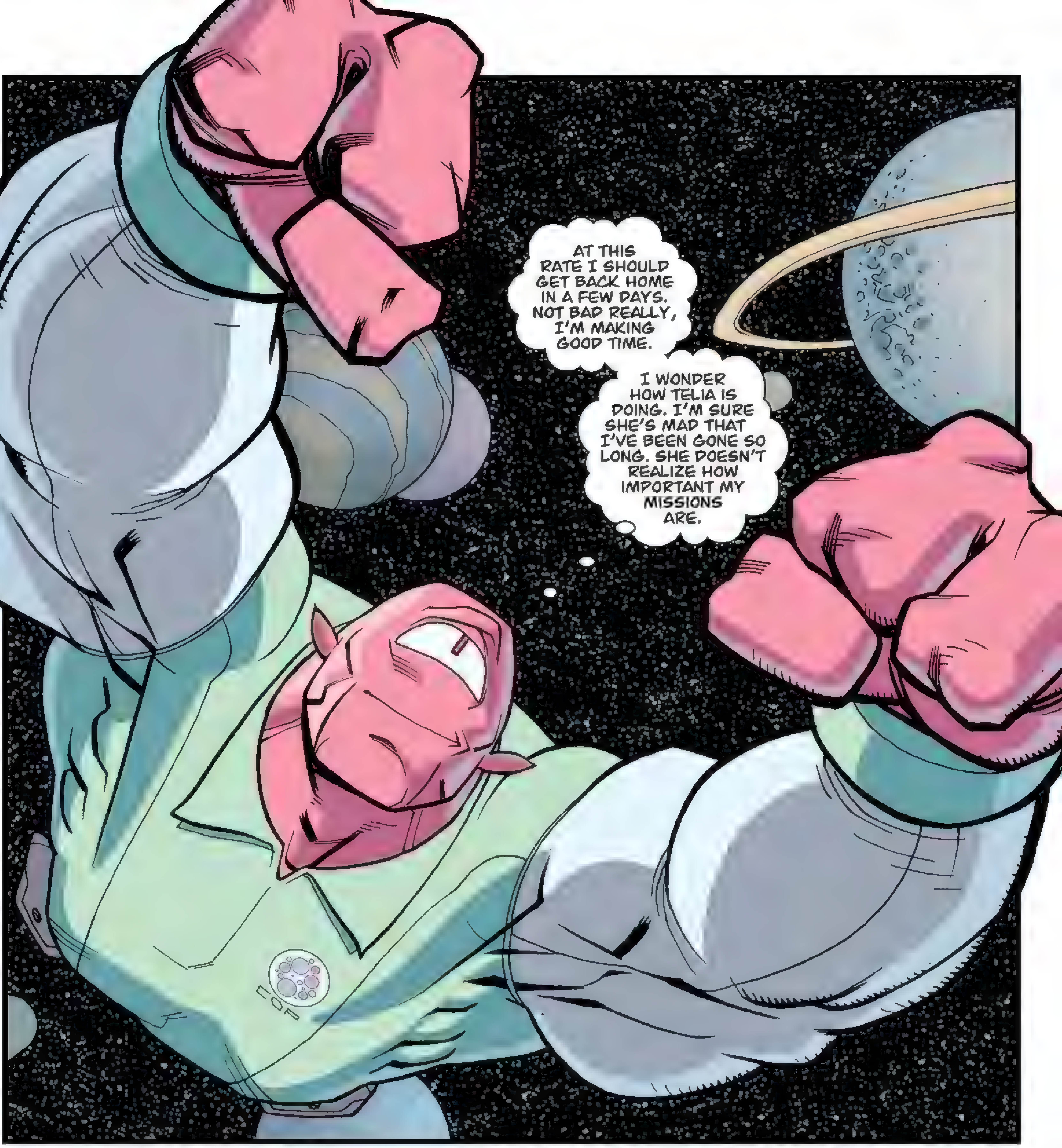

YOU REALLY HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH DANGER YOU'RE IN RIGHT NOW.
THAT'S... DISAPPOINTING.
YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF THIS PLANET, CHARGED WITH PREPARING IT FOR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER. THAT IS NOT UP FOR DEBATE.
YOU ARE FREE TO IGNORE YOUR DUTIES BUT THAT WILL BRING CONSEQUENCES.
CURRENTLY OUR RESERVE FORCES ARE OCCUPIED. THIS IS, NO DOUBT, WHY YOU WERE GIVEN THIS ASSIGNMENT TO BEGIN WITH.
SO I CAN'T REPLACE YOU NOW.
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO OPPOSE US. YOU CAN DENY THESE PEOPLE YOU CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THE *UTOPIA* VILTRUM WOULD BRING THIS PLANET.
INSTEAD, WE CAN FLATTEN THEIR CIVILIZATION WHILE WE TAKE WHAT WE WANT.
THAT DECISION IS YOURS TO MAKE.
IN TIME, A REPLACEMENT FOR YOU WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE. ANOTHER VILTRUMITE AGENT WILL BE SENT HERE. IF YOU STILL CHOOSE TO OPPOSE US, YOU WILL BE KILLED AND REPLACED AT THAT TIME.
IT COULD BE FIVE MONTHS... IT COULD BE FIVE YEARS.
I PRAY YOU COME TO YOUR SENSES BEFORE THAT TIME.

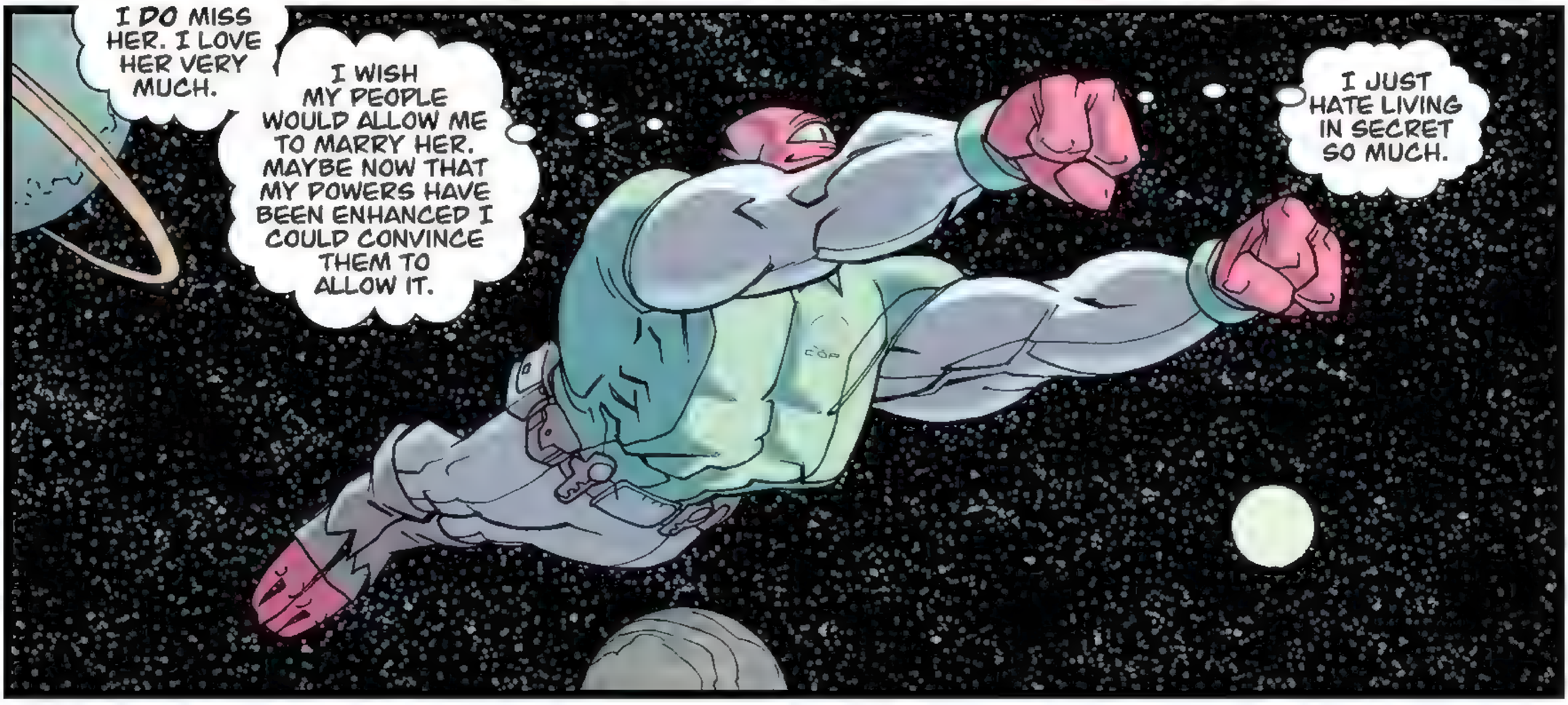

YEAH, THANKS.
LIKE I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT.
⩦COUGH⩦
⩦COUGH⩦
ARE YOU OKAY, SIR?
WE WERE SENT TO ASSIST YOU. DO YOU NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION?
NO--JUST, CHECK ON THE PEOPLE IN THE SHIP, MAKE SURE THEY'RE OKAY. I'M ALRIGHT, I'M--
I'M FINE.

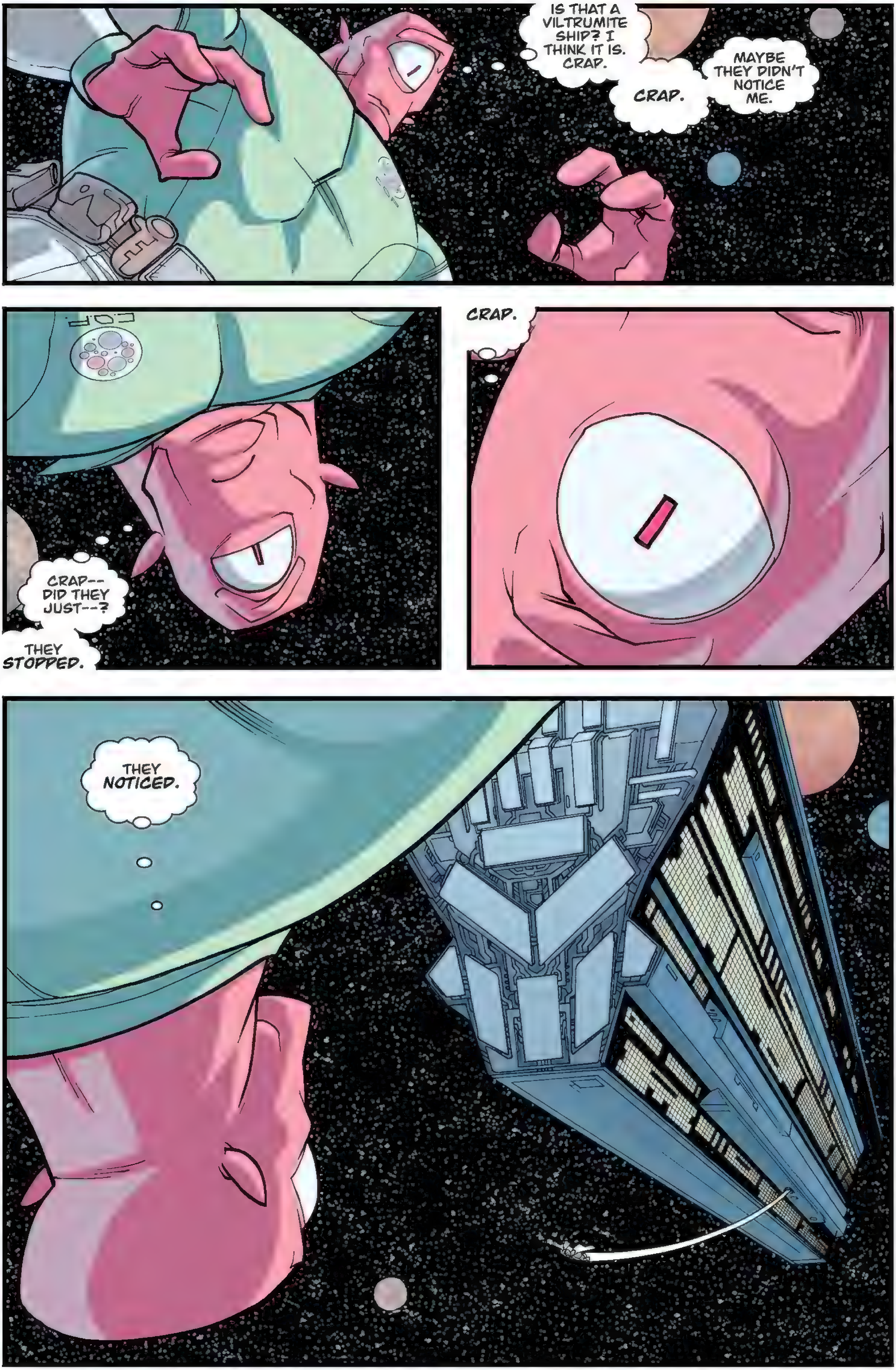

WELL?
IT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER.
SHAME, WE COULD HAVE USED HIM.
IT'S NOT OVER YET. I'M CONFIDENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO BRING HIM OVER TO OUR SIDE.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

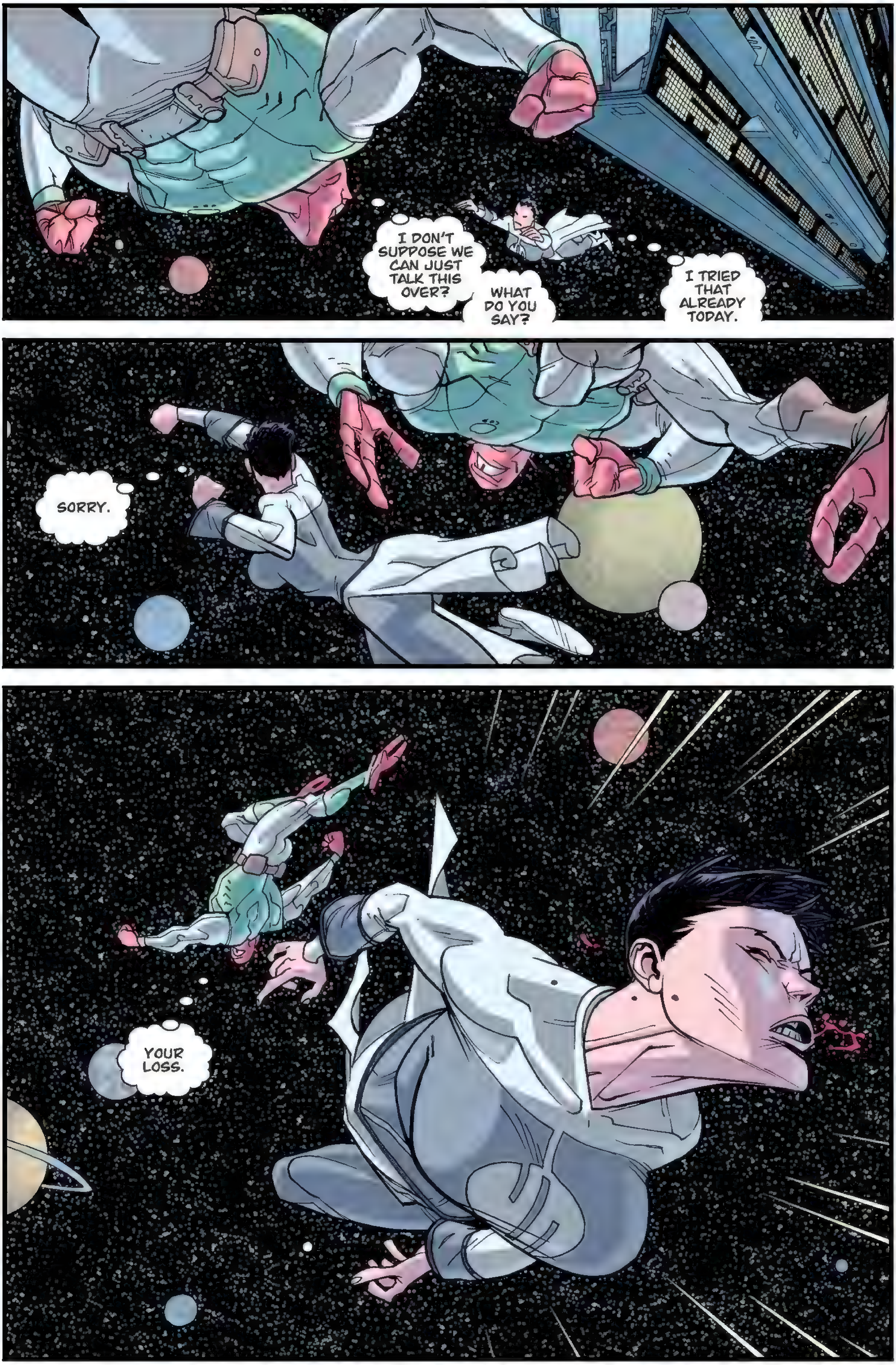

OH, MOM--YOU'RE STILL HERE. I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE LEFT ALREADY.
I WAS WORRIED--I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT CHECK BACK HERE AFTER YOU WERE DONE.
YOU'RE DONE, RIGHT?
Z-GA
FAT
YEAH--SHE'S GONE. IT'S ALL OVER, FOR NOW AT LEAST.
FOR NOW?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY *THAT?* WHAT DID THAT WOMAN WANT?
WHO *WAS* THAT?
IT'S NOTHING, MOM. REALLY--JUST FORGET IT.
VILTRUMITE STUFF.
WHAT, LIKE I'M NOT SMART ENOUGH TO COMPREHEND YOUR COSMIC SPACE FIGHTS OR SOMETHING?
THAT'S NOT IT, MOM--NO. SHE CAME TO TALK... OR SOMETHING, LIKE THAT WAS GOING TO GET ME TO HELP THEM TAKE OVER THE PLANET.
IT WAS *WEIRD*.
THAT *IS* WEIRD.
LET'S GO BACK TO MY DORM ROOM--I CAN FLY YOU HOME FROM THERE.
MARK, I DROVE.
THIS WILL BE FASTER--I'LL WHIP BACK HERE AND PICK UP THE CAR TONIGHT.
IF YOU *INSIST*...
IT'LL SAVE ME GAS MONEY AT LEAST.

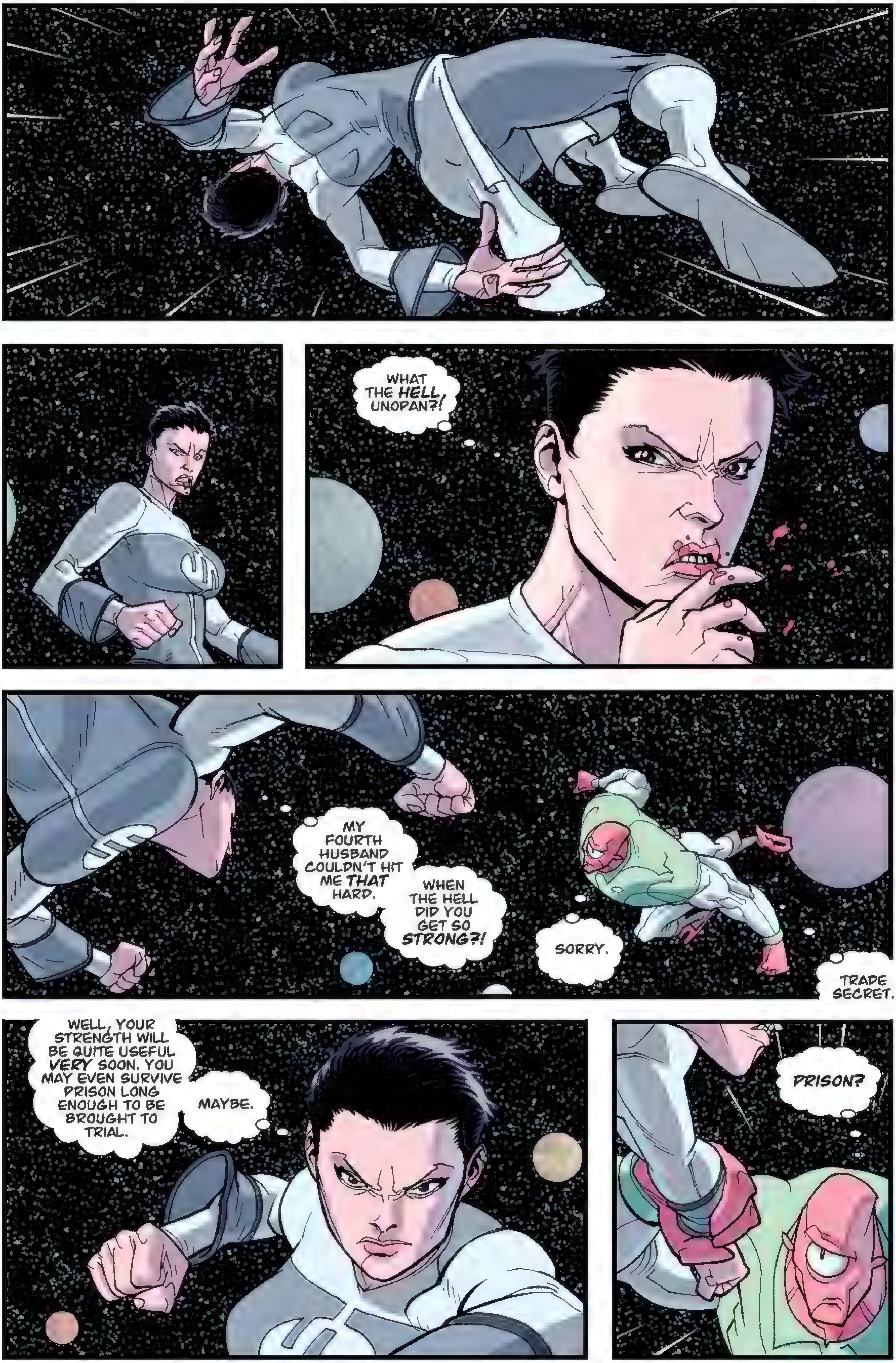

THE GRAYSON HOME.
MARK!
HEY, OLIVER. HOW'S IT GOING?
GOO--WELL. THINGS ARE GOING WELL.
OH, HELLO, YOU MUST BE MARK. I'M APRIL. I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE ACTUALLY MET, HAVE WE? I DON'T THINK WE HAVE.
I HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT YOU HERE, I FEEL LIKE I ALREADY KNOW YOU. BETWEEN OLIVER AND DEBBIE IT'S LIKE SOMEONE IS CONSTANTLY TALKING ABOUT YOU.
OH, YEAH? HEH. THAT'S COOL.
NICE TO MEET YOU, APRIL.
SO YOU TEACHING MY BROTHER ALL KINDS OF STUFF?
TO SAY THE LEAST, YEAH.
THUS FAR, I BELIEVE I'VE COVERED ABOUT SIX YEARS OF GRADE SCHOOL IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. AT THE RATE WE'RE GOING HE'LL BE TEACHING ME IN A COUPLE YEARS.

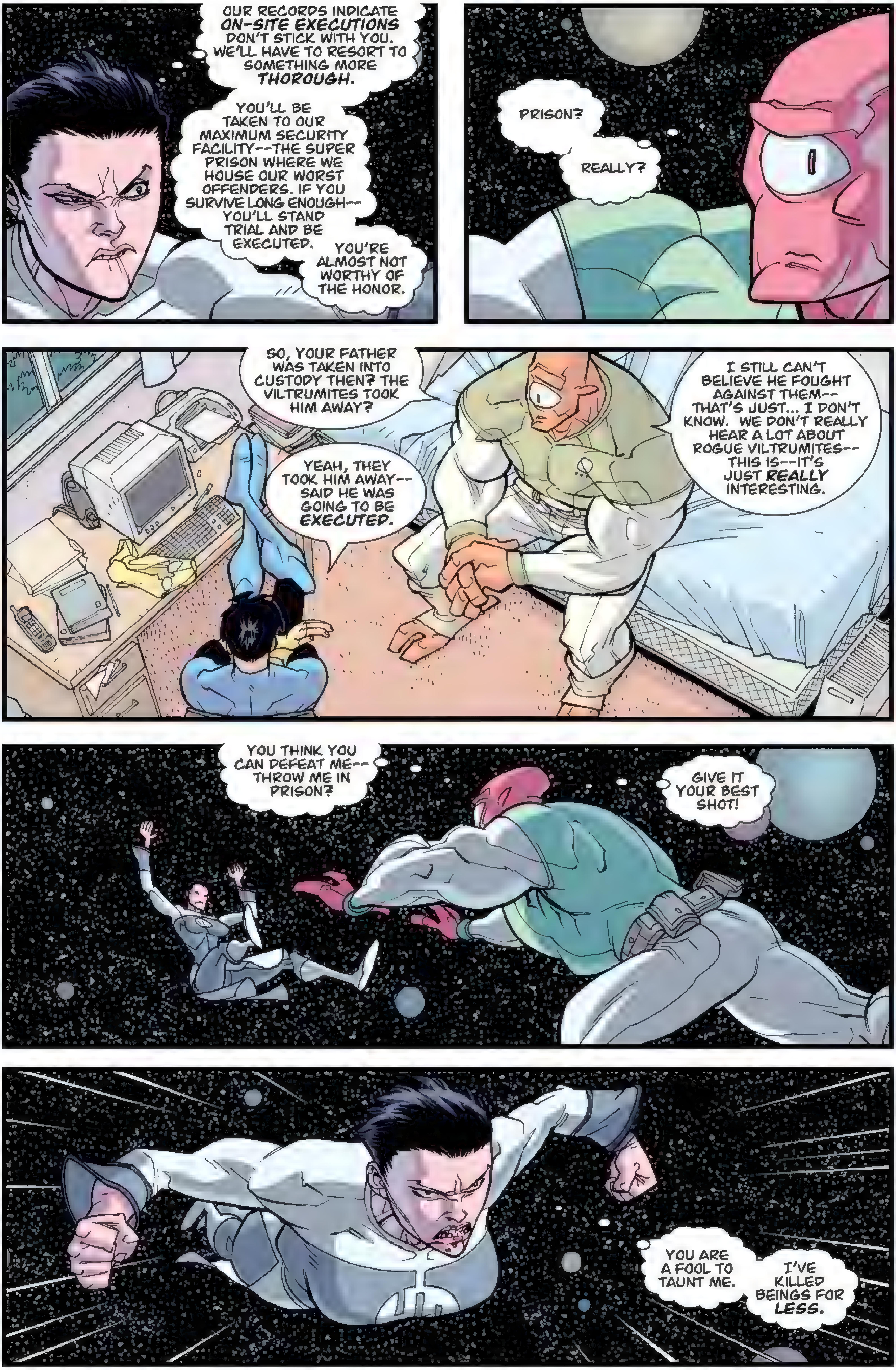

AT THIS RATE I SHOULD GET BACK HOME IN A FEW DAYS. NOT BAD REALLY, I'M MAKING GOOD TIME.
I WONDER HOW TELIA IS DOING. I'M SURE SHE'S MAD THAT I'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG. SHE DOESN'T REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT MY MISSIONS ARE.

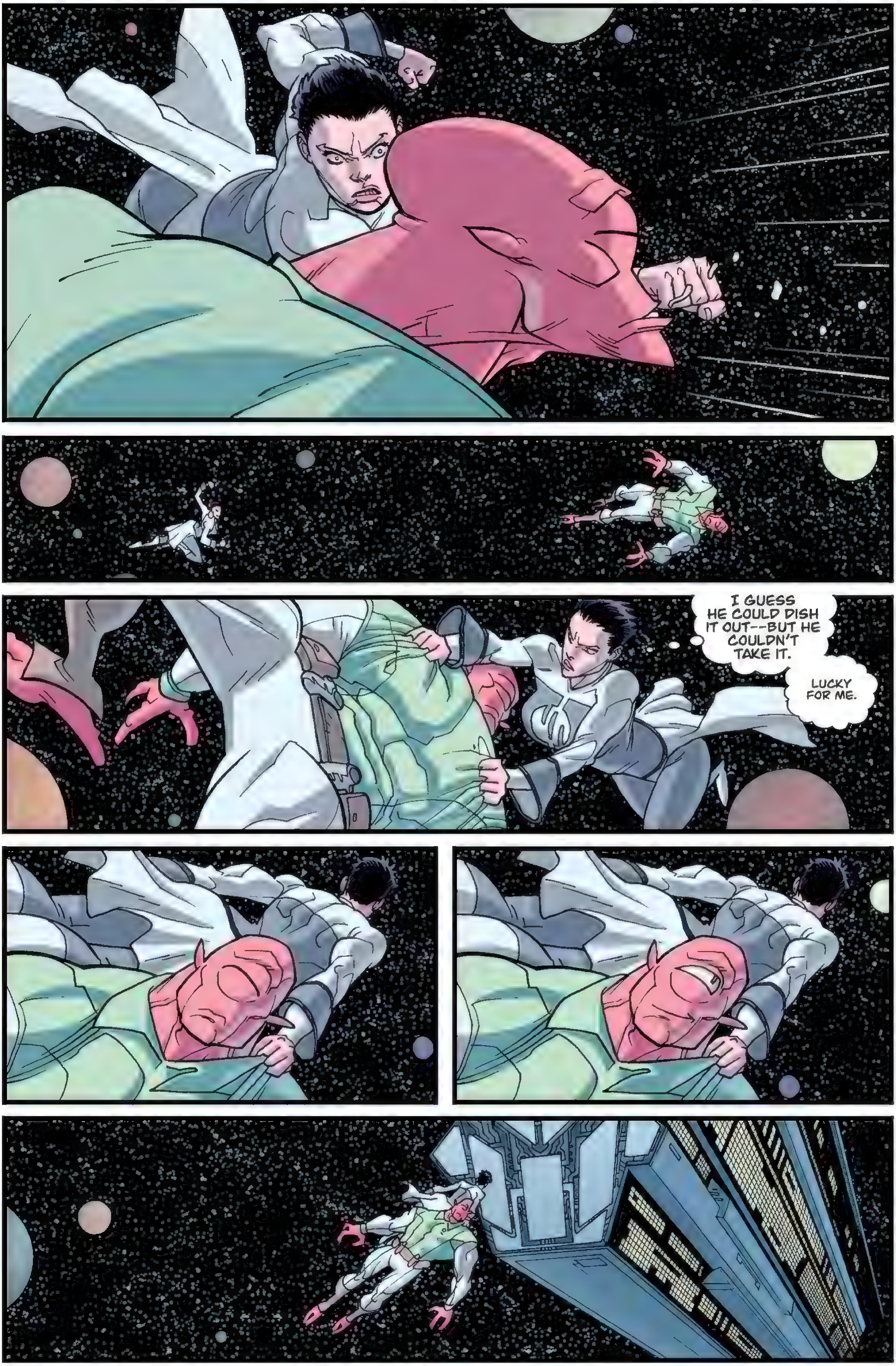

I *DO* MISS HER. I LOVE HER VERY MUCH.
I WISH MY PEOPLE WOULD ALLOW ME TO MARRY HER. MAYBE NOW THAT MY POWERS HAVE BEEN ENHANCED I COULD CONVINCE THEM TO ALLOW IT.
I JUST HATE LIVING IN SECRET SO MUCH.

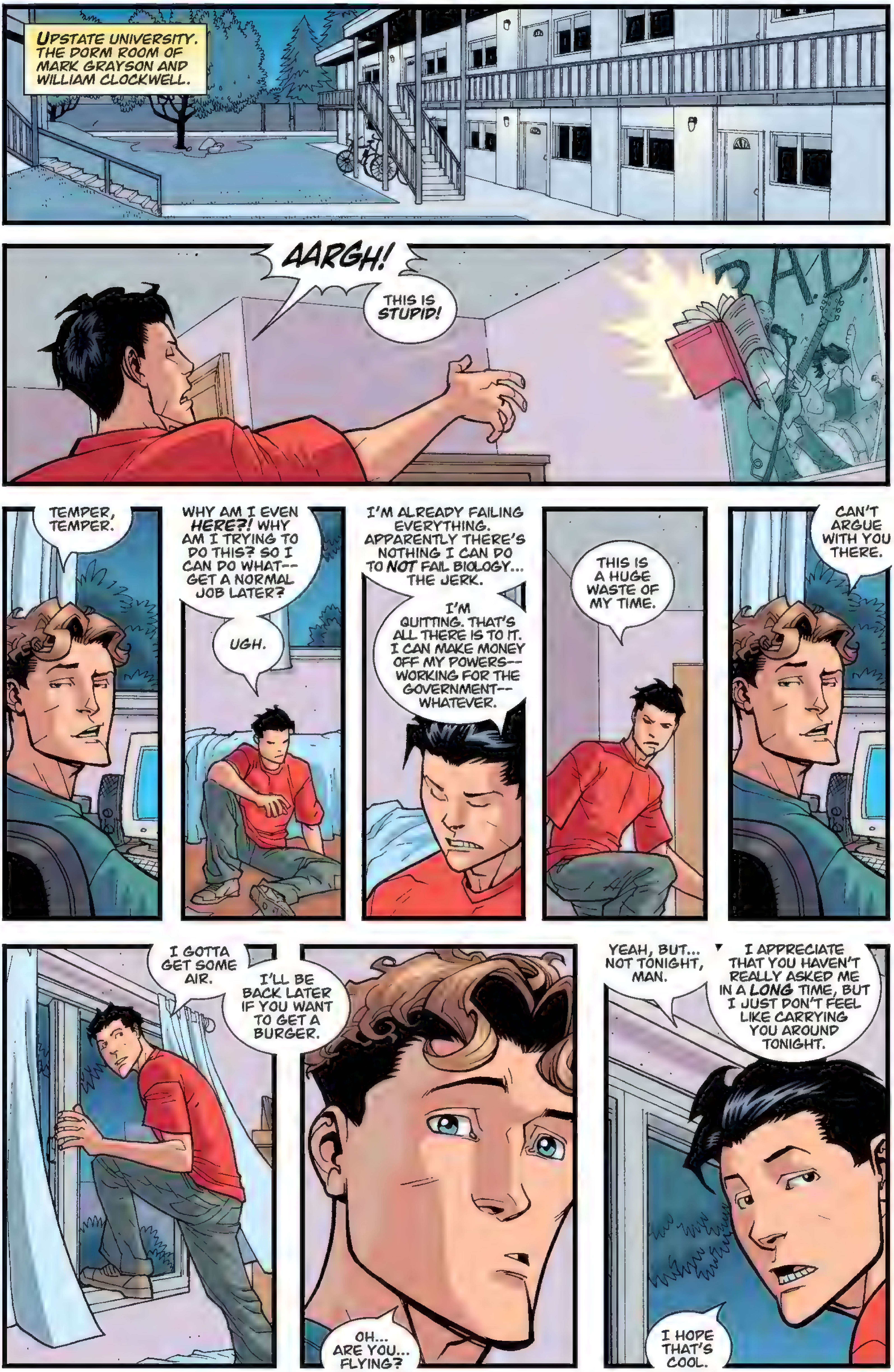

IS THAT A VILTRUMITE SHIP? I THINK IT IS. CRAP.
CRAP.
MAYBE THEY DIDN'T NOTICE ME.
CRAP-- DID THEY JUST--?
THEY STOPPED.
CRAP.
THEY NOTICED.

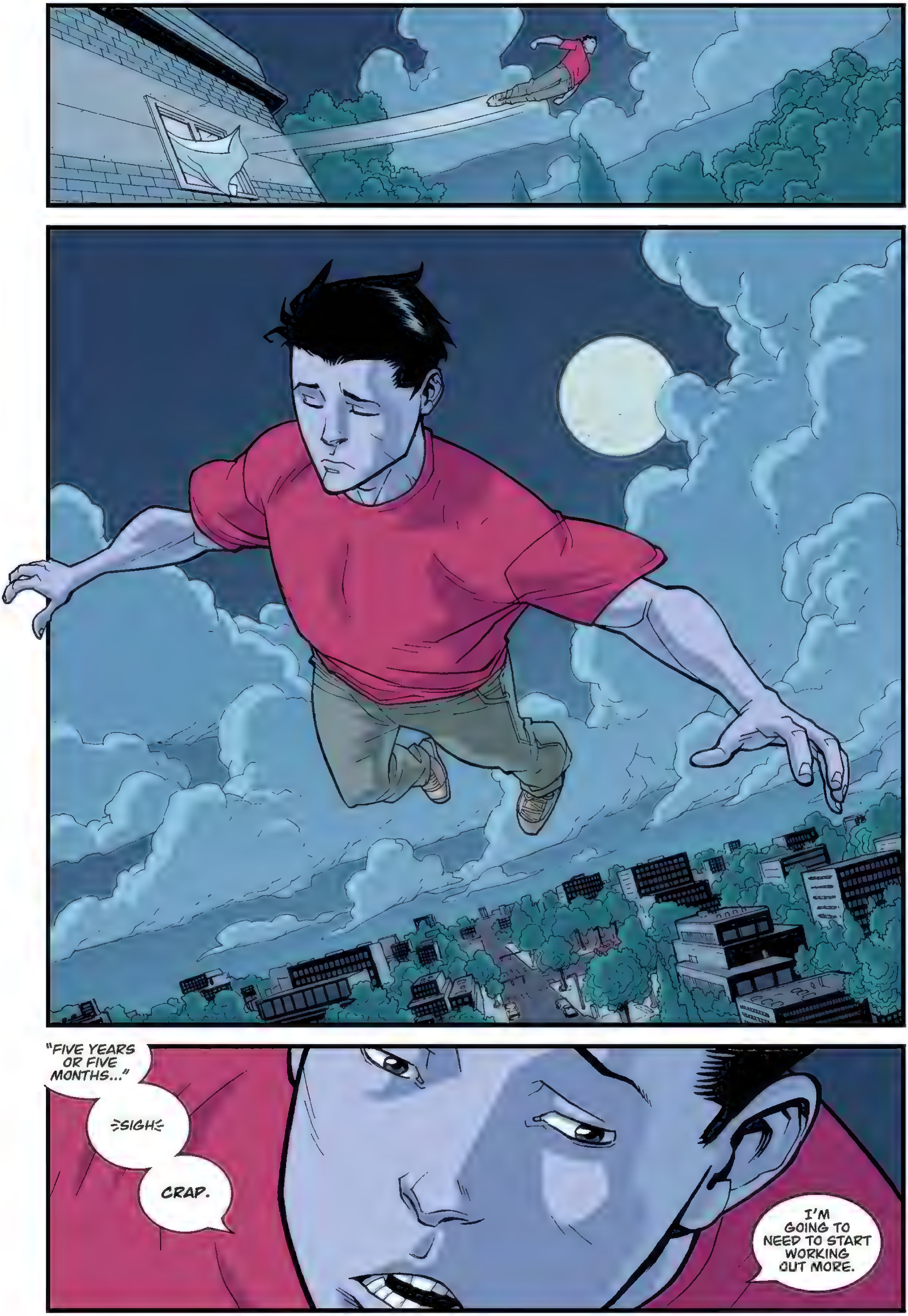

I DON'T SUPPOSE WE CAN JUST TALK THIS OVER?
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I TRIED THAT ALREADY TODAY.
SORRY.
YOUR LOSS.

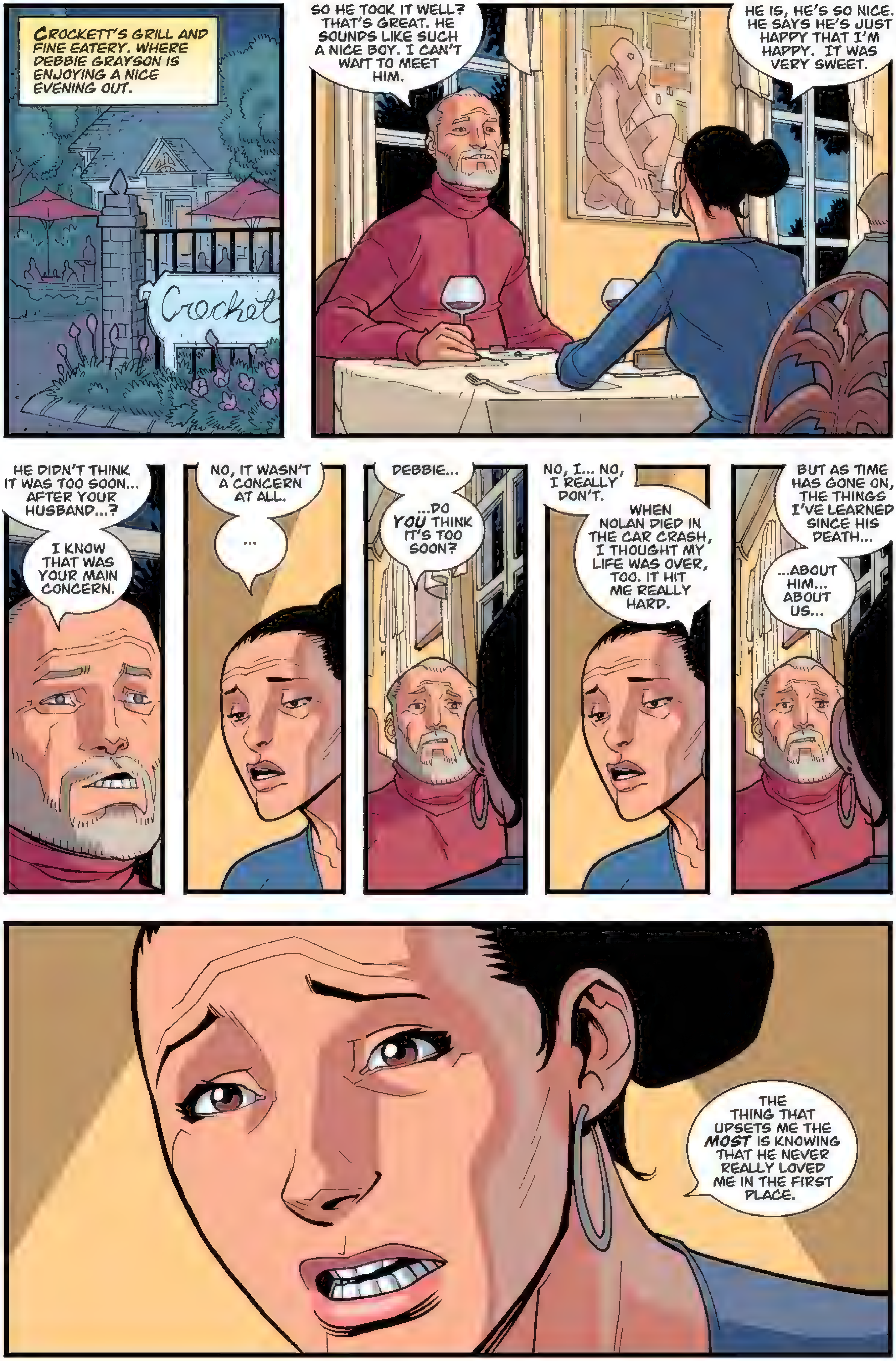

WHAT THE HELL, UNOPAN?!
MY FOURTH HUSBAND COULDN'T HIT ME THAT HARD.
WHEN THE HELL DID YOU GET SO STRONG?!
SORRY.
TRADE SECRET.
WELL, YOUR STRENGTH WILL BE QUITE USEFUL VERY SOON. YOU MAY EVEN SURVIVE PRISON LONG ENOUGH TO BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL.
MAYBE.
PRISON?

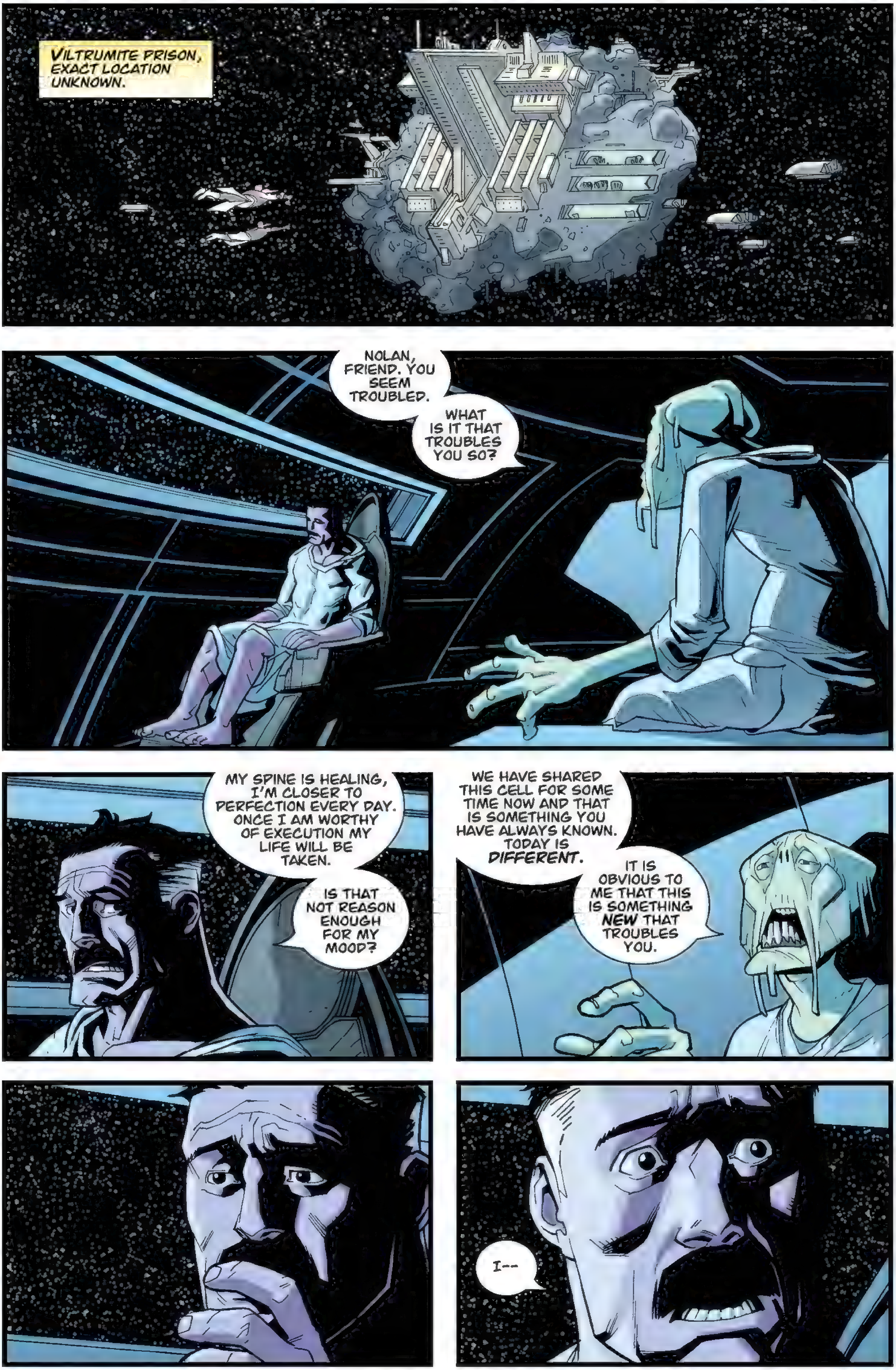

OUR RECORDS INDICATE ON-SITE EXECUTIONS DON'T STICK WITH YOU. WE'LL HAVE TO RESORT TO SOMETHING MORE THOROUGH.
YOU'LL BE TAKEN TO OUR MAXIMUM SECURITY FACILITY--THE SUPER PRISON WHERE WE HOUSE OUR WORST OFFENDERS. IF YOU SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH--YOU'LL STAND TRIAL AND BE EXECUTED.
YOU'RE ALMOST NOT WORTHY OF THE HONOR.
PRISON?
REALLY?
SO, YOUR FATHER WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THEN? THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY?
YEAH, THEY TOOK HIM AWAY--SAID HE WAS GOING TO BE EXECUTED.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE FOUGHT AGAINST THEM--THAT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW. WE DON'T REALLY HEAR A LOT ABOUT ROGUE VILTRUMITES--THIS IS--IT'S JUST REALLY INTERESTING.
YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT ME--THROW ME IN PRISON?
GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!
YOU ARE A FOOL TO TAUNT ME.
I'VE KILLED BEINGS FOR LESS.


I GUESS HE COULD DISH IT OUT--BUT HE COULDN'T TAKE IT.
LUCKY FOR ME.


UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
AARGH!
THIS IS *STUPID!*
TEMPER, TEMPER.
WHY AM I EVEN *HERE?!* WHY AM I TRYING TO DO THIS? SO I CAN DO WHAT-- GET A NORMAL JOB LATER?
UGH.
I'M ALREADY FAILING EVERYTHING. APPARENTLY THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO *NOT* FAIL BIOLOGY... THE JERK.
I'M QUITTING. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT. I CAN MAKE MONEY OFF MY POWERS-- WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT-- WHATEVER.
THIS IS A HUGE WASTE OF MY TIME.
CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU THERE.
I GOTTA GET SOME AIR.
I'LL BE BACK LATER IF YOU WANT TO GET A BURGER.
OH... ARE YOU... FLYING?
YEAH, BUT... NOT TONIGHT, MAN.
I APPRECIATE THAT YOU HAVEN'T REALLY ASKED ME IN A *LONG* TIME, BUT I JUST DON'T FEEL LIKE CARRYING YOU AROUND TONIGHT.
I HOPE THAT'S COOL.


"FIVE YEARS OR FIVE MONTHS..."
≑SIGH≑
CRAP.
I'M GOING TO NEED TO START WORKING OUT MORE.


CROCKETT'S GRILL AND FINE EATERY. WHERE DEBBIE GRAYSON IS ENJOYING A NICE EVENING OUT.
Crockett
SO HE TOOK IT WELL? THAT'S GREAT. HE SOUNDS LIKE SUCH A NICE BOY. I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET HIM.
HE IS, HE'S SO NICE. HE SAYS HE'S JUST HAPPY THAT I'M HAPPY. IT WAS VERY SWEET.
HE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS TOO SOON... AFTER YOUR HUSBAND...?
I KNOW THAT WAS YOUR MAIN CONCERN.
NO, IT WASN'T A CONCERN AT ALL.
...
DEBBIE...
...DO *YOU* THINK IT'S TOO SOON?
NO, I... NO, I REALLY DON'T.
WHEN NOLAN DIED IN THE CAR CRASH, I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS OVER, TOO. IT HIT ME REALLY HARD.
BUT AS TIME HAS GONE ON, THE THINGS I'VE LEARNED SINCE HIS DEATH...
...ABOUT HIM... ABOUT US...
THE THING THAT UPSETS ME THE *MOST* IS KNOWING THAT HE NEVER REALLY LOVED ME IN THE FIRST PLACE.

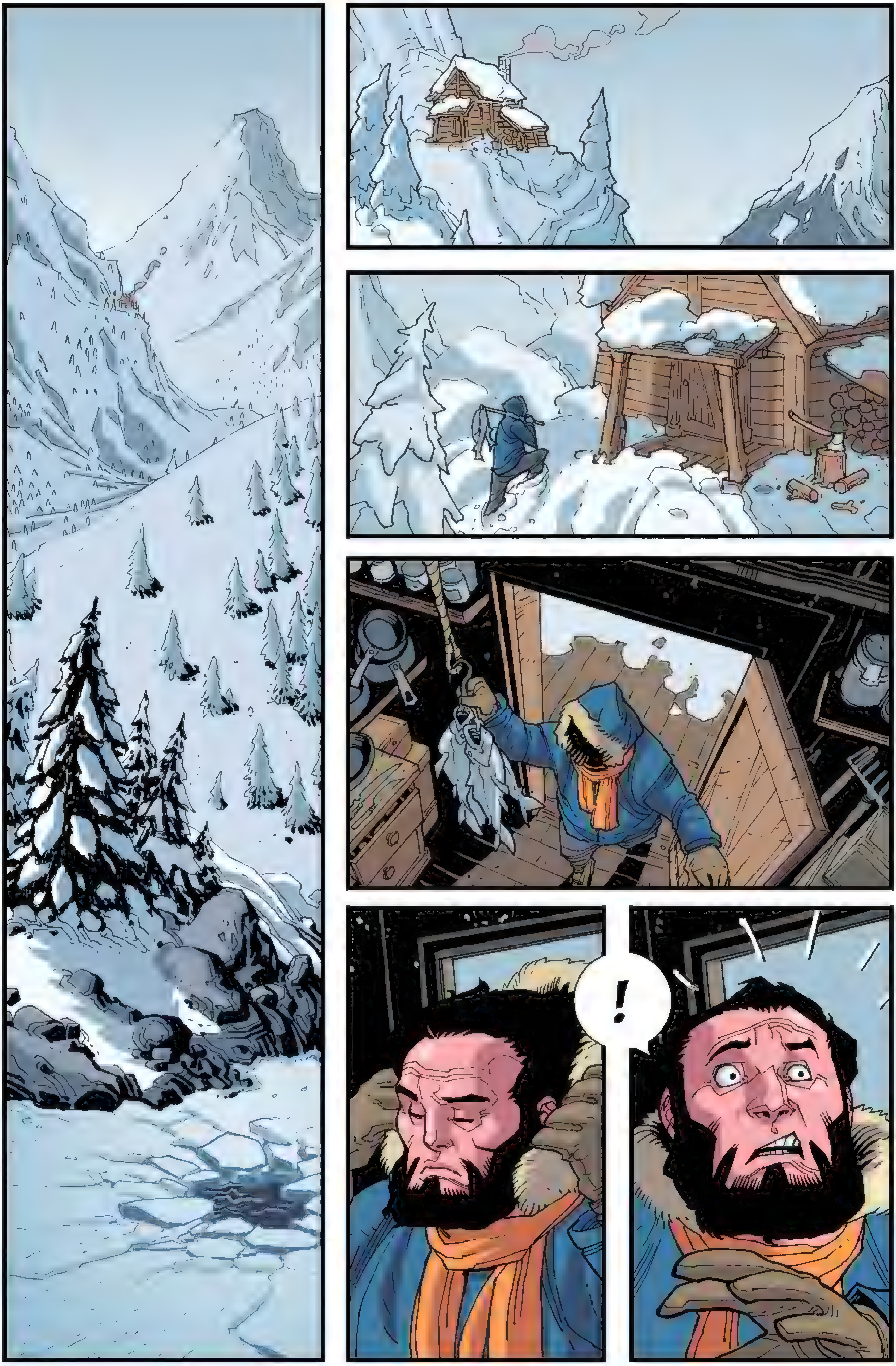

VILTRUMITE PRISON, EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
NOLAN, FRIEND. YOU SEEM TROUBLED.
WHAT IS IT THAT TROUBLES YOU SO?
MY SPINE IS HEALING, I'M CLOSER TO PERFECTION EVERY DAY. ONCE I AM WORTHY OF EXECUTION MY LIFE WILL BE TAKEN.
IS THAT NOT REASON ENOUGH FOR MY MOOD?
WE HAVE SHARED THIS CELL FOR SOME TIME NOW AND THAT IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN. TODAY IS *DIFFERENT*.
IT IS OBVIOUS TO ME THAT THIS IS SOMETHING *NEW* THAT TROUBLES YOU.
I--

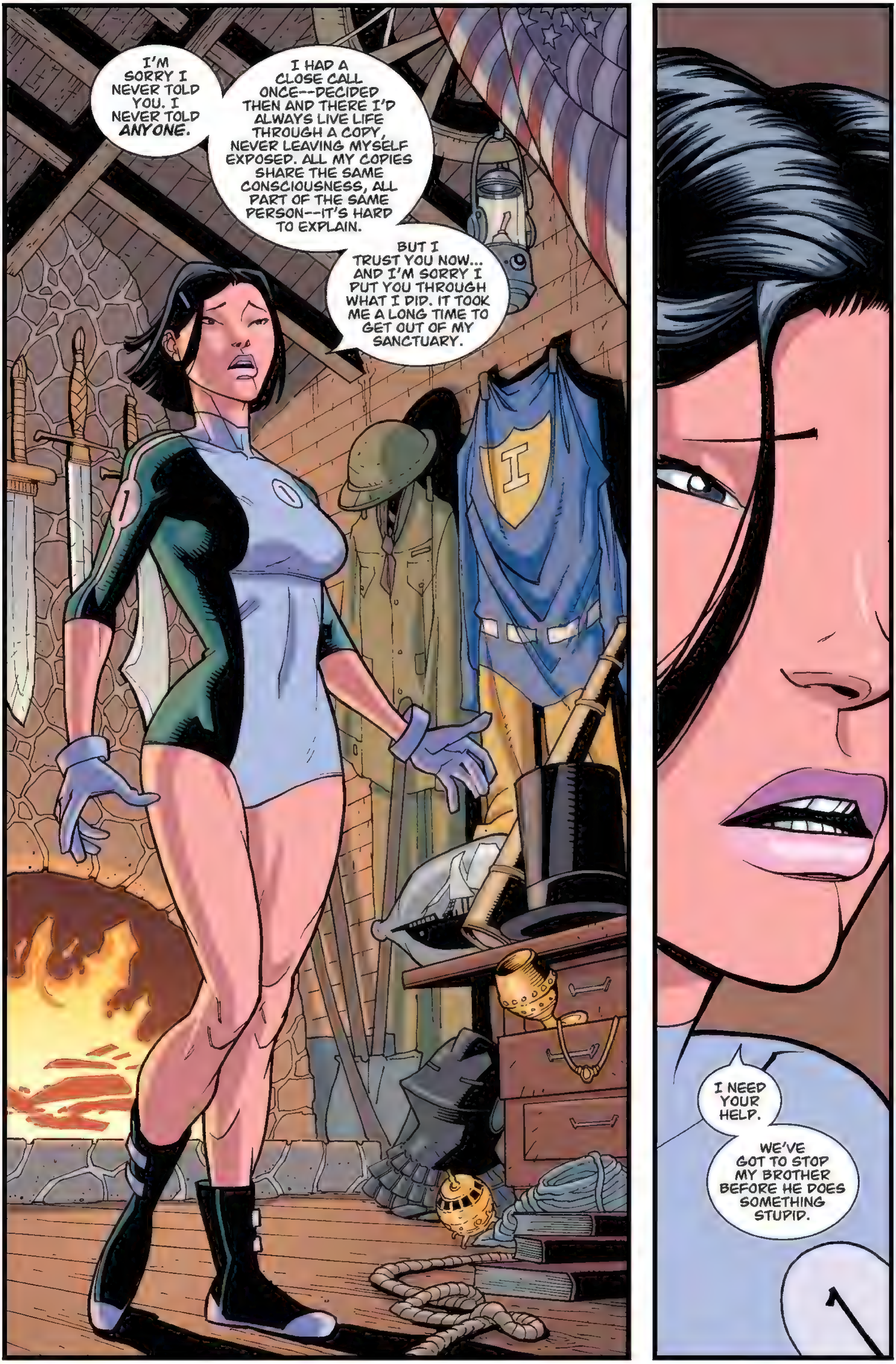
I THINK I MISS MY WIFE.

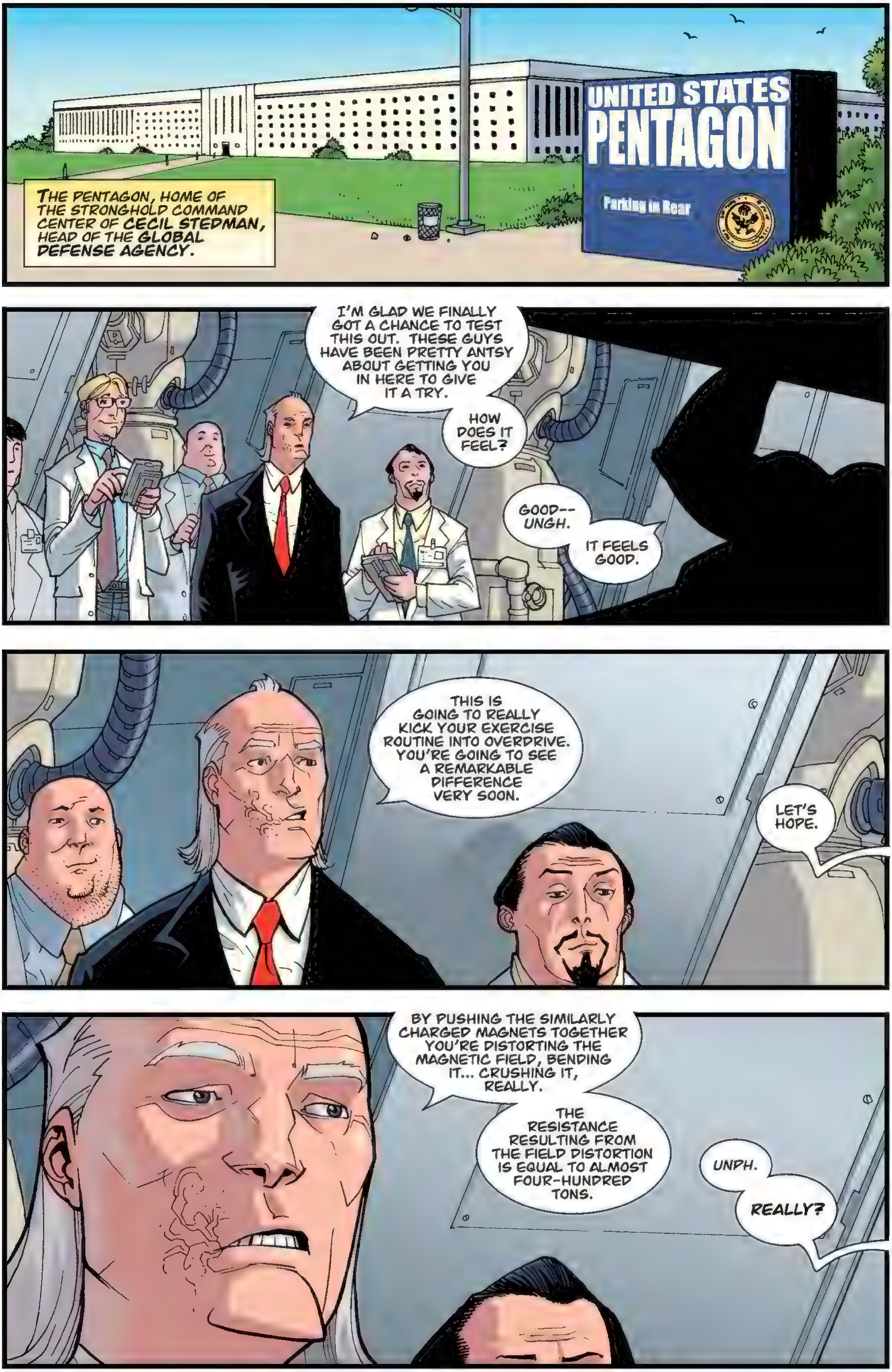
COP

ISSUE FORTY-SIX

21
18
10
4
7
RYAN

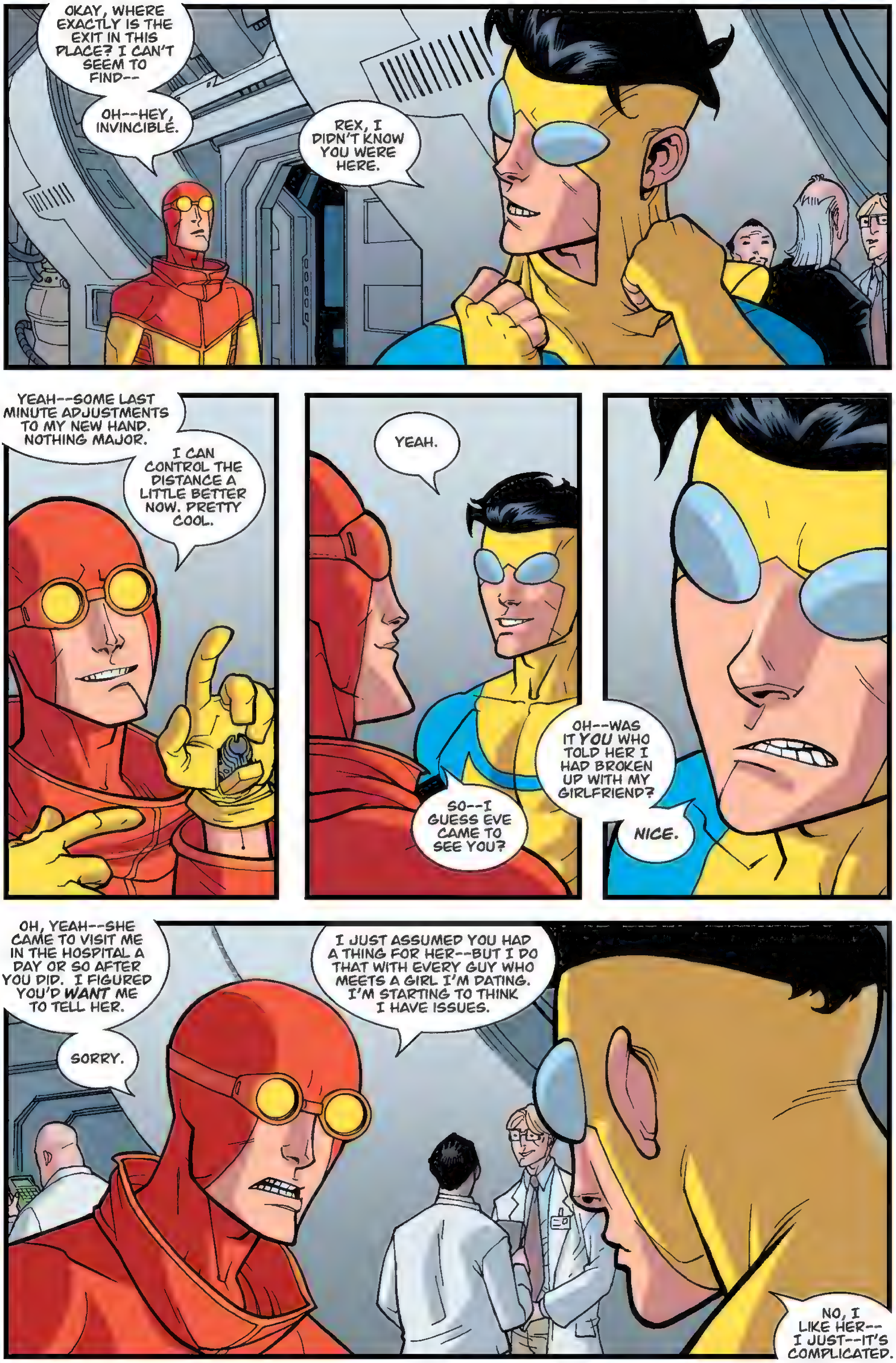



I'M SORRY I NEVER TOLD YOU. I NEVER TOLD *ANYONE*.
I HAD A CLOSE CALL ONCE--DECIDED THEN AND THERE I'D ALWAYS LIVE LIFE THROUGH A COPY, NEVER LEAVING MYSELF EXPOSED. ALL MY COPIES SHARE THE SAME CONSCIOUSNESS, ALL PART OF THE SAME PERSON--IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN.
BUT I TRUST YOU NOW... AND I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH WHAT I DID. IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO GET OUT OF MY SANCTUARY.
I
I NEED YOUR HELP.
WE'VE GOT TO STOP MY BROTHER BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING STUPID.

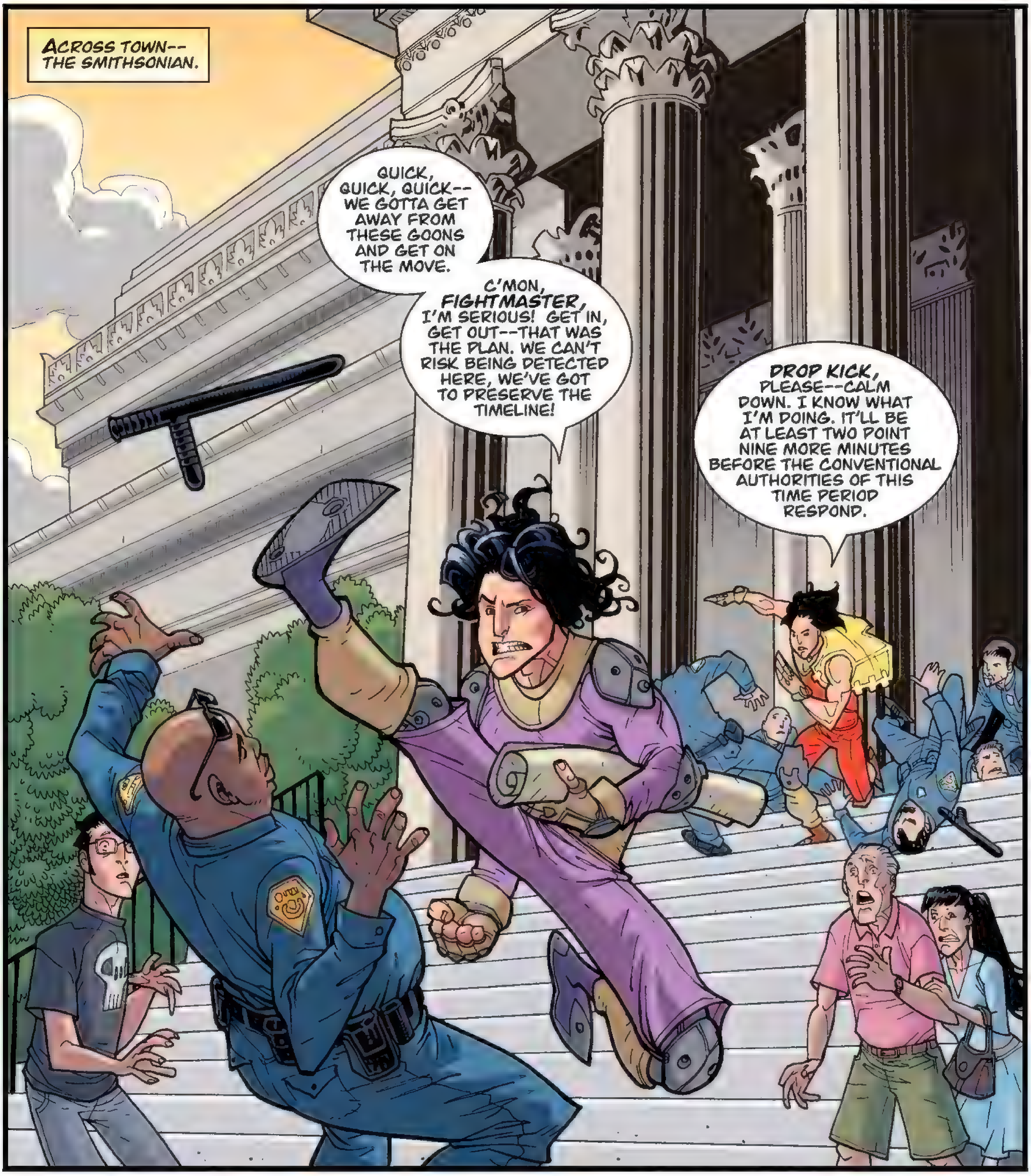

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THE PENTAGON, HOME OF THE STRONGHOLD COMMAND CENTER OF CECIL STEDMAN, HEAD OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
I'M GLAD WE FINALLY GOT A CHANCE TO TEST THIS OUT. THESE GUYS HAVE BEEN PRETTY ANTSY ABOUT GETTING YOU IN HERE TO GIVE IT A TRY.
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
GOOD-- UNGH.
IT FEELS GOOD.
THIS IS GOING TO REALLY KICK YOUR EXERCISE ROUTINE INTO OVERDRIVE. YOU'RE GOING TO SEE A REMARKABLE DIFFERENCE VERY SOON.
LET'S HOPE.
BY PUSHING THE SIMILARLY CHARGED MAGNETS TOGETHER YOU'RE DISTORTING THE MAGNETIC FIELD, BENDING IT... CRUSHING IT, REALLY.
THE RESISTANCE RESULTING FROM THE FIELD DISTORTION IS EQUAL TO ALMOST FOUR-HUNDRED TONS.
UNPH.
REALLY?

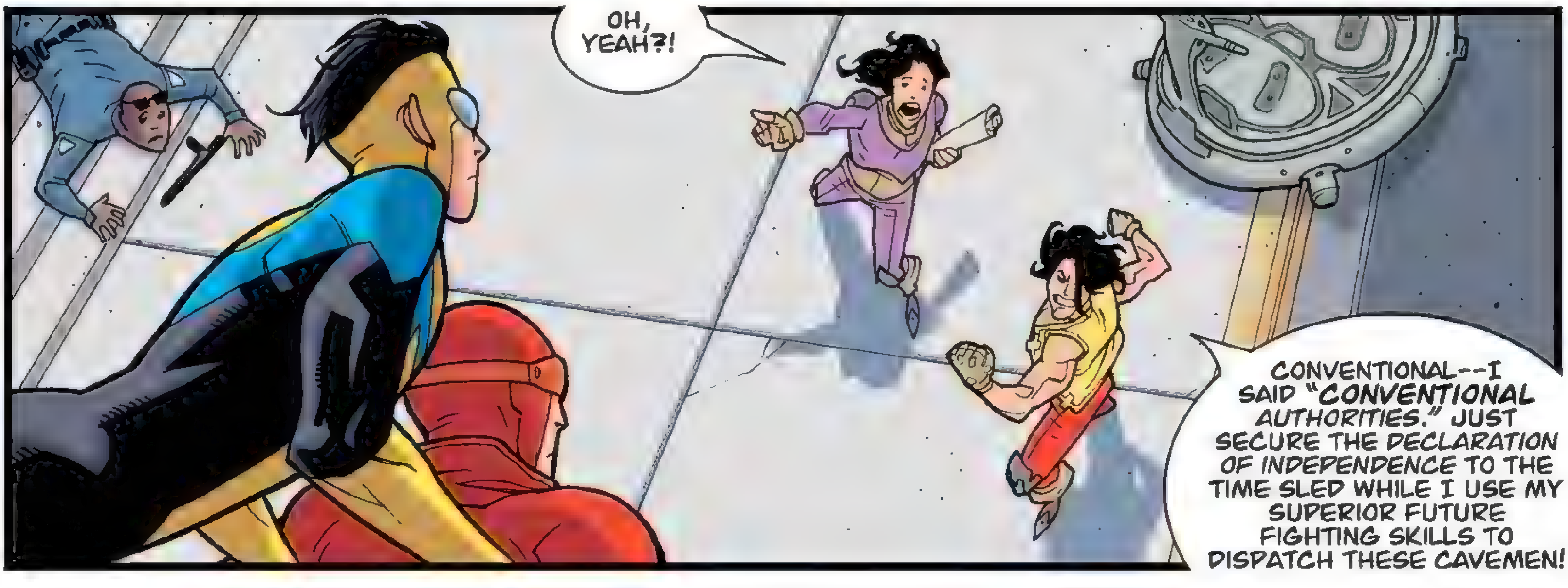
FEELS LIKE *MORE*.

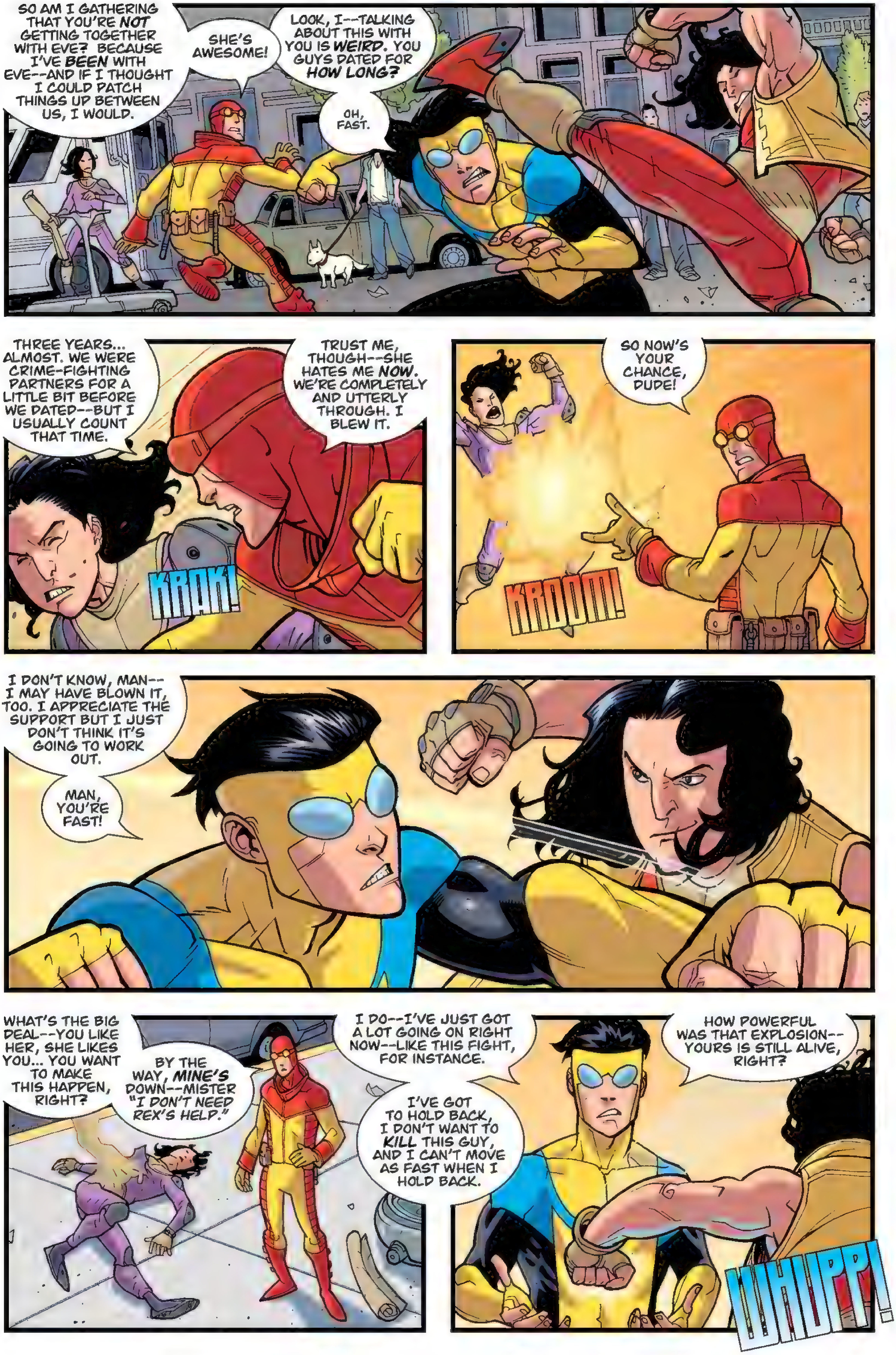
THIS IS GREAT THOUGH--I CAN FEEL IT WORKING.
KROOM!!
I CAN *FEEL* MYSELF GETTING STRONGER--I DON'T KNOW HOW QUICKLY IT ACTUALLY WORKS, IT MAY ALL BE IN MY HEAD, BUT THE MORE I LIFT THAT THING--THE *EASIER* IT GETS.
A FEW HOURS ON THIS THING EVERY DAY--AND I'LL BE READY WHEN THE VILTRUMITES COME TO EARTH.
THAT'S THE PLAN--LET'S HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
I THINK IT ALL JUST DEPENDS ON *TIME*. HOW LONG IT TAKES THE VILTRUMITE AGENT TO GET HERE, HOW MUCH TIME I'LL HAVE TO SPEND WORKING OUT, HOW MUCH TIME IT'LL TAKE TO GET MY STRENGTH LEVELS UP TO THEIR FULL LIMIT--WHATEVER THAT IS.
AS LONG AS I'VE GOT THE TIME--THIS SHOULD BE A PIECE OF CAKE.
LUCKILY, IF THERE WERE A FULL-SCALE INVASION OF EARTH, YOU WOULDN'T BE ALONE.
WE'VE GOT THAT GOING FOR US, AND THE FACT THAT WE KNOW THEY'RE COMING... EVENTUALLY. THAT WAS A FOOLISH MOVE ON THEIR PART.
YEAH--THEY'RE PRETTY ARROGANT.
I DON'T THINK THEY'VE EVEN CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY WE COULD BEAT THEM.

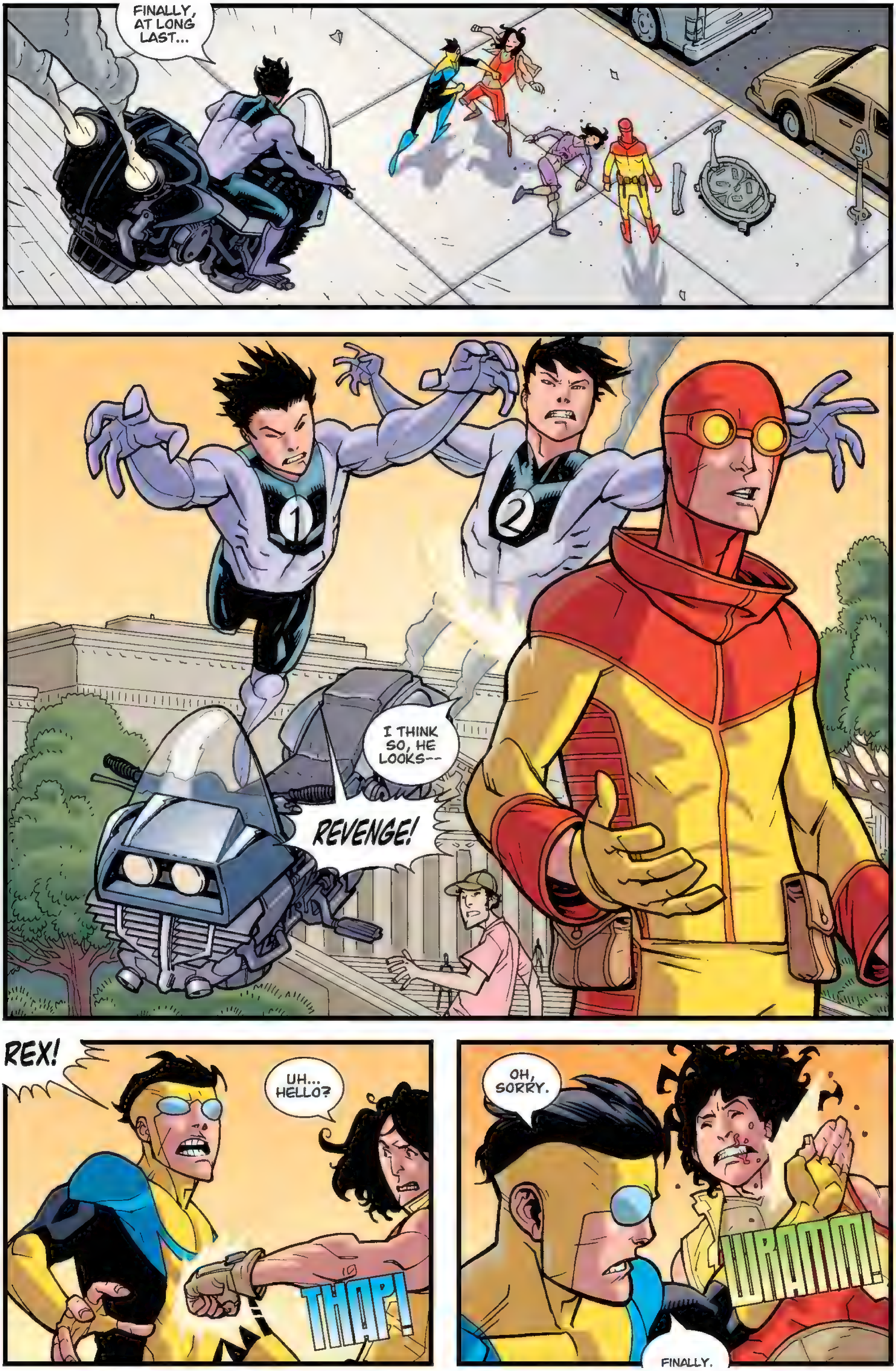

OKAY, WHERE EXACTLY IS THE EXIT IN THIS PLACE? I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND--
OH--HEY, INVINCIBLE.
REX, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.
YEAH--SOME LAST MINUTE ADJUSTMENTS TO MY NEW HAND. NOTHING MAJOR.
I CAN CONTROL THE DISTANCE A LITTLE BETTER NOW. PRETTY COOL.
YEAH.
SO--I GUESS EVE CAME TO SEE YOU?
OH--WAS IT *YOU* WHO TOLD HER I HAD BROKEN UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND?
NICE.
OH, YEAH--SHE CAME TO VISIT ME IN THE HOSPITAL A DAY OR SO AFTER YOU DID. I FIGURED YOU'D *WANT* ME TO TELL HER.
SORRY.
I JUST ASSUMED YOU HAD A THING FOR HER--BUT I DO THAT WITH EVERY GUY WHO MEETS A GIRL I'M DATING. I'M STARTING TO THINK I HAVE ISSUES.
NO, I LIKE HER--I JUST--IT'S COMPLICATED.

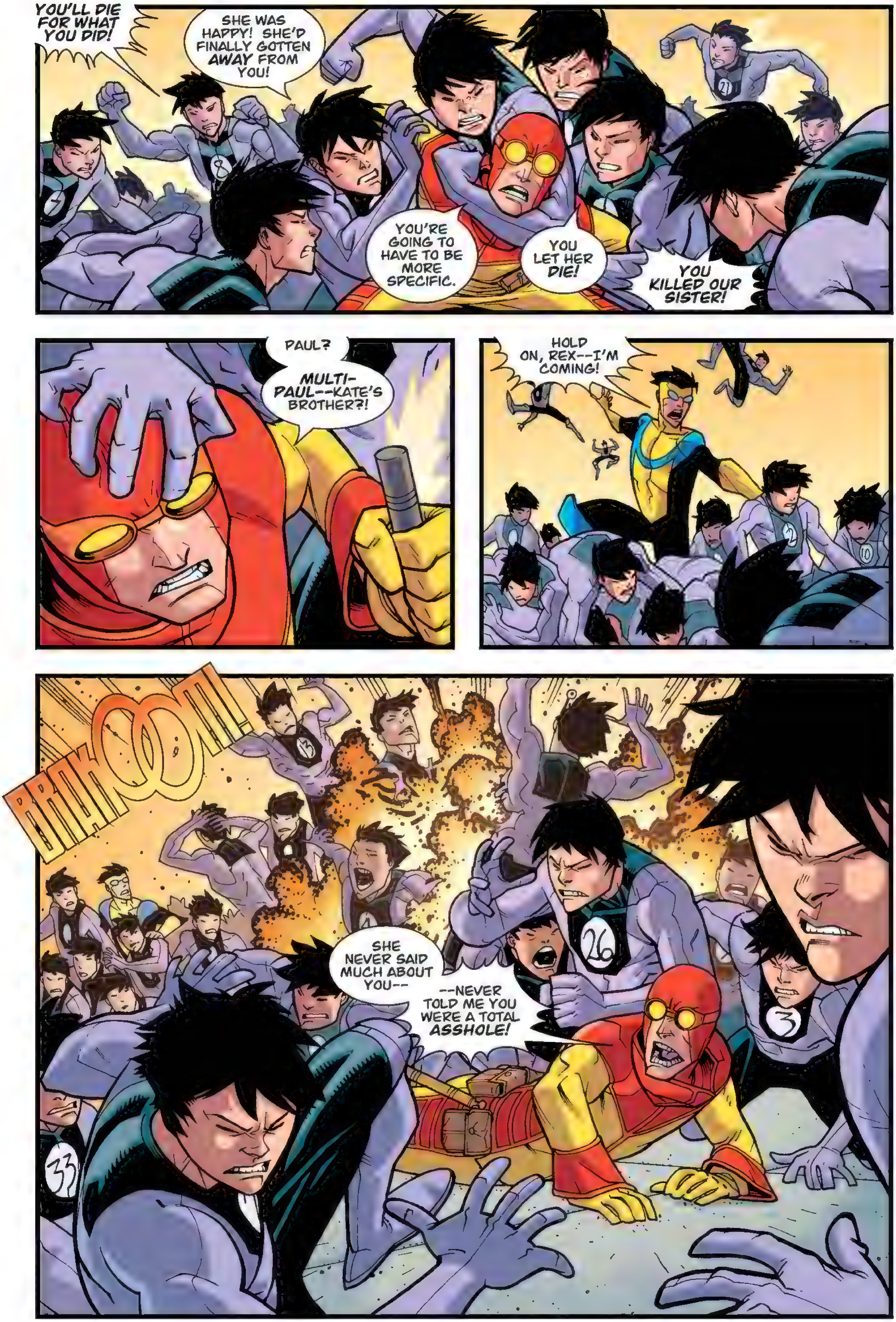
I WAS KINDA CLUELESS TO THE FACT THAT SHE LIKED ME. I WAS ATTRACTED TO HER--OF COURSE, BUT I WAS WITH AMBER AND THE WHOLE THING WAS--
I'M SORRY TO BREAK THIS UP BUT THERE'S A SITUATION THAT COULD USE YOUR ATTENTION, INVINCIBLE.
IS IT SOMETHING BIG? YOU NEED ME TO TAG ALONG?
UH...?
YOU COULD AT LEAST *PRETEND*.
NO, SORRY--YEAH. IT'S COOL, I COULD USE YOU. WE CAN FINISH OUR TALK ON THE WAY.
YOU KNOW HOW UNCOMFORTABLE "ARM-PITTING" IS?
SO I'VE HEARD.

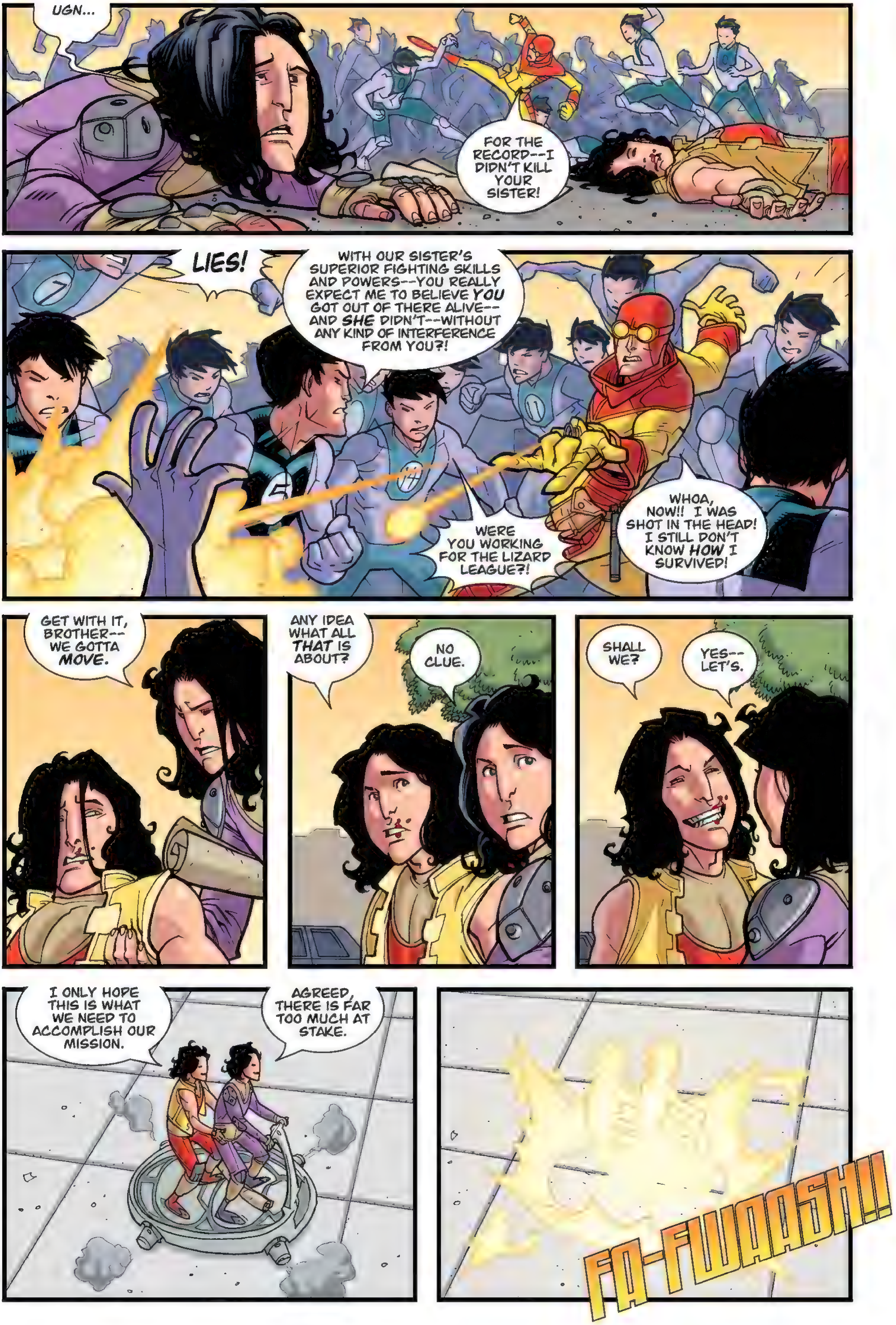

ACROSS TOWN--THE SMITHSONIAN.
QUICK, QUICK, QUICK--WE GOTTA GET AWAY FROM THESE GOONS AND GET ON THE MOVE.
C'MON, **FIGHTMASTER,** I'M SERIOUS! GET IN, GET OUT--THAT WAS THE PLAN. WE CAN'T RISK BEING DETECTED HERE, WE'VE GOT TO PRESERVE THE TIMELINE!
DROP KICK, PLEASE--CALM DOWN. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. IT'LL BE AT LEAST TWO POINT NINE MORE MINUTES BEFORE THE CONVENTIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THIS TIME PERIOD RESPOND.

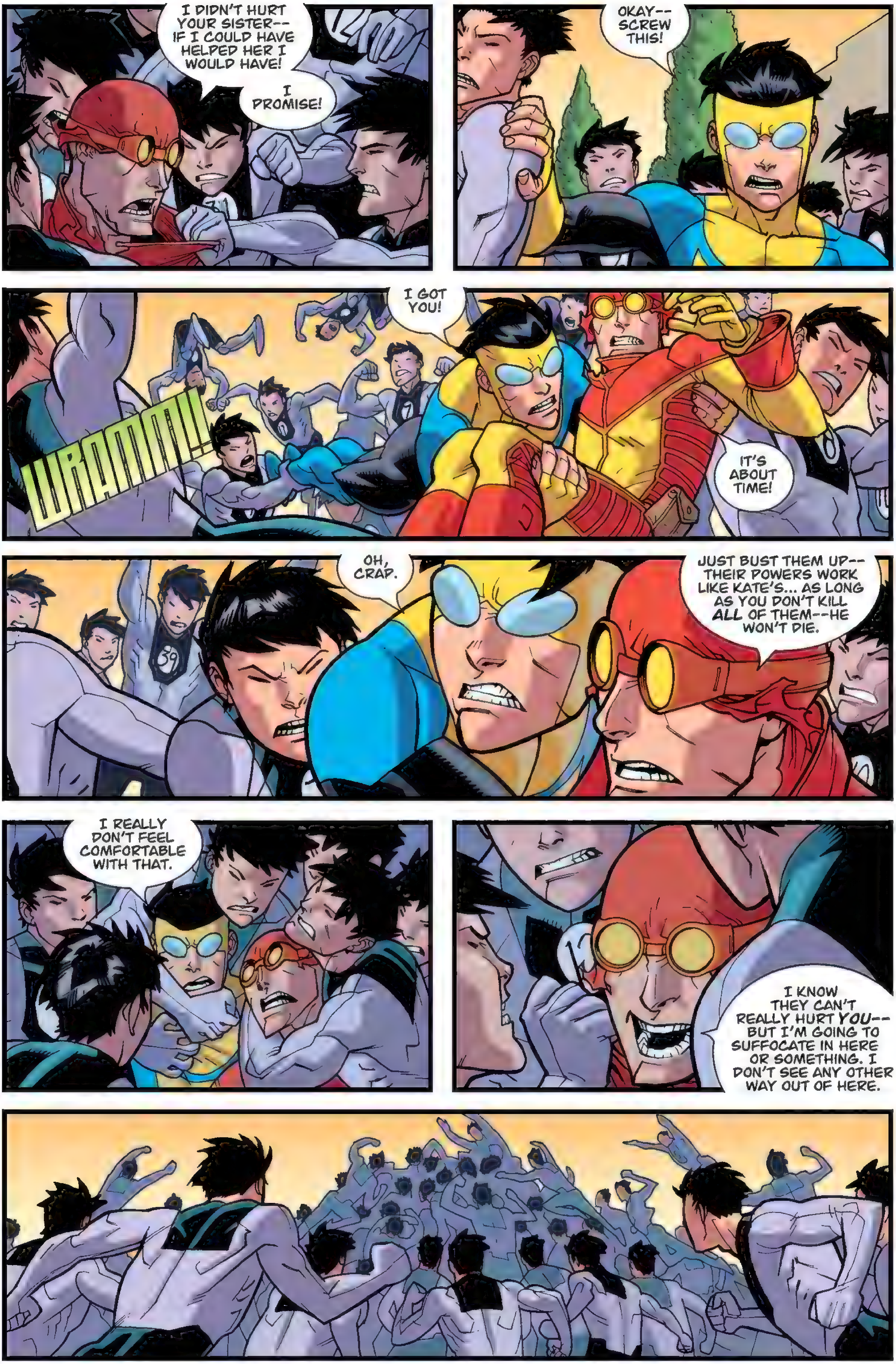

OH, YEAH?!
CONVENTIONAL--I SAID "**CONVENTIONAL** AUTHORITIES." JUST SECURE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE TO THE TIME SLED WHILE I USE MY SUPERIOR FUTURE FIGHTING SKILLS TO DISPATCH THESE CAVEMEN!


SO AM I GATHERING THAT YOU'RE **NOT** GETTING TOGETHER WITH EVE? BECAUSE I'VE **BEEN** WITH EVE--AND IF I THOUGHT I COULD PATCH THINGS UP BETWEEN US, I WOULD.
SHE'S AWESOME!
LOOK, I--TALKING ABOUT THIS WITH YOU IS ***WEIRD***. YOU GUYS DATED FOR ***HOW LONG?***
OH, FAST.
THREE YEARS... ALMOST. WE WERE CRIME-FIGHTING PARTNERS FOR A LITTLE BIT BEFORE WE DATED--BUT I USUALLY COUNT THAT TIME.
TRUST ME, THOUGH--SHE HATES ME ***NOW***. WE'RE COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY THROUGH. I BLEW IT.
KRAK!
SO NOW'S YOUR CHANCE, DUDE!
KROOM!
I DON'T KNOW, MAN-- I MAY HAVE BLOWN IT, TOO. I APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT BUT I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO WORK OUT.
MAN, YOU'RE FAST!
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL--YOU LIKE HER, SHE LIKES YOU... YOU WANT TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN, RIGHT?
*BY THE WAY, **MINE'S** DOWN--MISTER "I DON'T NEED REX'S HELP."*
I DO--I'VE JUST GOT A LOT GOING ON RIGHT NOW--LIKE THIS FIGHT, FOR INSTANCE.
I'VE GOT TO HOLD BACK, I DON'T WANT TO ***KILL*** THIS GUY, AND I CAN'T MOVE AS FAST WHEN I HOLD BACK.
HOW POWERFUL WAS THAT EXPLOSION--YOURS IS STILL ALIVE, RIGHT?
WHIPP!

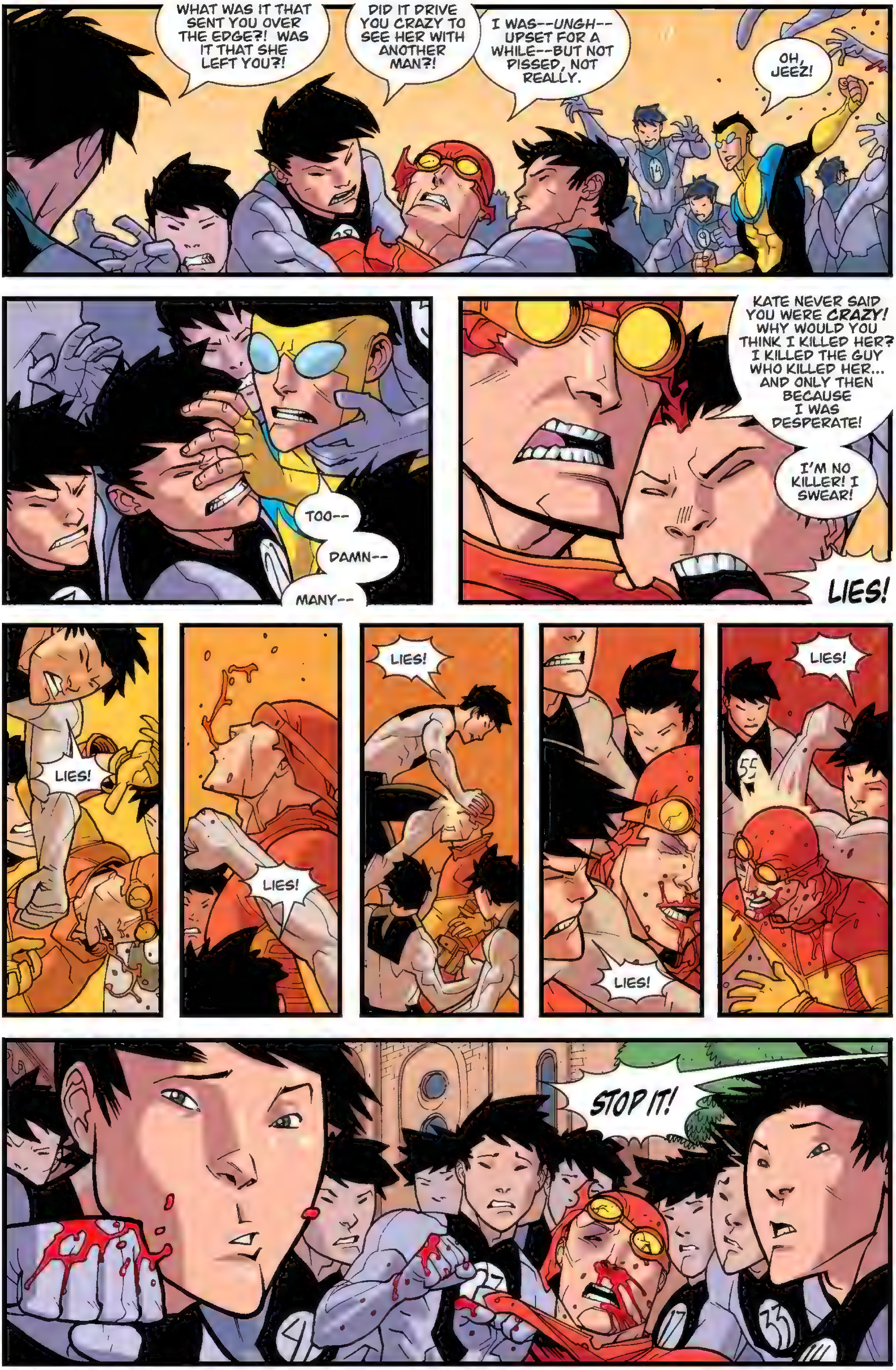

FINALLY, AT LONG LAST...
I THINK SO, HE LOOKS--
REVENGE!
REX!
UH... HELLO?
THAP!
OH, SORRY.
WRAMM!
FINALLY.

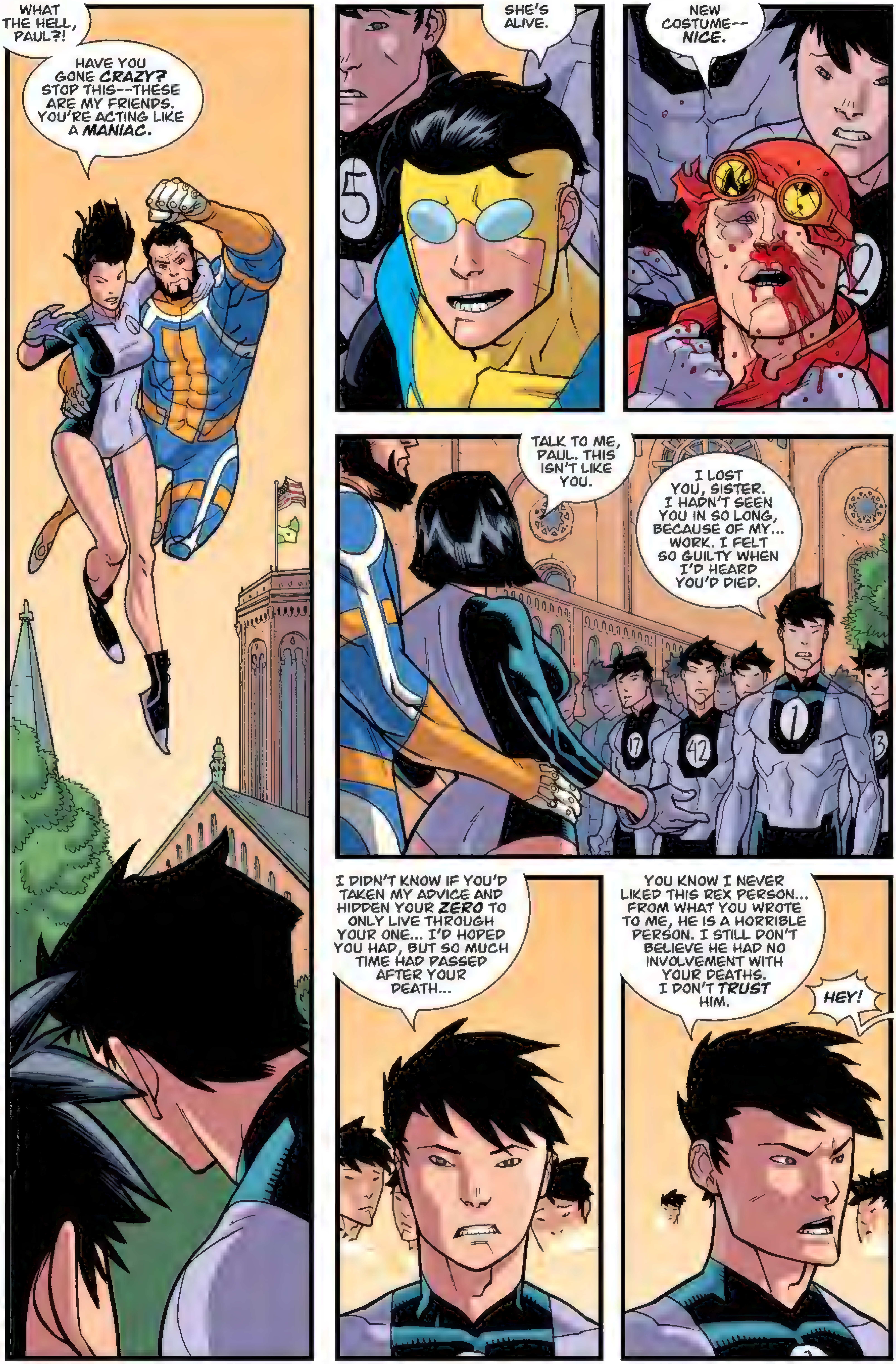

YOU'LL DIE FOR WHAT YOU DID!
SHE WAS HAPPY! SHE'D FINALLY GOTTEN AWAY FROM YOU!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE MORE SPECIFIC.
YOU LET HER DIE!
YOU KILLED OUR SISTER!
PAUL?
MULTI-PAUL--KATE'S BROTHER?!
HOLD ON, REX--I'M COMING!
BRAKOOM!
SHE NEVER SAID MUCH ABOUT YOU--
--NEVER TOLD ME YOU WERE A TOTAL ASSHOLE!

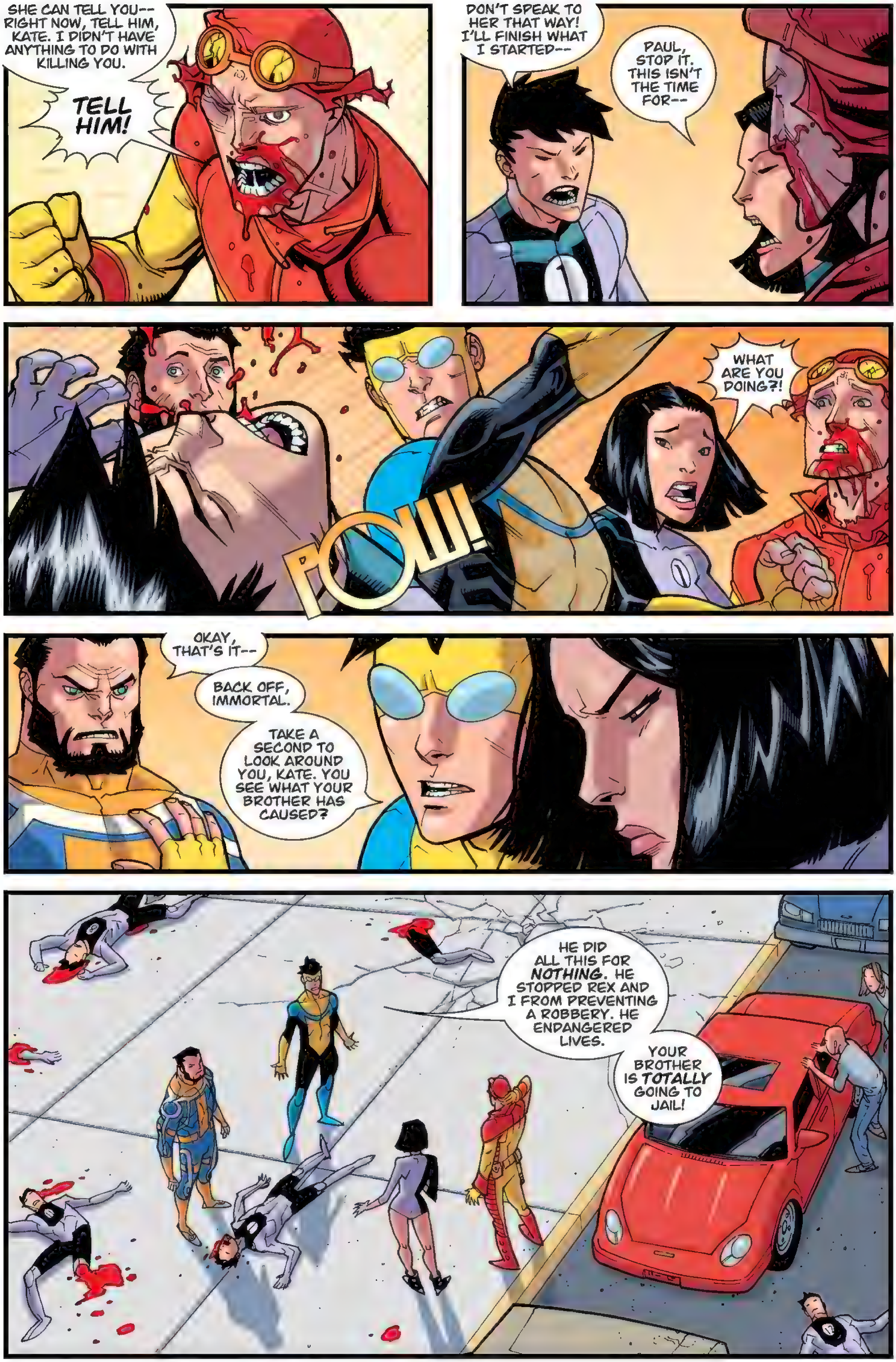

UGN...
FOR THE RECORD--I DIDN'T KILL YOUR SISTER!
LIES!
WITH OUR SISTER'S SUPERIOR FIGHTING SKILLS AND POWERS--YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE *YOU* GOT OUT OF THERE ALIVE-- AND *SHE* DIDN'T--WITHOUT ANY KIND OF INTERFERENCE FROM YOU?!
WERE YOU WORKING FOR THE LIZARD LEAGUE?!
WHOA, NOW!! I WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD! I STILL DON'T KNOW *HOW* I SURVIVED!
GET WITH IT, BROTHER-- WE GOTTA *MOVE.*
ANY IDEA WHAT ALL *THAT* IS ABOUT?
NO CLUE.
SHALL WE?
YES-- LET'S.
I ONLY HOPE THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION.
AGREED, THERE IS FAR TOO MUCH AT STAKE.
FA-FWAASH!!


I DIDN'T HURT YOUR SISTER-- IF I COULD HAVE HELPED HER I WOULD HAVE!
I PROMISE!
OKAY-- SCREW THIS!
I GOT YOU!
WRAMM!!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
OH, CRAP.
JUST BUST THEM UP-- THEIR POWERS WORK LIKE KATE'S... AS LONG AS YOU DON'T KILL ALL OF THEM--HE WON'T DIE.
I REALLY DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THAT.
I KNOW THEY CAN'T REALLY HURT YOU-- BUT I'M GOING TO SUFFOCATE IN HERE OR SOMETHING. I DON'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY OUT OF HERE.

FINE!
BRAKOOM!


WHAT WAS IT THAT SENT YOU OVER THE EDGE?! WAS IT THAT SHE LEFT YOU?!
DID IT DRIVE YOU CRAZY TO SEE HER WITH ANOTHER MAN?!
I WAS--*UNGH*--UPSET FOR A WHILE--BUT NOT PISSED, NOT REALLY.
OH, JEEZ!
TOO--
DAMN--
MANY--
KATE NEVER SAID YOU WERE **CRAZY!** WHY WOULD YOU THINK I KILLED HER? I KILLED THE GUY WHO KILLED HER... AND ONLY THEN BECAUSE I WAS DESPERATE!
I'M NO KILLER! I SWEAR!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
STOP IT!


WHAT THE HELL, PAUL?!
HAVE YOU GONE CRAZY? STOP THIS--THESE ARE MY FRIENDS. YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A MANIAC.
SHE'S ALIVE.
NEW COSTUME-- NICE.
TALK TO ME, PAUL. THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU.
I LOST YOU, SISTER. I HADN'T SEEN YOU IN SO LONG, BECAUSE OF MY... WORK. I FELT SO GUILTY WHEN I'D HEARD YOU'D DIED.
I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D TAKEN MY ADVICE AND HIDDEN YOUR ZERO TO ONLY LIVE THROUGH YOUR ONE... I'D HOPED YOU HAD, BUT SO MUCH TIME HAD PASSED AFTER YOUR DEATH...
YOU KNOW I NEVER LIKED THIS REX PERSON... FROM WHAT YOU WROTE TO ME, HE IS A HORRIBLE PERSON. I STILL DON'T BELIEVE HE HAD NO INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR DEATHS. I DON'T TRUST HIM.
HEY!

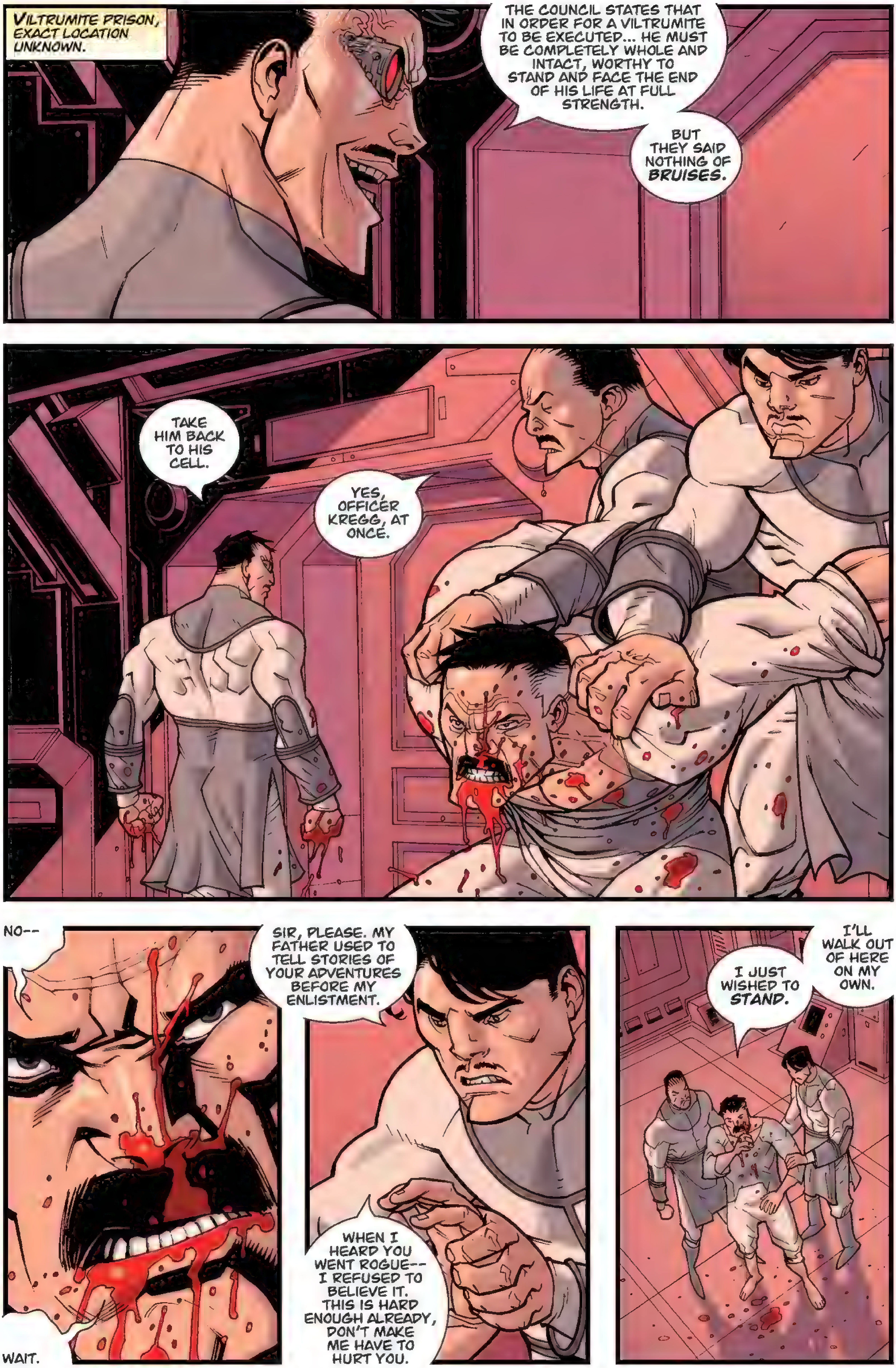

SHE CAN TELL YOU-- RIGHT NOW, TELL HIM, KATE. I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH KILLING YOU.
TELL HIM!
DON'T SPEAK TO HER THAT WAY! I'LL FINISH WHAT I STARTED--
PAUL, STOP IT. THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
POW!
OKAY, THAT'S IT--
BACK OFF, IMMORTAL.
TAKE A SECOND TO LOOK AROUND YOU, KATE. YOU SEE WHAT YOUR BROTHER HAS CAUSED?
HE DID ALL THIS FOR NOTHING. HE STOPPED REX AND I FROM PREVENTING A ROBBERY. HE ENDANGERED LIVES.
YOUR BROTHER IS TOTALLY GOING TO JAIL!

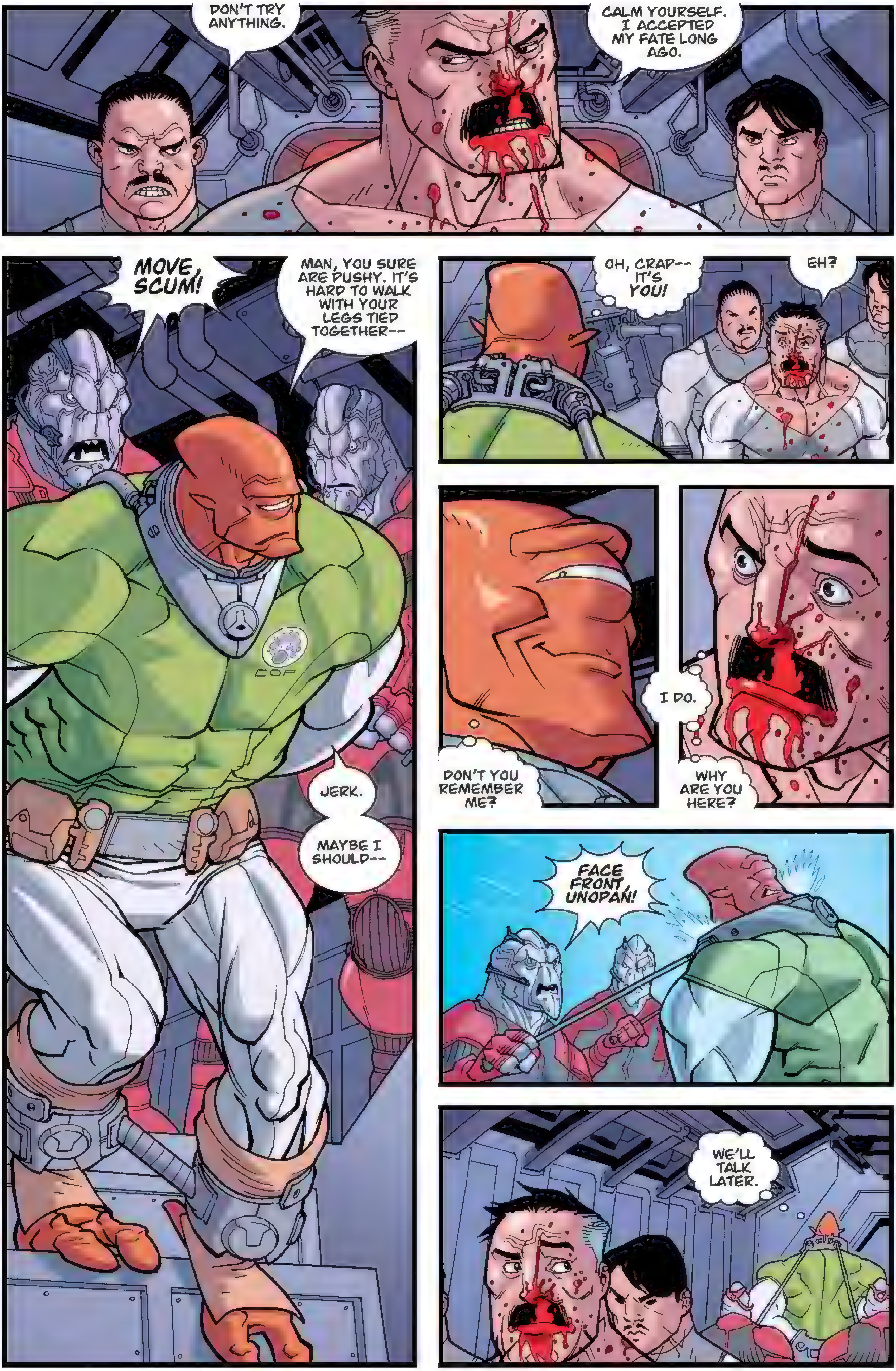
VILTRUMITE PRISON, EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
SKRUNK!

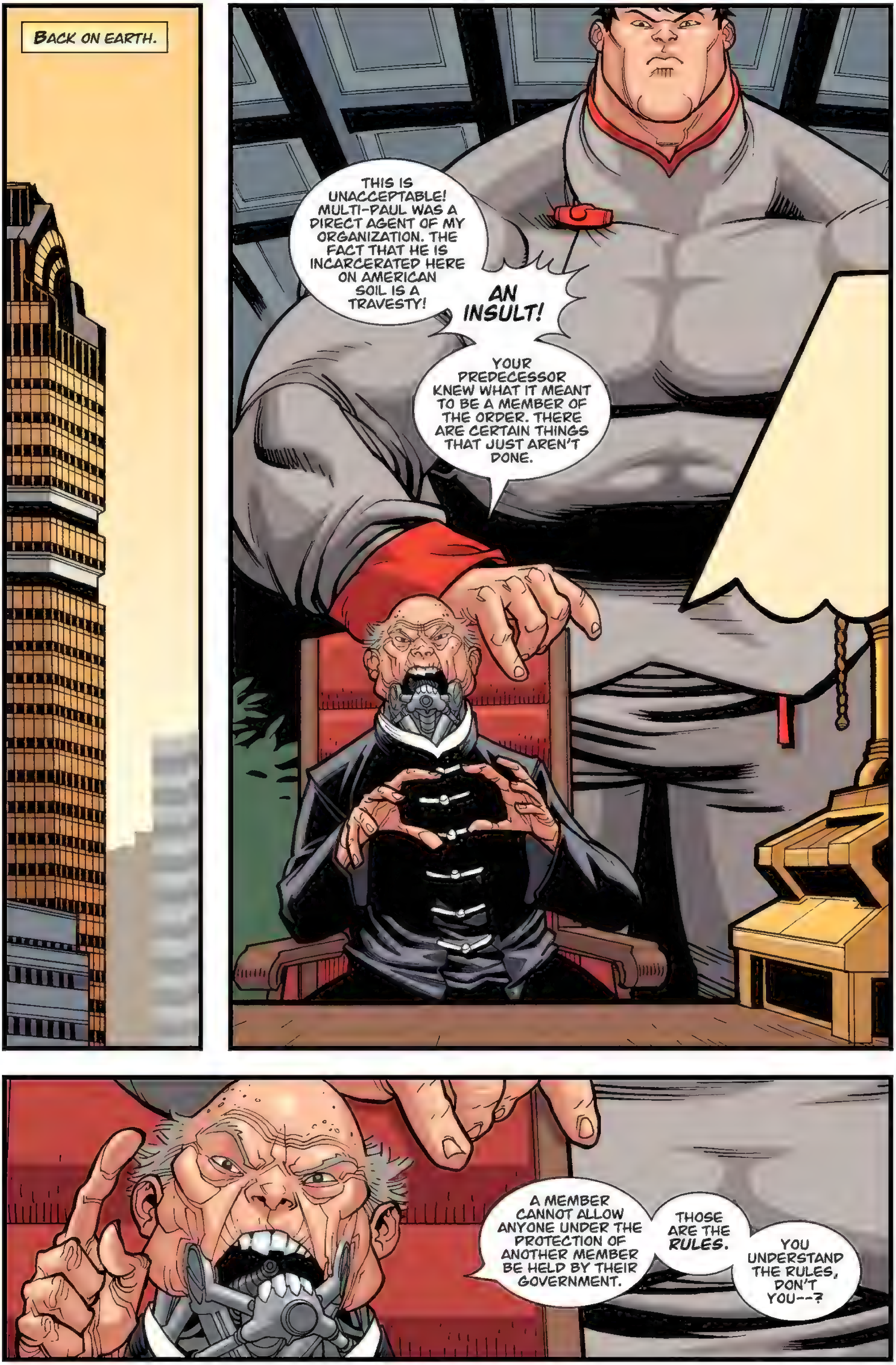
SKROOOM!!
KABOOOM!
KROOOM!!
KRUKK!
ENOUGH!

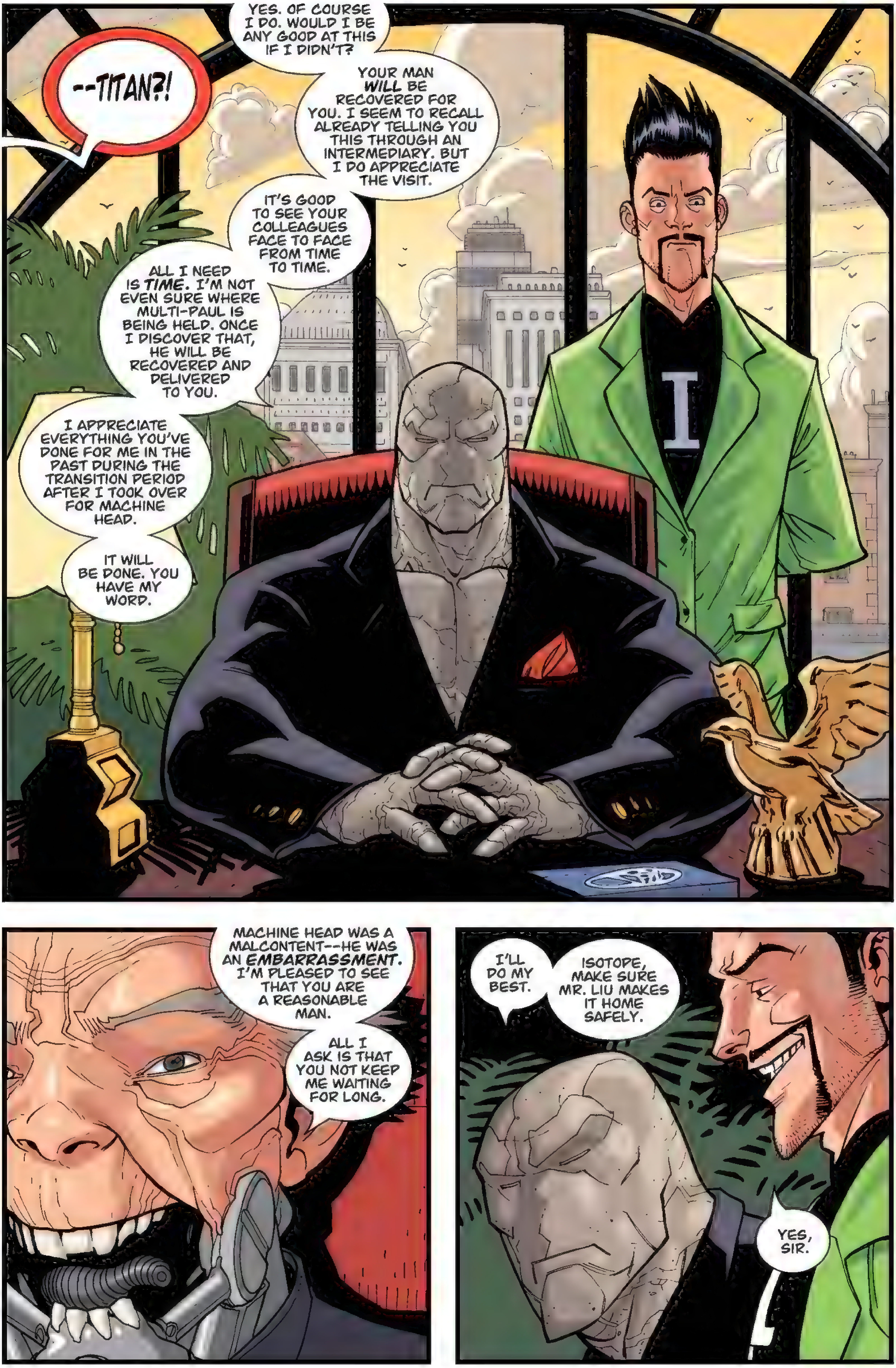
THAT WILL BE QUITE ENOUGH.
GENERAL KREGG, I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COME DOWN HERE YOURSELF... I'M IMPRESSED.
YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T MISS THIS.
YOU FLATTER ME.
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOUR SESSION FROM THE OBSERVATION DECK. YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW YOU'VE PASSED INSPECTION.
YOUR EXECUTION IS BEING SCHEDULED NOW.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, NOW. SOON, VERY SOON, FOR THE DISGRACE YOU'VE CAUSED US...
...YOU'LL BE PUT TO DEATH!

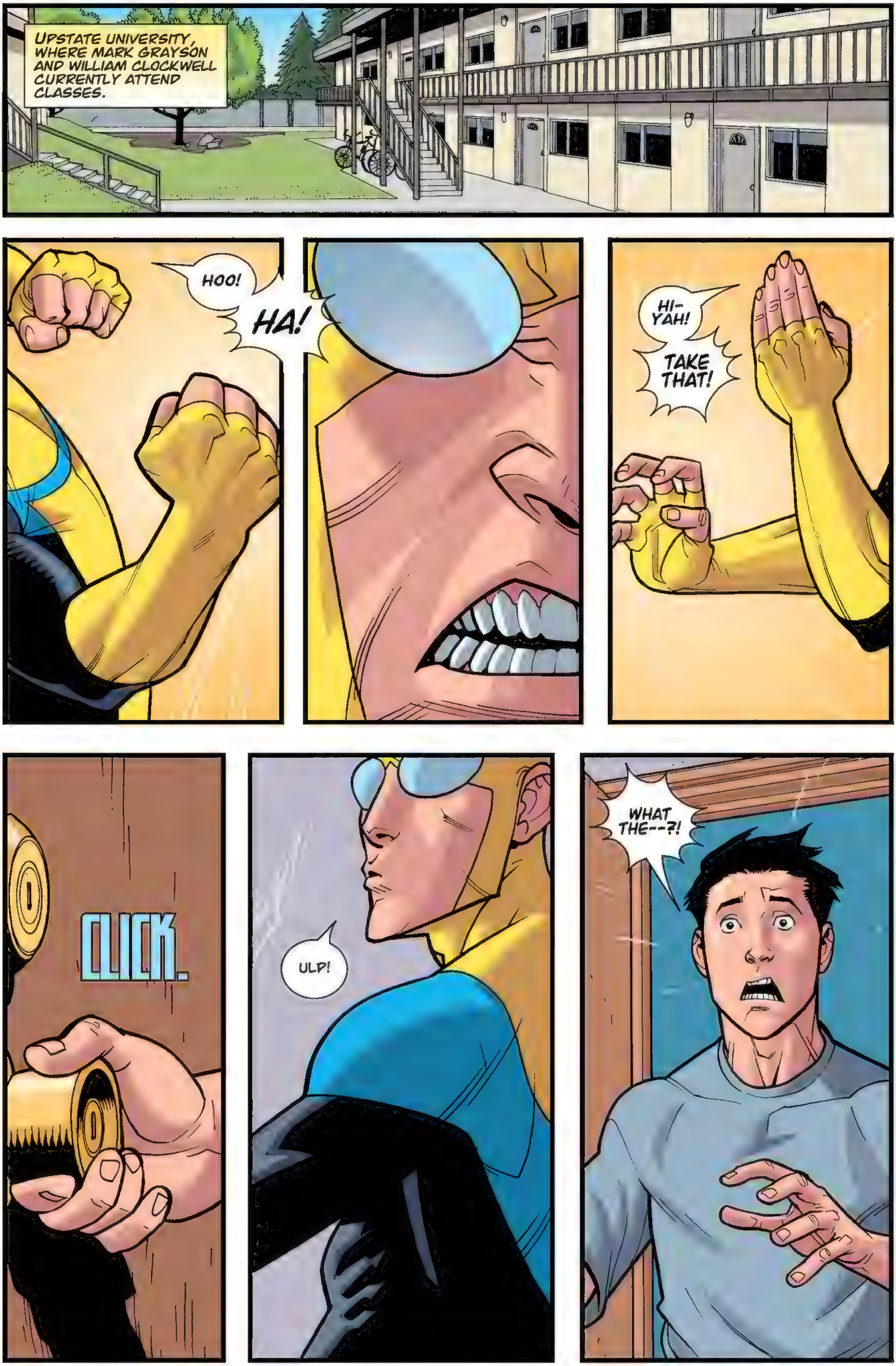
ISSUE FORTY-SEVEN

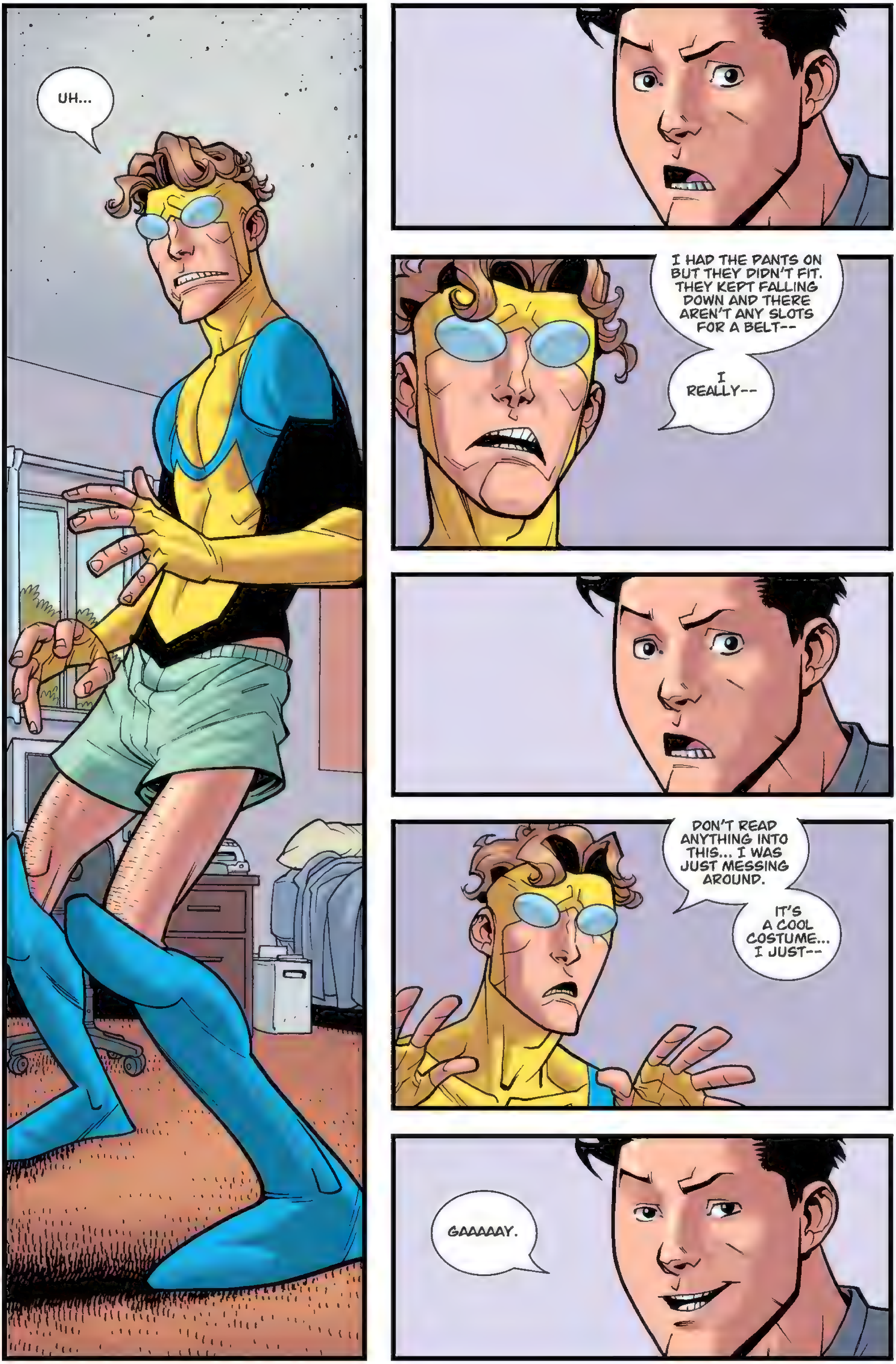

VILTRUMITE PRISON, EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
THE COUNCIL STATES THAT IN ORDER FOR A VILTRUMITE TO BE EXECUTED... HE MUST BE COMPLETELY WHOLE AND INTACT, WORTHY TO STAND AND FACE THE END OF HIS LIFE AT FULL STRENGTH.
BUT THEY SAID NOTHING OF *BRUISES.*
TAKE HIM BACK TO HIS CELL.
YES, OFFICER KREGG, AT ONCE.
NO--
WAIT.
SIR, PLEASE. MY FATHER USED TO TELL STORIES OF YOUR ADVENTURES BEFORE MY ENLISTMENT.
WHEN I HEARD YOU WENT ROGUE-- I REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT. THIS IS HARD ENOUGH ALREADY, DON'T MAKE ME HAVE TO HURT YOU.
I JUST WISHED TO *STAND.*
I'LL WALK OUT OF HERE ON MY OWN.

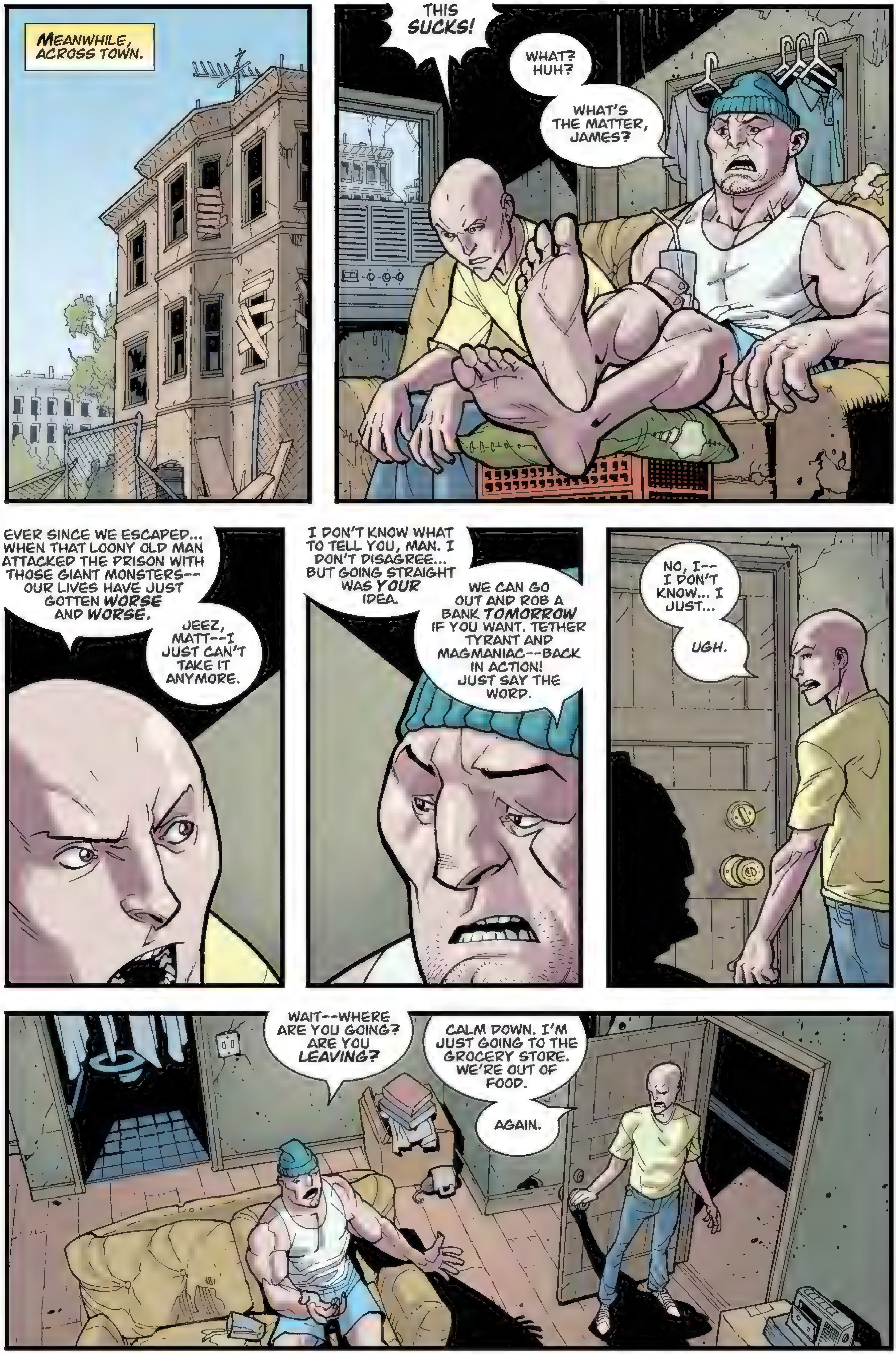

DON'T TRY ANYTHING.
CALM YOURSELF. I ACCEPTED MY FATE LONG AGO.
MOVE, SCUM!
MAN, YOU SURE ARE PUSHY. IT'S HARD TO WALK WITH YOUR LEGS TIED TOGETHER--
COP
JERK.
MAYBE I SHOULD--
OH, CRAP-- IT'S YOU!
EH?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?
I DO.
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
FACE FRONT, UNOPAN!
WE'LL TALK LATER.

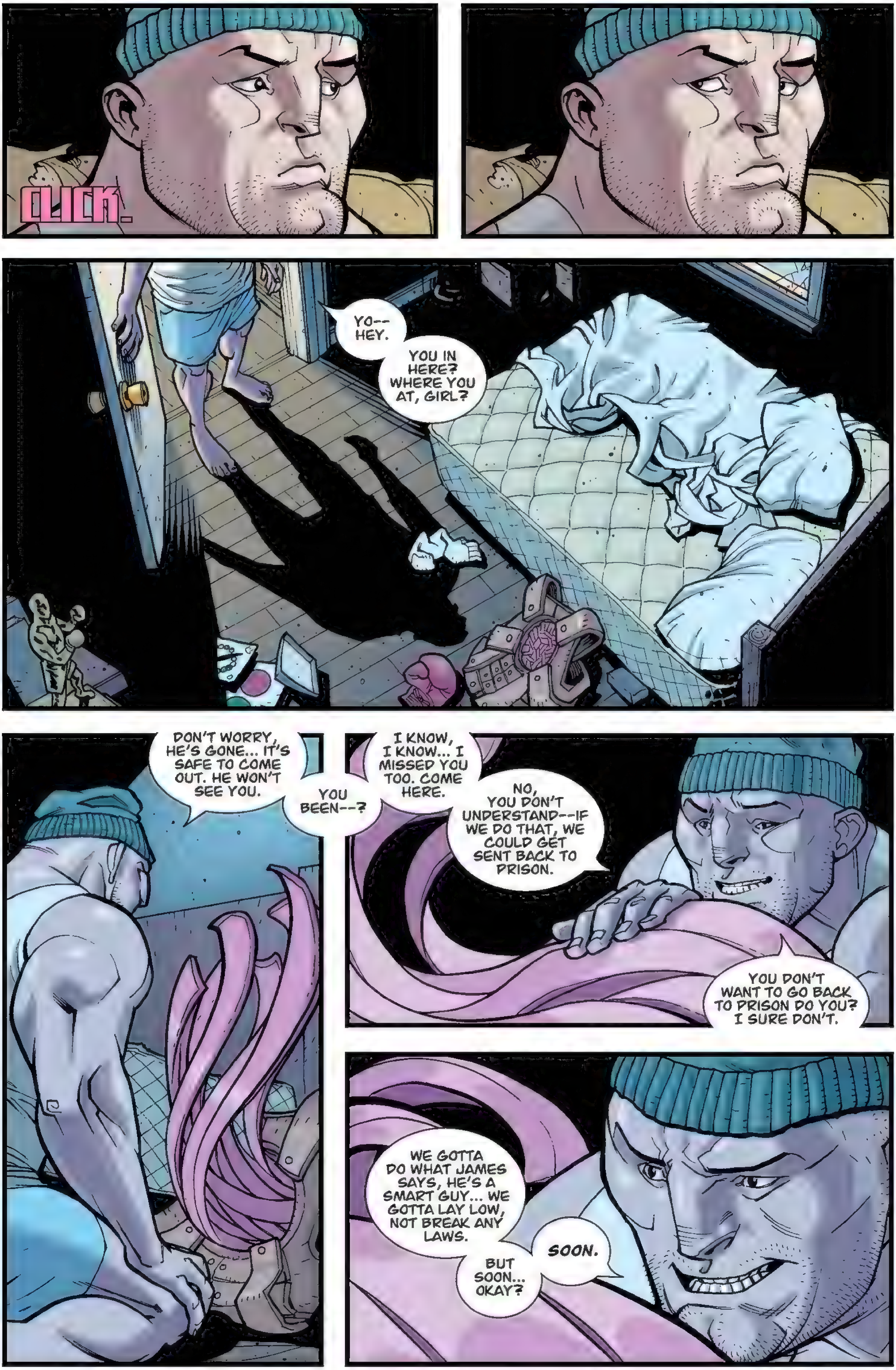

BACK ON EARTH.
THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE! MULTI-PAUL WAS A DIRECT AGENT OF MY ORGANIZATION. THE FACT THAT HE IS INCARCERATED HERE ON AMERICAN SOIL IS A TRAVESTY!
AN INSULT!
YOUR PREDECESSOR KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ORDER. THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT JUST AREN'T DONE.
A MEMBER CANNOT ALLOW ANYONE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF ANOTHER MEMBER BE HELD BY THEIR GOVERNMENT.
THOSE ARE THE RULES.
YOU UNDERSTAND THE RULES, DON'T YOU--?

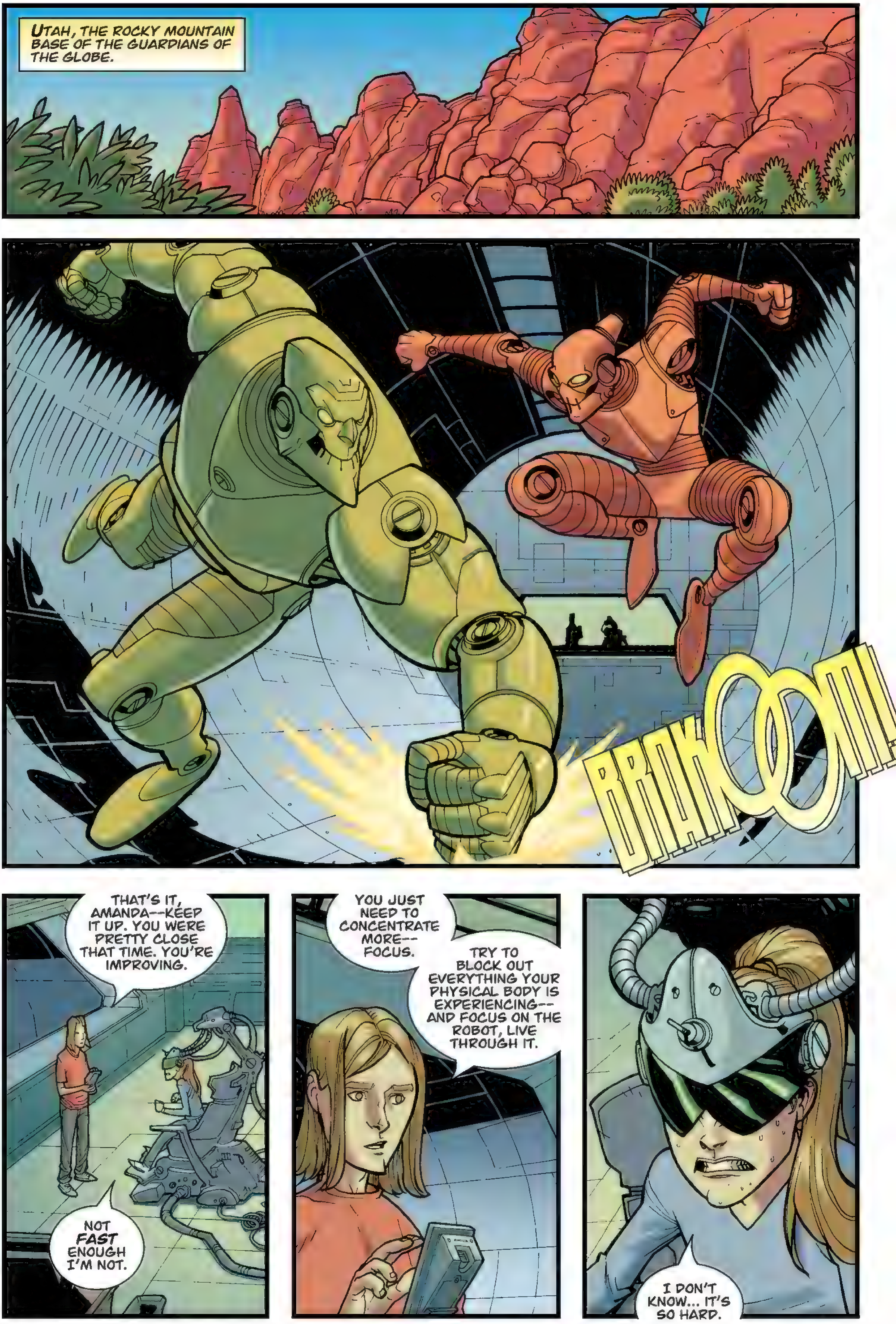

--TITAN?!
YES. OF COURSE I DO. WOULD I BE ANY GOOD AT THIS IF I DIDN'T?
YOUR MAN *WILL* BE RECOVERED FOR YOU. I SEEM TO RECALL ALREADY TELLING YOU THIS THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY. BUT I DO APPRECIATE THE VISIT.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOUR COLLEAGUES FACE TO FACE FROM TIME TO TIME.
ALL I NEED IS *TIME*. I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHERE MULTI-PAUL IS BEING HELD. ONCE I DISCOVER THAT, HE WILL BE RECOVERED AND DELIVERED TO YOU.
I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR ME IN THE PAST DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD AFTER I TOOK OVER FOR MACHINE HEAD.
IT WILL BE DONE. YOU HAVE MY WORD.
MACHINE HEAD WAS A MALCONTENT--HE WAS AN *EMBARRASSMENT*. I'M PLEASED TO SEE THAT YOU ARE A REASONABLE MAN.
ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU NOT KEEP ME WAITING FOR LONG.
I'LL DO MY BEST.
ISOTOPE, MAKE SURE MR. LIU MAKES IT HOME SAFELY.
YES, SIR.


UPSTATE UNIVERSITY, WHERE MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL CURRENTLY ATTEND CLASSES.
HOO!
HA!
HI-YAH!
TAKE THAT!
CLICK.
ULP!
WHAT THE--?!

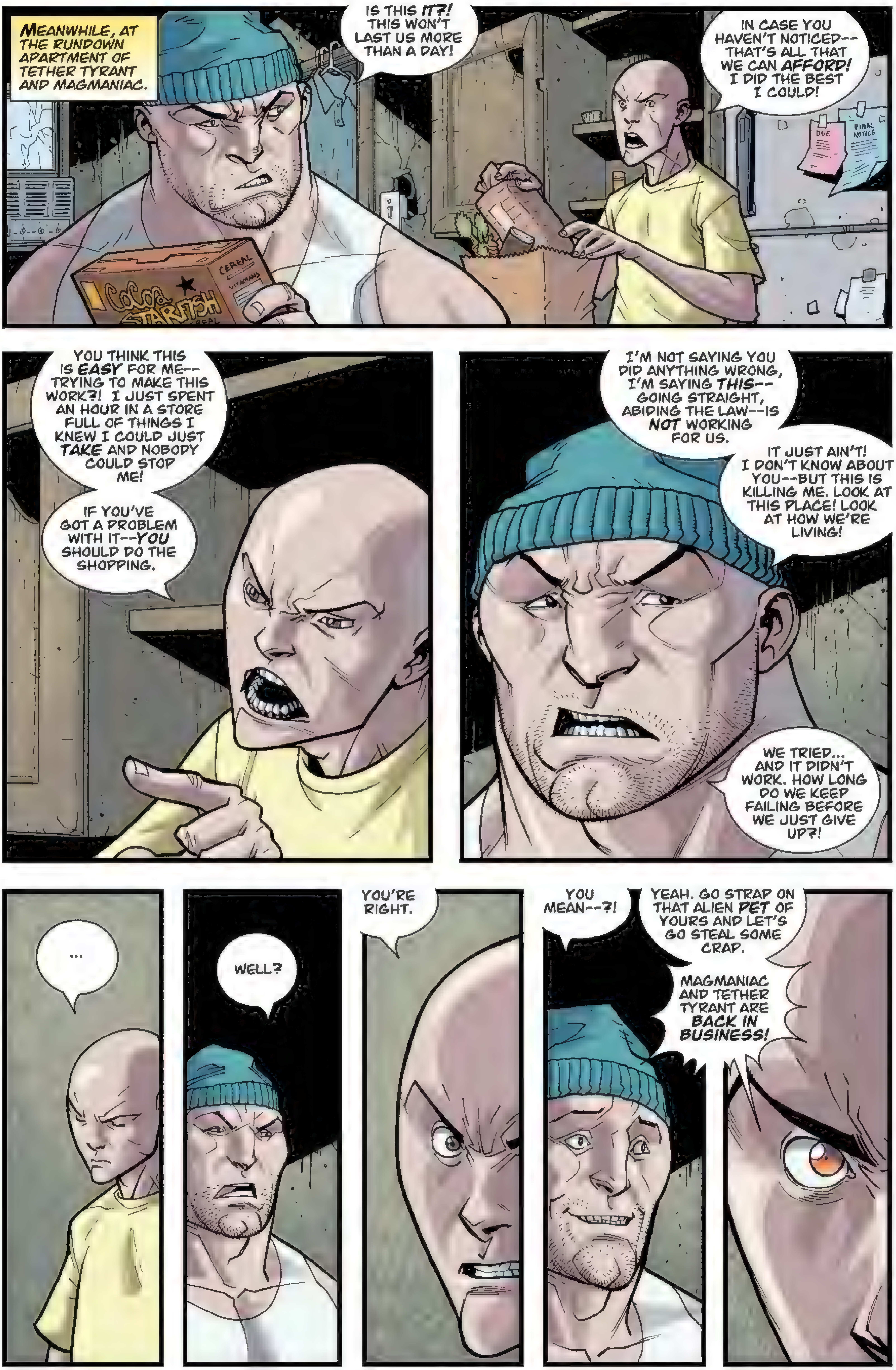

UH...
I HAD THE PANTS ON BUT THEY DIDN'T FIT. THEY KEPT FALLING DOWN AND THERE AREN'T ANY SLOTS FOR A BELT--
I REALLY--
DON'T READ ANYTHING INTO THIS... I WAS JUST MESSING AROUND.
IT'S A COOL COSTUME... I JUST--
GAAAAAY.

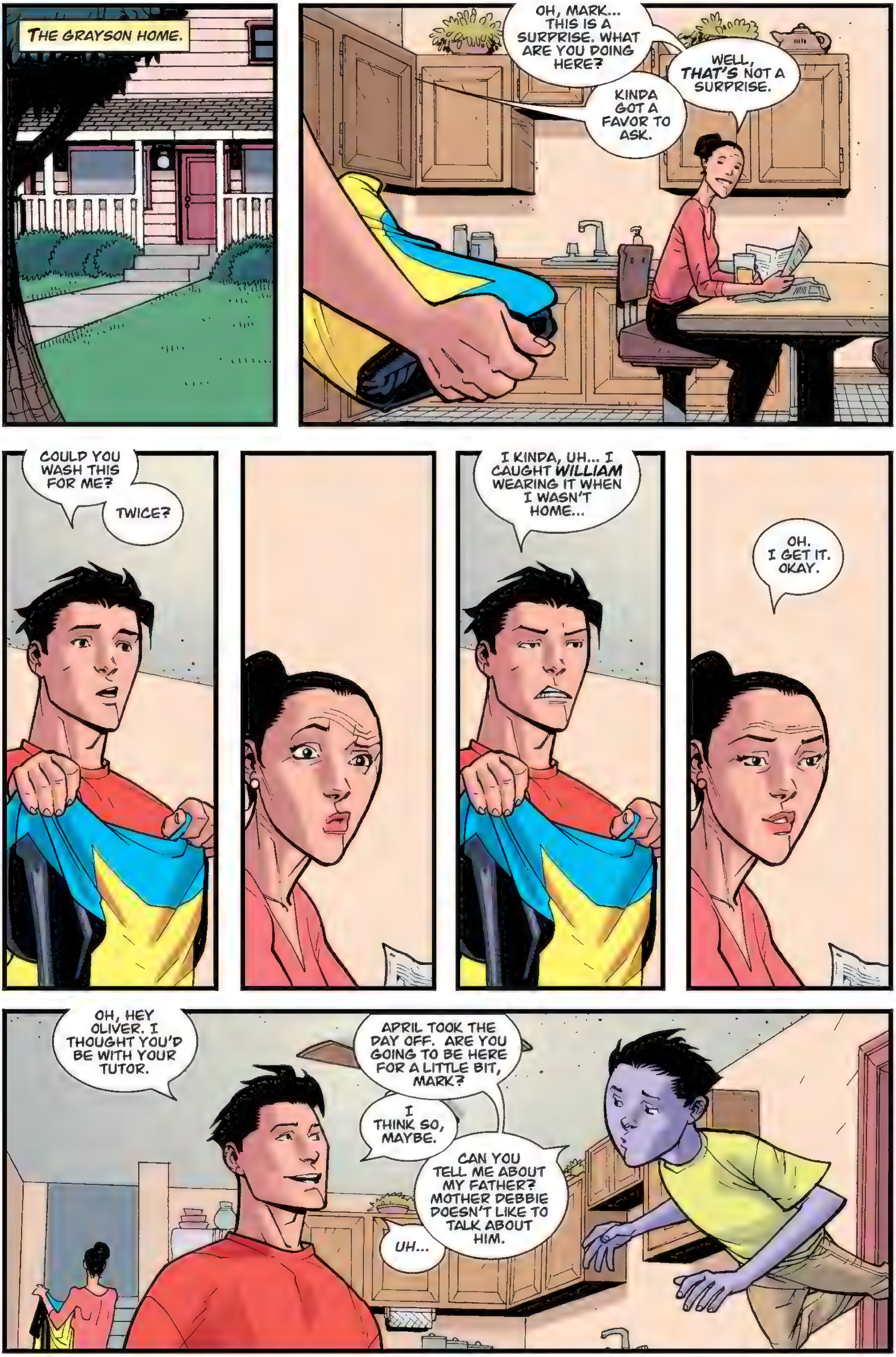

MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN.
THIS SUCKS!
WHAT? HUH?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JAMES?
EVER SINCE WE ESCAPED... WHEN THAT LOONY OLD MAN ATTACKED THE PRISON WITH THOSE GIANT MONSTERS-- OUR LIVES HAVE JUST GOTTEN WORSE AND WORSE.
JEEZ, MATT--I JUST CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU, MAN. I DON'T DISAGREE... BUT GOING STRAIGHT WAS YOUR IDEA.
WE CAN GO OUT AND ROB A BANK TOMORROW IF YOU WANT. TETHER TYRANT AND MAGMANIAC--BACK IN ACTION! JUST SAY THE WORD.
NO, I-- I DON'T KNOW... I JUST...
UGH.
WAIT--WHERE ARE YOU GOING? ARE YOU LEAVING?
CALM DOWN. I'M JUST GOING TO THE GROCERY STORE. WE'RE OUT OF FOOD.
AGAIN.

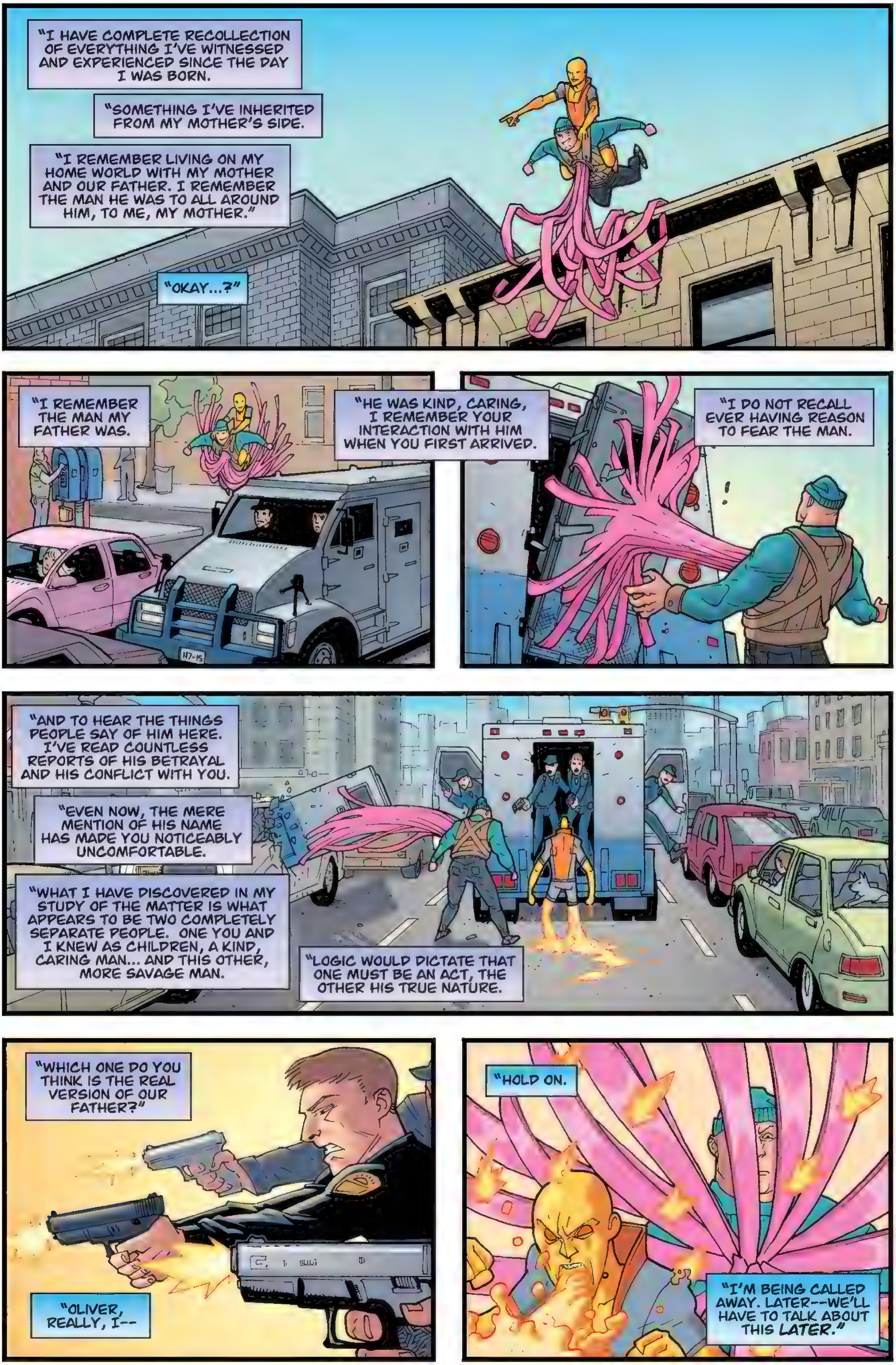

CLICK.
YO-- HEY.
YOU IN HERE? WHERE YOU AT, GIRL?
DON'T WORRY, HE'S GONE... IT'S SAFE TO COME OUT. HE WON'T SEE YOU.
YOU BEEN--?
I KNOW, I KNOW... I MISSED YOU TOO. COME HERE.
NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND--IF WE DO THAT, WE COULD GET SENT BACK TO PRISON.
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO PRISON DO YOU? I SURE DON'T.
WE GOTTA DO WHAT JAMES SAYS, HE'S A SMART GUY... WE GOTTA LAY LOW, NOT BREAK ANY LAWS.
BUT SOON... OKAY?
SOON.


UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
BRAKOOM!
THAT'S IT, AMANDA--KEEP IT UP. YOU WERE PRETTY CLOSE THAT TIME. YOU'RE IMPROVING.
NOT FAST ENOUGH I'M NOT.
YOU JUST NEED TO CONCENTRATE MORE--FOCUS.
TRY TO BLOCK OUT EVERYTHING YOUR PHYSICAL BODY IS EXPERIENCING--AND FOCUS ON THE ROBOT, LIVE THROUGH IT.
I DON'T KNOW... IT'S SO HARD.

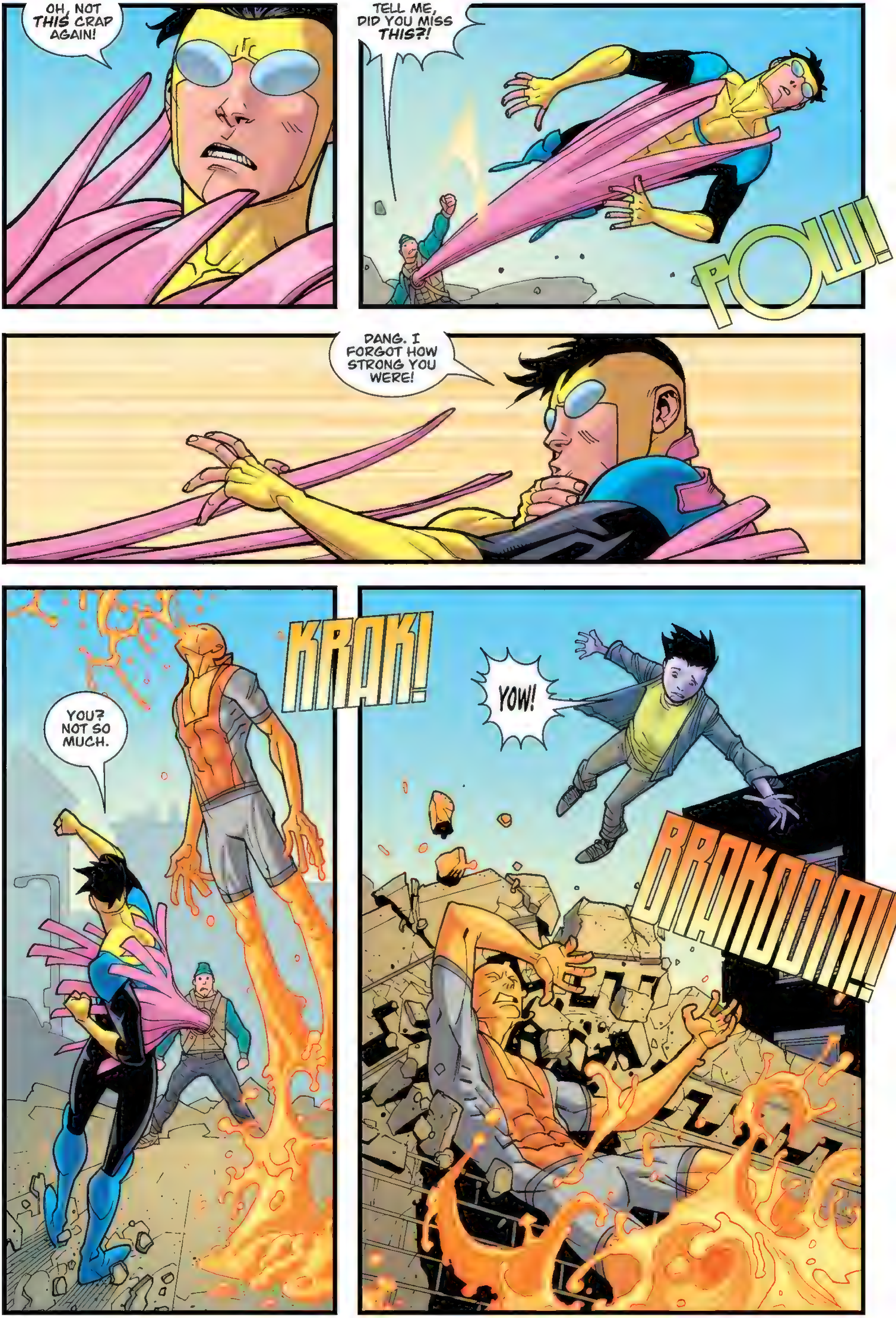
WRAKK!!
ARGGH!
I CAN'T DO THIS.
SURE YOU CAN. YOU JUST NEED TO FOCUS MORE. LOOK AT ME. I'M MONITORING YOU HERE, AND MY ROBOT CONSTRUCT IS DODGING AND FIGHTING YOU AT THE SAME TIME. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.
WELL, MAYBE I'M JUST NOT AS SMART AS YOU, OKAY?!
OH, I'M SORRY, RUDY. I REALLY DIDN'T MEAN TO SNAP AT YOU LIKE THAT... I'M JUST... I'M FRUSTRATED.
IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE SO CLOSE... AND...
IT'S OKAY... I UNDERSTAND. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU. I GET IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE.
IT'S JUST... I'VE NOTICED ALREADY... I'M STILL GETTING YOUNGER, I'M ALREADY LOOKING A BIT YOUNGER THAN I WAS WHEN WE FIRST GOT TOGETHER.
I DON'T... DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU.
THERE, THERE.
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

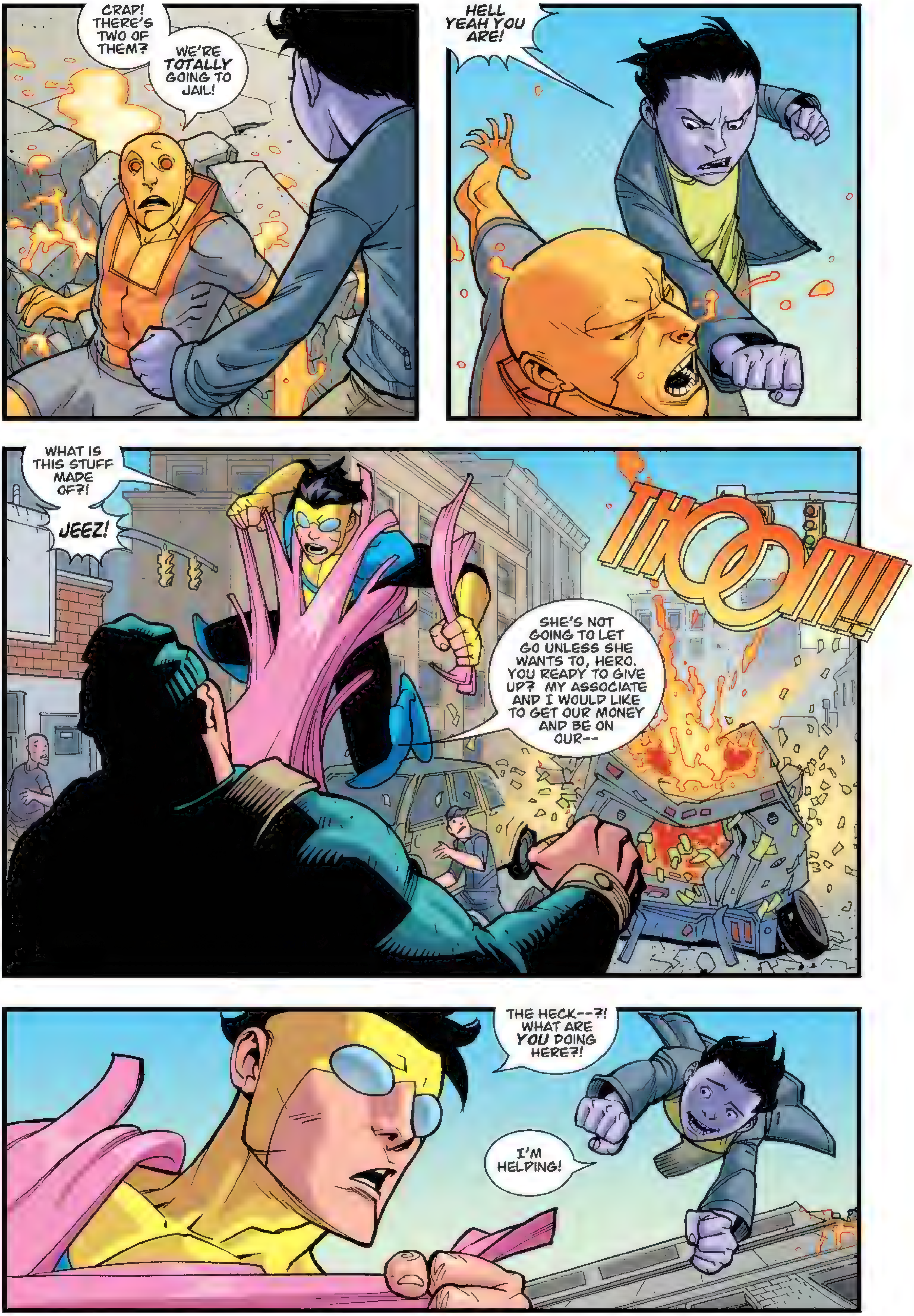

MEANWHILE, AT THE RUNDOWN APARTMENT OF TETHER TYRANT AND MAGMANIAC.
IS THIS IT?! THIS WON'T LAST US MORE THAN A DAY!
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED-- THAT'S ALL THAT WE CAN AFFORD! I DID THE BEST I COULD!
DUE
FINAL NOTICE
COCOA STARFISH CEREAL
CEREAL VITAMINS
YOU THINK THIS IS EASY FOR ME-- TRYING TO MAKE THIS WORK?! I JUST SPENT AN HOUR IN A STORE FULL OF THINGS I KNEW I COULD JUST TAKE AND NOBODY COULD STOP ME!
IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM WITH IT--YOU SHOULD DO THE SHOPPING.
I'M NOT SAYING YOU DID ANYTHING WRONG, I'M SAYING THIS-- GOING STRAIGHT, ABIDING THE LAW--IS NOT WORKING FOR US.
IT JUST AIN'T! I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU--BUT THIS IS KILLING ME. LOOK AT THIS PLACE! LOOK AT HOW WE'RE LIVING!
WE TRIED... AND IT DIDN'T WORK. HOW LONG DO WE KEEP FAILING BEFORE WE JUST GIVE UP?!
...
WELL?
YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU MEAN--?!
YEAH. GO STRAP ON THAT ALIEN PET OF YOURS AND LET'S GO STEAL SOME CRAP.
MAGMANIAC AND TETHER TYRANT ARE BACK IN BUSINESS!)

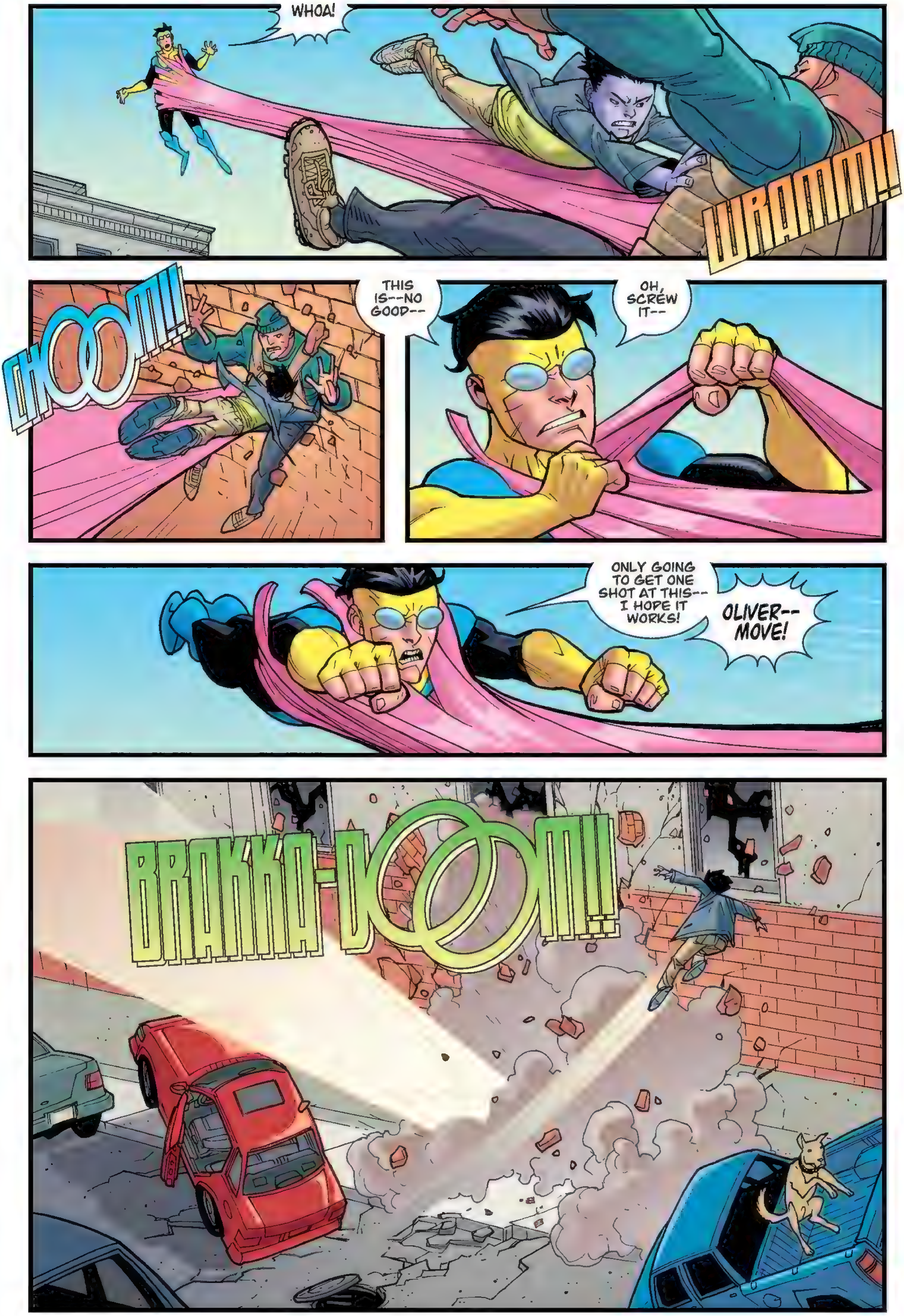

THE GRAYSON HOME.
OH, MARK... THIS IS A SURPRISE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
KINDA GOT A FAVOR TO ASK.
WELL, *THAT'S* NOT A SURPRISE.
COULD YOU WASH THIS FOR ME?
TWICE?
I KINDA, UH... I CAUGHT *WILLIAM* WEARING IT WHEN I WASN'T HOME...
OH. I GET IT. OKAY.
OH, HEY OLIVER. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH YOUR TUTOR.
APRIL TOOK THE DAY OFF. ARE YOU GOING TO BE HERE FOR A LITTLE BIT, MARK?
I THINK SO, MAYBE.
CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT MY FATHER? MOTHER DEBBIE DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HIM.
UH...


"I HAVE COMPLETE RECOLLECTION OF EVERYTHING I'VE WITNESSED AND EXPERIENCED SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN.
"SOMETHING I'VE INHERITED FROM MY MOTHER'S SIDE.
"I REMEMBER LIVING ON MY HOME WORLD WITH MY MOTHER AND OUR FATHER. I REMEMBER THE MAN HE WAS TO ALL AROUND HIM, TO ME, MY MOTHER."
"OKAY...?"
"I REMEMBER THE MAN MY FATHER WAS.
"HE WAS KIND, CARING, I REMEMBER YOUR INTERACTION WITH HIM WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED.
117-15
"I DO NOT RECALL EVER HAVING REASON TO FEAR THE MAN.
"AND TO HEAR THE THINGS PEOPLE SAY OF HIM HERE. I'VE READ COUNTLESS REPORTS OF HIS BETRAYAL AND HIS CONFLICT WITH YOU.
"EVEN NOW, THE MERE MENTION OF HIS NAME HAS MADE YOU NOTICEABLY UNCOMFORTABLE.
"WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED IN MY STUDY OF THE MATTER IS WHAT APPEARS TO BE TWO COMPLETELY SEPARATE PEOPLE. ONE YOU AND I KNEW AS CHILDREN, A KIND, CARING MAN... AND THIS OTHER, MORE SAVAGE MAN.
"LOGIC WOULD DICTATE THAT ONE MUST BE AN ACT, THE OTHER HIS TRUE NATURE.
"WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK IS THE REAL VERSION OF OUR FATHER?"
"OLIVER, REALLY, I--
"HOLD ON.
"I'M BEING CALLED AWAY. LATER--WE'LL HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS *LATER*."

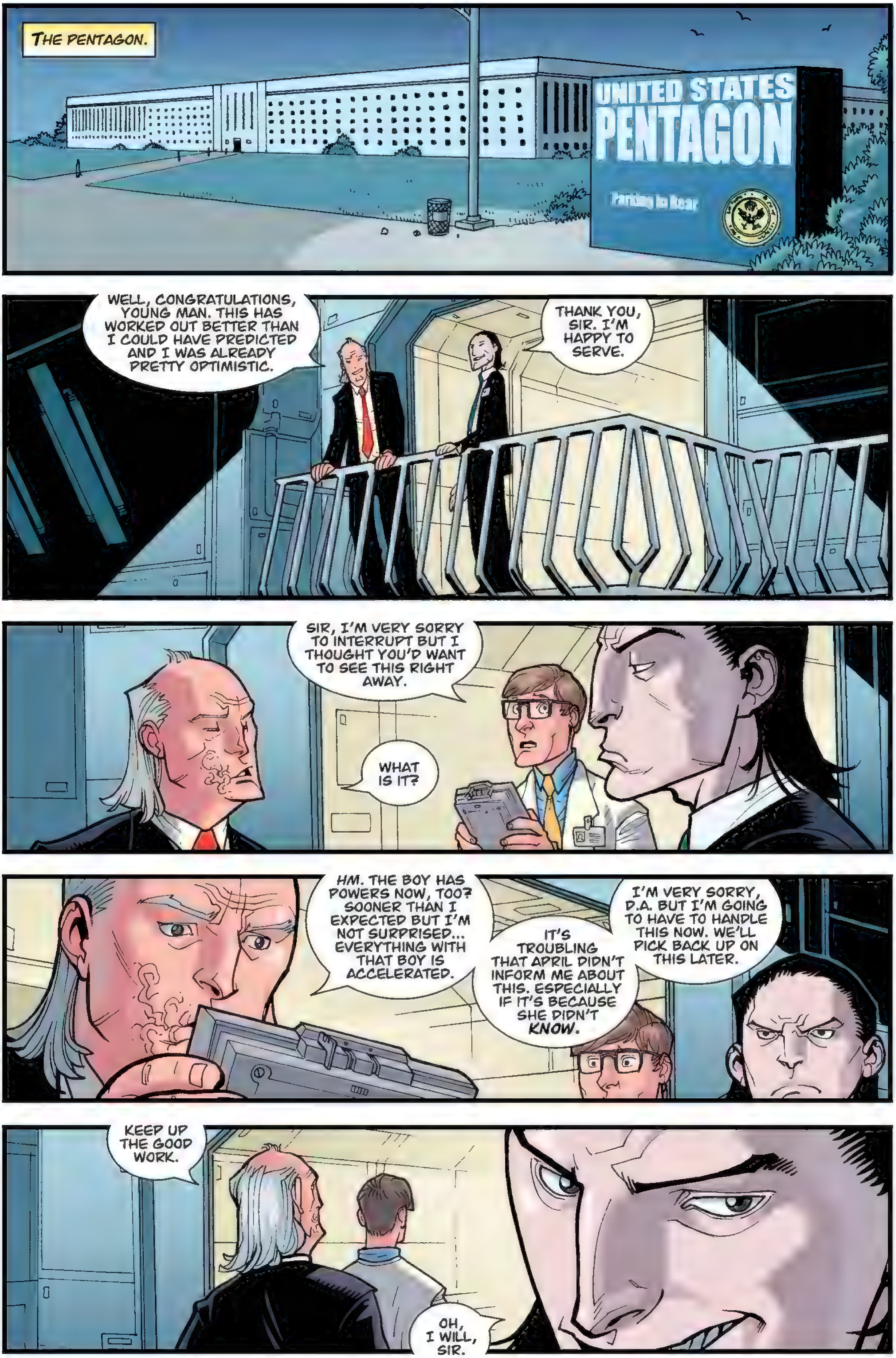
OH, CRAP.
I KNEW THIS WAS A BAD IDEA. THIS IS GETTING WORSE BY THE SECOND-- BAD IDEA.
JUST SHUT UP. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS.
YOU GUYS?! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
I MISSED YOU.
THOOM!!


OH, NOT THIS CRAP AGAIN!
TELL ME, DID YOU MISS THIS?!
POW!
DANG. I FORGOT HOW STRONG YOU WERE!
KRAK!
YOU? NOT SO MUCH.
YOW!
BRAKOOM!!


CRAP! THERE'S TWO OF THEM?
WE'RE *TOTALLY* GOING TO JAIL!
HELL YEAH YOU ARE!
WHAT IS THIS STUFF MADE OF?!
JEEZ!
THOOM!!!
SHE'S NOT GOING TO LET GO UNLESS SHE WANTS TO, HERO. YOU READY TO GIVE UP? MY ASSOCIATE AND I WOULD LIKE TO GET OUR MONEY AND BE ON OUR--
THE HECK--?! WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?!
I'M HELPING!


WHOA!
WRAMM!!
CHOOM!!
THIS IS--NO GOOD--
OH, SCREW IT--
ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS-- I HOPE IT WORKS!
OLIVER-- MOVE!
BRAKKA-DOOM!!

DID WE WIN?
THWACK!!
NO. YOU *DIDN'T*.
SO... WHAT NOW?
WE'RE DONE. I NOTICED THAT BUILDING WAS BEING EVACUATED DURING THE FIGHT--AND I PULLED BACK AT THE END TO LESSEN THE IMPACT SO THE BUILDING WOULDN'T COLLAPSE... SO THERE'S NO FURTHER DANGER.
THE GOVERNMENT WILL CLEAN THIS PLACE UP-- CART THE BAD GUYS AWAY... WE'RE GOOD TO GO.
SO THAT WAS *GOOD*, RIGHT? I DID GOOD.
I WASN'T SURE IF I COULD DO IT-- BUT MAN, THIS WAS ALMOST *EASY*.
SO... CAN I BE YOUR PARTNER NOW?
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS *LATER*.


THE PENTAGON.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WELL, CONGRATULATIONS, YOUNG MAN. THIS HAS WORKED OUT BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE PREDICTED AND I WAS ALREADY PRETTY OPTIMISTIC.
THANK YOU, SIR. I'M HAPPY TO SERVE.
SIR, I'M VERY SORRY TO INTERRUPT BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO SEE THIS RIGHT AWAY.
WHAT IS IT?
HM. THE BOY HAS POWERS NOW, TOO? SOONER THAN I EXPECTED BUT I'M NOT SURPRISED... EVERYTHING WITH THAT BOY IS ACCELERATED.
IT'S TROUBLING THAT APRIL DIDN'T INFORM ME ABOUT THIS. ESPECIALLY IF IT'S BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T *KNOW*.
I'M VERY SORRY, D.A. BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO HANDLE THIS NOW. WE'LL PICK BACK UP ON THIS LATER.
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.
OH, I WILL, SIR.

I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.
U S A

Since first breaking in as the writer of his self-published Battle Pope, **ROBERT KIRKMAN** has been a strident proponent of creator-owned comics. Making his home at Image Comics early on, Kirkman is the creator and co-creator of some of the company's most beloved titles, including Invincible, The Walking Dead and The Astounding Wolf-Man. Based on the strength of his creator-owned properties, the writer was offered work at Marvel Comics, where he worked on popular characters such as the X-Men and Fantastic Four, while launching the fan-favorite The Irredeemable Ant-Man and Destroyer MAX. More recently, Kirkman has committed himself fully to creator-owned work, continuing his ongoing titles and also acting as writer on new series Thief of Thieves under his Skybound imprint at Image.

The co-creator of Invincible, **CORY WALKER** was also the series' original artist, drawing issues #1-7 and setting the tone for the title. Since then, the talented artist has performed art duties on numerous titles at both Marvel and DC Comics, including issues of Marvel Team-Up, The Irredeemable Ant-Man, Punisher War Journal, and Shadowpact in addition to acting as sole artist on the critically acclaimed Destroyer MAX, alongside writer and Invincible co-creator Robert Kirkman. Walker has never forgotten his creation however, and has contributed frequent guest spots on Invincible issues, covers and back-ups.

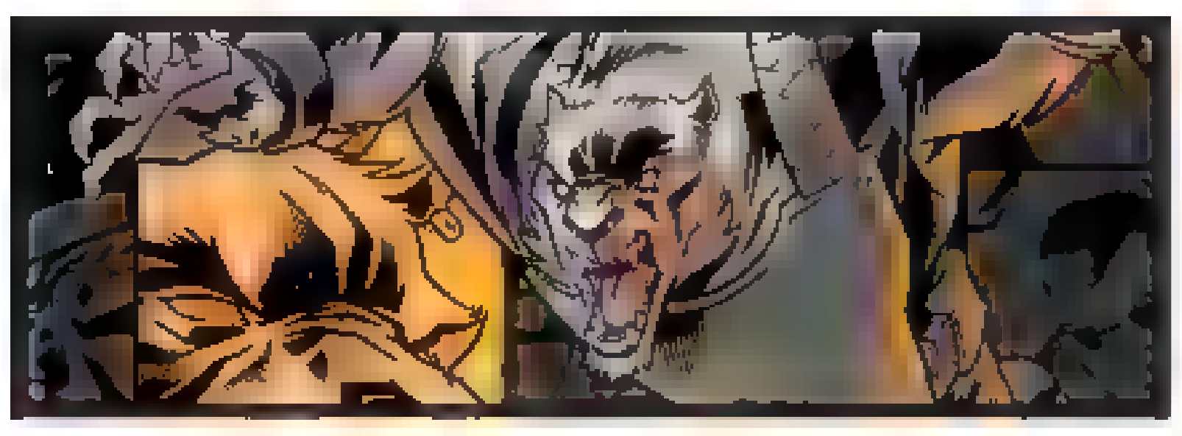
Starting with issue #8, **RYAN OTTLEY** has not only made Invincible his home, but he has made it his own as well. For years, the artist has joined forces with Robert Kirkman in detailing the ongoing adventures of young Mark Grayson. Not only is Ottley a talented storyteller, but he also boasts an unparalleled work ethic. His speed made it possible for him to draw a guest spot on DC Comics' Superman/Batman as well as launch the new ongoing series Haunt, while remaining Invincible's regular artist for over sixty issues and counting.

BILL CRABTREE makes music, comics and love. Mostly love, though -- and let's be honest, if any of us had the choice to make any of those three things at any time on any day... we'd always choose the love. Seriously, Bill can do those things at the drop of a hat if he so chooses. At the local grocery store they call him "love maker" and they barely know Bill Crabtree.

Anyone who looks at the credits of their favorite comic books is likely familiar with the name **RUS WOOTON**. With his work on Invincible, The Walking Dead, The Astounding Wolf-Man, Godland, Fear Agent and more, a case could easily be made for Wooton being the go-to letterer for creator-owned comics. But Wooton's work can also be found in abundance at Marvel Comics, where as a member of Chris Eliopoulos' Virtual Caligraphy group he has lettered countless series including Fantastic Four, newuniversal, Uncanny X-Men and more.

Editor **SEAN MACKIEWICZ** is handsome.

MORE GREAT BOOKS FROM ROBERT KIRKMAN & SKYBOUND!



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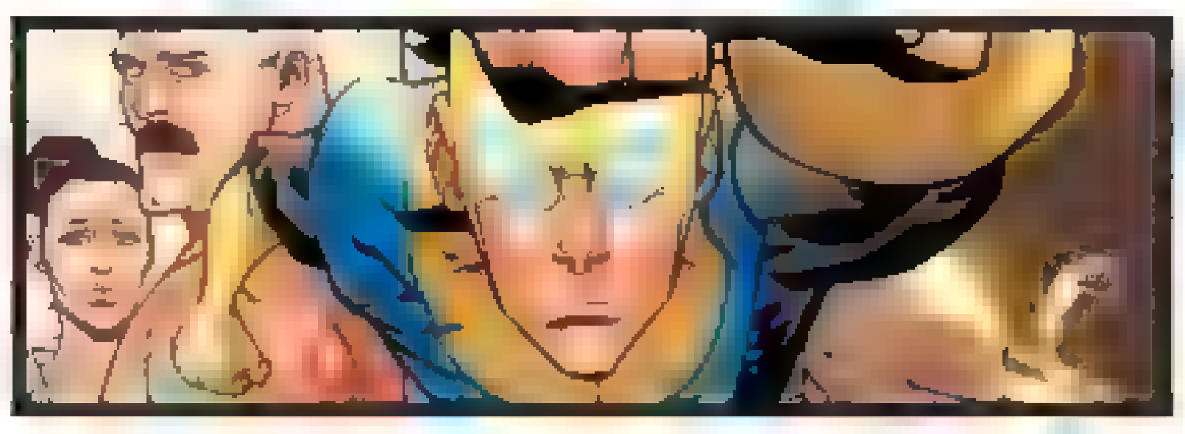

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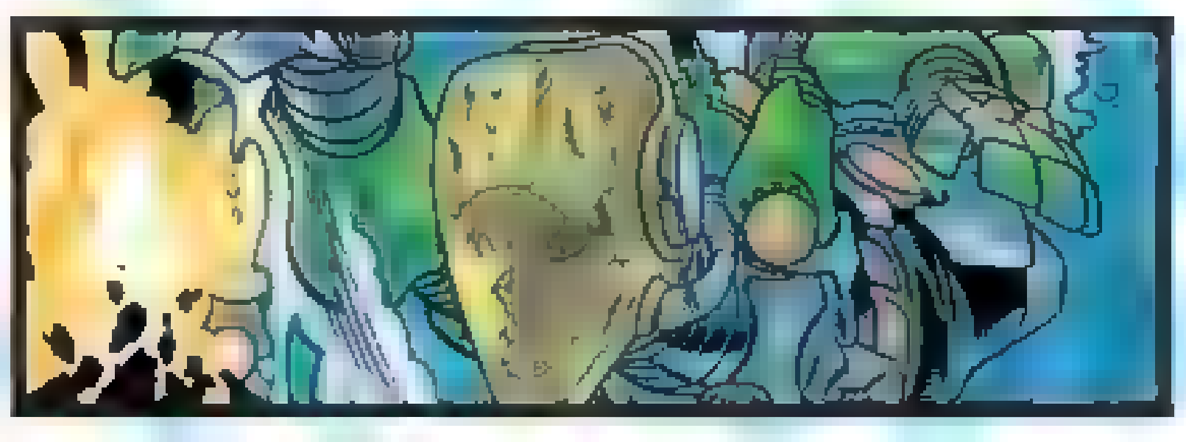

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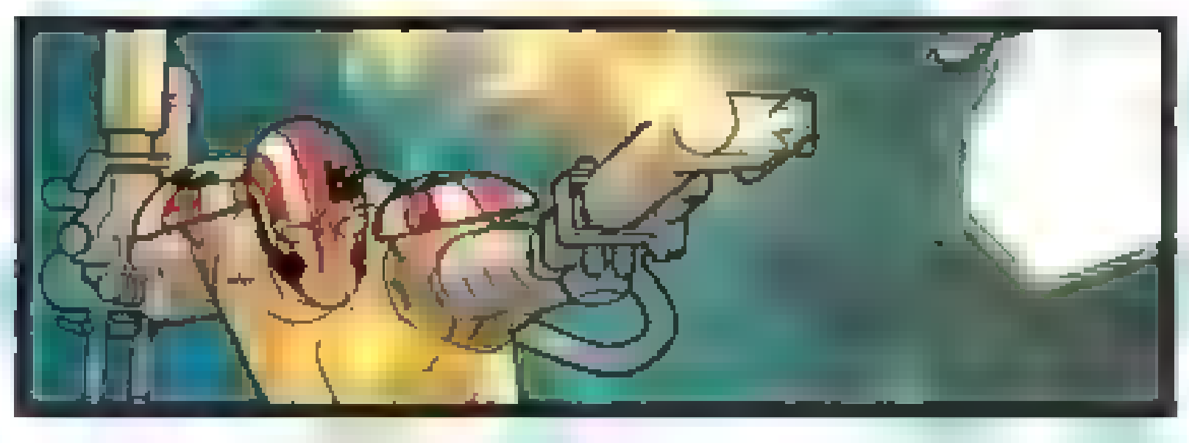

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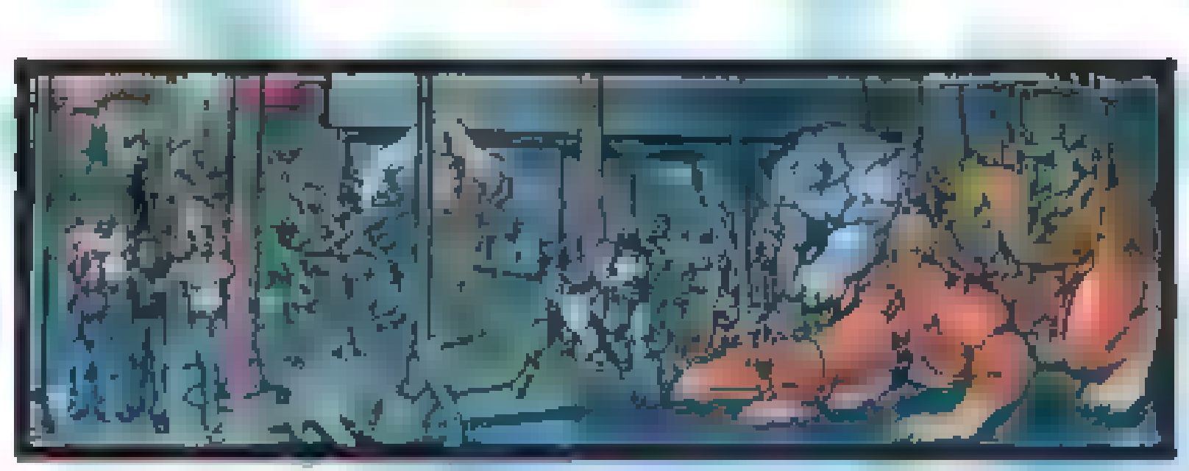

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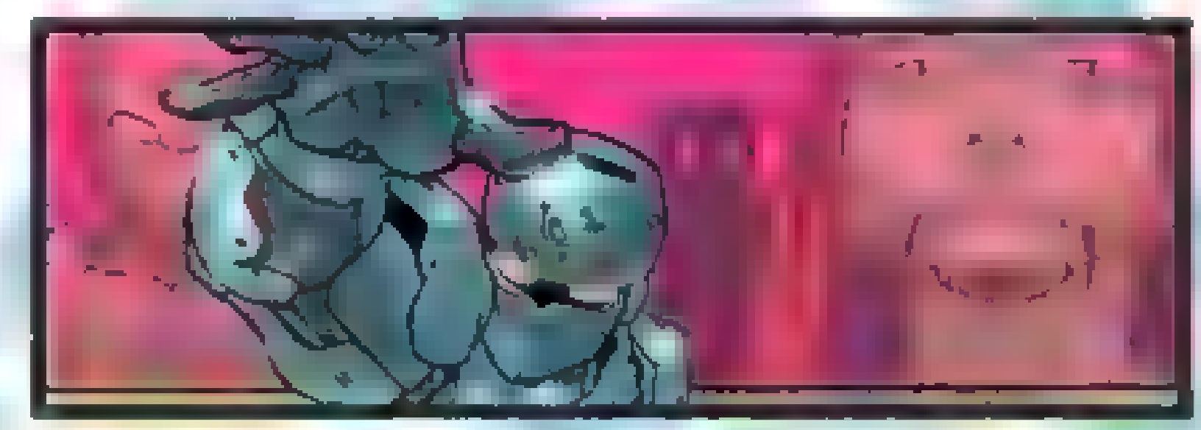

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Since first breaking in as the writer of his self-published Battle Pope, **ROBERT KIRKMAN** has been a strident proponent of creator-owned comics. Making his home at Image Comics early on, Kirkman is the creator and co-creator of some of the company's most beloved titles, including Invincible, The Walking Dead and Super Dinosaur. Based on the strength of his creator-owned properties, the writer was offered work at Marvel Comics, where he worked on popular characters such as the X-Men and Fantastic Four, while launching the fan-favorite The Irredeemable Ant-Man and Destroyer MAX. More recently, Kirkman has committed himself fully to creator-owned work, continuing his three ongoing titles under his Skybound imprint at Image while also acting as executive producer on The Walking Dead television show.

Starting with issue #8, **RYAN OTTLEY** has not only made Invincible his home, but he has made it his own as well. For years, the artist has joined forces with Robert Kirkman in detailing the ongoing adventures of young Mark Grayson. Not only is Ottley a talented storyteller, but he also boasts an unparalleled work ethic. His speed made it possible for him to draw a guest spot on DC Comics' Superman/Batman as well as launch the new ongoing series Haunt, while remaining Invincible's regular artist for over ninety issues and counting.

The co-creator of Invincible, **CORY WALKER** was also the series' original artist, drawing issues #1-7 and setting the tone for the title. Since then, the talented artist has performed art duties on numerous titles at both Marvel and DC Comics, including issues of Marvel Team-Up, The Irredeemable Ant-Man, Punisher War Journal, and Shadowpact in addition to acting as sole artist on the critically acclaimed Destroyer MAX, alongside writer and Invincible co-creator Robert Kirkman. Walker has never forgotten his creation however, and has contributed frequent guest spots on Invincible issues, covers and back-ups.

The Mexico-based artist **FCO PLASCENCIA** began his professional coloring career on Gemini from Image Comics, before his extended runs on Invincible, Astounding Wolf-Man and Haunt. He currently colors DC Comic's bestselling Batman.

JOHN RAUCH is an American comic book colorist whose credits include Invincible, The Darkness, Teen Titans: Year One, Patsy Walker: Hellcat, and a bunch of other stuff not worth bragging about. He enjoys speaking about himself in the third person and pretending he is more talented and relevant than he really is in order to help fight off bouts of depression.

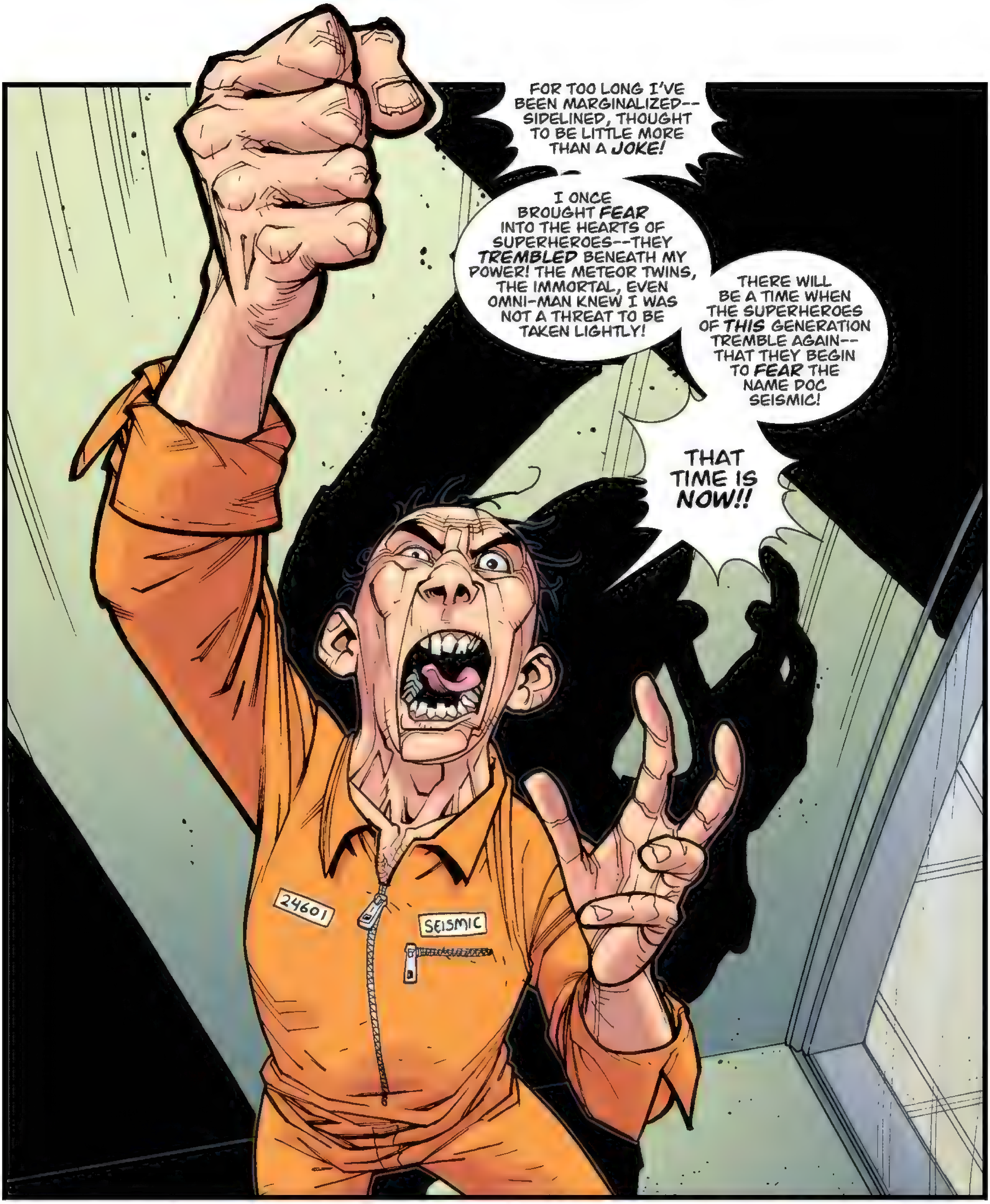
Anyone who looks at the credits of their favorite comic books is likely familiar with the name **RUS WOOTON**. With his work on Invincible, The Walking Dead, Super Dinosaur, The Manhattan Projects, Sex and more, a case could easily be made for Wooton being the go-to letterer for creator-owned comics. But Wooton's work can also be found in abundance at Marvel Comics, where as a member of Chris Eliopoulos' Virtual Caligraphy group he has lettered countless series including Fantastic Four, newuniversal, Uncanny X-Men and more.

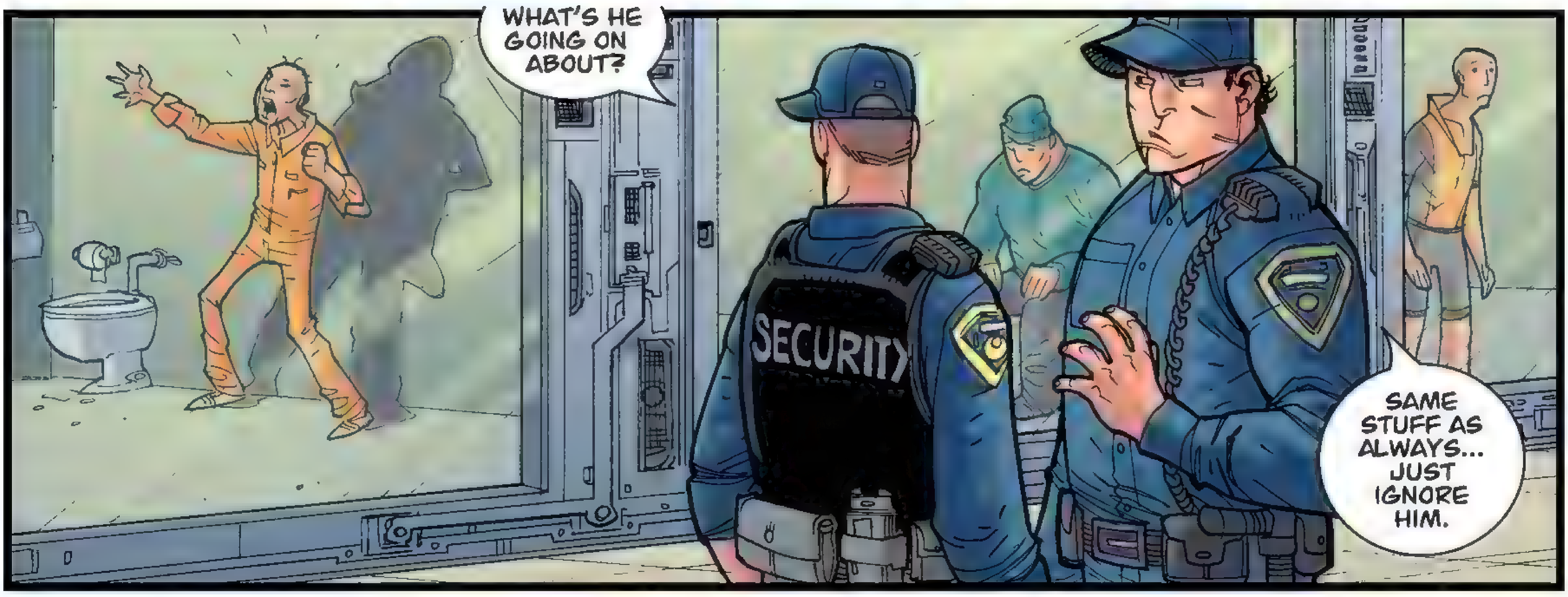
SEAN MACKIEWICZ is the Editorial Director of Skybound Entertainment. Choosing his favorite title to work on is like picking your favorite child...if all your children were covered in blood.

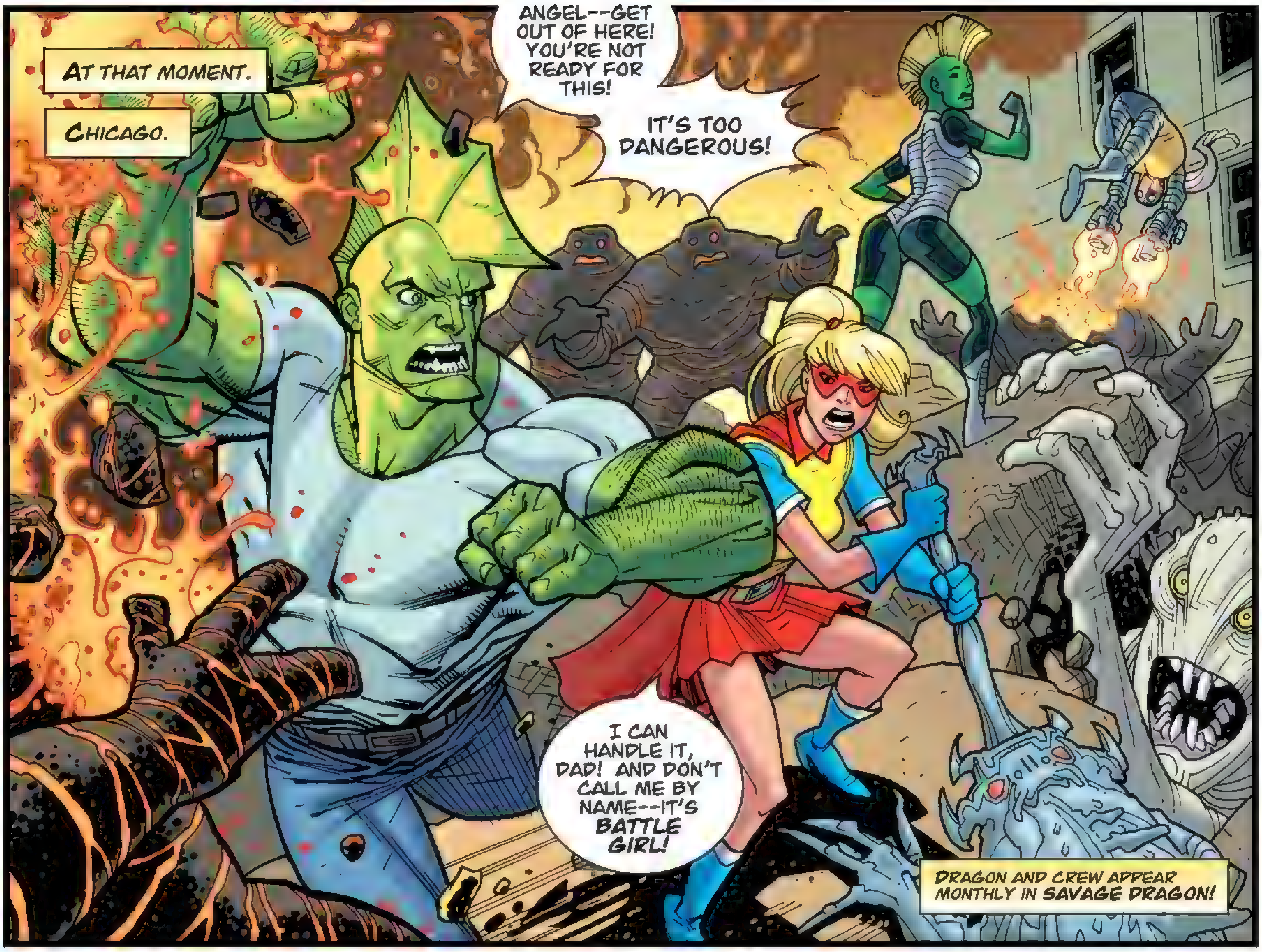
CHAPTER 48

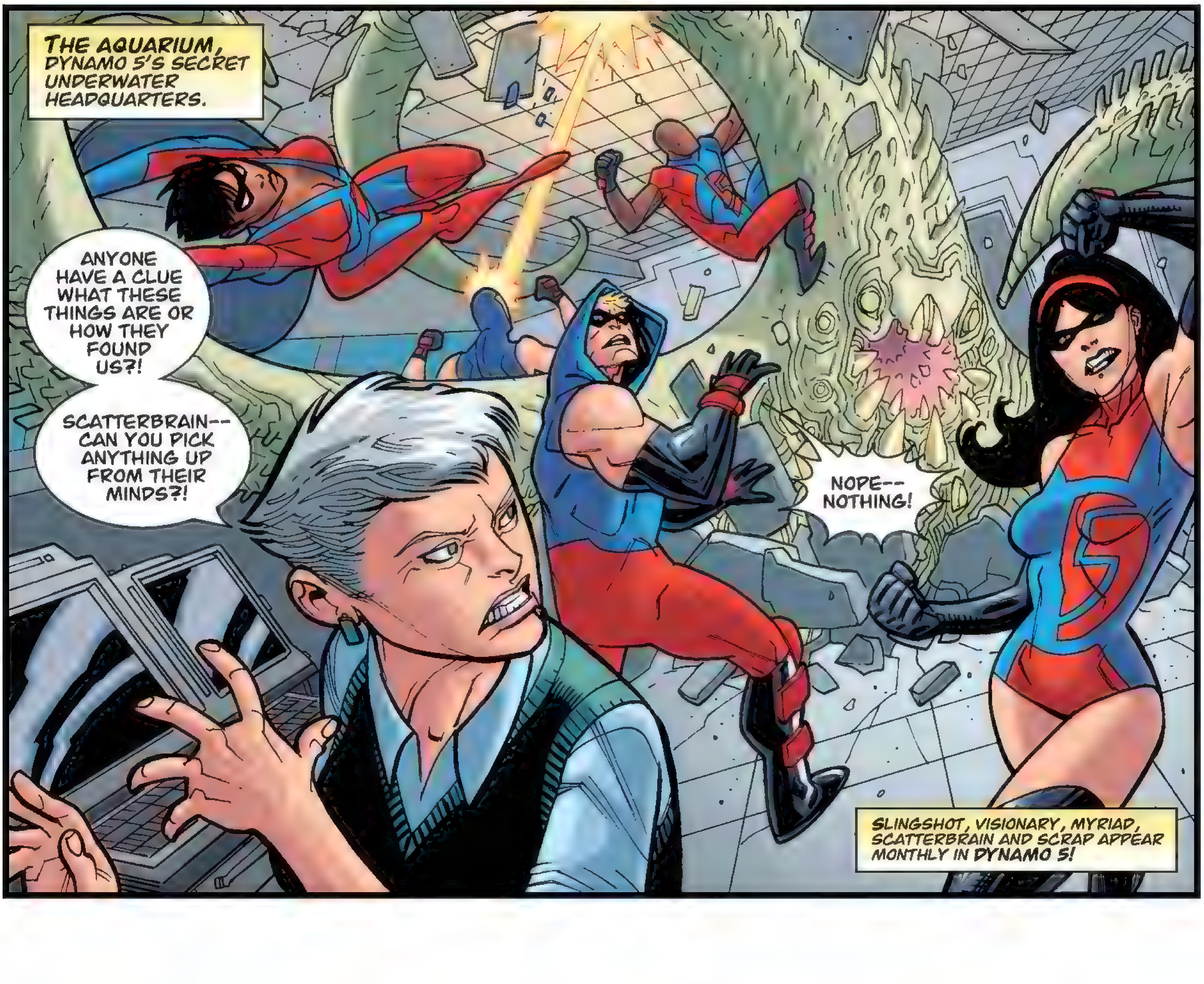
ONE-THIRTY... I MEAN, IT'S SO RARE THAT I ACTUALLY CRACK ONE-HUNDRED... AND I GOT ONE-THIRTY TONIGHT.
I ROCK.
BOWL
THIS WAS GREAT, GUYS... I REALLY NEEDED THIS. WE GOTTA DO THIS MORE OFTEN.
WELL, I'M PRETTY MUCH ALWAYS AVAILABLE. IT'S YOU GUYS THAT ARE ALWAYS BUSY.
I UNDERSTAND WHY MARK IS BUSY, I KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING... BUT RICK I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOT YOU SO BUSY.
HE, UH... MEANS MY GIRLFRIEND, THAT'S WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT, I'M ALWAYS BUSY SPENDING TIME WITH MY GIRLFRIEND.
YOU KNOW AMBER AND I BROKE UP, WILLIAM. HEH.
NO PARKING
YEAH, I DID.
UH... SORRY, MAN.
...
RICK, ARE YOU OKAY?
NO, I--
I'M SORRY, GUYS, THIS WAS REALLY FUN... BUT, I-- I JUST NEED TO GET HOME.

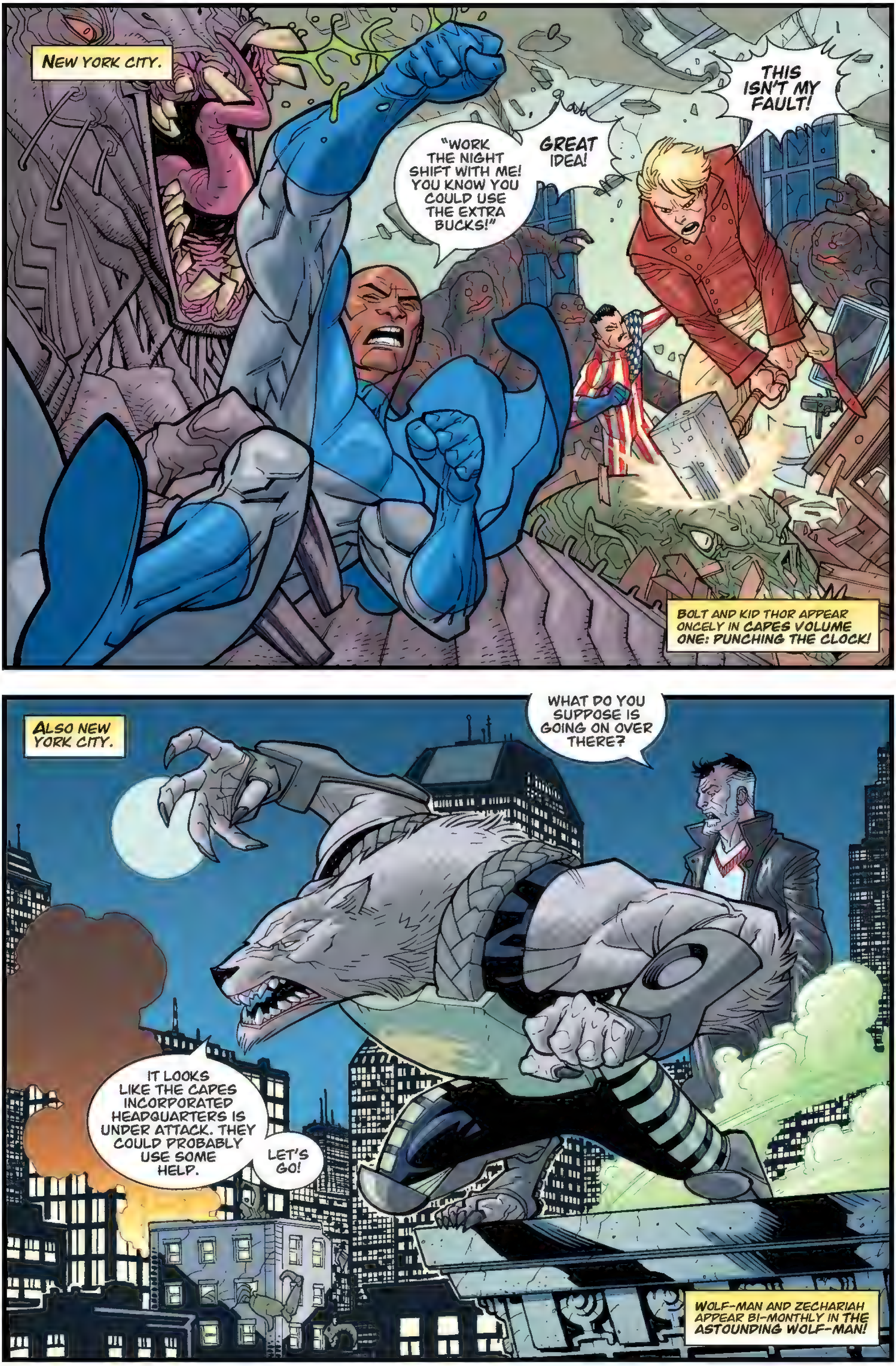
HEY--WAIT A MINUTE. DID WE SAY SOMETHING?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
I'M JUST-- OH, GOD...
I KNOW YOU GUYS DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME WHEN THAT PSYCHO ABDUCTED ME--YOU HAD TO SEE SOME OF IT ON THE NEWS BUT--
THE THINGS HE DID TO ME, WHAT HE TURNED ME INTO-- I ONLY REMEMBER SOME OF IT, BUT HE CHANGED ME... I-- I'M BARELY EVEN HUMAN ANYMORE.
I KNOW YOU GUYS CAN'T TELL, IT'S ON THE INSIDE-- YOU CAN'T SEE IT, BUT I CAN FEEL IT... I KNOW IT'S--I CAN'T SLEEP... I HAVE NIGHTMARES.
I'M SORRY, GUYS--I JUST-- I WASN'T READY FOR THIS.
I'M SORRY.
SO...
THAT WAS OUR RIDE... YOU THINK MAYBE...?
HUH?
NO. NO WAY. YOU CAN WALK.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING I NEED TO DO, ANYWAY... SOMETHING I'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF.

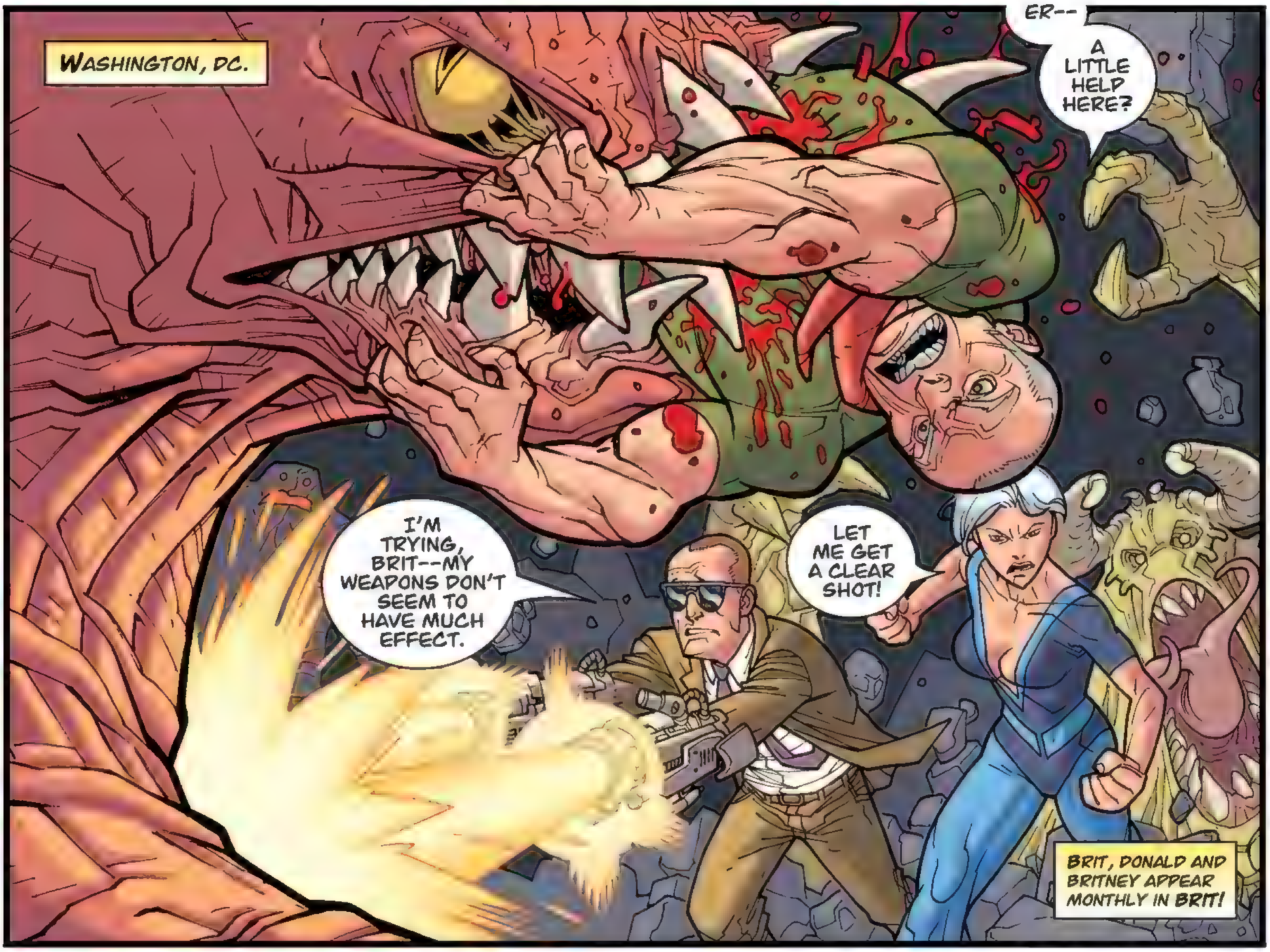

FOR TOO LONG I'VE BEEN MARGINALIZED-- SIDELINED, THOUGHT TO BE LITTLE MORE THAN A *JOKE!*
I ONCE BROUGHT ***FEAR*** INTO THE HEARTS OF SUPERHEROES--THEY ***TREMBLED*** BENEATH MY POWER! THE METEOR TWINS, THE IMMORTAL, EVEN OMNI-MAN KNEW I WAS NOT A THREAT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY!
THERE WILL BE A TIME WHEN THE SUPERHEROES OF ***THIS*** GENERATION TREMBLE AGAIN-- THAT THEY BEGIN TO ***FEAR*** THE NAME DOC SEISMIC!
THAT TIME IS ***NOW!!***
24601
SEISMIC

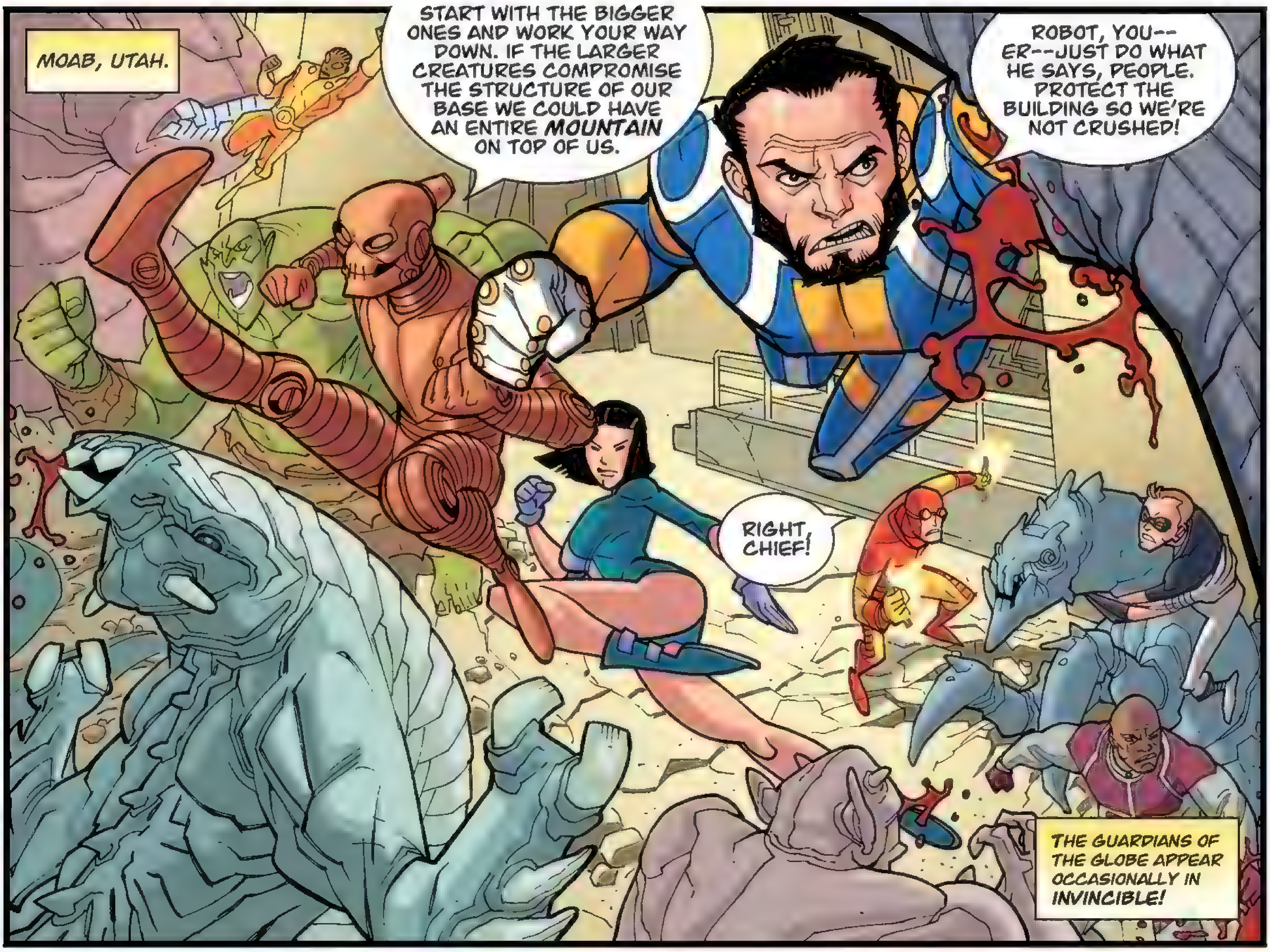

WHAT'S HE GOING ON ABOUT?
SECURITY
SAME STUFF AS ALWAYS... JUST IGNORE HIM.


AT THAT MOMENT.
CHICAGO.
ANGEL--GET OUT OF HERE! YOU'RE NOT READY FOR THIS!
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!
I CAN HANDLE IT, DAD! AND DON'T CALL ME BY NAME--IT'S BATTLE GIRL!
DRAGON AND CREW APPEAR MONTHLY IN SAVAGE DRAGON!


THE AQUARIUM, DYNAMO 5'S SECRET UNDERWATER HEADQUARTERS.
ANYONE HAVE A CLUE WHAT THESE THINGS ARE OR HOW THEY FOUND US?!
SCATTERBRAIN--CAN YOU PICK ANYTHING UP FROM THEIR MINDS?!
NOPE--NOTHING!
SLINGSHOT, VISIONARY, MYRIAD, SCATTERBRAIN AND SCRAP APPEAR MONTHLY IN DYNAMO 5!


NEW YORK CITY.
"WORK THE NIGHT SHIFT WITH ME! YOU KNOW YOU COULD USE THE EXTRA BUCKS!"
GREAT IDEA!
THIS ISN'T MY FAULT!
BOLT AND KID THOR APPEAR ONCELY IN CAPES VOLUME ONE: PUNCHING THE CLOCK!
ALSO NEW YORK CITY.
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE IS GOING ON OVER THERE?
IT LOOKS LIKE THE CAPES INCORPORATED HEADQUARTERS IS UNDER ATTACK. THEY COULD PROBABLY USE SOME HELP.
LET'S GO!
WOLF-MAN AND ZECHARIAH APPEAR BI-MONTHLY IN THE ASTOUNDING WOLF-MAN!


WASHINGTON, DC.
ER-- A LITTLE HELP HERE?
I'M TRYING, BRIT--MY WEAPONS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT.
LET ME GET A CLEAR SHOT!
BRIT, DONALD AND BRITNEY APPEAR MONTHLY IN BRIT!


MOAB, UTAH.
START WITH THE BIGGER ONES AND WORK YOUR WAY DOWN. IF THE LARGER CREATURES COMPROMISE THE STRUCTURE OF OUR BASE WE COULD HAVE AN ENTIRE MOUNTAIN ON TOP OF US.
ROBOT, YOU-- ER--JUST DO WHAT HE SAYS, PEOPLE. PROTECT THE BUILDING SO WE'RE NOT CRUSHED!
RIGHT, CHIEF!
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE APPEAR OCCASIONALLY IN INVINCIBLE!

A LITTLE HELP!
I'M ON MY WAY!
THESE THINGS ARE TOUGH--BUT LET'S SEE HOW TOUGH THEY ARE ON THE *INSIDE!*
AS LONG AS I'M NOT LEARNING FIRST HAND.
THE DIRT FROM THESE MONSTERS IS FROM DEEP WITHIN THE EARTH. THE ODDS AGAINST THEM JUST HAPPENING UPON OUR BASE BY ACCIDENT ARE TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION.
THIS IS CLEARLY AN ATTACK.
HOW MANY OF THESE THINGS ARE THERE?! THERE'S TOO DAMN MANY!
CHOOM!!
THEY JUST KEEP COMING! WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO?!
CHOOM!!
JUST KEEP FIGHTING! WE CAN DO THIS! WE HAVE TO DO THIS!
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE DON'T GIVE UP!

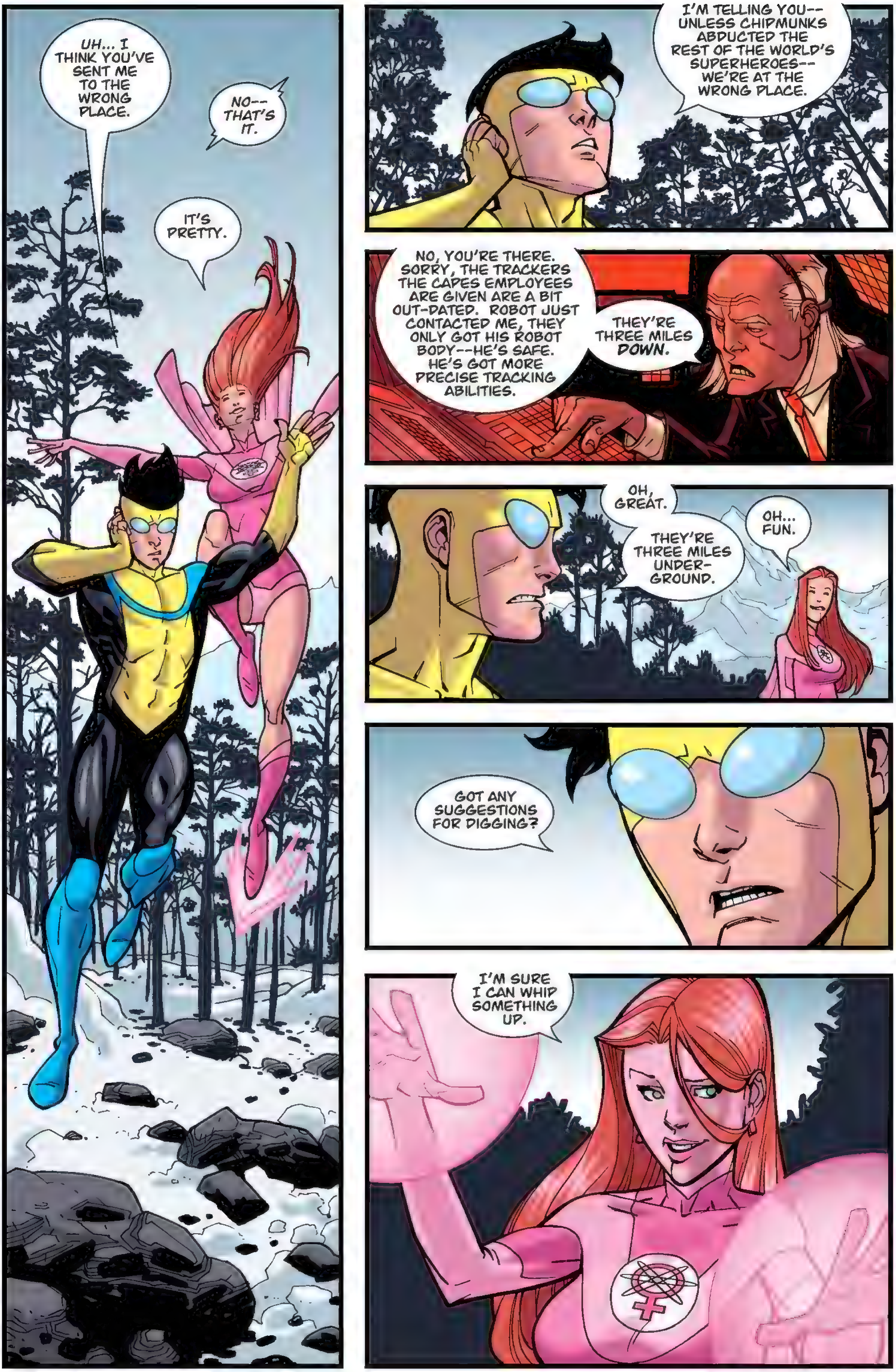
THE GRAYSON HOME.
HERE YOU GO. NOW, WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? YOU DON'T USUALLY JUST COME TO CHAT.
I KNOW ABOUT OLIVER'S POWERS.
YEAH, WELL--
HE HAS THEM, YES.
I NEVER ACTUALLY CAME OUT AND SAID YOU SHOULD INFORM ME THE MINUTE HE GETS POWERS--BUT THE FACT THAT YOU DIDN'T TELL ME--WELL...
IT DISPLAYS A FUNDAMENTAL LACK OF TRUST IN ME AND MY ORGANIZATION.
DON'T LET IT OFFEND YOU. I JUST DIDN'T WANT YOU TAKING HIM AWAY--TO TRAIN HIM OR WHATEVER.
YOU'RE NOT TAKING HIM.
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'RE NOT.
BUT WE WILL BE HELPING HIM--WE CAN DO THAT. YOU KNOW HOW DANGEROUS SOMEONE HIS AGE CAN BE WITH THE KIND OF POWERS HE'S DEVELOPING.
BEYOND THAT--I'M A LITTLE ANGRY, I'LL ADMIT.
MY ORGANIZATION HAS INVESTED A LOT OF TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT INTO THIS FAMILY. TO BE KEPT OUT OF THE LOOP ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS...

WELL, I THINK THE WORK MY SON DOES FOR YOU MORE THAN COMPENSATES YOU FOR YOUR TROUBLE. THERE'S NO NEED TO HOLD IT OVER OUR HEADS.
AFTER WHAT YOUR HUSBAND DID, I THINK--
HOLD ON.
CALM DOWN, I CAN BARELY UNDERSTAND YOU...
WHAT?!
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? I THOUGHT HE NEEDED HIS WRIST BANDS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM?! HE ESCAPED WITHOUT FREEING ANY OTHER PRISONERS? THAT'S GOOD. JUST SEND SOMEONE--
THE GUARDIANS' BASE IS ABANDONED? YOU CAN'T CONTACT ANYONE AT CAPES?
EVERYONE? THEY GOT EVERYONE?!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHO'S AVAILABLE-- WHO'S STILL OUT THERE?
TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON.
I NEED TO CONTACT YOUR SON.

AFRICA.
DO YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT WAS FOR ME TO FIND YOU?
NOT HARD ENOUGH.
POTATOES
FLOUR

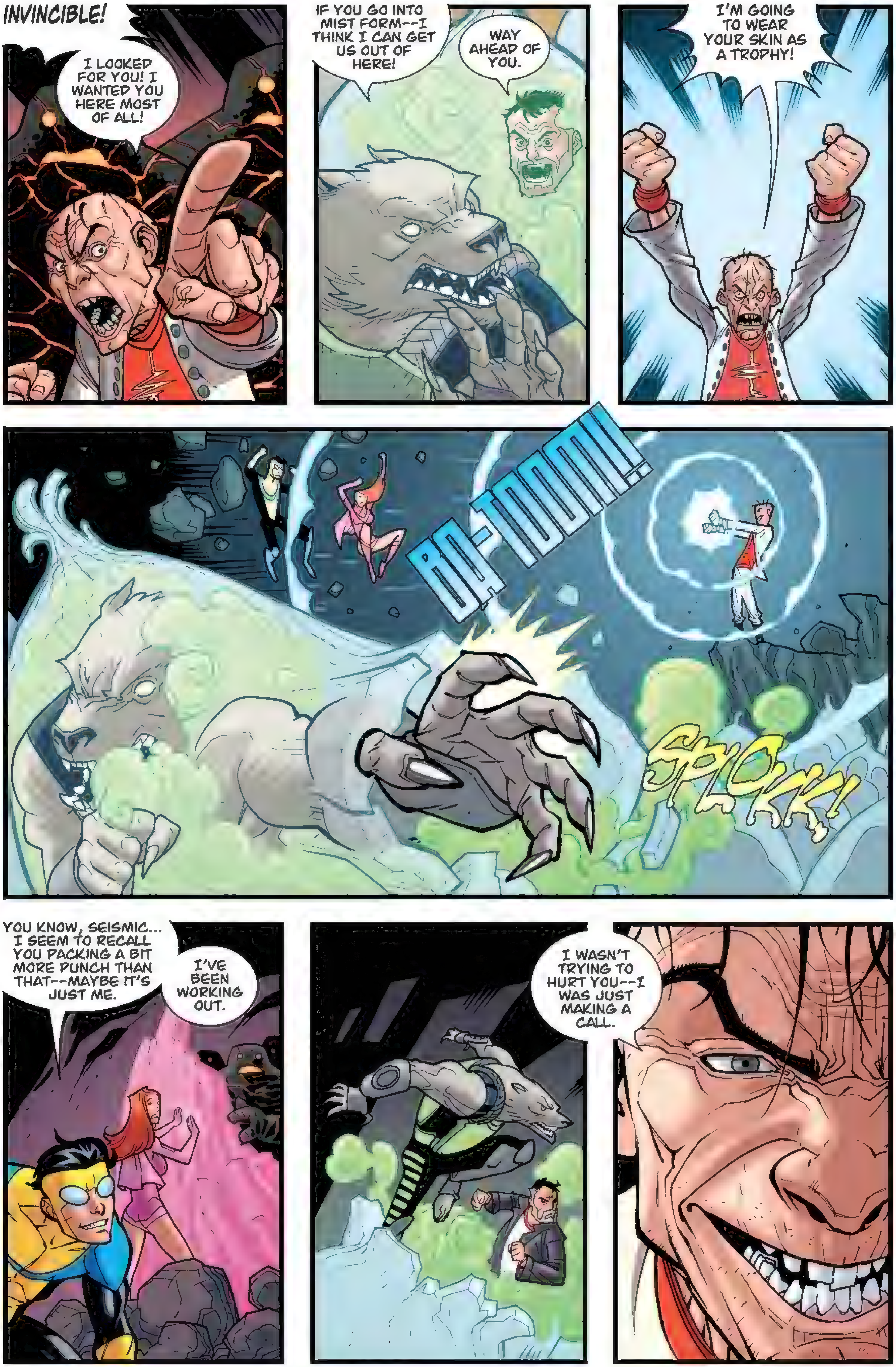
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THAT MEANS. I'M NOT IN THE MOOD, I'M KIND OF BUSY, AND I REALLY DON'T THINK I'M READY TO TALK TO YOU JUST YET.
EVE, CAN WE JUST GO SOMEWHERE SO WE CAN TA--
MARK, LISTEN UP.
UGH.
HOLD ON.
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT TALKING TO ME, SO HERE'S THE DEAL. IT SEEMS EVERY SUPERHERO WITH A CENTRAL BASE--AND SOME WHO DON'T--HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT. THEY'RE JUST GONE.
WE'RE STILL WORKING OUT ALL THE DETAILS, BUT I NEED YOU IN THE STATES, NOW. I'LL GIVE YOU MORE DETAILS EN ROUTE--GET A MOVE ON.
I'M SORRY, SOMETHING HAS COME UP. I GOTTA--
WAIT, HOW BIG IS IT? IS IT, Y'KNOW... EARTH THREATENING?
SEEMS PRETTY BAD, YEAH. WHY--DO YOU WANNA HELP?
C'MON, THEN.
YEAH, I--I THINK I SHOULD.

I'M SORRY, EVE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
I REALLY JUST **DON'T** HAVE ANY DESIRE TO TALK ABOUT THIS RIGHT NOW--AND FOR A LITTLE WHILE LONGER AFTER THAT.
OKAY, UH... OKAY--
I'M BACK. I'VE GOT MORE INFORMATION FOR YOU.
I'M LISTENING-- GO AHEAD.


UH... I THINK YOU'VE SENT ME TO THE WRONG PLACE.
NO-- THAT'S IT.
IT'S PRETTY.
I'M TELLING YOU-- UNLESS CHIPMUNKS ABDUCTED THE REST OF THE WORLD'S SUPERHEROES-- WE'RE AT THE WRONG PLACE.
NO, YOU'RE THERE. SORRY, THE TRACKERS THE CAPES EMPLOYEES ARE GIVEN ARE A BIT OUT-DATED. ROBOT JUST CONTACTED ME, THEY ONLY GOT HIS ROBOT BODY--HE'S SAFE. HE'S GOT MORE PRECISE TRACKING ABILITIES.
THEY'RE THREE MILES DOWN.
OH, GREAT.
THEY'RE THREE MILES UNDERGROUND.
OH... FUN.
GOT ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR DIGGING?
I'M SURE I CAN WHIP SOMETHING UP.

YOU'RE NOT LAUGHING NOW, ARE YOU?!
ARE YOU?!
HA! HA! HA! HA!
IT IS YOU WHO LOOK LIKE FOOLS, THIS TIME! IT IS YOU WHO IS LAUGHED AT!
I'M JUST--I'M BLOWN AWAY BY HOW EASY ALL THIS WAS. ONCE I REALIZED I COULD STILL SPEAK TO THE LEGIONS OF UNDEREARTH--MY PEOPLE... IT ALL CAME TOGETHER.
FOR CREATURES THAT TRAVEL THE CORE OF THE EARTH, COMMUNICATING WITH LITTLE MORE THAN VIBRATION--FINDING YOUR SECRET STRONGHOLDS AND SANCTUARIES WAS CHILD'S PLAY!
I KNEW THAT SOME OF YOU WOULD BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD--BUT REALLY, THIS STEP OF THE PLAN WAS ONLY MEANT TO THIN YOU OUT!
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET ALL OF YOU!!
ARROGANT JERK!
WE'LL SEE HOW CONFIDENT YOU ARE AFTER--
PLOOM!
IRK!
ACTUALLY--I MIGHT HAVE A BETTER IDEA TO--UNGH!
I WOULDN'T HOLD OUT MUCH HOPE FOR ESCAPE IF I WERE YOU. THE SUBSTANCE YOU ARE IN IS VERY STRONG--VERY, VERY STRONG.
TRUE, SOME OF YOU COULD PROBABLY BURST THROUGH--BUT NOT WITHOUT CRUSHING THE PEOPLE ALSO CONTAINED WITHIN YOUR INDIVIDUAL GLOBES.
SO TAKE THAT INTO CONSIDERATION.
SO ESCAPE--NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE. AND WE'RE MANY MILES BELOW EARTH'S SURFACE--SO THE CHANCES OF A RESCUE ARE--
LET ME JUST SAY I HAVE YOU ALL RIGHT WHERE I WANT YOU.

BRAKOOM!!
DID SOMEONE SAY "RESCUE?"
LANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF HUNDREDS OF HOSTILE CREATURES AND SPOUTING A SILLY LINE? THAT ABOUT THE EXTENT OF YOUR PLAN?
WE *REALLY* SHOULD HAVE TALKED MORE ON THE WAY OVER.
NO--THERE'S A PLAN. I SWEAR!
JUST, UH--USE YOUR PINK STUFF TO BUST THOSE GUYS UP--AND I'LL TAKE THE BIG THINGS DOWN.
TRUST ME!

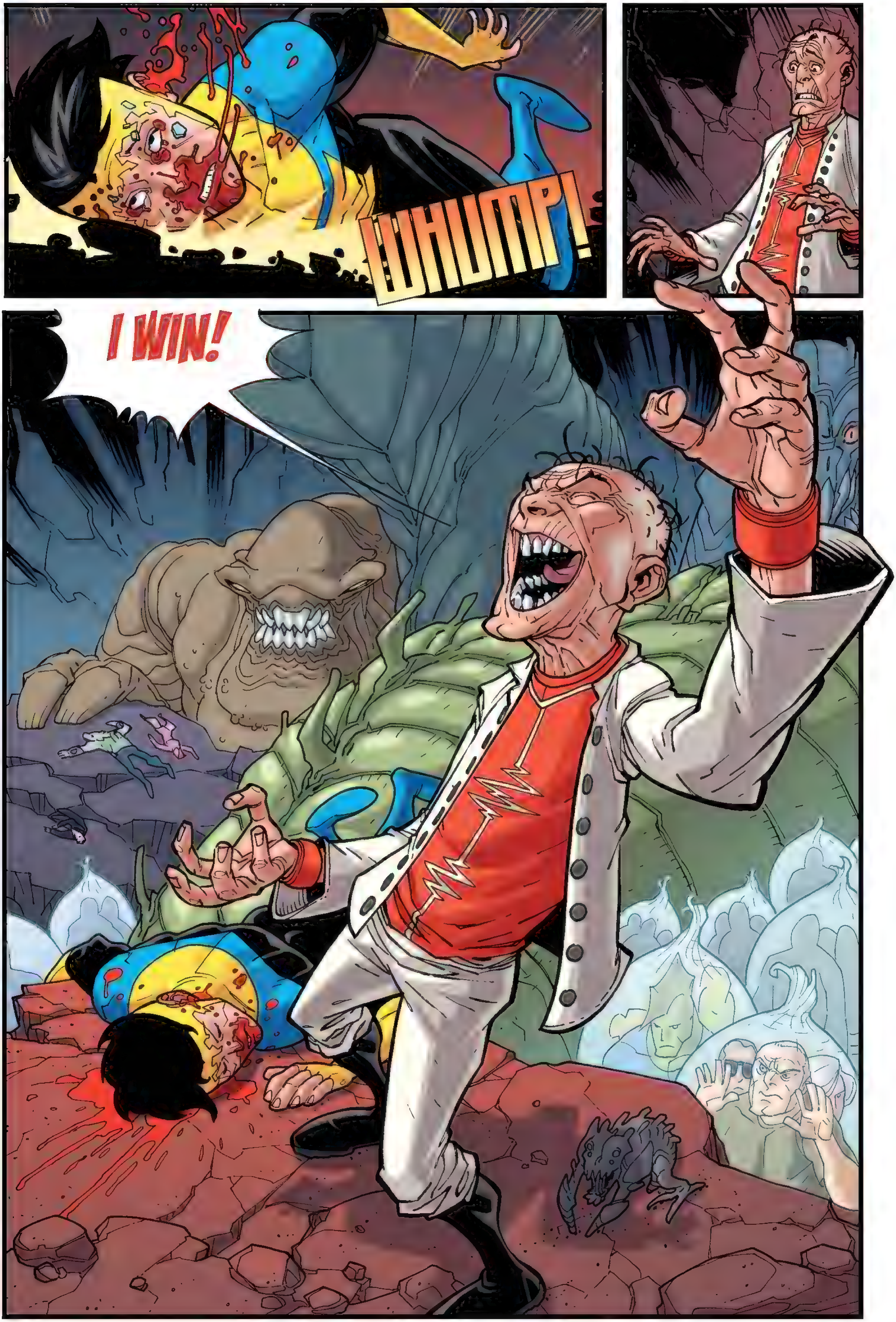

INVINCIBLE!
I LOOKED FOR YOU! I WANTED YOU HERE MOST OF ALL!
IF YOU GO INTO MIST FORM--I THINK I CAN GET US OUT OF HERE!
WAY AHEAD OF YOU.
I'M GOING TO WEAR YOUR SKIN AS A TROPHY!
BA-TOOM!!
SPLOKK!
YOU KNOW, SEISMIC... I SEEM TO RECALL YOU PACKING A BIT MORE PUNCH THAN THAT--MAYBE IT'S JUST ME.
I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT.
I WASN'T TRYING TO HURT YOU--I WAS JUST MAKING A CALL.

BRAKOOM

OKAY--DON'T LET THESE THINGS INTIMIDATE US! I CAN DO SOME DAMAGE REAL QUICK.
THE BIGGER THEY ARE THE HARDER THEY--
THWA-TOOM!!
GAK!
I GOT YOU!
FASTER THAN I--
IT'S OKAY-- JUST REST. I'LL GET YOU SOMEWHERE SAFE AND THEN I'LL--
EVE!
I'VE GOT HER, HERO-- YOU JUST DO YOUR THING.
THOOM!!

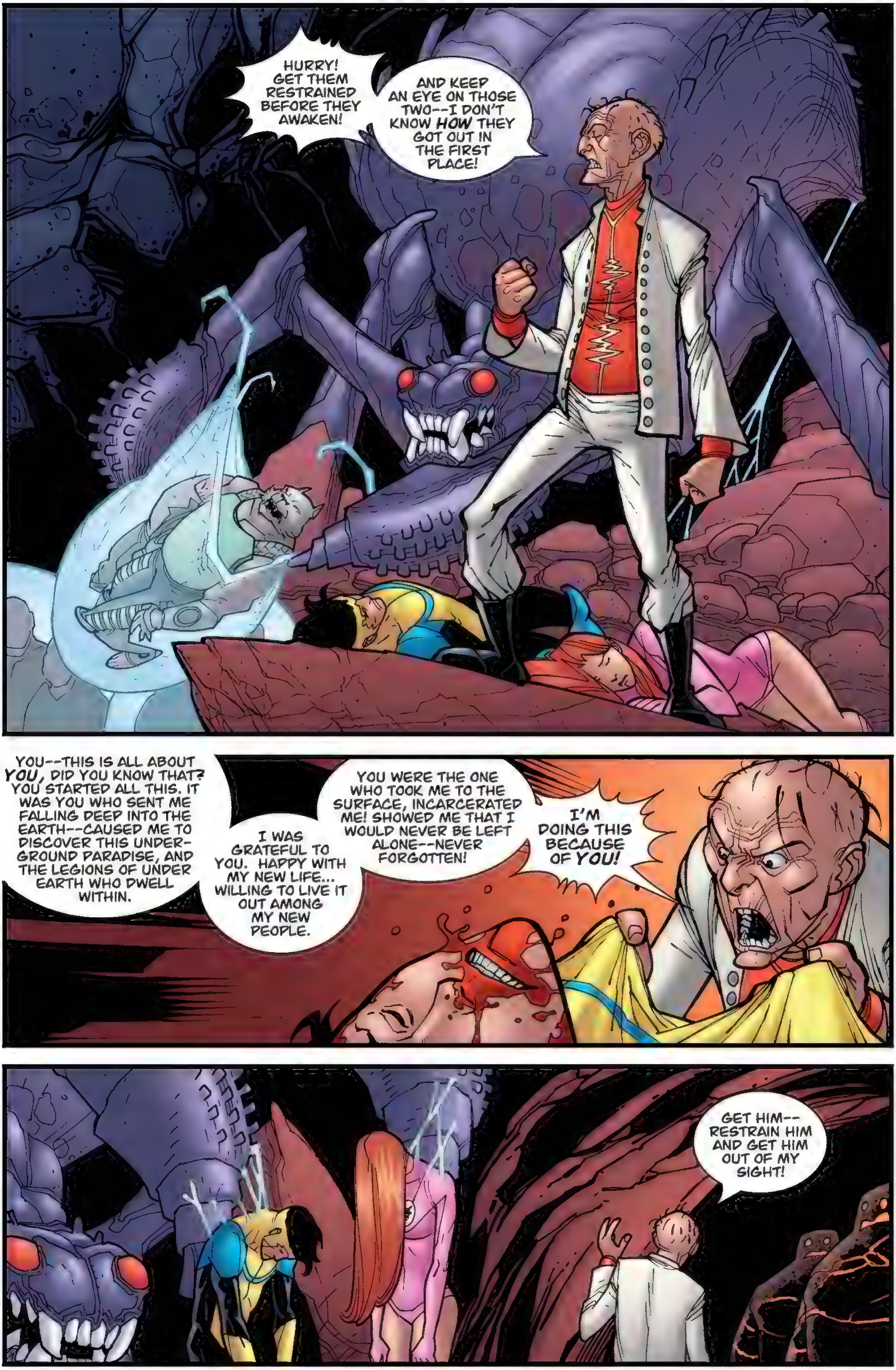
ZECHARIAH! WHAT ARE YOU--?!
WRAKOOM!
CRAP! THIS ISN'T GOING WELL!
UNGH!
NOT ONE OF MY BETTER IDEAS--
COME HERE!
SEE HOW YOU LIKE THIS!
DO YOU REALIZE MY POWER?! WITNESS THE DAMAGE I CAN DO WITHOUT EVEN LIFTING A FINGER!
COWER BEFORE ME!!

KROOM!!
JEEZ, YOU GUYS ARE TOUGH!
TWOOM!
AGH-- TOO MUCH! CAN'T-- GIVE UP!
KRAK!
TOOM!
KLAGG!
TOO MUCH AT STAKE--
--NOT GOING DOWN LIKE THIS!
GOOM!
NO!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH--!
SHUKK!
READY TO GIVE UP?
KOFF!
I GOT PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT--


WHUMP!
I WIN!

CHAPTER 49

DEEP BELOW THE UNITED STATES PENTAGON, THE SECRET UNDERGROUND BASE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
A COVERT GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
INVINCIBLE! CAN YOU HEAR ME?!
MARK, COME IN--
--MARK?!
GLOBAL
UNITED ST
DAMN!
DIRECTOR STEDMAN, THERE'S A--
NO TIME!
YOUR GUYS BETTER BE FIELD READY-- BECAUSE I'M SENDING THEM IN!
I CAN HAVE THEM READY IN--
NOW!


HURRY! GET THEM RESTRAINED BEFORE THEY AWAKEN!
AND KEEP AN EYE ON THOSE TWO--I DON'T KNOW *HOW* THEY GOT OUT IN THE FIRST PLACE!
YOU--THIS IS ALL ABOUT *YOU*, DID YOU KNOW THAT? YOU STARTED ALL THIS. IT WAS YOU WHO SENT ME FALLING DEEP INTO THE EARTH--CAUSED ME TO DISCOVER THIS UNDERGROUND PARADISE, AND THE LEGIONS OF UNDER EARTH WHO DWELL WITHIN.
I WAS GRATEFUL TO YOU. HAPPY WITH MY NEW LIFE... WILLING TO LIVE IT OUT AMONG MY NEW PEOPLE.
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO TOOK ME TO THE SURFACE, INCARCERATED ME! SHOWED ME THAT I WOULD NEVER BE LEFT ALONE--NEVER FORGOTTEN!
I'M DOING THIS BECAUSE OF *YOU!*
GET HIM--RESTRAIN HIM AND GET HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT!

UNGH...
HUNGH?
WHA--?
HUH? WHERE?
OH, CRAP. WE LOST DIDN'T WE?
AND FOR SOME REASON, DOCTOR SEISMIC DIDN'T HAVE HIS MONSTERS KILL US. IS HE JUST CRAZY OR EXTREMELY ARROGANT?
IT'S PROBABLY JUST NOT HIS STYLE. HE'S OLD SCHOOL.
SO...
JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE AND I'LL HAVE US OUT OF HERE.
NO. WAIT.
WE GET OUT OF HERE--THEN WHAT? IT'LL BE JUST LIKE BEFORE--WE'LL BE OVERPOWERED LIKE BEFORE AND THEN HE MIGHT PUT US IN SOMETHING STRONGER.
WE'VE GOT TO THINK ABOUT THIS.
WE'RE SURROUNDED BY THE MOST POWERFUL SUPERHEROES ON THE PLANET--I MEAN, THIS ISN'T EVERYONE BUT IT'S CLOSE--I THINK I'VE GOT AN IDEA.
WE NEED TO FOCUS ON FREEING EVERYONE--IGNORE THE MONSTERS, DON'T TRY TO DEFEAT THEM OURSELVES.
WE GET EVERYONE OUT--AND THEN FIGHT AS A GROUP, WE'LL--

ATTACK!
USA

THOK!
THOK!
WHAT THE--?!
THIS IS JUST... CONFUSING.
THOK!
POOM!
POOM!
POOM!
POOM!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THESE ARE *BAD GUYS*-- THIS--
SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT HERE.
OKAY, PEOPLE-- LET'S TEACH THESE THINGS A LESSON.
DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO MAKE SURE THIS *NEVER* HAPPENS AGAIN!

TOO SLOW!
OKAY--NOW THINGS ARE FUN AGAIN!
WROKK!
BE CAREFUL, ANGEL--THIS ISN'T A GAME!
JUST STEP AWAY--AND DUCK.
THUNK!
OH, UH... RIGHT.
THANKS.
BOOM!
CRAP!
CRAP!
NO! NOT THIS EASY!
YOU DON'T GET TO WIN THIS EASY!
IT'S NOT EASY!
I JUST MAKE IT LOOK THAT WAY.

VRAMM!!

BA-TOOOM!
THERE'S STILL SOME FIGHT LEFT IN THIS OLD DOG! BUT I'M NO FOOL--I CAN SEE THE WRITING ON THE WALL.
MAYBE THIS IS IT--MAYBE IT'S ALL BUT OVER. BY WORKING TOGETHER, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO DEFEAT MY LEGIONS OF UNDER-EARTH!
BUT IF THIS IS IT, IF I'M GOING DOWN--I'M TAKING EVERY ONE OF YOU WITH ME!
I DON'T THINK SO.
YOU!
YOU THINK YOU'RE FAST ENOUGH TO STOP ME BEFORE I BRING THIS CAVE DOWN ON EVERYONE?
I AM--AND YOU KNOW I AM.
YOU, THIS IS ALL BECAUSE OF YOU. I WIDENED MY FOCUS TOO MUCH THIS TIME. YOU WERE THE ONE I WANTED--THE ONE WHO NEEDED TO PAY.
NEXT TIME, AND THERE WILL BE A NEXT TIME--I'LL JUST COME AFTER YOU. WE'LL SEE HOW WELL YOU FARE AGAINST ME THEN.
OLD MAN, ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE ME PUNCH YOU?
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU TRY.

WHAT THE--?!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THE MONSTERS ARE RETREATING-- LOOKS LIKE WE WON.
SWEET!
WHERE IS SEISMIC? DID HE GET AWAY?
DON'T WORRY, IMMORTAL-- I GOT HIM.
HE'S NOT GOING ***ANYWHERE.***

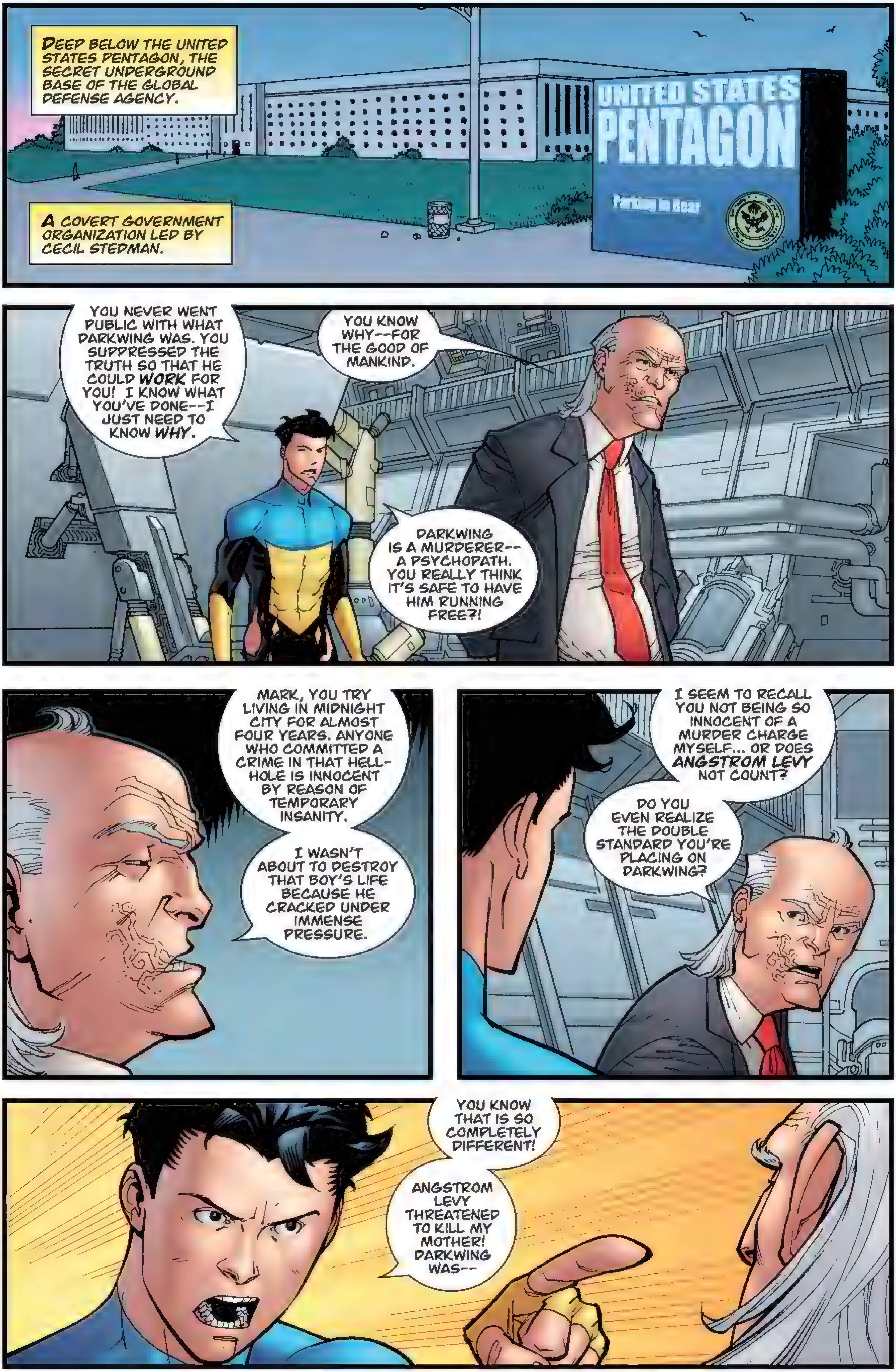
MURDERER!
WRAMM!!
WHAT?!
HE'S A MURDERER--I KNOW HE HELPED US HERE, BUT WE DON'T KNOW **WHY**. HE'S GOT AN ARMY OF **KILLER ROBOTS** WITH HIM--HE--
DON'T ANY OF YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID IN MIDNIGHT CITY? HE'S A COLD-BLOODED KILLER!

I'LL ADMIT I'VE MADE SOME MISTAKES IN THE PAST--BUT THAT'S ALL BEHIND ME. I'M MUCH BETTER NOW!
MISTAKES?! YOU WERE KILLING PEOPLE WHO BROKE THE LAW--*ANY* LAW!
YOU WERE KILLING BECAUSE YOU *ENJOYED* IT!
YOU'RE A--!
NO WAY! I'M NOT LETTING YOU PULL ME INTO THE SHADOW REALM!
WHY ARE YOU EVEN TRYING TO FIGHT BACK?! ALMOST EVERY SUPERHERO ON THE PLANET IS HERE--WHAT CHANCE DO YOU HAVE?
KRAK!
CALM DOWN, KID. THIS GUY JUST SAVED THE LOT OF US. CUT HIM SOME SLACK.
YOU'RE RAVING LIKE A LUNATIC.
WHAT?!
YOU'RE SIDING WITH *HIM*?!
ARE YOU *CRAZY*?!
LET GO OF ME!

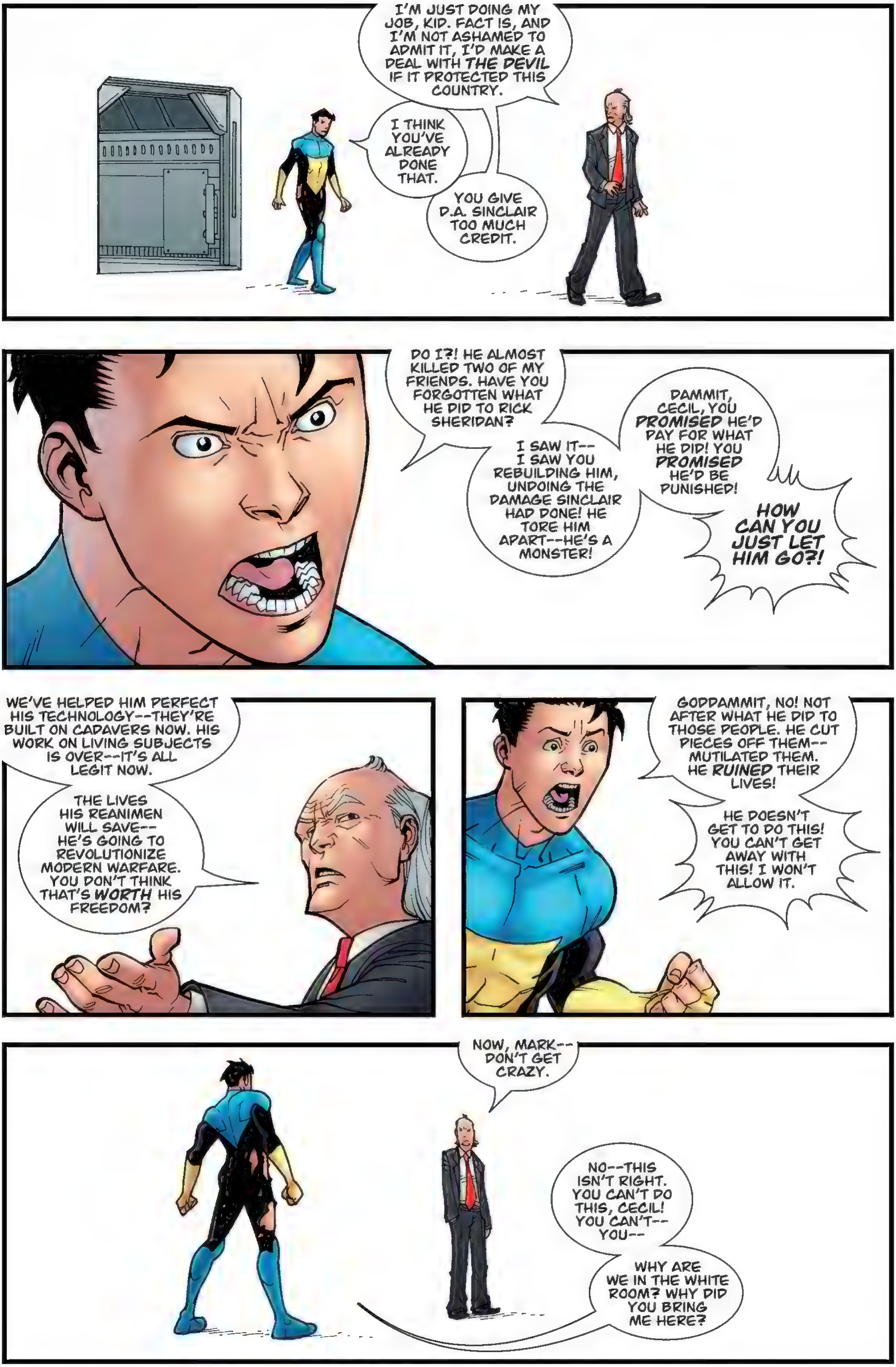
STAND DOWN, INVINCIBLE!
RIGHT NOW!
HE--HE MURDERED PEOPLE. HE WAS A COLD-BLOODED KILLER. WHY DOESN'T ANYONE KNOW ABOUT THIS?
I HAVE KNOWN DARKWING FOR SOME TIME, BACK IN HIS DAYS AS NIGHT BOY WHEN HE WORKED WITH THE ORIGINAL DARKWING.
ARROGANT, YES--BUT ***NEVER*** A KILLER.
I WAS THERE--I ***SAW*** HIM. WASN'T THIS ALL OVER THE NEWS? I THOUGHT EVERYONE KNEW ABOUT THIS.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER.
BUT--
KID, WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS ***LATER.***
NOW GET OUT OF HERE.

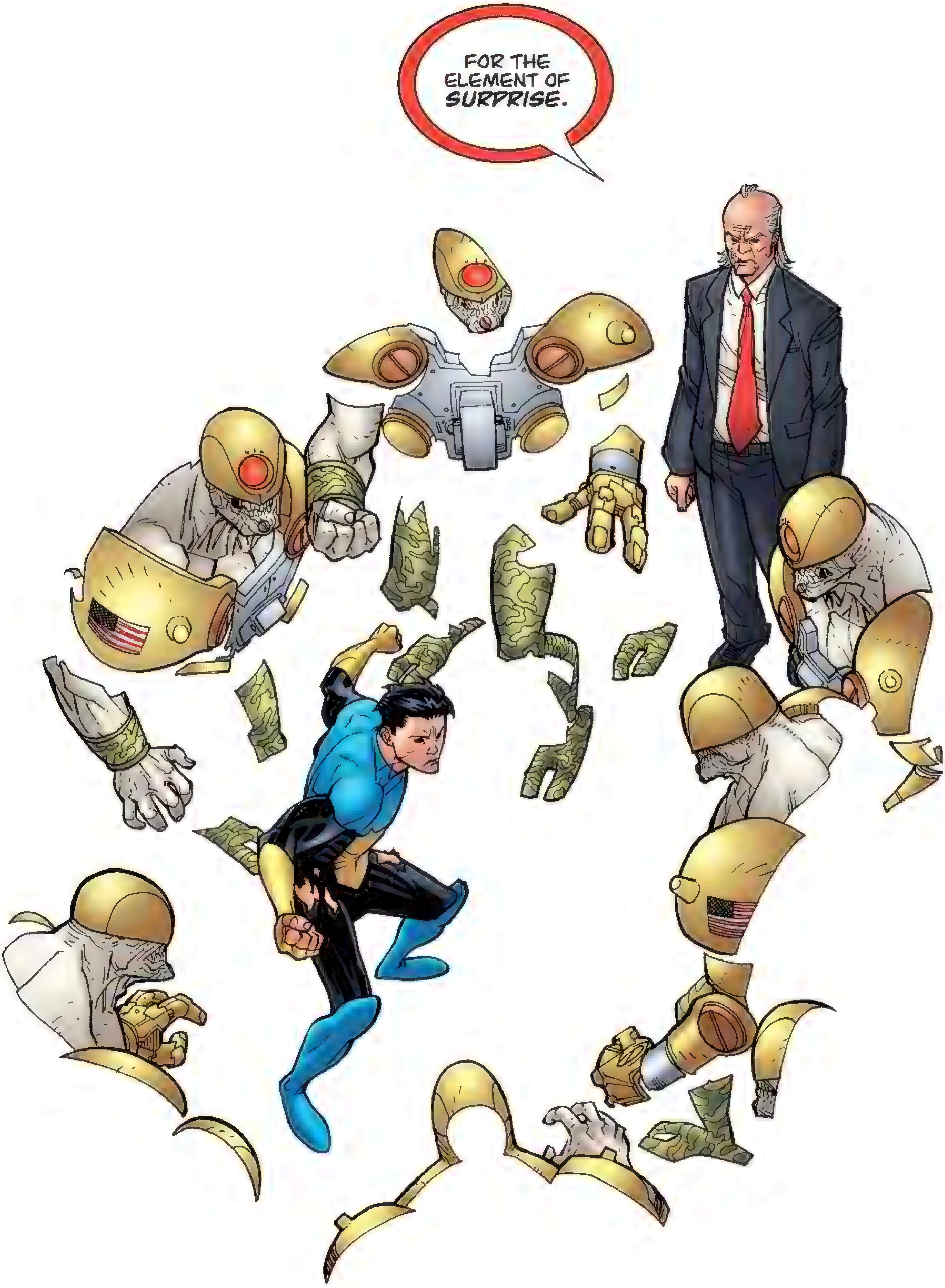
MARK?
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT? ARE YOU OKAY?
ME? NO--NOT EVEN CLOSE. THAT GUY, DARKWING--I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
YOU HAD NO CLUE DARKWING WAS A MURDERER? YOU NEVER SAW IT ON THE NEWS?
GRANTED, I DON'T WATCH A LOT OF NEWS, BUT I THINK I WOULD HAVE HEARD ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
I'M SHOCKED YOU NEVER MENTIONED IT TO ME.
I BROUGHT HIM IN A WHILE AGO--I FIGURED IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A BIG NEWS STORY.
SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT HERE--THIS IS WEIRD.
THOSE ROBOT SOLDIER-THINGS... THEY'RE BASED ON THE DESIGNS OF THAT PSYCHO WHO WAS AT MY COLLEGE, KILLING HOMELESS PEOPLE AND TURNING THEM INTO THOSE ROBOTS...
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT WHERE THEY'RE GETTING THE BODIES THOSE THINGS ARE BUILT AROUND.
WHAT'S WRONG?
I THINK I'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

IF THE NEWS HAD BROADCAST ANYTHING ABOUT DARKWING, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THE ONLY ONE TO ATTACK ONCE THOSE MONSTERS WERE DEFEATED.
THERE WAS A COVER UP--THE NEWS NEVER WENT PUBLIC.
CECIL STEDMAN HEADS UP THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY--THEY CAN DO *ANYTHING* IN THE NAME OF "GLOBAL DEFENSE."
YOU REALLY THINK THAT HE'D--
I DON'T KNOW... AND *THAT'S* THE PROBLEM.
I'VE BEEN TOO TRUSTING, TOO NAIVE. I'VE TAKEN EVERYTHING CECIL HAS EVER TOLD ME AT FACE VALUE. I HAVEN'T FOLLOWED ALL HIS ORDERS... BUT I'VE NEVER DOUBTED HIM--NEVER ASKED QUESTIONS.
CAN YOU GET YOURSELF BACK HOME?
AND LATER--AFTER I'M DONE, I WANT TO COME VISIT--CLEAR THINGS UP BETWEEN US. I DON'T LIKE THIS... TENSION.
YEAH, SURE.
I'D UH, I'D LIKE THAT, MARK. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
ASK SOME OF THOSE QUESTIONS...
...WHETHER I WANT TO KNOW THE ANSWERS OR NOT.


DEEP BELOW THE UNITED STATES PENTAGON, THE SECRET UNDERGROUND BASE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
A COVERT GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
YOU NEVER WENT PUBLIC WITH WHAT DARKWING WAS. YOU SUPPRESSED THE TRUTH SO THAT HE COULD WORK FOR YOU! I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE--I JUST NEED TO KNOW WHY.
YOU KNOW WHY--FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND.
DARKWING IS A MURDERER--A PSYCHOPATH. YOU REALLY THINK IT'S SAFE TO HAVE HIM RUNNING FREE?!
MARK, YOU TRY LIVING IN MIDNIGHT CITY FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS. ANYONE WHO COMMITTED A CRIME IN THAT HELL-HOLE IS INNOCENT BY REASON OF TEMPORARY INSANITY.
I WASN'T ABOUT TO DESTROY THAT BOY'S LIFE BECAUSE HE CRACKED UNDER IMMENSE PRESSURE.
I SEEM TO RECALL YOU NOT BEING SO INNOCENT OF A MURDER CHARGE MYSELF... OR DOES ANGSTROM LEVY NOT COUNT?
DO YOU EVEN REALIZE THE DOUBLE STANDARD YOU'RE PLACING ON DARKWING?
YOU KNOW THAT IS SO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
ANGSTROM LEVY THREATENED TO KILL MY MOTHER! DARKWING WAS--

MISTER STEDMAN, I--
I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN A MEETING...
MISTER SINCLAIR, PLEASE LEAVE-- *NOW.*
WHAT THE *HELL* IS HE DOING HERE?!
MARK, CALM DOWN.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST USING HIS DESIGNS--I THOUGHT YOU WERE USING HIS SICK, TWISTED WORK FOR YOUR OWN GAIN-- AND *THAT* WAS BAD ENOUGH!
BUT YOU'RE WORKING WITH THE GUY?! THAT'S-- I CAN'T BELIEVE ALL THIS--I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF!
HOW MANY MORE OF MY ENEMIES ARE ON YOUR PAYROLL?!
MARK, CALM DOWN.
PLEASE, FOLLOW ME.
CECIL, DAMMIT-- WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!
I WILL EXPLAIN, JUST COME WITH ME.


I'M JUST DOING MY JOB, KID. FACT IS, AND I'M NOT ASHAMED TO ADMIT IT, I'D MAKE A DEAL WITH *THE DEVIL* IF IT PROTECTED THIS COUNTRY.
I THINK YOU'VE ALREADY DONE THAT.
YOU GIVE D.A. SINCLAIR TOO MUCH CREDIT.
DO I?! HE ALMOST KILLED TWO OF MY FRIENDS. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT HE DID TO RICK SHERIDAN?
I SAW IT-- I SAW YOU REBUILDING HIM, UNDOING THE DAMAGE SINCLAIR HAD DONE! HE TORE HIM APART--HE'S A MONSTER!
DAMMIT, CECIL, YOU *PROMISED* HE'D PAY FOR WHAT HE DID! YOU *PROMISED* HE'D BE PUNISHED!
HOW CAN YOU JUST LET HIM GO?!
WE'VE HELPED HIM PERFECT HIS TECHNOLOGY--THEY'RE BUILT ON CADAVERS NOW. HIS WORK ON LIVING SUBJECTS IS OVER--IT'S ALL LEGIT NOW.
THE LIVES HIS REANIMEN WILL SAVE-- HE'S GOING TO REVOLUTIONIZE MODERN WARFARE. YOU DON'T THINK THAT'S *WORTH* HIS FREEDOM?
GODDAMMIT, NO! NOT AFTER WHAT HE DID TO THOSE PEOPLE. HE CUT PIECES OFF THEM-- MUTILATED THEM. HE *RUINED* THEIR LIVES!
HE DOESN'T GET TO DO THIS! YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS! I WON'T ALLOW IT.
NOW, MARK-- DON'T GET CRAZY.
NO--THIS ISN'T RIGHT. YOU CAN'T DO THIS, CECIL! YOU CAN'T-- YOU--
WHY ARE WE IN THE WHITE ROOM? WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE?


FOR THE ELEMENT OF *SURPRISE*.

CHA R 50

WHAT IS THIS?!
YOU THINK I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT COMES NEXT? YOU TALK LIKE YOU'RE TALKING-- THEN YOU FLIP OUT. YOU'RE A LOOSE CANNON, MARK.
I DON'T PARTICULARLY WISH TO END UP LIKE ANGSTROM LEVY.
ANGSTROM LEVY WAS AN ACCIDENT!!
WRA-KOOM!!
I CAME HERE TO CONFRONT YOU FOR WORKING WITH EVIL, MURDEROUS PEOPLE--AND YOU'RE ATTACKING *ME* FOR IT?! MAKING ME OUT TO BE THE BAD GUY?!
THIS ISN'T RIGHT!
WRAMM!!

LOOK AT YOURSELF-- LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
I'M ONLY PROTECTING MYSELF. WE DIDN'T ATTACK YOU, MARK.
ARE YOU *KIDDING* ME?!
SKRAGG!
YOU BROUGHT ME IN HERE FOR AN *AMBUSH!* YOU *PLANNED* THIS! YOU DON'T WANT ME BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON YOUR LITTLE OPERATION--YOU DON'T WANT THE PUBLIC TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *REALLY* UP TO.
YOU WANT TO SILENCE ME!
I'M *NOT* GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN.
YOU SOUND LIKE A CHILD. BLOW THE WHISTLE ON ME? THE PUBLIC KNOWING WHAT I *REALLY* DO? HOW? HOW WOULD THEY *EVER* FIND OUT?
I THINK YOU UNDERESTIMATE MY *REACH*. MY HANDS ARE IN EVERY PIE, MARK. THAT'S HOW I'M ABLE TO *DO* WHAT IT IS I *REALLY* DO.
I DON'T THINK YOU QUITE REALIZE THE GRAVITY OF THIS SITUATION. I PROTECT THE WORLD--AND *YOU'RE* GOING TO TRY AND *STOP* ME?
THAT MAKES YOU MY *ENEMY*.

WHAT--I HAVEN'T KILLED ENOUGH PEOPLE TO BE AN ALLY?!
YOU'RE INSANE!
YOU'VE PROVEN YOU'RE NOT USEFUL TO ME ANYMORE. FURTHERMORE-- YOU'RE PROVING THAT YOU ACTUALLY MEAN TO WORK AGAINST ME.
I SIMPLY WON'T ALLOW THAT.
ALLOW?
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE PAYING ATTENTION, OLD MAN--BUT I DON'T THINK YOUR EVIL ROBOTS WILL BE ABLE TO STOP ME.
AS YOU KNOW... I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT.
WARNING! WHITE ROOM SUBTERFUGE FAILURE IN THIRTY SECONDS!
KROOOM!!
CRAP.
WARNING! WHITE ROOM SUBTERFUGE FAILURE IN FIFTEEN SECONDS!
SO THAT'S IT? IS THAT ALL OF YOUR ROBOTS? YOU REALLY DIDN'T PLAN FOR THIS DID YOU?
DID YOU THINK I'D JUST GIVE UP AND STEP BACK IN LINE?
WHITE ROOM SUBTERFUGE FAILURE IN THREE... TWO... ONE...

UH...
YEAH, WE COULD BE HERE **ALL DAY** AT THE RATE YOU'RE GOING.
SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE UP?
THEN WHAT? ARE YOU GOING TO **ARREST** ME?
FOR **WHAT?** I'M CONFIDENT WE CAN AVOID THAT...
...ASSUMING YOU STOP **RIGHT NOW.**
THEN WHAT? WE JUST FORGET THIS EVER HAPPENED? FORGET YOU'VE GOT DOCTOR FRANKENSTEIN RUNNING FREE--MAKING ZOMBIE SOLDIERS--PRETEND YOU'RE NOT HIRING **MURDERERS?!**
HOW ABOUT THIS--YOU ARREST D.A. SINCLAIR AND DARKWING--AND I'LL **THINK** ABOUT STANDING DOWN.
IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CONTINUE WORKING FOR ME--THEN I'LL NEED THEM MORE THAN EVER.
NO, I'M SORRY THAT ME WORKING WITH THEM INTERFERES WITH YOUR STRICT VIEWS ON RIGHT AND WRONG THAT ARE BORN OUT OF A NEED TO PROVE YOU'RE NOT YOUR FATHER--BUT I WON'T STOP WORKING WITH THEM ANY TIME SOON.
THEN I GUESS I'VE GOT A LOT OF ROBOTS TO DESTROY--BECAUSE I'M SURE AS HELL NOT GOING TO JUST SURRENDER.
ACTUALLY, I THINK YOU'VE COST THE AMERICAN TAXPAYERS QUITE ENOUGH ALREADY. I'VE GOT A MUCH MORE EFFICIENT WAY OF KEEPING YOU IN CHECK.

ARRRRGH!
REBOOTING. WHITE ROOM SUBTERFUGE RESTORED IN 3... 2... 1...
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY, MARK. THE ONLY THING I ASK IS THAT YOU BE **REASONABLE**, THINK THIS OVER.
GIVE ME A CHANCE TO CONVINCE YOU THAT I'M RIGHT. EVERYTHING I'VE DONE FOR YOU-- YOUR FAMILY, ALL THE TIME WE'VE WORKED TOGETHER...
I THINK YOU AT LEAST OWE ME THAT MUCH.
WHAT DID--
WHAT DID YOU **DO** TO ME?
WHEN WE FOUND YOU-- AFTER YOUR FATHER HAD LEFT YOU FOR DEAD, AFTER HE HAD THREATENED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD-- DO YOU REALLY THINK WE'D TRUST **YOU** SO **BLINDLY?**
THE COMMUNICATOR WE IMBEDDED IN YOUR EAR ISN'T ALONE IN THERE.
WE GAMBLED, AND IT SEEMED TO PAY OFF--WE FIGURED YOUR EQUILIBRIUM WASN'T AS INVULNERABLE AS YOU ARE.
WE WERE RIGHT. IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE FOUND A **WEAKNESS.**

YOU PUT A WEAPON IN ME?
AFTER WHAT YOUR FATHER HAD JUST TRIED TO DO? YES. OF COURSE WE DID.
YOU PUT A WEAPON IN ME!!
YEAAGGH!!
MARK, YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN. AND BEFORE YOU GET THE URGE TO CRUSH MY HAND--DESTROYING THIS TRANSMITTER, JUST KNOW, IF IT'S DAMAGED, THE PULSE IN YOUR EAR GOES INTO A PERMANENT LOOP.
IT COULD KILL YOU.
WHAT DO YOU--THINK THE RANGE IS ON THAT THING?
RANGE? WHAT DO YOU--?
VOOSH!!

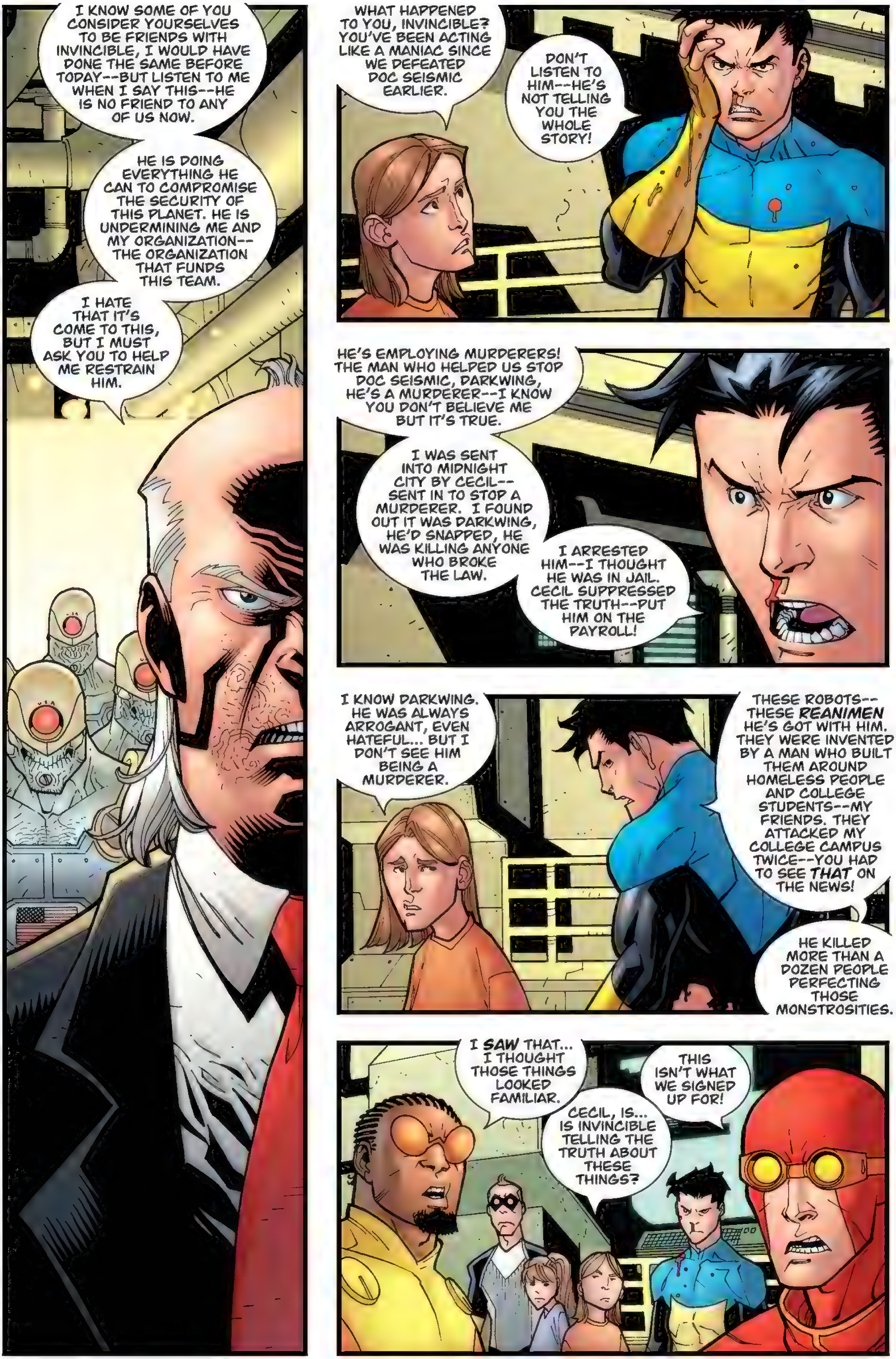
TED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
NNNNNNGGH!!
BOOM!!!

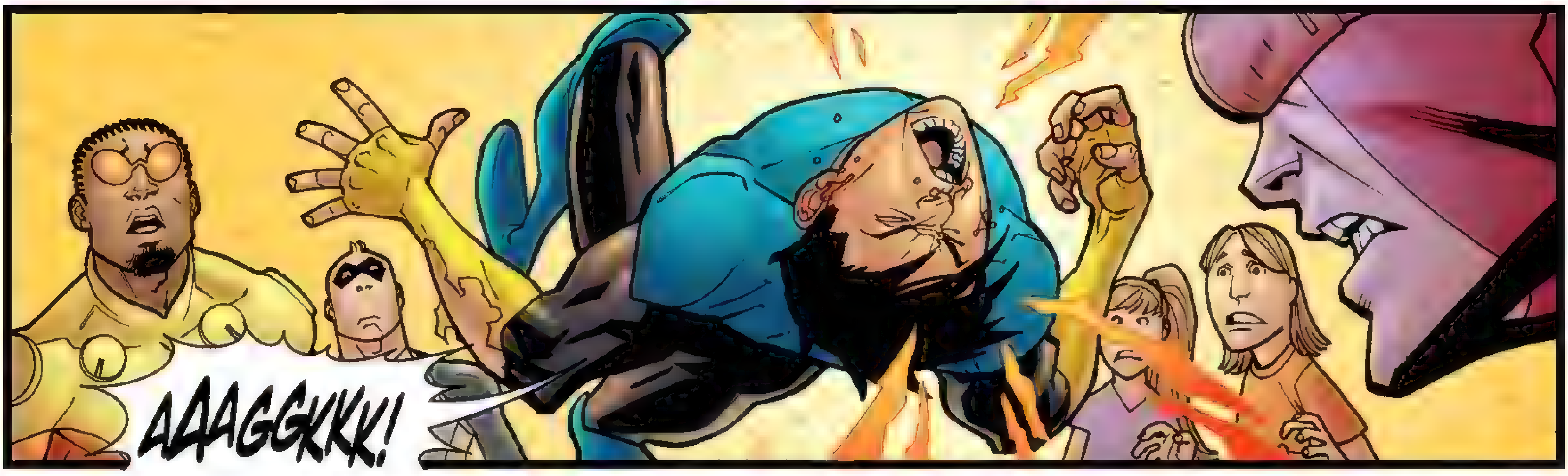
WE HAD THEORIZED THAT--
ARE YOU AWAKE? GOOD.
WE HAD THEORIZED THAT YOUR EQUILIBRIUM WOULD HAVE TO BE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU-- SINCE IT WOULD ALSO AID IN YOUR FLYING ABILITIES.
IN THEORY, YOU WOULD BE MUCH MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THIS FORM OF ATTACK THAN A NORMAL HUMAN WOULD.
THAT SEEMS TO BE THE CASE.
UNGH.
OH, AND TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, THE RANGE ISN'T ANYTHING GREAT-- BUT IT'S ENOUGH.
LAST TIME THE PENTAGON SLOWED ME DOWN.
VOOSH!
CRAP.

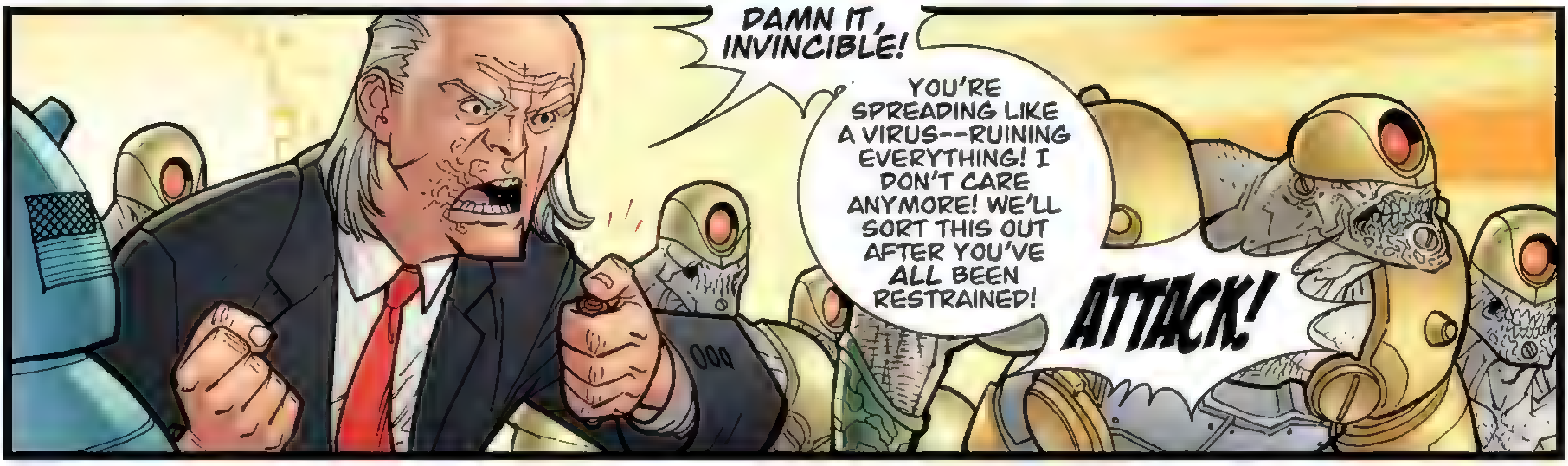
CRAP.
CRAP.
CRAP.
CRAP.
CRAP.
AH...

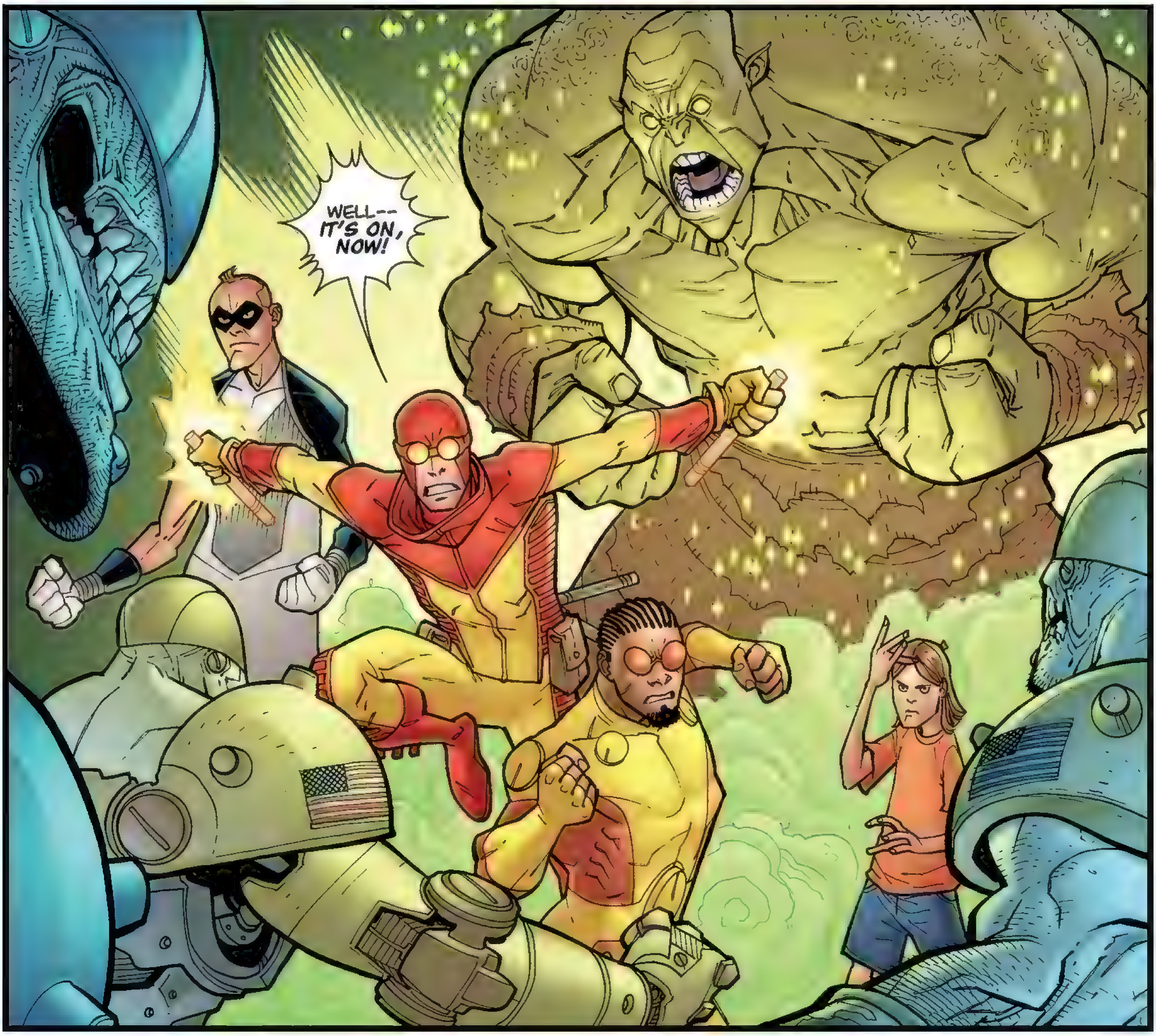
AARRRRGGH!!
ALMOST...
THERE...
SKRA-KOOM!!
WHAT THE--?!

HELP... I NEED HELP...
I JUST...
NEED A SECOND... DISORIENTED...
WHAT'S GOING ON? IS SOMETHING AFTER YOU?
DUDE-- WHAT HAPPENED?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO GO. ROBOT, I NEED YOUR HELP, I NEED YOU TO GET THIS THING OUT OF MY EAR BEFORE HE CATCHES UP TO ME.
HE'LL BE HERE ANY MINUTE--I CAN'T TALK--I CAN'T THINK WHEN HE ACTIVATES IT--IT FEELS LIKE A BOMB GOING OFF INSIDE MY HEAD.
YOU GOTTA GET IT OUT OF ME.
WHO'S AFTER YOU? DID THEY FOLLOW YOU HERE?
CECIL--YOU GOTTA HELP, SOMEONE IS CHASING INVINCIBLE. THEY'VE PUT SOMETHING IN HIS HEAD--I THINK THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL HIM.
I KNOW.
TO ANY OF YOU WHO VALUE YOUR POSITION ON THIS TEAM--YOU'LL STAY OUT OF THIS MATTER ENTIRELY.
YOU WON'T BE GETTING A SECOND WARNING.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
IT'S HIM. HE'S THE ONE DOING THIS.


I KNOW SOME OF YOU CONSIDER YOURSELVES TO BE FRIENDS WITH INVINCIBLE, I WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME BEFORE TODAY--BUT LISTEN TO ME WHEN I SAY THIS--HE IS NO FRIEND TO ANY OF US NOW.
HE IS DOING EVERYTHING HE CAN TO COMPROMISE THE SECURITY OF THIS PLANET. HE IS UNDERMINING ME AND MY ORGANIZATION--THE ORGANIZATION THAT FUNDS THIS TEAM.
I HATE THAT IT'S COME TO THIS, BUT I MUST ASK YOU TO HELP ME RESTRAIN HIM.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, INVINCIBLE? YOU'VE BEEN ACTING LIKE A MANIAC SINCE WE DEFEATED DOC SEISMIC EARLIER.
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM--HE'S NOT TELLING YOU THE WHOLE STORY!
HE'S EMPLOYING MURDERERS! THE MAN WHO HELPED US STOP DOC SEISMIC, DARKWING, HE'S A MURDERER--I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME BUT IT'S TRUE.
I WAS SENT INTO MIDNIGHT CITY BY CECIL--SENT IN TO STOP A MURDERER. I FOUND OUT IT WAS DARKWING, HE'D SNAPPED, HE WAS KILLING ANYONE WHO BROKE THE LAW.
I ARRESTED HIM--I THOUGHT HE WAS IN JAIL. CECIL SUPPRESSED THE TRUTH--PUT HIM ON THE PAYROLL!
I KNOW DARKWING. HE WAS ALWAYS ARROGANT, EVEN HATEFUL... BUT I DON'T SEE HIM BEING A MURDERER.
THESE ROBOTS--THESE ***REANIMEN*** HE'S GOT WITH HIM. THEY WERE INVENTED BY A MAN WHO BUILT THEM AROUND HOMELESS PEOPLE AND COLLEGE STUDENTS--MY FRIENDS. THEY ATTACKED MY COLLEGE CAMPUS TWICE--YOU HAD TO SEE ***THAT*** ON THE NEWS!
HE KILLED MORE THAN A DOZEN PEOPLE PERFECTING THOSE MONSTROSITIES.
I ***SAW*** THAT... I THOUGHT THOSE THINGS LOOKED FAMILIAR.
THIS ISN'T WHAT WE SIGNED UP FOR!
CECIL, IS... IS INVINCIBLE TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT THESE THINGS?


AAAGGKKK!


DAMN IT, INVINCIBLE!
YOU'RE SPREADING LIKE A VIRUS--RUINING EVERYTHING! I DON'T CARE ANYMORE! WE'LL SORT THIS OUT AFTER YOU'VE ALL BEEN RESTRAINED!
ATTACK!


WELL-- IT'S ON, NOW!

HOLD ON, INVINCIBLE-- I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS!
KRUKK!
I'M COMING FOR YOU, OLD MAN!
BOOM!
THIS IS ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SAVING MY FRIEND!
BOOM!
SHOOM! SHOOM!
NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!
THAP!
BOOOM!!

AAAAAGGH!!
CRAP! WHAT HAPPENED?
IT'S A FAIL SAFE--WITH THE TRANSMITTER DOWN, THE PULSE IS CONSTANT.
THAT'S WHY INVINCIBLE WAS RUNNING INSTEAD OF ATTACKING!
JEEZ, SORRY!
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?!
WRAMM!!
WRAMM!!
WRAMM!!
NNNNNNNG.
CALL THEM OFF, CECIL--THEY'RE KILLING HIM!
DEAR, GOD...
WHAT HAVE I DONE?

WRAMM!!
WRAMM!!
WRAMM!!
WRAMM!!
WRAMM!!
SHUT THEM DOWN! SHUT THEM ALL DOWN!
WHAT?! I CAN'T-- I HAVEN'T COMPLETED THAT FAIL SAFE. THEY'LL HAVE TO BE SHUT DOWN INDIVIDUALLY-- IT'LL TAKE... FIVE MINUTES.
DO IT-- AND PRAY HE LASTS THAT LONG!
GOOM!!
WHAT THE--?!

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
I'VE FIGURED OUT THE FREQUENCY--AND BLOCKED THE TRANSMISSION.
OKAY--THAT'S IT, WE'RE DONE HERE. THIS IS *OVER*. I DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO PROTECT THE WORLD, END OF STORY. I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT ANY OF YOU THINK OF WHAT I DO.
YOU WANT TO QUIT? *QUIT*. SEE IF I CARE... YOU GUYS ARE A DIME A DOZEN THESE DAYS.
INVINCIBLE, *YOU'RE FIRED*. THERE'S NO WAY WE COULD WORK TOGETHER AFTER THIS--NO WAY I'D *WANT* TO.
YOU EVER GET IN MY WAY AGAIN--AND I'LL LET THEM KILL YOU.
KOFF!
FINE.
THAT WILL BE ALL, PEOPLE.
CECIL--
EH?

KROOM!!
IF WE'RE DONE-- WE'RE *DONE*. GET IT? I DON'T WANT YOU IN MY LIFE--I DON'T WANT YOU MESSING WITH ME.
WHATEVER I'VE BEEN PAID-- WHATEVER YOU'VE GIVEN US--IT'S *MINE*. YOU STAY *AWAY* FROM MY FAMILY.
I DON'T WANT YOU TALKING TO MY MOTHER--I DON'T WANT YOU COMING TO MY HOUSE.
STAY AWAY FROM OLIVER. IF YOU TRY TO RECRUIT MY LITTLE BROTHER--
I'LL KILL YOU.
KOFF!
KOFF!
ROBOT, GET THIS DAMN THING OUT OF MY EAR.

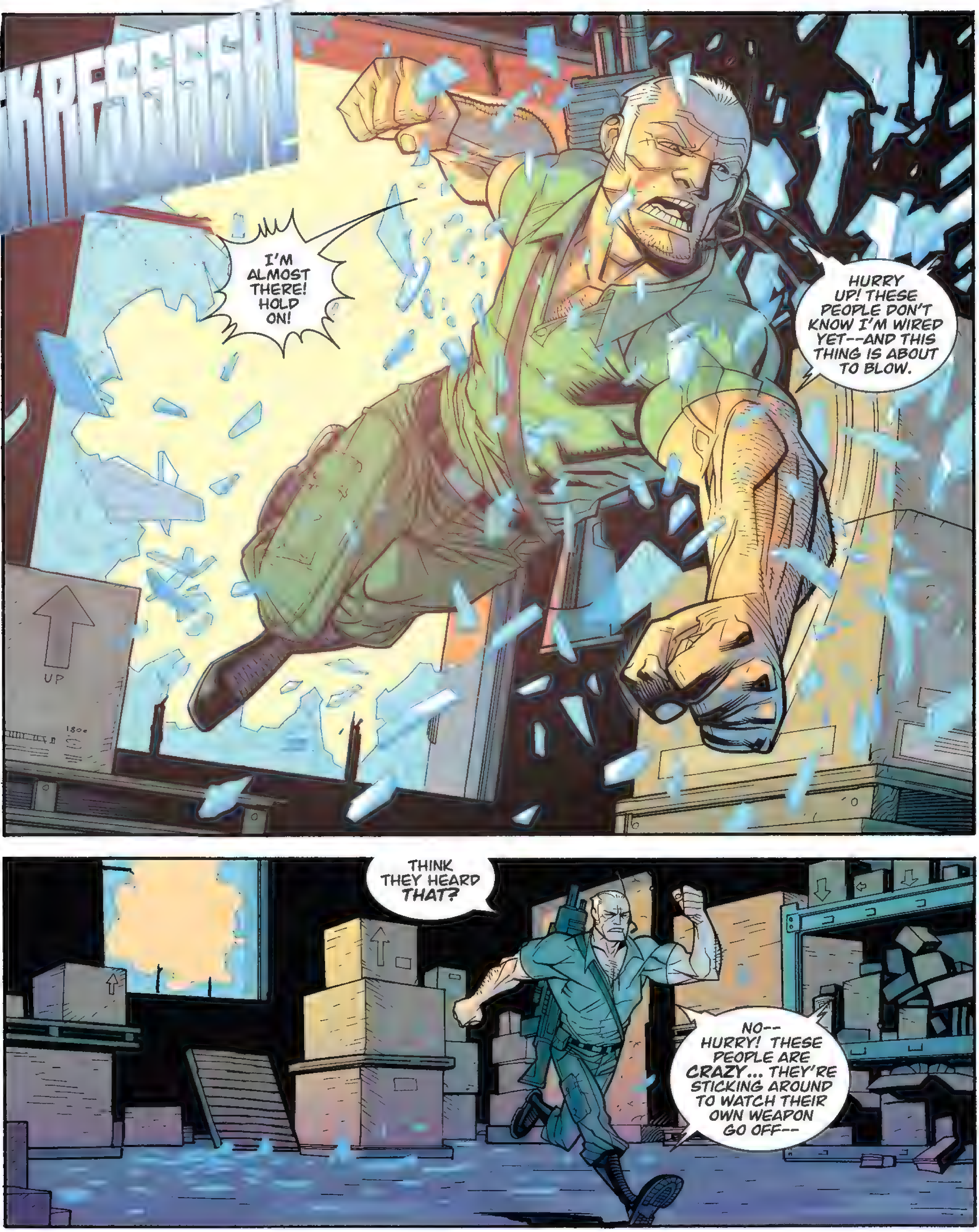
THE GRAYSON HOME.
MARK!
OH MY GOD--ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M FINE. IT LOOKS WORSE THAN IT ACTUALLY IS, I PROMISE.
EVE, WHY--? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SHE WAS **WORRIED** ABOUT YOU. I TOLD HER HOW TOUGH YOU WERE--BUT IT DIDN'T HELP.
I COULDN'T GO HOME WITHOUT KNOWING HOW THINGS WENT WITH CECIL... I WAS WORRIED YOU MIGHT GET FIRED OR SOMETHING BUT... WHAT HAPPENED?
NO FLYING IN THE HOUSE.
EVE TOLD ME WHAT WAS GOING ON--YOU CONFRONTED CECIL... AND HE--
DID **HE** DO THIS TO YOU?!
MAYBE WE SHOULD ALL SIT DOWN. I KNOW I'D LIKE TO.
CAN I HOVER?
NO.

EVE, WAIT--
OH, I WASN'T GOING TO GO WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE... I JUST THOUGHT YOU AND YOUR MOM WOULD WANT TO BE ALONE FOR A MINUTE... TO TALK ABOUT STUFF.
AND IT'S A PRETTY NIGHT.
YEAH.
YOUR MOM CALMED DOWN? I THOUGHT SHE WAS GOING TO DRIVE TO THE PENTAGON ON HER OWN.
P.S. YOUR BROTHER IS *AWESOME*. HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT?
HE TOTALLY IS, AND SHE'S FINE... NOW.
WHAT ABOUT ROBOT? WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO?
THEY'RE QUITTING. ROBOT AND MONSTER GIRL ARE... AND REX, HIM TOO FOR SURE. BULLETPROOF IS A MAYBE.
SHAPESMITH HAS SOME KIND OF HERO-WORSHIP THING GOING ON WITH IMMORTAL, SO IF HE DOESN'T QUIT, NEITHER WILL SHAPESMITH--AND IMMORTAL'S SO TIGHT WITH CECIL HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE REST. KATE, SAMSON... THEY'LL PROBABLY STAY.
AFTER ROBOT TOOK THAT DEVICE OUT OF MY EAR, HE MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT STILL HAVING THE TEEN TEAM'S OLD BASE--WHOEVER QUITS MIGHT START WORKING OUT OF THAT AGAIN.
SHOULD WE GO BACK INSIDE?
YEAH.
NO... WAIT.
I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.

OH, YEAH?
OKAY. WHEN THOSE THINGS WERE BEATING ON ME-- WHEN THE PULSE WAS GOING OFF IN MY HEAD NON-STOP... I COULDN'T THINK, I COULDN'T MOVE, I COULDN'T FIGHT BACK.
THERE WAS A MOMENT, A TIME WHEN I THOUGHT-- THIS IS IT. I'M GOING TO DIE... AND IN THAT MOMENT I KEPT GETTING FLASHES... LITTLE THOUGHTS, POPPING UP THROUGH THE DARKNESS.
THOUGHTS OF *YOU.*
I KNOW WHAT I SAID BEFORE... BUT THIS IS *REAL*-- WHAT I FEEL ABOUT YOU. I WAS GOING TO DIE AND ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS YOU.
THE WAY YOU SMELL, YOUR SMILE, THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE, THE WAY--

SO...
YOU AND ME?
YOU AND ME.
GROSS.

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF CECIL STEDMAN!

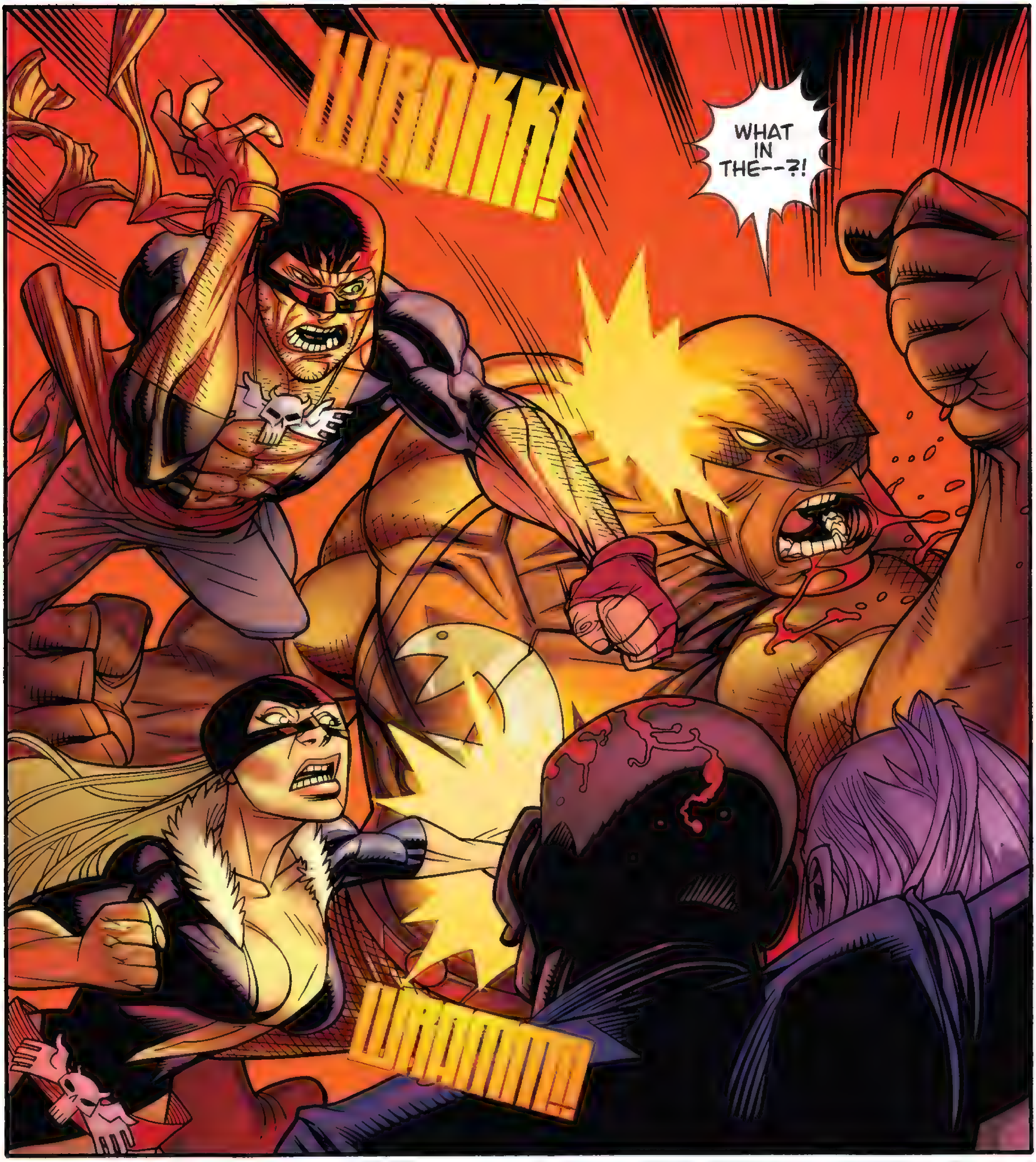

SKRSSSSH!
I'M ALMOST THERE! HOLD ON!
HURRY UP! THESE PEOPLE DON'T KNOW I'M WIRED YET--AND THIS THING IS ABOUT TO BLOW.
UP
THINK THEY HEARD *THAT?*
NO-- HURRY! THESE PEOPLE ARE *CRAZY*... THEY'RE STICKING AROUND TO WATCH THEIR OWN WEAPON GO OFF--

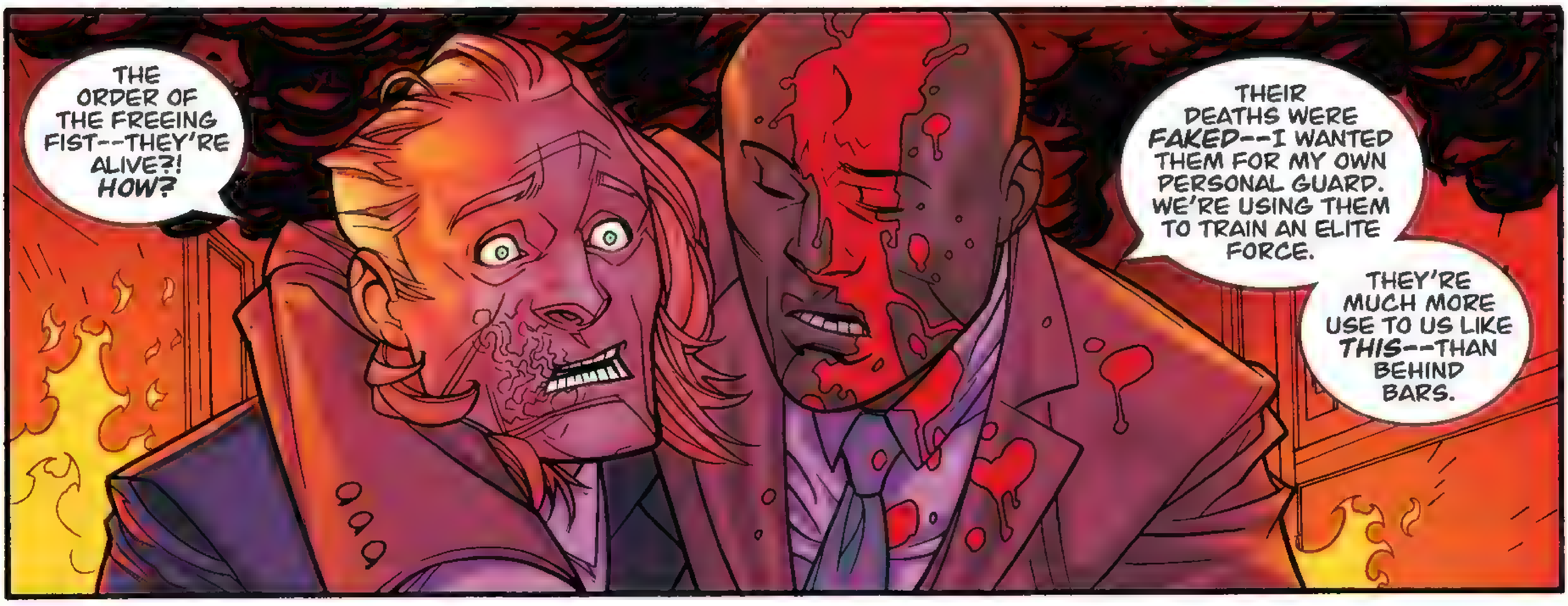
...AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THIS CRAP EVEN *IS*.
HEY-- WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?!
SILENCE HIM! I WON'T HAVE OUR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH SPOILED BY THE RAMBLING OF A NON-BELIEVER!
YES, DEAR.
WROK!
HANDS ON YOUR HEADS-- EVERYONE DOWN-- NOBODY MOVES, NOBODY GETS SHOT!
NO--THERE'S STILL TIME! DETONATE THE BOMB!
DETONATE IT *NOW!*
YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND!

THOOM!!
AT LAST--OUR MASTER PLAN IS COMPLETE! THIS IS THE EPICENTER OF THE *NEW WORLD ORDER!*
WE'LL BE THE FIRST TO DIE--AND WHEN CHEMICAL X EVAPORATES INTO GAS, THIS ENTIRE CITY WILL BECOME A BARREN WASTELAND!
OUR DEATHS WILL REPRESENT THE DELICATE BALANCE OF LIFE AND DEATH--IT WILL TEACH AN ENTIRE GENERATION TO LIVE LIFE TO ITS FULLEST!
WE'LL SPARK A *REVOLUTION!* OUR WORK OF ART WILL CHANGE THE WORLD!
STOW IT, CRAZIES!
HQ--LISTEN UP! WE'VE GOT A SITUATION HERE!
CHEMICAL X HAS BEEN RELEASED!
WE NEED TO QUARANTINE A THREE MILE RADIUS AROUND MY LOCATION, DOUBLE FAST!
AGENT STEDMAN IS DOWN! I REPEAT, AGENT STEDMAN IS DOWN! I NEED A MED-EVAC EQUIPPED WITH SAFE-SUITS ON SITE NOW!
CECIL! CECIL--CAN YOU HEAR ME?
GET IT-- OFF--

WEEKS LATER.
A SECRET GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY HOSPITAL.
THEY'RE LETTING YOU OUT *ALREADY?*
YEAH, I'M TIP TOP. SO YOU PICKED THE PERFECT TIME TO FINALLY COME AND VISIT.
YOU GET A FINAL REPORT YET? HOW MANY DID WE LOSE?
COUNTING THE TWO "ORDER OF THE FREEING FIST" NUT JOBS--WHICH I *DON'T*, WE LOST SEVENTEEN, TOTAL.
WE EVACUATED THE AREA IN RECORD TIME--BUT THERE WERE STILL PEOPLE WE COULDN'T FIND--UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.
PARDON ME FOR ASKING BUT...
WHAT'S WITH *THE SCAR?*
DID THEY MESS UP WHEN THEY WERE APPLYING THE ARTIFICIAL SKIN? WHAT GIVES?
THAT'S *NOT* ARTIFICIAL. THIS PATCH WAS THE ONLY PART OF MY SKIN THAT WAS EVEN REMOTELY SALVAGEABLE. THEY WANTED TO REPLACE IT--BUT I WOULDN'T LET THEM.
I WANT TO BE REMINDED OF THIS NIGHTMARE EVERY TIME I LOOK IN THE MIRROR... I MESSED UP, BRIT. I GOT PEOPLE *KILLED.*
I *WON'T* LET THIS HAPPEN AGAIN.

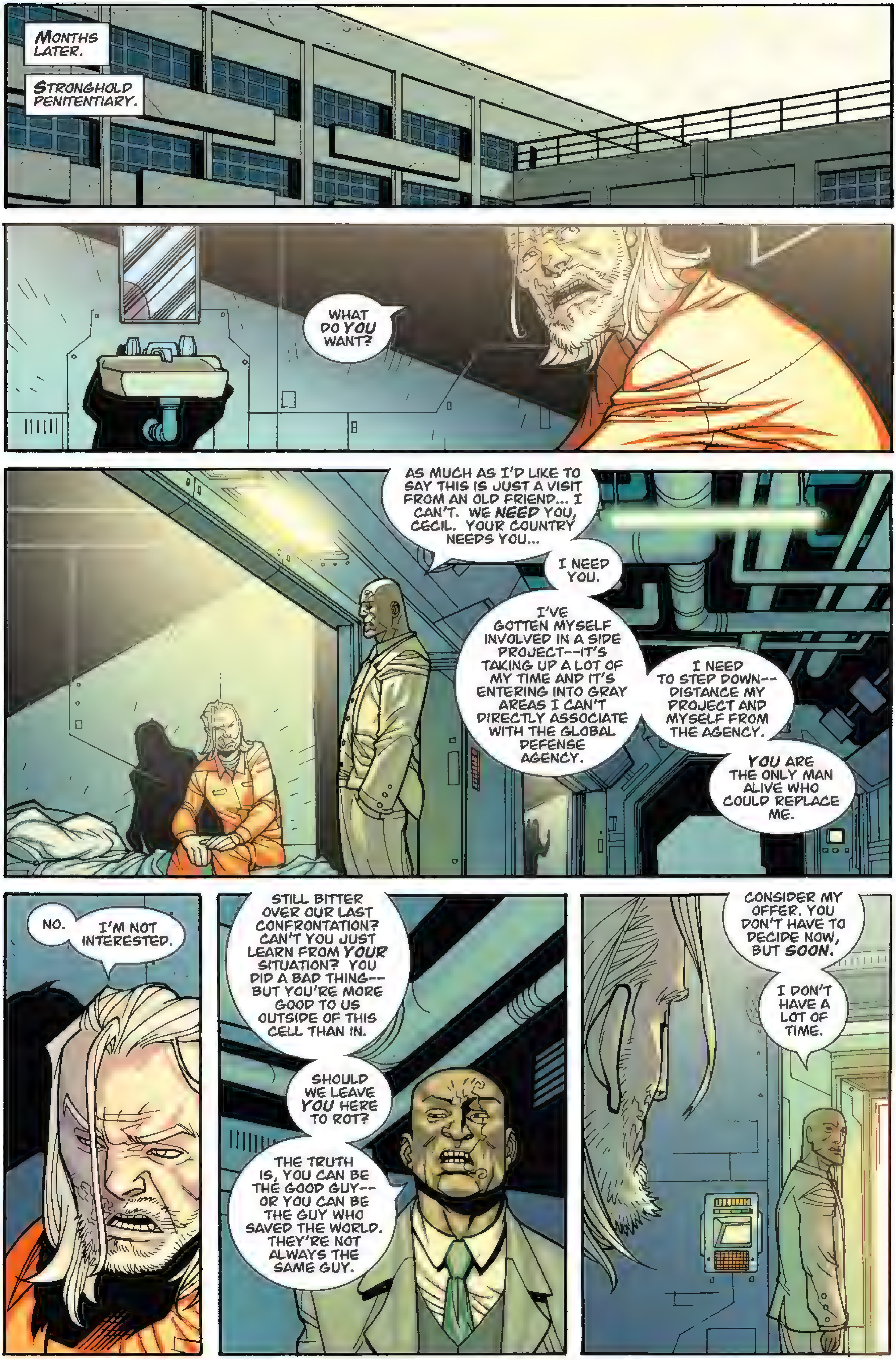
YEARS LATER.
THE LIZARD LEAGUE INVADES THE PENTAGON--BREACHING THE LOWER LEVELS, THE HQ OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
ITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I'VE GOT YOU, DIRECTOR RADCLIFFE. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS. THE BUNKER IS JUST AHEAD.
JUST GET YOURSELF OUT, STEDMAN--I'LL JUST GET YOU KILLED!
I'M NOT LEAVING YOU!
SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO THE MAN, TWERP!
STAY BACK!
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
PLEASE.

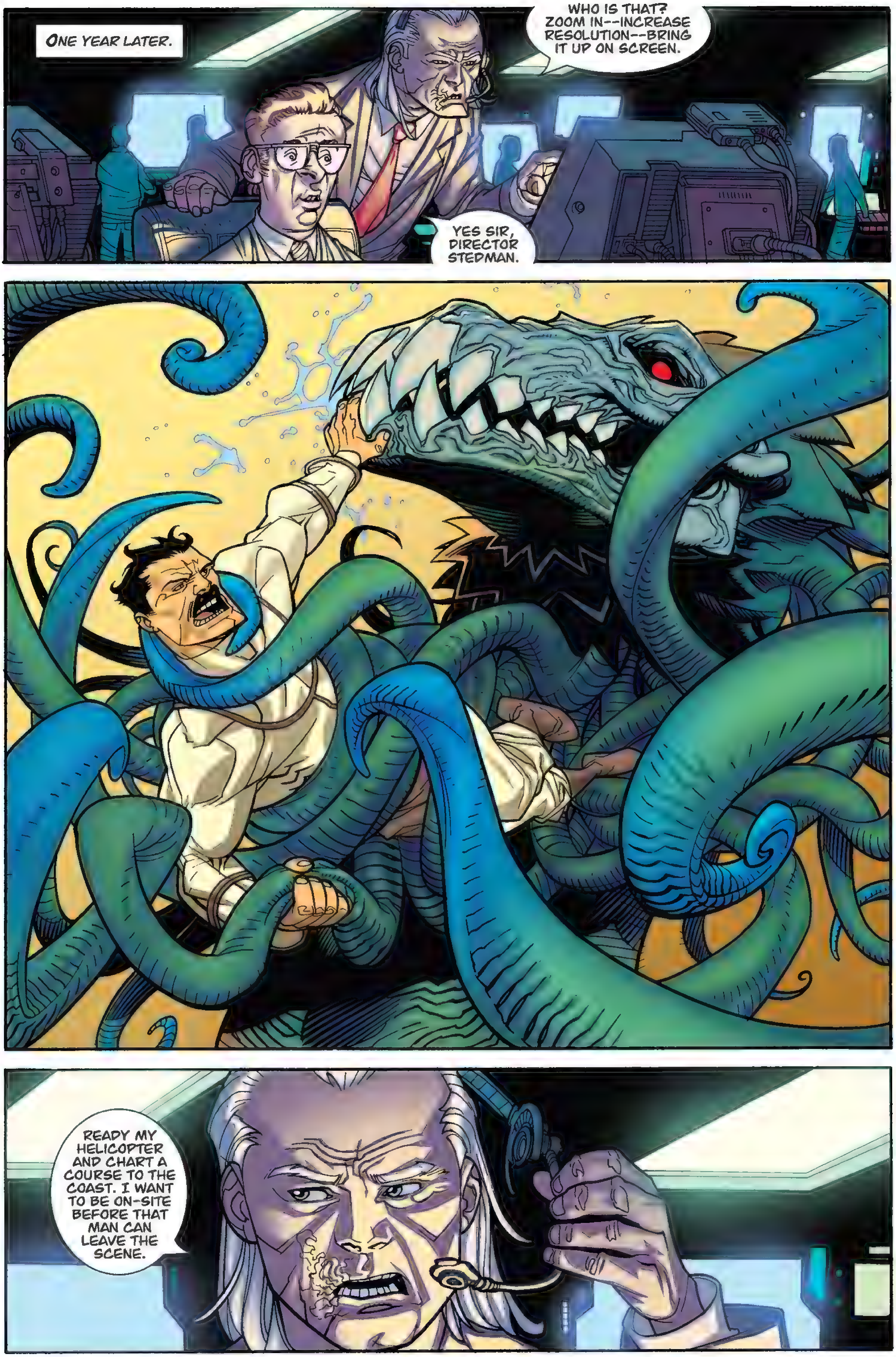

WROKK!
WHAT IN THE--?!
WHAMM!


THE ORDER OF THE FREEING FIST--THEY'RE ALIVE?! *HOW?*
THEIR DEATHS WERE *FAKED*--I WANTED THEM FOR MY OWN PERSONAL GUARD. WE'RE USING THEM TO TRAIN AN ELITE FORCE.
THEY'RE MUCH MORE USE TO US LIKE *THIS*--THAN BEHIND BARS.

JUST LOOK.
WRAMMM
THIS MAKES WHAT THEY DID *OKAY?!* WHAT THEY DID TO *ME?!* THEY KILLED FIFTEEN PEOPLE FOR GOD'S SAKE!
THEY GET A CLEAN SLATE?!
WE'D BE *DEAD* RIGHT NOW IF IT WASN'T FOR THEM.
WELL, THEN LET ME *THANK* THEM.
OH, MY GOD...

CECIL, OLD FRIEND... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?


MONTHS LATER.
STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO SAY THIS IS JUST A VISIT FROM AN OLD FRIEND... I CAN'T. WE NEED YOU, CECIL. YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU...
I NEED YOU.
I'VE GOTTEN MYSELF INVOLVED IN A SIDE PROJECT--IT'S TAKING UP A LOT OF MY TIME AND IT'S ENTERING INTO GRAY AREAS I CAN'T DIRECTLY ASSOCIATE WITH THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
I NEED TO STEP DOWN--DISTANCE MY PROJECT AND MYSELF FROM THE AGENCY.
YOU ARE THE ONLY MAN ALIVE WHO COULD REPLACE ME.
NO.
I'M NOT INTERESTED.
STILL BITTER OVER OUR LAST CONFRONTATION? CAN'T YOU JUST LEARN FROM YOUR SITUATION? YOU DID A BAD THING--BUT YOU'RE MORE GOOD TO US OUTSIDE OF THIS CELL THAN IN.
SHOULD WE LEAVE YOU HERE TO ROT?
THE TRUTH IS, YOU CAN BE THE GOOD GUY--OR YOU CAN BE THE GUY WHO SAVED THE WORLD. THEY'RE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME GUY.
CONSIDER MY OFFER. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DECIDE NOW, BUT SOON.
I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME.

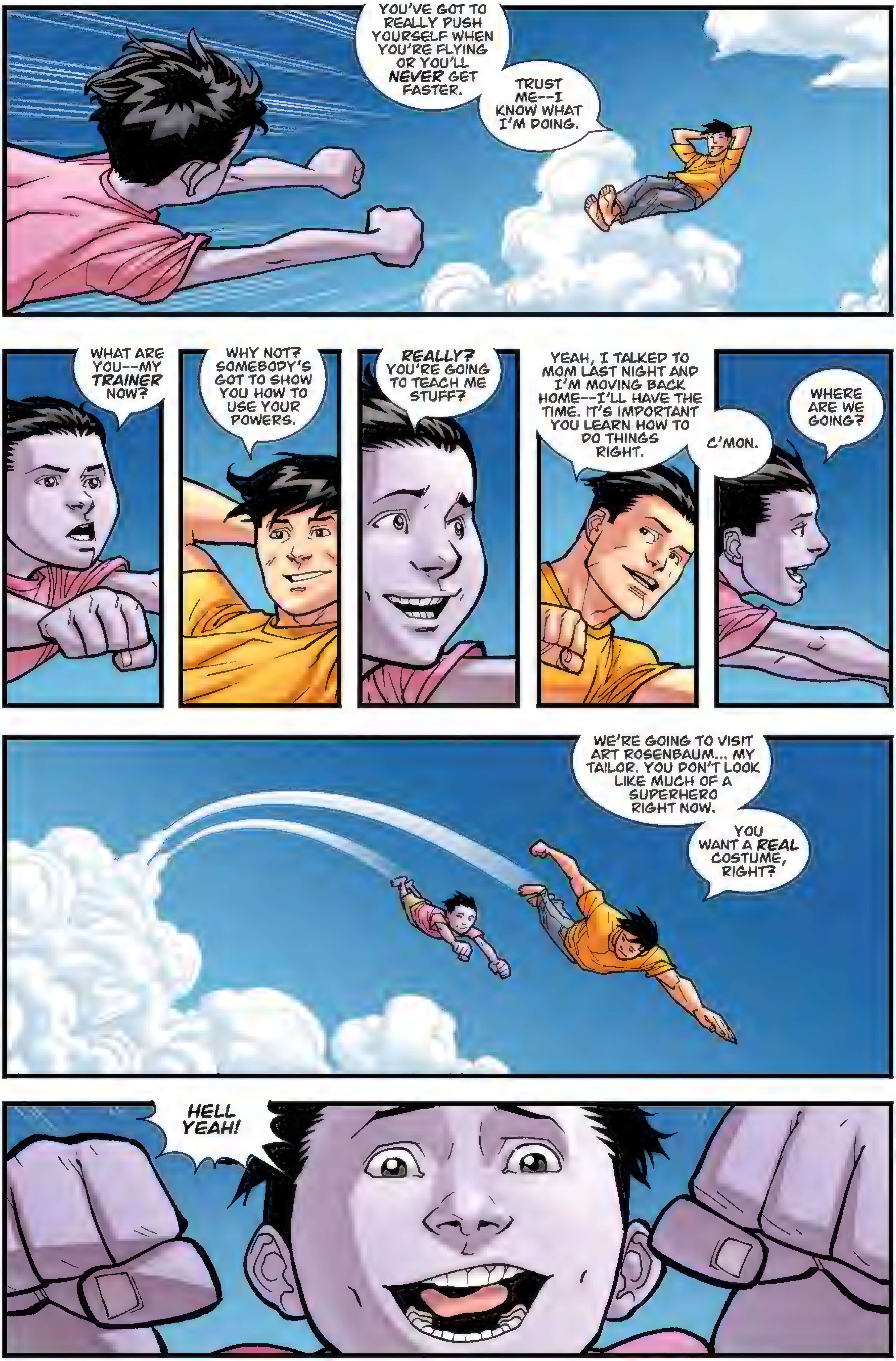

ONE YEAR LATER.
WHO IS THAT? ZOOM IN--INCREASE RESOLUTION--BRING IT UP ON SCREEN.
YES SIR, DIRECTOR STEDMAN.
READY MY HELICOPTER AND CHART A COURSE TO THE COAST. I WANT TO BE ON-SITE BEFORE THAT MAN CAN LEAVE THE SCENE.

HMN?
EXCUSE ME, SIR. COULD I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU?
WHO ARE YOU?
MY NAME IS CECIL STEDMAN, I'M THE HEAD OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY. YOU'VE DISPLAYED A RANGE OF ABILITIES HERE TODAY THAT MY AGENCY WOULD DEEM--
GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY? YOU REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF THIS PLANET?
YES. YES I DO.
THEN I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU AS WELL. I'VE COME HERE TO PROTECT THIS PLANET.
I WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN LEARNING THE CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIORS OF ITS PEOPLE.
THAT, I CAN DEFINITELY HELP YOU WITH--AS WELL AS YOUR MISSION IN GENERAL. YOU SEE, WE HAVE THE SAME JOB. COME BACK TO MY HEADQUARTERS WITH ME--IT'LL BE EASIER TO TALK THERE.
OKAY, BUT--
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. MY PEOPLE WILL CLEAN IT UP.

HOURS LATER.
WELL?
WE MONITORED EVERYTHING DURING YOUR CONVERSATION, HIS HEART RATE, RESPIRATION, BODY TEMPERATURE, PUPIL DILATION--EVERYTHING WE COULD USE TO DETERMINE THE TRUTHFULNESS OF HIS STATEMENTS.
AND?
HE'S *LYING.*
HE *IS* AN ALIEN, SO THINGS ARE TECHNICALLY INCONCLUSIVE, BUT OUR BEST PEOPLE ALL AGREE, HIS STORY, OF VILTRUM AND THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE--AND HIS MISSION TO AID THIS PLANET...
ALL FALSE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO *DO?*
NOTHING.
I DON'T KNOW WHY HE'D LIE OR WHAT HE COULD POSSIBLY HAVE TO HIDE--AND I DON'T *CARE.* THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS, HE CAN HELP THIS PLANET IN A GREAT MANY WAYS--AND I AIM TO *USE* THAT HELP... NO MATTER WHAT HIS TRUE MOTIVES MIGHT BE.
BUT, SIR--
I'D MAKE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF IF IT MEANT THE SAFETY OF THIS PLANET AND THE PEOPLE ON IT.
THAT'S MY *JOB.*
THAT'S WHAT I *DO.*

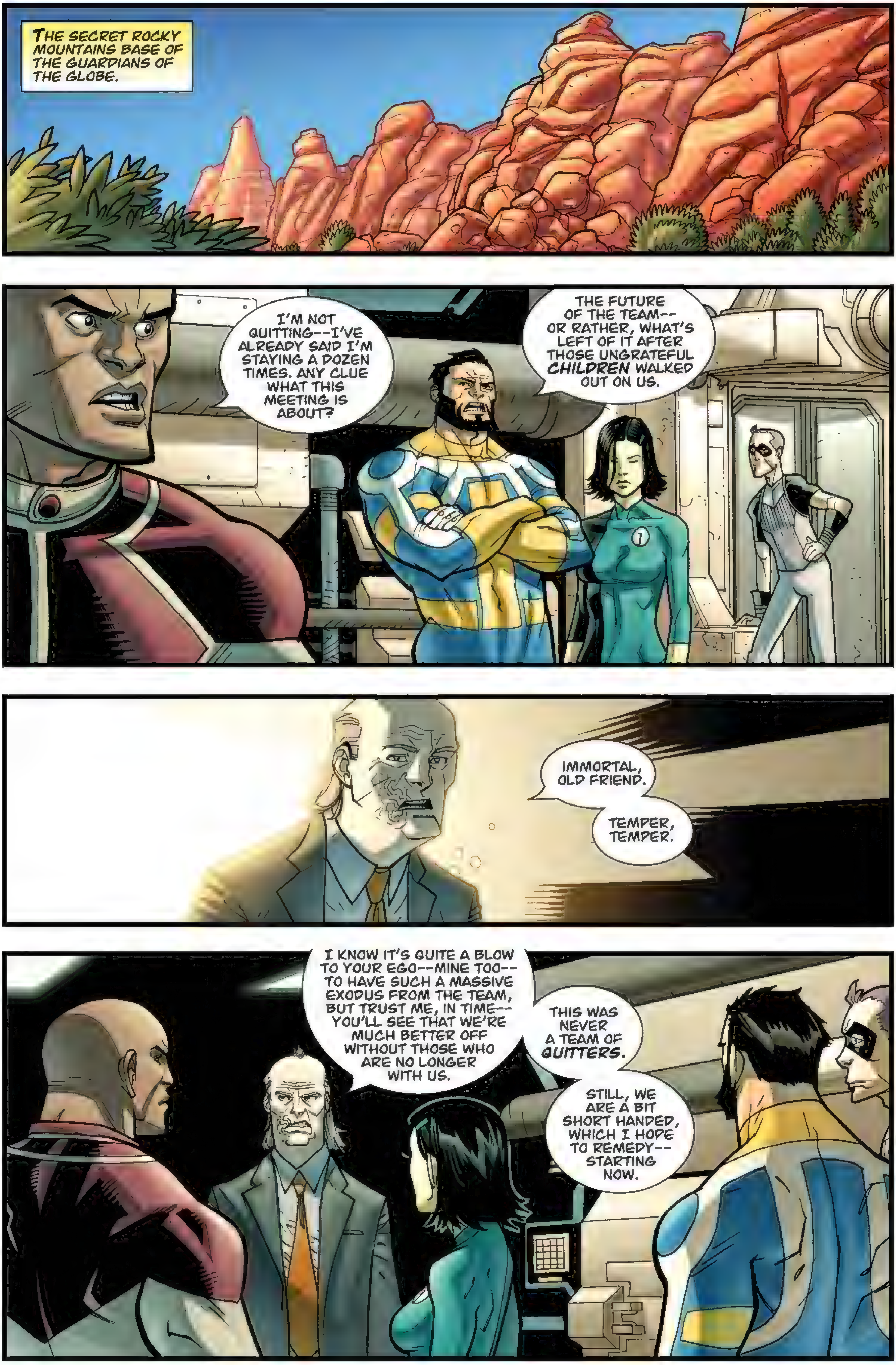
CHAPTER 51

HEY!
SLOW DOWN!


YOU'VE GOT TO REALLY PUSH YOURSELF WHEN YOU'RE FLYING OR YOU'LL **NEVER** GET FASTER.
TRUST ME--I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
WHAT ARE YOU--MY ***TRAINER*** NOW?
WHY NOT? SOMEBODY'S GOT TO SHOW YOU HOW TO USE YOUR POWERS.
REALLY? YOU'RE GOING TO TEACH ME STUFF?
YEAH, I TALKED TO MOM LAST NIGHT AND I'M MOVING BACK HOME--I'LL HAVE THE TIME. IT'S IMPORTANT YOU LEARN HOW TO DO THINGS RIGHT.
C'MON.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
WE'RE GOING TO VISIT ART ROSENBAUM... MY TAILOR. YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE MUCH OF A SUPERHERO RIGHT NOW.
YOU WANT A **REAL** COSTUME, RIGHT?
HELL YEAH!

THE FORMER BASE OF THE TEEN TEAM.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO USE THIS PLACE AGAIN.
ARE YOU KIDDING? THIS PLACE IS SWEET.
I DON'T SEE ANY REASON NOT TO USE IT--IT'S COMPLETELY ADEQUATE FOR OUR PURPOSES.
IT IS A COOL BASE, JUST SEEMS LIKE A BIT OF A STEP DOWN, THAT'S ALL. ARE YOU GOING TO GO BY THE TEEN TEAM AGAIN?
I MEAN, CECIL STILL HAS A GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TEAM... RIGHT?
YEAH, I EXPECTED MORE FROM KATE... AND I CAN'T BELIEVE SHAPESMITH STAYED TOO--AFTER SEEING WHAT CECIL DID TO INVINCIBLE.
WE'RE STILL UNDECIDED ON A NEW NAME. I'VE GOT SOME IDEAS... BUT NOBODY LIKES THEM.
WE SURE AS HELL AIN'T GOING BY "THE TEEN TEAM." AT LEAST, NOT IF YOU WANT ME ON THE TEAM.
I BARELY REMEMBER BEING A TEENAGER--AND JUST BEING AROUND YOU KIDS MAKES ME FEEL OLD ENOUGH AS IT IS.

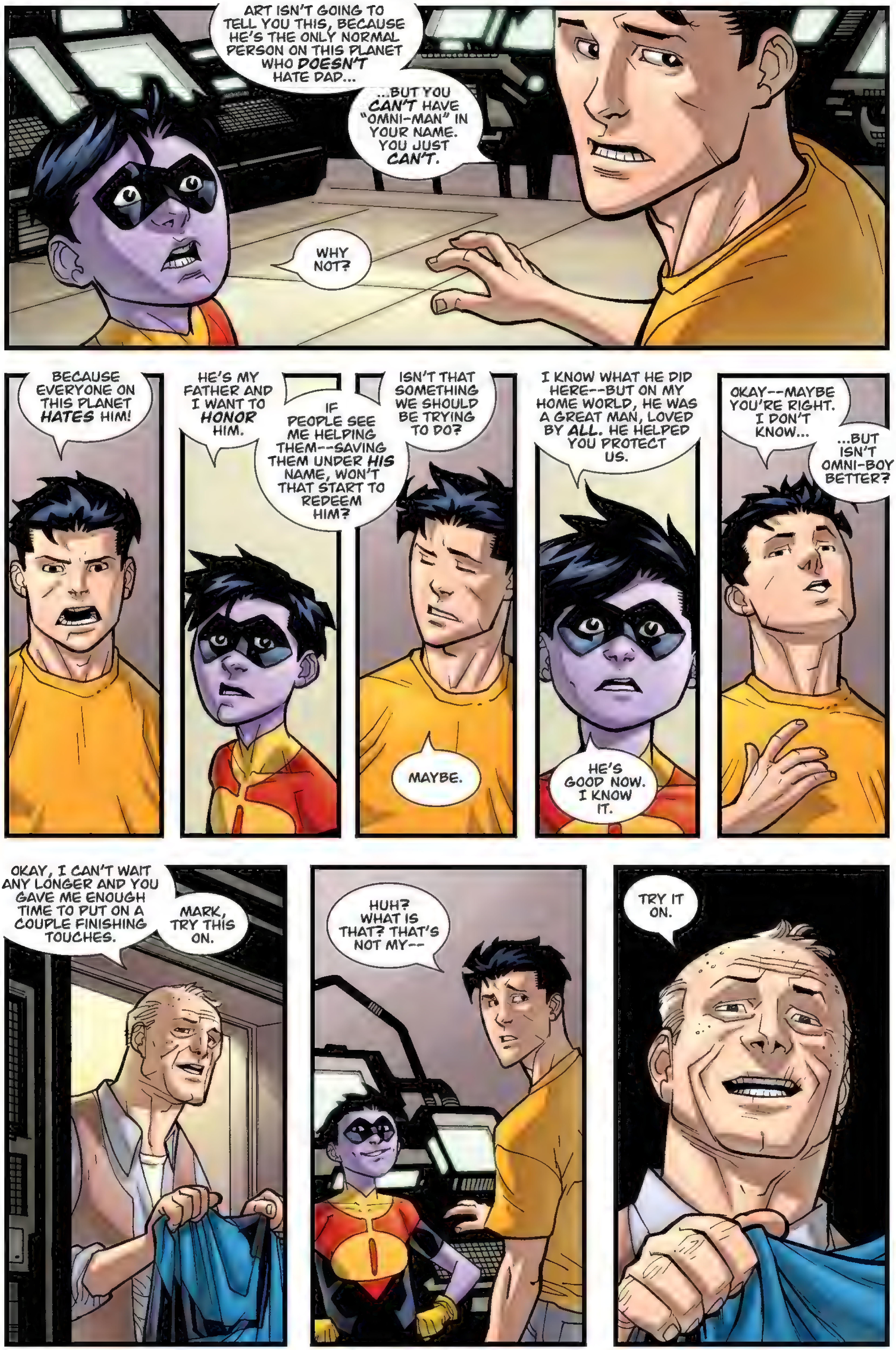
WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE? I THOUGHT YOU LIVED IN AFRICA SOMEWHERE?
VISITING, JERK FACE--BUT I AM MOVING BACK HERE. I'M NOT GIVING UP ON THE CONTINENT--BUT I CAN'T FOCUS ON IT ANYMORE.
THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH TO DO--BY THE TIME I'M FINISHED FIXING AN AREA--IT'S ALREADY STARTING TO FALL APART. I CAN'T DO IT ALL ON MY OWN.
I JUST DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO MAKE **LASTING** CHANGE.
INVINCIBLE SAID HE'D HELP ME OUT BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WOULD--
INVINCIBLE, HUH?
YEAH, WE'RE... UH... DATING NOW, I GUESS. WHICH IS ANOTHER REASON I'M MOVING BACK.
WOW, THAT'S GREAT NEWS, EVE. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU. YOU TWO WILL MAKE A GREAT COUPLE.
UH... WHEN DID YOU STOP BEING A TOTAL JERK?

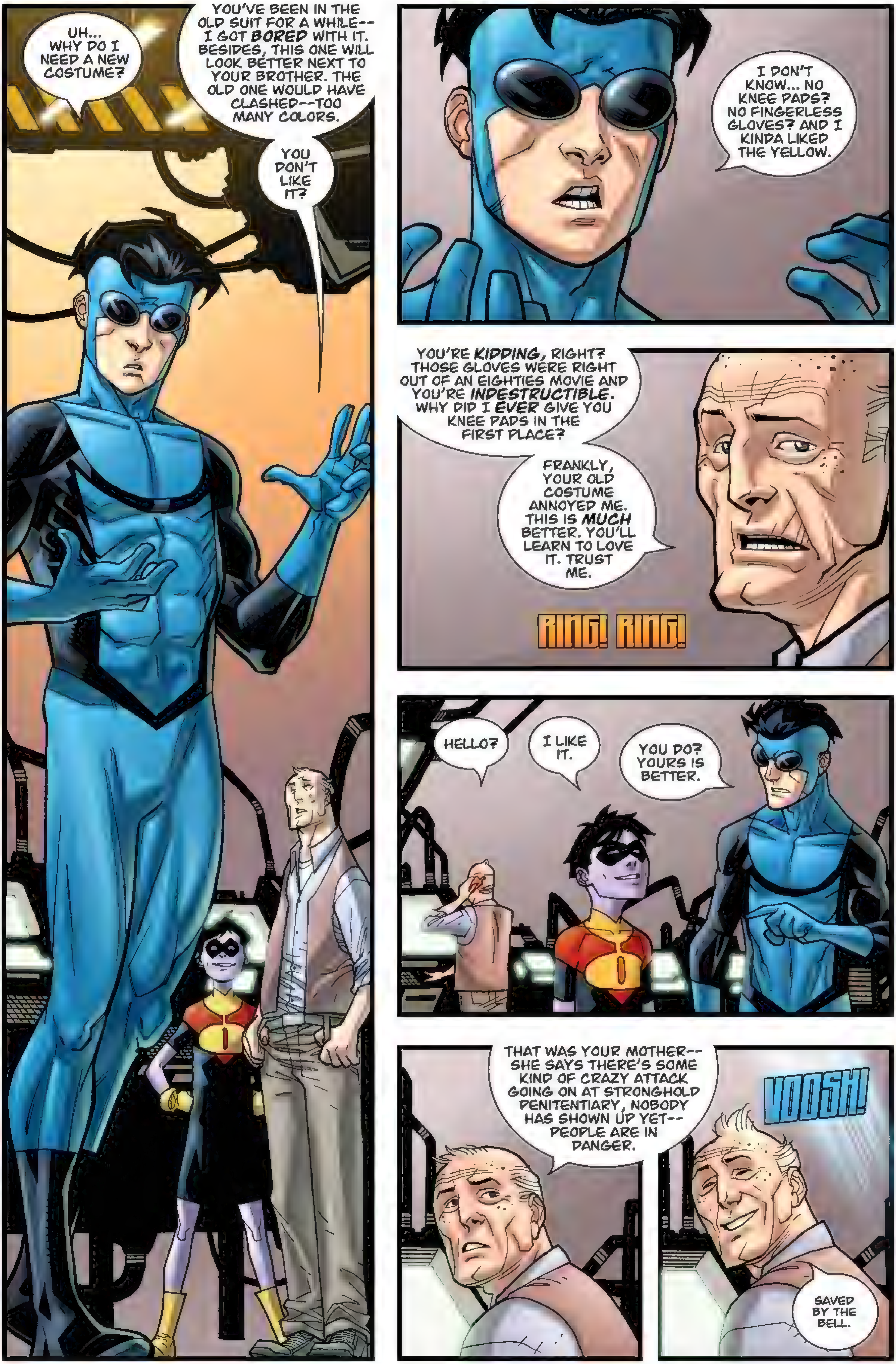

THE SECRET ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I'M NOT QUITTING--I'VE ALREADY SAID I'M STAYING A DOZEN TIMES. ANY CLUE WHAT THIS MEETING IS ABOUT?
THE FUTURE OF THE TEAM-- OR RATHER, WHAT'S LEFT OF IT AFTER THOSE UNGRATEFUL **CHILDREN** WALKED OUT ON US.
IMMORTAL, OLD FRIEND.
TEMPER, TEMPER.
I KNOW IT'S QUITE A BLOW TO YOUR EGO--MINE TOO-- TO HAVE SUCH A MASSIVE EXODUS FROM THE TEAM, BUT TRUST ME, IN TIME-- YOU'LL SEE THAT WE'RE MUCH BETTER OFF WITHOUT THOSE WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US.
THIS WAS NEVER A TEAM OF **QUITTERS.**
STILL, WE ARE A BIT SHORT HANDED, WHICH I HOPE TO REMEDY-- STARTING NOW.

LET'S ALL TAKE A SECOND TO WELCOME **DARKWING**, THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I'M HAPPY TO SERVE.
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU ON BOARD, KID.
IT'S AN HONOR TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ALONGSIDE YOU, SIR. I ONLY HOPE I CAN BE AS USEFUL AS MY MENTOR WAS, WHEN HE WAS ON THIS TEAM.
IF YOUR PERFORMANCE AGAINST DOC SEISMIC WAS ANY INDICATION--YOU'LL SURPASS THE ORIGINAL DARKWING IN NO TIME.
WHO IS HE AGAIN?
≈SIGH.≈

THE SKYSCRAPER HEADQUARTERS OF TITAN.
THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY.
REGARDLESS, I FEEL THE NEED TO REMIND YOU THAT THE CLOCK IS TICKING. MR. LIU IS A HIGH-RANKING AND VERY POWERFUL MEMBER OF THE ORDER. HIS AGENT MULTI-PAUL IS STILL IMPRISONED--DESPITE HIS REQUEST FOR YOU TO REMEDY THAT.
YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORDER IS NOT SET IN STONE--IT WOULD NOT TAKE MUCH FOR THEM TO ASK FOR YOUR REMOVAL AND--
DO NOT ASSUME I'M AS BLIND AS MACHINE HEAD WAS TO YOUR TREACHEROUS WAYS.
I WON'T BE SO EASILY OVERTAKEN.
KROOOM!!
U-- UNDERSTOOD.
I THOUGHT SO.

ART ROSENBAUM'S TAILOR SHOP.
TAILOR SHOPPE
WELL, I KNOW NOBODY ASKED *ME*, AND I COULD BE A LITTLE BIASED--BUT I THINK IT LOOKS *GREAT*.
WELL, OLIVER--WHAT DO YOU THINK?
HELL YEAH! THIS COSTUME *ROCKS!*
KID OMNI-MAN IS *HERE*, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN--AND HE'S *AWESOME*.
I LOVE IT!
KID OMNI-MAN? THIS IS ALL A SURPRISE TO ME. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU AND ART WERE ALREADY DISCUSSING NAMES.
YOU REALLY WANT TO GO BY *KID OMNI-MAN?*
DON'T LOOK AT ME. I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING BY OMNI-BOY... THIS KID OMNI-MAN STUFF IS NEW TO ME.
OF COURSE, THE COSTUME WORKS EITHER WAY.
YEAH...
ART, COULD YOU GIVE US A MINUTE? I THINK OLIVER AND I NEED TO TALK.
SURE, NO PROBLEM.
WHAT?


ART ISN'T GOING TO TELL YOU THIS, BECAUSE HE'S THE ONLY NORMAL PERSON ON THIS PLANET WHO **DOESN'T** HATE DAD...
...BUT YOU **CAN'T** HAVE "OMNI-MAN" IN YOUR NAME. YOU JUST **CAN'T**.
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE EVERYONE ON THIS PLANET **HATES** HIM!
HE'S MY FATHER AND I WANT TO **HONOR** HIM.
IF PEOPLE SEE ME HELPING THEM--SAVING THEM UNDER **HIS** NAME, WON'T THAT START TO REDEEM HIM?
ISN'T THAT SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE TRYING TO DO?
MAYBE.
I KNOW WHAT HE DID HERE--BUT ON MY HOME WORLD, HE WAS A GREAT MAN, LOVED BY **ALL**. HE HELPED YOU PROTECT US.
HE'S GOOD NOW. I KNOW IT.
OKAY--MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. I DON'T KNOW...
...BUT ISN'T OMNI-BOY BETTER?
OKAY, I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER AND YOU GAVE ME ENOUGH TIME TO PUT ON A COUPLE FINISHING TOUCHES.
MARK, TRY THIS ON.
HUH? WHAT IS THAT? THAT'S NOT MY--
TRY IT ON.

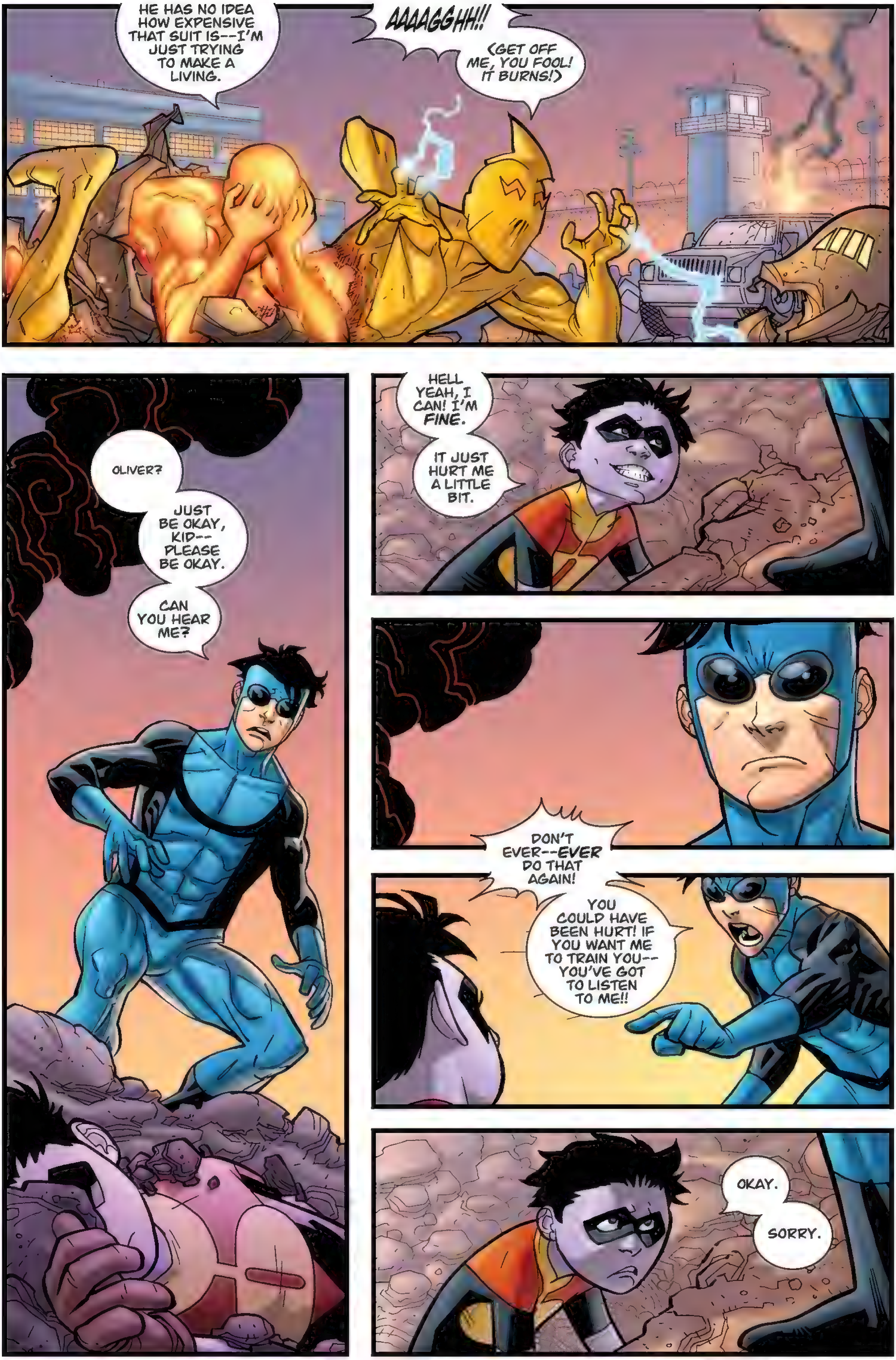

UH... WHY DO I NEED A NEW COSTUME?
YOU'VE BEEN IN THE OLD SUIT FOR A WHILE-- I GOT **BORED** WITH IT. BESIDES, THIS ONE WILL LOOK BETTER NEXT TO YOUR BROTHER. THE OLD ONE WOULD HAVE CLASHED--TOO MANY COLORS.
YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
I DON'T KNOW... NO KNEE PADS? NO FINGERLESS GLOVES? AND I KINDA LIKED THE YELLOW.
YOU'RE **KIDDING**, RIGHT? THOSE GLOVES WERE RIGHT OUT OF AN EIGHTIES MOVIE AND YOU'RE **INDESTRUCTIBLE**. WHY DID I **EVER** GIVE YOU KNEE PADS IN THE FIRST PLACE?
FRANKLY, YOUR OLD COSTUME ANNOYED ME. THIS IS **MUCH** BETTER. YOU'LL LEARN TO LOVE IT. TRUST ME.
RING! RING!
HELLO?
I LIKE IT.
YOU DO? YOURS IS BETTER.
THAT WAS YOUR MOTHER-- SHE SAYS THERE'S SOME KIND OF CRAZY ATTACK GOING ON AT STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY, NOBODY HAS SHOWN UP YET-- PEOPLE ARE IN DANGER.
VOOSH!
SAVED BY THE BELL.

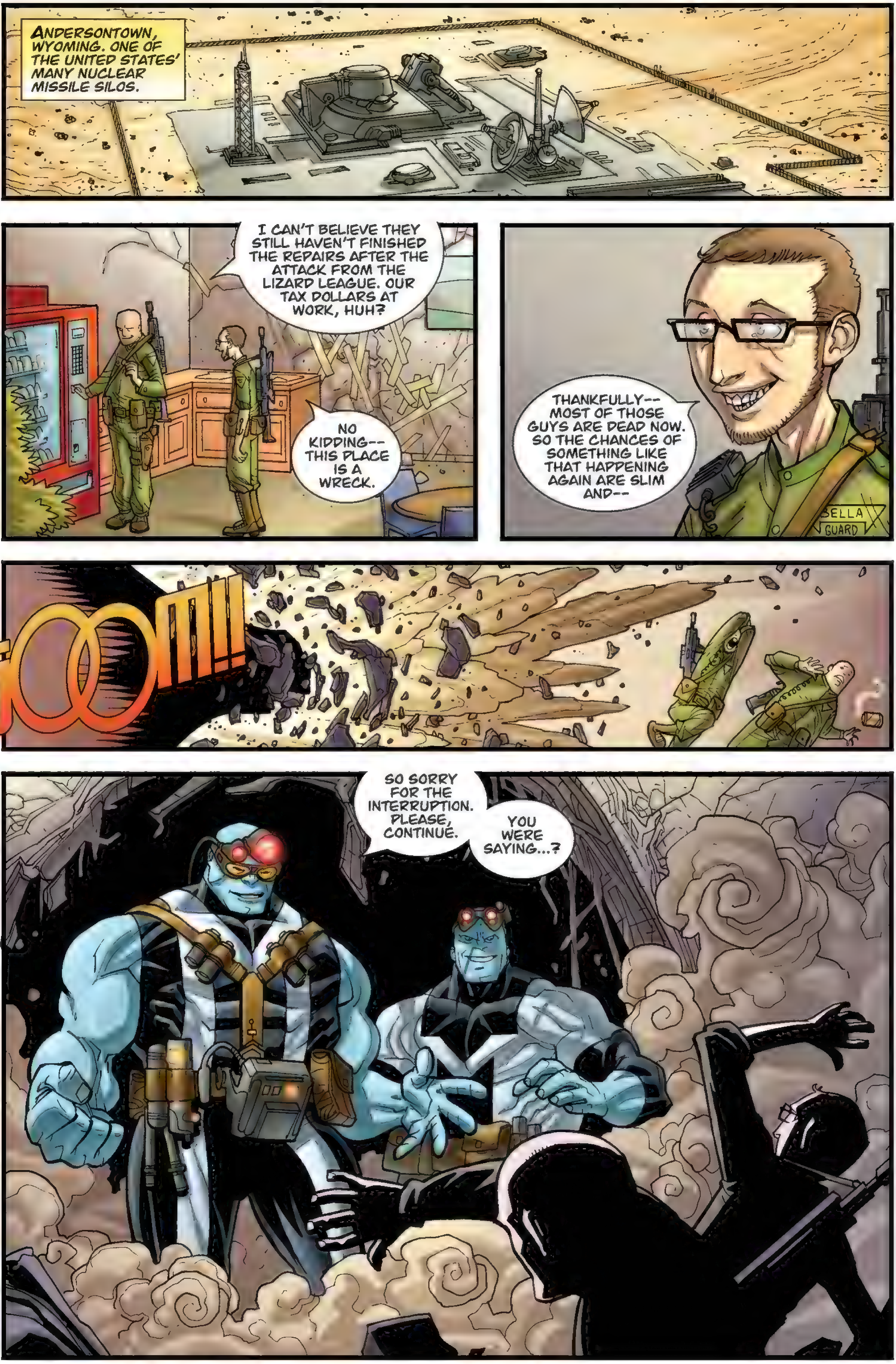
THE FAMILY HOME OF SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.
SO THAT'S IT? DAD'S NOT EVEN GOING TO LISTEN TO ME?
I'M SORRY, DEAR. HE'S JUST STILL MAD OVER THAT NOTE. YOU DID MOVE ALL THE WAY AROUND THE WORLD AND TOLD US IN A *NOTE*.
IT WAS A BIT INCONSIDERATE.
SORRY IF I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE GETTING YELLED AT FOR SOMETHING I KNEW WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
I SUPPOSE IT'S *MY FAULT* HE'S UNREASONABLE.
WELL, SAMANTHA, YOU DO PUT HIM UNDER A LOT OF STRESS AND--
OH MY GOD--ARE YOU **KIDDING** ME?! HE'S A--!!
NEVERMIND.
JUST... CAN I MOVE BACK IN OR NOT?
OF COURSE YOU CAN, DEAR.

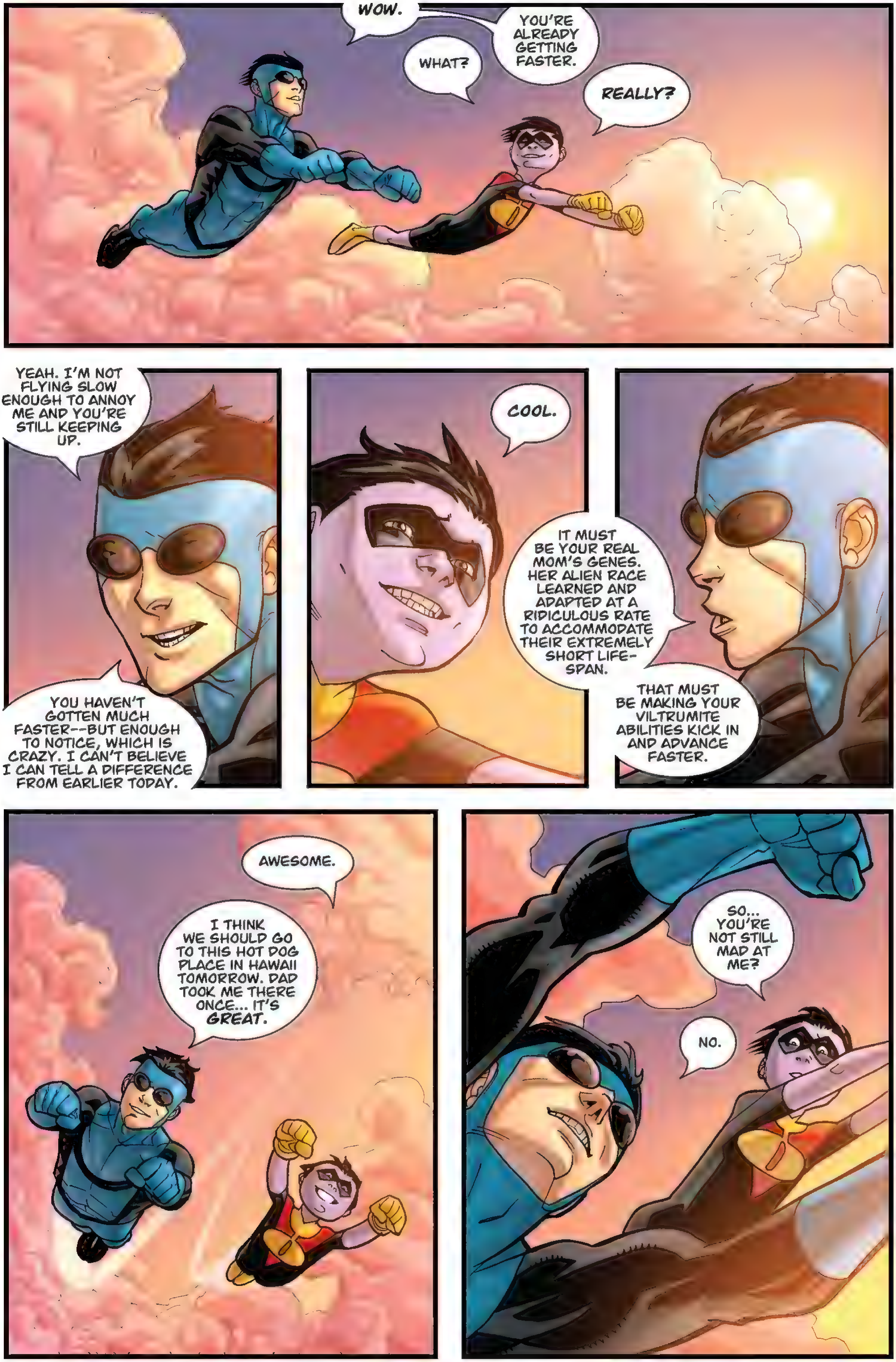
STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
BZZKT!
FWOOSH!
(LOOK AT THEM--THEY TREMBLE AT OUR MIGHT!)
WHAT?
REMEMBER TO CALL ME "INVINCIBLE" AND I'LL CALL YOU "OMNI-BOY." NO REAL NAMES.
KID OMNI-MAN.
WHATEVER. JUST HANG BACK A LITTLE AND BE CAREFUL. I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING HURT.
YEAH-- I'LL HANG BACK.
SURE.

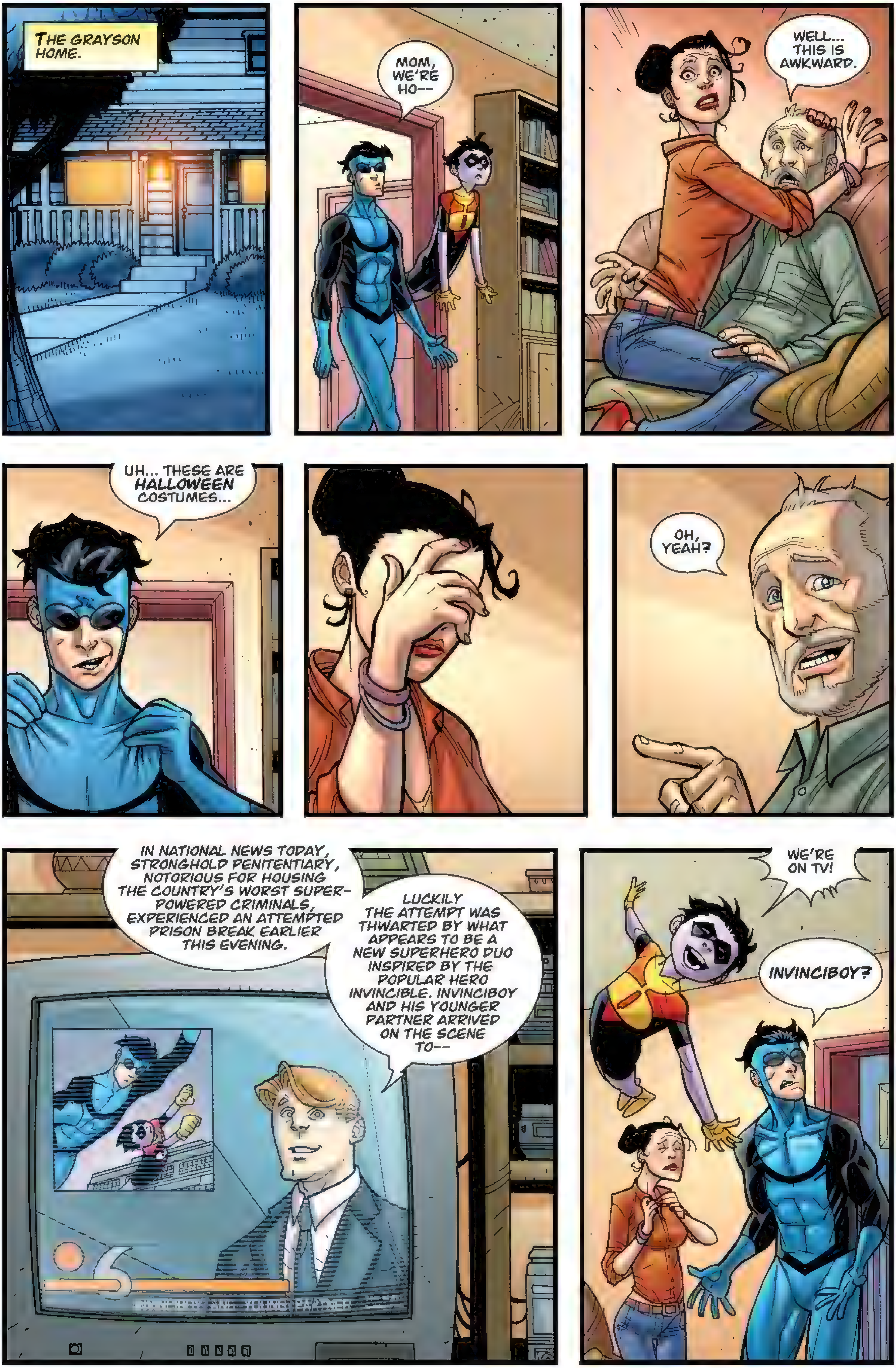
WILL DO!
OLIV-- OMNI-B-- KID-OM-- JUST STOP!!
LOCK DOWN! LOCK DOWN!
FINALLY-- I THOUGHT THE ORDER WAS GOING TO LET ME ROT IN HERE FOREVER.
<WHY ARE YOU WASTING YOUR TIME OUT HERE? OUR ORDERS ARE TO FREE ONE PRISONER--WE SHOULD BE FIGHTING OUR WAY INSIDE! I NEED YOU TO COVER ME!>
FWOOSH!
ARE YOU SPEAKING RUSSIAN AGAIN? I CAN'T UNDERSTAND A DAMN WORD YOU'RE SAYING!
IS RAINING BOY!
NOW YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE! WHY COULDN'T TITAN HAVE JUST SENT MAGNATTACK TO HELP ME?!
KID OMNI-MAN IS HERE TO KICK YOUR--!
YEEAAGHH!
BZZZAKKTT!
<HEAD STRONG AMERICAN BOY MUST DIE!>
DOOM!!

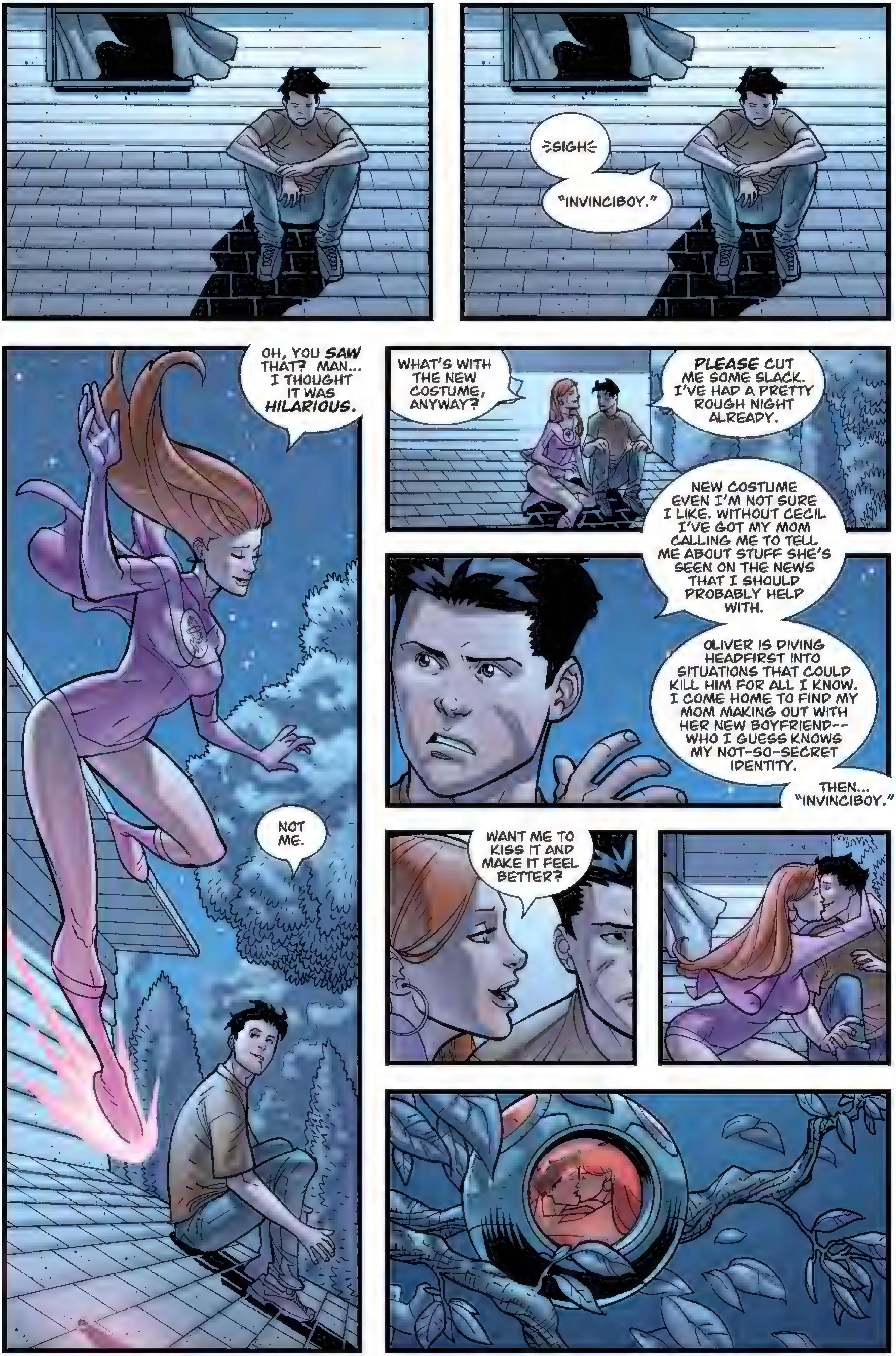
KID OMNI-MAN!
NO!
NO, MAN! C'MON-- I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO REBUILD THIS SUIT AGA--!
KA-THOOM!


HE HAS NO IDEA HOW EXPENSIVE THAT SUIT IS--I'M JUST TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING.
AAAAGGHH!!
<GET OFF ME, YOU FOOL! IT BURNS!>
OLIVER?
JUST BE OKAY, KID--PLEASE BE OKAY.
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
HELL YEAH, I CAN! I'M FINE.
IT JUST HURT ME A LITTLE BIT.
DON'T EVER--EVER DO THAT AGAIN!
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN HURT! IF YOU WANT ME TO TRAIN YOU--YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME!!
OKAY.
SORRY.


ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING. ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY STILL HAVEN'T FINISHED THE REPAIRS AFTER THE ATTACK FROM THE LIZARD LEAGUE. OUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK, HUH?
NO KIDDING-- THIS PLACE IS A WRECK.
THANKFULLY-- MOST OF THOSE GUYS ARE DEAD NOW. SO THE CHANCES OF SOMETHING LIKE THAT HAPPENING AGAIN ARE SLIM AND--
BELLA GUARD
GOOOM!!!
SO SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION. PLEASE, CONTINUE.
YOU WERE SAYING...?


WOW.
WHAT?
YOU'RE ALREADY GETTING FASTER.
REALLY?
YEAH. I'M NOT FLYING SLOW ENOUGH TO ANNOY ME AND YOU'RE STILL KEEPING UP.
YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN MUCH FASTER--BUT ENOUGH TO NOTICE, WHICH IS CRAZY. I CAN'T BELIEVE I CAN TELL A DIFFERENCE FROM EARLIER TODAY.
COOL.
IT MUST BE YOUR REAL MOM'S GENES. HER ALIEN RACE LEARNED AND ADAPTED AT A RIDICULOUS RATE TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR EXTREMELY SHORT LIFE-SPAN.
THAT MUST BE MAKING YOUR VILTRUMITE ABILITIES KICK IN AND ADVANCE FASTER.
AWESOME.
I THINK WE SHOULD GO TO THIS HOT DOG PLACE IN HAWAII TOMORROW. DAD TOOK ME THERE ONCE... IT'S **GREAT**.
SO... YOU'RE NOT STILL MAD AT ME?
NO.


THE GRAYSON HOME.
MOM, WE'RE HO--
WELL... THIS IS AWKWARD.
UH... THESE ARE HALLOWEEN COSTUMES...
OH, YEAH?
IN NATIONAL NEWS TODAY, STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY, NOTORIOUS FOR HOUSING THE COUNTRY'S WORST SUPER-POWERED CRIMINALS, EXPERIENCED AN ATTEMPTED PRISON BREAK EARLIER THIS EVENING.
LUCKILY THE ATTEMPT WAS THWARTED BY WHAT APPEARS TO BE A NEW SUPERHERO DUO INSPIRED BY THE POPULAR HERO INVINCIBLE. INVINCIBOY AND HIS YOUNGER PARTNER ARRIVED ON THE SCENE TO--
WE'RE ON TV!
INVINCIBOY?


≈SIGH≈
"INVINCIBOY."
OH, YOU **SAW** THAT? MAN... I THOUGHT IT WAS ***HILARIOUS.***
NOT ME.
WHAT'S WITH THE NEW COSTUME, ANYWAY?
PLEASE CUT ME SOME SLACK. I'VE HAD A PRETTY ROUGH NIGHT ALREADY.
NEW COSTUME EVEN I'M NOT SURE I LIKE. WITHOUT CECIL I'VE GOT MY MOM CALLING ME TO TELL ME ABOUT STUFF SHE'S SEEN ON THE NEWS THAT I SHOULD PROBABLY HELP WITH.
OLIVER IS DIVING HEADFIRST INTO SITUATIONS THAT COULD KILL HIM FOR ALL I KNOW. I COME HOME TO FIND MY MOM MAKING OUT WITH HER NEW BOYFRIEND-- WHO I GUESS KNOWS MY NOT-SO-SECRET IDENTITY.
THEN... "INVINCIBOY."
WANT ME TO KISS IT AND MAKE IT FEEL BETTER?

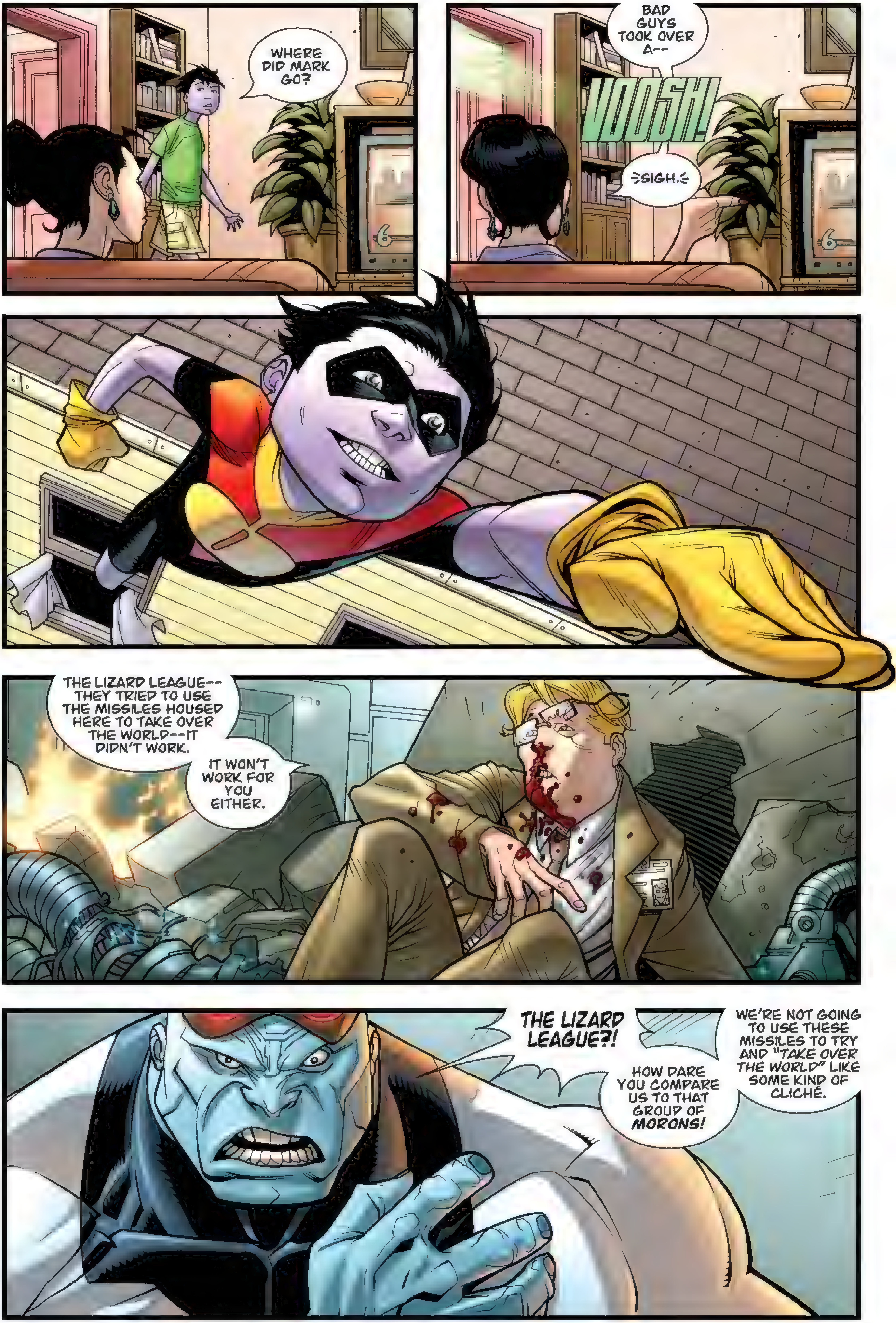
YOUNG LOVE...
...HOW *INTERESTING.*

CHAPTER 52

MARK! GET DOWN HERE, *NOW!*
WHAT IS IT? IS EVERYTHING OKAY?
LOOK.
...THE FINAL TRANSMISSION FROM INSIDE THE MISSILE SILO OUR VIEWERS WILL REMEMBER FROM THE LIZARD LEAGUE INCIDENT LAST MONTH.
THE UNKNOWN INTRUDERS ARE BELIEVED TO BE IN CONTROL OF THE FACILITY NOW.
AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE!
NUCLEAR STOCKPILES NOW IN THE HANDS OF MADMEN!
THE MAULER TWINS-- *CRAP.* CALL EVE-- TELL HER I'LL BE LATE--AND THAT I *DON'T* NEED HELP. I'LL BE DONE BY THE TIME SHE COULD FLY OVER THERE.
OKAY, I'LL--
VOOSH!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WORKED--
SO WELL. YOU CUT ME OFF. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WORKED SO WELL.
OF COURSE IT WORKED. WE BUILT THAT GUN. I TOLD YOU IT WOULD WORK.
I TOLD YOU IT WOULD WORK THAT WELL.
I THINK I'M THE ORIGINAL CLONE. YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY SUFFERING FROM EXTENSIVE DEGRADATION.
WON'T WORK. WHATEVER YOU'RE TRYING... SOMEONE WILL STOP YOU. SOMEONE--

KROOOM!
OKAY-- PARTY'S OVER!
WHO THE HELL IS *THAT?!*
INVINCIBOY! I SAW HIM ON THE NEWS EARLIER. HE'S NEW.
HE *WAS* NEW!
KA-CHOOM!
NNNNNGG.
BZZAKKT!
WOULD YOU LIKE TO RETRACT YOUR PREVIOUS STATEMENT?


WHERE DID MARK GO?
BAD GUYS TOOK OVER A--
VOOSH!
≒SIGH.≒
THE LIZARD LEAGUE-- THEY TRIED TO USE THE MISSILES HOUSED HERE TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD--IT DIDN'T WORK.
IT WON'T WORK FOR YOU EITHER.
THE LIZARD LEAGUE?!
HOW DARE YOU COMPARE US TO THAT GROUP OF MORONS!
WE'RE NOT GOING TO USE THESE MISSILES TO TRY AND "TAKE OVER THE WORLD" LIKE SOME KIND OF CLICHÉ.

WE DON'T NEED THE WHOLE WORLD-- THE ENTIRE COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE OF THIS PLANET WILL BE **ENOUGH.**
WE'RE GOING TO LAUNCH ONE OF YOUR MISSILES INTO SPACE-- TO DETONATE IN THE SUN. THE RESULTING SOLAR FLARE WILL BE THE LARGEST IN RECORDED HISTORY.
ALL SATELLITE BASED FORMS OF COMMUNICATION WILL BE OFFLINE-- INDEFINITELY.
OR RATHER--THEY WILL BE UNTIL WE BRING THEM BACK ONLINE--UNDER ***OUR*** CONTROL.
ENTIRE NATIONS WILL HAVE TO PAY US FOR THE RIGHT TO CONVERSE. THOSE WHO OPPOSE US CAN BE MANIPULATED INTO WAR.
WE WON'T "RULE" THE WORLD... BUT WE WILL **CONTROL** IT.
SORRY-- I WOULD HAVE BEEN HERE SOONER BUT HAD TROUBLE FINDING THE PLACE!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?! WHAT ARE YOU ***DOING?!***
I'M HELPING YOU-- ***SEE?!***
WRAMM!
NO!
YOU'RE NOT READY FOR THIS! GET OUT OF HERE!
NOW!

STAY FOCUSED!
SKROOM!!
GET OFF HIM!
WROKK!
I'M NOT USUALLY ONE TO KILL CHILDREN, BUT WHATEVER.
CLIK-KLAKK!
WHKOOM!!
NO!
SURPRISE! YOUR PLAN ISN'T GOING TO WORK--
--AGAIN!
SCREW THIS!
WE DON'T HAVE TO DEFEAT YOU TO WIN!
CLICK!

SHHHHHHHH!
SHOOOOOOM!!
THEY'VE FIRED THE MISSILE!
I'M GOING AFTER IT! GET OUT OF HERE, KID OMNI-MAN!
YOU CAN'T FIGHT THESE GUYS ALONE-- JUST RUN!

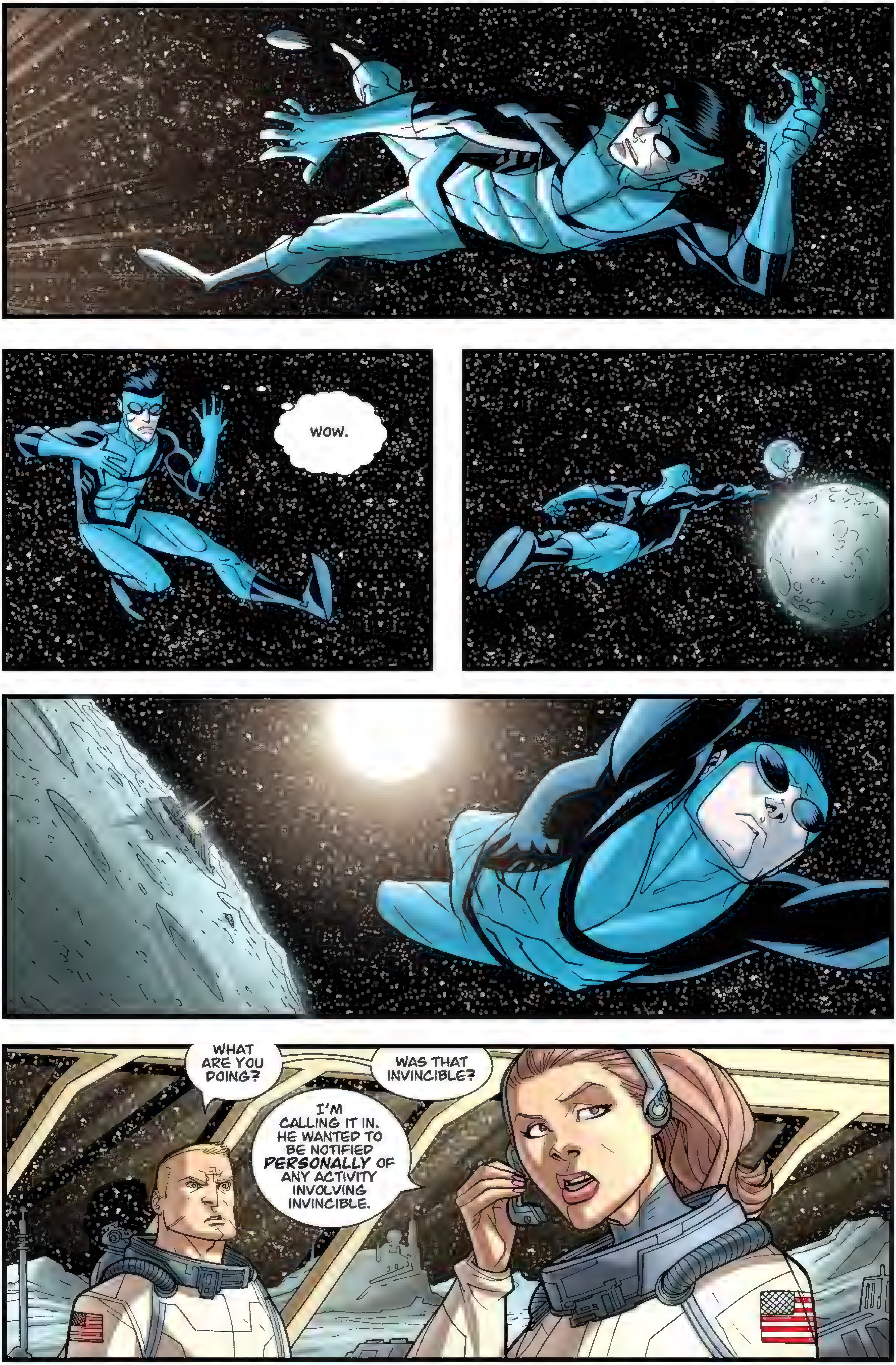
LIKE HELL!
WRAMM!!
UMPHM!
OUMPH AGHLLG!
HA!
I'M TOTALLY HOLDING MY OWN! YOU GUYS ARE SCREWED!
ULP!
YOU'VE JUST MADE HIM MAD!
RAAGH!
KROOM!!
NOW YOU'RE JUST ASKING FOR IT!

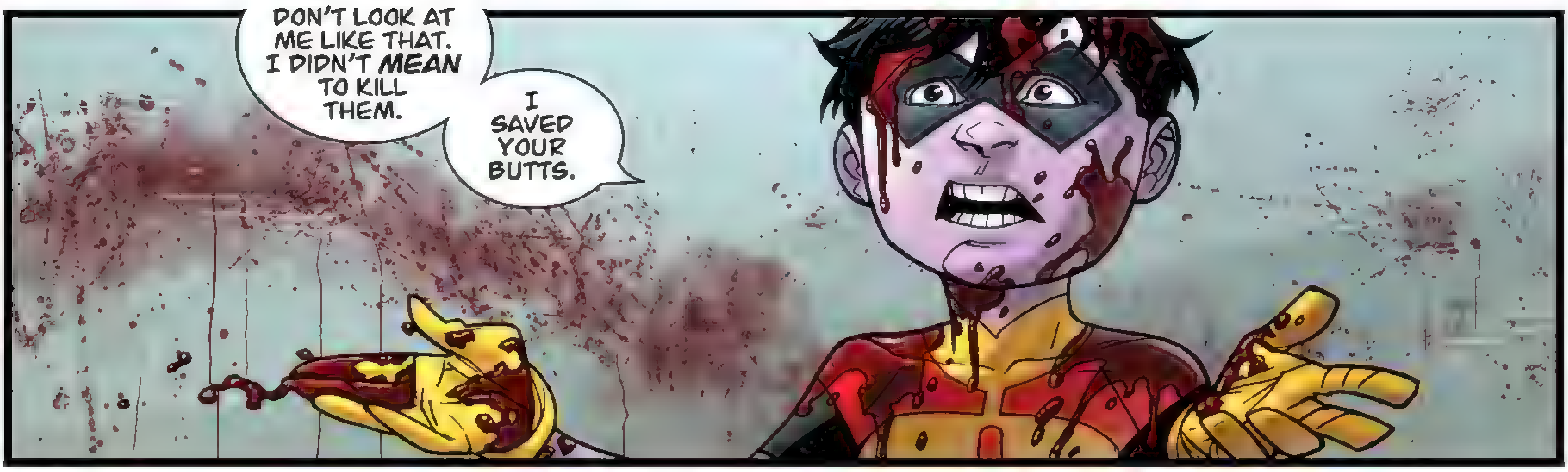
SCRRA-FOOO

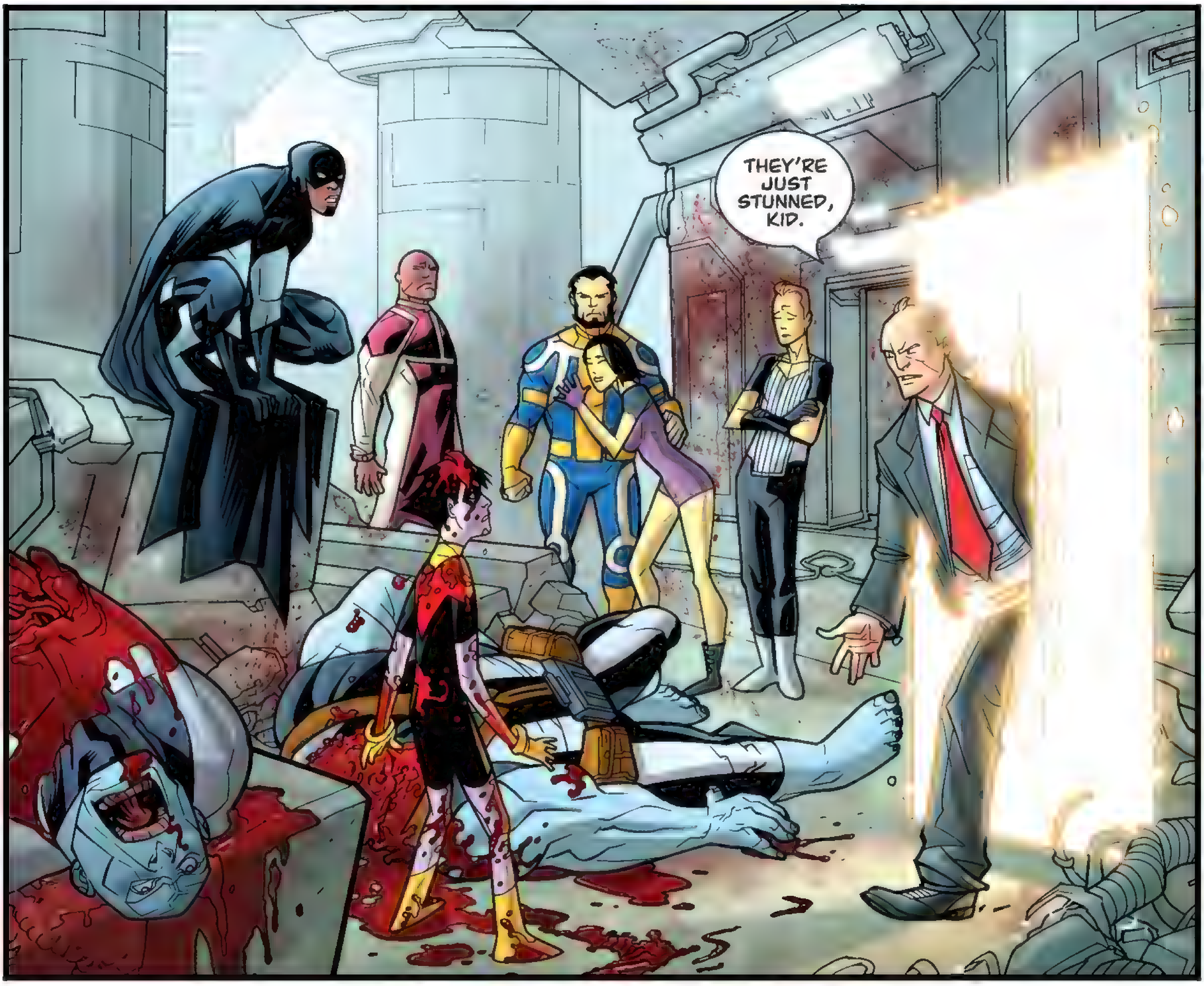
KROOM!!
WOW. I'VE GOTTA ADMIT, I REALLY DIDN'T EXPECT THAT TO HAPPEN EITHER.
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
I GIVE UP--I SURRENDER.
JUST DON'T HURT ME!
OH, YOU'RE GONNA MAKE THIS EASY FOR ME, HUH?

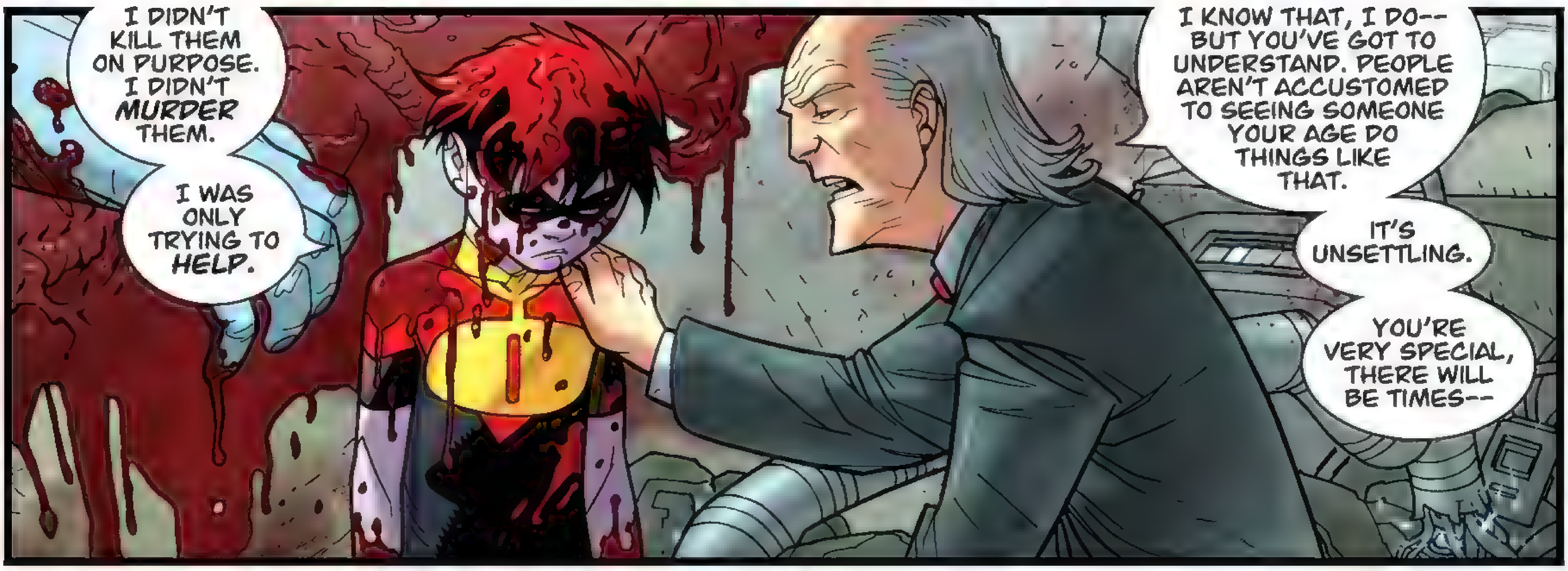
BOOM!!
WOW.
SCHPP!
SCHLPP!
THUD!
...
WHAT?!
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT-- I SWEAR!

CRAP.
THIS THING SEEMS LIKE IT'S GETTING **FASTER.**
GOTTA STOP IT-- GOTTA PUSH MYSELF!
THIS IS PROBABLY GOING TO HURT.

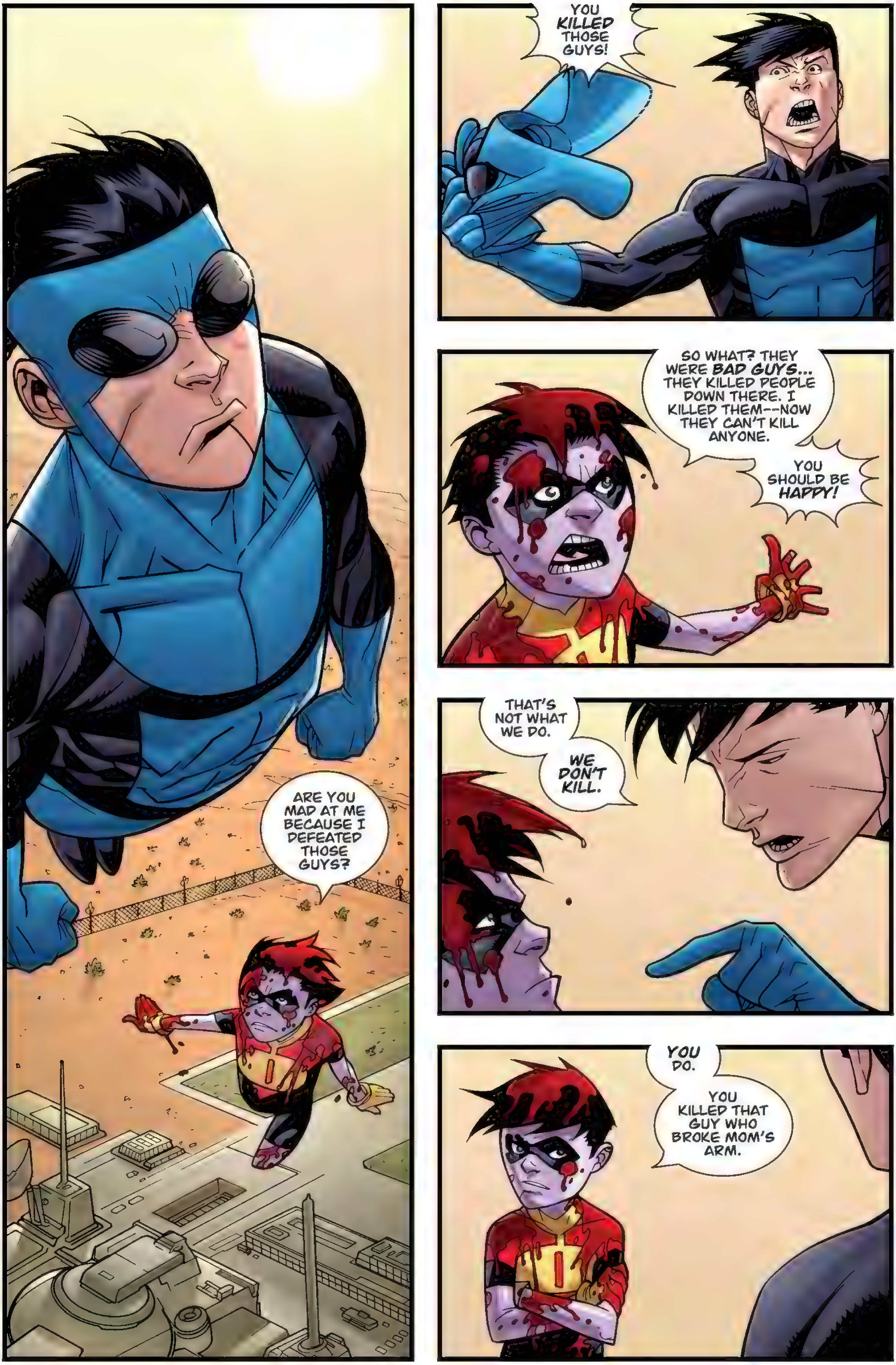

WOW.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WAS THAT INVINCIBLE?
I'M CALLING IT IN. HE WANTED TO BE NOTIFIED PERSONALLY OF ANY ACTIVITY INVOLVING INVINCIBLE.


DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO KILL THEM.
I SAVED YOUR BUTTS.


THEY'RE JUST STUNNED, KID.


I DIDN'T KILL THEM ON PURPOSE. I DIDN'T *MURDER* THEM.
I WAS ONLY TRYING TO *HELP*.
I KNOW THAT, I DO-- BUT YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND. PEOPLE AREN'T ACCUSTOMED TO SEEING SOMEONE YOUR AGE DO THINGS LIKE THAT.
IT'S UNSETTLING.
YOU'RE VERY SPECIAL, THERE WILL BE TIMES--

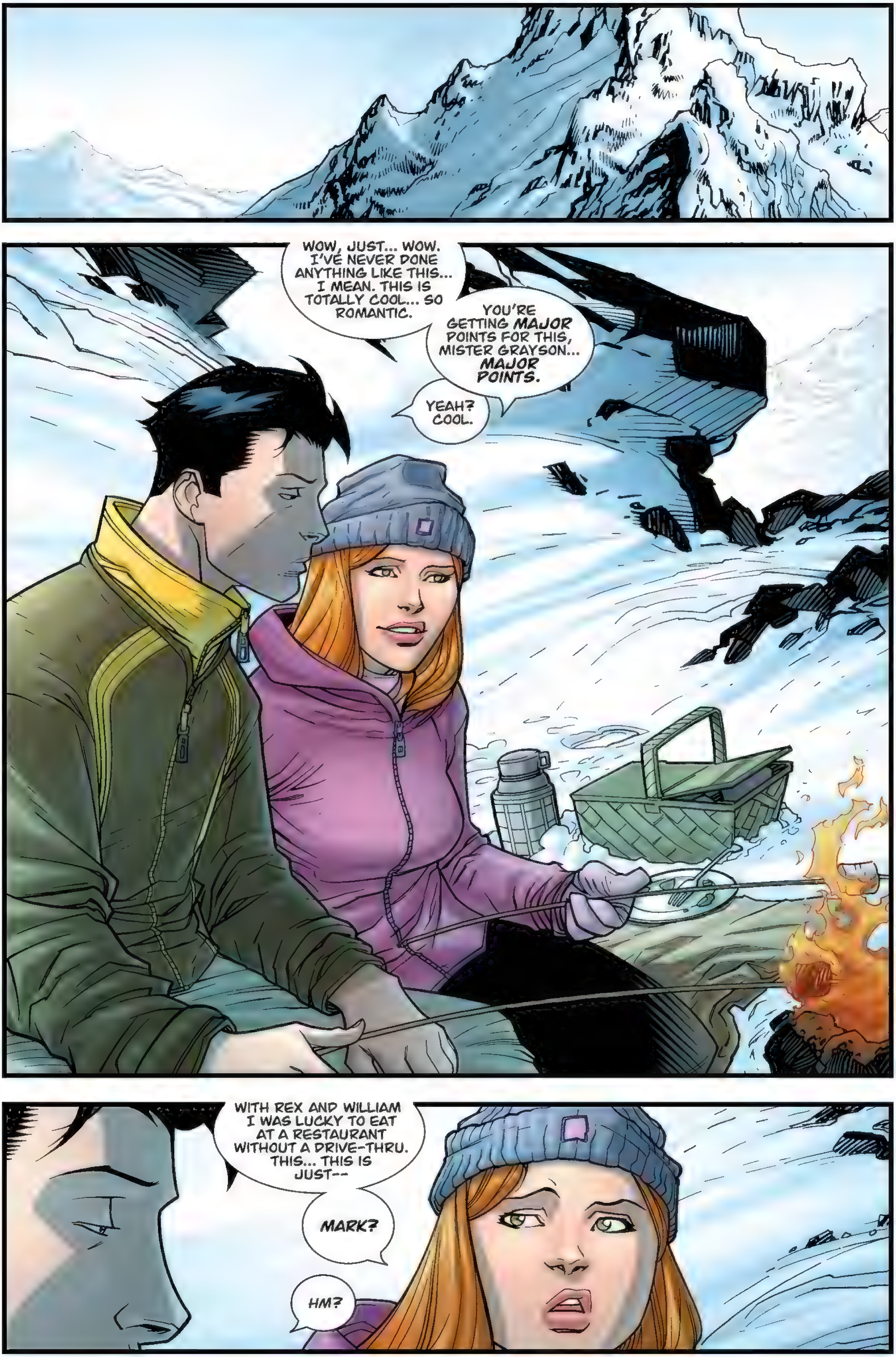
VOOSH!
GET AWAY FROM HIM!
I TOLD YOU--I WARNED YOU. STAY OUT OF MY LIFE--LEAVE ME AND MY FAMILY ALONE!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
INVINCIBLE, CALM DOWN. I'M TRYING TO HELP YOU... I'M JUST HERE TO CLEAN UP YOUR BROTHER'S MESS.
WELL... AT LEAST I STOPPED THEM.
SKY.
NOW!


ARE YOU MAD AT ME BECAUSE I DEFEATED THOSE GUYS?
YOU *KILLED* THOSE GUYS!
SO WHAT? THEY WERE *BAD GUYS*... THEY KILLED PEOPLE DOWN THERE. I KILLED THEM--NOW THEY CAN'T KILL ANYONE.
YOU SHOULD BE *HAPPY!*
THAT'S NOT WHAT WE DO.
WE DON'T KILL.
YOU DO.
YOU KILLED THAT GUY WHO BROKE MOM'S ARM.

THAT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
THIS WAS AN ACCIDENT!
OKAY-- NEVER MIND. START OVER. YOU SHOULDN'T KILL-- WE'RE NOT MURDERERS, OLIVER. BUT YOU DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL THEM, OKAY. I GET THAT.
THE MAIN PROBLEM I'M HAVING HERE-- THE THING THAT WORRIES ME ABOUT THIS IS THAT YOU DON'T SEEM TO CARE THAT YOU'VE KILLED THEM.
WHY SHOULD I? HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU FOUGHT THOSE GUYS NOW? HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE THEY KILLED SINCE THE FIRST TIME YOU FOUGHT?
WHAT YOU DO IS ILLOGICAL. THE LOGICAL THING TO DO WOULD BE TO STOP THESE GUYS-- PERMANENTLY.
THAT'S WHAT MAKES SENSE TO ME.
THERE ARE LAWS AND RULES AND... WELL, WE CAN'T JUST TAKE THAT KIND OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOMEONE'S LIFE-- FOR ANYONE'S LIFE.
WE'RE NOT INFALLIBLE-- WHAT IF WE'RE WRONG AND SOMEONE WE KILL IS INNOCENT. WHAT THEN?
HUMAN LIFE IS A PRECIOUS THING.
NO, IT'S NOT.
WHAT?!

PRECIOUS. HUMAN LIFE ISN'T PRECIOUS. NOT IN GENERAL-- NOT EVERYONE.
PEOPLE RISK THEIR LIVES EVERY DAY. THEY KILL EACH OTHER. IF THEY DON'T THINK THEIR LIVES ARE IMPORTANT, WHY SHOULD I?
MOST OF THEM ARE UTTERLY *INSIGNIFICANT.*
YOU SOUND LIKE *DAD.*
SO? WHY IS THAT BAD? WAS HE SO WRONG? DID NOTHING HE SAID MAKE SENSE TO YOU--EVEN ON A SMALL LEVEL?
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT THAT MAYBE OUR FATHER WAS *RIGHT?*
...
SOMETIMES.

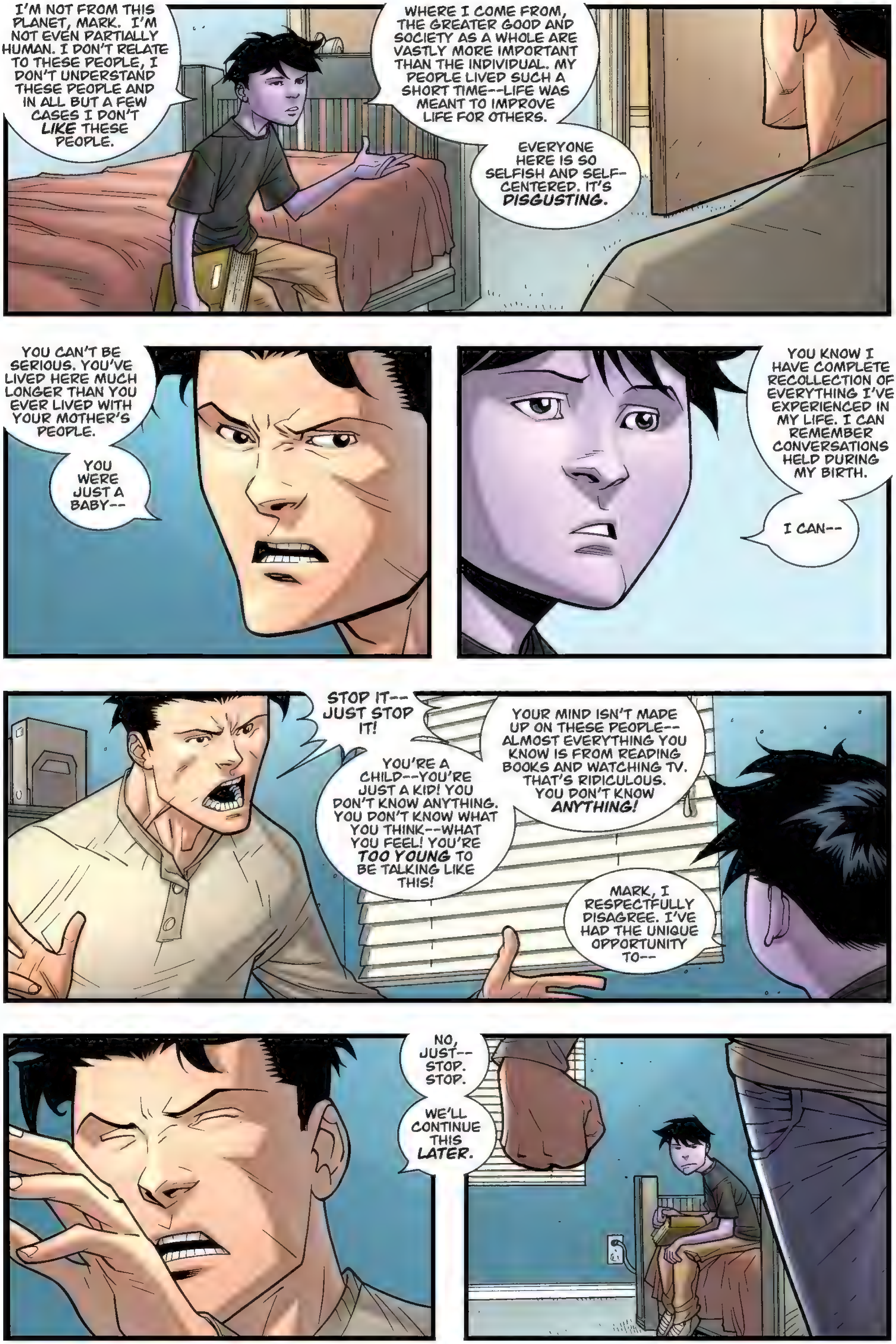
CHAPTER 53


WOW, JUST... WOW. I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS... I MEAN. THIS IS TOTALLY COOL... SO ROMANTIC.
YOU'RE GETTING **MAJOR** POINTS FOR THIS, MISTER GRAYSON... **MAJOR POINTS.**
YEAH? COOL.
WITH REX AND WILLIAM I WAS LUCKY TO EAT AT A RESTAURANT WITHOUT A DRIVE-THRU. THIS... THIS IS JUST--
MARK?
HM?

ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?
WHAT?
MARK!
HUH?
OH MY GOD--YOU AREN'T, ARE YOU?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
OH, EVE--I'M SORRY... REALLY. I WANTED THIS TO BE SPECIAL... THIS IS OUR FIRST REAL DATE--I JUST, I DON'T MEAN TO DRIFT OFF.
I'VE JUST GOT A LOT ON MY MIND.
ARE YOU STILL THINKING ABOUT OLIVER?
YEAH, I DON'T KNOW HOW HE'S DEALING WITH WHAT HE DID YESTERDAY--OR IF HE'S EVEN GIVEN IT A SECOND THOUGHT.
I WANT TO TALK TO HIM SOME MORE.
HE KILLED TWO PEOPLE YESTERDAY... HE'S STILL JUST A KID. I CAN'T TAKE MY MIND OFF THE WHOLE ORDEAL.
I UNDERSTAND... THAT'S A BIG DEAL.
DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE? I MEAN, WE CAN DO THIS AGAIN SOME OTHER TIME.

WHAT? *NO.* I CAN'T DO THAT. THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE SPECIAL. I HATE THAT I'VE RUINED THE MOMENT AS MUCH AS I HAVE ALREADY.
NO WAY.
WHOA--I'M NOT SOME STUPID GIRL YOU HAVE TO BEND OVER BACKWARDS FOR TO KEEP HAPPY. I'M *ATOM FRICKIN' EVE*-- I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.
LET'S GO.
REALLY? YOU DON'T MIND?
I GET IT. YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO DEAL WITH. I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE. YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO HAVE TO LIE TO ME TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU MISSED A DATE, OR WORRY ABOUT ME BEING MAD BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO GO SAVE THE WORLD INSTEAD OF SHOP FOR SHOES WITH ME.
I KNOW YOUR LIFE-- I'M A PART OF *BOTH* SIDES. I KNOW ABOUT ALL THE CRAP THAT COMES WITH THE SUPERHERO PART.
THAT'S WHY OUR RELATIONSHIP IS GOING TO *WORK.*

THE GRAYSON HOME.
HEY.
HEY.
Y'KNOW, THIS ROOM USED TO BE DAD'S OFFICE.
YEAH, MOM TOLD ME. THIS IS WHERE HE WROTE HIS BOOKS. SHE LEFT THE COMPUTER IN HERE FOR ME TO USE FOR MY SCHOOLWORK.
YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY?
BAD GUYS ARE STOPPED. YOUR CREEPY SCAR GUY CLEANED UP THE MESS. PEOPLE ARE SAFE.
WHAT'S LEFT TO TALK ABOUT?
YOU CAN'T BE SO CASUAL ABOUT THIS-- WE'RE NOT OUR FATHER. WE'RE JUST *NOT*.
BUT YESTERDAY YOU SAID--
I KNOW WHAT I SAID... THAT DOESN'T MEAN I AGREE WITH HIM.

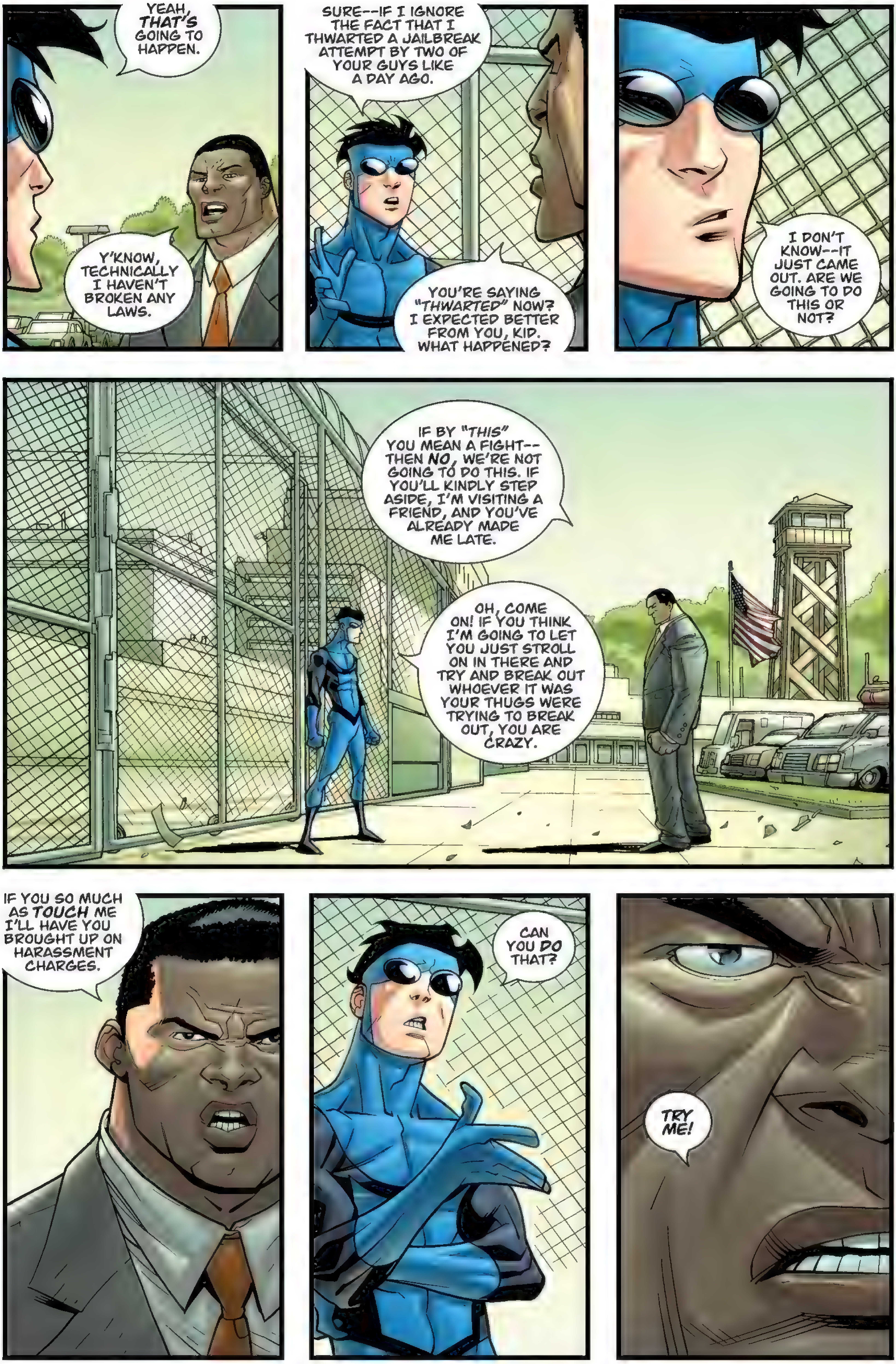

I'M NOT FROM THIS PLANET, MARK. I'M NOT EVEN PARTIALLY HUMAN. I DON'T RELATE TO THESE PEOPLE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND THESE PEOPLE AND IN ALL BUT A FEW CASES I DON'T *LIKE* THESE PEOPLE.
WHERE I COME FROM, THE GREATER GOOD AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE ARE VASTLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE INDIVIDUAL. MY PEOPLE LIVED SUCH A SHORT TIME--LIFE WAS MEANT TO IMPROVE LIFE FOR OTHERS.
EVERYONE HERE IS SO SELFISH AND SELF-CENTERED. IT'S *DISGUSTING.*
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS. YOU'VE LIVED HERE MUCH LONGER THAN YOU EVER LIVED WITH YOUR MOTHER'S PEOPLE.
YOU WERE JUST A BABY--
YOU KNOW I HAVE COMPLETE RECOLLECTION OF EVERYTHING I'VE EXPERIENCED IN MY LIFE. I CAN REMEMBER CONVERSATIONS HELD DURING MY BIRTH.
I CAN--
STOP IT--JUST STOP IT!
YOU'RE A CHILD--YOU'RE JUST A KID! YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK--WHAT YOU FEEL! YOU'RE *TOO YOUNG* TO BE TALKING LIKE THIS!
YOUR MIND ISN'T MADE UP ON THESE PEOPLE--ALMOST EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS FROM READING BOOKS AND WATCHING TV. THAT'S RIDICULOUS. YOU DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING!*
MARK, I RESPECTFULLY DISAGREE. I'VE HAD THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO--
NO, JUST--STOP. STOP.
WE'LL CONTINUE THIS *LATER.*

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU TWO?
TRUST ME--YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
WHY? BECAUSE I'M NOT A SUPERHERO? I WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND?
YOU NEED TO START TRUSTING ME, MARK.
YEAH? DO I? THAT'S GOOD--YEAH... I'M GOING TO START TRUSTING *YOU*.
WHAT IS *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
YOUR BOYFRIEND! I DON'T KNOW THAT GUY. HE DIDN'T SEEM A BIT SURPRISED TO SEE ME IN COSTUME! NOT ONE BIT!
I'M INVINCIBLE--NOT YOU. YOU DON'T GET TO TELL PEOPLE MY SECRET!
MARK, I--
SAVE IT! WHAT'S DONE IS DONE!

SIGH
SO IT DIDN'T GO WELL?
IT'S NOT JUST OLIVER--I JUST SNAPPED AT MY MOM, TOO--OVER THE WHOLE SECRET IDENTITY THING.
THIS SUCKS.
I WONDER-- IS IT ME? AM I JUST BEING TOO... I DON'T KNOW. AM I CAUSING ALL THE TENSION?
IS IT MY TEMPER?
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE JUSTIFIED-- BUT WHAT DO I KNOW? I YELL AT MY PARENTS ALL THE TIME.
I GOTTA GET MY MIND OFF THIS CRAP.
YOU WANT TO GO SEE A MOVIE?

THE FORMER DORM ROOM OF WILLIAM CLOCKWELL AND MARK GRAYSON.
SORRY IT'S TAKEN SO LONG TO MOVE MY STUFF OUT-- IT'S BEEN PRETTY CRAZY.
I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE HERE TODAY--I THINK THIS STUFF WAS GOING TO BE ON THE CURB TOMORROW. I'M MOVING OUT, TOO.
I CAN SEE THAT. ONE SECOND.
OKAY-- THAT'S THE LAST OF IT.
WHERE ARE YOU MOVING?
I'M MOVING IN WITH RICK SHERIDAN. HE'S HAVING TROUBLE BEING ALONE--AFTER BEING TURNED INTO HALF A KILLER ROBOT. HIS ROOMMATE MOVED OUT AND, WELL, HE'S GOT AN AWESOME PLACE SO...
YOU THINK YOU COULD HELP ME? IT SURE WOULD MAKE THE MOVE GO FASTER.
DEF JUX
SURE, NO PROBLEM. I GOTTA HURRY THOUGH--I WAS GOING TO DO A LITTLE PATROLLING TODAY.

THIS SUCKS.
CECIL WAS OUT OF LINE--AND I'M GLAD TO BE RID OF HIM, BUT AT LEAST WITH HIM, I COULD READ A BOOK UNTIL I GOT THE CALL.
PATROLLING--*SHEESH.*
THIS IS EFFECTIVE, AT LEAST IN THEORY.
I MEAN, I'M COVERING A LOT OF GROUND--HITTING THE HOTSPOTS. THE COASTLINE, POWER PLANTS, DOWNTOWN--
STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, TITAN. I HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU TAKING OVER MACHINE HEAD'S ORGANIZATION AFTER I *HELPED* YOU FIGHT HIM.
DID YOU *REALLY* THINK I WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU?
STEP ASIDE, INVINCIBLE.


YEAH, *THAT'S* GOING TO HAPPEN.
Y'KNOW, TECHNICALLY I HAVEN'T BROKEN ANY LAWS.
SURE--IF I IGNORE THE FACT THAT I THWARTED A JAILBREAK ATTEMPT BY TWO OF YOUR GUYS LIKE A DAY AGO.
YOU'RE SAYING "THWARTED" NOW? I EXPECTED BETTER FROM YOU, KID. WHAT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW--IT JUST CAME OUT. ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS OR NOT?
IF BY "*THIS*" YOU MEAN A FIGHT--THEN *NO*, WE'RE NOT GOING TO DO THIS. IF YOU'LL KINDLY STEP ASIDE, I'M VISITING A FRIEND, AND YOU'VE ALREADY MADE ME LATE.
OH, COME ON! IF YOU THINK I'M GOING TO LET YOU JUST STROLL ON IN THERE AND TRY AND BREAK OUT WHOEVER IT WAS YOUR THUGS WERE TRYING TO BREAK OUT, YOU ARE CRAZY.
IF YOU SO MUCH AS *TOUCH* ME I'LL HAVE YOU BROUGHT UP ON HARASSMENT CHARGES.
CAN YOU *DO* THAT?
TRY ME!

YOU ASKED FOR IT.
THWAKK!
YOU'VE JUST MADE A *HUGE* MISTAKE!
CRAP-- ARE YOU OKAY? I TRIED TO HOLD BACK AS MUCH AS I COULD. I'VE GOTTEN STRONGER SINCE WE LAST FOUGHT.
THAT'S IT--
ROCK ON!
YOU COULDN'T JUST LEAVE IT ALONE--YOU **HAD** TO GET INVOLVED!
THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE *EASY!*
SORRY, MAN.
THRAKOOM!

TITAN!
I'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH-- YOUR TIME IS *UP!*
WROKKA-DOOM

WHAKOOM!!
KROOOM!!
HM.
SCREW THIS.
WRAKOOM!
BE GONE!
WRAMM!!

KRAKOOM!
EXCELLENT TIMING.
PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY FOR MY RECKLESSNESS, MASTER.
WE WILL DISCUSS THIS LATER.
VOOSH!!
DANG.
HM?
GET BACK INSIDE!
IS SORRY!

LATER.
WHAT?!
YOU DID NOT RECOGNIZE MY SOUL PROJECTION THEN? IT WAS I WHO DID WHAT YOU COULD NOT. MY AGENT IS FREE--AND YOU HAVE FAILED ME AND FAILED THE ORDER.
CONSIDER YOUR MEMBERSHIP REVOKED.
MISTER LIU, I--
YOU, TITAN, WILL BE TURNING OVER YOUR ENTIRE OPERATION TO THE ORDER. YOU FORFEIT YOUR STANDING IN OUR COMMUNITY AND YOU WILL CEASE ALL ACTIVITY AND RETURN TO A LIFE OF MEDIOCRITY.
THERE ARE NO SECOND CHANCES IN THIS BUSINESS-- YOU'VE SEEN WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF.
YOU KEEP ONLY YOUR LIFE. RESIST AND THAT TOO WILL BE REVOKED.
ISOTOPE, PROVE YOUR LOYALTY OR LACK THEREOF.
RIGHT NOW.

HM.
SO IT'S A WAR HE WANTS...
HGGNNN.
...AND IT'S A WAR HE'LL GET!
EVERYONE'S GOT TO PICK A SIDE EVENTUALLY...
EXCELLENT.
THERE IS MUCH WE CAN ACCOMPLISH TOGETHER.

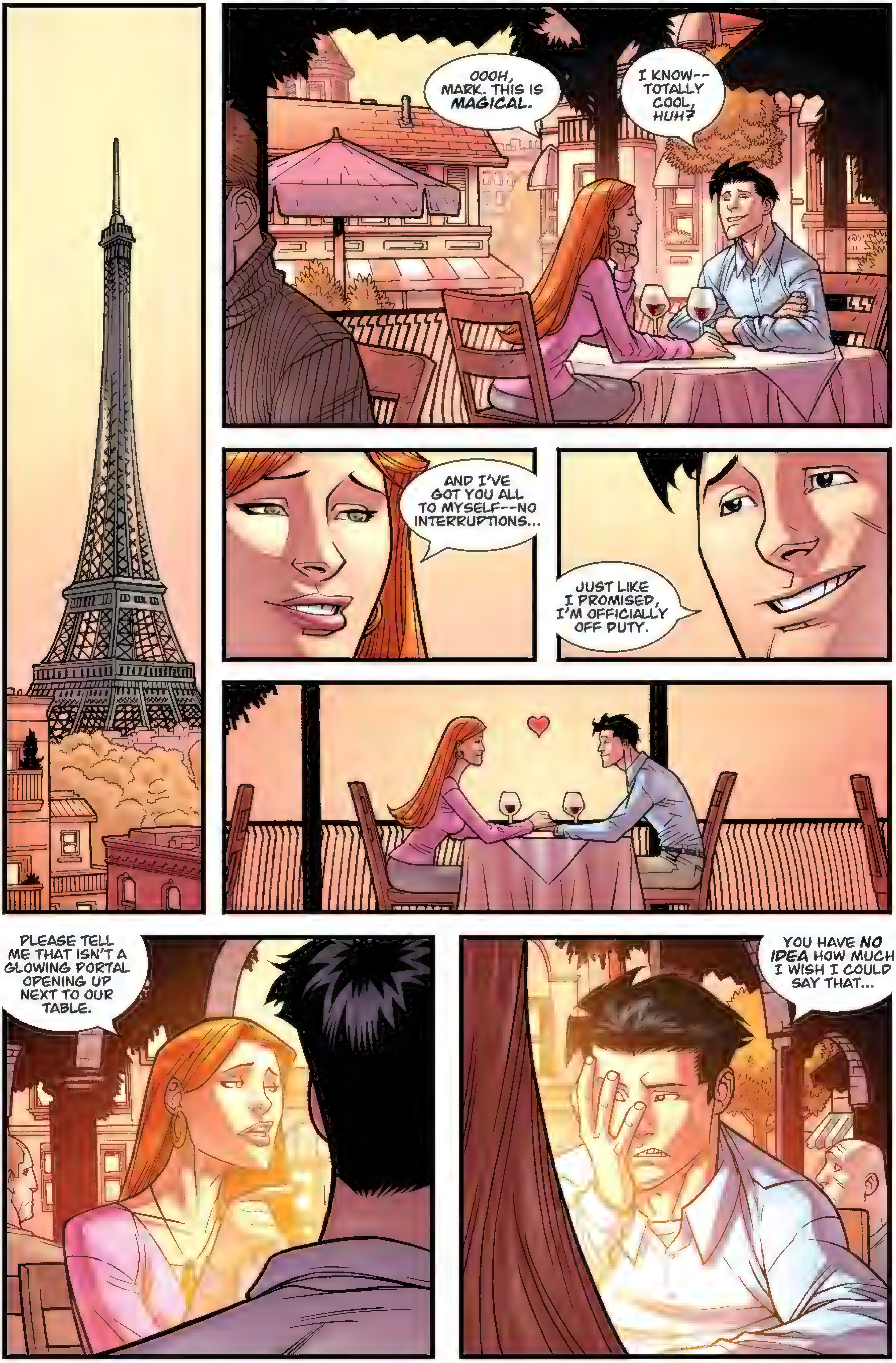
HM.
HEY! I WAS ON MY WAY TO YOUR PLACE.
UH-AKK!
SORRY, DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE.
THANKS FOR THE CATCH... NOT USED TO PEOPLE TALKING TO ME WHEN I'M UP HERE.
I WAS COMING TO SEE *YOU*--SAW THE NEWS ABOUT STRONGHOLD, THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO HANG OUT AND TALK OR SOMETHING.
I WAS COMING TO SEE YOU REAL QUICK. I--I CAN'T DO ANYTHING TONIGHT, I'M SORRY.
I KNOW WHAT I SAID EARLIER, BUT.. JUST DON'T TAKE ADVANTAGE, OKAY?
I'M SORRY, EVE. I JUST--
ARE YOU *HAPPY* WITH ME?

ARE YOU KIDDING? OF COURSE I'M HAPPY WITH YOU. JEEZ--C'MON! I--I'M TOTALLY HAPPY WITH YOU.
YOU CAN'T TELL? REALLY? I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
I'VE BEEN DISTRACTED, YES--MY BROTHER KILLED A COUPLE GUYS, IT'S SOMETHING I'VE GOT TO DEAL WITH, I--
STOP--STOP RIGHT THERE.
I'M BEING SILLY. YOU'VE GOT REALLY CRAZY IMPORTANT STUFF GOING DOWN IN YOUR LIFE.
CONSIDER COMMENT RETRACTED. I'M REALLY--
ULP!
REALLY, EVE--YOU'RE THE BEST.
OKAY--TOMORROW, YOU AND ME, A REAL DATE. THE WORKS, DINNER, SKIING, HIKING, FLYING, WE CAN GO TO THE MOON IF YOU WANT--WHATEVER. JUST YOU AND ME, NO INTERRUPTIONS.
CECIL'S NOT GOING TO BE CALLING ME AWAY--I CAN ACTUALLY PROMISE THIS. A DATE, A REAL DATE, FROM START TO FINISH--WITHOUT A GIANT MONSTER INTERRUPTING.
I'LL MAKE IT SPECIAL. JUST GIVE ME TONIGHT TO CLEAR THIS MESS UP.
OKAY?
OKAY.
GREAT! I'LL BE AT YOUR PLACE AT FIVE. SEE YOU THEN!

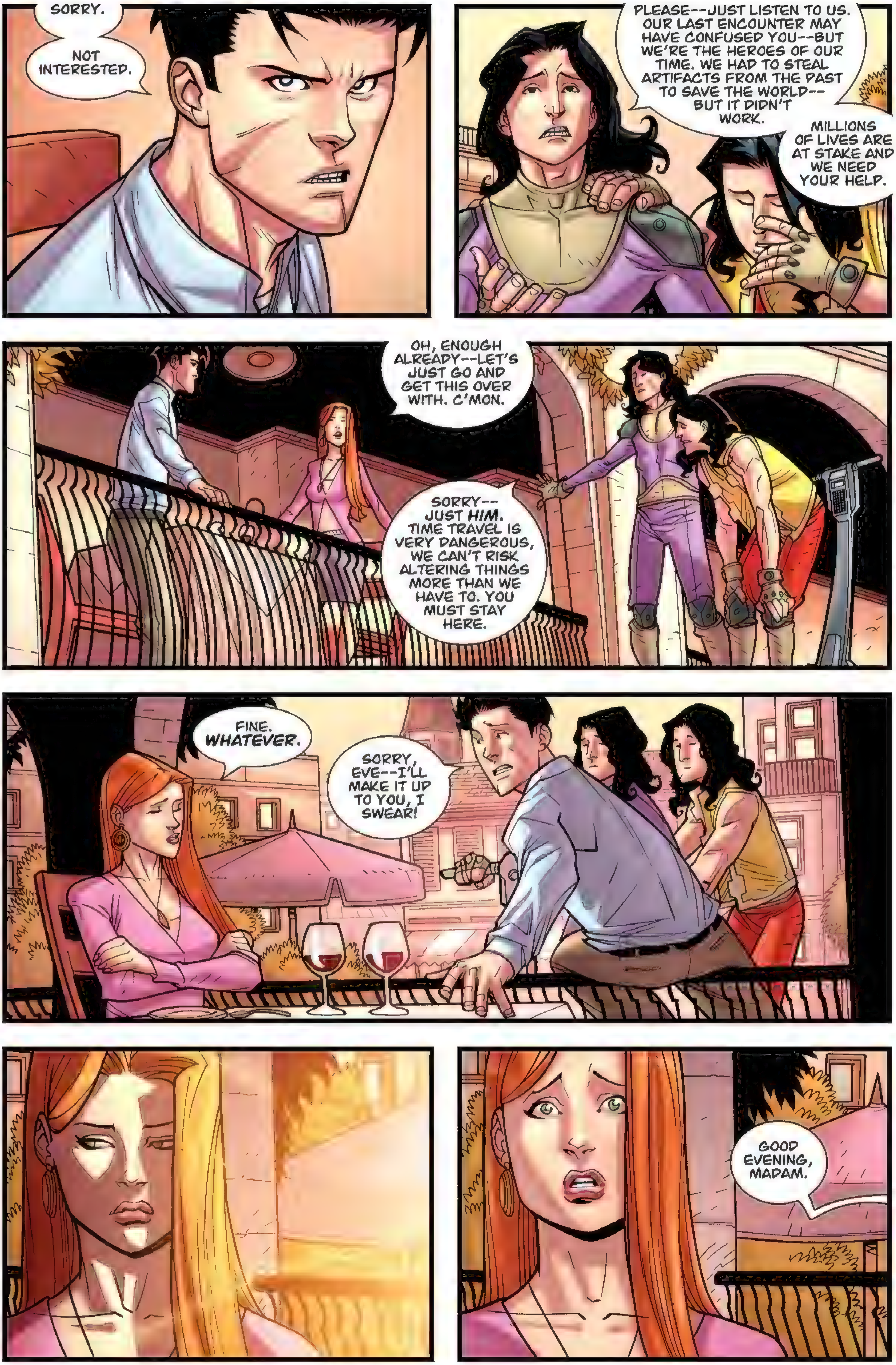
YOU DIDN'T SEE ME?
NOPE. HOW HIGH WERE YOU?
PRETTY HIGH--I'M STILL NOT COMFORTABLE GOING OUT IN SPACE, THOUGH.
GIVE IT TIME, I WAS KIND OF FORCED INTO IT, THIS ALIEN WAS ON HIS WAY AND DAD CALLED AND--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN COSTUME? DID YOU--
I DIDN'T *GO* ANYWHERE. I KNOW I'M "GROUNDED" UNTIL YOU GET OVER ME BEING EFFICIENT.
WHEN YOU SAY IT LIKE *THAT*-- YOU... DON'T YOU SEE WHY I'M REACTING THIS WAY?
I'M SORRY, I DID THAT BECAUSE I WAS ANGRY-- IT WAS IRRATIONAL AND UNPRODUCTIVE. THE TRUTH IS, I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS A LOT LATELY... AND I'M INCLINED TO AGREE WITH YOU.
YOU AND I HAVE VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES AND MINE HAVE BEEN GATHERED IN SUCH A BRIEF SPAN OF TIME THEY'RE EASILY SKEWED.
IF YOU'RE WILLING TO GIVE THESE PEOPLE A CHANCE--IF YOU CARE ABOUT THEM *THAT* MUCH-- MAYBE I'M WRONG.

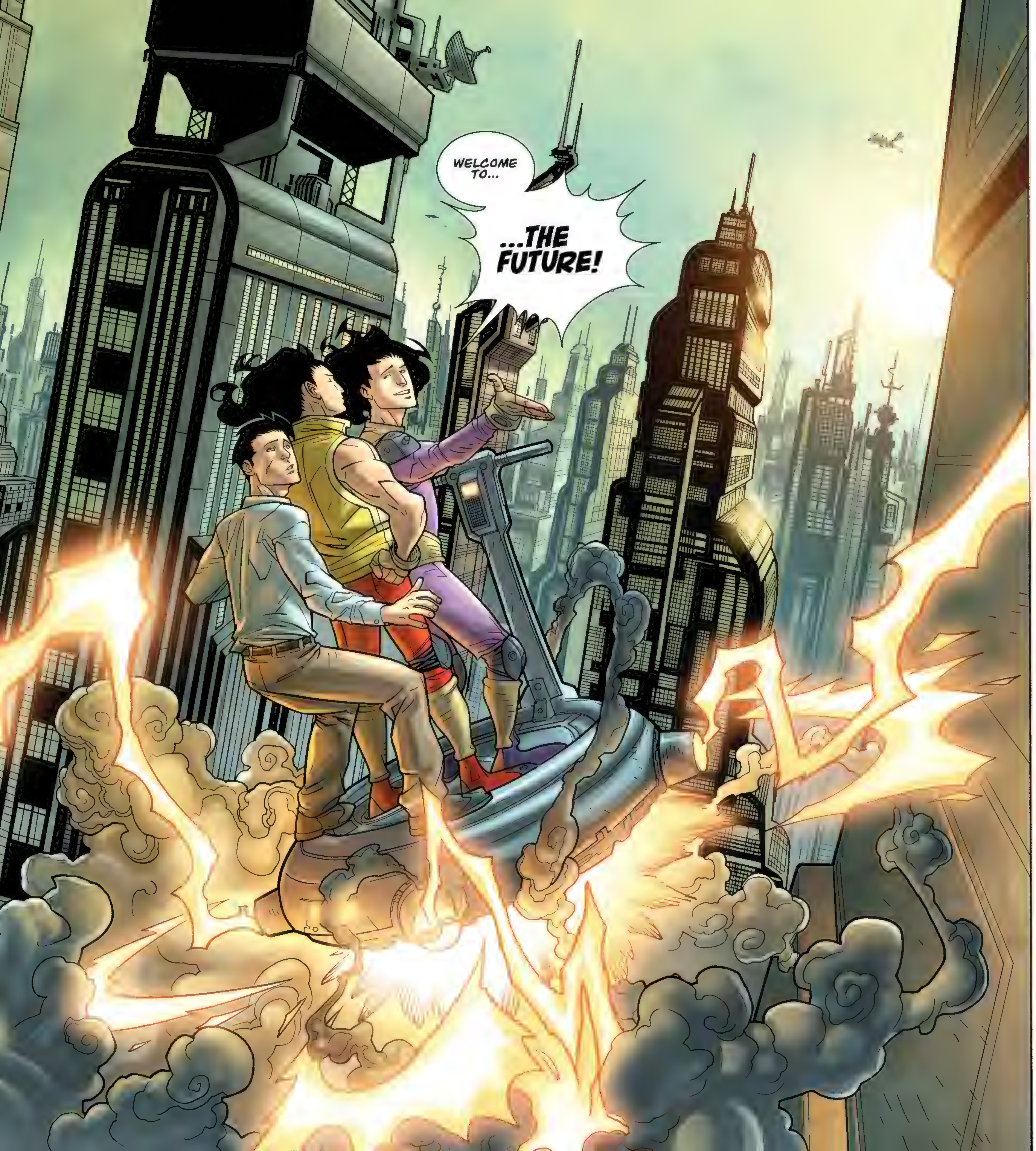
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT.
JUST PLEASE, MARK-- RESPECT THAT I'M DIFFERENT AND FROM TIME TO TIME MY REACTIONS MIGHT NOT BE EXACTLY WHAT YOU EXPECT OF ME.
I CAN DO THAT.
C'MERE.

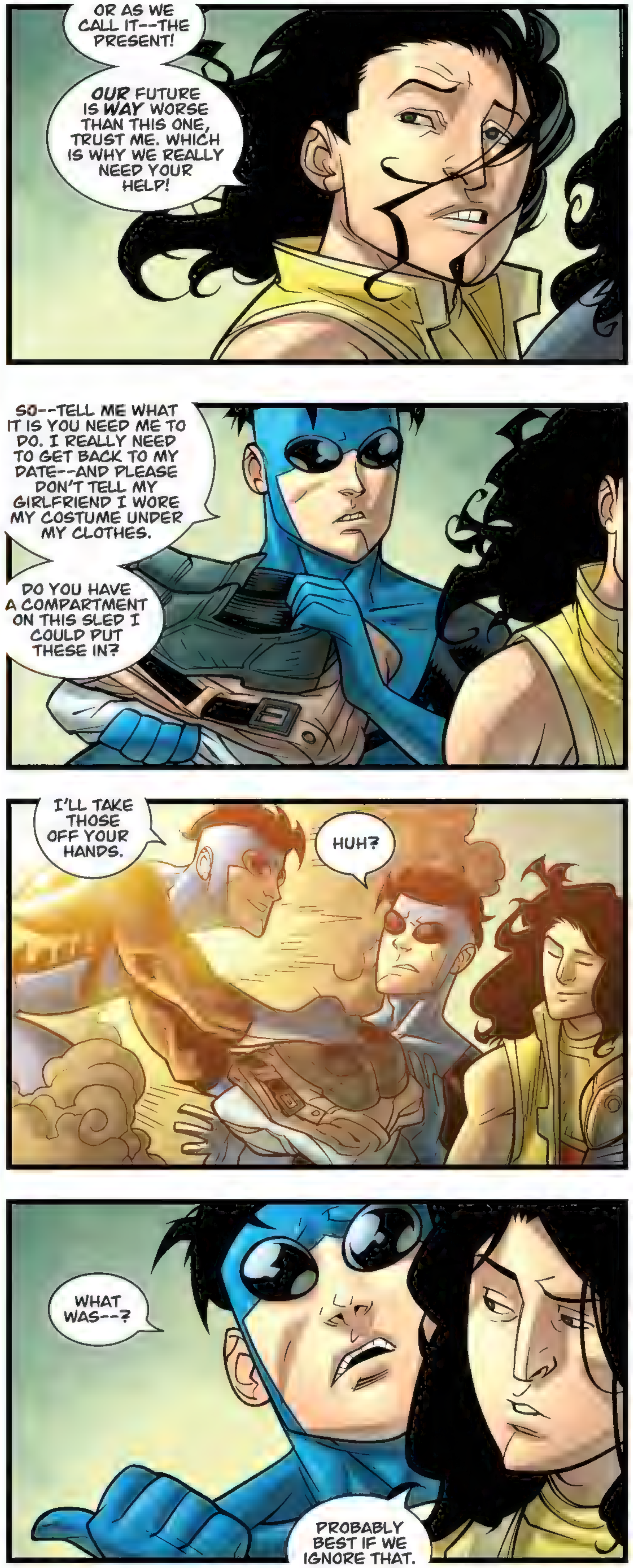
CHAPTER 54

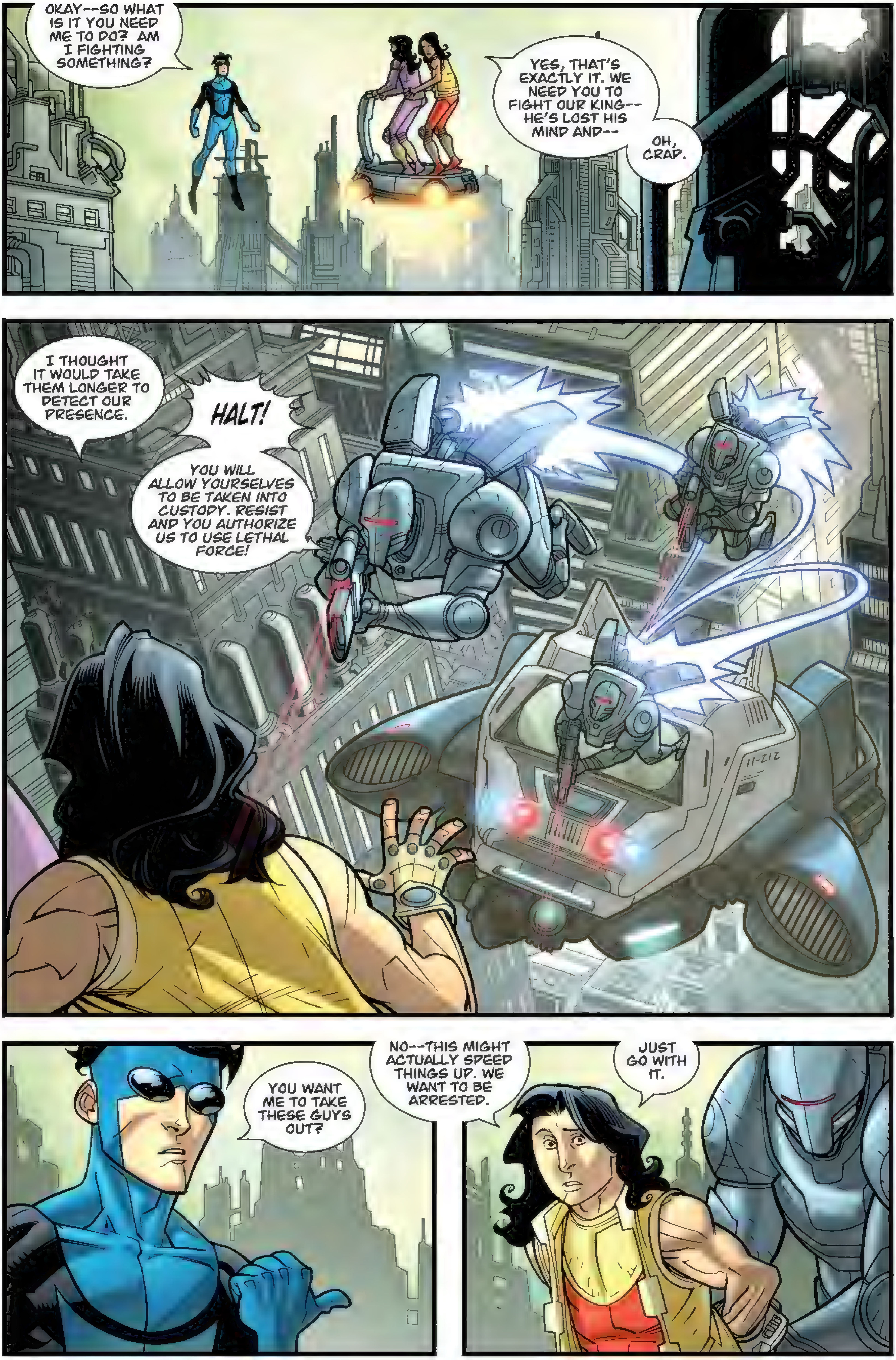

OOOH, MARK. THIS IS MAGICAL.
I KNOW-- TOTALLY COOL, HUH?
AND I'VE GOT YOU ALL TO MYSELF--NO INTERRUPTIONS...
JUST LIKE I PROMISED, I'M OFFICIALLY OFF DUTY.
PLEASE TELL ME THAT ISN'T A GLOWING PORTAL OPENING UP NEXT TO OUR TABLE.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I WISH I COULD SAY THAT...

IS THIS HIM?!
YEAH-- THAT'S THE DUDE WHO KICKED OUR ASSES! GRAB HIM!
WHOA--NOT SO FAST, JERKS! I'M KIND OF IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING.
WRAMM!
NO--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'VE GOT TO COME WITH US!
YOU'VE GOT TO SAVE THE FUTURE!

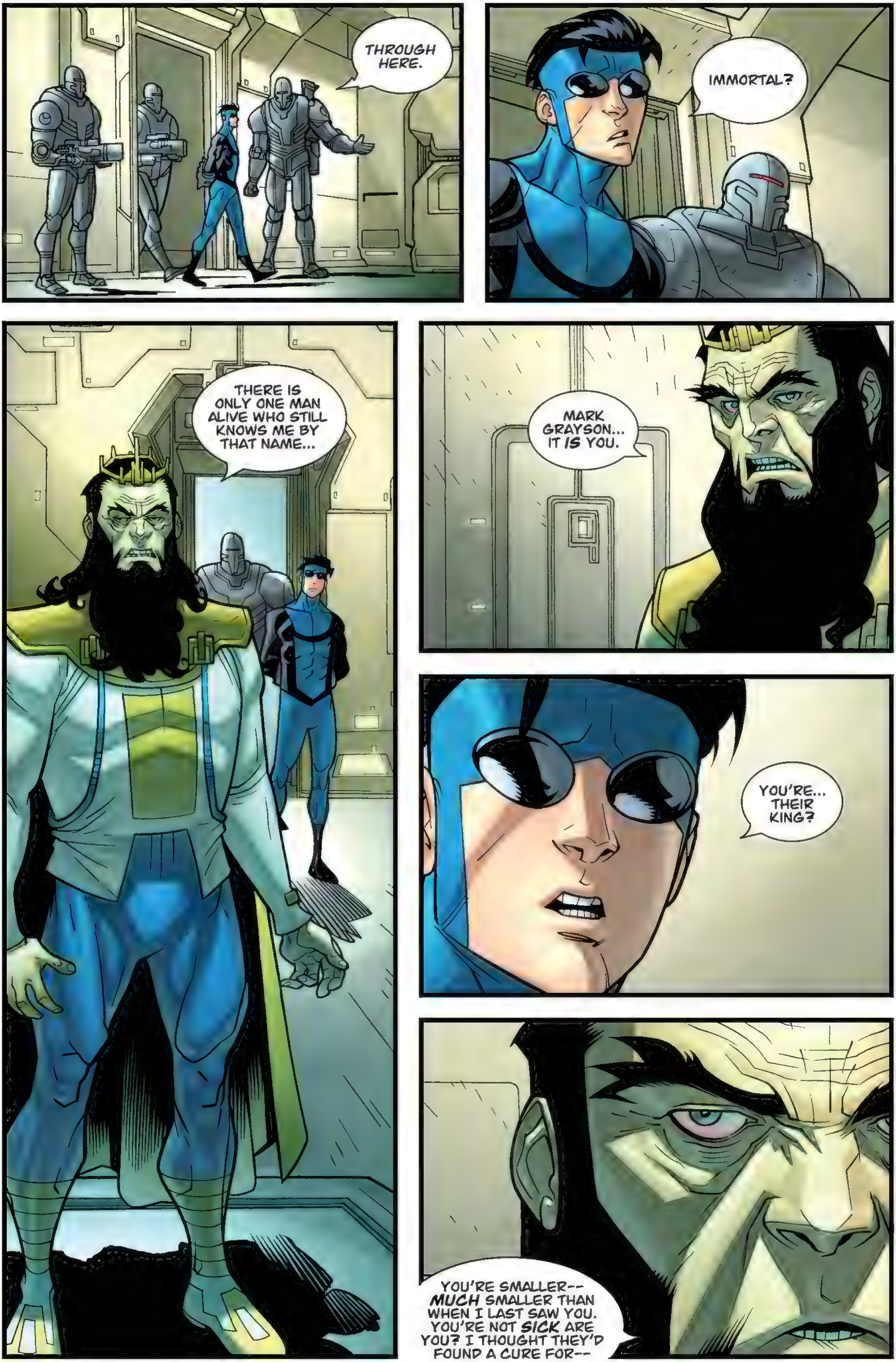

SORRY.
NOT INTERESTED.
PLEASE--JUST LISTEN TO US. OUR LAST ENCOUNTER MAY HAVE CONFUSED YOU--BUT WE'RE THE HEROES OF OUR TIME. WE HAD TO STEAL ARTIFACTS FROM THE PAST TO SAVE THE WORLD--BUT IT DIDN'T WORK.
MILLIONS OF LIVES ARE AT STAKE AND WE NEED YOUR HELP.
OH, ENOUGH ALREADY--LET'S JUST GO AND GET THIS OVER WITH. C'MON.
SORRY--JUST *HIM*. TIME TRAVEL IS VERY DANGEROUS, WE CAN'T RISK ALTERING THINGS MORE THAN WE HAVE TO. YOU MUST STAY HERE.
FINE. **WHATEVER.**
SORRY, EVE--I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU, I SWEAR!
GOOD EVENING, MADAM.


WELCOME TO...
...THE FUTURE!


OR AS WE CALL IT--THE PRESENT!
OUR FUTURE IS WAY WORSE THAN THIS ONE, TRUST ME. WHICH IS WHY WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP!
SO--TELL ME WHAT IT IS YOU NEED ME TO DO. I REALLY NEED TO GET BACK TO MY DATE--AND PLEASE DON'T TELL MY GIRLFRIEND I WORE MY COSTUME UNDER MY CLOTHES.
DO YOU HAVE A COMPARTMENT ON THIS SLED I COULD PUT THESE IN?
I'LL TAKE THOSE OFF YOUR HANDS.
HUH?
WHAT WAS--?
PROBABLY BEST IF WE IGNORE THAT.


OKAY--SO WHAT IS IT YOU NEED ME TO DO? AM I FIGHTING SOMETHING?
YES, THAT'S EXACTLY IT. WE NEED YOU TO FIGHT OUR KING-- HE'S LOST HIS MIND AND--
OH, CRAP.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE THEM LONGER TO DETECT OUR PRESENCE.
HALT!
YOU WILL ALLOW YOURSELVES TO BE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY. RESIST AND YOU AUTHORIZE US TO USE LETHAL FORCE!
11-Z1Z
YOU WANT ME TO TAKE THESE GUYS OUT?
NO--THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY SPEED THINGS UP. WE WANT TO BE ARRESTED.
JUST GO WITH IT.

OKAY--NOW WE CAN TALK. HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, SOCIETY WAS ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE--AND ONE MAN CAME TO THE FOREFRONT, LEADING THE WORLD... RESTORING ORDER.
THE WORLD WAS IN SUCH A STATE OF CHAOS, NO ONE EVEN REMEMBERS HOW HE CAME TO BE IN POWER--BUT HE WAS SOMEHOW MADE SUPREME RULER OF THE PLANET.
AND HE'S BEEN RULING IT EVER SINCE.
FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS?
IS HE A... *VILTRUMITE?*
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.
ANYWAY, HE'S LOST HIS MIND, HE'S DESTROYING THE PLANET, PEOPLE ARE DYING--AND THINGS ARE ONLY GETTING WORSE.
RIGHT--AND WE WERE ASSEMBLING PIECES OF A WEAPON THAT COULD SUPPOSEDLY DEFEAT HIM. THE INK FROM YOUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS USED TO MAKE A POISON HE WOULDN'T BE IMMUNE TO.
IT DIDN'T WORK.
HE'S A TYRANT. HE KILLS FOR AMUSEMENT. MY WIFE WAS BROUGHT TO HIM--THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I SAW HER.
WE'RE BEING BROUGHT TO THE CITADEL, BUT WE'LL BE HELD IN THE DETENTION LEVEL-- YOU'LL NEED TO WORK YOUR WAY UP TO THE ROYAL CHAMBERS. WE'VE GOT REBELS WORKING WITH US EVERYWHERE. ONCE WE FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET YOU TO THE KING WE CAN--
YOU TWO--COME WITH US.
WHAT ABOUT HIM?
*THE KING WANTS TO SEE HIM **IMMEDIATELY.***

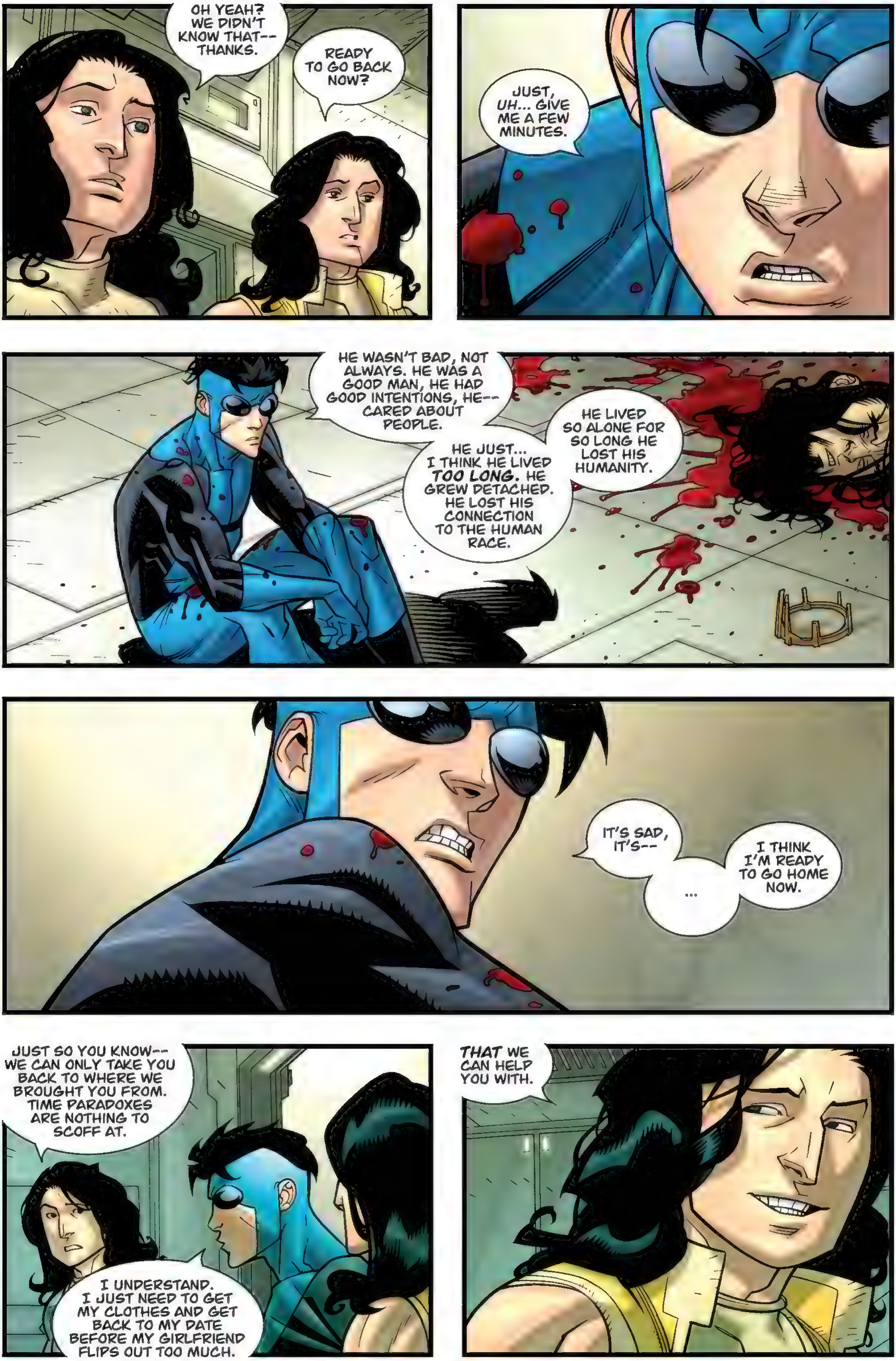

THROUGH HERE.
IMMORTAL?
THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN ALIVE WHO STILL KNOWS ME BY THAT NAME...
MARK GRAYSON... IT *IS* YOU.
YOU'RE... THEIR KING?
YOU'RE SMALLER-- *MUCH* SMALLER THAN WHEN I LAST SAW YOU. YOU'RE NOT *SICK* ARE YOU? I THOUGHT THEY'D FOUND A CURE FOR--

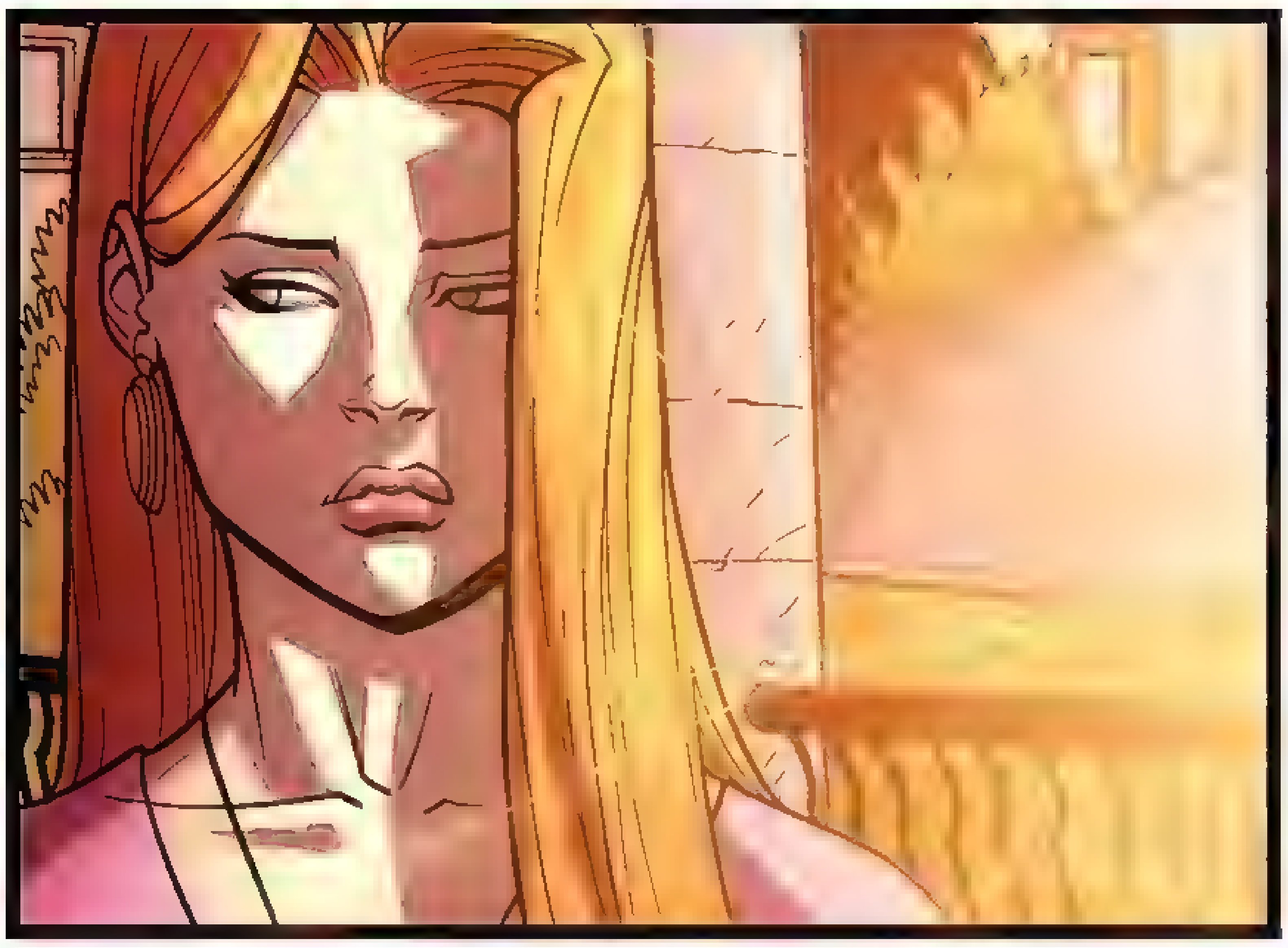
NO, I'M FINE-- I'M JUST YOUNGER. THESE GUYS BROUGHT ME HERE FROM THE--
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE YOU TOOK YOUR FAMILY AND LEFT THIS PLANET. WHAT WAS THAT--TWO HUNDRED--THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO?
I JUST... I CAN'T REMEMBER.
I CARRY WITHIN ME A GREAT SORROW, MARK. SOMETHING I CAN'T OVERCOME... NOT ANYMORE...
IS IT ABOUT KATE? DID KATE DIE?
KATE? I DON'T REMEMBER A KATE...
IS THAT THE REDHEAD THAT YOU--
NO!
I DON'T REMEMBER! I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING!
I WANT IT ALL TO END... FINALLY, AT LONG LAST... I JUST WANT IT TO BE OVER.
I WANT TO DIE, MARK.
UH... I'M SORRY, I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

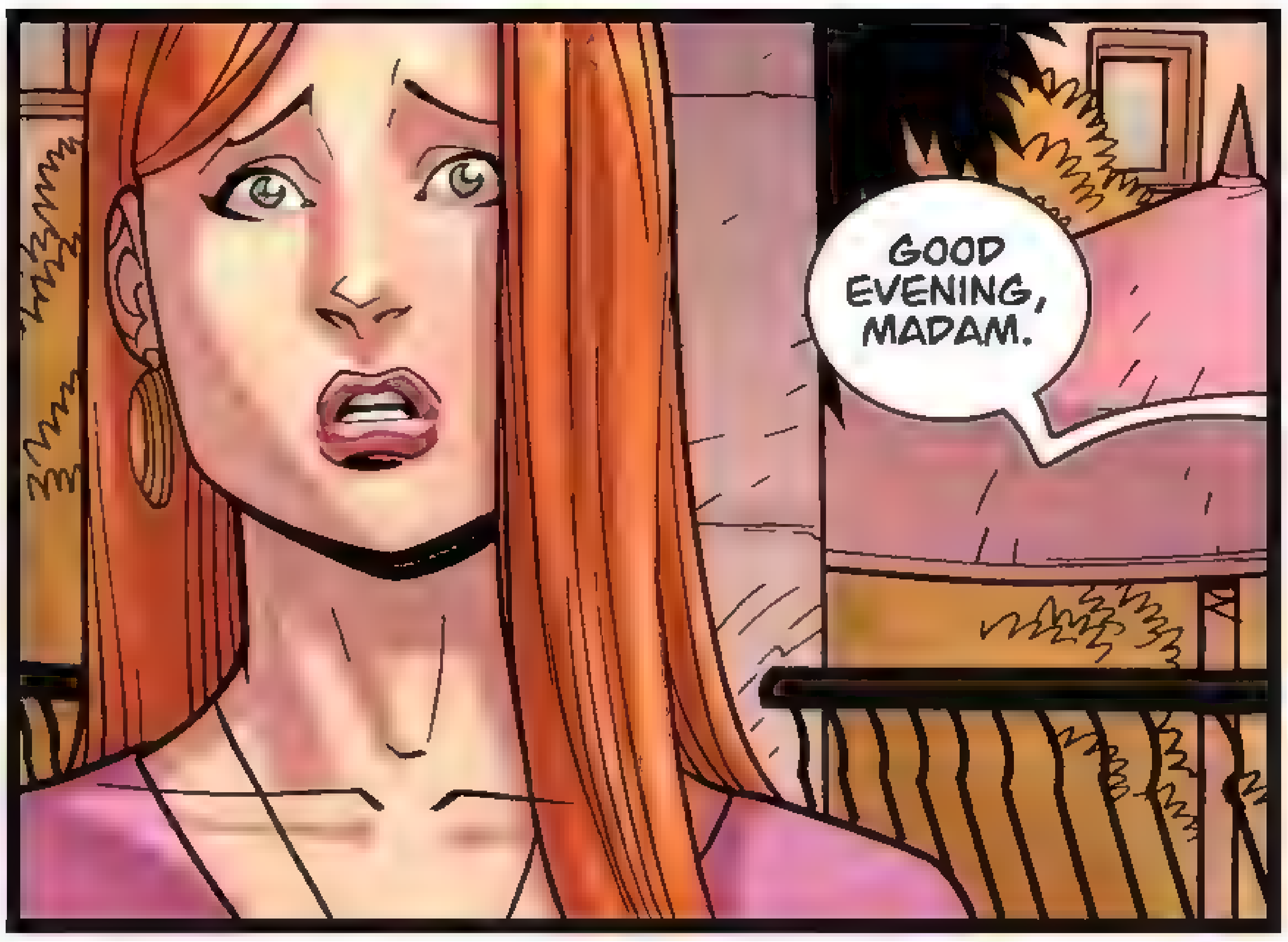
I'M JUST GLAD YOU'VE COME. I NEED YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME, MARK.
I NEED YOU TO KILL ME.
UH... WHY?
I CAN'T LEAD A WORLD I DON'T CARE ABOUT... I'M FINISHED. I'VE WANTED TO DIE FOR SOME TIME. I CAN'T DO IT MYSELF... ALL ATTEMPTS HAVE FAILED.
I'VE TRIED TO INSTIGATE MY MURDER... BUT IT CAN'T BE DONE. THE THINGS I'VE DONE... THE HORRIBLE ACTS I'VE COMMITTED, I'VE TAKEN LIVES--ALL IN AN ATTEMPT TO INSPIRE A REVOLT-- AN ATTACK AGAINST ME, BUT THEY ALWAYS FAIL.
BUT YOU... YOU'RE STRONG ENOUGH... YOU COULD KILL ME... SEPARATE MY PARTS SO I DON'T COME BACK... YOU COULD GIVE ME THE ETERNAL PEACE I'VE LONGED FOR.
I'M SORRY, BUT... I CAN'T DO THAT.
I CAN'T JUST KILL YOU.
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE HERE ALIVE... YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO.

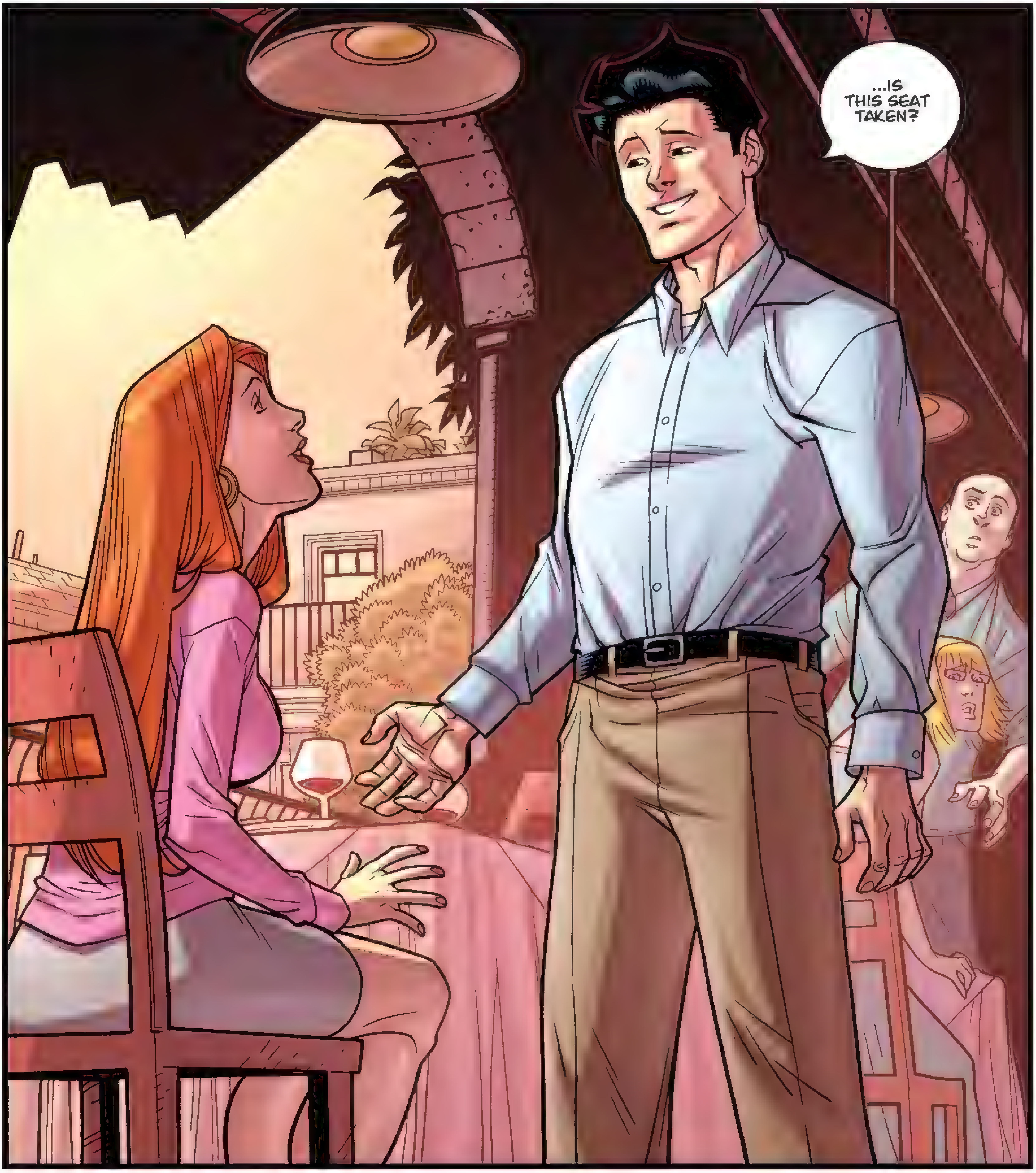
DO IT!
KILL ME!
WRAMM!
I'VE KILLED WOMEN--CHILDREN--I'VE BECOME THE VERY THING I FOUGHT AGAINST MY WHOLE LIFE!
I DESERVE TO DIE!
WHUDD!
YOU NEVER SHOULD HAVE LEFT ME IN CHARGE OF EARTH! I'M NOT A VILTRUMITE--I KNEW I COULDN'T DO IT! YOU NEVER SHOULD HAVE MADE ME DO THIS!
WHAT?!
THIS IS YOUR FAULT! I'VE DONE ALL THIS BECAUSE OF YOU! AS LEADER OF THE EMPIRE *YOU* SHOULD HAVE--
WRAKK!
STOP!
JUST STOP TALKING!!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THESE THINGS!

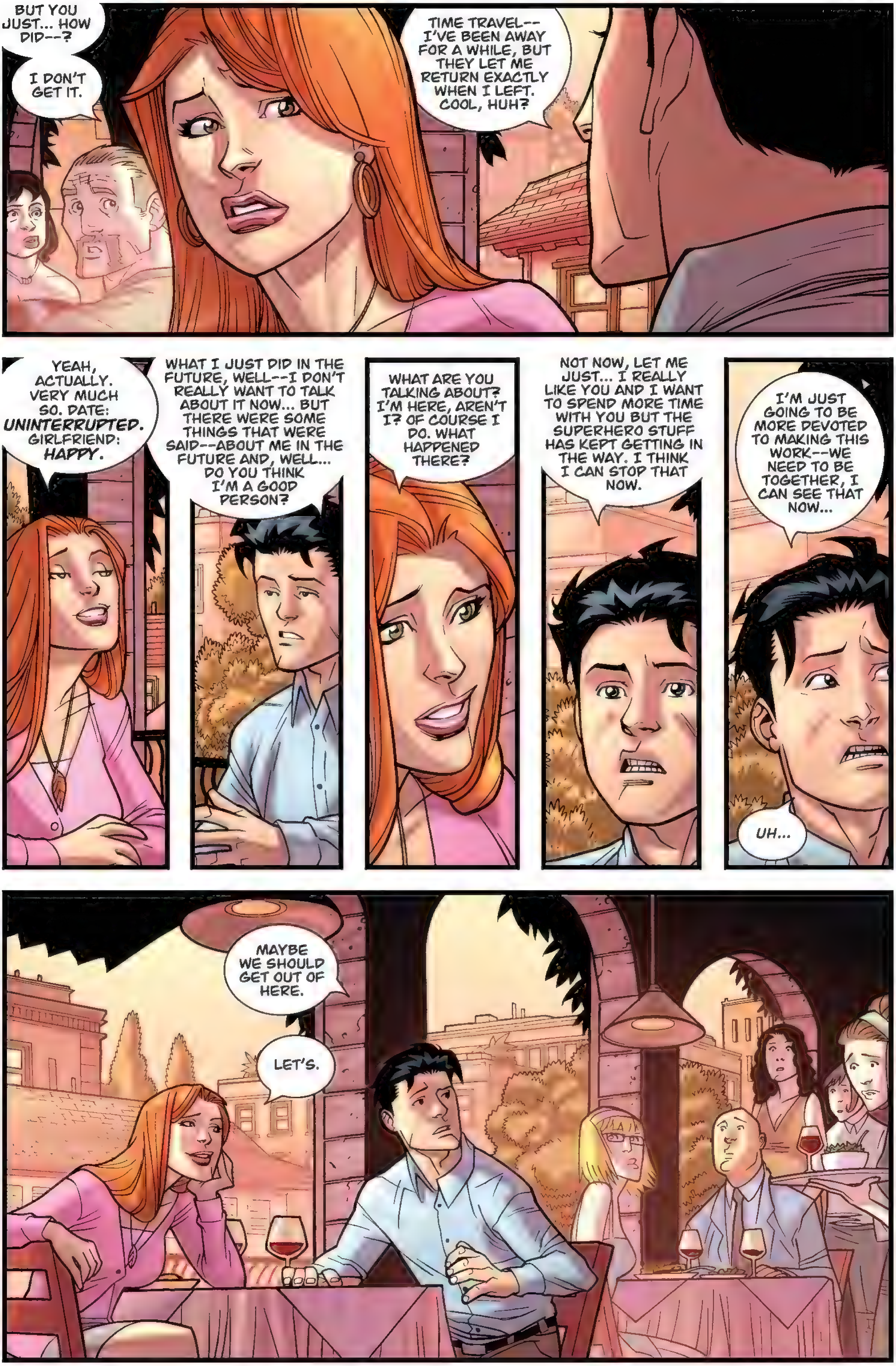
SCHLAGG!!
SHUT UP!
THUMP!
WE WERE ABLE TO CONTACT THE RESISTANCE FROM OUR HOLDING CELL. THE ROYAL GUARD HAS FALLEN--WE'VE TAKEN OVER THE CITADEL, IT'S ALL OVER!
WE CAN TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR TIME WHENEVER YOU'RE READY.
HE'S NOT *REALLY* DEAD. YOU NEED TO KEEP WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM SEPARATED OR HE'LL COME BACK--THAT'S HOW HE WORKS.


OH YEAH? WE DIDN'T KNOW THAT-- THANKS.
READY TO GO BACK NOW?
JUST, UH... GIVE ME A FEW MINUTES.
HE WASN'T BAD, NOT ALWAYS. HE WAS A GOOD MAN, HE HAD GOOD INTENTIONS, HE-- CARED ABOUT PEOPLE.
HE JUST... I THINK HE LIVED *TOO LONG.* HE GREW DETACHED. HE LOST HIS CONNECTION TO THE HUMAN RACE.
HE LIVED SO ALONE FOR SO LONG HE LOST HIS HUMANITY.
IT'S SAD, IT'S--
...
I THINK I'M READY TO GO HOME NOW.
JUST SO YOU KNOW-- WE CAN ONLY TAKE YOU BACK TO WHERE WE BROUGHT YOU FROM. TIME PARADOXES ARE NOTHING TO SCOFF AT.
I UNDERSTAND. I JUST NEED TO GET MY CLOTHES AND GET BACK TO MY DATE BEFORE MY GIRLFRIEND FLIPS OUT TOO MUCH.
THAT WE CAN HELP YOU WITH.

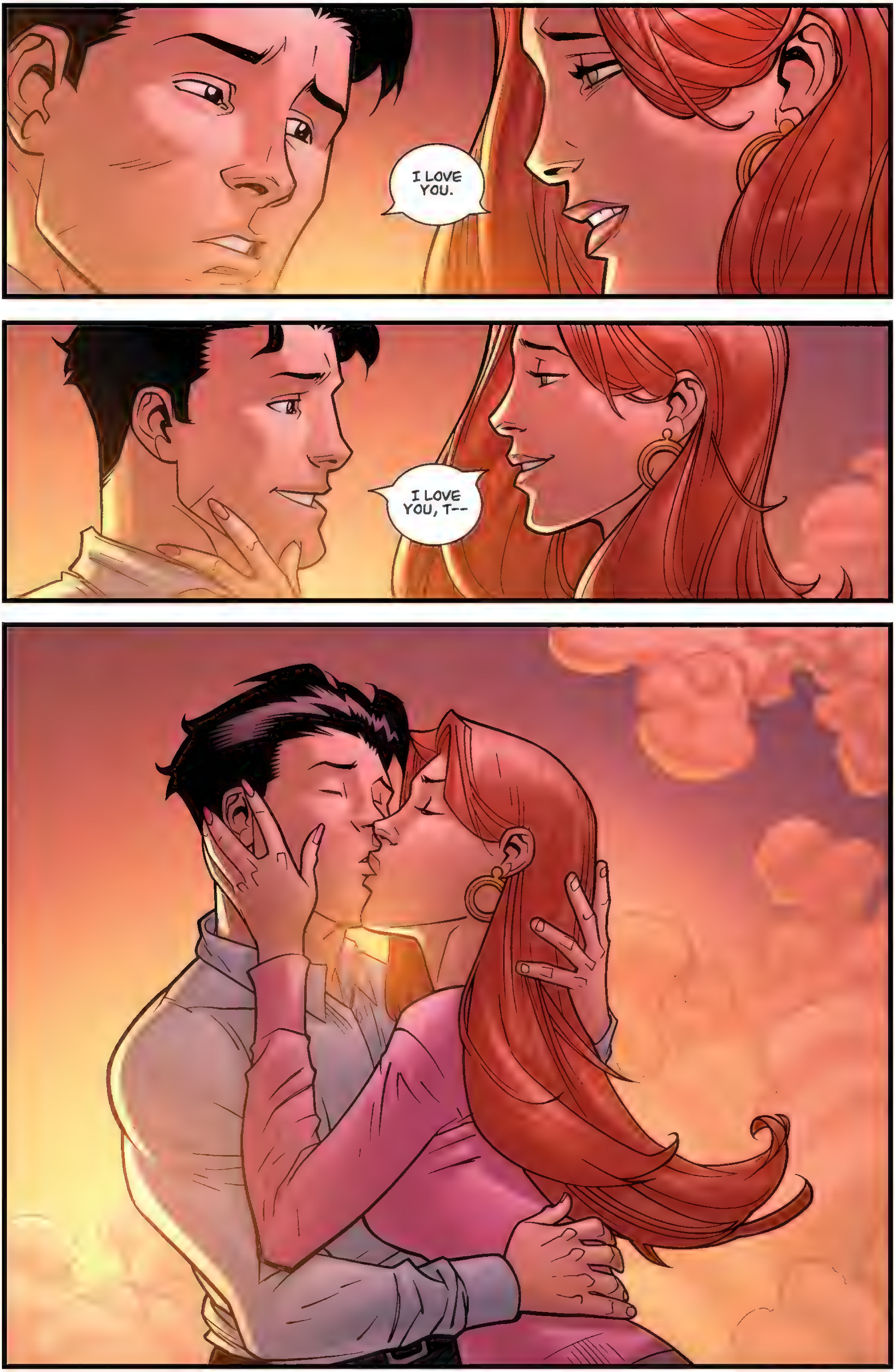



GOOD EVENING, MADAM.


...IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?


BUT YOU JUST... HOW DID--?
I DON'T GET IT.
TIME TRAVEL--I'VE BEEN AWAY FOR A WHILE, BUT THEY LET ME RETURN EXACTLY WHEN I LEFT. COOL, HUH?
YEAH, ACTUALLY. VERY MUCH SO. DATE: *UNINTERRUPTED*. GIRLFRIEND: *HAPPY*.
WHAT I JUST DID IN THE FUTURE, WELL--I DON'T REALLY WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT NOW... BUT THERE WERE SOME THINGS THAT WERE SAID--ABOUT ME IN THE FUTURE AND, WELL... DO YOU THINK I'M A GOOD PERSON?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'M HERE, AREN'T I? OF COURSE I DO. WHAT HAPPENED THERE?
NOT NOW, LET ME JUST... I REALLY LIKE YOU AND I WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOU BUT THE SUPERHERO STUFF HAS KEPT GETTING IN THE WAY. I THINK I CAN STOP THAT NOW.
I'M JUST GOING TO BE MORE DEVOTED TO MAKING THIS WORK--WE NEED TO BE TOGETHER, I CAN SEE THAT NOW...
UH...
MAYBE WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE.
LET'S.

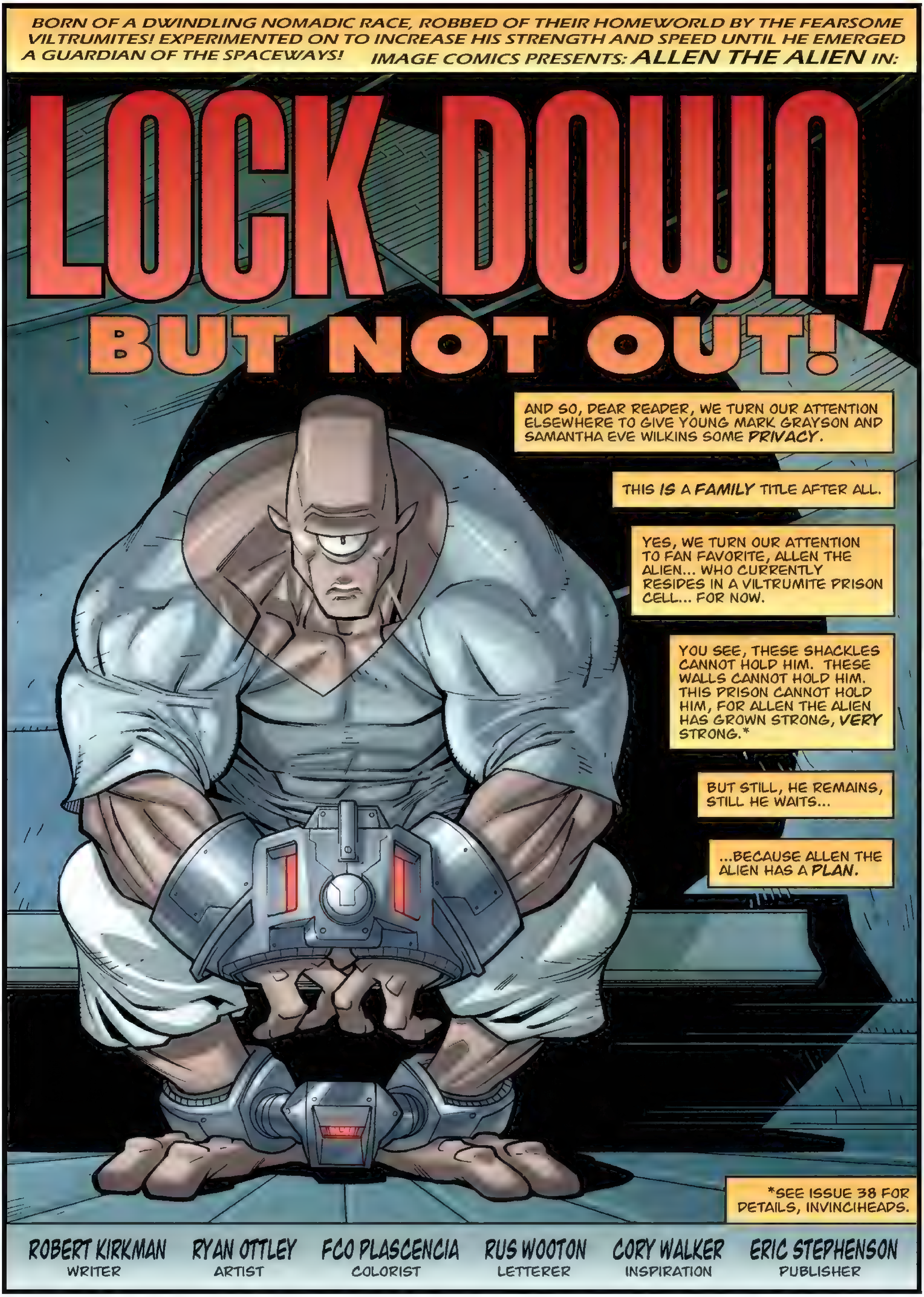
SCHOOL BUS
RYAN fco CLIFF


I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU, T--

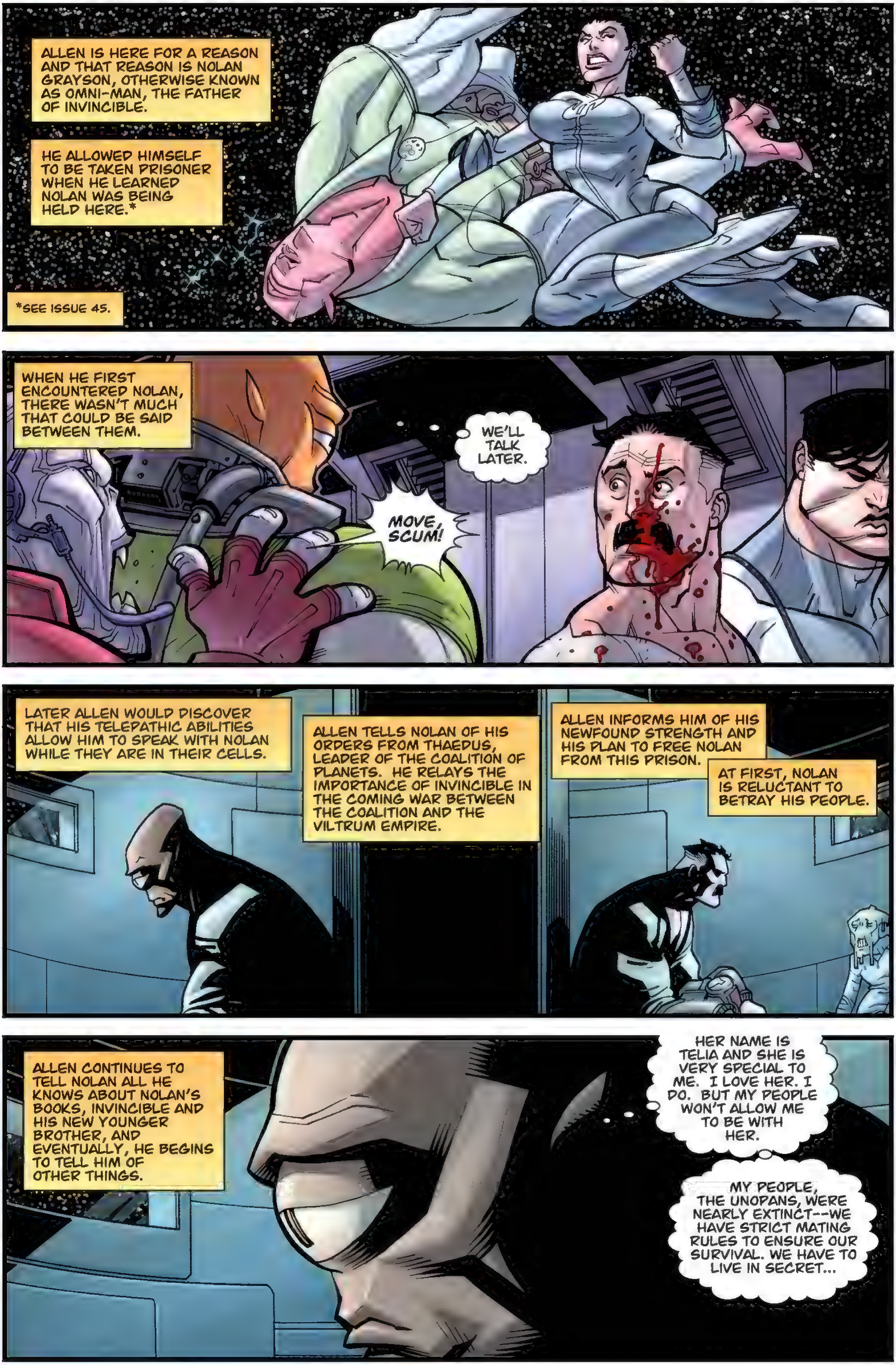
CHAPTER 55

RYAN
FCO
plascencia

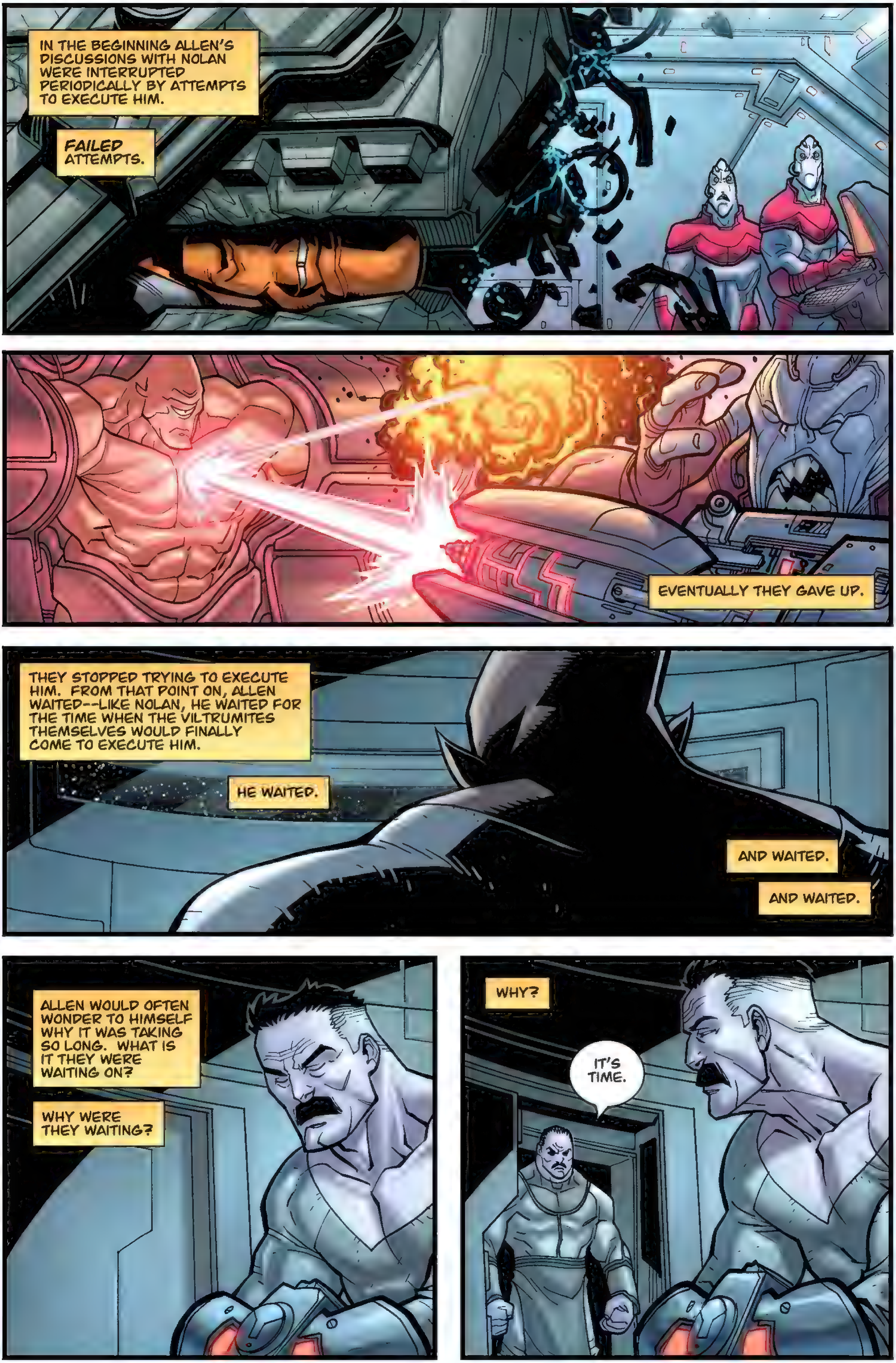
YOU'RE SURE YOU WANT TO COME BACK HERE?
SURE, I FIGURED THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY TO JUST SIT AND TALK. I THINK MY MOM'S OUT ON A DATE... OLIVER'S TUTOR TOOK HIM TO SEE SOME PLAY TONIGHT.
THERE'S NOBODY HERE.
WE'VE KINDA ALREADY SEEN MOST OF THE WORLD BUT THE NIGHT'S STILL YOUNG IF YOU WANT TO GO OUT AND DO SOMETHING.
THE NIGHT'S YOUNG, LET'S STOP BACK AT MY PLACE, NOBODY'S THERE. RIIIIGHT.
YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU DIDN'T *PLAN* THIS?
PLAN WHAT?
YOU'RE SWEET.


BORN OF A DWINDLING NOMADIC RACE, ROBBED OF THEIR HOMEWORLD BY THE FEARSOME VILTRUMITES! EXPERIMENTED ON TO INCREASE HIS STRENGTH AND SPEED UNTIL HE EMERGED A GUARDIAN OF THE SPACEWAYS! IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS: ALLEN THE ALIEN IN:
LOCK DOWN, BUT NOT OUT!
AND SO, DEAR READER, WE TURN OUR ATTENTION ELSEWHERE TO GIVE YOUNG MARK GRAYSON AND SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS SOME PRIVACY.
THIS IS A FAMILY TITLE AFTER ALL.
YES, WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO FAN FAVORITE, ALLEN THE ALIEN... WHO CURRENTLY RESIDES IN A VILTRUMITE PRISON CELL... FOR NOW.
YOU SEE, THESE SHACKLES CANNOT HOLD HIM. THESE WALLS CANNOT HOLD HIM. THIS PRISON CANNOT HOLD HIM, FOR ALLEN THE ALIEN HAS GROWN STRONG, VERY STRONG.*
BUT STILL, HE REMAINS, STILL HE WAITS...
...BECAUSE ALLEN THE ALIEN HAS A PLAN.
*SEE ISSUE 38 FOR DETAILS, INVINCIHEADS.
ROBERT KIRKMAN WRITER
RYAN OTTLEY ARTIST
FCO PLASCENCIA COLORIST
RUS WOOTON LETTERER
CORY WALKER INSPIRATION
ERIC STEPHENSON PUBLISHER

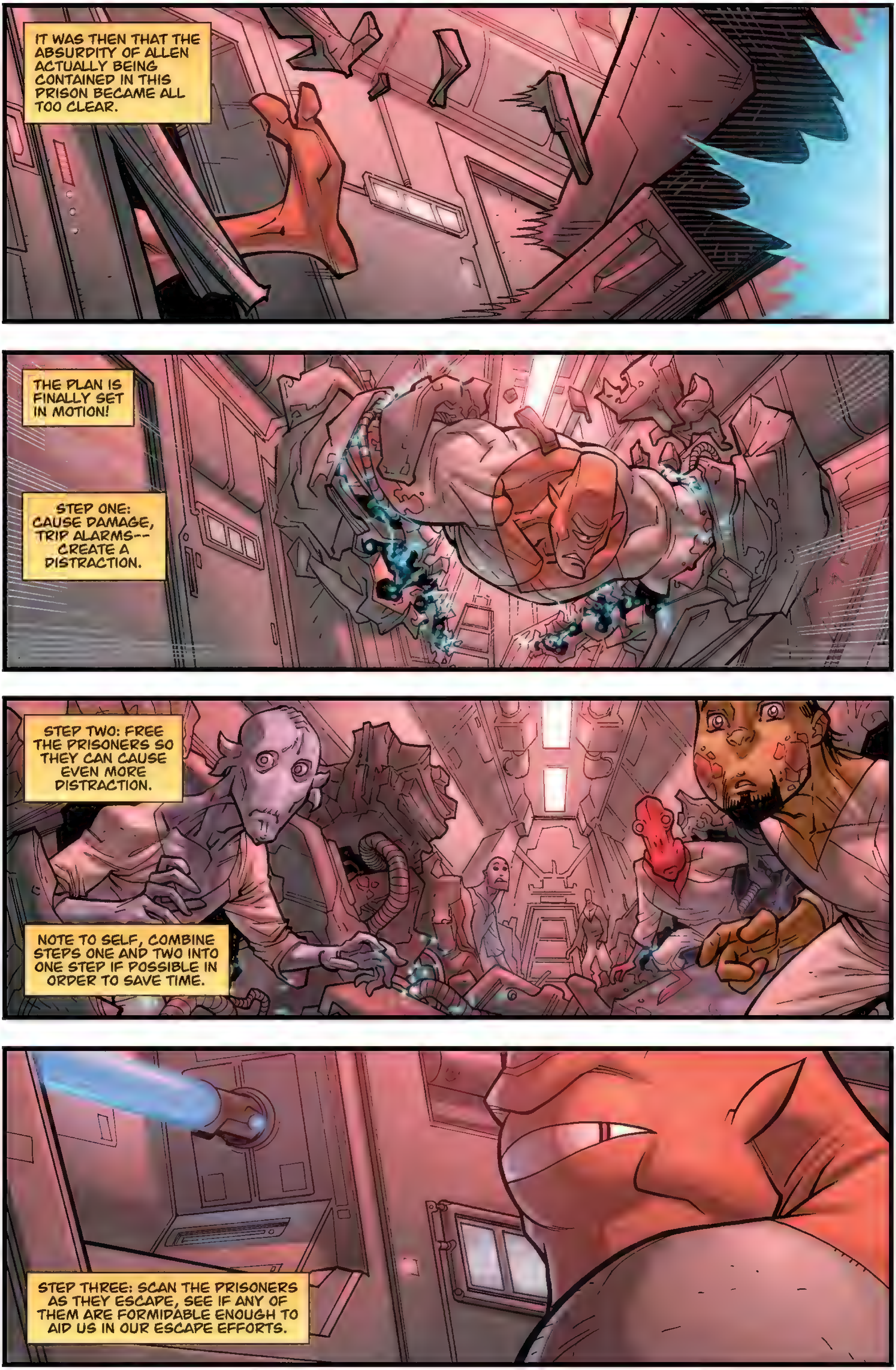
INVINCIBLE Vol 1, No 55, OCTOBER, 2008 (U.S.P.S. 426-730) Published by IMAGE COMICS Robert Kirkman, Chief Operating Officer. Erik Larsen, Chief Finacial Officer. Todd McFarlane, President. Marc Silvestri, Chief Executive Officer. Jim Valentino, Vice-President. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1942 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 305, BERKELEY, CA 94704. **SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** Published monthly. Copyright © 2008 by ROBERT KIRKMAN & CORY WALKER. All rights reserved. Price $2.95 per copy in the U.S. and $3.65 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. $12.00; Canada $17.00; and foreign $24.00. Printed in Canada. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that is shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. INVINCIBLE (including all prominent characters featured in the issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) are trademarks of ROBERT KIRKMAN & CORY WALKER. **POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO INVINCIBLE, c/o IMAGE COMICS, 1942 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 305, BERKELEY, CA 94704.**


ALLEN IS HERE FOR A REASON AND THAT REASON IS NOLAN GRAYSON, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS OMNI-MAN, THE FATHER OF INVINCIBLE.
HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE TAKEN PRISONER WHEN HE LEARNED NOLAN WAS BEING HELD HERE.*
*SEE ISSUE 45.
WHEN HE FIRST ENCOUNTERED NOLAN, THERE WASN'T MUCH THAT COULD BE SAID BETWEEN THEM.
WE'LL TALK LATER.
MOVE, SCUM!
LATER ALLEN WOULD DISCOVER THAT HIS TELEPATHIC ABILITIES ALLOW HIM TO SPEAK WITH NOLAN WHILE THEY ARE IN THEIR CELLS.
ALLEN TELLS NOLAN OF HIS ORDERS FROM THAEDUS, LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS. HE RELAYS THE IMPORTANCE OF INVINCIBLE IN THE COMING WAR BETWEEN THE COALITION AND THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
ALLEN INFORMS HIM OF HIS NEWFOUND STRENGTH AND HIS PLAN TO FREE NOLAN FROM THIS PRISON.
AT FIRST, NOLAN IS RELUCTANT TO BETRAY HIS PEOPLE.
ALLEN CONTINUES TO TELL NOLAN ALL HE KNOWS ABOUT NOLAN'S BOOKS, INVINCIBLE AND HIS NEW YOUNGER BROTHER, AND EVENTUALLY, HE BEGINS TO TELL HIM OF OTHER THINGS.
HER NAME IS TELIA AND SHE IS VERY SPECIAL TO ME. I LOVE HER. I DO. BUT MY PEOPLE WON'T ALLOW ME TO BE WITH HER.
MY PEOPLE, THE UNOPANS, WERE NEARLY EXTINCT--WE HAVE STRICT MATING RULES TO ENSURE OUR SURVIVAL. WE HAVE TO LIVE IN SECRET...

EVENTUALLY, THIS LED TO NOLAN TALKING ABOUT OTHER THINGS AS WELL.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL-- NOT EXACTLY, BUT I HAVE FEELINGS THAT GO AGAINST EVERYTHING I'VE EVER BELIEVED TO BE TRUE.
MY ENTIRE EXISTENCE HAS BEEN PUT INTO QUESTION. I FEEL A LOVE I'VE NEVER FELT BEFORE, MADE STRONGER BY ABSENCE, AND IT'S SOMETHING, AS A VILTRUMITE, I SHOULD NOT BE FEELING.
MANY THINGS WERE DISCUSSED IN THE TIME NOLAN AWAITED EXECUTION FOR HIS CRIMES AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
EVENTUALLY THEY EVEN DISCUSSED THEIR MANY ENCOUNTERS IN EARTH'S ORBIT, YEARS AGO AT THIS POINT, WHEN NEITHER ONE KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT THE OTHER.*
A BOND STARTED TO FORM.
*SEEN BRIEFLY IN ISSUE 2 AND AGAIN IN ISSUE 11.
UNTIL THEY WERE *FRIENDS*.
THAT BOND GREW, UNTIL THE MISSION BECAME THAT MUCH MORE IMPORTANT.
ALLEN WAS NO LONGER THERE TO RESCUE A POSSIBLE ALLY.
HE NEEDED TO SAVE HIS FRIEND AND HE WAS NOT SURE HE WOULD SUCCEED--AND THIS WORRIED HIM.


IN THE BEGINNING ALLEN'S DISCUSSIONS WITH NOLAN WERE INTERRUPTED PERIODICALLY BY ATTEMPTS TO EXECUTE HIM.
FAILED ATTEMPTS.
EVENTUALLY THEY GAVE UP.
THEY STOPPED TRYING TO EXECUTE HIM. FROM THAT POINT ON, ALLEN WAITED--LIKE NOLAN, HE WAITED FOR THE TIME WHEN THE VILTRUMITES THEMSELVES WOULD FINALLY COME TO EXECUTE HIM.
HE WAITED.
AND WAITED.
AND WAITED.
ALLEN WOULD OFTEN WONDER TO HIMSELF WHY IT WAS TAKING SO LONG. WHAT IS IT THEY WERE WAITING ON?
WHY WERE THEY WAITING?
WHY?
IT'S TIME.

IT'S TIME.
SWEET!!
WRAKK!
HERE WE GO!

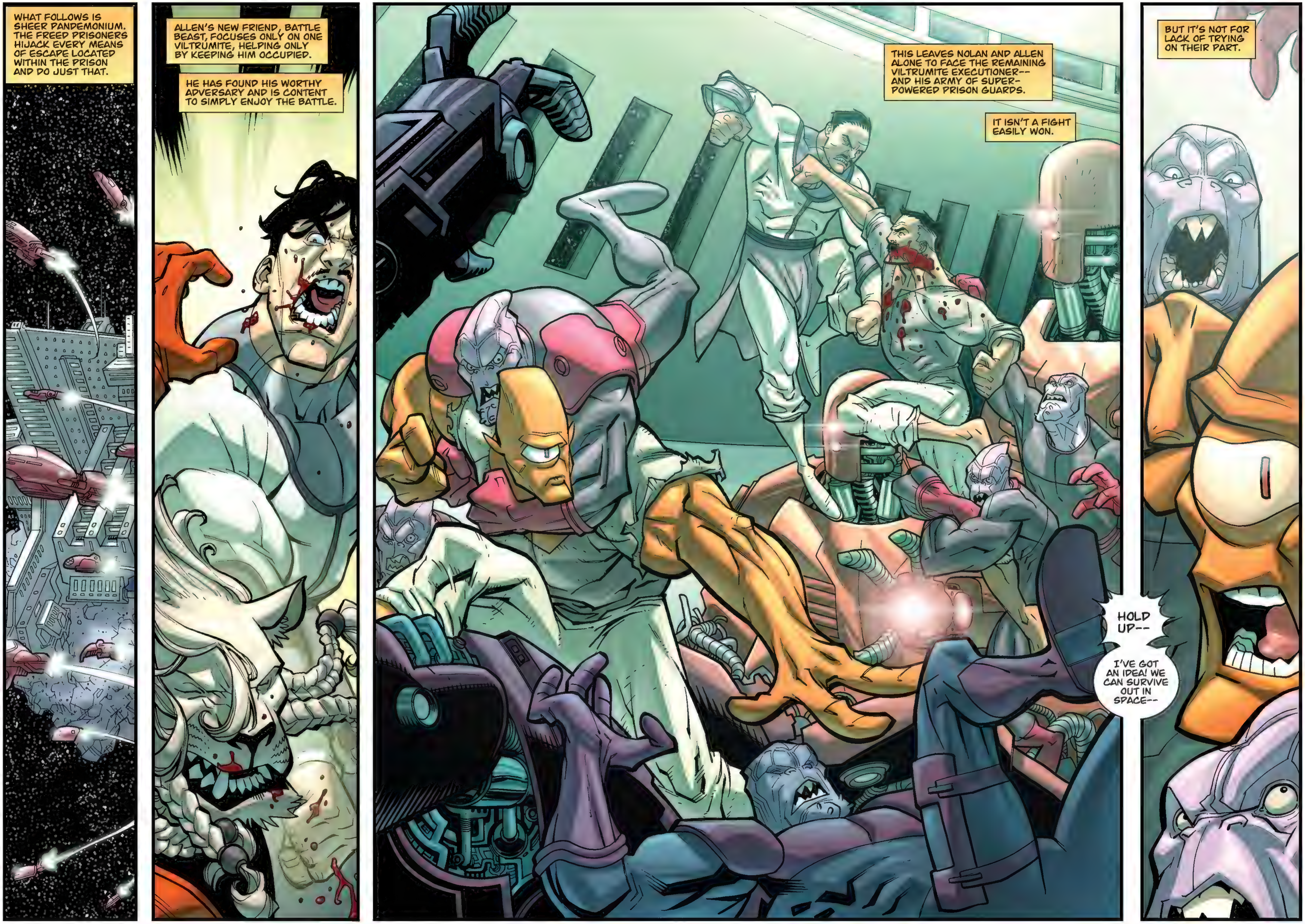

IT WAS THEN THAT THE ABSURDITY OF ALLEN ACTUALLY BEING CONTAINED IN THIS PRISON BECAME ALL TOO CLEAR.
THE PLAN IS FINALLY SET IN MOTION!
STEP ONE: CAUSE DAMAGE, TRIP ALARMS-- CREATE A DISTRACTION.
STEP TWO: FREE THE PRISONERS SO THEY CAN CAUSE EVEN MORE DISTRACTION.
NOTE TO SELF, COMBINE STEPS ONE AND TWO INTO ONE STEP IF POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO SAVE TIME.
STEP THREE: SCAN THE PRISONERS AS THEY ESCAPE, SEE IF ANY OF THEM ARE FORMIDABLE ENOUGH TO AID US IN OUR ESCAPE EFFORTS.

STEP ONE: CHECK.
STEP TWO: CHECK.
STEP THREE: ...?
WHO IS BRAVE ENOUGH TO FREE **BATTLE BEAST?!**
CHECK.

THAT WOULD BE ME.
WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN HELPING MY FRIEND AND I ESCAPE THIS PRISON?
I DESIRE ONLY TO FIND WORTHY ADVERSARIES... YOU CAN HAVE MY AID ONLY UNTIL OUR TWO GOALS NO LONGER COINCIDE.
WORKS FOR ME.
THIS WAY.
HALT OR YOU WILL BE KILLED WHERE YOU STAND!
THIS IS YOUR ONLY WARNING.
CONSIDER IT *IGNORED!*
KEEP FIGHTING-- WE'VE GOT TO GET TO THE EXECUTION ROOM BEFORE MY FRIEND IS KILLED!
I WILL HELP YOU BECAUSE IT BRINGS CONFLICT-- BUT YOU DO NOT COMMAND ME!

WRACK!
NOW WE LOOK ELSEWHERE IN THE PRISON, WHERE WE JOIN NOLAN'S EXECUTION, ALREADY IN PROGRESS.
I REGRET THAT IT'S COME TO THIS. YOU WERE MY HERO.
JUST...
GET IT OVER WITH, ALREADY.
WE CONSIDER IT AN HONOR TO--
KROOM!!
ANYONE HOME?!

WHO DARES INTERRUPT A VILTRUMITE EXECUTION?!
THIS CEREMONY IS SACRED!
NOT FOR US!
VILTRUMITE?! DID YOU SAY VILTRUMITE?!
KRAKOOM!!
ARE YOU THE ONES I SEEK? THE FABLED WORLD-CONQUERORS--FEARED ACROSS THE UNIVERSE--IN ALL CORNERS OF EXISTENCE?!
I MUST FACE YOU IN BATTLE! FIGHT ME!
THIS GUY FOR REAL?
SEEMS THAT WAY--HE'S A HUGE HELP!
SKROG!
GOOD.
WE'LL NEED HIM!

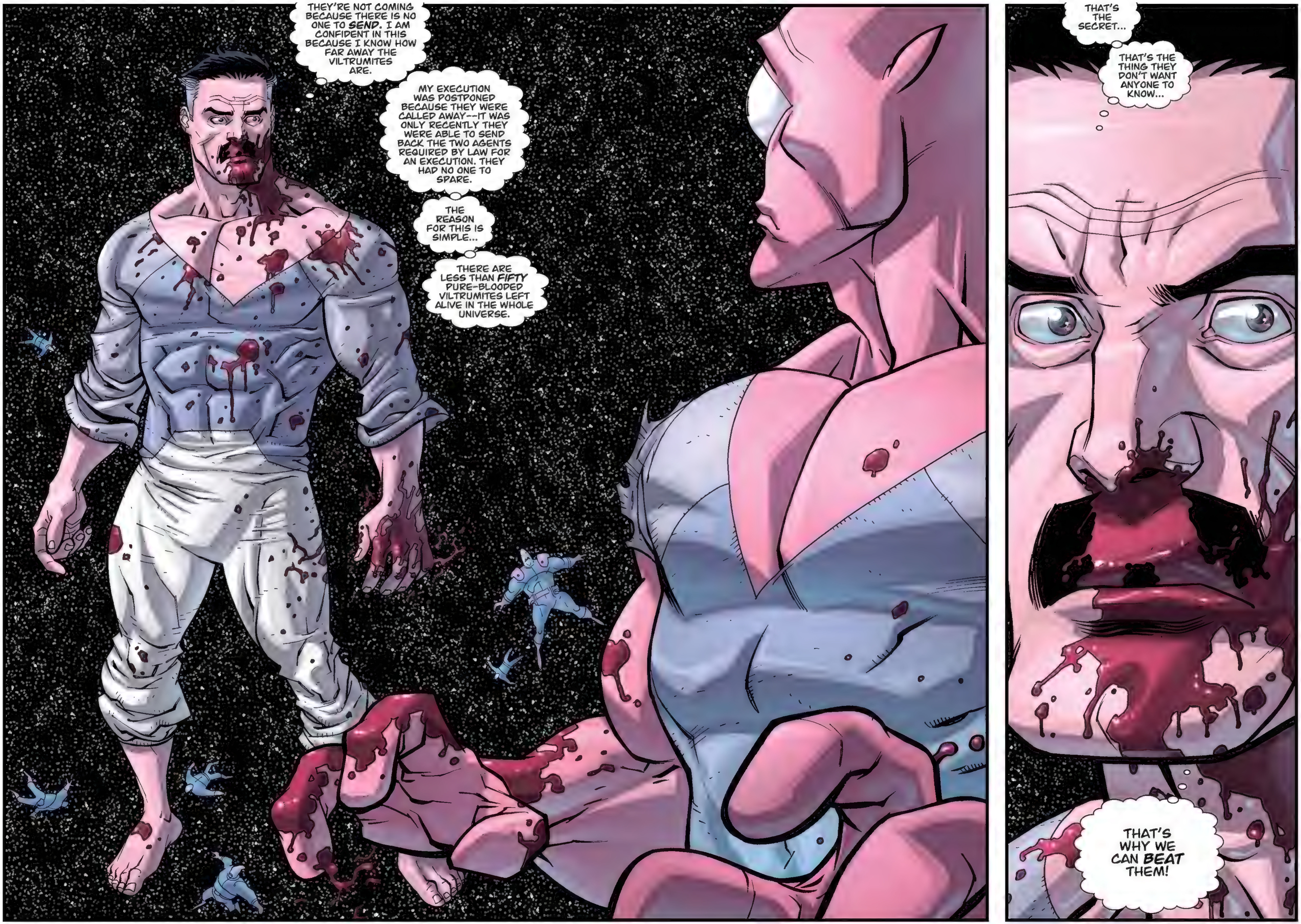

WHAT FOLLOWS IS SHEER PANDEMONIUM. THE FREED PRISONERS HIJACK EVERY MEANS OF ESCAPE LOCATED WITHIN THE PRISON AND DO JUST THAT.
ALLEN'S NEW FRIEND, BATTLE BEAST, FOCUSES ONLY ON ONE VILTRUMITE, HELPING ONLY BY KEEPING HIM OCCUPIED.
HE HAS FOUND HIS WORTHY ADVERSARY AND IS CONTENT TO SIMPLY ENJOY THE BATTLE.
THIS LEAVES NOLAN AND ALLEN ALONE TO FACE THE REMAINING VILTRUMITE EXECUTIONER-- AND HIS ARMY OF SUPER-POWERED PRISON GUARDS.
IT ISN'T A FIGHT EASILY WON.
BUT IT'S NOT FOR LACK OF TRYING ON THEIR PART.
HOLD UP--
I'VE GOT AN IDEA! WE CAN SURVIVE OUT IN SPACE--

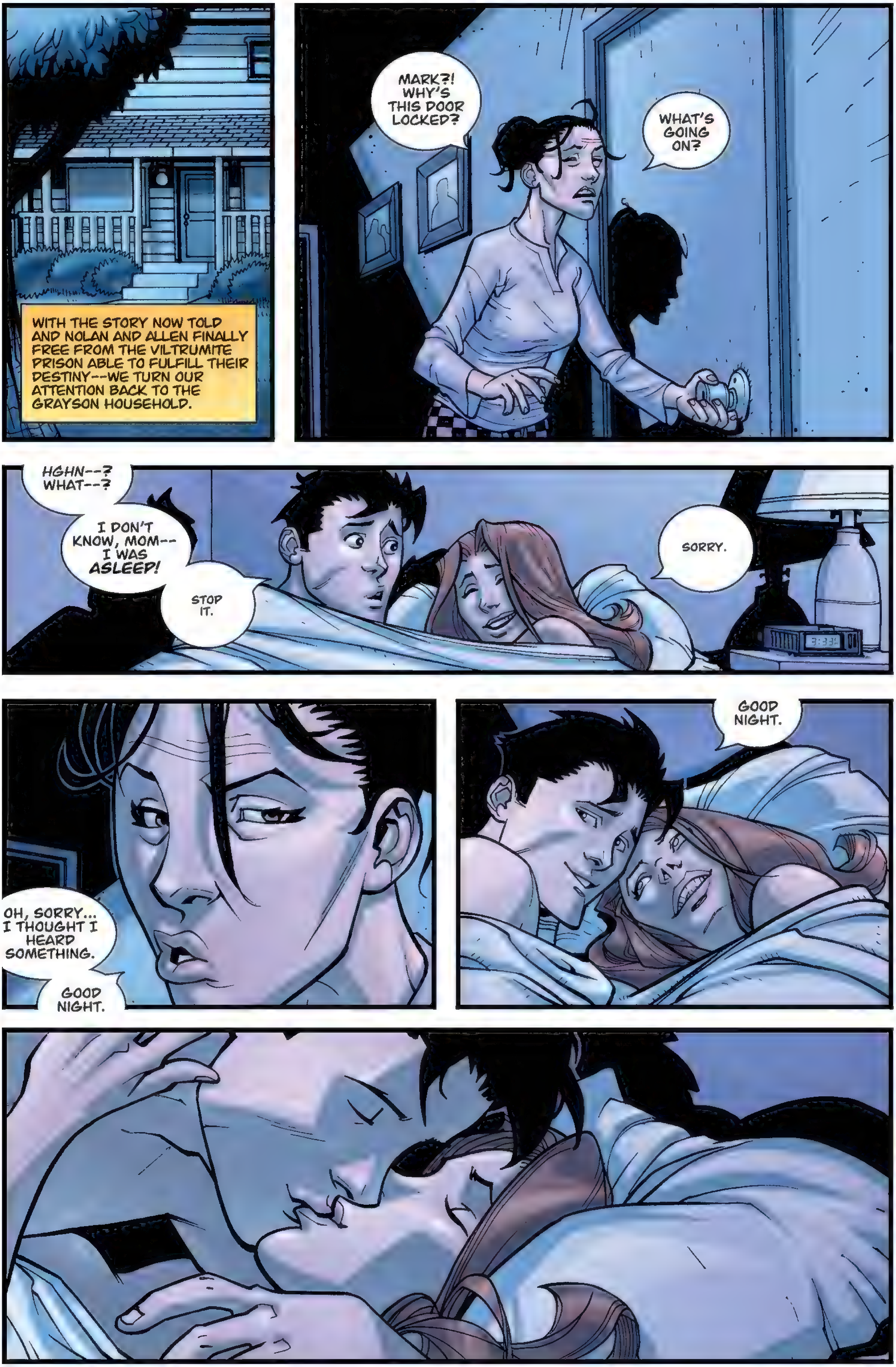
--BUT CAN *THEY?!*
KRA-GOOM!
ALLEN'S PUNCH CAUSES A MASSIVE CHAIN-REACTION, RIPPLING THROUGH NEARLY ALL OF THE VILTRUMITE PRISON WHICH CURRENTLY HOUSES HIM.
AS EVERY WEAK POINT IS EXPLOITED, EVERY SINGLE LOAD-BEARING STRUCTURE IS PUSHED TO ITS BREAKING POINT.
WITH ONE MIGHTY PUNCH, ALLEN THE ALIEN HAS COMPROMISED THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE ENTIRE STATION.
ONCE SHIELDED FROM ITS HARSH EMBRACE--THE ALIEN RACE CHARGED BY THE VILTRUMITES TO MAINTAIN AND RUN THEIR PRISON NOW FIND THEMSELVES HURTLING INTO THE BLACKNESS OF SPACE!

BEST IDEA EVER.
CRAP!
YOU'LL DIE FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
THE VILTRUMITE AGENT TRAINED WITH THE BEST OF THEM, HE SHOULDN'T GO NAMELESS, HE DESERVED A MUCH BETTER FATE THAN THIS.
HE WAS STRONG, HE WAS LOYAL-- HE WAS A VERY GOOD SOLDIER.
GET OFF HIM!
HE COULD HAVE BEEN THE PRIDE OF THE EMPIRE...
...BUT NOTHING COULD PREPARE HIM FOR WHAT COMES NEXT.

UM... WOW.
INDEED.
HOW STRONG ARE YOU?
VERY.

WHERE'S THAT OTHER VILTRUMITE-- AND MY FURRY FRIEND?
I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM SINCE YOU DEMOLISHED THAT WALL AND SENT US OUT HERE-- YOU THINK HE COULD SURVIVE OUT HERE?
NO DOUBT. MAYBE HE JUST RAN--BUT THEN WHERE'S THE VILTRUMITE?
MORE!
MORE!
MORE!!
CRAP!
WHAT IS IT?
MY GEAR, I SCANNED YOUR BOOKS WHEN I VISITED YOUR SON--I NEED THAT INFORMATION, I NEED TO RETRIEVE MY SCANNER--BUT WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE MORE VILTRUMITES SHOW UP.
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN ALERTED BY NOW.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.
WHY?
YOU HAVE TIME TO GET YOUR GEAR. TAKE YOUR TIME, WE'LL LOOK FOR MORE SUPPLIES.
TRUST ME... NO ONE IS COMING.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?


THEY'RE NOT COMING BECAUSE THERE IS NO ONE TO **SEND.** I AM CONFIDENT IN THIS BECAUSE I KNOW HOW FAR AWAY THE VILTRUMITES ARE.
MY EXECUTION WAS POSTPONED BECAUSE THEY WERE CALLED AWAY--IT WAS ONLY RECENTLY THEY WERE ABLE TO SEND BACK THE TWO AGENTS REQUIRED BY LAW FOR AN EXECUTION. THEY HAD NO ONE TO SPARE.
THE REASON FOR THIS IS SIMPLE...
THERE ARE LESS THAN ***FIFTY*** PURE-BLOODED VILTRUMITES LEFT ALIVE IN THE WHOLE UNIVERSE.
THAT'S THE SECRET...
THAT'S THE THING THEY DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW...
THAT'S WHY WE CAN ***BEAT*** THEM!


WITH THE STORY NOW TOLD AND NOLAN AND ALLEN FINALLY FREE FROM THE VILTRUMITE PRISON ABLE TO FULFILL THEIR DESTINY--WE TURN OUR ATTENTION BACK TO THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
MARK?! WHY'S THIS DOOR LOCKED?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
HGHN--? WHAT--?
I DON'T KNOW, MOM-- I WAS *ASLEEP!*
STOP IT.
SORRY.
OH, SORRY... I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING.
GOOD NIGHT.
GOOD NIGHT.

CHAPTER 56

RYAN—FCO plascencia

WHAT-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WOKE UP A FEW MINUTES AGO, I WAS JUST... I DON'T KNOW... WATCHING YOU SLEEP...
YOU WERE STARING AT ME LIKE A *WEIRDO!*
FWAPP!
WEIRDO? YOU RETHINKING THIS WHOLE THING ALREADY?
NO. NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT, MARK GRAYSON. I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU ALMOST AS MUCH AS I WISH WE HAD A PLACE OF OUR OWN.
YEAH.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN JUST BUILD A HOUSE WITH YOUR POWERS-- LAND HERE ISN'T CHEAP.
THIS ISN'T COOL. YOUR MOM'S WHAT--TEN FEET AWAY WHILE WE'RE DOING THIS? SHE HEARD US LAST NIGHT.
SHE DID NOT.
SHE TOTALLY *DID*, YOU LIAR.
MAYBE, BUT SHE WAS HALF ASLEEP.
I'M WITH YOU. THIS SUCKS, BUT I DON'T WANT TO FLY TO AFRICA EVERY TIME WE WANT TO HAVE SEX, YOU KNOW.
SO... ONE OF US NEEDS TO GET OUR OWN PLACE. WE'RE DECIDED.
I'D LOVE TO. IF ONLY I HAD THE MONEY.

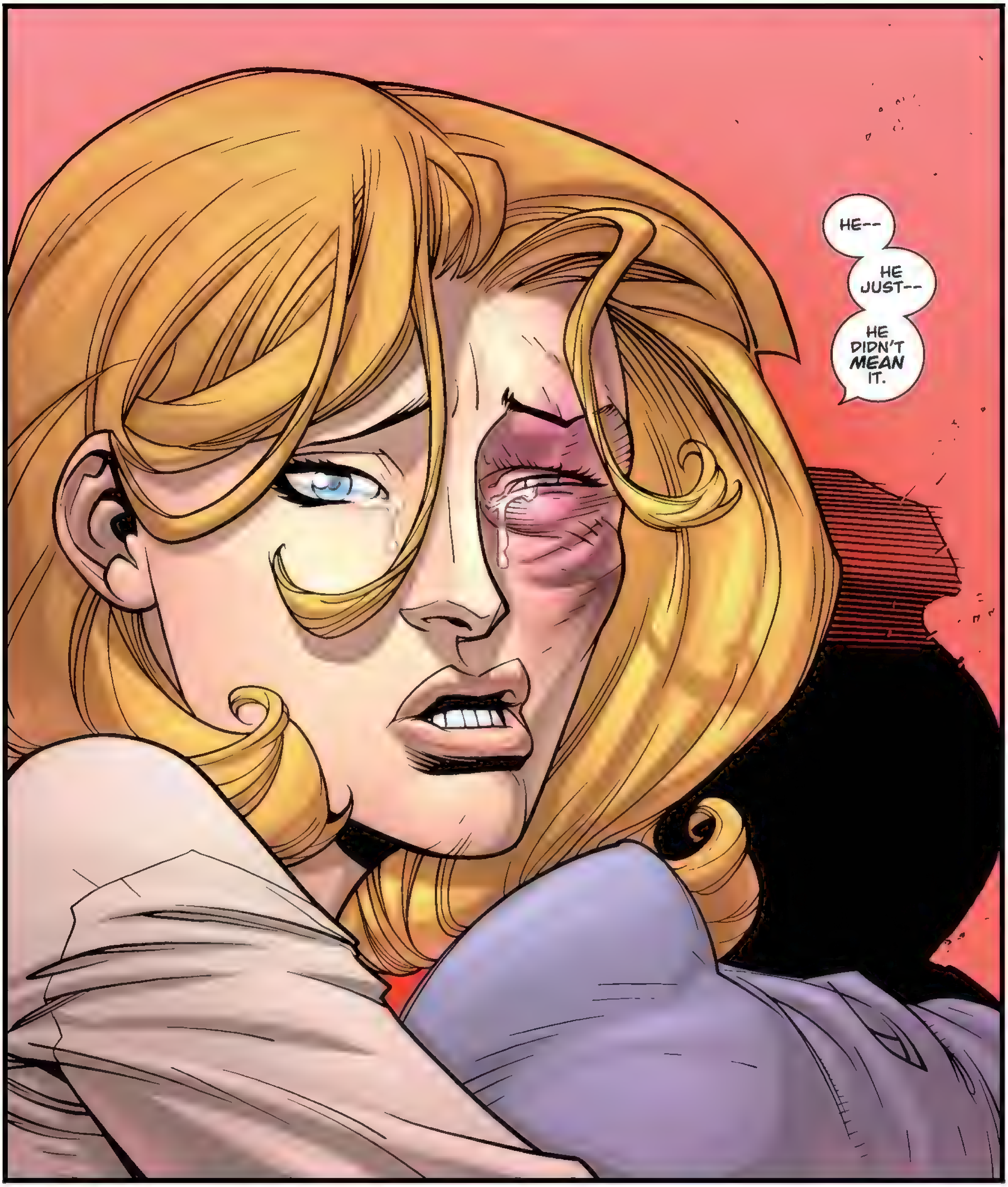
MONEY, HUH? I HAD AN IDEA ABOUT THAT.
RING! RING!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT-- OLIVER WILL GET IT.
NO! IF IT'S FOR YOU HE'LL BRING IT IN HERE AND--
KNOCK! KNOCK!
MARK! PHONE FOR YOU!
CRAP! DON'T LET HIM SEE ME--HE'LL TOTALLY TELL YOUR MOM.
I'M JUST GOING TO GET THE PHONE... I WON'T LET HIM IN.
GIVE IT TO-- HEY!
WHOA-- HEY, EVE!
DON'T TELL MOM, OKAY?
JUST GET OUT!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN HERE?

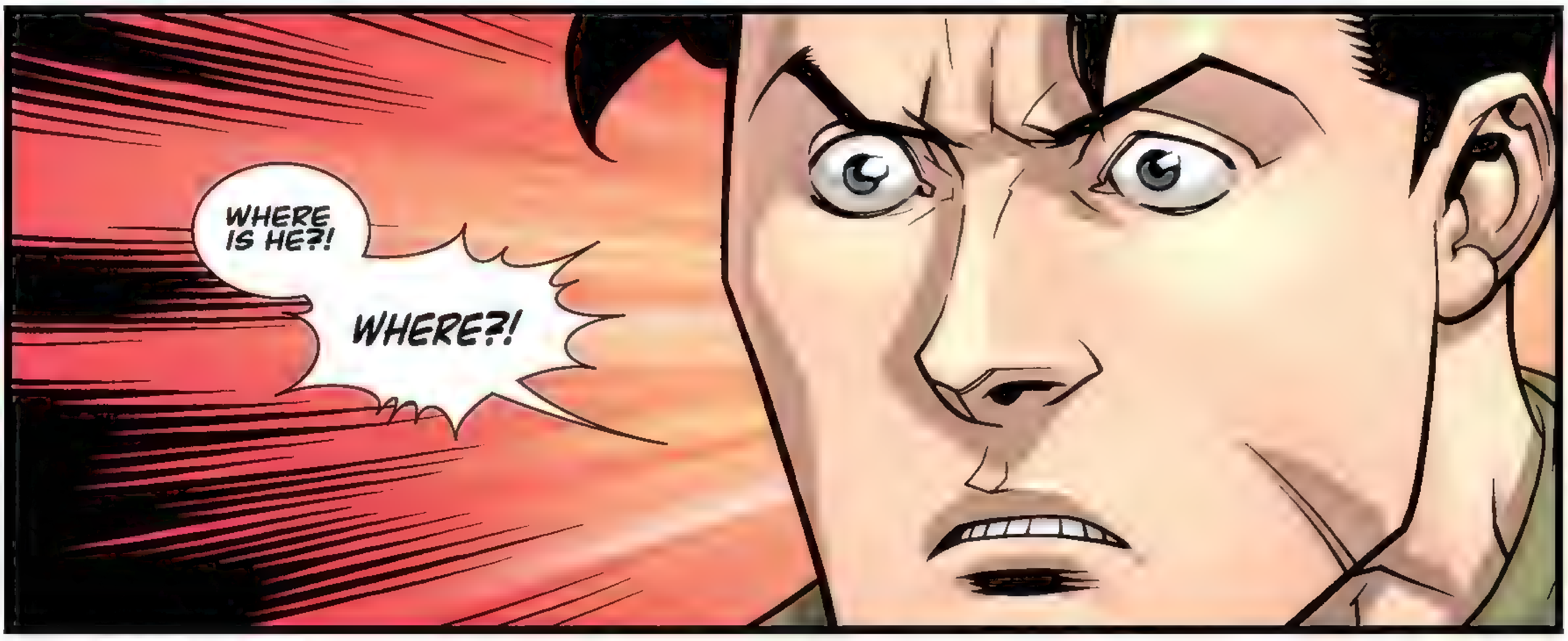
HELLO?
OH, HEY. HOW ARE YOU--?
...
OKAY...
YEAH, SURE. I'LL--
I'LL BE THERE IN A MINUTE.
WHAT?
I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER. JUST TRUST ME.
LAST NIGHT-- WHEN YOU--UH, WITH YOUR POWERS. WHERE'D YOU PUT MY COSTUME?
SHOULD BE IN YOUR CLOSET.
CAN I COME?
NO. THIS IS SOMETHING PERSONAL. I'M ONLY BRINGING THE COSTUME IN CASE I RUN INTO SOMETHING ON THE WAY.
MARK, WHAT'S GOING ON?
I REALLY JUST CAN'T GET INTO IT RIGHT NOW. IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS-- I'M NOT GOING TO GET HURT. JUST... LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT IT WHEN I GET BACK. CAN I DO THAT?
SURE-- WHATEVER. I SHOULD PROBABLY CHECK IN WITH MY FOLKS ANYWAY.
I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO DO MORE TRAINING TODAY...

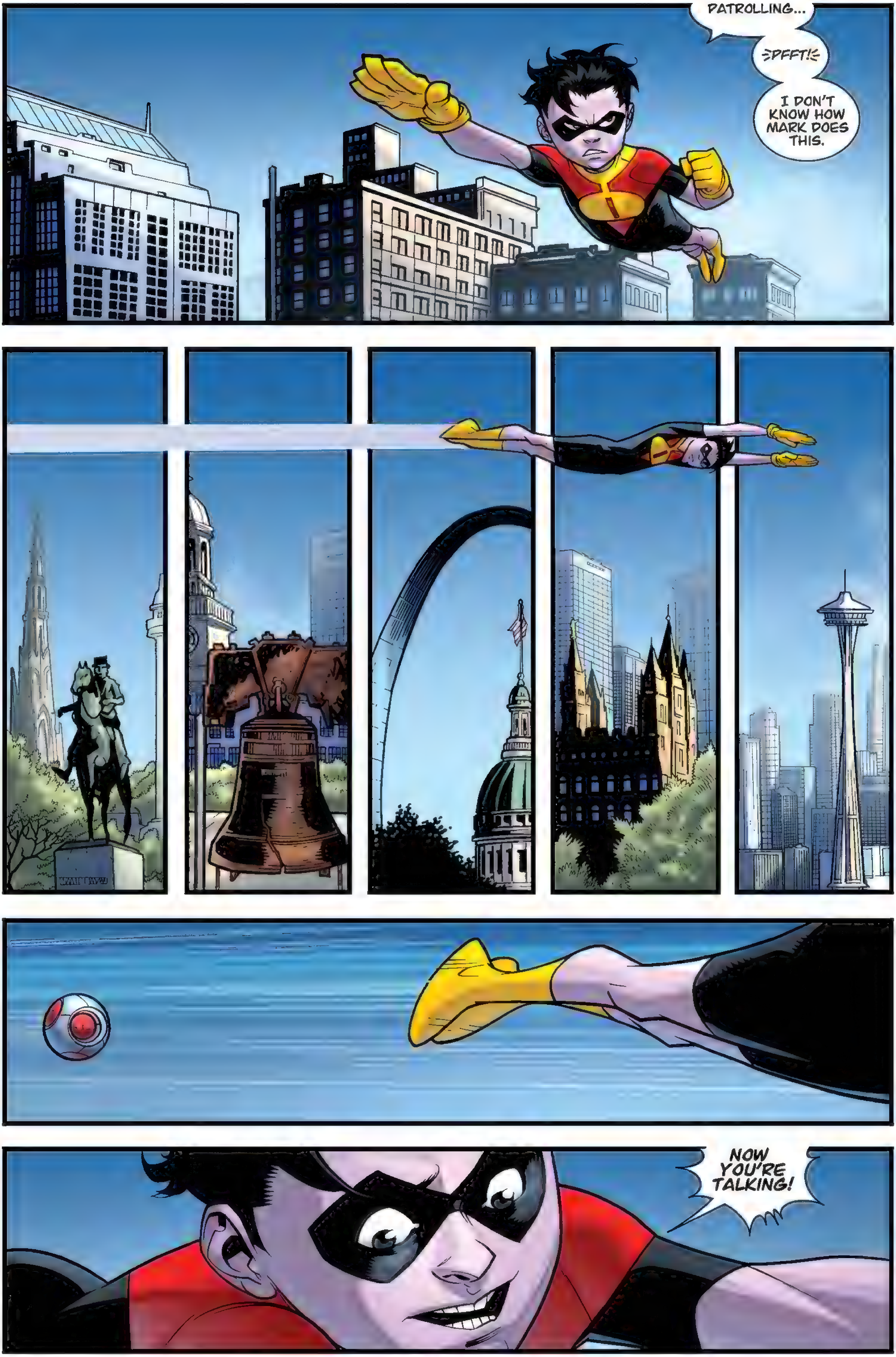
NO, I'LL TRY TO TAKE YOU OUT TONIGHT. STAY HERE.
EVE, I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I'M DONE.
YOU BETTER.
HEH.
"SLEEPING," MY ASS...

...
STAY HOME?
I THINK NOT.
IT'S TIME FOR--
KID OMNI-MAN'S FIRST SOLO ADVENTURE!!

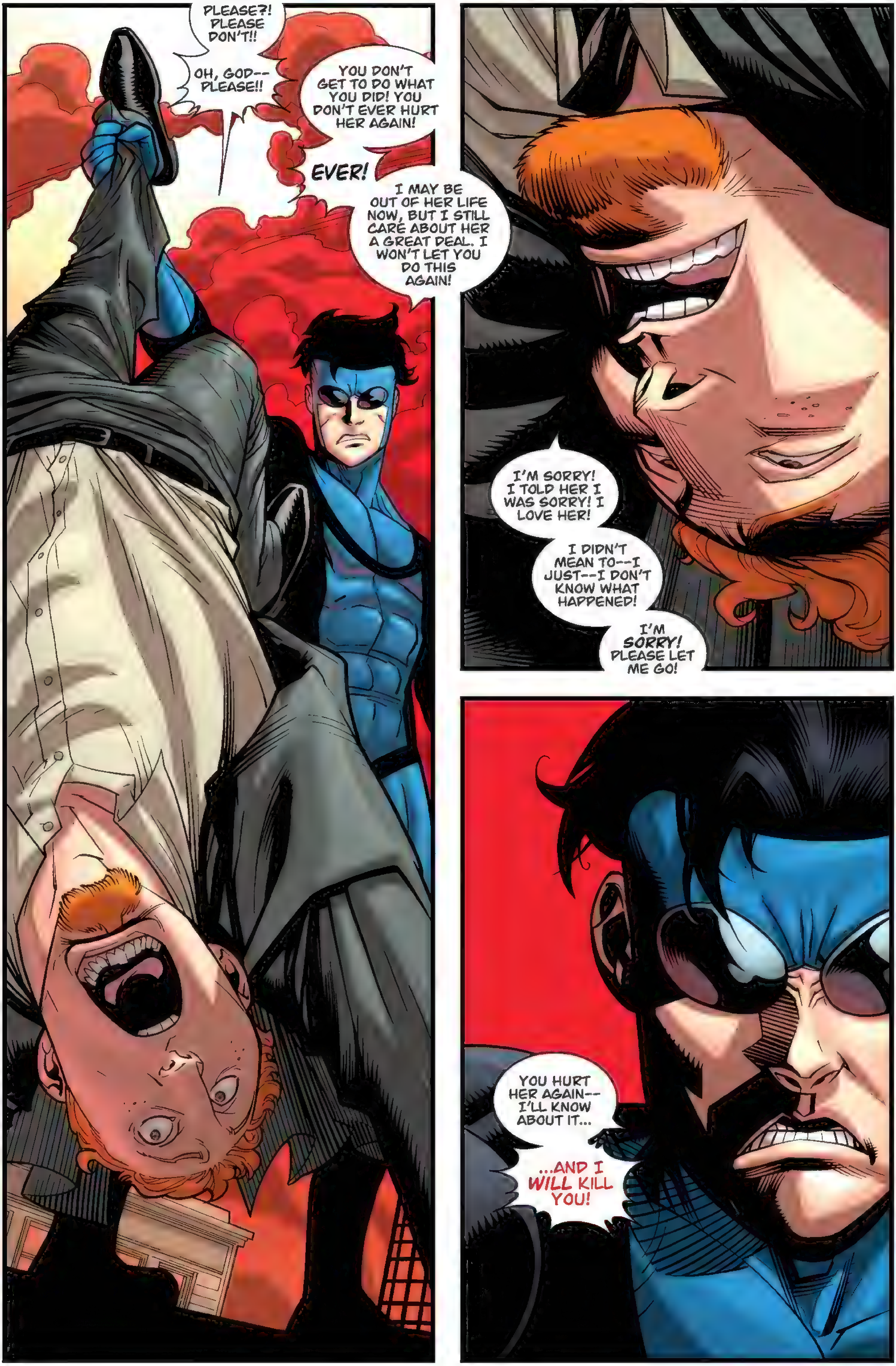
AMBER?
OH, I... I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D BE COMING IN THROUGH THE DOOR.
FUNNY.
ARE YOU OKAY?
THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE BEEN HARD. REALLY HARD... JUST... YOU CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE.
MY FATHER DIED.
I WOULD HAVE CALLED YOU BUT IT WAS AWKWARD--I WAS ALREADY SEEING GARY. I CONFIDED IN HIM. I THOUGHT WE WERE CLOSE ENOUGH--HE WAS SO NICE... BUT HE'S GOT PROBLEMS OF HIS OWN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
YOU SHOULD HAVE CALLED ME, I HAD NO IDEA. I FEEL HORRIBLE.
DON'T... GARY WAS VERY SUPPORTIVE. HE'S SUCH A GREAT GUY... HE'S SO UNDERSTANDING.
IT'S JUST THAT, AND I'M SORRY--I JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHO ELSE I COULD TALK TO ABOUT THIS, HE GETS ANGRY SOMETIMES...


HE--
HE JUST--
HE DIDN'T *MEAN* IT.


WHERE IS HE?!
WHERE?!

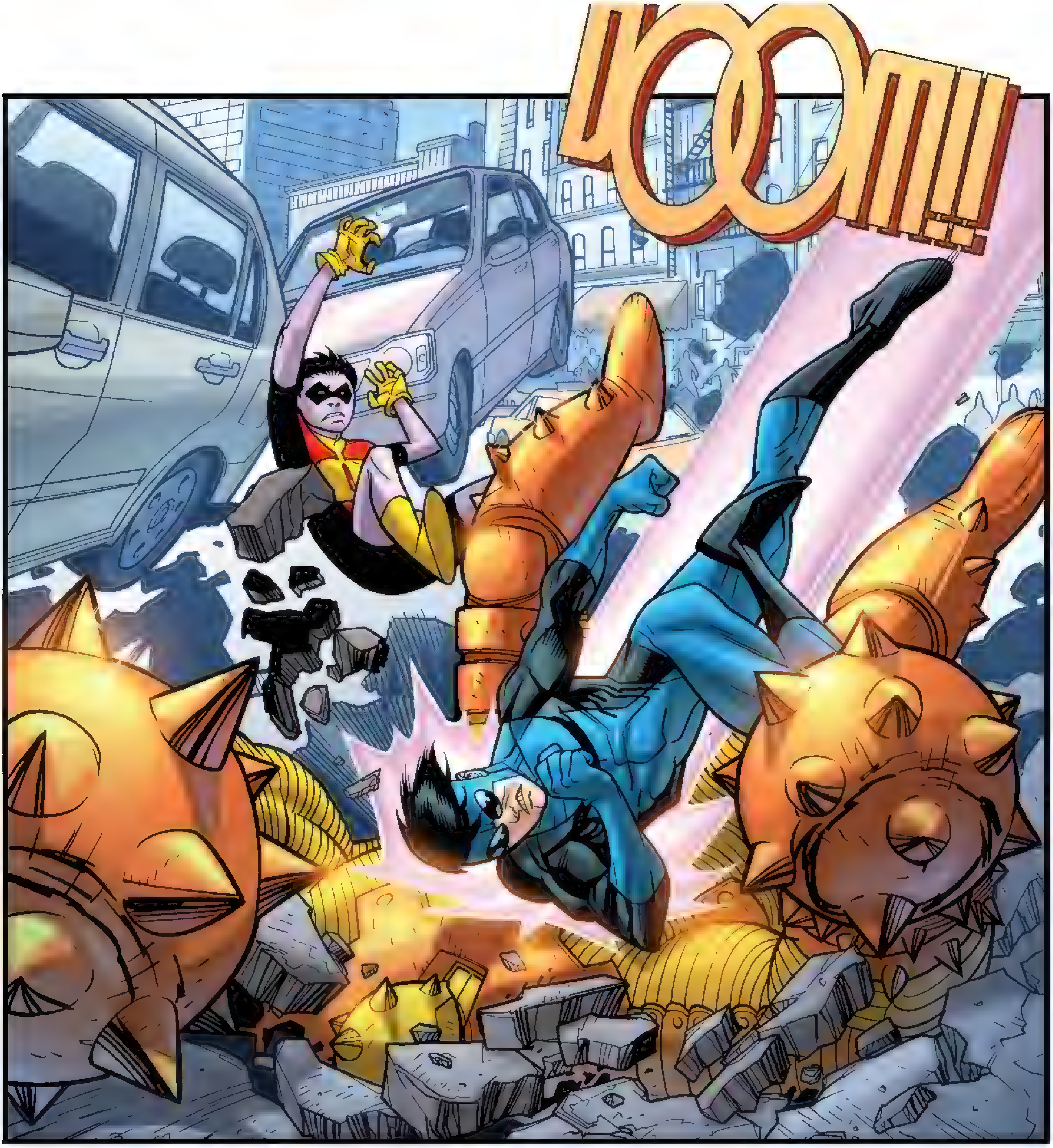

PATROLLING...
PFFT!
I DON'T KNOW HOW MARK DOES THIS.
NOW YOU'RE TALKING!

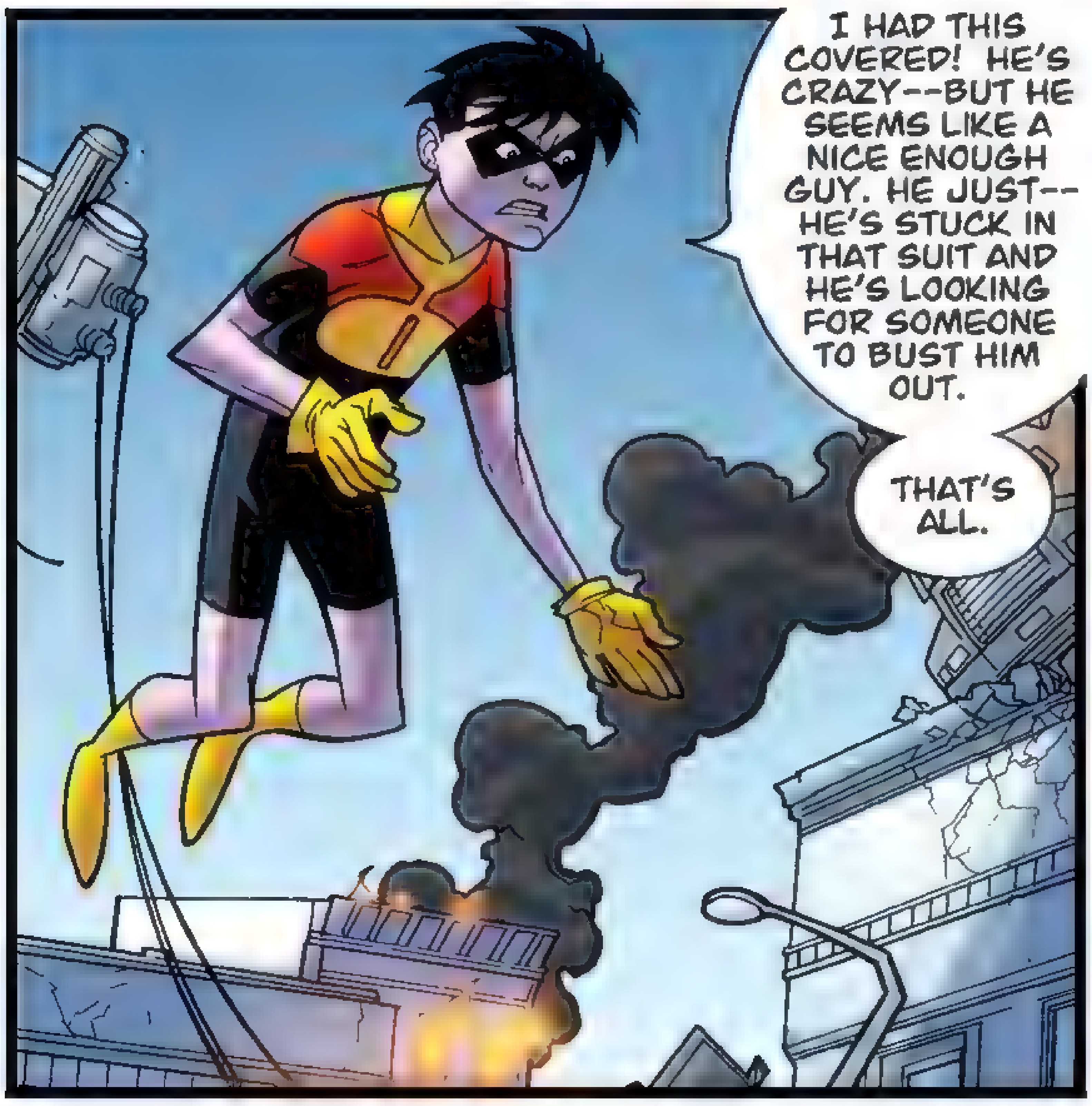
WRAKKA-DOOM!
KROOM!!
DON'T WASTE MY TIME! I NEED SOMEONE MUCH MORE POWERFUL THAN *YOU!*
MY MISTAKE.
I WAS HOLDING BACK.
THEN MAYBE YOU ARE STRONG ENOUGH. PLEASE-- LISTEN TO ME. I NEED YOUR HELP, I NEED SOMEONE STRONGER THAN I AM.
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT!

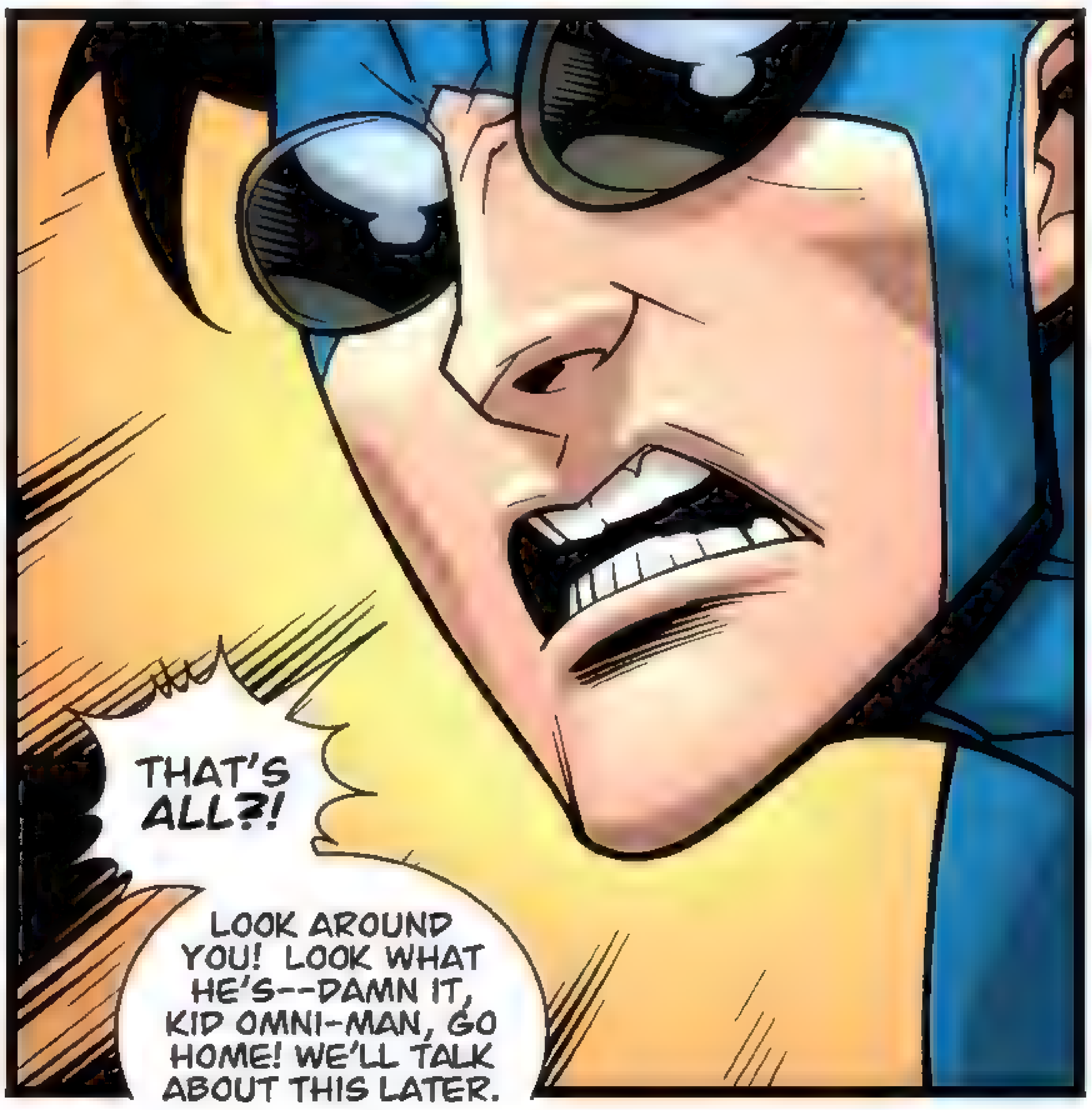

PLEASE?! PLEASE DON'T!!
OH, GOD-- PLEASE!!
YOU DON'T GET TO DO WHAT YOU DID! YOU DON'T EVER HURT HER AGAIN!
EVER!
I MAY BE OUT OF HER LIFE NOW, BUT I STILL CARE ABOUT HER A GREAT DEAL. I WON'T LET YOU DO THIS AGAIN!
I'M SORRY! I TOLD HER I WAS SORRY! I LOVE HER!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO--I JUST--I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!
I'M SORRY! PLEASE LET ME GO!
YOU HURT HER AGAIN-- I'LL KNOW ABOUT IT...
...AND I WILL KILL YOU!

KROOM!!
THANK YOU! I PROMISE I WON'T EVER--
UH...
YEAH, DUDE-- YOU GOTTA COME PICK ME UP.
I'M--
I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM...
...OR HOW I GOT HERE. I DIDN'T EVEN SEE WHO...

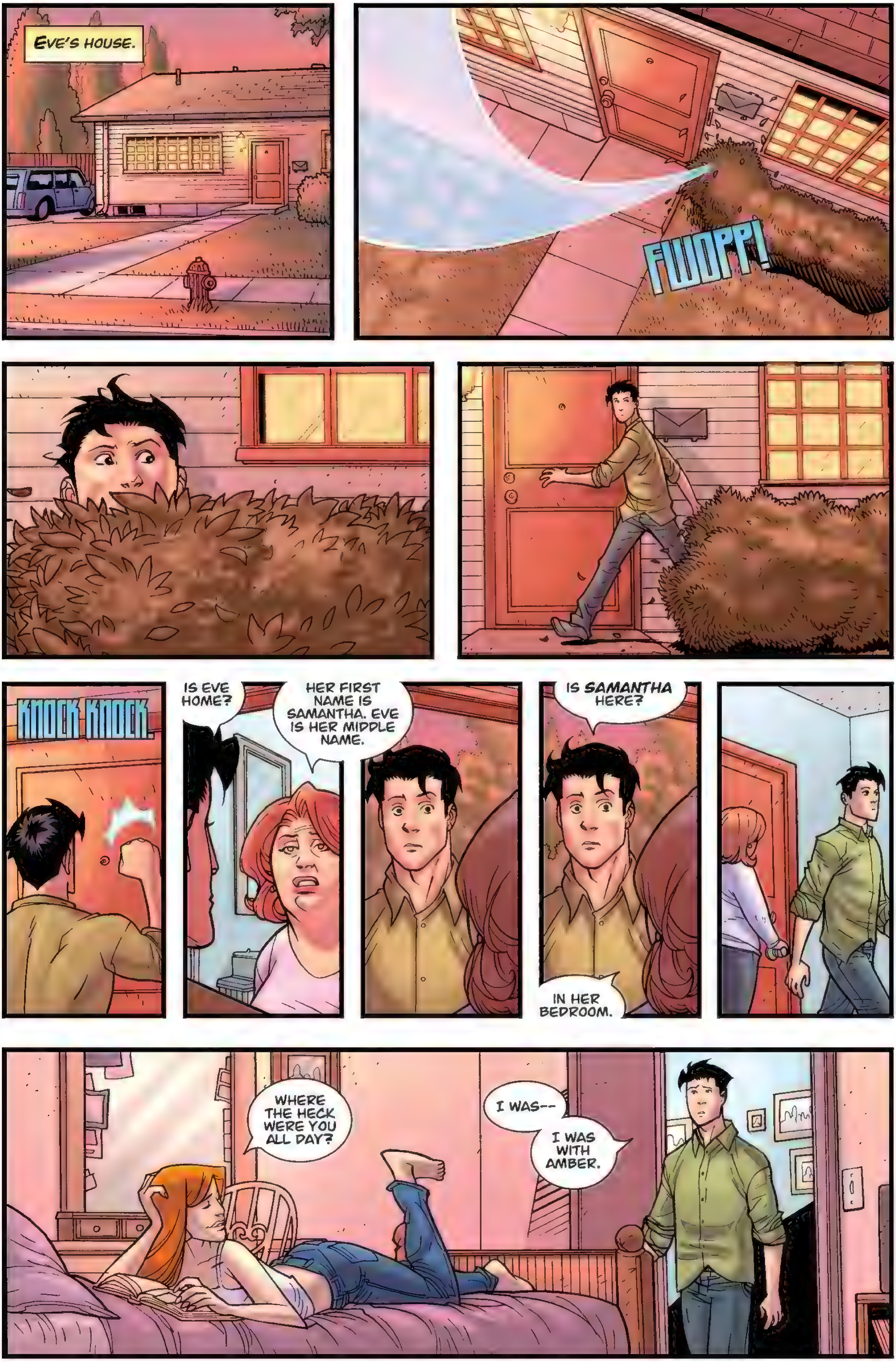
WRAKOOM!
NO! YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH--YOU'RE JUST WASTING MY TIME!
WHAT THE HELL IS YOUR PROBLEM?!
I TRIED TO HELP--I DID WHAT YOU ASKED! WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?! ARE YOU BIPOLAR OR WHAT?!
MEANWHILE.
HAS EVE BEEN HERE? I NEED TO TALK TO HER.
YOUR BROTHER IS ON TV FIGHTING SOME GIANT ROBOT THING. I THOUGHT YOU WERE TRAINING HIM! HE SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS ALONE.
CRAP.
"WAS EVE HERE?"
CHRIST.


DOOOM!!!


I HAD THIS COVERED! HE'S CRAZY--BUT HE SEEMS LIKE A NICE ENOUGH GUY. HE JUST--HE'S STUCK IN THAT SUIT AND HE'S LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO BUST HIM OUT.
THAT'S ALL.


THAT'S *ALL?!*
LOOK AROUND YOU! LOOK WHAT HE'S--DAMN IT, KID OMNI-MAN, GO HOME! WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER.

HEY.
OH, MARK! I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE.
I JUST GOT OFF THE PHONE WITH GARY--I DON'T KNOW IF YOU FOUND HIM BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO SAY ANYTHING TO HIM NOW. EVERYTHING'S OKAY, REALLY.
I KNOW WHAT HE DID--THERE'S NO EXCUSE--BUT I THINK IT WAS JUST A ONE-TIME THING. HE CALLED ME--OUT OF BREATH, SO UPSET OVER THE WHOLE THING. HE'S A GOOD GUY, I KNOW HE IS.
I THINK--I **AM** GOING TO GIVE HIM ANOTHER CHANCE.
THANKS, THOUGH--IT WAS REALLY COOL OF YOU TO BE THERE FOR ME.
AMBER, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, MARK.
I THINK EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE FINE.
OKAY, JUST--
OKAY.


EVE'S HOUSE.
FWOPP!
KNOCK KNOCK
IS EVE HOME?
HER FIRST NAME IS SAMANTHA. EVE IS HER MIDDLE NAME.
IS SAMANTHA HERE?
IN HER BEDROOM.
WHERE THE HECK WERE YOU ALL DAY?
I WAS--
I WAS WITH AMBER.

OH, *WERE* YOU NOW?!
THERE ARE LIMITS TO HOW COOL I CAN BE ABOUT STUFF.
DOES YOUR MOM HATE IT WHEN PEOPLE CALL YOU EVE?
YES.
DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
HER BOYFRIEND HIT HER--SHE CALLED ME. THAT'S WHO CALLED THIS MORNING. I DIDN'T THINK, I JUST REACTED.
I WANTED TO KILL THAT GUY. I THREATENED HIM--I WAS... I DON'T KNOW. MY TEMPER, IT WORRIES ME SOMETIMES.
HE HIT HER?
YEAH. HURT HER PRETTY BAD. HER EYE IS ALL SWOLLEN, SHE'S SCRAPED UP.
GUY'S A REAL JERK.
THEN WHY ARE YOU BEATING YOURSELF UP OVER THIS? HE HURT AMBER, I LIKE AMBER--SHE'S A NICE GIRL. *I'D* WANT TO HURT HIM TOO.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO EASIER ON YOURSELF, HUH?

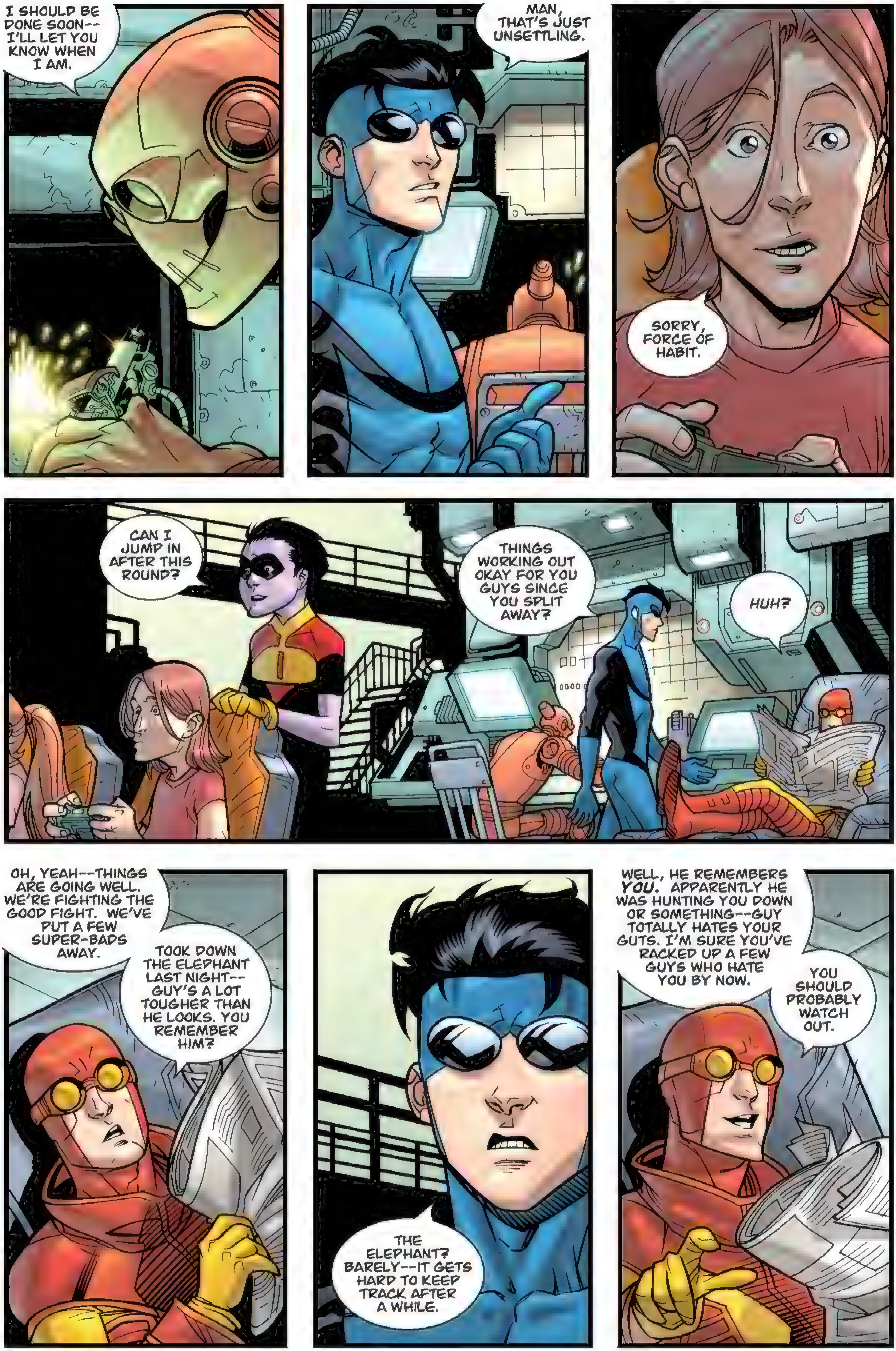
I'VE GOT SO MUCH... POWER. I JUST, I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I CAN CONTROL IT.
IT'S HARD NOT TO LOSE CONTROL. LOOK AT OLIVER.
OLIVER IS YOUNG-- INEXPERIENCED.
YOU CAN TEACH HIM TO BE BETTER. YOU ARE ALREADY. DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF TO HIM.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
SOMETIMES I JUST FEEL SO UNSURE OF MYSELF. IT'S FRUSTRATING.
COME HERE, LET ME TAKE YOUR MIND OFF ALL THIS STUFF.
AS YOU WISH.
THIS IS NICE.

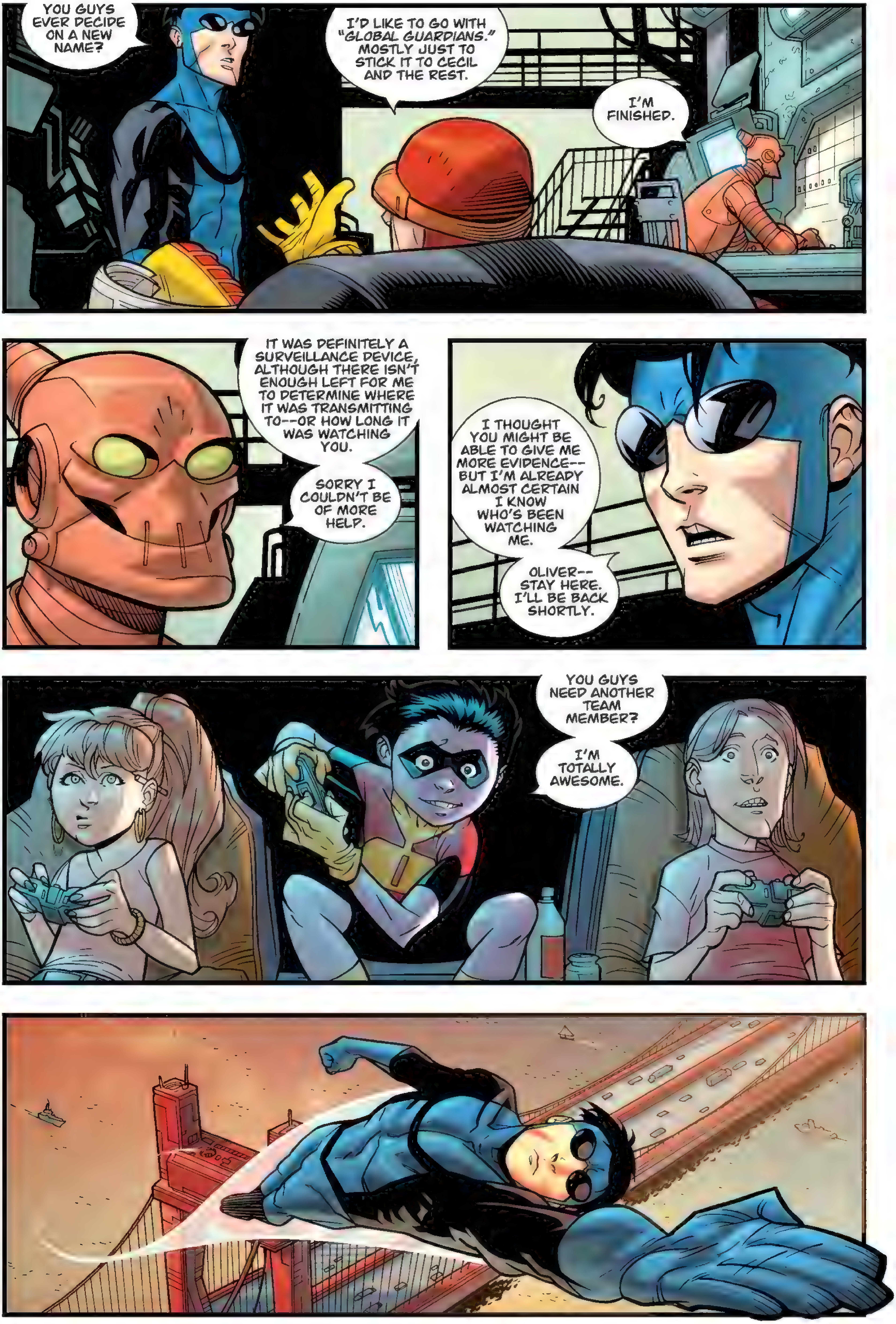
OLIVER, YOU AWAKE?
YEAH!
YOW!
SORRY. I DO A LOT OF READING AT NIGHT. I DON'T NEED A LOT OF SLEEP--GOT THAT FROM MY MOTHER'S PEOPLE.
DON'T SWEAT IT, I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE HERE AND NOT OUT FIGHTING CRIME ON YOUR OWN.
ABOUT THAT, ACTUALLY....
...I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE. I'M SORRY FOR BEING SO HARD ON YOU. IN MANY WAYS YOU'RE JUST A KID--AND I'M TRAINING YOU TO BE A SUPER-HERO.
I SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOU A LITTLE BIT MORE.
WHAT IS THAT? LOOK, CAN YOU SEE THAT?
THERE'S SOME KIND OF REFLECTION--COMING FROM THE TREES OVER THERE.
WHAT?!

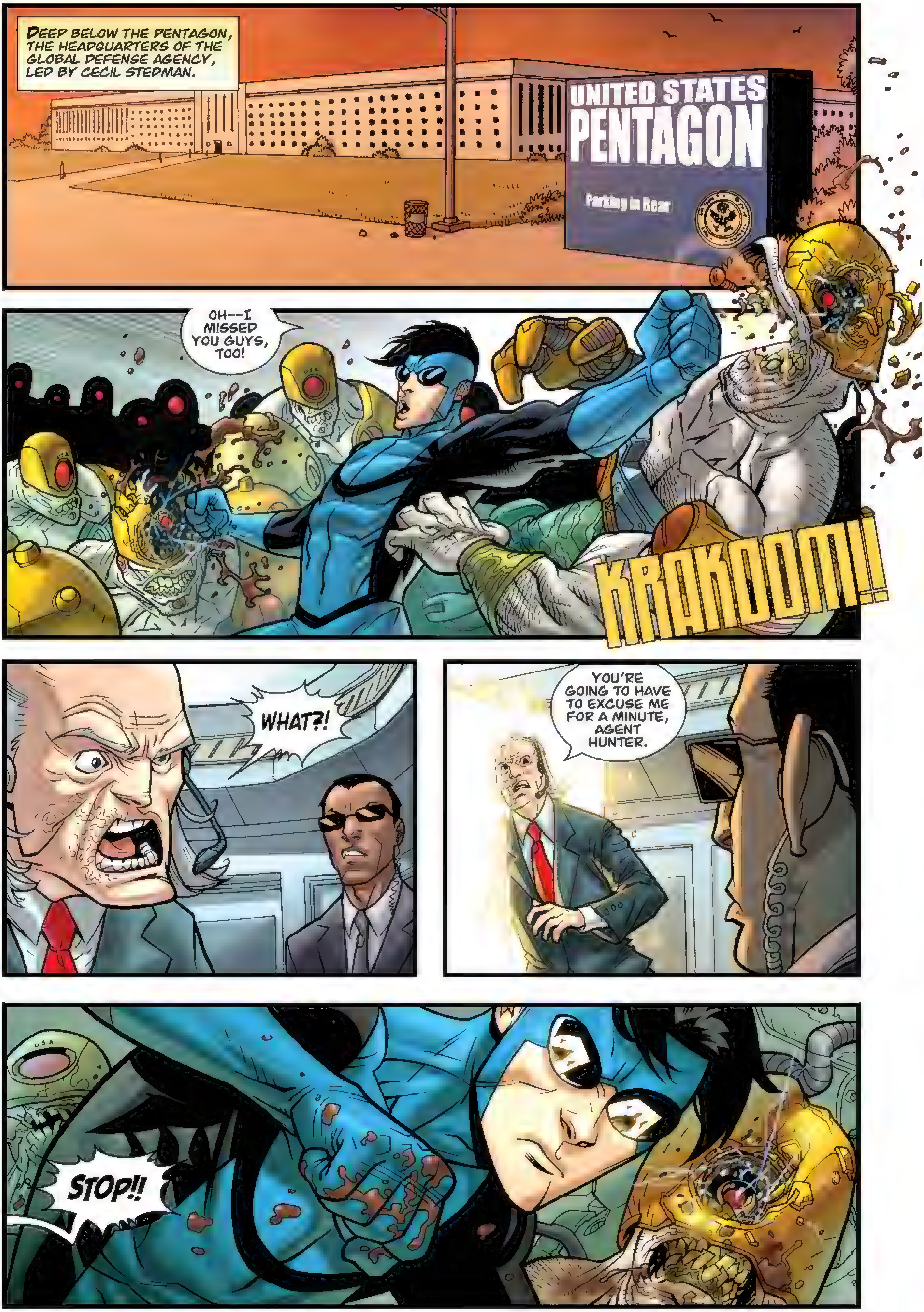
GOT IT!
ROOM!!
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!
SOMEONE WAS WATCHING US.

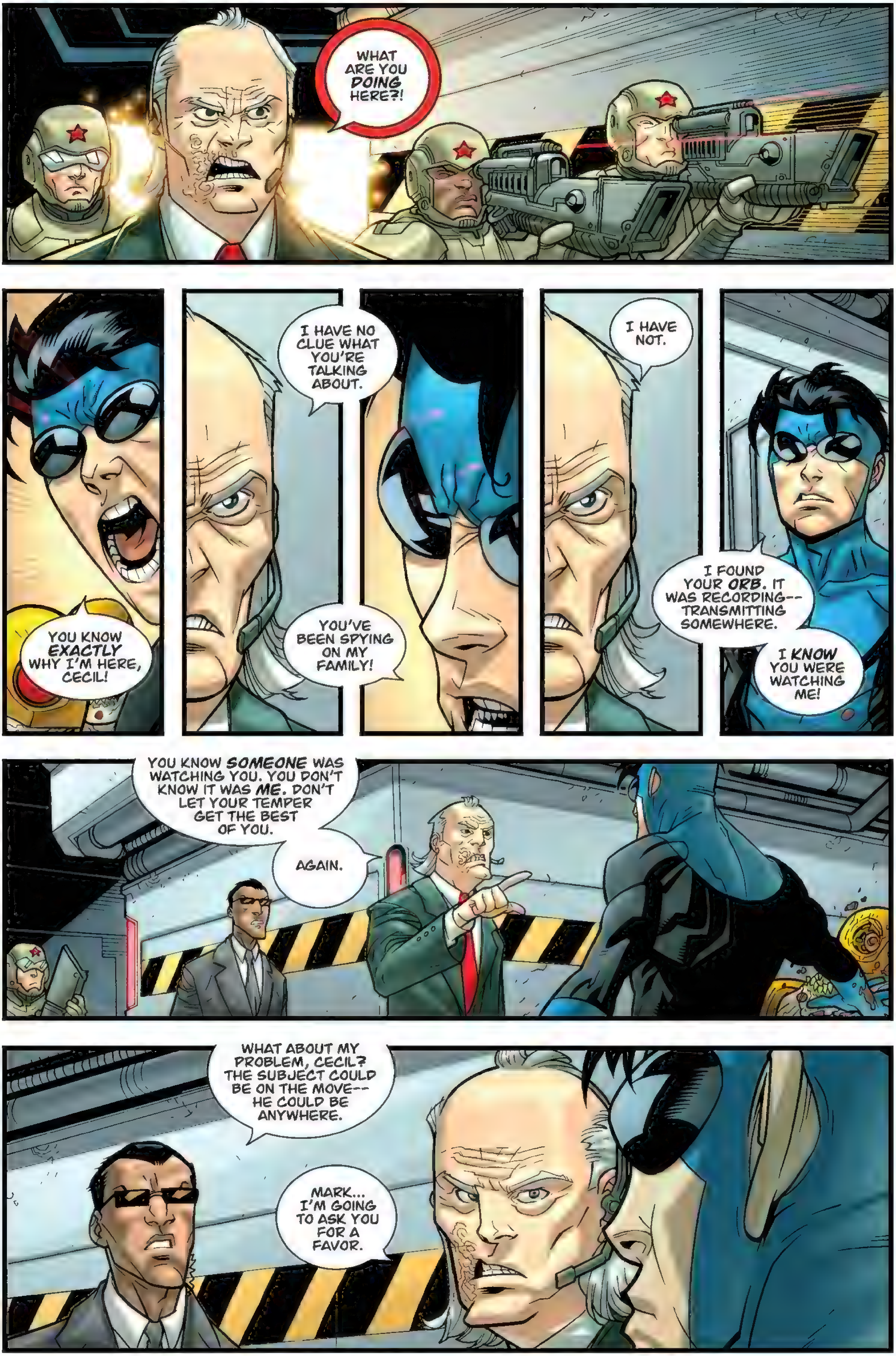
CHAPTER 57

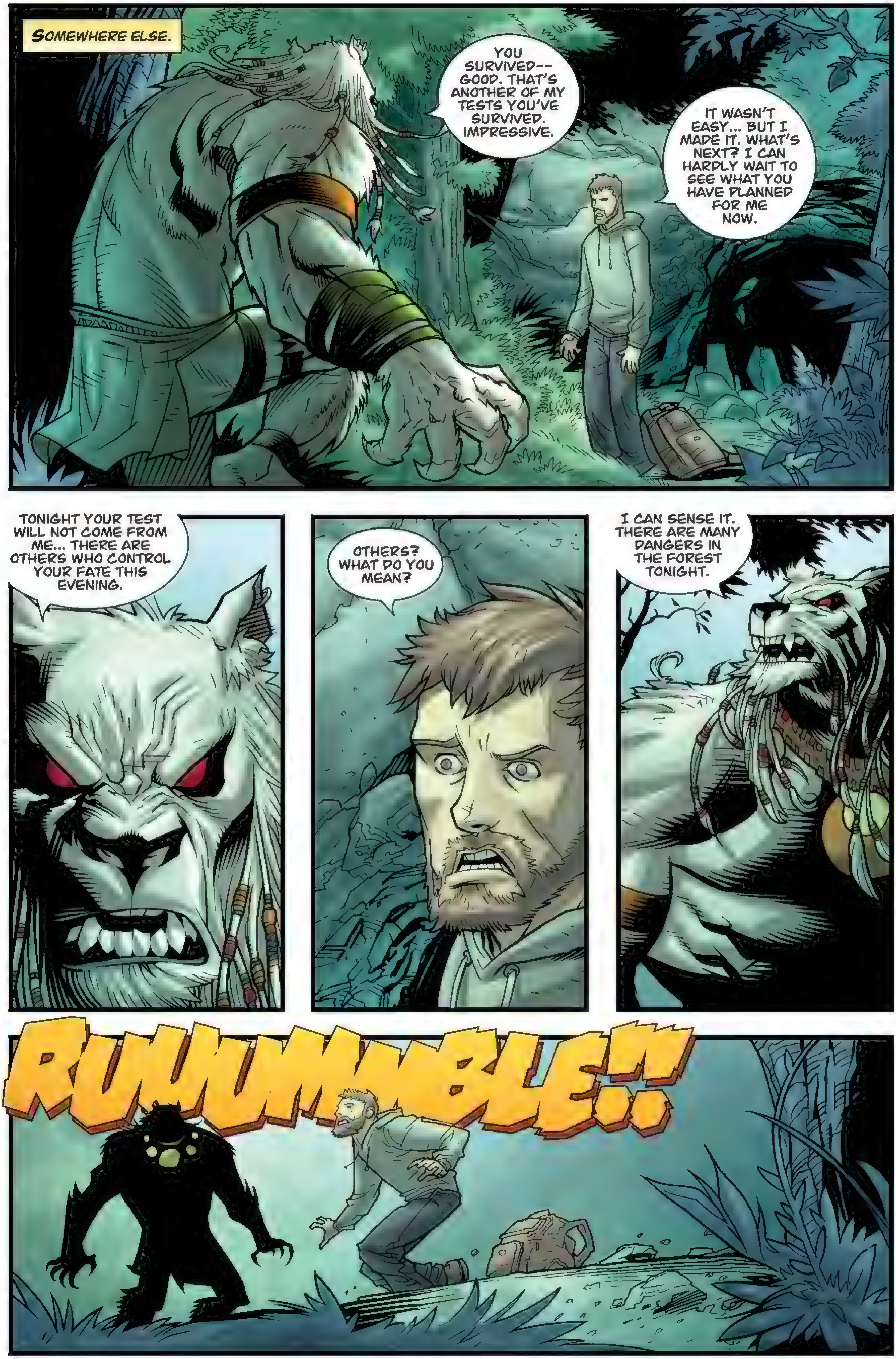
THE SECRET BASE OF THE TEAM FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE TEEN TEAM.
WE'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST **ALL DAY.** HOW MUCH LONGER IS THIS GOING TO TAKE?
YEAH, ROBOT, REALLY... WOULD IT SPEED THINGS UP IF YOU--I DON'T KNOW... HELPED... YOURSELF?
I ASSURE YOU, SPLITTING MY FOCUS LIKE THIS DOESN'T SLOW ME DOWN. IN FACT, I'M ANALYZING THAT PROBE YOU DESTROYED THROUGH A CONSTRUCT BECAUSE IT ALLOWS ME TO BE MUCH MORE PRECISE.
I'D REALLY JUST SLOW MYSELF DOWN IF I TRIED TO HELP.
OKAY, OKAY... JUST DO WHAT YOU CAN. I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU DOING THIS FOR US.
BUT I DIDN'T DESTROY IT. I TOLD YOU--IT JUST BLEW UP WHEN I TOUCHED IT.

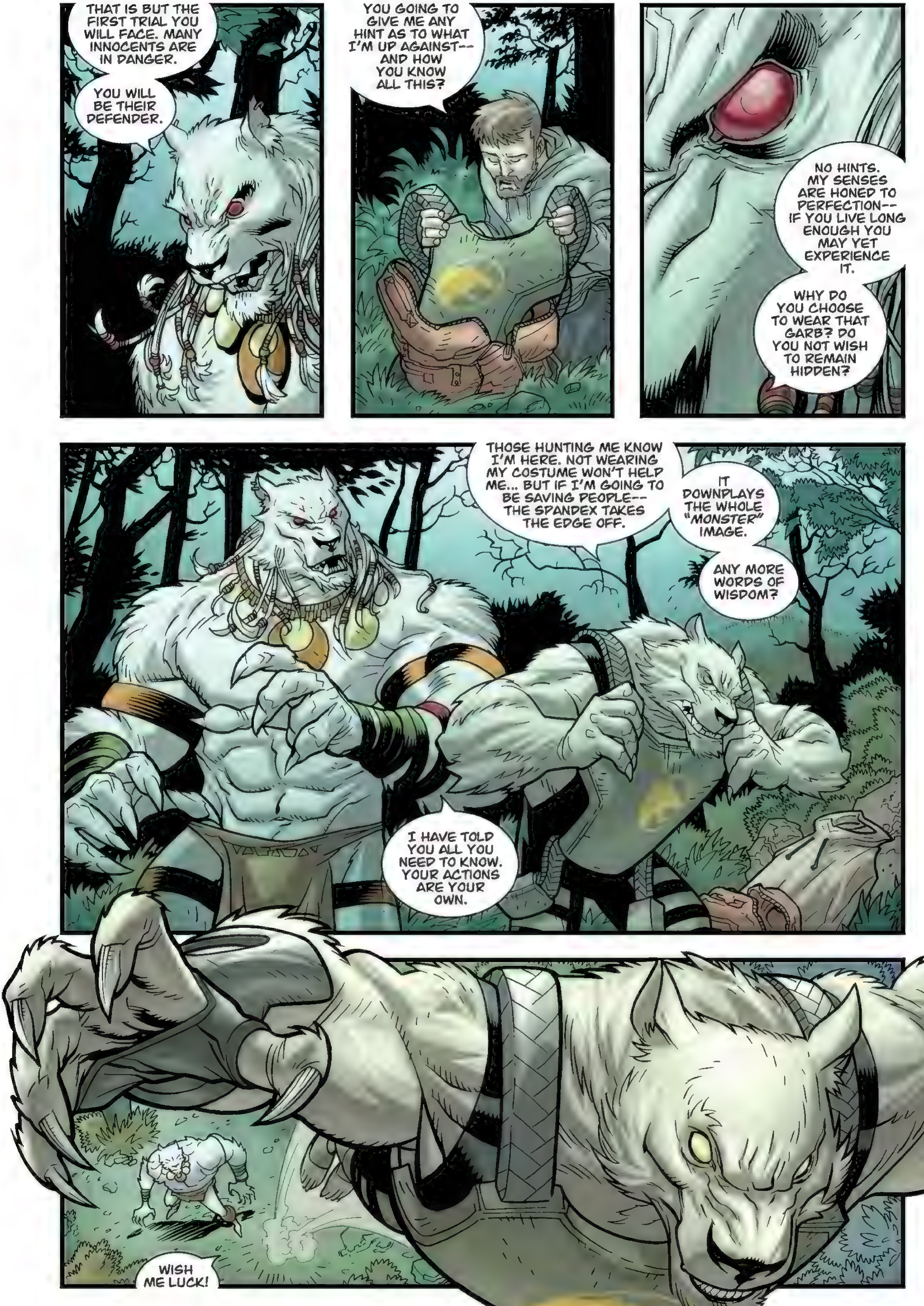

I SHOULD BE DONE SOON-- I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I AM.
MAN, THAT'S JUST UNSETTLING.
SORRY, FORCE OF HABIT.
CAN I JUMP IN AFTER THIS ROUND?
THINGS WORKING OUT OKAY FOR YOU GUYS SINCE YOU SPLIT AWAY?
HUH?
OH, YEAH--THINGS ARE GOING WELL. WE'RE FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT. WE'VE PUT A FEW SUPER-BADS AWAY.
TOOK DOWN THE ELEPHANT LAST NIGHT-- GUY'S A LOT TOUGHER THAN HE LOOKS. YOU REMEMBER HIM?
THE ELEPHANT? BARELY--IT GETS HARD TO KEEP TRACK AFTER A WHILE.
WELL, HE REMEMBERS *YOU*. APPARENTLY HE WAS HUNTING YOU DOWN OR SOMETHING--GUY TOTALLY HATES YOUR GUTS. I'M SURE YOU'VE RACKED UP A FEW GUYS WHO HATE YOU BY NOW.
YOU SHOULD PROBABLY WATCH OUT.

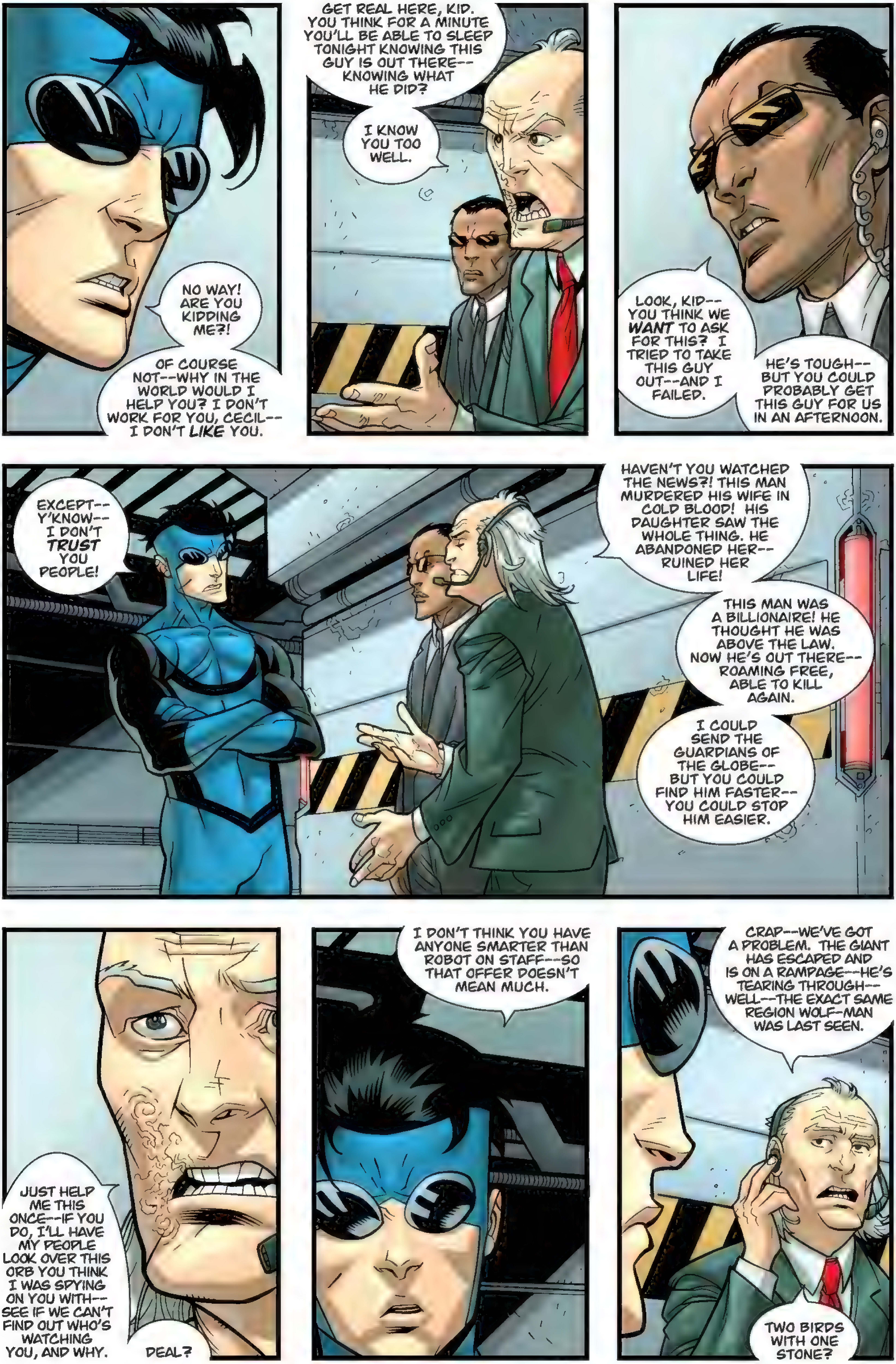

YOU GUYS EVER DECIDE ON A NEW NAME?
I'D LIKE TO GO WITH "GLOBAL GUARDIANS." MOSTLY JUST TO STICK IT TO CECIL AND THE REST.
I'M FINISHED.
IT WAS DEFINITELY A SURVEILLANCE DEVICE, ALTHOUGH THERE ISN'T ENOUGH LEFT FOR ME TO DETERMINE WHERE IT WAS TRANSMITTING TO--OR HOW LONG IT WAS WATCHING YOU.
SORRY I COULDN'T BE OF MORE HELP.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE ME MORE EVIDENCE--BUT I'M ALREADY ALMOST CERTAIN I KNOW WHO'S BEEN WATCHING ME.
OLIVER--STAY HERE. I'LL BE BACK SHORTLY.
YOU GUYS NEED ANOTHER TEAM MEMBER?
I'M TOTALLY AWESOME.


DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
OH--I MISSED YOU GUYS, TOO!
KRAKOOM!!
WHAT?!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO EXCUSE ME FOR A MINUTE, AGENT HUNTER.
STOP!!


WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHY I'M HERE, CECIL!
I HAVE NO CLUE WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
YOU'VE BEEN SPYING ON MY FAMILY!
I HAVE NOT.
I FOUND YOUR ORB. IT WAS RECORDING-- TRANSMITTING SOMEWHERE.
I KNOW YOU WERE WATCHING ME!
YOU KNOW SOMEONE WAS WATCHING YOU. YOU DON'T KNOW IT WAS ME. DON'T LET YOUR TEMPER GET THE BEST OF YOU.
AGAIN.
WHAT ABOUT MY PROBLEM, CECIL? THE SUBJECT COULD BE ON THE MOVE-- HE COULD BE ANYWHERE.
MARK... I'M GOING TO ASK YOU FOR A FAVOR.

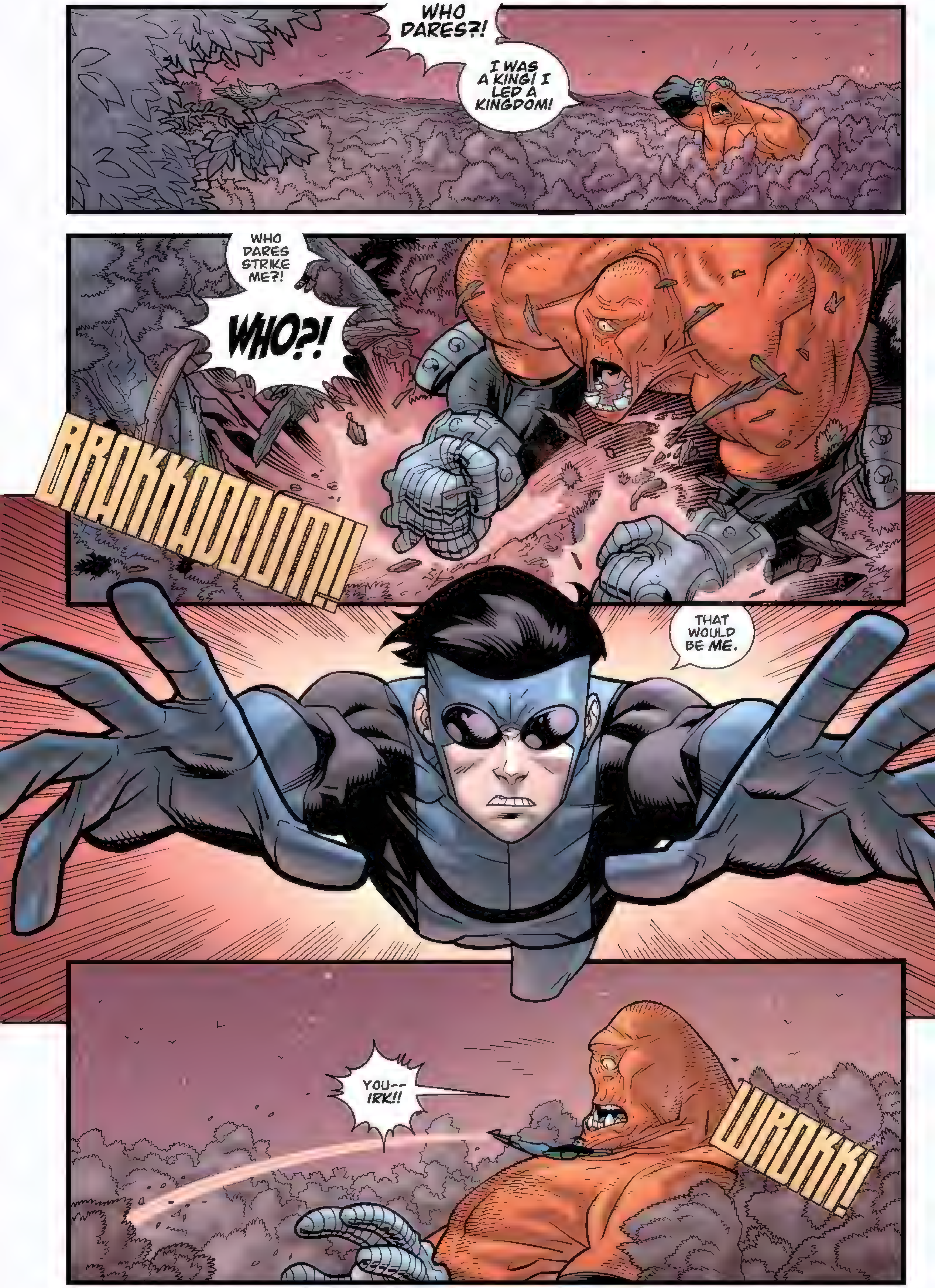

SOMEWHERE ELSE.
YOU SURVIVED-- GOOD. THAT'S ANOTHER OF MY TESTS YOU'VE SURVIVED. IMPRESSIVE.
IT WASN'T EASY... BUT I MADE IT. WHAT'S NEXT? I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO SEE WHAT YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR ME NOW.
TONIGHT YOUR TEST WILL NOT COME FROM ME... THERE ARE OTHERS WHO CONTROL YOUR FATE THIS EVENING.
OTHERS? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I CAN SENSE IT. THERE ARE MANY DANGERS IN THE FOREST TONIGHT.
RUUUMMBLE!!

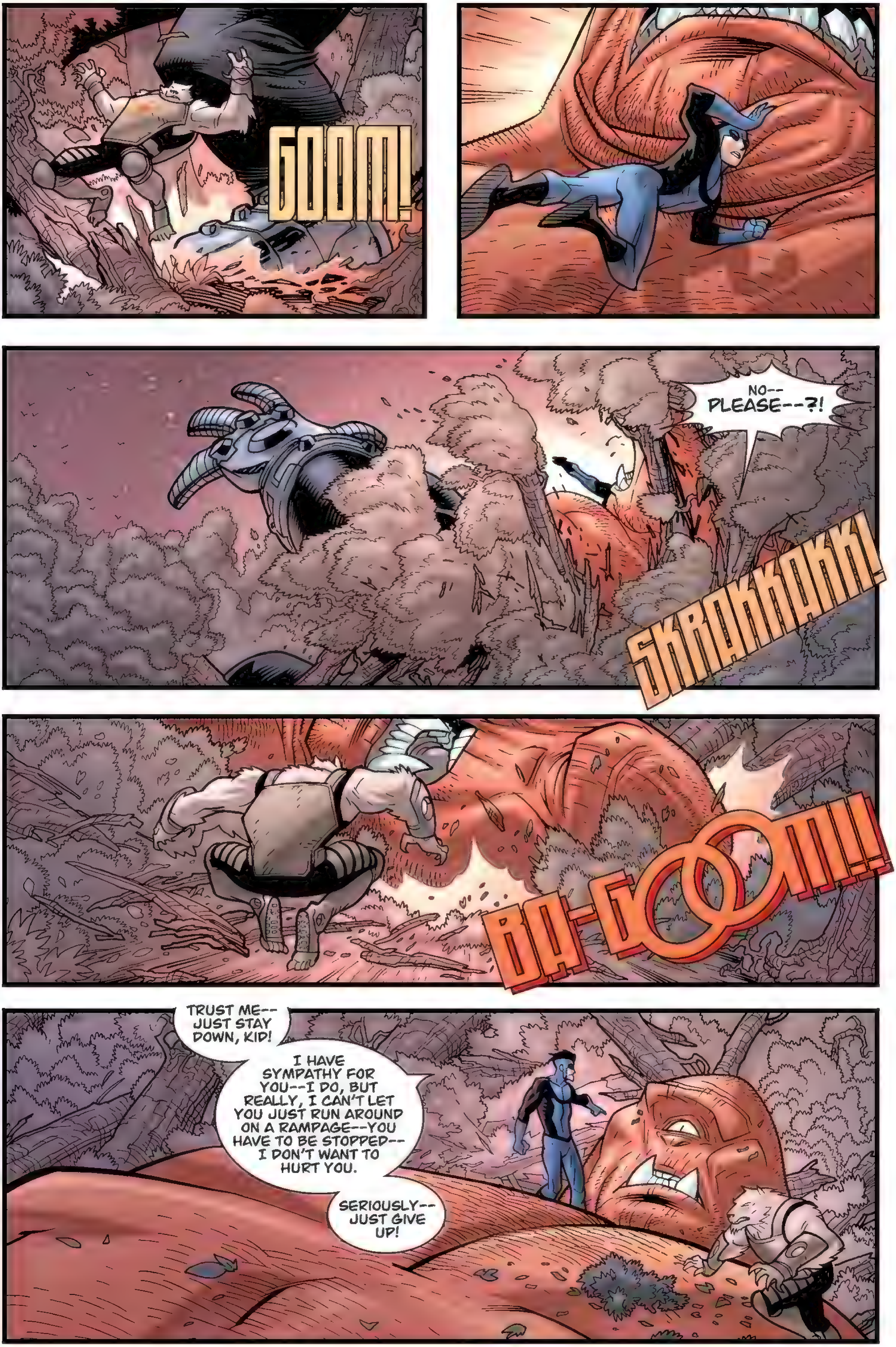

THAT IS BUT THE FIRST TRIAL YOU WILL FACE. MANY INNOCENTS ARE IN DANGER.
YOU WILL BE THEIR DEFENDER.
YOU GOING TO GIVE ME ANY HINT AS TO WHAT I'M UP AGAINST-- AND HOW YOU KNOW ALL THIS?
NO HINTS. MY SENSES ARE HONED TO PERFECTION-- IF YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH YOU MAY YET EXPERIENCE IT.
WHY DO YOU CHOOSE TO WEAR THAT GARB? DO YOU NOT WISH TO REMAIN HIDDEN?
THOSE HUNTING ME KNOW I'M HERE. NOT WEARING MY COSTUME WON'T HELP ME... BUT IF I'M GOING TO BE SAVING PEOPLE-- THE SPANDEX TAKES THE EDGE OFF.
IT DOWNPLAYS THE WHOLE "MONSTER" IMAGE.
ANY MORE WORDS OF WISDOM?
I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW. YOUR ACTIONS ARE YOUR OWN.
WISH ME LUCK!

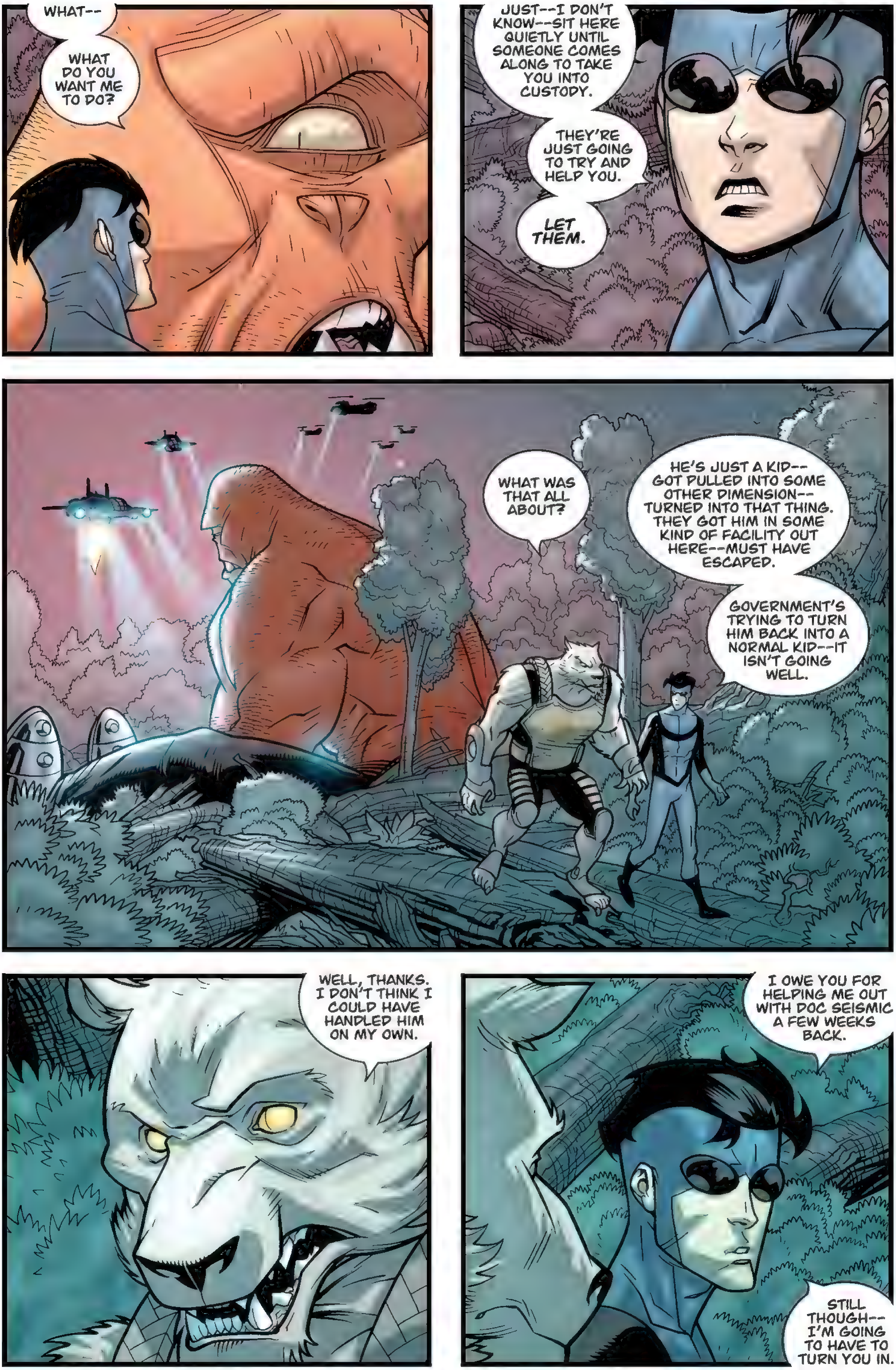

NO WAY! ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!
OF COURSE NOT--WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD I HELP YOU? I DON'T WORK FOR YOU, CECIL--I DON'T *LIKE* YOU.
GET REAL HERE, KID. YOU THINK FOR A MINUTE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SLEEP TONIGHT KNOWING THIS GUY IS OUT THERE--KNOWING WHAT HE DID?
I KNOW YOU TOO WELL.
LOOK, KID--YOU THINK WE *WANT* TO ASK FOR THIS? I TRIED TO TAKE THIS GUY OUT--AND I FAILED.
HE'S TOUGH--BUT YOU COULD PROBABLY GET THIS GUY FOR US IN AN AFTERNOON.
EXCEPT--Y'KNOW--I DON'T *TRUST* YOU PEOPLE!
HAVEN'T YOU WATCHED THE NEWS?! THIS MAN MURDERED HIS WIFE IN COLD BLOOD! HIS DAUGHTER SAW THE WHOLE THING. HE ABANDONED HER--RUINED HER LIFE!
THIS MAN WAS A BILLIONAIRE! HE THOUGHT HE WAS ABOVE THE LAW. NOW HE'S OUT THERE--ROAMING FREE, ABLE TO KILL AGAIN.
I COULD SEND THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE--BUT YOU COULD FIND HIM FASTER--YOU COULD STOP HIM EASIER.
JUST HELP ME THIS ONCE--IF YOU DO, I'LL HAVE MY PEOPLE LOOK OVER THIS ORB YOU THINK I WAS SPYING ON YOU WITH--SEE IF WE CAN'T FIND OUT WHO'S WATCHING YOU, AND WHY.
DEAL?
I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ANYONE SMARTER THAN ROBOT ON STAFF--SO THAT OFFER DOESN'T MEAN MUCH.
CRAP--WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM. THE GIANT HAS ESCAPED AND IS ON A RAMPAGE--HE'S TEARING THROUGH--WELL--THE EXACT SAME REGION WOLF-MAN WAS LAST SEEN.
TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE?

MAYBE THIS WASN'T THE BEST IDEA--
WHAT WAS I THINKING?
YOU'RE HURTING ME! THAT'S NOT *FAIR!*
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE--I JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE!
OH, CRAP!
I ESCAPED! I JUST WANT TO GO HOME!
I'M NEVER GOING TO BE PRESIDENT. I'M TOO STRONG TO BE LOCKED UP--WHY ARE YOU ATTACKING ME?!
YOU'RE HURTING PEOPLE--YOU NEED TO STOP!

COULD HAVE GONE THE REST OF MY LIFE WITHOUT FIGHTING THIS GUY AGAIN.
WRAKOOM!
I'VE GOT YOU-- WHAT'S THE SITUATION HERE?
SEEMS THIS GUY'S ON HIS WAY SOMEWHERE-- HE DOESN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE.
I KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT HIM... NOT MUCH.
I DON'T KNOW IF HE'S KILLED ANYONE-- HE TRAMPLED A FEW TRUCKS-- HE'S BAD NEWS, I WAS TRYING TO STOP HIM.


WHO DARES?!
I WAS A KING! I LED A KINGDOM!
WHO DARES STRIKE ME?!
WHO?!
BRAKKADOOOM!!
THAT WOULD BE ME.
YOU-- IRK!!
WRAKK!


GOOM!
NO-- PLEASE--?!
SKRAKKAKK!
BA-GOOM!!
TRUST ME-- JUST STAY DOWN, KID!
I HAVE SYMPATHY FOR YOU--I DO, BUT REALLY, I CAN'T LET YOU JUST RUN AROUND ON A RAMPAGE--YOU HAVE TO BE STOPPED-- I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU.
SERIOUSLY-- JUST GIVE UP!


WHAT--
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
JUST--I DON'T KNOW--SIT HERE QUIETLY UNTIL SOMEONE COMES ALONG TO TAKE YOU INTO CUSTODY.
THEY'RE JUST GOING TO TRY AND HELP YOU.
LET THEM.
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
HE'S JUST A KID--GOT PULLED INTO SOME OTHER DIMENSION--TURNED INTO THAT THING. THEY GOT HIM IN SOME KIND OF FACILITY OUT HERE--MUST HAVE ESCAPED.
GOVERNMENT'S TRYING TO TURN HIM BACK INTO A NORMAL KID--IT ISN'T GOING WELL.
WELL, THANKS. I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE HANDLED HIM ON MY OWN.
I OWE YOU FOR HELPING ME OUT WITH DOC SEISMIC A FEW WEEKS BACK.
STILL THOUGH--I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TURN YOU IN.

CRAP.
YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE--
POW!
--RUN!
THOOM!
YOU KILLED YOUR WIFE. YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
FIVE MINUTES... PLEASE. JUST LISTEN TO ME FOR FIVE MINUTES.

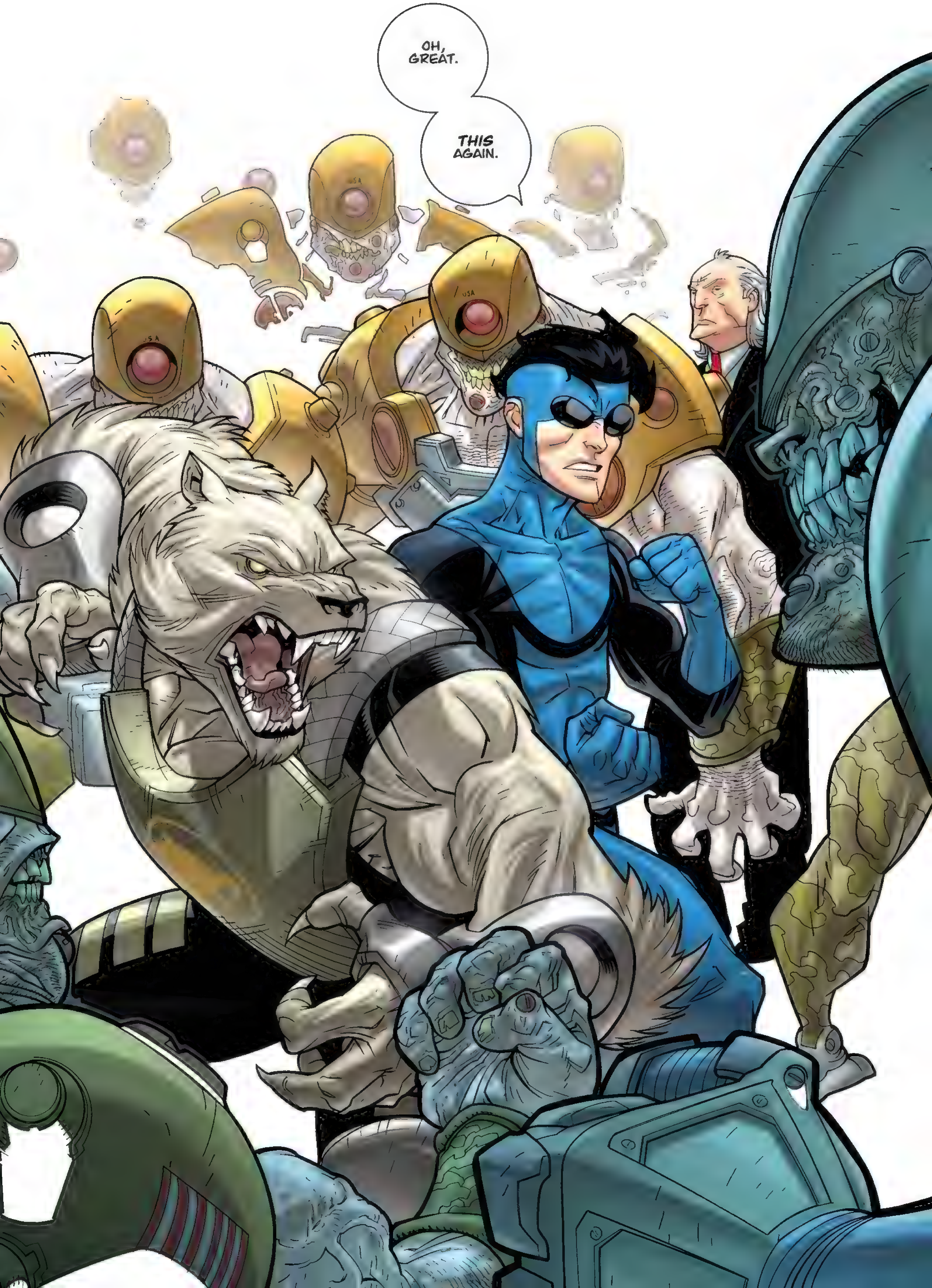
SORRY, I REALLY DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.
PLEASE-- JUST STOP. I CAN EXPLAIN-- I DIDN'T KILL MY WIFE. I DIDN'T.
MY DAUGHTER-- SHE SAW ME WITH MY WIFE'S BODY-- THAT'S WHY THEY THINK I DID IT. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED, I SWEAR.
YOUR DAUGHTER?
SHE SAW YOU?
I FOUND MY WIFE LIKE THAT--DEAD ON THE FLOOR. I HELD HER, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.
CHLOE-- MY DAUGHTER-- SHE FOUND US LIKE THAT.
I'M SORRY, THAT'S--
--ARE YOU **LYING** TO ME?
NO, I'M NOT--LOOK, I'M REVERTING BACK TO MY HUMAN FORM--I'M HELPLESS--I'M NOT GOING TO FIGHT BACK, I'M NOT TRYING TO TRICK YOU.
I DIDN'T KILL MY WIFE. PLEASE-- ***PLEASE*** BELIEVE ME.
I JUST NEED SOMEBODY TO BELIEVE ME.
IF YOU DIDN'T KILL HER--THEN WHO DID?

I HAD A--I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'D CALL HIM--A MENTOR, HELPING ME LEARN TO USE MY POWERS, HE WAS TRAINING ME, GUIDING ME.
I THOUGHT HE WAS MY FRIEND--I DIDN'T KNOW HOW WRONG I WAS. HE WAS KEEPING THINGS FROM ME, HIDING THINGS. I THOUGHT I'D KILLED A SUPERHERO--HE LET ME BELIEVE THAT.
ON ACCIDENT--I THOUGHT I'D KILLED HIM ON ACCIDENT. I HAVE THESE--EPISODES, ONCE A MONTH, ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON, WHERE I LOSE CONTROL...
I'M LISTENING...
I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY--AND NO, I WASN'T HAVING AN EPISODE WHEN MY WIFE WAS KILLED--I'D JUST HAD ONE, I'M NOT DUE FOR ANOTHER FOR... A FEW DAYS.
HE KILLED HER--ZECHARIAH, MY MENTOR. I SAW HIM--TRYING TO DRINK HER BLOOD--HE MURDERED HER--BECAUSE I TOLD HIM I WAS THROUGH WORKING WITH HIM.
HE KILLED HER.
HE KILLED HER.
HE KILLED MY WIFE.
SHE'S DEAD.

JEEZ, DUDE--I'M REALLY SORRY. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU'D--
I'M REALLY NOT GOOD AT THIS.
NO, I'M SORRY, IT'S JUST... I'VE BEEN RUNNING SO LONG, SINCE IT HAPPENED...
I HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT MUCH. IT JUST--
JUST LET ME TAKE YOU IN--TELL THEM YOUR STORY, I DON'T THINK--
NO! I HAVE TO HUNT DOWN ZECHARIAH! I CAN'T HAVE HIM OUT THERE--ROAMING FREE.
I HAVE TO RECONCILE WITH MY DAUGHTER--SHE HAS TO KNOW I DIDN'T DO THIS. SHE HAS TO.
I'M HERE--THERE'S ANOTHER WEREWOLF--THE ONE WHO TURNED ME--HE'S VERY POWERFUL, HE'S TEACHING ME HOW TO FIGHT ZECHARIAH--HOW TO BRING HIM TO JUSTICE. ONCE I'M DONE HERE I CAN--
JUST LET ME TAKE YOU IN. IF YOU TELL YOUR STORY TO THE GUY WHO SENT ME AFTER YOU--I'M SURE HE'LL LISTEN.
GUY WITH YOUR POWERS--HE'S PROBABLY TRYING TO RECRUIT YOU. NO MATTER WHAT HE THINKS YOU DID.
I **BELIEVE** YOU.
JUST LET ME TAKE YOU IN.

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
BRAVO, KID. I KNEW YOU COULD DO IT.
AND-- DO MY EYES DECEIVE ME-- YOU GOT HIM TO DO IT-- VOLUNTARILY?
DIDN'T EXPECT THAT. KID'S GOOD.
IMPRESSIVE.
THANKS, BUT HE'S NOT HERE TO TURN HIMSELF IN.
HE'S HERE TO *TALK*.
THAT WASN'T PART OF THE DEAL, KID.
HE CAN TALK TO HIS LAWYER. WE'RE ARRESTING HIM.
THEN I'M *CHANGING* THE DEAL. YOU CAN LISTEN TO WHAT HE HAS TO SAY--THAT DOESN'T HURT ANYTHING.

AGENT HUNTER, CAN YOU PLEASE EXCUSE US?
GOOD LUCK, MURDERER.
IT'S OKAY-- JUST LET ME TALK TO HIM.
ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT YOU CAN PARDON MURDERING PSYCHOPATHS LIKE **DARKWING**--BUT YOU CAN'T EVEN HEAR HIS STORY?
THAT'S ***INSANE***.
NOTHING I CAN DO HERE, KID. HIS STORY'S TOO PUBLIC. THERE'S NO WAY I CAN HAVE HIM RUNNING AROUND IN THE CLEAR. EVERYONE KNOWS WHO GARY HAMPTON IS-- THE WEREWOLF SUPERHERO WIFE-KILLER.
IT'S NOT LIKE HE COULD GO BY ANOTHER NAME OR ANYTHING EITHER... THE FUR TENDS TO GIVE HIM AWAY.
NO, SADLY-- HE'S USELESS TO ME. I'VE GOT TO BE PRACTICAL HERE, INVINCIBLE. IF HE'S GOT A STORY TO TELL--HE CAN TELL IT TO A JURY.
THIS GUY ISN'T A KILLER-- I ARRIVED TO SEE HIM RISKING HIS LIFE TRYING TO SAVE PEOPLE FROM THE GIANT-- TRUST ME--HE'S ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS.
I'M ***NOT*** LETTING YOU ARREST HIM!
I KNOW YOU TOO WELL.
DIDN'T YOU WONDER WHY I HAD YOU MEET ME IN THE WHITE ROOM?


OH, GREAT.
THIS AGAIN.
USA

ASTOUNDING WOLF-MAN

II

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
I'M TELLING YOU RIGHT NOW--THIS MAN IS INNOCENT! WHY WON'T YOU JUST BELIEVE ME?!
I DIDN'T KILL MY WIFE.
THEN I'M SURE A JURY WILL SIDE WITH YOU IN THE END.
I DON'T MAKE THE LAWS, KIDS. LET'S NOT DO THIS AGAIN, INVINCIBLE. SURRENDER OR BE TAKEN BY FORCE.
OH, GREAT.
HOW STRONG ARE THESE THINGS, INVINCIBLE?
STRONG.

WRAKK!
SKRAGGG!
LET'S FIND OUT **HOW** STRONG!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
THEY'RE TOUGH AS ALL HELL, BUT I THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT.
KROOM!
I'M GOOD FOR NOW--BUT HOW MANY OF THESE THINGS **ARE** THERE?
WRAKOOM!
SERIOUSLY, GUYS--THIS IS POINTLESS.
YOU'RE VASTLY OUT-NUMBERED!
USA
HE'S RIGHT-- WE SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR AN OPENING.
I'M WITH YOU--JUST CLEAR THE WAY AND I'LL FOLLOW.
KRAKOOM!

THE WAY--IS UP!
KROOM!!
TED STATES
NTAGON
THIS IS UNCOMFORTABLE.
I GET THAT A LOT.

I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU GOING TO BAT FOR ME BACK THERE.
I HOPE IT DOESN'T GET YOU IN TOO MUCH TROUBLE.
I'LL WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER. WE'RE--
KROOM!
CRAP!
VOOSH!
THUDD!
WHUMP!

WHAT THE HELL WAS *THAT?*
UGH.
YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK CECIL WOULD JUST LET YOU GO AGAIN, DID YOU?
YOU'RE IN DEEP, INVINCIBLE. PROTECTING A MURDERER IS SERIOUS BUSINESS.

PROTECTING A MURDERER, HUH? THAT'S SOMETHING YOU GUYS ARE AGAINST?
YOU KEEP ODD COMPANY, THEN.
MY PAST IS MY PAST--WHY CAN'T YOU GET OVER THAT?! I WAS NOT WELL--I'M BETTER NOW.
I SEEM TO RECALL A FEW BLACK MARKS ON YOUR--
THAT ISN'T WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
WE DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS, MARK--WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT YOU.
OH, REALLY?! YOU'RE JUST GOING TO LET US GO?
SWEET!
I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT HE MEANT.
IT WASN'T.
I KNOW.

WRAKOOM!!
I'M NOT A BAD GUY-- I SWEAR. I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU--I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU!
PLEASE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
WRAK!
DON'T BOTHER, WOLF-MAN--THESE GUYS HAVE THEIR MARCHING ORDERS. THEY'RE COMPANY MEN--THEY DON'T THINK FOR THEMSELVES.
THAT HURTS, INVINCIBLE!
I USED TO THINK YOU WERE COOL!
WRAMM!
LIKE I CARE!
KROOM!

I'M ALMOST AS STRONG AS MY FATHER NOW--HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HOLD YOUR OWN?!
YES--YOU'RE GETTING MORE LIKE YOUR FATHER EVERY DAY.
DO YOU THINK THAT'S A GOOD THING?
WROK!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS-- THIS ISN'T YOUR FIGHT!
SHRIPP!
WE MADE IT OUR FIGHT-- MURDERER!
KRAK!
YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ME!
CHOOM!
IMMORTAL!
LET'S SEE HOW LONG YOU LAST IN THE SHADOW-VERSE!
WHAT--?!

OH, NO YOU DON'T!
WHOOSH!!
THOOOM!!
WROKK!
SKROOM!
DAMN IT--
--STOP!

I KNOW YOU'RE GOOD PEOPLE! I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT!
DAMN IT! I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU-- AND I'M SICK OF HOLDING BACK!
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT US TO DO? DO YOU WANT US TO JUST LET YOU TAKE THIS CRIMINAL AND RUN?!
DO YOU THINK WE FIND YOU INTIMIDATING?! YOU ARE A CHILD-- WE'RE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINK--?!
THAP!
WRAKKA-DOOM!!

UH...
WE'RE OUT OF HERE.
WHOOSH!

COOL. I THINK WE LOST THEM.
GREAT.
THAT TOTALLY DID NOT WORK OUT THE WAY I THOUGHT IT WOULD.
I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THAT.
YOU COULDN'T HAVE PLANNED FOR THAT--DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I JUST HOPE I DIDN'T GET YOU IN TROUBLE WITH SCAR FACE BACK THERE.
I DON'T WANT THEM HUNTING YOU DOWN BECAUSE OF ME.
WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES BEFORE, BUT I THINK DEEP DOWN, CECIL--THAT'S HIS NAME--KNOWS THAT IF THERE'S A METEOR COMING TO TAKE OUT EARTH... I'M HIS BEST BET ON KEEPING THIS PLANET ALIVE.
AS LONG AS THAT'S STILL TRUE-- I GET A PASS.
STILL, THANKS FOR STICKING YOUR NECK OUT FOR ME--MEANS A LOT.
DON'T MENTION IT.
...
SO... WHERE TO?

THE HAMPTON ESTATE.
WHEN SHE SAW ME HOLDING MY WIFE'S BODY... I KNEW--
I KNEW SHE THOUGHT I'D KILLED HER.
I DIED MYSELF, THAT VERY INSTANT... MY LIFE WAS OVER.
GETTING CAUGHT--WHAT THOSE PEOPLE WILL DO TO ME--NONE OF THAT SCARES ME. THAT'S NOT WHY I RAN. I NEED TIME TO SET THINGS STRAIGHT...
...TO SHOW HER SHE STILL HAS A FATHER.
AND HE'S STILL OUT THERE--THE MAN WHO DID KILL YOUR WIFE?
SOMEWHERE, YEAH. I DON'T KNOW WHERE.
I NEVER KNEW WHERE HE WENT WHEN WE WEREN'T WORKING TOGETHER--HE ALWAYS FOUND ME.
HE'S STILL OUT THERE.
ZECHARIAH--

YOU TRIPPED THE SILENT ALARM.
I KNOW. WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
I SAW THAT IT WAS YOU ON THE SECURITY FEED. THOUGHT I'D GIVE YOU A MOMENT ALONE...
...AND I HAD TO FIND MY ROBE.
WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?
INVINCIBLE, THIS IS MY FRIEND DUNFORD.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
AND THE SAME TO YOU.
I SUPPOSE I HAVE YOU TO THANK FOR THIS VISIT. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, GARY.
ARE YOU... OKAY?

I DIDN'T KILL REBECCA.
I KNOW YOU DIDN'T. I KNEW YOU, GARY... I KNOW YOU COULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING.
WAS IT *HIM?*
IT WAS... AND I REMEMBER YOU WARNING ME ABOUT HIM.
I DIDN'T LISTEN...
I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED.
YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN. THIS ISN'T YOUR FAULT.
HOW IS SHE? HOW'S CHLOE?

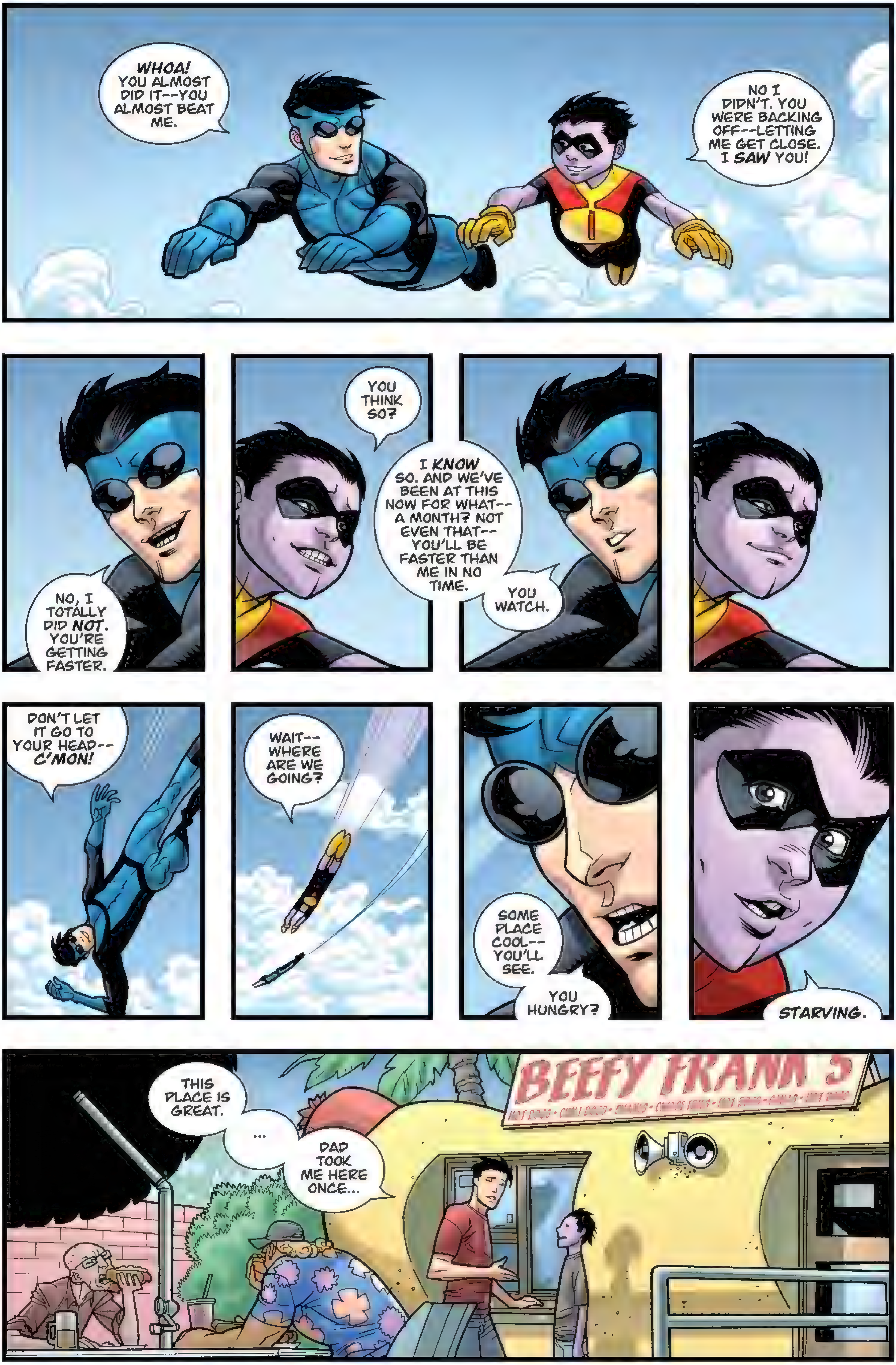
NOT WELL. SADLY.
NOT WELL AT ALL.
I'M TRYING TO BE SUPPORTIVE, I KNOW SHE'S GOING THROUGH A LOT--BUT I WAS NEVER CUT OUT TO BE A PARENT. I DON'T KNOW IF I'M DOING WHAT SHE NEEDS.
I'M GIVING HER SPACE. SHE DOESN'T SPEND A LOT OF TIME HERE. SHE'S STILL GOING TO SCHOOL, BUT HER GRADES ARE SUFFERING.
THE SCHOOL KNOWS THE SITUATION--THEY'RE BEING VERY UNDERSTANDING.
SHE'S JUST SO... ANGRY. SHE DOESN'T TALK TO ME... I'VE TRIED TO GET HER TO OPEN UP TO ME--BUT NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
DOES SHE THINK I...?
SHE DOES. SHE THINKS YOU LOST CONTROL-- WENT INTO A RAGE AND REBECCA...
I HAVEN'T TALKED TO HER ABOUT IT-- MAYBE I SHOULD--
NO!
I'LL MAKE THIS RIGHT. IF YOU TRY TO CONVINCE HER I DIDN'T KILL HER MOTHER IT'LL JUST DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN YOU. SHE'S NOT READY TO BELIEVE YOU.
SHE HAS NO REASON TO.

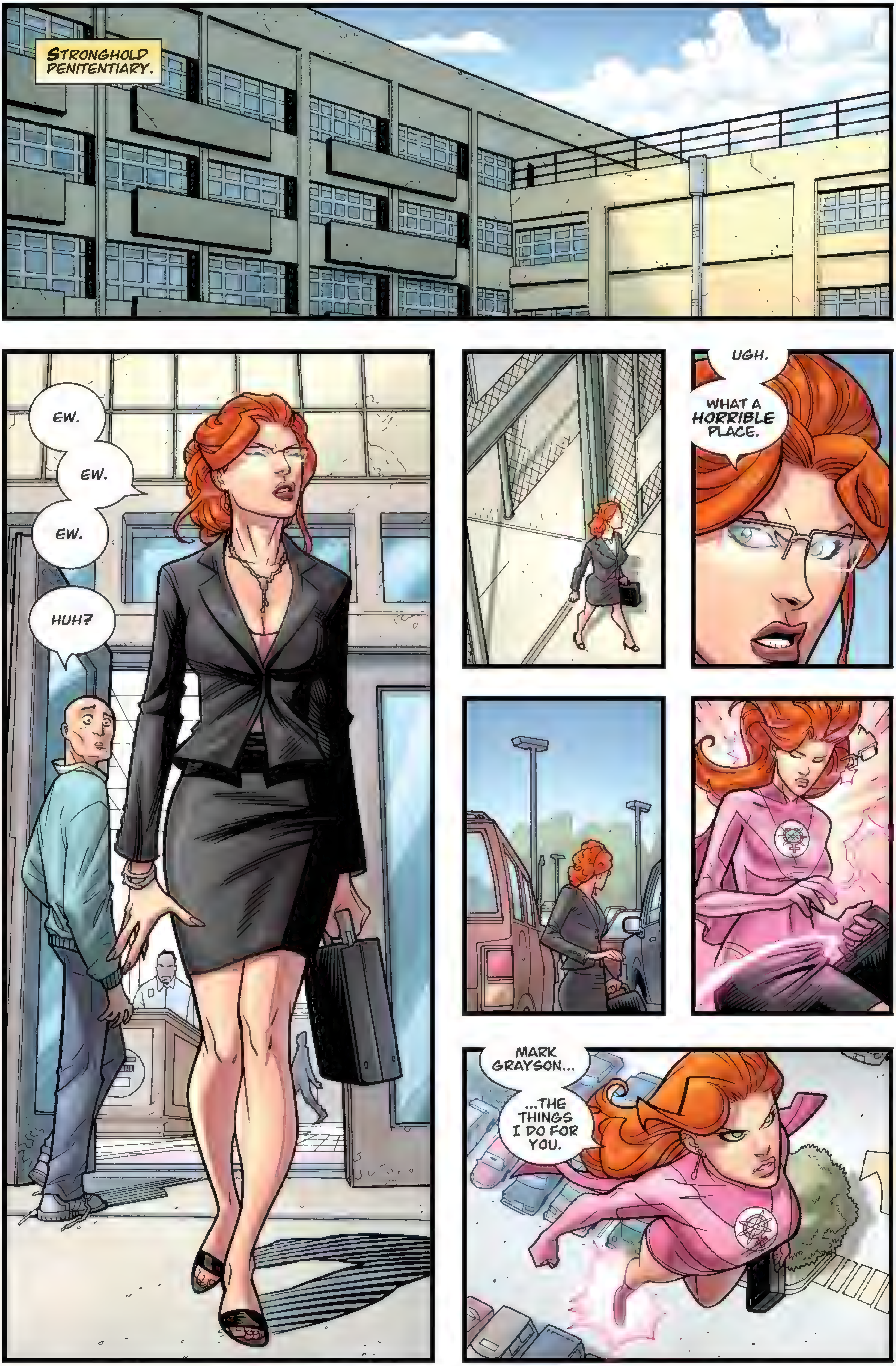
I'LL GIVE HER THE REASON TO BELIEVE ME. I'LL SHOW HER THE KIND OF MAN THAT I AM--THE KIND OF MAN I'VE ALWAYS BEEN.
I JUST NEED TIME. DUNFORD, JUST GIVE ME THE TIME TO PROVE TO HER.
I'LL BRING DOWN ZECHARIAH--EXPOSE HIM FOR WHAT HE IS--AND SHE'LL HAVE TO BELIEVE ME.
I'LL GET MY LITTLE GIRL BACK.
I'LL GIVE YOU AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED.
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, GARY.
WHEN THE TIME COMES, I'LL HELP OUT IN ANY WAY I CAN.
I REALLY WISH I COULD HELP MORE. I'M VERY SORRY.
DON'T BE. YOU'VE HELPED ENOUGH. BRINGING ME HERE--TRYING TO CLEAR THINGS WITH THE GOVERNMENT.
I ALMOST HATE TO ASK, BUT I DO NEED ONE MORE THING FROM YOU.
NAME IT.
I NEED YOU TO GET ME OUT OF HERE.

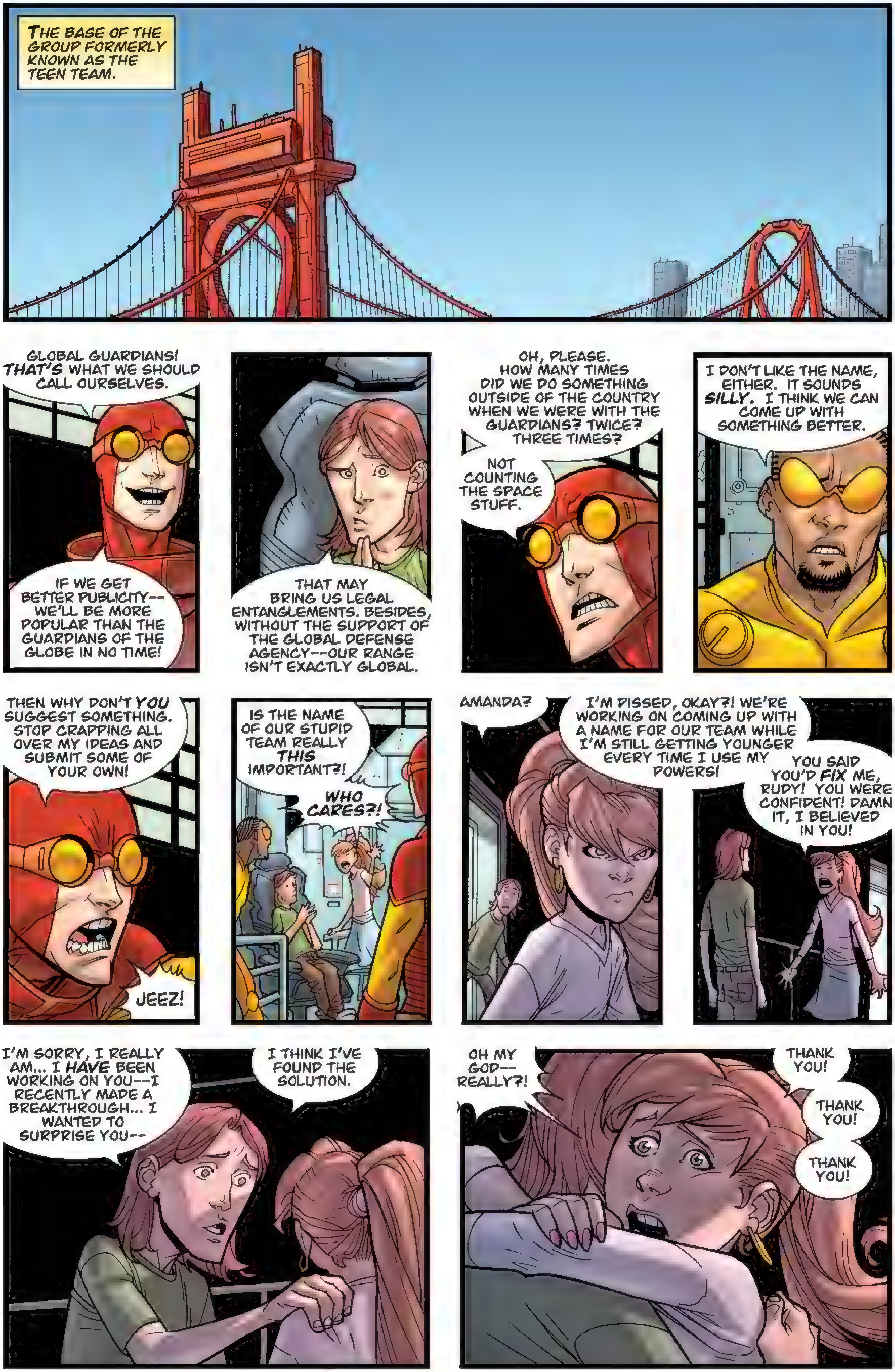
YOU'RE SURE YOU WANT ME TO BRING YOU BACK HERE?
THEY KNOW YOU WERE HERE-- WON'T THEY COME HERE AGAIN TO ARREST YOU?
MAYBE THEY WILL... I'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.
IT'S IMPORTANT I STAY HERE-- I'M LEARNING THINGS.
I REALLY SHOULD BE GETTING BACK--MY GIRLFRIEND'S PROBABLY WONDERING WHY I HAVEN'T CALLED HER TONIGHT.
GOOD LUCK.
WHO WAS THAT?
SOMETHING I THOUGHT I MIGHT NEVER HAVE AGAIN...
...A FRIEND.

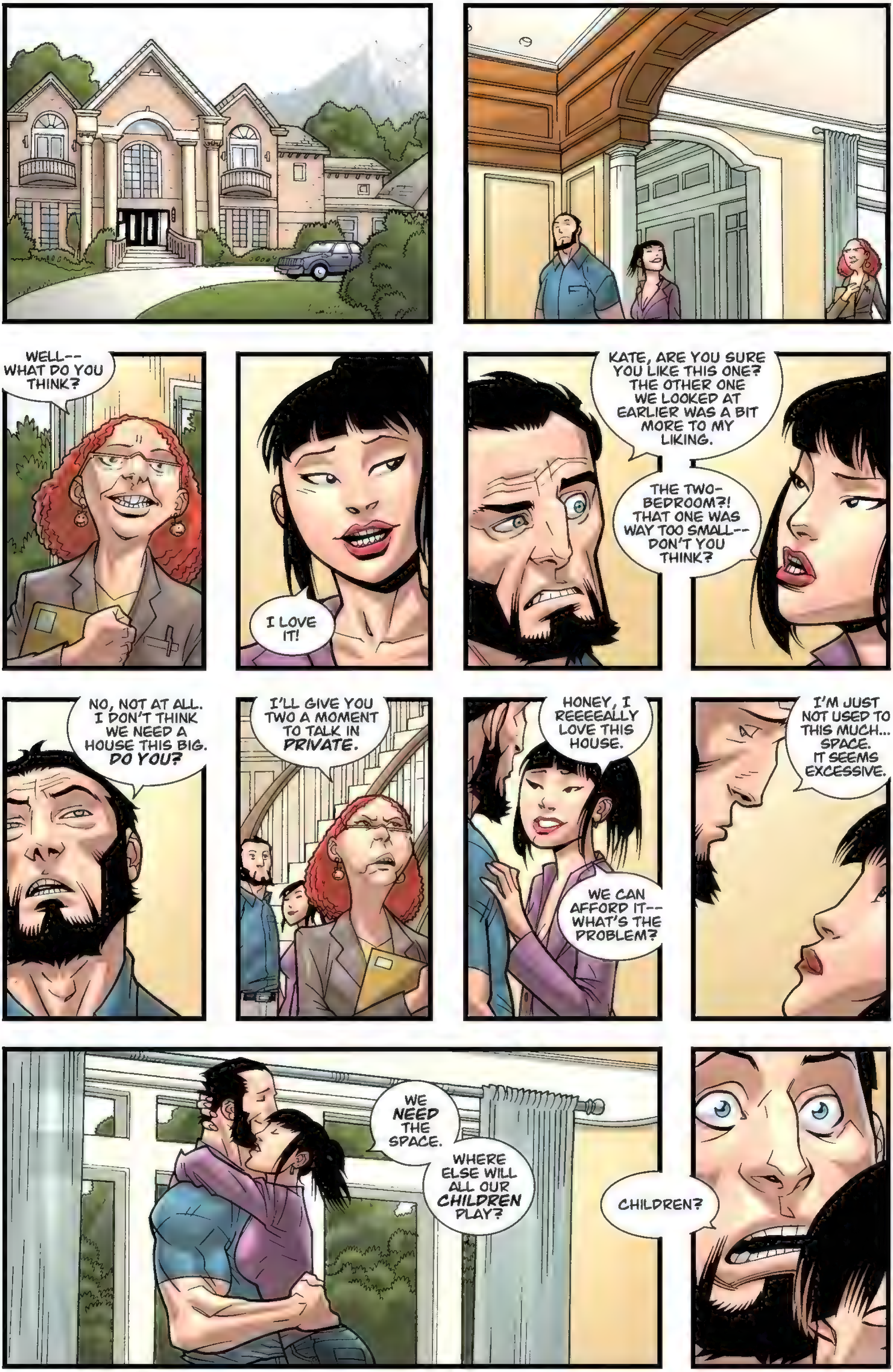
DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
YES, IDENTITY CONFIRMED. IT'S GARY HAMPTON. WE'VE GOT A FIX ON HIS LOCATION.
WE'RE MONITORING ON SATELLITES-- WE'VE GOT A CLEAR VIEW.
STAND BY FOR INSTRUCTIONS.
NO.
WE KNOW WHERE HE IS-- WE'LL KEEP HIM UNDER SURVEILLANCE.
I'M STILL DECIDING WHAT TO DO WITH HIM. HE MAY STILL PROVE USEFUL TO ME...
YOU WANT ME TO GO IN?

CHAPTER 58

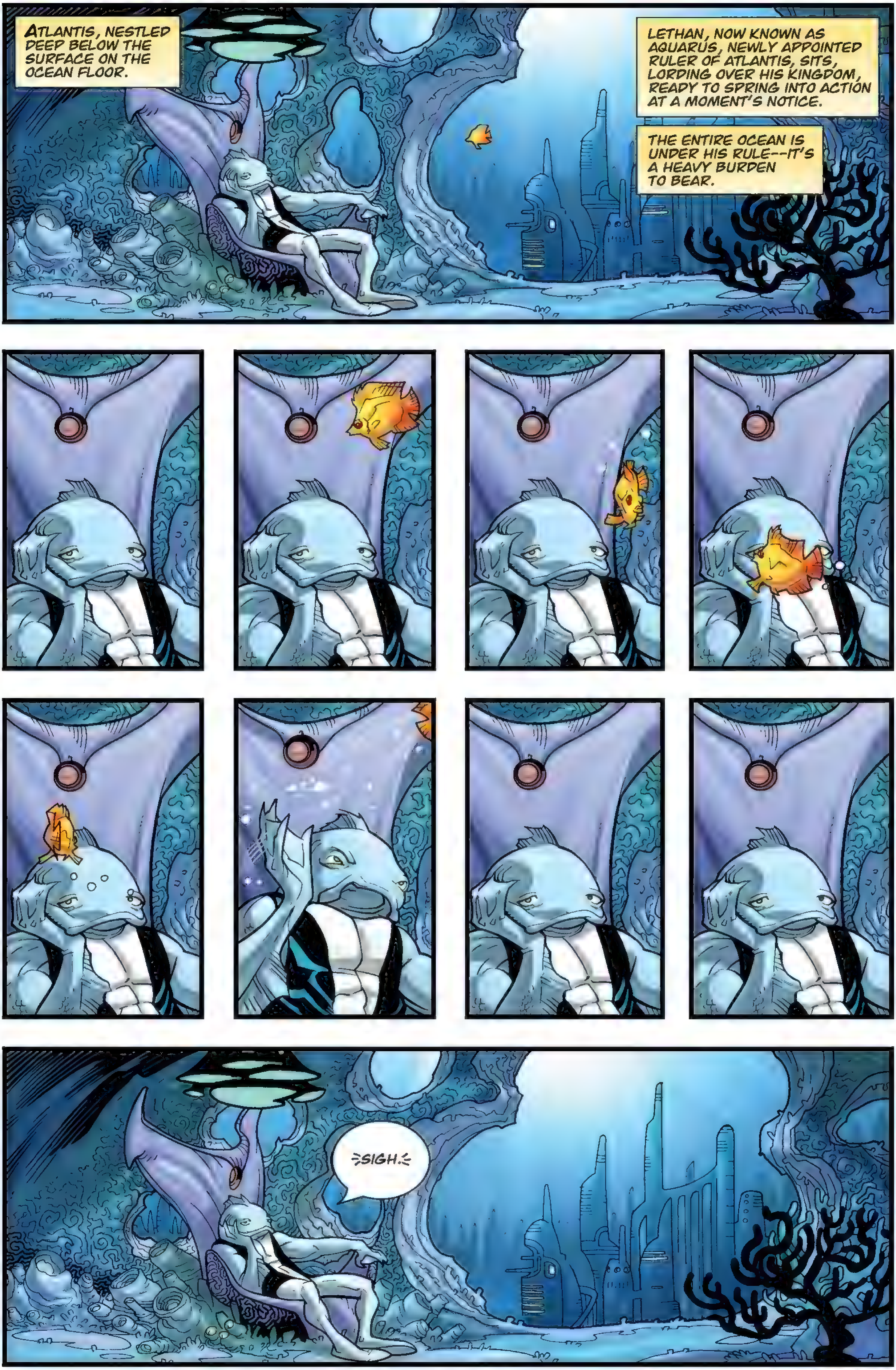

WHOA! YOU ALMOST DID IT--YOU ALMOST BEAT ME.
NO I DIDN'T. YOU WERE BACKING OFF--LETTING ME GET CLOSE. I SAW YOU!
NO, I TOTALLY DID NOT. YOU'RE GETTING FASTER.
YOU THINK SO?
I KNOW SO. AND WE'VE BEEN AT THIS NOW FOR WHAT--A MONTH? NOT EVEN THAT--YOU'LL BE FASTER THAN ME IN NO TIME.
YOU WATCH.
DON'T LET IT GO TO YOUR HEAD--C'MON!
WAIT--WHERE ARE WE GOING?
SOME PLACE COOL--YOU'LL SEE.
YOU HUNGRY?
STARVING.
THIS PLACE IS GREAT.
...
DAD TOOK ME HERE ONCE...
BEEFY FRANK'S

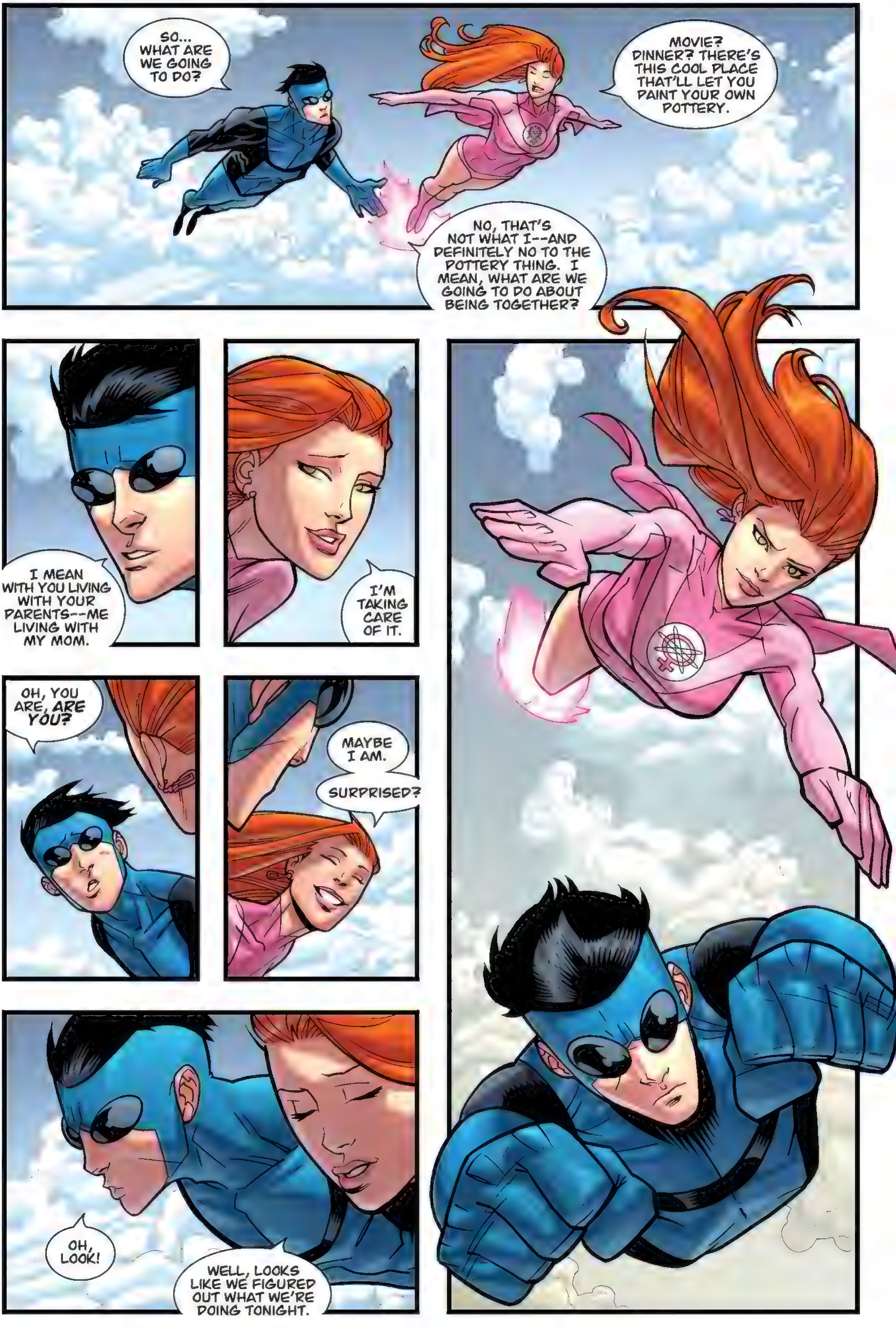

STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
EW.
EW.
EW.
HUH?
UGH.
WHAT A HORRIBLE PLACE.
MARK GRAYSON...
...THE THINGS I DO FOR YOU.


THE BASE OF THE GROUP FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE TEEN TEAM.
GLOBAL GUARDIANS! THAT'S WHAT WE SHOULD CALL OURSELVES.
IF WE GET BETTER PUBLICITY--WE'LL BE MORE POPULAR THAN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE IN NO TIME!
THAT MAY BRING US LEGAL ENTANGLEMENTS. BESIDES, WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY--OUR RANGE ISN'T EXACTLY GLOBAL.
OH, PLEASE. HOW MANY TIMES DID WE DO SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTRY WHEN WE WERE WITH THE GUARDIANS? TWICE? THREE TIMES?
NOT COUNTING THE SPACE STUFF.
I DON'T LIKE THE NAME, EITHER. IT SOUNDS SILLY. I THINK WE CAN COME UP WITH SOMETHING BETTER.
THEN WHY DON'T YOU SUGGEST SOMETHING. STOP CRAPPING ALL OVER MY IDEAS AND SUBMIT SOME OF YOUR OWN!
JEEZ!
IS THE NAME OF OUR STUPID TEAM REALLY THIS IMPORTANT?!
WHO CARES?!
AMANDA?
I'M PISSED, OKAY?! WE'RE WORKING ON COMING UP WITH A NAME FOR OUR TEAM WHILE I'M STILL GETTING YOUNGER EVERY TIME I USE MY POWERS!
YOU SAID YOU'D FIX ME, RUDY! YOU WERE CONFIDENT! DAMN IT, I BELIEVED IN YOU!
I'M SORRY, I REALLY AM... I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON YOU--I RECENTLY MADE A BREAKTHROUGH... I WANTED TO SURPRISE YOU--
I THINK I'VE FOUND THE SOLUTION.
OH MY GOD--REALLY?!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!


WELL-- WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I LOVE IT!
KATE, ARE YOU SURE YOU LIKE THIS ONE? THE OTHER ONE WE LOOKED AT EARLIER WAS A BIT MORE TO MY LIKING.
THE TWO-BEDROOM?! THAT ONE WAS WAY TOO SMALL-- DON'T YOU THINK?
NO, NOT AT ALL. I DON'T THINK WE NEED A HOUSE THIS BIG. DO YOU?
I'LL GIVE YOU TWO A MOMENT TO TALK IN PRIVATE.
HONEY, I REEEEALLY LOVE THIS HOUSE.
WE CAN AFFORD IT-- WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
I'M JUST NOT USED TO THIS MUCH... SPACE. IT SEEMS EXCESSIVE.
WE NEED THE SPACE.
WHERE ELSE WILL ALL OUR CHILDREN PLAY?
CHILDREN?

CLOSE--BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH. YOU'RE JUST NOT AS FAST AS ME.
SAYS-- YOU!
SLOW DOWN!
SLOW DOWN!
SLOW DOWN!
KRUNK!
CRAP.
I PULLED BACK TOO LATE--MOM'S GOING TO KILL ME.
NO CRAP-- MAYBE NEXT TIME YOU'LL LISTEN TO ME.
NEXT TIME, I'LL WIN.
HELLO?! DON'T WE HAVE A DATE TONIGHT?
OH, SORRY, I'LL GET CHANGED.
DON'T BOTHER.
WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE MORE FUN THIS WAY.

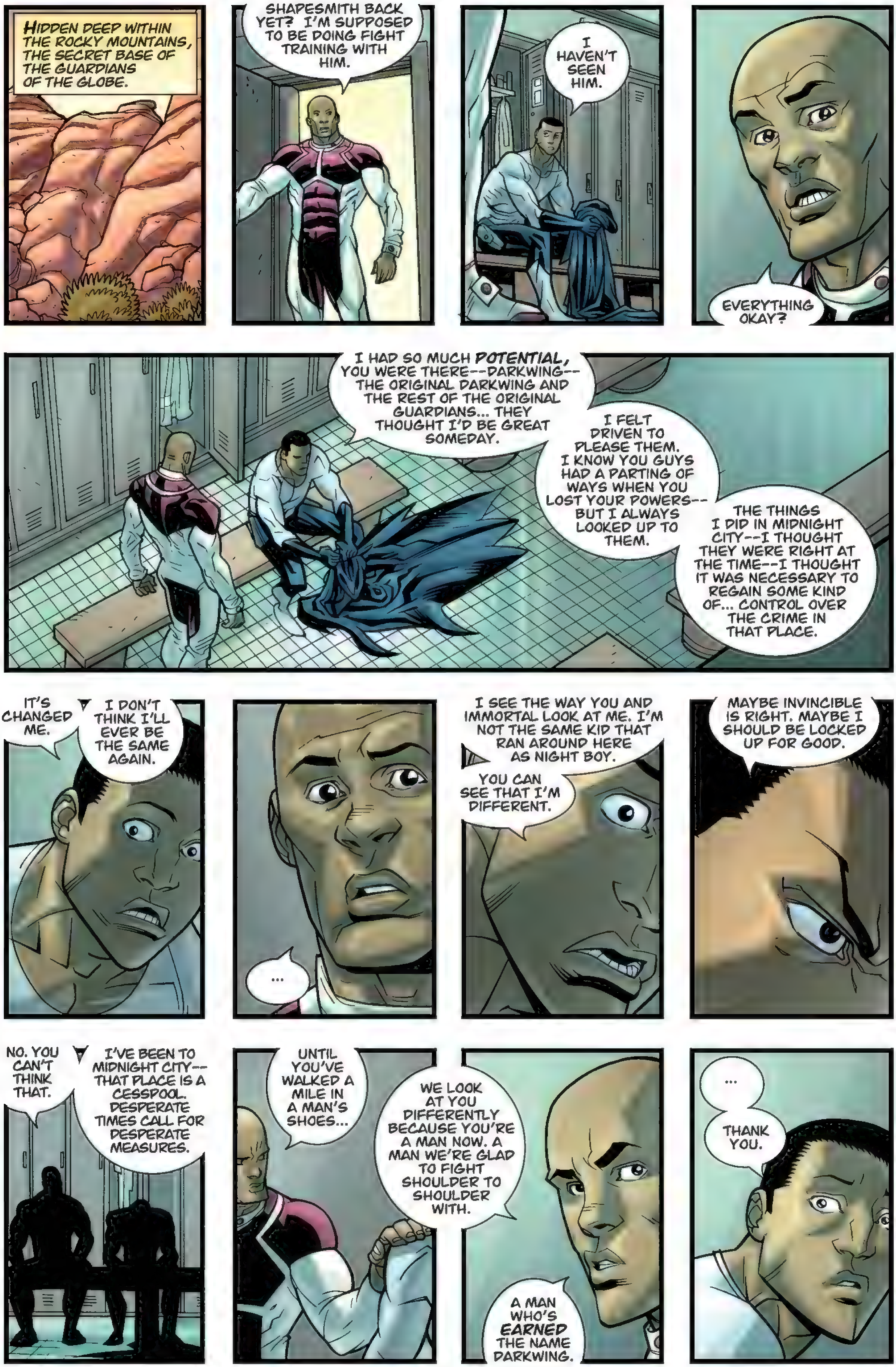

ATLANTIS, NESTLED DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE ON THE OCEAN FLOOR.
LETHAN, NOW KNOWN AS AQUARUS, NEWLY APPOINTED RULER OF ATLANTIS, SITS, LORDING OVER HIS KINGDOM, READY TO SPRING INTO ACTION AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE.
THE ENTIRE OCEAN IS UNDER HIS RULE--IT'S A HEAVY BURDEN TO BEAR.
SIGH.

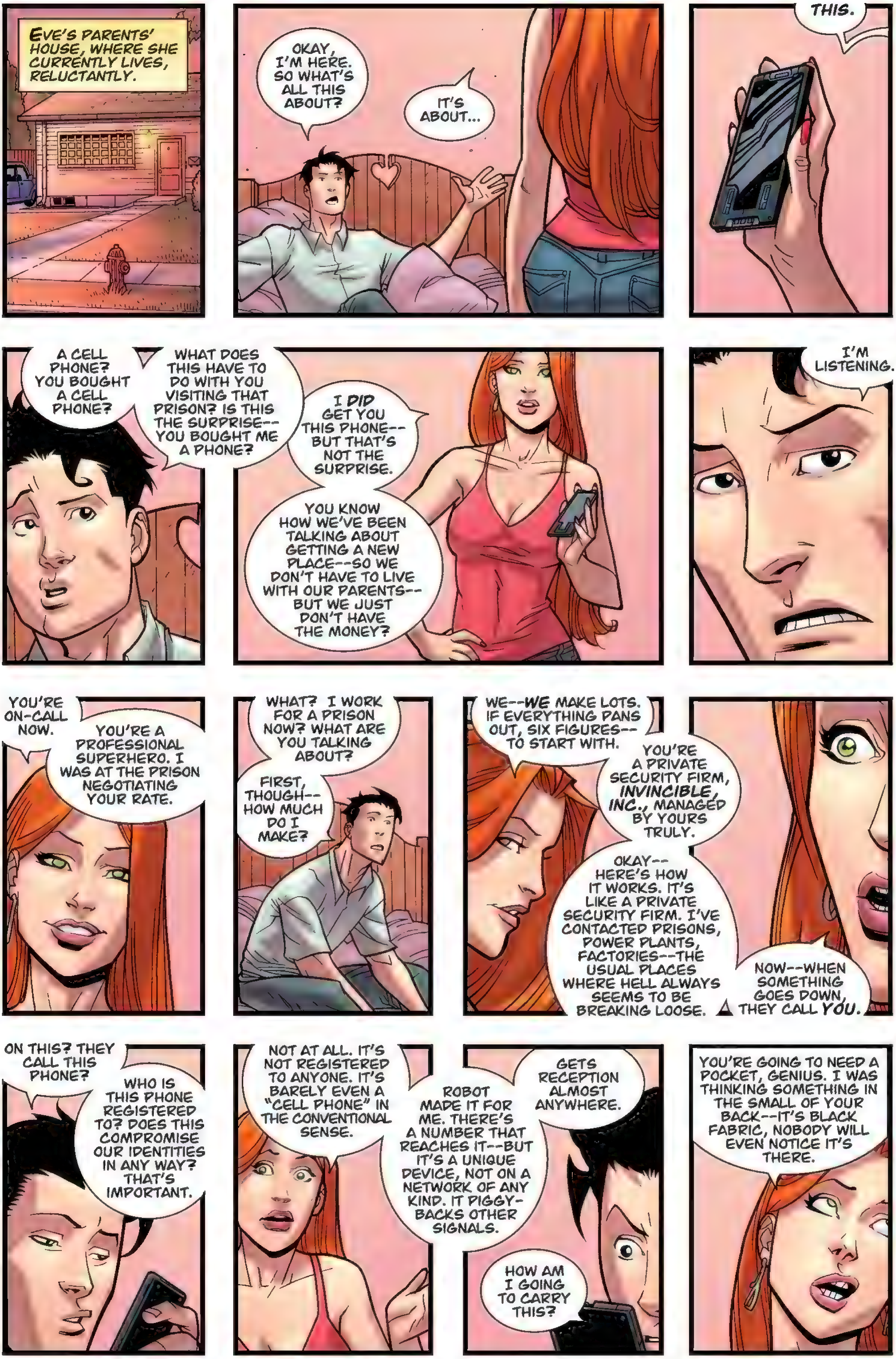

SO... WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
MOVIE? DINNER? THERE'S THIS COOL PLACE THAT'LL LET YOU PAINT YOUR OWN POTTERY.
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I--AND DEFINITELY NO TO THE POTTERY THING. I MEAN, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT BEING TOGETHER?
I MEAN WITH YOU LIVING WITH YOUR PARENTS--ME LIVING WITH MY MOM.
I'M TAKING CARE OF IT.
OH, YOU ARE, ARE YOU?
MAYBE I AM.
SURPRISED?
OH, LOOK!
WELL, LOOKS LIKE WE FIGURED OUT WHAT WE'RE DOING TONIGHT.

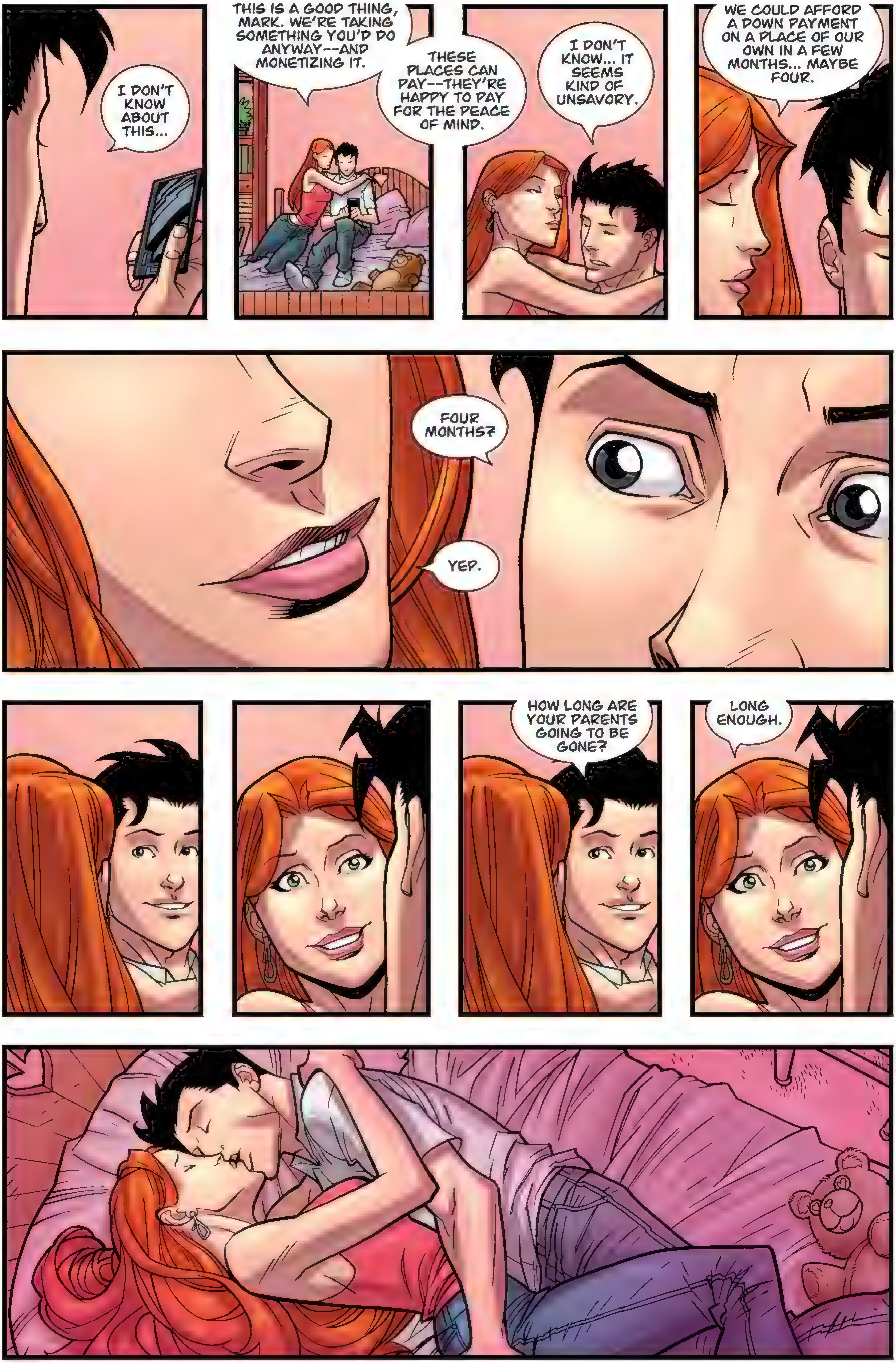
HA! HA!
WHEN I SAW YOU AT THE PRISON EARLIER TODAY--I KNEW YOU'D BE IN THIS AREA! I KNEW YOU'D BE FIRST ON THE SCENE!
ATOM EVE, MY DEAR-- YOU'VE FALLEN INTO MY TRAP!
WHO IS THIS GUY?!
KILLCANNON... WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING SINCE I WAS A KID.
I GUESS HE'S MY NEMESIS.
WHAT THE--?!
HEH.
WRAMM!
YOUR NEMESIS SUCKS.
OH, WHATEVER-- I TOTALLY SET HIM UP FOR YOU.

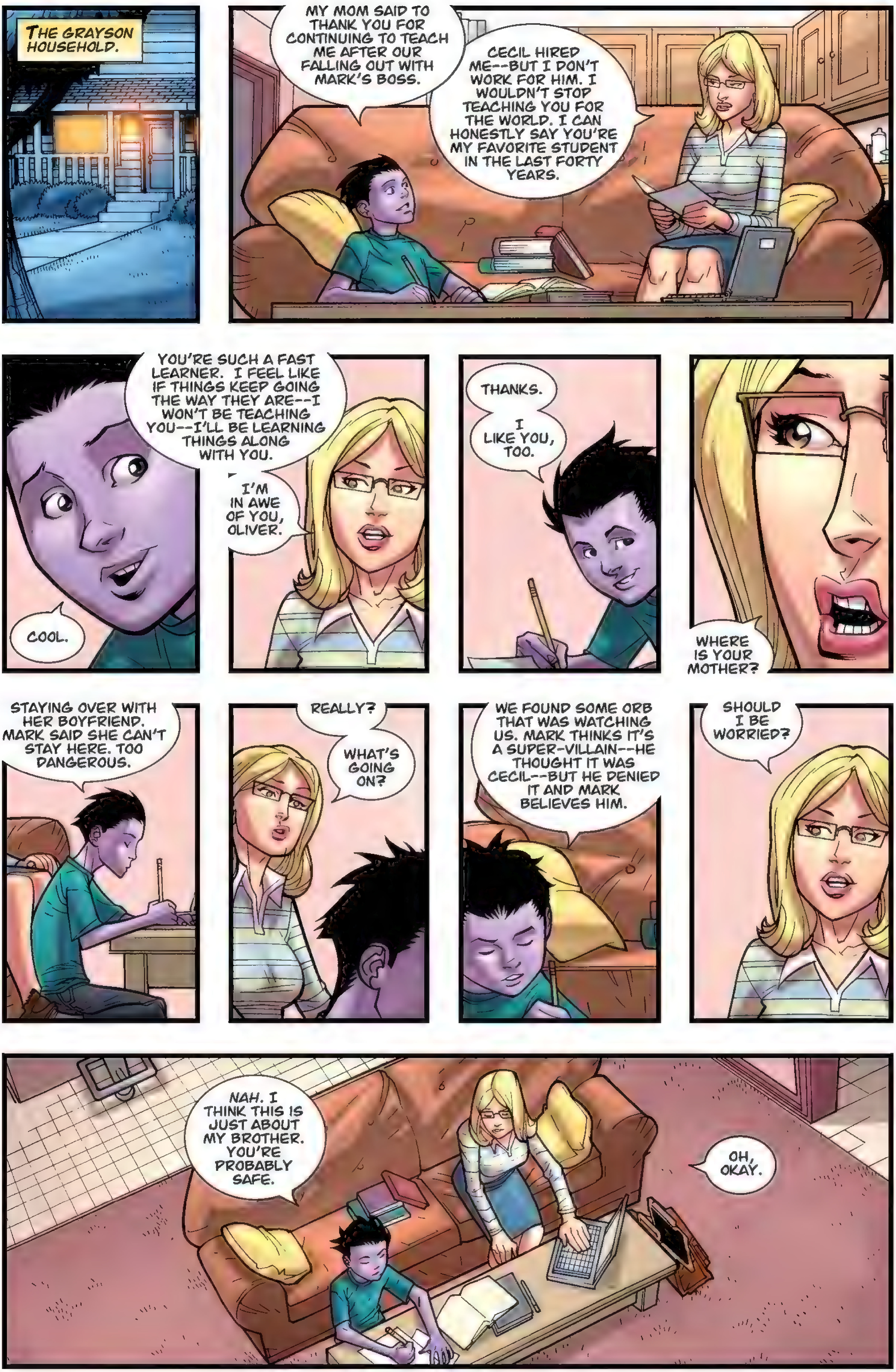
HEY-- WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT HE SAID?
HUH? WHAT?
HE SAID HE SAW YOU AT A PRISON TODAY.
IS HE CRAZY? DID HE REALLY SEE YOU?
I DON'T KNOW. UM.
I DIDN'T HEAR HIM SAY THAT.
I KNOW WE HAVEN'T BEEN *OFFICIALLY* TOGETHER FOR VERY LONG-- BUT I CAN TOTALLY TELL WHEN YOU'RE LYING.
IS THIS SOMETHING SERIOUS? WHY WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN AT A *PRISON* TODAY?
EVE?
IT'S NOT SOMETHING SERIOUS.
CAN WE DROP IT?
I DON'T THINK SO. NO.
DEFINITELY NOT.
OH, *FINE!*
I WAS TRYING TO *SURPRISE* YOU!
FOLLOW ME TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE.

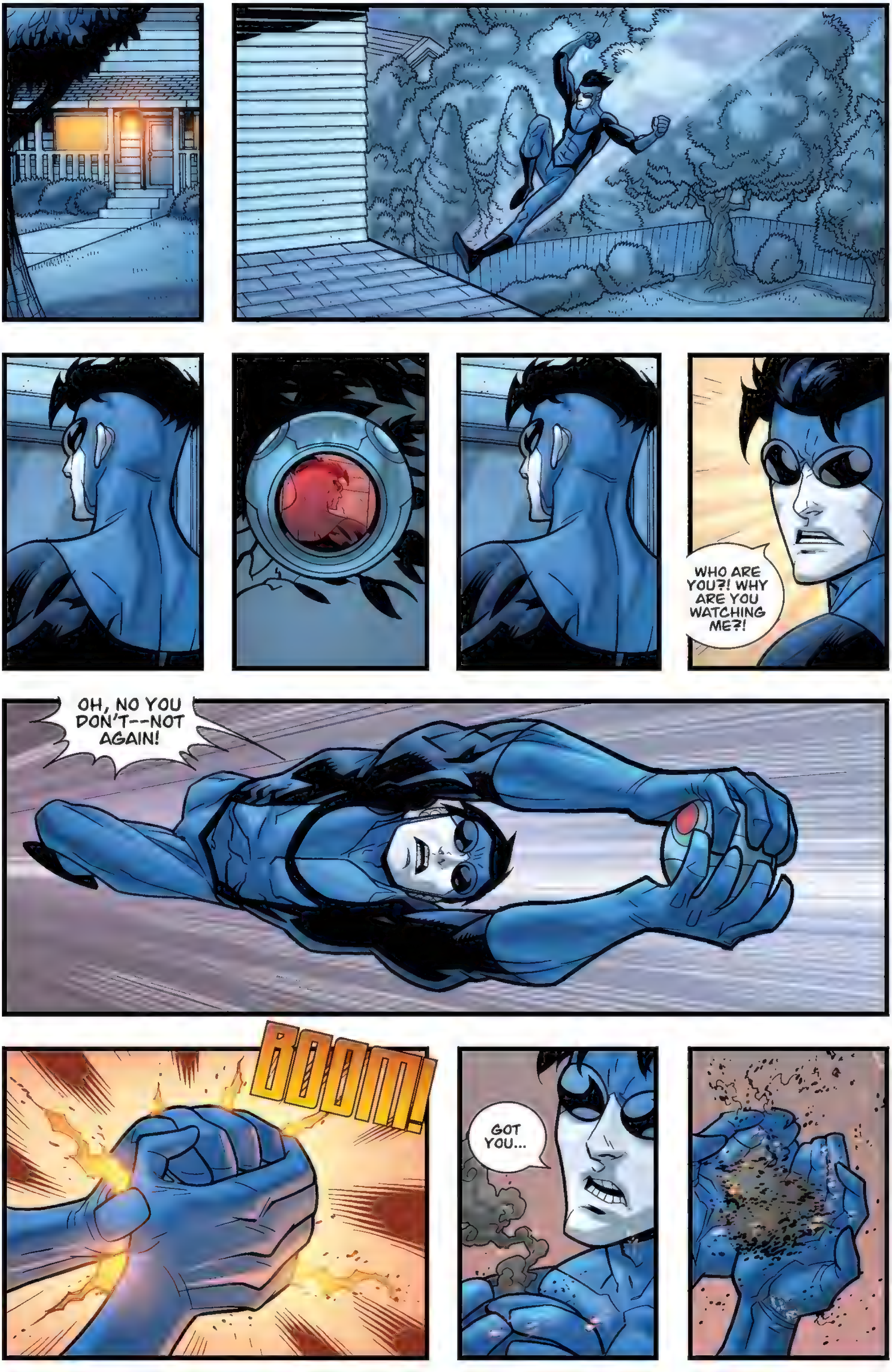
THE TAILOR SHOP OF ART ROSENBAUM.
I'M GLAD YOU LIKE THAT ONE. IT WAS MY FAVORITE, TOO. I HATE IT WHEN A CLIENT PICKS MY LEAST FAVORITE.
HAPPENS FROM TIME TO TIME.
I'M STILL NEW TO THIS WHOLE THING--MY CURRENT COSTUME IS BASED ON MARTIAN ATTIRE--SEEMS INAPPROPRIATE, YOU KNOW?
I SUPPOSE.
ONE THING, THOUGH--YOUR SHAPE-SHIFTING ABILITIES...
WHAT ABOUT THEM?
WELL, IT'S A LITTLE BEYOND MY MEANS TO BE ABLE TO DESIGN A COSTUME AROUND THEM--I MEAN, I CAN'T MAKE SOMETHING THAT SHIFTS WITH YOU.
YOU UNDERSTAND?
OH, YEAH. I UNDERSTAND.
THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
SEE?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PAY ME... ARE YOU?
FOR WHAT?
THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.

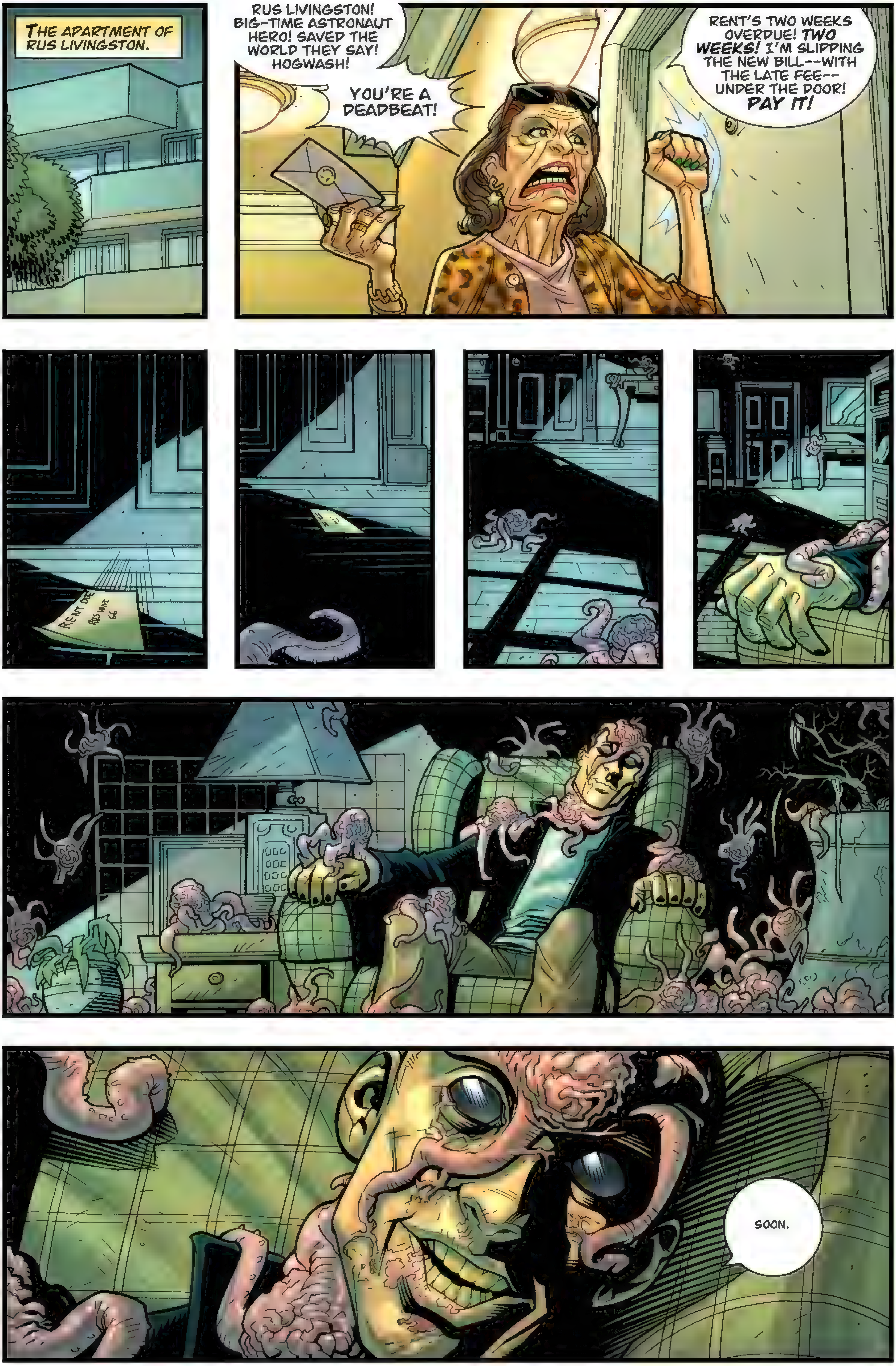

HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS, THE SECRET BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
SHAPESMITH BACK YET? I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DOING FIGHT TRAINING WITH HIM.
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM.
EVERYTHING OKAY?
I HAD SO MUCH *POTENTIAL*, YOU WERE THERE--DARKWING--THE ORIGINAL DARKWING AND THE REST OF THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS... THEY THOUGHT I'D BE GREAT SOMEDAY.
I FELT DRIVEN TO PLEASE THEM. I KNOW YOU GUYS HAD A PARTING OF WAYS WHEN YOU LOST YOUR POWERS--BUT I ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO THEM.
THE THINGS I DID IN MIDNIGHT CITY--I THOUGHT THEY WERE RIGHT AT THE TIME--I THOUGHT IT WAS NECESSARY TO REGAIN SOME KIND OF... CONTROL OVER THE CRIME IN THAT PLACE.
IT'S CHANGED ME.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.
...
I SEE THE WAY YOU AND IMMORTAL LOOK AT ME. I'M NOT THE SAME KID THAT RAN AROUND HERE AS NIGHT BOY.
YOU CAN SEE THAT I'M DIFFERENT.
MAYBE INVINCIBLE IS RIGHT. MAYBE I SHOULD BE LOCKED UP FOR GOOD.
NO. YOU CAN'T THINK THAT.
I'VE BEEN TO MIDNIGHT CITY--THAT PLACE IS A CESSPOOL. DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES.
UNTIL YOU'VE WALKED A MILE IN A MAN'S SHOES...
WE LOOK AT YOU DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE YOU'RE A MAN NOW. A MAN WE'RE GLAD TO FIGHT SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH.
A MAN WHO'S *EARNED* THE NAME DARKWING.
...
THANK YOU.

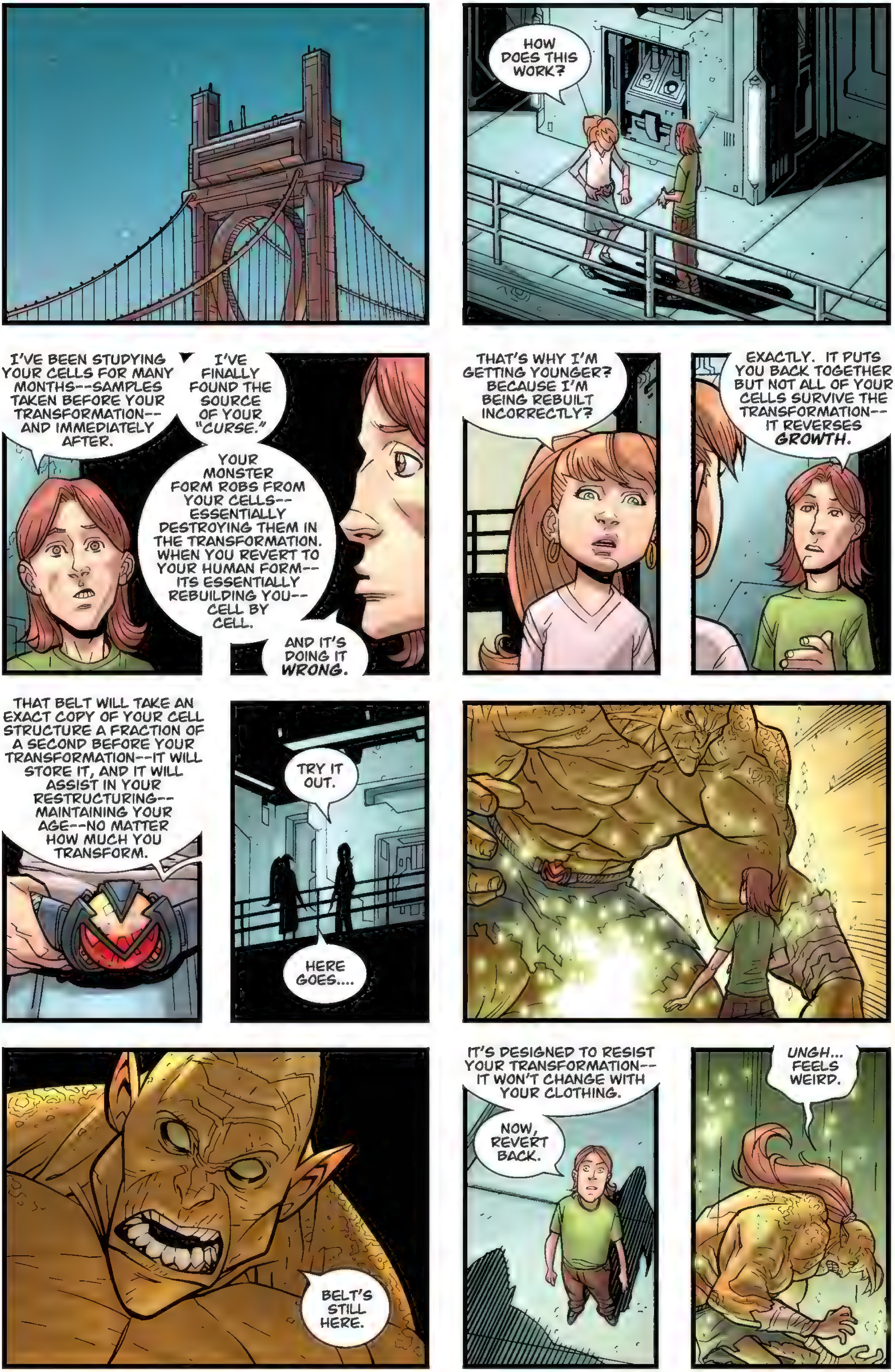

EVE'S PARENTS' HOUSE, WHERE SHE CURRENTLY LIVES, RELUCTANTLY.
OKAY, I'M HERE. SO WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?
IT'S ABOUT...
THIS.
A CELL PHONE? YOU BOUGHT A CELL PHONE?
WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH YOU VISITING THAT PRISON? IS THIS THE SURPRISE-- YOU BOUGHT ME A PHONE?
I *DID* GET YOU THIS PHONE-- BUT THAT'S NOT THE SURPRISE.
YOU KNOW HOW WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT GETTING A NEW PLACE--SO WE DON'T HAVE TO LIVE WITH OUR PARENTS-- BUT WE JUST DON'T HAVE THE MONEY?
I'M LISTENING.
YOU'RE ON-CALL NOW.
YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL SUPERHERO. I WAS AT THE PRISON NEGOTIATING YOUR RATE.
WHAT? I WORK FOR A PRISON NOW? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
FIRST, THOUGH-- HOW MUCH DO I MAKE?
WE--*WE* MAKE LOTS. IF EVERYTHING PANS OUT, SIX FIGURES-- TO START WITH.
YOU'RE A PRIVATE SECURITY FIRM, *INVINCIBLE, INC.*, MANAGED BY YOURS TRULY.
OKAY-- HERE'S HOW IT WORKS. IT'S LIKE A PRIVATE SECURITY FIRM. I'VE CONTACTED PRISONS, POWER PLANTS, FACTORIES--THE USUAL PLACES WHERE HELL ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE BREAKING LOOSE.
NOW--WHEN SOMETHING GOES DOWN, THEY CALL *YOU*.
ON THIS? THEY CALL THIS PHONE?
WHO IS THIS PHONE REGISTERED TO? DOES THIS COMPROMISE OUR IDENTITIES IN ANY WAY? THAT'S IMPORTANT.
NOT AT ALL. IT'S NOT REGISTERED TO ANYONE. IT'S BARELY EVEN A "CELL PHONE" IN THE CONVENTIONAL SENSE.
ROBOT MADE IT FOR ME. THERE'S A NUMBER THAT REACHES IT--BUT IT'S A UNIQUE DEVICE, NOT ON A NETWORK OF ANY KIND. IT PIGGY-BACKS OTHER SIGNALS.
GETS RECEPTION ALMOST ANYWHERE.
HOW AM I GOING TO CARRY THIS?
YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A POCKET, GENIUS. I WAS THINKING SOMETHING IN THE SMALL OF YOUR BACK--IT'S BLACK FABRIC, NOBODY WILL EVEN NOTICE IT'S THERE.

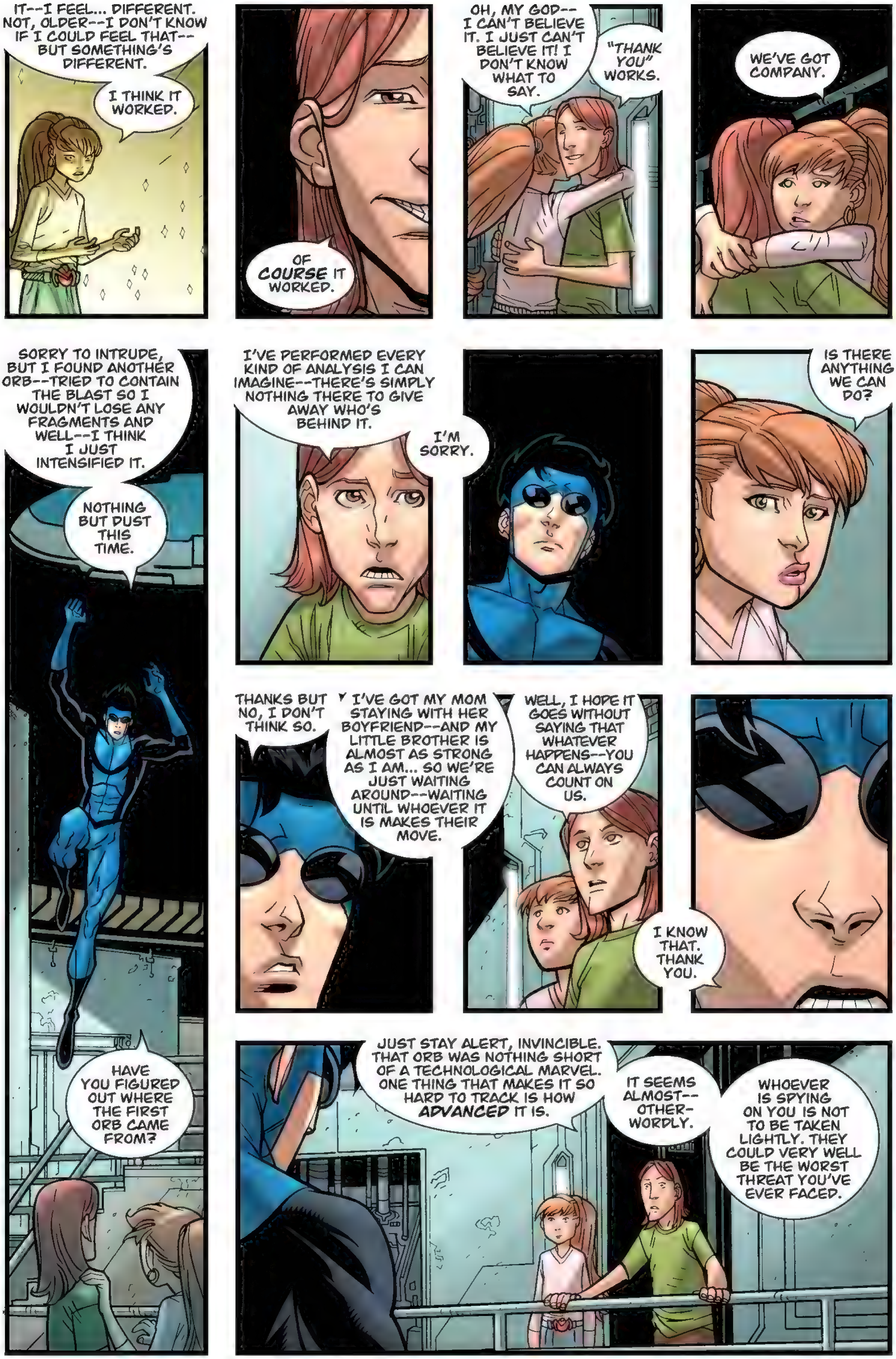

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS...
THIS IS A GOOD THING, MARK. WE'RE TAKING SOMETHING YOU'D DO ANYWAY--AND MONETIZING IT.
THESE PLACES CAN PAY--THEY'RE HAPPY TO PAY FOR THE PEACE OF MIND.
I DON'T KNOW... IT SEEMS KIND OF UNSAVORY.
WE COULD AFFORD A DOWN PAYMENT ON A PLACE OF OUR OWN IN A FEW MONTHS... MAYBE FOUR.
FOUR MONTHS?
YEP.
HOW LONG ARE YOUR PARENTS GOING TO BE GONE?
LONG ENOUGH.

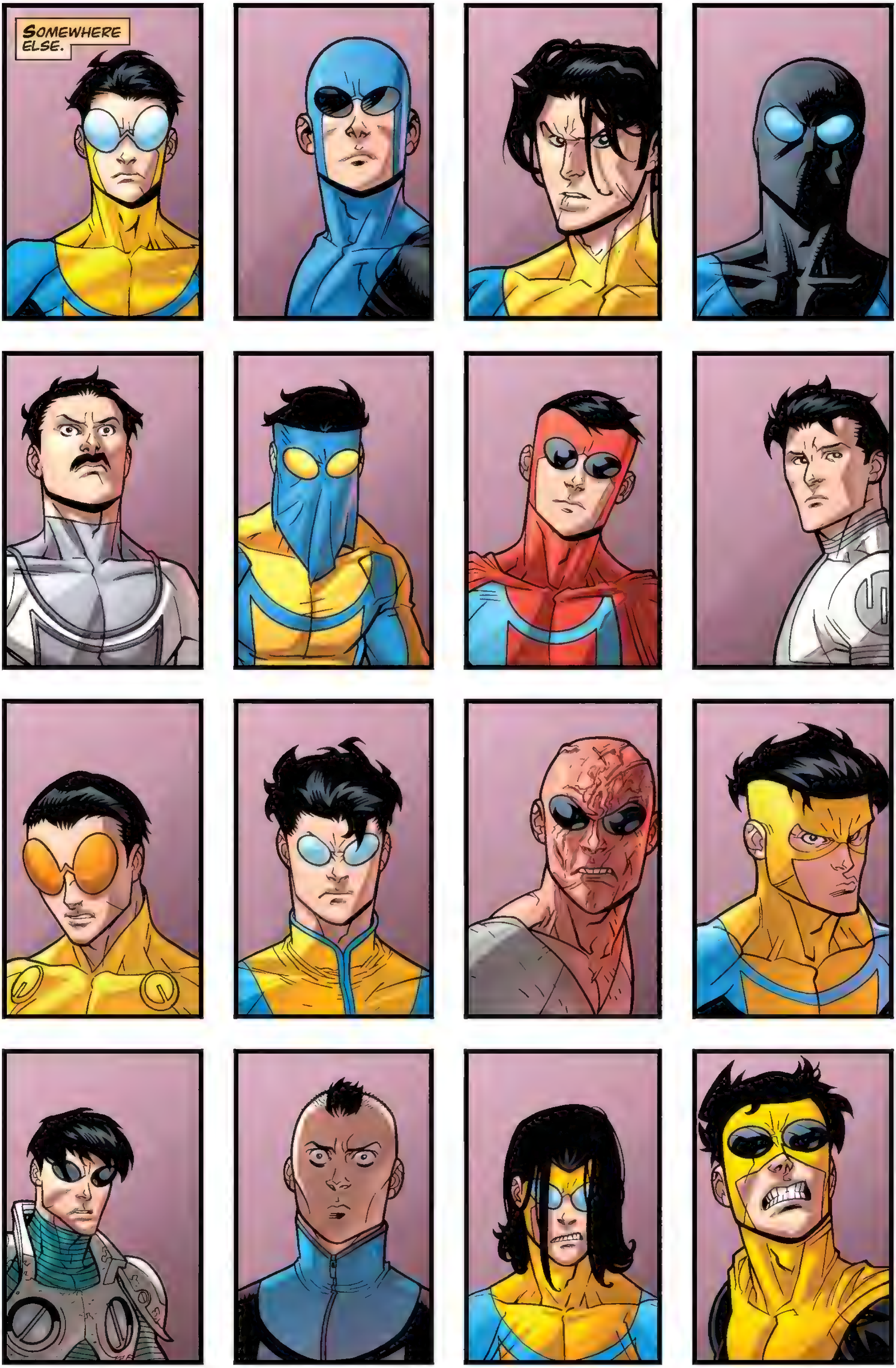

THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
MY MOM SAID TO THANK YOU FOR CONTINUING TO TEACH ME AFTER OUR FALLING OUT WITH MARK'S BOSS.
CECIL HIRED ME--BUT I DON'T WORK FOR HIM. I WOULDN'T STOP TEACHING YOU FOR THE WORLD. I CAN HONESTLY SAY YOU'RE MY FAVORITE STUDENT IN THE LAST FORTY YEARS.
YOU'RE SUCH A FAST LEARNER. I FEEL LIKE IF THINGS KEEP GOING THE WAY THEY ARE--I WON'T BE TEACHING YOU--I'LL BE LEARNING THINGS ALONG WITH YOU.
I'M IN AWE OF YOU, OLIVER.
COOL.
THANKS.
I LIKE YOU, TOO.
WHERE IS YOUR MOTHER?
STAYING OVER WITH HER BOYFRIEND. MARK SAID SHE CAN'T STAY HERE. TOO DANGEROUS.
REALLY?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WE FOUND SOME ORB THAT WAS WATCHING US. MARK THINKS IT'S A SUPER-VILLAIN--HE THOUGHT IT WAS CECIL--BUT HE DENIED IT AND MARK BELIEVES HIM.
SHOULD I BE WORRIED?
NAH. I THINK THIS IS JUST ABOUT MY BROTHER. YOU'RE PROBABLY SAFE.
OH, OKAY.


WHO ARE YOU?! WHY ARE YOU WATCHING ME?!
OH, NO YOU DON'T--NOT AGAIN!
BOOM!
GOT YOU...


THE APARTMENT OF RUS LIVINGSTON.
RUS LIVINGSTON! BIG-TIME ASTRONAUT HERO! SAVED THE WORLD THEY SAY! HOGWASH!
YOU'RE A DEADBEAT!
RENT'S TWO WEEKS OVERDUE! *TWO WEEKS!* I'M SLIPPING THE NEW BILL--WITH THE LATE FEE--UNDER THE DOOR! *PAY IT!*
SOON.


HOW DOES THIS WORK?
I'VE BEEN STUDYING YOUR CELLS FOR MANY MONTHS--SAMPLES TAKEN BEFORE YOUR TRANSFORMATION--AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER.
I'VE FINALLY FOUND THE SOURCE OF YOUR "CURSE."
YOUR MONSTER FORM ROBS FROM YOUR CELLS--ESSENTIALLY DESTROYING THEM IN THE TRANSFORMATION. WHEN YOU REVERT TO YOUR HUMAN FORM--ITS ESSENTIALLY REBUILDING YOU--CELL BY CELL.
AND IT'S DOING IT *WRONG.*
THAT'S WHY I'M GETTING YOUNGER? BECAUSE I'M BEING REBUILT INCORRECTLY?
EXACTLY. IT PUTS YOU BACK TOGETHER BUT NOT ALL OF YOUR CELLS SURVIVE THE TRANSFORMATION--IT REVERSES ***GROWTH.***
THAT BELT WILL TAKE AN EXACT COPY OF YOUR CELL STRUCTURE A FRACTION OF A SECOND BEFORE YOUR TRANSFORMATION--IT WILL STORE IT, AND IT WILL ASSIST IN YOUR RESTRUCTURING--MAINTAINING YOUR AGE--NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU TRANSFORM.
TRY IT OUT.
HERE GOES....
BELT'S STILL HERE.
IT'S DESIGNED TO RESIST YOUR TRANSFORMATION--IT WON'T CHANGE WITH YOUR CLOTHING.
NOW, REVERT BACK.
UNGH... FEELS WEIRD.

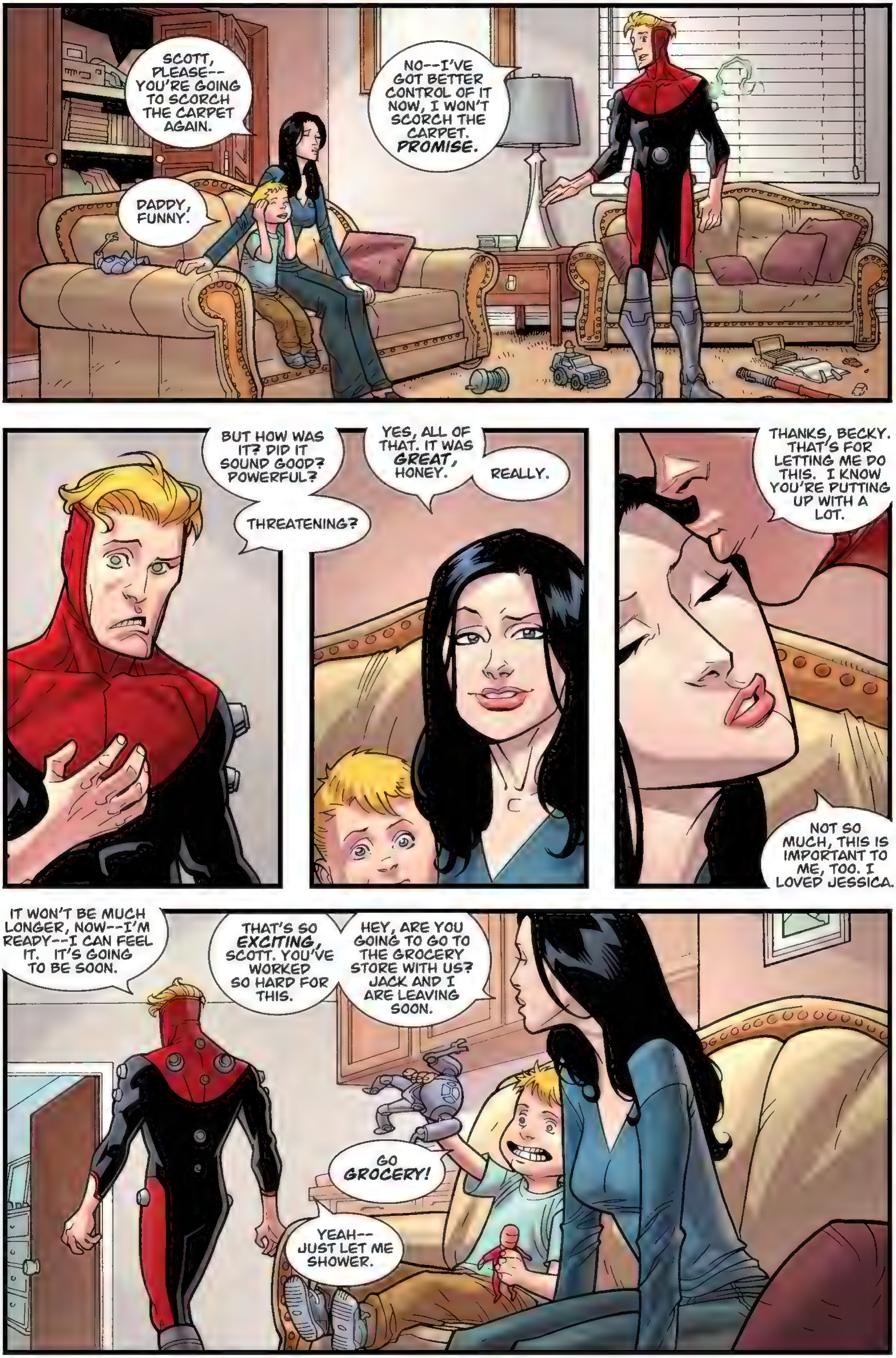

IT--I FEEL... DIFFERENT. NOT, OLDER--I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD FEEL THAT--BUT SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT.
I THINK IT WORKED.
OF *COURSE* IT WORKED.
OH, MY GOD--I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
"THANK YOU" WORKS.
WE'VE GOT COMPANY.
SORRY TO INTRUDE, BUT I FOUND ANOTHER ORB--TRIED TO CONTAIN THE BLAST SO I WOULDN'T LOSE ANY FRAGMENTS AND WELL--I THINK I JUST INTENSIFIED IT.
NOTHING BUT DUST THIS TIME.
HAVE YOU FIGURED OUT WHERE THE FIRST ORB CAME FROM?
I'VE PERFORMED EVERY KIND OF ANALYSIS I CAN IMAGINE--THERE'S SIMPLY NOTHING THERE TO GIVE AWAY WHO'S BEHIND IT.
I'M SORRY.
IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?
THANKS BUT NO, I DON'T THINK SO.
I'VE GOT MY MOM STAYING WITH HER BOYFRIEND--AND MY LITTLE BROTHER IS ALMOST AS STRONG AS I AM... SO WE'RE JUST WAITING AROUND--WAITING UNTIL WHOEVER IT IS MAKES THEIR MOVE.
WELL, I HOPE IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS--YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON US.
I KNOW THAT. THANK YOU.
JUST STAY ALERT, INVINCIBLE. THAT ORB WAS NOTHING SHORT OF A TECHNOLOGICAL MARVEL. ONE THING THAT MAKES IT SO HARD TO TRACK IS HOW *ADVANCED* IT IS.
IT SEEMS ALMOST--OTHER-WORDLY.
WHOEVER IS SPYING ON YOU IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. THEY COULD VERY WELL BE THE WORST THREAT YOU'VE EVER FACED.

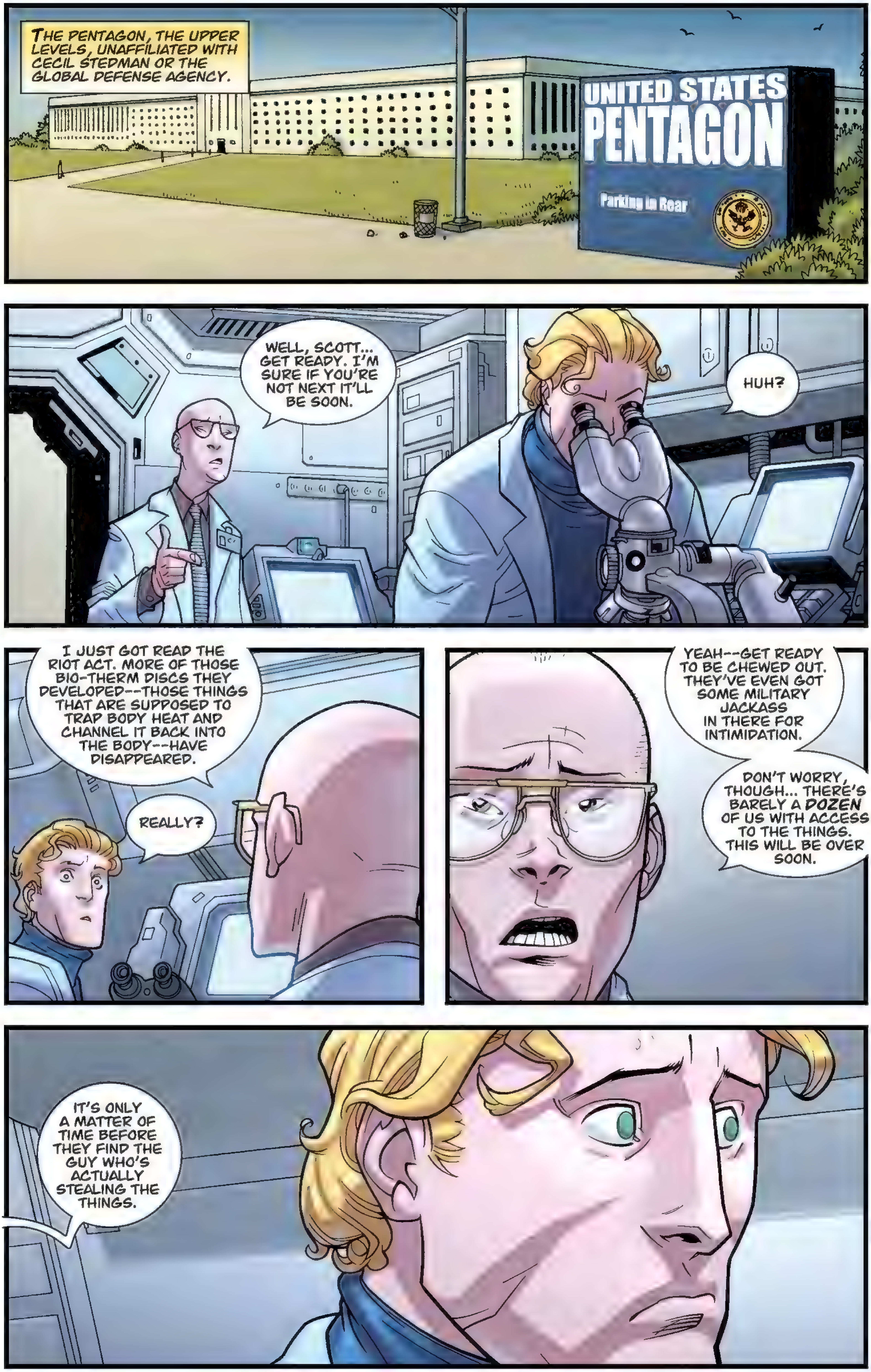

SOMEWHERE ELSE.

IT'S A START.

CHAPTER 59

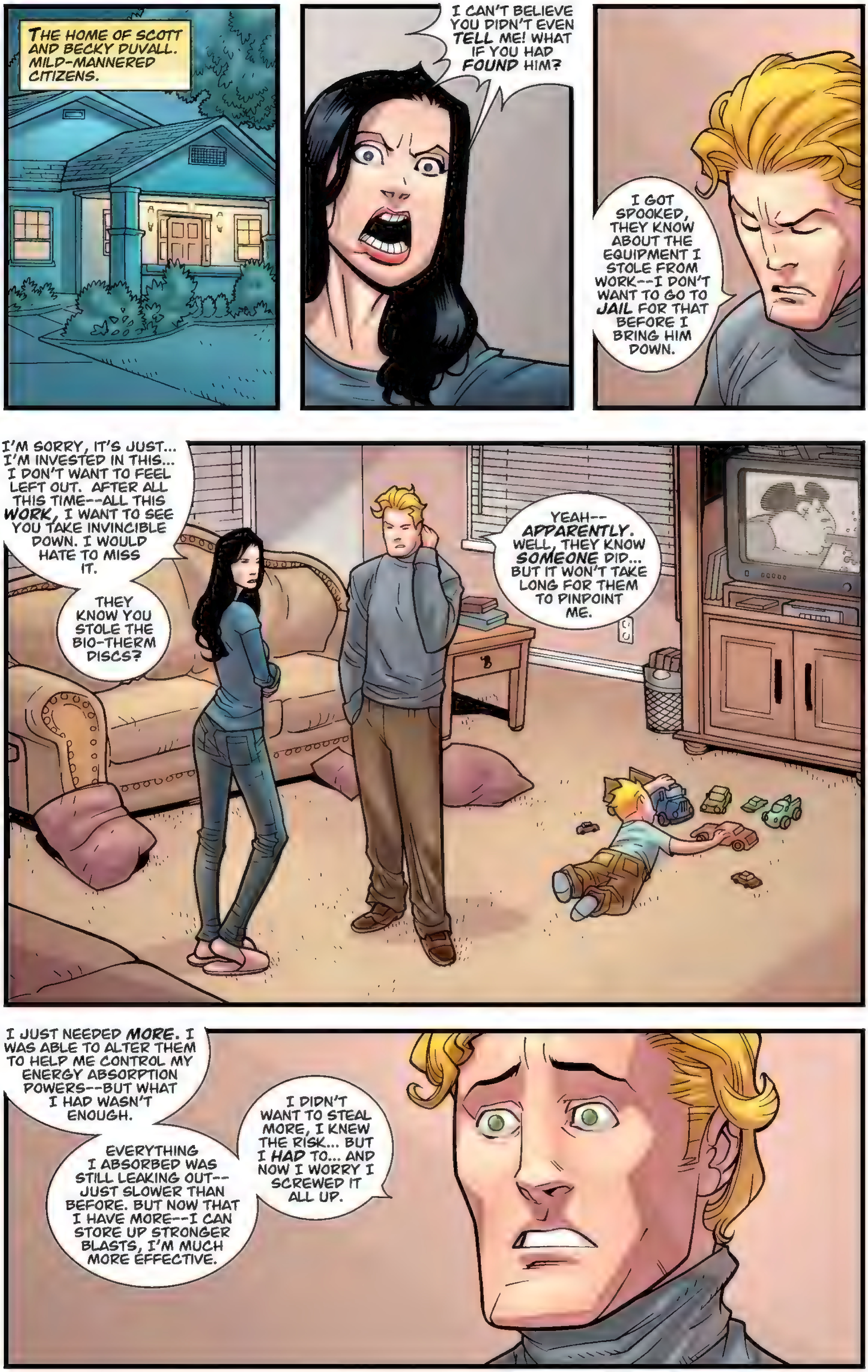
INVINCIBLE!!
YOU THINK YOU ARE ABOVE THE LAW--YOU THINK YOUR ACTIONS HOLD NO CONSEQUENCE!
YOU ARE WRONG!
YOU WILL PAY FOR YOUR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY!
POWERPLEX WILL MAKE YOU PAY!!

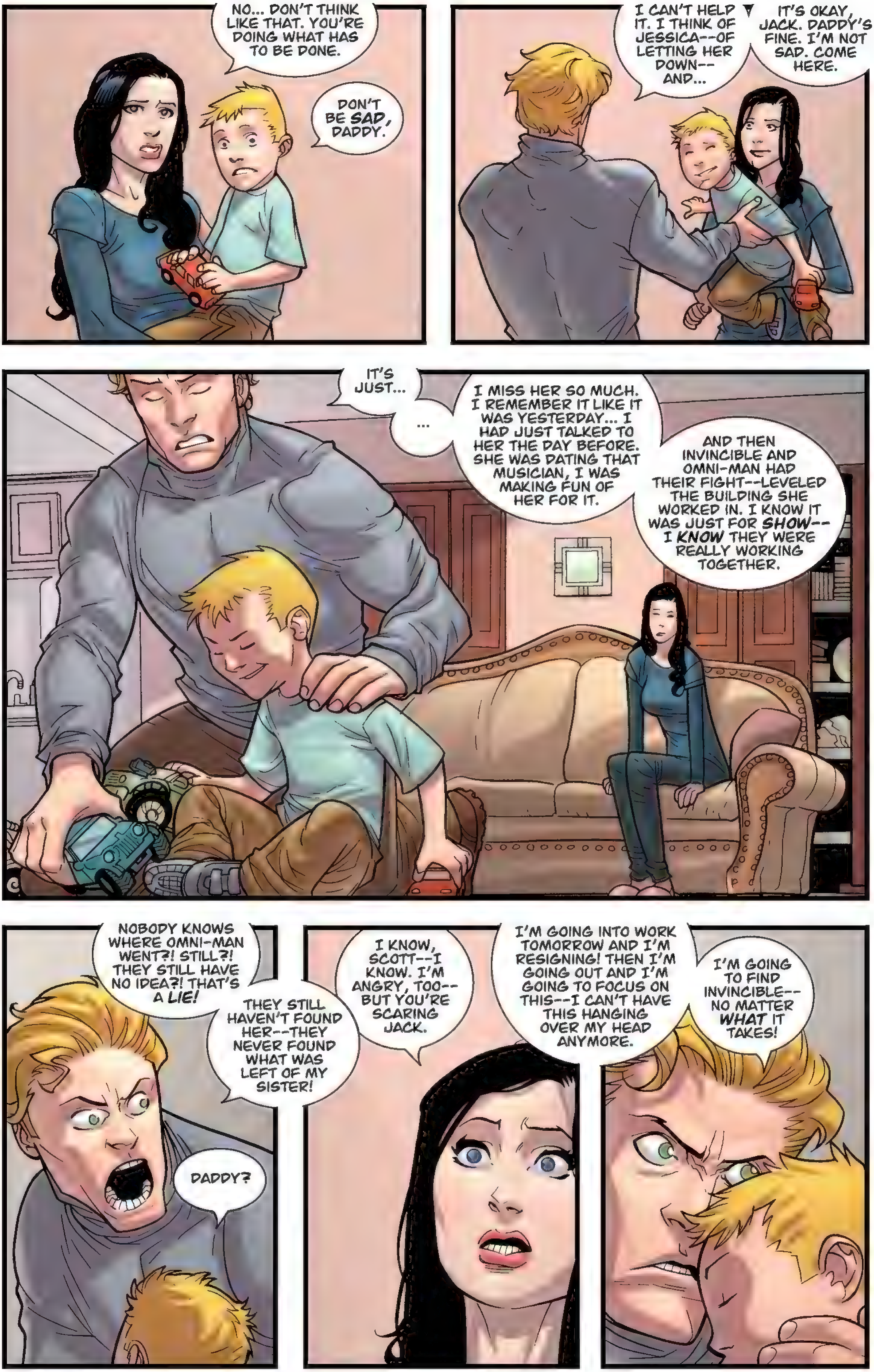

SCOTT, PLEASE--YOU'RE GOING TO SCORCH THE CARPET AGAIN.
NO--I'VE GOT BETTER CONTROL OF IT NOW, I WON'T SCORCH THE CARPET. *PROMISE.*
DADDY, FUNNY.
BUT HOW WAS IT? DID IT SOUND GOOD? POWERFUL?
THREATENING?
YES, ALL OF THAT. IT WAS *GREAT,* HONEY.
REALLY.
THANKS, BECKY. THAT'S FOR LETTING ME DO THIS. I KNOW YOU'RE PUTTING UP WITH A LOT.
NOT SO MUCH, THIS IS IMPORTANT TO ME, TOO. I LOVED JESSICA.
IT WON'T BE MUCH LONGER, NOW--I'M READY--I CAN FEEL IT. IT'S GOING TO BE SOON.
THAT'S SO *EXCITING,* SCOTT. YOU'VE WORKED SO HARD FOR THIS.
HEY, ARE YOU GOING TO GO TO THE GROCERY STORE WITH US? JACK AND I ARE LEAVING SOON.
GO *GROCERY!*
YEAH--JUST LET ME SHOWER.


THE PENTAGON, THE UPPER LEVELS, UNAFFILIATED WITH CECIL STEDMAN OR THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WELL, SCOTT... GET READY. I'M SURE IF YOU'RE NOT NEXT IT'LL BE SOON.
HUH?
I JUST GOT READ THE RIOT ACT. MORE OF THOSE BIO-THERM DISCS THEY DEVELOPED--THOSE THINGS THAT ARE SUPPOSED TO TRAP BODY HEAT AND CHANNEL IT BACK INTO THE BODY--HAVE DISAPPEARED.
REALLY?
YEAH--GET READY TO BE CHEWED OUT. THEY'VE EVEN GOT SOME MILITARY JACKASS IN THERE FOR INTIMIDATION.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH... THERE'S BARELY A DOZEN OF US WITH ACCESS TO THE THINGS. THIS WILL BE OVER SOON.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY FIND THE GUY WHO'S ACTUALLY STEALING THE THINGS.

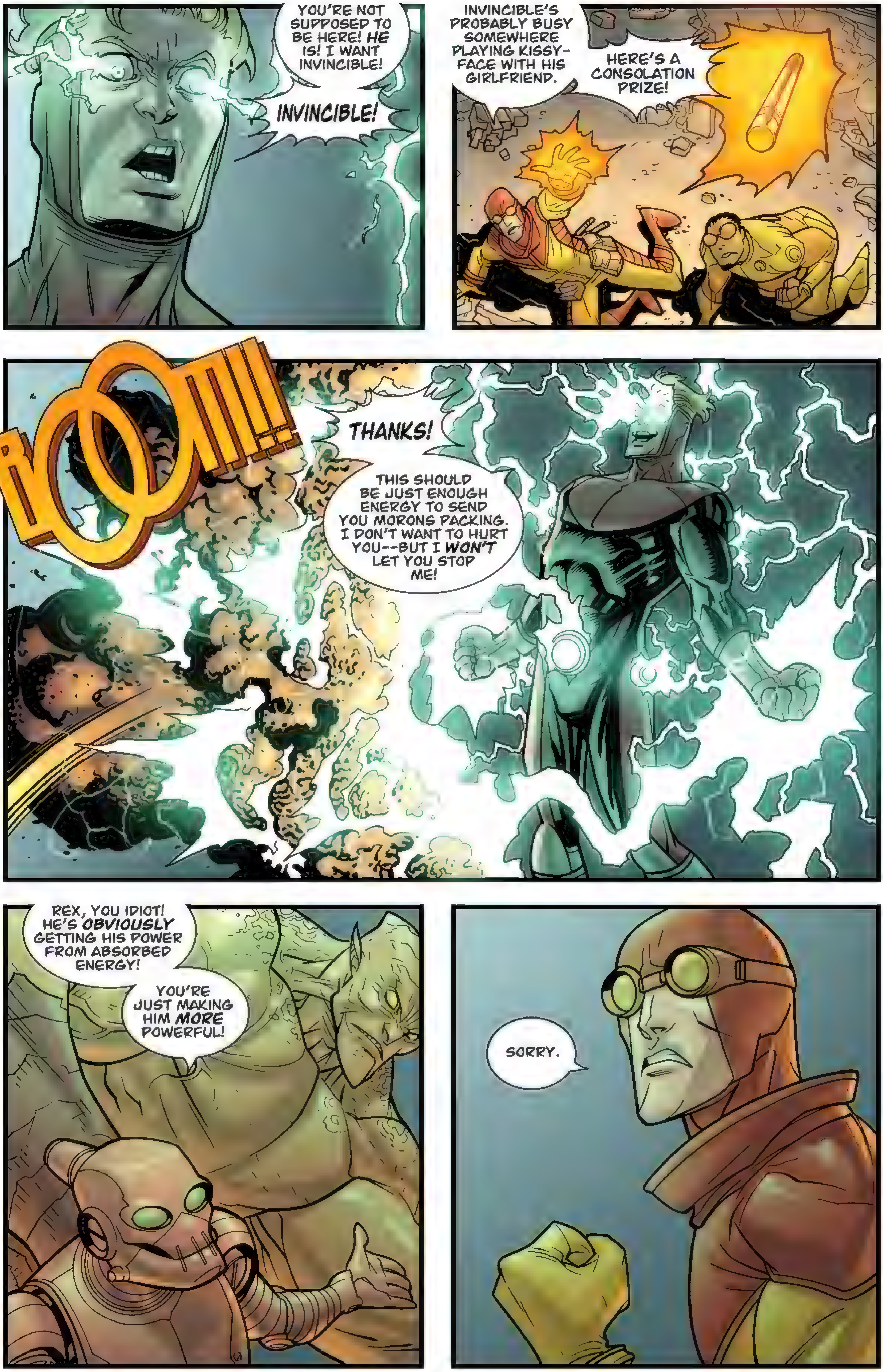
RUN!
MOMMY!
SKROOOOM!
RUN! GET OUT OF HERE!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WANT TO BE HERE WHEN HE ARRIVES--STAY CLEAR OF HIS PATH OF DESTRUCTION!
HE'S HAD ENOUGH VICTIMS ALRE--
OH, COOL!
I GET TO SHOW OFF MY NEW COSTUME!
HEY, YOU'RE NOT HI--!
WRACK!

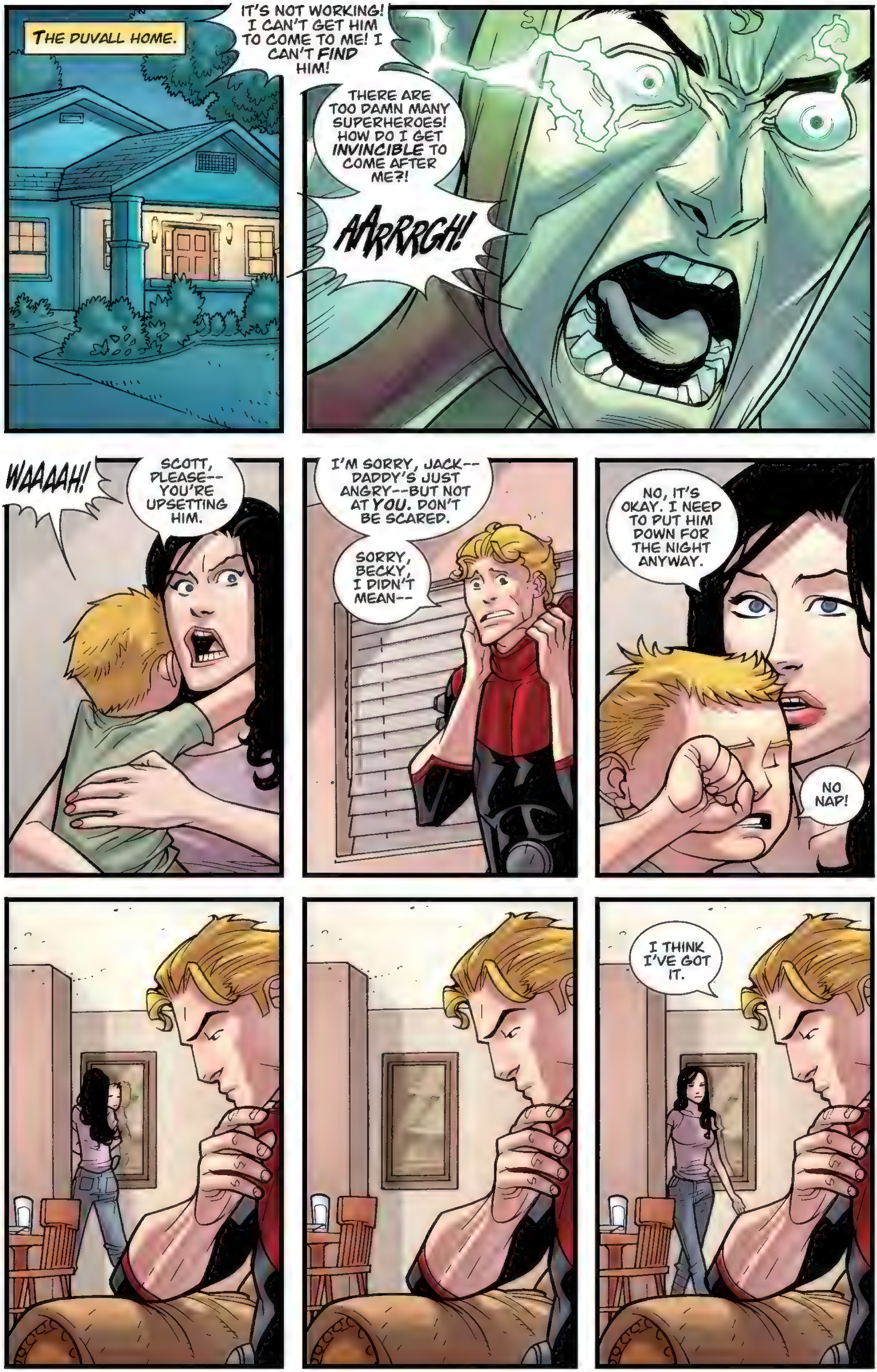
KRAKOOM!!
YOU'RE NOT INVINCIBLE!
SORRY.
KROOM!
IS THIS BETTER?
NO...
BZZACKK!
HUH?
KRAKOOM!
NOT EVEN CLOSE.
BOOM!!

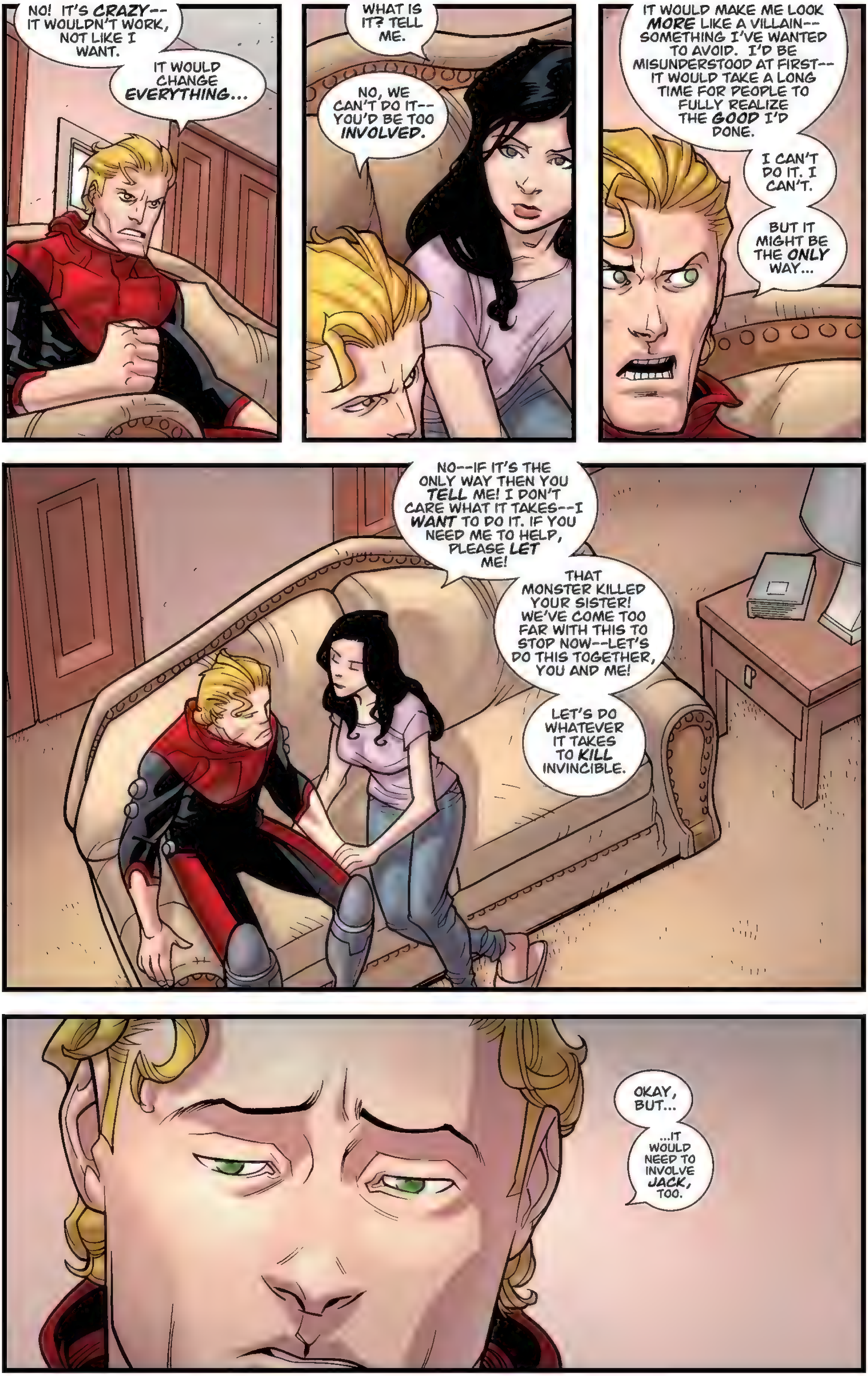

THE HOME OF SCOTT AND BECKY DUVALL. MILD-MANNERED CITIZENS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DIDN'T EVEN *TELL* ME! WHAT IF YOU HAD *FOUND* HIM?
I GOT SPOOKED, THEY KNOW ABOUT THE EQUIPMENT I STOLE FROM WORK--I DON'T WANT TO GO TO *JAIL* FOR THAT BEFORE I BRING HIM DOWN.
I'M SORRY, IT'S JUST... I'M INVESTED IN THIS... I DON'T WANT TO FEEL LEFT OUT. AFTER ALL THIS TIME--ALL THIS *WORK*, I WANT TO SEE YOU TAKE INVINCIBLE DOWN. I WOULD HATE TO MISS IT.
THEY KNOW YOU STOLE THE BIO-THERM DISCS?
YEAH-- *APPARENTLY*. WELL, THEY KNOW *SOMEONE* DID... BUT IT WON'T TAKE LONG FOR THEM TO PINPOINT ME.
I JUST NEEDED *MORE*. I WAS ABLE TO ALTER THEM TO HELP ME CONTROL MY ENERGY ABSORPTION POWERS--BUT WHAT I HAD WASN'T ENOUGH.
EVERYTHING I ABSORBED WAS STILL LEAKING OUT--JUST SLOWER THAN BEFORE. BUT NOW THAT I HAVE MORE--I CAN STORE UP STRONGER BLASTS, I'M MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE.
I DIDN'T WANT TO STEAL MORE, I KNEW THE RISK... BUT I *HAD* TO... AND NOW I WORRY I SCREWED IT ALL UP.


NO... DON'T THINK LIKE THAT. YOU'RE DOING WHAT HAS TO BE DONE.
DON'T BE **SAD**, DADDY.
I CAN'T HELP IT. I THINK OF JESSICA--OF LETTING HER DOWN-- AND...
IT'S OKAY, JACK. DADDY'S FINE. I'M NOT SAD. COME HERE.
IT'S JUST...
...
I MISS HER SO MUCH. I REMEMBER IT LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY... I HAD JUST TALKED TO HER THE DAY BEFORE. SHE WAS DATING THAT MUSICIAN, I WAS MAKING FUN OF HER FOR IT.
AND THEN INVINCIBLE AND OMNI-MAN HAD THEIR FIGHT--LEVELED THE BUILDING SHE WORKED IN. I KNOW IT WAS JUST FOR ***SHOW***-- I ***KNOW*** THEY WERE REALLY WORKING TOGETHER.
NOBODY KNOWS WHERE OMNI-MAN WENT?! STILL?! THEY STILL HAVE NO IDEA?! THAT'S A ***LIE!***
THEY STILL HAVEN'T FOUND HER--THEY NEVER FOUND WHAT WAS LEFT OF MY SISTER!
DADDY?
I KNOW, SCOTT--I KNOW. I'M ANGRY, TOO-- BUT YOU'RE SCARING JACK.
I'M GOING INTO WORK TOMORROW AND I'M RESIGNING! THEN I'M GOING OUT AND I'M GOING TO FOCUS ON THIS--I CAN'T HAVE THIS HANGING OVER MY HEAD ANYMORE.
I'M GOING TO FIND INVINCIBLE-- NO MATTER ***WHAT*** IT TAKES!

NO!
NO!
NO!
NO!
KROKKA-KA-BOOOM!

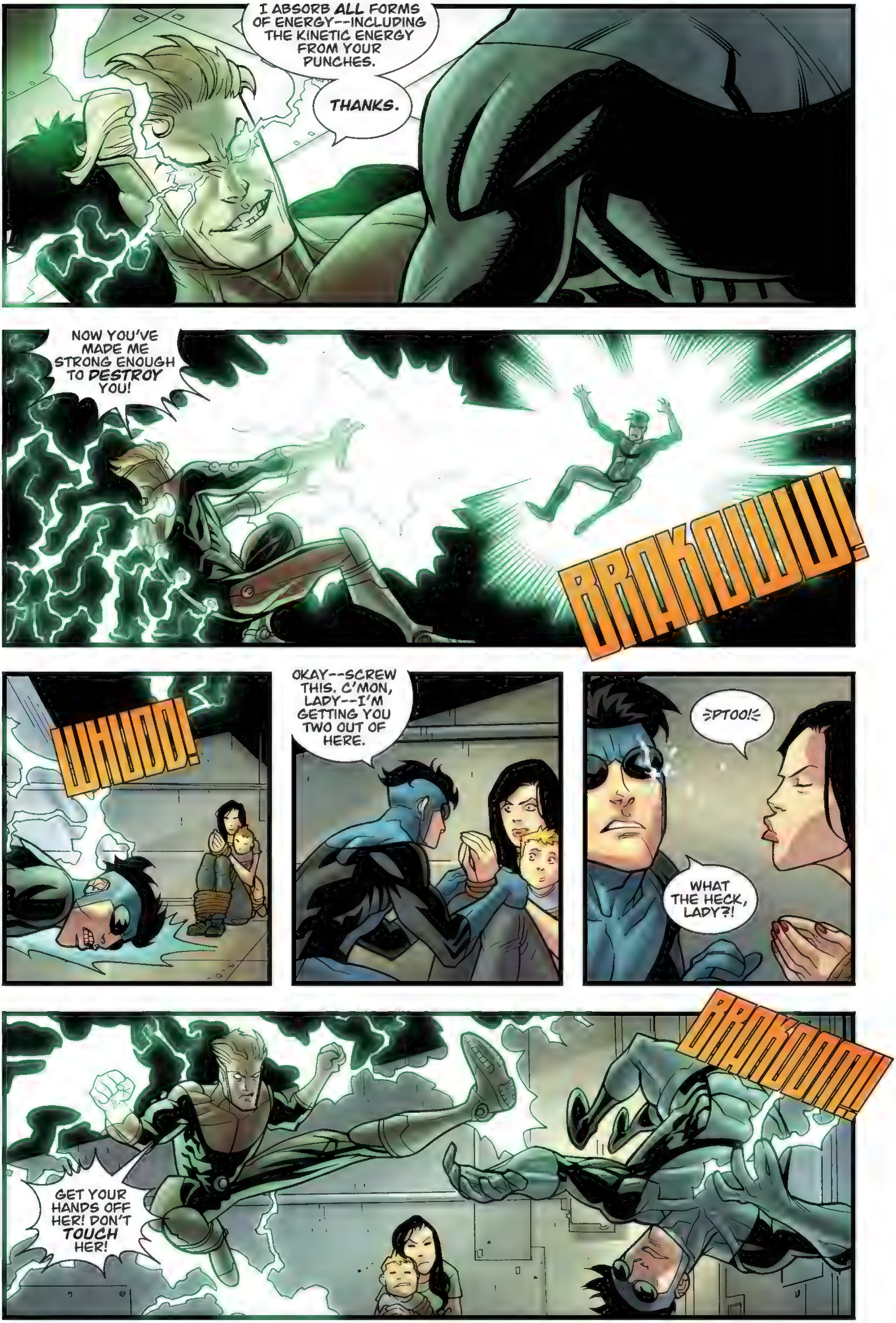

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE! *HE* IS! I WANT INVINCIBLE!
INVINCIBLE!
INVINCIBLE'S PROBABLY BUSY SOMEWHERE PLAYING KISSY-FACE WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.
HERE'S A CONSOLATION PRIZE!
BOOM!!!
THANKS!
THIS SHOULD BE JUST ENOUGH ENERGY TO SEND YOU MORONS PACKING. I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU--BUT I *WON'T* LET YOU STOP ME!
REX, YOU IDIOT! HE'S *OBVIOUSLY* GETTING HIS POWER FROM ABSORBED ENERGY!
YOU'RE JUST MAKING HIM *MORE* POWERFUL!
SORRY.

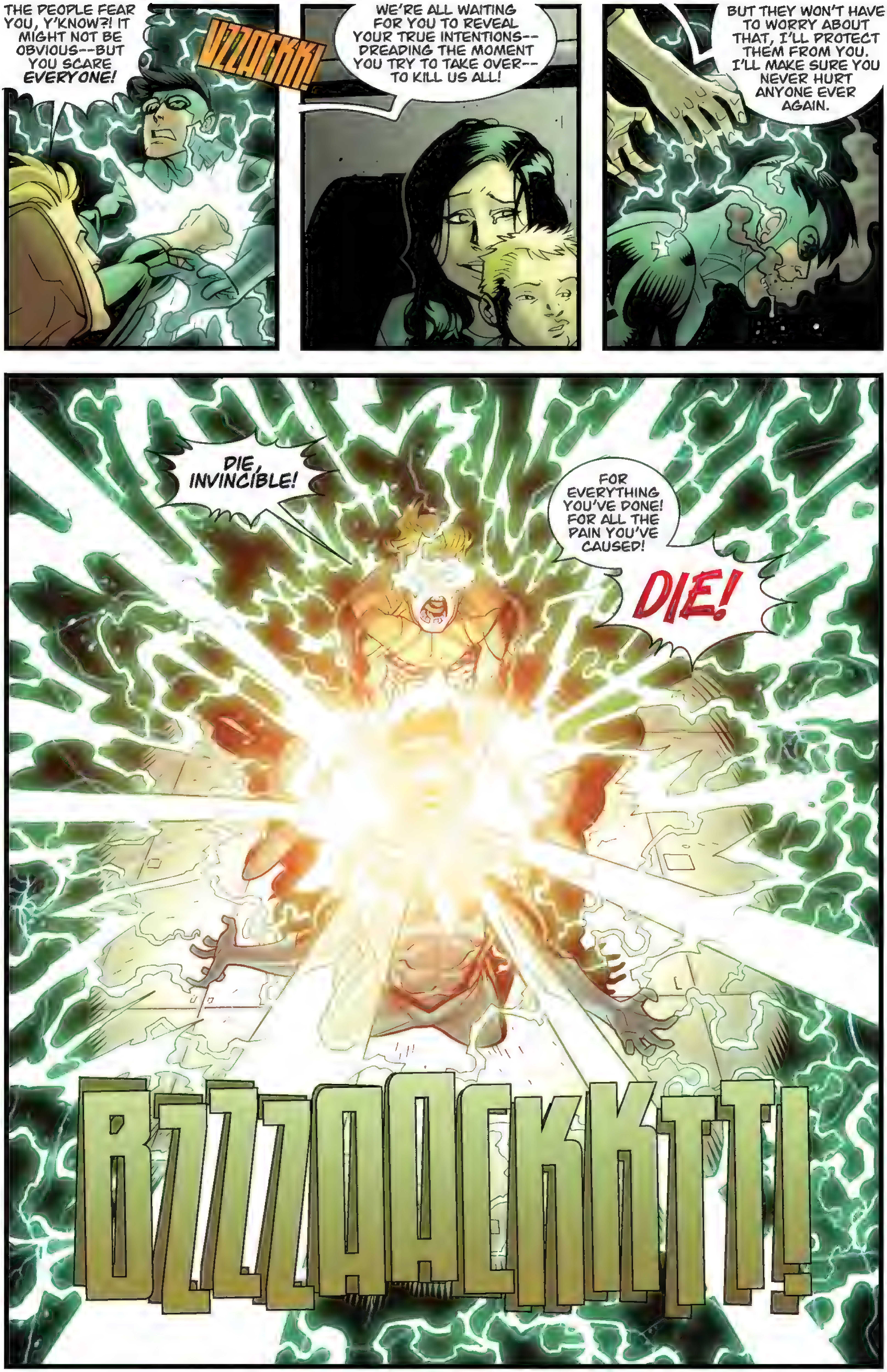

THE DUVALL HOME.
IT'S NOT WORKING! I CAN'T GET HIM TO COME TO ME! I CAN'T FIND HIM!
THERE ARE TOO DAMN MANY SUPERHEROES! HOW DO I GET INVINCIBLE TO COME AFTER ME?!
AARRRGH!
WAAAAH!
SCOTT, PLEASE-- YOU'RE UPSETTING HIM.
I'M SORRY, JACK-- DADDY'S JUST ANGRY--BUT NOT AT YOU. DON'T BE SCARED.
SORRY, BECKY, I DIDN'T MEAN--
NO, IT'S OKAY. I NEED TO PUT HIM DOWN FOR THE NIGHT ANYWAY.
NO NAP!
I THINK I'VE GOT IT.

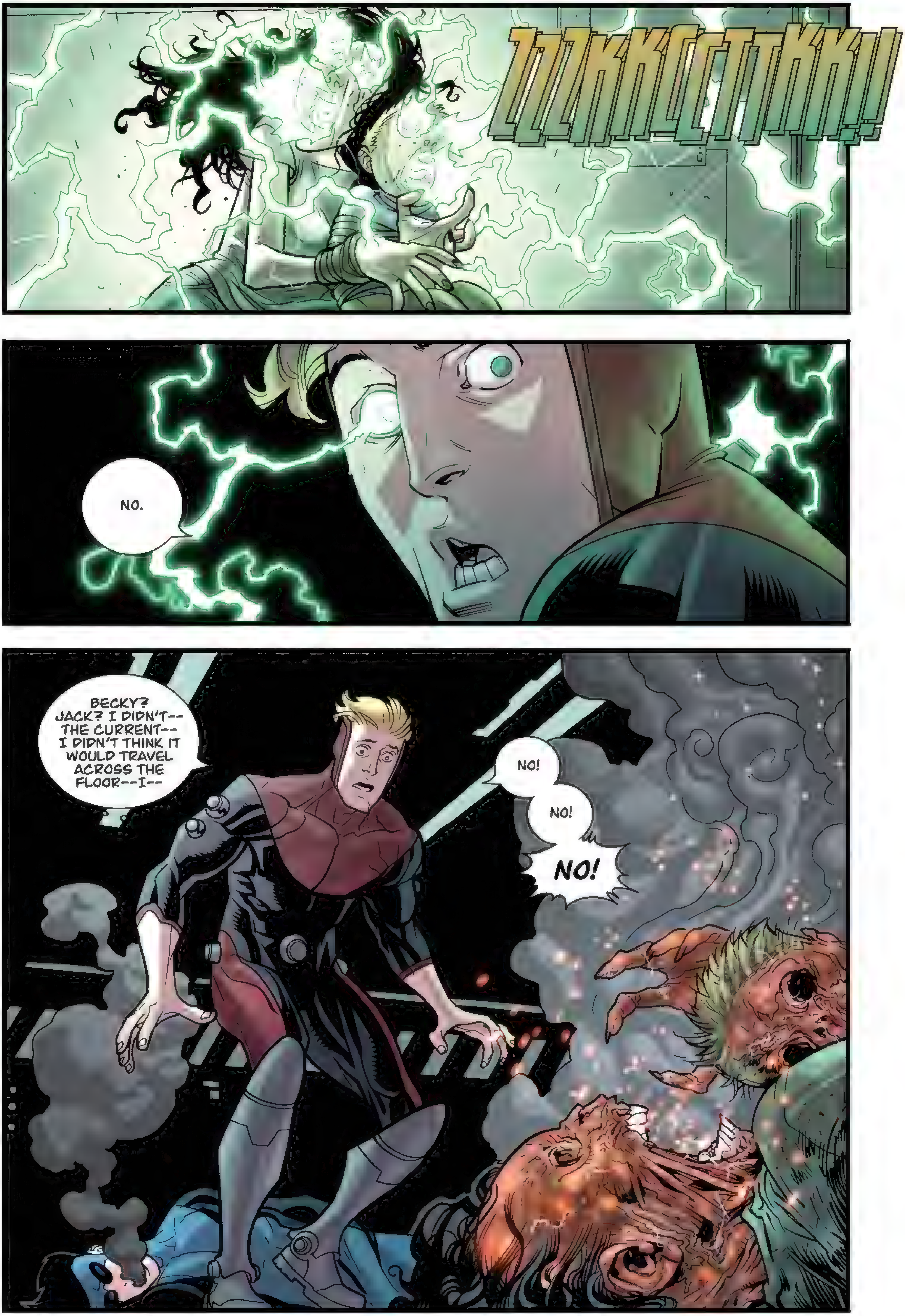

NO! IT'S CRAZY-- IT WOULDN'T WORK, NOT LIKE I WANT.
IT WOULD CHANGE EVERYTHING...
WHAT IS IT? TELL ME.
NO, WE CAN'T DO IT-- YOU'D BE TOO INVOLVED.
IT WOULD MAKE ME LOOK MORE LIKE A VILLAIN-- SOMETHING I'VE WANTED TO AVOID. I'D BE MISUNDERSTOOD AT FIRST-- IT WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME FOR PEOPLE TO FULLY REALIZE THE GOOD I'D DONE.
I CAN'T DO IT. I CAN'T.
BUT IT MIGHT BE THE ONLY WAY...
NO--IF IT'S THE ONLY WAY THEN YOU TELL ME! I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES--I WANT TO DO IT. IF YOU NEED ME TO HELP, PLEASE LET ME!
THAT MONSTER KILLED YOUR SISTER! WE'VE COME TOO FAR WITH THIS TO STOP NOW--LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER, YOU AND ME!
LET'S DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO KILL INVINCIBLE.
OKAY, BUT...
...IT WOULD NEED TO INVOLVE JACK, TOO.

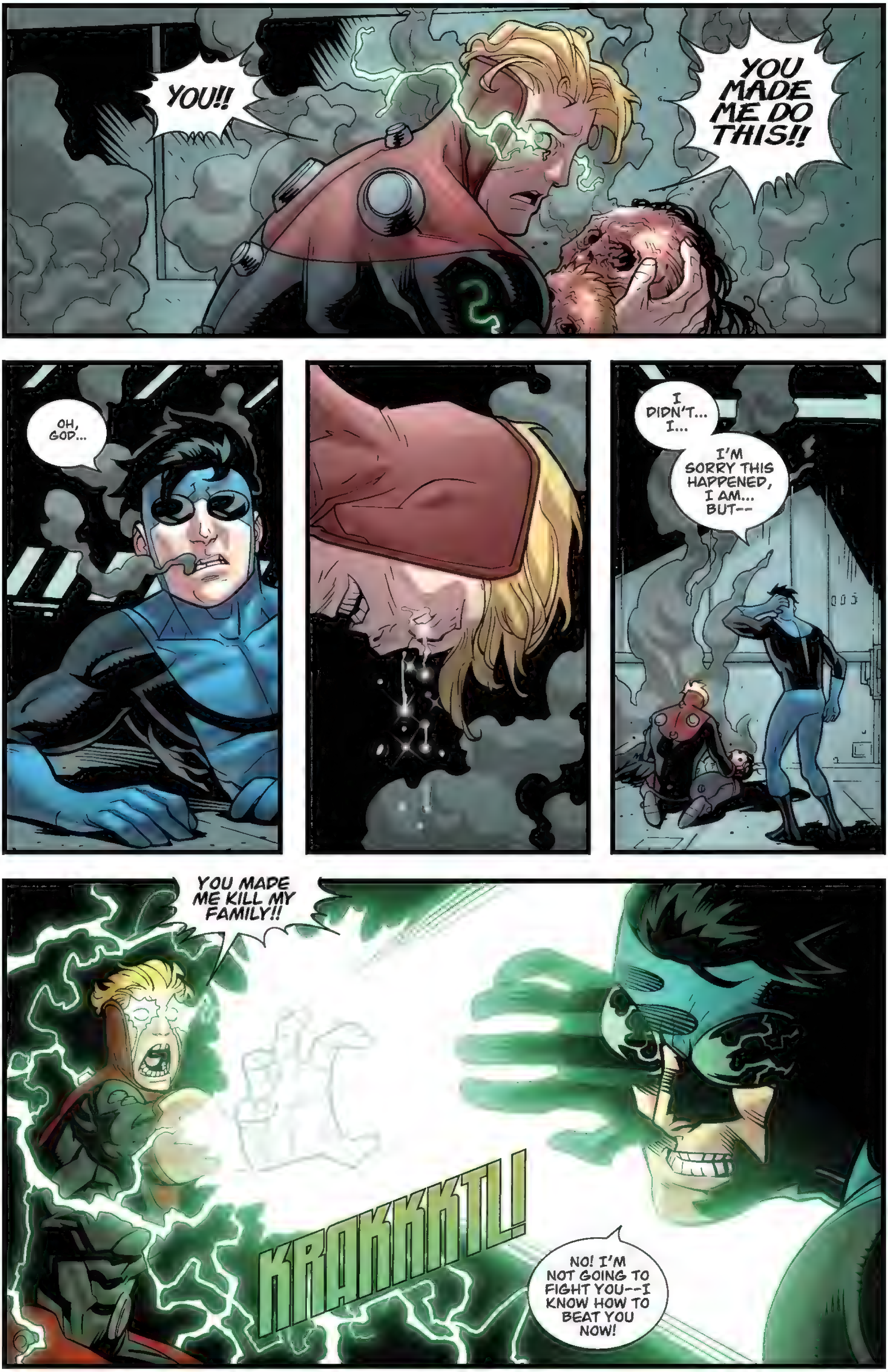
ARE YOU OKAY? COMFORTABLE?
WE'RE FINE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT US. WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
GOVERNMENT OWNED WEAPONS TESTING FACILITY-- DECOMMISSIONED. THEY PROBABLY DON'T KNOW THEY STILL HAVE IT.
THE NEWS HAS BEEN RUNNING THE FOOTAGE FOR A FEW MINUTES NOW. HE COULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE. SAYS I'M GOING TO KILL YOU IF HE DOESN'T COME ALONE--SO HE SHOULDN'T BRING ANYONE.
I HOPE THIS WOR--
WHAT THE HECK, DUDE?!
PLEASE LET THIS LADY AND HER KID GO. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO YOU ARE!
KROOOM!
DO YOU KNOW WHO JESSICA DUVALL IS?
NO. I DON'T.
AGAIN, MAN-- WHAT THE HECK?
SHE WAS AN OFFICE ASSISTANT AT AN ADVERTISING AGENCY. SHE WAS WORKING THERE TO PAY HER WAY THROUGH COLLEGE.
YOU AND YOUR FATHER TORE THROUGH HER BUILDING--I'LL NEVER KNOW HOW TERRIFIED SHE WAS IN THOSE FINAL MOMENTS AS THE BUILDING COLLAPSED ALL AROUND HER!
A LOT... A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED IN THAT FIGHT. I DON'T KNOW THE NAME OF EVERY ONE...
I'M SORRY, ALL I CAN SAY IS I'M SORRY.

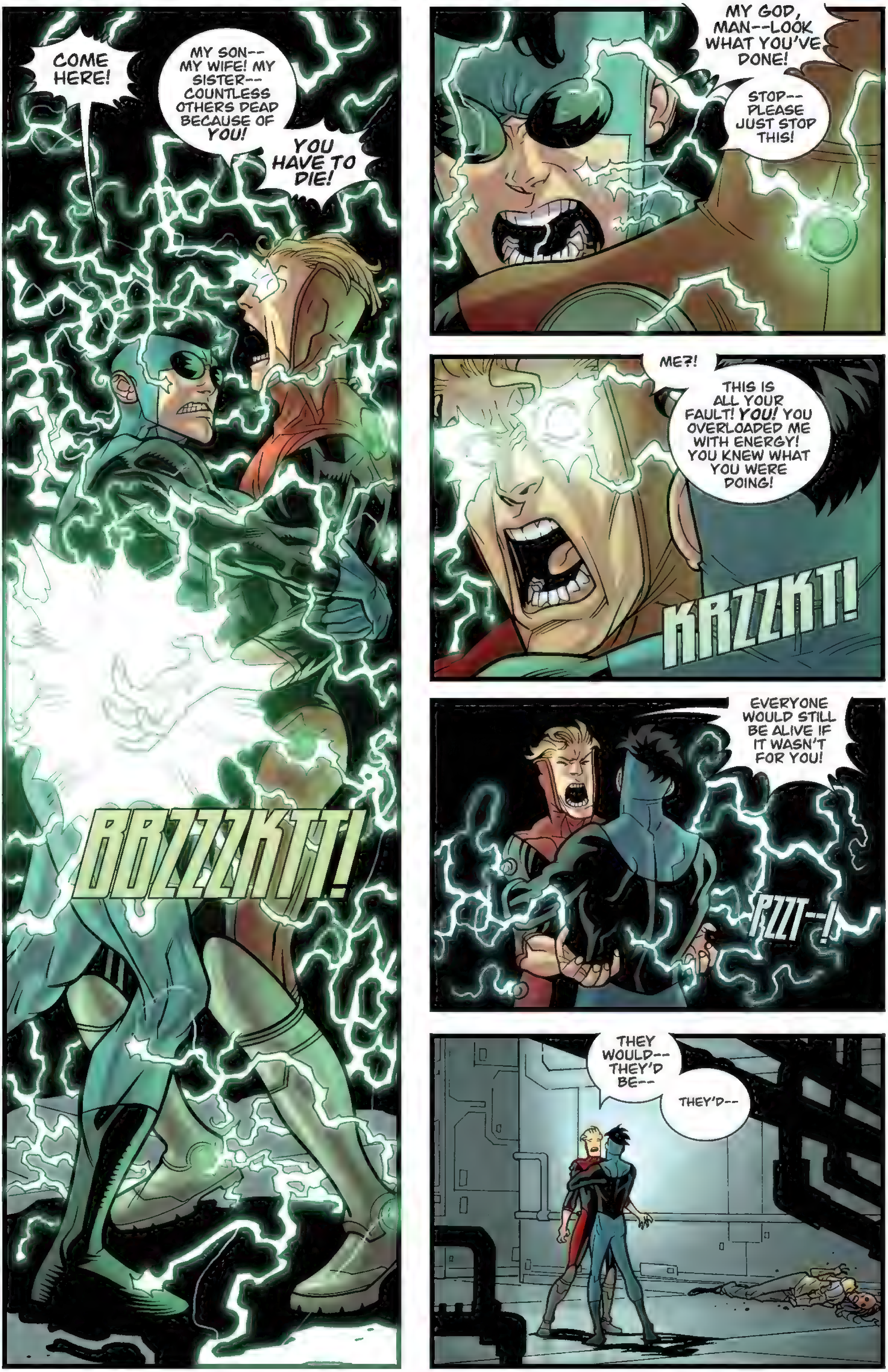
YOU'RE NOT SORRY--YOU DON'T EVEN CARE! BUT YOU *WILL!*
I'LL MAKE SURE OF IT!
BRAKOOM!!
NGG!
YOU THINK YOU ARE ABOVE THE LAW--YOU THINK YOUR ACTIONS HOLD NO CONSEQUENCE!
YOU ARE *WRONG!*
YOU WILL *PAY--*
STOP.
I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS--YOU HAVE TO KNOW THAT I DIDN'T MEAN FOR *ANY* OF THAT TO HAPPEN.
--BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU KILL ME!
I'M *POWERPLEX!* I DON'T NEED YOU TO LET ME!
BZACCK!!
WAIT A MINUTE--I KNOW WHO YOU *ARE!*
WRAMM!
YOU'RE THAT GUY--YOU BEAT UP THE TEEN TEAM--SAID YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME!
WRAMM!
THEY *WARNED* ME ABOUT YOU!
WRAMM!
SAID YOU ABSORB ENERGY FROM EXPLOSIONS...
WRAMM!
HUH?

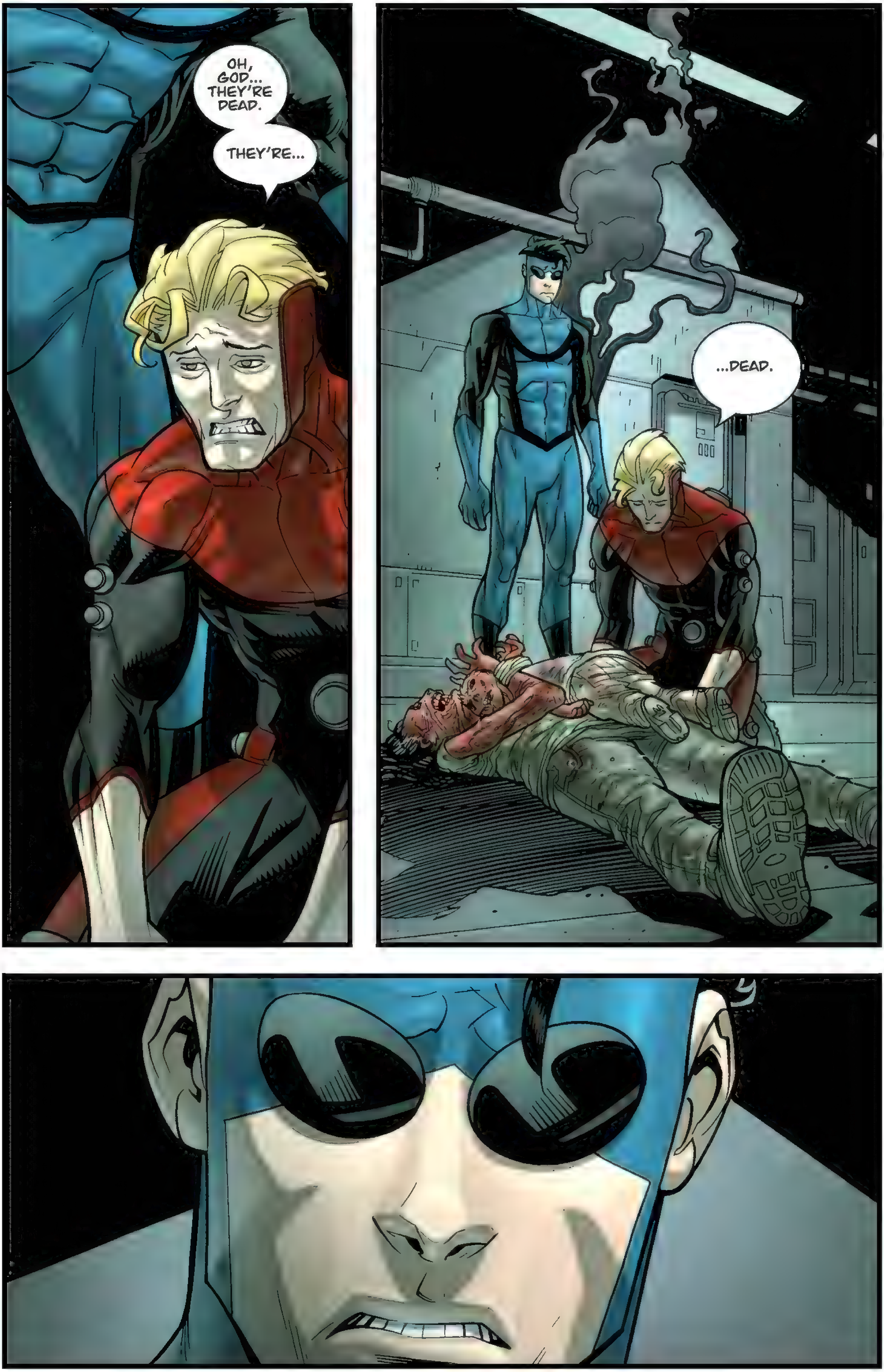

I ABSORB ALL FORMS OF ENERGY--INCLUDING THE KINETIC ENERGY FROM YOUR PUNCHES.
THANKS.
NOW YOU'VE MADE ME STRONG ENOUGH TO DESTROY YOU!
BRAKOWW!
WHUDD!
OKAY--SCREW THIS. C'MON, LADY--I'M GETTING YOU TWO OUT OF HERE.
PTOO!
WHAT THE HECK, LADY?!
BRAKOOM!
GET YOUR HANDS OFF HER! DON'T TOUCH HER!

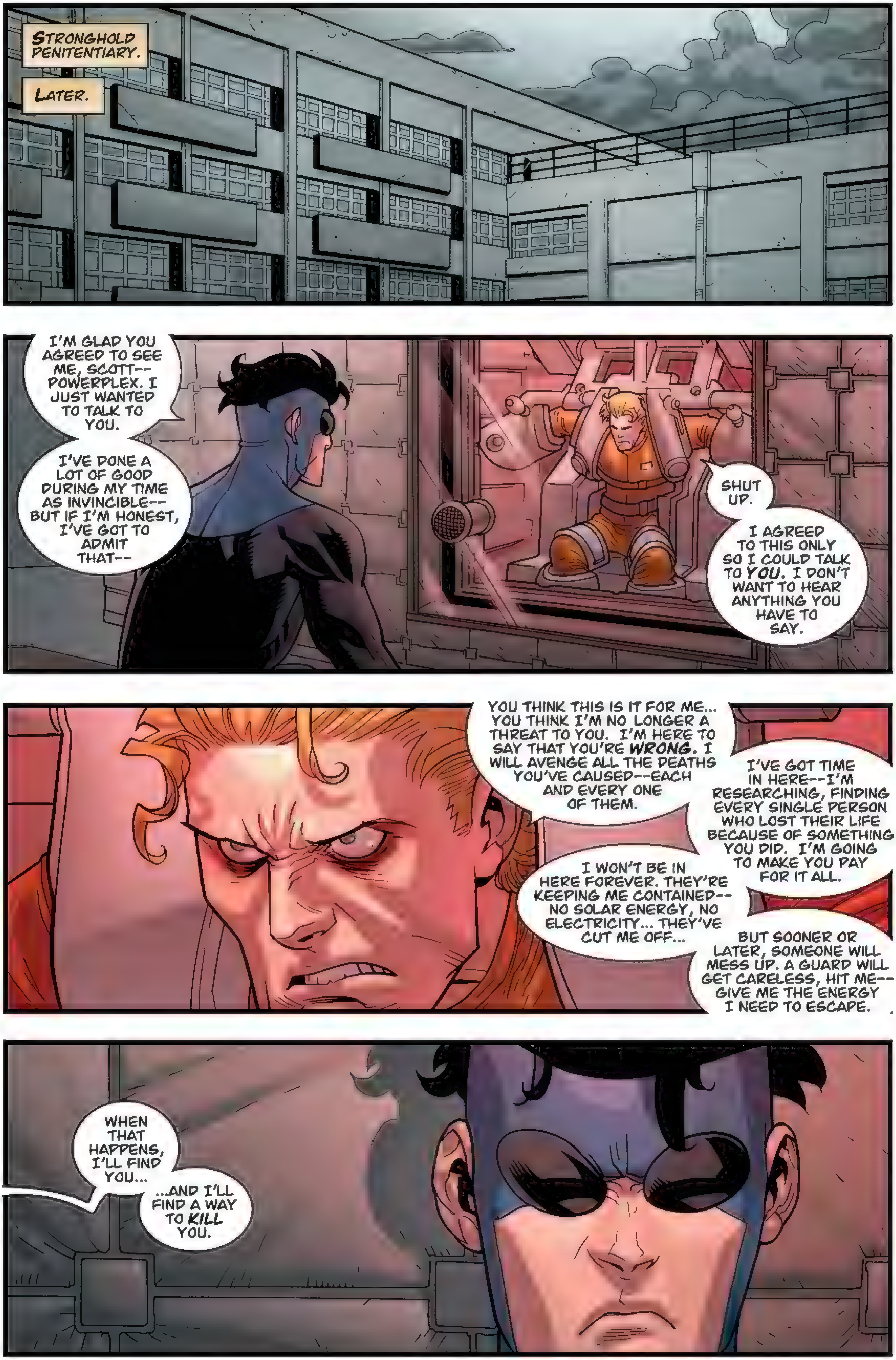

THE PEOPLE FEAR YOU, Y'KNOW?! IT MIGHT NOT BE OBVIOUS--BUT YOU SCARE *EVERYONE!*
VZZACKK!
WE'RE ALL WAITING FOR YOU TO REVEAL YOUR TRUE INTENTIONS--DREADING THE MOMENT YOU TRY TO TAKE OVER--TO KILL US ALL!
BUT THEY WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT, I'LL PROTECT THEM FROM YOU. I'LL MAKE SURE YOU NEVER HURT ANYONE EVER AGAIN.
DIE, INVINCIBLE!
FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE! FOR ALL THE PAIN YOU'VE CAUSED!
DIE!
BZZZAACKKTT!


ZZZKKCCTTKK!!
NO.
BECKY? JACK? I DIDN'T-- THE CURRENT-- I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD TRAVEL ACROSS THE FLOOR--I--
NO!
NO!
NO!


YOU!!
YOU MADE ME DO THIS!!
OH, GOD...
I DIDN'T... I...
I'M SORRY THIS HAPPENED, I AM... BUT--
YOU MADE ME KILL MY FAMILY!!
KRAKKKTL!
NO! I'M NOT GOING TO FIGHT YOU--I KNOW HOW TO BEAT YOU NOW!


COME HERE!
MY SON-- MY WIFE! MY SISTER-- COUNTLESS OTHERS DEAD BECAUSE OF YOU!
YOU HAVE TO DIE!
BBZZZKTT!
MY GOD, MAN--LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
STOP-- PLEASE JUST STOP THIS!
ME?!
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT! YOU! YOU OVERLOADED ME WITH ENERGY! YOU KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING!
KRZZKT!
EVERYONE WOULD STILL BE ALIVE IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU!
PZZT--!
THEY WOULD-- THEY'D BE--
THEY'D--


OH, GOD... THEY'RE DEAD.
THEY'RE...
...DEAD.


STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
LATER.
I'M GLAD YOU AGREED TO SEE ME, SCOTT--POWERPLEX. I JUST WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.
I'VE DONE A LOT OF GOOD DURING MY TIME AS INVINCIBLE--BUT IF I'M HONEST, I'VE GOT TO ADMIT THAT--
SHUT UP.
I AGREED TO THIS ONLY SO I COULD TALK TO *YOU*. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANYTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY.
YOU THINK THIS IS IT FOR ME... YOU THINK I'M NO LONGER A THREAT TO YOU. I'M HERE TO SAY THAT YOU'RE *WRONG*. I WILL AVENGE ALL THE DEATHS YOU'VE CAUSED--EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM.
I'VE GOT TIME IN HERE--I'M RESEARCHING, FINDING EVERY SINGLE PERSON WHO LOST THEIR LIFE BECAUSE OF SOMETHING YOU DID. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY FOR IT ALL.
I WON'T BE IN HERE FOREVER. THEY'RE KEEPING ME CONTAINED--NO SOLAR ENERGY, NO ELECTRICITY... THEY'VE CUT ME OFF...
BUT SOONER OR LATER, SOMEONE WILL MESS UP. A GUARD WILL GET CARELESS, HIT ME--GIVE ME THE ENERGY I NEED TO ESCAPE.
WHEN THAT HAPPENS, I'LL FIND YOU...
...AND I'LL FIND A WAY TO *KILL* YOU.

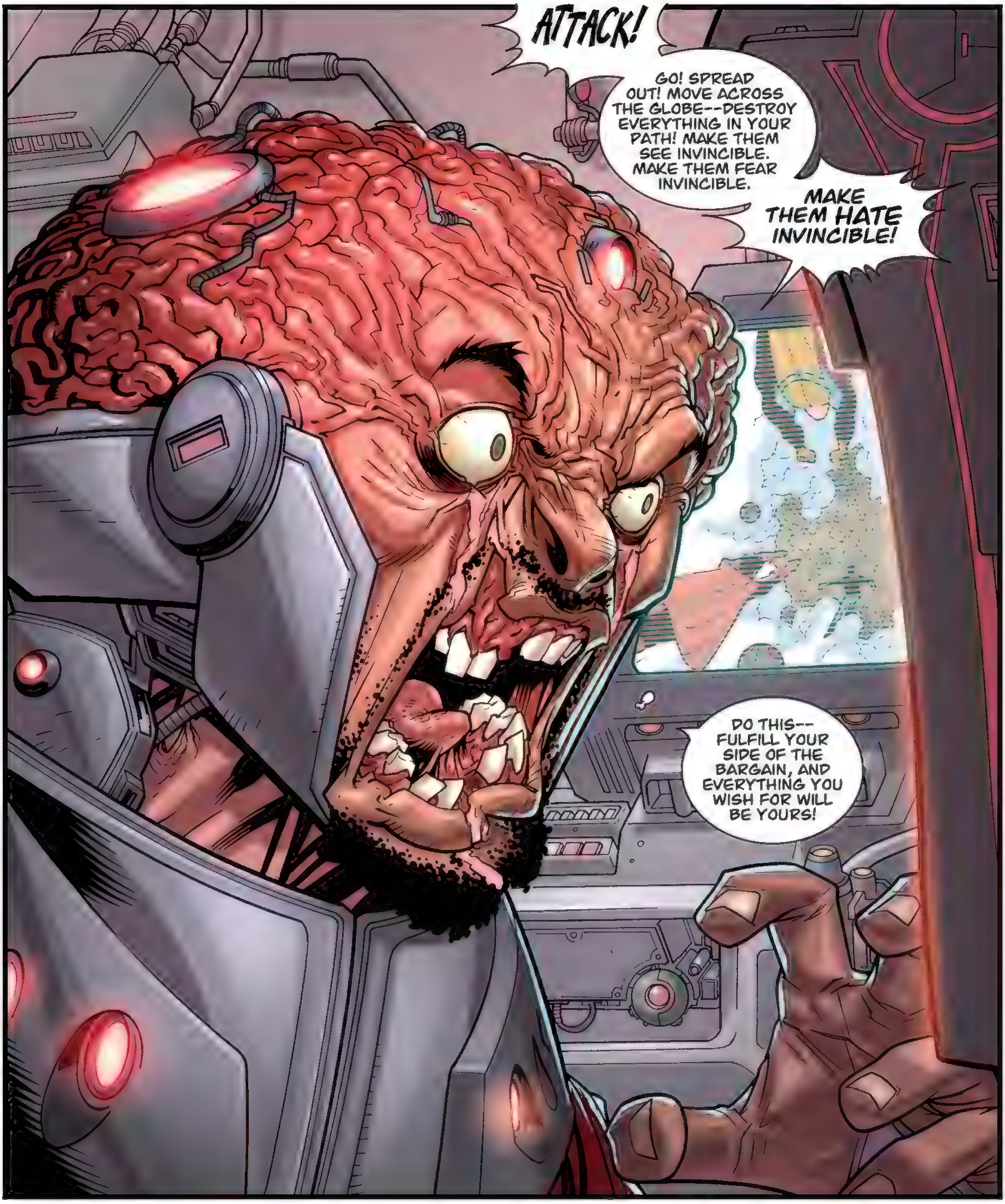
CHAPTER 60

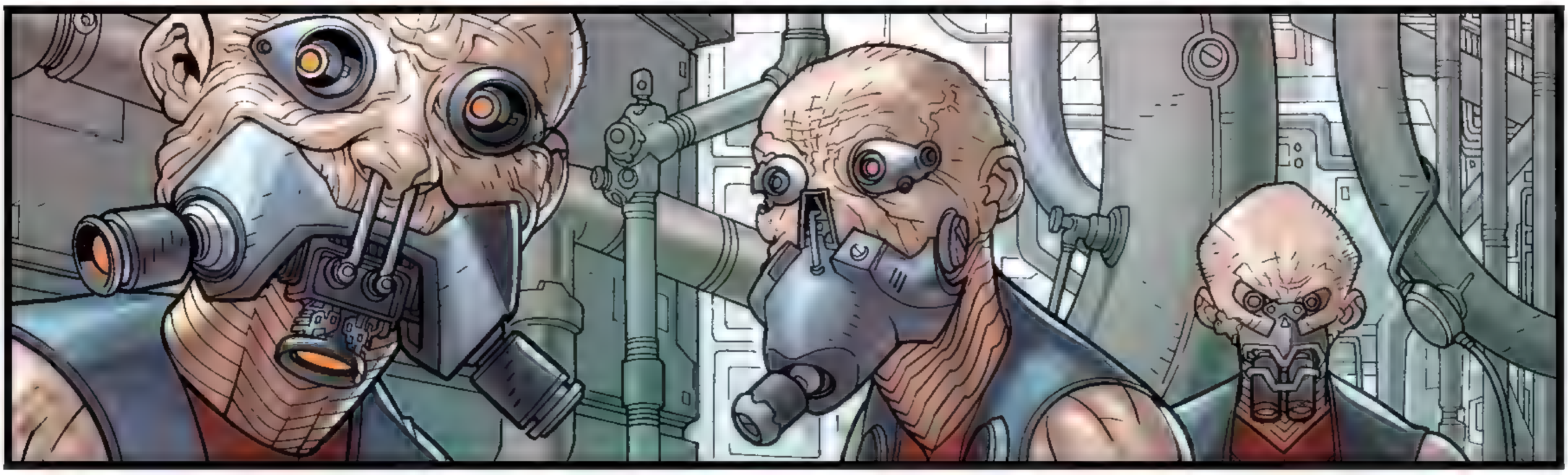
MONTHS AGO.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.

HKK.
HNNN--

FUUHIXSSS...
...MUHEEEEE.

Months later.
Now.
Day one.


ATTACK!
GO! SPREAD OUT! MOVE ACROSS THE GLOBE--DESTROY EVERYTHING IN YOUR PATH! MAKE THEM SEE INVINCIBLE. MAKE THEM FEAR INVINCIBLE.
MAKE THEM HATE INVINCIBLE!
DO THIS--FULFILL YOUR SIDE OF THE BARGAIN, AND EVERYTHING YOU WISH FOR WILL BE YOURS!

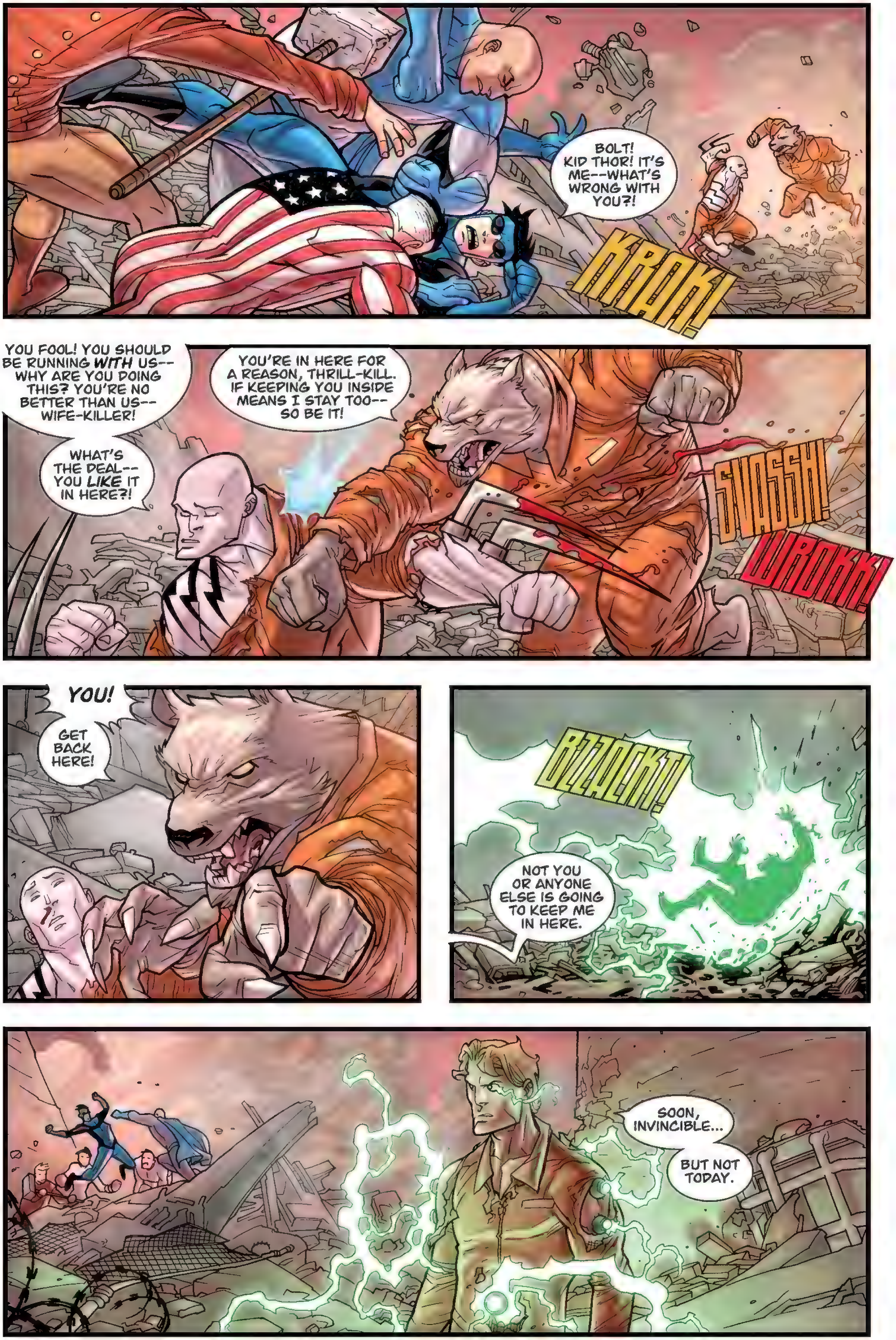


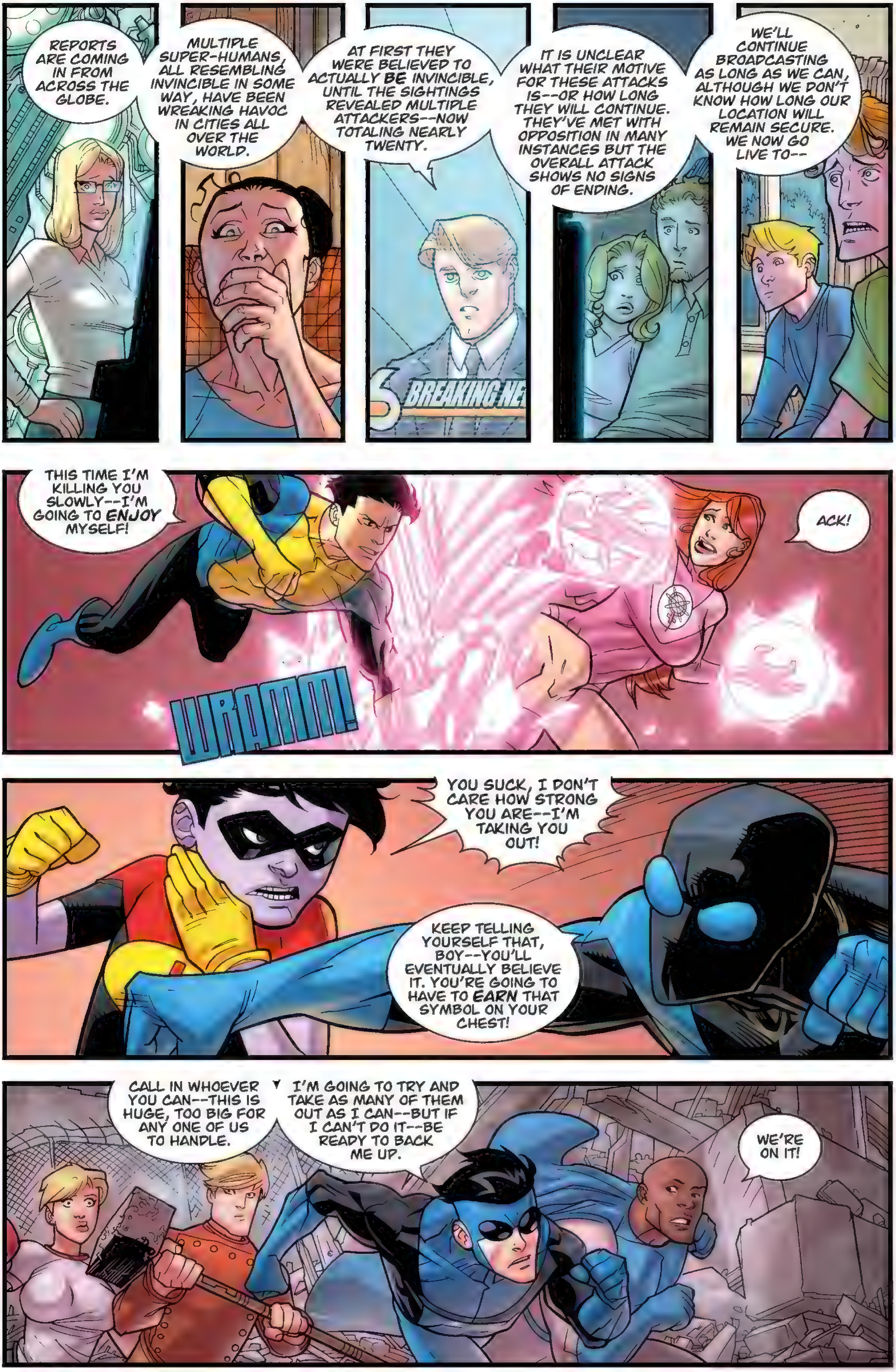
THE HOME OF SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ATOM EVE.
SO... WHAT'S THE DEAL, ANYWAY? WHY CAN'T I MEET THEM?
WHO?
YOUR PARENTS. YOU THINK I WOULDN'T NOTICE? YOU ONLY HAVE ME OVER WHEN THEY'VE GONE SOMEWHERE.
I'M SORRY, I'LL LET YOU MEET THEM IF YOU REALLY WANT TO. IT'S JUST... MY PARENTS ARE HORRIBLE.
YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.
UH... HELLO. THIS IS ME YOU'RE TALKING TO.
I WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND?
OH, CRAP-- UH.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
BEEPBEEPBEEPBEEP
WHOA--MY FIRST CALL. SWEET!
MUST BE SOMETHING GOING ON OVER AT STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
YOU WANT ME TO COME WITH?
NAH. I'LL GIVE THEM A CALL ON THE WAY--SEE WHAT IT IS.
I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS.

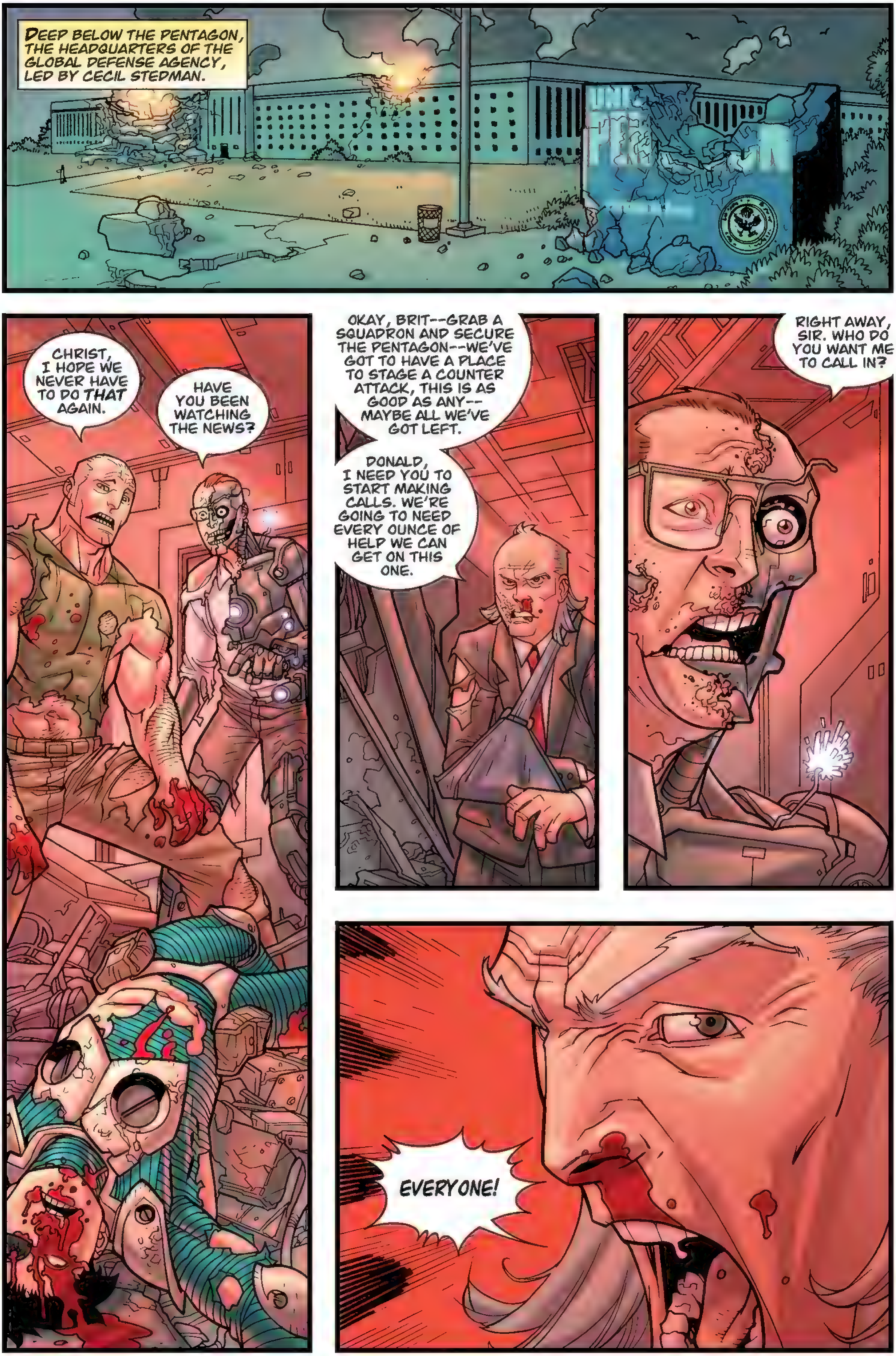
KRAKOOM!!
IS THIS WHAT PASSES FOR A PRISON ON THIS WORLD?!
PATHETIC!
I WOULDN'T EVEN KEEP YOU AS A SLAVE IN MY EMPIRE!
AFTER NEARLY A YEAR IN A VILTRUMITE PRISON--I COULD USE THIS WARM-UP!
RUN! FLEE! THIS IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT I'M GOING TO DO TO MY FATHER WHEN I FIND HIM!

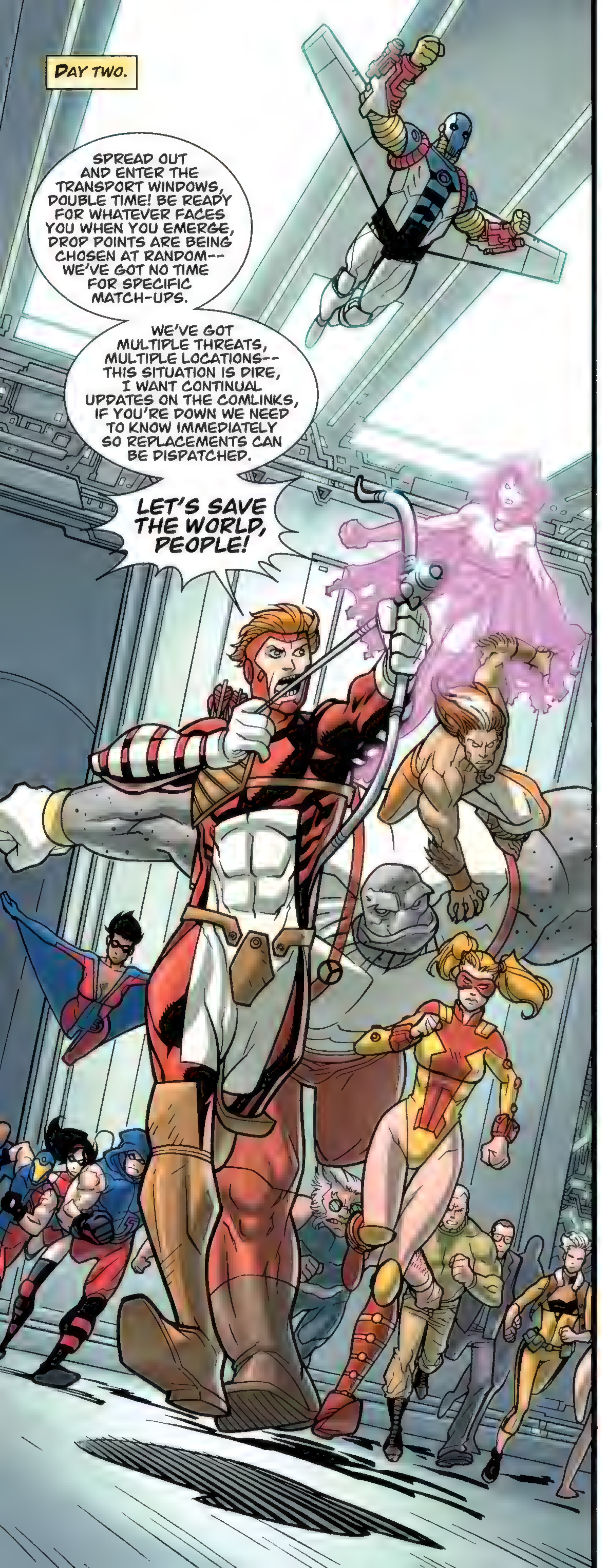
I'VE KILLED YOU BEFORE AND I'LL DO IT AGAIN!
THE DUNCAN ROSENBLATT OF MY DIMENSION WOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOU! HE'S THE KING OF ALL MONSTERS-- ONE OF THE MOST FEROCIOUS VILLAINS I'VE FACED!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!
LOOP 202
CRAP!
WHO IS THIS GUY?!

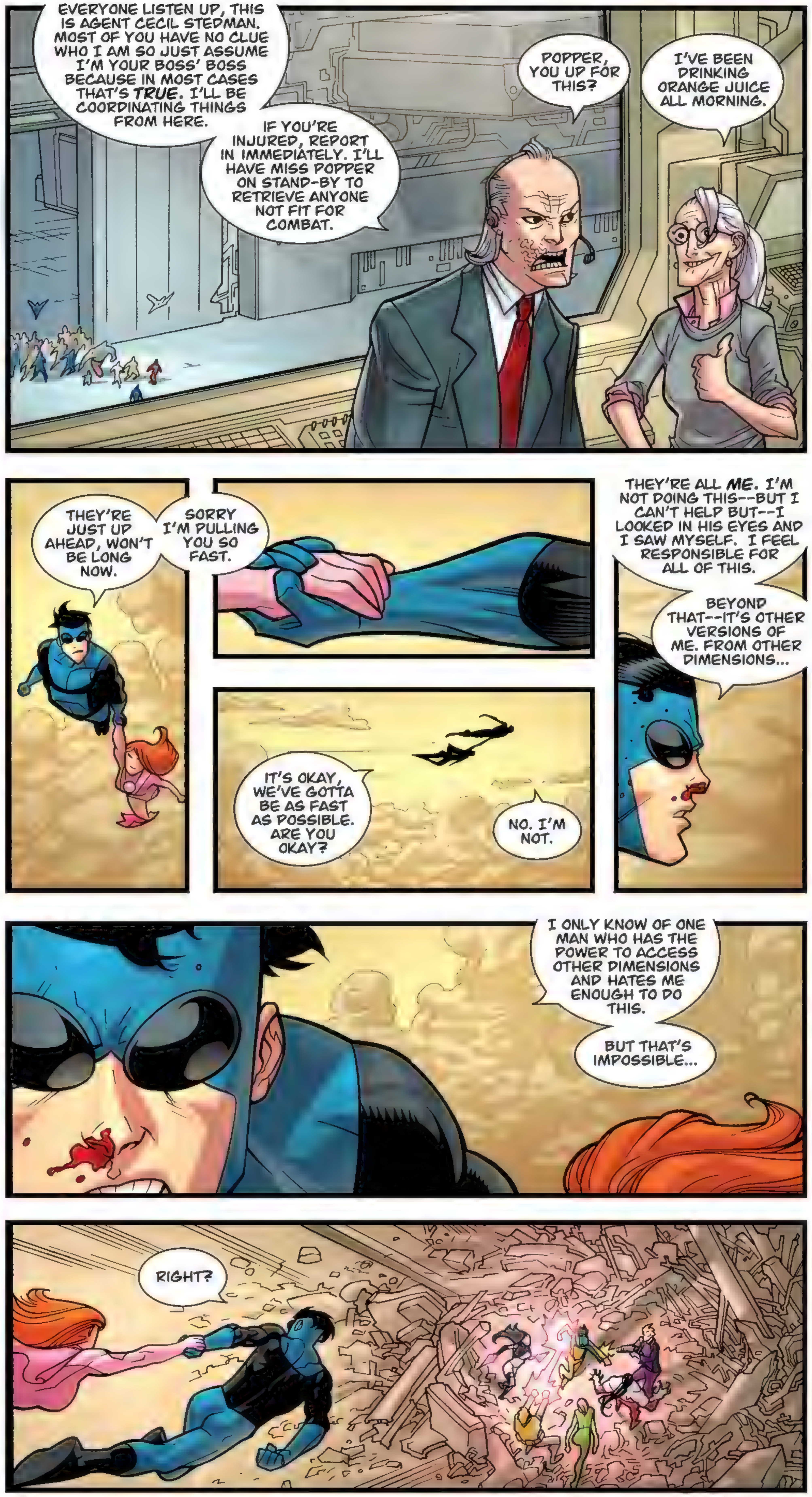
STOP THIS! WE'RE TOO EVENLY MATCHED-- JUST STOP! THIS COULD GO ON FOREVER!
STOP FIGHTING AND TELL ME HOW YOU GOT HERE-- WHO BROUGHT YOU HERE?! HOW DID YOU GET TO THIS DIMENSION?!
KROOM!
YOU'LL GET NO ANSWERS FROM ME! I WILL NEVER YIELD TO YOU. IT SICKENS ME TO EVEN LOOK AT YOU.
A LESSER VERSION OF ME-- A PALE REFLECTION. I'LL SEE YOUR BRAINS SMEARED ACROSS MY KNUCKLES BEFORE I BOW BEFORE YOU.
I'LL--
WROKK!
SHUT UP!
KROOM!
WHAT THE HELL IS--
HEY!
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE--GET HIM! WE'VE GOT TO STOP THESE BASTARDS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
WHAT?!
GUYS-- IT'S ME!
IT'S--!

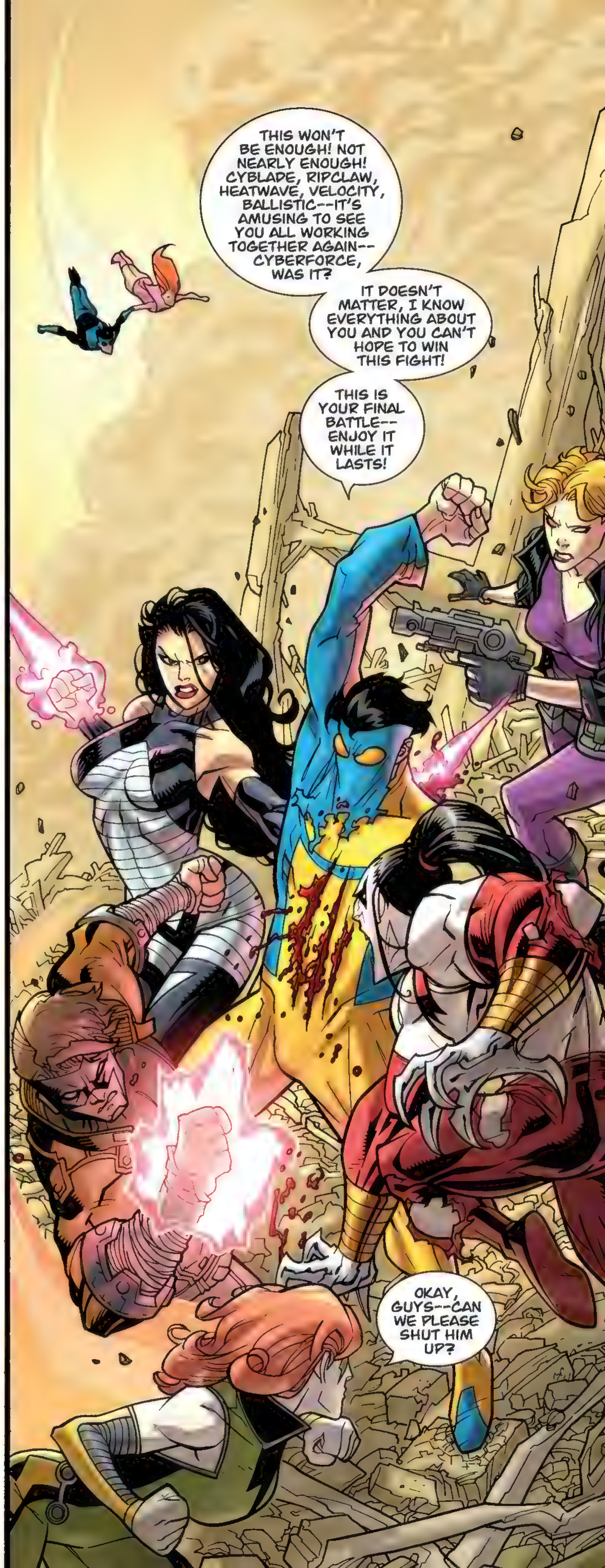

BOLT! KID THOR! IT'S ME--WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
KRAK!
YOU FOOL! YOU SHOULD BE RUNNING *WITH* US--WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN US--WIFE-KILLER!
YOU'RE IN HERE FOR A REASON, THRILL-KILL. IF KEEPING YOU INSIDE MEANS I STAY TOO--SO BE IT!
WHAT'S THE DEAL--YOU *LIKE* IT IN HERE?!
SVASSH!
WROKK!
YOU!
GET BACK HERE!
BZZACKT!
NOT YOU OR ANYONE ELSE IS GOING TO KEEP ME IN HERE.
SOON, INVINCIBLE...
BUT NOT TODAY.


REPORTS ARE COMING IN FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE.
MULTIPLE SUPER-HUMANS, ALL RESEMBLING INVINCIBLE IN SOME WAY, HAVE BEEN WREAKING HAVOC IN CITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD.
AT FIRST THEY WERE BELIEVED TO ACTUALLY **BE** INVINCIBLE, UNTIL THE SIGHTINGS REVEALED MULTIPLE ATTACKERS--NOW TOTALING NEARLY TWENTY.
BREAKING NE
IT IS UNCLEAR WHAT THEIR MOTIVE FOR THESE ATTACKS IS--OR HOW LONG THEY WILL CONTINUE. THEY'VE MET WITH OPPOSITION IN MANY INSTANCES BUT THE OVERALL ATTACK SHOWS NO SIGNS OF ENDING.
WE'LL CONTINUE BROADCASTING AS LONG AS WE CAN, ALTHOUGH WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG OUR LOCATION WILL REMAIN SECURE. WE NOW GO LIVE TO--
THIS TIME I'M KILLING YOU SLOWLY--I'M GOING TO **ENJOY** MYSELF!
ACK!
WRAMM!
YOU SUCK, I DON'T CARE HOW STRONG YOU ARE--I'M TAKING YOU OUT!
KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT, BOY--YOU'LL EVENTUALLY BELIEVE IT. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO **EARN** THAT SYMBOL ON YOUR CHEST!
CALL IN WHOEVER YOU CAN--THIS IS HUGE, TOO BIG FOR ANY ONE OF US TO HANDLE.
I'M GOING TO TRY AND TAKE AS MANY OF THEM OUT AS I CAN--BUT IF I CAN'T DO IT--BE READY TO BACK ME UP.
WE'RE ON IT!


DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
CHRIST, I HOPE WE NEVER HAVE TO DO *THAT* AGAIN.
HAVE YOU BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS?
OKAY, BRIT--GRAB A SQUADRON AND SECURE THE PENTAGON--WE'VE GOT TO HAVE A PLACE TO STAGE A COUNTER ATTACK, THIS IS AS GOOD AS ANY--MAYBE ALL WE'VE GOT LEFT.
DONALD, I NEED YOU TO START MAKING CALLS. WE'RE GOING TO NEED EVERY OUNCE OF HELP WE CAN GET ON THIS ONE.
RIGHT AWAY, SIR. WHO DO YOU WANT ME TO CALL IN?
EVERYONE!


DAY TWO.
SPREAD OUT AND ENTER THE TRANSPORT WINDOWS, DOUBLE TIME! BE READY FOR WHATEVER FACES YOU WHEN YOU EMERGE, DROP POINTS ARE BEING CHOSEN AT RANDOM-- WE'VE GOT NO TIME FOR SPECIFIC MATCH-UPS.
WE'VE GOT MULTIPLE THREATS, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS-- THIS SITUATION IS DIRE, I WANT CONTINUAL UPDATES ON THE COMLINKS, IF YOU'RE DOWN WE NEED TO KNOW IMMEDIATELY SO REPLACEMENTS CAN BE DISPATCHED.
LET'S SAVE THE WORLD, PEOPLE!

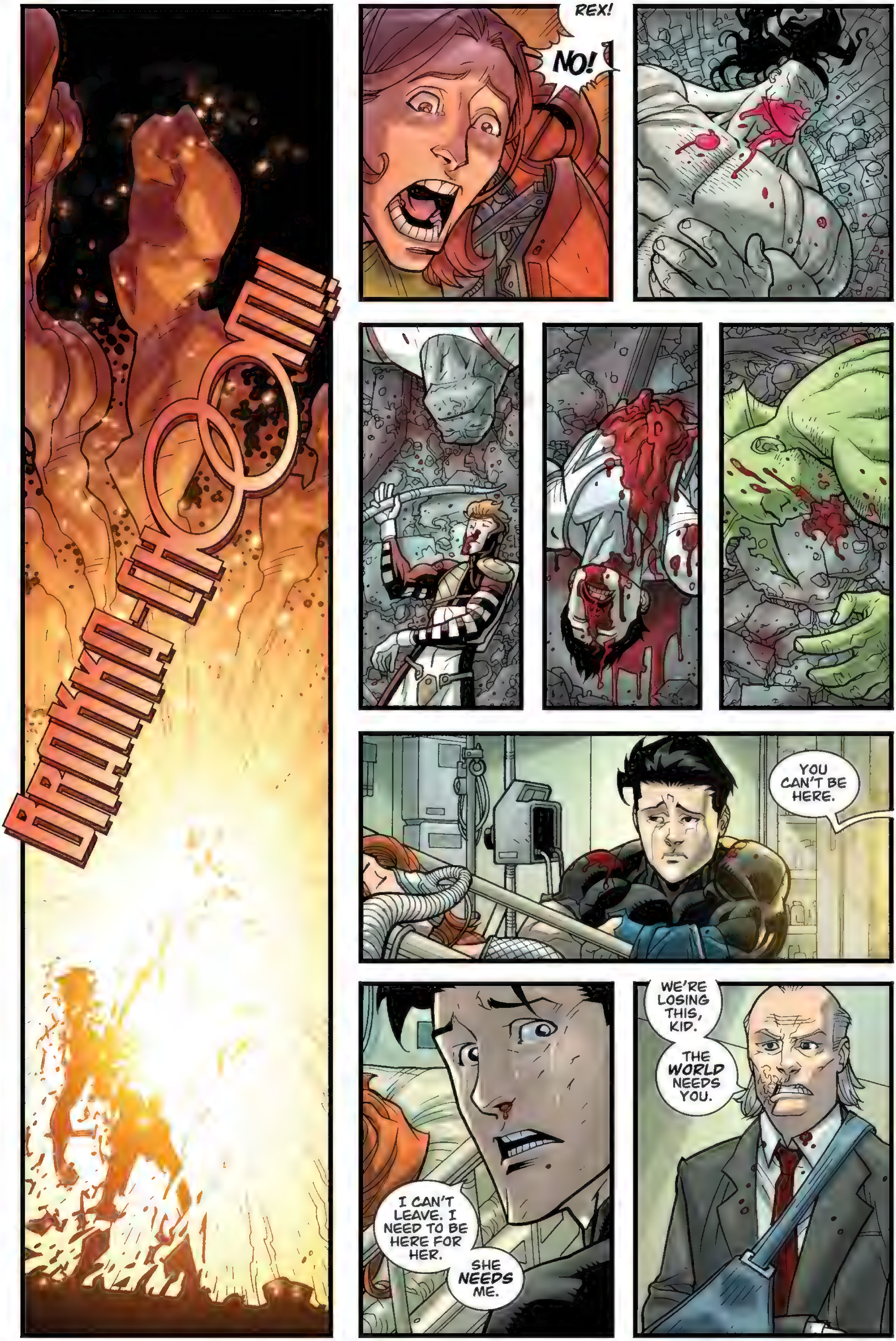

EVERYONE LISTEN UP, THIS IS AGENT CECIL STEDMAN. MOST OF YOU HAVE NO CLUE WHO I AM SO JUST ASSUME I'M YOUR BOSS' BOSS BECAUSE IN MOST CASES THAT'S TRUE. I'LL BE COORDINATING THINGS FROM HERE.
IF YOU'RE INJURED, REPORT IN IMMEDIATELY. I'LL HAVE MISS POPPER ON STAND-BY TO RETRIEVE ANYONE NOT FIT FOR COMBAT.
POPPER, YOU UP FOR THIS?
I'VE BEEN DRINKING ORANGE JUICE ALL MORNING.
THEY'RE JUST UP AHEAD, WON'T BE LONG NOW.
SORRY I'M PULLING YOU SO FAST.
IT'S OKAY, WE'VE GOTTA BE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. ARE YOU OKAY?
NO. I'M NOT.
THEY'RE ALL ME. I'M NOT DOING THIS--BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT--I LOOKED IN HIS EYES AND I SAW MYSELF. I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF THIS.
BEYOND THAT--IT'S OTHER VERSIONS OF ME. FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS...
I ONLY KNOW OF ONE MAN WHO HAS THE POWER TO ACCESS OTHER DIMENSIONS AND HATES ME ENOUGH TO DO THIS.
BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
RIGHT?

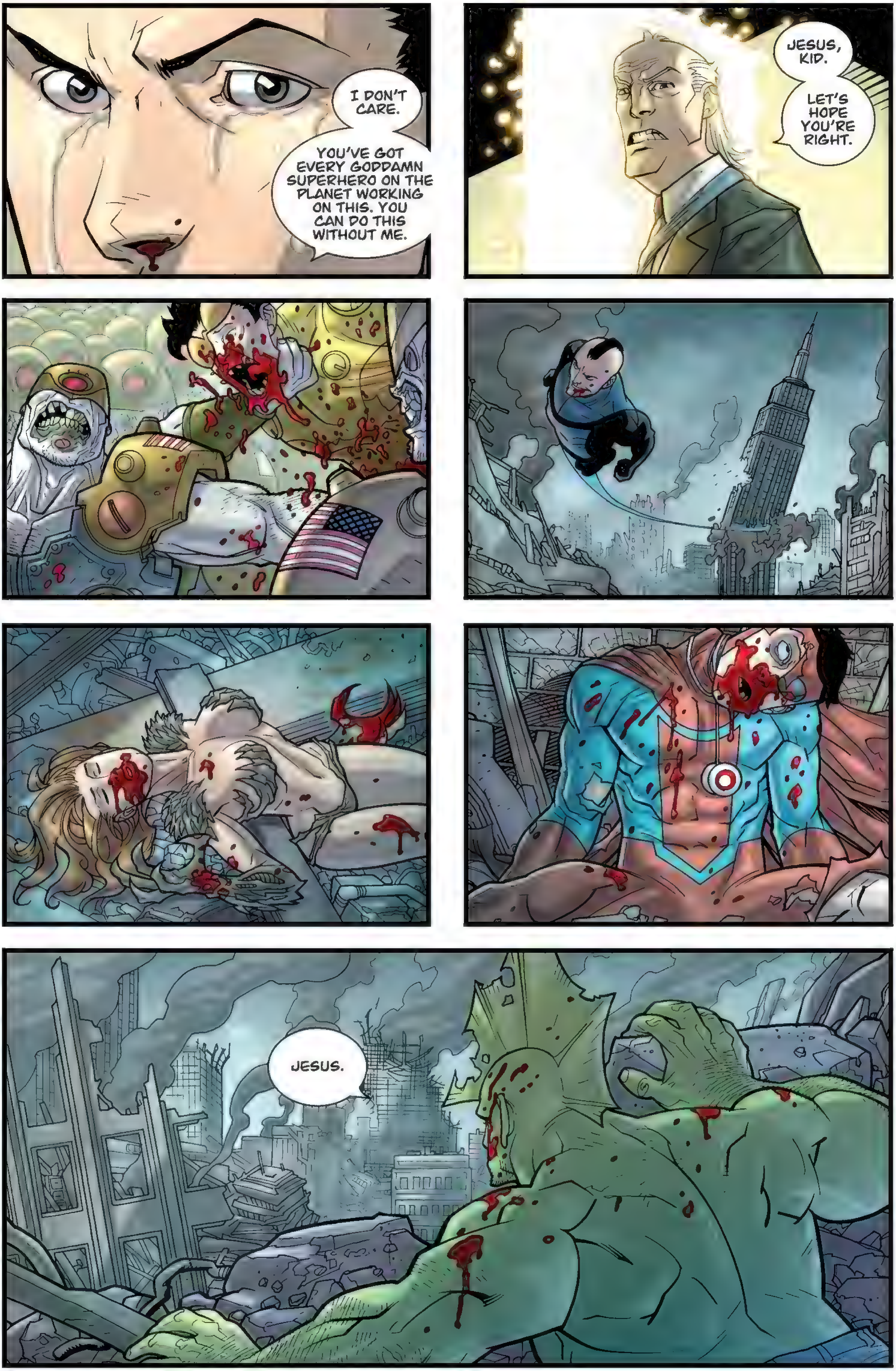

THIS WON'T BE ENOUGH! NOT NEARLY ENOUGH! CYBLADE, RIPCLAW, HEATWAVE, VELOCITY, BALLISTIC--IT'S AMUSING TO SEE YOU ALL WORKING TOGETHER AGAIN-- CYBERFORCE, WAS IT?
IT DOESN'T MATTER, I KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU AND YOU CAN'T HOPE TO WIN THIS FIGHT!
THIS IS YOUR FINAL BATTLE-- ENJOY IT WHILE IT LASTS!
OKAY, GUYS--CAN WE PLEASE SHUT HIM UP?

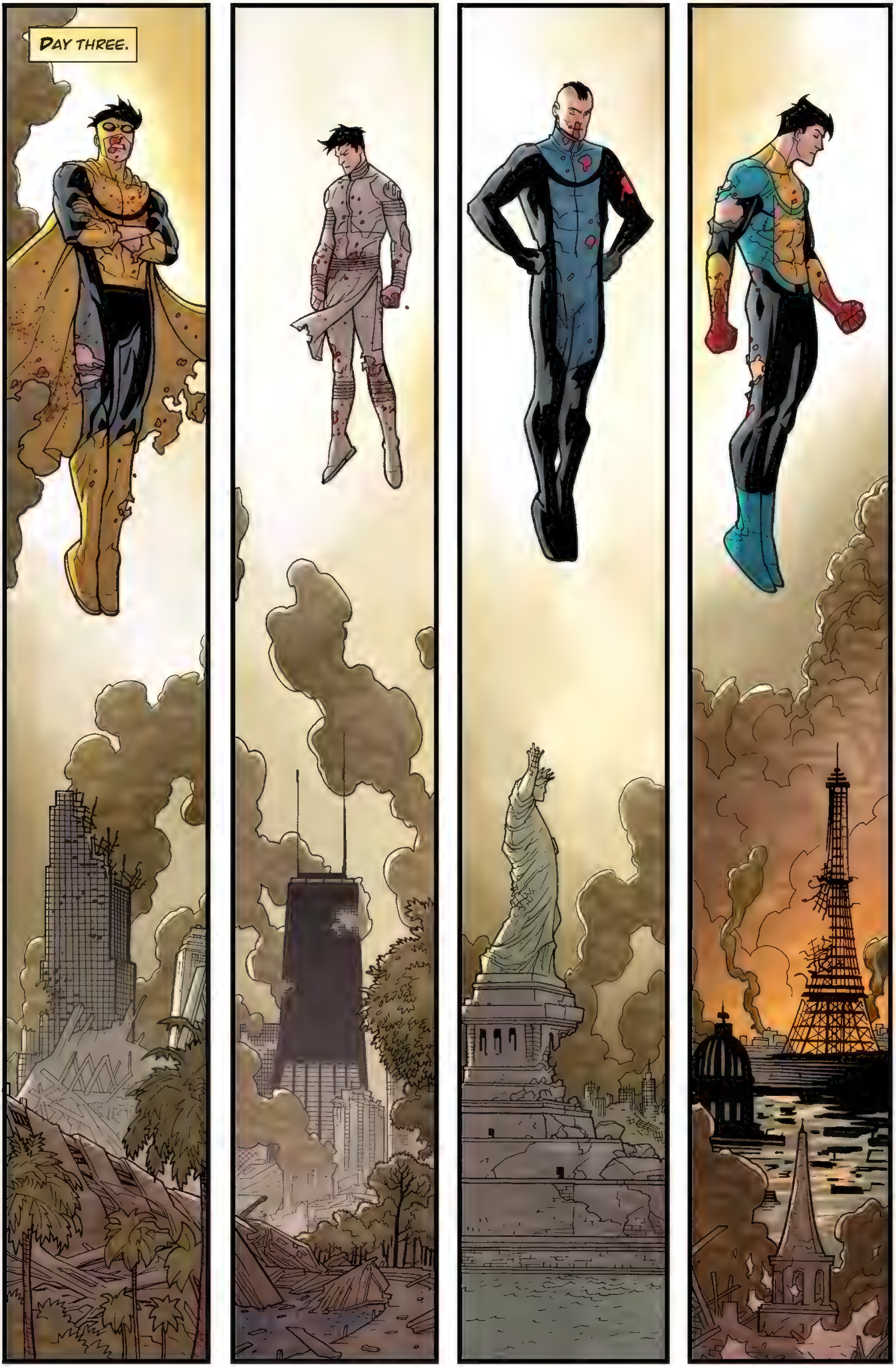
WRAKK
YOU THINK THIS WILL WORK? YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP ME?!
I MURDERED MY FATHER! AN ADULT VILTRUMITE-- DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN HOPE TO SURVIVE THIS?!
YOU'RE NOT INVINCIBLE-- I *KNOW* INVINCIBLE! WHO ARE YOU?!
JUST SHUT UP AND BEAT HIM, DAD!
LOOK OUT!
SORRY!
ACK!
KROOM!
WHUMP!
YOU'RE *MINE* NOW!
REMATCH!
CHEERS!
JERK!
SWOSH!
OH, GOD-- JUST HANG ON, EVE!
WE'LL BE AT THE HOSPITAL IN NO TIME-- JUST HANG ON!!

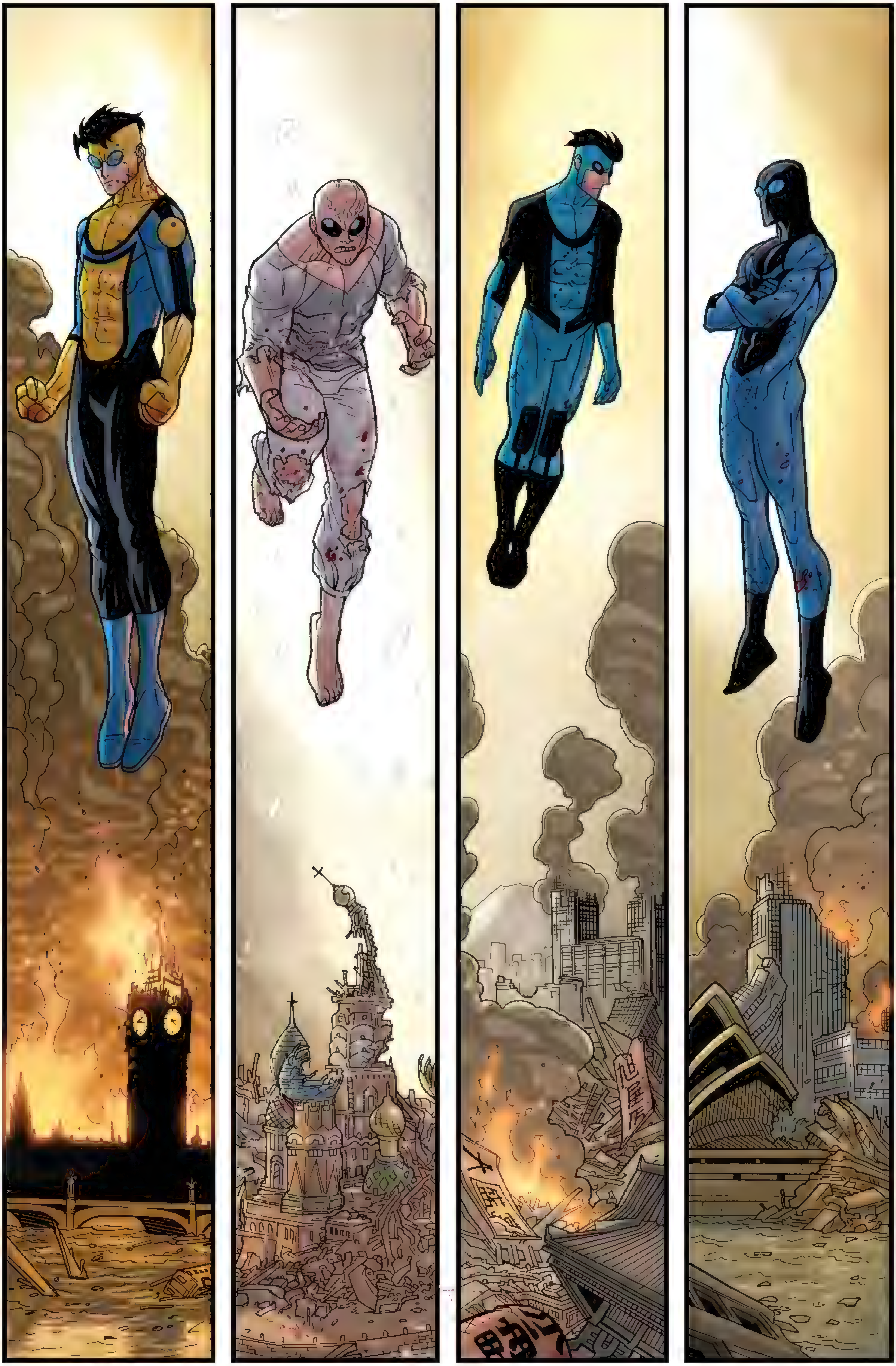
KROOM!
PATHETIC! THEY CALL YOU CLOWNS THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE HERE?!
YOU'RE AN EMBARRASSMENT!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I KILLED YOU ALL SO *EASILY!*
WE'RE NOT DEAD YET!
DARKWING?!
HELP!
I NEED HELP!
YOU GOING TO MAKE IT?
YEAH--UGH--I CAN PULL MYSELF TOGETHER. WHERE'S DARKWING? DID HE GET HIM?
DIE!
WROKK!
SHE'S NOT HERE--WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO KILLING HER MYSELF, THIS TIME.
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY SOME KIND OF LESSER VILTRUMITE--JUST LOOK AT YOU! HOW COULD YOU HOPE TO DEFEAT ME?!
KROOM!
SHE'S BREATHING! SHE'S STILL BREATHING!
I THINK I CAN FIX THAT...
LEAVE THEM ALONE!
WRAMM!

WRAMM!
THE NATIONAL GUARD IS OFFERING TO SHELTER PEOPLE AT THE BASE.
NO--WE'LL BE FINE HERE. I DON'T WANT TO BE LOCKED AWAY AS LONG AS THEY'RE STILL BROADCASTING UPDATES.
WAKE UP, AMANDA--PLEASE BE OKAY--
MONSTER GIRL!
CHOOM!
WHERE'S DARKWING?
HE'S NOT HERE--THAT MADMAN MUST HAVE KILLED HIM, TRAPPING HIMSELF IN THE SHADOWVERSE... HE SAVED US.
DARKWING SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO SAVE US.
JUST FIX HER! PLEASE!
FIX HER!
NO! GET THEM OUT OF HERE BEFORE HE KILLS ALL OF US. LEAVE HIM TO ME.
NO! GO BACK!
IT'S THE ONLY WAY--GO!
WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM!!
THAT WAS A FUTILE GESTURE, REX. I'M GOING TO POP YOUR HEAD OFF AND THEN FLY OFF TO MURDER ALL THREE OF THEM.
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH AGAINST ME? YOU'RE OUT OF BATONS AND GOLF BALLS AND WHATEVER YOU KEPT IN YOUR POCKETS--YOUR WRIST LAUNCHER IS SPENT--YOU'VE GOT NOTHING. NO WAY OF ATTACKING ME.
SO TELL ME--HOW ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO CHARGE AND EXPLODE?
MY SKELETON.

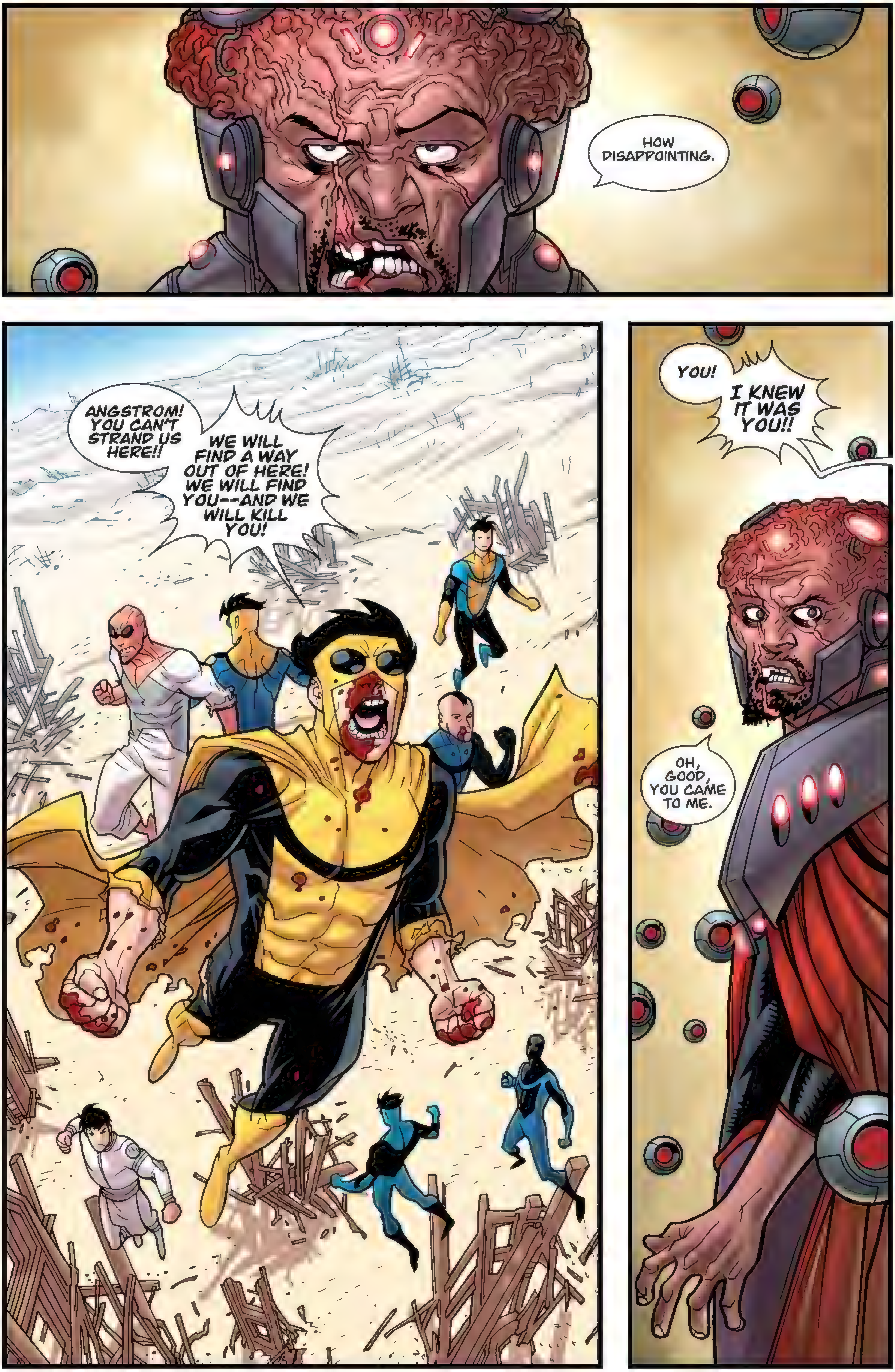

BRAKKA-THOOM!!!
REX!
NO!
YOU CAN'T BE HERE.
I CAN'T LEAVE. I NEED TO BE HERE FOR HER.
SHE NEEDS ME.
WE'RE LOSING THIS, KID.
THE WORLD NEEDS YOU.

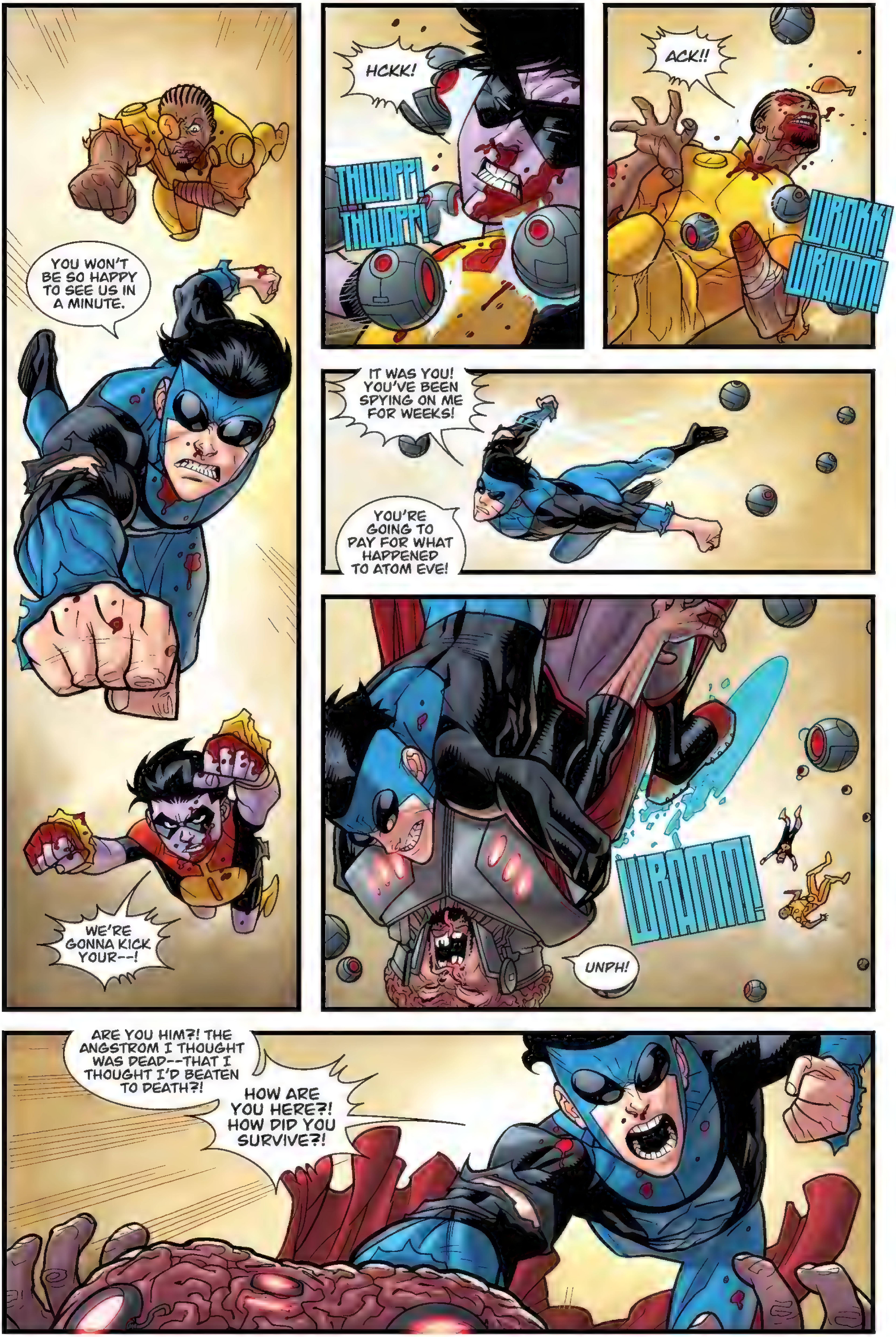

I DON'T CARE.
YOU'VE GOT EVERY GODDAMN SUPERHERO ON THE PLANET WORKING ON THIS. YOU CAN DO THIS WITHOUT ME.
JESUS, KID.
LET'S HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
JESUS.

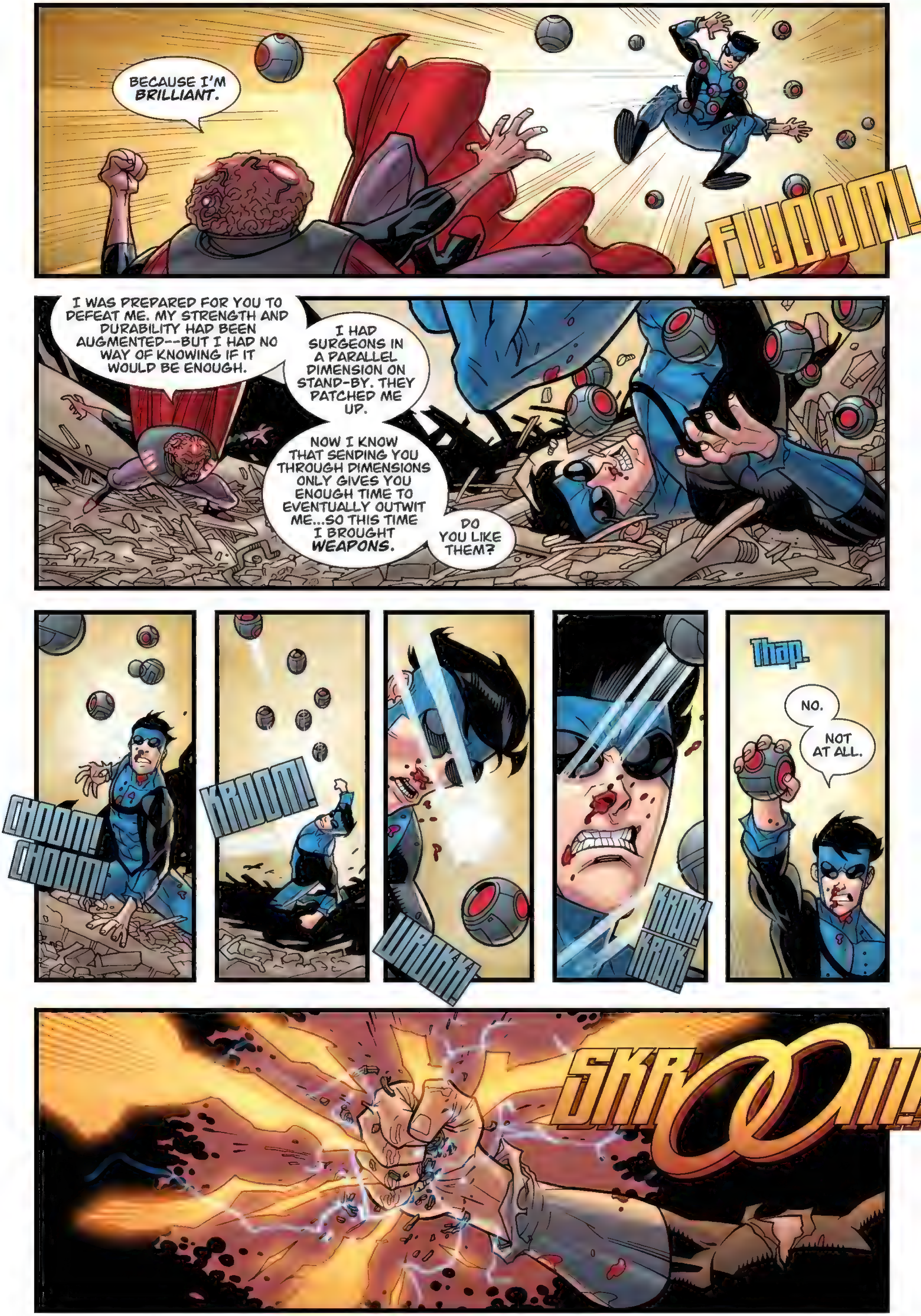

DAY THREE.

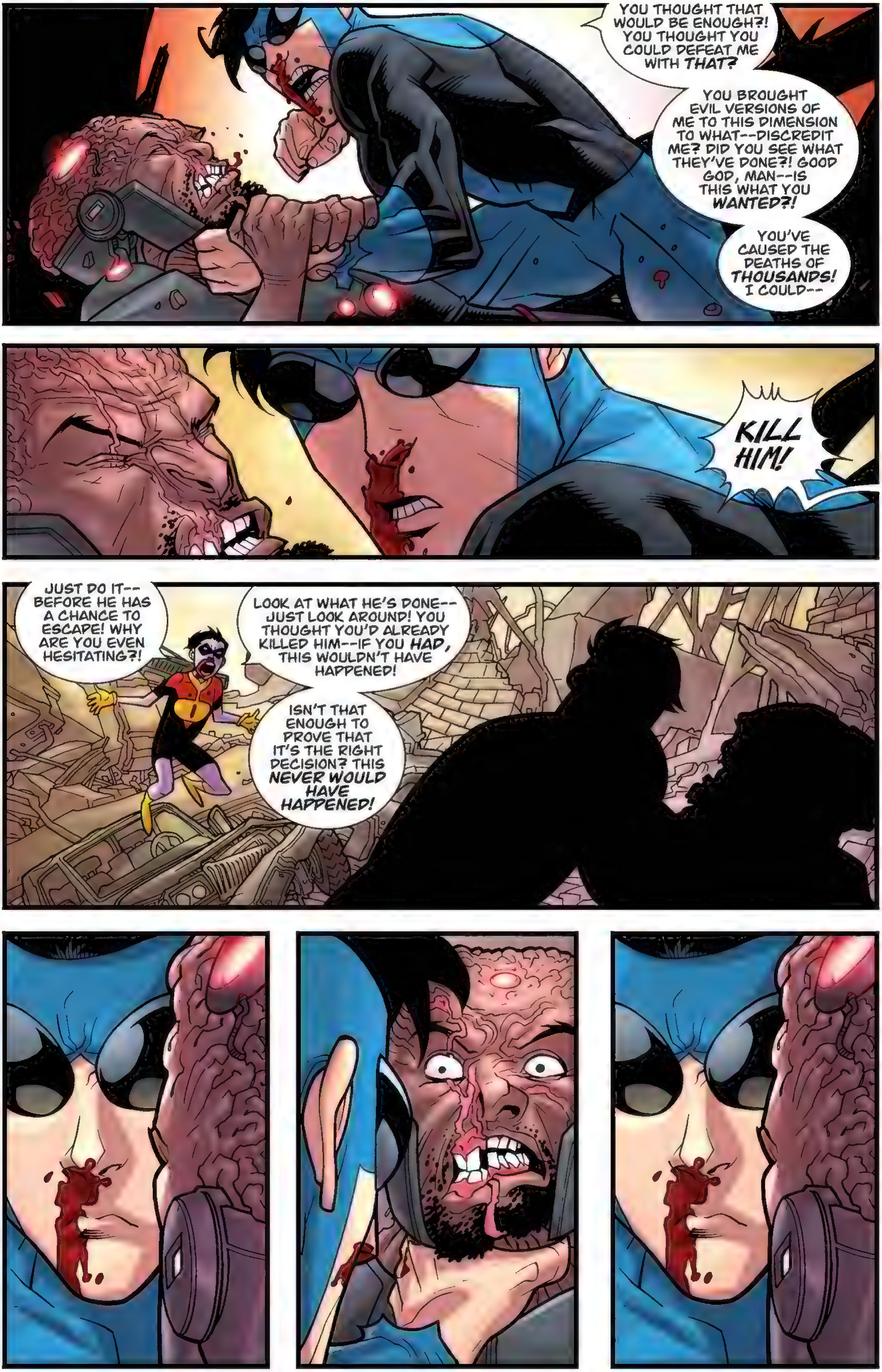

旭屋店

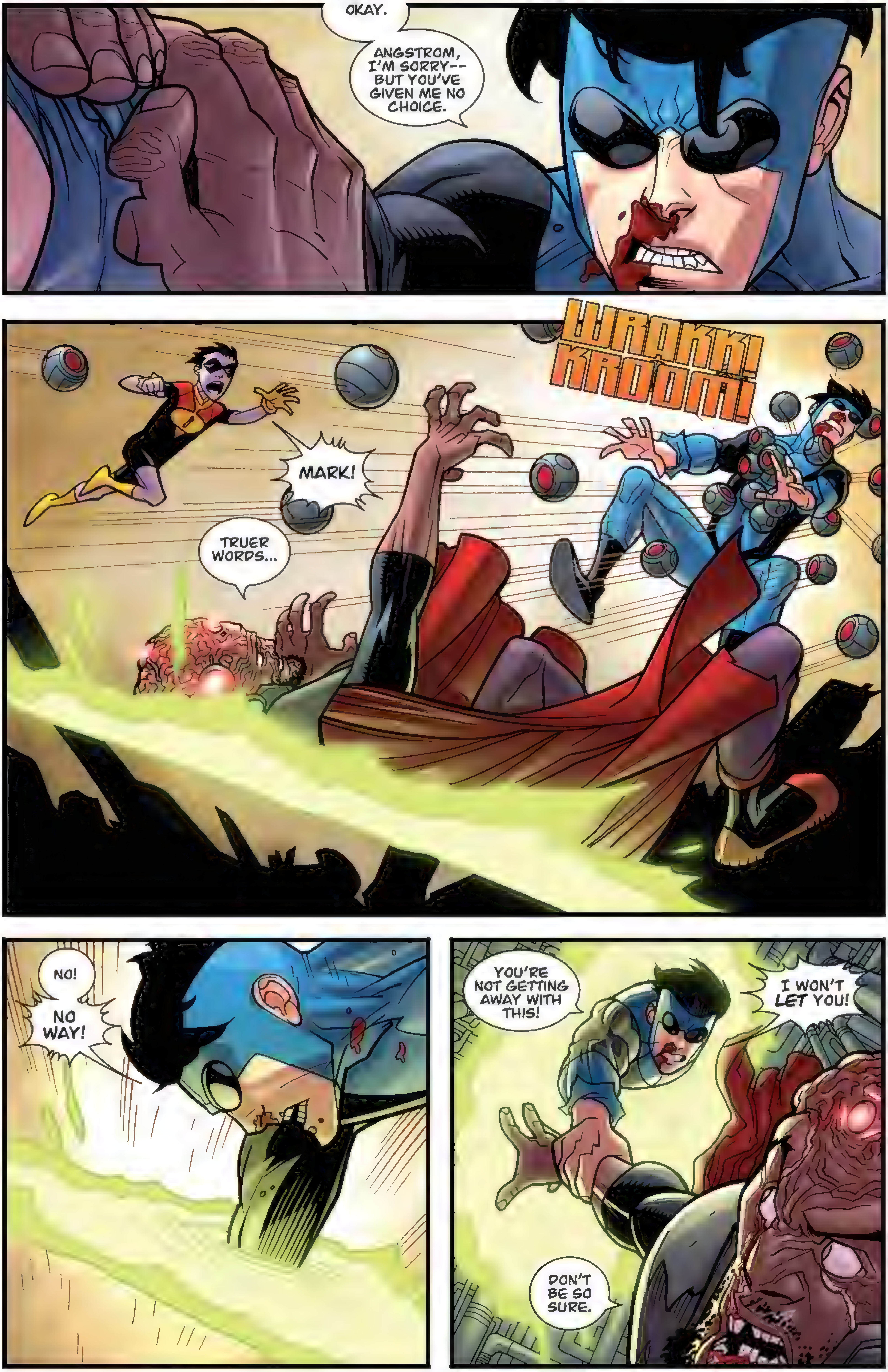
PHASE ONE IS COMPLETE.
GATHER AND PREPARE FOR MY ARRIVAL.
WHY ARE WE MEETING ABOVE MY HOUSE? I HATE COMING BACK TO THIS PLACE.
NOT ALL OF US KILLED OUR MOTHER HERE. MY FATHER DESTROYED THIS PLACE BEFORE I COULD KILL HIM. I'M HAPPY TO SEE IT.
WHAT IS TAKING HIM SO LONG?
SORRY. I PREFER TO MAKE AN ENTRANCE.
THIS WORLD IS IN RUINS, THIS INVINCIBLE'S REPUTATION IS DESTROYED. THE PEOPLE HERE WILL ALWAYS HATE AND FEAR HIM BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE. NOW ALL THAT IS LEFT IS TO DISFIGURE HIM. I WANT HIM TO KNOW WHAT PAIN HE'S CAUSED ME.
FIND HIM, AND BRING HIM TO ME.
HOW ABOUT WE *DON'T?* YOUR STUPID PLAN WEEDED US DOWN TO EIGHT. YOU SAID IF WE DID THIS FOR YOU, IN RETURN YOU'D HELP US EXPAND OUR EMPIRES INTO COUNTLESS DIMENSIONS.
THIS PLACE IS IN SHAMBLES. I SAY WE MOVE ON--*NOW,* OR WE KILL YOU.
WRAMMM!


HOW DISAPPOINTING.
ANGSTROM! YOU CAN'T STRAND US HERE!!
WE WILL FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE! WE WILL FIND YOU--AND WE WILL KILL YOU!
YOU!
I KNEW IT WAS YOU!!
OH, GOOD, YOU CAME TO ME.

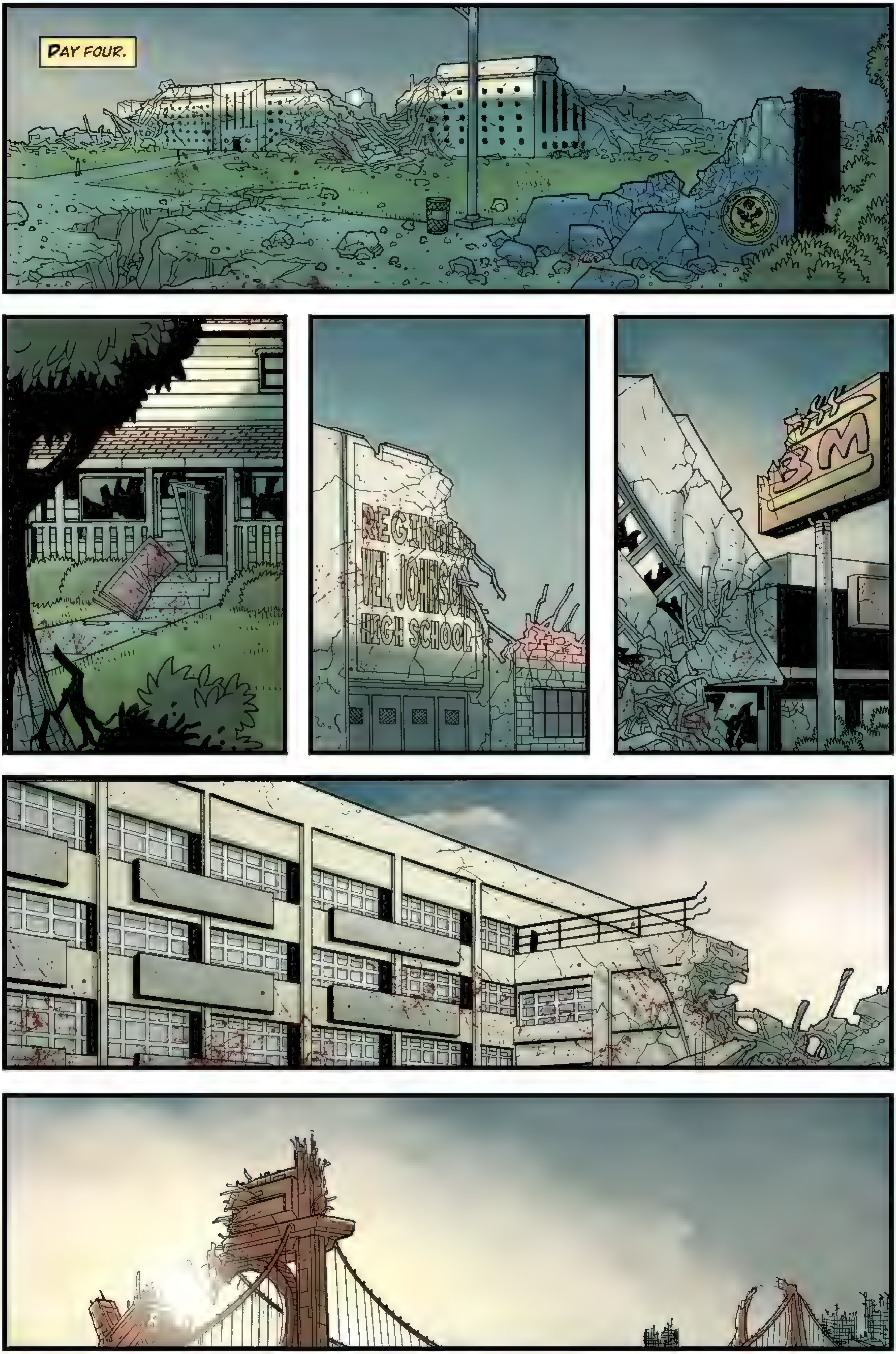

YOU WON'T BE SO HAPPY TO SEE US IN A MINUTE.
WE'RE GONNA KICK YOUR--!
HCKK!
THWOPP! THWOPP!
ACK!!
UROKK! URAMM!
IT WAS YOU! YOU'VE BEEN SPYING ON ME FOR WEEKS!
YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO ATOM EVE!
URAMM!
UNPH!
ARE YOU HIM?! THE ANGSTROM I THOUGHT WAS DEAD--THAT I THOUGHT I'D BEATEN TO DEATH?!
HOW ARE YOU HERE?! HOW DID YOU SURVIVE?!


BECAUSE I'M BRILLIANT.
FWOOM!
I WAS PREPARED FOR YOU TO DEFEAT ME. MY STRENGTH AND DURABILITY HAD BEEN AUGMENTED--BUT I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING IF IT WOULD BE ENOUGH.
I HAD SURGEONS IN A PARALLEL DIMENSION ON STAND-BY. THEY PATCHED ME UP.
NOW I KNOW THAT SENDING YOU THROUGH DIMENSIONS ONLY GIVES YOU ENOUGH TIME TO EVENTUALLY OUTWIT ME...SO THIS TIME I BROUGHT WEAPONS.
DO YOU LIKE THEM?
CHOOM! CHOOM!
KROOM!
WROKK!
KROK! KROK!
Thap.
NO.
NOT AT ALL.
SKROOM!


YOU THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH?! YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD DEFEAT ME WITH *THAT?*
YOU BROUGHT EVIL VERSIONS OF ME TO THIS DIMENSION TO WHAT--DISCREDIT ME? DID YOU SEE WHAT THEY'VE DONE?! GOOD GOD, MAN--IS THIS WHAT YOU *WANTED?!*
YOU'VE CAUSED THE DEATHS OF *THOUSANDS!* I COULD--
KILL HIM!
JUST DO IT--BEFORE HE HAS A CHANCE TO ESCAPE! WHY ARE YOU EVEN HESITATING?!
LOOK AT WHAT HE'S DONE--JUST LOOK AROUND! YOU THOUGHT YOU'D ALREADY KILLED HIM--IF YOU *HAD,* THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED!
ISN'T THAT ENOUGH TO PROVE THAT IT'S THE RIGHT DECISION? THIS *NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED!*


OKAY.
ANGSTROM, I'M SORRY-- BUT YOU'VE GIVEN ME NO CHOICE.
WRAKK! KROOM!
MARK!
TRUER WORDS...
NO!
NO WAY!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY WITH THIS!
I WON'T LET YOU!
DON'T BE SO SURE.

NO!
NO!
SHUKK!
NO!
...
GROSS.
I NEED YOU TO PATCH ME UP. I'M GETTING THE REMAINING EIGHT INVINCIBLES FROM THAT DIMENSION I STRANDED THEM IN--AND WE'RE GOING BACK--WE'LL HIT HIM ALL AT ONCE.
I WANT HIS BLOOD! HURRY, WE'VE GOT TO GET BACK.
NO.
PROMISES WERE MADE, ANGSTROM LEVY. YOU GAVE US ASSURANCES, WE HAD A DEAL AND YOU FAILED.
YOU DO NOT GET A SECOND CHANCE. YOU DO NOT GET TO GIVE US ORDERS.
YOU WORK FOR US NOW.


DAY FOUR.
REGINAL
VEL JOHNSO
HIGH SCHOOL
BM

MY GOD...

CHAPTER 61

LOS ANGELES, CHICAGO AND NEW YORK... ALL NEARLY LEVELED. THE WORLD IS IN RUINS. PARIS, MOSCOW, LONDON, TOKYO AND SYDNEY HAVE SUFFERED EQUAL DAMAGE. WE DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE'LL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE WITH THIS BROADCAST. WE APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING AS WE TRY TO REPORT ON THESE EVENTS WITH OUR LIMITED RESOURCES.
THE DEATH TOLL WORLDWIDE IS ALREADY WELL INTO THE MILLIONS. AS IT CONTINUES TO RISE, ANALYSTS ARE EXPECTING IT TO MORE THAN TRIPLE. RESCUE CREWS ARE WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK AND THE GOOD NEWS IS, MANY SURVIVORS ARE BEING FOUND AMIDST THE WRECKAGE.
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW DAYS. MAKESHIFT REFUGEE CAMPS LIKE THIS ONE JUST OUTSIDE OF NEW YORK CITY ARE SPRINGING UP ALL OVER THE WORLD.
THE RED CROSS IS REPORTING THAT THIS DISASTER FAR EXCEEDS THEIR CAPABILITIES, AND THEY'RE ASKING FOR EVERY CITIZEN IN A POSITION TO HELP TO DO SO.
ALL OF THIS STILL LEAVES US WITH THE QUESTION-- **WHY?** WHY HAS THIS HAPPENED? WHILE THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION MAY NEVER COME, THE ATTACKERS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF THE SUPERHERO KNOWN AS INVINCIBLE.
INVINCIBLE, AS EVERYONE WILL REMEMBER, WAS THE SON OF OMNI-MAN--THE SUPERHERO TURNED SUPER-VILLAIN WHO TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD UNTIL HE WAS THWARTED BY HIS SON AND THEN DISAPPEARED, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.
SUSPICIONS HAVE ALWAYS RUN WILD WITH SOME BELIEVING INVINCIBLE WAS ACTUALLY WORKING WITH OMNI-MAN--WITH PLANS TO CONQUER THE WORLD AT A LATTER TIME.
WE HAVE REPORTS OF INVINCIBLE WORKING ALONGSIDE THESE ATTACKERS, BUT NOTHING HAS BEEN CONFIRMED AND HE COULDN'T BE REACHED FOR COMMENT.
6 WORLD DISASTER
I SAW HIM WITH MY OWN EYES. HE WAS WORKING WITH THEM. INVINCIBLE HAS FINALLY SHOWN HIS TRUE COLORS. IT'S OBVIOUS NOW THAT HIM DEFENDING THE WORLD AGAINST HIS FATHER WAS ALL JUST AN ACT.
THIS IS ABSURD. THESE THINGS WERE DOPPELGANGERS--EVIL TWINS. I KNOW INVINCIBLE AND HE WASN'T WORKING WITH THEM.
THIS IS SLOPPY REPORTING. IF YOU REVIEWED FOOTAGE FOR TEN MINUTES I'M SURE YOU'D FIND INVINCIBLE, ON CAMERA, FIGHTING AGAINST THESE MONSTERS.

NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO.
PLEASE WAKE UP, EVE. PLEASE... IF YOU'RE IN THERE, IF YOU CAN HEAR ME... WAKE UP.
...
I'M SO SORRY, BUT... I DON'T THINK I CAN STAY HERE MUCH LONGER. I CAN'T, I'VE GOT TO HELP PEOPLE-- THERE'S TOO MUCH TO BE DONE.
I CAN'T BE HERE FOR YOU.
I'M SORRY.
YOU READY?

IS SHE GOING TO BE *SAFE* HERE?
IT'S NOT SAFE TO MOVE HER TO ONE OF MY SECURE FACILITIES YET, SO I'VE MOVED A MEDICAL TEAM HERE. THE STAFF OF THIS HOSPITAL WON'T EVEN COME INTO THIS AREA--AND HER IDENTITY HAS BEEN PROTECTED.
HER PARENTS ARE BEING BROUGHT IN. SHE WON'T BE ALONE.
HAVE YOU FOUND MY MOTHER?
OLIVER DID. SHE WAS AT HER BOYFRIEND'S HOUSE THE WHOLE TIME--MOST SUBURBAN AREAS WEREN'T HIT, THANKFULLY.
HE'S MEETING UP WITH US ON LOCATION. OLIVER, NOT YOUR MOM'S BOYFRIEND.
AFTER THIS IS OVER... WE'RE THROUGH.
THIS IS ONLY TEMPORARY.
UNDERSTOOD.
I'M GLAD WE COULD PUT OUR DIFFERENCES BEHIND US FOR NOW, THOUGH.
THIS SITUATION IS BIGGER THAN EITHER OF US.

ALA

BRAKOWW!
YOU! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D SHOW YOUR FACE HERE AFTER ALL THE PAIN AND SUFFERING YOU'VE CAUSED!
HOW DARE YOU!
BZZACKT!
FINALLY--AT LONG LAST--YOU'LL DIE FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
KRAKOOM!
WHAT THE--?!
WHERE DID HE COME FROM?!
HE WAS HELPING US. IS HE NOT A SUPERHERO? I DON'T RECOGNIZE ALL OF THEM.
I'M--HERE TO HELP!
DOING THIS--JUST MAKING THINGS--WORSE!
KRRZZKT!

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS-- TAKE HIM DOWN HARD AND FAST, PEOPLE!
LET'S GO!
AAGGH!
KROOM!
THINK THEY'VE GOT THIS ONE COVERED, KID THOR.
C'MON, THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE, LIVES TO SAVE.
YOU'VE JUST GIVEN ME ALL THE ENERGY I NEED TO TAKE YOU DOWN!
IDIOT!
BZZZK!
POW!
HERE'S MORE, JERK!
QUICK-- SOMEONE PIN HIM DOWN!
DON'T LET HIM MOVE!

ON IT, DUDE!
KROOOM!!!
NO! YOU CAN'T STOP ME!
POWERPLEX WILL HAVE HIS REVENGE!
BZZACKKT!
JUST HOLD HIM DOWN UNTIL HE USES UP ALL HIS STORED ENERGY. FIGHT THROUGH THE PAIN AS BEST YOU CAN!
I'M GOOD, BRO.
I'M MADE OF SOLID, AWESOME ROCK-- THIS STUFF BARELY TICKLES.
NO.
NO!
NO!
NO.
THIS ISN'T RIGHT...

BRING HIM HERE.
WHAT IS WRONG WITH ALL OF YOU?!
WHY WOULD YOU HELP *HIM?!* WHY NOW--AFTER EVERYTHING HE'S DONE--WOULD YOU STOP ME FROM TAKING HIM DOWN?!
LOOK AROUND YOU! LOOK AT THIS! THIS IS ALL HIS FAULT! HE CAUSED THIS!
EVERY DEAD BODY YOU FIND IS A PERSON HE'S KILLED! HE'S A MURDERER!
HE HAS TO BE STOPPED!!
THIS IS ALL HIS FAULT!
WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?!
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, MARK.

THE CLEAN-UP IS GOING WELL. WE'VE ALMOST GOT ALL OF MANHATTAN CLEARED AWAY AND READY FOR RECONSTRUCTION. I SEE WHAT THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY IS CAPABLE OF WHEN WE ALL WORK TOGETHER AND... IT'S *INSPIRING*.
BUT...
I DON'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE I CAN TALK TO ABOUT THIS... I HOPE YOU WAKE UP SOON. I REALLY--OH, GOD, EVE... I MISS YOU SO MUCH.
I SEE THE DESTRUCTION, THE LIVES LOST... I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK... POWERPLEX IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO... ANGSTROM LEVY, POWERPLEX... THESE GUYS ARE OUT THERE BECAUSE OF *ME*. THERE'S NO DISPUTING THAT. THEIR ACTIONS ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF THINGS I'VE DONE, WHETHER I WAS TRYING TO DO GOOD OR NOT IS IRRELEVANT.
I CAN'T IGNORE THIS GUILT ANYMORE. I CAN'T ESCAPE IT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO...
UM... EXCUSE US-- WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE--
NONSENSE, SHE'S *OUR* DAUGHTER. EXCUSE ME.
I WAS-- JUST LEAVING ANYWAY.
UM... MARK-- RIGHT? I REMEMBER YOU COMING TO SEE SAMANTHA AT THE HOUSE.
YEAH, SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO JUST WALK AWAY IN THERE.

NO, IT'S OKAY. ADAM, SAMANTHA'S FATHER--HE'S NOT HANDLING THIS WELL.
HE--
YOU'RE HERE--SO YOU KNOW, SAMANTHA... YOU KNOW SHE'S ATOM EVE.
YEAH.
ADAM *NEVER* APPROVED--WE WERE ALWAYS WORRIED SOMETHING LIKE... *THIS* WOULD HAPPEN. THIS IS OUR WORST FEARS REALIZED.
YOU SEEM LIKE A NICE BOY, I'M SORRY HE WAS SO RUDE.
NO--IT'S OKAY. I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU OR YOUR HUSBAND, LET ME KNOW.
THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU. NO, WE'RE FINE. THE DOCTOR HAS SAID HE'S VERY OPTIMISTIC--HER INJURIES AREN'T AS SEVERE AS THEY COULD HAVE BEEN.
IT'S FUNNY... NO, THAT'S A *HORRIBLE* THING TO SAY...IT'S IRONIC--BUT THAT STILL DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT...
THERE WAS A GIRL, LIVED ACROSS THE STREET FROM US. LUCY WAS HER NAME. SAMANTHA AND HER PLAYED TOGETHER WHEN THEY WERE YOUNGER--BUT SHE WENT OFF TO COLLEGE IN CHICAGO. SHE WAS A COUPLE YEARS OLDER THAN SAM...
SHE *DIED*. SHE WAS JUST A NORMAL GIRL, SHE WASN'T OUT FIGHTING ANYONE--AND SHE'S DEAD... AND OUR LITTLE GIRL IS ALIVE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
I'M SORRY, DEAR. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE SO MORBID. WE JUST--
I SHOULD PROBABLY GO, I DIDN'T MEAN TO KEEP YOU.

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE APARTMENT OF FORMER ASTRONAUT, RUS LIVINGSTON.
THIRD FLOOR'S CLEAR.
YEAH-- I THINK THAT'S IT.
DID YOU SEE THAT?!
YEAH! WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT THING?!
I NEED A NEW PLACE TO LIVE--A BIGGER PLACE.
YOU WILL HELP ME FIND IT.
GRAAAGH!
YEEAAGH!!

THE PENTAGON, CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
OKAY, OKAY... HE'S REVIVING.
IMMORTAL? IMMORTAL CAN YOU HEAR ME?
I'M-- I'M HERE... I'M--
KATE, I-- I'M VERY HAPPY TO SEE YOU.
I HURRIED HERE AS FAST AS I COULD ONCE ALL MY COPIES WERE KILLED. I WANTED TO BE HERE FOR YOUR REVIVAL.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, IMMORTAL. I'M HERE TO ASSURE YOU THAT WE'LL GIVE YOU AS MUCH TIME TO RECOVER AS YOU NEED. THE GUARDIANS WILL BE OKAY WITHOUT YOU.
I HOPE THAT IS TRUE BECAUSE I AM NOT COMING BACK.
I AM THROUGH WITH THIS LIFE. MY WIFE WANTS TO START A FAMILY, I'M READY TO GIVE THAT TO HER.
OH, MY GOD!
OH, MY GOD--I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!

IMMORTAL AND DUPLI-KATE ARE RETIRING. DARKWING IS DEAD, SHAPESMITH IS INJURED--THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE OUT OF COMMISSION.
THE WORLD IS LARGELY *UNDEFENDED*.
WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT, *FAST*. THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU ALL HERE, DESPITE THE PAST DIFFERENCES I'VE HAD WITH SOME OF YOU.
SHAPESMITH SHOULD BE BACK UP TO SPEED SOON, HE HAS SOMETHING HE CALLS A *"CORE"* AND AS LONG AS THAT'S NOT DAMAGED HE SAYS HE'LL BE FINE. SO HE WAS LUCKY.
MORE LIKE *WE* WERE LUCKY. IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT FORMING A NEW TEAM, WE HAVE VERY FEW OPTIONS RIGHT NOW.
THAT'S THE MAIN ISSUE--WE NEED A NEW TEAM *RIGHT NOW*. I DON'T THINK THE ENEMIES OF THE WORLD WILL BE KIND ENOUGH TO TAKE A BREAK WHILE WE REBUILD.
I UNDERSTAND THIS SITUATION IS BIGGER THAN MY COMPLAINTS WITH YOU, CECIL... SO YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.
I'M TOLD BULLETPROOF'S NEW HAND IS COMPLETE--HE WASN'T INJURED OTHERWISE. I THINK I COULD CONVINCE HIM TO JOIN AT LEAST TEMPORARILY.
I'M CURRENTLY IN THE HOSPITAL WITH MONSTER GIRL AND THE DOCTORS TELL ME THEY'RE OPTIMISTIC THAT SHE'LL MAKE A FULL RECOVERY SOON. WE COULD COUNT HER IN AS WELL.
WHAT ABOUT REX SPLODE?
REX IS *DEAD*.
THERE'S NO TIME FOR THAT NOW.
WE NEED TO GET THIS TEAM UP AND RUNNING BEFORE ANYONE REALIZES HOW *VULNERABLE* WE ARE.
I DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE WORKING FOR YOU UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.
WHY AM I *HERE?*

I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU TO LEAD THE TEAM.
WHAT? *ME?* I'M NOT READY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D BE QUALIFIED FOR THAT?
YOU STOOD UP TO ME, KID. THAT MEANS SOMETHING.
I NEED SOMEONE WITH A STRONG WILL WHO'S ABLE TO MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS WHEN HE HAS TO. I *KNOW* YOU'RE READY FOR THIS.
I CAN'T-- NOT WITH EVE HURT LIKE SHE IS.
MY HEAD'S NOT IN IT RIGHT NOW.
BRIT? THINK YOU COULD HANDLE LEADING THE TEAM?
I'M HERE FOR YOU, CECIL-- BUT IT'S NICE TO KNOW YOU WENT TO THE ROOKIE FIRST.
NO OFFENSE, KID.
YOU WERE ALWAYS GOING TO BE IN CHARGE--WE JUST DIDN'T THINK YOU'D WANT TO BE THE FIELD LEADER.
I WISH YOU GUYS THE BEST OF LUCK. AND YOU CAN COUNT ON ME IF SOMETHING BIG COMES ALONG-- BUT FOR NOW, I THINK I'D BE OF BEST USE IN THE CLEAN-UP EFFORT.
CAN SOMEONE SHOW ME HOW TO GET OUT OF HERE WITHOUT JUST FLYING *UP?*
I'LL SHOW YOU OUT.
IF IT'S A GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TEAM... YOU KNOW YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.
I APPRECIATE THAT, SAMSON. IT WOULDN'T FEEL RIGHT WITHOUT YOU INVOLVED.
THAT INVINCIBLE-- MOODY LITTLE CUSS, AIN'T HE?

GOT ANOTHER BODY OVER HERE!

STAND READY FOR MY ARRIVAL, WORM!

YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF THIS PLANET, CHARGED WITH PREPARING IT FOR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER BY OUR EMPIRE.
I AM HERE TO CONFIRM YOUR PROGRESS MADE TOWARD THAT TASK... IF THERE IS NONE, I WILL ASSUME YOUR DUTIES AND TAKE OVER.
IF YOU OPPOSE ME. ***I WILL KILL YOU.***

THIS ISN'T A GOOD TIME.
MAYBE YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION. THE VILTRUM EMPIRE ANTICIPATED YOUR RESISTANCE-- THAT IS WHY THEY SENT ME, SPECIFICALLY.
I AM CONQUEST. I HAVE NEVER FAILED TO ASSIMILATE A CHOSEN PLANET, NO MATTER ITS STRENGTH.
IF YOU CHOOSE TO OPPOSE ME, YOU WILL NOT SURVIVE.
MAYBE YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND. I HAVE CAUSED ALL THE DESTRUCTION YOU SEE AROUND YOU. THE LIVES LOST ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF MY ACTIONS.
I CAN'T DESCRIBE THE GUILT, SHAME... AND MOST IMPORTANTLY ANGER THAT I FEEL RIGHT NOW.
ALL I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT-- THE ONLY THING I'VE WANTED SINCE ALL OF THIS HAPPENED...
...WAS SOMETHING TO HIT AS HARD AS I CAN.
VERY WELL.

CHAPTER 62

KRA-KOOM!!

CHOOM!
RUMMMMMMBLE!
RIGHT NOW, ANISSA WOULD BE TELLING YOU ABOUT HOW THE VILTRUM EMPIRE WOULD TURN THIS PLANET INTO A UTOPIA. SHE'D TELL YOU YOU'RE A FOOL TO TRY AND PREVENT THIS--THAT WE WOULD BE HELPING THE PEOPLE YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE PROTECTING FROM US.
I WILL NOT TELL YOU ANY SUCH THING.
THE TRUTH IS, I WANT YOU TO RESIST. I'M NOT HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO SPREAD THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. I'M NOT HERE BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN ONE CAUSE OR THE OTHER, OR THAT I'M FULFILLING SOME KIND OF HONORABLE DUTY.
I'M HERE BECAUSE I ENJOY THIS.

I LONG TO FEEL MY FISTS **DRENCHED** IN BL--
WRAMM!
HA HA!
YOU'RE GETTING THERE.
VOOSH!

KROOM!!
RRRRRMMMMMMBBLE!
KKRRRRGGGG!
KKGGGG!
BOOM!!

Krik.
Krakkle.
KRRGG!
MORE!
I WANT MORE!

THOOM!
ARRGH!
VERY GOOD.
THAT WAS A WARM UP.
KRAK!
KROOM!
WROKK!
WRAMM!

KRAK!
KRAK!
YOU TRIED THIS ALREADY!
VRAMM!
ENOUGH GAMES.
DOOOM!!!

THERE--THEY'VE FOUND HIM AGAIN--THAT'S NOT TOO FAR AWAY!
I CAN HELP HIM!
LIVE!
OLIVER, DON'T--
--GO.
VOOSH!
YOUR BOYS ARE STRONG, DEB. THEY'LL BE OKAY.
YOU'LL SEE.
AGH.
JESUS.
OUCH.
KROOM!
WRAMM!

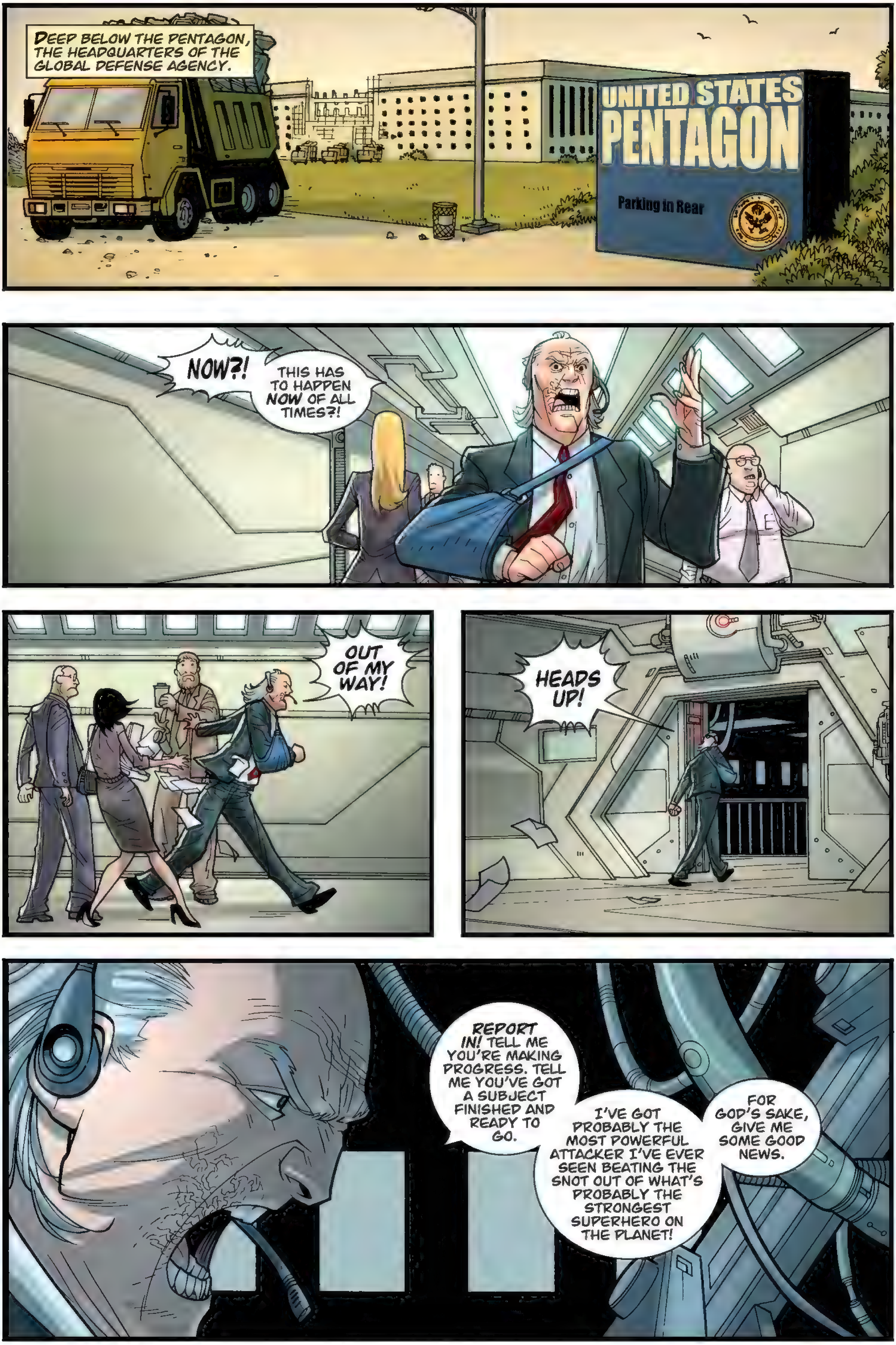
THERE!
TOO FAST--
CAN'T--
KRA-KOOM!
FOOM!!

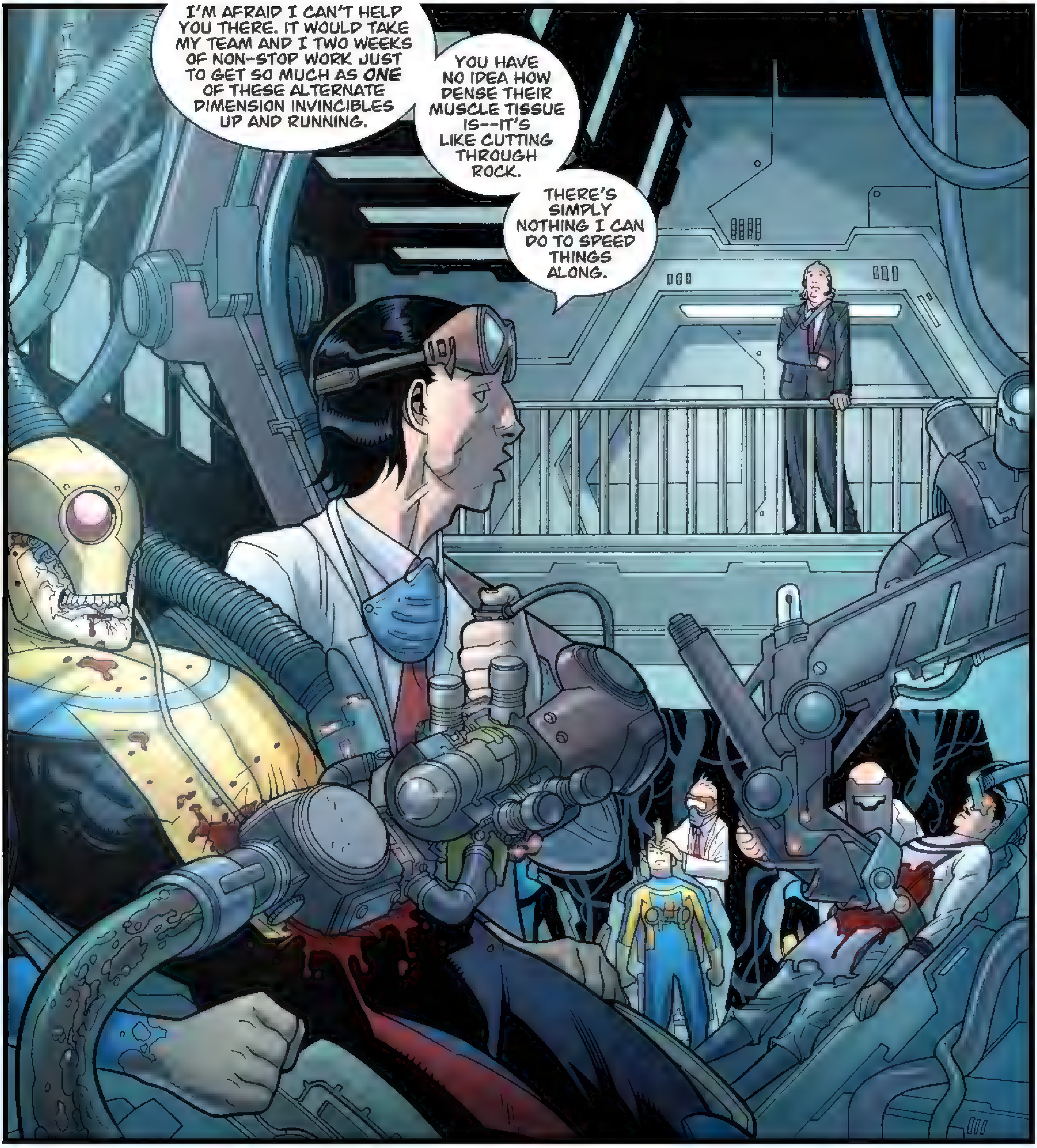
WROKK!
WRUNK!
SKRRRGGGG
STOP!
LISTEN TO ME--
JUST LISTEN.
ARE YOU CRAZY?
YOU THINK I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO SURRENDER SO THAT I HAVE TO STOP?
HAVE I GIVEN YOU ANY INDICATION THAT I WANT TO QUIT? I'M HAVING THE TIME OF MY LIFE!
COME ON-- KEEP GOING! WHEN I'M DONE WITH YOU I'M GOING TO KILL EVERYONE ELSE--DON'T FORGET THAT! YOU'RE ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN ME AND THESE FEEBLE BEINGS YOU'VE GROWN TO LOVE.
GOOM!

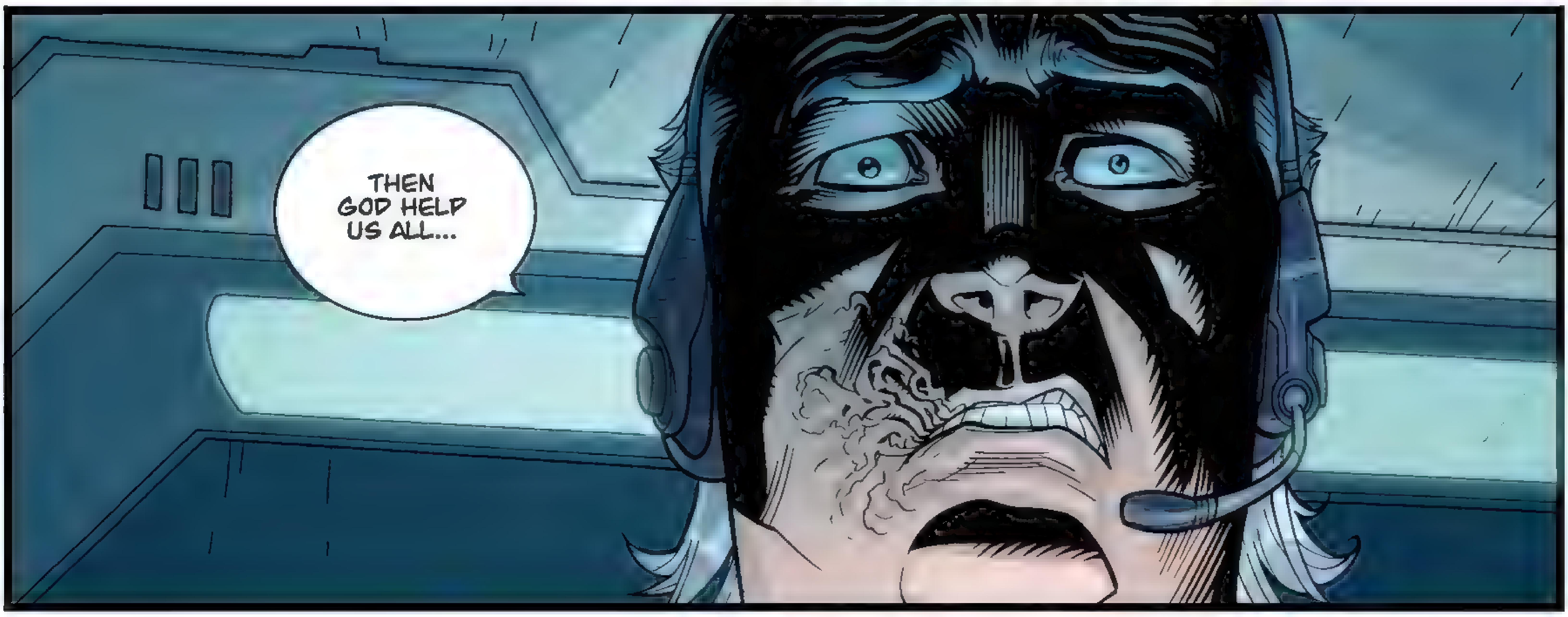
BIG-ASS BEAT DOWN COMING UP!
CHOOOM!!
WHO THE HELL ARE *YOU?*
I LIKE TO KNOW **WHO** I'M DISMEMBERING.
SCREW YOU. YOUR BREATH SMELLS LIKE FEET.

CHOOM!
OLIVER-- GET OUT OF HERE!
LET GO OF ME!
I'M HERE TO HELP! TOGETHER WE CAN *BEAT* THIS GUY!
NO!
HE'LL KILL YOU!
YOU IDIOT! YOU NEED ALL THE HELP YOU CAN GET!
WRAMM!
THE TIME I SPENT KILLING HIM MIGHT HAVE GIVEN YOU A MOMENT TO GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS-- MAYBE EVEN OUTWIT ME. YOU ARE AN EMBARRASSMENT.
WHERE IS YOUR VILTRUMITE *HEART?!*
UNTIL I SEE IT BEATING IN MY HAND I WILL NOT BELIEVE YOU HAVE IT!
SHOW ME YOUR POWER!
SHOW ME YOUR RAGE!

WROKK!
ALMOST THERE.
GROKK!
KRAKK!
BRAKK!
CHILD...
...IF THAT IS ALL THE STRENGTH YOU POSSESS, THIS IS NOT GOING TO END WELL FOR YOU.
THAPP!


DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
NOW?!
THIS HAS TO HAPPEN NOW OF ALL TIMES?!
OUT OF MY WAY!
HEADS UP!
REPORT IN! TELL ME YOU'RE MAKING PROGRESS. TELL ME YOU'VE GOT A SUBJECT FINISHED AND READY TO GO.
I'VE GOT PROBABLY THE MOST POWERFUL ATTACKER I'VE EVER SEEN BEATING THE SNOT OUT OF WHAT'S PROBABLY THE STRONGEST SUPERHERO ON THE PLANET!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, GIVE ME SOME GOOD NEWS.


I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU THERE. IT WOULD TAKE MY TEAM AND I TWO WEEKS OF NON-STOP WORK JUST TO GET SO MUCH AS *ONE* OF THESE ALTERNATE DIMENSION INVINCIBLES UP AND RUNNING.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW DENSE THEIR MUSCLE TISSUE IS--IT'S LIKE CUTTING THROUGH ROCK.
THERE'S SIMPLY NOTHING I CAN DO TO SPEED THINGS ALONG.


THEN GOD HELP US ALL...

CHAPTER 63

WHILE THE CLEAN-UP EFFORT CONTINUES ALL ACROSS THE GLOBE, AIDED IN LARGE PART BY THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY OF THE WORLD, IT APPEARS THE CRISIS THAT CAUSED THIS DESTRUCTION HAS YET TO REACH A CONCLUSION.
WE'VE BEEN BRINGING YOU WHAT FOOTAGE WE CAN OF THE FIGHT BETWEEN WHO WE ORIGINALLY BELIEVED TO BE THE NEW HERO **INVINCIBOY**, BUT IS NOW KNOWN TO ACTUALLY BE INVINCIBLE AND AN UNKNOWN ATTACKER.
THE FIGHT HAS MOVED ACROSS THE GLOBE AT ENORMOUS SPEEDS. BECAUSE OF THIS, WE'VE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH SNIPPETS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES ACROSS THE WORLD.
THIS JUST IN... ANALYSIS OF THIS FOOTAGE HAS REVEALED THE ATTACKER TO BE NONE OTHER THAN **OMNI-MAN**, WHOM YOU WILL ALL REMEMBER IS INVINCIBLE'S FATHER.
INVINCIBLE WAS BROUGHT TO PROMINENCE IN THE MEDIA WHEN HE DEFENDED EARTH AGAINST OMNI-MAN, AFTER HE REVEALED HIS PLOT TO CONQUER OUR CIVILIZATION AND ENSLAVE US.
♡ DAD & MOM
WE WILL CONTINUE TO STAY WITH THIS STORY AS IT DEVELOPS, BRINGING YOU UPDATES AS THEY'RE MADE AVAILABLE. WE NOW GO TO...
SAMANTHA?!
UNGH.
OH, MY GOD, ADAM-- I THINK SHE'S WAKING UP!
CALL THE NURSE! SHE'S OPENING HER EYES!

UNGH...
⚞KOFF!⚟
OH, MY GOD! WHERE'S MARK?!
WHAT HAPPENED?!
WAIT...
MOM?
DAD?
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN OUT?
TWO DAYS.
SAMANTHA, HONEY-- EVERYTHING'S OKAY. THIS IS A SPECIAL PLACE-- THEY'RE KEEPING YOUR IDENTITY SECRET... THEY TOLD US NOT TO WORRY.
OH, MY GOD--WHAT IS *THAT?*
OH, THAT POOR INVINCIBLE BOY IS FIGHTING HIS DAD AGAIN.
YOU KNOW HIM, RIGHT?

OH, MY GOD-- MARK!
HE'S GOING TO KILL HIM THIS TIME! I HAVE TO HELP HIM!
MARK? YOU MEAN--?
YOUR BOYFRIEND?
CRAP.
YOU CAN'T BE DOING THIS-- YOUR INJURIES, YOU COULD MAKE THEM WORSE. THERE ARE TESTS--YOU CAN'T EVEN WALK!
DO I LOOK LIKE I NEED TO WALK?! LISTEN--IF YOU GUYS ARE PROTECTING MY IDENTITY, I NEED TO SPEAK TO THE MAN WHO SET THIS UP. GRAY HAIR-- WEIRD SCAR ON HIS MOUTH.
YOU KNOW WHO I'M TALKING ABOUT. GET HIM ON THE PHONE-- NOW!
I'LL--
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
I'M COMING, MARK.

UP UNTIL NOW, I'VE BEEN PLAYING WITH YOU-- GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW TOY.
I TIRE OF THAT GAME.
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
NOT THAT I'M NOT HAVING FUN--BUT I'M STARTING TO QUESTION WHY THEY SENT ME HERE. THIS TASK IS BENEATH ME.
BEATING YOU-- CONQUERING YOUR PATHETIC PLANET--IT'S TOO EASY.
FUN-- BUT EASY!
YO
FO-BY-FO
KRAKKA-DOOM!
I'VE MET YOUR FATHER, YOU KNOW. NEVER SPENT MUCH TIME WITH HIM--BUT I KNEW HIM WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER. HE SHOWED SO MUCH PROMISE.
NOW HE'S DEAD. HEARD HIS EXECUTION WAS FINALLY ORDERED JUST BEFORE I WAS SENT HERE.
SAD REALLY-- I'D LOVE TO SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE AFTER I TOLD HIM I'VE KILLED YOU.
MY... FATHER...?

EAT ONE, YOU OLD SACK OF TURDS!
WRONK!
C'MON-- HURRY!
WHY DID YOU COME BACK? HE'LL KILL YOU, OLIVER. PLEASE, JUST RUN!
YOU CAN'T FIGHT HIM ALONE--HE'S OLD AS DIRT--WE CAN TAKE HIM DOWN TOGETHER.
TRUST ME, YOU *CAN'T*. I'M OLD--NOT *WEAK*.
I DO THANK YOU FOR COMING BACK. I WELCOME THE SECOND CHANCE.
I'M GOING TO SPLIT YOU IN HALF AND EAT YOUR HEART. HOW'S THAT SOUND?

I THINK THAT SOUNDS LIKE A BUNCH OF BULL--
TAKE A BREAK WHILE I FOCUS ON THE BOY.
WRAMM
GOOM!
AAGH!!
KRAKK!
NGGG.
DO YOU FEEL YOUR BODY STARTING TO RIP APART? IT STARTS WITH YOUR VERTEBRAE SEPARATING--THEN YOU'LL FEEL YOUR MUSCLES STARTING TO STRETCH--IF YOU'RE ABLE TO FOCUS THROUGH THE PAIN YOU'LL FEEL YOUR SKIN PULLED TO ITS BREAKING POINT...
THIS IS GOING TO BE AMAZING.
NO!
NO!
NO!
NO!

CHOOM!
WELL...
FASTER THAN I ANTICIPATED...
NO MATTER.
KROOM!
I'LL EAT YOUR HEART INSTEAD!
WRAMM!
I'VE GOT HIM, SEND A MED-UNIT RIGHT AWAY. TELL HIS MOTHER HE'S STILL BREATHING.
SIR, I'VE GOT AN URGENT CALL COMING IN. IT'S THE REDHEAD. SHE WANTS A TELEPORT INTO THE HOT ZONE. WHAT SHOULD I SAY?
PATCH HER THROUGH-- I'M WILLING TO TRY ANYTHING AT THIS POINT.

THAT WAS THEM, THEY SAID HE'S HURT BUT BREATHING--THEY SAY HE'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
THERE, THERE...
DESTRUCTINATOR
HALF OF THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY IS EITHER IN THE HOSPITAL OR COMPLETELY SHELL-SHOCKED BY THE EVENTS THAT LEVELED THE WORLD.
OTHERWISE, I'D HAVE SUPERHEROES POPPING OUT OF PORTALS A MILE APART TRYING TO ANTICIPATE WHERE THIS FIGHT IS GOING--NEVER MIND THE FACT THAT WE'VE GOT MAYBE SIX PEOPLE ON THE PLANET WHO COULD HOLD THEIR OWN WITH THIS GUY FOR MORE THAN A MINUTE.
WHAT I'M SAYING IS--I CAN SEND YOU, BUT BY THE TIME YOU STEP OUT OF THAT PORTAL THEY COULD BE GONE. THEY'RE MOVING AT INCREDIBLE SPEEDS--WE'VE BEEN BEHIND AS MUCH AS FIVE MINUTES TRYING TO FOLLOW THEIR FIGHT ON SATELLITE FEEDS.
I DON'T CARE--I HAVE TO TRY. IF I GET THERE IN TIME--I CAN HOLD THE MAN DOWN WITH MY FORCE FIELDS.
DO IT.
LOOK BEHIND YOU!
SPLUT!
SPLUT!
SPLUT!

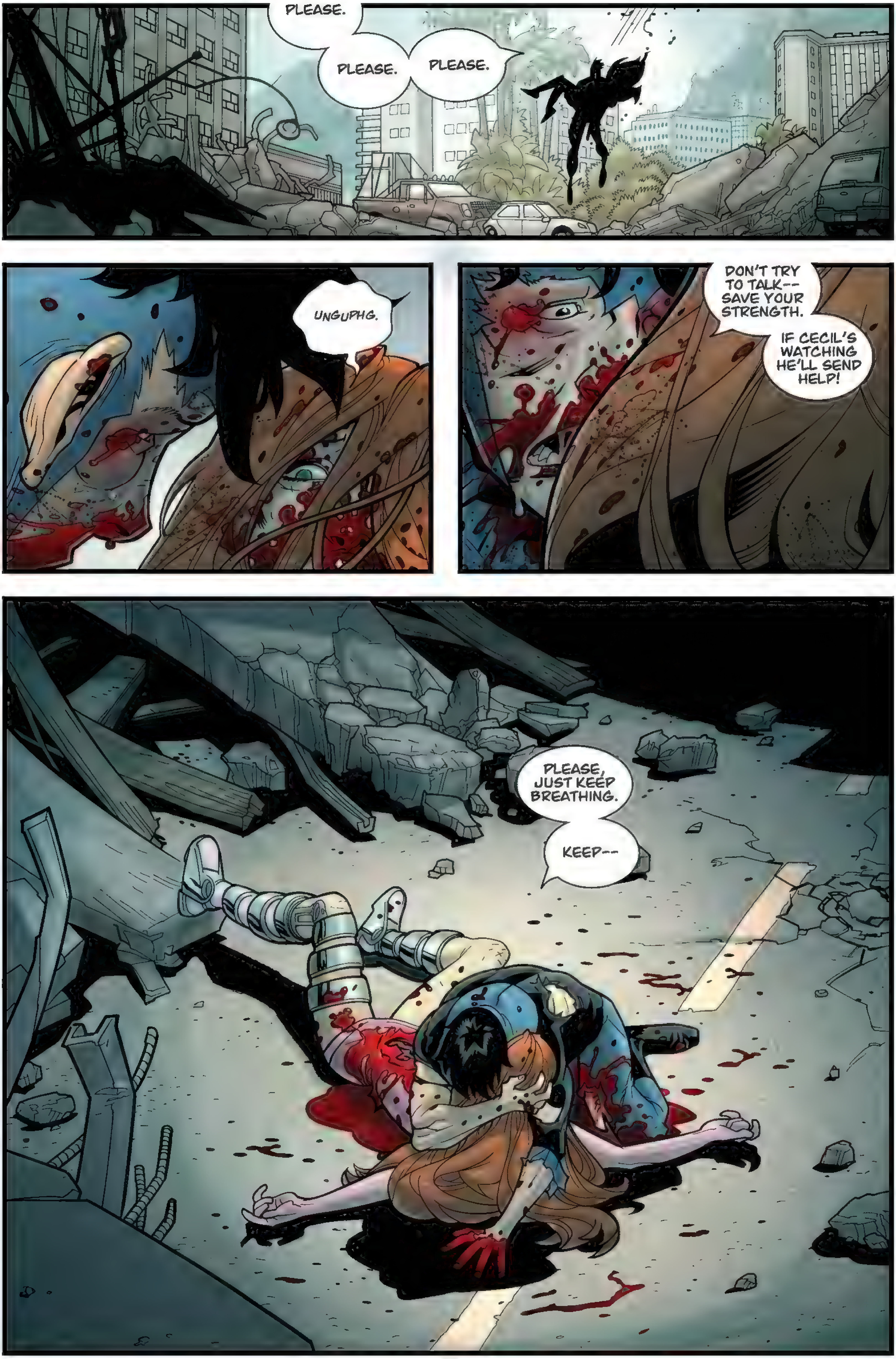
BRAKKA-DOOM!
FSSSHH!
WRRRKK!
SHHKGG!
KRRRMM!

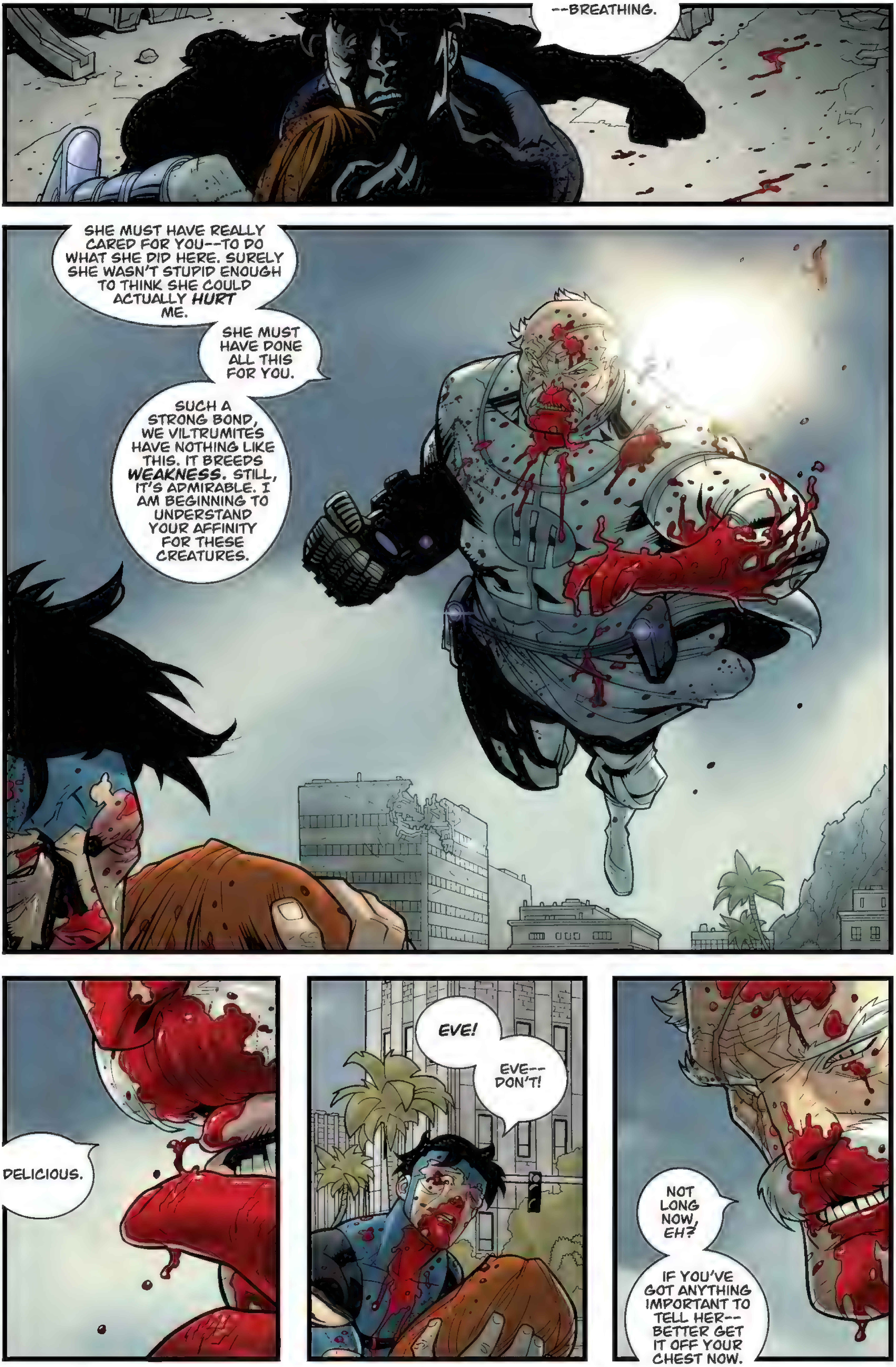
GOOM!!
WHAMM!
PLEASE, NO--
YOU'RE NOT OMNI-MAN!
YEAH, BAD NEWS FOR YOU.

MARK!
GET OUT OF HERE! GO!
NOW!
WRAMM!
SO CONCERNED FOR OTHERS' SAFETY...
YOU REALLY ARE PATHETIC.
WRUKK!
AAAGGH!
NO!
YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN, KITTEN.
CHOOM!

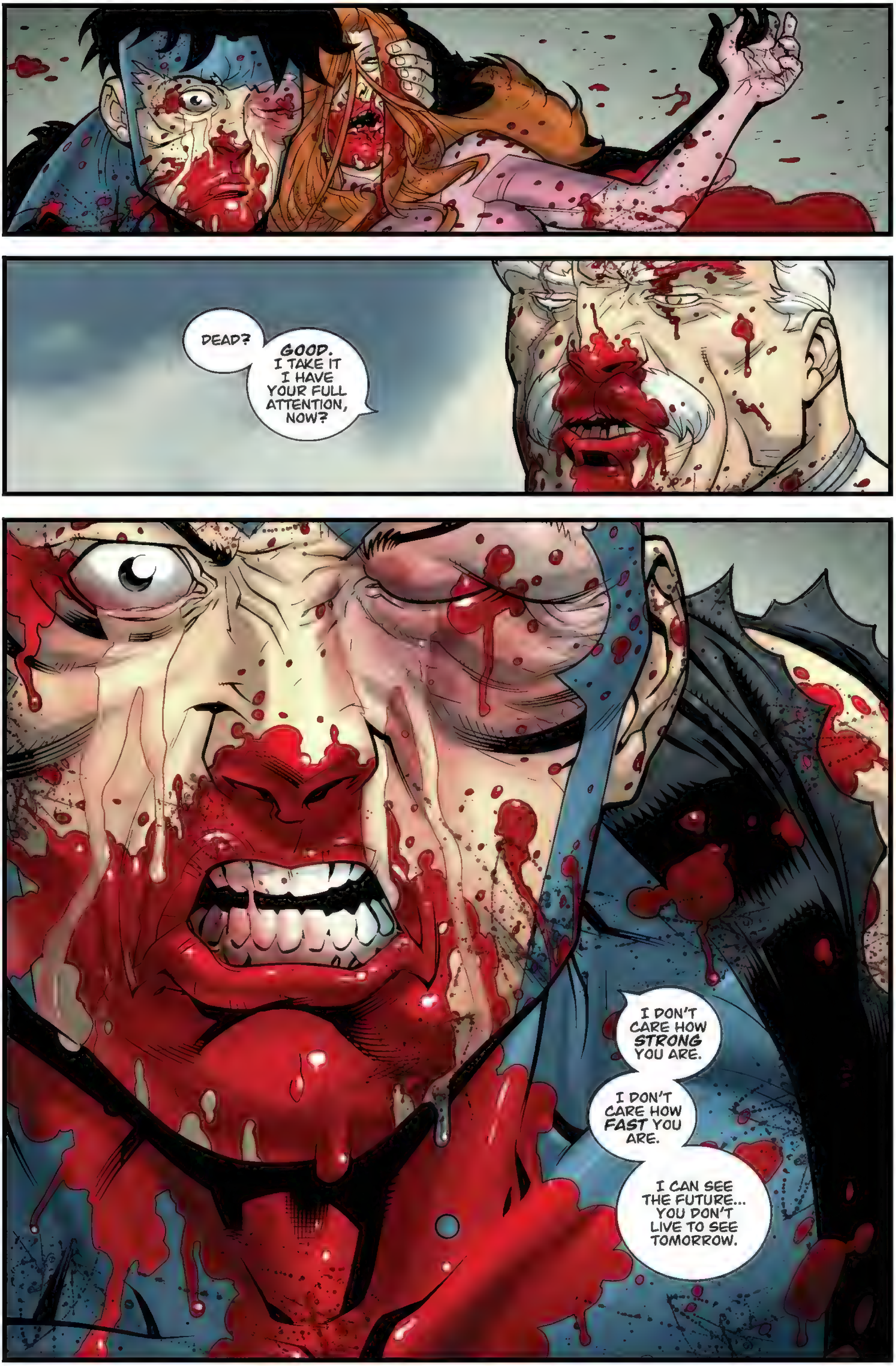
GOOM!
SPLUGCK!
HEH.
SO PRETTY...

...SUCH A WASTE.
NO.
EVE, PLEASE-- I CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU.
I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU...


PLEASE.
PLEASE.
PLEASE.
UNGUPHG.
DON'T TRY TO TALK-- SAVE YOUR STRENGTH.
IF CECIL'S WATCHING HE'LL SEND HELP!
PLEASE, JUST KEEP BREATHING.
KEEP--


--BREATHING.
SHE MUST HAVE REALLY CARED FOR YOU--TO DO WHAT SHE DID HERE. SURELY SHE WASN'T STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK SHE COULD ACTUALLY *HURT* ME.
SHE MUST HAVE DONE ALL THIS FOR YOU.
SUCH A STRONG BOND, WE VILTRUMITES HAVE NOTHING LIKE THIS. IT BREEDS ***WEAKNESS.*** STILL, IT'S ADMIRABLE. I AM BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND YOUR AFFINITY FOR THESE CREATURES.
DELICIOUS.
EVE!
EVE-- DON'T!
NOT LONG NOW, EH?
IF YOU'VE GOT ANYTHING IMPORTANT TO TELL HER-- BETTER GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST NOW.

I SHOULD DO THIS NOW-- DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL GET THE CHANCE AGAIN.
I WANT TO ***THANK*** YOU, MARK GRAYSON... INVINCIBLE.
REALLY.
FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.
IT'S NOT VERY OFTEN THAT I GET TO CUT LOOSE LIKE THIS. I MEAN ***REALLY*** CUT LOOSE LIKE I HAVE HERE. USUALLY, THERE ARE SO MANY MISSION PARAMETERS.
"DON'T DESTROY THIS."
"KEEP THIS PERSON ALIVE."
BUT NOT HERE-- NOT WITH ***THIS*** PLANET. FOR WHATEVER REASON, I DON'T REALLY CARE WHY, TO BE HONEST, I WAS TOLD--TAKE CONTROL, NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES... TAKE CONTROL OF THE PLANET.
SO WHATEVER YOU DID TO PISS US OFF--***THANK YOU.*** THIS HAS BEEN ***FUN.***


DEAD?
GOOD. I TAKE IT I HAVE YOUR FULL ATTENTION, NOW?
I DON'T CARE HOW STRONG YOU ARE.
I DON'T CARE HOW FAST YOU ARE.
I CAN SEE THE FUTURE... YOU DON'T LIVE TO SEE TOMORROW.

CHAPTER 64

HA HA HA HA HA!
AFTER ALL I'VE DONE-- AFTER EVERYTHING YOU'VE ENDURED AT MY HAND--STILL, YOU THREATEN ME.
I DARE SAY, CHILD-- YOU ARE BEGINNING TO IMPRESS ME.
OKAY, THEN.
DO YOUR WORST.

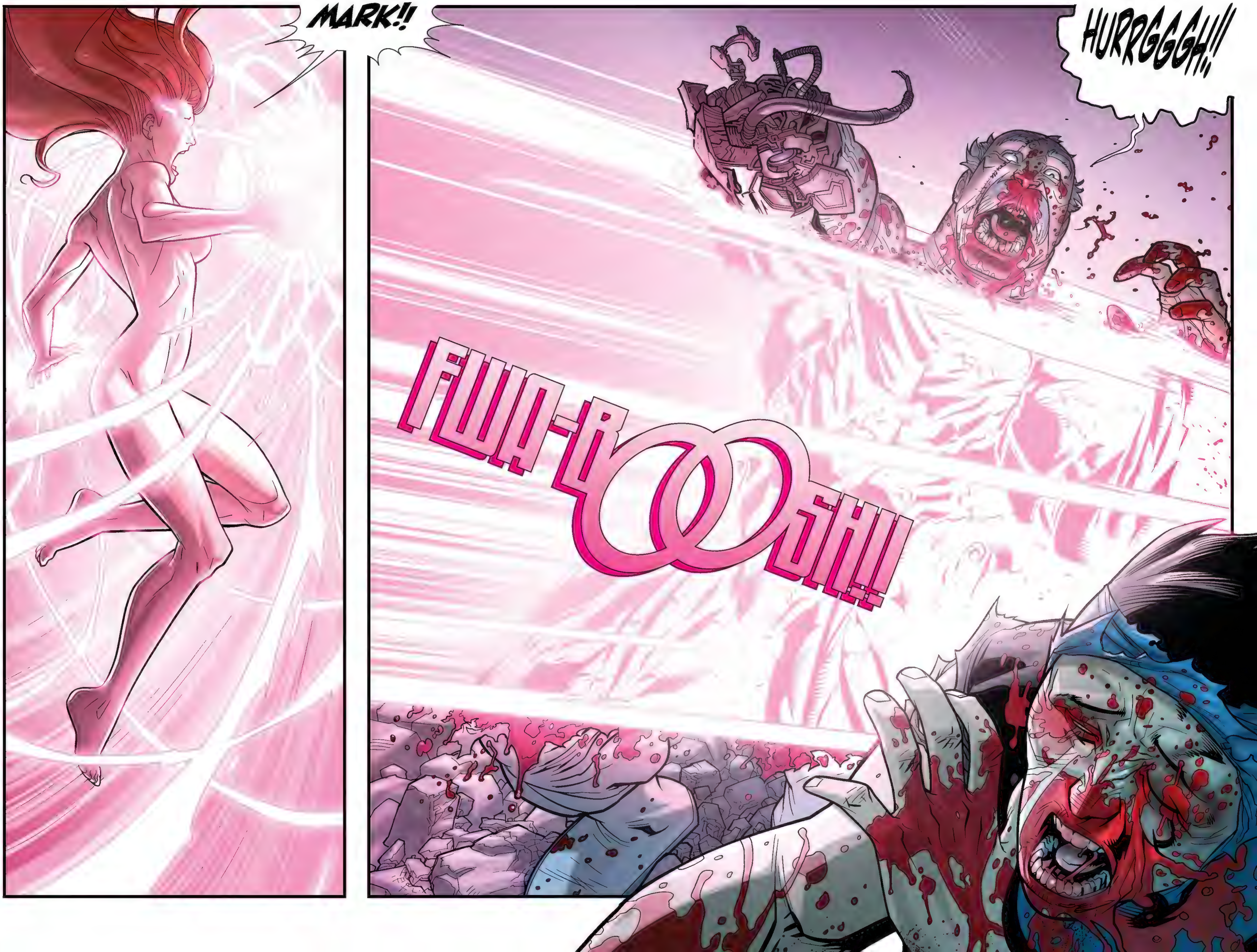
CHOOM!

NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHE--
KROK!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU ENJOYED EVERYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE THIS-- I PROMISE YOU I WILL ENJOY THIS MORE!
WHAM!
CHILD, PLEASE.
BEING ENRAGED AT ME DOESN'T MAKE YOU STRONGER. THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS.
YOU DON'T STAND A--
YEEEAAAAAGGH!!

GRAAGH!
SHHK!
OFF ME!
PTEW!
DAMN.

BOOM!!

DIE!
DIE!
WRAMM
WRAMM!
DIE!
EVE?
PAY ATTENTION!!
KROOM!


MARK!!
HURRGGGH!!
FWA-ROOSH!!

JERK.
WHAT WAS--?
THIS TIME I'LL MAKE *SURE* YOU'RE DEAD...

YOU WILL NOT TOUCH HER!
HNGH?
WRAMM!
UNGH.
WHUMP!
KRAK! KRAK!
KRAK! KRAK!
THAP!
GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH FIGHT LEFT IN ME FOR YOU, BOY.

RUNKK!
YEAAAGGHH!!
HUFF!
HUFF!
SEE?
MORE THAN ENOUGH.
NOT ENOUGH.
NOT NEARLY.

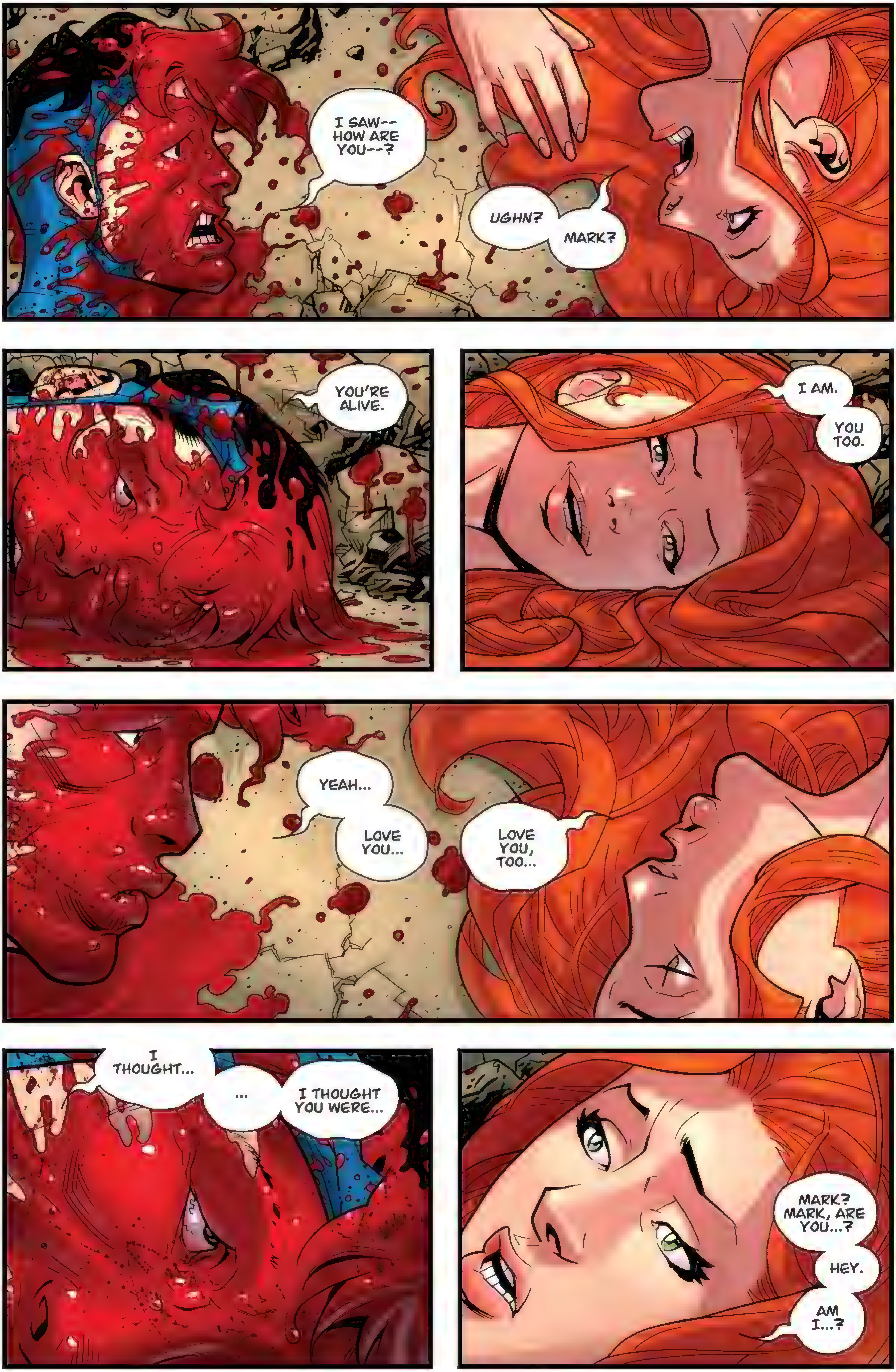
WRAMM!
IS THIS STILL FUN?!
ARE YOU ENJOYING YOURSELF?!
HAVING FUN?!
KROOM!
WELL?!
ANSWER ME!
HEH.
I TAKE THE GOOD WITH THE BAD...

CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!

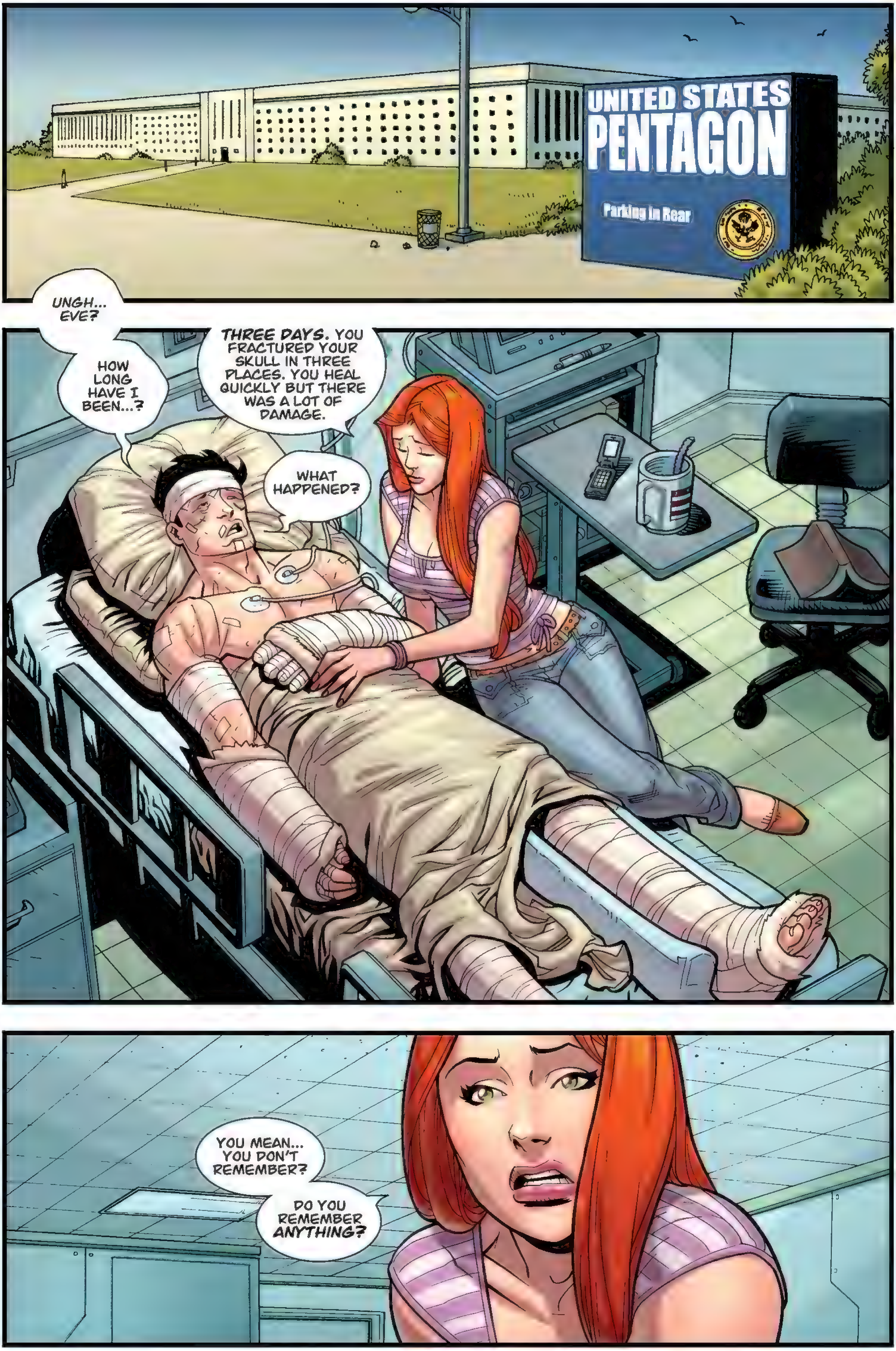
EVE?
HOLD ON...
I'M COMING...
PLEASE...
...

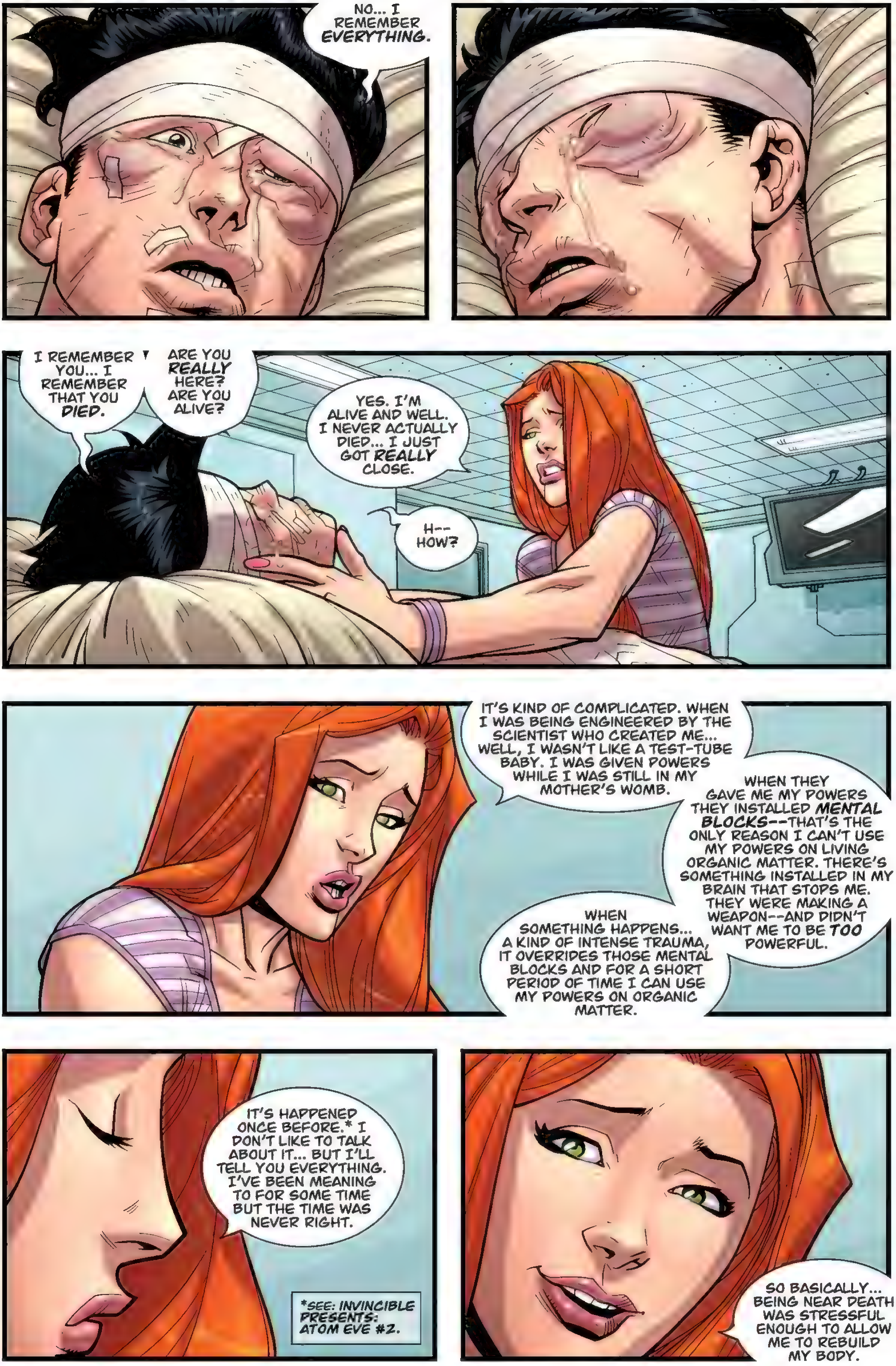
EVE?
HOW?

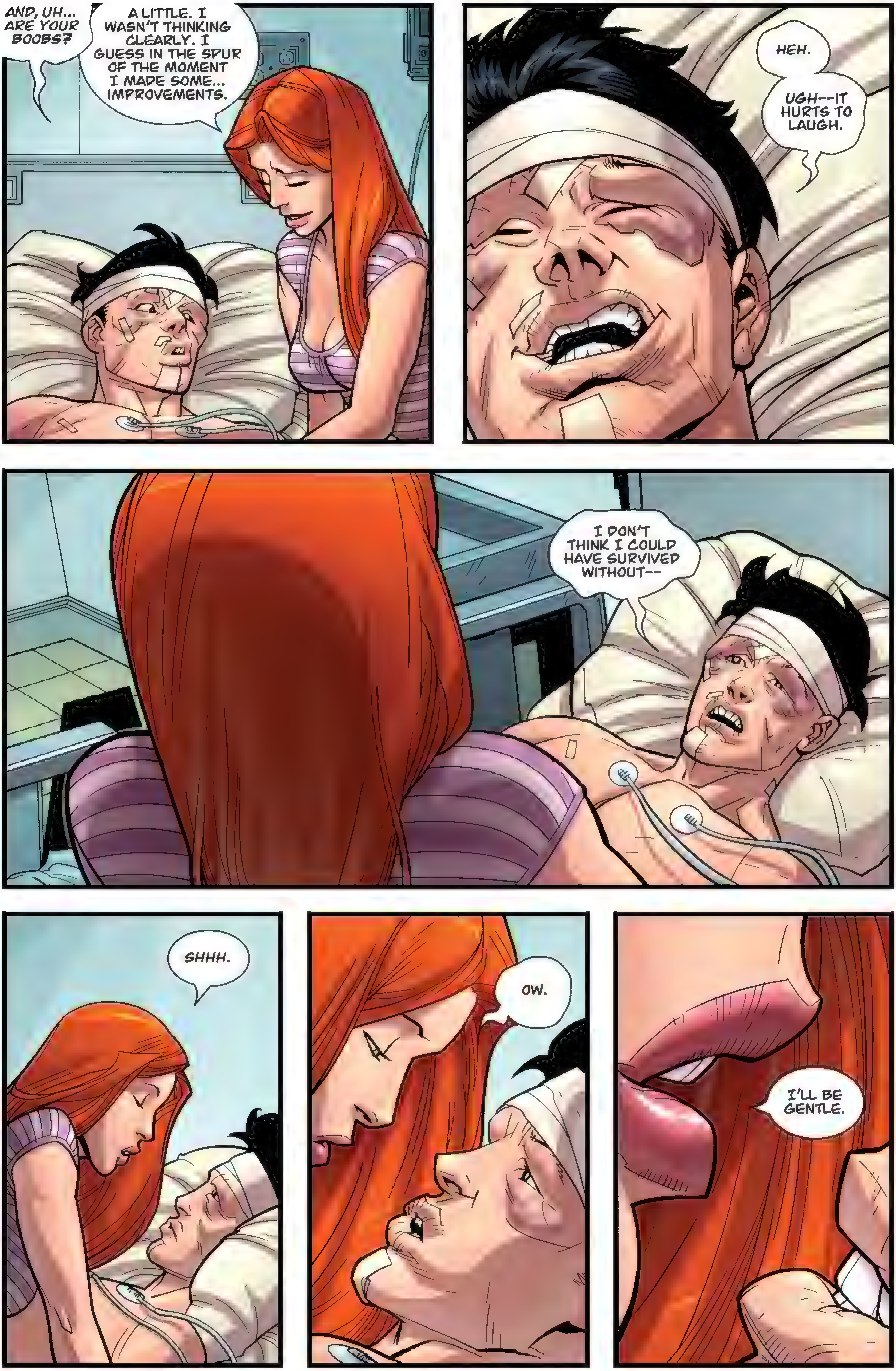

I SAW-- HOW ARE YOU--?
UGHN?
MARK?
YOU'RE ALIVE.
I AM.
YOU TOO.
YEAH...
LOVE YOU...
LOVE YOU, TOO...
I THOUGHT...
...
I THOUGHT YOU WERE...
MARK? MARK, ARE YOU...?
HEY.
AM I...?

...NAKED?
...
HUH.

CHAPTER 65


UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
UNGH... EVE?
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN...?
THREE DAYS. YOU FRACTURED YOUR SKULL IN THREE PLACES. YOU HEAL QUICKLY BUT THERE WAS A LOT OF DAMAGE.
WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU MEAN... YOU DON'T REMEMBER?
DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?


NO... I REMEMBER **EVERYTHING.**
I REMEMBER YOU... I REMEMBER THAT YOU **DIED.**
ARE YOU **REALLY** HERE? ARE YOU ALIVE?
YES. I'M ALIVE AND WELL. I NEVER ACTUALLY DIED... I JUST GOT **REALLY** CLOSE.
H-- HOW?
IT'S KIND OF COMPLICATED. WHEN I WAS BEING ENGINEERED BY THE SCIENTIST WHO CREATED ME... WELL, I WASN'T LIKE A TEST-TUBE BABY. I WAS GIVEN POWERS WHILE I WAS STILL IN MY MOTHER'S WOMB.
WHEN THEY GAVE ME MY POWERS THEY INSTALLED ***MENTAL BLOCKS***--THAT'S THE ONLY REASON I CAN'T USE MY POWERS ON LIVING ORGANIC MATTER. THERE'S SOMETHING INSTALLED IN MY BRAIN THAT STOPS ME. THEY WERE MAKING A WEAPON--AND DIDN'T WANT ME TO BE ***TOO*** POWERFUL.
WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS... A KIND OF INTENSE TRAUMA, IT OVERRIDES THOSE MENTAL BLOCKS AND FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME I CAN USE MY POWERS ON ORGANIC MATTER.
IT'S HAPPENED ONCE BEFORE.* I DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT... BUT I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING. I'VE BEEN MEANING TO FOR SOME TIME BUT THE TIME WAS NEVER RIGHT.
*SEE: INVINCIBLE PRESENTS: ATOM EVE #2.
SO BASICALLY... BEING NEAR DEATH WAS STRESSFUL ENOUGH TO ALLOW ME TO REBUILD MY BODY.

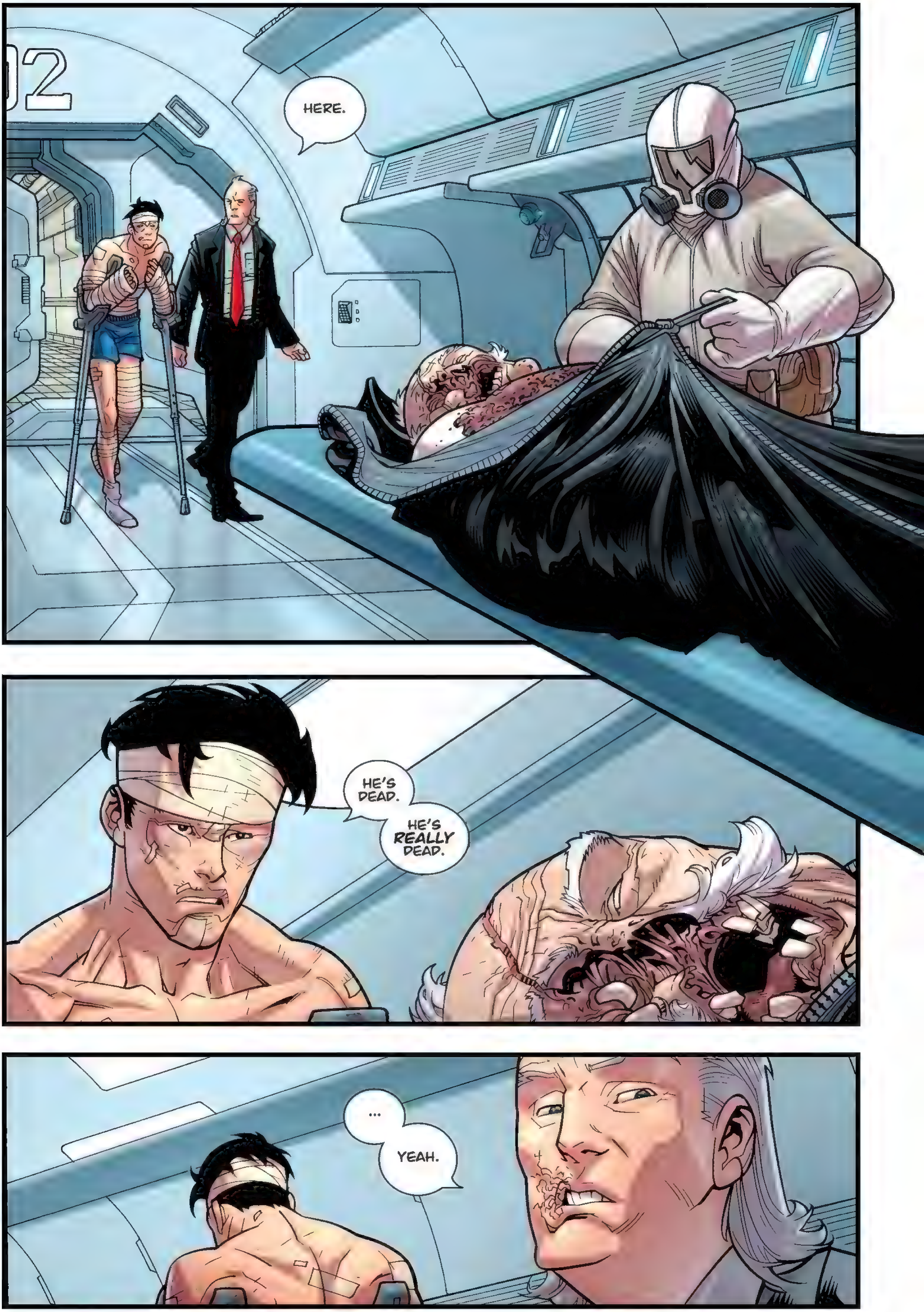

AND, UH... ARE YOUR BOOBS?
A LITTLE. I WASN'T THINKING CLEARLY. I GUESS IN THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT I MADE SOME... IMPROVEMENTS.
HEH.
UGH--IT HURTS TO LAUGH.
I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE SURVIVED WITHOUT--
SHHH.
OW.
I'LL BE GENTLE.

I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND. I WOULD *LOVE* TO HAVE SO MUCH AS ONE OF THESE GUYS COMPLETED AND OPERATIONAL... BUT IT'S JUST NOT FEASIBLE.
I'M DOING MY BEST--*REALLY*. THERE'S JUST--SO MUCH WORK INVOLVED IN REBUILDING THESE BODIES. I'M ESSENTIALLY *INVENTING* NEW TOOLS TO MAKE THIS JOB POSSIBLE.
IT SIMPLY *CAN'T* BE RUSHED.
NO, I THINK *YOU* DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HAVE YOU BEEN WATCHING THE FOOTAGE? DID YOU SEE WHAT THIS MONSTER DID TO INVINCIBLE? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT JUST *ONE* OF THESE THINGS IS CAPABLE OF?
THIS IS *ONE* OF AN ENTIRE ALIEN RACE. COUNTLESS SOLDIERS--JUST LIKE HIM, WHO ARE, NOW THAT THIS ONE HAS FAILED, SOONER RATHER THAN LATER...
COMING HERE.
I HAD, OF COURSE, ALREADY CONSIDERED THIS... BUT HEARING IT PUT SO BLUNTLY...
I THINK I UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION.
SPARE NO EXPENSE-- I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES--
FINISH THESE THINGS PRONTO!
INSTEAD OF DINNER AND A MOVIE... I THINK WE'LL BE WORKING TONIGHT.
I GATHERED...

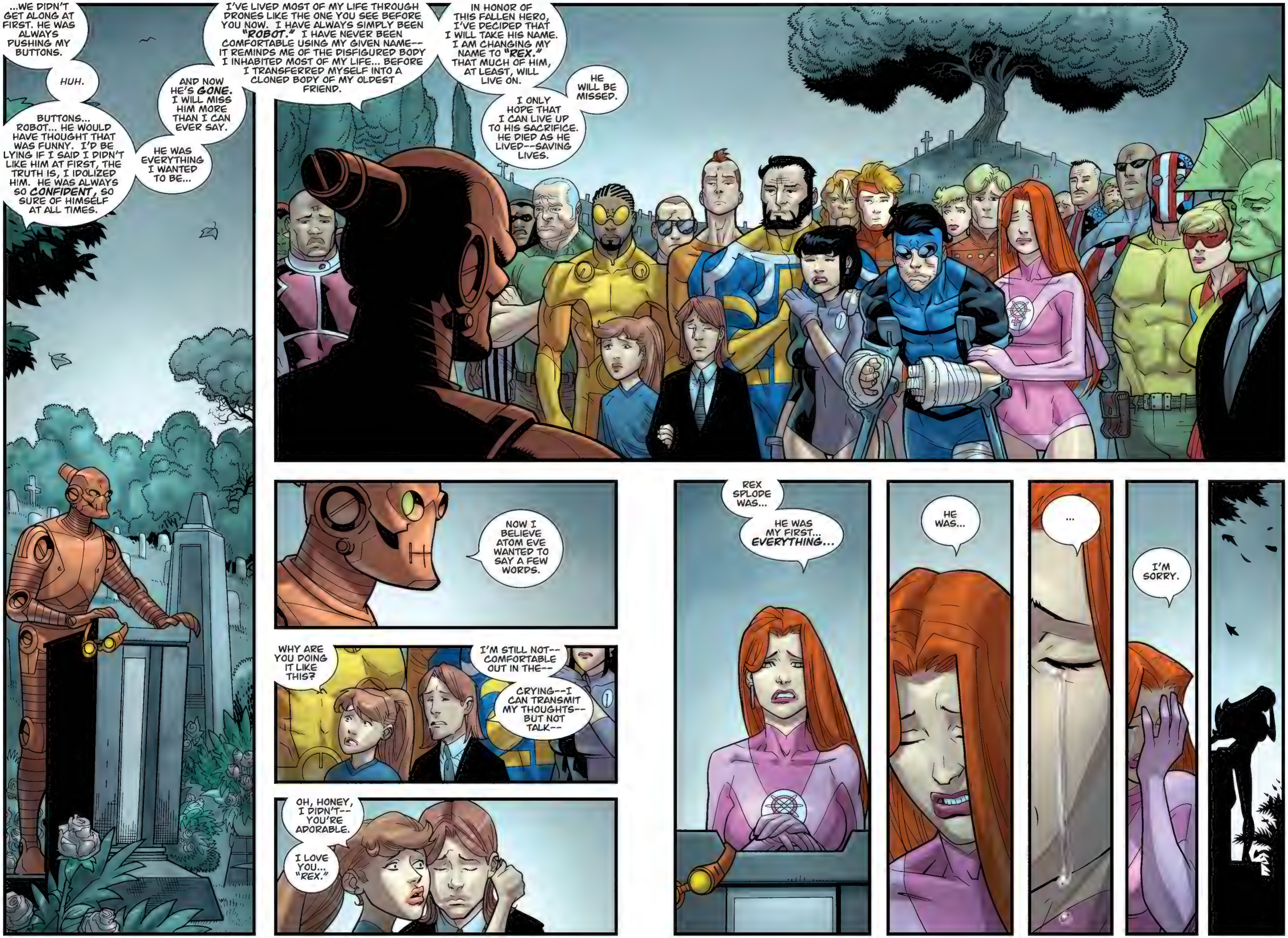
UH...
IT SOUNDED LIKE YOU WERE AWAKE FROM THE HALL.
WE HEARD RUSTLING.
SORRY, MS. GRAYSON. I WAS GOING TO COME GET YOU IN A MINUTE.
HE JUST WOKE UP.
IT'S OKAY-- AND, PLEASE, CALL ME DEBBIE.
OH, MARK... I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.
I WAS SO WORRIED... I THOUGHT...
...
IT'S OKAY, MOM.

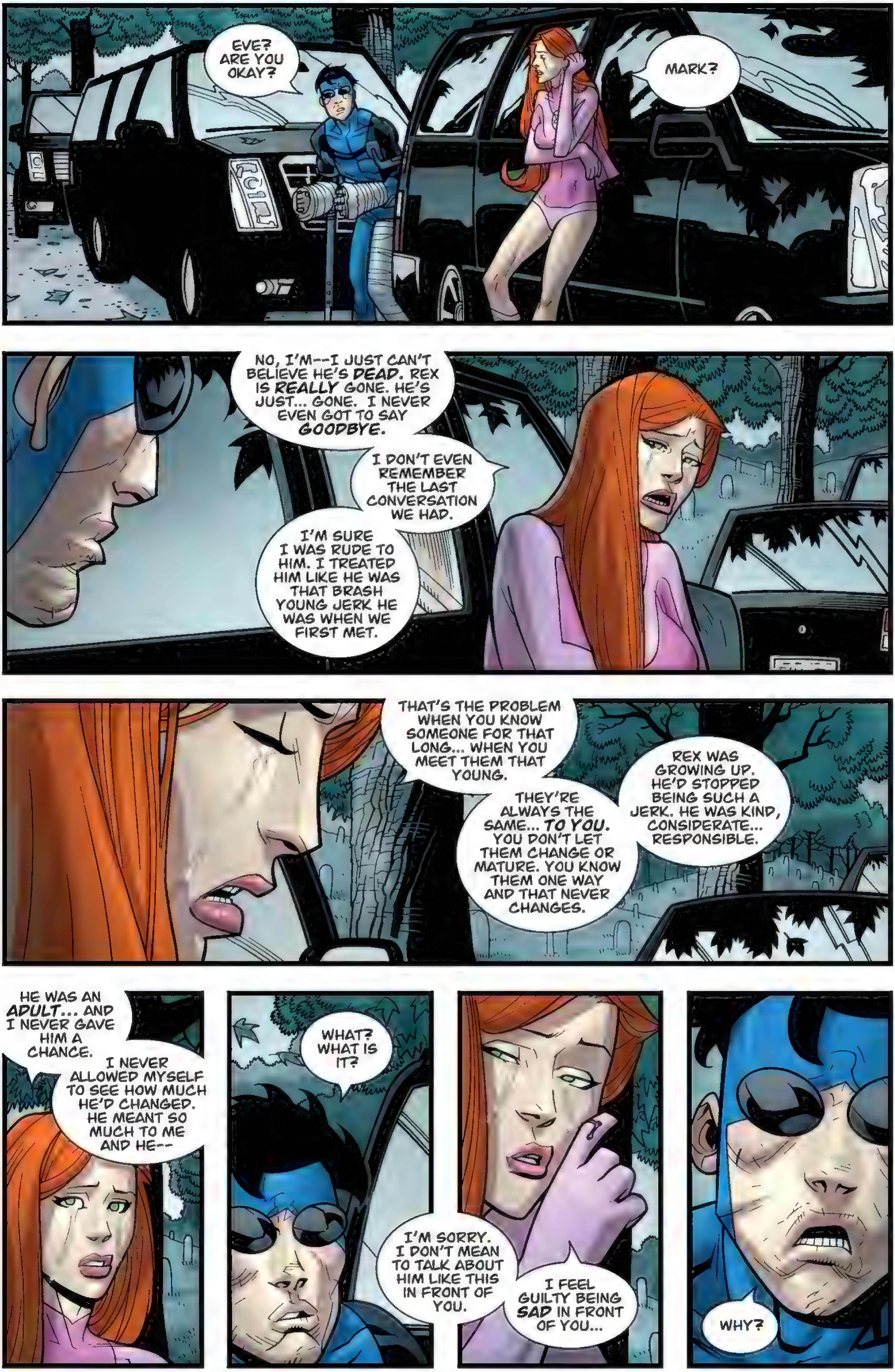
NO, IT'S NOT.
I'M SO SORRY, MARK.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MOM.
WHY?
WHEN I MARRIED YOUR FATHER... I KNEW ABOUT HIS POWERS--WHAT HE DID. I DIDN'T KNOW EVERYTHING...
...BUT I KNEW ENOUGH.
I BROUGHT YOU INTO THIS LIFE. I RAISED YOU, KNOWING THAT THIS WOULD BE YOUR LIFE. WE PRACTICALLY ENCOURAGED YOU. EVERY TIME I SEE YOU OUT THERE... GETTING HURT, FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE...
I FEEL LIKE IT'S MY FAULT.
MOM, IT'S NOT YOUR--
I COULD HAVE TAKEN YOU AWAY FROM ALL THIS... WE COULD HAVE HIDDEN YOUR FATHER'S POWERS LONGER.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET HIM CONVINCE ME THIS WOULD BE OKAY. YOU COULD BE DOING SOMETHING ELSE WITH THESE POWERS-- ANYTHING...
...ANYTHING BUT THIS.
BUT WHAT I'M DOING IS GOOD.
PEOPLE NEED ME--

PEOPLE NEED HEROES AND THERE ARE PLENTY!
THEY DON'T NEED YOU!
YOU'RE NOT SUGGESTING THAT HE JUST QUIT, ARE YOU?
THIS VILTRUMITE CAME FOR HIM! IF MARK--
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT?!
YOU THINK--?!
I'M SORRY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. I'M JUST UPSET.
LET'S GO, PAUL.
UM, GET WELL SOON.
DEBBIE, WAIT--
JUST LET HER GO. SHE'S NOT MAD AT YOU.
OH, EXCUSE ME.
I KNOW WE'RE NOT ON THE BEST OF TERMS, BUT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED.
THERE'S A LOT AT STAKE HERE.
ANSWER THIS RIGHT NOW.
WHERE IS THE BODY?

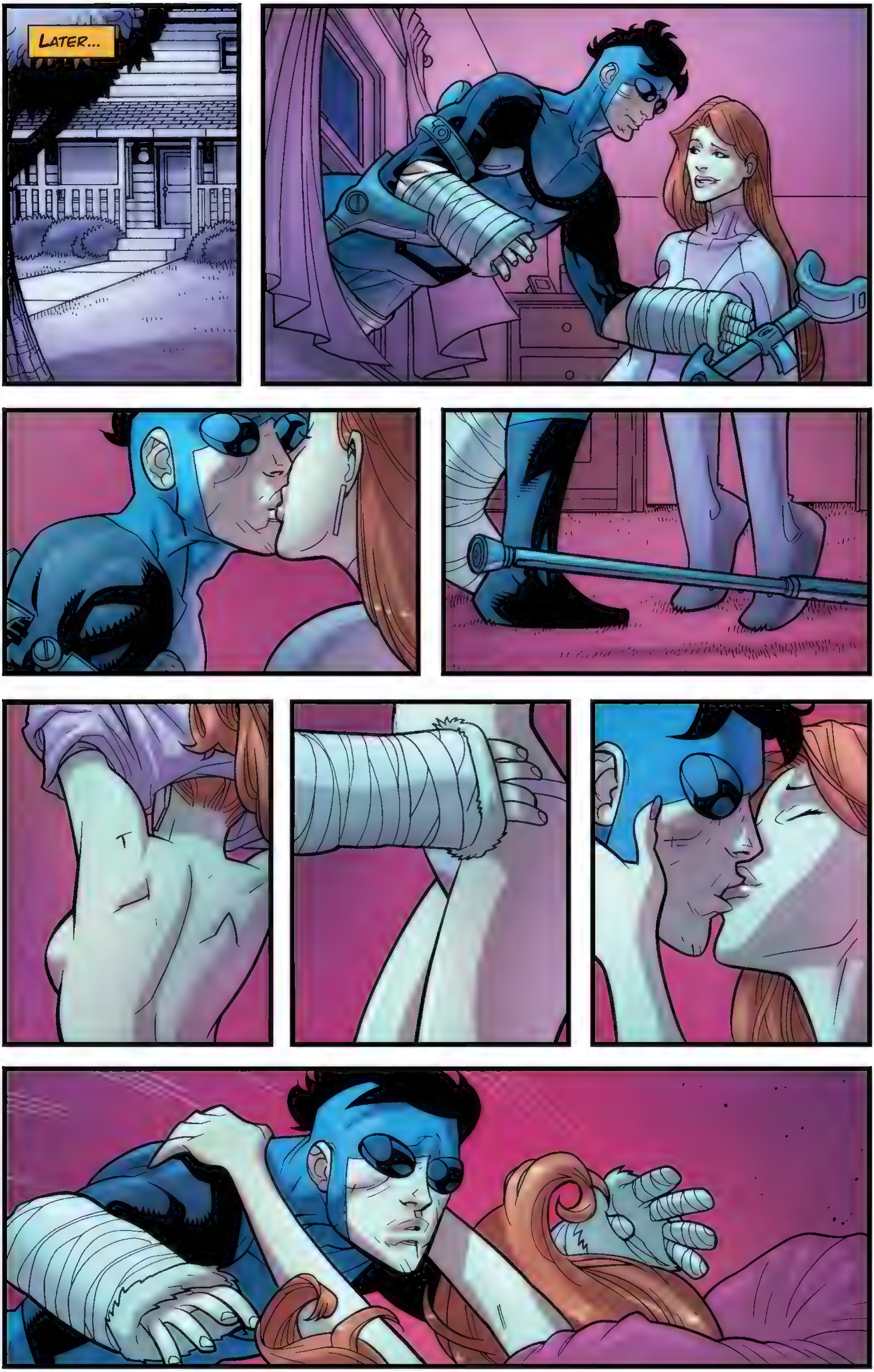

02
HERE.
HE'S DEAD.
HE'S REALLY DEAD.
...
YEAH.

DID YOU REALLY HAVE TO SEE IT?
I HAD TO BE SURE... HAD TO SEE HIM WITH MY OWN EYES... TO KNOW HE'S DEAD.
AFTER ANGSTROM--
I UNDERSTAND. I JUST--I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD STAND SEEING THAT MAN AGAIN.
ALIVE OR DEAD.
I DIDN'T WANT TO, I JUST HAD TO BE SURE.
I'M GOING TO CHECK ON OLIVER. HE'S JUST DOWN THE HALL. WANNA COME?
I CAN'T.
I NEED TO LEAVE, MARK.
WHY? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
REX'S FUNERAL IS TODAY.
OH, UH... CAN I COME? WOULD YOU MIND?
I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD BE THERE.
I'D LIKE THAT.

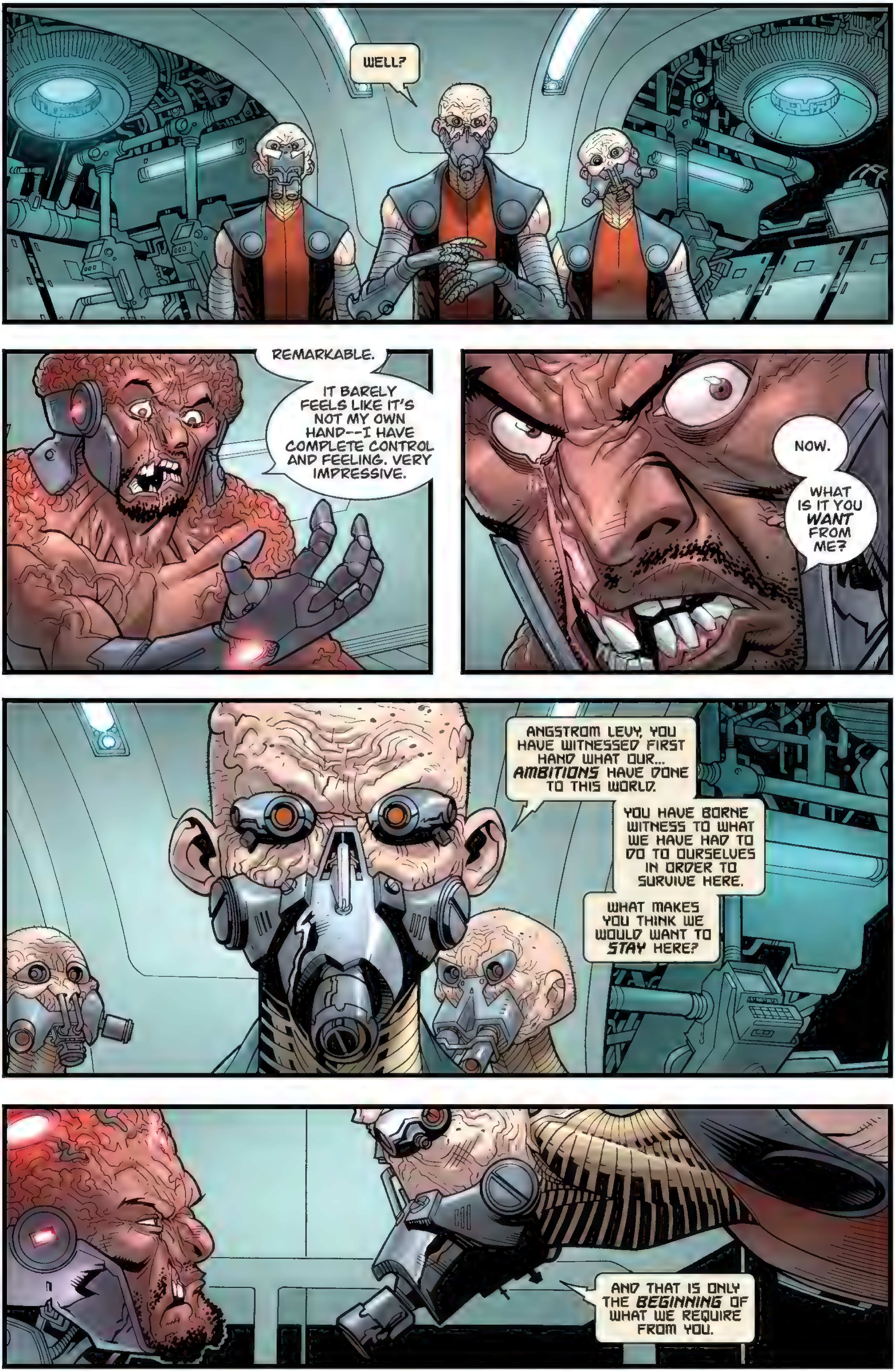

...WE DIDN'T GET ALONG AT FIRST. HE WAS ALWAYS PUSHING MY BUTTONS.
HUH.
BUTTONS... ROBOT... HE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT WAS FUNNY. I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I DIDN'T LIKE HIM AT FIRST, THE TRUTH IS, I IDOLIZED HIM. HE WAS ALWAYS SO **CONFIDENT**, SO SURE OF HIMSELF AT ALL TIMES.
HE WAS EVERYTHING I WANTED TO BE...
AND NOW HE'S **GONE**. I WILL MISS HIM MORE THAN I CAN EVER SAY.
I'VE LIVED MOST OF MY LIFE THROUGH DRONES LIKE THE ONE YOU SEE BEFORE YOU NOW. I HAVE ALWAYS SIMPLY BEEN ***"ROBOT."*** I HAVE NEVER BEEN COMFORTABLE USING MY GIVEN NAME-- IT REMINDS ME OF THE DISFIGURED BODY I INHABITED MOST OF MY LIFE... BEFORE I TRANSFERRED MYSELF INTO A CLONED BODY OF MY OLDEST FRIEND.
IN HONOR OF THIS FALLEN HERO, I'VE DECIDED THAT I WILL TAKE HIS NAME. I AM CHANGING MY NAME TO ***"REX."*** THAT MUCH OF HIM, AT LEAST, WILL LIVE ON.
I ONLY HOPE THAT I CAN LIVE UP TO HIS SACRIFICE. HE DIED AS HE LIVED--SAVING LIVES.
HE WILL BE MISSED.
NOW I BELIEVE ATOM EVE WANTED TO SAY A FEW WORDS.
WHY ARE YOU DOING IT LIKE THIS?
I'M STILL NOT-- COMFORTABLE OUT IN THE--
CRYING--I CAN TRANSMIT MY THOUGHTS-- BUT NOT TALK--
OH, HONEY, I DIDN'T-- YOU'RE ADORABLE.
I LOVE YOU... "REX."
REX SPLODE WAS...
HE WAS MY FIRST... ***EVERYTHING...***
HE WAS...
...
I'M SORRY.

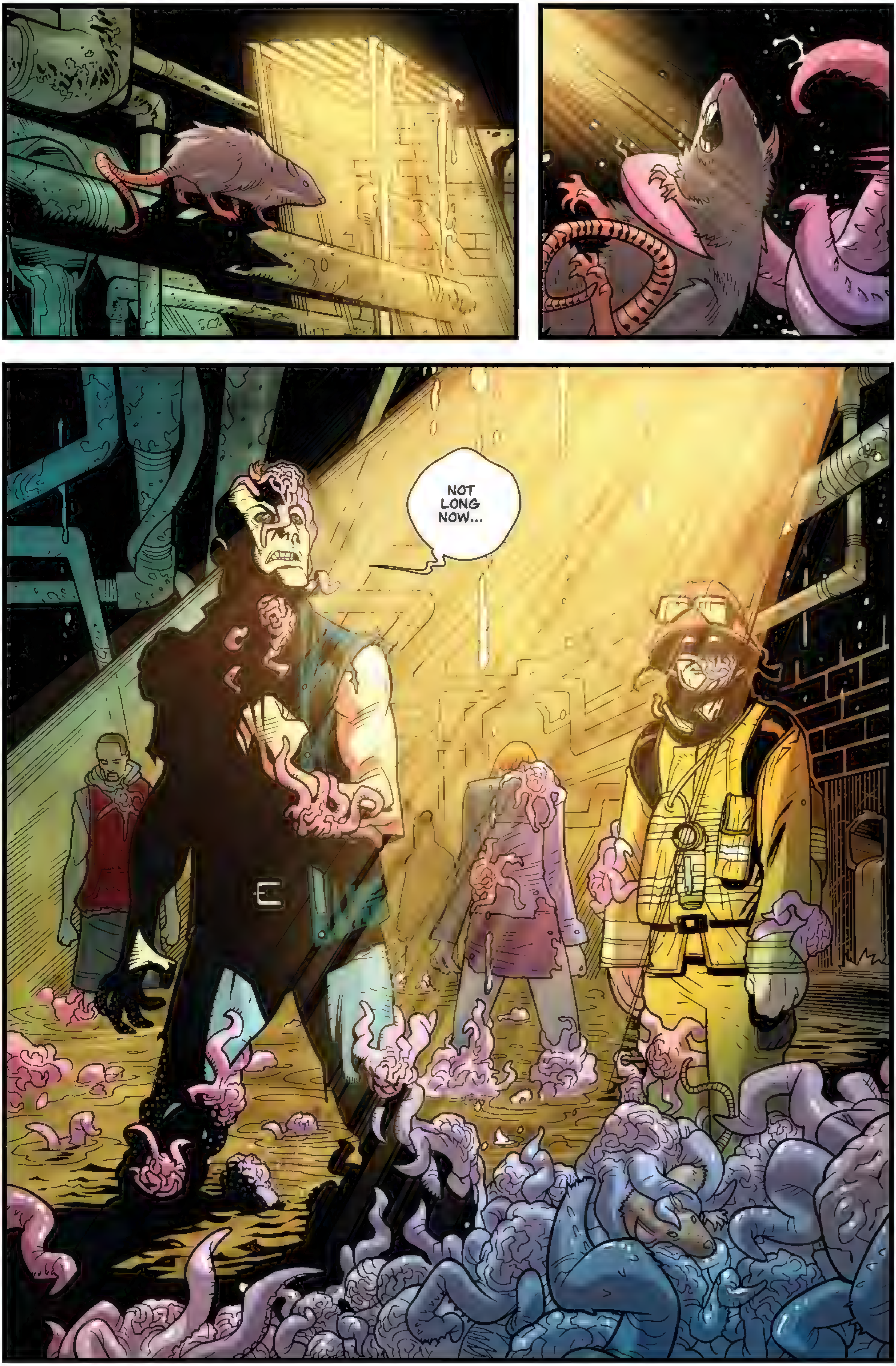

EVE? ARE YOU OKAY?
MARK?
NO, I'M--I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S *DEAD.* REX IS *REALLY* GONE. HE'S JUST... GONE. I NEVER EVEN GOT TO SAY *GOODBYE.*
I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER THE LAST CONVERSATION WE HAD.
I'M SURE I WAS RUDE TO HIM. I TREATED HIM LIKE HE WAS THAT BRASH YOUNG JERK HE WAS WHEN WE FIRST MET.
THAT'S THE PROBLEM WHEN YOU KNOW SOMEONE FOR THAT LONG... WHEN YOU MEET THEM THAT YOUNG.
THEY'RE ALWAYS THE SAME... *TO YOU.* YOU DON'T LET THEM CHANGE OR MATURE. YOU KNOW THEM ONE WAY AND THAT NEVER CHANGES.
REX WAS GROWING UP. HE'D STOPPED BEING SUCH A JERK. HE WAS KIND, CONSIDERATE... RESPONSIBLE.
HE WAS AN *ADULT...* AND I NEVER GAVE HIM A CHANCE.
I NEVER ALLOWED MYSELF TO SEE HOW MUCH HE'D CHANGED. HE MEANT SO MUCH TO ME AND HE--
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
I'M SORRY. I DON'T MEAN TO TALK ABOUT HIM LIKE THIS IN FRONT OF YOU.
I FEEL GUILTY BEING *SAD* IN FRONT OF YOU...
WHY?

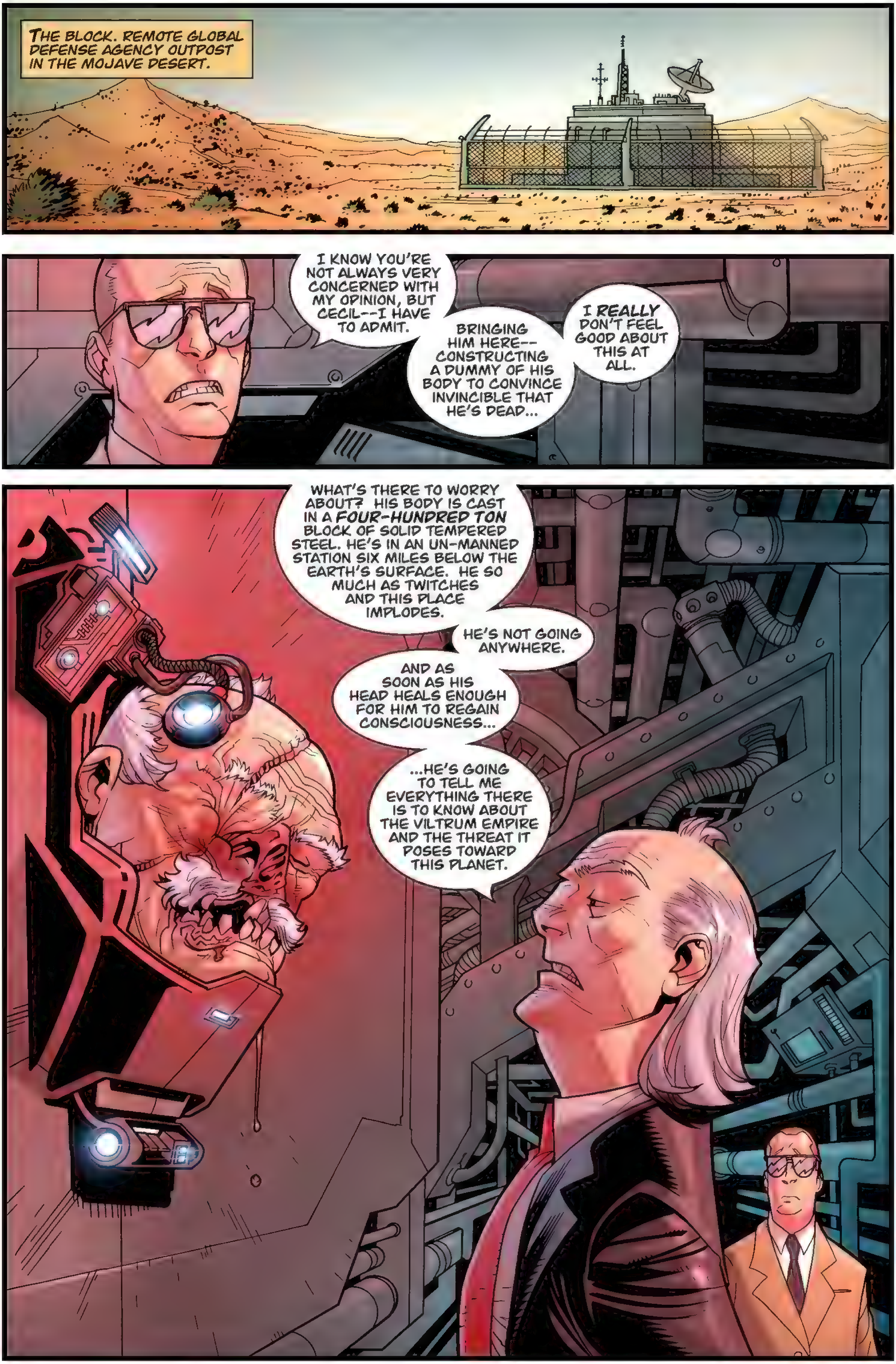
CAN I SAY I LOVED HIM?
IS THAT TOO WEIRD FOR YOU? HE MEANT SO MUCH TO ME BEFORE HE CHEATED ON ME. IF I'M HONEST, I WAS ALREADY STARTING TO HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU BEFORE HE DID THAT.
THAT JUST MAKES ME FEEL MORE GUILTY...
I'M A WRECK, I JUST--IT'S BEEN SO HARD, I CAME OUT OF MY COMA, YOU WERE FIGHTING CONQUEST--I REBUILT MYSELF.
I ONLY RECENTLY LEARNED HE'D BEEN KILLED.
IT'S ALL HAPPENED SO FAST, I JUST CAN'T--
ARE YOU... SMILING?
I'M SORRY, I JUST... I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU. I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU'RE HERE AND OKAY AND...
I CAN'T HELP IT.

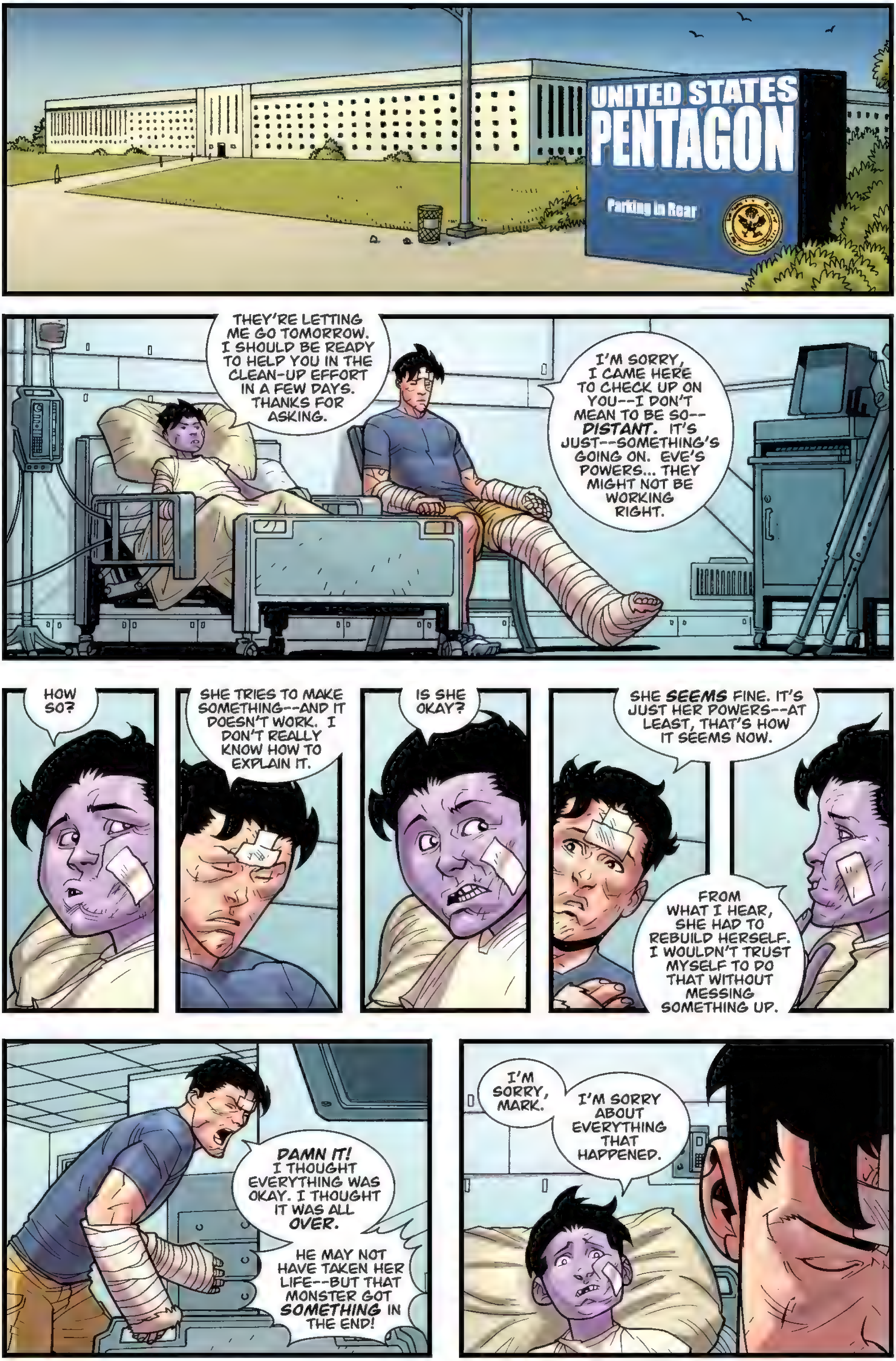

LATER...

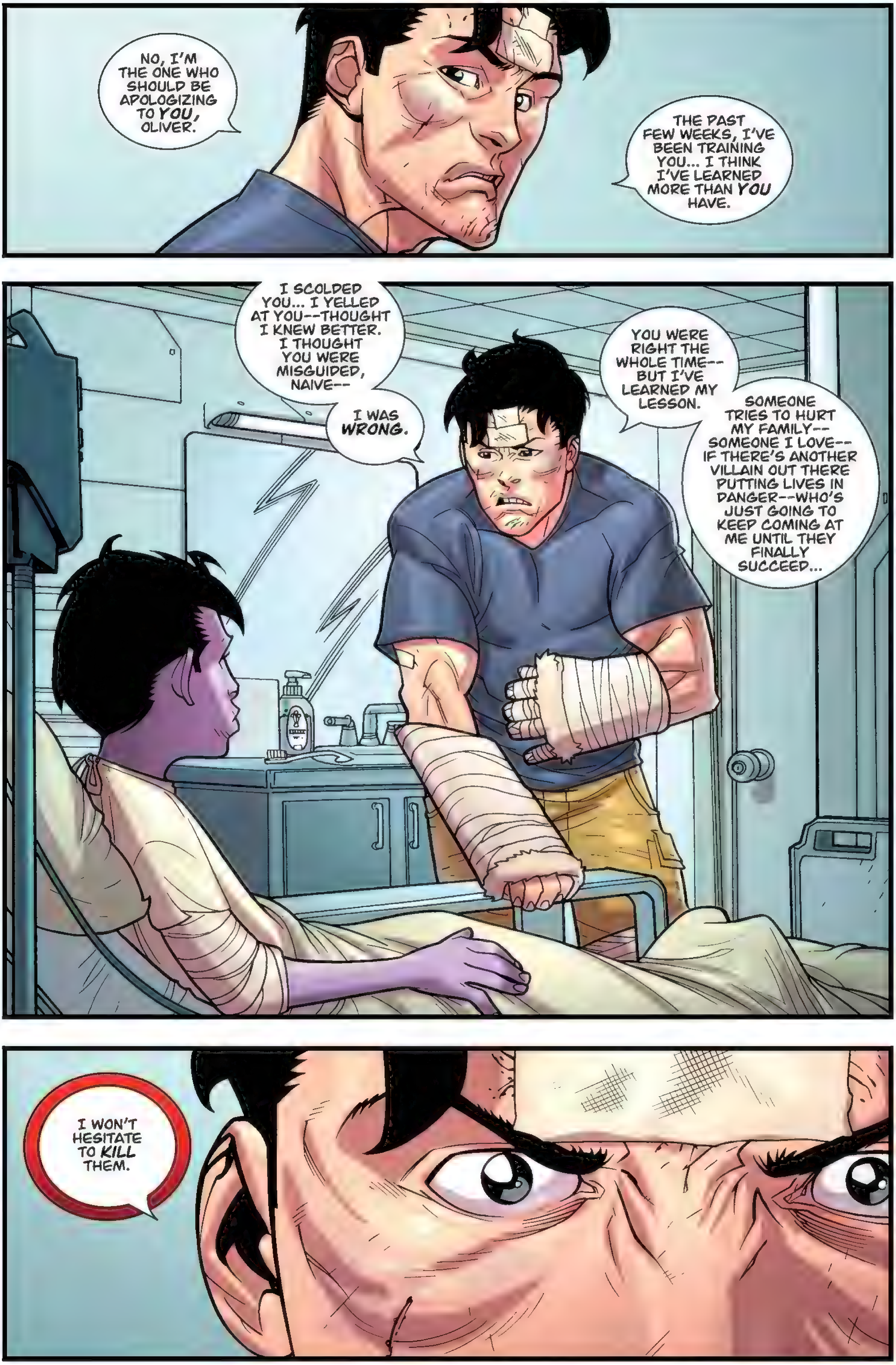
UH...
THIS IS GOING TO BE AWKWARD.
UH?
YOUR COSTUME IS FOLDED NEATLY AND ON THE FLOOR BY THE BED.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO THAT.


WELL?
REMARKABLE.
IT BARELY FEELS LIKE IT'S NOT MY OWN HAND--I HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL AND FEELING. VERY IMPRESSIVE.
NOW.
WHAT IS IT YOU *WANT* FROM ME?
ANGSTROM LEVY, YOU HAVE WITNESSED FIRST HAND WHAT OUR... *AMBITIONS* HAVE DONE TO THIS WORLD.
YOU HAVE BORNE WITNESS TO WHAT WE HAVE HAD TO DO TO OURSELVES IN ORDER TO SURVIVE HERE.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE WOULD WANT TO *STAY* HERE?
AND THAT IS ONLY THE *BEGINNING* OF WHAT WE REQUIRE FROM YOU.


NOT LONG NOW...


THE BLOCK. REMOTE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY OUTPOST IN THE MOJAVE DESERT.
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS VERY CONCERNED WITH MY OPINION, BUT CECIL--I HAVE TO ADMIT.
BRINGING HIM HERE--CONSTRUCTING A DUMMY OF HIS BODY TO CONVINCE INVINCIBLE THAT HE'S DEAD...
I *REALLY* DON'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT THIS AT ALL.
WHAT'S THERE TO WORRY ABOUT? HIS BODY IS CAST IN A *FOUR-HUNDRED TON* BLOCK OF SOLID TEMPERED STEEL. HE'S IN AN UN-MANNED STATION SIX MILES BELOW THE EARTH'S SURFACE. HE SO MUCH AS TWITCHES AND THIS PLACE IMPLODES.
HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
AND AS SOON AS HIS HEAD HEALS ENOUGH FOR HIM TO REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS...
...HE'S GOING TO TELL ME EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT THE VILTRUM EMPIRE AND THE THREAT IT POSES TOWARD THIS PLANET.

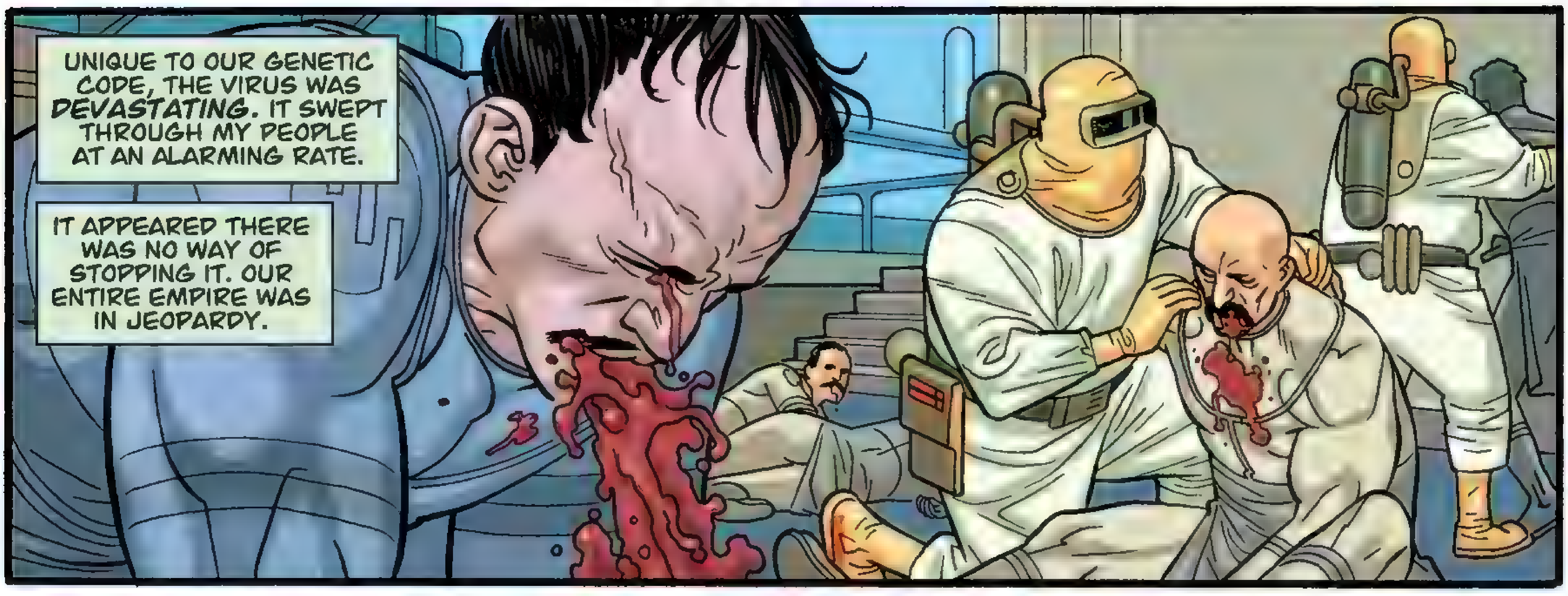

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THEY'RE LETTING ME GO TOMORROW. I SHOULD BE READY TO HELP YOU IN THE CLEAN-UP EFFORT IN A FEW DAYS. THANKS FOR ASKING.
I'M SORRY, I CAME HERE TO CHECK UP ON YOU--I DON'T MEAN TO BE SO-- *DISTANT.* IT'S JUST--SOMETHING'S GOING ON. EVE'S POWERS... THEY MIGHT NOT BE WORKING RIGHT.
HOW SO?
SHE TRIES TO MAKE SOMETHING--AND IT DOESN'T WORK. I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT.
IS SHE OKAY?
SHE *SEEMS* FINE. IT'S JUST HER POWERS--AT LEAST, THAT'S HOW IT SEEMS NOW.
FROM WHAT I HEAR, SHE HAD TO REBUILD HERSELF. I WOULDN'T TRUST MYSELF TO DO THAT WITHOUT MESSING SOMETHING UP.
DAMN IT! I THOUGHT EVERYTHING WAS OKAY. I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL *OVER.*
HE MAY NOT HAVE TAKEN HER LIFE--BUT THAT MONSTER GOT *SOMETHING* IN THE END!
I'M SORRY, MARK.
I'M SORRY ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED.

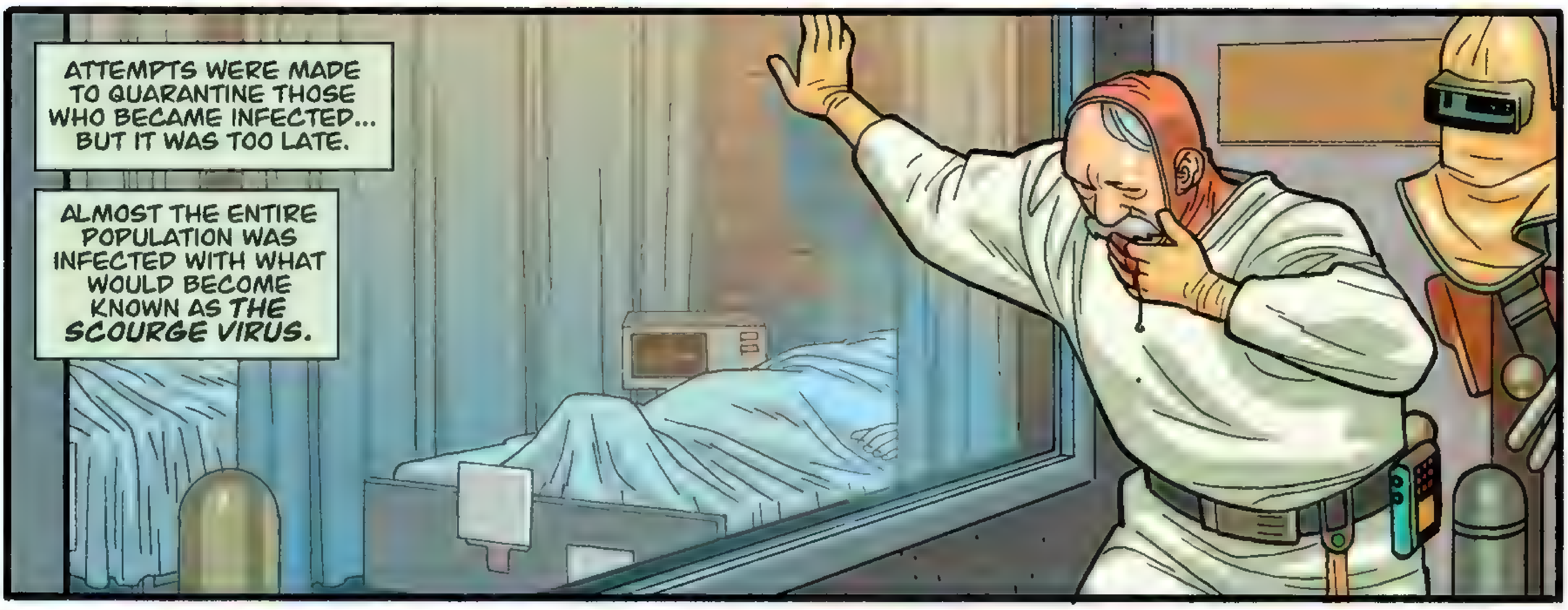

NO, I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE APOLOGIZING TO *YOU*, OLIVER.
THE PAST FEW WEEKS, I'VE BEEN TRAINING YOU... I THINK I'VE LEARNED MORE THAN *YOU* HAVE.
I SCOLDED YOU... I YELLED AT YOU--THOUGHT I KNEW BETTER. I THOUGHT YOU WERE MISGUIDED, NAIVE--
I WAS *WRONG*.
YOU WERE RIGHT THE WHOLE TIME--BUT I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON.
SOMEONE TRIES TO HURT MY FAMILY--SOMEONE I LOVE--IF THERE'S ANOTHER VILLAIN OUT THERE PUTTING LIVES IN DANGER--WHO'S JUST GOING TO KEEP COMING AT ME UNTIL THEY FINALLY SUCCEED...
I WON'T HESITATE TO *KILL* THEM.

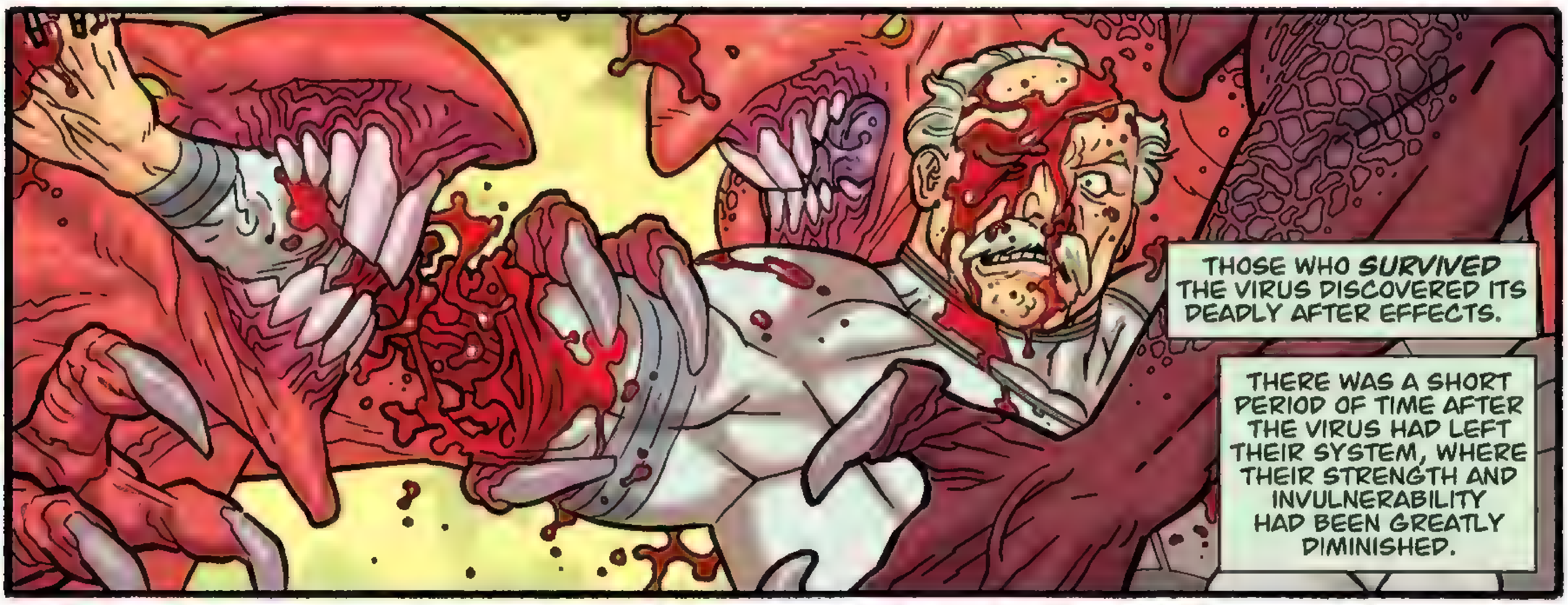
CHAPTER 66

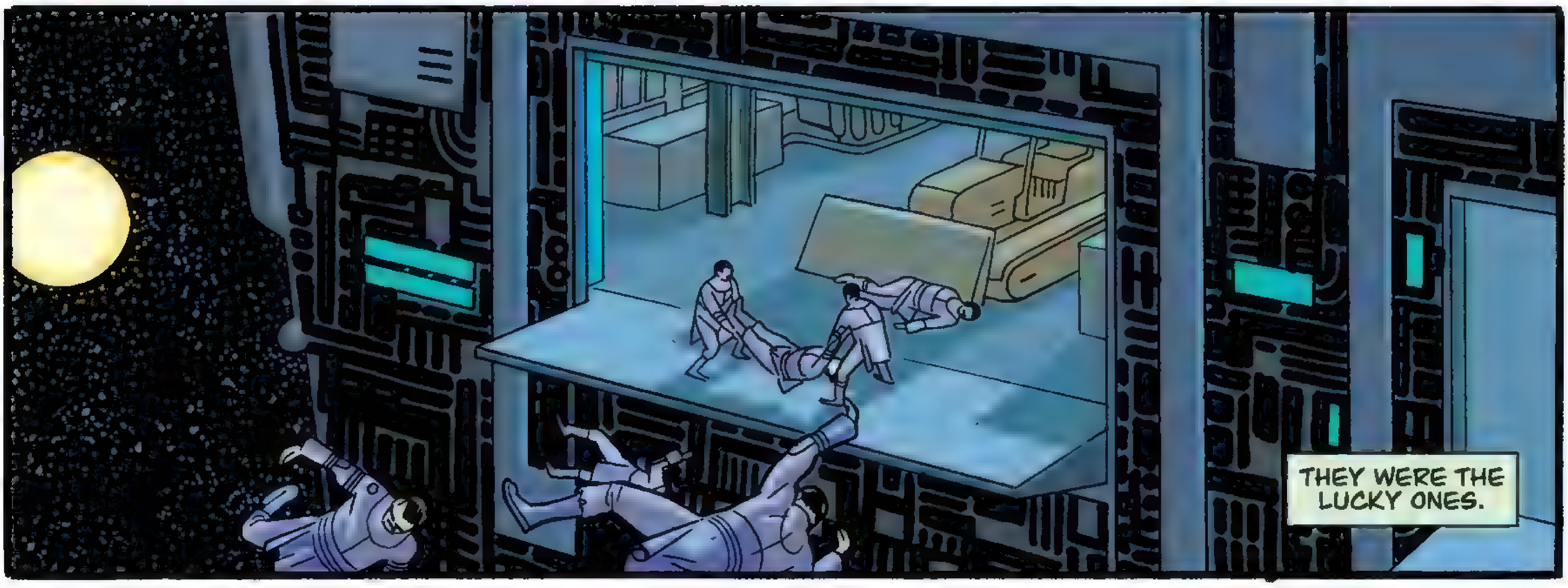
THERE ARE LESS THAN *FIFTY* FULL-BLOODED VILTRUMITES LEFT IN THE UNIVERSE... BUT IT WAS NOT ALWAYS THIS WAY.
ALLEN, MY FRIEND... IT IS TIME SOMEONE KNEW THE *TRUTH* ABOUT THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.

YOU KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE PLANET VILTRUM, OUR HISTORY AND OUR EMPIRE...
...AND MUCH OF IT IS TRUE.
WE WERE A VIOLENT RACE WHO VALUED STRENGTH ABOVE ALL ELSE.
TO RID OURSELVES OF ANY WEAKNESS WE SLAUGHTERED EACH OTHER UNTIL WE WERE BRED INTO THE VILTRUMITES YOU KNOW TODAY.
EVENTUALLY, OUR PEOPLE UNITED, AND WE TURNED OUR ATTENTION OUTWARD, ESTABLISHING THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
AN EMPIRE THAT CONTINUED TO EXPAND AT AN ASTOUNDING RATE FOR NEARLY *ONE-THOUSAND YEARS.*
UNTIL OUR ENEMIES MADE A WEAPON CAPABLE OF HURTING US.
THEY MADE A *VIRUS.*


UNIQUE TO OUR GENETIC CODE, THE VIRUS WAS *DEVASTATING*. IT SWEPT THROUGH MY PEOPLE AT AN ALARMING RATE.
IT APPEARED THERE WAS NO WAY OF STOPPING IT. OUR ENTIRE EMPIRE WAS IN JEOPARDY.


ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO QUARANTINE THOSE WHO BECAME INFECTED... BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.
ALMOST THE ENTIRE POPULATION WAS INFECTED WITH WHAT WOULD BECOME KNOWN AS *THE SCOURGE VIRUS*.


THOSE WHO *SURVIVED* THE VIRUS DISCOVERED ITS DEADLY AFTER EFFECTS.
THERE WAS A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME AFTER THE VIRUS HAD LEFT THEIR SYSTEM, WHERE THEIR STRENGTH AND INVULNERABILITY HAD BEEN GREATLY DIMINISHED.


THEY WERE THE LUCKY ONES.

FOR DECADES THIS VIRUS RAVAGED MY PEOPLE. EACH YEAR, IT WOULD TAKE *COUNTLESS* LIVES, EITHER BY SUCCUMBING TO THE VIRUS ITSELF OR BEING MURDERED DURING THE WEAKENING AFTER EFFECT.
IN THE END, WE LOST NINETY-NINE POINT NINE PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION. WE WERE LEFT ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION.
MIRACULOUSLY, THE VILTRUM EMPIRE ENDURED.

OUR LEADERS SPREAD REPORTS OF OUR EXPANDING EMPIRE THINNING OUR RANKS. NEW PLANS WERE DEVISED ALLOWING AS FEW AS *ONE* VILTRUMITE TO CONQUER ALIEN PLANETS ON THEIR OWN.
MY MISSION ON EARTH WAS ONE SUCH PLAN.
OUR STRANGLEHOLD ON THE GALAXY CONTINUED BASED ON THE NOW EMPTY THREAT OF OUR EMPIRE'S STRENGTH.
CROSS-BREEDING WITH CONQUERED RACES, SOMETHING THAT HAD LONG BEEN FORBIDDEN, WAS NOW ENCOURAGED. IT CONTINUED WITH MIXED RESULTS.
UNTIL *EARTH*, UNTIL MY SON. I NEVER TOLD HIM OUR MAIN REASON FOR CONQUERING EARTH... WHAT MADE IT SO IMPORTANT.
HUMAN DNA IS ALMOST ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT COMPATIBLE WITH VILTRUMITES. EARTH IS TO BECOME A BREEDING CAMP.
THE RESULTS OF THE SCOURGE VIRUS WERE HIDDEN, BUT *NEVER* FORGOTTEN.
OUR PLANET, CUT OFF FROM ANY OUTSIDE RACES, NOW STANDS AS A TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN BRETHREN. A REMINDER OF WHAT WE'VE SACRIFICED TO CONTINUE OUR QUEST FOR INTER-PLANETARY DOMINATION.

A QUEST I NOW SEE AS THE POINTLESS ENDEAVOR THAT IT IS...
WHAT THEY PLAN TO DO WITH EARTH... I WAS **BORN** IN A BREEDING CAMP. I WOULDN'T WISH THAT ON ANYONE. WE HAVE TO WARN MARK.
NO.
YOU HAVE TO TAKE ME TO YOUR PEOPLE. I NEED TO MEET WITH THE COALITION OF PLANETS. ***IMMEDIATELY.***
I TRUST YOU, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOSS WILL. THIS WON'T BE EASY.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. IF WE'RE GOING TO BE ABLE TO SAVE EARTH AND STOP THE VILTRUM EMPIRE ONCE AND FOR ALL, THE COALITION NEEDS TO KNOW EVERYTHING I KNOW.
WE'LL ALSO NEED THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN MY BOOKS THAT YOU SCANNED. I WROTE EVERYTHING DOWN SO I WOULDN'T NEED TO REMEMBER IT ALL--AND THERE IS VALUABLE INFORMATION ENCODED IN THE WORDS.
INFORMATION THAT WILL GAIN YOUR BOSS'S TRUST.
OKAY, LET ME GET MY GEAR AND THEN WE'LL GO.

SOME TIME LATER, THE PLANET TELESCRIA, THE SECRET HOME BASE OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!
TELIA, DEAR, UH--I'M SORRY.
I WAS ON THAT MISSION AND I WAS TAKEN PRISONER BY THE VILTRUMITES. THEY HELD ME IN PRISON FOR A FEW MONTHS, I WAS JUST RECENTLY ABLE TO ESCAPE.
I WOULD HAVE CONTACTED YOU IF I COULD HAVE--BUT THERE WAS NEVER AN OPPORTUNITY AND--
NOT THAT--I KNOW YOUR MISSIONS RUN LONG SOMETIMES. WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IS THE COUCH.
YOU SLEPT ON THE COUCH!
OH, UH... THAT. I'M SORRY. THE THING IS, WE GOT IN REALLY LATE AND--

I DON'T CARE *HOW* LATE YOU GET BACK FROM A MISSION. YOU KNOW THE *RULES*. YOU WAKE ME UP!
I'VE BEEN LIVING WITHOUT FOR *MONTHS* AND I AM HUNGRY! NOW GIVE IT TO ME YOU UNOPAN GOD.
GIVE IT TO ME *NOW!*
TELIA, PLEASE. I CAN'T RIGHT NOW.
STOP--!
CAN WE PLEASE, JUST ONCE... NOT DO THIS? I'M SICK OF ALL THE PRETENSE.
DO I *REALLY* HAVE TO HEAR ABOUT THE UNOPAN POPULATION AND HOW YOUR STRICT PROCREATION LAWS FORBID OUR UNION BEFORE EVERY SINGLE TIME WE HAVE SEX?
DON'T SAY YOU CAN'T. YOU *CAN*--YOU ALWAYS *DO*. CUT THE CRAP AND LET'S GET TO IT!
NO, THAT'S NOT IT--
WAIT A MINUTE... DID YOU SAY "*WE*" GOT IN REALLY LATE?

VILTRUMITE!
UH, SORRY... THIS IS AWKWARD.
HI.
DIE, WORLD-CONQUERING SCUM!
VOPP! VOPP!
SORRY TO STARTLE YOU-- I'M REALLY NOT HERE TO HURT YOU. I PROMISE.
I CAN VOUCH FOR HIM. HE'S A GOOD GUY. I MET HIM IN PRISON. HE'S HERE TO HELP THE COALITION.
AND, HONEY...
YOU KEEP THAT THING HIDDEN IN THE COUCH?
WHEN YOU'RE AWAY ON MISSIONS, YEAH.
WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE GOING...

HIDDEN AMONG THE TOWERING SKY SCRAPERS OF TELESCRIA IS CENTRAL BASE OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
FASCINATING--SIMPLY *FASCINATING*. ARE YOU CROSS REFERENCING THE VISUAL MARKERS HIDDEN IN THE STORIES WITH STAR MAPS?
NO, WHY? OOOOH. THEY LINE UP EXACTLY. *AMAZING*.
DOWNLOAD COMPLETE IN THREE, TWO...
THIS COULD BE THE FINAL PIECE THE COALITION NEEDS TO END THE VILTRUMITE THREAT ONCE AND FOR ALL.
MAYBE WE SHOULD CANCEL THE CHOOMBAK MATCH TONIGHT. I'M GOING TO BE PROCESSING DATA IN THE BACK OF MY MIND ALL NIGHT.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO ENJOY MYSELF.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO IT-- BUT, DUTY CALLS!
HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK THEY'LL BE IN WITH THAEDUS? WE NEED TO DISCUSS THIS WITH HIM.
WHO KNOWS, HE'S BEEN MEETING WITH ALLEN AND THE ROGUE VILTRUMITE FOR HOURS.
EVER SINCE HIS TRANSFORMATION, I FIND ALLEN UNSETTLING. HE TERRIFIES ME.
INTIMIDATING, SURE... BUT AGENT ALLEN IS ON *OUR* SIDE.
WHY WOULD YOU BE *SCARED* OF HIM?

NEARLY EXTINCT... LESS THAN *FIFTY* PURE BLOODS... I HAD NO IDEA.
I DIDN'T KNOW...
I'M CONFUSED. AS LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE *HAPPY* TO HEAR THIS NEWS.
WELL, THE THING IS...
I AM CONFLICTED.
I AM LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, SWORN TO BRING DOWN THE VILTRUM EMPIRE ONCE AND FOR ALL.
AND I AM ALSO A VILTRUMITE.
I DO NOT BELIEVE IT.
I DEMAND THAT YOU PERFORM THE *TOOLOCK PULL* TO PROVE YOURSELF AS AN UNDERCOVER VILTRUM AGENT.
I WILL GLADLY DO SO IF YOU INSIST.
BUT I HAVE ALREADY DONE THIS FOR ALLEN IN THE PAST AND *I DID NOT* CARE FOR IT.
IT'S TRUE, DUDE-- PULLED HIS BEARD RIGHT OUT.
IT WAS *CRAZY*.

BUT I THOUGHT--I ALWAYS *FEARED* THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME, FOR TURNING MY BACK AGAINST THE EMPIRE--VILTRUMITES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN LOYAL...
...I THOUGHT I WAS THE FIRST.
MY BETRAYAL WAS HIDDEN, REMOVED FROM HISTORY'S RECORD.
BUT THERE IS NO TIME FOR THIS. WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONVERSING TOO LONG. PEOPLE WILL BECOME SUSPICIOUS THAT THIS ISN'T JUST A STANDARD BRIEFING.
I CAN'T HAVE THAT.
THERE IS AT LEAST ONE VILTRUMITE AGENT AMONG US, REPORTING BACK TO THE EMPIRE.
THE WORK YOU WILL DO WITH ALLEN MUST REMAIN SECRET.
THE DATA FROM MY INFO POD... IT'S GOING INTO THE MAIN DATABASE?
NO.
MY TRUSTED INNER-CIRCLE HAS A SEPARATE DATABASE FOR MORE *SENSITIVE* DATA. AND EVEN THEY WILL BE UNAWARE OF YOUR MISSION USING THIS DATA.
WE NOW HAVE A LIST OF WEAPONS AND BEINGS THAT CAN HURT A VILTRUMITE--THINGS THAT WILL BECOME *VERY* VALUABLE TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
I CHARGE YOU TWO WITH THE TASK OF GATHERING AS MUCH OF THESE THINGS THAT STILL REMAIN.
ALLEN, I'M GIVING YOU ACCESS TO OUR ARMORY FOR THE NEXT HOUR--THAT'S AS MUCH TIME AS I CAN KEEP SECRET FROM THE COUNCIL.
GO.

SWEET!
IT LOOKS COOL, BUT WITH YOUR STRENGTH AREN'T ALL THOSE GADGETS A LITTLE... UNNECESSARY? SEEMS LIKE THEY'LL JUST... SLOW YOU DOWN.
YEAH, AND YOUR SUIT'S ALL ABOUT PRACTICALITY. NICE CAPE, DUDE.
COP
COP

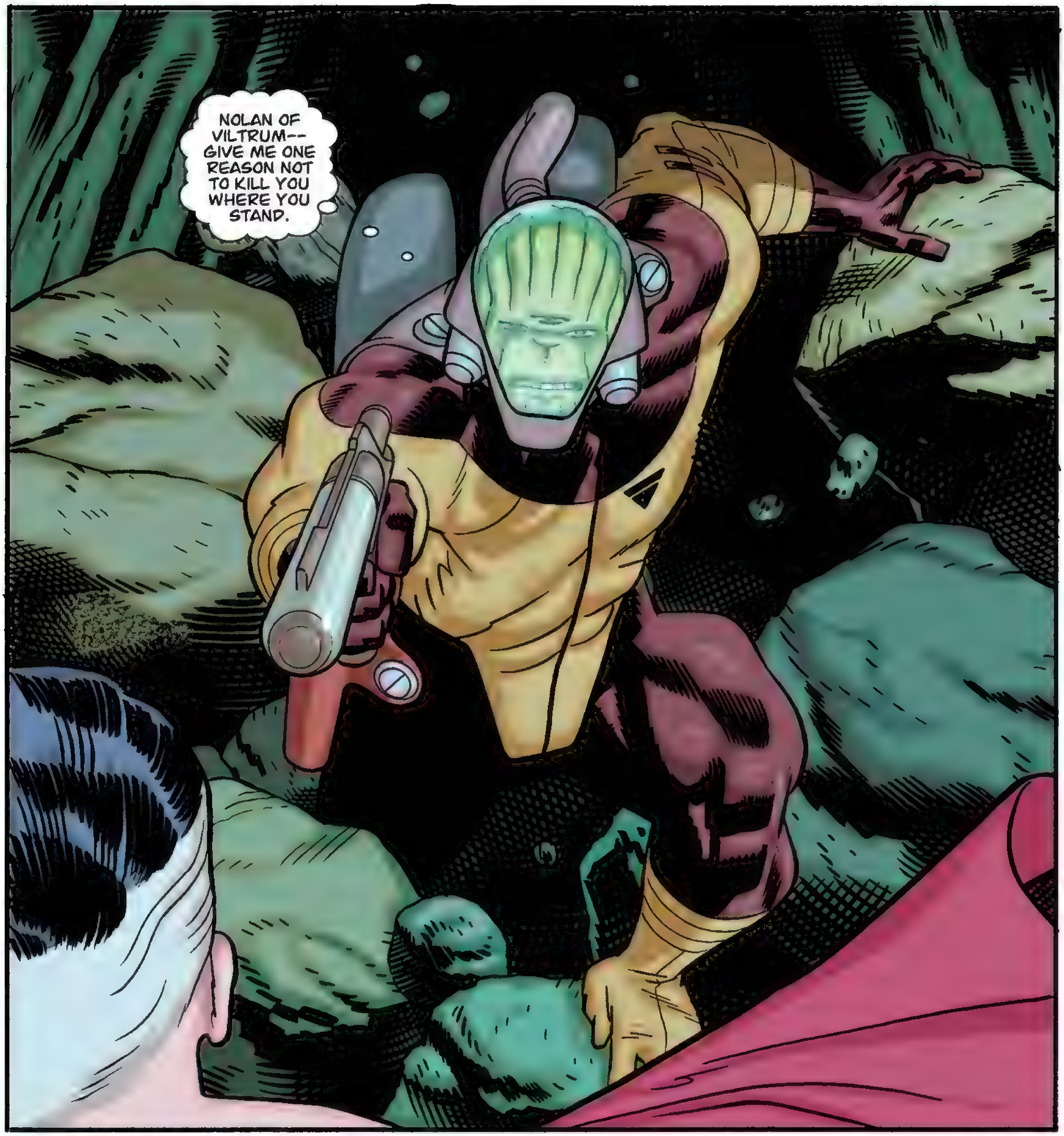
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO TRY THIS ONE *FIRST?*
THIS ONE IS RELATIVELY CLOSE AND SHOULD BE EASY. I CONSIDER THIS ONE A... WARM UP.
CLOSE? *GOOD.* MY GIRLFRIEND ISN'T TOO HAPPY ABOUT ME LEAVING FOR ANOTHER MISSION SO SOON.
CAN'T BE TOO MAD, THOUGH. SHE PACKED ME SOME FRESH KANZLOK FOR THE TRIP. *YUM.*
HM? WHAT IS *IT?*
Allen
ONLY THE MOST DELICIOUS THING IN THE *UNIVERSE.*
WANT SOME?
PASS.

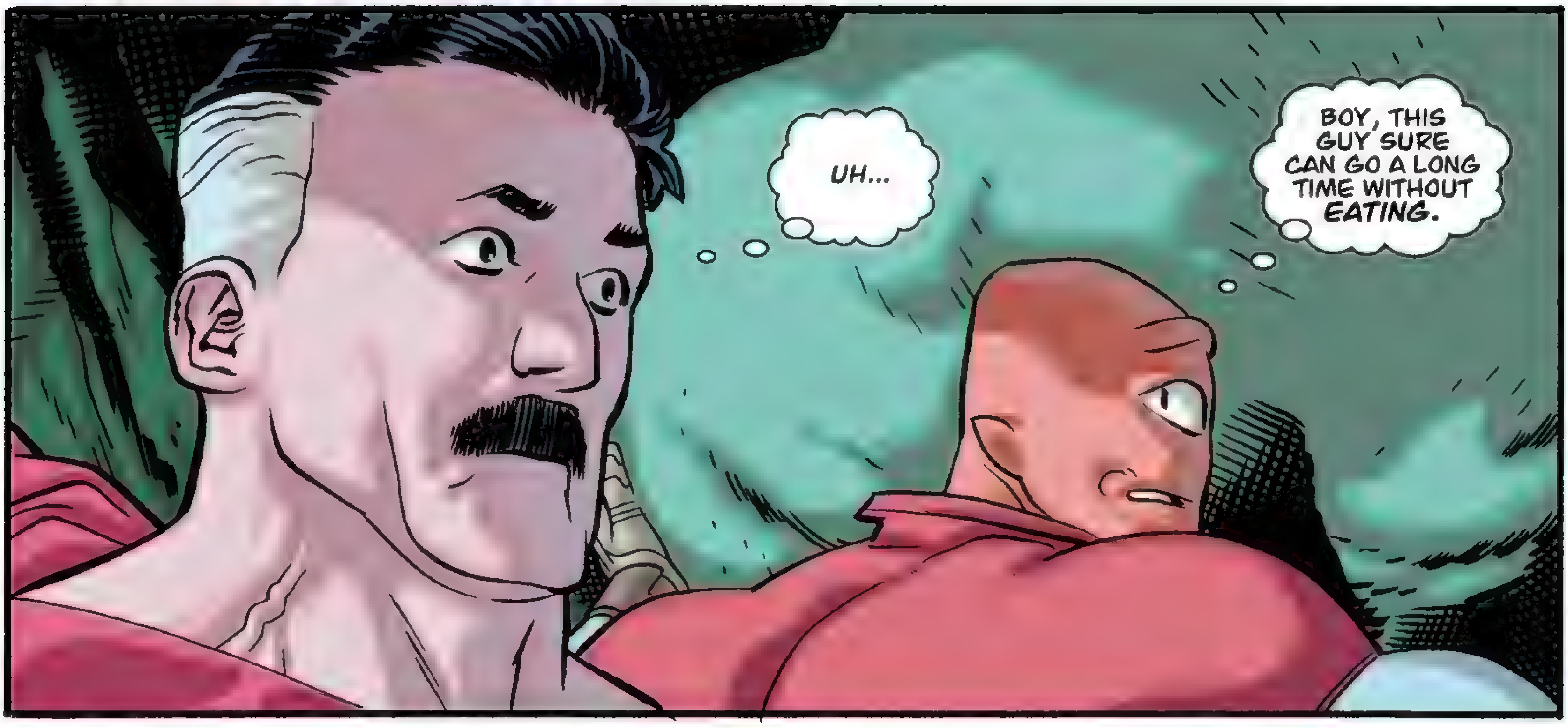
THERE IT IS, THE NEBULOID BELT. IT'S BEEN... ALMOST A HUNDRED YEARS SINCE I WAS HERE.
LOOKS EXACTLY THE SAME.
IT'S... A BUNCH OF ROCKS.
HAND ME YOUR INFO POD.
JUST SAYING...
THERE'S A CODE HIDDEN IN THE TEXT. THE NUMBER OF WORDS IN THESE PARAGRAPHS I WROTE ABOUT THE ASTEROIDS WILL SPELL OUT THE COORDINATES OF THE SPECIFIC ASTEROID WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
FOLLOW ME.

SO, IF IT'S BEEN ONE-HUNDRED YEARS, GIVE OR TAKE, AND THE ASTEROIDS ARE DRIFTING AT THIS SPEED, THEIR RELATIVE DISTANCE TO EACH OTHER WOULD BE SHIFTING...
AND...
YOU GOING TO BE ABLE TO FIND THIS... WHATEVER IT IS WE'RE AFTER?
ABSOLUTELY. JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE.
...
ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP?
NO, NO... ALMOST GOT IT.
THERE.
THIS IS IT.
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE? IT'S A ROCK-- THEY ALL LOOK THE SAME.
I'M NOT SURE... BUT THIS *LOOKS* FAMILIAR.
AH!

THERE IT IS.
WAIT, *WHAT?*
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. THE GUN HAS JUST BEEN LYING HERE FOR ALMOST *ONE-HUNDRED YEARS?* THAT MAKES NO SENSE.
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST TAKE IT BACK TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE? WHY'D YOU LEAVE IT HERE?
THIS GUN BELONGS TO THE *SPACE RACER.* YOU REALLY KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HIM?
SPACE *RACER?* YOU CALLED HIM THE SPACE RIDER IN THE BOOK.
I HAD TO CHANGE THE NAMES, I HAD NO IDEA WHO WOULD EVENTUALLY READ THOSE BOOKS. I WROTE THEM AS REMINDERS TO MYSELF--OR MY SON, IF WE NEEDED THEM. I DIDN'T WANT THEM TO FALL IN THE WRONG HANDS.
AND NO, I'M NOT EVEN CLOSE TO ONE-HUNDRED YEARS OLD. YOU DID YOUR JOB, NO ONE TALKS ABOUT THIS GUY ANYMORE.
THE SPACE RACER'S GUN--THE ONE THAT FIRES INDESTRUCTIBLE BLASTS THAT WILL SHOOT THROUGH ANYTHING--CAN ONLY BE FIRED BY *HIM.*
HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF BOND WITH THE GUN--IF ANYONE TRIES TO TAKE IT OR USE IT... IF I HAD TOUCHED IT WHILE HE WAS STILL ALIVE IT WOULD HAVE FLOWN INTO THE CENTER OF THE PILE OF RUBBLE I BURIED HIM UNDER AND GIVEN HIM THE MEANS TO ESCAPE.
MY ONLY OPTION WAS TO LEAVE IT EXACTLY WHERE HE DROPPED IT.

THANKFULLY, BY NOW HE'S SURELY...
...DEAD.
CRAP!
WHAT WAS *THAT* ALL ABOUT?
THIS IS GOING TO BE A PAIN--IT SEEMS THE GUN STILL GOES TO HIS *CORPSE* WHEN YOU TOUCH IT.
HELP ME DIG.
UH, ALLEN... DON'T...
...MOVE.


NOLAN OF VILTRUM--GIVE ME ONE REASON NOT TO KILL YOU WHERE YOU STAND.


UH...
BOY, THIS GUY SURE CAN GO A LONG TIME WITHOUT *EATING*.

CHAPTER 67

HOLD THE THREATS, SPACE RACER! YOU COULDN'T KILL ME LAST TIME AND THIS TIME I BROUGHT *HELP!*
UH... *YEAH!*
DON'T--!
WAIT! YOU CAN'T HEAR IT-- BUT I CAN *FEEL* IT! THIS ASTEROID IS BREAKING APART-- AND THE PIECES ARE COLLIDING WITH THE REST OF THE ASTEROIDS IN THE BELT!
IT'S CAUSING A CHAIN REACTION! THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE PRETTY!

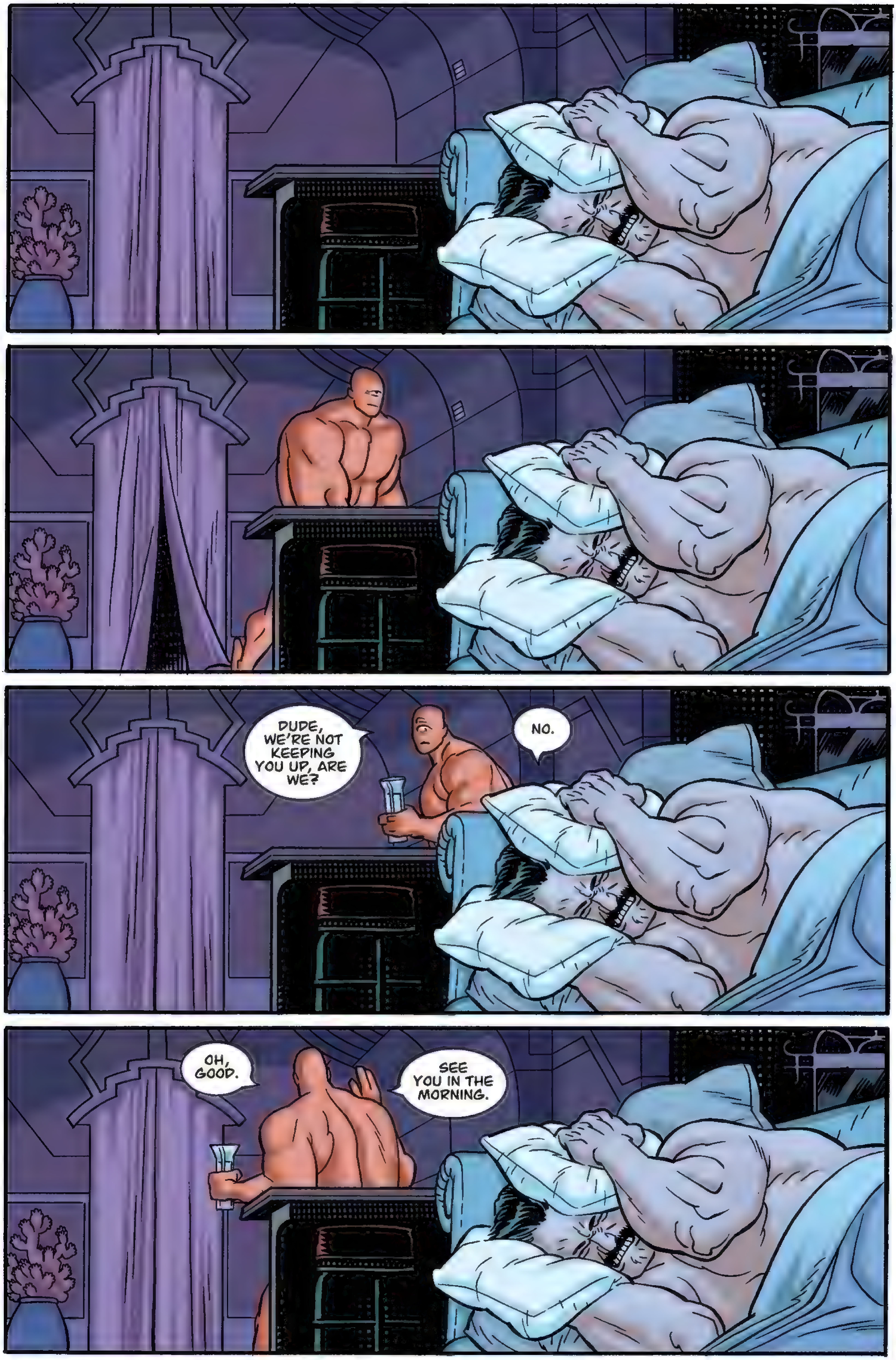
COP

MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!
THAT SHOULD BE FAR ENOUGH...
TO ME.
WHAT'S HE--?
WHAT THE--?!
AGH--CRAP! DON'T SHOOT.
HEAR ME OUT.
WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE TO SAY THAT I WOULD WANT TO HEAR?

WHY DO YOU *THINK* I'M HERE? WE CAME HERE TO FREE YOU--NOT TO FIGHT YOU.
WHY WOULD WE HAVE COME OTHERWISE?
I THINK IT MORE LIKELY THAT YOU CAME HERE TO RETRIEVE MY WEAPON, THINKING I'D LONG SINCE PERISHED.
HE'S GOT YOU THERE.
MIND IF I STEP IN?
YOU DON'T KNOW ME, I'M ALLEN THE ALIEN.
I FOUGHT THIS GUY A FEW TIMES IN THE PAST, TOO-- AND I AGREE WITH YOU--HE'S A REAL JERK. AND THE TRUTH IS, WE *DID* COME HERE TO RETRIEVE YOUR GUN... THINKING YOU WERE LONG DEAD.
BUT WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW IS THAT THIS GUY IS *TOTALLY* REFORMED. HE'S WORKING WITH THE COALITION OF PLANETS NOW TO ORGANIZE AN OFFENSIVE *AGAINST* THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
HE'S ON *OUR* SIDE NOW.
ASSUMING YOU *WERE* ON OUR SIDE...
WHAT ALLEN IS SAYING IS TRUE. I AM REFORMED. I'VE TURNED AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES AND AM NOW TRYING TO DO MY PART IN ENDING THEIR REIGN.
I AM VERY SORRY FOR WHAT I'VE PUT YOU THROUGH--BUT PLEASE DON'T HOLD MY PAST ACTIONS AGAINST THE COALITION--THEY MAY BE THE UNIVERSE'S LAST BEST HOPE AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.

IF YOU COULD PLEASE JUST ACCOMPANY US BACK TO THE COALITION HEADQUARTERS YOU COULD SEE THAT WE ARE INDEED FIGHTING **AGAINST** THE VILTRUMITES.
WE COULD PROVIDE YOU WITH WHATEVER ASSURANCES--
I HAVE BEEN BURIED UNDER THAT RUBBLE FOR NEARLY ONE-HUNDRED YEARS...
I KNOW AND MY ASSOCIATE HAS SAID HE'S VERY SORRY ABOUT THAT, AND--
DO YOU HAVE ANY **FOOD?**
SURE DO! JUST GIVE ME A SECOND...
EVER HEARD OF **KANSLOK?**
PASS.
I WILL ACCOMPANY YOU BACK TO THIS SUPPOSED COALITION STRONGHOLD, BUT MY GUN WILL NEVER SHIFT FROM YOUR DIRECTION.
CROSS ME--AND IT WILL BE YOUR END.
OOH, SCARY.
HEH.

HIDDEN AMONG THE TOWERING SKYSCRAPERS OF TELESCRIA LIES THE CENTRAL BASE OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
HE'S STILL VERY CAUTIOUS ABOUT THIS SITUATION BUT I'M TOLD HE'S OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WORKING WITH US.
MY MEDICAL SPECIALISTS ARE EXAMINING HIM TO MAKE SURE HE'S IN GOOD PHYSICAL SHAPE. HIS METABOLISM IS *ASTOUNDING*.
THIS GUY IS GOING TO BE A HUGE HELP TO US. VERY WELL DONE, BOTH OF YOU.
THANK *YOU*, GREAT THAEDUS.
I'M GOING TO HEAD HOME WHILE YOUR TEAM ASSEMBLES FOR OUR NEXT MISSION. YOU SAY IT COULD BE TWO DAYS BEFORE THEY ARE READY?
I WILL ALERT YOU BOTH AS SOON AS WE'RE READY TO GO.
WHERE SHOULD I--?
ARE YOU *KIDDING?* YOU'RE CRASHING AT *MY* PLACE, BUDDY!


DUDE, WE'RE NOT KEEPING YOU UP, ARE WE?
NO.
OH, GOOD.
SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.

THE ROGNARR ARE VICIOUS, WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL. WHEN THE VILTRUMITES DISCOVERED THIS RACE OF MONSTERS, THEY SENT A FEW TEAMS HERE TO TRY AND DESTROY THEM-- TO DISASTROUS RESULTS. THESE THINGS ARE INDESTRUCTIBLE.
FINALLY, I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF USING A SOLAR DISK TO BLOCK THEIR SUN-- FREEZING THEM. IF THESE THINGS THAW OUT WHILE WE'RE HERE-- WE'RE IN TROUBLE.
WITH ALL THIS ICE-- HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND THEM?
COP
YOU'RE RIGHT.
NOLAN TO BRIDGE. WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO PREPARE A TEAM TO TRANSPORT THESE THINGS TO THE CARGO HOLD BEFORE THEY COMPLETELY THAW OUT. THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GOING TO FIND THEM IS BY REMOVING THE SOLAR DISK.
WE CAN HANDLE THAT ON OUR OWN, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
DOWNLOAD, FIRE AT WILL.

NO!!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
MORONS!
THIS ICE WILL BE MELTED IN A MATTER OF MINUTES... WE NEEDED TO *MOVE* THE DISK--NOT COMPLETELY *DESTROY* IT!
WE'VE GOT TO WORK FAST!
THERE! WE NEED TO GET THAT ONE UP TO THE SHIP BEFORE IT COMPLETELY THAWS OUT!
WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS!
C'MON!
KRAKK!
I'M TAKING THIS ONE TO THE SHIP! SEE IF YOU CAN FIND MORE. ONCE THEY THAW COMPLETELY--WE'RE FINISHED!
THE ROGNARR ARE TOO STRONG TO TRANSPORT.

SKRSSH!
CRAP!
AAAGH!
THE VILTRUMITE'S HEART RATE HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED, CAPTAIN. I THINK THEY'RE IN TROUBLE.
THESE CREATURES MAY BE THE THING WE NEED TO FINALLY TURN THE TIDE AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES! FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION HERE!
WHAT IS GOING ON DOWN THERE?
REPORT!
WHAT'S GOING ON IS YOU MORONS SCREWED UP! THIS ICE IS ALMOST COMPLETELY MELTED--WE'RE SURROUNDED!
THIS MISSION IS BUST! I'M GETTING US OUT OF HERE NOW!

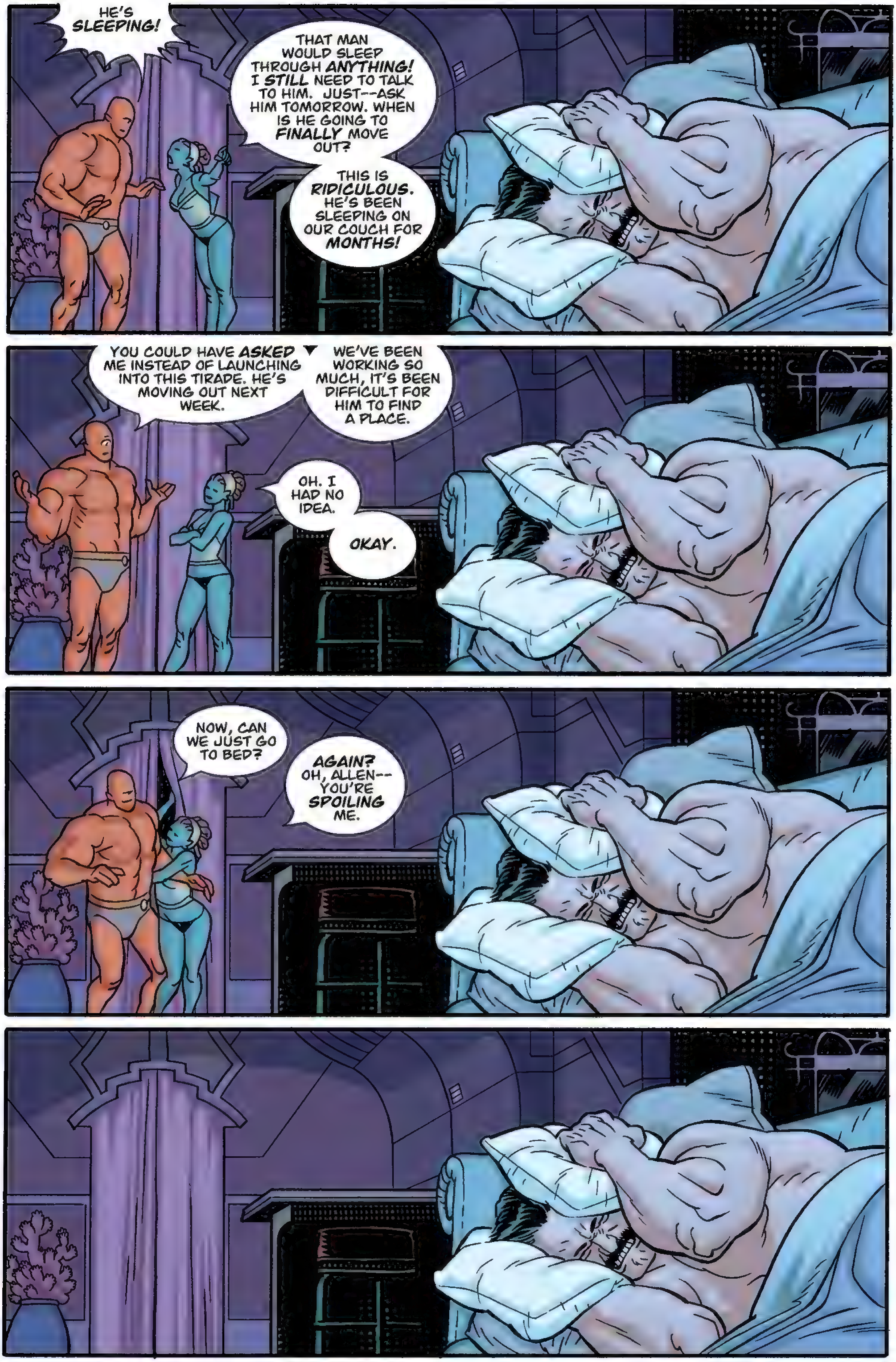
GO! JUST GET OUT OF HERE, *NOW!* I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF!
I CAN HELP YOU!
NO! JUST--
THROMP!
ALLEN!
WRAMM!
I GOT THIS...
UNGH...
NO, YOU *DON'T!* THESE THINGS EAT VILTRUMITES ALIVE!
THE ONLY REASON WE'RE LASTING THIS LONG IS THAT THEY'RE STILL GROGGY FROM BEING FROZEN!

RUN! GO NOW!
I'LL CATCH UP TO YOU! MOVE!
KROOOM!!
GO FAST AND DON'T LOOK BACK! THESE THINGS CAN JUMP!
WHOA!
NO KIDDING!
RAARRGH!!
KROOM!
THAT WAS QUICK, COME ON.
NO.
IF I GET ON THAT SHIP--I'LL RIP IT IN HALF.

TELESCRIA, WHERE WE FIND THE HOME BASE OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
IT'S NOT A TOTAL LOSS. WE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE--AND THEY'RE ACTIVE AGAIN. WE COULD DISTRACT A SQUAD OF VILTRUMITES BY SENDING THEM THERE... AND I'M NOT COMPLETELY RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CAPTURING SOME TO TRAIN IN SOME WAY.
WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
WE'RE NOT GOING TO SUCCEED EVERY SINGLE TIME.
THE SAME SHORT-TEMPERED BLOOD RUNS THROUGH MY VEINS AS WELL, NOLAN. YOU SHOWED GREAT *RESTRAINT* OUT THERE.
I'M SORRY MY PEOPLE SCREWED THIS ONE UP.
BEST NOT TO BRING IT UP.
SERIOUSLY.
COP
THANKFULLY, THERE ARE FAR MORE POTENTIAL WEAPONS LISTED IN YOUR BOOKS... AND A FEW THINGS I'D LIKE YOU TO LOOK INTO THAT YOU DIDN'T WRITE ABOUT.
YOU HAVE A LONG ROAD AHEAD OF YOU.

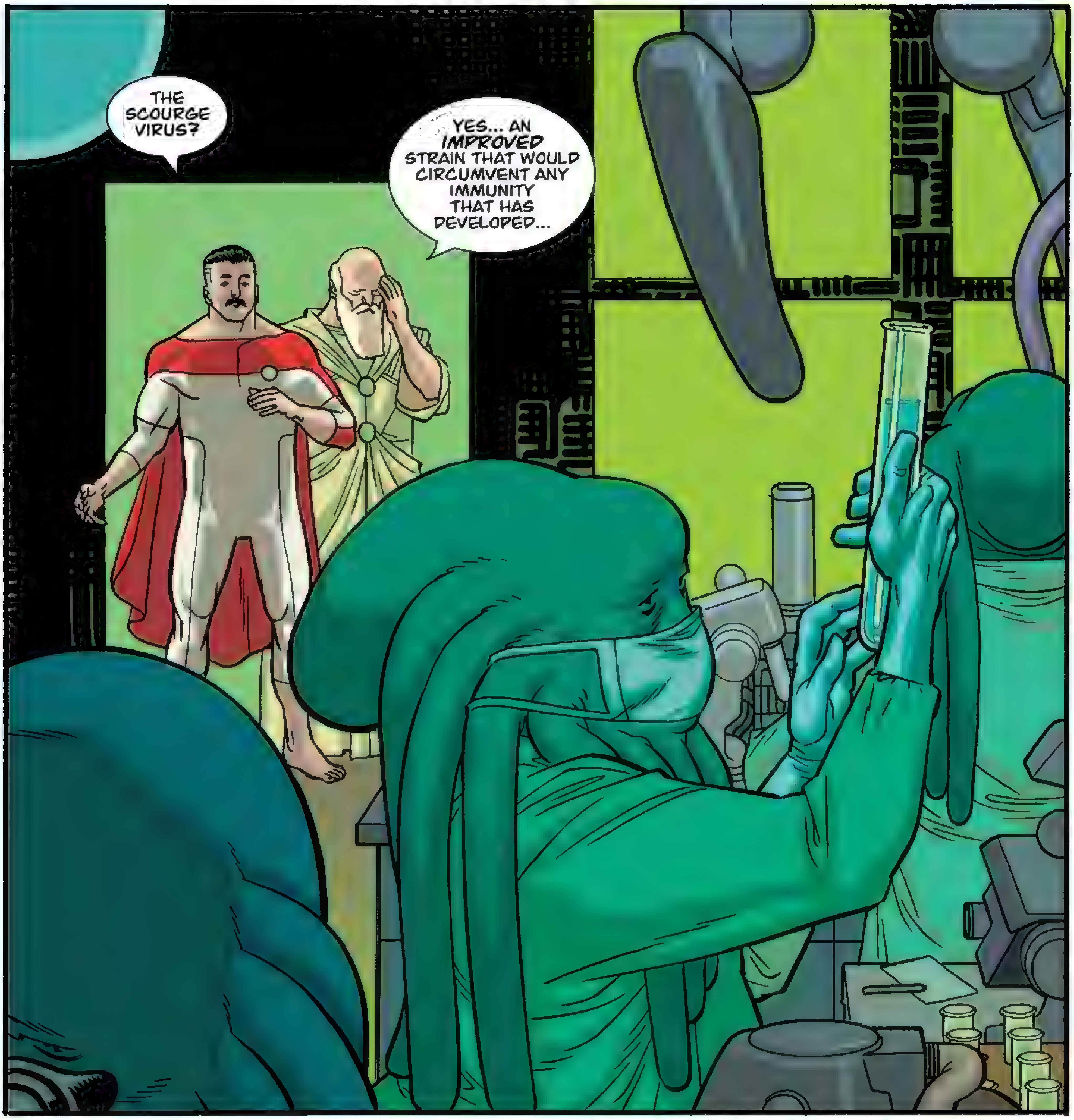
THE KLAXUS PLANT IS POISONOUS TO VILTRUMITES. IT CAN'T KILL US--BUT IT WOULD MAKE US PRETTY EASY TO DEFEAT IN AN OTHERWISE EVENLY MATCHED FIGHT.
THE PROBLEM IS THE PLANT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP FROM GROWING. IT NEEDS VERY LITTLE WATER OR SUNLIGHT AND GROWS AT AN INSANELY RAPID RATE.
SO... WE INFESTED THIS PLANET WITH THESE SINLAK BEETLES, WHICH EAT THE PLANT FASTER THAN IT CAN GROW--AND ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO EXTERMINATE.
MAYBE WE CAN EXTRACT SOME OF THE POISON FROM PLANT MATERIAL INGESTED BY THE BEETLE...
IT IS TRUE, WE WERE ABLE TO FEND OFF THE VILTRUMITE SPONSORED KRESH INVASION OF GELDARIA.
THERE IS ONE THAT MAY BE OF ASSISTANCE TO YOU.*
*HOLY CRAP! HE'S TALKING ABOUT TECH JACKET! YOU SHOULD TOTALLY ORDER THAT TRADE PAPERBACK, DUDE.
THEIR OLD MIGRATION PATHS CAME RIGHT THROUGH THIS SPOT ON THE STARMAPS.
IF WE COULD CATCH ONE OF THESE IT WOULD BE A HUGE HELP. SPACE SHARKS ARE BAD NEWS.

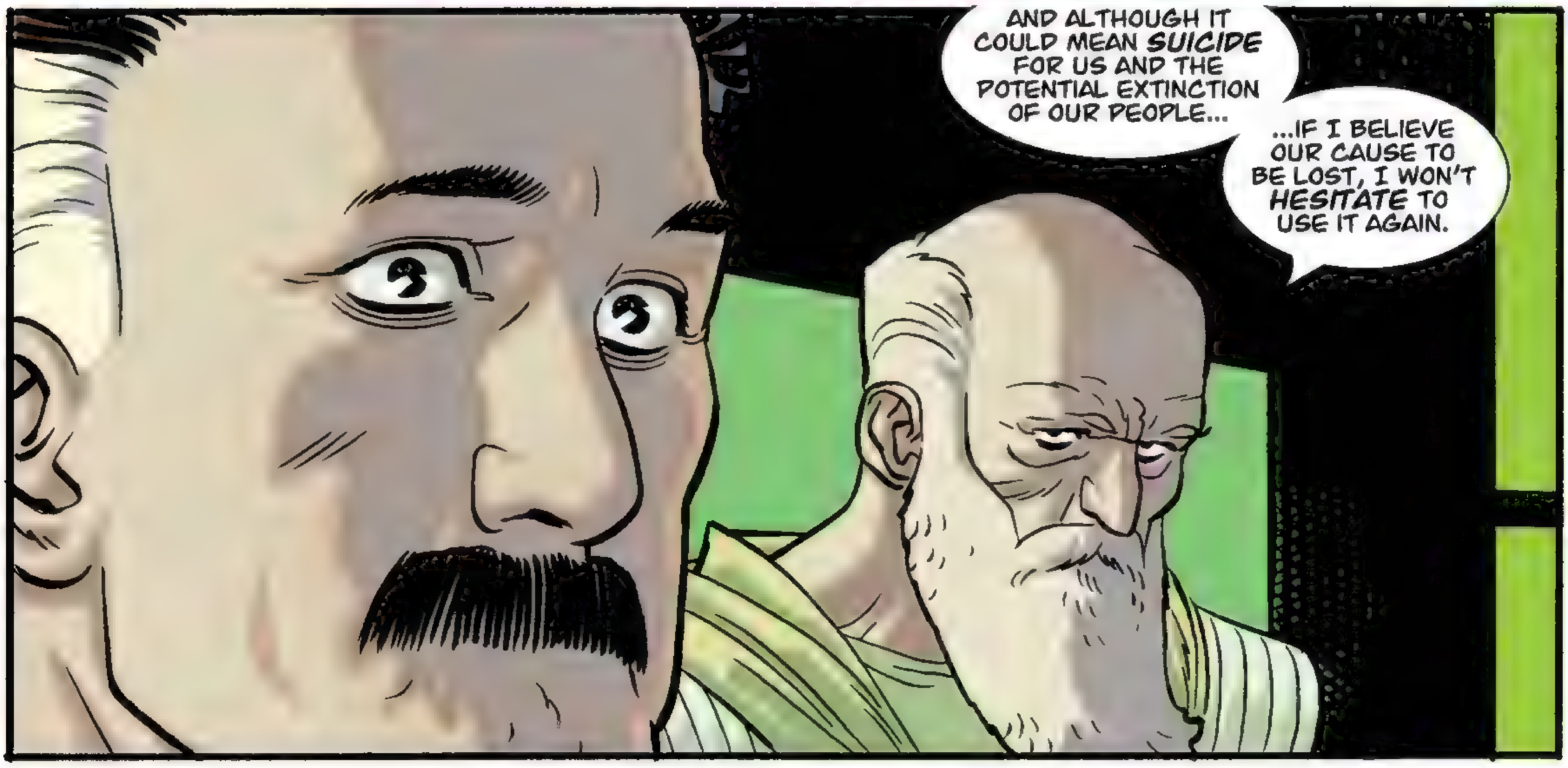
IF THIS THING IS STILL OUT HERE-- THIS BEACON WILL DETECT IT.
LET'S GO.
YIPE!
WE KNOW HIM AS BATTLE BEAST.
I KNOW OF THE ONE YOU SPEAK. MY PLANET'S FAVORITE SON... OUR WORLD'S PROTECTOR, HE BROUGHT US THIS UTOPIA.
BUT IN DOING SO, HE BECAME ADDICTED TO CONFLICT. INVULNERABLE AND IMMORTAL, HE LEFT OUR WORLD IN SEARCH OF CONFLICT WORTHY OF HIS UNIQUE ABILITIES.
I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM, THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHO DO NOT BELIEVE HIM TO EXIST. I PRAY TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE HIS RETURN. WE ALL DO.
GONE.
I FEAR I DID MY JOB TOO WELL.


HE'S SLEEPING!
THAT MAN WOULD SLEEP THROUGH ANYTHING! I STILL NEED TO TALK TO HIM. JUST--ASK HIM TOMORROW. WHEN IS HE GOING TO FINALLY MOVE OUT?
THIS IS RIDICULOUS. HE'S BEEN SLEEPING ON OUR COUCH FOR MONTHS!
YOU COULD HAVE ASKED ME INSTEAD OF LAUNCHING INTO THIS TIRADE. HE'S MOVING OUT NEXT WEEK.
WE'VE BEEN WORKING SO MUCH, IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO FIND A PLACE.
OH. I HAD NO IDEA.
OKAY.
NOW, CAN WE JUST GO TO BED?
AGAIN? OH, ALLEN-- YOU'RE SPOILING ME.

FINALLY IN YOUR NEW PLACE? *GOOD FOR YOU.* I'M SURE YOU'RE *THRILLED.*
HEH.
NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE SEX DRIVE OF A REPRESSED UNOPAN.
NO KIDDING.
THAEDUS, I HAVE TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, SINCE IT'S JUST YOU AND I HERE... I HAVE...
CONCERNS.
I SHARE THEM.
COME WITH ME.
WE HAVE SPACE RACER WORKING WITH US. WE WERE ABLE TO EXTRACT A DILUTED SAMPLE OF THE KLAXUS POISON FROM THE SINTAK BEETLE.
THERE ARE OTHER POTENTIAL ITEMS OF INTEREST-- BUT I FEAR IT WON'T BE ENOUGH.
IT *WILL* BE.
COME.
THE TIME TO STRIKE IS *NOW.* YOU NEED TO GO TO EARTH.
GET YOUR SON AND THAT BOY WITH THE GELDARIAN WEAPON-- AND WHOEVER ELSE YOU THINK CAN HELP US.
WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO ARRANGE AS MANY THREATS TO THE VILTRUMITES AS WE CAN WHILE YOU ARE AWAY.
NOW...
...THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST REVEAL TO YOU.

WHEN YOU TOLD ME OF OUR PEOPLE'S GENOCIDE... I WASN'T COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED.
I TURNED MY BACK ON MY PEOPLE BECAUSE I GREW TO BELIEVE THEIR ACTIONS TO BE, FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD... ***EVIL***. I HAVE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO BRINGING AN END TO THEIR TYRANNY.
I WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO BRING AN END TO THIS AGE OF VIOLENCE AND FEAR. BUT I NEVER KNEW... I WAS UNAWARE OF THE ***EXTENT*** OF THE DAMAGE I'D BROUGHT TO THE VILTRUMITES.
STEP THROUGH THIS DOOR.
THE WORST THING TO EVER HAPPEN TO OUR PEOPLE... IT WAS MY GENETIC SIGNATURE THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE...


THE SCOURGE VIRUS?
YES... AN *IMPROVED* STRAIN THAT WOULD CIRCUMVENT ANY IMMUNITY THAT HAS DEVELOPED...


AND ALTHOUGH IT COULD MEAN *SUICIDE* FOR US AND THE POTENTIAL EXTINCTION OF OUR PEOPLE...
...IF I BELIEVE OUR CAUSE TO BE LOST, I WON'T *HESITATE* TO USE IT AGAIN.

COP

CHAPTER 68

OPI
HR
MISSIN

UNGH.
ALMOST THERE.
112

WRAMM!!
STOP!
CHOOM!
ORTH
YOU DISRUPT THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THE EVILS YOU HAVE SERVED?! HOW MUCH YOU HAVE DAMAGED CIVILIZATION WITH YOUR ACTIONS?!
DO YOU?!
El Madman's
TACOS
TACOS
DUDE... THE HECK--?!
TACOS...

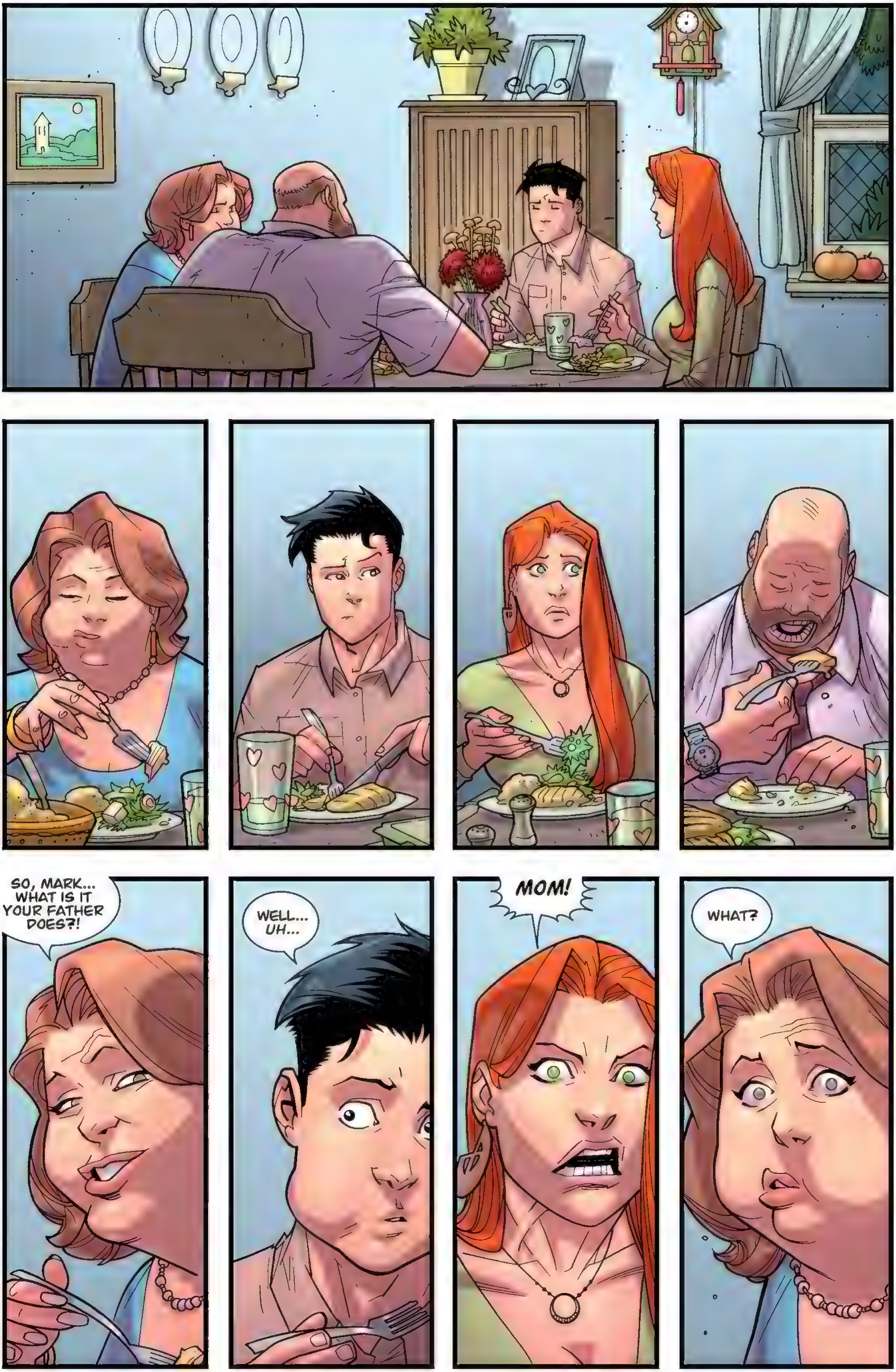
YOU *DISGUST* ME, YOU NAIVE FOOL! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE. THE DEVASTATION WORLDWIDE--IN ALL THE MAJOR CITIES OF THE WORLD--WAS THE *BEST* THING THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO US!
THE LACK OF FOOD AND SUPPLIES, THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS AMONG THE DISPLACED CITY DWELLERS WOULD HAVE STEMMED THE IMPENDING OVERPOPULATION CATASTROPHE.
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DENSELY POPULATED CITY CENTERS WOULD HAVE LED TO A SUBSTANTIAL DECREASE IN CARBON EMISSIONS LEADING TO A POSSIBLE END TO GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE.
THE PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT OF REBUILDING THE CITIES WOULD HAVE TAKEN *YEARS* IF YOU AND YOUR SUPERHERO FRIENDS HADN'T INTERFERED!
IT WOULD HAVE EMPLOYED *MILLIONS* WORLDWIDE AND BROUGHT ABOUT AN ERA OF UNPRECEDENTED PROSPERITY AND THE STRONGEST GLOBAL ECONOMY IN HISTORY.
BUT YOU HAD TO MEDDLE, YOU COULDN'T LET NATURE TAKE ITS COURSE. BY SAVING THOUSANDS YOU HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT THE DEATH OF *MILLIONS!*
IT ENDS HERE--YOUR MEDDLING WAYS--YOUR VERY *LIFE!*
TACOS..
GUESADILLA
CHILE RELLENO
FRENCH FRIES
YOUR BOYFRIEND'S ON THE NEWS... JEEZ, IS THAT A *DINOSAUR?* LOOKS LIKE HE'LL BE LATE FOR DINNER TONIGHT.
DON'T KNOW WHO HE'S FIGHTING, THOUGH... AND HE'S HUGE...
NAH. HE'S GOT AN HOUR AND A HALF TO GET HERE. HE'LL MAKE IT, HE KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO ME.
GREAT, MOM--NOW YOU'VE GOT ME WORRIED.
FINALLY!
I THOUGHT YOU'D *NEVER* SHUT UP!
KROOM!

KRAKOOM!
CRAP!
ROBOT'S GOING TO BE PISSED. I'M SURE THESE THINGS AREN'T CHEAP.
OH, WELL-- I'M SURE I'M PLENTY HEALED BY NOW. I'VE BEEN WEARING THESE FOR--
AGH!
YOU'RE FAST!
HEY!
CHOMP!!
I STAND BEFORE YOU NOW TO SAY YOU ARE THE *OLD* WAY, INVINCIBLE!
I REPRESENT A NEW WORLD ORDER! TREMBLE BEFORE THE MIGHT OF **DINOSAURUS!**
AW, NUTS.
YOU'RE ACTUALLY A VIABLE THREAT.

OH, SHUT UP!
WHAMM!
WHUDD!
NO! NOT AGAIN!
WHAT THE--?!
BRO, YOU GOTTA DO SOMETHING. THAT THING IS LIKE-- AS EVIL AS IT IS SMART! I DON'T KNOW IF IT CAN BE STOPPED!
IT CAN RETURN AT ANY TIME... IT'S OUT OF CONTROL. IT MAKES ME HURT PEOPLE AND STUFF!
PLEASE, HELP ME!
WHOA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING, MAN?!

THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE, MY FRIEND.
WHAT A MESS. OUR WORK IS *NEVER* DONE.
INVINCIBLE, WHAT IS IT YOU WERE GOING TO DO TO HIM?
SURELY YOU WEREN'T...

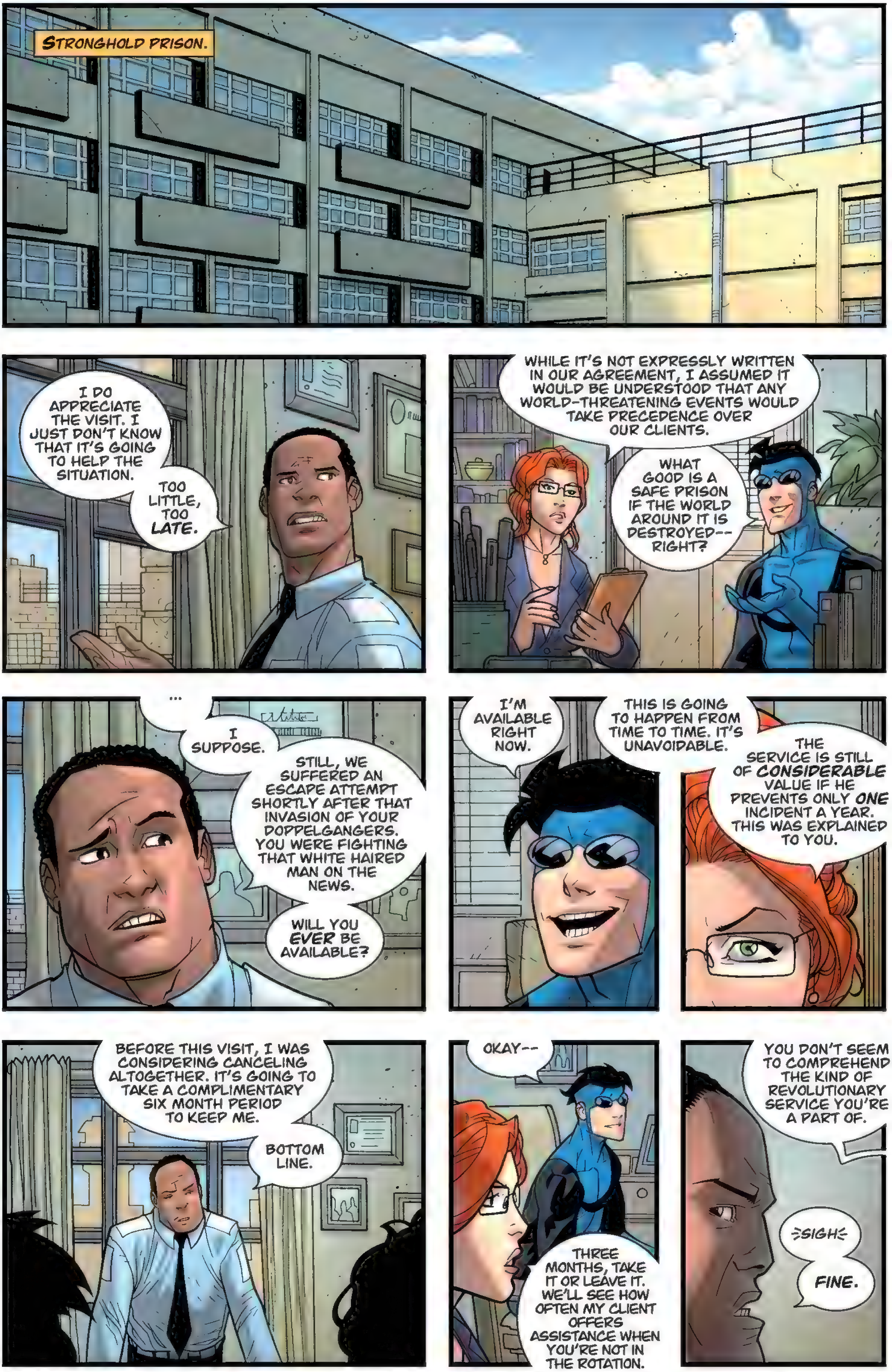
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
"YEAH. I WAS GOING TO KILL HIM." WAS THE FIRST THING THAT POPPED INTO MY HEAD... AND HEARING IT PUT SO PLAINLY LIKE THAT...
IT JUST FELT SO... WRONG.
WERE YOU GOING TO KILL HIM? COULD YOU?
HE CAUSED ALL KINDS OF DAMAGE, WAS RANTING AND RAVING ABOUT HOW THE CITIES BEING LEVELED WAS A GOOD THING AND HOW I SHOULDN'T HAVE HELPED REBUILD THEM.
WAS HE GOING TO ATTEMPT TO LEVEL THE CITY AGAIN? HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN SAVED BY KILLING HIM?
THIS IS HOW I'M THINKING NOW. I SHOULD JUST TAKE CARE OF THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL... SAVE EVERYONE THE HEARTACHE.
BUT COULD YOU?
I DON'T KNOW. CONQUEST... ANGSTROM... I HAD A PERSONAL STAKE IN THAT. I SNAPPED.
THIS GUY WAS JUST SOME IDIOT FRAT BOY. I FELT SORRY FOR HIM... BUT... I THINK I WAS GOING TO.
I DON'T KNOW.
THAT'S GOOD... I THINK THAT'S A GOOD THING... YOU NOT KNOWING.
LET'S GO EAT. MY PARENTS PROBABLY THINK WE'RE AVOIDING THEM.
THANKS FOR DOING THIS. THEY'RE EXCITED.
NO PROBLEM, EVE.
HOW BAD COULD IT BE?
...
WHAT DID I SAY?


SO, MARK... WHAT IS IT YOUR FATHER DOES?!
WELL... UH...
MOM!
WHAT?

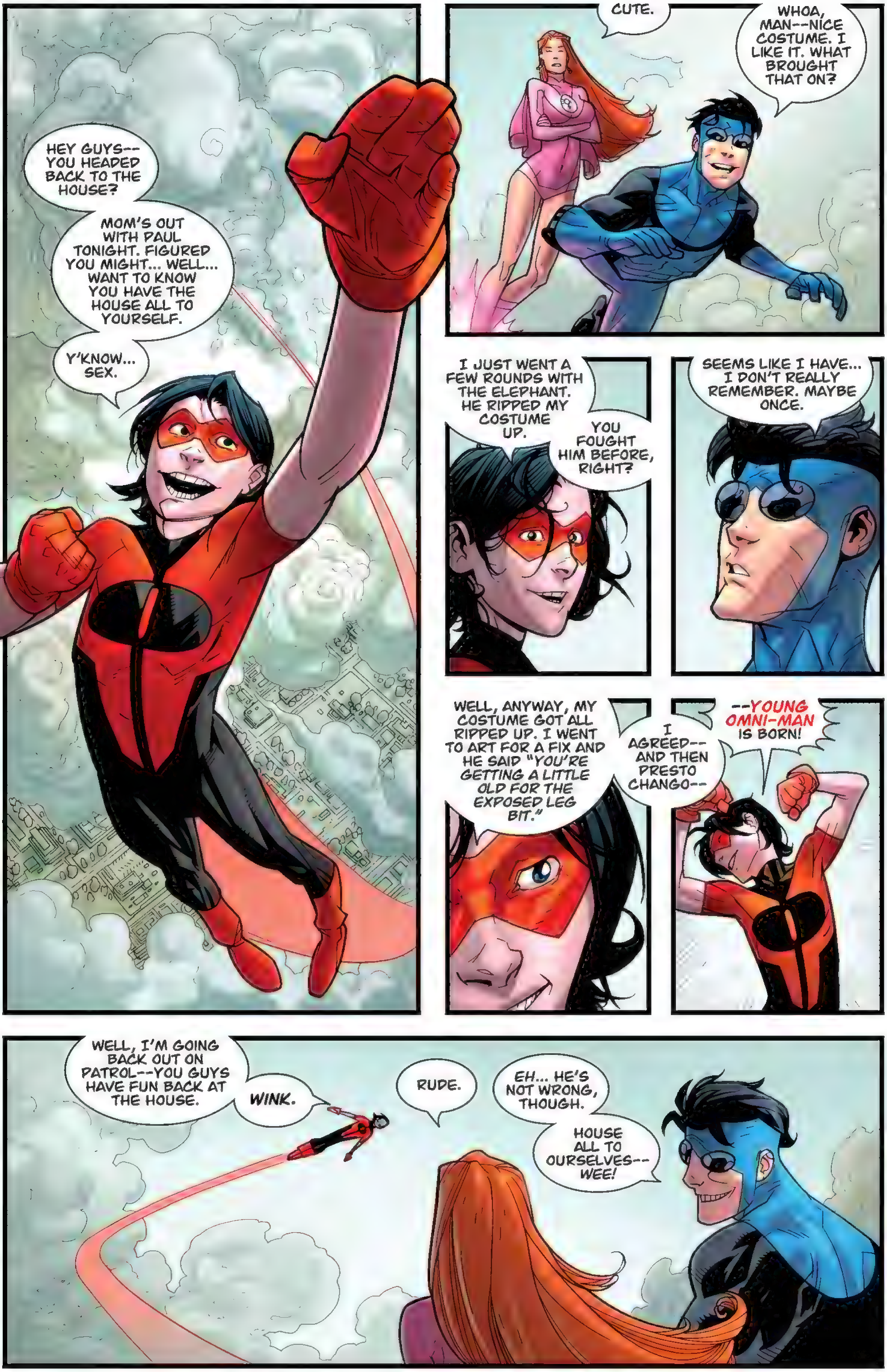
DAMN IT, BETSY! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR *MIND?!*
THE BOY'S FATHER IS THE PSYCHO WHO TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD! DON'T YOU REMEMBER?!
OMNI-MAN!
THE BOY HAD TO FIGHT HIM--HIS OWN FATHER--TO SAVE THE PLANET! PROBABLY NOT HIS FAVORITE DINNER CONVERSATION, YOU DITZ!!
DAD!
STOP!
NO, IT'S OKAY. YOUR FATHER IS *RIGHT*. I WAS JUST TRYING TO MAKE CONVERSATION--BUT IT WAS A STUPID MISTAKE TO MAKE.
I'M VERY SORRY, MARK.
IT'S TOTALLY OKAY, REALLY.
WHY DO YOU LET HIM TREAT YOU LIKE THIS?
LET?! NOBODY "LETS" ME DO ANYTHING... NOT IN MY OWN HOME! I--
UM.
NEVER MIND.
SO, MR. WILKINS... ADAM...
YOU LIKE SPORTS?

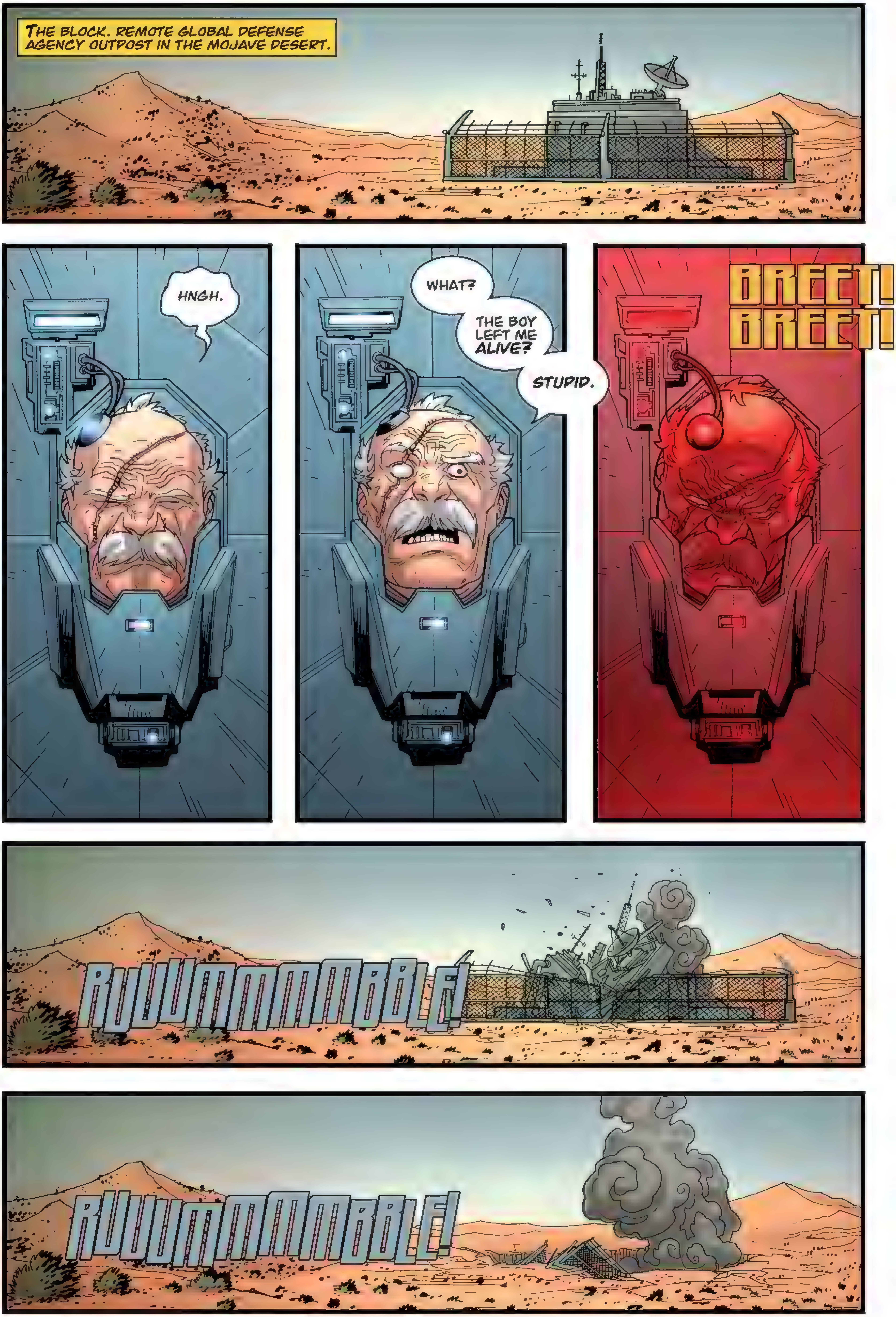
JUST GOING TO LEAVE THEM WITH THE DISHES?
THEY *LIKE* IT. BONDING TIME. CIGAR?
NO, NO THANKS. WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
I WANTED TO *THANK* YOU.
I KNOW THAT MY LITTLE ANGEL IS NO ANGEL. I CAUGHT HER ONE TIME, WITH THAT LONG-HAIRED BOY. THE ONE THAT DIED.
YOU KNOW SHE HAD HIM LIVING HERE FOR A WHILE? WE DIDN'T EVEN *KNOW*.
ANYWAY, I APPRECIATE YOU GIVING HER A CHANCE... KNOWING YOU'RE NOT HER *FIRST*.
SHE NEVER REALLY GOT JUST HOW *IMPORTANT* VIRGINITY IS TO A WOMAN.
MEN LIKE TO FEEL LIKE THEY'RE BREAKING NEW GROUND. THEY WANT TO BE THE TEACHERS... THEY WANT TO BE IN CHARGE.
HARD TO DO THAT IF THERE'S NO CORNERS LEFT UNEXPLORED, RIGHT?
BETSY WAS A VIRGIN WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER.
YOU CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN YOU'RE WITH A VIRGIN. THEY JUST ACT DIFFERENTLY, THINK DIFFERENTLY... LESS CONFIDENCE. IT'S *ATTRACTIVE*.
DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD HAVE MARRIED BETSY, HAD THINGS BEEN... DIFFERENT.
I DON'T LIKE COMING IN SECOND... OR THIRD... OR... WHATEVER THE CASE MAY BE.
IT'S GOOD OF YOU TO LOOK PAST MY DAUGHTER'S OBVIOUS FLAWS. SHOWS CHARACTER. I *RESPECT* THAT.
OF COURSE, IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD WHEN A WOMAN KNOWS A THING OR TWO, RIGHT? SO I GUESS THERE ARE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES...

I TOLD YOU IT WOULD BE *HORRIBLE*.
WHAT WAS MY DAD SAYING TO YOU OUT THERE? YOU GUYS TALKED *FOREVER*.
NOTHING IMPORTANT.
WELL, THANKS FOR DOING THIS. I REALLY APPRECIATE IT. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO DISLIKE MY PARENTS AS MUCH AS I DO.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?
SO, YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT TOMORROW? ARE YOU READY?
I THINK I CAN DO *ANYTHING*, NOW.


STRONGHOLD PRISON.
I DO APPRECIATE THE VISIT. I JUST DON'T KNOW THAT IT'S GOING TO HELP THE SITUATION.
TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.
WHILE IT'S NOT EXPRESSLY WRITTEN IN OUR AGREEMENT, I ASSUMED IT WOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT ANY WORLD-THREATENING EVENTS WOULD TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER OUR CLIENTS.
WHAT GOOD IS A SAFE PRISON IF THE WORLD AROUND IT IS DESTROYED-- RIGHT?
...
I SUPPOSE.
STILL, WE SUFFERED AN ESCAPE ATTEMPT SHORTLY AFTER THAT INVASION OF YOUR DOPPELGANGERS. YOU WERE FIGHTING THAT WHITE HAIRED MAN ON THE NEWS.
WILL YOU EVER BE AVAILABLE?
I'M AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW.
THIS IS GOING TO HAPPEN FROM TIME TO TIME. IT'S UNAVOIDABLE.
THE SERVICE IS STILL OF CONSIDERABLE VALUE IF HE PREVENTS ONLY ONE INCIDENT A YEAR. THIS WAS EXPLAINED TO YOU.
BEFORE THIS VISIT, I WAS CONSIDERING CANCELING ALTOGETHER. IT'S GOING TO TAKE A COMPLIMENTARY SIX MONTH PERIOD TO KEEP ME.
BOTTOM LINE.
OKAY--
THREE MONTHS, TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT. WE'LL SEE HOW OFTEN MY CLIENT OFFERS ASSISTANCE WHEN YOU'RE NOT IN THE ROTATION.
YOU DON'T SEEM TO COMPREHEND THE KIND OF REVOLUTIONARY SERVICE YOU'RE A PART OF.
SIGH
FINE.

OH, WOW! THAT WAS *AWESOME!* YOU WERE *AMAZING* IN THERE!
SOMEONE HAD TO BE. LORD, MARK--YOU'RE SUCH A PUSH OVER. YOU GIVE HIM SIX FREE MONTHS AND WE'LL **NEVER** HAVE OUR OWN PLACE!
SORRY.
YOU OKAY TO FLY? I MEAN, YOUR POWERS--?
I WOULDN'T BE FLYING SO HIGH IF YOU WEREN'T RIGHT HERE. I DON'T KNOW--THEY HAVEN'T ACTED UP IN A FEW DAYS... MAYBE THAT'S **OVER.**
ONE CAN ONLY HOPE...
SORRY I BROUGHT IT UP. DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU.
IT'S OKAY.
THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT I'VE GOTTEN SOME CALLS FROM A FEW POWER PLANTS INQUIRING ABOUT OUR SERVICE. THIS COULD BE **HUGE.**
DO YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH WE'LL BE MAKING IF WE GET SO MUCH AS SIX REGULAR CLIENTS?
NOPE... BUT AS LONG AS *YOU* KNOW, I'M COOL.
MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA TO EXPAND OUR ROSTER A LITTLE... HAVE AT LEAST ONE RESERVE FOR WHEN YOU'RE TIED UP SOMEWHERE ELSE.
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT MAYBE OLIVER HELPING OUT? I'M SURE HE NEEDS MONEY.
SPEAK OF THE DEVIL...


HEY GUYS-- YOU HEADED BACK TO THE HOUSE?
MOM'S OUT WITH PAUL TONIGHT. FIGURED YOU MIGHT... WELL... WANT TO KNOW YOU HAVE THE HOUSE ALL TO YOURSELF.
Y'KNOW... SEX.
CUTE.
WHOA, MAN--NICE COSTUME. I LIKE IT. WHAT BROUGHT THAT ON?
I JUST WENT A FEW ROUNDS WITH THE ELEPHANT. HE RIPPED MY COSTUME UP.
YOU FOUGHT HIM BEFORE, RIGHT?
SEEMS LIKE I HAVE... I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER. MAYBE ONCE.
WELL, ANYWAY, MY COSTUME GOT ALL RIPPED UP. I WENT TO ART FOR A FIX AND HE SAID "YOU'RE GETTING A LITTLE OLD FOR THE EXPOSED LEG BIT."
I AGREED-- AND THEN PRESTO CHANGO--
--YOUNG OMNI-MAN IS BORN!
WELL, I'M GOING BACK OUT ON PATROL--YOU GUYS HAVE FUN BACK AT THE HOUSE.
WINK.
RUDE.
EH... HE'S NOT WRONG, THOUGH.
HOUSE ALL TO OURSELVES-- WEE!


THE BLOCK. REMOTE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY OUTPOST IN THE MOJAVE DESERT.
HNGH.
WHAT?
THE BOY LEFT ME *ALIVE?*
STUPID.
BREET! BREET!
RUUUMMMMMMBBLE!
RUUUMMMMMMBBLE!

WRAKOOM!!

OH, FU--

OUR ARMY IS COMPLETE.
OUR GENERALS ARE IN PLACE.
THE SEQUID INVASION OF EARTH BEGINS *NOW!*

EVE? MY MOM'S GOING TO BE HOME SOON AND I'D RATHER IT NOT BE *OBVIOUS* WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING.
I MEAN, I REALLY APPRECIATE THAT YOU'RE ALREADY COMFORTABLE ENOUGH IN OUR RELATIONSHIP TO SPEND SO MUCH TIME IN THE CAN--BUT YOU LEFT YOUR PANTS OUT HERE.
SENDS THE WRONG SIGNAL, Y'KNOW?
NOK! NOK!
EVE?
GO AWAY!
OKAY, UH... LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.

ONE STEP

CHAPTER 69

SHE IS UNIVERSA, WARRIOR QUEEN TO A FAR OFF WORLD.
SHE HAS TRAVELED COUNTLESS MILES TO THE PLANET EARTH. HER REASONS FOR DOING SO WILL PUT THE ENTIRE PLANET IN JEOPARDY.
SHE IS AS DEADLY AS SHE IS RELENTLESS.
SHE WILL NOT STOP-- WILL NOT REST UNTIL SHE GETS WHAT SHE HAS COME FOR.
THE POPULATION OF THIS PLANET IS IN GRAVE DANGER--THEY HAVE NO CONCEPT OF THE LEVEL OF THREAT COMING THEIR WAY.

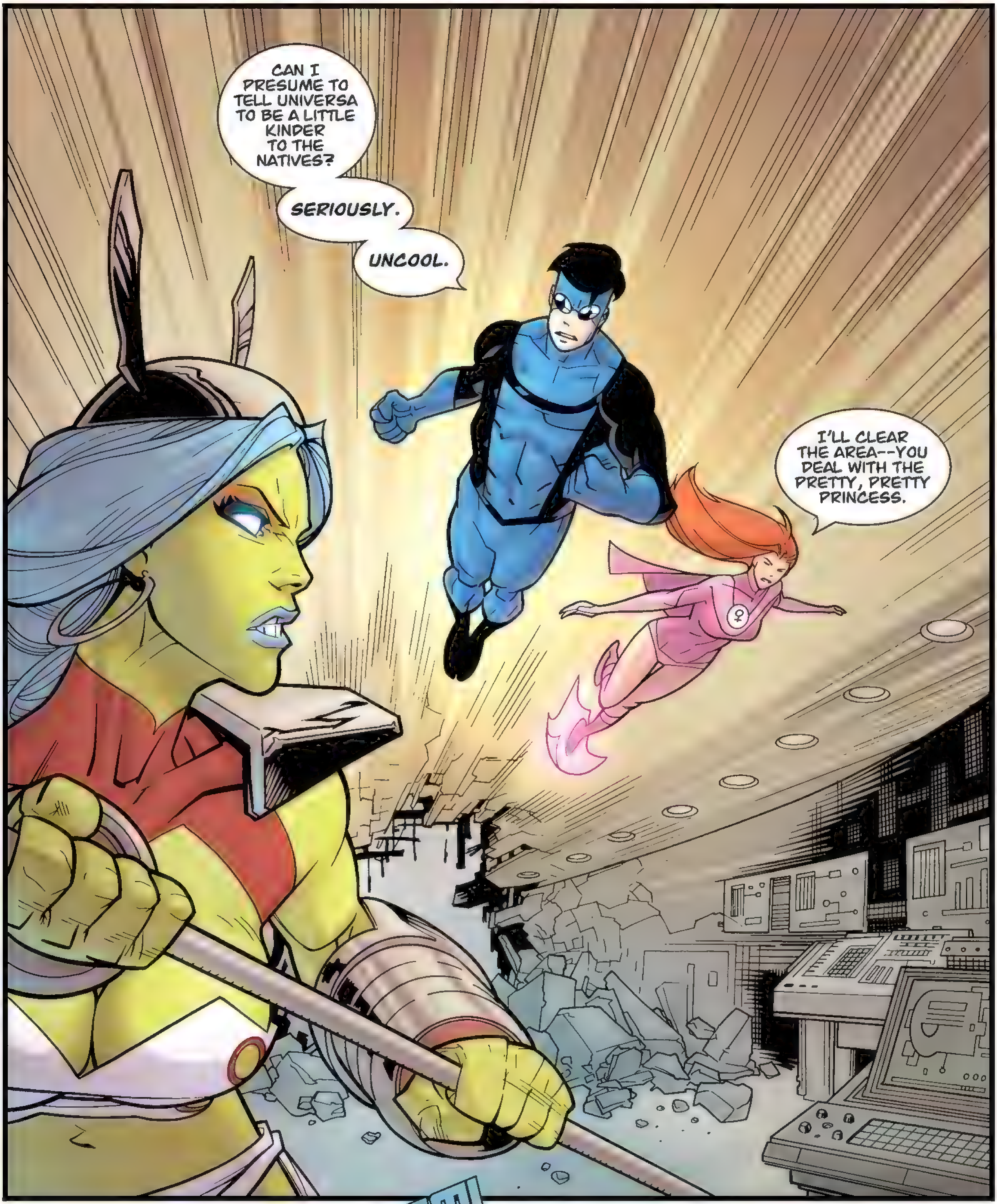
Because the people of Earth have far more pressing concerns at the moment.
KROOM!
WROMM!
Hear me, human race! It is time to meet your new masters!
Together we will form a new race--a new civilization. We will live together as one--a new combined race of human and Sequid!
Embrace us or DIE!
CAFE
The people of Earth do not live in a constant state of fear. While there have been alien invasions, entire cities leveled and villains who threaten all life on Earth...
These attacks are few and far between. There are days, weeks, even months of peace.
And even on days when there is an attack of some kind, on some large scale, it is most often an isolated event, affecting one area, easily handled by one costumed hero.
It is a rare occasion that two threats, of similar magnitude, would somehow occur on the same day...

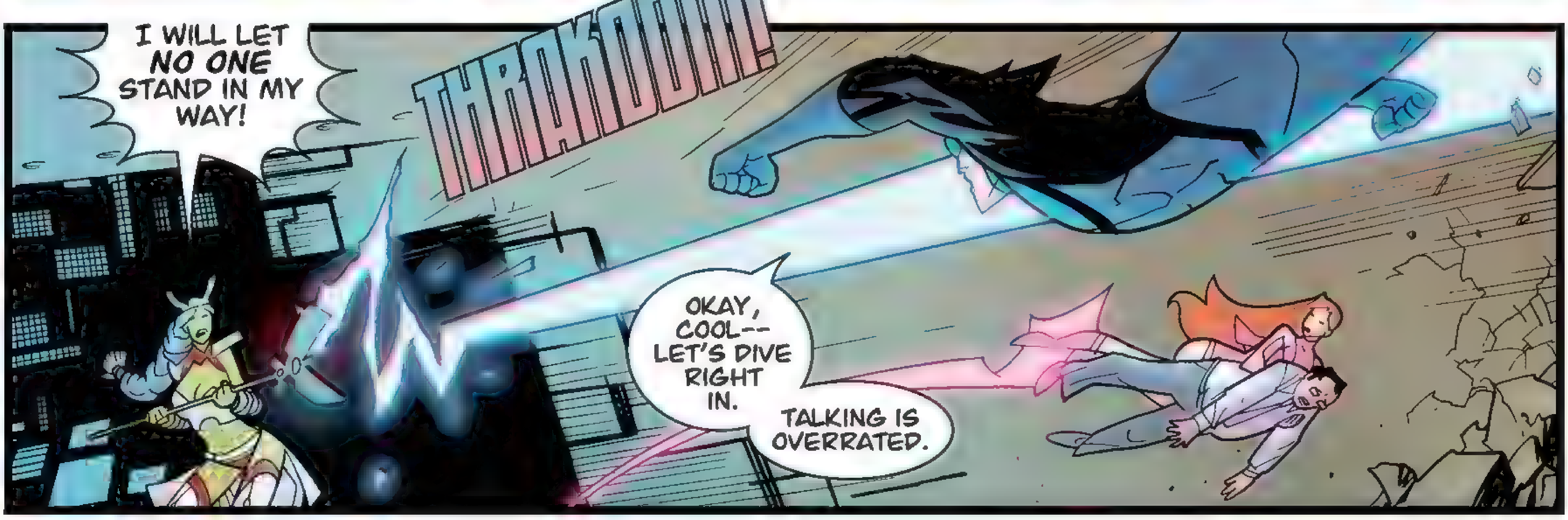
...BUT THIS IS ONE OF THOSE DAYS.
BRAKKA-THOOM!!!
THERE.

ARE YOU *OKAY?* YOU'VE BEEN ACTING... DISTANT SINCE LAST NIGHT. I SWEAR MY MOM HAS NO CLUE YOU SPENT THE NIGHT.
SHE WAS OUT SUPER-LATE--PROBABLY STILL ASLEEP. IT'S COOL ANYWAY, I DOUBT SHE'D CARE.
EVE?
I'M OKAY.
I'M JUST TIRED... UM...
...AND WORRIED ABOUT MY POWERS.
BUT YOU HAVEN'T HAD ANY MORE PROBLEMS WITH THEM, RIGHT? I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A ONE TIME THING.
DID SOMETHING ELSE--
BREET! BREET!
WHAT IS *THAT?*
I DON'T KNOW. WHERE IS IT COMING FROM?
WAIT!
CRAP!
CRAP!
CRAP!
HI--*INVINCIBLE INCORPORATED.* HOW MAY I HELP YOU?
RIGHT NOW?
OKAY. NO, WE CAN HANDLE THAT.
WE'RE ON OUR WAY.

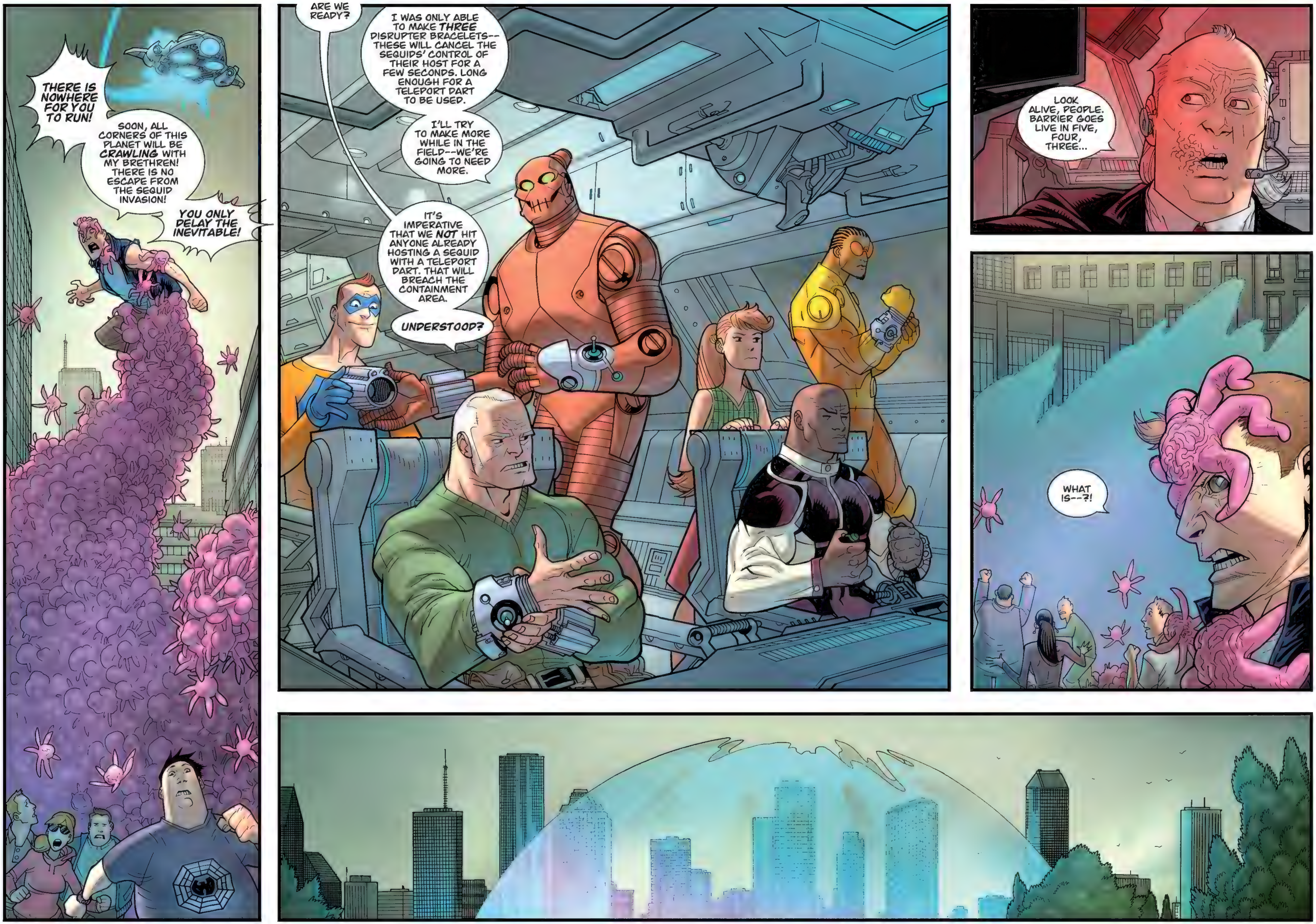
WOW.
WHAT IS IT?
THAT WAS WESTERN POWER. THEY'VE GOT A NUCLEAR PLANT UNDER ATTACK--RIGHT NOW. THEY SAY IF WE CAN STOP WHOEVER IS ATTACKING THEY'LL SIGN A FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT.
HOW FAST CAN YOU GET--
--READY?
LET'S GO.
ARE YOU SURE I SHOULD GO? MY POWERS?
YOU CAN HANG BACK A LITTLE IF YOU'RE WORRIED. WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THEY'RE STILL ACTING UP.
YEAH.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
MARK!
ALIENS ARE ATTACKING HOUSTON--IT'S ALL OVER THE NEWS. I NEED TO--
SHOOT.

AAAGGH!
AAIIIEEE!!
SCATTER, VERMIN!
WRAKOOM!
MY PEOPLE HUNGER--THEY ARE IN NEED! STAND ASIDE OR BE SLAIN!
I HAVE TRAVELLED VAST SPANS OF THE COSMOS TO ARRIVE HERE. YOU ARE A PLANET RICH WITH ENERGY.
I WANT IT!
I WANT IT ALL!
THE ENERGY GENERATED BY THIS PLANT-- IT'S SENT RIGHT INTO THE GRID-- WE DON'T STORE IT!
WE HAVE NO MEANS OF STORING IT AND GIVING IT TO YOU--WHAT YOU ASK FOR-- IT JUST ISN'T--
--PRACTICAL.
FOOL!
WROMM!
I HAVE MY OWN MEANS OF STORING YOUR ENERGY.
DO NOT PRESUME TO TELL UNIVERSA HOW TO COMPLETE HER TASK!


CAN I PRESUME TO TELL UNIVERSA TO BE A LITTLE KINDER TO THE NATIVES?
SERIOUSLY.
UNCOOL.
I'LL CLEAR THE AREA--YOU DEAL WITH THE PRETTY, PRETTY PRINCESS.


I WILL LET NO ONE STAND IN MY WAY!
THRAKOOM!
OKAY, COOL-- LET'S DIVE RIGHT IN.
TALKING IS OVERRATED.

STILL, THOUGH--IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING--WHAT IS IT YOU'RE AFTER?
HOW DARE YOU?!
WRAMM!
NONE BUT I CAN WIELD THE STAFF OF LEADERSHIP!
KROOM!
STOP!
I DON'T *WANT* YOUR STUPID STAFF! I DON'T EVEN WANT TO FIGHT YOU!
ALL I WANT IS FOR YOU TO STOP HURTING PEOPLE!
YOU'RE IN A POWER PLANT--I GET IT. YOU'RE AFTER ENERGY--*GREAT!* DID YOU EVER THINK TO JUST *ASK* FOR HOWEVER MUCH YOU NEED?!
<3<3
MAYBE WE CAN GIVE IT TO YOU--WOULDN'T *THAT* BE EASIER?
MY WORLD IS *EIGHT TIMES* THE SIZE OF YOURS. THE AMOUNT OF POWER I NEED TO PREVENT A GLOBAL EXTINCTION WILL DRAIN THIS PLANET *DRY*.
OKAY THEN...
WE CAN FIGHT NOW.


THERE IS NOWHERE FOR YOU TO RUN!
SOON, ALL CORNERS OF THIS PLANET WILL BE *CRAWLING* WITH MY BRETHREN! THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM THE SEQUID INVASION!
YOU ONLY DELAY THE INEVITABLE!
ARE WE READY?
I WAS ONLY ABLE TO MAKE *THREE* DISRUPTER BRACELETS-- THESE WILL CANCEL THE SEQUIDS' CONTROL OF THEIR HOST FOR A FEW SECONDS. LONG ENOUGH FOR A TELEPORT DART TO BE USED.
I'LL TRY TO MAKE MORE WHILE IN THE FIELD--WE'RE GOING TO NEED MORE.
IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT WE *NOT* HIT ANYONE ALREADY HOSTING A SEQUID WITH A TELEPORT DART. THAT WILL BREACH THE CONTAINMENT AREA.
UNDERSTOOD?
LOOK ALIVE, PEOPLE. BARRIER GOES LIVE IN FIVE, FOUR, THREE...
WHAT IS--?!

WE HAVE TO WORK *FAST,* PEOPLE!
PRIORITY ONE IS REMOVING PEOPLE FROM THE CONTAINMENT ZONE. HIT THEM WITH THE DARTS AND THEY'RE TELEPORTED AWAY. THERE ARE *THOUSANDS* OF PEOPLE LEFT UNDER THIS DOME--WE DON'T GET THEM ALL--THE SEQUIDS REMAIN LINKED.
AS LONG AS THEY HAVE AT LEAST *ONE* HOST TO ATTACH THEMSELVES TO THEIR MINDS REMAIN LINKED-- NO HOST, AND THEY'RE MINDLESS DRONES.
I DON'T THINK I HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENS IF WE FAIL.

LOOK ALIVE, GUARDIANS!
WE'RE IN THE THICK OF IT!
ACK!
WROMP!!
YOU'RE TOO LATE!
THERE ARE TOO MANY FLESHY HOSTS FOR US TO LATCH ONTO! WITH SO MANY OPTIONS TO LINK OUR MINDS--WE'RE UNSTOPPABLE!
TO BATTLE ME IS ONLY TO DELAY WHAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED! EMBRACE YOUR MASTER AND I WILL SHOW FAVOR TOWARD YOU.
DEFY ME AND I WILL DESTROY YOU!
THAP! THAP! THAP!
I HOPE THESE THINGS WORK--
AGH!
MY AR--!
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME!
YOU'LL NEVER GET THROUGH MY SKIN--AND YOU'LL NEVER OVERPOWER ME! I'M TOO STRONG FOR YOU!
FOOLS!
YOU HAVE NO CLUE WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST!

BWOOM!
WHUDD!
OW!
SERIOUSLY...
OW.
SURRENDER YOUR PLANET'S ENERGY TO ME.
YOU ARE BEATEN.
BEATEN? I SAID "OW."
I NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BEING *BEATEN.*
SEE?
WRAMM!

YOU DON'T KNOW THIS--BEING AN ALIEN AND ALL, BUT MY DAD WAS ALSO A SUPERHERO... AND AN ALIEN... WHICH, WELL--IT'S A LONG STORY.
ANYWAY, I NEVER GOT AROUND TO ASKING HIM ABOUT IT--BUT I KNOW HE FOUGHT HIS SHARE OF FEMALE VILLAINS IN HIS DAY.
EVER SINCE I FOUND OUT HE WAS A SUPERHERO--I ALWAYS WONDERED HOW HE DID IT. I MEAN, I'M A FIRM BELIEVER THAT HITTING WOMEN IS WRONG. THING IS, IT'S PART OF THE JOB--AND I DON'T WANT TO BE SEXIST.
IF I'M HONEST--AND FEEL FREE TO CALL ME OLD FASHIONED--I'M STILL NOT VERY COMFORTABLE WITH IT.
VTOOM!
SILENCE!
OW, AGAIN!
GETTING MORE COMFORTABLE WITH IT...
...AND WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING?
THIS IS THE STAFF OF LEADERSHIP--IT HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN FROM ONE RULER TO THE NEXT ON MY PLANET FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
IT EMITS A POWERFUL ENERGY BURST--A PULSE CONTAINING TWO DISTINCT ENERGY PATTERNS FUSED INTO ONE--A BURST CAPABLE OF LEVELING CITIES--ENDING CIVILIZATIONS--
--MORE THAN ENOUGH TO DESTROY YOU!
BWOOSH!!
NNNGGH!
--CAN'T!

YOU WERE A FOOL TO OPPOSE--
AGH!
WRAMM!
BACK OFF HIM, LADY. I'M KIND OF IN LOVE WITH--
KROOM!
YOU DARE INTERFERE?!
THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT--
OH, NO--
CRAP!
RTWOOM!

POWERS NOT WORKING!
A LITTLE HELP HERE!
PLEASE!!
BTWOO
EVE?
EVE!
AAGH!!
BTWOOM!
TO SEE ONE LOVE ANOTHER ENOUGH TO SACRIFICE THEMSELF TOUCHES ME... MORE THAN YOU COULD EVEN KNOW.
IT PAINS ME TO HAVE TO END YOUR LIFE--BUT THERE IS TOO MUCH AT STAKE. I CANNOT FAIL AND YOU WILL NOT YIELD TO ME.
YOU GIVE ME NO CHOICE...

GIVE ME THAT!
NO!
YEAAGH!!
BZZZKKLTTK!
WHUDD!
NNG.
YOU FOOL, ONLY THOSE CHOSEN BY THE ***WORLD-GOD*** CAN WIELD THE STAFF OF LEADERSHIP.
YOU HAVE SEALED YOUR PLANET'S FATE.
HEY!

SHUT UP!
POW!
CRAP-- THAT WORKED!
POWER... WAS IN HER STAFF.
ARE YOU OKAY?
JUST... A LITTLE DAZED... I'M FINE.
WELL, THAT CERTAINLY TOOK LONG ENOUGH.
NOW THAT THAT CRISIS IS AVERTED-- I NEED YOU IN HOUSTON--RIGHT NOW!
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE ON SITE, IT'S--
IF THEY'RE ALREADY THERE--WHY DO YOU NEED ME?
I DON'T KNOW HOW-- BUT THE SEQUIDS ARE BACK. WE'VE GOT THE CITY BLOCKED OFF, BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THAT WILL HOLD.
HOW MANY-- HOW BAD IS IT?
I MEAN-- THE GUARDIANS HAVE IT PRETTY MUCH TAKEN CARE OF...
...RIGHT?

ALL TOO EASY!

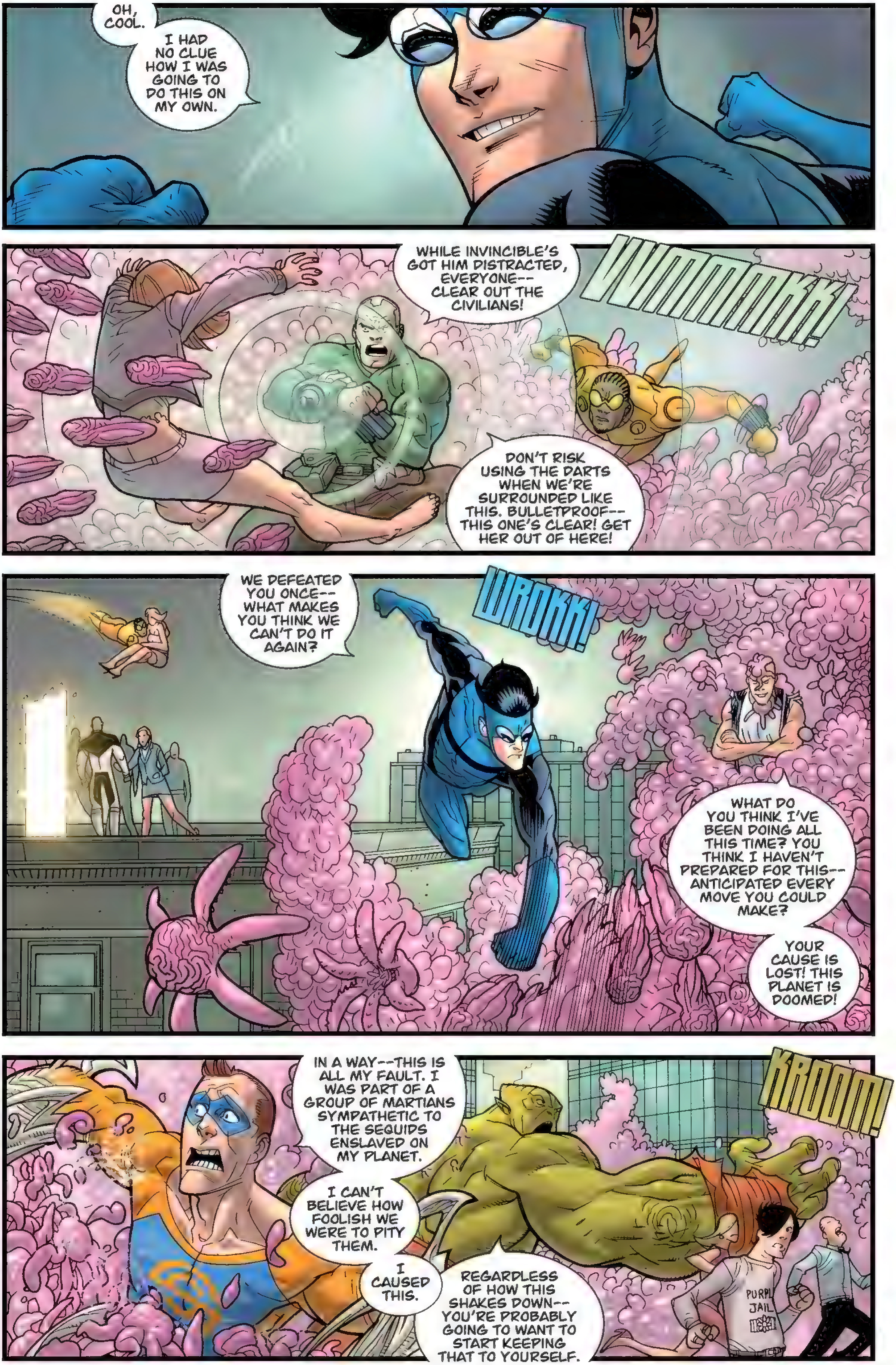
CHAPTER 70

LET THIS BE A LESSON TO ALL WHO OPPOSE THIS NEW WORLD THAT IS DAWNING!
WE ARE YOUR MASTERS NOW!
KEEP RANTING...
WIRRR KLKT!
YOUR SACRIFICE TODAY SUCCEEDS ONLY IN SETTING AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS WHO MAY OPPOSE US.
THE SEQUID RULE OF EARTH IS UPON YOU-- ACCEPT YOUR FATE OR DIE!
OKAY, I'M IN.
MY SUIT IS CLOSING UP-- THE SEQUIDS SHOULD HAVE NO IDEA I'M NO LONGER INSIDE, I CAN CONTROL IT FROM HERE.
EVERYONE, WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL.
WE'VE GOT TO RESUME THE ATTACK--KEEP HIM OCCUPIED WHILE WE EVACUATE THE REST OF THE CIVILIANS.
BOW BEFORE THE MIGHT OF THE SEQUID EMPI--
HUH?

WHAMM!

HOW?!
HOW IN THE HECK ARE YOU BACK?!
CHOOM!
DID YOU *REALLY* THINK THAT WOULD HURT US?! IS THAT THE EXTENT OF YOUR PLAN?
A TACKLE?!
PATHETIC.
I WAS JUST TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION.
THAT PLAN WORKED.
TO CONTINUE-- HOW ARE YOU HERE?! YOU WERE LEFT WITH THE MARTIANS, YOU HAD NO HOST-- THEY TOOK YOU BACK TO MARS.
RIGHT? I MEAN, OBVIOUSLY NOT... BUT WHAT HAPPENED? DID THE MARTIANS SEND YOU HERE? WAS IT AN ATTACK?
THIS ONE, THE BODY YOU SEE BEFORE YOU-- OUR ORIGINAL HOST. WE NEVER LEFT IT. *YOU* BROUGHT US HERE.

SO YOU'RE WANTING TO TAKE OVER THIS PLANET AND THEN ATTACK MARS... SOME KIND OF REVENGE THING?
COMBINING YOUR RACE WITH OURS--INCREASING YOUR NUMBER OF HOSTS TO A LEVEL THAT WOULD LEAD TO YOU NEVER BEING WITHOUT ONE...
...A NEW SYMBIOTIC RACE, ELIMINATING YOUR WEAKNESS ONCE AND FOR ALL, YOUR NEED TO LINK YOUR MINDS THROUGH THE CONNECTION OF AT LEAST ONE HOST.
VERY GOOD.
THAT IS OUR PLAN *EXACTLY*.
WELL, IT AIN'T GOING TO HAPPEN!
FOOM!!
NOW!
LET'S BRING THIS ONE TO A CLOSE, GUARDIANS! I'M FED UP WITH THESE THINGS.


OH, COOL.
I HAD NO CLUE HOW I WAS GOING TO DO THIS ON MY OWN.
WHILE INVINCIBLE'S GOT HIM DISTRACTED, EVERYONE-- CLEAR OUT THE CIVILIANS!
VVMMMKK!
DON'T RISK USING THE DARTS WHEN WE'RE SURROUNDED LIKE THIS. BULLETPROOF-- THIS ONE'S CLEAR! GET HER OUT OF HERE!
WE DEFEATED YOU ONCE-- WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE CAN'T DO IT AGAIN?
WROKK!
WHAT DO YOU THINK I'VE BEEN DOING ALL THIS TIME? YOU THINK I HAVEN'T PREPARED FOR THIS-- ANTICIPATED EVERY MOVE YOU COULD MAKE?
YOUR CAUSE IS LOST! THIS PLANET IS DOOMED!
IN A WAY--THIS IS ALL MY FAULT. I WAS PART OF A GROUP OF MARTIANS SYMPATHETIC TO THE SEQUIDS ENSLAVED ON MY PLANET.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW FOOLISH WE WERE TO PITY THEM.
I CAUSED THIS.
KROOM!
REGARDLESS OF HOW THIS SHAKES DOWN-- YOU'RE PROBABLY GOING TO WANT TO START KEEPING THAT TO YOURSELF.
PURPL JAIL

SO FAR, SO GOOD.
NO, DAMN IT!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH LATELY.
I'M NOT PLAYING AROUND HERE!!
WRAMM!

AND WE WERE STARTING TO SEE YOU AS SUCH A FORMIDABLE ADVERSARY.
WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU IS NOT *US*. WE ARE MANY! HURTING THIS FORM WILL ONLY CAUSE US TO CHOOSE ANOTHER HOST--
YOU CANNOT DEFEAT US THIS WAY!
I WILL HURT YOU THE ONLY WAY I KNOW HOW--AND I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE PAYING ATTENTION, BUT YOU'RE ALMOST OUT OF ALTERNATIVE HOSTS!
YOU'RE *LOSING!!*
ANOTHER ONE DOWN! *MOVE*--GET HIM OUT OF HERE!
KEEP IT UP, PEOPLE! WE'RE ALMOST IN THE CLEAR! IT'S LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL TIME.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SUCCEED! THESE PEOPLE ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION!
THEY HAVE ENDURED TOO MUCH! I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO HARM THEM!
YOU WILL NOT ENSLAVE THIS PLANET!
KROOM!!
MY PLANET!

MY--
...
KROOM!!!
I KNEW IT! WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING ABOVE--IT'S LITTLE MORE THAN A *DECOY!*
EVEN IF WE WIN UP THERE--YOU'RE HERE, HIDING, WAITING FOR THE FORCEFIELD AROUND THE CITY TO BE DROPPED.
IT'S OVER!
NO.
THE LINK TO THE ONE-MIND WILL NOT BE BROKEN.
SPLUCH!

PERIMETER TEAMS ARE GIVING US THE ALL-CLEAR SIGNAL. ONCE THESE LAST FEW PEOPLE IN OUR AREA ARE PORTED OUT-- WE'RE **CLEAN**.
IT'LL JUST BE US--AND HIM! MONSTER GIRL, KEEP THOSE PEOPLE CLEAR. SHAPESMITH--FIRE YOUR DISRUPTORS IN THAT AREA--BULLETPROOF, ALL YOURS.
I'M ON IT!
ALL CLEAR!
VZZKK!
WHAT--?
SHK!
GOT YOU!
CONTINUE INTO THE DOORWAY IN AN ORDERLY FASHION. THIS IS ONLY A TEMPORARY EVACUATION. WE SHOULD HAVE YOU RETURNED VERY SOON.
WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCONVENIENCE.
THINK THIS IS THE LAST OF THEM!

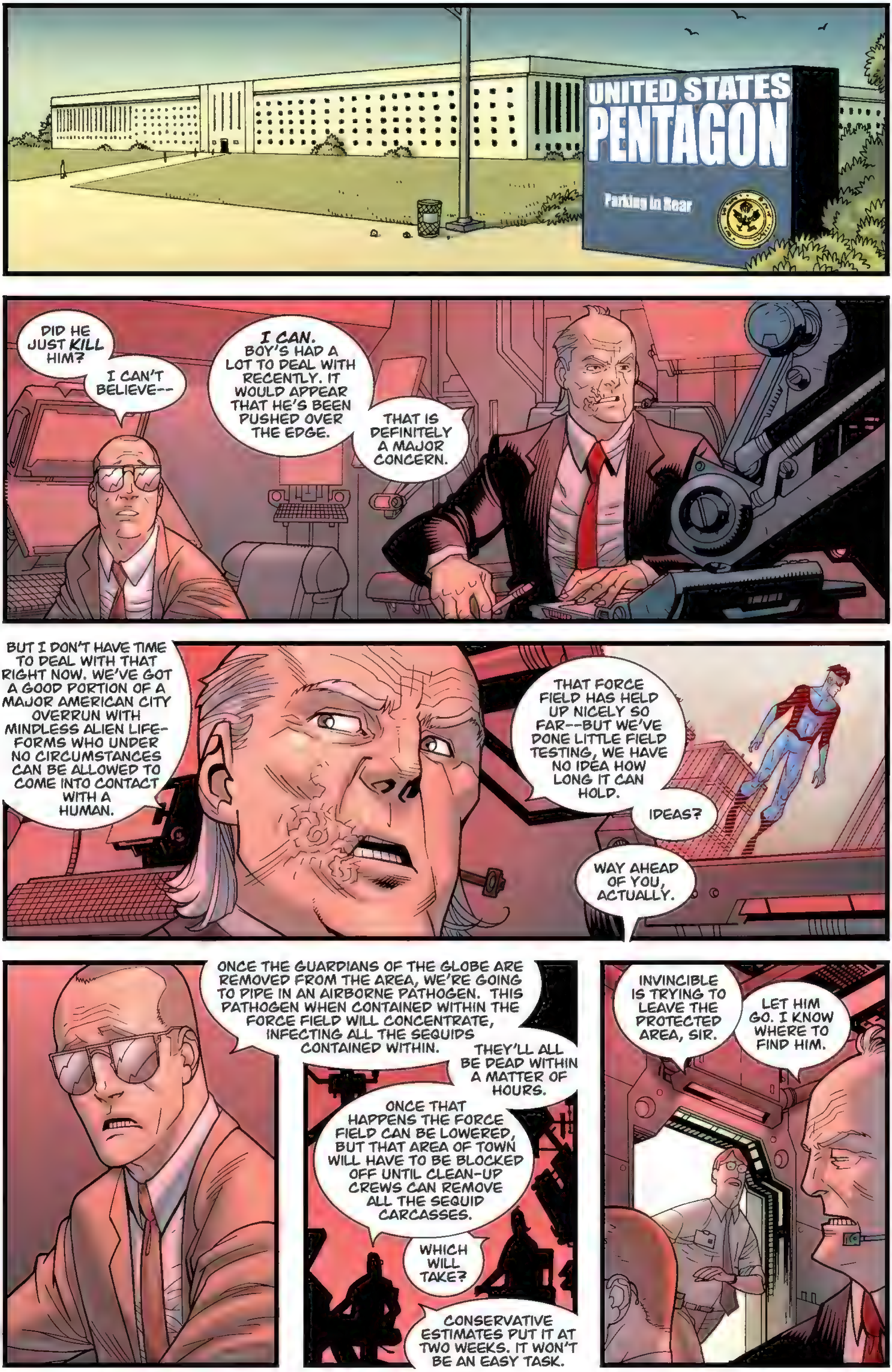
SHKK!
VZZZKKK!
HOPE THIS--
THOK!
--WORKS.
WOW-- LOT OF PEOPLE.
OKAY, I GOT DISTRACTED--
DON'T GET COCKY!
THRAKK

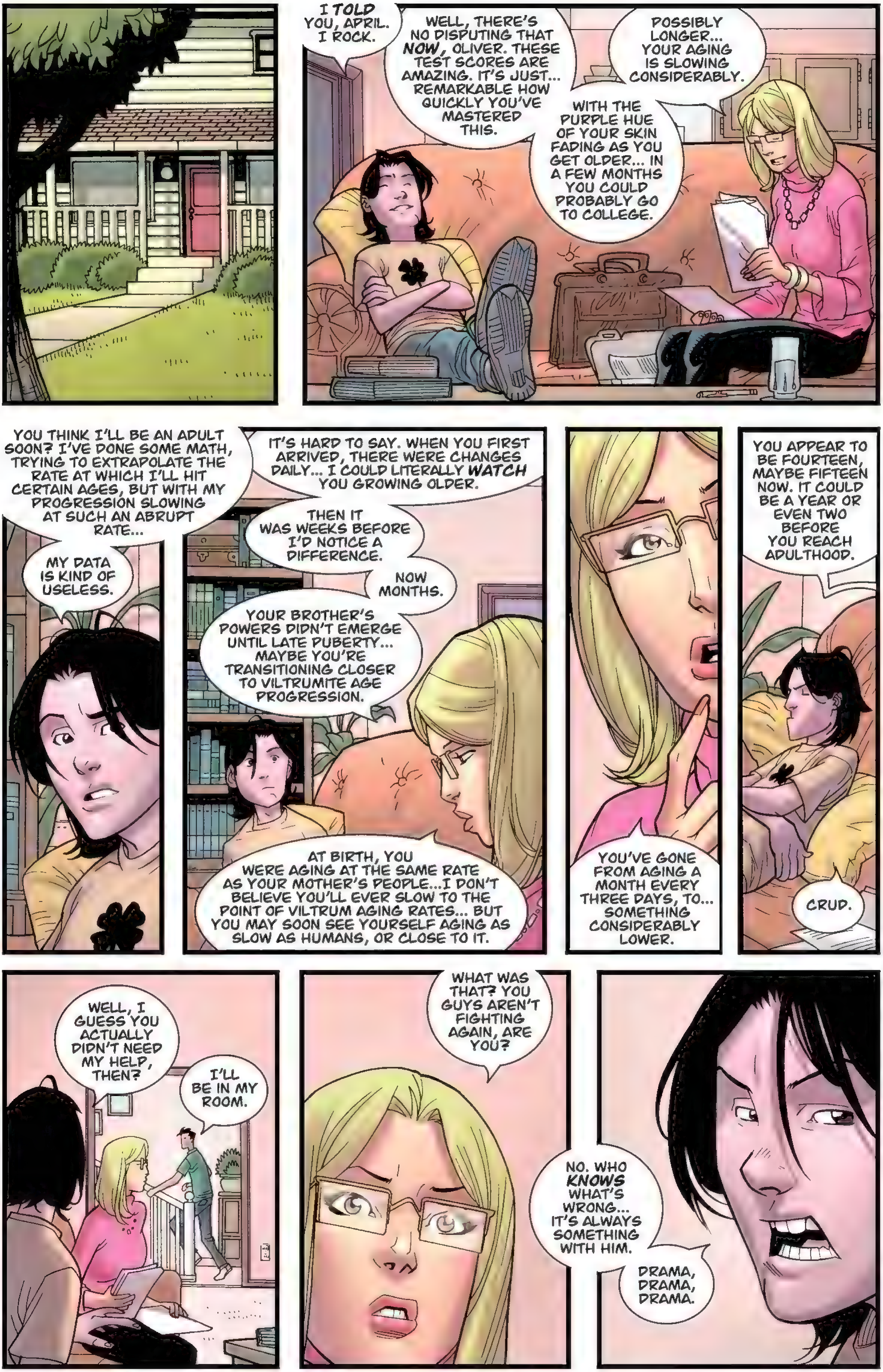
COCKY?
WE *WILL* COMMAND YOUR PLANET. WE KNOW THIS TO BE FACT.
YOU CANNOT STOP US.
REALLY? HAH!
I DON'T THINK YOU'VE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION.
OKAY, GUARDIANS--LISTEN UP! IT'S JUST HIM AND US IN THE CITY--SO LET'S FOCUS ALL ATTENTION ON THIS GUY AND WRAP THIS UP.
I'D LIKE TO PUT BRIT JUNIOR TO BED MYSELF TONIGHT, GIVE THE LITTLE WOMAN A BREAK. I'VE BEEN WORKING TOO MANY NIGHTS LATELY.
SO LET'S TAKE THIS JERK DOWN!
HE HAD A HOST HIDDEN IN THE SEWERS, BUT I TOOK CARE OF HIM--I'M BACK AT THE HOLDING AREA NOW WITH THE REST OF THE REFUGEES.
LET'S BRING THESE PEOPLE HOME.
HEAR THAT, SEQUID MAN-- OR WHATEVER YOU'RE CALLING YOURSELF...
...IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.
SKRADD!
NOW WHO'S BEING COCKY?

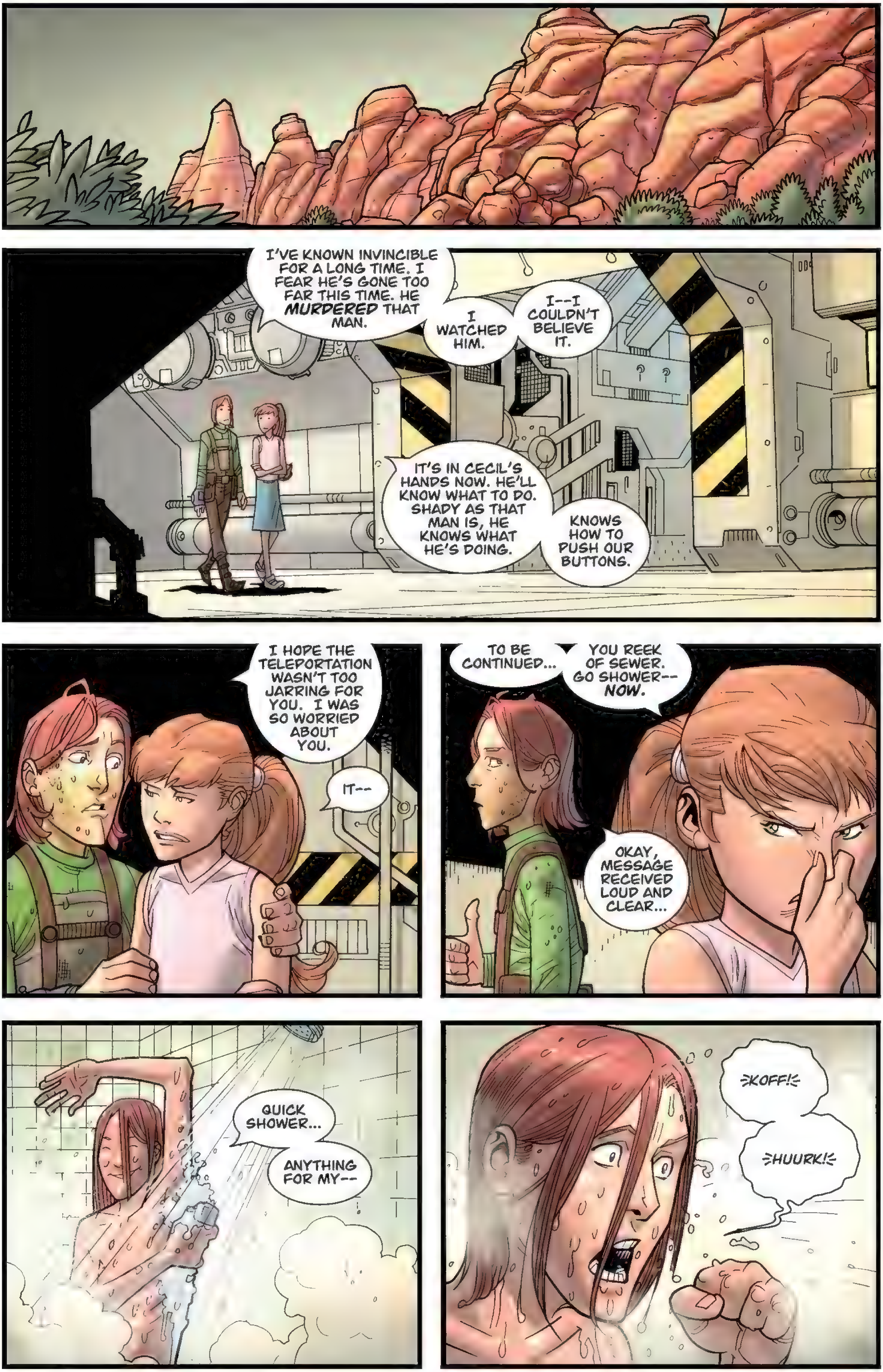
KROOM!
MONSTER GIRL!
UGH.
WROMMM!
VZZKKK!
MONSTER GIRL--SNAP OUT OF IT! NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO REVERT BACK TO HUMAN FORM!
GOT YOU! I'LL SEE YOU IN A SECOND. DON'T--
SKRKK!
TAKE THIS!
VZZKKK!
THESE BANDS--THAT'S WHAT'S BEEN GIVING YOU THE UPPER HAND! THE SAME DEVICE YOU USED TO DEFEAT ME ON THE MARTIAN SHIP!
I REMEMBER IT WELL!
YOU MAY CONSIDER IT YOUR SAVING GRACE--I SEE IT FOR WHAT IT IS--A WEAK SPOT, SOMETHING YOU RELY TOO HEAVILY ON!

A NUISANCE AT BEST!
NO MORE!
KROOM!
CRAP!
SKRKK!!
SKROOM!
OOH-- SORRY!
MEANT TO SAVE THE BRACELET! I PANICKED!
OKAY, EVERYONE. NOW WE--
ACK!
NOW WE PROVIDE YOU WITH YOUR *LAST* CHANCE TO SUBMIT! BOW TO US AND WE WILL SPARE YOUR LIVES.
YOU HAVE NO WEAPON AGAINST US! WE OUTNUMBER YOU GREATLY! NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOU ARE, HOW POWERFUL YOU'VE BECOME--OR HOW TIGHT YOU BELIEVE YOUR DEFENSES TO BE--WE WILL OVERCOME ALL!
THE WORLD AS YOU KNEW IT IS ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE. YOU HAVE NO HOPE OF DEFEATING US NOW!
I KNOW.
I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK--WAITING FOR THEM TO GET INTO POSITION, TO USE THEIR LITTLE DISRUPTOR THINGS.
I KNOW THE THREAT YOU POSE--YOU COULD ACTUALLY SUCCEED IN ENSLAVING THIS ENTIRE PLANET--AND I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.
YOU'VE LEFT ME WITH NO CHOICE.

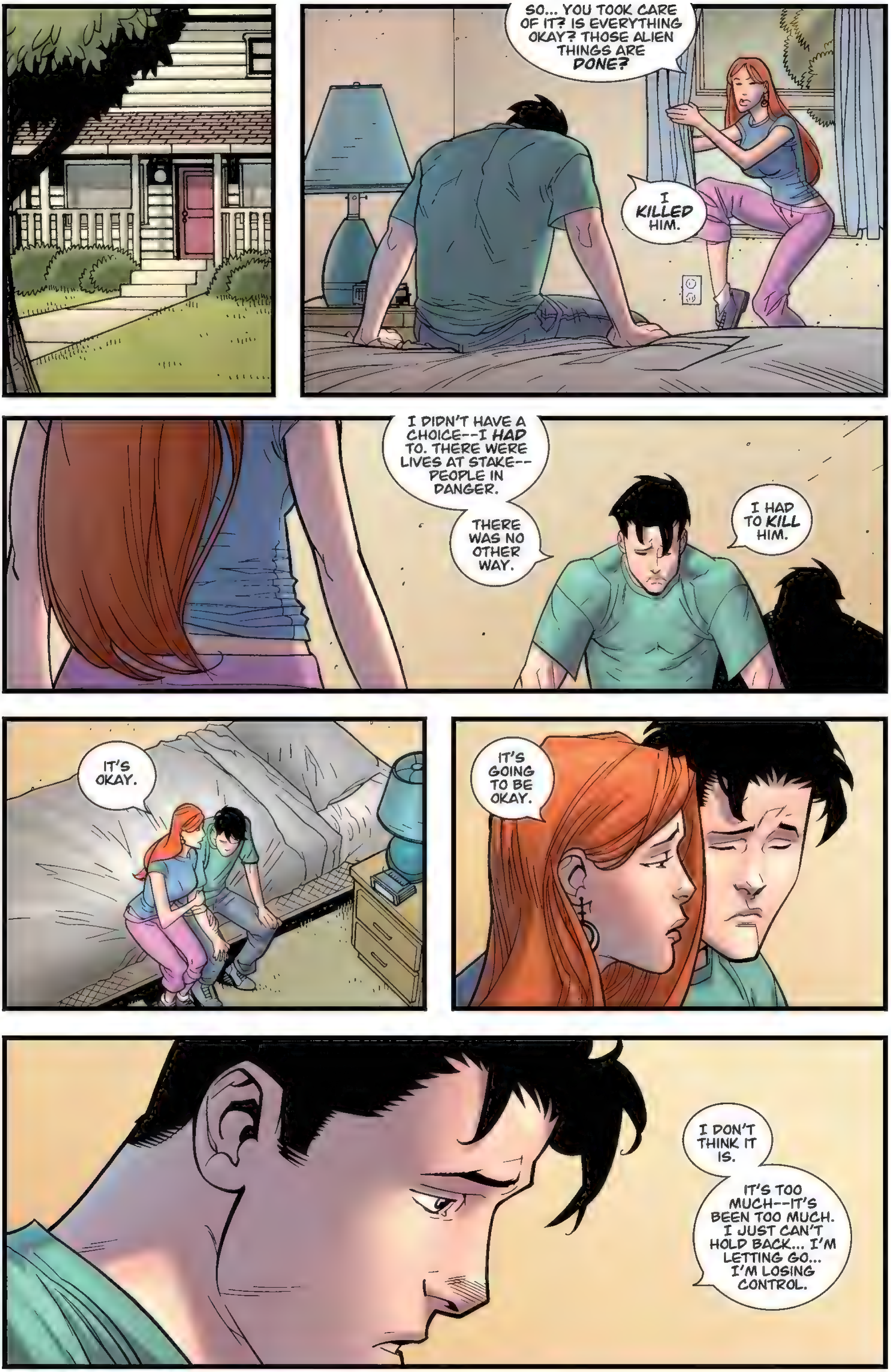
SPLACK!!
INVINCIBLE, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
RUS LIVINGSTON WAS A *HOST*, NOT THE THREAT. HE WAS *INNOCENT*. WE COULD HAVE FOUND ANOTHER WAY... WE COULD HAVE MADE THIS WORK.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO KILL AN INNOCENT MAN.
...

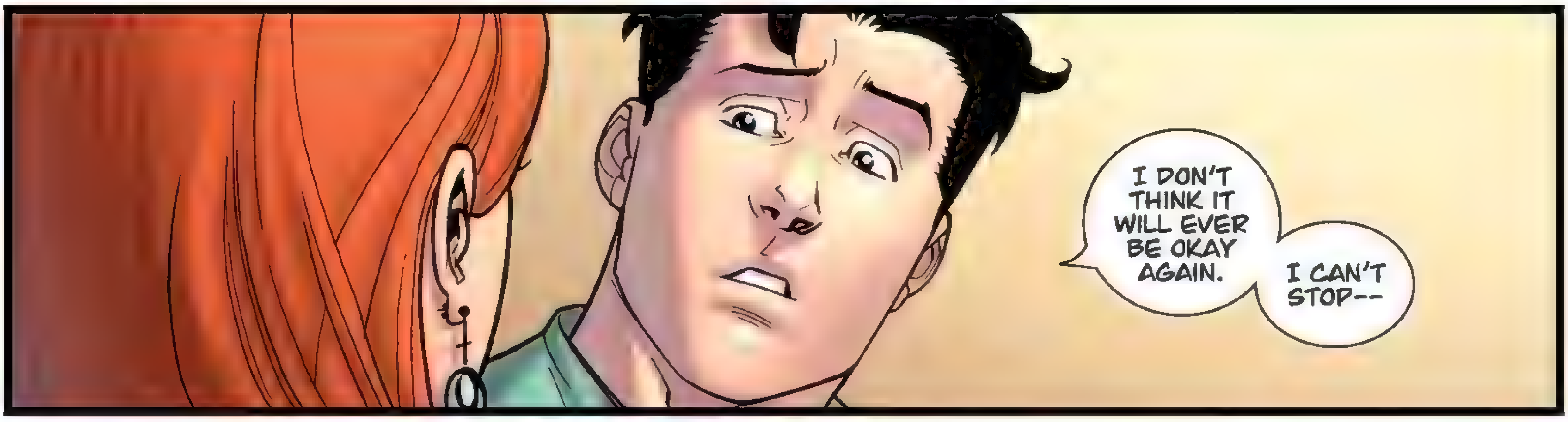

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
DID HE JUST **KILL** HIM?
I CAN'T BELIEVE--
I CAN. BOY'S HAD A LOT TO DEAL WITH RECENTLY. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HE'S BEEN PUSHED OVER THE EDGE.
THAT IS DEFINITELY A MAJOR CONCERN.
BUT I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH THAT RIGHT NOW. WE'VE GOT A GOOD PORTION OF A MAJOR AMERICAN CITY OVERRUN WITH MINDLESS ALIEN LIFE-FORMS WHO UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES CAN BE ALLOWED TO COME INTO CONTACT WITH A HUMAN.
THAT FORCE FIELD HAS HELD UP NICELY SO FAR--BUT WE'VE DONE LITTLE FIELD TESTING, WE HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG IT CAN HOLD.
IDEAS?
WAY AHEAD OF YOU, ACTUALLY.
ONCE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE REMOVED FROM THE AREA, WE'RE GOING TO PIPE IN AN AIRBORNE PATHOGEN. THIS PATHOGEN WHEN CONTAINED WITHIN THE FORCE FIELD WILL CONCENTRATE, INFECTING ALL THE SEQUIDS CONTAINED WITHIN.
THEY'LL ALL BE DEAD WITHIN A MATTER OF HOURS.
ONCE THAT HAPPENS THE FORCE FIELD CAN BE LOWERED, BUT THAT AREA OF TOWN WILL HAVE TO BE BLOCKED OFF UNTIL CLEAN-UP CREWS CAN REMOVE ALL THE SEQUID CARCASSES.
WHICH WILL TAKE?
CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATES PUT IT AT TWO WEEKS. IT WON'T BE AN EASY TASK.
INVINCIBLE IS TRYING TO LEAVE THE PROTECTED AREA, SIR.
LET HIM GO. I KNOW WHERE TO FIND HIM.

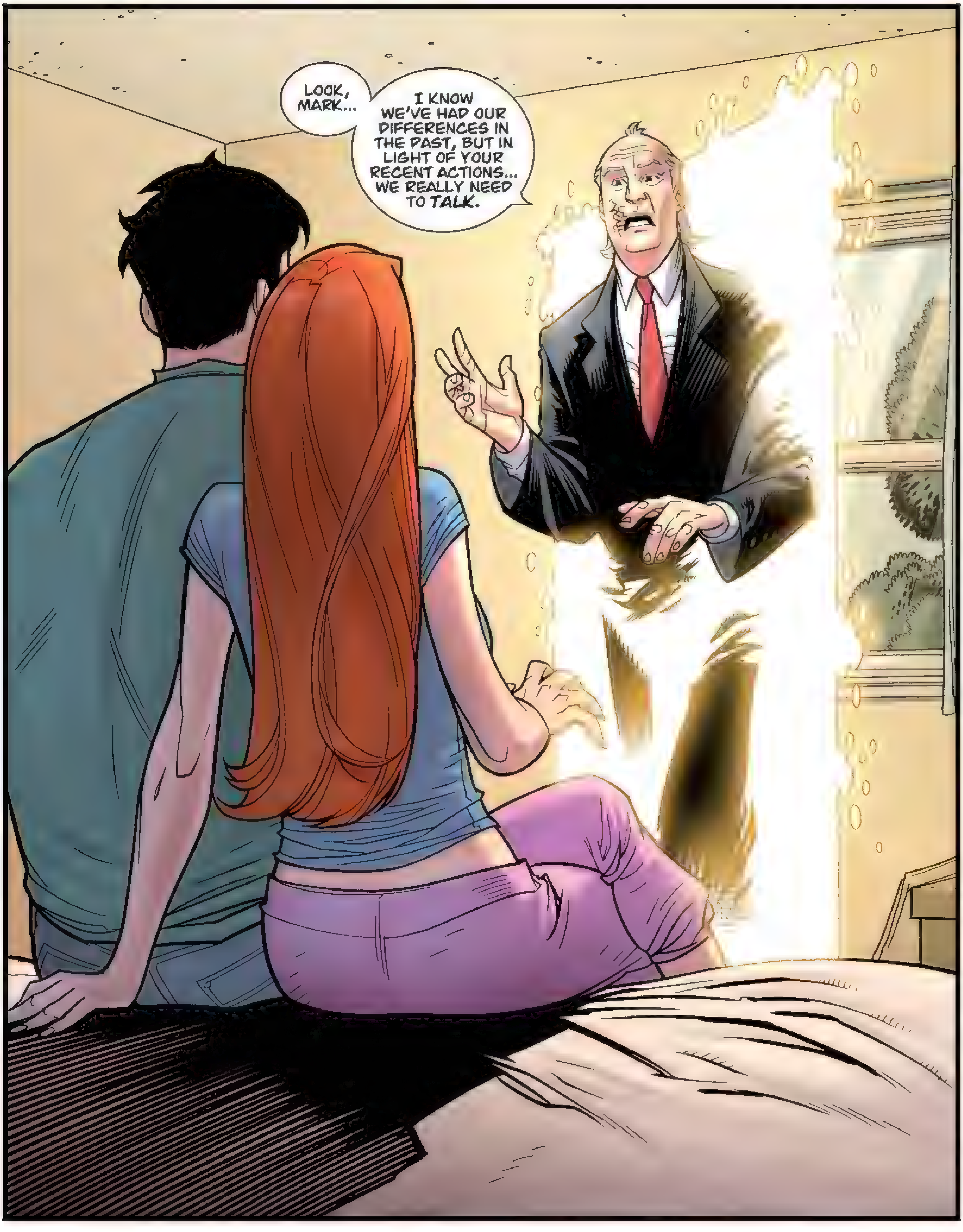

I TOLD YOU, APRIL. I ROCK.
WELL, THERE'S NO DISPUTING THAT NOW, OLIVER. THESE TEST SCORES ARE AMAZING. IT'S JUST... REMARKABLE HOW QUICKLY YOU'VE MASTERED THIS.
POSSIBLY LONGER... YOUR AGING IS SLOWING CONSIDERABLY.
WITH THE PURPLE HUE OF YOUR SKIN FADING AS YOU GET OLDER... IN A FEW MONTHS YOU COULD PROBABLY GO TO COLLEGE.
YOU THINK I'LL BE AN ADULT SOON? I'VE DONE SOME MATH, TRYING TO EXTRAPOLATE THE RATE AT WHICH I'LL HIT CERTAIN AGES, BUT WITH MY PROGRESSION SLOWING AT SUCH AN ABRUPT RATE...
MY DATA IS KIND OF USELESS.
IT'S HARD TO SAY. WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED, THERE WERE CHANGES DAILY... I COULD LITERALLY WATCH YOU GROWING OLDER.
THEN IT WAS WEEKS BEFORE I'D NOTICE A DIFFERENCE.
NOW MONTHS.
YOUR BROTHER'S POWERS DIDN'T EMERGE UNTIL LATE PUBERTY... MAYBE YOU'RE TRANSITIONING CLOSER TO VILTRUMITE AGE PROGRESSION.
AT BIRTH, YOU WERE AGING AT THE SAME RATE AS YOUR MOTHER'S PEOPLE...I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'LL EVER SLOW TO THE POINT OF VILTRUM AGING RATES... BUT YOU MAY SOON SEE YOURSELF AGING AS SLOW AS HUMANS, OR CLOSE TO IT.
YOU'VE GONE FROM AGING A MONTH EVERY THREE DAYS, TO... SOMETHING CONSIDERABLY LOWER.
YOU APPEAR TO BE FOURTEEN, MAYBE FIFTEEN NOW. IT COULD BE A YEAR OR EVEN TWO BEFORE YOU REACH ADULTHOOD.
CRUD.
WELL, I GUESS YOU ACTUALLY DIDN'T NEED MY HELP, THEN?
I'LL BE IN MY ROOM.
WHAT WAS THAT? YOU GUYS AREN'T FIGHTING AGAIN, ARE YOU?
NO. WHO KNOWS WHAT'S WRONG... IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING WITH HIM.
DRAMA, DRAMA, DRAMA.


I'VE KNOWN INVINCIBLE FOR A LONG TIME. I FEAR HE'S GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME. HE *MURDERED* THAT MAN.
I WATCHED HIM.
I--I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT.
IT'S IN CECIL'S HANDS NOW. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO. SHADY AS THAT MAN IS, HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.
KNOWS HOW TO PUSH OUR BUTTONS.
I HOPE THE TELEPORTATION WASN'T TOO JARRING FOR YOU. I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
IT--
TO BE CONTINUED...
YOU REEK OF SEWER. GO SHOWER-- *NOW*.
OKAY, MESSAGE RECEIVED LOUD AND CLEAR...
QUICK SHOWER...
ANYTHING FOR MY--
KOFF!
HUURK!

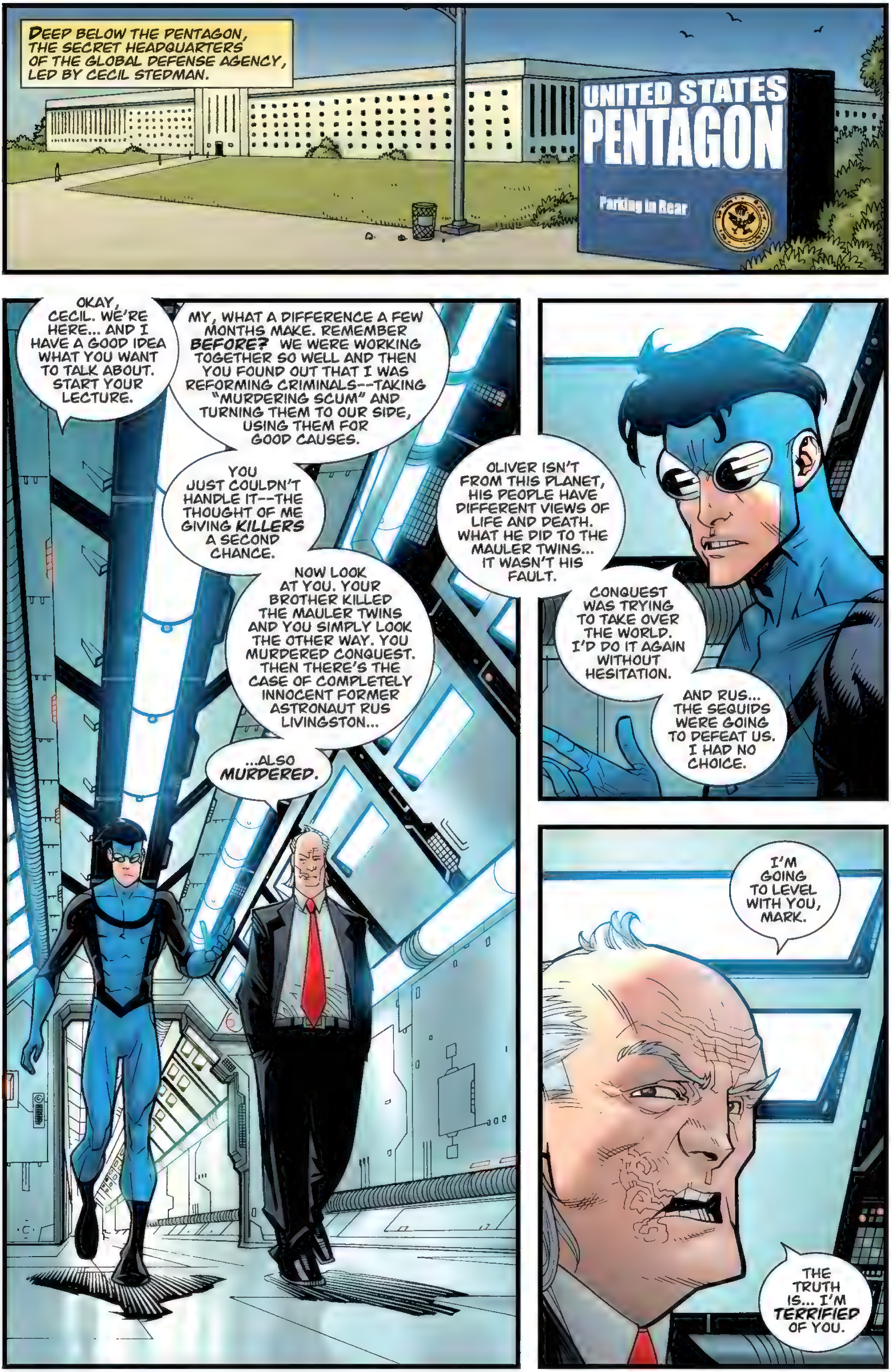
HUWAGG!!
NO! NO WAY!
SQUIKK!
YOU'RE DONE! THIS IS OVER!
OVER!
SQUIPP!
SCHLOGG! SCHLOGG! SCHLOGG!
OKAY...
LOOKS LIKE IT FINALLY IS, AT LONG LAST... OVER.

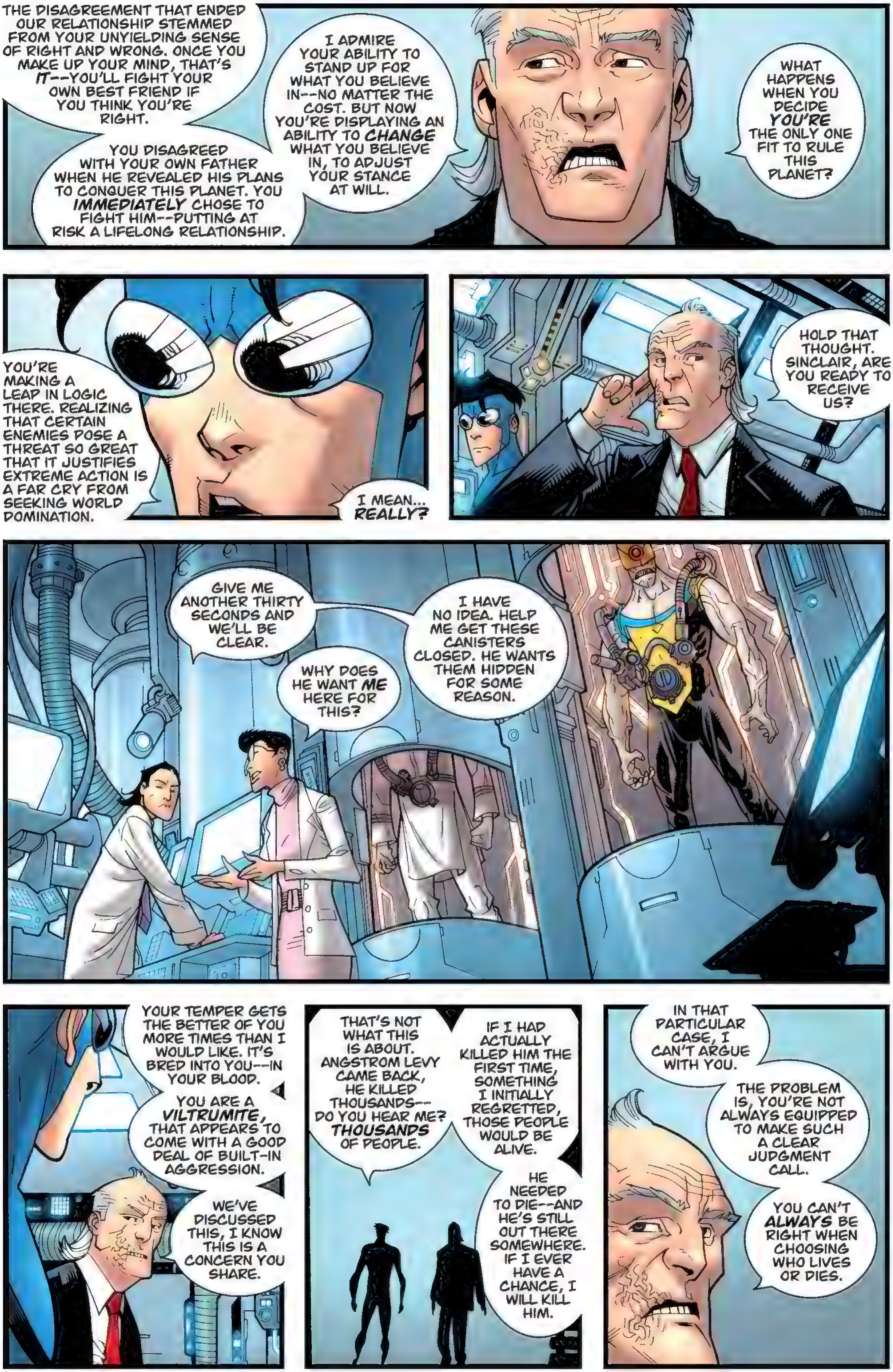

SO... YOU TOOK CARE OF IT? IS EVERYTHING OKAY? THOSE ALIEN THINGS ARE DONE?
I KILLED HIM.
I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE--I HAD TO. THERE WERE LIVES AT STAKE--PEOPLE IN DANGER.
THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY.
I HAD TO KILL HIM.
IT'S OKAY.
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
I DON'T THINK IT IS.
IT'S TOO MUCH--IT'S BEEN TOO MUCH. I JUST CAN'T HOLD BACK... I'M LETTING GO... I'M LOSING CONTROL.

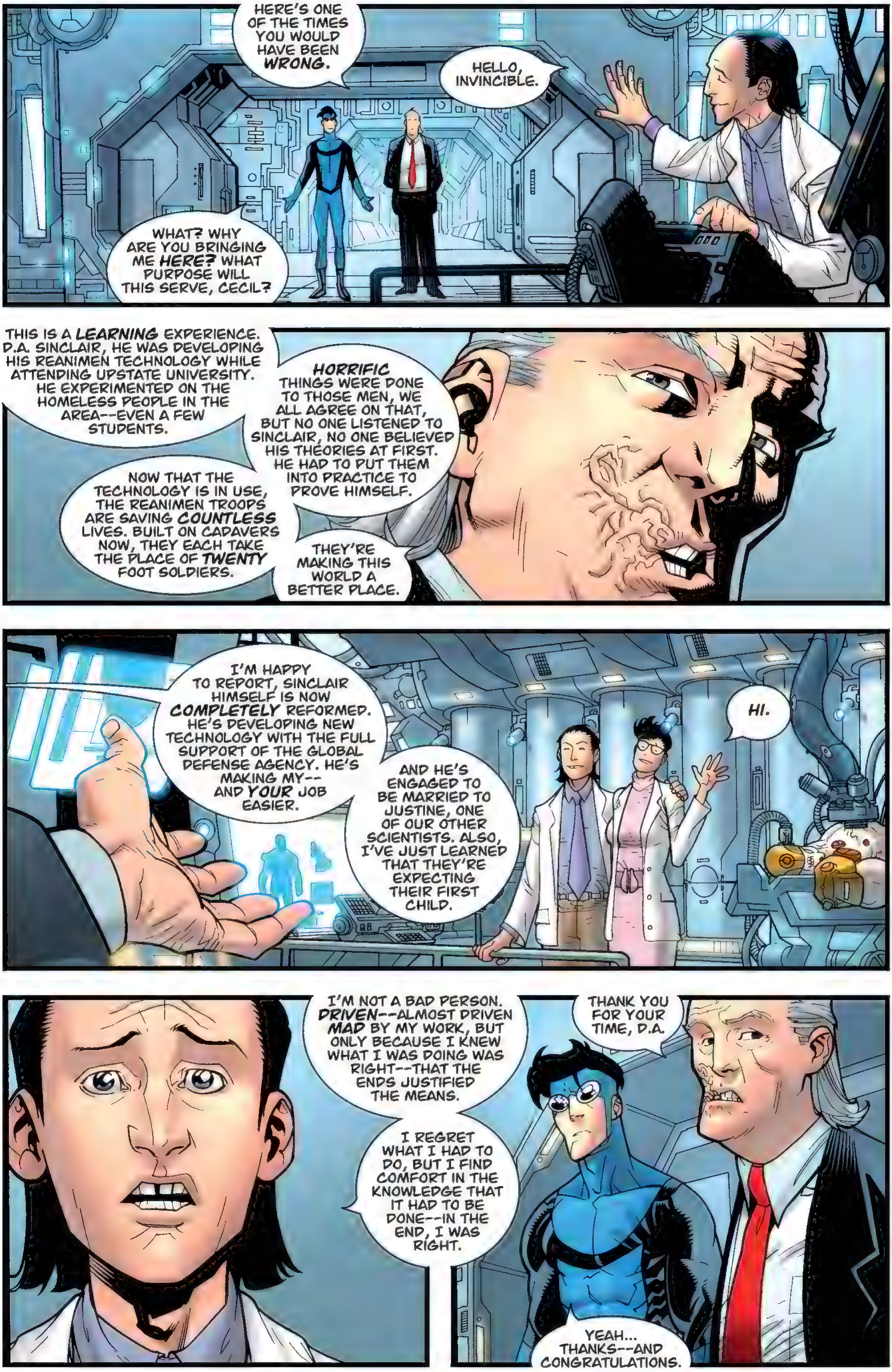

I DON'T THINK IT WILL EVER BE OKAY AGAIN.
I CAN'T STOP--

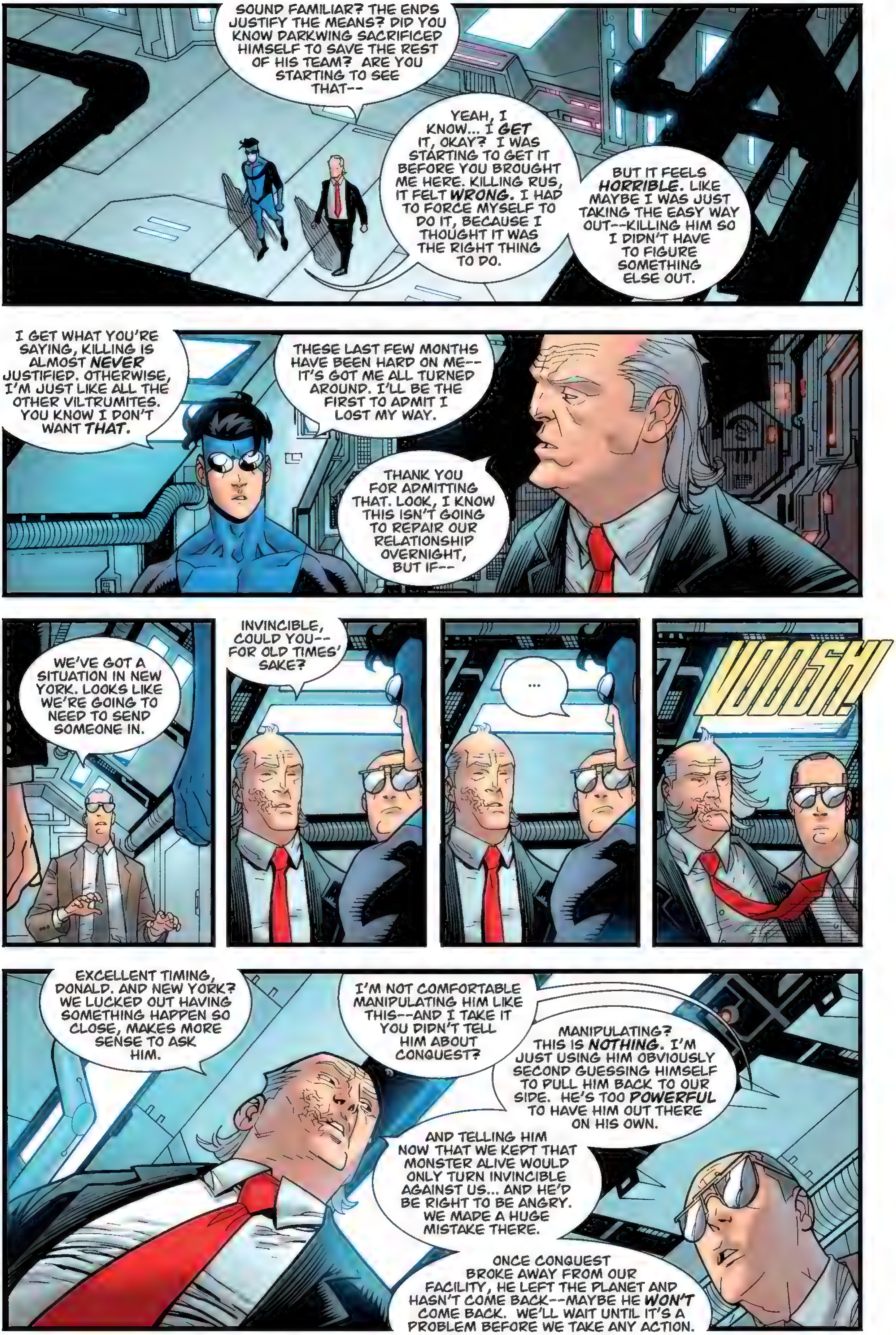

LOOK, MARK...
I KNOW WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES IN THE PAST, BUT IN LIGHT OF YOUR RECENT ACTIONS... WE REALLY NEED TO *TALK*.

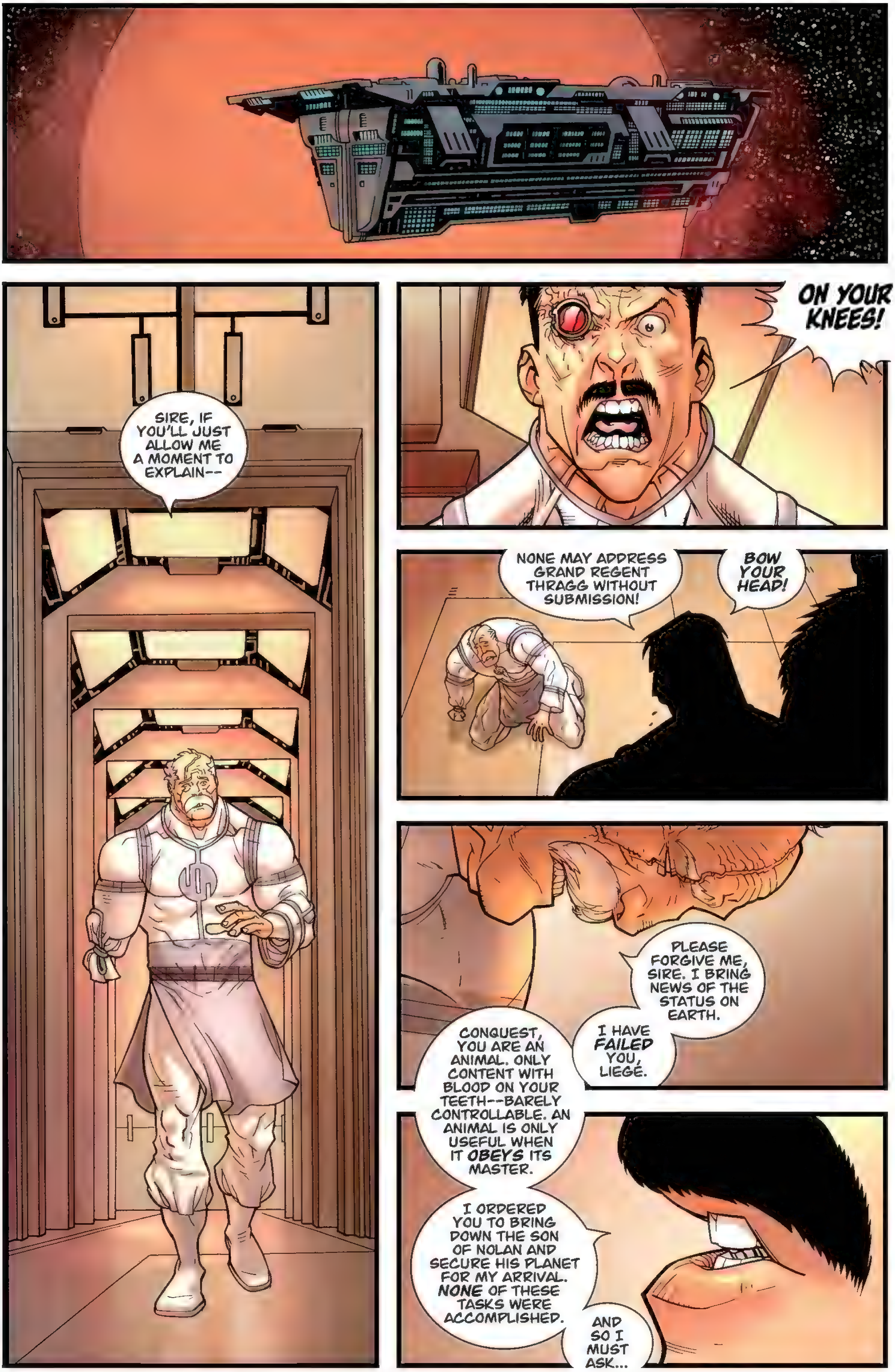
INVINCIBLE RETURNS 1

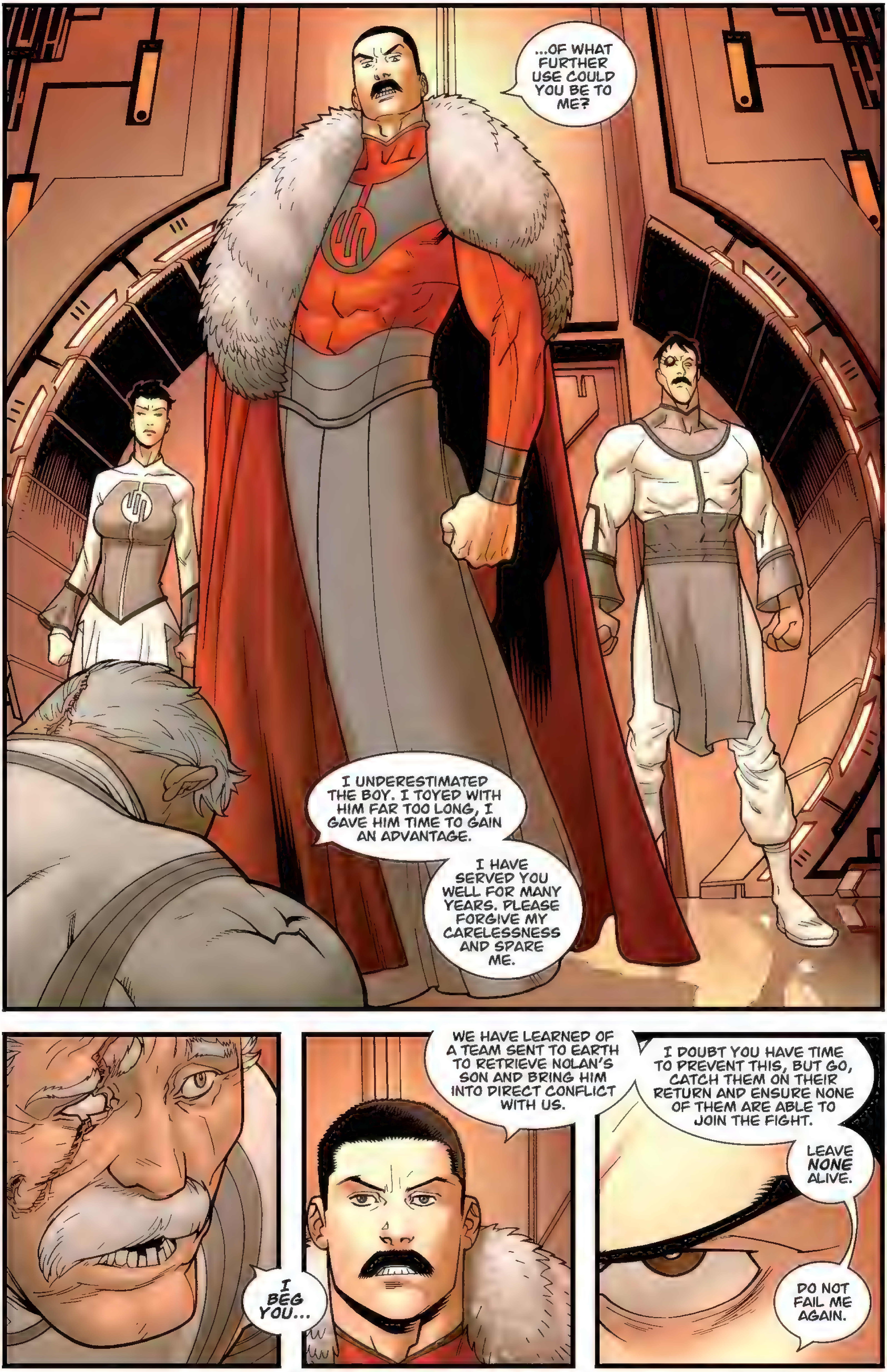

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
OKAY, CECIL. WE'RE HERE... AND I HAVE A GOOD IDEA WHAT YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT. START YOUR LECTURE.
MY, WHAT A DIFFERENCE A FEW MONTHS MAKE. REMEMBER *BEFORE?* WE WERE WORKING TOGETHER SO WELL AND THEN YOU FOUND OUT THAT I WAS REFORMING CRIMINALS--TAKING "MURDERING SCUM" AND TURNING THEM TO OUR SIDE, USING THEM FOR GOOD CAUSES.
YOU JUST COULDN'T HANDLE IT--THE THOUGHT OF ME GIVING *KILLERS* A SECOND CHANCE.
NOW LOOK AT YOU. YOUR BROTHER KILLED THE MAULER TWINS AND YOU SIMPLY LOOK THE OTHER WAY. YOU MURDERED CONQUEST. THEN THERE'S THE CASE OF COMPLETELY INNOCENT FORMER ASTRONAUT RUS LIVINGSTON...
...ALSO *MURDERED.*
OLIVER ISN'T FROM THIS PLANET, HIS PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF LIFE AND DEATH. WHAT HE DID TO THE MAULER TWINS... IT WASN'T HIS FAULT.
CONQUEST WAS TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. I'D DO IT AGAIN WITHOUT HESITATION.
AND RUS... THE SEQUIDS WERE GOING TO DEFEAT US. I HAD NO CHOICE.
I'M GOING TO LEVEL WITH YOU, MARK.
THE TRUTH IS... I'M *TERRIFIED* OF YOU.


THE DISAGREEMENT THAT ENDED OUR RELATIONSHIP STEMMED FROM YOUR UNYIELDING SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG. ONCE YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND, THAT'S *IT*--YOU'LL FIGHT YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND IF YOU THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU DISAGREED WITH YOUR OWN FATHER WHEN HE REVEALED HIS PLANS TO CONQUER THIS PLANET. YOU *IMMEDIATELY* CHOSE TO FIGHT HIM--PUTTING AT RISK A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP.
I ADMIRE YOUR ABILITY TO STAND UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN--NO MATTER THE COST. BUT NOW YOU'RE DISPLAYING AN ABILITY TO *CHANGE* WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN, TO ADJUST YOUR STANCE AT WILL.
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DECIDE *YOU'RE* THE ONLY ONE FIT TO RULE THIS PLANET?
YOU'RE MAKING A LEAP IN LOGIC THERE. REALIZING THAT CERTAIN ENEMIES POSE A THREAT SO GREAT THAT IT JUSTIFIES EXTREME ACTION IS A FAR CRY FROM SEEKING WORLD DOMINATION.
I MEAN... *REALLY?*
HOLD THAT THOUGHT. SINCLAIR, ARE YOU READY TO RECEIVE US?
GIVE ME ANOTHER THIRTY SECONDS AND WE'LL BE CLEAR.
WHY DOES HE WANT *ME* HERE FOR THIS?
I HAVE NO IDEA. HELP ME GET THESE CANISTERS CLOSED. HE WANTS THEM HIDDEN FOR SOME REASON.
YOUR TEMPER GETS THE BETTER OF YOU MORE TIMES THAN I WOULD LIKE. IT'S BRED INTO YOU--IN YOUR BLOOD.
YOU ARE A *VILTRUMITE*, THAT APPEARS TO COME WITH A GOOD DEAL OF BUILT-IN AGGRESSION.
WE'VE DISCUSSED THIS, I KNOW THIS IS A CONCERN YOU SHARE.
THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT. ANGSTROM LEVY CAME BACK, HE KILLED THOUSANDS-- DO YOU HEAR ME? *THOUSANDS* OF PEOPLE.
IF I HAD ACTUALLY KILLED HIM THE FIRST TIME, SOMETHING I INITIALLY REGRETTED, THOSE PEOPLE WOULD BE ALIVE.
HE NEEDED TO DIE--AND HE'S STILL OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. IF I EVER HAVE A CHANCE, I WILL KILL HIM.
IN THAT PARTICULAR CASE, I CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU.
THE PROBLEM IS, YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS EQUIPPED TO MAKE SUCH A CLEAR JUDGMENT CALL.
YOU CAN'T *ALWAYS* BE RIGHT WHEN CHOOSING WHO LIVES OR DIES.

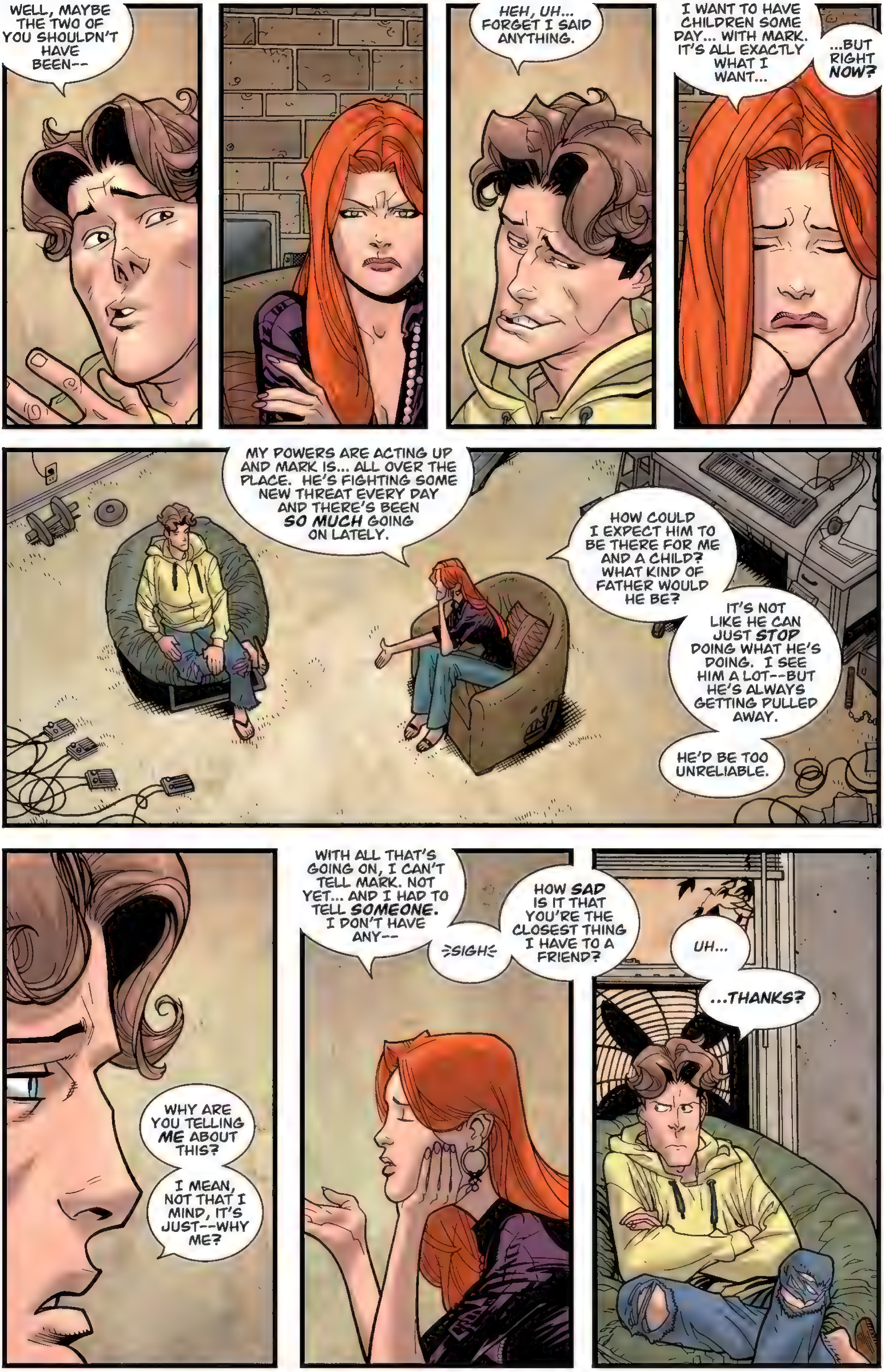

HERE'S ONE OF THE TIMES YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN WRONG.
HELLO, INVINCIBLE.
WHAT? WHY ARE YOU BRINGING ME HERE? WHAT PURPOSE WILL THIS SERVE, CECIL?
THIS IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE. D.A. SINCLAIR, HE WAS DEVELOPING HIS REANIMEN TECHNOLOGY WHILE ATTENDING UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. HE EXPERIMENTED ON THE HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE AREA--EVEN A FEW STUDENTS.
HORRIFIC THINGS WERE DONE TO THOSE MEN, WE ALL AGREE ON THAT, BUT NO ONE LISTENED TO SINCLAIR, NO ONE BELIEVED HIS THEORIES AT FIRST. HE HAD TO PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE TO PROVE HIMSELF.
NOW THAT THE TECHNOLOGY IS IN USE, THE REANIMEN TROOPS ARE SAVING COUNTLESS LIVES. BUILT ON CADAVERS NOW, THEY EACH TAKE THE PLACE OF TWENTY FOOT SOLDIERS.
THEY'RE MAKING THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE.
I'M HAPPY TO REPORT, SINCLAIR HIMSELF IS NOW COMPLETELY REFORMED. HE'S DEVELOPING NEW TECHNOLOGY WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY. HE'S MAKING MY-- AND YOUR JOB EASIER.
AND HE'S ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED TO JUSTINE, ONE OF OUR OTHER SCIENTISTS. ALSO, I'VE JUST LEARNED THAT THEY'RE EXPECTING THEIR FIRST CHILD.
HI.
I'M NOT A BAD PERSON. DRIVEN--ALMOST DRIVEN MAD BY MY WORK, BUT ONLY BECAUSE I KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING WAS RIGHT--THAT THE ENDS JUSTIFIED THE MEANS.
I REGRET WHAT I HAD TO DO, BUT I FIND COMFORT IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT HAD TO BE DONE--IN THE END, I WAS RIGHT.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, D.A.
YEAH... THANKS--AND CONGRATULATIONS.


SOUND FAMILIAR? THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS? DID YOU KNOW DARKWING SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO SAVE THE REST OF HIS TEAM? ARE YOU STARTING TO SEE THAT--
YEAH, I KNOW... I *GET* IT, OKAY? I WAS STARTING TO GET IT BEFORE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE. KILLING RUS, IT FELT *WRONG*. I HAD TO FORCE MYSELF TO DO IT, BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
BUT IT FEELS *HORRIBLE*. LIKE MAYBE I WAS JUST TAKING THE EASY WAY OUT--KILLING HIM SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO FIGURE SOMETHING ELSE OUT.
I GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, KILLING IS ALMOST *NEVER* JUSTIFIED. OTHERWISE, I'M JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHER VILTRUMITES. YOU KNOW I DON'T WANT *THAT*.
THESE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN HARD ON ME--IT'S GOT ME ALL TURNED AROUND. I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT I LOST MY WAY.
THANK YOU FOR ADMITTING THAT. LOOK, I KNOW THIS ISN'T GOING TO REPAIR OUR RELATIONSHIP OVERNIGHT, BUT IF--
WE'VE GOT A SITUATION IN NEW YORK. LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO SEND SOMEONE IN.
INVINCIBLE, COULD YOU--FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE?
...
VOOSH!
EXCELLENT TIMING, DONALD. AND NEW YORK? WE LUCKED OUT HAVING SOMETHING HAPPEN SO CLOSE, MAKES MORE SENSE TO ASK HIM.
I'M NOT COMFORTABLE MANIPULATING HIM LIKE THIS--AND I TAKE IT YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM ABOUT CONQUEST?
MANIPULATING? THIS IS *NOTHING*. I'M JUST USING HIM OBVIOUSLY SECOND GUESSING HIMSELF TO PULL HIM BACK TO OUR SIDE. HE'S TOO *POWERFUL* TO HAVE HIM OUT THERE ON HIS OWN.
AND TELLING HIM NOW THAT WE KEPT THAT MONSTER ALIVE WOULD ONLY TURN INVINCIBLE AGAINST US... AND HE'D BE RIGHT TO BE ANGRY. WE MADE A HUGE MISTAKE THERE.
ONCE CONQUEST BROKE AWAY FROM OUR FACILITY, HE LEFT THE PLANET AND HASN'T COME BACK--MAYBE HE *WON'T* COME BACK. WE'LL WAIT UNTIL IT'S A PROBLEM BEFORE WE TAKE ANY ACTION.


SIRE, IF YOU'LL JUST ALLOW ME A MOMENT TO EXPLAIN--
ON YOUR KNEES!
NONE MAY ADDRESS GRAND REGENT THRAGG WITHOUT SUBMISSION!
BOW YOUR HEAD!
PLEASE FORGIVE ME, SIRE. I BRING NEWS OF THE STATUS ON EARTH.
I HAVE *FAILED* YOU, LIEGE.
CONQUEST, YOU ARE AN ANIMAL. ONLY CONTENT WITH BLOOD ON YOUR TEETH--BARELY CONTROLLABLE. AN ANIMAL IS ONLY USEFUL WHEN IT *OBEYS* ITS MASTER.
I ORDERED YOU TO BRING DOWN THE SON OF NOLAN AND SECURE HIS PLANET FOR MY ARRIVAL. *NONE* OF THESE TASKS WERE ACCOMPLISHED.
AND SO I MUST ASK...


...OF WHAT FURTHER USE COULD YOU BE TO ME?
I UNDERESTIMATED THE BOY. I TOYED WITH HIM FAR TOO LONG, I GAVE HIM TIME TO GAIN AN ADVANTAGE.
I HAVE SERVED YOU WELL FOR MANY YEARS. PLEASE FORGIVE MY CARELESSNESS AND SPARE ME.
I BEG YOU...
WE HAVE LEARNED OF A TEAM SENT TO EARTH TO RETRIEVE NOLAN'S SON AND BRING HIM INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH US.
I DOUBT YOU HAVE TIME TO PREVENT THIS, BUT GO, CATCH THEM ON THEIR RETURN AND ENSURE NONE OF THEM ARE ABLE TO JOIN THE FIGHT.
LEAVE NONE ALIVE.
DO NOT FAIL ME AGAIN.

UH, CONGRATULATIONS THEN?
DON'T SAY THAT! I DON'T WANT CONGRATULATIONS! THIS ISN'T SOMETHING TO BE HAPPY ABOUT.
I DON'T WANT A BABY!
...
ARE YOU OKAY?
THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SAID IT OUT LOUD...
BABY.
WHAT IS THERE TO BE UPSET ABOUT? YOU AND MARK LOVE EACH OTHER.
YOU COULD MAKE THIS WORK.
I'M TOO YOUNG TO BE A MOTHER-- AND WE'RE NOT EVEN MARRIED. WE HAVEN'T EVEN TALKED ABOUT MARRIAGE.
I'M NOT READY TO HAVE A BABY NOW.


WELL, MAYBE THE TWO OF YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN--
HEH, UH... FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.
I WANT TO HAVE CHILDREN SOME DAY... WITH MARK. IT'S ALL EXACTLY WHAT I WANT...
...BUT RIGHT NOW?
MY POWERS ARE ACTING UP AND MARK IS... ALL OVER THE PLACE. HE'S FIGHTING SOME NEW THREAT EVERY DAY AND THERE'S BEEN SO MUCH GOING ON LATELY.
HOW COULD I EXPECT HIM TO BE THERE FOR ME AND A CHILD? WHAT KIND OF FATHER WOULD HE BE?
IT'S NOT LIKE HE CAN JUST STOP DOING WHAT HE'S DOING. I SEE HIM A LOT--BUT HE'S ALWAYS GETTING PULLED AWAY.
HE'D BE TOO UNRELIABLE.
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME ABOUT THIS?
I MEAN, NOT THAT I MIND, IT'S JUST--WHY ME?
WITH ALL THAT'S GOING ON, I CAN'T TELL MARK. NOT YET... AND I HAD TO TELL SOMEONE. I DON'T HAVE ANY--
SIGH
HOW SAD IS IT THAT YOU'RE THE CLOSEST THING I HAVE TO A FRIEND?
UH...
...THANKS?

EATING AGAIN? MY WORD, OLIVER.
HUNGRY.
STARVING, ACTUALLY. ARE YOU GOING OUT SOON? WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF CEREAL.
I'M GOING OUT WITH PAUL LATER, BUT I DON'T PLAN ON HAVING THE TIME TO GET YOU MORE CEREAL.
WHY DON'T YOU FLY YOUR LITTLE BUTT OVER TO THE STORE AND GET SOME YOURSELF?
I'M LAZY.
HOW ARE THINGS BETWEEN YOU AND PAUL? YOU'VE BEEN SEEING HIM FOR A WHILE. IS THAT GETTING SERIOUS?
SERIOUS? I DON'T KNOW IF I'D GO THAT FAR. HE'S A GOOD COMPANION. WE GET ALONG. I ENJOY SPENDING TIME WITH HIM.
DEEP DOWN, I DON'T KNOW HOW I FEEL. I HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT IT OUT VERY--
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU ABOUT THIS! DON'T YOU HAVE HOMEWORK OR SOMETHING TO BE DOING?
DON'T YOU THINK MARK NEEDS HELP SOMEWHERE?
OH... UH... I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ANYTHING...
I'M SORRY... COME HERE, YOU.
OLIVER, KID...
I SURE AM GLAD YOU CAME ALONG.
NOW GET OUT OF THE HOUSE. I'M SURE YOUR BROTHER COULD USE HELP OF SOME KIND.
HELP DOING WHAT? HE'S PROBABLY OFF SOMEWHERE SPENDING TIME WITH ATOM EVE.
NEAR AS I CAN TELL THAT'S ALL HE DOES THESE DAYS.

I CAN'T **BELIEVE** IT! I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING **AGAIN!**
RELAX!
NOBODY ASKED YOU TO GET INVOLVED!
3M TA3
KROOM!

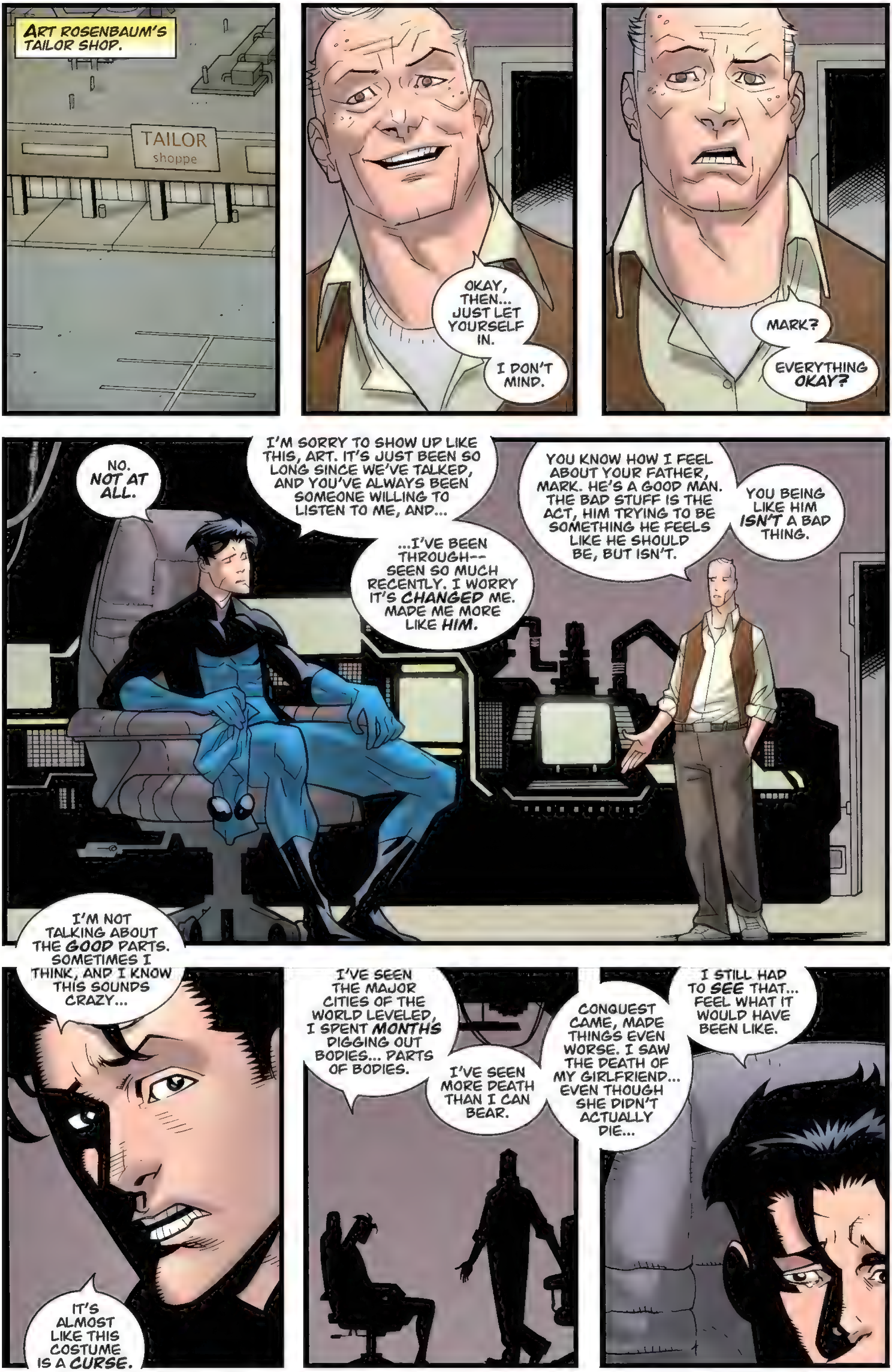
OKAY, BOYS-- LET'S EARN THAT PAY!
FWOOSH!
THAT SHOULD KEEP HIM BUSY.
GOOD-- YOU'LL HAVE TIME TO GIVE ME ANSWERS!
THAT THING ATTACKED BOTH OF US AT STRONGHOLD PRISON A WHILE BACK. WHAT IS IT?! WHY IS IT AFTER YOU?
THIS IS SIMPLY A DISPUTE OVER MY TERRITORY. YOU DON'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED. THE LESS YOU KNOW, THE BETTER. TRUST ME.
THAT'S JUST NOT GOING TO CUT IT--
--TALK!
KRAK!
OW-- OKAY. FINE.
I WAS GRANDFATHERED INTO AN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION CALLED THE ORDER WHEN I TOOK OVER MACHINE HEAD'S TERRITORY.
IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.
IT COSTS TOO MUCH, IT WAS A HASSLE. I DECIDED I DIDN'T NEED THEM. NOW THEY'RE TRYING TO MUSCLE ME OUT.
THIS GUY'S THE MUSCLE. HIS AGENT WAS BEING HELD IN STRONGHOLD, I WAS THERE TO SPRING HIM... WASN'T DOING IT FAST ENOUGH SO HE STEPPED IN. GUY'S A GRADE-A JERK.
SO HE ATTACKED YOU, THEN?

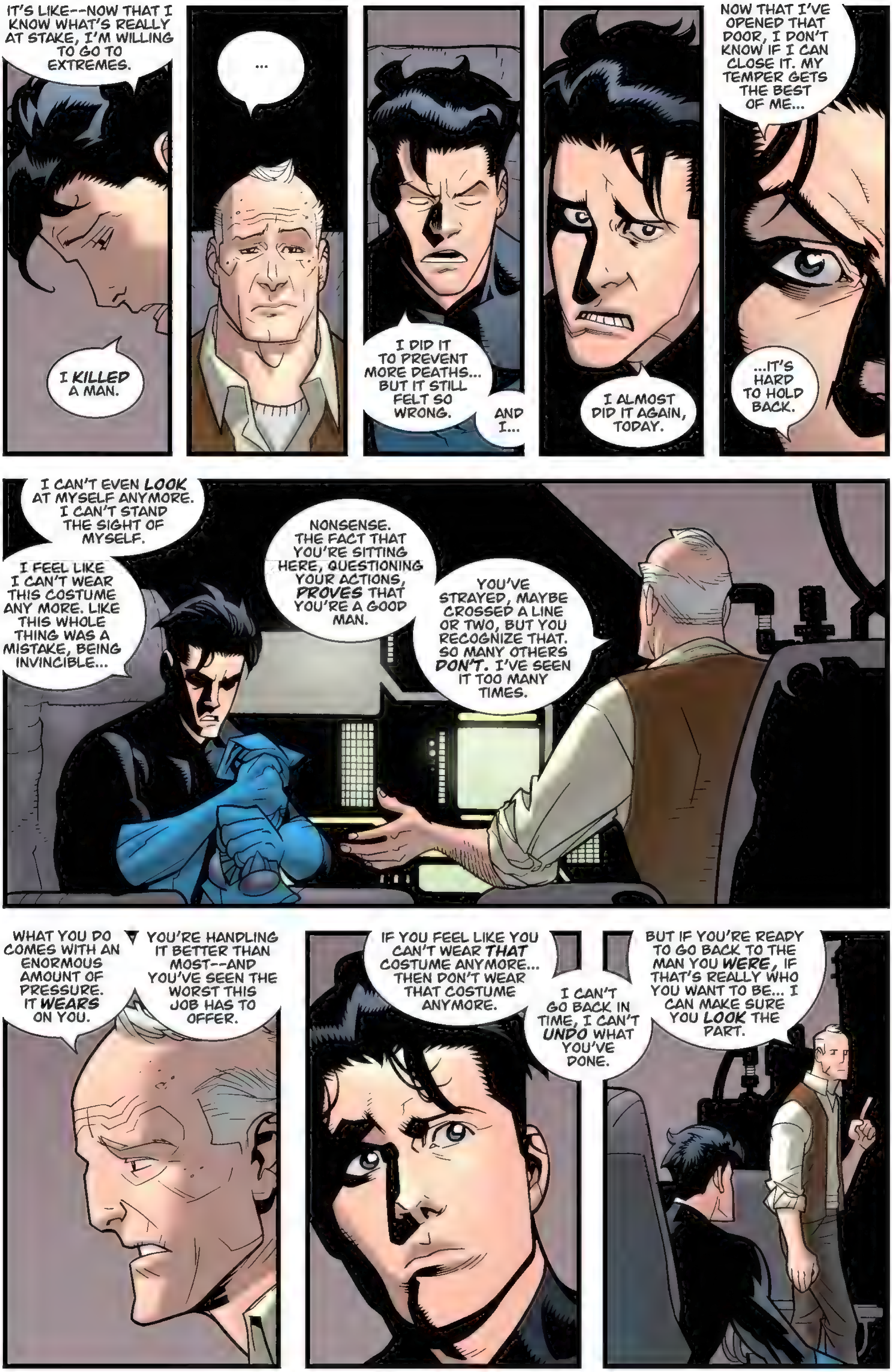
I FOUND HIM. COME ON.
DOES HE HAVE ANY WEAKNESSES YOU KNOW OF?
SORRY, THIS IS MY STOP.
WHAT THE-- ARE YOU *KIDDING* ME?!
WHAT A BUNCH OF CRAP.
WRAKOOM!
WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?!* I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO HELP?!
FEH.
VILLAINS.

WHOA!
PAY ATTENTION, INVINCIBLE!
SWOOSH!
THESE MATTERS ARE *NOT* OF YOUR CONCERN! YOU'D BE WISE TO NOT INTERFERE, BOY.
YOU MAY DRAW OUR ATTENTION--AND THAT COULD BE BAD FOR YOU.
WRAMM!
SORRY, BUT I DON'T SCARE THAT EASY.
IF ANYTHING THAT'S JUST GOING TO MAKE ME WANT--
HUH?!
WHERE'D IT GO?

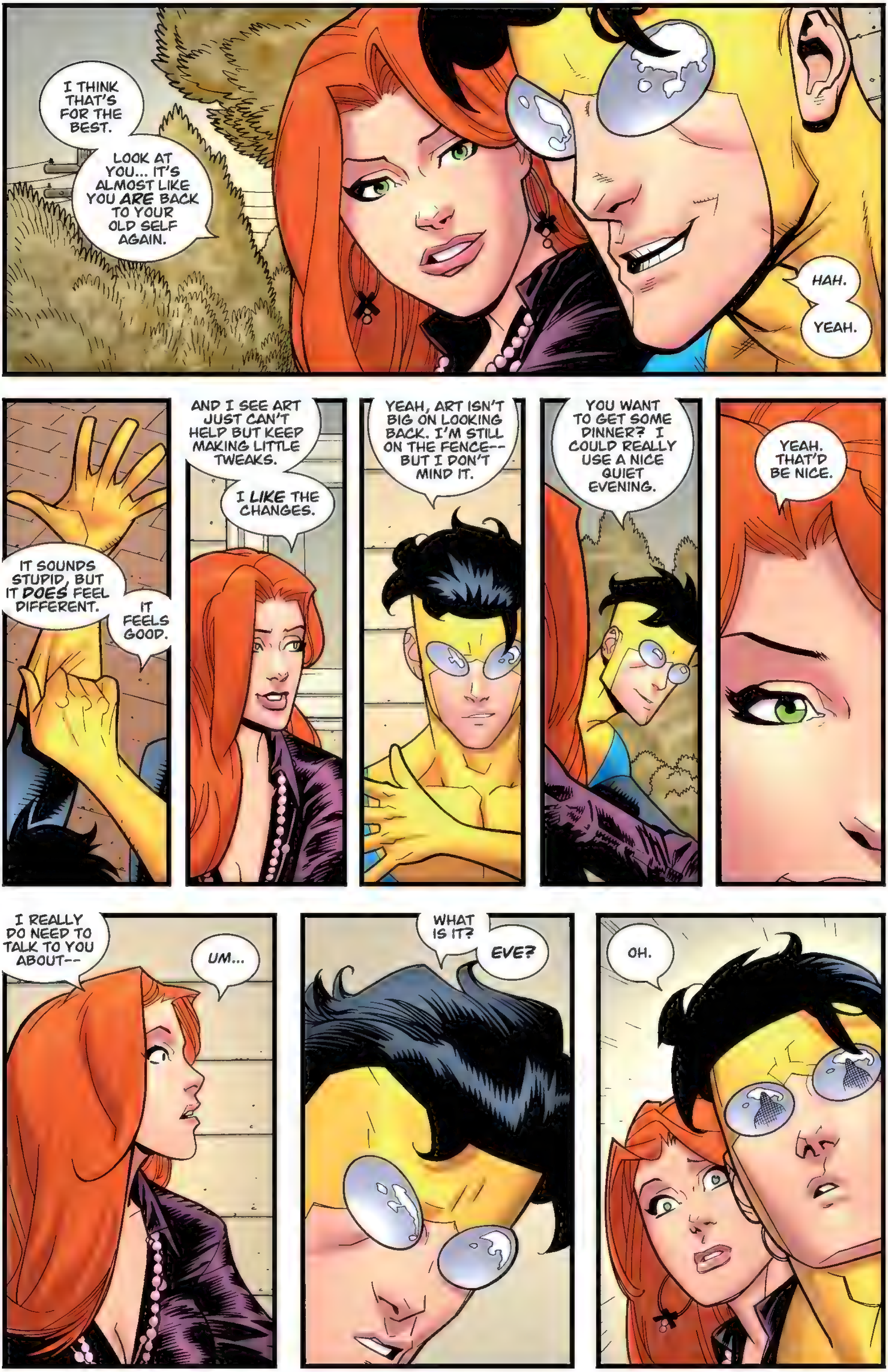
WROKK!
WRAMM!
NOT SO TOUGH NOW, ARE YOU?
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!
WHUDD!
LUCKY YOU. HE FOUND US.
BYE BYE.
GOOD TIMING.
WRAKOOM!

WHAT IS THIS?! NOW YOU'VE GOT YOUR PEOPLE KILLING OLD MEN?!
THAT'S *HIM!* THE ONE WHO ATTACKED ME. THE DRAGON IS SOME KIND OF SOUL PROJECTION-- THE BIG GUY PROTECTS HIS BODY WHILE HE'S OUT.
HE'S NOT SOME SWEET OLD MAN!
YOU THINK I'M GOING TO LET YOU KILL HIM BECAUSE I LET YOU TRICK ME INTO HELPING YOU TAKE DOWN MACHINE HEAD?!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A GOOD GUY! THOUGHT YOU WOULD MAKE THINGS *BETTER*-- CLEAN UP YOUR ACT!
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE *DONE!* LOOK AT ALL THE *DAMAGE!*
CAN'T--
BREATHE--
YOU--!
INVINCIBLE, *STOP!*
WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE...
BUT HE--IF WE--
WE CAN'T--


ART ROSENBAUM'S TAILOR SHOP.
TAILOR shoppe
OKAY, THEN... JUST LET YOURSELF IN.
I DON'T MIND.
MARK?
EVERYTHING OKAY?
NO. NOT AT ALL.
I'M SORRY TO SHOW UP LIKE THIS, ART. IT'S JUST BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE'VE TALKED, AND YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SOMEONE WILLING TO LISTEN TO ME, AND...
...I'VE BEEN THROUGH-- SEEN SO MUCH RECENTLY. I WORRY IT'S CHANGED ME. MADE ME MORE LIKE HIM.
YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOUR FATHER, MARK. HE'S A GOOD MAN. THE BAD STUFF IS THE ACT, HIM TRYING TO BE SOMETHING HE FEELS LIKE HE SHOULD BE, BUT ISN'T.
YOU BEING LIKE HIM ISN'T A BAD THING.
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE GOOD PARTS. SOMETIMES I THINK, AND I KNOW THIS SOUNDS CRAZY...
IT'S ALMOST LIKE THIS COSTUME IS A CURSE.
I'VE SEEN THE MAJOR CITIES OF THE WORLD LEVELED, I SPENT MONTHS DIGGING OUT BODIES... PARTS OF BODIES.
I'VE SEEN MORE DEATH THAN I CAN BEAR.
CONQUEST CAME, MADE THINGS EVEN WORSE. I SAW THE DEATH OF MY GIRLFRIEND... EVEN THOUGH SHE DIDN'T ACTUALLY DIE...
I STILL HAD TO SEE THAT... FEEL WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE.


IT'S LIKE--NOW THAT I KNOW WHAT'S REALLY AT STAKE, I'M WILLING TO GO TO EXTREMES.
I **KILLED** A MAN.
...
I DID IT TO PREVENT MORE DEATHS... BUT IT STILL FELT SO WRONG.
AND I...
I ALMOST DID IT AGAIN, TODAY.
NOW THAT I'VE OPENED THAT DOOR, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN CLOSE IT. MY TEMPER GETS THE BEST OF ME...
...IT'S HARD TO HOLD BACK.
I CAN'T EVEN **LOOK** AT MYSELF ANYMORE. I CAN'T STAND THE SIGHT OF MYSELF.
I FEEL LIKE I CAN'T WEAR THIS COSTUME ANY MORE. LIKE THIS WHOLE THING WAS A MISTAKE, BEING INVINCIBLE...
NONSENSE. THE FACT THAT YOU'RE SITTING HERE, QUESTIONING YOUR ACTIONS, **PROVES** THAT YOU'RE A GOOD MAN.
YOU'VE STRAYED, MAYBE CROSSED A LINE OR TWO, BUT YOU RECOGNIZE THAT. SO MANY OTHERS **DON'T**. I'VE SEEN IT TOO MANY TIMES.
WHAT YOU DO COMES WITH AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PRESSURE. IT **WEARS** ON YOU.
YOU'RE HANDLING IT BETTER THAN MOST--AND YOU'VE SEEN THE WORST THIS JOB HAS TO OFFER.
IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN'T WEAR **THAT** COSTUME ANYMORE... THEN DON'T WEAR THAT COSTUME ANYMORE.
I CAN'T GO BACK IN TIME, I CAN'T **UNDO** WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
BUT IF YOU'RE READY TO GO BACK TO THE MAN YOU **WERE**, IF THAT'S REALLY WHO YOU WANT TO BE... I CAN MAKE SURE YOU **LOOK** THE PART.

I WAS WORRIED, THEN I SAW YOU ON THE NEWS. THOUGHT YOU'D BE HOME SOON SO I CAME UP HERE.
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN THE MARKET FOR A COSTUME CHANGE.
YEAH. I WENT TO SEE ART.
WE TALKED ABOUT MY RECENT MISSTEPS, HOW MUCH I'D LIKE TO GO BACK A FEW STEPS. FOR ART THAT MEANT A COSTUME CHANGE.
YOU KNOW HOW HE IS.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE SNOT BEATEN OUT OF YOU... SO I ASSUME YOUR "TALK" WITH CECIL WENT FINE.
IT DID.
IT WAS A JUSTIFIED LECTURE. HE'S WORRIED ABOUT MY RECENT ACTIONS, WHAT IT COULD MEAN FOR ME.
WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT WHEN HE SHOWED UP.
AND?
I'M DONE WITH KILLING-- IT'S TOO EASY, IT CHANGES THINGS. I'M JUST NOT CONVINCED IT'S THE ANSWER ANYMORE.
EVEN IF IT WOULD PREVENT FUTURE ATTACKS... IT SEEMS TO ALSO POTENTIALLY PREVENT GOOD THINGS.


I THINK THAT'S FOR THE BEST.
LOOK AT YOU... IT'S ALMOST LIKE YOU **ARE** BACK TO YOUR OLD SELF AGAIN.
HAH.
YEAH.
IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT IT **DOES** FEEL DIFFERENT.
IT FEELS GOOD.
AND I SEE ART JUST CAN'T HELP BUT KEEP MAKING LITTLE TWEAKS.
I **LIKE** THE CHANGES.
YEAH, ART ISN'T BIG ON LOOKING BACK. I'M STILL ON THE FENCE-- BUT I DON'T MIND IT.
YOU WANT TO GET SOME DINNER? I COULD REALLY USE A NICE QUIET EVENING.
YEAH. THAT'D BE NICE.
I REALLY DO NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT--
UM...
WHAT IS IT?
EVE?
OH.

IT IS TIME, SON. YOU ARE NEEDED.
THE TIME FOR WAR IS UPON US.

LATER.
Crocket
WE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THIS. I KNOW YOUR MIND IS ELSEWHERE. I MEAN, CRAP, MARK. YOUR DAD JUST CAME BACK TO EARTH.
NO, I WANTED TO DO THIS. WHEN'S THE LAST TIME WE WENT ON AN ACTUAL DATE?
AREN'T THERE OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD BE DOING BEFORE YOU LEAVE?
NOLAN AND ALLEN WENT OFF TO FIND SOMEONE CALLED TECH JACKET. THEY'RE GOING TO BE OUT FOR A WHILE. I'VE GOT TIME.
AND THIS IS THE ENTIRETY OF WHAT I NEED TO DO BEFORE I LEAVE. I WANT TO SPEND EVERY WAKING MOMENT WITH YOU. I'M GOING TO MISS YOU.
I KNOW. I WISH I COULD COME WITH YOU, BUT WITH MY POWERS ACTING UP, AND...
WHAT? YOU KEEP ACTING LIKE YOU WANT TO SAY SOMETHING--AND THEN DON'T. WHAT IS IT?
NOTHING. IT'S...
NOTHING.
I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
WAS IT WEIRD SEEING YOUR FATHER AGAIN?

"YOU MEAN BECAUSE HE TRIED TO KILL ME ONCE?
"OR IS IT THE FACT THAT BEFORE DOING SO, HE REVEALED TO ME AFTER BEING A COMPLETELY NORMAL, ALBEIT SUPERHERO DAD ALL MY LIFE THAT HE WAS ACTUALLY A MEMBER OF AN ALIEN RACE OUT TO CONQUER THE UNIVERSE AND HE WANTED MY HELP TAKING OVER EARTH?
"OR IS IT THAT HE TOLD ME DURING THE FIGHT THAT HE WAS COMPLETELY PREPARED TO KILL ME, WAS INDIFFERENT ABOUT THAT, AND CONSIDERED MY MOTHER TO BE LITTLE MORE THAN A PET?
"OR, WELL... ALL OF THE ABOVE?"

PRETTY MUCH, YEAH.
I MEAN, THAT'S ALL WEIRD, RIGHT?
IS *WEIRD* THE RIGHT WORD?
WEIRD WORKS... IT WAS *EXTREMELY* DIFFICULT, TOO. UPSETTING. SCARRING.
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN MY FATHER SINCE OUR FIGHT OVER THIS PLANET. THAT WAS ON THE ALIEN PLANET THRAXA WHERE HE CONCEIVED OLIVER WITH ANDRESSA.
SOUNDS WEIRD JUST LAYING IT ALL OUT LIKE THAT.
DON'T KNOW WHERE MY MIND WAS. I KNEW ALL ABOUT THAT.
WE WEREN'T DATING AT THE TIME. YOU TOLD ME ALL ABOUT IT WHEN YOU CAME TO VISIT WITH... AMBER.
YOU AND YOUR FATHER FOUGHT OTHER VILTRUMITES WHILE YOU WERE THERE, DIDN'T YOU?
"YEAH... BUT '*FIGHT*' SEEMS LIKE AN UNDERSTATEMENT.
"THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER ENCOUNTERED VILTRUMITES OTHER THAN MY FATHER.
"HE PRETTY MUCH BACKED DOWN ON THE WHOLE KILLING ME AND TAKING OVER EARTH STANCE. ADMITTED HE LEFT EARTH BECAUSE HE REALIZED HE LOVED ME--AND COULDN'T DO IT.
"HE TOLD ME HE WAS QUESTIONING HIS LOYALTY TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE ALREADY--AND HIS STANCE WAS PRETTY MUCH SET IN STONE AFTER THAT FIGHT."
REFRESH YOUR BEVERAGE, SIR?
UH... OKAY.
NOT THE BEST ATMOSPHERE FOR THIS CONVERSATION...
MAYBE WE SHOULD *GO?*

OKAY, SO NOW THAT WE'RE OUT OF THERE AND CAN SPEAK FREELY--YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT I KNOW NEXT TO **NOTHING** ABOUT VILTRUMITES. IT'S THIS LOOMING THREAT THAT HANGS OVER YOUR HEAD EVERY SECOND OF EVERY DAY AND YOU NEXT TO **NEVER** TALK ABOUT IT.
OH, WHATEVER. YOU HAVE TO KNOW **SOMETHING** ABOUT THEM.
I'M UP TO SPEED ON EVERYTHING BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR DAD AND EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED WITH... CONQUEST.
IT'S ALL THE **BETWEEN** STUFF THAT I'M IN THE DARK ABOUT.
CAN YOU JUST TELL ME EVERYTHING-- EVEN IF YOU THINK I ALREADY KNOW SOME OF IT?
I'VE HAD BRIEF ENCOUNTERS HERE AND THERE, BUT I REALLY KNOW NEXT TO **NOTHING** ABOUT THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO THEIR LEADER IS.
EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT VILTRUMITES?
THIS SHOULD TAKE TWO MINUTES.
WELL, YOU KNOW MORE THAN I DO, WHICH ISN'T COOL.
I PROMISE I WORRY ABOUT THIS STUFF MUCH MORE THAN **YOU** DO.
I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT. IT'S TOO OVERWHELMING.
SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED. I THOUGHT MY DAD WAS DEAD. HE WAS SCHEDULED FOR EXECUTION.
I KNOW, IF IT'S TOO HARD TO TALK ABOUT, I UNDERSTAND.
NO, YOU'RE RIGHT. I DON'T WANT YOU FEELING LEFT IN THE DARK. THIS IS TOO BIG.

"A GOOD EXAMPLE OF ME NOT KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT VILTRUMITES... THERE WAS THIS GUY ON THRAXA, I HEARD SOMEONE CALL HIM **GENERAL KREGG.** HE TOLD ME I'D BEEN MADE THE VILTRUMITE AGENT STATIONED ON EARTH, THAT IT WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO PREPARE IT FOR VILTRUMITE INVASION.
"THIS WAS SHORTLY AFTER THEY TOOK MY FATHER AWAY TO BE EXECUTED."
DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE WAS, **HE** COULD BE THEIR LEADER FOR ALL I KNOW. HE NEVER REALLY SAID ANYTHING ELSE TO ME--AND HAVING JUST BEEN TOLD MY FATHER WAS GOING TO BE EXECUTED, I WAS A LITTLE SHAKEN.
AND I WAS BADLY BEATEN UP... SO MUCH SO THAT I JUST LAID THERE, HALF CONSCIOUS FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT.
THEY JUST TOOK HIM AND LEFT. IT WAS SO WEIRD.
"YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF EARTH, KID. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US, WE'RE GOING TO GO KILL YOUR DAD."
WHY WOULD THEY PUT **ME** IN CHARGE OF EARTH? THAT MAKES NO SENSE! THAT'S LIKE APPOINTING YOU TO BE IN CHARGE OF MY LAUNDRY OR SOMETHING-- YOU NEVER SIGNED UP FOR THAT. IT'S SOMETHING I **KNOW** YOU DON'T WANT TO DO.
BUT YOUR DAD'S OKAY... AND HE'S TOTALLY GONE "GOOD GUY" NOW. HE'S FIGHTING FOR THIS **COALITION OF PLANETS** THING?
THAT'S COOL.
I'M CURIOUS, THOUGH? HOW DID YOUR DAD ESCAPE?
HIS SPINE WAS BROKEN ON THRAXA. THERE'S SOME CREEPY VILTRUMITE LAW WHERE YOU CAN'T BE EXECUTED UNLESS YOU'RE COMPLETELY WHOLE... IN PERFECT CONDITION.
THESE ARE MY PEOPLE.
IN THE TIME IT TOOK HIM TO HEAL, ALLEN FOUND HIS WAY TO HIM AND HELPED HIM ESCAPE.
THEY'RE LIKE BEST FRIENDS NOW.

THAT'S SWEET. TURNING HIS BACK ON HIS PEOPLE, I'M SURE YOUR DAD COULD USE A FRIEND RIGHT NOW.
DIDN'T THAT WOMAN VILTRUMITE COME HERE TO EARTH A WHILE BACK? HOW DOES **SHE** FIT IN TO ALL THIS?
ANISSA. YEAH.
THAT WAS **WEIRD.**
SHE WAS SENT HERE TO CHECK ON MY PROGRESS, OF WHICH, THERE WAS NONE.
"THAT DIDN'T MAKE HER HAPPY.
"WE FOUGHT A LITTLE BIT. THINKING BACK, SHE WAS CLEARLY GOING EASY ON ME. JUST HERE TO **WARN** ME, REALLY."
SHE HAD SOME NONSENSE STORY ABOUT VILTRUMITES MAKING EARTH A BETTER PLACE. SHARING THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND HELPING OUR CIVILIZATION GROW.
NO MORE DISEASE, NO MORE WAR, BLAH BLAH BLAH.
IT WAS ALL **BULL.**

"SHE EVEN HELPED ME SAVE A BUNCH OF PEOPLE AS SOME KIND OF FORCED DISPLAY OF THE GOOD THE VILTRUMITES COULD DO.
"I DIDN'T BUY IT."
SHE WAS CLEARLY SOME KIND OF LAST DITCH EFFORT TO WIN ME OVER. IT ALL SEEMED LIKE A TRICK.
IN HINDSIGHT, SHE WAS CLEARLY THE HONEY, SOON TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE VINEGAR.
I KNEW A BIT ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES ALREADY. WORLD CONQUERORS, ALIEN ENSLAVERS, GENERALLY BAD PEOPLE... I WASN'T BUYING HER KINDER, GENTLER VILTRUMITES ACT.
SHE WARNED ME. TOLD ME I BETTER START MY WORK, PREPARING EARTH FOR TAKEOVER--THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR EVERYONE IF I DID IT PEACEFULLY.
BECAUSE THEY WOULD NOT.
AND SHE SAID THE NEXT AGENT THEY'D SEND WOULDN'T BE AS REASONABLE AS SHE WAS.
CONQUEST.
YEAH.. CONQUEST.
NO NEED TO GO THERE, MARK. REALLY.
THE LESS SAID ABOUT HIM THE BETTER.

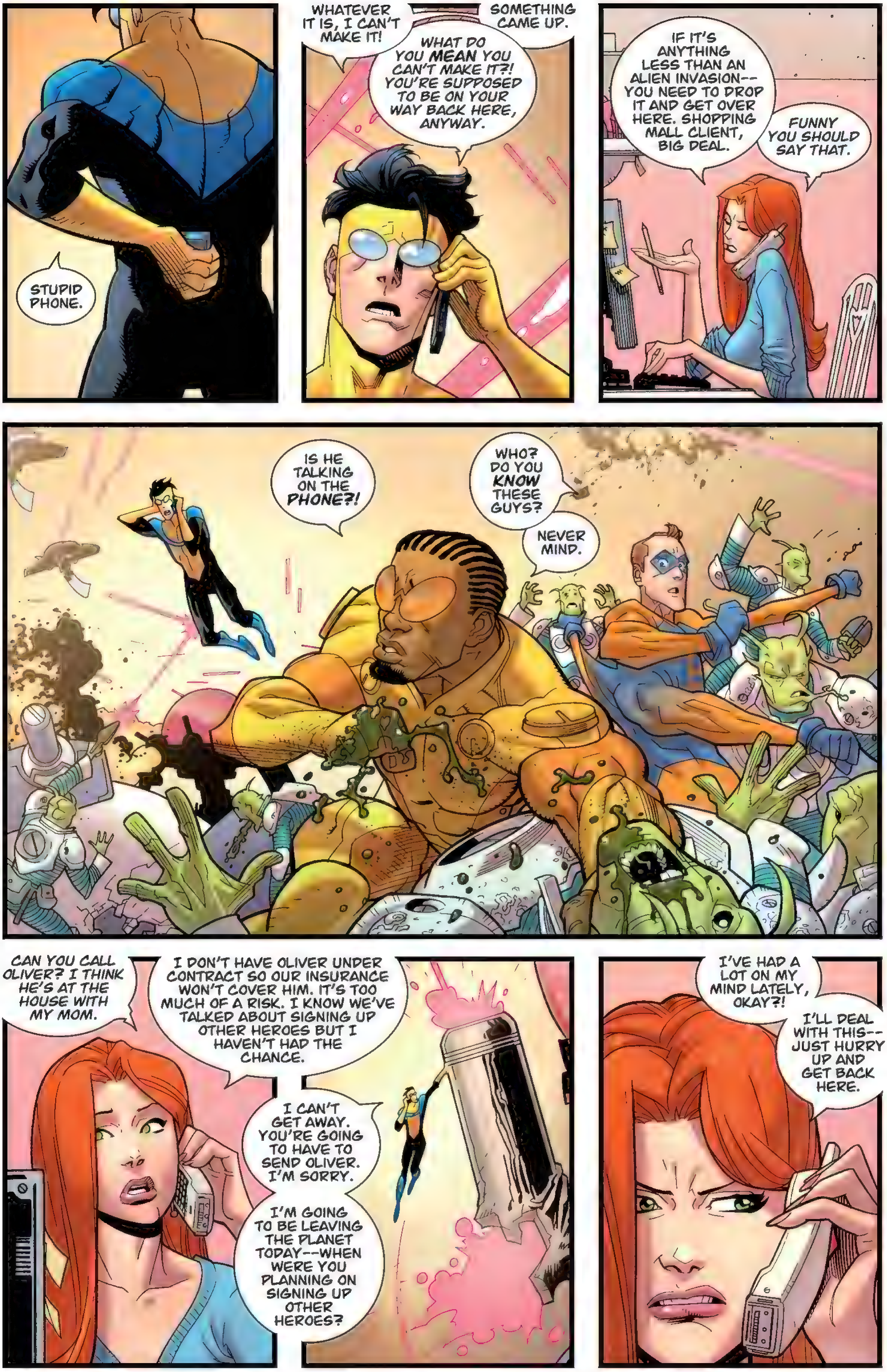
MY DAD TELLS ME THEIR NUMBERS ARE ASTONISHINGLY *LOW.* SOME VIRUS HAS DWINDLED THEIR POPULATION DOWN TO NEXT TO NOTHING.
SO THE BATTLE, ACCORDING TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS, IS VERY WINNABLE.
MY DAD HAS BEEN WORKING WITH ALLEN THE ALIEN, GATHERING THE THINGS LISTED IN HIS BOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
HE SAYS *NOW* IS THE TIME TO STRIKE.
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?
THEY'VE SINGLED OUT EARTH BECAUSE OF OUR COMPATIBLE DNA... *THAT'S* THE RESOURCE THEY WANT FROM US. WE'RE A WAY FOR THEM TO RESTORE THEIR POPULATION.
I WAS ALWAYS GOING TO BE IN THIS BATTLE. I'M JUST GLAD MY FATHER IS ON *MY* SIDE.
DO YOU TRUST HIM?

IT'S WEIRD. I'VE KNOWN HIM ALL MY LIFE TO BE THIS GOOD PERSON, **OMNI-MAN**, DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY... AND I CAN'T CONVINCE MYSELF ALL THAT WAS AN ACT.
THE KINDNESS HE SHOWED ME, THE LOVE BETWEEN A FATHER AND SON, IT ALL SEEMED SO REAL, SO NORMAL. SO I BELIEVE THAT IT WAS.
THE BAD PARTS, HIM TRYING TO TAKE OVER, FIGHTING ME... IT WAS SUCH A BRIEF PERIOD. HE SEEMS BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN.
THEN AGAIN, HE'S BEEN ALIVE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. THE ENTIRETY OF HIS TIME WITH ME MUST SEEM LIKE THE BLINK OF AN EYE TO HIM.
SO... I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE? **ALLEN** TRUSTS HIM. THE COALITION TRUSTS HIM.
HE'S DONE NOTHING BUT REVEAL THE WEAKNESSES OF HIS PEOPLE SINCE HE BEGAN WORKING WITH THEM. I DON'T SEE HOW THAT COULD BE PART OF A LARGER PLAN...
BUT WHAT DO I KNOW?
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO LEAVE TOMORROW. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'LL BE GONE AND I WON'T HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH EARTH.
BUT THIS IS SOMETHING I ***HAVE*** TO DO-- FOR THE SAKE OF THE WHOLE PLANET.
I KNOW. I UNDERSTAND.
I--
I'LL HOLD DOWN THE FORT WHILE YOU'RE GONE.

ARE YOU SCARED?
YES.
BUT NOT FOR WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO ME, OR EVEN THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR... NOT MOSTLY, AT LEAST.
AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED, EVERYTHING I'VE DONE... HOW I'VE CHANGED...
VILTRUMITE BLOOD COURSES THROUGH THESE VEINS. I'M WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THIS WAR WILL BRING OUT OF ME...
...WHAT IT COULD MAKE ME BECOME.

CHAPTER 71

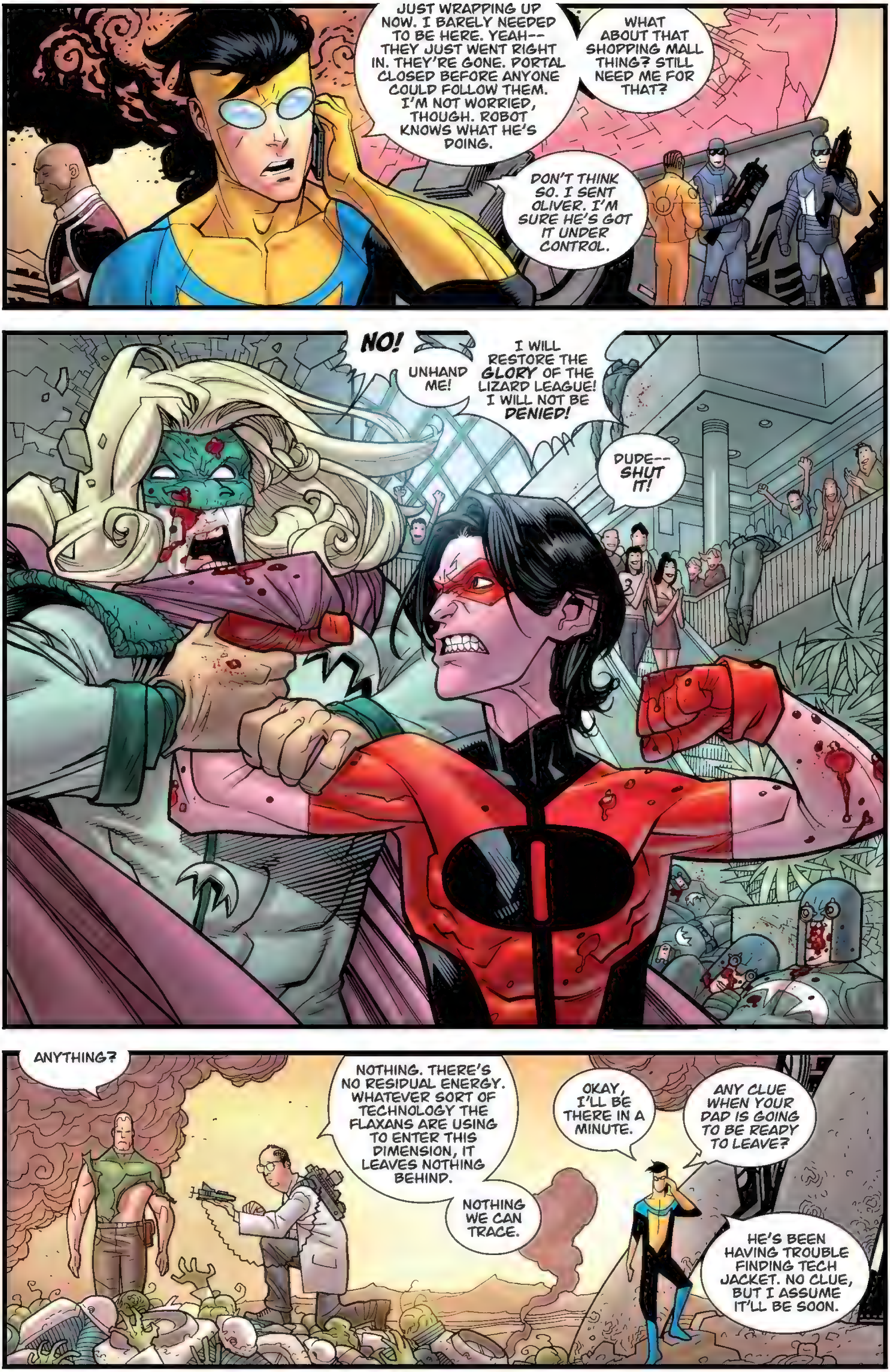
BREET! BREET!
YOU'RE KIDDING ME!


STUPID PHONE.
WHATEVER IT IS, I CAN'T MAKE IT!
SOMETHING CAME UP.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T MAKE IT?! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON YOUR WAY BACK HERE, ANYWAY.
IF IT'S ANYTHING LESS THAN AN ALIEN INVASION--YOU NEED TO DROP IT AND GET OVER HERE. SHOPPING MALL CLIENT, BIG DEAL.
FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT.
IS HE TALKING ON THE PHONE?!
WHO? DO YOU KNOW THESE GUYS?
NEVER MIND.
CAN YOU CALL OLIVER? I THINK HE'S AT THE HOUSE WITH MY MOM.
I DON'T HAVE OLIVER UNDER CONTRACT SO OUR INSURANCE WON'T COVER HIM. IT'S TOO MUCH OF A RISK. I KNOW WE'VE TALKED ABOUT SIGNING UP OTHER HEROES BUT I HAVEN'T HAD THE CHANCE.
I CAN'T GET AWAY. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO SEND OLIVER. I'M SORRY.
I'M GOING TO BE LEAVING THE PLANET TODAY--WHEN WERE YOU PLANNING ON SIGNING UP OTHER HEROES?
I'VE HAD A LOT ON MY MIND LATELY, OKAY?!
I'LL DEAL WITH THIS--JUST HURRY UP AND GET BACK HERE.

UNGH.
WE NEED TO WRAP THIS UP--EVERY SECOND THAT TICKS BY THEIR NUMBERS GROW. WE'VE GOT TO SHUT THAT PORTAL DOWN!
NO. THE FLAXANS ARE FROM A DIMENSION NOT IN SYNC WITH OUR OWN. TIME FOR THEM RUNS MUCH SLOWER SO OUR DIMENSION CAUSES THEM TO AGE AT A RAPID RATE.
WE JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW THEY'RE BLOCKING THOSE EFFECTS--AND THIS WILL BE OVER.
THEN WE NEED TO BUY US SOME TIME TO DO THAT. THESE TANKS ARE CUTTING OUR AIR FORCE TO RIBBONS.
I THINK I CAN HELP IN THAT REGARD. JUST GIVE ME A SECOND.
ARE YOU EVEN IN THAT ONE? I CAN NEVER TELL, ANYMORE. WHERE ARE YOU?
I'LL GIVE YOU A HINT, I'M IN THE ONE WITH THE MOST LEG ROOM.
SKRAGOOM

VOP! VOP! VOP!
KRAKOOM!
WOW, LOOK AT THE-- WAIT! THEY'RE NOT RUNNING FROM *ME!* LOOK AT THEM, CLEARING THE AREA. THEY'RE STARTING TO AGE--
WE'VE GOT THEM, GUARDIANS! FOCUS ALL EFFORTS ON THE TANKS!
THAT'S IT, THE TANKS ARE EMITTING A DISTORTION FIELD. THEY JUST HAVE TO KEEP IN RANGE!
HOW DID WE NOT NOTICE THIS BEFORE?
KROOM!
KROOM!
KROOM!
REALLY-- WHAT WERE THEY *THINKING?!*
KROOM!
THESE GUYS ARE A JOKE! WHY DO THEY EVEN BOTHER?
KROOM!

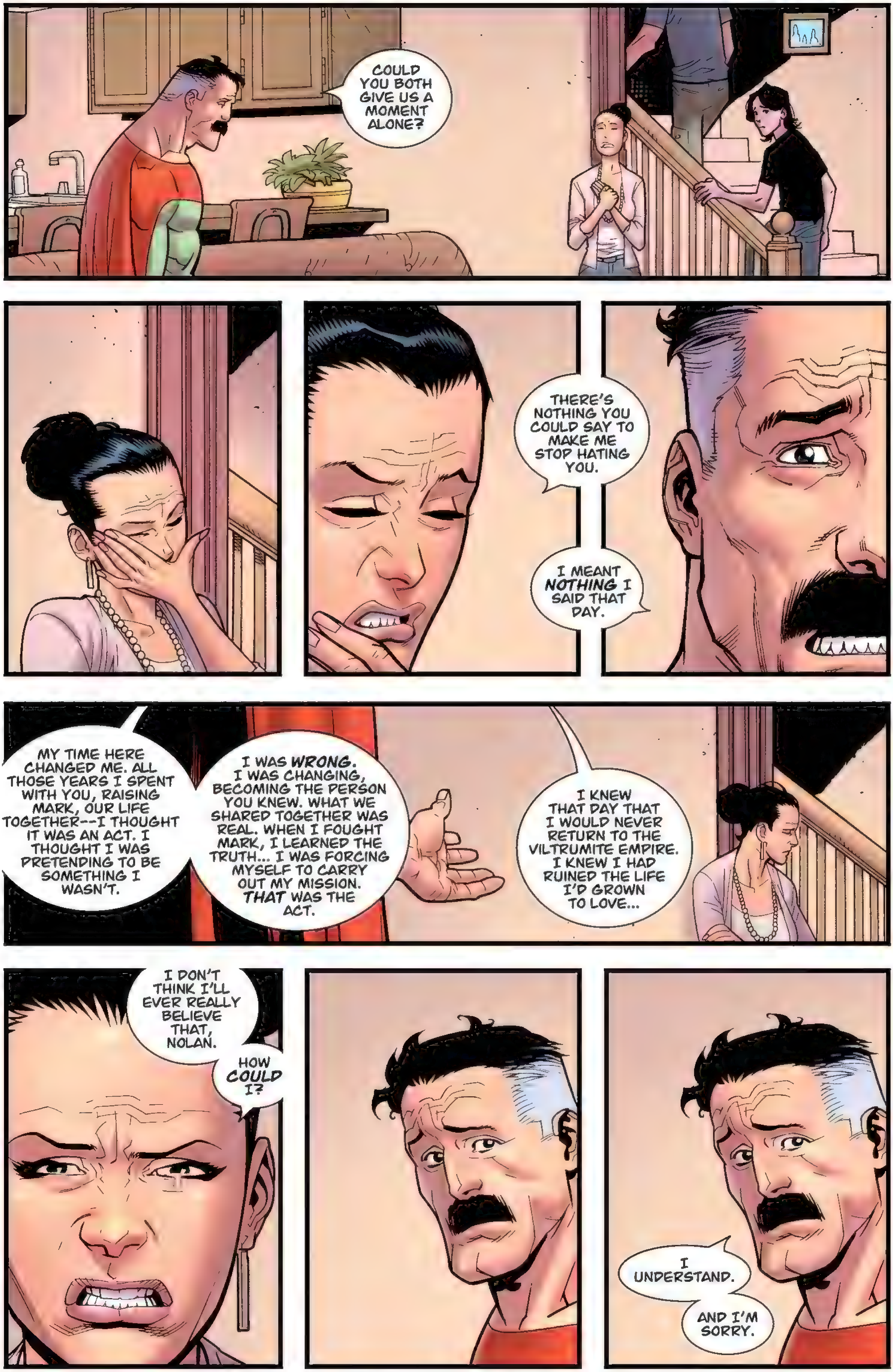
NO!
DON'T YOU REALIZE HOW DANGEROUS THE FLAXANS ARE? DECADES PASS BETWEEN EACH OF THEIR ATTACKS! THE PLANNING, THE TIME AVAILABLE TO THEM...
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEFEAT US--ENSLAVE US ALL! WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THEM BACK, STOP THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL!
WE'RE GOING BACK WITH THEM--TO ATTACK WHEN THEY LEAST EXPECT IT!
FOLLOW ME!
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
THIS IS THEIR ARMY--AND LOOK AT THEM. THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE ACCESS TO THIS WORLD WHENEVER THEY WANT, SO GETTING BACK WILL BE NO TROUBLE.
ROBOT, STOP RIGHT NOW. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'D BE RUNNING INTO--OR HOW THEIR DIMENSION WILL AFFECT US!
WE CAN PLAN FOR THIS, DO IT ANOTHER TIME!
I'VE DONE THE CALCULATIONS, THIS MAY BE OUR LAST CHANCE. TRUST ME ON THIS.
THE PORTAL IS CLOSING--HURRY!

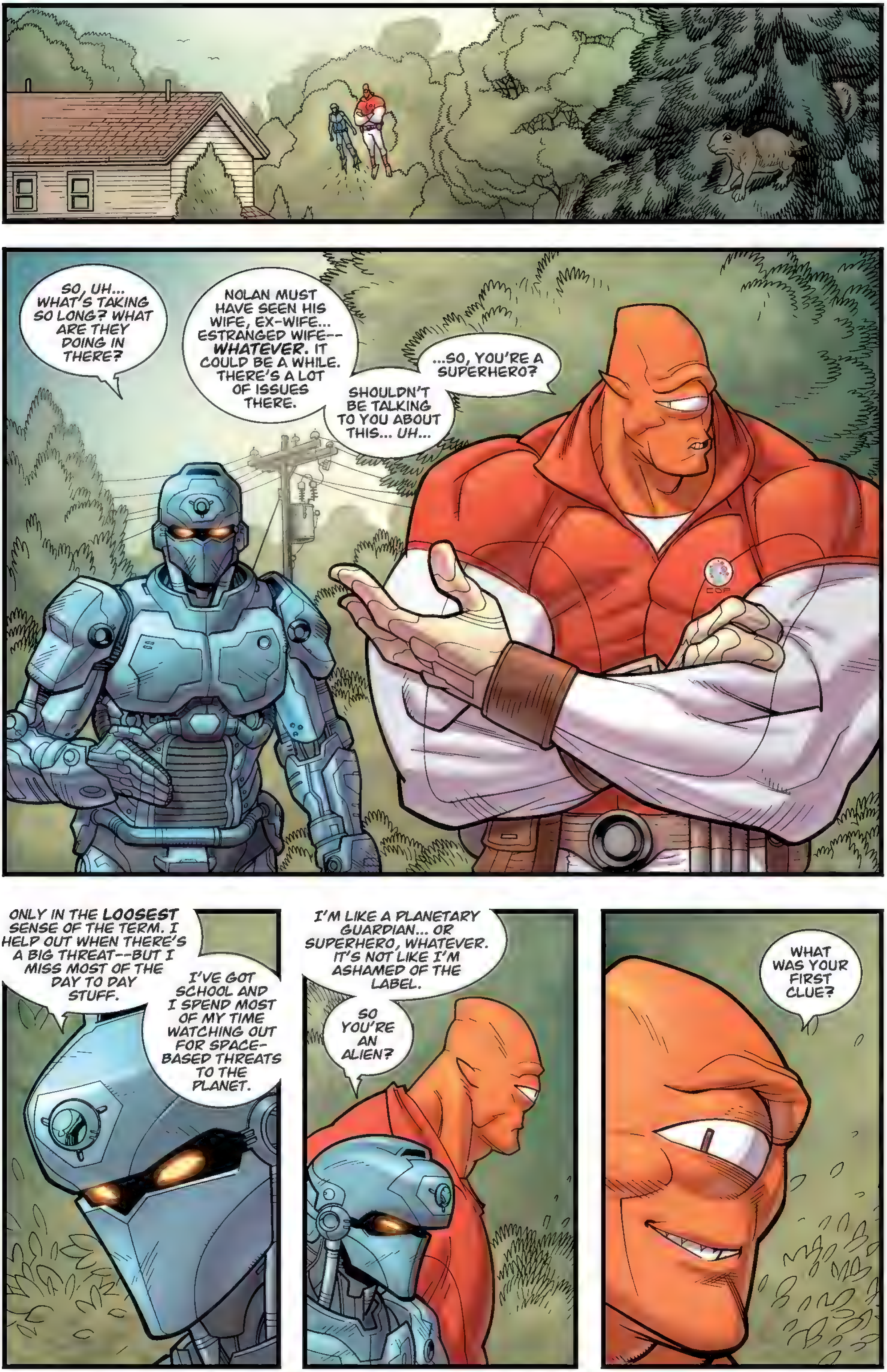

JUST WRAPPING UP NOW. I BARELY NEEDED TO BE HERE. YEAH-- THEY JUST WENT RIGHT IN. THEY'RE GONE. PORTAL CLOSED BEFORE ANYONE COULD FOLLOW THEM. I'M NOT WORRIED, THOUGH. ROBOT KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.
WHAT ABOUT THAT SHOPPING MALL THING? STILL NEED ME FOR THAT?
DON'T THINK SO. I SENT OLIVER. I'M SURE HE'S GOT IT UNDER CONTROL.
NO!
UNHAND ME!
I WILL RESTORE THE GLORY OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE! I WILL NOT BE DENIED!
DUDE-- SHUT IT!
ANYTHING?
NOTHING. THERE'S NO RESIDUAL ENERGY. WHATEVER SORT OF TECHNOLOGY THE FLAXANS ARE USING TO ENTER THIS DIMENSION, IT LEAVES NOTHING BEHIND.
NOTHING WE CAN TRACE.
OKAY, I'LL BE THERE IN A MINUTE.
ANY CLUE WHEN YOUR DAD IS GOING TO BE READY TO LEAVE?
HE'S BEEN HAVING TROUBLE FINDING TECH JACKET. NO CLUE, BUT I ASSUME IT'LL BE SOON.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR WIFE? YOU'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO SEE HER WHILE YOU'RE HERE?
I COULDN'T. I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I'VE PUT HER THROUGH SO MUCH... LET'S JUST FIND THIS BOY AND GET OFF THIS PLANET.
TOO MANY BAD MEMORIES.
WELL, I CERTAINLY DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD TAKE THIS LONG TO FIND THIS *TECH JACKET* EITHER. HE AND HIS FAMILY JUST DISAPPEARED AT SOME POINT A WHILE BACK.
I WAS ABLE TO DISCOVER THIS HOUSE, OWNED BY THE BOY'S GRANDFATHER. MAYBE HE'LL KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.
THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE, IF WE DON'T FIND HIM HERE--I DON'T CARE HOW POWERFUL THE GELDARIANS SAID HE WAS--WE'RE LEAVING WITHOUT HIM.
UNDERSTOOD.
KNOCK! KNOCK!
YOU LOOKING FOR THE THOMPSON BOY? CALLS HIMSELF TECH JACKET? WHAT AM I SAYING--OF *COURSE* YOU ARE.
HE'S PROBABLY UP IN HIS SPACE STATION. THEY DON'T SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THE HOUSE.
OUR APPEARANCE DOESN'T ALARM YOU?
SEEN STRANGER, THAT'S FOR SURE...
...AND THE BAD GUYS DON'T KNOCK FIRST.

DO YOU EAT THEM WITH THE SPRINKLES ON THE TOP OR THE BOTTOM OF THE CHIP? I ALWAYS GO SPRINKLES SIDE DOWN-- I THINK IT TASTES BETTER.
SPRINKLES?
THE FLAVOR THINGS--THAT DUST THAT'S ON THE CHIP, YOU KNOW--
BREET! BREET!
WHAT IS IT?!
I DON'T KNOW-- THE LONG-RANGE SENSORS NEVER PICKED UP ANYTHING, THEN SUDDENLY SOMETHING WAS ON TOP OF US!
I DON'T SEE IT ON ANY OF THE MONITORS! WE COULD BE UNDER ATTACK!
HEY, DAD--DID YOU LOOK OUT THE WINDOW?
FRIENDS OF YOURS?
NO, BUT THEY LOOK FRIENDLY ENOUGH. IF THEY CAN SURVIVE SPACE ON THEIR OWN-- THEY COULD HAVE JUST BUSTED IN HERE.
MIGHT AS WELL LET THEM IN.

NO WAY. IF YOU'RE GOING, *I'M* GOING! YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE ME HERE!
I *NEED* YOU HERE. I NEED TO KNOW YOU'RE HERE TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE. CAN'T YOU JUST DO THIS FOR ME?
I'M *NOT* GOING TO LEAVE YOU AND FATHER TO GO INTO BATTLE ALONE. I WANT TO BE THERE FOR YOU. I THINK YOU'LL NEED ME.
THE VILTRUMITES TRIED TO KILL MY MOTHER AND ME. THIS IS MY FIGHT, TOO.
I UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT WE *BOTH* WANT YOU TO STAY HERE. WE DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE EARTH UNDEFENDED.
OR RATHER, I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE MOM AND EVE UNDEFENDED. WHAT IF ANGSTROM LEVY COMES BACK WHILE I'M GONE?
OKAY... *THAT* I UNDERSTAND.
WHY AM I HEARING THIS FROM *YOU?* FATHER HASN'T EVEN COME TO SEE *ME*. WHY HAVEN'T I HEARD THIS FROM HIM?
HE'S WORRIED ABOUT COMING AROUND HERE. HE'S NOT READY FOR MOM TO SEE HIM YET. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO TELL HER ABOUT ALL THIS.
TELL ME ABOUT *WHAT?*
AND WHO'S NOT READY TO SEE ME?
ME.
BUT I'VE SINCE CHANGED MY MIND.

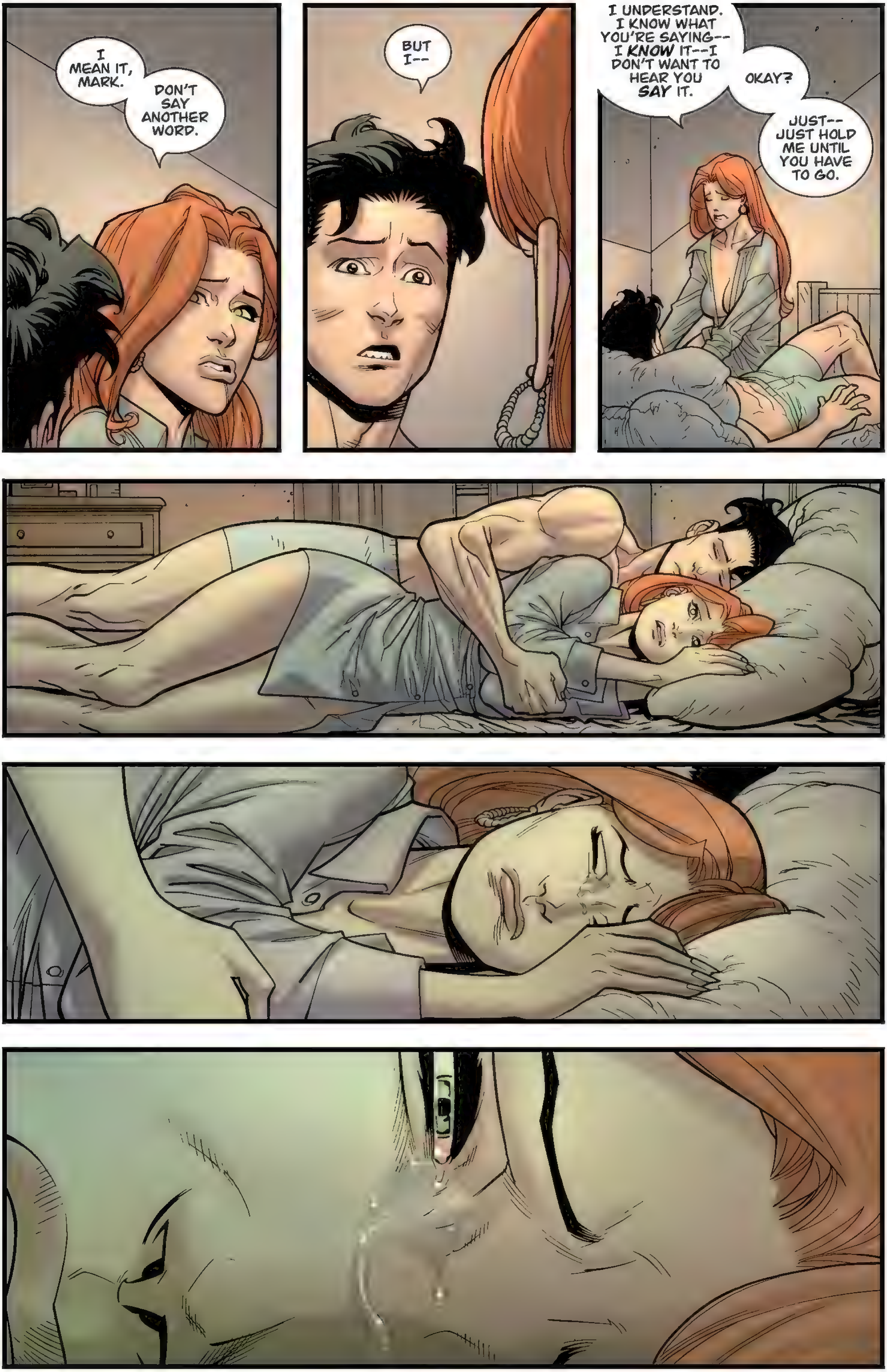

COULD YOU BOTH GIVE US A MOMENT ALONE?
THERE'S NOTHING YOU COULD SAY TO MAKE ME STOP HATING YOU.
I MEANT *NOTHING* I SAID THAT DAY.
MY TIME HERE CHANGED ME. ALL THOSE YEARS I SPENT WITH YOU, RAISING MARK, OUR LIFE TOGETHER--I THOUGHT IT WAS AN ACT. I THOUGHT I WAS PRETENDING TO BE SOMETHING I WASN'T.
I WAS *WRONG.* I WAS CHANGING, BECOMING THE PERSON YOU KNEW. WHAT WE SHARED TOGETHER WAS REAL. WHEN I FOUGHT MARK, I LEARNED THE TRUTH... I WAS FORCING MYSELF TO CARRY OUT MY MISSION. *THAT* WAS THE ACT.
I KNEW THAT DAY THAT I WOULD NEVER RETURN TO THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE. I KNEW I HAD RUINED THE LIFE I'D GROWN TO LOVE...
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER REALLY BELIEVE THAT, NOLAN.
HOW *COULD* I?
I UNDERSTAND.
AND I'M SORRY.


SO, UH... WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG? WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN THERE?
NOLAN MUST HAVE SEEN HIS WIFE, EX-WIFE... ESTRANGED WIFE-- **WHATEVER.** IT COULD BE A WHILE. THERE'S A LOT OF ISSUES THERE.
SHOULDN'T BE TALKING TO YOU ABOUT THIS... UH...
...SO, YOU'RE A SUPERHERO?
COP
ONLY IN THE **LOOSEST** SENSE OF THE TERM. I HELP OUT WHEN THERE'S A BIG THREAT--BUT I MISS MOST OF THE DAY TO DAY STUFF.
I'VE GOT SCHOOL AND I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME WATCHING OUT FOR SPACE-BASED THREATS TO THE PLANET.
I'M LIKE A PLANETARY GUARDIAN... OR SUPERHERO, WHATEVER. IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ASHAMED OF THE LABEL.
SO YOU'RE AN ALIEN?
WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CLUE?

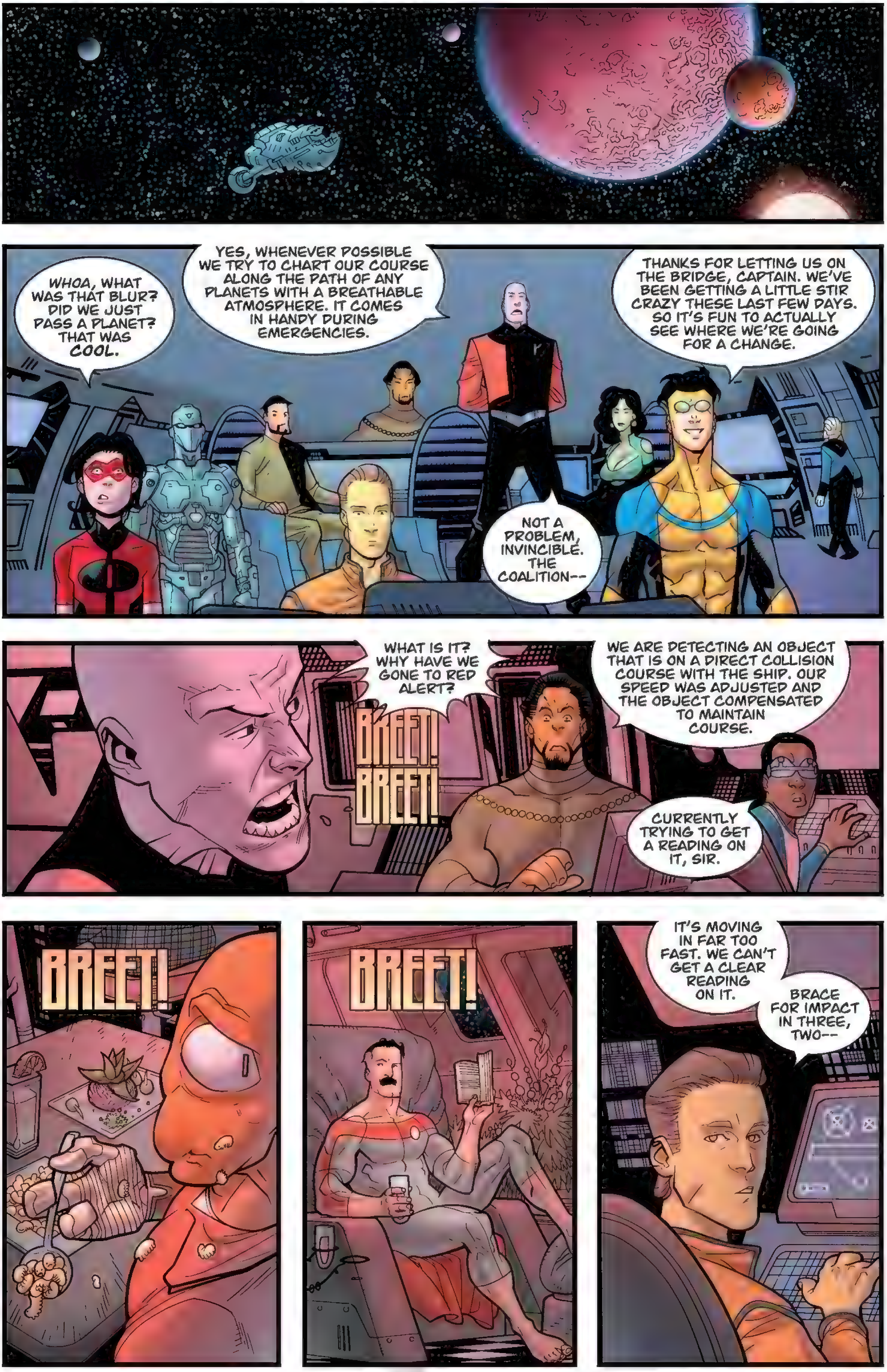
MARK, I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOUR BROTHER.
I WAS WORRIED YOU DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME.
I RECOGNIZE YOU, SON. I'VE... *MISSED* YOU SO MUCH.
YOU'VE GROWN UP SO MUCH SINCE I LAST SAW YOU. TELL ME EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE HERE ON EARTH. I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT *EVERYTHING.*
WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED... WHAT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED.
COP
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE TO START... THERE'S BEEN A LOT.
I DON'T KNOW...
I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. I THINK THAT YOU SHOULD COME WITH US.
MAYBE WE CAN TALK MORE DURING THE TRIP. THERE IS MUCH YOU COULD LEARN.
HELL YEAH!

MARK?
IT'S TIME.
I'M SORRY.
SHH.

I REALLY AM SORRY.
SORRY FOR *WHAT?*
SORRY FOR ***EVERYTHING.*** I'M SORRY THAT I HAVE TO DO THIS, I'M SORRY THAT I HAVE TO LEAVE YOU--PUT MYSELF IN DANGER LIKE THIS--MAKE YOU WORRY. EVERYTHING--I'M SORRY FOR EVERYTHING.
I'M SORRY THAT I'VE DRAGGED YOU INTO THIS LIFE--IF YOU WERE WITH ANYONE ELSE, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS.
DON'T YOU GET IT, MARK? I DON'T ***WANT*** TO BE WITH ANYONE ELSE.
EVE, I--I DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL BE COMING BACK. *IF--*
STOP.
DON'T SAY THAT.
I HAVEN'T REALLY GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO WHAT I'M ACTUALLY GETTING MYSELF INTO. THIS ISN'T A BATTLE--THIS IS A ***WAR***--A WAR BETWEEN TWO IMPOSSIBLY POWERFUL FORCES.
THEY NEED ME FOR THIS--AND I AM POWERFUL. BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I'M POWERFUL ENOUGH.
I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE THAT I'LL SURVIVE THIS.
EVE--I COULD DI--


I MEAN IT, MARK.
DON'T SAY ANOTHER WORD.
BUT I--
I UNDERSTAND. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING-- I *KNOW* IT--I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOU *SAY* IT.
OKAY?
JUST-- JUST HOLD ME UNTIL YOU HAVE TO GO.

TO BE HONEST, I KIND OF FIGURED WE'D JUST BE FLYING THERE OURSELVES.
I'D RATHER WE HAD. I REQUESTED ANY SHIP BUT *THIS* ONE. THE CREW IS PATHETIC. STILL, EVEN WITH OUR ABILITIES, IT'S DIFFICULT TO TRAVEL THIS KIND OF DISTANCE WITHOUT A SHIP.
WE CAN ONLY HOLD OUR BREATH FOR SO LONG.
TAKE THESE EARPIECES. KEEP THEM IN AT ALL TIMES. IT WILL ALLOW US TO SPEAK TELEPATHICALLY TO EACH OTHER IN SPACE. IT'S SIMILAR TO WHAT ALLEN USES. IF WE DON'T ALL HAVE THEM, THE DISCUSSION ONLY WORKS ONE WAY.
NEAT. ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT THAT.
WAIT, HOW LONG CAN WE HOLD OUR BREATH?
SORRY, I HAVEN'T GOTTEN AROUND TO TEACHING HIM THAT.
I'VE BEEN A LITTLE PREOCCUPIED AS OF LATE.
I *SAW* THAT. SHE'S VERY PRETTY.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT.
HAH.
SO SERIOUSLY-- I CAN HOLD MY BREATH FOR A LONG TIME?


WHOA, WHAT WAS THAT BLUR? DID WE JUST PASS A PLANET? THAT WAS COOL.
YES, WHENEVER POSSIBLE WE TRY TO CHART OUR COURSE ALONG THE PATH OF ANY PLANETS WITH A BREATHABLE ATMOSPHERE. IT COMES IN HANDY DURING EMERGENCIES.
THANKS FOR LETTING US ON THE BRIDGE, CAPTAIN. WE'VE BEEN GETTING A LITTLE STIR CRAZY THESE LAST FEW DAYS. SO IT'S FUN TO ACTUALLY SEE WHERE WE'RE GOING FOR A CHANGE.
NOT A PROBLEM, INVINCIBLE. THE COALITION--
WHAT IS IT? WHY HAVE WE GONE TO RED ALERT?
BREET! BREET!
WE ARE DETECTING AN OBJECT THAT IS ON A DIRECT COLLISION COURSE WITH THE SHIP. OUR SPEED WAS ADJUSTED AND THE OBJECT COMPENSATED TO MAINTAIN COURSE.
CURRENTLY TRYING TO GET A READING ON IT, SIR.
BREET!
BREET!
IT'S MOVING IN FAR TOO FAST. WE CAN'T GET A CLEAR READING ON IT.
BRACE FOR IMPACT IN THREE, TWO--

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?!
ARE WE MOVING FASTER? WHAT'S GOING ON?
IN THE EVENT OF IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO THE SHIP, THE BRIDGE AUTOMATICALLY DETACHES AND RETURNS TO BASE.
WHATEVER THAT WAS-- IT'S DESTROYED THE REST OF THE SHIP.
MY DAD IS BACK THERE!
POINT ME TO THE NEAREST AIRLOCK--OR I'M MAKING MY OWN EXIT. UNDERSTAND?!
WHAT WAS IT?
JUST STAY ALERT--LOOK FOR DAD AND ALLEN.

NO. *NOT* HIM.
HOW?

CHAPTER 72

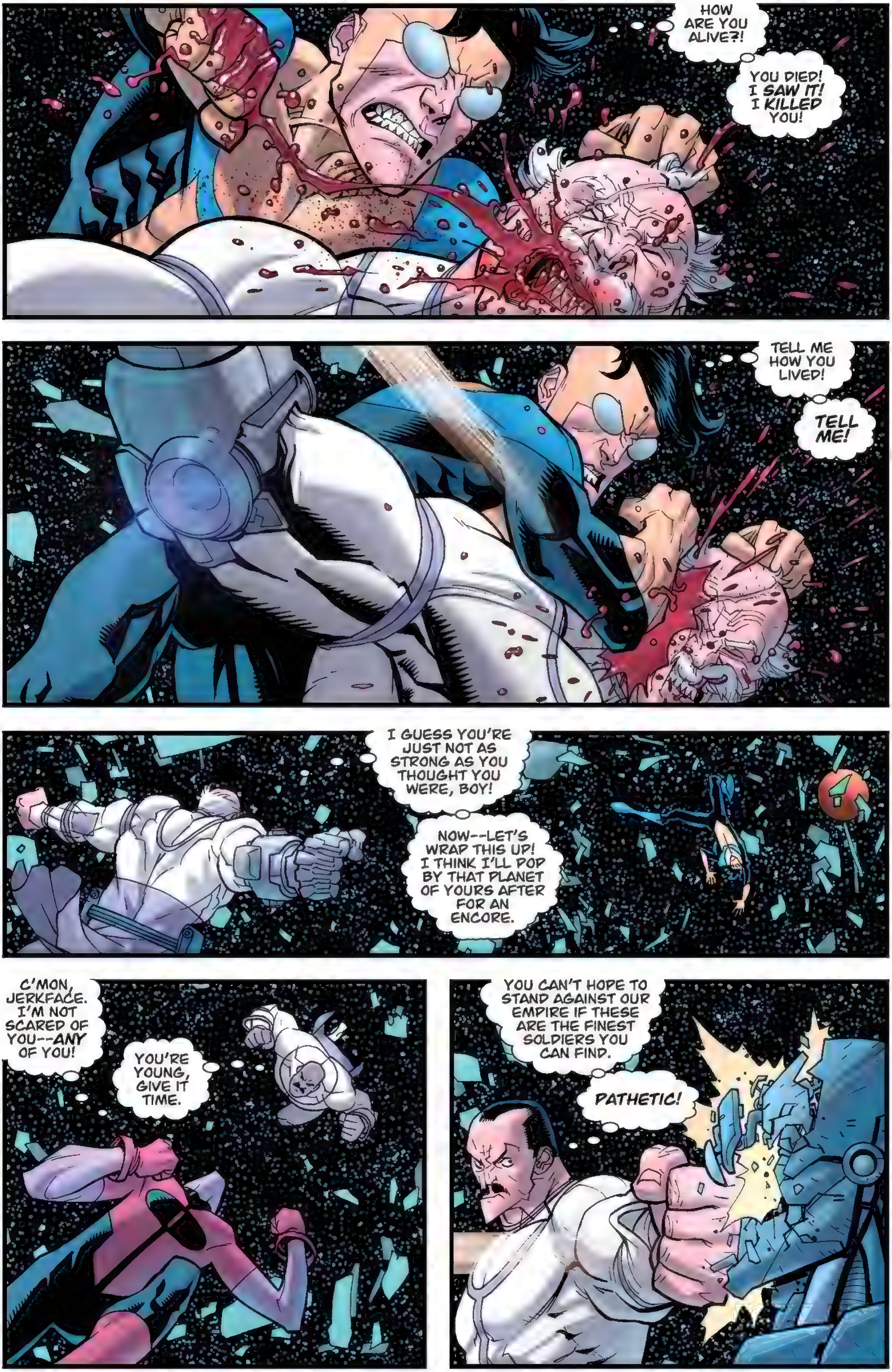
RYAN OTTLEY '09 +fco

OH, MARK. IT'S SO GOOD TO *SEE* YOU AGAIN.
AND I SEE YOU'VE BROUGHT ***FRIENDS.***
PUTTING IT ALL ON THE TABLE, MY ORDERS ARE ***SIMPLE.*** SLAUGHTER YOU AND EVERYONE WITH YOU.
I'M SO HAPPY TO GET ANOTHER SHOT AT YOU. I'LL ADMIT I UNDERESTIMATED YOU THE FIRST TIME. I TRUST YOU LEFT THE GIRL AT HOME THIS TIME?
A PITY.
YOU'VE BROUGHT ALONG SOME HELP, WHICH SHOULD MAKE THINGS MORE INTERESTING. ALTHOUGH, I THINK YOU'VE GROSSLY OVERESTIMATED THE ABILITIES OF THE GELDARIANS. THEY NEED THEIR TECHNOLOGY TO HOLD THEIR HEADS UP. HE'LL BE ***USELESS.***
AND THE BOY, GOOD TO SEE HIS ARM HEALED. I'LL ENJOY BREAKING IT AGAIN.
MARK, I WANT YOU TO ENJOY THE SHOW, SO I'LL BE KILLING YOU ***LAST.***

THAT'S IT! I'M MESSING THIS GUY UP!
OLIVER-- *NO!*
UH, I KINDA THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE A BRIEFING OR SOMETHING BEFORE WE ACTUALLY STARTED FIGHTING.
WHAT DO I *DO?* DO THEY HAVE WEAK SPOTS OR ANYTHING?
CONQUEST?
NO--
OLIVER!
YOU'LL MAKE A NICE WARM UP!

DID I BLACK OUT?
HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?
OH, NO-- THIS ISN'T GOOD!
SERIOUSLY! WHATEVER HELP ANYONE CAN MUSTER-- I'LL GLADLY ACCEPT!
HE'S SHRUGGING OFF WHATEVER I THROW AT HIM!
FOOLISH GELDARIAN.
WAIT-- THAT DID THE TRICK!
NOLAN! THE TRAITOR! I CAN'T BELIEVE MY LUCK. I GET TO KILL YOU, TOO!
WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE SUCH FORTUNE?!
YOUR SON IS SO POWERFUL-- ALMOST STRONGER THAN YOU. YOU MUST BE SO PROUD!

DAD!
SON, BE CAREFUL! HE--
I'VE FOUGHT HIM BEFORE! I CAN DO THIS!


HOW ARE YOU ALIVE?!
YOU DIED! I SAW IT! I KILLED YOU!
TELL ME HOW YOU LIVED!
TELL ME!
I GUESS YOU'RE JUST NOT AS STRONG AS YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE, BOY!
NOW--LET'S WRAP THIS UP! I THINK I'LL POP BY THAT PLANET OF YOURS AFTER FOR AN ENCORE.
C'MON, JERKFACE. I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU--ANY OF YOU!
YOU'RE YOUNG, GIVE IT TIME.
YOU CAN'T HOPE TO STAND AGAINST OUR EMPIRE IF THESE ARE THE FINEST SOLDIERS YOU CAN FIND.
PATHETIC!

YOU OKAY?
YEAH, I'M FINE. I THINK MY HELMET CAN REPAIR ITSELF.
THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE! I SAW YOUR BODY! YOU WERE DEAD.
YET, HERE I AM. I WOKE UP ENCASED IN STEEL, DEEP UNDER YOUR PLANET'S SURFACE.
SOMEONE WAS STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK THEY COULD CONTAIN ME.
REPAIRS EIGHTY PERCENT COMPLETE.
HURRY! I CAN'T SEE WHILE YOU'RE DOING THIS!
OH, YOU THINK YOU CAN--
HANDS OFF MY SON!
FINALLY-- I'VE BEEN WAITING TO GET MY HANDS ON YOU SINCE OUR LAST ENCOUNTER!
YOU SHOULD HAVE MADE SURE I WAS DEAD!
A MISTAKE I WON'T REPEAT.

CECIL KEPT YOU ALIVE?! THAT HAS TO BE IT!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'D--WHEN I SEE HIM AGAIN...!
HOW OPTIMISTIC YOU ARE.
YOU WON'T BE SEEING *ANYONE* AGAIN!
THANKS, KID.
I'M GETTING THE HANG OF THIS.
I PROMISE I'M NOT COMPLETELY USELESS.
IT'S ALL OVER NOW, ASSFACE!
YOU FIGHT WELL, SON.
I'M IMPRESSED.
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?! I KNOW YOUR NUMBERS ARE SPARSE, BUT *THREE?!* YOU'RE RIDICULOUSLY OUTNUMBERED!
WHAT EVER MADE YOU THINK YOU GUYS HAD A CHANCE?

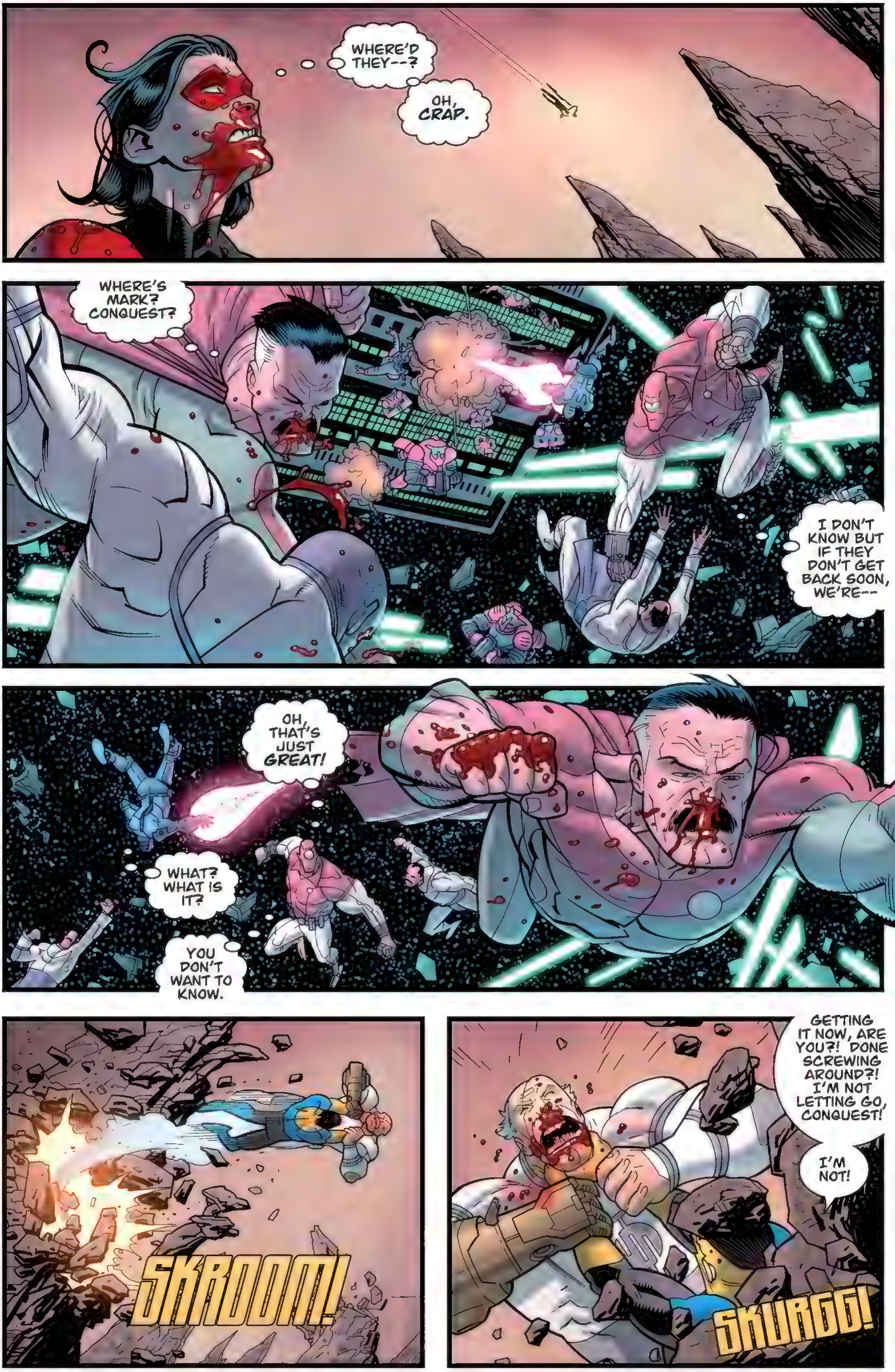
OH.
NEVER MIND THEN.

THINGS JUST GOT REAL.
NEW STRATEGY, WE NEED TO BREAK AWAY, FIND COVER. WE CAN'T FIGHT THIS MANY HEAD-ON!
AGH-- STUPID!
OUT OF AIR!
CAN'T BREATHE!
GETTING LIGHT-HEADED! WHAT DO I DO?!
THE PLANET WE PASSED-- GO!
LOOK AT THIS.
THE WEAKEST STRAYS FROM THE PACK, ENSURING ITS DEMISE.

AS I RECALL, I WAS SAVING YOU FOR LAST.
OLIVER!

GASP!
GOOM!
BRAKKA-DOOM!!

THAT KNOCKED THE WIND OUT OF YOU-- DIDN'T IT?
OR DID YOU JUST EXHALE KNOWING THAT YOU WERE COMING TO THIS PLANET--AND COULD GET A BREATH?
VERY-- GKK.
DON'T HIDE BEHIND THAT SMILE-- YOU'RE DEAD.
I'M MAKING SURE THIS TI--
KROOM!
WROKK!
WHAT'S THIS SUPPOSED TO DO? I GOT A BREATH.
YOU REALLY THINK I CAN'T MAKE YOU LET GO?
LOOKS LIKE I'M CHANGING THE DEATH ORDER. YOU'RE NUMBER ONE, KID.


WHERE'D THEY--?
OH, CRAP.
WHERE'S MARK? CONQUEST?
I DON'T KNOW BUT IF THEY DON'T GET BACK SOON, WE'RE--
OH, THAT'S JUST GREAT!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
SKROOM!
GETTING IT NOW, ARE YOU?! DONE SCREWING AROUND?! I'M NOT LETTING GO, CONQUEST!
I'M NOT!
SKURGG!

KRAKK!
GOOM!
NOT--
LETTING--
GO--
GOOM!
CHOOM!
NOT--
STOPPING--
SKRAGG!
GLK
HRK

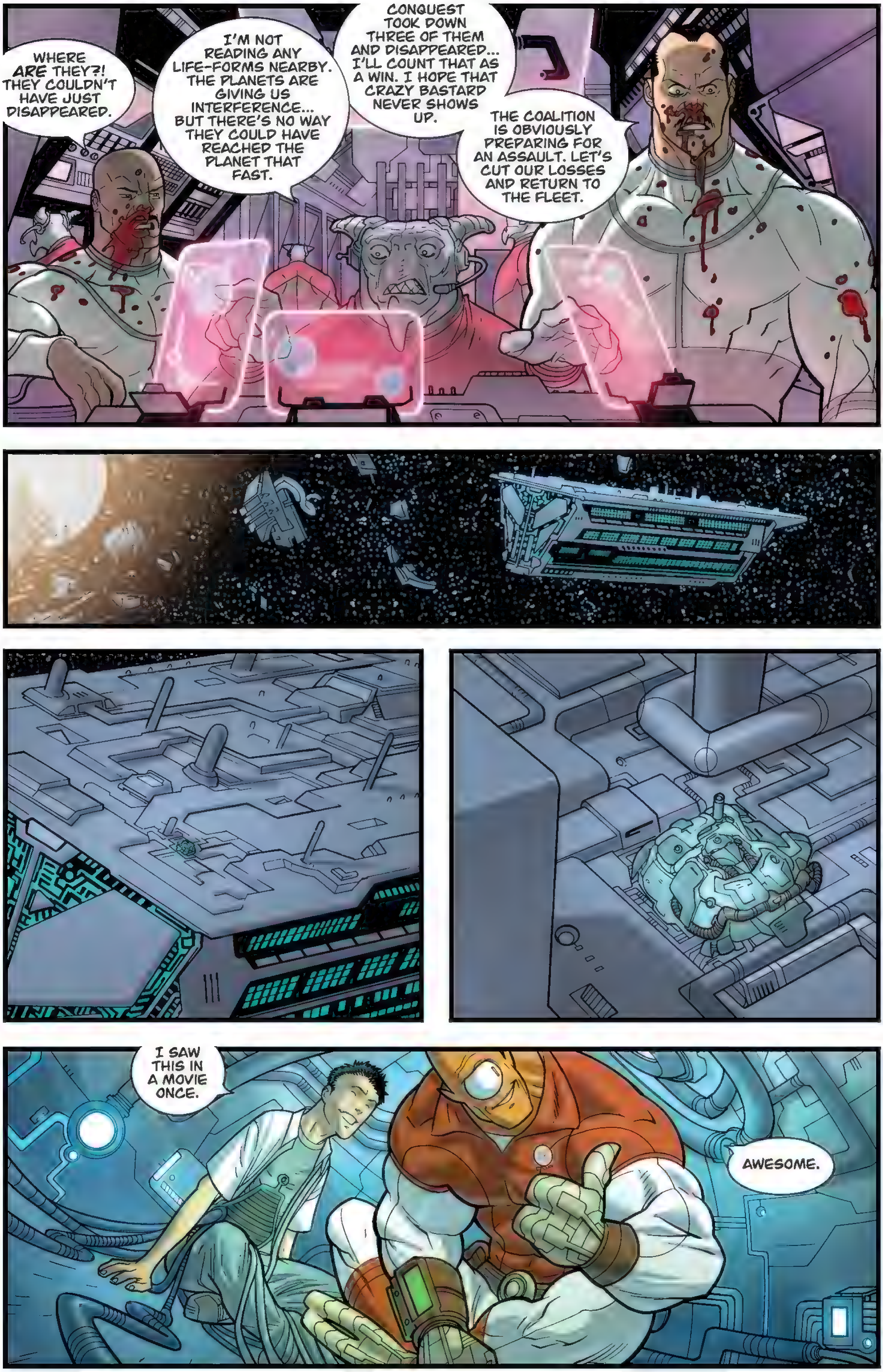
SPLAGG!!
NOT--
ENOUGH--!

...
HOW--
LONG UNTIL--
UNGH!
NO!
NO!
NO...

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HELP.

CHAPTER 73

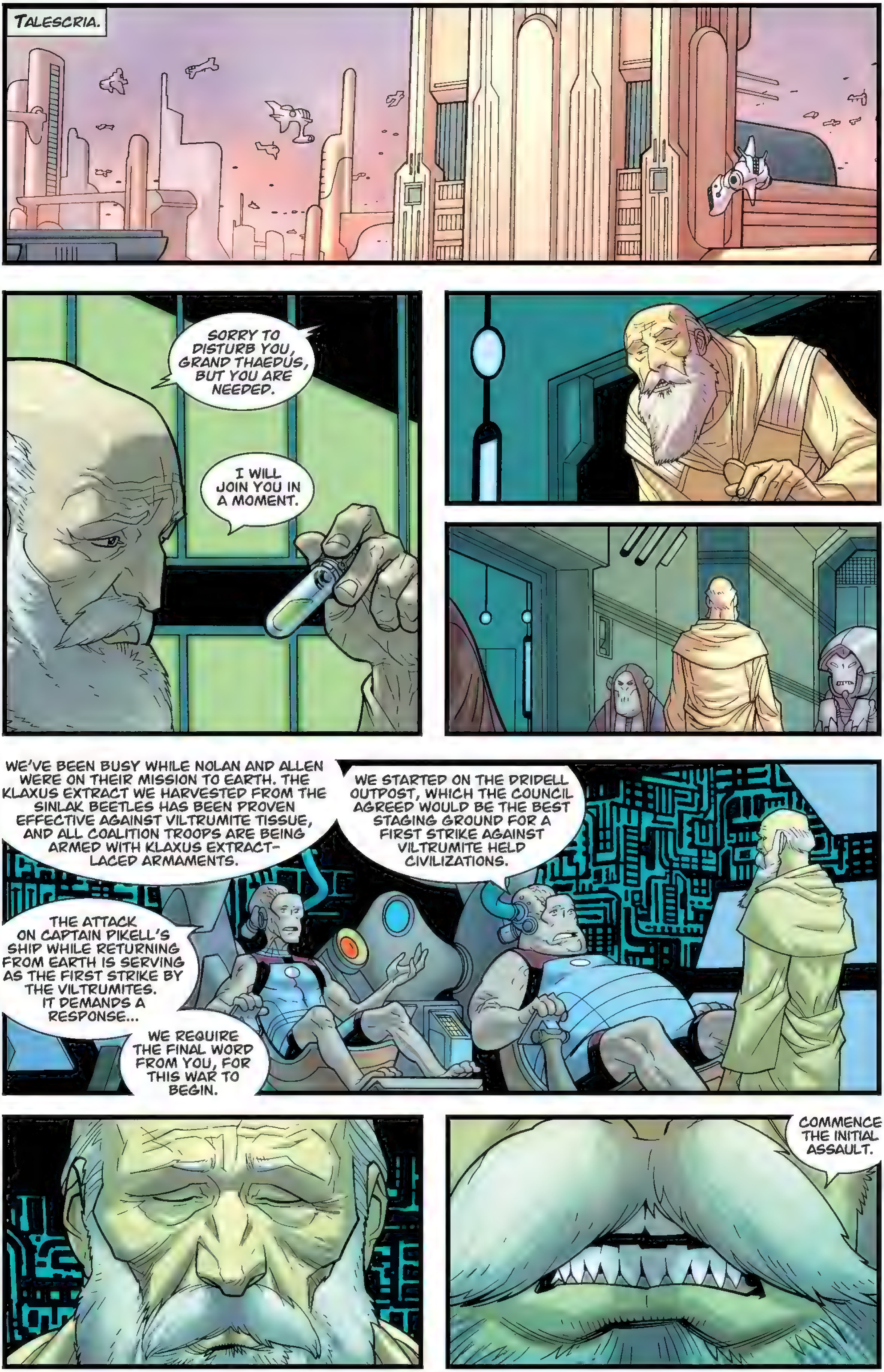
THE PLANET TALESCRIA, SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
WHAT?!
WHERE *ARE* THEY?! HOW COULD YOU LET THIS HAPPEN?! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW *IMPORTANT* THEY ARE?!
THEY WERE THE LYNCHPIN OF OUR ENTIRE PLAN OF ATTACK!
FORGIVE ME, GREAT THAEDUS.
WE WERE ATTACKED, OUR SHIP WAS DESTROYED. THE ESCAPE DRONE HAS LIMITED WEAPONS CAPABILITIES.
FORGIVE ME. I KNOW THERE WAS LITTLE YOU COULD DO. I DON'T MEAN TO LOSE MY--
JUST... *LEAVE* ME.
ATTENDANT. RESPOND.
YES, GREAT THAEDUS?
CALL FOR AN ASSEMBLY. THERE ARE... MATTERS TO DISCUSS.


WHERE **ARE** THEY?! THEY COULDN'T HAVE JUST DISAPPEARED.
I'M NOT READING ANY LIFE-FORMS NEARBY. THE PLANETS ARE GIVING US INTERFERENCE... BUT THERE'S NO WAY THEY COULD HAVE REACHED THE PLANET THAT FAST.
CONQUEST TOOK DOWN THREE OF THEM AND DISAPPEARED... I'LL COUNT THAT AS A WIN. I HOPE THAT CRAZY BASTARD NEVER SHOWS UP.
THE COALITION IS OBVIOUSLY PREPARING FOR AN ASSAULT. LET'S CUT OUR LOSSES AND RETURN TO THE FLEET.
I SAW THIS IN A MOVIE ONCE.
AWESOME.

CHOOM!
WHY DID YOU BOTHER BURYING HIM?
COULDN'T WE HAVE JUST THROWN HIM INTO SPACE?
ALTHOUGH HE LOST HIS WAY IN HIS LATER YEARS, CONQUEST WAS THE GREATEST OF VILTRUMITE WARRIORS.
THAT DEMANDS A CERTAIN LEVEL OF RESPECT, DESPITE HIS ACTIONS. HE DESERVED A PROPER BURIAL.
HE DESERVED TO ROT IN THE SUN.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS GUY'S DONE.
EVERYTHING HE'S DONE WAS IN SERVICE TO THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE.
IN A WAY... THAT MADE HIM A GREATER MAN THAN I.
COME.
WE SHOULDN'T LEAVE MARK UNATTENDED FOR LONG.

SO, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? ARE WE WAITING UNTIL HE HEALS ENOUGH TO TAKE HIM SOMEWHERE?
NO.
THIS IS THE SAFEST PLACE FOR HIM. THE COALITION WILL SOON BE IN OPEN WAR WITH THE VILTRUMITES-- NO COALITION FACILITY WILL BE SAFE.
MY CAPE WILL HOLD HIM TOGETHER... WITH TIME, HE'LL HEAL. WE'LL JUST NEED TO STAY HERE-- AND WATCH OVER HIM.
HOW LONG WILL *THAT* TAKE?
MONTHS.
BUT THIS ISN'T A BAD THING.
BEING STRANDED ON THIS PLANET, MY BROTHER HALF-DEAD?
WHAT'S *NOT* BAD ABOUT THIS?
IT'S ENOUGH TIME FOR ME TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER.

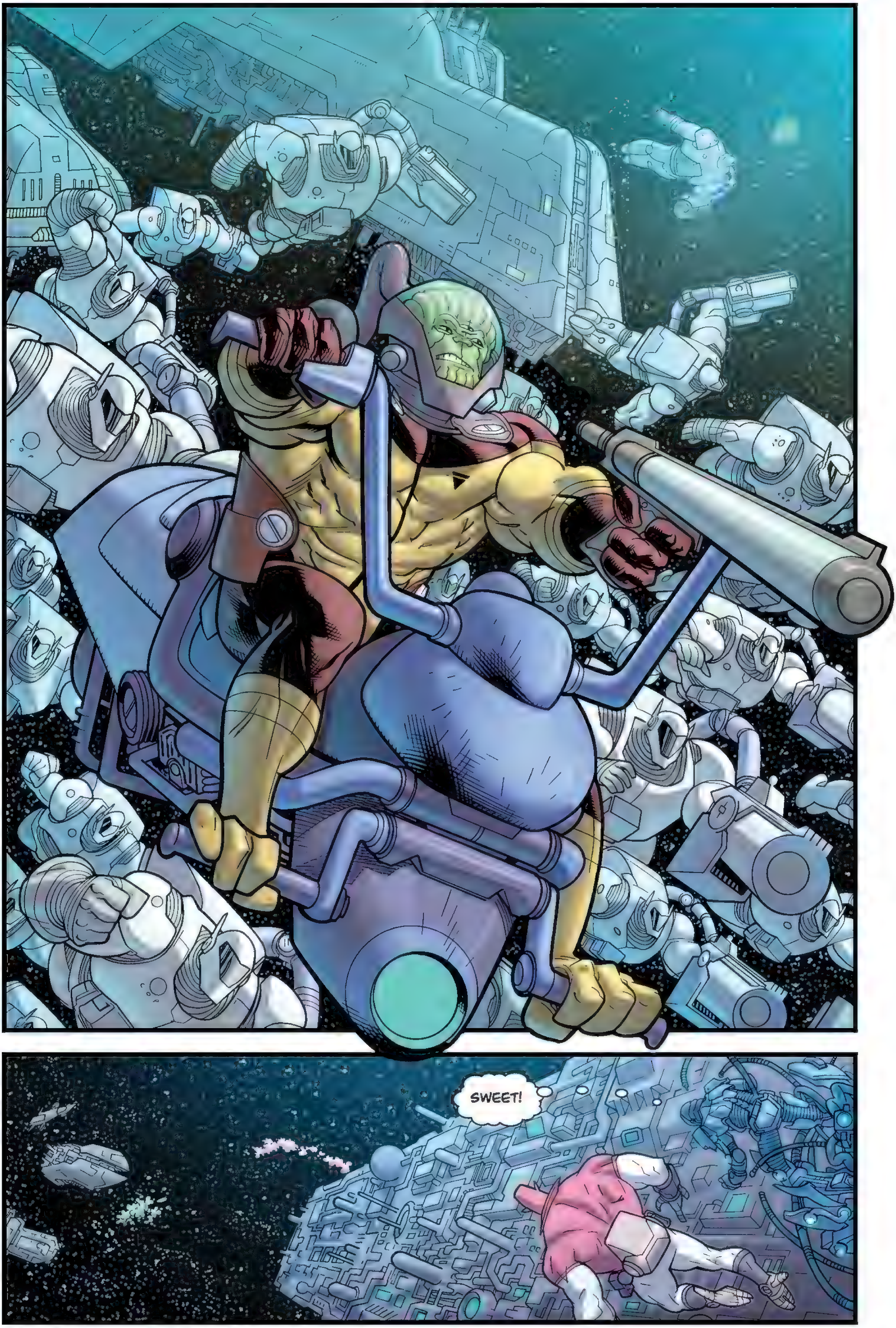
WHOA, ARE YOU SEEING THIS?! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!
I'M READING LIFE SIGNS! LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS THING!
I'M ACTIVATING THE CLAW-- WE'VE GOT TO REPORT THIS TO THE COALITION!
AIR LOCKS ARE CLOSED! OUR PASSENGER IS ON BOARD!
LET'S GO CHECK HIM OUT!
WHOA!
M-M-M--
--MORE.
HE'S HUGE!


TALESCRIA.
SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, GRAND THAEDUS, BUT YOU ARE NEEDED.
I WILL JOIN YOU IN A MOMENT.
WE'VE BEEN BUSY WHILE NOLAN AND ALLEN WERE ON THEIR MISSION TO EARTH. THE KLAXUS EXTRACT WE HARVESTED FROM THE SINLAK BEETLES HAS BEEN PROVEN EFFECTIVE AGAINST VILTRUMITE TISSUE, AND ALL COALITION TROOPS ARE BEING ARMED WITH KLAXUS EXTRACT-LACED ARMAMENTS.
WE STARTED ON THE DRIDELL OUTPOST, WHICH THE COUNCIL AGREED WOULD BE THE BEST STAGING GROUND FOR A FIRST STRIKE AGAINST VILTRUMITE HELD CIVILIZATIONS.
THE ATTACK ON CAPTAIN PIKELL'S SHIP WHILE RETURNING FROM EARTH IS SERVING AS THE FIRST STRIKE BY THE VILTRUMITES. IT DEMANDS A RESPONSE...
WE REQUIRE THE FINAL WORD FROM YOU, FOR THIS WAR TO BEGIN.
COMMENCE THE INITIAL ASSAULT.

KRAK!
KROOM!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
I'M CATCHING DINNER.
WE'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST TWO WEEKS-- AREN'T YOU STARVING?
KRAGG!
NOT ENOUGH TO EAT THAT!
I WILL NEVER EAT THAT!
NEVER EVER.
...
EVER!

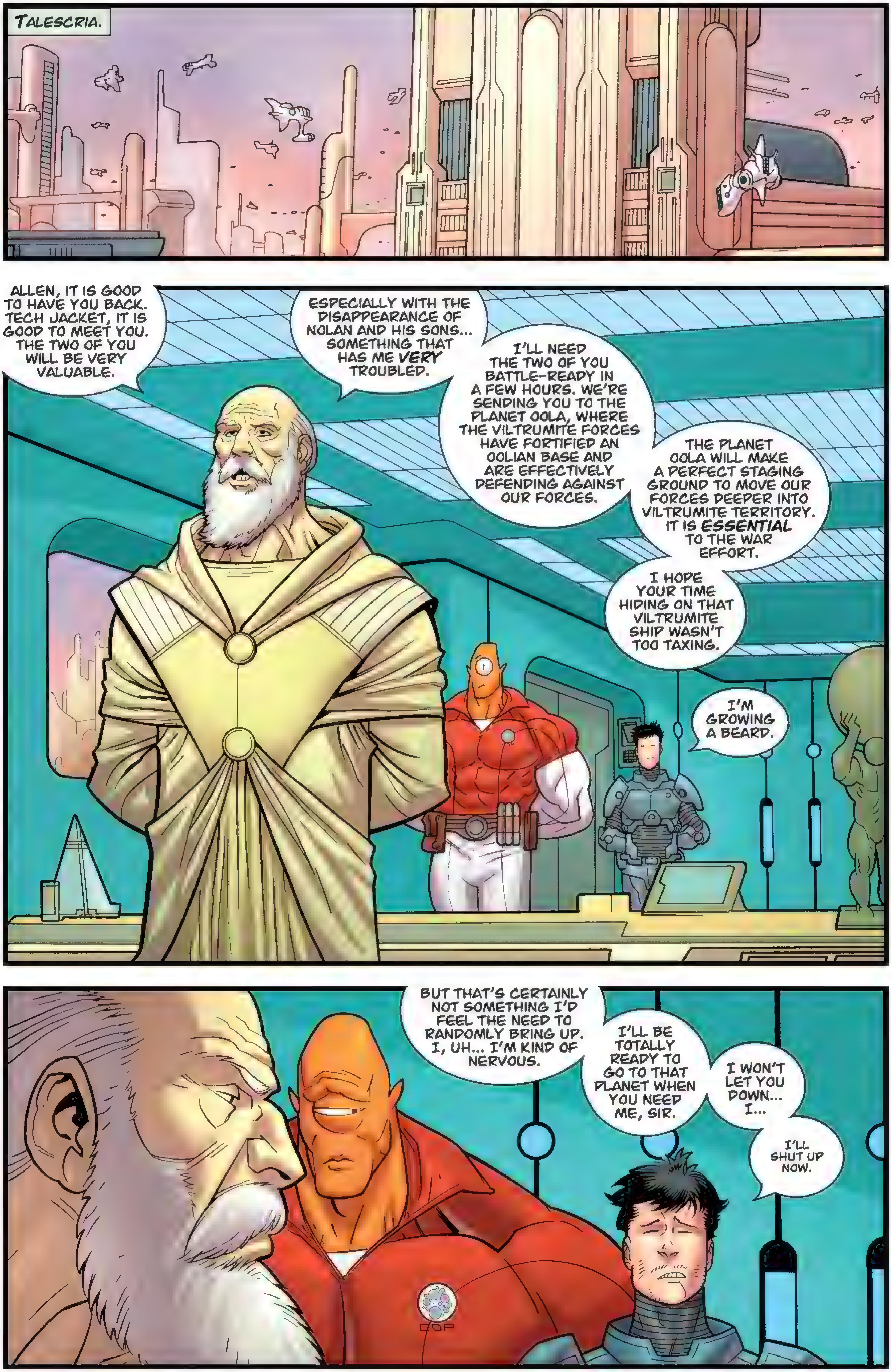
IS THERE ANY *MORE?*
WHAT?

I MEAN-- JUST LOOK AT IT--ISN'T IT AWESOME?!
I CAN SEE IT, IT'S GREAT... REALLY. DO YOU HAVE TO KEEP BRINGING IT UP? IT'S JUST FACIAL HAIR.
THIS IS WORSE THAN WHEN YOU WERE EXPLAINING WHERE YOUR EXCREMENT WENT...
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, THE TECH JACKET CLEANS ME EVERY NIGHT. IT REMOVES BACTERIA FROM MY BODY. I HAVEN'T SHOWERED SINCE I GOT IT.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SHAVING ME ALL THIS TIME, TOO! I HAD NO CLUE I'D STARTED GROWING FACIAL HAIR. THIS IS AWESOME. I THOUGHT I COULDN'T DO IT.
I'M TOTALLY GROWING A BEARD!
KRBOOM!
WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?!
I'VE GOT A TRACKING SIGNAL IN MY GEAR. IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE EXACT FREQUENCY IT'S UNDETECTABLE-- BUT IT CAN BE USED TO FIND ME IF I'M EVER LOST.
SO I BELIEVE THAT WAS THE CAVALRY SHOWING UP.


SWEET!

JUST THE MOISTURE. WE WANT TO KEEP HIM HYDRATED. I DON'T WANT HIM CHOKING ON THE MEAT.
I'VE DONE THIS A *DOZEN* TIMES! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
IT'S BEEN ALMOST A MONTH--EXACTLY HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO NEED TO STAY HERE?
HIS RECOVERY IS MOVING ALONG AT A GOOD PACE. IT SHOULDN'T BE MORE THAN A FEW MORE MONTHS. SO GET COMFORTABLE.
I'M BUILDING THIS SHELTER FOR A REASON.
MY MOM, NOT MY REAL MOM, MY EARTH MOM, MARK'S MOM, UH--DEBBIE.
YOU REALLY THINK YOU LOVE HER?
I *KNOW* I DO.
IT TOOK ME MONTHS OF HEALING IN A VILTRUMITE PRISON TO MAKE ME REALIZE IT... BUT YES, I DO.
WE HAVE AFFECTION, THE VILTRUMITES, BUT WE DON'T *CARE* FOR EACH OTHER LIKE HUMANS DO. OUR LIVES ARE SO LONG THAT OVER TIME WE GROW DISTANT, IT'S HARD TO FORM A BOND WITH SOMEONE OVER THAT MUCH TIME.
YOU'LL NEVER FIND ONE OF US WHO WILL ADMIT IT--BUT WE LIVE VERY LONELY, SOLITARY LIVES. ESPECIALLY WITH OUR NUMBERS SO DEPLETED.
LIVING ON EARTH CHANGED ME. SEEING HUMANS GROW SO CLOSE TO EACH OTHER, CARING SO DEEPLY FOR THEIR LOVED ONES IN THE SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME ALLOTTED FOR THEM... IT WAS SPECIAL, SOMETHING TO BE ADMIRED.

AT FIRST I WAS A SPECTATOR, WATCHING AS THEY LIVED THEIR LIVES. ACTING AS ONE OF THEM, GROWING CLOSE TO DEBBIE, PRETENDING TO FORM A BOND.
BUT WHY *HER?* DID I JUST PICK HER AT RANDOM?
AT FIRST I THOUGHT I HAD, I TOLD MYSELF THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY.
I COULDN'T ACTUALLY CARE FOR THIS FRAIL CREATURE.
BUT I *DID*. I HAD A CONNECTION TO HER.
WE HAD MARK, TOGETHER. RAISED HIM NOT AS A VILTRUMITE, BUT AS A HUMAN.
I THOUGHT I WAS BIDING MY TIME, WAITING TO SEE IF MARK DEVELOPED POWERS... WAITING TO SEE HOW HUMAN DNA MIXED WITH VILTRUMITE DNA... IF HE'D HAVE POWERS AND IF SO, HOW CLOSE TO VILTRUMITE STRENGTH HE WAS.
BUT I NEVER LOOKED AT THAT LIFE AS A CHORE. I *ENJOYED* IT.
OVER TIME, I FELL INTO THE ROLE OF HUMAN HUSBAND, HUMAN FATHER... SO MUCH SO THAT WHEN MARK GOT HIS POWERS...
...IT WAS A GREAT BURDEN MORE THAN ANYTHING.
I HAD TO GO BACK TO BEING A VILTRUMITE. I HAD TO DO WHAT I WAS PUT THERE TO DO.
WHETHER I WANTED TO OR NOT.
I SPENT A LOT OF TIME ALONE, THEN... CONSIDERING IF I COULD IGNORE MY DUTY, CONTINUE LIVING THE LIE I'D ENJOYED SO MUCH... WITH THE WOMAN I'D GROWN TO LOVE.
IN THE END... I CHOSE TO CARRY OUT MY MISSION... DESPITE HOW CONFLICTED I WAS.
THE DAMAGE I'VE DONE... THE PAIN I'VE CAUSED...
WHEN I LOOKED DOWN AT MARK, SAW HIM... BEATEN BY MY OWN HAND... A VILTRUMITE WOULD HAVE FELT NOTHING... BUT I WAS DEVASTATED.
I KNEW THEN THAT I'D MADE A MISTAKE... BUT I'D ALREADY GONE TOO FAR... IT WAS TOO LATE.

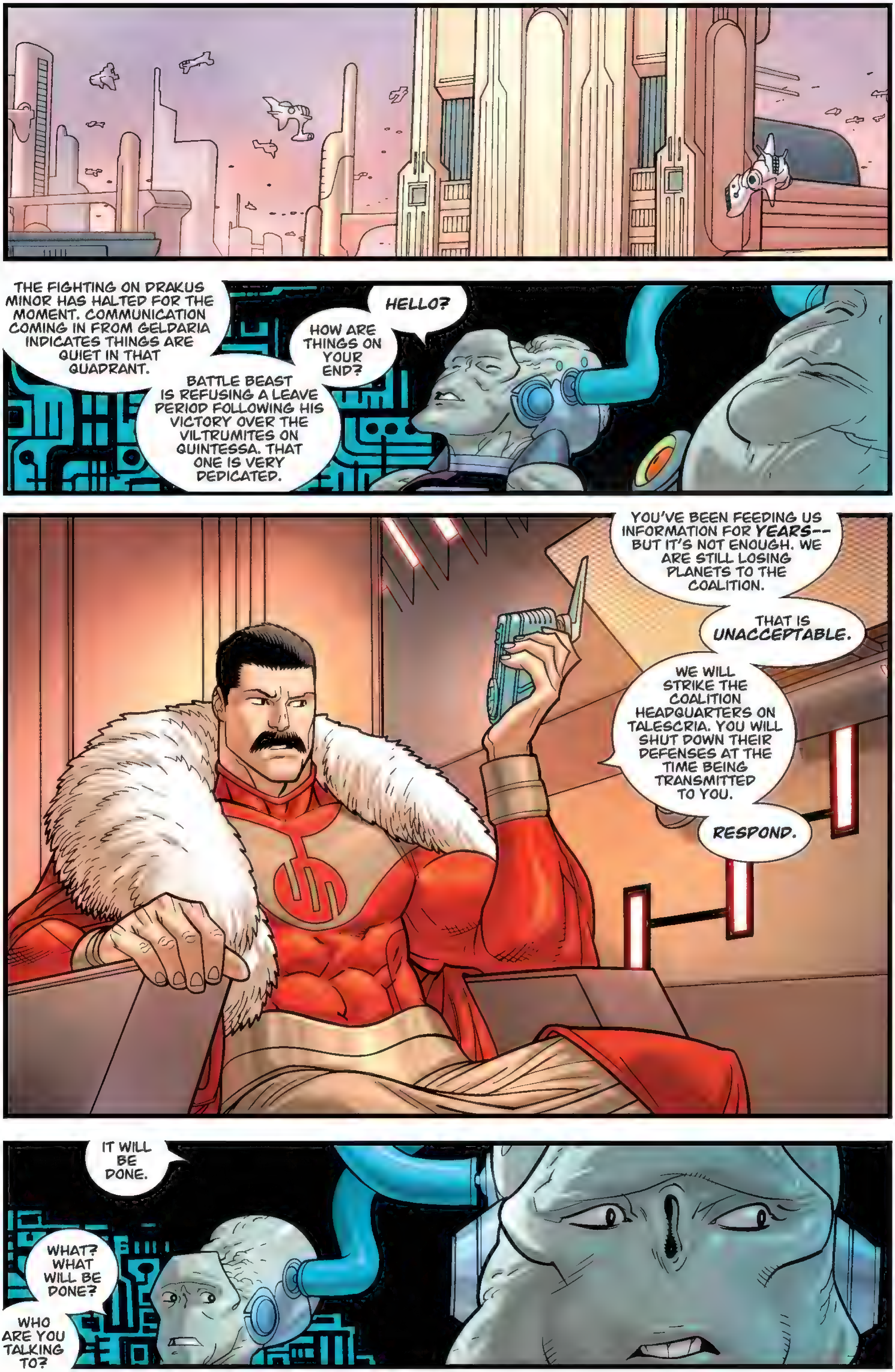

TALESCRIA.
ALLEN, IT IS GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK. TECH JACKET, IT IS GOOD TO MEET YOU. THE TWO OF YOU WILL BE VERY VALUABLE.
ESPECIALLY WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF NOLAN AND HIS SONS... SOMETHING THAT HAS ME *VERY* TROUBLED.
I'LL NEED THE TWO OF YOU BATTLE-READY IN A FEW HOURS. WE'RE SENDING YOU TO THE PLANET OOLA, WHERE THE VILTRUMITE FORCES HAVE FORTIFIED AN OOLIAN BASE AND ARE EFFECTIVELY DEFENDING AGAINST OUR FORCES.
THE PLANET OOLA WILL MAKE A PERFECT STAGING GROUND TO MOVE OUR FORCES DEEPER INTO VILTRUMITE TERRITORY. IT IS **ESSENTIAL** TO THE WAR EFFORT.
I HOPE YOUR TIME HIDING ON THAT VILTRUMITE SHIP WASN'T TOO TAXING.
I'M GROWING A BEARD.
BUT THAT'S CERTAINLY NOT SOMETHING I'D FEEL THE NEED TO RANDOMLY BRING UP. I, UH... I'M KIND OF NERVOUS.
I'LL BE TOTALLY READY TO GO TO THAT PLANET WHEN YOU NEED ME, SIR.
I WON'T LET YOU DOWN... I...
I'LL SHUT UP NOW.

I LIKE IT THERE. I DON'T KNOW, IT'S LIKE YOU SAY, THE PEOPLE ARE NICE. THEY CARE FOR EACH OTHER MORE THAN PEOPLE DID ON THRAXA.
YOUR AFFECTION TOWARD MY MOTHER WAS CONSIDERED ODD TO THEM. ALTHOUGH, SHE DIDN'T MIND.
MY MOTHER IS DEAD BY NOW. SOMETIMES I THINK ABOUT THAT AND IT MAKES ME SAD.
THAT'S ONLY NATURAL. I CAN'T SAY I'VE NEVER FOUND MYSELF SADDENED BY HER PASSING.
SHE WAS A GOOD PERSON. HER PEOPLE'S ACCELERATED LIFE-SPANS ARE UNFORTUNATE.
YOU'RE TELLING *ME?* I WAS A *BABY* LAST TIME I SAW YOU.
YOU THINK I DON'T THINK ABOUT MY LIFESPAN ALL THE TIME?
DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT LIFESPAN. YOU'LL PROBABLY OUTLIVE ME. DESPITE YOUR GENETICS-- YOU'LL STILL LIVE CENTURIES.
YOUR AGE HAS SLOWED CONSIDERABLY. BEFORE, I COULD WATCH YOU CHANGE FROM DAY TO DAY...NOT NOW. YOU'LL BE FINE.
THE VILTRUMITES STILL VIEW ME AS INFERIOR--THEY WANTED TO KILL ME.
LET'S KICK THOSE GUYS' ASSES.
I PLAN TO.
WE'LL GET RIGHT ON THAT AS SOON AS MARK IS BACK IN FIGHTING FORM.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE GETTING BACK, I DON'T LIKE LEAVING HIM ALONE FOR SO LONG.
WAIT-- THERE'S A NEST RIGHT THERE!
SWEET!

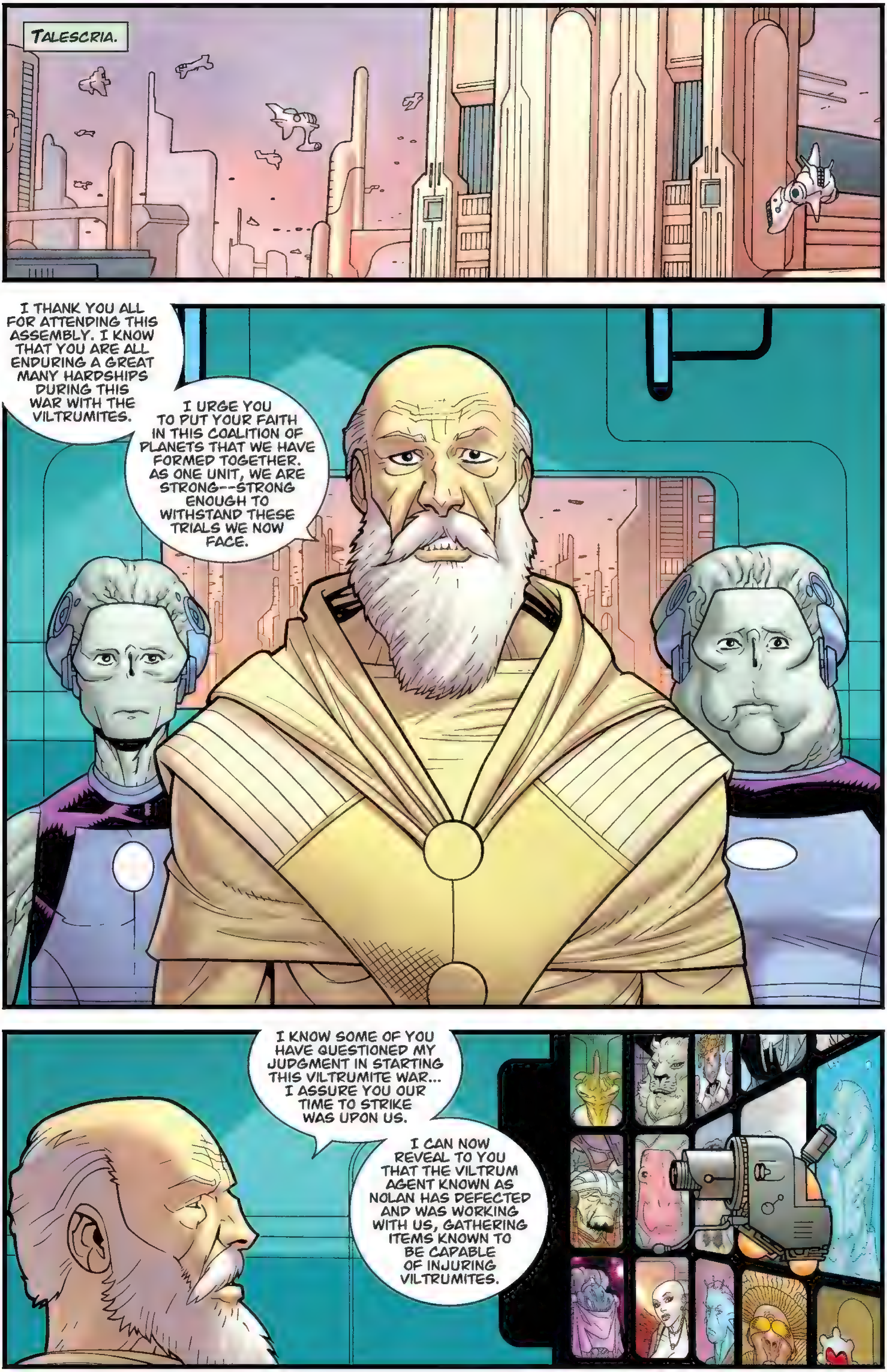
YOU'RE NOT EVEN WAITING UNTIL YOU'RE HUNGRY TO EAT ANYMORE.
I *LOVE* THESE THINGS... I ACTUALLY LOOK FORWARD TO EATING.
I THINK I'M GAINING WEIGHT.
ATTACK!
ALL THE TIME--I'M TELLING YOU IT'S *ALL THE TIME!*
THEY *KNOW* I'M IN THE HOUSE. IT'S CRAZY. I KNOW I DON'T HAVE SUPER HEARING BUT *SHEESH.*
IT'S AWFUL!
HA! HA! HA!
ABORT! *ABORT!*
THE SEDATIVE HAS ALREADY WORN OFF--THIS ISN'T WORKING, MAN THE ESCAPE PODS BEFORE YOUR SHIP LOSES PROPULSION!
HIS SPINE FEELS ALMOST COMPLETELY HEALED. HIS RECOVERY SHOULD SPEED UP NOW THAT HIS BODY ISN'T REBUILDING BONE.
HE MAY BE CONSCIOUS IN A MONTH OR SO.
ANOTHER *MONTH?*
HE'S OKAY, RIGHT? THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN GO WRONG... IS THERE?

IT'S BELIEVED THAT THE RAGNARR CAN EXIST IN SPACE UNHARMED--SO A TETHER SYSTEM IS BEING DEVELOPED. I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN THE SCIENTISTS GET A WORKING PROTOTYPE.
IN OTHER NEWS, THE BEACON LEFT IN THE OCEANS OF LASNEMA HAS DETECTED A FLAUN... LOOKS TO BE A BIG ONE, TOO. NOLAN'S BOOKS SAY THEIR TEETH CAN CUT A VILTRUMITE. I'LL SEND A TEAM OUT TO HARVEST THEM WITHOUT DAMAGING THE ANIMAL.
STILL NO LUCK ON THE SPACE SHARKS, THOUGH.
SPACE WHAT?
DON'T HOLD BACK, JUST--
WRAMM!
HELL YEAH!
BATTLE BEAST HAS AGREED TO JOIN OUR RANKS. HE'S ACCOMPANIED A SQUADRON TO THE VILTRUMITE-CONTROLLED PLANET QUINTESSA, DESPITE HIS INITIAL REFUSAL OF ANYTHING HE DEEMED ASSISTANCE.
THE KRESH UPRISING ON GELDARIA HAS BEEN QUELLED... BUT UNFORTUNATELY WE DID LOSE CONTROL OF OOLA. LUCKILY, ANOTHER STAGING GROUND HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON GLACIA PRIME.
ENJOY YOUR DOWNTIME, WE NEED YOU BACK ON THE FRONT IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.
CAN'T--
DON'T TELL ME THAT--LOOK AT YOU--LOOK AT HOW MUCH STRONGER YOU'VE GOTTEN OVER THE LAST MONTH! YOU'VE GOT THIS!
KEEP GOING, OLIVER! YOU CAN DO IT!
IT'S THREE STEPS FORWARD AND TWO STEPS BACK. OUR ARMIES ARE MORE THAN EFFECTIVE AGAINST THE FORCES OF THE VARIOUS VILTRUMITE-OCCUPIED PLANETS.
THE PROBLEM IS WE LACK HEAVY-HITTERS. WITH NOLAN, INVINCIBLE AND THE YOUNGER ONE ALL MISSING... WE'RE AT A LOSS WHEN THE VILTRUMITE AGENTS STATIONED WITHIN THESE WORLDS JOIN THE FIGHT.
THE TWO OF YOU, BATTLE BEAST, SPACE RACER, IT JUST ISN'T ENOUGH. I MAY HAVE TO SPLIT YOU TWO UP.

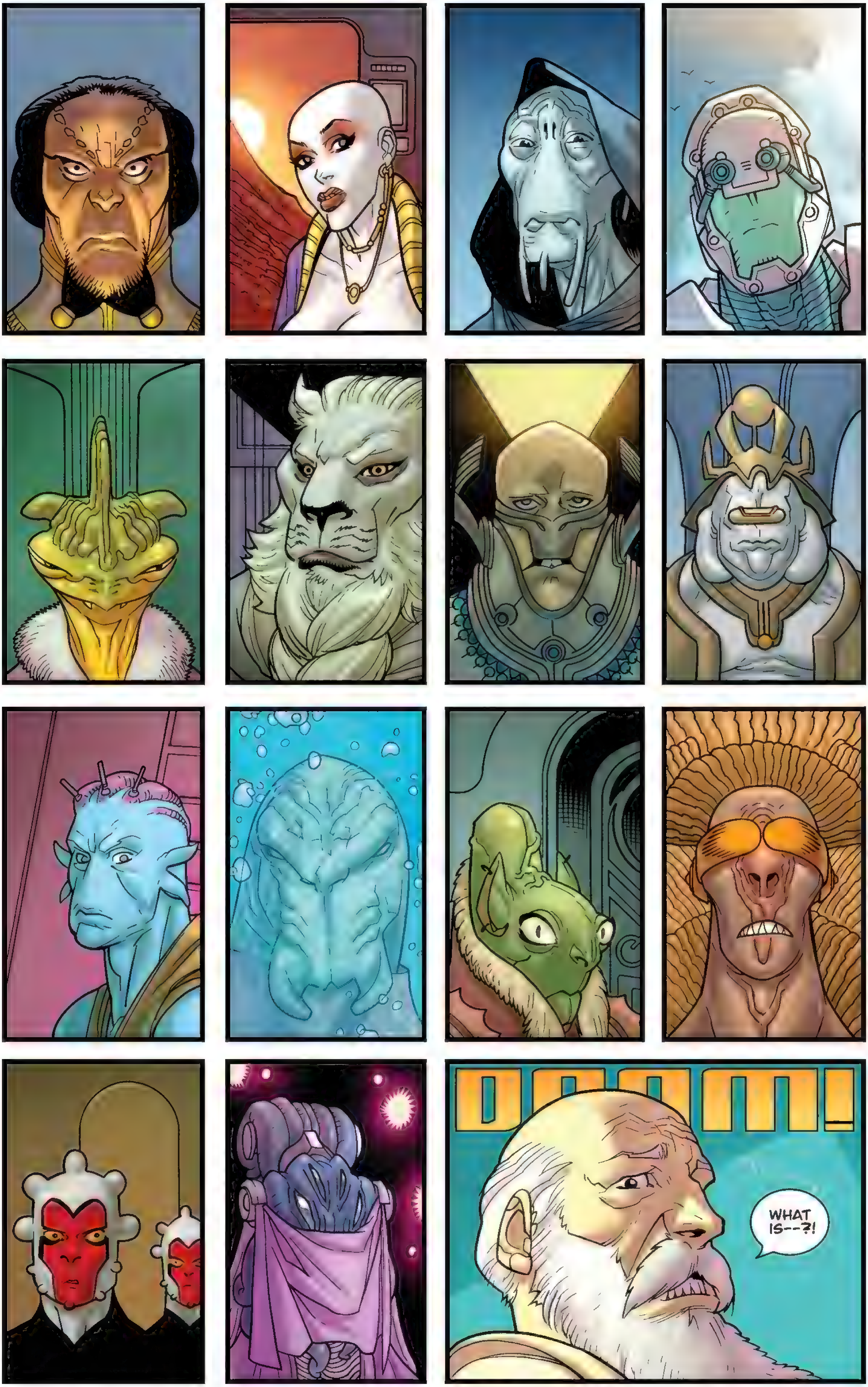
K-K-K.
--KILL YOU.
HE SPOKE...
GOOD.
WON'T BE LONG NOW.


THE FIGHTING ON DRAKUS MINOR HAS HALTED FOR THE MOMENT. COMMUNICATION COMING IN FROM GELDARIA INDICATES THINGS ARE QUIET IN THAT QUADRANT.
BATTLE BEAST IS REFUSING A LEAVE PERIOD FOLLOWING HIS VICTORY OVER THE VILTRUMITES ON QUINTESSA. THAT ONE IS VERY DEDICATED.
HOW ARE THINGS ON YOUR END?
HELLO?
YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING US INFORMATION FOR ***YEARS***-- BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH. WE ARE STILL LOSING PLANETS TO THE COALITION.
THAT IS ***UNACCEPTABLE.***
WE WILL STRIKE THE COALITION HEADQUARTERS ON TALESCRIA. YOU WILL SHUT DOWN THEIR DEFENSES AT THE TIME BEING TRANSMITTED TO YOU.
RESPOND.
IT WILL BE DONE.
WHAT? WHAT WILL BE DONE?
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

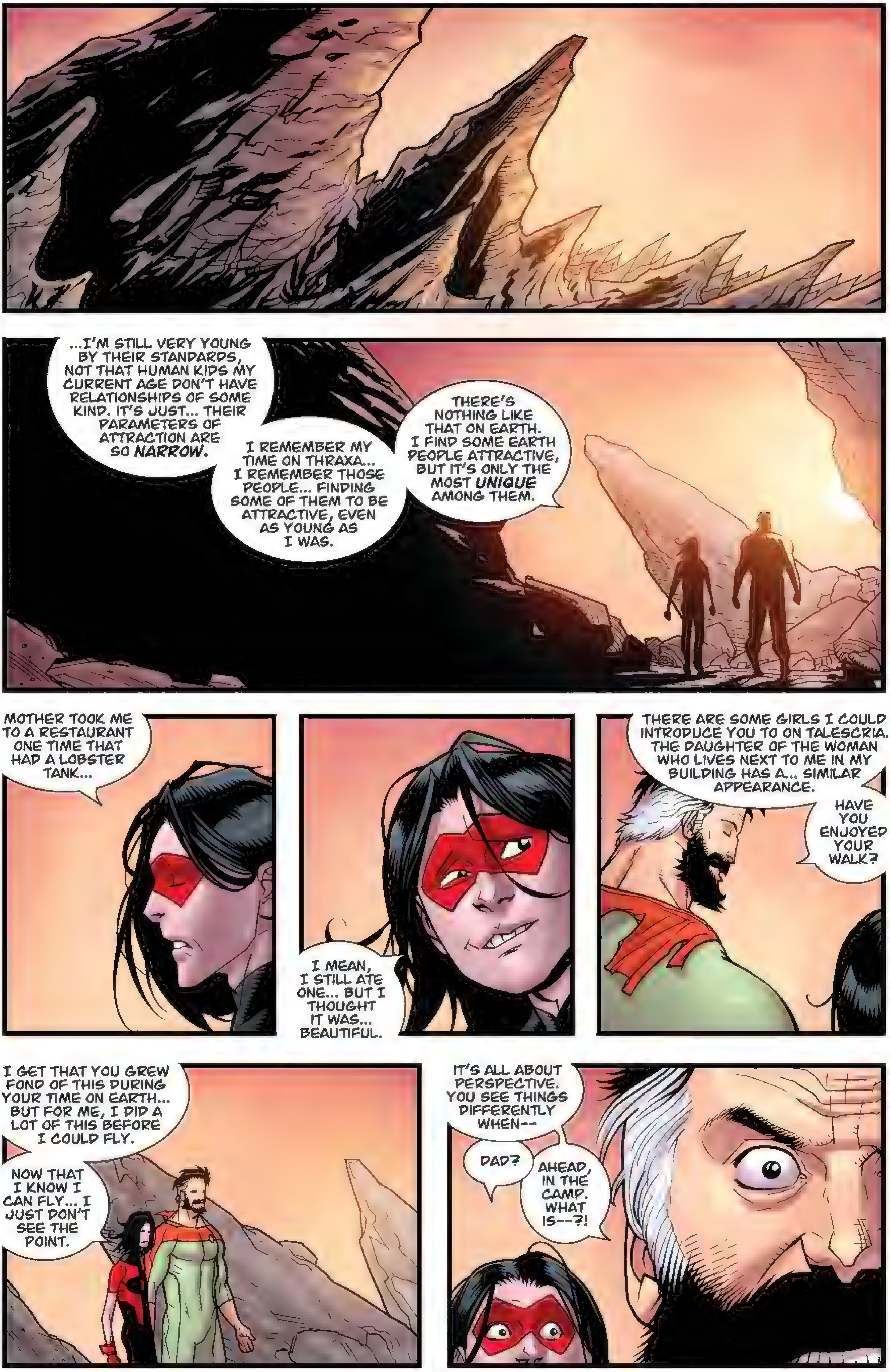
CHAPTER 74

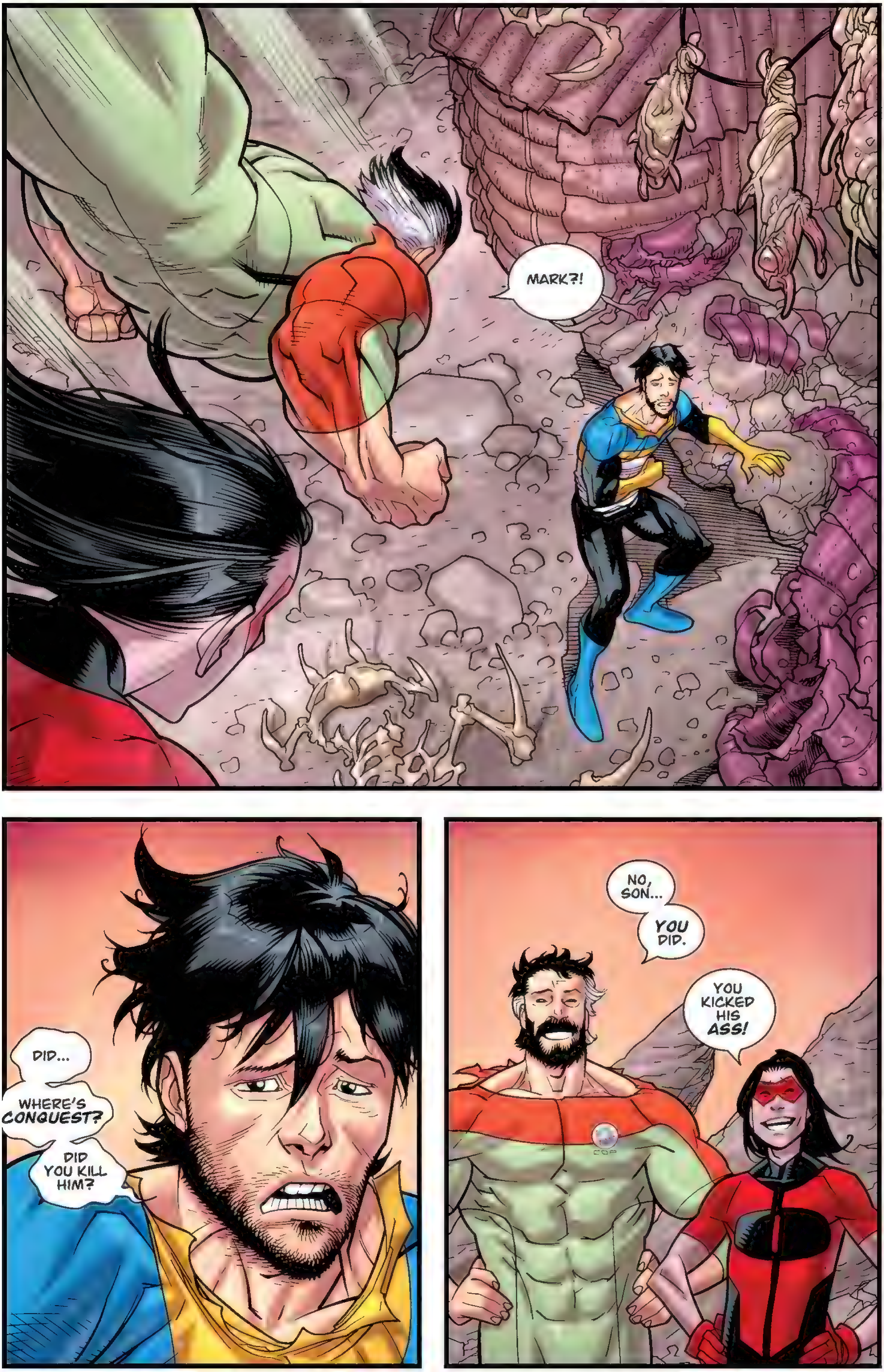

TALESCRIA.
I THANK YOU ALL FOR ATTENDING THIS ASSEMBLY. I KNOW THAT YOU ARE ALL ENDURING A GREAT MANY HARDSHIPS DURING THIS WAR WITH THE VILTRUMITES.
I URGE YOU TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN THIS COALITION OF PLANETS THAT WE HAVE FORMED TOGETHER. AS ONE UNIT, WE ARE STRONG--STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THESE TRIALS WE NOW FACE.
I KNOW SOME OF YOU HAVE QUESTIONED MY JUDGMENT IN STARTING THIS VILTRUMITE WAR... I ASSURE YOU OUR TIME TO STRIKE WAS UPON US.
I CAN NOW REVEAL TO YOU THAT THE VILTRUM AGENT KNOWN AS NOLAN HAS DEFECTED AND WAS WORKING WITH US, GATHERING ITEMS KNOWN TO BE CAPABLE OF INJURING VILTRUMITES.

YOUR ARMIES HAVE BEEN EQUIPPED WITH WEAPONS DEVELOPED USING THESE ITEMS THAT HAVE BEEN RECOVERED. THAT IS HOW WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO HOLD THE VILTRUMITE FORCES AT BAY.
I REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT THE LYNCHPIN OF OUR PLAN, NOLAN AND HIS TWO VILTRUMITE SONS, HAVE GONE MISSING, AND WILL NOT BE PROVIDING US WITH THE ASSISTANCE WE WERE COUNTING ON.
BUT FEAR NOT, AS LONG AS WE CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER, AS A UNIFIED FRONT AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES-- WE WILL SUCCEED.
WE WILL FINALLY RID THE UNIVERSE OF THIS SCOURGE ONCE AND FOR ALL.
WE--

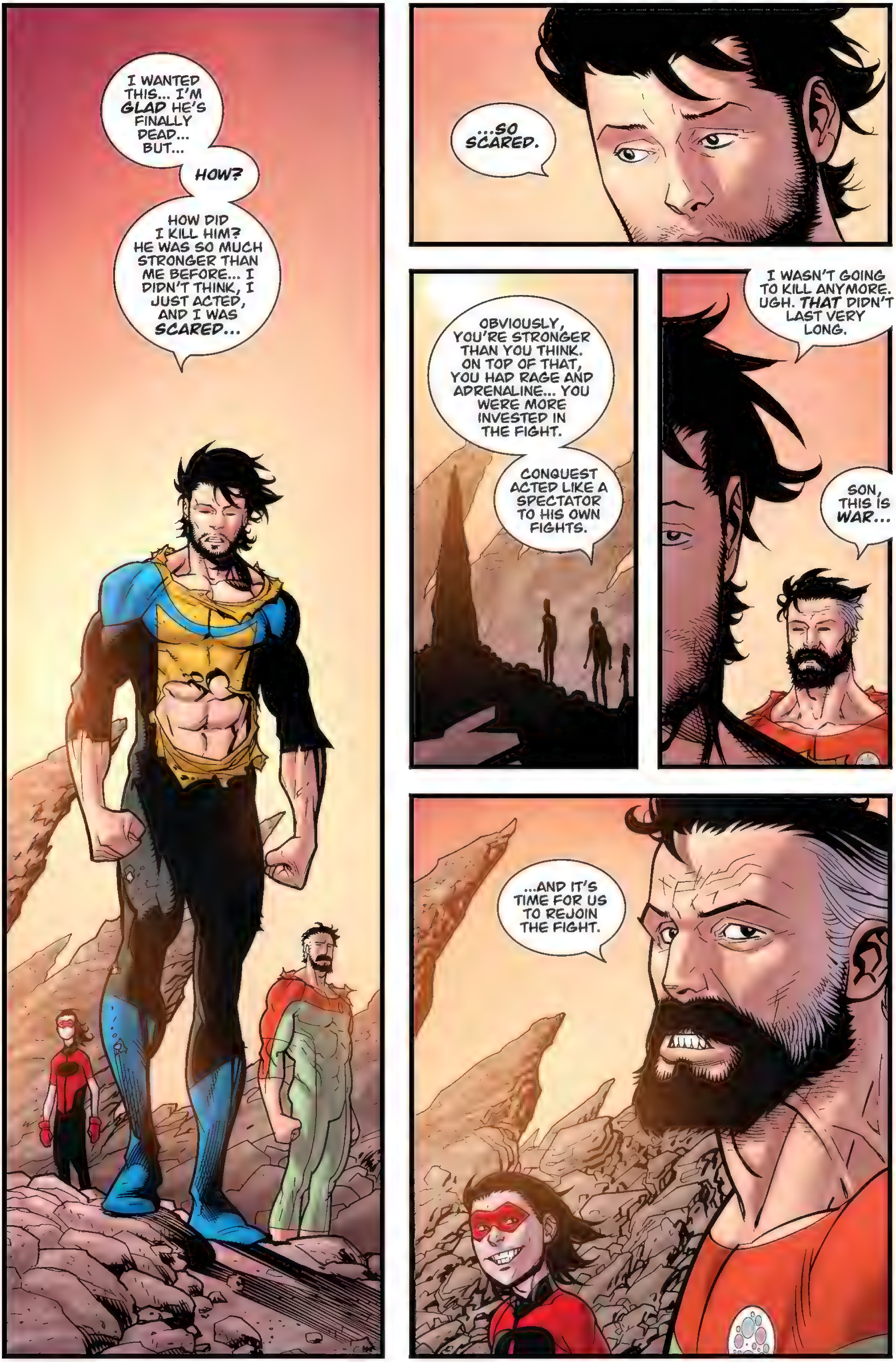

DOOM!
WHAT IS--?!

KROOM!

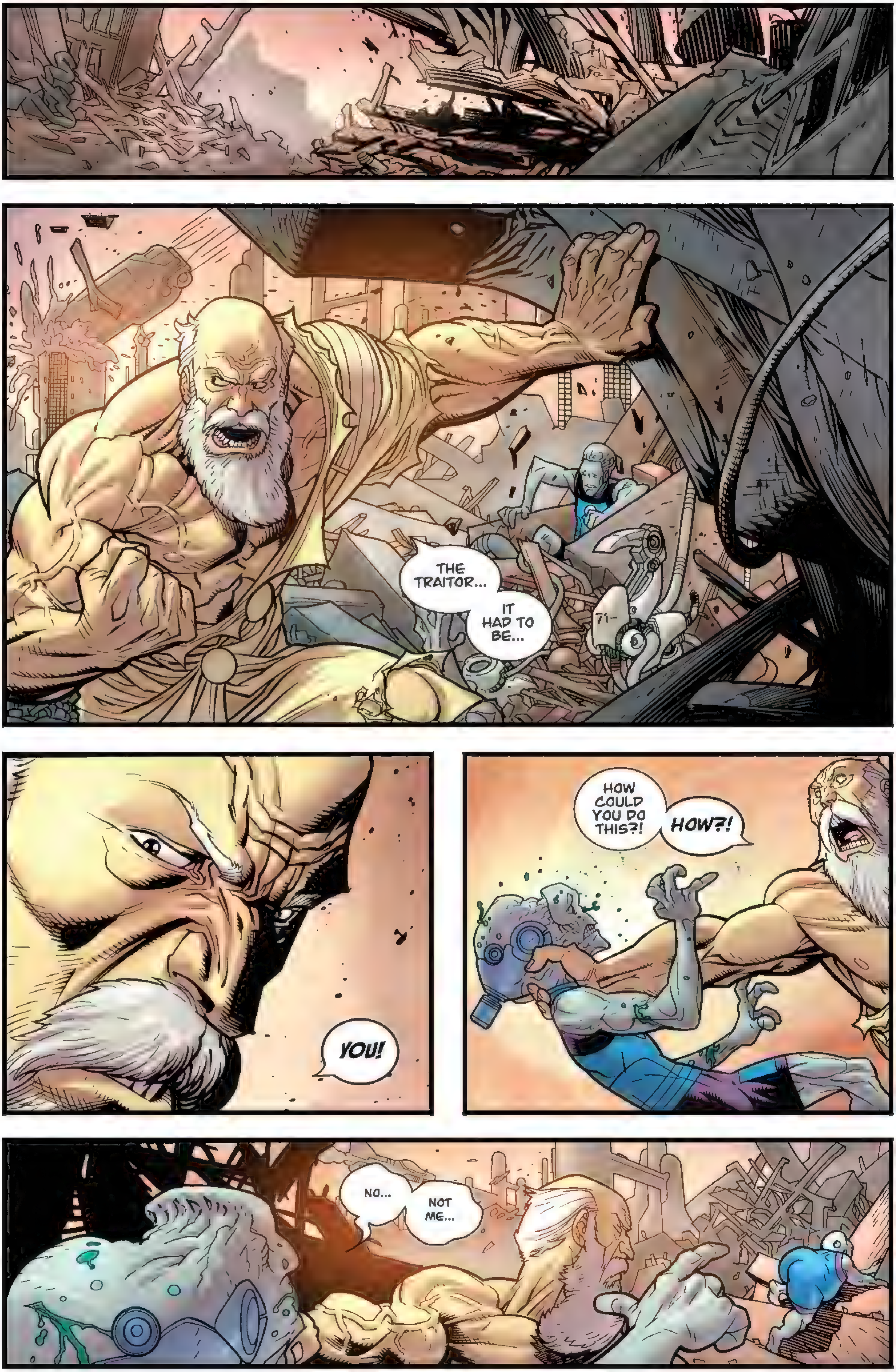

...I'M STILL VERY YOUNG BY THEIR STANDARDS, NOT THAT HUMAN KIDS MY CURRENT AGE DON'T HAVE RELATIONSHIPS OF SOME KIND. IT'S JUST... THEIR PARAMETERS OF ATTRACTION ARE SO NARROW.
I REMEMBER MY TIME ON THRAXA... I REMEMBER THOSE PEOPLE... FINDING SOME OF THEM TO BE ATTRACTIVE, EVEN AS YOUNG AS I WAS.
THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THAT ON EARTH. I FIND SOME EARTH PEOPLE ATTRACTIVE, BUT IT'S ONLY THE MOST UNIQUE AMONG THEM.
MOTHER TOOK ME TO A RESTAURANT ONE TIME THAT HAD A LOBSTER TANK...
I MEAN, I STILL ATE ONE... BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS... BEAUTIFUL.
THERE ARE SOME GIRLS I COULD INTRODUCE YOU TO ON TALESCRIA. THE DAUGHTER OF THE WOMAN WHO LIVES NEXT TO ME IN MY BUILDING HAS A... SIMILAR APPEARANCE.
HAVE YOU ENJOYED YOUR WALK?
I GET THAT YOU GREW FOND OF THIS DURING YOUR TIME ON EARTH... BUT FOR ME, I DID A LOT OF THIS BEFORE I COULD FLY.
NOW THAT I KNOW I CAN FLY... I JUST DON'T SEE THE POINT.
IT'S ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE. YOU SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY WHEN--
DAD?
AHEAD, IN THE CAMP. WHAT IS--?!


MARK?!
DID...
WHERE'S CONQUEST?
DID YOU KILL HIM?
NO, SON...
YOU DID.
YOU KICKED HIS ASS!

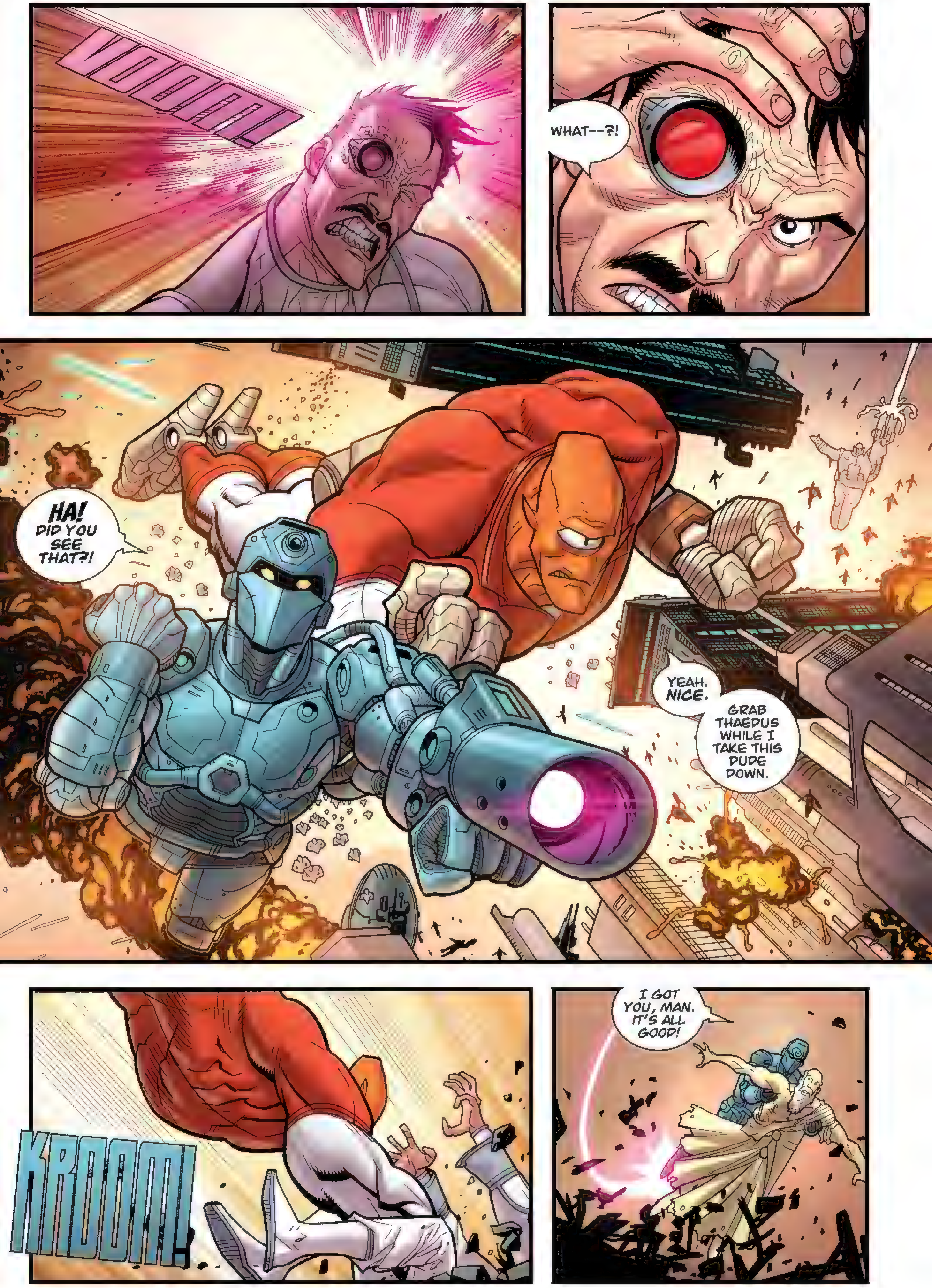
GRAH!!
ZACK!
I THOUGHT YOU HAD A GIRLFRIEND...
...THAT GELDARIAN GIRL?
KIND OF... BUT NO. WE AGREED TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE LAST TIME I SAW HER. IT WAS HER IDEA...
WE DON'T HAVE COMPATIBLE...
...PARTS.
PLEASE STOP SAYING THE THINGS THAT COME INTO YOUR HEAD FIRST WHEN I TALK TO YOU. DON'T--Y'KNOW WHAT... JUST STOP ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS.
AND GET READY--WE'VE GOT A DISTRESS CALL FROM TALESCRIA.


I WANTED THIS... I'M GLAD HE'S FINALLY DEAD... BUT...
HOW?
HOW DID I KILL HIM? HE WAS SO MUCH STRONGER THAN ME BEFORE... I DIDN'T THINK, I JUST ACTED, AND I WAS SCARED...
...SO SCARED.
OBVIOUSLY, YOU'RE STRONGER THAN YOU THINK. ON TOP OF THAT, YOU HAD RAGE AND ADRENALINE... YOU WERE MORE INVESTED IN THE FIGHT.
CONQUEST ACTED LIKE A SPECTATOR TO HIS OWN FIGHTS.
I WASN'T GOING TO KILL ANYMORE. UGH. THAT DIDN'T LAST VERY LONG.
SON, THIS IS WAR...
...AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO REJOIN THE FIGHT.

THE COALITION OF PLANETS...
FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS WE REIGNED UNOPPOSED ACROSS THE GALAXY, UNTIL HIM...
...UNTIL *THAEDUS.*
THE BETRAYER ON EARTH AND HIS *SON...* IT ALL STARTED WITH THAEDUS--WITH *HIS* BETRAYAL. HE WAS THE PROGENITOR OF OUR DEMISE... WHAT'S BROUGHT US TO THIS CURRENT... SORRY... STATE.
AS THE BATTLE RAGES ACROSS OUR PLANETS-- --OUR CONTROL OF THE GALAXY BEGINS SLIPPING THROUGH OUR GRASP-- WE HAVE BROUGHT THE FIGHT TO *HIM...* TO TALESCRIA.
WITH THAEDUS DEAD AND THE COALITION IN DISARRAY, THIS WAR WILL BE OVER, WE WILL BE THE VICTORS.
AND YOU, MY LIEGE...
...YOU WILL BE AVENGED.

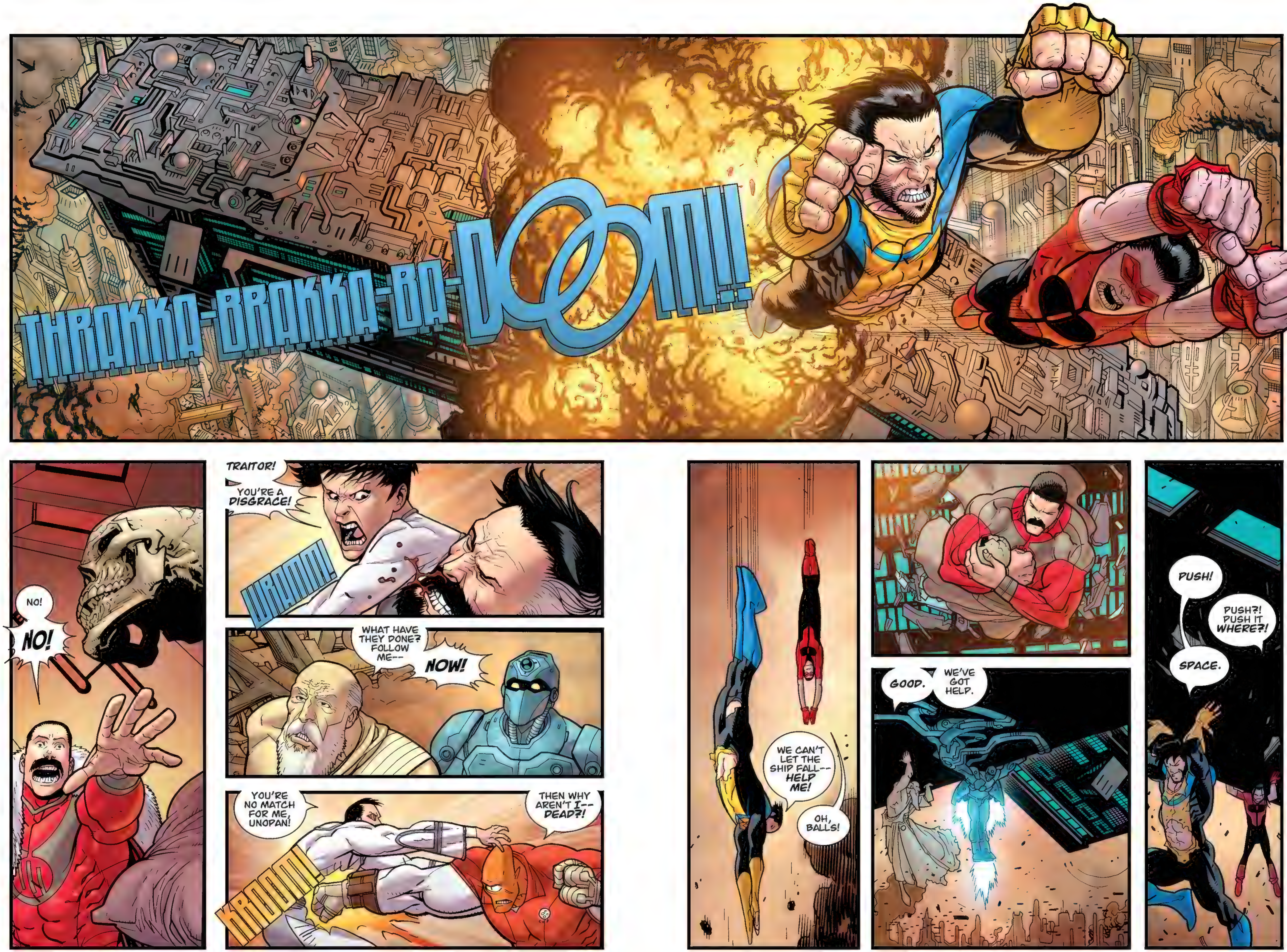

THE TRAITOR...
IT HAD TO BE...
YOU!
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS?!
HOW?!
NO...
NOT ME...

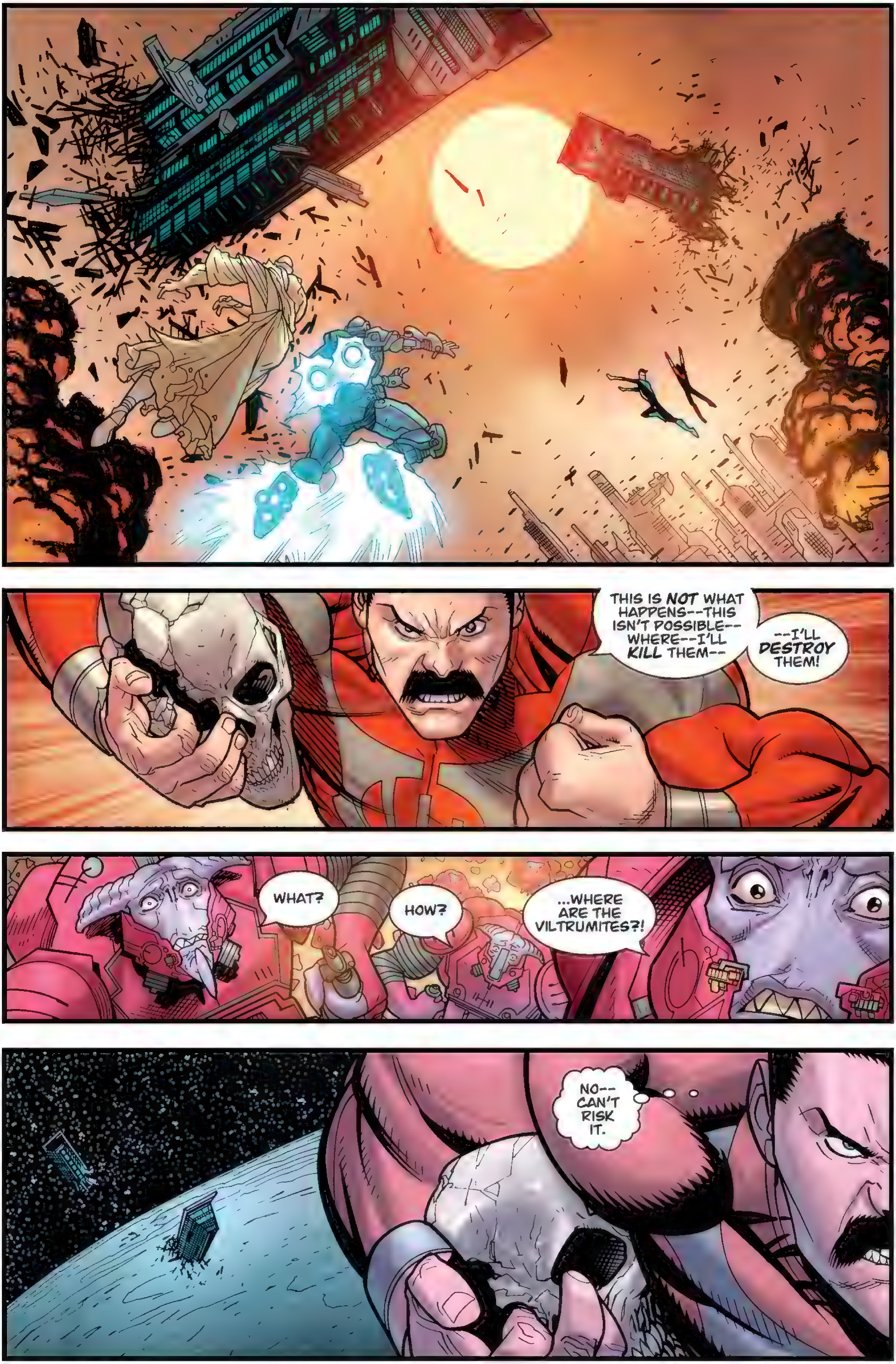
NO, PLEASE NO--
SOMEBODY *HELP ME!!*
KRAKK!
WRAMM!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM--
--YOU'VE GOT YOUR *OWN* PROBLEMS.
WRAKOOM!

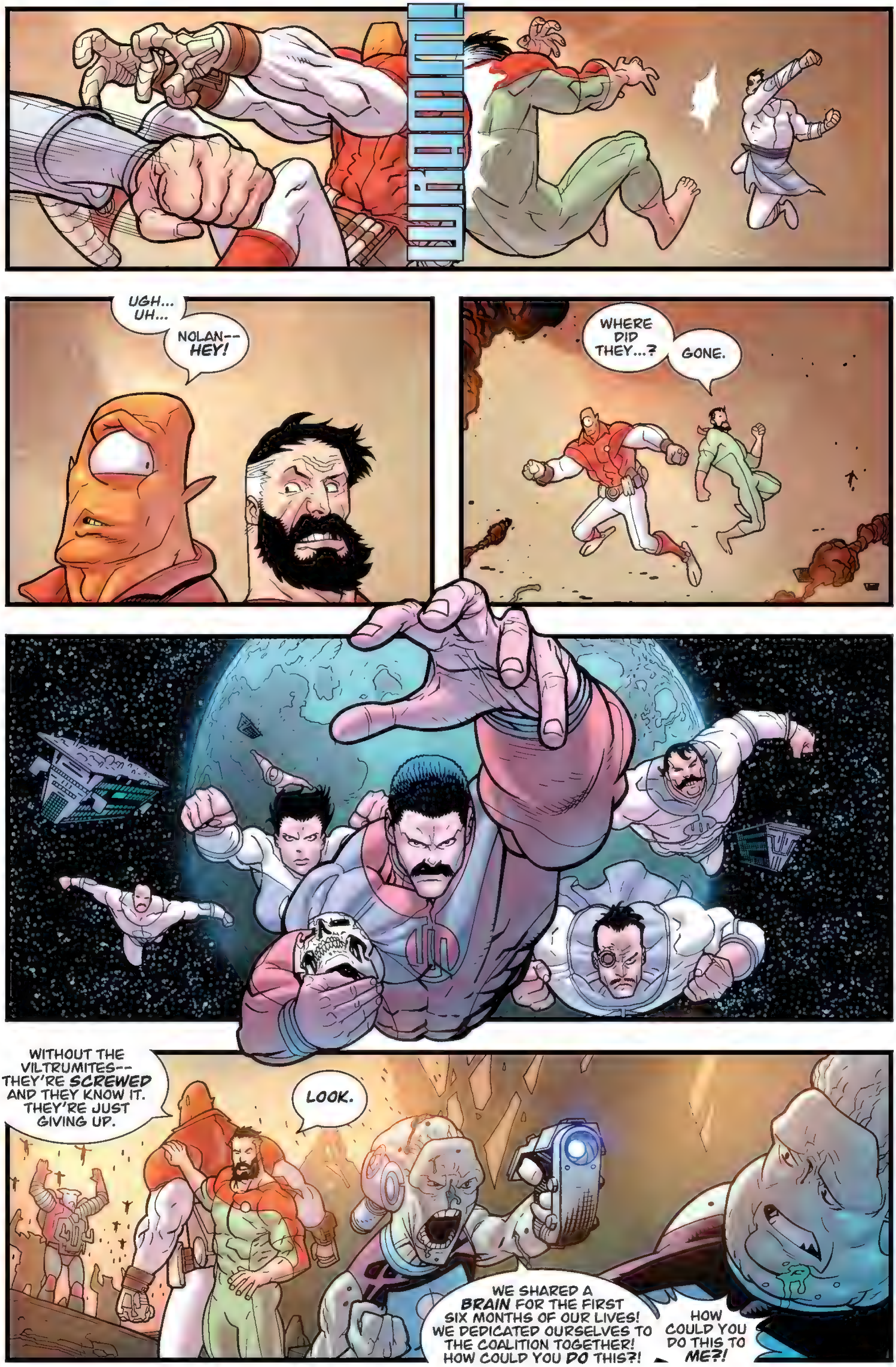

VOOM!
WHAT--?!
HA! DID YOU SEE THAT?!
YEAH. NICE.
GRAB THAEDUS WHILE I TAKE THIS DUDE DOWN.
KROOM!
I GOT YOU, MAN. IT'S ALL GOOD!

WROOM!
I'LL SEE YOUR WEAK BODY SPILL THROUGH THE SEAMS OF YOUR TECHNOLOGY, GELDARIAN!
EXTERIOR PRESSURE AT 90% CAPACITY, BREACH IMMINENT.
KROK!
TH-- THANKS...
FOOLISH UNOPAN, YOU DEFY US EVEN AS YOUR BELOVED COALITION CRUMBLES AROUND YOU!
DUDE, YOU'RE CLUELESS--WE'VE GOT YOUR CRAPPY EMPIRE ON THE ROPES!
BEFORE SHE GETS UP--WE GOTTA HELP ALLEN.
NO, ALLEN CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF. WE MUST FLEE, GATHER WHAT TROOPS WE CAN TO REGROUP. OUR CAUSE IS ALL BUT LOST.
I NEVER CONSIDERED THEY'D FIND US HERE-- I'VE SPREAD US TOO THIN...
IT'S OVER...
WAIT--
LOOK!

PAY ATTENTION WHEN SOMEONE KILLS YOU!
GOOD ADVICE!
THRAKKK!
THESE GUYS WERE ENSLAVED--TRY TO DISABLE THEIR WEAPONS WITHOUT HURTING THEM.
DOING MY BEST.
IF YOU COULD WORK YOUR WAY TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY--THIS AREA IS WELL-DEFENDED, BUT OTHER PARTS...
CAN DO--JUST WANT TO DO SOMETHING ELSE FIRST.
KEEP UP WITH ME--AND KEEP YOUR FISTS OUT IN FRONT OF YOU.
I KNOW HOW TO FLY--WHAT ARE WE--?
OH--


THRAKKA-BRAKKA-BA-DOOM!!
NO!
NO!
TRAITOR!
YOU'RE A DISGRACE!
VROOOM!
WHAT HAVE THEY DONE? FOLLOW ME--
NOW!
YOU'RE NO MATCH FOR ME, UNOPAN!
THEN WHY AREN'T I--DEAD?!
KROOOM!
WE CAN'T LET THE SHIP FALL--HELP ME!
OH, BALLS!
GOOD.
WE'VE GOT HELP.
PUSH!
PUSH?! PUSH IT WHERE?!
SPACE.

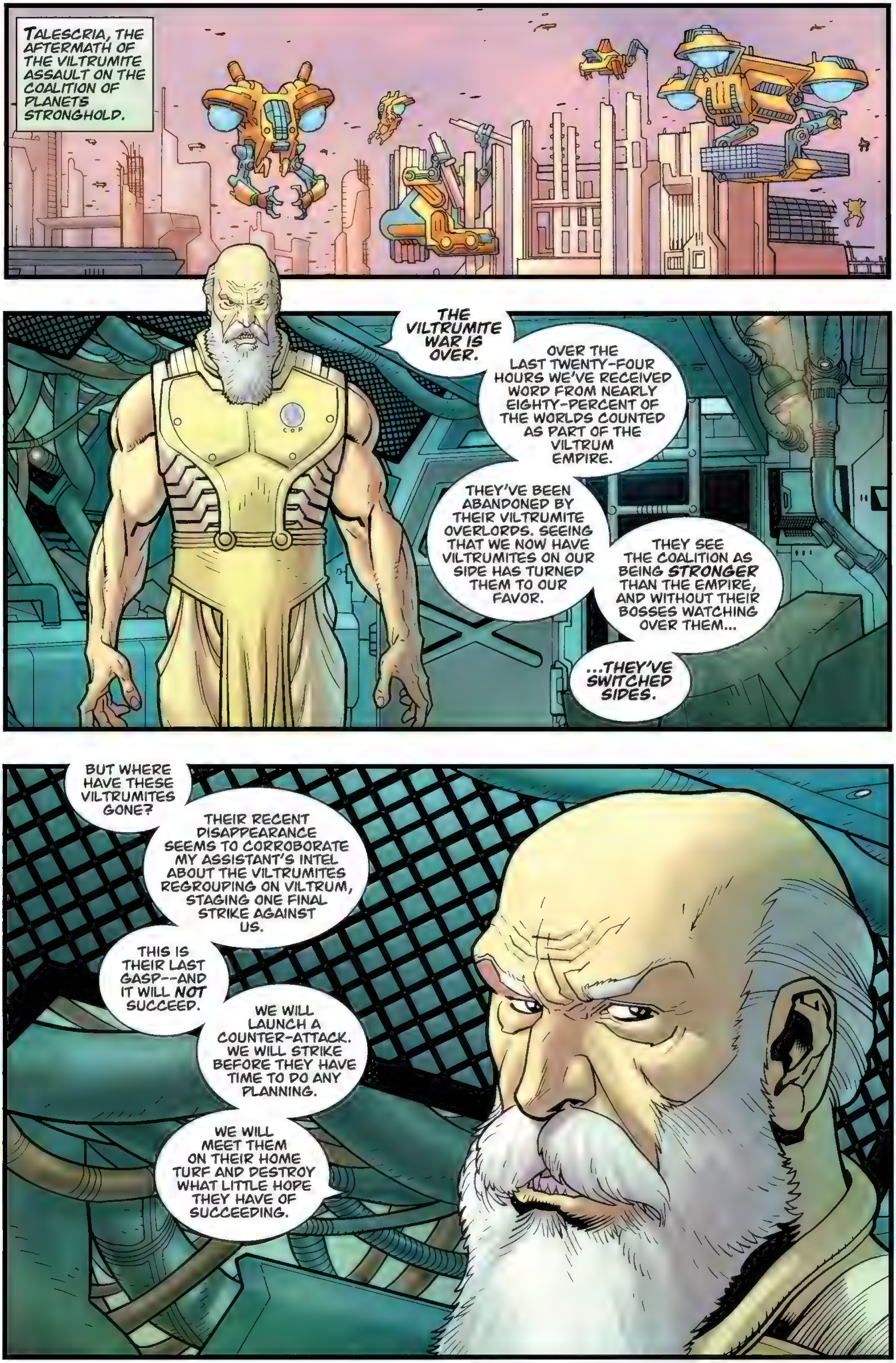

THIS IS **NOT** WHAT HAPPENS--THIS ISN'T POSSIBLE--WHERE--I'LL **KILL** THEM--
--I'LL **DESTROY** THEM!
WHAT?
HOW?
...WHERE ARE THE VILTRUMITES?!
NO--CAN'T RISK IT.


UGH... UH...
NOLAN-- HEY!
WHERE DID THEY...?
GONE.
WITHOUT THE VILTRUMITES-- THEY'RE SCREWED AND THEY KNOW IT. THEY'RE JUST GIVING UP.
LOOK.
WE SHARED A BRAIN FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF OUR LIVES! WE DEDICATED OURSELVES TO THE COALITION TOGETHER! HOW COULD YOU DO THIS?!
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME?!

VZAM!
LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO! YOU THINK I WANTED THIS?! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE WORKING FOR *THEM!*
TALK! TELL ME WHAT THE VILTRUMITES' PLANS ARE! TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
DON'T MAKE ME SHOOT YOU AGAIN!
ENOUGH.
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE-- YOU BROUGHT THEM HERE, YOU CAUSED THIS DESTRUCTION--YOU'VE BETRAYED US *ALL.*
YOU WILL PAY FOR THESE CRIMES--BUT FIRST, TELL US WHERE THE VILTRUMITES ARE GOING--*RIGHT NOW.*
DOESN'T MATTER NOW--DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL.
IT'S TOO LATE, YOU'VE GOT NO HOPE OF WINNING THIS WAR. THEY SAID-- THEY--
IF THIS BATTLE WAS LOST, THEY WERE TO RECONVENE ON THE PLANET VILTRUM TO STAGE A COUNTER-ATTACK.
YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE. THEY'RE *ALL* GOING THERE--
ALL OF THEM.
IT'S *OVER.*

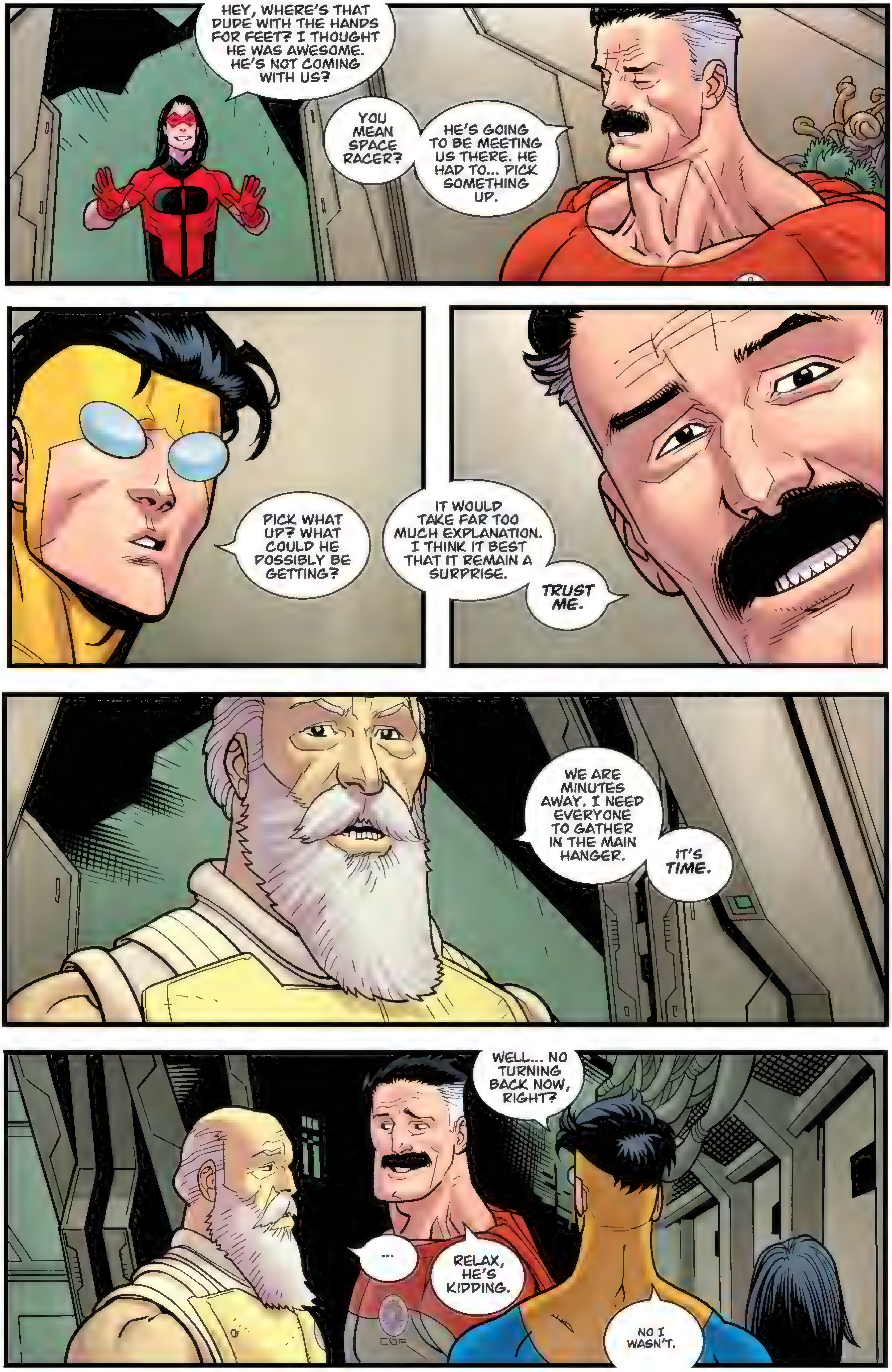
CHAPTER 75

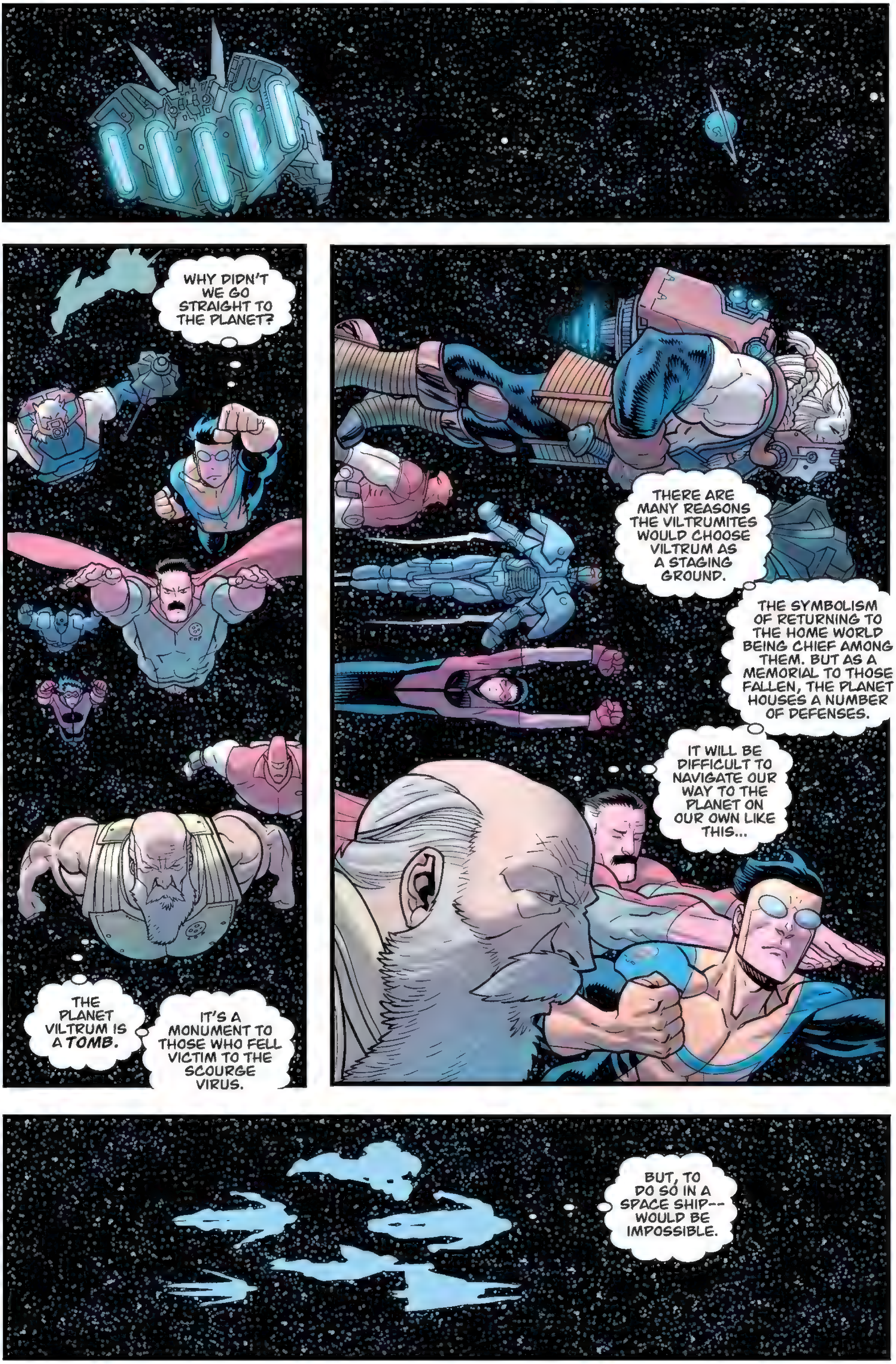
RYAN '10
RANSOM
+fco


TALESCRIA, THE AFTERMATH OF THE VILTRUMITE ASSAULT ON THE COALITION OF PLANETS STRONGHOLD.
THE VILTRUMITE WAR IS OVER.
OVER THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WE'VE RECEIVED WORD FROM NEARLY EIGHTY-PERCENT OF THE WORLDS COUNTED AS PART OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
THEY'VE BEEN ABANDONED BY THEIR VILTRUMITE OVERLORDS. SEEING THAT WE NOW HAVE VILTRUMITES ON OUR SIDE HAS TURNED THEM TO OUR FAVOR.
THEY SEE THE COALITION AS BEING **STRONGER** THAN THE EMPIRE, AND WITHOUT THEIR BOSSES WATCHING OVER THEM...
...THEY'VE SWITCHED SIDES.
BUT WHERE HAVE THESE VILTRUMITES GONE?
THEIR RECENT DISAPPEARANCE SEEMS TO CORROBORATE MY ASSISTANT'S INTEL ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES REGROUPING ON VILTRUM, STAGING ONE FINAL STRIKE AGAINST US.
THIS IS THEIR LAST GASP--AND IT WILL **NOT** SUCCEED.
WE WILL LAUNCH A COUNTER-ATTACK. WE WILL STRIKE BEFORE THEY HAVE TIME TO DO ANY PLANNING.
WE WILL MEET THEM ON THEIR HOME TURF AND DESTROY WHAT LITTLE HOPE THEY HAVE OF SUCCEEDING.

ARE YOU READY TO FINISH THIS?
HELL YEAH!

HOW'D THEY DO? DOES IT FIT?
YEAH, REALLY WELL, ACTUALLY. IT'S KIND OF AMAZING.
THERE'S A LOT ABOUT TALESCRIA THAT I FIND AMAZING. DID YOU SEE THE CITY BEFORE WE LEFT? IT'S ALMOST COMPLETELY REBUILT--AND IT'S BEEN, WHAT... THREE DAYS?
I REALLY ENJOY LIVING THERE.
SO AFTER ALL THIS IS DONE... YOU THINK YOU'LL STAY THERE?
I DON'T KNOW, MARK. YOU KNOW I CAN NEVER COME BACK TO EARTH. SO I DON'T KNOW WHY I *WOULDN'T* STAY THERE... ALTHOUGH, I'LL ADMIT I'M NOT GIVING IT MUCH THOUGHT.
I'VE LEARNED THAT WHEN YOU'RE IN OUR SITUATION... IT'S BEST TO FOCUS ON WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW RATHER THAN THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE.
JUST IN CASE.
...
YEAH... JUST IN CASE.
I'VE GOT TO ADMIT, DAD. I THINK I MIGHT ACTUALLY BE... **SCARED.**
FACING CONQUEST ALONE... THAT HAD TO BE DONE, I HAD NO OTHER OPTION. SQUARING OFF AGAINST ***DOZENS*** OF VILTRUMITES?
WE'RE NOT ALL GOING TO MAKE IT OUT OF THIS... WE'RE JUST NOT.
THAT'S HARD.
SON... THAT'S ***WAR.***


HEY, WHERE'S THAT DUDE WITH THE HANDS FOR FEET? I THOUGHT HE WAS AWESOME. HE'S NOT COMING WITH US?
YOU MEAN SPACE RACER?
HE'S GOING TO BE MEETING US THERE. HE HAD TO... PICK SOMETHING UP.
PICK WHAT UP? WHAT COULD HE POSSIBLY BE GETTING?
IT WOULD TAKE FAR TOO MUCH EXPLANATION. I THINK IT BEST THAT IT REMAIN A SURPRISE.
TRUST ME.
WE ARE MINUTES AWAY. I NEED EVERYONE TO GATHER IN THE MAIN HANGER.
IT'S *TIME.*
WELL... NO TURNING BACK NOW, RIGHT?
...
RELAX, HE'S KIDDING.
COP
NO I WASN'T.


WHY DIDN'T WE GO STRAIGHT TO THE PLANET?
THE PLANET VILTRUM IS A *TOMB*.
IT'S A MONUMENT TO THOSE WHO FELL VICTIM TO THE SCOURGE VIRUS.
THERE ARE MANY REASONS THE VILTRUMITES WOULD CHOOSE VILTRUM AS A STAGING GROUND.
THE SYMBOLISM OF RETURNING TO THE HOME WORLD BEING CHIEF AMONG THEM. BUT AS A MEMORIAL TO THOSE FALLEN, THE PLANET HOUSES A NUMBER OF DEFENSES.
IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE OUR WAY TO THE PLANET ON OUR OWN LIKE THIS...
BUT, TO DO SO IN A SPACE SHIP-- WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE.

THAT RING... ARE THOSE... BODIES?
YES, THE FALLEN-- PRESERVED BY THE COLDNESS OF SPACE... THAT IS THE MONUMENT TO THEIR SACRIFICE.
THAT IS WHY THE PLANET IS A TOMB. THERE IS NOTHING OF THE VILTRUM I ONCE KNEW. THAT TIME IS LONG FORGOTTEN... DEAD TO US ALL.
COME. IF WE ARE TO MAKE IT TO THE SURFACE UNDETECTED-- WE MUST MOVE QUICKLY--AND SILENTLY.
THERE ARE MANY DANGERS UP AHEAD.
THIS IS SO...
SHH.

YOU DARE TO COME *HERE?* TO VILTRUM?!
THAEDUS, YOU ARE A--
TOO MUCH THINKING! MORE FIGHTING!
MORE!
THAT TAKES CARE OF THULA. BATTLE BEAST NEVER FAILS TO IMPRESS.
THULA IS THOROUGH... SHE NO DOUBT REPORTED OUR ARRIVAL BEFORE SHE ENGAGED.
LOOKS LIKE IT!
OKAY... THIS IS IT, EVERYONE.
GET READY.

TO ALL WHO MAKE THEMSELVES ENEMIES OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE--!
PREPARE FOR YOUR DEATHS!
WE ARE GROSSLY OUT-NUMBERED... MOVE FAST FROM OPPONENT TO OPPONENT. TRY NOT TO LET THEM OVERPOWER YOU--WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY IF WE'RE TO SURVIVE THIS.
IF ONLY SPACE RACER COULD--

SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG. FIRING THE RESTRAINTS AROUND THEIR NECKS TOOK MORE TIME THAN WE ANTICIPATED.
BUT I SEE I'M JUST IN TIME!

BY THE THRONE OF ARGALL--!
THEY'RE TOO STRONG! DON'T TRY TO FIGHT THEM! AVOID THEM--*RUN*--LET THE VASTNESS OF SPACE BE THEIR DEMISE!
IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK, TRAITOR!
YOU GAVE THEM OUR EVERY WEAKNESS--SERVED US UP TO THEM ON A PLATTER--AND IT'S STILL NOT GOING TO WORK!
WE'LL SEE.
THESE TOXIN-LACED PROJECTILES ARE WORKING WONDERS--LOOK AT THESE GUYS GOING DOWN!
THIS IS GOING TO BE--!
DIE!
TECH JACKET--NO!
DON'T WORRY, ZACK! I'M--
WHOA!
WHAT IS...
OH...

YOU'LL PAY FOR YOUR--
LOOK OUT!
SOME OF THESE GUYS ARE DEFINITELY TOUGHER THAN OTHERS!
OLIVER--BE CAREFUL--THEY--
WHAT IS THIS BOY DOING HERE--AND A HALF-BREED, NO LESS? WE DON'T ALLOW YOUR KIND IN OUR RANKS!
INFERIOR SOLDIERS WILL NOT BE TOLER--
YOUR BALLS ARE INFERIOR, JERK FACE!
YOU DARE--?!
THEIR NUMBERS PALE IN COMPARISON TO OURS. THEIR STRENGTH IS A FAÇADE, DO NOT BELIEVE IT.
FOR THE GLORY OF THE EMPIRE, THEY WILL FALL.
DO NOT QUESTION THIS.

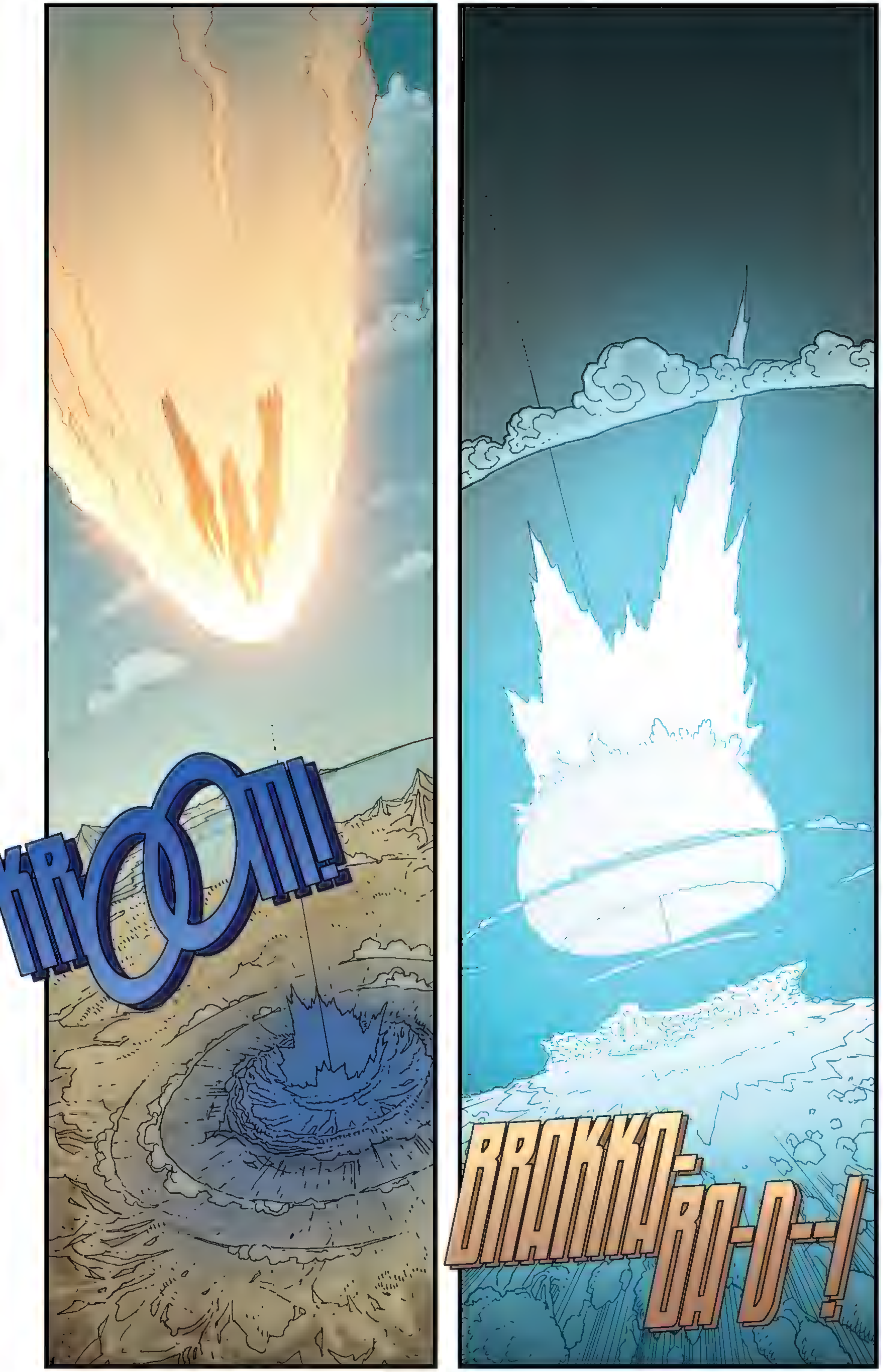
OH, CAN IT, MORON.
WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
NO!
SOMEBODY STOP HIM, INVINCIBLE DOESN'T--
PLEASE.
HEY, DICK HEAD--A BLACK HOLE CALLED-- IT WANTS ITS SUCK BACK!
YOU ARE A FUNNY ONE, I GATHER.
ALWAYS CRACKING JOKES. VERY GOOD. I ENJOY A GOOD JOKE, MYSELF.
STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE...

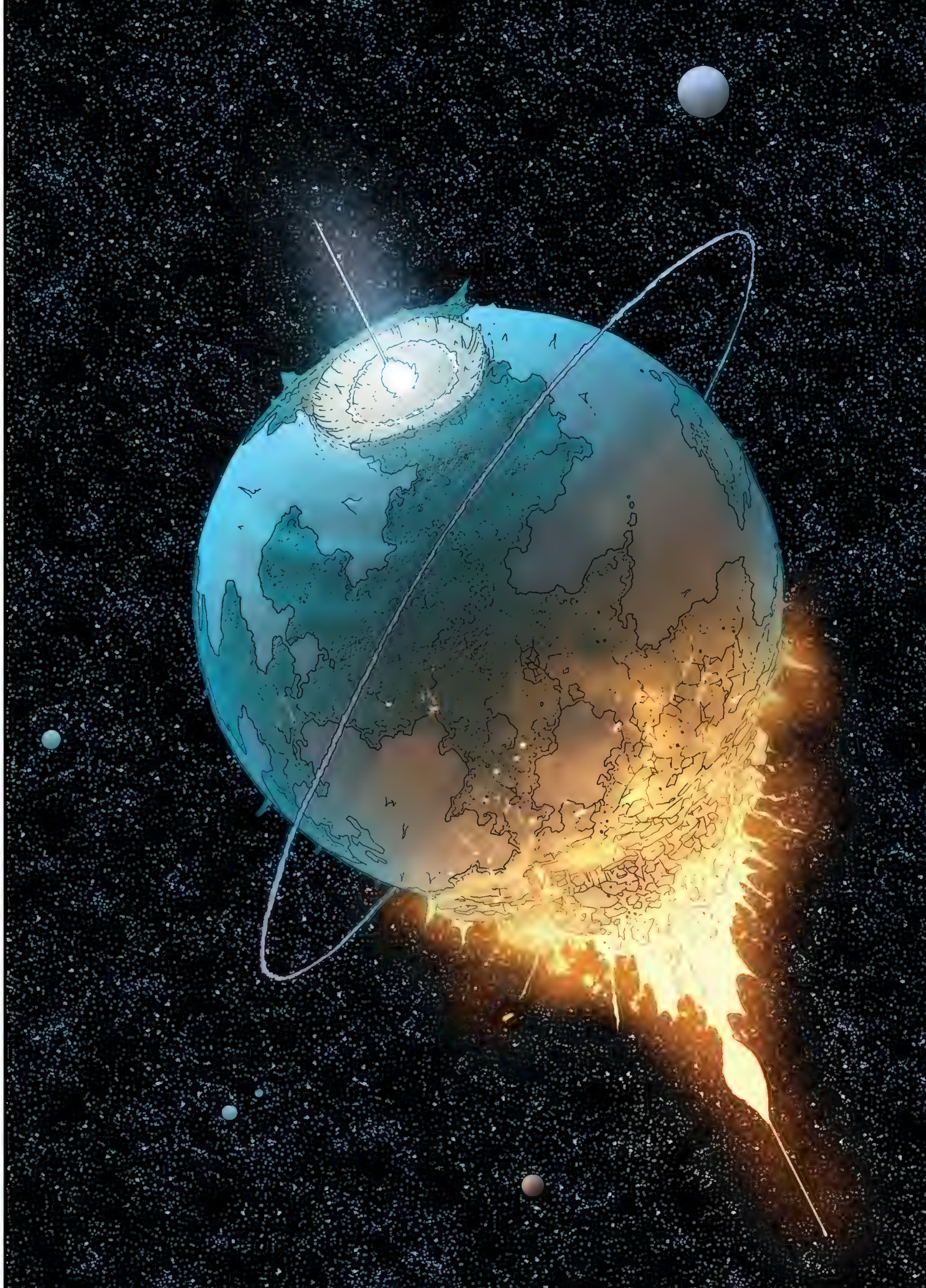
OLIVER!
GET BACK HERE!
SEEMED LIKE SUCH A NICE BOY...
MY BROTHER...

YOU KILLED MY BROTHER!!
WELL... THAT'S SOMETHING.
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE IN OVER YOUR HEAD... EVEN CONQUEST FEARS ME.
I KILLED CONQUEST AND NOW I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!
HE KILLED HIM?
THAT'S NOT--HOW COULD HE?
SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...

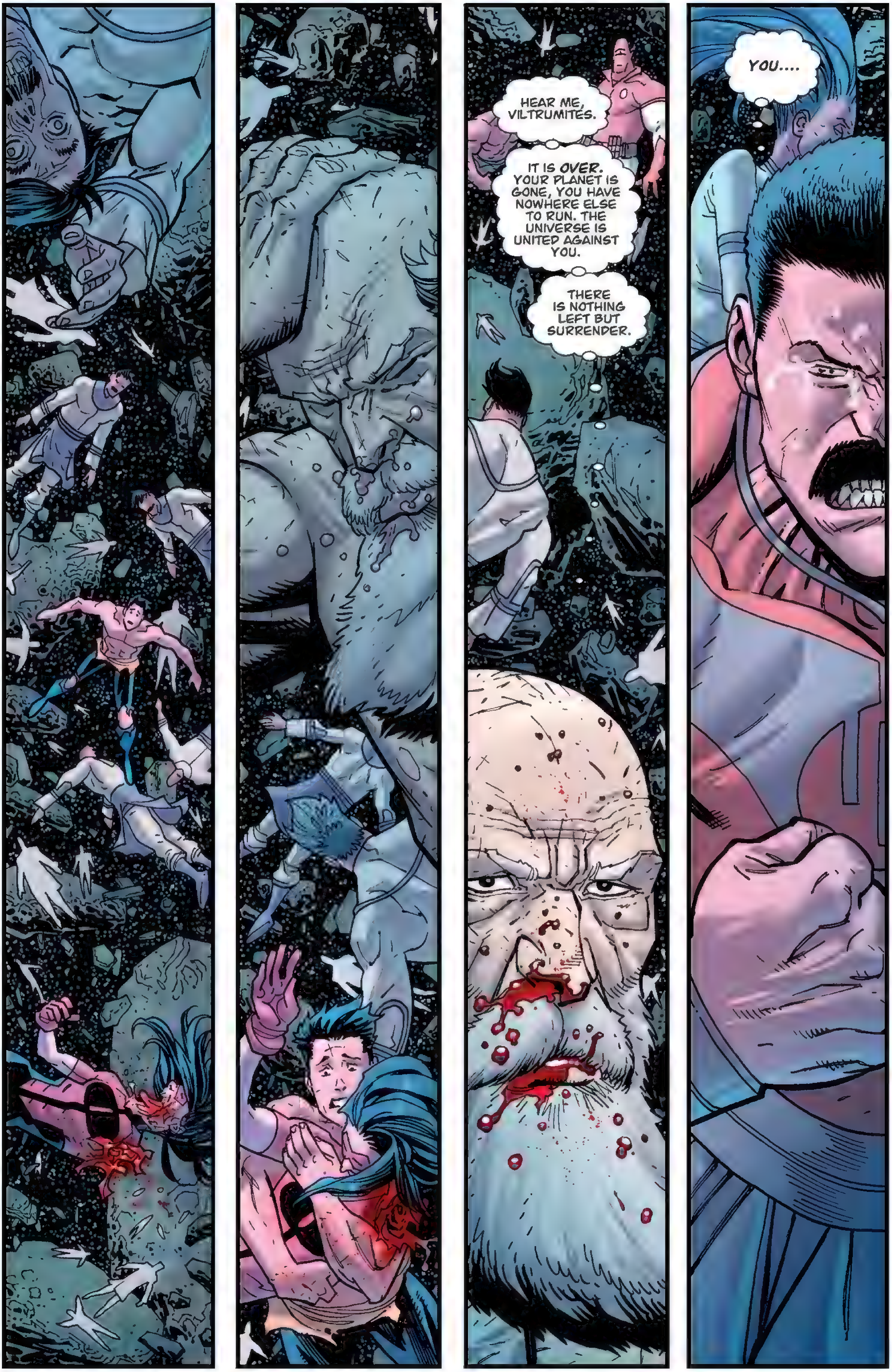
WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE--MY SON KILLED CONQUEST!
STILL SO CONFIDENT IN YOUR VICTORY?
NOW, WHILE THEY'RE DISTRACTED-- WE HAVE TO MAKE A MOVE--SOMETHING THEY WON'T EXPECT.
SPACE RACER-- TO ME!
YES!
YES!!
WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?
BEATS ME.
ALL OF YOU-- WITH ME-- NOW!
WE'LL ONLY GET ONE SHOT AT THIS!
SPACE RACER-- DEAD CENTER, FIRE YOUR GUN--

--NOW!
STAY CLOSE--WE HAVE TO TIME THIS PERFECTLY AND REACH THE PLANET ALL AT THE SAME TIME!
IF THE CORE HAS TIME TO STABILIZE, WE COULD DIE ON IMPACT.
WAIT, WHAT ARE WE--ACK!
CRAP!
ONE CHANCE--
FASTER!
FASTER!
GET READY!


KROOM!!
BRAKKA-BA-O--!



DOOM!
DOOM!
DOOM!
DOOM!
DOOM!
DOOM!
KRAAADGGLE!


HEAR ME, VILTRUMITES.
IT IS *OVER*. YOUR PLANET IS GONE, YOU HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO RUN. THE UNIVERSE IS UNITED AGAINST YOU.
THERE IS NOTHING LEFT BUT SURRENDER.
YOU....

YOU BROUGHT THIS UPON US ALL-- IT IS *YOU* WHO SET THIS IN MOTION-- CARRIED IT OUT-- THAEDUS OF VILTRUM... **BETRAYER.**
YOU HAVE TAKEN IT ALL FROM US. OUR HERITAGE, OUR HOME... OUR HISTORY... **DESTROYED.**
THE VILTRUM EMPIRE WILL NOT STAND FOR THIS!
YOU WILL DO WHAT YOU WILL AND I AM PREPARED FOR YOUR WRATH. BUT KNOW THIS, THRAGG, WHATEVER HAPPENS HERE...
...YOU ***HAVE*** NO EMPIRE.
SURRENDER YOUR--
SURRENDER?!
YOU SICKEN ME.
THERE IS NOTHING LEFT...

...BUT REVENGE!

AT LONG LAST, LORD ARGALL, YOU HAVE BEEN AVENGED.
YOU WILL *NOT* BE MISSED.

NO, OLIVER... NO...
DAMN IT, NO...
GET READY.
ALREADY AM.
GRIEVE WHILE YOU CAN, BECAUSE I ASSURE YOU...

YOU ARE ALL NEXT.

COP

CHAPTER 76

I'M STARTING WITH YOU!
YOU KILLED MY BROTHER...

...I'M NOT GOING TO LET--
MY PLANET!
MY HISTORY!
MY HERITAGE!
YOUR HERITAGE!
WE PLANNED TO RETURN TO VILTRUM, TRIUMPHANT, OUR RANKS REPLENISHED... ONE DAY...
I HAVE TAKEN *NOTHING* FROM YOU THAT COMPARES. YOU HAVE ROBBED US OF OUR VERY *FUTURE*. YOUR DEATH WON'T BEGIN TO--

IT'S OVER, THRAGG! GIVE IT UP--YOU'VE LOST, CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?
AND YOU!
YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, SIDE WITH THAEDUS, THE GREAT BETRAYER?!
DO YOU KNOW WHY WE KEPT HIS DEFECTION SECRET? WHY HE DEFECTED IN THE FIRST PLACE?!
IT WAS HE WHO MURDERED LORD ARGALL--HE WHO SENT THE EMPIRE INTO DISARRAY.
HE BROUGHT ABOUT THE DARK TIMES BEFORE I WAS ABLE TO COME INTO POWER AS REGENT.
WAIT... YOU KNOW THIS?
WE ALSO BELIEVE HE WAS BEHIND THE SCOURGE VIRUS--WHICH STOLE ANY HOPE OF FINDING A TRUE HEIR TO ARGALL.
HE MUST HAVE USED HIS OWN DNA FOR THEM TO DEVELOP IT--IT'S THE ONLY WAY.
I--
I AM NOT THE MAN I ONCE WAS. I FEEL OUR PEOPLE DESERVE NOTHING LESS THAN EXTINCTION FOR WHAT WE'VE DONE...
NO MATTER HOW IT PAINS ME TO SAY SUCH A THING.

NO!
FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO OUR PEOPLE, YOU WILL DI--!
FINALLY-- A WORTHY ADVERSARY! FINALLY I WILL HAVE MY--!
IRK!
A NUISANCE AT BEST.

THIS IS YOUR END, UNOPAN.
NO... YOU CAN'T--
WHAT?!
UH...
THANKS...
WHA-- STAY AWAKE--
STAY...
...
A PETTY DISTRACTION, BUYING YOU A FEW SECONDS AT MOST.
LET ME GIVE YOU ONE FINAL PIECE OF ADVICE...

WHAT?!
WE ARE OUT OF HERE, FRIEND!
SPACE RACER, WHAT ARE YOU--?
WE CAN'T JUST *LEAVE!* WE'VE FOUGHT TOO HARD, COME TOO CLOSE!
HAVE YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION? THE DESTRUCTION OF VILTRUM WAS LUCK AND IT KNOCKED THEM OFF BALANCE--BUT LOOK AT YOU. WE'RE OUTNUMBERED. THIS WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A FULL-ON ASSAULT. WE WERE MEANT TO POSITION OURSELVES ON VILTRUM AND WAIT FOR MY ARRIVAL WITH THE RAGNAR... THIS HAS BEEN A *DISASTER.*
WE LEAVE NOW OR WE'RE ALL DEAD!

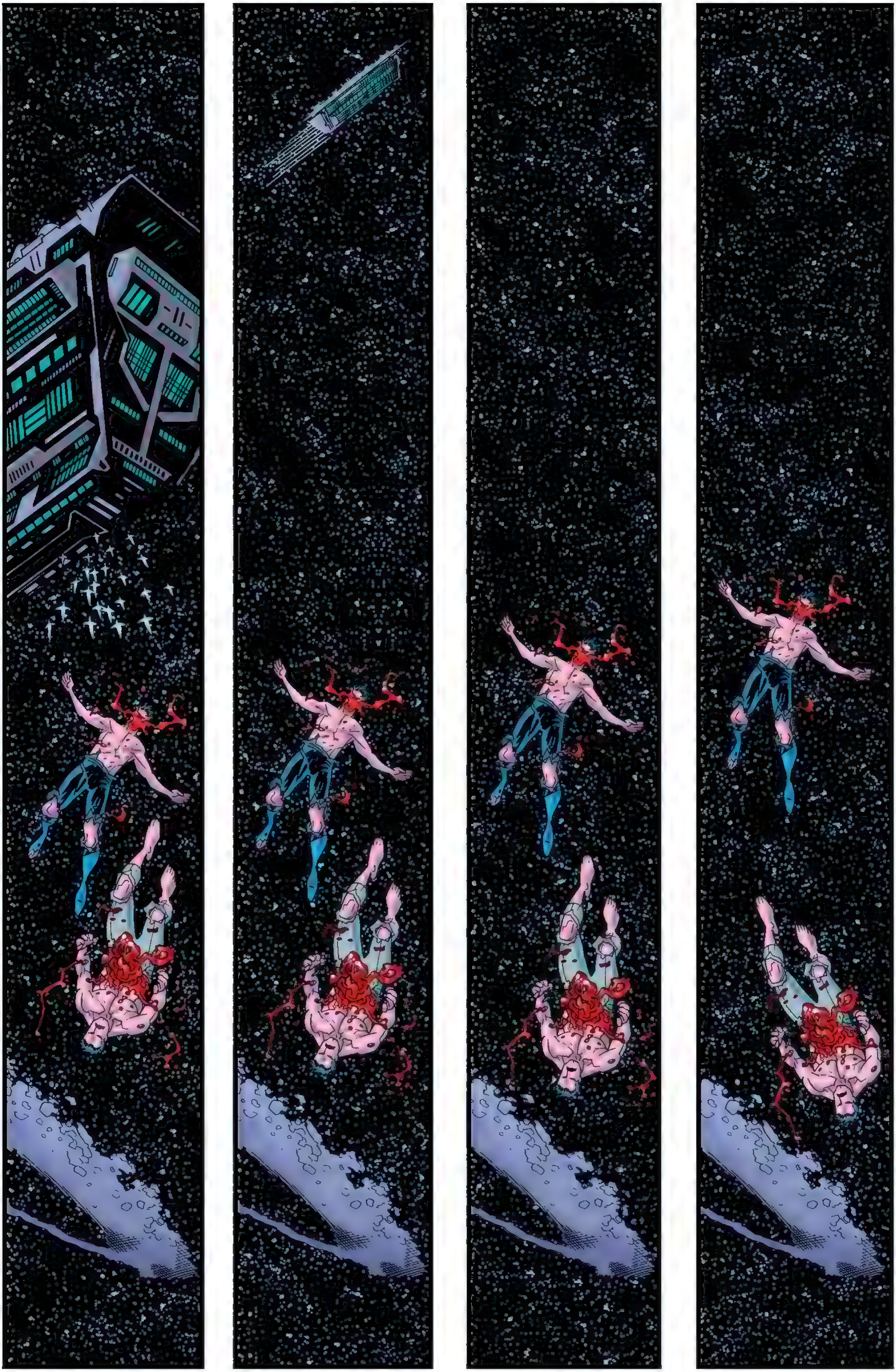
I DON'T LIKE THIS...
WHAT ABOUT NOLAN AND MARK?
WE CANNOT HELP THEM NOW. WE MUST CALL FOR HELP.
OUR WISEST MOVE AT THIS POINT IS RETREAT.
THE VILTRUMITES ON OUR SIDE WILL HAVE TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES IF THEY ARE NOT ALREADY DEAD.
DID ANYONE HAPPEN TO SEE WHERE THEY WENT?!
WHERE IS THRAGG?!
OKAY THEN...
WHERE WERE WE?

HOW DO WE BEAT THIS GUY?
WE CAN'T.
WAIT-- WHAT?!
IN ORDER TO BE MADE REGENT, THRAGG WAS TRAINED FROM BIRTH, TEMPERED TO BE THE STRONGEST AMONG US ALL... EDUCATED IN ALL MANNERS OF COMBAT...
WE SIMPLY CANNOT DEFEAT HIM ON OUR OWN.
YOUR FATHER SPEAKS THE TRUTH.
MARK, PLEASE KNOW... NO MATTER WHAT I SAID...
...I ALWAYS LOVED YOU.
I THOUGHT THAT MADE ME WEAKER... BUT I KNOW NOW THAT IT MADE ME STRONGER.
DAD?

PATHETIC...
FORGET ME--RUN!
YOU HAVE TO ESCAPE!
I CAN'T---
I--
SO PREDICTABLE.
CRAP!
YOU'LL BE A BLOODY MASS OF ENTRAILS BY THE TIME YOUR FATHER CATCHES UP TO US.

FASTER THAN I THOUGHT.
MARK...
...
EVEN AT THE END HE SHOWS HIS WEAKNESS.
NOW...
IT IS TIME...
IT...
...
WHY DO YOU HESITATE?

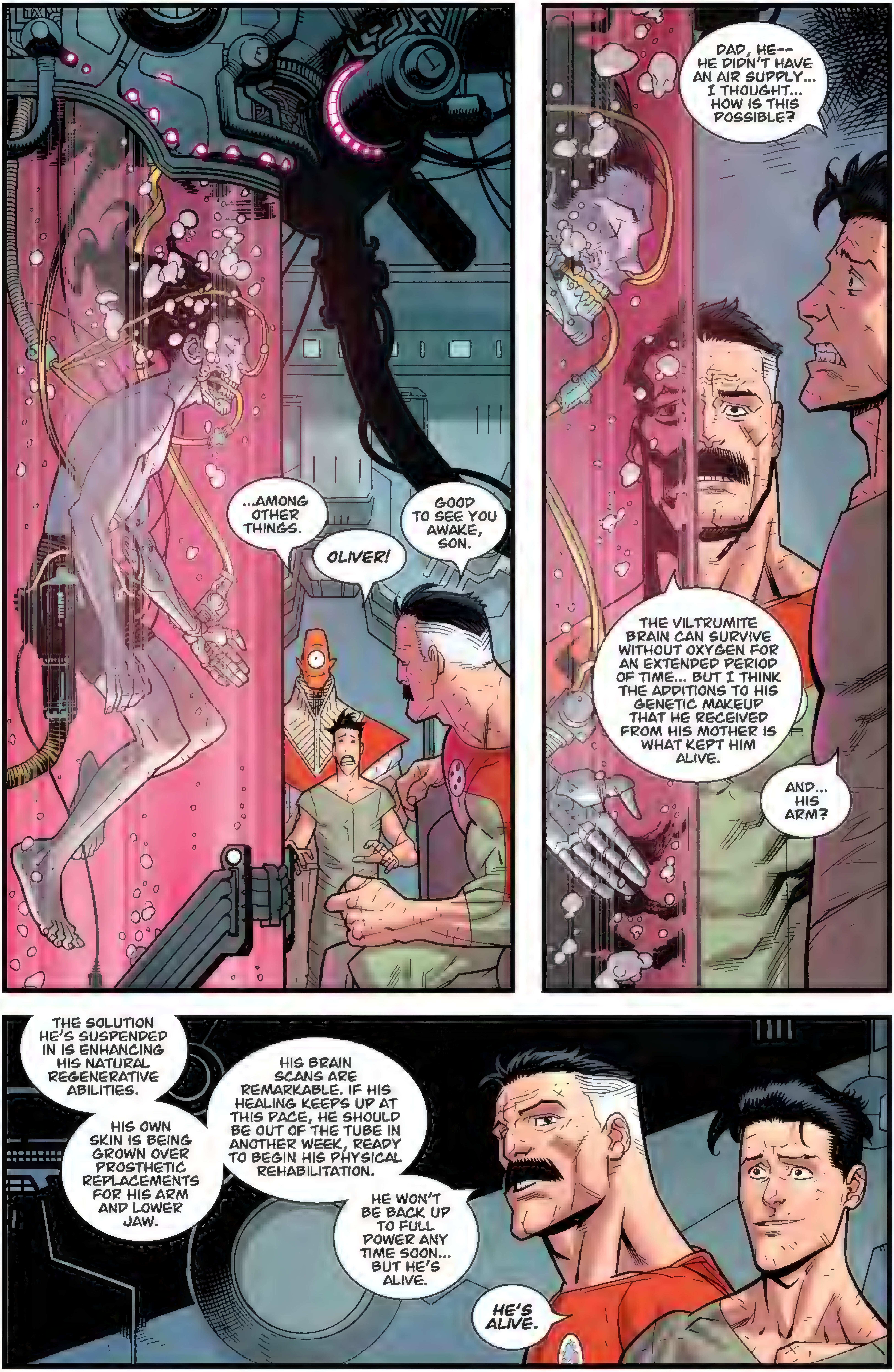
WE NEED THEM... WE NEED ALL VILTRUMITES.
THEY WILL BE SPARED.
CALL THE SHIP.
FORGIVE ME, REGENT... BUT NO.
NO. WE NEED VILTRUMITES LOYAL TO OUR CAUSE--
--NOT THEM.
YES, THEM.
TRUST ME, IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE...
THEM ABOVE ALL OTHERS.



IT'S NOT AS BAD AS WE THOUGHT-- THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY SURVIVED BUT I'LL HAVE THEM IN MOMENTARILY.
COP
DOWNLOAD HAS THE VILTRUMITES SAFELY ON BOARD.
VERY GOOD. SET A COURSE FOR TALESCRIA.
THEY'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET.

WHA--
--HUH?
THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE WAKING UP. I'M GLAD I MADE IT HERE IN TIME.
IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU, MARK. I WAS WORRIED THERE AT THE BEGINNING.
WHAT ARE YOU *WEARING?*
THIS? MY ARM WAS BROKEN IN THE BATTLE OF VILTRUM. I'M STILL WEARING A CAST.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT... AND HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN OUT?

TWO WEEKS, YOU WERE PRETTY MESSED UP. AS FOR THE CLOTHES... I'VE BEEN BUMPED UP TO THE TOP POSITION. I'M *THE BOSS.*
WITH THAEDUS GONE, THE COALITION OF PLANETS WAS IN DISARRAY, AND THEY FEARED THIS WAR WAS FAR FROM OVER.
I WAS HASTILY CHRISTENED TOP DOG OF THE COALITION.
SO NOW YOU'RE TECHNICALLY SUPPOSED TO ADDRESS ME AS "GREAT ALLEN." BUT WHEN IT'S JUST US YOU DON'T HAVE TO BECAUSE IT *DOES* SOUND SILLY.
BUT THE PAY'S GOOD!
WELL, UH...
CONGRATS.
IS MY FATHER AROUND? I ASSUME HE WOKE UP BEFORE I DID.
HE DID... BY A FEW DAYS.
THIS WAY.
ARE WE ON TALESCRIA?
YES, THE CITY HAS BEEN COMPLETELY REBUILT...


...AMONG OTHER THINGS.
GOOD TO SEE YOU AWAKE, SON.
OLIVER!
DAD, HE-- HE DIDN'T HAVE AN AIR SUPPLY... I THOUGHT... HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
THE VILTRUMITE BRAIN CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT OXYGEN FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME... BUT I THINK THE ADDITIONS TO HIS GENETIC MAKEUP THAT HE RECEIVED FROM HIS MOTHER IS WHAT KEPT HIM ALIVE.
AND... HIS ARM?
THE SOLUTION HE'S SUSPENDED IN IS ENHANCING HIS NATURAL REGENERATIVE ABILITIES.
HIS OWN SKIN IS BEING GROWN OVER PROSTHETIC REPLACEMENTS FOR HIS ARM AND LOWER JAW.
HIS BRAIN SCANS ARE REMARKABLE. IF HIS HEALING KEEPS UP AT THIS PACE, HE SHOULD BE OUT OF THE TUBE IN ANOTHER WEEK, READY TO BEGIN HIS PHYSICAL REHABILITATION.
HE WON'T BE BACK UP TO FULL POWER ANY TIME SOON... BUT HE'S ALIVE.
HE'S ALIVE.

I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, HEH... **GREAT ALLEN...** BUT THE STATUS REPORT FROM THE OUTER TERRITORIES HAS COME IN.
AND?
NOTHING. LIKE ALWAYS.
ABSOLUTELY *NOTHING.*
WHAT DOES HE MEAN *"NOTHING?"*
THE VILTRUMITES AREN'T ATTACKING?
ATTACKING?
HEH... THEY'RE NOT DOING *ANYTHING.*
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THEY'VE DISAPPEARED, MARK. SINCE THE BATTLE OF VILTRUM... THERE'S BEEN NO SIGN OF THEM. IT'S AS THOUGH THEY'VE *VANISHED.*

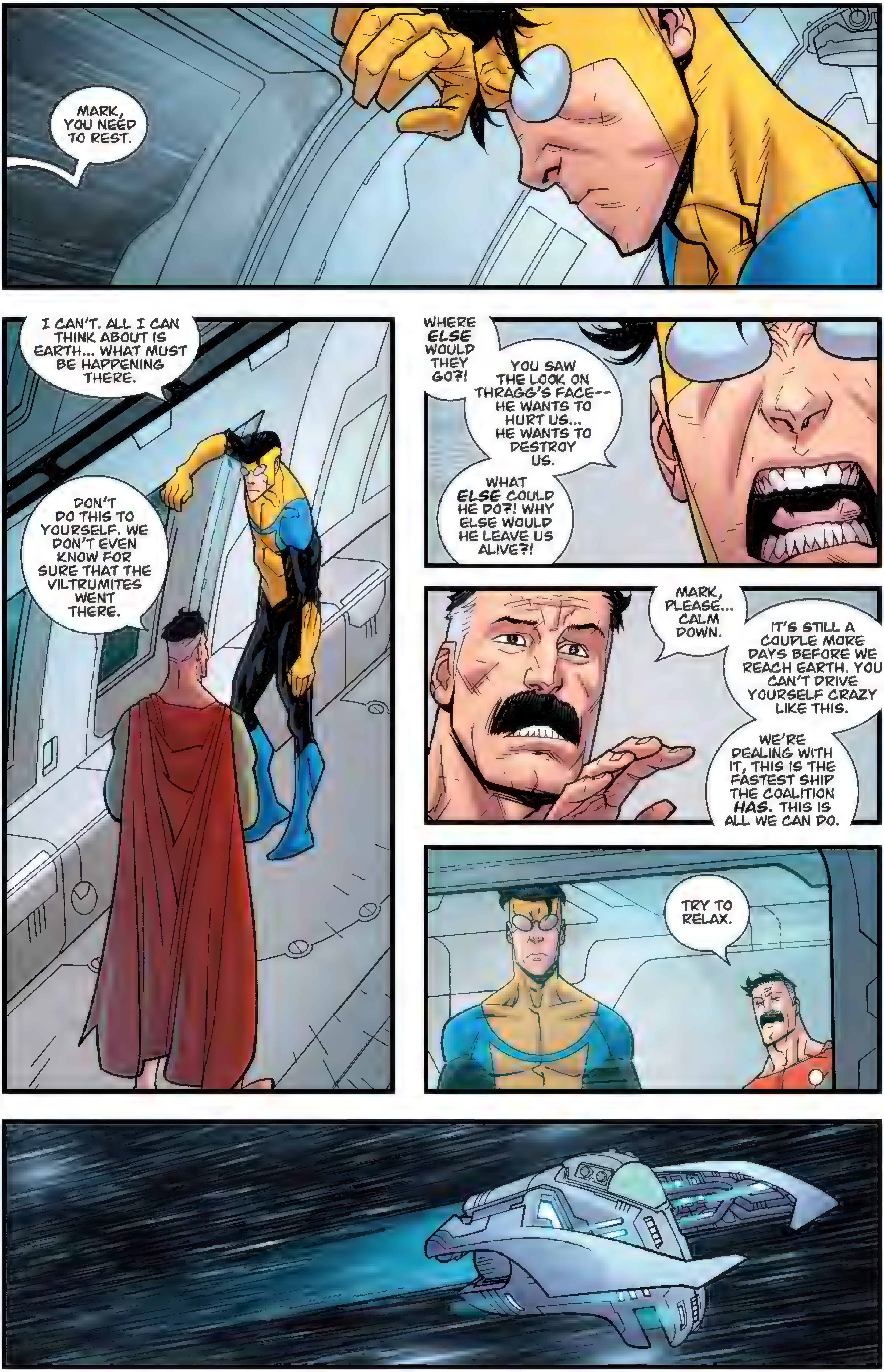
GRANTED, SPACE IS A BIG PLACE, AND THEY CAN CERTAINLY TRAVEL GREAT DISTANCES IN LITTLE TIME... BUT WE'VE GOT EYES IN ALL QUADRANTS OF THE GALAXY.
IT WOULD BE VERY HARD TO HIDE FROM US.
WE'VE SEARCHED ALL THE FORMER PLANETS OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE TO SEE IF SOMEONE MIGHT POSSIBLY BE HARBORING THEM. *THEY'RE NOT*.
WITHOUT THOSE PLANETS TO BACK THEM, THEIR NUMBERS DWINDLE TO THE POINT THAT ANY FRONTAL ASSAULT AGAINST US WOULD BE INEFFECTIVE AT BEST, ***DISASTROUS*** AT WORST.
SO IT MAKES SENSE THAT THEY WOULD LAY LOW FOR A WHILE, REGROUP, PREPARE FOR A SERIES OF SMALL, CALCULATED ASSAULTS.
CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WOULD HAVE THEM ATTACKING THEIR FORMERLY OCCUPIED PLANETS, IT WOULD TAKE LITTLE EFFORT TO TURN THEM BACK TO THEIR SIDE... AND EVENTUALLY THEY WOULD AGAIN COMMAND A FORCE LARGE ENOUGH TO DESTROY US.
WE'VE BEEN STATIONING OUR TROOPS WITH THESE PLANETS IN PREPARATION FOR THIS. A DELAY OF THIS LONG, ESPECIALLY WITH THEM KNOWING YOU AND YOUR FATHER AND BROTHER WERE OUT OF COMMISSION FOLLOWING OUR LAST BATTLE... MAKES NO SENSE...
...NO SENSE AT ALL.

OH, GOD...
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
THEY LEFT US ALIVE FOR A REASON, MY FATHER AND ME... THERE'S NO WAY THE VILTRUMITES JUST GAVE UP AND WENT INTO HIDING... NOT RIGHT BEFORE KILLING US.
WHAT DID WE DO TO THEM? WE DESTROYED VILTRUM... THRAGG WAS READY TO KILL US FOR THAT... HE WAS RIGHT THERE, HE COULD HAVE DONE IT...
...BUT MAYBE HE THOUGHT OF ANOTHER WAY TO HURT US... SOMETHING MORE *PAINFUL* THAN DEATH.
YOU CAN'T FIND THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT IN THIS GALAXY, ALLEN.
THE VILTRUMITES HAVE GONE TO *EARTH*.

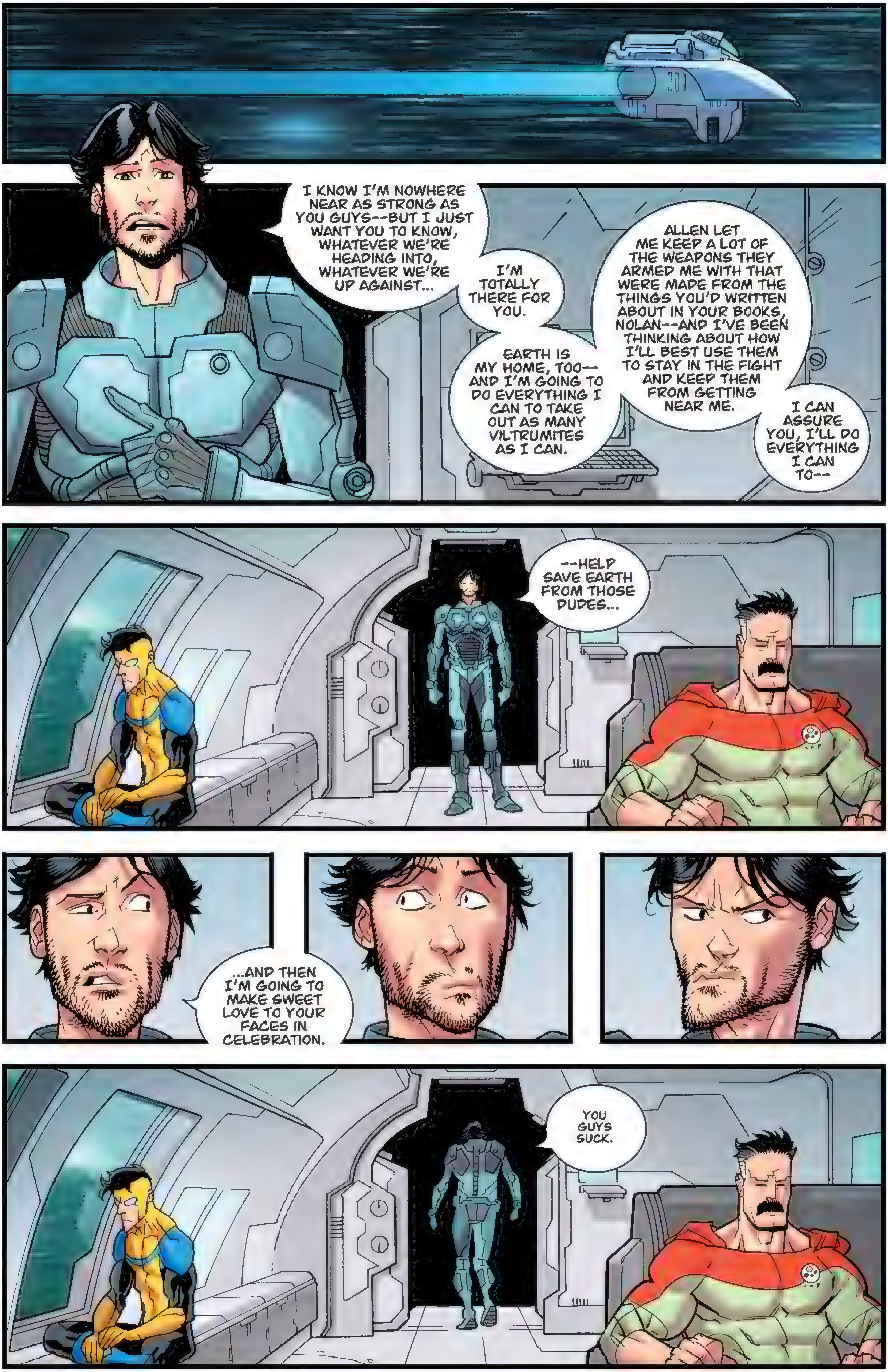
CHAPTER 77

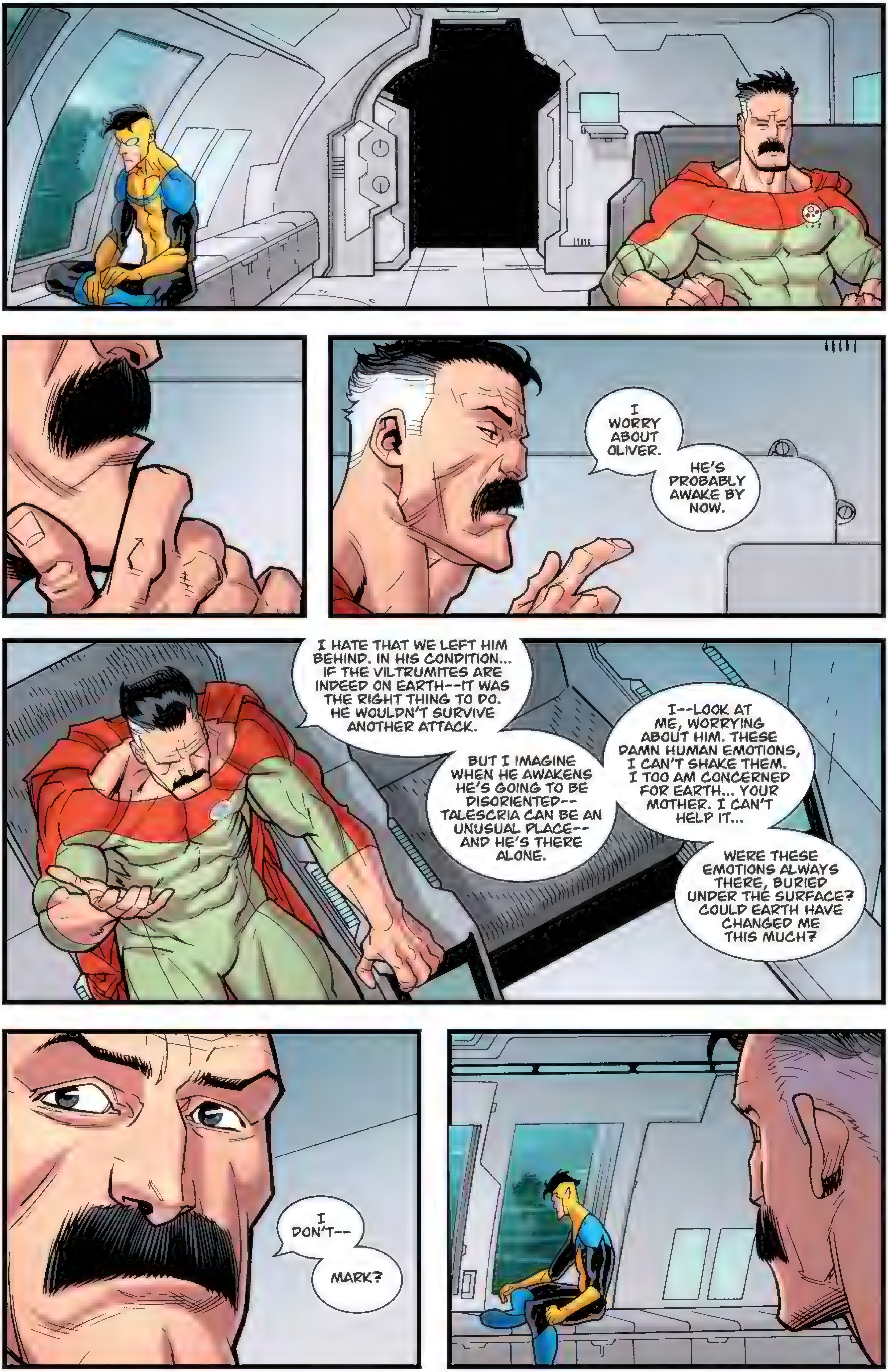
RYAN TOWNSEND +FCO

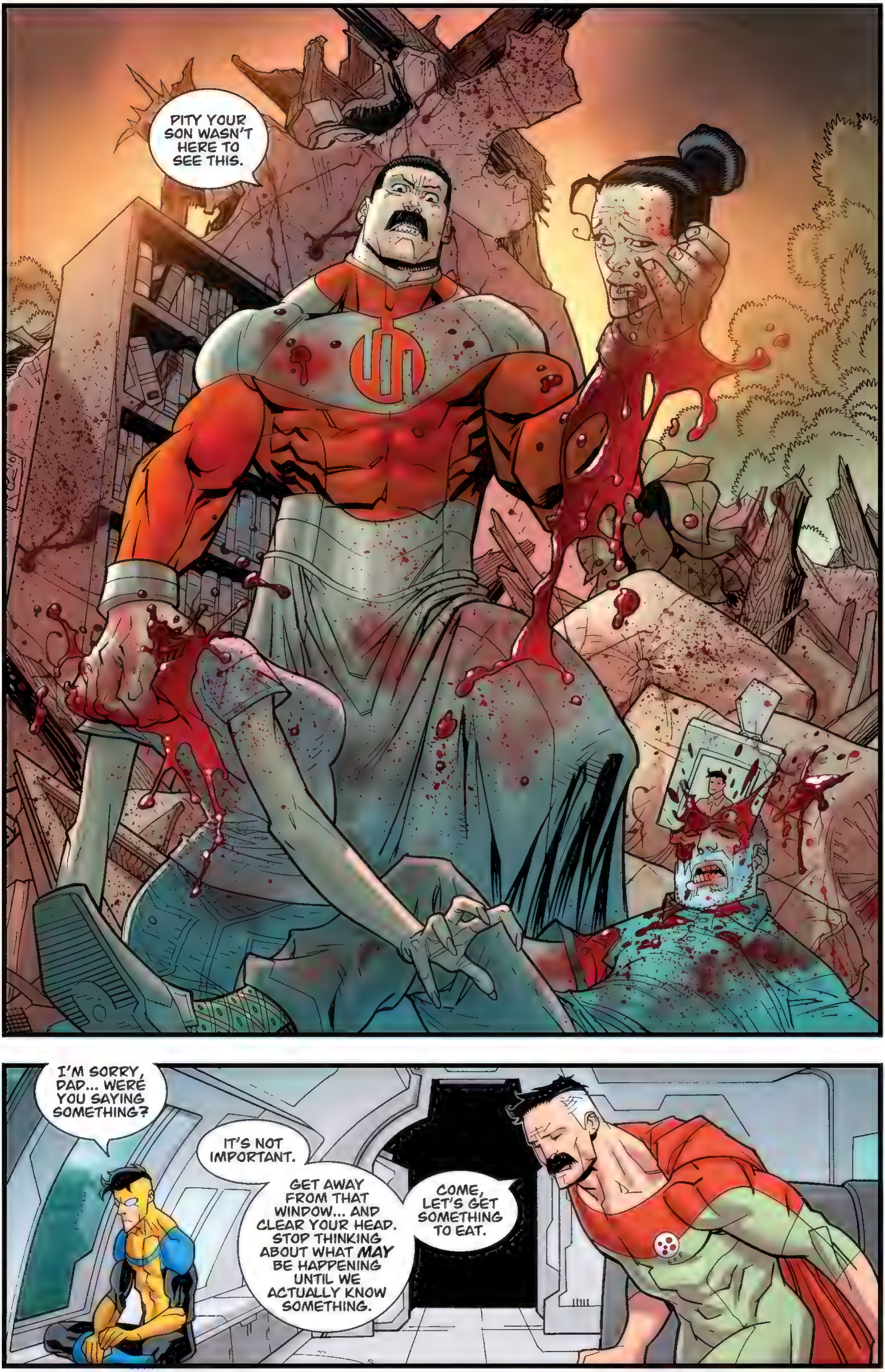
PENTAGON
NO, NO PLEASE--
--WAIT!
I--I CAN **HELP** YOU-- YOU'LL NEED ME. I CAN SMOOTH THINGS OVER...
I CAN PREPARE THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET FOR VILTRUMITE RULE... I CAN SMOOTH THINGS OVER SO THAT WE CAN COEXIST ON THIS PLANET AND--
GKK!
COEXIST?!
THE TIME FOR THAT HAS PASSED. WE WILL TAKE WHAT WE **WANT...**
...AND **DESTROY** THE REST.


MARK, YOU NEED TO REST.
I CAN'T. ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS EARTH... WHAT MUST BE HAPPENING THERE.
DON'T DO THIS TO YOURSELF. WE DON'T EVEN KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE VILTRUMITES WENT THERE.
WHERE ELSE WOULD THEY GO?!
YOU SAW THE LOOK ON THRAGG'S FACE-- HE WANTS TO HURT US... HE WANTS TO DESTROY US.
WHAT ELSE COULD HE DO?! WHY ELSE WOULD HE LEAVE US ALIVE?!
MARK, PLEASE... CALM DOWN.
IT'S STILL A COUPLE MORE DAYS BEFORE WE REACH EARTH. YOU CAN'T DRIVE YOURSELF CRAZY LIKE THIS.
WE'RE DEALING WITH IT, THIS IS THE FASTEST SHIP THE COALITION HAS. THIS IS ALL WE CAN DO.
TRY TO RELAX.

TALESCRIA, HEADQUARTERS OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
THE MOVERS WON'T BE HERE FOR AT LEAST TWENTY MINUTES. PLENTY OF TIME IF YOU WANT TO--
TELIA, PLEASE... *NOT NOW.*
YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE *FINE.* THOSE VILTRUMITES PROBABLY JUST WENT INTO HIDING.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. I BET WE DON'T HEAR FROM THEM FOR YEARS.
I DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF TIME TO WORRY ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES. I COMMAND ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION, NOW... I'VE GOT FAR TOO MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT.
STILL, I CAN'T STAND THAT WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY WENT... PART OF ME, I HATE TO ADMIT, WISHES THEY *DID* GO TO EARTH... AT LEAST THEN, WE'D *KNOW.*
BUT... THAT'S NOT ALL OF IT...
OH, ALLEN, BABY... WHAT IS IT?
I MISS MY FRIEND... TECH JACKET.

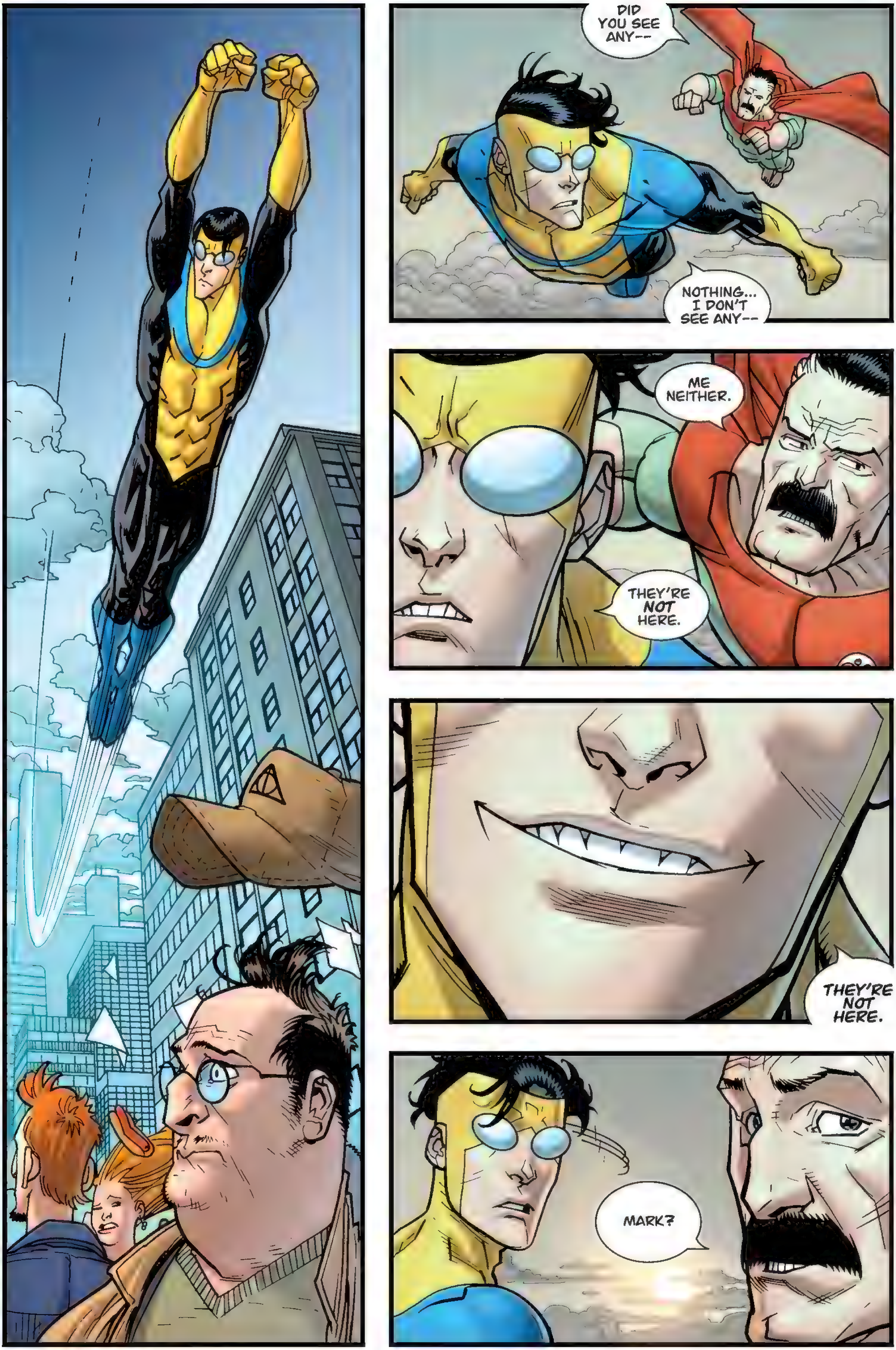

I KNOW I'M NOWHERE NEAR AS STRONG AS YOU GUYS--BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW, WHATEVER WE'RE HEADING INTO, WHATEVER WE'RE UP AGAINST...
I'M TOTALLY THERE FOR YOU.
EARTH IS MY HOME, TOO--AND I'M GOING TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO TAKE OUT AS MANY VILTRUMITES AS I CAN.
ALLEN LET ME KEEP A LOT OF THE WEAPONS THEY ARMED ME WITH THAT WERE MADE FROM THE THINGS YOU'D WRITTEN ABOUT IN YOUR BOOKS, NOLAN--AND I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HOW I'LL BEST USE THEM TO STAY IN THE FIGHT AND KEEP THEM FROM GETTING NEAR ME.
I CAN ASSURE YOU, I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO--
--HELP SAVE EARTH FROM THOSE DUDES...
...AND THEN I'M GOING TO MAKE SWEET LOVE TO YOUR FACES IN CELEBRATION.
YOU GUYS SUCK.


I WORRY ABOUT OLIVER.
HE'S PROBABLY AWAKE BY NOW.
I HATE THAT WE LEFT HIM BEHIND. IN HIS CONDITION... IF THE VILTRUMITES ARE INDEED ON EARTH--IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. HE WOULDN'T SURVIVE ANOTHER ATTACK.
BUT I IMAGINE WHEN HE AWAKENS HE'S GOING TO BE DISORIENTED--TALESCRIA CAN BE AN UNUSUAL PLACE--AND HE'S THERE ALONE.
I--LOOK AT ME, WORRYING ABOUT HIM. THESE DAMN HUMAN EMOTIONS, I CAN'T SHAKE THEM. I TOO AM CONCERNED FOR EARTH... YOUR MOTHER. I CAN'T HELP IT...
WERE THESE EMOTIONS ALWAYS THERE, BURIED UNDER THE SURFACE? COULD EARTH HAVE CHANGED ME THIS MUCH?
I DON'T--
MARK?

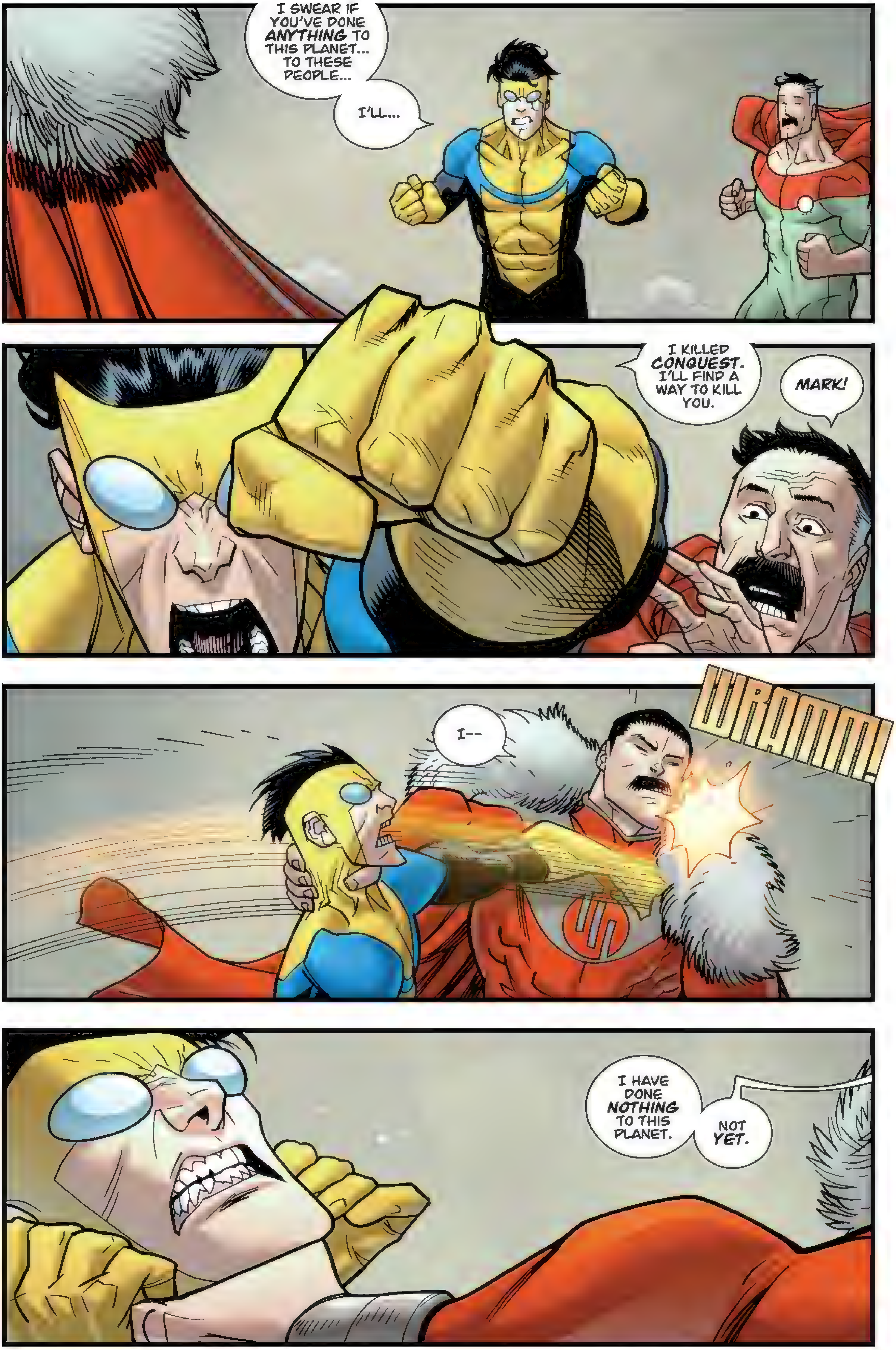

PITY YOUR SON WASN'T HERE TO SEE THIS.
I'M SORRY, DAD... WERE YOU SAYING SOMETHING?
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.
GET AWAY FROM THAT WINDOW... AND CLEAR YOUR HEAD. STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT *MAY* BE HAPPENING UNTIL WE ACTUALLY KNOW SOMETHING.
COME, LET'S GET SOMETHING TO EAT.

WHILE WE'RE DOING OUR BEST TO DISTRACT THEM, ZACK--YOUR JOB WILL BE TO FIND AND FREE ANY OF EARTH'S HEROES THEY MAY HAVE IMPRISONED.
IF WE'RE GOING TO MAKE A DENT--WE'RE GOING TO NEED THEIR HELP.
AS SOON AS WE HAVE CONFIRMATION, THIS SHIP GOES BACK TO TALESCRIA TO WARN THE COALITION. IT'LL TAKE A WEEK OR SO FOR IT TO RETURN AND LONGER THAN THAT FOR COALITION FORCES TO REACH US.
SO OUR MAIN INITIATIVE WILL BE TO WAIT. GATHER OUR FORCES AND PLAN AN ATTACK WHEN THE COALITION ARRIVES.
THAT'S OUR ONLY OPTION, IF WE--
WE WILL BE ARRIVING IN EARTH ORBIT SHORTLY, PLEASE TAKE YOUR POSITIONS.
MARK?! WHAT ARE YOU--?!

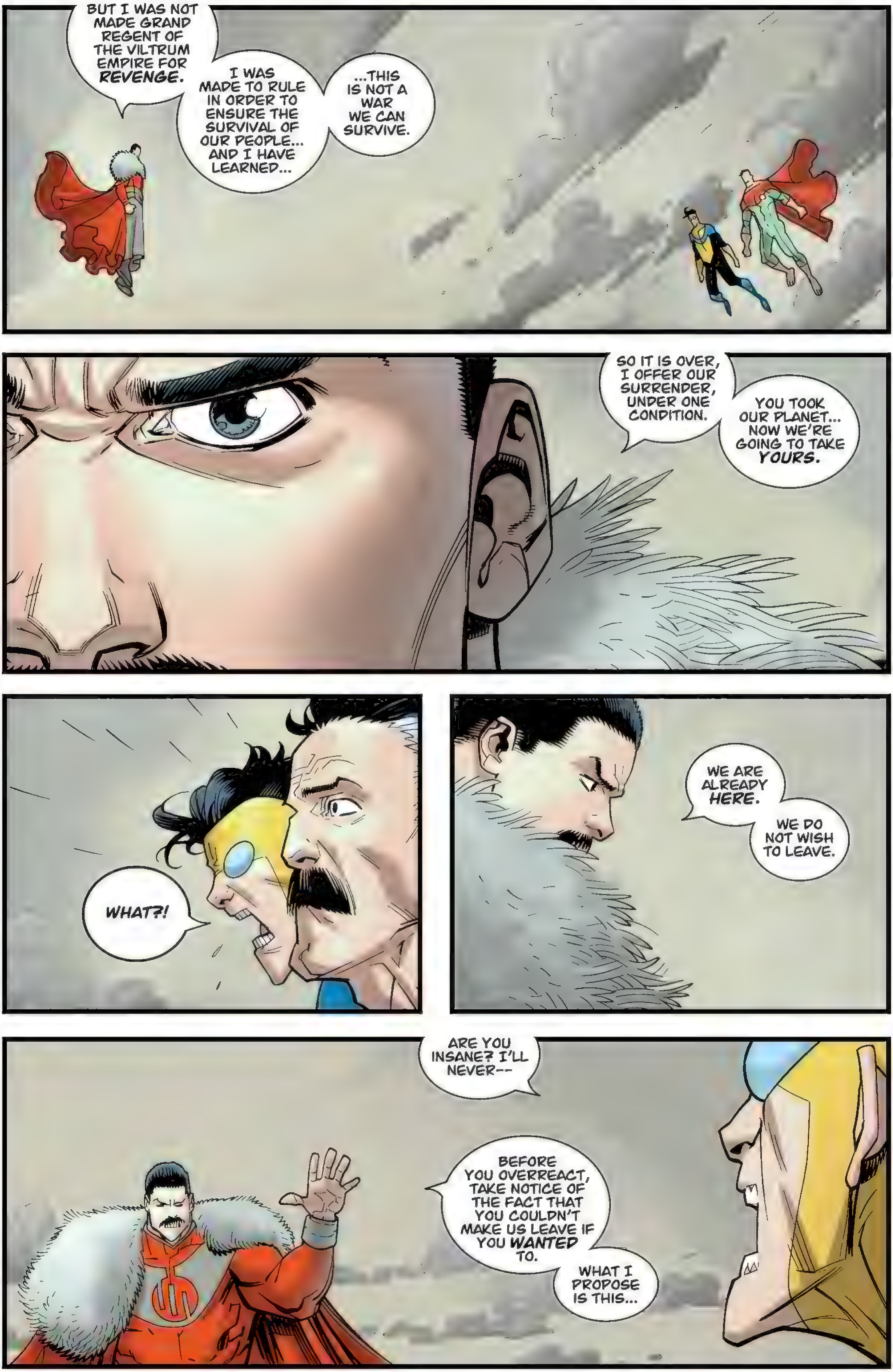
WHAT THE--?


DID YOU SEE ANY--
NOTHING... I DON'T SEE ANY--
ME NEITHER.
THEY'RE *NOT* HERE.
THEY'RE NOT HERE.
MARK?

WE VERY MUCH ARE HERE.

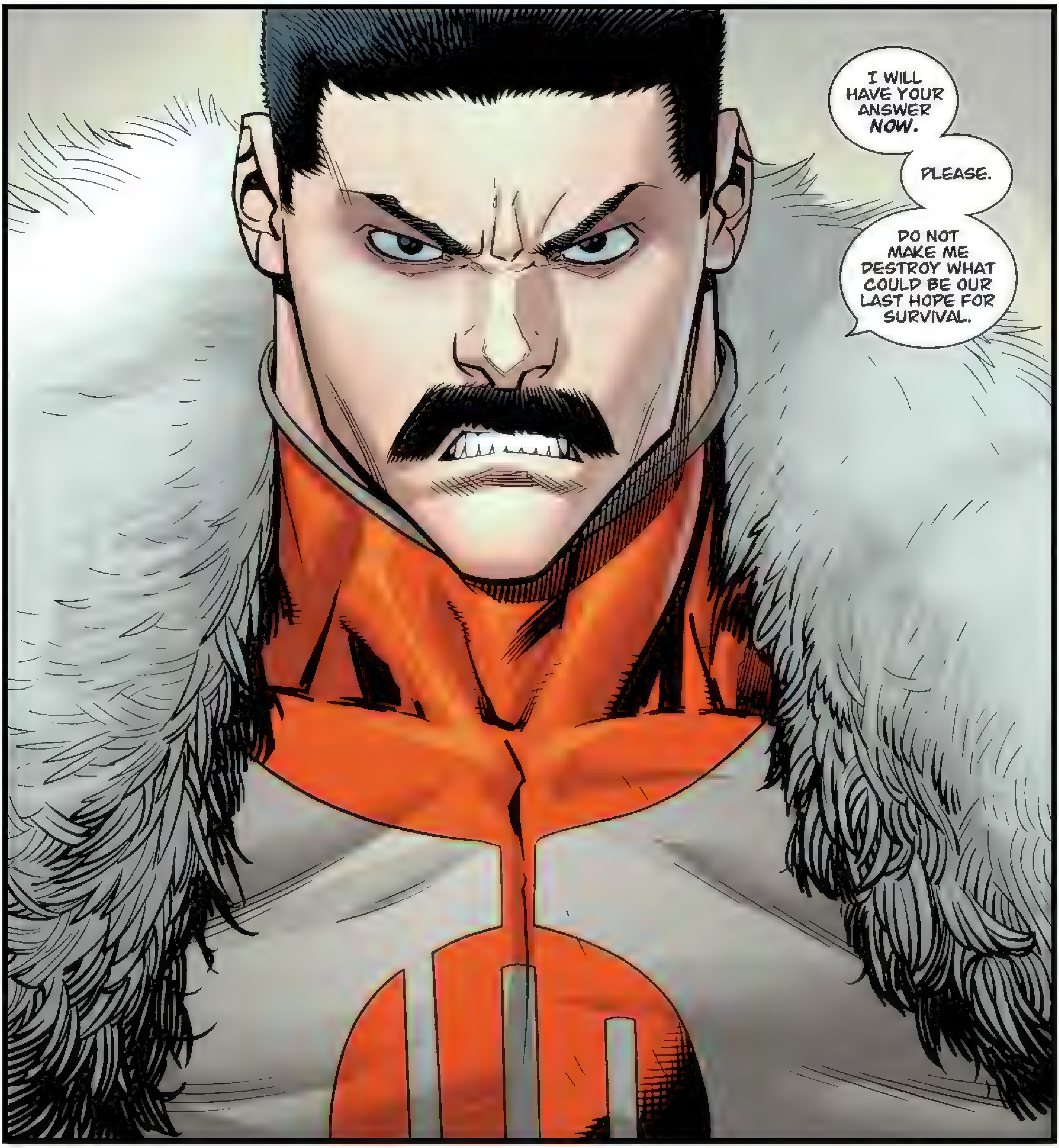

I SWEAR IF YOU'VE DONE ANYTHING TO THIS PLANET... TO THESE PEOPLE...
I'LL...
I KILLED CONQUEST. I'LL FIND A WAY TO KILL YOU.
MARK!
I--
WRAMM!
I HAVE DONE NOTHING TO THIS PLANET.
NOT YET.

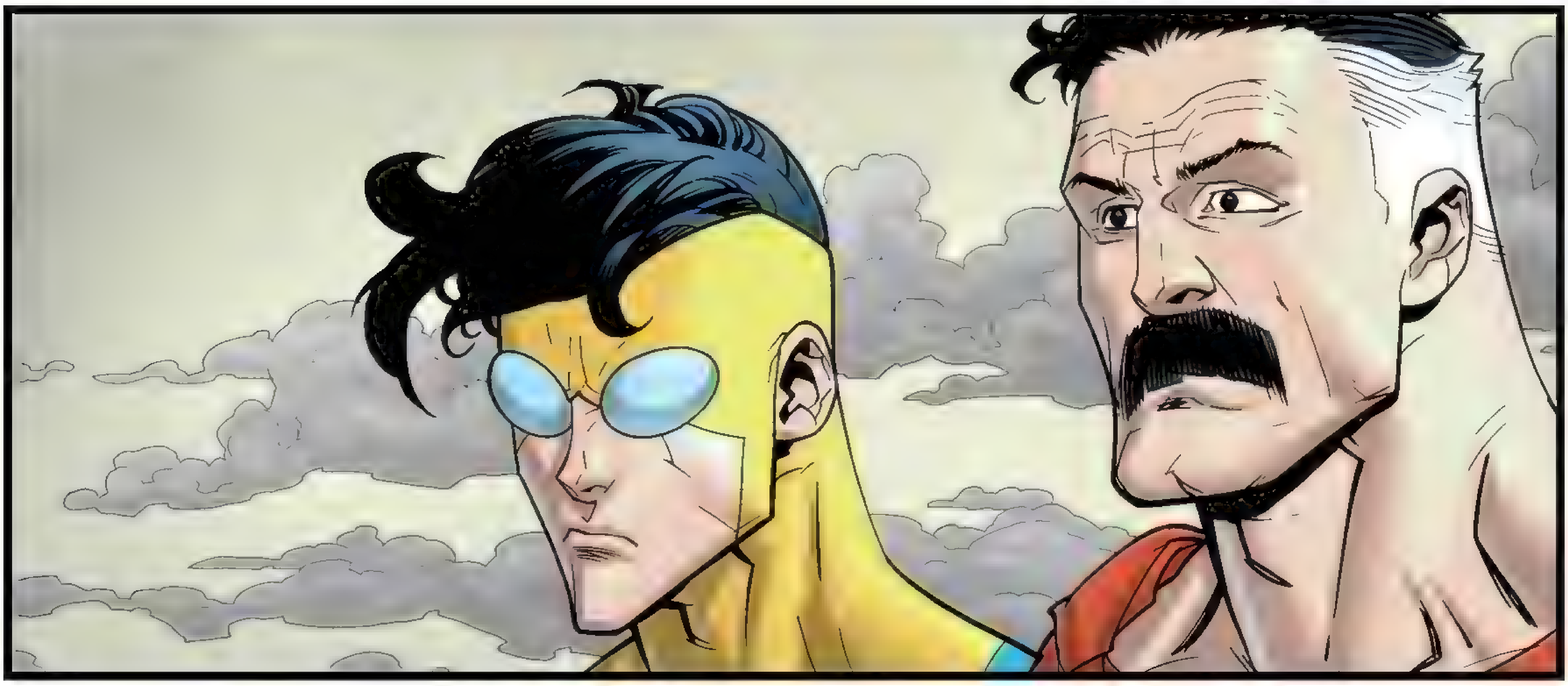
YOU CAN FIGHT ME IF YOU WISH, BUT I AM NOT ALONE HERE.
IF BY CHANCE YOU WERE ABLE TO INJURE ME, I COULDN'T GUARANTEE THE REST OF MY FORCES WOULDN'T LAY WASTE TO THIS PLANET.
I SUGGEST THAT WE TALK, THE THREE OF US.
YOUR CHOICE. FIGHT OR TALK.
TALK.
WISE CHOICE... I AM PLEASED.
I HAVE COME TO OFFER YOU A TRUCE. THERE ARE EXACTLY THIRTY-SEVEN OF US LEFT ALIVE, SOME OF US SEVERELY INJURED.
THAT IS ENOUGH TO TEAR THIS PLANET IN HALF, KILLING EVERY LIVING CREATURE HERE, AND THERE IS NOTHING YOU COULD DO TO STOP THAT.
AND IT WOULD BE FAIR RETALIATION FOR WHAT YOU DID TO OUR HOME WORLD.


BUT I WAS NOT MADE GRAND REGENT OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE FOR **REVENGE.**
I WAS MADE TO RULE IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF OUR PEOPLE... AND I HAVE LEARNED...
...THIS IS NOT A WAR WE CAN SURVIVE.
SO IT IS OVER, I OFFER OUR SURRENDER, UNDER ONE CONDITION.
YOU TOOK OUR PLANET... NOW WE'RE GOING TO TAKE ***YOURS.***
WHAT?!
WE ARE ALREADY ***HERE.***
WE DO NOT WISH TO LEAVE.
ARE YOU INSANE? I'LL NEVER--
BEFORE YOU OVERREACT, TAKE NOTICE OF THE FACT THAT YOU COULDN'T MAKE US LEAVE IF YOU ***WANTED*** TO.
WHAT I PROPOSE IS THIS...

"WE WILL LIVE AMONG YOU. THE PEOPLE OF EARTH WILL NOT EVEN KNOW WE ARE HERE.
"YOU WILL NOT EVEN KNOW WE ARE HERE."
YOU WILL HAVE NO CONTACT WITH US. WE WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH ANY MATTERS ON EARTH. WE DO NOT WANT OUR PRESENCE TO BE KNOWN.
WE WILL NOT ATTACK YOU... BUT WE WILL NOT HELP YOU.
"MY PEOPLE WILL BLEND IN, LIVE AS HUMANS WITH HUMANS. WE WILL INTERMINGLE...
"...WE WILL INTERBREED."

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE VILTRUMITE PEOPLE.
WE WILL RESTORE OUR RANKS OVER THE COURSE OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS. HUMAN DNA HAS BEEN PROVEN TO MAKE NEAR PERFECT HYBRIDS... THE CLOSEST THING WE HAVE TO PURE-BLOODED VILTRUMITES.
"OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN WILL JOIN OUR RANKS, THEIR CHILDREN WILL HAVE CHILDREN AND OUR RANKS WILL SWELL WITH THE INFUSION OF HUMAN DNA.
"YOU WILL ALLOW US THE TIME TO RESTORE OUR NUMBERS... TO REBUILD OUR EMPIRE."
THOUGH THE TWO OF YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR HOME WORLD, YOU WILL PROVIDE US WITH OUR ULTIMATE SALVATION.
THE TWO OF YOU REPRESENT THE FUTURE OF OUR PEOPLE, WHAT WE WILL BECOME-- WHAT WE *MUST* BECOME IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.
THIS IS HOW THINGS MUST BE.

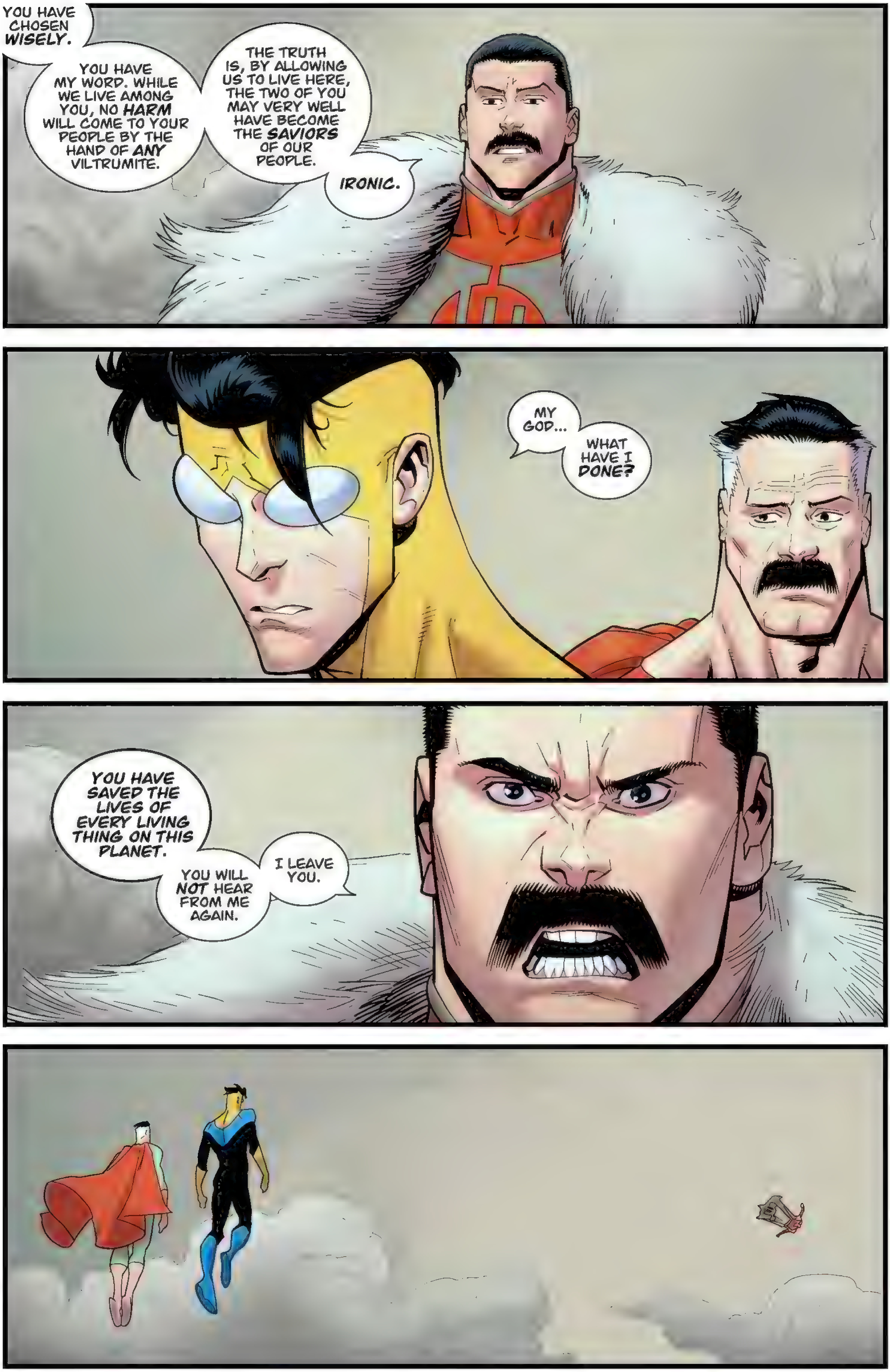

I WILL HAVE YOUR ANSWER *NOW*.
PLEASE.
DO NOT MAKE ME DESTROY WHAT COULD BE OUR LAST HOPE FOR SURVIVAL.



WHAT YOU ARE PROPOSING... YOU WANT US TO WAIT AND RESUME OUR FIGHT WHEN THERE ARE MORE OF YOU-- AND YOU ARE **STRONGER?**
HOW COULD I AGREE TO **THAT?**
TODAY IS NOT TOMORROW.
YOU KNOW THE RESULTS OF FIGHTING US TODAY... WHY WOULDN'T YOU WANT TO PUT THAT OFF UNTIL TOMORROW?
WE ARE IN A STALEMATE... DO NOT THINK THAT YOU HAVE THE UPPER HAND. YOU ARE BACKED INTO A CORNER.
MAKE YOUR DECISION. STRIKE OUT BLINDLY OR SURRENDER TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY.
I TIRE OF THIS.
TO HAVE YOU HERE, HIDING UNDER OUR NOSES... POISED TO STRIKE AT ANY MOMENT.
I CAN'T **LIVE** WITH THAT. I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
I CAN'T LIVE UNDER THE CONSTANT THREAT OF YOUR ATTACK--I CAN'T ALLOW THESE PEOPLE TO BE AT RISK LIKE THIS!
I CAN'T-- I **WON'T!**
MARK.

NO.
NO.
NO!
MY ANSWER IS--
MY ANSWER IS YES.

CHAPTER 78


YOU HAVE CHOSEN **WISELY.**
YOU HAVE MY WORD. WHILE WE LIVE AMONG YOU, NO **HARM** WILL COME TO YOUR PEOPLE BY THE HAND OF **ANY** VILTRUMITE.
THE TRUTH IS, BY ALLOWING US TO LIVE HERE, THE TWO OF YOU MAY VERY WELL HAVE BECOME THE **SAVIORS** OF OUR PEOPLE.
IRONIC.
MY GOD...
WHAT HAVE I **DONE?**
YOU HAVE SAVED THE LIVES OF EVERY LIVING THING ON THIS PLANET.
YOU WILL **NOT** HEAR FROM ME AGAIN.
I LEAVE YOU.

BOY, IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE** TO KEEP UP WITH YOU GUYS.
WHAT'S THE WORD?
THE WAR IS OVER.
OH, MAN! **AWESOME** NEWS!
WAY COOL!
I NEVER REALLY SAID GOODBYE TO ALLEN.
WAIT, I THOUGHT WE'D BE GOING BACK TO TALESCRIA.
UH...
GUYS?
JERKS.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, PAUL... I DON'T WANT ANY OF THIS CRAP.
I DON'T WANT TO LOOK AT IT.
THERE ARE TOO MANY MEMORIES ATTACHED. YEAH, GOOD AND BAD ONES.
IT DOES UPSET ME. I CAN ADMIT THAT I MISS YOU A LITTLE BIT. THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THINGS.
THAT'S NOT MY FAULT AND YOU KNOW IT.
NO.
JUST--
JUST COME OVER TODAY AND GET THIS CRAP OR I'M THROWING IT AWAY.
BEEP.
SCREW YOU, PAUL.
WHO'S PAUL?

HI, MOM.
OH, MY GOD.
OH, MY GOD!
YOU'RE SAFE-- YOU'RE ALIVE!
I'M FINE, MOM... I'M FINE.
FINE?! YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR TEN MONTHS!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE HERE-- I THOUGHT YOU WERE--I THOUGHT--
OH. MY GOD-- WHERE'S OLIVER?

OLIVER IS FINE. HE WAS INJURED, BUT HE'S *ALIVE*.
HE'S ON TALESCRIA, THEY HAVE THE FINEST DOCTORS, HE'S WELL TAKEN CARE OF.
WHO IS *PAUL?*
MARK, YOU SHOULD GO SEE EVE... SHE'S NOT DOING SO WELL.
WHAT?
OKAY... I'LL BE BACK.

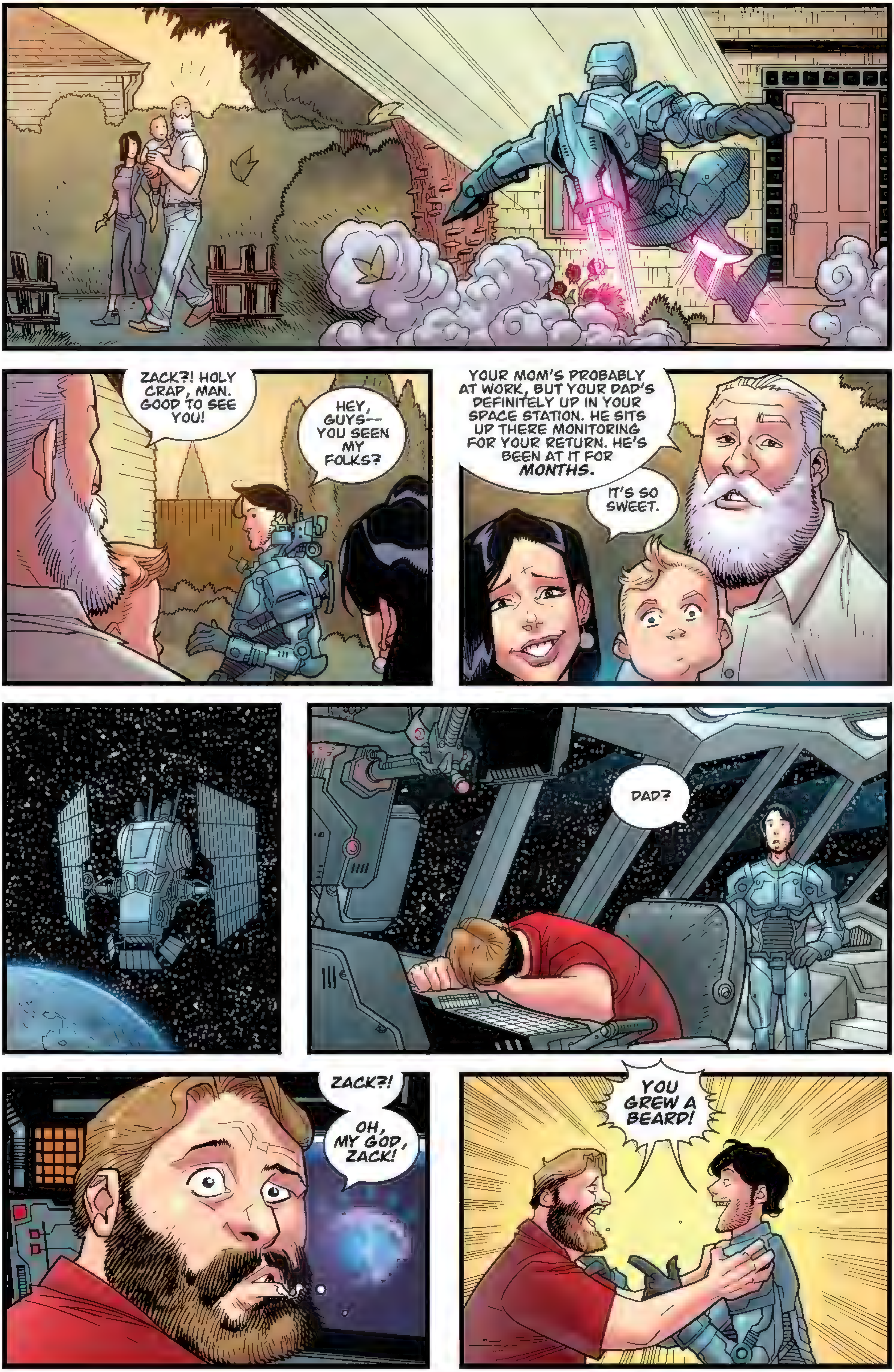
OH...
YOU TOOK ANOTHER MATE...
"MATE?!" MORE LIKE... COMPANION--AND... ARE YOU SERIOUSLY UPSET OVER THIS?!
HOW MANY ALIEN BUG PEOPLE WERE YOU SLEEPING WITH BEFORE OLIVER CAME ALONG?!
I'M NOT UPSET... SIMPLY...
...DISAPPOINTED.
ANYWAY, HE'S MY EX-BOYFRIEND NOW. WITH MARK GONE, I JUST WASN'T THERE FOR HIM AND HE COULDN'T--
SORRY TO BARGE IN LIKE THIS, WE DETECTED ATMOSPHERIC PENETRATION, THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE MARK AND--
GAH!
BLAMM!
NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, CECIL.
YEAH, UH... MARK HAD TOLD ME YOU'D REFORMED... SORRY...
...REFLEX.
SO... DOES THIS MEAN THE WAR'S OVER?

EVE?
YOU HERE?
MARK?
IT'S ME! WAR'S OVER... I'M BACK!
NOW, FINALLY... EVERYTHING CAN GO BACK TO NORMAL.
STOP. DON'T COME ANY CLOSER.
WHAT?!
WHY?

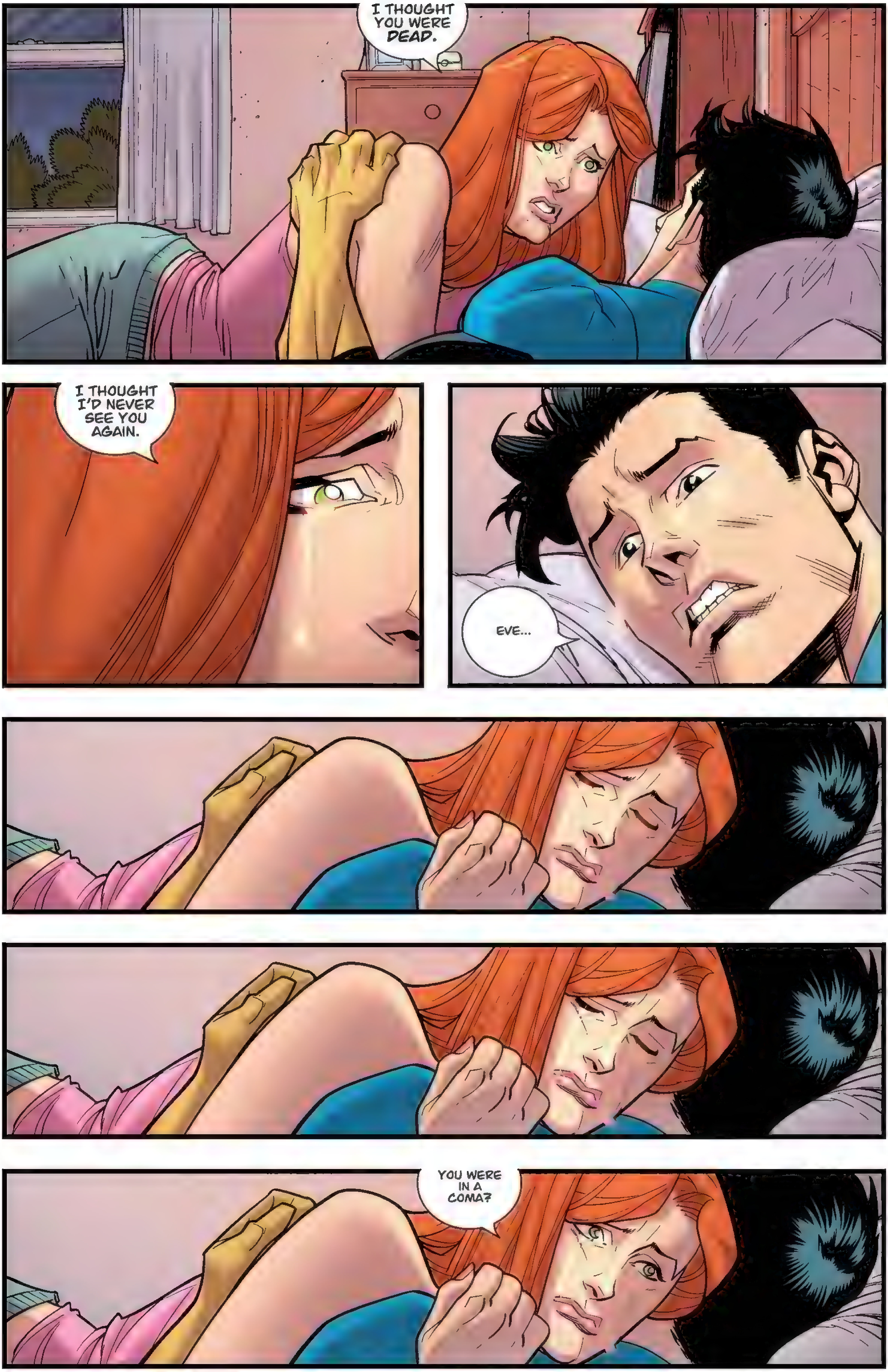
I DON'T WANT YOU TO LOOK AT ME.
I LOVE YOU, EVE!
I'VE BEEN WAITING ALMOST A YEAR FOR THIS!
OH, GOD, MARK...
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE HERE.
OH, GOD...

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
≈SIGH.≈
BEEP.
OKAY--PACK IT UP PEOPLE... WE'RE NOT GOING TO NEED, WELL... PRETTY MUCH ANY OF THIS.
WAR'S OVER.

BUMMER.


ZACK?! HOLY CRAP, MAN. GOOD TO SEE YOU!
HEY, GUYS-- YOU SEEN MY FOLKS?
YOUR MOM'S PROBABLY AT WORK, BUT YOUR DAD'S DEFINITELY UP IN YOUR SPACE STATION. HE SITS UP THERE MONITORING FOR YOUR RETURN. HE'S BEEN AT IT FOR *MONTHS*.
IT'S SO SWEET.
DAD?
ZACK?!
OH, MY GOD, ZACK!
YOU GREW A BEARD!

I'VE BEEN KEEPING THE BUSINESS GOING. BULLETPROOF HAS BEEN HELPING OUT. IT'S BEEN TOUGH, BUT I'VE MANAGED.
GOT MY POWERS BACK, TOO... AT LEAST... IT SEEMS THEY'VE STOPPED ACTING UP.
WELL, THAT'S **GREAT** NEWS.
AND YOU'RE STILL LIVING HERE AT HOME?
I'VE GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH MONEY SAVED UP TO BUY SOME LAND, AND WITH MY POWERS WORKING AGAIN I COULD BUILD SOMETHING SIMILAR TO WHAT I HAD IN AFRICA...
BUT WITH YOU GONE...
...I JUST DIDN'T SEE THE POINT.
I'M SO SORRY, EVE. MY GOD... I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THIS TO YOU.
THE WHOLE TIME I WAS OUT THERE... YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW EASY IT WAS TO LOSE TRACK OF TIME. I DIDN'T--
***TEN* MONTHS...**
I WAS GONE ALMOST A YEAR, I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW HARD THAT MUST HAVE BEEN FOR YOU. I SPENT A LOT OF THAT TIME IN A COMA, SO FOR ME IT WENT FAST...
...HOW DID YOU MANAGE?


I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN.
EVE...
YOU WERE IN A COMA?

TRUTH IS, AFTER SEEING YOU AGAIN, THINGS WITH PAUL JUST... FELT **WRONG**. NOT THAT I BELIEVE A WORD OF WHAT YOU SAID.
THAT YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME, THAT YOU REGRET WHAT YOU'VE DONE... THERE'S NO WAY TO COME BACK FROM THAT.
AND YET AFTER SEEING ME YOU COULD NO LONGER STAND TO BE WITH ANOTHER MAN...
I WISH THAT THERE WERE SOME WAY TO MAKE YOU AWARE OF JUST HOW MUCH I'VE ***MISSED*** YOU.
NOLAN, I--
NO, ***DAMN*** IT!
I'LL ***NEVER*** FORGIVE YOU!
DEBBIE, PLEASE--

I CAN NEVER TAKE BACK WHAT I DID TO YOU. I UNDERSTAND THAT. ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT I WAS MISGUIDED... LOST... THERE WERE SO MANY EMOTIONS... CONFLICTING THOUGHTS...
I HAD *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS OF BELIEFS TO OVERCOME, YOU HAVE TO TRY AND UNDERSTAND...
NO!
I DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND A GODDAMN THING! YOU RUINED MY LIFE, YOU SON OF A BITCH!
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?!
YOU RUINED--!!
...
I JUST WISH...
I WISH EVERYTHING COULD GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS *BEFORE...*
NO.
THINGS WILL *NEVER* GO BACK TO THE WAY THEY WERE...
...BECAUSE I WILL NEVER LIE TO YOU AGAIN.

I GOTTA GO TO WORK, BYE! WOULDN'T WANT TO GET BETWEEN YOU TWO, ANYWAY.
BYE, RICK. LOVE YOU!
RUBIX CUBAN
THAT EXPLAINS *SO MUCH* ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP.
BEHAVE.
SO HE'S BACK FROM SPACE AND HE HASN'T EVEN COME TO SEE *ME*. TYPICAL.
HE *JUST* GOT BACK LIKE... HOURS AGO. HE JUST CAME TO SEE ME, I'M SURE HE'LL GET TO YOU.
HE WANTED TO GO SEE HOW HIS MOM WAS DOING... SHE'S SPENDING TIME WITH HIS DAD. MARK SAYS HE'S A GOOD PERSON, BUT... I JUST CAN'T BE AROUND THAT MAN.
IT'S UNCOMFORTABLE.
DID YOU *TELL* HIM?
WILLIAM, I--
...I DON'T KNOW *HOW*.

I KILLED CONQUEST.
WE DESTROYED VILTRUM.
WE ENDED THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
...
BUT NOW THEY'RE HERE...
THE WAR IS OVER...
...BUT WE DIDN'T *WIN*.

TALESCRIA, CENTRAL BASE OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
GREAT ALLEN, I APOLOGIZE FOR MY INTRUSION... BUT THIS INFO TABLET WAS DELIVERED FOR YOU.
IT WAS MARKED URGENT.
UH... THANK YOU. I'LL TAKE IT.
ALLEN, IF YOU ARE READING THIS, THEN I AM DEAD.
FORGIVE MY ARROGANCE, BUT IF I HAVE MET MY END, I CAN ONLY ASSUME THE WAR AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES HAS TAKEN A TURN FOR THE WORSE.
THERE IS A WEAPON THAT I REGRET TO INFORM YOU I HAVE KEPT A SECRET.
THERE IS A SECRET PASSAGE IN MY CHAMBER, I HAVE MARKED ITS LOCATION ON THIS BLUEPRINT.
AS MY CHOSEN SUCCESSOR, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE DIFFICULTY GAINING ACCESS.
I APOLOGIZE THAT I HAD TO KEEP THIS SECRET, BUT WITH VILTRUMITES AS OUR ALLIES, I HAD TO CONSIDER THIS AS A LAST RESORT.

THE SCOURGE VIRUS.
THE VIRUS THAT RAVAGED THE VILTRUMITE POPULATION... NEARLY KILLED THEM ALL.
THIS IS A STRONGER STRAIN, PERFECTED... IT WILL NOT FAIL THIS TIME.
IF THE WAR EFFORT APPEARS LOST, I URGE YOU TO USE IT... IGNORE YOUR ATTACHMENT TO OUR VILTRUMITE ALLIES.
FOR THE GOOD OF THE UNIVERSE.
ERADICATE ALL VILTRUM LIFE... FOREVER.
WHATEVER YOU DO, MAKE CERTAIN THAT I DID NOT DIE IN VAIN. -THAEDUS.

CHAPTER 79

TAILOR
MARK! YOU'RE BACK!
YEP. SURE AM.
IS IT TRUE... IS YOUR DAD REALLY HERE?
YEAH, MY MOM TELL YOU? HE MIGHT COME TO SEE YOU, YOU COULD JUST COME BY THE HOUSE. EASIER FOR YOU TO COME TO HIM THAN HIM COME TO YOU.
HE CAN'T BE... SEEN.
BUT THAT'S NOT REALLY WHY I'M HERE.
OH, SURE... UH... WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I KNOW YOU'RE CREATIVE... AND YOU LIKE TO TWEAK THINGS, AND I APPRECIATE THAT. IT'S COOL, REALLY...
...AND I DON'T WANT TO OFFEND YOU...
C'MON, MARK. JUST SPIT IT OUT.
IT'S JUST NOT WORKING FOR ME...

WHOA! ARE YOU GOING OUT? SOMETHING GOING ON?
NO, I WAS--UGH. JUST SEEING IF THIS COSTUME STILL WORKED... I WAS... WHY'D YOU HAVE TO COME HOME RIGHT *NOW?*
JUST...
DOES THIS SKIRT MAKE MY BUTT LOOK *BIGGER?*
IT JUST MAKES IT LOOK... *AMAZING.*
SERIOUSLY, I KNOW YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE, EVE... BUT IF I'M HONEST, I'M IN *NO* HURRY FOR YOU TO LOSE THIS WEIGHT.
I *LIKE* IT.
OKAY, YOU'RE SWEET BUT... CHANGING THE SUBJECT...
WHAT'S WITH THE BOOTS AND GLOVES? I LIKED THE UPDATE.
I DIDN'T. I THOUGHT IT LOOKED... LESS *UNIQUE.* I MEAN, I LIKED IT AT FIRST, BUT IT JUST DIDN'T FEEL--
BREET! BREET!
IS THAT THE--?
YEAH, IT'S THE "YOU NEED TO GO FIGHT SOMEONE" HOTLINE.
DUTY CALLS.

IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK!

HA! HA! HA!
I'M SURE THAT DESPITE IT ALL HE WAS STILL JUST ADORABLE!
YEAH! AFTER YOU GOT PAST THE SMELL HE WAS IRRESISTIBLE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE DINNER GUESTS TOOK IT. WE NEVER REALLY HEARD BACK FROM THE ANDERSONS.
WOULD YOU LIKE ANYTHING ELSE TO DRINK?
MORE TEA?
NO, THANK YOU. I'M FINE.
I'M SURE I DID THE SAME THING WHEN I WAS A BABY, I THINK ALL KIDS DID.
OF COURSE, WHEN I WAS DONE I COULD HAVE JUST TURNED IT INTO WATER... OR PERFUME.
I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE TURNED IT INTO PERFUME.
I'M SURE YOU WERE JUST A DREAM TO TAKE CARE OF.
NOT HOW MY PARENTS TELL IT.
I'M SURE THEY STILL DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA HOW LUCKY THEY ARE.
DEBBIE, HOW DO YOU ALWAYS KNOW THE RIGHT THING TO SAY?
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!

I KNEW YOU WERE TAKING CARE OF THAT BANK THING TONIGHT AND I DIDN'T HAVE ANY PLANS SO I POPPED OVER TO SEE YOUR MOM.
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
SO YOU'RE *FRIENDS* WITH MY MOM?
MARK, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WOULD YOU RATHER WE BE ENEMIES?
THIS IS *CRAZY*.
ENEMIES, NO. I WANT YOU TO GET ALONG... BUT YOU GUYS ARE... HANGING OUT TOGETHER WHEN I'M NOT AROUND?
THAT'S JUST... *WEIRD*.
MARKUS SEBASTIAN GRAYSON... I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ACTING THIS WAY.
WE... SPENT A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER, *BONDED* WHEN YOU WERE GONE.
I REALLY DON'T SEE HOW THIS IS A BIG DEAL. I'M FRIENDS WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND.
YOU KNOW, THE TWO OF US DON'T HAVE A LOT OF OTHER FRIENDS... WE'VE REALLY GROWN QUITE CLOSE.
YOU'RE MAKING IT *WORSE*.
REALLY, MARK. YOU'RE BOTH ADULTS NOW. YOU TURNED TWENTY WHILE YOU WERE AWAY.
YOU REALLY WANT ME SCOLDING YOU WHEN I SEE HER FACE IN YOUR LAP WHEN YOU'RE *FORTY?*
UH...
WHEN WAS MY FACE IN HIS LAP?
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
NOW YOU'RE MAKING *ME* UNCOMFORTABLE.
WAIT.
WERE YOU TELLING HER THE STORY ABOUT THE DINNER PARTY WHERE I COVERED MYSELF IN MY OWN--
⪻SIGH.⪼
WHERE'S DAD?

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PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I REALLY JUST CAN'T STAY HERE, CAN I?
I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU *DIDN'T*.

STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY.
PLEASE!
LOOK, I GET IT, I TURN INTO THIS BIG STRONG EVIL DUDE, AND SO, LIKE... YOU GOTTA KEEP ME HERE AND STUFF SO THAT I DON'T WRECK CRAP.
IT'S COOL. REALLY.
BUT CAN'T I GET A TV IN HERE OR SOMETHING?! THIS IS TOTALLY *BORING!* IT'S *TORTURE!*
I MEAN, IT'S *DINOSAURUS* WHO COMMITTED THE CRIMES... COULDN'T YOU TREAT ME LIKE I'M ON THE LEVEL, BRO?
WHY YOU GOTTA SHACKLE ME DOWN LIKE THIS? I HEARD YOU, Y'KNOW-- YOU GUYS DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THIS WILL HOLD IF I *DO* TURN.
FINE, JUST KEEP ME HERE. I DON'T EVEN CARE.
WHATEVER.
UM... I FEEL WEIRD.
I THINK I FIGURED OUT WHAT MAKES ME TURN INTO DINOSAURUS...
FINALLY!
SKRAKK!!

WE DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS IF YOU DON'T ***WANT*** TO.
NO, IT'S NOT THAT. I ACTUALLY ***REALLY*** WANT TO DO THIS. I HAVE ALMOST ***NO*** FRIENDS AND KATE AND I USED TO BE REALLY CLOSE.
TO BE HONEST, I WAS SHOCKED WHEN SHE INVITED US.
I JUST HATE BEING IN THIS COSTUME. I LOOK HORRIBLE, I FEEL HORRIBLE. I SHOULD HAVE JUST FLOWN OVER IN PLAIN CLOTHES.
YOU LOOK ***GREAT.*** WILL YOU STOP FISHING FOR COMPLIMENTS?
SHUT UP.
THAT'S THEIR HOUSE OVER THERE.
READY TO GO?
SEE ANY CIVILIANS AROUND?
ALL CLEAR.
THIS SHOULD BE FUN.
OH, HE'S NOT ***THAT*** BAD.
EVE, INVINCIBLE... PLEASE COME IN.
WE'RE SO GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT.

PLEASE, CALL ME MARK, I DON'T THINK THAT'S GIVING TOO MUCH AWAY.
EVE, YOU LOOK **AMAZING**. REALLY.
UH... **THANKS**.
I'VE JUST **GOT** TO INTRODUCE YOU TO LITTLE ABRAHAM AND MARY... AREN'T THEY JUST **ADORABLE?!**
THEY'RE OUR PRIDE AND JOY. WE JUST HAD TO INVITE YOU OVER TO SHOW THEM OFF.
WHAT A COUPLE OF CUTIES.
...
YOU OKAY?
...THEY'RE ADORABLE.
THE KIDS LIKE TO EAT EARLY, I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND... WE'VE ALREADY GOT DINNER PREPARED.
FINE BY ME.

I WAS SCARED AT FIRST, I MEAN YOU HEAR CHILDBIRTH IS THE *WORST* AND TWINS... YEESH. IN THE END IT WAS ONLY *SLIGHTLY* MORE PAINFUL THAN BEING RIPPED IN HALF.
I WAS RELIEVED.
DOESN'T SOUND SO BAD TO *ME.*
THEN WE DESTROYED THEIR PLANET AND THEY KIND OF, *UH*... DISPERSED. THAT WAS THE END OF THAT.
IT ALL ENDED PRETTY ABRUPTLY, ACTUALLY.
I SPENT MOST OF THE WAR IN A COMA, BUT... I WAS THERE WHEN IT COUNTED, I GUESS. ALL IN ALL THE TEN MONTHS SEEMED TO FLY BY.
EVE, IS YOUR DAD STILL A *TOTAL* WEIRDO? REMEMBER WHEN HE THOUGHT WE WERE LESBIANS?
HE PULLED US ASIDE AT THE SLEEPOVER TO TELL US HOW *AWESOME* HE THOUGHT THAT WAS... HOW GROSS BOYS WERE AND THAT WE SHOULD... MY GOD, I THINK HIS ACTUAL WORDS WERE...
"STICK WITH IT, GIRLS."
IN THE END, I JUST FELT SORRY FOR JOHN WILKES BOOTH. I MEAN, TRUE, HE DID *INTEND* TO KILL ME, BUT I WASN'T DEAD... AND HE WAS STILL PUNISHED FOR THE CRIME.
THE MANHUNT WAS EXCRUCIATING.
THERE JUST WASN'T ANYTHING I COULD DO. I COULDN'T INTERFERE WITHOUT BLOWING MY COVER... I JUST LET HIM... IT'S SOMETHING I TRULY REGRET... IT WAS ANOTHER TIME...
I WOULD HAVE ACTED DIFFERENTLY TODAY.

YOU AND MARK ARE AWESOME TOGETHER. I CAN SEE HOW MUCH HE LOVES YOU.
YEAH?
PLEASE. DON'T ACT LIKE YOU DON'T SEE IT.
I DO. I THINK I DO. Y'KNOW... I MEAN, YOU HOPE BUT YOU CAN NEVER REALLY KNOW, CAN YOU?
DO YOU EVER REALLY KNOW HOW STRONG A RELATIONSHIP IS?
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'VE GOT IMMORTAL WRAPPED AROUND MY LITTLE FINGER.
RETIRE? DONE.
MARRIAGE? OKAY.
BIG EXPENSIVE HOUSE? SURE THING.
KIDS? ABSOLUTELY.
OKAY, YOU KNOW WHERE YOU STAND.
HERE, HOLD ABE WHILE I WASH UP MARY.
THEY'RE JUST CHATTING IT UP OUT THERE TOO, AREN'T THEY? MY GUY AND YOURS. THEY DIDN'T USE TO LIKE EACH OTHER, WELL... AT ALL.
I THINK THIS IS GOOD. WE SHOULD START DOING THIS MORE OFTEN.

IT'S SO GOOD TO GET TO DO THIS... AND I THINK IT'S GOOD FOR THE KIDS FOR US TO HAVE GUESTS.
EVE?
ARE YOU OKAY?
NO.
I'M NOT.
HERE. I CAN'T-- JUST... PLEASE...
PLEASE TAKE HIM.
EVE?

EVE?
WHAT HAPPENED? KATE SAID YOU WERE CRYING, ARE YOU UPSET ABOUT SOMETHING?
NO, I'M--
I'M FINE.
JUST... NEEDED SOME AIR.
EVE.
WHAT'S WRONG?
MARK, I--
EVE, SERIOUSLY... WHAT HAPPENED IN THERE?
DID KATE SAY SOMETHING?
NO, JUST LISTEN, IT'S--
OH, GOD...

I HAD AN ABORTION.
WHAT?

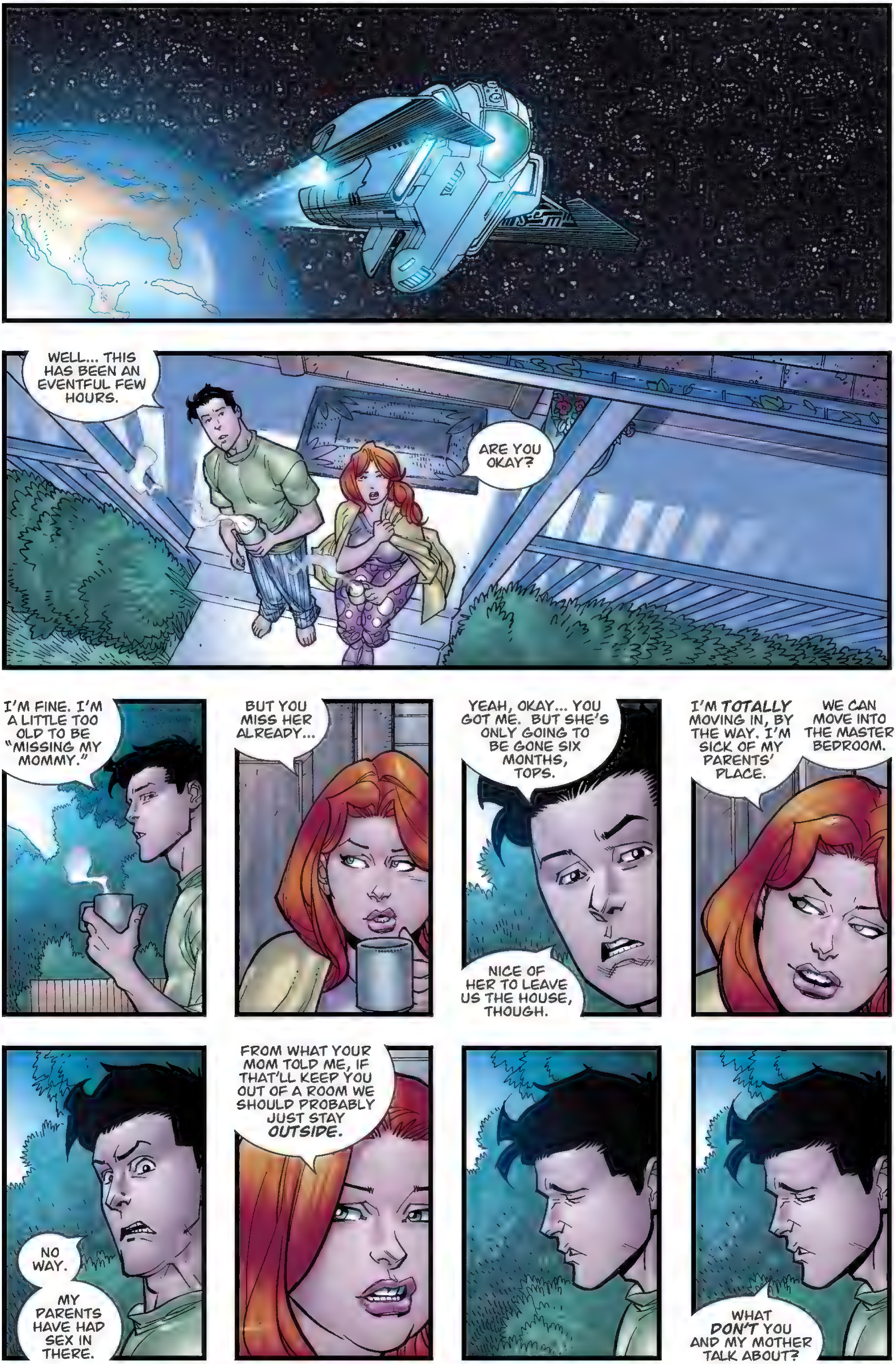
I'M SORRY, I--
I'M SO SORRY...
YOU WERE PREGNANT?
I WAS.
WHEN YOU LEFT I WAS... I WAS SO ALONE. I'M NOT READY, NOT FOR *THAT*... AND TO DO IT ALONE?
I COULDN'T...
I JUST...
I MADE A DECISION.
AND I DON'T KNOW IF...
...OH, GOD. HOW CAN YOU--HOW COULD YOU--
EVE...

I'M SORRY I DID THIS TO YOU.

I LOVE YOU.
I GIVE THEM ANOTHER WEEK, TOPS.
I LOVE EVE, BUT SHE JUST CAN'T KEEP A MAN HAPPY. TOO MANY ISSUES.

CHAPTER 80

YOU TWO WERE OUT PRETTY LATE.
WE WERE TALKING.
TALKING, HUH?
NOT IN THE MOOD.
MARK, BE NICE.
I AM, BUT LOOK-- ONE MINUTE SHE'S TELLING ME WE'RE ADULTS AND THE NEXT SHE'S WAITING UP TO CHECK ON US.
WHAT GIVES, MOM?
WE NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING.
WAIT A MINUTE... ARE YOU GUYS BACK TOGETHER?
YES.
WE'RE STILL SORTING THAT OUT...
...BUT YOUR FATHER CAN'T STAY HERE.
ARE YOU GOING BACK TO TALESCRIA?
I AM.
AND I'M GOING WITH HIM.
WHAT?!
WHY NOT GET TO EXPLORE ALIEN WORLDS WHILE WE'RE SORTING THINGS OUT?
ALSO, I WANT TO SEE OLIVER.
WAIT A MINUTE... YOU STAYED UP TO TELL ME THIS?
WHEN WERE YOU PLANNING ON LEAVING?

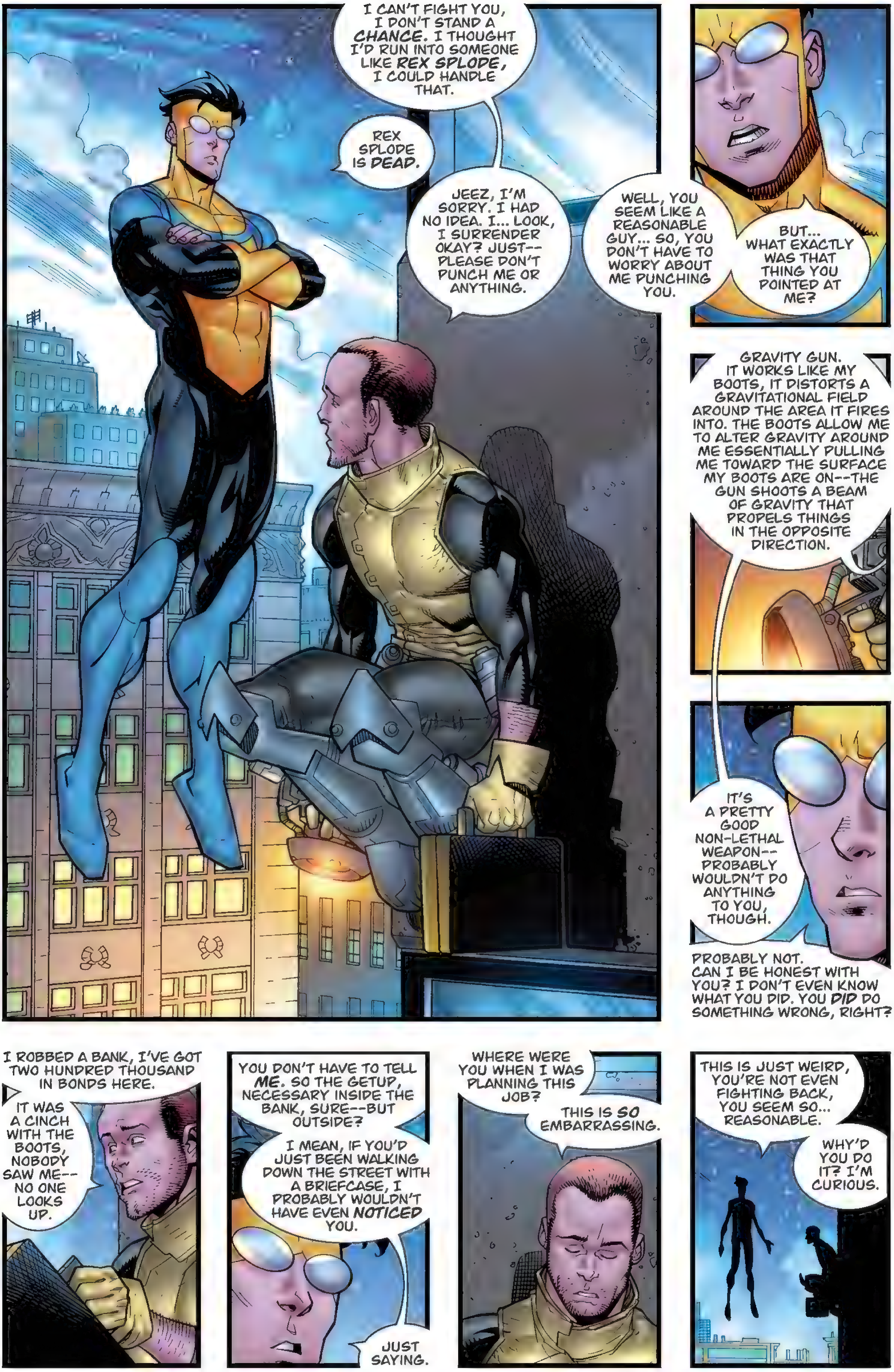

WELL... THIS HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL FEW HOURS.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE. I'M A LITTLE TOO OLD TO BE "MISSING MY MOMMY."
BUT YOU MISS HER ALREADY...
YEAH, OKAY... YOU GOT ME. BUT SHE'S ONLY GOING TO BE GONE SIX MONTHS, TOPS.
NICE OF HER TO LEAVE US THE HOUSE, THOUGH.
I'M *TOTALLY* MOVING IN, BY THE WAY. I'M SICK OF MY PARENTS' PLACE.
WE CAN MOVE INTO THE MASTER BEDROOM.
NO WAY.
MY PARENTS HAVE HAD SEX IN THERE.
FROM WHAT YOUR MOM TOLD ME, IF THAT'LL KEEP YOU OUT OF A ROOM WE SHOULD PROBABLY JUST STAY *OUTSIDE*.
WHAT *DON'T* YOU AND MY MOTHER TALK ABOUT?

WE CAN MOVE YOUR STUFF OVER WHEN WE WAKE UP... WON'T TAKE ME A MINUTE.
EVE?
OH-- OH, YEAH. WE CAN DO THAT. THANKS.
EVE... ABOUT LAST NIGHT...
REALLY, I... JUST DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT ANYMORE.
OKAY.

AND FINALLY YOU COME TO VISIT. UNANNOUNCED-- AND EXACTLY AT DINNER TIME.
STILL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MARK.
IS IT *DINNER TIME?* JEEZ! SORRY.
EVE AND I WERE UP ALL NIGHT, SO WE SLEPT TODAY AND MY SCHEDULE IS ALL KINDS OF MESSED UP.
UP ALL NIGHT, HUH?
I GUESS YOU TWO ARE GETTING REACQUAINTED, THEN.
OH, HOW I'VE MISSED OUR LITTLE TALKS, WILLIAM.
YEAH, SORRY... I COULDN'T RESIST.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
SHE'S MOVING IN WITH ME, BY THE WAY...
...INTO MY PARENTS' HOUSE, WHICH WE'LL LIVE IN ALONE... BECAUSE MY MOTHER HAS GONE OFF TO AN ALIEN PLANET WITH MY DAD.
BEING YOUR FRIEND IS LIKE, THE COOLEST THING *EVER.*
IT'S ALWAYS ALIEN PLANET THIS AND END OF THE WORLD THAT. I'VE REALLY *MISSED* YOU, MAN.
DINNER IS SER--
OH, WILLIAM-- I DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE HAVING COMPANY.
SORRY, RICK. I JUST POPPED IN FOR A MINUTE. I CAN'T STAY FOR DINNER ANYWAY.
WELL, WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOU STAY. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MAN.
LET ME PUT THIS STUFF IN THE KITCHEN.
WHENEVER YOU'RE READY, BABE.
UH... WHAT?

YOU'RE GAY?
WHOA.
YEAH, I'VE BEEN KIND OF FIGHTING IT ALL MY LIFE... NOT WILLING TO LET MYSELF ADMIT IT.
I NEVER REALLY KNEW HOW TO TELL YOU. EVE KNOWS. SORRY TO SPRING IT ON YOU LIKE THIS.
IT'S OKAY... REALLY. NO BIG DEAL...
UH...
IS IT COMPLETELY OFFENSIVE TO ADMIT HOW WEIRD I THINK THIS IS?
NOT COMPLETELY.
IT'S STUPID, I'M DOING THAT THING WHERE I'M THINKING BACK TO ALL OUR TIMES IN THE LOCKER ROOM AT GYM CLASS AND US CHANGING TOGETHER WHEN WE ROOMED TOGETHER IN COLLEGE AND IT'S... IT'S STUPID, RIGHT?
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ATTRACTED TO EVERY WOMAN. SO YOU'RE NOT ATTRACTED TO EVERY MAN.
IT'S STUPID OF ME TO THINK THAT YOU'RE ATTRACTED TO ME AND LET THAT WEIRD ME OUT, RIGHT?
NOT AT ALL. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN **EXTREMELY** ATTRACTED TO YOU.
HEY!
...
SORRY, IT'S TRUE.
IT'S OKAY, DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN REALLY BLAME YOU. HE'S QUITE THE--
OKAY... OKAY! I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH.
I'M VERY FLATTERED, REALLY...
BUT I REALLY SHOULD BE GOING, EVE'S PROBABLY DONE...
THANKS FOR TELLING ME, IT'S TOTALLY COOL. REALLY.
I'LL CALL YOU. WE NEED TO HANG OUT SOME TIME--MAYBE WE CAN DOUBLE-DATE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER? THAT DIDN'T GO SO BAD. HE SEEMED FINE.
NO, IT DID... I MEAN, SPRINGING IT ON HIM LIKE THAT WENT ABOUT LIKE I IMAGINED...
IT'S JUST...
I DON'T THINK HE'LL EVER TAKE ME **FLYING** AGAIN...

WHAT THE--?!
SO, UH... WHO EXACTLY ARE *YOU* SUPPOSED TO BE?
BACK OFF OR FEEL THE FORCE OF--
OH, CRAP! *INVINCIBLE?!*
I NEVER EXPECTED *YOU.*


I CAN'T FIGHT YOU, I DON'T STAND A CHANCE. I THOUGHT I'D RUN INTO SOMEONE LIKE REX SPLODE, I COULD HANDLE THAT.
REX SPLODE IS DEAD.
JEEZ, I'M SORRY. I HAD NO IDEA. I... LOOK, I SURRENDER OKAY? JUST-- PLEASE DON'T PUNCH ME OR ANYTHING.
WELL, YOU SEEM LIKE A REASONABLE GUY... SO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME PUNCHING YOU.
BUT... WHAT EXACTLY WAS THAT THING YOU POINTED AT ME?
GRAVITY GUN. IT WORKS LIKE MY BOOTS, IT DISTORTS A GRAVITATIONAL FIELD AROUND THE AREA IT FIRES INTO. THE BOOTS ALLOW ME TO ALTER GRAVITY AROUND ME ESSENTIALLY PULLING ME TOWARD THE SURFACE MY BOOTS ARE ON--THE GUN SHOOTS A BEAM OF GRAVITY THAT PROPELS THINGS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.
IT'S A PRETTY GOOD NON-LETHAL WEAPON-- PROBABLY WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO YOU, THOUGH.
PROBABLY NOT. CAN I BE HONEST WITH YOU? I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU DID. YOU DID DO SOMETHING WRONG, RIGHT?
I ROBBED A BANK, I'VE GOT TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND IN BONDS HERE.
IT WAS A CINCH WITH THE BOOTS, NOBODY SAW ME-- NO ONE LOOKS UP.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME. SO THE GETUP, NECESSARY INSIDE THE BANK, SURE--BUT OUTSIDE?
I MEAN, IF YOU'D JUST BEEN WALKING DOWN THE STREET WITH A BRIEFCASE, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE EVEN NOTICED YOU.
JUST SAYING.
WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I WAS PLANNING THIS JOB?
THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING.
THIS IS JUST WEIRD, YOU'RE NOT EVEN FIGHTING BACK, YOU SEEM SO... REASONABLE.
WHY'D YOU DO IT? I'M CURIOUS.

MY GIRLFRIEND AND I... WE'VE BEEN DATING FOR A LONG TIME AND... OH, GOD...
I WAS GOING TO **PROPOSE** TO HER.
I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY THE RING--NOT ONE SHE DESERVES. NOT AFTER I SPENT SO MUCH DEVELOPING THIS EQUIPMENT...
YOU INVENTED THIS STUFF?! WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST **SELL** IT SO YOU COULD BUY THE RING?
I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE EASIER--TAKE LESS TIME. I DIDN'T... I'M NOT A BAD PERSON, REALLY. I'M SORRY THAT I--
OH, GOD-- I'M GOING TO **JAIL!**
HANNA IS NEVER GOING TO MARRY ME NOW!
WAIT, STOP-- CALM DOWN.
LOOK, GIVE ME THE BONDS, I'LL RETURN THEM FOR YOU... AND WE'LL CALL IT EVEN.
WHAT?!
REALLY?
YEAH. YOU DIDN'T ACTUALLY HURT ANYONE. GO HOME, SELL YOUR TECH... MARRY YOUR GIRL.
HAVE A GOOD LIFE. BE HAPPY.
INVINCIBLE, I--I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR THIS--I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DOING THIS FOR ME.
THANK YOU! THANK YOU SO MUCH!
MY DAYS AS GRAVITATOR ARE OVER.
GRAVITATOR? SOUNDS LIKE A FLOATING **POTATO.**
A BIT CLOSE TO "GRAVY TATER," TOO...
I WAS CLEARLY NEVER CUT OUT FOR THIS LINE OF WORK.
WELL, GO ON... I'VE GOT ENOUGH PEOPLE WHO THINK I RUINED THEIR LIVES AND WANT TO KILL ME.
WE SQUARE?
TOTALLY...
THANKS AGAIN, MAN.

FIVE & DIME SAVINGS & LOAN
YOU GUYS STILL OPEN? SORRY, BUT UH... SOME GUY ROBBED YOU, STOLE ALL THESE BONDS.
I WANTED TO RETURN THEM.
UM...
THANKS?
Night Flight Comics
SORRY TO COME IN SO CLOSE TO CLOSING TIME AND--WHAT THE **HECK?!**
I KNOW IT'S BEEN ALMOST A YEAR SINCE I PICKED UP MY BOOKS, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT **THIS** MANY!
LAUNCH PAD McQUA
YEAH, IT'S MOSTLY ***SCIENCE DOG***, TOO.
FILIP SCHAFF DID THIS THING WHERE HE PLEDGED TO BE ON TIME FOR A YEAR.
GUY WANTS TO BE PATTED ON THE BACK FOR DOING WHAT HE WAS ***SUPPOSED*** TO BE DOING ALL ALONG.
WHATEVER-- I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO READ ALL THIS.
THIS IS AWESOME.
YOU THINK THAT NOW... BUT JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU READ THEM.
YOU STILL READING SCIENCE DOG THEN?
YEAH... IT'S ***AWESOME***, OKAY. JUST DON'T TELL ANYONE.
WHAT THE HECK? DID ***EVERY*** SERIES START OVER WITH A NEW ISSUE ONE? THAT BLOWS.
WHY DO THEY DO THAT? IT DOESN'T HELP SALES LONG TERM AND THEY ALWAYS JUST GO BACK TO THE NUMBERING FOR THE NEXT ANNIVERSARY ISSUE.
OMNIBUS
DEAD STUFF
ALONE
WHAT'S THE POINT?!
ANYTHING FOR A QUICK BUCK, MAN. THESE COMPANIES HAVE NO INTEGRITY.
GRONCHLESS

KNOCK! KNOCK!
I DON'T CARE HOW CREEPED OUT HE IS BY HIS PARENT'S ROOM--I'M NOT SLEEPING IN A TWIN BED ANOTHER NIGHT.
KNOCK!
I'M HERE-- I'M *HERE!*
OH, EVE-- I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE HERE.
I JUST WANTED TO POP IN AND SAY GOODBYE TO NOLAN BEFORE HE LEFT.
OH, WELL... UM...
HE LEFT ALREADY? I CAN'T BELIEVE HE DID IT TO ME *AGAIN.*
WHERE'S DEBBIE? I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE DIDN'T CALL ME TO SAY HE WAS LEAVING.
SHE KIND OF WENT *WITH* HIM... TO SOME KIND OF ALIEN PLANET... FOR I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG...
OH...
OKAY.
SORRY.

BURN THOSE.
OH, CALM DOWN, IT'S NOT THAT BAD. HAVEN'T YOU EVER SLEPT IN A HOTEL BED?
NOT AFTER MY PARENTS.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE *WEIRD* FOR YOU?
NOT EVEN A LITTLE?
LET ME PUT YOUR MIND AT EASE.
THEY'RE CLEANED DOWN TO THE ATOMIC LEVEL.
HUH...
THAT ONLY MAKES ME FEEL A *LITTLE* BETTER.
YOU'RE CRACKING ME UP WITH THI--
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
OH, CRAP.
INVINCIBLE, INC. AT YOUR SERVICE.
UNDERSTOOD-- HE'S ON THE WAY!
OH, CRAP IS RIGHT. THAT WAS ONE OF OUR CLIENTS FROM LAS VEGAS.
THERE'S A BIG RED GUY-- TEARING THE WHOLE CITY APART!
BIG RED GUY?
I CAN'T NARROW THAT DOWN TO LESS THAN FOUR PEOPLE... SHEESH.
VOOSH!

RUN!
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
CAESARS PALACE
OH, THAT BIG RED GUY.

KROOM!
YOU? COME TO PLAY THE HERO AGAIN, SO THAT YOU CAN TRY TO MURDER MY WEAKER SELF WHEN IT'S ALL OVER?
IF YOU WERE A TRUE HERO, YOU'D BE HELPING ME!
WHAMM
HELP YOU DO WHAT?! DESTROY LAS VEGAS?!
NO! YOU'D HELP ME EVACUATE LAS VEGAS BEFORE IT IS DESTROYED!
THIS CITY IS AN ABOMINATION ON THIS EARTH. IT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE HERE. A MAN-MADE OASIS IN THE MIDDLE OF A NATURALLY FORMED DESERT!
IN MINUTES, THIS CITY WILL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A MEMORY-- BUT THESE PEOPLE DON'T HAVE TO DIE!
KRAKK!

IF YOU DON'T WANT THESE PEOPLE TO DIE--TELL ME *HOW* THIS CITY IS BEING DESTROYED AND HELP ME ***STOP*** IT!
I'VE HEARD YOUR SPIEL--YOU THINK YOU'RE REALLY HELPING PEOPLE, WELL... ***DO IT!***
WHILE I DO NOT FEEL THESE PEOPLE SHOULD DIE, I'M AFRAID THIS CITY ***MUST!***
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO STOP THAT.
THIS CITY IS A DRAIN ON NATURAL RESOURCES OF ***EPIC*** PROPORTIONS. THE COLORADO RIVER WILL SOON DRY UP. THIS REGION CAN'T SUSTAIN ITSELF.
FURTHERMORE--IF IT WERE DESTROYED, THE AREA WOULD BE IDEAL FOR A SOLAR POWER STATION LARGE ENOUGH TO POWER THIS COUNTRY WITH CLEAN ENERGY, FREEING IT FROM THE BURDEN OF FOSSIL FUELS.
YOU MAY TRY TO FIGHT ME--BUT DEEP DOWN, I KNOW YOU KNOW I'M ***RIGHT***.
MANDA
MAN
NEW
I--KNOW ***YOU'RE INSANE!***
IT DOESN'T MATTER, NOTHING DOES.
IT'S TOO LATE, MY BOMB--
DID YOU SAY ***BOMB?***

WHAT?
VOOOSH!
OKAY, THAT WAS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE. HERE'S YOUR STUPID BOMB. WANT TO HELP ME DISARM IT, OR SHOULD I JUST THROW IT INTO SPACE?
DOESN'T MATTER, I HAVE *MORE*. IN FACT, THAT'S THE ONE YOU WERE *SUPPOSED* TO FIND--IT WAS REDUNDANT.
REDUNDANT? HOW MANY OF THESE DO YOU HAVE?
ENOUGH.
IT TAKES AT LEAST *FIFTY* TO LEVEL THE CITY. I DEVISED THESE BOMBS MYSELF. THEY'LL VAPORIZE EVERYTHING.
THEY'RE REALLY QUITE POWERFUL, THIS WHOLE AREA WILL BE A SOLID SHEET OF *GLASS*.
WHEN DO THEY GO OFF? HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE?!
NOT ENOUGH.
WHILE I SUSPECT I COULD SURVIVE THIS BLAST, I'M NOT CERTAIN. BUT I *AM* CERTAIN IT WILL BE EXTREMELY PAINFUL.
MY PLAN WAS TO EVACUATE MYSELF AS WELL. THERE'S STILL SO MUCH *GOOD* I COULD DO.
A PITY.

VOOOOM!!!

KOFF!
GLASS...
UNGH.
WHAT...?
MY GOD...
...IT'S ALL...

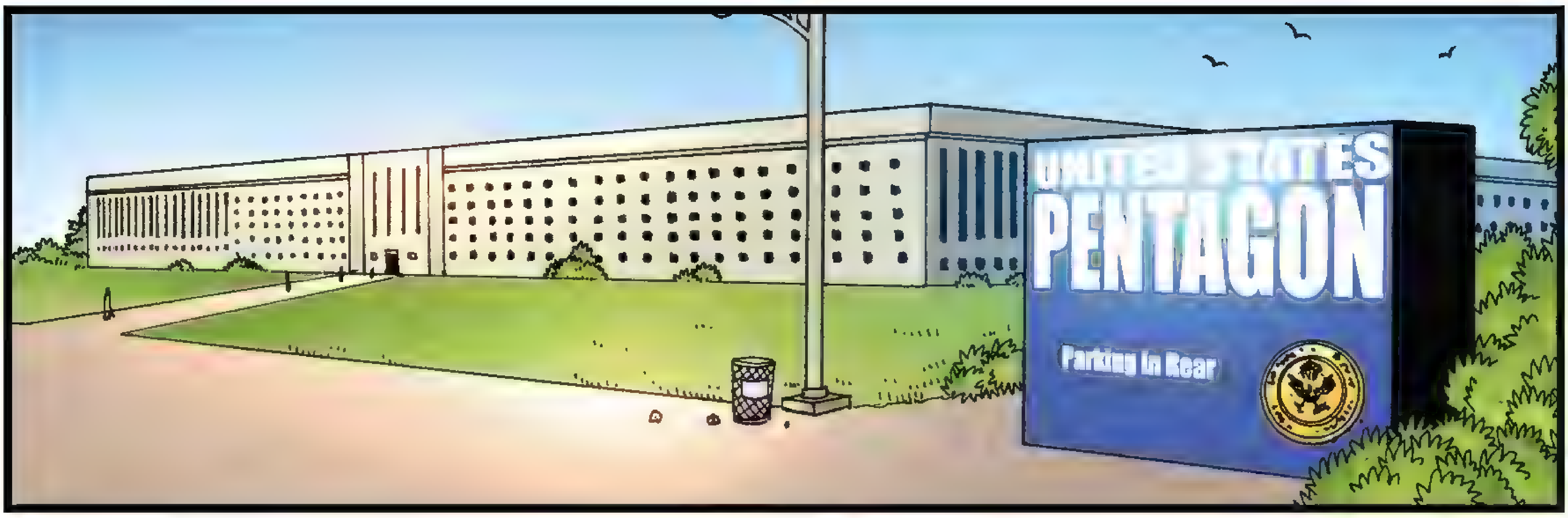
...GONE.

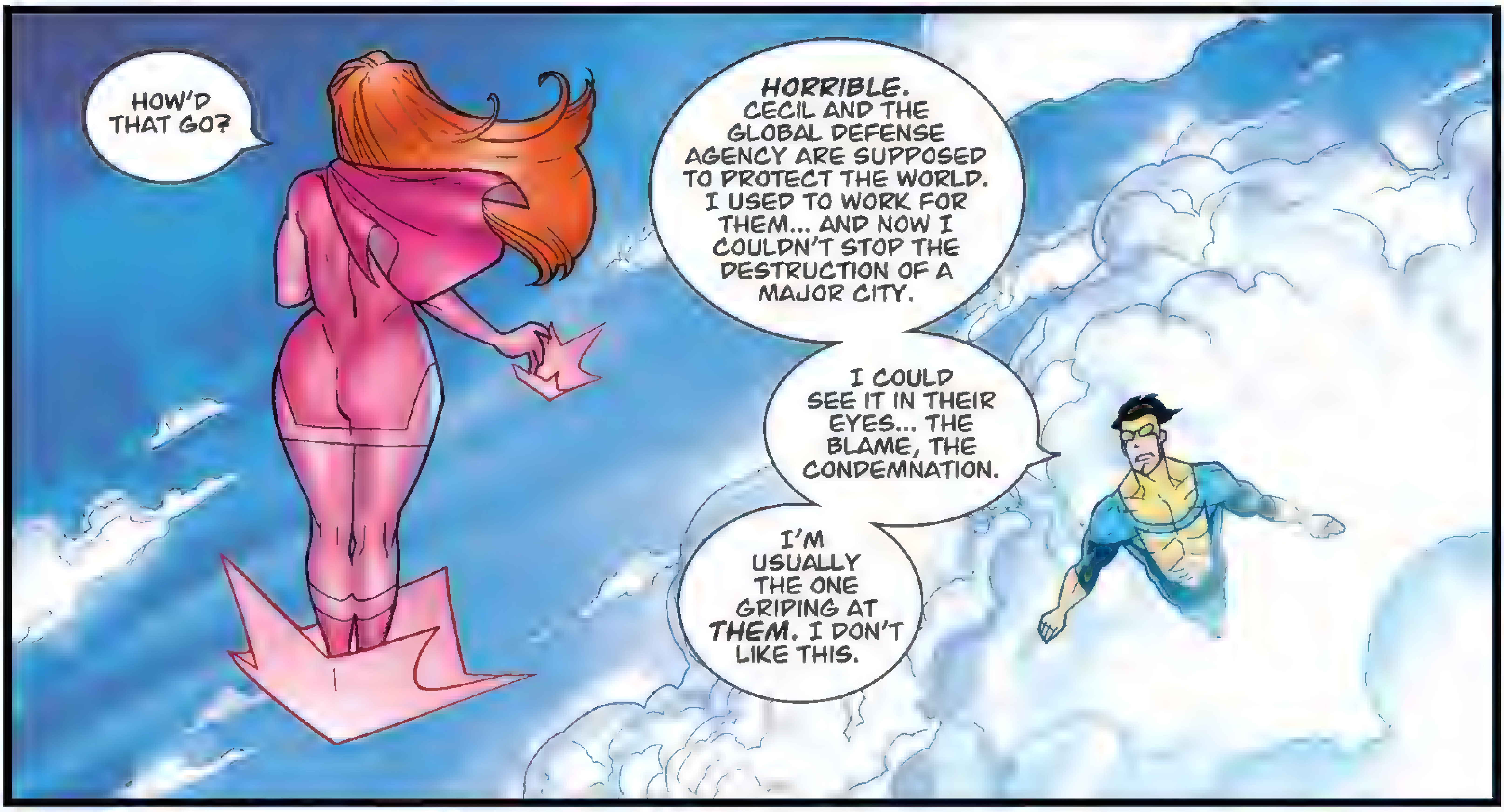
CHAPTER 81

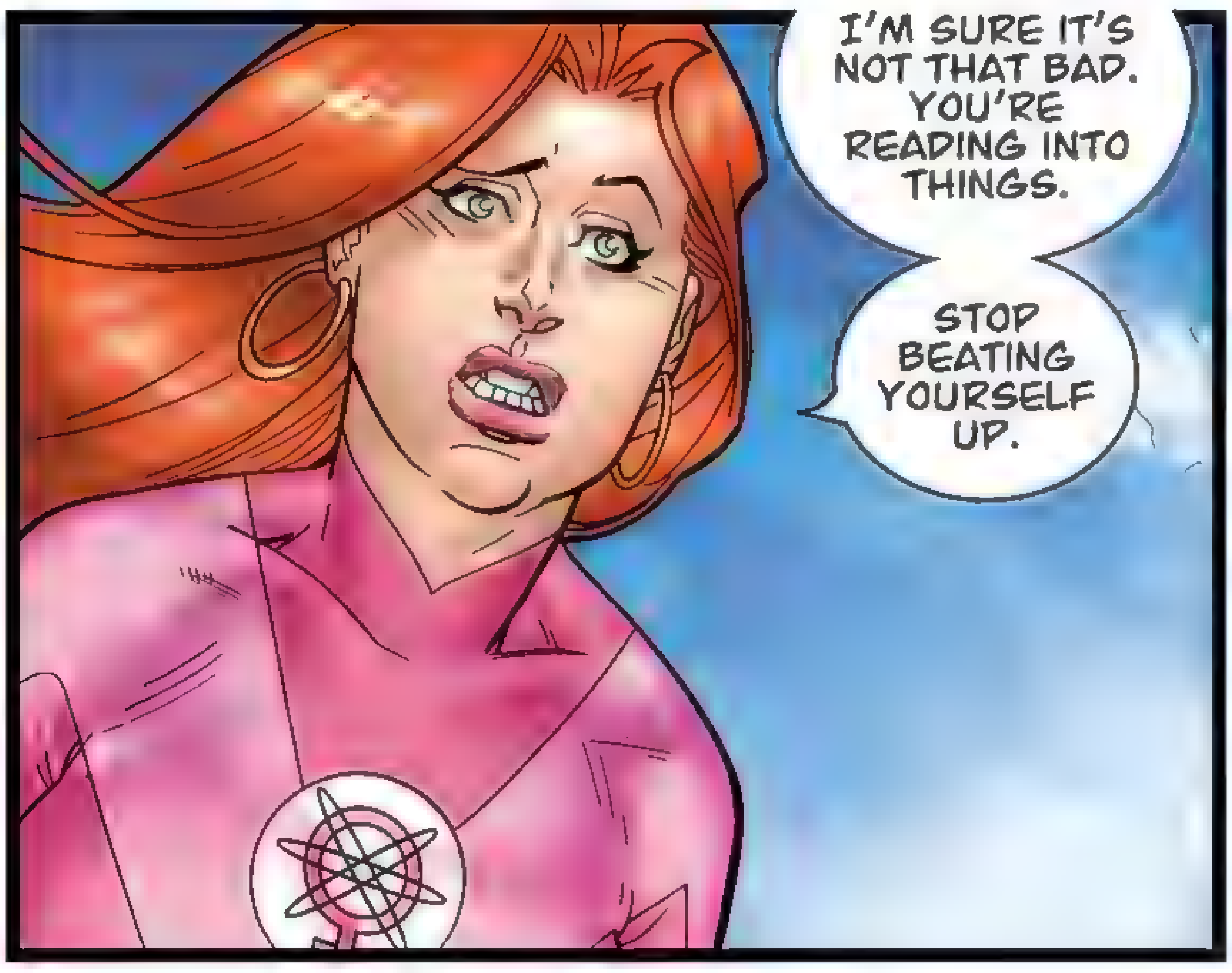
I STAND AT THE EDGE OF WHAT WAS, ONLY HOURS AGO, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA. AS YOU CAN SEE, THE CITY HAS BEEN **COMPLETELY** OBLITERATED.
THOUSANDS OF TOURISTS AND RESIDENTS OF THE CITY WERE EVACUATED DURING THE RAMPAGE OF A SUPER-VILLAIN KNOWN AS **DINOSAURUS.**
WHETHER HIS RAMPAGE WAS THE CAUSE OF THIS UNBELIEVABLE DISASTER REMAINS UNKNOWN.
4
PLEASE, LET'S JUST TURN IT OFF.
THIS WASN'T YOUR FAULT. YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF FOR THIS.
WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT THE AREA IS NOT RADIOACTIVE, SO IT WAS SOME KIND OF UNKNOWN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE THAT CAUSED THE DESTRUCTION.
SOME OF THE OUTLYING AREAS OF THE CITY WERE NOT REACHED, BUT WITHOUT THE CITY CENTER TO PROVIDE SUPPLIES TO THEM, IT'S POSSIBLE THESE PEOPLE WILL NEED TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES.
WHILE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS WERE EVACUATED IN THE HOURS BEFORE THE EXPLOSION, THOUSANDS ARE MISSING, AND PRESUMED DEAD.
I'VE JUST LEARNED AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF INFORMATION. EYE WITNESS REPORTS ARE COMING IN FROM THE EVACUATED POPULATION.
WE'RE HEARING FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES THAT DURING THE RAMPAGE OF DINOSAURUS A SUPER-HERO ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND ATTEMPTED TO STOP HIM.
COULD THIS PERSON'S INVOLVEMENT HAVE LED TO THIS DEVASTATION?
WAIT...
WE'RE NOW HEARING THIS UNIDENTIFIED SUPER-HERO WAS IN FACT **INVINCIBLE.**

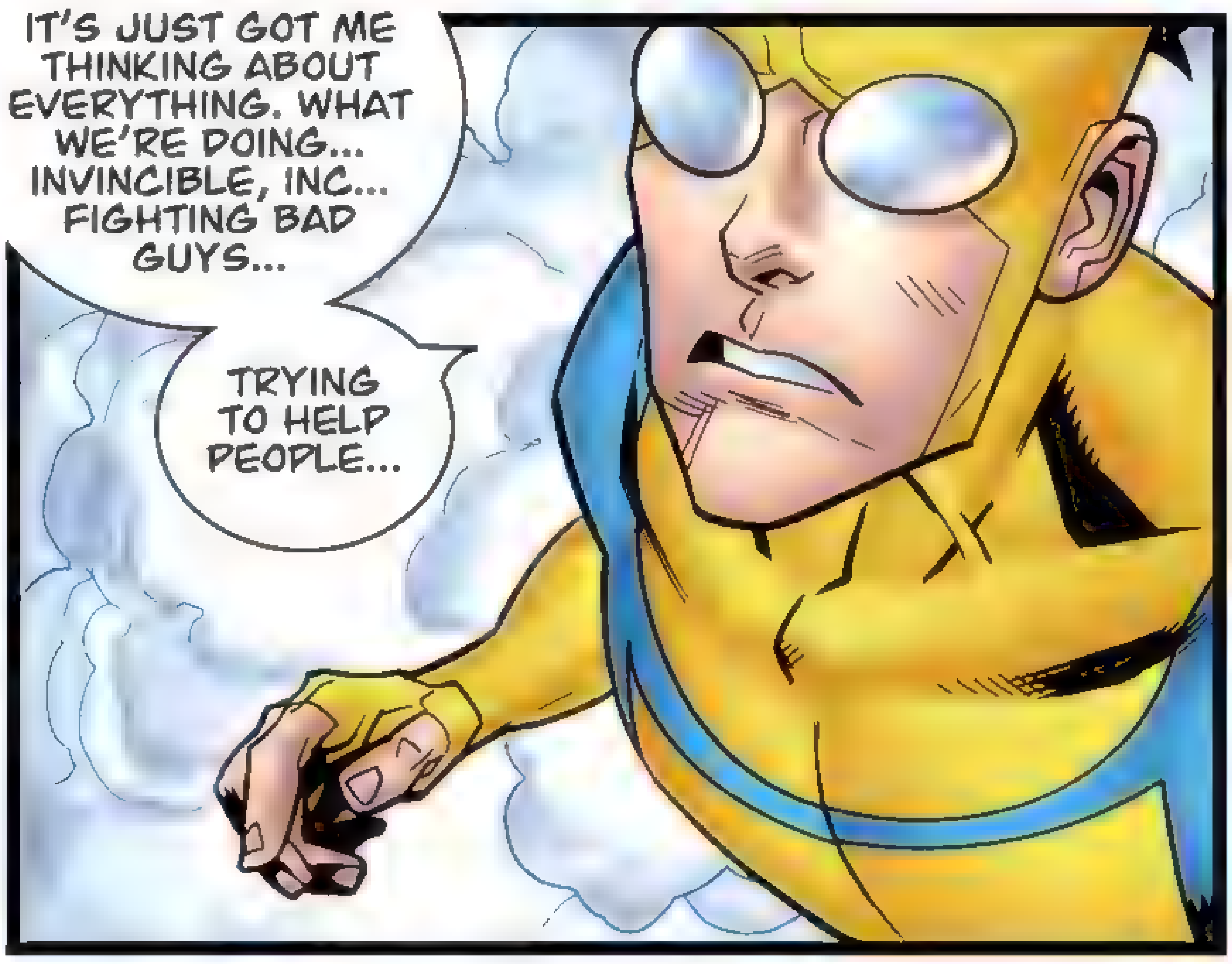
WHAT?!

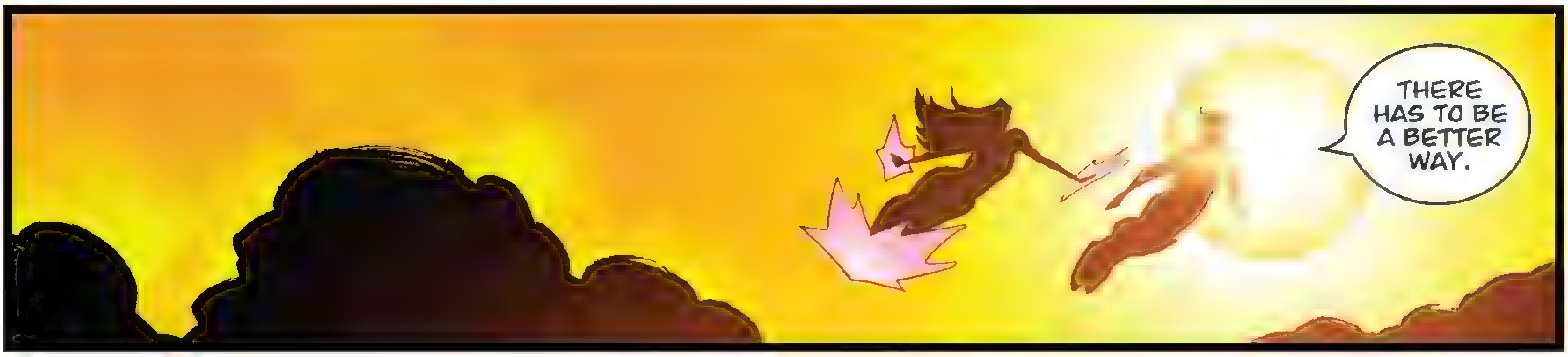
POWERPLEX, PLEASE... **CALM DOWN.** THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU AT ALL.
I KNOW YOUR HISTORY WITH INVINCIBLE, BUT THIS JUST ISN'T ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR.
I KNOW... I'M SORRY, KINETIC. IT'S JUST, I WASN'T READY FOR THIS. WHEN INVINCIBLE DISAPPEARED FOR SO LONG, I THOUGHT IT WAS **OVER.**
I'M THANKFUL THAT YOU GUYS HAVE TAKEN ME IN, ALLOWED ME TO JOIN THE ACTIONEERS... AND I'M REALLY TRYING TO CONTROL MYSELF.
I JUST... WASN'T PREPARED. I'M SORRY IF I STARTLED YOU.
CECIL RELEASED US ALL FROM CUSTODY TOGETHER. HE THOUGHT YOU WOULD MAKE A GOOD ADDITION TO OUR TEAM.
WE'VE ALL GOT TROUBLED PASTS... WE WERE ALL **VAMPIRES** FOR A WHILE FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.*
CECIL WORKS **WITH** INVINCIBLE... HE CAN'T BE AS BAD AS YOU SAY.
* SEE THE *ASTOUNDING WOLF-MAN* TRADE PAPERBACK SERIES FOR MORE!
INVINCIBLE KILLED MY SISTER! HE KILLED MY WIFE AND SON! HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR COUNTLESS DEATHS AND UNTOLD DESTRUCTION!
LAS VEGAS IS A CRATER, AND HE WAS THERE--DON'T YOU SEE THE CONNECTION?!
HE-- YOU CAN'T--
I'M SORRY. I REALLY AM.
I'M JUST... IT'S HARD FOR ME TO LET GO. I KNOW WHAT I NEED TO DO...
I KNOW...


UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

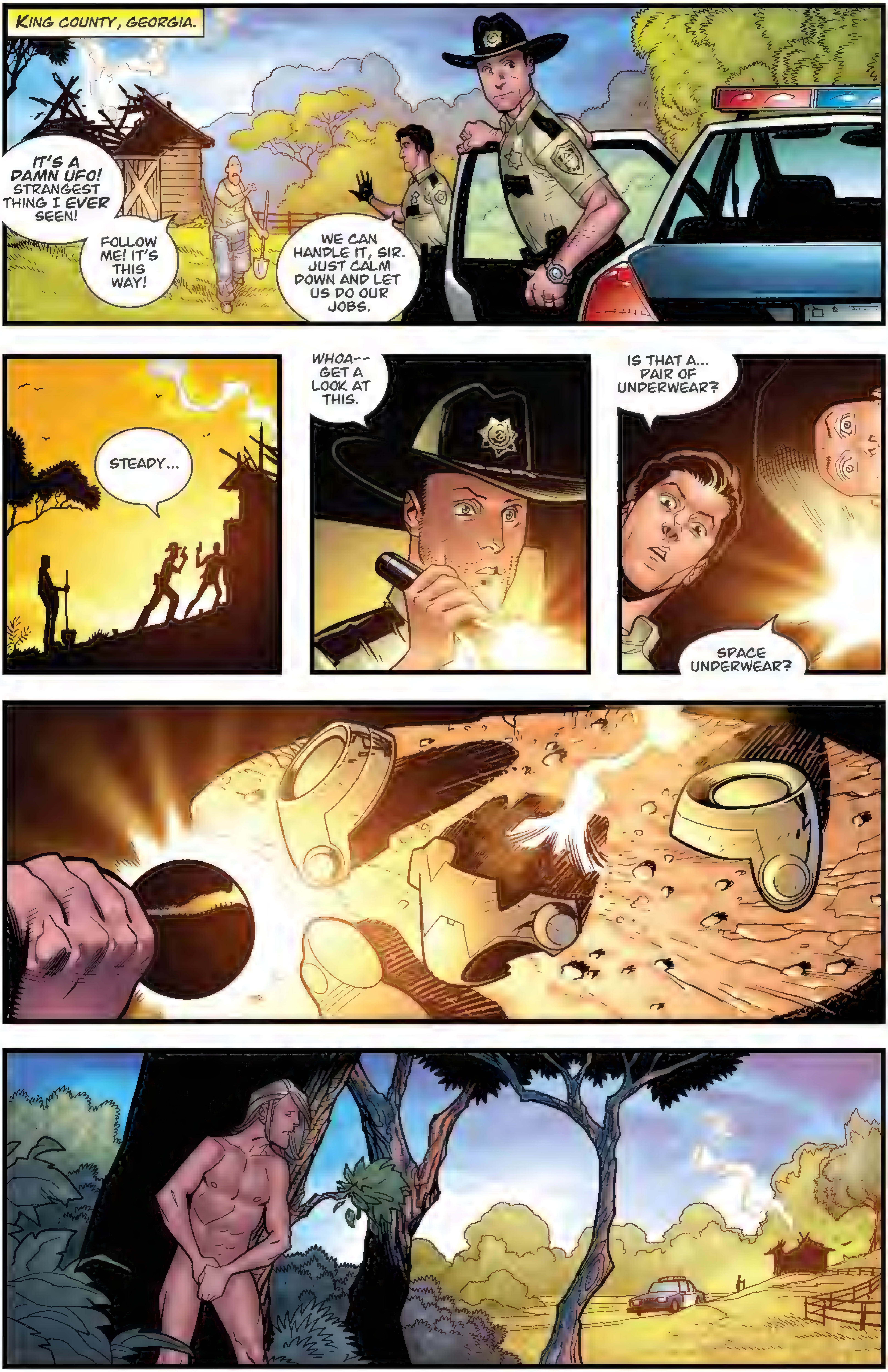

HOW'D THAT GO?
HORRIBLE. CECIL AND THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY ARE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT THE WORLD. I USED TO WORK FOR THEM... AND NOW I COULDN'T STOP THE DESTRUCTION OF A MAJOR CITY.
I COULD SEE IT IN THEIR EYES... THE BLAME, THE CONDEMNATION.
I'M USUALLY THE ONE GRIPING AT THEM. I DON'T LIKE THIS.


I'M SURE IT'S NOT THAT BAD. YOU'RE READING INTO THINGS.
STOP BEATING YOURSELF UP.

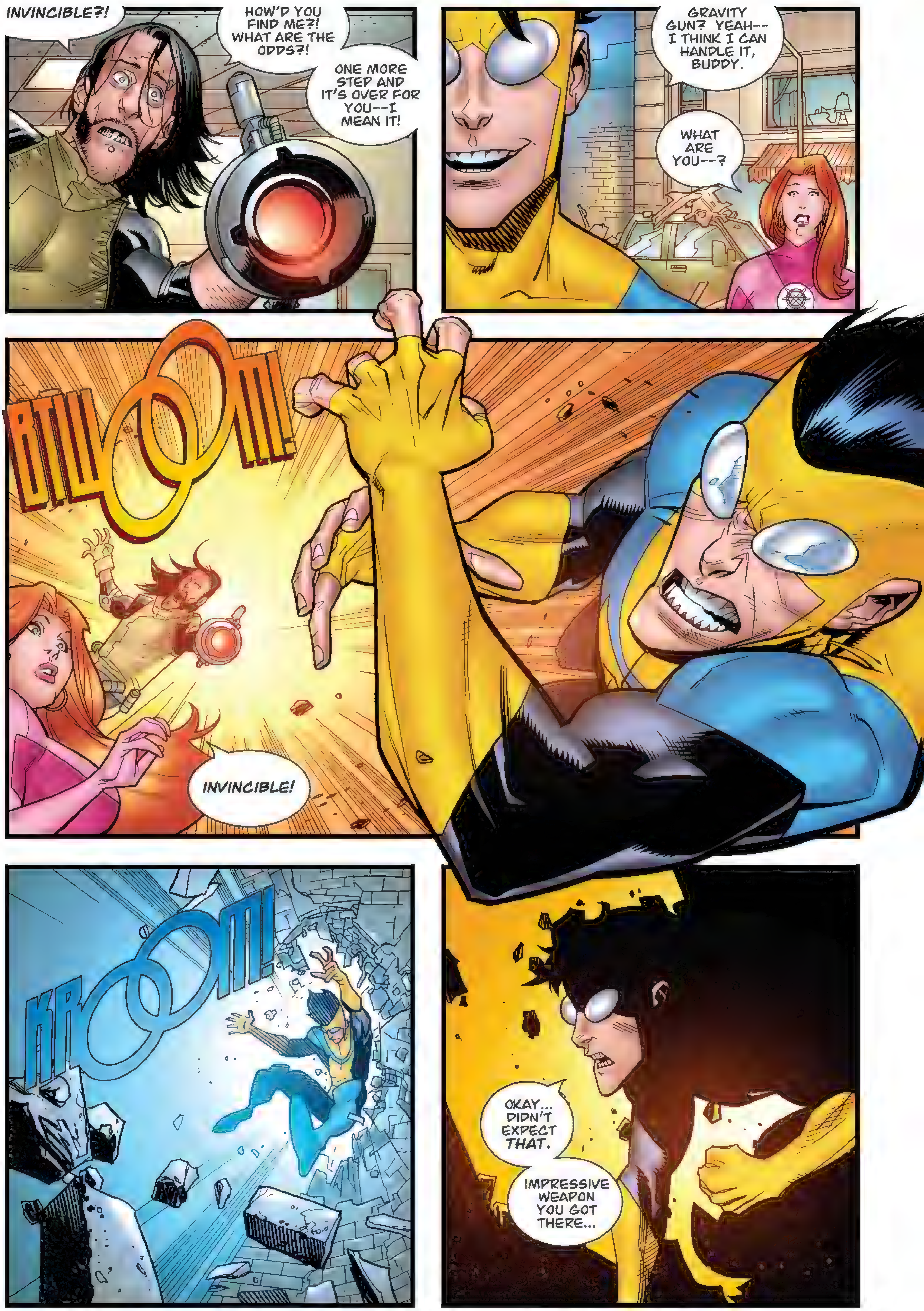

IT'S JUST GOT ME THINKING ABOUT EVERYTHING. WHAT WE'RE DOING... INVINCIBLE, INC... FIGHTING BAD GUYS...
TRYING TO HELP PEOPLE...

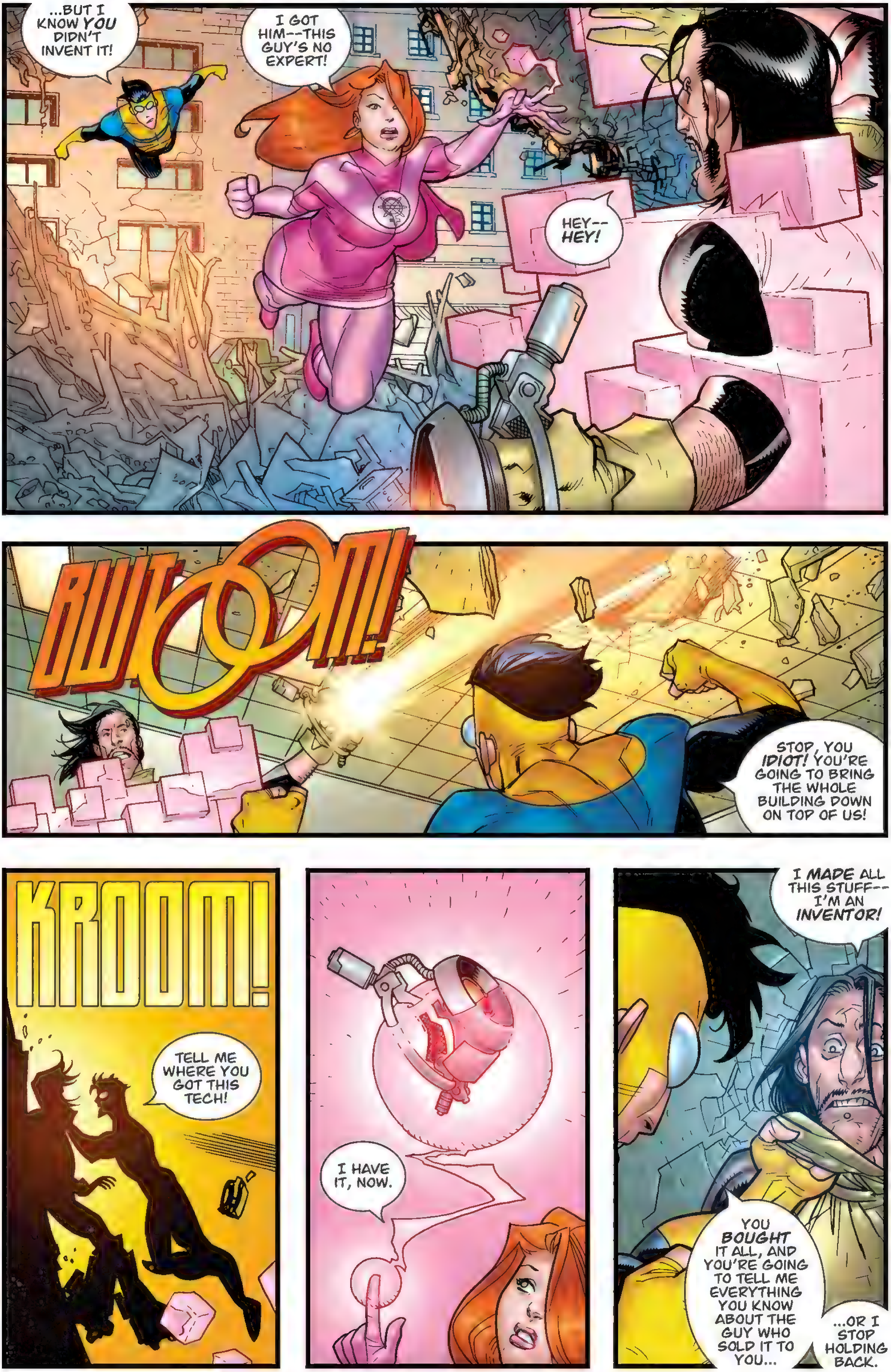

THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY.

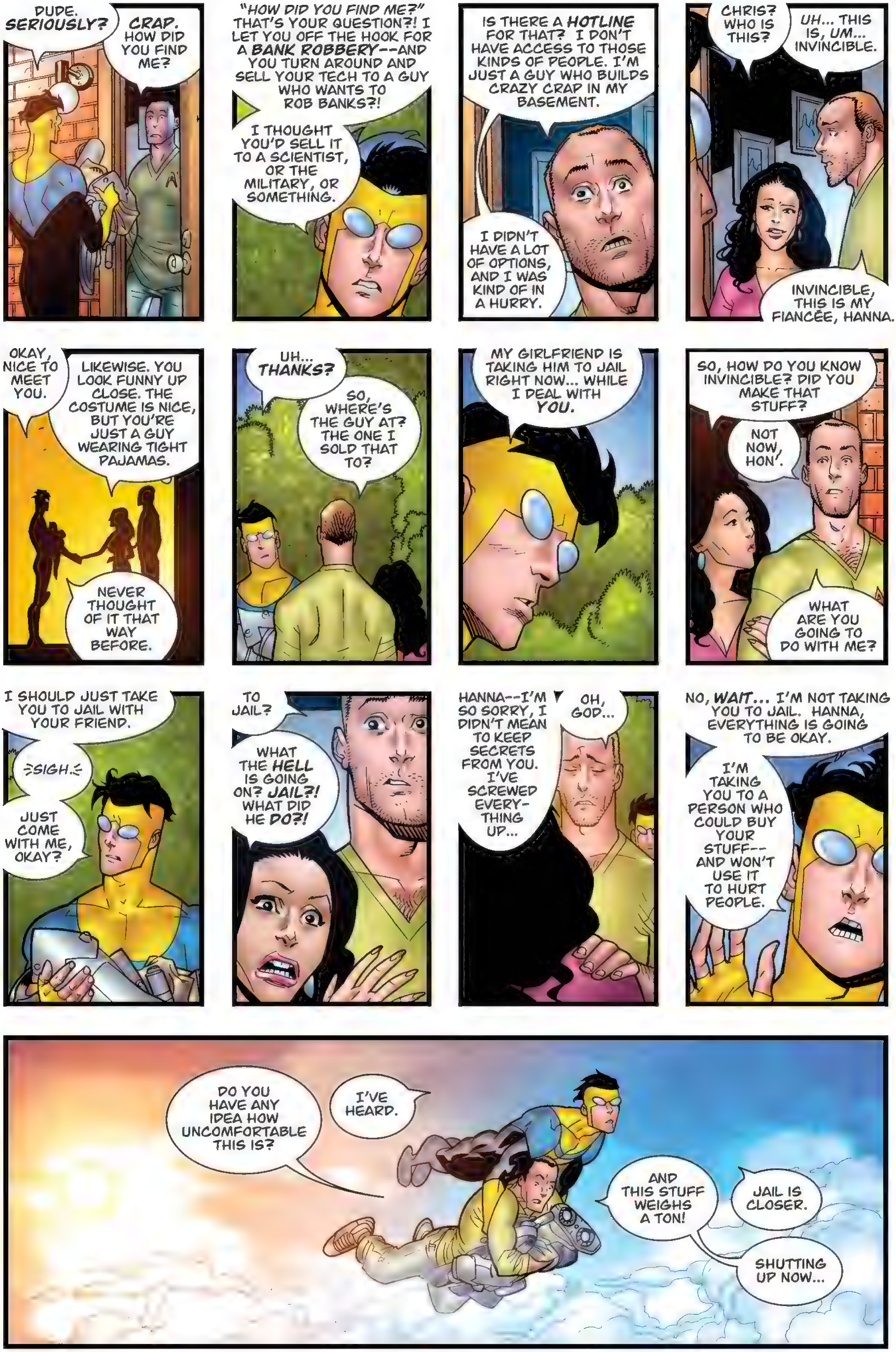
THE KID'S HAVING A HARD TIME WITH THIS ONE... YOU CAN SEE IT IN HIS EYES.
YOU'LL FEEL LESS SORRY FOR HIM WHEN YOU'VE BEEN *CHOKED* BY HIM AS MANY TIMES AS I HAVE.
LET HIM SUFFER... HE COULD USE A LITTLE HUMILITY.
THE FACT REMAINS, HE'S A ROGUE ELEMENT. HIS LITTLE SIDE BUSINESS WITH ATOM EVE, HIS SUPERHERO PROTECTION RACKET...
...IF THIS IS THE KIND OF THING IT LEADS TO, WE NEED TO MANAGE THAT, POSSIBLY TAKE OVER.
ARE WE REALLY ENTERTAINING FOR A SECOND THAT THIS WAS IN SOME WAY HIS FAULT?
HAVE YOU SEEN MY MISSION LOGS? I'VE BEEN PRESENT FOR AT LEAST THREE CITY DESTRUCTIONS IN THE PAST--I'VE STILL GOT A SEAT AT THE TABLE.
ARE YOU GUYS BLAMING ME FOR PARIS?*
*SEE *GUARDING THE GLOBE*, VOLUME ONE!
NO, AND OF COURSE I DON'T ACTUALLY BLAME INVINCIBLE FOR LAS VEGAS.
PARIS... VEGAS... THE FACT IS IT REFLECTS POORLY ON *US*. WE NEED TO BE BETTER ORGANIZED. THE ORDER, THIS MANIAC DINOSAURUS... OUR OPPONENTS ARE GETTING BETTER...
WE HAVE TO GET BETTER.
ON THIS DINOSAURUS CHARACTER... I DO NOT BUY THAT HE WAS VAPORIZED IN THE EXPLOSION--HE CAN HOLD HIS OWN AGAINST INVINCIBLE... I'M CALLING IT RIGHT NOW.
HE SURVIVED.
WE NEED TO FIND HIM BEFORE HE STRIKES AGAIN.


KING COUNTY, GEORGIA.
IT'S A DAMN UFO! STRANGEST THING I EVER SEEN!
FOLLOW ME! IT'S THIS WAY!
WE CAN HANDLE IT, SIR. JUST CALM DOWN AND LET US DO OUR JOBS.
STEADY...
WHOA-- GET A LOOK AT THIS.
IS THAT A... PAIR OF UNDERWEAR?
SPACE UNDERWEAR?

HOLY CRAP!
ARE YOU OKAY, MA'AM?
HIS GUN--AND THE BUILDING... I'LL BE OKAY. IT HAPPENED SO FAST--AND...
WHO IS--
INVINCIBLE...
OH--WHAT THE HECK?!
TREMBLE BEFORE THE AWESOME MIGHT OF GRAVITATOR!
AND FILL THOSE BAGS, JERKS! TREMBLE AND THEN FILL--IN THAT ORDER!
HOP TO IT!
WHAT? WHERE DID HE GET--?


INVINCIBLE?!
HOW'D YOU FIND ME?! WHAT ARE THE ODDS?!
ONE MORE STEP AND IT'S OVER FOR YOU--I MEAN IT!
GRAVITY GUN? YEAH-- I THINK I CAN HANDLE IT, BUDDY.
WHAT ARE YOU--?
BTLLOOM!
INVINCIBLE!
KROOM!
OKAY... DIDN'T EXPECT THAT.
IMPRESSIVE WEAPON YOU GOT THERE...

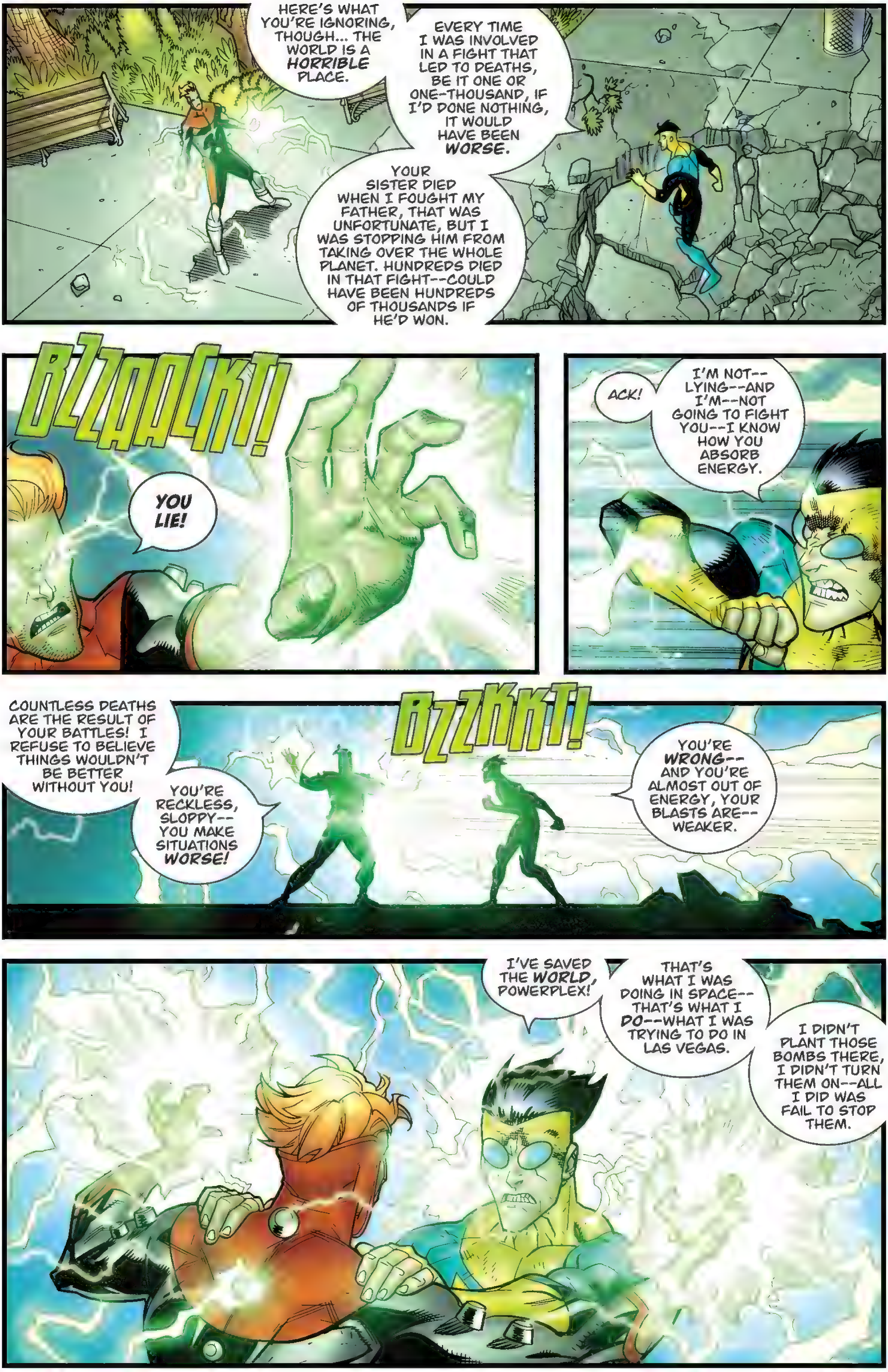

...BUT I KNOW *YOU* DIDN'T INVENT IT!
I GOT HIM--THIS GUY'S NO EXPERT!
HEY-- *HEY!*
BWOOM!
STOP, YOU *IDIOT!* YOU'RE GOING TO BRING THE WHOLE BUILDING DOWN ON TOP OF US!
KROOM!
TELL ME WHERE YOU GOT THIS TECH!
I HAVE IT, NOW.
I *MADE* ALL THIS STUFF-- I'M AN *INVENTOR!*
YOU *BOUGHT* IT ALL, AND YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE GUY WHO SOLD IT TO YOU...
...OR I STOP HOLDING BACK.


DUDE. SERIOUSLY?
CRAP. HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
"HOW DID YOU FIND ME?" THAT'S YOUR QUESTION?! I LET YOU OFF THE HOOK FOR A BANK ROBBERY--AND YOU TURN AROUND AND SELL YOUR TECH TO A GUY WHO WANTS TO ROB BANKS?!
I THOUGHT YOU'D SELL IT TO A SCIENTIST, OR THE MILITARY, OR SOMETHING.
IS THERE A HOTLINE FOR THAT? I DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO THOSE KINDS OF PEOPLE. I'M JUST A GUY WHO BUILDS CRAZY CRAP IN MY BASEMENT.
I DIDN'T HAVE A LOT OF OPTIONS, AND I WAS KIND OF IN A HURRY.
CHRIS? WHO IS THIS?
UH... THIS IS, UM... INVINCIBLE.
INVINCIBLE, THIS IS MY FIANCÉE, HANNA.
OKAY, NICE TO MEET YOU.
LIKEWISE. YOU LOOK FUNNY UP CLOSE. THE COSTUME IS NICE, BUT YOU'RE JUST A GUY WEARING TIGHT PAJAMAS.
NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY BEFORE.
UH... THANKS?
SO, WHERE'S THE GUY AT? THE ONE I SOLD THAT TO?
MY GIRLFRIEND IS TAKING HIM TO JAIL RIGHT NOW... WHILE I DEAL WITH YOU.
SO, HOW DO YOU KNOW INVINCIBLE? DID YOU MAKE THAT STUFF?
NOT NOW, HON'.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ME?
I SHOULD JUST TAKE YOU TO JAIL WITH YOUR FRIEND.
SIGH
JUST COME WITH ME, OKAY?
TO JAIL?
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON? JAIL?! WHAT DID HE DO?!
HANNA--I'M SO SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO KEEP SECRETS FROM YOU. I'VE SCREWED EVERYTHING UP...
OH, GOD...
NO, WAIT... I'M NOT TAKING YOU TO JAIL. HANNA, EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY.
I'M TAKING YOU TO A PERSON WHO COULD BUY YOUR STUFF--AND WON'T USE IT TO HURT PEOPLE.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW UNCOMFORTABLE THIS IS?
I'VE HEARD.
AND THIS STUFF WEIGHS A TON!
JAIL IS CLOSER.
SHUTTING UP NOW...

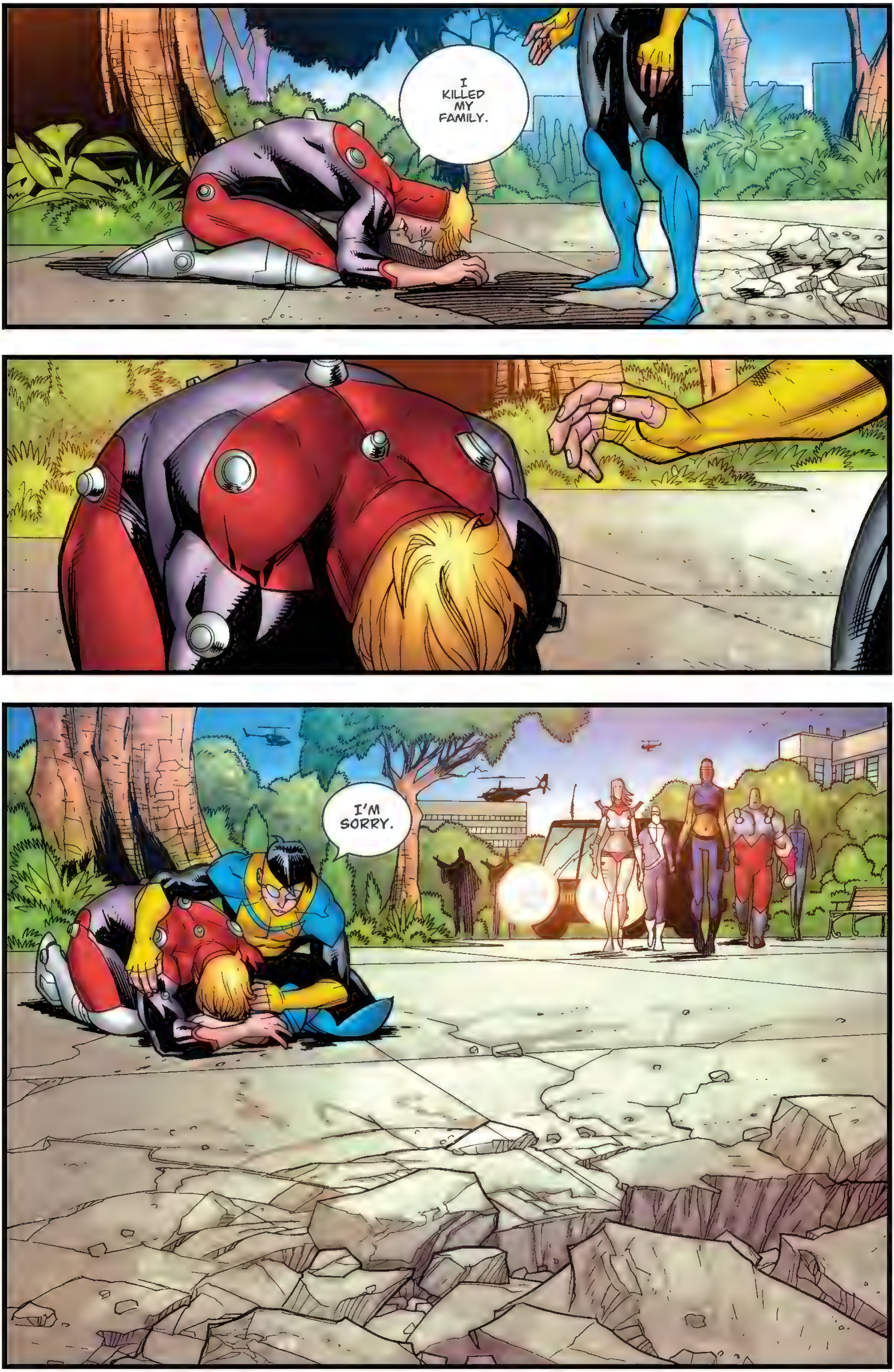
DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHAT YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO ON YOUR OWN IS NOTHING SHORT OF AMAZING. I LOOK FORWARD TO BEING ABLE TO WORK WITH YOU. WE REALLY ARE THE BEST OF THE BEST HERE.
YOU'LL HAVE THE MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AT YOUR DISPOSAL, THINGS YOU'VE ONLY *DREAMED* OF.
AND... YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO *PAY* ME?
YES, YOU'LL BE *EXTREMELY* WELL COMPENSATED FOR YOUR WORK HERE.
THIS IS JUST... UNHEARD OF, REALLY. HE JUST... *INVENTED* THIS STUFF SO HE COULD GET AN ENGAGEMENT RING?
YEAH, AND YOU SAY HE HAS NO TECHNICAL EDUCATION?
THE GUY BARELY GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL AND HE WORKS IN A FACTORY, WHICH IS WHERE HE STOLE THE PARTS... BUT HE'S CLEARLY A *GENIUS.*
COULD HAVE BEEN LOCKED AWAY FOR LIFE, BUT NOW HIS WORK HERE WILL SAVE COUNTLESS LIVES.
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY YOU'RE COMING AROUND TO MY WAY OF THINKING.
YOU GET OLDER... YOU START TO SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY. DOESN'T MEAN I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING YOU DO.
TAKE GOOD CARE OF THIS GUY. THANKS, CECIL.

GRRGH!!
BZZAKKKKTT!!
I KNEW IF I WAITED LONG ENOUGH I'D SEE YOU HERE!
THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO FORGIVE YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID, BUT--
I NEVER WILL!
THWAMM!

WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE STAYED IN SPACE?! THINGS WERE SO MUCH **BETTER** WITHOUT YOU HERE!
I WAS GETTING MY LIFE IN ORDER... DEALING WITH BECKY AND JACK'S DEATH... I WAS COPING--DOING SOME GOOD EVEN.
I WAS RELEASED, I JOINED THE **ACTIONEERS!**
THANKS FOR THE UPDATE?
WHAT DO YOU **WANT** ME TO SAY?
LAS VEGAS!
HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE TO DIE BEFORE YOU SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE?! ARE YOU REALLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE DESTRUCTION YOU CAUSE?
NO. HOW **COULD** I BE?!
I KNOW HOW MANY DEATHS I'VE CAUSED... IT WEIGHS ON ME.
WHAT?
DO YOU THINK I'M STUPID? OR CRAZY? I'M NOT **EVIL.**
NOT A DAY GOES BY THAT I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT.

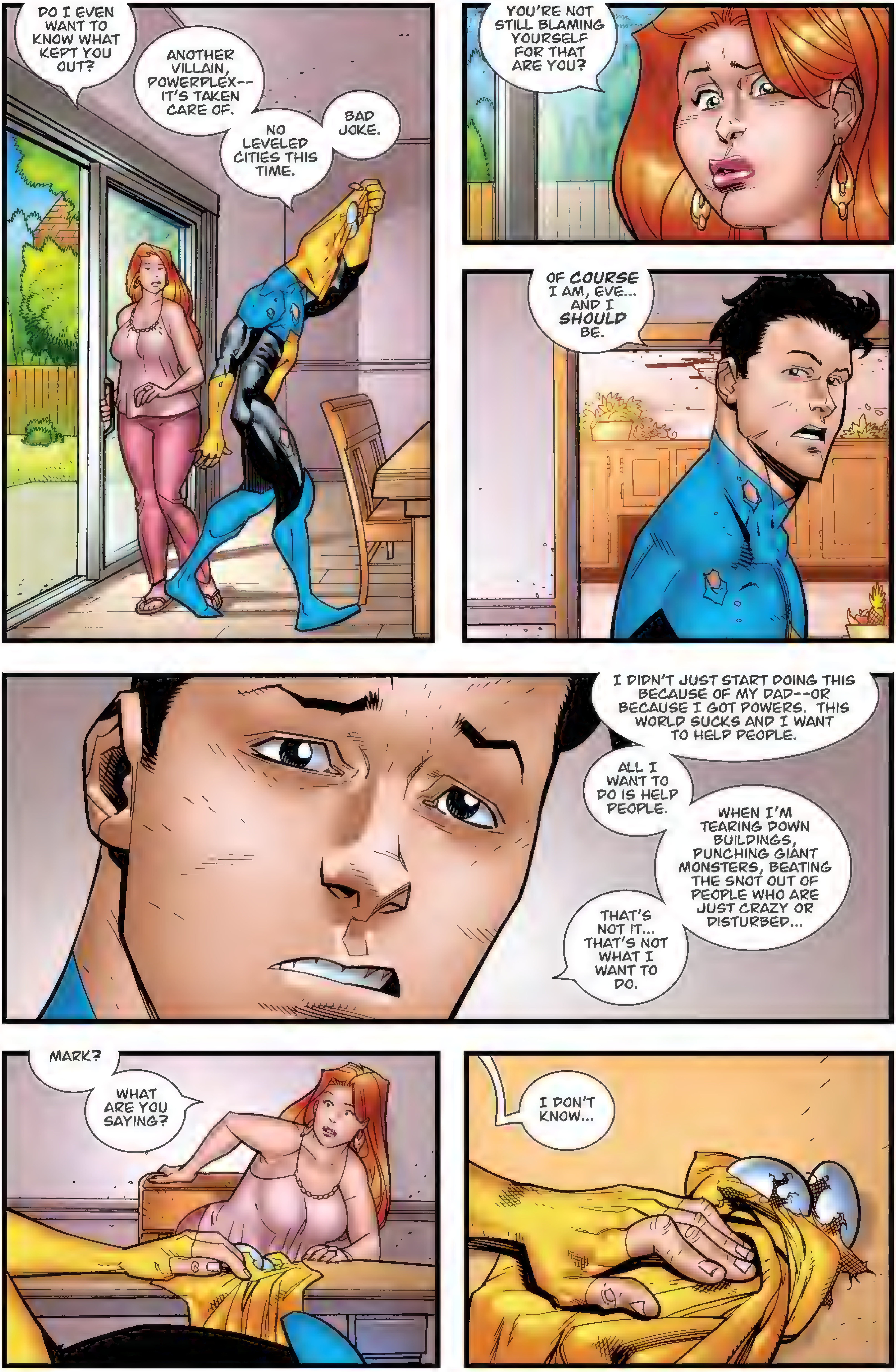

HERE'S WHAT YOU'RE IGNORING, THOUGH... THE WORLD IS A **HORRIBLE** PLACE.
EVERY TIME I WAS INVOLVED IN A FIGHT THAT LED TO DEATHS, BE IT ONE OR ONE-THOUSAND, IF I'D DONE NOTHING, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN **WORSE.**
YOUR SISTER DIED WHEN I FOUGHT MY FATHER, THAT WAS UNFORTUNATE, BUT I WAS STOPPING HIM FROM TAKING OVER THE WHOLE PLANET. HUNDREDS DIED IN THAT FIGHT--COULD HAVE BEEN HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS IF HE'D WON.
BZZAACKT!
YOU LIE!
ACK!
I'M NOT--LYING--AND I'M--NOT GOING TO FIGHT YOU--I KNOW HOW YOU ABSORB ENERGY.
COUNTLESS DEATHS ARE THE RESULT OF YOUR BATTLES! I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THINGS WOULDN'T BE BETTER WITHOUT YOU!
YOU'RE RECKLESS, SLOPPY--YOU MAKE SITUATIONS **WORSE!**
BZZKKKT!
YOU'RE **WRONG--** AND YOU'RE ALMOST OUT OF ENERGY, YOUR BLASTS ARE--WEAKER.
I'VE SAVED THE **WORLD,** POWERPLEX!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS DOING IN SPACE--THAT'S WHAT I *DO*--WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO IN LAS VEGAS.
I DIDN'T PLANT THOSE BOMBS THERE, I DIDN'T TURN THEM ON--ALL I DID WAS FAIL TO STOP THEM.

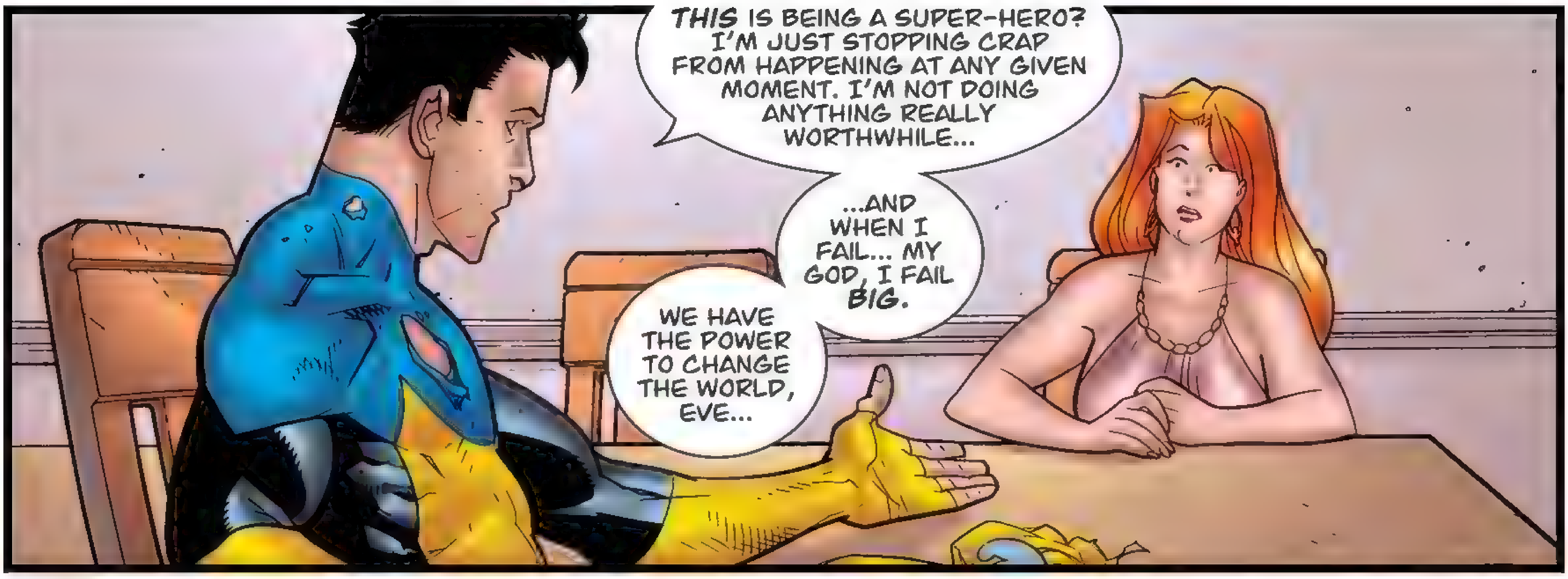
I FAILED... BUT YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR THAT--JUST LIKE YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FAMILY.
...
I DIDN'T BRING THEM TO THAT PLACE... I DIDN'T TIE THEM UP... I DIDN'T SHOOT ELECTRICAL CURRENT INTO THEIR BODIES.
I'M SORRY...
...BUT YOU DID THAT.
...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
OH, GOD... YOU'RE RIGHT.

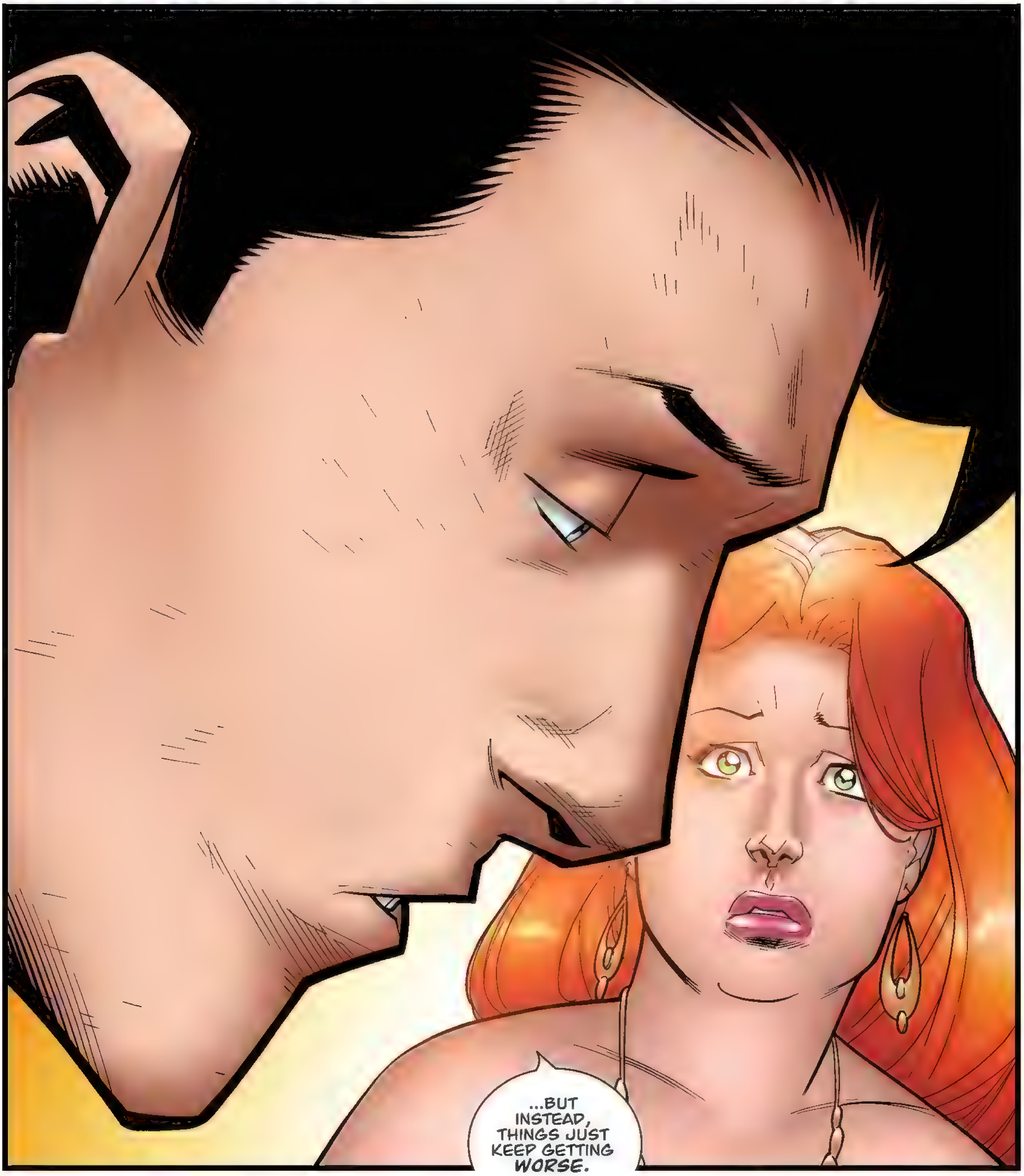

I KILLED MY FAMILY.
I'M SORRY.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO LET YOU GUYS DOWN.
I JUST... COULDN'T... I REALLY SCREWED UP.
IT'S OKAY... DON'T APOLOGIZE TO US.
HOW YOU HOLDING UP?
OKAY, HE'S REALLY POWERFUL, BUT IF YOU DON'T GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO ABSORB, HIS POWERS DROP OFF REALLY FAST.
I DON'T MEAN HIM. I MEAN VEGAS.
IT'S NOT EASY. IN A LOT OF WAYS, THIS GUY'S RIGHT. I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS BAD STUFF.
NOT IN THE WAY HE MEANS, BUT STILL...
...
I'M DEALING WITH IT.

WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE WITH HIM?
MORE COUNSELING. I'M NOT GOING TO LIE TO YOU, HE'S ACTUALLY QUITE THE LITTLE HERO WHEN YOU'RE NOT AROUND. THAT'S WHY WE RELEASED HIM TO BEGIN WITH.
I THINK CONFRONTING YOU LIKE THIS HAS LED TO A BREAKTHROUGH. POOR GUY LOST HIS SISTER, DIDN'T DEAL WELL WITH IT-- AND IT DROVE HIM TO ACCIDENTALLY KILL HIS WIFE AND SON.
IT'S TRAGIC... BUT LOCKING HIM AWAY DOES NOTHING. HE'S USEFUL.
I UNDERSTAND.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP HIM, LET ME KNOW.
AND WHAT ABOUT ME? YOU UP FOR HELPING ME IF I NEED HELP WITH SOMETHING?
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN BEING THE TWO-HUNDREDTH SUPERHERO ON YOUR PAYROLL. I'M DOING MY OWN THING.
YOU DID JUST FINE WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WHILE I WAS GONE.


DO I EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT KEPT YOU OUT?
ANOTHER VILLAIN, POWERPLEX-- IT'S TAKEN CARE OF.
NO LEVELED CITIES THIS TIME.
BAD JOKE.
YOU'RE NOT STILL BLAMING YOURSELF FOR THAT ARE YOU?
OF **COURSE** I AM, EVE... AND I **SHOULD** BE.
I DIDN'T JUST START DOING THIS BECAUSE OF MY DAD--OR BECAUSE I GOT POWERS. THIS WORLD SUCKS AND I WANT TO HELP PEOPLE.
ALL I WANT TO DO IS HELP PEOPLE.
WHEN I'M TEARING DOWN BUILDINGS, PUNCHING GIANT MONSTERS, BEATING THE SNOT OUT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE JUST CRAZY OR DISTURBED...
THAT'S NOT IT... THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANT TO DO.
MARK?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I DON'T KNOW...


THIS IS BEING A SUPER-HERO? I'M JUST STOPPING CRAP FROM HAPPENING AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT. I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING REALLY WORTHWHILE...
...AND WHEN I FAIL... MY GOD, I FAIL BIG.
WE HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD, EVE...


...BUT INSTEAD, THINGS JUST KEEP GETTING WORSE.

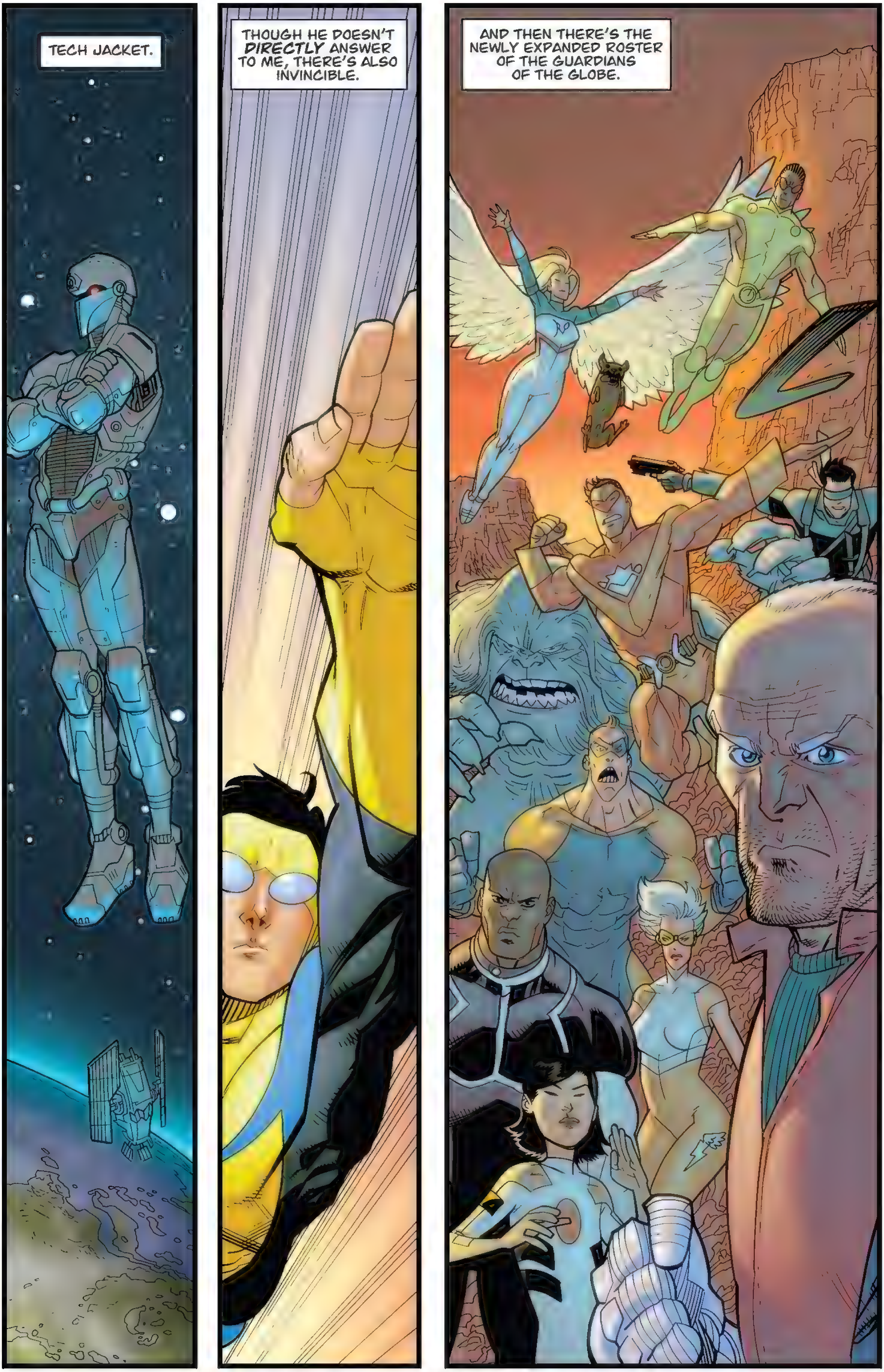
CHAPTER 82

YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?
ROBOT, YES... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
REX, ACTUALLY... IF YOU WOULD. I PREFER THAT, NOW.

SORRY, REX. PLEASE... SIT DOWN.
I KNOW THIS MUST BE WEIRD FOR YOU. IT'S BEEN LESS THAN A YEAR SINCE I'VE SEEN YOU... BUT FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR...
IT'S HARD TO GAUGE, AS THERE WASN'T REALLY A PLANETARY ROTATION THAT WAS SIMILAR. BUT I'D GUESS SOMEWHERE IN THE RANGE OF TWELVE YEARS.
I'M TOLD YOU WANT TO JUST DIVE BACK INTO THINGS. YOU'RE READY TO WORK?
I'VE BEEN THE RULING MONARCH OF THE FLAXAN EMPIRE FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS. THE LAST THREE OF THOSE YEARS HAVE BEEN AN UNPRECEDENTED ERA OF **PEACE.**
SIMPLY PUT... I SAVED THEIR WORLD. THERE WAS NOTHING MORE FOR ME TO DO.
I'M ANXIOUS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AGAIN.
WHY DID YOU COME BACK?
I DID WHAT I'D COME TO ACCOMPLISH... BUT MAKING THEM A CIVILIZATION DEVOTED TO PEACE... RUINED MY LIFE.
MY REASONS FOR RETURNING WERE... ***PERSONAL.***
...
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
NO, I'M SORRY. I SHOULD NOT HAVE SAID THAT. WE DON'T HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP THAT WOULD MAKE A COMMENT LIKE THAT APPROPRIATE.
IT'S TAKING ME LONGER THAN I EXPECTED TO REACQUAINT MYSELF WITH CERTAIN NUANCE IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR.

NO, I UNDERSTAND, COMPLETELY, IT'S OKAY... REALLY.
I DON'T WANT TO TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF YOUR TIME, REX. I BROUGHT YOU HERE TO OFFER YOU A JOB.
A JOB? AM I NO LONGER A MEMBER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE?
YOU ARE, BUT... I SEE SOMETHING BIGGER FOR YOU. THE CLIMATE FOR SUPER-HUMANS HAS CHANGED SOMEWHAT IN YOUR TIME AWAY.
PARIS, FRANCE AND LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, AS I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD, HAVE BOTH BEEN DESTROYED. THE EVIL OF OUR WORLD HAS... ORGANIZED, THEY'VE BECOME MORE EFFICIENT... MORE DEADLY.
THEIR PLANS ARE BIGGER, MORE WELL THOUGHT OUT--THEY'RE, WELL... THEY'RE SUCCEEDING AT THINGS THEY USUALLY FAIL AT.
I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. I CAN SEE HOW THIS WOULD CAUSE GREAT CONCERN FOR YOU.
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
I'M FRUSTRATED, BECAUSE I LOOK AROUND AND I SEE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO PUT AN END TO ALL THIS, BUT IT'S NOT COMING TOGETHER.
I THINK YOU'RE THE KEY TO CHANGING THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN... RESOURCES?

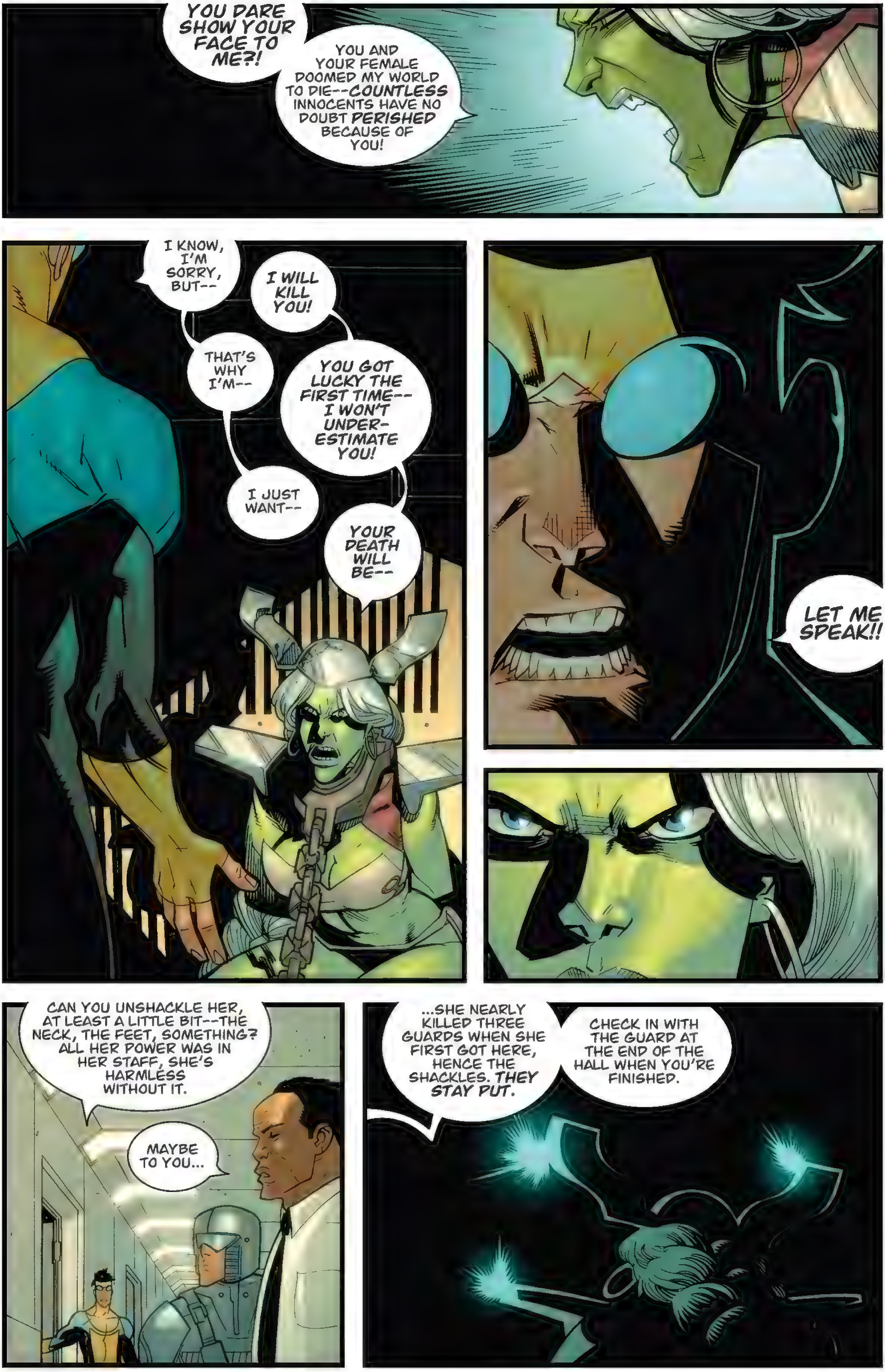
I'VE GOT ORGANIZED TEAMS OF HEROES BY THE DOZENS. I'VE GOT CAPES, INCORPORATED.
THE ACTIONEERS.
WOLF-MAN AND THE WOLF C.O.R.P.S.


TECH JACKET.
THOUGH HE DOESN'T *DIRECTLY* ANSWER TO ME, THERE'S ALSO INVINCIBLE.
AND THEN THERE'S THE NEWLY EXPANDED ROSTER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

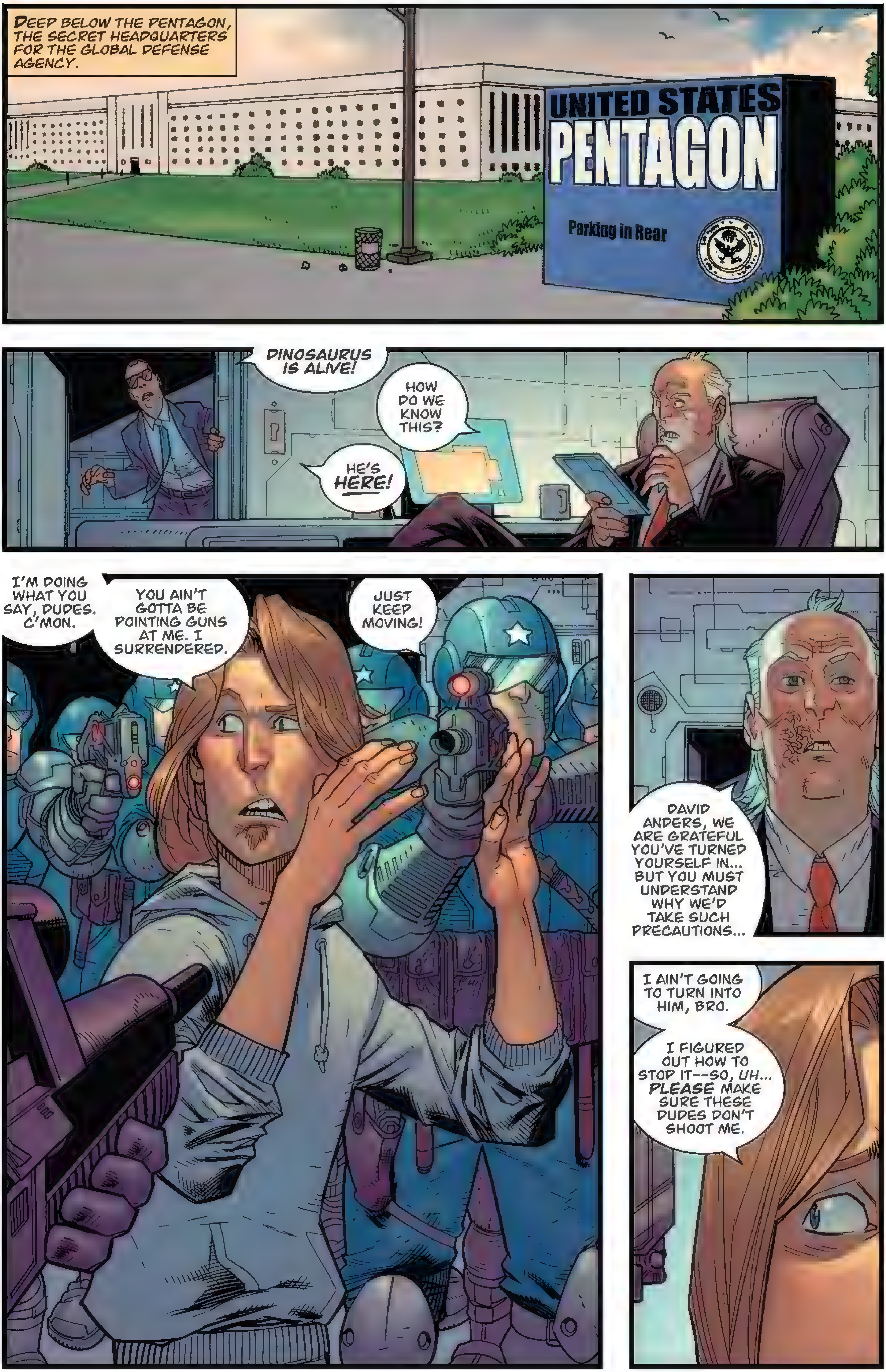
OKAY, WHAT DOES ALL THIS HAVE TO DO WITH *ME?*
I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO, WELL... BE IN CHARGE OF ALL OF THEM... ***ALL*** THE SUPER-HEROES I'M IN CONTACT WITH.
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO HELP ME MONITOR THE WORLD, AND PLACE THEM WHERE THEY NEED TO BE.
I KNOW THAT YOU, ABOVE ALL OTHERS, WOULD BE *PERFECT* IN THIS JOB.
I'VE SEEN YOU CARRY ON TWO DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS IN TWO LOCATIONS MILES APART BEFORE. YOU'RE SOMEHOW ABLE TO SPLIT YOUR FOCUS OVER MANY OF YOUR ROBOT CONSTRUCTS, CONTROLLING THEM ALL, SPEAKING THROUGH ALL OF THEM, SEEING THROUGH ALL OF THEM.
I KNOW THIS IS WHERE YOU'D BE MOST EFFECTIVE. IN THE EVENT OF A CRISIS, YOU COULD ORGANIZE HUNDREDS OF HEROES, DIRECTING THEM ALL TO DO EXACTLY WHAT IS NEEDED OF THEM.
DO YOU BELIEVE YOU'RE UP TO THIS TASK? IS THIS SOMETHING YOU'D BE INTERESTED IN DOING?
YES, ACTUALLY... I ACCEPT.
I AM WILLING TO DEVOTE MY ENTIRE LIFE TO THIS. THERE IS ***NOTHING*** ELSE FOR ME, NOT AFTER... THIS IS A DISTRACTION I WOULD ***WELCOME.***
OKAY THEN.
LET'S GET STARTED.

STRONGHOLD PRISON.
THIS IS VERY UNUSUAL, INVINCIBLE. I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE GOT IN MIND, BUT I'M CONCERNED.
I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU... AFTER WHAT HAPPENED IN LAS VEGAS UNDER YOUR WATCH, I WANTED TO REFUSE YOUR REQUEST.
WHY *DIDN'T* YOU?
LET'S JUST SAY YOU'VE GOT FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES. FRIENDS THAT **TRUST** YOU.
MORE THAN I DO.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS OUR CONTRACT WITH INVINCIBLE, INC. I DON'T KNOW THAT--
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M HERE FOR. IF YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS WITH THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THINGS, YOU KNOW **EVE** HANDLES THAT.
THIS IS THE CELL, SIR.
OPEN IT UP.
SHE'S ALL YOURS, KID.

UM...
UH...
HI?


YOU DARE SHOW YOUR FACE TO ME?!
YOU AND YOUR FEMALE DOOMED MY WORLD TO DIE--COUNTLESS INNOCENTS HAVE NO DOUBT PERISHED BECAUSE OF YOU!
I KNOW, I'M SORRY, BUT--
I WILL KILL YOU!
THAT'S WHY I'M--
YOU GOT LUCKY THE FIRST TIME--I WON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOU!
I JUST WANT--
YOUR DEATH WILL BE--
LET ME SPEAK!!
CAN YOU UNSHACKLE HER, AT LEAST A LITTLE BIT--THE NECK, THE FEET, SOMETHING? ALL HER POWER WAS IN HER STAFF, SHE'S HARMLESS WITHOUT IT.
MAYBE TO YOU...
...SHE NEARLY KILLED THREE GUARDS WHEN SHE FIRST GOT HERE, HENCE THE SHACKLES. THEY STAY PUT.
CHECK IN WITH THE GUARD AT THE END OF THE HALL WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED.

Crocke
THEIR FATHER IS PROBABLY LETTING THEM WATCH TV THE WHOLE TIME I'M GONE... WHICH THEY'LL LOVE. AND REALLY, THANKS FOR CALLING. ANY EXCUSE FOR ME TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE.
I LOVE MY KIDS, I REALLY DO. BUT I TAKE EVERY LITTLE BREAK I CAN.
I WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN. I'M SORRY HOW LAST TIME--
OH, AND SALAD TIME! I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE UNTIL NOW.
BRAVO, GIRL.
YOU LOSING THE WEIGHT FOR MARK NOW THAT HE'S BACK?
MY, GOD--NO. I'M EATING A SALAD BECAUSE I... LIKE SALAD.
AND I DIDN'T GAIN THE WEIGHT FROM OVER-EATING. IT WAS BECAUSE I JUST STOPPED... DOING... ANYTHING WHILE MARK WAS GONE.
I NEVER REALIZED HOW MANY CALORIES USING MY POWERS BURNED. I DIDN'T REALLY DO MUCH OF ANYTHING SUPER-HERO-WISE WHILE MARK WAS GONE.
I'M ACTUALLY SLOWLY LOSING WEIGHT NOW THAT I'M BACK IN ACTION FROM TIME TO TIME.
WELL, THEN I BET MARK IS JUST THRILLED.
ACTUALLY. MARK LIKES ME THE WAY I AM.
HE DOES?
REALLY?
WEIRD.


DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS FOR THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
DINOSAURUS IS ALIVE!
HOW DO WE KNOW THIS?
HE'S HERE!
I'M DOING WHAT YOU SAY, DUDES. C'MON.
YOU AIN'T GOTTA BE POINTING GUNS AT ME. I SURRENDERED.
JUST KEEP MOVING!
DAVID ANDERS, WE ARE GRATEFUL YOU'VE TURNED YOURSELF IN... BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND WHY WE'D TAKE SUCH PRECAUTIONS...
I AIN'T GOING TO TURN INTO HIM, BRO.
I FIGURED OUT HOW TO STOP IT--SO, UH... PLEASE MAKE SURE THESE DUDES DON'T SHOOT ME.

OKAY, FIRST OF ALL, I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T REALLY THINK ABOUT COMING TO SEE YOU UNTIL RECENTLY. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO RETHINK HOW I DO THINGS A BIT, BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING ABOUT THIS JOB ALL WRONG LATELY AND...
YOU DON'T CARE-- *SORRY.*
I DON'T WANT TO WASTE ANY MORE OF YOUR TIME.
WHY ARE YOU *HERE?*
I'M GOING TO TRY AND TALK THEM INTO LETTING YOU *GO.*
OKAY, SO NOW I'VE GOT YOUR ATTENTION.
GOOD.
OKAY, HERE GOES.
I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT YOU DID SOME BAD STUFF. REALLY BAD STUFF. YOU ALMOST KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE.
BUT I DON'T KNOW THAT THE ANSWER IS KEEPING YOU HERE... WHAT DOES THAT *ACCOMPLISH?*
IF CECIL COULD HEAR ME NOW...

OKAY, THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS, I GET IT--YOUR WORLD IS IN DANGER, IT NEEDS POWER--YOU'VE GOT PEOPLE DYING. YOU'RE DESPERATE.
BUT YOU'RE HERE TO HELP PEOPLE, YOUR PEOPLE, BUT STILL--IT COUNTS. WHAT I'M SAYING IS, YOU'RE NOT EVIL.
YOU'RE DESPERATE.
YOU JUST WANT TO SAVE YOUR PLANET... IF YOU COULD DO THAT WITHOUT HURTING ANYONE... YOU'D DO IT, RIGHT?
...
LET ME BE CLEAR. IF I COULD GET YOU SET FREE, AND ALSO SOMEHOW HELP YOU--SO THAT YOU COULD GO BACK TO YOUR HOME WORLD...
WOULD YOU COOPERATE WITH ME, WITHOUT FIGHTING ME OR TRYING TO KILL ME... OR ANYONE ON THIS PLANET?
YES.

PRETTY IMPRESSED BY YOU TODAY, KID.
NOTHING SPECIAL-- IT'S NOT A **PERMANENT** FIX.
I WAS GOING TO KEEP HER LOCKED UP, WHAT-- FOREVER?
INSTEAD, WE'RE GIVING HER ENOUGH ENERGY TO GET HOME, AND HELP HER PEOPLE FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME--AND IT'S ONLY COSTING US A COUPLE HUNDRED MILLION IN ELECTRICITY.
IT'S A SIMPLE PLAN. ROLLING BLACKOUTS ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN TEN MINUTE INTERVALS, FEED HER THE JUICE INSTEAD.
DOESN'T HURT ANYONE-- JUST HELPS.
WELL, **WE** DIDN'T THINK OF IT. YOU DID.
YOUR PEOPLE WERE **SCARED** OF HER. THAT'S A PROBLEM.
ANYWAY, LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ALMOST DONE, I'LL NEED TO ESCORT HER TO THE NEXT POWER STATION.
SURE, LISTEN. COME BY THE PENTAGON AFTER YOU'RE DONE WITH HER... I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
...
NOTHING **SERIOUS.**
OH, UH... SURE. WILL DO.

THANK YOU.
NO PROBLEM.
I HOPE IT'S ENOUGH TO TIDE YOUR PLANET OVER LONG ENOUGH TO FIND A PERMANENT SOLUTION.
I'M SORRY WE KEPT YOU PRISONER FOR SO LONG.
I *ATTACKED* YOU. I WAS WRONG TO TRY AND OVERPOWER YOU AND TAKE WHAT I NEEDED.
YOU WERE RIGHT, I WAS DESPERATE.
YOU ARE A GREAT MAN TO *FORGIVE* MY ACTIONS.
UH... THANKS.
JUST, *UH...* LET US DO WHAT WE CAN. DON'T, Y'KNOW... TRY TO ATTACK AGAIN LATER.
THAT WOULD MAKE ME LOOK BAD.
I HOPE TO ONE DAY REPAY YOUR KINDNESS.
OKAY, COOL.
THAT SMILE HAD ME WORRIED FOR A MINUTE.

LOOK, MAN. I KNOW I DID A BAD THING--I MEAN, NOT *ME* BUT LIKE, THAT *PART* OF ME, Y'KNOW... THE DINOSAUR GUY.
I MEAN... WHAT I DID TO VEGAS... LIKE... *SUCKS*. IT *TOTALLY* SUCKS.
SO I UNDERSTAND, LOCK ME AWAY. I CAN'T STOP THAT DUDE INSIDE ME--HE'S INSANE, MAN. SO, Y'KNOW... I TOTALLY SURRENDER AND STUFF.
IT WAS VERY HEROIC OF YOU TO TURN YOURSELF IN. WE'RE VERY GRATEFUL--
YO, MAN. I AIN'T DONE--
I DON'T WANT TO BE TIED TO THE FLOOR OR NOTHING. I WANT TO BE TAKEN CARE OF. I'M NOT EVIL OR ANYTHING.
IT'S THE THING INSIDE ME. SO I SAY, LOCK ME UP--BUT DON'T LIKE... *PUNISH* ME. OKAY?
I'M SURE WE CAN MAKE SOME KIND OF ARRANGEMENTS... SOMETHING TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED, COMFORTABLE.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW YOU CAME TO BE THE WAY YOU ARE--WHAT CREATED THIS DINOSAURUS PERSONALITY?
NO, BUT I DID FIGURE OUT WHAT MAKES ME CHANGE INTO HIM... I FELT IT COMING ON BEFORE I ESCAPED LAST TIME.
IT'S LIKE, I DON'T KNOW THE WORD--IT'S WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE... YOU JUST DON'T *CARE* ABOUT STUFF.
INDIFFERENCE?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT. IT'S WHEN YOU'RE LIKE "*OH, WELL*" AND YOU DON'T HAVE LIKE... AN OPINION ON SOMETHING.
THAT'S CALLED *INDIFFERENCE*.
SO YOU'RE SAYING AN OVERWHELMING FEELING OF INDIFFERENCE TURNS YOU INTO DINOSAURUS?
HUH?

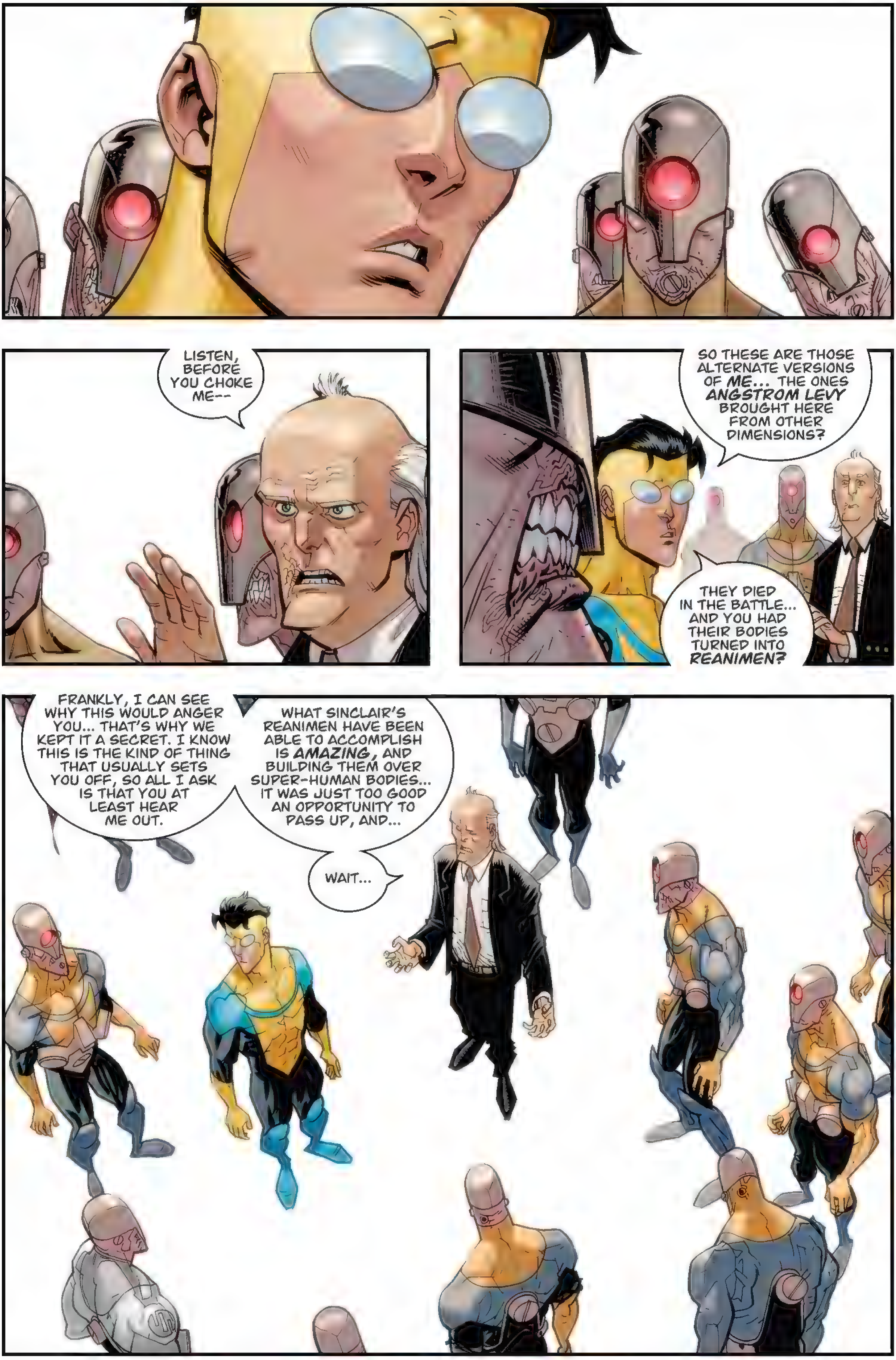
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CENTRAL BASE, UTAH.
I ACCEPTED, OF COURSE. IT REALLY IS A GOOD IDEA. IT'S DEFINITELY HOW I'D BE MOST USEFUL. IT'S REALLY A GLORIFIED DISPATCHER, BUT MY DRONES COULD BE ASSISTING IN BATTLE AS WELL.
I THINK IT WILL GIVE ME *PURPOSE*.
SOMETHING I REALLY MISSED WHEN WE WERE RULING THE FLAXAN EMPIRE.
ARE YOU... ADJUSTING WELL?
EVERYTHING IS SO... *DIFFERENT* NOW...
YEAH.

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS FOR THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
MEETING IN THE WHITE ROOM? THIS IS NEVER A GOOD SIGN.
I THINK WE'RE PAST ALL THAT. RELAX, I JUST WANT TO TALK.
I BELIEVE YOU'VE BEEN BROUGHT UP TO SPEED ON THE VARIOUS THINGS THAT HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE GONE... AND YOU'VE WITNESSED FIRST HAND JUST HOW BAD THINGS ARE OUT THERE.
YEAH. IT WAS ALWAYS DANGEROUS... BUT... I COULD STAND TO HAVE A FEW MORE BANK ROBBERS AND A LOT LESS DESTROYED CITIES...
NOT TO MAKE LIGHT OF THINGS...
WHAT I'M GETTING AT, IS... I'D JUST LIKE TO KNOW IF I CAN COUNT ON YOU... IF I NEED YOU.
WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES IN THE PAST, BUT YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T TURN AWAY FROM A SITUATION WHERE I WAS NEEDED.
I'M NOT WEARING AN EARPIECE ANY TIME SOON, THOUGH... IN FACT, I'VE BEEN THINKING...

I'M STARTING TO SEE A TIME WHEN I'M NOT EVEN WEARING THE COSTUME ANYMORE.
DRESSING UP, PUNCHING GUYS... I MEAN, IT HAS ITS PLACE, BUT I'VE RECENTLY BEEN LOOKING AT THINGS... ***DIFFERENTLY***.
LIKE UNIVERSA TODAY. WE TALKED, WE RESOLVED SOMETHING... SHE'S NO LONGER AN ENEMY. I THINK.
THAT SEEMS SO MUCH ***SMARTER*** THAN... FIGHTING.
MAYBE IF I'D TRIED A DIFFERENT APPROACH WITH DINOSAURUS...
THAT THING IS A ***MANIAC***. NOTHING WOULD GET THROUGH TO HIM.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CERTAIN? EVERYONE ***WANTS*** SOMETHING... AND THESE GUYS ARE JUST TRYING TO GET IT.
I DON'T AGREE WITH HIS METHODS, BUT FROM WHAT HE SAYS, DINOSAURUS THINKS HE'S ACTUALLY ***HELPING*** HUMANITY.
I THINK THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING TO THAT...
THAT'S AN ARGUMENT FOR ANOTHER TIME, THEN.
SO, TO WRAP UP... I CAN COUNT ON YOU IF I NEED YOU?
OF COURSE... YES.
GOOD. NOW THAT WE'RE ON SPEAKING TERMS AGAIN, I FIGURE IT'S BEST TO JUST ***TELL*** YOU THINGS UP FRONT THAT I FEEL MIGHT UPSET YOU.
DON'T BE ALARMED, BUT...

THERE ARE THINGS I'VE BEEN KEEPING FROM YOU...

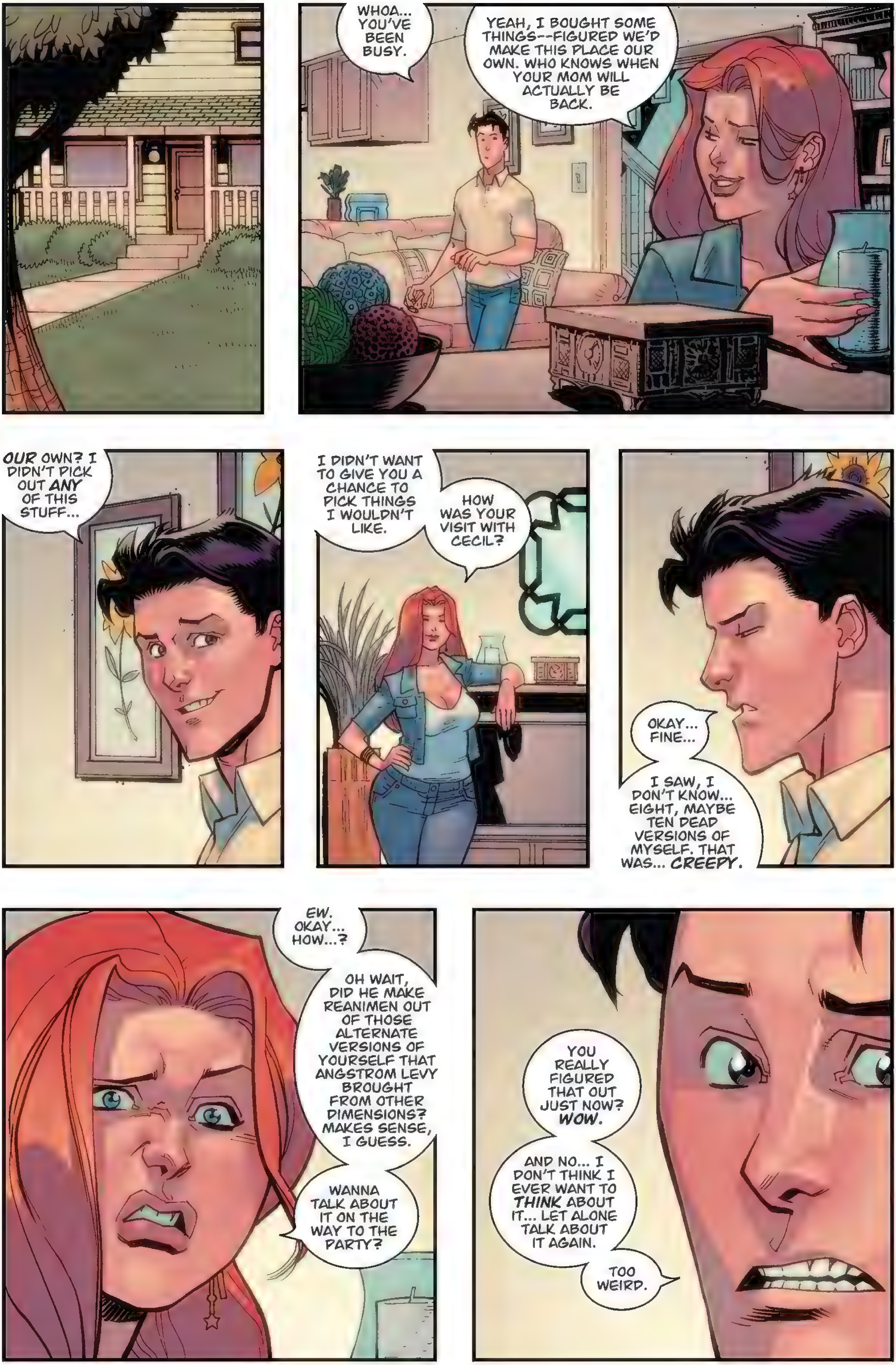
CHAPTER 83


LISTEN, BEFORE YOU CHOKE ME--
SO THESE ARE THOSE ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF *ME*... THE ONES *ANGSTROM LEVY* BROUGHT HERE FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS?
THEY DIED IN THE BATTLE... AND YOU HAD THEIR BODIES TURNED INTO *REANIMEN?*
FRANKLY, I CAN SEE WHY THIS WOULD ANGER YOU... THAT'S WHY WE KEPT IT A SECRET. I KNOW THIS IS THE KIND OF THING THAT USUALLY SETS YOU OFF, SO ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU AT LEAST HEAR ME OUT.
WHAT SINCLAIR'S REANIMEN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH IS *AMAZING*, AND BUILDING THEM OVER SUPER-HUMAN BODIES... IT WAS JUST TOO GOOD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PASS UP, AND...
WAIT...

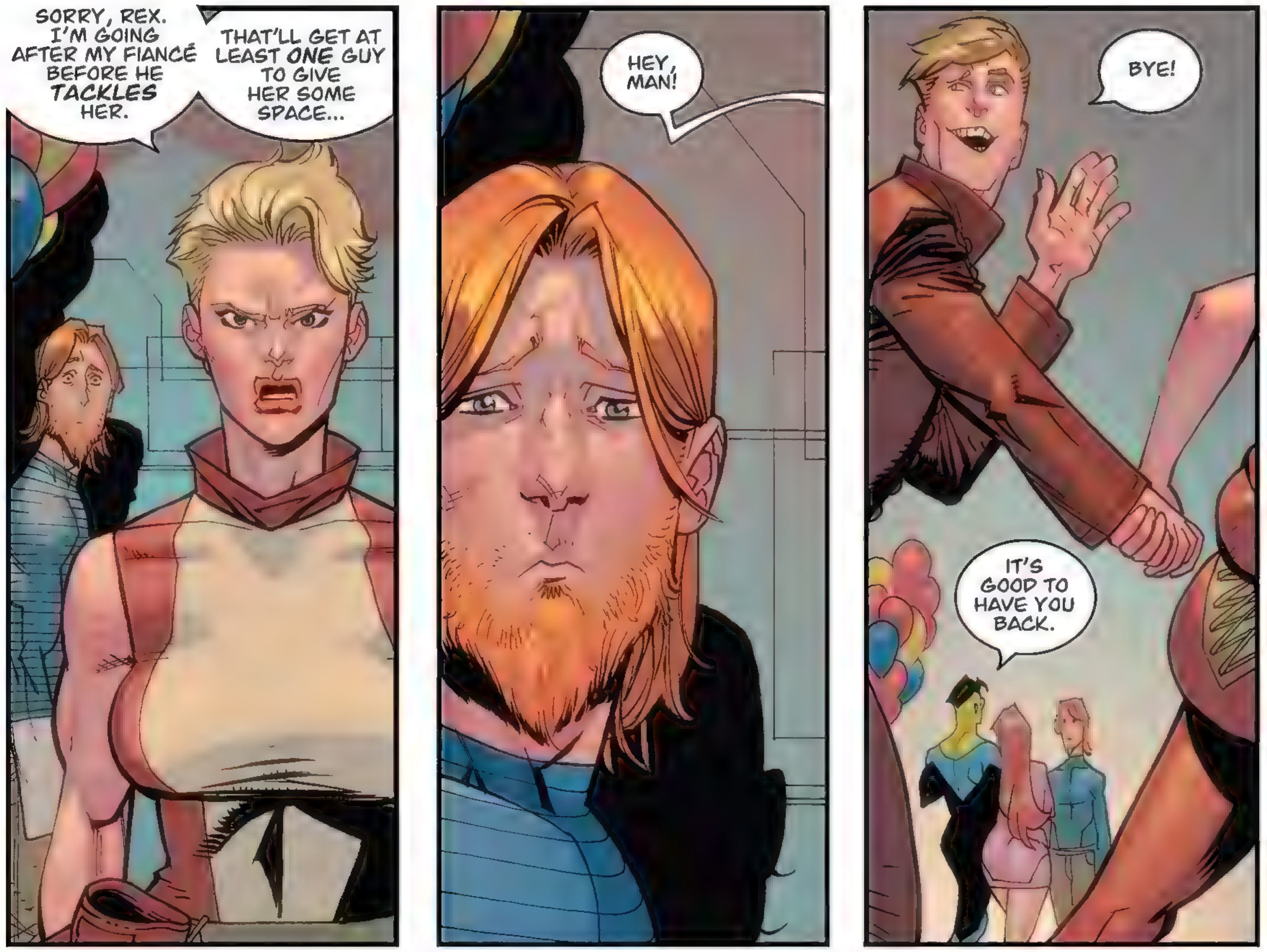
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CHOKE ME?
I'M NOT.
THIS... AS UNCOMFORTABLE AS IT MAKES ME... MAKES SENSE.
IT'S... WEIRD, SEEING MYSELF, DEAD.
THESE THINGS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN UNSETTLING... EVEN MORE SO WHEN IT'S YOU THAT YOU'RE SEEING.
UGH.
THESE GUYS TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD, THERE'S NO CHANCE OF THEM REGAINING CONTROL-- RESUMING THEIR ATTACK?
NONE.
SINCLAIR'S TECHNOLOGY ONLY USES ENOUGH OF THE BRAIN TO CONTROL THE BODY. THOUGHT PROCESSES, PERSONALITY... NONE OF THAT IS LEFT.
THEY'RE ESSENTIALLY ROBOTS. HE'S PERFECTED THINGS A GREAT DEAL SINCE HE FIRST BEGAN THESE EXPERIMENTS.
OKAY THEN...

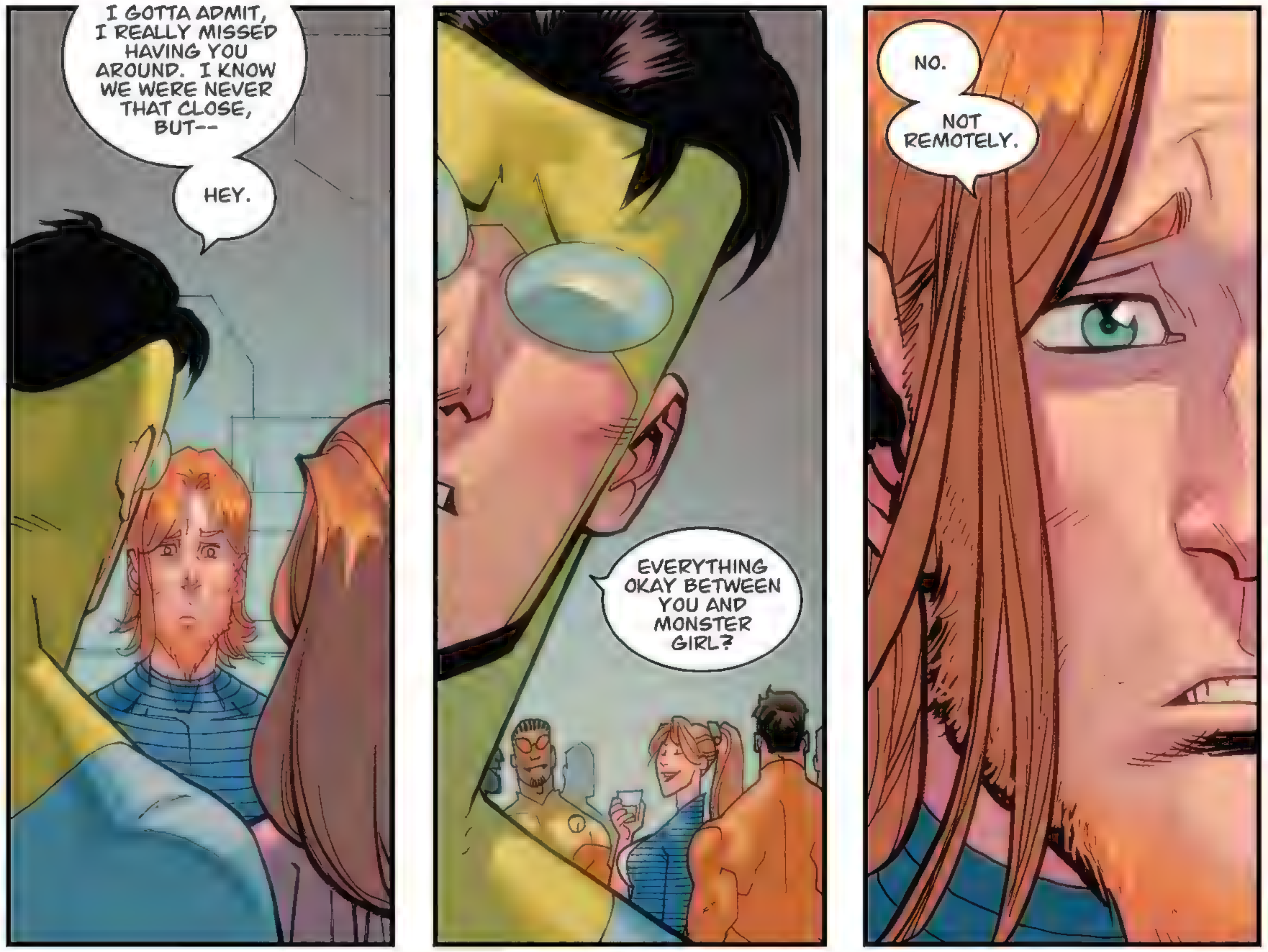
LOOK, THIS CHANGES NOTHING.
YOU NEED ME. CALL.
IF YOU DON'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE, I'LL LET MYSELF OUT.
WOW.

THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF CRIMINAL MASTERMIND, TITAN.
WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING, BOSS.
WE'VE TRIED TO GO LEGIT... THAT DIDN'T WORK, WE JUST COULDN'T MAKE ENDS MEET.
WE TRIED TO GO BACK TO CRIME ON OUR OWN--WE COULDN'T HACK IT.
WORKING FOR MACHINE HEAD WAS NO GREAT SHAKES... BUT YOU WERE ONE OF US--A THUG, YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE...
WORKING FOR YOU, IT'S BEEN EASIER. AND WE KNOW WE HAVEN'T BEEN THE MOST USEFUL PARTS OF YOUR ORGANIZATION...
IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME TO INTERRUPT YOUR RAMBLE...
YOU WISH TO PROVE YOUR WORTH. UNDERSTANDABLE. ADMIRABLE. THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'M STILL TRYING TO REBUILD MY ORGANIZATION IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT DEBACLE WITH THE ORDER.*
IT'S BROUGHT DOWN A LOT OF HEAT ON ME AND THIS ORGANIZATION.
*SEE GUARDING THE GLOBE, VOLUME 1.
SO WHAT I'M SAYING IS, THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU COULD PROVE VERY VALUABLE TO ME.
WERE YOU WILLING TO TAKE THINGS TO THE NEXT LEVEL... IN FACT, I THINK I KNOW JUST THE TASK WITH WHICH TO PROVE YOURSELVES.


WHOA... YOU'VE BEEN BUSY.
YEAH, I BOUGHT SOME THINGS--FIGURED WE'D MAKE THIS PLACE OUR OWN. WHO KNOWS WHEN YOUR MOM WILL ACTUALLY BE BACK.
OUR OWN? I DIDN'T PICK OUT *ANY* OF THIS STUFF...
I DIDN'T WANT TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO PICK THINGS I WOULDN'T LIKE.
HOW WAS YOUR VISIT WITH CECIL?
OKAY... FINE...
I SAW, I DON'T KNOW... EIGHT, MAYBE TEN DEAD VERSIONS OF MYSELF. THAT WAS... *CREEPY*.
EW. OKAY... HOW...?
OH WAIT, DID HE MAKE REANIMEN OUT OF THOSE ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF YOURSELF THAT ANGSTROM LEVY BROUGHT FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS? MAKES SENSE, I GUESS.
WANNA TALK ABOUT IT ON THE WAY TO THE PARTY?
YOU REALLY FIGURED THAT OUT JUST NOW? *WOW*.
AND NO... I DON'T THINK I EVER WANT TO *THINK* ABOUT IT... LET ALONE TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN.
TOO WEIRD.

AND YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR *TWELVE* YEARS FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE?
YOU RULED THE FLAXAN EMPIRE FOR A TIME--THAT'S IMPRESSIVE.
WELCOME BACK
YOUR TIME AWAY HAS CERTAINLY, UM... *BENEFITED* YOU...
THAT'S RIGHT, BOYS. *TWELVE* YEARS AWAY... SOME OF YOU I BARELY REMEMBER, SOME OF YOU I *DON'T* REMEMBER...
...AND TAKE NOTE--THE WOMAN YOU SEE BEFORE YOU HAS A BRAIN THAT'S OVER *FORTY YEARS OLD.*
THERE ARE PARTS OF YOUR CLOTHES WHERE THERE ARE *NO* CLOTHES AND WE CAN SEE YOUR *SKIN* INSTEAD.
AND MONSTER GIRL
UGH. DO THEY STILL MAKE *CIGARETTES?*


SORRY, REX. I'M GOING AFTER MY FIANCÉ BEFORE HE *TACKLES* HER.
THAT'LL GET AT LEAST *ONE* GUY TO GIVE HER SOME SPACE...
HEY, MAN!
BYE!
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.


I GOTTA ADMIT, I REALLY MISSED HAVING YOU AROUND. I KNOW WE WERE NEVER THAT CLOSE, BUT--
HEY.
EVERYTHING OKAY BETWEEN YOU AND MONSTER GIRL?
NO.
NOT REMOTELY.

I'M GOING TO GO STAKE OUT THEIR PLACE--IT'S LIKE A ***FORTRESS.*** FOR THE RECORD, I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THIS, TITAN REALLY IS ASKING FOR THE MOON... WHY WOULD HE SEND JUST ***US?***
TO AVOID RETALIATION. HE WANTS US TO LOOK LIKE ROGUE AGENTS--LIKE HE'S NOT BEHIND IT. HE DOESN'T THINK WE'LL PULL IT OFF.
BUT WE ***WILL...*** I'D COME WITH YOU, BUT I REALLY NEED TO SEPARATE--I'VE BEEN BONDED TOO LONG.
I GET IT, MAN. AT LEAST... CLEAN UP A LITTLE OR SOMETHING WHILE I'M OUT.
HE'S GONE. YEAH. HE KNOWS YOU'RE ALIVE, THOUGH. WE DON'T KEEP SECRETS FROM EACH OTHER.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WON'T TALK TO ME IN FRONT OF HIM--I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE HIM, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S GOING TO ***HEAR*** YOU.
I KNOW... BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I ***WANT.*** I KNOW A PERMANENT BOND WOULD MAKE ME STRONGER--MAYBE EVEN HELP US PULL THIS OFF, BUT YOU'VE SAID IT WOULD... ***TRANSFORM*** ME.
I TRUST YOU... WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR YEARS... BUT I JUST DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.
NO, OKAY? I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.
PLEASE... DON'T BRING IT UP AGAIN.
OH, CALM DOWN.
IT'S OKAY--IT'LL JUST BE FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, GIRL. I'M THE GET REACQUAINTED **EXPERT**. I'LL TAKE YOU UNDER MY WING. GET YOU UP TO SPEED.
WELCOME B
YOU KNOW, OUR MINDS AREN'T THAT FAR APART IN AGE... I'M ALMOST FORTY, MYSELF. WE'VE PROBABLY GOT A LOT IN COMMON.
DO TELL...
SO THERE'S REALLY NOTHING GOING ON BETWEEN YOU AND ROBOT--ER, ***REX?*** YOU KIDS KIND OF HAD SOME KIND OF PUPPY LOVE THING GOING ON BEFORE YOU WENT AWAY AND GREW UP.
NO, WE... THAT'S ***OVER.*** BUT... DID YOU THINK WE WERE SOMEHOW... YIKES. I'M ***COMPLETELY*** OUT OF SYNC WITH HUMAN BEHAVIOR. I'M SORRY THAT I DIDN'T PICK UP ON IT SOONER.
THERE'S ***NOTHING*** HAPPENING HERE BETWEEN US...
I'M SORRY, IT'S...
...JUST TOO ***SOON.***

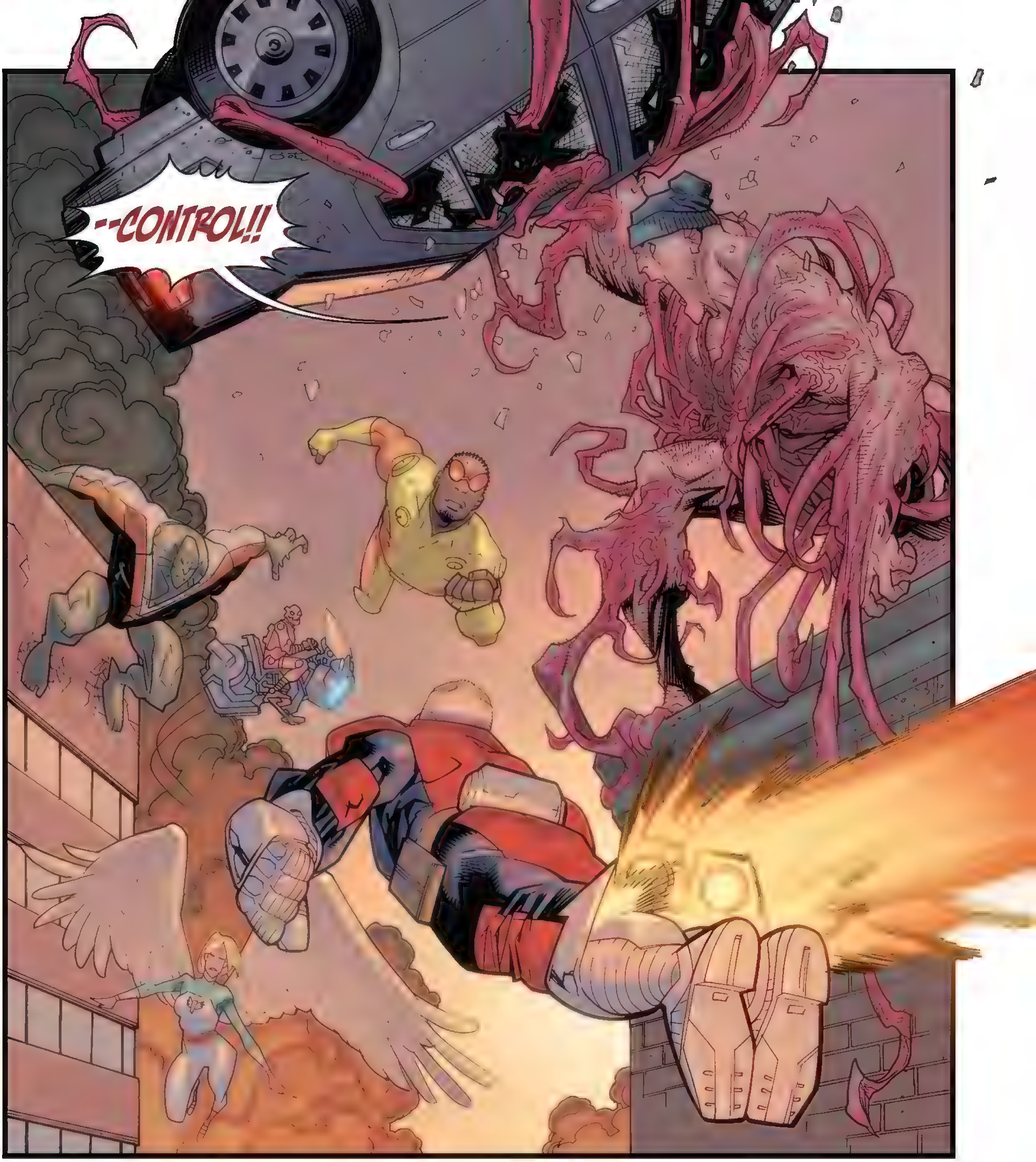
I THOUGHT IT WAS NICE.
THE PARTY WAS FINE. IT'S JUST, ROBOT. **REX,** UGH... WHATEVER. I'M NEVER GOING TO GET USED TO THAT.
IT WAS HARD SEEING HIM JUST... WATCH MONSTER GIRL GETTING **BOMBARDED** BY THOSE GUYS.
IT'S WEIRD FOR ME, SEEING HIM AT ALL.
AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL EVER BE ABLE TO CALL HIM **REX.**
YEAH, I HADN'T EVEN CONSIDERED WHAT THAT MUST BE LIKE... HE DOES LOOK JUST LIKE HIM NOW THAT HE'S OLDER.
YEAH...
SIGH
CHEER ME UP. LET'S HAVE SEX.
UM.
WHAT'S **WRONG?**
THIS ROOM... WE STILL HAVEN'T...
HAVE SEX WITH ME!
HAVE SEX WITH ME IN YOUR PARENTS' BED!
NOT HELPING!

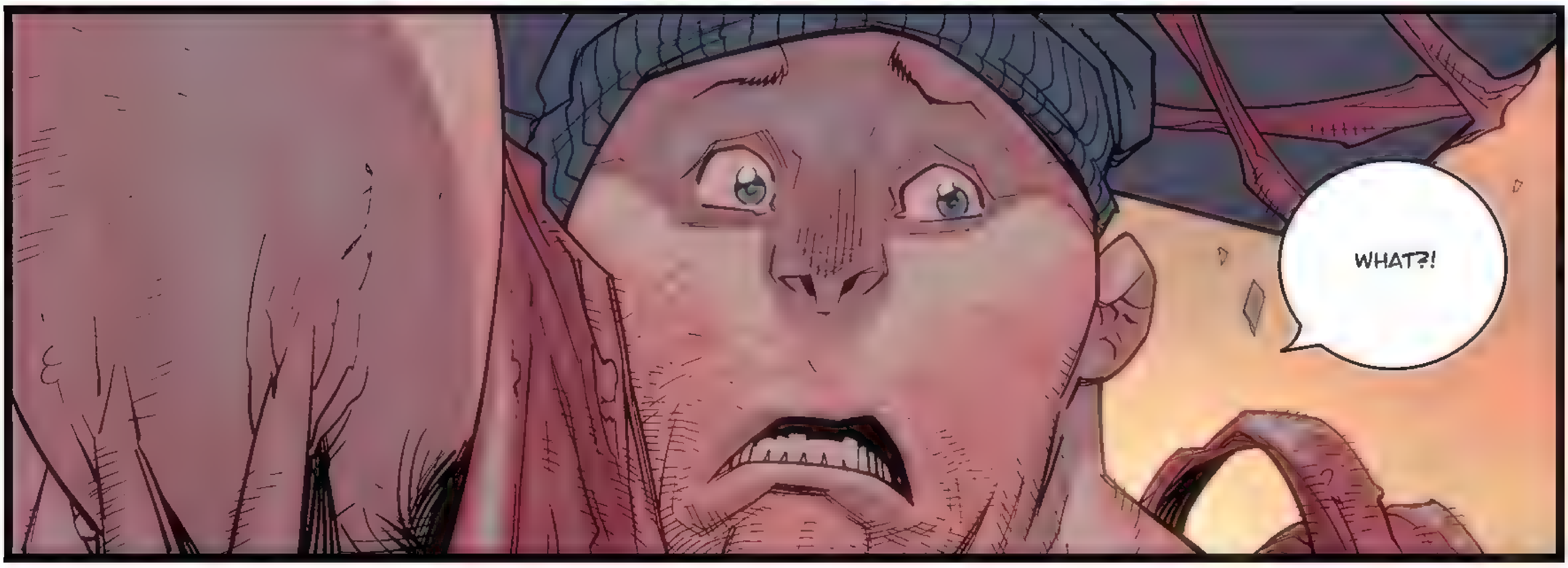
SHUNKROOSH!!
IT'S ALL OVER, MACHINE HEAD!
WHAT?!
MAGMANIAC?! TETHER TYRANT?!
ARE YOU ⫶BZZT⫶ IDIOTS?!
VAULT. KILL THEM!

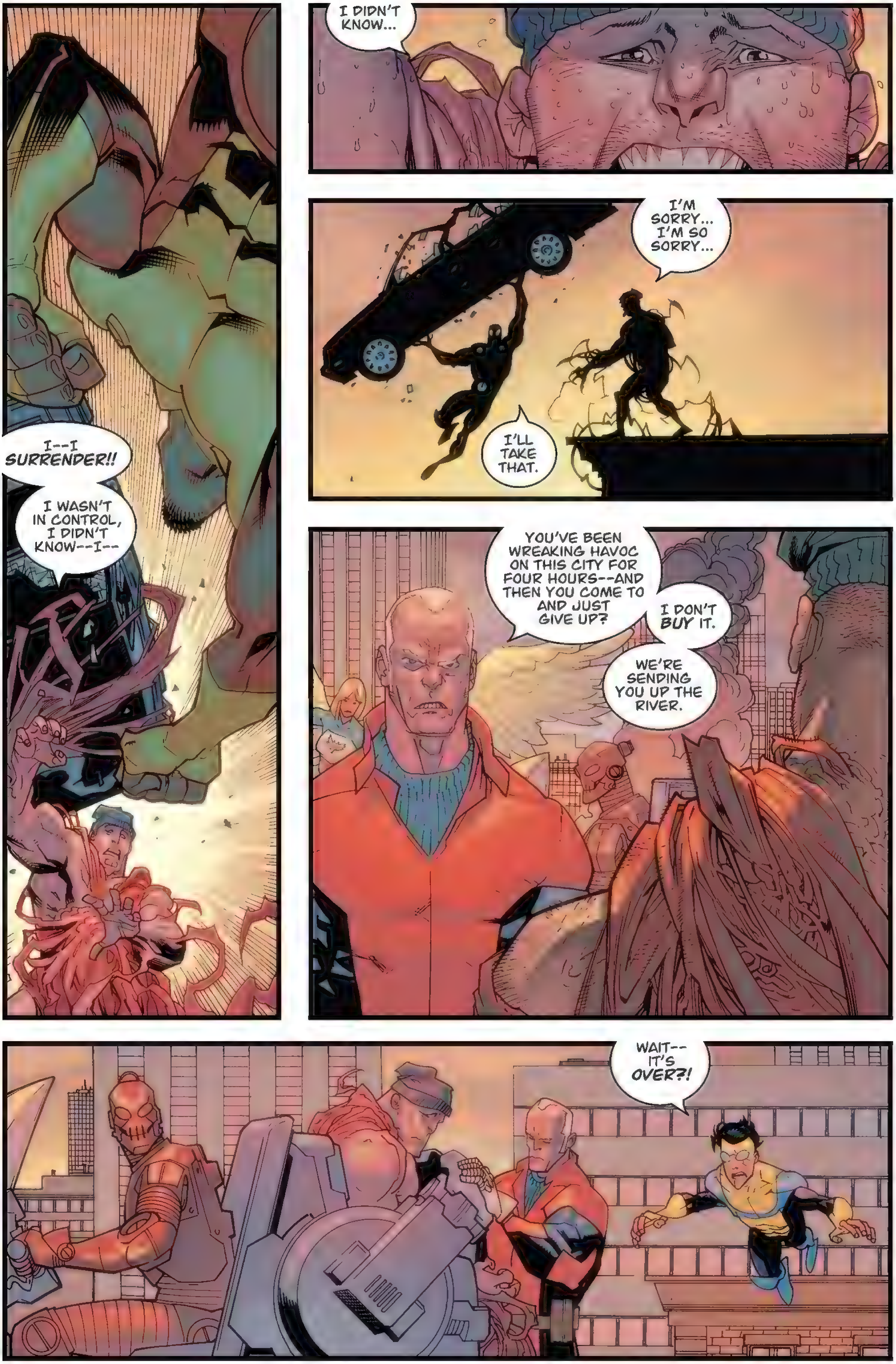
TAKE THIS LOSER DOWN--I'M GOING AFTER MACHINE HEAD!
LOSER?! VAULT IS NO LOSER!
VAULT IS--
BZZZKTT!!
VAULT IS PREPARED-- UNSTOPPABLE!
HOW BAD AT THIS ARE YOU?! I WORKED FOR YOU FOR THREE YEARS AND YOU DON'T KNOW BULLETS CAN'T HURT ME?!
VAULT!
YOU EXIST IN A LIQUID STATE? INTERESTING.
YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS MUST EXIST IN SOME FORM OF ELECTRICAL CURRENT-- THAT ALLOWS YOU TO CONTROL ALL PARTS OF YOUR BODY.
VAULT WILL SEE HOW YOU WORK WHEN THAT IS DISRUPTED.
VBLOOOT!

JAMES!!
YOU CAN FORM A NEW HEAD-- C'MON, YOU'RE NOT...
YOU'RE NOT...
DO IT. NOW.
TAKE OVER, DO THE PERMANENT BOND, I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS... THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME.
AARRGH!!
WHAT IN--?

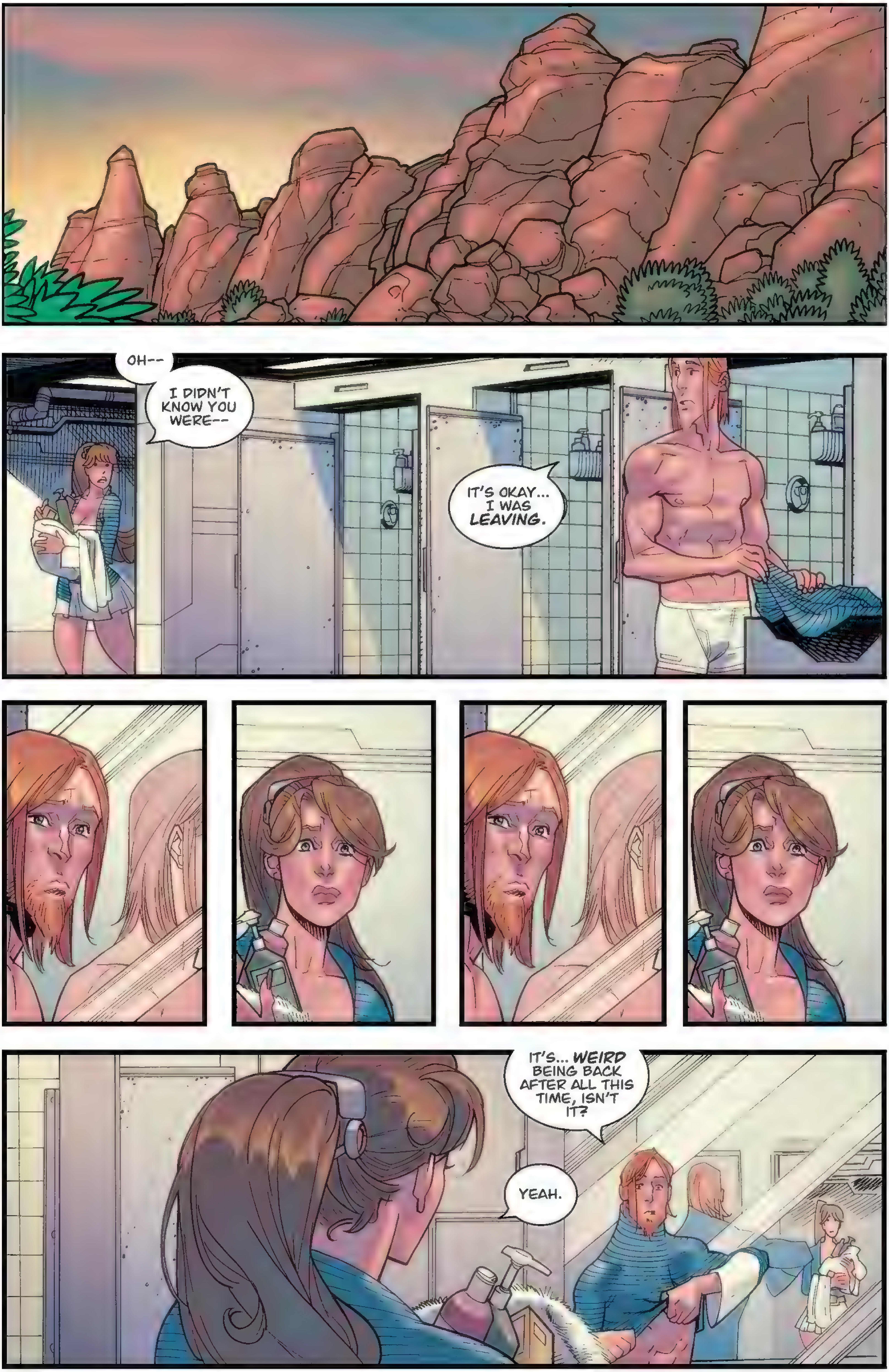
WAIT-- WHAT IS THIS?! HELLO?!
WHERE AM I? ARE YOU HERE?
DID WE BOND? DID YOU TAKE OVER? DID...
DID I DIE, TOO?
JAMES... HOW COULD I LET--
...
IF YOU CAN HEAR ME--I DON'T *WANT* THIS! I TAKE IT BACK! I DON'T WANT YOU TO TAKE OVER.
HELLO?! I'M *SERIOUS!!*
IF YOU'RE OUT THERE-- IF YOU CAN HEAR ME! I WANT MY BODY BACK! I DEMAND YOU GIVE IT TO ME!
I WANT--!!

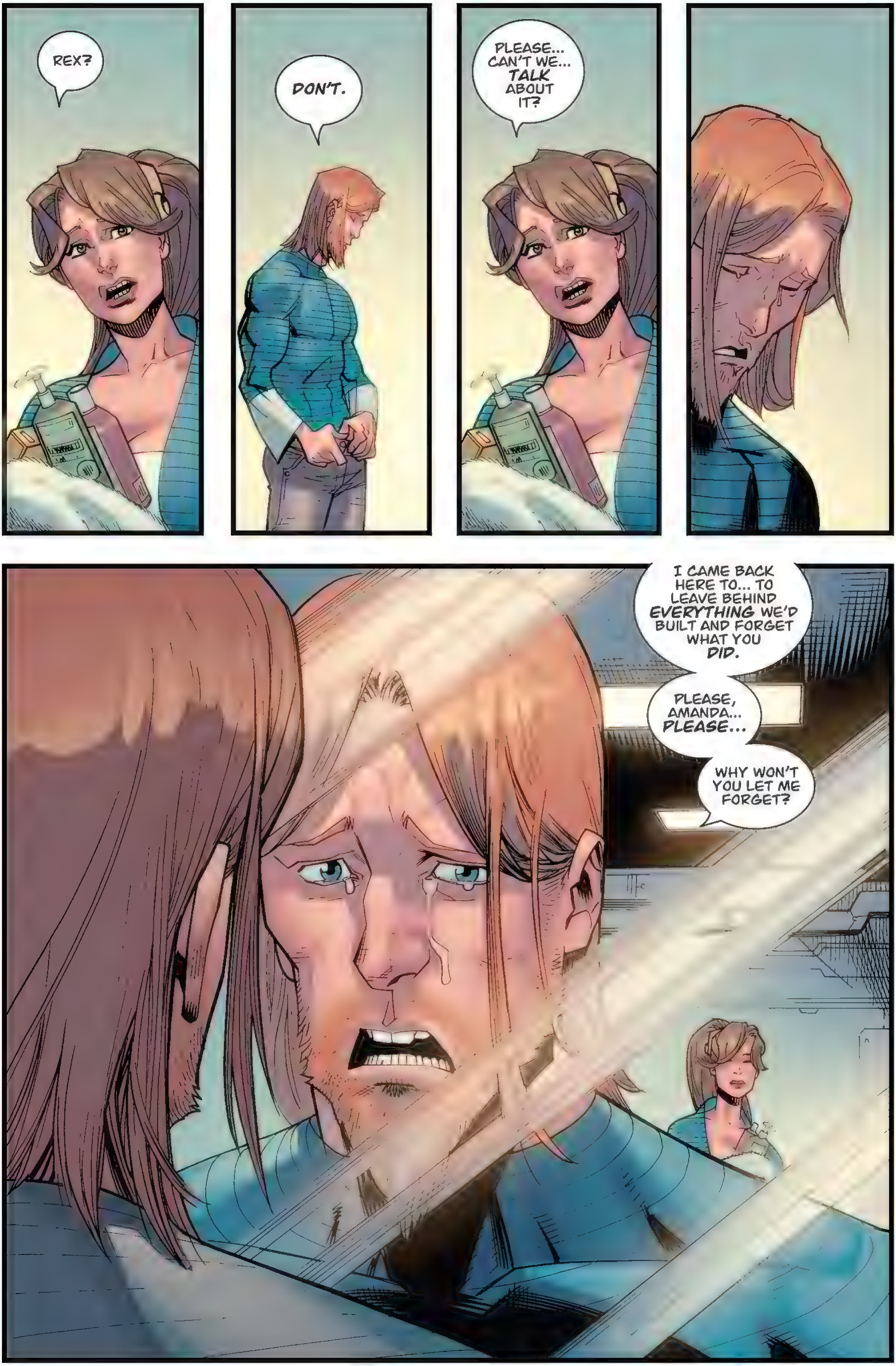

--CONTROL!!


WHAT?!

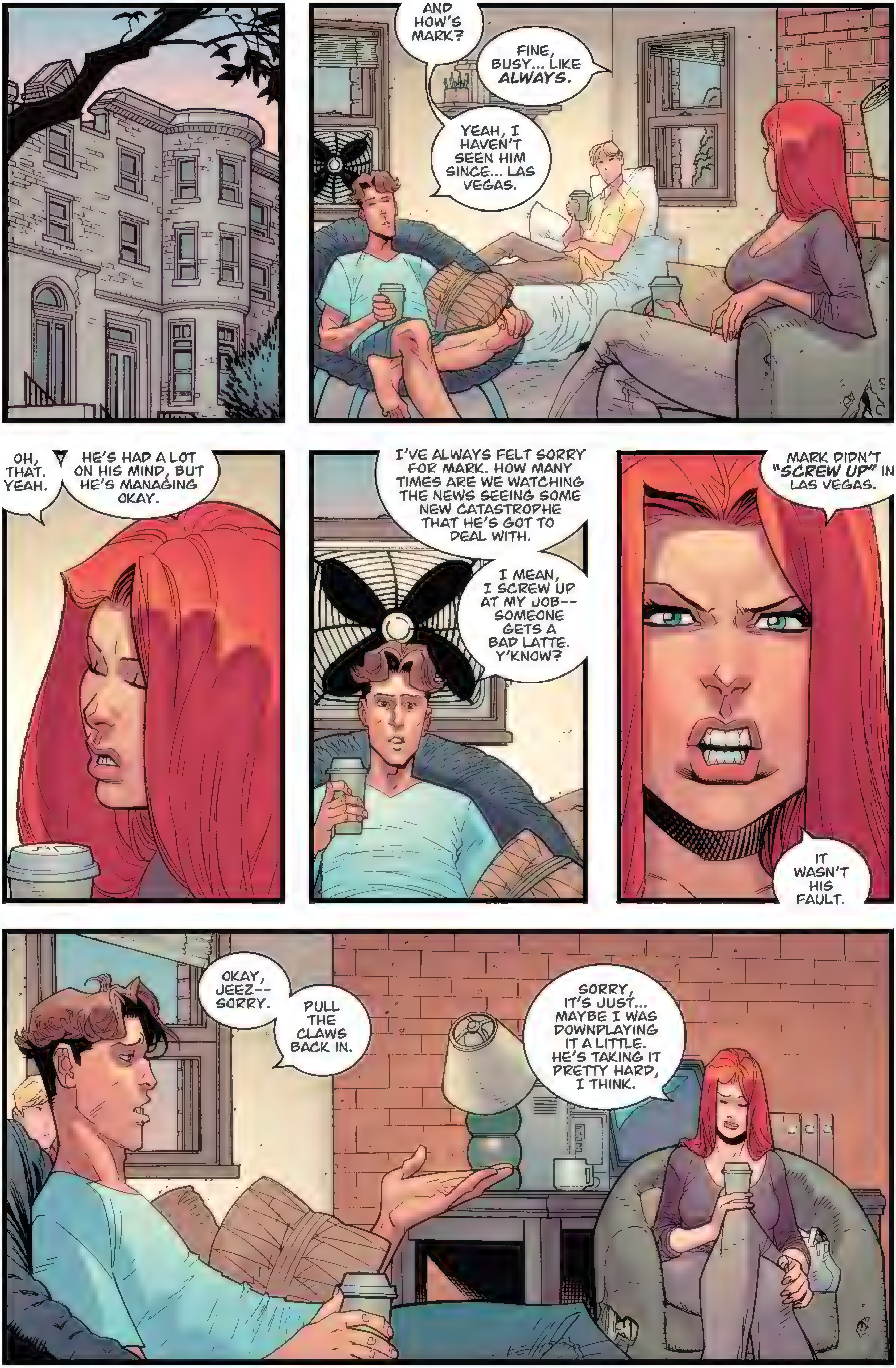

I--I **SURRENDER!!**
I WASN'T IN CONTROL, I DIDN'T KNOW--I--
I DIDN'T KNOW...
I'M SORRY... I'M SO SORRY...
I'LL TAKE THAT.
YOU'VE BEEN WREAKING HAVOC ON THIS CITY FOR FOUR HOURS--AND THEN YOU COME TO AND JUST GIVE UP?
I DON'T ***BUY*** IT.
WE'RE SENDING YOU UP THE RIVER.
WAIT--IT'S ***OVER?!***

BUMMER.
OH, YOU SEEM DISAPPOINTED. I GET THAT I WAS PREMATURE IN CALLING YOU--BUT THIS REACTION IS STILL A BIT SHOCKING.
WERE YOU HOPING THIS LUNATIC COULD CAUSE **MORE** DAMAGE?
CRAP, THAT'S NOT IT. IT'S JUST-- I DON'T GET UP THIS EARLY VERY OFTEN... IT'S NOT EVEN **SIX** YET.
YOU USUALLY IN YOUR SUIT READY TO WORK AT THIS TIME?
I DON'T SLEEP. THAT'S HALF THE REASON I LANDED THIS JOB.
I SIT IN A PUDDLE OF GOO FOR ONE HOUR A DAY, IT KEEPS ME YOUNG.
YOU'RE MAKING THAT UP.
SMART ASS.
WHATEVER, KID.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR BEAUTY SLEEP.
IT'S OKAY.
TURNS OUT, I WASN'T NEEDED. THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE HAD THIS ONE HANDLED...
GOOD TO KNOW...


OH--
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE--
IT'S OKAY... I WAS *LEAVING.*
IT'S... *WEIRD* BEING BACK AFTER ALL THIS TIME, ISN'T IT?
YEAH.

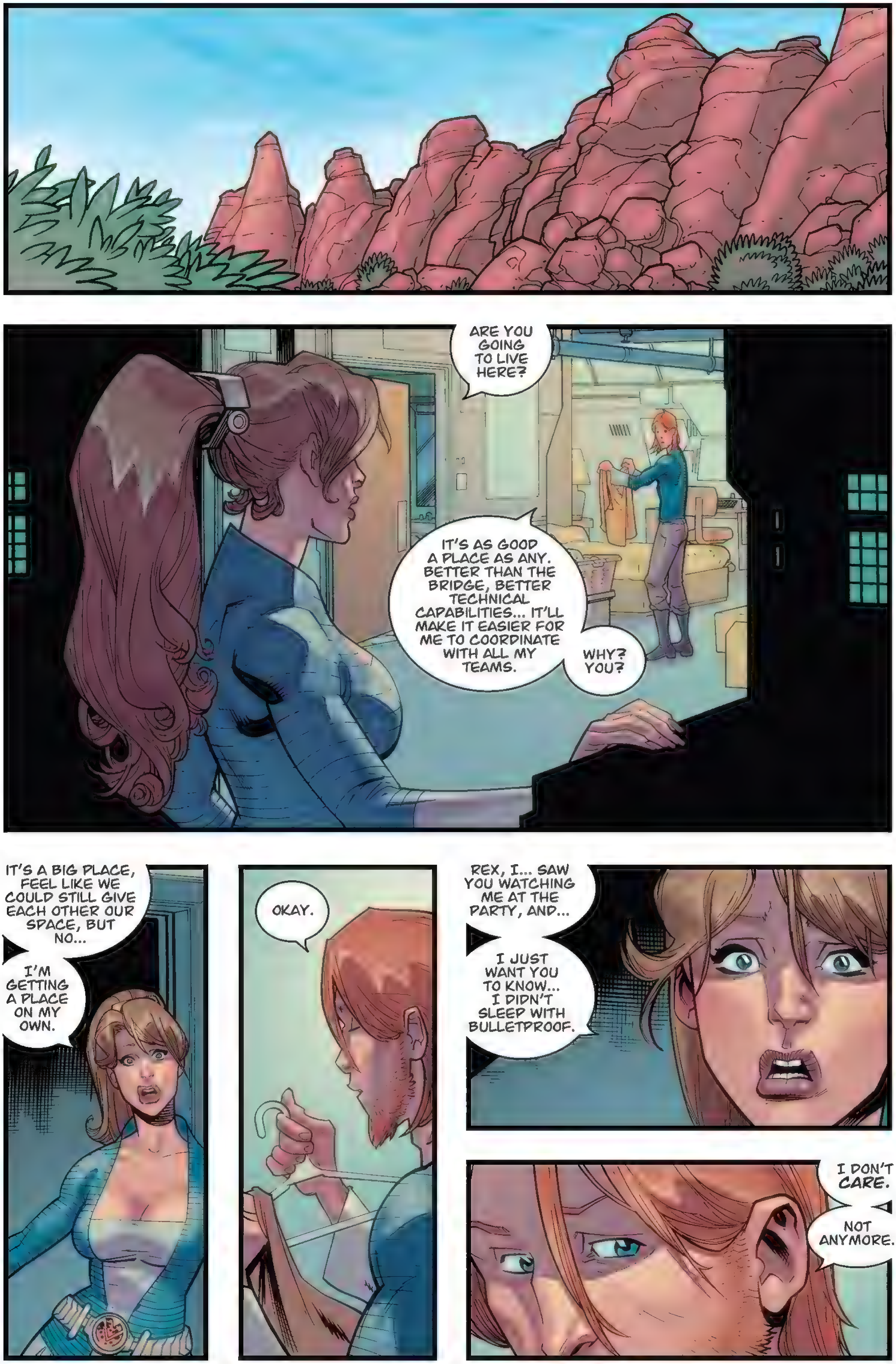

REX?
DON'T.
PLEASE... CAN'T WE... TALK ABOUT IT?
I CAME BACK HERE TO... TO LEAVE BEHIND EVERYTHING WE'D BUILT AND FORGET WHAT YOU DID.
PLEASE, AMANDA... PLEASE...
WHY WON'T YOU LET ME FORGET?

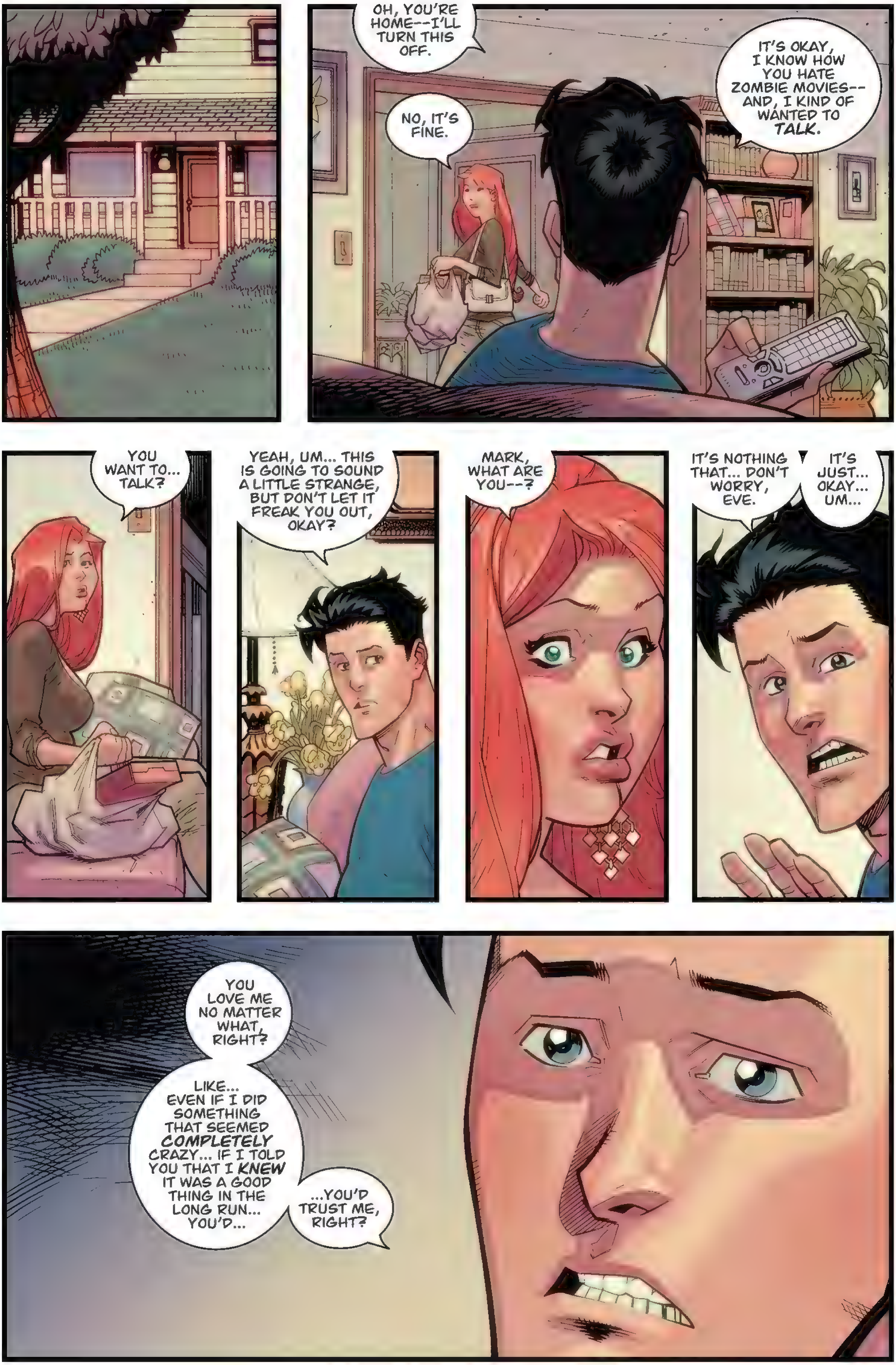
CHAPTER 84

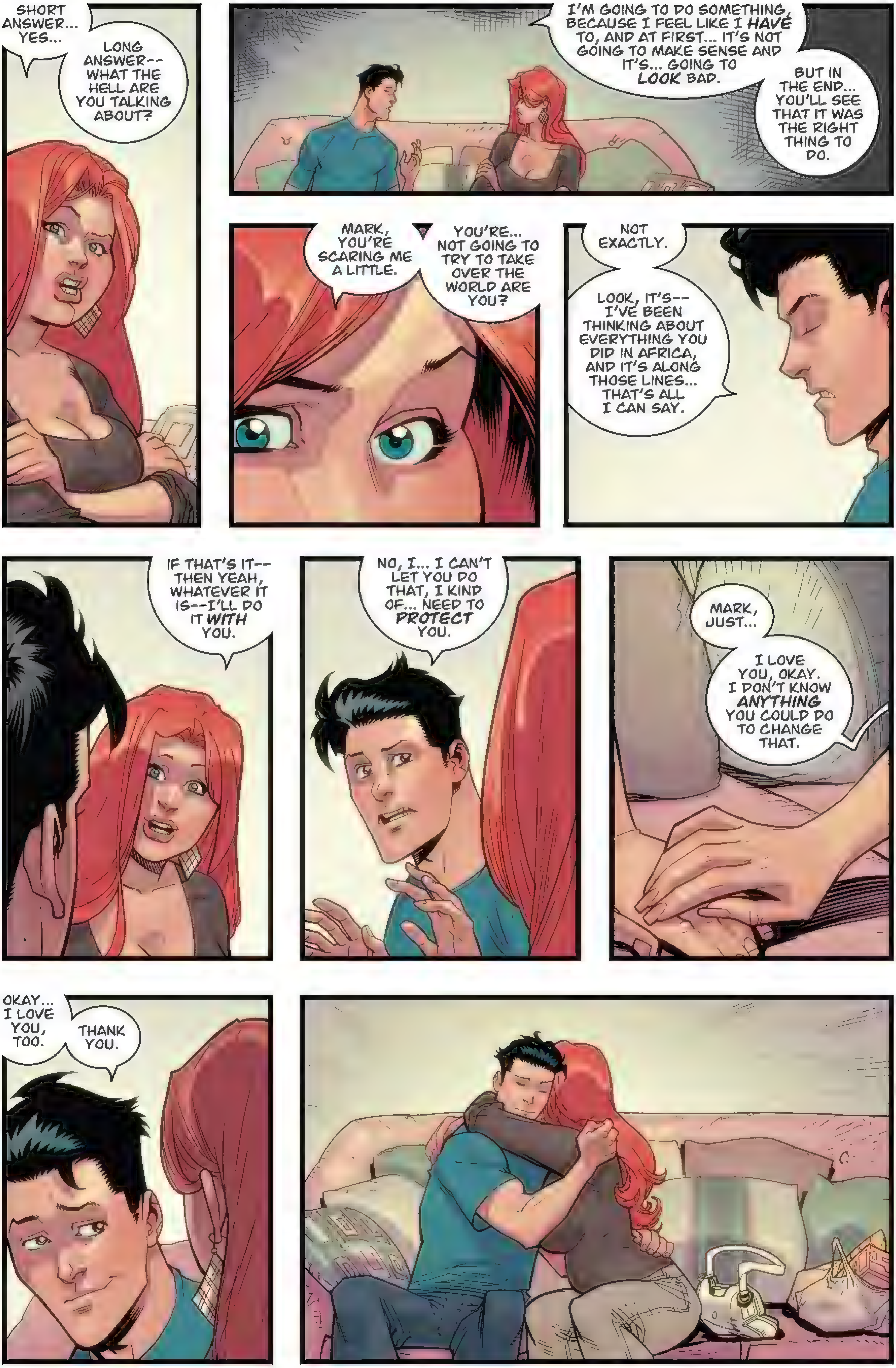

AND HOW'S MARK?
FINE, BUSY... LIKE **ALWAYS.**
YEAH, I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE... LAS VEGAS.
OH, THAT. YEAH.
HE'S HAD A LOT ON HIS MIND, BUT HE'S MANAGING OKAY.
I'VE ALWAYS FELT SORRY FOR MARK. HOW MANY TIMES ARE WE WATCHING THE NEWS SEEING SOME NEW CATASTROPHE THAT HE'S GOT TO DEAL WITH.
I MEAN, I SCREW UP AT MY JOB-- SOMEONE GETS A BAD LATTE. Y'KNOW?
MARK DIDN'T **"SCREW UP"** IN LAS VEGAS.
IT WASN'T HIS FAULT.
OKAY, JEEZ-- SORRY.
PULL THE CLAWS BACK IN.
SORRY, IT'S JUST... MAYBE I WAS DOWNPLAYING IT A LITTLE. HE'S TAKING IT PRETTY HARD, I THINK.

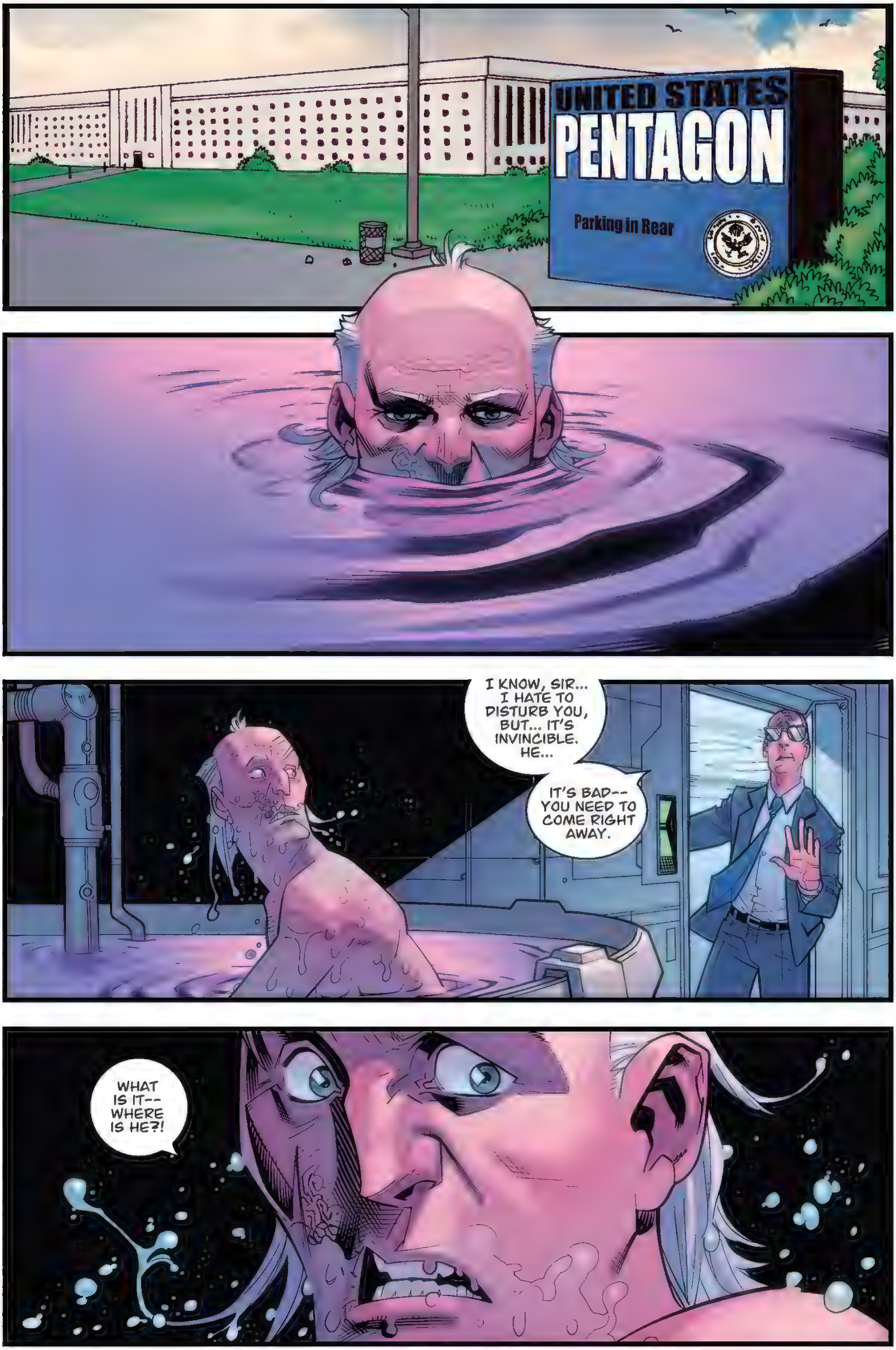
WHY DID YOU CALL ME HERE?
I KNOW THIS HAS BEEN GRATING ON YOU, THE DESTRUCTION OF LAS VEGAS... SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD HELP FOR YOU TO SEE THAT **SOME** GOOD HAS COME FROM THIS.
ARE THOSE... ***SOLAR PANELS?***
YES. THERE AREN'T ENOUGH RESOURCES TO REBUILD-- WE'RE INCAPABLE OF STARTING THIS CITY OVER FROM SCRATCH.
ALSO, SOME PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT FEEL IT WOULD BE DISRESPECTFUL.
SO YOU'RE GOING TO FOLLOW THAT MANIAC'S PLAN AND COVER THE AREA WITH SOLAR PANELS?
YEAH, IT'S AMAZING! YOU CAN THANK THIS GUY HERE FOR MAKING IT ALL WORK.
OH, I BARELY DID ***ANYTHING.***
ARE YOU ***KIDDING?*** THIS GUY HERE BASICALLY INVENTED A DOUBLE-SIDED SOLAR PANEL THAT CAN UTILIZE THE MIRRORED SURFACE OF THE TERRAIN HERE.
HIS SOLAR PANELS ABSORB NEARY ***TWICE*** AS MUCH SOLAR ENERGY AS STANDARD PANELS.
WHAT A GREAT FIND CHRIS HAS TURNED OUT TO BE. GOOD JOB THERE, INVINCIBLE.
WITH THE WORK HE AND SINCLAIR ARE DOING, THIS SOLAR PANEL ARRAY WILL PROVIDE CHEAP, CLEAN ENERGY FOR NEARLY ***HALF*** OF THE CITIZENS IN THIS COUNTRY.
AND ITS CONSTRUCTION IS A PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT THAT IS EMPLOYING ***THOUSANDS.***
WHOA...

...DINOSAURUS WAS *RIGHT*.
WHAT WAS THAT?
NOTHING...

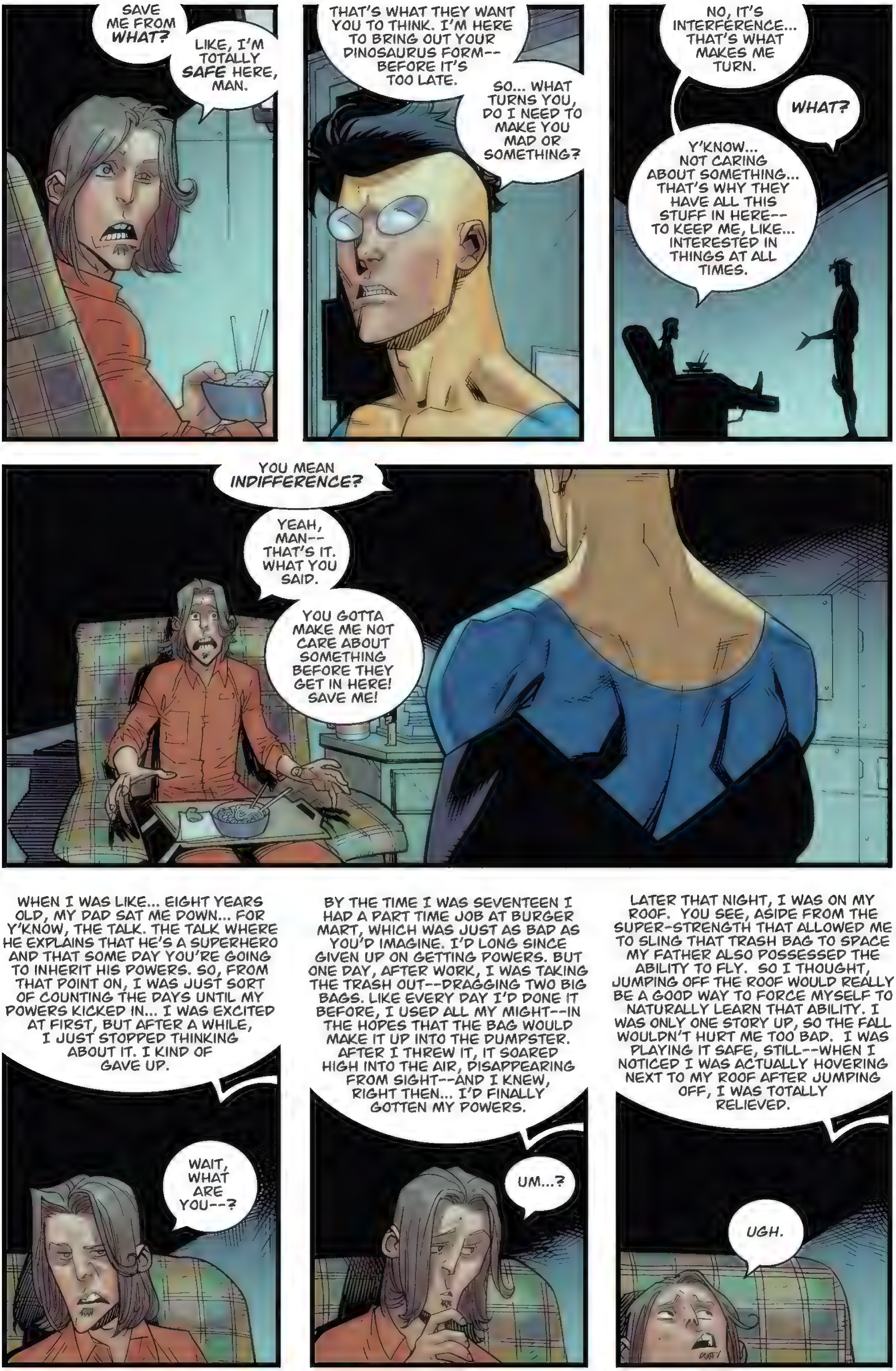

ARE YOU GOING TO LIVE HERE?
IT'S AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY. BETTER THAN THE BRIDGE, BETTER TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES... IT'LL MAKE IT EASIER FOR ME TO COORDINATE WITH ALL MY TEAMS.
WHY? YOU?
IT'S A BIG PLACE, FEEL LIKE WE COULD STILL GIVE EACH OTHER OUR SPACE, BUT NO...
I'M GETTING A PLACE ON MY OWN.
OKAY.
REX, I... SAW YOU WATCHING ME AT THE PARTY, AND...
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW... I DIDN'T SLEEP WITH BULLETPROOF.
I DON'T CARE.
NOT ANYMORE.

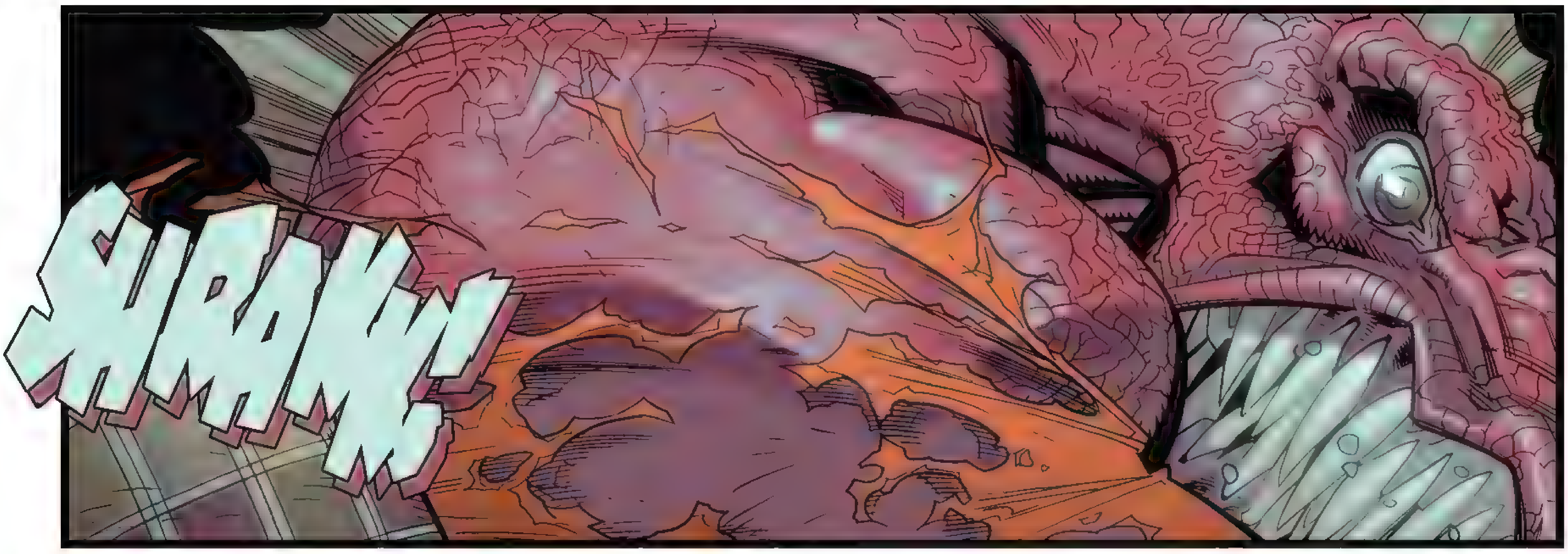

OH, YOU'RE HOME--I'LL TURN THIS OFF.
NO, IT'S FINE.
IT'S OKAY, I KNOW HOW YOU HATE ZOMBIE MOVIES--AND, I KIND OF WANTED TO *TALK*.
YOU WANT TO... TALK?
YEAH, UM... THIS IS GOING TO SOUND A LITTLE STRANGE, BUT DON'T LET IT FREAK YOU OUT, OKAY?
MARK, WHAT ARE YOU--?
IT'S NOTHING THAT... DON'T WORRY, EVE.
IT'S JUST... OKAY... UM...
YOU LOVE ME NO MATTER WHAT, RIGHT?
LIKE... EVEN IF I DID SOMETHING THAT SEEMED *COMPLETELY* CRAZY... IF I TOLD YOU THAT I *KNEW* IT WAS A GOOD THING IN THE LONG RUN... YOU'D...
...YOU'D TRUST ME, RIGHT?

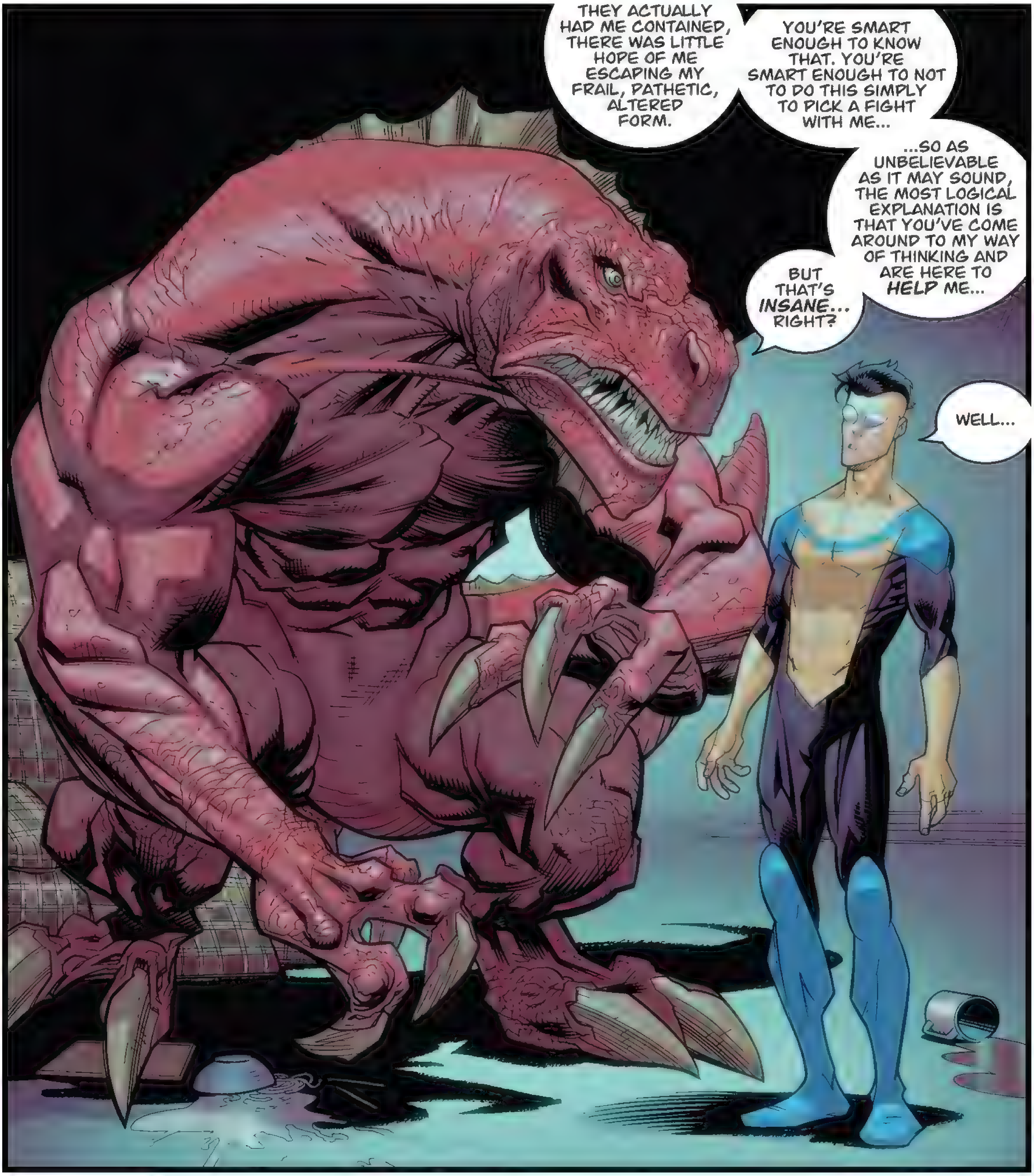

SHORT ANSWER... YES...
LONG ANSWER-- WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I'M GOING TO DO SOMETHING, BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE I *HAVE* TO, AND AT FIRST... IT'S NOT GOING TO MAKE SENSE AND IT'S... GOING TO *LOOK* BAD.
BUT IN THE END... YOU'LL SEE THAT IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
MARK, YOU'RE SCARING ME A LITTLE.
YOU'RE... NOT GOING TO TRY TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD ARE YOU?
NOT EXACTLY.
LOOK, IT'S-- I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU DID IN AFRICA, AND IT'S ALONG THOSE LINES... THAT'S ALL I CAN SAY.
IF THAT'S IT-- THEN YEAH, WHATEVER IT IS--I'LL DO IT *WITH* YOU.
NO, I... I CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT, I KIND OF... NEED TO *PROTECT* YOU.
MARK, JUST...
I LOVE YOU, OKAY. I DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING* YOU COULD DO TO CHANGE THAT.
OKAY... I LOVE YOU, TOO.
THANK YOU.

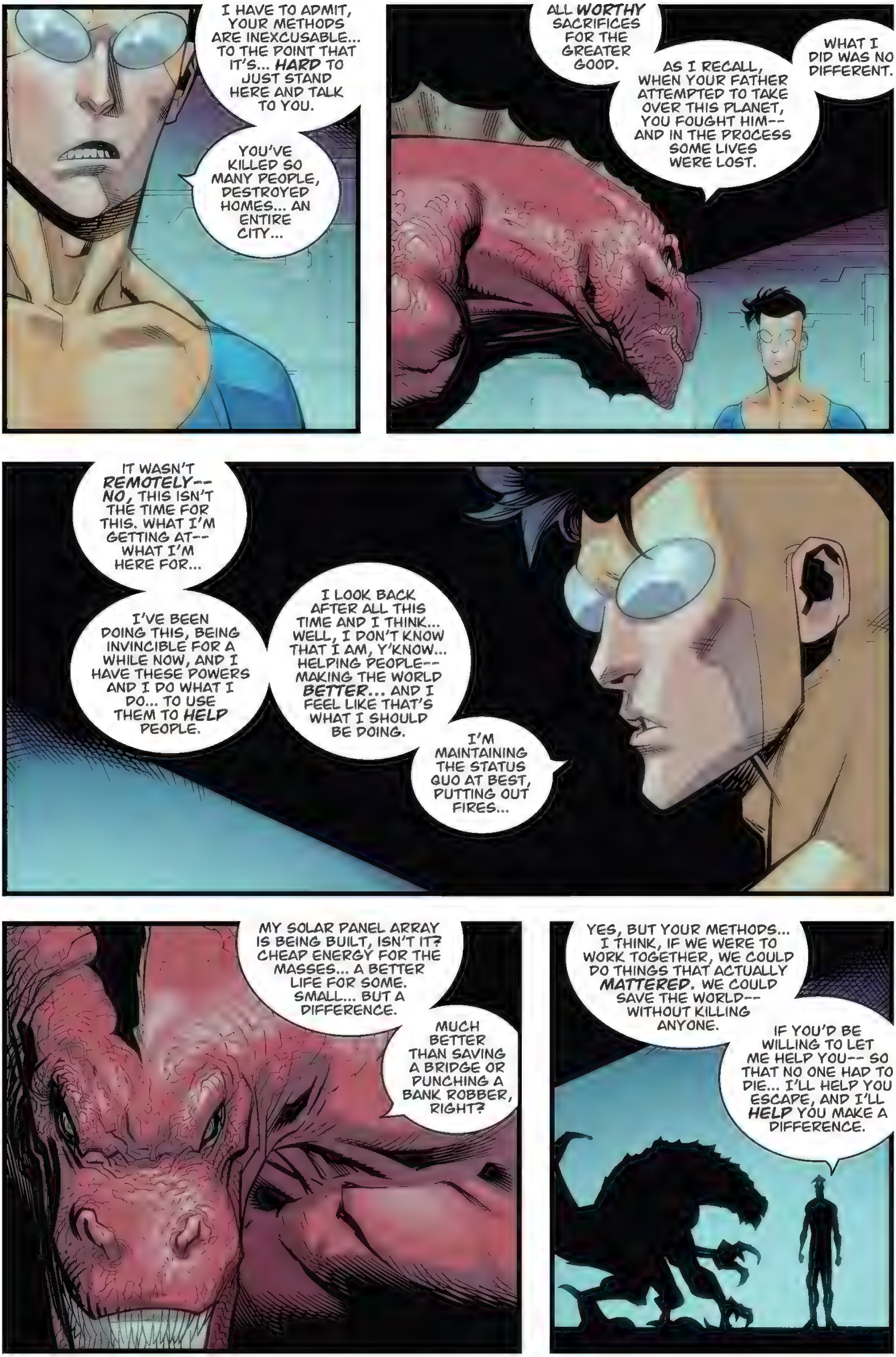

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I KNOW, SIR... I HATE TO DISTURB YOU, BUT... IT'S INVINCIBLE. HE...
IT'S BAD--YOU NEED TO COME RIGHT AWAY.
WHAT IS IT--WHERE IS HE?!

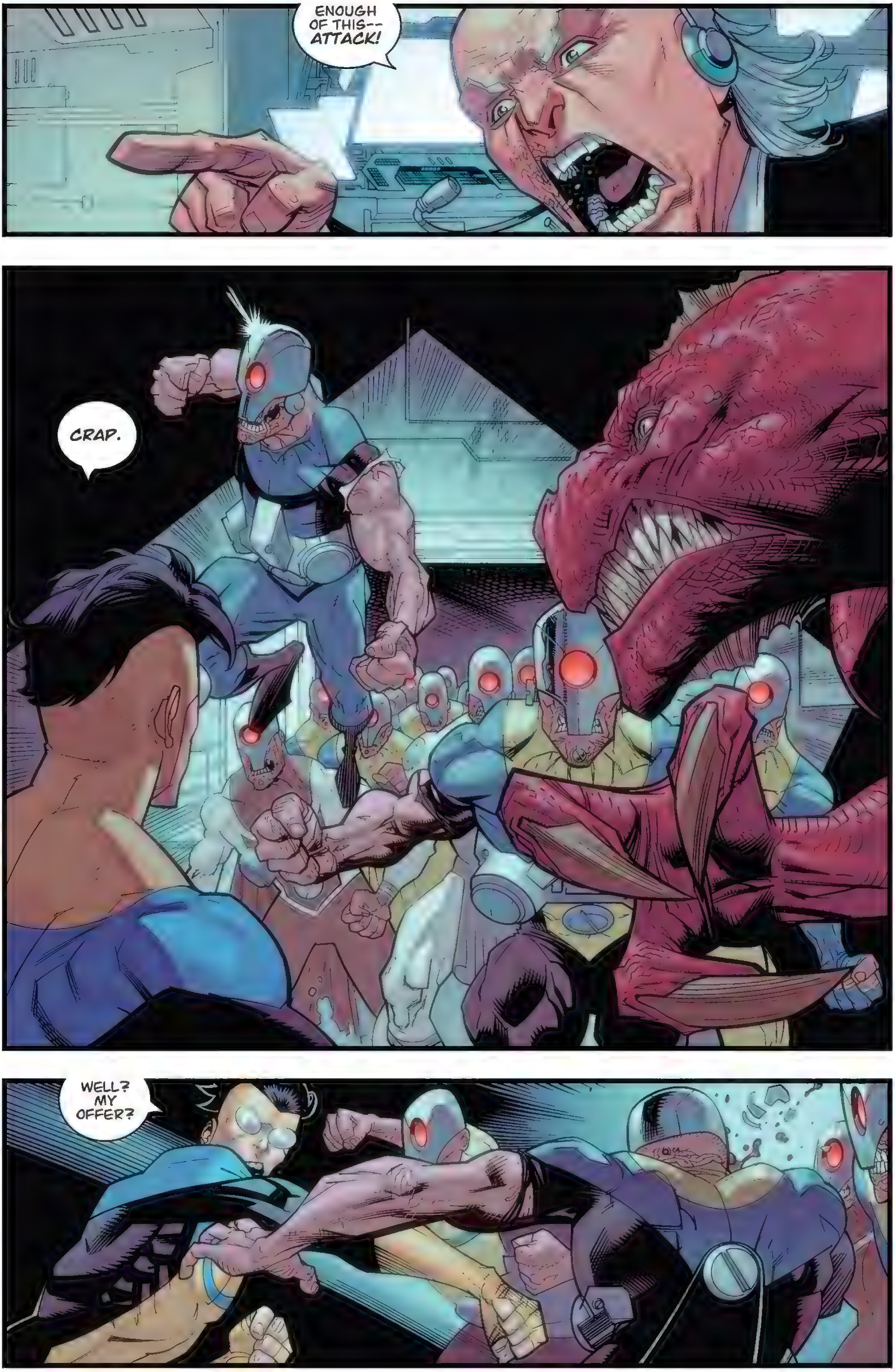
UM... ARE YOU, LIKE-- HERE TO KILL ME?
NO, I'M... HERE TO SAVE YOU.


SAVE ME FROM *WHAT?*
LIKE, I'M TOTALLY *SAFE* HERE, MAN.
THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT YOU TO THINK. I'M HERE TO BRING OUT YOUR DINOSAURUS FORM-- BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
SO... WHAT TURNS YOU, DO I NEED TO MAKE YOU MAD OR SOMETHING?
NO, IT'S INTERFERENCE... THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME TURN.
WHAT?
Y'KNOW... NOT CARING ABOUT SOMETHING... THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE ALL THIS STUFF IN HERE-- TO KEEP ME, LIKE... INTERESTED IN THINGS AT ALL TIMES.
YOU MEAN *INDIFFERENCE?*
YEAH, MAN-- THAT'S IT. WHAT YOU SAID.
YOU GOTTA MAKE ME NOT CARE ABOUT SOMETHING BEFORE THEY GET IN HERE! SAVE ME!
WHEN I WAS LIKE... EIGHT YEARS OLD, MY DAD SAT ME DOWN... FOR Y'KNOW, THE TALK. THE TALK WHERE HE EXPLAINS THAT HE'S A SUPERHERO AND THAT SOME DAY YOU'RE GOING TO INHERIT HIS POWERS. SO, FROM THAT POINT ON, I WAS JUST SORT OF COUNTING THE DAYS UNTIL MY POWERS KICKED IN... I WAS EXCITED AT FIRST, BUT AFTER A WHILE, I JUST STOPPED THINKING ABOUT IT. I KIND OF GAVE UP.
WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU--?
BY THE TIME I WAS SEVENTEEN I HAD A PART TIME JOB AT BURGER MART, WHICH WAS JUST AS BAD AS YOU'D IMAGINE. I'D LONG SINCE GIVEN UP ON GETTING POWERS. BUT ONE DAY, AFTER WORK, I WAS TAKING THE TRASH OUT--DRAGGING TWO BIG BAGS. LIKE EVERY DAY I'D DONE IT BEFORE, I USED ALL MY MIGHT--IN THE HOPES THAT THE BAG WOULD MAKE IT UP INTO THE DUMPSTER. AFTER I THREW IT, IT SOARED HIGH INTO THE AIR, DISAPPEARING FROM SIGHT--AND I KNEW, RIGHT THEN... I'D FINALLY GOTTEN MY POWERS.
UM...?
LATER THAT NIGHT, I WAS ON MY ROOF. YOU SEE, ASIDE FROM THE SUPER-STRENGTH THAT ALLOWED ME TO SLING THAT TRASH BAG TO SPACE MY FATHER ALSO POSSESSED THE ABILITY TO FLY. SO I THOUGHT, JUMPING OFF THE ROOF WOULD REALLY BE A GOOD WAY TO FORCE MYSELF TO NATURALLY LEARN THAT ABILITY. I WAS ONLY ONE STORY UP, SO THE FALL WOULDN'T HURT ME TOO BAD. I WAS PLAYING IT SAFE, STILL--WHEN I NOTICED I WAS ACTUALLY HOVERING NEXT TO MY ROOF AFTER JUMPING OFF, I WAS TOTALLY RELIEVED.
UGH.


SHRAKK!


THEY ACTUALLY HAD ME CONTAINED, THERE WAS LITTLE HOPE OF ME ESCAPING MY FRAIL, PATHETIC, ALTERED FORM.
YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT. YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO NOT TO DO THIS SIMPLY TO PICK A FIGHT WITH ME...
...SO AS UNBELIEVABLE AS IT MAY SOUND, THE MOST LOGICAL EXPLANATION IS THAT YOU'VE COME AROUND TO MY WAY OF THINKING AND ARE HERE TO HELP ME...
BUT THAT'S INSANE... RIGHT?
WELL...


I HAVE TO ADMIT, YOUR METHODS ARE INEXCUSABLE... TO THE POINT THAT IT'S... **HARD** TO JUST STAND HERE AND TALK TO YOU.
YOU'VE KILLED SO MANY PEOPLE, DESTROYED HOMES... AN ENTIRE CITY...
ALL **WORTHY** SACRIFICES FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
AS I RECALL, WHEN YOUR FATHER ATTEMPTED TO TAKE OVER THIS PLANET, YOU FOUGHT HIM-- AND IN THE PROCESS SOME LIVES WERE LOST.
WHAT I DID WAS NO DIFFERENT.
IT WASN'T **REMOTELY-- NO**, THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR THIS. WHAT I'M GETTING AT-- WHAT I'M HERE FOR...
I'VE BEEN DOING THIS, BEING INVINCIBLE FOR A WHILE NOW, AND I HAVE THESE POWERS AND I DO WHAT I DO... TO USE THEM TO **HELP** PEOPLE.
I LOOK BACK AFTER ALL THIS TIME AND I THINK... WELL, I DON'T KNOW THAT I AM, Y'KNOW... HELPING PEOPLE-- MAKING THE WORLD **BETTER**... AND I FEEL LIKE THAT'S WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING.
I'M MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO AT BEST, PUTTING OUT FIRES...
MY SOLAR PANEL ARRAY IS BEING BUILT, ISN'T IT? CHEAP ENERGY FOR THE MASSES... A BETTER LIFE FOR SOME. SMALL... BUT A DIFFERENCE.
MUCH BETTER THAN SAVING A BRIDGE OR PUNCHING A BANK ROBBER, RIGHT?
YES, BUT YOUR METHODS... I THINK, IF WE WERE TO WORK TOGETHER, WE COULD DO THINGS THAT ACTUALLY **MATTERED**. WE COULD SAVE THE WORLD-- WITHOUT KILLING ANYONE.
IF YOU'D BE WILLING TO LET ME HELP YOU-- SO THAT NO ONE HAD TO DIE... I'LL HELP YOU ESCAPE, AND I'LL **HELP** YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE.


ENOUGH OF THIS-- ATTACK!
CRAP.
WELL? MY OFFER?

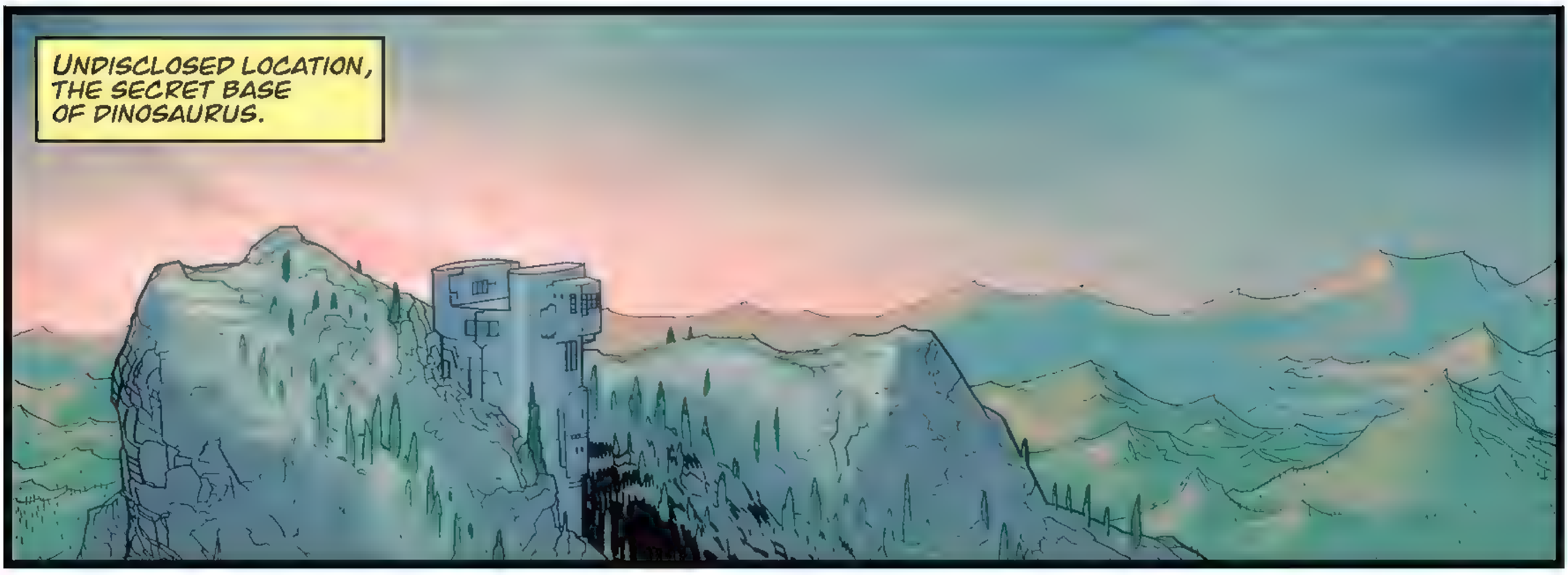
WRAMM!
WHY WOULD YOU TRUST ME AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE DONE?!
YOU--HAVE NOBLE INTENTIONS. I SEE THE *GOOD* IN WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
I THINK YOU'D HELP ME LOOK AT THE--BIG PICTURE.
KRAK!
DON'T GIVE ME TIME TO REALIZE HOW MUCH OF A MISTAKE I'M PROBABLY MAKING HERE.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE--PAYING ATTENTION, BUT GETTING OUT OF HERE WITHOUT MY HELP WON'T BE EASY.
WROKK!
OKAY THEN, I'LL TRY IT YOUR WAY.
JUST--SHOW ME THE WAY OUT OF HERE BEFORE THESE THINGS--KILL US BOTH!

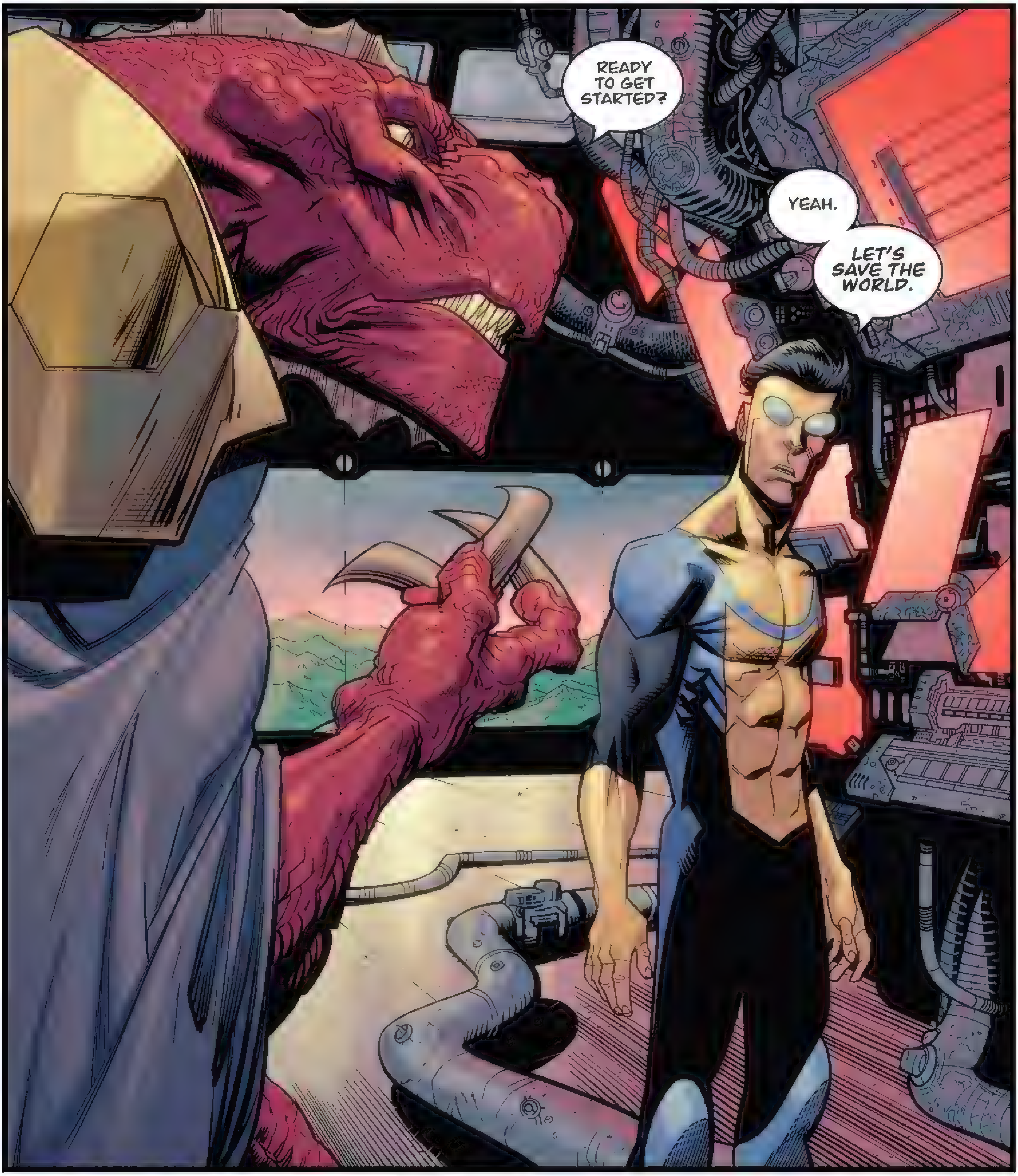
THIS WAY.

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
KROOM!
THAT--*DIDN'T* HAPPEN. THERE'S *NO WAY* THAT JUST HAPPENED. INVINCIBLE WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT, HE'S... HE WOULD NEVER...
TELL ME THAT DIDN'T JUST HAPPEN.
THAT JUST HAPPENED, SIR.
SUIT UP. I NEED THREE SQUADRONS READY TO LAUNCH IN TWO MINUTES.

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
HE DID WHAT?!

I WISH I HAD MORE INFORMATION FOR YOU, EVE--I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO BETTER EXPLAIN THINGS TO ME.
WAS HE ACTING STRANGE? I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT COULD MAKE HIM DO THIS.
NO, NOT AT ALL-- HE... TOLD ME HE MIGHT BE DOING SOMETHING CRAZY, BUT ALSO THAT HE **KNEW** IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO...
I THINK I GAVE HIM **PERMISSION** TO DO THIS... THAT'S WHY HE WAS TELLING ME.
THAT'S UNIMPORTANT. INVINCIBLE IS OFFICIALLY A FUGITIVE NOW. THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.
IF HE CONTACTS YOU, AND YOU DO NOT INFORM US IMMEDIATELY, THAT MAKES YOU AN **ACCOMPLICE**. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENS NEXT--BUT IT COULD BE A LAS VEGAS LEVEL CATASTROPHE.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS. MARK WOULD NEVER ALLOW SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO HAPPEN.
YOU DON'T REALLY THINK HE'S CAPABLE OF THAT, DO YOU?
I HAVE **NO IDEA** WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF AT THIS POINT.
WE NEED TO COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR HIS FATHER THIS WHOLE TIME...
...THIS COULD MEAN THE **END** FOR US ALL.


UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, THE SECRET BASE OF DINOSAURUS.


READY TO GET STARTED?
YEAH.
LET'S SAVE THE WORLD.

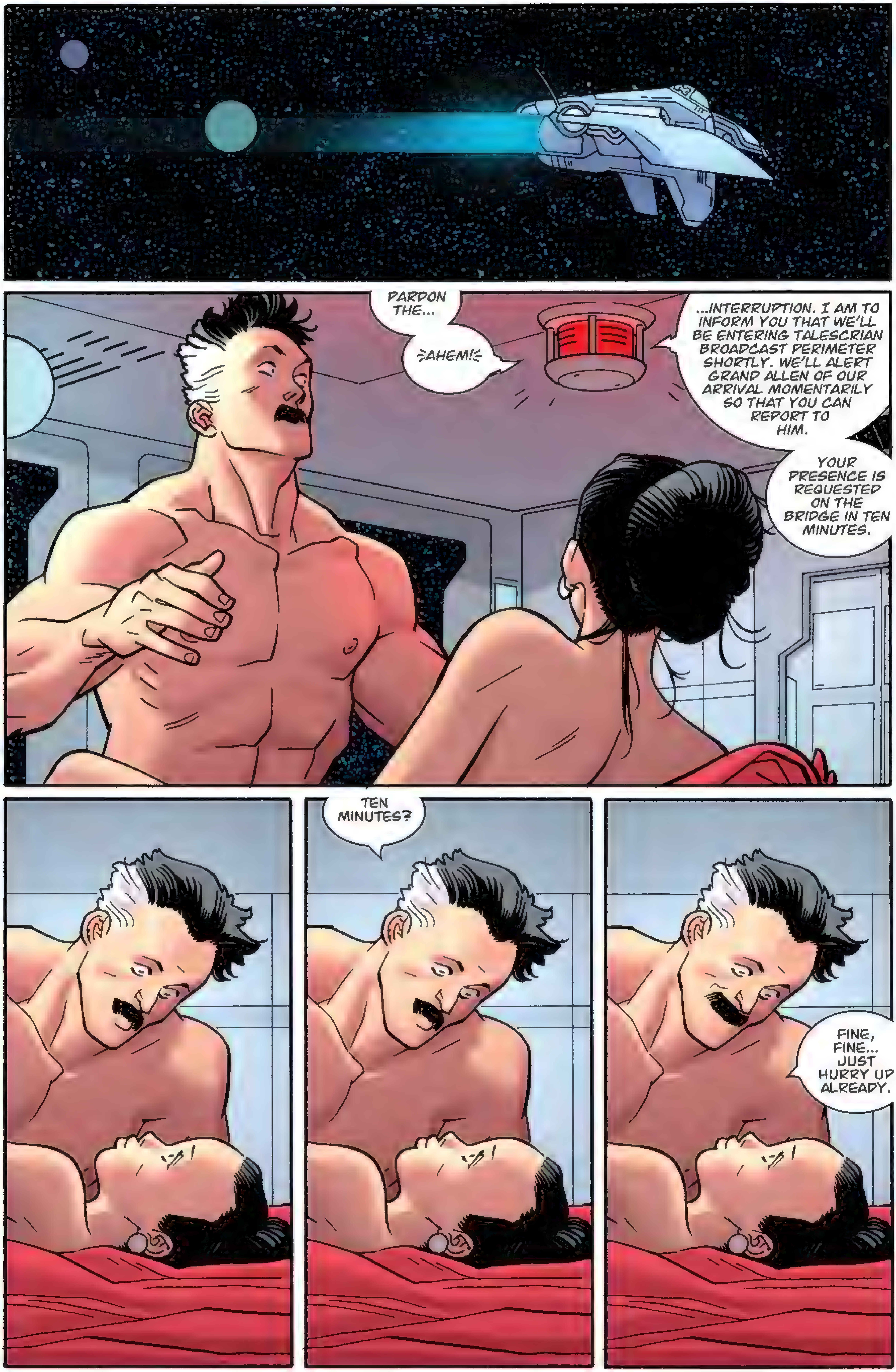
CHAPTER 85

I-- UH...
UM...
YOUR MEAL IS PREPARED.
LEAVE IT.
DON'T TELL ME... *AGAIN?*
IT'S SERIOUSLY LIKE *EVERY* TIME I GO IN THERE. THEY DO ALMOST NOTHING ELSE.
I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE. HOW MUCH LONGER UNTIL WE ARRIVE AT TALESCRIA?

SERIOUSLY. THAT'S THE *LAST* TIME. NOT UNTIL YOU FIND OUT HOW TO LOCK THAT DOOR.
I TOLD YOU, THEY CAN'T LOCK. I DON'T KNOW WHY.
I THINK THE CIVILIZATION THAT CONSTRUCTED THIS SHIP DIDN'T DEVELOP THE CONCEPT OF LOCKING A DOOR.
DID THE CIVILIZATION DIE OFF BECAUSE NO ONE WAS MAKING BABIES?
MAYBE THEY WERE STUCK IN SPACE SHIPS FOR DAYS ON END WITH NOTHING ELSE TO DO SO THEY DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN WHO SAW?
HEY, I WASN'T JOKING. YOU'RE CUT OFF.
WHAT?
OH, MAN... WHAT *IS* THIS STUFF? I HADN'T EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT EATING ALIEN FOOD WHEN WE LEFT.
I'M GOING TO BE LOSING SO MUCH WEIGHT.
SMELLS GOOD, THOUGH...
MAYBE IF I BEND THESE DOORS TOGETHER A LITTLE AT THE TOP...

THE PLANET TALESCRIA. CENTRAL BASE TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
SERIOUSLY, HE HAS TO *GO*. EVER SINCE HE WALKED IN ON US YOU JUST HAVEN'T BEEN THE SAME.
YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK ON ME--ADMIT IT. WHO **CARES** WHAT HE SAW? HE KNOWS WHAT PEOPLE DO!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE CAN'T JUST STAY AT NOLAN'S PLACE UNTIL HE GETS BACK!
HE'S JUST A KID. I CAN'T LEAVE HIM ALONE IN THIS CITY.
NOLAN WOULD BE ***PISSED***.
STILL A ***KID?!*** I CAN'T STAND THESE ALIEN RACES THAT SPEND A QUARTER OF THEIR LIFESPAN AS *"KIDS!"*
I HAVEN'T SEEN MY PARENTS SINCE I WAS ***THREE***.
THE BOY NEEDS HIS HAND HELD SO I HAVE TO SUFFER?
JUST LISTEN TO YOURSELF, TELIA.
SOMETIMES I'M ***RELIEVED*** THAT OUR SPECIES CAN'T PRODUCE OFFSPRING TOGETHER.
...
NOT COOL, ALLEN. NOT COOL.

OLIVER, HEY-- EVERYTHING GOING OKAY IN HERE?
YEAH.
YOU REALLY HAVE NO IDEA HOW SOUND TRAVELS IN THIS PLACE.
MY ARM'S ALL CALIBRATED, THE JAW IS WORKING GREAT. I CAN BARELY TELL THEY'RE NOT MY ORIGINAL... PARTS.
I BELIEVE WE'VE FINALLY GOT IT WORKING PROPERLY. YOUR NEURAL IMPULSES SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED SEAMLESSLY. NO MORE BROKEN HANDS WHEN YOU MEET NEW PEOPLE.
PLEASE DO APOLOGIZE AGAIN TO THE AMBASSADOR FOR ME.
THERE'S REALLY NO NEED, HE'S GOT SEVEN HANDS.
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TODAY?
YOU KIDDING? I'M GOING OUT ON A TEST RUN.
HE IS ADORABLE.
GOING TO WORK, THIS COALITION WON'T LEAD ITSELF.


PARDON THE...
≠AHEM!≠
...INTERRUPTION. I AM TO INFORM YOU THAT WE'LL BE ENTERING TALESCRIAN BROADCAST PERIMETER SHORTLY. WE'LL ALERT GRAND ALLEN OF OUR ARRIVAL MOMENTARILY SO THAT YOU CAN REPORT TO HIM.
YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUESTED ON THE BRIDGE IN TEN MINUTES.
TEN MINUTES?
FINE, FINE... JUST HURRY UP ALREADY.

I EXPECT **PROGRESS!**
SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!
I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN, AMBASSADOR.
I HAVE PATROL TEAMS CRISSCROSSING THE GALAXY, LOOKING FOR ANY SIGN OF THE VILTRUMITES.
ON A HUNCH, ONE TEAM WENT TO A DISTANT PLANET CALLED EARTH. THE VILTRUMITES HAVE A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THAT PLANET... THEY MAY HAVE GONE THERE, BUT I HAVEN'T HEARD BACK FROM THAT TEAM.
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THEM? HOW DO YOU KNOW THEY HAVEN'T FOUND THE VILTRUMITES AND BEEN KILLED BY THEM. HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN AWAY?
THE PLANET IS SO DISTANT WE CAN'T SEND OR RECEIVE TRANSMISSIONS. IF OUR CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, AND THEY TRAVELED THERE AND CAME STRAIGHT BACK... THEY WOULD HAVE RETURNED A FEW DAYS AGO.
IF WE DON'T HEAR FROM THEM SOON, I'LL SEND--
I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, GREAT ALLEN, BUT THERE'S A TOP PRIORITY TRANSMISSION COMING IN FROM THE EDGE OF BROADCAST RANGE.
WHOA, **NEAT!** I THINK THAT'S THEM!

THEY'RE ON EARTH?!
AND YOU JUST LEFT THEM THERE... AND YOU WANT TO LET THEM STAY THERE?
IT WAS AN AGREEMENT, ALLEN. MARK AND I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS.
WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THEM THERE. WE CAN'T ALLOW--
IT'S DONE, ALLEN. THEY'RE ON EARTH-- THEY'RE ALL OVER THE PLANET. WE DO ANYTHING TO THEM NOW AND WE DOOM THAT ENTIRE CIVILIZATION.
A DEAL WAS MADE. YOU NEED TO HONOR IT.
COP
...
WE'LL HAVE TO DISCUSS THIS MORE IN PERSON. I'M UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE HERE FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE COALITION AND...
WHEN DO YOU ARRIVE?
WE WILL ARRIVE IN A MATTER OF HOURS, GREAT ALLEN.
GREAT. I'LL PREPARE TO RECEIVE YOU THEN.
HOURS? WE'LL BE IN OUR QUARTERS IF YOU NEED US.

WRAKOOM!
I'M NOT FROM AROUND HERE, BUT I BET IT'S STILL ILLEGAL TO SMASH INTO A PLACE AND STEAL STUFF!
SO THANKS, I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR SOME ASS TO KI--!
WHY DO YOU CARE WHAT I DO? IS YOUR LIFE WORTH SO LITTLE TO YOU?!
SO THE LEFT ARM'S WEAKER, MAKES SENSE. LET'S SEE HOW YOU HANDLE MY *REAL* ARM!

KRAK!
KROOM!!
YIKES!
I HOPE NOBODY'S *WATCHING* THIS!
WE CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE, KID.
LET THE PROFESSIONALS HANDLE THIS!
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, GUYS. LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS GUY--
I THINK YOU SHOULD LET ME HANDLE--
NO, *PLEASE*--
I *SURRENDER!* I--

VZZZAAPP!
CRAP! THE BAG'S OPENED! CATCH THEM!
HURRY!
...UH.
FIRST TIME TRYING SOME SUPERHEROING ON TALESCRIA?
PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO ME. WE'RE JUST NOT NEEDED HERE.
DAD!
YOU'RE BACK!!
COME ON, I'VE GOT SOMEONE WITH ME WHO'D VERY MUCH LIKE TO SEE YOU.

OLIVER!!
IT'S SO GREAT TO SEE YOU!
AW, MOM-- I MISSED YOU, TOO!
SEEING THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER... IT...
COP
THE GREAT ALLEN IS READY TO SEE YOU, NOLAN.
YES, RIGHT AWAY.
QUICKLY, BEFORE YOU SHOW TOO MUCH EMOTION...
COP
I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I WAS *FINE*...
MOSTLY.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THE POSITION YOU'VE PUT ME IN?
I KNOW IT SEEMS LIKE A BAD IDEA, BUT HEAR ME OUT--
COP
BAD IDEA?! IT'S A *HORRIBLE* IDEA! WE HAD THE VILTRUMITES ON THE RUN-- THEIR RANKS DEPLETED!
YOU PROPOSE WE LEAVE THEM ALONE--ON EARTH, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY A *BREEDING CAMP!*
I SHARE YOUR CONCERN, BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YEARS-- DECADES OF LIVING WITH HUMANS IN ORDER TO ADD TO THEIR RANKS.
LOOK WHAT THAT DID FOR ME. I'M CONFIDENT IT COULD *TRANSFORM* MY PEOPLE... IT COULD BRING THE PEACE WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING FOR.
FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T SHARE YOUR OPTIMISTIC IMPRESSION OF *YOUR* PEOPLE.
I'VE GOT COUNTLESS PLANETARY SYSTEMS TO REPORT TO, THEY RELY ON ME FOR THEIR PROTECTION.
I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN JUST...
I'VE GOT A LOT TO CONSIDER. PLEASE...
...LEAVE ME.
COP

IT WAS UNSETTLING TO SEE HIM THAT WAY--LIKE TALKING TO SOMEONE I DIDN'T KNOW.
ALLEN AND I HAVE A BOND... THIS SITUATION ON EARTH... IT HAS ME CONCERNED.
AS IT **SHOULD.** JUST BECAUSE THEY SAY THEY'RE NOT GOING TO CAUSE ANY TROUBLE, DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD BELIEVE THEM.
YOUR PEOPLE ARE VERY GOOD **LIARS.**
OKAY, I DESERVE THAT.
THIS PLACE IS TOTALLY ***GREAT.*** I WISH ALLEN HAD JUST LET ME STAY HERE WHILE YOU WERE GONE.
AND *I'M* GLAD HE KEPT YOU OUT OF TROUBLE.
I'LL NEED TO BUY A BED FOR YOUR ROOM TOMORROW--BUT FOR TONIGHT, YOU CAN JUST SLEEP ON THE COUCH.
NO WORRIES.
ANYTHING WILL BE BETTER THAN STAYING WITH ALLEN AND TELIA. I HEARD EVERYTHING AT THAT PLACE...
AND I MEAN... *UGH*... ***EVERYTHING.***
WELL, YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT HERE...

I'M SORRY!
I THOUGHT I *DID* SHUT THE DOOR. CALM DOWN.
I'M ***SURE*** HE DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING.

COME TO BED, ALLEN. IT'S LATE. WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*
JUST... THINKING...
TELIA, I... I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING *HORRIBLE*... FOR THE SAKE OF THE UNIVERSE.
DOES THAT MAKE ME A BAD PERSON?
NO, THAT... THAT'S YOUR *JOB*.
I MEAN, YOU'RE THE HEAD OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS... THAT'S WHAT YOU DO...
RIGHT?
...
YEAH.

SLEEP WELL?
YEAH.
ALLEN AND TELIA TAKE CARE OF YOU WHILE I WAS AWAY?
ON MY MOTHER'S PLANET--I'D BE AN ELDER, HELL--I'D BE ***MONARCH*** BY NOW. THEY *"TOOK CARE OF ME"* AS MUCH AS YOU WOULD NEED TO *"TAKE CARE"* OF AN ADULT.
OOH, SORE SUBJECT. YOU'RE NO LONGER A CHILD. DULY NOTED.
SO, ARE WE GOING TO STAY HERE?
DO YOU ***LIKE*** IT HERE?
I KIND OF DO. IT'S... BETTER THAN EARTH IN A LOT OF WAYS. PEOPLE SEEM MORE AWARE OF THE UNIVERSE AS A WHOLE. THE PEOPLE SEEM MUCH MORE ENLIGHTENED... I... NEVER CARED FOR EARTH ALL THAT MUCH.
OH? I DON'T KNOW THAT YOU SPENT ENOUGH TIME THERE, THEN. THERE'S A LOT TO LIKE.
WHEN WAS THE LAST WAR THAT TOOK PLACE ON THIS PLANET--THAT ONLY INVOLVED PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET? THE FACT THAT THE PEOPLE ON EARTH STILL FIGHT EACH OTHER... IT'S JUST... STUPID.
I'D WAGER YOU AND MARK CARE FOR EARTH FAR MORE THAN MOST PEOPLE ON EARTH CARE FOR ***EACH OTHER.***
DO YOU THINK THAT'S A BAD THING?
...
I DON'T KNOW...

OLIVER, COULD YOU PLEASE LEAVE US ALONE?
UH... SURE.
NO PROBLEM.
ALLEN?
WHAT IS IT?
I'VE REACHED A DECISION...
...ON HOW TO HANDLE THE *EARTH* SITUATION.
...
AND?
WHAT HAVE YOU DECIDED?
YOU ARE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.

BEFORE HE DIED... THAEDUS TOLD YOU ABOUT THE SCOURGE VIRUS... DIDN'T HE?
SKRAGG!
DON'T.
IT'S NO LONGER THERE.
WHERE IS IT?
I'M SORRY, THIS IS GOING TO GET UGLY, BUT I JUST COULDN'T DO THIS WITHOUT TELLING YOU FIRST.
I VALUE OUR FRIENDSHIP TOO MUCH.
IT'S BEING LOADED ON A SHIP, THAT I AM PERSONALLY GOING TO TRAVEL TO EARTH IN... WHERE I WILL THEN INTRODUCE THE VIRUS INTO THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE.
I'M SORRY.
COP

YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
THAT VIRUS IS DESIGNED TO KILL VILTRUMITES-- AND HUMANS ARE SO GENETICALLY SIMILAR... YOU COULD BE KILLING THEM ALL!
I KNOW THAT.
I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS...
COP
I KNOW THAT, TOO.
READY?

CHAPTER 86

THIS IS FOR THE GOOD OF THE UNIVERSE--IT GIVES EVERY LIVING BEING A CHANCE TO THRIVE--TO STEP OUT FROM UNDER THE SHADOW YOUR PEOPLE HAVE CAST ON OUR VERY EXISTENCE!
I WON'T LET YOU STOP ME!
COP
KRAK!
NO!
THE PEOPLE ON EARTH ARE INNOCENT! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
CHOOM!
NOT HERE--
WRAMM!
--WE'LL BRING THE WHOLE BUILDING DOWN AROUND US!

KRADOOM!

NO, WAIT--!
STOP!
YOU CAN'T GO THROUGH WITH THIS... THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING... IT'S AN ENTIRE **PLANET** OF **INNOCENT** PEOPLE.
HOW IS THAT ANY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT THE VILTRUMITES DID ON UNOPA?
THIS WOULD PREVENT ANYTHING LIKE THAT FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN.
THINK OF THE LIVES IT WOULD SAVE A HUNDRED-- A **THOUSAND** YEARS FROM NOW? COUNTLESS LIVES SAVED--**EONS** OF PEACE.
ALLEN... YOU **CAN'T** DO THIS.
HOW COULD I **NOT?**

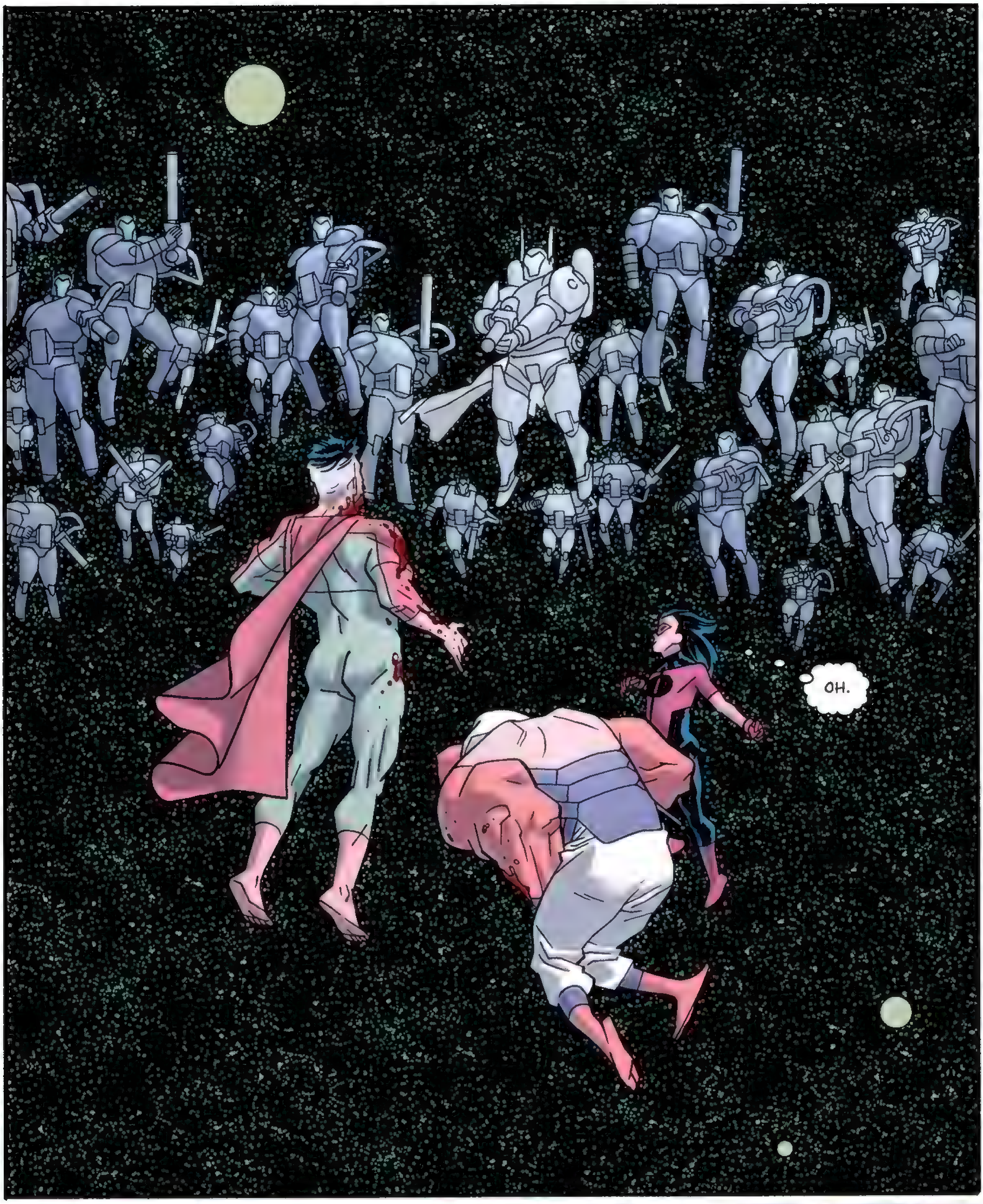
WRAMM!
I WILL BEAT SOME SENSE INTO YOU, MY FRIEND!
FRIEND, YOU'LL BEAT ME ONLY AS MUCH AS I ALLOW IT...
...WHICH ENDS NOW!

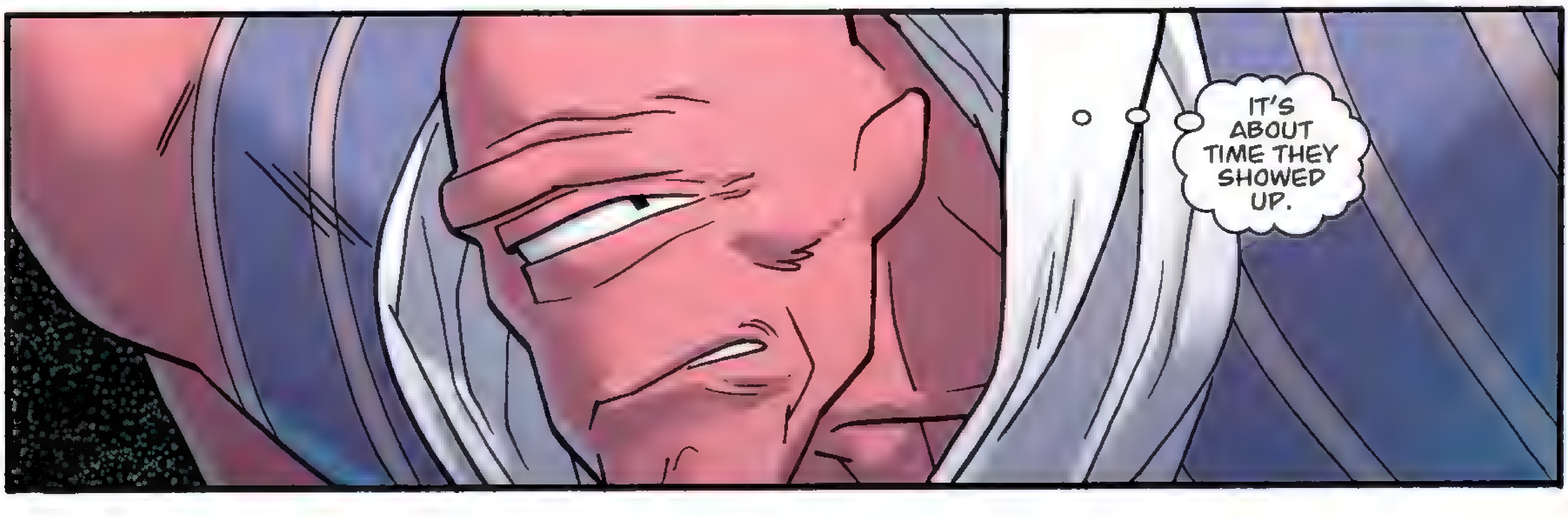
I KNEW YOU'D MAKE ME DO THIS! I KNEW YOU'D STAND AGAINST ME!
YOU CAN'T SEE THINGS THE WAY I DO. YOUR TIME WITH THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE HAS SCARRED YOU!
YOU FEEL LIKE IF YOU TAKE ONE STEP BACK TOWARD THAT LIFE--YOU WON'T COME BACK!
BUT I LEAD THE COALITION NOW! I HAVE TO PROTECT MILLIONS OF LIVES! SOMETIMES THESE KINDS OF DECISIONS HAVE TO BE MADE!
THAEDUS KNEW THAT! HE'S THE ONE WHO PUT THIS PLAN INTO MOTION! HE JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO CARRY OUT!
THEY'RE ALL IN ONE PLACE--CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY THAT IS?
WE HAVE TO ACT NOW, WHILE WE CAN!
I WON'T LET YOU STAND IN MY WAY--WHEN I'M DONE, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO STAND AT ALL!
BUT IN TIME, YOU'LL HEAL--AND HOPEFULLY, WHEN ALL OF THIS IS DONE, YOU'LL REALIZE I HAD NO CHOICE...
AND WE CAN BE--

ALLEN! MY GOD-- WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

OLIVER-- WAIT! I CAN EXPLAIN, JUST--
YOU CAN EXPLAIN WHY YOU'RE BEATING MY FATHER TO DEATH?!
PLEASE, DO THAT-- WHILE I TEAR YOU APART!

SLOW DOWN THERE, KIDDO. JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE-- HEAR ME OUT.
I TRIED REASONING WITH YOUR DAD AND--
YOU CALL THAT REASONING?! FUNNY! HERE'S *MY* ATTEMPT!
THIS SEEM *REASONABLE?!*
OW!
DID YOU HEAR ME TALKING TO TELIA OR SOMETHING?! THIS KIND OF INJURY HURTS UNOPANS IMMENSELY-- *NOT COOL!*
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF YOUR ANATOMY COMPARES TO MINE--YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH THIS--
OH, *SHUT UP!* VILTRUMITES HAVE BALLS-- CRY BABY!
AND I THINK YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE HOW BIG...
WAIT-- WHY'D YOU STOP?


OH.


IT'S ABOUT TIME THEY SHOWED UP.

OKAY...
LET ME TRY THIS AGAIN WHILE THE THREAT OF MY SOLDIERS HAS YOU WILLING TO LISTEN.
IF I RELEASE THE SCOURGE VIRUS ON EARTH--IT'S NOT ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT CERTAIN THAT IT WILL AFFECT THE HUMAN POPULATION THERE. IT'S *POSSIBLE*... BUT THAT'S IT.
I'M SORRY, BUT--THAT'S A RISK **WORTH** TAKING. IF THAT VIRUS CAN WIPE OUT THE VILTRUMITES ONCE AND FOR ALL--RID THE UNIVERSE OF THAT THREAT... I ***HAVE*** TO DO IT.
IF YOU THINK ABOUT THIS... REALLY CONSIDER WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE, YOU'LL SEE THAT I'M RIGHT.
YOU HAVE A VIRUS THAT COULD KILL ALL VILTRUMITES? AND YOU... WANT TO RELEASE IT ON EARTH.
YES, AND BECAUSE OF OUR SIMILAR GENETIC MAKE-UP... IT'S VERY LIKELY THAT IT COULD WIPE OUT THE ENTIRE HUMAN POPULATION IN THE PROCESS.
COP

HE'S RIGHT.
LET HIM DO IT.
OLIVER?
I'M SURE HE'D WARN MARK--AND LET HIM TAKE EVE AND A FEW OTHER PEOPLE HE LIKED OFF-PLANET.
MOM'S ALREADY HERE. THERE'S REALLY NO ONE ELSE I CARE ABOUT.
I'M SORRY... BUT THAT'S HOW I FEEL.
YOU HEARD HIS SIDE OF THE ARGUMENT...
NOW HEAR MINE.

I WAS NOT AN ANOMALY. THERE WAS NOTHING THAT WOULD HAVE SET ME APART FROM ANY OTHER VILTRUMITE.
I WAS VIOLENT, RUTHLESS, IT WAS OUR WAY OF LIFE. IT WAS HOW WE LIVED, HOW I LIVED. THAT WAS WHO I WAS.
UNTIL I WENT TO EARTH.
I LIVED AMONG THE PEOPLE, LIVING AS THEY LIVED, WAITING FOR MY MOMENT TO STRIKE, WAITING FOR MARK TO PROVE WHETHER OR NOT HUMAN DNA MATCHED PERFECTLY WITH VILTRUMITE'S.
COP
THAT TIME CHANGED ME. I HARDLY EVEN REALIZED IT AT THE TIME. THE AFFECTION SHOWN FOR THOSE AROUND THEM, THOSE THEY... LOVE. I PRETENDED... UNTIL I WASN'T PRETENDING ANYMORE.
WHEN THE TIME CAME TO COMPLETE MY MISSION, I COULDN'T DO IT... I WAS DIFFERENT. EARTH HAD CHANGED ME.
NOW WHAT REMAINS OF MY PEOPLE ARE EXISTING ON EARTH, AS I DID, AND FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME.
I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THE SAME THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME... WILL HAPPEN TO ALL OF THEM.
AND WHAT IF THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN? WE WILL HAVE SQUANDERED OUR ONLY CHANCE TO RID OURSELVES OF THIS THREAT TO OUR ENTIRE UNIVERSE.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT YOUR PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF? OUR EFFORTS TO DESTROY THEM IN THE RECENT WAR?
I'M CONFUSED, MY FRIEND. ARE YOU TRYING TO SAVE THE INNOCENT PEOPLE OF EARTH... OR YOUR VILTRUMITE BRETHREN?
WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF EARTH IS TRUE OF MY MOTHER, AND VERY FEW OTHERS. I HAVE READ THE ENTIRETY OF THEIR WRITTEN HISTORY... MY OPINION OF THEM DIFFERS FROM YOURS... SUBSTANTIALLY.
THEY'RE ASSHOLES. THEY CARE ONLY FOR TAKING WHAT THEY DON'T HAVE FROM THOSE THAT DO. THEY'RE A SMALL AND PETTY PEOPLE WHO ARE NEARLY AS ADDICTED TO VIOLENCE AS OUR RACE IS.
YOU BELIEVE VILTRUMITES WILL LEARN FROM THEM, AND BE MADE BETTER BY IT. I'M SORRY, FATHER... BUT... YOU'RE WRONG.

OKAY, WE'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME WITH THIS. I HAVE A MISSION TO CARRY OUT AND YOU'VE MADE IT CLEAR THAT YOU MEAN TO INTERFERE.
RESTRAIN HIM.
YOU CAN'T!
DON'T DO THIS! DON'T MAKE ME--

I WASN'T KIDDING WHEN I SAID I WOULDN'T LET YOU DO THIS, ALLEN.
I'M NOT GOING OVER THIS WITH YOU AGAIN. THIS IS *OVER*, NOLAN.
IT'S DECIDED.
YOU'RE NOT THINKING CLEARLY!
THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE WIN THE WAR!
DON'T MAKE ME--
NO... COULD NEVER...
NOT AFTER...

WELL, THAT WAS TOUCHING... YOU HAVE CHANGED.
STILL, THOUGH... I'M *CONVINCED* YOU'RE AN ANOMALY. I JUST CAN'T SEE GRAND REGENT THRAGG MARRYING A NICE LITTLE HUMAN WOMAN AND SETTLING DOWN.
YOU'RE SPECIAL. DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT.
YOU COME FROM AN IRREDEEMABLE RACE OF GENOCIDAL *MANIACS*... DON'T FORGET WHAT'S AT STAKE.
AND PLEASE, DON'T HOLD ALL THIS AGAINST--
DAMN.

LET HIM GO, HE'S IN NO SHAPE TO PURSUE US ON HIS OWN. I'M SORRY, I KNOW THAT WAS HARD TO SEE. I WAS TRYING TO SUBDUE HIM WITHOUT HURTING HIM *TOO* BADLY... BUT I COULD ONLY HOLD BACK SO MUCH...
I...
I GET IT.
WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, HE'LL SEE THAT WE WERE RIGHT. I KNOW IT.
THEN THINGS WILL GO BACK TO NORMAL.
I... HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, ALLEN.
WILL YOU ACCOMPANY ME TO EARTH?
I COULD USE YOUR HELP EITHER CONVINCING MARK... OR MORE LIKELY, ***RESTRAINING*** HIM.
LET'S GO.

DOOM!
GAH!
YOU!
I SAW *EVERYTHING!* IT'S ALL OVER THE NEWS FEED!
I TRUSTED YOU!
I LOVED YOU!
YOU'RE ATTACKING ALLEN?!
TRYING TO TAKE OVER *THIS* PLANET NOW?!

I CAN'T BELIEVE I LET YOU DO THIS TO ME--
THAP!
--AGAIN?
ALLEN IS GOING TO EARTH... TO KILL ALL THE VILTRUMITES THERE...
...BUT...
...HE'S GOING TO...
...KILL EVERYONE ON EARTH AT THE SAME TIME.

WE'VE GOT TO GET TO EARTH...
WE'VE GOT TO...
WE...

...HAVE TO WARN MAR--
*
KROOM!
COP
NOLAN?
NOLAN?!

CHAPTER 87

MY *FIRST* ATTEMPT TO RULE THIS DIMENSION WAS A HALF-HEARTED ATTEMPT, *DOOMED* TO FAIL FROM THE VERY START.*
MY WORLD WAS DYING, ITS ENERGY DEPLETED, I WAS DESPERATE AND HUNGRY--I ENTERED YOUR WORLD IN MY DEPLETED FORM, TRYING IN *VAIN* TO OVERTAKE YOU.
I UNDERESTIMATED THE RESISTANCE THIS WORLD WOULD HAVE TO OFFER... BUT NOT *THIS TIME.*
THIS TIME I ENTERED YOUR WORLD UNDETECTED, SPENT *MONTHS* RESTORING MYSELF, DRAINING YOUR WORLD OF ENERGY WITHOUT DETECTION--WAITING FOR THE PERFECT MOMENT TO STRIKE...
*SEE INVINCIBLE 27.

AND THAT TIME...
...HAS PASSED.

HOW LONG DID YOU WAIT TO TELL ME ABOUT THIS?! THESE ARE MY **FRIENDS!** THEY COULD HAVE BEEN **KILLED!!** SOME OF THEM MIGHT ALREADY BE DEAD!
THOSE IRRIGATION CHANNELS YOU WERE DIGGING WERE FAR MORE IMPORTANT IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS.
I ONLY ALERTED YOU WHEN IT WAS CLEAR WE'D BE **NEEDED.**

GET READY TO--
WRAMM!
MORE MORTALS TO SLAUGHTER!
CHOOM!
DOES THE ARMY OF DEFEATED ENEMIES AT MY FEET NOT GIVE YOU PAUSE TO FACE ME IN BATTLE?!
YOU ONLY DELAY THE PLEASURE I WILL TAKE IN DRAINING THE LIFE FROM THEIR BODIES TO FURTHER SUSTAIN MYSELF.
YOU PRESERVE MERE MOMENTS OF THEIR DOOMED LIVES!
WHUDD!
VALIANT EFFORT-- BUT AS WITH ALL MY OPPONENTS, IT ENDS IN TRAGEDY.
WE'RE JUST-- GETTING-- STARTED!

CHOMP!
VAAOSH!

UGH.
THANKS-- YOU OKAY?
I AM UNHARMED, STRANGELY.
UM...
HI.

I'M TRULY SORRY, INVINCIBLE, BUT DUE TO YOUR CURRENT STATUS AS A FUGITIVE, I NEED TO REQUEST YOU AND DINOSAURUS SURRENDER.
IMMEDIATELY.
ARE YOU *KIDDING?*
I THINK WHAT YOU MEAN TO SAY IS *THANK YOU.* WERE YOU NOT PAYING ATTENTION?
WE JUST SAVED THE WORLD.
POTENTIALLY, YES. AND I IMAGINE THAT WILL GRANT THE TWO OF YOU SOME LENIENCY. BUT IN LIGHT OF DINOSAURUS' PAST ACTIONS AND YOUR EFFORTS TOWARD RELEASING HIM...
...I HAVE TO INSIST YOU ACCOMPANY US BACK TO THE PENTAGON FOR DETAINMENT. AT LEAST UNTIL THIS IS SORTED OUT.
YEAH... *THAT'S* GOING TO HAPPEN.

MARK?!
EVE.
I'M SORRY IT'S TAKEN ME THIS LONG TO SEE YOU... THEY'VE BEEN WATCHING THE HOUSE. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
YOU'RE WORKING WITH THE MADMAN WHO BLEW UP LAS VEGAS-- I KNOW YOU WERE TAKING THAT HARD, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT IT WAS SCREWING YOU UP THIS BADLY.
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU COULD SEE IT THAT WAY, BUT THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. AS WRONG AS DINOSAURUS WAS TO DO THAT--WHAT HE DID HELPED PEOPLE... IN THE END AT LEAST.
I KNOW IT'S HARD TO SEE, BUT HE'S CHANGING THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER. MORE THAN WE EVER DID WITH OUR SILLY COSTUMES AND OUR FISTS.
I RARELY EVER USED MY FISTS AND WHAT WE DO HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT HELPING PEOPLE.
YEAH, THE PERSON GETTING CHASED OR ATTACKED... THAT INDIVIDUAL, OR SMALL GROUP-- WHATEVER THE CASE WAS. THE SCALE WAS ALWAYS SMALLER THAN IT SHOULD BE.
DINOSAURUS' IDEAS ARE GOOD, BUT HIS WAY OF CARRYING THEM OUT... THAT WAS THE PROBLEM.
I THINK I'M ABLE TO FIX THAT... AND I HAVE BEEN ALREADY. WE'VE BEEN HELPING PEOPLE ON A LARGER SCALE-- THINGS LIKE WHAT WE DID IN AFRICA.

THEN WHY CUT ME OUT OF IT?
YOU KNOW I COULD **HELP** YOU.
THAT'S THE PLAN, ***EVENTUALLY***.
BUT I DON'T QUITE TRUST HIM. HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU--OR WHO I REALLY AM--OR THIS PLACE.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS? I MEAN, WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE?
SEEMS LIKE THIS COULD ***REALLY*** BACKFIRE FOR YOU.
IT COULD, I KNOW. BUT THE BENEFITS THAT COULD COME FROM ME DIRECTING DINOSAURUS' CRAZY PLANS COULD BE WORTH THE RISK.
AND I'M THERE TO STOP HIM IF HE TRIES ANYTHING I DON'T APPROVE OF.
I'M SORRY, BUT YOUR LAST ATTEMPT TO STOP HIM DIDN'T GO SO WELL.
SO THEN YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M RISKING HERE... AND THAT I'VE ***CONSIDERED*** WHAT'S AT STAKE... AND I ***KNOW*** WHAT I'M DOING.
I'M PRETTY MUCH A WANTED MAN AT THIS POINT. I WOULDN'T BE DOING ALL THIS IF I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS ***WORTH*** IT... BUT ALSO IF I DIDN'T BELIEVE I COULD HANDLE IT.
OKAY. OKAY.
I JUST HAD TO SAY IT.
YOU'RE IN COSTUME?
WAS OUT DEALING WITH ***KILLCANNON***. I HAVE A WHOLE LIFE OF MY OWN, YOU KNOW.
SPEAKING OF THAT... INVINCIBLE, INC. IS PRETTY MUCH IN THE TOILET. CECIL HASN'T MADE YOUR OUTLAW STATUS PUBLIC JUST YET... BUT I'VE HAD TO SUSPEND SERVICE.
WE'RE LOSING CLIENTS.
IT'S NOT HIGH ON MY LIST OF PRIORITIES... BUT WE SHOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT...
...DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH.

I ONLY CAME HERE TO *TALK*.
I DIDN'T BRING A SQUADRON OF SOLDIERS, AND I *COULD* HAVE.
I DIDN'T SEND IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE... WHICH I COULD HAVE EASILY DONE.
SO CUT ME SOME SLACK AND HEAR ME OUT.
I DON'T HAVE DINOSAURUS WITH ME. YOU WOULDN'T OUTRIGHT ATTACK ME UNLESS YOU KNEW YOU COULD GET *HIM*, TOO.
I FIGURED YOU WERE MONITORING THE PLACE. I ACTUALLY *WANT* TO TALK TO YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* HERE, KID?
THIS IS *CRAZY*.
YOU SAW THAT SOLAR PANEL ARRAY... YOU *BUILT* IT. YOU CAN'T ARGUE THAT IT WON'T HELP PEOPLE. IT'S GOING TO CHANGE PEOPLE'S LIVES, AND HELP THE WHOLE PLANET... AND IT COULD LEAD TO MORE LIKE IT.
DINOSAURUS DID THAT. HE DID A HORRIBLE, UNFORGIVABLE THING TO ACCOMPLISH IT-- BUT HIS REASONING WAS *SOUND*.
I CAN GUIDE HIM, PREVENT HIM FROM CARRYING OUT HIS PLANS IN A WAY THAT HURTS PEOPLE... AND HE CAN HELP ME DO THINGS THAT ACTUALLY HELP PEOPLE... THINGS THAT *MATTER*.
MARK... MY GOD, ONE MINUTE YOU IMPRESS ME WITH YOUR PLANNING OF THIS MEETING, THINKING ONE STEP AHEAD OF ME... AND THE NEXT... YOU COULDN'T SOUND MORE...
NAIVE.

I'VE GOT THIS UNDER CONTROL. I KNOW **EXACTLY** WHAT I'M DOING HERE.
ACTUALLY, I'M SORRY, MARK... BUT...
THIS **SCARES** ME.
YOU ONCE TOLD ME THAT VILTRUMITE WOMAN--ANISSA PROMISED TO GIVE THIS PLANET TECHNOLOGY THAT WOULD IMPROVE ALL OUR LIVES... IF ONLY YOU JUST ALLOWED THEM TO TAKE OVER.
YOU DIDN'T TRUST THEM... WHAT'S DIFFERENT HERE?
I'D LISTEN TO THE--
WAIT...
WHAT IS IT?
YOUR FRIEND WITH THE EYE IS ENTERING EARTH'S ORBIT. ANY CLUE WHAT **THAT** MIGHT BE ABOUT?
A LITTLE, I SHOULD PROBABLY GET UP THERE.
I THINK NOT--I'M SENDING A GUARDIAN TEAM. THEY'LL HANDLE IT--WHATEVER IT IS. WE NEED TO CHAT.
WE'LL CHAT SOME OTHER TIME. I'M GOING. CALL OFF YOUR TEAM.
OOSH!

MARK!
HEY, GUYS!
GOOD TO SEE YOU!

WOW, THEY'VE GOT YOU BACK IN ONE PIECE-- YOU'D NEVER KNOW ANYTHING HAPPENED!
YEAH, THEY GREW MY SKIN OVER NEW MECHANICAL PARTS. THEY ALMOST FEEL NORMAL.
I DON'T MEAN TO INTERRUPT THIS REUNION, BUT WE'RE HERE FOR A REASON...
WHERE'S MOM AND DAD? DID THEY COME?
WELL, NO... THEY...
THEY REMAINED ON TALESCRIA. THERE'S A LOT TO DISCUSS. YOUR FATHER INFORMED ME OF THE VILTRUMITES' STATUS HERE ON EARTH, AND...
I'VE DEVISED A PLAN I NEED TO RUN PAST YOU.

HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
MARK, PLEASE. JUST THINK THIS THROUGH... I UNDERSTAND YOUR INITIAL REACTION, BUT YOU NEED TO WEIGH THIS AGAINST THE ATROCITIES THE VILTRUMITES HAVE COMMITTED ALL OVER THE UNIVERSE.
JUST CONSIDER IT...
THIS SEEMS WRONG AT FIRST, BUT IT'S NOT. IT'S THE *ONLY* WAY WE CAN SAVE THE UNIVERSE. THIS FIXES *EVERYTHING*.
NO... IT DOESN'T.
IF THERE'S EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE THIS SCOURGE VIRUS YOU HAVE WILL AFFECT HUMANS... AND IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S PRETTY MUCH CERTAIN... THERE'S *NO WAY* YOU CAN DO THIS.
ALLEN, THE VILTRUMITES KILLED NEARLY ALL OF *YOUR* PEOPLE... HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT?

IT'S DIFFERENT BECAUSE ONCE THE VILTRUMITES FEEL THEIR NUMBERS ARE SUFFICIENT AND THEY'RE THROUGH INTERBREEDING WITH EARTH THEY WILL RESUME THEIR MISSION OF UNIVERSAL CONQUEST.
THEN MORE PEOPLE, LIKE MINE, WILL BE PUSHED TO THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION... AND THAT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING. THINK OF WHAT THEY DID WITH THEIR NUMBERS DWINDLING. HOW MUCH *WORSE* WILL THINGS BE WITH THEIR FULL POWER RESTORED?
IF I CAUSE THE EXTINCTION OF HUMANITY IN ORDER TO RID US OF THE VILTRUMITES-- THAT'S IT. IT STOPS *HERE* AND THE HUMAN RACE BECOMES A WORTHY SACRIFICE FOR THE GOOD OF ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE.
MY FATHER'S NOT HERE BECAUSE HE DIDN'T AGREE WITH YOU... *RIGHT?*
HE COULDN'T SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE. YOUR BROTHER DOES... WHY CAN'T YOU?
MY FATHER IS RIGHT, AND I'M SORRY OLIVER, BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN ODDLY COLD TOWARD HUMAN LIFE IN GENERAL.
YOU *CAN'T* DO THIS.
I'M SORRY, MARK. BUT WE *HAVE* TO.

DON'T ACT SURPRISED, ALLEN.
YOU KNEW I COULD NEVER LET YOU DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
IN FACT, I'M ALMOST CERTAIN THAT SOMEWHERE, DEEP INSIDE, YOU *WANT* ME TO STOP YOU!
DON'T BET ON IT!

AND YOU-- DON'T *DO* THIS, OLIVER. HELP ME STOP ALLEN.
THERE ARE PEOPLE ON THAT PLANET YOU KNOW-- AND COUNTLESS OTHERS WHO ARE *INNOCENT*. THEY DON'T DESERVE TO DIE!
THIS ISN'T ABOUT *THEM!*
OLIVER IS RIGHT-- BUT ENOUGH ARGUING! YOU'RE WASTING TIME!
THIS HAS TO BE DONE QUICKLY--IT HAS TO BE DONE *NOW!* BEFORE THEY GET A CHANCE TO DETECT WHAT'S HAPPENING!
YOU NEED TO JUST LET THIS HAPPEN. TRUST THAT I KNOW WHAT IS BEST. I WAS MADE HEAD OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS FOR A REASON.
BESIDES-- NOLAN COULDN'T STOP ME.
WHAT CHANCE DO *YOU* HAVE?!

HE HAS ME.

CHAPTER 88

THRAGG.
ALLEN, SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN... AND THE YOUNG VILTRUMITE TRAITOR HAS HEALED NICELY.
NOW, DID YOU **REALLY** THINK WE WOULD OCCUPY THIS PLANET WITHOUT MONITORING ORBITAL ACTIVITY?
WE SAW YOUR ARRIVAL, WE KNOW YOUR PLAN, SO...
TELL ME WHY I SHOULDN'T SLAUGHTER BOTH OF YOU ***RIGHT NOW?***

WELL, THERE'S A FEW REASONS THAT COME TO MIND RANGING FROM THE POIGNANT AND BOLD TO THE MUNDANE AND DESPERATE.
I COULD LIST THEM ALL, BUT THAT WOULD TAKE A WHILE. SO I'LL JUST DIVE INTO THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE...
IF YOU SO MUCH AS MOVE A MUSCLE IN OUR DIRECTION--I PULL THIS TRIGGER... AND YOU *DIE.*
YOU CLEARLY HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD I'VE BEEN FIGHTING THE URGE TO KILL YOU SIMPLY TO SEE THAT GIANT RIDICULOUS UNOPAN EYE BURST FORTH FROM YOUR SHATTERED SKULL...
NOW YOU SHOW ME *IMMEASURABLE* DISRESPECT BY THREATENING ME WITH THE SCOURGE VIRUS... THE THING THAT TURNED MY HOME PLANET INTO A *TOMB...* BEFORE YOU HELPED ITS CREATOR, THAEDUS *DESTROY* IT...
YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* THE RESTRAINT I'M EXERCISING AT THIS MOMENT...
THIS IS A PERFECTED STRAIN, FAR MORE DEADLY THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE THAT DECIMATED THE VILTRUMITE POPULATION.
I'D ADVISE YOU TO STOP PRETENDING YOU STILL HAVE THE UPPER HAND HERE.
NO MATTER THE LEVEL OF PERFECTION YOU'VE ACHIEVED WITH THIS NEW STRAIN... I KNOW I COULD SEPARATE YOUR HEAD FROM YOUR BODY BEFORE THE VIRUS TAKES EFFECT ON ME.
JUST SO WE'RE *CLEAR* ON THE TERMS OF THIS STANDOFF.

OKAY, SO IT'S OVER, RIGHT? ALLEN--YOU'RE PACKING IT IN AND GOING HOME?
THRAGG *KNOWS*-- YOU'RE NOT CATCHING THEM BY SURPRISE-- YOU RELEASE THIS THING INTO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE NOW AND THEY JUST TAKE OFF, LEAVING THE PLANET BEFORE THE VIRUS SPREADS.
SO THAT'S IT--YOUR PLAN IS OFFICIALLY FOILED.
COME ON, GUYS... LET'S NOT DO ANYTHING CRAZY, OKAY?
I'M SO TOTALLY ***UNPREPARED*** FOR CRAZY RIGHT NOW.
LET ME BE CLEAR. THERE WILL BE NO FIGHT HERE... NOT NOW.
AS THE NEW HEAD OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, ALLEN... I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE... AND NEED TO PROVE YOURSELF WORTHY OF THE APPOINTMENT.
I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A ***TRUCE***.

A TRUCE? REALLY?
YES. I COULD SLAUGHTER YOU NOW, MAYBE YOU WOULD INFECT ME, MAYBE NOT. MY PEOPLE WOULD BE SAFE, YOU WOULD BE DEAD.
BUT WHAT DOES THAT ACCOMPLISH? YOU ARE NOT SO STUPID THAT THIS IS THE *ONLY* SAMPLE OF THE VIRUS. YOU'VE GOT IT STORED AWAY SOMEWHERE, BEYOND MY REACH.
SO AFTER YOU DIE YOUR SUCCESSOR COMES BACK HERE AND WE'RE IN THE EXACT SAME PLACE.
FUTHERMORE, I DON'T *BELIEVE* YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THIS. I KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE MADE A LEADER, TO HAVE YOURSELF THRUST INTO THAT ROLE.
AT THIS STAGE, YOU ARE ALLOWING YOUR PERCEIVED DUTY TO OVERSHADOW YOUR OWN GOOD JUDGMENT. THE EXTINCTION OF LIFE ON EARTH IS SIMPLY NOT WORTH THE LIVES OF THIRTY VILTRUMITES.
ALSO, I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T POINT OUT THAT YOU ONLY HAVE MY WORD THAT WE ARE ALL EVEN ON THIS PLANET. DO YOU REALLY TRUST THAT I WOULD ALLOW MY PEOPLE TO BE IN SUCH A VULNERABLE POSITION?
IF THE OVERWHELMING SENSE OF OBLIGATION TO YOUR NEW ROLE WASN'T CLOUDING YOUR JUDGEMENT... YOU WOULD SEE ALL THIS, AND BE AWARE OF IT. INSTEAD, YOU ARE ACTING ON IMPULSE, ALLOWING YOUR UNCERTAINTY TO DRIVE YOUR DECISIONS.
THIS IS NOT A GOOD IDEA.
CONSIDER HOW YOU *REALLY* FEEL ABOUT IT, AND YOU WILL AGREE.
OKAY...
SO NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE.

SO AGAIN, I PROPOSE A TRUCE. WE OCCUPY THIS PLANET, IT'S NOT A HOSTILE OCCUPATION, OUR PRESENCE IS LARGELY UNKNOWN BY THE POPULATION. YOU ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH IT... BUT I AM UNCOMFORTABLE WITH YOU HAVING THE SCOURGE VIRUS IN HAND, AT THE READY.
YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO STRIKE AT US WITH THIS VIRUS AT ANY TIME. WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO SLAUGHTER EVERY LIVING THING ON THIS PLANET--AND RESUME OUR WAR WITH THE COALITION.
WE ARE IN A STANDOFF. I SAY WE ALLOW OUR POSITION TO REMAIN AS SUCH, WITH EACH PARTY KEEPING THE OTHER IN CHECK.
WE WILL LIVE HERE, NOTHING MORE... AND IN RETURN, YOU WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO KILL US.
I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN MAKE THAT WORK.
LET ME HELP YOU. YOU ARE BACKED INTO A CORNER.
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE.
THE HELL WE DON'T! I'M WILLING TO BET YOUR PEOPLE ARE IN DEEP COVER... I BET THIS VIRUS WOULD GET TO THEM BEFORE THEY COULD GET OFF WORLD, WE MAY NOT GET ALL OF YOU, BUT--
OLIVER... STOP.
THRAGG IS RIGHT.

OH, WHAT THE HECK?

HOW AM I HEARING YOU? ARE YOU PLUGGED INTO OUR COMM SYSTEM?
WHAT? I DIDN'T HEAR HIM.
I'VE GOT SOME ALIEN TECH, ALLOWS ME TO TRANSMIT AND READ YOUR THOUGHTS.
DID ROBOT SAY HE CAN'T HEAR ME? IF HE'S NOT IN THAT SUIT, HE'S OUT OF RANGE-- THAT'S WHY.
SAYS HE'S GOT ALIEN TECH, CAN READ AND TRANSMIT THOUGHTS. YOU'RE OUT OF RANGE.
SORRY TO GET YOU OUT FOR THIS.
YOU CAN HEAD BACK, WE'VE GOT THIS COVERED.
HE'S TELLING US TO LEAVE. HE'S IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION.
IS THAT WHAT HE'S SAYING?
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
FRIENDS OF MINE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. THEY WON'T INTERFERE.
ROBOT SAYS THAT YOUR STATUS AS A FUGITIVE MAKES HIM SKEPTICAL OF YOUR ACTIONS HERE, AND HE'D LIKE ALL OF YOU TO ACCOMPANY US BACK TO THE PENTAGON FOR DETAINMENT UNTIL THINGS ARE SORTED.
THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

SUBDUE THEM ALL! MONSTER GIRL--YOU TAKE THE BIG ONE!
WHICH ONE?!
OH, CRAP-- COME ON, GUYS! DON'T DO THIS!
SORRY, MAN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO LATELY... BUT IT'S GOT A LOT OF PEOPLE WORRIED. YOU'VE BROUGHT THIS ON YOURSELF.
SURE--BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'M WRONG.
YOU'RE MINE, HANDSOME!
NO! STAY AWAY FROM HIM!
HE'LL KILL YOU!

WHAT IS *WRONG* WITH YOU? YOU ATTACK THE ONE WHO HAS JUST SAVED YOUR PLANET?!
HAVE YOU GONE *MAD?!*
THRAGG, PLEASE!
STOP! DON'T HURT THEM!
HOLD ON-- I'VE GOT YOU!
SCREW THIS NOISE!

WHILE HE'S DISTRACTED! THIS IS OUR CHANCE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
OLIVER, NO!
HEY!
PLEASE DON'T HURT THEM-- THEY'RE TRYING TO DO GOOD HERE!
MY PATIENCE ONLY GOES SO FAR.
OLIVER?!
DAMN IT, NO!

OLIVER!
OLIVER!

STOP THIS! STOP IT *NOW!*
CHOOM!
I'M TRYING TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE, YOU *IDIOT!*
YOU STOP!
KRAK!
NO!
WRAMM!
JUST LET IT FALL! LET IT HAPPEN!

COME ON...
GOT IT--!
WRAMM!
YOU CAN'T LET THESE PEOPLE DIE! I KNOW YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT THEM--BUT HOW COULD YOU EVEN ATTEMPT THIS?!
WROK!
WRAKK!
YOU ARE *WEAK!* THESE PEOPLE MAKE YOU WEAK! HOW CAN YOU PUT THE LIVES OF BILLIONS AGAINST THE LIVES OF INCONCEIVABLY MORE?!
I DON'T SEE IT AS EITHER-OR!
WHUDD!

STOP!
THE FATE OF YOUR ENTIRE WORLD IS AT RISK.
I AM NEEDED.
SO...
WHO ARE YOU?

I'M THROUGH ARGUING WITH YOU ABOUT THIS! I'M SICK OF IT! YOU'RE *WRONG!* AND NOW YOU'VE GOT ALLEN RECONSIDERING--
THIS **HAS TO BE DONE!**
NO, OLIVER... JUST...
PLEASE.
PLEASE...
DON'T--
PLEASE.

PSHOOM!!
MARK!
KOFF!

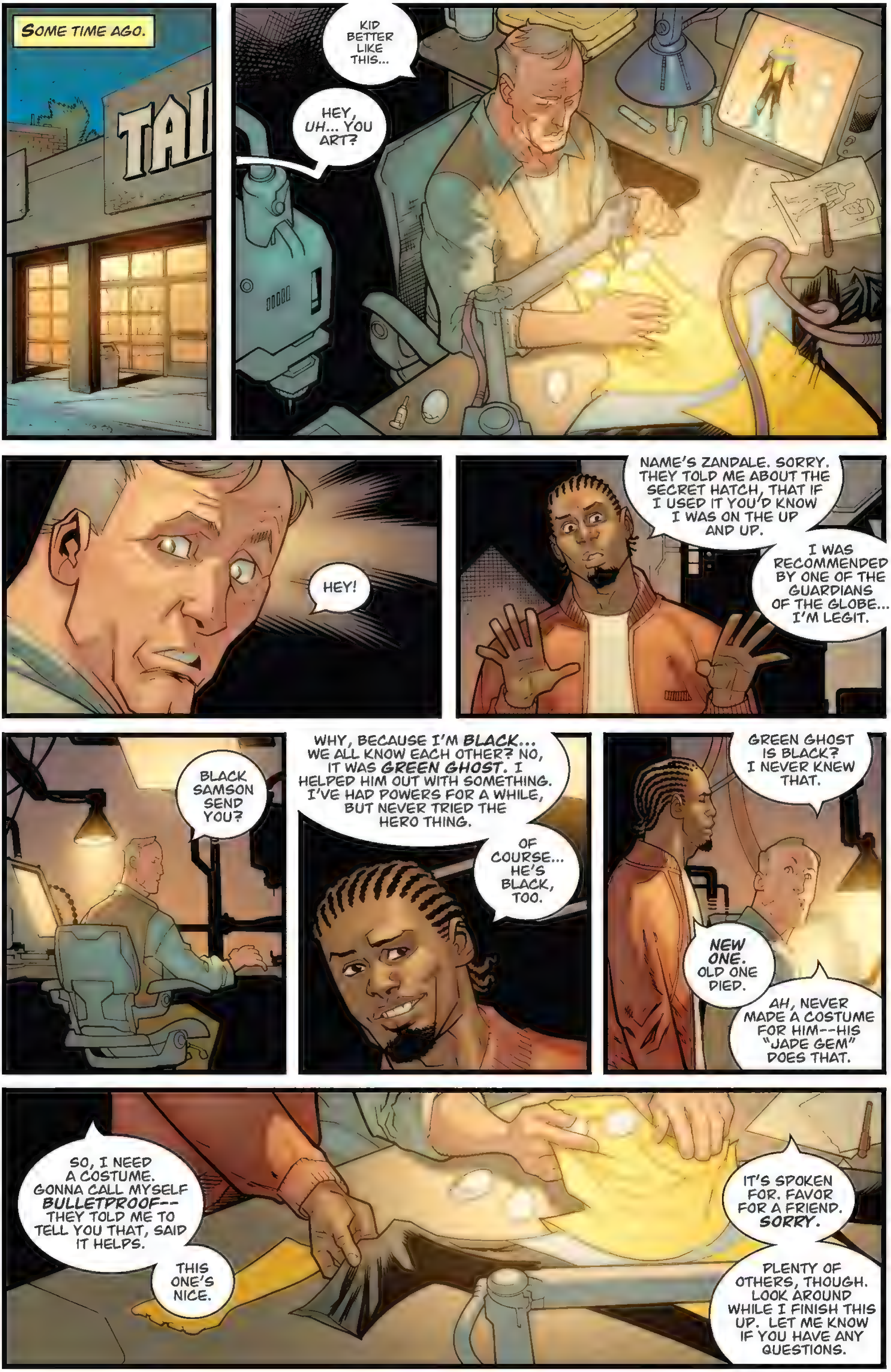
MARK!
NO!
STAY BACK! YOU COULD GET INFECTED, TOO!
I'LL HELP HIM!
OH, GOD...
MARK, HOLD ON!

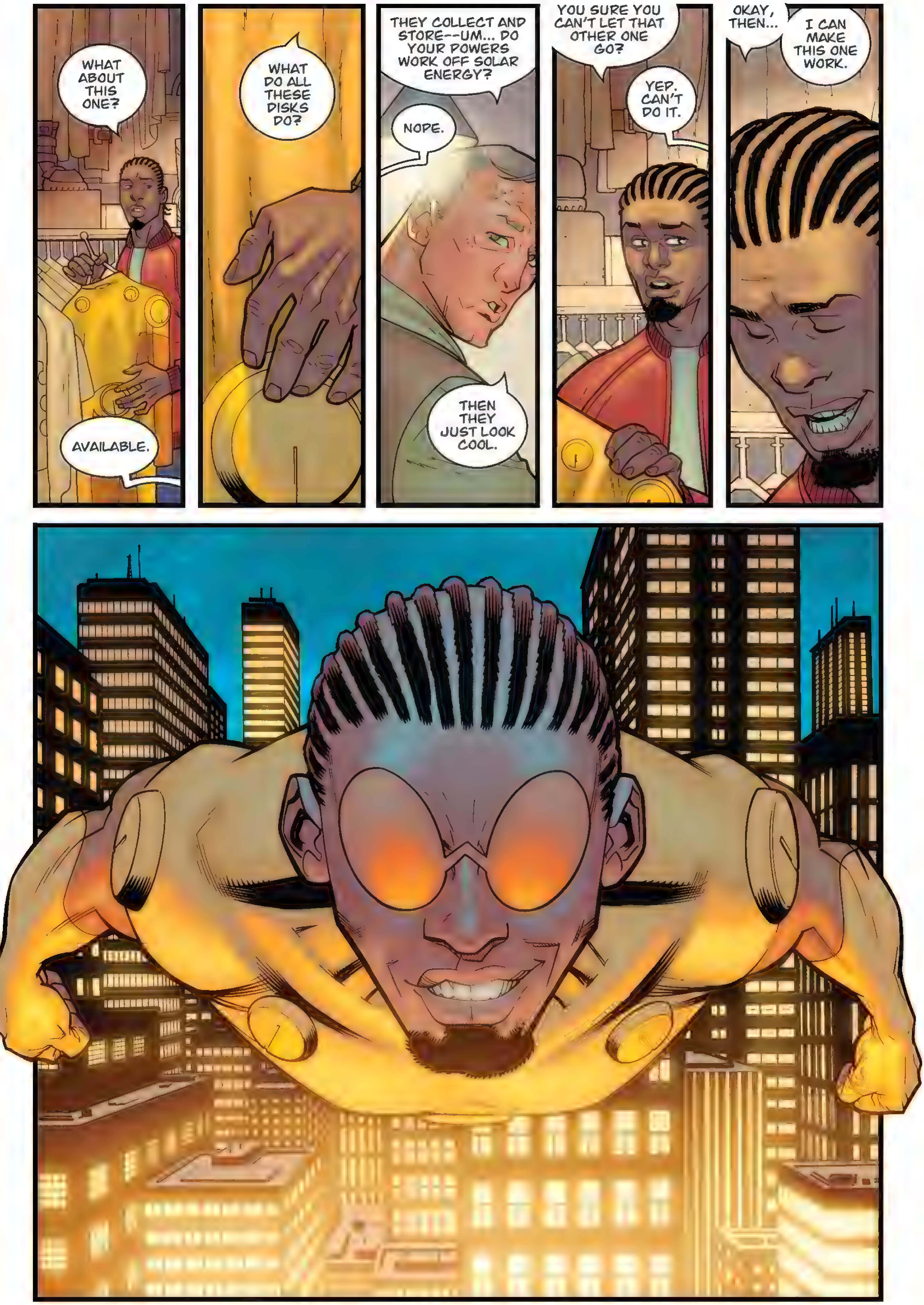
ARE YOU OKAY? MARK--CAN YOU HEAR ME?!
I'M FINE--
≈KOFF!≈
BLAST JUST CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD--COULDN'T GET MY BEARINGS.
THAT DISCHARGE--WHAT'S THE RANGE? HOW WILL IT SPREAD IN THE ATMOSPHERE?
WHAT'S THE SITUATION HERE?
MARK, DO YOU FEEL OKAY?
DON'T BRING THIS PROBLEM TO MY PLANET AND THEN ACT LIKE YOU CARE!
WHAT'S THE RISK HERE?! IS THE SCOURGE VIRUS AIRBORNE NOW OR NOT?!
WE'RE OVER AN OCEAN... AND THE GUN DISCHARGES ARE SMALL, MEANT FOR INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTIONS.
THE VIRUS INCUBATES IN THE BODY, AND THEN SPREADS THROUGH PERSONAL CONTACT... IT RELIES ON CARRIERS TO BUILD ITSELF UP ENOUGH TO SPREAD.
THE PLANET IS NOT UNDER THREAT.

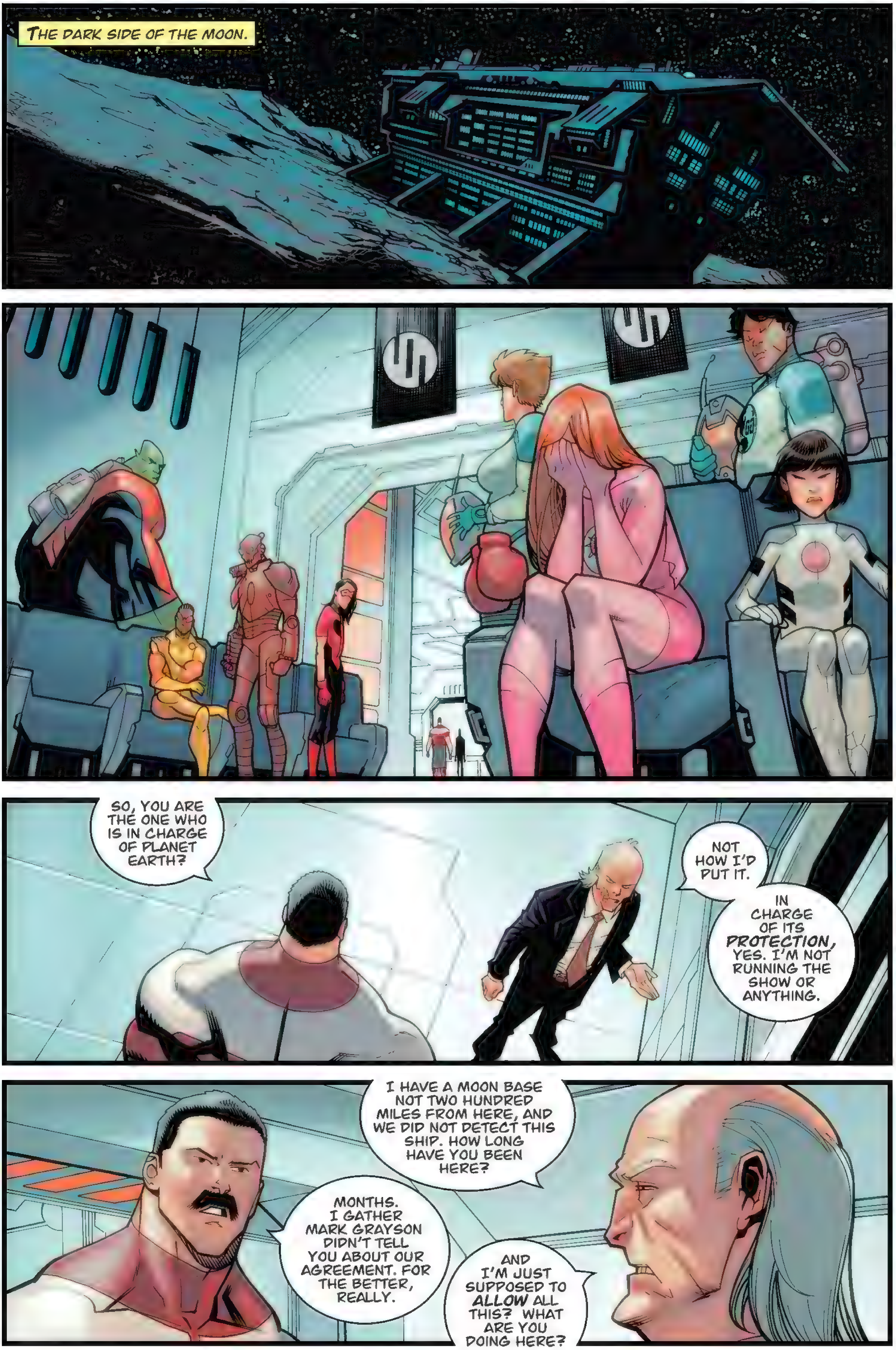
OKAY...
GOOD.
HOW DO YOU FEEL? ARE YOU OKAY?
THE VIRUS... I'M PRETTY SURE YOU'RE EXPOSED.
I'M FINE.
I'LL FEEL A LOT BETTER AFTER WE GET THAT GUN OUT OF OLIVER'S HANDS.
I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO HAVE CONTACT WITH ANYONE OF HUMAN OR VILTRUMITE DNA UNTIL YOU'VE HAD EXTENSIVE SCREENINGS.
YOU NEED TO BE QUARANTINED UNTIL WE'RE CERTAIN YOU WERE NOT INFECTED.
INFECTED-- QUARANTINE?! ALLEN, I'M FINE. I GROSSLY OVERESTIMATED YOUR PEOPLE'S ABILITY TO SYNTHESIZE A VIRUS. THIS STUFF DOESN'T WORK.
MARK...

WHAT?
ALLEN, I'M *FINE*.

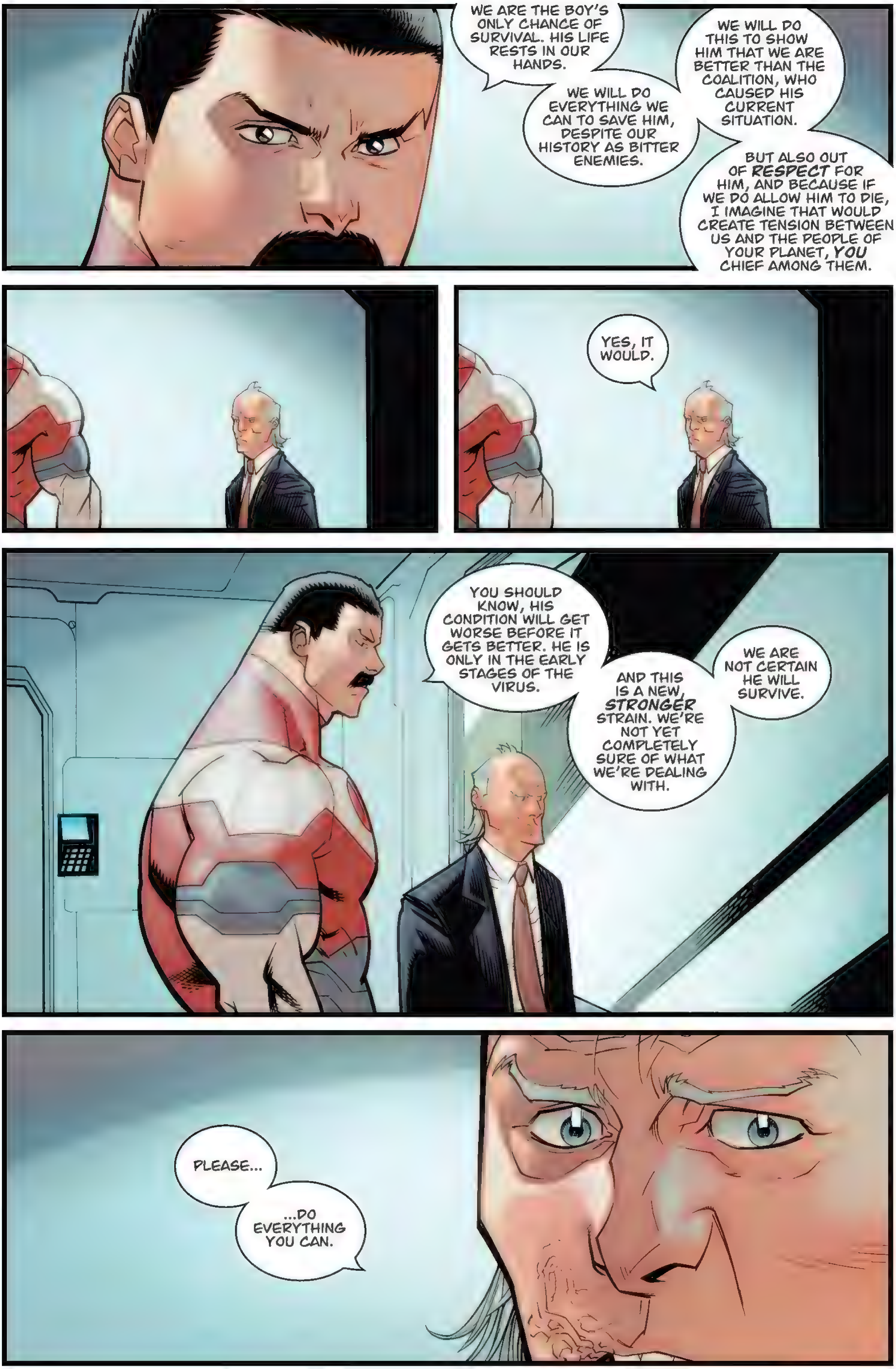
CHAPTER 89

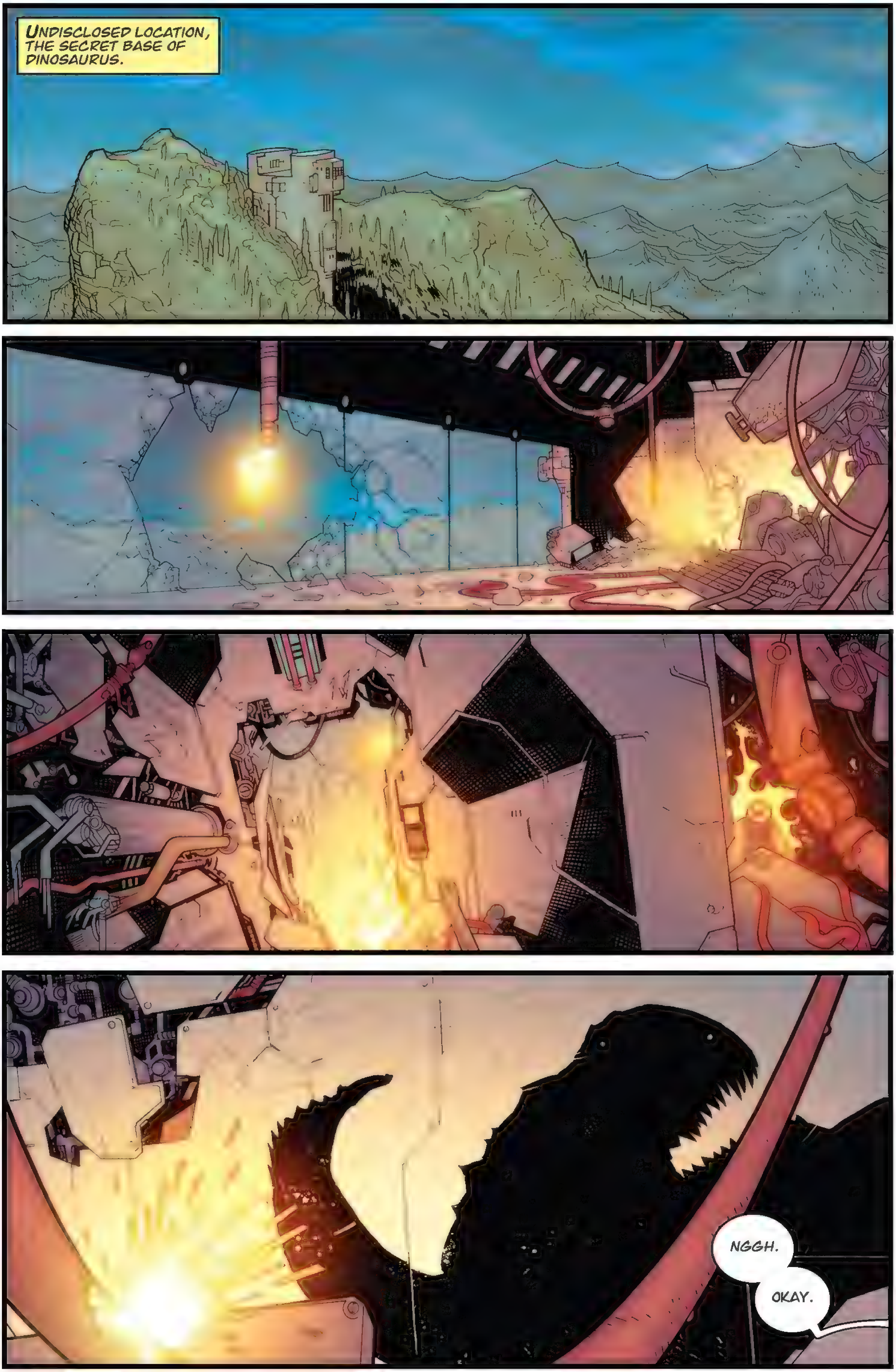

SOME TIME AGO.
TAI
KID BETTER LIKE THIS...
HEY, UH... YOU ART?
HEY!
NAME'S ZANDALE. SORRY. THEY TOLD ME ABOUT THE SECRET HATCH, THAT IF I USED IT YOU'D KNOW I WAS ON THE UP AND UP.
I WAS RECOMMENDED BY ONE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE... I'M LEGIT.
BLACK SAMSON SEND YOU?
WHY, BECAUSE I'M BLACK... WE ALL KNOW EACH OTHER? NO, IT WAS GREEN GHOST. I HELPED HIM OUT WITH SOMETHING. I'VE HAD POWERS FOR A WHILE, BUT NEVER TRIED THE HERO THING.
OF COURSE... HE'S BLACK, TOO.
GREEN GHOST IS BLACK? I NEVER KNEW THAT.
NEW ONE. OLD ONE DIED.
AH, NEVER MADE A COSTUME FOR HIM--HIS "JADE GEM" DOES THAT.
SO, I NEED A COSTUME. GONNA CALL MYSELF BULLETPROOF-- THEY TOLD ME TO TELL YOU THAT, SAID IT HELPS.
THIS ONE'S NICE.
IT'S SPOKEN FOR. FAVOR FOR A FRIEND. SORRY.
PLENTY OF OTHERS, THOUGH. LOOK AROUND WHILE I FINISH THIS UP. LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.


WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?
AVAILABLE.
WHAT DO ALL THESE DISKS DO?
THEY COLLECT AND STORE--UM... DO YOUR POWERS WORK OFF SOLAR ENERGY?
NOPE.
THEN THEY JUST LOOK COOL.
YOU SURE YOU CAN'T LET THAT OTHER ONE GO?
YEP. CAN'T DO IT.
OKAY, THEN...
I CAN MAKE THIS ONE WORK.

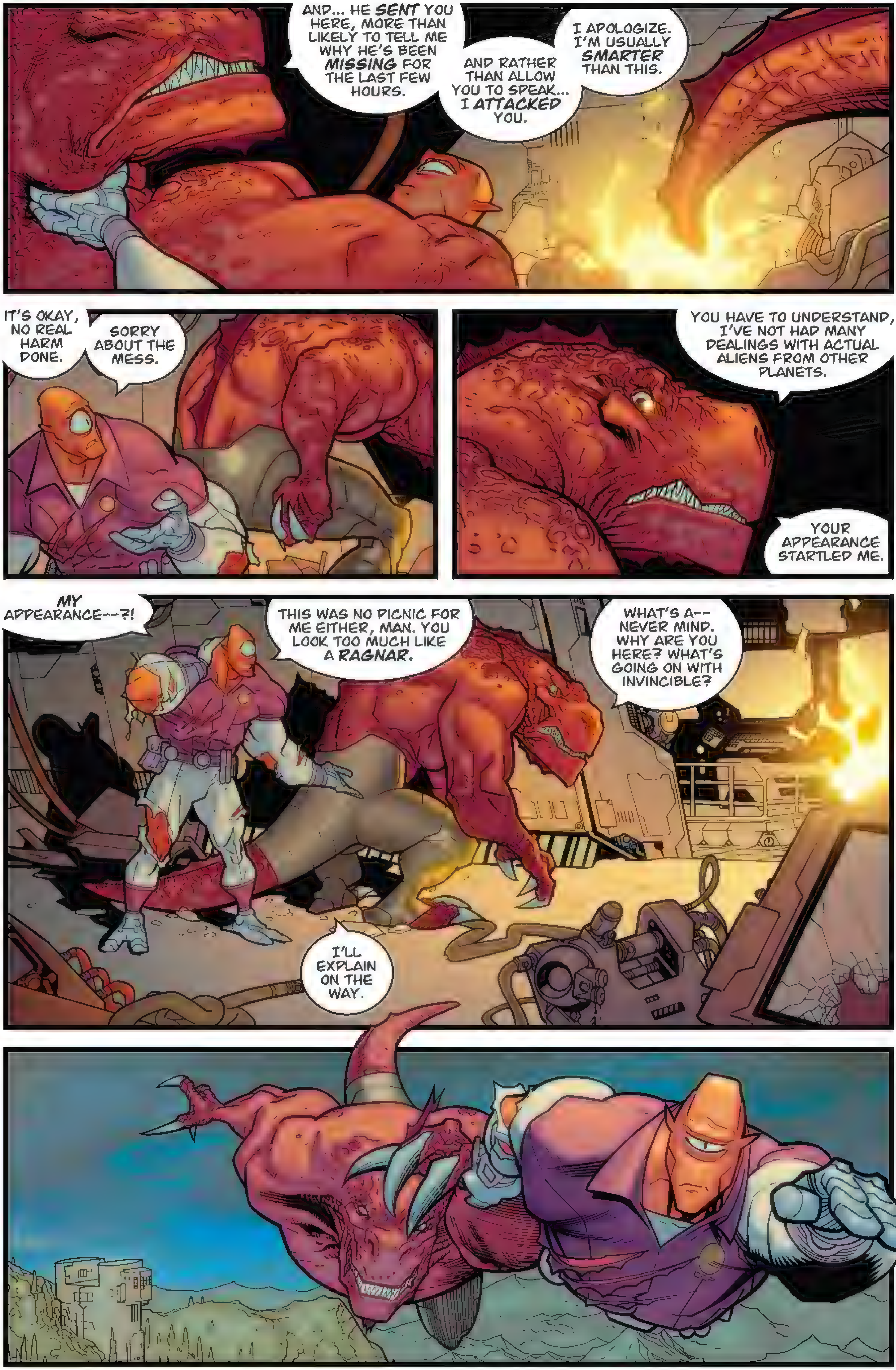

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON.
SO, YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS IN CHARGE OF PLANET EARTH?
NOT HOW I'D PUT IT.
IN CHARGE OF ITS *PROTECTION*, YES. I'M NOT RUNNING THE SHOW OR ANYTHING.
I HAVE A MOON BASE NOT TWO HUNDRED MILES FROM HERE, AND WE DID NOT DETECT THIS SHIP. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
MONTHS. I GATHER MARK GRAYSON DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT OUR AGREEMENT. FOR THE BETTER, REALLY.
AND I'M JUST SUPPOSED TO *ALLOW* ALL THIS? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

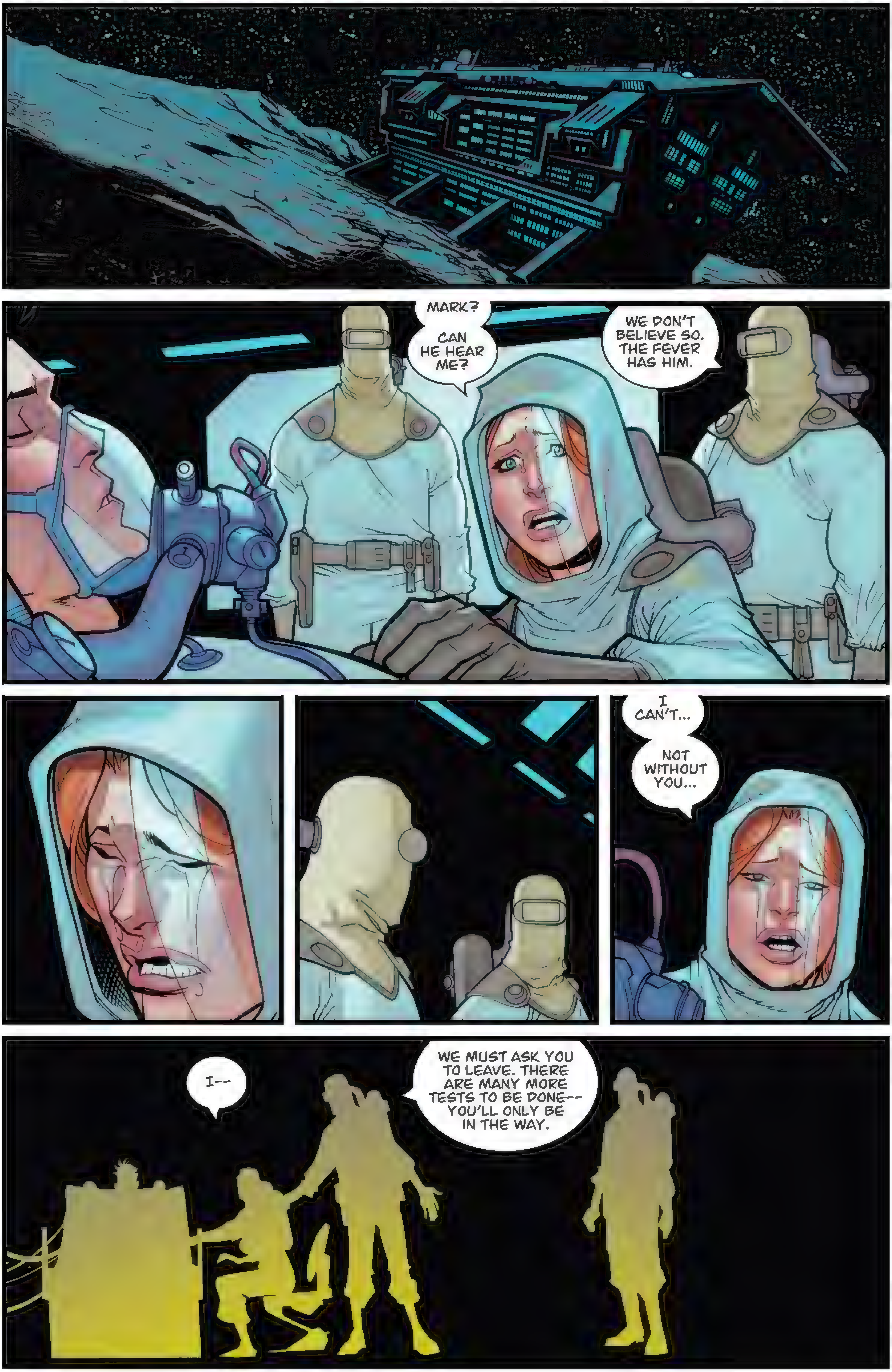
YOU SIMPLY HAVE NO CHOICE IN THE MATTER. THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO. YOU DID NOT DETECT OUR PRESENCE HERE, BECAUSE OUR TECHNOLOGY IS VASTLY MORE ADVANCED THAN YOURS.
YOU MUST HONOR THE AGREEMENT WE HAVE WITH MARK. OTHERWISE, WE WILL DESTROY YOU.
WE WILL COEXIST IN PEACE BECAUSE TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, WHICH COULD LEAD TO THE EXTINCTION OF MY PEOPLE.
AND, IT APPEARS, YOURS AS WELL.
AS TO OUR CURRENT SITUATION. WE HAVE DEALT WITH THE SCOURGE VIRUS BEFORE. WE KNOW HOW TO HANDLE IT.

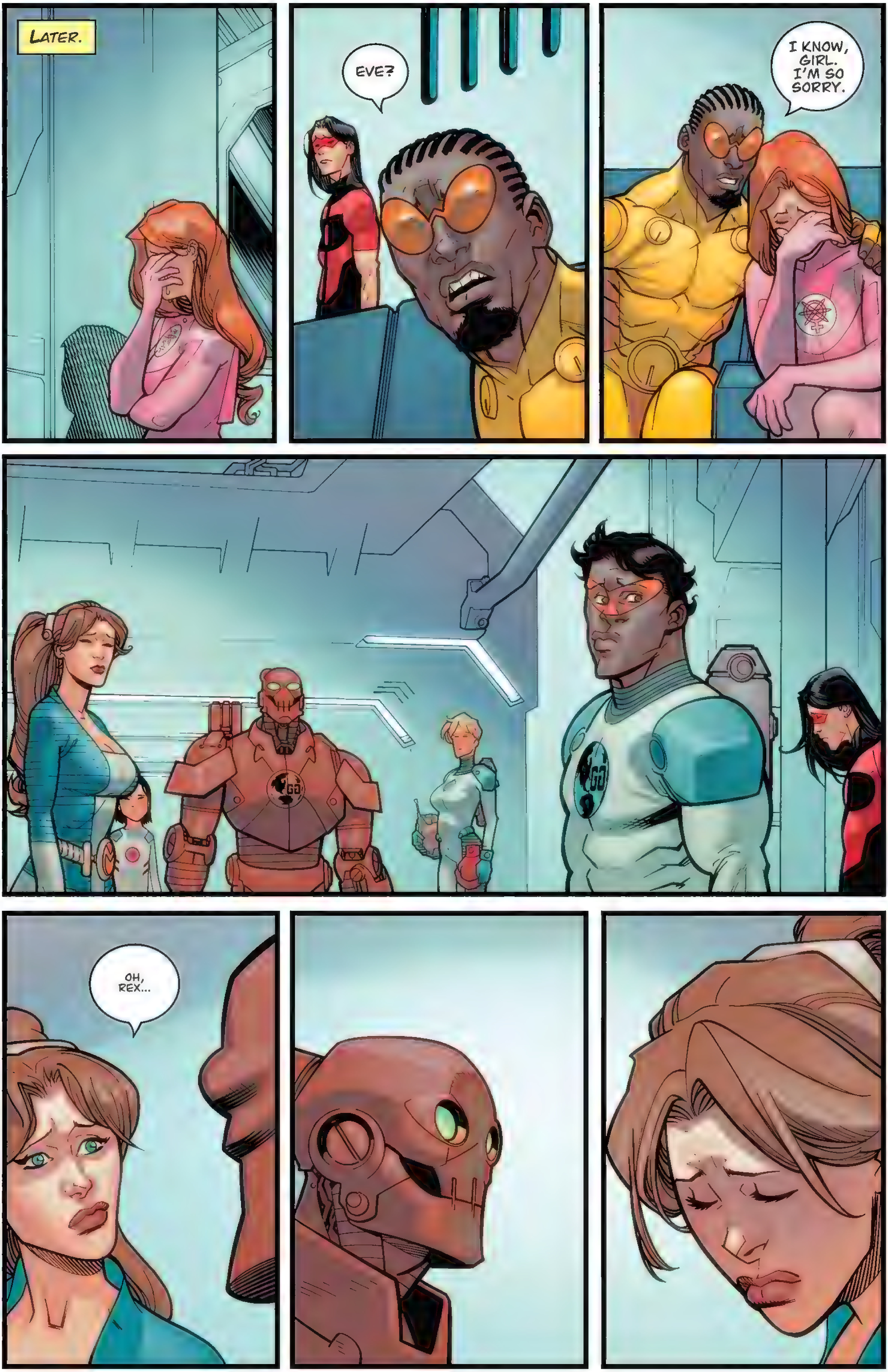

WE ARE THE BOY'S ONLY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL. HIS LIFE RESTS IN OUR HANDS.
WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO SAVE HIM, DESPITE OUR HISTORY AS BITTER ENEMIES.
WE WILL DO THIS TO SHOW HIM THAT WE ARE BETTER THAN THE COALITION, WHO CAUSED HIS CURRENT SITUATION.
BUT ALSO OUT OF RESPECT FOR HIM, AND BECAUSE IF WE DO ALLOW HIM TO DIE, I IMAGINE THAT WOULD CREATE TENSION BETWEEN US AND THE PEOPLE OF YOUR PLANET, YOU CHIEF AMONG THEM.
YES, IT WOULD.
YOU SHOULD KNOW, HIS CONDITION WILL GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER. HE IS ONLY IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE VIRUS.
AND THIS IS A NEW, STRONGER STRAIN. WE'RE NOT YET COMPLETELY SURE OF WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.
WE ARE NOT CERTAIN HE WILL SURVIVE.
PLEASE...
...DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN.

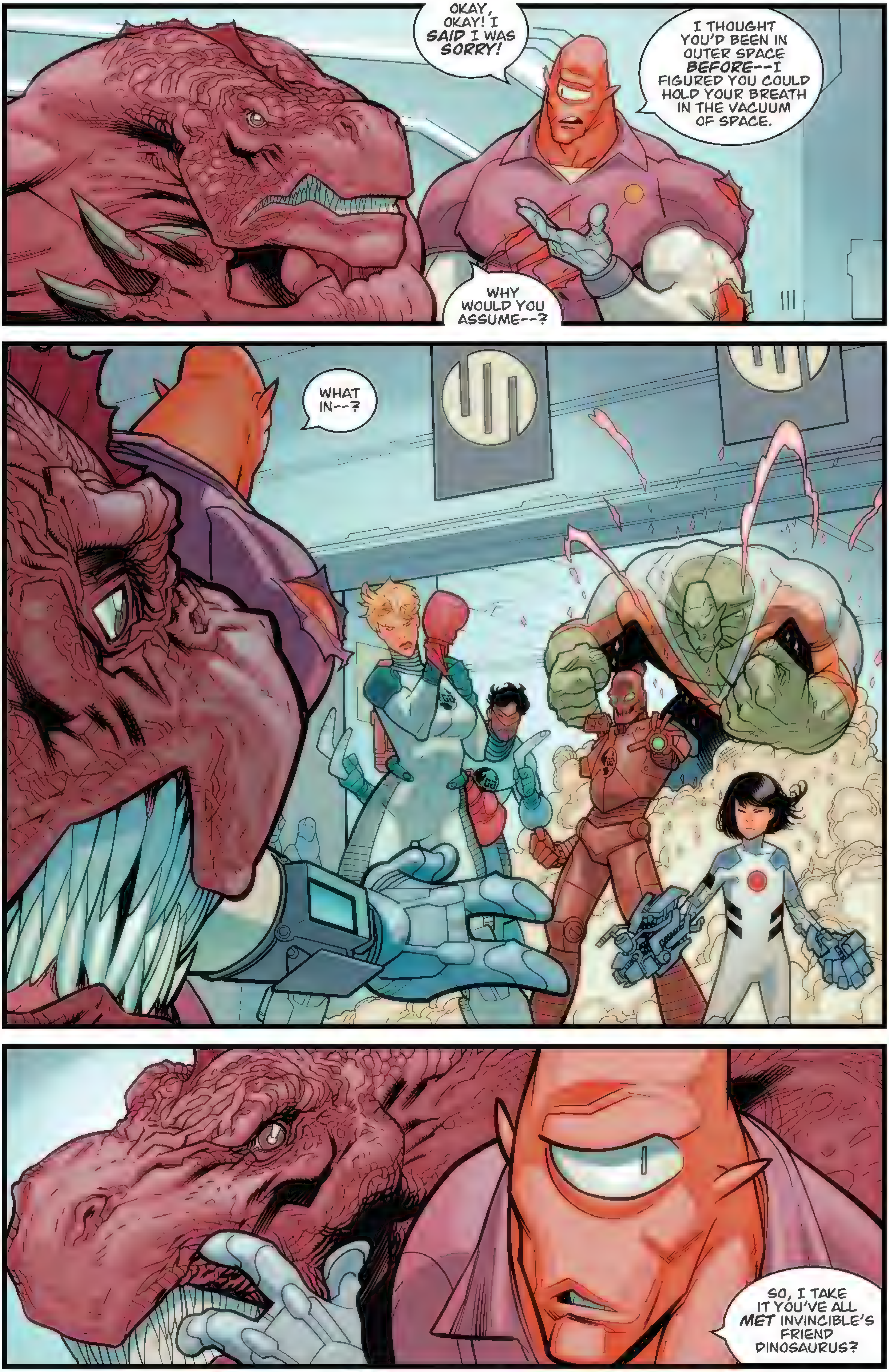

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, THE SECRET BASE OF DINOSAURUS.
NGGH.
OKAY.

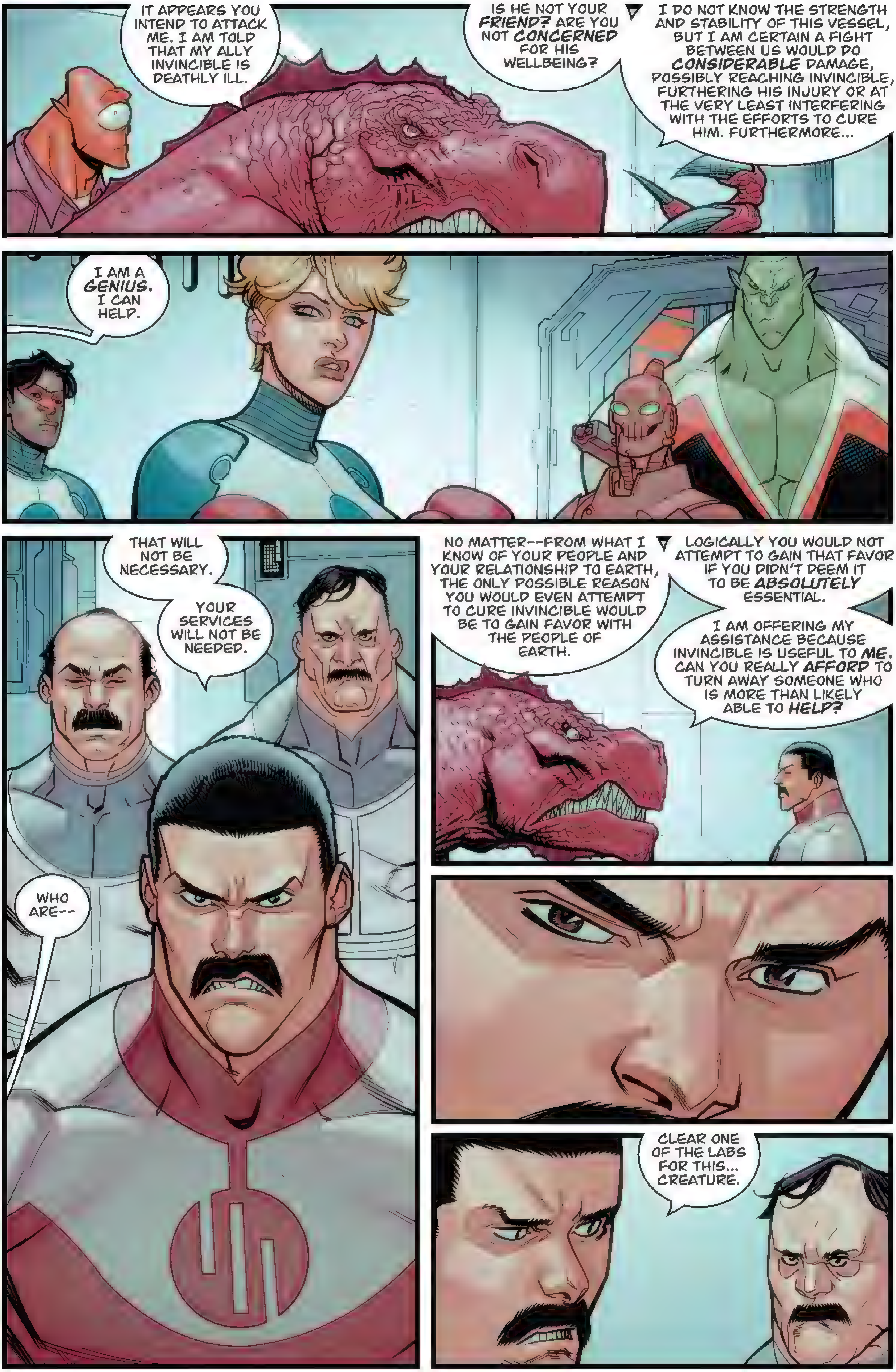
IT WOULD APPEAR WE ARE MORE OR LESS EVENLY MATCHED.
ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN **RESTRAINING** MYSELF QUITE A BIT THIS ENTIRE TIME.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF HURTING YOU. I'M FRIENDS WITH INVINCIBLE.

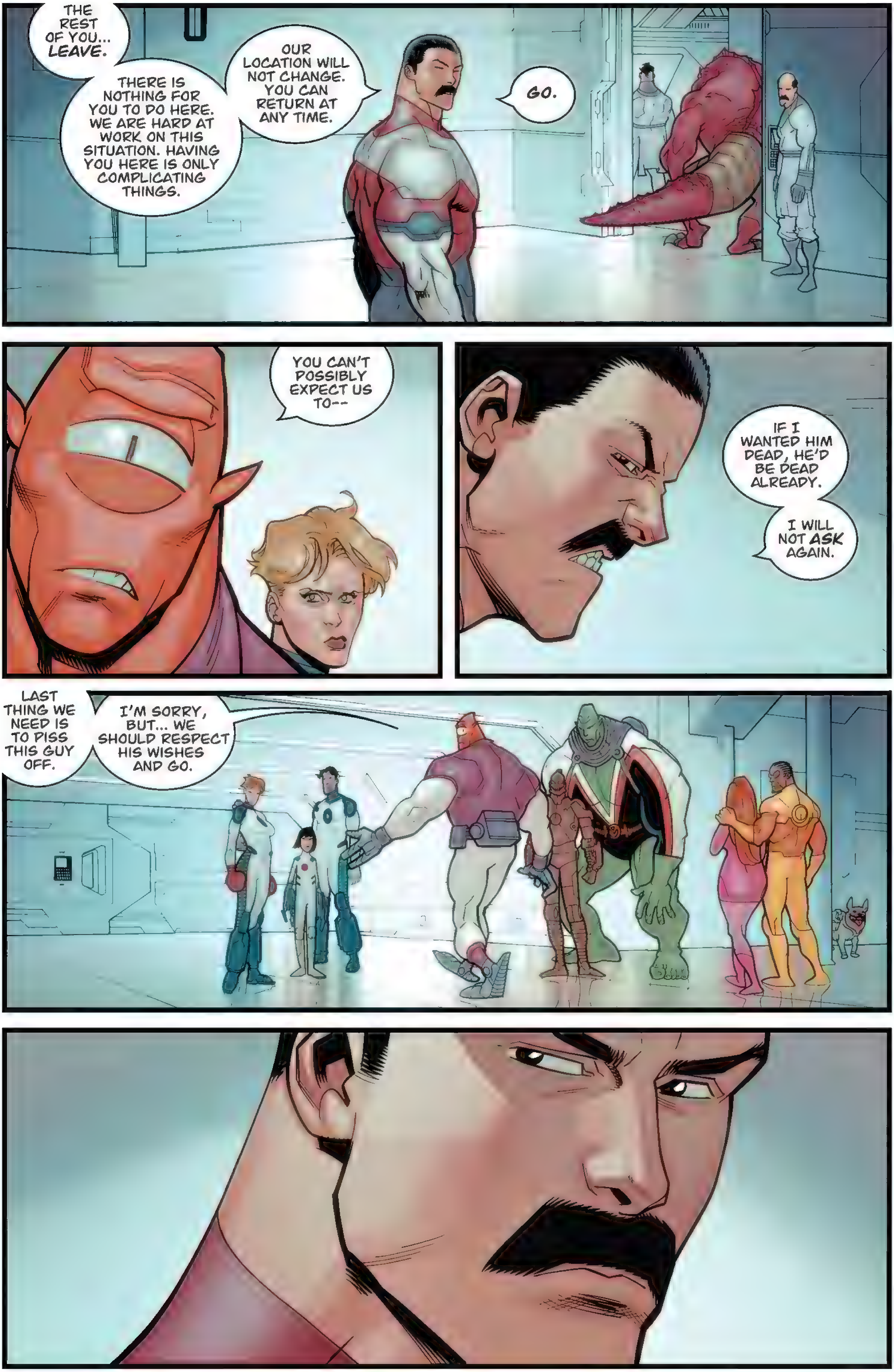

AND... HE *SENT* YOU HERE, MORE THAN LIKELY TO TELL ME WHY HE'S BEEN *MISSING* FOR THE LAST FEW HOURS.
AND RATHER THAN ALLOW YOU TO SPEAK... I *ATTACKED* YOU.
I APOLOGIZE. I'M USUALLY *SMARTER* THAN THIS.
IT'S OKAY, NO REAL HARM DONE.
SORRY ABOUT THE MESS.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND, I'VE NOT HAD MANY DEALINGS WITH ACTUAL ALIENS FROM OTHER PLANETS.
YOUR APPEARANCE STARTLED ME.
MY APPEARANCE--?!
THIS WAS NO PICNIC FOR ME EITHER, MAN. YOU LOOK TOO MUCH LIKE A *RAGNAR*.
WHAT'S A-- NEVER MIND. WHY ARE YOU HERE? WHAT'S GOING ON WITH INVINCIBLE?
I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE WAY.

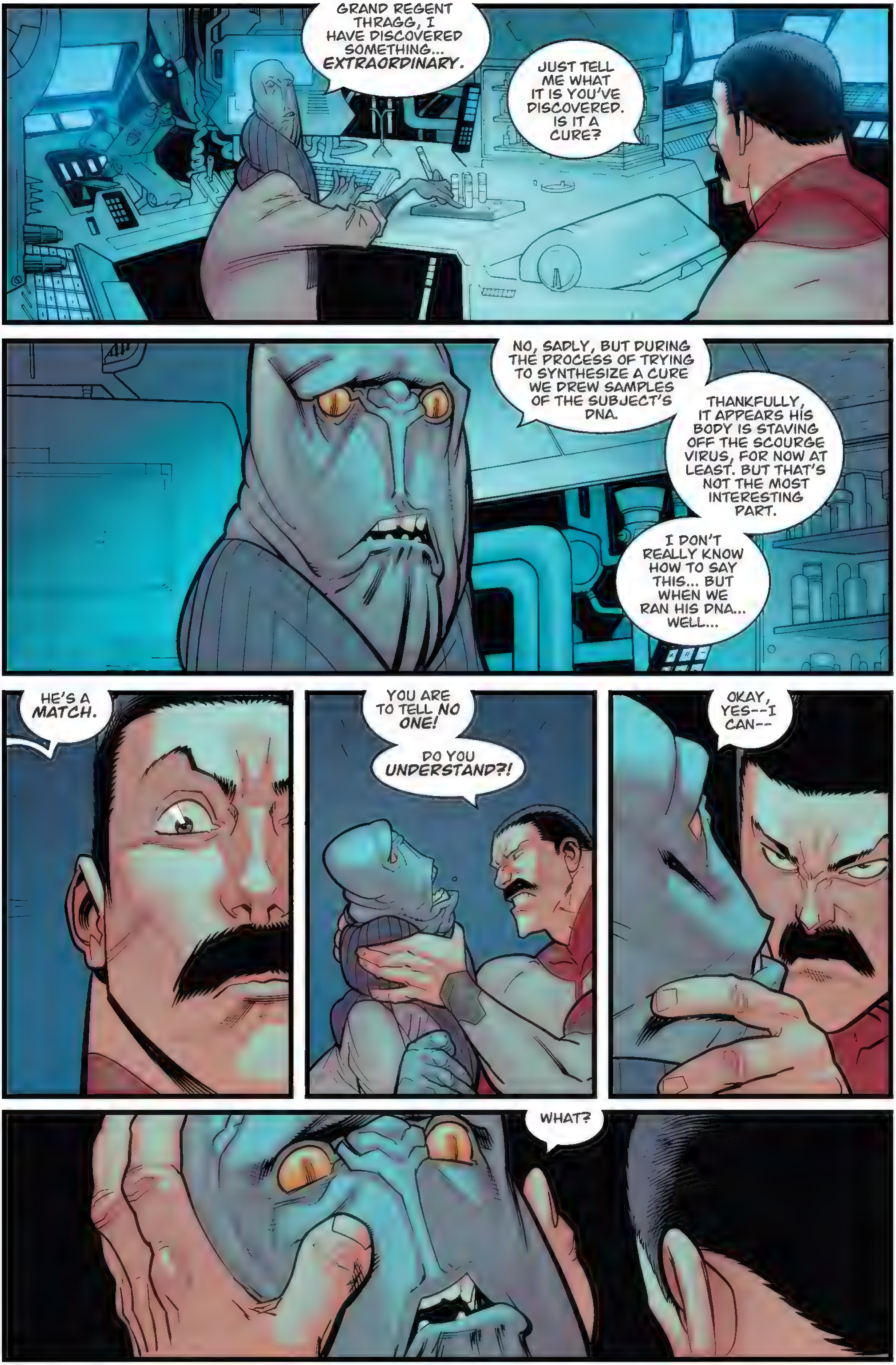

MARK?
CAN HE HEAR ME?
WE DON'T BELIEVE SO. THE FEVER HAS HIM.
I CAN'T...
NOT WITHOUT YOU...
I--
WE MUST ASK YOU TO LEAVE. THERE ARE MANY MORE TESTS TO BE DONE-- YOU'LL ONLY BE IN THE WAY.


LATER.
EVE?
I KNOW, GIRL. I'M SO SORRY.
OH, REX...

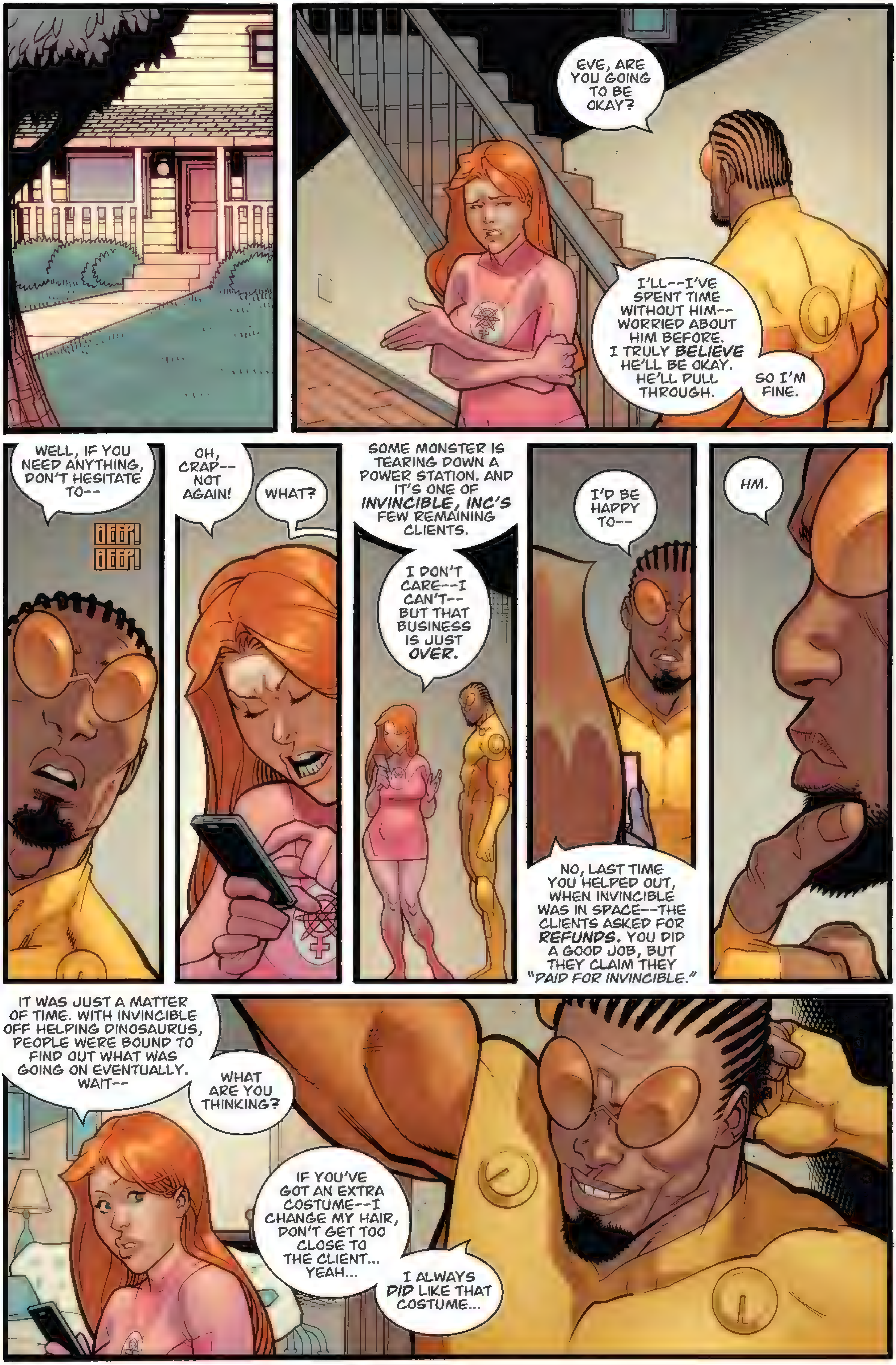

OKAY, OKAY! I *SAID* I WAS *SORRY!*
I THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN IN OUTER SPACE *BEFORE*--I FIGURED YOU COULD HOLD YOUR BREATH IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE.
WHY WOULD YOU ASSUME--?
WHAT IN--?
SO, I TAKE IT YOU'VE ALL *MET* INVINCIBLE'S FRIEND DINOSAURUS?


IT APPEARS YOU INTEND TO ATTACK ME. I AM TOLD THAT MY ALLY INVINCIBLE IS DEATHLY ILL.
IS HE NOT YOUR *FRIEND?* ARE YOU NOT *CONCERNED* FOR HIS WELLBEING?
I DO NOT KNOW THE STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF THIS VESSEL, BUT I AM CERTAIN A FIGHT BETWEEN US WOULD DO *CONSIDERABLE* DAMAGE, POSSIBLY REACHING INVINCIBLE, FURTHERING HIS INJURY OR AT THE VERY LEAST INTERFERING WITH THE EFFORTS TO CURE HIM. FURTHERMORE...
I AM A *GENIUS.* I CAN HELP.
THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY.
YOUR SERVICES WILL NOT BE NEEDED.
WHO ARE--
NO MATTER--FROM WHAT I KNOW OF YOUR PEOPLE AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO EARTH, THE ONLY POSSIBLE REASON YOU WOULD EVEN ATTEMPT TO CURE INVINCIBLE WOULD BE TO GAIN FAVOR WITH THE PEOPLE OF EARTH.
LOGICALLY YOU WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO GAIN THAT FAVOR IF YOU DIDN'T DEEM IT TO BE *ABSOLUTELY* ESSENTIAL.
I AM OFFERING MY ASSISTANCE BECAUSE INVINCIBLE IS USEFUL TO *ME.* CAN YOU REALLY *AFFORD* TO TURN AWAY SOMEONE WHO IS MORE THAN LIKELY ABLE TO *HELP?*
CLEAR ONE OF THE LABS FOR THIS... CREATURE.


THE REST OF YOU... **LEAVE.**
THERE IS NOTHING FOR YOU TO DO HERE. WE ARE HARD AT WORK ON THIS SITUATION. HAVING YOU HERE IS ONLY COMPLICATING THINGS.
OUR LOCATION WILL NOT CHANGE. YOU CAN RETURN AT ANY TIME.
GO.
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY EXPECT US TO--
IF I WANTED HIM DEAD, HE'D BE DEAD ALREADY.
I WILL NOT **ASK** AGAIN.
LAST THING WE NEED IS TO PISS THIS GUY OFF.
I'M SORRY, BUT... WE SHOULD RESPECT HIS WISHES AND GO.

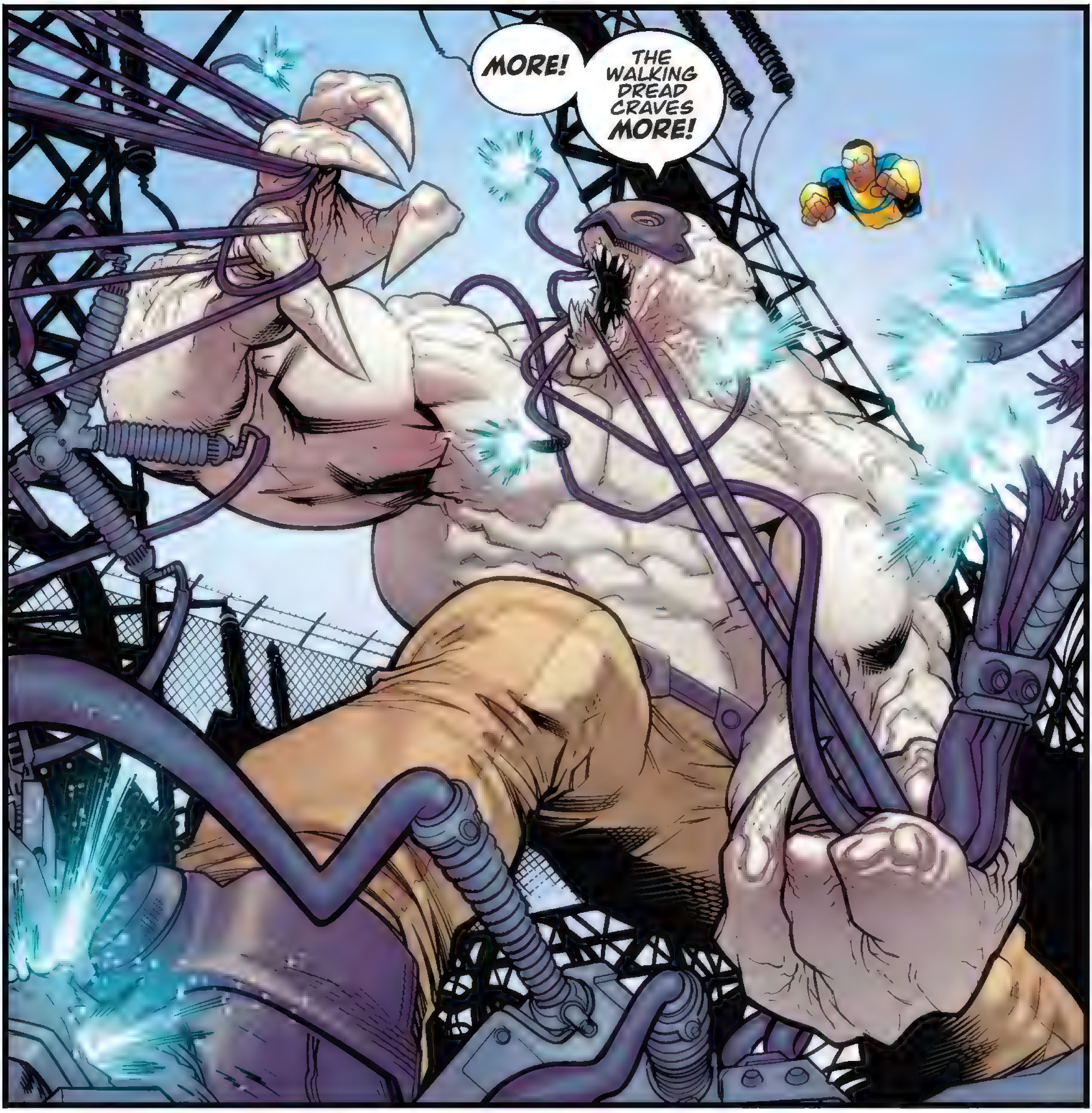

GRAND REGENT THRAGG, I HAVE DISCOVERED SOMETHING... **EXTRAORDINARY.**
JUST TELL ME WHAT IT IS YOU'VE DISCOVERED. IS IT A CURE?
NO, SADLY, BUT DURING THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO SYNTHESIZE A CURE WE DREW SAMPLES OF THE SUBJECT'S DNA.
THANKFULLY, IT APPEARS HIS BODY IS STAVING OFF THE SCOURGE VIRUS, FOR NOW AT LEAST. BUT THAT'S NOT THE MOST INTERESTING PART.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS... BUT WHEN WE RAN HIS DNA... WELL...
HE'S A **MATCH.**
YOU ARE TO TELL **NO ONE!**
DO YOU **UNDERSTAND?!**
OKAY, YES--I CAN--
WHAT?

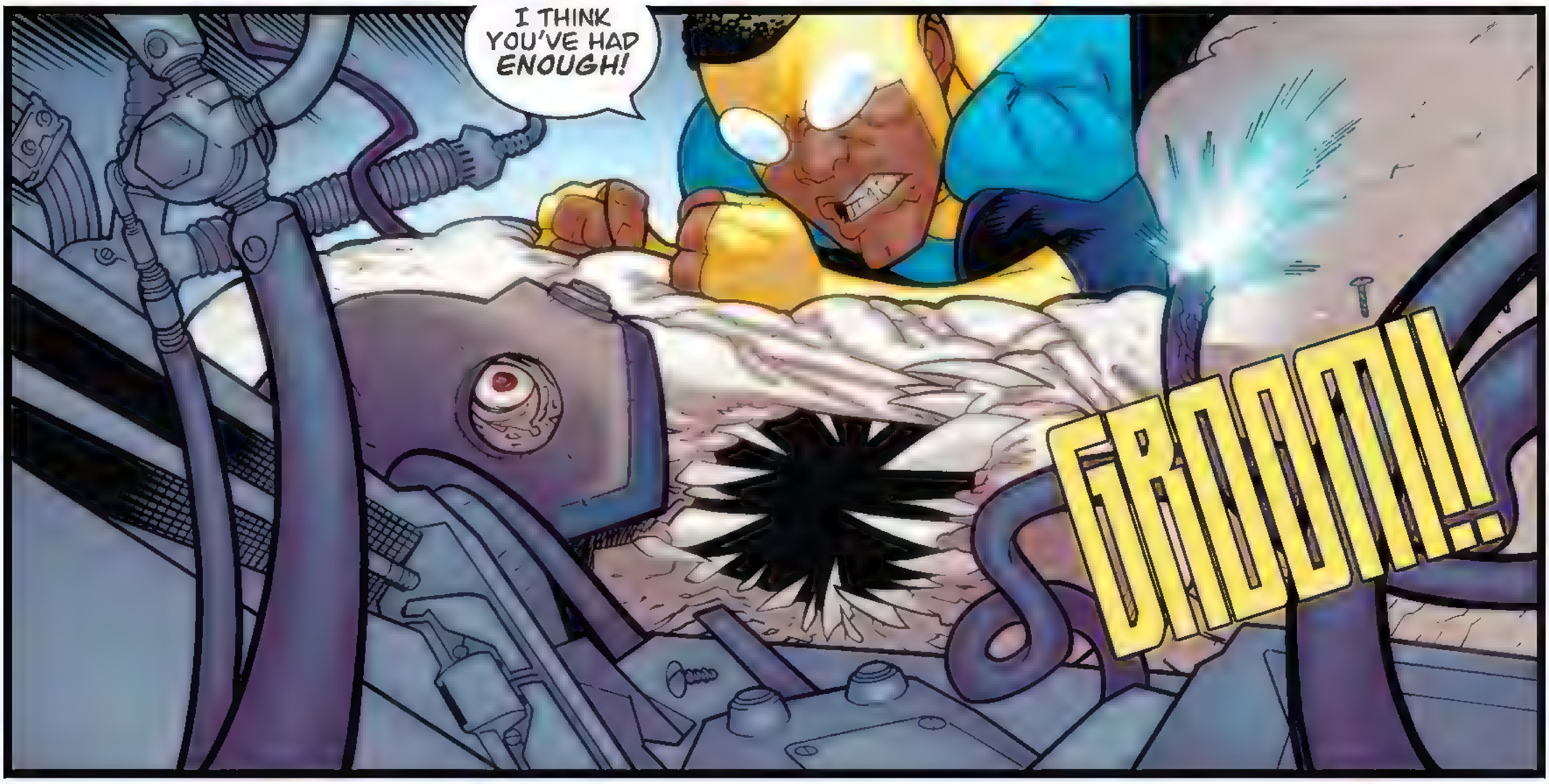
WHUD
I'M SORRY.
NO ONE CAN KNOW.

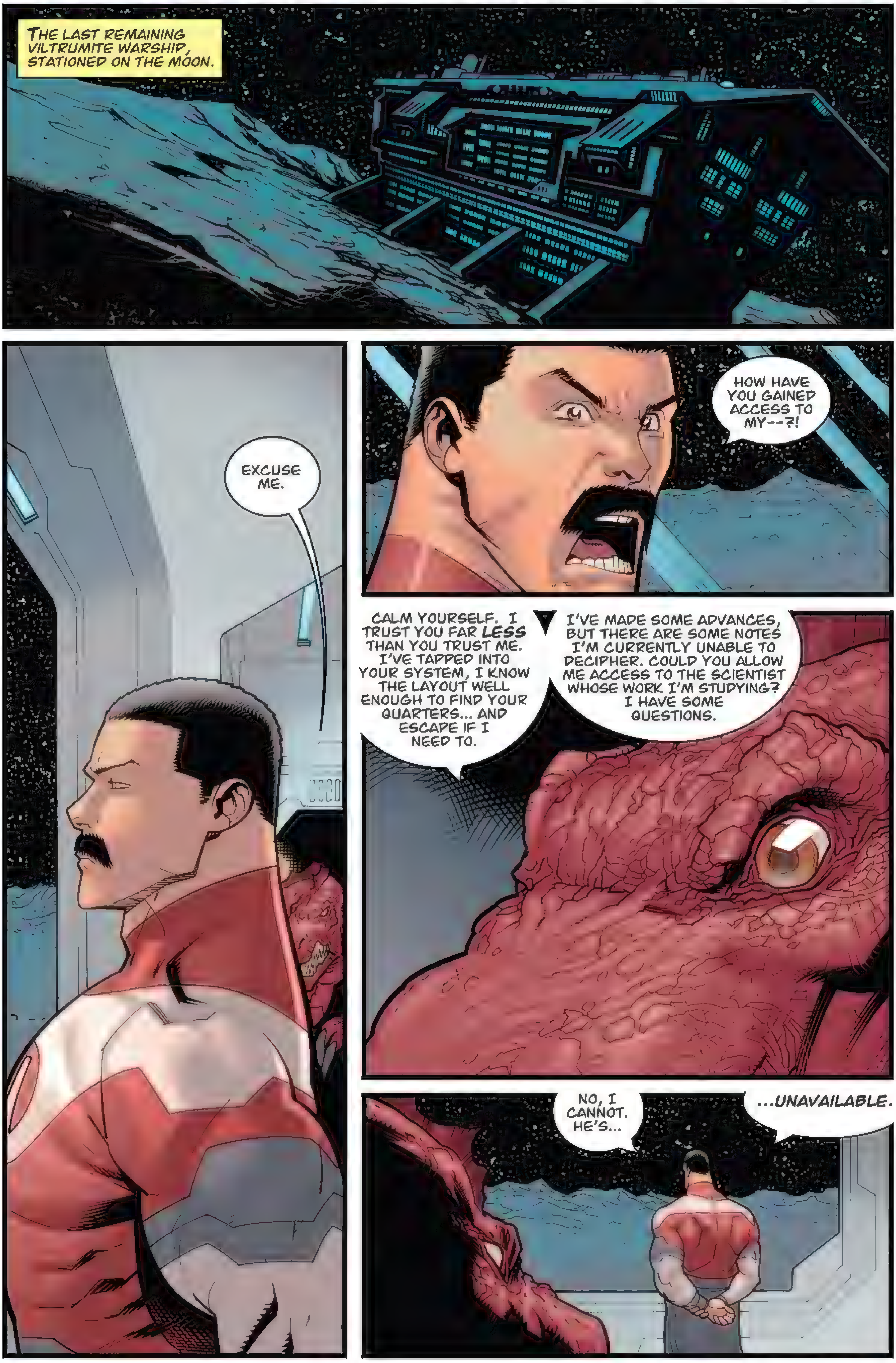

EVE, ARE YOU GOING TO BE OKAY?
I'LL--I'VE SPENT TIME WITHOUT HIM--WORRIED ABOUT HIM BEFORE. I TRULY BELIEVE HE'LL BE OKAY. HE'LL PULL THROUGH.
SO I'M FINE.
WELL, IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, DON'T HESITATE TO--
BEEP! BEEP!
OH, CRAP--NOT AGAIN!
WHAT?
SOME MONSTER IS TEARING DOWN A POWER STATION. AND IT'S ONE OF INVINCIBLE, INC'S FEW REMAINING CLIENTS.
I DON'T CARE--I CAN'T--BUT THAT BUSINESS IS JUST OVER.
I'D BE HAPPY TO--
NO, LAST TIME YOU HELPED OUT, WHEN INVINCIBLE WAS IN SPACE--THE CLIENTS ASKED FOR REFUNDS. YOU DID A GOOD JOB, BUT THEY CLAIM THEY "PAID FOR INVINCIBLE."
HM.
IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME. WITH INVINCIBLE OFF HELPING DINOSAURUS, PEOPLE WERE BOUND TO FIND OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON EVENTUALLY. WAIT--
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
IF YOU'VE GOT AN EXTRA COSTUME--I CHANGE MY HAIR, DON'T GET TOO CLOSE TO THE CLIENT... YEAH...
I ALWAYS DID LIKE THAT COSTUME...

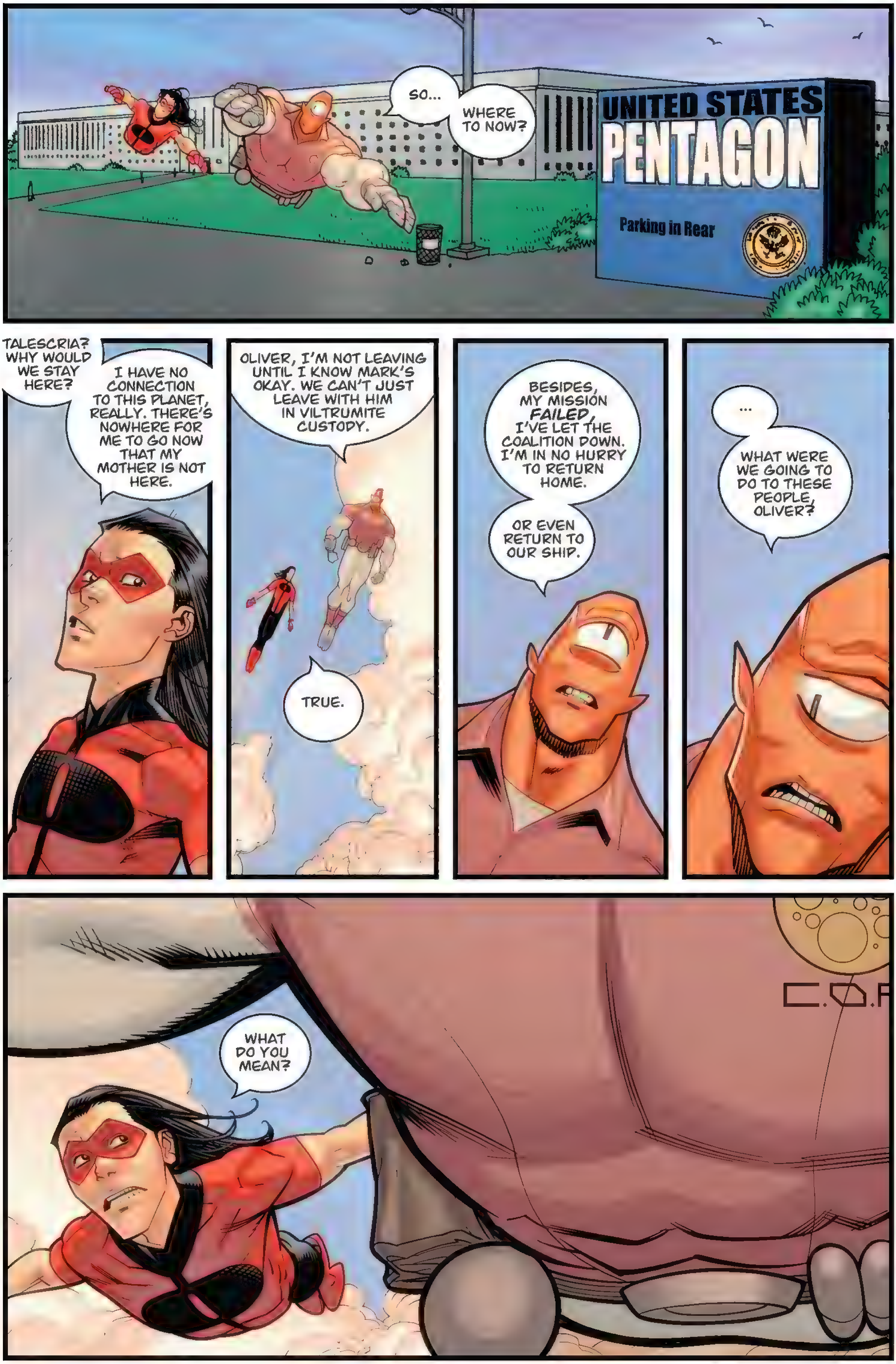
CHAPTER 90

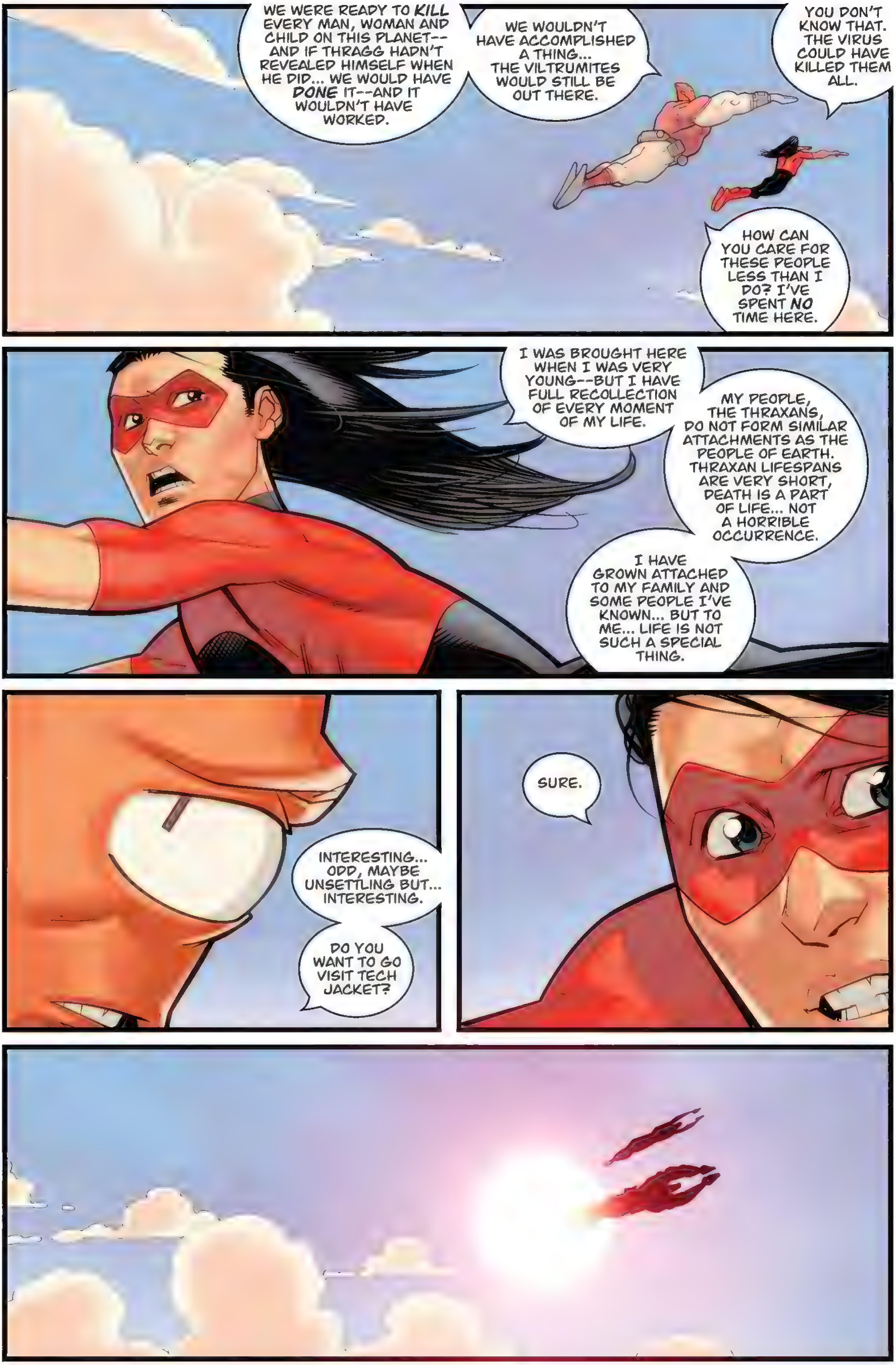
ARE YOU THERE YET?
MARK WOULD HAVE BEEN THERE ALREADY!
I'M NOT MARK!
AND I'M REALLY NOT USED TO FLYING AND TALKING ON THE PHONE AT THE SAME--
DAMN.
THAT'S GOING TO PISS HER OFF.
WHOA-- THAT GUY'S BIG!

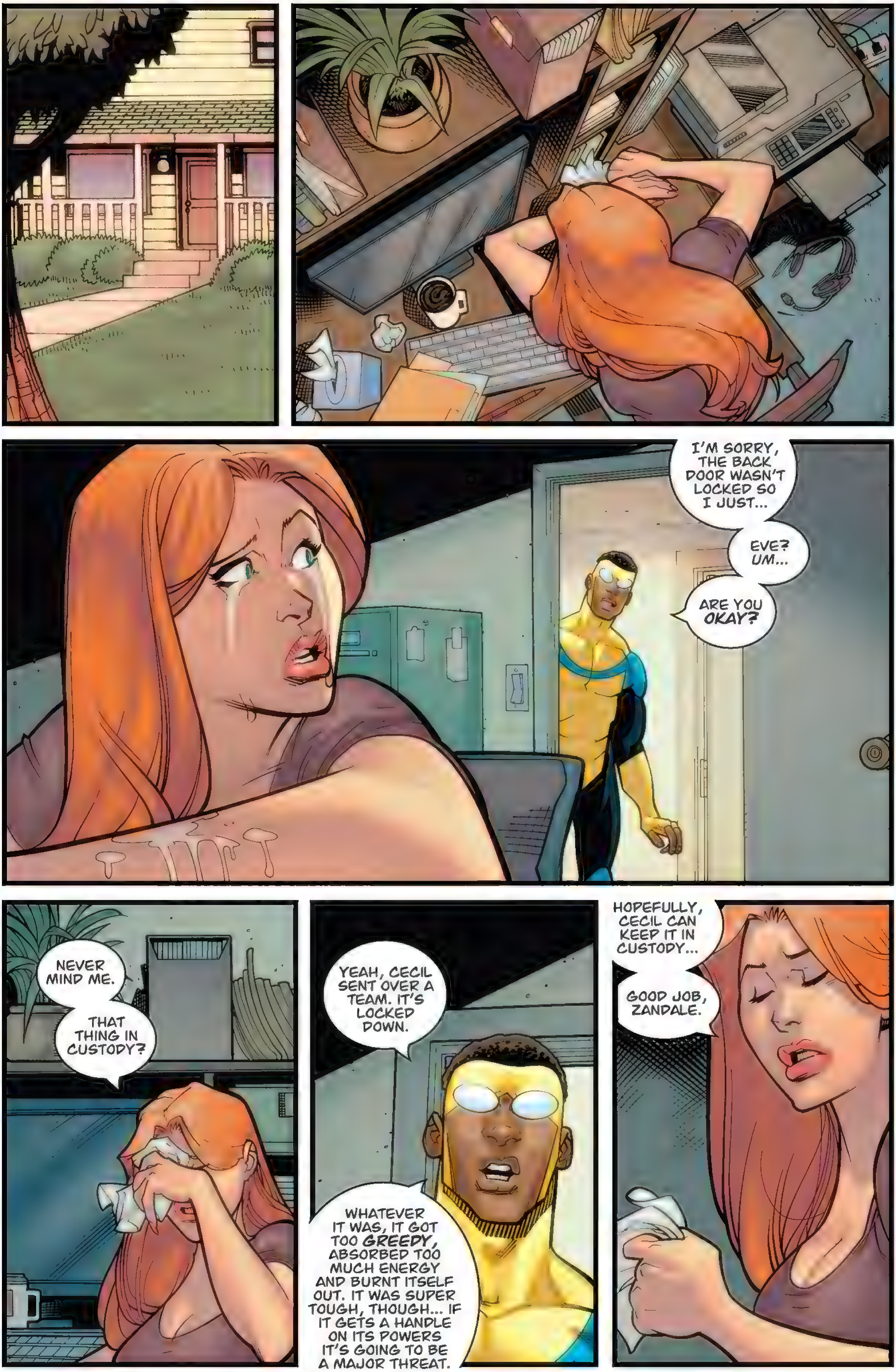

MORE!
THE WALKING DREAD CRAVES MORE!

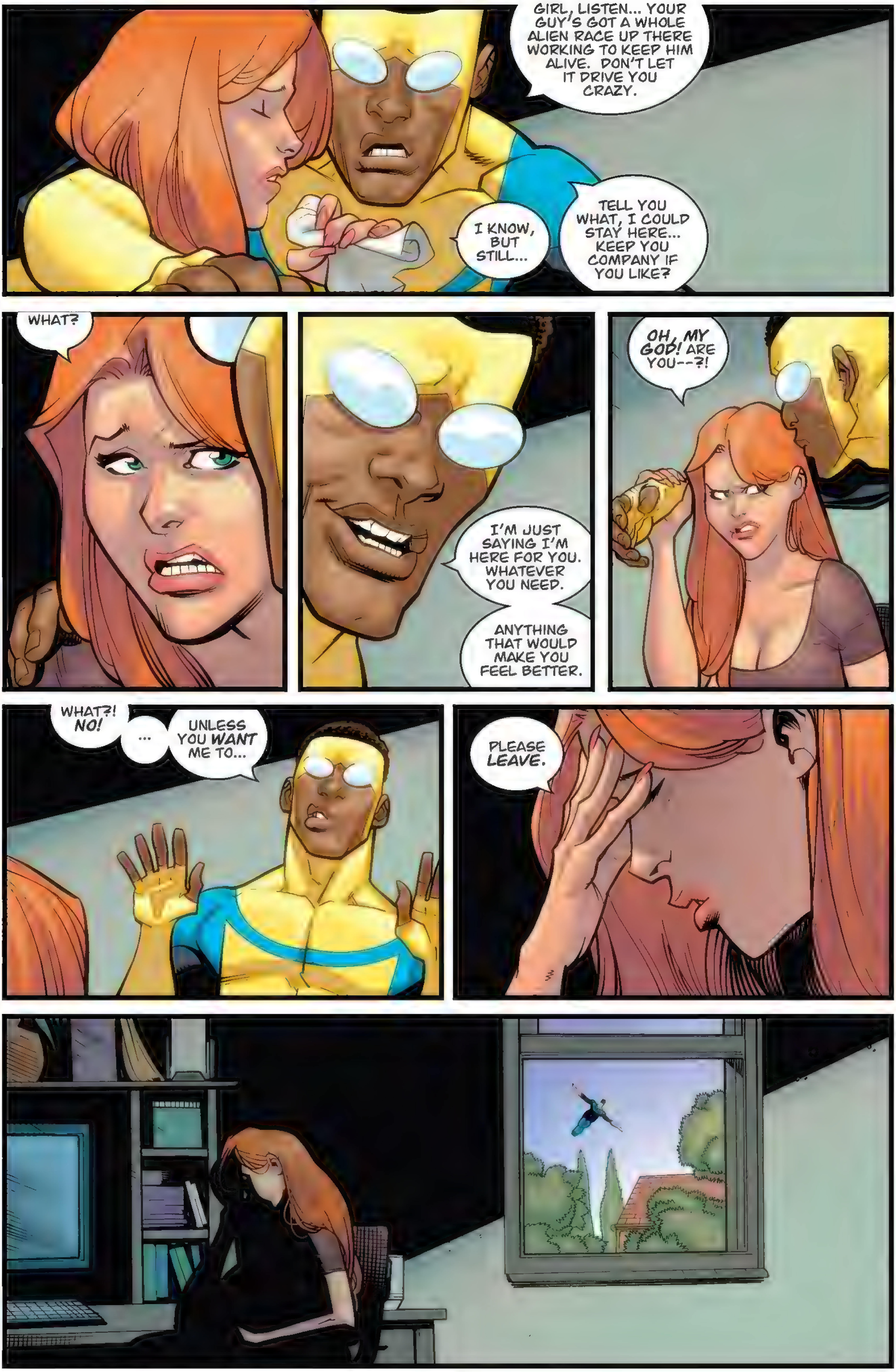

I THINK YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH!
GROOM!!

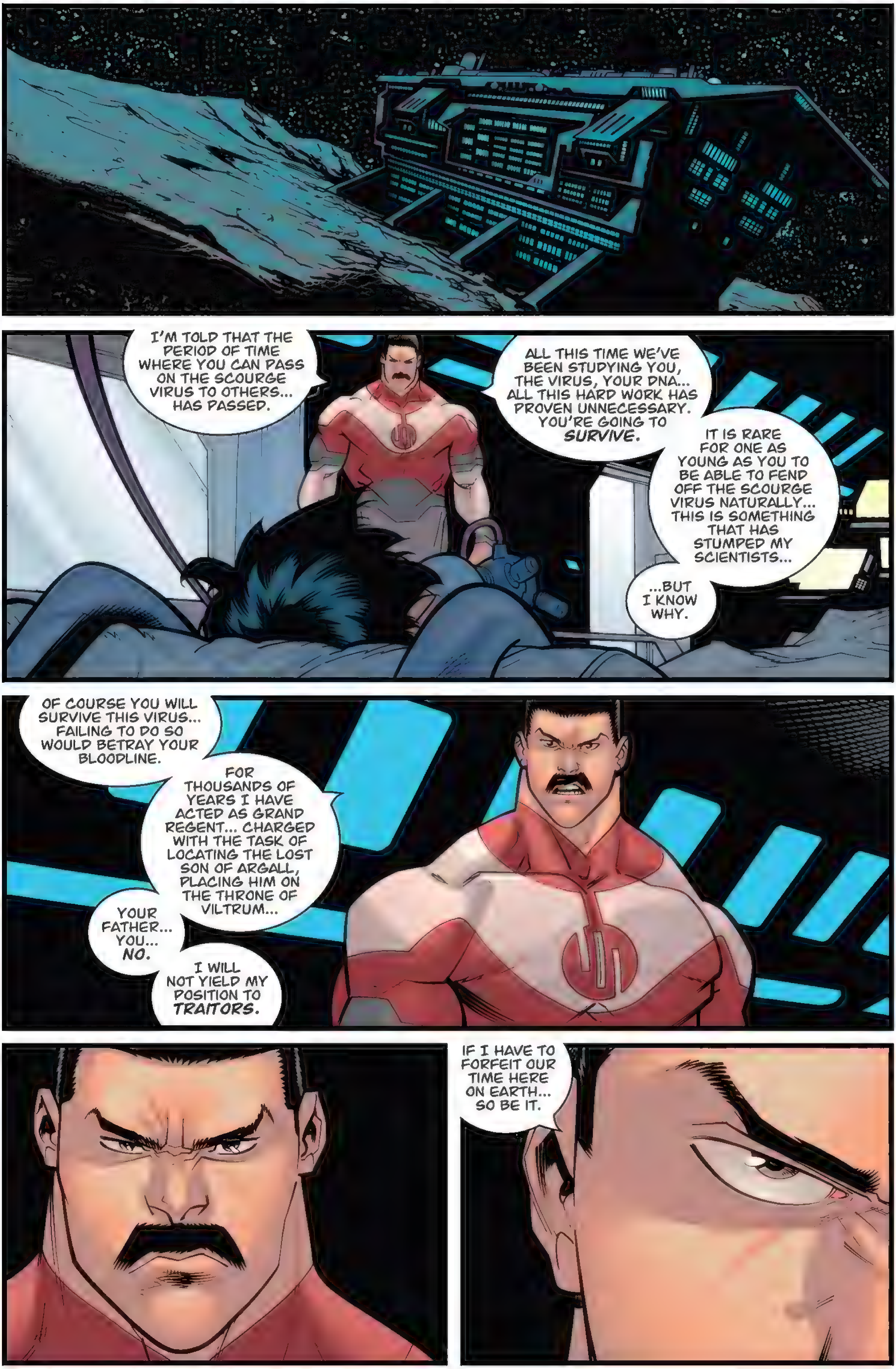

THE LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, STATIONED ON THE MOON.
EXCUSE ME.
HOW HAVE YOU GAINED ACCESS TO MY--?!
CALM YOURSELF. I TRUST YOU FAR LESS THAN YOU TRUST ME. I'VE TAPPED INTO YOUR SYSTEM, I KNOW THE LAYOUT WELL ENOUGH TO FIND YOUR QUARTERS... AND ESCAPE IF I NEED TO.
I'VE MADE SOME ADVANCES, BUT THERE ARE SOME NOTES I'M CURRENTLY UNABLE TO DECIPHER. COULD YOU ALLOW ME ACCESS TO THE SCIENTIST WHOSE WORK I'M STUDYING? I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS.
NO, I CANNOT. HE'S...
...UNAVAILABLE.

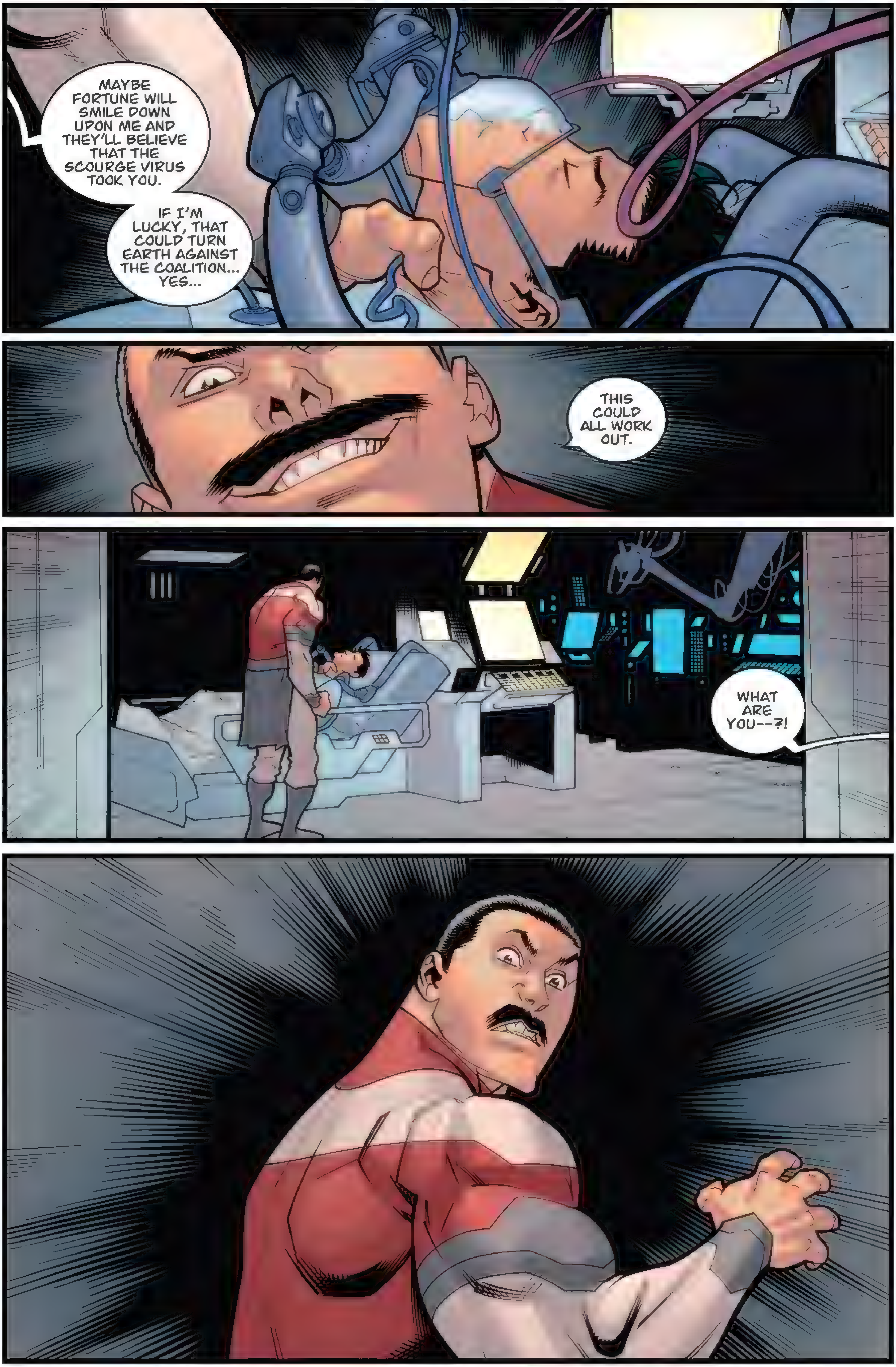

SO...
WHERE TO NOW?
UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
TALESCRIA? WHY WOULD WE STAY HERE?
I HAVE NO CONNECTION TO THIS PLANET, REALLY. THERE'S NOWHERE FOR ME TO GO NOW THAT MY MOTHER IS NOT HERE.
OLIVER, I'M NOT LEAVING UNTIL I KNOW MARK'S OKAY. WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE WITH HIM IN VILTRUMITE CUSTODY.
TRUE.
BESIDES, MY MISSION *FAILED*, I'VE LET THE COALITION DOWN. I'M IN NO HURRY TO RETURN HOME.
OR EVEN RETURN TO OUR SHIP.
...
WHAT WERE WE GOING TO DO TO THESE PEOPLE, OLIVER?
C.O.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


WE WERE READY TO **KILL** EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD ON THIS PLANET-- AND IF THRAGG HADN'T REVEALED HIMSELF WHEN HE DID... WE WOULD HAVE **DONE** IT--AND IT WOULDN'T HAVE WORKED.
WE WOULDN'T HAVE ACCOMPLISHED A THING... THE VILTRUMITES WOULD STILL BE OUT THERE.
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. THE VIRUS COULD HAVE KILLED THEM ALL.
HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR THESE PEOPLE LESS THAN I DO? I'VE SPENT **NO** TIME HERE.
I WAS BROUGHT HERE WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG--BUT I HAVE FULL RECOLLECTION OF EVERY MOMENT OF MY LIFE.
MY PEOPLE, THE THRAXANS, DO NOT FORM SIMILAR ATTACHMENTS AS THE PEOPLE OF EARTH. THRAXAN LIFESPANS ARE VERY SHORT, DEATH IS A PART OF LIFE... NOT A HORRIBLE OCCURRENCE.
I HAVE GROWN ATTACHED TO MY FAMILY AND SOME PEOPLE I'VE KNOWN... BUT TO ME... LIFE IS NOT SUCH A SPECIAL THING.
INTERESTING... ODD, MAYBE UNSETTLING BUT... INTERESTING.
DO YOU WANT TO GO VISIT TECH JACKET?
SURE.

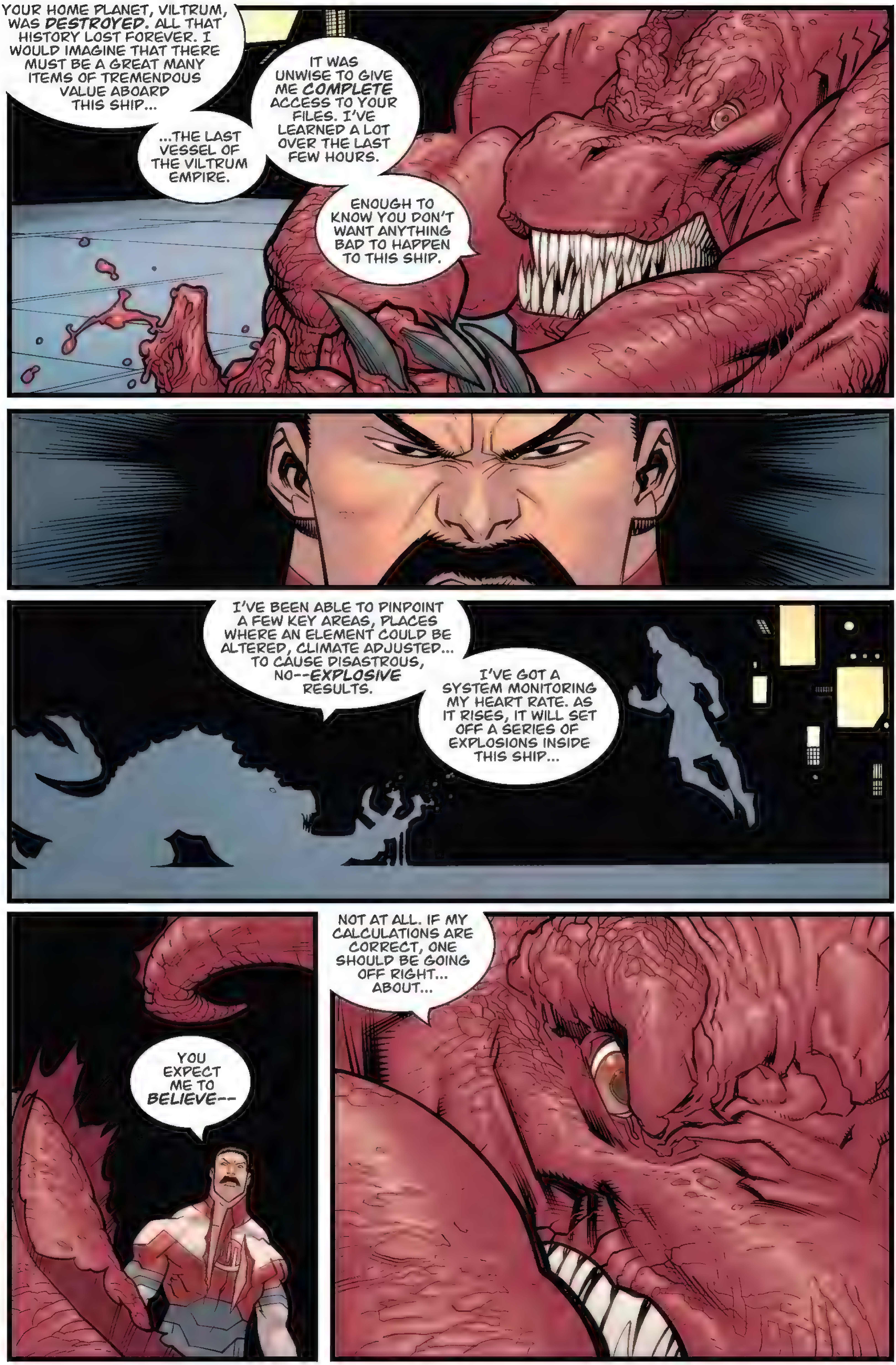

I'M SORRY, THE BACK DOOR WASN'T LOCKED SO I JUST...
EVE? UM...
ARE YOU *OKAY?*
NEVER MIND ME.
THAT THING IN CUSTODY?
YEAH, CECIL SENT OVER A TEAM. IT'S LOCKED DOWN.
WHATEVER IT WAS, IT GOT TOO *GREEDY*, ABSORBED TOO MUCH ENERGY AND BURNT ITSELF OUT. IT WAS SUPER TOUGH, THOUGH... IF IT GETS A HANDLE ON ITS POWERS IT'S GOING TO BE A MAJOR THREAT.
HOPEFULLY, CECIL CAN KEEP IT IN CUSTODY...
GOOD JOB, ZANDALE.

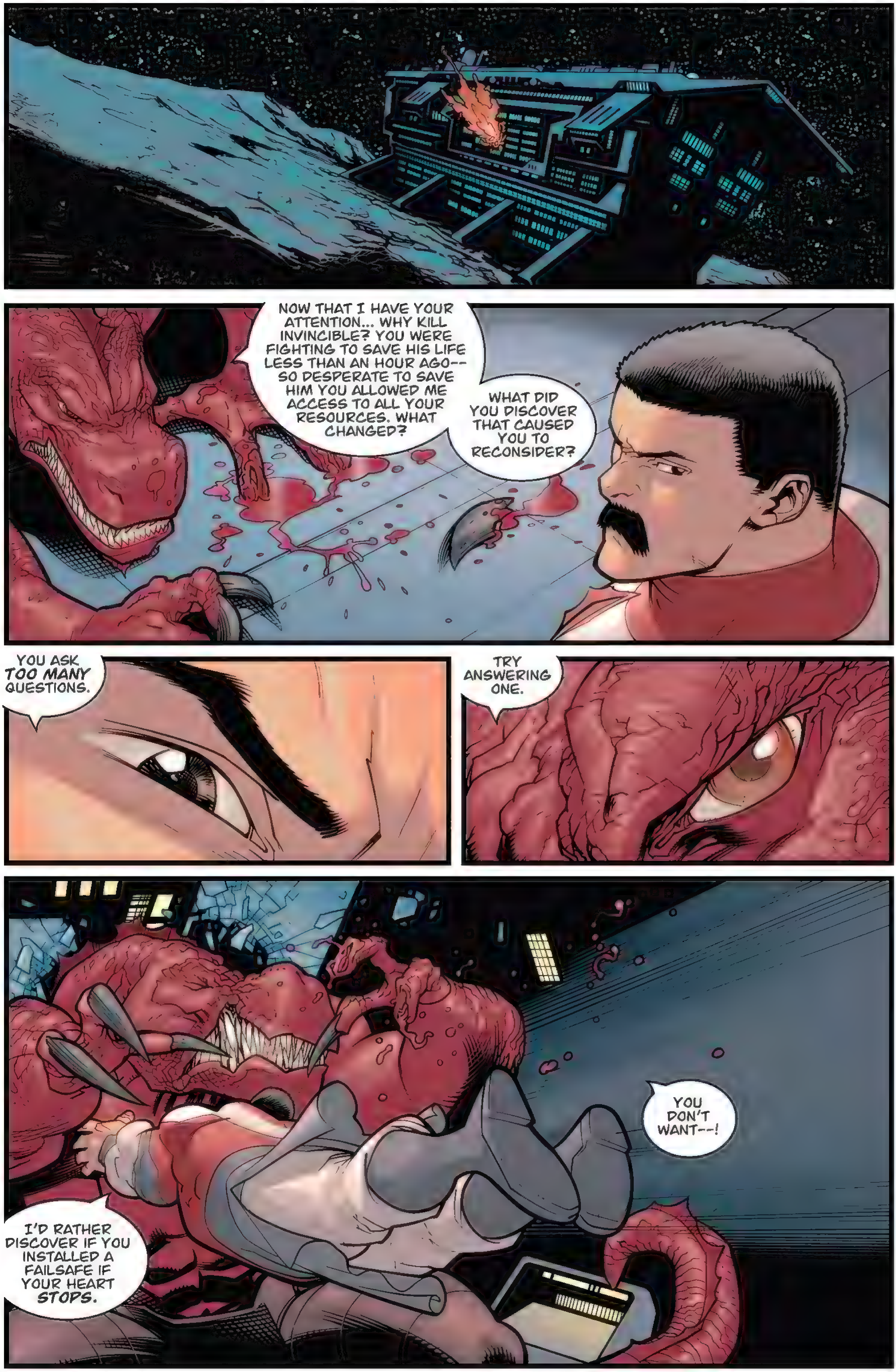

GIRL, LISTEN... YOUR GUY'S GOT A WHOLE ALIEN RACE UP THERE WORKING TO KEEP HIM ALIVE. DON'T LET IT DRIVE YOU CRAZY.
I KNOW, BUT STILL...
TELL YOU WHAT, I COULD STAY HERE... KEEP YOU COMPANY IF YOU LIKE?
WHAT?
I'M JUST SAYING I'M HERE FOR YOU. WHATEVER YOU NEED.
ANYTHING THAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.
OH, MY GOD! ARE YOU--?!
WHAT?! NO!
...
UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO...
PLEASE LEAVE.

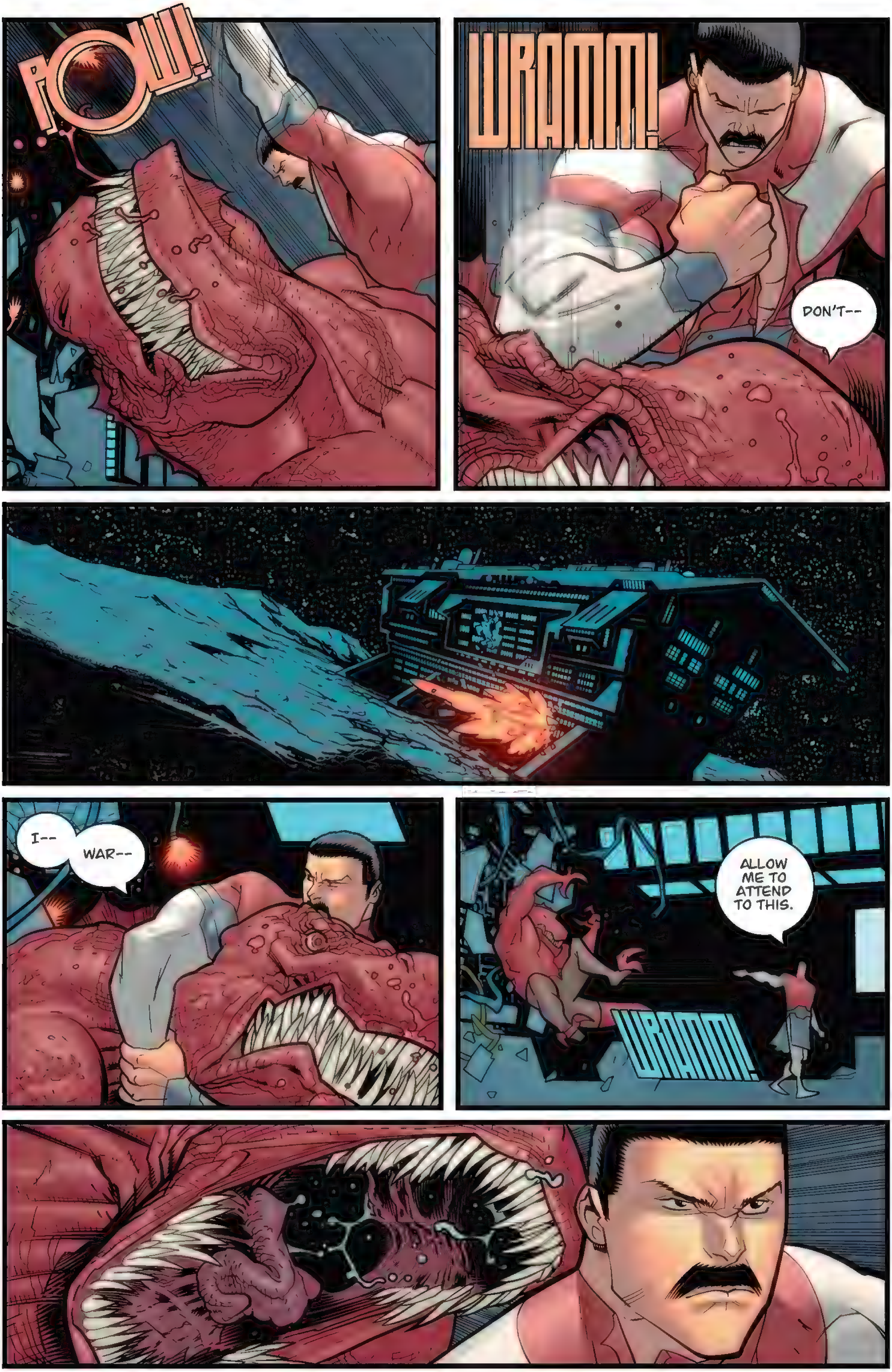

I'M TOLD THAT THE PERIOD OF TIME WHERE YOU CAN PASS ON THE SCOURGE VIRUS TO OTHERS... HAS PASSED.
ALL THIS TIME WE'VE BEEN STUDYING YOU, THE VIRUS, YOUR DNA... ALL THIS HARD WORK HAS PROVEN UNNECESSARY. YOU'RE GOING TO *SURVIVE.*
IT IS RARE FOR ONE AS YOUNG AS YOU TO BE ABLE TO FEND OFF THE SCOURGE VIRUS NATURALLY... THIS IS SOMETHING THAT HAS STUMPED MY SCIENTISTS...
...BUT I KNOW WHY.
OF COURSE YOU WILL SURVIVE THIS VIRUS... FAILING TO DO SO WOULD BETRAY YOUR BLOODLINE.
FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS I HAVE ACTED AS GRAND REGENT... CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF LOCATING THE LOST SON OF ARGALL, PLACING HIM ON THE THRONE OF VILTRUM...
YOUR FATHER... YOU... *NO.*
I WILL NOT YIELD MY POSITION TO *TRAITORS.*
IF I HAVE TO FORFEIT OUR TIME HERE ON EARTH... SO BE IT.


MAYBE FORTUNE WILL SMILE DOWN UPON ME AND THEY'LL BELIEVE THAT THE SCOURGE VIRUS TOOK YOU.
IF I'M LUCKY, THAT COULD TURN EARTH AGAINST THE COALITION... YES...
THIS COULD ALL WORK OUT.
WHAT ARE YOU--?!

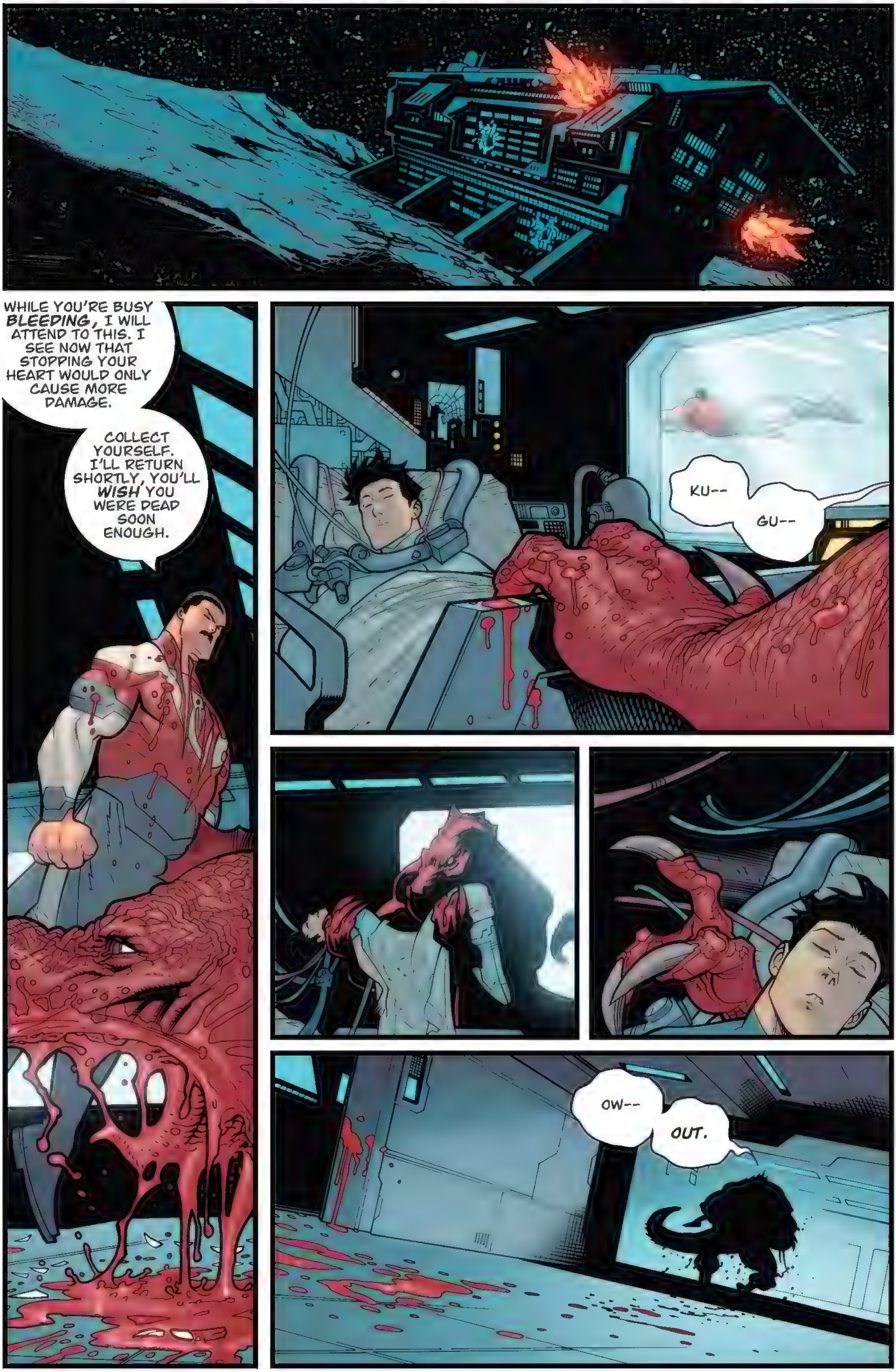
SKROGG!
I SUSPECT IT WASN'T UNTIL JUST NOW THAT YOU REALIZED HOW *FOOLISH* THAT COURSE OF ACTION WAS.

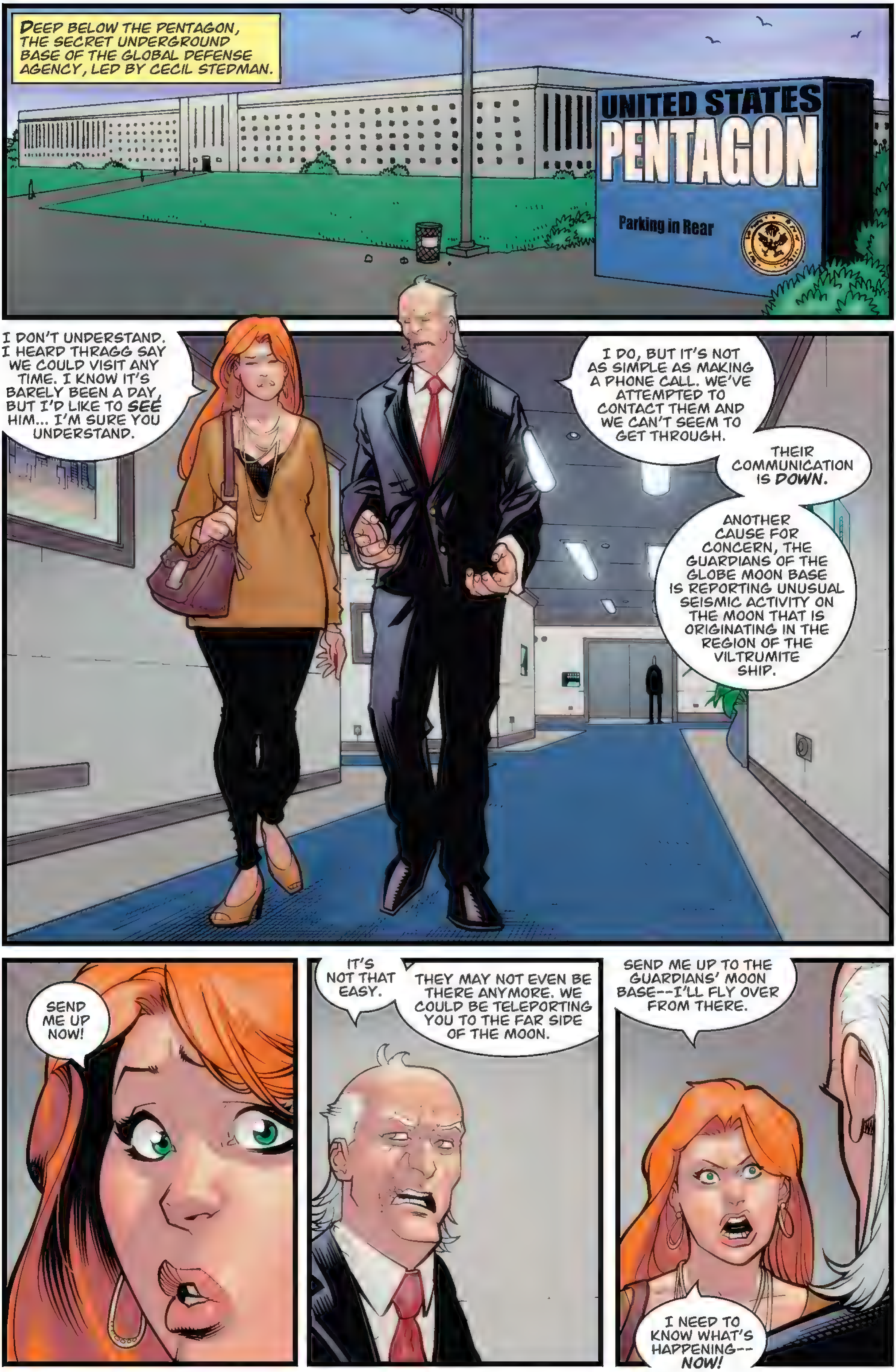

YOUR HOME PLANET, VILTRUM, WAS *DESTROYED*. ALL THAT HISTORY LOST FOREVER. I WOULD IMAGINE THAT THERE MUST BE A GREAT MANY ITEMS OF TREMENDOUS VALUE ABOARD THIS SHIP...
...THE LAST VESSEL OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
IT WAS UNWISE TO GIVE ME *COMPLETE* ACCESS TO YOUR FILES. I'VE LEARNED A LOT OVER THE LAST FEW HOURS.
ENOUGH TO KNOW YOU DON'T WANT ANYTHING BAD TO HAPPEN TO THIS SHIP.
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PINPOINT A FEW KEY AREAS, PLACES WHERE AN ELEMENT COULD BE ALTERED, CLIMATE ADJUSTED... TO CAUSE DISASTROUS, NO--*EXPLOSIVE* RESULTS.
I'VE GOT A SYSTEM MONITORING MY HEART RATE. AS IT RISES, IT WILL SET OFF A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS INSIDE THIS SHIP...
YOU EXPECT ME TO *BELIEVE*--
NOT AT ALL. IF MY CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, ONE SHOULD BE GOING OFF RIGHT... ABOUT...

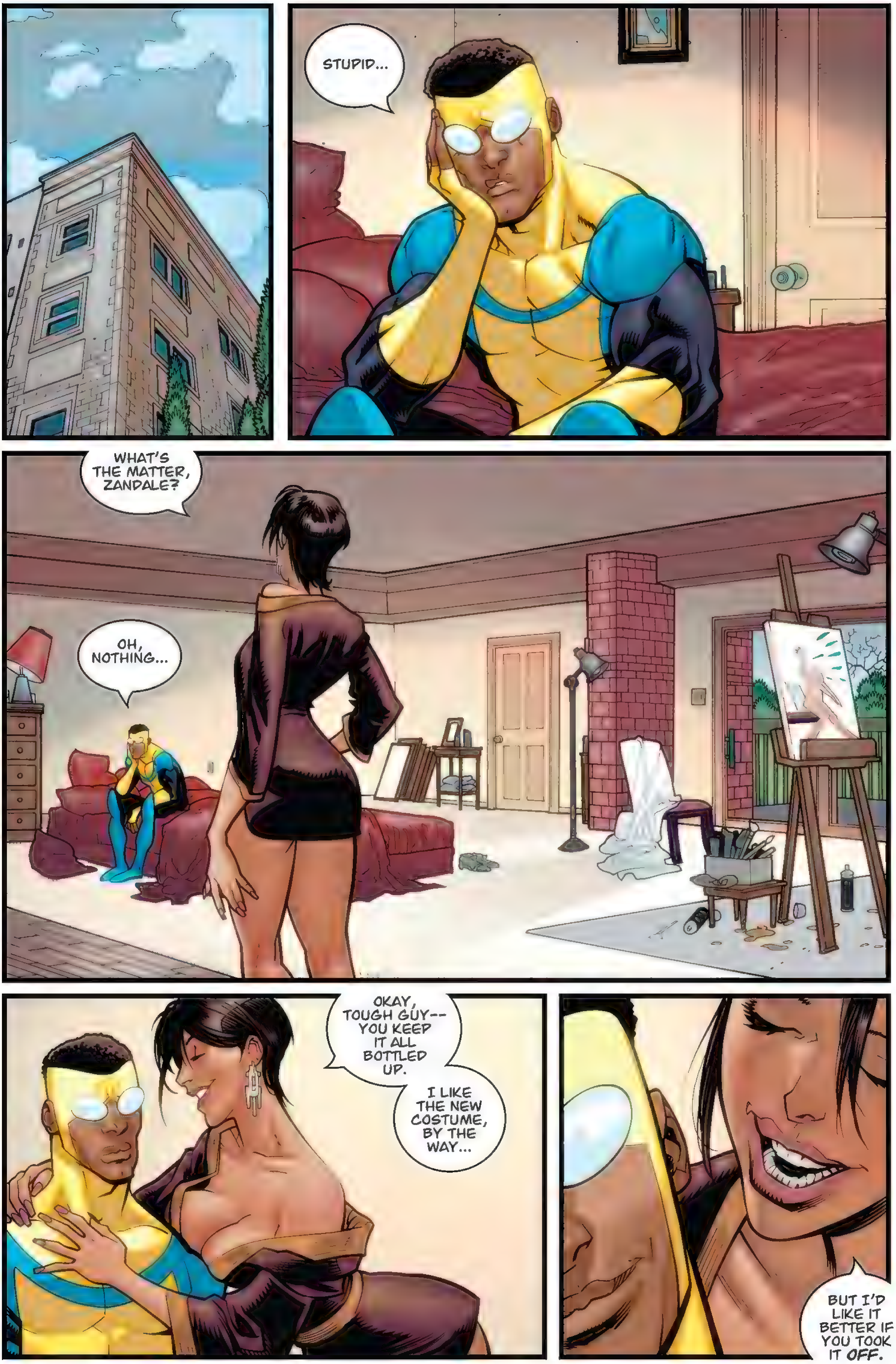

NOW THAT I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION... WHY KILL INVINCIBLE? YOU WERE FIGHTING TO SAVE HIS LIFE LESS THAN AN HOUR AGO-- SO DESPERATE TO SAVE HIM YOU ALLOWED ME ACCESS TO ALL YOUR RESOURCES. WHAT CHANGED?
WHAT DID YOU DISCOVER THAT CAUSED YOU TO RECONSIDER?
YOU ASK *TOO MANY* QUESTIONS.
TRY ANSWERING ONE.
YOU DON'T WANT--!
I'D RATHER DISCOVER IF YOU INSTALLED A FAILSAFE IF YOUR HEART *STOPS*.

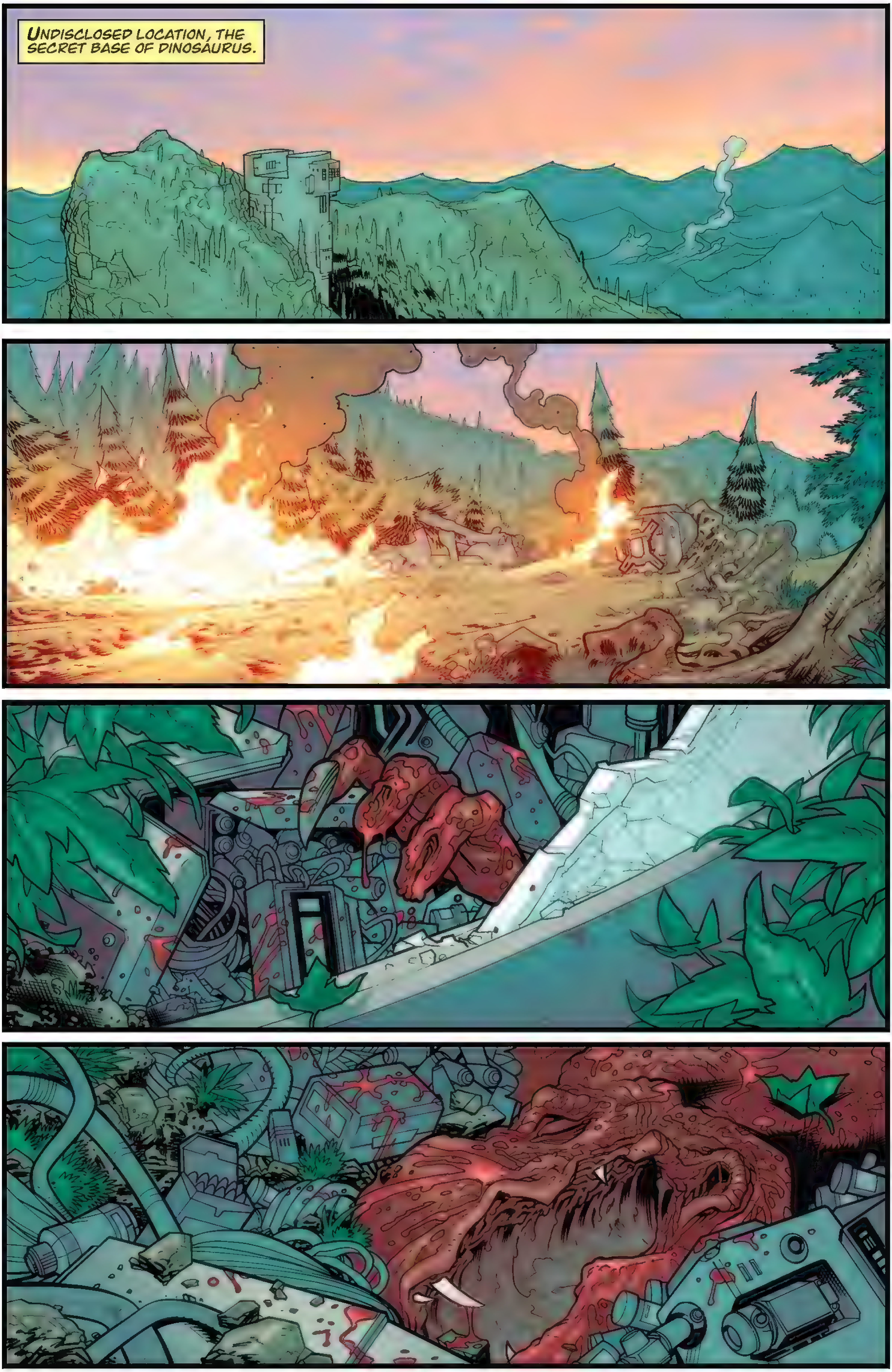

POW!
WRAMM!
DON'T--
I--
WAR--
ALLOW ME TO ATTEND TO THIS.
WRAMM!

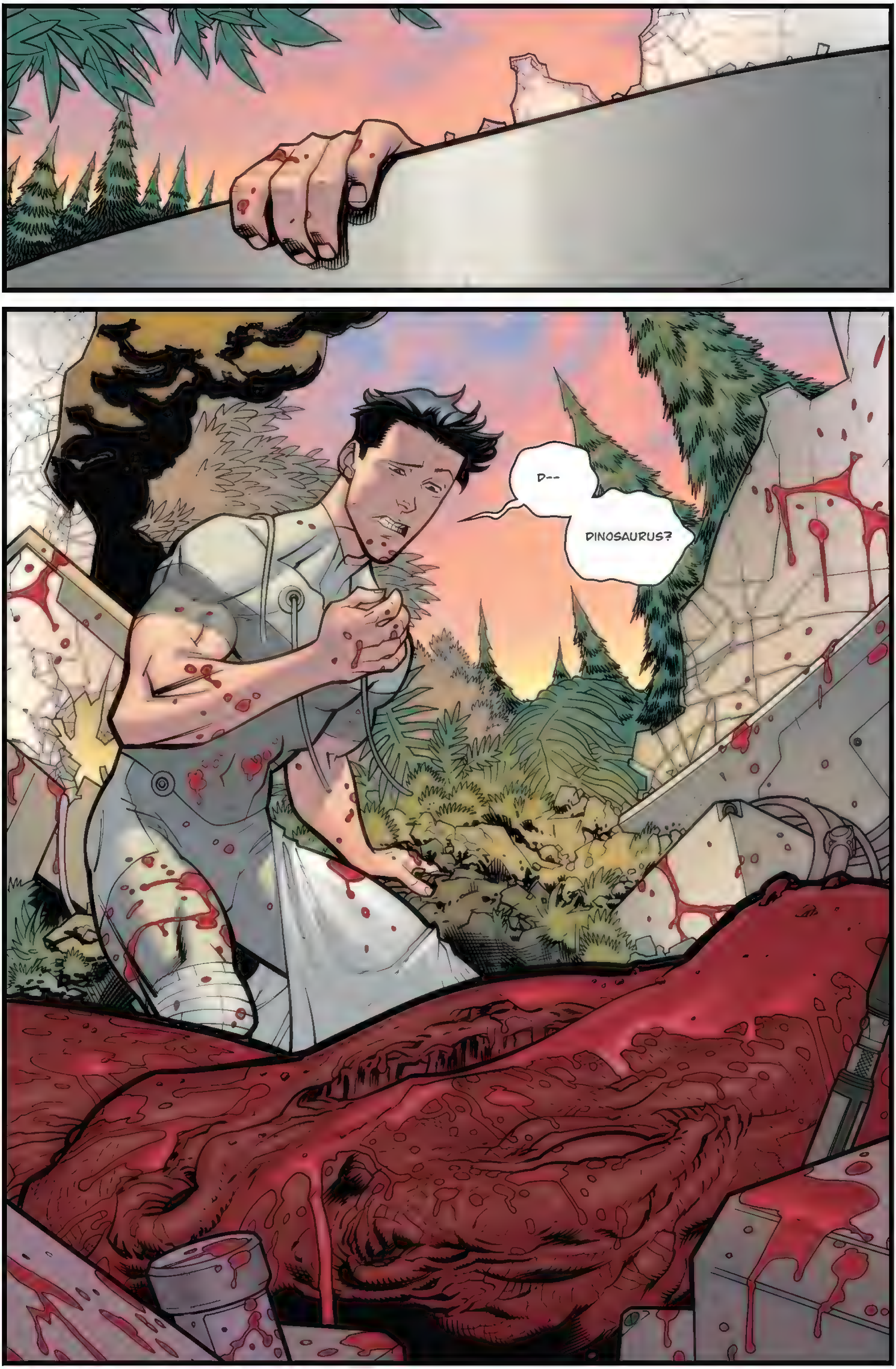
SKRSSH!
SURELY YOU EXPECTED THAT TO RESULT IN A FAR DIFFERENT OUTCOME.
EXPLOSHUN-- ONLY DA BUGGINING...
I THINK I'VE HEARD *ENOUGH* FROM YOU.
KROKK!


WHILE YOU'RE BUSY *BLEEDING*, I WILL ATTEND TO THIS. I SEE NOW THAT STOPPING YOUR HEART WOULD ONLY CAUSE MORE DAMAGE.
COLLECT YOURSELF. I'LL RETURN SHORTLY, YOU'LL *WISH* YOU WERE DEAD SOON ENOUGH.
KU--
GU--
OW--
OUT.

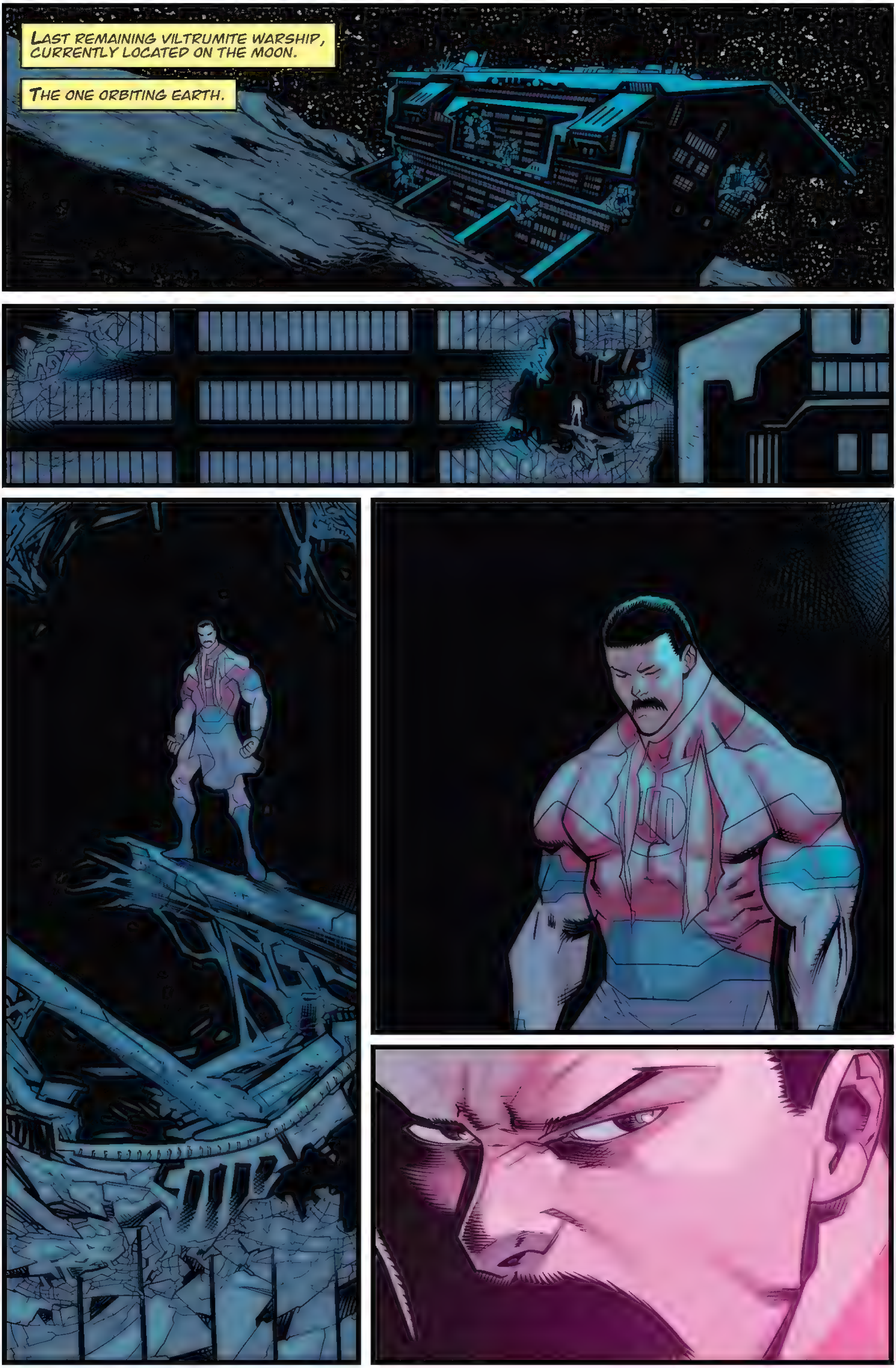

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET UNDERGROUND BASE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I HEARD THRAGG SAY WE COULD VISIT ANY TIME. I KNOW IT'S BARELY BEEN A DAY, BUT I'D LIKE TO *SEE* HIM... I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND.
I DO, BUT IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS MAKING A PHONE CALL. WE'VE ATTEMPTED TO CONTACT THEM AND WE CAN'T SEEM TO GET THROUGH.
THEIR COMMUNICATION IS *DOWN.*
ANOTHER CAUSE FOR CONCERN, THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE MOON BASE IS REPORTING UNUSUAL SEISMIC ACTIVITY ON THE MOON THAT IS ORIGINATING IN THE REGION OF THE VILTRUMITE SHIP.
SEND ME UP NOW!
IT'S NOT THAT EASY.
THEY MAY NOT EVEN BE THERE ANYMORE. WE COULD BE TELEPORTING YOU TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOON.
SEND ME UP TO THE GUARDIANS' MOON BASE--I'LL FLY OVER FROM THERE.
I NEED TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING-- *NOW!*

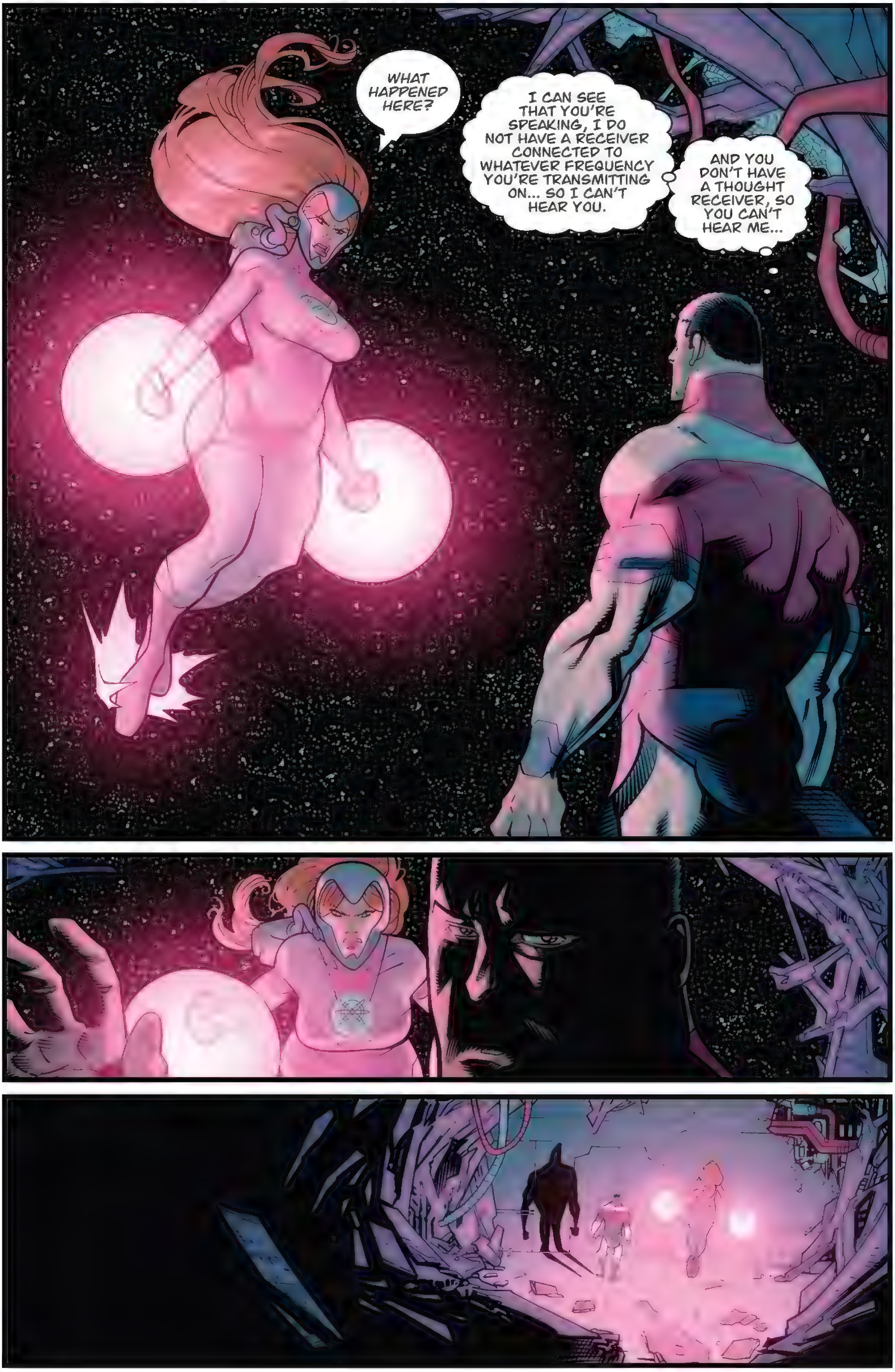

STUPID...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ZANDALE?
OH, NOTHING...
OKAY, TOUGH GUY-- YOU KEEP IT ALL BOTTLED UP.
I LIKE THE NEW COSTUME, BY THE WAY...
BUT I'D LIKE IT BETTER IF YOU TOOK IT *OFF*.

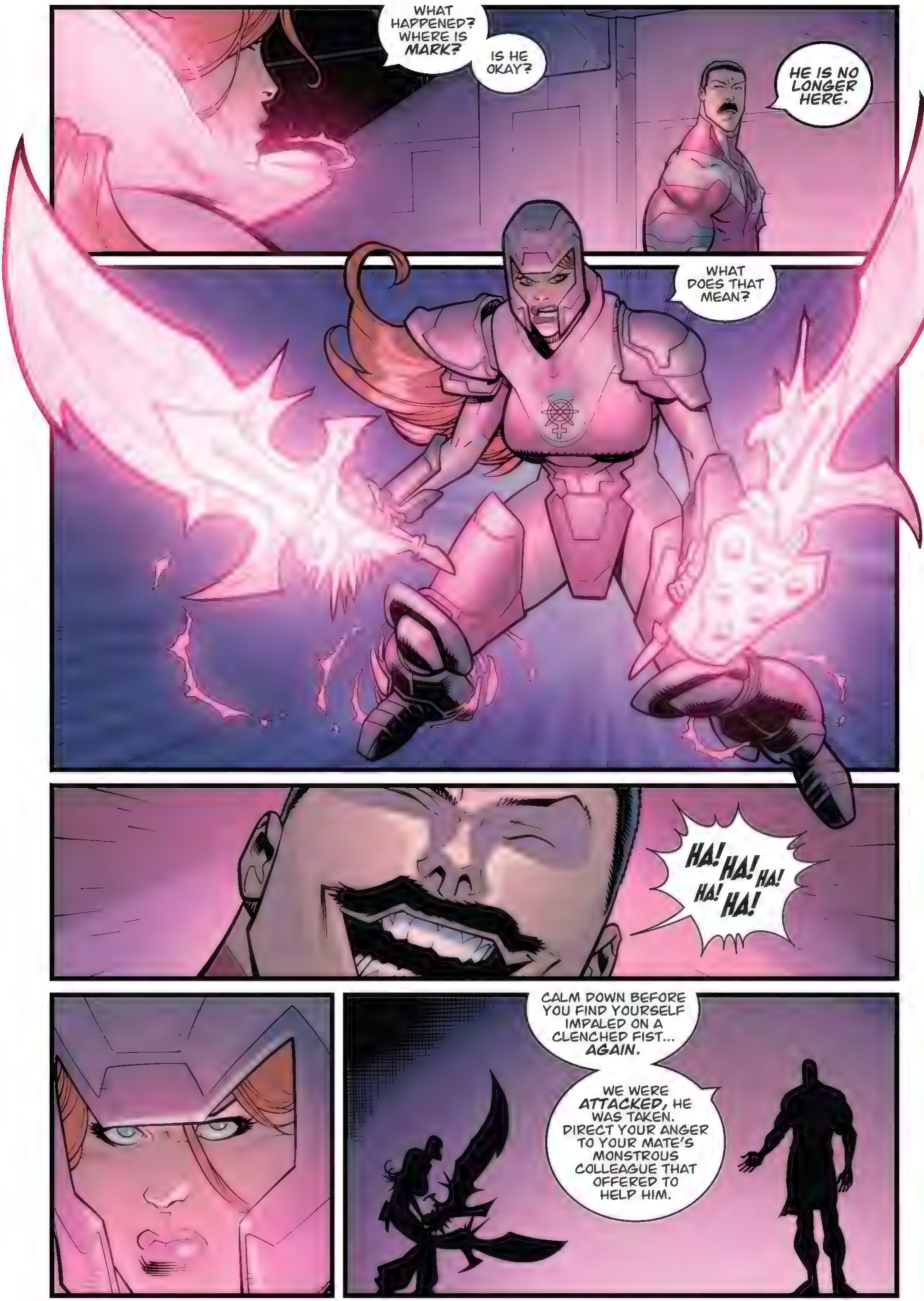

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, THE SECRET BASE OF DINOSAURUS.

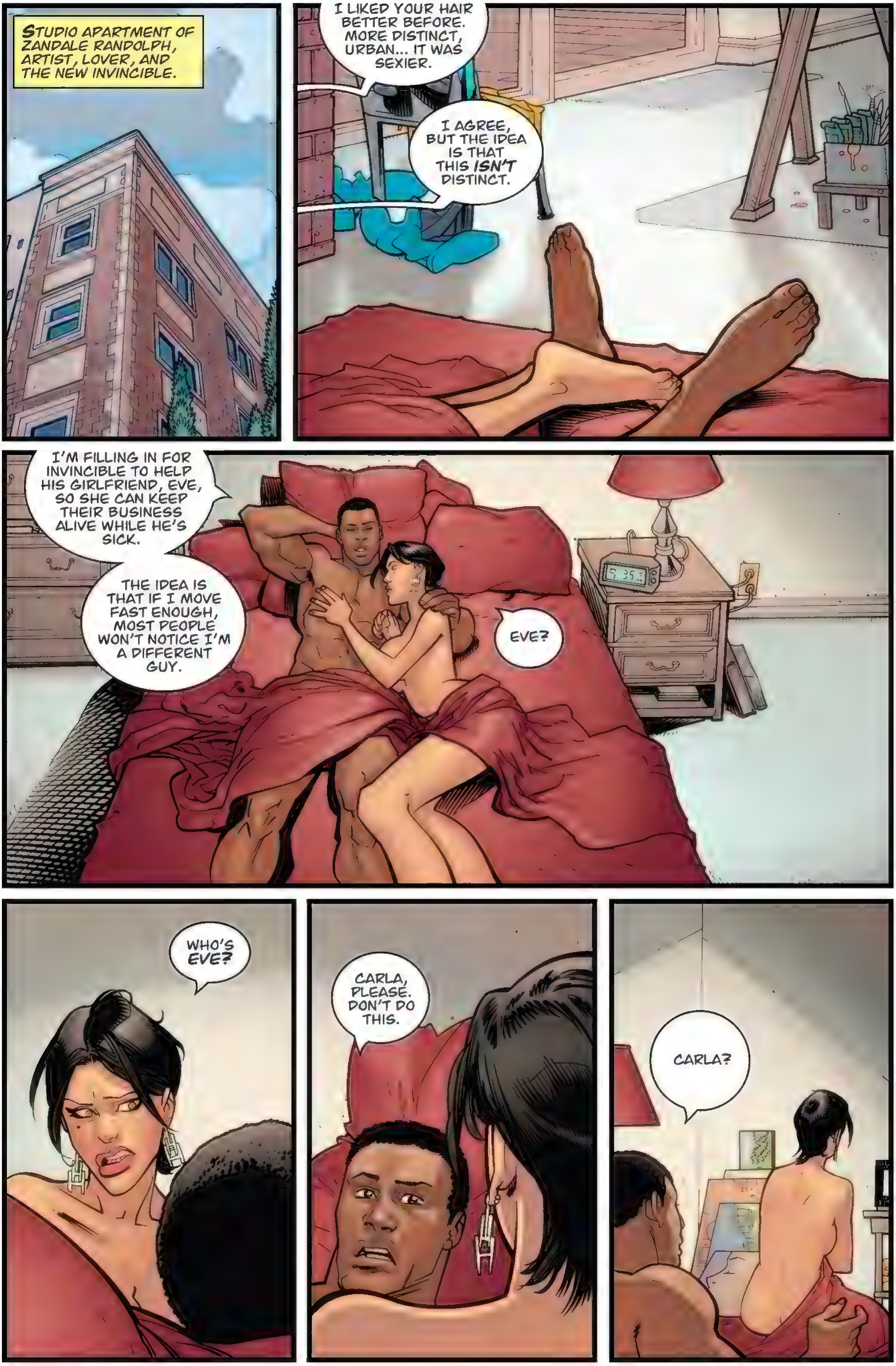

D--
DINOSAURUS?

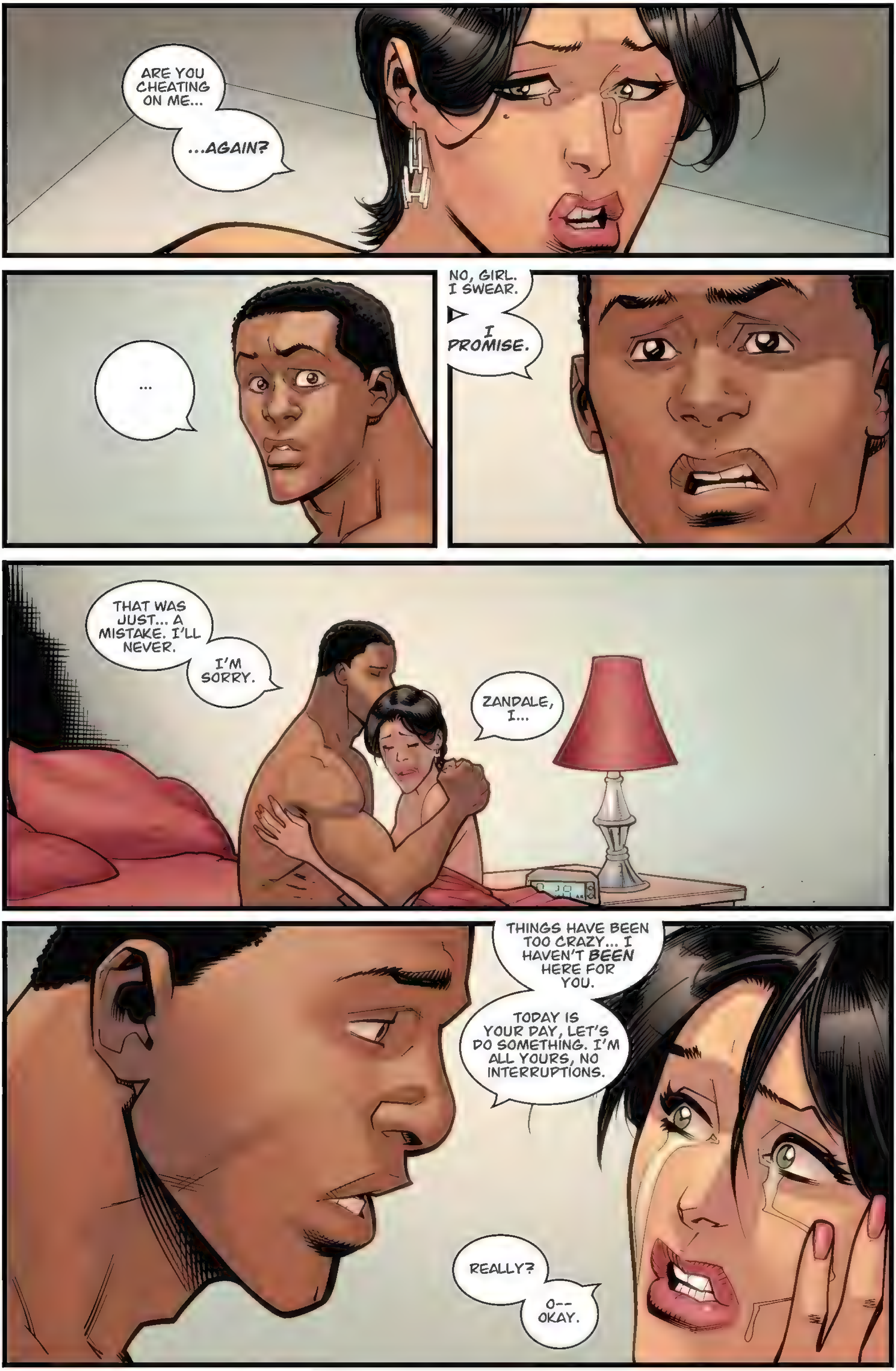
CHAPTER 91

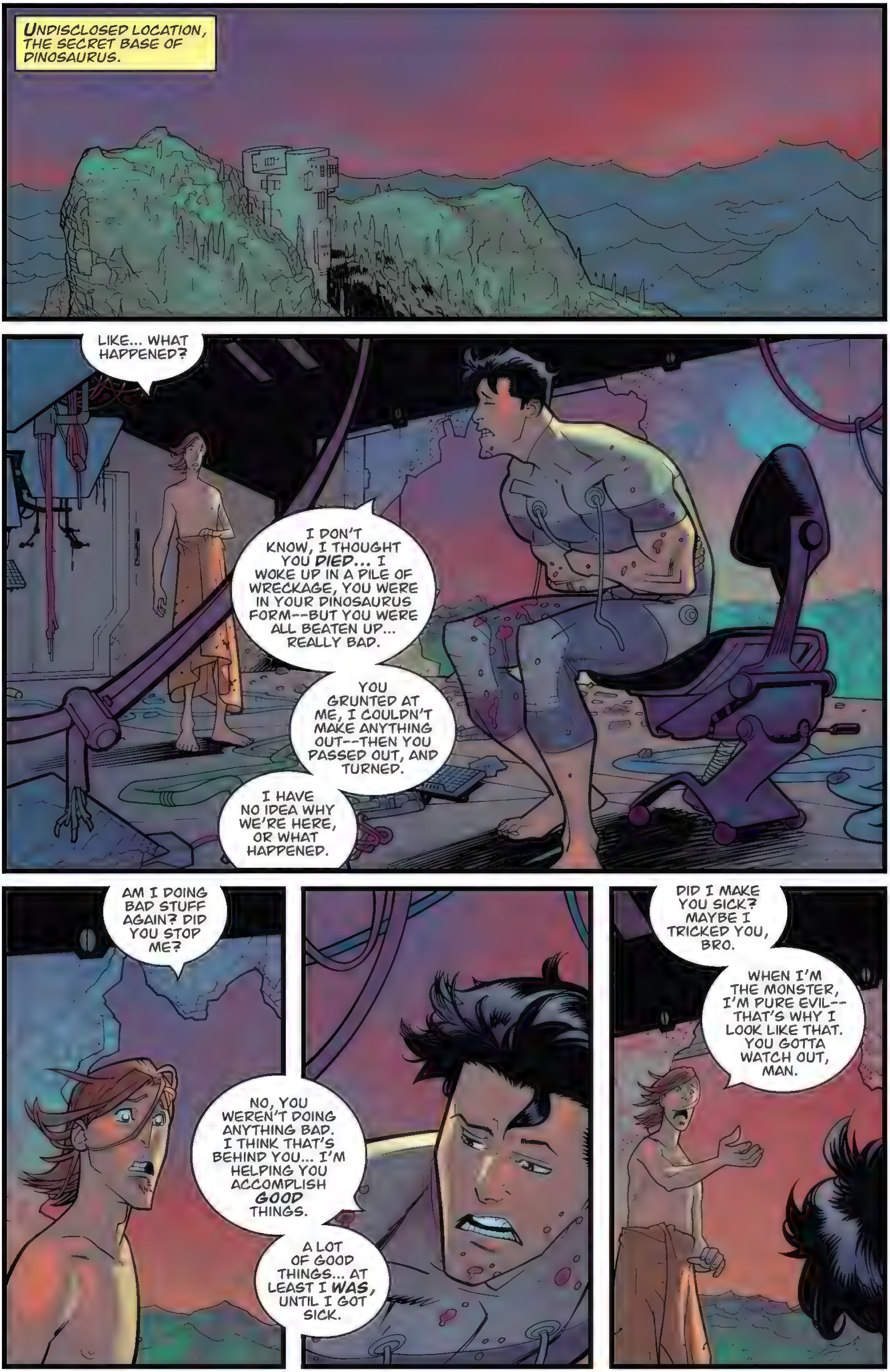

LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, CURRENTLY LOCATED ON THE MOON.
THE ONE ORBITING EARTH.

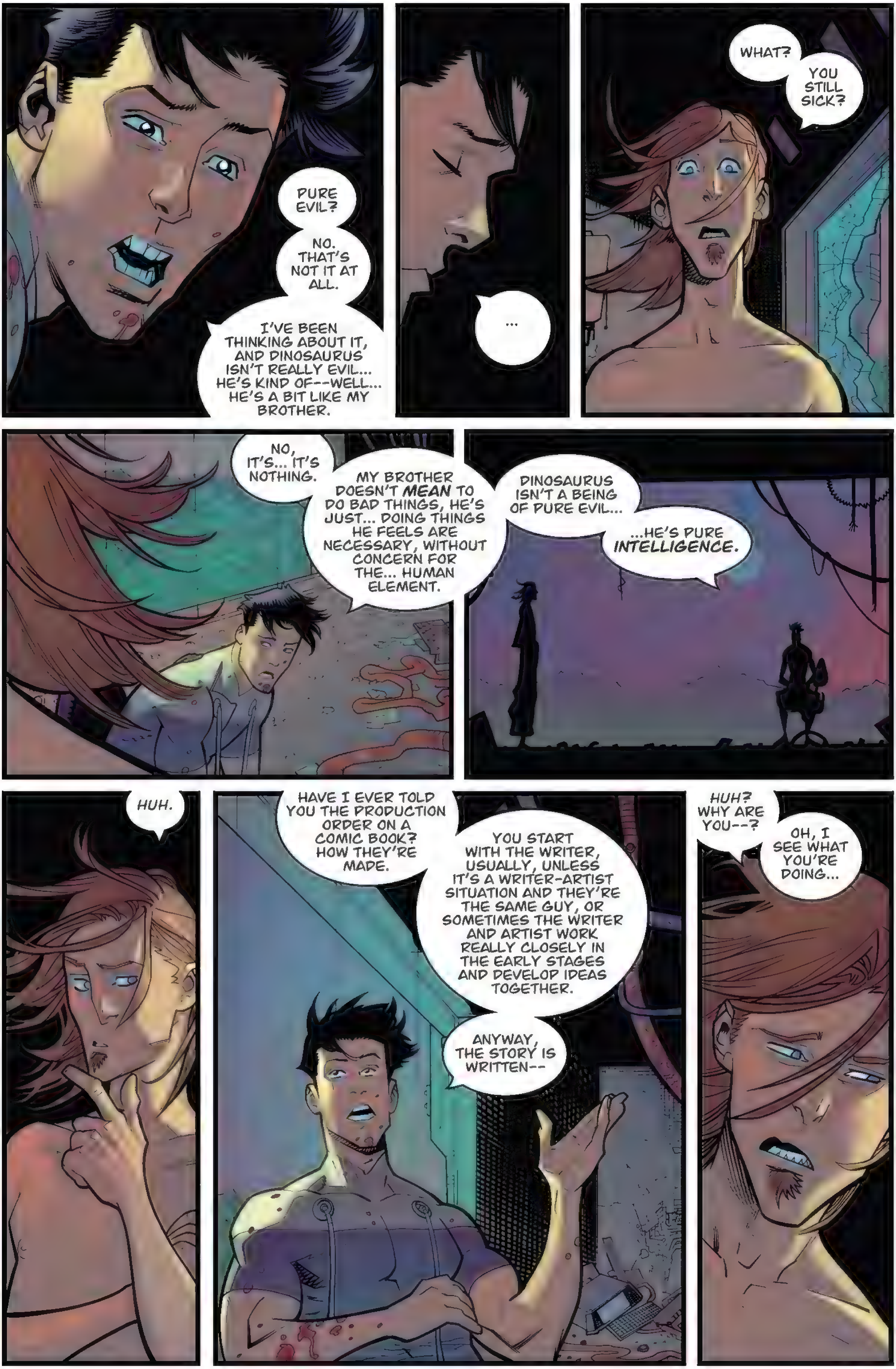

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
I CAN SEE THAT YOU'RE SPEAKING, I DO NOT HAVE A RECEIVER CONNECTED TO WHATEVER FREQUENCY YOU'RE TRANSMITTING ON... SO I CAN'T HEAR YOU.
AND YOU DON'T HAVE A THOUGHT RECEIVER, SO YOU CAN'T HEAR ME...

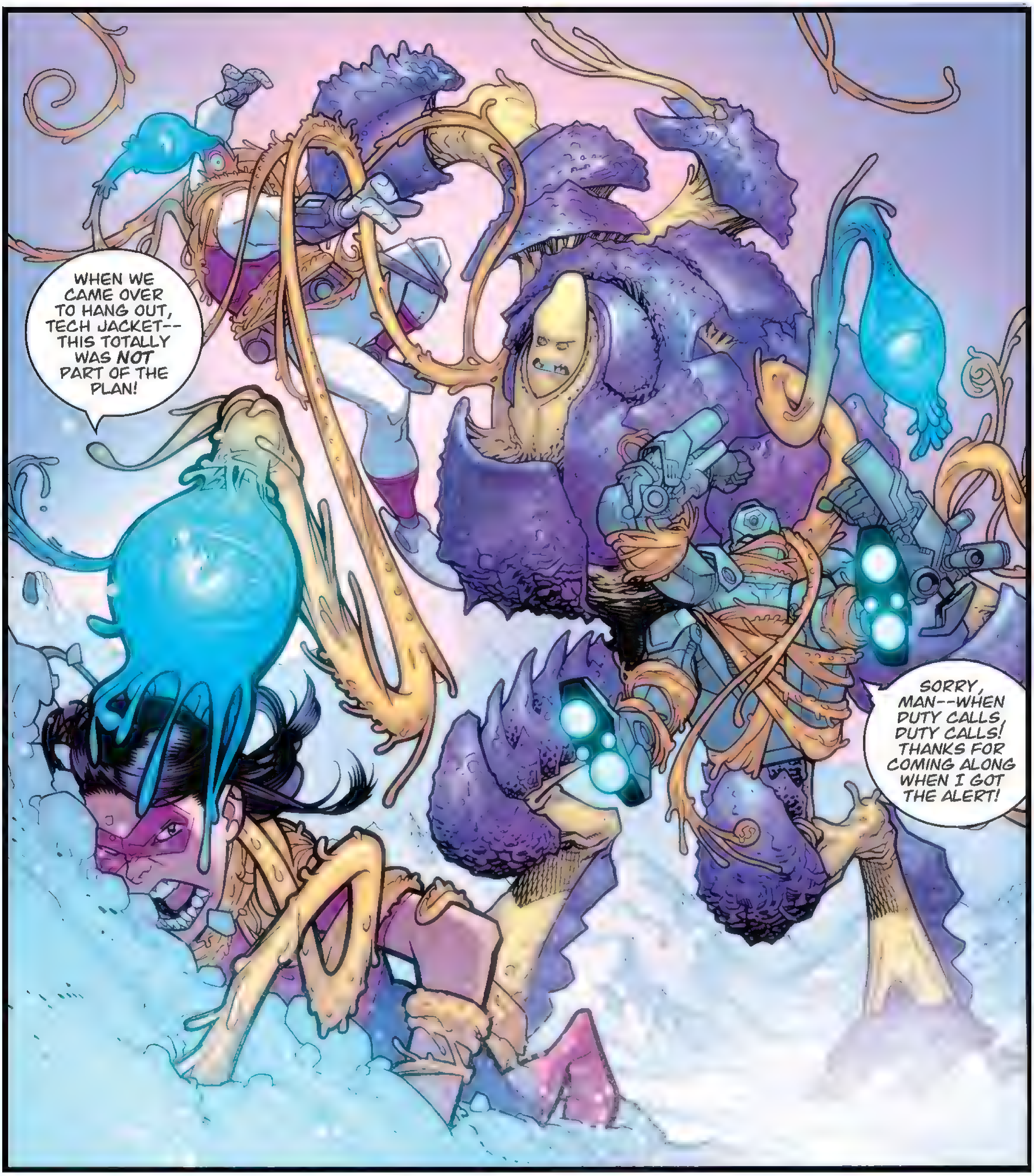

WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE IS *MARK?*
IS HE OKAY?
HE IS NO LONGER HERE.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
CALM DOWN BEFORE YOU FIND YOURSELF IMPALED ON A CLENCHED FIST... *AGAIN.*
WE WERE *ATTACKED,* HE WAS TAKEN. DIRECT YOUR ANGER TO YOUR MATE'S MONSTROUS COLLEAGUE THAT OFFERED TO HELP HIM.

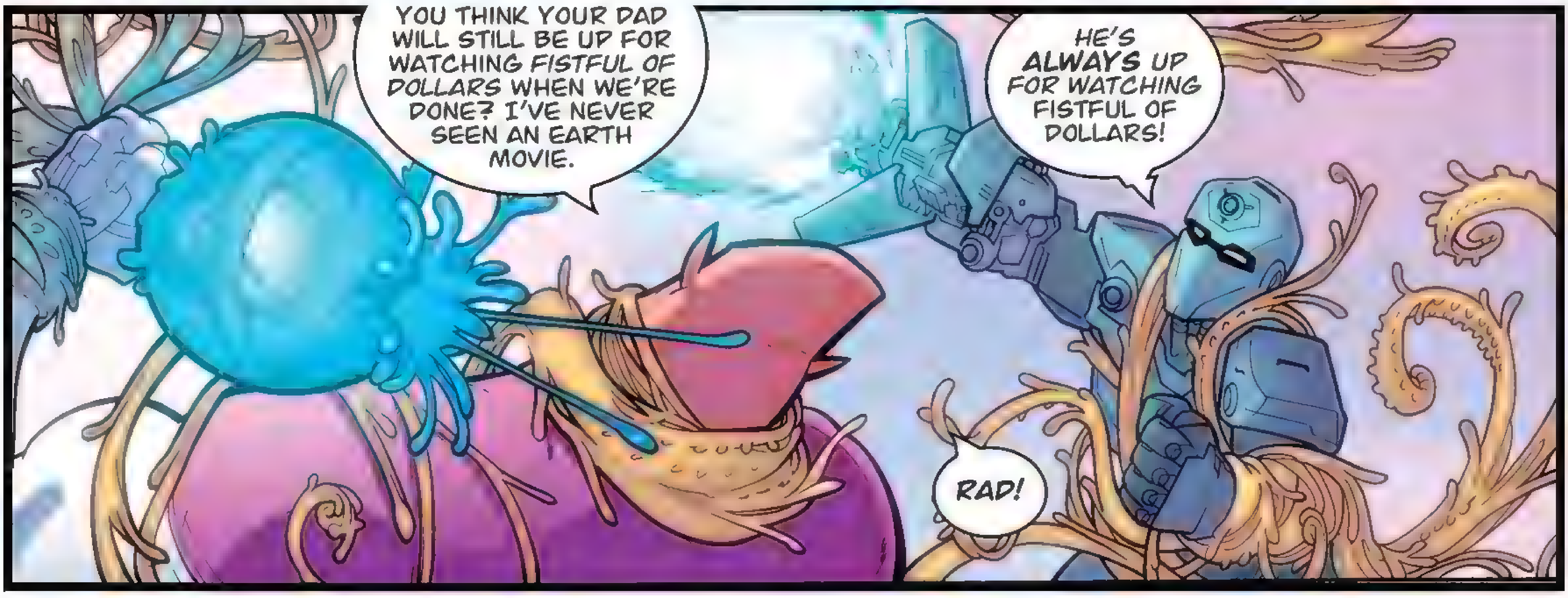

STUDIO APARTMENT OF ZANDALE RANDOLPH, ARTIST, LOVER, AND THE NEW INVINCIBLE.
I LIKED YOUR HAIR BETTER BEFORE. MORE DISTINCT, URBAN... IT WAS SEXIER.
I AGREE, BUT THE IDEA IS THAT THIS *ISN'T* DISTINCT.
I'M FILLING IN FOR INVINCIBLE TO HELP HIS GIRLFRIEND, EVE, SO SHE CAN KEEP THEIR BUSINESS ALIVE WHILE HE'S SICK.
THE IDEA IS THAT IF I MOVE FAST ENOUGH, MOST PEOPLE WON'T NOTICE I'M A DIFFERENT GUY.
EVE?
WHO'S *EVE?*
CARLA, PLEASE. DON'T DO THIS.
CARLA?


ARE YOU CHEATING ON ME...
...AGAIN?
...
NO, GIRL. I SWEAR.
I PROMISE.
THAT WAS JUST... A MISTAKE. I'LL NEVER.
I'M SORRY.
ZANDALE, I...
THINGS HAVE BEEN TOO CRAZY... I HAVEN'T **BEEN** HERE FOR YOU.
TODAY IS YOUR DAY, LET'S DO SOMETHING. I'M ALL YOURS, NO INTERRUPTIONS.
REALLY?
O-- OKAY.


UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, THE SECRET BASE OF DINOSAURUS.
LIKE... WHAT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW, I THOUGHT YOU *DIED*... I WOKE UP IN A PILE OF WRECKAGE, YOU WERE IN YOUR DINOSAURUS FORM--BUT YOU WERE ALL BEATEN UP... REALLY BAD.
YOU GRUNTED AT ME, I COULDN'T MAKE ANYTHING OUT--THEN YOU PASSED OUT, AND TURNED.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHY WE'RE HERE, OR WHAT HAPPENED.
AM I DOING BAD STUFF AGAIN? DID YOU STOP ME?
NO, YOU WEREN'T DOING ANYTHING BAD. I THINK THAT'S BEHIND YOU... I'M HELPING YOU ACCOMPLISH *GOOD* THINGS.
A LOT OF GOOD THINGS... AT LEAST I *WAS*, UNTIL I GOT SICK.
DID I MAKE YOU SICK? MAYBE I TRICKED YOU, BRO.
WHEN I'M THE MONSTER, I'M PURE EVIL--THAT'S WHY I LOOK LIKE THAT. YOU GOTTA WATCH OUT, MAN.

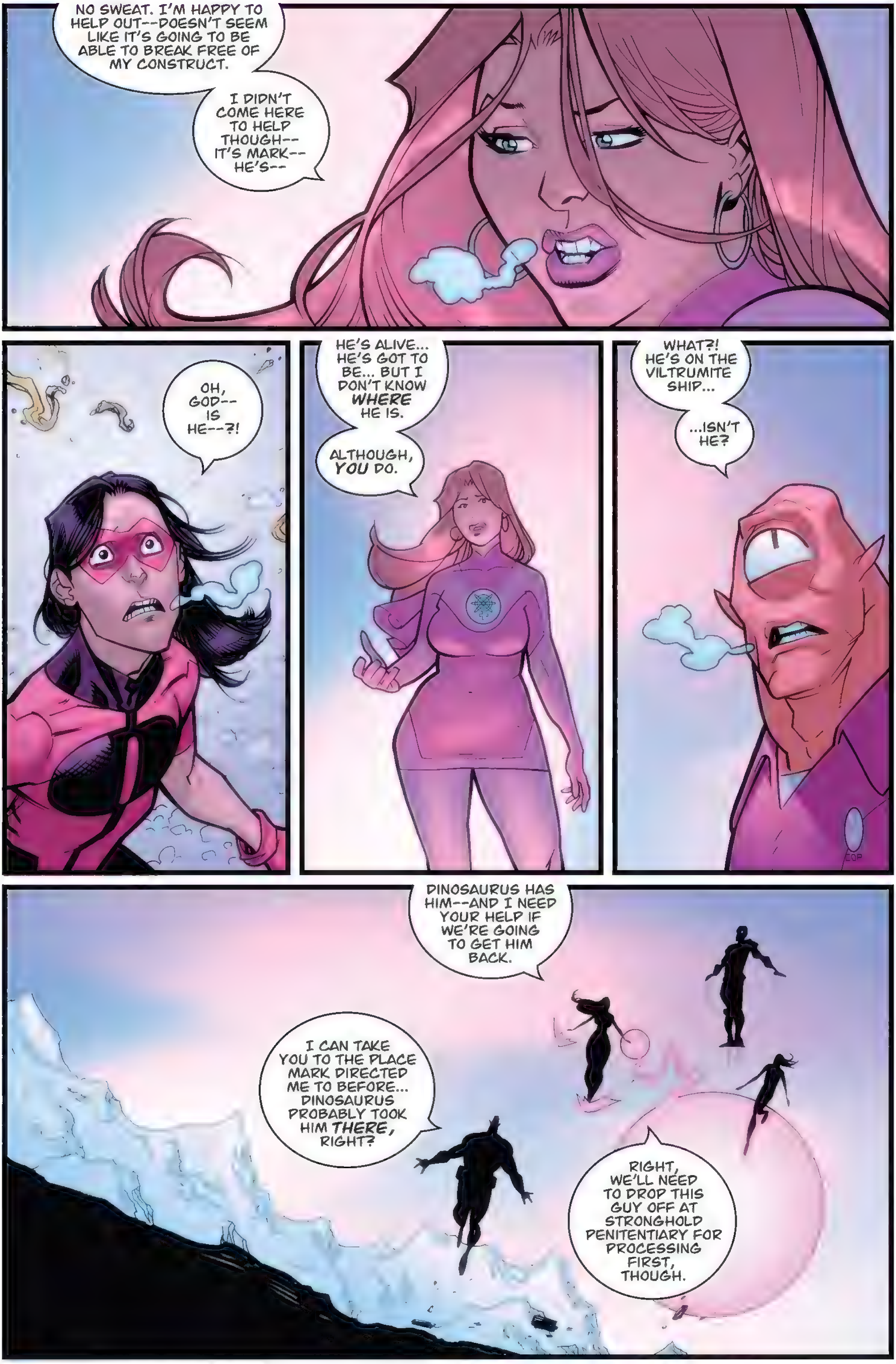

PURE EVIL?
NO. THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT, AND DINOSAURUS ISN'T REALLY EVIL... HE'S KIND OF--WELL... HE'S A BIT LIKE MY BROTHER.
...
WHAT?
YOU STILL SICK?
NO, IT'S... IT'S NOTHING.
MY BROTHER DOESN'T MEAN TO DO BAD THINGS, HE'S JUST... DOING THINGS HE FEELS ARE NECESSARY, WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE... HUMAN ELEMENT.
DINOSAURUS ISN'T A BEING OF PURE EVIL...
...HE'S PURE INTELLIGENCE.
HUH.
HAVE I EVER TOLD YOU THE PRODUCTION ORDER ON A COMIC BOOK? HOW THEY'RE MADE.
YOU START WITH THE WRITER, USUALLY, UNLESS IT'S A WRITER-ARTIST SITUATION AND THEY'RE THE SAME GUY, OR SOMETIMES THE WRITER AND ARTIST WORK REALLY CLOSELY IN THE EARLY STAGES AND DEVELOP IDEAS TOGETHER.
ANYWAY, THE STORY IS WRITTEN--
HUH? WHY ARE YOU--?
OH, I SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING...

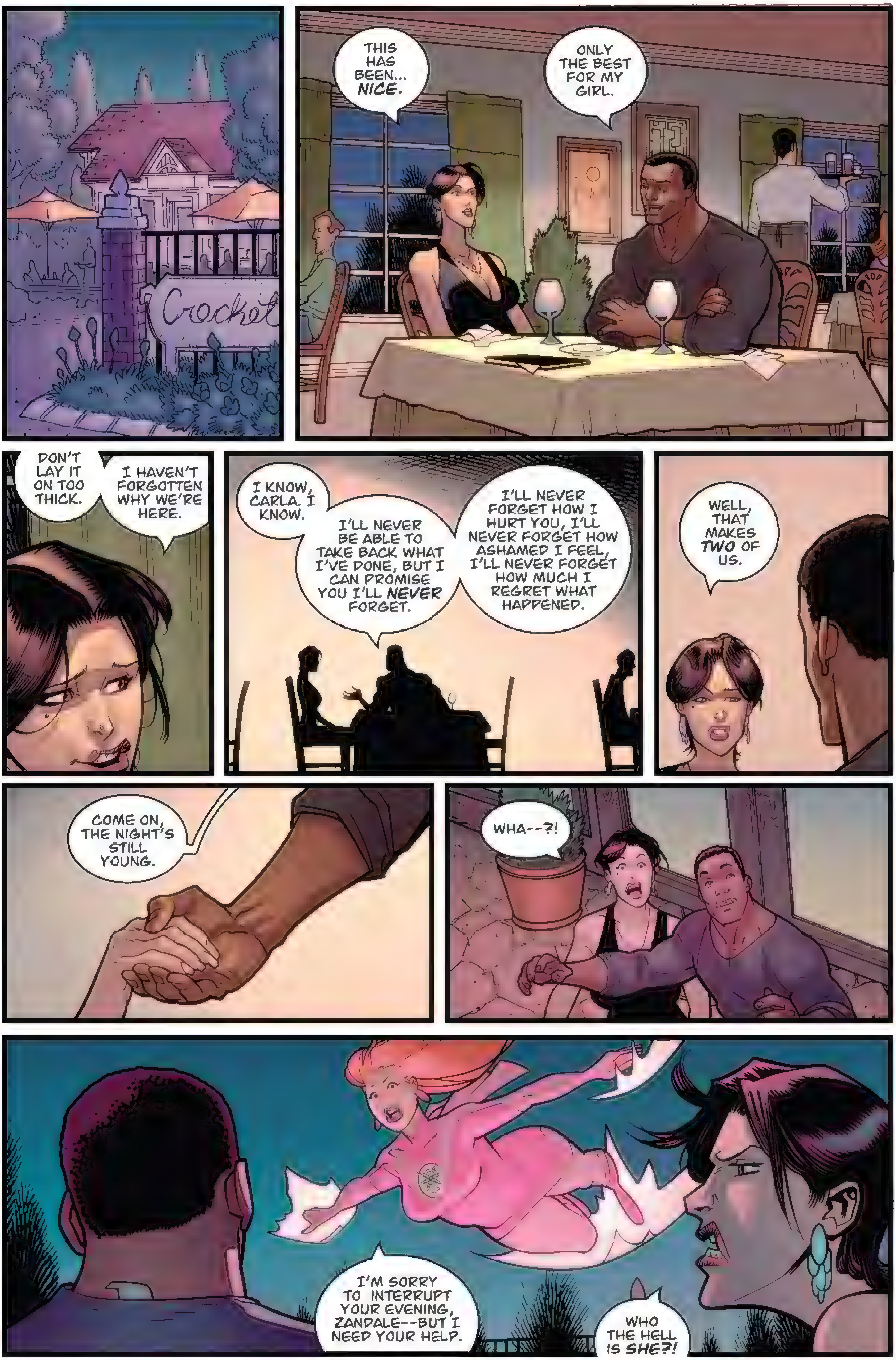

WHEN WE CAME OVER TO HANG OUT, TECH JACKET-- THIS TOTALLY WAS **NOT** PART OF THE PLAN!
SORRY, MAN--WHEN DUTY CALLS, DUTY CALLS! THANKS FOR COMING ALONG WHEN I GOT THE ALERT!

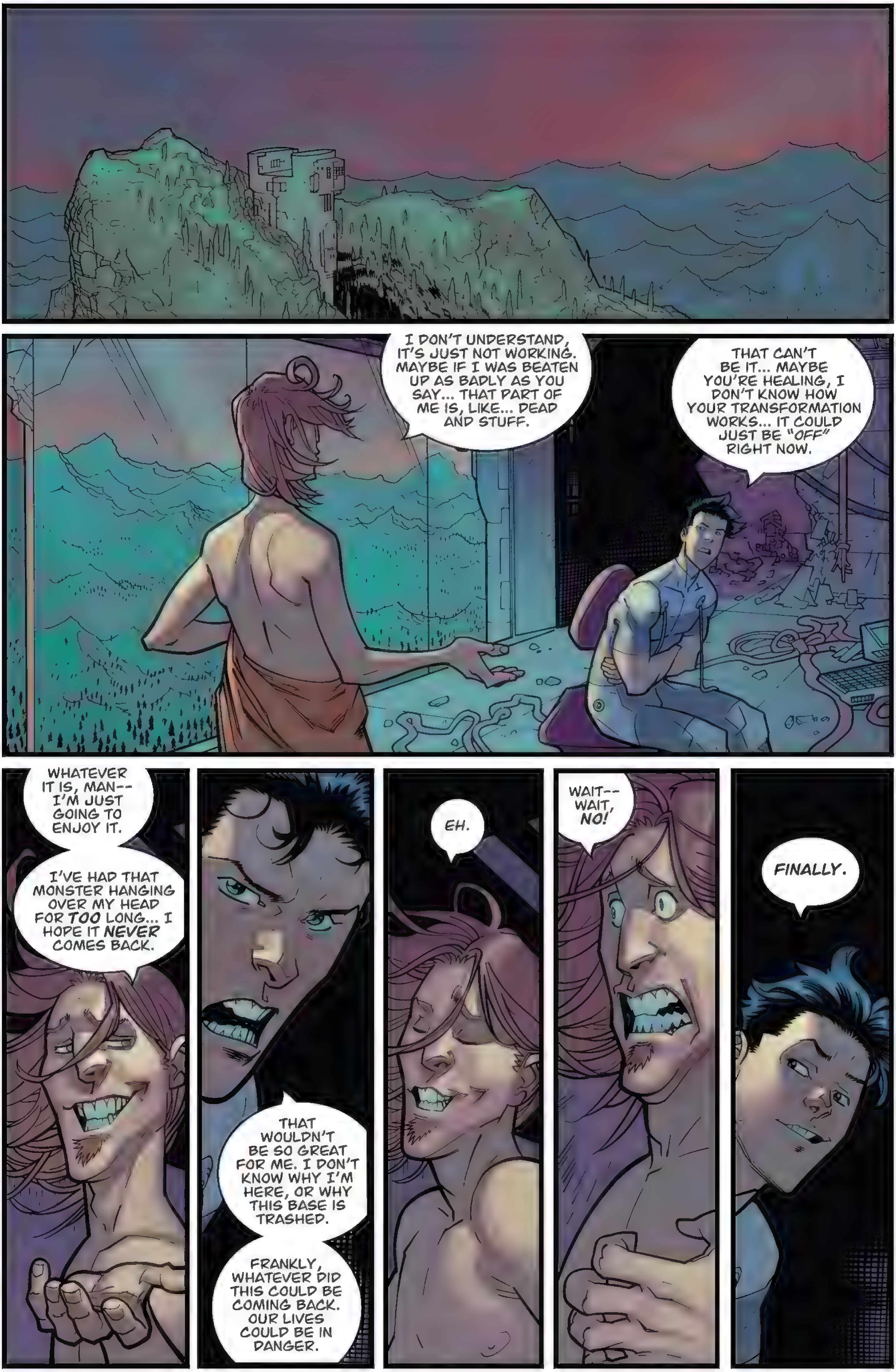

YOU THINK YOUR DAD WILL STILL BE UP FOR WATCHING FISTFUL OF DOLLARS WHEN WE'RE DONE? I'VE NEVER SEEN AN EARTH MOVIE.
HE'S **ALWAYS** UP FOR WATCHING FISTFUL OF DOLLARS!
RAD!

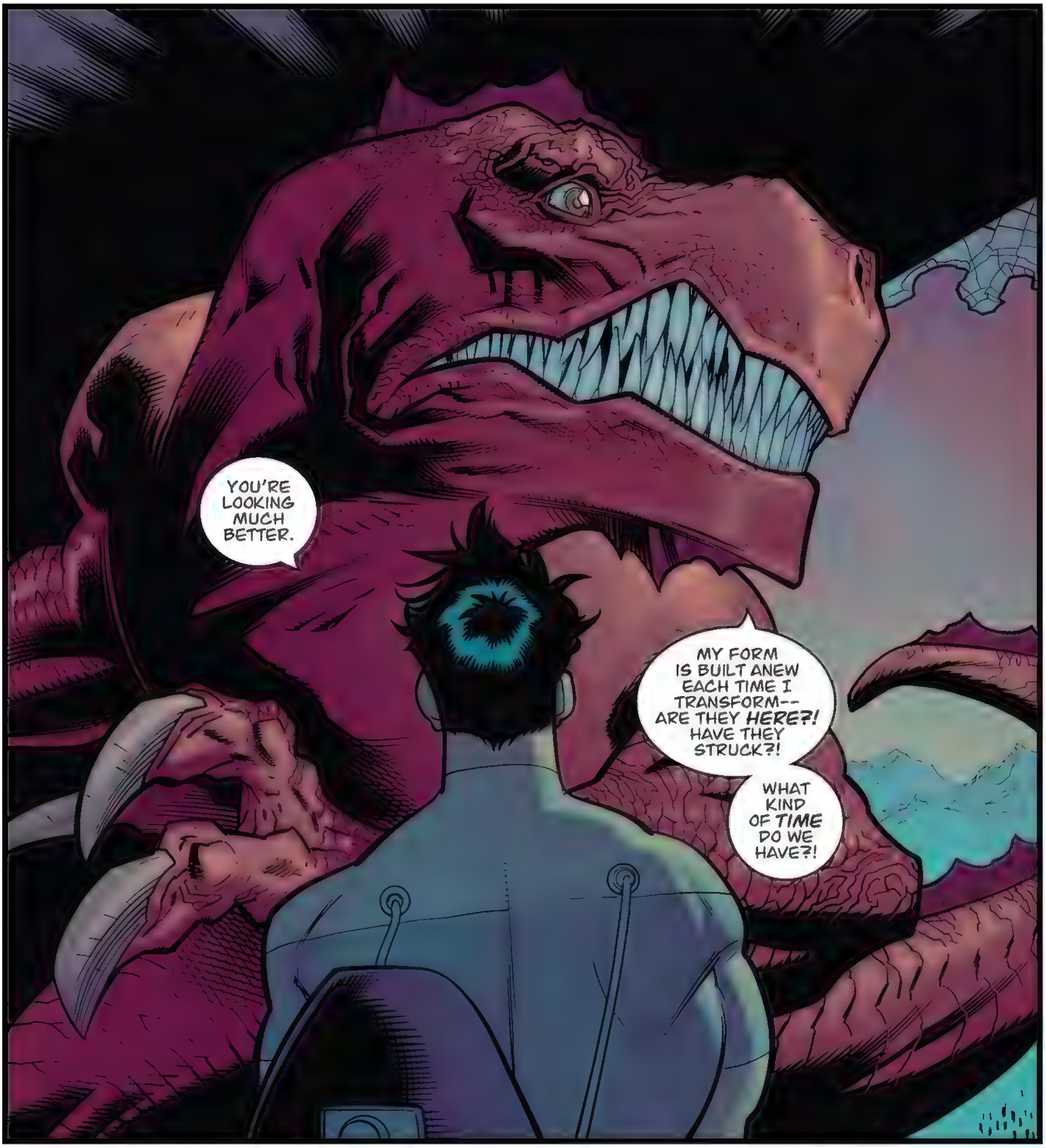
ANY CLUE HOW TO BEAT THIS THING? I CAN'T TELL WHAT PARTS ARE HIM AND WHAT PARTS ARE HIS SUIT!
THIS IS A **SUIT**, RIGHT?!
I'VE NEVER FOUGHT **ANYTHING** LIKE THIS GUY BEFORE-- BUT IT APPEARS TO BE SOME KIND OF SYMBIOTIC ORGANISM.
VZOP! VZAP!
I CAN'T REALLY TELL WHO'S IN CONTROL.
DO YOU FEEL THAT-- KNOCKING IN YOUR HEAD? I THINK IT'S ATTEMPTING TO COMMUNICATE.
WHATEVER IT IS--IT'S NOT COMPATIBLE WITH MY TRANSLATOR IMPLANT...
CRAP! THIS THING IS MELTING MY TECH JACKET-- IT'S GETTING INSIDE!
HIT IT! HIT IT!
HIT IT!
I AM!
KRAKKOOM!!

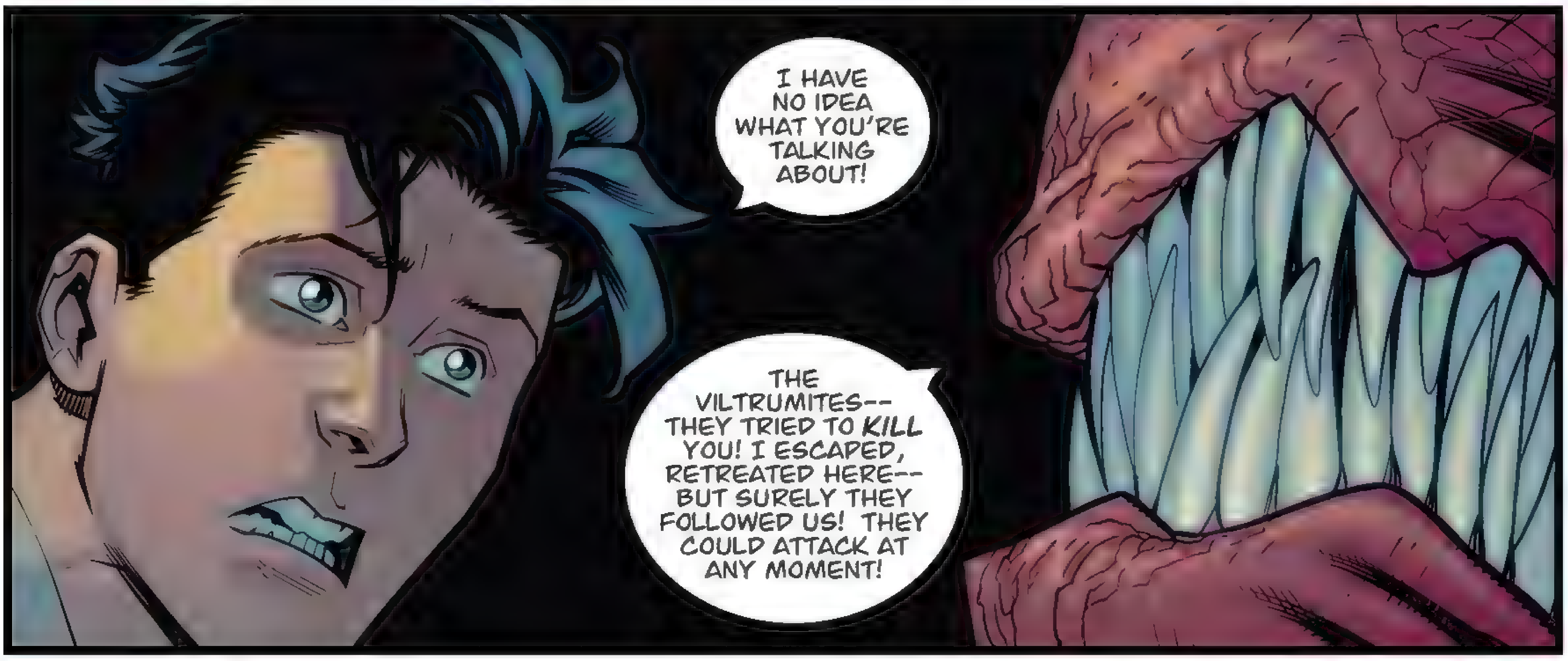
CHOOM!!
SKREEEKSS!!
WHEW!
THANKS, LADY!

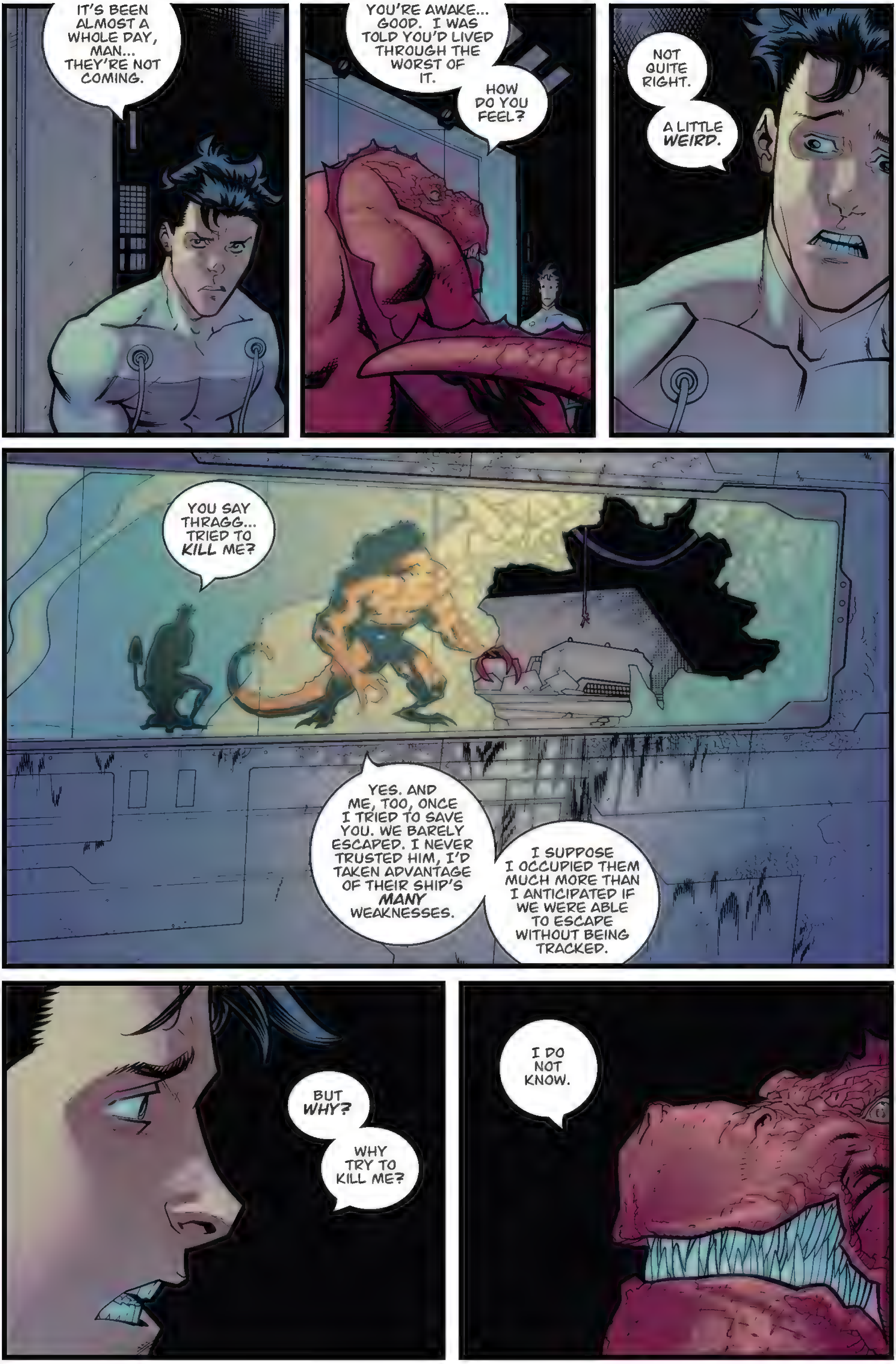

NO SWEAT. I'M HAPPY TO HELP OUT--DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE ABLE TO BREAK FREE OF MY CONSTRUCT.
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO HELP THOUGH-- IT'S MARK-- HE'S--
OH, GOD-- IS HE--?!
HE'S ALIVE... HE'S GOT TO BE... BUT I DON'T KNOW **WHERE** HE IS.
ALTHOUGH, **YOU** DO.
WHAT?! HE'S ON THE VILTRUMITE SHIP...
...ISN'T HE?
DINOSAURUS HAS HIM--AND I NEED YOUR HELP IF WE'RE GOING TO GET HIM BACK.
I CAN TAKE YOU TO THE PLACE MARK DIRECTED ME TO BEFORE... DINOSAURUS PROBABLY TOOK HIM **THERE**, RIGHT?
RIGHT, WE'LL NEED TO DROP THIS GUY OFF AT STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY FOR PROCESSING FIRST, THOUGH.

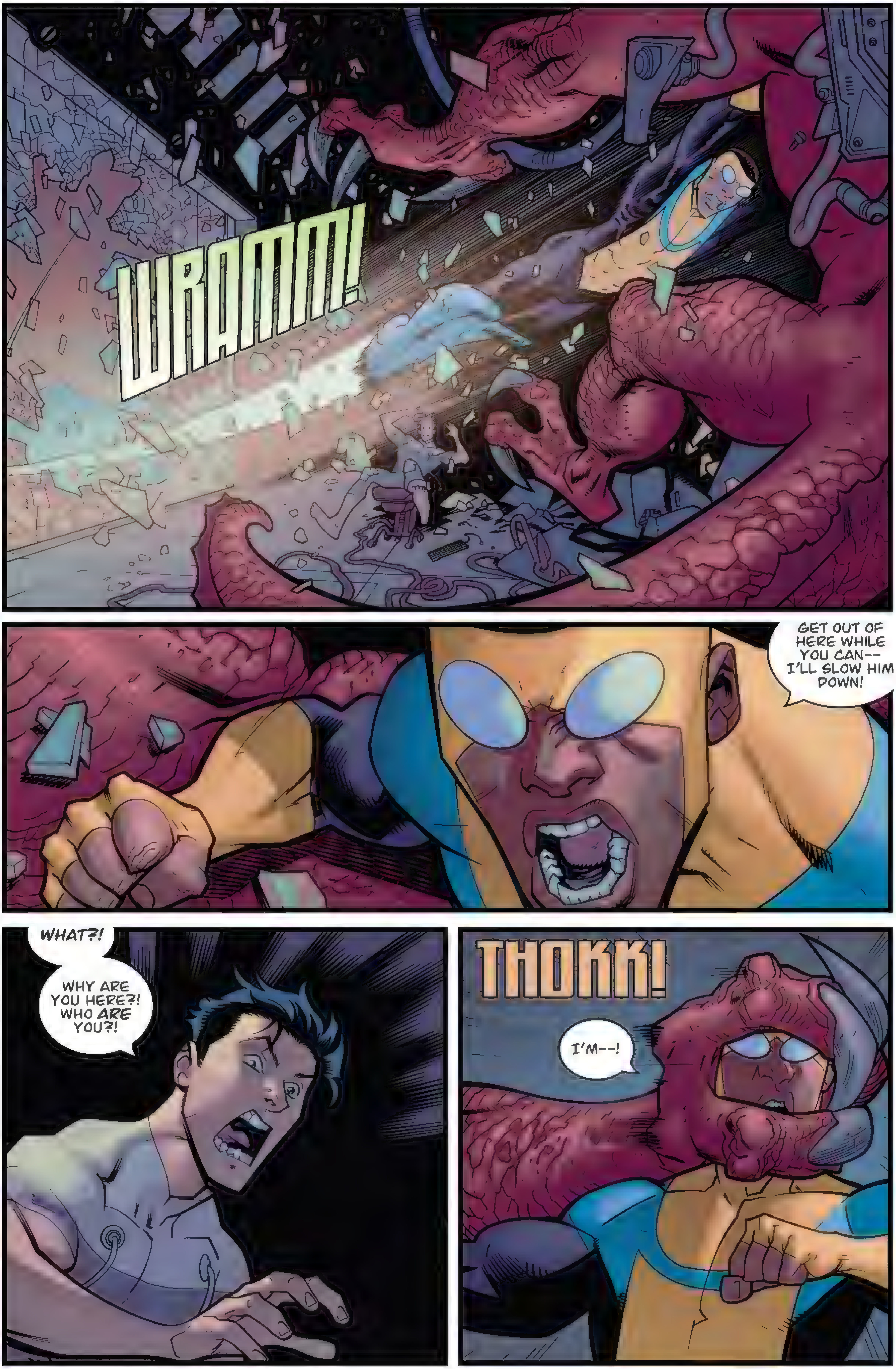

Crocket
THIS HAS BEEN... *NICE.*
ONLY THE BEST FOR MY GIRL.
DON'T LAY IT ON TOO THICK.
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN WHY WE'RE HERE.
I KNOW, CARLA. I KNOW.
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE BACK WHAT I'VE DONE, BUT I CAN PROMISE YOU I'LL *NEVER* FORGET.
I'LL NEVER FORGET HOW I HURT YOU, I'LL NEVER FORGET HOW ASHAMED I FEEL, I'LL NEVER FORGET HOW MUCH I REGRET WHAT HAPPENED.
WELL, THAT MAKES *TWO* OF US.
COME ON, THE NIGHT'S STILL YOUNG.
WHA--?!
I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR EVENING, ZANDALE--BUT I NEED YOUR HELP.
WHO THE HELL IS *SHE?!*


I DON'T UNDERSTAND, IT'S JUST NOT WORKING. MAYBE IF I WAS BEATEN UP AS BADLY AS YOU SAY... THAT PART OF ME IS, LIKE... DEAD AND STUFF.
THAT CAN'T BE IT... MAYBE YOU'RE HEALING, I DON'T KNOW HOW YOUR TRANSFORMATION WORKS... IT COULD JUST BE "OFF" RIGHT NOW.
WHATEVER IT IS, MAN-- I'M JUST GOING TO ENJOY IT.
I'VE HAD THAT MONSTER HANGING OVER MY HEAD FOR TOO LONG... I HOPE IT NEVER COMES BACK.
THAT WOULDN'T BE SO GREAT FOR ME. I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M HERE, OR WHY THIS BASE IS TRASHED.
FRANKLY, WHATEVER DID THIS COULD BE COMING BACK. OUR LIVES COULD BE IN DANGER.
EH.
WAIT-- WAIT, NO!
FINALLY.


YOU'RE LOOKING MUCH BETTER.
MY FORM IS BUILT ANEW EACH TIME I TRANSFORM-- ARE THEY *HERE?!* HAVE THEY STRUCK?!
WHAT KIND OF *TIME* DO WE HAVE?!

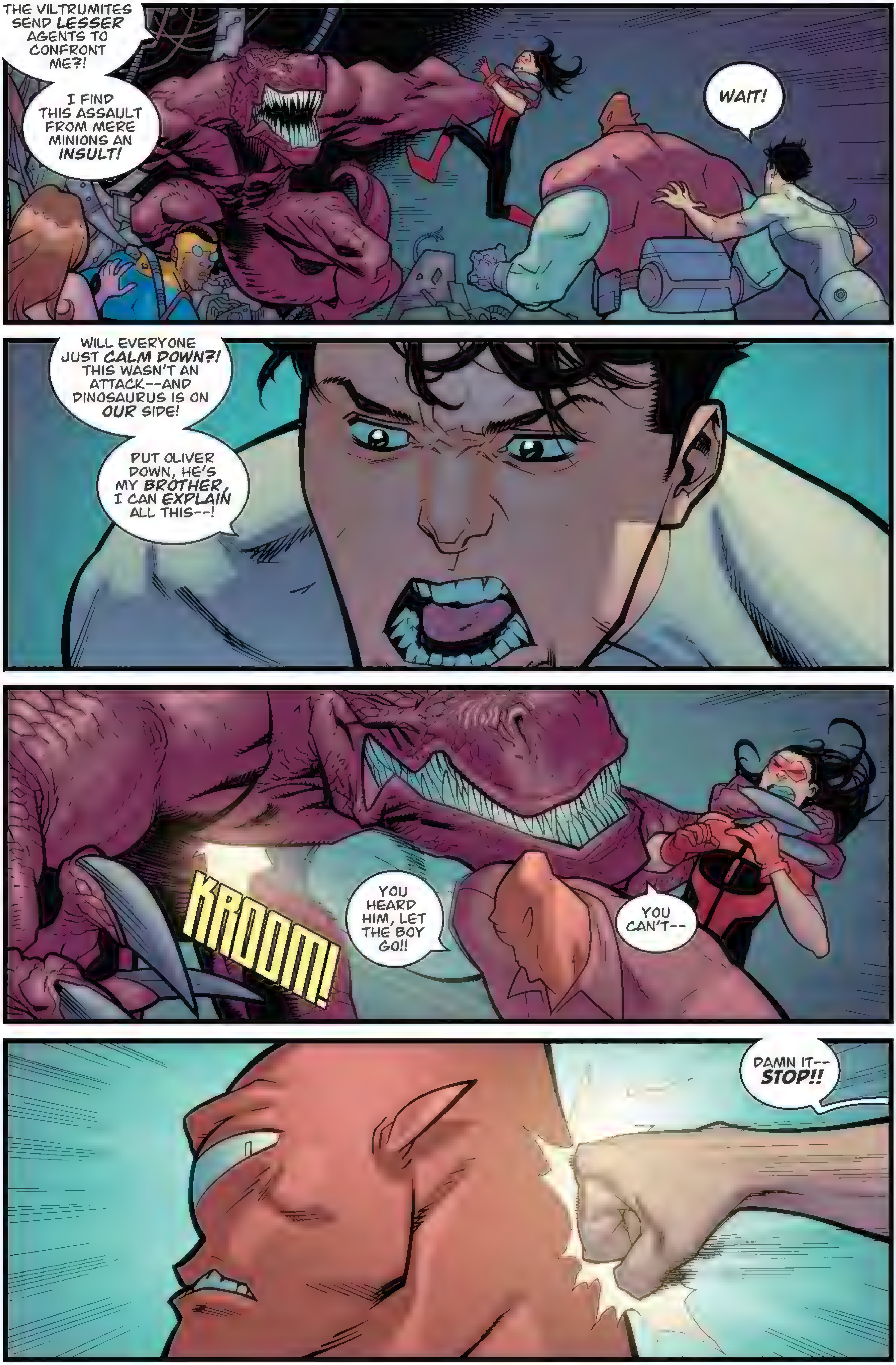

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
THE VILTRUMITES-- THEY TRIED TO *KILL* YOU! I ESCAPED, RETREATED HERE-- BUT SURELY THEY FOLLOWED US! THEY COULD ATTACK AT ANY MOMENT!

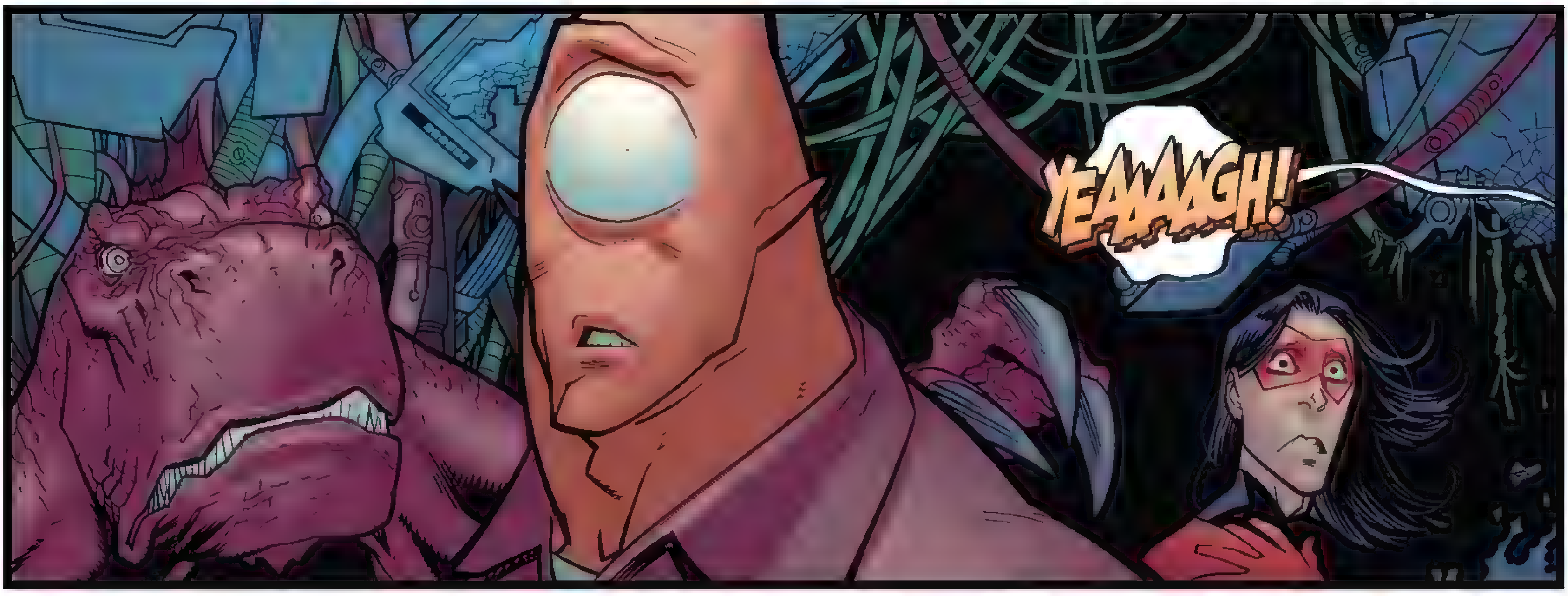

IT'S BEEN ALMOST A WHOLE DAY, MAN... THEY'RE NOT COMING.
YOU'RE AWAKE... GOOD. I WAS TOLD YOU'D LIVED THROUGH THE WORST OF IT.
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
NOT QUITE RIGHT.
A LITTLE *WEIRD*.
YOU SAY THRAGG... TRIED TO *KILL* ME?
YES. AND ME, TOO, ONCE I TRIED TO SAVE YOU. WE BARELY ESCAPED. I NEVER TRUSTED HIM, I'D TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THEIR SHIP'S *MANY* WEAKNESSES.
I SUPPOSE I OCCUPIED THEM MUCH MORE THAN I ANTICIPATED IF WE WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE WITHOUT BEING TRACKED.
BUT *WHY?*
WHY TRY TO KILL ME?
I DO NOT KNOW.


WRAMM!
GET OUT OF HERE WHILE YOU CAN-- I'LL SLOW HIM DOWN!
WHAT?!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?! WHO ARE YOU?!
THOKK!
I'M--!

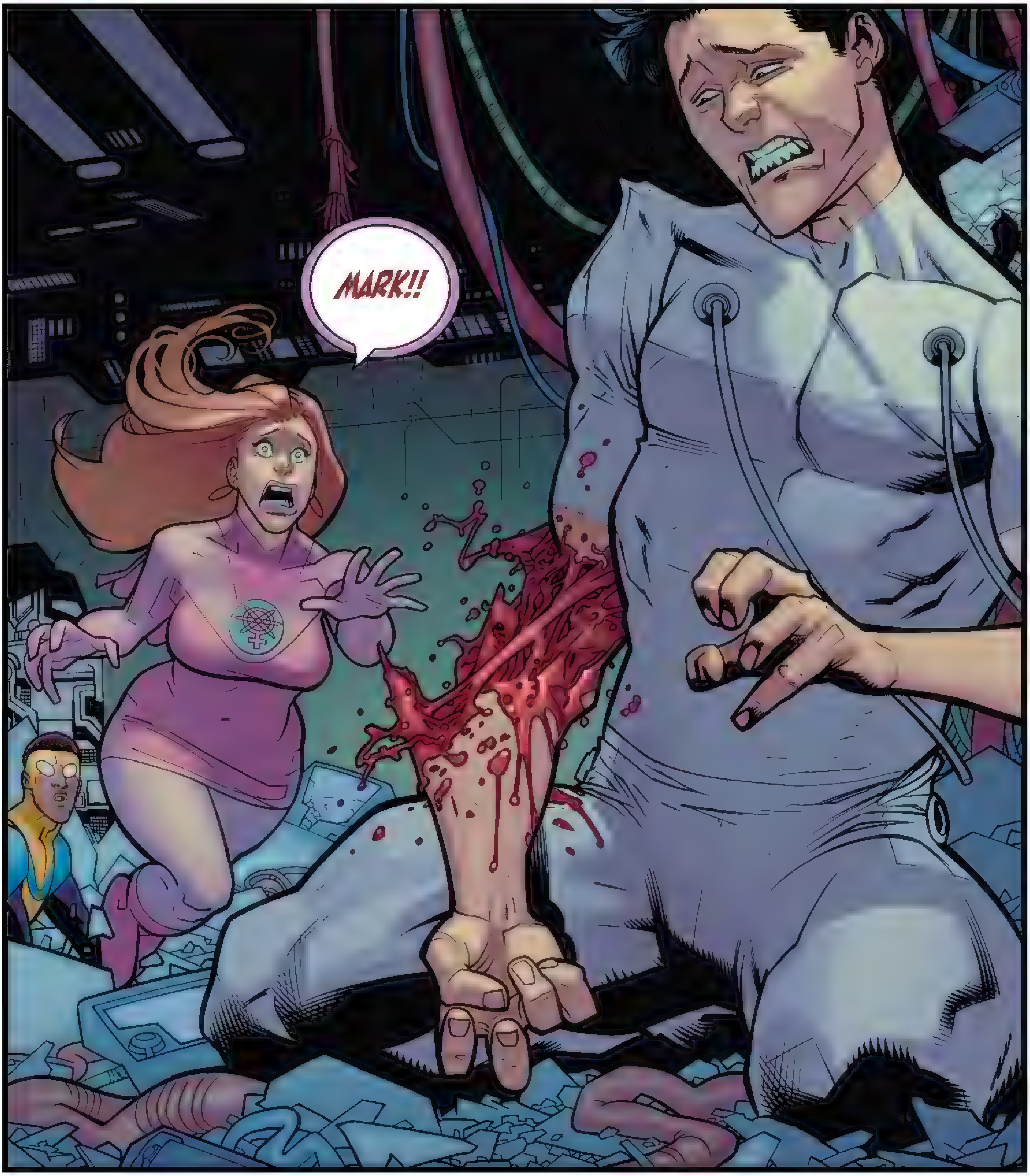
CHOOM!
YOU DARE ATTACK ME?!
DINOSAURUS, DON'T--!
MARK!
YOU'RE ALIVE!
EVE!
I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU! I DIDN'T KNOW--
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO WORRY? I'M ALWAYS--
KRAKOOM!

DOOM!
CRAP!
DINOSAURUS-- STOP!!
LEAVE HIM ALONE, DICK HOLE!
WRAMM!
OLIVER? WHAT ARE--
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, OLIVER, THIS GUY IS NO LIGHTWEIGHT-- TRUST ME!


THE VILTRUMITES SEND LESSER AGENTS TO CONFRONT ME?!
I FIND THIS ASSAULT FROM MERE MINIONS AN INSULT!
WAIT!
WILL EVERYONE JUST CALM DOWN?! THIS WASN'T AN ATTACK--AND DINOSAURUS IS ON OUR SIDE!
PUT OLIVER DOWN, HE'S MY BROTHER, I CAN EXPLAIN ALL THIS--!
KROOM!
YOU HEARD HIM, LET THE BOY GO!!
YOU CAN'T--
DAMN IT-- STOP!!



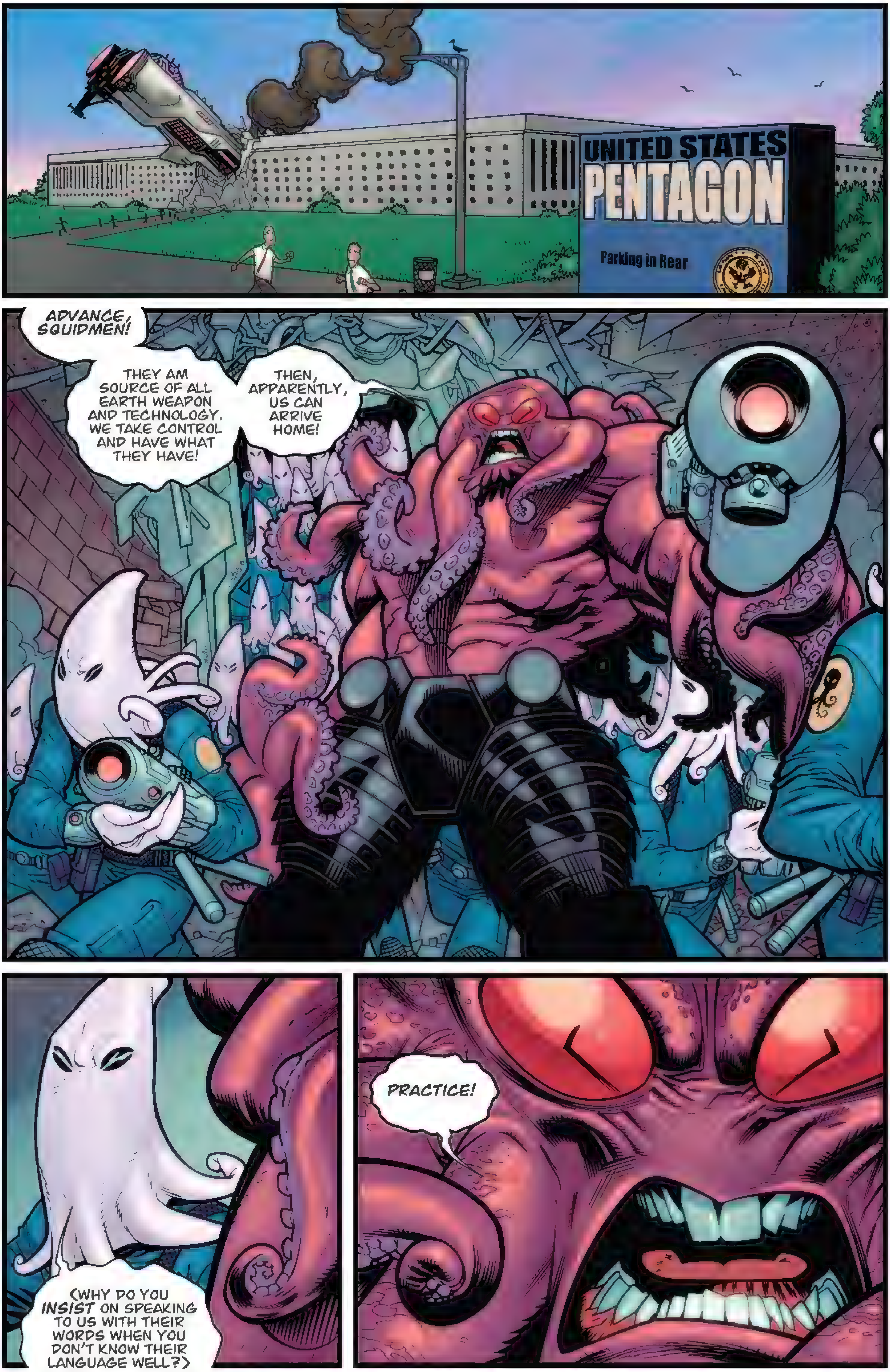
YEAAAGH!



MARK!!

CHAPTER 92

IT TOOK *ELEVEN* DIFFERENT SURGERIES TO RECONSTRUCT YOUR ARM SO THAT IT CAN HEAL PROPERLY.
THE SCOURGE VIRUS, AS IT'S BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME, SOMETIMES LEAVES SURVIVORS IN A PERIOD WHERE THEIR VILTRUMITE ABILITIES ARE SUSPENDED FOR A VARIABLE AMOUNT OF TIME--SOMETIMES *PERMANENTLY*.
THE PROBLEM IS THAT YOUR ABILITIES HAVEN'T LEFT YOU ALL AT ONCE... YOUR SUPER STRENGTH WAS STILL INTACT, YOUR INVULNERABILITY GREATLY DIMINISHED.
SO WHEN YOU HIT ALLEN--
I *KNOW* WHAT HAPPENED.
THIS IS JUST...
...
...IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO.
HOPEFULLY, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY. DINOSAURUS SAID HE READ THAT IT WAS VERY *RARE* FOR THIS TO BE PERMANENT.
I WON'T WASTE YOUR TIME AGAIN TRYING TO GET YOU TO REVEAL HIS LOCATION. IF YOUR TRUST OF HIM ENDS UP BEING UNFOUNDED, THAT'S ON YOU.
YOU'RE TAKING A HUGE RISK THERE.
NOW, TELL ME ABOUT THRAGG, WHY DID HE SUDDENLY ATTACK--?
BOOM!!


UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
ADVANCE, SQUIDMEN!
THEY AM SOURCE OF ALL EARTH WEAPON AND TECHNOLOGY. WE TAKE CONTROL AND HAVE WHAT THEY HAVE!
THEN, APPARENTLY, US CAN ARRIVE HOME!
<WHY DO YOU *INSIST* ON SPEAKING TO US WITH THEIR WORDS WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW THEIR LANGUAGE WELL?>
PRACTICE!

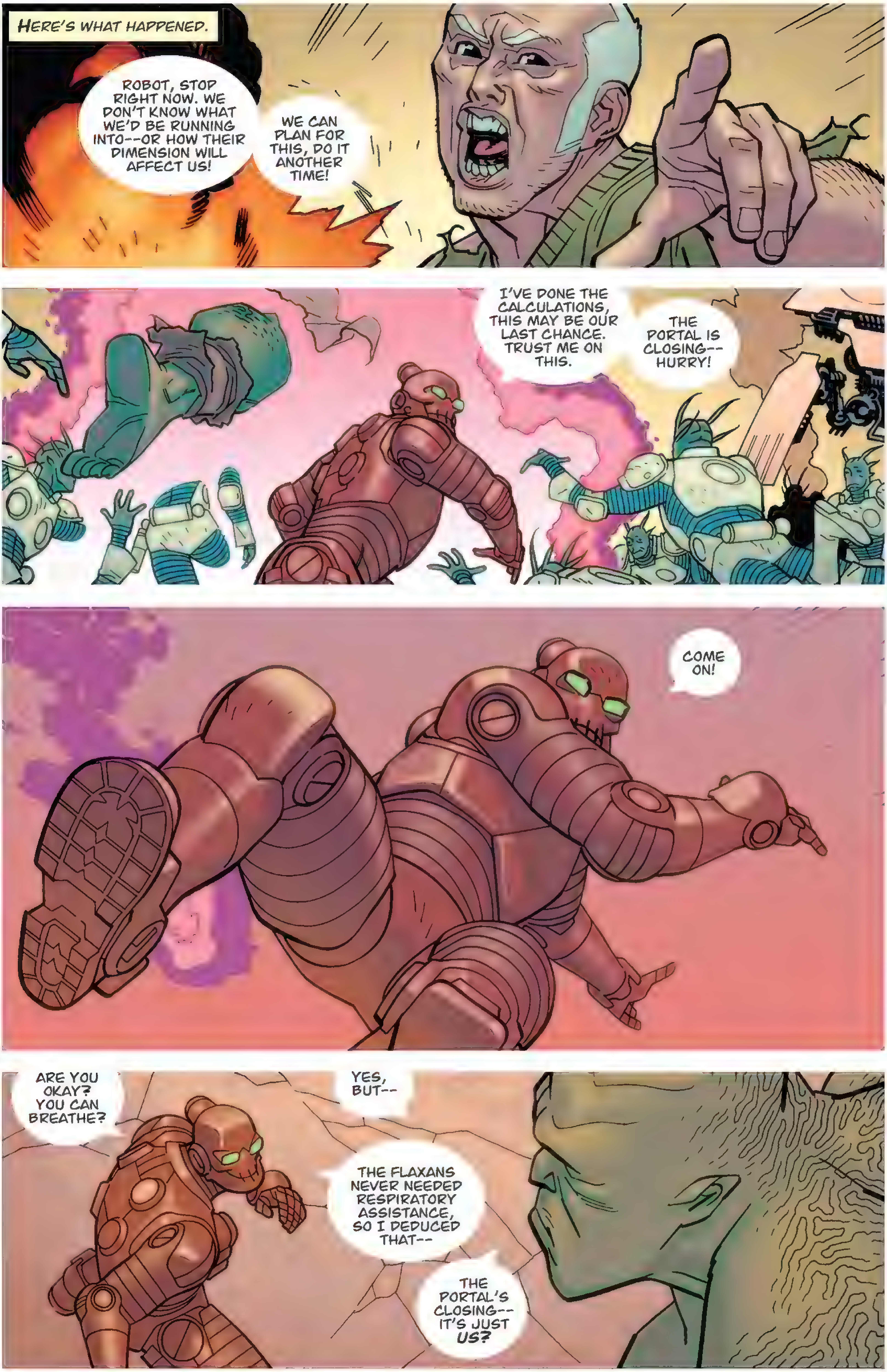
EVE! FOLLOW ME AND--!
OH, YEAH.
STAY WITH ME-- I'LL PROTECT YOU.
CHOOM!
SEE?!
REX!
PENTAGON UNDER ATTACK-- SCRAMBLE-- EVERYONE!!
ALREADY ON TOP OF IT. I'VE GOT CAPES AND THE WOLF C.O.R.P.S. ON STAND-BY--BUT THE GUARDIANS ARE EN ROUTE--
--ALL OF THEM!

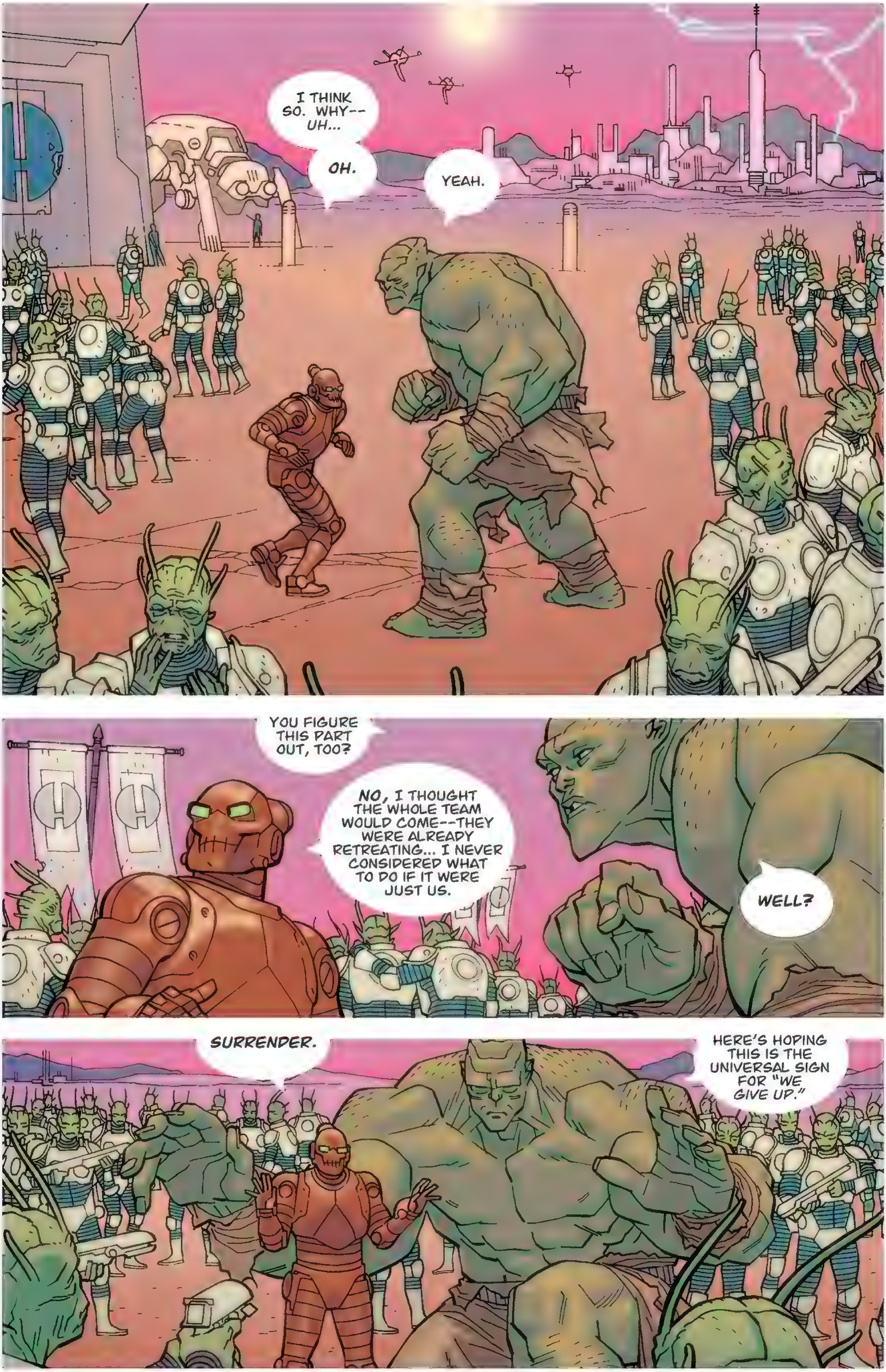
WE'VE DONE THIS BEFORE-- TAKE OUT THE BIGGEST, UGLIEST ONE--AND THE REST FALL INTO LINE!
GUARDIANS-- TAKE HIM DOWN!
ON IT!!
WE DON'T BECOME DEFEATED SO EASILY!
BEFORE NOW YOU CATCH US OFF GUARD! NOW WE AM PUNCTUAL! NOW WE AM POWERED UP!

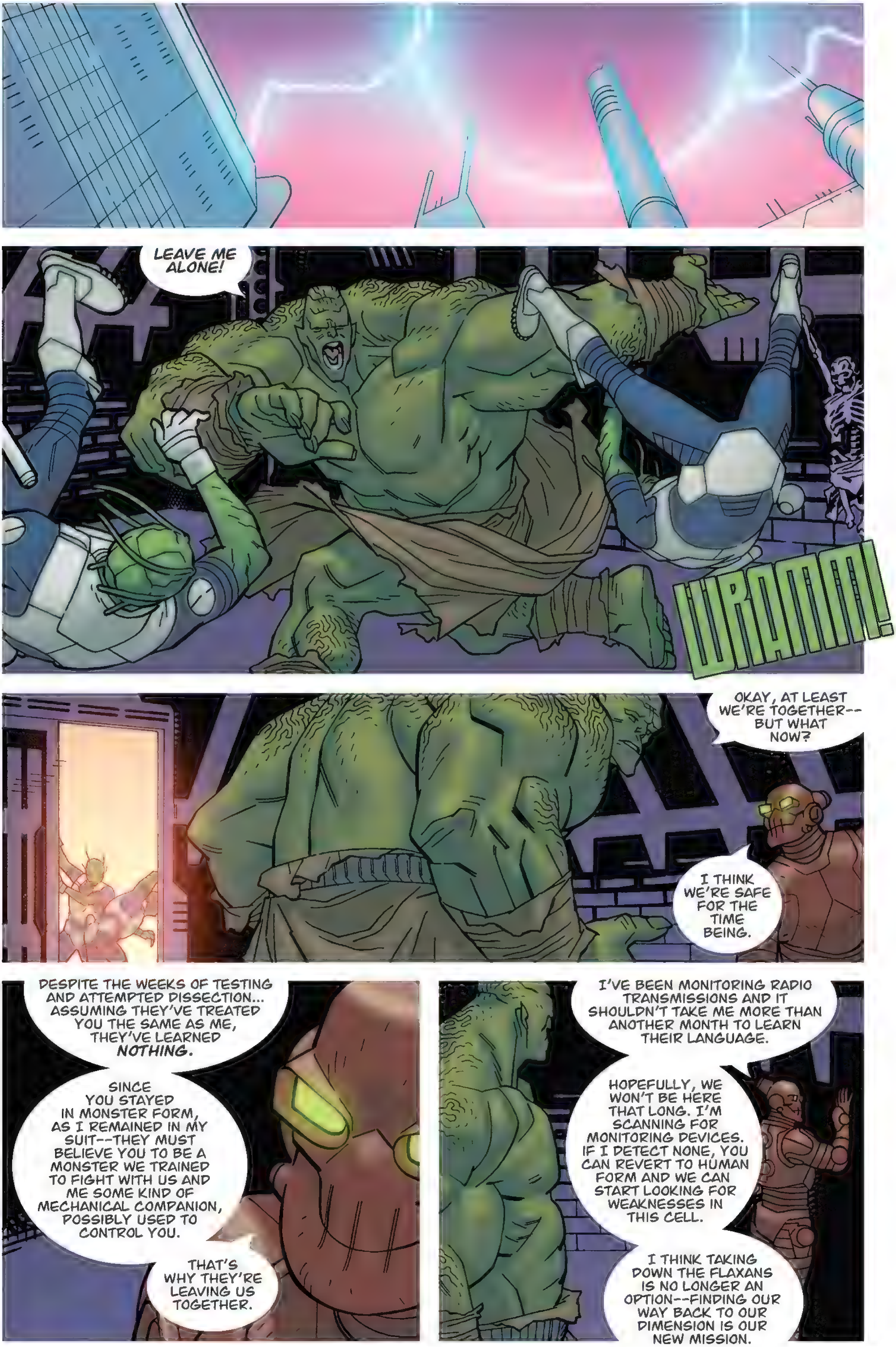
NICE, BULLET-- *INVINCIBLE!*
YETI-- BLACK SAMSON, YOU'RE UP NEXT!
CHOOM!
WRAMM!
OKAY, SHAPESMITH-- ALL YOURS!
I'M IN POSITION-- LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE *READY!*
ALMOST READY!
ACTUALLY, NOW-- *READY.*

COMING AT YOU!
WRAKOOM!!
CAPES AND WOLF C.O.R.P.S. STAND DOWN. THE THREAT HAS BEEN NEUTRALIZED.
DON'T THINK WE EVEN NEEDED THE FULL GUARDIANS ROSTER... NICE.

ALL TAKEN CARE OF, SIR. WE'LL HAVE ALL THE SQUIDMEN ROUNDED UP WITHIN THE HOUR.
I CAN SEE THAT. NICE JOB, BRIT.
IMPRESSIVE WORK THERE, MONSTER GIRL.
YEAH, WHERE WERE YOU? THUMBS GET SORE--OR WAS IT HARD TO CONCENTRATE OVER YOUR STUPID VIDEO GAME?
HELP ME OUT HERE, WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON TODAY? IT CHANGES FROM TIME TO TIME--AND SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO KEEP TRACK.
KRAKK!
DAMN IT!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU GUYS?!
YOU TWO USED TO BE CLOSE.
WHAT HAPPENED?

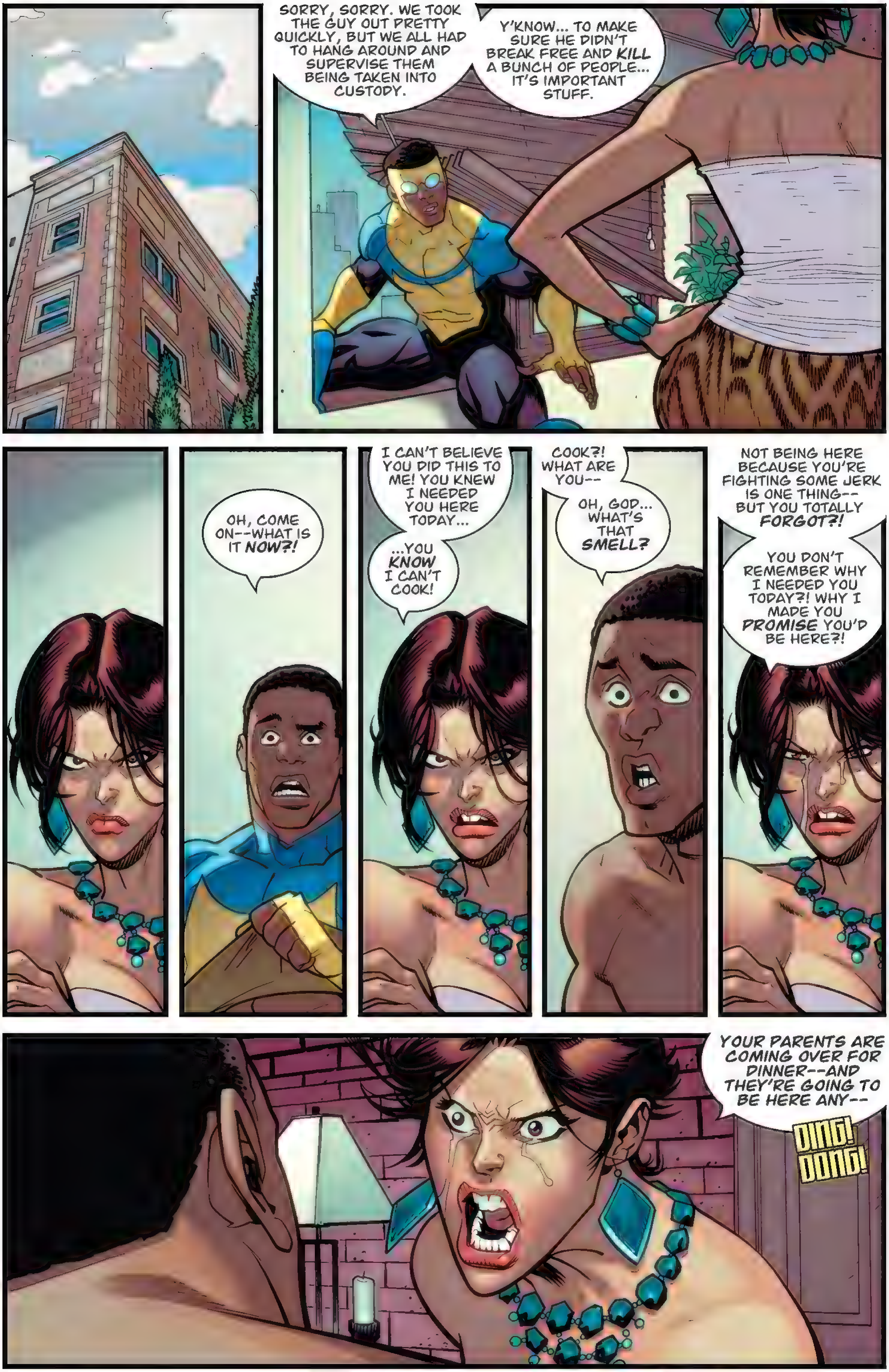

HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED.
ROBOT, STOP RIGHT NOW. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'D BE RUNNING INTO--OR HOW THEIR DIMENSION WILL AFFECT US!
WE CAN PLAN FOR THIS, DO IT ANOTHER TIME!
I'VE DONE THE CALCULATIONS, THIS MAY BE OUR LAST CHANCE. TRUST ME ON THIS.
THE PORTAL IS CLOSING-- HURRY!
COME ON!
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU CAN BREATHE?
YES, BUT--
THE FLAXANS NEVER NEEDED RESPIRATORY ASSISTANCE, SO I DEDUCED THAT--
THE PORTAL'S CLOSING-- IT'S JUST *US?*


I THINK SO. WHY-- UH...
OH.
YEAH.
YOU FIGURE THIS PART OUT, TOO?
NO, I THOUGHT THE WHOLE TEAM WOULD COME--THEY WERE ALREADY RETREATING... I NEVER CONSIDERED WHAT TO DO IF IT WERE JUST US.
WELL?
SURRENDER.
HERE'S HOPING THIS IS THE UNIVERSAL SIGN FOR "WE GIVE UP."


LEAVE ME ALONE!
WRAMM!
OKAY, AT LEAST WE'RE TOGETHER-- BUT WHAT NOW?
I THINK WE'RE SAFE FOR THE TIME BEING.
DESPITE THE WEEKS OF TESTING AND ATTEMPTED DISSECTION... ASSUMING THEY'VE TREATED YOU THE SAME AS ME, THEY'VE LEARNED *NOTHING.*
SINCE YOU STAYED IN MONSTER FORM, AS I REMAINED IN MY SUIT--THEY MUST BELIEVE YOU TO BE A MONSTER WE TRAINED TO FIGHT WITH US AND ME SOME KIND OF MECHANICAL COMPANION, POSSIBLY USED TO CONTROL YOU.
THAT'S WHY THEY'RE LEAVING US TOGETHER.
I'VE BEEN MONITORING RADIO TRANSMISSIONS AND IT SHOULDN'T TAKE ME MORE THAN ANOTHER MONTH TO LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE.
HOPEFULLY, WE WON'T BE HERE THAT LONG. I'M SCANNING FOR MONITORING DEVICES. IF I DETECT NONE, YOU CAN REVERT TO HUMAN FORM AND WE CAN START LOOKING FOR WEAKNESSES IN THIS CELL.
I THINK TAKING DOWN THE FLAXANS IS NO LONGER AN OPTION--FINDING OUR WAY BACK TO OUR DIMENSION IS OUR NEW MISSION.

IT'S BEEN DAYS SINCE YOU'VE EATEN. JUST TRY IT... IT'S NOT SO BAD.
THE SMELL, OH, GOD--THEY SMELL WORSE THAN THEY *LOOK!*
CLANK!
WHAT?
QUICK-- CHANGE TO MONSTER FORM!
CRAP! WHAT ARE THEY--
SLAM!
EEK!
WHAT'S *HIS* PROBLEM?
WELL, I'M ONLY UNDERSTANDING PART OF WHAT HE'S SAYING-- BUT IT APPEARS HE EXPECTS YOU TO TRY AND EAT HIM.
I THINK THEY WERE *FEEDING* HIM TO YOU.

THAT TOOK FOREVER.
WELL, I CAN'T FLY AS FAST AS YOU COULD.
JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE TO DRIVE SOMEWHERE.
MY GOD... I FELT SO... HELPLESS TODAY.
I KNOW THIS IS A DIFFICULT TIME... I WENT THROUGH THIS WITH MY POWERS. IT'S LIKE LOSING A PIECE OF YOURSELF.
CECIL SAID IT WAS MOST LIKELY TEMPORARY.
"MOST LIKELY."
THERE'S A CHANCE THIS COULD BE PERMANENT.
I'M NOT INVINCIBLE...
...AND I MAY NEVER BE INVINCIBLE AGAIN.

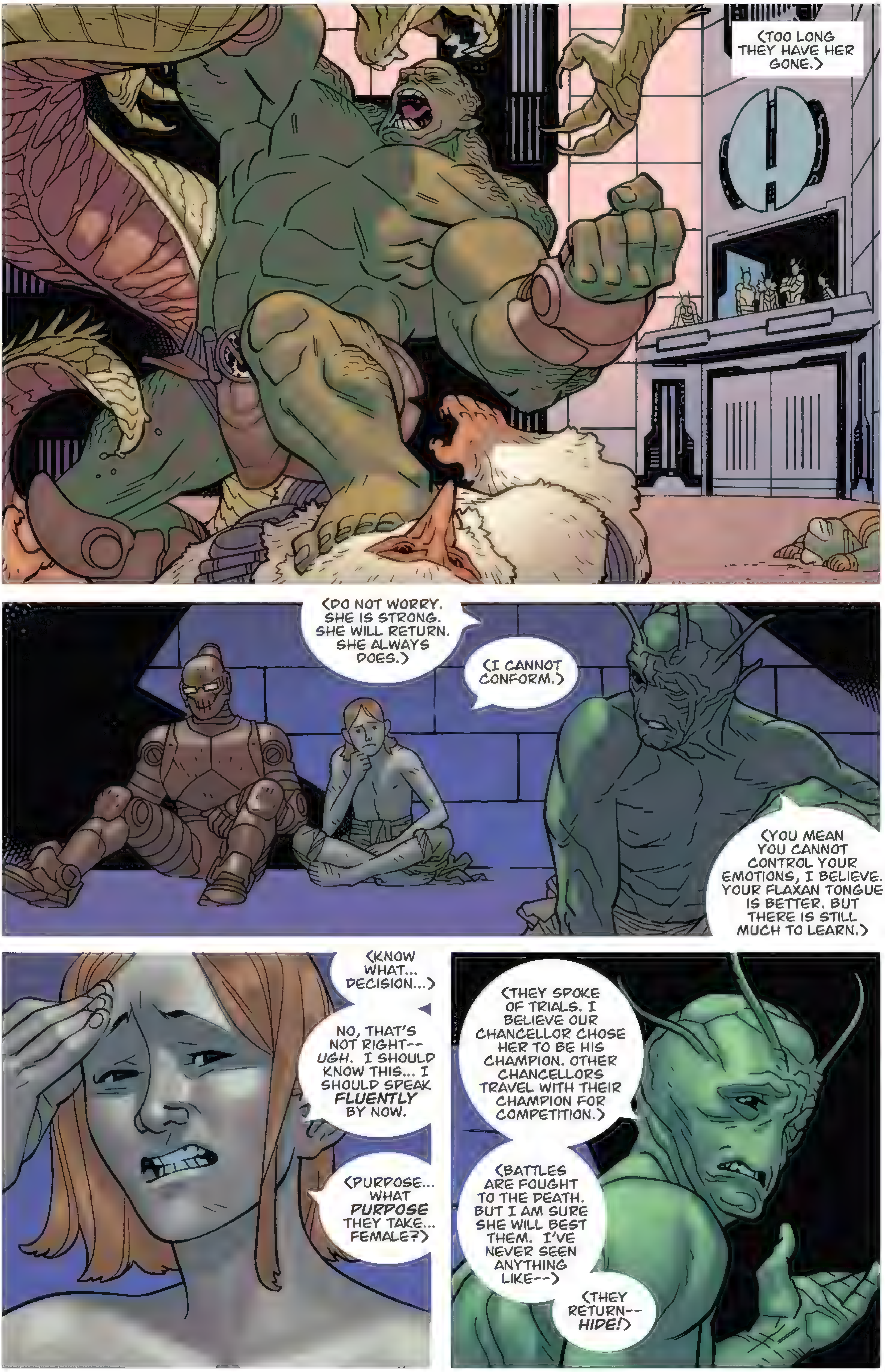

SORRY, SORRY. WE TOOK THE GUY OUT PRETTY QUICKLY, BUT WE ALL HAD TO HANG AROUND AND SUPERVISE THEM BEING TAKEN INTO CUSTODY.
Y'KNOW... TO MAKE SURE HE DIDN'T BREAK FREE AND KILL A BUNCH OF PEOPLE... IT'S IMPORTANT STUFF.
OH, COME ON--WHAT IS IT NOW?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID THIS TO ME! YOU KNEW I NEEDED YOU HERE TODAY...
...YOU KNOW I CAN'T COOK!
COOK?! WHAT ARE YOU--
OH, GOD... WHAT'S THAT SMELL?
NOT BEING HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE FIGHTING SOME JERK IS ONE THING--BUT YOU TOTALLY FORGOT?!
YOU DON'T REMEMBER WHY I NEEDED YOU TODAY?! WHY I MADE YOU PROMISE YOU'D BE HERE?!
YOUR PARENTS ARE COMING OVER FOR DINNER--AND THEY'RE GOING TO BE HERE ANY--
DING! DONG!

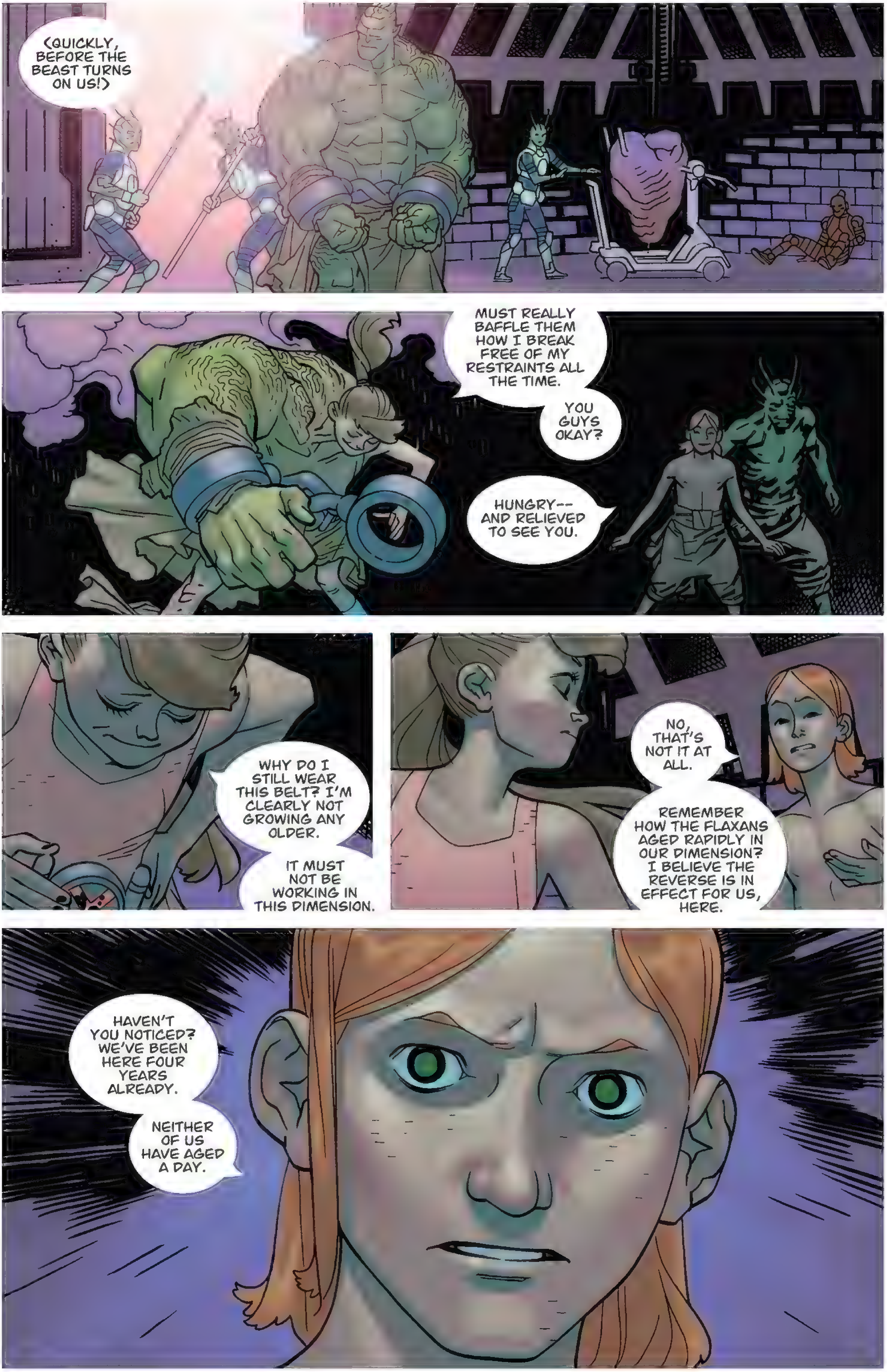
OH, GREAT! THEY'RE HERE AND I HAVEN'T EVEN HAD TIME TO CLEAN--
--UP.
OKAY, BABY... YOU CAN GET THE DOOR.
DING! DONG!
OH, WAIT--
VOOSH!
NOW, OPEN THE DOOR.

YOUR PLACE LOOKS VERY NICE, ZANDALE. YOU AND CARLA HAVE REALLY TURNED THIS ROOM INTO A HOME... OF SORTS.
AND YOU CHANGED YOUR HAIR, THANK JESUS.
YEAH, TYRONE AND I WERE TALKING, AND WE DECIDED WE WERE GETTING A BIT OLD FOR CORN ROWS.
HE'LL CERTAINLY FIT IN BETTER WITH HIS SCIENTIST BUDDIES... BUT WHAT DO *YOU* CARE? AREN'T PAINTERS SUPPOSED TO TRY AND LOOK YOUNG LONG PAST THE POINT OF BELIEVABILITY?
FOOD LOOKS... INTERESTING.
WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD FROM TYRONE? IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE YOUR FATHER AND I SAW HIM.
I WAS TOURING A GALLERY IN VIRGINIA AND HE MADE TIME TO GRAB A QUICK LUNCH WITH ME A FEW WEEKS AGO.
TYRONE IS CURING CANCER BY DAY AND SAVING THE WORLD AS ***BULLETPROOF*** BY NIGHT... HE'S BUSY, HARRIET. HE'S GOT A LOT MORE THINGS ON HIS MIND THAN COLOR WHEELS AND BRUSH SIZES.
AND WHAT HAPPENED, KID? THIS FOOD IS ALMOST AS BAD AS YOUR ART!
WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS? ALWAYS... IT'S ALWAYS LIKE THIS!
WHY CAN'T YOU TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR BROTHER?! IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH IT WOULDN'T BE LIKE THIS!
IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH IT WOULD CRUSH THEM. NO... I'LL MANAGE...
EVERYTHING OKAY?
GOOD NEWS, GUYS!
I ORDERED A PIZZA!

OKAY, WE'RE OUT OF HERE. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, REX!
LATER, GUYS.
HEY.
WHAT?
WHAT I DID TODAY, I CROSSED A LINE.
I'M SORRY I DID THAT.

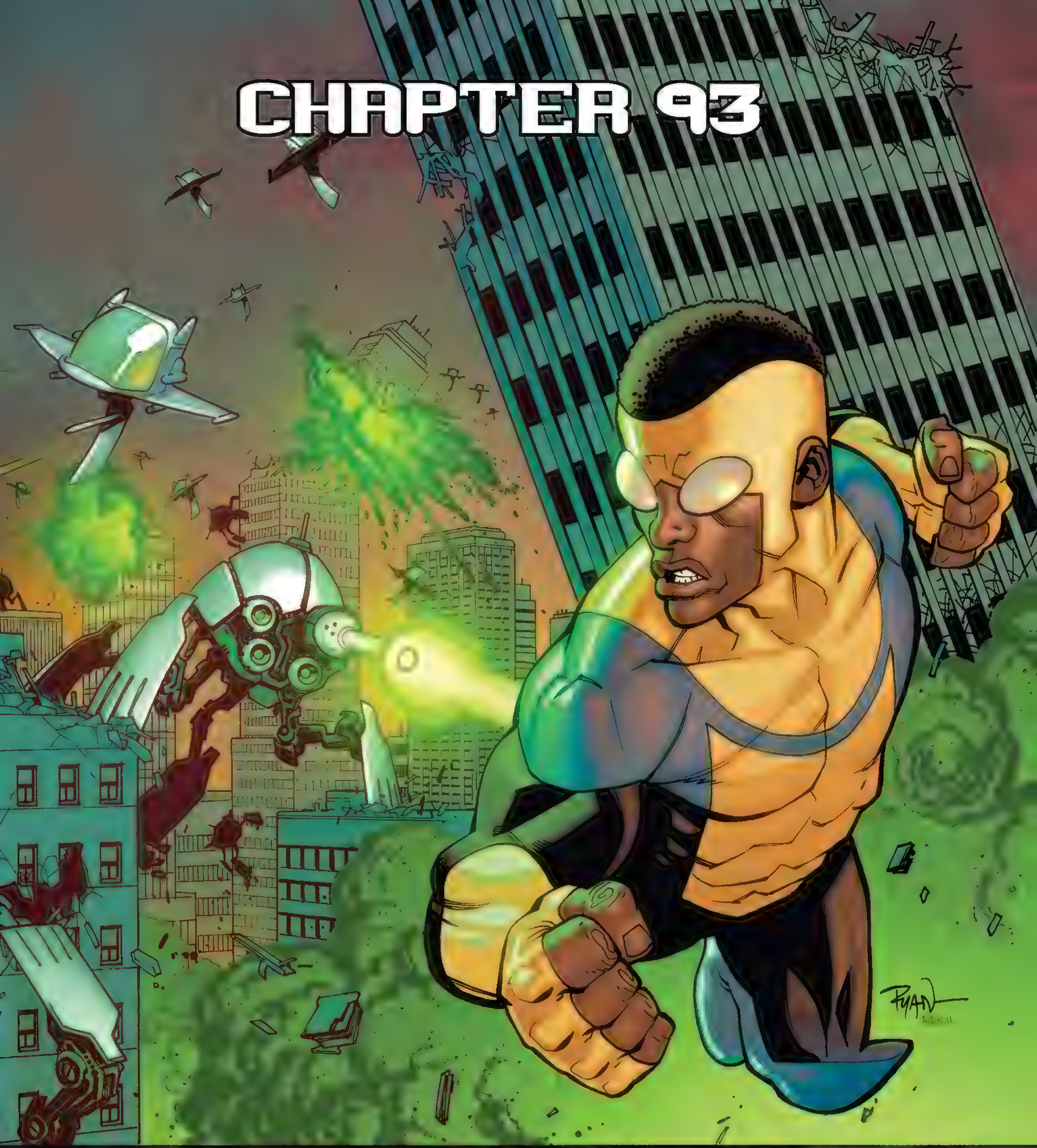
REX?
THIS IS WHAT YOU APOLOGIZE FOR?
NO, STOP... I KNOW, I'M SORRY. I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ANYTHING--I JUST CAN'T HANDLE YOU SNIPING AT ME LIKE THAT, AND FRANKLY I FEEL LIKE I INSTIGATED YOU INTO LASHING OUT EARLIER.
SO THAT'S ON ME.
AND I *DON'T* WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE, FOR *ANYTHING*. YOU MADE YOUR CHOICES, YOU DID WHAT YOU DID... THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST NOW.
I CAME HERE TO *FORGET*... I REALLY MEANT THAT. I JUST WANT TO LEAVE ALL THAT BEHIND US AND MOVE ON.
YOU'RE SERIOUS?!
YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO FORGET... ALL OF IT?

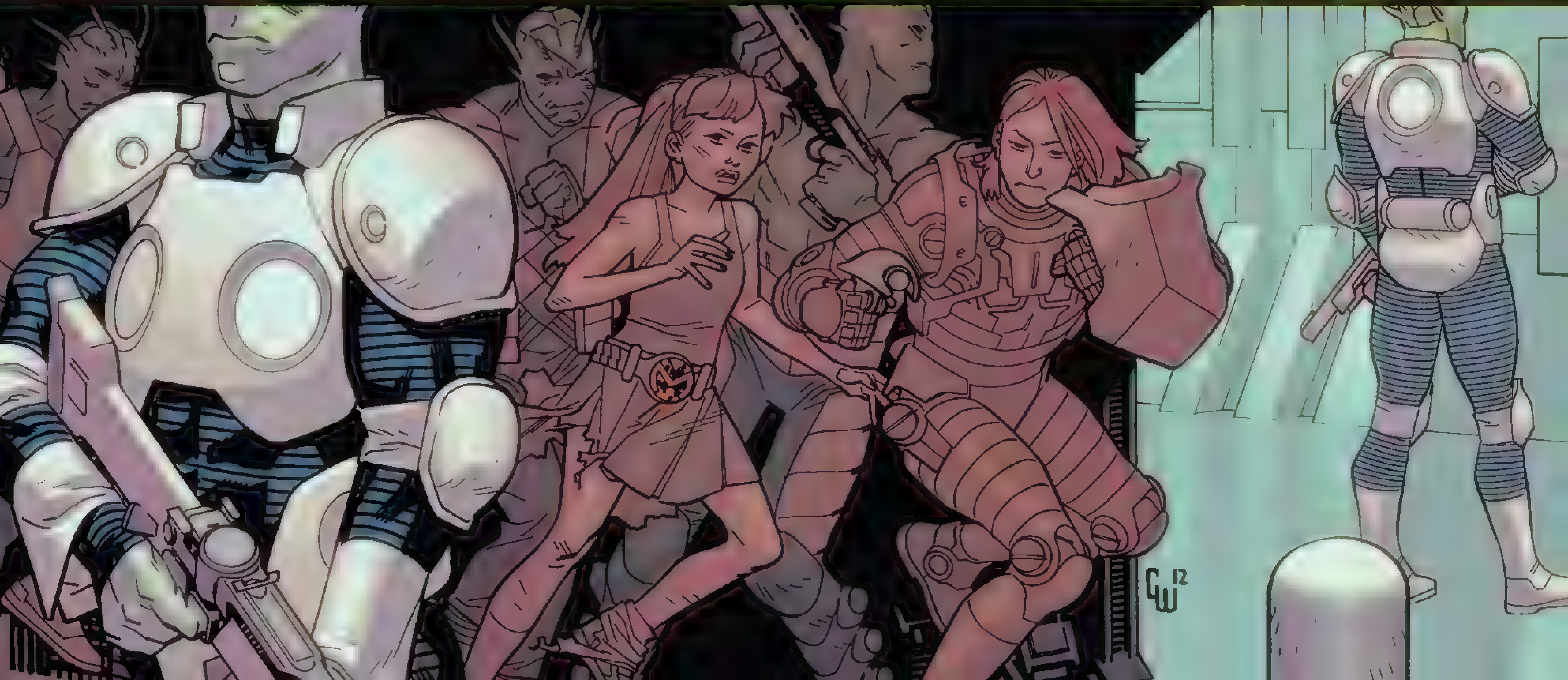

‹TOO LONG THEY HAVE HER GONE.›
‹DO NOT WORRY. SHE IS STRONG. SHE WILL RETURN. SHE ALWAYS DOES.›
‹I CANNOT CONFORM.›
‹YOU MEAN YOU CANNOT CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS, I BELIEVE. YOUR FLAXAN TONGUE IS BETTER. BUT THERE IS STILL MUCH TO LEARN.›
‹KNOW WHAT... DECISION...›
NO, THAT'S NOT RIGHT-- UGH. I SHOULD KNOW THIS... I SHOULD SPEAK **FLUENTLY** BY NOW.
‹PURPOSE... WHAT **PURPOSE** THEY TAKE... FEMALE?›
‹THEY SPOKE OF TRIALS. I BELIEVE OUR CHANCELLOR CHOSE HER TO BE HIS CHAMPION. OTHER CHANCELLORS TRAVEL WITH THEIR CHAMPION FOR COMPETITION.›
‹BATTLES ARE FOUGHT TO THE DEATH. BUT I AM SURE SHE WILL BEST THEM. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE--›
‹THEY RETURN-- **HIDE!**›

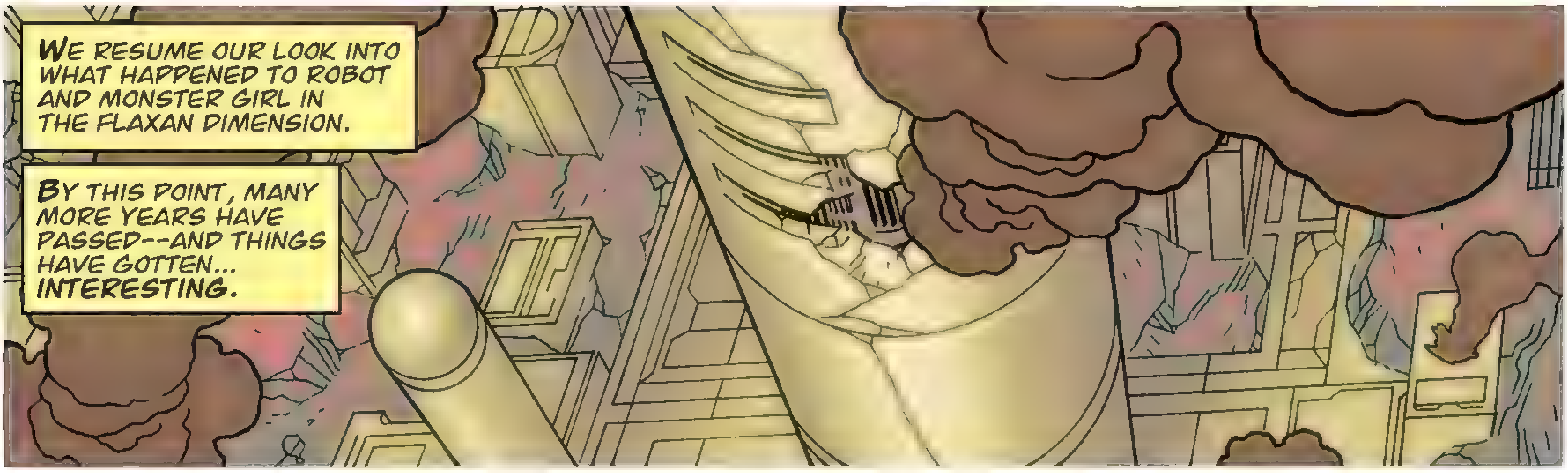

<QUICKLY, BEFORE THE BEAST TURNS ON US!>
MUST REALLY BAFFLE THEM HOW I BREAK FREE OF MY RESTRAINTS ALL THE TIME.
YOU GUYS OKAY?
HUNGRY-- AND RELIEVED TO SEE YOU.
WHY DO I STILL WEAR THIS BELT? I'M CLEARLY NOT GROWING ANY OLDER.
IT MUST NOT BE WORKING IN THIS DIMENSION.
NO, THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
REMEMBER HOW THE FLAXANS AGED RAPIDLY IN OUR DIMENSION? I BELIEVE THE REVERSE IS IN EFFECT FOR US, HERE.
HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED? WE'VE BEEN HERE FOUR YEARS ALREADY.
NEITHER OF US HAVE AGED A DAY.

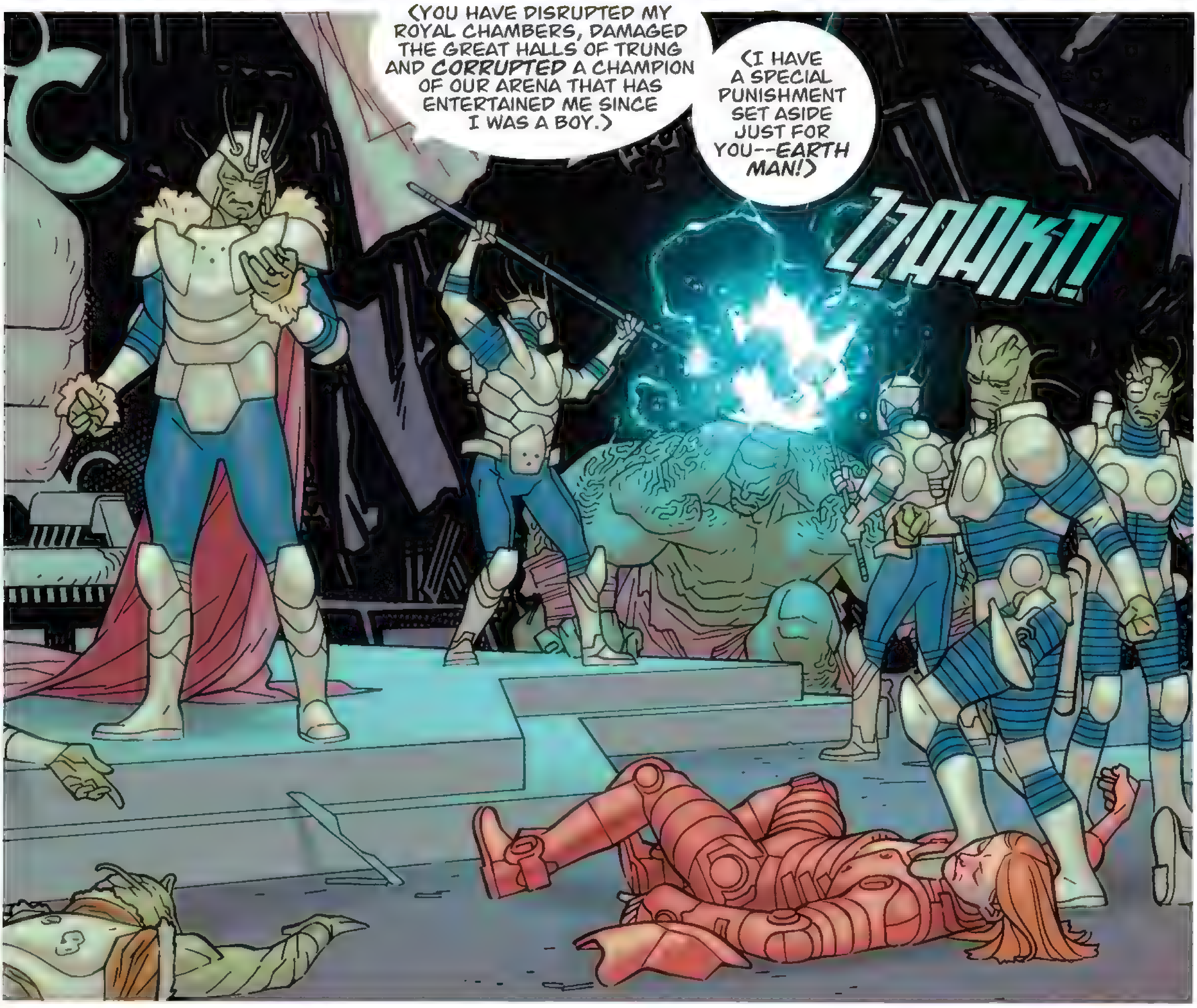
SEVEN-HUNDRED YEARS WE LIVED TOGETHER!
I KNEW YOU BETTER THAN ANYONE ON EARTH HAS EVER KNOWN ANYONE! I LOVED YOU MORE THAN ANYONE HAS EVER LOVED ANYONE!
AND YOU THREW IT AWAY--ALL OF IT--AFTER ONE SINGLE MISTAKE!
I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT!

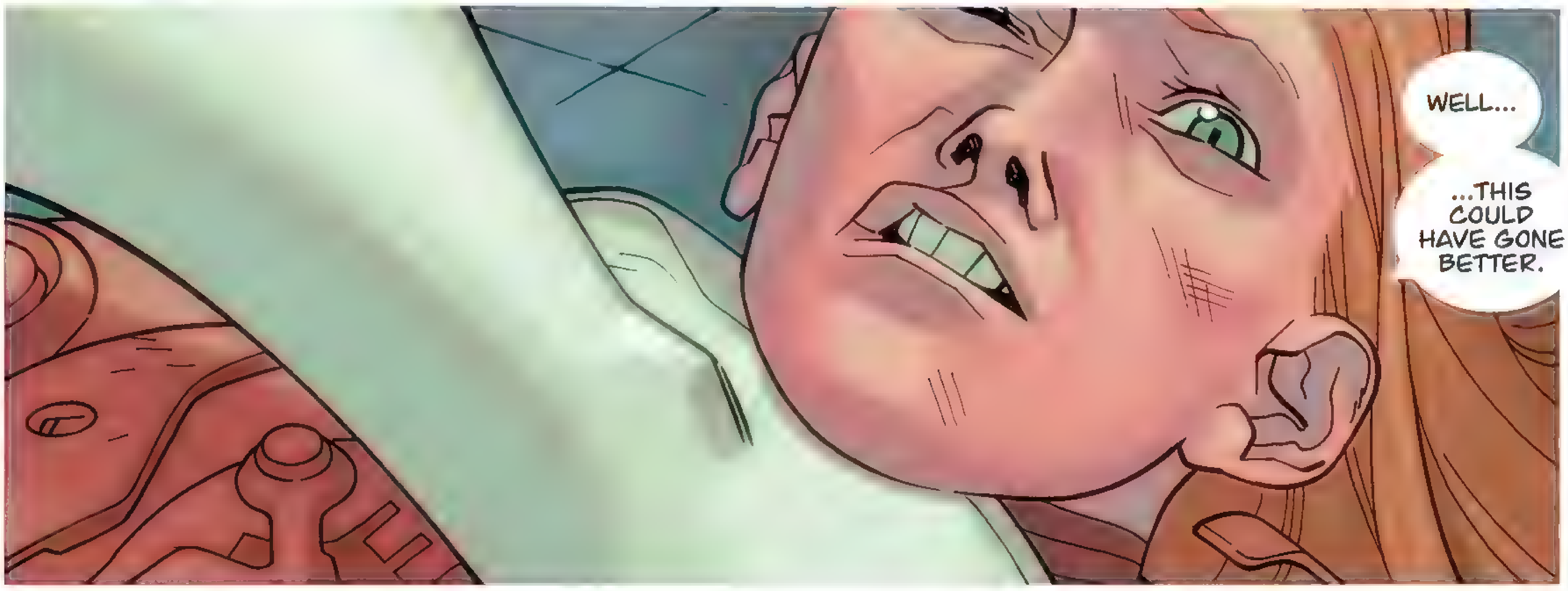
CHAPTER 93

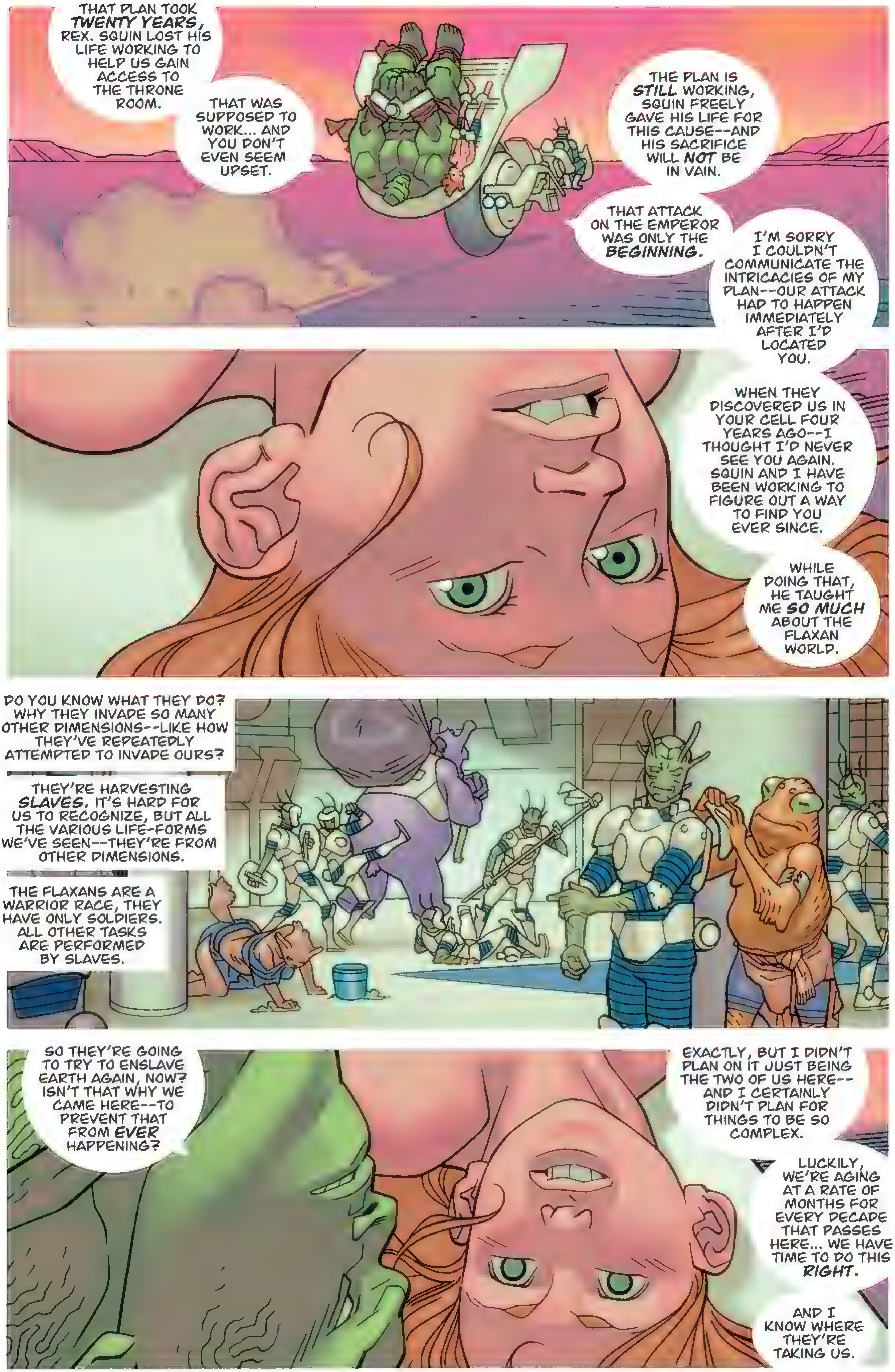


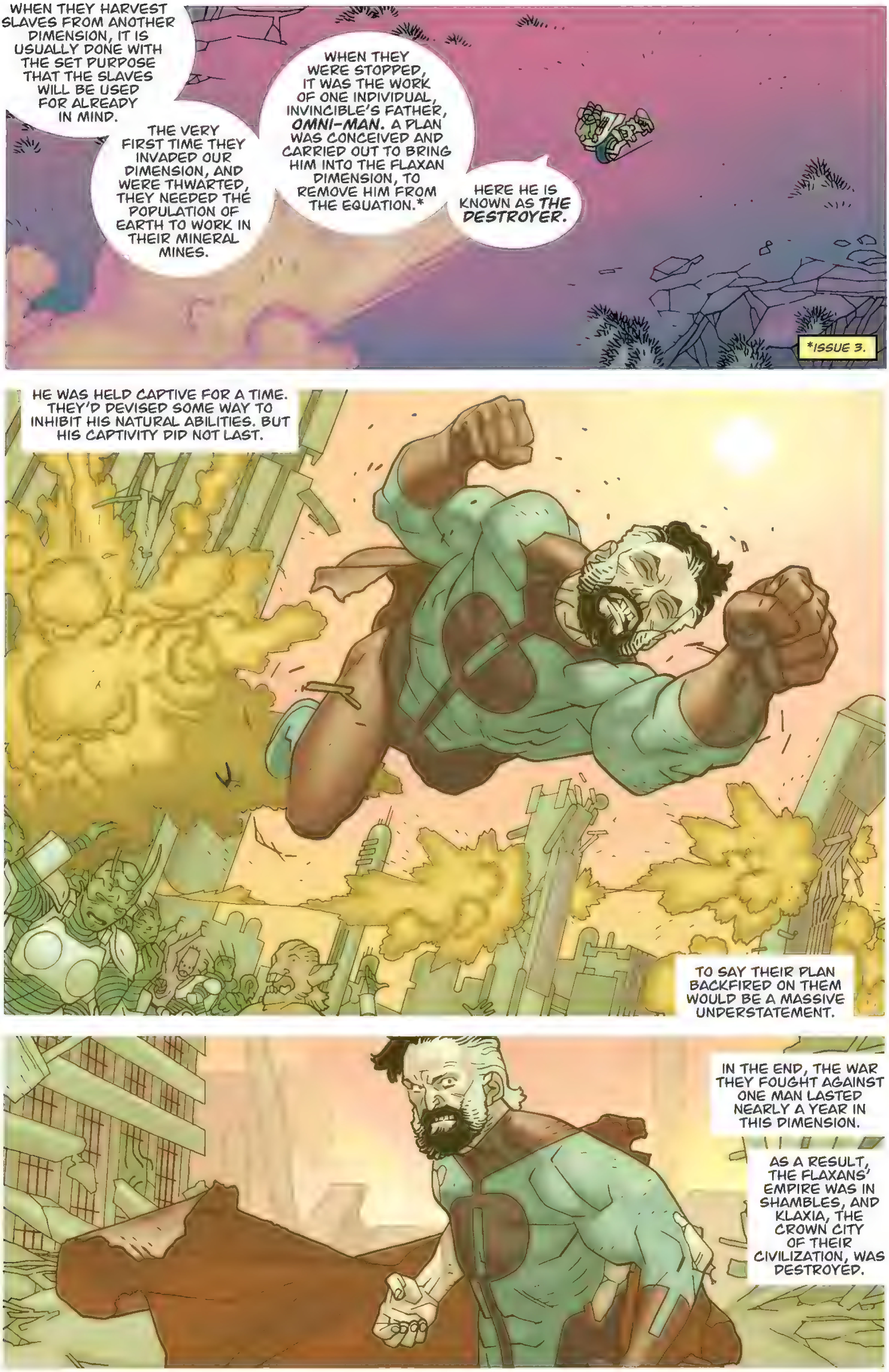


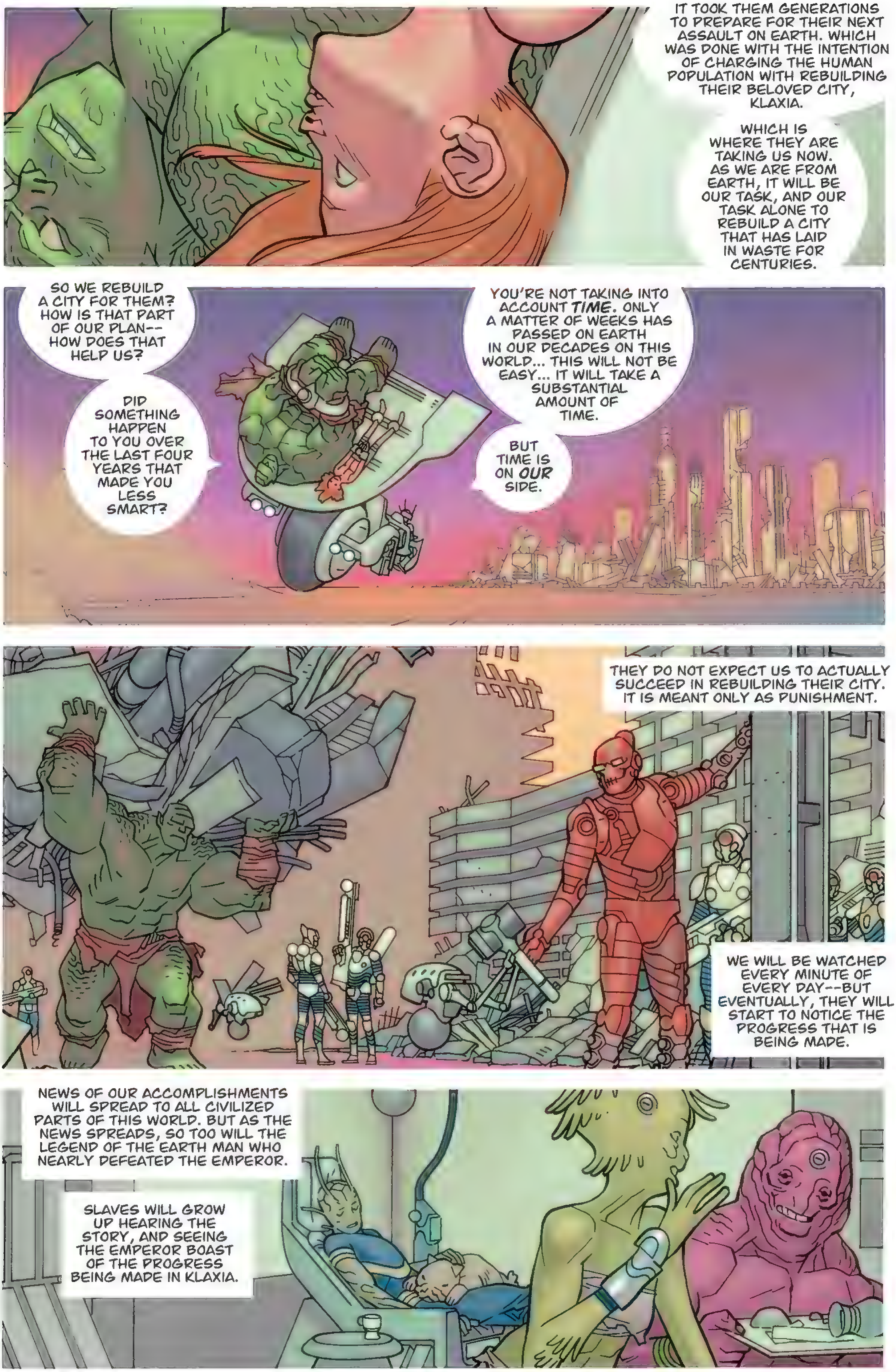

WE RESUME OUR LOOK INTO WHAT HAPPENED TO ROBOT AND MONSTER GIRL IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION.
BY THIS POINT, MANY MORE YEARS HAVE PASSED--AND THINGS HAVE GOTTEN... INTERESTING.

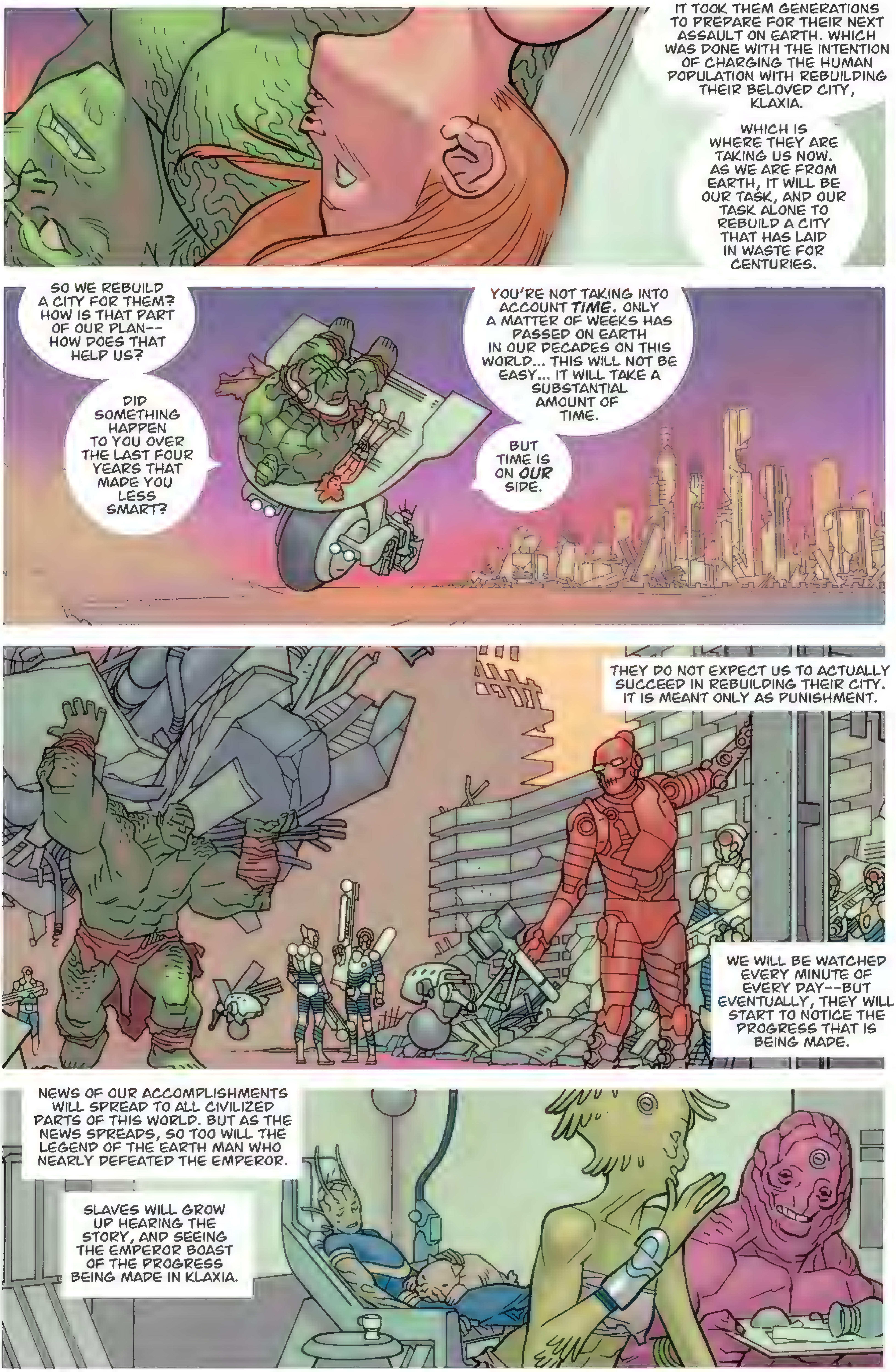

<YOU HAVE DISRUPTED MY ROYAL CHAMBERS, DAMAGED THE GREAT HALLS OF TRUNG AND CORRUPTED A CHAMPION OF OUR ARENA THAT HAS ENTERTAINED ME SINCE I WAS A BOY.>
<I HAVE A SPECIAL PUNISHMENT SET ASIDE JUST FOR YOU--EARTH MAN!>
ZZAAKT!


WELL...
...THIS COULD HAVE GONE BETTER.


THAT PLAN TOOK TWENTY YEARS, REX. SQUIN LOST HIS LIFE WORKING TO HELP US GAIN ACCESS TO THE THRONE ROOM.
THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO WORK... AND YOU DON'T EVEN SEEM UPSET.
THE PLAN IS STILL WORKING, SQUIN FREELY GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THIS CAUSE--AND HIS SACRIFICE WILL NOT BE IN VAIN.
THAT ATTACK ON THE EMPEROR WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T COMMUNICATE THE INTRICACIES OF MY PLAN--OUR ATTACK HAD TO HAPPEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER I'D LOCATED YOU.
WHEN THEY DISCOVERED US IN YOUR CELL FOUR YEARS AGO--I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN. SQUIN AND I HAVE BEEN WORKING TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO FIND YOU EVER SINCE.
WHILE DOING THAT, HE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH ABOUT THE FLAXAN WORLD.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY DO? WHY THEY INVADE SO MANY OTHER DIMENSIONS--LIKE HOW THEY'VE REPEATEDLY ATTEMPTED TO INVADE OURS?
THEY'RE HARVESTING SLAVES. IT'S HARD FOR US TO RECOGNIZE, BUT ALL THE VARIOUS LIFE-FORMS WE'VE SEEN--THEY'RE FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS.
THE FLAXANS ARE A WARRIOR RACE, THEY HAVE ONLY SOLDIERS. ALL OTHER TASKS ARE PERFORMED BY SLAVES.
SO THEY'RE GOING TO TRY TO ENSLAVE EARTH AGAIN, NOW? ISN'T THAT WHY WE CAME HERE--TO PREVENT THAT FROM EVER HAPPENING?
EXACTLY, BUT I DIDN'T PLAN ON IT JUST BEING THE TWO OF US HERE--AND I CERTAINLY DIDN'T PLAN FOR THINGS TO BE SO COMPLEX.
LUCKILY, WE'RE AGING AT A RATE OF MONTHS FOR EVERY DECADE THAT PASSES HERE... WE HAVE TIME TO DO THIS RIGHT.
AND I KNOW WHERE THEY'RE TAKING US.


WHEN THEY HARVEST SLAVES FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION, IT IS USUALLY DONE WITH THE SET PURPOSE THAT THE SLAVES WILL BE USED FOR ALREADY IN MIND.
THE VERY FIRST TIME THEY INVADED OUR DIMENSION, AND WERE THWARTED, THEY NEEDED THE POPULATION OF EARTH TO WORK IN THEIR MINERAL MINES.
WHEN THEY WERE STOPPED, IT WAS THE WORK OF ONE INDIVIDUAL, INVINCIBLE'S FATHER, ***OMNI-MAN***. A PLAN WAS CONCEIVED AND CARRIED OUT TO BRING HIM INTO THE FLAXAN DIMENSION, TO REMOVE HIM FROM THE EQUATION.*
HERE HE IS KNOWN AS ***THE DESTROYER***.
**ISSUE 3.*
HE WAS HELD CAPTIVE FOR A TIME. THEY'D DEVISED SOME WAY TO INHIBIT HIS NATURAL ABILITIES. BUT HIS CAPTIVITY DID NOT LAST.
TO SAY THEIR PLAN BACKFIRED ON THEM WOULD BE A MASSIVE UNDERSTATEMENT.
IN THE END, THE WAR THEY FOUGHT AGAINST ONE MAN LASTED NEARLY A YEAR IN THIS DIMENSION.
AS A RESULT, THE FLAXANS' EMPIRE WAS IN SHAMBLES, AND KLAXIA, THE CROWN CITY OF THEIR CIVILIZATION, WAS DESTROYED.


IT TOOK THEM GENERATIONS TO PREPARE FOR THEIR NEXT ASSAULT ON EARTH. WHICH WAS DONE WITH THE INTENTION OF CHARGING THE HUMAN POPULATION WITH REBUILDING THEIR BELOVED CITY, KLAXIA.
WHICH IS WHERE THEY ARE TAKING US NOW. AS WE ARE FROM EARTH, IT WILL BE OUR TASK, AND OUR TASK ALONE TO REBUILD A CITY THAT HAS LAID IN WASTE FOR CENTURIES.
SO WE REBUILD A CITY FOR THEM? HOW IS THAT PART OF OUR PLAN-- HOW DOES THAT HELP US?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO YOU OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS THAT MADE YOU LESS SMART?
YOU'RE NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT *TIME*. ONLY A MATTER OF WEEKS HAS PASSED ON EARTH IN OUR DECADES ON THIS WORLD... THIS WILL NOT BE EASY... IT WILL TAKE A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF TIME.
BUT TIME IS ON *OUR* SIDE.
THEY DO NOT EXPECT US TO ACTUALLY SUCCEED IN REBUILDING THEIR CITY. IT IS MEANT ONLY AS PUNISHMENT.
WE WILL BE WATCHED EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY--BUT EVENTUALLY, THEY WILL START TO NOTICE THE PROGRESS THAT IS BEING MADE.
NEWS OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS WILL SPREAD TO ALL CIVILIZED PARTS OF THIS WORLD. BUT AS THE NEWS SPREADS, SO TOO WILL THE LEGEND OF THE EARTH MAN WHO NEARLY DEFEATED THE EMPEROR.
SLAVES WILL GROW UP HEARING THE STORY, AND SEEING THE EMPEROR BOAST OF THE PROGRESS BEING MADE IN KLAXIA.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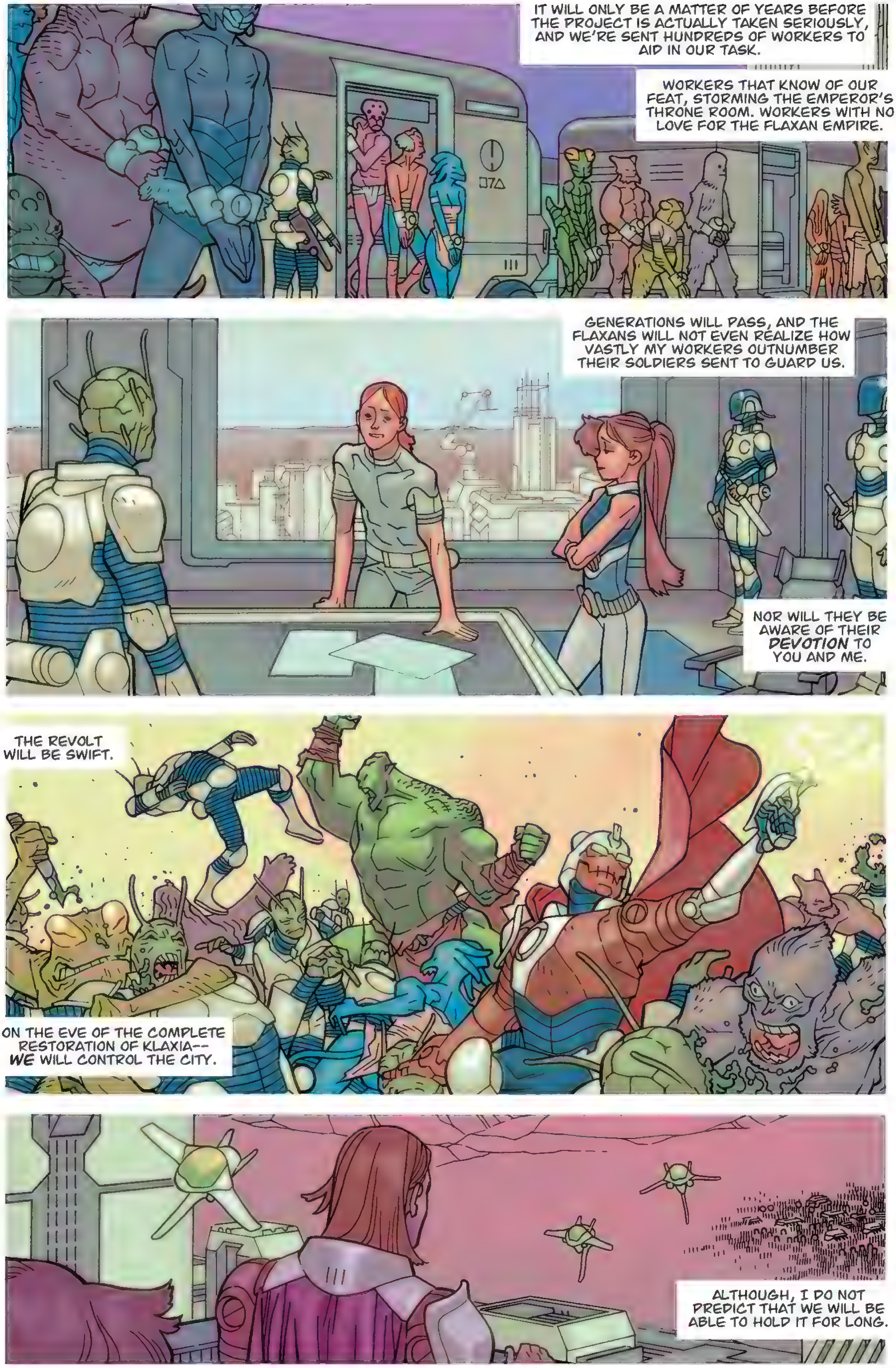
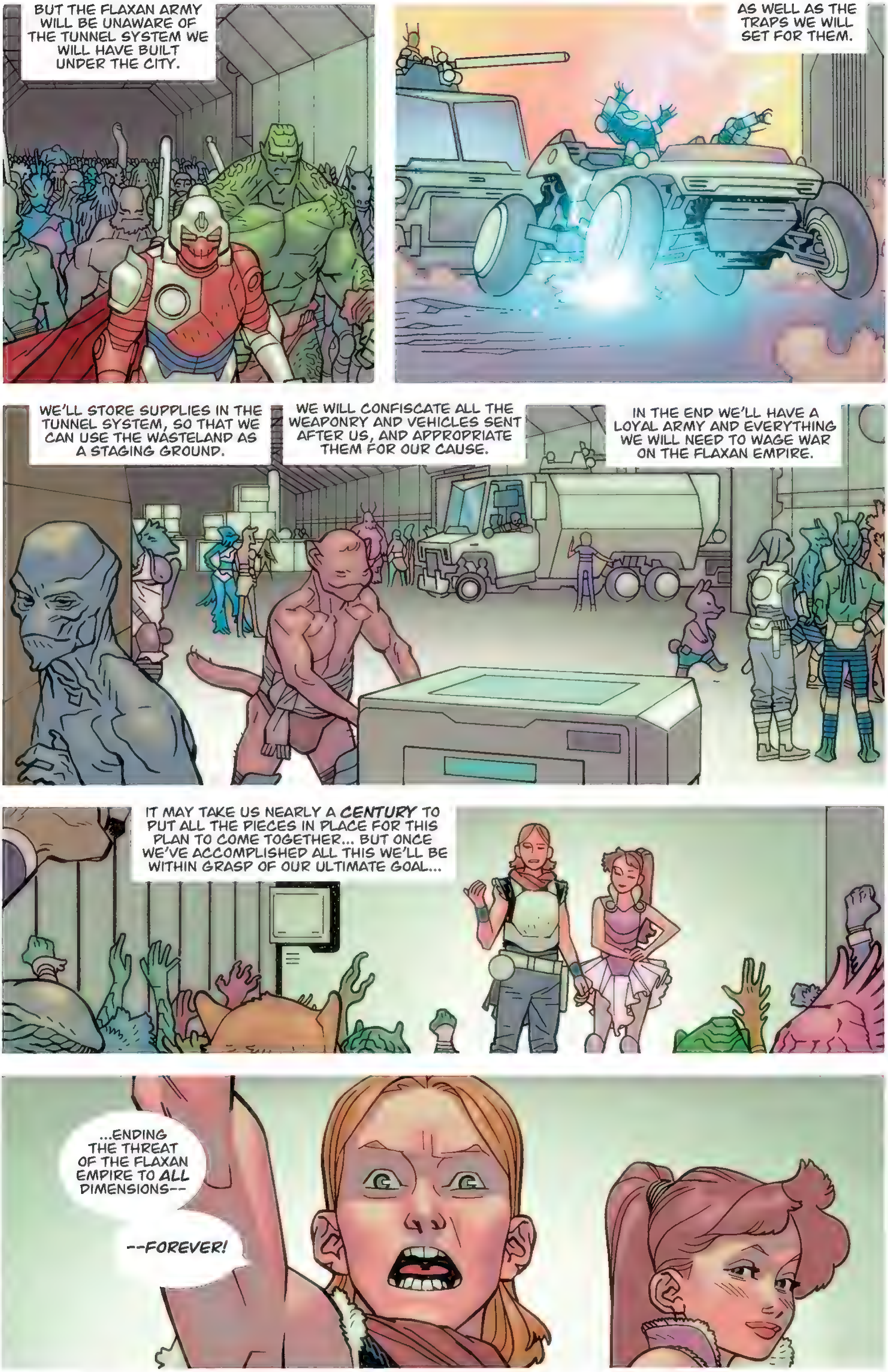
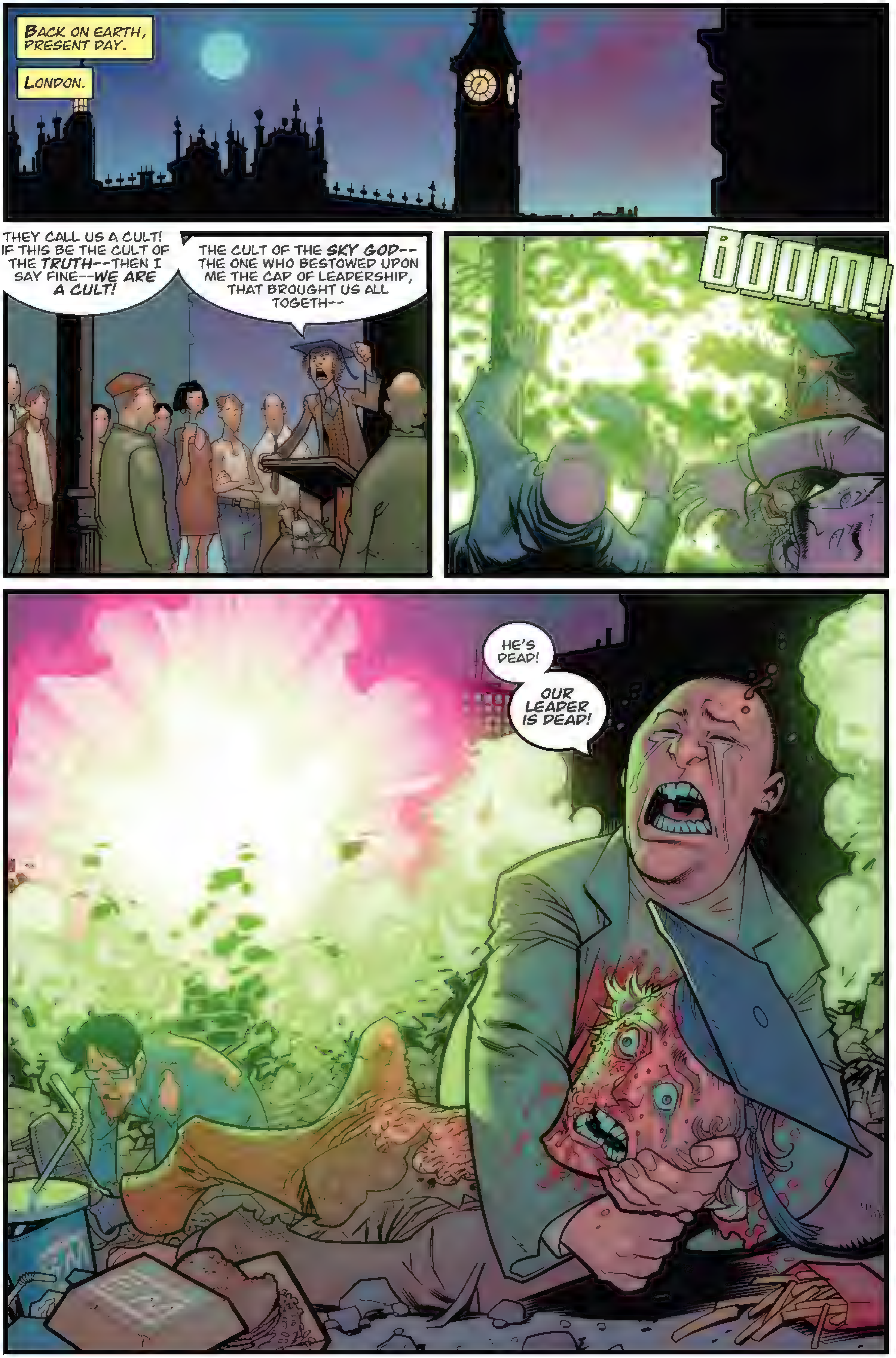

IT WILL ONLY BE A MATTER OF YEARS BEFORE THE PROJECT IS ACTUALLY TAKEN SERIOUSLY, AND WE'RE SENT HUNDREDS OF WORKERS TO AID IN OUR TASK.
WORKERS THAT KNOW OF OUR FEAT, STORMING THE EMPEROR'S THRONE ROOM. WORKERS WITH NO LOVE FOR THE FLAXAN EMPIRE.
GENERATIONS WILL PASS, AND THE FLAXANS WILL NOT EVEN REALIZE HOW VASTLY MY WORKERS OUTNUMBER THEIR SOLDIERS SENT TO GUARD US.
NOR WILL THEY BE AWARE OF THEIR *DEVOTION* TO YOU AND ME.
THE REVOLT WILL BE SWIFT.
ON THE EVE OF THE COMPLETE RESTORATION OF KLAXIA-- *WE* WILL CONTROL THE CITY.
ALTHOUGH, I DO NOT PREDICT THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD IT FOR LONG.


BUT THE FLAXAN ARMY WILL BE UNAWARE OF THE TUNNEL SYSTEM WE WILL HAVE BUILT UNDER THE CITY.
AS WELL AS THE TRAPS WE WILL SET FOR THEM.
WE'LL STORE SUPPLIES IN THE TUNNEL SYSTEM, SO THAT WE CAN USE THE WASTELAND AS A STAGING GROUND.
WE WILL CONFISCATE ALL THE WEAPONRY AND VEHICLES SENT AFTER US, AND APPROPRIATE THEM FOR OUR CAUSE.
IN THE END WE'LL HAVE A LOYAL ARMY AND EVERYTHING WE WILL NEED TO WAGE WAR ON THE FLAXAN EMPIRE.
IT MAY TAKE US NEARLY A *CENTURY* TO PUT ALL THE PIECES IN PLACE FOR THIS PLAN TO COME TOGETHER... BUT ONCE WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED ALL THIS WE'LL BE WITHIN GRASP OF OUR ULTIMATE GOAL...
...ENDING THE THREAT OF THE FLAXAN EMPIRE TO *ALL* DIMENSIONS--
--FOREVER!

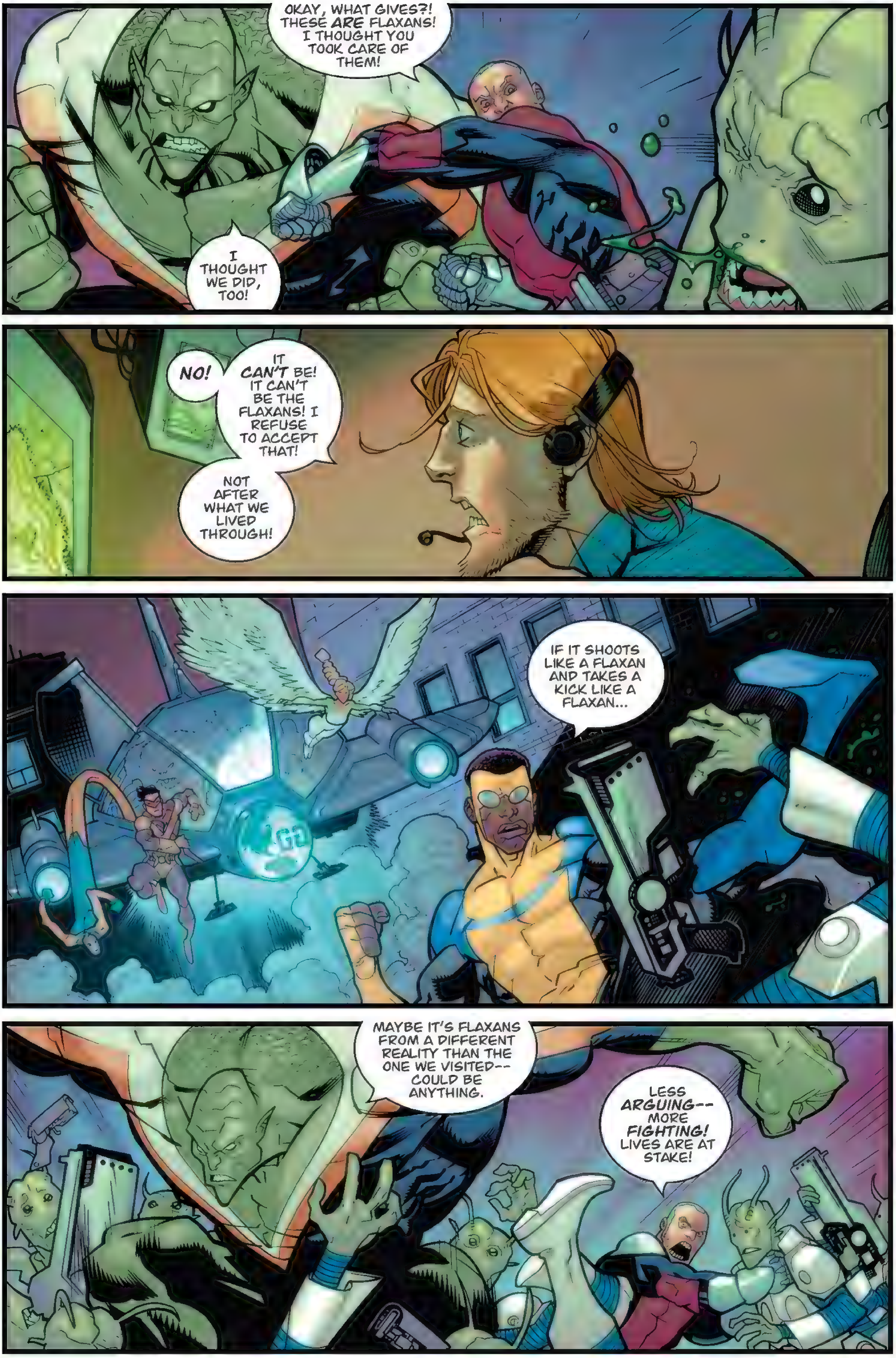

BACK ON EARTH, PRESENT DAY.
LONDON.
THEY CALL US A CULT! IF THIS BE THE CULT OF THE *TRUTH*--THEN I SAY FINE--*WE ARE A CULT!*
THE CULT OF THE *SKY GOD*--THE ONE WHO BESTOWED UPON ME THE CAP OF LEADERSHIP, THAT BROUGHT US ALL TOGETH--
BOOM!!
HE'S DEAD!
OUR LEADER IS DEAD!

ACROSS THE POND, THE GRAYSON HOME.
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP STOP THEM! THEY'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF LONDON! WE CAN'T LET ANOTHER MAJOR CITY GET DESTROYED!
AGAIN!
I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE YOU HERE, UNPROTECTED. IF THIS IS A FULL-SCALE INVASION, IT COULD REACH THIS AREA.
EVE!
PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE AT STAKE! DON'T MAKE THIS ABOUT ME BEING POWERLESS.
REMEMBER WHEN YOU STARTED OUT AND I WAS GIVING YOU POINTERS ON BEING A SUPERHERO? THERE'S ONE THAT I FORGOT.
KNOW WHEN IT'S YOUR FIGHT.
HOW COULD THIS NOT BE YOUR FIGHT?
HOW WOULD I EVEN GET THERE? I CAN'T FLY AS FAST AS YOU COULD.
FACE IT, THERE ARE COUNTLESS OTHER SUPERHEROES WHO ARE FASTER, STRONGER AND SMARTER THAN ME... AND THEY'RE NO DOUBT ALREADY ON THEIR WAY.
AND IF SOMEHOW I AM EVENTUALLY NEEDED--CECIL WILL KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO LOOK.
MARK, I KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE HARD... BUT SIT DOWN.

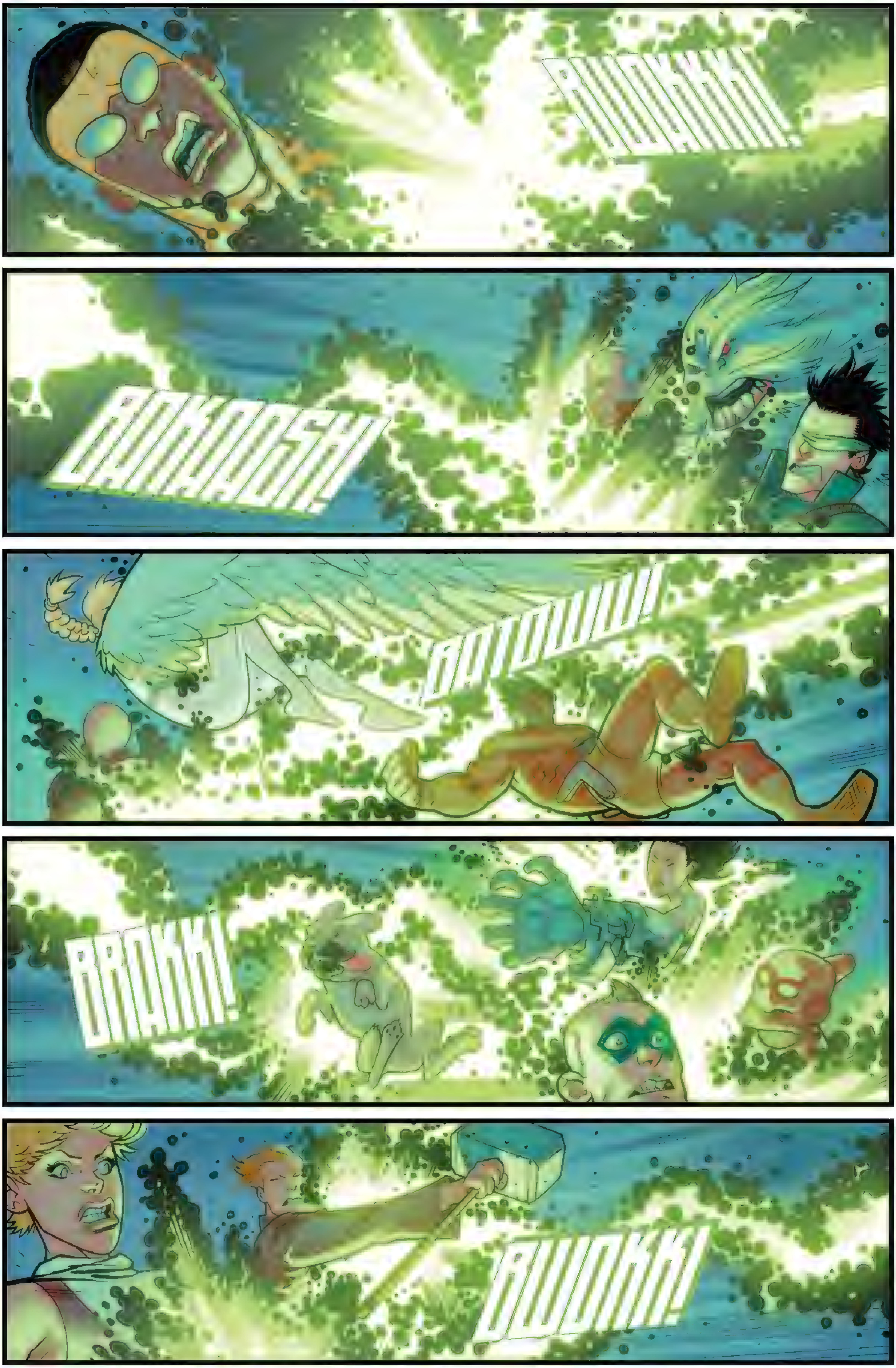
I'M SORRY, GUYS... I'VE GOT A MEETING AT THIS GALLERY AND I, UM... NEED TO GO.
ARE YOU **SERIOUS?!** WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN LONDON? YOU'RE JUST GOING TO GO?
WE'LL PROBABLY SEE YOUR BROTHER ON TV! CANCEL IT.
I'VE GOTTA MAKE A LIVING, MOM.
THIS GALLERY OPENING ISN'T FOR MONTHS, I CAN'T BLOW IT BY SKIPPING THIS MEETING.
HOW DID YOU AND YOUR BROTHER END UP SO **DIFFERENT?**
IT'S A DAMN SHAME.
THE **REAL** SHAME IS THAT YOU--!
OKAY, I NEED TO BE GOING NOW. DON'T GET TOO WORRIED ABOUT WHAT'S ON THE TV, IT'S HALF A WORLD AWAY.
I HEAR **TYRONE** HAS A NEW COSTUME, KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR IT.
BYE.

IT'S NOT THE FLAXANS. THERE IS NO WAY. THAT'S JUST NOT POSSIBLE.
IT'S SOMEONE ELSE. ANOTHER FORCE FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION, USING SIMILAR ARMOR... IT CAN'T BE THE FLAXANS.
WELL, IT SURE AS HELL LOOKS LIKE IT'S THEM! SO STOP ARGUING WITH ME AND START SCRAMBLING TEAMS!
THIS ARGUMENT IS BARELY TAKING UP A FRACTION OF MY COGNITIVE BANDWIDTH. I'VE ALREADY BEGUN SCRAMBLING TEAMS.
THE ACTIONEERS ARE ON SITE. CAPES, WOLF-MAN AND THE WOLF C.O.R.P.S. ARE ON STANDBY.
TWO GUARDIANS TEAMS ARE EN ROUTE AND WE'RE ABOUT TO DISPATCH THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM FROM THIS BASE MOMENTARILY.
BRIT, IS YOUR TEAM READY TO GO UP AGAINST THIS INVADING FORCE THAT IS MOST CERTAINLY NOT THE FLAXANS?
AFFIRMATIVE.
SEND US IN, ROBOT.

WE NOW JOIN SHEER PANDEMONIUM ALREADY IN PROGRESS!
WOW!

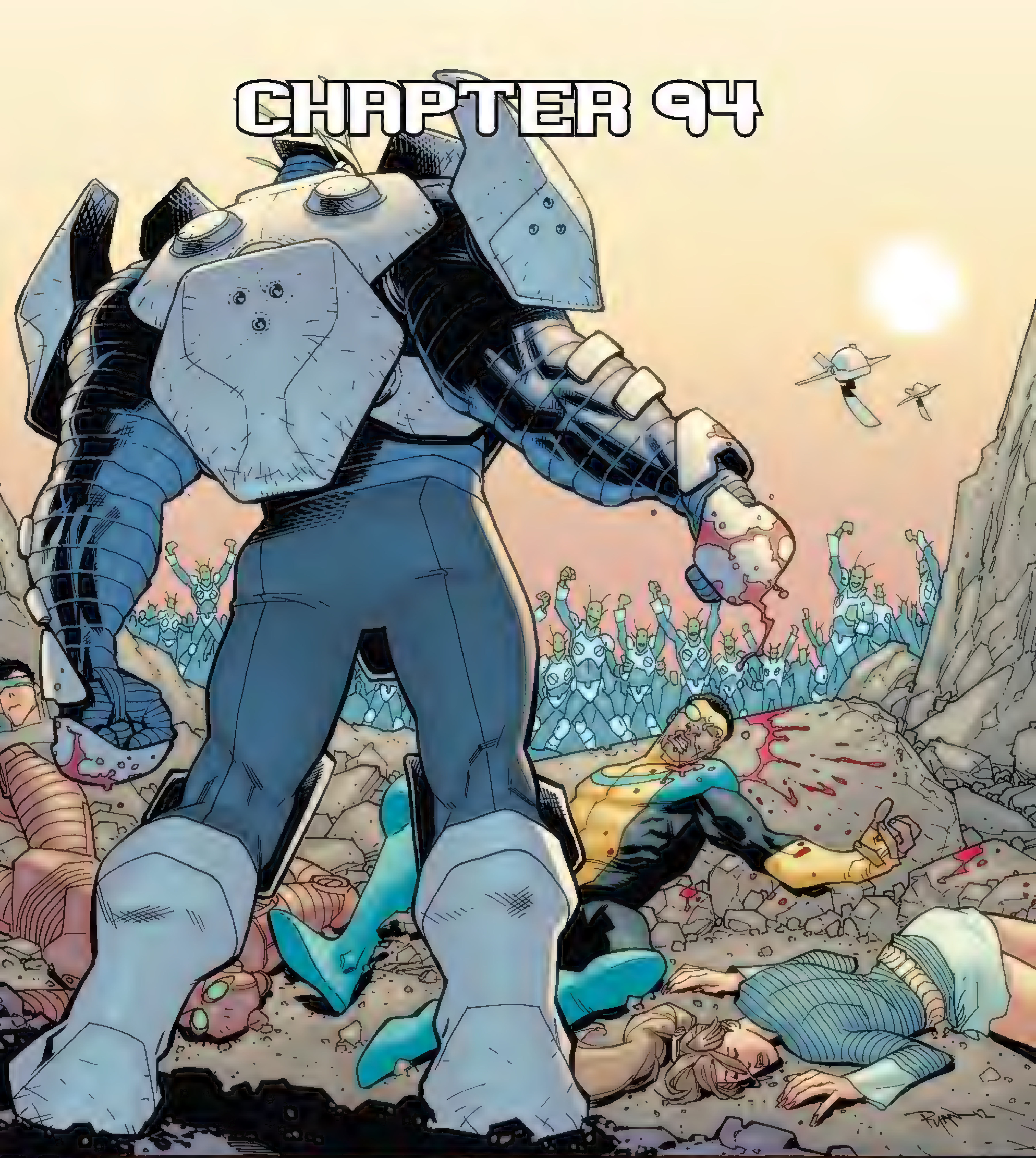

OKAY, WHAT GIVES?! THESE *ARE* FLAXANS! I THOUGHT YOU TOOK CARE OF THEM!
I THOUGHT WE DID, TOO!
NO!
IT *CAN'T* BE! IT CAN'T BE THE FLAXANS! I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT!
NOT AFTER WHAT WE LIVED THROUGH!
IF IT SHOOTS LIKE A FLAXAN AND TAKES A KICK LIKE A FLAXAN...
MAYBE IT'S FLAXANS FROM A DIFFERENT REALITY THAN THE ONE WE VISITED-- COULD BE ANYTHING.
LESS *ARGUING*-- MORE *FIGHTING!* LIVES ARE AT STAKE!

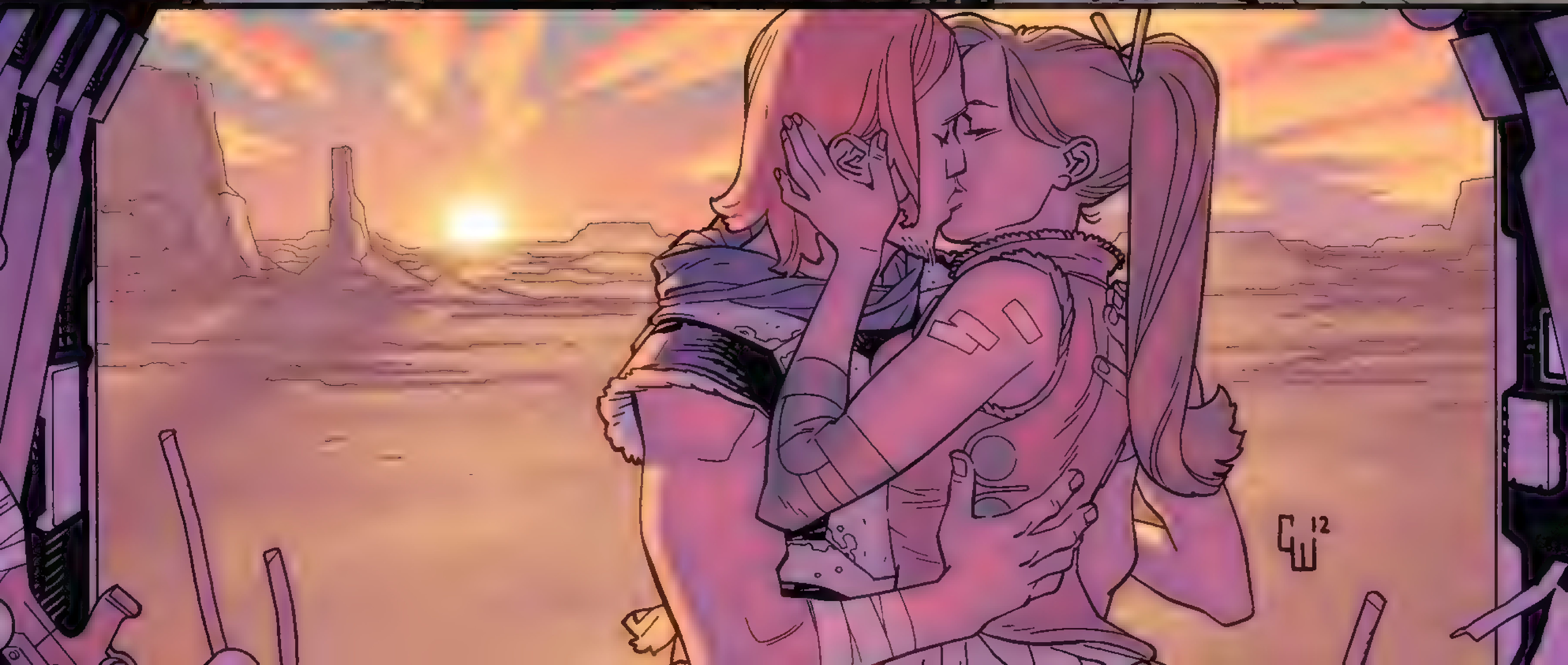
BLOOWWWW!!
WHAT THE--?!


BWOKKK!
BAKOOSH!
BADOWW!
BRAKK!
BDUNKK!

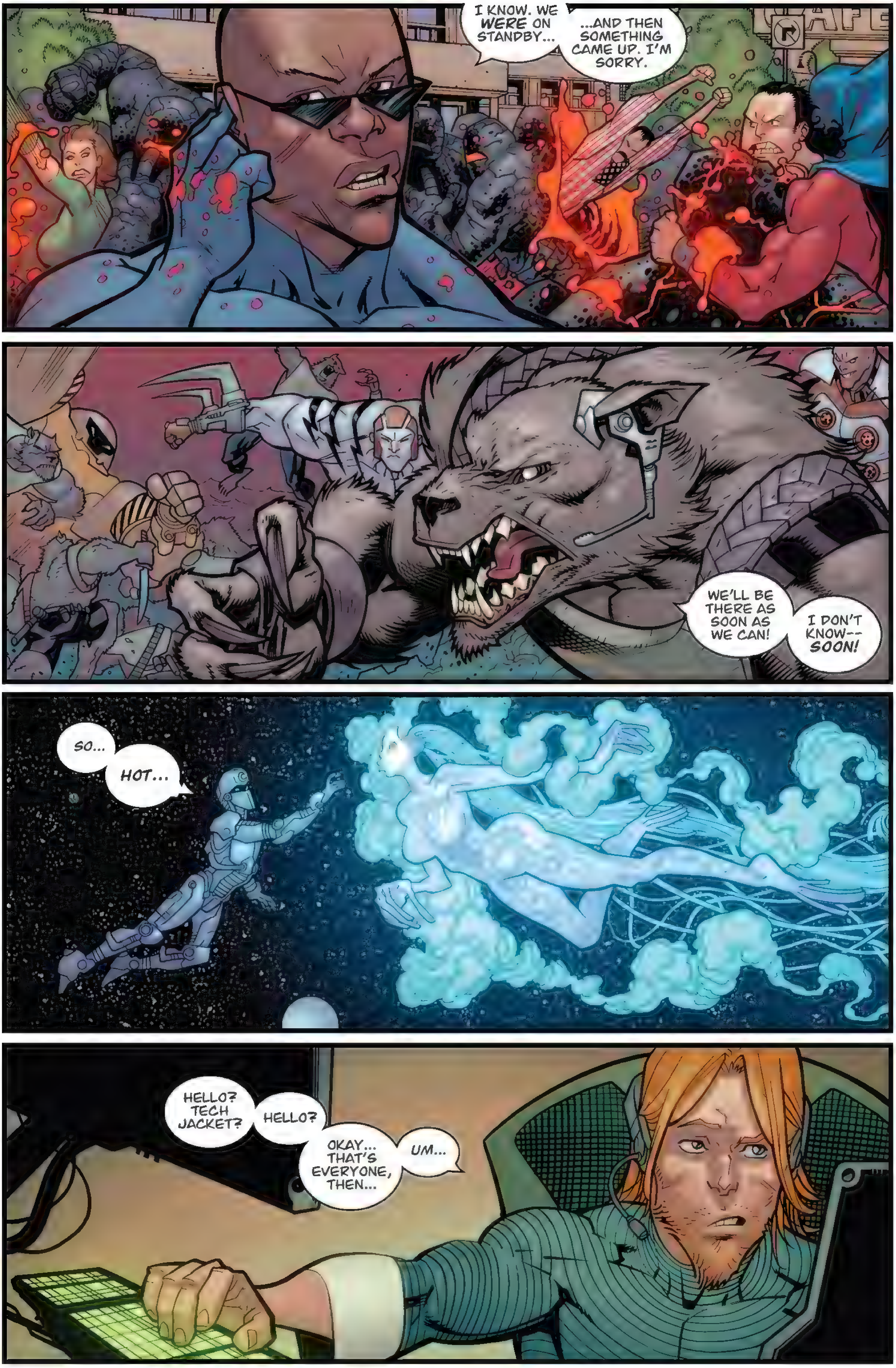
IT CAN'T BE...
I'LL CALL CECIL!

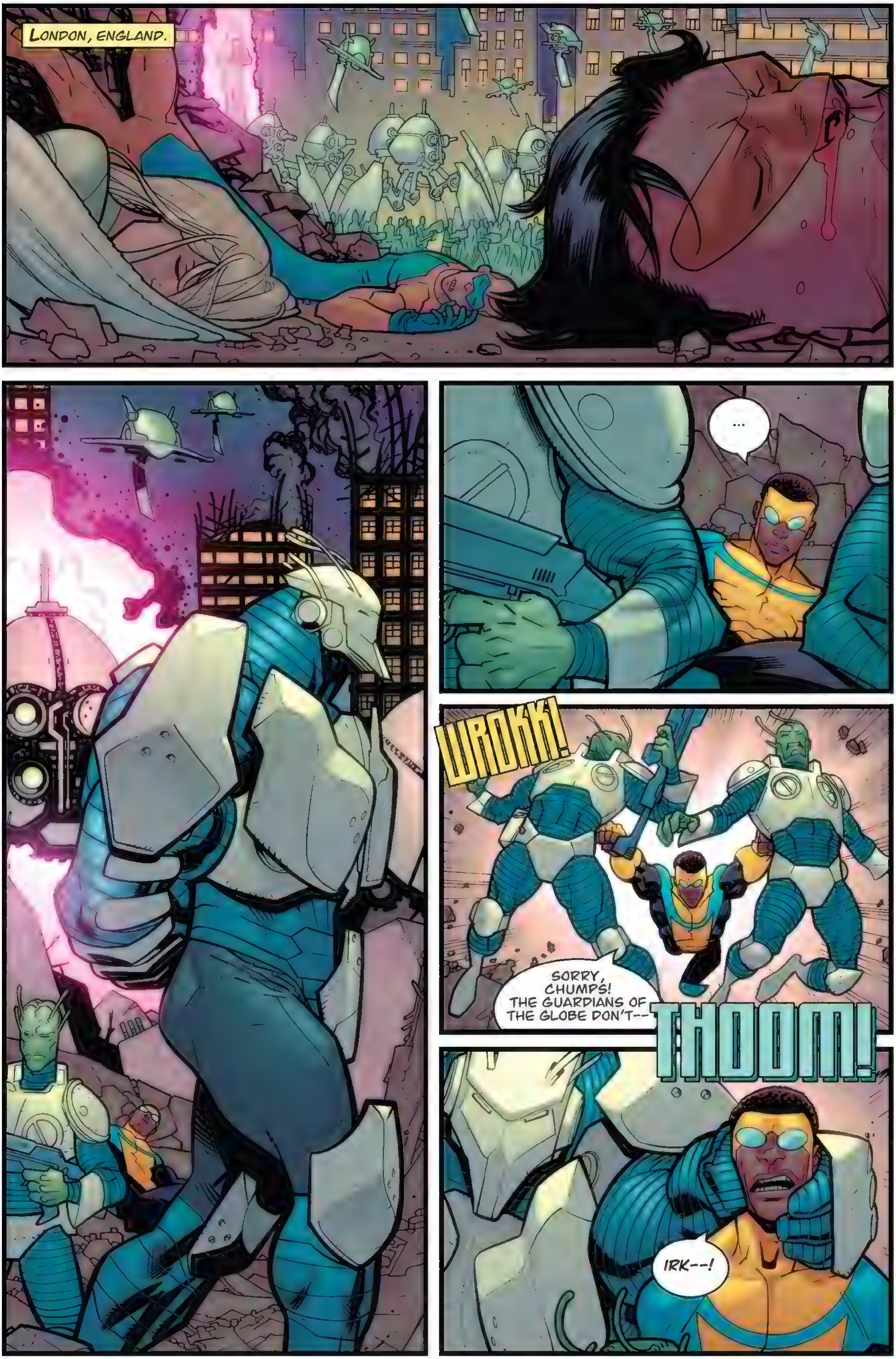
CHAPTER 94



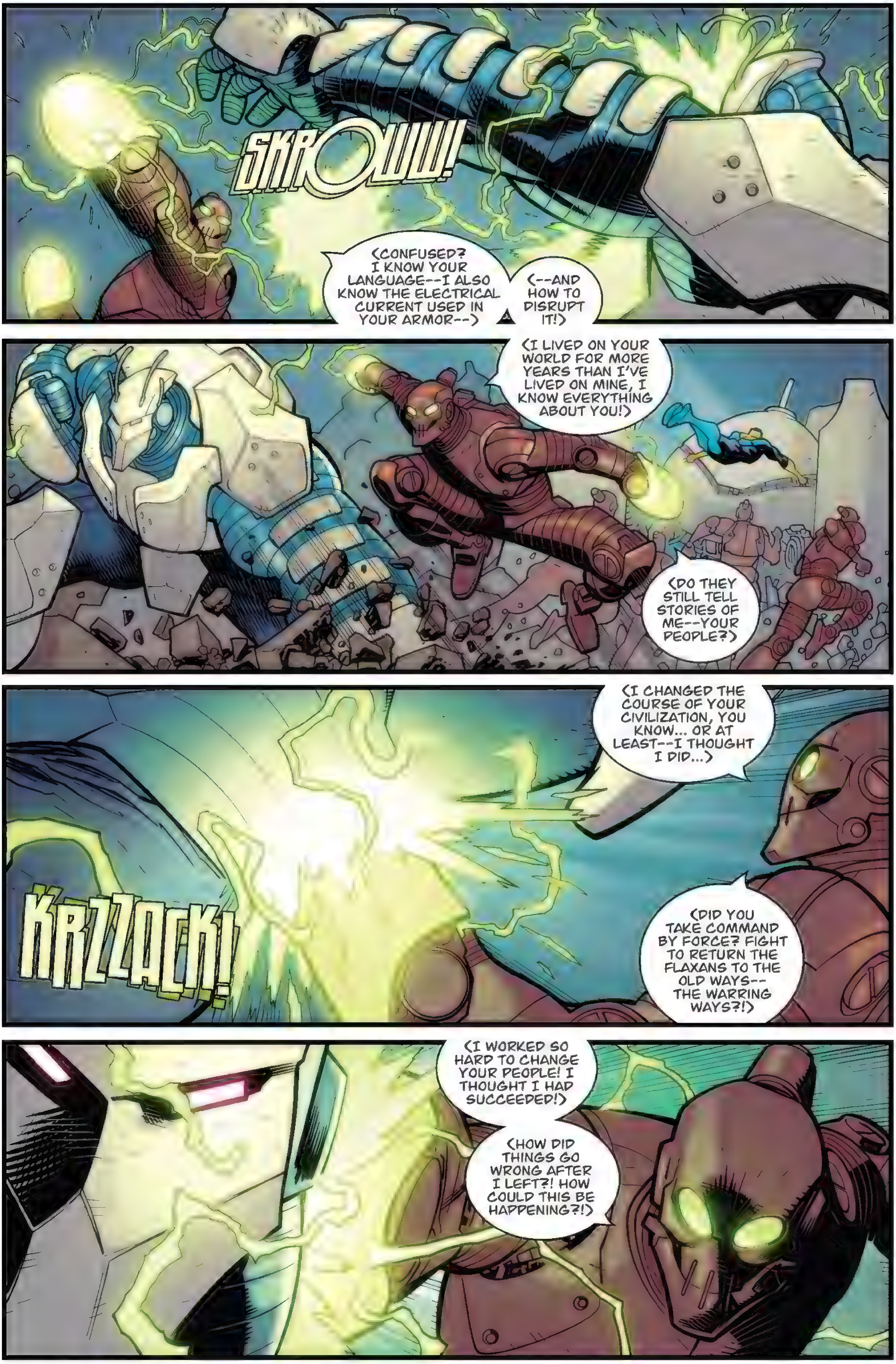


I'M ON MY WAY TO THE PENTAGON NOW, BUT IF YOU COULD GET CLEARANCE TO TELEPORT ME OVER...
I KNOW HE'S BUSY. I'VE SEEN THE NEWS--THAT'S WHY I'M COMING TO HELP.
NO, ATOM-- ATOM EVE.
SERIOUSLY?
ALIEN SOLDIERS MARCH DOWN THE STREETS UNCHALLENGED. IT APPEARS, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, THAT OUR FORCES HAVE BEEN DEFEATED.
IF THERE'S ANYONE OUT THERE WITH POWERS ABLE TO LEND A HAND, THE PEOPLE OF LONDON COULD CERTAINLY USE YOUR HELP.
DAMN IT!
WRAMM!
SIGH

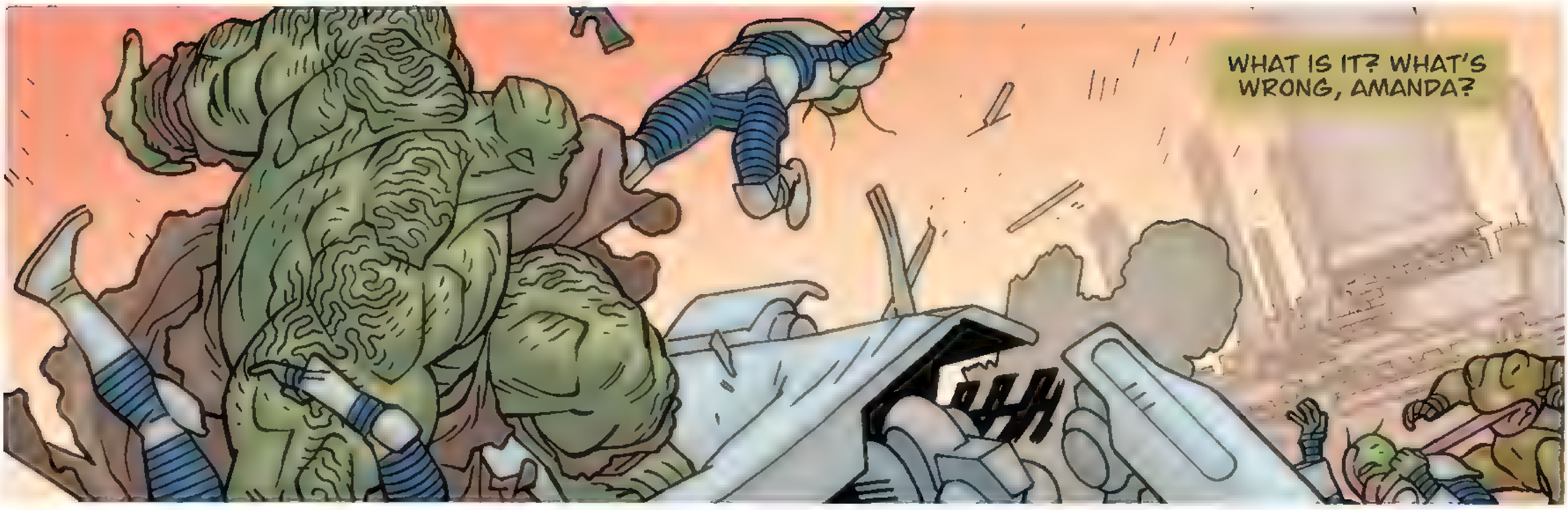

I KNOW. WE *WERE* ON STANDBY...
...AND THEN SOMETHING CAME UP. I'M SORRY.
WE'LL BE THERE AS SOON AS WE CAN!
I DON'T KNOW-- *SOON!*
SO...
HOT...
HELLO? TECH JACKET?
HELLO?
OKAY... THAT'S EVERYONE, THEN...
UM...

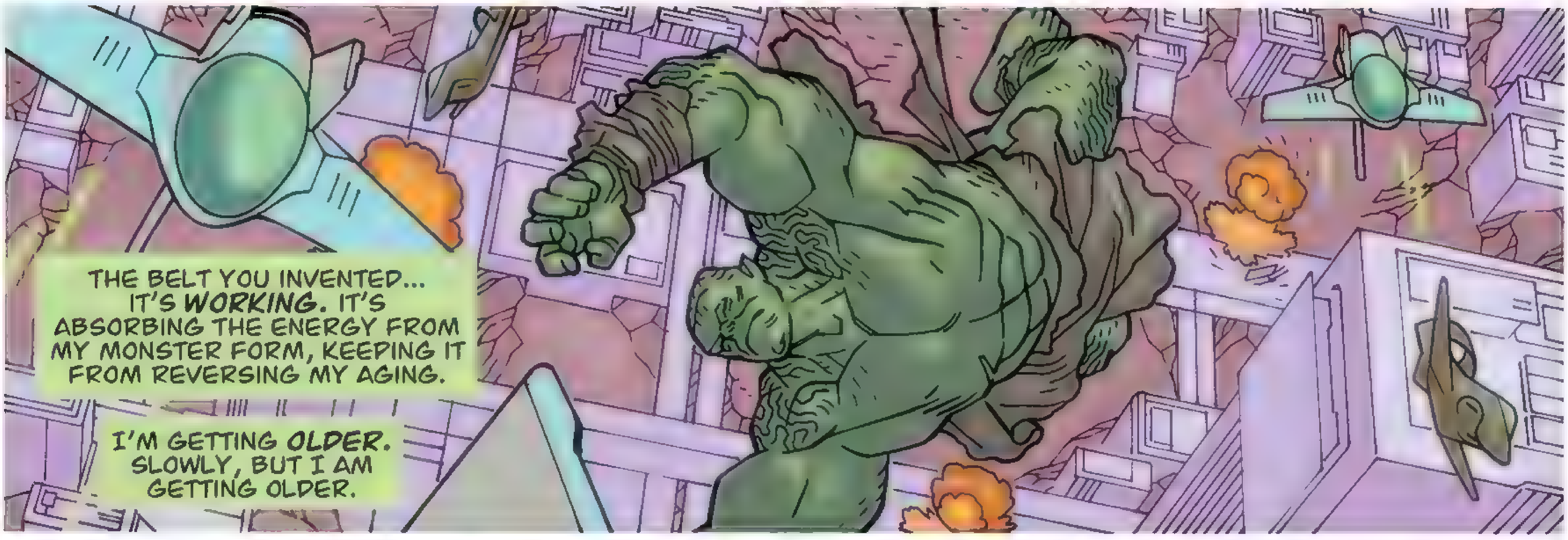

LONDON, ENGLAND.
...
WROKK!
SORRY, CHUMPS! THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE DON'T--
THOOM!
IRK--!

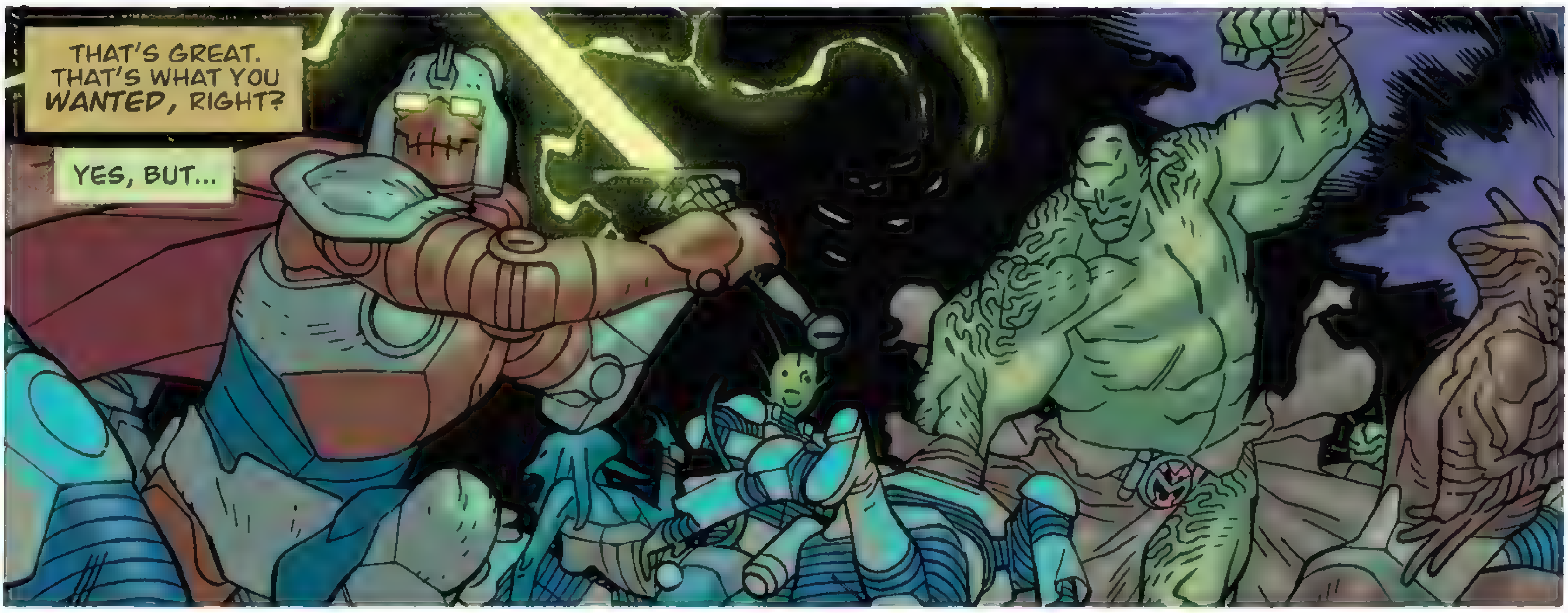
FOR THE RECORD, I WAS GOING TO BREAK FREE ON MY OWN!
I BELIEVE YOU--NOW HELP MY DRONES WITH THE SOLDIERS--
THIS ONE IS *MINE!*
THOOM!

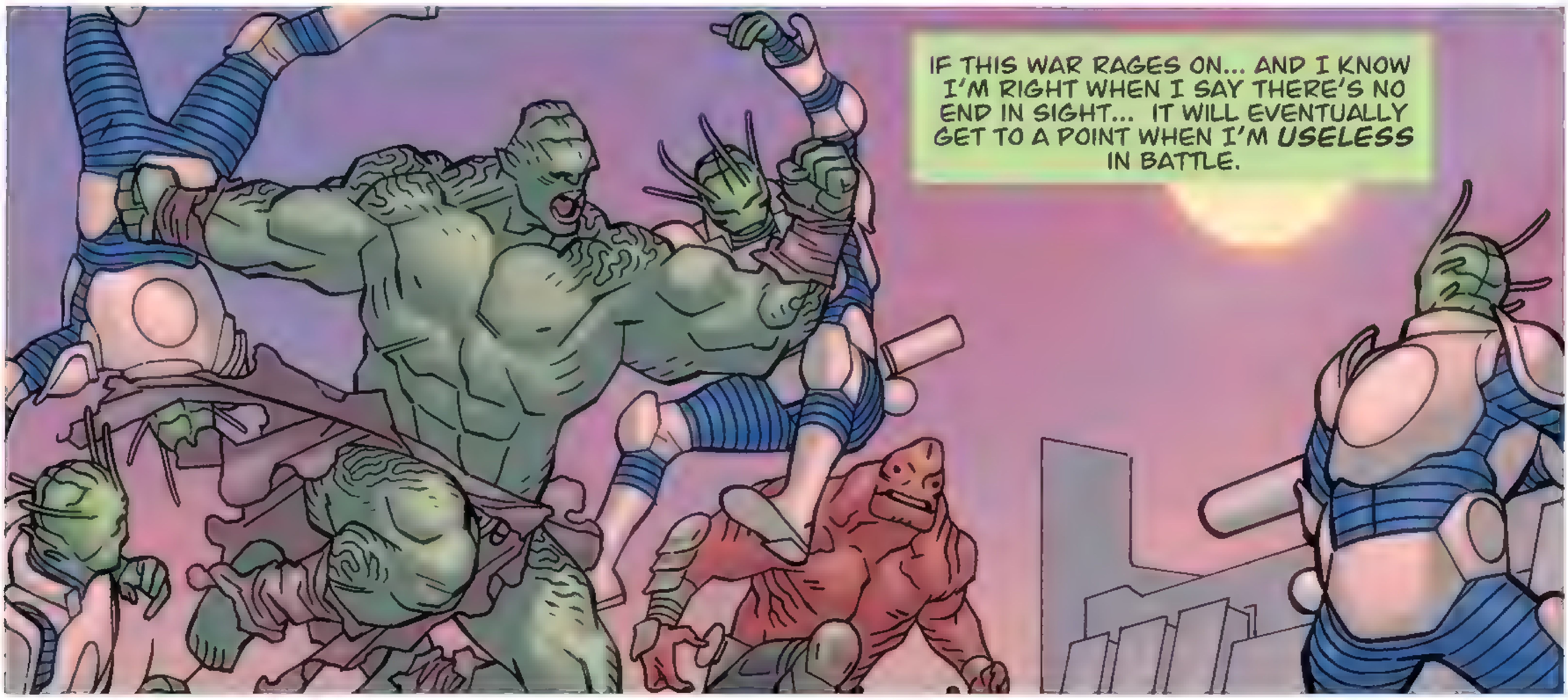

SKROWW!
(CONFUSED? I KNOW YOUR LANGUAGE--I ALSO KNOW THE ELECTRICAL CURRENT USED IN YOUR ARMOR--)
(--AND HOW TO DISRUPT IT!)
(I LIVED ON YOUR WORLD FOR MORE YEARS THAN I'VE LIVED ON MINE, I KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU!)
(DO THEY STILL TELL STORIES OF ME--YOUR PEOPLE?)
(I CHANGED THE COURSE OF YOUR CIVILIZATION, YOU KNOW... OR AT LEAST--I THOUGHT I DID...)
KRZZACK!
(DID YOU TAKE COMMAND BY FORCE? FIGHT TO RETURN THE FLAXANS TO THE OLD WAYS-- THE WARRING WAYS?!)
(I WORKED SO HARD TO CHANGE YOUR PEOPLE! I THOUGHT I HAD SUCCEEDED!)
(HOW DID THINGS GO WRONG AFTER I LEFT?! HOW COULD THIS BE HAPPENING?!)

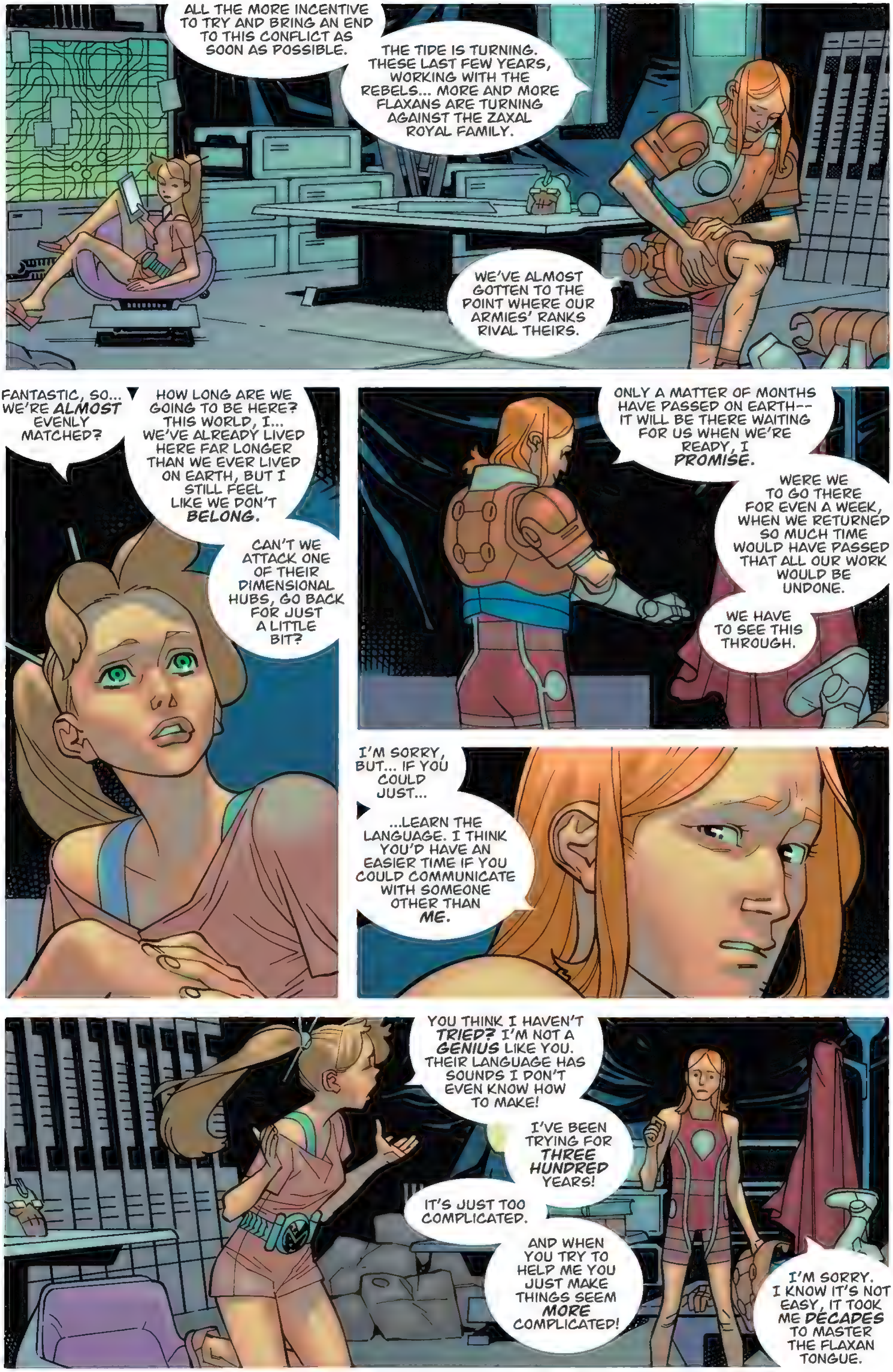
‹MY ARMY HAS SECURED ALL CORNERS OF THIS CONTINENT... WE'VE INSPIRED COUNTLESS SLAVES TO RISE UP AND JOIN OUR CAUSE...›
‹...BUT WE WILL NOT SURVIVE THIS UPCOMING BATTLE WITH THE FLAXAN ARMIES IF WE DO NOT JOIN FORCES.›
‹YOU SAY FLAXAN, YET YOU MEAN THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY-- THE RULING CLASS WHOSE BLOODLINE HAS COMMANDED US FOR EONS.›
‹WE ARE FLAXAN AND YET WE, LIKE YOU, STAND ***AGAINST*** THEIR FORCES.›
‹AND WE WILL STAND ***WITH YOU.***›
THAT ***SEEMED*** TO GO WELL.
IT DID. THE REBELS ARE GOING TO FIGHT WITH US.
SWEET.
WE MAY JUST SURVIVE THE NEXT FEW ***DECADES*** OF THIS WAR.


WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG, AMANDA?


THE BELT YOU INVENTED... IT'S *WORKING*. IT'S ABSORBING THE ENERGY FROM MY MONSTER FORM, KEEPING IT FROM REVERSING MY AGING.
I'M GETTING *OLDER*. SLOWLY, BUT I AM GETTING OLDER.


THAT'S GREAT. THAT'S WHAT YOU *WANTED*, RIGHT?
YES, BUT...


IF THIS WAR RAGES ON... AND I KNOW I'M RIGHT WHEN I SAY THERE'S NO END IN SIGHT... IT WILL EVENTUALLY GET TO A POINT WHEN I'M *USELESS* IN BATTLE.


ALL THE MORE INCENTIVE TO TRY AND BRING AN END TO THIS CONFLICT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
THE TIDE IS TURNING. THESE LAST FEW YEARS, WORKING WITH THE REBELS... MORE AND MORE FLAXANS ARE TURNING AGAINST THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY.
WE'VE ALMOST GOTTEN TO THE POINT WHERE OUR ARMIES' RANKS RIVAL THEIRS.
FANTASTIC, SO... WE'RE *ALMOST* EVENLY MATCHED?
HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO BE HERE? THIS WORLD, I... WE'VE ALREADY LIVED HERE FAR LONGER THAN WE EVER LIVED ON EARTH, BUT I STILL FEEL LIKE WE DON'T *BELONG*.
CAN'T WE ATTACK ONE OF THEIR DIMENSIONAL HUBS, GO BACK FOR JUST A LITTLE BIT?
ONLY A MATTER OF MONTHS HAVE PASSED ON EARTH-- IT WILL BE THERE WAITING FOR US WHEN WE'RE READY, I *PROMISE*.
WERE WE TO GO THERE FOR EVEN A WEEK, WHEN WE RETURNED SO MUCH TIME WOULD HAVE PASSED THAT ALL OUR WORK WOULD BE UNDONE.
WE HAVE TO SEE THIS THROUGH.
I'M SORRY, BUT... IF YOU COULD JUST...
...LEARN THE LANGUAGE. I THINK YOU'D HAVE AN EASIER TIME IF YOU COULD COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE OTHER THAN *ME*.
YOU THINK I HAVEN'T *TRIED?* I'M NOT A *GENIUS* LIKE YOU. THEIR LANGUAGE HAS SOUNDS I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO MAKE!
I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR *THREE HUNDRED* YEARS!
IT'S JUST TOO COMPLICATED.
AND WHEN YOU TRY TO HELP ME YOU JUST MAKE THINGS SEEM *MORE* COMPLICATED!
I'M SORRY. I KNOW IT'S NOT EASY, IT TOOK ME *DECADES* TO MASTER THE FLAXAN TONGUE.

I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU. I KNOW THIS ISN'T EASY FOR YOU. ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT WHAT WE'RE DOING IS NOTHING LESS THAN SAVING OUR WORLD.
AND WHILE IT WILL MOST DEFINITELY BE THE LONGEST STRETCH OF TIME ANY HUMAN HAS EVER EXPERIENCED, ASIDE FROM MAYBE THE IMMORTAL... IT *WILL* BE TEMPORARY.
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH... IF I COULD HAVE CHOSEN ANYONE TO ACCOMPANY ME ON THIS MISSION...
...IT WOULD HAVE BEEN YOU.
WELL, I...
<THE SCOUTING PARTY IS ASSEMBLED, WE'LL LEAVE AS SOON AS YOU'RE READY, SIR.>
<GOOD. I'LL JOIN YOU IN A MOMENT.>
WE SHOULD RETURN BY MORNING.
I'LL... SEE YOU THEN.
YEAH.
...

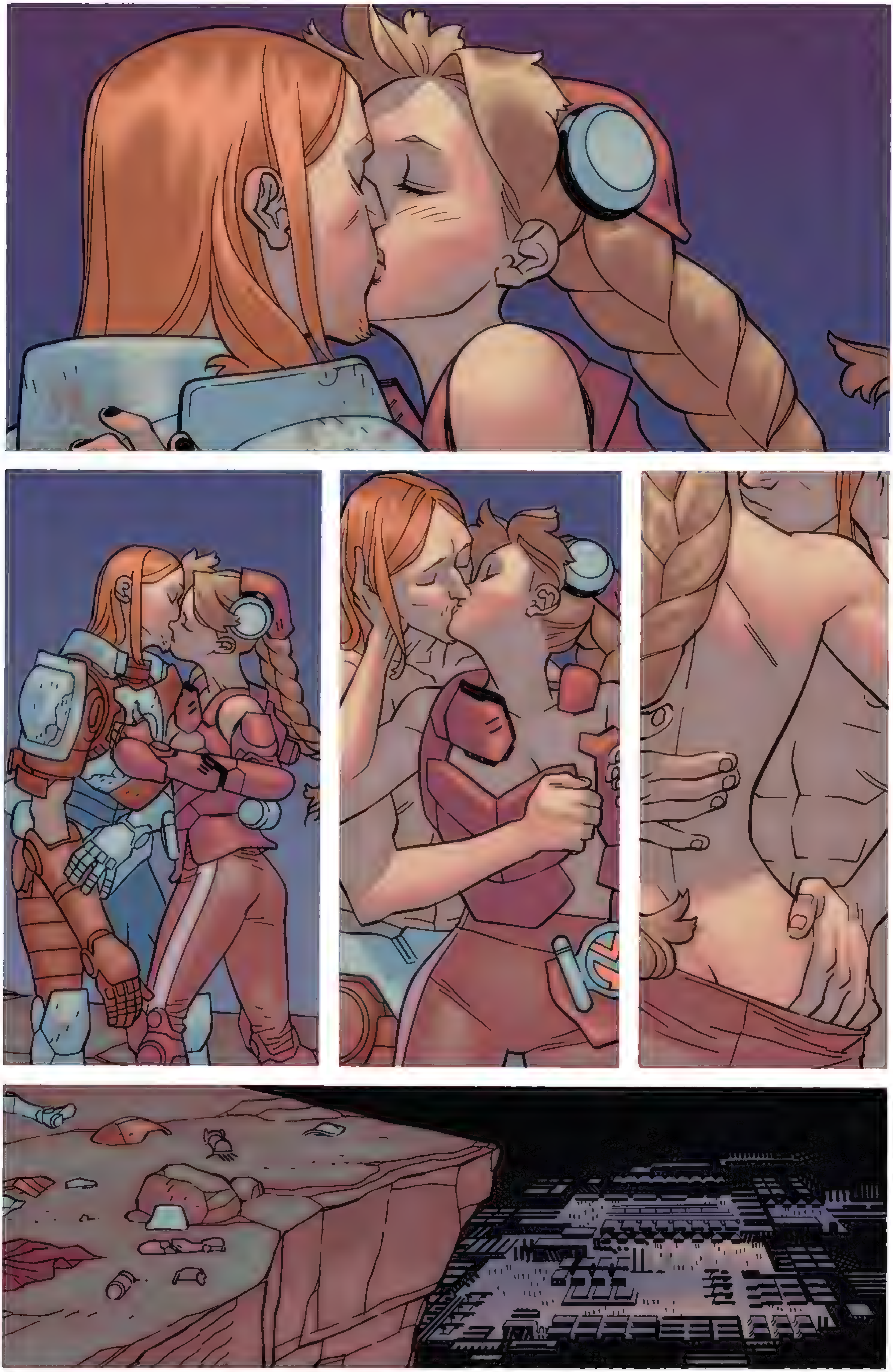
DAMN.
THAT WAS SOMETHING ELSE...
SKRACKK!
AAAH!
WE'RE ALL GONNA--!
WHAT--?!

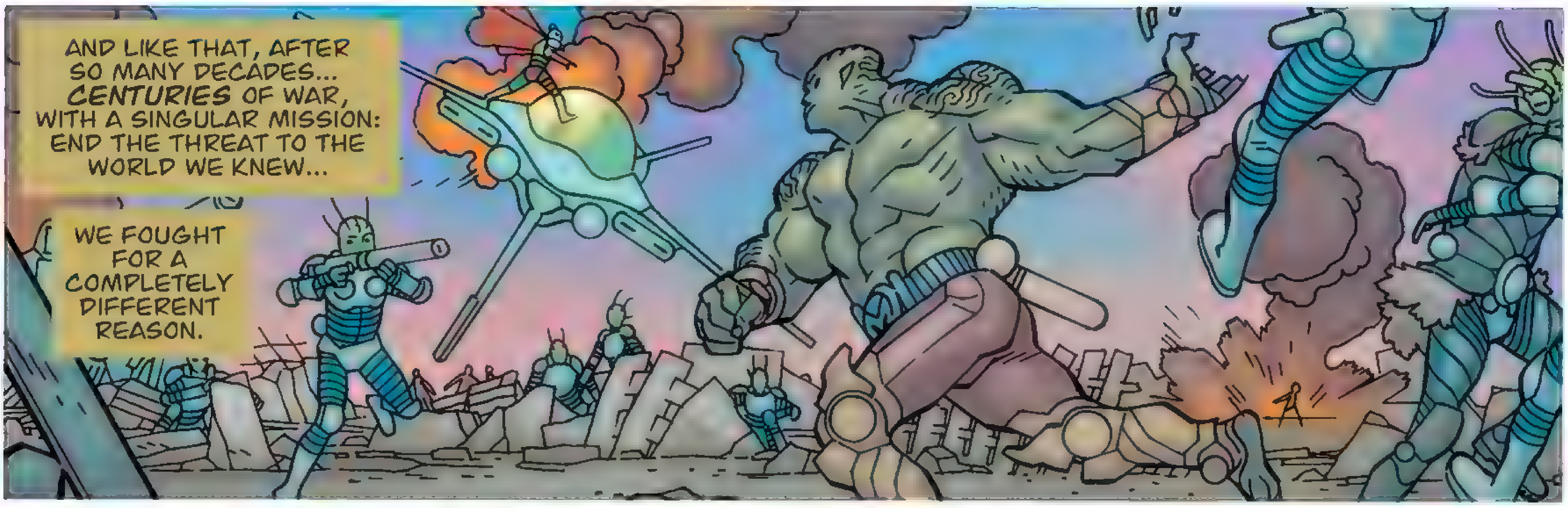
WRAMM!
CHOK!
KROOM!
CRAP.
ANY IDEAS?
WE NEED TO CONTAIN THEM, DRIVE THEM OUT OF THE CITY CENTER. THIS IS A NEW TACTIC FOR THEM, THEY USUALLY INVADE SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS, EASIER TO ESTABLISH A FOOTHOLD-- BUT LONDON COULD PROVIDE A MUCH STRONGER STAGING GROUND.
FOR NOW, I NEED YOU TO GET OUR INJURED OUT OF HARM'S WAY. GET THEM TO A ROOFTOP SO OUR PEOPLE CAN SAFELY TELEPORT THEM AWAY.
GO!

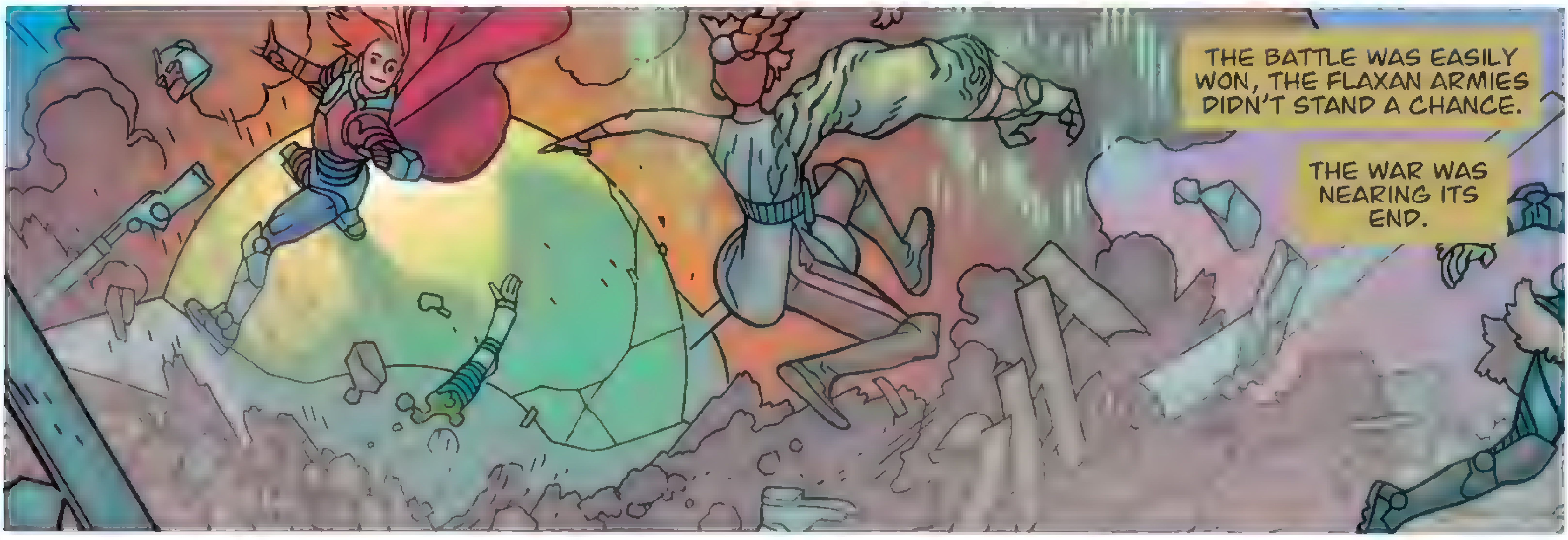
THERE'S MORE WHERE THIS CAME FROM.
HANDS OFF. I'M *FINE!*
BLAM! BLAM!

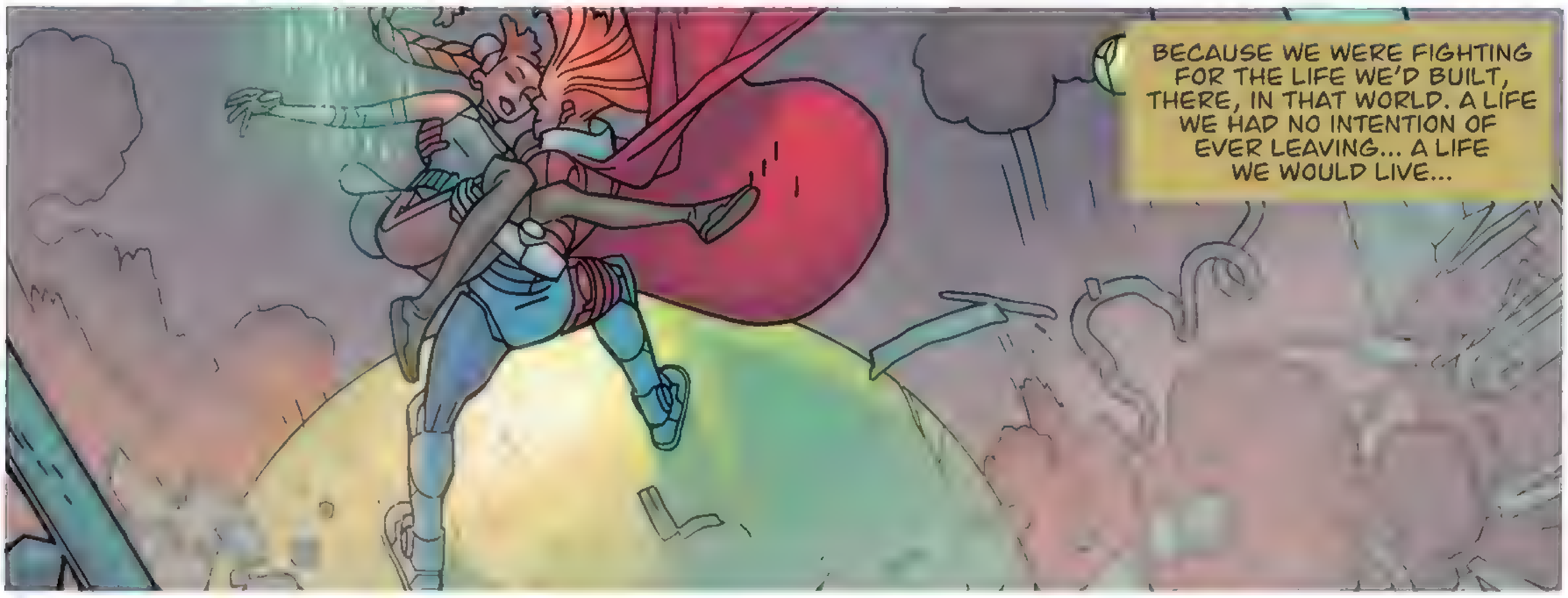
COULD REALLY USE YOUR HELP, AMANDA.
C'MON... SHAKE IT OFF.
PLEASE.
I--
I STILL LOVE YOU.

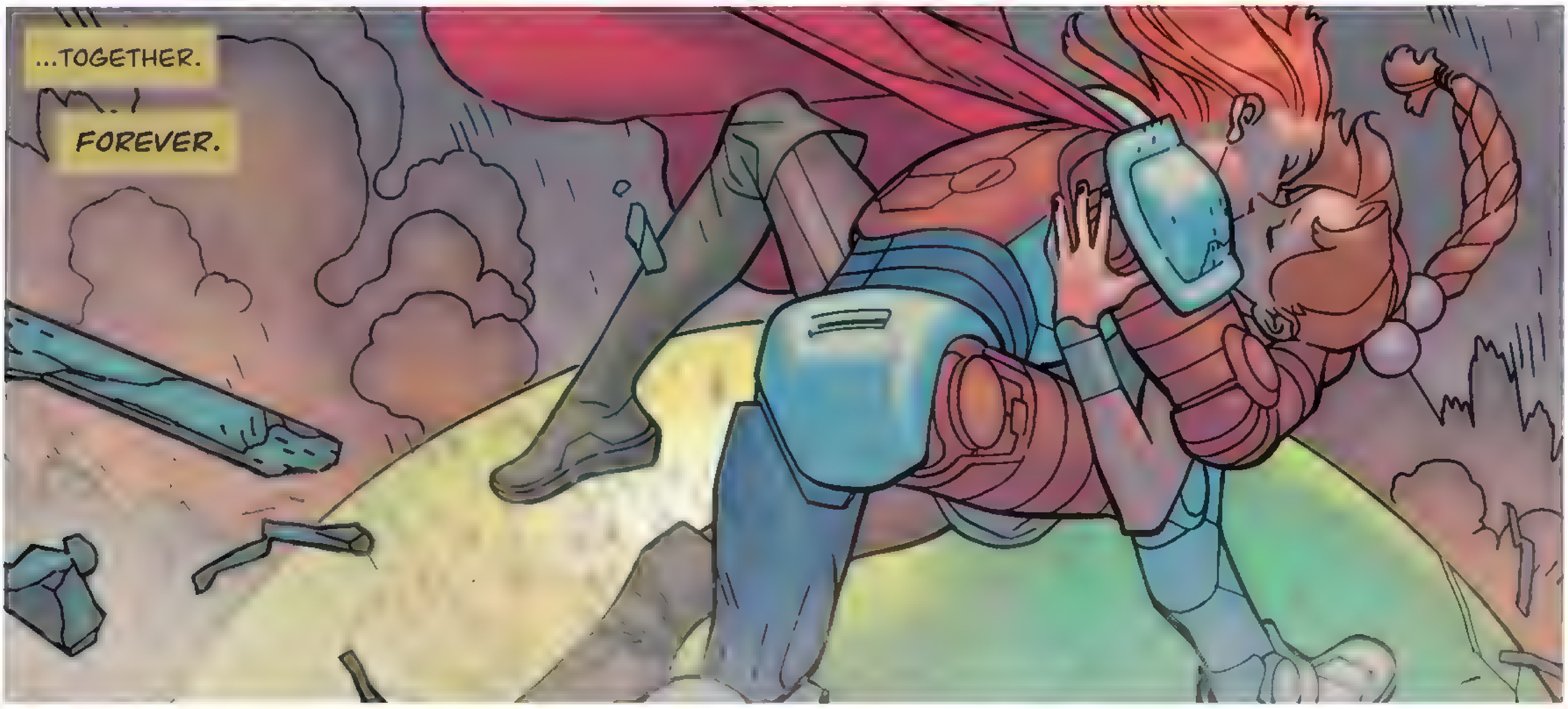
AMANDA?
THESKA TOLD ME YOU WERE UP HERE. COUNTING HEADS? MAKING SURE YOUR ARMY IS BIG ENOUGH?
YOU MEAN OUR ARMY? SOMETHING LIKE THAT. IT'S GOOD TO SEE OUR FORCES COMBINED, NOW THAT WE'RE NOT WAGING WAR ON TWO FRONTS THIS IS ALL BUT OVER.
REX, I...
I REALLY *MISSED* YOU.
I'VE LOVED--
I KNOW...
AND I'VE--
I KNOW.

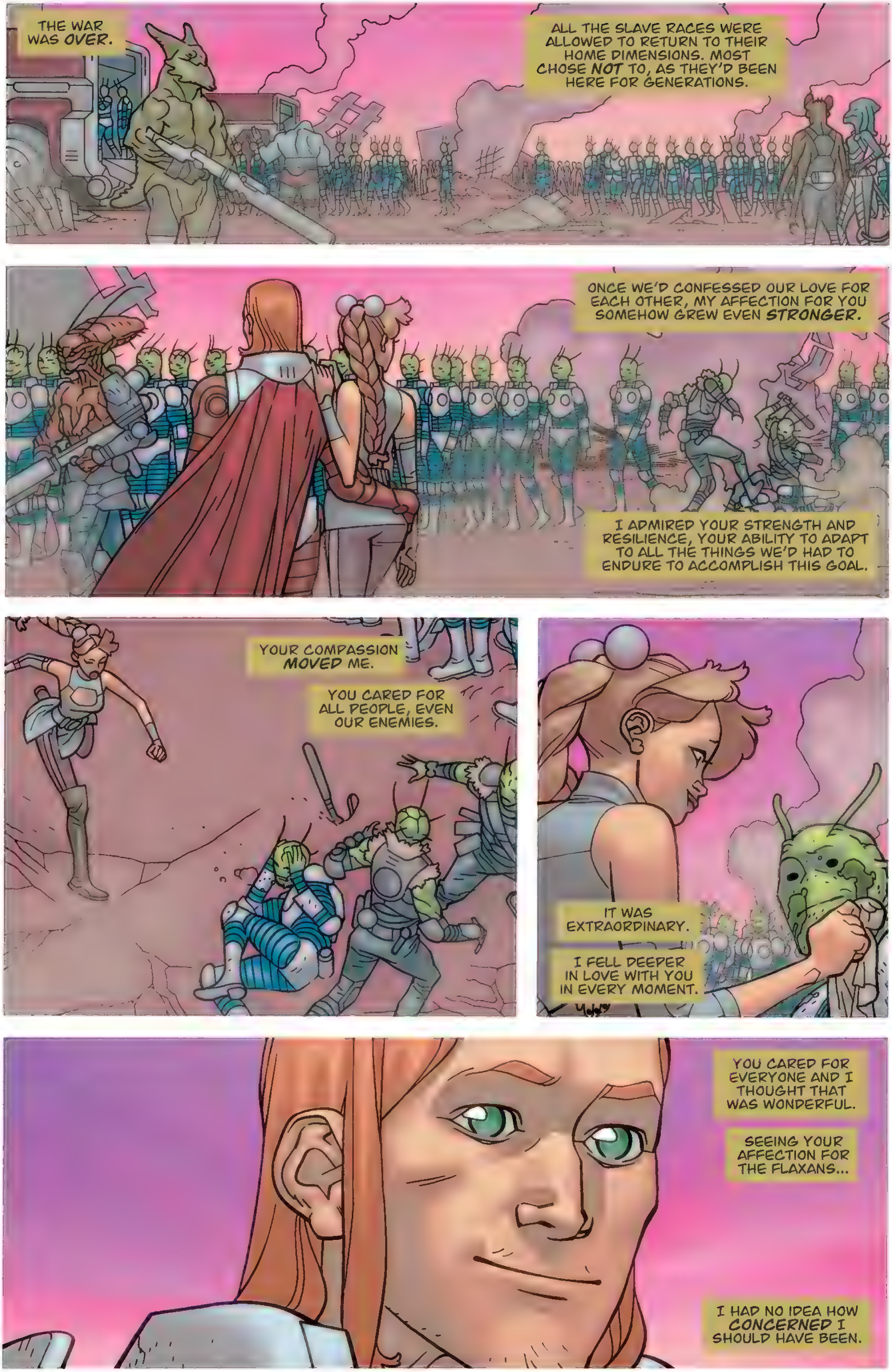


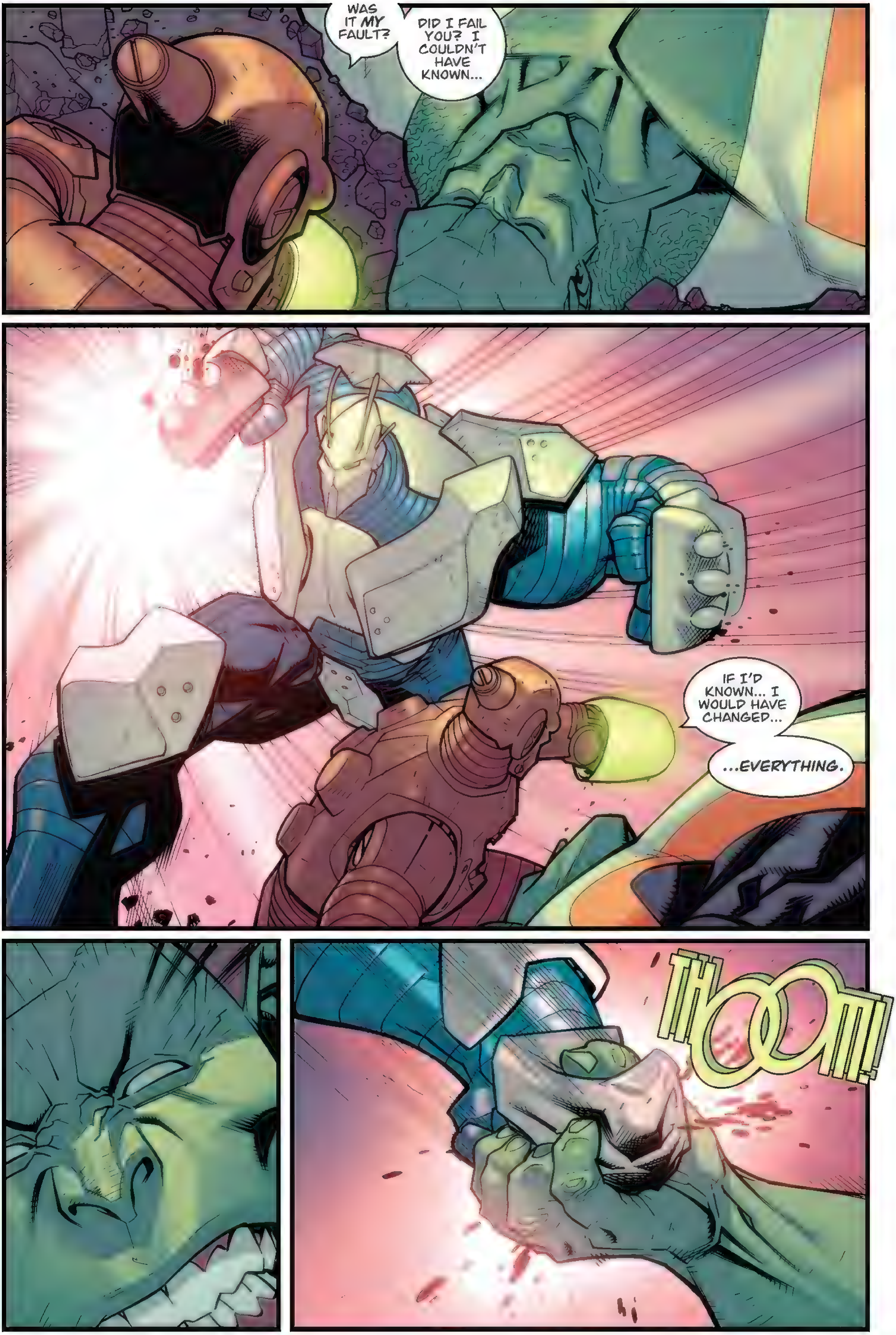

AND LIKE THAT, AFTER SO MANY DECADES... *CENTURIES* OF WAR, WITH A SINGULAR MISSION: END THE THREAT TO THE WORLD WE KNEW...
WE FOUGHT FOR A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT REASON.


THE BATTLE WAS EASILY WON, THE FLAXAN ARMIES DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.
THE WAR WAS NEARING ITS END.

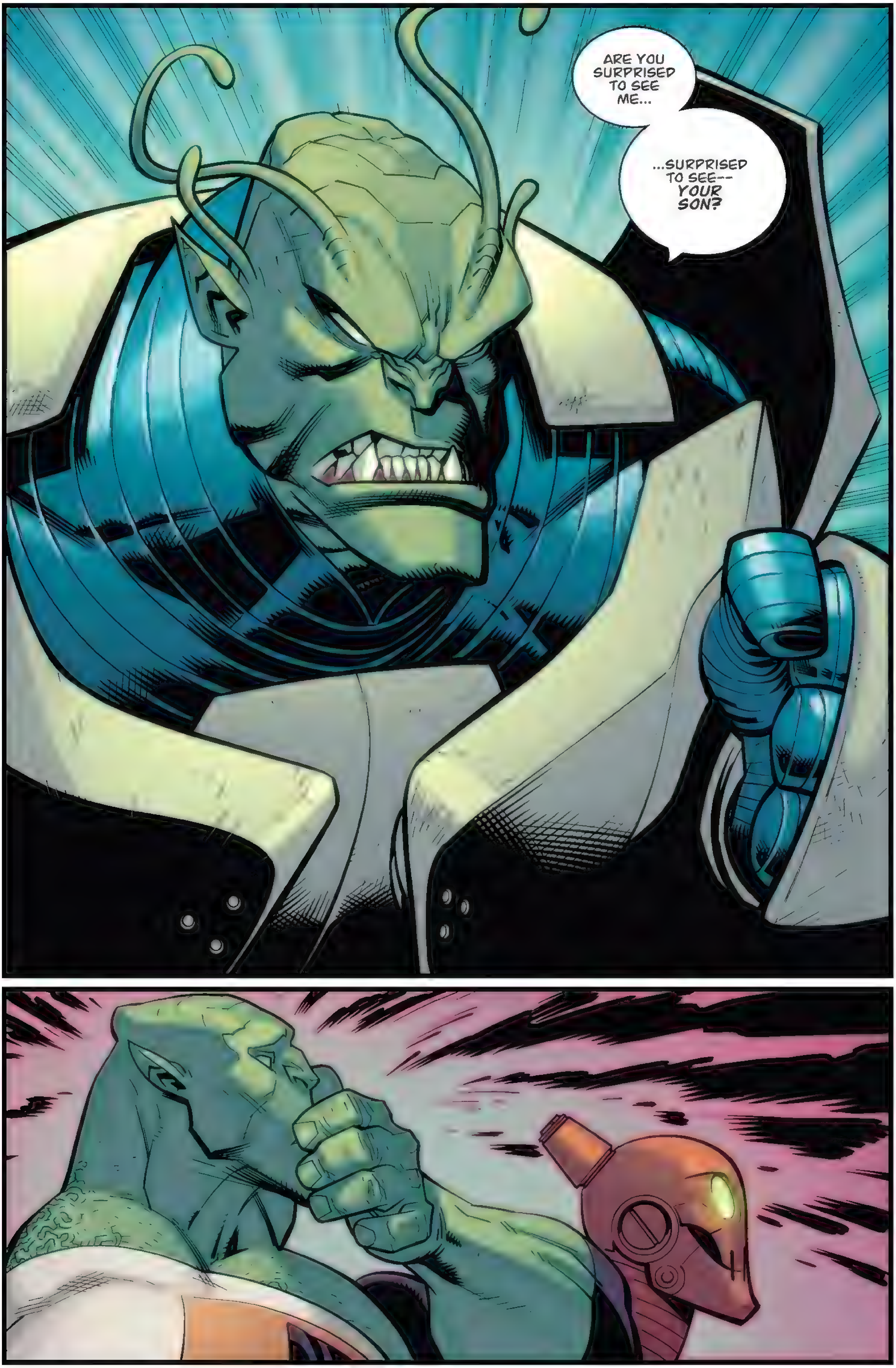

BECAUSE WE WERE FIGHTING FOR THE LIFE WE'D BUILT, THERE, IN THAT WORLD. A LIFE WE HAD NO INTENTION OF EVER LEAVING... A LIFE WE WOULD LIVE...


...TOGETHER.
FOREVER.


THE WAR WAS *OVER*.
ALL THE SLAVE RACES WERE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME DIMENSIONS. MOST CHOSE *NOT* TO, AS THEY'D BEEN HERE FOR GENERATIONS.
ONCE WE'D CONFESSED OUR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER, MY AFFECTION FOR YOU SOMEHOW GREW EVEN *STRONGER*.
I ADMIRED YOUR STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE, YOUR ABILITY TO ADAPT TO ALL THE THINGS WE'D HAD TO ENDURE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL.
YOUR COMPASSION *MOVED* ME.
YOU CARED FOR ALL PEOPLE, EVEN OUR ENEMIES.
IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY.
I FELL DEEPER IN LOVE WITH YOU IN EVERY MOMENT.
YOU CARED FOR EVERYONE AND I THOUGHT THAT WAS WONDERFUL.
SEEING YOUR AFFECTION FOR THE FLAXANS...
I HAD NO IDEA HOW *CONCERNED* I SHOULD HAVE BEEN.


WAS IT *MY* FAULT?
DID I FAIL YOU? I COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN...
IF I'D KNOWN... I WOULD HAVE CHANGED...
...*EVERYTHING.*
THOOM!

WRAMM!
GOOD TIMING. I'M STRETCHED A LITTLE THIN. LOTS OF DRONES IN ACTION.
MUST HAVE GOTTEN DISTRACTED.
I *WASN'T* UNCONSCIOUS.
WHAT?
WHATEVER HE BLASTED US WITH--IT DIDN'T KNOCK US OUT--IT PARALYZED US TEMPORARILY.
I HEARD EVERYTHING YOU SAID.
AT LONG LAST I AM FACE TO FACE WITH YOU--!
LOOK UPON ME, **REX ROBOT** AND **AMANDA MONSTER GIRL**. I AM LIVING PROOF THAT YOUR WORK TO DESTROY MY PEOPLE HAS **FAILED**.
THAT'S RIGHT... I SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE, TOO.

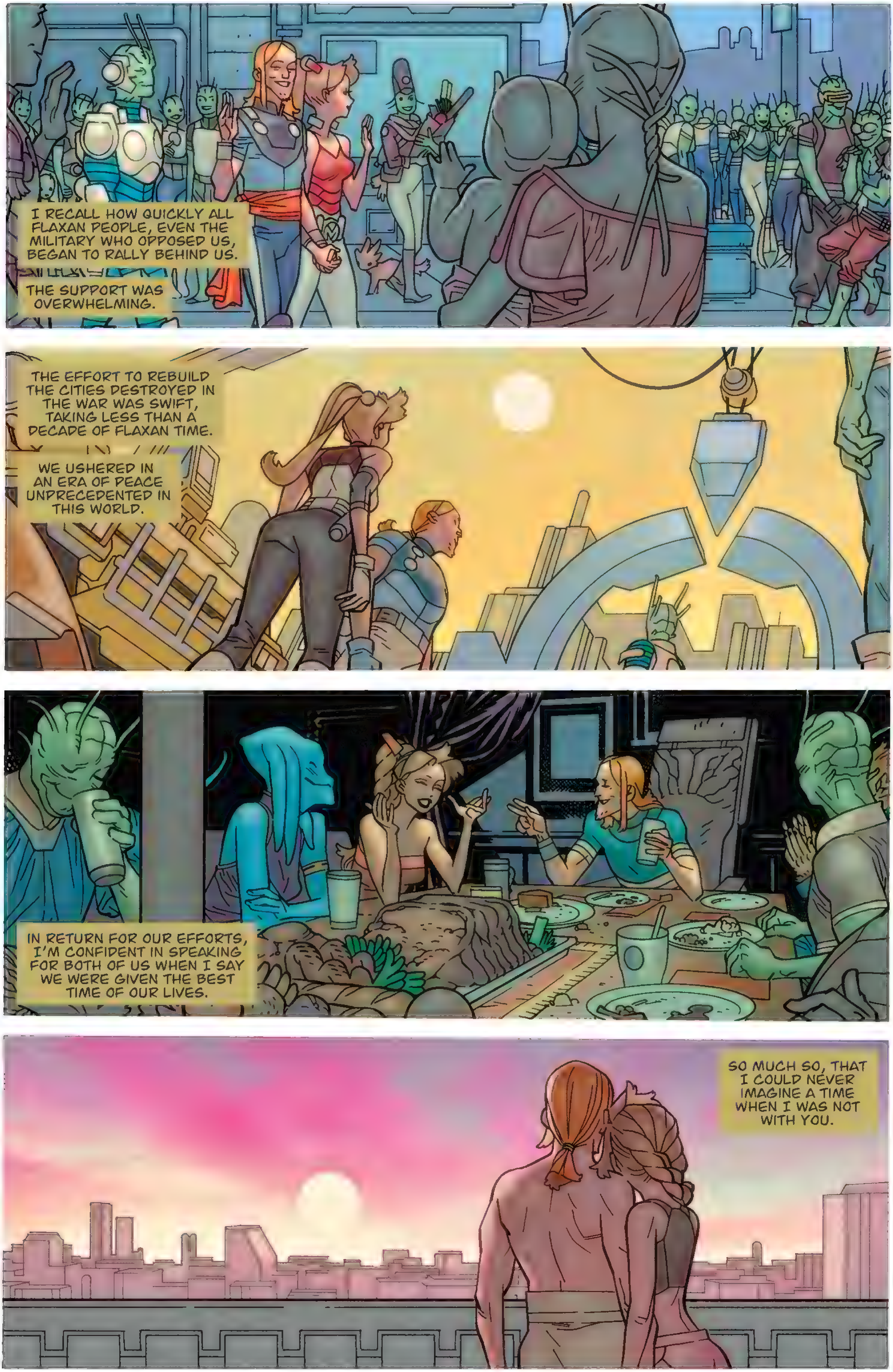

ARE YOU SURPRISED TO SEE ME...
...SURPRISED TO SEE-- *YOUR SON?*

CHAPTER 95

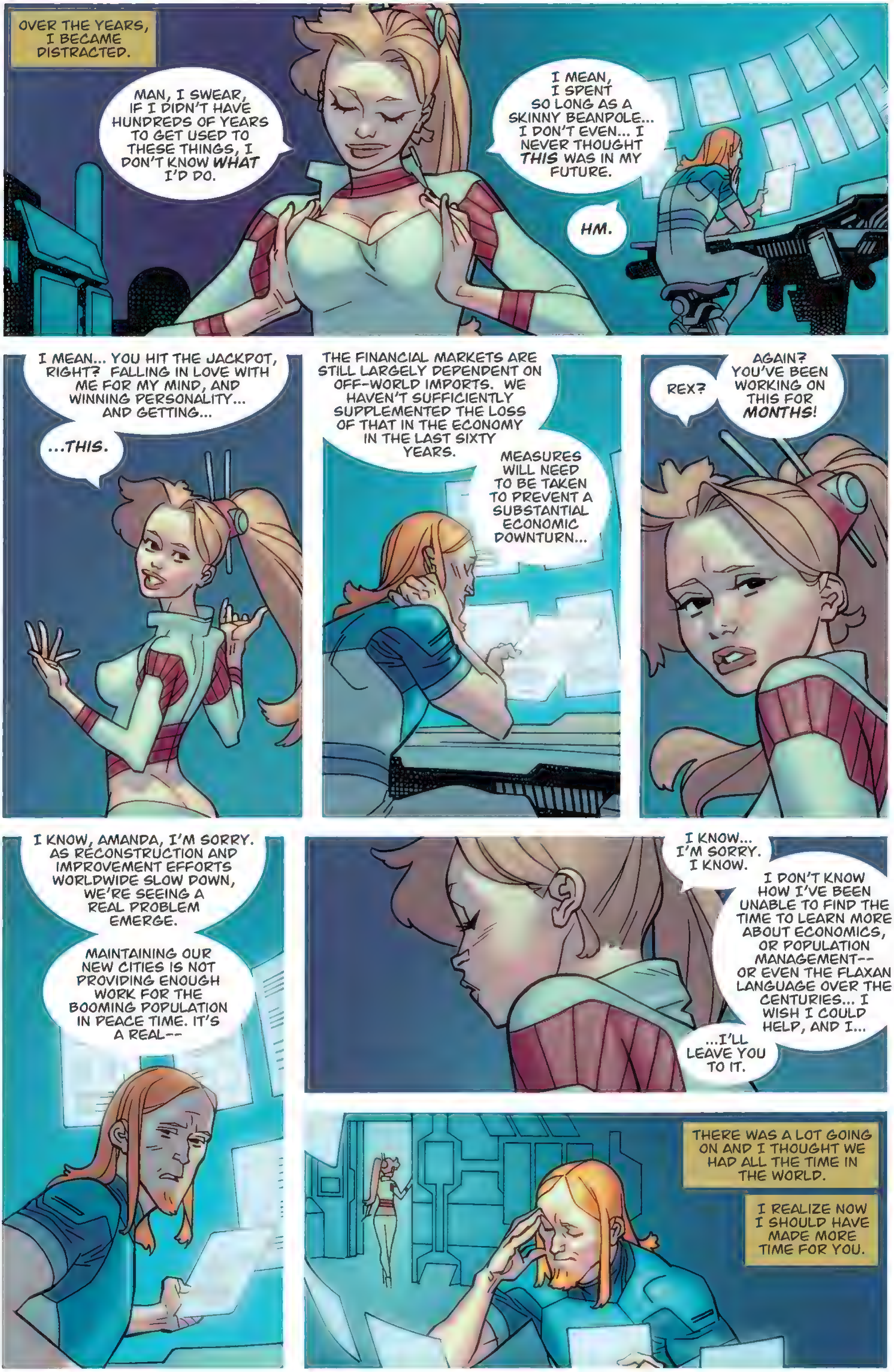
HOW *COULD* YOU DO THIS, AMANDA? HOW *DID* YOU HIDE THIS FROM ME?!
I-I--
AS WE SPEAK, THIS CITY BURNS TO THE GROUND. THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.
I WAS RAISED AMONG THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY... IN HIDING. I WAS TAUGHT OF YOUR CRIMES AGAINST US-- YOU COST THE ZAXALS *GENERATIONS* OF PROGRESS! I WAS TRAINED FOR ONE PURPOSE--
--*REVENGE* AGAINST THE ONE WHO SIRED ME-- AND THE ONE WHO TOOK *EVERYTHING* FROM MY PEOPLE!
A CHILD?! YOU HID A *CHILD* FROM ME?!
NO, IT'S NOT POSSIBLE--
I COULDN'T--

DEAREST AMANDA, I REMEMBER THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE END OF THE GREAT WAR OF INDEPENDENCE...
...HOW *HAPPY* WE WERE.
THE WHOLE PLANET WAS IN A PERIOD OF UPHEAVAL, EVERYTHING WAS IN QUESTION, THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY HAD BEEN PUSHED OUT OF POWER. THEIR EMPIRE WAS IN DISARRAY.
THE WHOLE PLANET SEEMED IN A PANIC...
...BUT WE HAD EACH OTHER.
WHEN THE DECISION WAS MADE THAT I WAS THE ONE MOST FIT TO ASSUME COMMAND... TO *RULE*... I ACCEPTED.
BECAUSE I KNEW I COULD USE THAT POSITION TO INFLUENCE THIS WORLD EVEN FURTHER... TO NEVER RETURN TO ITS OLD WAYS... TO *NEVER* INVADE EARTH...
...AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, I KNEW, THAT NO MATTER WHAT...

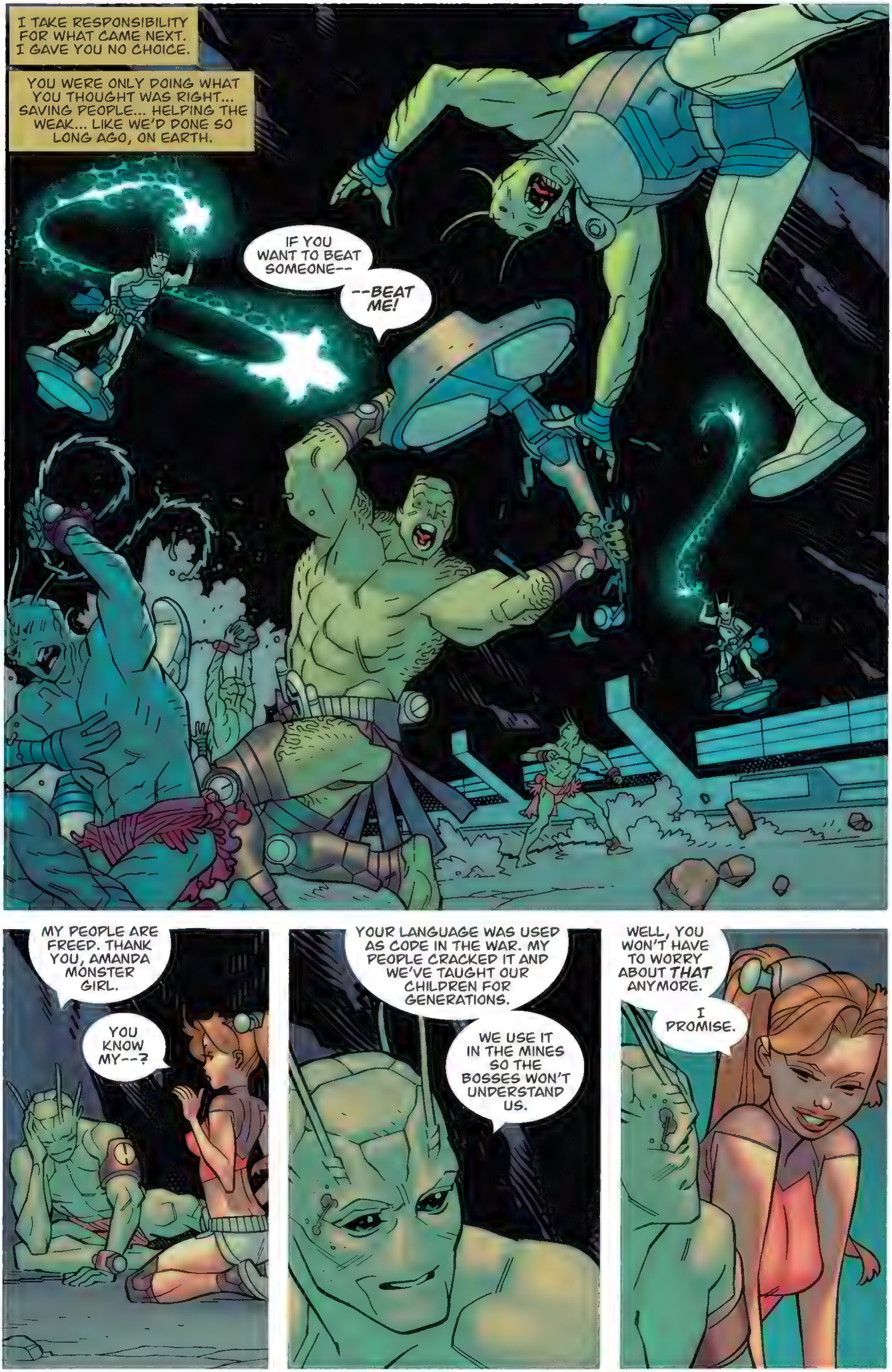
I WOULD HAVE *YOU* BY MY SIDE.
I REMEMBER OUR CONVERSATION, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, WHEN WE FIRST TOOK POWER... WE HAD THE MEANS TO RETURN TO EARTH, PUT THIS WORLD BEHIND US.
BUT IT HAD MEANT SO MUCH TO US, AND LIFE HERE SEEMED TO HOLD SO MUCH PROMISE...
...WE CHOSE TO STAY.


I RECALL HOW QUICKLY ALL FLAXAN PEOPLE, EVEN THE MILITARY WHO OPPOSED US, BEGAN TO RALLY BEHIND US.
THE SUPPORT WAS OVERWHELMING.
THE EFFORT TO REBUILD THE CITIES DESTROYED IN THE WAR WAS SWIFT, TAKING LESS THAN A DECADE OF FLAXAN TIME.
WE USHERED IN AN ERA OF PEACE UNPRECEDENTED IN THIS WORLD.
IN RETURN FOR OUR EFFORTS, I'M CONFIDENT IN SPEAKING FOR BOTH OF US WHEN I SAY WE WERE GIVEN THE BEST TIME OF OUR LIVES.
SO MUCH SO, THAT I COULD NEVER IMAGINE A TIME WHEN I WAS NOT WITH YOU.

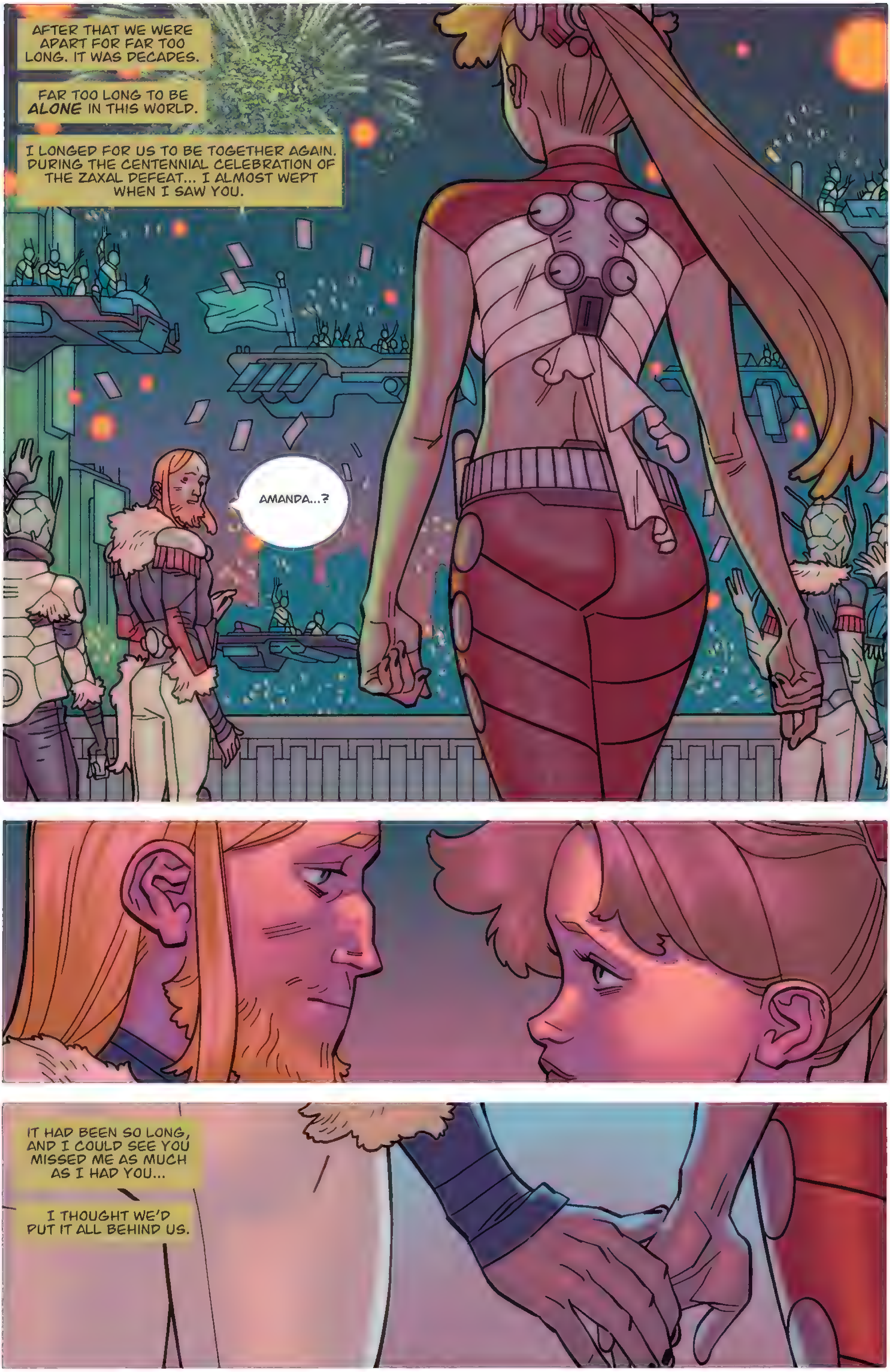
ALL THAT SAID, WE WERE NOT WITHOUT OUR DISAGREEMENTS.
I'M JUST SAYING... **FIFTEEN YEARS** IS A LONG TIME, IT SEEMS LIKE ENOUGH PUNISHMENT.
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? **RELEASE** THEM?
YES.
THAT'S **EXACTLY** WHAT I'D HAVE YOU DO. REX, PLEASE... THE PEOPLE LOVE YOU FOR YOUR COMPASSION. THESE PEOPLE ARE NO DANGER TO YOU.
THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY PRACTICALLY **ENSLAVED** THIS ENTIRE PLANET. THEY'RE A DANGER TO EVERYONE.
THEY'RE WELL TAKEN CARE OF IN THEIR IMPRISONMENT... THEY'LL LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES IN COMFORT, I REFUSE TO EXECUTE THEM-- BUT RELEASING THEM?
YOU'RE BETTER THAN THIS. THE PEOPLE **KNOW** YOU'RE BETTER THAN THIS.
REX, PLEASE....
YOU ALWAYS PUSHED ME TO BE BETTER, YOU HELPED ME KEEP MYSELF IN CHECK...
...MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO YOU MORE.

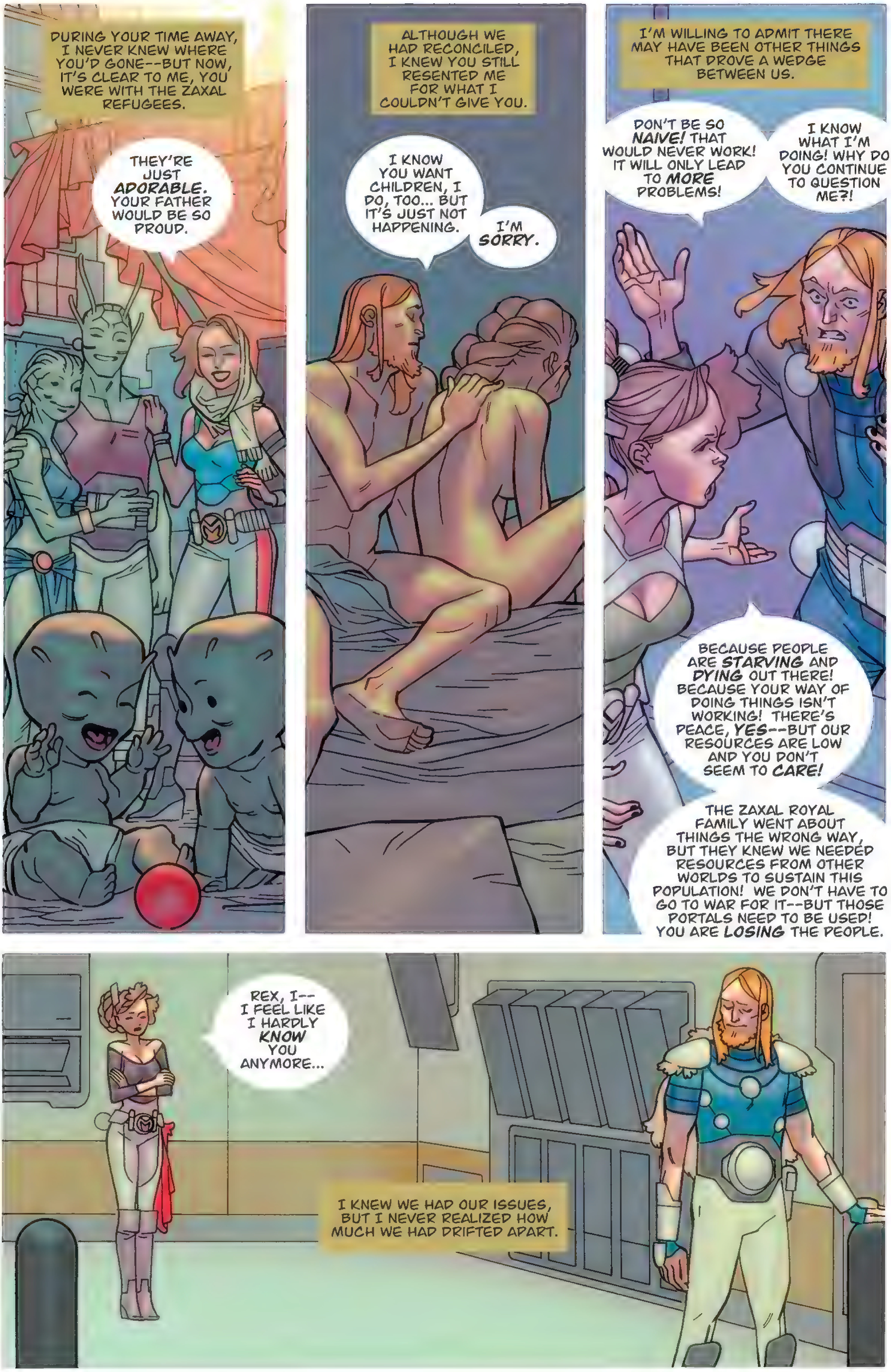

OVER THE YEARS, I BECAME DISTRACTED.
MAN, I SWEAR, IF I DIDN'T HAVE HUNDREDS OF YEARS TO GET USED TO THESE THINGS, I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* I'D DO.
I MEAN, I SPENT SO LONG AS A SKINNY BEANPOLE... I DON'T EVEN... I NEVER THOUGHT *THIS* WAS IN MY FUTURE.
HM.
I MEAN... YOU HIT THE JACKPOT, RIGHT? FALLING IN LOVE WITH ME FOR MY MIND, AND WINNING PERSONALITY... AND GETTING...
...THIS.
THE FINANCIAL MARKETS ARE STILL LARGELY DEPENDENT ON OFF-WORLD IMPORTS. WE HAVEN'T SUFFICIENTLY SUPPLEMENTED THE LOSS OF THAT IN THE ECONOMY IN THE LAST SIXTY YEARS.
MEASURES WILL NEED TO BE TAKEN TO PREVENT A SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC DOWNTURN...
REX?
AGAIN? YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS FOR *MONTHS!*
I KNOW, AMANDA, I'M SORRY. AS RECONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS WORLDWIDE SLOW DOWN, WE'RE SEEING A REAL PROBLEM EMERGE.
MAINTAINING OUR NEW CITIES IS NOT PROVIDING ENOUGH WORK FOR THE BOOMING POPULATION IN PEACE TIME. IT'S A REAL--
I KNOW... I'M SORRY. I KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND THE TIME TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ECONOMICS, OR POPULATION MANAGEMENT-- OR EVEN THE FLAXAN LANGUAGE OVER THE CENTURIES... I WISH I COULD HELP, AND I...
...I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT.
THERE WAS A LOT GOING ON AND I THOUGHT WE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.
I REALIZE NOW I SHOULD HAVE MADE MORE TIME FOR YOU.

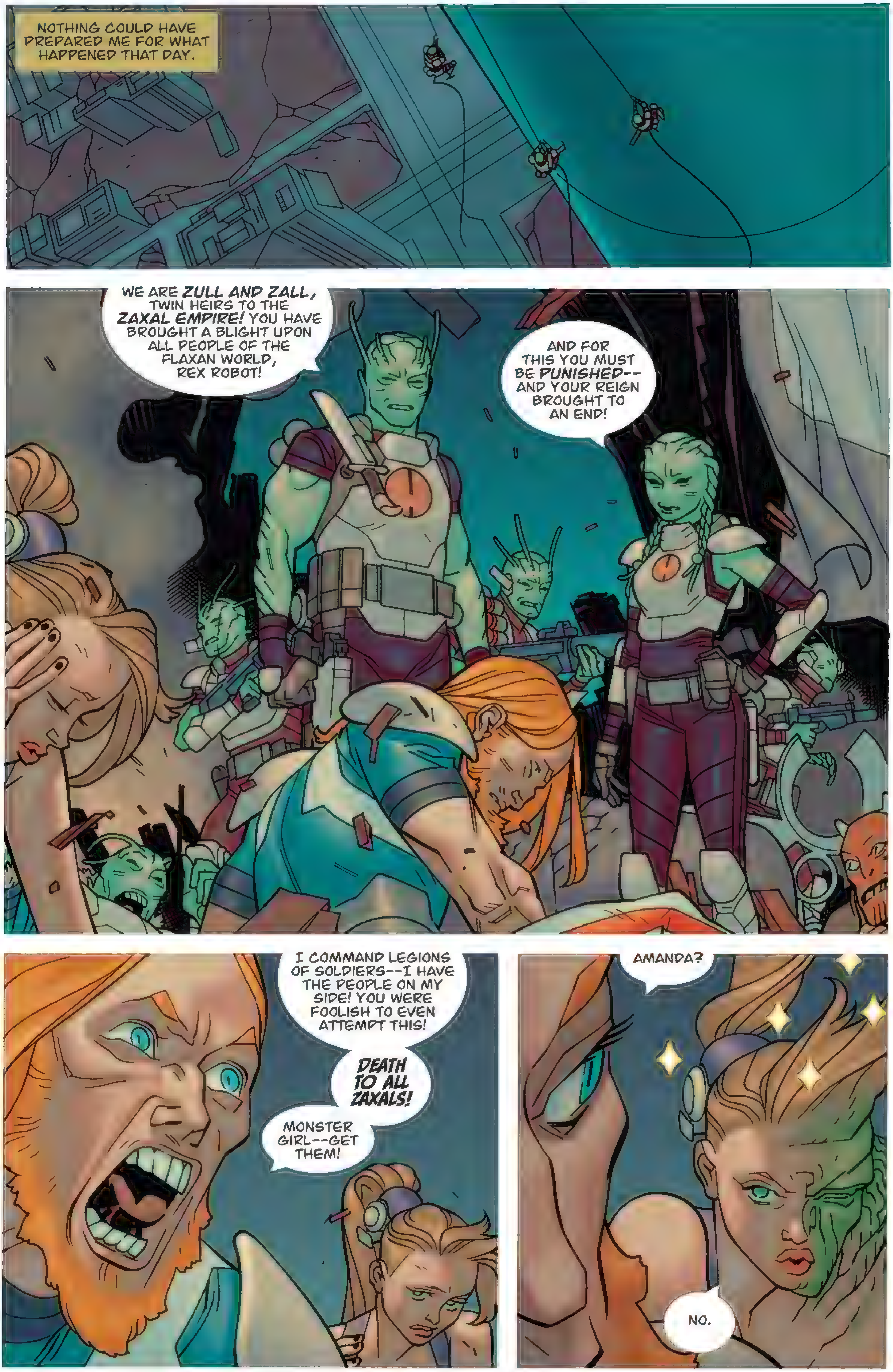
I WAS SO BUSY, I FAILED TO NOTICE WHEN YOU STARTED TO TURN AGAINST ME, THE MOMENT WHEN I LOST YOU.
AMANDA, WE'RE JUST--
MEETING, PLANNING, RUNNING AN ENTIRE CIVILIZATION--I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! THAT'S WHY I'M HERE!
WHY DID YOU NEVER TELL ME ABOUT THE ZAXAL WORK CLASSIFICATION ACT?! I KNOW, I DON'T KNOW THE LANGUAGE, I'VE TRIED TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE... BUT THAT DOESN'T GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO KEEP THINGS FROM ME!
DESCENDANTS OF THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY AND THEIR ALLIES ARE RESTRICTED ACCESS TO CITY CENTERS?! HOW IS THAT *REMOTELY* HUMANE?!
DO YOU KNOW THEY WORK IN THE MINES OF THE WASTELAND TO EARN A LIVING WAGE? THEIR CHILDREN GROW UP IN TENT CITIES! HOW HAVE YOU ALLOWED THIS TO GO ON?!
<PLEASE EXCUSE ME.>
WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD IS AN *EXAGGERATION.*
THEY'RE KEPT FROM THE GENERAL POPULATION FOR *SECURITY* REASONS. YOU REMEMBER THE YEARS AFTER THE WAR--HOW MANY ZAXALS WERE EXECUTED IN THE STREETS.
I COULD THINK OF NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE, IT'S FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY.
THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS ARE ADEQUATE. THE WASTELAND HAS CHANGED A GREAT DEAL OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES, DUE IN LARGE PART TO THEIR SETTLEMENT OF THE AREA.
WHY HAVEN'T WE BEEN COMBATING THIS WITH EDUCATION AND BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY?
WHEN DID YOU *GIVE UP* ON INTEGRATING THEM INTO SOCIETY?!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE--WHAT'S AT STAKE? THERE ARE MANY WHO WOULD PREFER THINGS TO BE AS THEY WERE UNDER THE ZAXALS.
I HAVE TO OPPOSE RADICAL POLITICAL FACTIONS EVERY ELECTION--SOME HAVE EVEN PROPOSED A RETURN OF SLAVERY.
THEY'RE THE GRANDCHILDREN OF OUR ENEMY AT THIS POINT... BUT THEY'RE STILL DANGEROUS.
I PUSHED YOU AWAY WHEN I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT YOU IN, EXPLAINED THINGS BETTER... SHOWN YOU WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT.

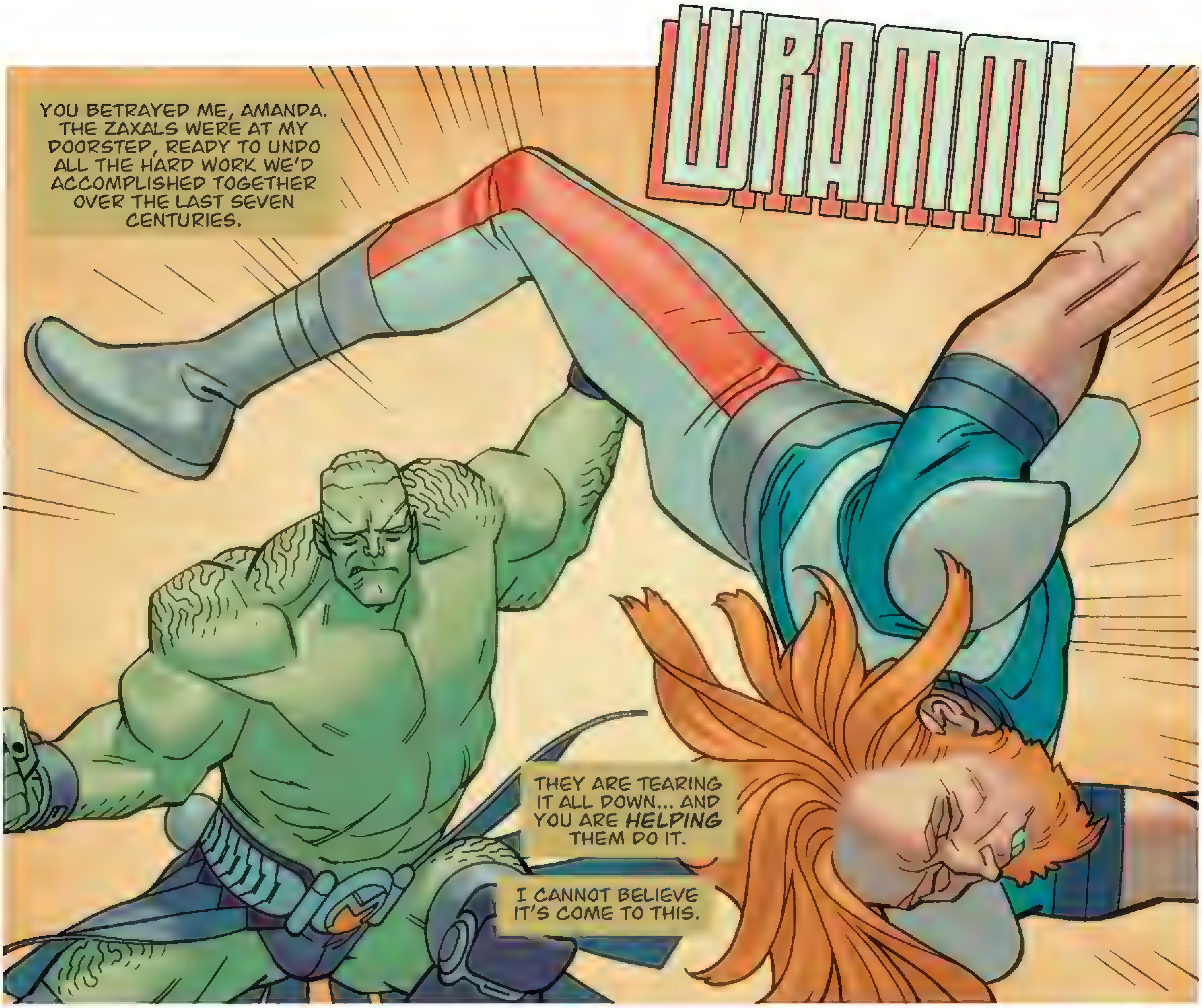

I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT CAME NEXT. I GAVE YOU NO CHOICE.
YOU WERE ONLY DOING WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS RIGHT... SAVING PEOPLE... HELPING THE WEAK... LIKE WE'D DONE SO LONG AGO, ON EARTH.
IF YOU WANT TO BEAT SOMEONE--
--BEAT *ME!*
MY PEOPLE ARE FREED. THANK YOU, AMANDA MONSTER GIRL.
YOU KNOW MY--?
YOUR LANGUAGE WAS USED AS CODE IN THE WAR. MY PEOPLE CRACKED IT AND WE'VE TAUGHT OUR CHILDREN FOR GENERATIONS.
WE USE IT IN THE MINES SO THE BOSSES WON'T UNDERSTAND US.
WELL, YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT *THAT* ANYMORE.
I PROMISE.

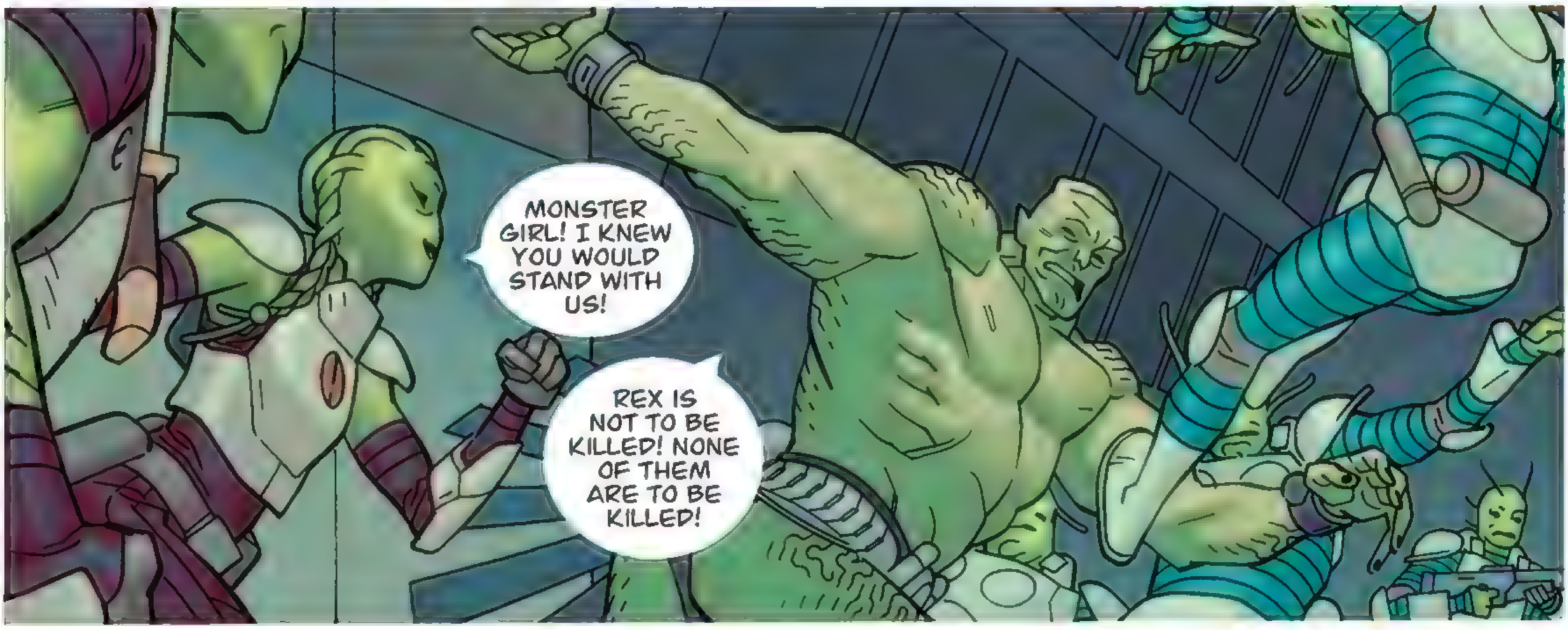
YOU MADE THEM SECOND CLASS CITIZENS, REX! PEOPLE ARE PUNISHED FOR GIVING THEM WORK-- THEY CAN'T FEED THEIR YOUNG!
THE MINES WERE THEIR ONLY MEANS OF SUPPORTING THEMSELVES-- AND THE BOSSES **KNEW** THAT. THEY WERE ESSENTIALLY **SLAVES!**
YOU DON'T EVEN **REALIZE** WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
I REALIZE **EXACTLY** WHAT I'VE DONE.
I WAS **HELPING** PEOPLE. REMEMBER THAT--DOING THE RIGHT THING?
YOU UNDERMINED MY AUTHORITY!
DO YOU NOT SEE WHAT A DELICATE HOLD I HAVE ON THESE PEOPLE?! ALL OF THIS COULD COME CRASHING DOWN AROUND US AT ANY MINUTE!
IT'S **MY** RESPONSIBILITY TO HOLD IT ALL TOGETHER! **MINE!** THAT WEIGHT RESTS ON MY SHOULDERS.
AND YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU WERE **HELPING?!**
GET OUT OF MY **SIGHT.**
I AM SORRY THAT IT HAS TAKEN ME THIS LONG TO ADMIT THAT I WAS WRONG THAT DAY.

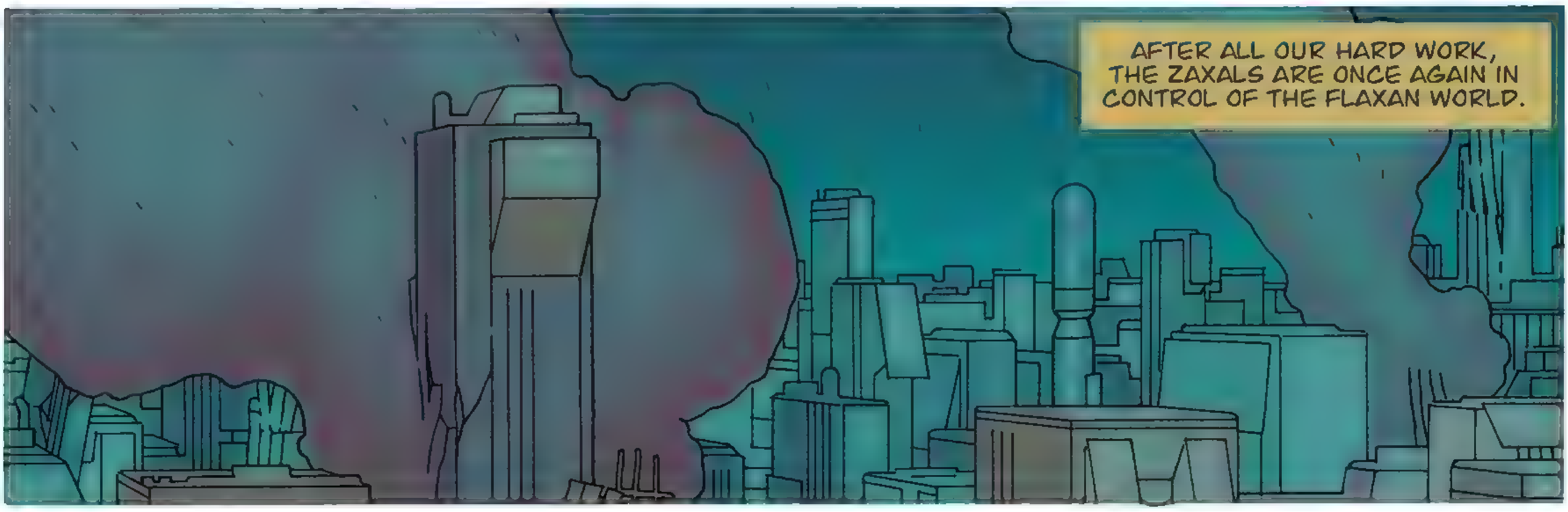

AFTER THAT WE WERE APART FOR FAR TOO LONG. IT WAS DECADES.
FAR TOO LONG TO BE **ALONE** IN THIS WORLD.
I LONGED FOR US TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN. DURING THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE ZAXAL DEFEAT... I ALMOST WEPT WHEN I SAW YOU.
AMANDA...?
IT HAD BEEN SO LONG, AND I COULD SEE YOU MISSED ME AS MUCH AS I HAD YOU...
I THOUGHT WE'D PUT IT ALL BEHIND US.

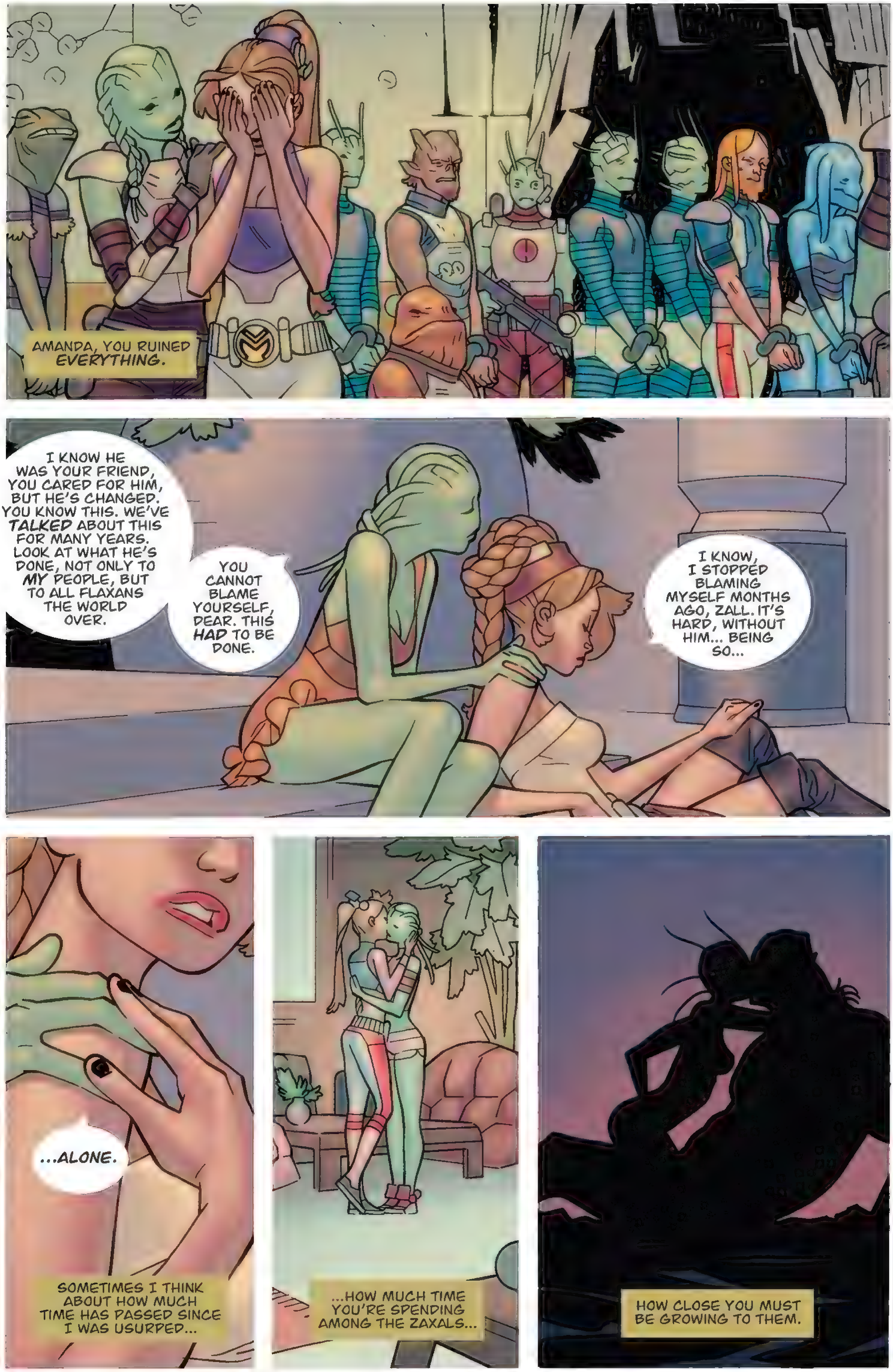

DURING YOUR TIME AWAY, I NEVER KNEW WHERE YOU'D GONE--BUT NOW, IT'S CLEAR TO ME, YOU WERE WITH THE ZAXAL REFUGEES.
THEY'RE JUST *ADORABLE*. YOUR FATHER WOULD BE SO PROUD.
ALTHOUGH WE HAD RECONCILED, I KNEW YOU STILL RESENTED ME FOR WHAT I COULDN'T GIVE YOU.
I KNOW YOU WANT CHILDREN, I DO, TOO... BUT IT'S JUST NOT HAPPENING.
I'M *SORRY*.
I'M WILLING TO ADMIT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN OTHER THINGS THAT DROVE A WEDGE BETWEEN US.
DON'T BE SO *NAIVE!* THAT WOULD NEVER WORK! IT WILL ONLY LEAD TO *MORE* PROBLEMS!
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO QUESTION ME?!
BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE *STARVING* AND *DYING* OUT THERE! BECAUSE YOUR WAY OF DOING THINGS ISN'T WORKING! THERE'S PEACE, *YES*--BUT OUR RESOURCES ARE LOW AND YOU DON'T SEEM TO *CARE!*
THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY WENT ABOUT THINGS THE WRONG WAY, BUT THEY KNEW WE NEEDED RESOURCES FROM OTHER WORLDS TO SUSTAIN THIS POPULATION! WE DON'T HAVE TO GO TO WAR FOR IT--BUT THOSE PORTALS NEED TO BE USED! YOU ARE *LOSING* THE PEOPLE.
REX, I-- I FEEL LIKE I HARDLY *KNOW* YOU ANYMORE...
I KNEW WE HAD OUR ISSUES, BUT I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH WE HAD DRIFTED APART.

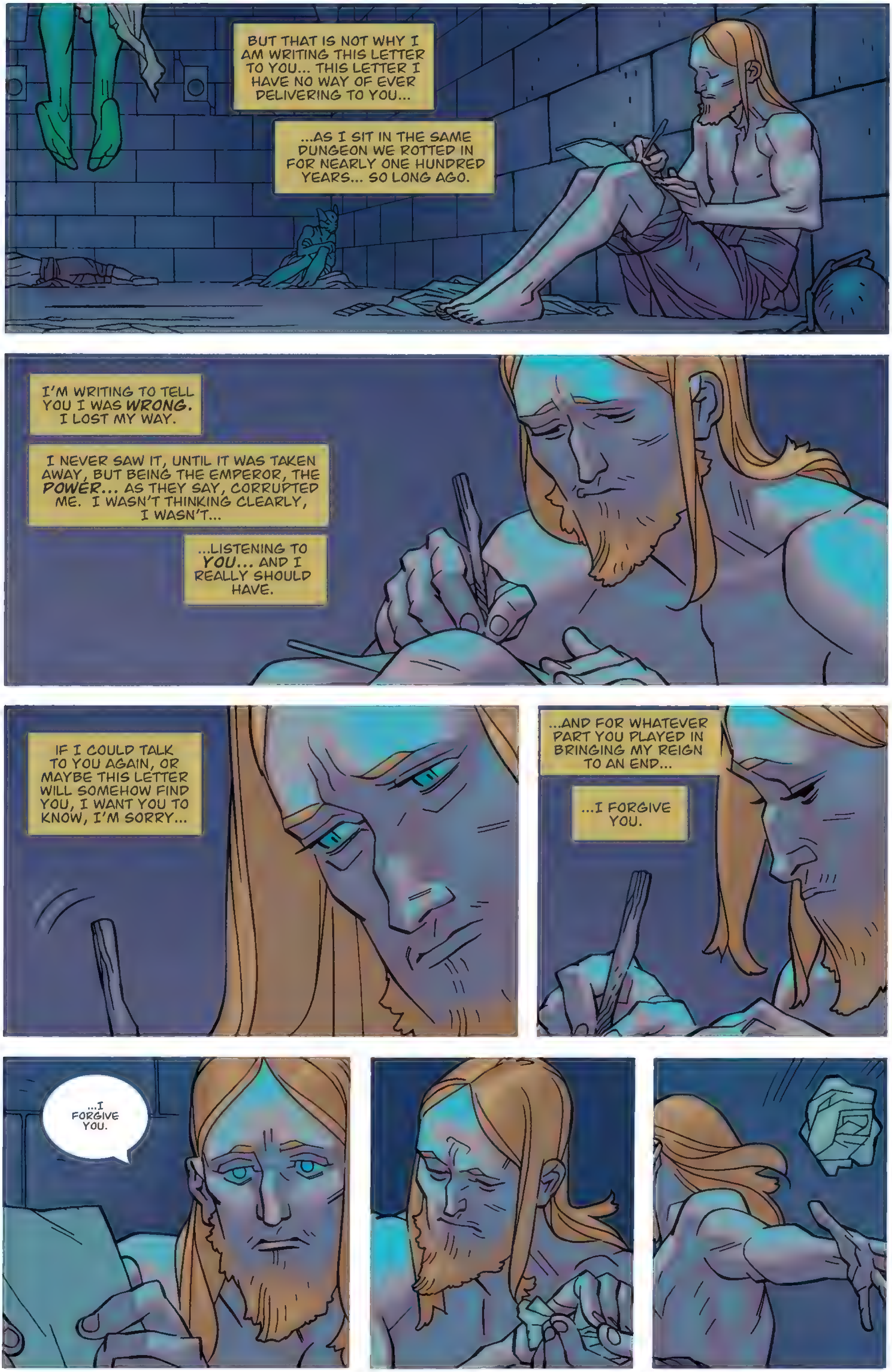

NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY.
WE ARE **ZULL AND ZALL,** TWIN HEIRS TO THE **ZAXAL EMPIRE!** YOU HAVE BROUGHT A BLIGHT UPON ALL PEOPLE OF THE FLAXAN WORLD, REX ROBOT!
AND FOR THIS YOU MUST BE **PUNISHED**-- AND YOUR REIGN BROUGHT TO AN END!
I COMMAND LEGIONS OF SOLDIERS--I HAVE THE PEOPLE ON MY SIDE! YOU WERE FOOLISH TO EVEN ATTEMPT THIS!
DEATH TO ALL ZAXALS!
MONSTER GIRL--GET THEM!
AMANDA?
NO.


WRAMM!
YOU BETRAYED ME, AMANDA. THE ZAXALS WERE AT MY DOORSTEP, READY TO UNDO ALL THE HARD WORK WE'D ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER OVER THE LAST SEVEN CENTURIES.
THEY ARE TEARING IT ALL DOWN... AND YOU ARE **HELPING** THEM DO IT.
I CANNOT BELIEVE IT'S COME TO THIS.

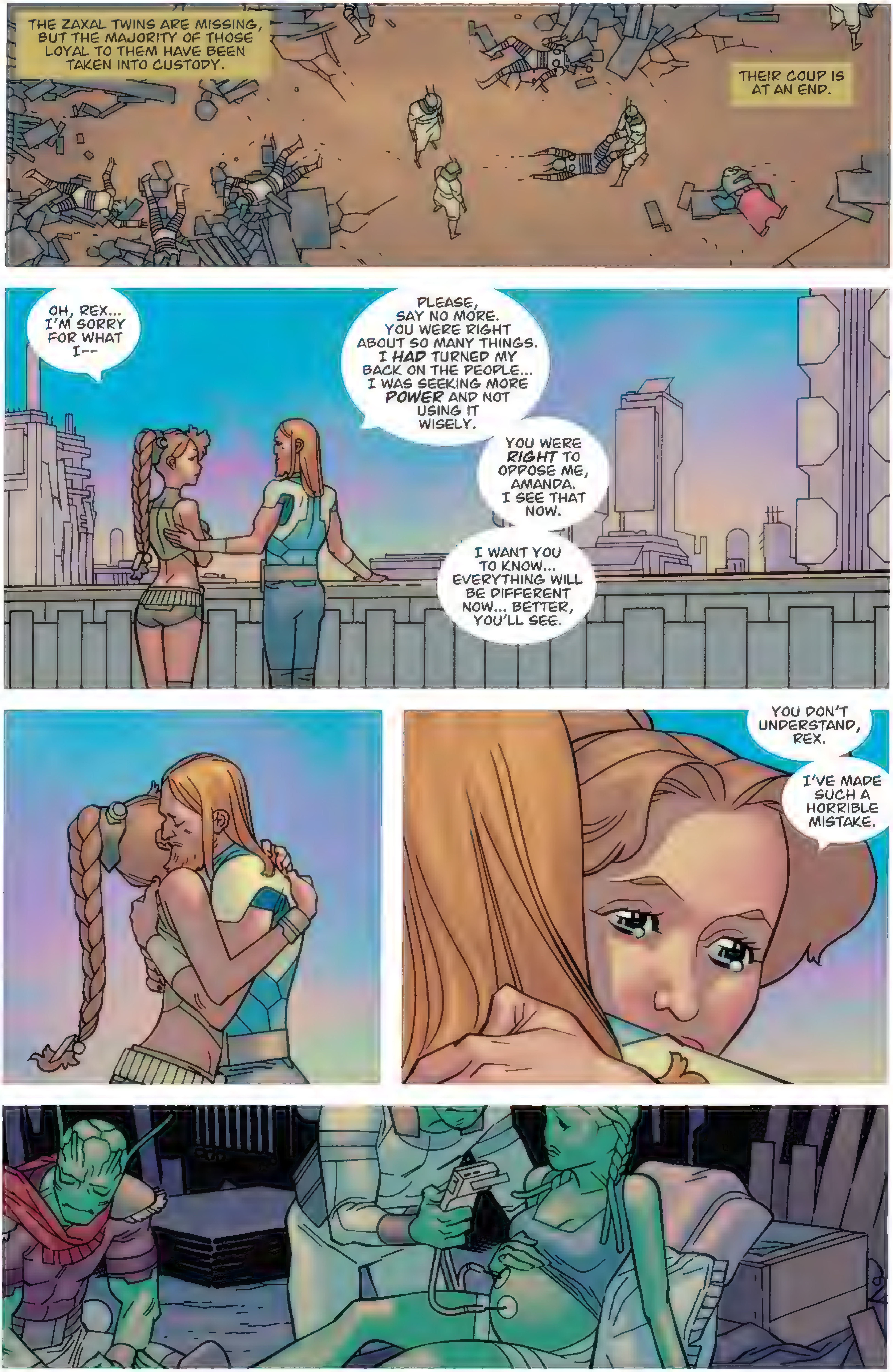

MONSTER GIRL! I KNEW YOU WOULD STAND WITH US!
REX IS NOT TO BE KILLED! NONE OF THEM ARE TO BE KILLED!

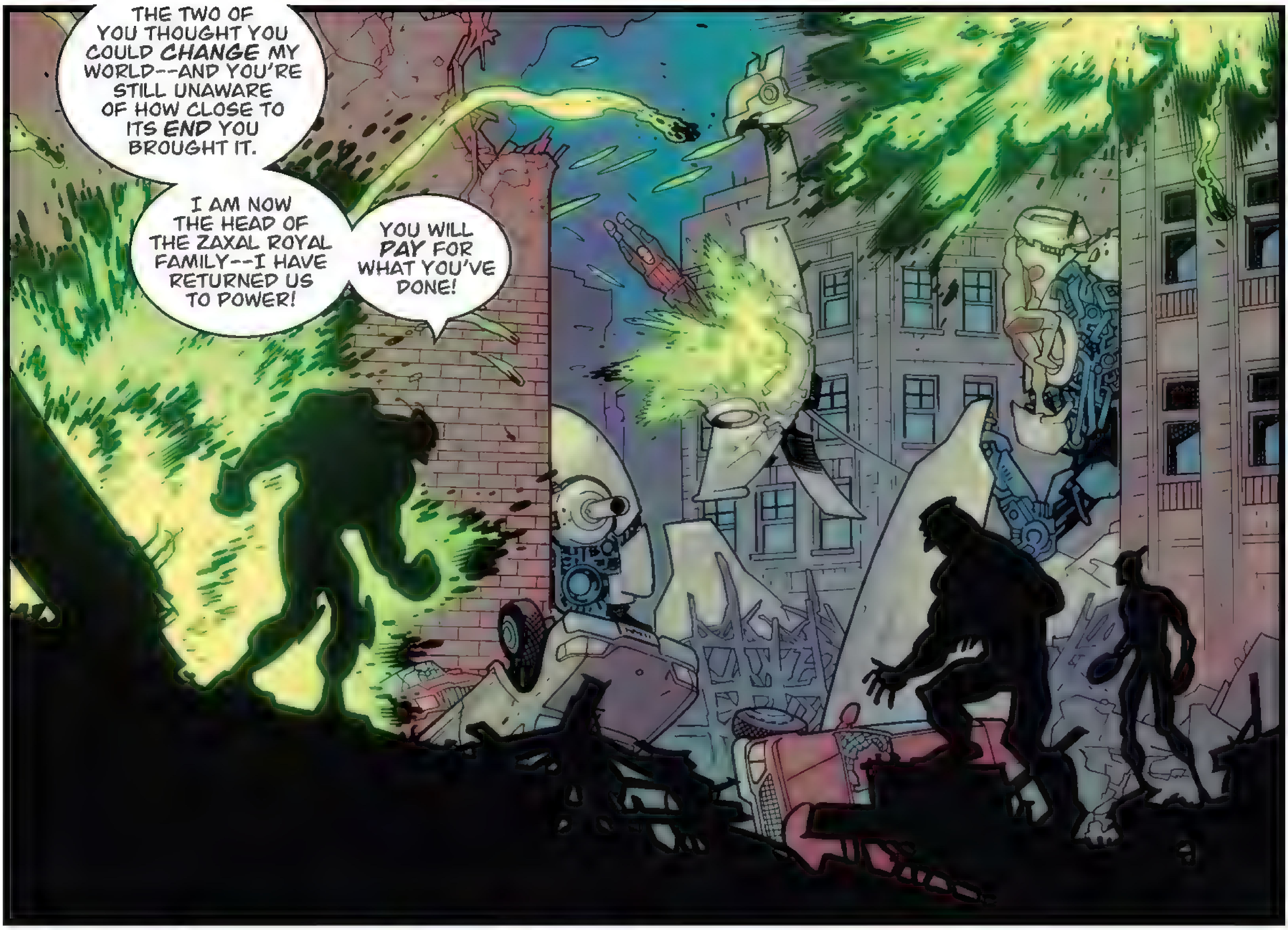

AFTER ALL OUR HARD WORK, THE ZAXALS ARE ONCE AGAIN IN CONTROL OF THE FLAXAN WORLD.

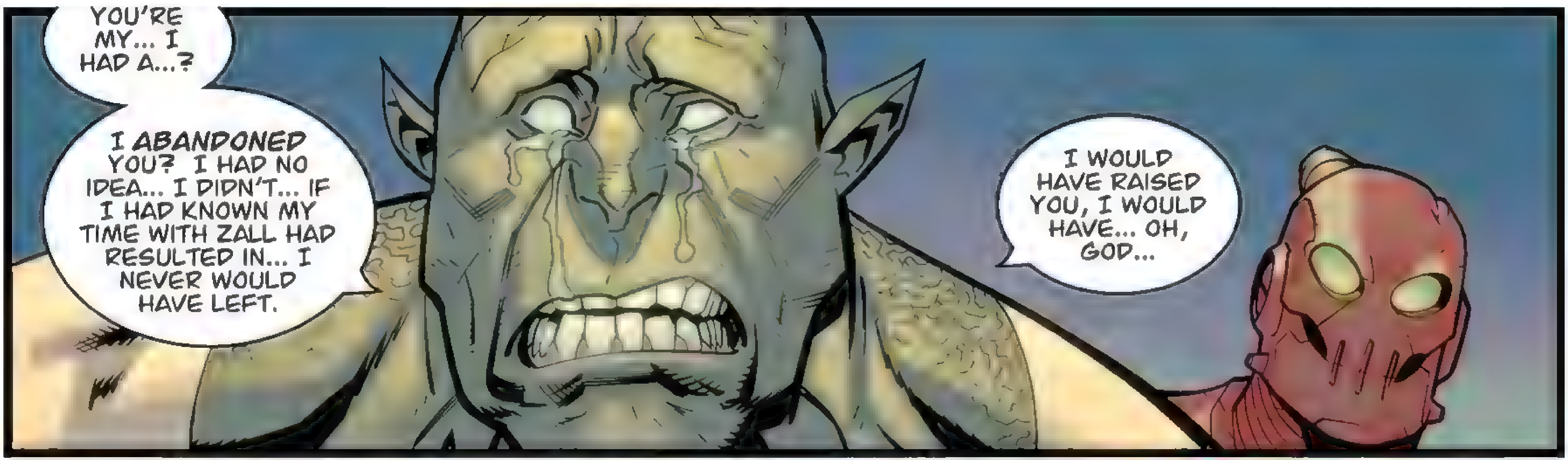

AMANDA, YOU RUINED *EVERYTHING.*
I KNOW HE WAS YOUR FRIEND, YOU CARED FOR HIM, BUT HE'S CHANGED. YOU KNOW THIS. WE'VE *TALKED* ABOUT THIS FOR MANY YEARS. LOOK AT WHAT HE'S DONE, NOT ONLY TO *MY* PEOPLE, BUT TO ALL FLAXANS THE WORLD OVER.
YOU CANNOT BLAME YOURSELF, DEAR. THIS *HAD* TO BE DONE.
I KNOW, I STOPPED BLAMING MYSELF MONTHS AGO, ZALL. IT'S HARD, WITHOUT HIM... BEING SO...
...ALONE.
SOMETIMES I THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE I WAS USURPED...
...HOW MUCH TIME YOU'RE SPENDING AMONG THE ZAXALS...
HOW CLOSE YOU MUST BE GROWING TO THEM.

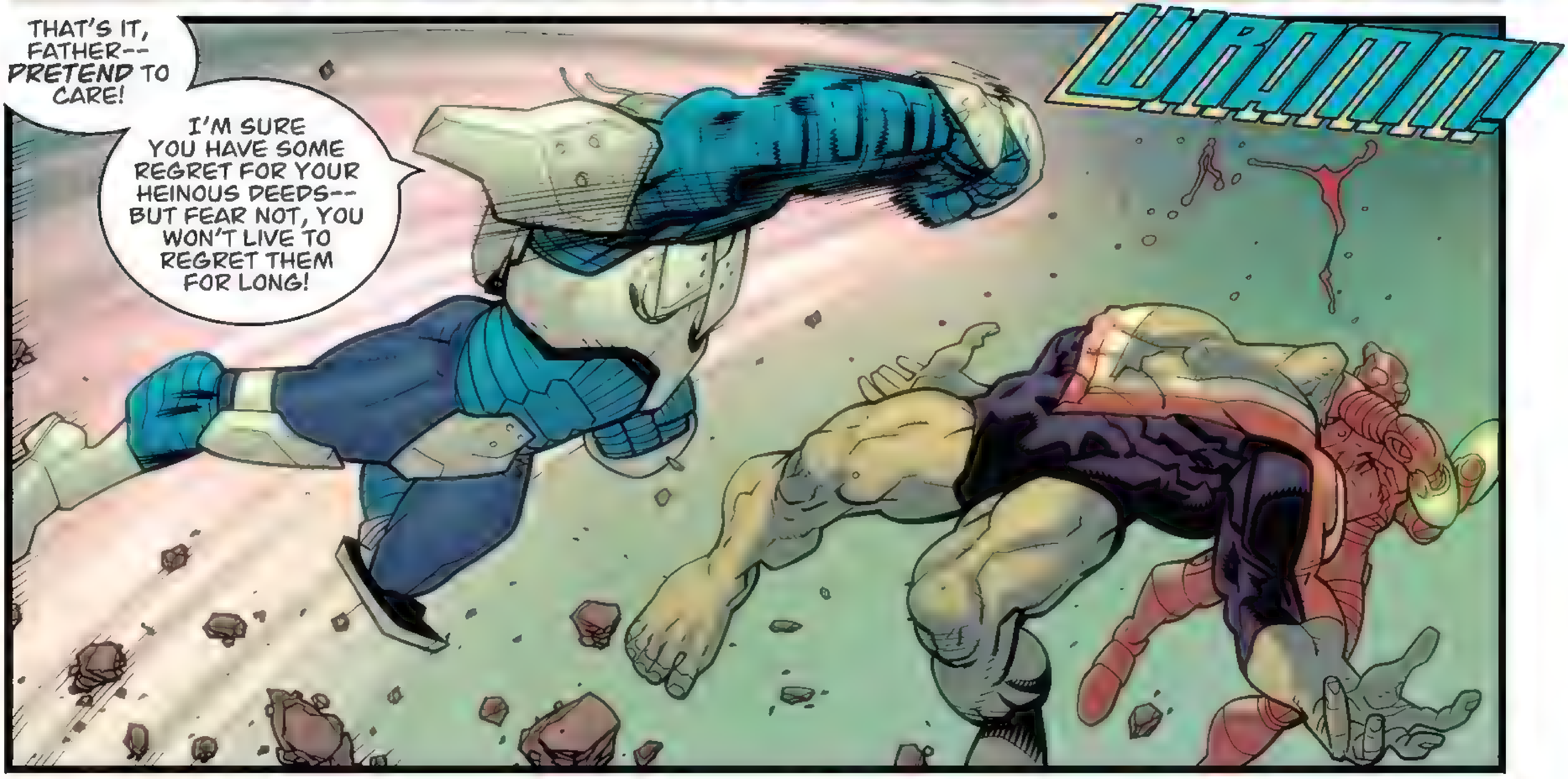

BUT THAT IS NOT WHY I AM WRITING THIS LETTER TO YOU... THIS LETTER I HAVE NO WAY OF EVER DELIVERING TO YOU...
...AS I SIT IN THE SAME DUNGEON WE ROTTED IN FOR NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS... SO LONG AGO.
I'M WRITING TO TELL YOU I WAS **WRONG.** I LOST MY WAY.
I NEVER SAW IT, UNTIL IT WAS TAKEN AWAY, BUT BEING THE EMPEROR, THE ***POWER...*** AS THEY SAY, CORRUPTED ME. I WASN'T THINKING CLEARLY, I WASN'T...
...LISTENING TO ***YOU...*** AND I REALLY SHOULD HAVE.
IF I COULD TALK TO YOU AGAIN, OR MAYBE THIS LETTER WILL SOMEHOW FIND YOU, I WANT YOU TO KNOW, I'M SORRY...
...AND FOR WHATEVER PART YOU PLAYED IN BRINGING MY REIGN TO AN END...
...I FORGIVE YOU.
...I FORGIVE YOU.

KRNKOOOM!
REX, YOU HAVE TO HELP ME--YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT THE ZAXALS! THEY'RE MOUNTING AN ATTACK ON ANOTHER DIMENSION RIGHT NOW!
WE HAVE TO *STOP* THEM!
I HAVE MOBILIZED THE FORCES THAT REMAIN LOYAL TO ME--ARMIES IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH ARE DRIVING THE ZAXALS OUT OF THE PALACE AND HAVE EFFECTIVELY DISRUPTED THEIR INVASION PLANS.
THIS SHOULD BE OVER WITHIN THE WEEK.


THE ZAXAL TWINS ARE MISSING, BUT THE MAJORITY OF THOSE LOYAL TO THEM HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY.
THEIR COUP IS AT AN END.
OH, REX... I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I--
PLEASE, SAY NO MORE. YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT SO MANY THINGS. I *HAD* TURNED MY BACK ON THE PEOPLE... I WAS SEEKING MORE *POWER* AND NOT USING IT WISELY.
YOU WERE *RIGHT* TO OPPOSE ME, AMANDA. I SEE THAT NOW.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW... EVERYTHING WILL BE DIFFERENT NOW... BETTER, YOU'LL SEE.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, REX.
I'VE MADE SUCH A HORRIBLE MISTAKE.


THE TWO OF YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD *CHANGE* MY WORLD--AND YOU'RE STILL UNAWARE OF HOW CLOSE TO ITS *END* YOU BROUGHT IT.
I AM NOW THE HEAD OF THE ZAXAL ROYAL FAMILY--I HAVE RETURNED US TO POWER!
YOU WILL *PAY* FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE!

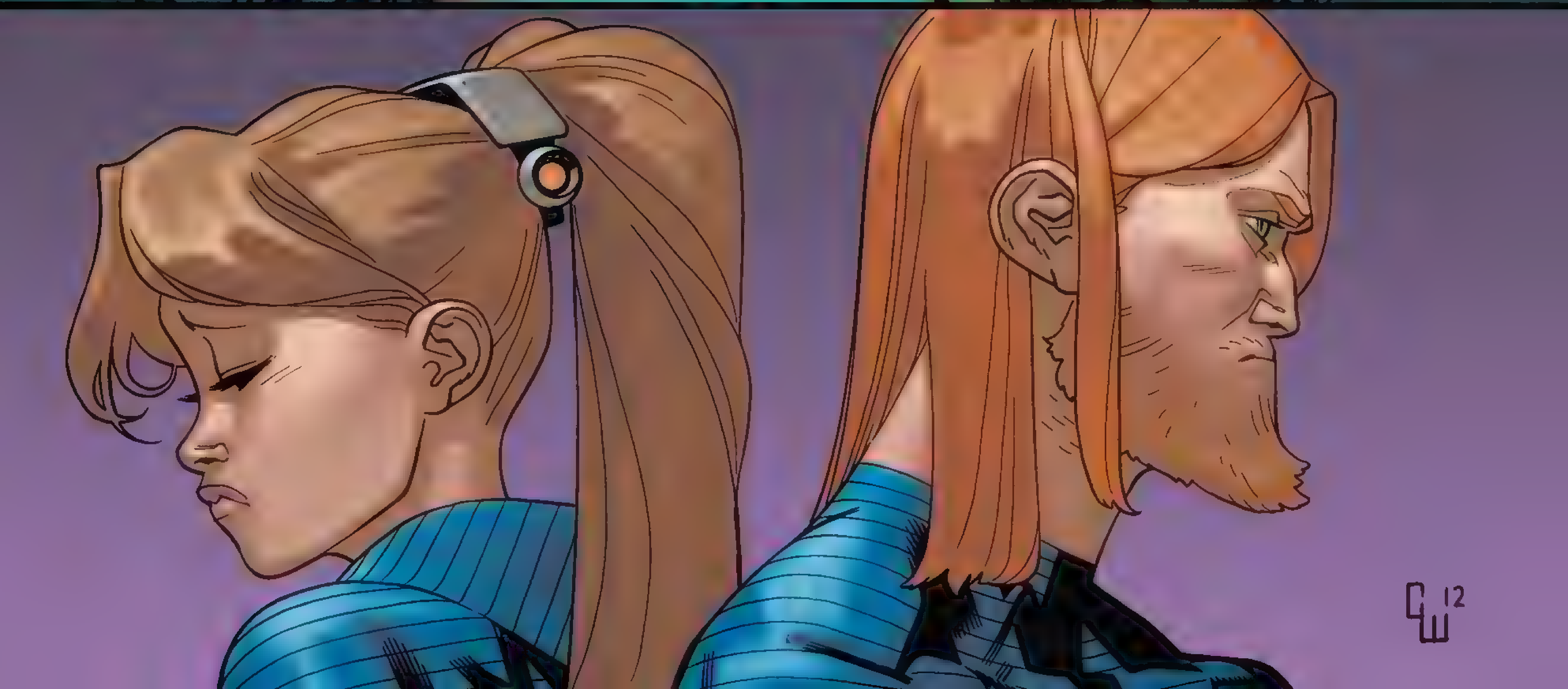

YOU'RE MY... I HAD A...?
I *ABANDONED* YOU? I HAD NO IDEA... I DIDN'T... IF I HAD KNOWN MY TIME WITH ZALL HAD RESULTED IN... I NEVER WOULD HAVE LEFT.
I WOULD HAVE RAISED YOU, I WOULD HAVE... OH, GOD...

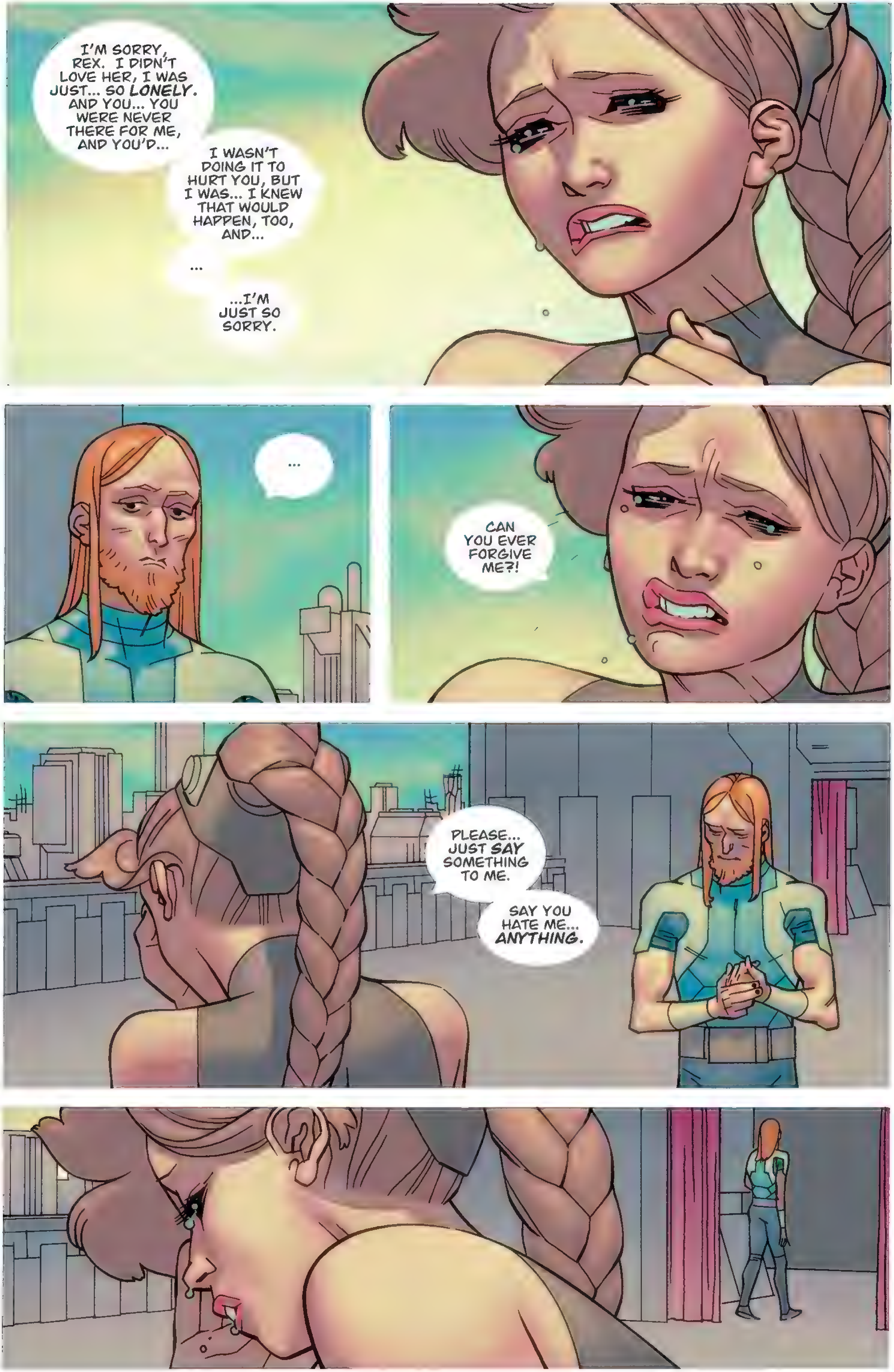

THAT'S IT, FATHER-- *PRETEND* TO CARE!
I'M SURE YOU HAVE SOME REGRET FOR YOUR HEINOUS DEEDS-- BUT FEAR NOT, YOU WON'T LIVE TO REGRET THEM FOR LONG!
WHAMM!

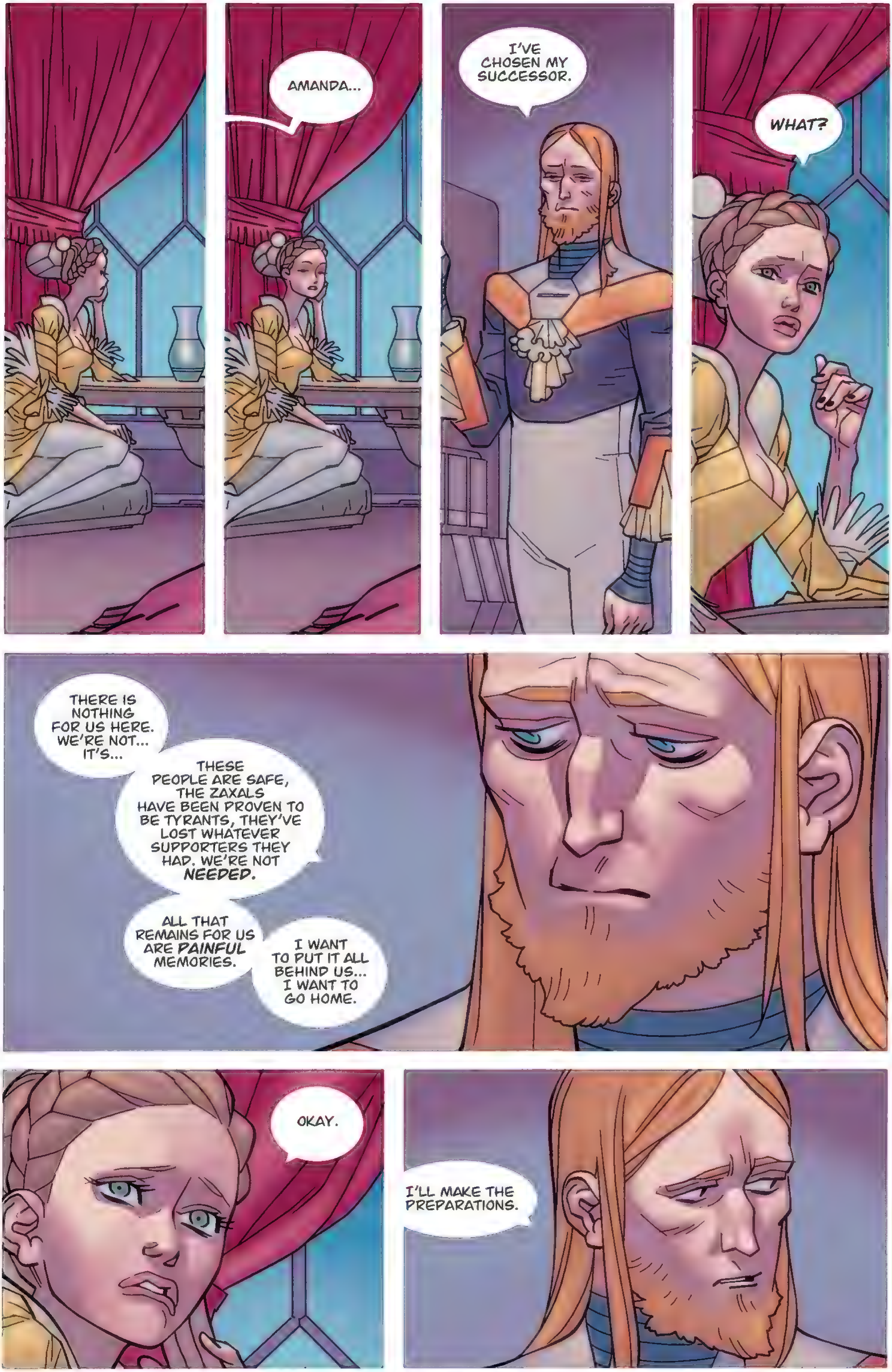
WRAKOOM!
HOW-- HOW COULD I--?
NO TIME FOR THAT NOW, AMANDA. WE'LL SORT THIS OUT LATER--FOR NOW, HE JUST NEEDS TO BE **STOPPED**.
KRAKK!
DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE ME! I COMMAND THE FLAXAN **LEGIONS**--
--YOUR END--YOUR **WORLD'S** END--WILL BE SWIFT!
WROKK!
SOON I WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT YOU DID--REBUILD YOUR WORLD IN MY IMAGE.
AND I'LL KEEP YOU BOTH ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO WITNESS THIS AND DESPAIR.
WRAMM!!
OR **NOT!**

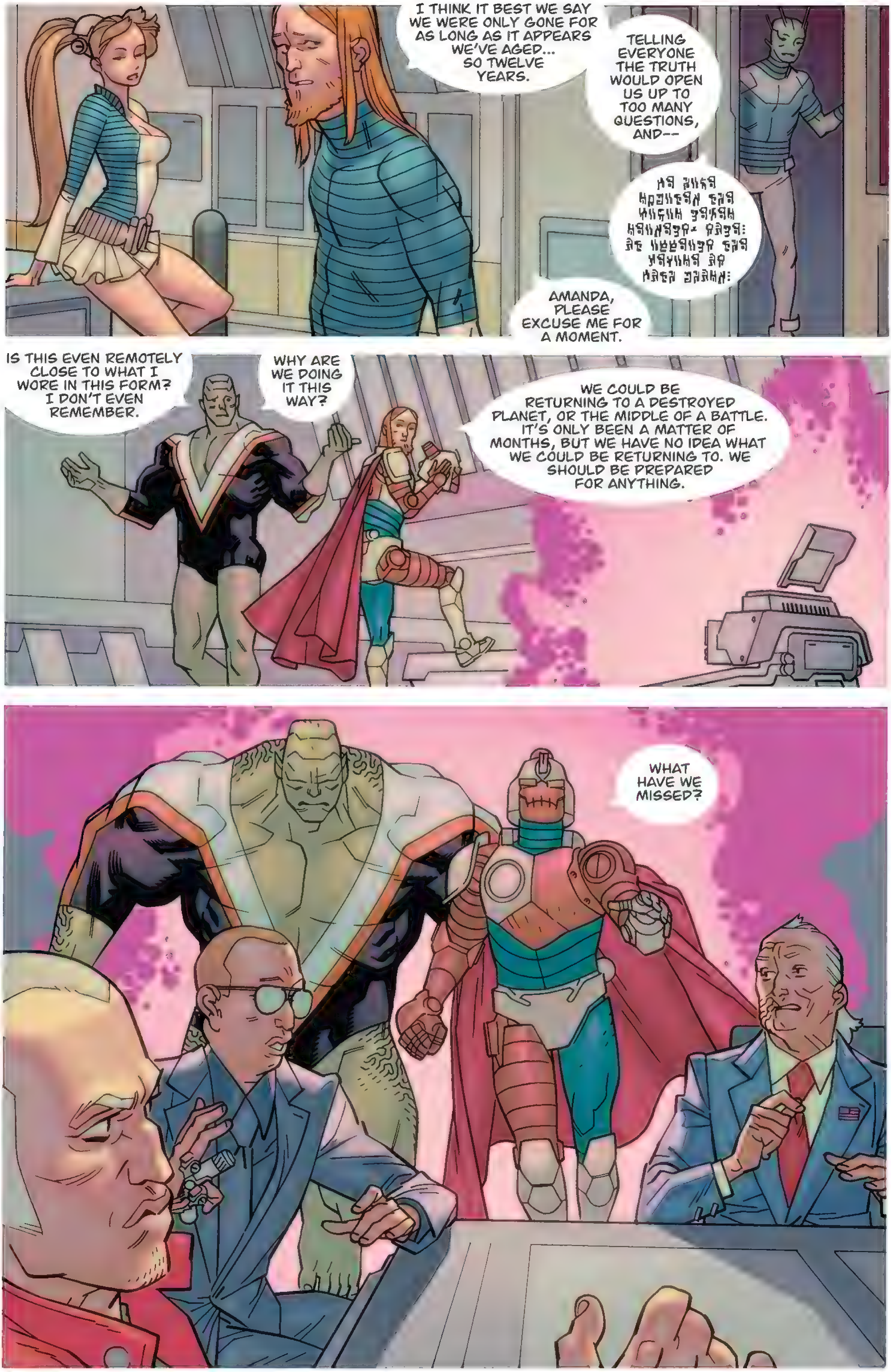
ON YOUR *FEET*, SOLDIER.
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE BACK IN FULL FORCE, AND WE'RE AT *YOUR* COMMAND. YOU KNOW THESE BASTARDS BETTER THAN *ANY* OF US...
...AND I'M WILLING TO BET, GIVEN THE RIGHT RESOURCES, YOU KNOW *EXACTLY* HOW TO BEAT THEM...
LET'S *FINISH* THIS!

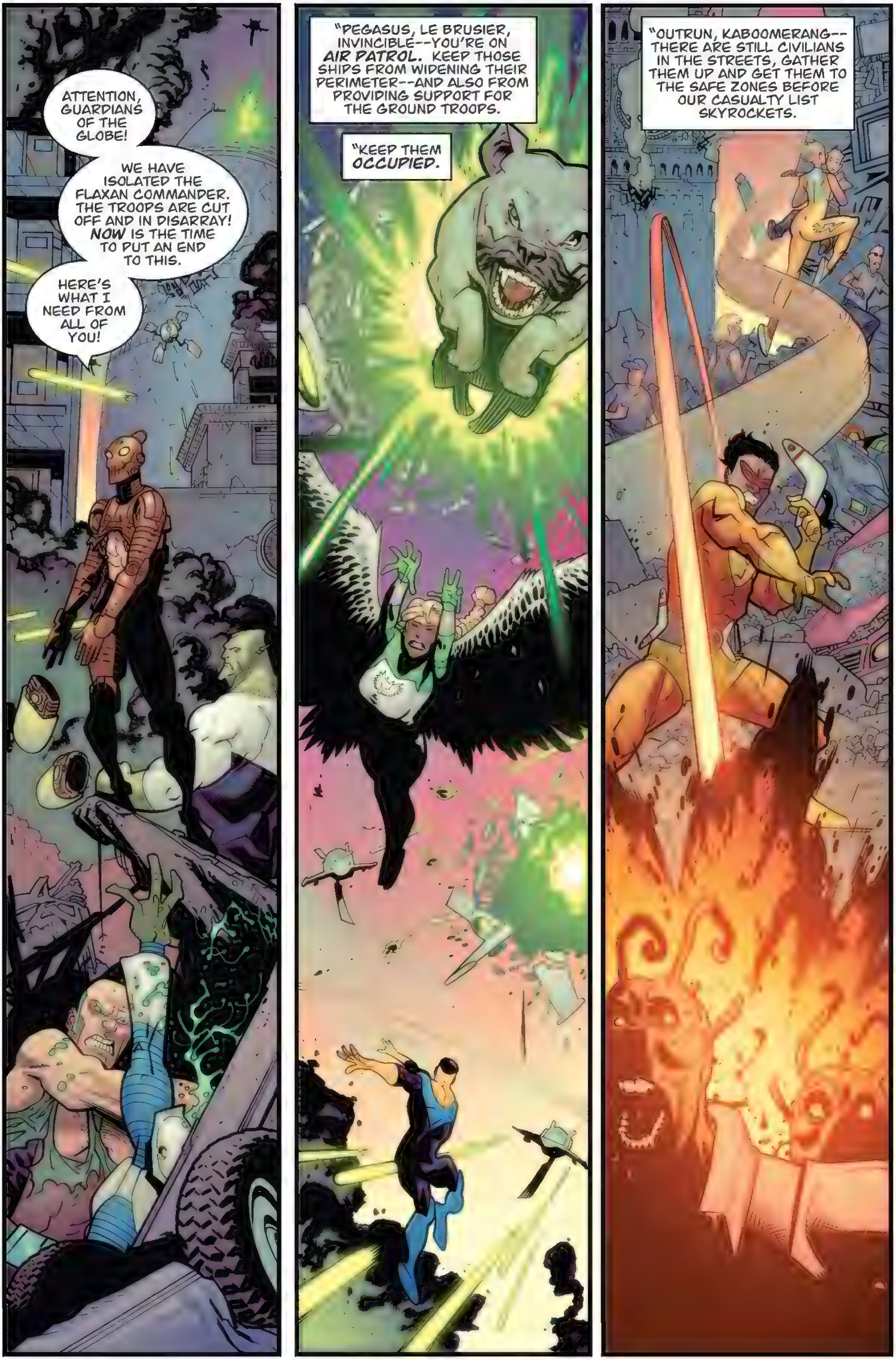
CHAPTER 96

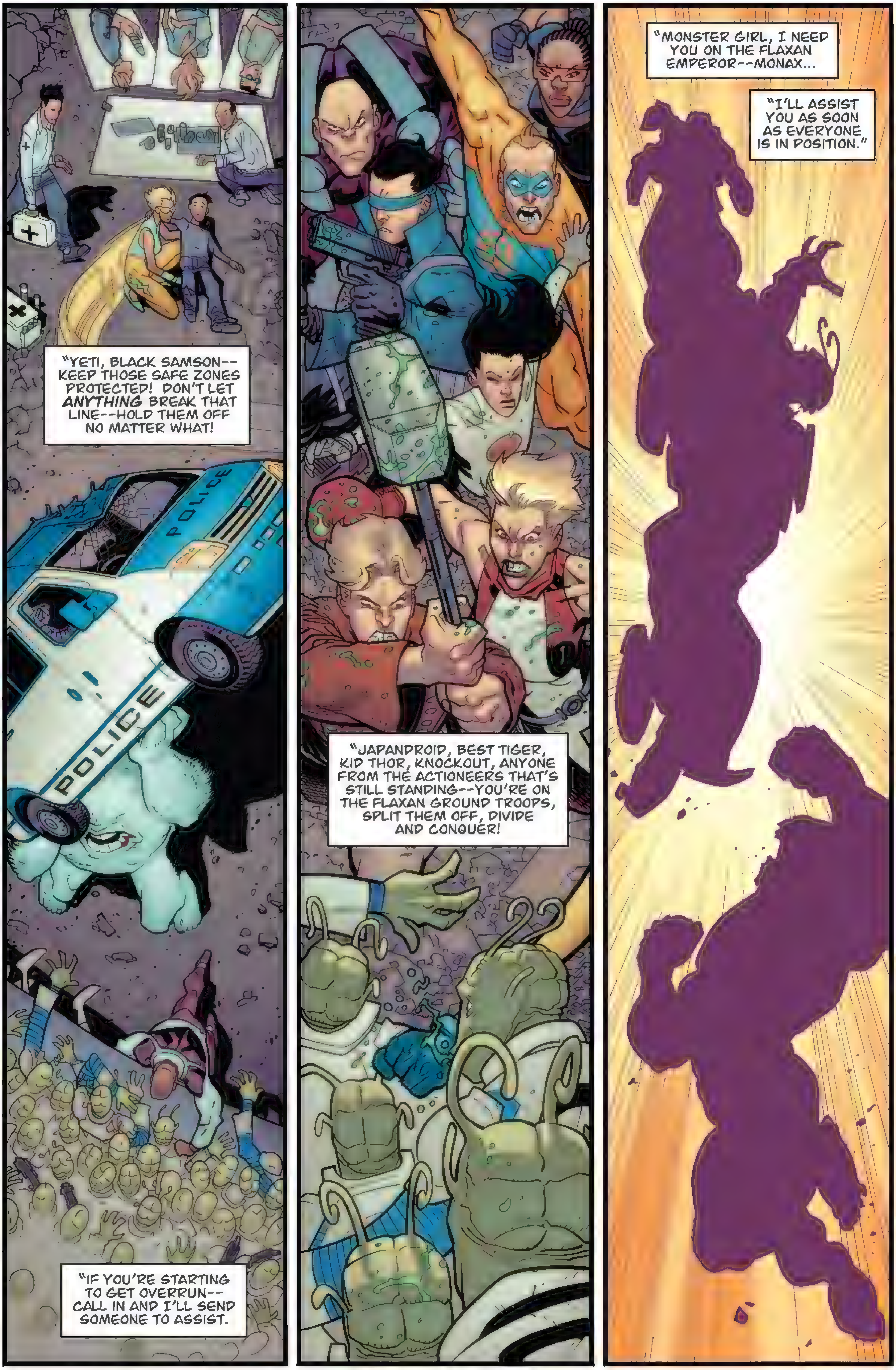


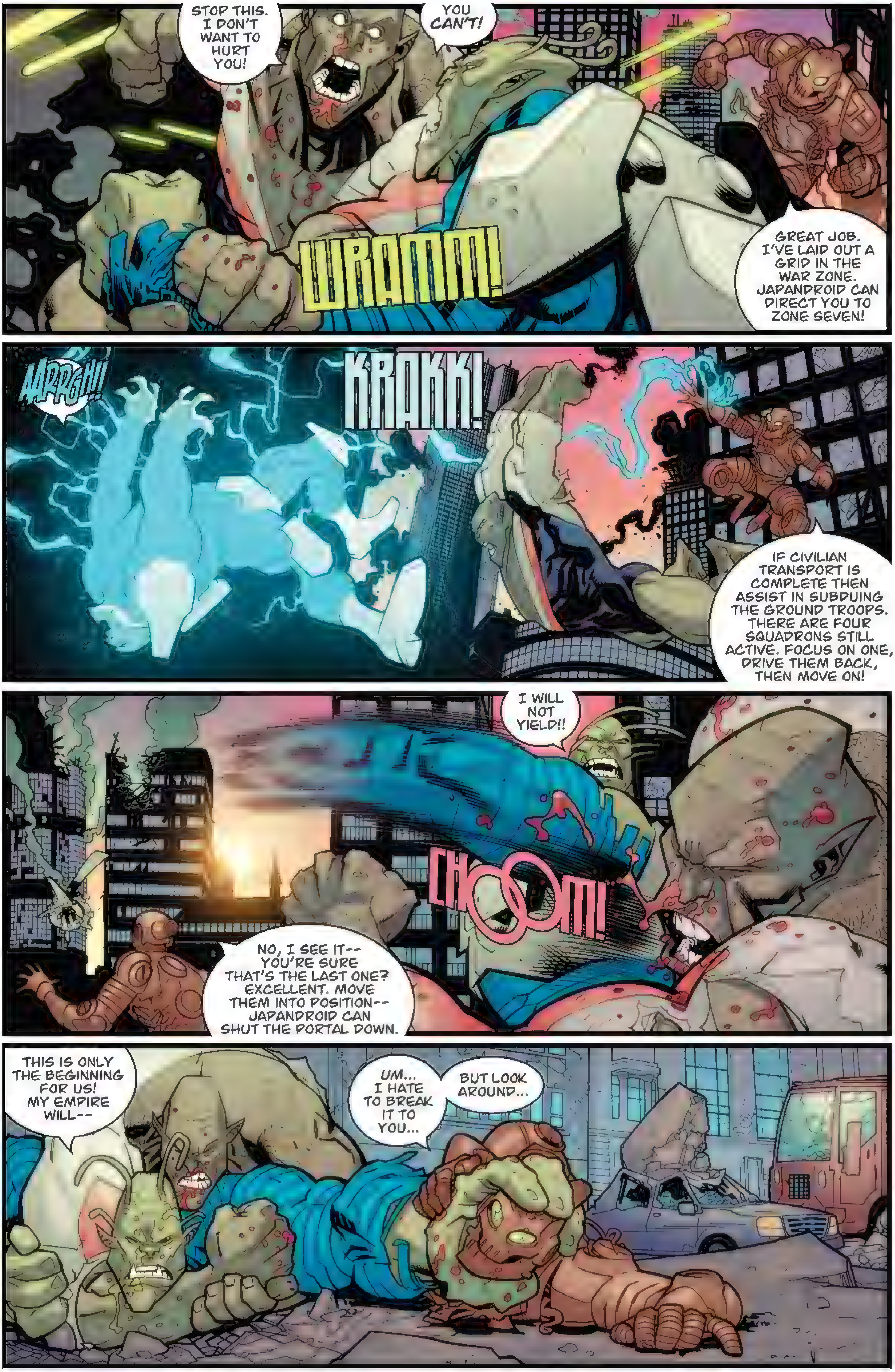

I'M SORRY, REX. I DIDN'T LOVE HER, I WAS JUST... SO **LONELY**. AND YOU... YOU WERE NEVER THERE FOR ME, AND YOU'D...
I WASN'T DOING IT TO HURT YOU, BUT I WAS... I KNEW THAT WOULD HAPPEN, TOO, AND...
...
...I'M JUST SO SORRY.
...
CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?!
PLEASE... JUST *SAY* SOMETHING TO ME.
SAY YOU HATE ME... *ANYTHING*.


AMANDA...
I'VE CHOSEN MY SUCCESSOR.
WHAT?
THERE IS NOTHING FOR US HERE. WE'RE NOT... IT'S...
THESE PEOPLE ARE SAFE, THE ZAXALS HAVE BEEN PROVEN TO BE TYRANTS, THEY'VE LOST WHATEVER SUPPORTERS THEY HAD. WE'RE NOT NEEDED.
ALL THAT REMAINS FOR US ARE PAINFUL MEMORIES.
I WANT TO PUT IT ALL BEHIND US... I WANT TO GO HOME.
OKAY.
I'LL MAKE THE PREPARATIONS.


I THINK IT BEST WE SAY WE WERE ONLY GONE FOR AS LONG AS IT APPEARS WE'VE AGED... SO TWELVE YEARS.
TELLING EVERYONE THE TRUTH WOULD OPEN US UP TO TOO MANY QUESTIONS, AND--
AMANDA, PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT.
IS THIS EVEN REMOTELY CLOSE TO WHAT I WORE IN THIS FORM? I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER.
WHY ARE WE DOING IT THIS WAY?
WE COULD BE RETURNING TO A DESTROYED PLANET, OR THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLE. IT'S ONLY BEEN A MATTER OF MONTHS, BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE COULD BE RETURNING TO. WE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING.
WHAT HAVE WE MISSED?


ATTENTION, GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE!
WE HAVE ISOLATED THE FLAXAN COMMANDER. THE TROOPS ARE CUT OFF AND IN DISARRAY! *NOW* IS THE TIME TO PUT AN END TO THIS.
HERE'S WHAT I NEED FROM ALL OF YOU!
"PEGASUS, LE BRUSIER, INVINCIBLE--YOU'RE ON *AIR PATROL.* KEEP THOSE SHIPS FROM WIDENING THEIR PERIMETER--AND ALSO FROM PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE GROUND TROOPS.
"KEEP THEM *OCCUPIED.*
"OUTRUN, KABOOMERANG--THERE ARE STILL CIVILIANS IN THE STREETS, GATHER THEM UP AND GET THEM TO THE SAFE ZONES BEFORE OUR CASUALTY LIST SKYROCKETS.


"YETI, BLACK SAMSON--KEEP THOSE SAFE ZONES PROTECTED! DON'T LET *ANYTHING* BREAK THAT LINE--HOLD THEM OFF NO MATTER WHAT!
POLICE
POLICE
"IF YOU'RE STARTING TO GET OVERRUN--CALL IN AND I'LL SEND SOMEONE TO ASSIST.
"JAPANDROID, BEST TIGER, KID THOR, KNOCKOUT, ANYONE FROM THE ACTIONEERS THAT'S STILL STANDING--YOU'RE ON THE FLAXAN GROUND TROOPS, SPLIT THEM OFF, DIVIDE AND CONQUER!
"MONSTER GIRL, I NEED YOU ON THE FLAXAN EMPEROR--MONAX...
"I'LL ASSIST YOU AS SOON AS EVERYONE IS IN POSITION."


STOP THIS. I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU!
YOU CAN'T!
WRAMM!
GREAT JOB. I'VE LAID OUT A GRID IN THE WAR ZONE. JAPANDROID CAN DIRECT YOU TO ZONE SEVEN!
AARRGH!!
KRAKK!
IF CIVILIAN TRANSPORT IS COMPLETE THEN ASSIST IN SUBDUING THE GROUND TROOPS. THERE ARE FOUR SQUADRONS STILL ACTIVE. FOCUS ON ONE, DRIVE THEM BACK, THEN MOVE ON!
I WILL NOT YIELD!!
CHOOM!
NO, I SEE IT-- YOU'RE SURE THAT'S THE LAST ONE? EXCELLENT. MOVE THEM INTO POSITION-- JAPANDROID CAN SHUT THE PORTAL DOWN.
THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING FOR US! MY EMPIRE WILL--
UM... I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU...
BUT LOOK AROUND...

IT'S OVER.
THAT'S IT! YOU'VE CAUSED ENOUGH DAMAGE. I HOPE YOU'RE PROUD OF YOURSELF. WHAT A GREAT LEADER YOU TURNED OUT TO BE.
YOU'RE AN EMBARRASSMENT.
NO! IT'S NOT OVER-- IT CAN'T BE! NOT NOW! NOT LIKE THIS!
YOU DON'T GET TO WIN! NOT YOU-- NOT AFTER EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE!
I WON'T LET YOU WIN--
--YOU MONSTER!
SHUT UP!
WRAMM!

I'M SORRY, I'M--
PLEASE JUST-- TAKE HIM AWAY.
SHE'S HIS FATHER.
IT'S COMPLICATED.

ZANDALE RANDOLPH'S SWANK STUDIO APARTMENT.
OH, BOY-- THAT WAS A TOUGH ONE. FRACTURE ISN'T TOO BAD, SO DON'T WORRY.
SHOULD BE HEALED IN A WEEK OR SO, AND IT GIVES US A GOOD REASON TO AVOID MY PARENTS! IT'D BE A PRETTY TOUGH SELL THAT I BROKE MY ARM WHILE SETTING UP FOR A GALLERY SHOW--
ZANDALE, HONEY-- YOU'RE RAMBLING NONSENSE--HON', PLEASE--WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
OH, GOD... THEY'RE IN THE KITCHEN AREN'T THEY?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOUR BROTHER WAS FIGHTING THOSE ALIENS... NOT YOU. HOW COULD YOU BREAK YOUR--
OH, BOY...
Cecil

THE GRAYSON HOME.
LONDON WAS NEARLY LEVELED IN THE BATTLE! WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU GUYS?!
WELL, THE THING IS...
TECH JACKET MET THIS ALIEN, AND SHE INVITED US TO HER MOTHERSHIP. WE WEREN'T **THAT** FAR AWAY BUT WE WERE OUT OF COMMUNICATION...
EVERYTHING TURNED OUT OKAY, RIGHT? I MEAN, I CERTAINLY HOPE NOTHING TOO **HORRIBLE** HAPPENED.
BUT-- AND I DON'T MEAN TO BE ARGUMENTATIVE-- IT'S JUST, I'M NOT EXACTLY **ON CALL** HERE, YOU KNOW...
COP

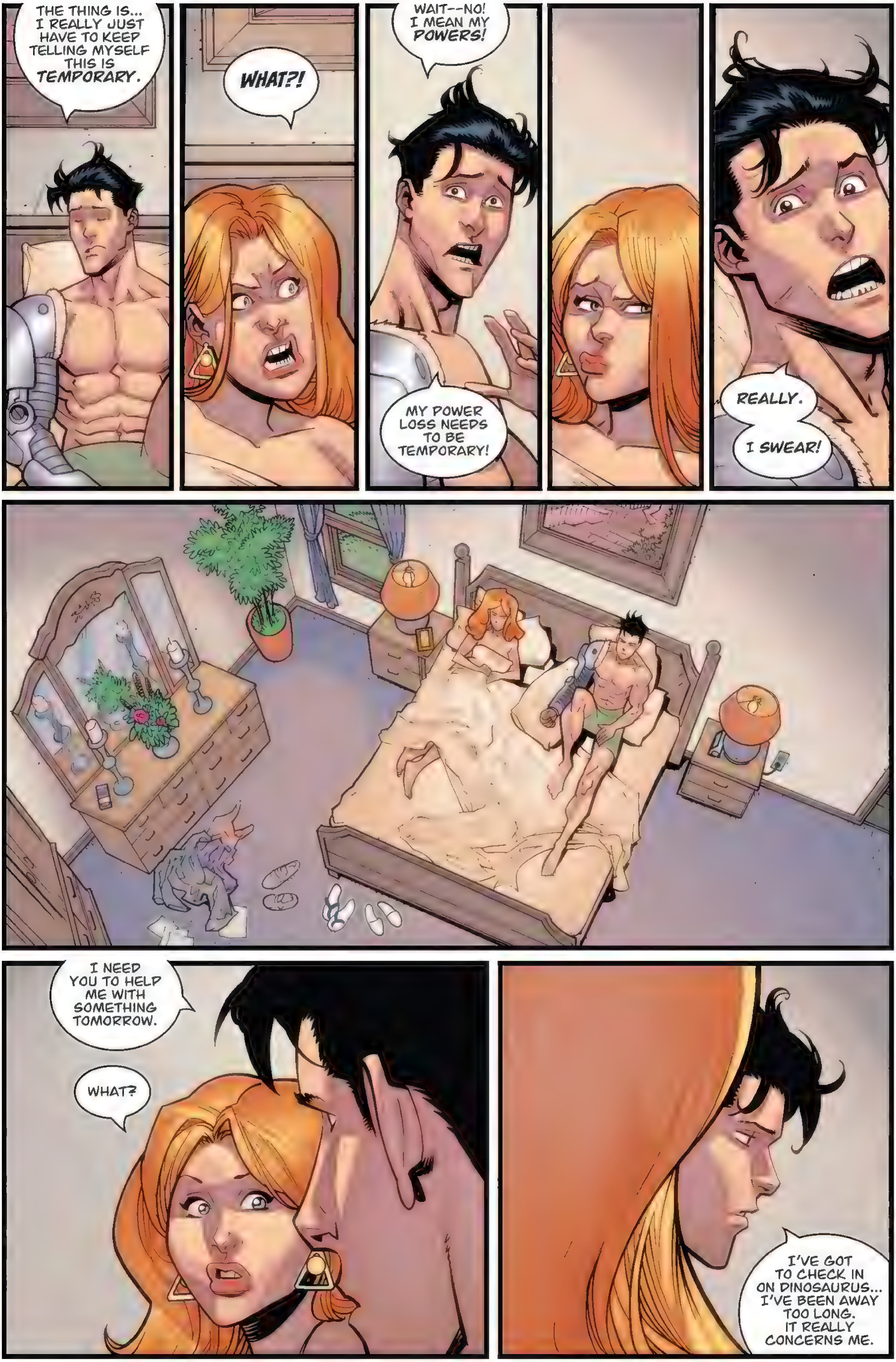
SORRY TO SNAP AT YOU LIKE THAT... IT'S JUST HARD, NOT BEING ABLE TO HELP.
I JUST... FEEL SO HELPLESS.
I GET IT, MAN. I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT YOU MUST BE GOING THROUGH.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU UP AND ABOUT, THOUGH-- YOUR ARM LOOKED PRETTY NASTY LAST TIME I SAW YOU.
YEAH... IT'S HEALING OKAY. I HONESTLY DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW LONG THESE THINGS TAKE.
THIS IS A WHOLE NEW WORLD FOR ME. AND I--
MARK, WE CAME HERE TO SAY ***GOODBYE***.
WE STAYED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE SAFE AND NOT IN THE HANDS OF THE VILTRUMITES. NOW THAT WE'RE THROUGH WITH THAT, WE NEED TO RETURN TO TALESCRIA.
I'M SURE THERE ARE A GREAT MANY MATTERS THAT REQUIRE MY ATTENTION.
OH... OKAY, THEN.
I GUESS I'LL SEE YOU LATER...
ALLEN? COULD YOU GIVE US A MOMENT?
I NEED TO TALK TO MARK.

SO, WHAT'S UP, OLIVER?
I--IT'S JUST--
YOU COULD HAVE DIED-- YOU ALMOST *DID*.
AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN *MY* FAULT. I WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU!
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT THE SCOURGE VIRUS HERE... I WAS ONLY THINKING ABOUT THE GREATER GOOD. I NEVER THOUGHT--
I'M SO SORRY...
IF LOSING SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU FEELS LIKE THIS... IF THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE A LOVED ONE DIE...
MAYBE I WAS WRONG ABOUT THE WHOLE THING...
IT'S OKAY, MAN. I'M... I'M *FINE*.
WE'RE GOOD, OKAY?

AT LEAST I GOT BACK FAST ENOUGH TO SAY GOODBYE. I WISH I HAD MORE TIME WITH THEM, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I THOUGHT THEY'D ALREADY GONE BACK.
I KNOW, RIGHT?
I GOT TO LONDON JUST IN TIME TO SEE THEM CARTING THE FLAXAN LEADER OFF TO JAIL. MY TIMING TODAY HAS BEEN ***IMPECCABLE.***
YOU WANT TO FOOL AROUND?
IT REALLY WON'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT MY POWERS...
...BUT **YES.**

GENERAL KREGG, I HAVE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BE A FOOLISH MAN. IN FACT, I WOULD COUNT YOU AMONG MY MOST LOYAL AGENTS.
SO WHEN I SAID TO ***INFILTRATE*** THE HUMAN POPULATION, ***PROCREATE,*** BUT IN ***NO WAY*** INTERFERE WITH THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRE WITH THESE PEOPLE... I WOULD EXPECT THAT YOU, ABOVE ALL OTHERS, WOULD UNDERSTAND AND FOLLOW THOSE ORDERS.
AND YET... HERE WE ARE.
I AM VERY SORRY, SIR. IT WAS NOT MY INTENTION TO DISOBEY YOU.
I COULDN'T STAND BY AND ALLOW THESE PEOPLE TO BE HARMED. THERE IS A HUMAN WOMAN IN LONDON WHO CARRIES MY CHILD.
SO? THAT WOMAN IS OF LIMITED IMPORTANCE.
I HAVE REVIEWED YOUR LOGS. YOU HAVE NEARLY ***A DOZEN*** HUMAN WOMEN SPREAD ALL OVER THE GLOBE WHO ARE CURRENTLY IMPREGNATED WITH YOUR OFFSPRING.
I KNOW, GRAND REGENT THRAGG.
I KNOW...
...AND I LOVE THEM ***ALL.***

MARK, WHAT IS IT?
WAS THAT OKAY FOR YOU? I MEAN, REALLY. I DON'T WANT YOU TO SUGARCOAT IT.
WELL, IT'S... POSSIBLE YOU WERE LEANING ON YOUR SUPER POWERS AS A CRUTCH WHEN WE...
BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THINGS WITHOUT RELYING ON YOUR POWERS. IT WAS... **OKAY.**
UGH... OKAY?!
I ***KNEW*** IT. I ***FEEL*** THINGS DIFFERENTLY NOW--I'M MORE... ***SENSITIVE*** AND IT'S NOT EASY TO...
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.
OH, GROW UP. DON'T ***POUT*** ABOUT IT. NOT EVERYONE HITS A HOME RUN EVERY TIME AT BAT.
STOP WHINING THAT YOU'RE NOT ***PERFECT*** ANYMORE. I WAS FINALLY STARTING TO FEEL ***WORTHY*** OF YOU AGAIN.
OH, GOD. DON'T START WITH THAT AGAIN.
YOU ***ARE*** PERFECT! YOU'RE--
OKAY... LET'S... ***BOTH*** STOP COMPLAINING ABOUT OURSELVES.
AGREED.


THE THING IS... I REALLY JUST HAVE TO KEEP TELLING MYSELF THIS IS *TEMPORARY*.
WHAT?!
WAIT--NO! I MEAN MY *POWERS!*
MY POWER LOSS NEEDS TO BE TEMPORARY!
REALLY.
I *SWEAR!*
I NEED YOU TO HELP ME WITH SOMETHING TOMORROW.
WHAT?
I'VE GOT TO CHECK IN ON DINOSAURUS... I'VE BEEN AWAY TOO LONG. IT REALLY CONCERNS ME.

"I'VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT HE COULD BE WORKING ON."

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I KNEW YOUR MOTHER ONLY BRIEFLY. I CARED FOR HER, BUT WE WERE NOT... MEANT TO BE TOGETHER.
I NEVER KNEW YOU-- THAT WE'D--I DIDN'T EVEN THINK IT COULD BE POSSIBLE FOR MY MONSTER FORM TO...
IF I'D KNOWN YOU EXISTED, I WOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT... I WOULD HAVE...
I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU.
LEAVE ME.
WE SHOULD GO.
THANKS FOR DOING THIS, REX.
I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE GOTTEN THROUGH THIS ALONE.

I DON'T WANT YOU TO EVER HAVE TO DO ANYTHING ALONE...
...EVER AGAIN.
REX, I--
WHAT HAPPENED... ALL OF IT... WAS MY FAULT. I DROVE US TO THE FLAXAN DIMENSION, I TOOK POWER WILLINGLY, I KEPT US THERE EVEN THOUGH YOU DIDN'T BELONG.
I LET THAT POWER CORRUPT ME. I LOST MYSELF.
I KNOW NOW THAT YOU ONLY DID WHAT YOU DID BECAUSE OF WHO I BECAME... AND I FORGIVE YOU.
I WASN'T MYSELF, HAVEN'T BEEN FOR A WHILE... AND AMANDA... I DON'T EVER WANT TO BE THAT PERSON AGAIN.

I THINK IT BEST WE SAY WE WERE ONLY GONE FOR AS LONG AS IT APPEARS WE'VE AGED... SO TWELVE YEARS.
TELLING EVERYONE THE TRUTH WOULD OPEN US UP TO TOO MANY QUESTIONS, AND--
‹WE HAVE LOCATED THE ZAXAL REBEL LEADERS, SIRE. IT APPEARS THE FEMALE IS WITH CHILD.›
AMANDA, PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT.
‹SO IT'S TRUE... SHE SOMEHOW... ***PROCREATED*** WITH ONE OF THEM.›
‹I CAN'T EVEN... HOW ***COULD*** SHE...›
‹IT DOESN'T MATTER. IF YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE, I WANT YOU TO HUNT THEM DOWN, ALL OF THEM. I WANT THEIR BLOODLINE ***ERASED***.›
‹ALL ZAXAL ROYALS ARE TO BE GATHERED AND ***EXECUTED***. WOMEN, CHILDREN... ***ALL*** OF THEM.›
‹INCLUDING THE UNBORN ***HALF-BREED*** THAT GROWS WITHIN THAT ***TRAITOROUS*** ZAXAL BELLY.›

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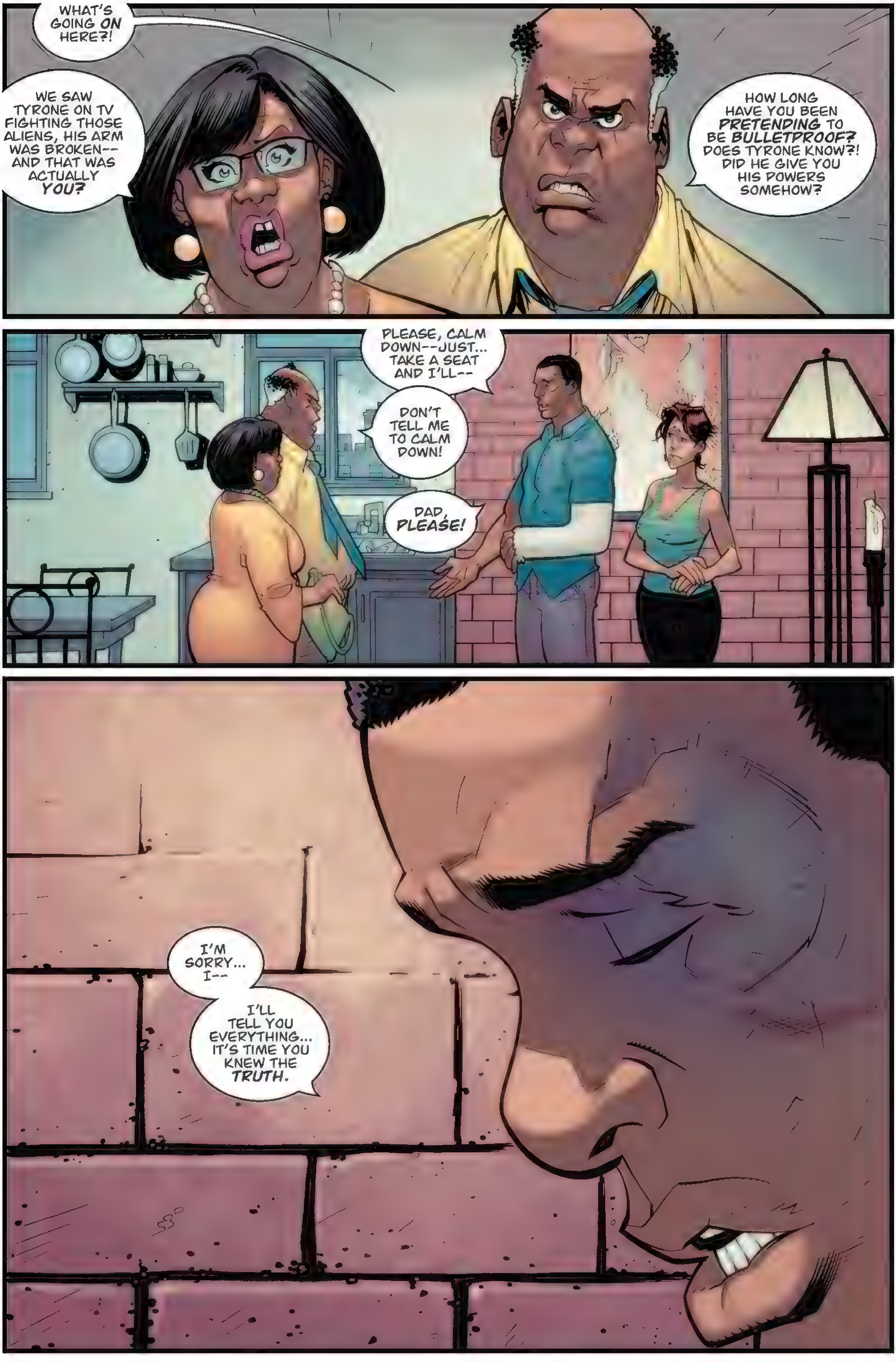
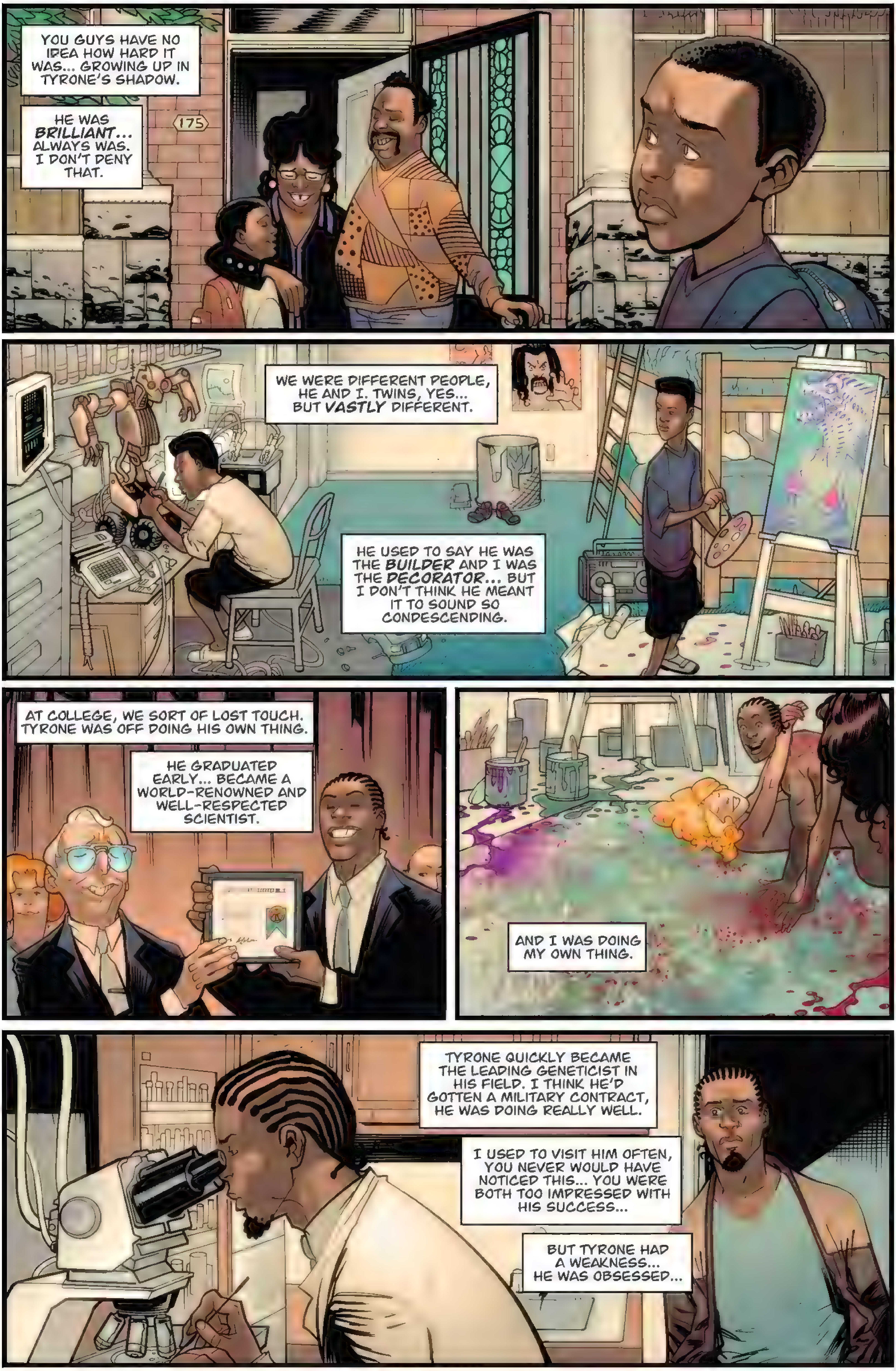
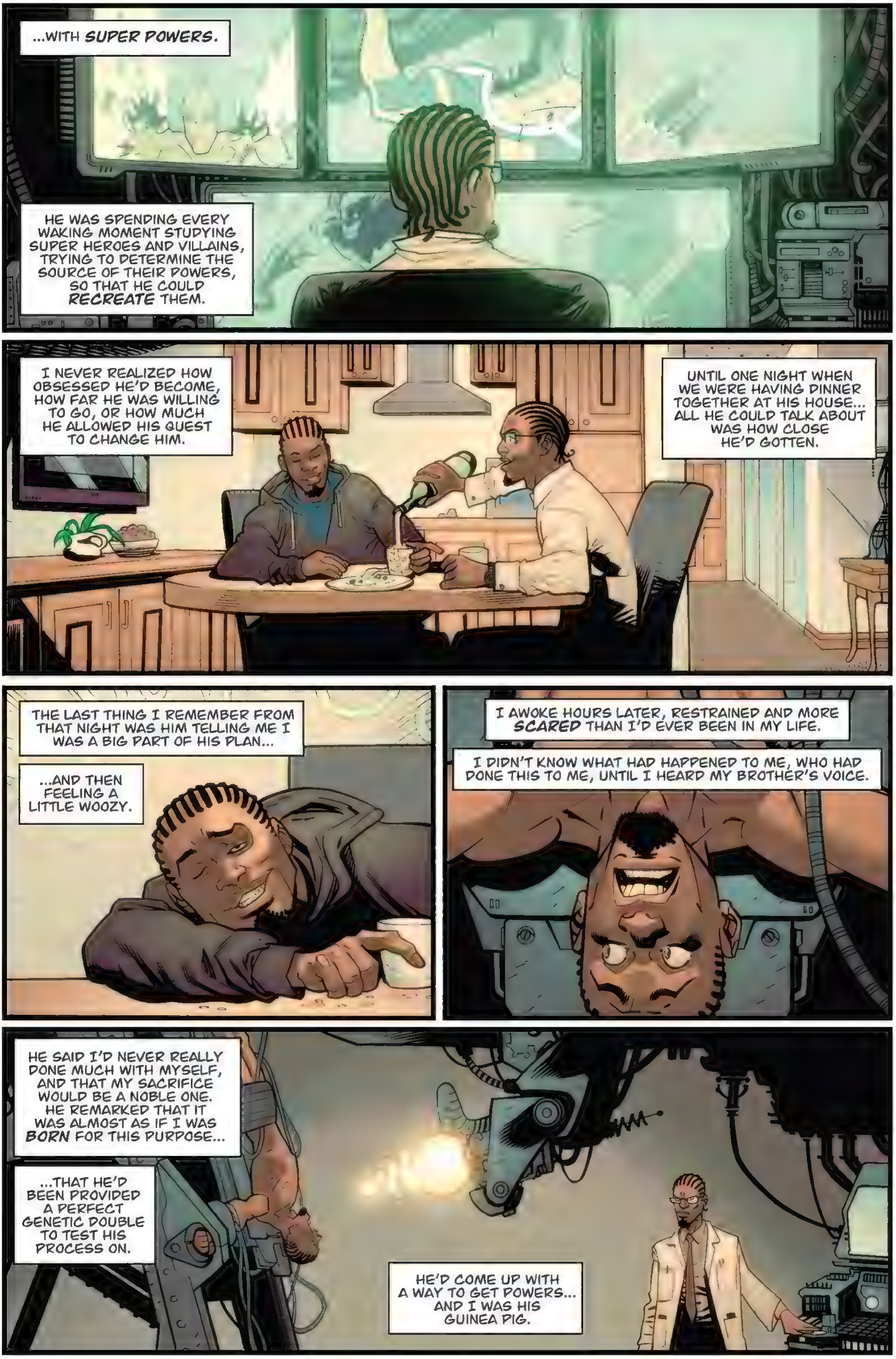
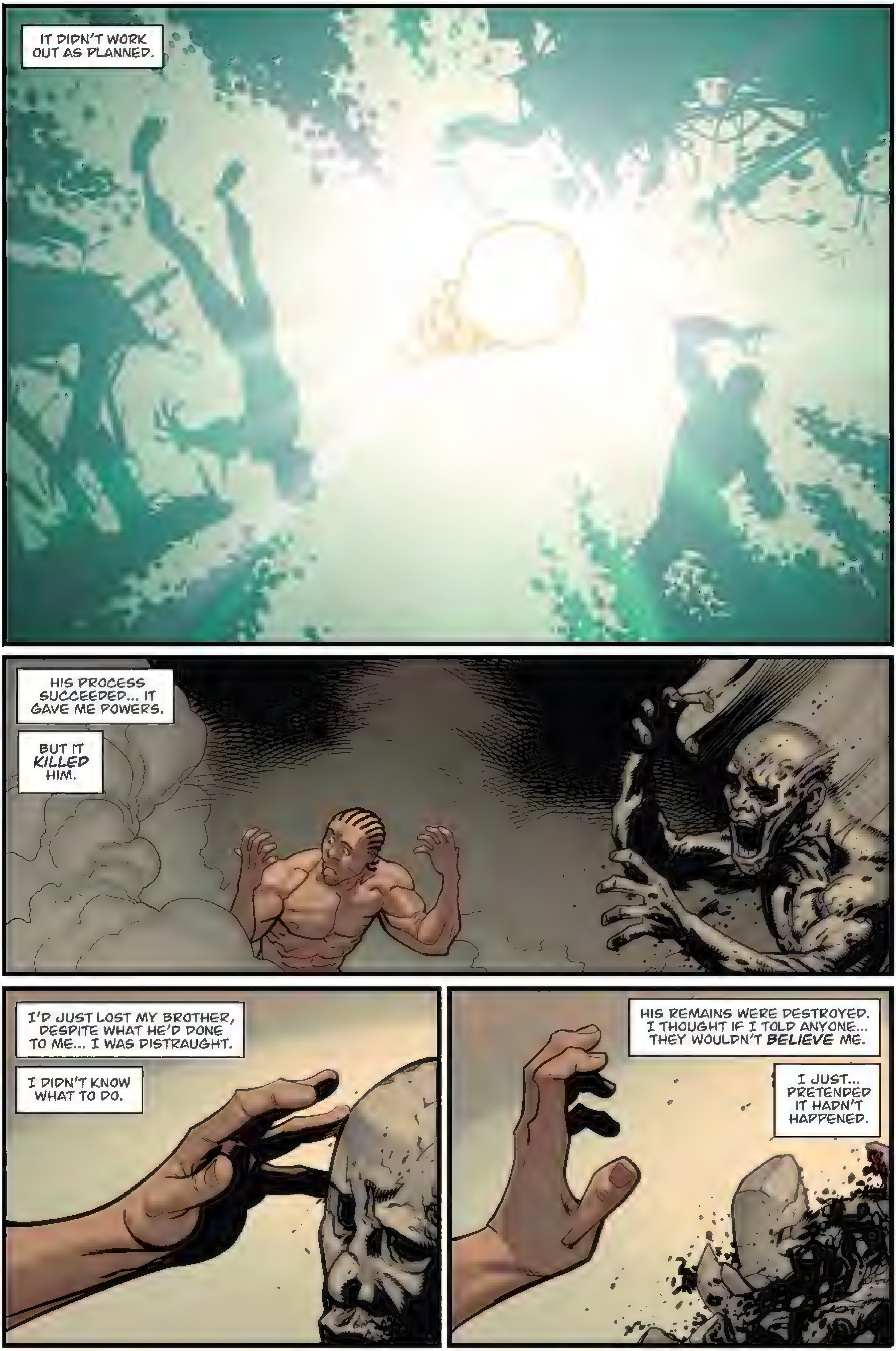
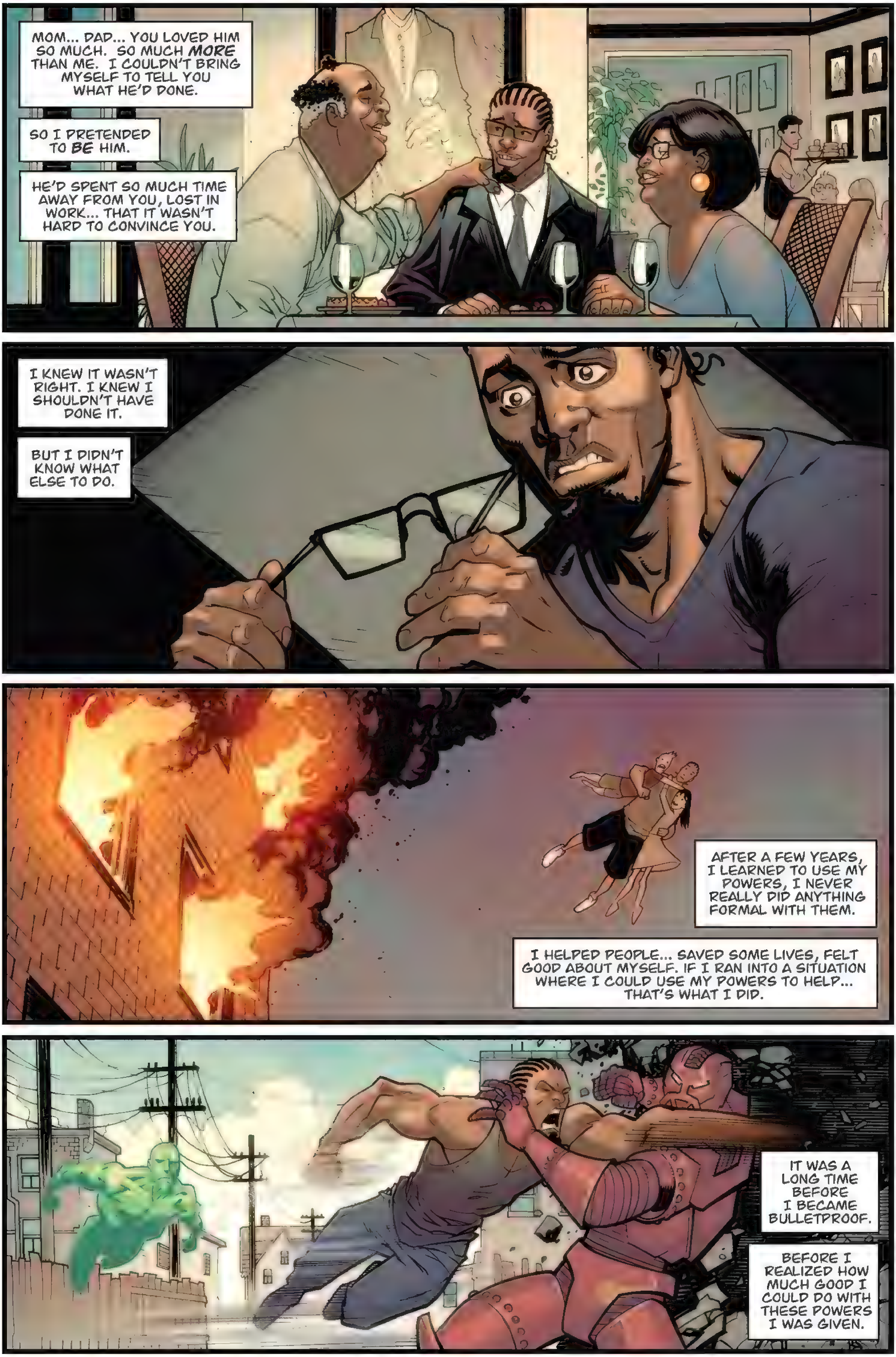
CHAPTER 97


WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!
WE SAW TYRONE ON TV FIGHTING THOSE ALIENS, HIS ARM WAS BROKEN--AND THAT WAS ACTUALLY YOU?
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PRETENDING TO BE BULLETPROOF? DOES TYRONE KNOW?! DID HE GIVE YOU HIS POWERS SOMEHOW?
PLEASE, CALM DOWN--JUST... TAKE A SEAT AND I'LL--
DON'T TELL ME TO CALM DOWN!
DAD, PLEASE!
I'M SORRY... I--
I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING... IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH.

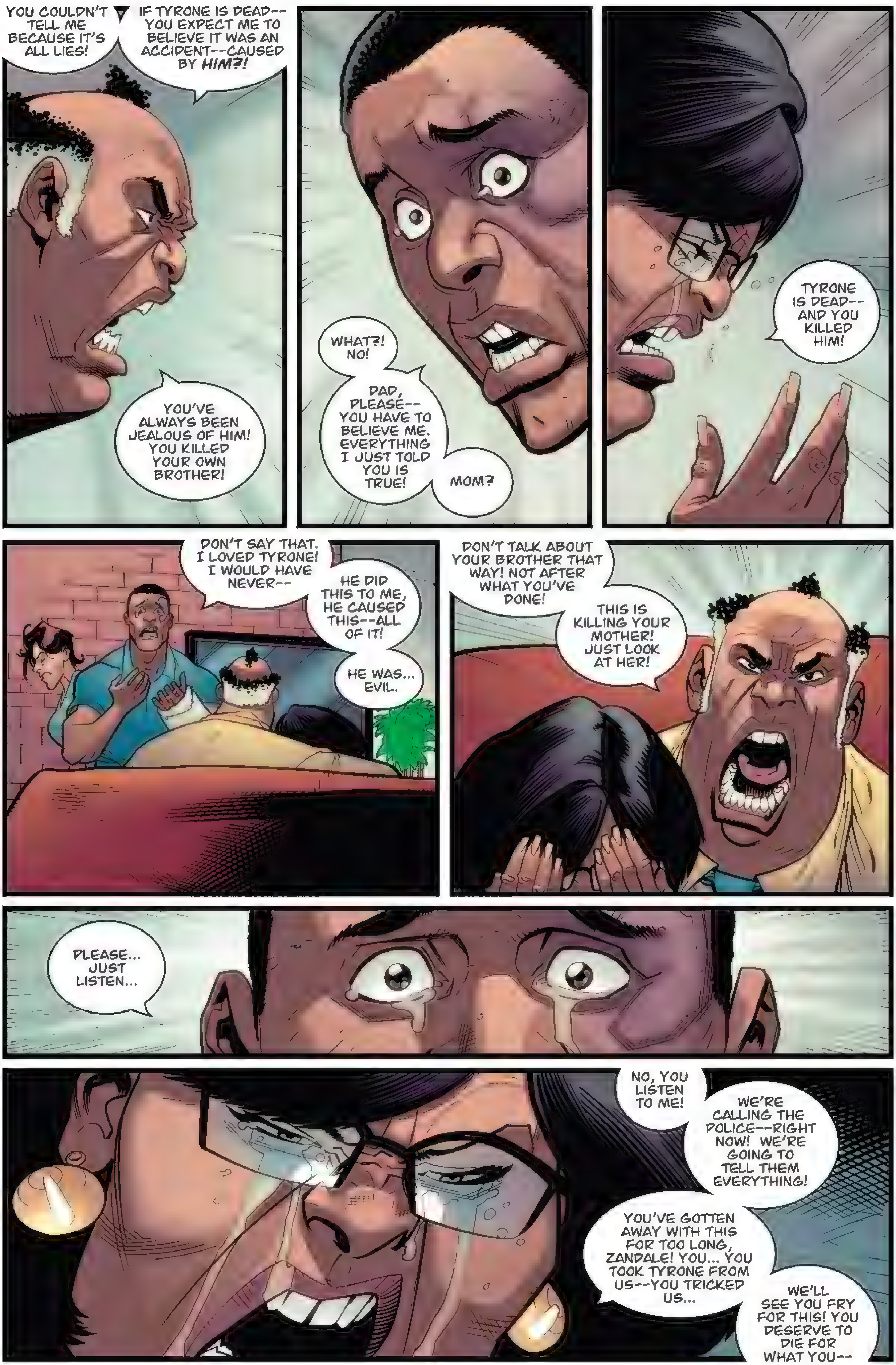

YOU GUYS HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD IT WAS... GROWING UP IN TYRONE'S SHADOW.
HE WAS **BRILLIANT...** ALWAYS WAS. I DON'T DENY THAT.
175
WE WERE DIFFERENT PEOPLE, HE AND I. TWINS, YES... BUT **VASTLY** DIFFERENT.
HE USED TO SAY HE WAS THE **BUILDER** AND I WAS THE **DECORATOR...** BUT I DON'T THINK HE MEANT IT TO SOUND SO CONDESCENDING.
AT COLLEGE, WE SORT OF LOST TOUCH. TYRONE WAS OFF DOING HIS OWN THING.
HE GRADUATED EARLY... BECAME A WORLD-RENOWNED AND WELL-RESPECTED SCIENTIST.
AND I WAS DOING MY OWN THING.
TYRONE QUICKLY BECAME THE LEADING GENETICIST IN HIS FIELD. I THINK HE'D GOTTEN A MILITARY CONTRACT, HE WAS DOING REALLY WELL.
I USED TO VISIT HIM OFTEN, YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE NOTICED THIS... YOU WERE BOTH TOO IMPRESSED WITH HIS SUCCESS...
BUT TYRONE HAD A WEAKNESS... HE WAS OBSESSED...

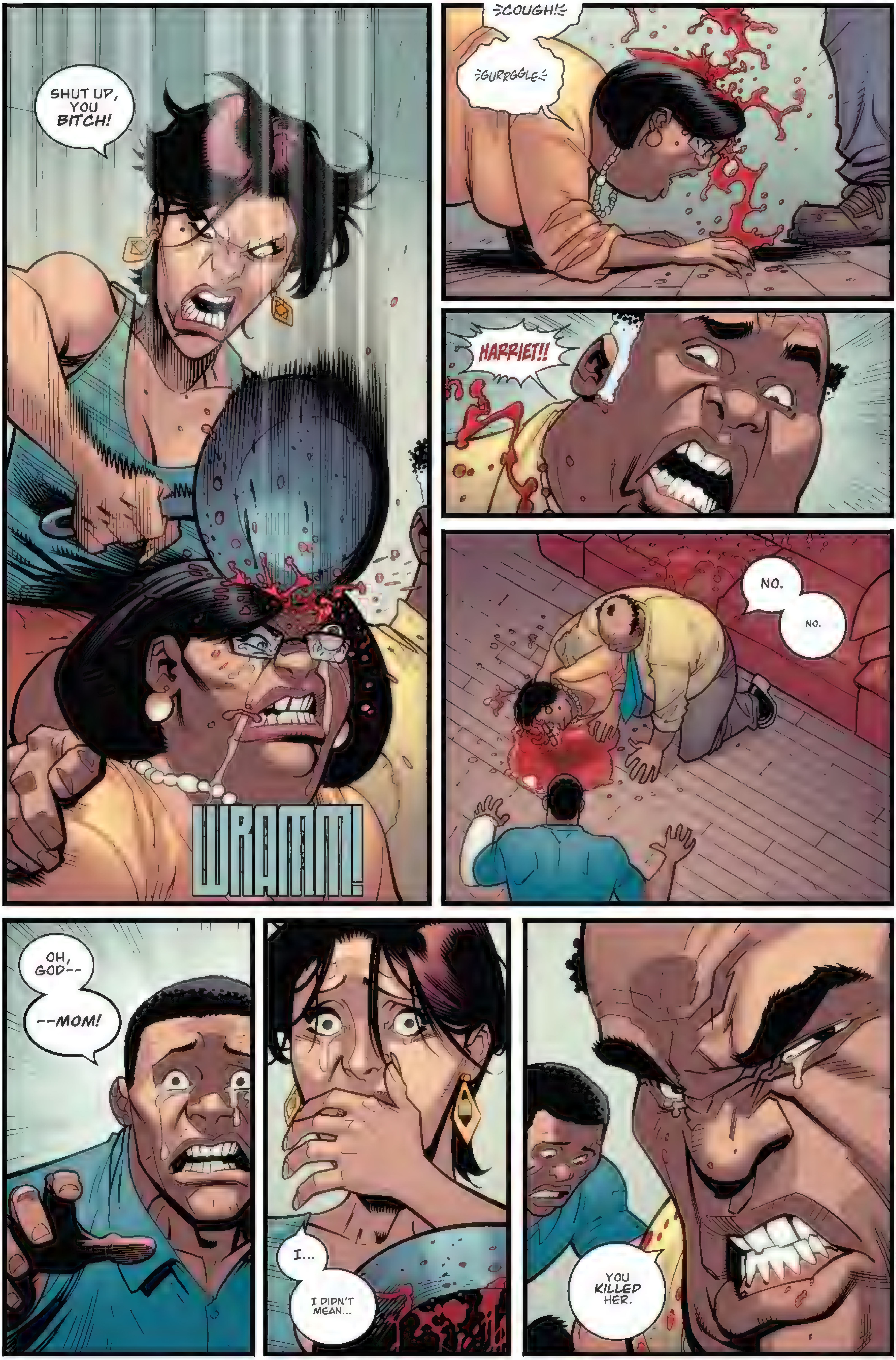

...WITH **SUPER POWERS.**
HE WAS SPENDING EVERY WAKING MOMENT STUDYING SUPER HEROES AND VILLAINS, TRYING TO DETERMINE THE SOURCE OF THEIR POWERS, SO THAT HE COULD **RECREATE** THEM.
I NEVER REALIZED HOW OBSESSED HE'D BECOME, HOW FAR HE WAS WILLING TO GO, OR HOW MUCH HE ALLOWED HIS QUEST TO CHANGE HIM.
UNTIL ONE NIGHT WHEN WE WERE HAVING DINNER TOGETHER AT HIS HOUSE... ALL HE COULD TALK ABOUT WAS HOW CLOSE HE'D GOTTEN.
THE LAST THING I REMEMBER FROM THAT NIGHT WAS HIM TELLING ME I WAS A BIG PART OF HIS PLAN...
...AND THEN FEELING A LITTLE WOOZY.
I AWOKE HOURS LATER, RESTRAINED AND MORE **SCARED** THAN I'D EVER BEEN IN MY LIFE.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO ME, WHO HAD DONE THIS TO ME, UNTIL I HEARD MY BROTHER'S VOICE.
HE SAID I'D NEVER REALLY DONE MUCH WITH MYSELF, AND THAT MY SACRIFICE WOULD BE A NOBLE ONE. HE REMARKED THAT IT WAS ALMOST AS IF I WAS **BORN** FOR THIS PURPOSE...
...THAT HE'D BEEN PROVIDED A PERFECT GENETIC DOUBLE TO TEST HIS PROCESS ON.
HE'D COME UP WITH A WAY TO GET POWERS... AND I WAS HIS GUINEA PIG.

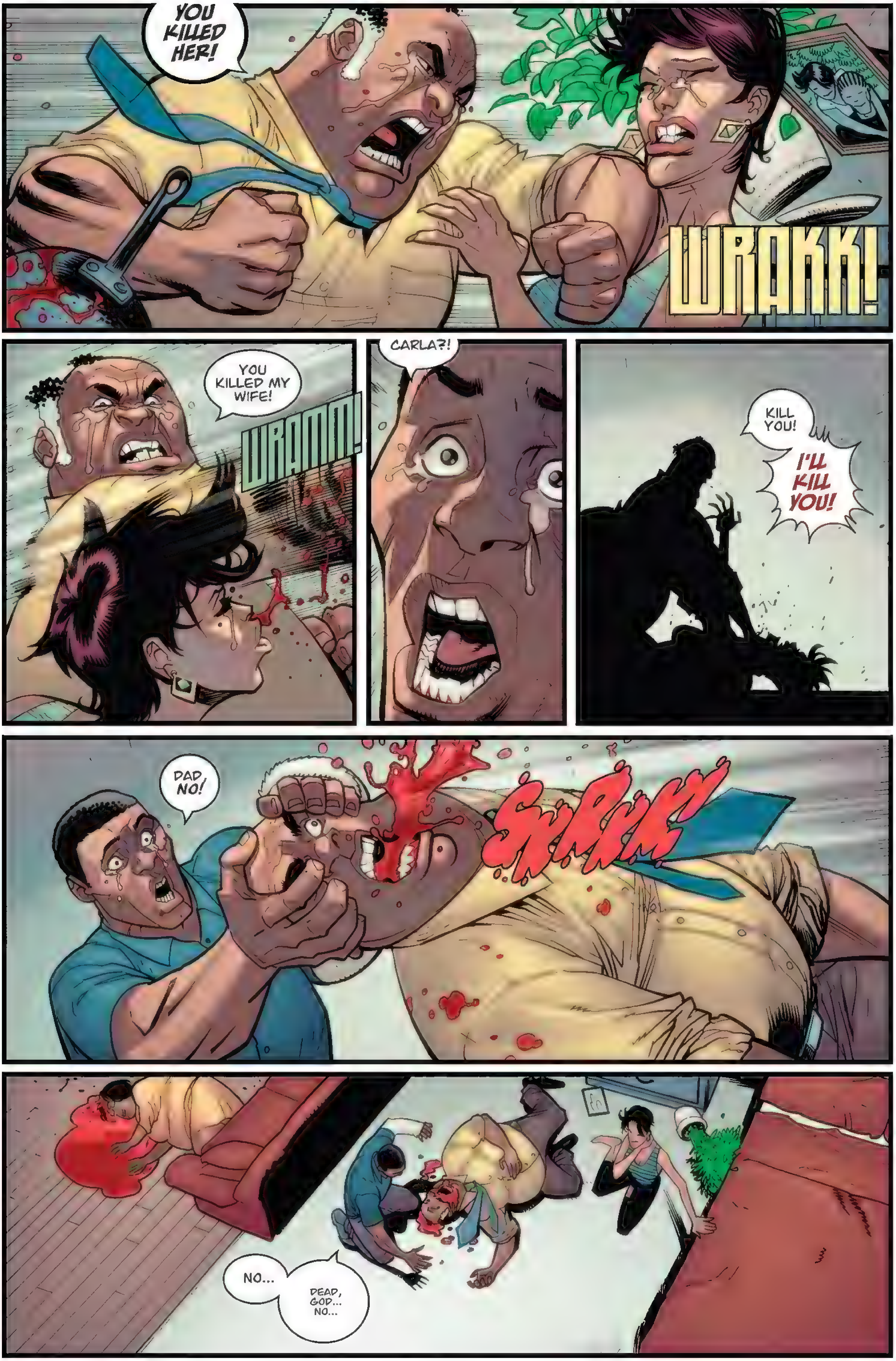

IT DIDN'T WORK OUT AS PLANNED.
HIS PROCESS SUCCEEDED... IT GAVE ME POWERS.
BUT IT *KILLED* HIM.
I'D JUST LOST MY BROTHER, DESPITE WHAT HE'D DONE TO ME... I WAS DISTRAUGHT.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
HIS REMAINS WERE DESTROYED. I THOUGHT IF I TOLD ANYONE... THEY WOULDN'T *BELIEVE* ME.
I JUST... PRETENDED IT HADN'T HAPPENED.

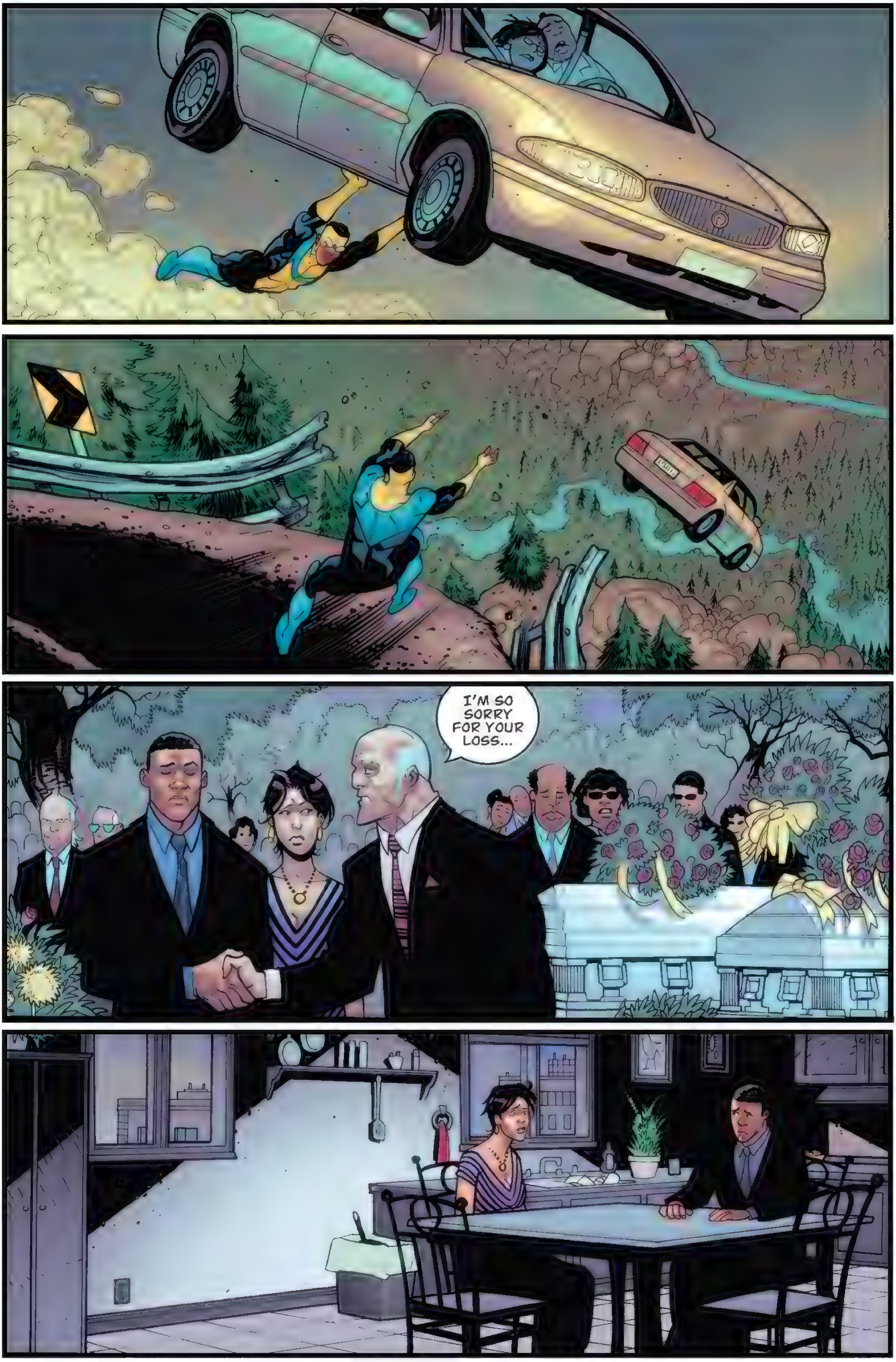

MOM... DAD... YOU LOVED HIM SO MUCH. SO MUCH *MORE* THAN ME. I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO TELL YOU WHAT HE'D DONE.
SO I PRETENDED TO *BE* HIM.
HE'D SPENT SO MUCH TIME AWAY FROM YOU, LOST IN WORK... THAT IT WASN'T HARD TO CONVINCE YOU.
I KNEW IT WASN'T RIGHT. I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT.
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.
AFTER A FEW YEARS, I LEARNED TO USE MY POWERS, I NEVER REALLY DID ANYTHING FORMAL WITH THEM.
I HELPED PEOPLE... SAVED SOME LIVES, FELT GOOD ABOUT MYSELF. IF I RAN INTO A SITUATION WHERE I COULD USE MY POWERS TO HELP... THAT'S WHAT I DID.
IT WAS A LONG TIME BEFORE I BECAME BULLETPROOF.
BEFORE I REALIZED HOW MUCH GOOD I COULD DO WITH THESE POWERS I WAS GIVEN.

I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MORE BELIEVABLE IF I TOLD YOU TYRONE HAD BECOME BULLETPROOF.
IT WOULD ALSO GIVE YOU ANOTHER REASON TO THINK HE WAS ALWAYS BUSY, SO YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM MUCH.
I'VE LIVED TWO LIVES FOR SO LONG NOW. I'VE MADE MY ART, DONE MY THING, MET **CARLA**... SHE'S BEEN SO GOOD FOR ME.
I'VE LIVED FIRSTHAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOW YOU THINK OF ME, HOW YOU TREAT ME.
AND HOW YOU TREAT TYRONE.
Cinema
THAT LOVE, THAT CARE... THE TIME WE SPENT TOGETHER WHEN YOU THOUGHT I WAS HIM.
IT WAS ALL I EVER WANTED.
I COULD NEVER BRING MYSELF TO TELL YOU... WHAT THE SON YOU LOVED HAD BECOME.
HOW HE'D KIDNAPPED ME, TRIED TO KILL ME, AND HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE PROCESS. I KNEW HOW MUCH HE MEANT TO YOU.
I'M SO SORRY.

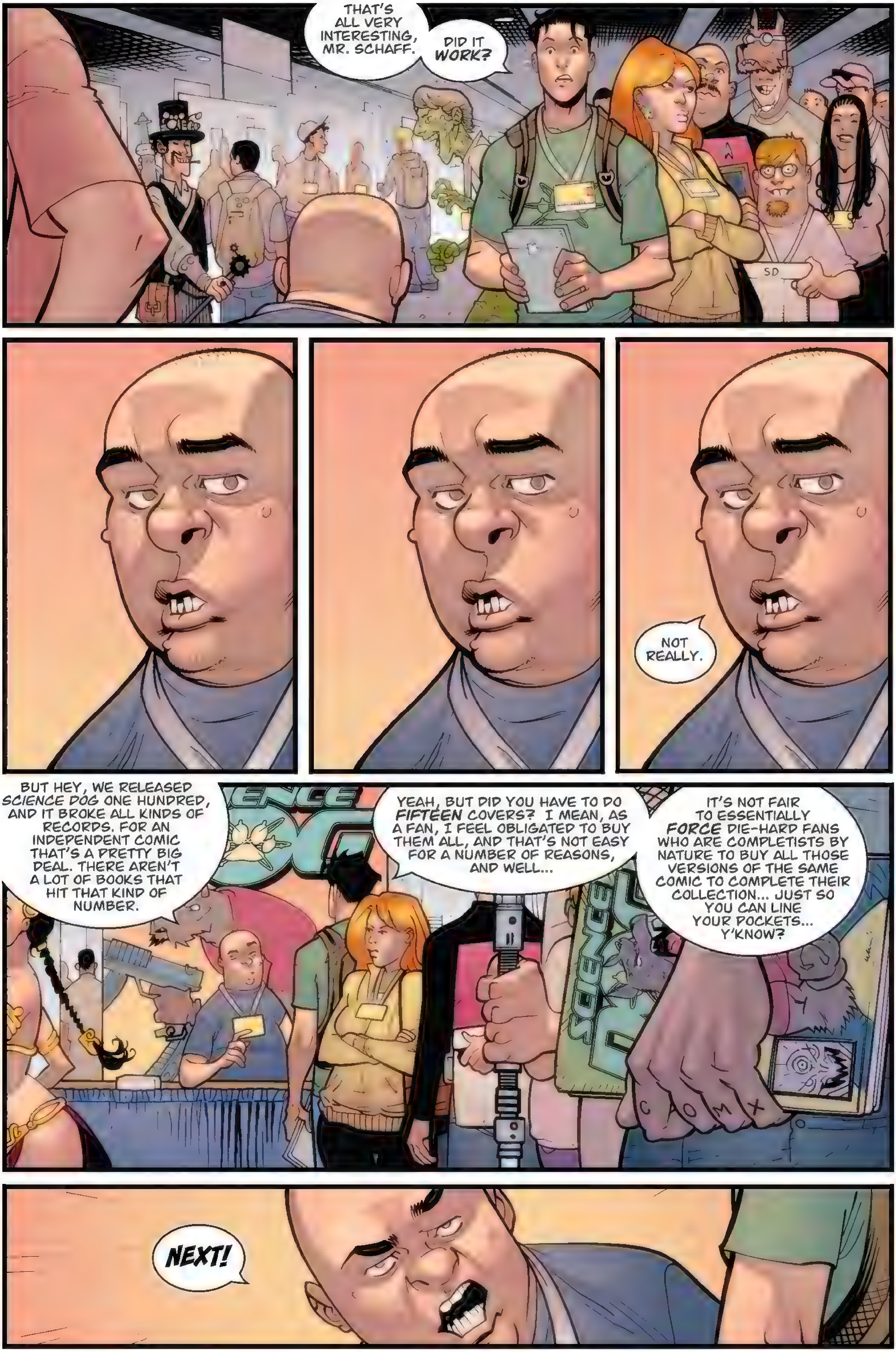

YOU COULDN'T TELL ME BECAUSE IT'S ALL LIES!
IF TYRONE IS DEAD--YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE IT WAS AN ACCIDENT--CAUSED BY *HIM?!*
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN JEALOUS OF HIM! YOU KILLED YOUR OWN BROTHER!
WHAT?! NO!
DAD, PLEASE--YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME. EVERYTHING I JUST TOLD YOU IS TRUE!
MOM?
TYRONE IS DEAD--AND YOU KILLED HIM!
DON'T SAY THAT. I LOVED TYRONE! I WOULD HAVE NEVER--
HE DID THIS TO ME, HE CAUSED THIS--ALL OF IT!
HE WAS... EVIL.
DON'T TALK ABOUT YOUR BROTHER THAT WAY! NOT AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
THIS IS KILLING YOUR MOTHER! JUST LOOK AT HER!
PLEASE... JUST LISTEN...
NO, YOU LISTEN TO ME!
WE'RE CALLING THE POLICE--RIGHT NOW! WE'RE GOING TO TELL THEM EVERYTHING!
YOU'VE GOTTEN AWAY WITH THIS FOR TOO LONG, ZANDALE! YOU... YOU TOOK TYRONE FROM US--YOU TRICKED US...
WE'LL SEE YOU FRY FOR THIS! YOU DESERVE TO DIE FOR WHAT YOU--

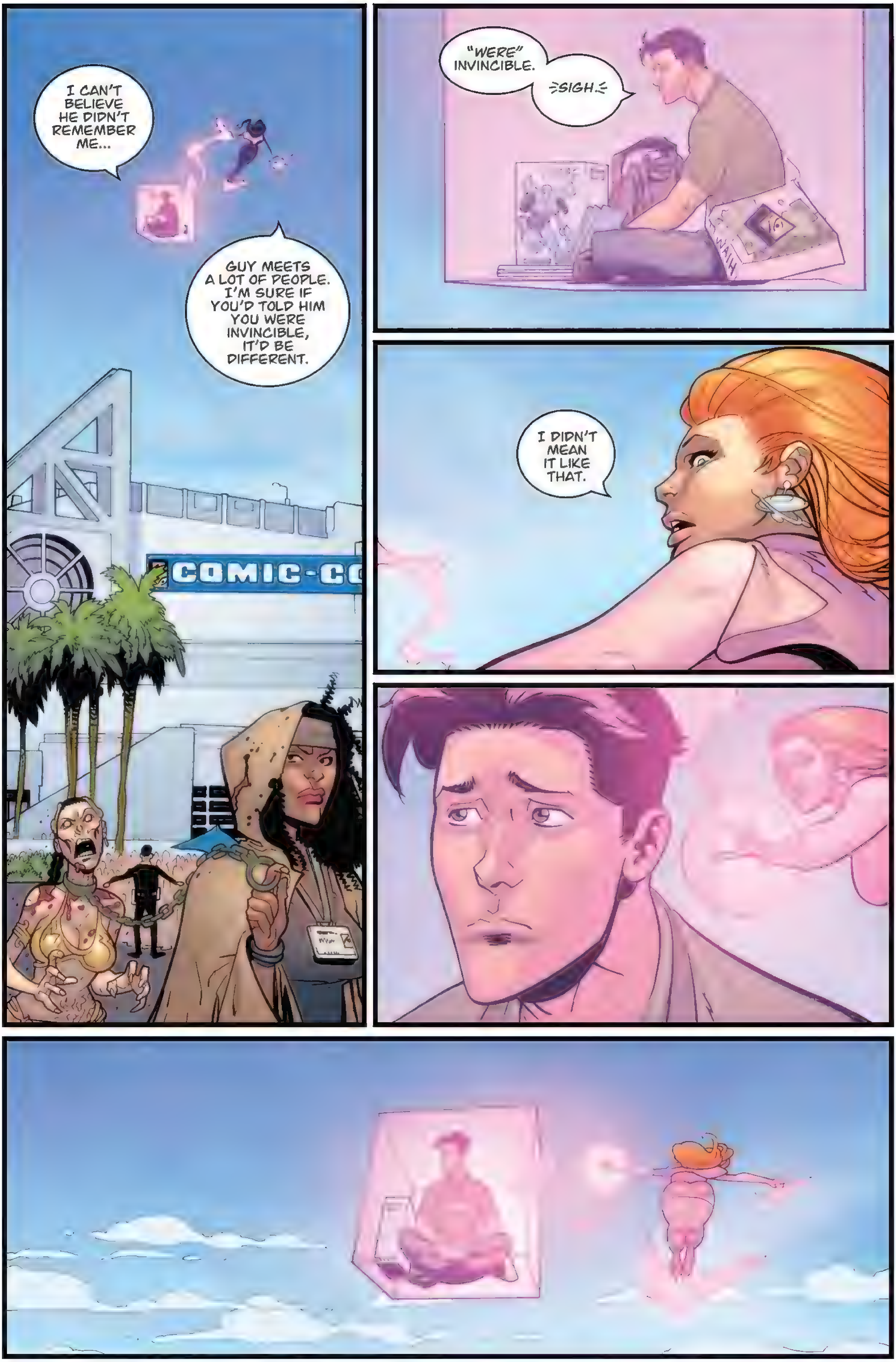

SHUT UP, YOU BITCH!
WRAMM!
COUGH!
GURRGGLE
HARRIET!!
NO.
NO.
OH, GOD--
--MOM!
I...
I DIDN'T MEAN...
YOU KILLED HER.

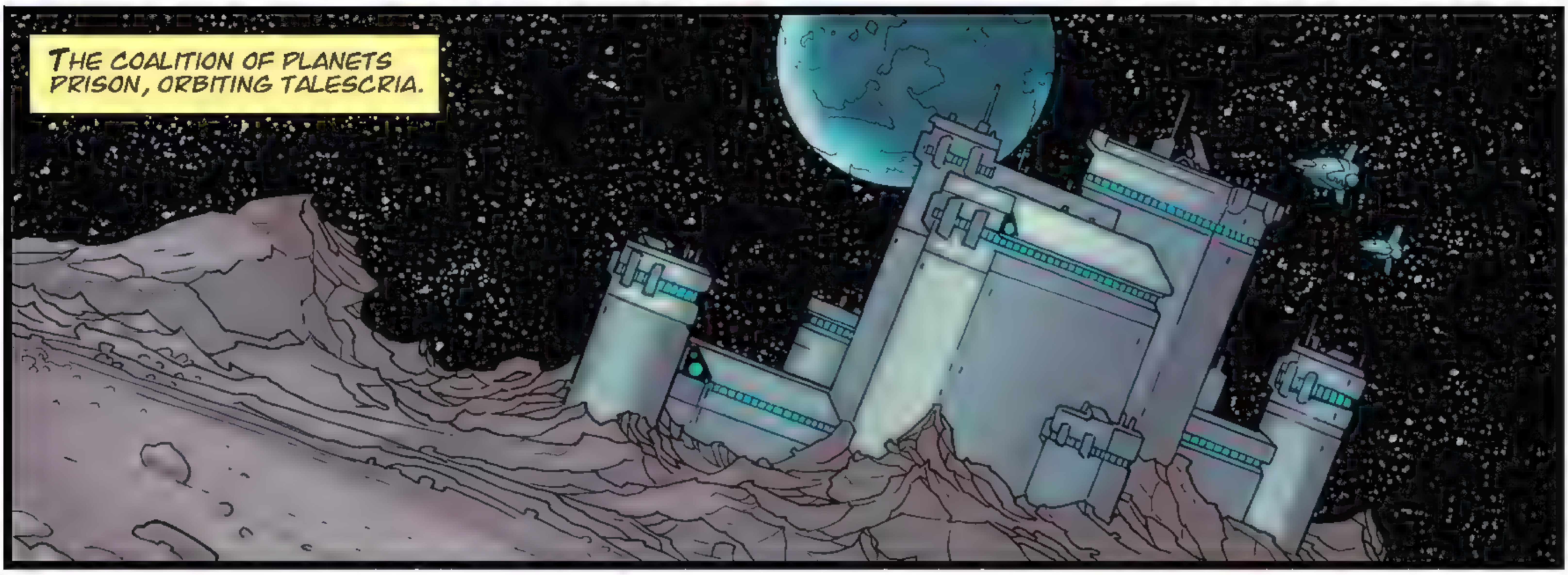

YOU KILLED HER!
WRAKK!
YOU KILLED MY WIFE!
WRAMM!
CARLA?!
KILL YOU!
I'LL KILL YOU!
DAD, NO!
NO...
DEAD, GOD... NO...

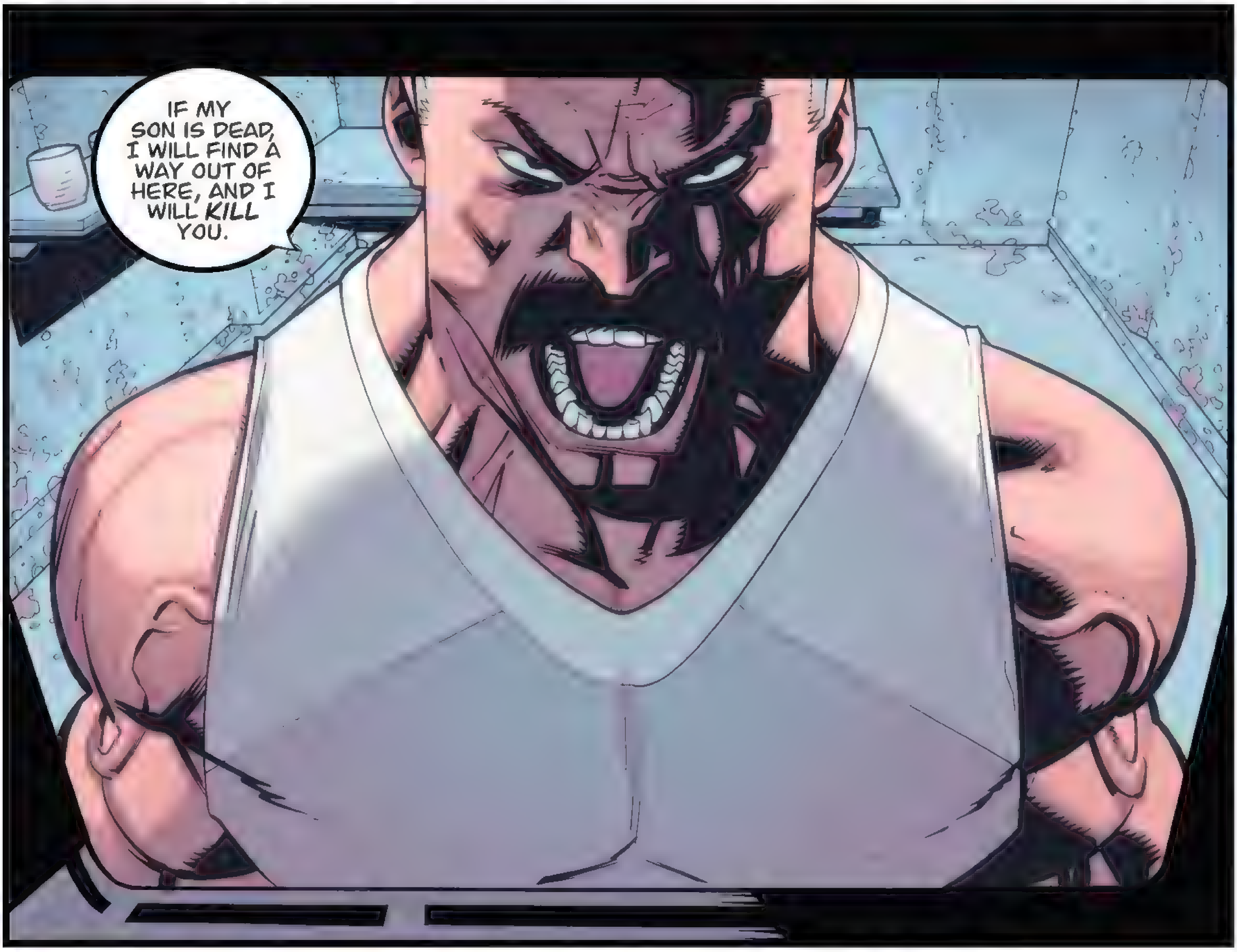

I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS...

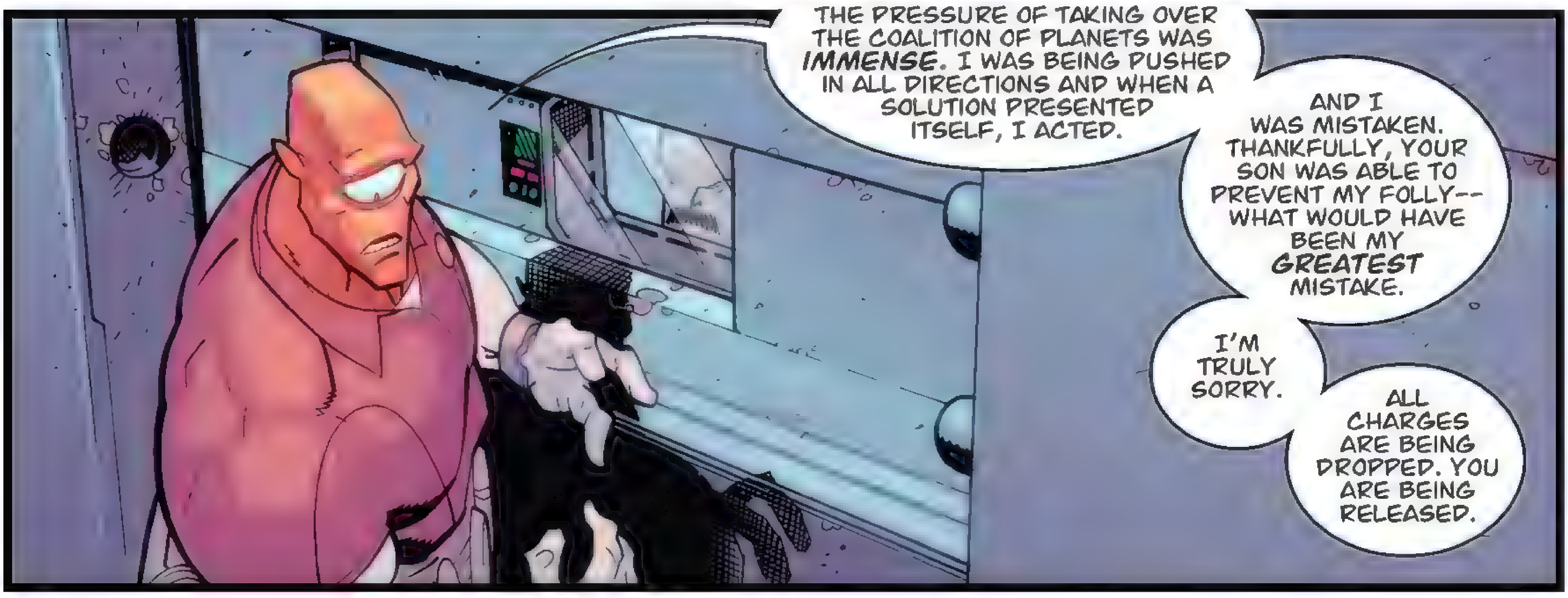
HEAVY HANDED? JARRING? OVERLY DARK? HELL, OUT OF PLACE EVEN. ALL OF THE ABOVE. I **COMPLETELY** AGREE.
IT'S A LOT OF THINGS AT WORK REALLY. I **CREATED** THE BOOK, I **OWN** THE BOOK, I CAN DO WHAT I WANT, INCLUDING CRAZY THINGS THAT I'D NEVER BE ALLOWED TO DO ON A CORPORATE COMIC BOOK. THAT LEADS TO CRAZY THINGS SOMETIMES... IT MAKES ME WANT TO SPREAD MY WINGS FROM TIME TO TIME, SO TO SPEAK.
THE OTHER THING IS WE WERE RAMPING UP TO OUR ONE-HUNDREDTH ISSUE. YOU GET TO THAT POINT AND YOU KIND OF WANT TO SHAKE THINGS UP... DO SOMETHING, I DON'T KNOW... **SHOCKING.**
DID I RUN THE RISK OF ALIENATING READERS? **OF COURSE.** THE ONLY THING YOU CAN DO IS TRY AND GET BACK TO THE LIGHT-HEARTED TONE OF THE BOOK AS **QUICKLY** AS POSSIBLE TO REMIND READERS THAT IT'S NOT AN OVERALL CHANGE, SOME KIND OF NEW STATUS QUO--IT WAS JUST AN, I DON'T KNOW...
INTRIGUING INTERLUDE.
I FIGURED IF I CONVINCED THEM OF THAT, I WOULDN'T LOSE ANY READERS.
Booth boy
Holds sharpies etc...
EXHIBITOR
ZOMBIES SUCK
Phillip Schaff
Science dog Creator
EXHIBITOR
SCIENCE DOG
SCIENCE DOG
SCIENCE DOG
SCIENCE DOG
THE DEATH OF...


THAT'S ALL VERY INTERESTING, MR. SCHAFF.
DID IT *WORK?*
SD
NOT REALLY.
BUT HEY, WE RELEASED SCIENCE DOG ONE HUNDRED, AND IT BROKE ALL KINDS OF RECORDS. FOR AN INDEPENDENT COMIC THAT'S A PRETTY BIG DEAL. THERE AREN'T A LOT OF BOOKS THAT HIT THAT KIND OF NUMBER.
YEAH, BUT DID YOU HAVE TO DO *FIFTEEN* COVERS? I MEAN, AS A FAN, I FEEL OBLIGATED TO BUY THEM ALL, AND THAT'S NOT EASY FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, AND WELL...
IT'S NOT FAIR TO ESSENTIALLY *FORCE* DIE-HARD FANS WHO ARE COMPLETISTS BY NATURE TO BUY ALL THOSE VERSIONS OF THE SAME COMIC TO COMPLETE THEIR COLLECTION... JUST SO YOU CAN LINE YOUR POCKETS... Y'KNOW?
SCIENCE
C O M X
NEXT!

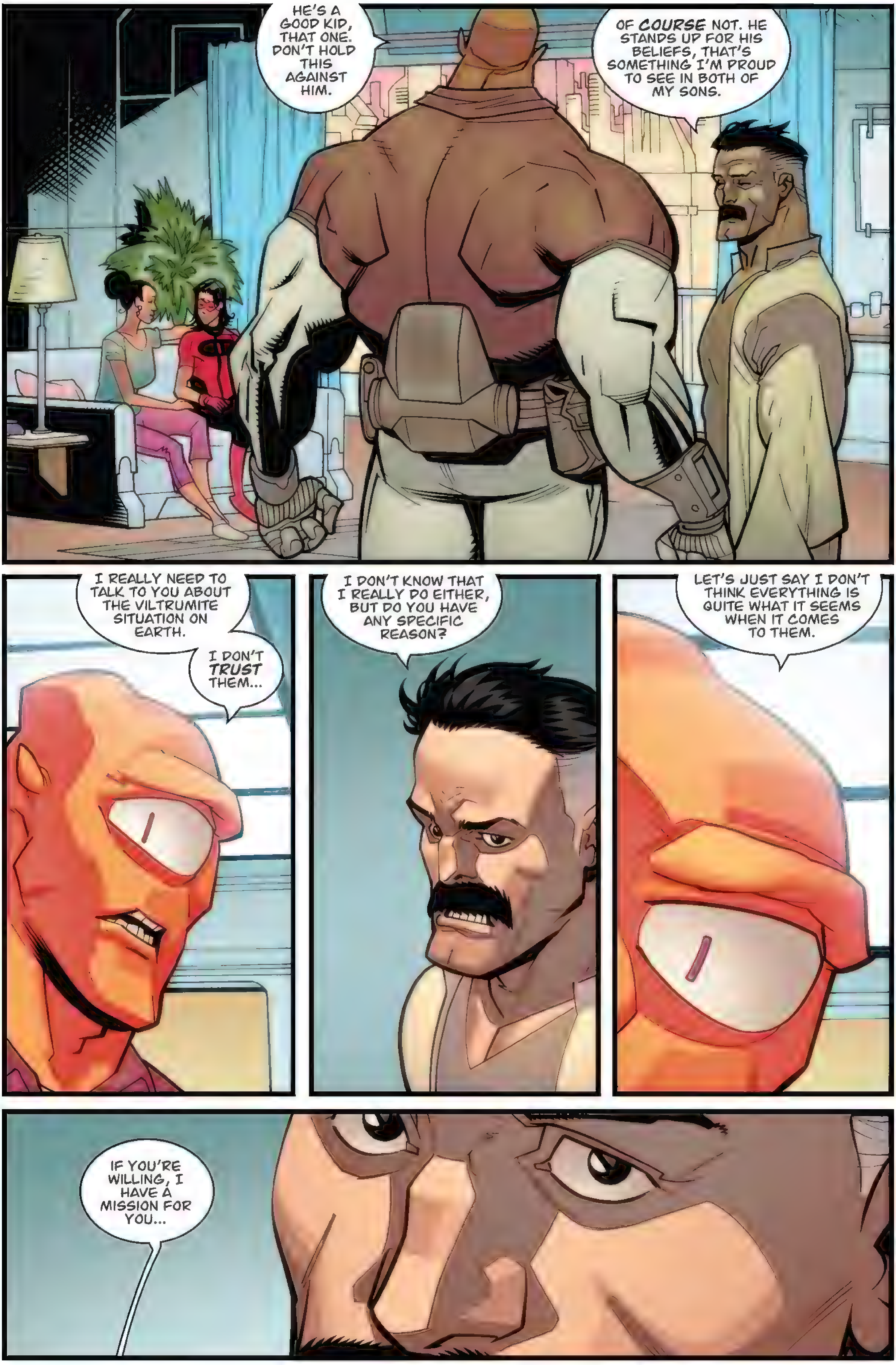

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE DIDN'T REMEMBER ME...
GUY MEETS A LOT OF PEOPLE. I'M SURE IF YOU'D TOLD HIM YOU WERE INVINCIBLE, IT'D BE DIFFERENT.
COMIC-CO
"WERE" INVINCIBLE.
SIGH
I DIDN'T MEAN IT LIKE THAT.

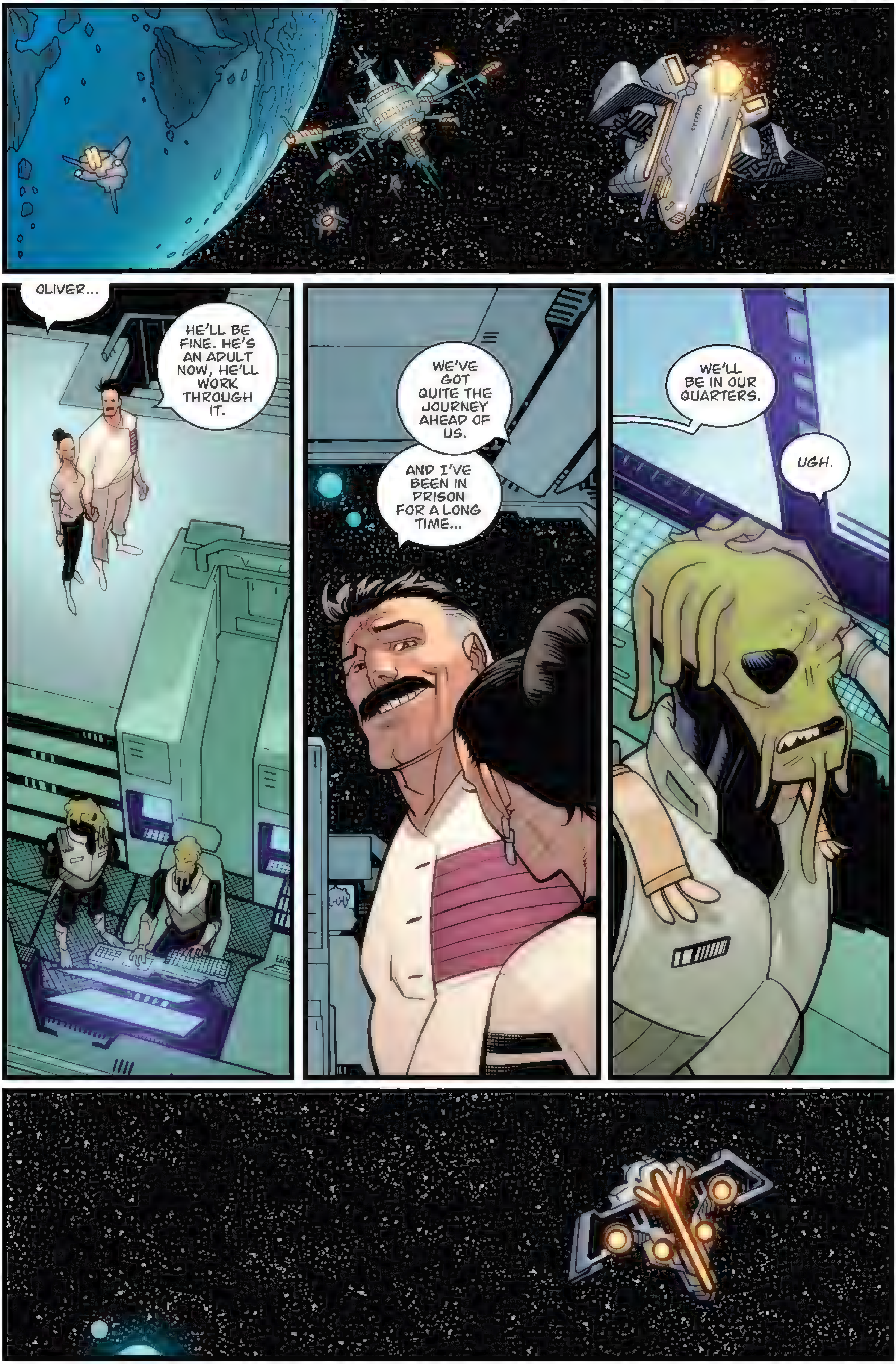

THE COALITION OF PLANETS PRISON, ORBITING TALESCRIA.

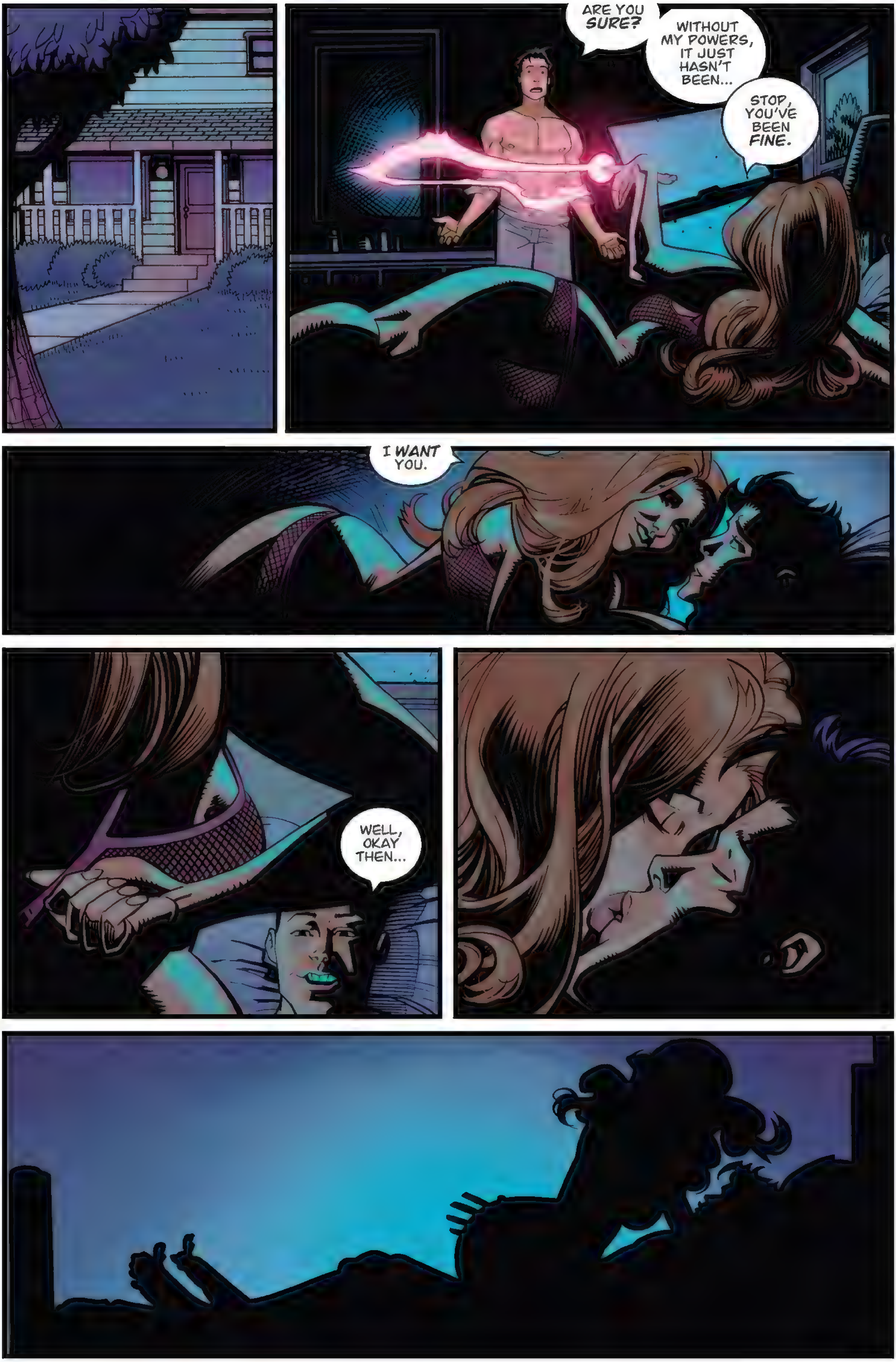

IF MY SON IS DEAD, I WILL FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE, AND I WILL *KILL* YOU.

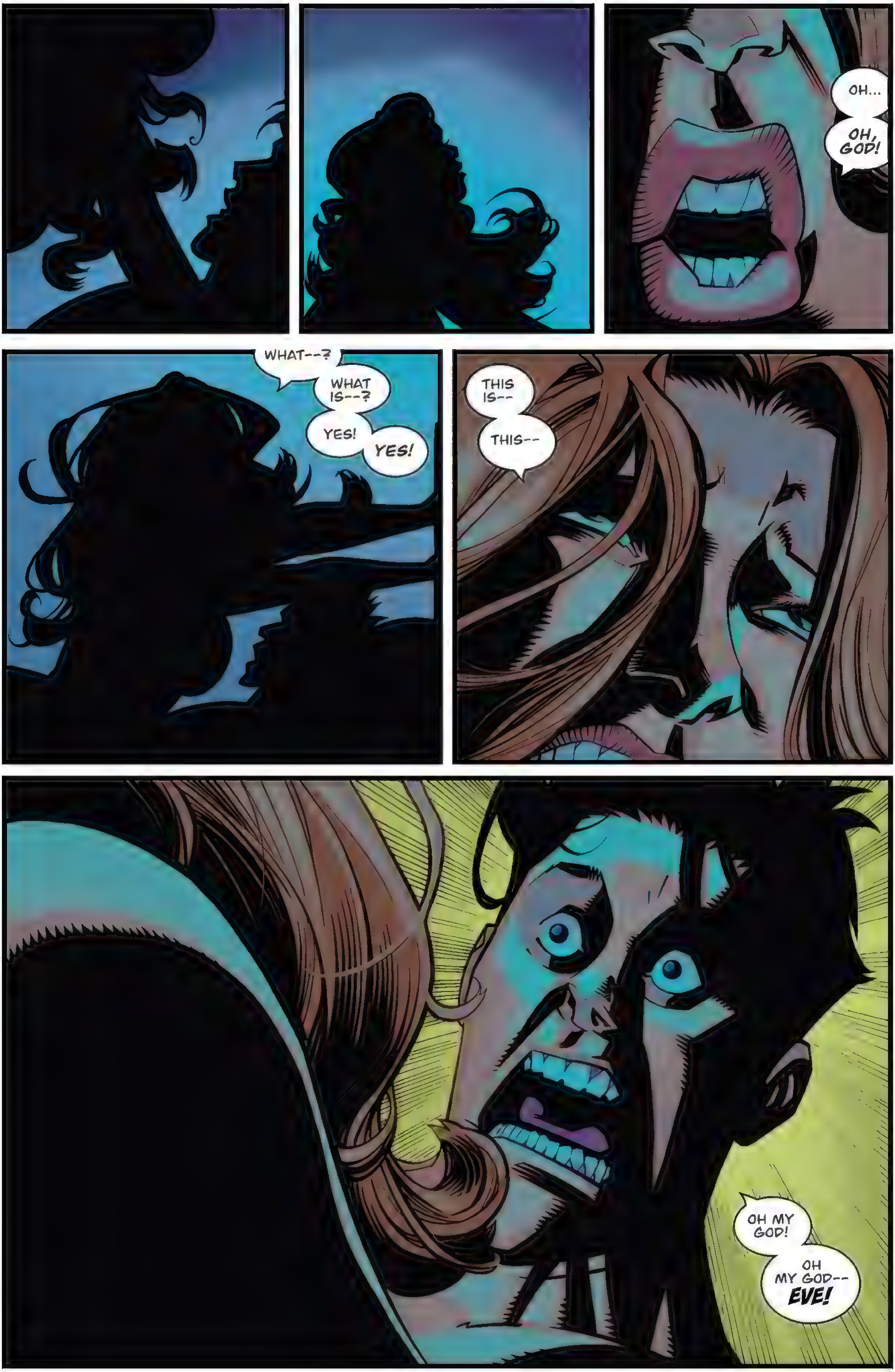

THE PRESSURE OF TAKING OVER THE COALITION OF PLANETS WAS *IMMENSE*. I WAS BEING PUSHED IN ALL DIRECTIONS AND WHEN A SOLUTION PRESENTED ITSELF, I ACTED.
AND I WAS MISTAKEN. THANKFULLY, YOUR SON WAS ABLE TO PREVENT MY FOLLY--WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN MY ***GREATEST*** MISTAKE.
I'M TRULY SORRY.
ALL CHARGES ARE BEING DROPPED. YOU ARE BEING RELEASED.

OH MY GOD-- NOLAN!
I'VE MISSED YOU...
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING HERE?!
HE CAME TO HIS SENSES. WE'RE GOOD.
IT WAS AN EXTREME ERROR IN MY JUDGEMENT...
YOU EXPECT THAT TO MAKE THINGS BETTER... AFTER WHAT YOU TRIED TO DO?! I CAN'T--
MOM?
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL EVER FORGIVE ME...


HE'S A GOOD KID, THAT ONE. DON'T HOLD THIS AGAINST HIM.
OF *COURSE* NOT. HE STANDS UP FOR HIS BELIEFS, THAT'S SOMETHING I'M PROUD TO SEE IN BOTH OF MY SONS.
I REALLY NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE VILTRUMITE SITUATION ON EARTH.
I DON'T *TRUST* THEM...
I DON'T KNOW THAT I REALLY DO EITHER, BUT DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC REASON?
LET'S JUST SAY I DON'T THINK EVERYTHING IS QUITE WHAT IT SEEMS WHEN IT COMES TO THEM.
IF YOU'RE WILLING, I HAVE A MISSION FOR YOU...

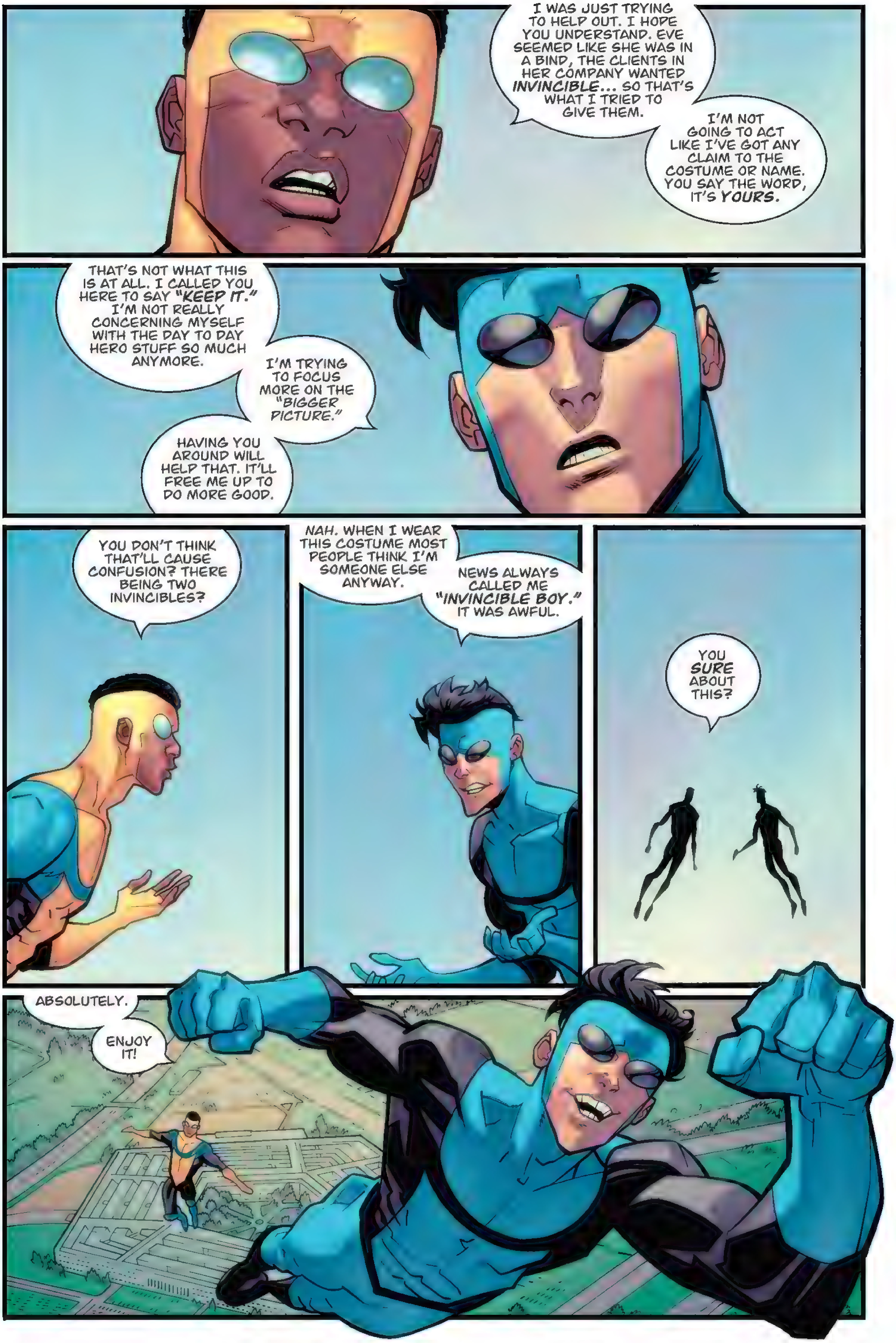

OLIVER...
HE'LL BE FINE. HE'S AN ADULT NOW, HE'LL WORK THROUGH IT.
WE'VE GOT QUITE THE JOURNEY AHEAD OF US.
AND I'VE BEEN IN PRISON FOR A LONG TIME...
WE'LL BE IN OUR QUARTERS.
UGH.

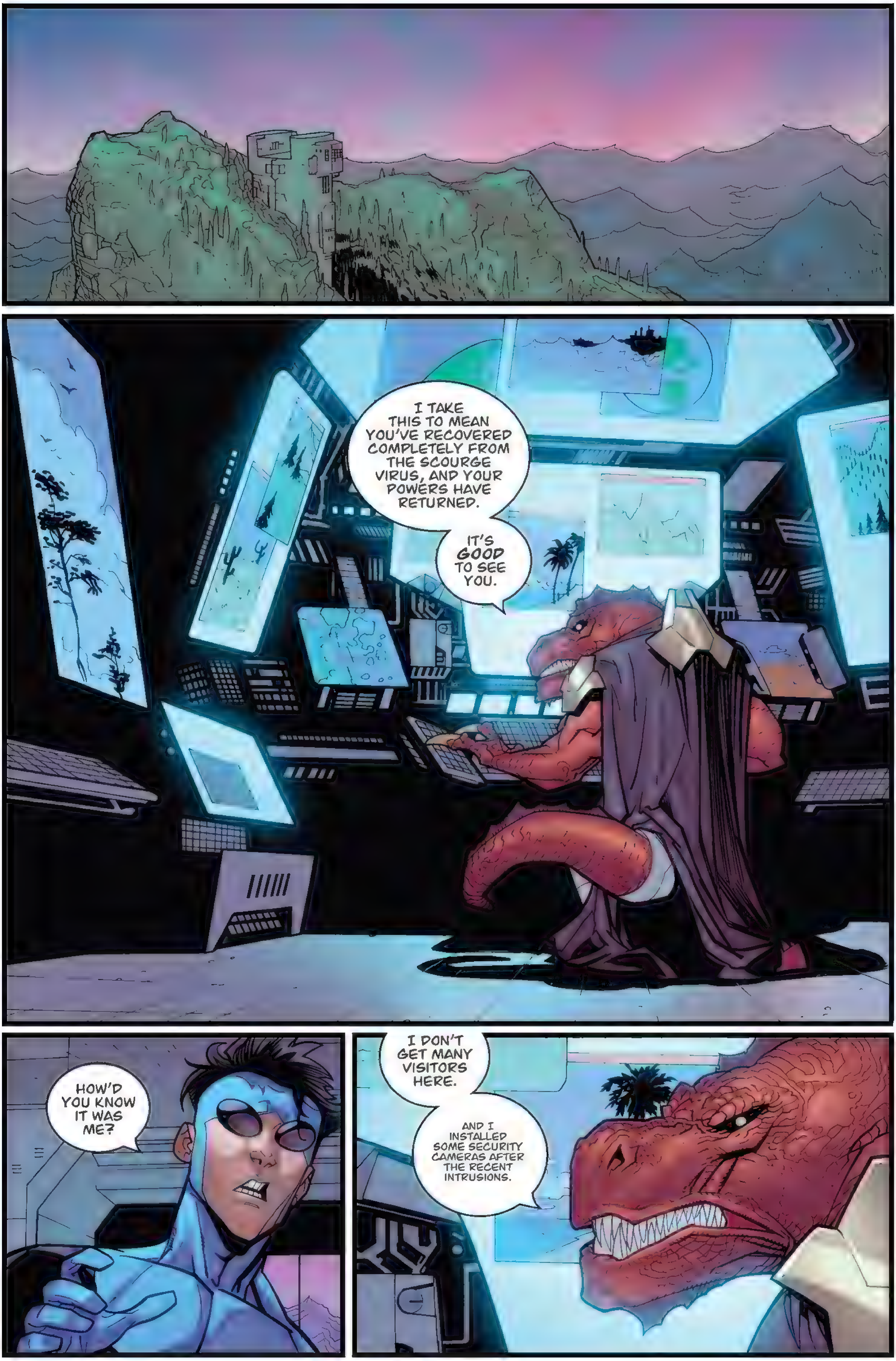

ARE YOU SURE?
WITHOUT MY POWERS, IT JUST HASN'T BEEN...
STOP, YOU'VE BEEN FINE.
I WANT YOU.
WELL, OKAY THEN...

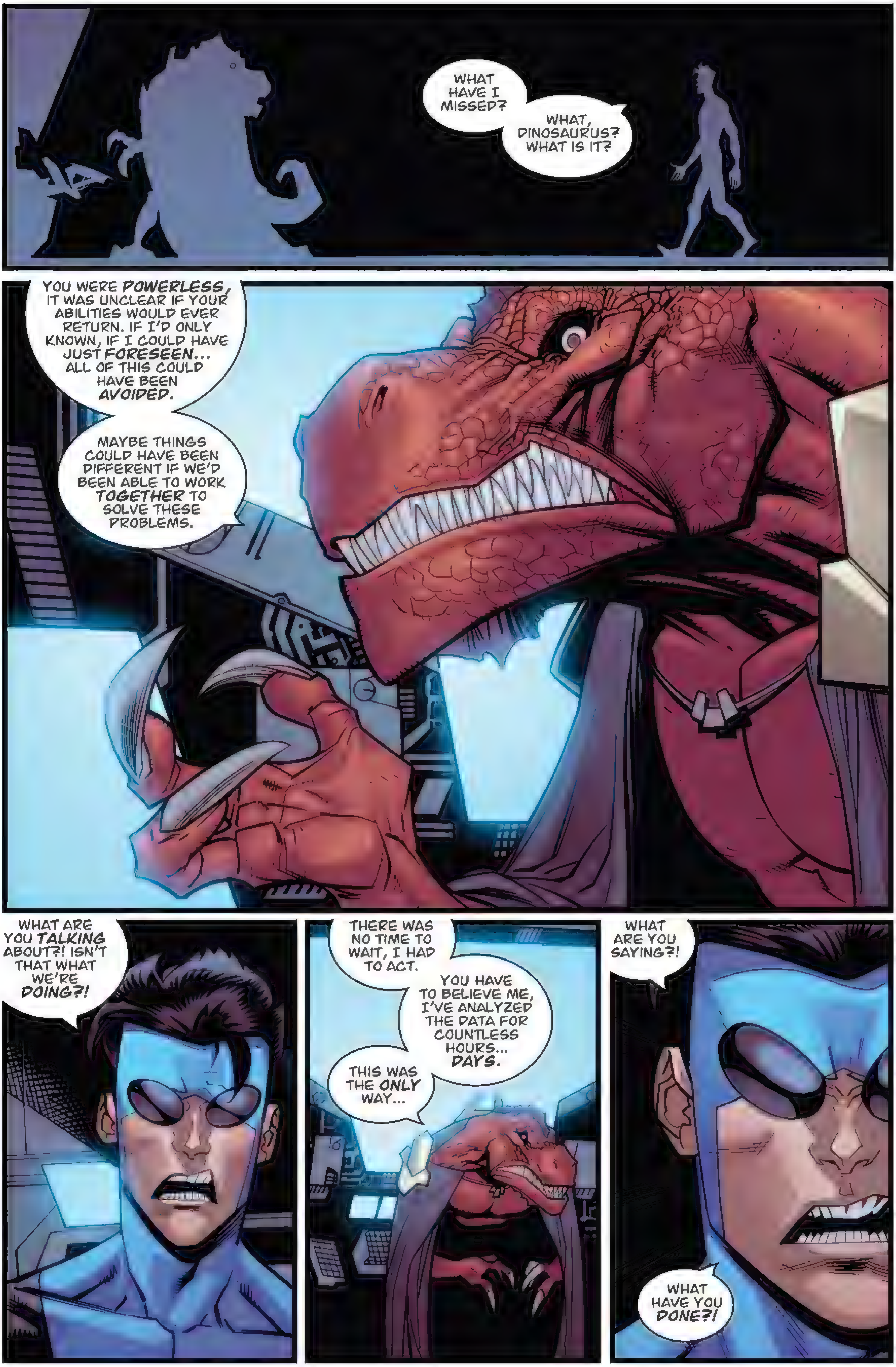

OH...
OH, GOD!
WHAT--?
WHAT IS--?
YES!
YES!
THIS IS--
THIS--
OH MY GOD!
OH MY GOD--
EVE!

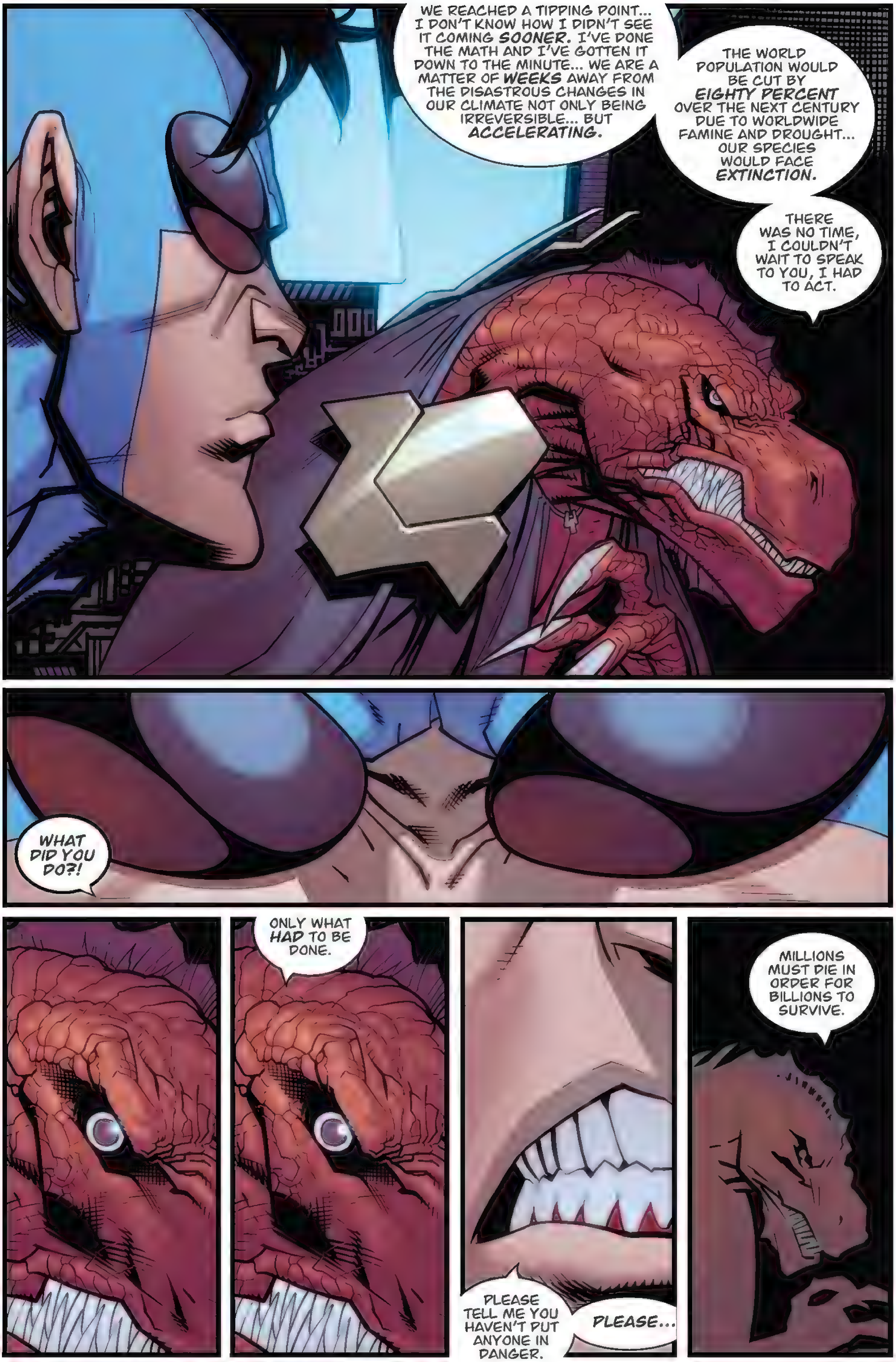
MY POWERS ARE BACK, BABY!

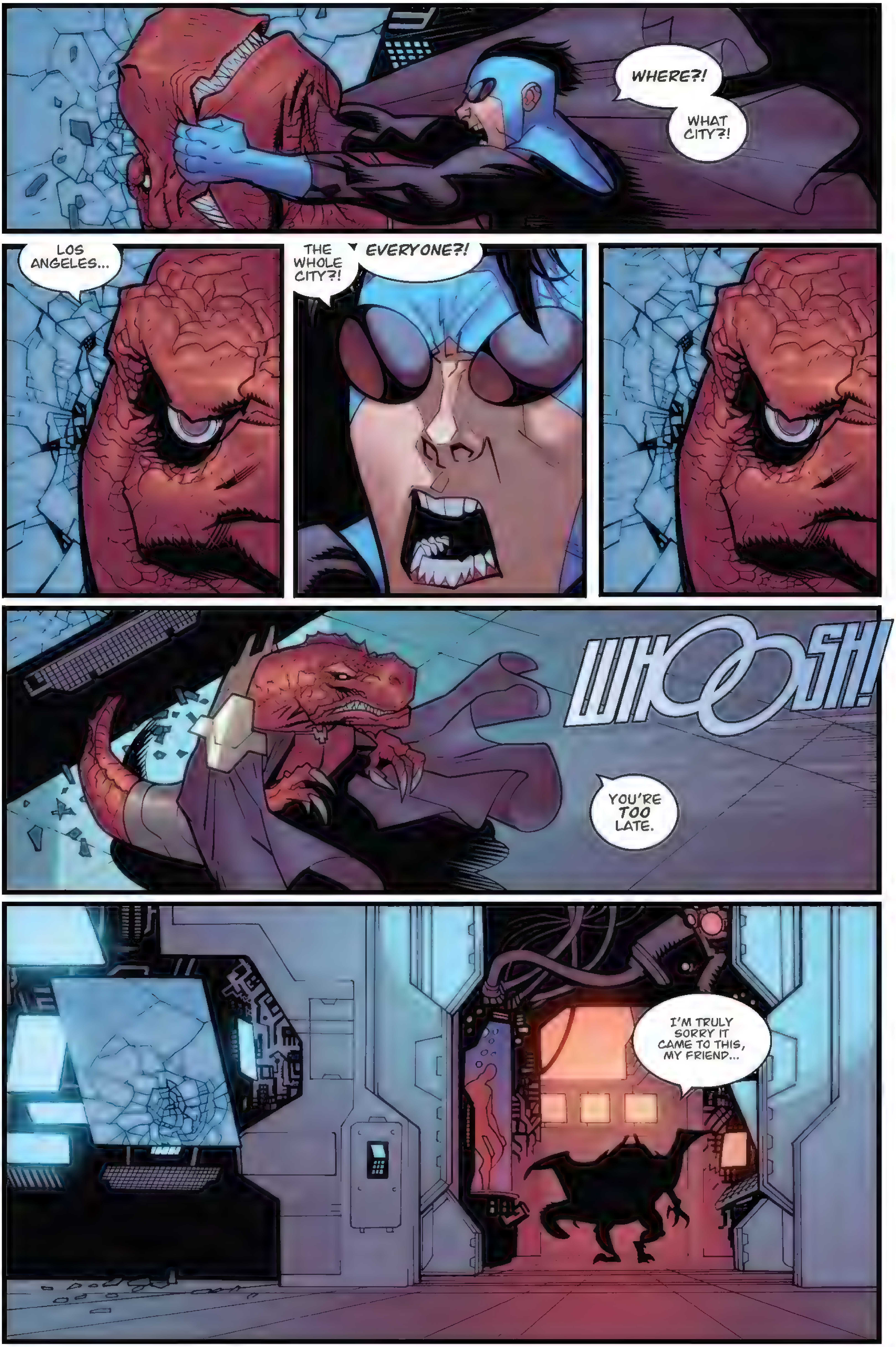
CHAPTER 98


I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP OUT. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND. EVE SEEMED LIKE SHE WAS IN A BIND, THE CLIENTS IN HER COMPANY WANTED INVINCIBLE... SO THAT'S WHAT I TRIED TO GIVE THEM.
I'M NOT GOING TO ACT LIKE I'VE GOT ANY CLAIM TO THE COSTUME OR NAME. YOU SAY THE WORD, IT'S YOURS.
THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS AT ALL. I CALLED YOU HERE TO SAY "KEEP IT." I'M NOT REALLY CONCERNING MYSELF WITH THE DAY TO DAY HERO STUFF SO MUCH ANYMORE.
I'M TRYING TO FOCUS MORE ON THE "BIGGER PICTURE."
HAVING YOU AROUND WILL HELP THAT. IT'LL FREE ME UP TO DO MORE GOOD.
YOU DON'T THINK THAT'LL CAUSE CONFUSION? THERE BEING TWO INVINCIBLES?
NAH. WHEN I WEAR THIS COSTUME MOST PEOPLE THINK I'M SOMEONE ELSE ANYWAY.
NEWS ALWAYS CALLED ME "INVINCIBLE BOY." IT WAS AWFUL.
YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
ABSOLUTELY.
ENJOY IT!


I TAKE THIS TO MEAN YOU'VE RECOVERED COMPLETELY FROM THE SCOURGE VIRUS, AND YOUR POWERS HAVE RETURNED.
IT'S **GOOD** TO SEE YOU.
HOW'D YOU KNOW IT WAS ME?
I DON'T GET MANY VISITORS HERE.
AND I INSTALLED SOME SECURITY CAMERAS AFTER THE RECENT INTRUSIONS.


WHAT HAVE I MISSED?
WHAT, DINOSAURUS? WHAT IS IT?
YOU WERE POWERLESS, IT WAS UNCLEAR IF YOUR ABILITIES WOULD EVER RETURN. IF I'D ONLY KNOWN, IF I COULD HAVE JUST FORESEEN... ALL OF THIS COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED.
MAYBE THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF WE'D BEEN ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! ISN'T THAT WHAT WE'RE DOING?!
THERE WAS NO TIME TO WAIT, I HAD TO ACT.
YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME, I'VE ANALYZED THE DATA FOR COUNTLESS HOURS... DAYS.
THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

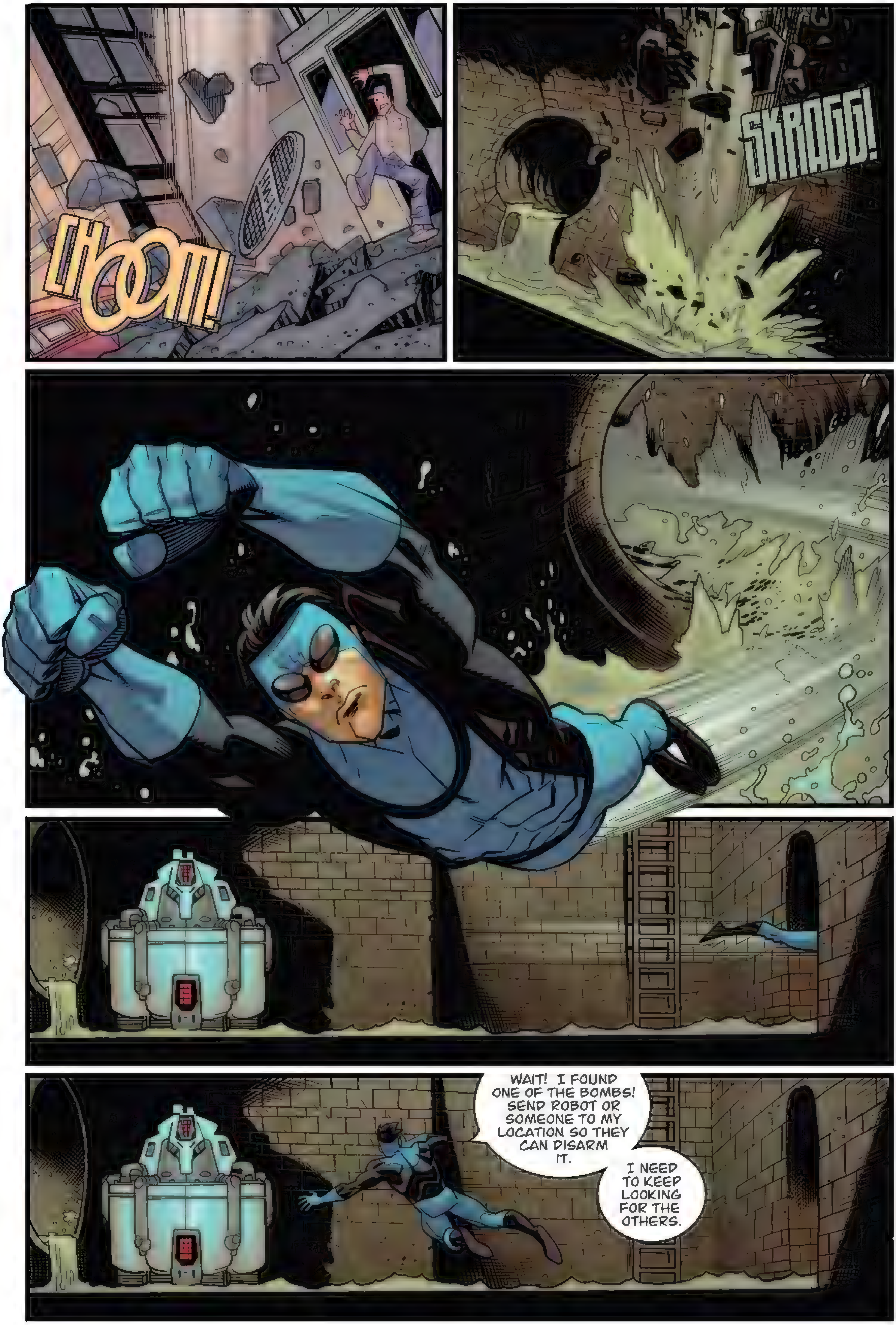

WE REACHED A TIPPING POINT... I DON'T KNOW HOW I DIDN'T SEE IT COMING **SOONER**. I'VE DONE THE MATH AND I'VE GOTTEN IT DOWN TO THE MINUTE... WE ARE A MATTER OF **WEEKS** AWAY FROM THE DISASTROUS CHANGES IN OUR CLIMATE NOT ONLY BEING IRREVERSIBLE... BUT **ACCELERATING**.
THE WORLD POPULATION WOULD BE CUT BY **EIGHTY PERCENT** OVER THE NEXT CENTURY DUE TO WORLDWIDE FAMINE AND DROUGHT... OUR SPECIES WOULD FACE **EXTINCTION**.
THERE WAS NO TIME, I COULDN'T WAIT TO SPEAK TO YOU, I HAD TO ACT.
WHAT DID YOU DO?!
ONLY WHAT **HAD** TO BE DONE.
PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAVEN'T PUT ANYONE IN DANGER.
PLEASE...
MILLIONS MUST DIE IN ORDER FOR BILLIONS TO SURVIVE.

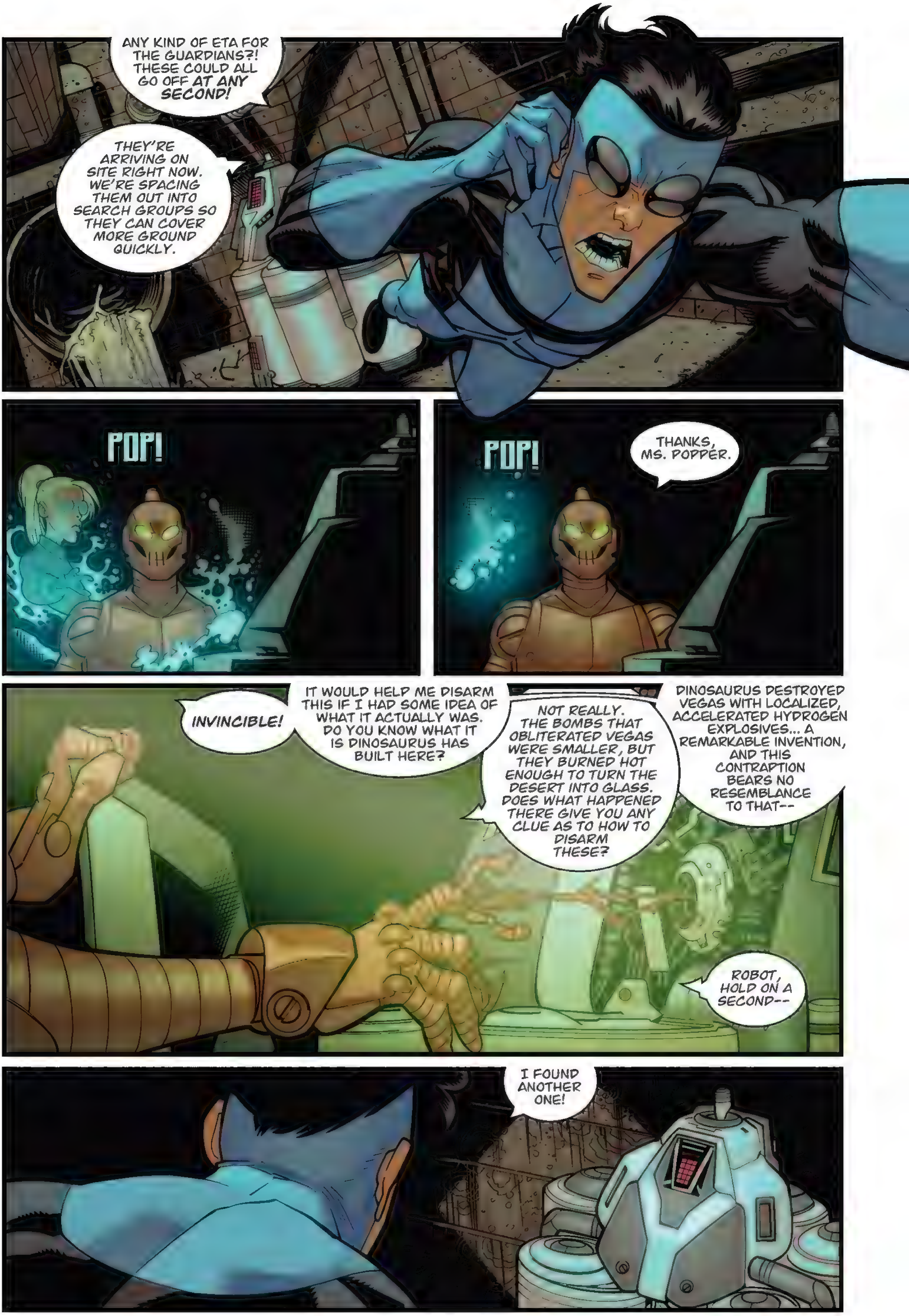

WHERE?!
WHAT CITY?!
LOS ANGELES...
THE WHOLE CITY?!
EVERYONE?!
WHOOSH!
YOU'RE *TOO* LATE.
I'M TRULY SORRY IT CAME TO THIS, MY FRIEND...

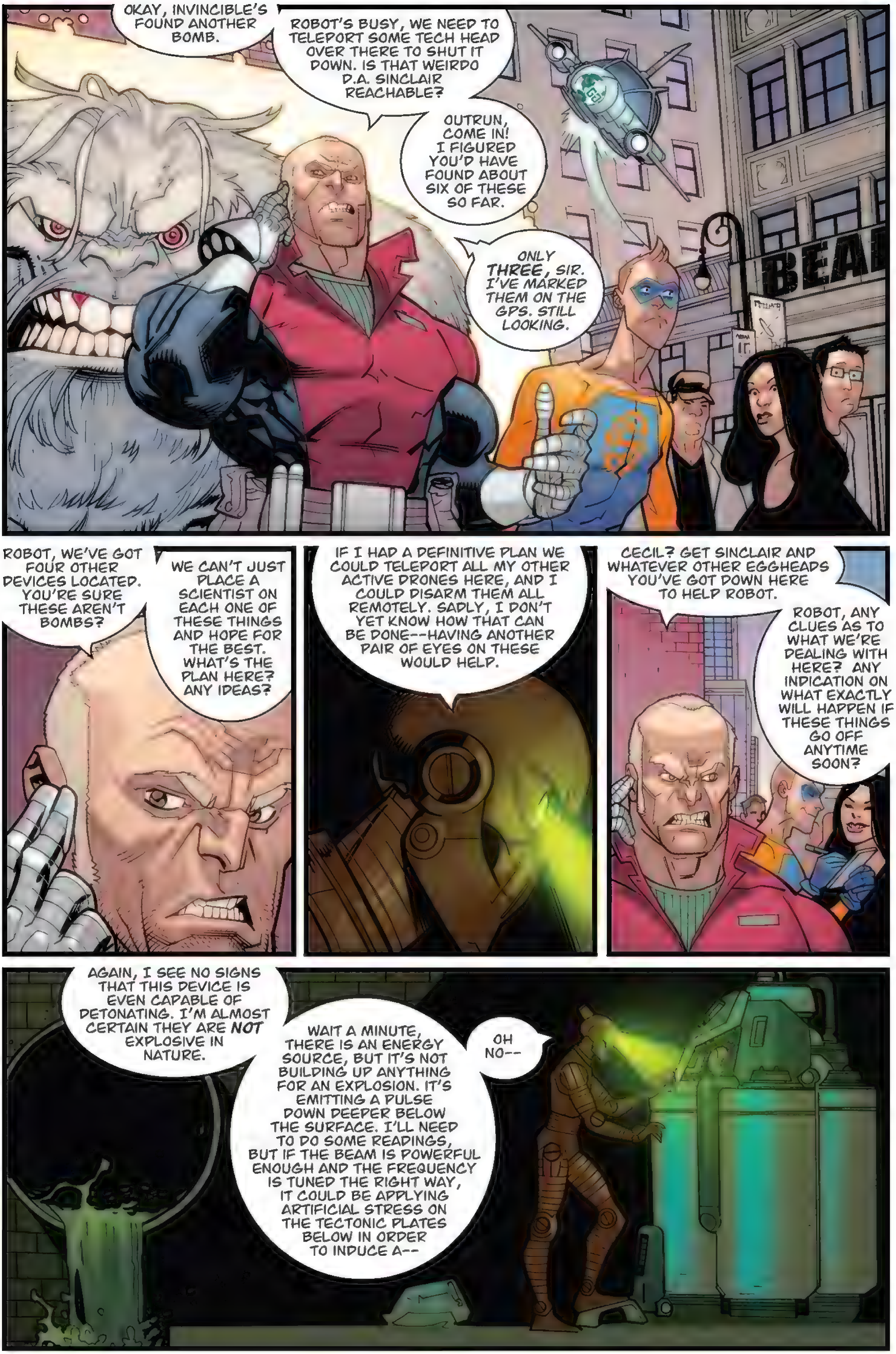
I MUST HAVE MY *REVENGE!*
I HAVE WAITED ***LONG ENOUGH!***

DO NOT FORGET WHO IS IN *CONTROL* HERE, ANGSTROM.
THESE OUTBURSTS WILL *NOT* BE TOLERATED.
I HAVE TRANSFORMED YOUR WORLD! PROVIDED YOU WITH A POPULATION WHO WORSHIP YOU AS *GODS!*
YOUR EVERY WANT AND DESIRE IS ATTENDED TO! YOU HAVE *LIMITLESS* RESOURCES! I HAVE WORKED *TIRELESSLY* TO CONSTRUCT A *PERFECT* WORLD FOR YOU--PULLED FROM *COUNTLESS* DIMENSIONS!
WHAT MORE COULD YOU POSSIBLY WANT FROM ME?!
...
NOTHING.
YOU ARE FREE TO GO. *THE TECHNICIANS* HAVE NO FURTHER USE FOR YOU.

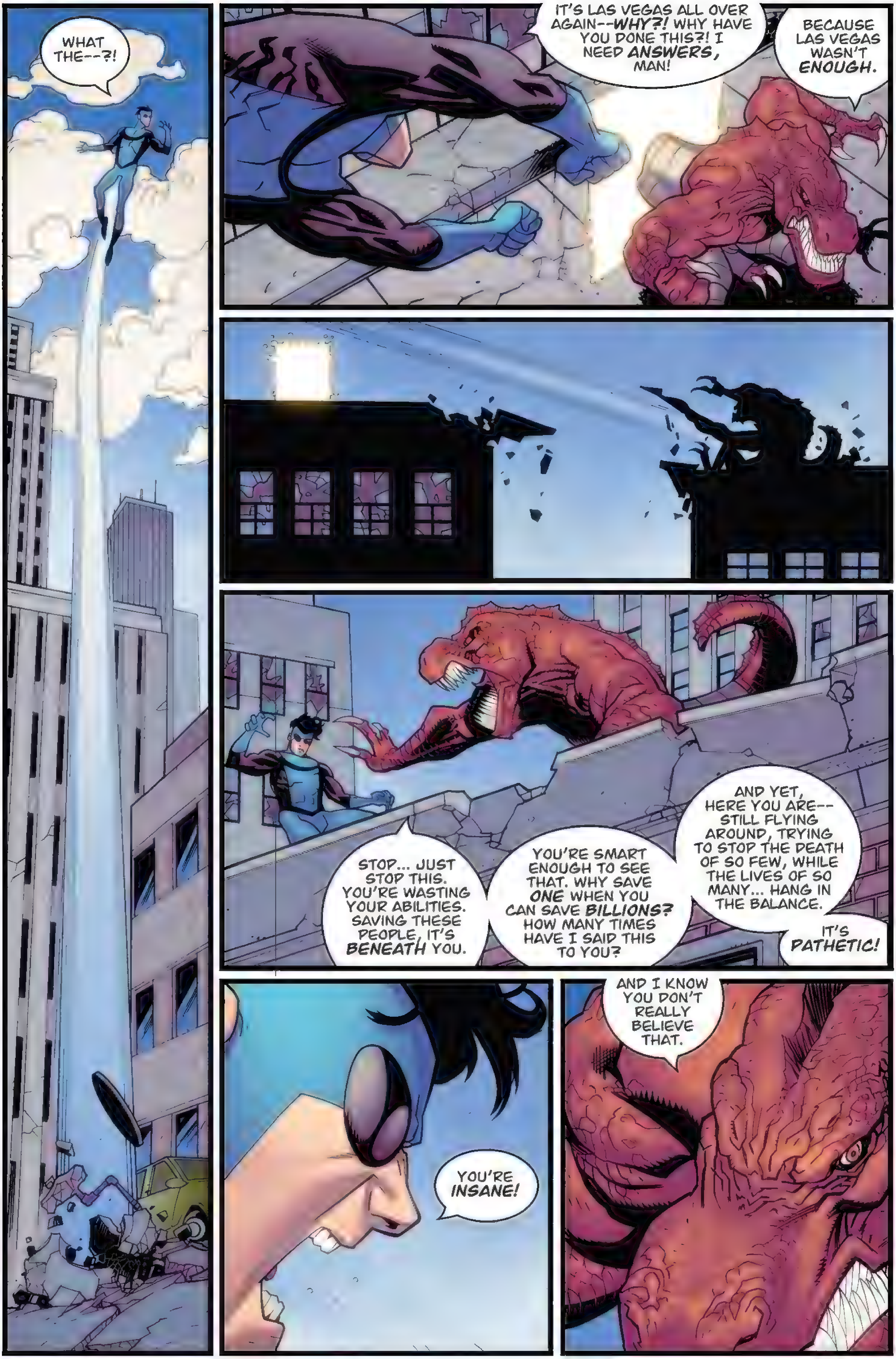
MARK?! WHAT WAS THAT? I HEARD LOS ANGELES-- WE'RE MONITORING THE CITY AND WE DON'T SEE ANYTHING. I CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU!
AND HOW DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER?!
SORRY, I WAS FLYING REALLY FAST.
AND ROBOT PUT YOUR NUMBER IN THIS PHONE WHEN HE MADE IT FOR ME.
CAPITOL RECORDS
LOS ANGELES HAS NO CURRENT UNUSUAL ACTIVITY. IT'S QUIET.
WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON HERE, MARK?
IT'S LAS VEGAS ALL OVER AGAIN! WE HAVE TO FIND THE BOMBS BEFORE DINOSAURUS SETS THEM OFF-- WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME!
I NEED YOU TO GET EVERYONE OUT HERE! NOW!
DINOSAURUS?!
DAMN IT, MARK--IF SO MUCH AS ONE PERSON LOSES A LIFE HERE, THIS WILL BE ON YOU! YOU DID THIS!
YOU CAN SCOLD ME LATER--THROW ME IN PRISON-- BUT FOR NOW--
JUST HELP ME MAKE IT RIGHT!

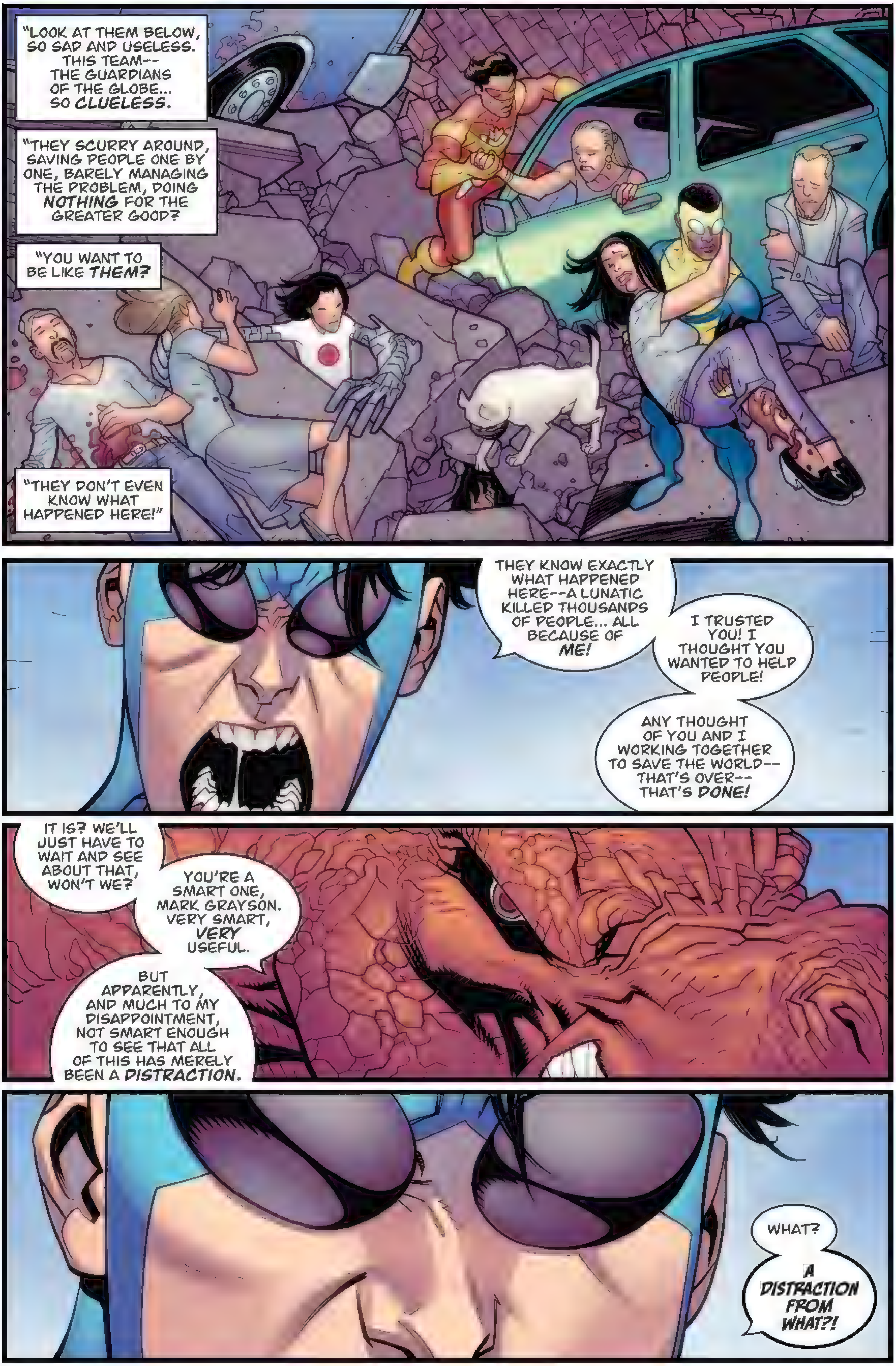

CHOOM!
SKRAGG!
WAIT! I FOUND ONE OF THE BOMBS! SEND ROBOT OR SOMEONE TO MY LOCATION SO THEY CAN DISARM IT.
I NEED TO KEEP LOOKING FOR THE OTHERS.

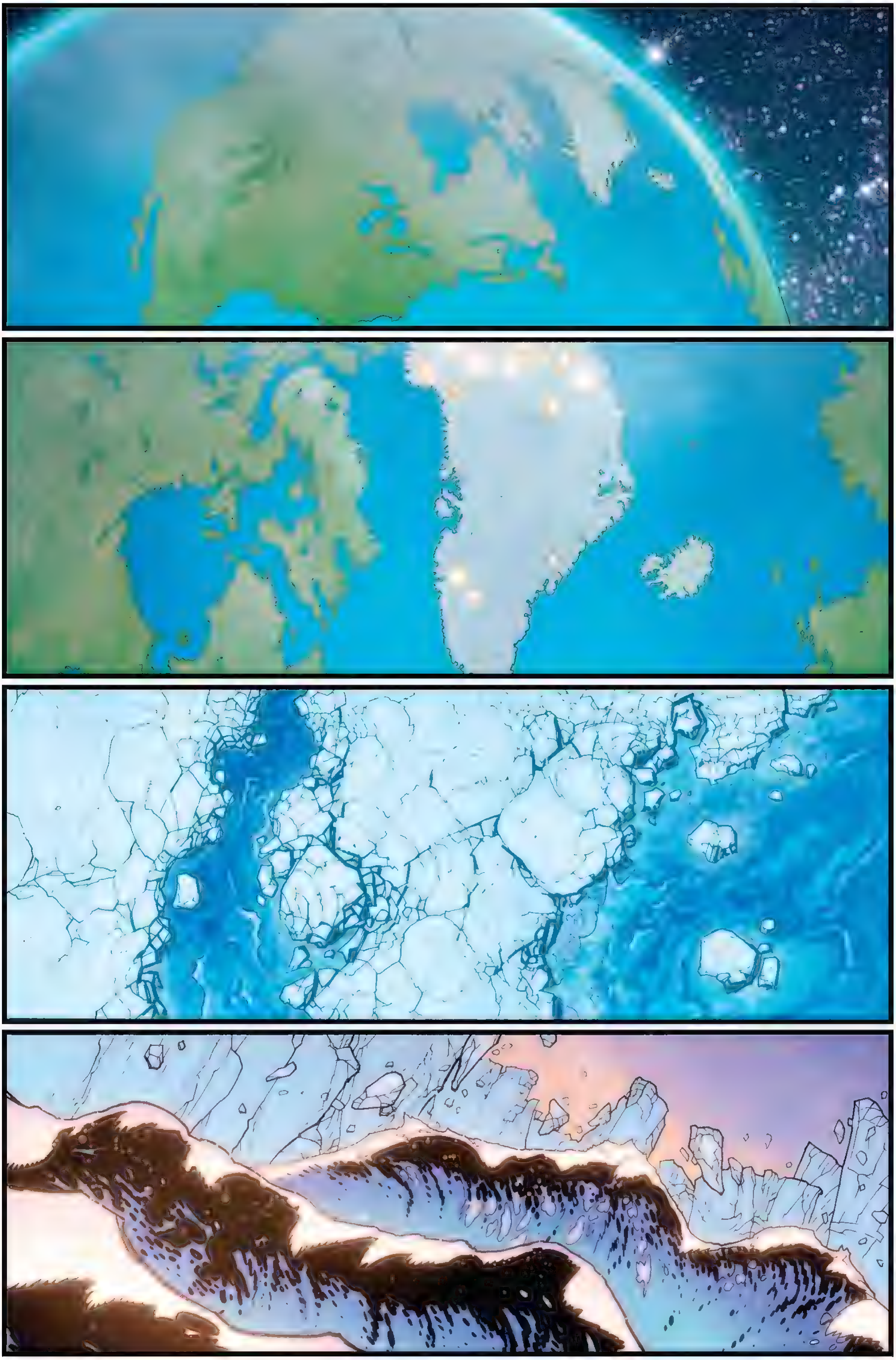

ANY KIND OF ETA FOR THE GUARDIANS?! THESE COULD ALL GO OFF AT ANY SECOND!
THEY'RE ARRIVING ON SITE RIGHT NOW. WE'RE SPACING THEM OUT INTO SEARCH GROUPS SO THEY CAN COVER MORE GROUND QUICKLY.
POP!
POP!
THANKS, MS. POPPER.
INVINCIBLE!
IT WOULD HELP ME DISARM THIS IF I HAD SOME IDEA OF WHAT IT ACTUALLY WAS. DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS DINOSAURUS HAS BUILT HERE?
NOT REALLY. THE BOMBS THAT OBLITERATED VEGAS WERE SMALLER, BUT THEY BURNED HOT ENOUGH TO TURN THE DESERT INTO GLASS. DOES WHAT HAPPENED THERE GIVE YOU ANY CLUE AS TO HOW TO DISARM THESE?
DINOSAURUS DESTROYED VEGAS WITH LOCALIZED, ACCELERATED HYDROGEN EXPLOSIVES... A REMARKABLE INVENTION, AND THIS CONTRAPTION BEARS NO RESEMBLANCE TO THAT--
ROBOT, HOLD ON A SECOND--
I FOUND ANOTHER ONE!

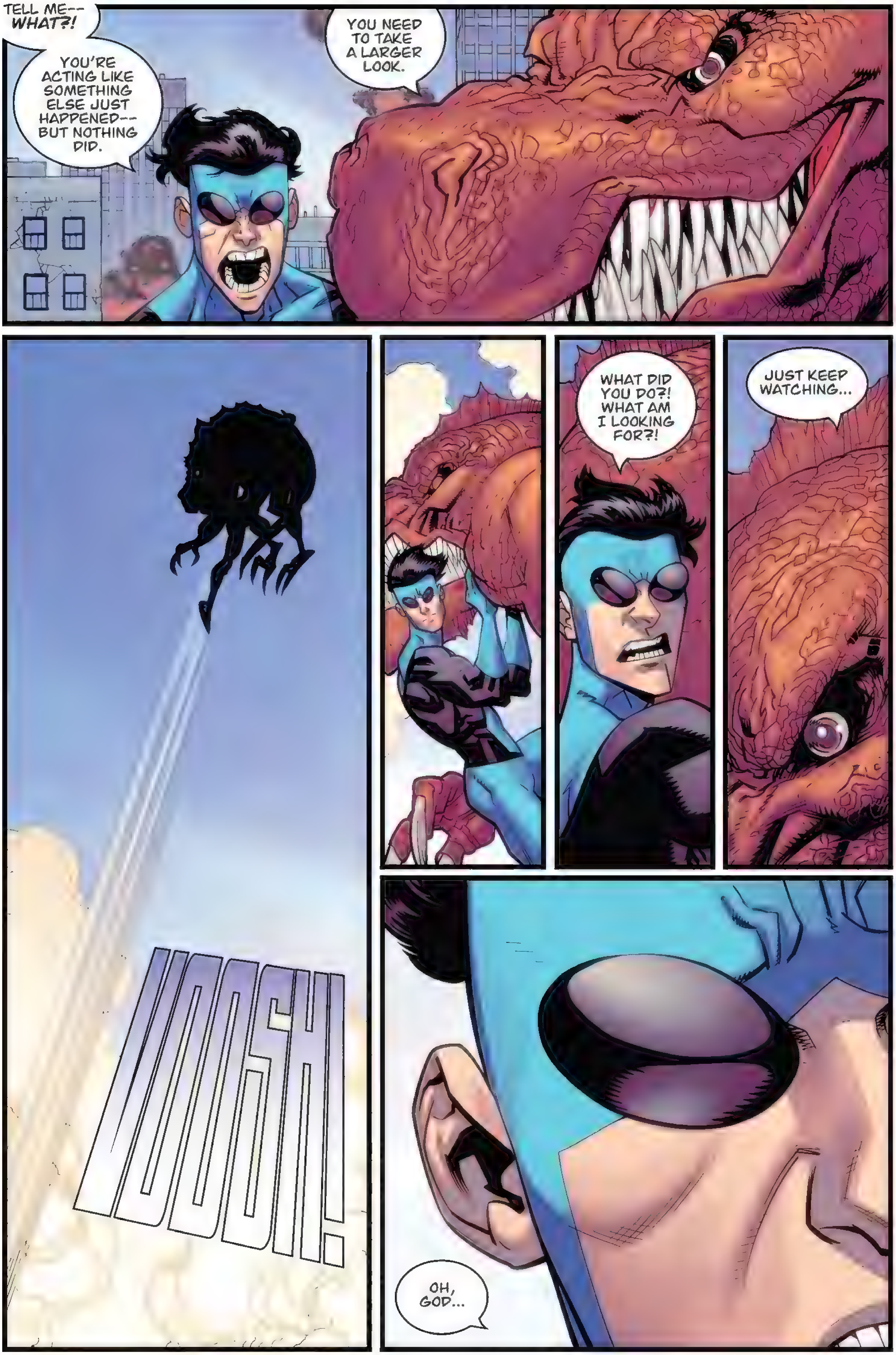

OKAY, INVINCIBLE'S FOUND ANOTHER BOMB.
ROBOT'S BUSY, WE NEED TO TELEPORT SOME TECH HEAD OVER THERE TO SHUT IT DOWN. IS THAT WEIRDO D.A. SINCLAIR REACHABLE?
OUTRUN, COME IN! I FIGURED YOU'D HAVE FOUND ABOUT SIX OF THESE SO FAR.
ONLY **THREE**, SIR. I'VE MARKED THEM ON THE GPS. STILL LOOKING.
BEA
ROBOT, WE'VE GOT FOUR OTHER DEVICES LOCATED. YOU'RE SURE THESE AREN'T BOMBS?
WE CAN'T JUST PLACE A SCIENTIST ON EACH ONE OF THESE THINGS AND HOPE FOR THE BEST. WHAT'S THE PLAN HERE? ANY IDEAS?
IF I HAD A DEFINITIVE PLAN WE COULD TELEPORT ALL MY OTHER ACTIVE DRONES HERE, AND I COULD DISARM THEM ALL REMOTELY. SADLY, I DON'T YET KNOW HOW THAT CAN BE DONE--HAVING ANOTHER PAIR OF EYES ON THESE WOULD HELP.
CECIL? GET SINCLAIR AND WHATEVER OTHER EGGHEADS YOU'VE GOT DOWN HERE TO HELP ROBOT.
ROBOT, ANY CLUES AS TO WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE? ANY INDICATION ON WHAT EXACTLY WILL HAPPEN IF THESE THINGS GO OFF ANYTIME SOON?
AGAIN, I SEE NO SIGNS THAT THIS DEVICE IS EVEN CAPABLE OF DETONATING. I'M ALMOST CERTAIN THEY ARE *NOT* EXPLOSIVE IN NATURE.
WAIT A MINUTE, THERE IS AN ENERGY SOURCE, BUT IT'S NOT BUILDING UP ANYTHING FOR AN EXPLOSION. IT'S EMITTING A PULSE DOWN DEEPER BELOW THE SURFACE. I'LL NEED TO DO SOME READINGS, BUT IF THE BEAM IS POWERFUL ENOUGH AND THE FREQUENCY IS TUNED THE RIGHT WAY, IT COULD BE APPLYING ARTIFICIAL STRESS ON THE TECTONIC PLATES BELOW IN ORDER TO INDUCE A--
OH NO--

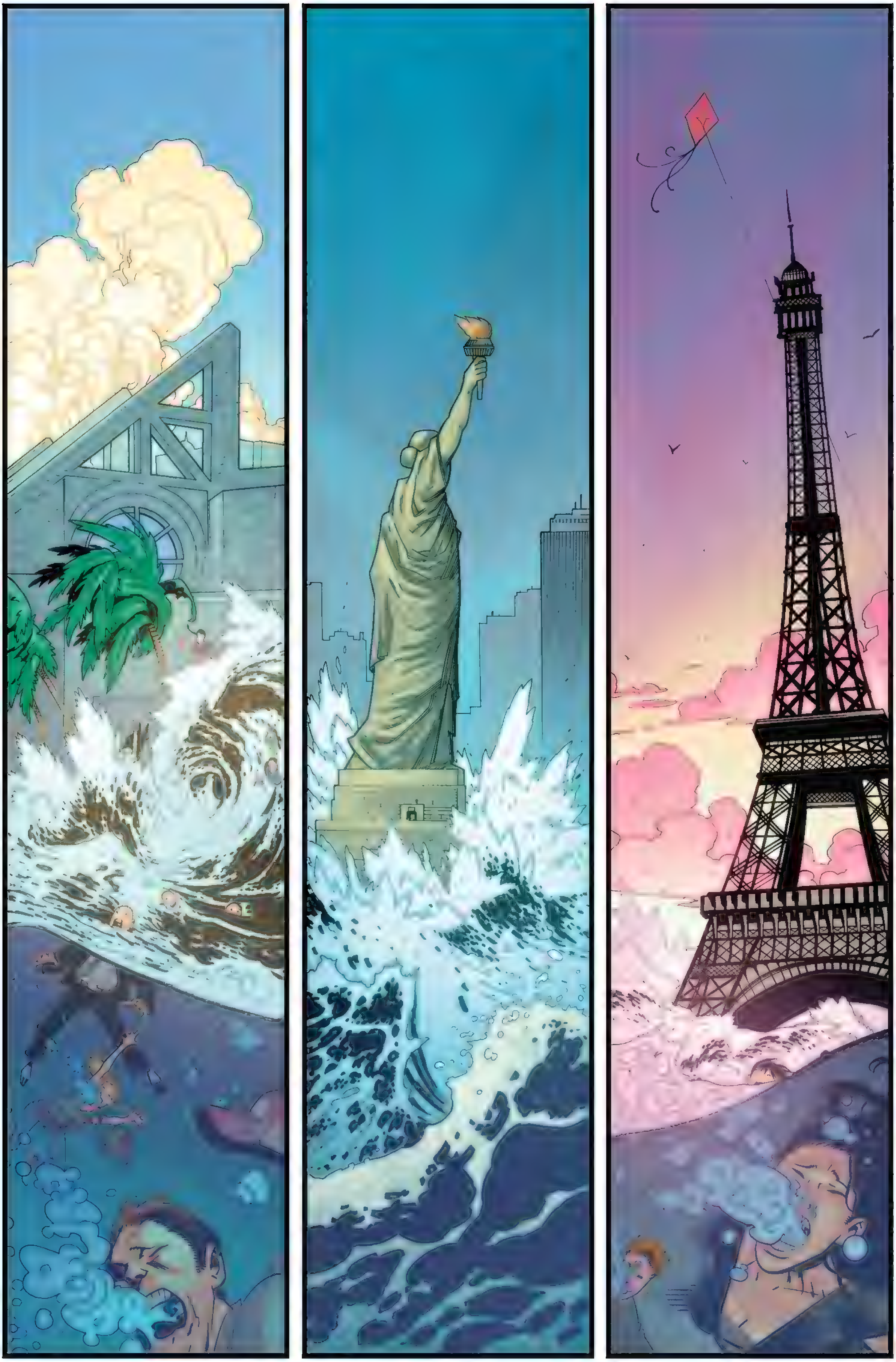
RUMMMBLE!
OKAY--TIME'S UP! NO MORE ANALYZING! WE NEED TO SMASH THESE MACHINES--SHUT THE SIGNAL OFF BEFORE THEY COLLAPSE THE WHOLE CITY!
SKRAGG!
ON IT!
KROOM!
I DOUBT WE FOUND THEM ALL--BUT IF WE DESTROY ENOUGH OF THEM IT COULD WEAKEN THE SIGNAL ENOUGH TO STOP THE EARTHQUAKE!
DOING WHAT I CAN!
WRAMM!
AND I'VE GOTTEN THREE MORE!
GREAT JOB, OUTRUN! THAT DID IT--I THINK IT'S STOPPING!

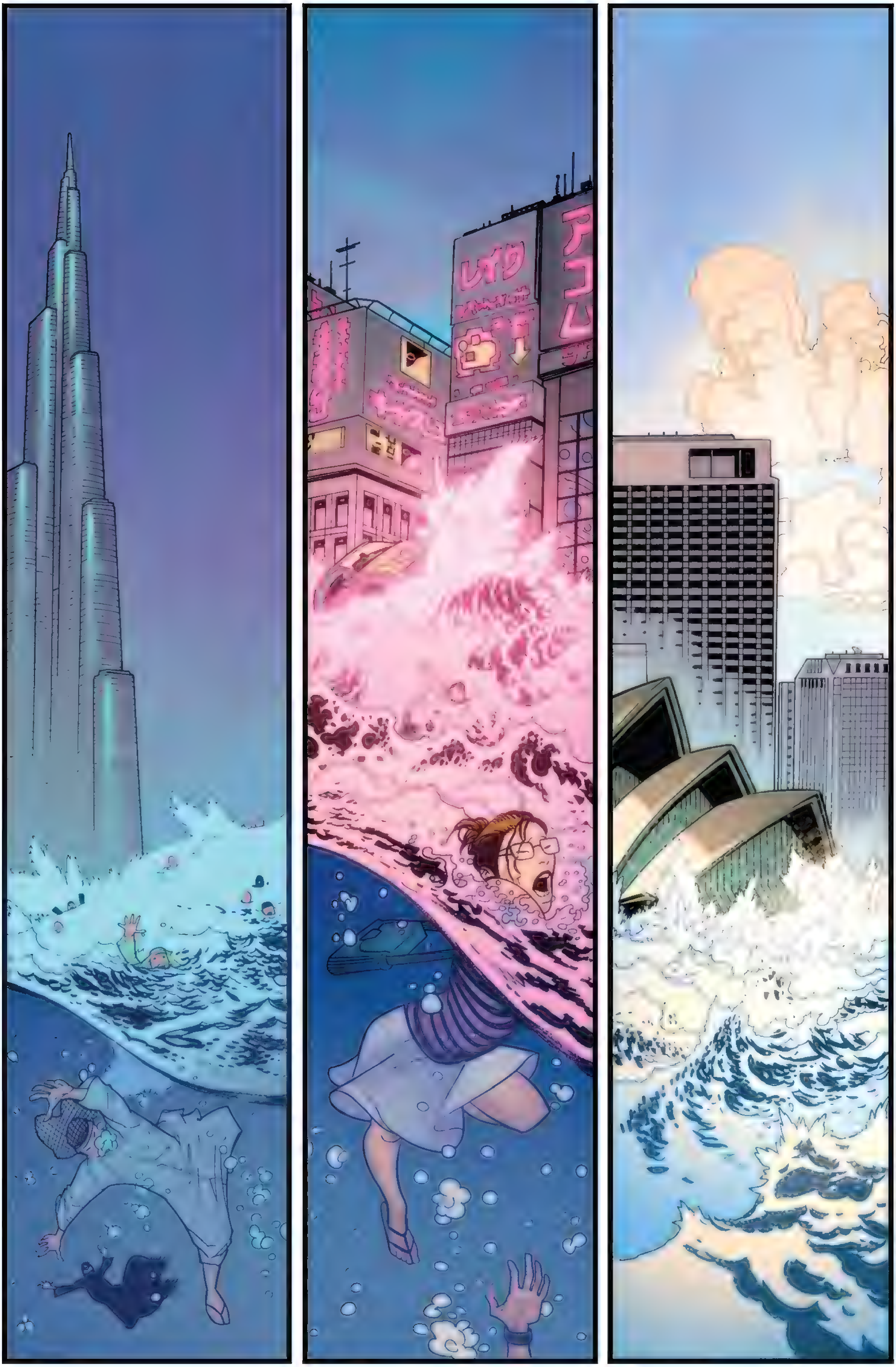

WHAT THE--?!
IT'S LAS VEGAS ALL OVER AGAIN--WHY?! WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS?! I NEED ANSWERS, MAN!
BECAUSE LAS VEGAS WASN'T ENOUGH.
STOP... JUST STOP THIS. YOU'RE WASTING YOUR ABILITIES. SAVING THESE PEOPLE, IT'S BENEATH YOU.
YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THAT. WHY SAVE ONE WHEN YOU CAN SAVE BILLIONS? HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I SAID THIS TO YOU?
AND YET, HERE YOU ARE-- STILL FLYING AROUND, TRYING TO STOP THE DEATH OF SO FEW, WHILE THE LIVES OF SO MANY... HANG IN THE BALANCE.
IT'S PATHETIC!
YOU'RE INSANE!
AND I KNOW YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT.


"LOOK AT THEM BELOW, SO SAD AND USELESS. THIS TEAM-- THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE... SO *CLUELESS*.
"THEY SCURRY AROUND, SAVING PEOPLE ONE BY ONE, BARELY MANAGING THE PROBLEM, DOING *NOTHING* FOR THE GREATER GOOD?
"YOU WANT TO BE LIKE *THEM?*
"THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HAPPENED HERE!"
THEY KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED HERE--A LUNATIC KILLED THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE... ALL BECAUSE OF *ME!*
I TRUSTED YOU! I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO HELP PEOPLE!
ANY THOUGHT OF YOU AND I WORKING TOGETHER TO SAVE THE WORLD-- THAT'S OVER-- THAT'S *DONE!*
IT IS? WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE ABOUT THAT, WON'T WE?
YOU'RE A SMART ONE, MARK GRAYSON. VERY SMART, *VERY* USEFUL.
BUT APPARENTLY, AND MUCH TO MY DISAPPOINTMENT, NOT SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THAT ALL OF THIS HAS MERELY BEEN A *DISTRACTION*.
WHAT?
A DISTRACTION FROM WHAT?!




TELL ME-- *WHAT?!*
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE SOMETHING ELSE JUST HAPPENED-- BUT NOTHING DID.
YOU NEED TO TAKE A LARGER LOOK.
VOOSH!
WHAT DID YOU DO?! WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?!
JUST KEEP WATCHING...
OH, GOD...

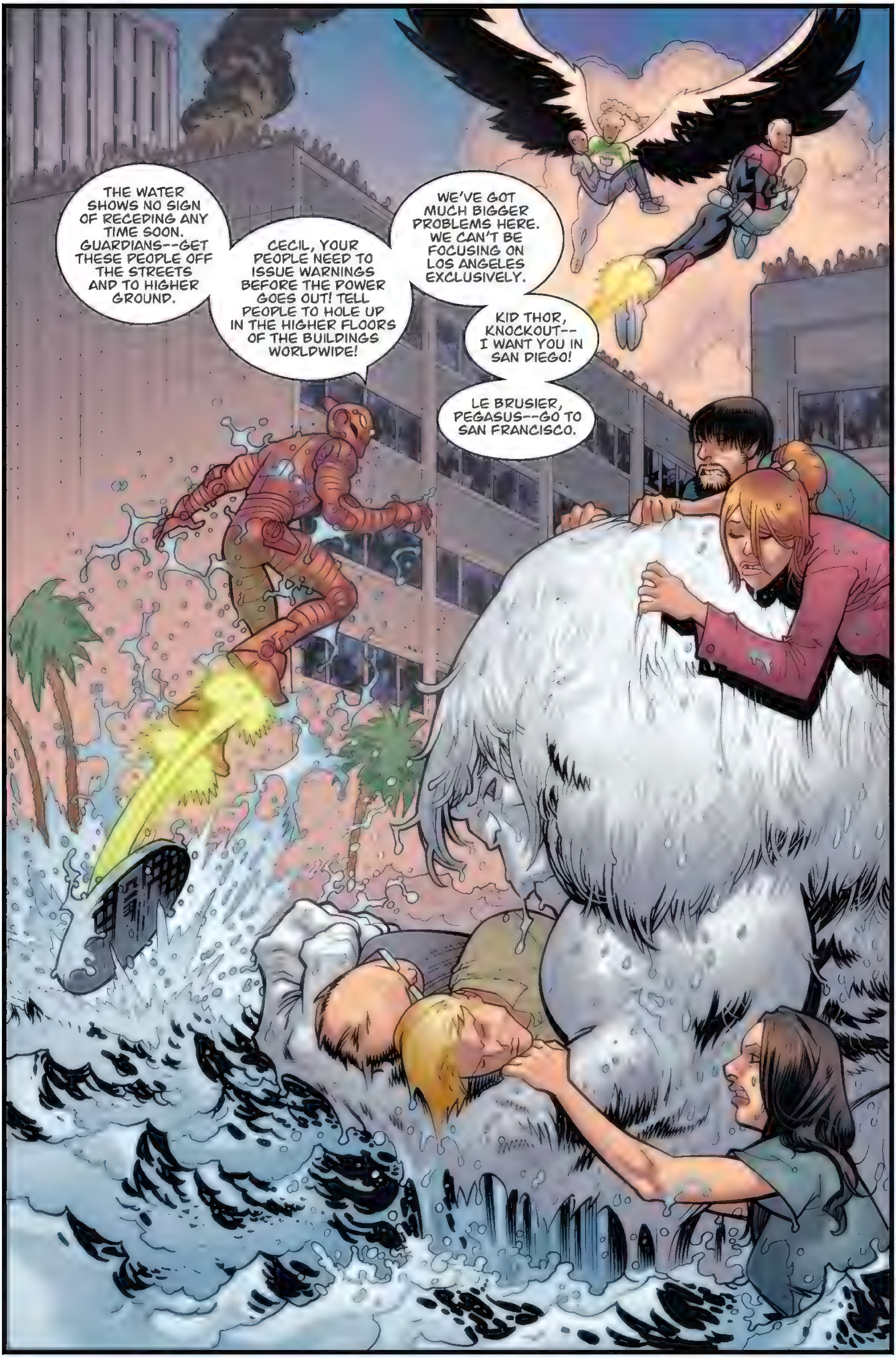



レイク
アコム

YOU'RE KILLING **EVERYONE.**

CHAPTER 99

THIS ISN'T THE DEATH OF *EVERYONE...*
...JUST A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE POPULATION, ACCORDING TO MY STUDIES. ENOUGH TO FIX THINGS, TO TURN THINGS AROUND SO THAT OUR CIVILIZATION CAN ENDURE.
THE WATERS, THEY WILL ONLY KILL THOUSANDS, NOT MILLIONS... BUT DRIVING PEOPLE FROM THE COASTAL CITIES, DISRUPTING THOSE LIVES, MAKING THE POPULATION CENTERS OF THE WORLD UNLIVABLE... THAT WILL *CHANGE THE WORLD...*
...FOR THE BETTER!
ISN'T THAT WHAT WE WERE WORKING TOWARD-- WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH-- ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANTED-- A *BETTER* WORLD?
YOU'RE *INSANE!* NO! I DIDN'T WANT THIS!
NOTHING GOOD WILL COME OF THIS... YOU'VE... RUINED *EVERYTHING.*


THE WATER SHOWS NO SIGN OF RECEDING ANY TIME SOON. GUARDIANS--GET THESE PEOPLE OFF THE STREETS AND TO HIGHER GROUND.
CECIL, YOUR PEOPLE NEED TO ISSUE WARNINGS BEFORE THE POWER GOES OUT! TELL PEOPLE TO HOLE UP IN THE HIGHER FLOORS OF THE BUILDINGS WORLDWIDE!
WE'VE GOT MUCH BIGGER PROBLEMS HERE. WE CAN'T BE FOCUSING ON LOS ANGELES EXCLUSIVELY.
KID THOR, KNOCKOUT-- I WANT YOU IN SAN DIEGO!
LE BRUSIER, PEGASUS--GO TO SAN FRANCISCO.

GUARDIANS ARE COVERING THE ENTIRE WEST COAST. I'M SCRAMBLING MORE TEAM MEMBERS TO THE OTHER WEST COAST CITIES.
CAPES INCORPORATED HAS NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY COVERED. CHUPACABRA IS IN RIO DE JANEIRO. WOLF-MAN AND THE WOLF C.O.R.P.S. ARE IN HONG KONG DOING ALL THEY CAN! ACTIONEERS ARE IN LONDON.
I'M SCRAMBLING TROOPS TO ALL OTHER CITIES. THE CURRENT BARRAGE IS BEING HANDLED AS WELL AS IT CAN, I'M TRANSITIONING TO MORE LONG-TERM THINKING.
I'VE FORWARDED OVER A SET OF SCHEMATICS FOR A SOLUTION TO THE FLOODING WORLDWIDE. I ESTIMATE IF WE SINK ALL OUR AVAILABLE RESOURCES INTO THIS, IT CAN BE BUILT IN LESS THAN THREE WEEKS.
THAT WON'T BE ENOUGH TIME FOR THE WATER TO ERODE OR COMPROMISE THE STRUCTURES OF THESE CITIES. WE NEED TO MOVE ON THIS QUICKLY--GET MY SCHEMATICS TO SINCLAIR AND THE REST OF YOUR BRAIN TRUST *NOW!*
I'M ON IT! THEY'RE LOOKING OVER THEM AND GETTING STARTED.
GOOD, I'LL BE THERE TO ASSIST AS SOON AS THE CURRENT RESCUE MISSION IS OVER. I'M CURRENTLY PILOTING NEARLY ***THIRTY*** DRONES THAT ARE DIVIDING MY FOCUS.

THIS IS ALL MY FAULT! DO YOU REALIZE THAT?! I FREED YOU--I *BELIEVED* IN YOU! I THOUGHT YOU REALLY WERE WORKING FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY--BUT NOW--NOW--
YOU'VE MADE ME A MASS MURDERER!
THERE'S NO COMING BACK FROM THIS--NOT THIS MANY PEOPLE--THIS MUCH DESTRUCTION! YOU'VE *RUINED* ME!
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE ANGRY--YOU HAVE A PROBLEM SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE, THAT'S YOUR WEAKNESS... BUT I SEE NO REASON FOR YOU TO ATTEMPT TO HURT ME.
I JUST DON'T SEE WHAT THAT WILL ACCOMPLISH.

KRAKKA-DOOM!
POLICE
3MTA3

YOU ARE INTELLIGENT, I KNOW THIS TO BE TRUE. IT SEEMS HORRIBLE--*NOW!* IT SEEMS LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD--NOW! BUT THESE DEATHS ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL!
YOU YOURSELF EVEN ADMITTED THAT WHAT HAPPENED IN VEGAS WAS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL--YOU JUST DISAGREED WITH THE WAY I ACCOMPLISHED THAT GOAL.
TRUST ME THAT THERE WERE NO ALTERNATIVES HERE!
TRUST ME!
SHUT UP!

KROOM!!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE EVEN HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH HERE. YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO DEFEAT ME PHYSICALLY.
ARE YOU *TRYING* TO MAKE ME KILL YOU? HAS IT COME TO THAT?
YOU'RE WORRIED THE PEOPLE WILL HATE YOU, AND YOU CAN'T GO ON?!
KROOM!!

I DON'T BUY IT FOR A MINUTE. SO WHAT IS IT THEN? ARE YOU JUST ANGRY? I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT. THAT'S LOGICAL. I'VE DONE SOMETHING OUT OF YOUR CONTROL, IT'S NATURAL TO FIND THAT FRUSTRATING.
EVEN INFURIATING.
NOW-- LET THAT GO!
CALM DOWN AND SEE THE FUTURE--SEE A TIME WHERE YOU AND I COOPERATE, WHERE YOU DON'T HAVE THE BURDEN OF YOUR HERO STATUS.
WITH YOUR POWERS RETURNED, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH. AND SO WHAT IF THE PEOPLE HATE US? THIS WAS NEVER ABOUT CREDIT.
THIS IS ABOUT SAVING MODERN CIVILIZATION.
I DON'T DO THIS FOR GLORY. I DO THIS BECAUSE I CARE.

I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL AWARE OF THE REASON I'VE CALLED YOU HERE.
OUR ADOPTIVE PLANET IS EXPERIENCING A CATACLYSM, BUT I MUST REITERATE-- YOU *ARE NOT* TO INTERFERE IN ANY WAY.
WERE OUR PRESENCE TO BE KNOWN TO THE POPULATION, IT WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS. WE ARE TO EXIST HERE, UNDETECTED, BIDING OUR TIME UNTIL OUR OFFSPRING IS OF AGE AND EXHIBITING VILTRUMITE ABILITIES.
IT IS ONLY WHEN OUR RANKS SWELL THAT WE WILL REVEAL OURSELVES AND ASSUME CONTROL OF THE PLANET.
WE CANNOT STIR THE COALITION OF PLANETS INTO ACTION, OUR PEOPLE WOULD NOT *SURVIVE* ANOTHER CONFLICT.
I KNOW THAT MANY OF US HAVE GROWN CONNECTED TO OUR CHOSEN MATES ON THE PLANET BELOW... THAT IS ILL-ADVISED. WHATEVER HAPPENS TO THESE PEOPLE, IT MUST BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN.
ANYONE WHO DISOBEYS ME, WILL *FACE MY WRATH.*

STAGING GROUND SEVEN, IN NEW JERSEY, CAN TAKE ON MORE REFUGEES, WE'RE DIVERTING THIS BATCH THERE.
MY SCANS SHOW THAT THE STREETS HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY EVACUATED, AND THE CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN MUCH **LOWER** THAN PROJECTED.
STILL NOT LOW ENOUGH. THE EVACUATION IS WORKING, BUT THESE PEOPLE CAN'T BE DISPLACED FOR LONG. DO YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR THIS? CAN A SEA WALL BE CONSTRUCTED?
GDA
IT COULD-- BUT I'VE GOT A TEAM WORKING ON SOMETHING **BETTER**. WE SHOULD HAVE IT READY IN--
WAIT! I'M GETTING A REPORT IN--THEY'VE FOUND DINOSAURUS. THEY'RE TRACKING A FIGHT BETWEEN HIM AND INVINCIBLE RIGHT NOW.
THEY'RE STILL IN LOS ANGELES.

WROKK!
I THINK YOU'VE SAID MORE THAN ENOUGH!

NOW LISTEN TO ME!!
WRAMM!!

THRAKKOOM!
I WAS STUPID TO EVER TRUST YOU! YOU'RE BRILLIANT--YOU HAVE GOOD IDEAS--YOU RECOGNIZE PROBLEMS THAT OTHERS HAVE BARELY BEGUN TO CONCEIVE-- BUT YOU'RE INSANE!
I THOUGHT WE COULD SAVE THE WORLD!
INSTEAD YOU'VE MADE ME YOUR ACCOMPLICE IN DESTROYING IT!
FOR THE SAKE OF HUMANITY-- YOU HAVE TO DIE!

KROOM!
NO!
I HAVE THE DATA! I SEE WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR US! I *KNOW* WHAT I'M DOING IS *RIGHT!*
IF YOU REFUSE TO HELP ME-- IF YOU'RE GOING TO STAND IN MY WAY--

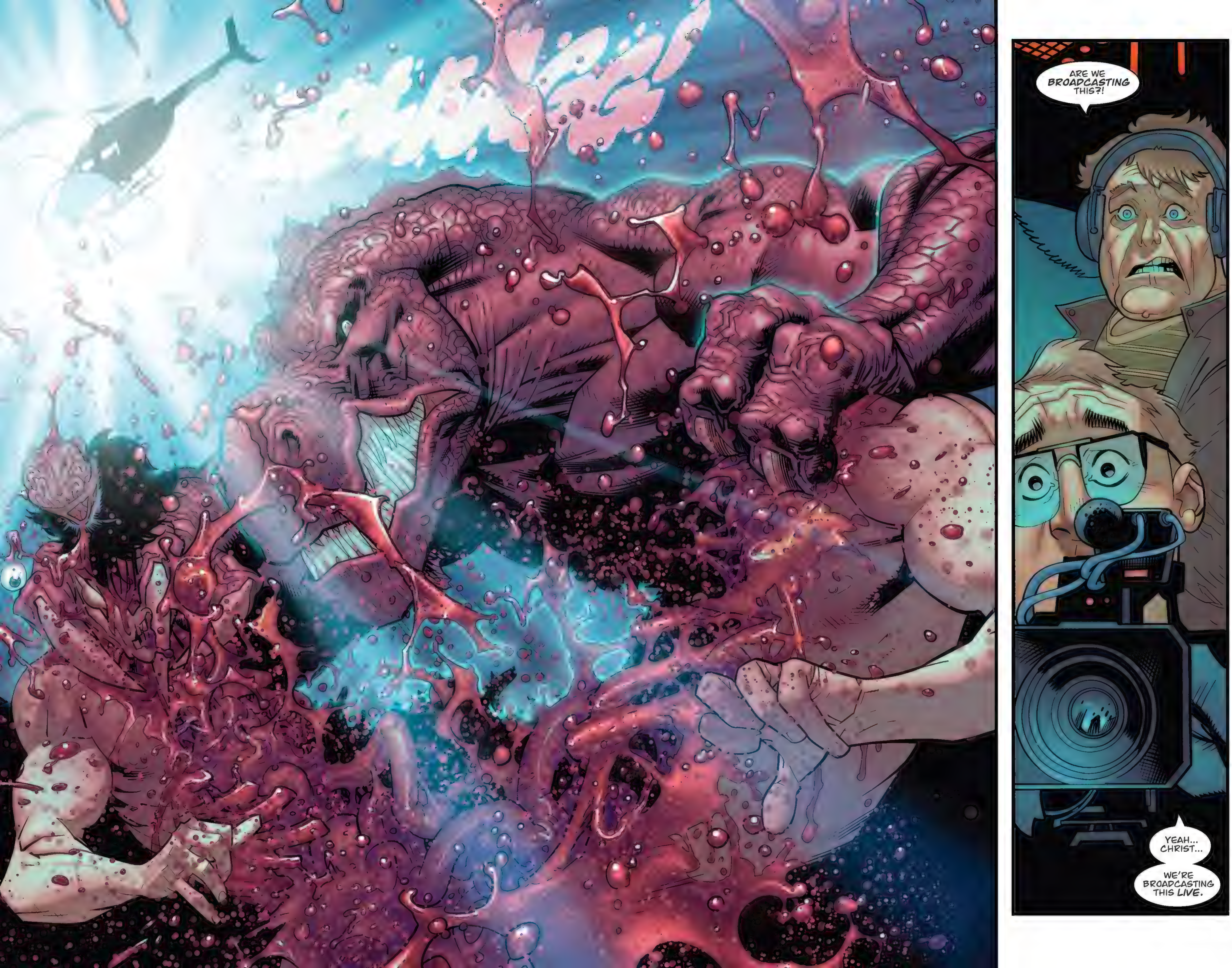
IT'S YOU WHO MUST DIE!
BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY-- YOU CAN STOP THIS-- YOU CAN--
ALL I'M GOING TO DO IS TAKE YOU DOWN!

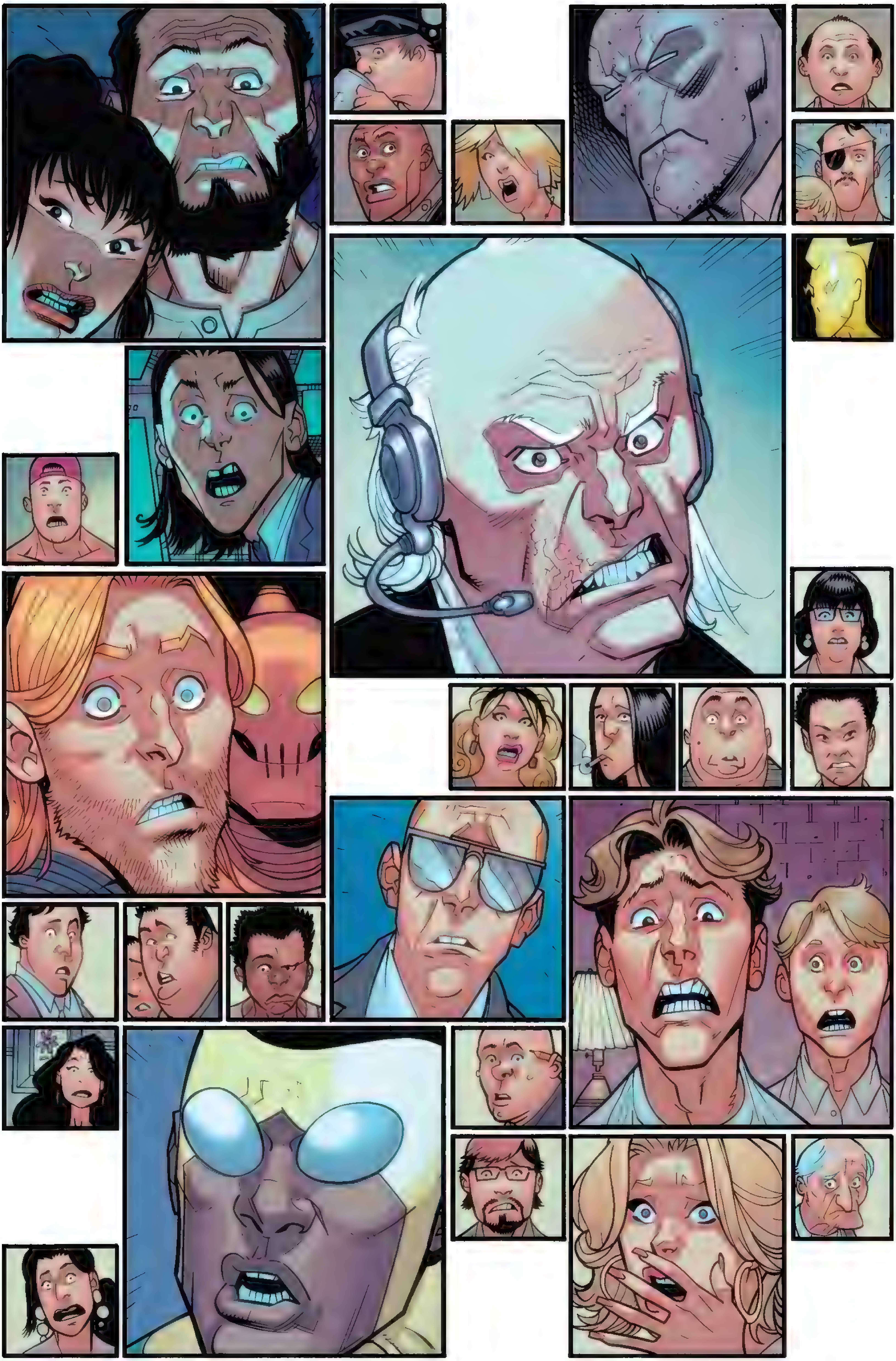
RUUMMMMBLE!!

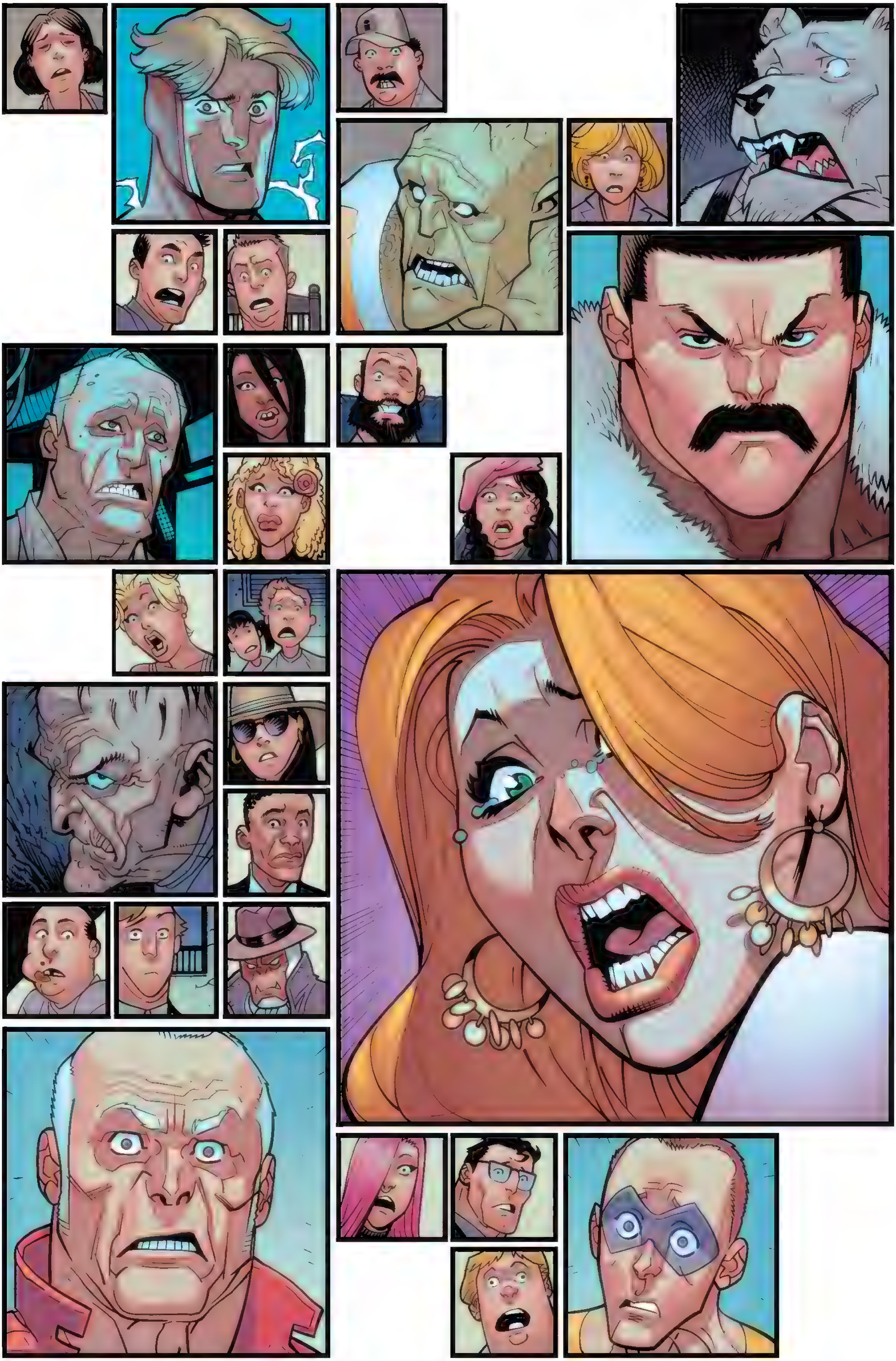
IT WOULD APPEAR WE'VE ATTRACTED A SPECTATOR. NO MATTER... THE WORLD SHOULD SEE THIS.
IT WILL WARN OTHERS WHO OPPOSE ME--YOU SEE...
...SINCE YOU'VE PROVEN, INVINCIBLE, THAT YOU CAN'T STAY OUT OF MY WAY...

I'M AFRAID I HAVE NO CHOICE--IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO *DIE!*

CHAPTER 100

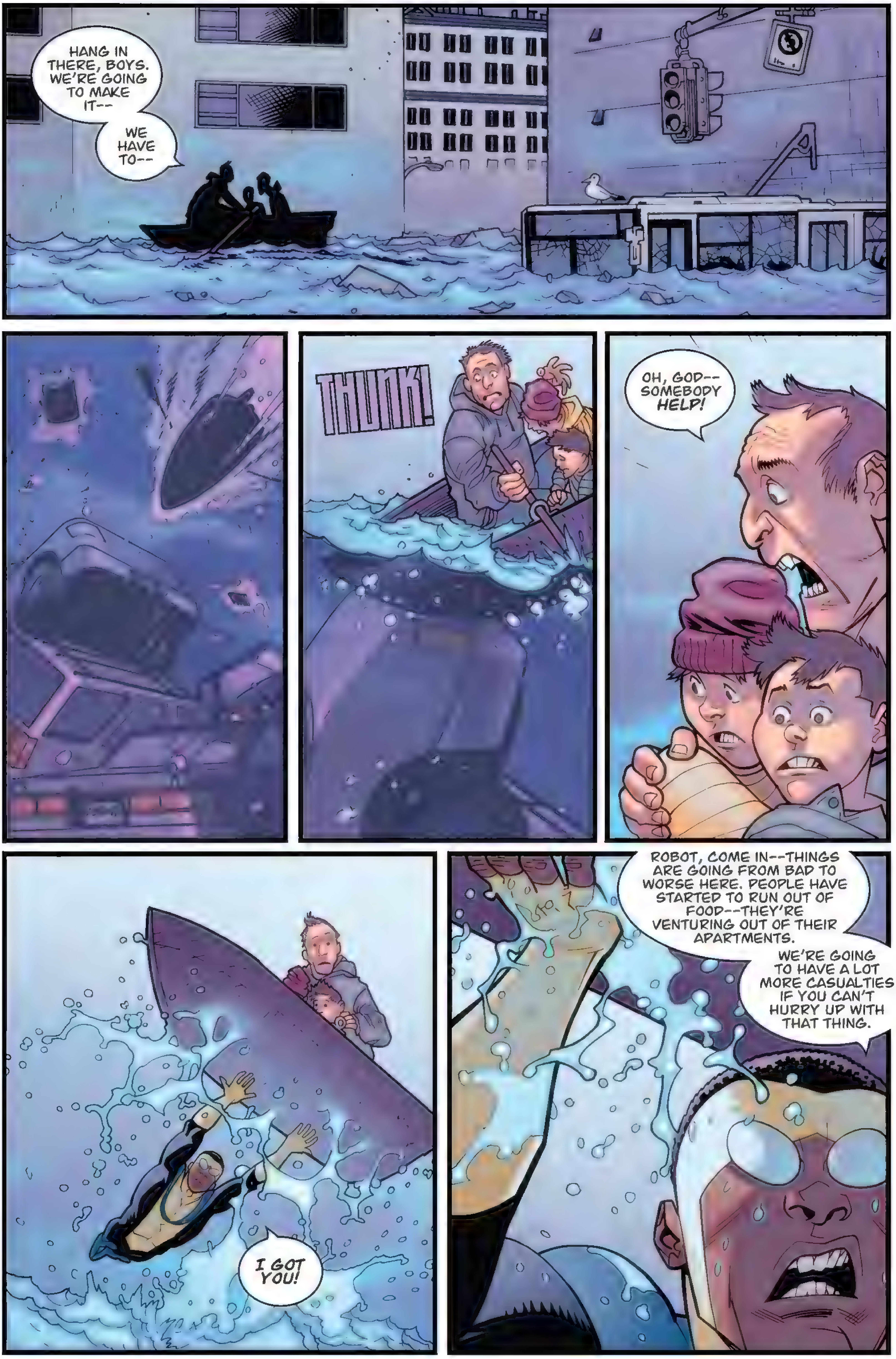

ARE WE BROADCASTING THIS?!
YEAH... CHRIST...
WE'RE BROADCASTING THIS LIVE.



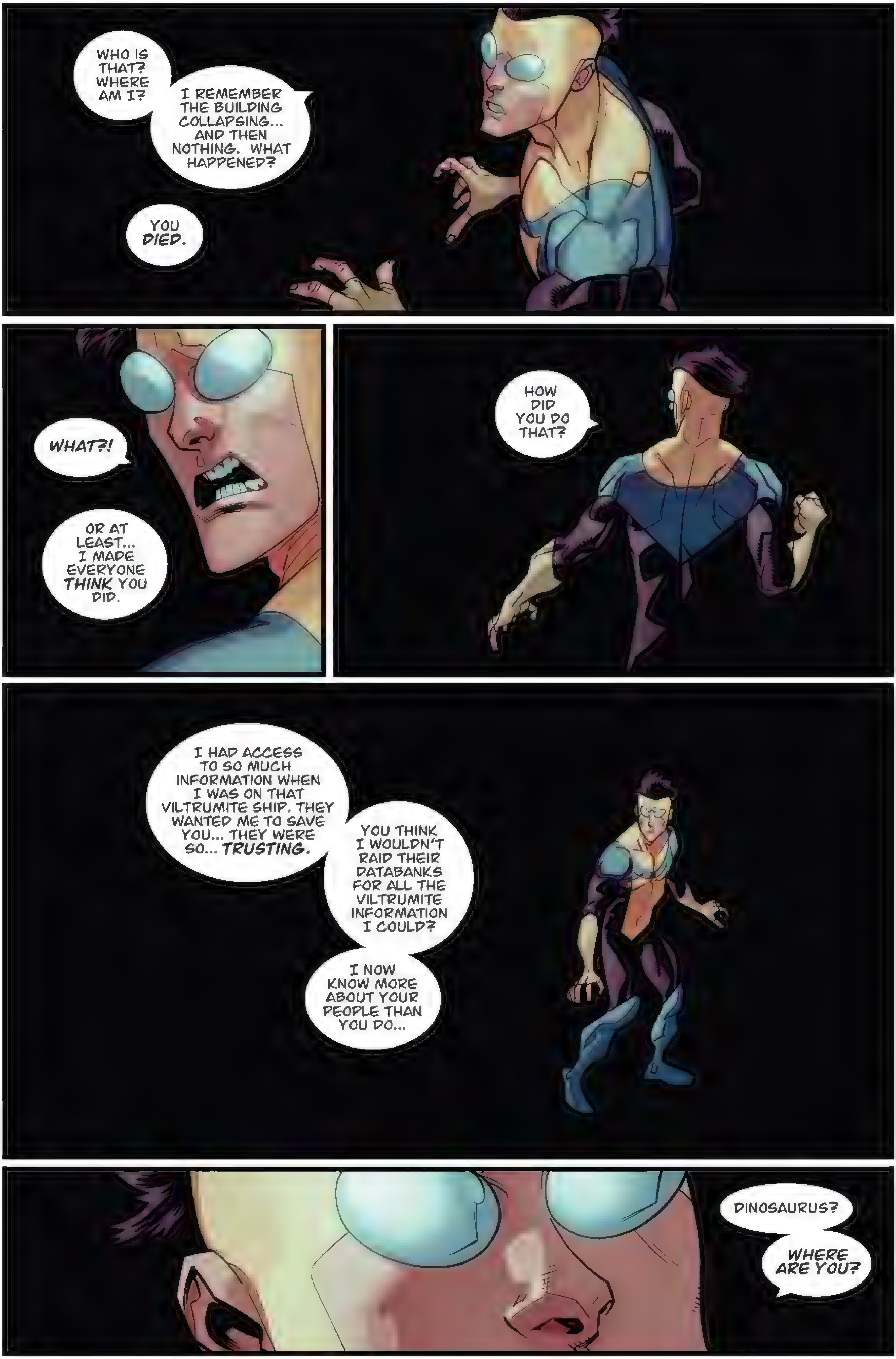


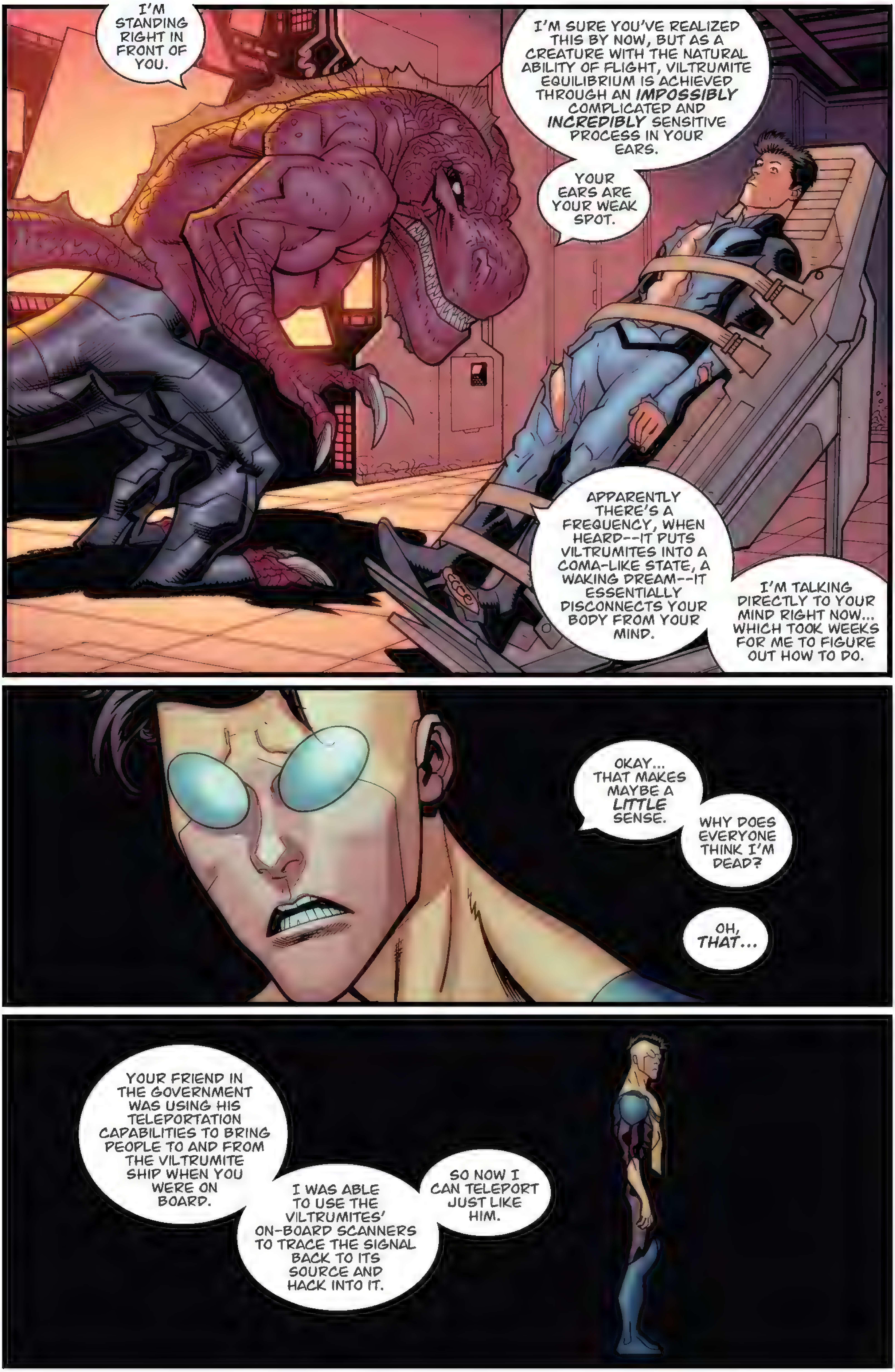
WHAT--?
WHERE AM I?

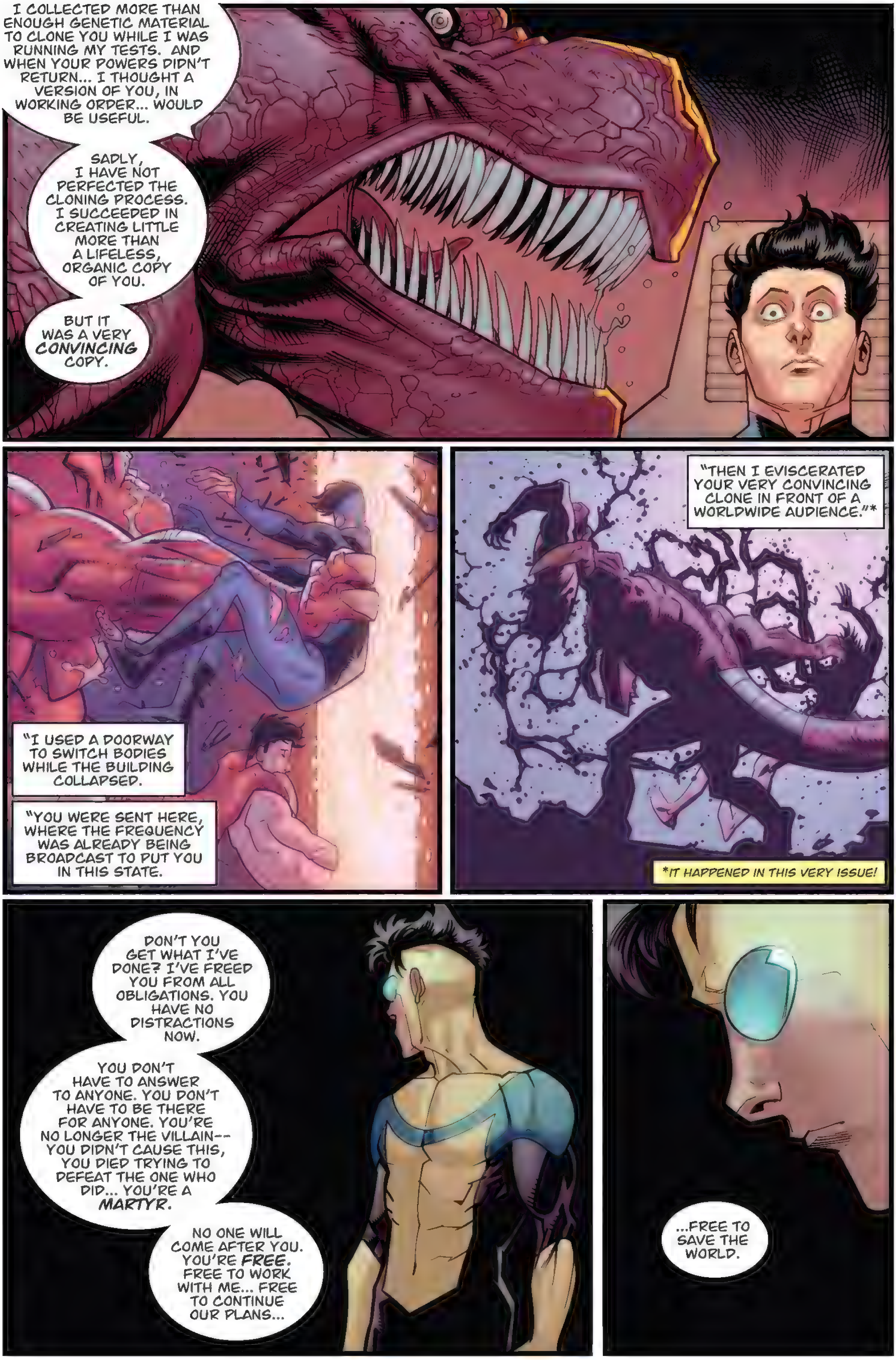
THIS IS WEIRD...
I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING... BUT MYSELF. WHY CAN I SEE MYSELF? THERE'S NO LIGHT HERE... AND... THIS ISN'T NATURAL...
SO QUIET...
HELLO?!
ANYONE THERE?!
HELLO, MARK GRAYSON.

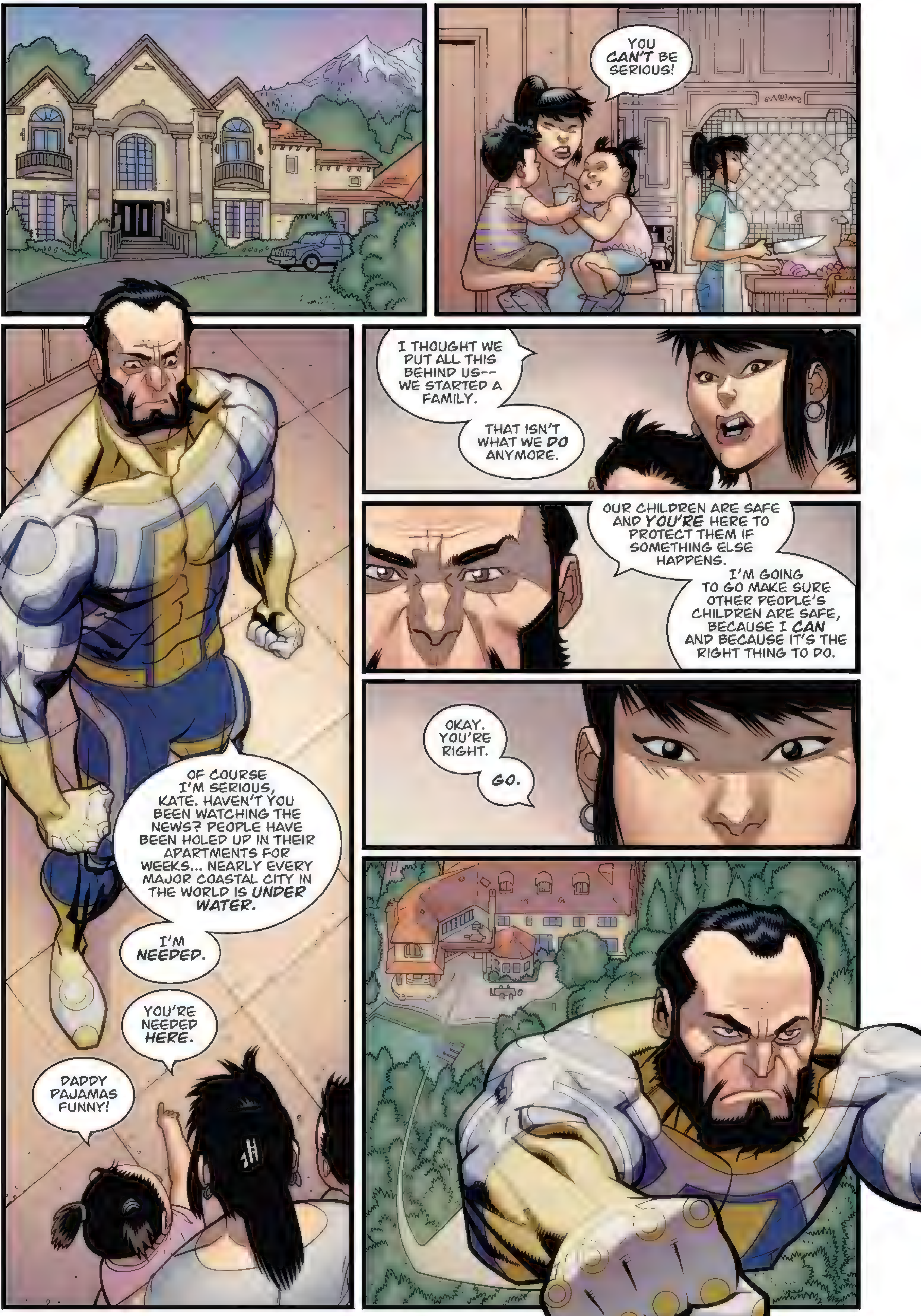

HANG IN THERE, BOYS. WE'RE GOING TO MAKE IT--
WE HAVE TO--
THUNK!
OH, GOD-- SOMEBODY *HELP!*
I GOT YOU!
ROBOT, COME IN--THINGS ARE GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE HERE. PEOPLE HAVE STARTED TO RUN OUT OF FOOD--THEY'RE VENTURING OUT OF THEIR APARTMENTS.
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A LOT MORE CASUALTIES IF YOU CAN'T HURRY UP WITH THAT THING.

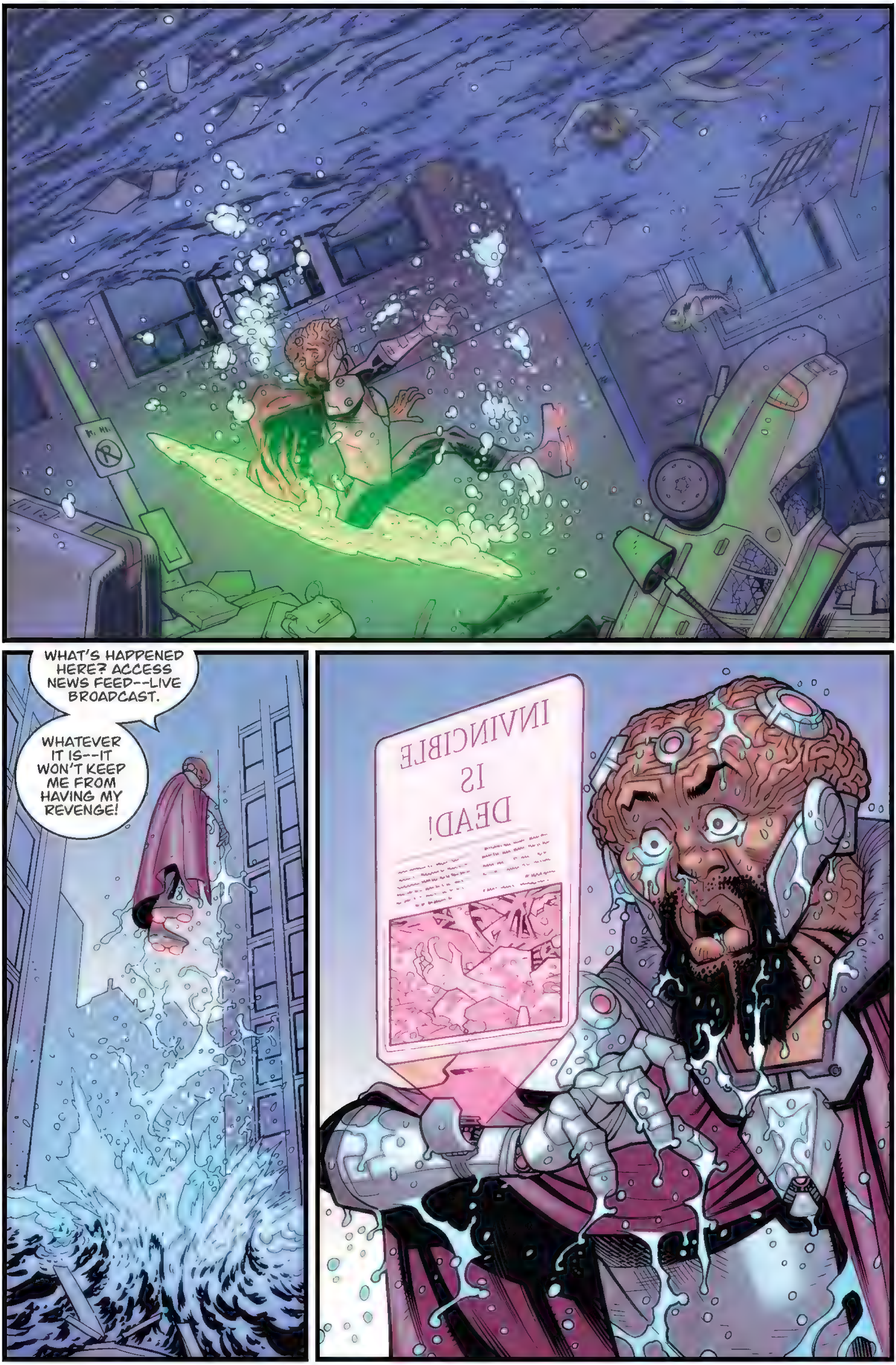
I PROMISE YOU, WE'RE GOING AS FAST AS WE CAN.

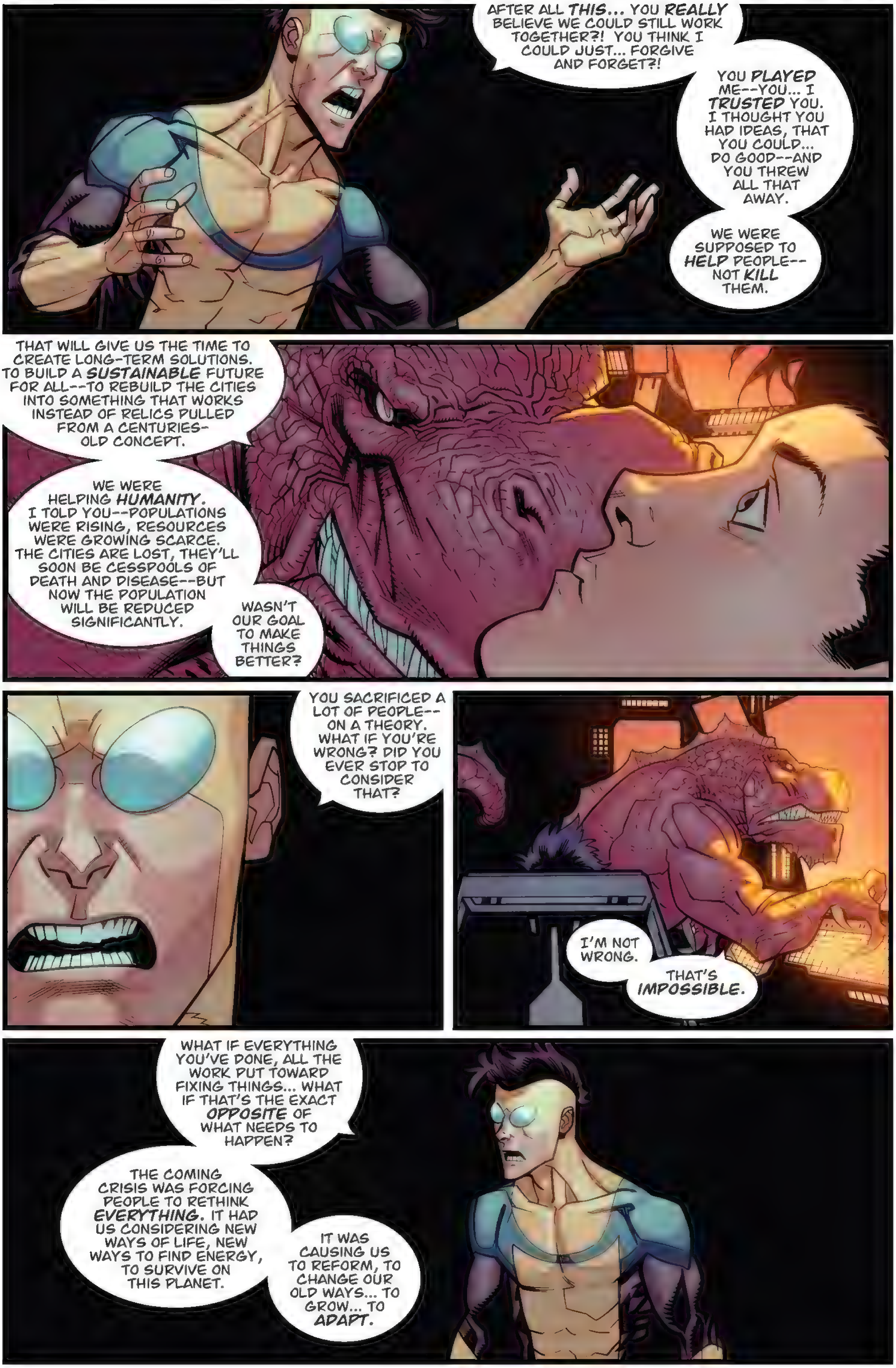

WHO IS THAT? WHERE AM I?
I REMEMBER THE BUILDING COLLAPSING... AND THEN NOTHING. WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU *DIED*.
WHAT?!
OR AT LEAST... I MADE EVERYONE *THINK* YOU DID.
HOW DID YOU DO THAT?
I HAD ACCESS TO SO MUCH INFORMATION WHEN I WAS ON THAT VILTRUMITE SHIP. THEY WANTED ME TO SAVE YOU... THEY WERE SO... *TRUSTING*.
YOU THINK I WOULDN'T RAID THEIR DATABANKS FOR ALL THE VILTRUMITE INFORMATION I COULD?
I NOW KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR PEOPLE THAN YOU DO...
DINOSAURUS?
WHERE ARE YOU?

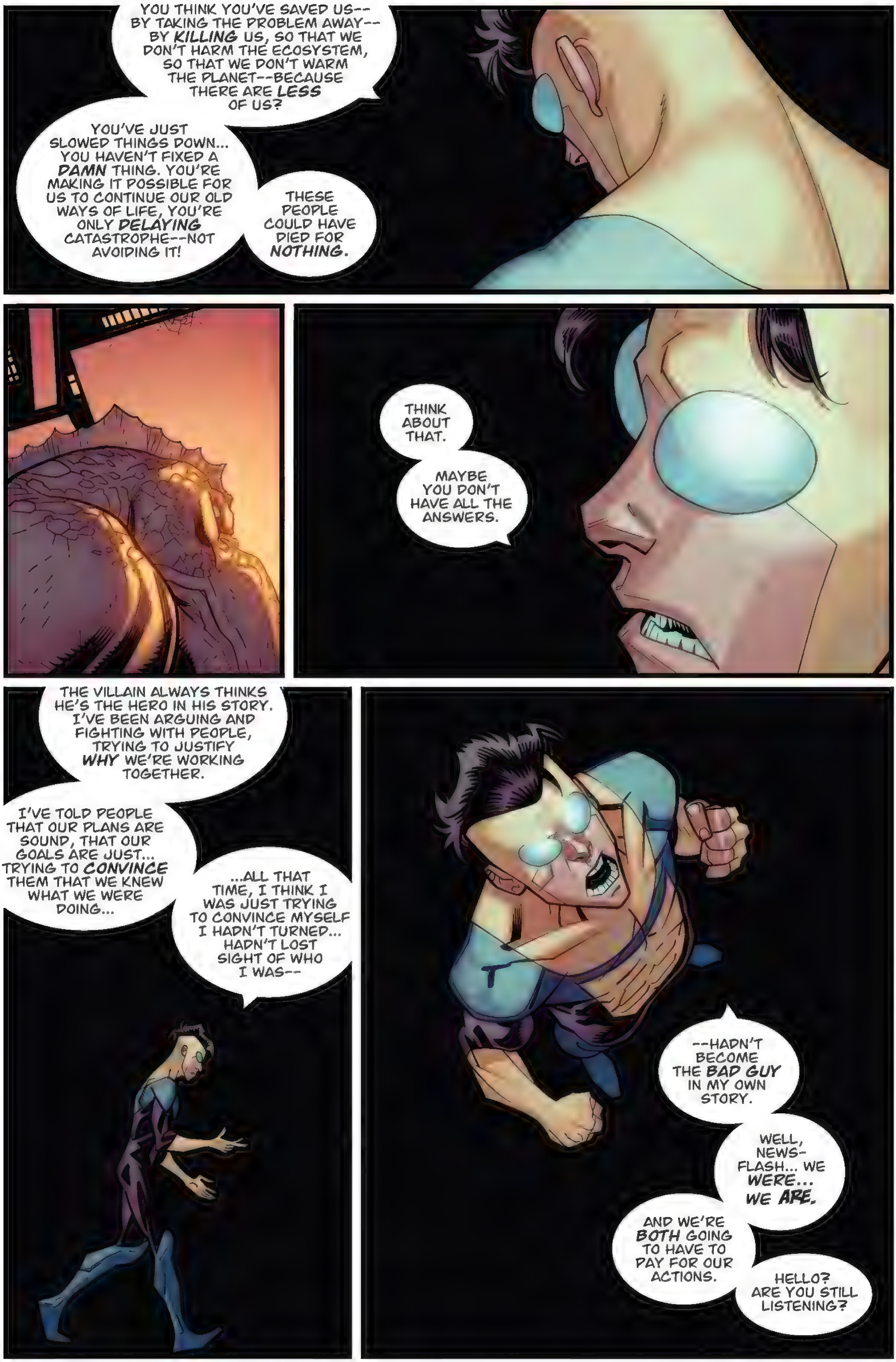

I'M STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.
I'M SURE YOU'VE REALIZED THIS BY NOW, BUT AS A CREATURE WITH THE NATURAL ABILITY OF FLIGHT, VILTRUMITE EQUILIBRIUM IS ACHIEVED THROUGH AN *IMPOSSIBLY* COMPLICATED AND *INCREDIBLY* SENSITIVE PROCESS IN YOUR EARS.
YOUR EARS ARE YOUR WEAK SPOT.
APPARENTLY THERE'S A FREQUENCY, WHEN HEARD--IT PUTS VILTRUMITES INTO A COMA-LIKE STATE, A WAKING DREAM--IT ESSENTIALLY DISCONNECTS YOUR BODY FROM YOUR MIND.
I'M TALKING DIRECTLY TO YOUR MIND RIGHT NOW... WHICH TOOK WEEKS FOR ME TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO.
OKAY... THAT MAKES MAYBE A *LITTLE* SENSE.
WHY DOES EVERYONE THINK I'M DEAD?
OH, *THAT*...
YOUR FRIEND IN THE GOVERNMENT WAS USING HIS TELEPORTATION CAPABILITIES TO BRING PEOPLE TO AND FROM THE VILTRUMITE SHIP WHEN YOU WERE ON BOARD.
I WAS ABLE TO USE THE VILTRUMITES' ON-BOARD SCANNERS TO TRACE THE SIGNAL BACK TO ITS SOURCE AND HACK INTO IT.
SO NOW I CAN TELEPORT JUST LIKE HIM.

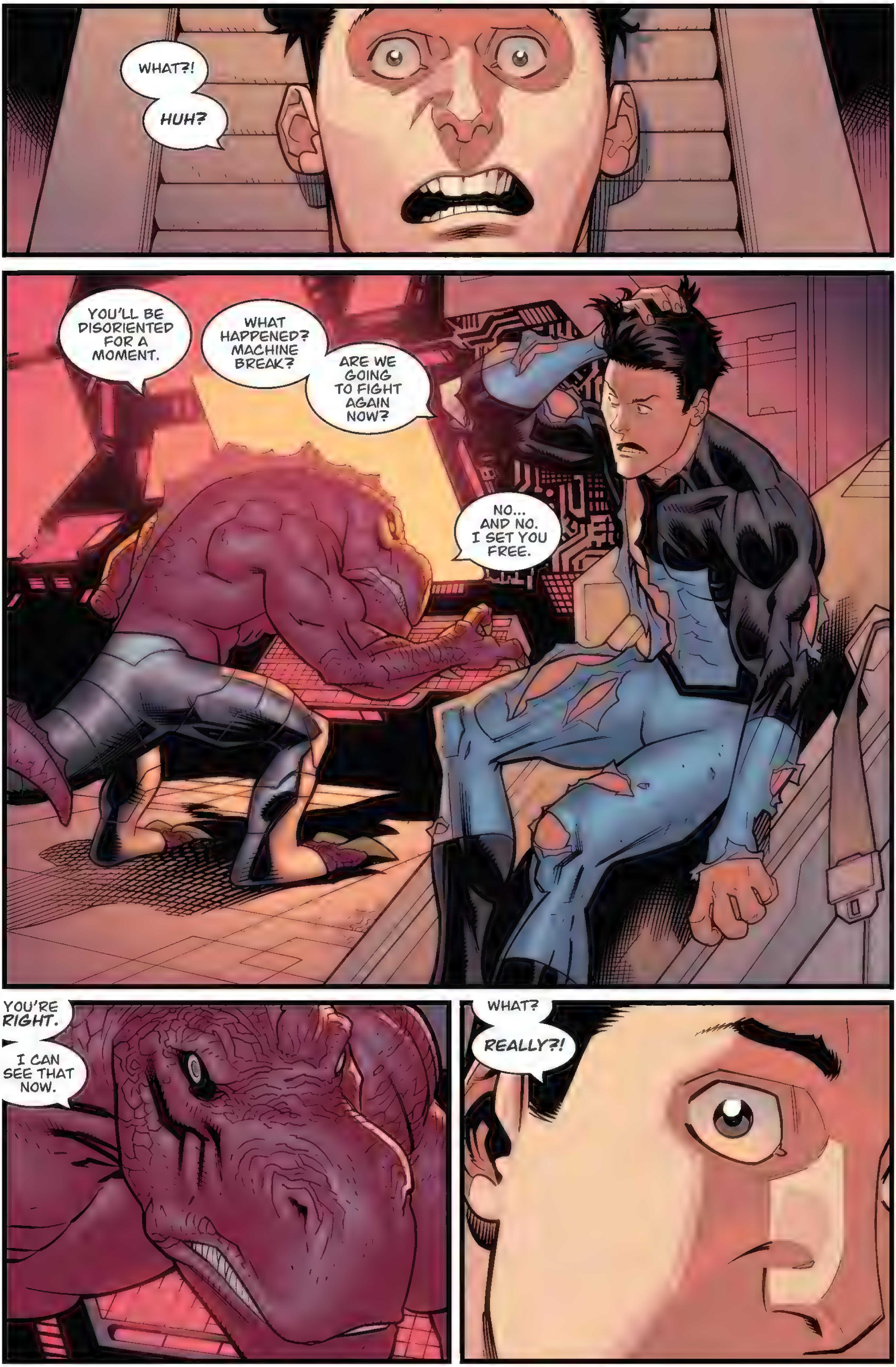

I COLLECTED MORE THAN ENOUGH GENETIC MATERIAL TO CLONE YOU WHILE I WAS RUNNING MY TESTS. AND WHEN YOUR POWERS DIDN'T RETURN... I THOUGHT A VERSION OF YOU, IN WORKING ORDER... WOULD BE USEFUL.
SADLY, I HAVE NOT PERFECTED THE CLONING PROCESS. I SUCCEEDED IN CREATING LITTLE MORE THAN A LIFELESS, ORGANIC COPY OF YOU.
BUT IT WAS A VERY *CONVINCING* COPY.
"I USED A DOORWAY TO SWITCH BODIES WHILE THE BUILDING COLLAPSED.
"YOU WERE SENT HERE, WHERE THE FREQUENCY WAS ALREADY BEING BROADCAST TO PUT YOU IN THIS STATE.
"THEN I EVISCERATED YOUR VERY CONVINCING CLONE IN FRONT OF A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE."*
*IT HAPPENED IN THIS VERY ISSUE!
DON'T YOU GET WHAT I'VE DONE? I'VE FREED YOU FROM ALL OBLIGATIONS. YOU HAVE NO DISTRACTIONS NOW.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER TO ANYONE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THERE FOR ANYONE. YOU'RE NO LONGER THE VILLAIN-- YOU DIDN'T CAUSE THIS, YOU DIED TRYING TO DEFEAT THE ONE WHO DID... YOU'RE A *MARTYR*.
NO ONE WILL COME AFTER YOU. YOU'RE *FREE*. FREE TO WORK WITH ME... FREE TO CONTINUE OUR PLANS...
...FREE TO SAVE THE WORLD.

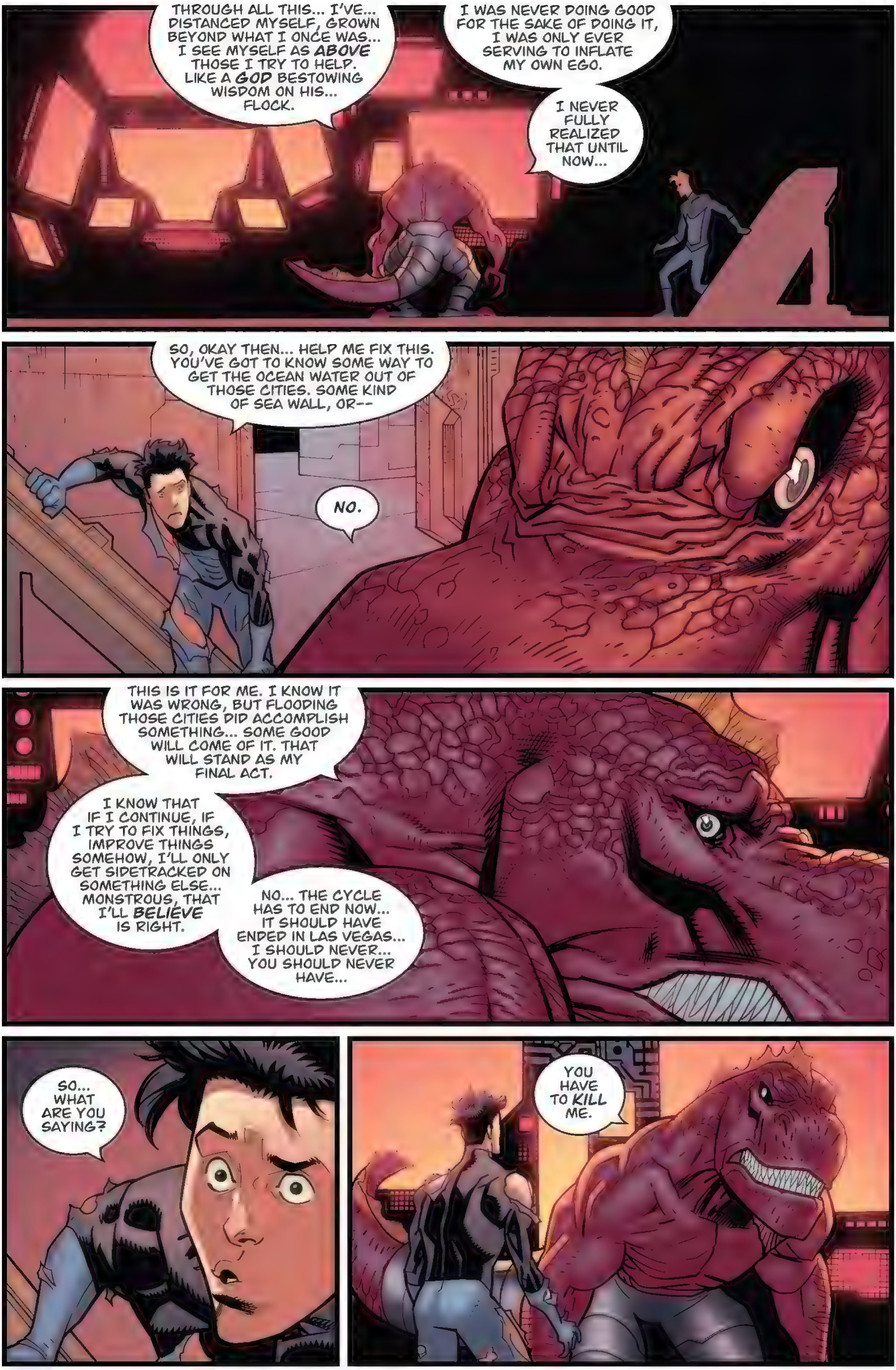

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
OF COURSE I'M SERIOUS, KATE. HAVEN'T YOU BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS? PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HOLED UP IN THEIR APARTMENTS FOR WEEKS... NEARLY EVERY MAJOR COASTAL CITY IN THE WORLD IS UNDER WATER.
I'M NEEDED.
YOU'RE NEEDED HERE.
DADDY PAJAMAS FUNNY!
I THOUGHT WE PUT ALL THIS BEHIND US-- WE STARTED A FAMILY.
THAT ISN'T WHAT WE DO ANYMORE.
OUR CHILDREN ARE SAFE AND YOU'RE HERE TO PROTECT THEM IF SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENS.
I'M GOING TO GO MAKE SURE OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN ARE SAFE, BECAUSE I CAN AND BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
OKAY. YOU'RE RIGHT.
GO.

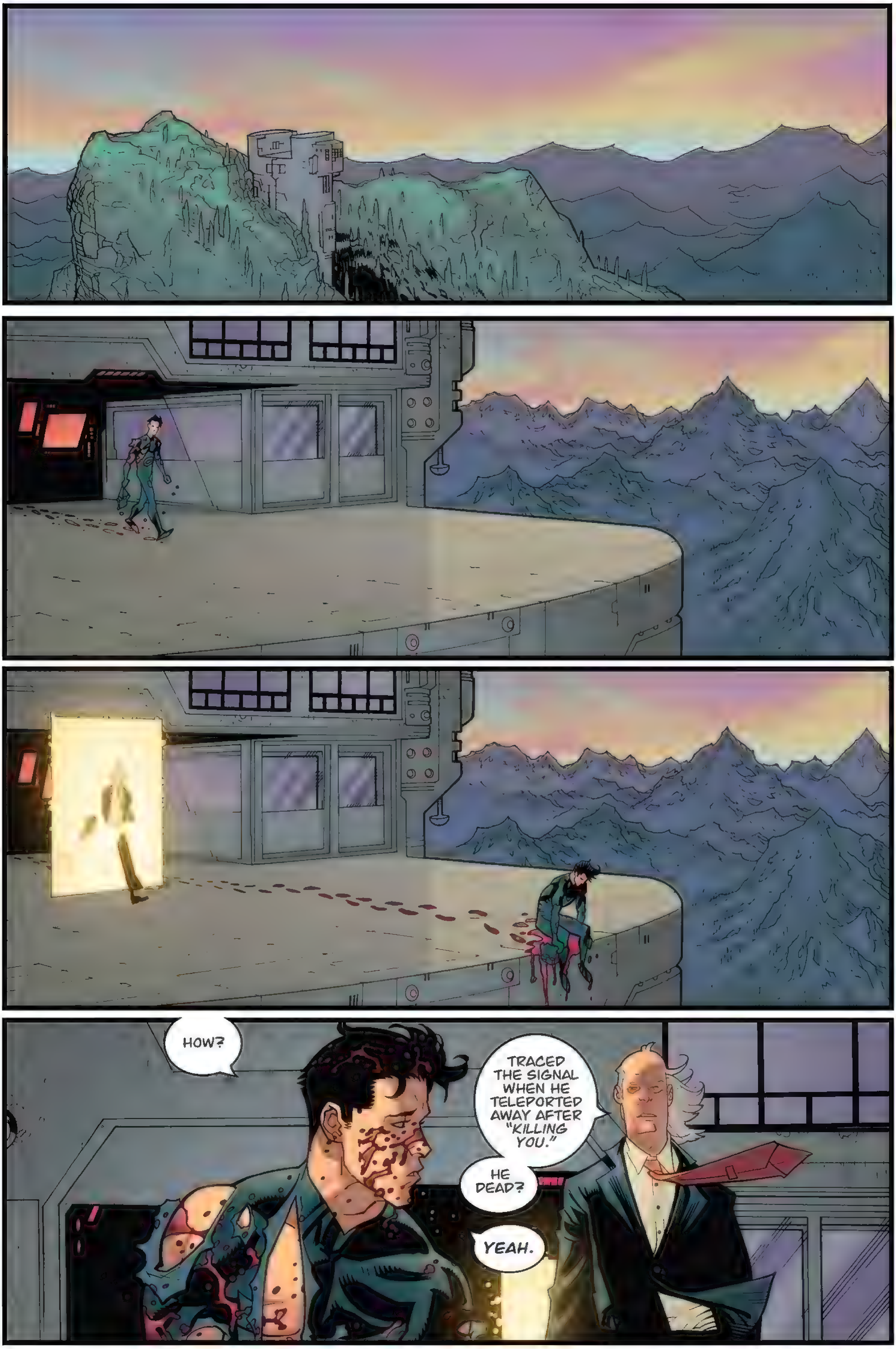

WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE? ACCESS NEWS FEED--LIVE BROADCAST.
WHATEVER IT IS--IT WON'T KEEP ME FROM HAVING MY REVENGE!
INVINCIBLE IS DEAD!

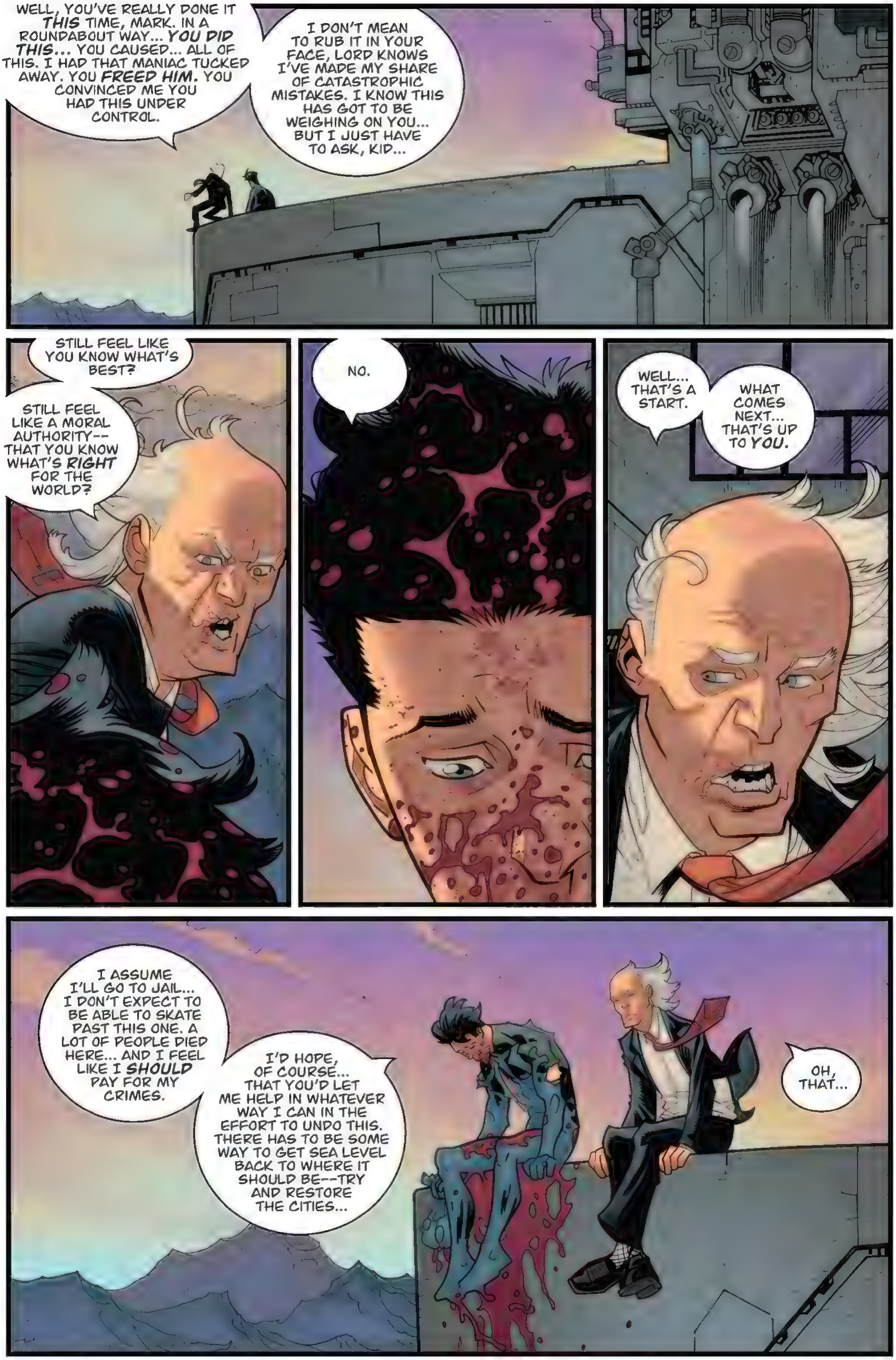

AFTER ALL *THIS*... YOU *REALLY* BELIEVE WE COULD STILL WORK TOGETHER?! YOU THINK I COULD JUST... FORGIVE AND FORGET?!
YOU ***PLAYED*** ME--YOU... I ***TRUSTED*** YOU. I THOUGHT YOU HAD IDEAS, THAT YOU COULD... DO GOOD--AND YOU THREW ALL THAT AWAY.
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO ***HELP*** PEOPLE--NOT ***KILL*** THEM.
THAT WILL GIVE US THE TIME TO CREATE LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS. TO BUILD A ***SUSTAINABLE*** FUTURE FOR ALL--TO REBUILD THE CITIES INTO SOMETHING THAT WORKS INSTEAD OF RELICS PULLED FROM A CENTURIES-OLD CONCEPT.
WE WERE HELPING ***HUMANITY***. I TOLD YOU--POPULATIONS WERE RISING, RESOURCES WERE GROWING SCARCE. THE CITIES ARE LOST, THEY'LL SOON BE CESSPOOLS OF DEATH AND DISEASE--BUT NOW THE POPULATION WILL BE REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY.
WASN'T OUR GOAL TO MAKE THINGS BETTER?
YOU SACRIFICED A LOT OF PEOPLE--ON A THEORY. WHAT IF YOU'RE WRONG? DID YOU EVER STOP TO CONSIDER THAT?
I'M NOT WRONG.
THAT'S ***IMPOSSIBLE***.
WHAT IF EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE, ALL THE WORK PUT TOWARD FIXING THINGS... WHAT IF THAT'S THE EXACT ***OPPOSITE*** OF WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?
THE COMING CRISIS WAS FORCING PEOPLE TO RETHINK ***EVERYTHING***. IT HAD US CONSIDERING NEW WAYS OF LIFE, NEW WAYS TO FIND ENERGY, TO SURVIVE ON THIS PLANET.
IT WAS CAUSING US TO REFORM, TO CHANGE OUR OLD WAYS... TO GROW... TO ***ADAPT***.

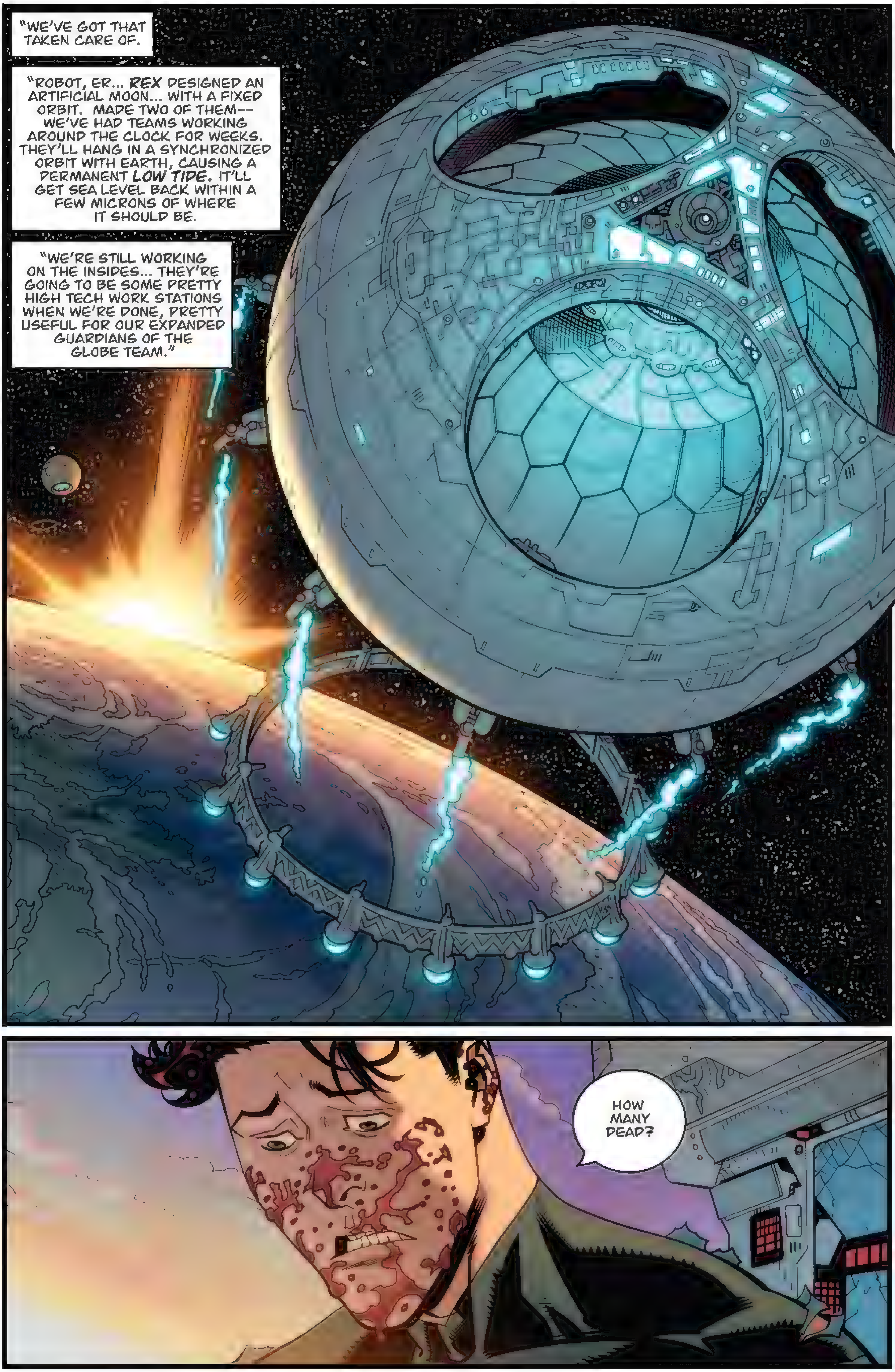

YOU THINK YOU'VE SAVED US-- BY TAKING THE PROBLEM AWAY-- BY *KILLING* US, SO THAT WE DON'T HARM THE ECOSYSTEM, SO THAT WE DON'T WARM THE PLANET--BECAUSE THERE ARE *LESS* OF US?
YOU'VE JUST SLOWED THINGS DOWN... YOU HAVEN'T FIXED A *DAMN* THING. YOU'RE MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO CONTINUE OUR OLD WAYS OF LIFE, YOU'RE ONLY *DELAYING* CATASTROPHE--NOT AVOIDING IT!
THESE PEOPLE COULD HAVE DIED FOR *NOTHING.*
THINK ABOUT THAT.
MAYBE YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS.
THE VILLAIN ALWAYS THINKS HE'S THE HERO IN HIS STORY. I'VE BEEN ARGUING AND FIGHTING WITH PEOPLE, TRYING TO JUSTIFY *WHY* WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER.
I'VE TOLD PEOPLE THAT OUR PLANS ARE SOUND, THAT OUR GOALS ARE JUST... TRYING TO *CONVINCE* THEM THAT WE KNEW WHAT WE WERE DOING...
...ALL THAT TIME, I THINK I WAS JUST TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF I HADN'T TURNED... HADN'T LOST SIGHT OF WHO I WAS--
--HADN'T BECOME THE *BAD GUY* IN MY OWN STORY.
WELL, NEWS-FLASH... WE *WERE... WE ARE.*
AND WE'RE *BOTH* GOING TO HAVE TO PAY FOR OUR ACTIONS.
HELLO? ARE YOU STILL LISTENING?

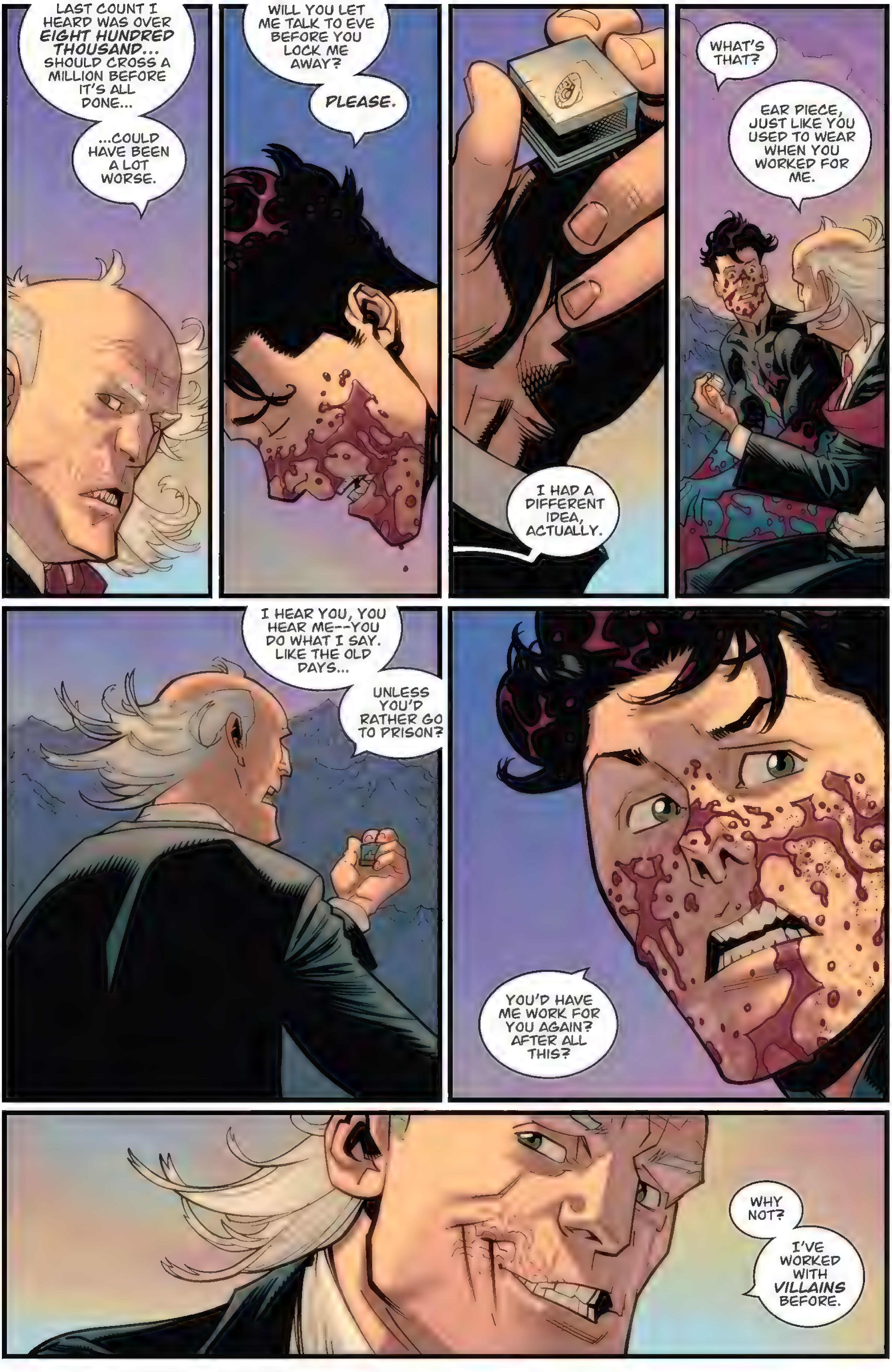

WHAT?!
HUH?
YOU'LL BE DISORIENTED FOR A MOMENT.
WHAT HAPPENED? MACHINE BREAK?
ARE WE GOING TO FIGHT AGAIN NOW?
NO... AND NO. I SET YOU FREE.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
I CAN SEE THAT NOW.
WHAT?
REALLY?!

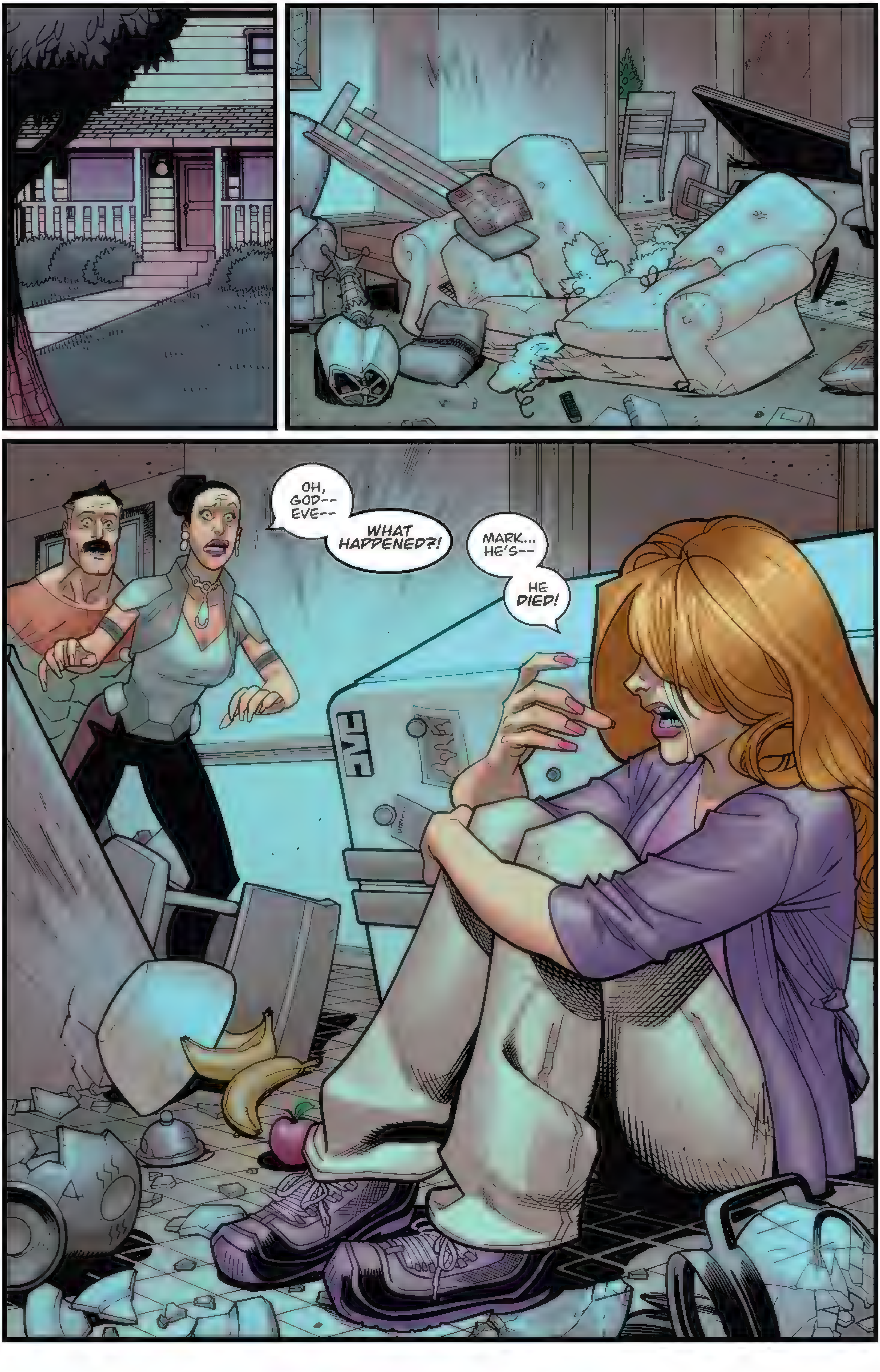

THROUGH ALL THIS... I'VE... DISTANCED MYSELF, GROWN BEYOND WHAT I ONCE WAS... I SEE MYSELF AS *ABOVE* THOSE I TRY TO HELP. LIKE A *GOD* BESTOWING WISDOM ON HIS... FLOCK.
I WAS NEVER DOING GOOD FOR THE SAKE OF DOING IT, I WAS ONLY EVER SERVING TO INFLATE MY OWN EGO.
I NEVER FULLY REALIZED THAT UNTIL NOW...
SO, OKAY THEN... HELP ME FIX THIS. YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW SOME WAY TO GET THE OCEAN WATER OUT OF THOSE CITIES. SOME KIND OF SEA WALL, OR--
NO.
THIS IS IT FOR ME. I KNOW IT WAS WRONG, BUT FLOODING THOSE CITIES DID ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING... SOME GOOD WILL COME OF IT. THAT WILL STAND AS MY FINAL ACT.
I KNOW THAT IF I CONTINUE, IF I TRY TO FIX THINGS, IMPROVE THINGS SOMEHOW, I'LL ONLY GET SIDETRACKED ON SOMETHING ELSE... MONSTROUS, THAT I'LL *BELIEVE* IS RIGHT.
NO... THE CYCLE HAS TO END NOW... IT SHOULD HAVE ENDED IN LAS VEGAS... I SHOULD NEVER... YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE...
SO... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU HAVE TO *KILL* ME.

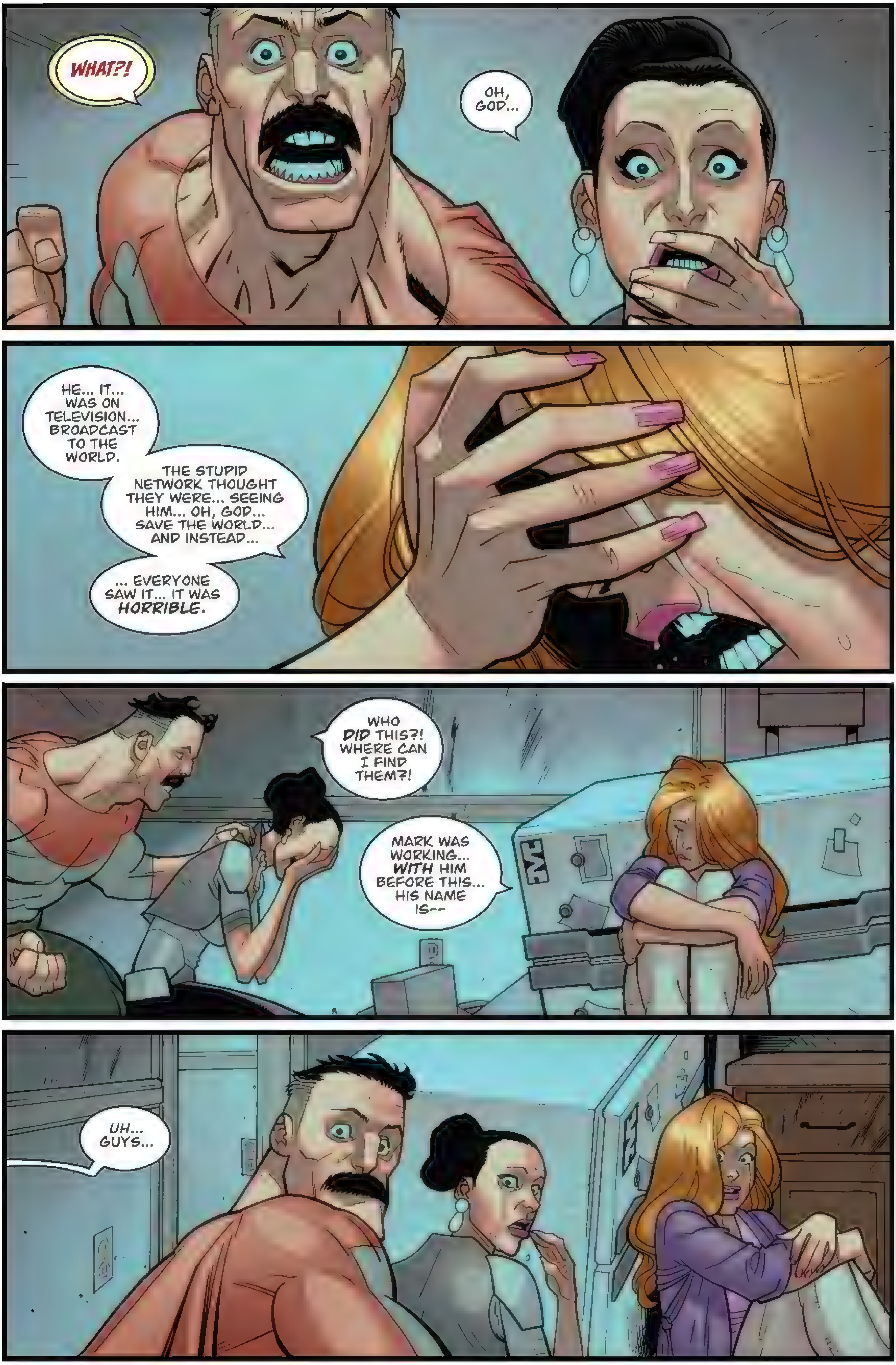

HOW?
TRACED THE SIGNAL WHEN HE TELEPORTED AWAY AFTER "KILLING YOU."
HE DEAD?
YEAH.

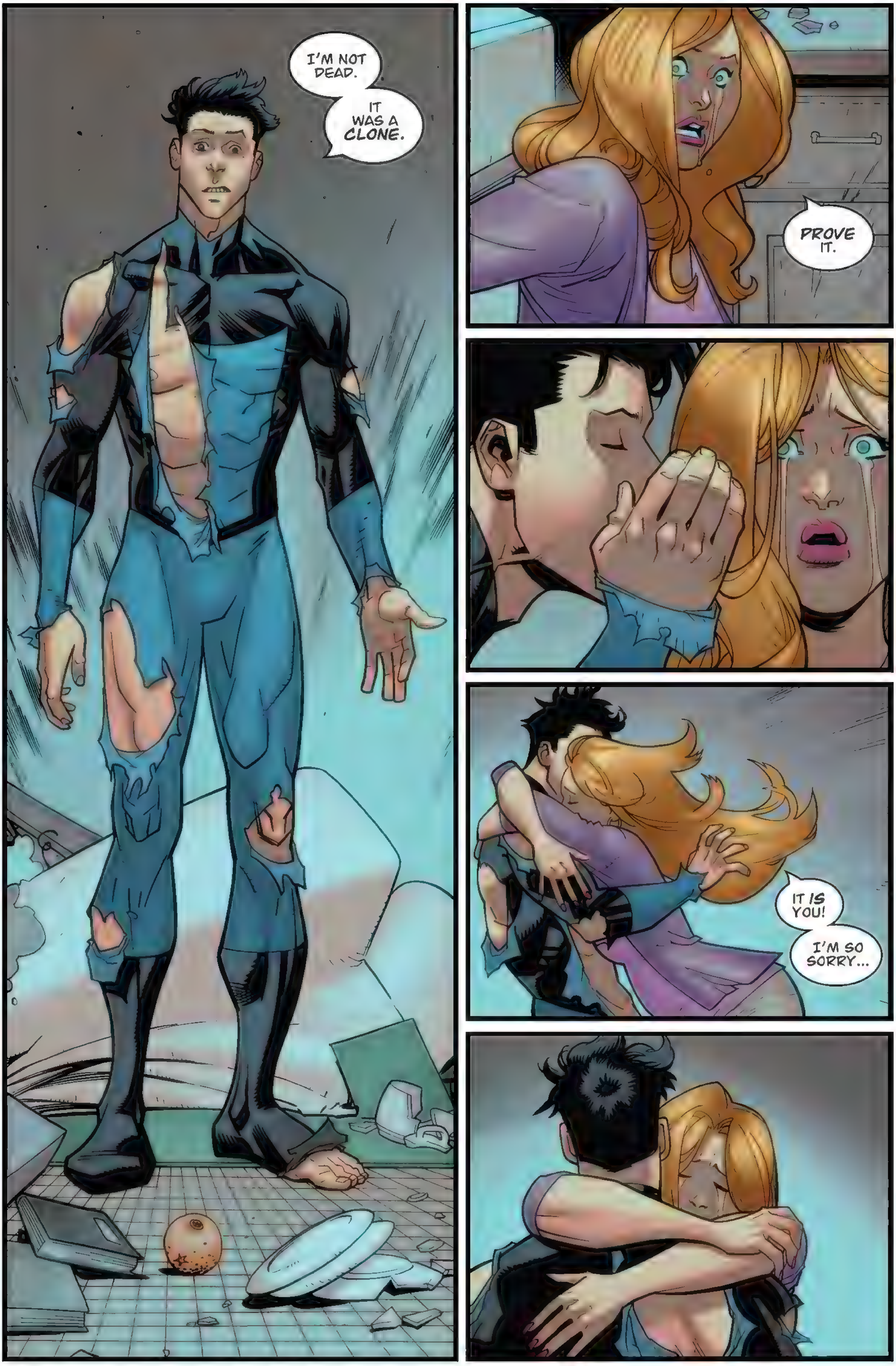

WELL, YOU'VE REALLY DONE IT *THIS* TIME, MARK. IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY... *YOU DID THIS*... YOU CAUSED... ALL OF THIS. I HAD THAT MANIAC TUCKED AWAY. YOU *FREED HIM*. YOU CONVINCED ME YOU HAD THIS UNDER CONTROL.
I DON'T MEAN TO RUB IT IN YOUR FACE, LORD KNOWS I'VE MADE MY SHARE OF CATASTROPHIC MISTAKES. I KNOW THIS HAS GOT TO BE WEIGHING ON YOU... BUT I JUST HAVE TO ASK, KID...
STILL FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEST?
STILL FEEL LIKE A MORAL AUTHORITY-- THAT YOU KNOW WHAT'S *RIGHT* FOR THE WORLD?
NO.
WELL... THAT'S A START.
WHAT COMES NEXT... THAT'S UP TO *YOU*.
I ASSUME I'LL GO TO JAIL... I DON'T EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO SKATE PAST THIS ONE. A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED HERE... AND I FEEL LIKE I *SHOULD* PAY FOR MY CRIMES.
I'D HOPE, OF COURSE... THAT YOU'D LET ME HELP IN WHATEVER WAY I CAN IN THE EFFORT TO UNDO THIS. THERE HAS TO BE SOME WAY TO GET SEA LEVEL BACK TO WHERE IT SHOULD BE--TRY AND RESTORE THE CITIES...
OH, THAT...

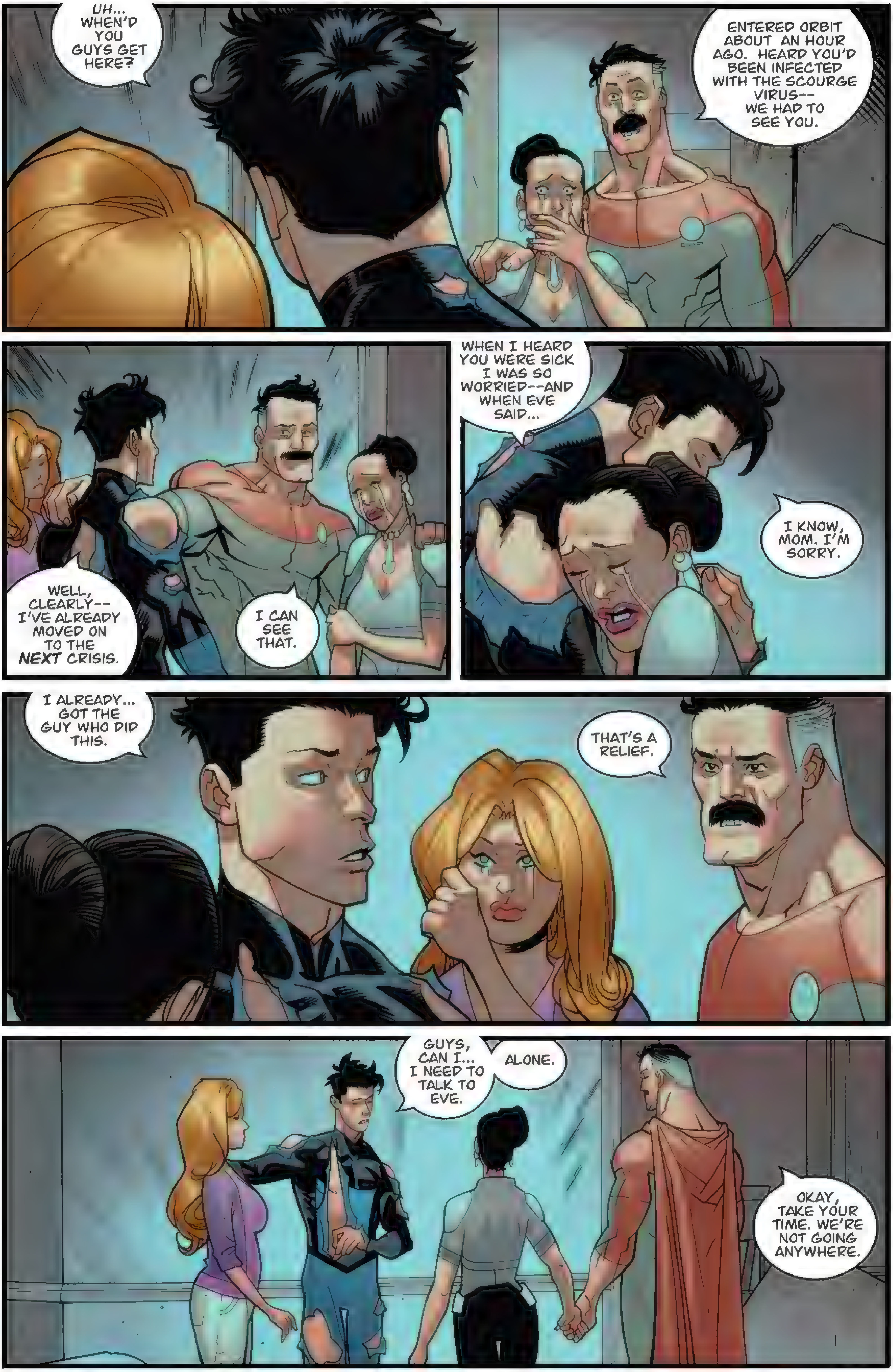

"WE'VE GOT THAT TAKEN CARE OF.
"ROBOT, ER... **REX** DESIGNED AN ARTIFICIAL MOON... WITH A FIXED ORBIT. MADE TWO OF THEM-- WE'VE HAD TEAMS WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK FOR WEEKS. THEY'LL HANG IN A SYNCHRONIZED ORBIT WITH EARTH, CAUSING A PERMANENT ***LOW TIDE***. IT'LL GET SEA LEVEL BACK WITHIN A FEW MICRONS OF WHERE IT SHOULD BE.
"WE'RE STILL WORKING ON THE INSIDES... THEY'RE GOING TO BE SOME PRETTY HIGH TECH WORK STATIONS WHEN WE'RE DONE, PRETTY USEFUL FOR OUR EXPANDED GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TEAM."
HOW MANY DEAD?

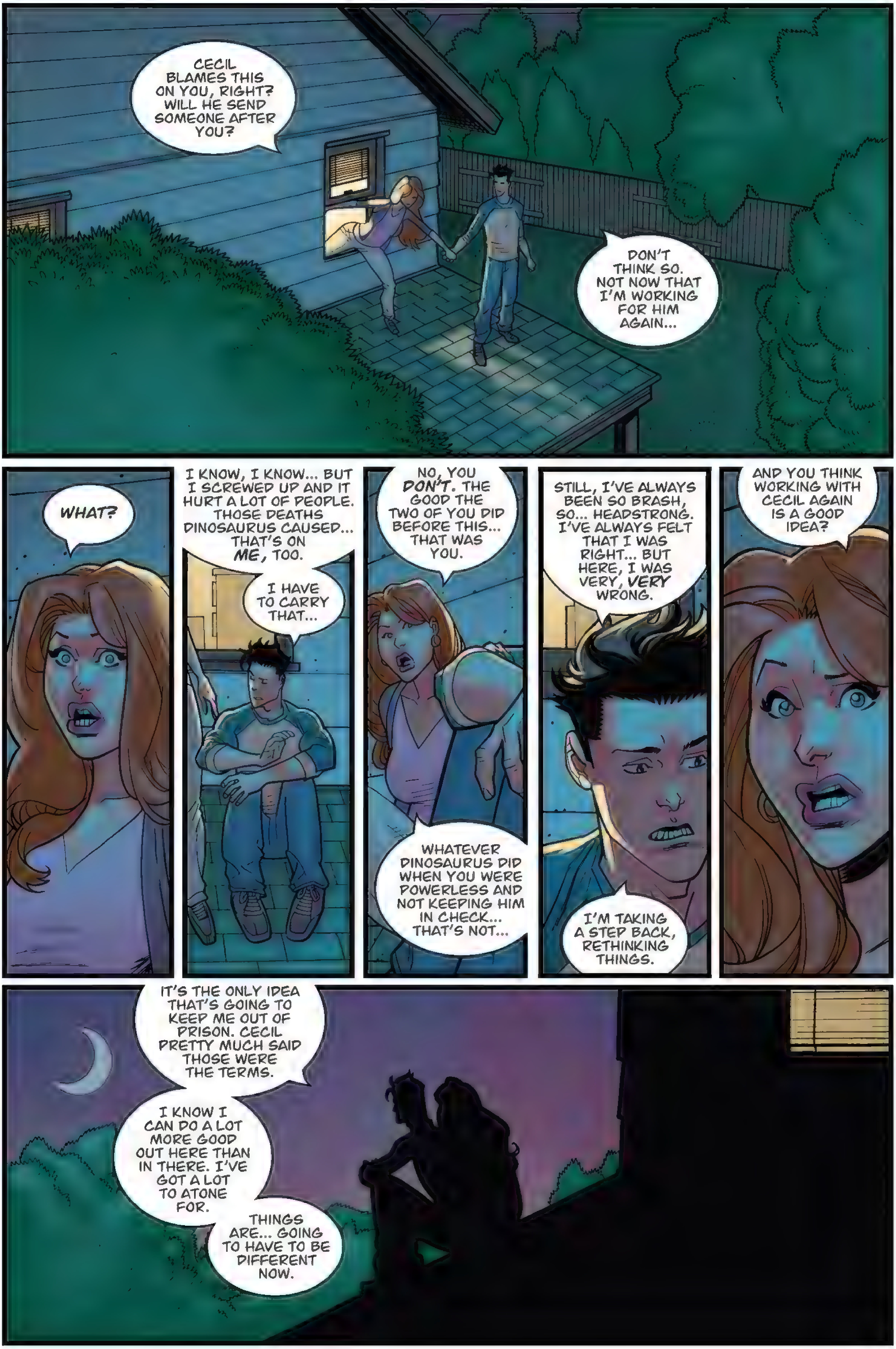

LAST COUNT I HEARD WAS OVER *EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND*... SHOULD CROSS A MILLION BEFORE IT'S ALL DONE...
...COULD HAVE BEEN A LOT WORSE.
WILL YOU LET ME TALK TO EVE BEFORE YOU LOCK ME AWAY?
PLEASE.
I HAD A DIFFERENT IDEA, ACTUALLY.
WHAT'S THAT?
EAR PIECE, JUST LIKE YOU USED TO WEAR WHEN YOU WORKED FOR ME.
I HEAR YOU, YOU HEAR ME--YOU DO WHAT I SAY. LIKE THE OLD DAYS...
UNLESS YOU'D RATHER GO TO PRISON?
YOU'D HAVE ME WORK FOR YOU AGAIN? AFTER ALL THIS?
WHY NOT?
I'VE WORKED WITH *VILLAINS* BEFORE.

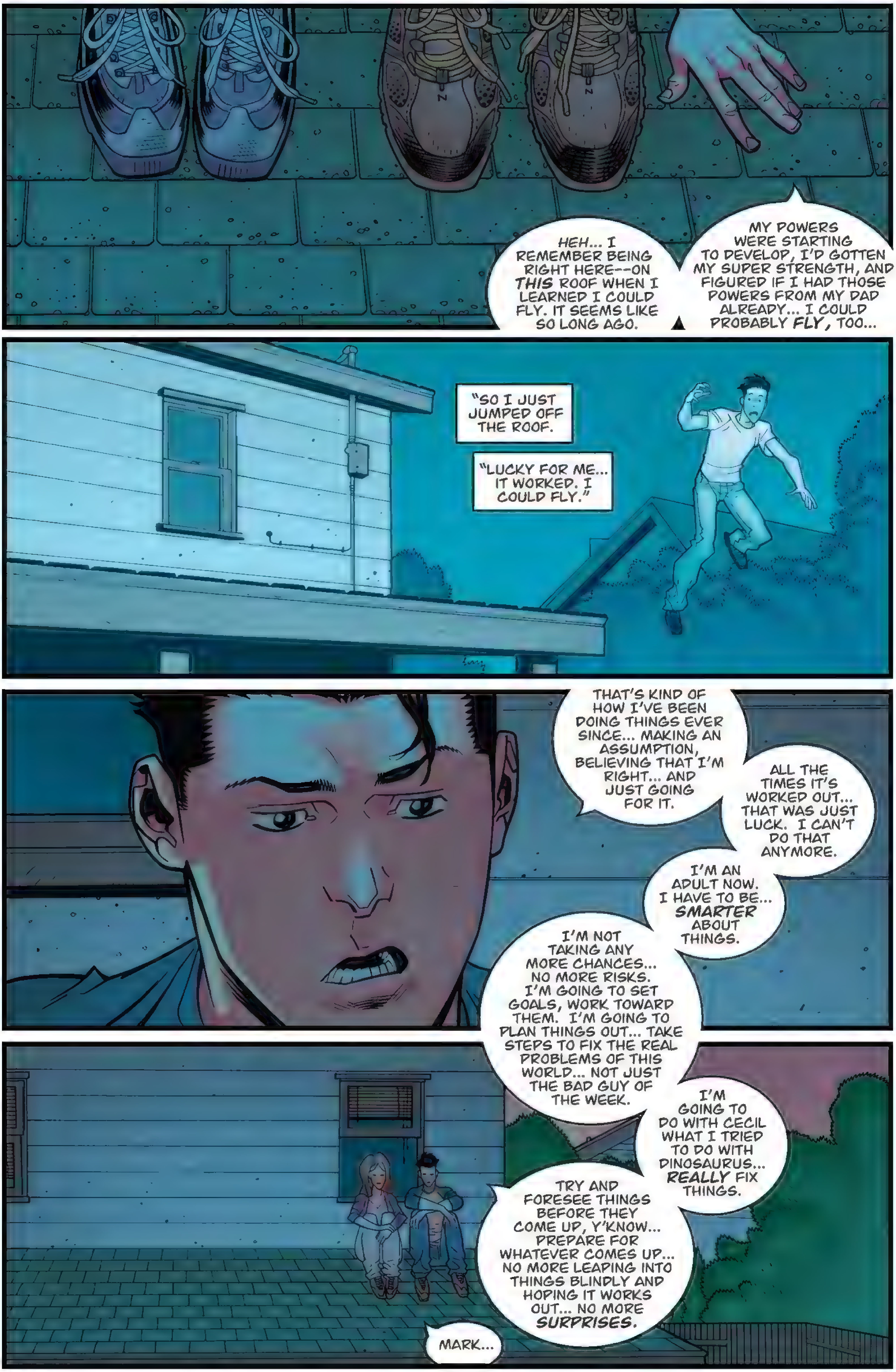

OH, GOD-- EVE--
WHAT HAPPENED?!
MARK... HE'S--
HE DIED!

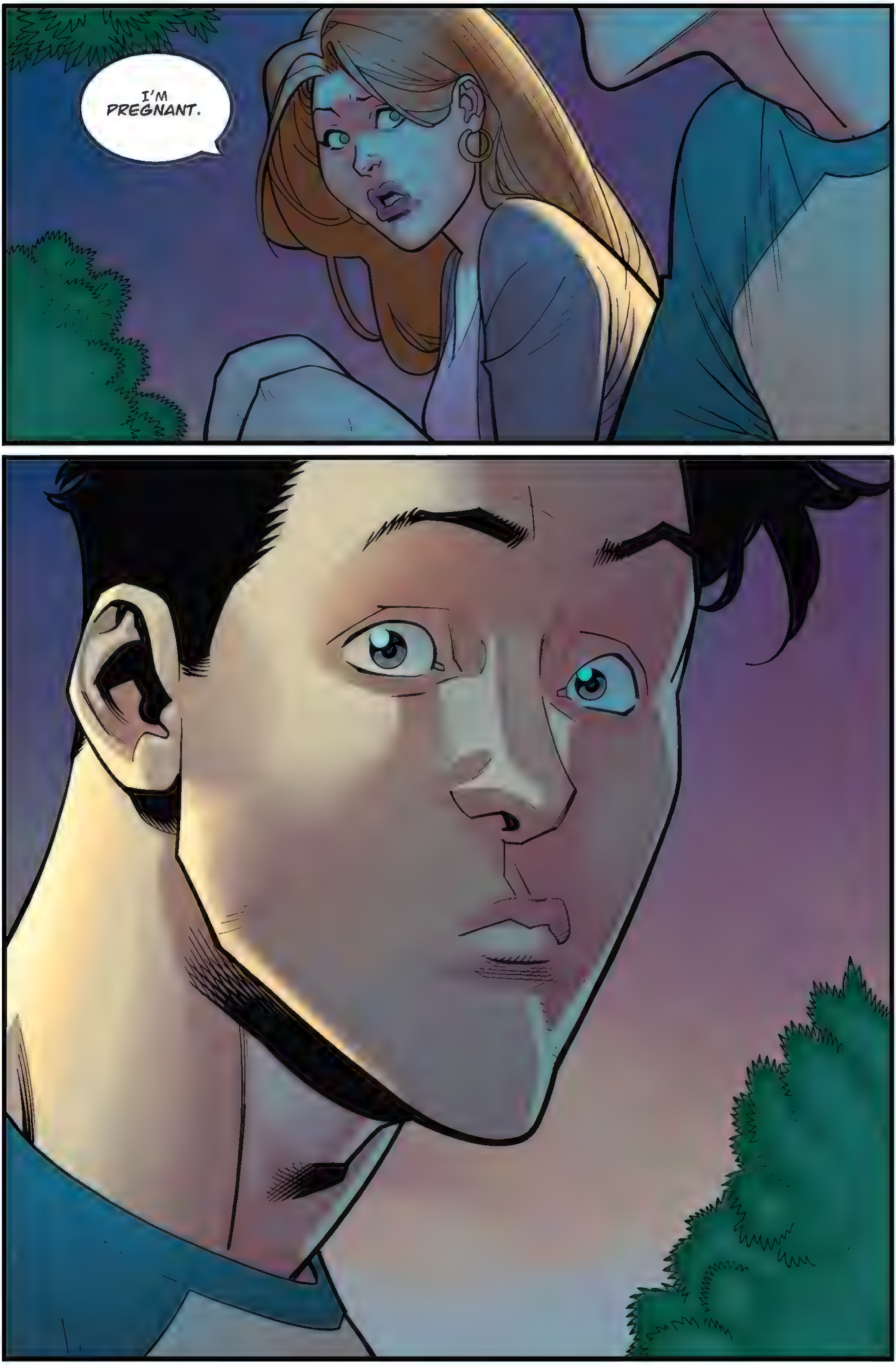

WHAT?!
OH, GOD...
HE... IT... WAS ON TELEVISION... BROADCAST TO THE WORLD.
THE STUPID NETWORK THOUGHT THEY WERE... SEEING HIM... OH, GOD... SAVE THE WORLD... AND INSTEAD...
... EVERYONE SAW IT... IT WAS HORRIBLE.
WHO DID THIS?! WHERE CAN I FIND THEM?!
MARK WAS WORKING... WITH HIM BEFORE THIS... HIS NAME IS--
UH... GUYS...


I'M NOT DEAD.
IT WAS A CLONE.
PROVE IT.
IT IS YOU!
I'M SO SORRY...

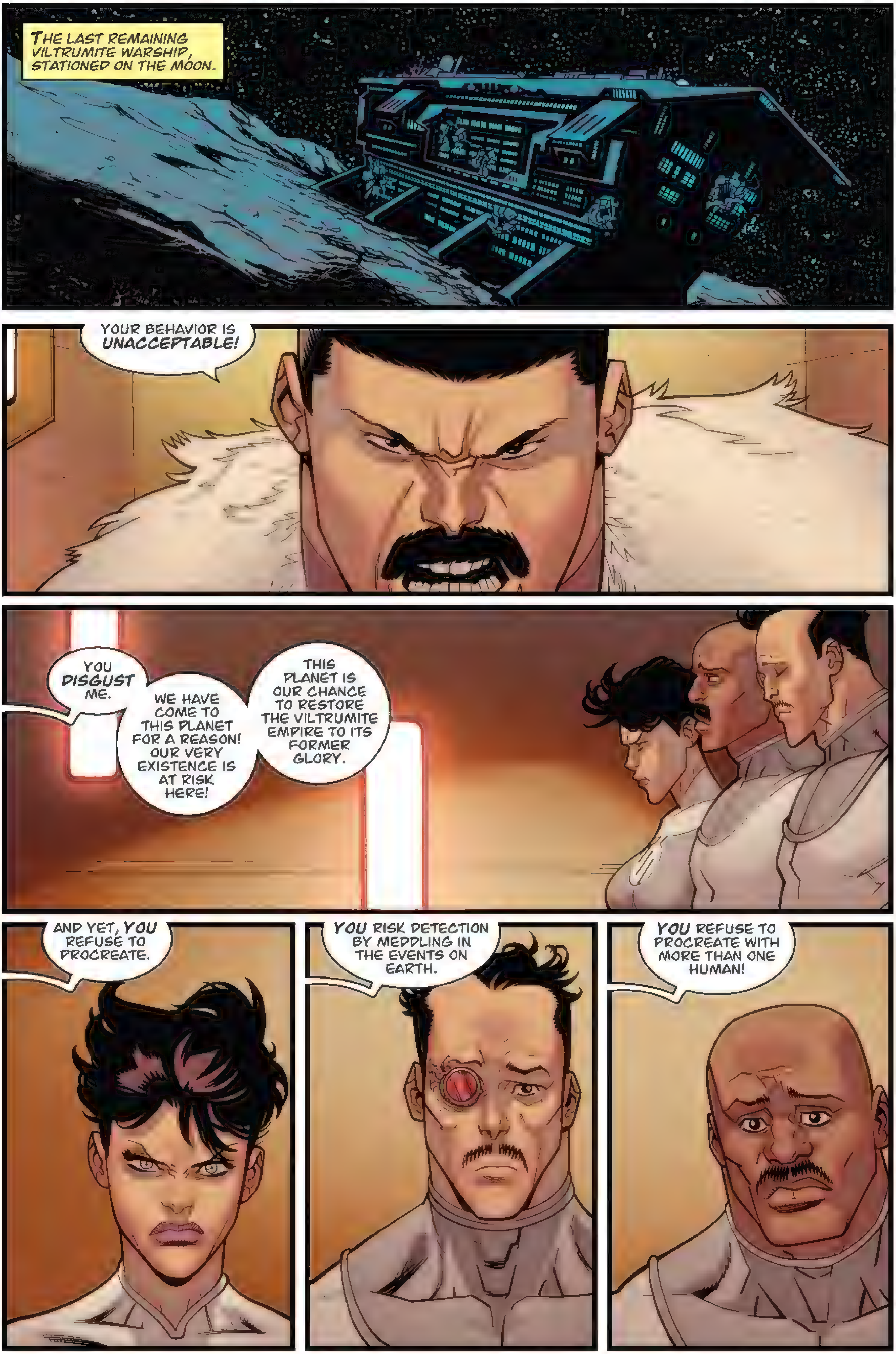

UH... WHEN'D YOU GUYS GET HERE?
ENTERED ORBIT ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. HEARD YOU'D BEEN INFECTED WITH THE SCOURGE VIRUS-- WE HAD TO SEE YOU.
WELL, CLEARLY-- I'VE ALREADY MOVED ON TO THE **NEXT** CRISIS.
I CAN SEE THAT.
WHEN I HEARD YOU WERE SICK I WAS SO WORRIED--AND WHEN EVE SAID...
I KNOW, MOM. I'M SORRY.
I ALREADY... GOT THE GUY WHO DID THIS.
THAT'S A RELIEF.
GUYS, CAN I... I NEED TO TALK TO EVE.
ALONE.
OKAY, TAKE YOUR TIME. WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

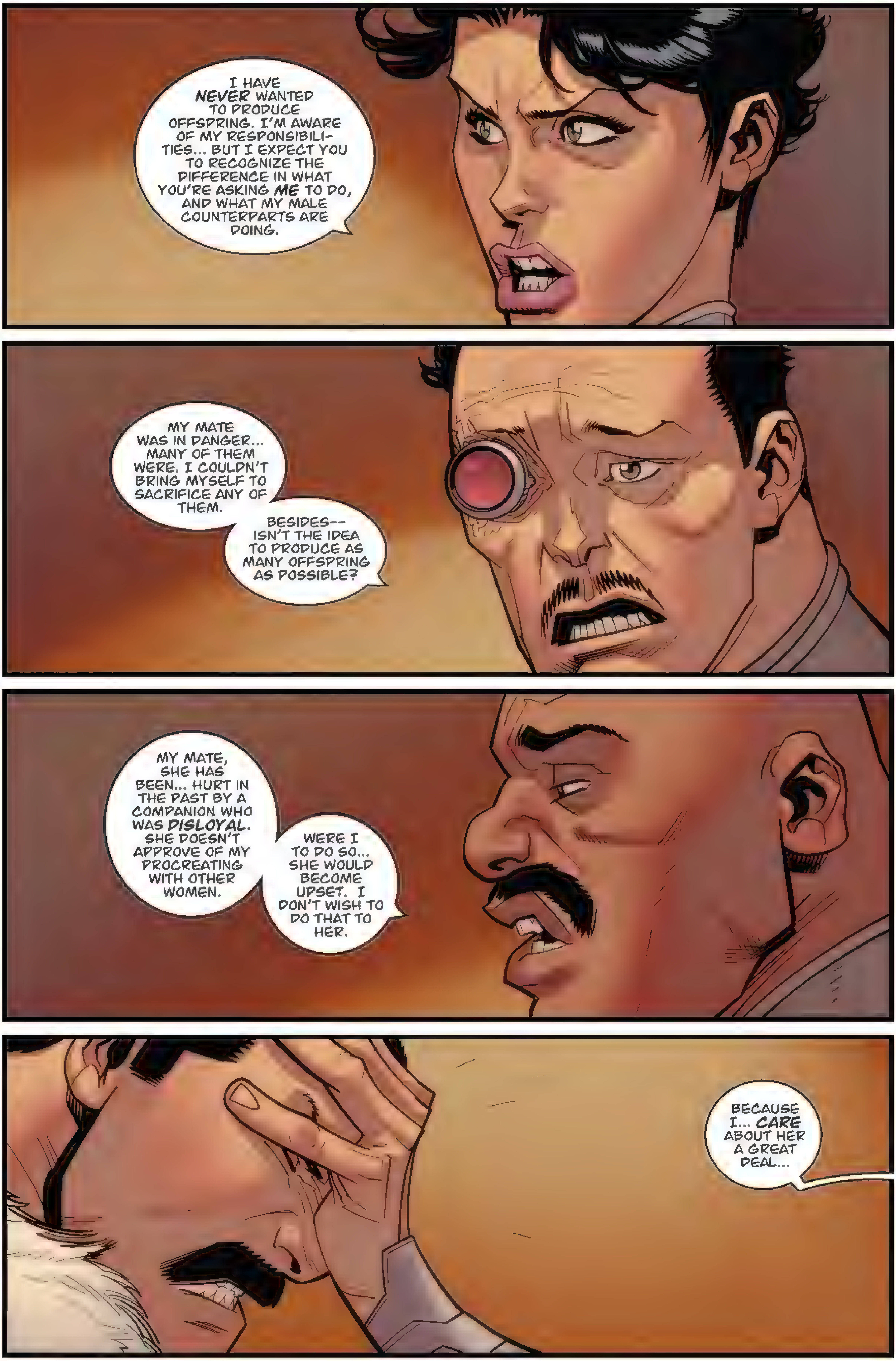

CECIL BLAMES THIS ON YOU, RIGHT? WILL HE SEND SOMEONE AFTER YOU?
DON'T THINK SO. NOT NOW THAT I'M WORKING FOR HIM AGAIN...
WHAT?
I KNOW, I KNOW... BUT I SCREWED UP AND IT HURT A LOT OF PEOPLE. THOSE DEATHS DINOSAURUS CAUSED... THAT'S ON *ME*, TOO.
I HAVE TO CARRY THAT...
NO, YOU *DON'T*. THE GOOD THE TWO OF YOU DID BEFORE THIS... THAT WAS YOU.
WHATEVER DINOSAURUS DID WHEN YOU WERE POWERLESS AND NOT KEEPING HIM IN CHECK... THAT'S NOT...
STILL, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO BRASH, SO... HEADSTRONG. I'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT I WAS RIGHT... BUT HERE, I WAS VERY, *VERY* WRONG.
I'M TAKING A STEP BACK, RETHINKING THINGS.
AND YOU THINK WORKING WITH CECIL AGAIN IS A GOOD IDEA?
IT'S THE ONLY IDEA THAT'S GOING TO KEEP ME OUT OF PRISON. CECIL PRETTY MUCH SAID THOSE WERE THE TERMS.
I KNOW I CAN DO A LOT MORE GOOD OUT HERE THAN IN THERE. I'VE GOT A LOT TO ATONE FOR.
THINGS ARE... GOING TO HAVE TO BE DIFFERENT NOW.

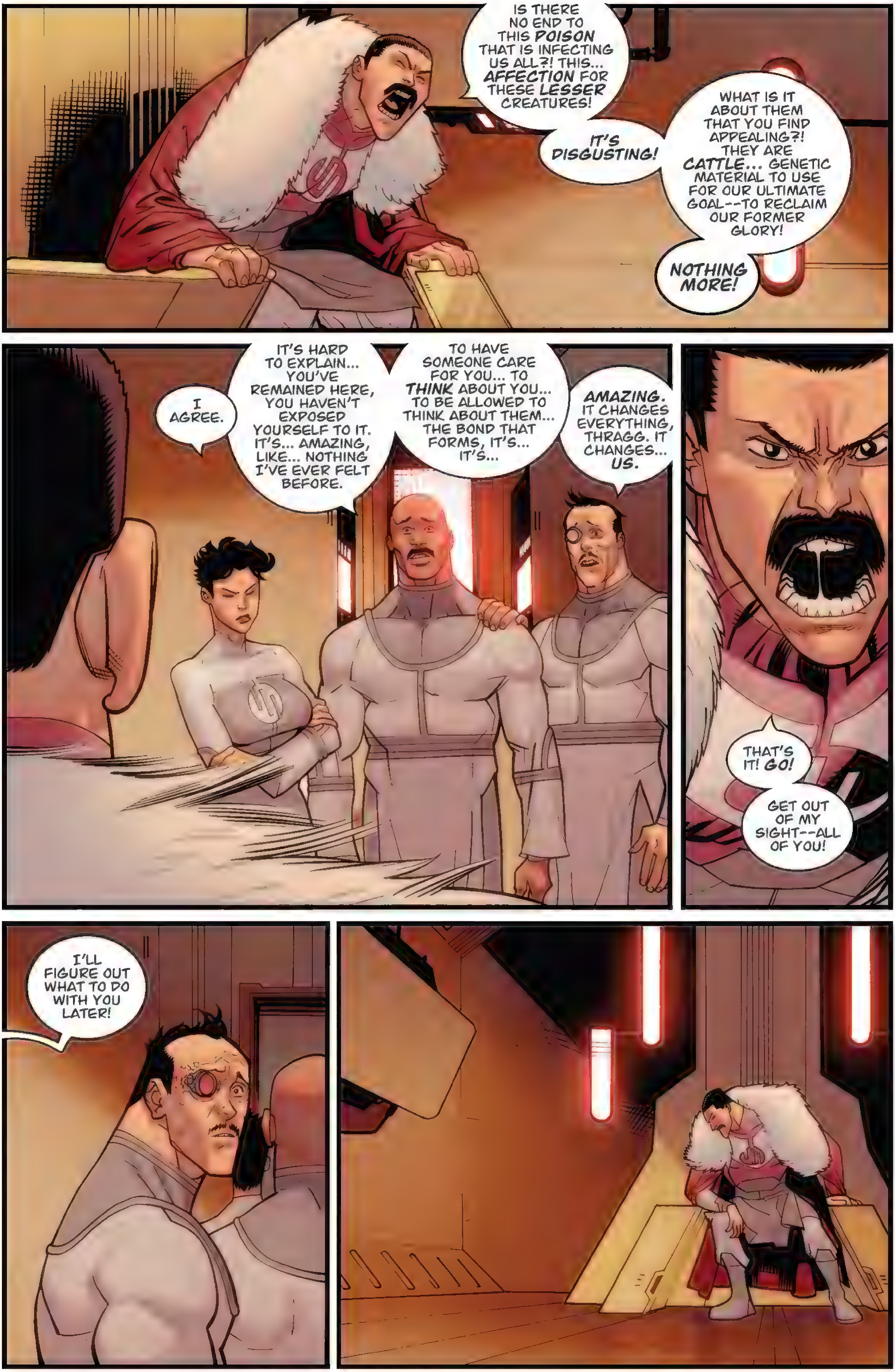

HEH... I REMEMBER BEING RIGHT HERE--ON *THIS* ROOF WHEN I LEARNED I COULD FLY. IT SEEMS LIKE SO LONG AGO.
MY POWERS WERE STARTING TO DEVELOP, I'D GOTTEN MY SUPER STRENGTH, AND FIGURED IF I HAD THOSE POWERS FROM MY DAD ALREADY... I COULD PROBABLY ***FLY***, TOO...
"SO I JUST JUMPED OFF THE ROOF.
"LUCKY FOR ME... IT WORKED. I COULD FLY."
THAT'S KIND OF HOW I'VE BEEN DOING THINGS EVER SINCE... MAKING AN ASSUMPTION, BELIEVING THAT I'M RIGHT... AND JUST GOING FOR IT.
ALL THE TIMES IT'S WORKED OUT... THAT WAS JUST LUCK. I CAN'T DO THAT ANYMORE.
I'M AN ADULT NOW. I HAVE TO BE... ***SMARTER*** ABOUT THINGS.
I'M NOT TAKING ANY MORE CHANCES... NO MORE RISKS. I'M GOING TO SET GOALS, WORK TOWARD THEM. I'M GOING TO PLAN THINGS OUT... TAKE STEPS TO FIX THE REAL PROBLEMS OF THIS WORLD... NOT JUST THE BAD GUY OF THE WEEK.
I'M GOING TO DO WITH CECIL WHAT I TRIED TO DO WITH DINOSAURUS... ***REALLY*** FIX THINGS.
TRY AND FORESEE THINGS BEFORE THEY COME UP, Y'KNOW... PREPARE FOR WHATEVER COMES UP... NO MORE LEAPING INTO THINGS BLINDLY AND HOPING IT WORKS OUT... NO MORE ***SURPRISES.***
MARK...

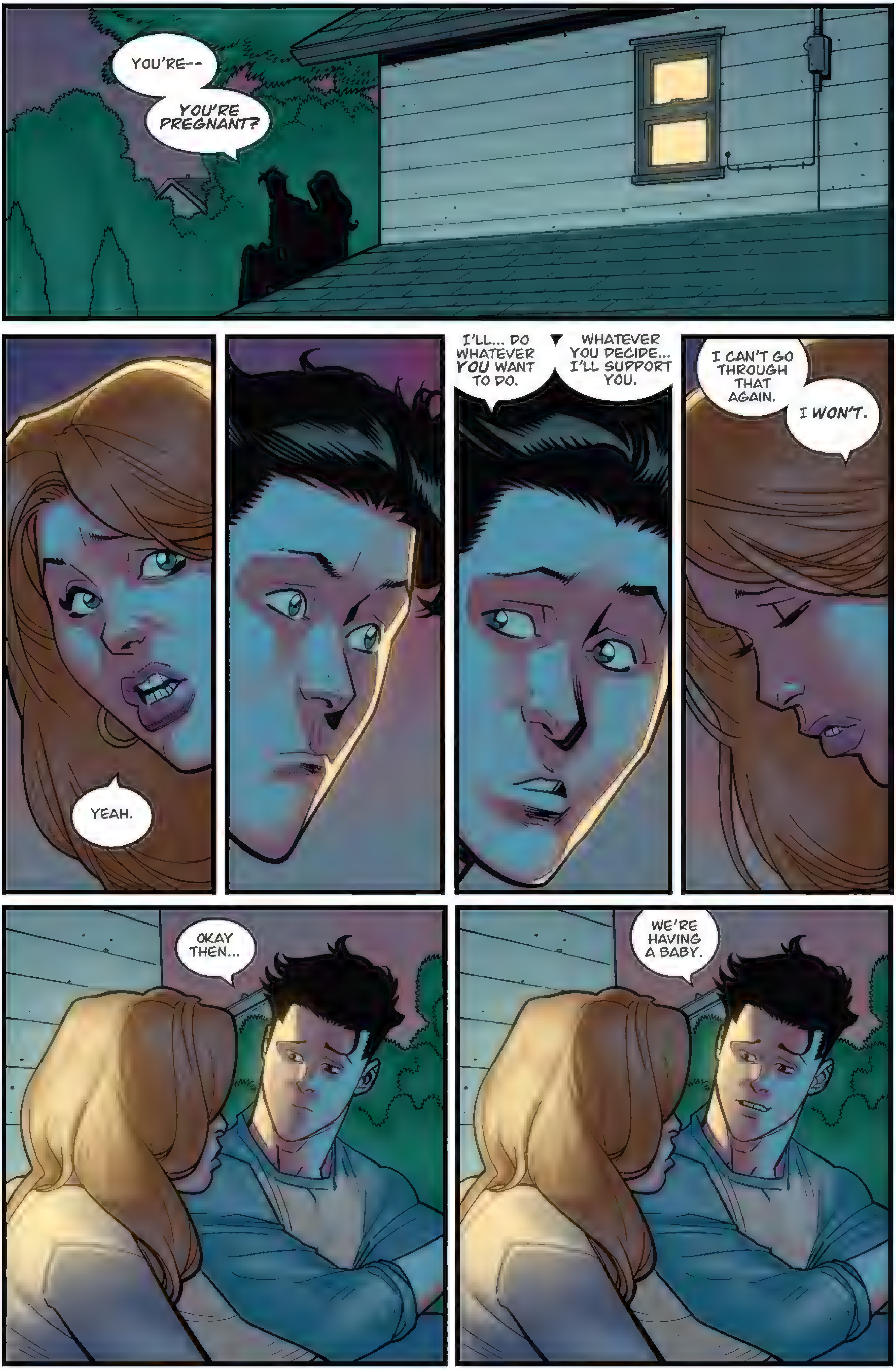

I'M PREGNANT.

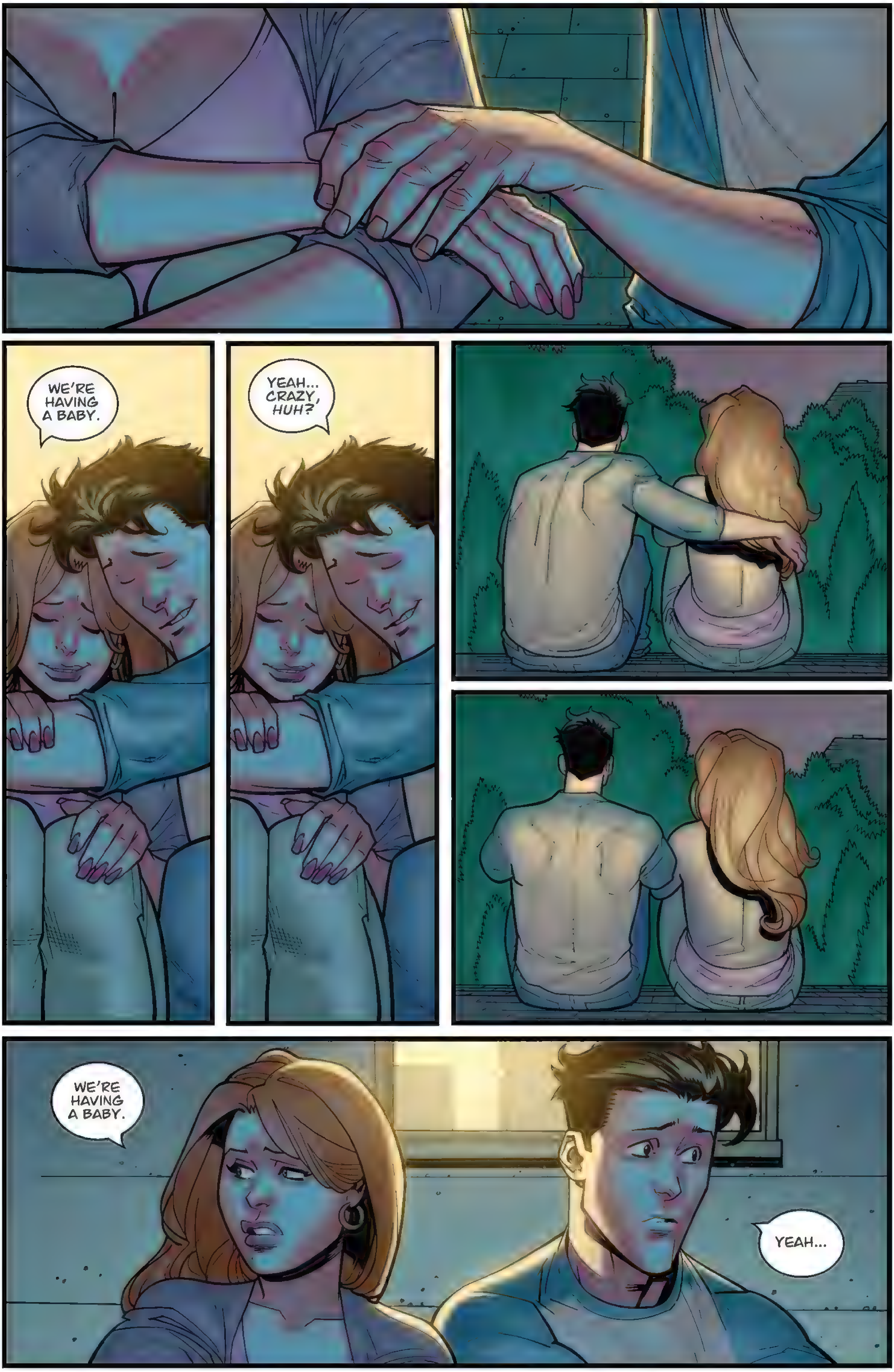
CHAPTER 101

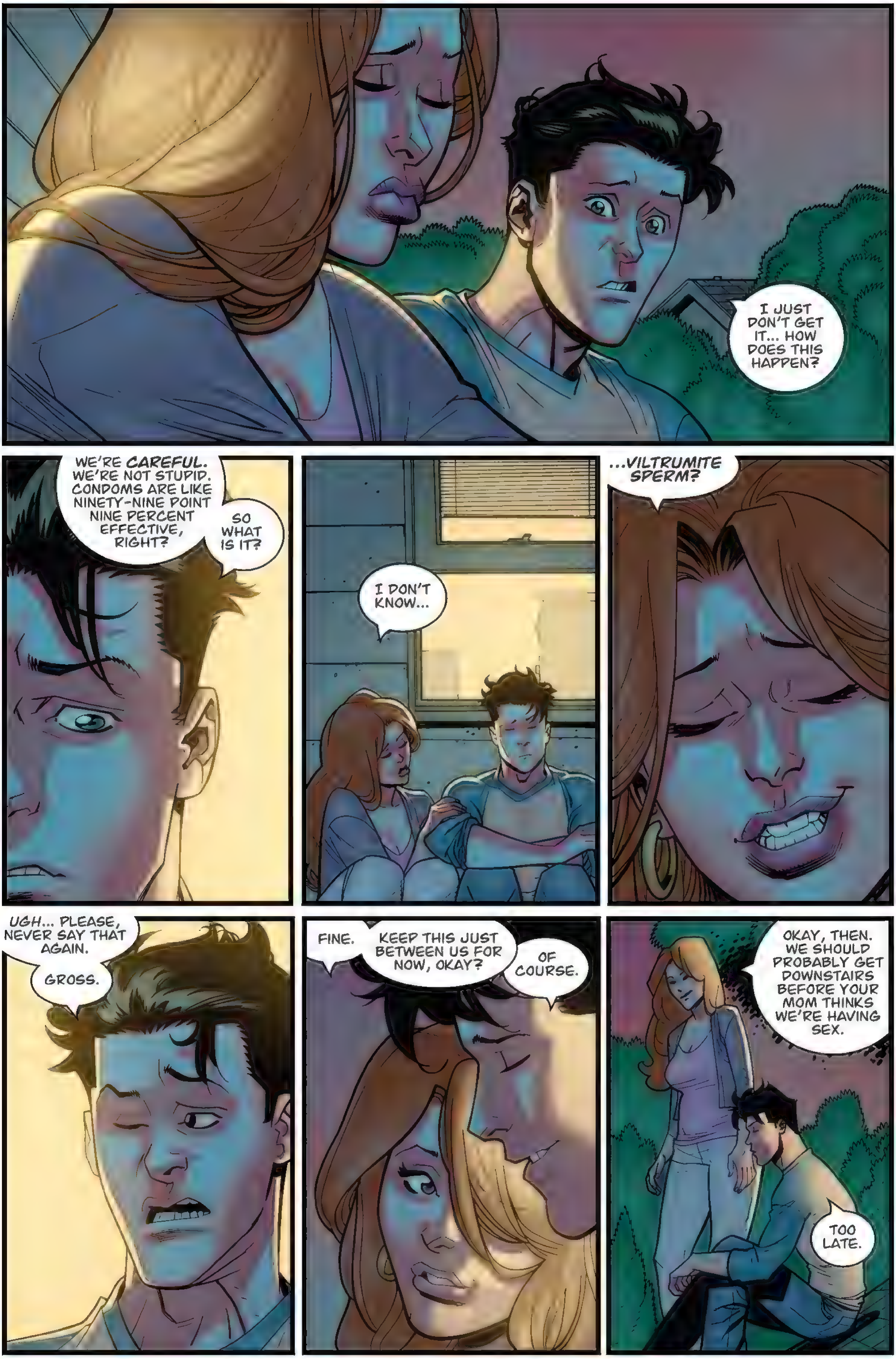

THE LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, STATIONED ON THE MOON.
YOUR BEHAVIOR IS *UNACCEPTABLE!*
YOU *DISGUST* ME.
WE HAVE COME TO THIS PLANET FOR A REASON! OUR VERY EXISTENCE IS AT RISK HERE!
THIS PLANET IS OUR CHANCE TO RESTORE THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE TO ITS FORMER GLORY.
AND YET, *YOU* REFUSE TO PROCREATE.
YOU RISK DETECTION BY MEDDLING IN THE EVENTS ON EARTH.
YOU REFUSE TO PROCREATE WITH MORE THAN ONE HUMAN!

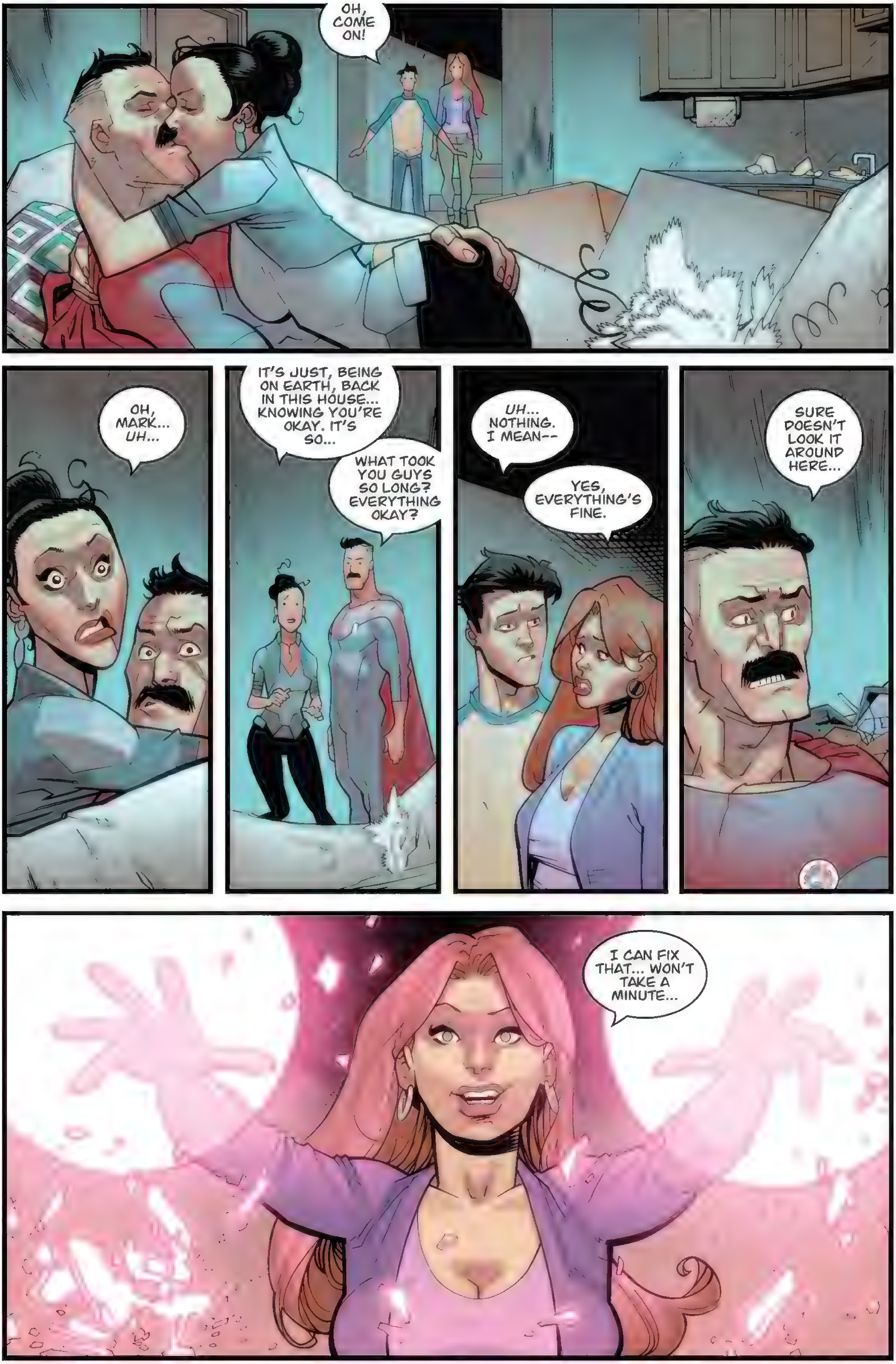

I HAVE NEVER WANTED TO PRODUCE OFFSPRING. I'M AWARE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES... BUT I EXPECT YOU TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE IN WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO DO, AND WHAT MY MALE COUNTERPARTS ARE DOING.
MY MATE WAS IN DANGER... MANY OF THEM WERE. I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO SACRIFICE ANY OF THEM.
BESIDES-- ISN'T THE IDEA TO PRODUCE AS MANY OFFSPRING AS POSSIBLE?
MY MATE, SHE HAS BEEN... HURT IN THE PAST BY A COMPANION WHO WAS DISLOYAL. SHE DOESN'T APPROVE OF MY PROCREATING WITH OTHER WOMEN.
WERE I TO DO SO... SHE WOULD BECOME UPSET. I DON'T WISH TO DO THAT TO HER.
BECAUSE I... CARE ABOUT HER A GREAT DEAL...

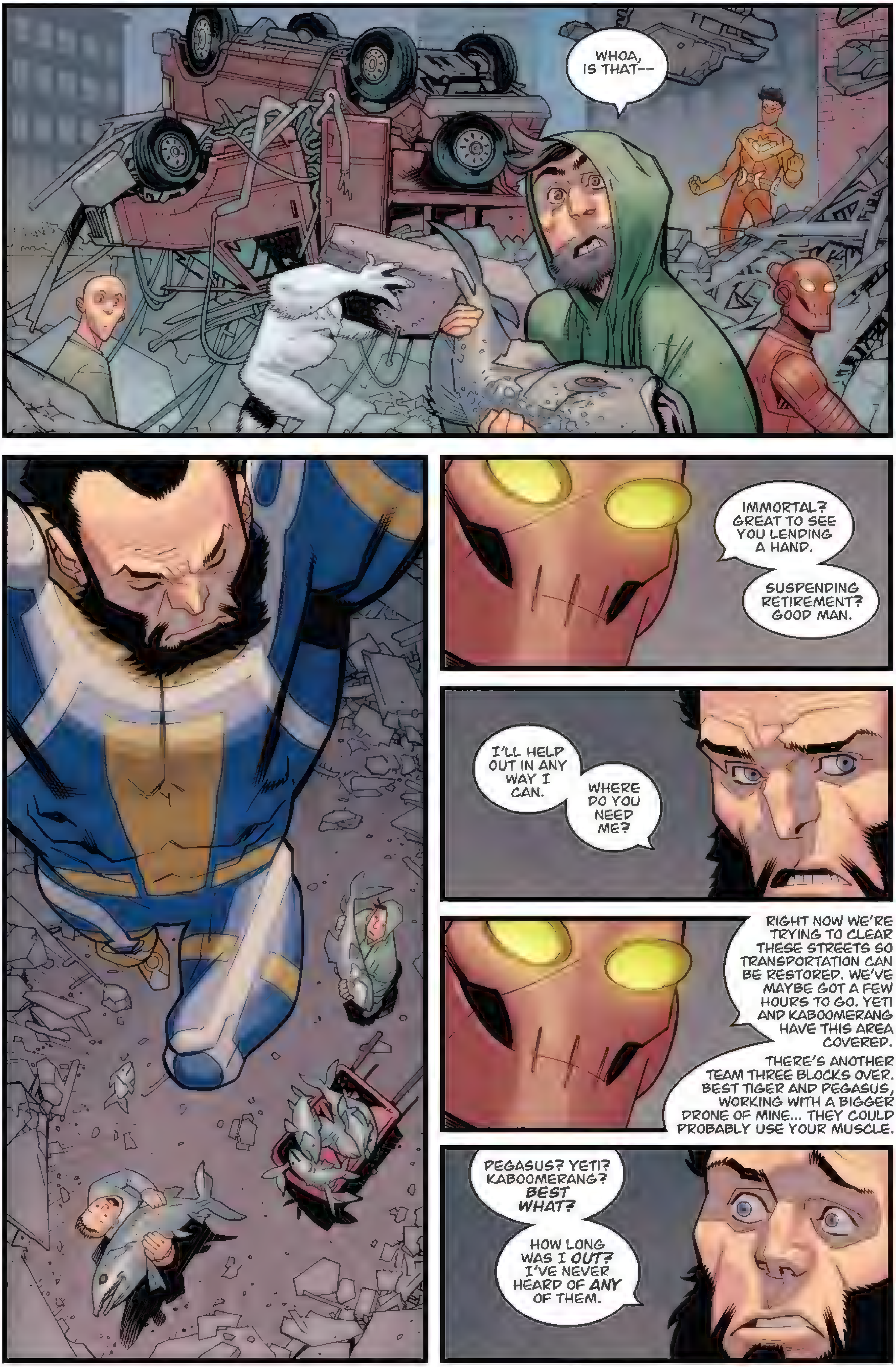

IS THERE NO END TO THIS POISON THAT IS INFECTING US ALL?! THIS... AFFECTION FOR THESE LESSER CREATURES!
IT'S DISGUSTING!
WHAT IS IT ABOUT THEM THAT YOU FIND APPEALING?! THEY ARE CATTLE... GENETIC MATERIAL TO USE FOR OUR ULTIMATE GOAL--TO RECLAIM OUR FORMER GLORY!
NOTHING MORE!
I AGREE.
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN... YOU'VE REMAINED HERE, YOU HAVEN'T EXPOSED YOURSELF TO IT. IT'S... AMAZING, LIKE... NOTHING I'VE EVER FELT BEFORE.
TO HAVE SOMEONE CARE FOR YOU... TO THINK ABOUT YOU... TO BE ALLOWED TO THINK ABOUT THEM... THE BOND THAT FORMS, IT'S... IT'S...
AMAZING. IT CHANGES EVERYTHING, THRAGG. IT CHANGES... US.
THAT'S IT! GO!
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT--ALL OF YOU!
I'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH YOU LATER!

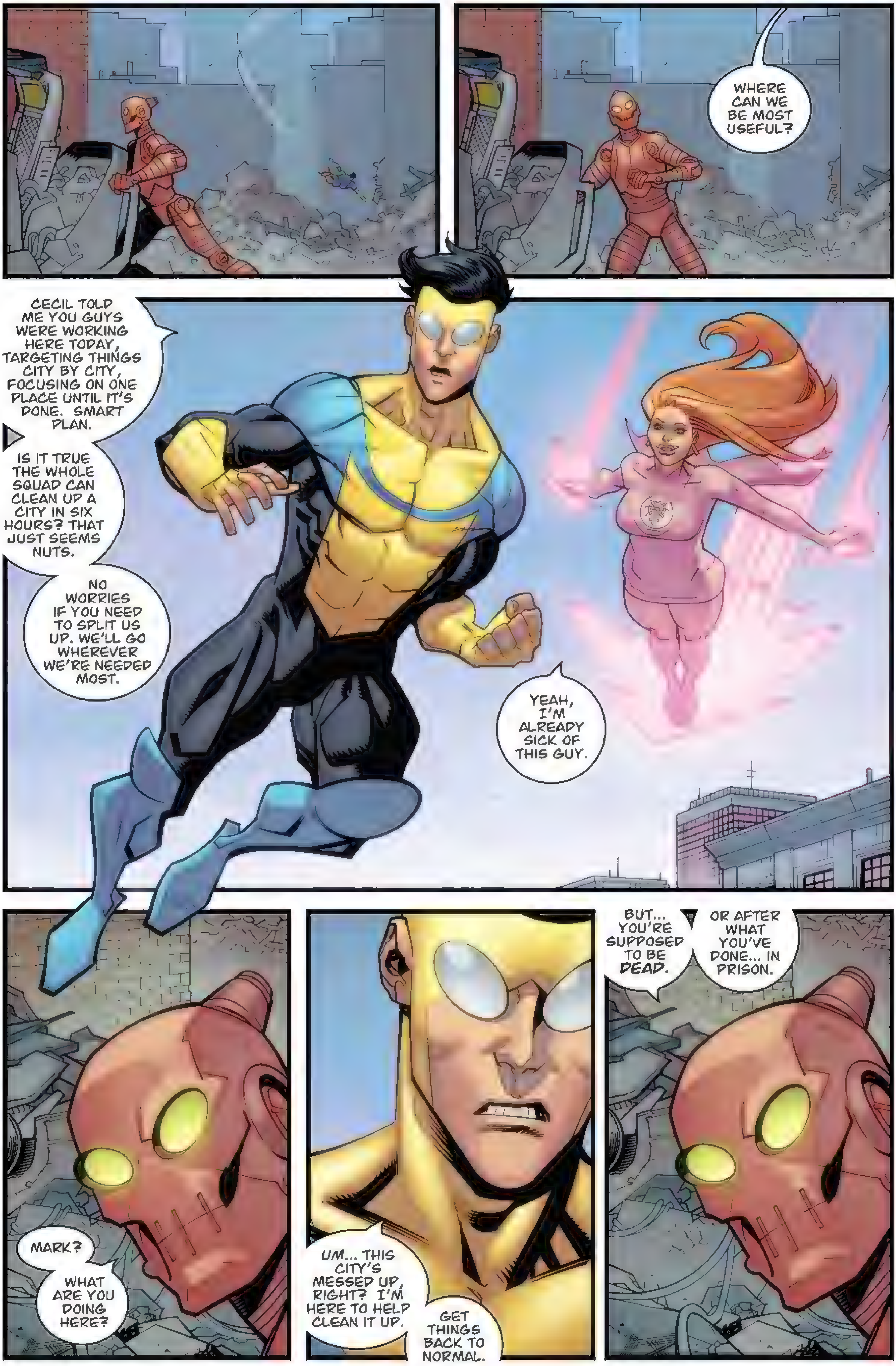

YOU'RE--
YOU'RE PREGNANT?
YEAH.
I'LL... DO WHATEVER *YOU* WANT TO DO.
WHATEVER YOU DECIDE... I'LL SUPPORT YOU.
I CAN'T GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN.
I *WON'T*.
OKAY THEN...
WE'RE HAVING A BABY.

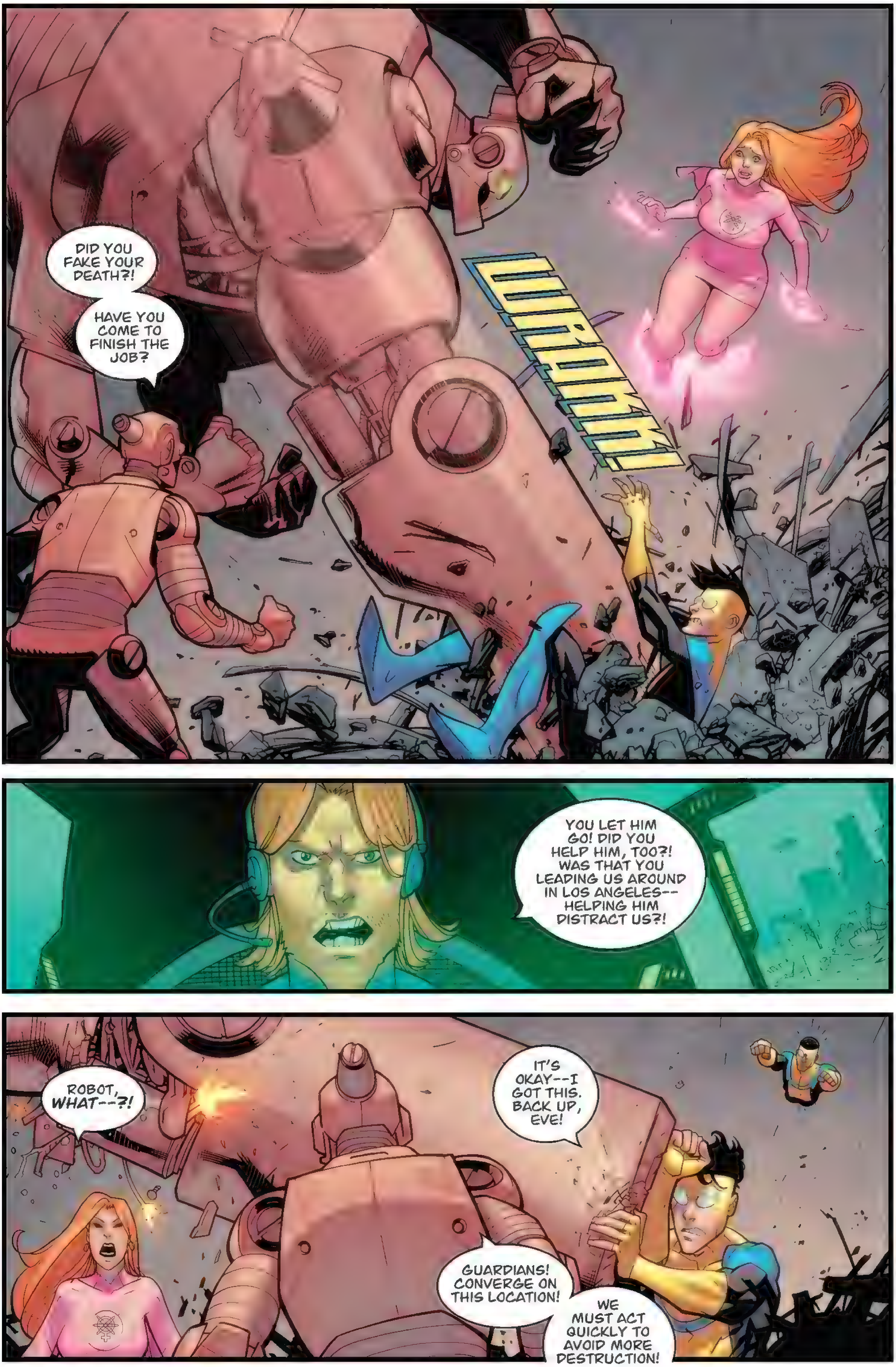

WE'RE HAVING A BABY.
YEAH... CRAZY, HUH?
WE'RE HAVING A BABY.
YEAH...

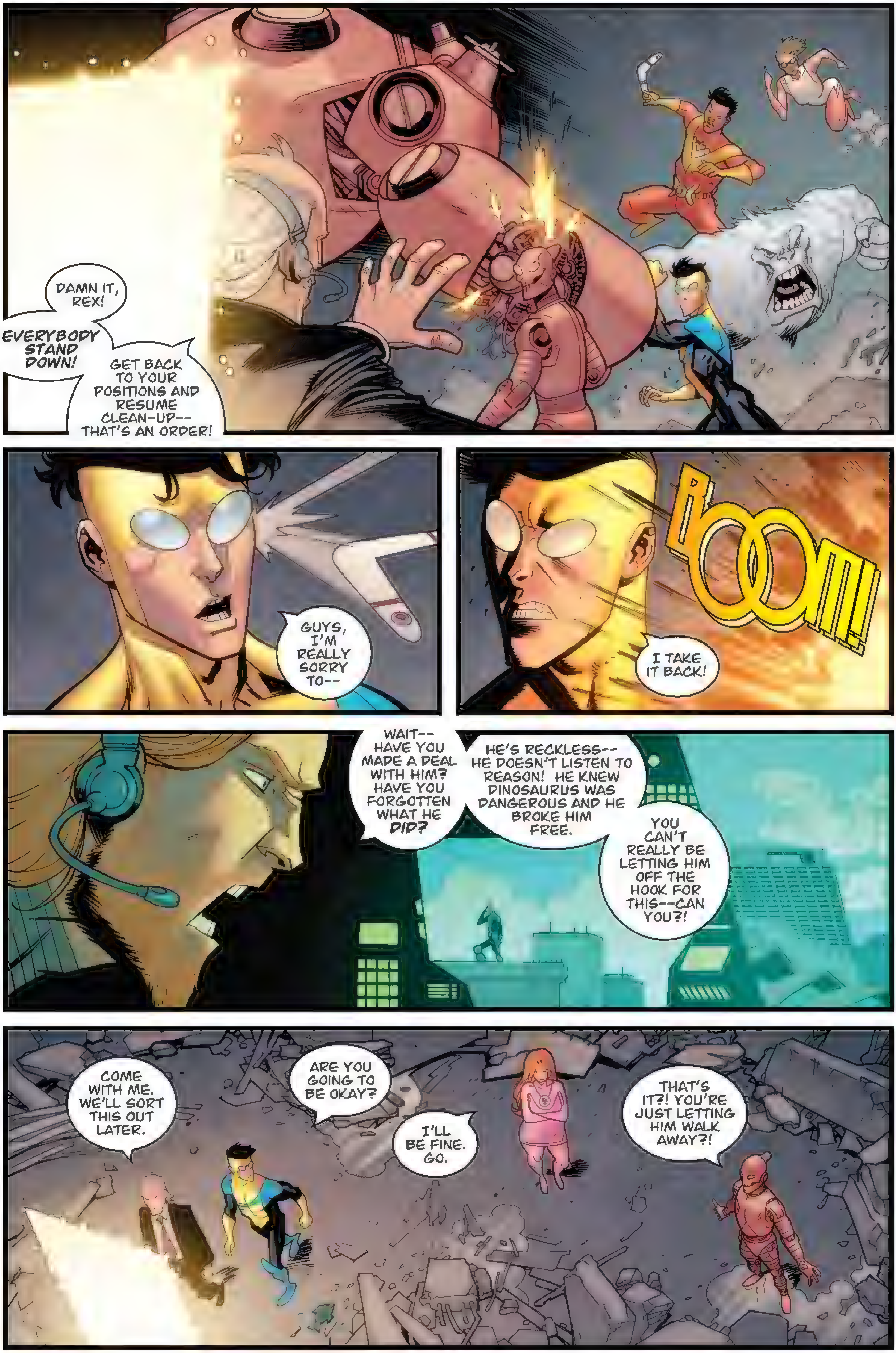

I JUST DON'T GET IT... HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?
WE'RE *CAREFUL.* WE'RE NOT STUPID. CONDOMS ARE LIKE NINETY-NINE POINT NINE PERCENT EFFECTIVE, RIGHT?
SO WHAT IS IT?
I DON'T KNOW...
...*VILTRUMITE SPERM?*
UGH... PLEASE, NEVER SAY THAT AGAIN.
GROSS.
FINE.
KEEP THIS JUST BETWEEN US FOR NOW, OKAY?
OF COURSE.
OKAY, THEN. WE SHOULD PROBABLY GET DOWNSTAIRS BEFORE YOUR MOM THINKS WE'RE HAVING SEX.
TOO LATE.


OH, COME ON!
OH, MARK... UH...
IT'S JUST, BEING ON EARTH, BACK IN THIS HOUSE... KNOWING YOU'RE OKAY. IT'S SO...
WHAT TOOK YOU GUYS SO LONG? EVERYTHING OKAY?
UH... NOTHING. I MEAN--
YES, EVERYTHING'S FINE.
SURE DOESN'T LOOK IT AROUND HERE...
I CAN FIX THAT... WON'T TAKE A MINUTE...

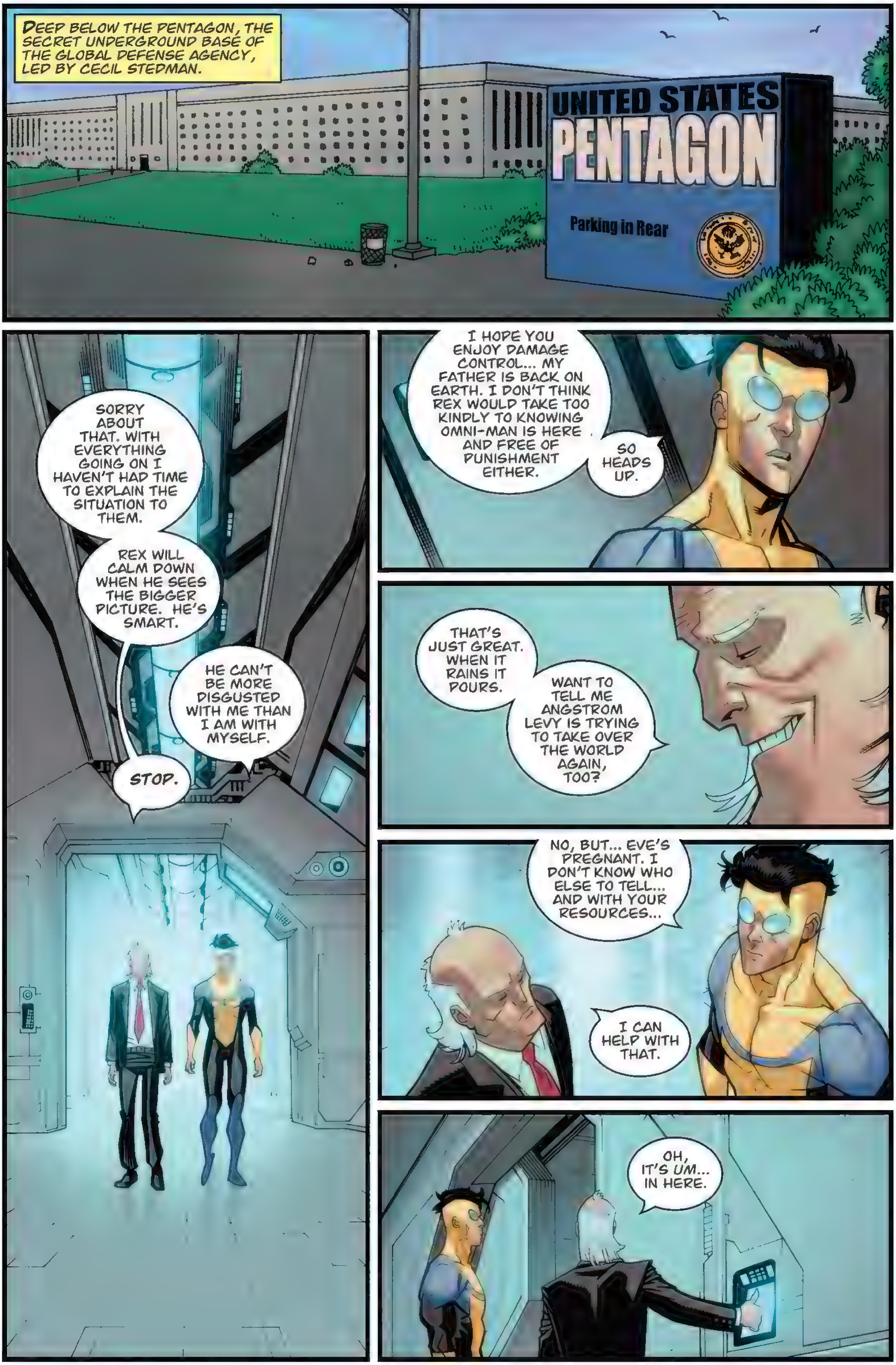

WHOA, IS THAT--
IMMORTAL? GREAT TO SEE YOU LENDING A HAND.
SUSPENDING RETIREMENT? GOOD MAN.
I'LL HELP OUT IN ANY WAY I CAN.
WHERE DO YOU NEED ME?
RIGHT NOW WE'RE TRYING TO CLEAR THESE STREETS SO TRANSPORTATION CAN BE RESTORED. WE'VE MAYBE GOT A FEW HOURS TO GO. YETI AND KABOOMERANG HAVE THIS AREA COVERED.
THERE'S ANOTHER TEAM THREE BLOCKS OVER. BEST TIGER AND PEGASUS, WORKING WITH A BIGGER DRONE OF MINE... THEY COULD PROBABLY USE YOUR MUSCLE.
PEGASUS? YETI? KABOOMERANG? *BEST WHAT?*
HOW LONG WAS I *OUT?* I'VE NEVER HEARD OF *ANY* OF THEM.

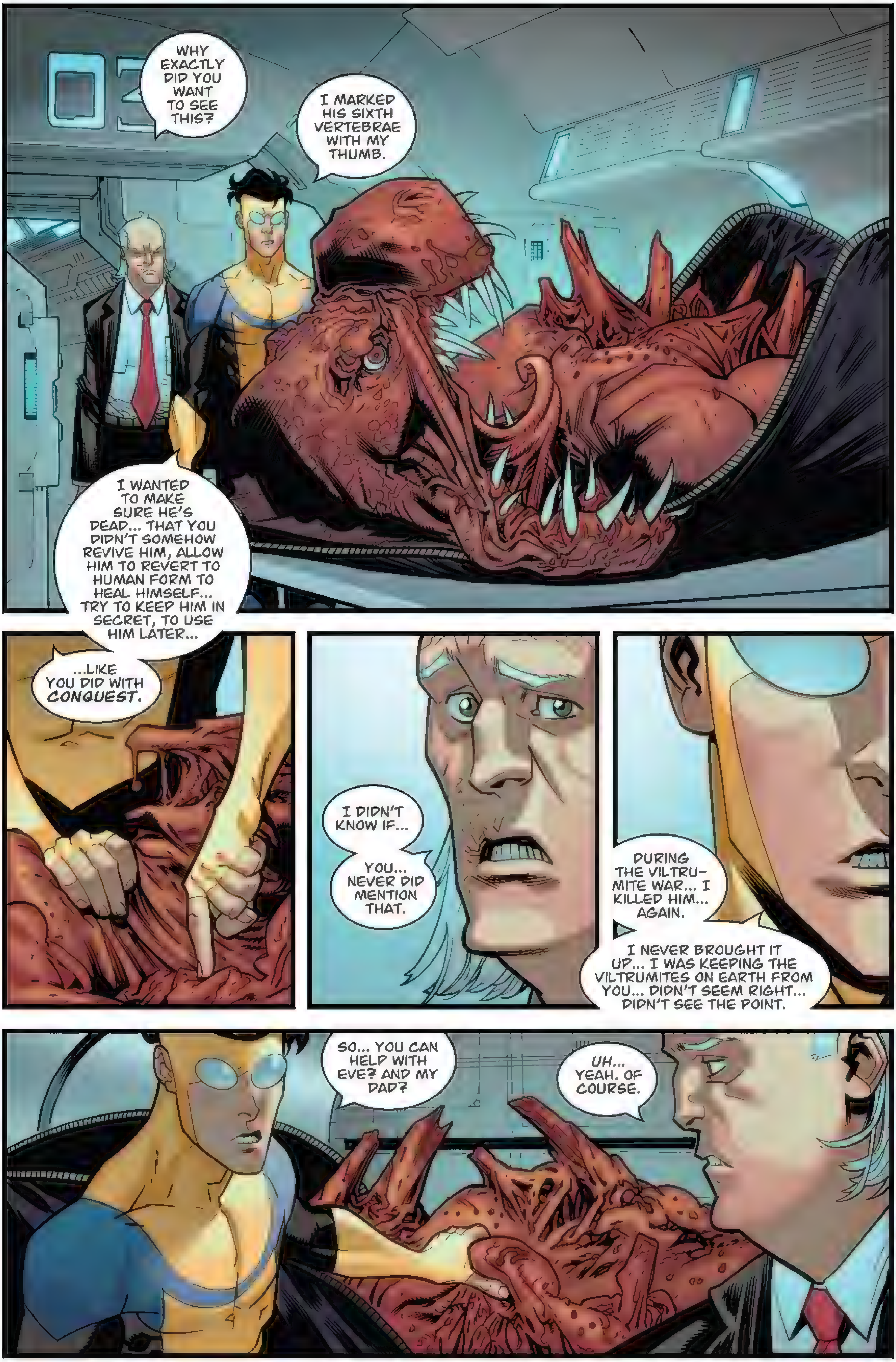

WHERE CAN WE BE MOST USEFUL?
CECIL TOLD ME YOU GUYS WERE WORKING HERE TODAY, TARGETING THINGS CITY BY CITY, FOCUSING ON ONE PLACE UNTIL IT'S DONE. SMART PLAN.
IS IT TRUE THE WHOLE SQUAD CAN CLEAN UP A CITY IN SIX HOURS? THAT JUST SEEMS NUTS.
NO WORRIES IF YOU NEED TO SPLIT US UP. WE'LL GO WHEREVER WE'RE NEEDED MOST.
YEAH, I'M ALREADY SICK OF THIS GUY.
MARK?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
UM... THIS CITY'S MESSED UP, RIGHT? I'M HERE TO HELP CLEAN IT UP.
GET THINGS BACK TO NORMAL.
BUT... YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD.
OR AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE... IN PRISON.

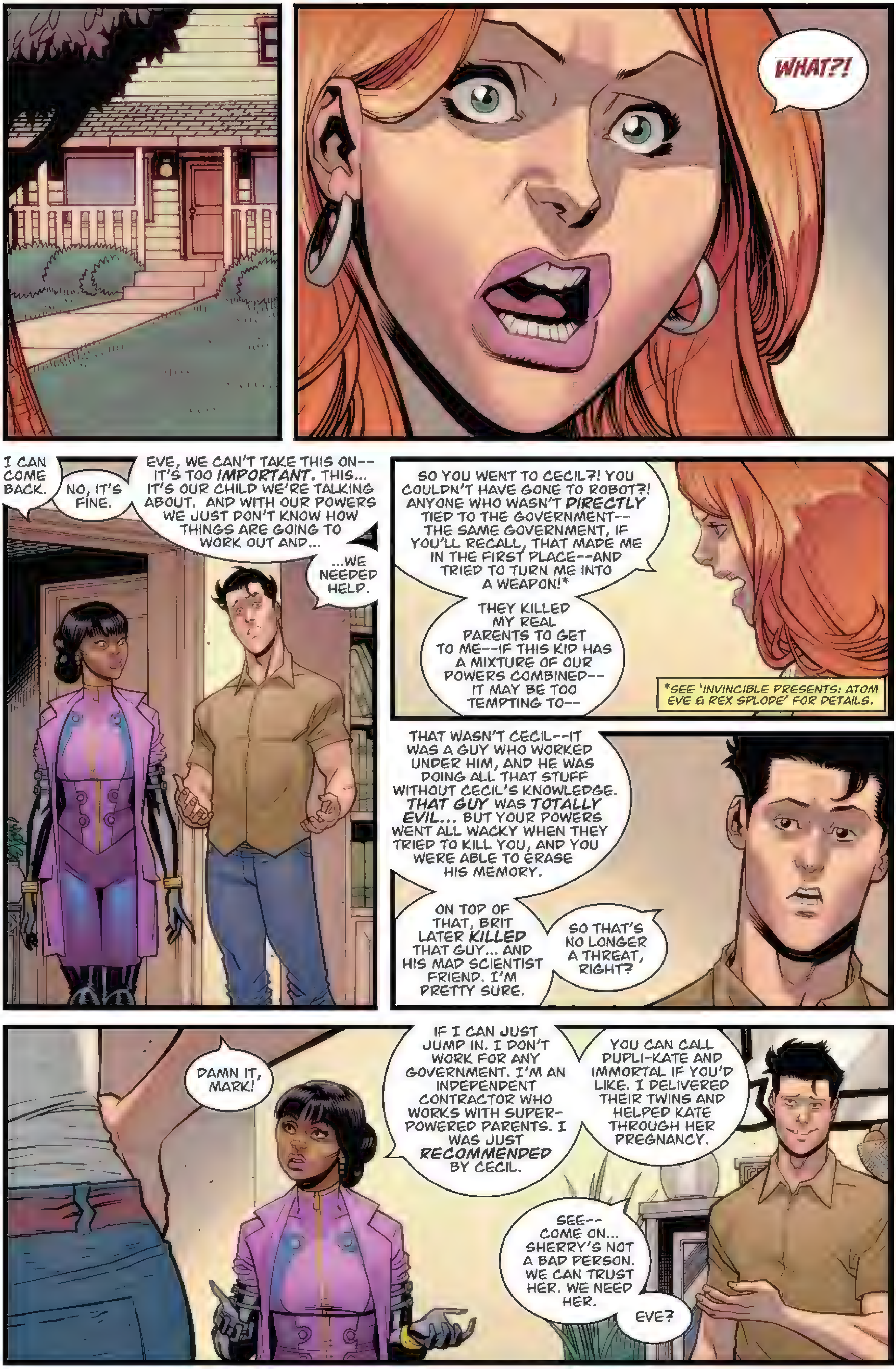

DID YOU FAKE YOUR DEATH?!
HAVE YOU COME TO FINISH THE JOB?
YOU LET HIM GO! DID YOU HELP HIM, TOO?! WAS THAT YOU LEADING US AROUND IN LOS ANGELES-- HELPING HIM DISTRACT US?!
ROBOT, WHAT--?!
IT'S OKAY--I GOT THIS. BACK UP, EVE!
GUARDIANS! CONVERGE ON THIS LOCATION!
WE MUST ACT QUICKLY TO AVOID MORE DESTRUCTION!

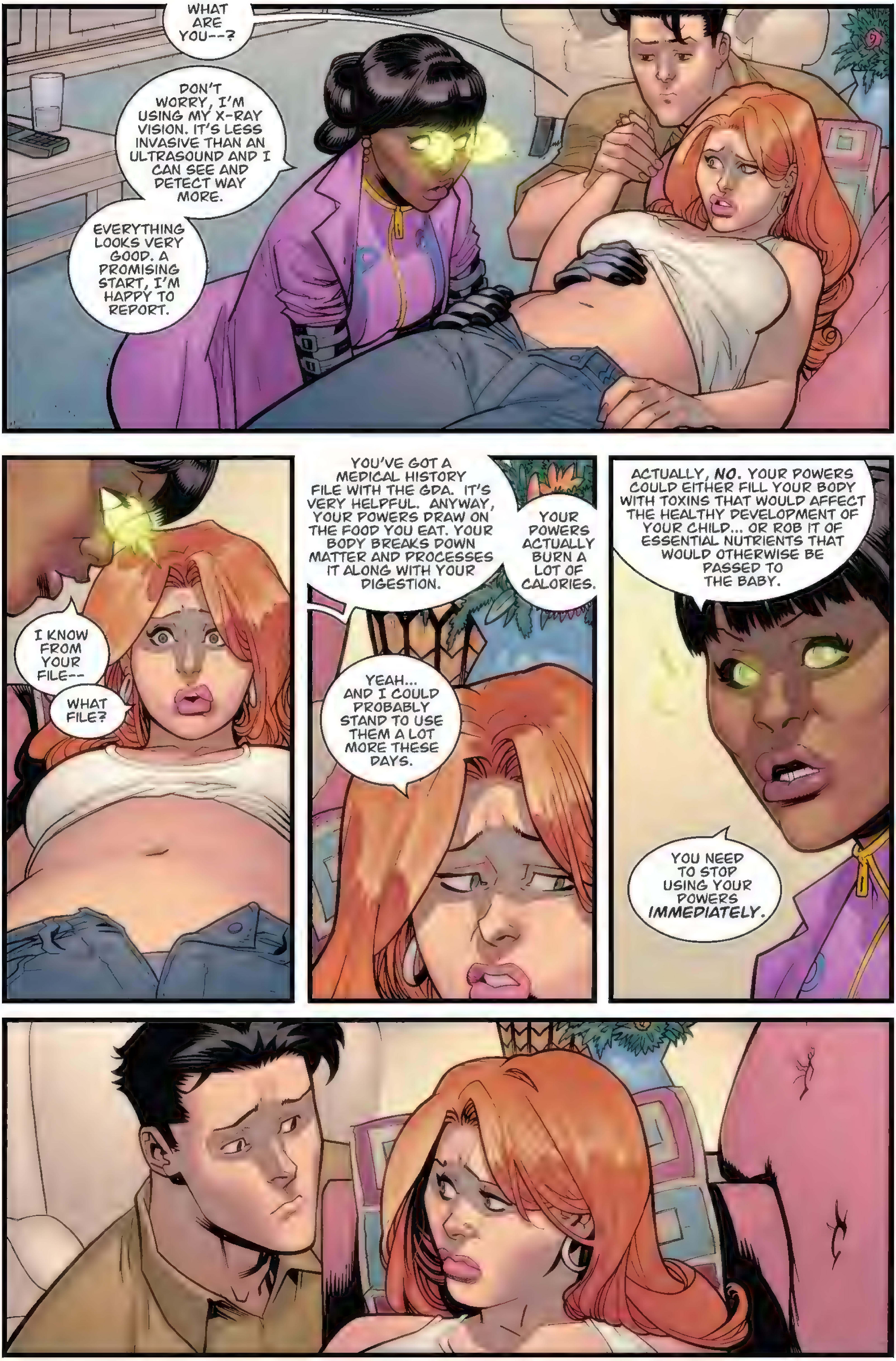

DAMN IT, REX!
EVERYBODY STAND DOWN!
GET BACK TO YOUR POSITIONS AND RESUME CLEAN-UP-- THAT'S AN ORDER!
GUYS, I'M REALLY SORRY TO--
BOOM!
I TAKE IT BACK!
WAIT-- HAVE YOU MADE A DEAL WITH HIM? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT HE *DID?*
HE'S RECKLESS-- HE DOESN'T LISTEN TO REASON! HE KNEW DINOSAURUS WAS DANGEROUS AND HE BROKE HIM FREE.
YOU CAN'T REALLY BE LETTING HIM OFF THE HOOK FOR THIS--CAN YOU?!
COME WITH ME. WE'LL SORT THIS OUT LATER.
ARE YOU GOING TO BE OKAY?
I'LL BE FINE. GO.
THAT'S IT?! YOU'RE JUST LETTING HIM WALK AWAY?!

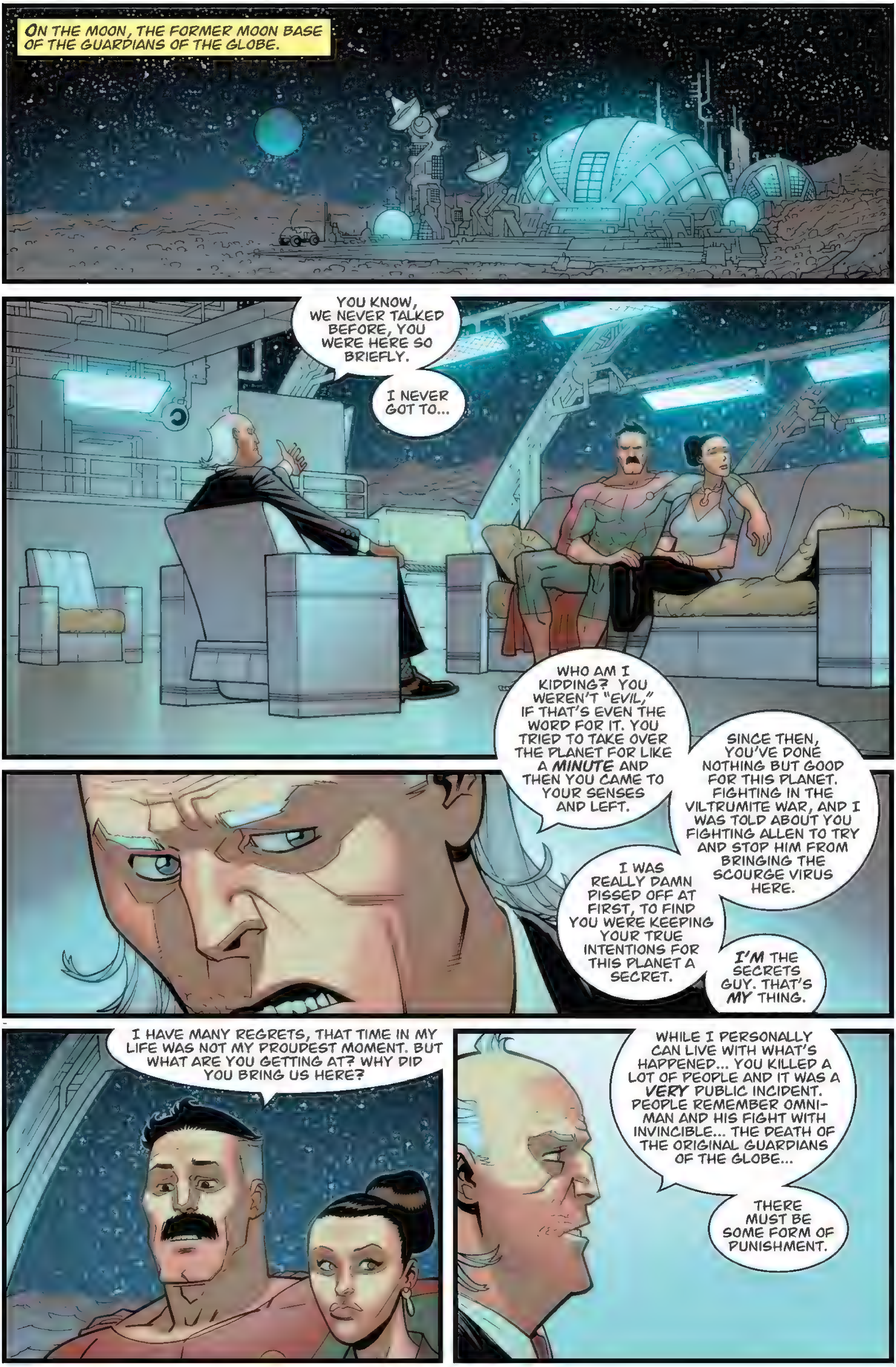
REX, COME ON--JUST STOP THIS.
THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT RIGHT NOW.
YOU THINK I'M UNAWARE OF THE SITUATION AROUND US? I'M FULLY AWARE--THAT'S WHY I'M SO ANGRY.
ALL THESE DEATHS ARE ON HIS HANDS--THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF HIM!
HE MADE A MISTAKE, OKAY?! YES--TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF IT! YES--PEOPLE DIED!
YOU DON'T THINK THAT'S GOING TO BE HARD FOR HIM TO LIVE WITH?! YOU THINK THAT WON'T HAUNT EVERY WAKING MOMENT OF HIS LIFE?!
IT WAS A MISTAKE. ONE I'M SURE HE'D TAKE BACK IF HE COULD! YOU'RE GOING TO TURN AGAINST HIM WHEN HE'S DOING ALL HE CAN TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT?!
JUST IGNORE THEM, EVE.
EVERYONE'S ON EDGE LATELY.

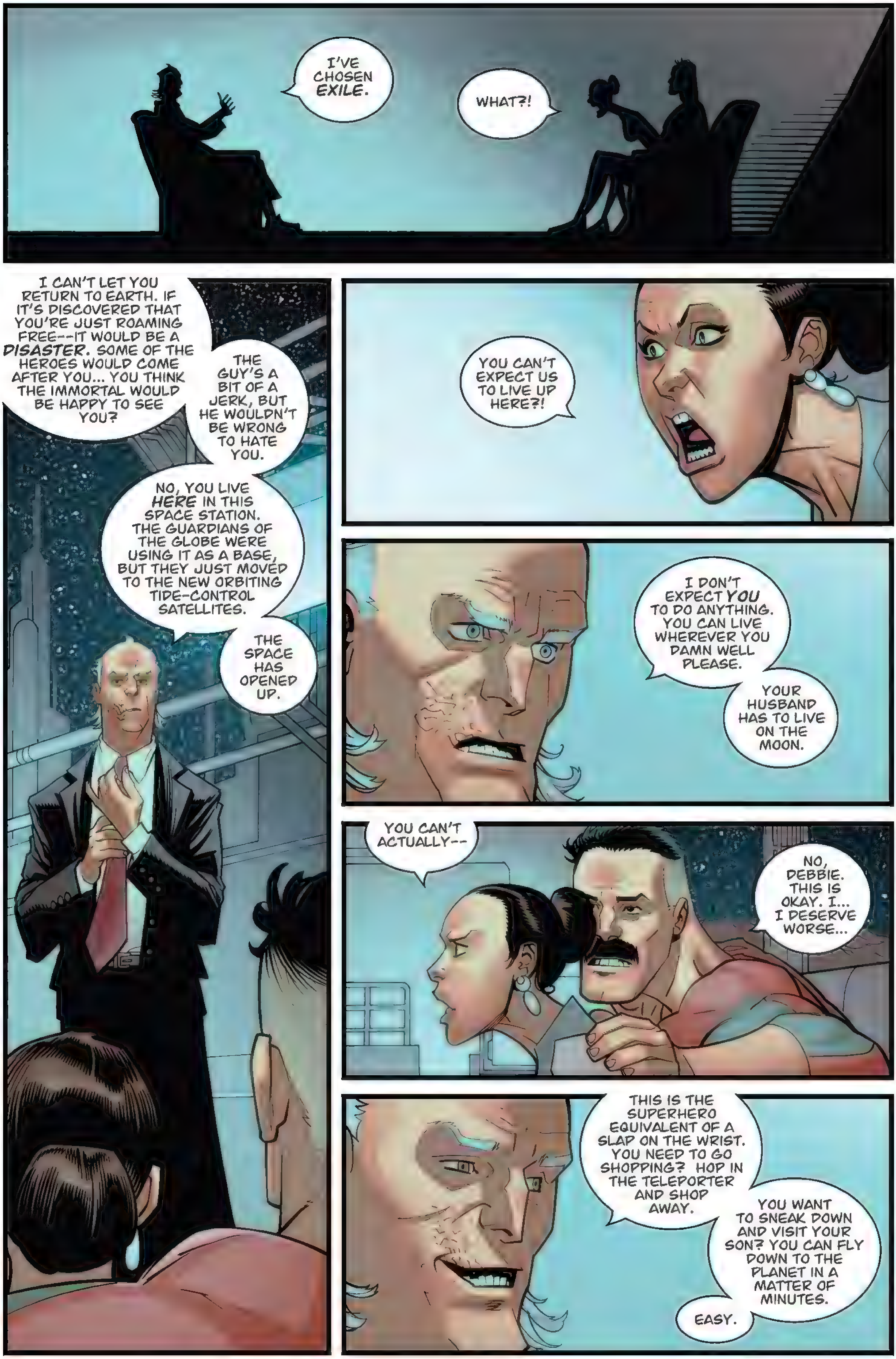

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET UNDERGROUND BASE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
SORRY ABOUT THAT. WITH EVERYTHING GOING ON I HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION TO THEM.
REX WILL CALM DOWN WHEN HE SEES THE BIGGER PICTURE. HE'S SMART.
HE CAN'T BE MORE DISGUSTED WITH ME THAN I AM WITH MYSELF.
STOP.
I HOPE YOU ENJOY DAMAGE CONTROL... MY FATHER IS BACK ON EARTH. I DON'T THINK REX WOULD TAKE TOO KINDLY TO KNOWING OMNI-MAN IS HERE AND FREE OF PUNISHMENT EITHER.
SO HEADS UP.
THAT'S JUST GREAT. WHEN IT RAINS IT POURS.
WANT TO TELL ME ANGSTROM LEVY IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD AGAIN, TOO?
NO, BUT... EVE'S PREGNANT. I DON'T KNOW WHO ELSE TO TELL... AND WITH YOUR RESOURCES...
I CAN HELP WITH THAT.
OH, IT'S UM... IN HERE.

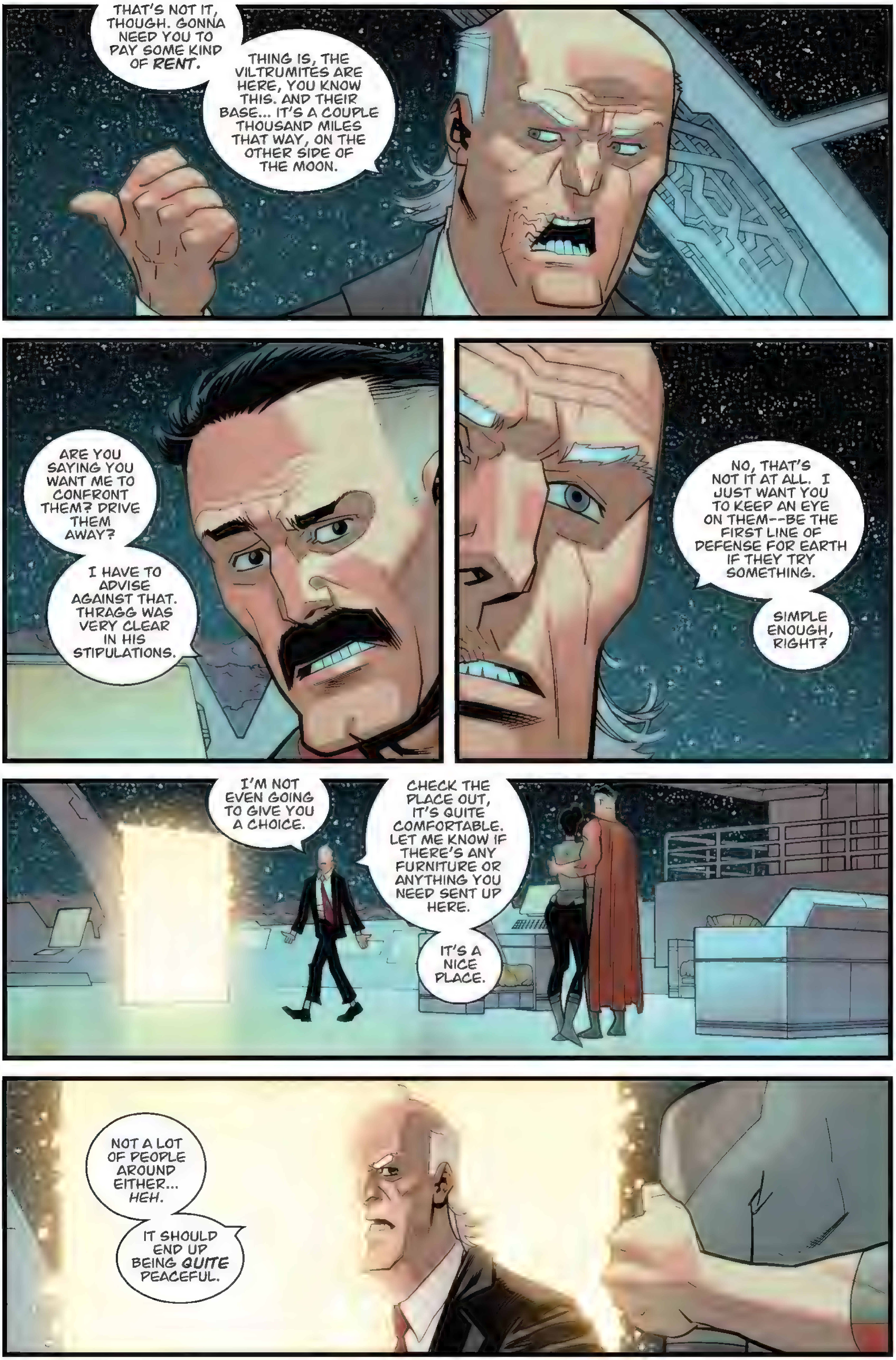

WHY EXACTLY DID YOU WANT TO SEE THIS?
I MARKED HIS SIXTH VERTEBRAE WITH MY THUMB.
I WANTED TO MAKE SURE HE'S DEAD... THAT YOU DIDN'T SOMEHOW REVIVE HIM, ALLOW HIM TO REVERT TO HUMAN FORM TO HEAL HIMSELF... TRY TO KEEP HIM IN SECRET, TO USE HIM LATER...
...LIKE YOU DID WITH CONQUEST.
I DIDN'T KNOW IF...
YOU... NEVER DID MENTION THAT.
DURING THE VILTRUMITE WAR... I KILLED HIM... AGAIN.
I NEVER BROUGHT IT UP... I WAS KEEPING THE VILTRUMITES ON EARTH FROM YOU... DIDN'T SEEM RIGHT... DIDN'T SEE THE POINT.
SO... YOU CAN HELP WITH EVE? AND MY DAD?
UH... YEAH. OF COURSE.

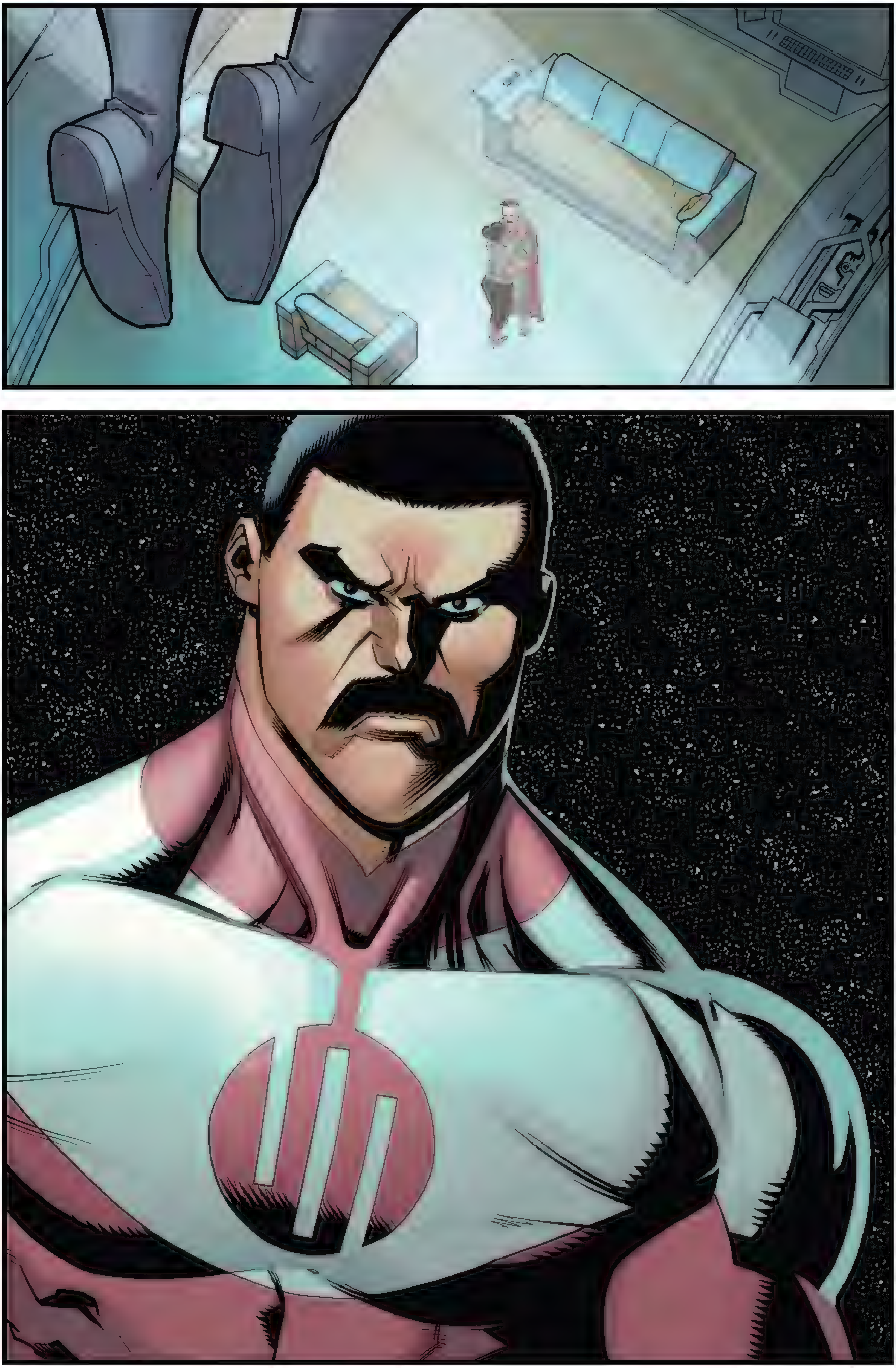

WHAT?!
I CAN COME BACK.
NO, IT'S FINE.
EVE, WE CAN'T TAKE THIS ON-- IT'S TOO IMPORTANT. THIS... IT'S OUR CHILD WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. AND WITH OUR POWERS WE JUST DON'T KNOW HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO WORK OUT AND...
...WE NEEDED HELP.
SO YOU WENT TO CECIL?! YOU COULDN'T HAVE GONE TO ROBOT?! ANYONE WHO WASN'T DIRECTLY TIED TO THE GOVERNMENT-- THE SAME GOVERNMENT, IF YOU'LL RECALL, THAT MADE ME IN THE FIRST PLACE--AND TRIED TO TURN ME INTO A WEAPON!*
THEY KILLED MY REAL PARENTS TO GET TO ME--IF THIS KID HAS A MIXTURE OF OUR POWERS COMBINED-- IT MAY BE TOO TEMPTING TO--
*SEE 'INVINCIBLE PRESENTS: ATOM EVE & REX SPLODE' FOR DETAILS.
THAT WASN'T CECIL--IT WAS A GUY WHO WORKED UNDER HIM, AND HE WAS DOING ALL THAT STUFF WITHOUT CECIL'S KNOWLEDGE. THAT GUY WAS TOTALLY EVIL... BUT YOUR POWERS WENT ALL WACKY WHEN THEY TRIED TO KILL YOU, AND YOU WERE ABLE TO ERASE HIS MEMORY.
ON TOP OF THAT, BRIT LATER KILLED THAT GUY... AND HIS MAD SCIENTIST FRIEND. I'M PRETTY SURE.
SO THAT'S NO LONGER A THREAT, RIGHT?
DAMN IT, MARK!
IF I CAN JUST JUMP IN. I DON'T WORK FOR ANY GOVERNMENT. I'M AN INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR WHO WORKS WITH SUPER-POWERED PARENTS. I WAS JUST RECOMMENDED BY CECIL.
YOU CAN CALL DUPLI-KATE AND IMMORTAL IF YOU'D LIKE. I DELIVERED THEIR TWINS AND HELPED KATE THROUGH HER PREGNANCY.
SEE-- COME ON... SHERRY'S NOT A BAD PERSON. WE CAN TRUST HER. WE NEED HER.
EVE?


WHAT ARE YOU--?
DON'T WORRY, I'M USING MY X-RAY VISION. IT'S LESS INVASIVE THAN AN ULTRASOUND AND I CAN SEE AND DETECT WAY MORE.
EVERYTHING LOOKS VERY GOOD. A PROMISING START, I'M HAPPY TO REPORT.
I KNOW FROM YOUR FILE--
WHAT FILE?
YOU'VE GOT A MEDICAL HISTORY FILE WITH THE GDA. IT'S VERY HELPFUL. ANYWAY, YOUR POWERS DRAW ON THE FOOD YOU EAT. YOUR BODY BREAKS DOWN MATTER AND PROCESSES IT ALONG WITH YOUR DIGESTION.
YOUR POWERS ACTUALLY BURN A LOT OF CALORIES.
YEAH... AND I COULD PROBABLY STAND TO USE THEM A LOT MORE THESE DAYS.
ACTUALLY, **NO.** YOUR POWERS COULD EITHER FILL YOUR BODY WITH TOXINS THAT WOULD AFFECT THE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD... OR ROB IT OF ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE PASSED TO THE BABY.
YOU NEED TO STOP USING YOUR POWERS *IMMEDIATELY.*


ON THE MOON, THE FORMER MOON BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
YOU KNOW, WE NEVER TALKED BEFORE, YOU WERE HERE SO BRIEFLY.
I NEVER GOT TO...
WHO AM I KIDDING? YOU WEREN'T "EVIL," IF THAT'S EVEN THE WORD FOR IT. YOU TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE PLANET FOR LIKE A *MINUTE* AND THEN YOU CAME TO YOUR SENSES AND LEFT.
SINCE THEN, YOU'VE DONE NOTHING BUT GOOD FOR THIS PLANET. FIGHTING IN THE VILTRUMITE WAR, AND I WAS TOLD ABOUT YOU FIGHTING ALLEN TO TRY AND STOP HIM FROM BRINGING THE SCOURGE VIRUS HERE.
I WAS REALLY DAMN PISSED OFF AT FIRST, TO FIND YOU WERE KEEPING YOUR TRUE INTENTIONS FOR THIS PLANET A SECRET.
I'M THE SECRETS GUY. THAT'S *MY* THING.
I HAVE MANY REGRETS, THAT TIME IN MY LIFE WAS NOT MY PROUDEST MOMENT. BUT WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT? WHY DID YOU BRING US HERE?
WHILE I PERSONALLY CAN LIVE WITH WHAT'S HAPPENED... YOU KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE AND IT WAS A *VERY* PUBLIC INCIDENT. PEOPLE REMEMBER OMNI-MAN AND HIS FIGHT WITH INVINCIBLE... THE DEATH OF THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE...
THERE MUST BE SOME FORM OF PUNISHMENT.

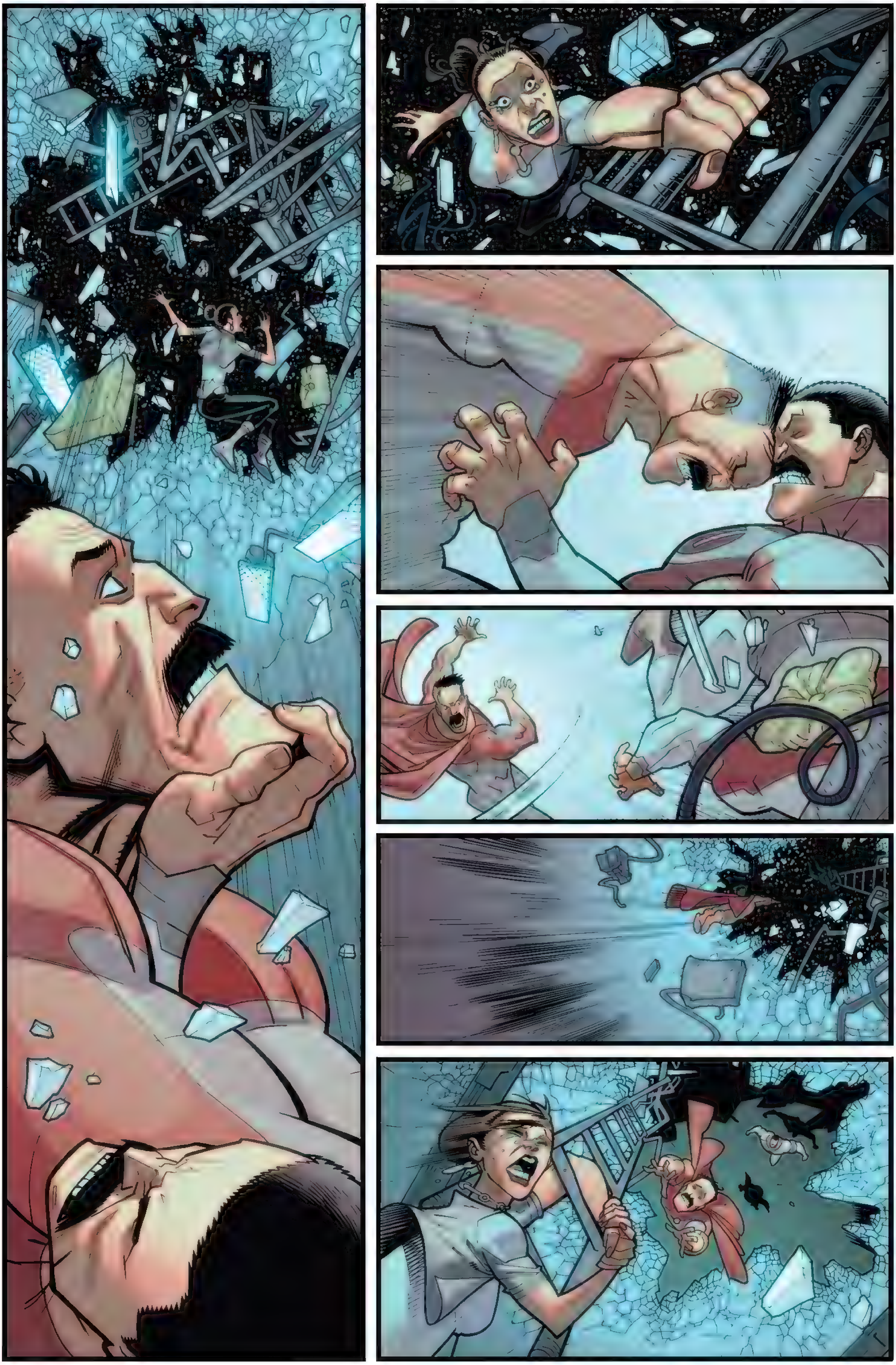

I'VE CHOSEN *EXILE*.
WHAT?!
I CAN'T LET YOU RETURN TO EARTH. IF IT'S DISCOVERED THAT YOU'RE JUST ROAMING FREE--IT WOULD BE A *DISASTER*. SOME OF THE HEROES WOULD COME AFTER YOU... YOU THINK THE IMMORTAL WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU?
THE GUY'S A BIT OF A JERK, BUT HE WOULDN'T BE WRONG TO HATE YOU.
NO, YOU LIVE *HERE* IN THIS SPACE STATION. THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE USING IT AS A BASE, BUT THEY JUST MOVED TO THE NEW ORBITING TIDE-CONTROL SATELLITES.
THE SPACE HAS OPENED UP.
YOU CAN'T EXPECT US TO LIVE UP HERE?!
I DON'T EXPECT *YOU* TO DO ANYTHING. YOU CAN LIVE WHEREVER YOU DAMN WELL PLEASE.
YOUR HUSBAND HAS TO LIVE ON THE MOON.
YOU CAN'T ACTUALLY--
NO, DEBBIE. THIS IS OKAY. I... I DESERVE WORSE...
THIS IS THE SUPERHERO EQUIVALENT OF A SLAP ON THE WRIST. YOU NEED TO GO SHOPPING? HOP IN THE TELEPORTER AND SHOP AWAY.
YOU WANT TO SNEAK DOWN AND VISIT YOUR SON? YOU CAN FLY DOWN TO THE PLANET IN A MATTER OF MINUTES.
EASY.

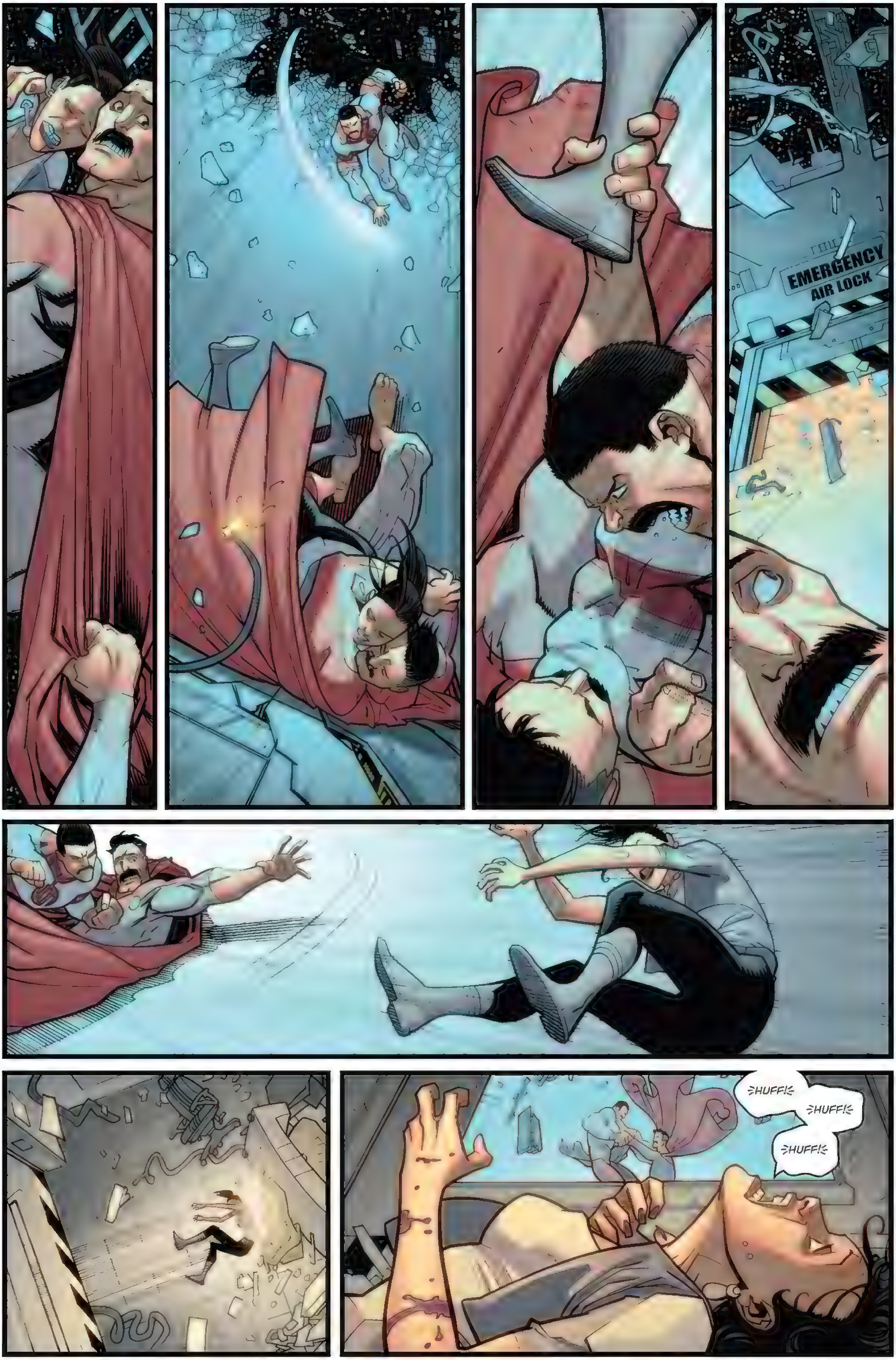

THAT'S NOT IT, THOUGH. GONNA NEED YOU TO PAY SOME KIND OF *RENT*.
THING IS, THE VILTRUMITES ARE HERE, YOU KNOW THIS. AND THEIR BASE... IT'S A COUPLE THOUSAND MILES THAT WAY, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON.
ARE YOU SAYING YOU WANT ME TO CONFRONT THEM? DRIVE THEM AWAY?
I HAVE TO ADVISE AGAINST THAT. THRAGG WAS VERY CLEAR IN HIS STIPULATIONS.
NO, THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. I JUST WANT YOU TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEM--BE THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE FOR EARTH IF THEY TRY SOMETHING.
SIMPLE ENOUGH, RIGHT?
I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO GIVE YOU A CHOICE.
CHECK THE PLACE OUT, IT'S QUITE COMFORTABLE. LET ME KNOW IF THERE'S ANY FURNITURE OR ANYTHING YOU NEED SENT UP HERE.
IT'S A NICE PLACE.
NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE AROUND EITHER... HEH.
IT SHOULD END UP BEING *QUITE* PEACEFUL.

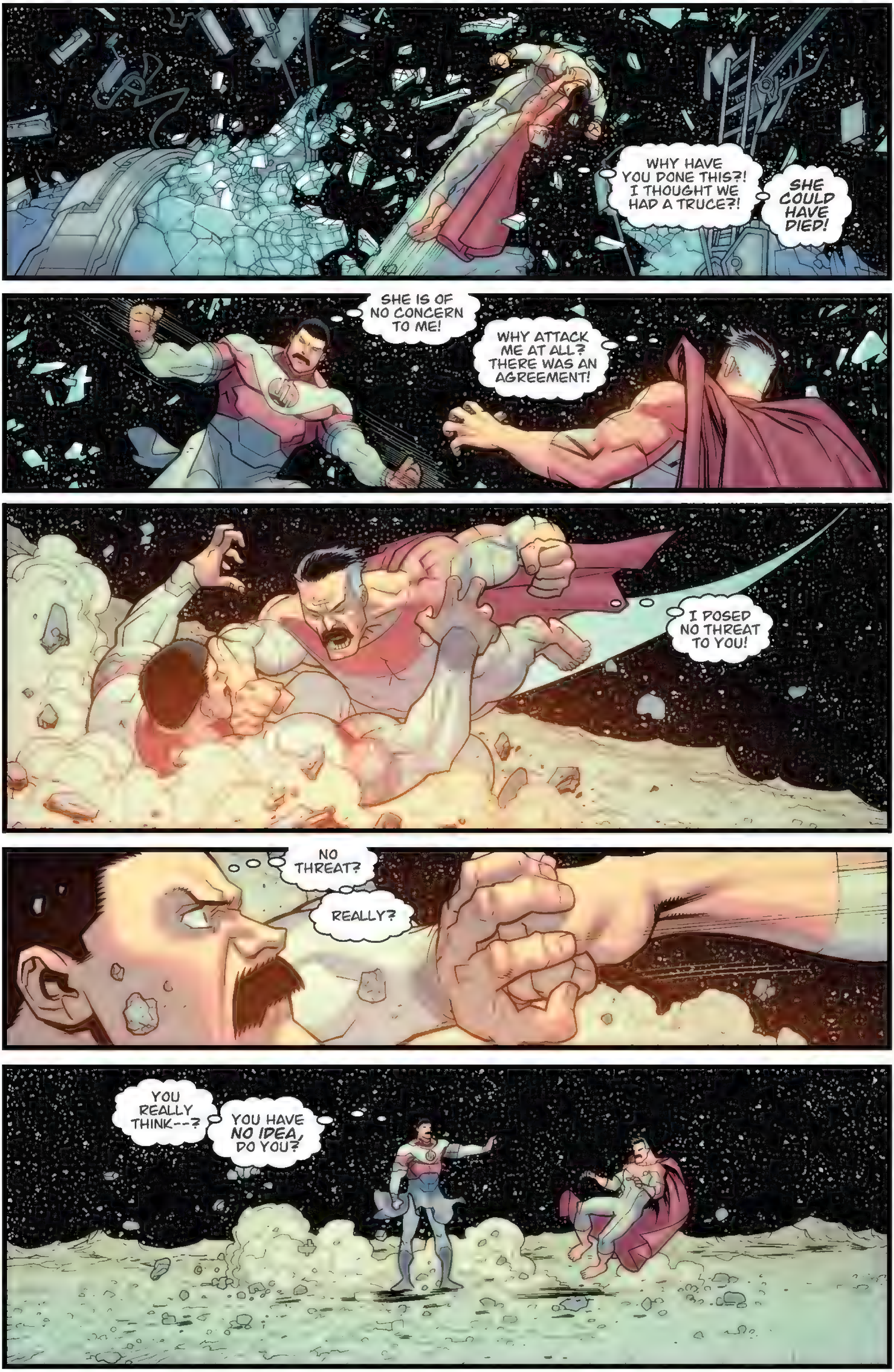


CHAPTER 102

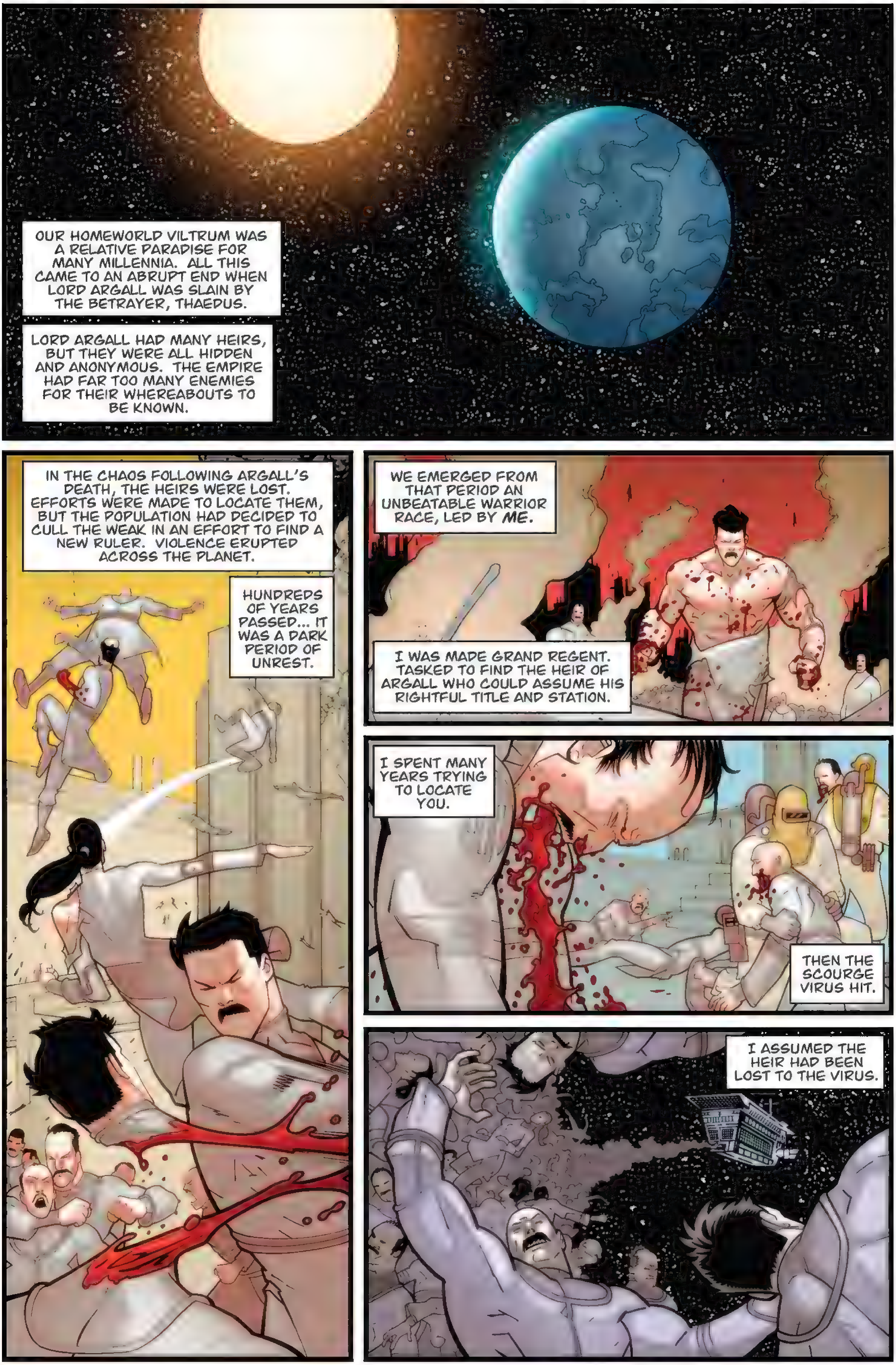
SO, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALL ALONE...
OH, WHATEVER WILL WE DO TO PASS THE TIME?
SKRAAASH!
BOOM!!

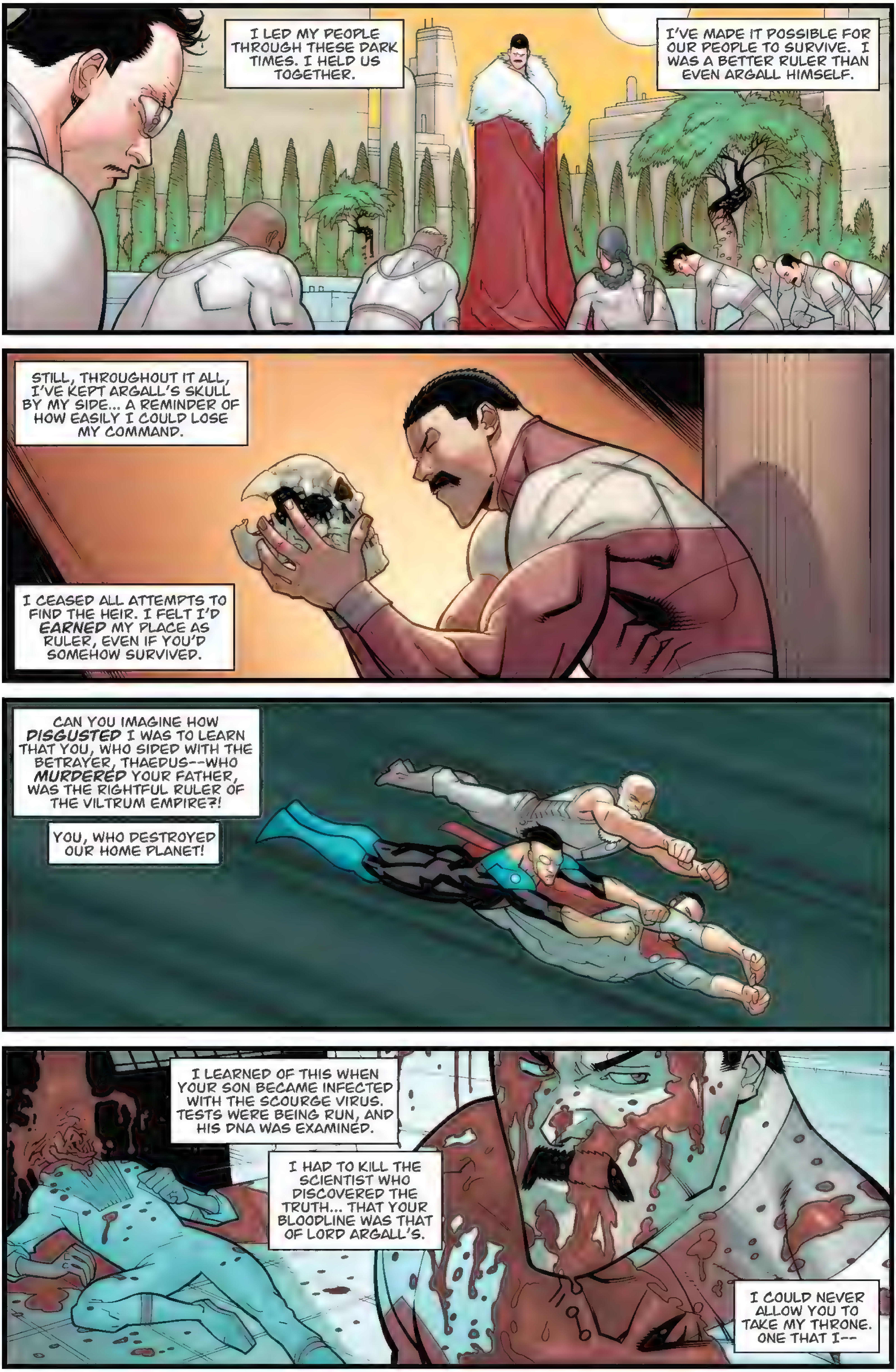


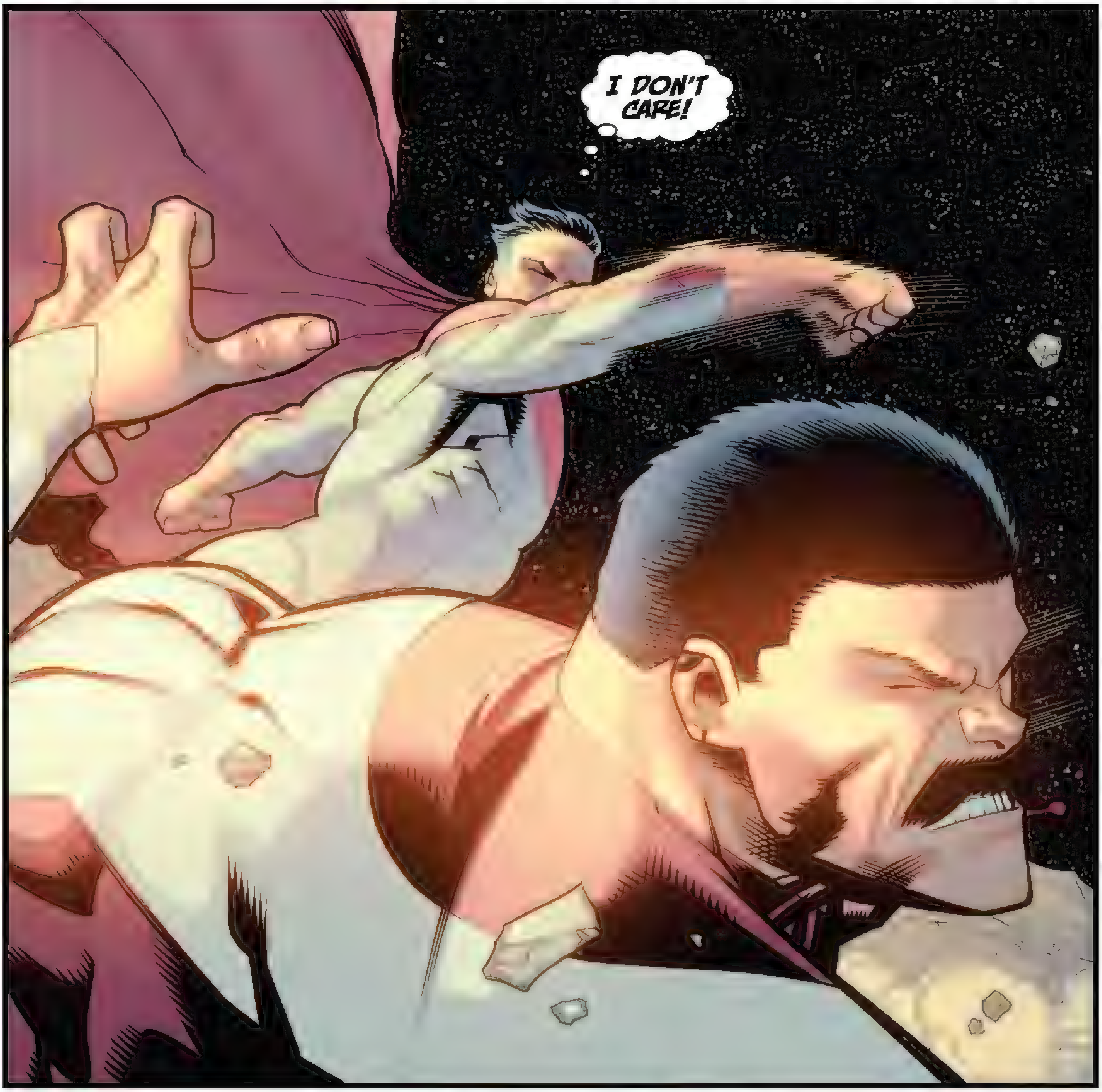

EMERGENCY
AIR LOCK
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!

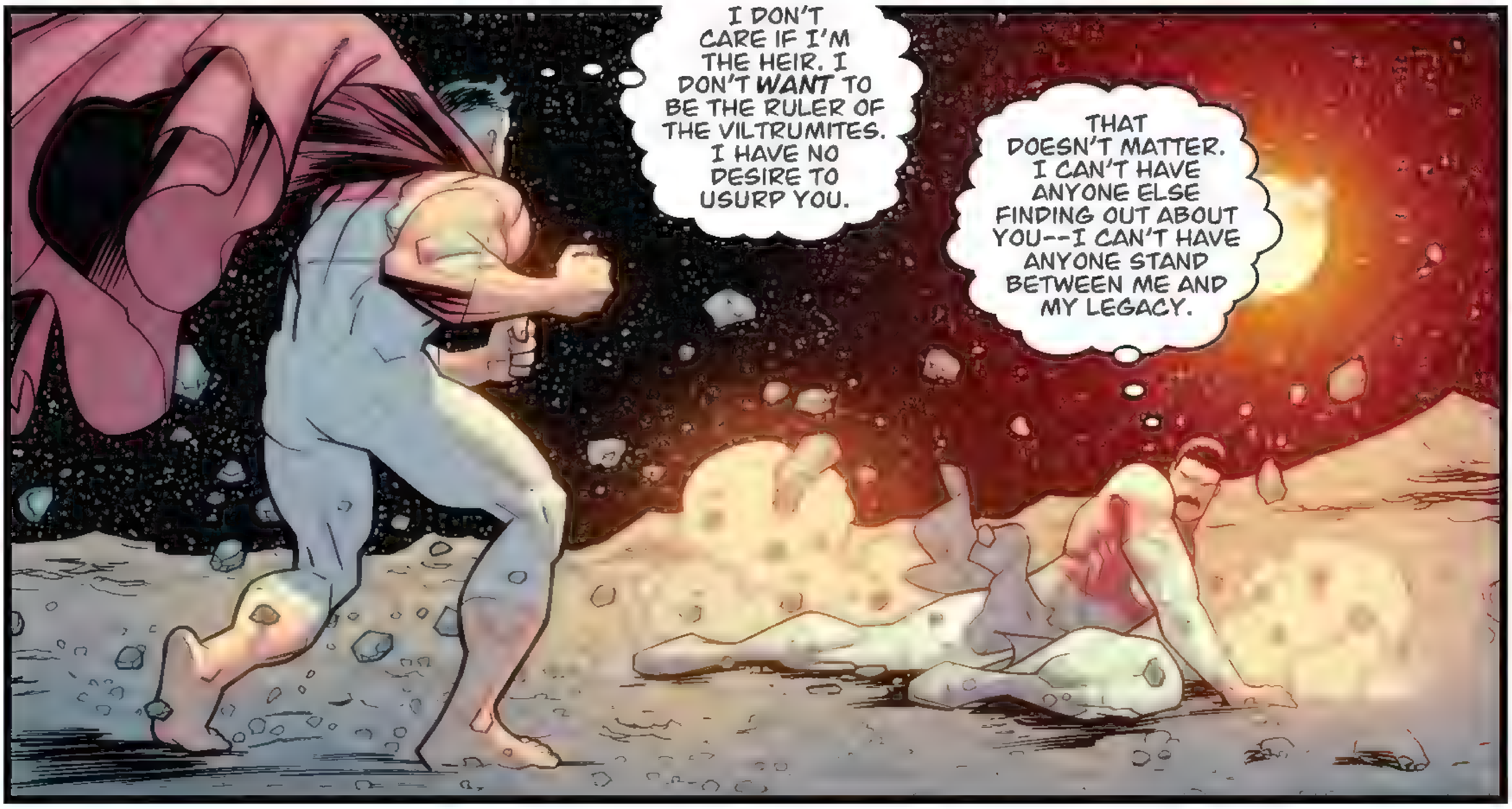

WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS?! I THOUGHT WE HAD A TRUCE?!
SHE COULD HAVE DIED!
SHE IS OF NO CONCERN TO ME!
WHY ATTACK ME AT ALL? THERE WAS AN AGREEMENT!
I POSED NO THREAT TO YOU!
NO THREAT?
REALLY?
YOU REALLY THINK--?
YOU HAVE *NO IDEA,* DO YOU?

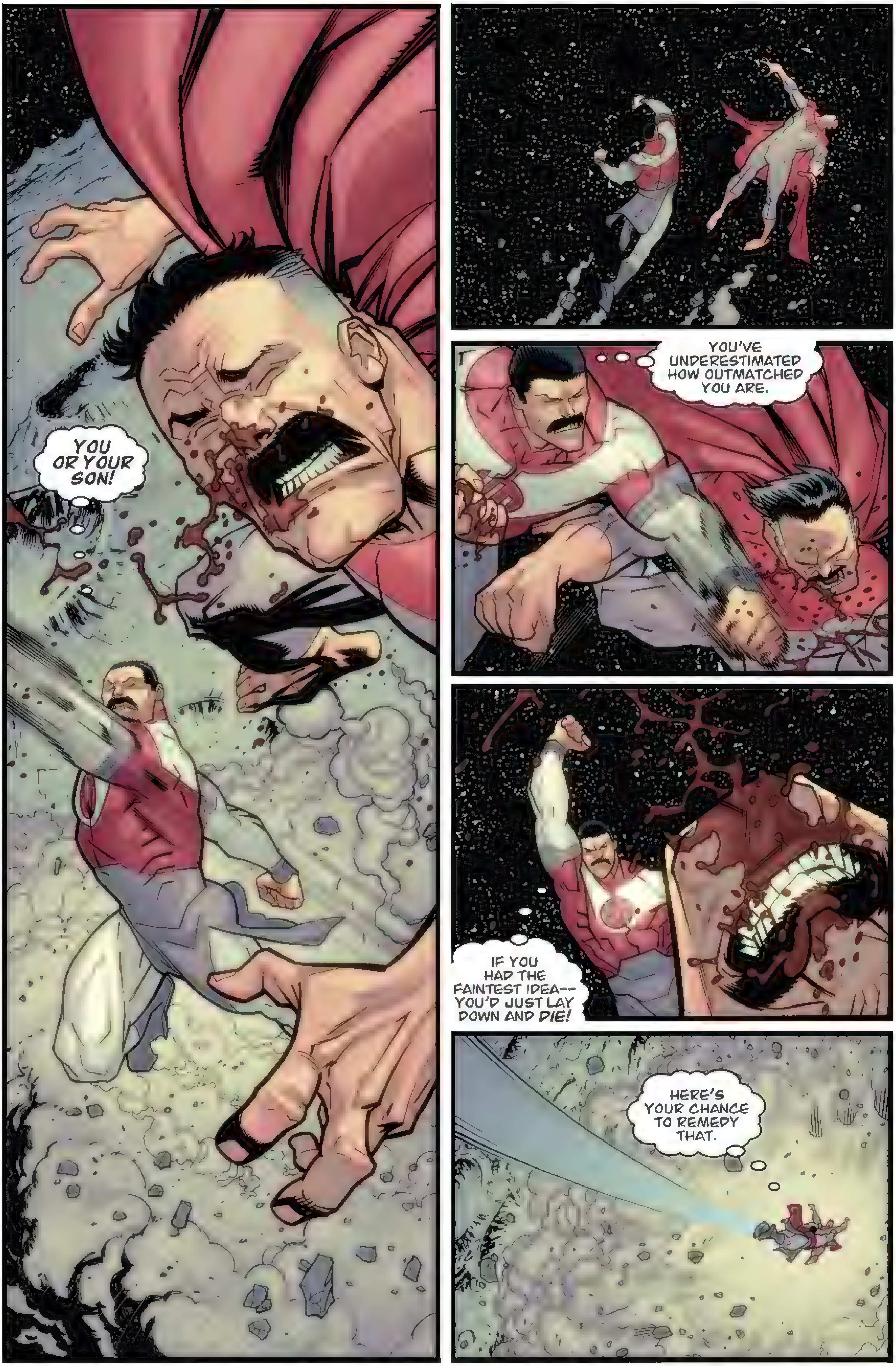
BEFORE YOU DIE... YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW THE TRUTH.
LET ME TELL YOU WHERE YOU *REALLY* COME FROM.

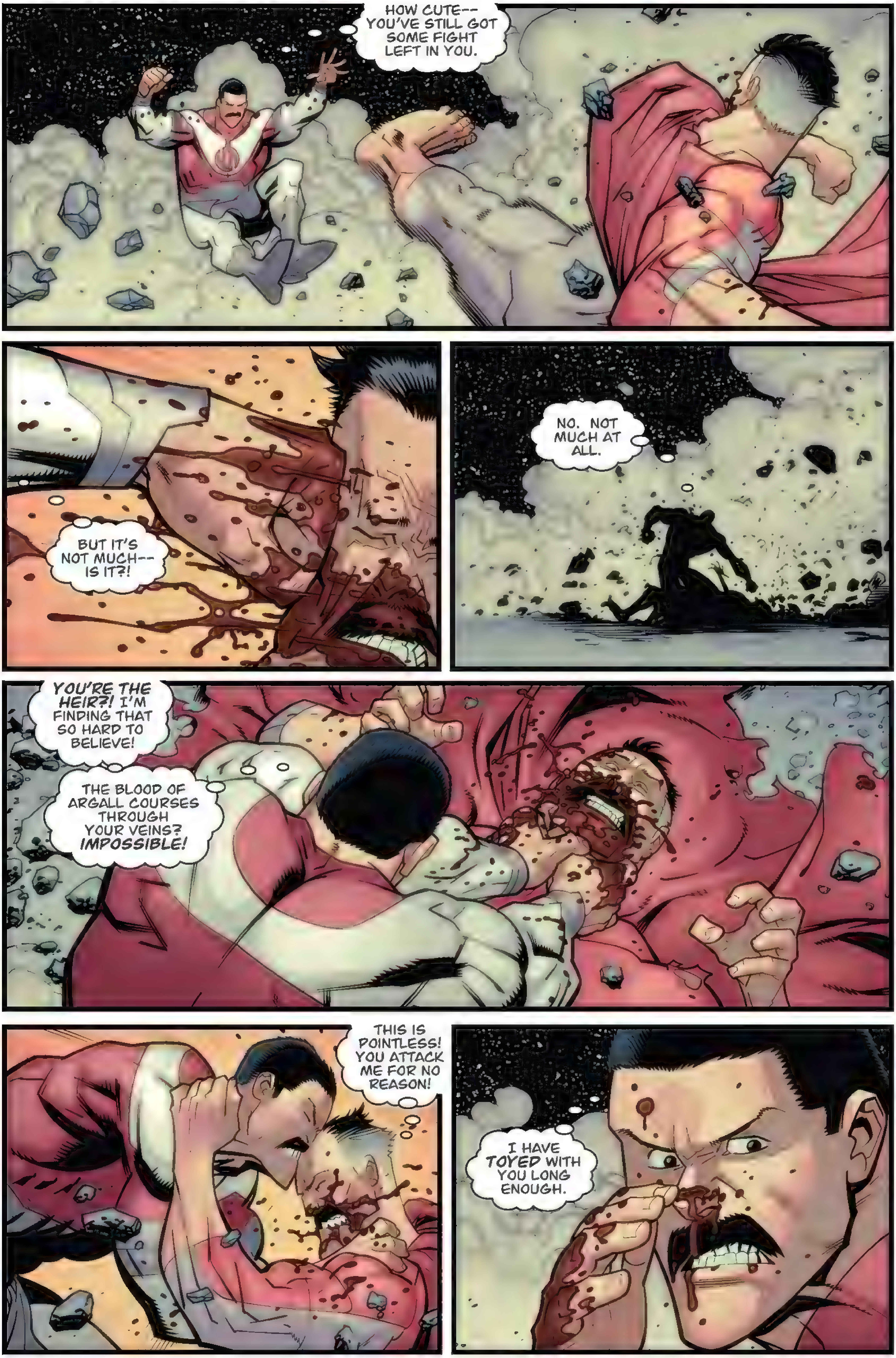

OUR HOMEWORLD VILTRUM WAS A RELATIVE PARADISE FOR MANY MILLENNIA. ALL THIS CAME TO AN ABRUPT END WHEN LORD ARGALL WAS SLAIN BY THE BETRAYER, THAEDUS.
LORD ARGALL HAD MANY HEIRS, BUT THEY WERE ALL HIDDEN AND ANONYMOUS. THE EMPIRE HAD FAR TOO MANY ENEMIES FOR THEIR WHEREABOUTS TO BE KNOWN.
IN THE CHAOS FOLLOWING ARGALL'S DEATH, THE HEIRS WERE LOST. EFFORTS WERE MADE TO LOCATE THEM, BUT THE POPULATION HAD DECIDED TO CULL THE WEAK IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A NEW RULER. VIOLENCE ERUPTED ACROSS THE PLANET.
HUNDREDS OF YEARS PASSED... IT WAS A DARK PERIOD OF UNREST.
WE EMERGED FROM THAT PERIOD AN UNBEATABLE WARRIOR RACE, LED BY *ME*.
I WAS MADE GRAND REGENT. TASKED TO FIND THE HEIR OF ARGALL WHO COULD ASSUME HIS RIGHTFUL TITLE AND STATION.
I SPENT MANY YEARS TRYING TO LOCATE YOU.
THEN THE SCOURGE VIRUS HIT.
I ASSUMED THE HEIR HAD BEEN LOST TO THE VIRUS.

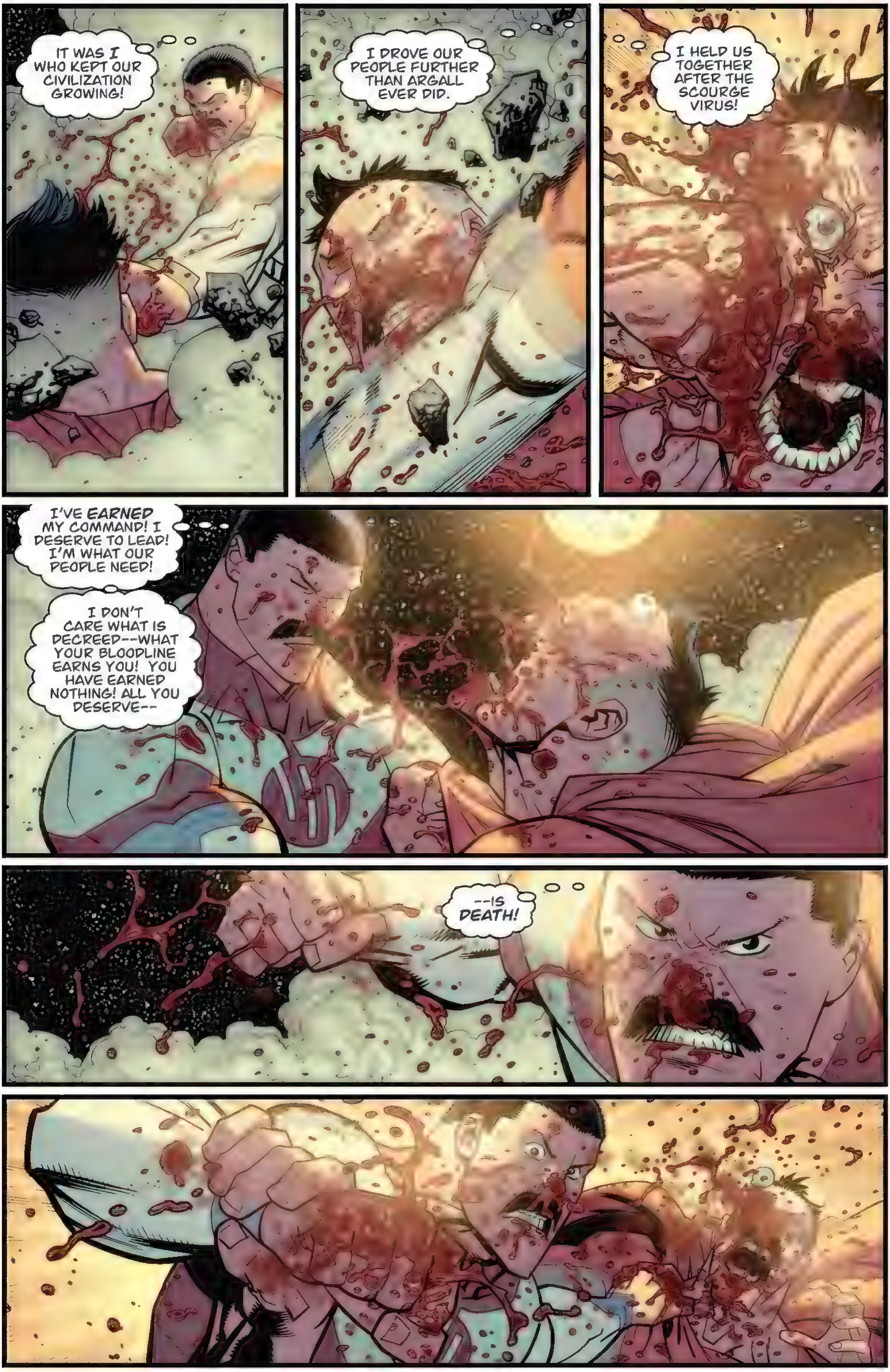

I LED MY PEOPLE THROUGH THESE DARK TIMES. I HELD US TOGETHER.
I'VE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR PEOPLE TO SURVIVE. I WAS A BETTER RULER THAN EVEN ARGALL HIMSELF.
STILL, THROUGHOUT IT ALL, I'VE KEPT ARGALL'S SKULL BY MY SIDE... A REMINDER OF HOW EASILY I COULD LOSE MY COMMAND.
I CEASED ALL ATTEMPTS TO FIND THE HEIR. I FELT I'D *EARNED* MY PLACE AS RULER, EVEN IF YOU'D SOMEHOW SURVIVED.
CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW *DISGUSTED* I WAS TO LEARN THAT YOU, WHO SIDED WITH THE BETRAYER, THAEDUS--WHO *MURDERED* YOUR FATHER, WAS THE RIGHTFUL RULER OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE?!
YOU, WHO DESTROYED OUR HOME PLANET!
I LEARNED OF THIS WHEN YOUR SON BECAME INFECTED WITH THE SCOURGE VIRUS. TESTS WERE BEING RUN, AND HIS DNA WAS EXAMINED.
I HAD TO KILL THE SCIENTIST WHO DISCOVERED THE TRUTH... THAT YOUR BLOODLINE WAS THAT OF LORD ARGALL'S.
I COULD NEVER ALLOW YOU TO TAKE MY THRONE. ONE THAT I--

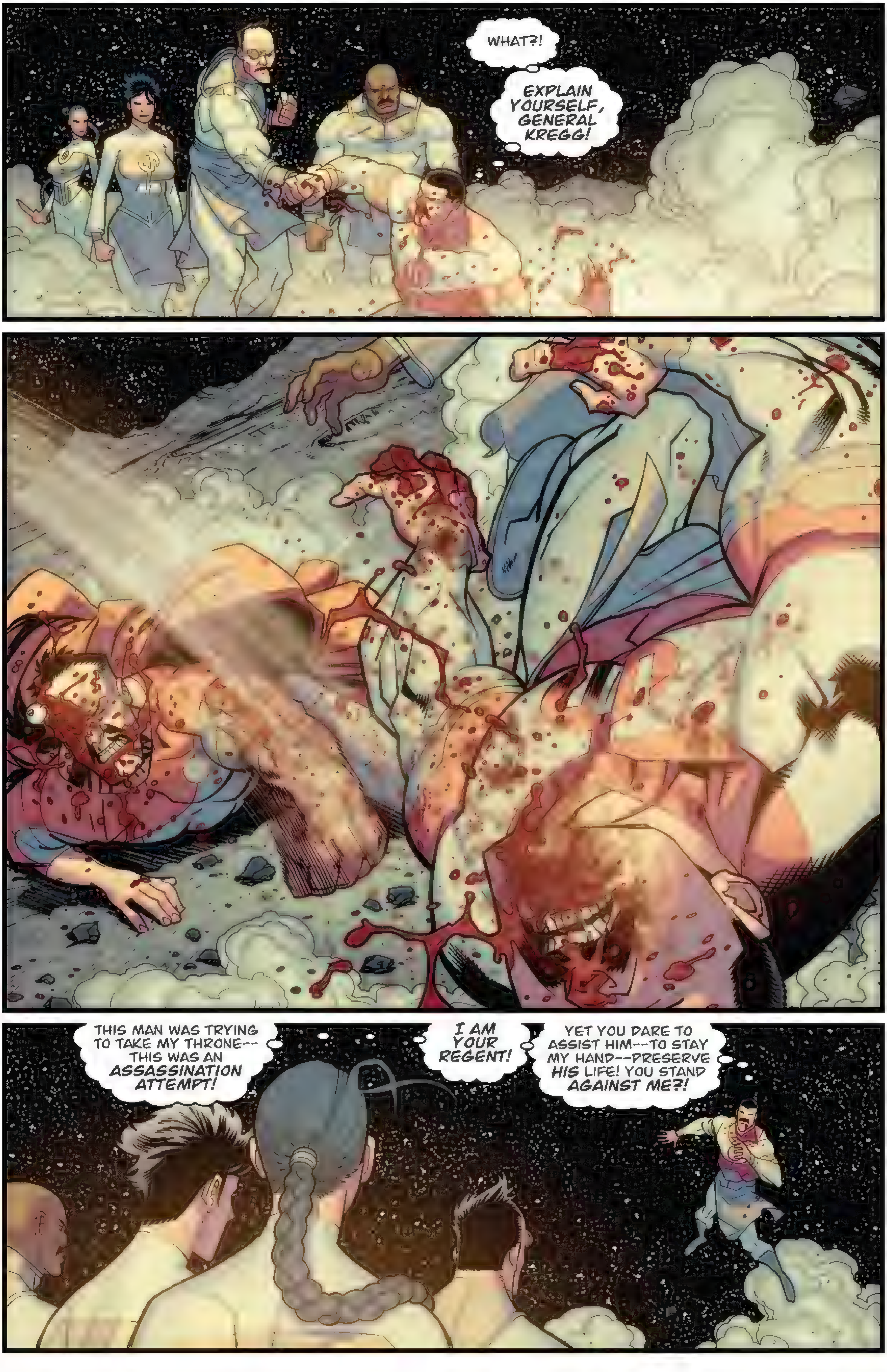

I DON'T CARE!

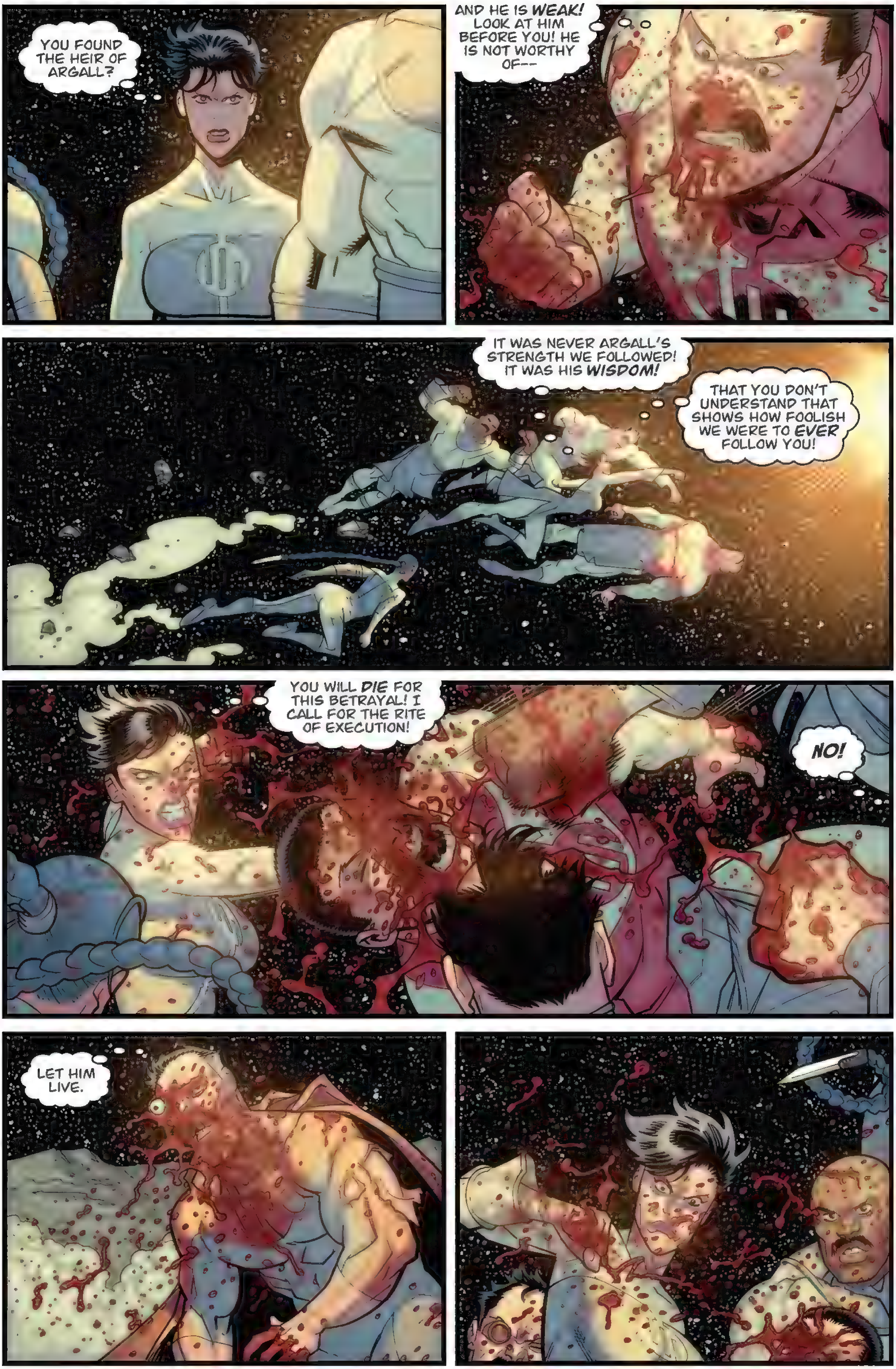

I DON'T CARE IF I'M THE HEIR. I DON'T *WANT* TO BE THE RULER OF THE VILTRUMITES. I HAVE NO DESIRE TO USURP YOU.
THAT DOESN'T MATTER. I CAN'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE FINDING OUT ABOUT YOU--I CAN'T HAVE ANYONE STAND BETWEEN ME AND MY LEGACY.

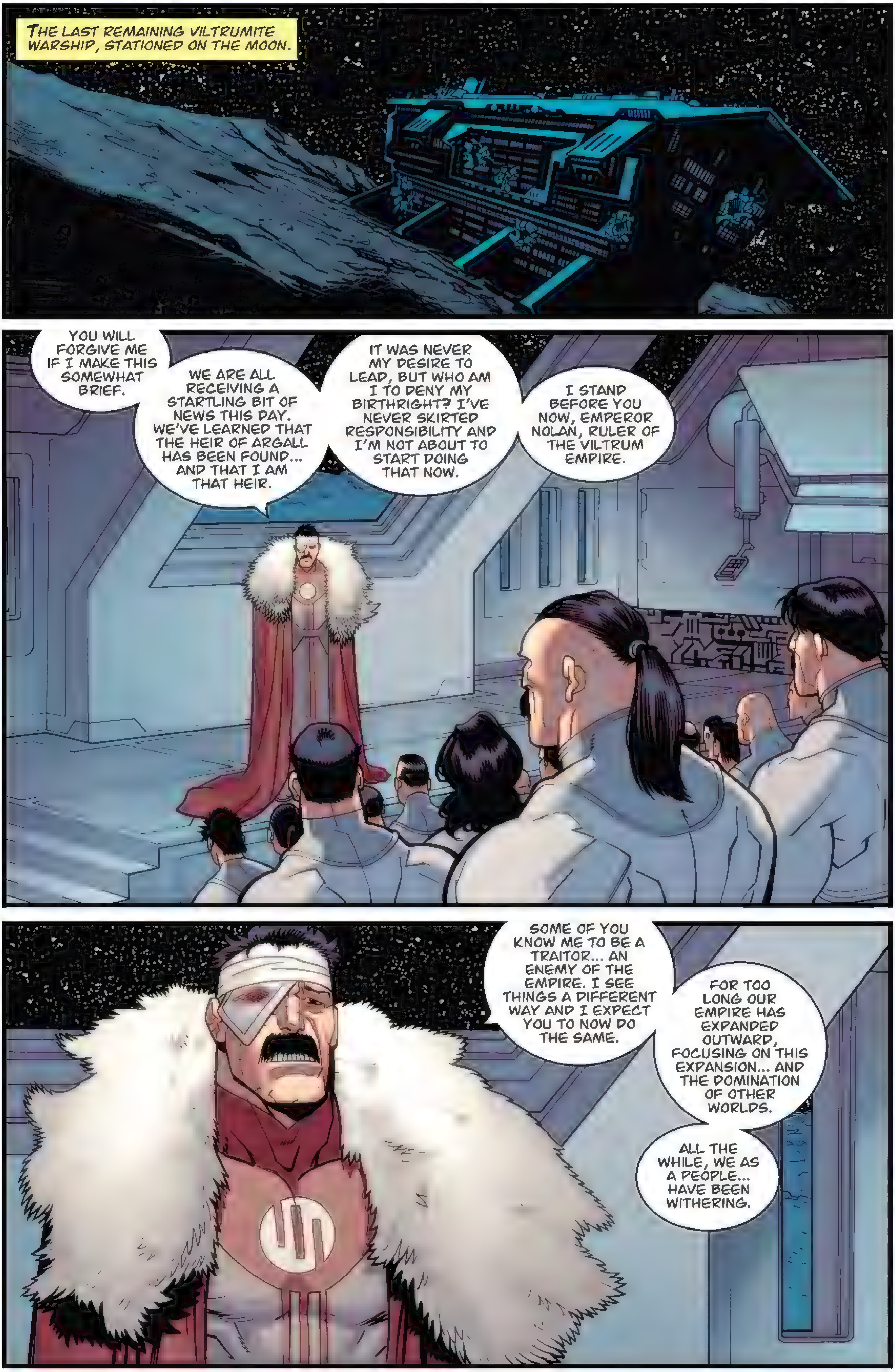

YOU OR YOUR SON!
YOU'VE UNDERESTIMATED HOW OUTMATCHED YOU ARE.
IF YOU HAD THE FAINTEST IDEA-- YOU'D JUST LAY DOWN AND *DIE!*
HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO REMEDY THAT.

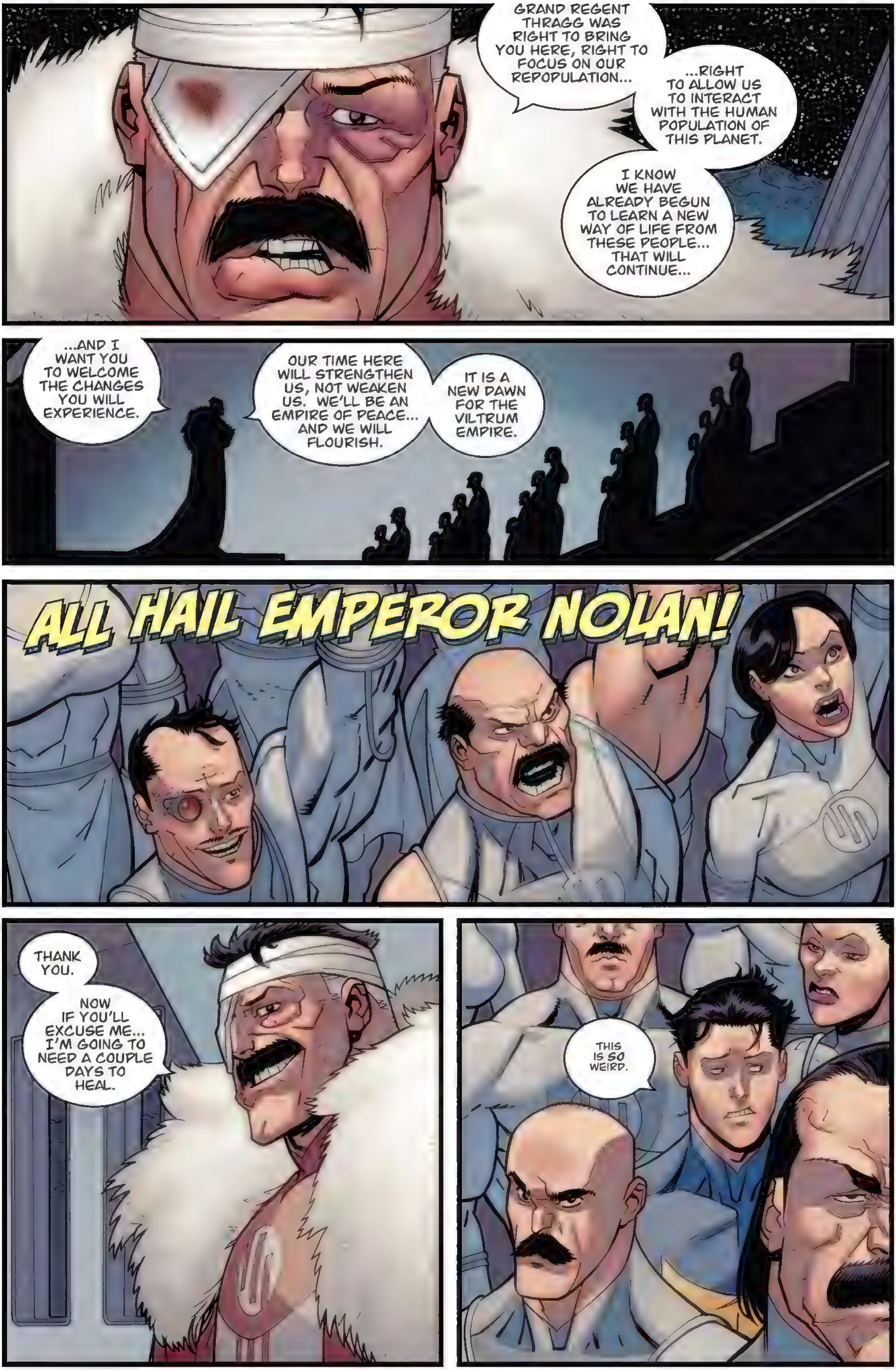

HOW CUTE-- YOU'VE STILL GOT SOME FIGHT LEFT IN YOU.
BUT IT'S NOT MUCH-- IS IT?!
NO. NOT MUCH AT ALL.
YOU'RE THE HEIR?! I'M FINDING THAT SO HARD TO BELIEVE!
THE BLOOD OF ARGALL COURSES THROUGH YOUR VEINS? ***IMPOSSIBLE!***
THIS IS POINTLESS! YOU ATTACK ME FOR NO REASON!
I HAVE ***TOYED*** WITH YOU LONG ENOUGH.

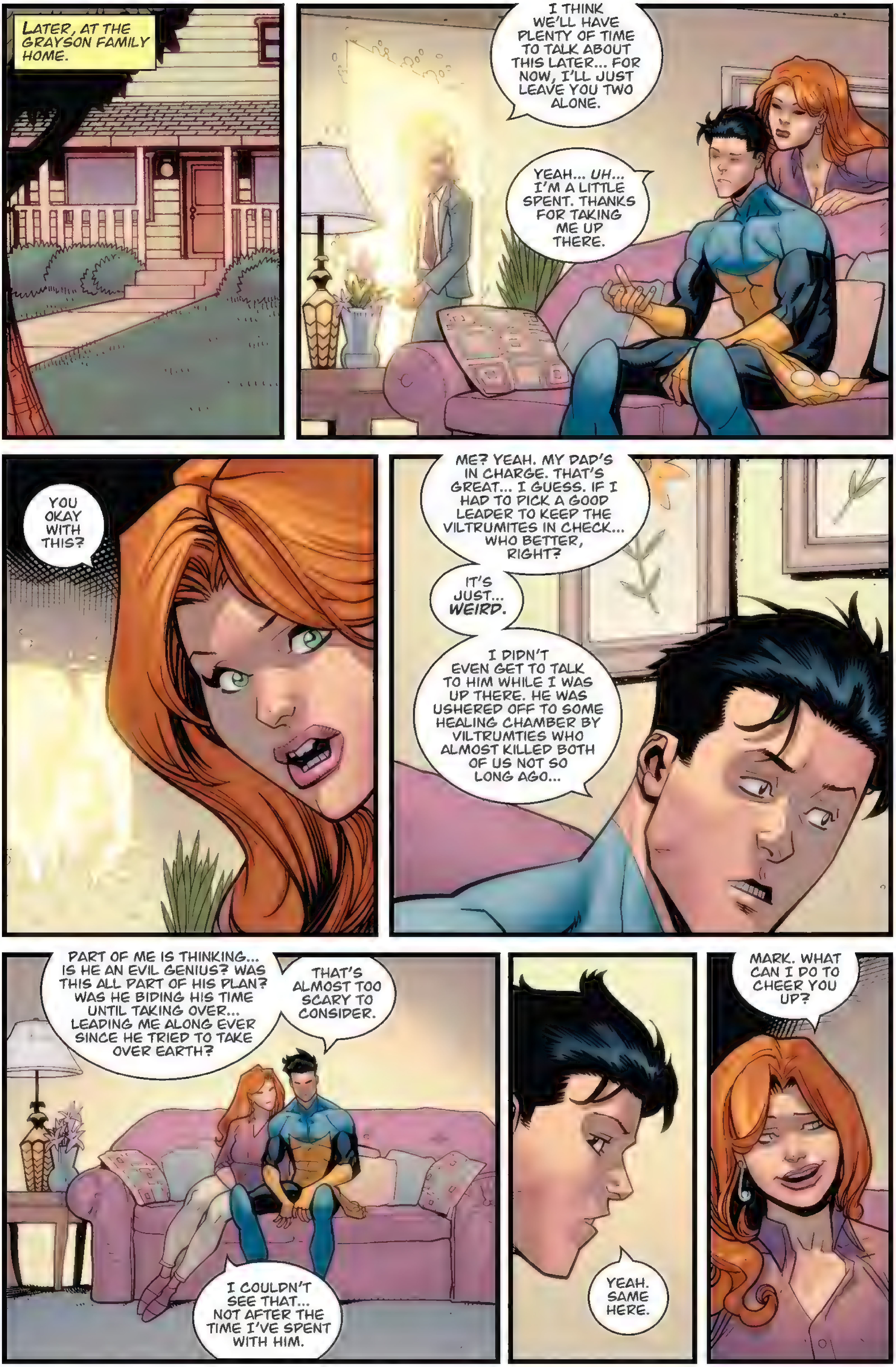

IT WAS I WHO KEPT OUR CIVILIZATION GROWING!
I DROVE OUR PEOPLE FURTHER THAN ARGALL EVER DID.
I HELD US TOGETHER AFTER THE SCOURGE VIRUS!
I'VE *EARNED* MY COMMAND! I DESERVE TO LEAD! I'M WHAT OUR PEOPLE NEED!
I DON'T CARE WHAT IS DECREED--WHAT YOUR BLOODLINE EARNS YOU! YOU HAVE EARNED NOTHING! ALL YOU DESERVE--
--IS *DEATH!*

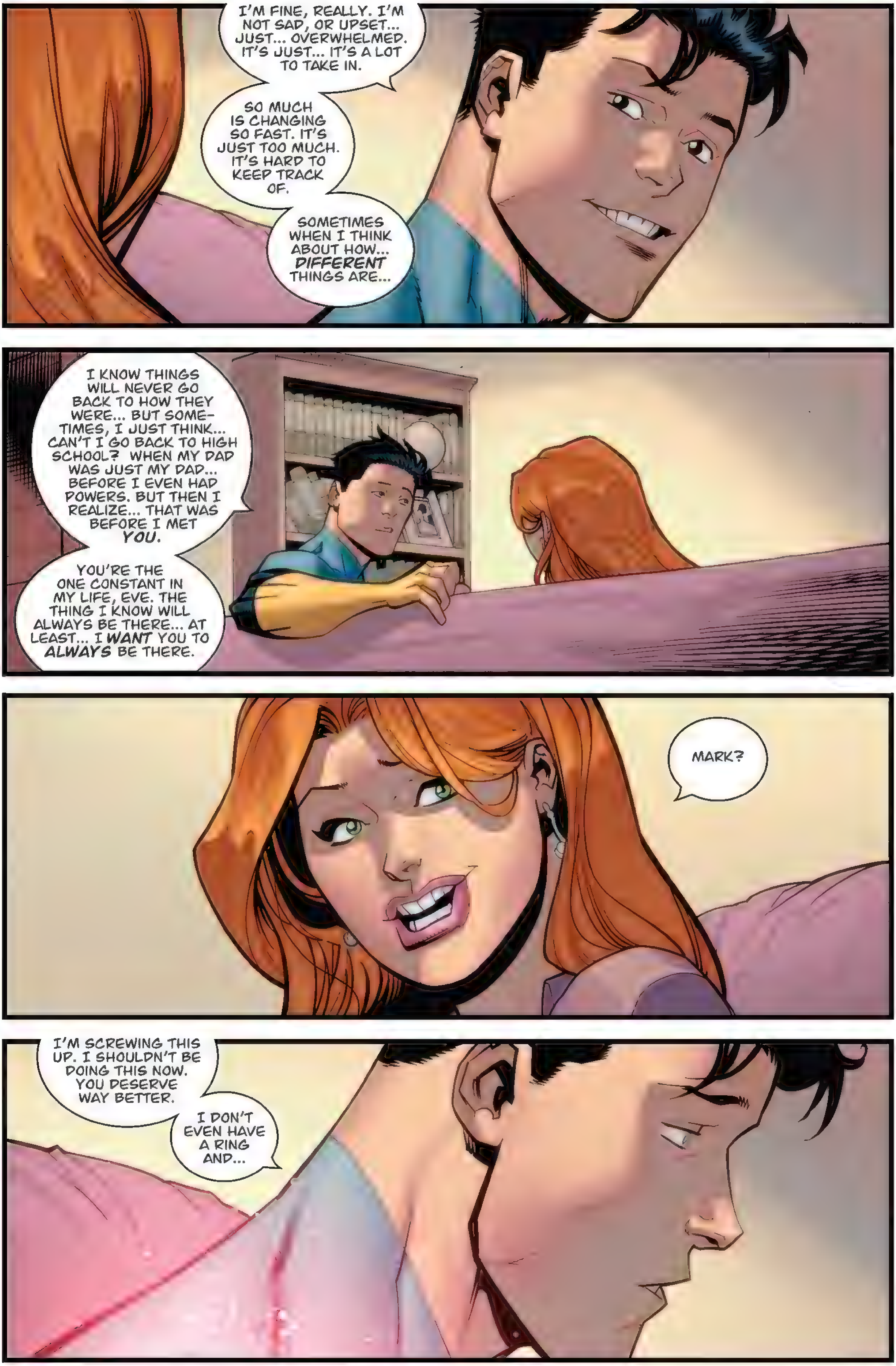

WHAT?!
EXPLAIN YOURSELF, GENERAL KREGG!
THIS MAN WAS TRYING TO TAKE MY THRONE-- THIS WAS AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT!
I AM YOUR REGENT!
YET YOU DARE TO ASSIST HIM--TO STAY MY HAND--PRESERVE HIS LIFE! YOU STAND AGAINST ME?!

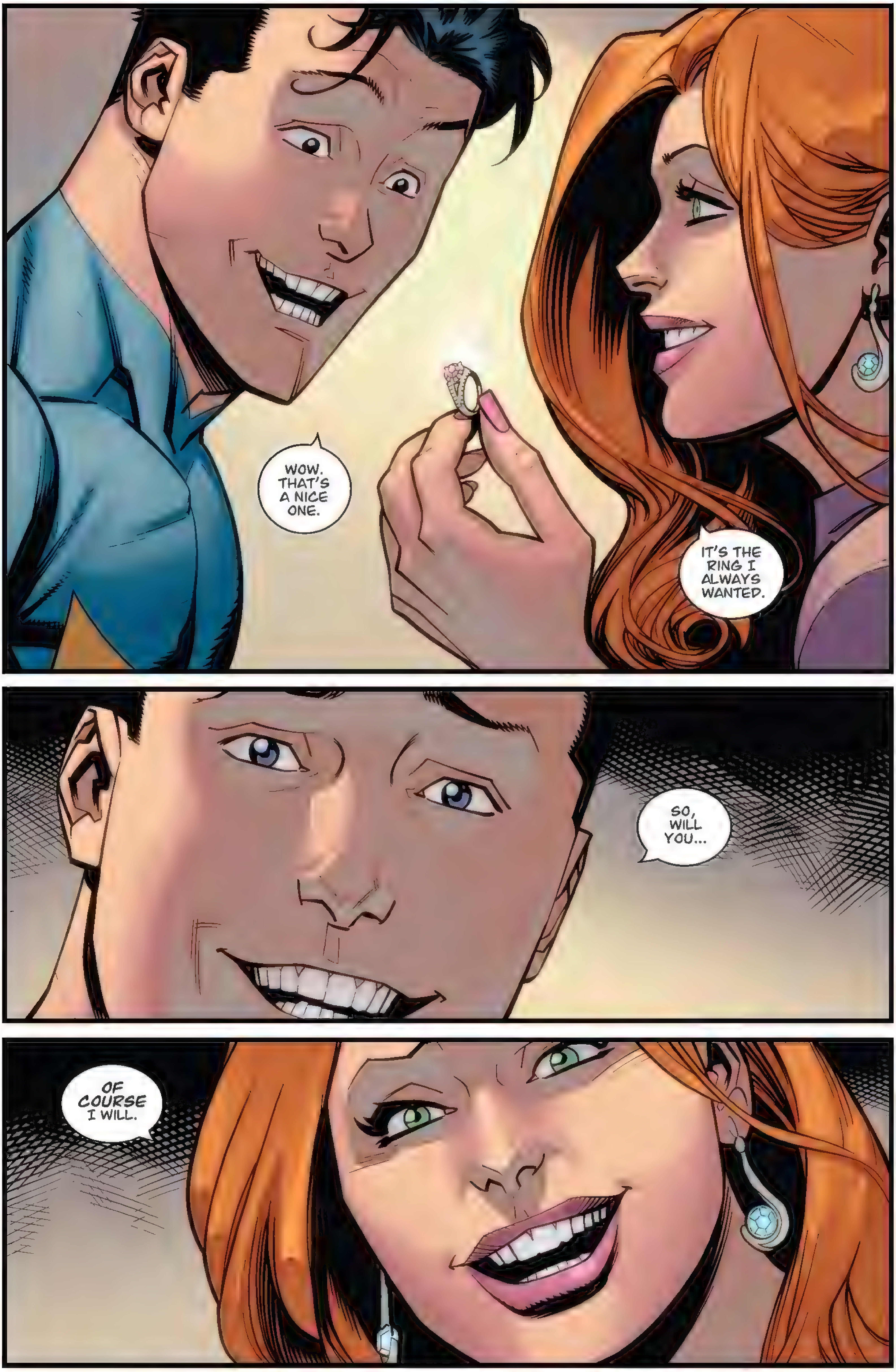

YOU FOUND THE HEIR OF ARGALL?
AND HE IS WEAK! LOOK AT HIM BEFORE YOU! HE IS NOT WORTHY OF--
IT WAS NEVER ARGALL'S STRENGTH WE FOLLOWED! IT WAS HIS WISDOM!
THAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT SHOWS HOW FOOLISH WE WERE TO EVER FOLLOW YOU!
YOU WILL DIE FOR THIS BETRAYAL! I CALL FOR THE RITE OF EXECUTION!
NO!
LET HIM LIVE.


THE LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, STATIONED ON THE MOON.
YOU WILL FORGIVE ME IF I MAKE THIS SOMEWHAT BRIEF.
WE ARE ALL RECEIVING A STARTLING BIT OF NEWS THIS DAY. WE'VE LEARNED THAT THE HEIR OF ARGALL HAS BEEN FOUND... AND THAT I AM THAT HEIR.
IT WAS NEVER MY DESIRE TO LEAD, BUT WHO AM I TO DENY MY BIRTHRIGHT? I'VE NEVER SKIRTED RESPONSIBILITY AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO START DOING THAT NOW.
I STAND BEFORE YOU NOW, EMPEROR NOLAN, RULER OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
SOME OF YOU KNOW ME TO BE A TRAITOR... AN ENEMY OF THE EMPIRE. I SEE THINGS A DIFFERENT WAY AND I EXPECT YOU TO NOW DO THE SAME.
FOR TOO LONG OUR EMPIRE HAS EXPANDED OUTWARD, FOCUSING ON THIS EXPANSION... AND THE DOMINATION OF OTHER WORLDS.
ALL THE WHILE, WE AS A PEOPLE... HAVE BEEN WITHERING.


GRAND REGENT THRAGG WAS RIGHT TO BRING YOU HERE, RIGHT TO FOCUS ON OUR REPOPULATION...
...RIGHT TO ALLOW US TO INTERACT WITH THE HUMAN POPULATION OF THIS PLANET.
I KNOW WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO LEARN A NEW WAY OF LIFE FROM THESE PEOPLE... THAT WILL CONTINUE...
...AND I WANT YOU TO WELCOME THE CHANGES YOU WILL EXPERIENCE.
OUR TIME HERE WILL STRENGTHEN US, NOT WEAKEN US. WE'LL BE AN EMPIRE OF PEACE... AND WE WILL FLOURISH.
IT IS A NEW DAWN FOR THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
ALL HAIL EMPEROR NOLAN!
THANK YOU.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME... I'M GOING TO NEED A COUPLE DAYS TO HEAL.
THIS IS SO WEIRD.

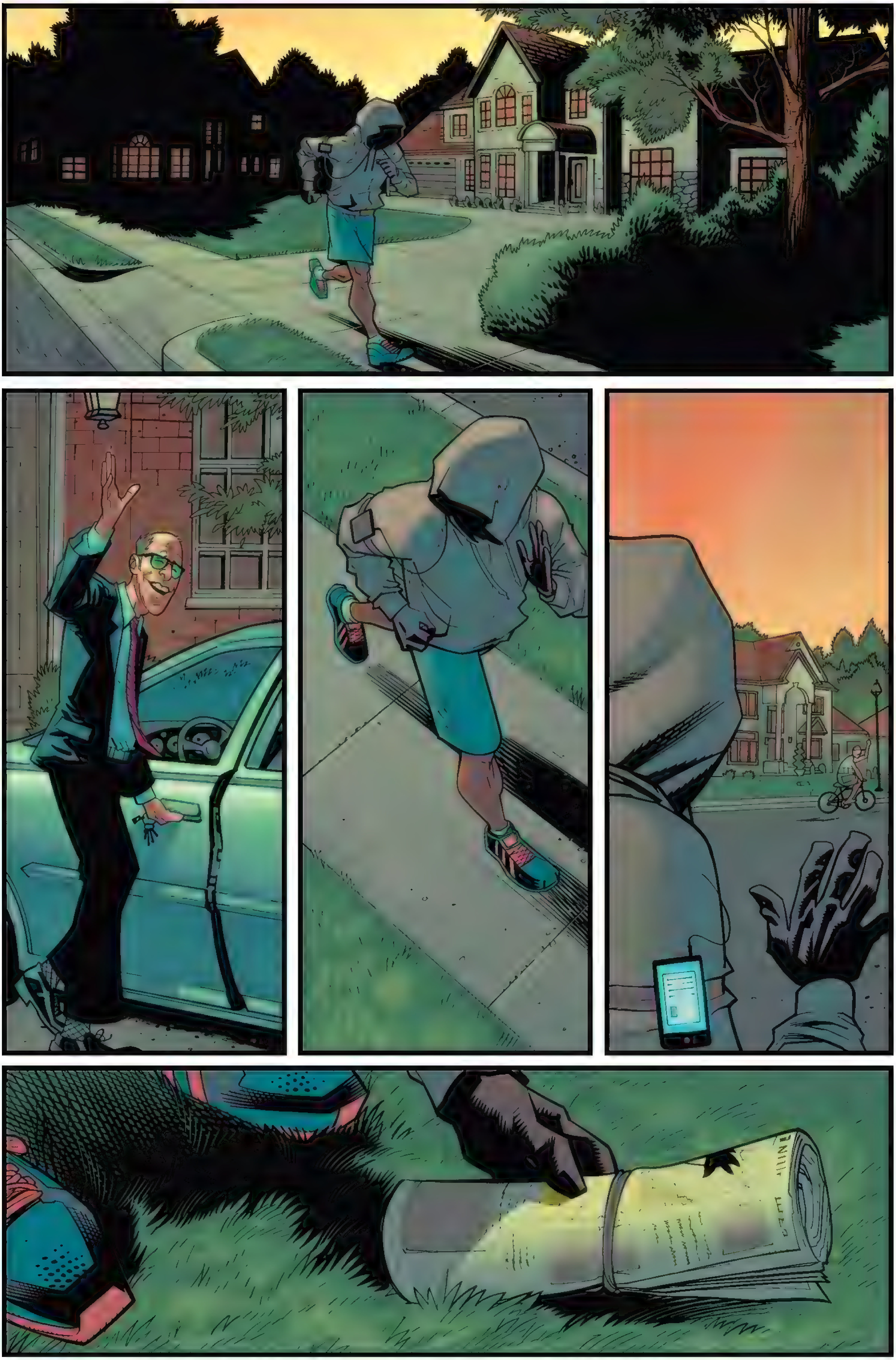

LATER, AT THE GRAYSON FAMILY HOME.
I THINK WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO TALK ABOUT THIS LATER... FOR NOW, I'LL JUST LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE.
YEAH... *UH*... I'M A LITTLE SPENT. THANKS FOR TAKING ME UP THERE.
YOU OKAY WITH THIS?
ME? YEAH. MY DAD'S IN CHARGE. THAT'S GREAT... I GUESS. IF I HAD TO PICK A GOOD LEADER TO KEEP THE VILTRUMITES IN CHECK... WHO BETTER, RIGHT?
IT'S JUST... ***WEIRD.***
I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO TALK TO HIM WHILE I WAS UP THERE. HE WAS USHERED OFF TO SOME HEALING CHAMBER BY VILTRUMTIES WHO ALMOST KILLED BOTH OF US NOT SO LONG AGO...
PART OF ME IS THINKING... IS HE AN EVIL GENIUS? WAS THIS ALL PART OF HIS PLAN? WAS HE BIDING HIS TIME UNTIL TAKING OVER... LEADING ME ALONG EVER SINCE HE TRIED TO TAKE OVER EARTH?
THAT'S ALMOST TOO SCARY TO CONSIDER.
I COULDN'T SEE THAT... NOT AFTER THE TIME I'VE SPENT WITH HIM.
YEAH. SAME HERE.
MARK. WHAT CAN I DO TO CHEER YOU UP?

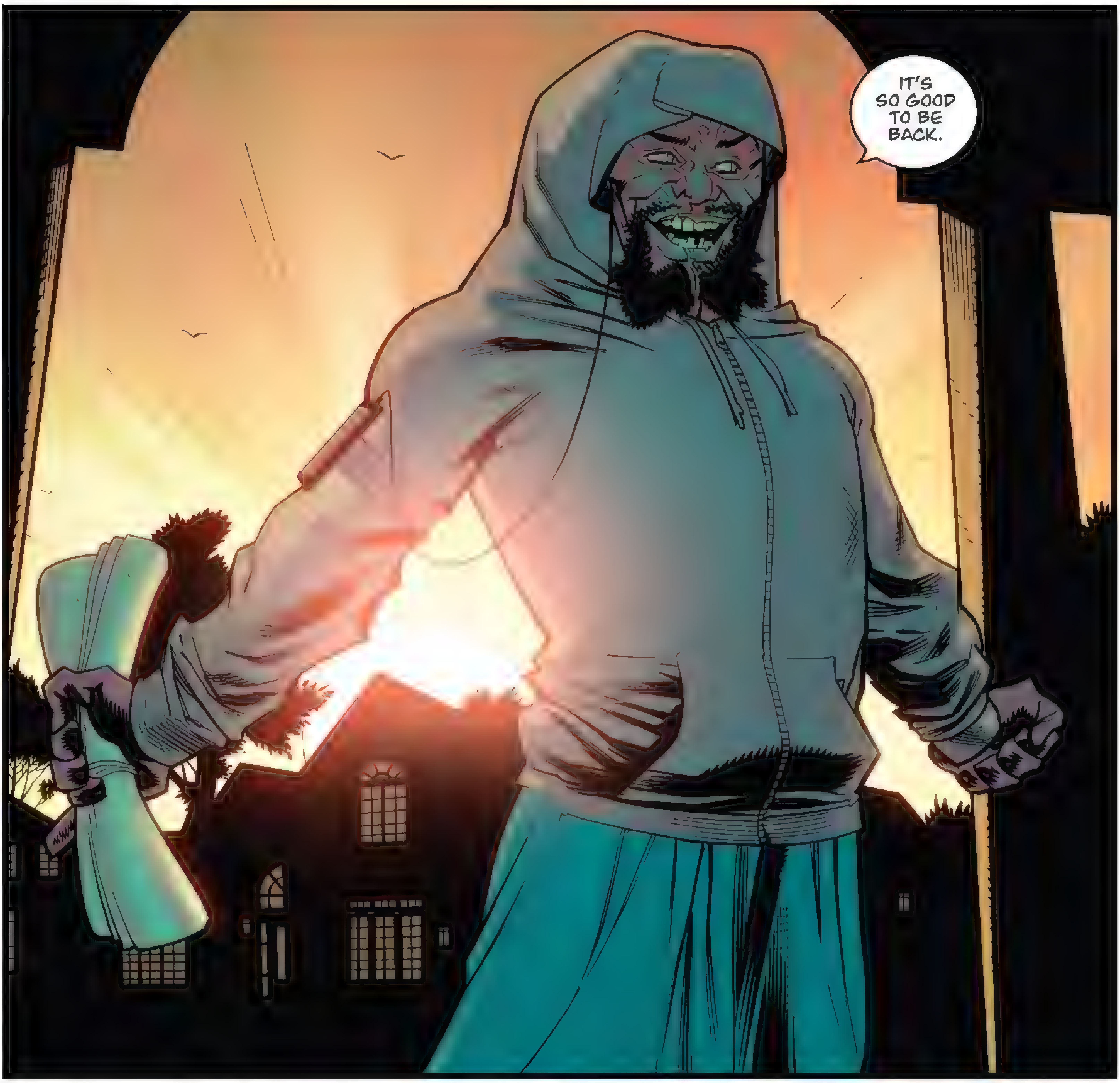

I'M FINE, REALLY. I'M NOT SAD, OR UPSET... JUST... OVERWHELMED. IT'S JUST... IT'S A LOT TO TAKE IN.
SO MUCH IS CHANGING SO FAST. IT'S JUST TOO MUCH. IT'S HARD TO KEEP TRACK OF.
SOMETIMES WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW... *DIFFERENT* THINGS ARE...
I KNOW THINGS WILL NEVER GO BACK TO HOW THEY WERE... BUT SOMETIMES, I JUST THINK... CAN'T I GO BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL? WHEN MY DAD WAS JUST MY DAD... BEFORE I EVEN HAD POWERS. BUT THEN I REALIZE... THAT WAS BEFORE I MET ***YOU.***
YOU'RE THE ONE CONSTANT IN MY LIFE, EVE. THE THING I KNOW WILL ALWAYS BE THERE... AT LEAST... I *WANT* YOU TO *ALWAYS* BE THERE.
MARK?
I'M SCREWING THIS UP. I SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS NOW. YOU DESERVE WAY BETTER.
I DON'T EVEN HAVE A RING AND...

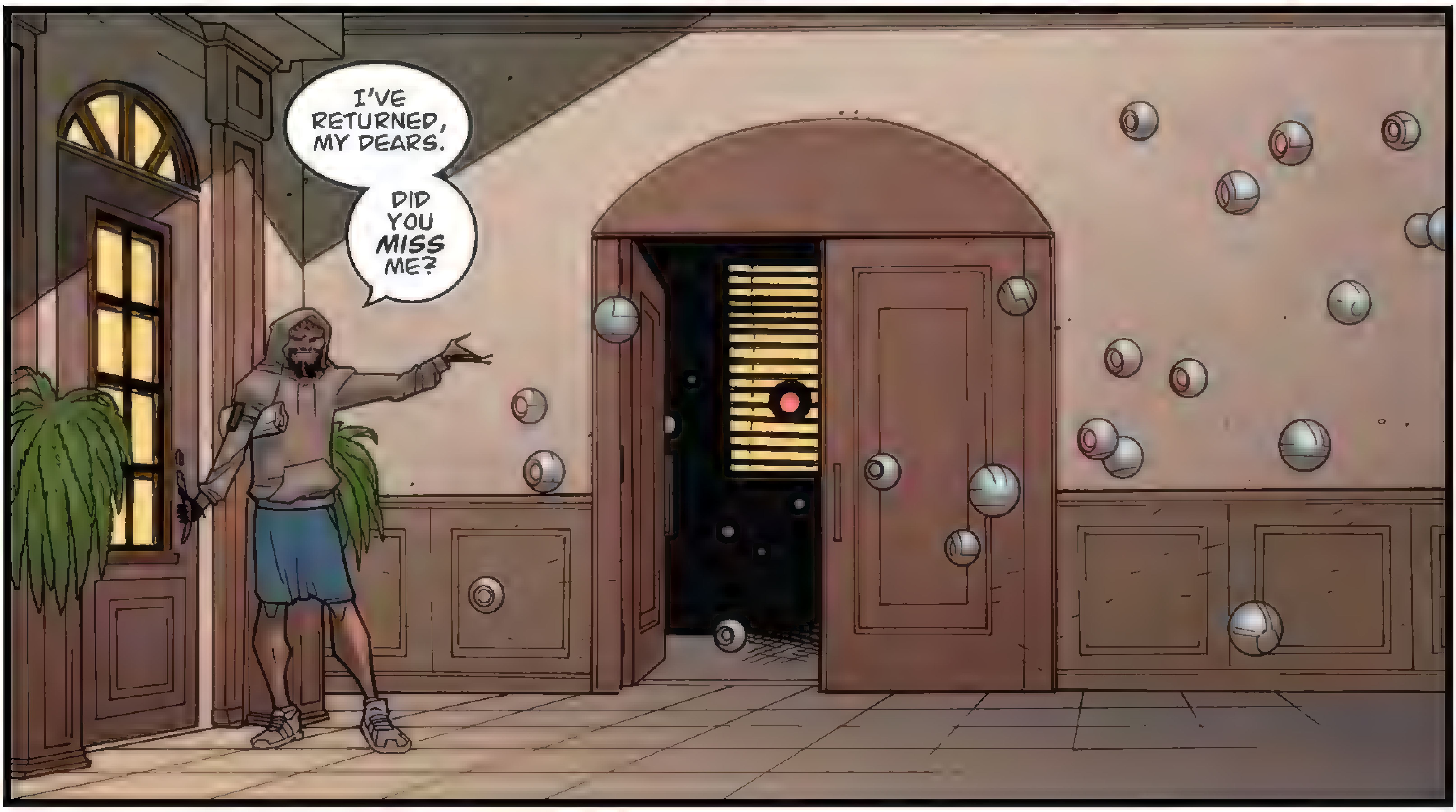

WOW. THAT'S A NICE ONE.
IT'S THE RING I ALWAYS WANTED.
SO, WILL YOU...
OF COURSE I WILL.

CHAPTER 103

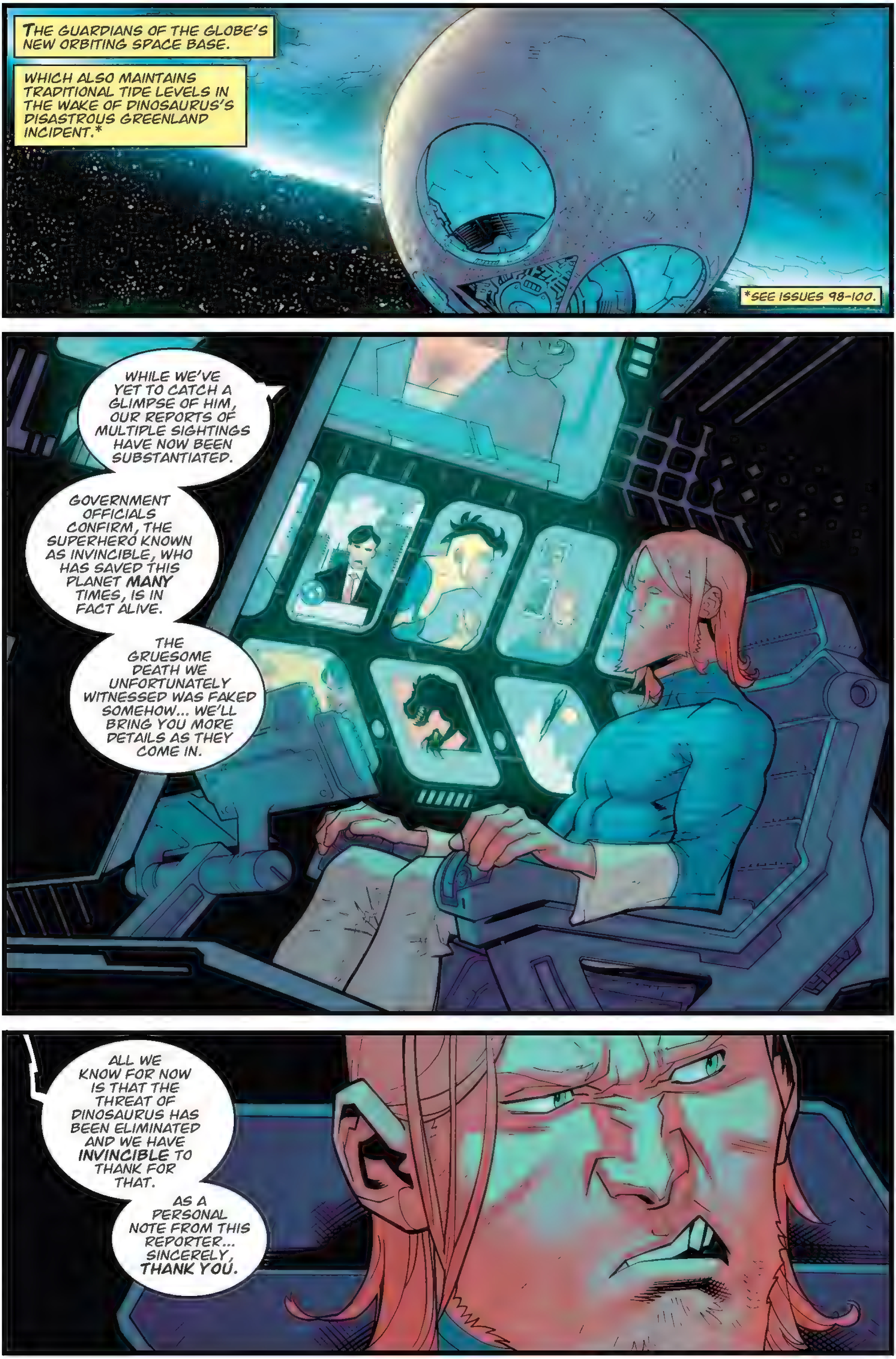
RYAN 13
RAUCH

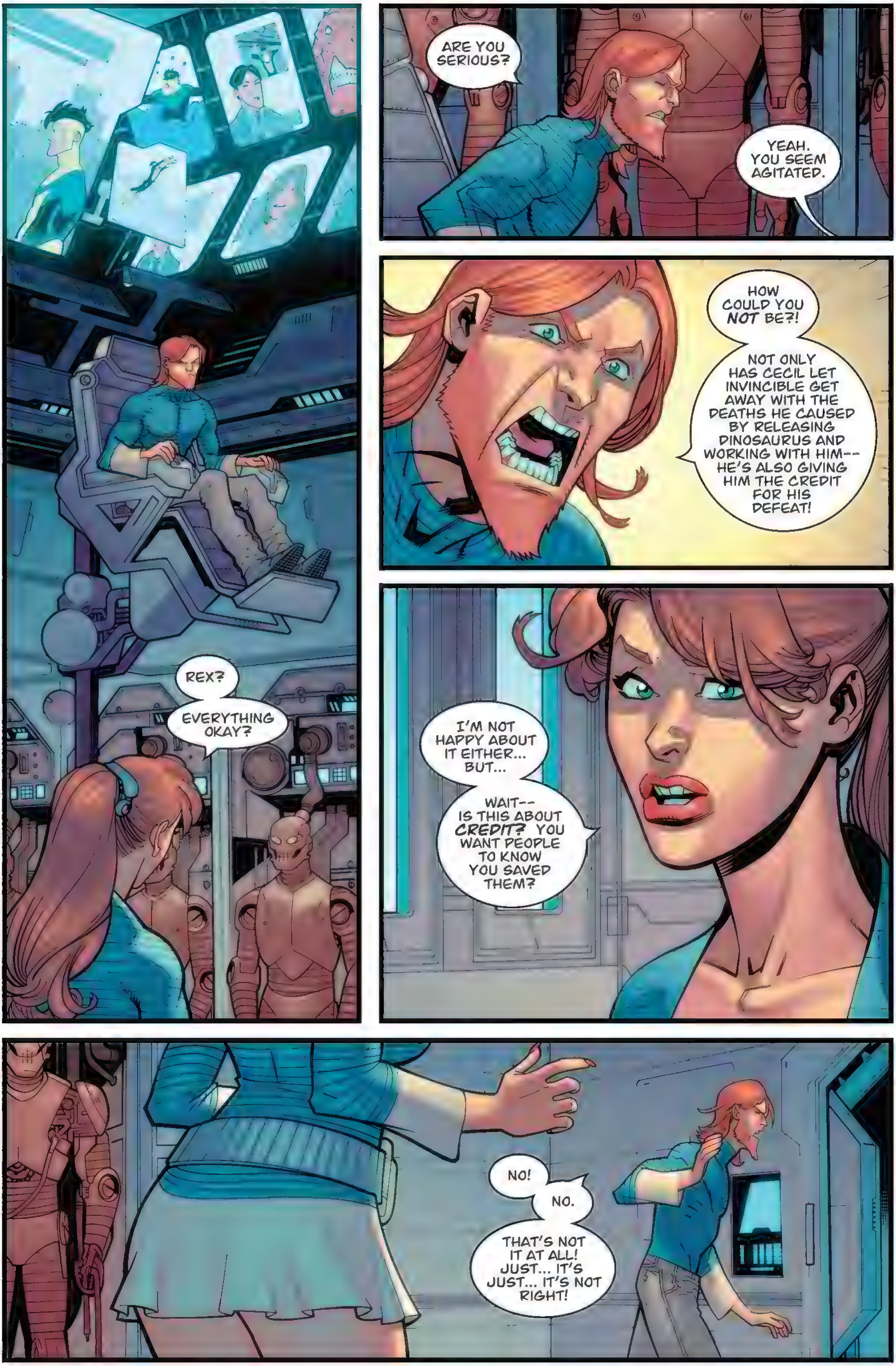


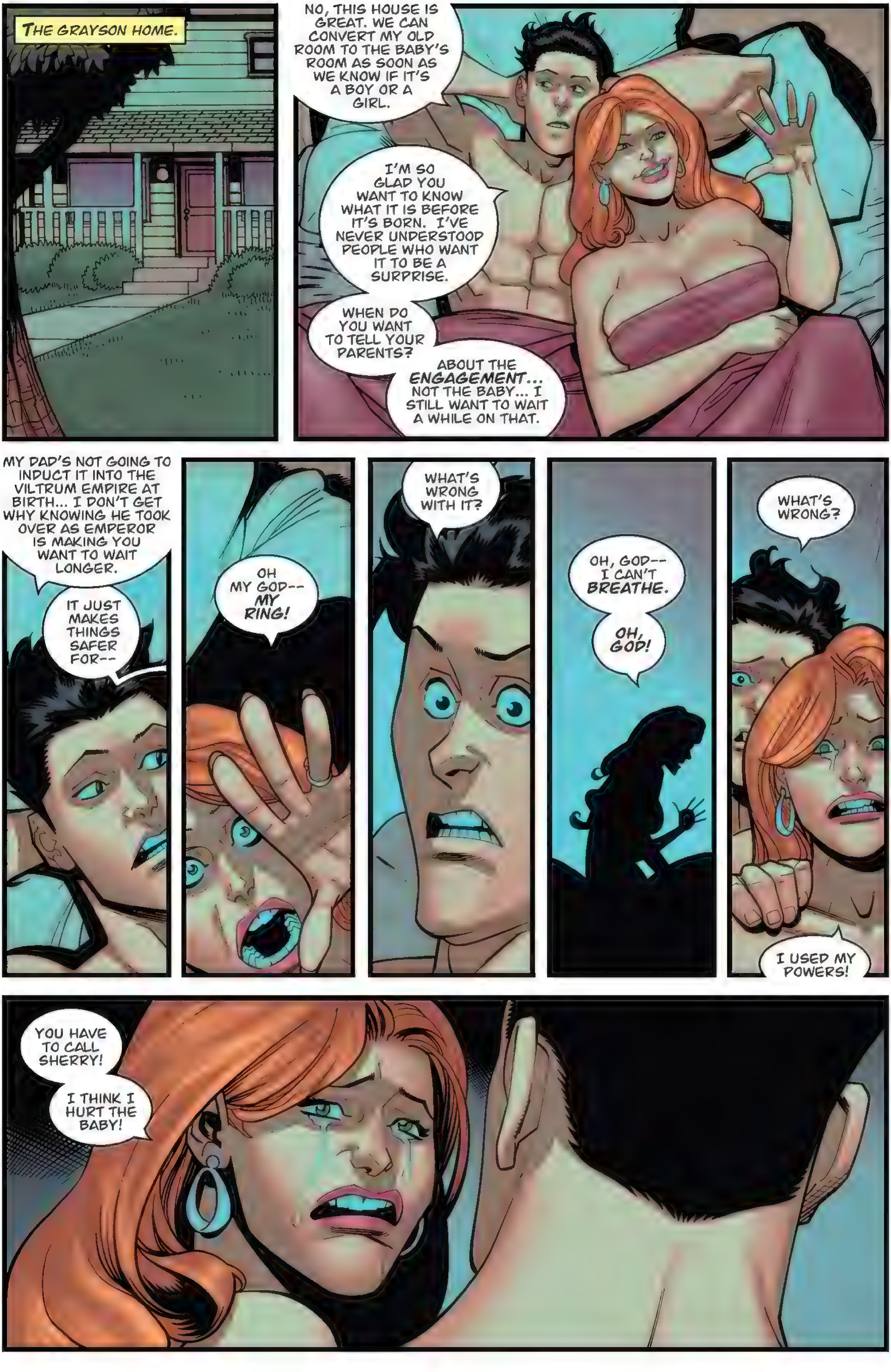

IT'S SO GOOD TO BE BACK.

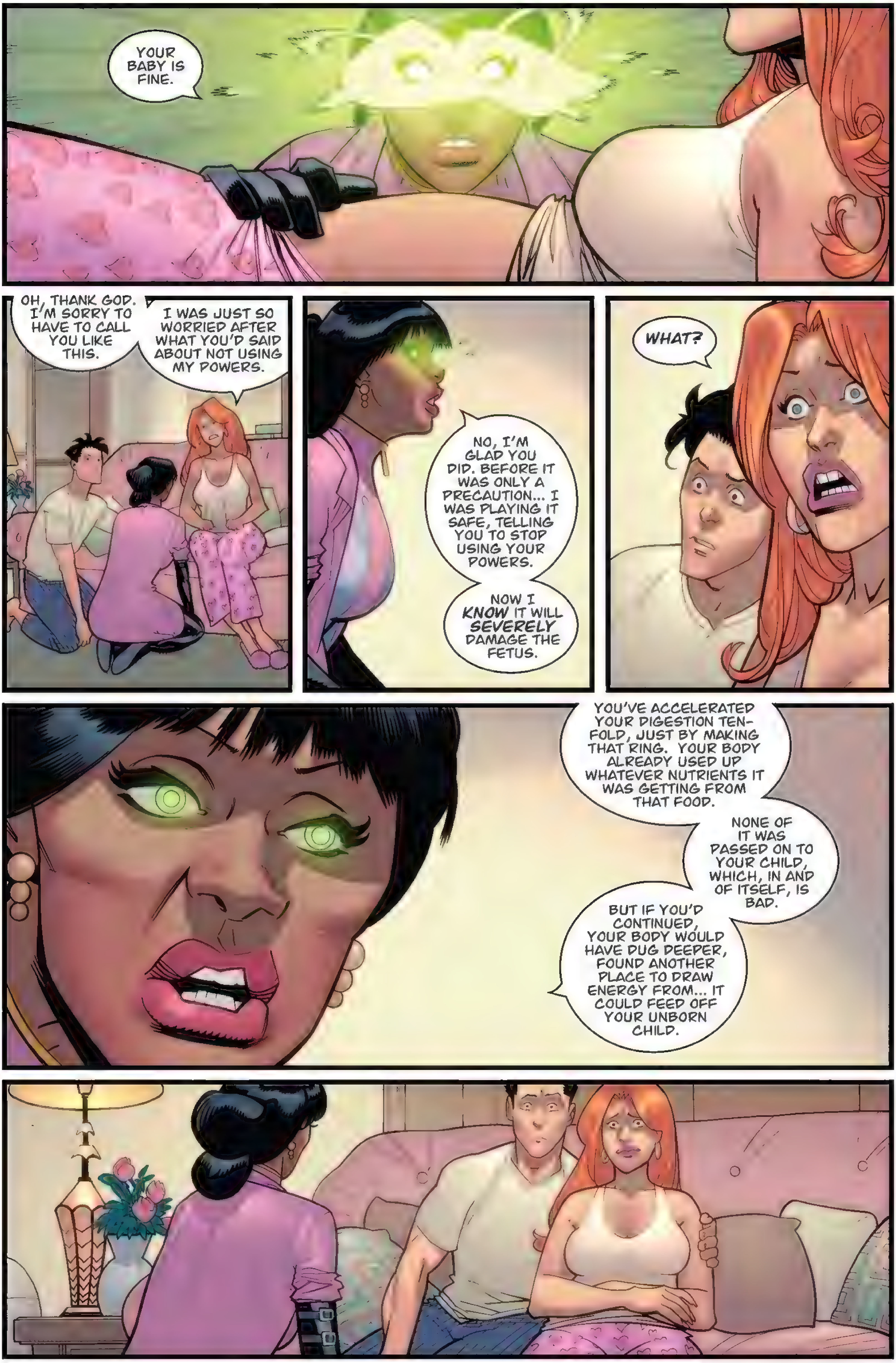

I'VE RETURNED, MY DEARS.
DID YOU *MISS* ME?

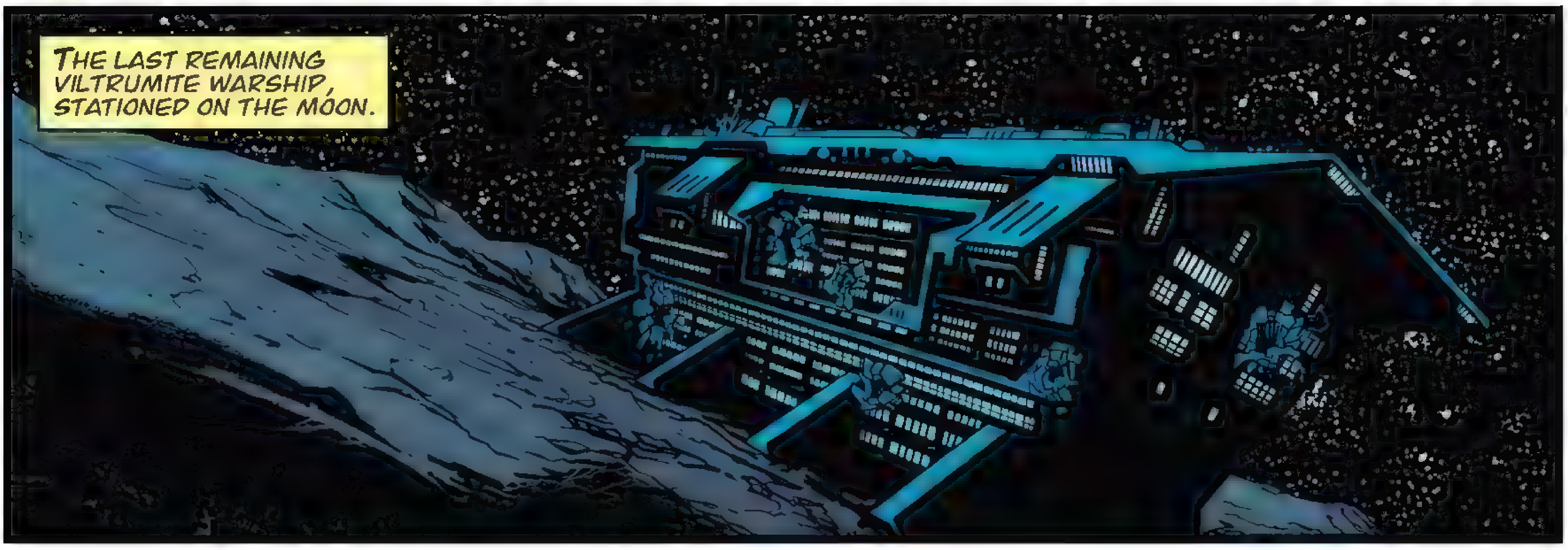
THERE'S JUST SOMETHING TO BE SAID ABOUT BEING BACK IN YOUR HOME DIMENSION.
I CAN'T QUITE PUT MY FINGER ON IT.
OF COURSE, IT MIGHT BE HOW THINGS WORKED THEMSELVES OUT WHILE I WAS AWAY...
HEH...
INVINCIBLE INDEED!
Hero thought to be dead is very much alive!
Who among us cannot remember where we were and
exactly what we were doing the day that Invincible died
The world's coasts were flooded, every major city was in
shambles. The majority of the world popu
hiding, clinging to whatever media
hopes that news would soon br
that Dinosaurus, the villain at
had been defeated.
It was then that the live fe
Invincible himself had found Di
locked in a brutal battle on the ro
It seemed the very fate of the world hung in the balance.
The whole world was watching as Invincible fought
ultimately sacrificed his life for us, once again
the world. As he did when he fought
Omni Man, and when he stopped the
before it reached our planet.
Unlike those other times, his
so it seemed
the aftermath of th
to be seen as
Guardia
While the details of his re
remain sketchy, the truth c
longer be denied. Invincible
returned. The prevailing theory is
that he never actually died, that it
was a hoax, another part of
Dinosaurus's plans. We can only
hope, that in time, things will
become clear and we'll learn exactly
what happened. But for now
should just be thankful th
that has so profoundly
way of life, is still
day.
PFFFFT!

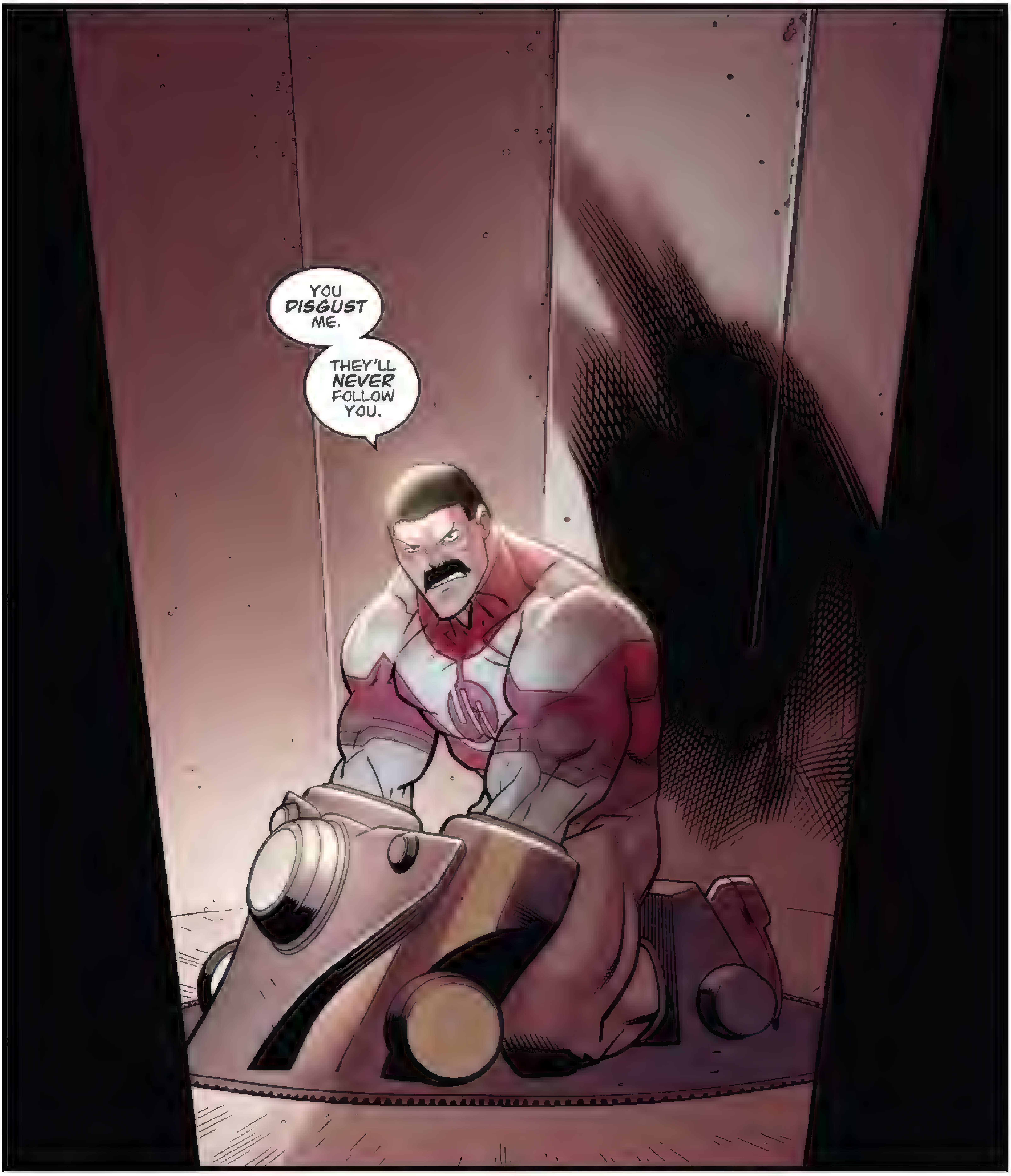

THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE'S NEW ORBITING SPACE BASE.
WHICH ALSO MAINTAINS TRADITIONAL TIDE LEVELS IN THE WAKE OF DINOSAURUS'S DISASTROUS GREENLAND INCIDENT.*
*SEE ISSUES 98-100.
WHILE WE'VE YET TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HIM, OUR REPORTS OF MULTIPLE SIGHTINGS HAVE NOW BEEN SUBSTANTIATED.
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CONFIRM, THE SUPERHERO KNOWN AS INVINCIBLE, WHO HAS SAVED THIS PLANET **MANY** TIMES, IS IN FACT ALIVE.
THE GRUESOME DEATH WE UNFORTUNATELY WITNESSED WAS FAKED SOMEHOW... WE'LL BRING YOU MORE DETAILS AS THEY COME IN.
ALL WE KNOW FOR NOW IS THAT THE THREAT OF DINOSAURUS HAS BEEN ELIMINATED AND WE HAVE **INVINCIBLE** TO THANK FOR THAT.
AS A PERSONAL NOTE FROM THIS REPORTER... SINCERELY, **THANK YOU.**

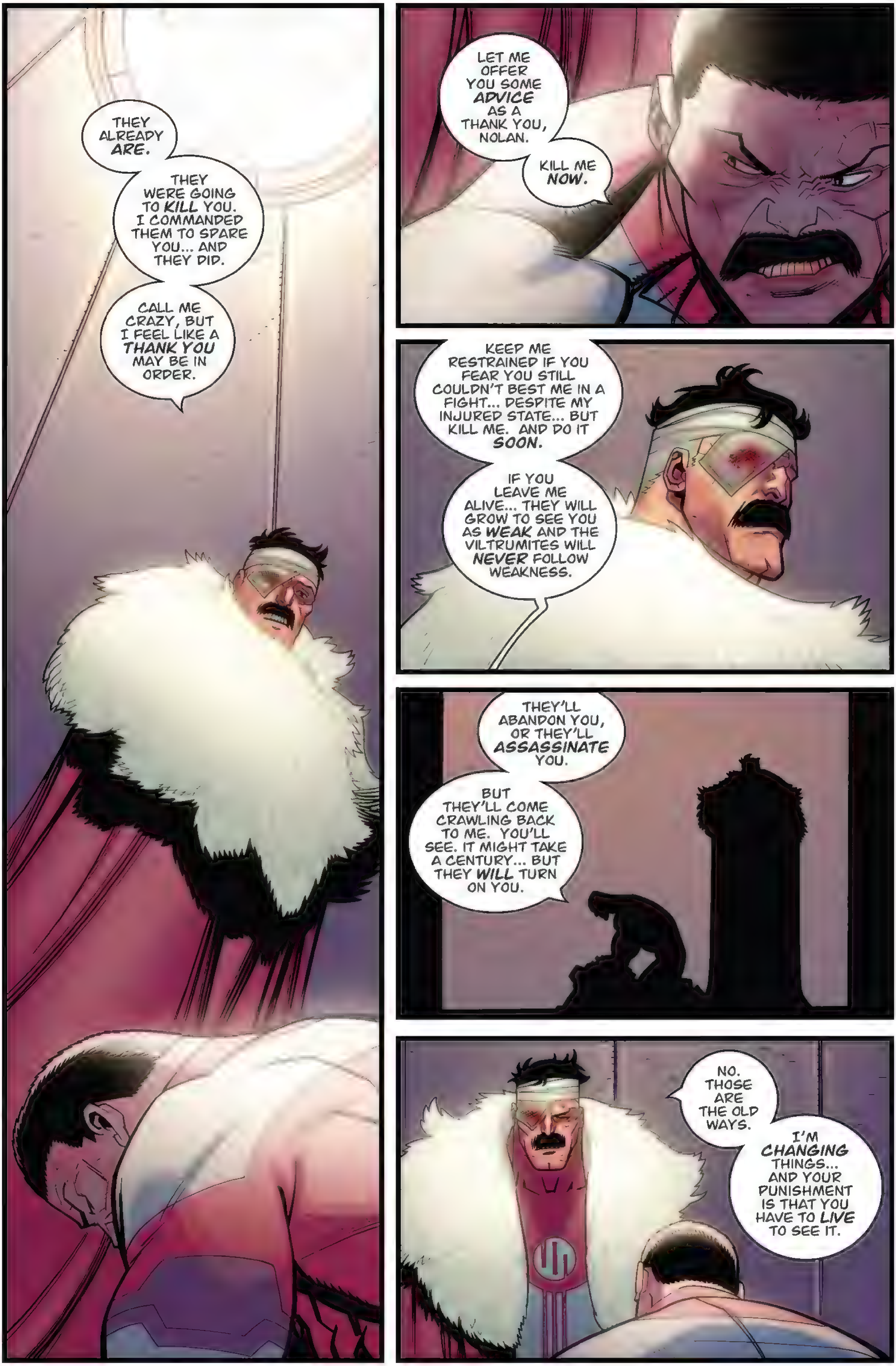

REX?
EVERYTHING OKAY?
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YEAH. YOU SEEM AGITATED.
HOW COULD YOU *NOT* BE?!
NOT ONLY HAS CECIL LET INVINCIBLE GET AWAY WITH THE DEATHS HE CAUSED BY RELEASING DINOSAURUS AND WORKING WITH HIM-- HE'S ALSO GIVING HIM THE CREDIT FOR HIS DEFEAT!
I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT EITHER... BUT...
WAIT-- IS THIS ABOUT *CREDIT?* YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW YOU SAVED THEM?
NO!
NO.
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL! JUST... IT'S JUST... IT'S NOT RIGHT!

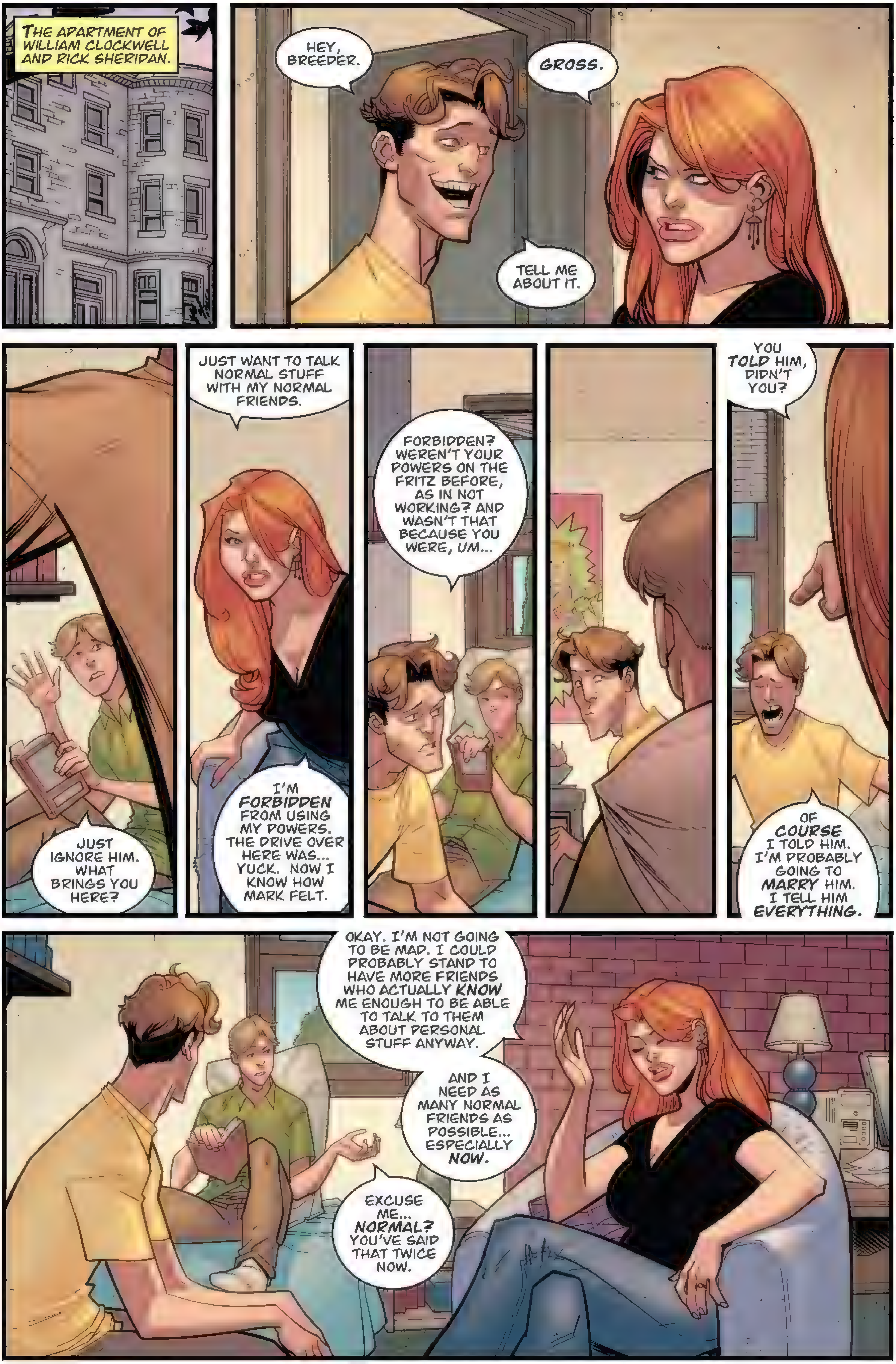

THE GRAYSON HOME.
NO, THIS HOUSE IS GREAT. WE CAN CONVERT MY OLD ROOM TO THE BABY'S ROOM AS SOON AS WE KNOW IF IT'S A BOY OR A GIRL.
I'M SO GLAD YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT IS BEFORE IT'S BORN. I'VE NEVER UNDERSTOOD PEOPLE WHO WANT IT TO BE A SURPRISE.
WHEN DO YOU WANT TO TELL YOUR PARENTS?
ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT... NOT THE BABY... I STILL WANT TO WAIT A WHILE ON THAT.
MY DAD'S NOT GOING TO INDUCT IT INTO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE AT BIRTH... I DON'T GET WHY KNOWING HE TOOK OVER AS EMPEROR IS MAKING YOU WANT TO WAIT LONGER.
IT JUST MAKES THINGS SAFER FOR--
OH MY GOD-- MY RING!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?
OH, GOD-- I CAN'T BREATHE.
OH, GOD!
WHAT'S WRONG?
I USED MY POWERS!
YOU HAVE TO CALL SHERRY!
I THINK I HURT THE BABY!


YOUR BABY IS FINE.
OH, THANK GOD. I'M SORRY TO HAVE TO CALL YOU LIKE THIS.
I WAS JUST SO WORRIED AFTER WHAT YOU'D SAID ABOUT NOT USING MY POWERS.
NO, I'M GLAD YOU DID. BEFORE IT WAS ONLY A PRECAUTION... I WAS PLAYING IT SAFE, TELLING YOU TO STOP USING YOUR POWERS.
NOW I *KNOW* IT WILL ***SEVERELY*** DAMAGE THE FETUS.
WHAT?
YOU'VE ACCELERATED YOUR DIGESTION TEN-FOLD, JUST BY MAKING THAT RING. YOUR BODY ALREADY USED UP WHATEVER NUTRIENTS IT WAS GETTING FROM THAT FOOD.
NONE OF IT WAS PASSED ON TO YOUR CHILD, WHICH, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS BAD.
BUT IF YOU'D CONTINUED, YOUR BODY WOULD HAVE DUG DEEPER, FOUND ANOTHER PLACE TO DRAW ENERGY FROM... IT COULD FEED OFF YOUR UNBORN CHILD.


THE LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, STATIONED ON THE MOON.


YOU *DISGUST* ME.
THEY'LL *NEVER* FOLLOW YOU.

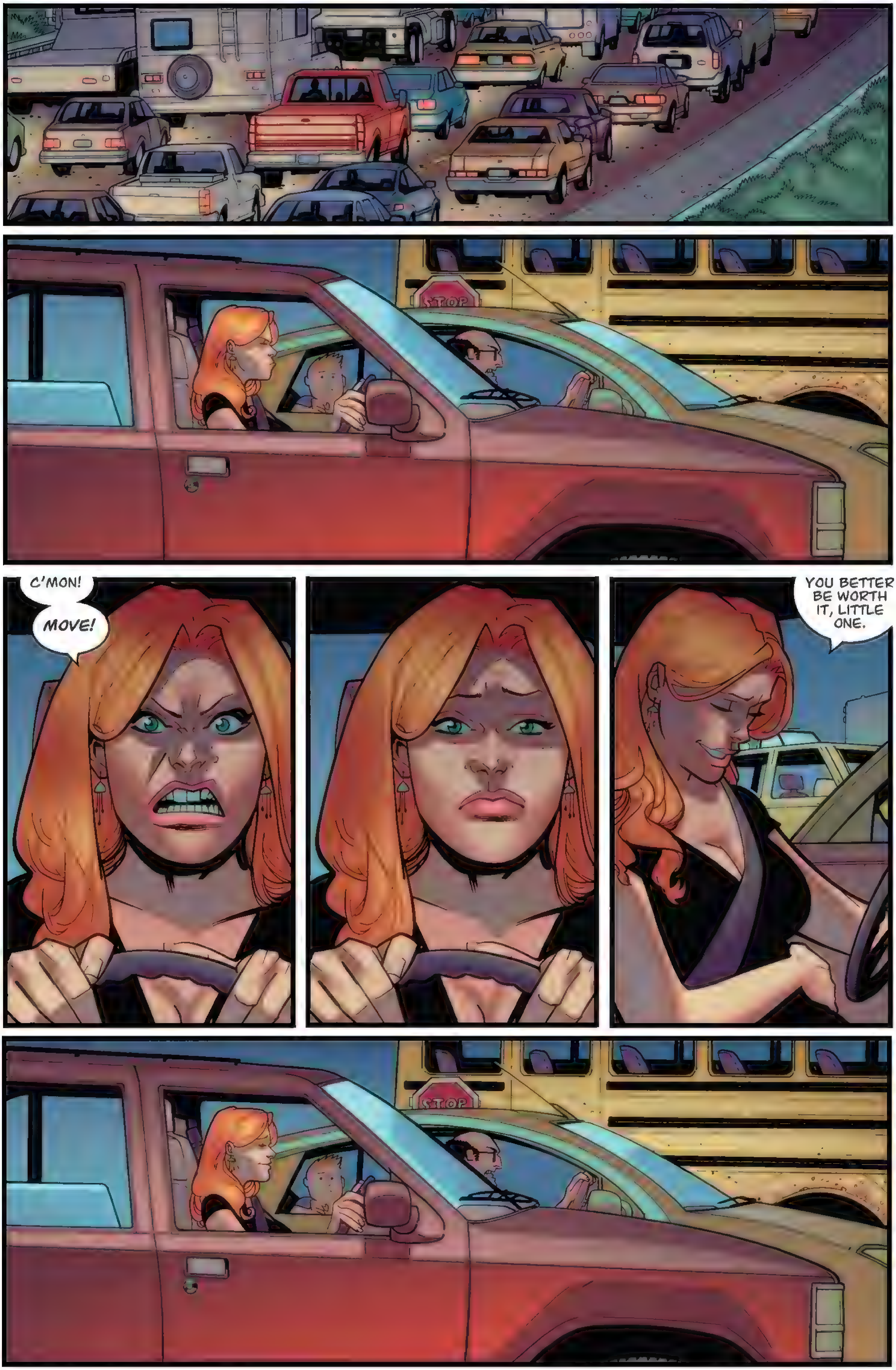

THEY ALREADY ARE.
THEY WERE GOING TO KILL YOU. I COMMANDED THEM TO SPARE YOU... AND THEY DID.
CALL ME CRAZY, BUT I FEEL LIKE A THANK YOU MAY BE IN ORDER.
LET ME OFFER YOU SOME ADVICE AS A THANK YOU, NOLAN.
KILL ME NOW.
KEEP ME RESTRAINED IF YOU FEAR YOU STILL COULDN'T BEST ME IN A FIGHT... DESPITE MY INJURED STATE... BUT KILL ME. AND DO IT SOON.
IF YOU LEAVE ME ALIVE... THEY WILL GROW TO SEE YOU AS WEAK AND THE VILTRUMITES WILL NEVER FOLLOW WEAKNESS.
THEY'LL ABANDON YOU, OR THEY'LL ASSASSINATE YOU.
BUT THEY'LL COME CRAWLING BACK TO ME. YOU'LL SEE. IT MIGHT TAKE A CENTURY... BUT THEY WILL TURN ON YOU.
NO. THOSE ARE THE OLD WAYS.
I'M CHANGING THINGS... AND YOUR PUNISHMENT IS THAT YOU HAVE TO LIVE TO SEE IT.

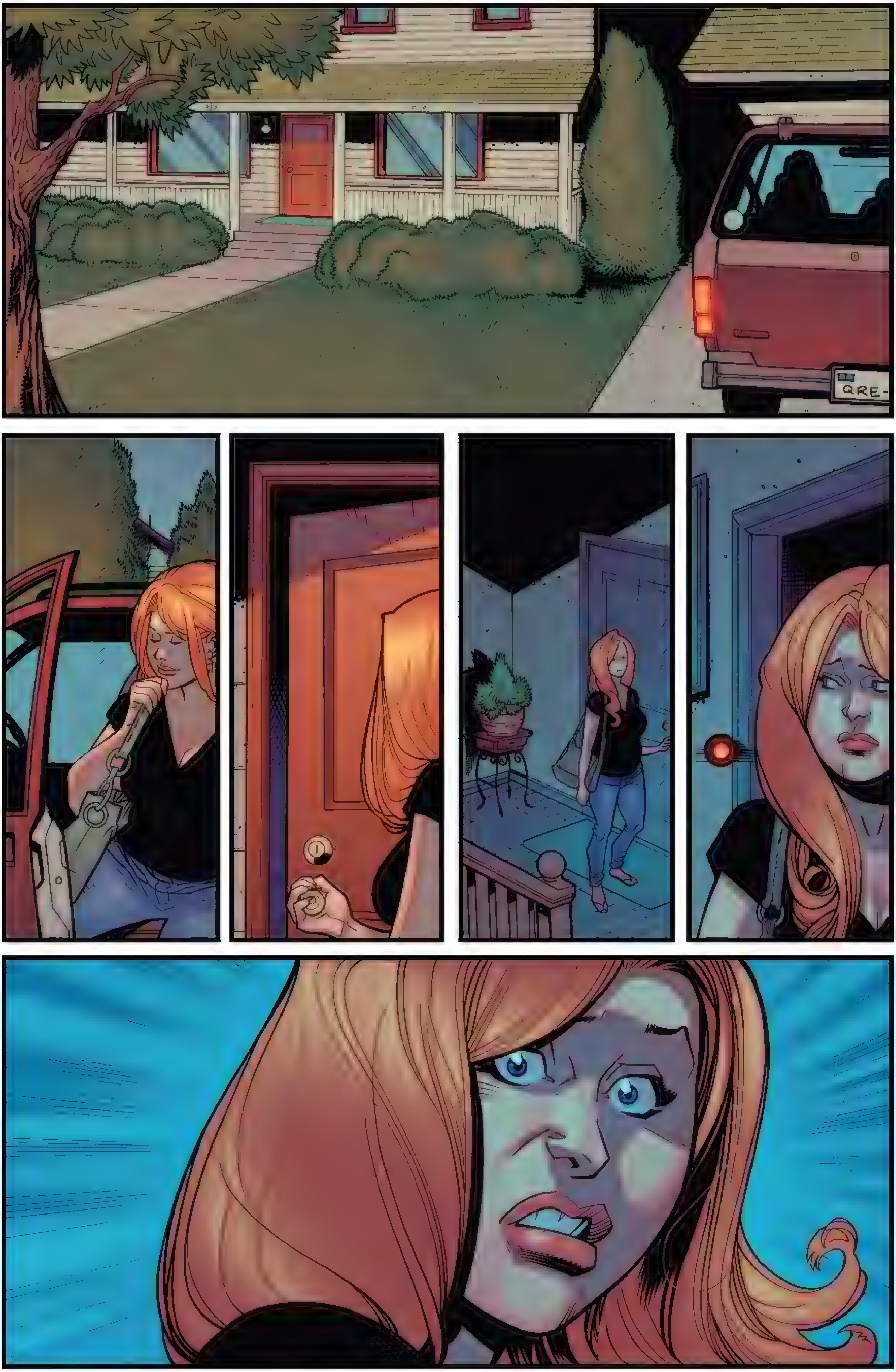

THE APARTMENT OF WILLIAM CLOCKWELL AND RICK SHERIDAN.
HEY, BREEDER.
GROSS.
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
JUST IGNORE HIM. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
JUST WANT TO TALK NORMAL STUFF WITH MY NORMAL FRIENDS.
I'M FORBIDDEN FROM USING MY POWERS. THE DRIVE OVER HERE WAS... YUCK. NOW I KNOW HOW MARK FELT.
FORBIDDEN? WEREN'T YOUR POWERS ON THE FRITZ BEFORE, AS IN NOT WORKING? AND WASN'T THAT BECAUSE YOU WERE, UM...
YOU TOLD HIM, DIDN'T YOU?
OF COURSE I TOLD HIM. I'M PROBABLY GOING TO MARRY HIM. I TELL HIM EVERYTHING.
OKAY. I'M NOT GOING TO BE MAD. I COULD PROBABLY STAND TO HAVE MORE FRIENDS WHO ACTUALLY KNOW ME ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT PERSONAL STUFF ANYWAY.
AND I NEED AS MANY NORMAL FRIENDS AS POSSIBLE... ESPECIALLY NOW.
EXCUSE ME... NORMAL? YOU'VE SAID THAT TWICE NOW.

I'M SORRY, IS THAT OFFENSIVE?
WHAT? NO... NOT AT ALL.
IT'S JUST... I'M FAR FROM NORMAL.
I JUST MEANT... NO POWERS, SPECIAL ABILITIES... THAT KIND OF THING.
I DON'T EXACTLY FIGHT CRIME OR ANYTHING, BUT YOU DO REMEMBER THAT A MAD SCIENTIST ABDUCTED ME AND TURNED ME INTO A CYBORG, RIGHT? YOUR BOYFRIEND (AND MINE ACTUALLY) SAVED ME.*
DOCTOR TOLD ME MY ARTIFICIAL HEART MOVES OXYGEN THROUGH MY BLOOD SO EFFICIENTLY THAT I COULD RUN FOR EIGHT HOURS WITHOUT GETTING WINDED... AND THE CURRENT ESTIMATE IS THAT I'LL PROBABLY LIVE TO AT LEAST ONE-HUNDRED AND FIFTY.
SO I DON'T THINK I QUALIFY AS "NORMAL."
I HATE IT WHEN YOU DO THAT...
*SEE ISSUE 37.
FAIR ENOUGH... AND THAT REMINDS ME...
MARK ISN'T MY BOYFRIEND ANYMORE.
AWESOME, CONGRATS!
GREAT NEWS. WHERE EXACTLY IS THE GROOM-TO-BE?
PROBABLY OFF PLAYING SUPERHERO.

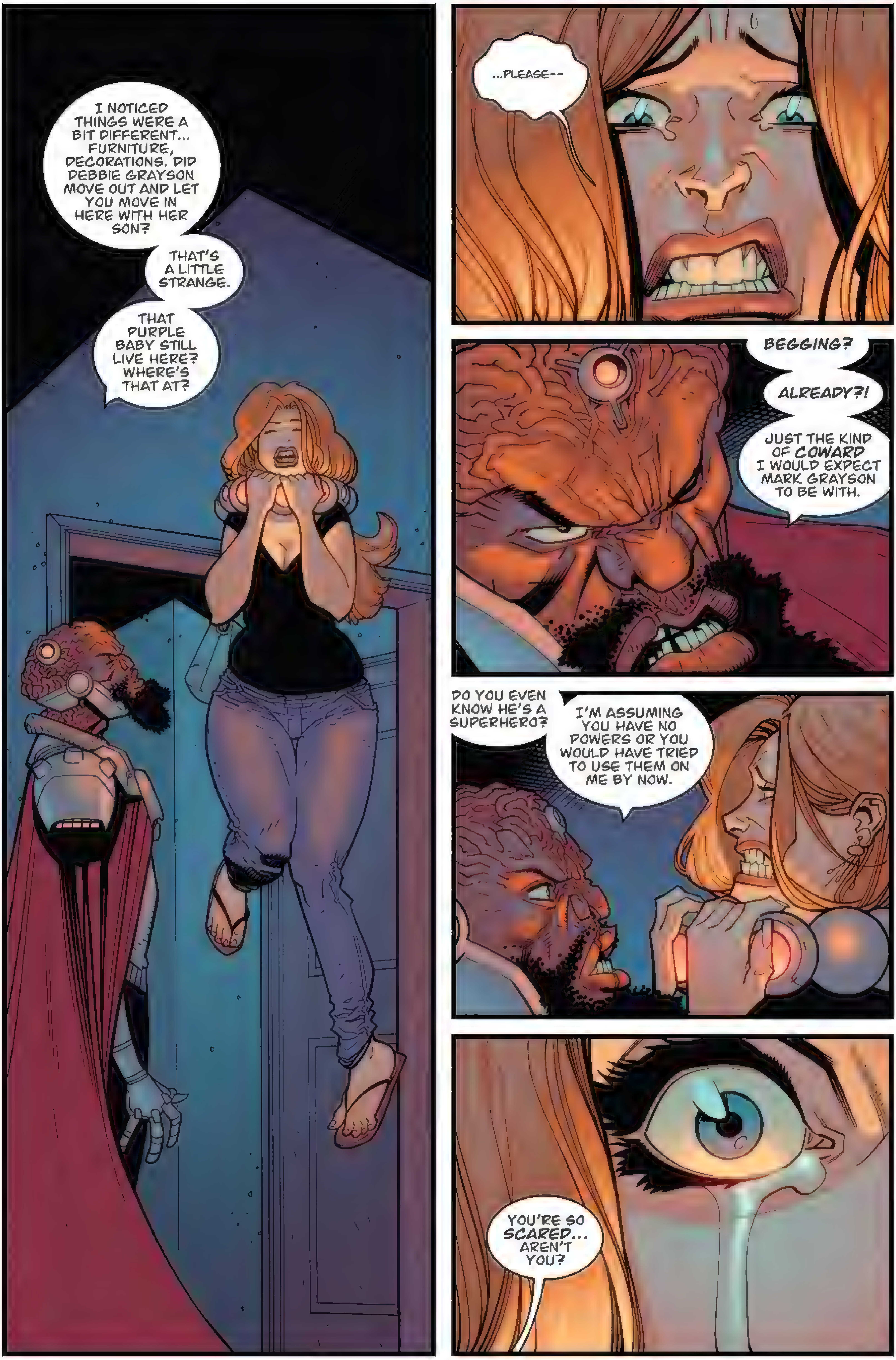
KRAKK!
WHAT THE HECK?!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE *DEAD!**
*LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE DIDN'T READ **GUARDING THE GLOBE VOLUME 2: HARD TO KILL**... AVAILABLE NOW!

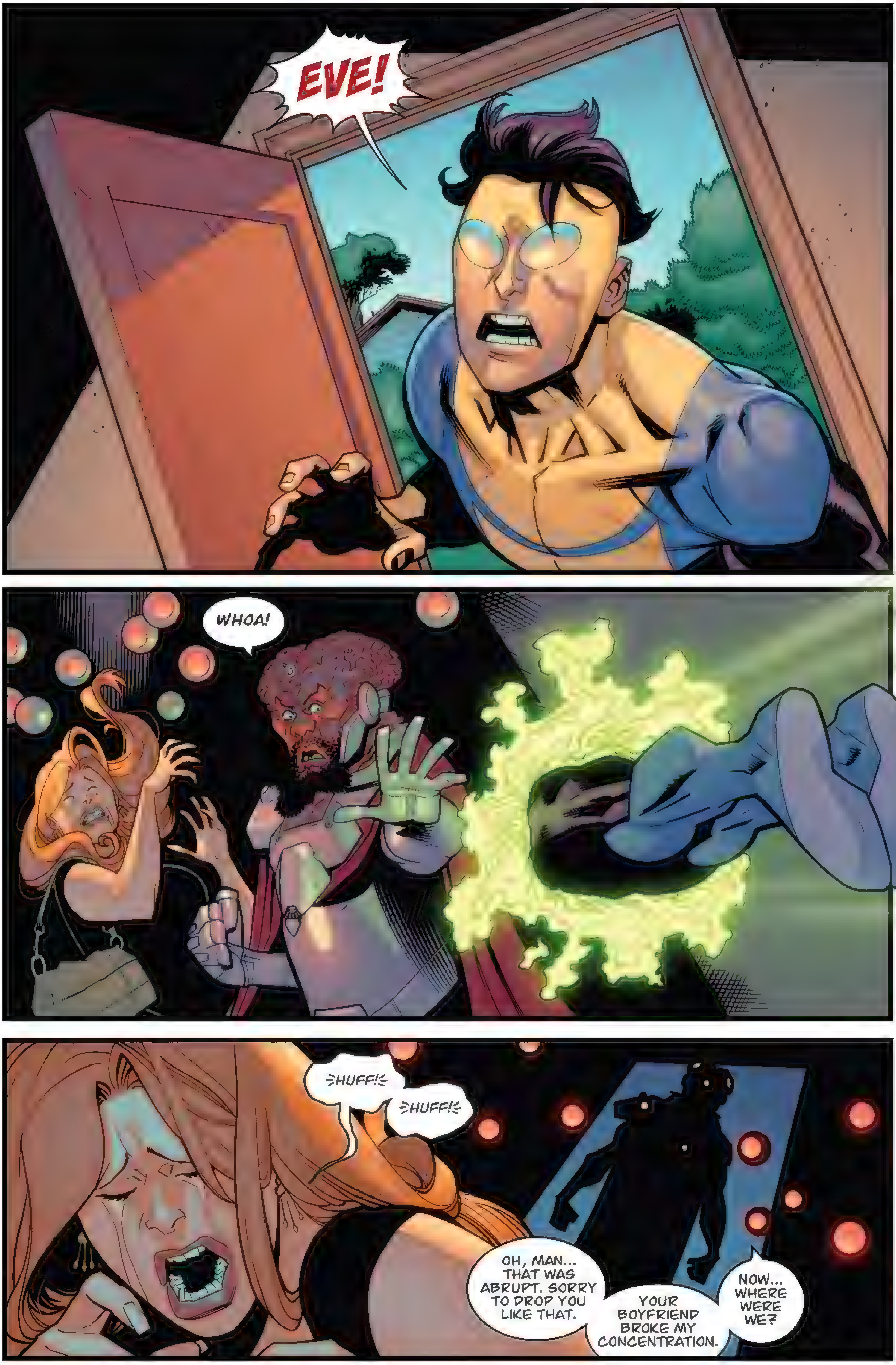
I'M A GENIUS WHO CLONES HIMSELF... DO YOU THINK I WOULD EVER ALLOW MYSELF TO ACTUALLY DIE?
OR IS IT MORE LIKELY THAT I WOULD ALLOW YOU TO THINK I WAS DEAD SO THAT I COULD LIE LOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE?
KRAKK!
SO YOU PULLED A DUPLI-KATE... OF COURSE.
I DON'T LIKE TO GIVE OUT TOO MUCH INFO ABOUT MYSELF, BUT I'M ACTUALLY A BIT OF A COLLECTOR. I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING A WHOLE SET OF YOU GUYS...
...IN PRISON!
YOU'VE GROWN MUCH... STRONGER... SINCE OUR LAST ENCOUNTER...
NO MATTER. THIS WILL NOT END QUICKLY... OR WITHOUT GREAT PAIN.
ACTUALLY, MAULER...
I THINK YOU'RE ONLY HALF RIGHT.

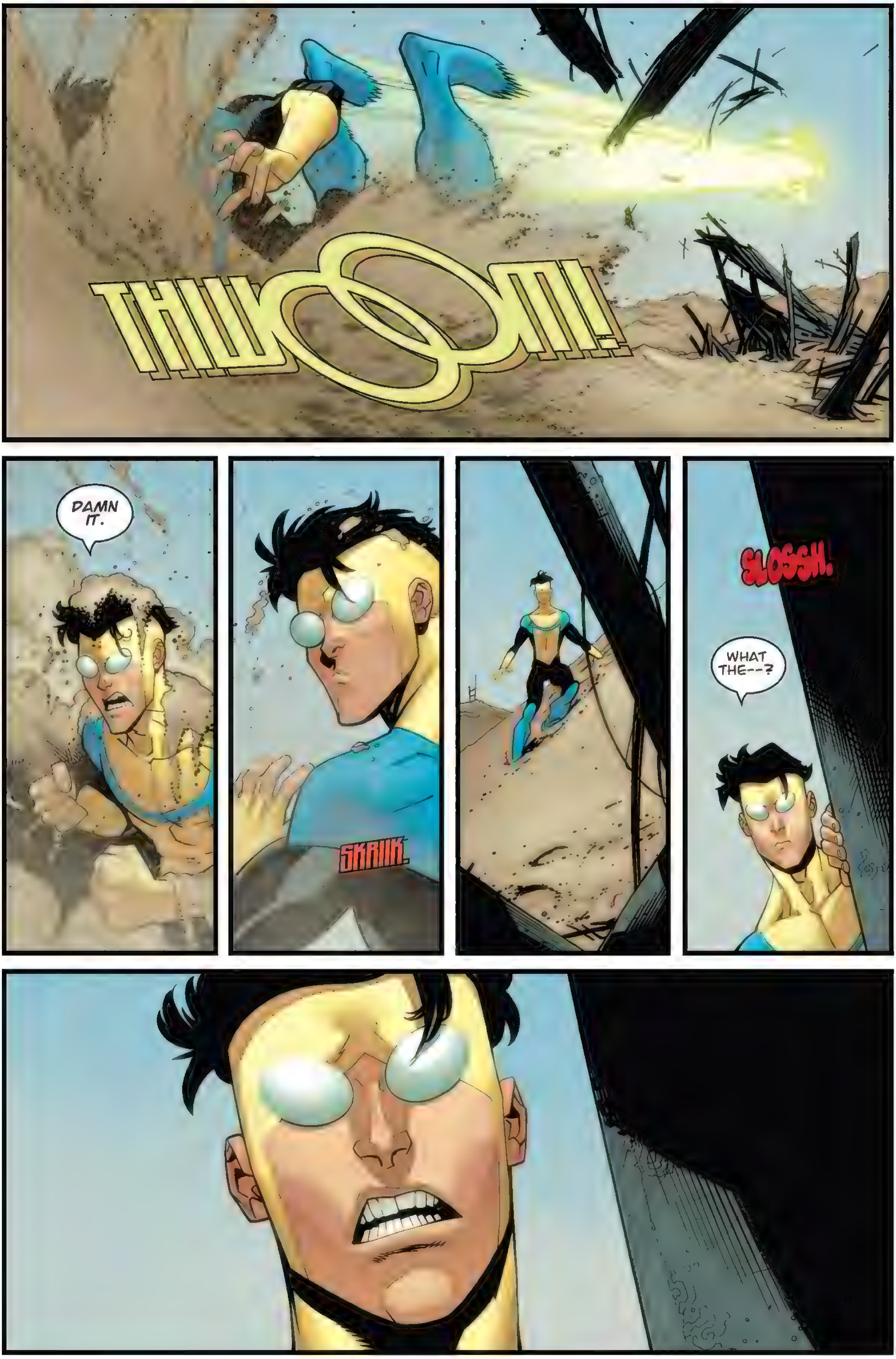

C'MON!
MOVE!
YOU BETTER BE WORTH IT, LITTLE ONE.
STOP


QRE-

NOW!
FWOMMM!!
I HONESTLY EXPECTED HIS MOTHER. THIS IS *MUCH* MORE INTERESTING...

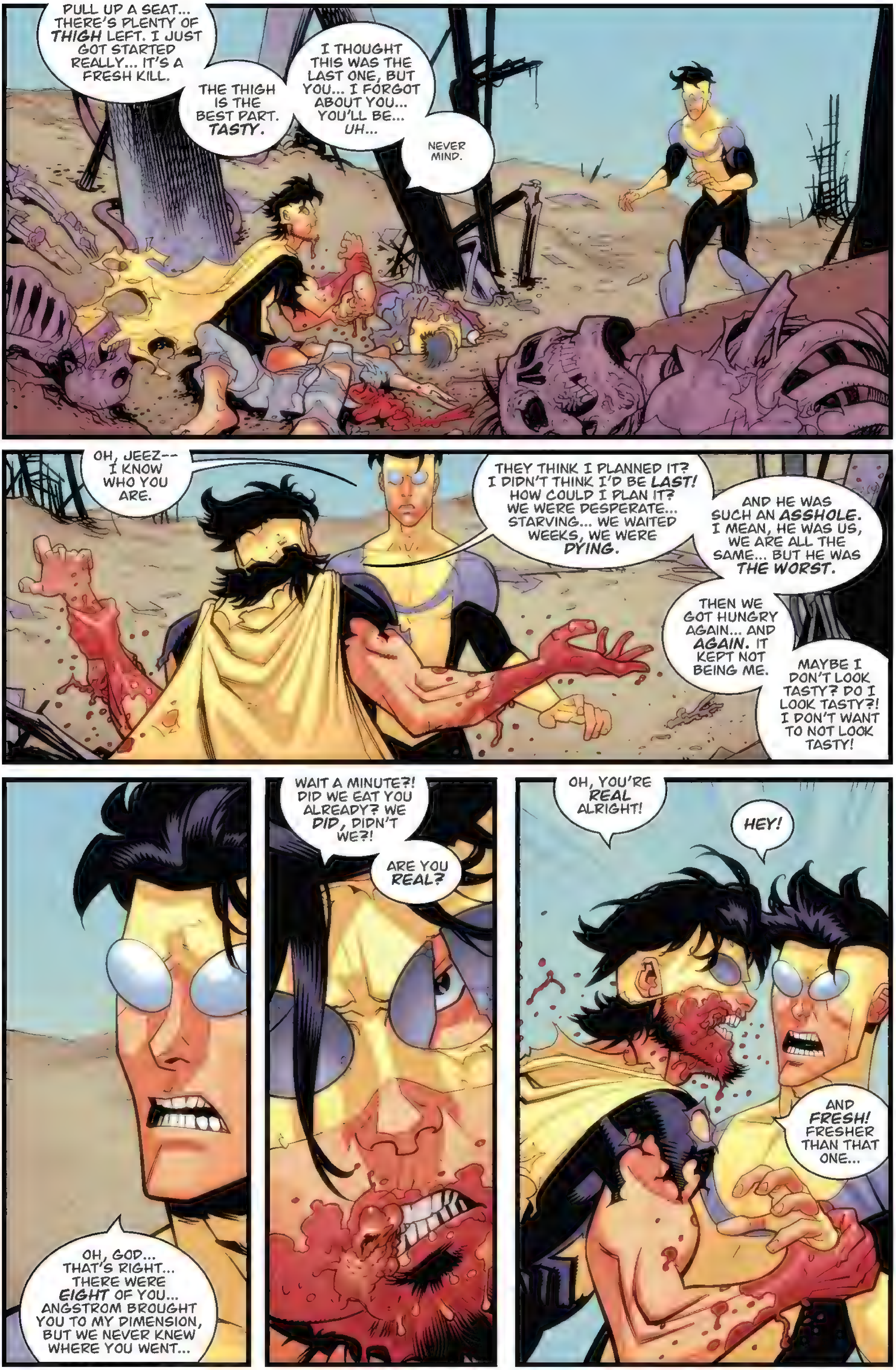

I NOTICED THINGS WERE A BIT DIFFERENT... FURNITURE, DECORATIONS. DID DEBBIE GRAYSON MOVE OUT AND LET YOU MOVE IN HERE WITH HER SON?
THAT'S A LITTLE STRANGE.
THAT PURPLE BABY STILL LIVE HERE? WHERE'S THAT AT?
...PLEASE--
BEGGING?
ALREADY?!
JUST THE KIND OF COWARD I WOULD EXPECT MARK GRAYSON TO BE WITH.
DO YOU EVEN KNOW HE'S A SUPERHERO?
I'M ASSUMING YOU HAVE NO POWERS OR YOU WOULD HAVE TRIED TO USE THEM ON ME BY NOW.
YOU'RE SO SCARED... AREN'T YOU?


EVE!
WHOA!
≥HUFF!≤
≥HUFF!≤
OH, MAN... THAT WAS ABRUPT. SORRY TO DROP YOU LIKE THAT.
YOUR BOYFRIEND BROKE MY CONCENTRATION.
NOW... WHERE WERE WE?

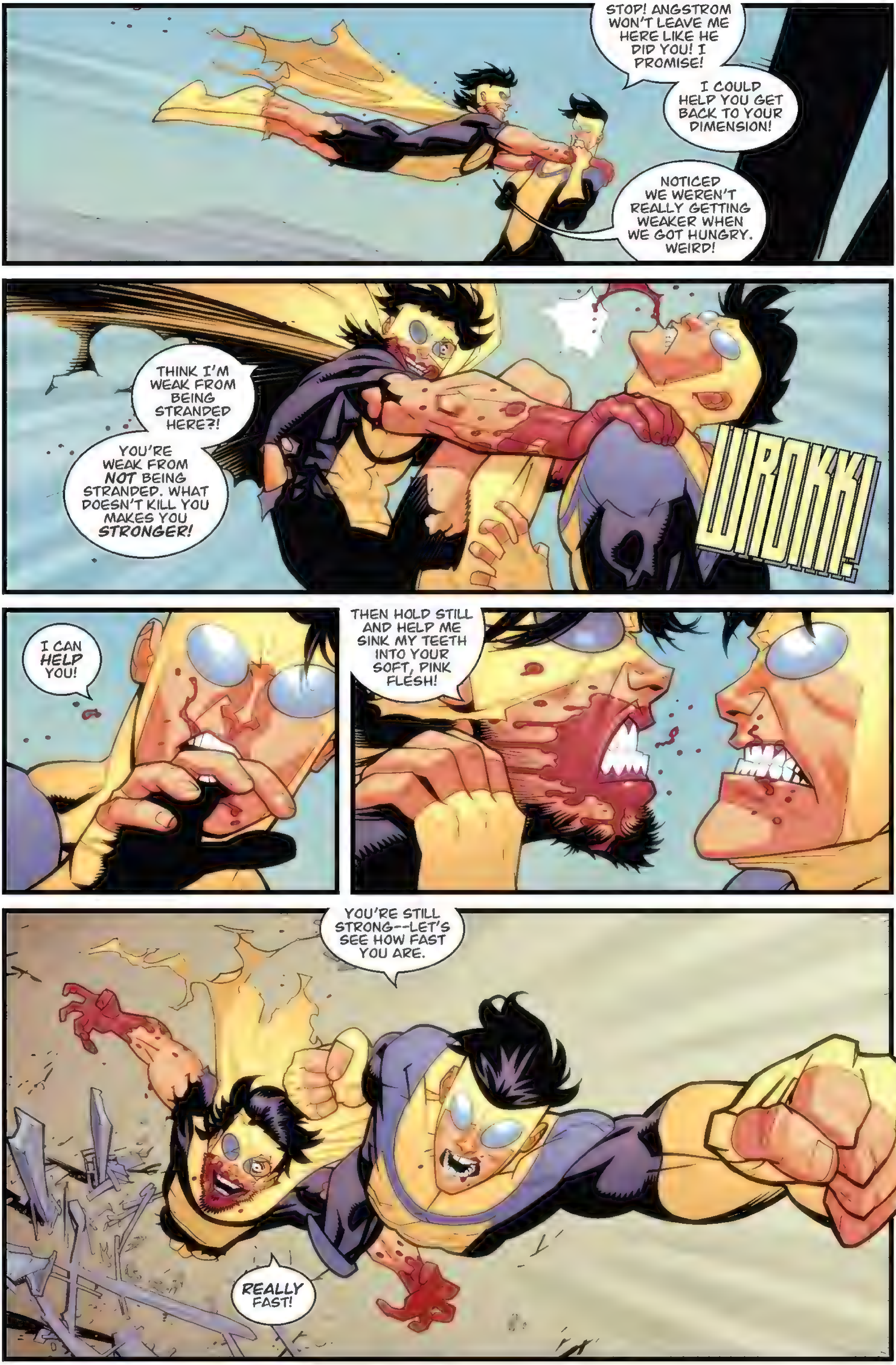

THUOOM!
DAMN IT.
SKRIIK.
SLOSSH.
WHAT THE--?

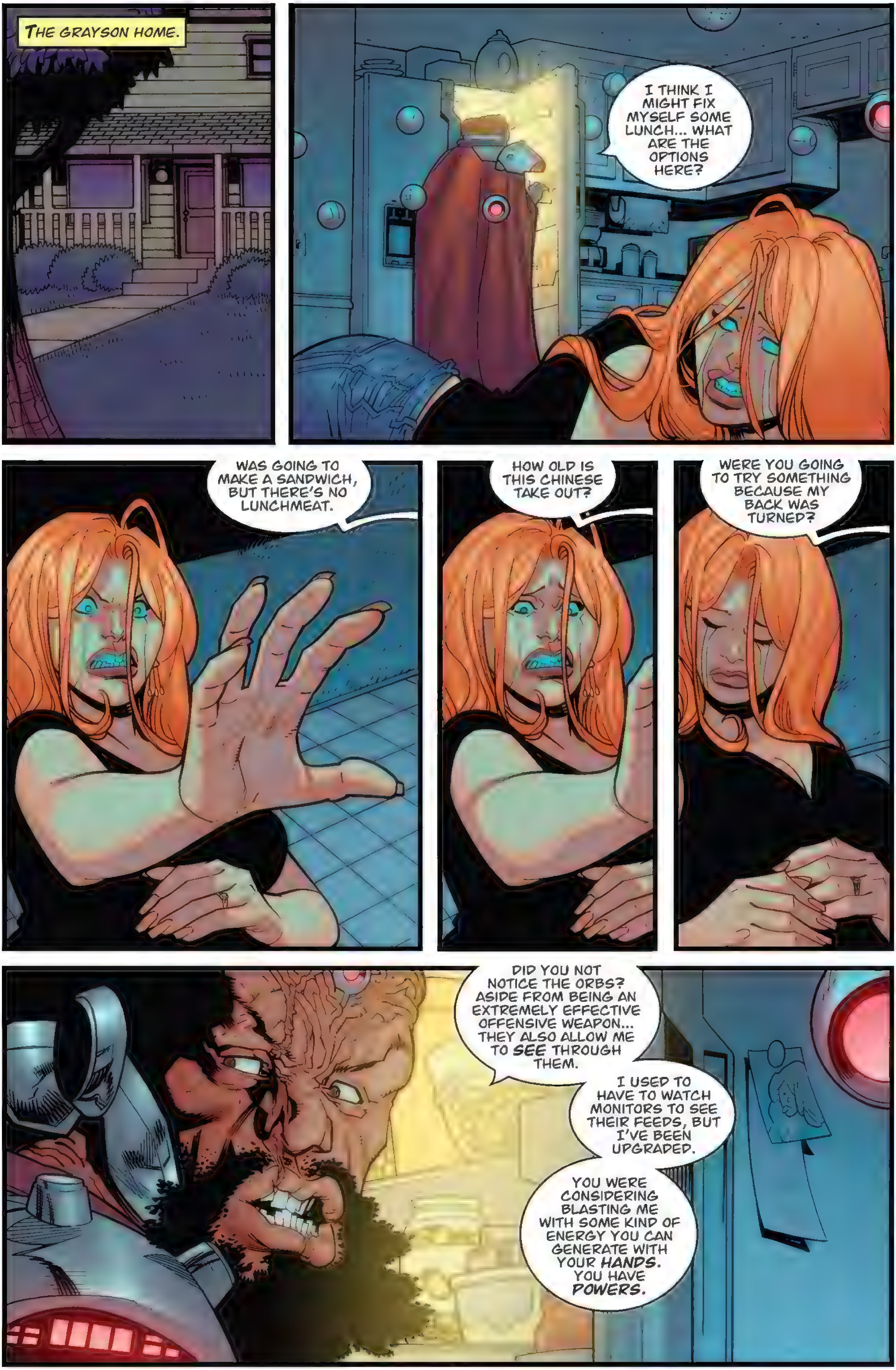
OH, GOOD.
YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME FOR DINNER.

CHAPTER 104

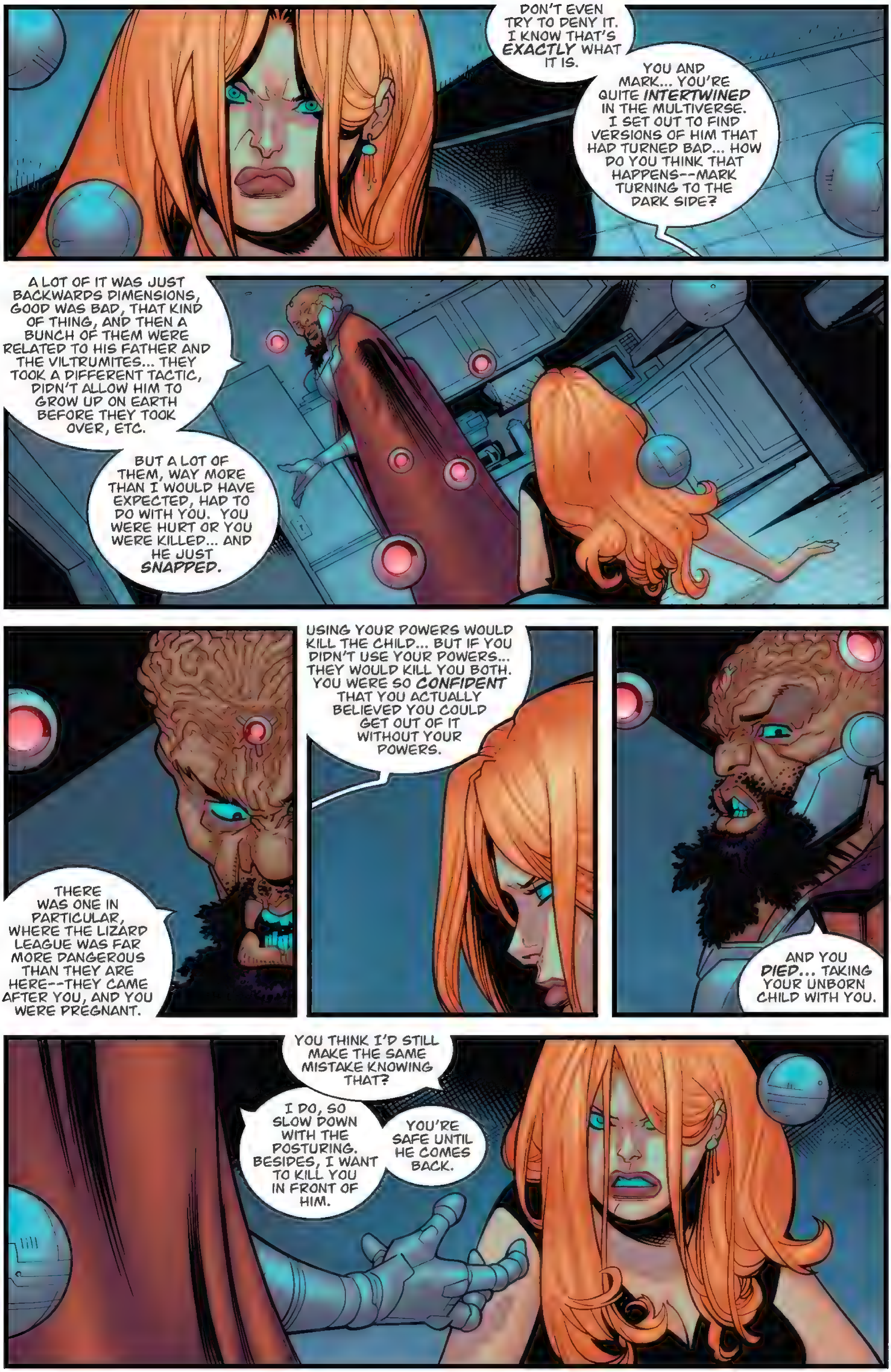

PULL UP A SEAT... THERE'S PLENTY OF THIGH LEFT. I JUST GOT STARTED REALLY... IT'S A FRESH KILL.
THE THIGH IS THE BEST PART. TASTY.
I THOUGHT THIS WAS THE LAST ONE, BUT YOU... I FORGOT ABOUT YOU... YOU'LL BE... UH...
NEVER MIND.
OH, JEEZ-- I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
THEY THINK I PLANNED IT? I DIDN'T THINK I'D BE LAST! HOW COULD I PLAN IT? WE WERE DESPERATE... STARVING... WE WAITED WEEKS, WE WERE DYING.
AND HE WAS SUCH AN ASSHOLE. I MEAN, HE WAS US, WE ARE ALL THE SAME... BUT HE WAS THE WORST.
THEN WE GOT HUNGRY AGAIN... AND AGAIN. IT KEPT NOT BEING ME.
MAYBE I DON'T LOOK TASTY? DO I LOOK TASTY?! I DON'T WANT TO NOT LOOK TASTY!
OH, GOD... THAT'S RIGHT... THERE WERE EIGHT OF YOU... ANGSTROM BROUGHT YOU TO MY DIMENSION, BUT WE NEVER KNEW WHERE YOU WENT...
WAIT A MINUTE?! DID WE EAT YOU ALREADY? WE DID, DIDN'T WE?!
ARE YOU REAL?
OH, YOU'RE REAL ALRIGHT!
HEY!
AND FRESH! FRESHER THAN THAT ONE...

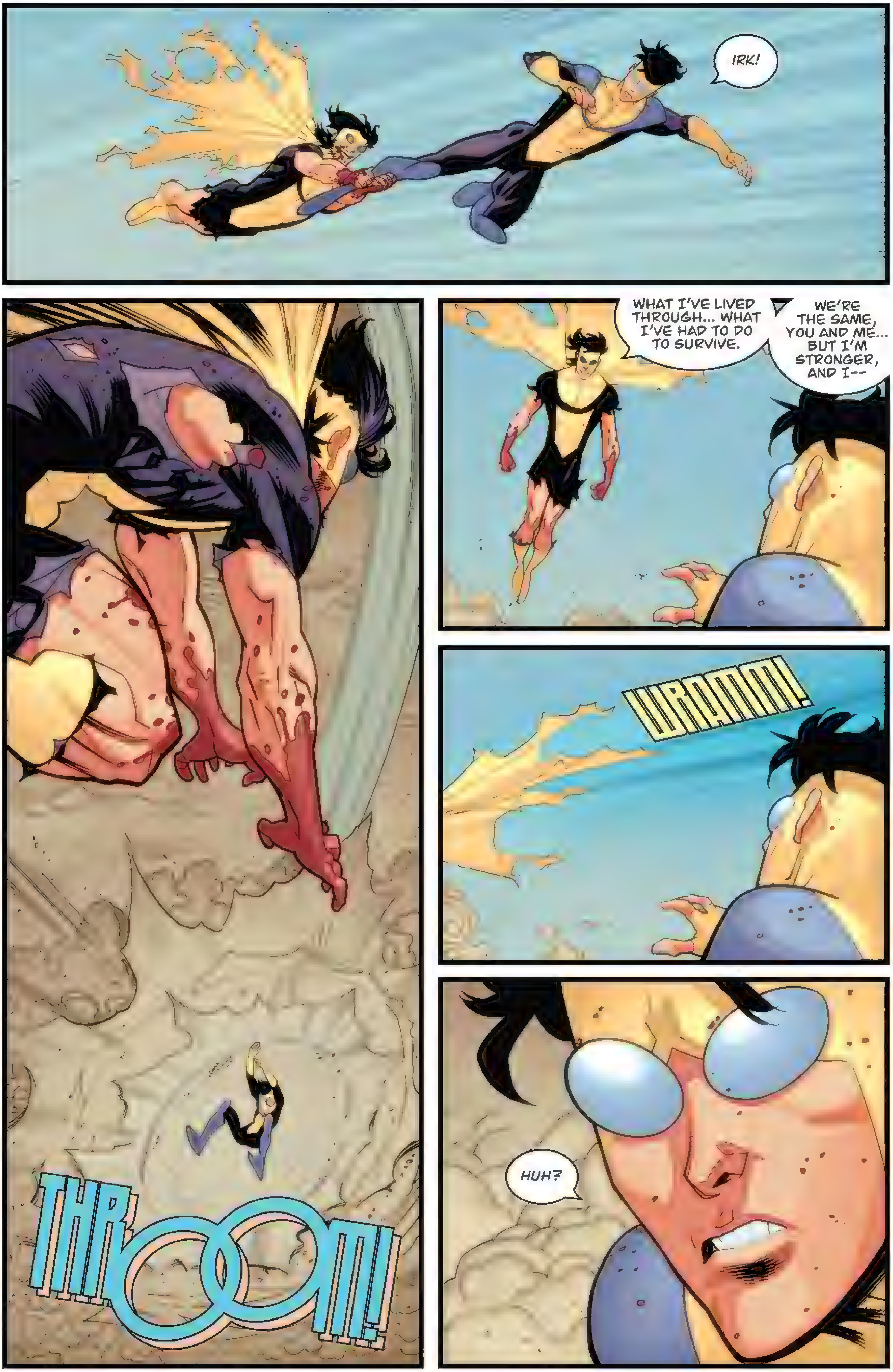
KRAK!
BACK OFF!
WRAMM!
SO HUNGRY... IT NEVER GOES AWAY... BUT ALSO BORED.
SO BORED.
THANK YOU FOR PUTTING UP A FIGHT.
WINNER GETS THE MEAT!

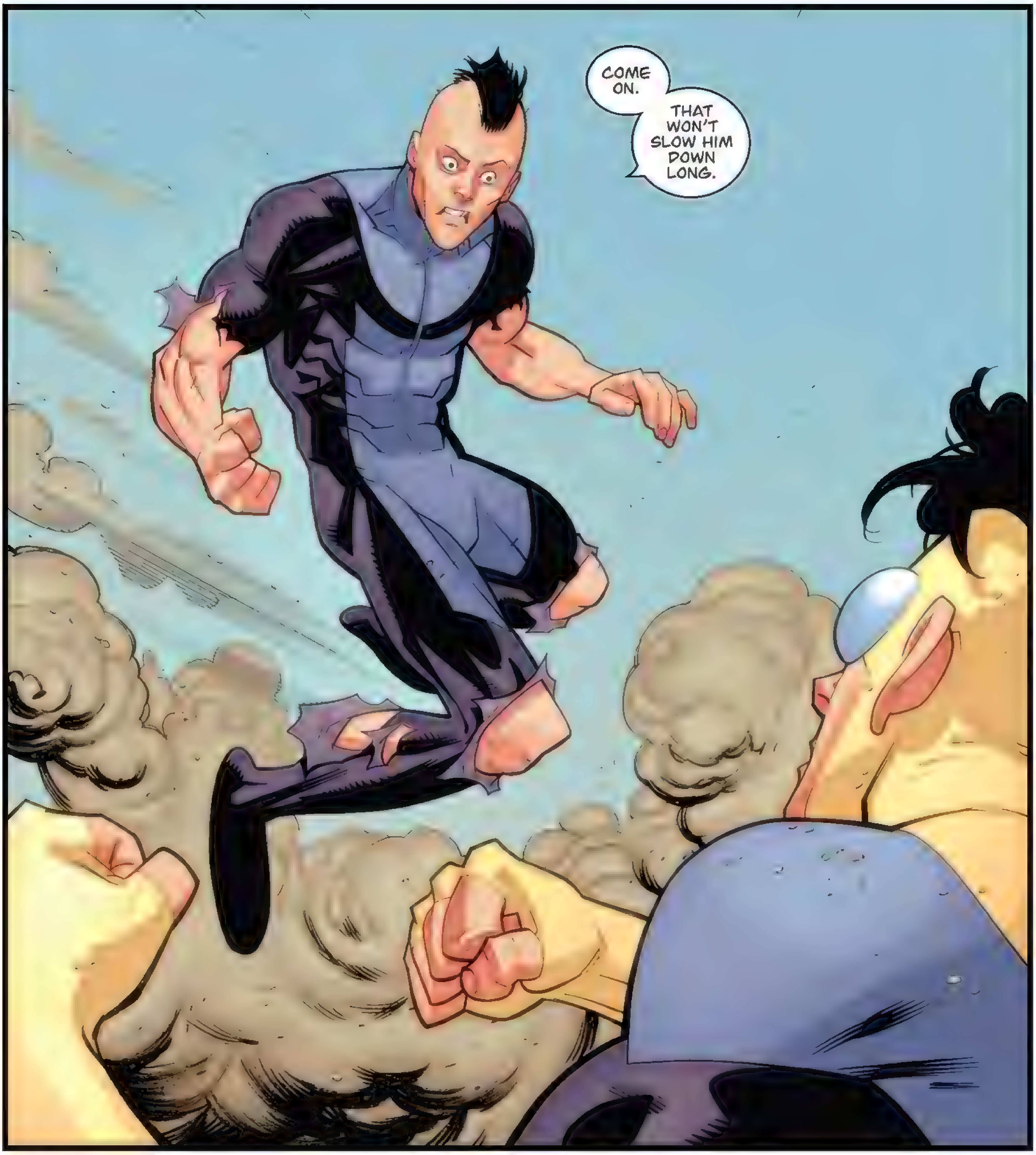

STOP! ANGSTROM WON'T LEAVE ME HERE LIKE HE DID YOU! I PROMISE!
I COULD HELP YOU GET BACK TO YOUR DIMENSION!
NOTICED WE WEREN'T REALLY GETTING WEAKER WHEN WE GOT HUNGRY. WEIRD!
THINK I'M WEAK FROM BEING STRANDED HERE?!
YOU'RE WEAK FROM NOT BEING STRANDED. WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER!
WROKK!
I CAN HELP YOU!
THEN HOLD STILL AND HELP ME SINK MY TEETH INTO YOUR SOFT, PINK FLESH!
YOU'RE STILL STRONG--LET'S SEE HOW FAST YOU ARE.
REALLY FAST!

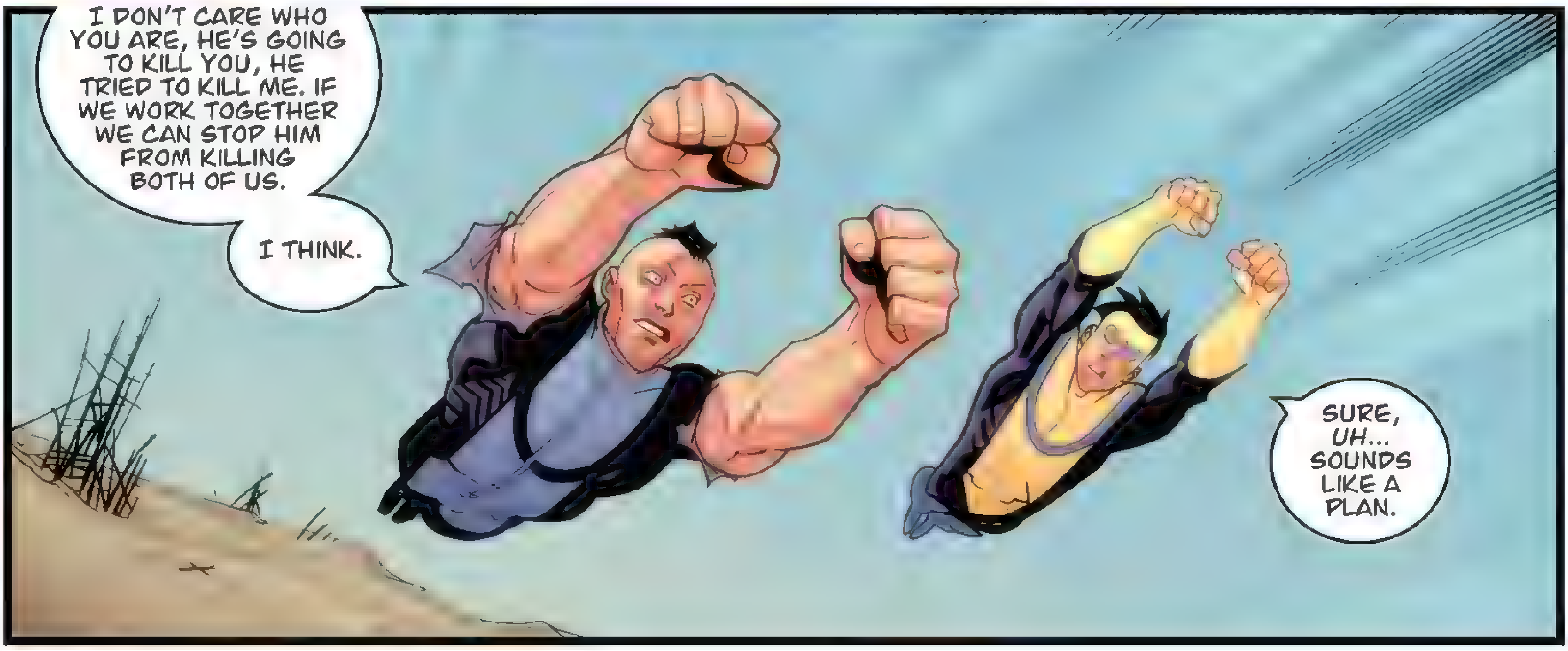

THE GRAYSON HOME.
I THINK I MIGHT FIX MYSELF SOME LUNCH... WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS HERE?
WAS GOING TO MAKE A SANDWICH, BUT THERE'S NO LUNCHMEAT.
HOW OLD IS THIS CHINESE TAKE OUT?
WERE YOU GOING TO TRY SOMETHING BECAUSE MY BACK WAS TURNED?
DID YOU NOT NOTICE THE ORBS? ASIDE FROM BEING AN EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE OFFENSIVE WEAPON... THEY ALSO ALLOW ME TO SEE THROUGH THEM.
I USED TO HAVE TO WATCH MONITORS TO SEE THEIR FEEDS, BUT I'VE BEEN UPGRADED.
YOU WERE CONSIDERING BLASTING ME WITH SOME KIND OF ENERGY YOU CAN GENERATE WITH YOUR HANDS. YOU HAVE POWERS.

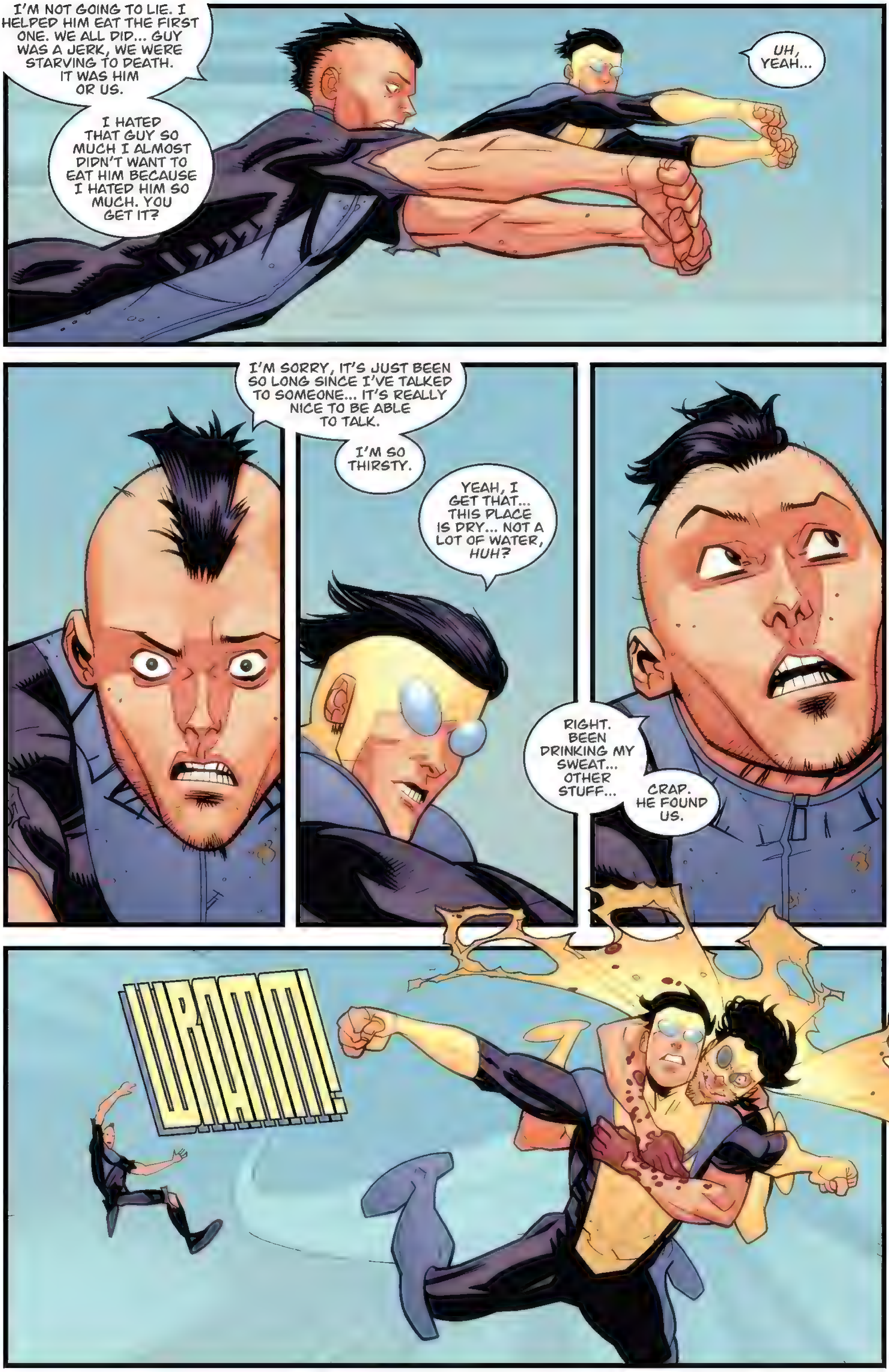
WAIT A MINUTE... YOU *ARE* HER!
HE WAS WITH SOME NORMAL GIRL WHEN WE FIRST STARTED OUR SPARRING. I THOUGHT THIS WAS A DIMENSION WHERE HE SOMEHOW DIDN'T END UP WITH YOU.
THE MIGHTY *ATOM EVE.*
AND IN THIS DIMENSION YOU HAVE A *MIGHTY WAISTLINE,* TOO!
WHICH IS STRANGE... YOU'RE SO VERY *ACTIVE* IN ALL THE OTHER DIMENSIONS WHERE I'VE OBSERVED YOU.
AND THEN THERE'S THE STRANGE FACT THAT YOU HAVEN'T BOTHERED TO ATTACK ME THE ENTIRE TIME I'VE BEEN HERE... EVEN WHEN MY ORBS NEARLY *CHOKED THE LIFE* OUT OF YOU...
HMMMM...
YOU'RE *PREGNANT...* AREN'T YOU?

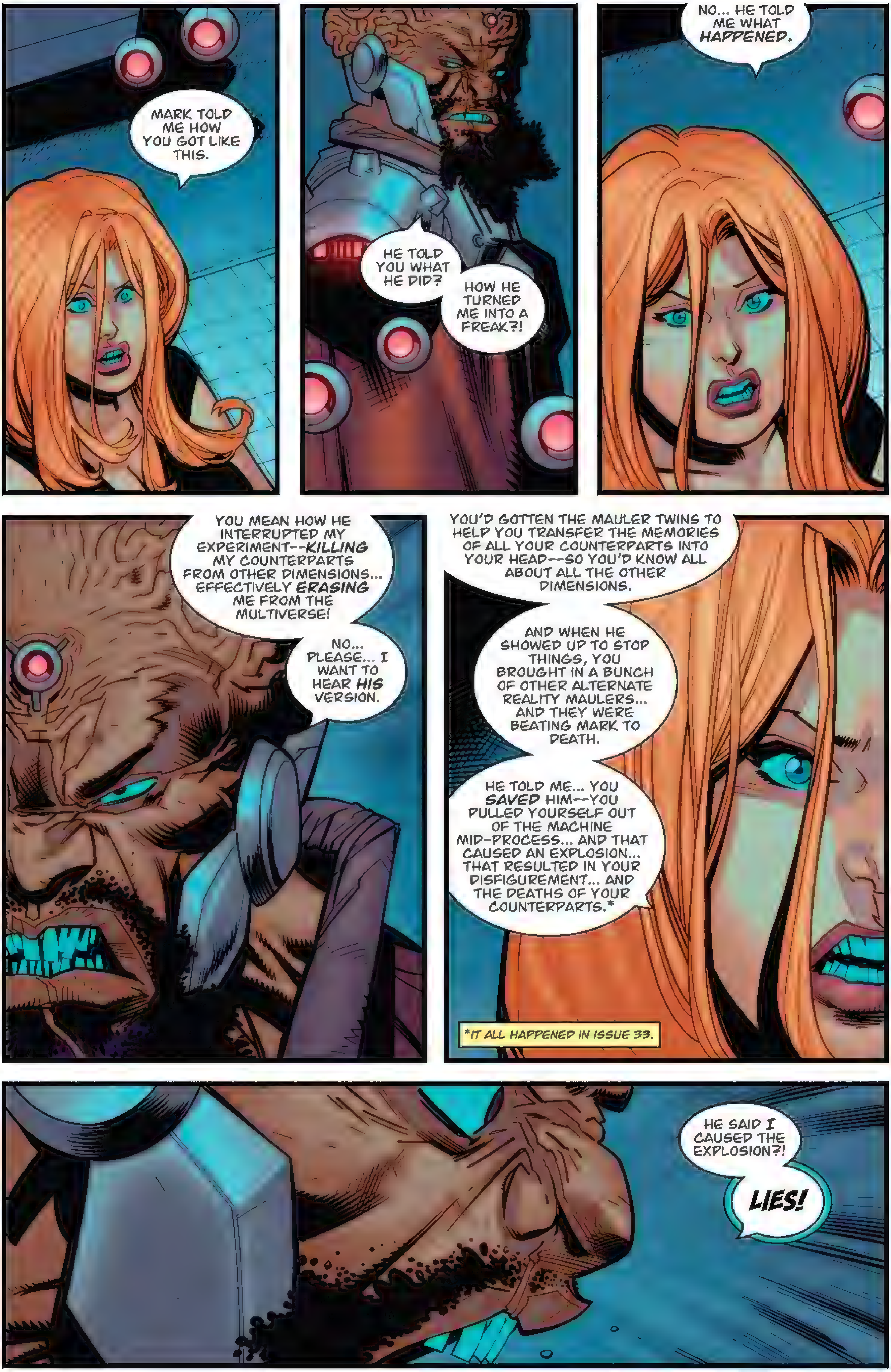

DON'T EVEN TRY TO DENY IT. I KNOW THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT IT IS.
YOU AND MARK... YOU'RE QUITE *INTERTWINED* IN THE MULTIVERSE. I SET OUT TO FIND VERSIONS OF HIM THAT HAD TURNED BAD... HOW DO YOU THINK THAT HAPPENS--MARK TURNING TO THE DARK SIDE?
A LOT OF IT WAS JUST BACKWARDS DIMENSIONS, GOOD WAS BAD, THAT KIND OF THING, AND THEN A BUNCH OF THEM WERE RELATED TO HIS FATHER AND THE VILTRUMITES... THEY TOOK A DIFFERENT TACTIC, DIDN'T ALLOW HIM TO GROW UP ON EARTH BEFORE THEY TOOK OVER, ETC.
BUT A LOT OF THEM, WAY MORE THAN I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED, HAD TO DO WITH YOU. YOU WERE HURT OR YOU WERE KILLED... AND HE JUST **SNAPPED.**
THERE WAS ONE IN PARTICULAR, WHERE THE LIZARD LEAGUE WAS FAR MORE DANGEROUS THAN THEY ARE HERE--THEY CAME AFTER YOU, AND YOU WERE PREGNANT.
USING YOUR POWERS WOULD KILL THE CHILD... BUT IF YOU DIDN'T USE YOUR POWERS... THEY WOULD KILL YOU BOTH. YOU WERE SO *CONFIDENT* THAT YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVED YOU COULD GET OUT OF IT WITHOUT YOUR POWERS.
AND YOU *DIED*... TAKING YOUR UNBORN CHILD WITH YOU.
YOU THINK I'D STILL MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE KNOWING THAT?
I DO, SO SLOW DOWN WITH THE POSTURING. BESIDES, I WANT TO KILL YOU IN FRONT OF HIM.
YOU'RE SAFE UNTIL HE COMES BACK.

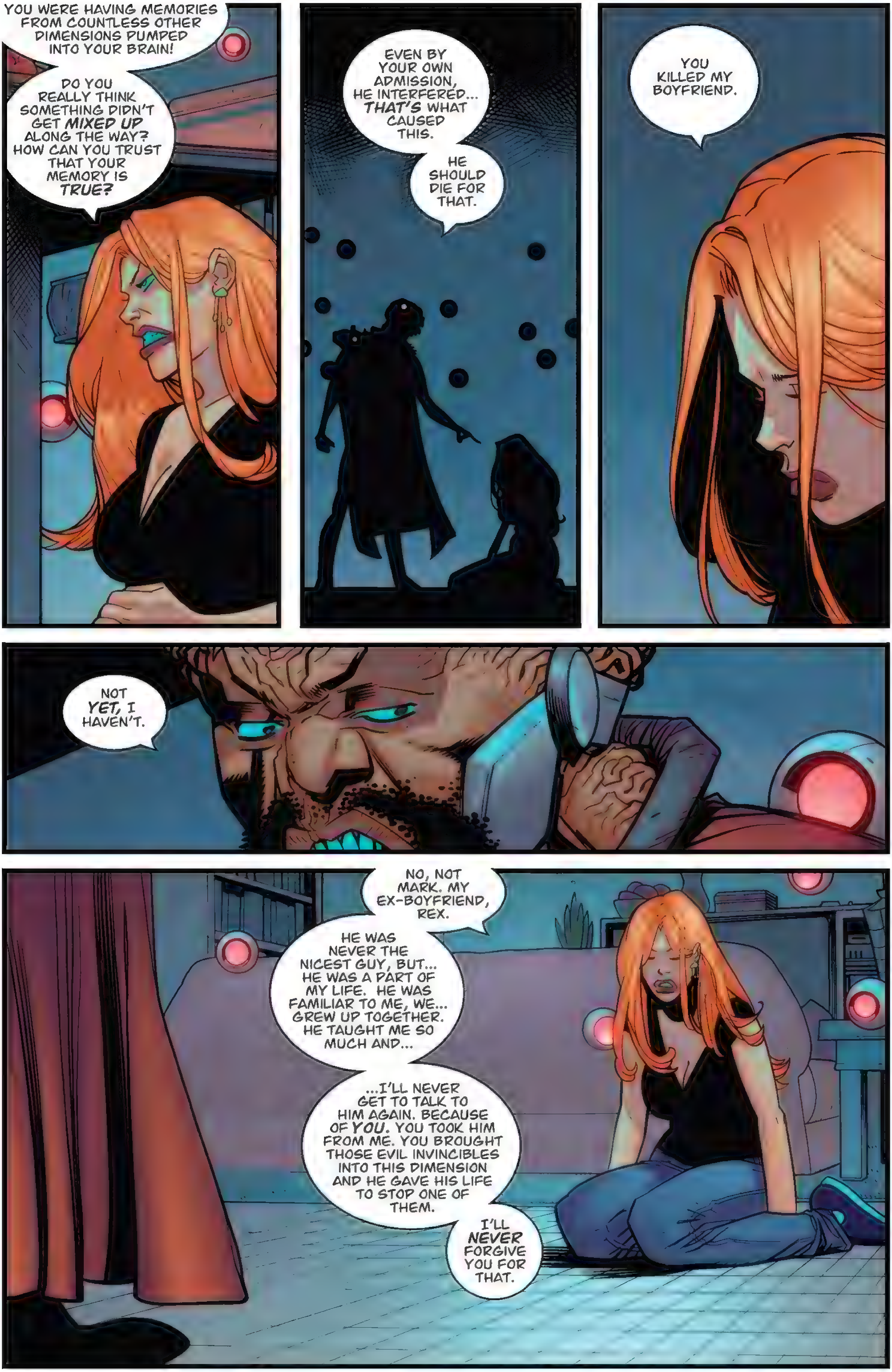

IRK!
THROOM!
WHAT I'VE LIVED THROUGH... WHAT I'VE HAD TO DO TO SURVIVE.
WE'RE THE SAME, YOU AND ME... BUT I'M STRONGER, AND I--
WRAMM!
HUH?

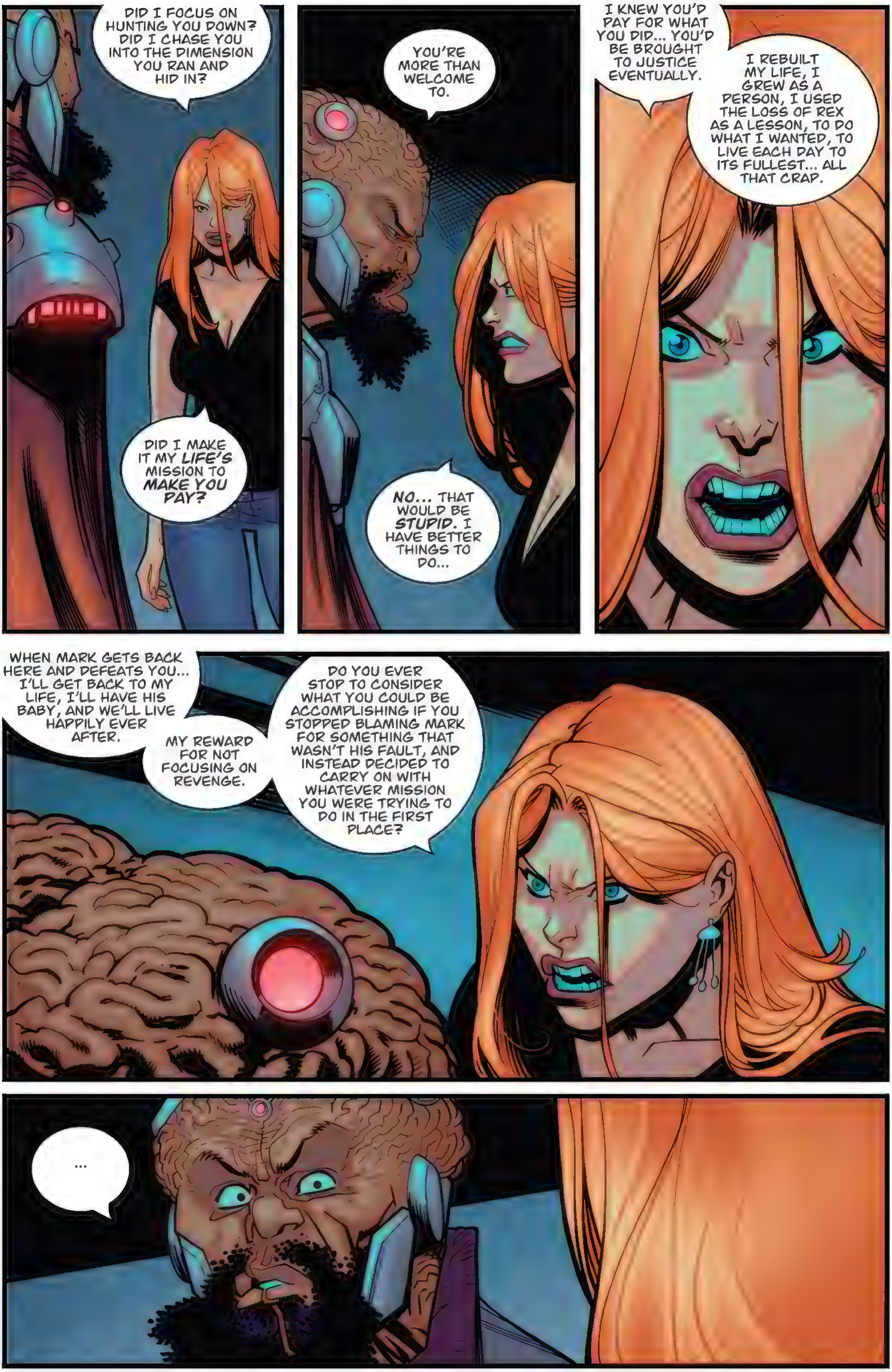

COME ON.
THAT WON'T SLOW HIM DOWN LONG.

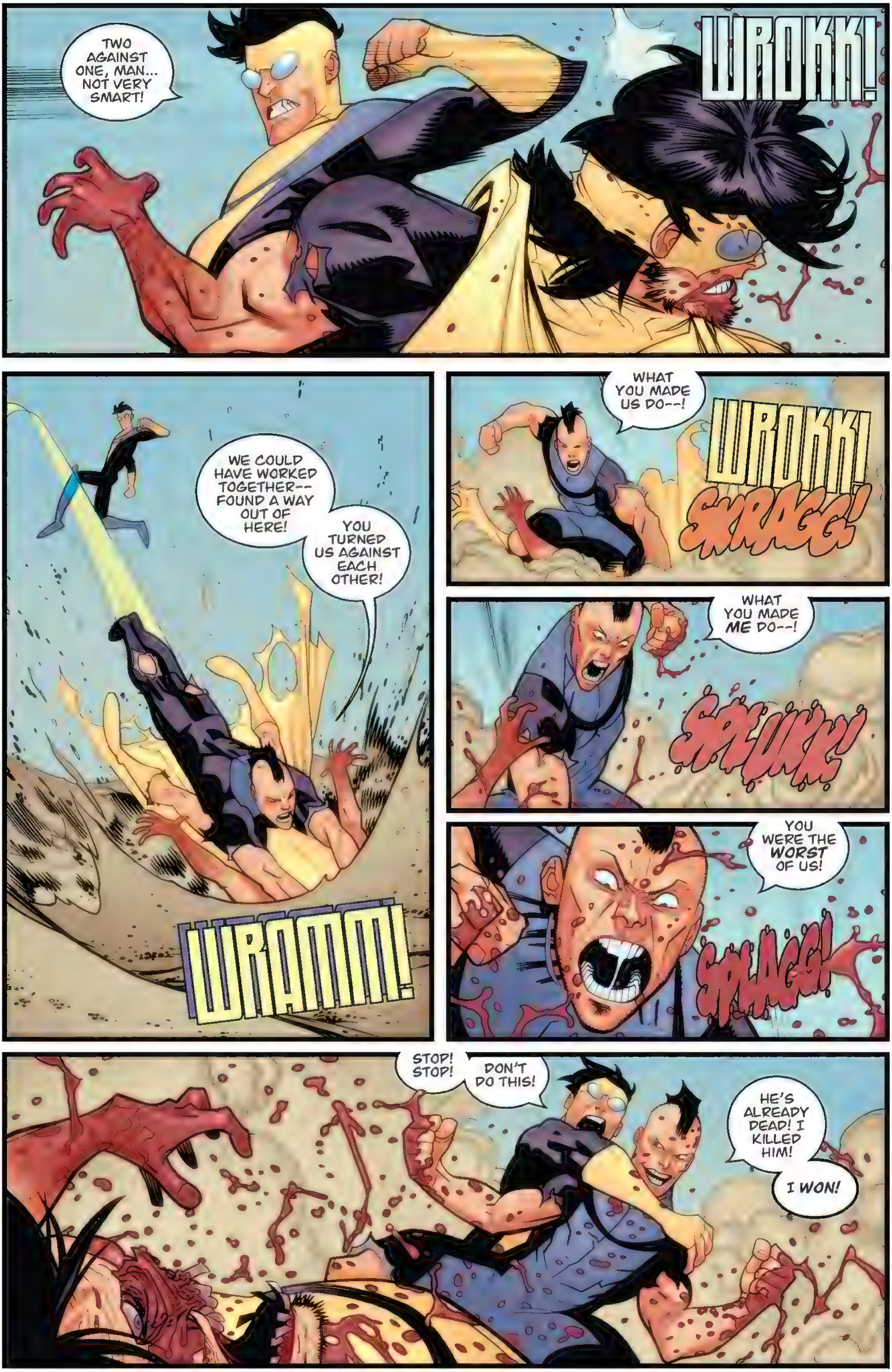

I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE, HE'S GOING TO KILL YOU, HE TRIED TO KILL ME. IF WE WORK TOGETHER WE CAN STOP HIM FROM KILLING BOTH OF US.
I THINK.
SURE, UH... SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN.

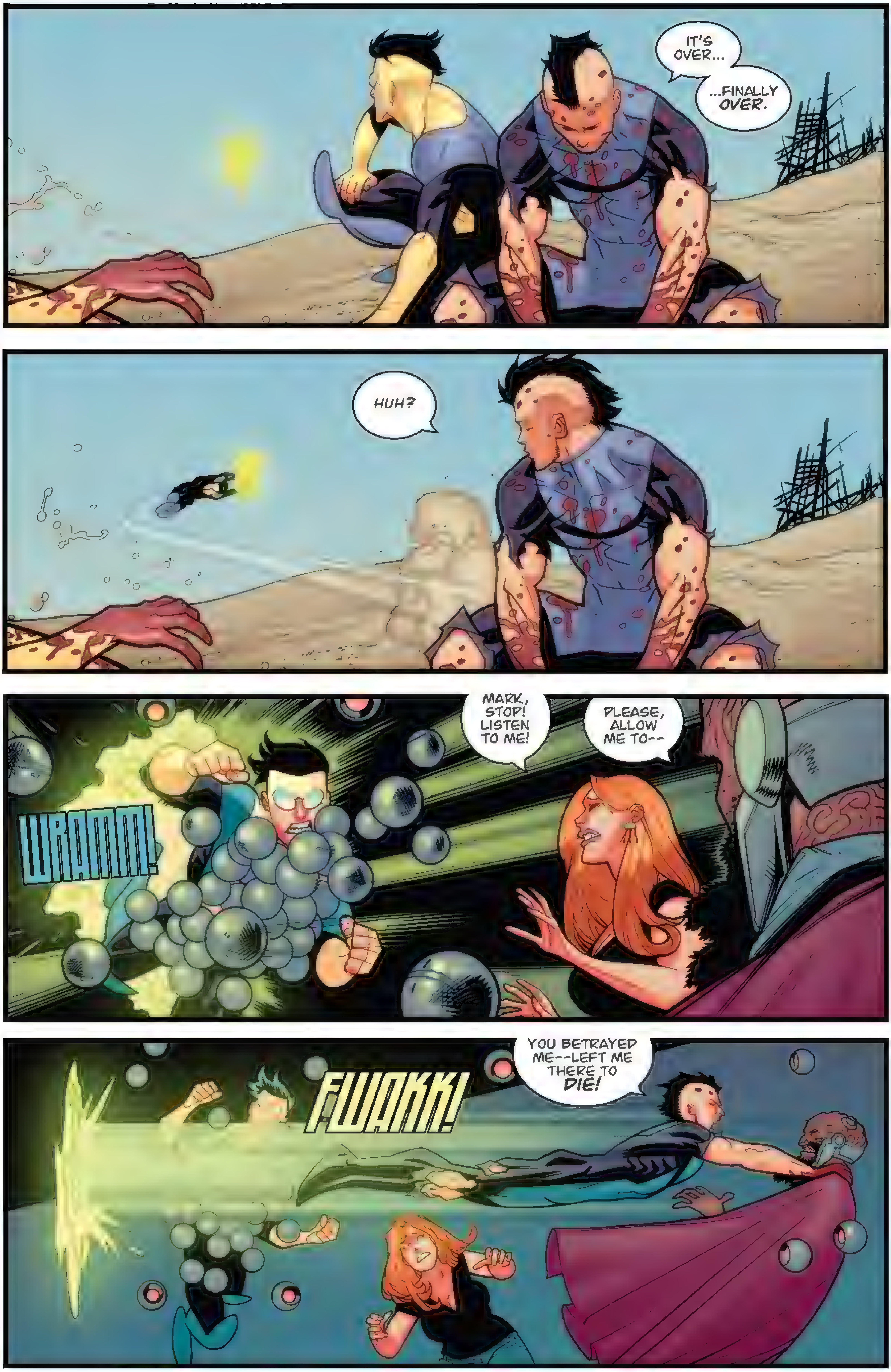

I'M NOT GOING TO LIE. I HELPED HIM EAT THE FIRST ONE. WE ALL DID... GUY WAS A JERK, WE WERE STARVING TO DEATH. IT WAS HIM OR US.
I HATED THAT GUY SO MUCH I ALMOST DIDN'T WANT TO EAT HIM BECAUSE I HATED HIM SO MUCH. YOU GET IT?
UH, YEAH...
I'M SORRY, IT'S JUST BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE TALKED TO SOMEONE... IT'S REALLY NICE TO BE ABLE TO TALK.
I'M SO THIRSTY.
YEAH, I GET THAT... THIS PLACE IS DRY... NOT A LOT OF WATER, HUH?
RIGHT. BEEN DRINKING MY SWEAT... OTHER STUFF...
CRAP. HE FOUND US.
WHAMM!

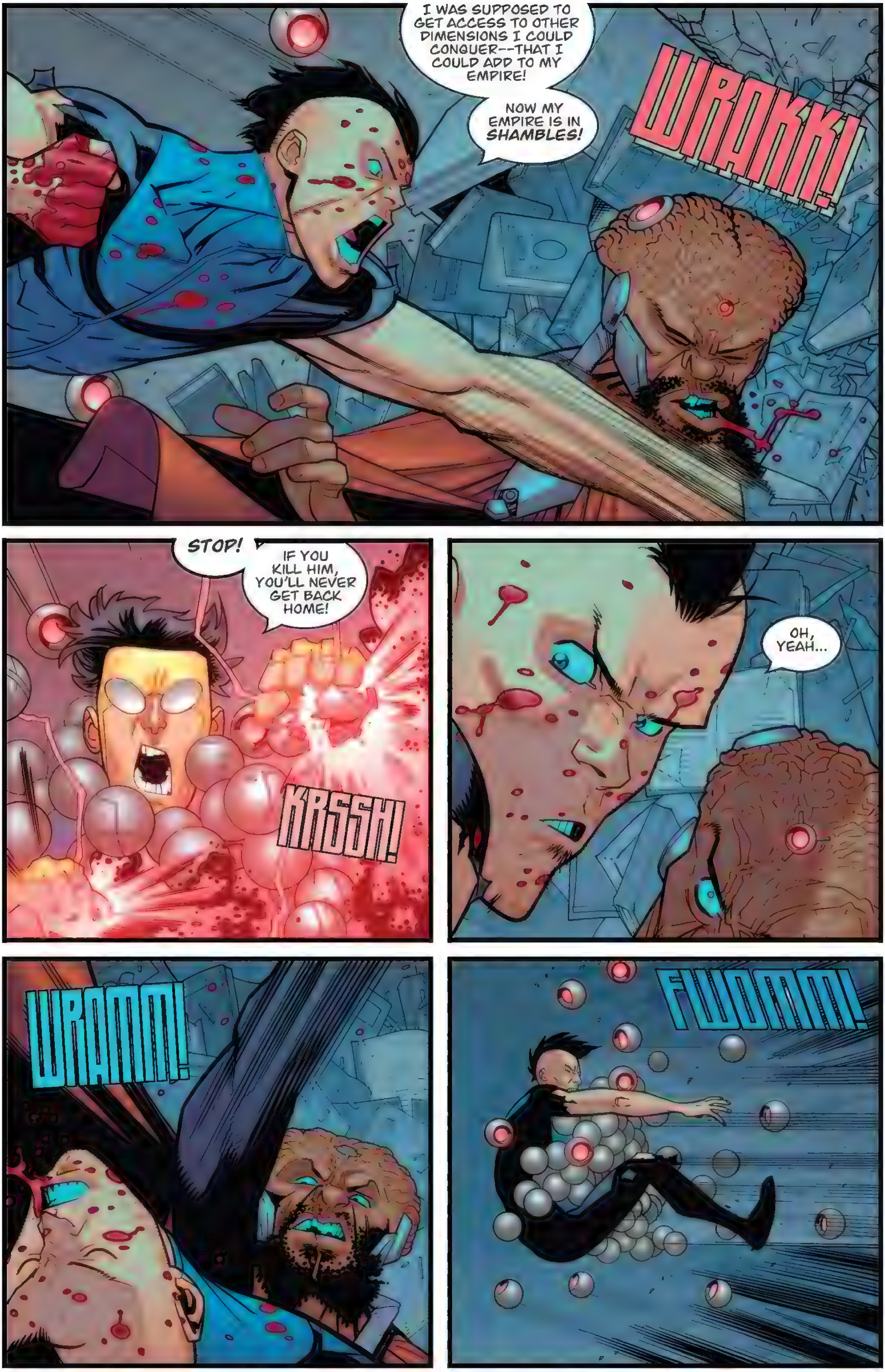

MARK TOLD ME HOW YOU GOT LIKE THIS.
HE TOLD YOU WHAT HE DID?
HOW HE TURNED ME INTO A FREAK?!
NO... HE TOLD ME WHAT **HAPPENED**.
YOU MEAN HOW HE INTERRUPTED MY EXPERIMENT--**KILLING** MY COUNTERPARTS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS... EFFECTIVELY **ERASING** ME FROM THE MULTIVERSE!
NO... PLEASE... I WANT TO HEAR **HIS** VERSION.
YOU'D GOTTEN THE MAULER TWINS TO HELP YOU TRANSFER THE MEMORIES OF ALL YOUR COUNTERPARTS INTO YOUR HEAD--SO YOU'D KNOW ALL ABOUT ALL THE OTHER DIMENSIONS.
AND WHEN HE SHOWED UP TO STOP THINGS, YOU BROUGHT IN A BUNCH OF OTHER ALTERNATE REALITY MAULERS... AND THEY WERE BEATING MARK TO DEATH.
HE TOLD ME... YOU **SAVED** HIM--YOU PULLED YOURSELF OUT OF THE MACHINE MID-PROCESS... AND THAT CAUSED AN EXPLOSION... THAT RESULTED IN YOUR DISFIGUREMENT... AND THE DEATHS OF YOUR COUNTERPARTS.*
*IT ALL HAPPENED IN ISSUE 33.
HE SAID *I* CAUSED THE EXPLOSION?!
LIES!

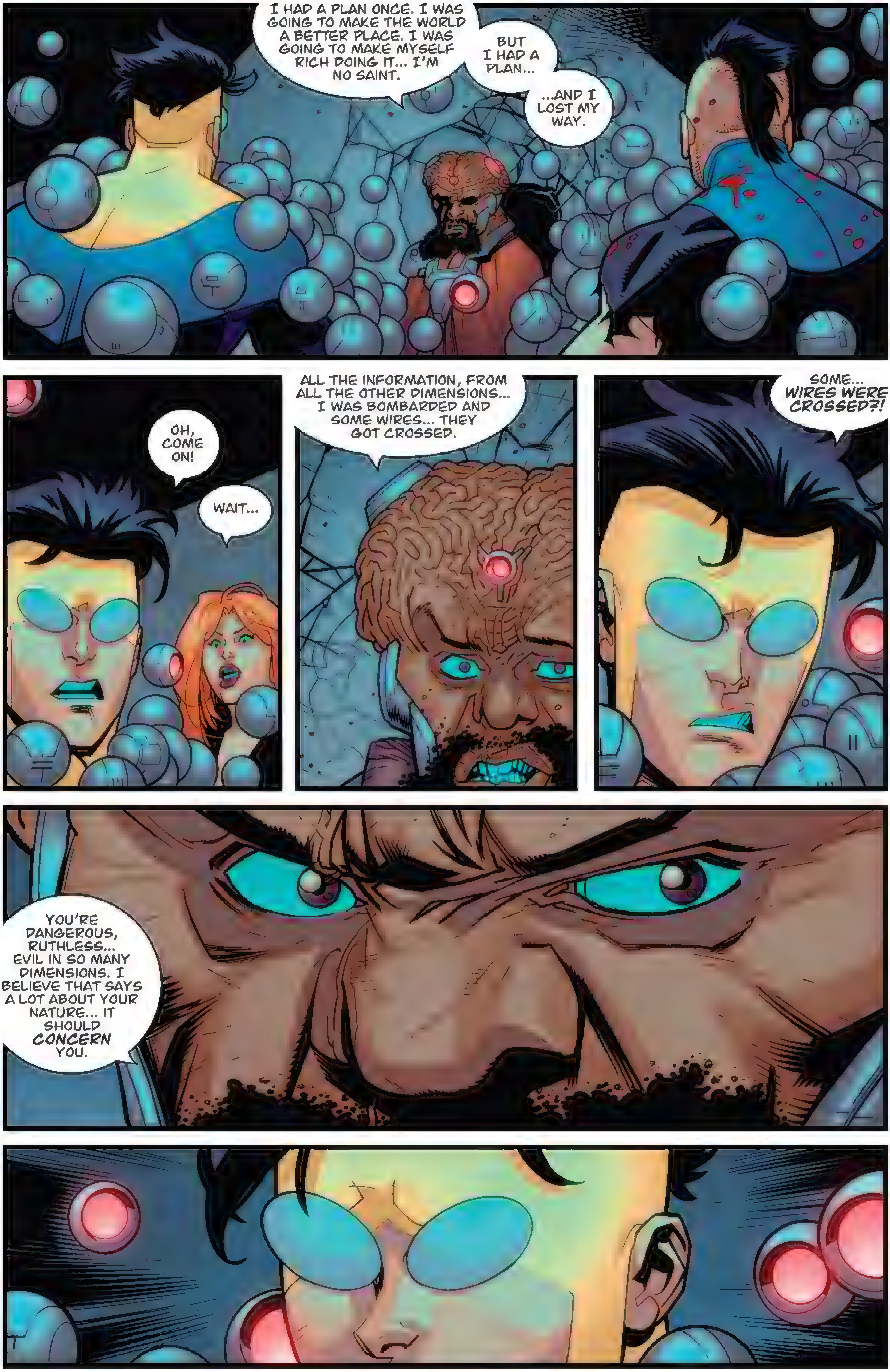

YOU WERE HAVING MEMORIES FROM COUNTLESS OTHER DIMENSIONS PUMPED INTO YOUR BRAIN!
DO YOU REALLY THINK SOMETHING DIDN'T GET *MIXED UP* ALONG THE WAY? HOW CAN YOU TRUST THAT YOUR MEMORY IS *TRUE?*
EVEN BY YOUR OWN ADMISSION, HE INTERFERED... *THAT'S* WHAT CAUSED THIS.
HE SHOULD DIE FOR THAT.
YOU KILLED MY BOYFRIEND.
NOT *YET,* I HAVEN'T.
NO, NOT MARK. MY EX-BOYFRIEND, REX.
HE WAS NEVER THE NICEST GUY, BUT... HE WAS A PART OF MY LIFE. HE WAS FAMILIAR TO ME, WE... GREW UP TOGETHER. HE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH AND...
...I'LL NEVER GET TO TALK TO HIM AGAIN. BECAUSE OF *YOU.* YOU TOOK HIM FROM ME. YOU BROUGHT THOSE EVIL INVINCIBLES INTO THIS DIMENSION AND HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO STOP ONE OF THEM.
I'LL *NEVER* FORGIVE YOU FOR THAT.

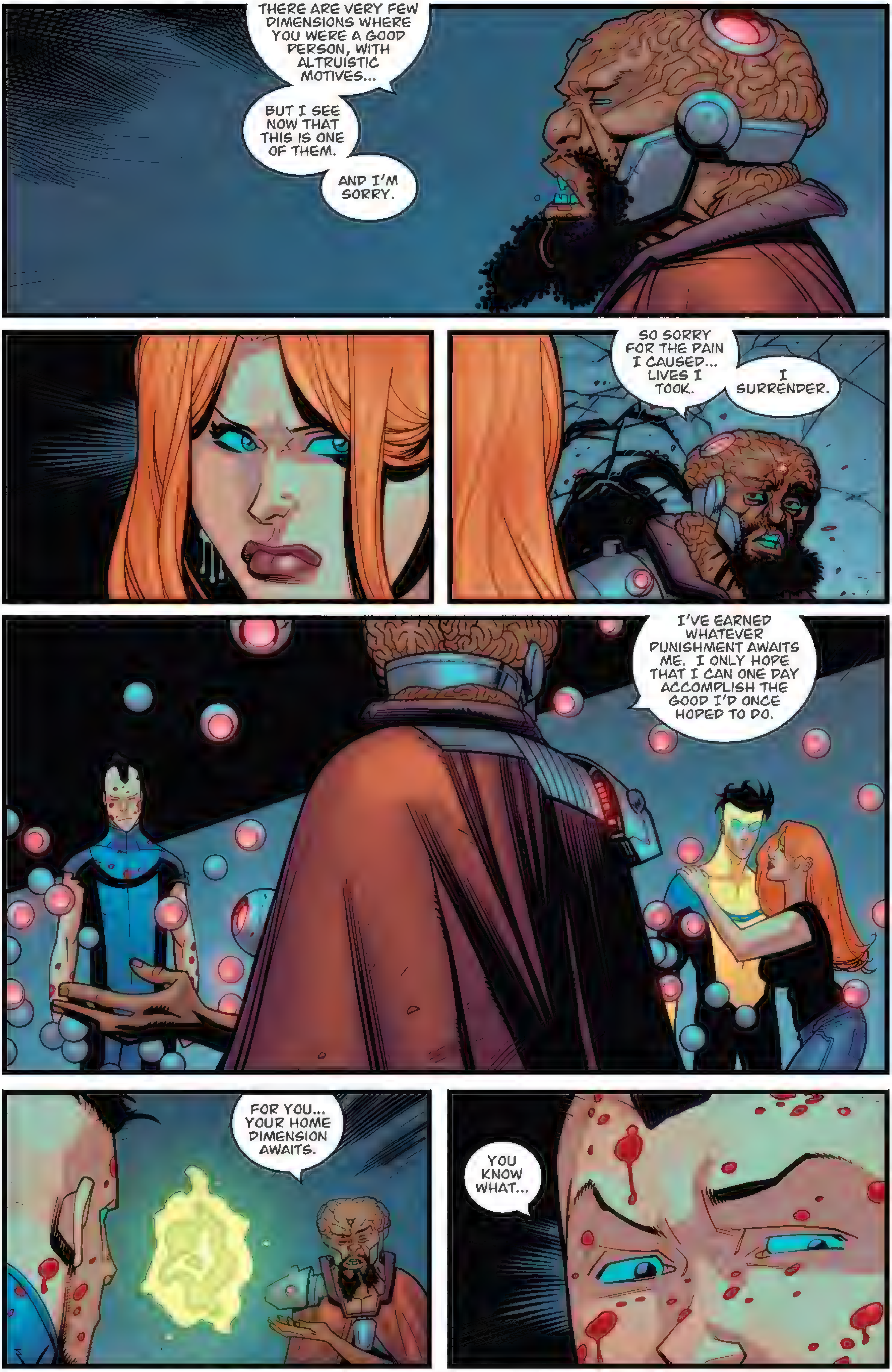

DID I FOCUS ON HUNTING YOU DOWN? DID I CHASE YOU INTO THE DIMENSION YOU RAN AND HID IN?
DID I MAKE IT MY *LIFE'S* MISSION TO *MAKE YOU PAY?*
YOU'RE MORE THAN WELCOME TO.
NO... THAT WOULD BE *STUPID.* I HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO...
I KNEW YOU'D PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID... YOU'D BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE EVENTUALLY.
I REBUILT MY LIFE, I GREW AS A PERSON, I USED THE LOSS OF REX AS A LESSON, TO DO WHAT I WANTED, TO LIVE EACH DAY TO ITS FULLEST... ALL THAT CRAP.
WHEN MARK GETS BACK HERE AND DEFEATS YOU... I'LL GET BACK TO MY LIFE, I'LL HAVE HIS BABY, AND WE'LL LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.
MY REWARD FOR NOT FOCUSING ON REVENGE.
DO YOU EVER STOP TO CONSIDER WHAT YOU COULD BE ACCOMPLISHING IF YOU STOPPED BLAMING MARK FOR SOMETHING THAT WASN'T HIS FAULT, AND INSTEAD DECIDED TO CARRY ON WITH WHATEVER MISSION YOU WERE TRYING TO DO IN THE FIRST PLACE?
...


TWO AGAINST ONE, MAN... NOT VERY SMART!
WROKK!
WE COULD HAVE WORKED TOGETHER-- FOUND A WAY OUT OF HERE!
YOU TURNED US AGAINST EACH OTHER!
WRAMM!
WHAT YOU MADE US DO--!
WROKK!
SKRAGG!
WHAT YOU MADE **ME** DO--!
SPLUKK!
YOU WERE THE **WORST** OF US!
SPLAGG!
STOP! STOP!
DON'T DO THIS!
HE'S ALREADY DEAD! I KILLED HIM!
I WON!

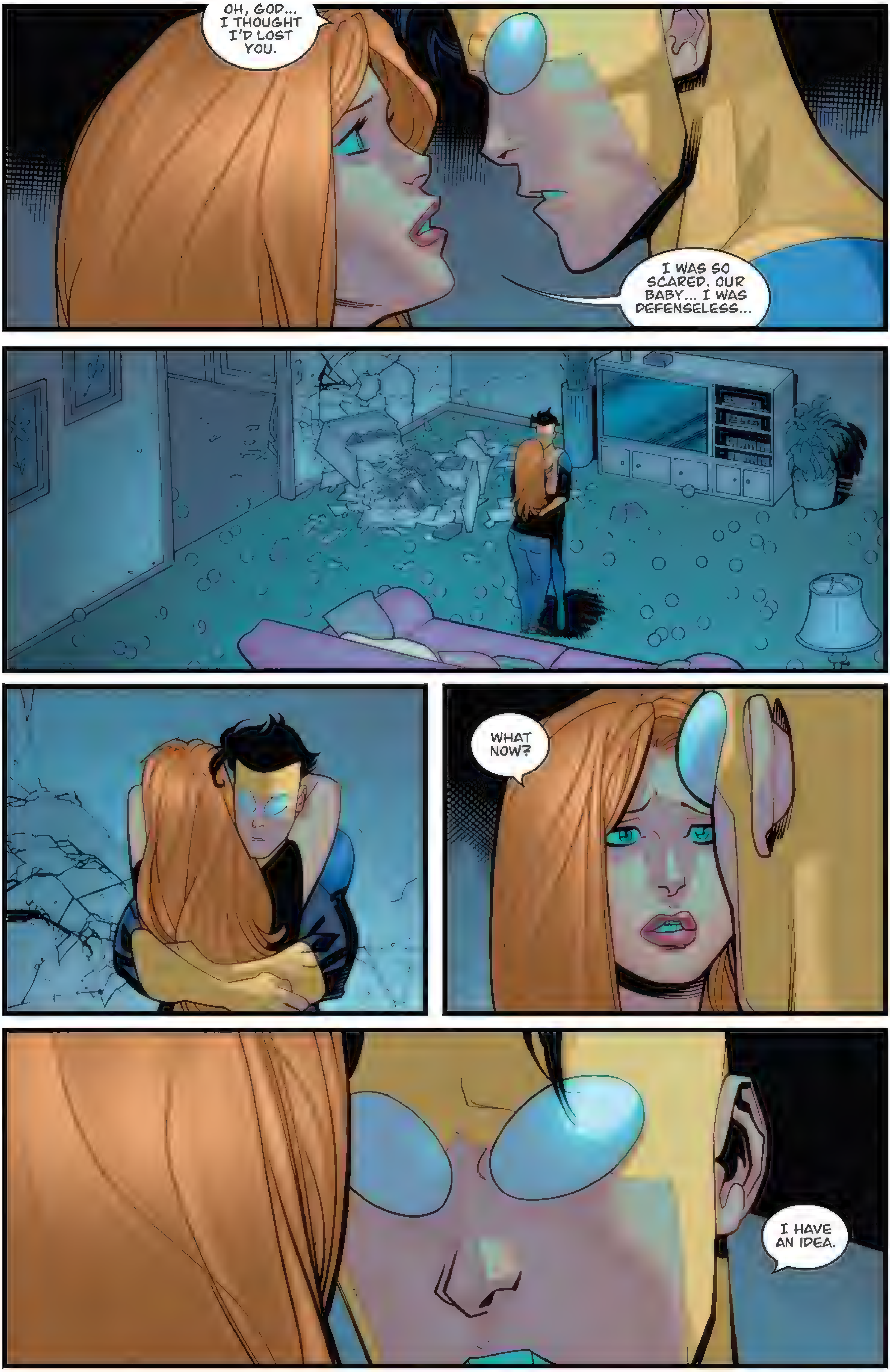

IT'S OVER...
...FINALLY OVER.
HUH?
WRAMM!
MARK, STOP! LISTEN TO ME!
PLEASE, ALLOW ME TO--
FWAKK!
YOU BETRAYED ME--LEFT ME THERE TO DIE!

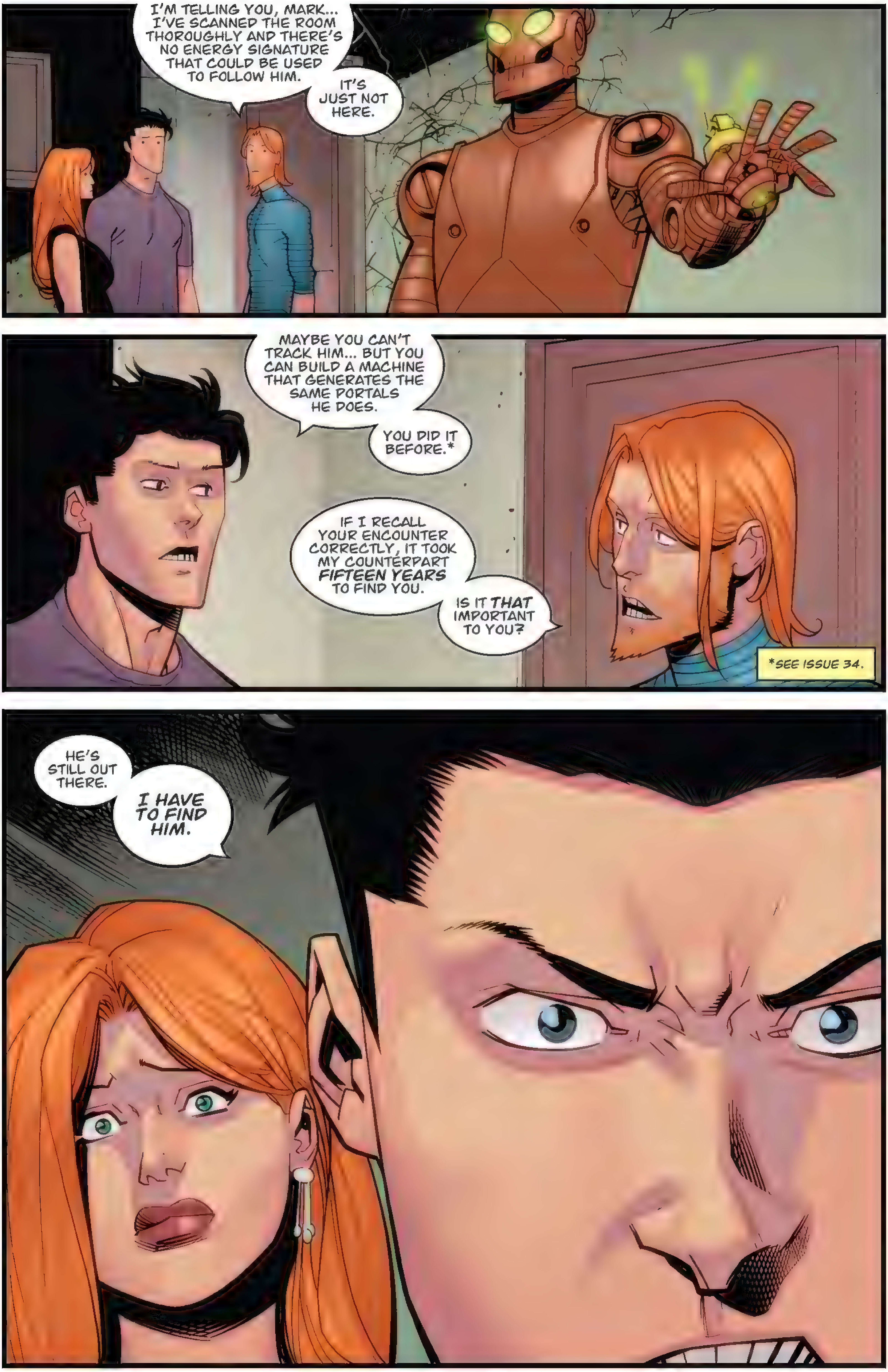

I WAS SUPPOSED TO GET ACCESS TO OTHER DIMENSIONS I COULD CONQUER--THAT I COULD ADD TO MY EMPIRE!
NOW MY EMPIRE IS IN *SHAMBLES!*
WROKK!
STOP!
IF YOU KILL HIM, YOU'LL NEVER GET BACK HOME!
KRSSH!
OH, YEAH...
WRAMM!
FWOMM!


I HAD A PLAN ONCE. I WAS GOING TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. I WAS GOING TO MAKE MYSELF RICH DOING IT... I'M NO SAINT.
BUT I HAD A PLAN...
...AND I LOST MY WAY.
OH, COME ON!
WAIT...
ALL THE INFORMATION, FROM ALL THE OTHER DIMENSIONS... I WAS BOMBARDED AND SOME WIRES... THEY GOT CROSSED.
SOME... WIRES WERE CROSSED?!
YOU'RE DANGEROUS, RUTHLESS... EVIL IN SO MANY DIMENSIONS. I BELIEVE THAT SAYS A LOT ABOUT YOUR NATURE... IT SHOULD CONCERN YOU.

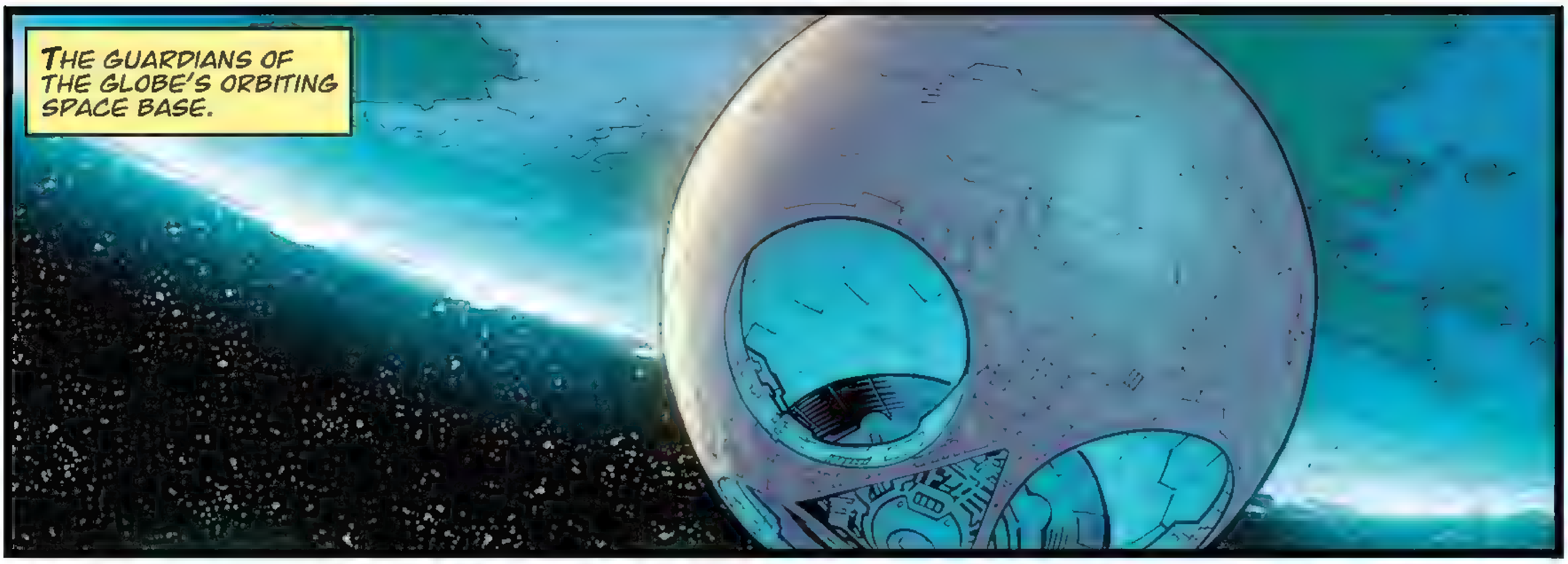

THERE ARE VERY FEW DIMENSIONS WHERE YOU WERE A GOOD PERSON, WITH ALTRUISTIC MOTIVES...
BUT I SEE NOW THAT THIS IS ONE OF THEM.
AND I'M SORRY.
SO SORRY FOR THE PAIN I CAUSED... LIVES I TOOK.
I SURRENDER.
I'VE EARNED WHATEVER PUNISHMENT AWAITS ME. I ONLY HOPE THAT I CAN ONE DAY ACCOMPLISH THE GOOD I'D ONCE HOPED TO DO.
FOR YOU... YOUR HOME DIMENSION AWAITS.
YOU KNOW WHAT...

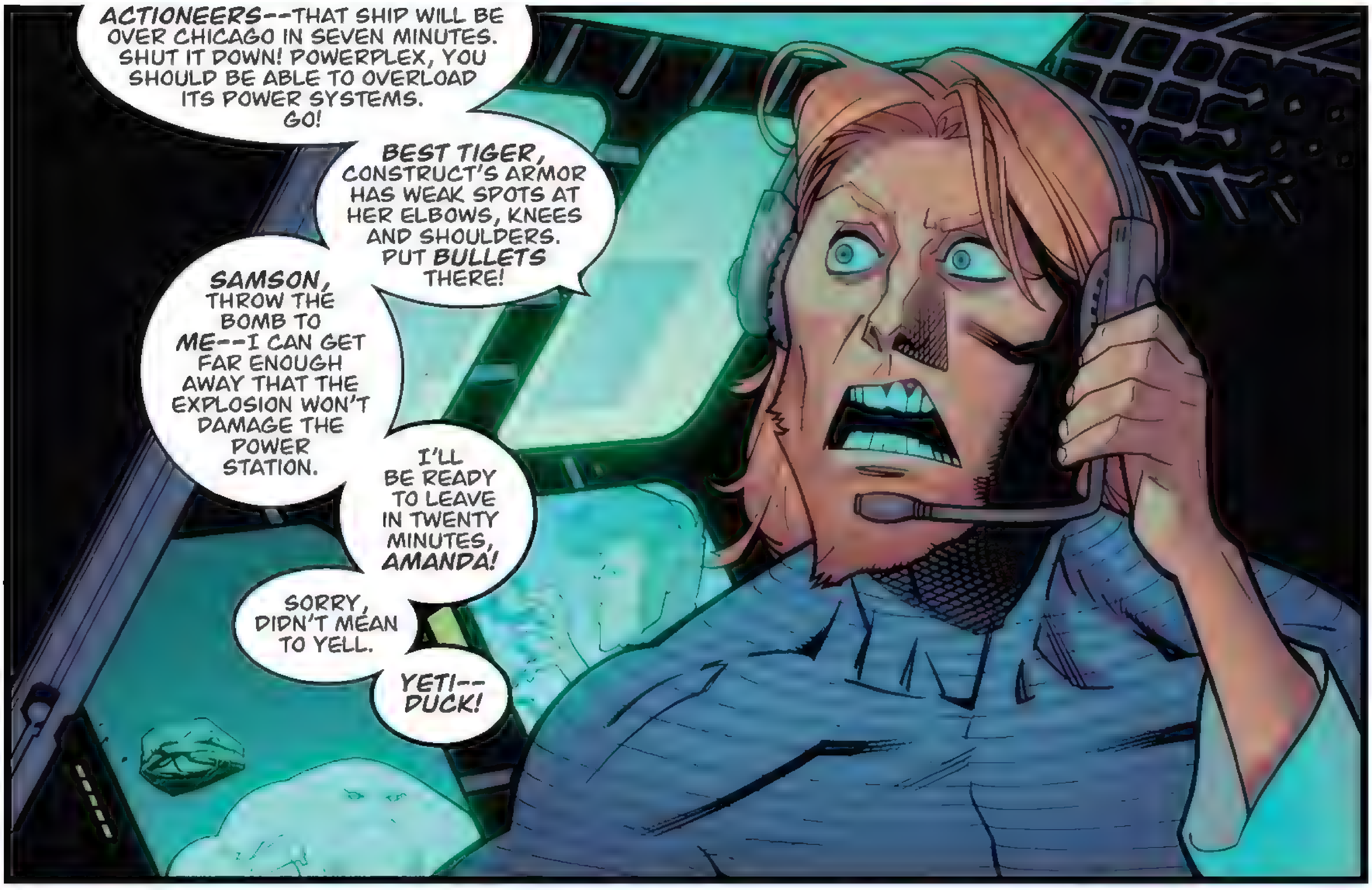
WE KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH HIS KIND WHERE I'M FROM.
NO!

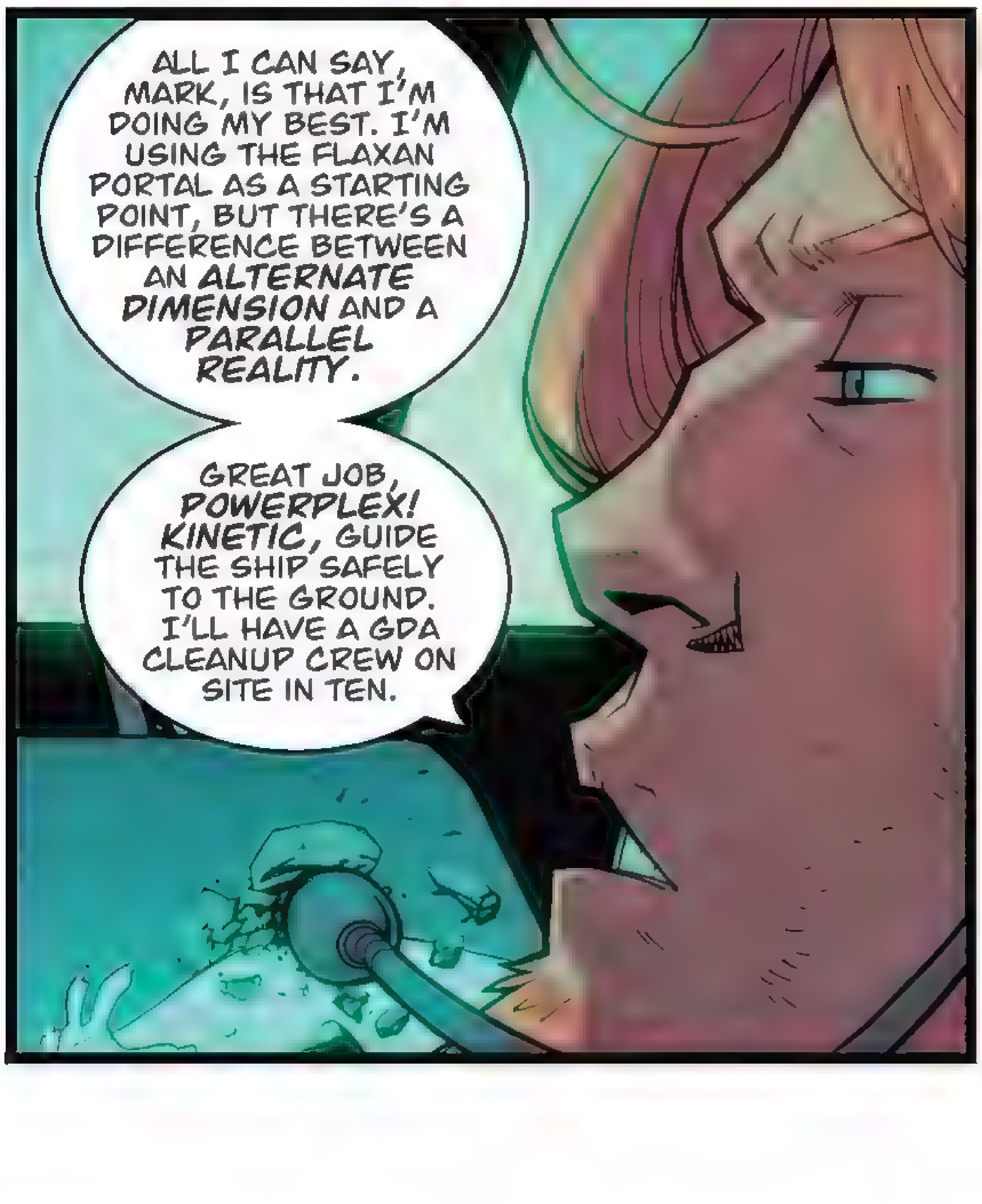

OH, GOD... I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU.
I WAS SO SCARED. OUR BABY... I WAS DEFENSELESS...
WHAT NOW?
I HAVE AN IDEA.

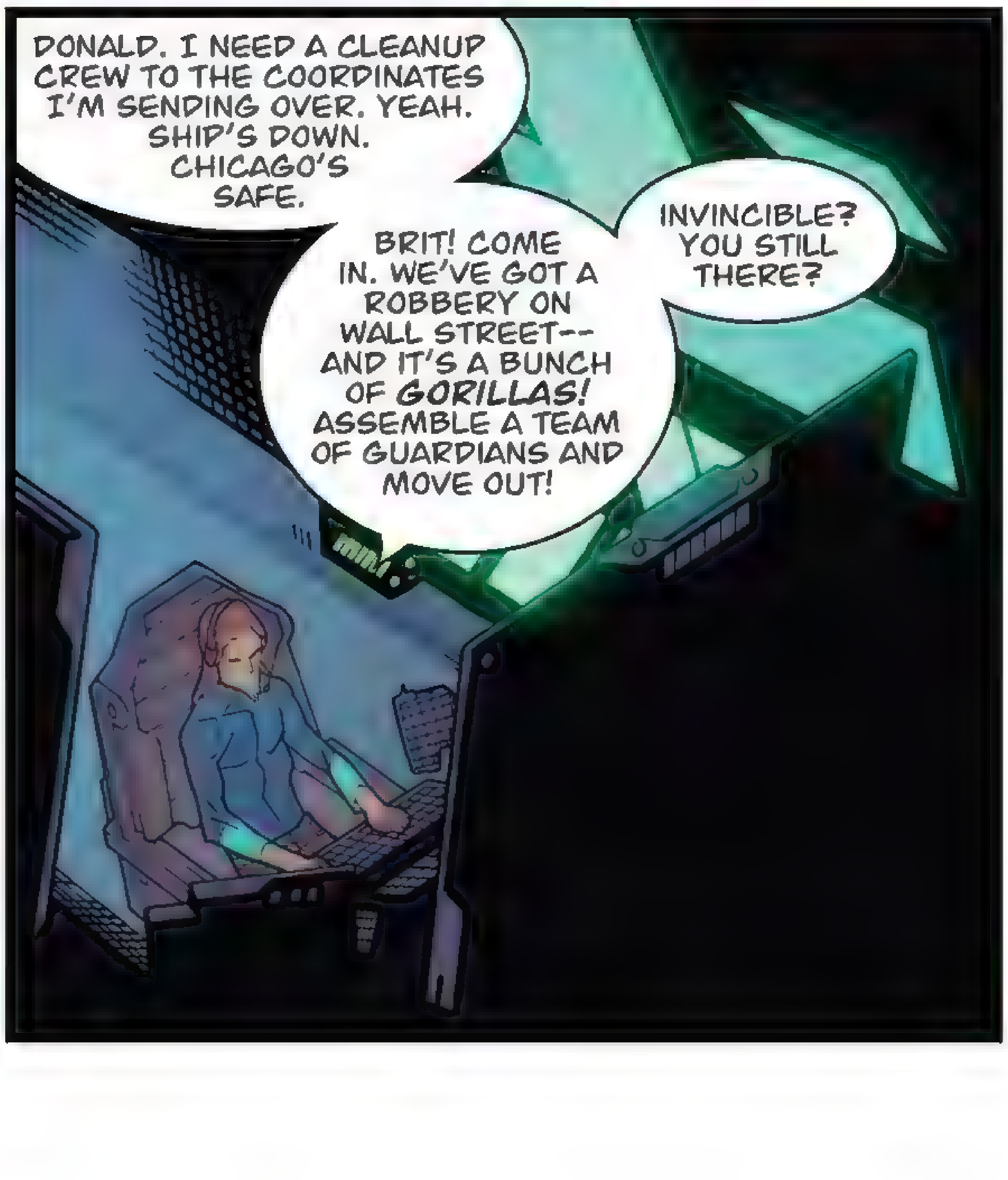

I'M TELLING YOU, MARK... I'VE SCANNED THE ROOM THOROUGHLY AND THERE'S NO ENERGY SIGNATURE THAT COULD BE USED TO FOLLOW HIM.
IT'S JUST NOT HERE.
MAYBE YOU CAN'T TRACK HIM... BUT YOU CAN BUILD A MACHINE THAT GENERATES THE SAME PORTALS HE DOES.
YOU DID IT BEFORE.*
IF I RECALL YOUR ENCOUNTER CORRECTLY, IT TOOK MY COUNTERPART *FIFTEEN YEARS* TO FIND YOU.
IS IT *THAT* IMPORTANT TO YOU?
*SEE ISSUE 34.
HE'S STILL OUT THERE.
I HAVE TO FIND HIM.

CHAPTER 105

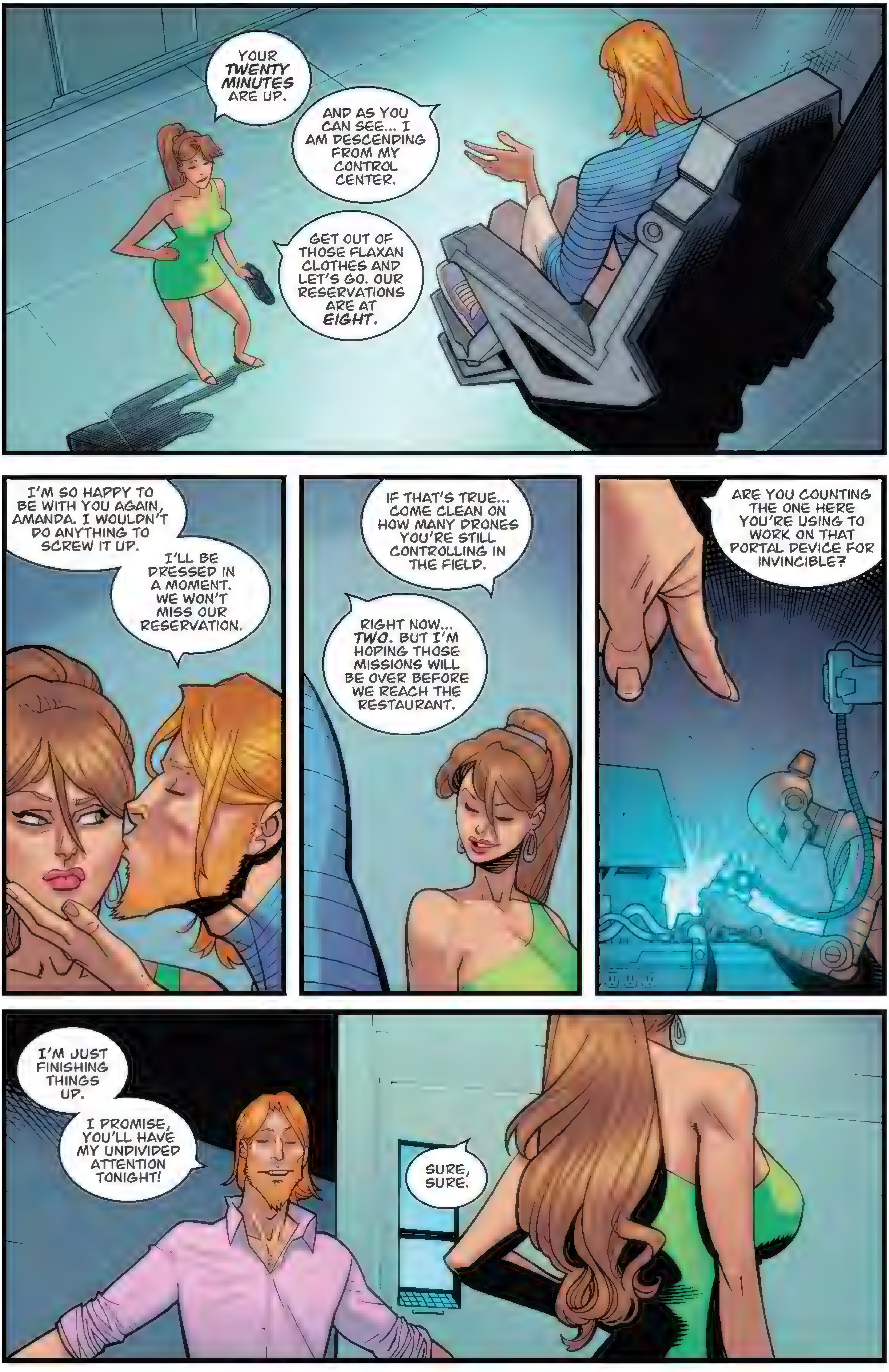

THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE'S ORBITING SPACE BASE.

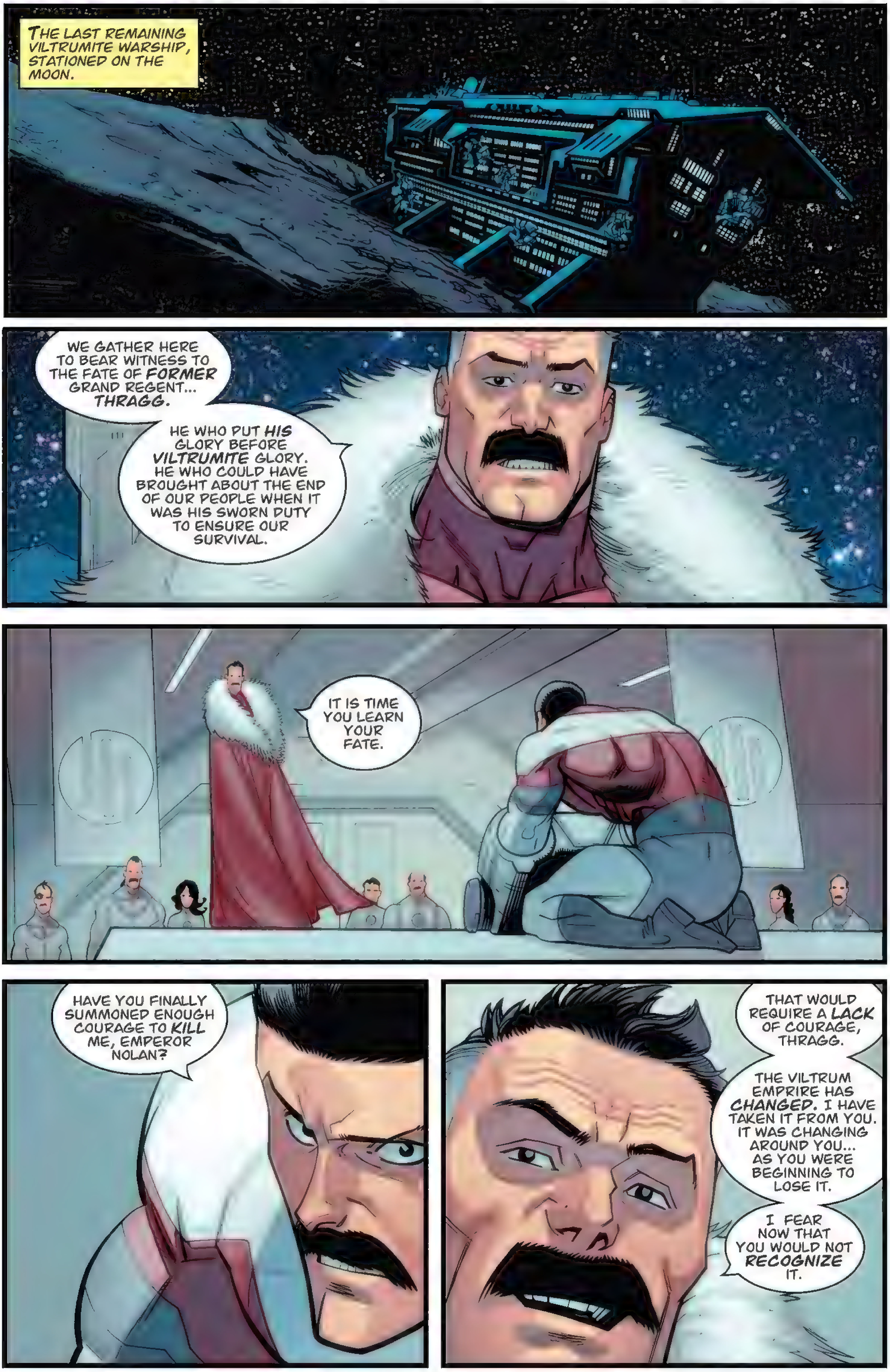

ACTIONEERS--THAT SHIP WILL BE OVER CHICAGO IN SEVEN MINUTES. SHUT IT DOWN! POWERPLEX, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO OVERLOAD ITS POWER SYSTEMS. GO!
BEST TIGER, CONSTRUCT'S ARMOR HAS WEAK SPOTS AT HER ELBOWS, KNEES AND SHOULDERS. PUT BULLETS THERE!
SAMSON, THROW THE BOMB TO ME--I CAN GET FAR ENOUGH AWAY THAT THE EXPLOSION WON'T DAMAGE THE POWER STATION.
I'LL BE READY TO LEAVE IN TWENTY MINUTES, AMANDA!
SORRY, DIDN'T MEAN TO YELL.
YETI--DUCK!


ALL I CAN SAY, MARK, IS THAT I'M DOING MY BEST. I'M USING THE FLAXAN PORTAL AS A STARTING POINT, BUT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION AND A PARALLEL REALITY.
GREAT JOB, POWERPLEX! KINETIC, GUIDE THE SHIP SAFELY TO THE GROUND. I'LL HAVE A GDA CLEANUP CREW ON SITE IN TEN.

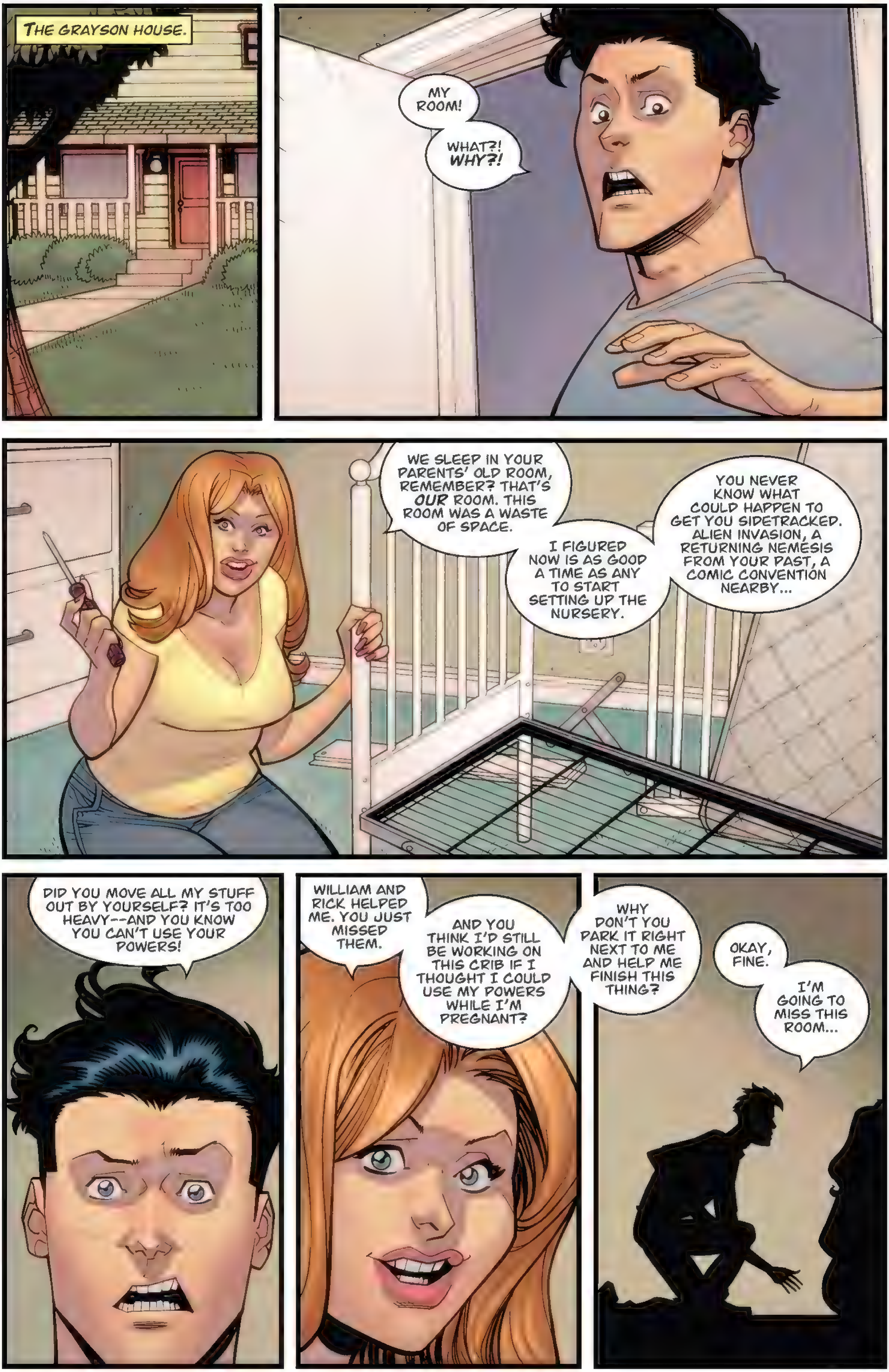

DONALD. I NEED A CLEANUP CREW TO THE COORDINATES I'M SENDING OVER. YEAH. SHIP'S DOWN. CHICAGO'S SAFE.
INVINCIBLE? YOU STILL THERE?
BRIT! COME IN. WE'VE GOT A ROBBERY ON WALL STREET--AND IT'S A BUNCH OF GORILLAS! ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF GUARDIANS AND MOVE OUT!

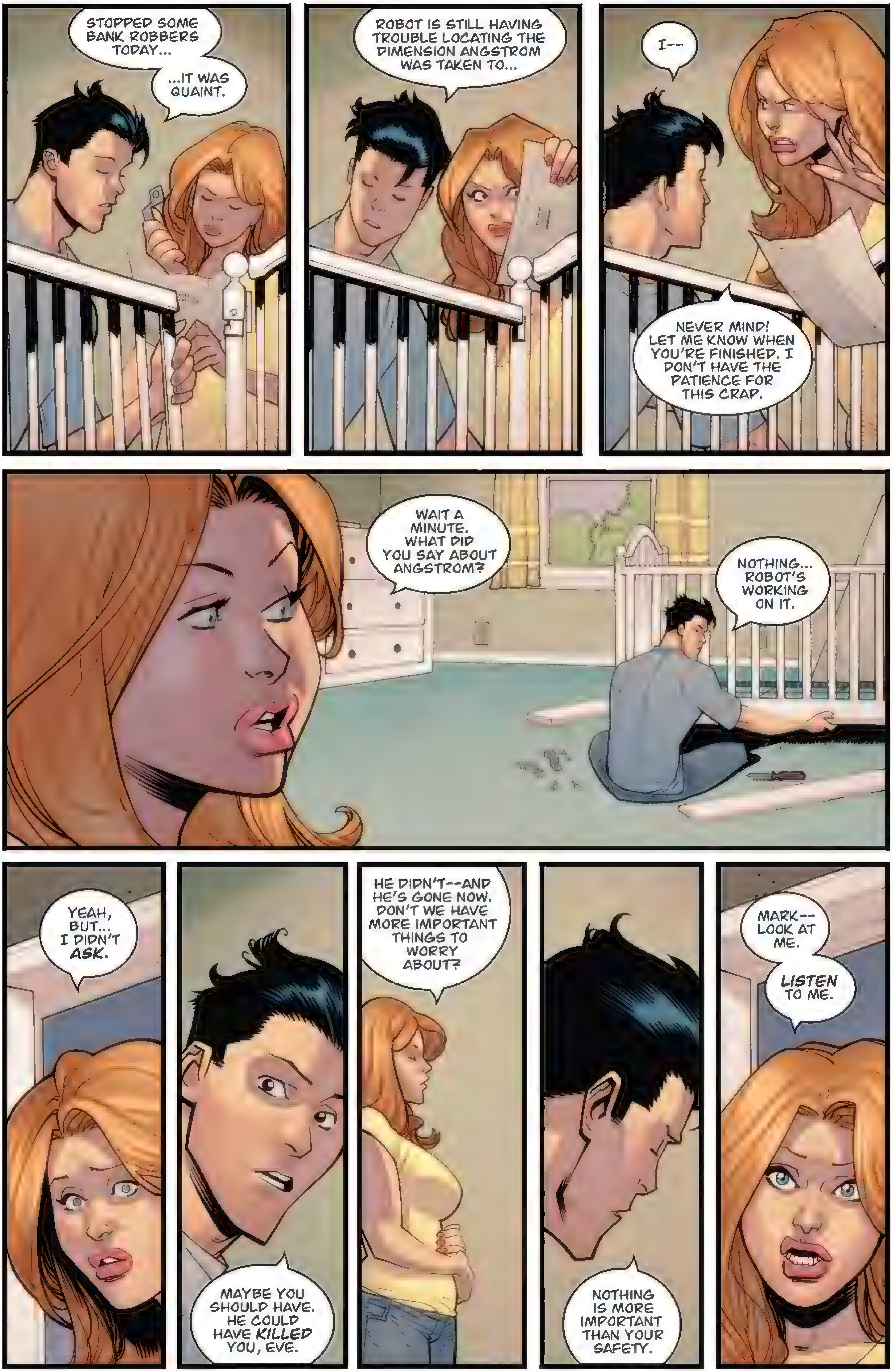
SKREE-KA-KRAASH!
SORRY, I WAS GETTING SHOT AT WITH MACHINE GUNS.
ONE SECOND.
INVINCIBLE?!
MY FIRST TIME ROBBING A BANK AND *YOU* SHOW UP?!
I STILL MAKE TIME FOR THE LITTLE PEOPLE.
AWESOME, RIGHT?!
WHOKK!
I KNOW YOU'RE BUSY COORDINATING A HUNDRED DIFFERENT SUPERHEROES ALL DAY, BUT I DO FEEL LIKE THIS COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANGSTROM LEVY LEADING AN ARMY OF EVIL WHOEVERS INTO OUR DIMENSION... OR Y'KNOW... *NOT.*
THANKS FOR THE UPDATE. KEEP ME POSTED.
SHOW OF HANDS...
...WHO WANTS TO STAY OUT OF JAIL?
NONE OF YOU? *PERFECT.*

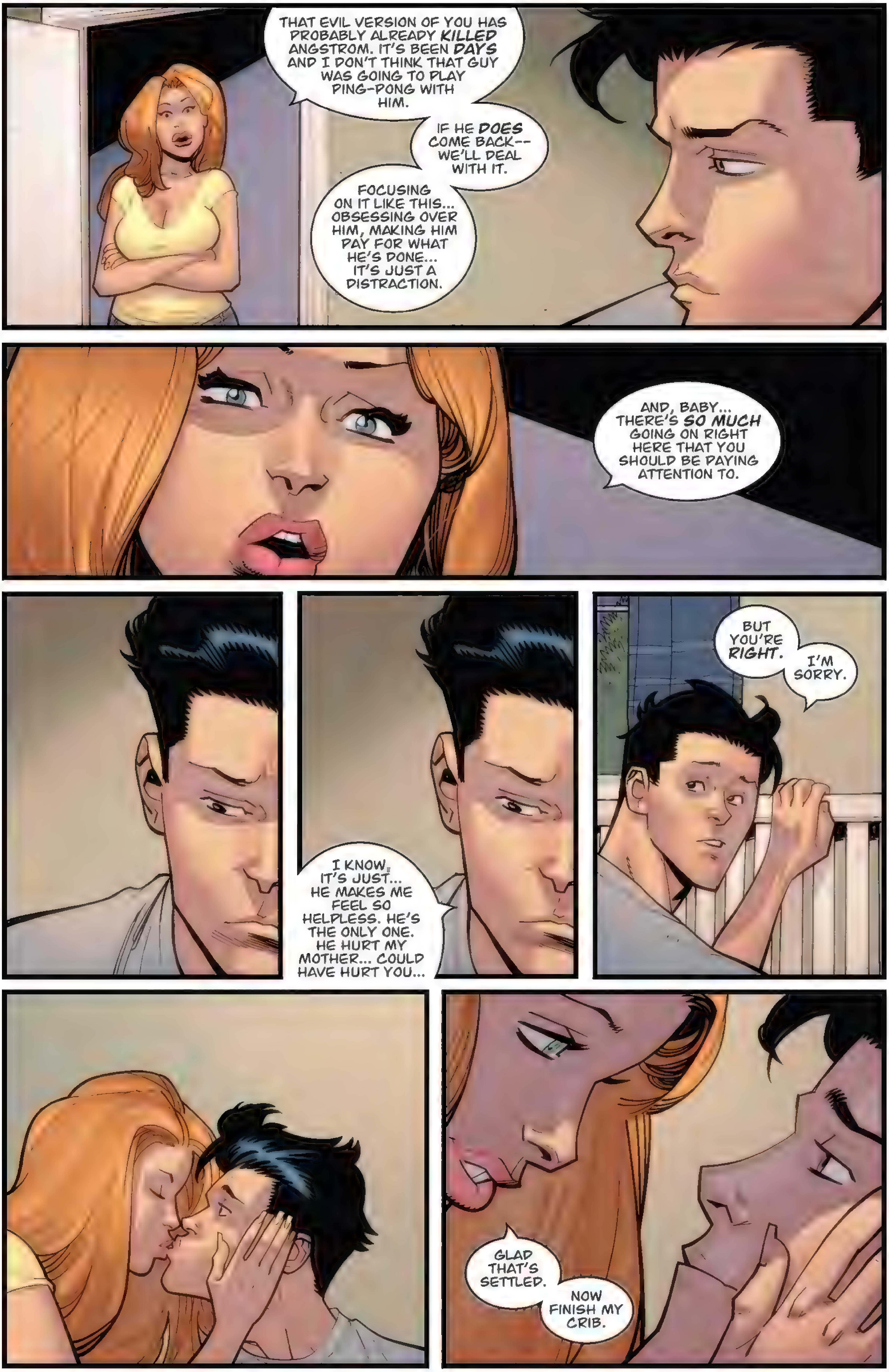

YOUR *TWENTY MINUTES* ARE UP.
AND AS YOU CAN SEE... I AM DESCENDING FROM MY CONTROL CENTER.
GET OUT OF THOSE FLAXAN CLOTHES AND LET'S GO. OUR RESERVATIONS ARE AT *EIGHT*.
I'M SO HAPPY TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN, AMANDA. I WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO SCREW IT UP.
I'LL BE DRESSED IN A MOMENT. WE WON'T MISS OUR RESERVATION.
IF THAT'S TRUE... COME CLEAN ON HOW MANY DRONES YOU'RE STILL CONTROLLING IN THE FIELD.
RIGHT NOW... *TWO*. BUT I'M HOPING THOSE MISSIONS WILL BE OVER BEFORE WE REACH THE RESTAURANT.
ARE YOU COUNTING THE ONE HERE YOU'RE USING TO WORK ON THAT PORTAL DEVICE FOR INVINCIBLE?
I'M JUST FINISHING THINGS UP.
I PROMISE, YOU'LL HAVE MY UNDIVIDED ATTENTION TONIGHT!
SURE, SURE.

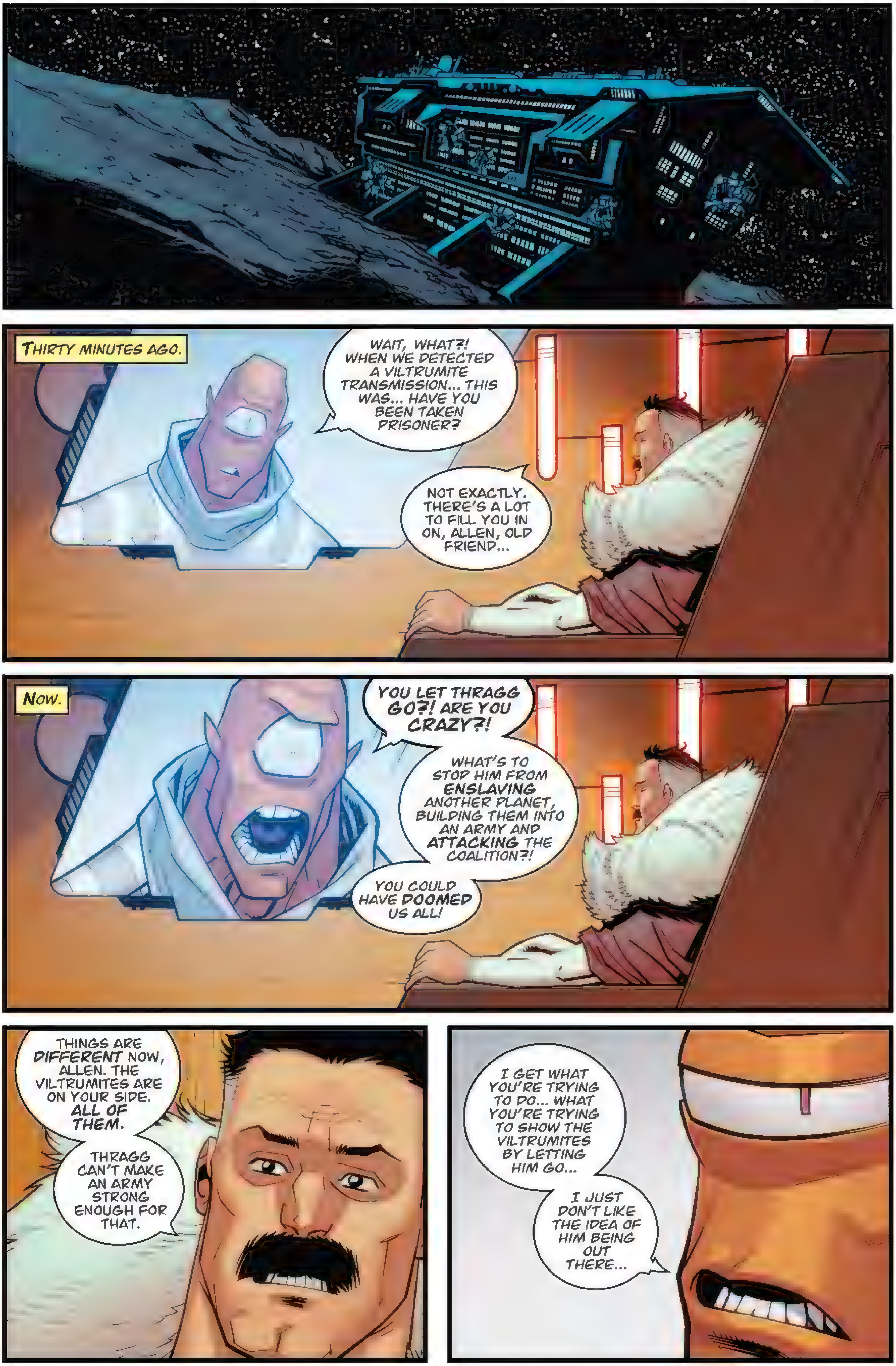

THE LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, STATIONED ON THE MOON.
WE GATHER HERE TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE FATE OF FORMER GRAND REGENT... THRAGG.
HE WHO PUT HIS GLORY BEFORE VILTRUMITE GLORY. HE WHO COULD HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT THE END OF OUR PEOPLE WHEN IT WAS HIS SWORN DUTY TO ENSURE OUR SURVIVAL.
IT IS TIME YOU LEARN YOUR FATE.
HAVE YOU FINALLY SUMMONED ENOUGH COURAGE TO KILL ME, EMPEROR NOLAN?
THAT WOULD REQUIRE A LACK OF COURAGE, THRAGG.
THE VILTRUM EMPIRE HAS CHANGED. I HAVE TAKEN IT FROM YOU. IT WAS CHANGING AROUND YOU... AS YOU WERE BEGINNING TO LOSE IT.
I FEAR NOW THAT YOU WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE IT.

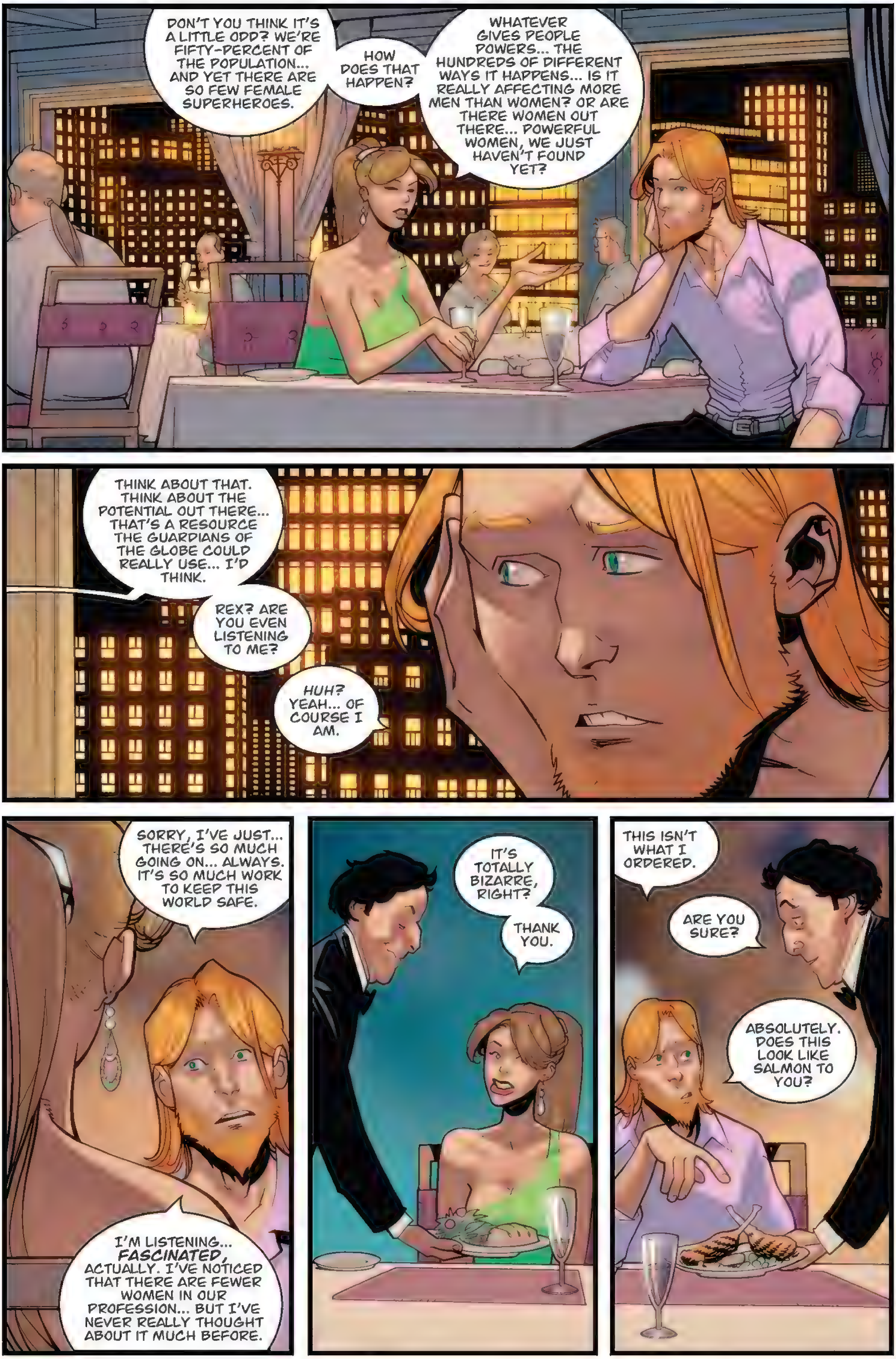
WE NOW STAND UNITED, DEDICATED TO *PEACE* AND *COEXISTENCE* WITH ALL MANNER OF LIFE IN THIS UNIVERSE.
GONE ARE THE DAYS OF WAR, ENSLAVEMENT AND CONQUEST.
TO PUNISH YOU AS YOU SEE NECESSARY WOULD JUST BE A RETURN TO THOSE DAYS.
WHAT?
KLIK KLAK.
I WISH FOR YOU TO SEE OUR PEOPLE *THRIVE* UNDER MY RULE. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOUR WAY WAS WRONG... I WANT YOU TO WITNESS OUR RESURGENCE... A RETURN TO WHAT WE ONCE WERE... BEFORE THE FALL OF ARGALL, BEFORE THE SCOURGE VIRUS, BEFORE THE VILTRUMITE WAR.
FOR YOU I CHOOSE ***EXILE.***
YOU WILL FIND A LIFE FOR YOURSELF IN THE COLDNESS OF SPACE, FAR FROM HERE AND FAR FROM COALITION SPACE.
FIND A FORGOTTEN CORNER OF THE COSMOS AND LIVE, THRAGG. BE APART FROM US AND EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER KNOWN... BUT LIVE.
NOW GO.

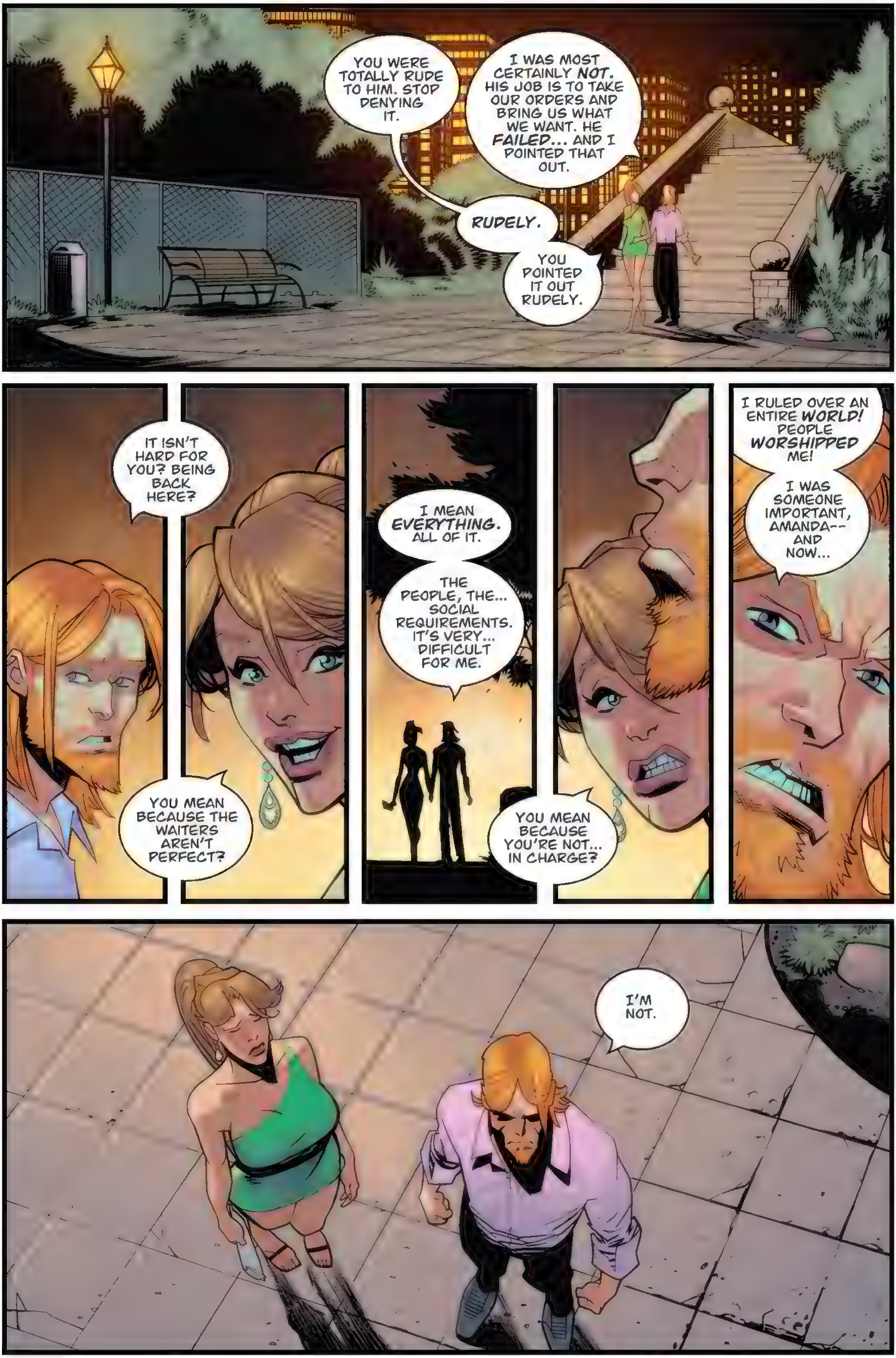

THE GRAYSON HOUSE.
MY ROOM!
WHAT?! *WHY?!*
WE SLEEP IN YOUR PARENTS' OLD ROOM, REMEMBER? THAT'S *OUR* ROOM. THIS ROOM WAS A WASTE OF SPACE.
I FIGURED NOW IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO START SETTING UP THE NURSERY.
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO GET YOU SIDETRACKED. ALIEN INVASION, A RETURNING NEMESIS FROM YOUR PAST, A COMIC CONVENTION NEARBY...
DID YOU MOVE ALL MY STUFF OUT BY YOURSELF? IT'S TOO HEAVY--AND YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T USE YOUR POWERS!
WILLIAM AND RICK HELPED ME. YOU JUST MISSED THEM.
AND YOU THINK I'D STILL BE WORKING ON THIS CRIB IF I THOUGHT I COULD USE MY POWERS WHILE I'M PREGNANT?
WHY DON'T YOU PARK IT RIGHT NEXT TO ME AND HELP ME FINISH THIS THING?
OKAY, FINE.
I'M GOING TO MISS THIS ROOM...

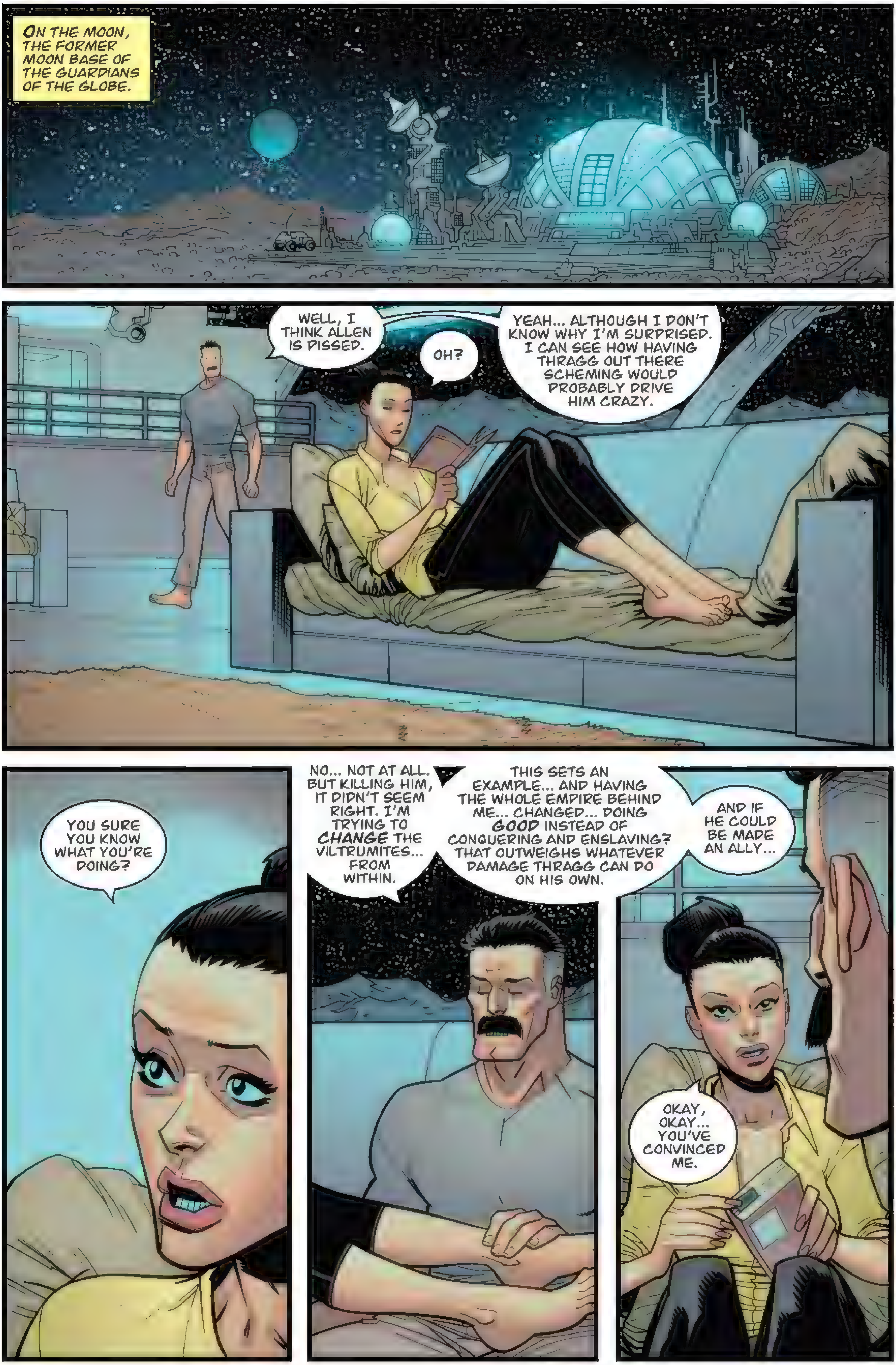

STOPPED SOME BANK ROBBERS TODAY...
...IT WAS QUAINT.
ROBOT IS STILL HAVING TROUBLE LOCATING THE DIMENSION ANGSTROM WAS TAKEN TO...
I--
NEVER MIND! LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED. I DON'T HAVE THE PATIENCE FOR THIS CRAP.
WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT DID YOU SAY ABOUT ANGSTROM?
NOTHING... ROBOT'S WORKING ON IT.
YEAH, BUT... I DIDN'T ASK.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE. HE COULD HAVE KILLED YOU, EVE.
HE DIDN'T--AND HE'S GONE NOW. DON'T WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT?
NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR SAFETY.
MARK-- LOOK AT ME.
LISTEN TO ME.

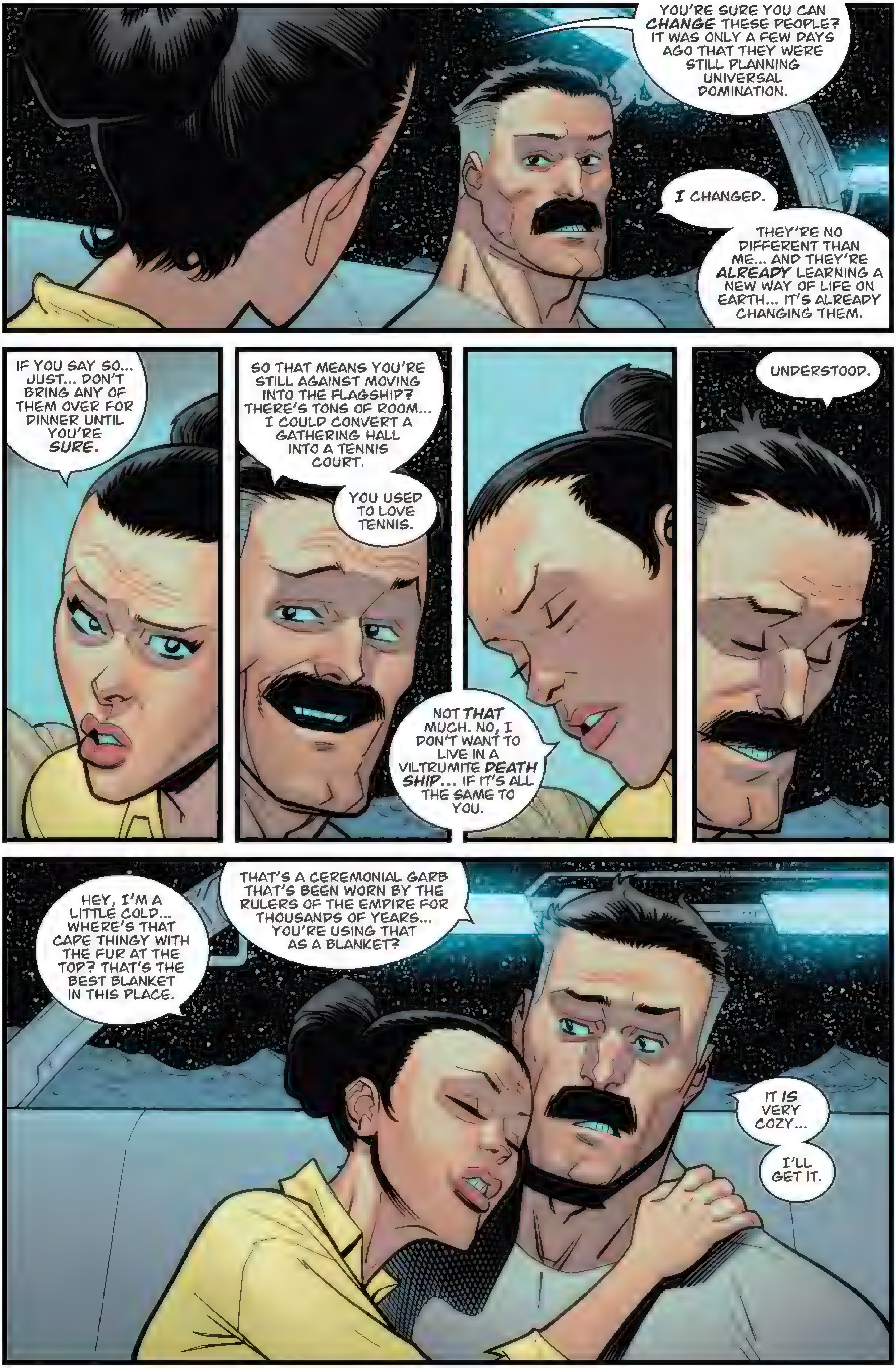

THAT EVIL VERSION OF YOU HAS PROBABLY ALREADY **KILLED** ANGSTROM. IT'S BEEN **DAYS** AND I DON'T THINK THAT GUY WAS GOING TO PLAY PING-PONG WITH HIM.
IF HE **DOES** COME BACK-- WE'LL DEAL WITH IT.
FOCUSING ON IT LIKE THIS... OBSESSING OVER HIM, MAKING HIM PAY FOR WHAT HE'S DONE... IT'S JUST A DISTRACTION.
AND, BABY... THERE'S **SO MUCH** GOING ON RIGHT HERE THAT YOU SHOULD BE PAYING ATTENTION TO.
I KNOW, IT'S JUST... HE MAKES ME FEEL SO HELPLESS. HE'S THE ONLY ONE. HE HURT MY MOTHER... COULD HAVE HURT YOU...
BUT YOU'RE **RIGHT**.
I'M SORRY.
GLAD THAT'S SETTLED.
NOW FINISH MY CRIB.

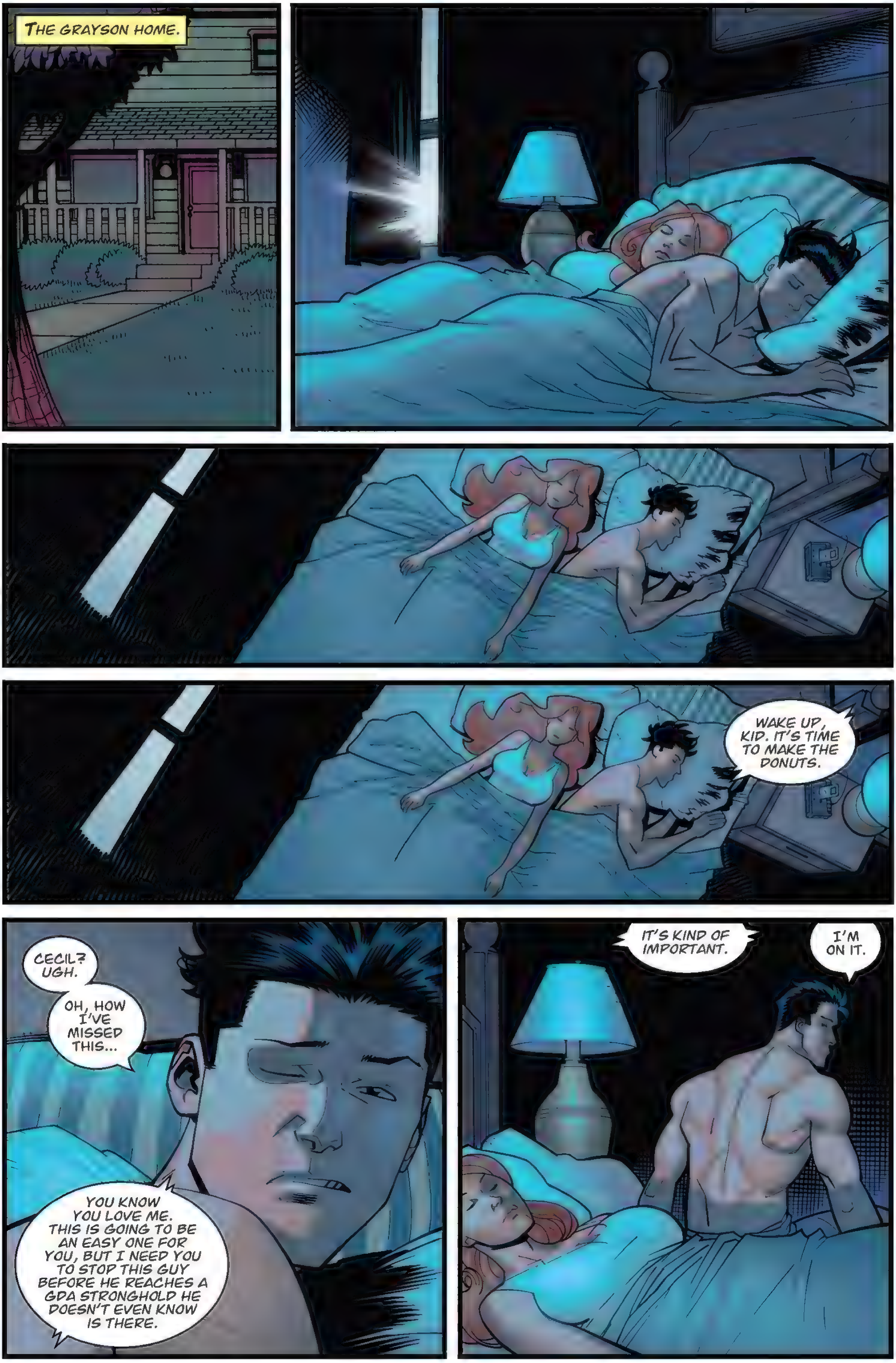

THIRTY MINUTES AGO.
WAIT, WHAT?! WHEN WE DETECTED A VILTRUMITE TRANSMISSION... THIS WAS... HAVE YOU BEEN TAKEN PRISONER?
NOT EXACTLY. THERE'S A LOT TO FILL YOU IN ON, ALLEN, OLD FRIEND...
NOW.
YOU LET THRAGG GO?! ARE YOU CRAZY?!
WHAT'S TO STOP HIM FROM ENSLAVING ANOTHER PLANET, BUILDING THEM INTO AN ARMY AND ATTACKING THE COALITION?!
YOU COULD HAVE DOOMED US ALL!
THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW, ALLEN. THE VILTRUMITES ARE ON YOUR SIDE. ALL OF THEM.
THRAGG CAN'T MAKE AN ARMY STRONG ENOUGH FOR THAT.
I GET WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO... WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SHOW THE VILTRUMITES BY LETTING HIM GO...
I JUST DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF HIM BEING OUT THERE...


DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE ODD? WE'RE FIFTY-PERCENT OF THE POPULATION... AND YET THERE ARE SO FEW FEMALE SUPERHEROES.
HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?
WHATEVER GIVES PEOPLE POWERS... THE HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT WAYS IT HAPPENS... IS IT REALLY AFFECTING MORE MEN THAN WOMEN? OR ARE THERE WOMEN OUT THERE... POWERFUL WOMEN, WE JUST HAVEN'T FOUND YET?
THINK ABOUT THAT. THINK ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OUT THERE... THAT'S A RESOURCE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE COULD REALLY USE... I'D THINK.
REX? ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?
HUH? YEAH... OF COURSE I AM.
SORRY, I'VE JUST... THERE'S SO MUCH GOING ON... ALWAYS. IT'S SO MUCH WORK TO KEEP THIS WORLD SAFE.
I'M LISTENING... **FASCINATED**, ACTUALLY. I'VE NOTICED THAT THERE ARE FEWER WOMEN IN OUR PROFESSION... BUT I'VE NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT MUCH BEFORE.
IT'S TOTALLY BIZARRE, RIGHT?
THANK YOU.
THIS ISN'T WHAT I ORDERED.
ARE YOU SURE?
ABSOLUTELY. DOES THIS LOOK LIKE SALMON TO YOU?

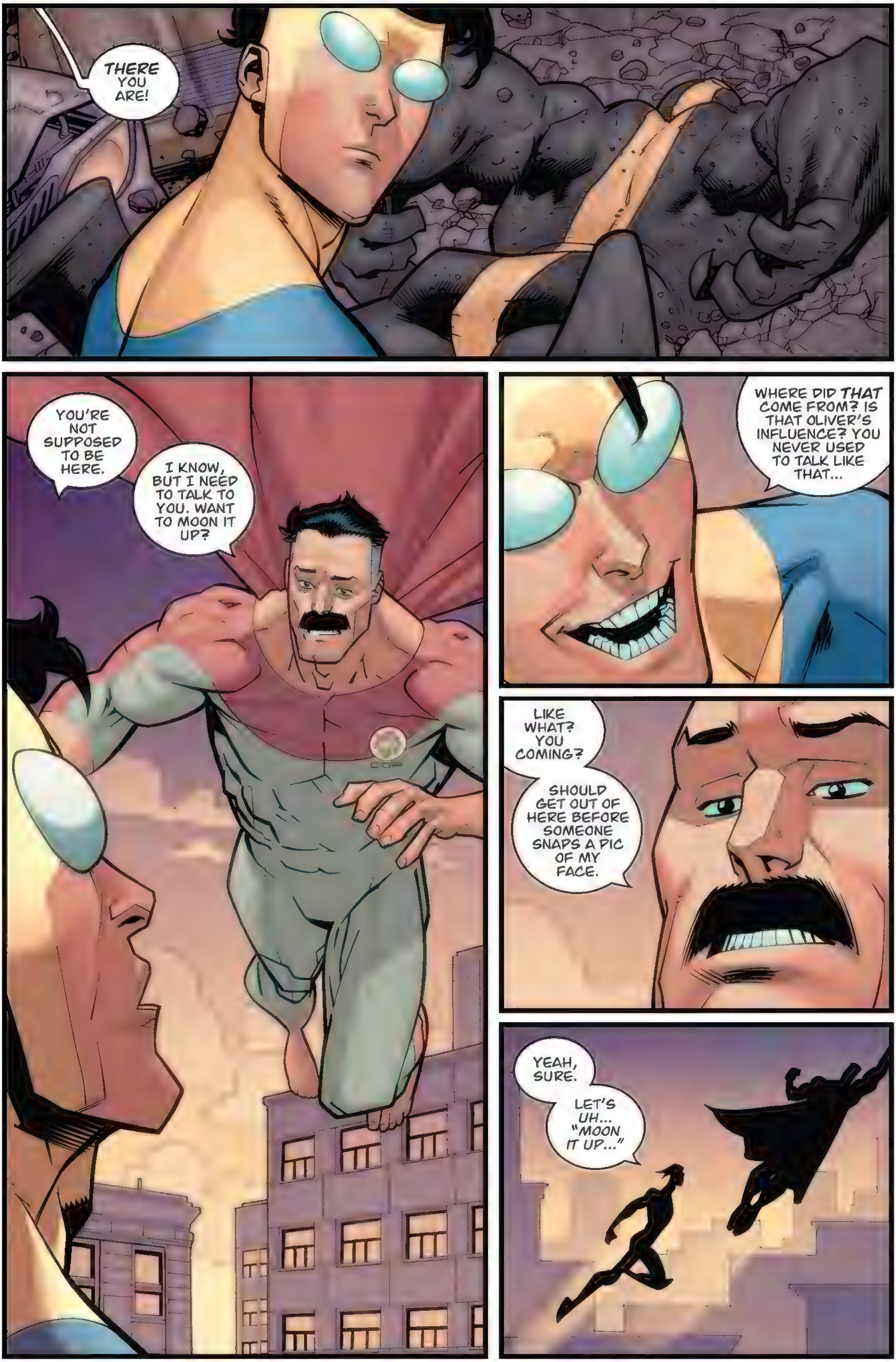

YOU WERE TOTALLY RUDE TO HIM. STOP DENYING IT.
I WAS MOST CERTAINLY **NOT**. HIS JOB IS TO TAKE OUR ORDERS AND BRING US WHAT WE WANT. HE **FAILED**... AND I POINTED THAT OUT.
RUDELY.
YOU POINTED IT OUT RUDELY.
IT ISN'T HARD FOR YOU? BEING BACK HERE?
YOU MEAN BECAUSE THE WAITERS AREN'T PERFECT?
I MEAN **EVERYTHING**. ALL OF IT.
THE PEOPLE, THE... SOCIAL REQUIREMENTS. IT'S VERY... DIFFICULT FOR ME.
YOU MEAN BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT... IN CHARGE?
I RULED OVER AN ENTIRE **WORLD!** PEOPLE **WORSHIPPED** ME!
I WAS SOMEONE IMPORTANT, AMANDA-- AND NOW...
I'M NOT.


ON THE MOON, THE FORMER MOON BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
WELL, I THINK ALLEN IS PISSED.
OH?
YEAH... ALTHOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M SURPRISED. I CAN SEE HOW HAVING THRAGG OUT THERE SCHEMING WOULD PROBABLY DRIVE HIM CRAZY.
YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
NO... NOT AT ALL. BUT KILLING HIM, IT DIDN'T SEEM RIGHT. I'M TRYING TO CHANGE THE VILTRUMITES... FROM WITHIN.
THIS SETS AN EXAMPLE... AND HAVING THE WHOLE EMPIRE BEHIND ME... CHANGED... DOING GOOD INSTEAD OF CONQUERING AND ENSLAVING? THAT OUTWEIGHS WHATEVER DAMAGE THRAGG CAN DO ON HIS OWN.
AND IF HE COULD BE MADE AN ALLY...
OKAY, OKAY... YOU'VE CONVINCED ME.

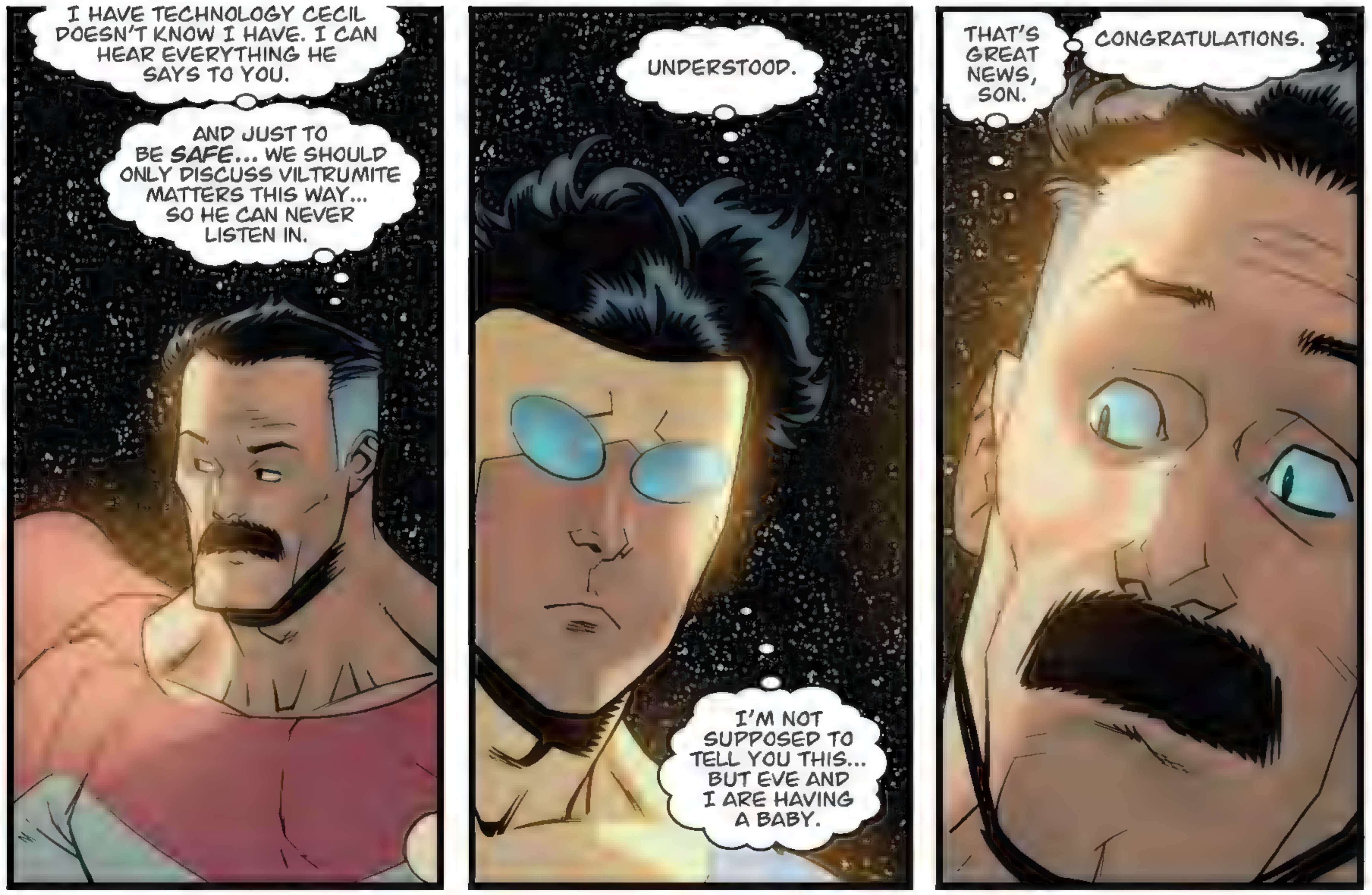

YOU'RE SURE YOU CAN *CHANGE* THESE PEOPLE? IT WAS ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO THAT THEY WERE STILL PLANNING UNIVERSAL DOMINATION.
I CHANGED.
THEY'RE NO DIFFERENT THAN ME... AND THEY'RE *ALREADY* LEARNING A NEW WAY OF LIFE ON EARTH... IT'S ALREADY CHANGING THEM.
IF YOU SAY SO... JUST... DON'T BRING ANY OF THEM OVER FOR DINNER UNTIL YOU'RE *SURE.*
SO THAT MEANS YOU'RE STILL AGAINST MOVING INTO THE FLAGSHIP? THERE'S TONS OF ROOM... I COULD CONVERT A GATHERING HALL INTO A TENNIS COURT.
YOU USED TO LOVE TENNIS.
NOT *THAT* MUCH. NO, I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN A VILTRUMITE *DEATH SHIP*... IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU.
UNDERSTOOD.
HEY, I'M A LITTLE COLD... WHERE'S THAT CAPE THINGY WITH THE FUR AT THE TOP? THAT'S THE BEST BLANKET IN THIS PLACE.
THAT'S A CEREMONIAL GARB THAT'S BEEN WORN BY THE RULERS OF THE EMPIRE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS... YOU'RE USING THAT AS A BLANKET?
IT *IS* VERY COZY...
I'LL GET IT.

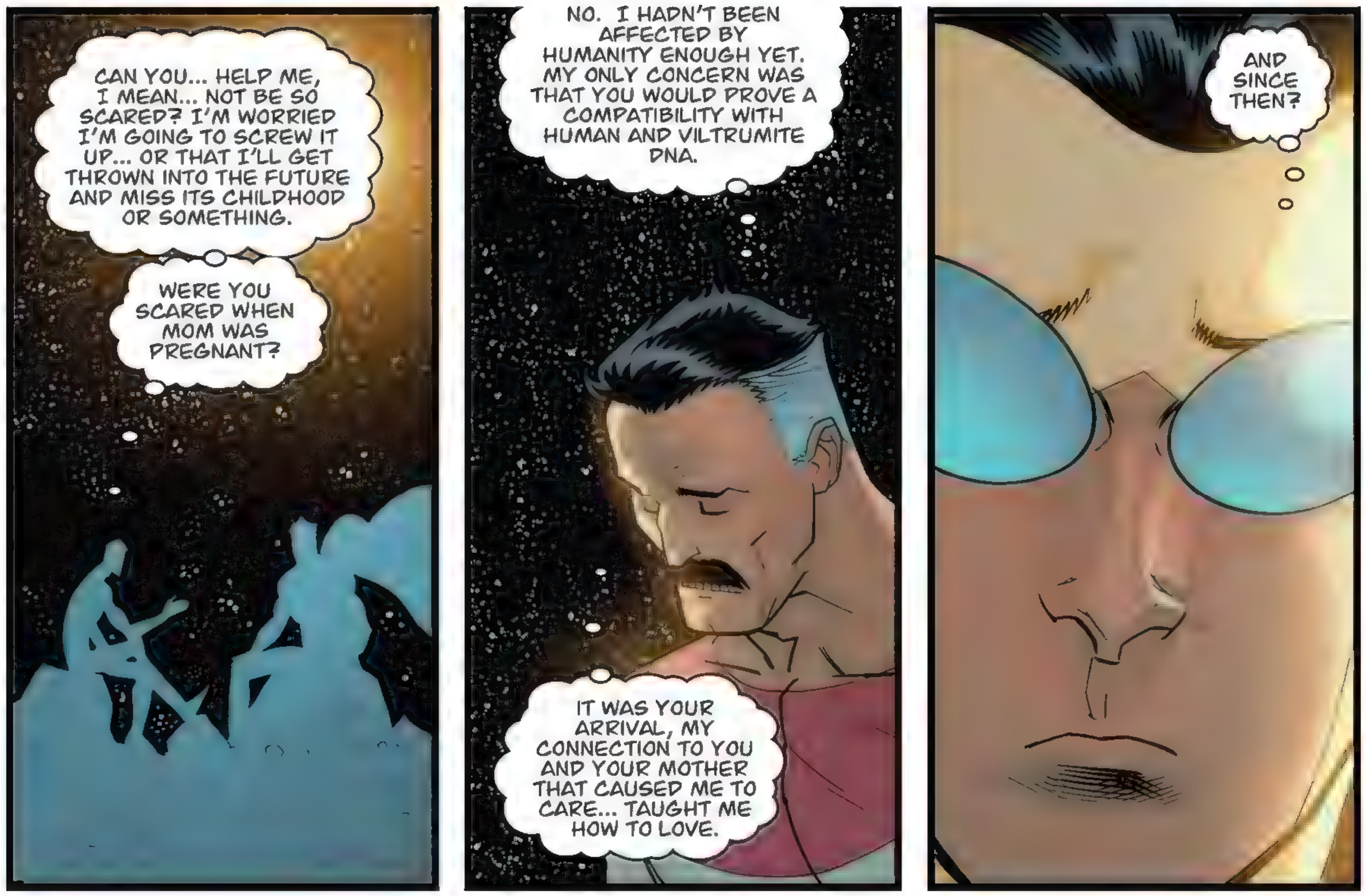

THE GRAYSON HOME.
WAKE UP, KID. IT'S TIME TO MAKE THE DONUTS.
CECIL? UGH.
OH, HOW I'VE MISSED THIS...
YOU KNOW YOU LOVE ME. THIS IS GOING TO BE AN EASY ONE FOR YOU, BUT I NEED YOU TO STOP THIS GUY BEFORE HE REACHES A GDA STRONGHOLD HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW IS THERE.
IT'S KIND OF IMPORTANT.
I'M ON IT.

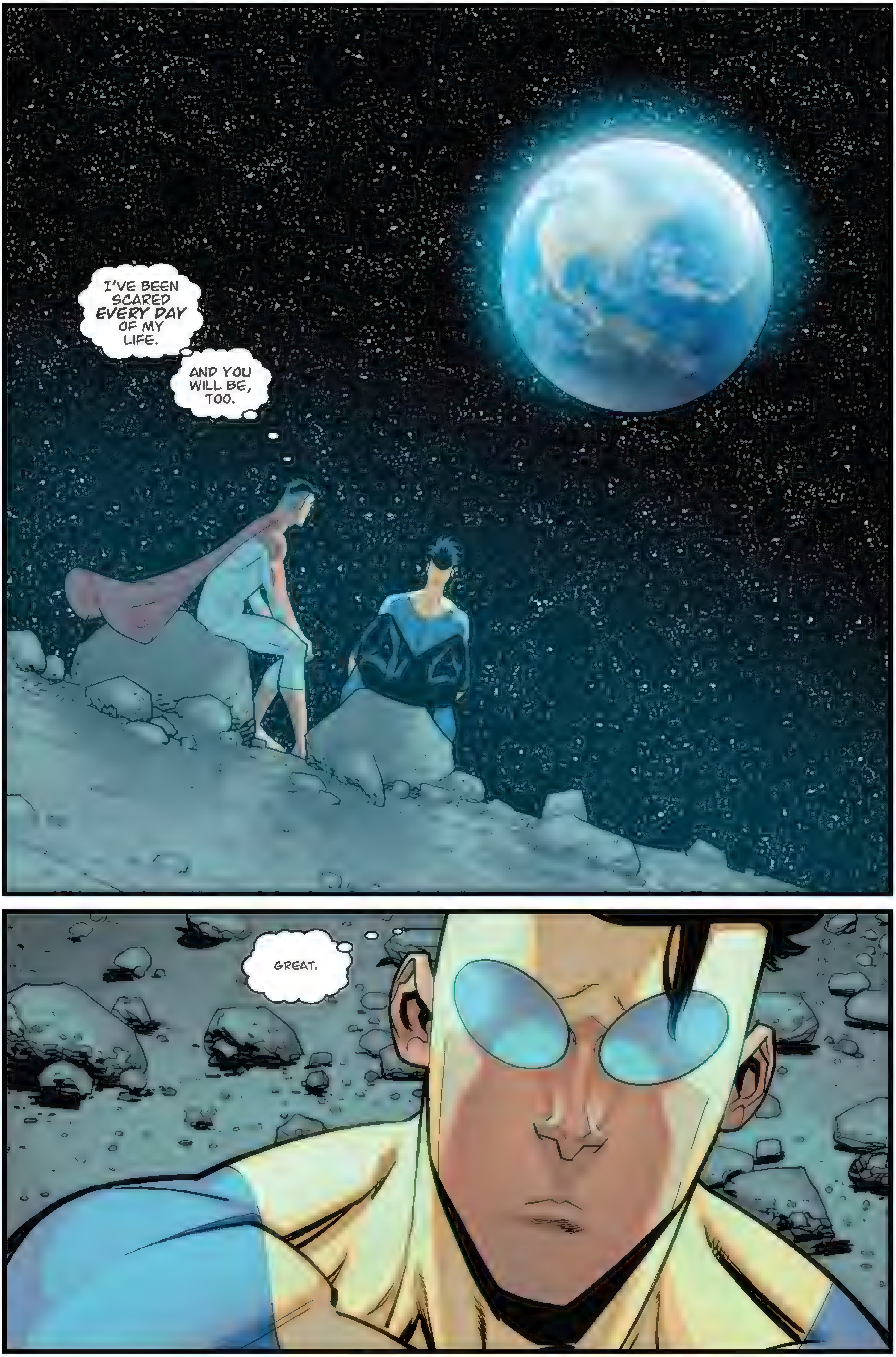
YEAH, RIGHT...
"EASY."
KRAKK!


THERE YOU ARE!
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE.
I KNOW, BUT I NEED TO TALK TO YOU. WANT TO MOON IT UP?
COP
WHERE DID *THAT* COME FROM? IS THAT OLIVER'S INFLUENCE? YOU NEVER USED TO TALK LIKE THAT...
LIKE WHAT? YOU COMING?
SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE SOMEONE SNAPS A PIC OF MY FACE.
YEAH, SURE.
LET'S UH... "MOON IT UP..."

YOU'RE REALLY SURE THAT IF THRAGG CAUSES ANY TROUBLE, YOU CAN DEAL WITH IT?
I HAVE THE WHOLE VILTRUM EMPIRE UNDER MY COMMAND. SO YEAH.
THIS IS JUST WEIRD. HEY, HOW'D YOU FIND ME SO EASILY?


I HAVE TECHNOLOGY CECIL DOESN'T KNOW I HAVE. I CAN HEAR EVERYTHING HE SAYS TO YOU.
AND JUST TO BE SAFE... WE SHOULD ONLY DISCUSS VILTRUMITE MATTERS THIS WAY... SO HE CAN NEVER LISTEN IN.
UNDERSTOOD.
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU THIS... BUT EVE AND I ARE HAVING A BABY.
THAT'S GREAT NEWS, SON.
CONGRATULATIONS.

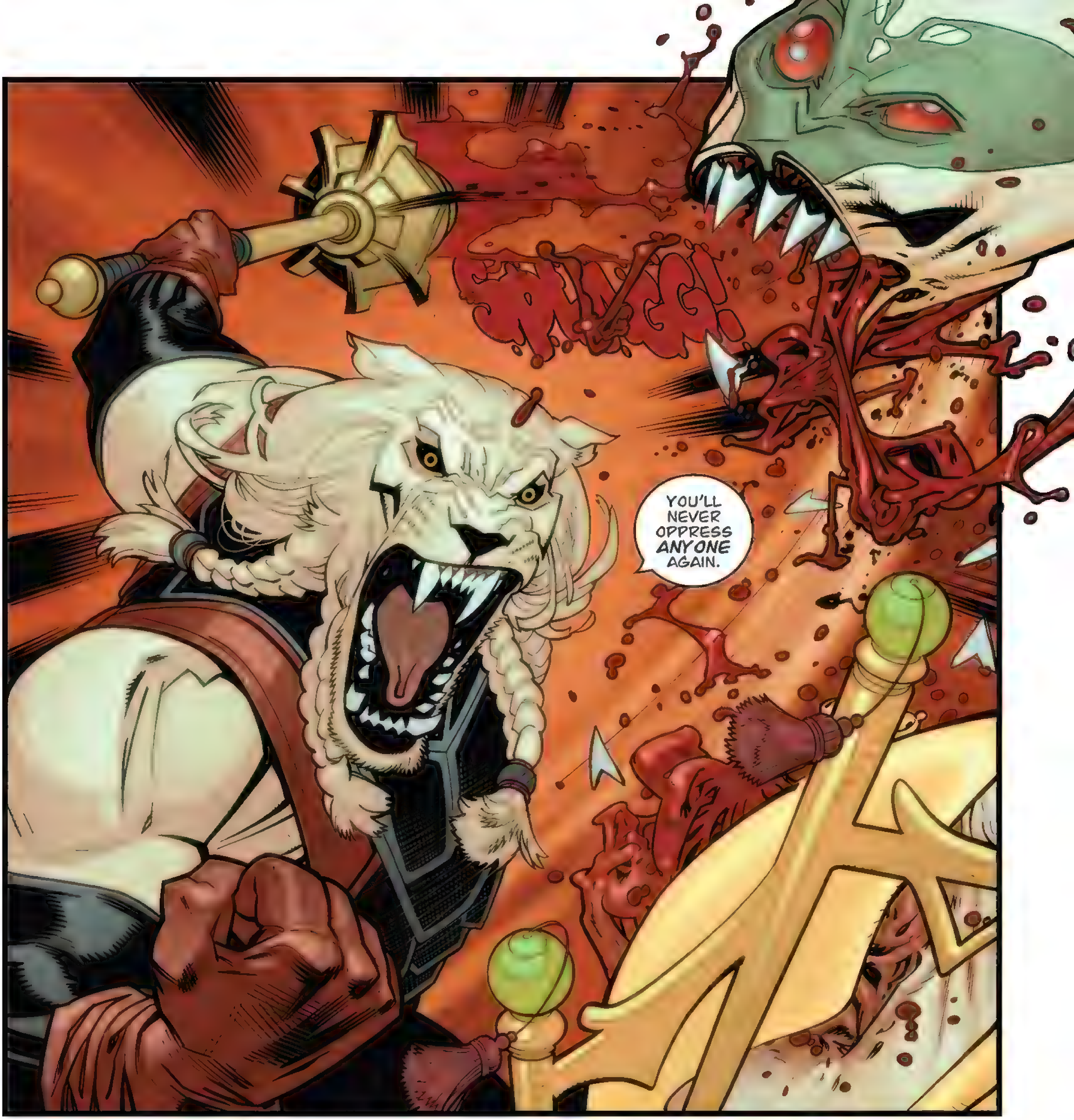

CAN YOU... HELP ME, I MEAN... NOT BE SO SCARED? I'M WORRIED I'M GOING TO SCREW IT UP... OR THAT I'LL GET THROWN INTO THE FUTURE AND MISS ITS CHILDHOOD OR SOMETHING.
WERE YOU SCARED WHEN MOM WAS PREGNANT?
NO. I HADN'T BEEN AFFECTED BY HUMANITY ENOUGH YET. MY ONLY CONCERN WAS THAT YOU WOULD PROVE A COMPATIBILITY WITH HUMAN AND VILTRUMITE DNA.
IT WAS YOUR ARRIVAL, MY CONNECTION TO YOU AND YOUR MOTHER THAT CAUSED ME TO CARE... TAUGHT ME HOW TO LOVE.
AND SINCE THEN?

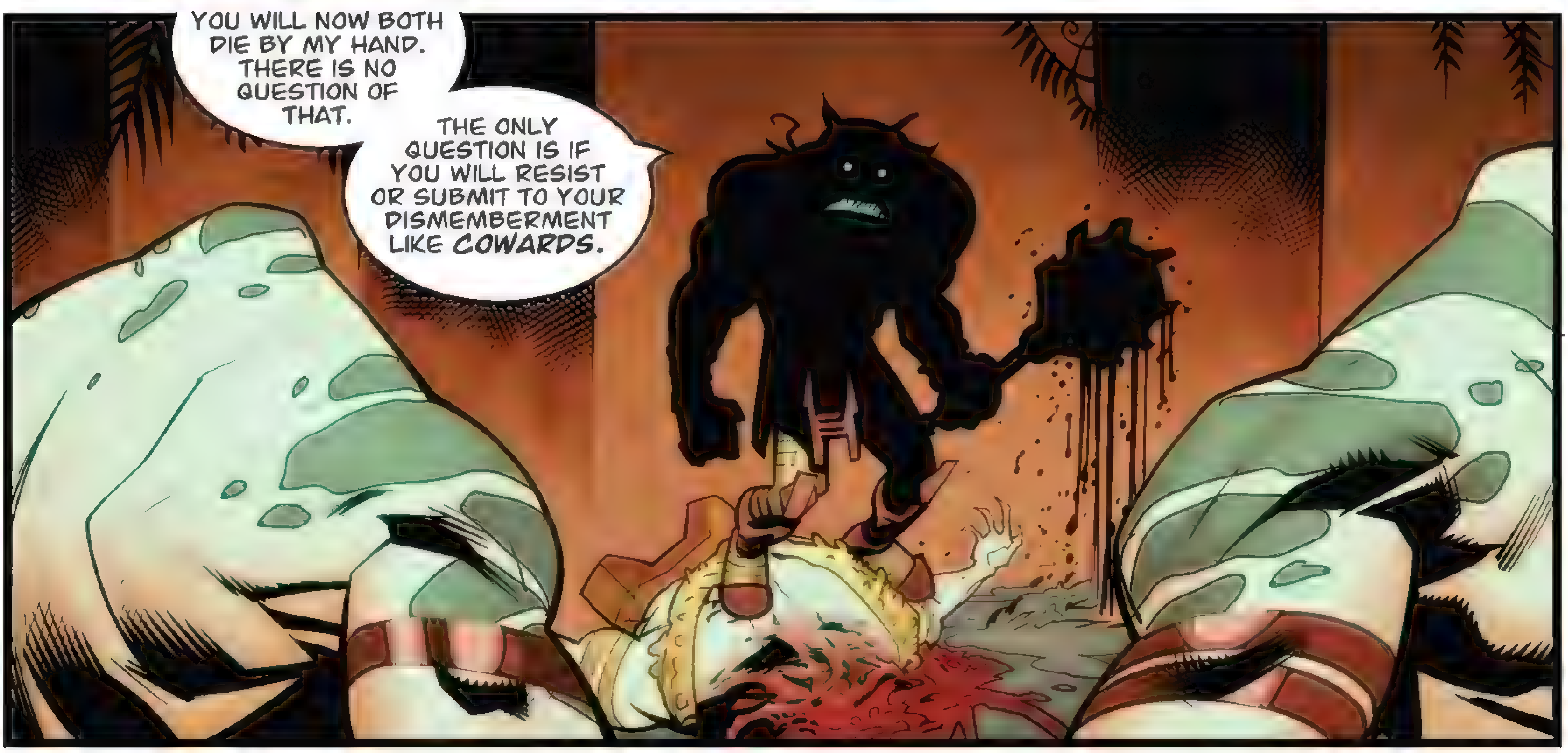

I'VE BEEN SCARED *EVERY DAY* OF MY LIFE.
AND YOU WILL BE, TOO.
GREAT.

CHAPTER 106

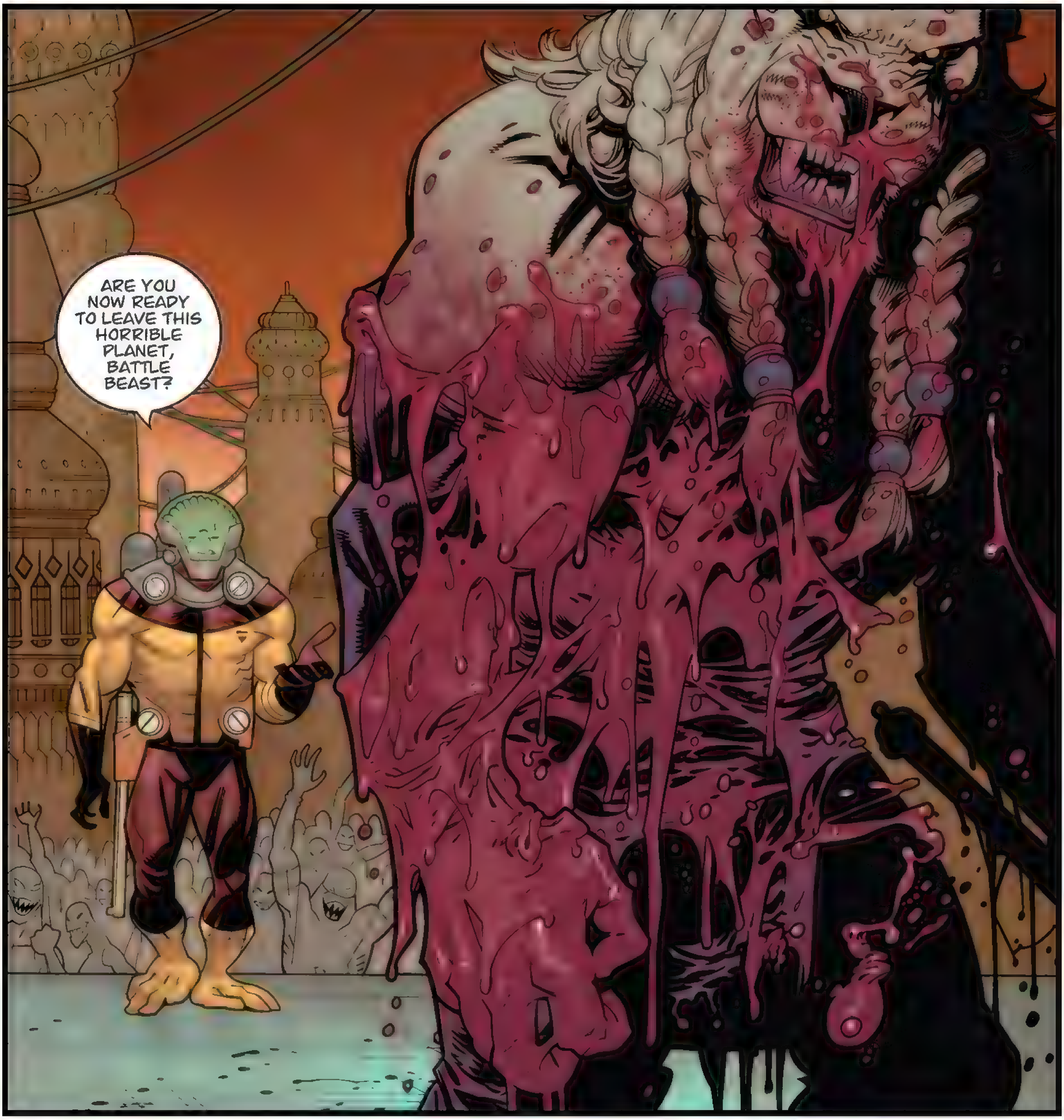
RYAN 13
RAUCH

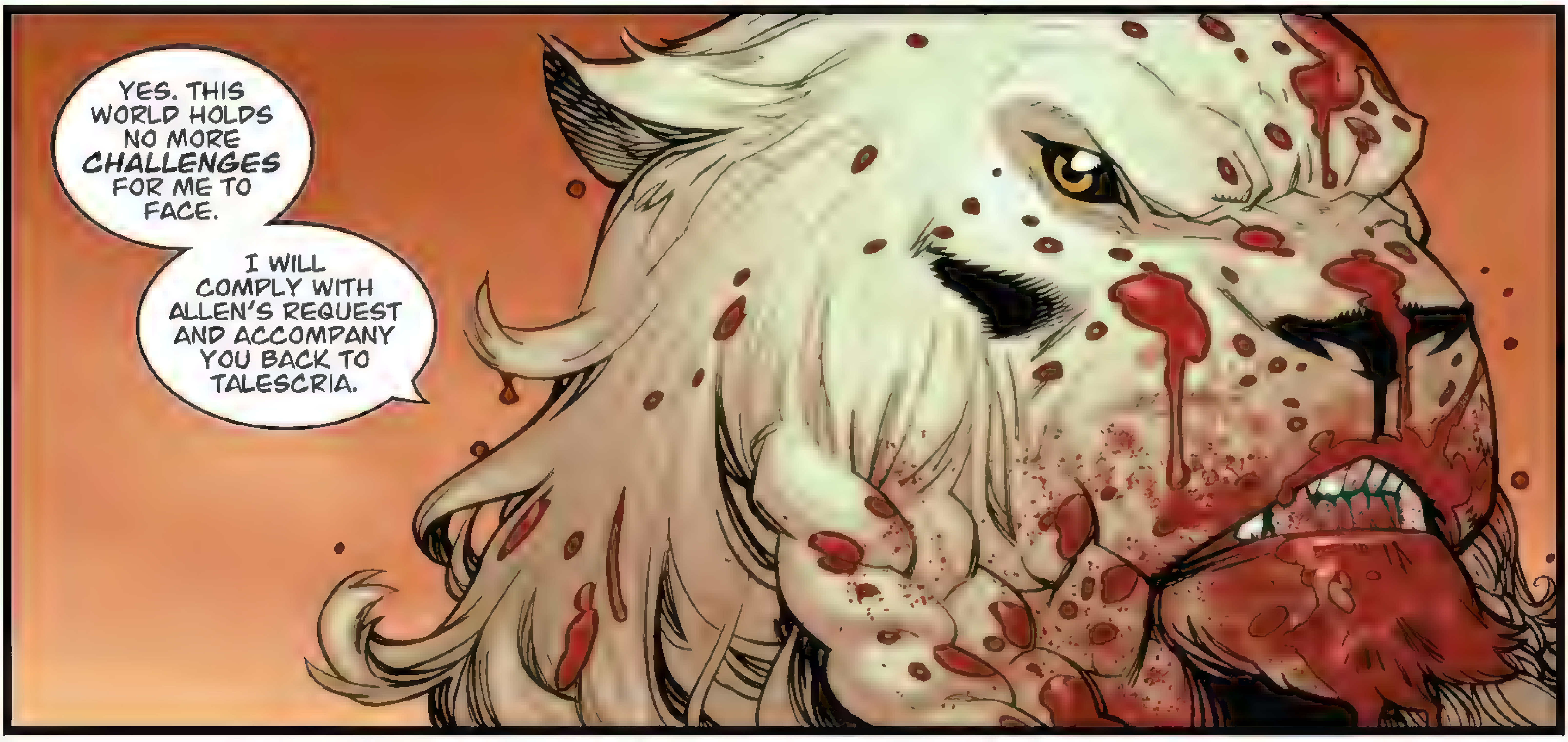
MADE CLEAR TO ME IT IS. DEAD MY MEN ARE. NONE LEFT THERE IS BUT US. SEE THIS I CAN.
TO MY HEAD WENT THE POWER. LOST CONTROL WAS. FORGOTTEN WAS ORIGINAL PURPOSE THAT CAUSED ME TO TAKE COMMAND.
POWER WAS I OBSESSED WITH. CLEAR TO ME NOW IT IS.
OPPRESS MY PEOPLE, NEVER AGAIN I WILL.
THAT LAST PART, AT LEAST, I KNOW TO BE TRUE.


SMACK!
YOU'LL NEVER OPPRESS *ANYONE* AGAIN.

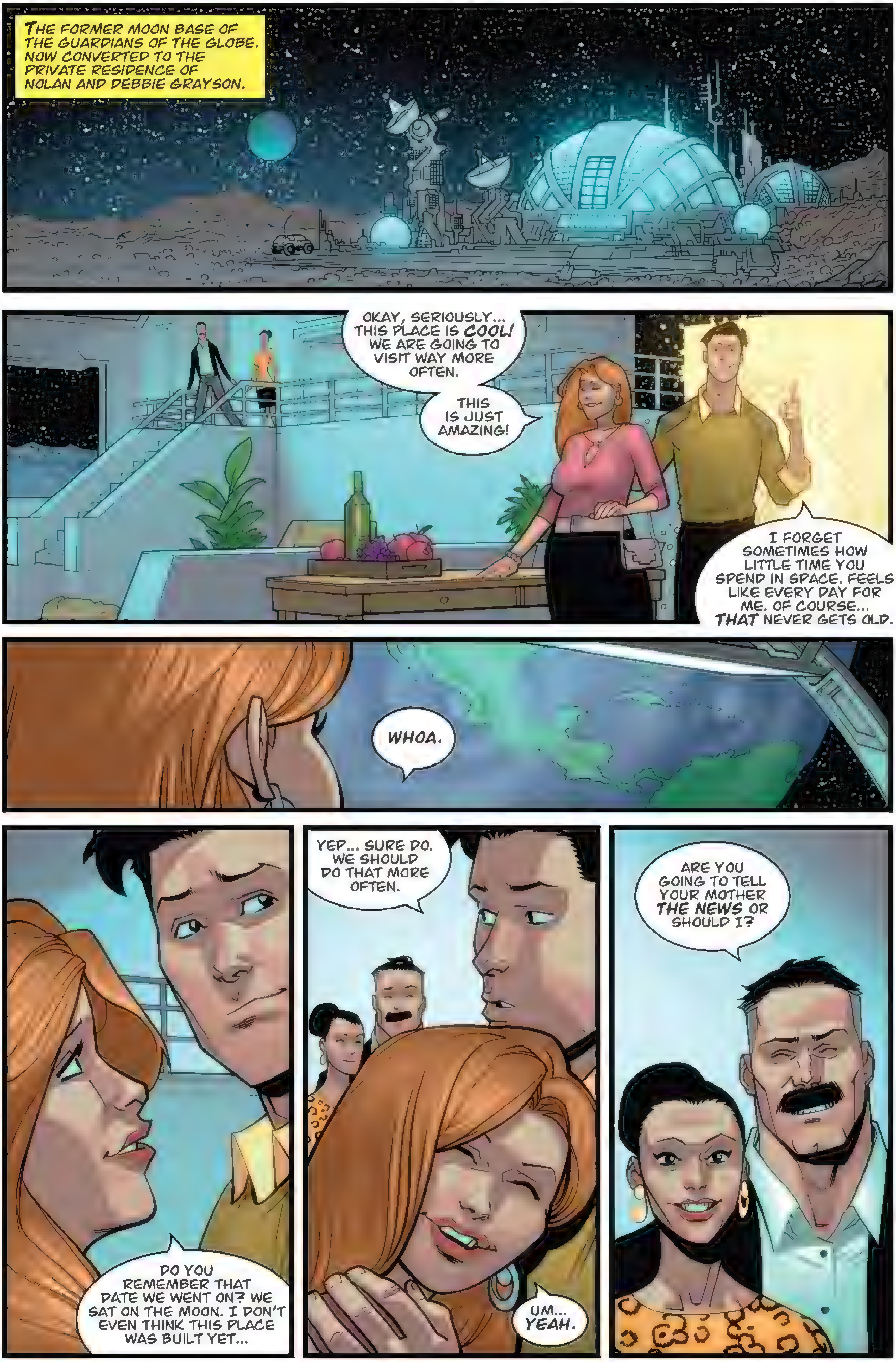

YOU WILL NOW BOTH DIE BY MY HAND. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THAT.
THE ONLY QUESTION IS IF YOU WILL RESIST OR SUBMIT TO YOUR DISMEMBERMENT LIKE *COWARDS*.

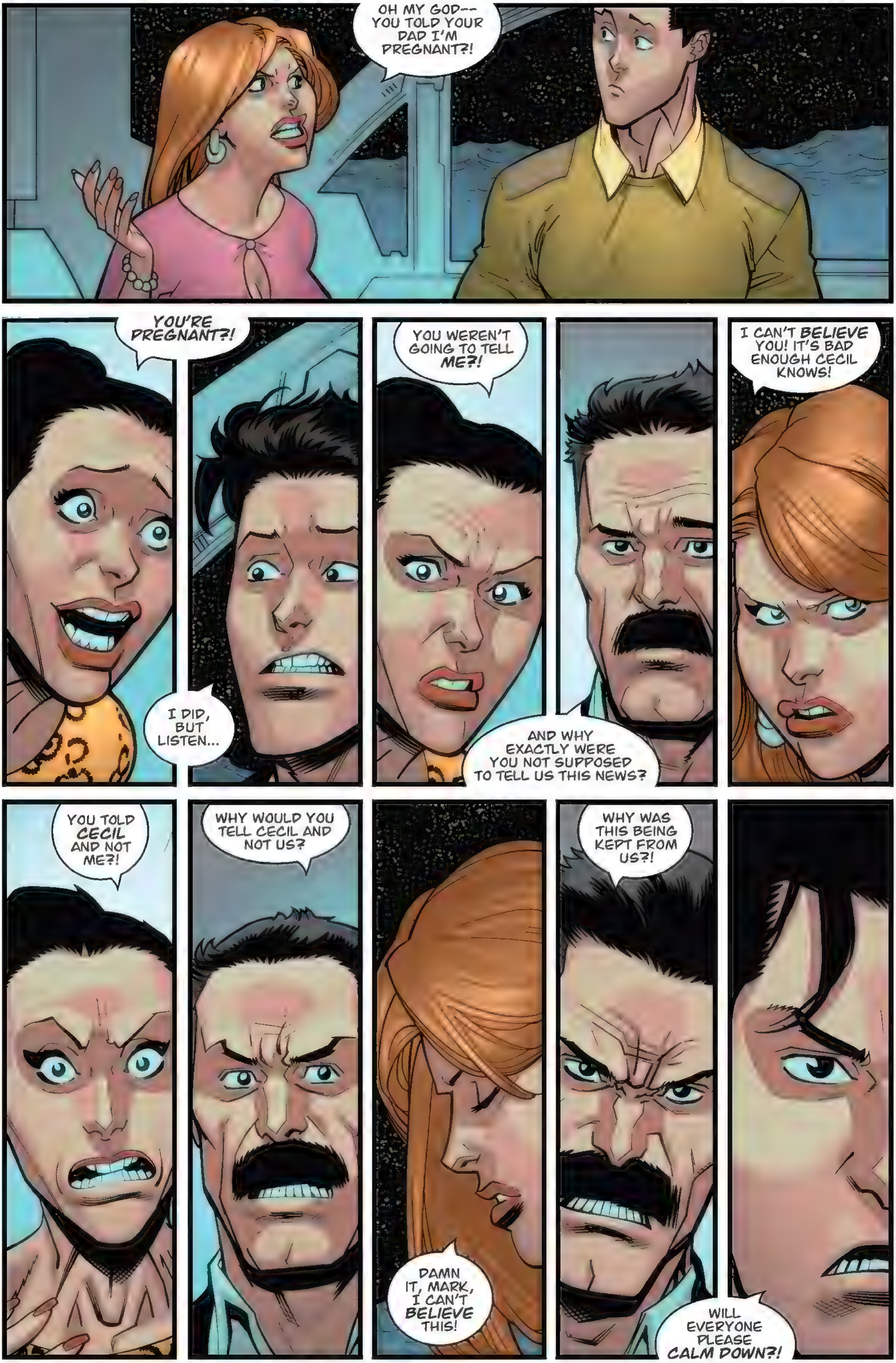
SVAASH!
NOT COWARDS-- GOOD!
SHUUKK!
WRAKK!
--VERY GOOD!
SVAASH!
IS THIS ALL?! YOUR LIVES DON'T MEAN MORE TO YOU THAN THIS?!
SKREESH!
SPLAGG!
SPLORGG!
SPLUNK!


ARE YOU NOW READY TO LEAVE THIS HORRIBLE PLANET, BATTLE BEAST?

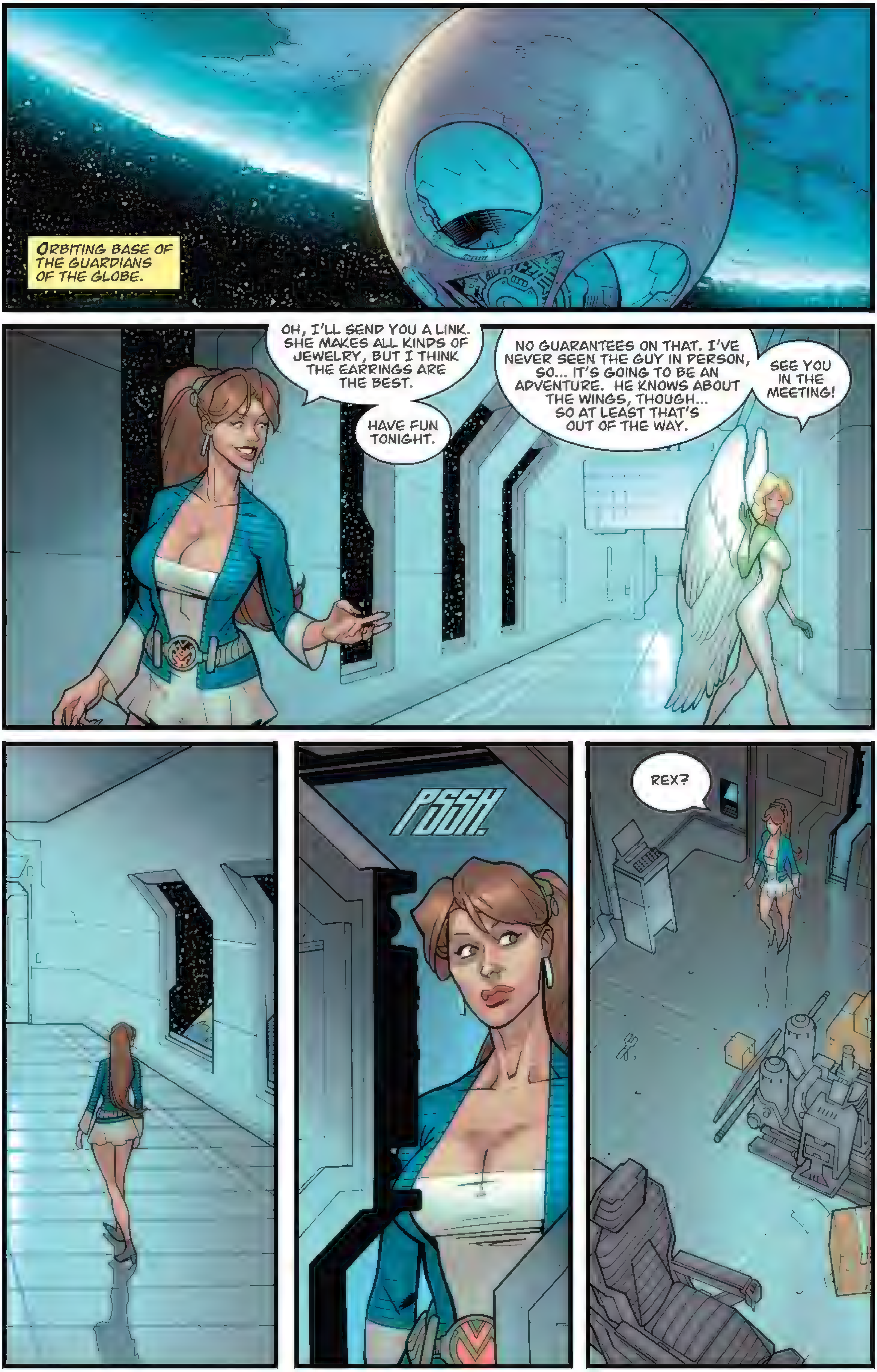

YES. THIS WORLD HOLDS NO MORE ***CHALLENGES*** FOR ME TO FACE.
I WILL COMPLY WITH ALLEN'S REQUEST AND ACCOMPANY YOU BACK TO TALESCRIA.

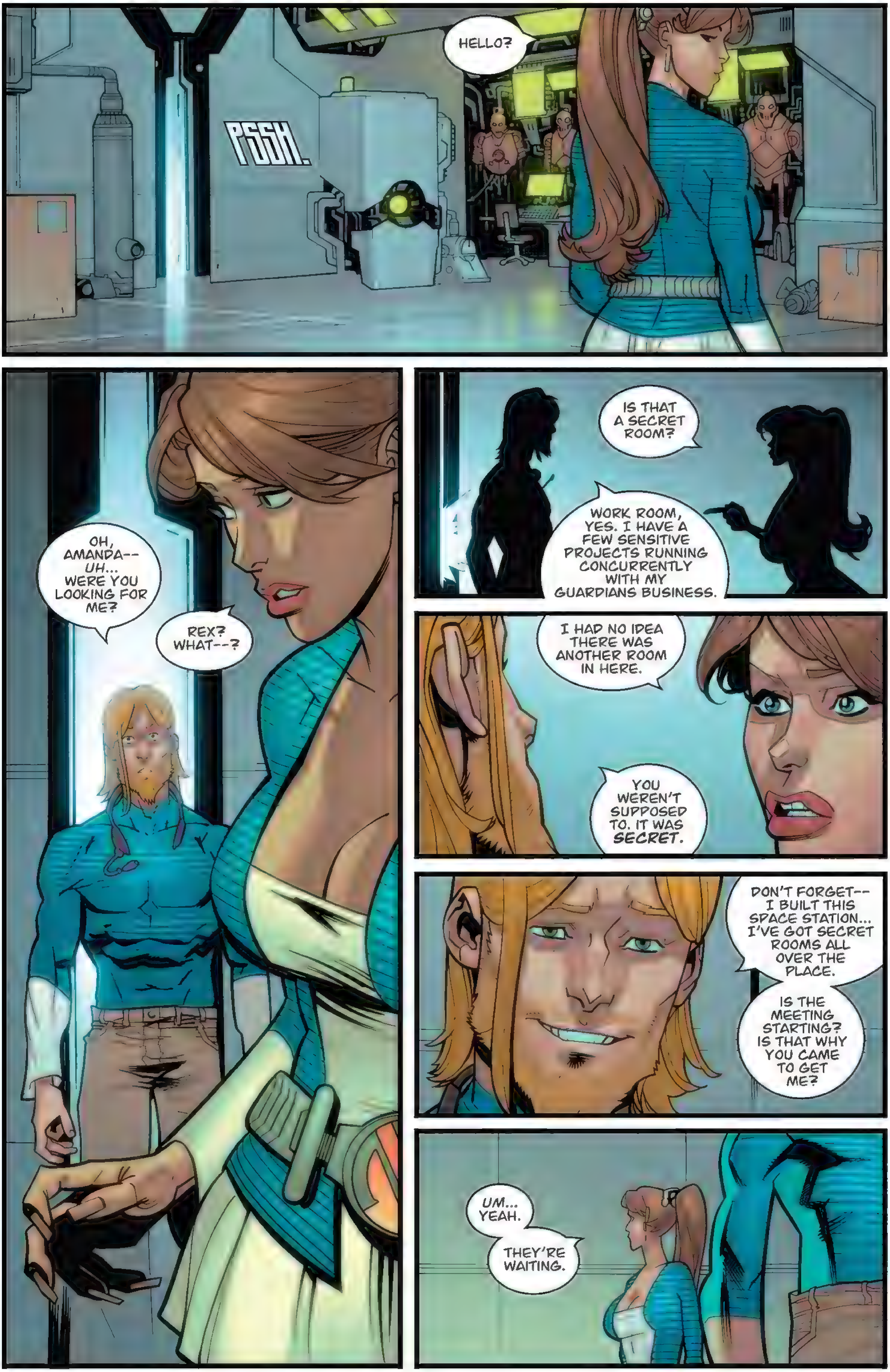
I JUST NEED SOME TIME TO CLEAN UP.
BATTLE BEAST, WAIT!
SAVED MY PEOPLE YOU HAVE. CHANGED FOREVER OUR LIVES ARE!
TO TRULY REPAY YOU I WILL NEVER BE ABLE.
TAKE ME WITH YOU, I BEG.
PLEASE?
OKAY.

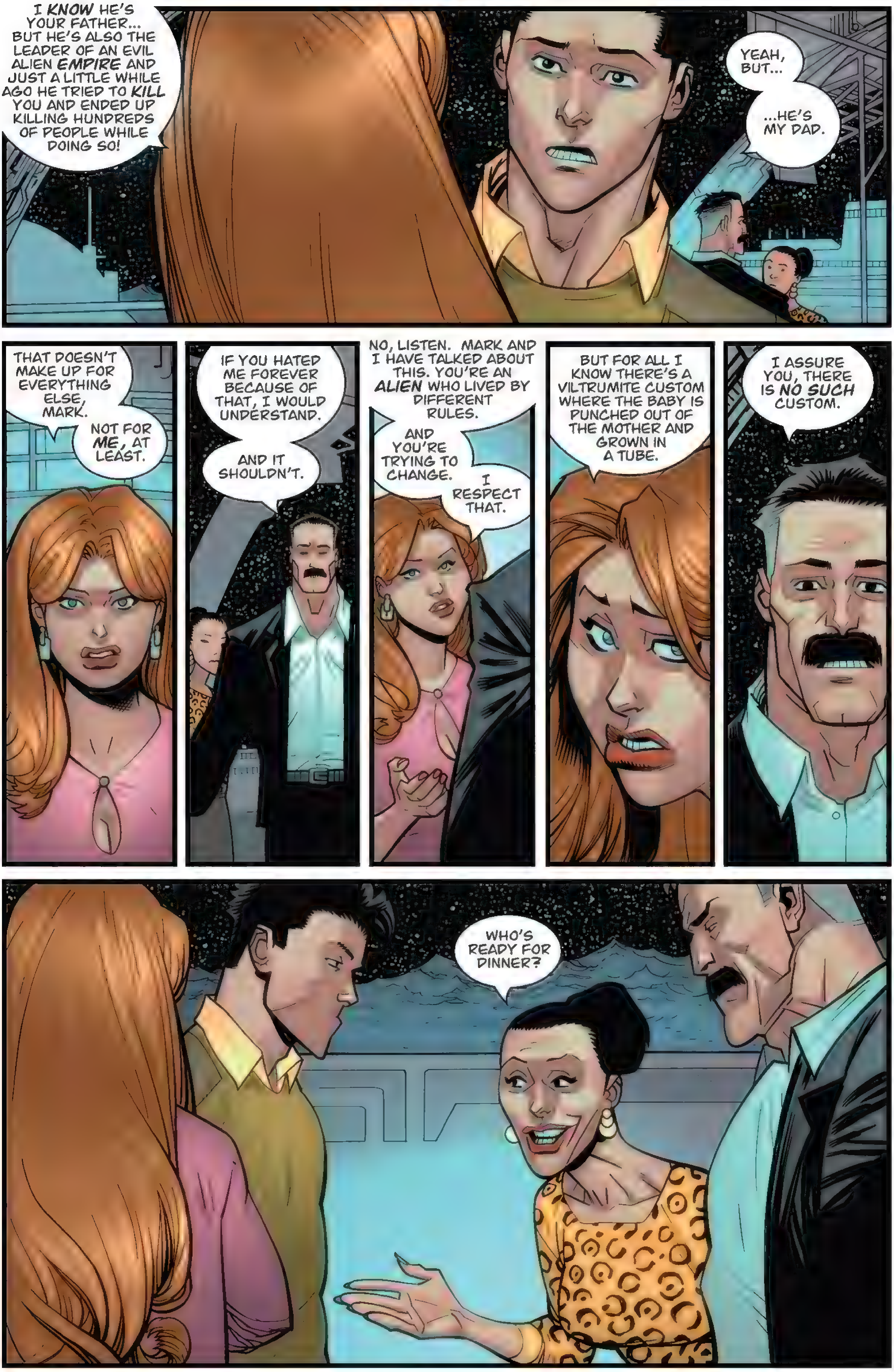

THE FORMER MOON BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. NOW CONVERTED TO THE PRIVATE RESIDENCE OF NOLAN AND DEBBIE GRAYSON.
OKAY, SERIOUSLY... THIS PLACE IS *COOL!* WE ARE GOING TO VISIT WAY MORE OFTEN.
THIS IS JUST AMAZING!
I FORGET SOMETIMES HOW LITTLE TIME YOU SPEND IN SPACE. FEELS LIKE EVERY DAY FOR ME. OF COURSE... *THAT* NEVER GETS OLD.
WHOA.
DO YOU REMEMBER THAT DATE WE WENT ON? WE SAT ON THE MOON. I DON'T EVEN THINK THIS PLACE WAS BUILT YET...
YEP... SURE DO. WE SHOULD DO THAT MORE OFTEN.
UM... *YEAH.*
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL YOUR MOTHER *THE NEWS* OR SHOULD I?

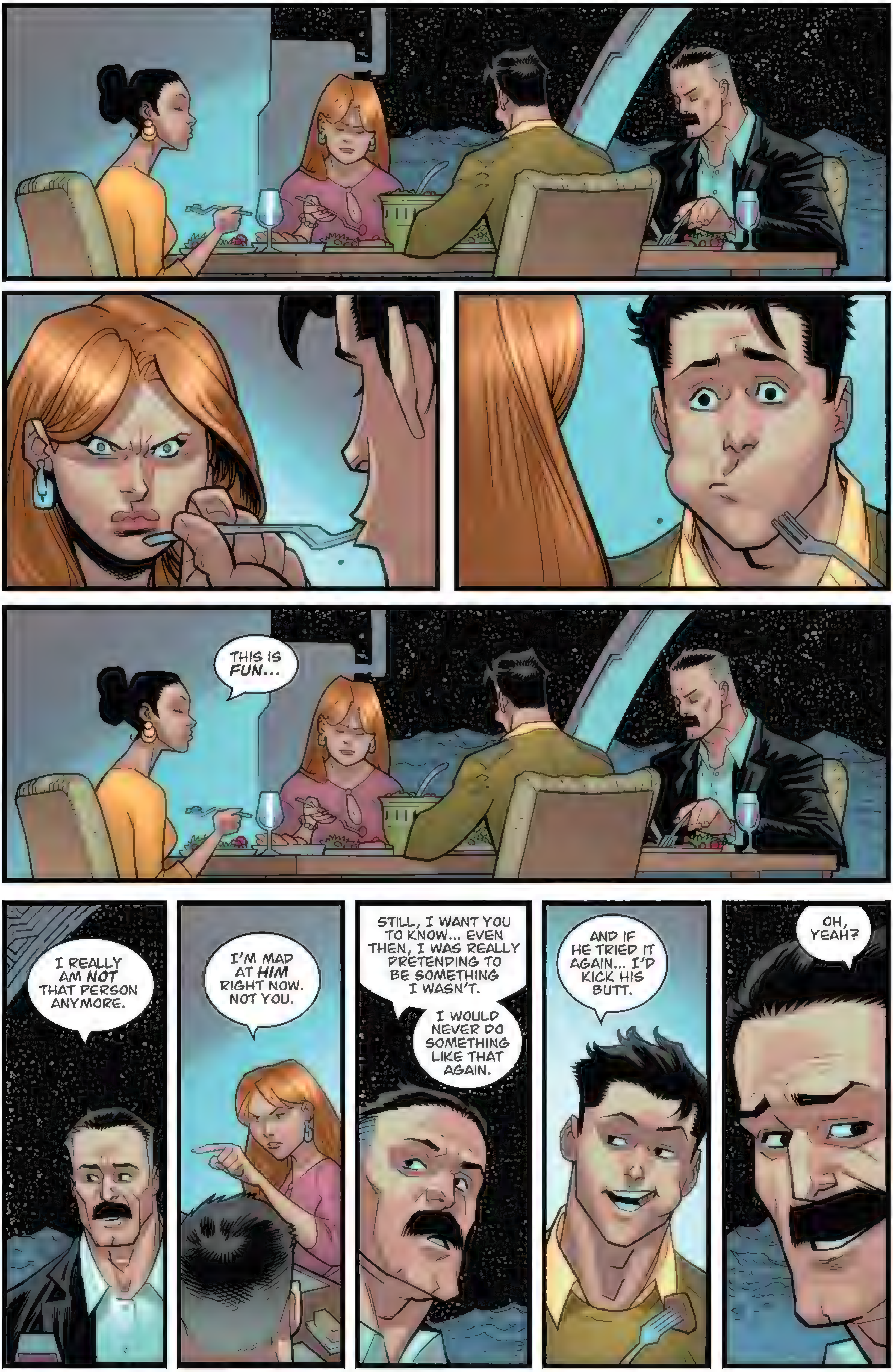

OH MY GOD-- YOU TOLD YOUR DAD I'M PREGNANT?!
YOU'RE PREGNANT?!
I DID, BUT LISTEN...
YOU WEREN'T GOING TO TELL ME?!
AND WHY EXACTLY WERE YOU NOT SUPPOSED TO TELL US THIS NEWS?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU! IT'S BAD ENOUGH CECIL KNOWS!
YOU TOLD CECIL AND NOT ME?!
WHY WOULD YOU TELL CECIL AND NOT US?
DAMN IT, MARK, I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!
WHY WAS THIS BEING KEPT FROM US?!
WILL EVERYONE PLEASE CALM DOWN?!

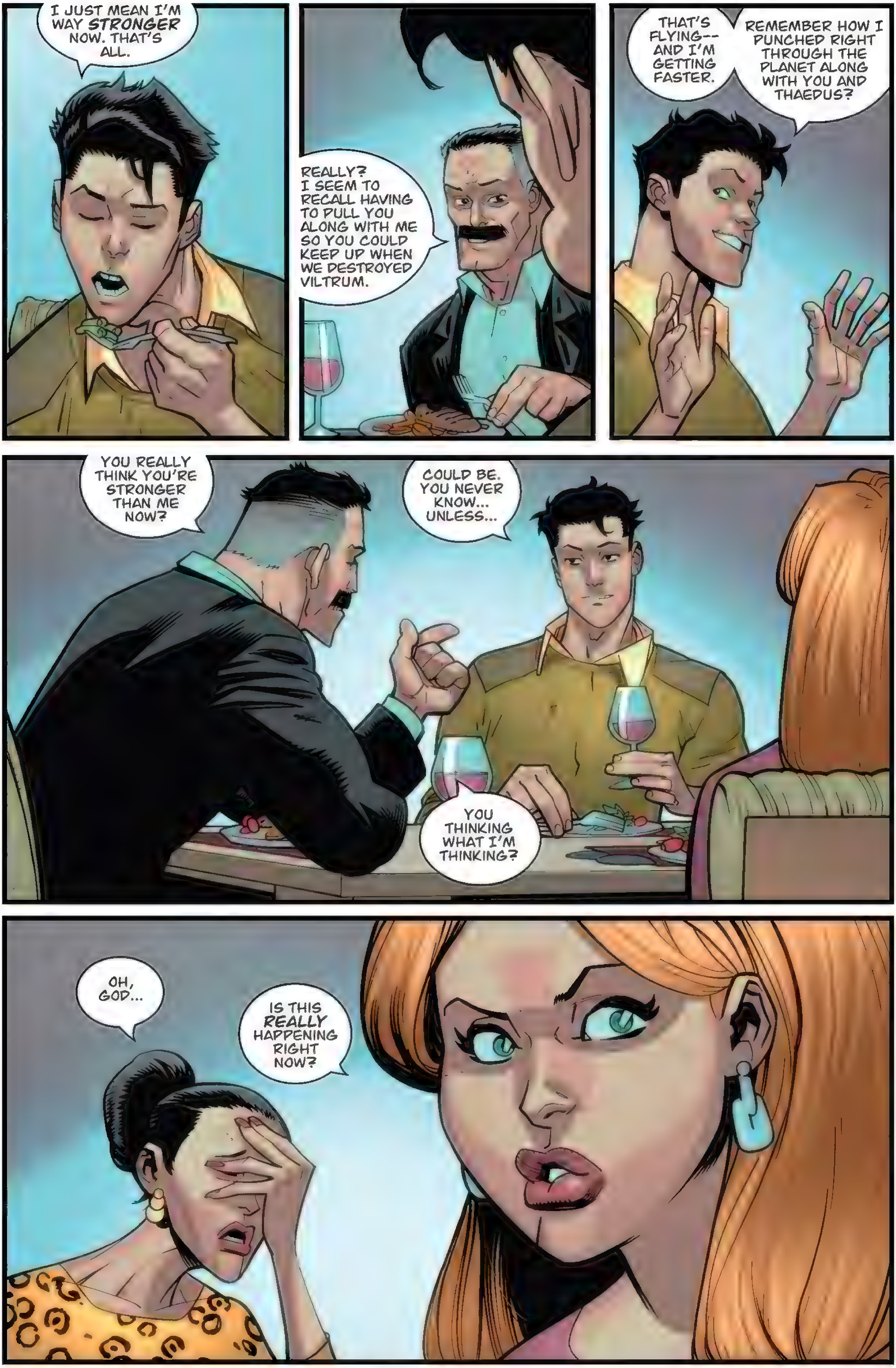
HELLO?!
I HAVE RETUNED TO YOU, MY *MAGMANITES!*
DOC SEISMIC IS HERE!
YOUR RULER HAS RETURNED!
EH?
AAGH!!
VOOSH!


ORBITING BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
OH, I'LL SEND YOU A LINK. SHE MAKES ALL KINDS OF JEWELRY, BUT I THINK THE EARRINGS ARE THE BEST.
HAVE FUN TONIGHT.
NO GUARANTEES ON THAT. I'VE NEVER SEEN THE GUY IN PERSON, SO... IT'S GOING TO BE AN ADVENTURE. HE KNOWS ABOUT THE WINGS, THOUGH... SO AT LEAST THAT'S OUT OF THE WAY.
SEE YOU IN THE MEETING!
PSSH.
REX?

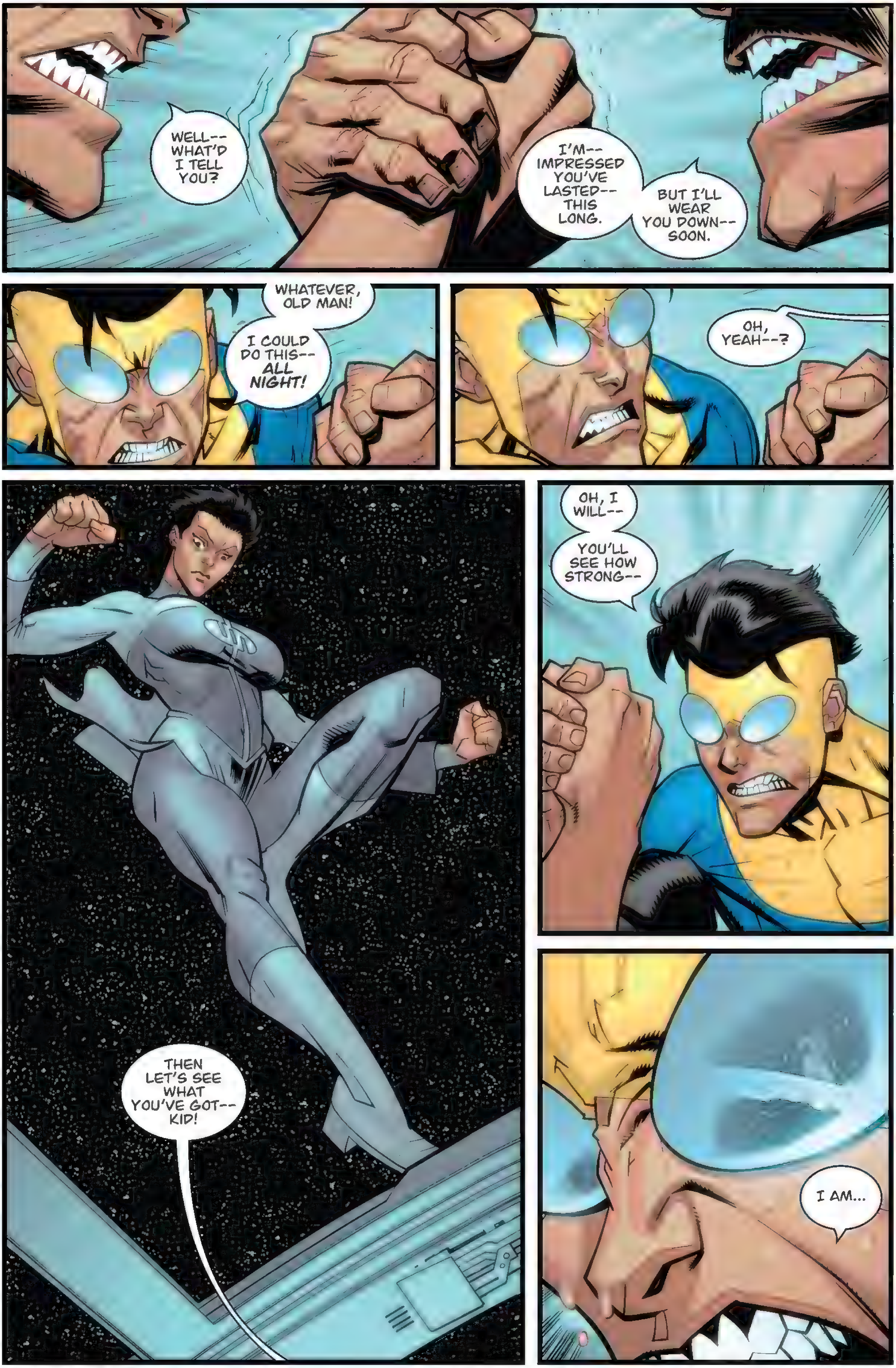

PSSH.
HELLO?
OH, AMANDA-- UH... WERE YOU LOOKING FOR ME?
REX? WHAT--?
IS THAT A SECRET ROOM?
WORK ROOM, YES. I HAVE A FEW SENSITIVE PROJECTS RUNNING CONCURRENTLY WITH MY GUARDIANS BUSINESS.
I HAD NO IDEA THERE WAS ANOTHER ROOM IN HERE.
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO. IT WAS *SECRET.*
DON'T FORGET-- I BUILT THIS SPACE STATION... I'VE GOT SECRET ROOMS ALL OVER THE PLACE.
IS THE MEETING STARTING? IS THAT WHY YOU CAME TO GET ME?
UM... YEAH.
THEY'RE WAITING.

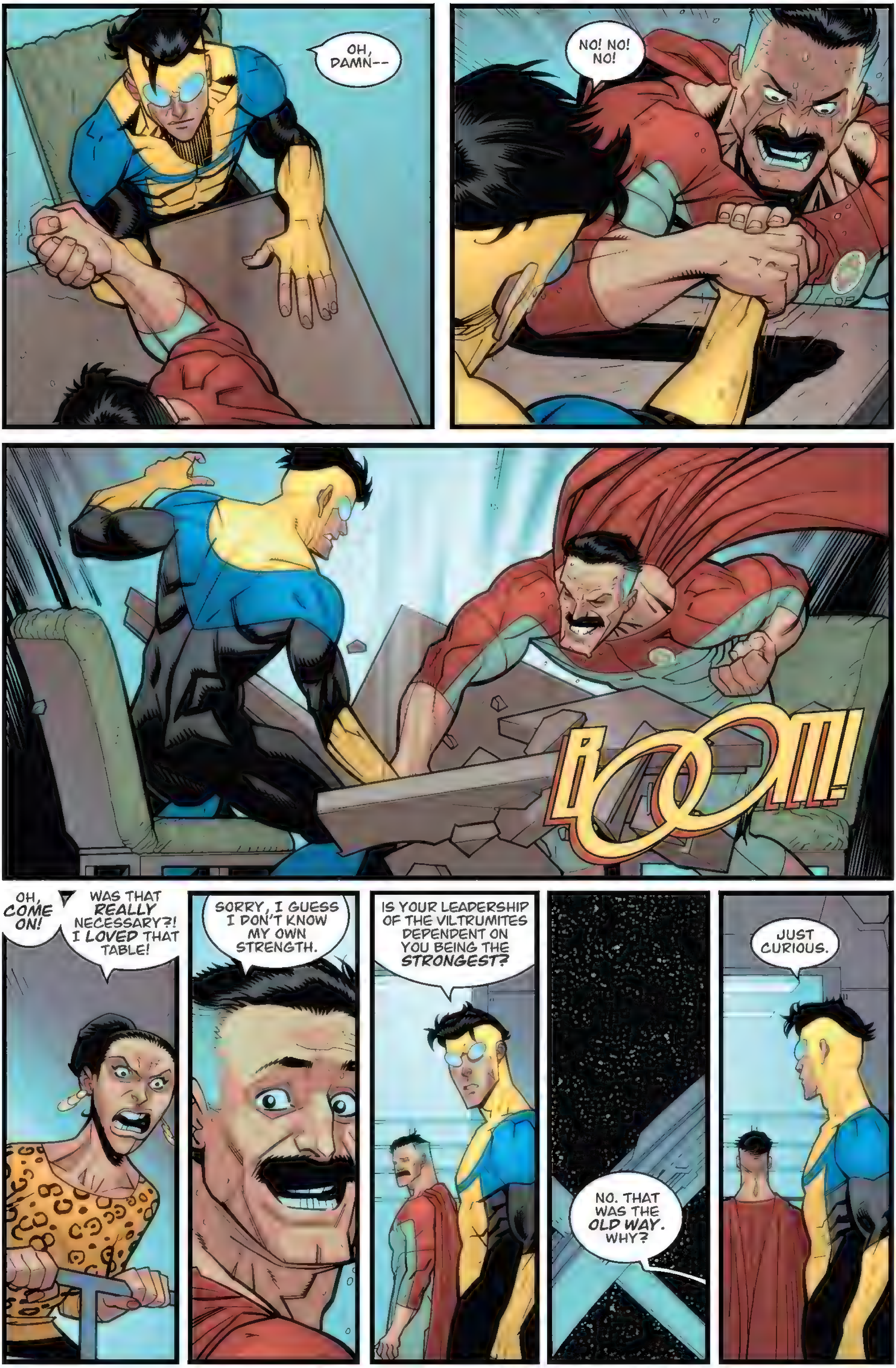

I KNOW HE'S YOUR FATHER... BUT HE'S ALSO THE LEADER OF AN EVIL ALIEN EMPIRE AND JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO HE TRIED TO KILL YOU AND ENDED UP KILLING HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WHILE DOING SO!
YEAH, BUT...
...HE'S MY DAD.
THAT DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING ELSE, MARK.
NOT FOR ME, AT LEAST.
IF YOU HATED ME FOREVER BECAUSE OF THAT, I WOULD UNDERSTAND.
AND IT SHOULDN'T.
NO, LISTEN. MARK AND I HAVE TALKED ABOUT THIS. YOU'RE AN ALIEN WHO LIVED BY DIFFERENT RULES.
AND YOU'RE TRYING TO CHANGE.
I RESPECT THAT.
BUT FOR ALL I KNOW THERE'S A VILTRUMITE CUSTOM WHERE THE BABY IS PUNCHED OUT OF THE MOTHER AND GROWN IN A TUBE.
I ASSURE YOU, THERE IS NO SUCH CUSTOM.
WHO'S READY FOR DINNER?

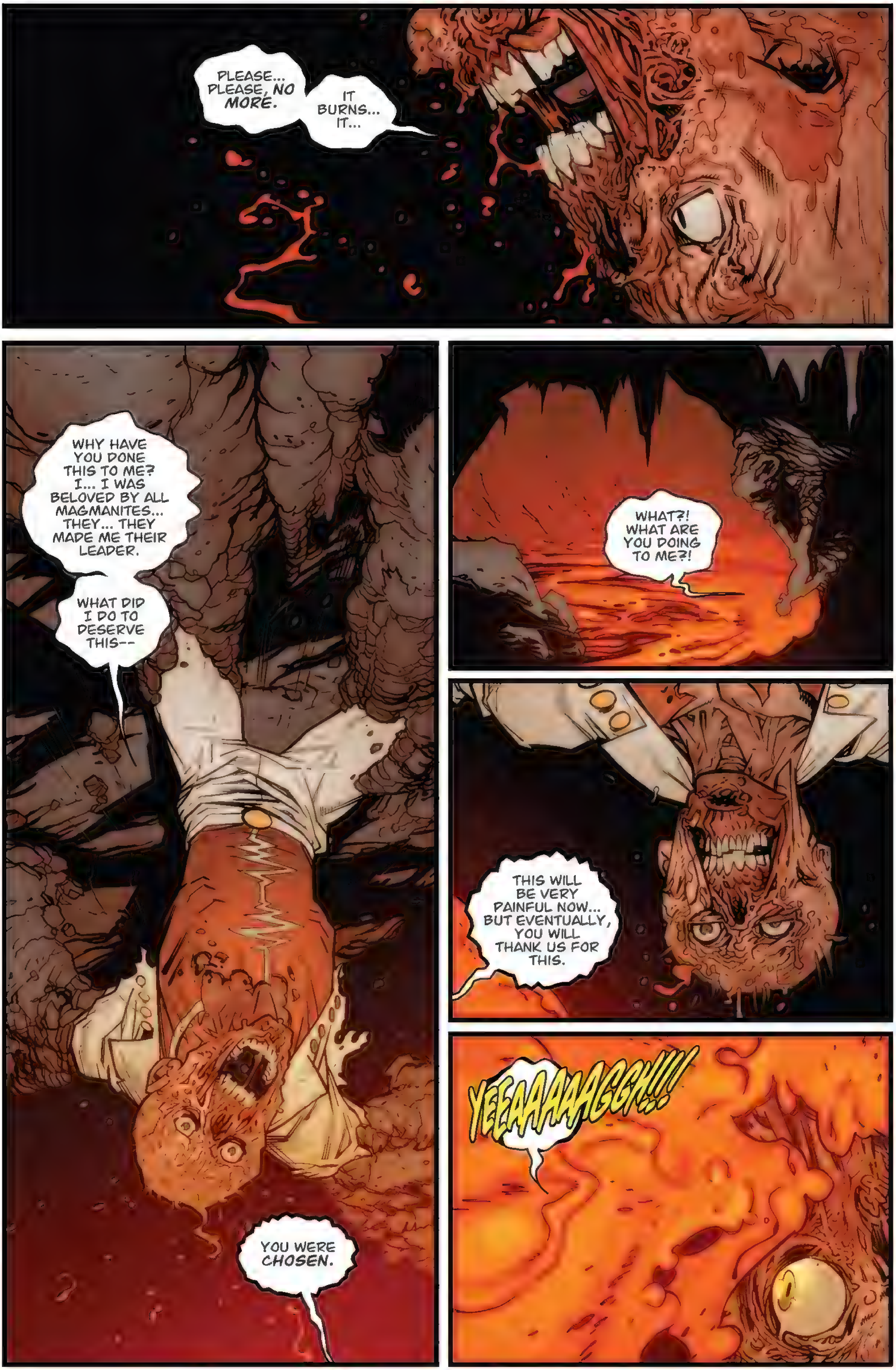

THIS IS *FUN*...
I REALLY AM *NOT* THAT PERSON ANYMORE.
I'M MAD AT *HIM* RIGHT NOW. NOT YOU.
STILL, I WANT YOU TO KNOW... EVEN THEN, I WAS REALLY PRETENDING TO BE SOMETHING I WASN'T.
I WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT AGAIN.
AND IF HE TRIED IT AGAIN... I'D KICK HIS BUTT.
OH, YEAH?

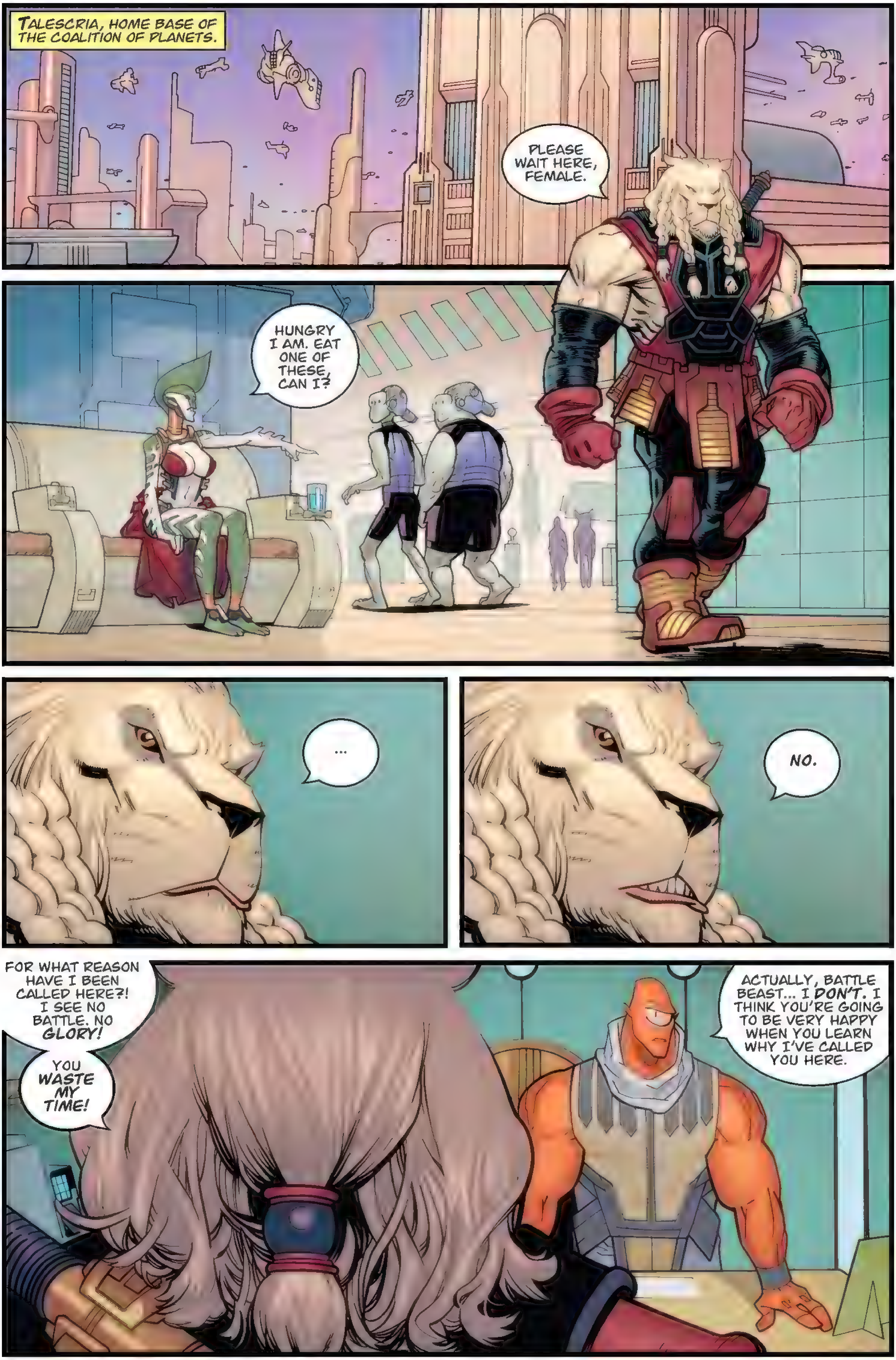

I JUST MEAN I'M WAY STRONGER NOW. THAT'S ALL.
REALLY? I SEEM TO RECALL HAVING TO PULL YOU ALONG WITH ME SO YOU COULD KEEP UP WHEN WE DESTROYED VILTRUM.
THAT'S FLYING-- AND I'M GETTING FASTER.
REMEMBER HOW I PUNCHED RIGHT THROUGH THE PLANET ALONG WITH YOU AND THAEDUS?
YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE STRONGER THAN ME NOW?
COULD BE. YOU NEVER KNOW... UNLESS...
YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?
OH, GOD...
IS THIS REALLY HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?

HE REALLY IS A CHANGED MAN. I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT.
OTHERWISE WE WOULDN'T BE TOGETHER.
I **KNOW**... IT'S NOT LIKE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN HIM SINCE... Y'KNOW.
BUT THIS IS MY **CHILD**. I FEEL LIKE I HAVE TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL... CERTAIN... **ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN**.
YOU UNDERSTAND?
I **COMPLETELY** UNDERSTAND.


WELL-- WHAT'D I TELL YOU?
I'M-- IMPRESSED YOU'VE LASTED-- THIS LONG.
BUT I'LL WEAR YOU DOWN-- SOON.
WHATEVER, OLD MAN!
I COULD DO THIS-- *ALL NIGHT!*
OH, YEAH--?
THEN LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT-- KID!
OH, I WILL--
YOU'LL SEE HOW STRONG--
I AM...


OH, DAMN--
NO! NO! NO!
BOOM!
OH, COME ON!
WAS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?! I LOVED THAT TABLE!
SORRY, I GUESS I DON'T KNOW MY OWN STRENGTH.
IS YOUR LEADERSHIP OF THE VILTRUMITES DEPENDENT ON YOU BEING THE STRONGEST?
NO. THAT WAS THE OLD WAY. WHY?
JUST CURIOUS.

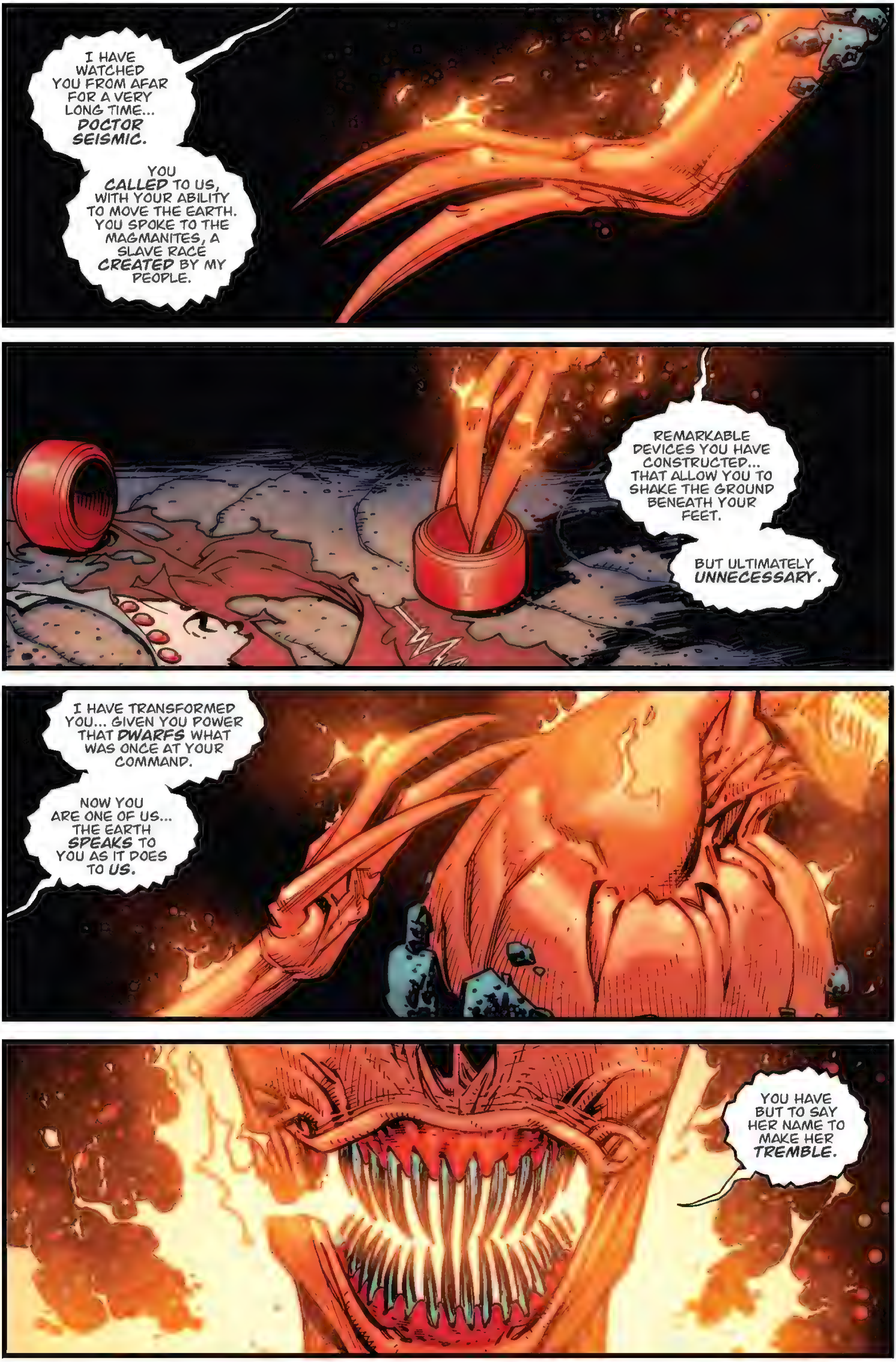

PLEASE... PLEASE, *NO MORE.*
IT BURNS... IT...
WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS TO ME? I... I WAS BELOVED BY ALL MAGMANITES... THEY... THEY MADE ME THEIR LEADER.
WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS--
YOU WERE *CHOSEN.*
WHAT?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME?!
THIS WILL BE VERY PAINFUL NOW... BUT EVENTUALLY, YOU WILL THANK US FOR THIS.
YEEAAAAAAGGH!!!


TALESCRIA, HOME BASE OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
PLEASE WAIT HERE, FEMALE.
HUNGRY I AM. EAT ONE OF THESE, CAN I?
...
NO.
FOR WHAT REASON HAVE I BEEN CALLED HERE?! I SEE NO BATTLE. NO GLORY!
YOU WASTE MY TIME!
ACTUALLY, BATTLE BEAST... I DON'T. I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO BE VERY HAPPY WHEN YOU LEARN WHY I'VE CALLED YOU HERE.

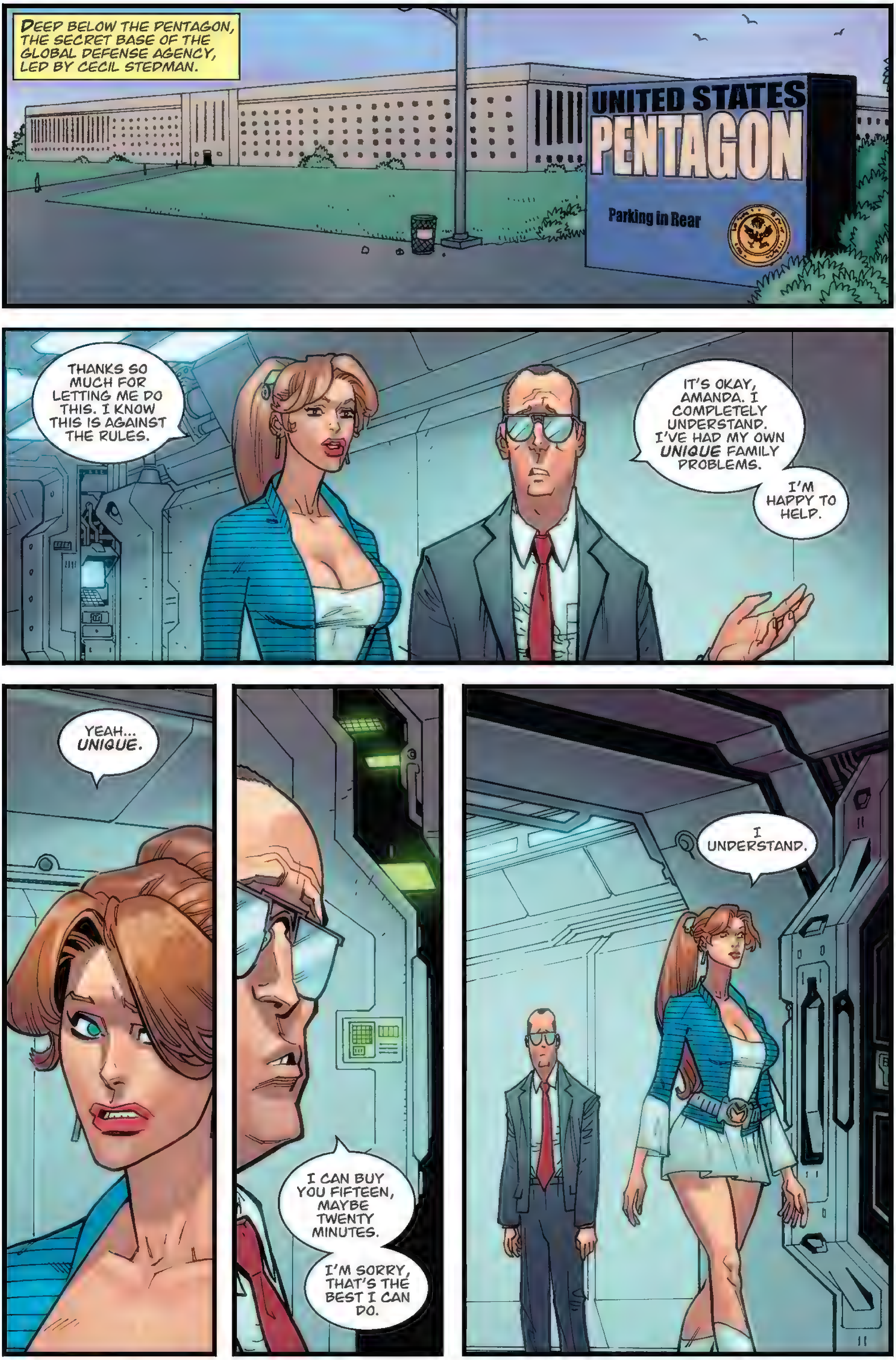
A VILTRUMITE CAN TRAVEL THROUGH SPACE INDEPENDENTLY, BUT IT CAN ONLY HOLD ITS BREATH FOR SO LONG.
IF YOU KNEW THE STARTING POINT... YOU COULD TRACK THEM BY NARROWING DOWN THE NUMBER OF INHABITABLE PLANETS THEY COULD REACH ON A SINGLE BREATH.
THEY COULD BE FOUND SOMEWHAT *EASILY*.
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
FORMER GRAND REGENT THRAGG OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE HAS BEEN *EXILED*.
I WANT YOU TO HUNT HIM DOWN AND *KILL HIM*.

CHAPTER 107

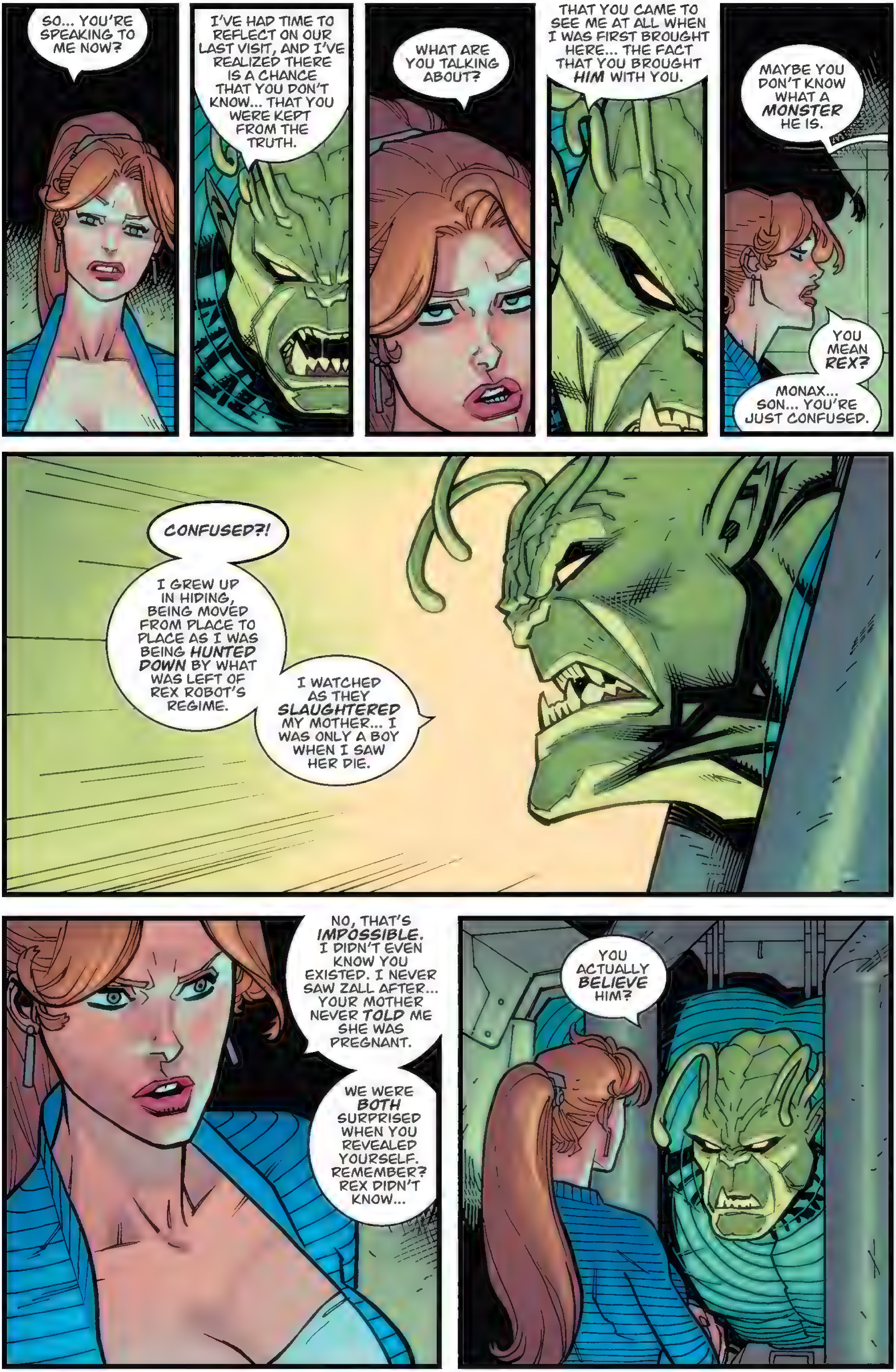
Ryan 13
RAUCH

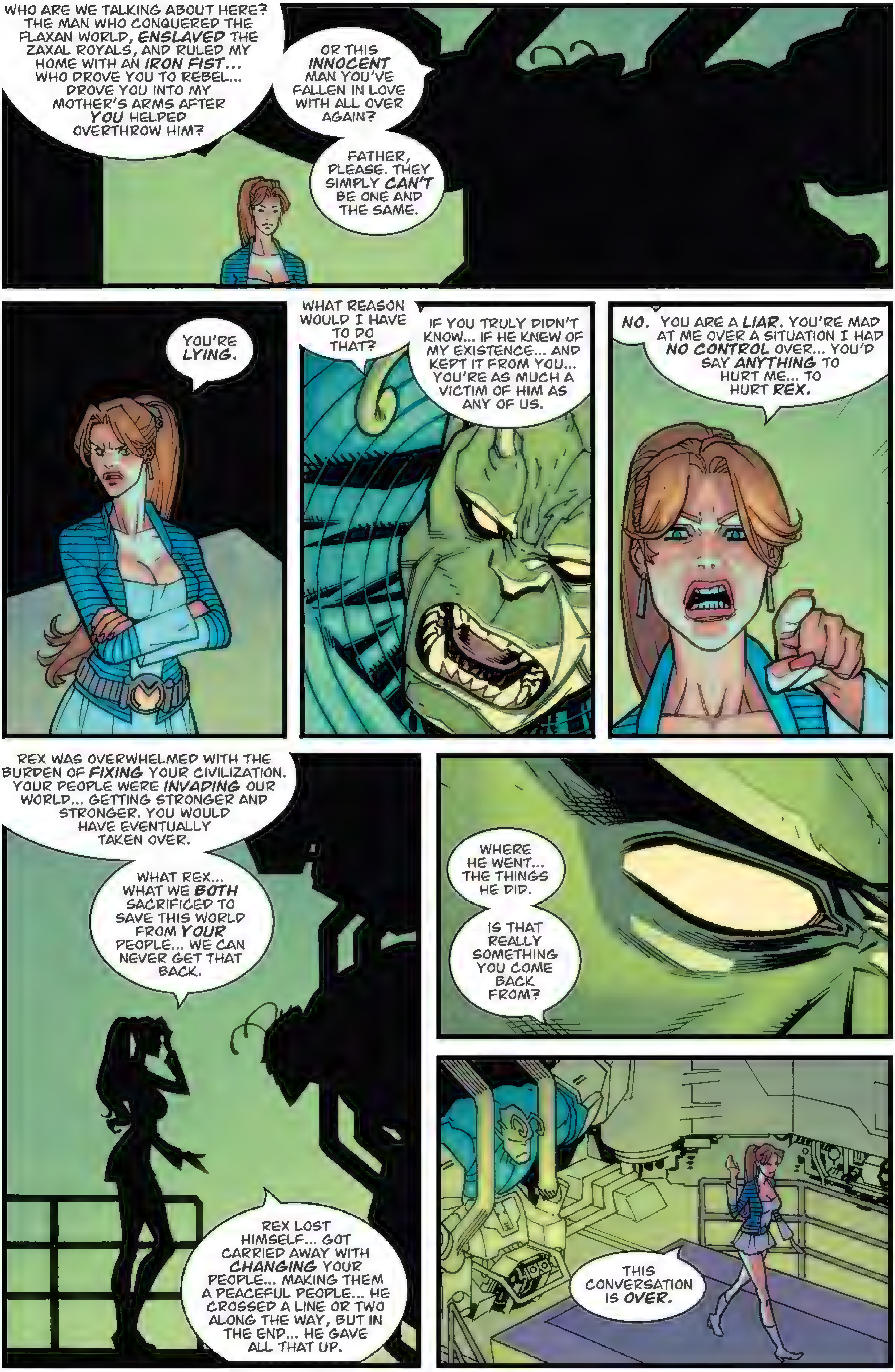

I HAVE WATCHED YOU FROM AFAR FOR A VERY LONG TIME... **DOCTOR SEISMIC.**
YOU **CALLED** TO US, WITH YOUR ABILITY TO MOVE THE EARTH. YOU SPOKE TO THE MAGMANITES, A SLAVE RACE **CREATED** BY MY PEOPLE.
REMARKABLE DEVICES YOU HAVE CONSTRUCTED... THAT ALLOW YOU TO SHAKE THE GROUND BENEATH YOUR FEET.
BUT ULTIMATELY **UNNECESSARY.**
I HAVE TRANSFORMED YOU... GIVEN YOU POWER THAT **DWARFS** WHAT WAS ONCE AT YOUR COMMAND.
NOW YOU ARE ONE OF US... THE EARTH **SPEAKS** TO YOU AS IT DOES TO **US.**
YOU HAVE BUT TO SAY HER NAME TO MAKE HER **TREMBLE.**

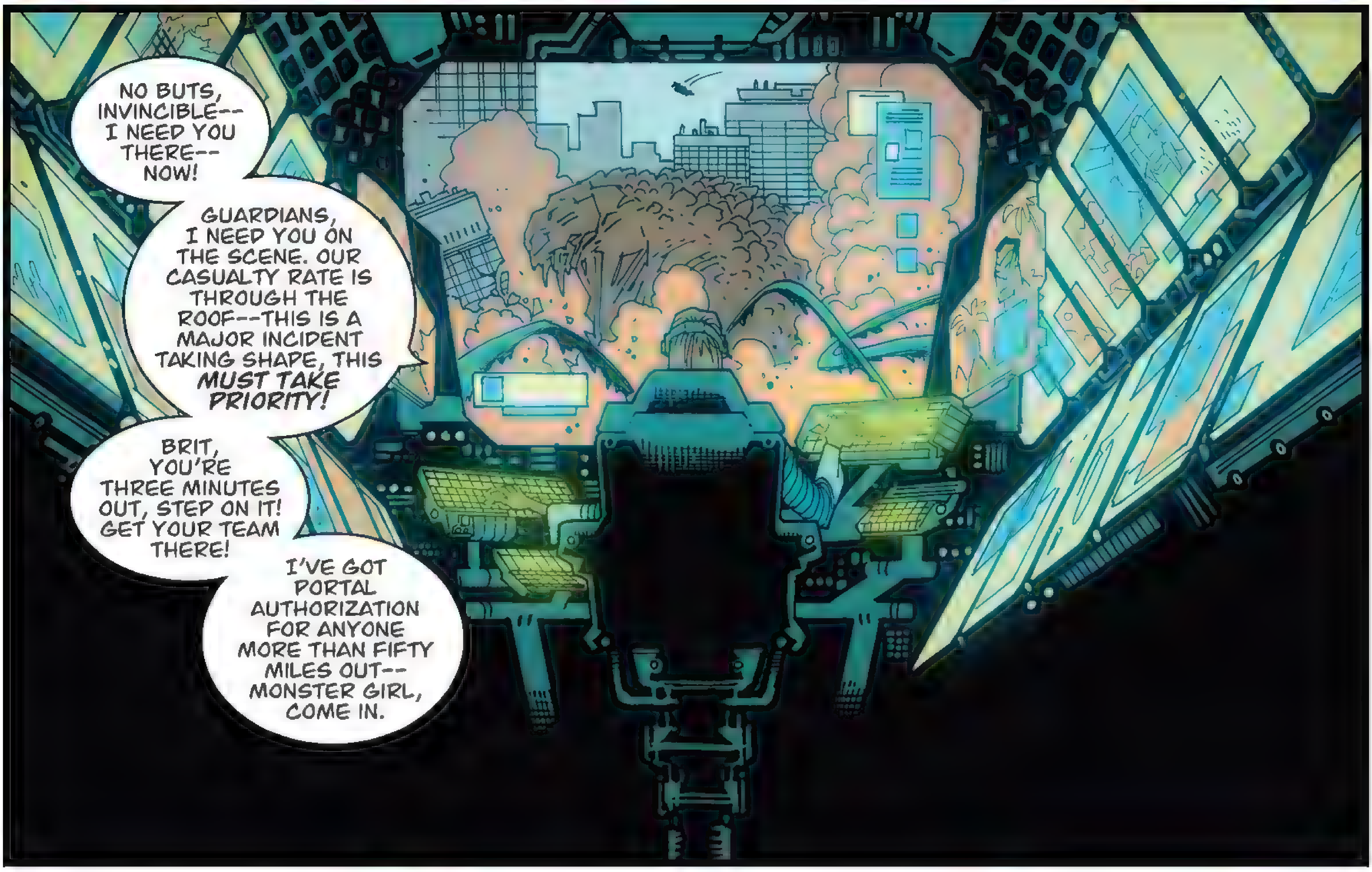
WHY--
WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS TO ME?
LONG HAVE I RULED THESE CAVERNS, BUT NOW I TURN MY ATTENTION TO THE SURFACE WORLD... AND *YOU* WILL BE MY BRIDGE TO THAT WORLD.
YOU WILL LEAD MY FORCES, BY MY SIDE-- AS THE KING OF UNDERWORLD.

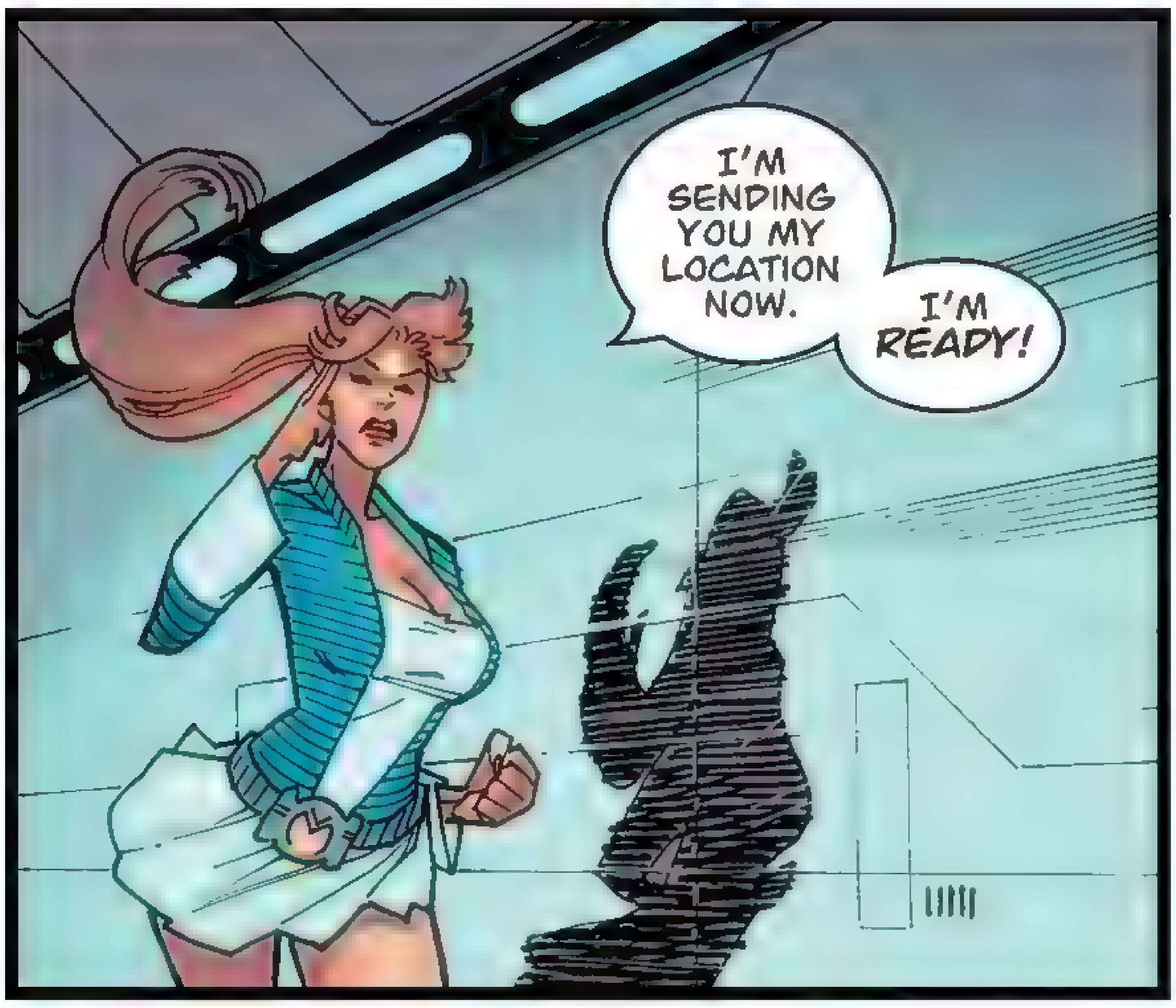

DEEP BELOW THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET BASE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, LED BY CECIL STEDMAN.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THANKS SO MUCH FOR LETTING ME DO THIS. I KNOW THIS IS AGAINST THE RULES.
IT'S OKAY, AMANDA. I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND. I'VE HAD MY OWN *UNIQUE* FAMILY PROBLEMS.
I'M HAPPY TO HELP.
YEAH... *UNIQUE.*
I CAN BUY YOU FIFTEEN, MAYBE TWENTY MINUTES.
I'M SORRY, THAT'S THE BEST I CAN DO.
I UNDERSTAND.

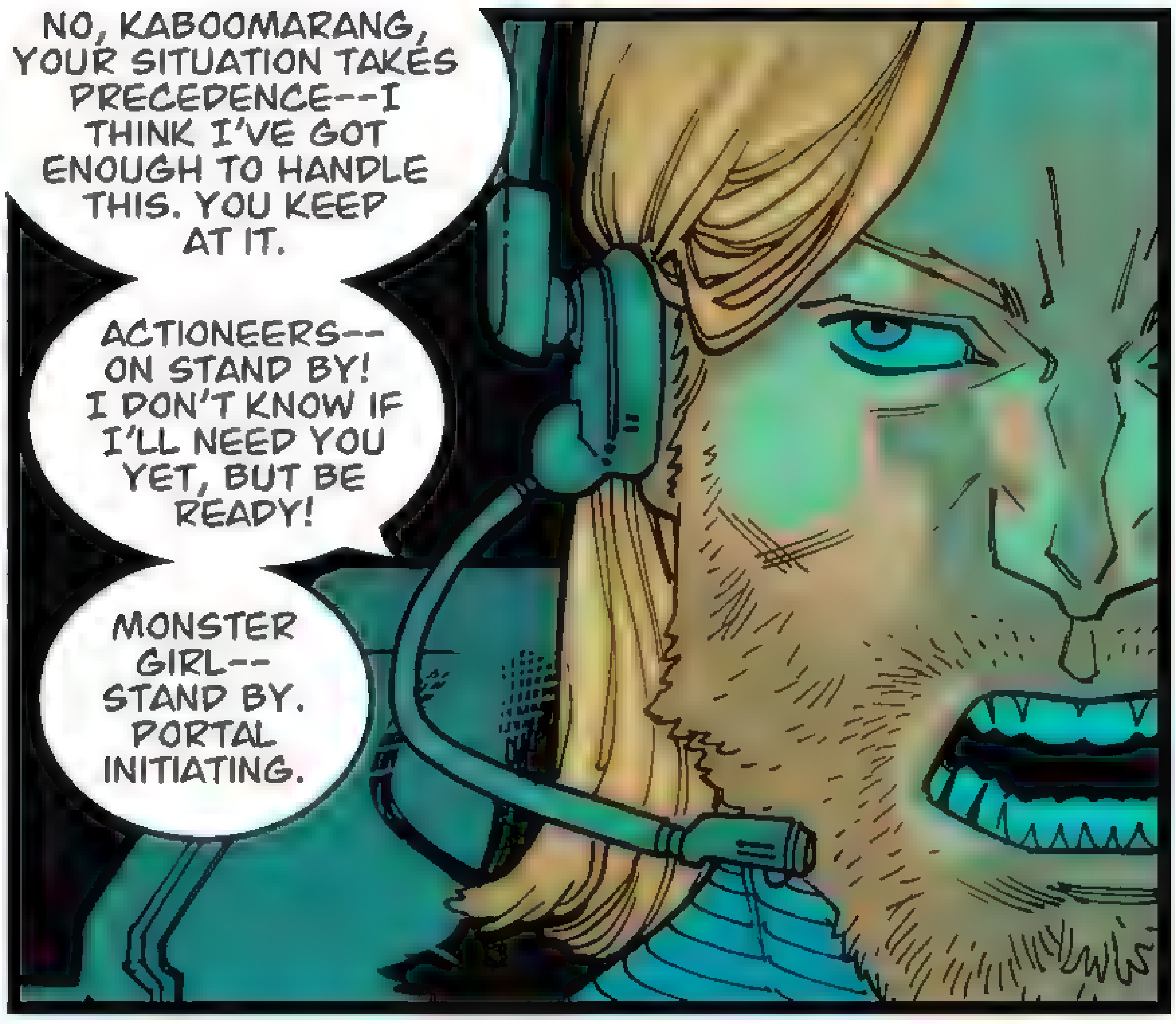
HELLO...
FATHER.

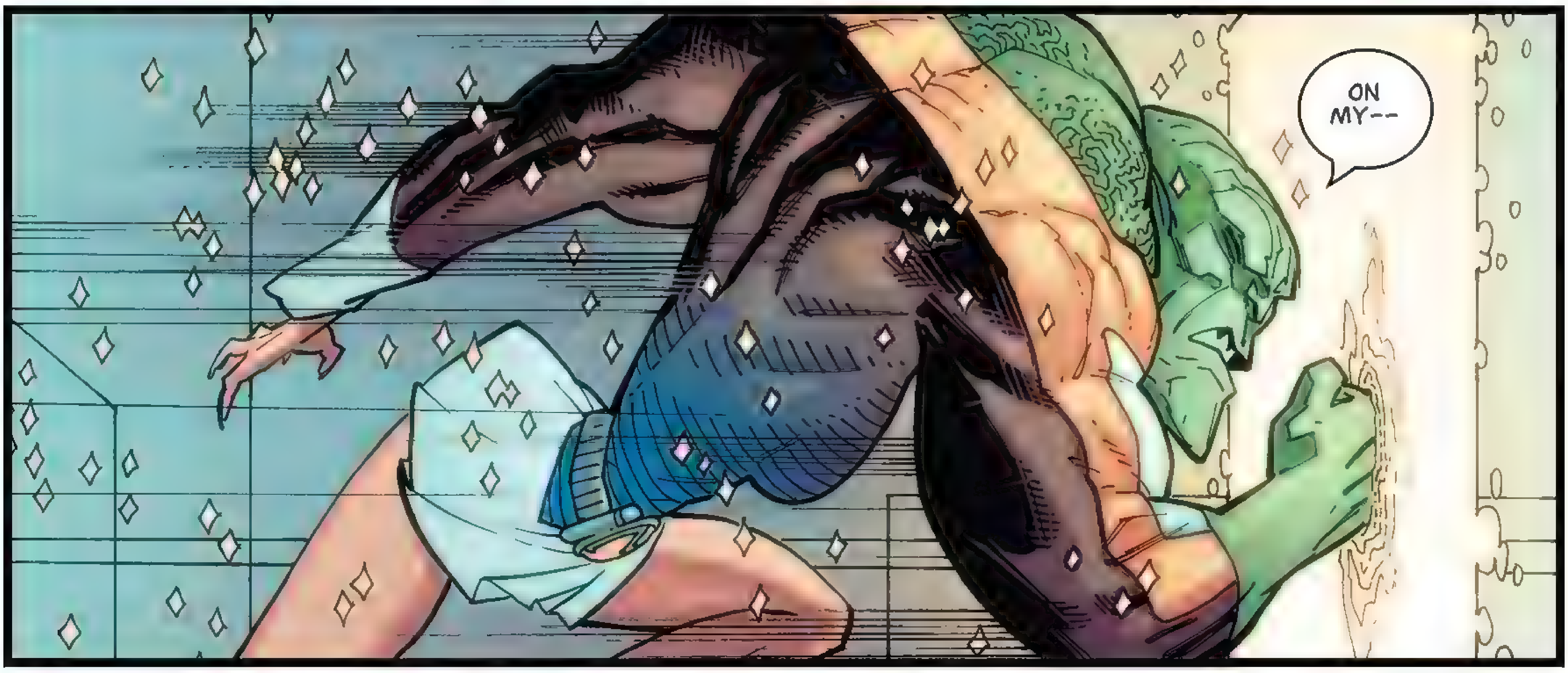

SO... YOU'RE SPEAKING TO ME NOW?
I'VE HAD TIME TO REFLECT ON OUR LAST VISIT, AND I'VE REALIZED THERE IS A CHANCE THAT YOU DON'T KNOW... THAT YOU WERE KEPT FROM THE TRUTH.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THAT YOU CAME TO SEE ME AT ALL WHEN I WAS FIRST BROUGHT HERE... THE FACT THAT YOU BROUGHT **HIM** WITH YOU.
MAYBE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT A **MONSTER** HE IS.
YOU MEAN **REX?**
MONAX... SON... YOU'RE JUST CONFUSED.
CONFUSED?!
I GREW UP IN HIDING, BEING MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE AS I WAS BEING **HUNTED DOWN** BY WHAT WAS LEFT OF REX ROBOT'S REGIME.
I WATCHED AS THEY **SLAUGHTERED** MY MOTHER... I WAS ONLY A BOY WHEN I SAW HER DIE.
NO, THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE.** I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU EXISTED. I NEVER SAW ZALL AFTER... YOUR MOTHER NEVER **TOLD** ME SHE WAS PREGNANT.
WE WERE **BOTH** SURPRISED WHEN YOU REVEALED YOURSELF. REMEMBER? REX DIDN'T KNOW...
YOU ACTUALLY **BELIEVE** HIM?


WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE? THE MAN WHO CONQUERED THE FLAXAN WORLD, ENSLAVED THE ZAXAL ROYALS, AND RULED MY HOME WITH AN IRON FIST... WHO DROVE YOU TO REBEL... DROVE YOU INTO MY MOTHER'S ARMS AFTER YOU HELPED OVERTHROW HIM?
OR THIS INNOCENT MAN YOU'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH ALL OVER AGAIN?
FATHER, PLEASE. THEY SIMPLY CAN'T BE ONE AND THE SAME.
YOU'RE LYING.
WHAT REASON WOULD I HAVE TO DO THAT?
IF YOU TRULY DIDN'T KNOW... IF HE KNEW OF MY EXISTENCE... AND KEPT IT FROM YOU... YOU'RE AS MUCH A VICTIM OF HIM AS ANY OF US.
NO. YOU ARE A LIAR. YOU'RE MAD AT ME OVER A SITUATION I HAD NO CONTROL OVER... YOU'D SAY ANYTHING TO HURT ME... TO HURT REX.
REX WAS OVERWHELMED WITH THE BURDEN OF FIXING YOUR CIVILIZATION. YOUR PEOPLE WERE INVADING OUR WORLD... GETTING STRONGER AND STRONGER. YOU WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY TAKEN OVER.
WHAT REX... WHAT WE BOTH SACRIFICED TO SAVE THIS WORLD FROM YOUR PEOPLE... WE CAN NEVER GET THAT BACK.
REX LOST HIMSELF... GOT CARRIED AWAY WITH CHANGING YOUR PEOPLE... MAKING THEM A PEACEFUL PEOPLE... HE CROSSED A LINE OR TWO ALONG THE WAY, BUT IN THE END... HE GAVE ALL THAT UP.
WHERE HE WENT... THE THINGS HE DID.
IS THAT REALLY SOMETHING YOU COME BACK FROM?
THIS CONVERSATION IS OVER.


NO BUTS, INVINCIBLE-- I NEED YOU THERE-- NOW!
GUARDIANS, I NEED YOU ON THE SCENE. OUR CASUALTY RATE IS THROUGH THE ROOF--THIS IS A MAJOR INCIDENT TAKING SHAPE, THIS *MUST TAKE PRIORITY!*
BRIT, YOU'RE THREE MINUTES OUT, STEP ON IT! GET YOUR TEAM THERE!
I'VE GOT PORTAL AUTHORIZATION FOR ANYONE MORE THAN FIFTY MILES OUT-- MONSTER GIRL, COME IN.

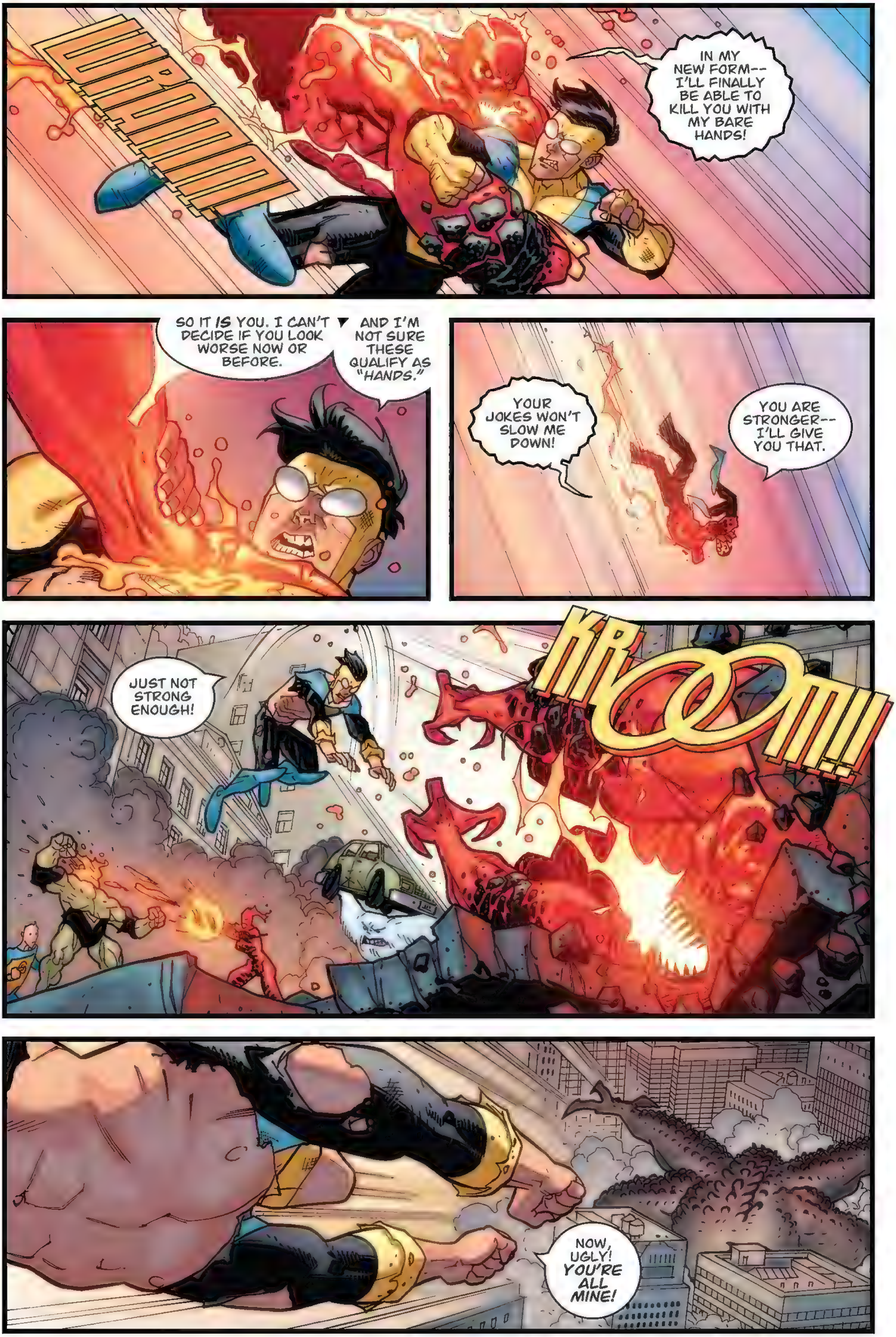

I'M SENDING YOU MY LOCATION NOW.
I'M *READY!*

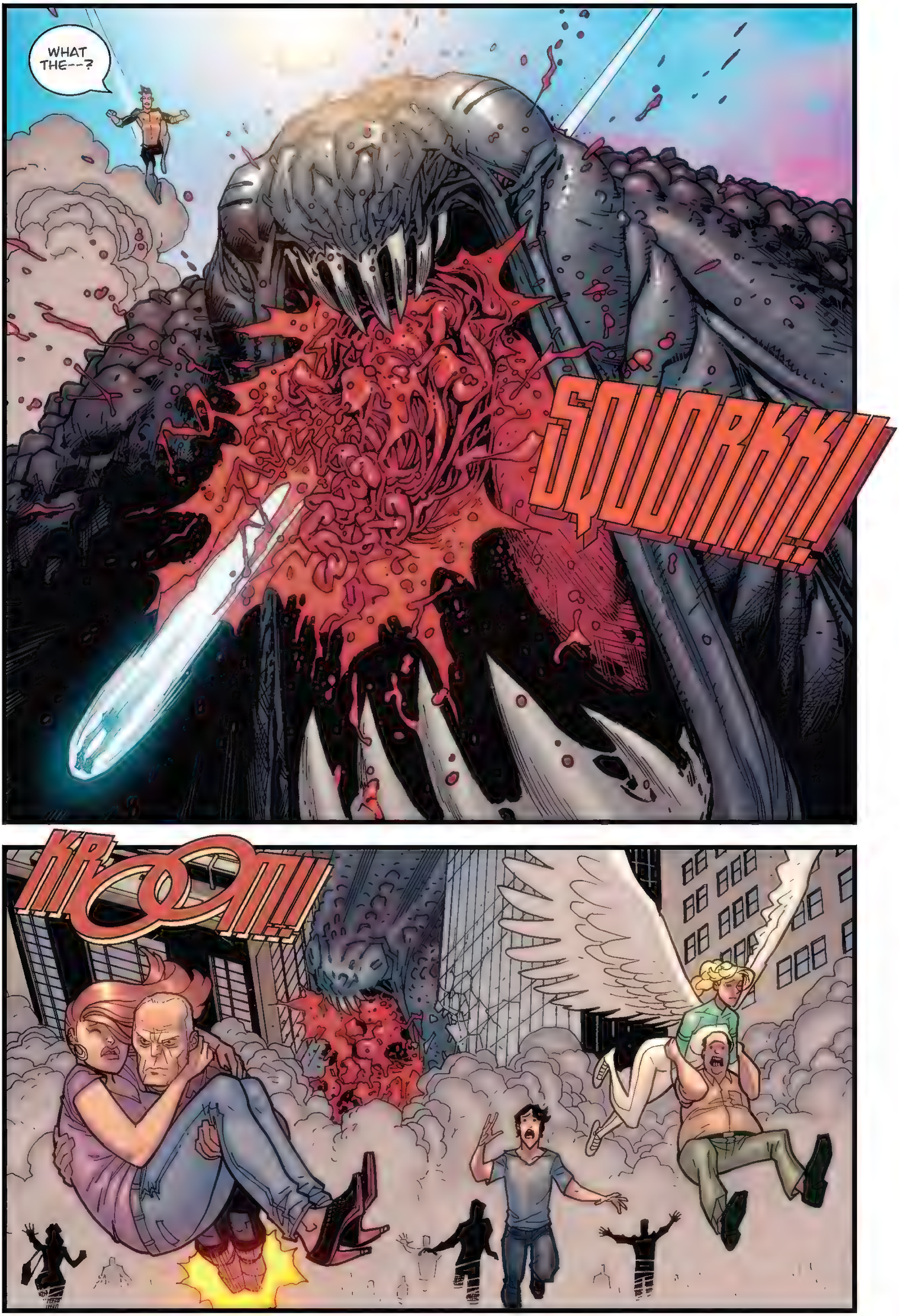

NO, KABOOMARANG, YOUR SITUATION TAKES PRECEDENCE--I THINK I'VE GOT ENOUGH TO HANDLE THIS. YOU KEEP AT IT.
ACTIONEERS-- ON STAND BY! I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL NEED YOU YET, BUT BE READY!
MONSTER GIRL-- STAND BY. PORTAL INITIATING.

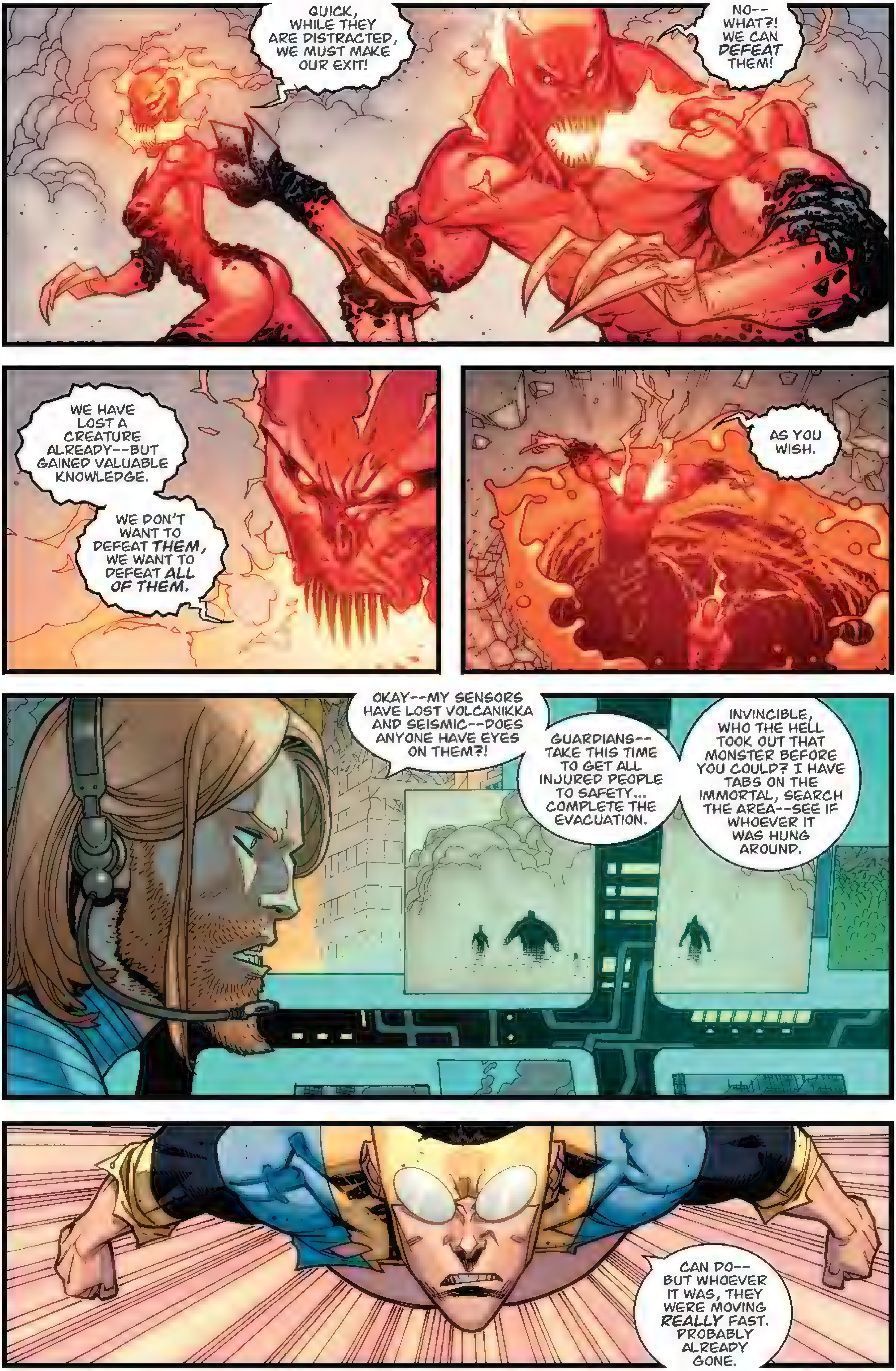

ON MY--

--WAY...

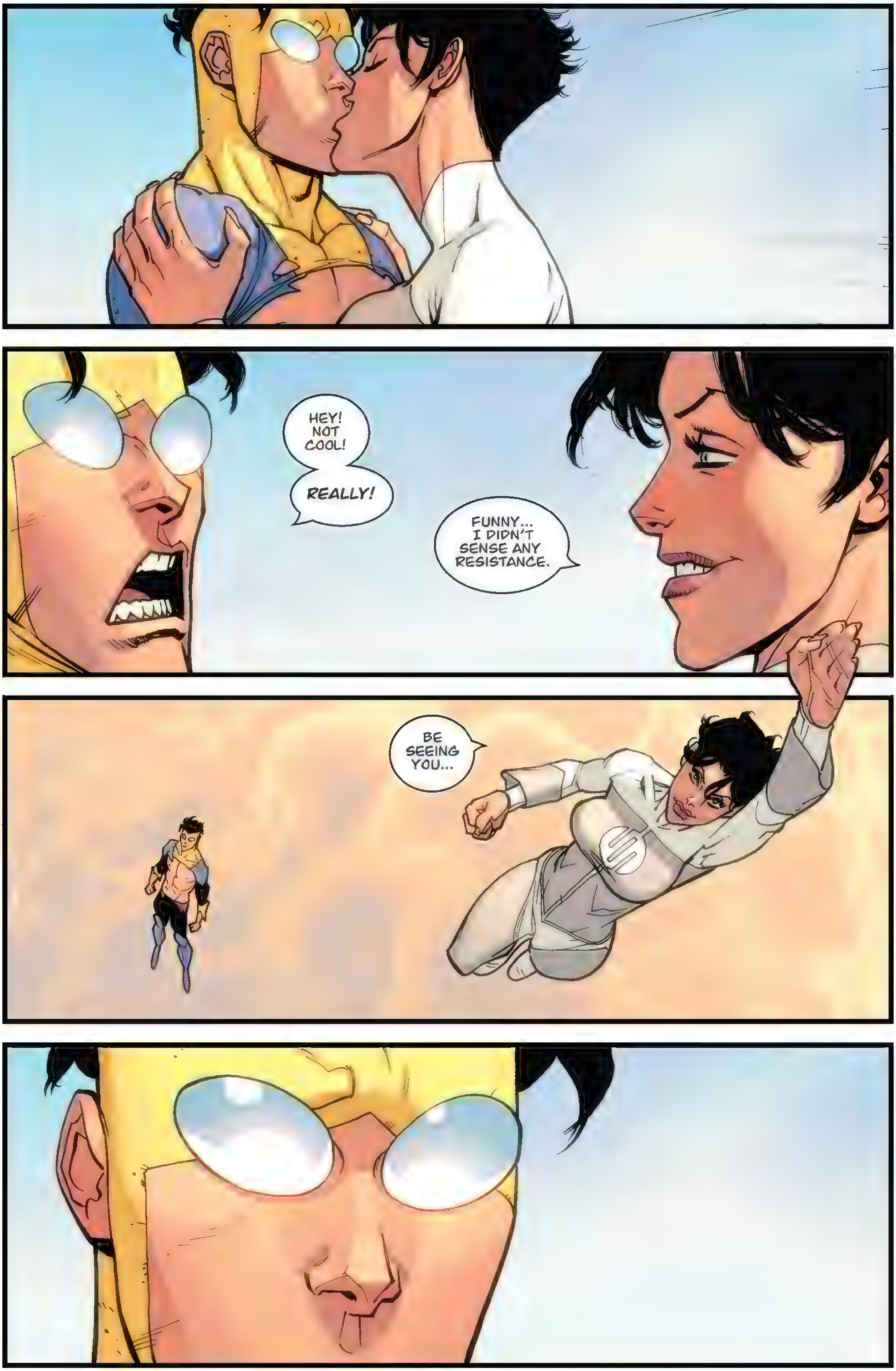
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?!
KRAKOOM!!
THE FEMALE REFERRED TO HERSELF AS *VOLCANIKKA*. THE MALE HAS REFERRED TO HIMSELF AS *SEISMIC* AND HE'S REFERENCED SOME KIND OF TRANSFORMATION... AND THAT WE'VE FACED HIM BEFORE.
THAT LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE SOMEHOW FACING A NEW AND IMPROVED *DOC SEISMIC*.
WELL, THAT EXPLAINS THE GIANT MONSTER!
SO HE'S BACK TO HIS OLD TRICKS...
YOU'RE OUR HEAVY HITTER, INVINCIBLE. I NEED YOU TO FOCUS ON THAT MONSTER-- SHUT IT DOWN!
THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THOSE BUILDINGS IS COMPROMISED! THEY COULD COLLAPSE AT ANY SECOND--WE NEED TO STOP ITS RAMPAGE *NOW* IF WE HAVE ANY HOPE OF GETTING THOSE PEOPLE EVACUATED!
ON IT!

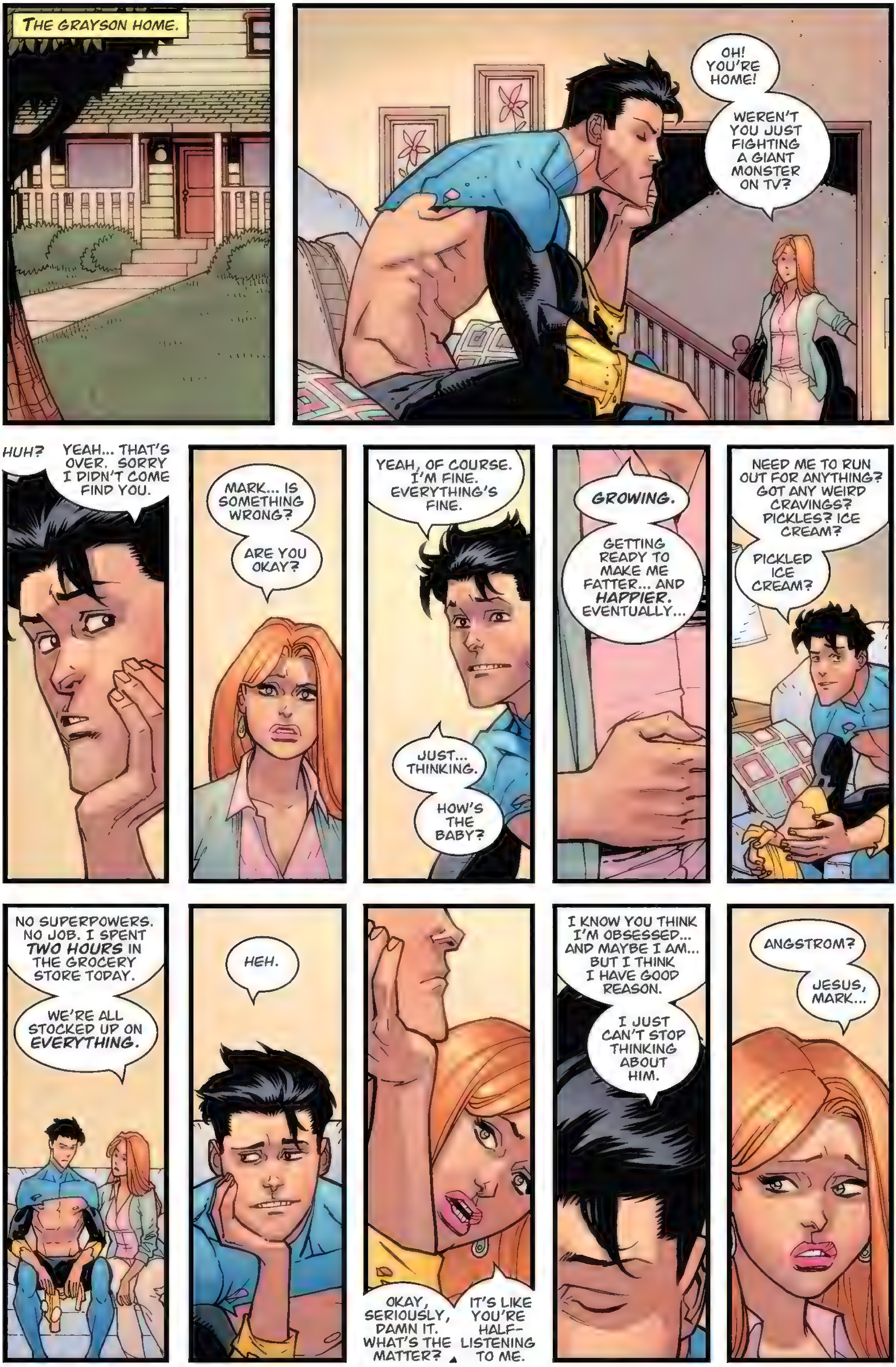

IN MY NEW FORM-- I'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO KILL YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS!
SO IT *IS* YOU. I CAN'T DECIDE IF YOU LOOK WORSE NOW OR BEFORE.
AND I'M NOT SURE THESE QUALIFY AS "*HANDS.*"
YOUR JOKES WON'T SLOW ME DOWN!
YOU ARE STRONGER-- I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
JUST NOT STRONG ENOUGH!
KRoooM!!
NOW, UGLY! *YOU'RE ALL MINE!*

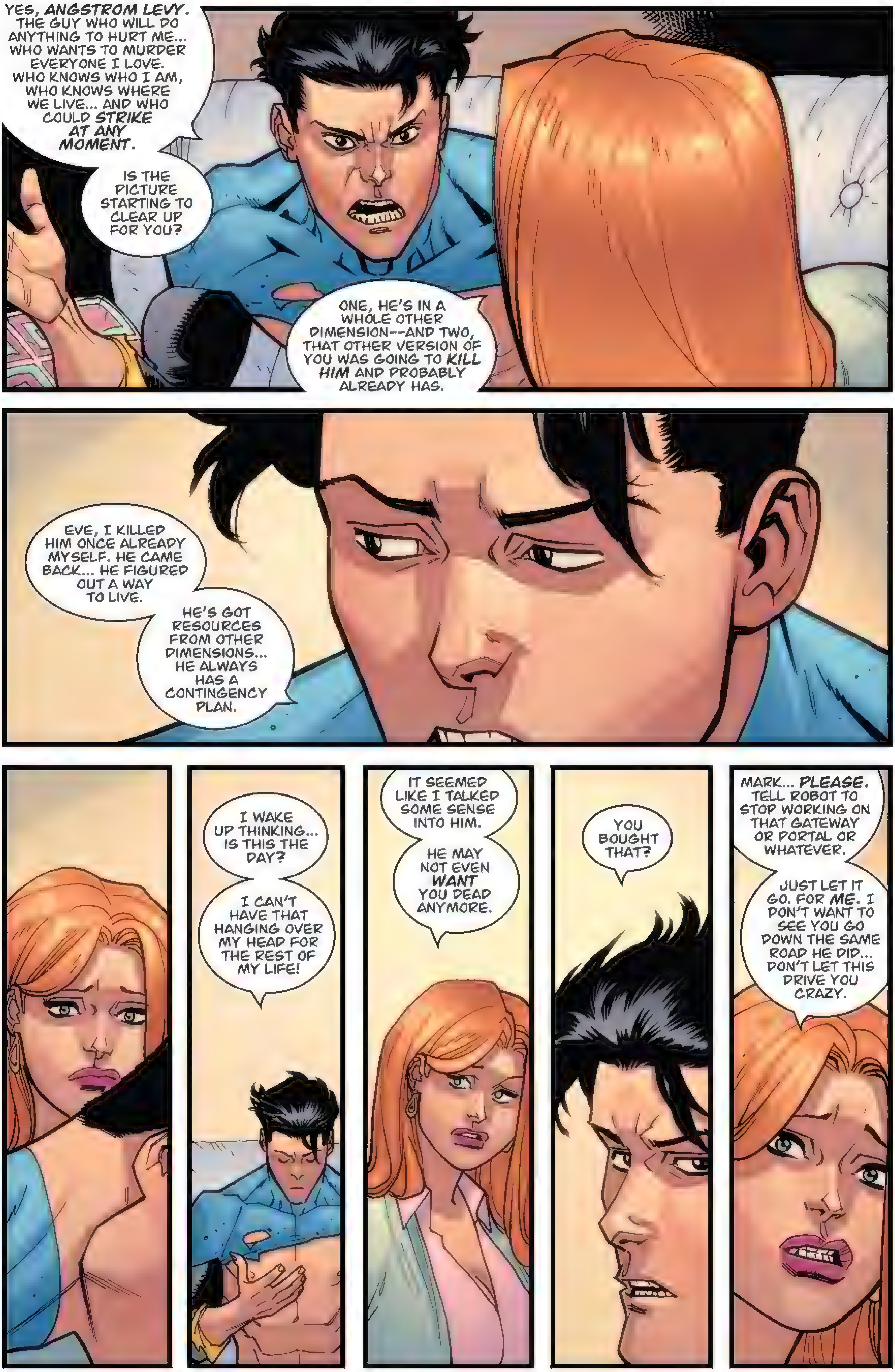

WHAT THE--?
SQUORKK!!
KROOM!!

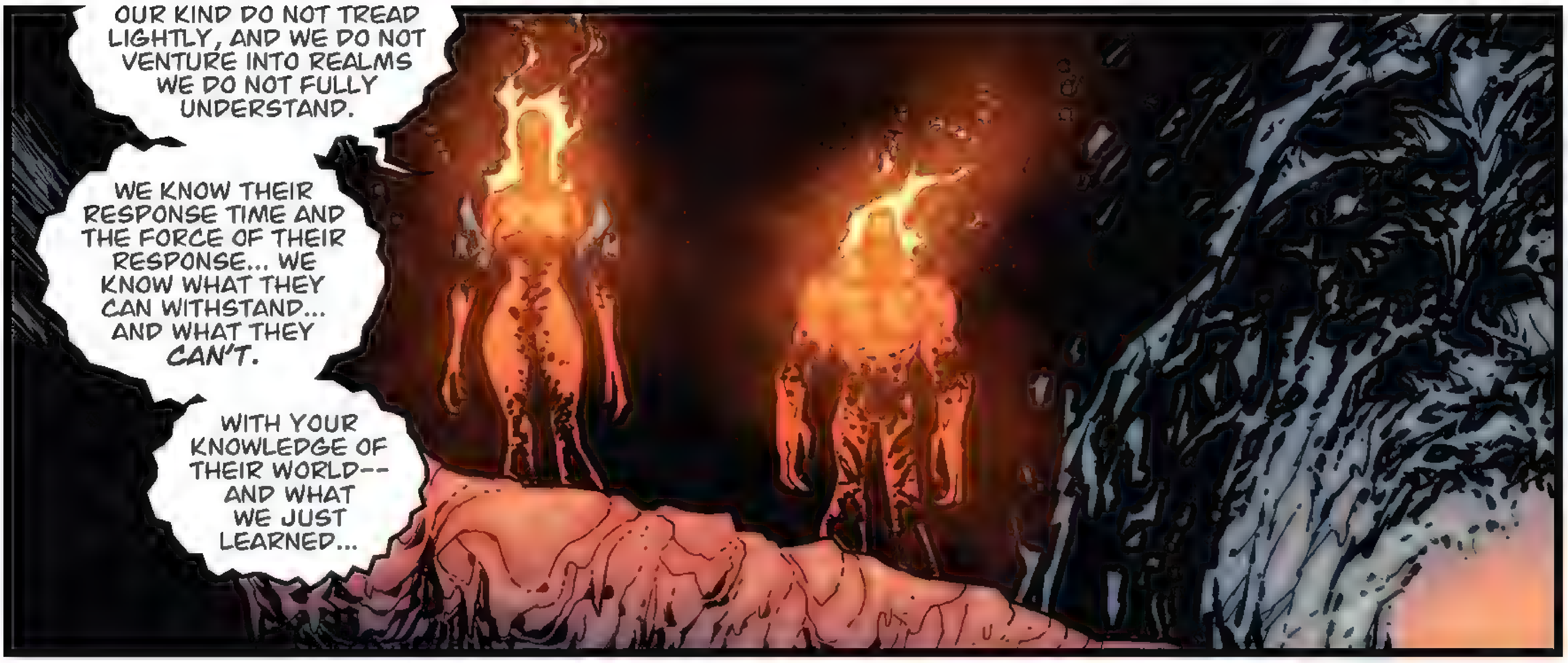

QUICK, WHILE THEY ARE DISTRACTED, WE MUST MAKE OUR EXIT!
NO-- WHAT?! WE CAN *DEFEAT* THEM!
WE HAVE LOST A CREATURE ALREADY--BUT GAINED VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE.
WE DON'T WANT TO DEFEAT *THEM*, WE WANT TO DEFEAT *ALL OF THEM.*
AS YOU WISH.
OKAY--MY SENSORS HAVE LOST VOLCANIKKA AND SEISMIC--DOES ANYONE HAVE EYES ON THEM?!
GUARDIANS-- TAKE THIS TIME TO GET ALL INJURED PEOPLE TO SAFETY... COMPLETE THE EVACUATION.
INVINCIBLE, WHO THE HELL TOOK OUT THAT MONSTER BEFORE YOU COULD? I HAVE TABS ON THE IMMORTAL, SEARCH THE AREA--SEE IF WHOEVER IT WAS HUNG AROUND.
CAN DO-- BUT WHOEVER IT WAS, THEY WERE MOVING *REALLY* FAST. PROBABLY ALREADY GONE.

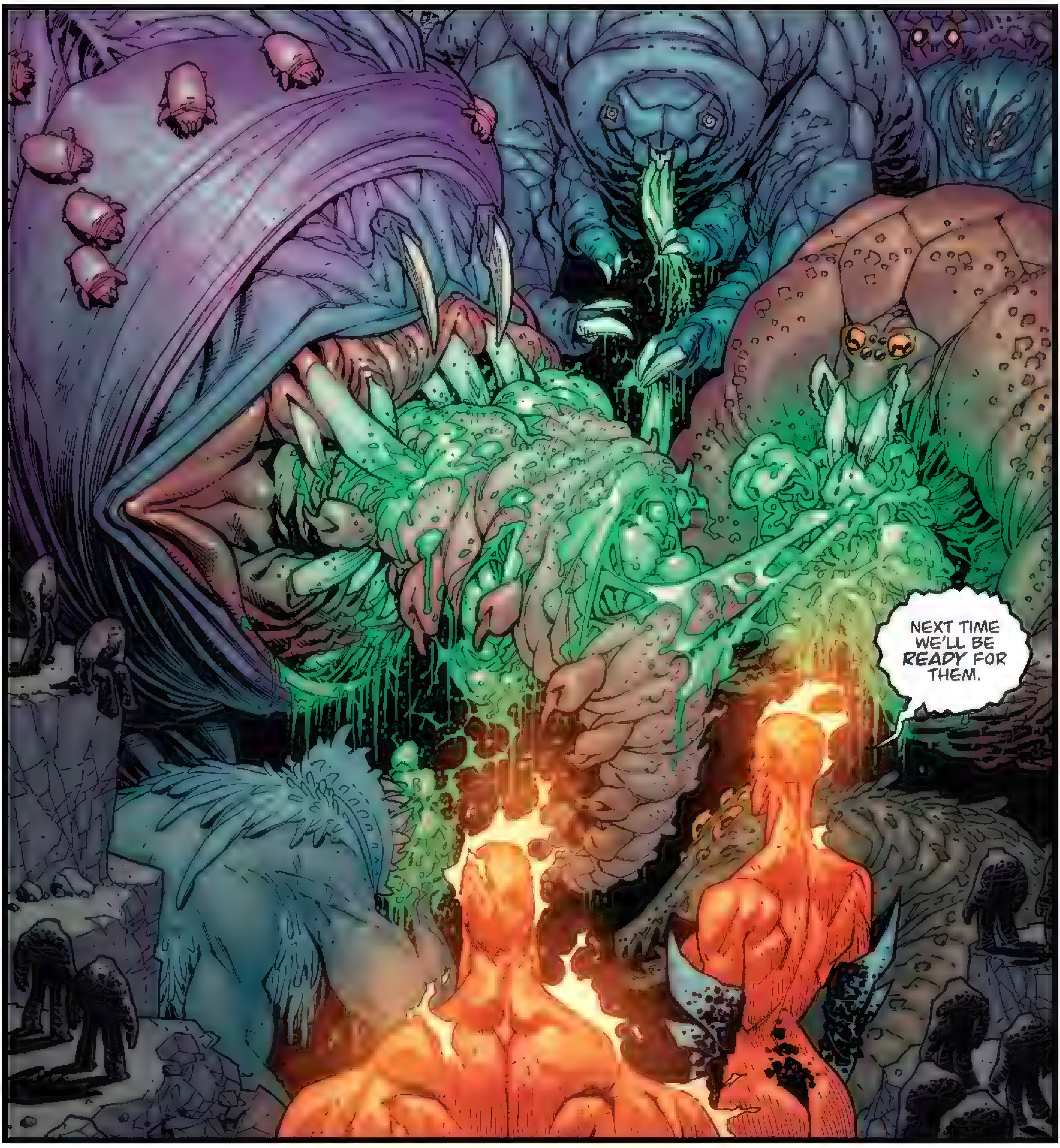
UH...
SO... THAT WAS *YOU*, THEN?
YES.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? ARE YOU TRYING TO UNDERMINE MY FATHER?
I SAW YOU SPYING ON HIM.
I WAS NEVER SPYING ON YOUR FATHER.
I WAS WATCHING *YOU*.

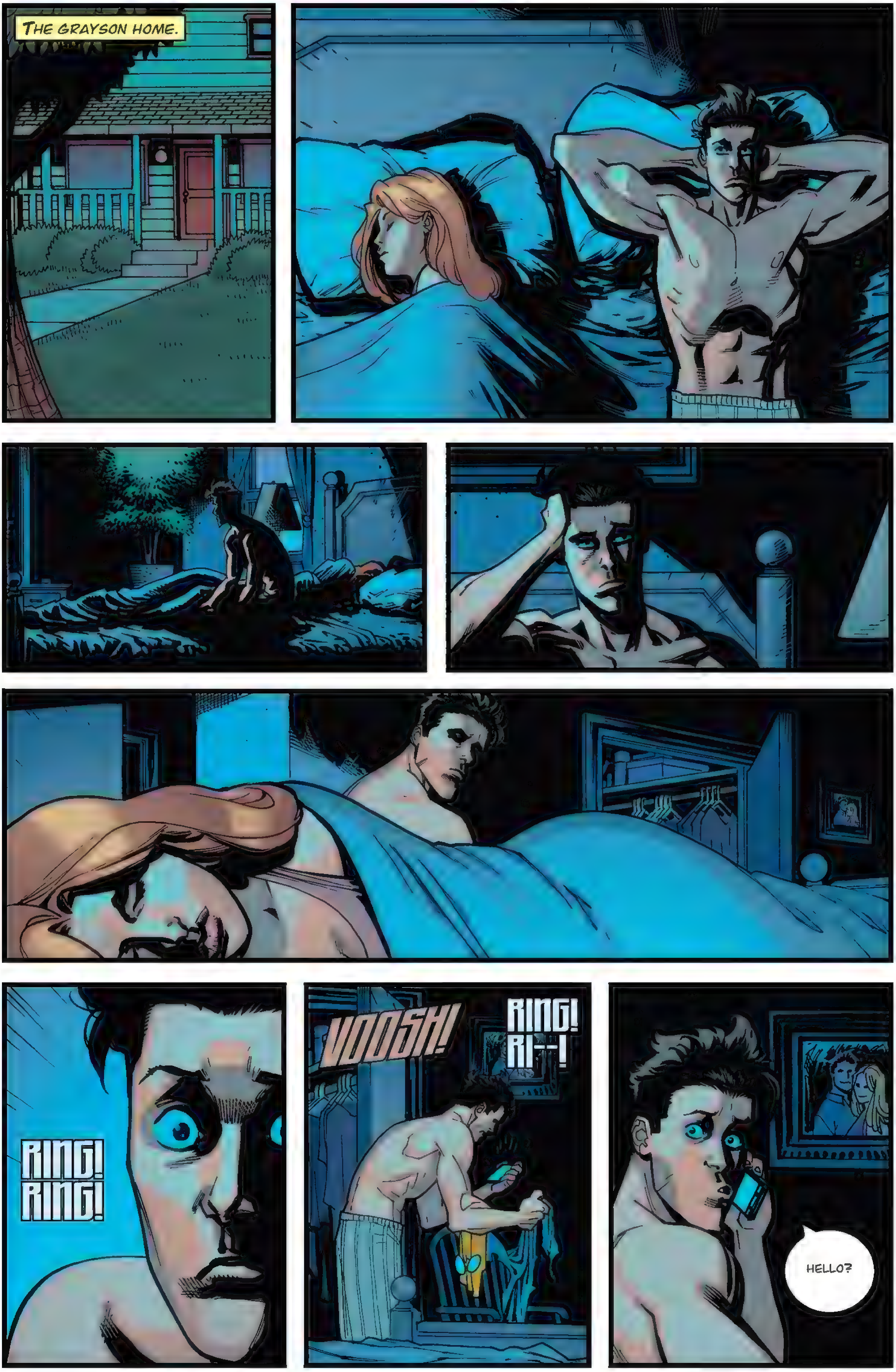

HEY! NOT COOL!
REALLY!
FUNNY... I DIDN'T SENSE ANY RESISTANCE.
BE SEEING YOU...

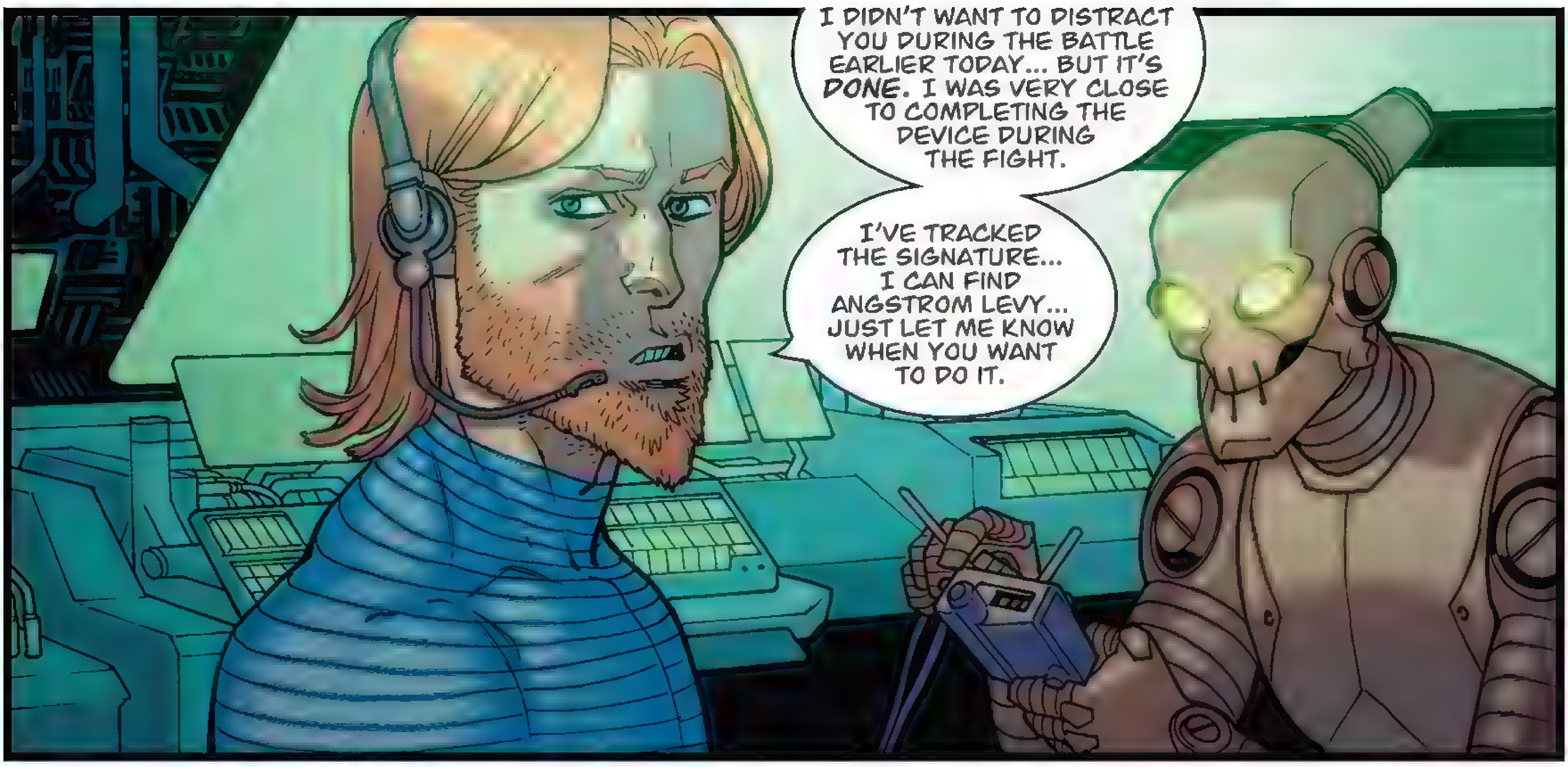

THE GRAYSON HOME.
OH! YOU'RE HOME!
WEREN'T YOU JUST FIGHTING A GIANT MONSTER ON TV?
HUH?
YEAH... THAT'S OVER. SORRY I DIDN'T COME FIND YOU.
MARK... IS SOMETHING WRONG?
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH, OF COURSE. I'M FINE. EVERYTHING'S FINE.
JUST... THINKING.
HOW'S THE BABY?
GROWING.
GETTING READY TO MAKE ME FATTER... AND ***HAPPIER.*** EVENTUALLY...
NEED ME TO RUN OUT FOR ANYTHING? GOT ANY WEIRD CRAVINGS? PICKLES? ICE CREAM?
PICKLED ICE CREAM?
NO SUPERPOWERS. NO JOB. I SPENT **TWO HOURS** IN THE GROCERY STORE TODAY.
WE'RE ALL STOCKED UP ON ***EVERYTHING.***
HEH.
OKAY, SERIOUSLY, DAMN IT. WHAT'S THE MATTER?
IT'S LIKE YOU'RE HALF-LISTENING TO ME.
I KNOW YOU THINK I'M OBSESSED... AND MAYBE I AM... BUT I THINK I HAVE GOOD REASON.
I JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT HIM.
ANGSTROM?
JESUS, MARK...

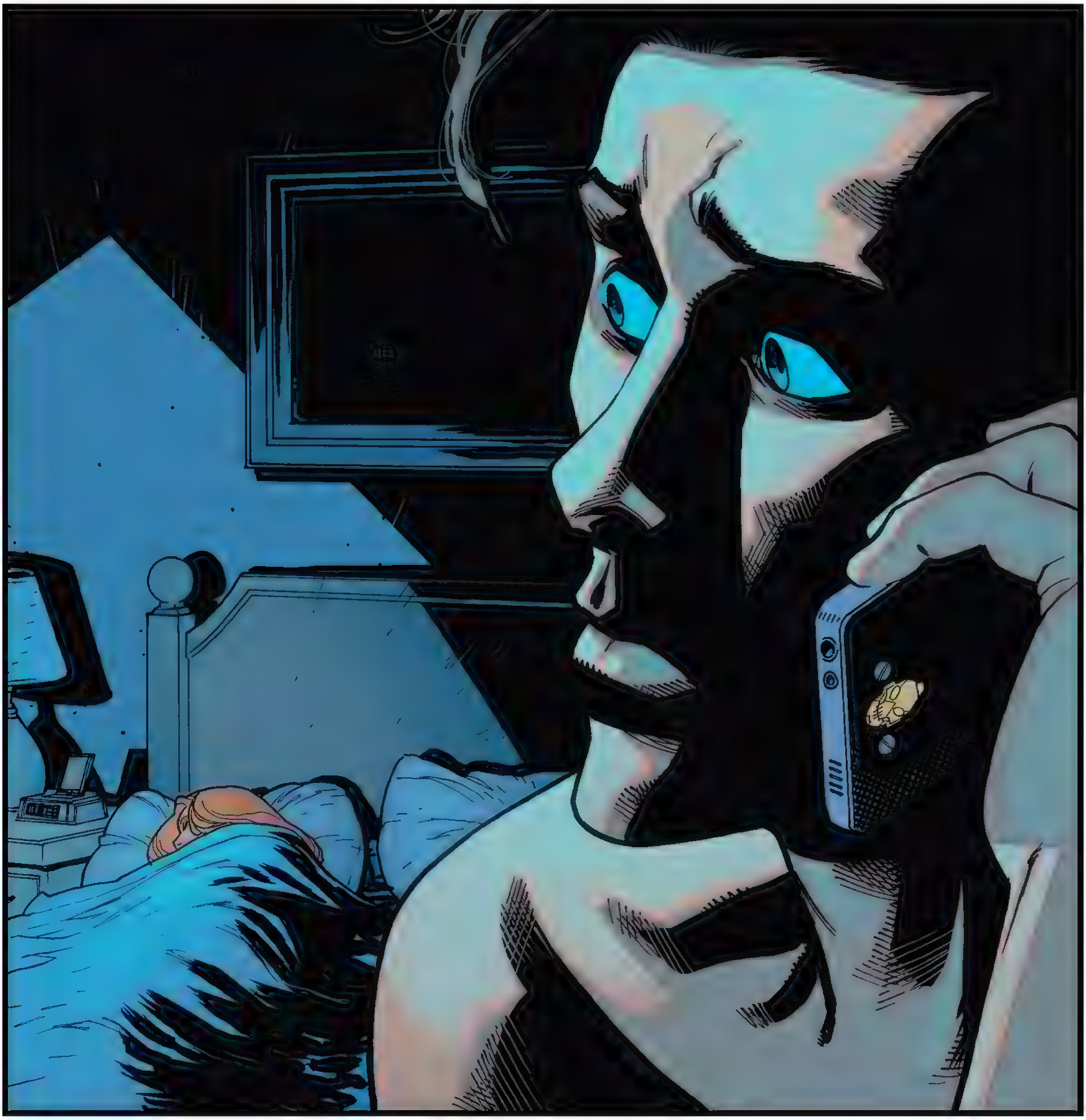

YES, ANGSTROM LEVY. THE GUY WHO WILL DO ANYTHING TO HURT ME... WHO WANTS TO MURDER EVERYONE I LOVE. WHO KNOWS WHO I AM, WHO KNOWS WHERE WE LIVE... AND WHO COULD STRIKE AT ANY MOMENT.
IS THE PICTURE STARTING TO CLEAR UP FOR YOU?
ONE, HE'S IN A WHOLE OTHER DIMENSION--AND TWO, THAT OTHER VERSION OF YOU WAS GOING TO KILL HIM AND PROBABLY ALREADY HAS.
EVE, I KILLED HIM ONCE ALREADY MYSELF. HE CAME BACK... HE FIGURED OUT A WAY TO LIVE.
HE'S GOT RESOURCES FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS... HE ALWAYS HAS A CONTINGENCY PLAN.
I WAKE UP THINKING... IS THIS THE DAY?
I CAN'T HAVE THAT HANGING OVER MY HEAD FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
IT SEEMED LIKE I TALKED SOME SENSE INTO HIM.
HE MAY NOT EVEN WANT YOU DEAD ANYMORE.
YOU BOUGHT THAT?
MARK... PLEASE. TELL ROBOT TO STOP WORKING ON THAT GATEWAY OR PORTAL OR WHATEVER.
JUST LET IT GO. FOR ME. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU GO DOWN THE SAME ROAD HE DID... DON'T LET THIS DRIVE YOU CRAZY.


OUR KIND DO NOT TREAD LIGHTLY, AND WE DO NOT VENTURE INTO REALMS WE DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND.
WE KNOW THEIR RESPONSE TIME AND THE FORCE OF THEIR RESPONSE... WE KNOW WHAT THEY CAN WITHSTAND... AND WHAT THEY *CAN'T*.
WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR WORLD-- AND WHAT WE JUST LEARNED...


NEXT TIME WE'LL BE *READY* FOR THEM.


THE GRAYSON HOME.
RING! RING!
VOOSH!
RING! RI--!
HELLO?


I DIDN'T WANT TO DISTRACT YOU DURING THE BATTLE EARLIER TODAY... BUT IT'S *DONE*. I WAS VERY CLOSE TO COMPLETING THE DEVICE DURING THE FIGHT.
I'VE TRACKED THE SIGNATURE... I CAN FIND ANGSTROM LEVY... JUST LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU WANT TO DO IT.



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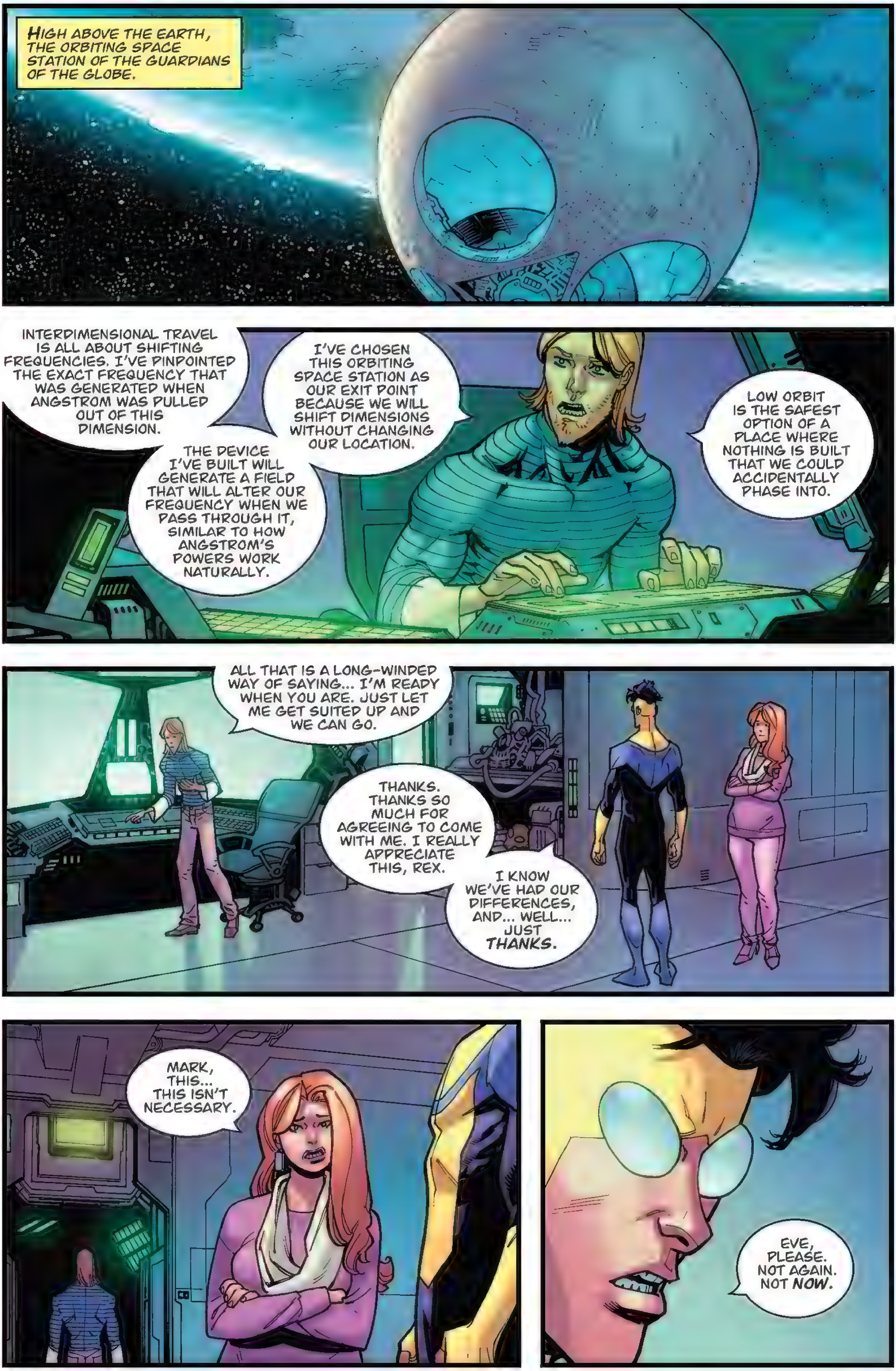
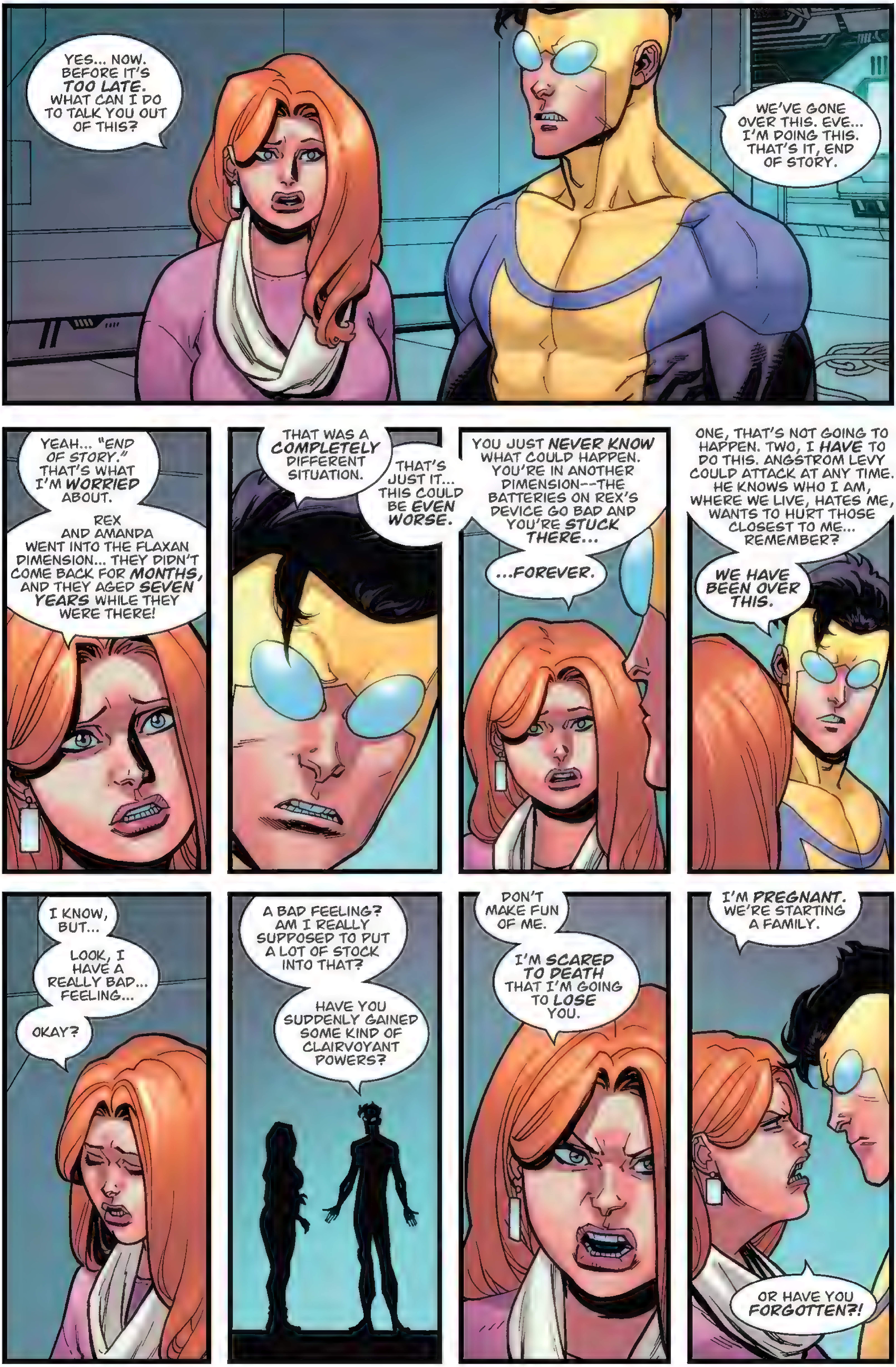
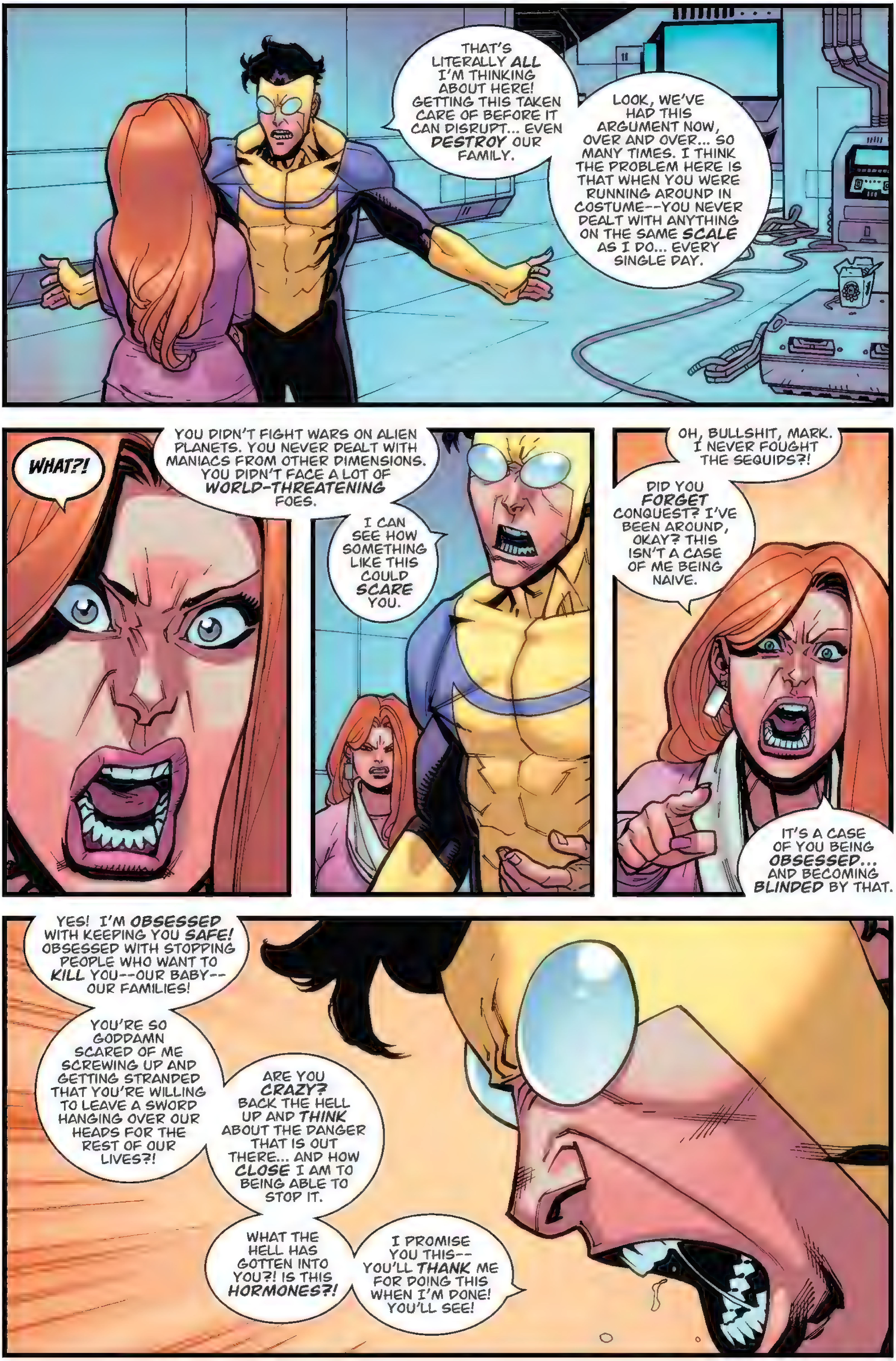
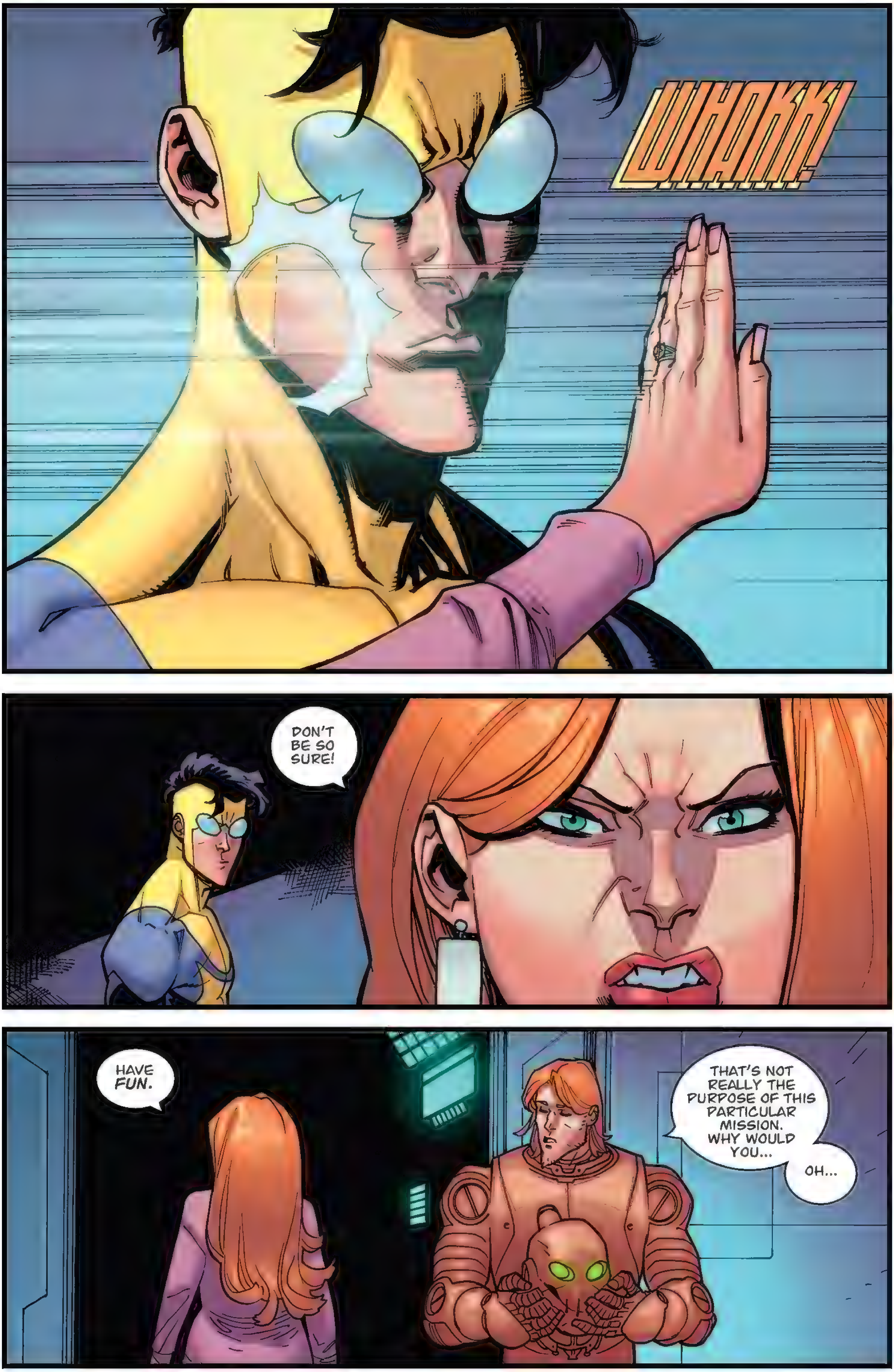
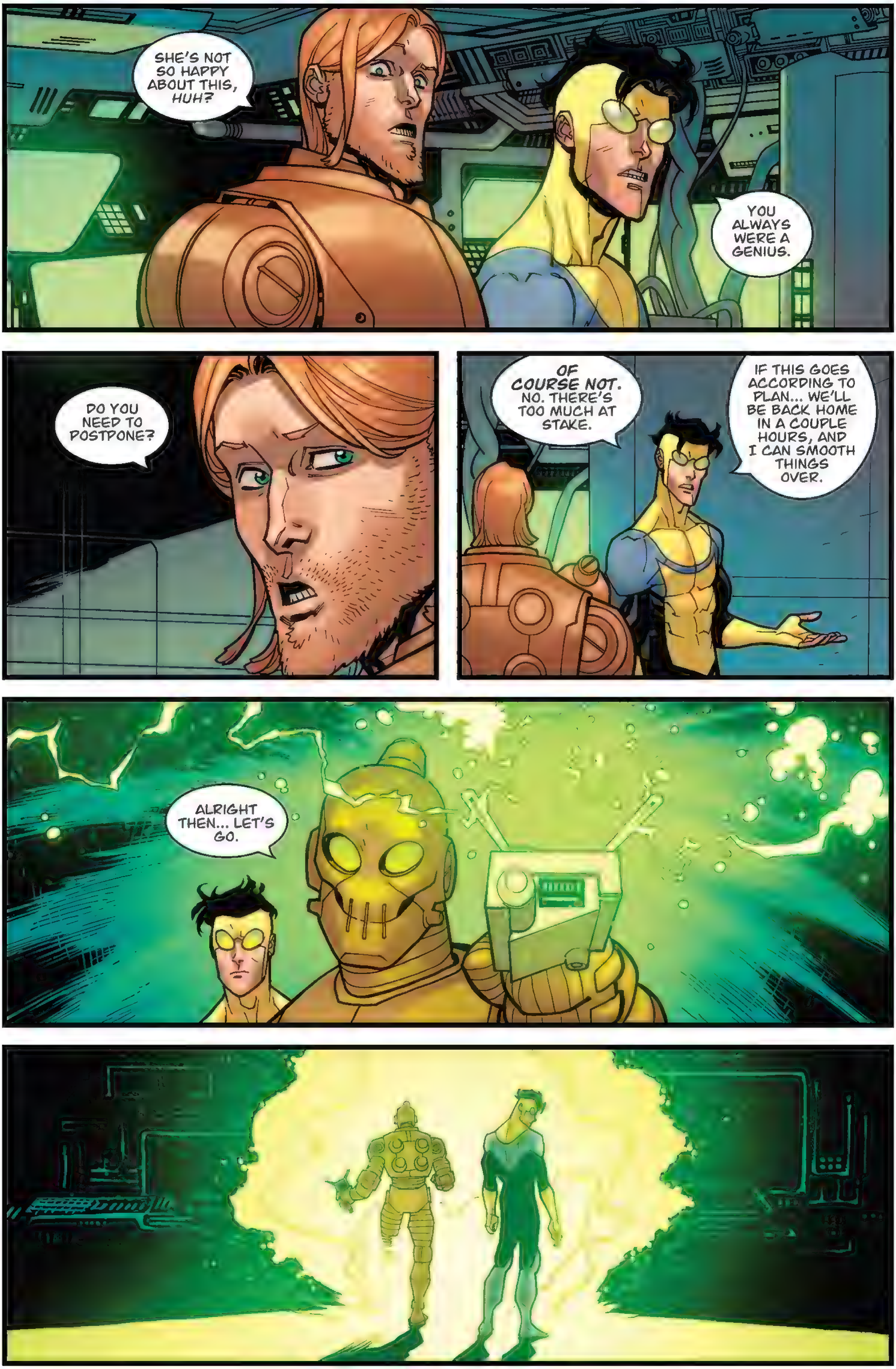
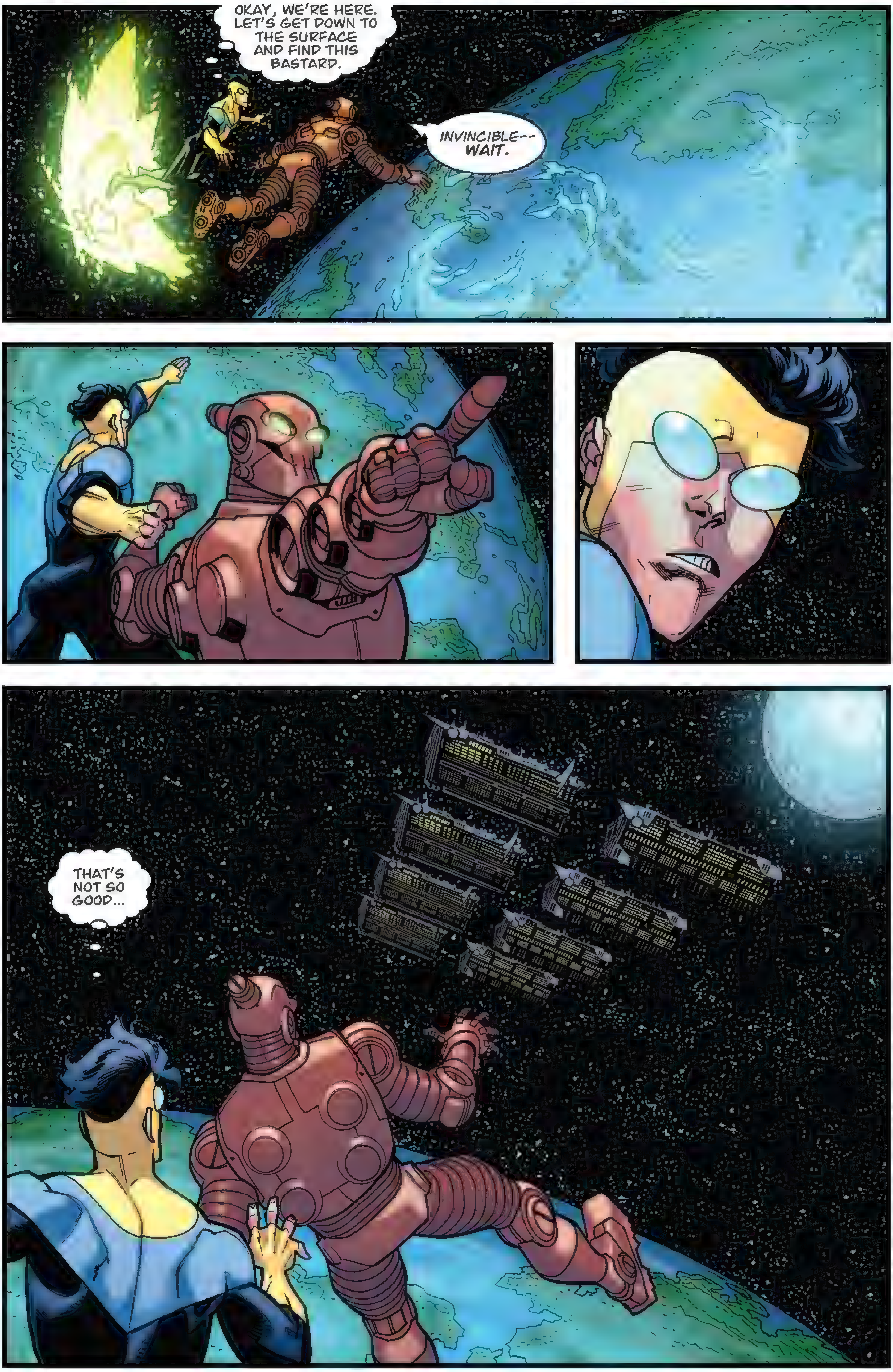

HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, THE ORBITING SPACE STATION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
INTERDIMENSIONAL TRAVEL IS ALL ABOUT SHIFTING FREQUENCIES. I'VE PINPOINTED THE EXACT FREQUENCY THAT WAS GENERATED WHEN ANGSTROM WAS PULLED OUT OF THIS DIMENSION.
THE DEVICE I'VE BUILT WILL GENERATE A FIELD THAT WILL ALTER OUR FREQUENCY WHEN WE PASS THROUGH IT, SIMILAR TO HOW ANGSTROM'S POWERS WORK NATURALLY.
I'VE CHOSEN THIS ORBITING SPACE STATION AS OUR EXIT POINT BECAUSE WE WILL SHIFT DIMENSIONS WITHOUT CHANGING OUR LOCATION.
LOW ORBIT IS THE SAFEST OPTION OF A PLACE WHERE NOTHING IS BUILT THAT WE COULD ACCIDENTALLY PHASE INTO.
ALL THAT IS A LONG-WINDED WAY OF SAYING... I'M READY WHEN YOU ARE. JUST LET ME GET SUITED UP AND WE CAN GO.
THANKS. THANKS SO MUCH FOR AGREEING TO COME WITH ME. I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS, REX.
I KNOW WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES, AND... WELL... JUST *THANKS*.
MARK, THIS... THIS ISN'T NECESSARY.
EVE, PLEASE. NOT AGAIN. NOT *NOW*.

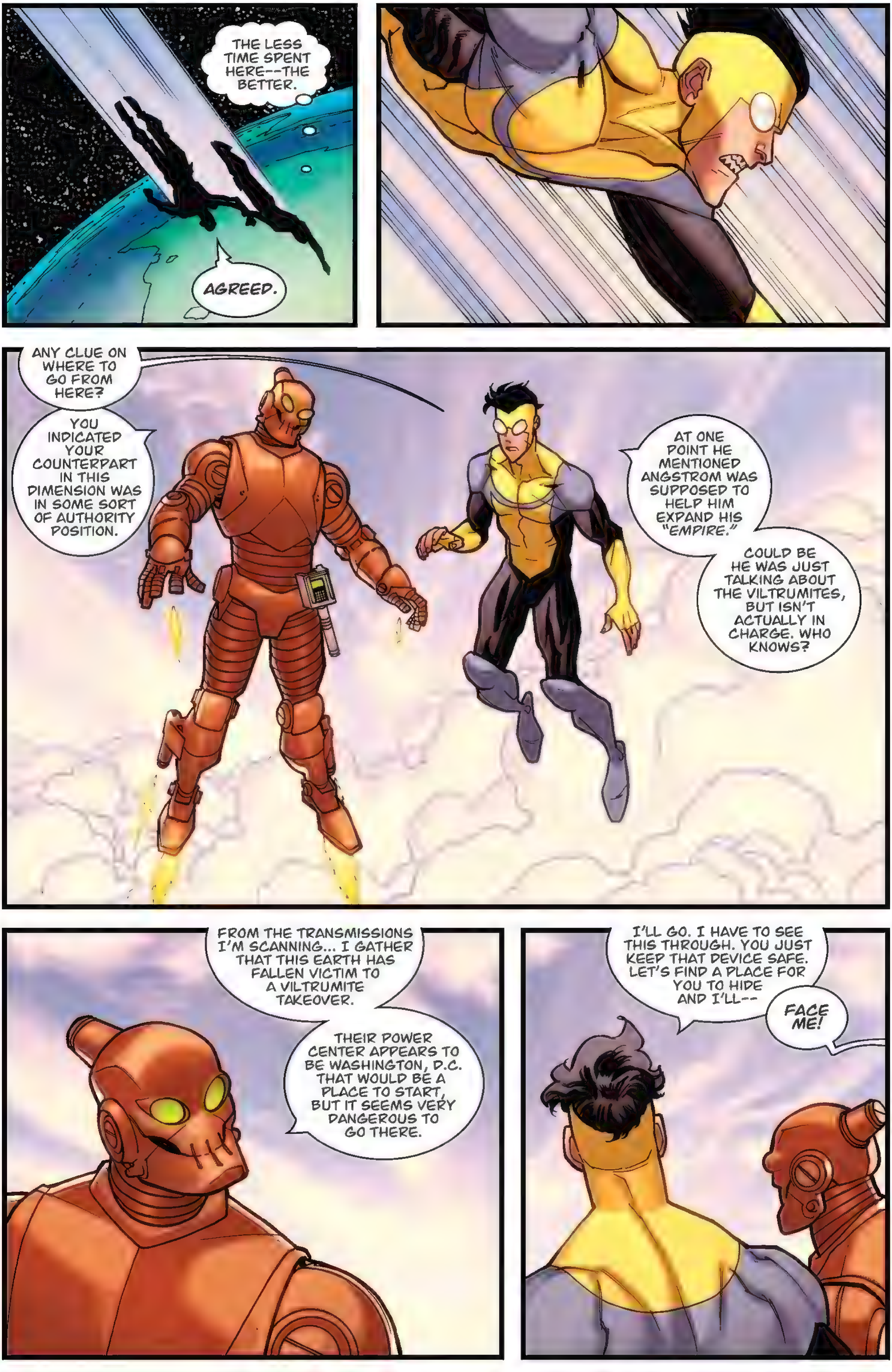

YES... NOW. BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE. WHAT CAN I DO TO TALK YOU OUT OF THIS?
WE'VE GONE OVER THIS. EVE... I'M DOING THIS. THAT'S IT, END OF STORY.
YEAH... "END OF STORY." THAT'S WHAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT.
REX AND AMANDA WENT INTO THE FLAXAN DIMENSION... THEY DIDN'T COME BACK FOR MONTHS, AND THEY AGED SEVEN YEARS WHILE THEY WERE THERE!
THAT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SITUATION.
THAT'S JUST IT... THIS COULD BE EVEN WORSE.
YOU JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT COULD HAPPEN. YOU'RE IN ANOTHER DIMENSION--THE BATTERIES ON REX'S DEVICE GO BAD AND YOU'RE STUCK THERE...
...FOREVER.
ONE, THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN. TWO, I HAVE TO DO THIS. ANGSTROM LEVY COULD ATTACK AT ANY TIME. HE KNOWS WHO I AM, WHERE WE LIVE, HATES ME, WANTS TO HURT THOSE CLOSEST TO ME... REMEMBER?
WE HAVE BEEN OVER THIS.
I KNOW, BUT...
LOOK, I HAVE A REALLY BAD... FEELING...
OKAY?
A BAD FEELING? AM I REALLY SUPPOSED TO PUT A LOT OF STOCK INTO THAT?
HAVE YOU SUDDENLY GAINED SOME KIND OF CLAIRVOYANT POWERS?
DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME.
I'M SCARED TO DEATH THAT I'M GOING TO LOSE YOU.
I'M PREGNANT. WE'RE STARTING A FAMILY.
OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?!


THAT'S LITERALLY **ALL** I'M THINKING ABOUT HERE! GETTING THIS TAKEN CARE OF BEFORE IT CAN DISRUPT... EVEN **DESTROY** OUR FAMILY.
LOOK, WE'VE HAD THIS ARGUMENT NOW, OVER AND OVER... SO MANY TIMES. I THINK THE PROBLEM HERE IS THAT WHEN YOU WERE RUNNING AROUND IN COSTUME--YOU NEVER DEALT WITH ANYTHING ON THE SAME **SCALE** AS I DO... EVERY SINGLE DAY.
WHAT?!
YOU DIDN'T FIGHT WARS ON ALIEN PLANETS. YOU NEVER DEALT WITH MANIACS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS. YOU DIDN'T FACE A LOT OF **WORLD-THREATENING** FOES.
I CAN SEE HOW SOMETHING LIKE THIS COULD **SCARE** YOU.
OH, BULLSHIT, MARK. I NEVER FOUGHT THE SEQUIDS?!
DID YOU **FORGET** CONQUEST? I'VE BEEN AROUND, OKAY? THIS ISN'T A CASE OF ME BEING NAIVE.
IT'S A CASE OF YOU BEING **OBSESSED...** AND BECOMING **BLINDED** BY THAT.
YES! I'M **OBSESSED** WITH KEEPING YOU **SAFE!** OBSESSED WITH STOPPING PEOPLE WHO WANT TO **KILL** YOU--OUR BABY--OUR FAMILIES!
YOU'RE SO GODDAMN SCARED OF ME SCREWING UP AND GETTING STRANDED THAT YOU'RE WILLING TO LEAVE A SWORD HANGING OVER OUR HEADS FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES?!
ARE YOU **CRAZY?** BACK THE HELL UP AND **THINK** ABOUT THE DANGER THAT IS OUT THERE... AND HOW **CLOSE** I AM TO BEING ABLE TO STOP IT.
WHAT THE HELL HAS GOTTEN INTO YOU?! IS THIS **HORMONES?!**
I PROMISE YOU THIS--YOU'LL **THANK** ME FOR DOING THIS WHEN I'M DONE! YOU'LL SEE!

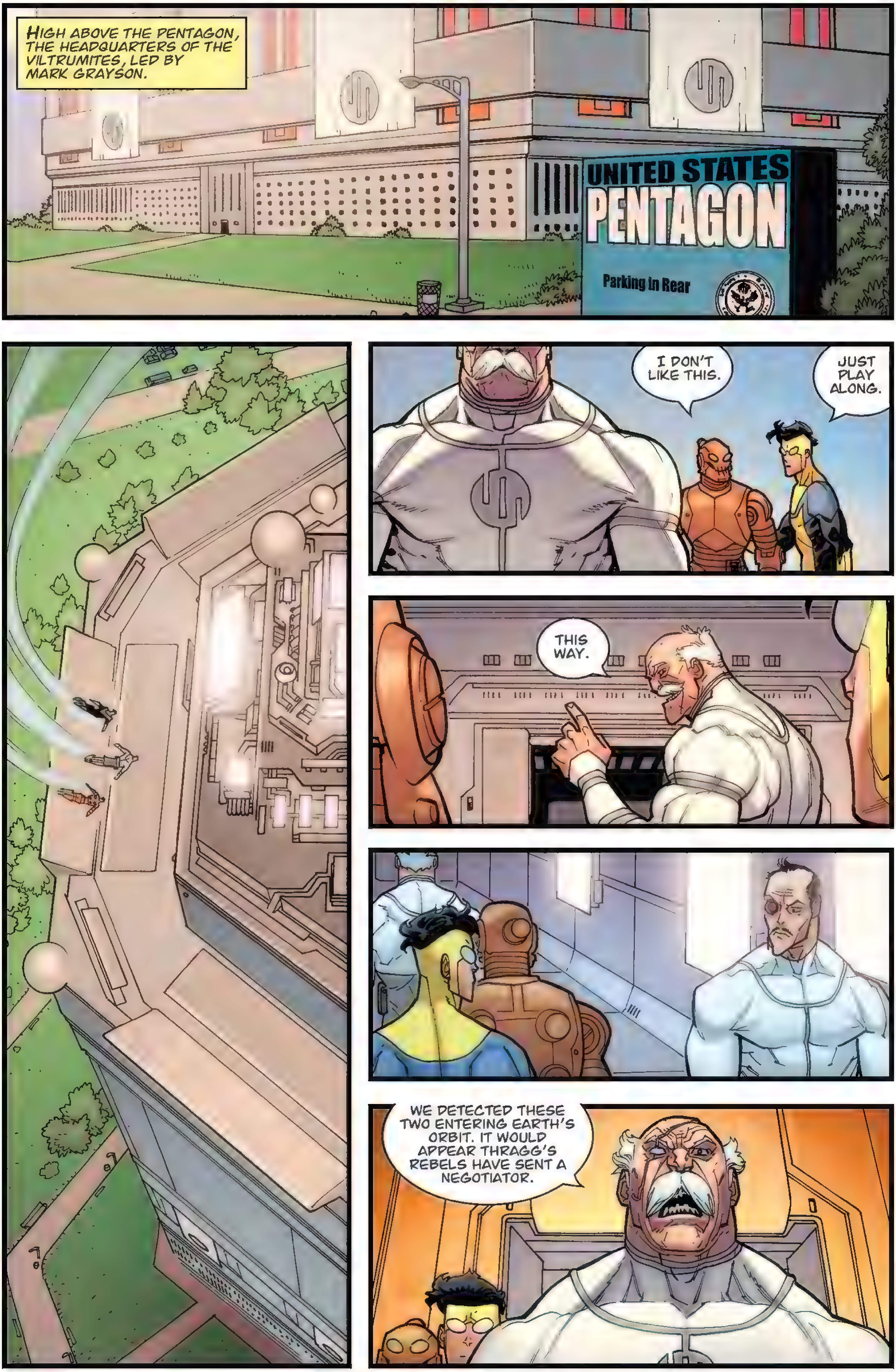

WHAKK!
DON'T BE SO SURE!
HAVE *FUN.*
THAT'S NOT REALLY THE PURPOSE OF THIS PARTICULAR MISSION. WHY WOULD YOU...
OH...

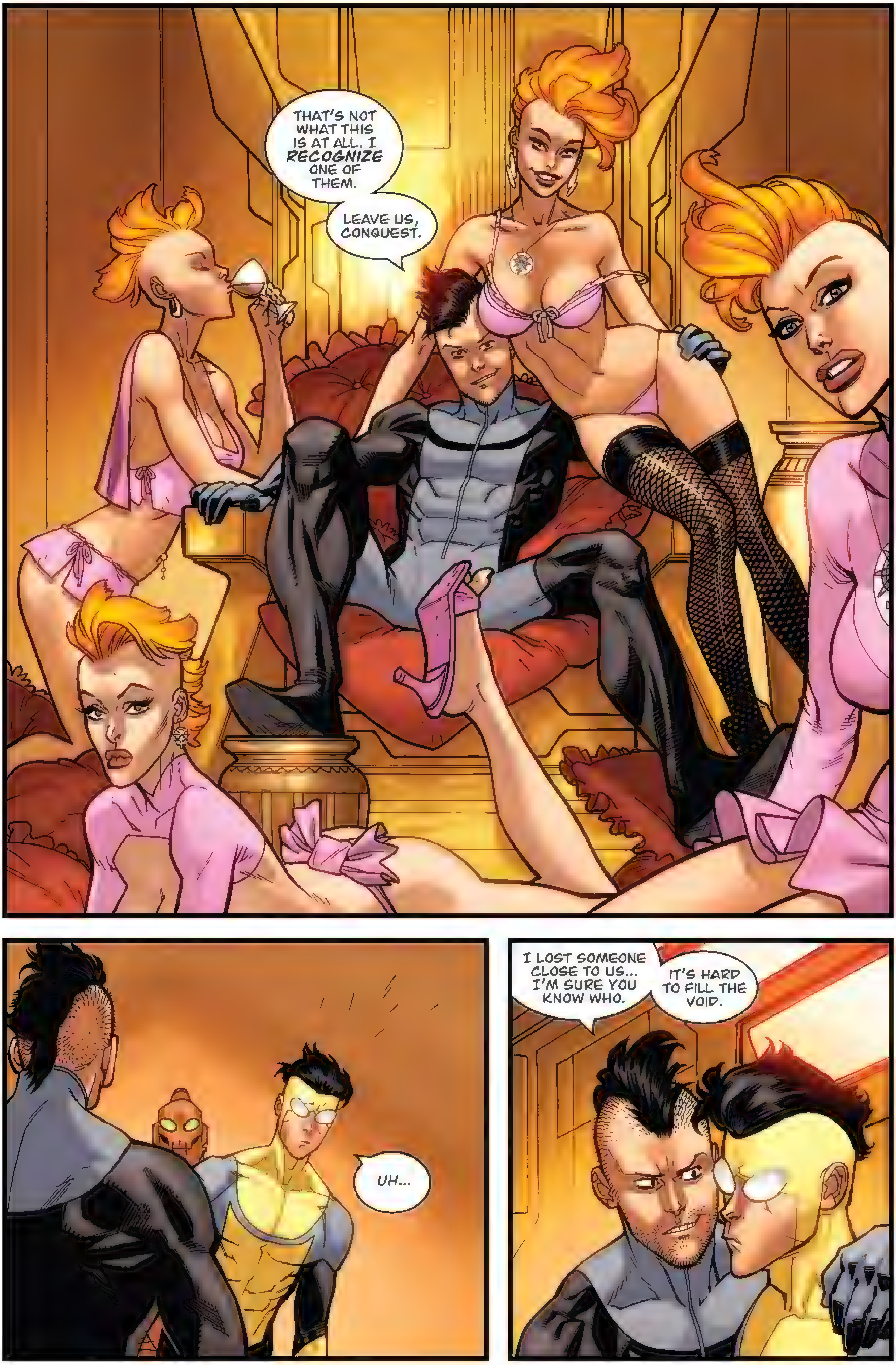

SHE'S NOT SO HAPPY ABOUT THIS, HUH?
YOU ALWAYS WERE A GENIUS.
DO YOU NEED TO POSTPONE?
OF COURSE NOT. NO. THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE.
IF THIS GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN... WE'LL BE BACK HOME IN A COUPLE HOURS, AND I CAN SMOOTH THINGS OVER.
ALRIGHT THEN... LET'S GO.

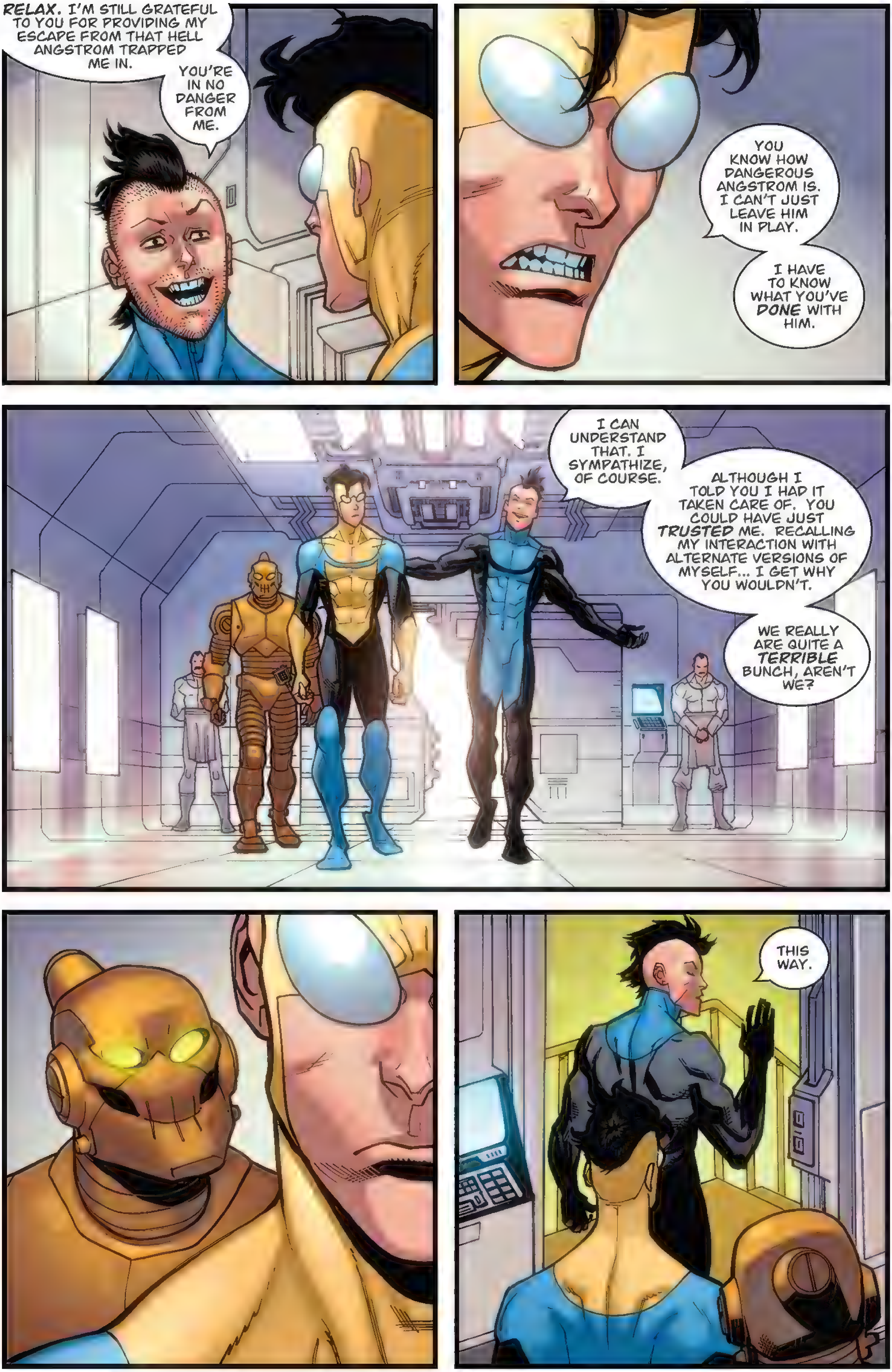

OKAY, WE'RE HERE. LET'S GET DOWN TO THE SURFACE AND FIND THIS BASTARD.
INVINCIBLE-- WAIT.
THAT'S NOT SO GOOD...

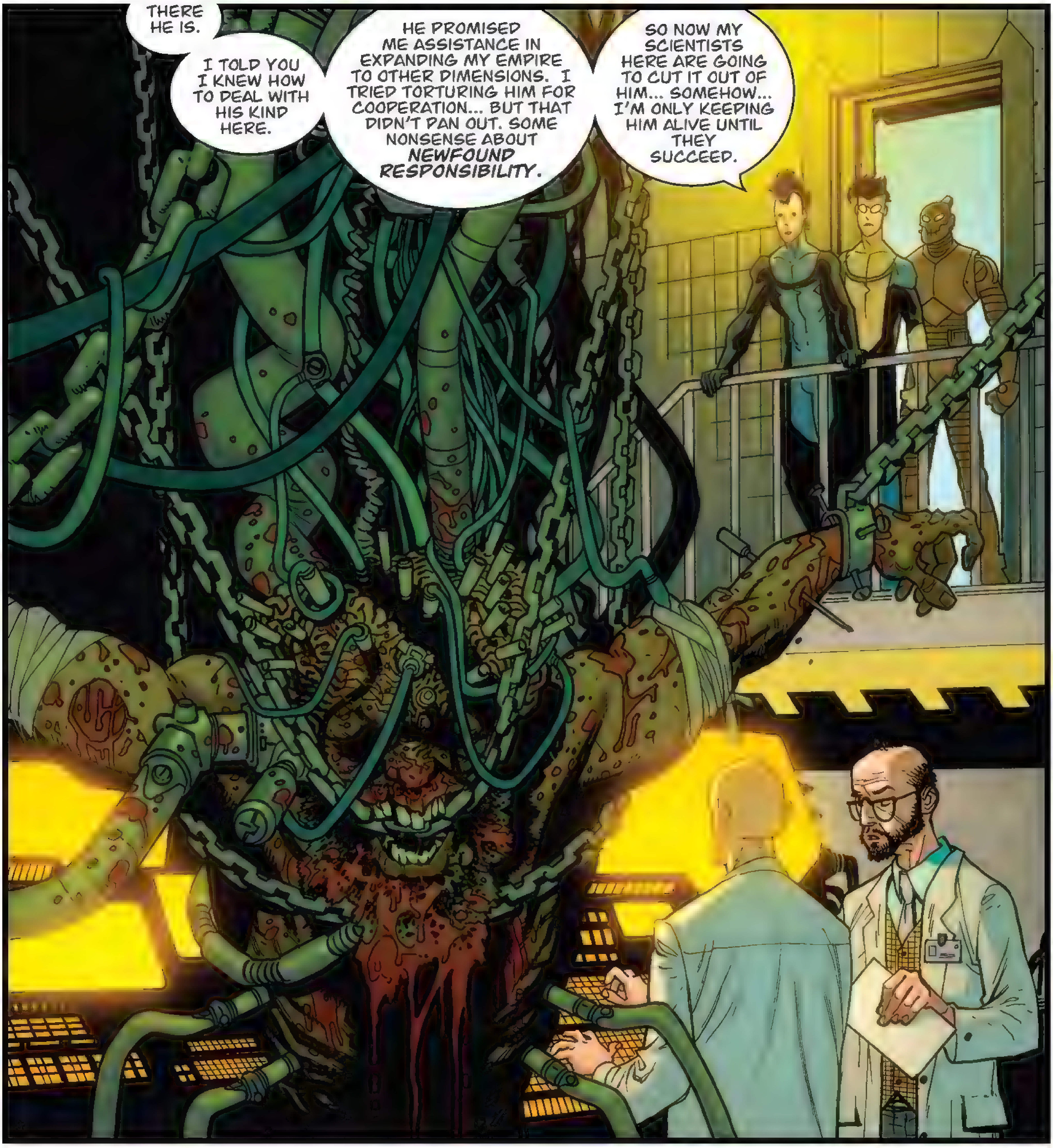

THE LESS TIME SPENT HERE--THE BETTER.
AGREED.
ANY CLUE ON WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?
YOU INDICATED YOUR COUNTERPART IN THIS DIMENSION WAS IN SOME SORT OF AUTHORITY POSITION.
AT ONE POINT HE MENTIONED ANGSTROM WAS SUPPOSED TO HELP HIM EXPAND HIS "EMPIRE."
COULD BE HE WAS JUST TALKING ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES, BUT ISN'T ACTUALLY IN CHARGE. WHO KNOWS?
FROM THE TRANSMISSIONS I'M SCANNING... I GATHER THAT THIS EARTH HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A VILTRUMITE TAKEOVER.
THEIR POWER CENTER APPEARS TO BE WASHINGTON, D.C. THAT WOULD BE A PLACE TO START, BUT IT SEEMS VERY DANGEROUS TO GO THERE.
I'LL GO. I HAVE TO SEE THIS THROUGH. YOU JUST KEEP THAT DEVICE SAFE. LET'S FIND A PLACE FOR YOU TO HIDE AND I'LL--
FACE ME!

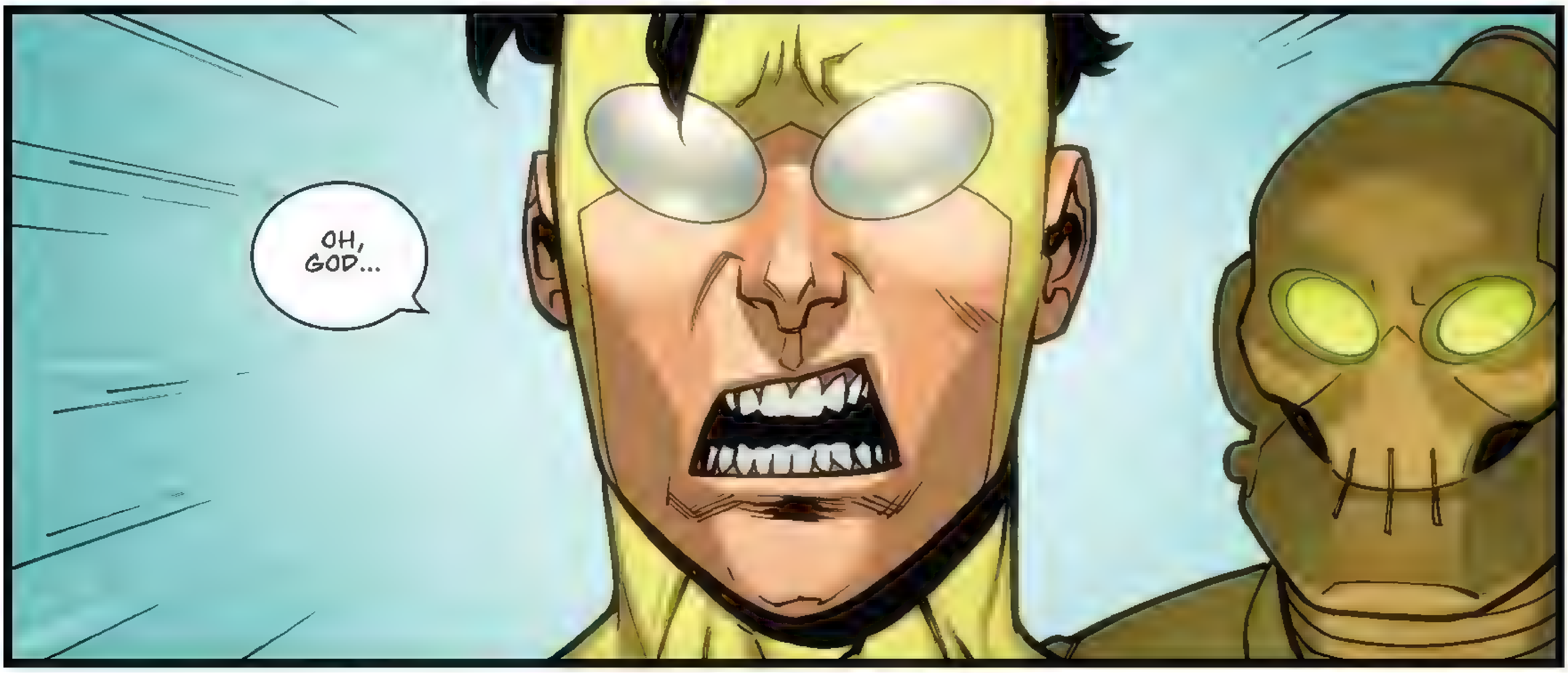
ACCOMPANY ME BACK TO THE CITADEL OR I WILL KILL YOU BOTH.
PLEASE RESIST...

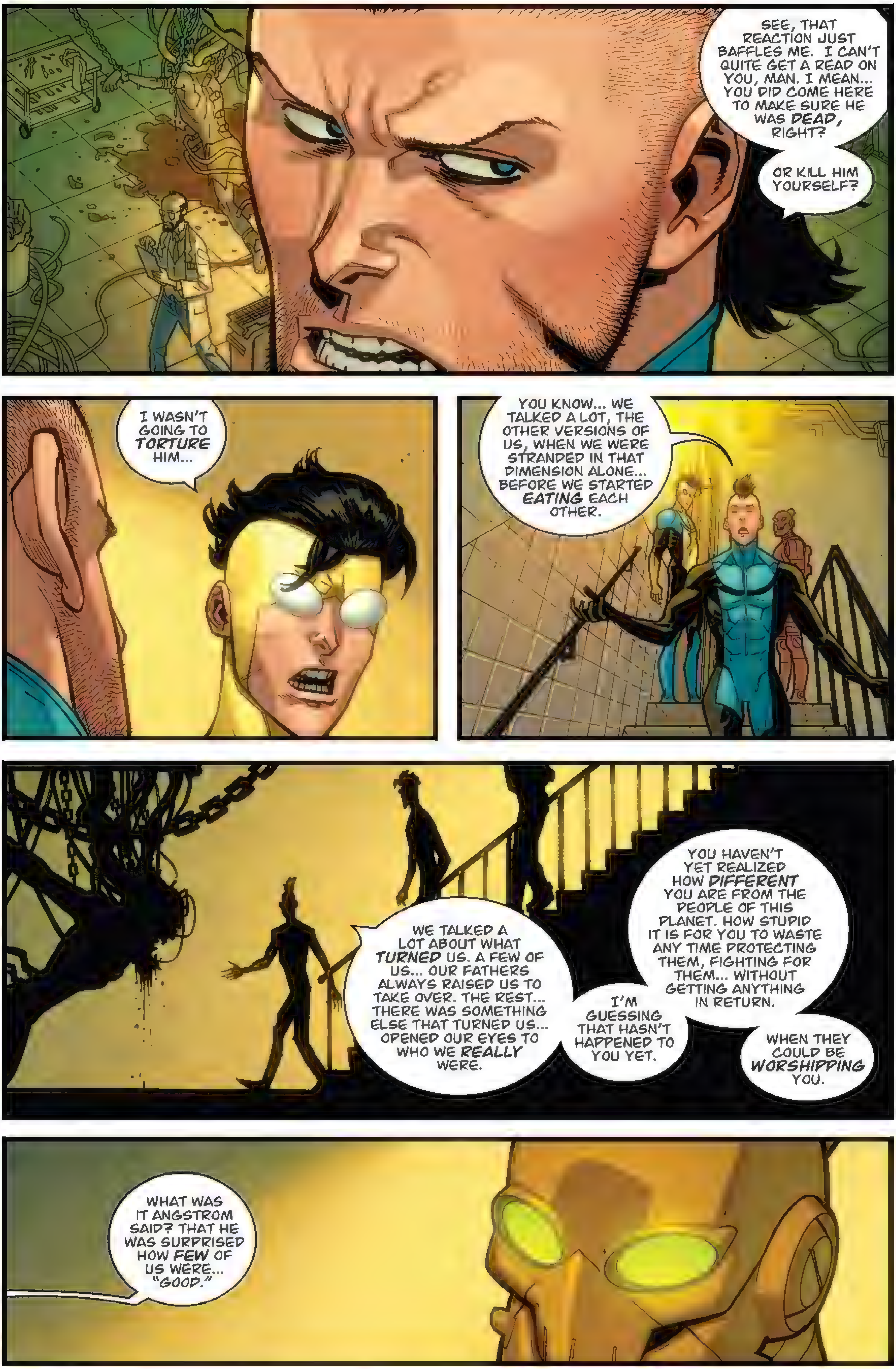

HIGH ABOVE THE PENTAGON, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE VILTRUMITES, LED BY MARK GRAYSON.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I DON'T LIKE THIS.
JUST PLAY ALONG.
THIS WAY.
WE DETECTED THESE TWO ENTERING EARTH'S ORBIT. IT WOULD APPEAR THRAGG'S REBELS HAVE SENT A NEGOTIATOR.


THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS AT ALL. I *RECOGNIZE* ONE OF THEM.
LEAVE US, CONQUEST.
UH...
I LOST SOMEONE CLOSE TO US... I'M SURE YOU KNOW WHO.
IT'S HARD TO FILL THE VOID.

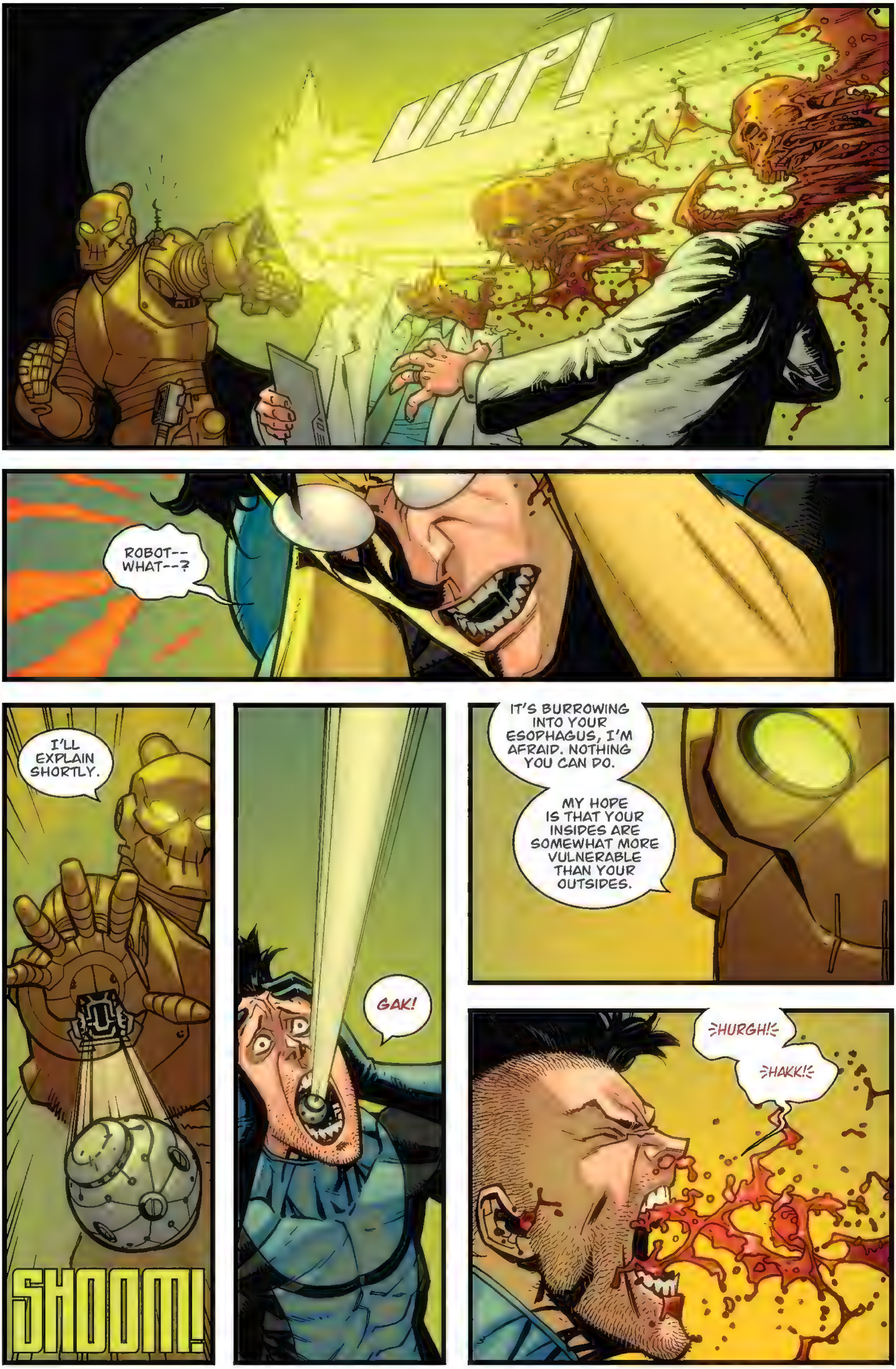

RELAX. I'M STILL GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR PROVIDING MY ESCAPE FROM THAT HELL ANGSTROM TRAPPED ME IN.
YOU'RE IN NO DANGER FROM ME.
YOU KNOW HOW DANGEROUS ANGSTROM IS. I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM IN PLAY.
I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH HIM.
I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT. I SYMPATHIZE, OF COURSE.
ALTHOUGH I TOLD YOU I HAD IT TAKEN CARE OF. YOU COULD HAVE JUST TRUSTED ME. RECALLING MY INTERACTION WITH ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF MYSELF... I GET WHY YOU WOULDN'T.
WE REALLY ARE QUITE A TERRIBLE BUNCH, AREN'T WE?
THIS WAY.

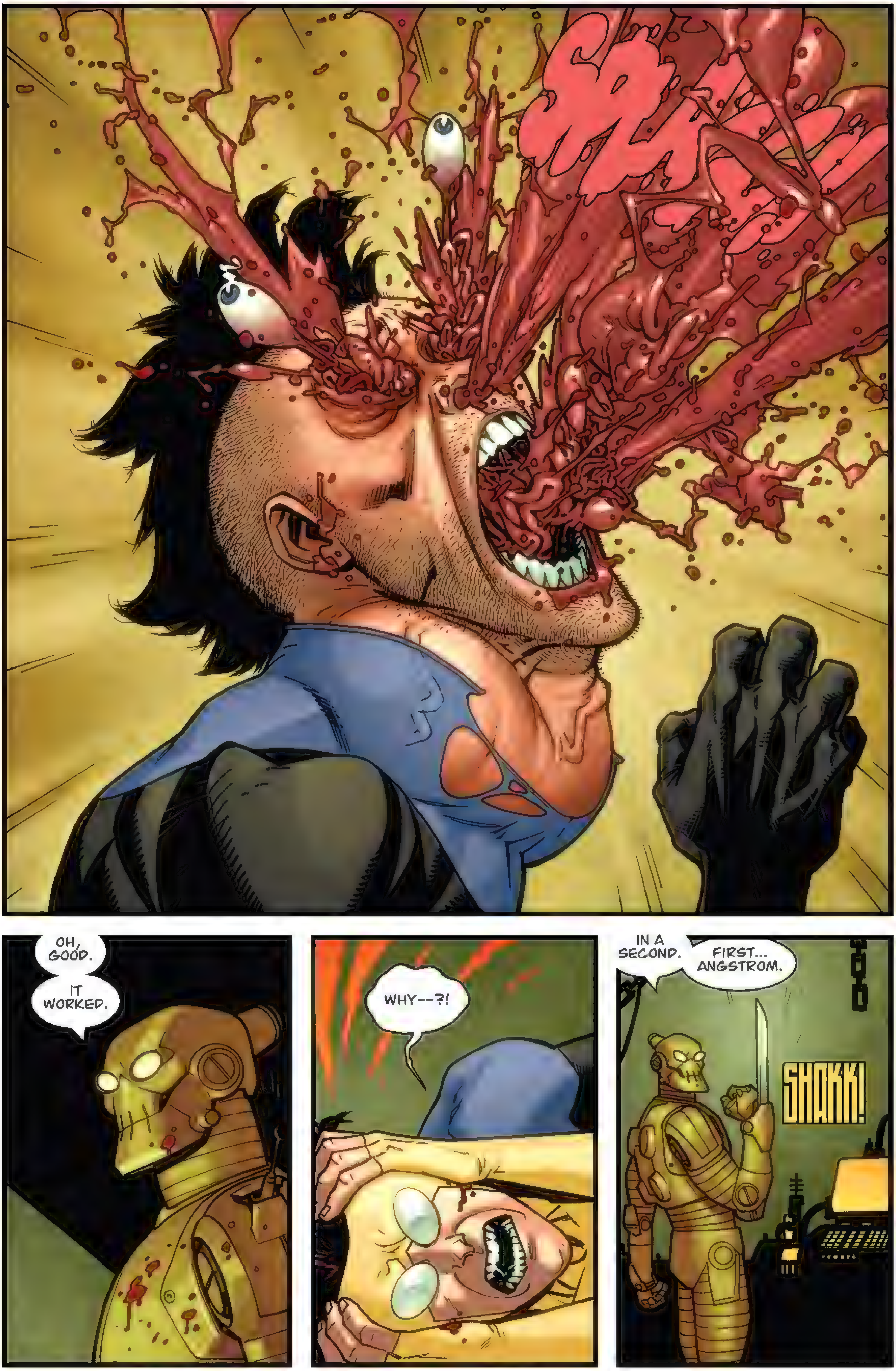

THERE HE IS.
I TOLD YOU I KNEW HOW TO DEAL WITH HIS KIND HERE.
HE PROMISED ME ASSISTANCE IN EXPANDING MY EMPIRE TO OTHER DIMENSIONS. I TRIED TORTURING HIM FOR COOPERATION... BUT THAT DIDN'T PAN OUT. SOME NONSENSE ABOUT ***NEWFOUND RESPONSIBILITY***.
SO NOW MY SCIENTISTS HERE ARE GOING TO CUT IT OUT OF HIM... SOMEHOW... I'M ONLY KEEPING HIM ALIVE UNTIL THEY SUCCEED.

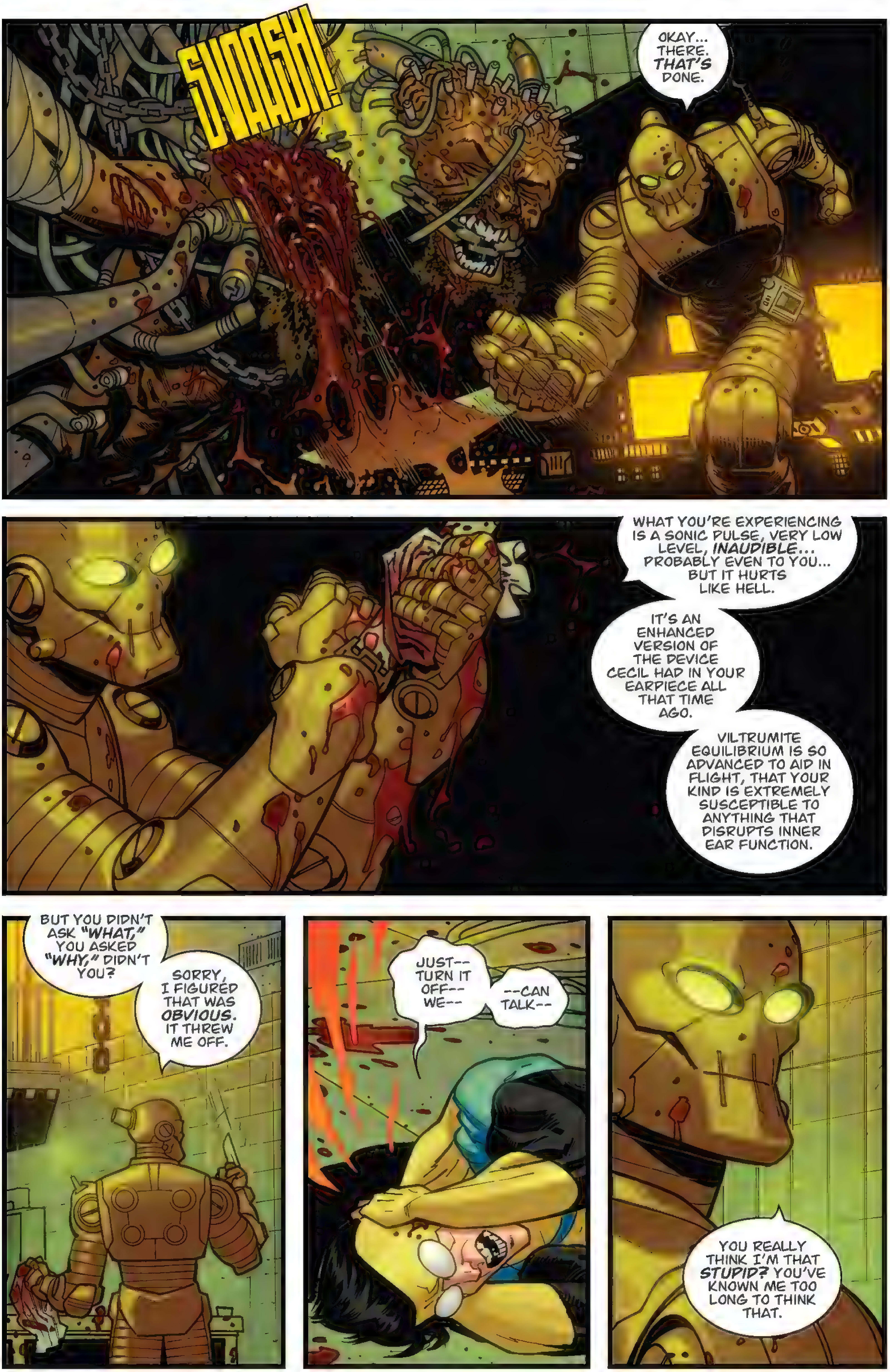

OH, GOD...

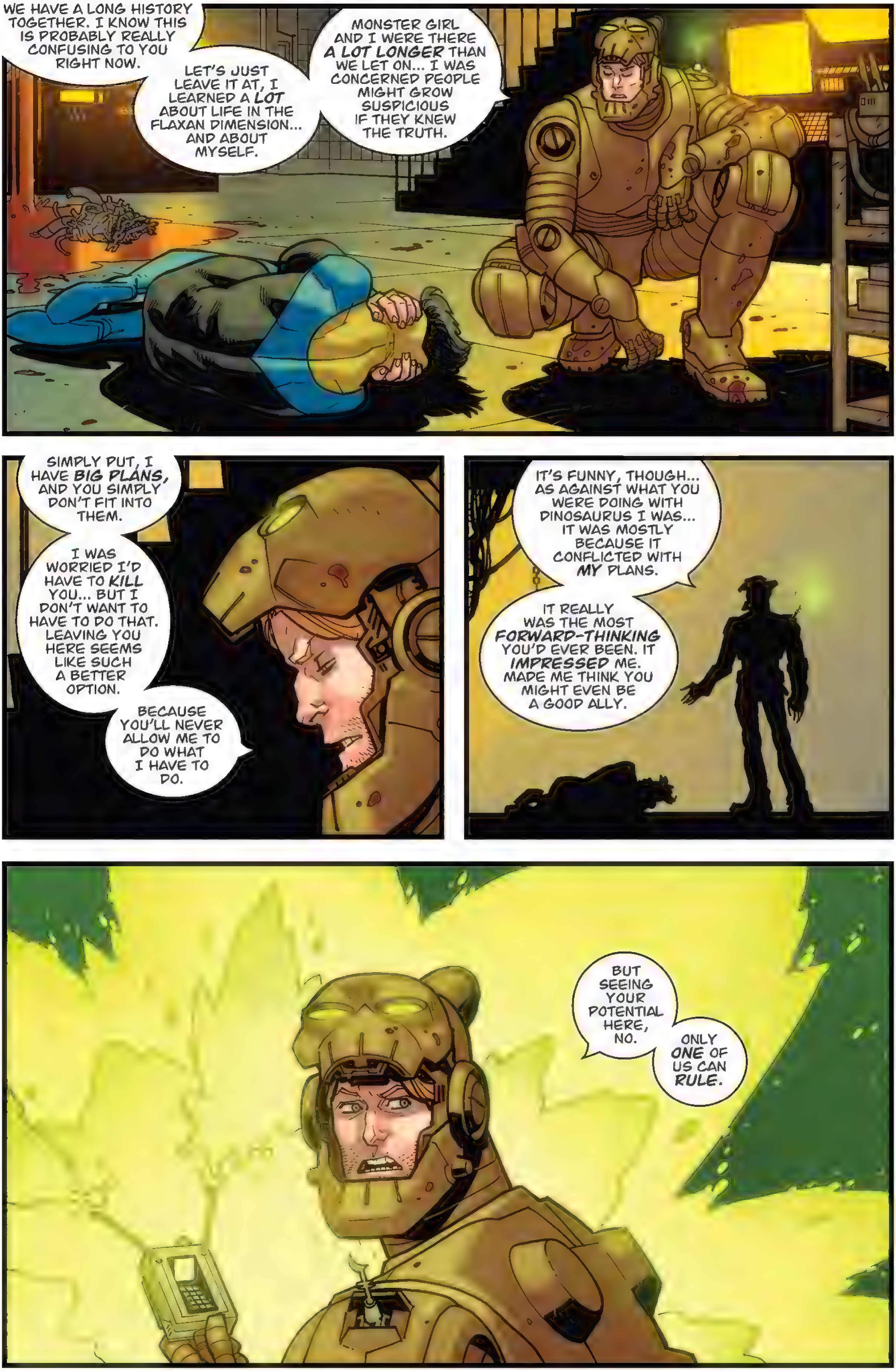

SEE, THAT REACTION JUST BAFFLES ME. I CAN'T QUITE GET A READ ON YOU, MAN. I MEAN... YOU DID COME HERE TO MAKE SURE HE WAS *DEAD*, RIGHT?
OR KILL HIM YOURSELF?
I WASN'T GOING TO *TORTURE* HIM...
YOU KNOW... WE TALKED A LOT, THE OTHER VERSIONS OF US, WHEN WE WERE STRANDED IN THAT DIMENSION ALONE... BEFORE WE STARTED *EATING* EACH OTHER.
WE TALKED A LOT ABOUT WHAT *TURNED* US. A FEW OF US... OUR FATHERS ALWAYS RAISED US TO TAKE OVER. THE REST... THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE THAT TURNED US... OPENED OUR EYES TO WHO WE *REALLY* WERE.
I'M GUESSING THAT HASN'T HAPPENED TO YOU YET.
YOU HAVEN'T YET REALIZED HOW *DIFFERENT* YOU ARE FROM THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET. HOW STUPID IT IS FOR YOU TO WASTE ANY TIME PROTECTING THEM, FIGHTING FOR THEM... WITHOUT GETTING ANYTHING IN RETURN.
WHEN THEY COULD BE *WORSHIPPING* YOU.
WHAT WAS IT ANGSTROM SAID? THAT HE WAS SURPRISED HOW *FEW* OF US WERE... "GOOD."

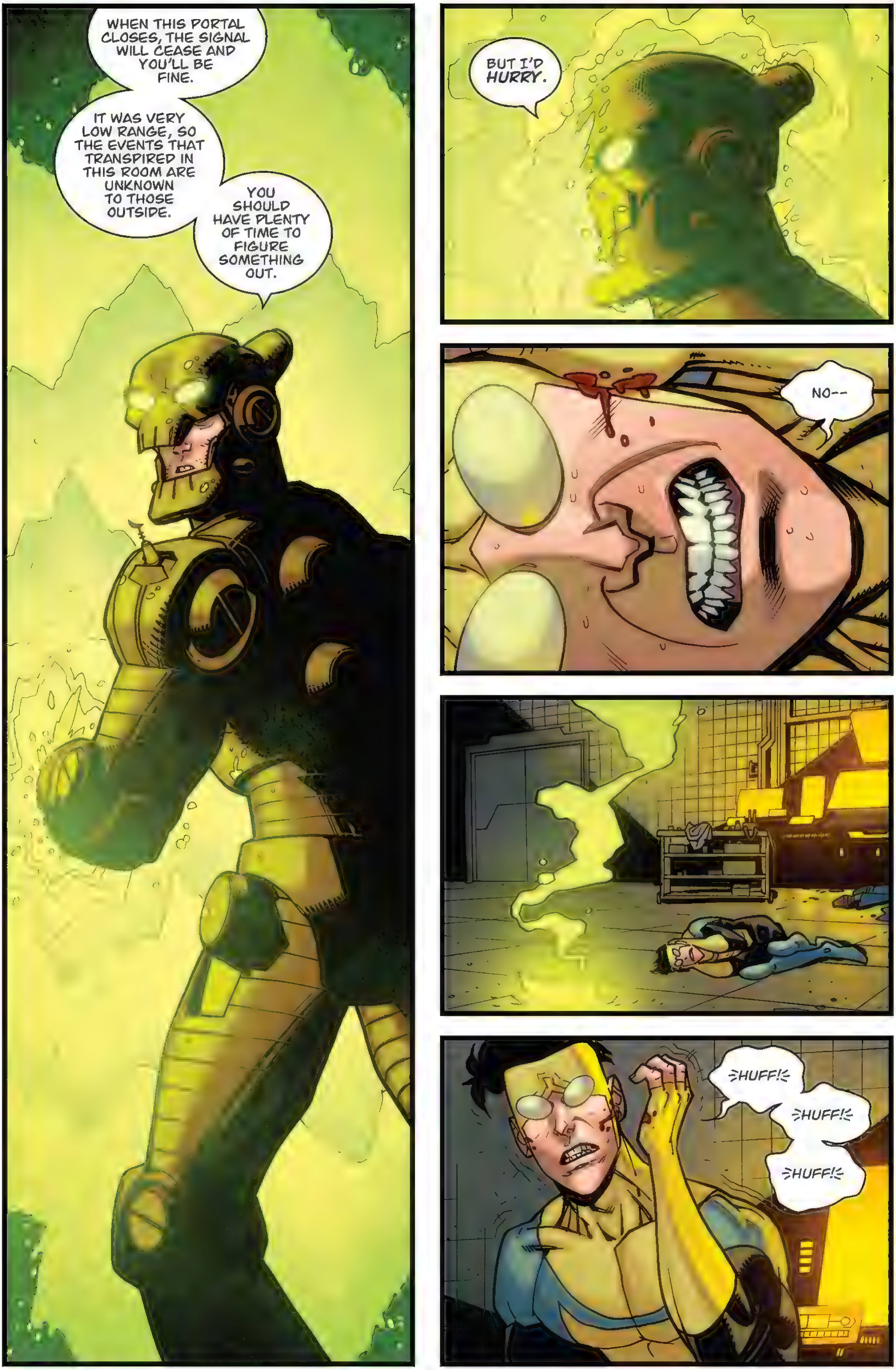
I'M REALLY SORRY, BUT I SEE NOW THAT I HAVE TO DO THIS.


VAP!
ROBOT-- WHAT--?
I'LL EXPLAIN SHORTLY.
SHOOM!
GAK!
IT'S BURROWING INTO YOUR ESOPHAGUS, I'M AFRAID. NOTHING YOU CAN DO.
MY HOPE IS THAT YOUR INSIDES ARE SOMEWHAT MORE VULNERABLE THAN YOUR OUTSIDES.
HURGH!
HAKK!


OH, GOOD.
IT WORKED.
WHY--?!
IN A SECOND.
FIRST... ANGSTROM.
SHAKK!

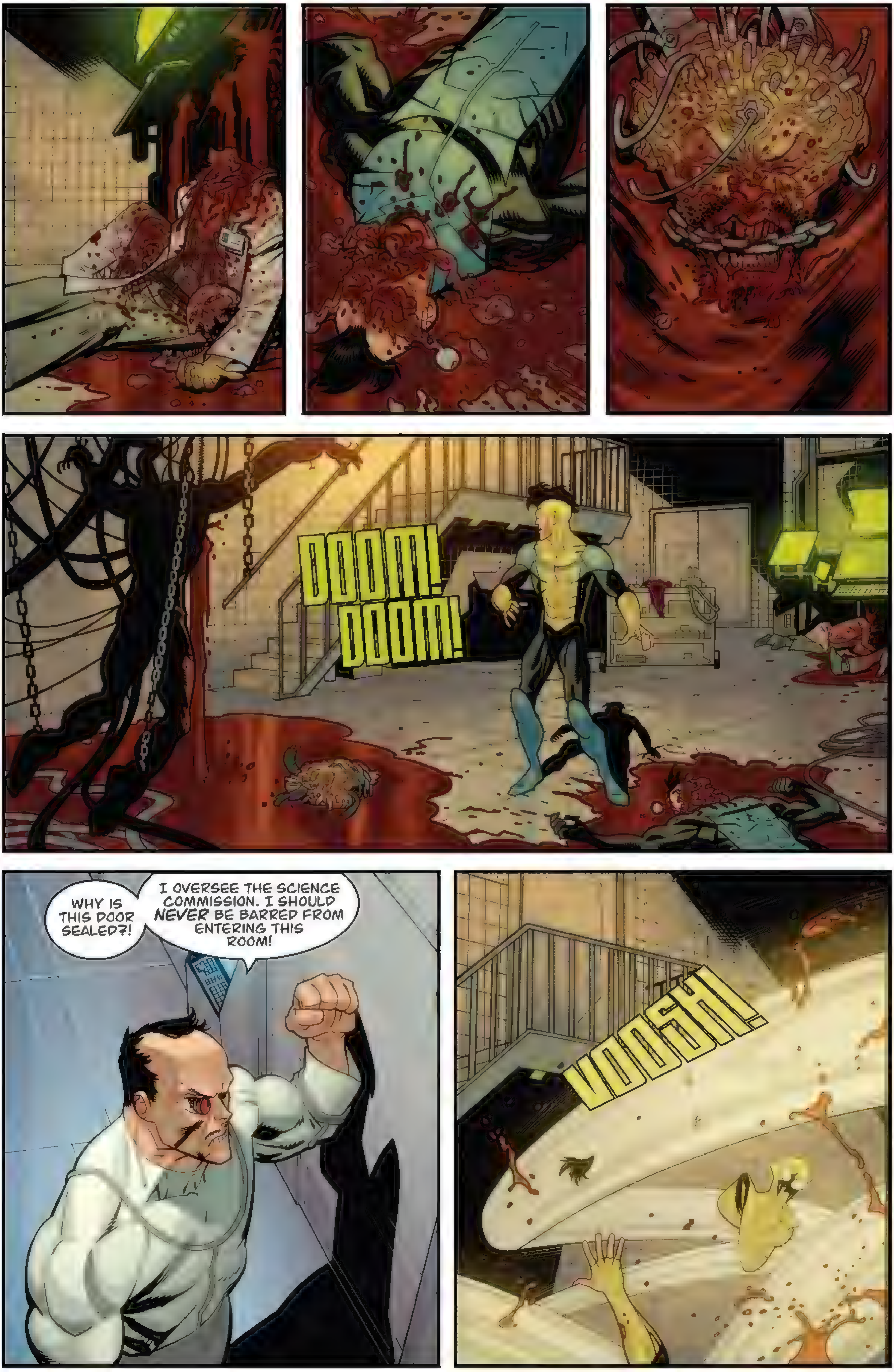

SHHASH!
OKAY... THERE. *THAT'S* DONE.
WHAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCING IS A SONIC PULSE, VERY LOW LEVEL, *INAUDIBLE*... PROBABLY EVEN TO YOU... BUT IT HURTS LIKE HELL.
IT'S AN ENHANCED VERSION OF THE DEVICE CECIL HAD IN YOUR EARPIECE ALL THAT TIME AGO.
VILTRUMITE EQUILIBRIUM IS SO ADVANCED TO AID IN FLIGHT, THAT YOUR KIND IS EXTREMELY SUSCEPTIBLE TO ANYTHING THAT DISRUPTS INNER EAR FUNCTION.
BUT YOU DIDN'T ASK **"WHAT,"** YOU ASKED **"WHY,"** DIDN'T YOU?
SORRY, I FIGURED THAT WAS *OBVIOUS*. IT THREW ME OFF.
JUST-- TURN IT OFF-- WE--
--CAN TALK--
YOU REALLY THINK I'M THAT *STUPID?* YOU'VE KNOWN ME TOO LONG TO THINK THAT.

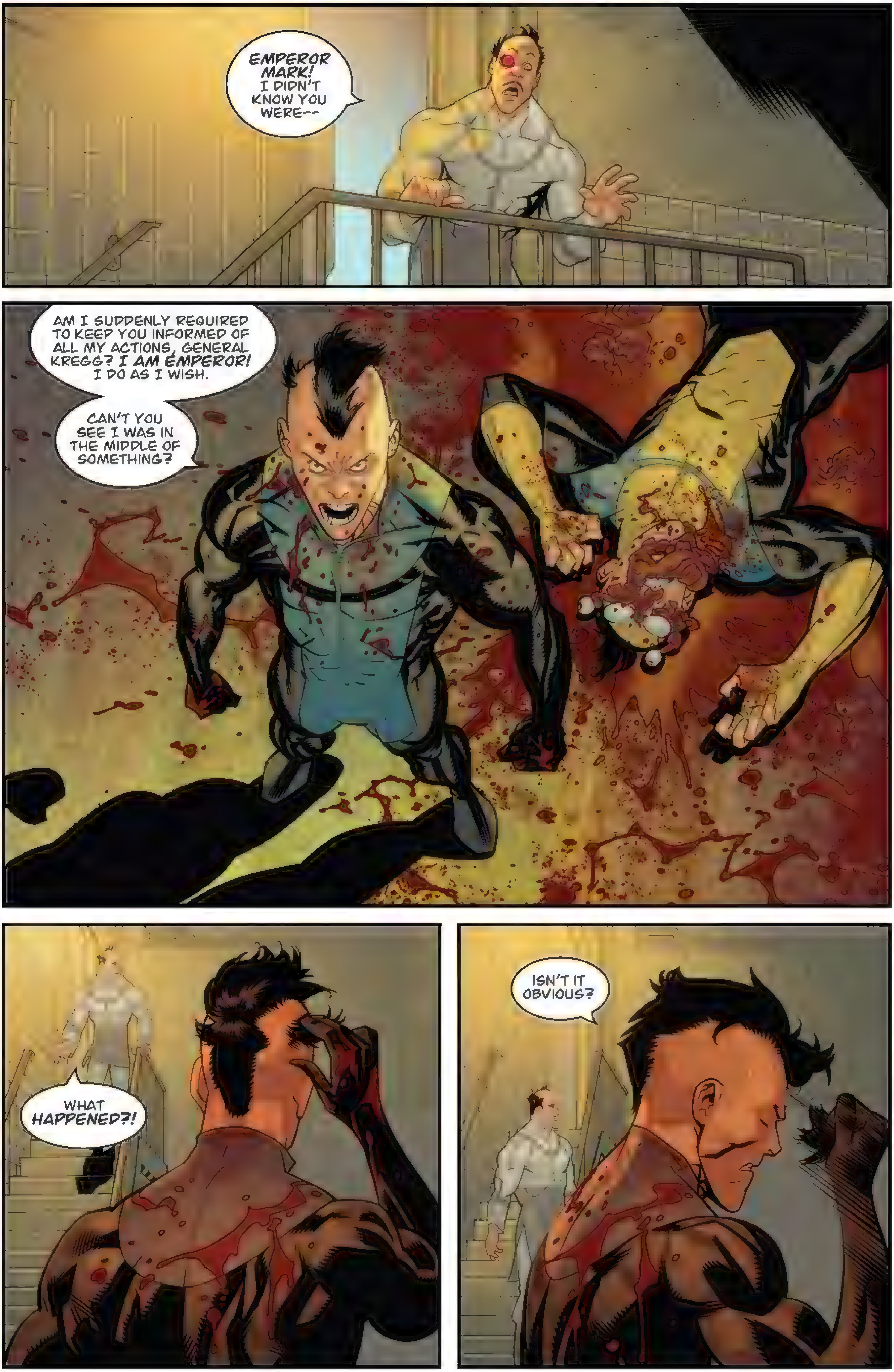

WE HAVE A LONG HISTORY TOGETHER. I KNOW THIS IS PROBABLY REALLY CONFUSING TO YOU RIGHT NOW.
LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT, I LEARNED A *LOT* ABOUT LIFE IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION... AND ABOUT MYSELF.
MONSTER GIRL AND I WERE THERE *A LOT LONGER* THAN WE LET ON... I WAS CONCERNED PEOPLE MIGHT GROW SUSPICIOUS IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH.
SIMPLY PUT, I HAVE *BIG PLANS*, AND YOU SIMPLY DON'T FIT INTO THEM.
I WAS WORRIED I'D HAVE TO *KILL* YOU... BUT I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO THAT. LEAVING YOU HERE SEEMS LIKE SUCH A BETTER OPTION.
BECAUSE YOU'LL NEVER ALLOW ME TO DO WHAT I HAVE TO DO.
IT'S FUNNY, THOUGH... AS AGAINST WHAT YOU WERE DOING WITH DINOSAURUS I WAS... IT WAS MOSTLY BECAUSE IT CONFLICTED WITH *MY* PLANS.
IT REALLY WAS THE MOST *FORWARD-THINKING* YOU'D EVER BEEN. IT *IMPRESSED* ME. MADE ME THINK YOU MIGHT EVEN BE A GOOD ALLY.
BUT SEEING YOUR POTENTIAL HERE, NO.
ONLY *ONE* OF US CAN *RULE*.

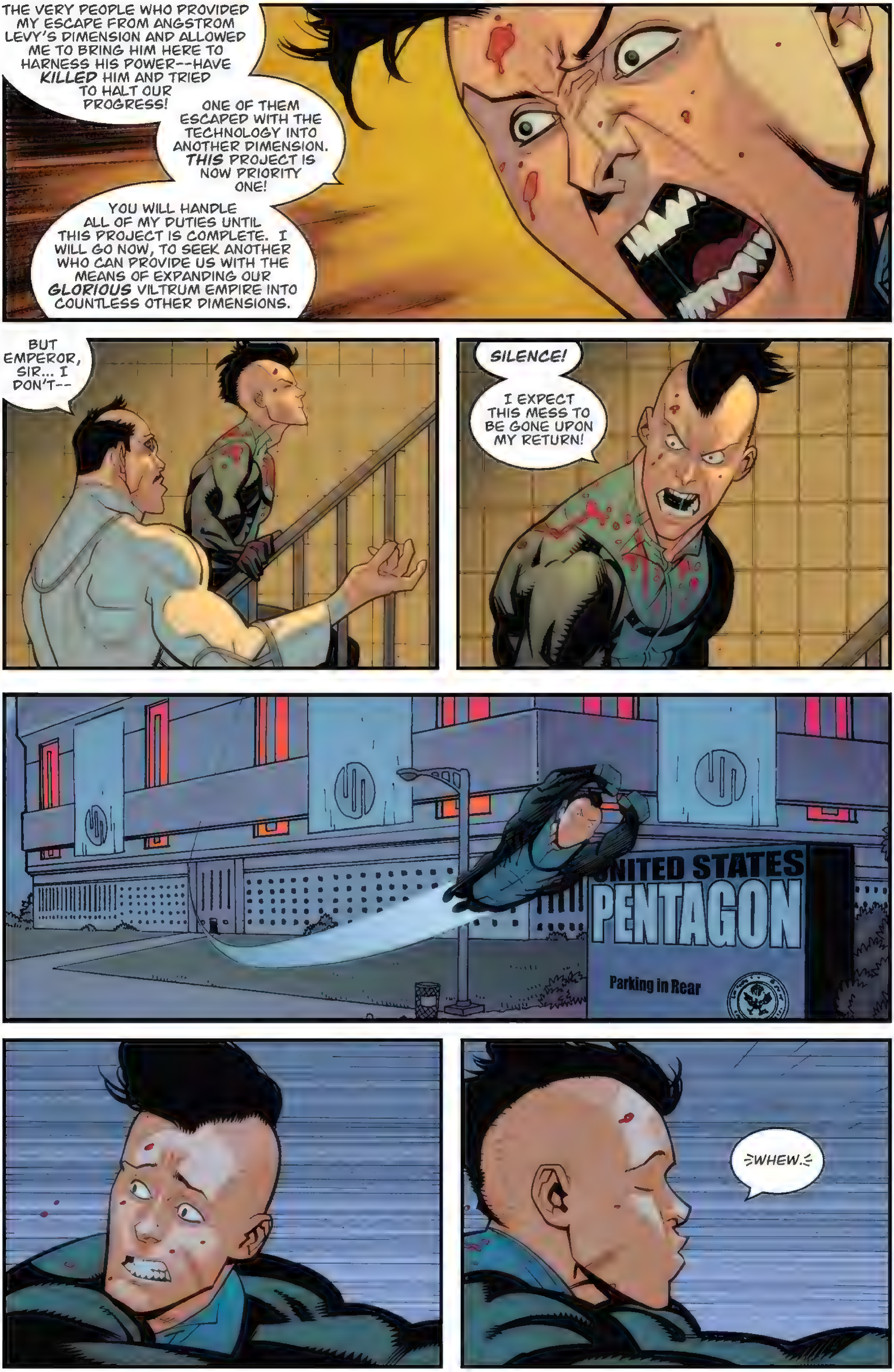

WHEN THIS PORTAL CLOSES, THE SIGNAL WILL CEASE AND YOU'LL BE FINE.
IT WAS VERY LOW RANGE, SO THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRED IN THIS ROOM ARE UNKNOWN TO THOSE OUTSIDE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
BUT I'D **HURRY**.
NO--
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!

HOLY FUCK.

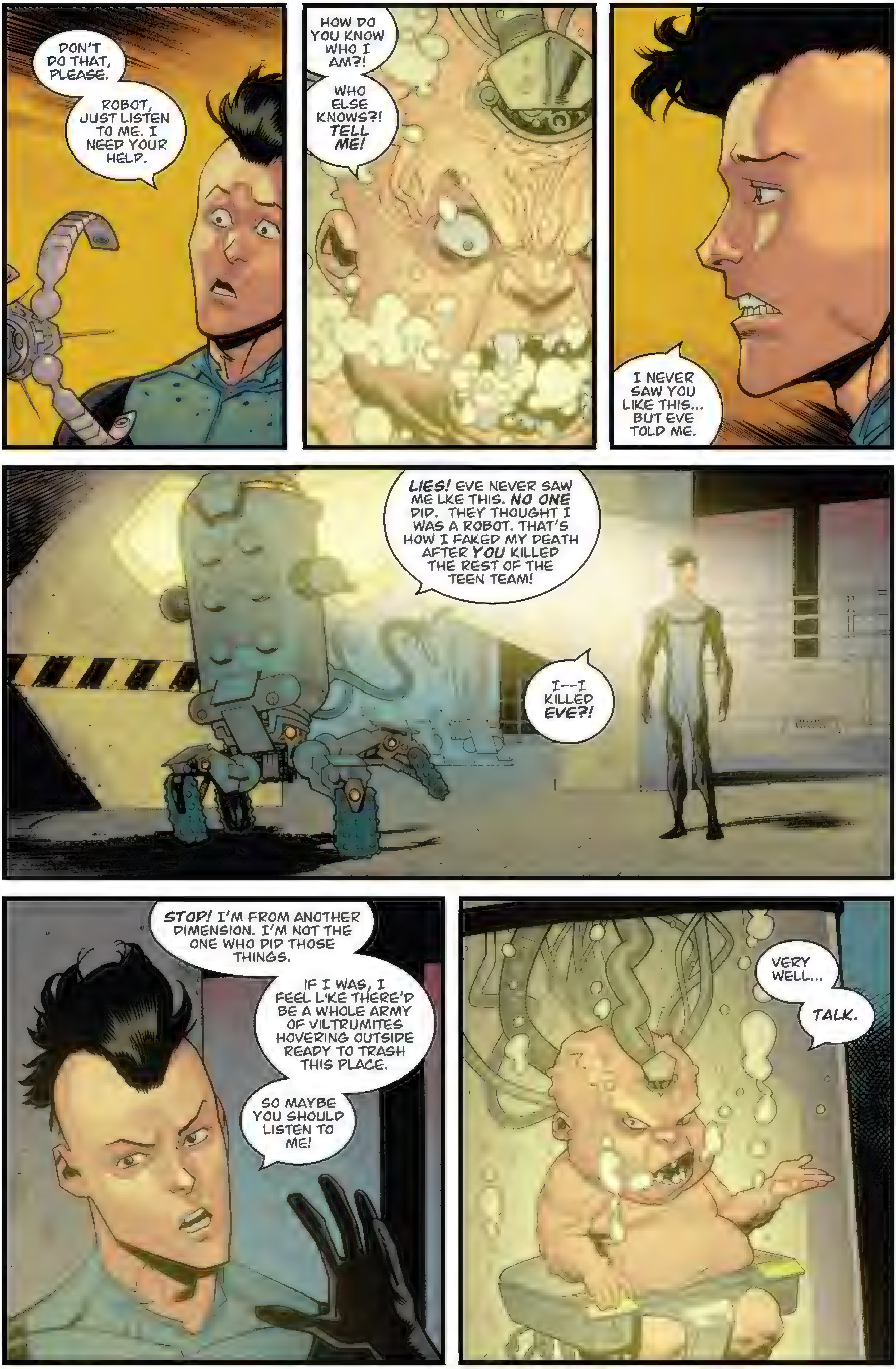
CHAPTER 109

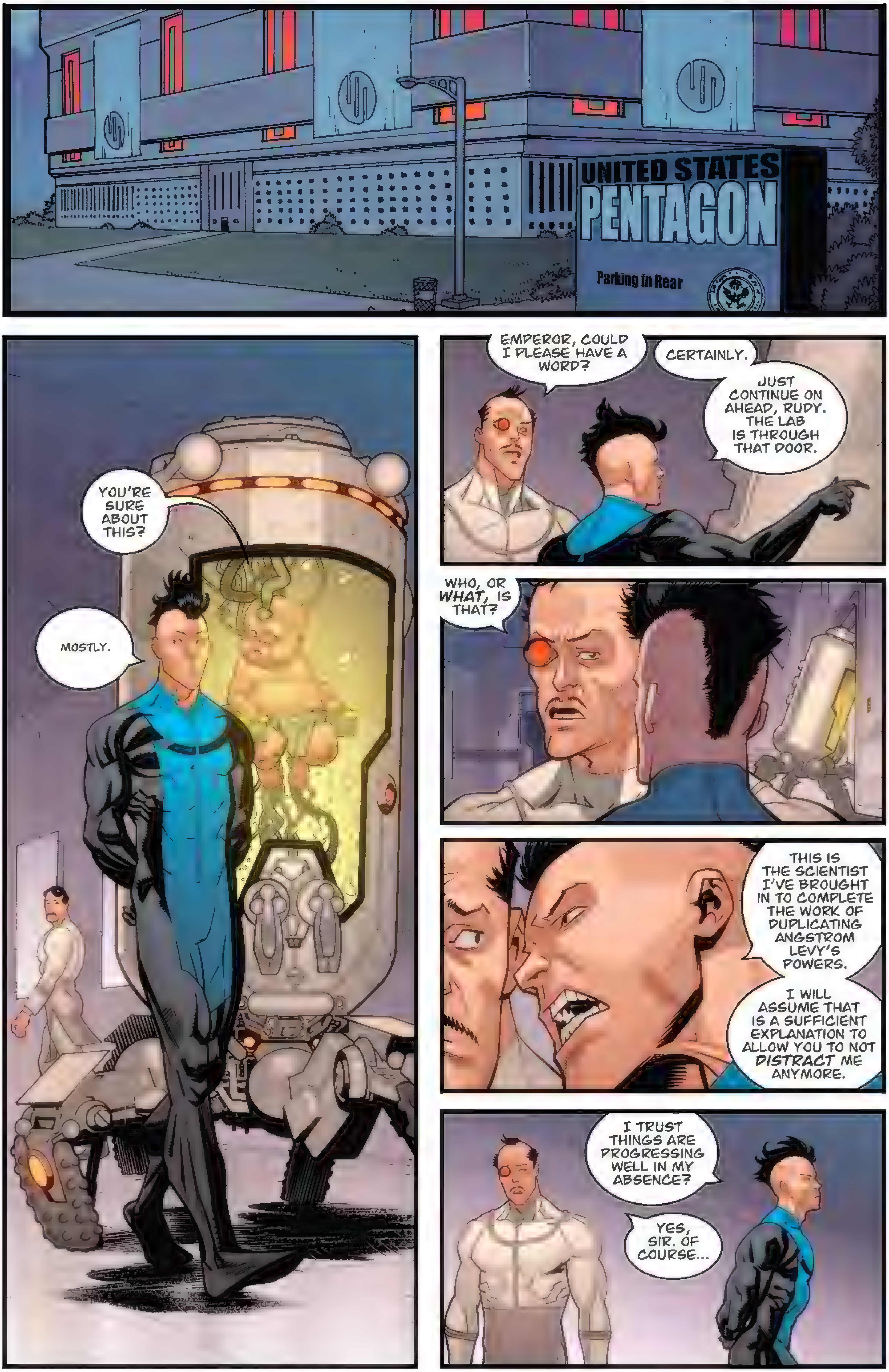

DOOM!
DOOM!
WHY IS THIS DOOR SEALED?!
I OVERSEE THE SCIENCE COMMISSION. I SHOULD *NEVER* BE BARRED FROM ENTERING THIS ROOM!
VOOSH!

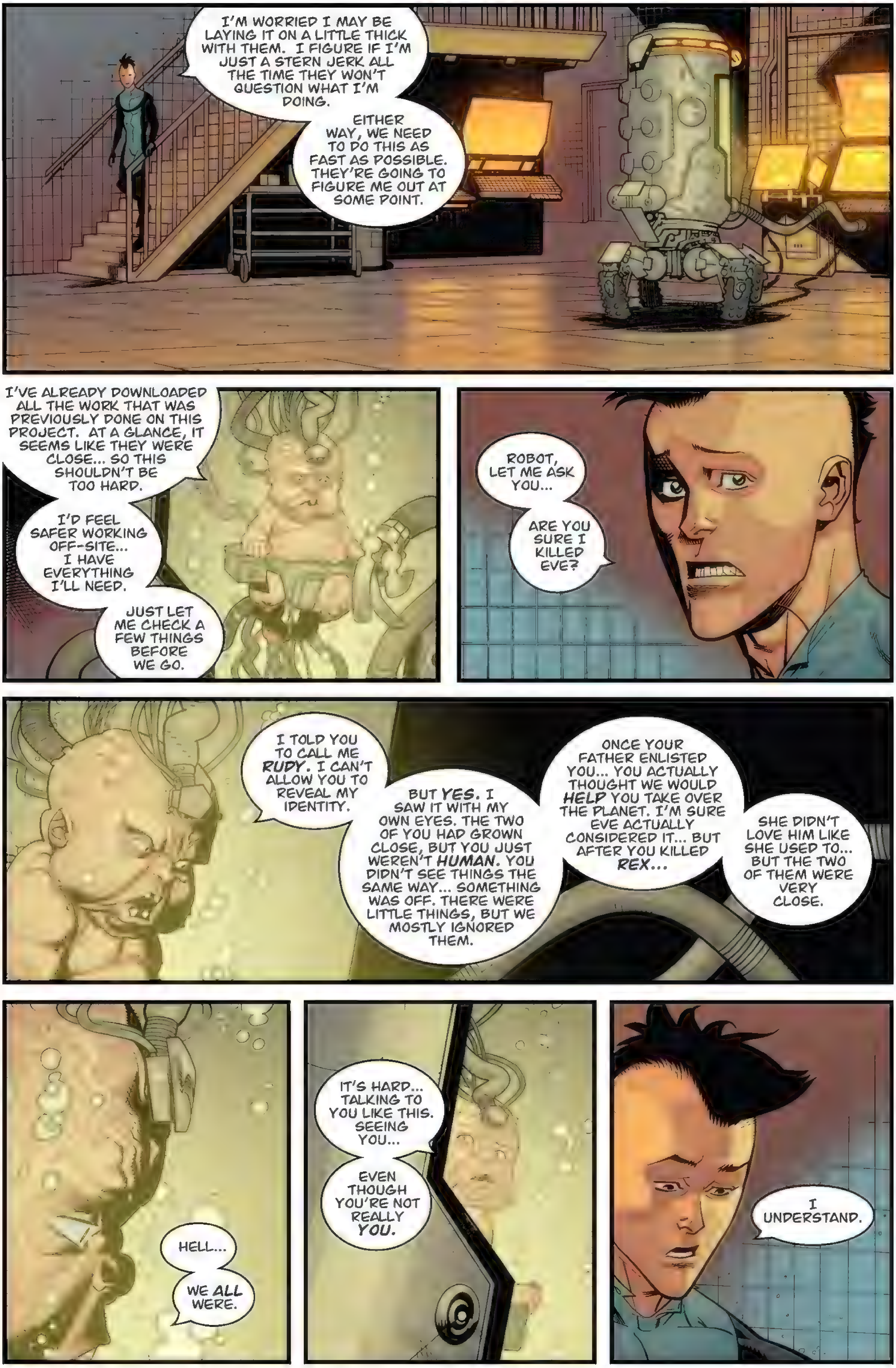

EMPEROR MARK! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE--
AM I SUDDENLY REQUIRED TO KEEP YOU INFORMED OF ALL MY ACTIONS, GENERAL KREGG? I AM EMPEROR! I DO AS I WISH.
CAN'T YOU SEE I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING?
WHAT HAPPENED?!
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

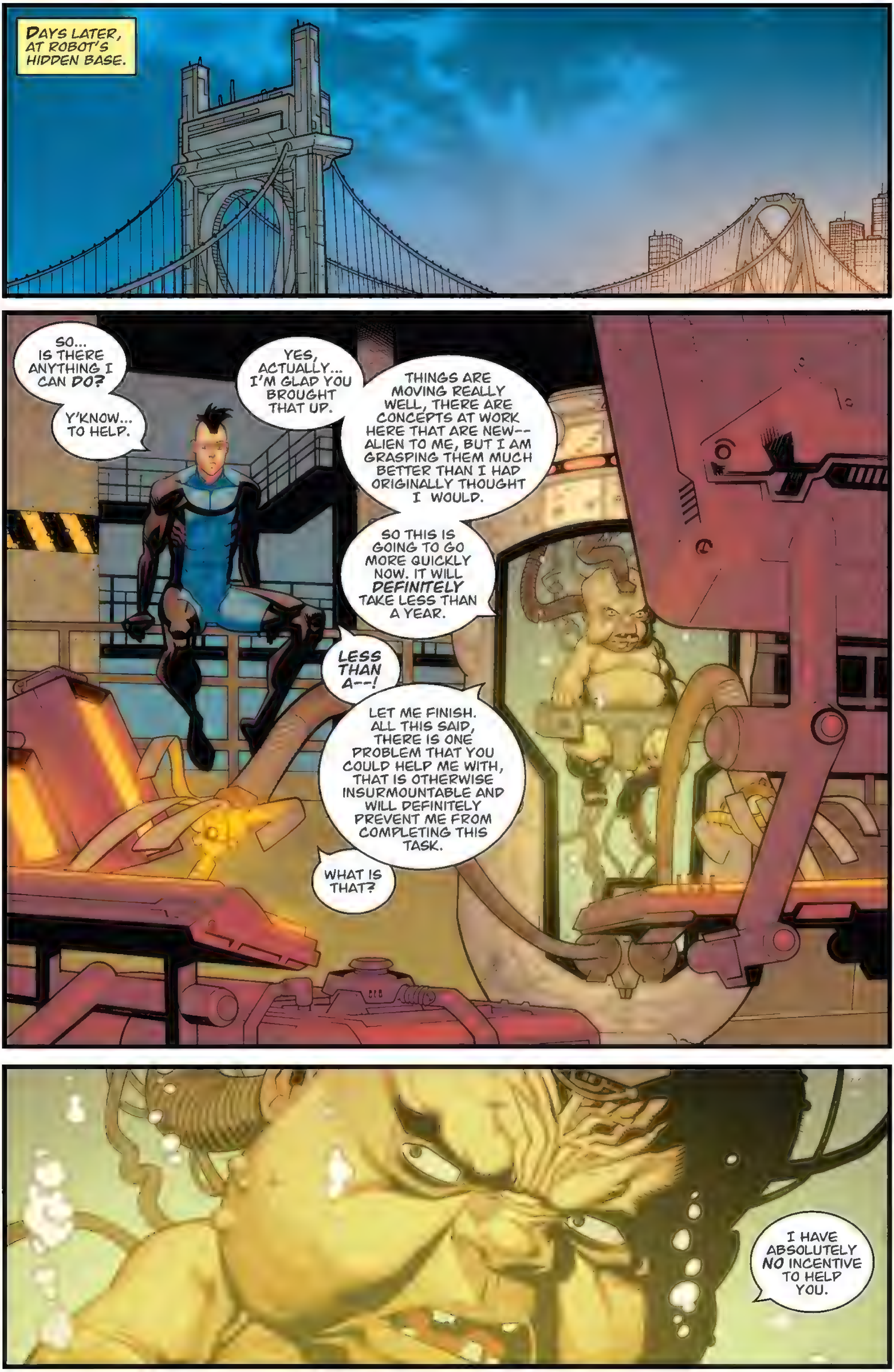

THE VERY PEOPLE WHO PROVIDED MY ESCAPE FROM ANGSTROM LEVY'S DIMENSION AND ALLOWED ME TO BRING HIM HERE TO HARNESS HIS POWER--HAVE **KILLED** HIM AND TRIED TO HALT OUR PROGRESS!
ONE OF THEM ESCAPED WITH THE TECHNOLOGY INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION. ***THIS*** PROJECT IS NOW PRIORITY ONE!
YOU WILL HANDLE ALL OF MY DUTIES UNTIL THIS PROJECT IS COMPLETE. I WILL GO NOW, TO SEEK ANOTHER WHO CAN PROVIDE US WITH THE MEANS OF EXPANDING OUR ***GLORIOUS*** VILTRUM EMPIRE INTO COUNTLESS OTHER DIMENSIONS.
BUT EMPEROR, SIR... I DON'T--
SILENCE!
I EXPECT THIS MESS TO BE GONE UPON MY RETURN!
NITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHEW.

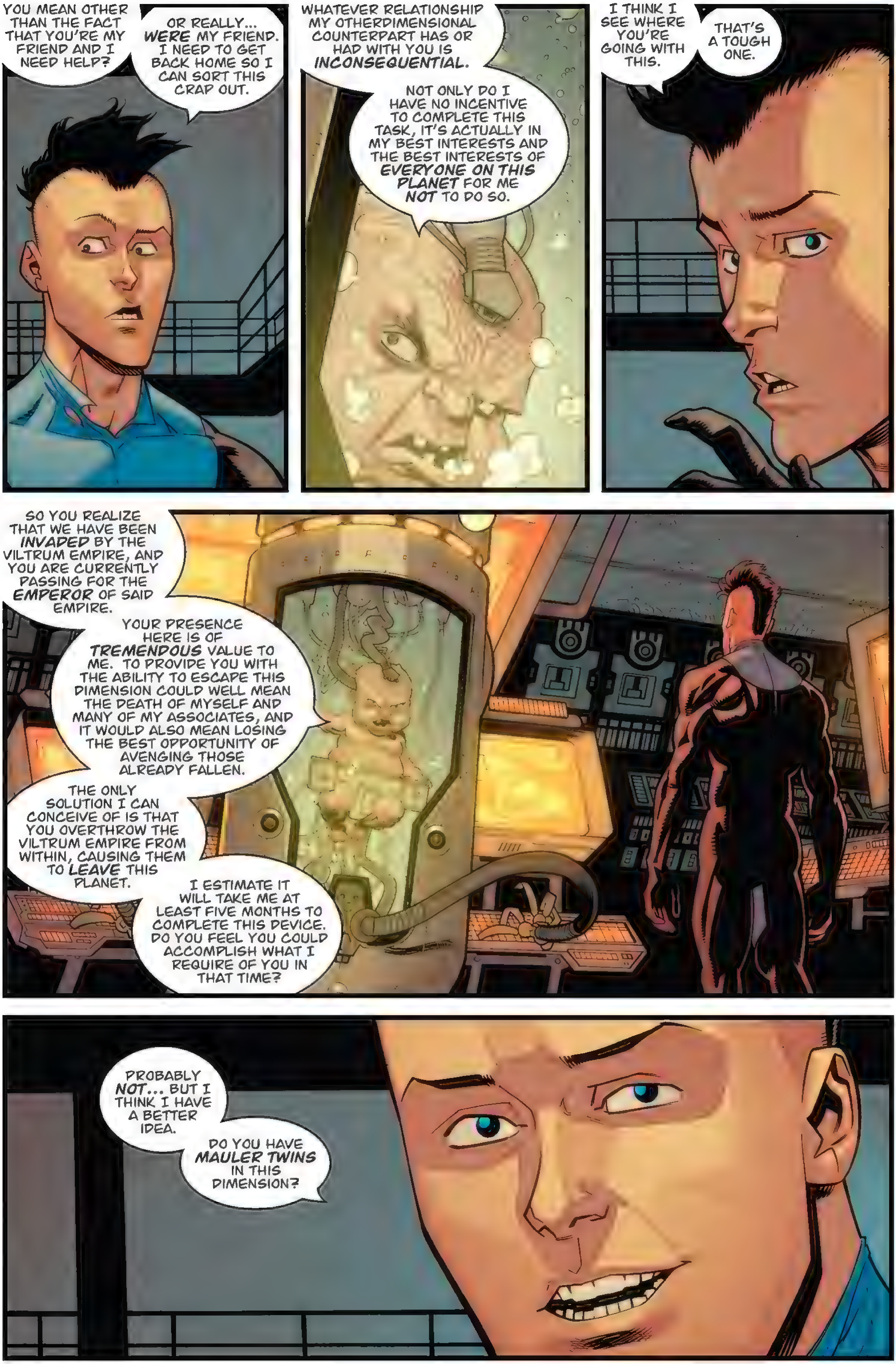
ROBOT?
HELLO?
YOU COME ANYWHERE NEAR ME AND I SWEAR I WILL IGNITE THE EXPLOSIVES THAT LINE THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BRIDGE.
I PROMISE THESE EXPLOSIVES WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO HURT YOU, VILTRUMITE SCUM!


DON'T DO THAT, PLEASE.
ROBOT, JUST LISTEN TO ME. I NEED YOUR HELP.
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!
WHO ELSE KNOWS?! TELL ME!
I NEVER SAW YOU LIKE THIS... BUT EVE TOLD ME.
LIES! EVE NEVER SAW ME LKE THIS. NO ONE DID. THEY THOUGHT I WAS A ROBOT. THAT'S HOW I FAKED MY DEATH AFTER YOU KILLED THE REST OF THE TEEN TEAM!
I--I KILLED EVE?!
STOP! I'M FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO DID THOSE THINGS.
IF I WAS, I FEEL LIKE THERE'D BE A WHOLE ARMY OF VILTRUMITES HOVERING OUTSIDE READY TO TRASH THIS PLACE.
SO MAYBE YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME!
VERY WELL...
TALK.

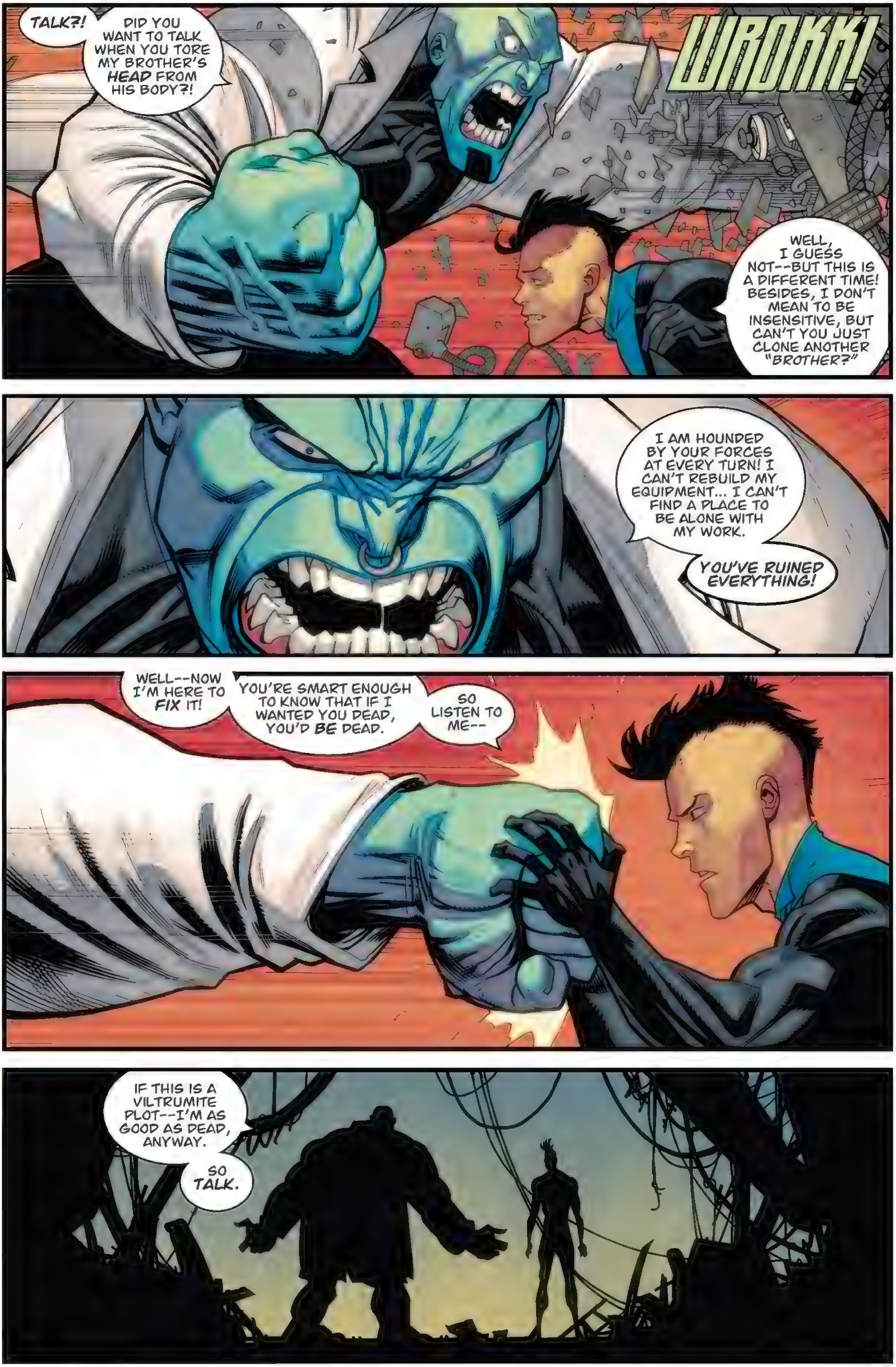

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS?
MOSTLY.
EMPEROR, COULD I PLEASE HAVE A WORD?
CERTAINLY.
JUST CONTINUE ON AHEAD, RUDY. THE LAB IS THROUGH THAT DOOR.
WHO, OR *WHAT*, IS THAT?
THIS IS THE SCIENTIST I'VE BROUGHT IN TO COMPLETE THE WORK OF DUPLICATING ANGSTROM LEVY'S POWERS.
I WILL ASSUME THAT IS A SUFFICIENT EXPLANATION TO ALLOW YOU TO NOT *DISTRACT* ME ANYMORE.
I TRUST THINGS ARE PROGRESSING WELL IN MY ABSENCE?
YES, SIR. OF COURSE...

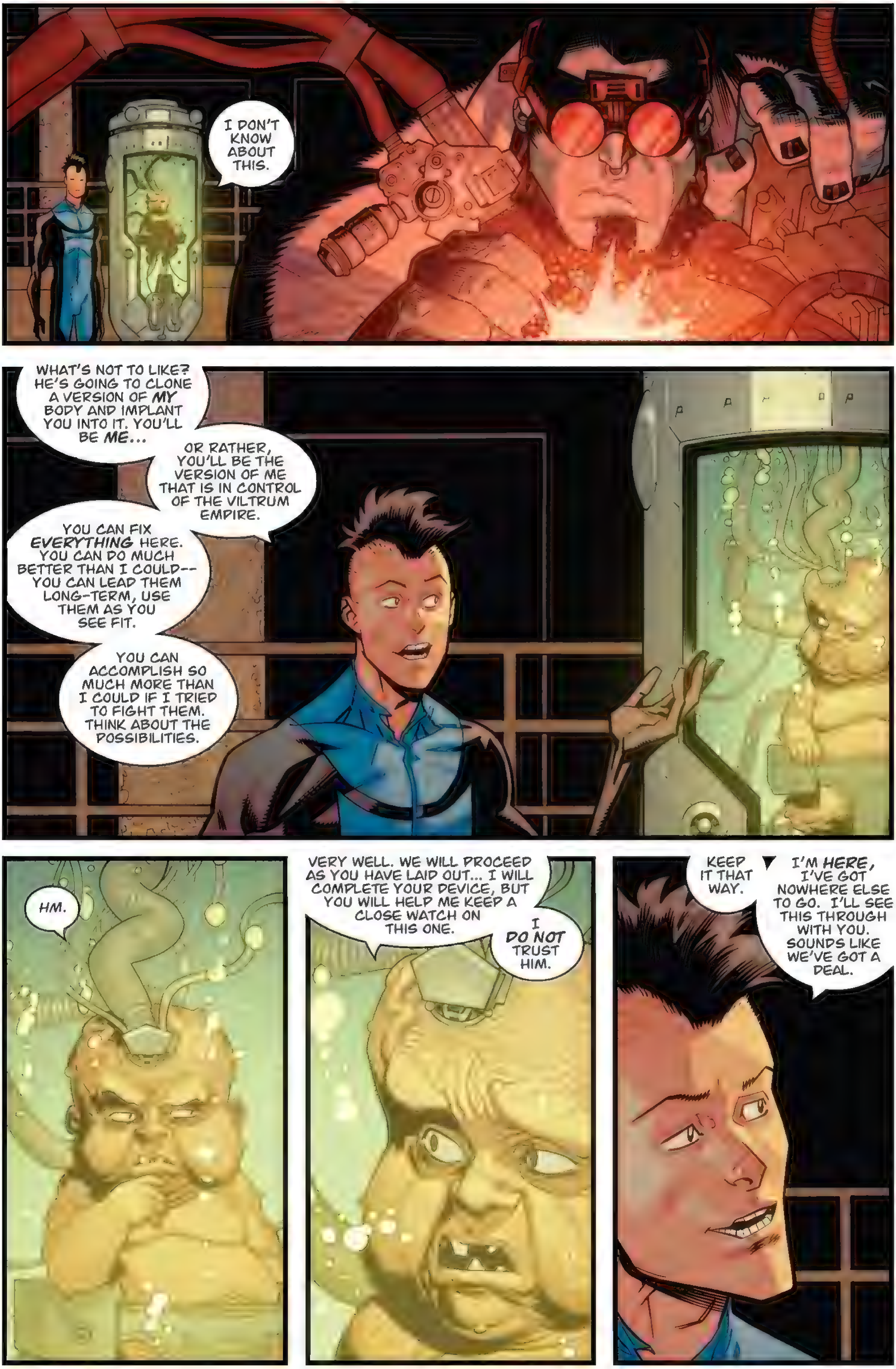

I'M WORRIED I MAY BE LAYING IT ON A LITTLE THICK WITH THEM. I FIGURE IF I'M JUST A STERN JERK ALL THE TIME THEY WON'T QUESTION WHAT I'M DOING.
EITHER WAY, WE NEED TO DO THIS AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. THEY'RE GOING TO FIGURE ME OUT AT SOME POINT.
I'VE ALREADY DOWNLOADED ALL THE WORK THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY DONE ON THIS PROJECT. AT A GLANCE, IT SEEMS LIKE THEY WERE CLOSE... SO THIS SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD.
I'D FEEL SAFER WORKING OFF-SITE... I HAVE EVERYTHING I'LL NEED.
JUST LET ME CHECK A FEW THINGS BEFORE WE GO.
ROBOT, LET ME ASK YOU...
ARE YOU SURE I KILLED EVE?
I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME *RUDY*. I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO REVEAL MY IDENTITY.
BUT **YES**. I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES. THE TWO OF YOU HAD GROWN CLOSE, BUT YOU JUST WEREN'T ***HUMAN***. YOU DIDN'T SEE THINGS THE SAME WAY... SOMETHING WAS OFF. THERE WERE LITTLE THINGS, BUT WE MOSTLY IGNORED THEM.
ONCE YOUR FATHER ENLISTED YOU... YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT WE WOULD ***HELP*** YOU TAKE OVER THE PLANET. I'M SURE EVE ACTUALLY CONSIDERED IT... BUT AFTER YOU KILLED ***REX***...
SHE DIDN'T LOVE HIM LIKE SHE USED TO... BUT THE TWO OF THEM WERE VERY CLOSE.
HELL...
WE ***ALL*** WERE.
IT'S HARD... TALKING TO YOU LIKE THIS. SEEING YOU...
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE NOT REALLY ***YOU***.
I UNDERSTAND.

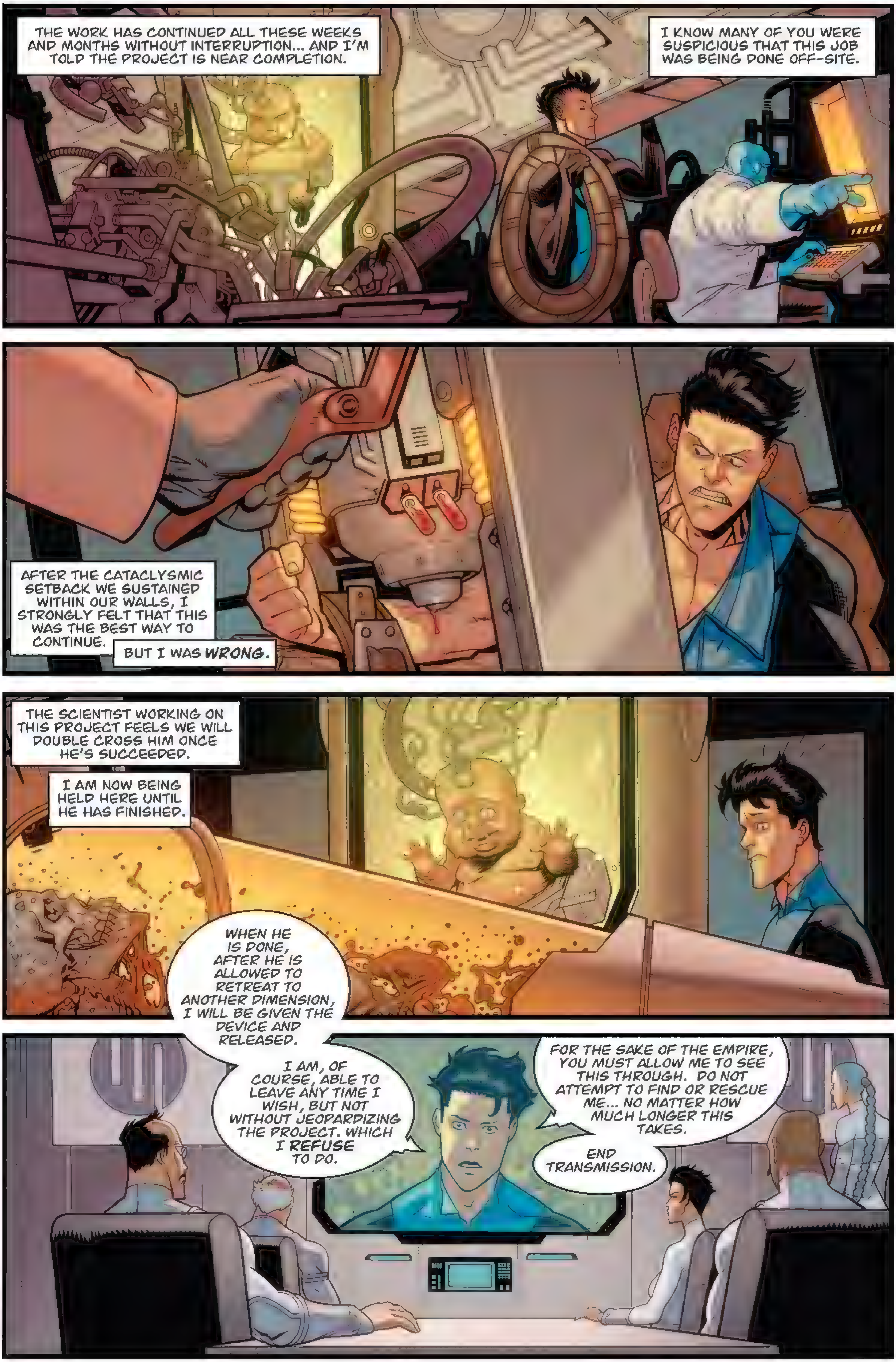

DAYS LATER, AT ROBOT'S HIDDEN BASE.
SO... IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN *DO?*
Y'KNOW... TO HELP.
YES, ACTUALLY... I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THAT UP.
THINGS ARE MOVING REALLY WELL, THERE ARE CONCEPTS AT WORK HERE THAT ARE NEW-- ALIEN TO ME, BUT I AM GRASPING THEM MUCH BETTER THAN I HAD ORIGINALLY THOUGHT I WOULD.
SO THIS IS GOING TO GO MORE QUICKLY NOW. IT WILL *DEFINITELY* TAKE LESS THAN A YEAR.
LESS THAN A--!
LET ME FINISH. ALL THIS SAID, THERE IS ONE PROBLEM THAT YOU COULD HELP ME WITH, THAT IS OTHERWISE INSURMOUNTABLE AND WILL DEFINITELY PREVENT ME FROM COMPLETING THIS TASK.
WHAT IS THAT?
I HAVE ABSOLUTELY *NO* INCENTIVE TO HELP YOU.

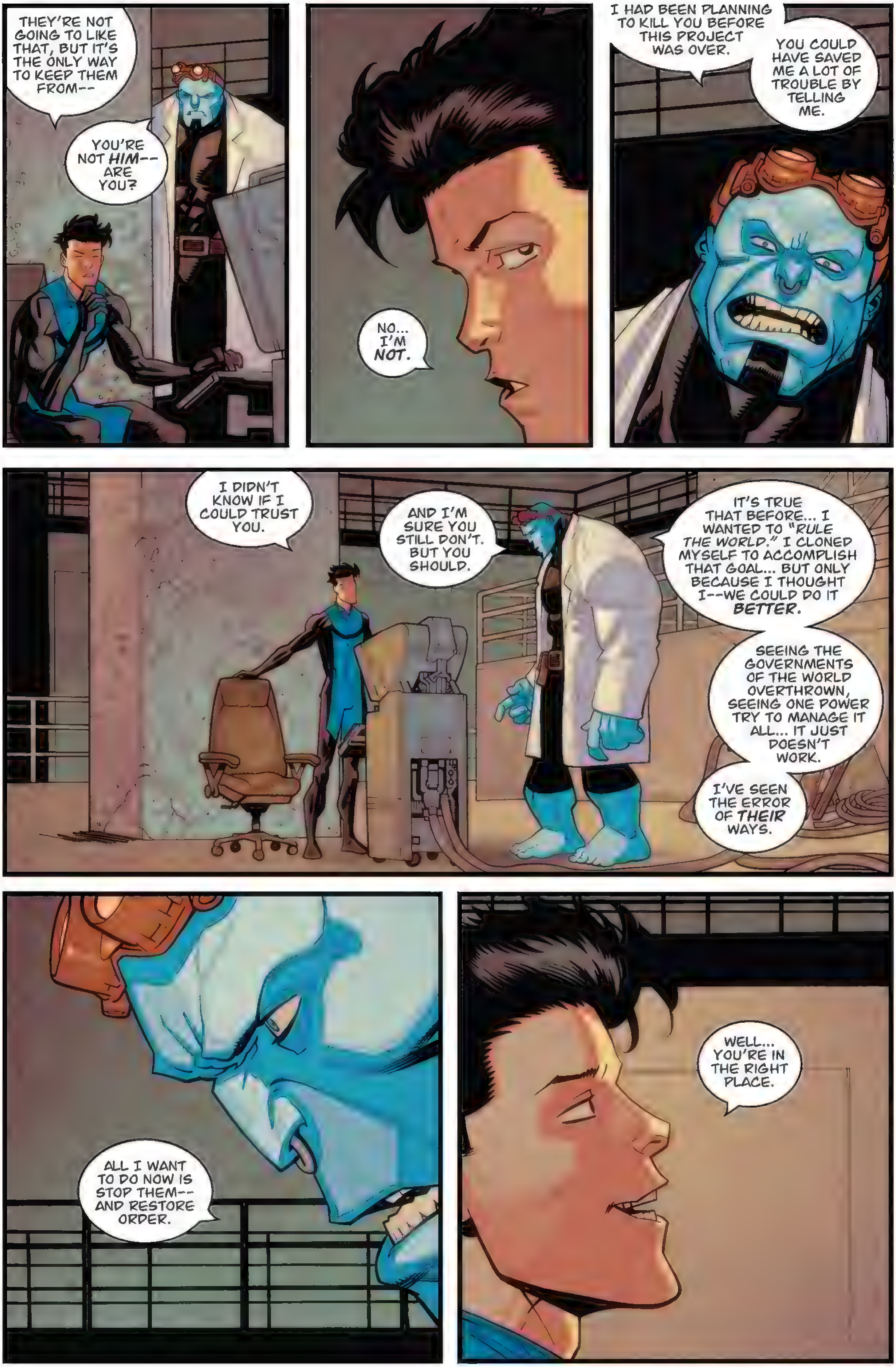

YOU MEAN OTHER THAN THE FACT THAT YOU'RE MY FRIEND AND I NEED HELP?
OR REALLY... *WERE* MY FRIEND. I NEED TO GET BACK HOME SO I CAN SORT THIS CRAP OUT.
WHATEVER RELATIONSHIP MY OTHERDIMENSIONAL COUNTERPART HAS OR HAD WITH YOU IS *INCONSEQUENTIAL.*
NOT ONLY DO I HAVE NO INCENTIVE TO COMPLETE THIS TASK, IT'S ACTUALLY IN MY BEST INTERESTS AND THE BEST INTERESTS OF *EVERYONE ON THIS PLANET* FOR ME *NOT* TO DO SO.
I THINK I SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH THIS.
THAT'S A TOUGH ONE.
SO YOU REALIZE THAT WE HAVE BEEN *INVADED* BY THE VILTRUM EMPIRE, AND YOU ARE CURRENTLY PASSING FOR THE *EMPEROR* OF SAID EMPIRE.
YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS OF *TREMENDOUS* VALUE TO ME. TO PROVIDE YOU WITH THE ABILITY TO ESCAPE THIS DIMENSION COULD WELL MEAN THE DEATH OF MYSELF AND MANY OF MY ASSOCIATES, AND IT WOULD ALSO MEAN LOSING THE BEST OPPORTUNITY OF AVENGING THOSE ALREADY FALLEN.
THE ONLY SOLUTION I CAN CONCEIVE OF IS THAT YOU OVERTHROW THE VILTRUM EMPIRE FROM WITHIN, CAUSING THEM TO *LEAVE* THIS PLANET.
I ESTIMATE IT WILL TAKE ME AT LEAST FIVE MONTHS TO COMPLETE THIS DEVICE. DO YOU FEEL YOU COULD ACCOMPLISH WHAT I REQUIRE OF YOU IN THAT TIME?
PROBABLY *NOT*... BUT I THINK I HAVE A BETTER IDEA.
DO YOU HAVE *MAULER TWINS* IN THIS DIMENSION?

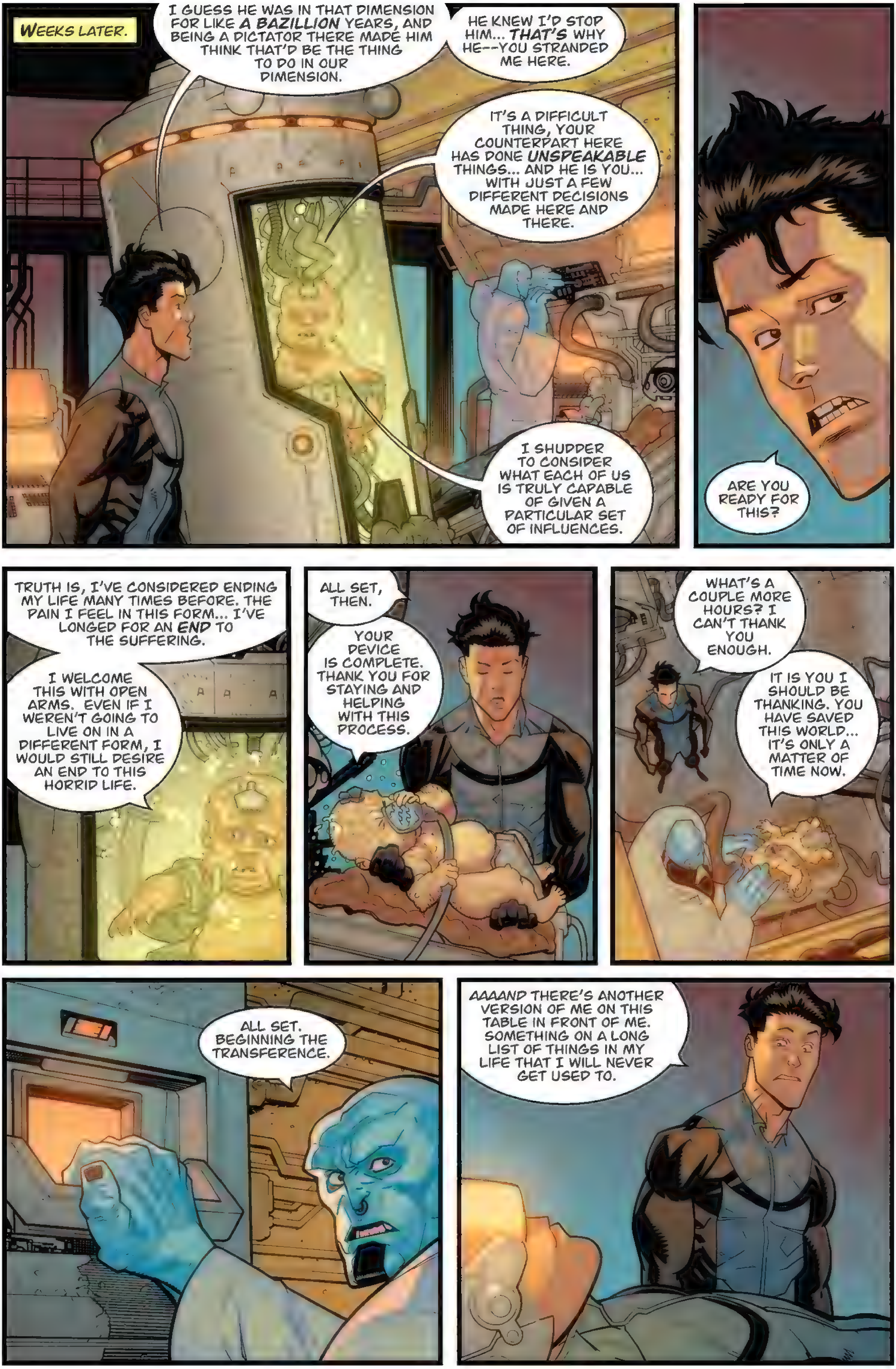
I SWEAR I JUST WANT TO TALK!
BRAKKOOM!

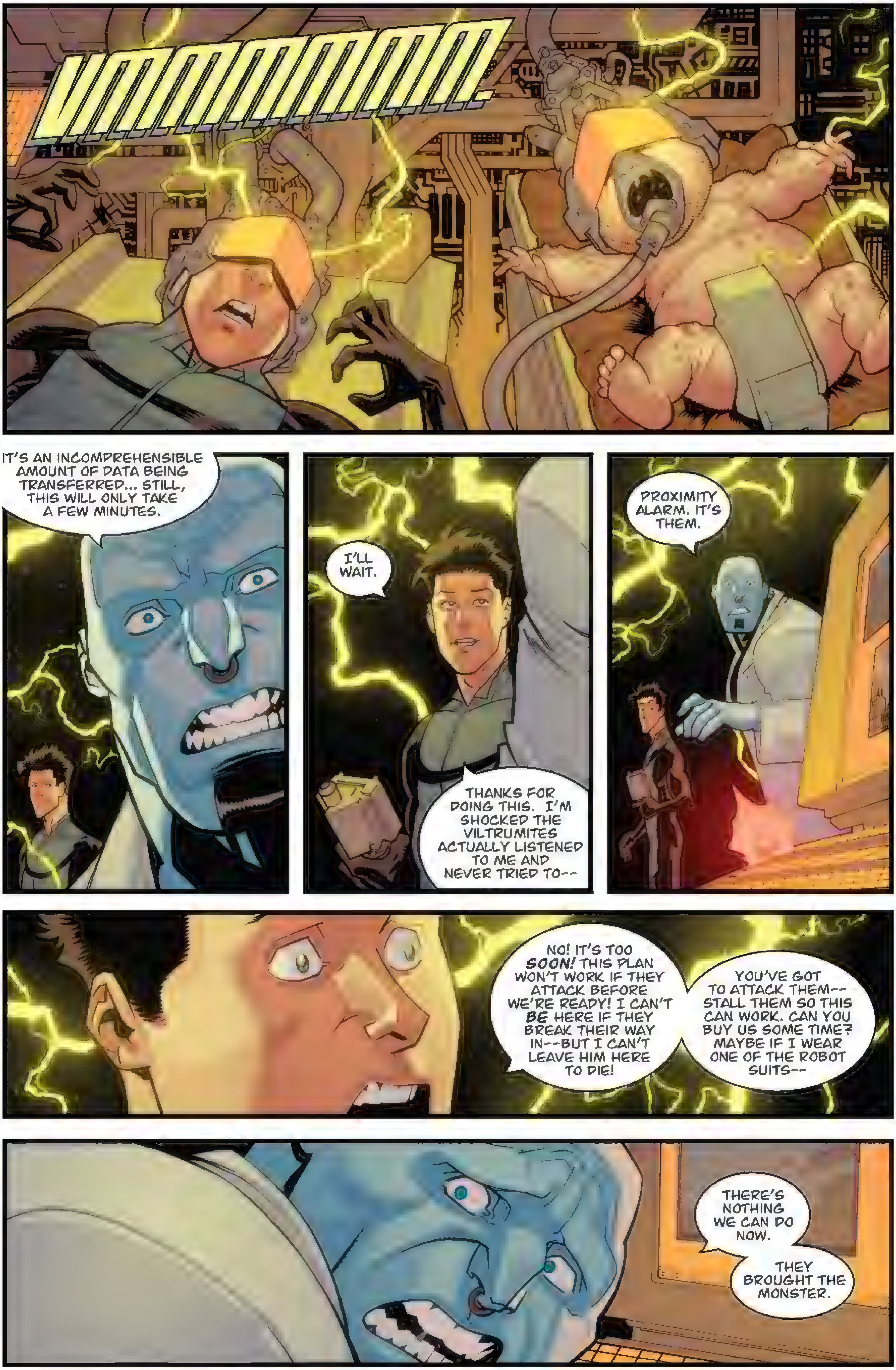

TALK?!
DID YOU WANT TO TALK WHEN YOU TORE MY BROTHER'S HEAD FROM HIS BODY?!
WROKK!
WELL, I GUESS NOT--BUT THIS IS A DIFFERENT TIME! BESIDES, I DON'T MEAN TO BE INSENSITIVE, BUT CAN'T YOU JUST CLONE ANOTHER "BROTHER?"
I AM HOUNDED BY YOUR FORCES AT EVERY TURN! I CAN'T REBUILD MY EQUIPMENT... I CAN'T FIND A PLACE TO BE ALONE WITH MY WORK.
YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING!
WELL--NOW I'M HERE TO FIX IT!
YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT IF I WANTED YOU DEAD, YOU'D BE DEAD.
SO LISTEN TO ME--
IF THIS IS A VILTRUMITE PLOT--I'M AS GOOD AS DEAD, ANYWAY.
SO TALK.


I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS.
WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE? HE'S GOING TO CLONE A VERSION OF *MY* BODY AND IMPLANT YOU INTO IT. YOU'LL BE *ME*...
OR RATHER, YOU'LL BE THE VERSION OF ME THAT IS IN CONTROL OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
YOU CAN FIX *EVERYTHING* HERE. YOU CAN DO MUCH BETTER THAN I COULD-- YOU CAN LEAD THEM LONG-TERM, USE THEM AS YOU SEE FIT.
YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH MORE THAN I COULD IF I TRIED TO FIGHT THEM. THINK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES.
HM.
VERY WELL. WE WILL PROCEED AS YOU HAVE LAID OUT... I WILL COMPLETE YOUR DEVICE, BUT YOU WILL HELP ME KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON THIS ONE.
I *DO NOT* TRUST HIM.
KEEP IT THAT WAY.
I'M *HERE*, I'VE GOT NOWHERE ELSE TO GO. I'LL SEE THIS THROUGH WITH YOU. SOUNDS LIKE WE'VE GOT A DEAL.

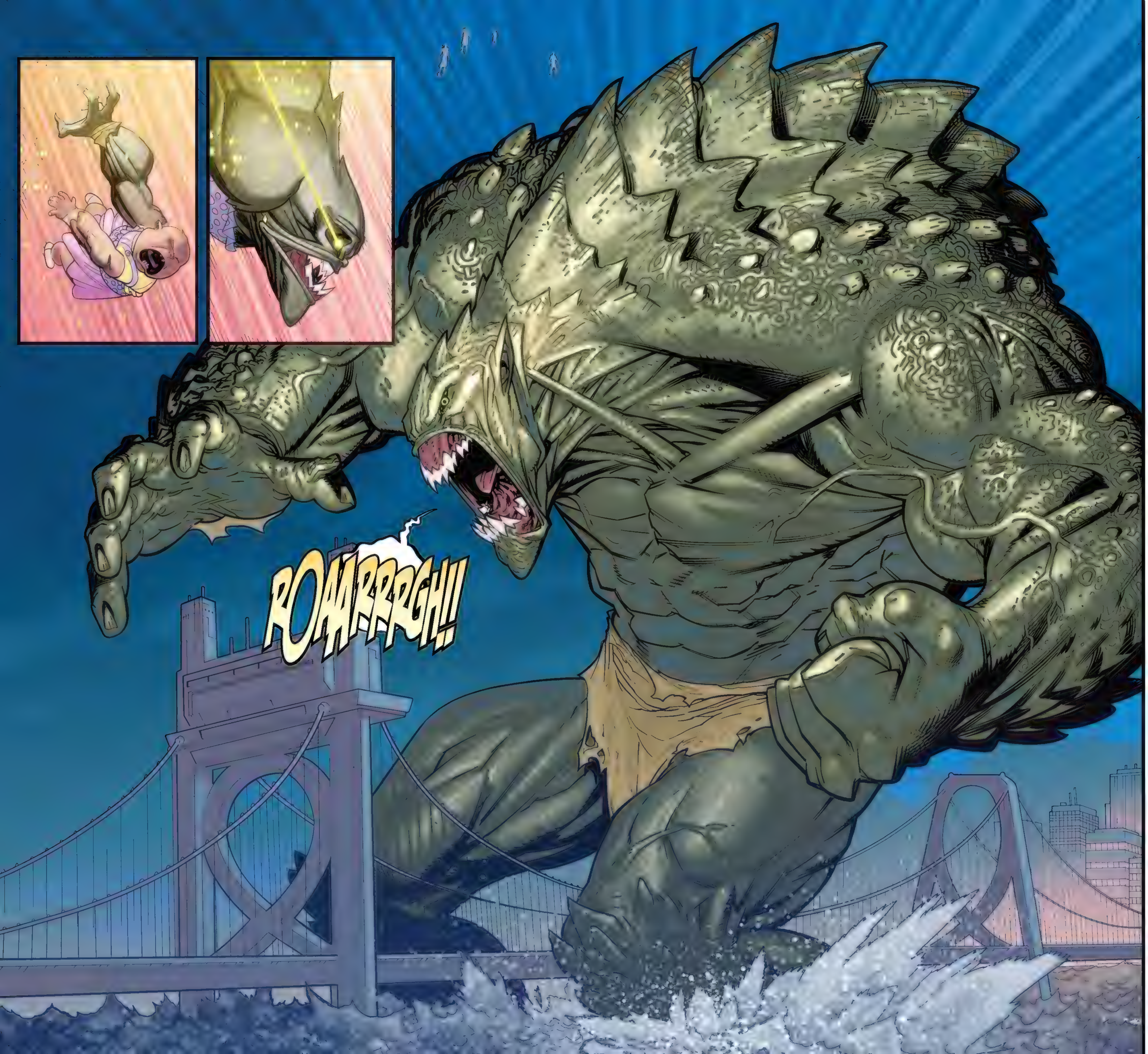

THE WORK HAS CONTINUED ALL THESE WEEKS AND MONTHS WITHOUT INTERRUPTION... AND I'M TOLD THE PROJECT IS NEAR COMPLETION.
I KNOW MANY OF YOU WERE SUSPICIOUS THAT THIS JOB WAS BEING DONE OFF-SITE.
AFTER THE CATACLYSMIC SETBACK WE SUSTAINED WITHIN OUR WALLS, I STRONGLY FELT THAT THIS WAS THE BEST WAY TO CONTINUE.
BUT I WAS *WRONG.*
THE SCIENTIST WORKING ON THIS PROJECT FEELS WE WILL DOUBLE CROSS HIM ONCE HE'S SUCCEEDED.
I AM NOW BEING HELD HERE UNTIL HE HAS FINISHED.
WHEN HE IS DONE, AFTER HE IS ALLOWED TO RETREAT TO ANOTHER DIMENSION, I WILL BE GIVEN THE DEVICE AND RELEASED.
I AM, OF COURSE, ABLE TO LEAVE ANY TIME I WISH, BUT NOT WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING THE PROJECT. WHICH I **REFUSE** TO DO.
FOR THE SAKE OF THE EMPIRE, YOU MUST ALLOW ME TO SEE THIS THROUGH. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIND OR RESCUE ME... NO MATTER HOW MUCH LONGER THIS TAKES.
END TRANSMISSION.

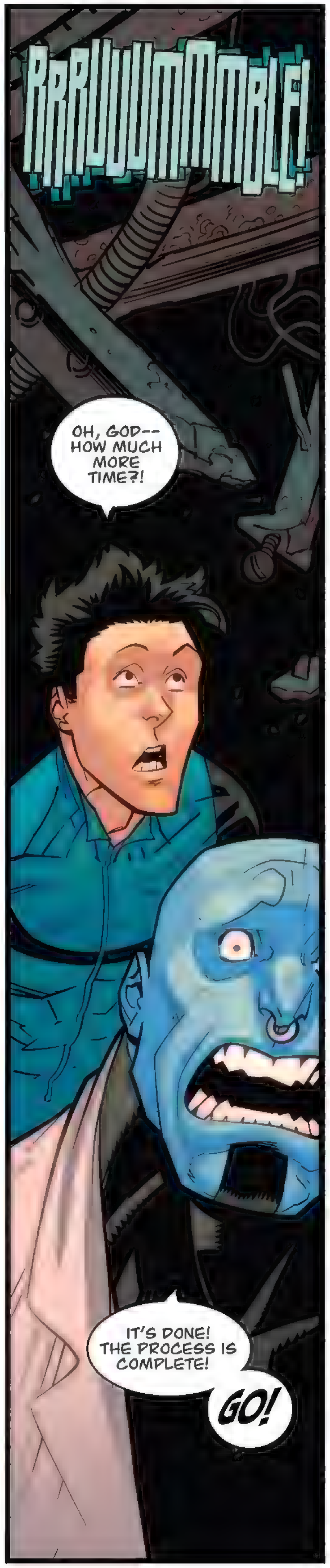

THEY'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THAT, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THEM FROM--
YOU'RE NOT *HIM*-- ARE YOU?
NO... I'M *NOT*.
I HAD BEEN PLANNING TO KILL YOU BEFORE THIS PROJECT WAS OVER.
YOU COULD HAVE SAVED ME A LOT OF TROUBLE BY TELLING ME.
I DIDN'T KNOW IF I COULD TRUST YOU.
AND I'M SURE YOU STILL DON'T. BUT YOU SHOULD.
IT'S TRUE THAT BEFORE... I WANTED TO "*RULE THE WORLD*." I CLONED MYSELF TO ACCOMPLISH THAT GOAL... BUT ONLY BECAUSE I THOUGHT I--WE COULD DO IT *BETTER*.
SEEING THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD OVERTHROWN, SEEING ONE POWER TRY TO MANAGE IT ALL... IT JUST DOESN'T WORK.
I'VE SEEN THE ERROR OF *THEIR* WAYS.
ALL I WANT TO DO NOW IS STOP THEM-- AND RESTORE ORDER.
WELL... YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

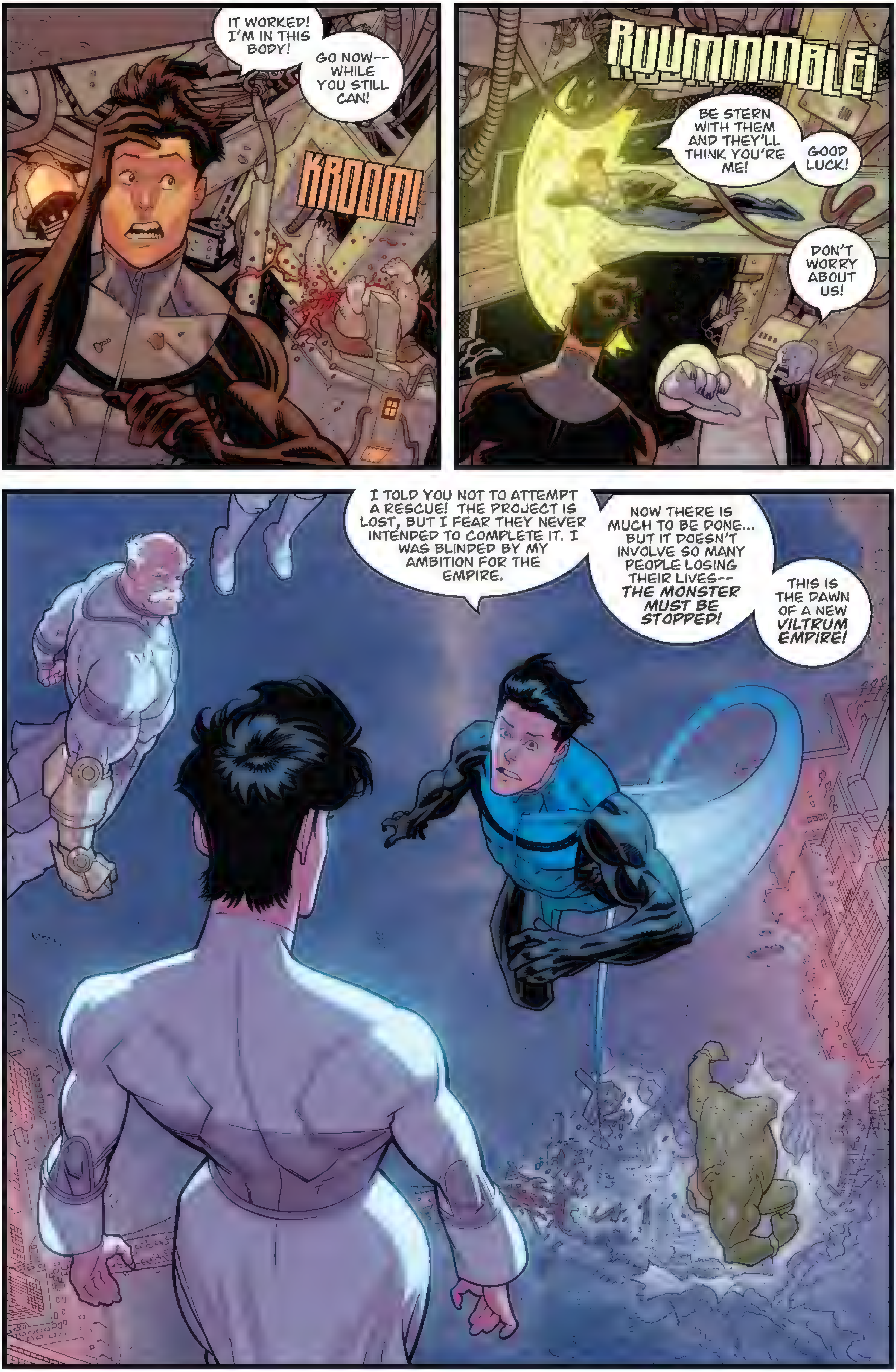

WEEKS LATER.
I GUESS HE WAS IN THAT DIMENSION FOR LIKE A BAZILLION YEARS, AND BEING A DICTATOR THERE MADE HIM THINK THAT'D BE THE THING TO DO IN OUR DIMENSION.
HE KNEW I'D STOP HIM... THAT'S WHY HE--YOU STRANDED ME HERE.
IT'S A DIFFICULT THING, YOUR COUNTERPART HERE HAS DONE UNSPEAKABLE THINGS... AND HE IS YOU... WITH JUST A FEW DIFFERENT DECISIONS MADE HERE AND THERE.
I SHUDDER TO CONSIDER WHAT EACH OF US IS TRULY CAPABLE OF GIVEN A PARTICULAR SET OF INFLUENCES.
ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?
TRUTH IS, I'VE CONSIDERED ENDING MY LIFE MANY TIMES BEFORE. THE PAIN I FEEL IN THIS FORM... I'VE LONGED FOR AN END TO THE SUFFERING.
I WELCOME THIS WITH OPEN ARMS. EVEN IF I WEREN'T GOING TO LIVE ON IN A DIFFERENT FORM, I WOULD STILL DESIRE AN END TO THIS HORRID LIFE.
ALL SET, THEN.
YOUR DEVICE IS COMPLETE. THANK YOU FOR STAYING AND HELPING WITH THIS PROCESS.
WHAT'S A COUPLE MORE HOURS? I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.
IT IS YOU I SHOULD BE THANKING. YOU HAVE SAVED THIS WORLD... IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME NOW.
ALL SET. BEGINNING THE TRANSFERENCE.
AAAAND THERE'S ANOTHER VERSION OF ME ON THIS TABLE IN FRONT OF ME. SOMETHING ON A LONG LIST OF THINGS IN MY LIFE THAT I WILL NEVER GET USED TO.


VMMMMMMM!
IT'S AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE AMOUNT OF DATA BEING TRANSFERRED... STILL, THIS WILL ONLY TAKE A FEW MINUTES.
I'LL WAIT.
THANKS FOR DOING THIS. I'M SHOCKED THE VILTRUMITES ACTUALLY LISTENED TO ME AND NEVER TRIED TO--
PROXIMITY ALARM. IT'S THEM.
NO! IT'S TOO *SOON!* THIS PLAN WON'T WORK IF THEY ATTACK BEFORE WE'RE READY! I CAN'T *BE* HERE IF THEY BREAK THEIR WAY IN--BUT I CAN'T LEAVE HIM HERE TO DIE!
YOU'VE GOT TO ATTACK THEM--STALL THEM SO THIS CAN WORK. CAN YOU BUY US SOME TIME? MAYBE IF I WEAR ONE OF THE ROBOT SUITS--
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO NOW.
THEY BROUGHT THE MONSTER.

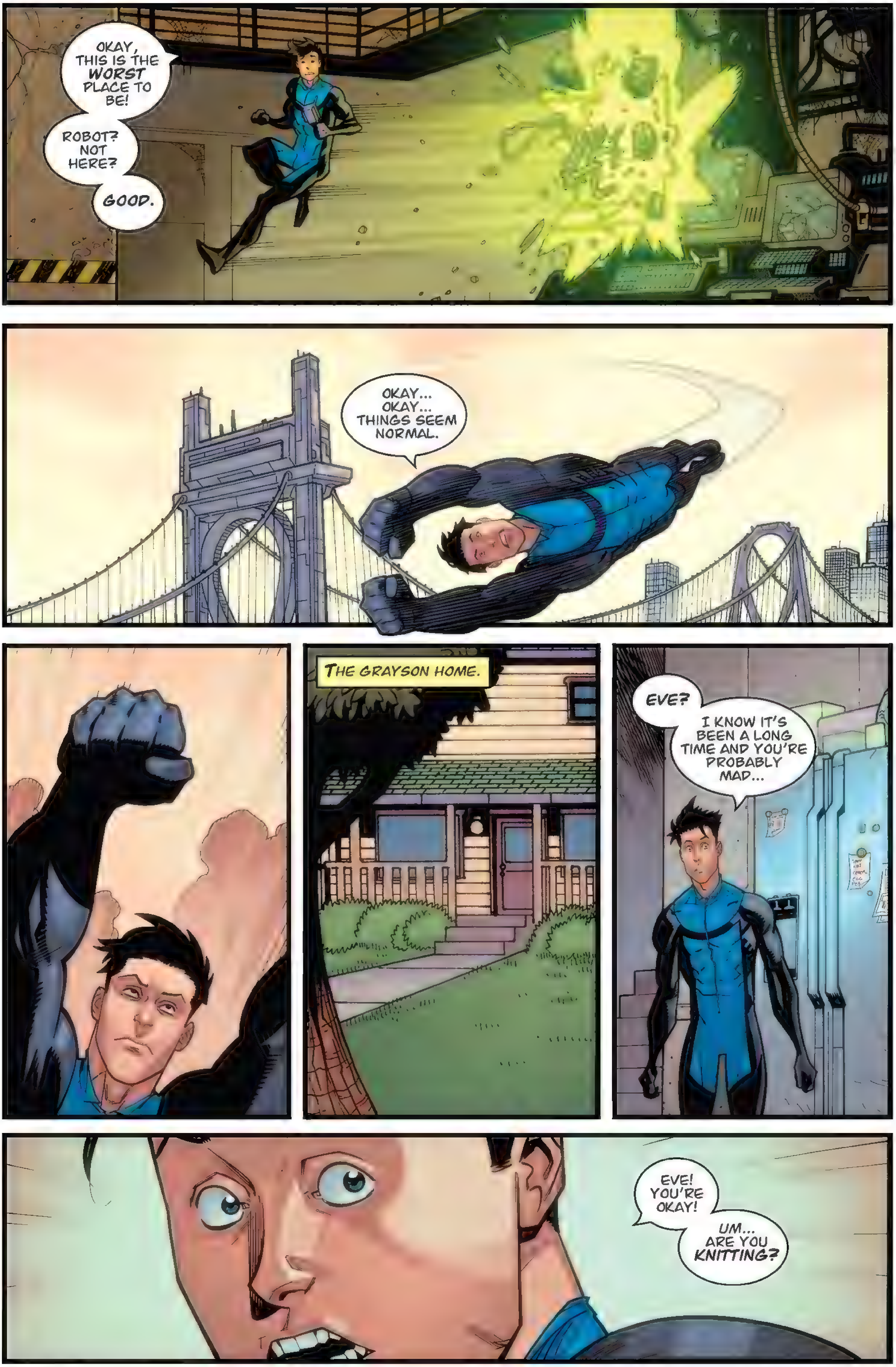
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
OUR EMPEROR IS BEING HELD HOSTAGE BY ONE OF THESE CREATURES. IF WE ALLOW THIS, WE WILL NEVER SEE THE END OF IT.
PROJECT BE DAMNED-- WE HAVE TO SEND A MESSAGE.
BUT THE LAST TIME WE UNLEASHED THIS BEAST IT WAS--I'M NOT SURE WE'LL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN IT.
IT WILL HAVE A LONG PATH OF DESTRUCTION, NO DOUBT, BUT IT WILL TIRE, AND IT WILL SLUMBER.
MARK GRAYSON WILL SURVIVE THE DESTRUCTION, AND OUR MESSAGE WILL BE SENT.
THIS IS THE BEST WAY.
YOU'LL SEE.

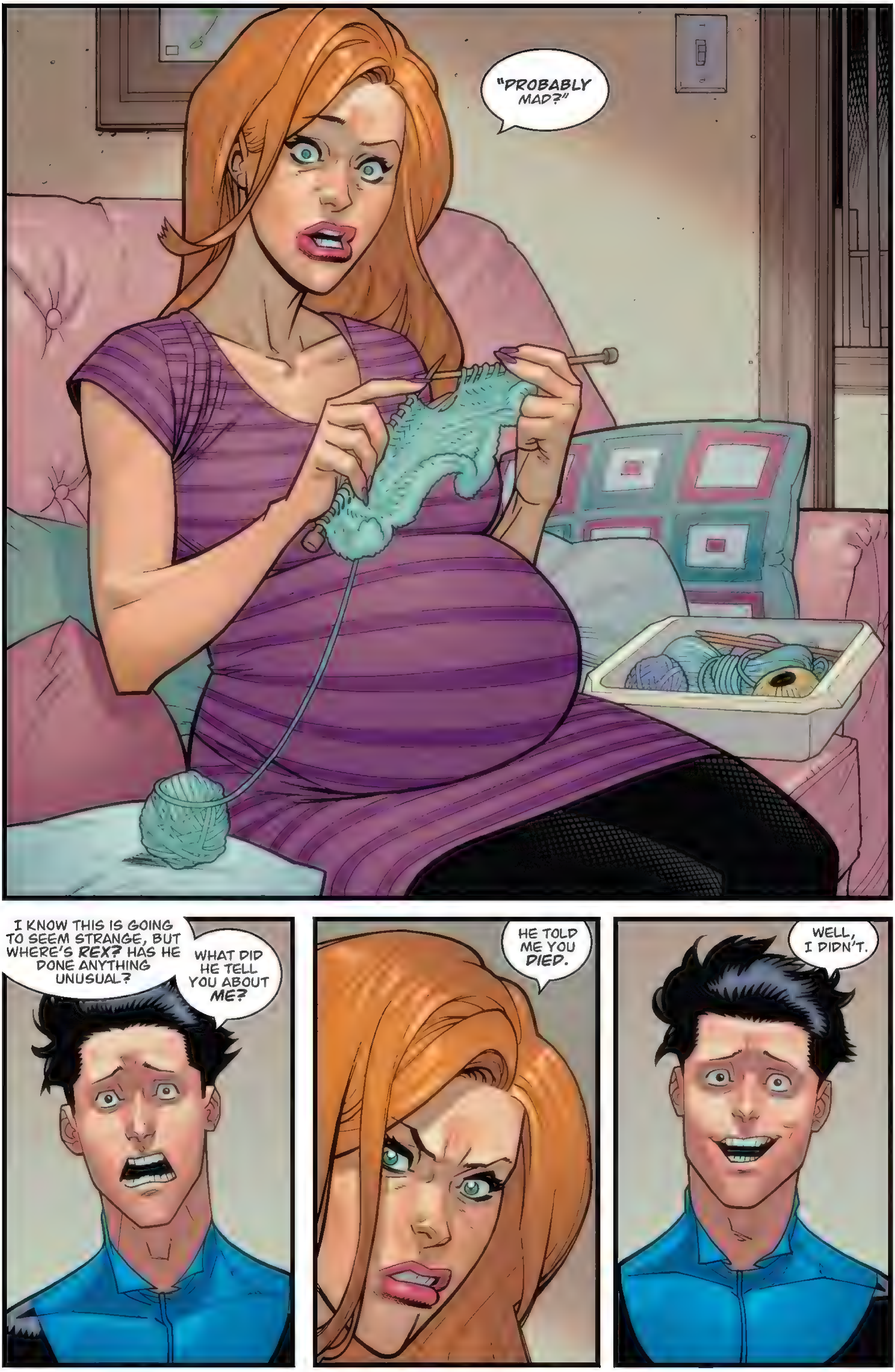

ROAARRRGH!!

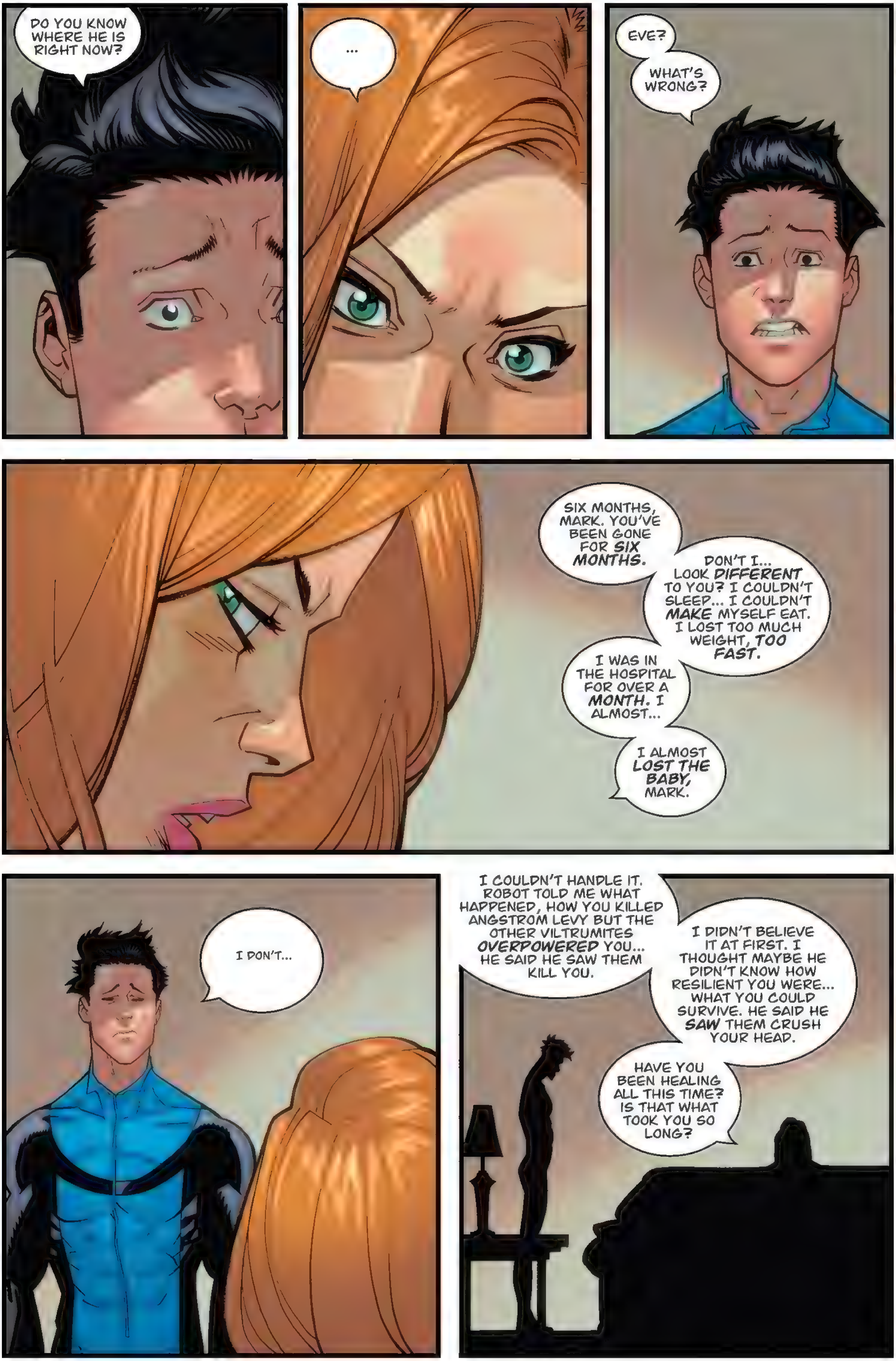

RRRUUUMMMBLE!
OH, GOD-- HOW MUCH MORE TIME?!
IT'S DONE! THE PROCESS IS COMPLETE!
GO!

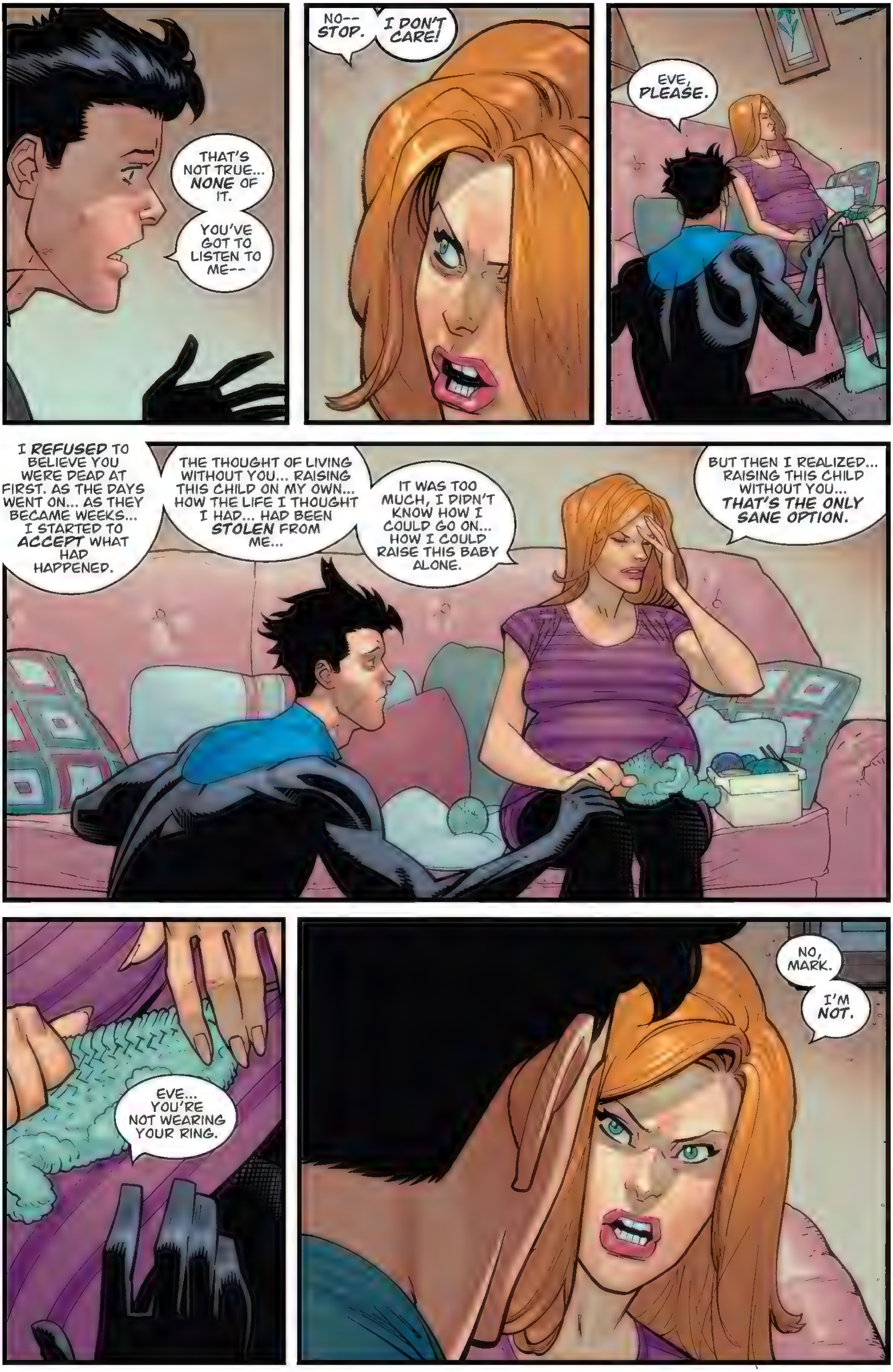

IT WORKED! I'M IN THIS BODY!
GO NOW-- WHILE YOU STILL CAN!
KROOM!
RUUMMMMBLE!
BE STERN WITH THEM AND THEY'LL THINK YOU'RE ME!
GOOD LUCK!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT US!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO ATTEMPT A RESCUE! THE PROJECT IS LOST, BUT I FEAR THEY NEVER INTENDED TO COMPLETE IT. I WAS BLINDED BY MY AMBITION FOR THE EMPIRE.
NOW THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE... BUT IT DOESN'T INVOLVE SO MANY PEOPLE LOSING THEIR LIVES-- THE MONSTER MUST BE STOPPED!
THIS IS THE DAWN OF A NEW VILTRUM EMPIRE!

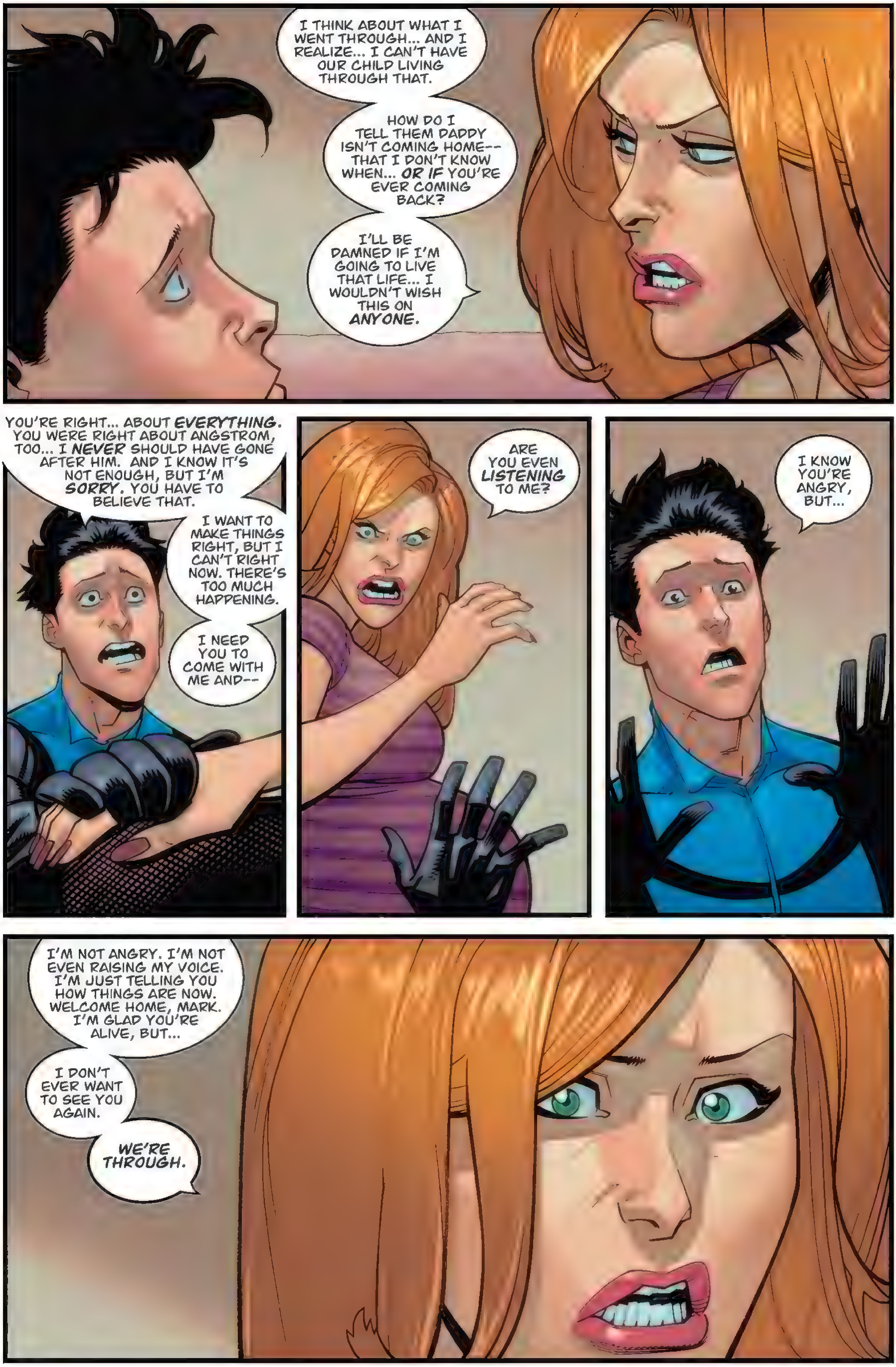
CHAPTER 110


OKAY, THIS IS THE *WORST* PLACE TO BE!
ROBOT? NOT HERE?
GOOD.
OKAY... OKAY... THINGS SEEM NORMAL.
THE GRAYSON HOME.
EVE?
I KNOW IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME AND YOU'RE PROBABLY MAD...
EVE! YOU'RE OKAY!
UM... ARE YOU *KNITTING?*

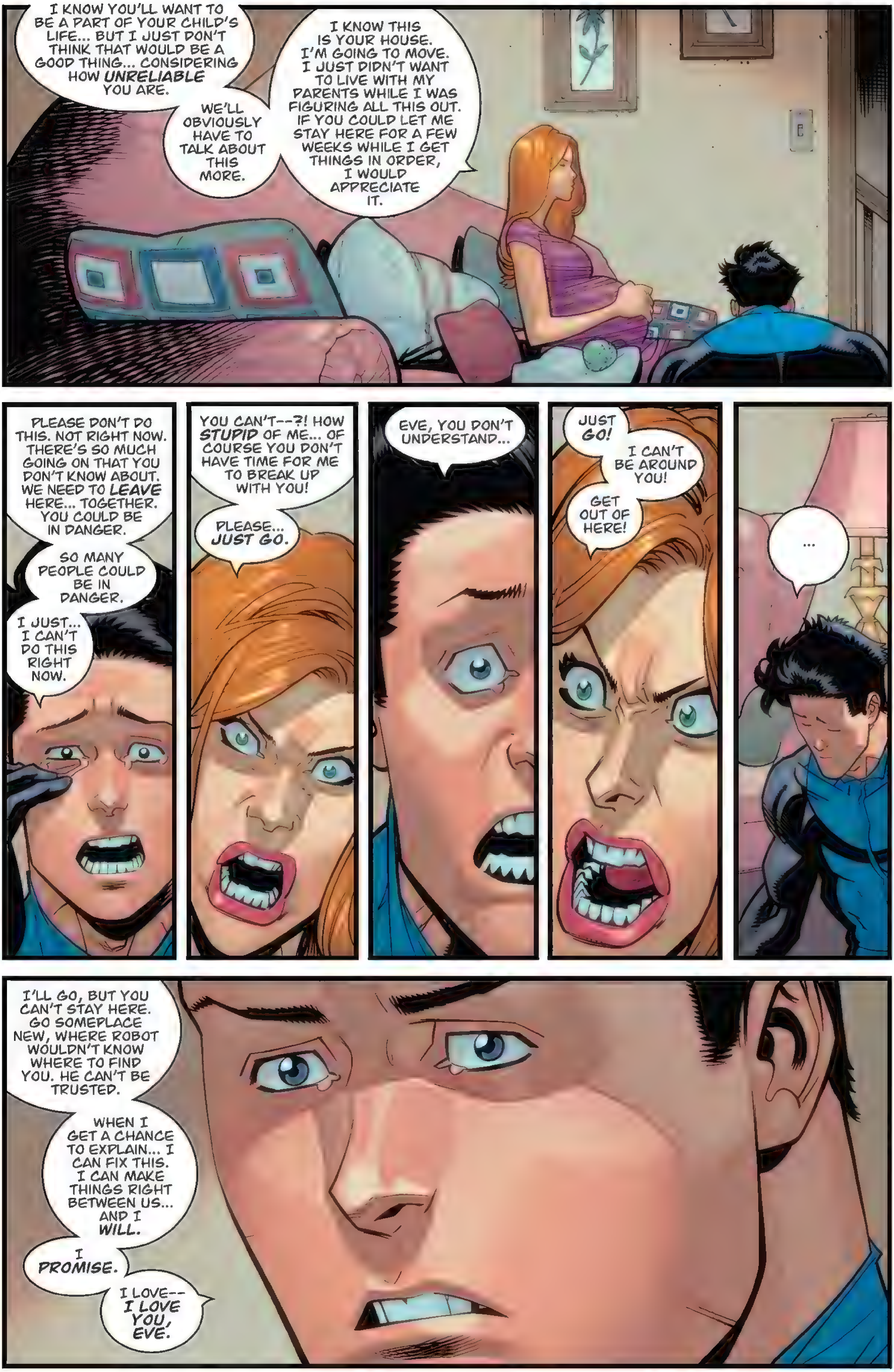

"PROBABLY *MAD?*"
I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO SEEM STRANGE, BUT WHERE'S ***REX?*** HAS HE DONE ANYTHING UNUSUAL?
WHAT DID HE TELL YOU ABOUT ***ME?***
HE TOLD ME YOU ***DIED.***
WELL, I DIDN'T.

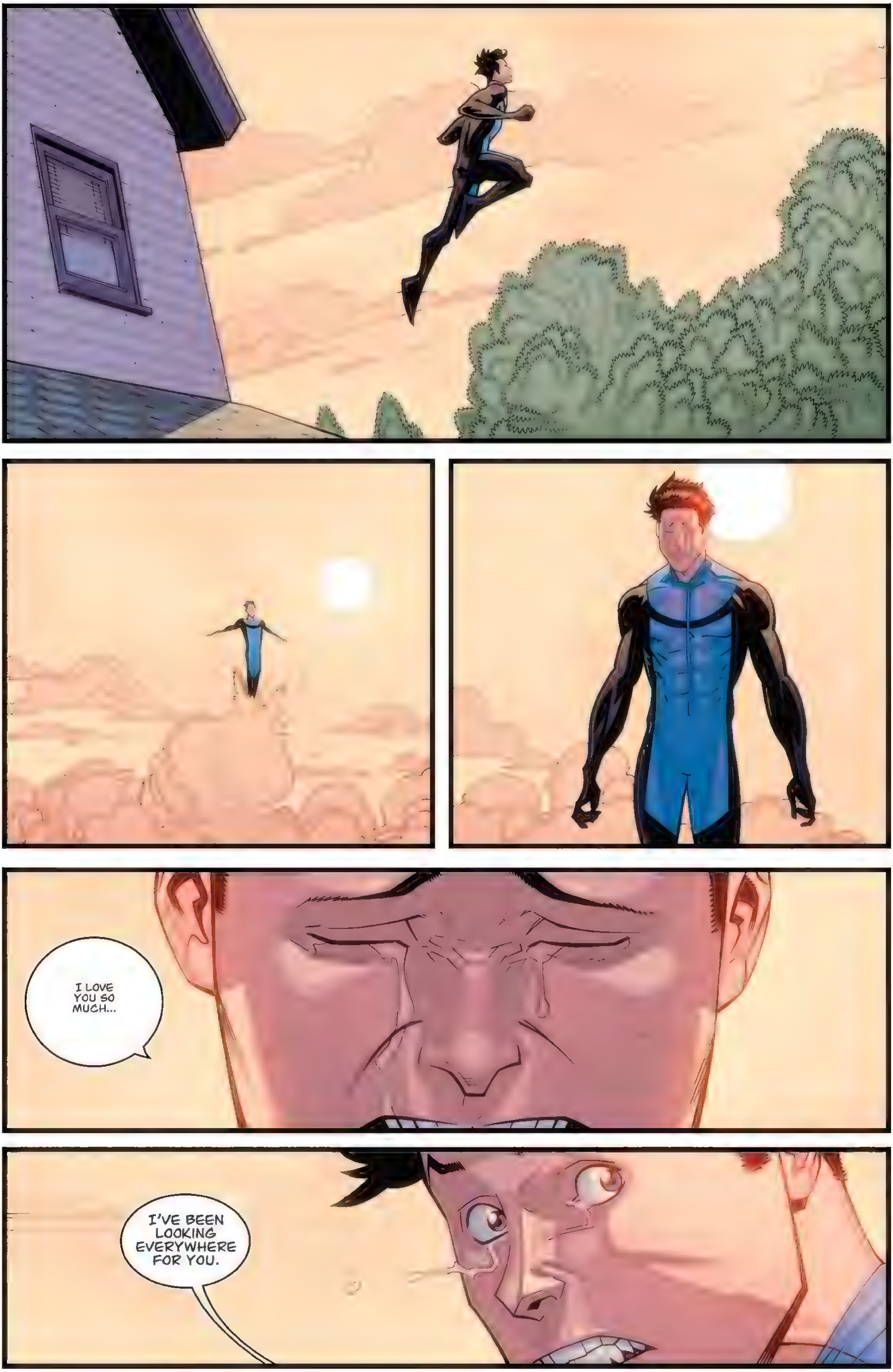

DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS RIGHT NOW?
...
EVE?
WHAT'S WRONG?
SIX MONTHS, MARK. YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR **SIX MONTHS.**
DON'T I... LOOK **DIFFERENT** TO YOU? I COULDN'T SLEEP... I COULDN'T **MAKE** MYSELF EAT. I LOST TOO MUCH WEIGHT, **TOO FAST.**
I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL FOR OVER A **MONTH.** I ALMOST...
I ALMOST **LOST THE BABY,** MARK.
I DON'T...
I COULDN'T HANDLE IT. ROBOT TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED, HOW YOU KILLED ANGSTROM LEVY BUT THE OTHER VILTRUMITES **OVERPOWERED** YOU... HE SAID HE SAW THEM KILL YOU.
I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT AT FIRST. I THOUGHT MAYBE HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW RESILIENT YOU WERE... WHAT YOU COULD SURVIVE. HE SAID HE **SAW** THEM CRUSH YOUR HEAD.
HAVE YOU BEEN HEALING ALL THIS TIME? IS THAT WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?


THAT'S NOT TRUE... *NONE* OF IT.
YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME--
NO-- *STOP.*
I DON'T CARE!
EVE, *PLEASE.*
I *REFUSED* TO BELIEVE YOU WERE DEAD AT FIRST. AS THE DAYS WENT ON... AS THEY BECAME WEEKS... I STARTED TO *ACCEPT* WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
THE THOUGHT OF LIVING WITHOUT YOU... RAISING THIS CHILD ON MY OWN... HOW THE LIFE I THOUGHT I HAD... HAD BEEN *STOLEN* FROM ME...
IT WAS TOO MUCH, I DIDN'T KNOW HOW I COULD GO ON... HOW I COULD RAISE THIS BABY ALONE.
BUT THEN I REALIZED... RAISING THIS CHILD WITHOUT YOU... *THAT'S THE ONLY SANE OPTION.*
EVE... YOU'RE NOT WEARING YOUR RING.
NO, MARK.
I'M *NOT.*

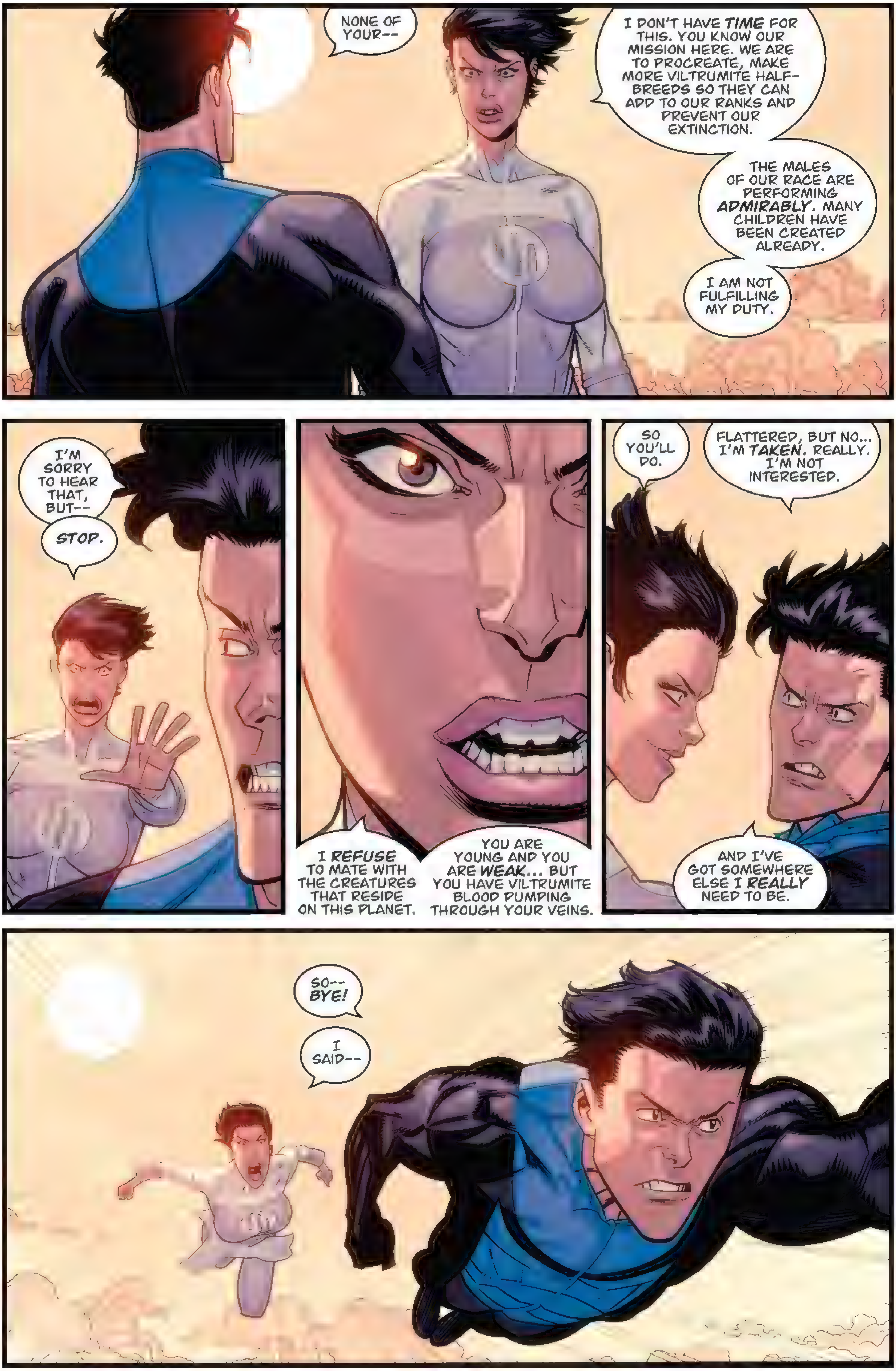

I THINK ABOUT WHAT I WENT THROUGH... AND I REALIZE... I CAN'T HAVE OUR CHILD LIVING THROUGH THAT.
HOW DO I TELL THEM DADDY ISN'T COMING HOME-- THAT I DON'T KNOW WHEN... *OR IF* YOU'RE EVER COMING BACK?
I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'M GOING TO LIVE THAT LIFE... I WOULDN'T WISH THIS ON *ANYONE.*
YOU'RE RIGHT... ABOUT *EVERYTHING.* YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT ANGSTROM, TOO... I *NEVER* SHOULD HAVE GONE AFTER HIM. AND I KNOW IT'S NOT ENOUGH, BUT I'M *SORRY.* YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT.
I WANT TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT, BUT I CAN'T RIGHT NOW. THERE'S TOO MUCH HAPPENING.
I NEED YOU TO COME WITH ME AND--
ARE YOU EVEN *LISTENING* TO ME?
I KNOW YOU'RE ANGRY, BUT...
I'M NOT ANGRY. I'M NOT EVEN RAISING MY VOICE. I'M JUST TELLING YOU HOW THINGS ARE NOW. WELCOME HOME, MARK. I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE, BUT...
I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
WE'RE THROUGH.

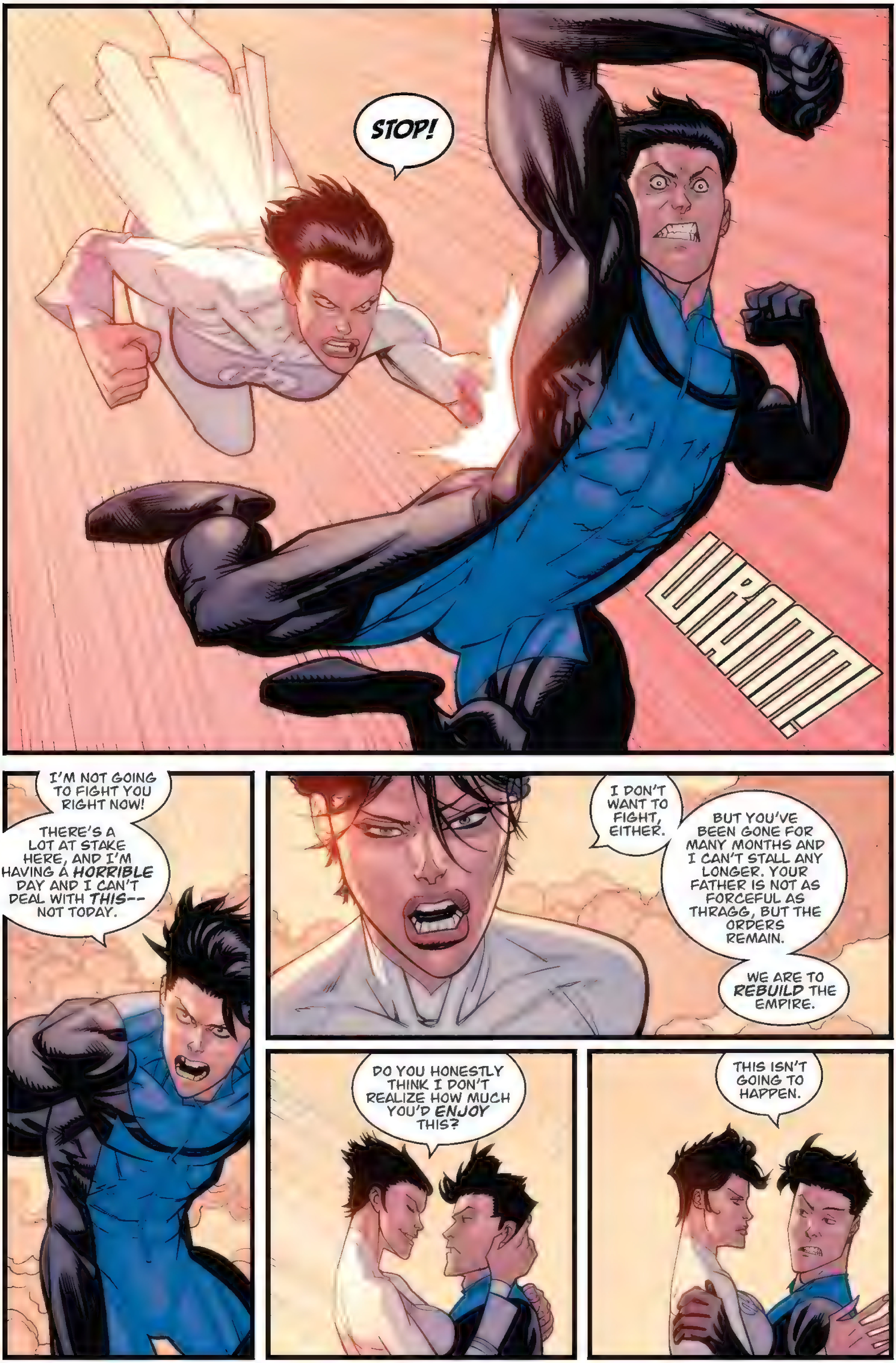
WHAT?!


I KNOW YOU'LL WANT TO BE A PART OF YOUR CHILD'S LIFE... BUT I JUST DON'T THINK THAT WOULD BE A GOOD THING... CONSIDERING HOW UNRELIABLE YOU ARE.
WE'LL OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS MORE.
I KNOW THIS IS YOUR HOUSE. I'M GOING TO MOVE. I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE WITH MY PARENTS WHILE I WAS FIGURING ALL THIS OUT. IF YOU COULD LET ME STAY HERE FOR A FEW WEEKS WHILE I GET THINGS IN ORDER, I WOULD APPRECIATE IT.
PLEASE DON'T DO THIS. NOT RIGHT NOW. THERE'S SO MUCH GOING ON THAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT. WE NEED TO LEAVE HERE... TOGETHER. YOU COULD BE IN DANGER.
SO MANY PEOPLE COULD BE IN DANGER.
I JUST... I CAN'T DO THIS RIGHT NOW.
YOU CAN'T--?! HOW STUPID OF ME... OF COURSE YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR ME TO BREAK UP WITH YOU!
PLEASE... JUST GO.
EVE, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...
JUST GO!
I CAN'T BE AROUND YOU!
GET OUT OF HERE!
...
I'LL GO, BUT YOU CAN'T STAY HERE. GO SOMEPLACE NEW, WHERE ROBOT WOULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO FIND YOU. HE CAN'T BE TRUSTED.
WHEN I GET A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN... I CAN FIX THIS. I CAN MAKE THINGS RIGHT BETWEEN US... AND I WILL.
I PROMISE.
I LOVE-- I LOVE YOU, EVE.

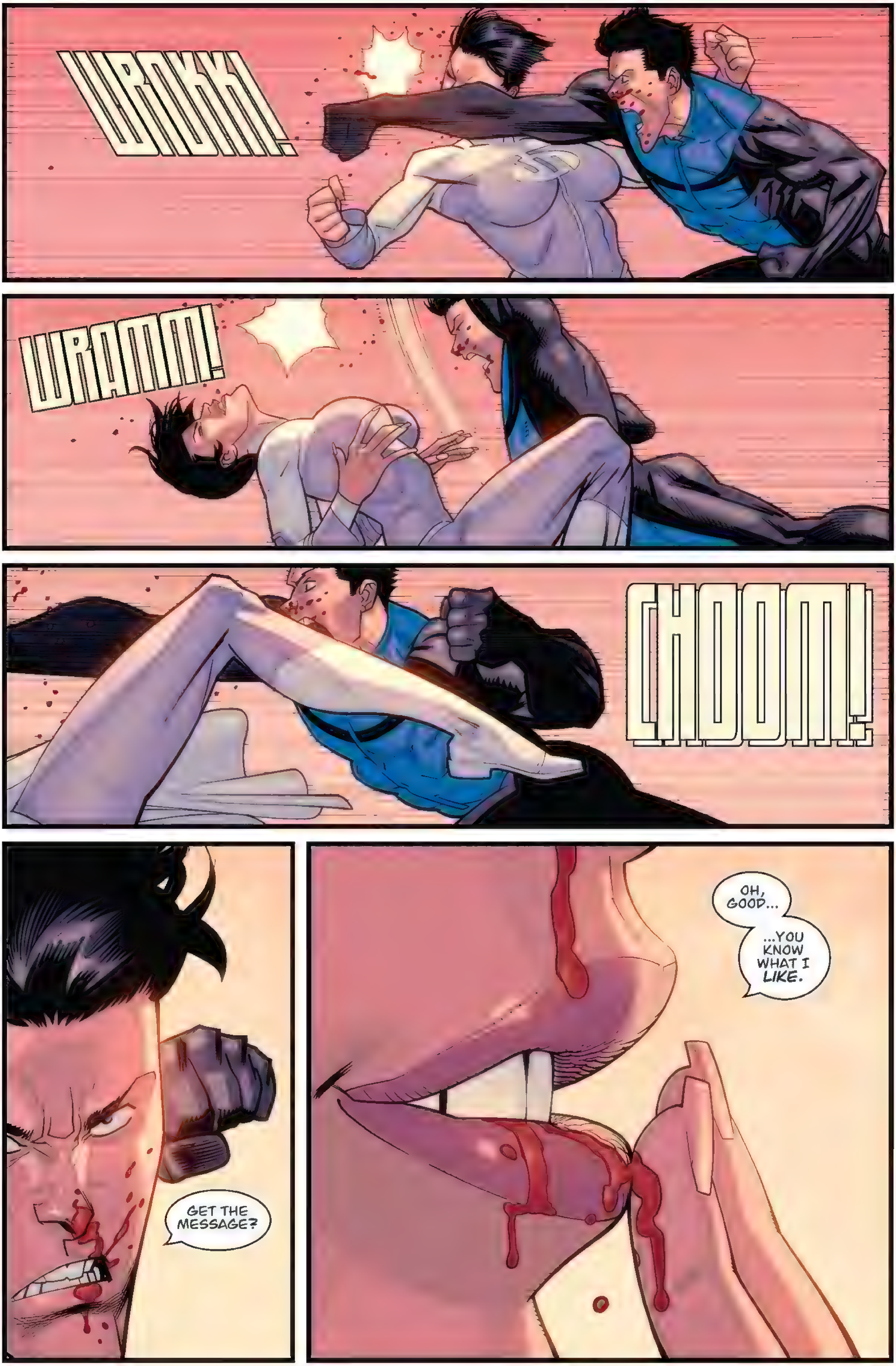

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH...
I'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR YOU.

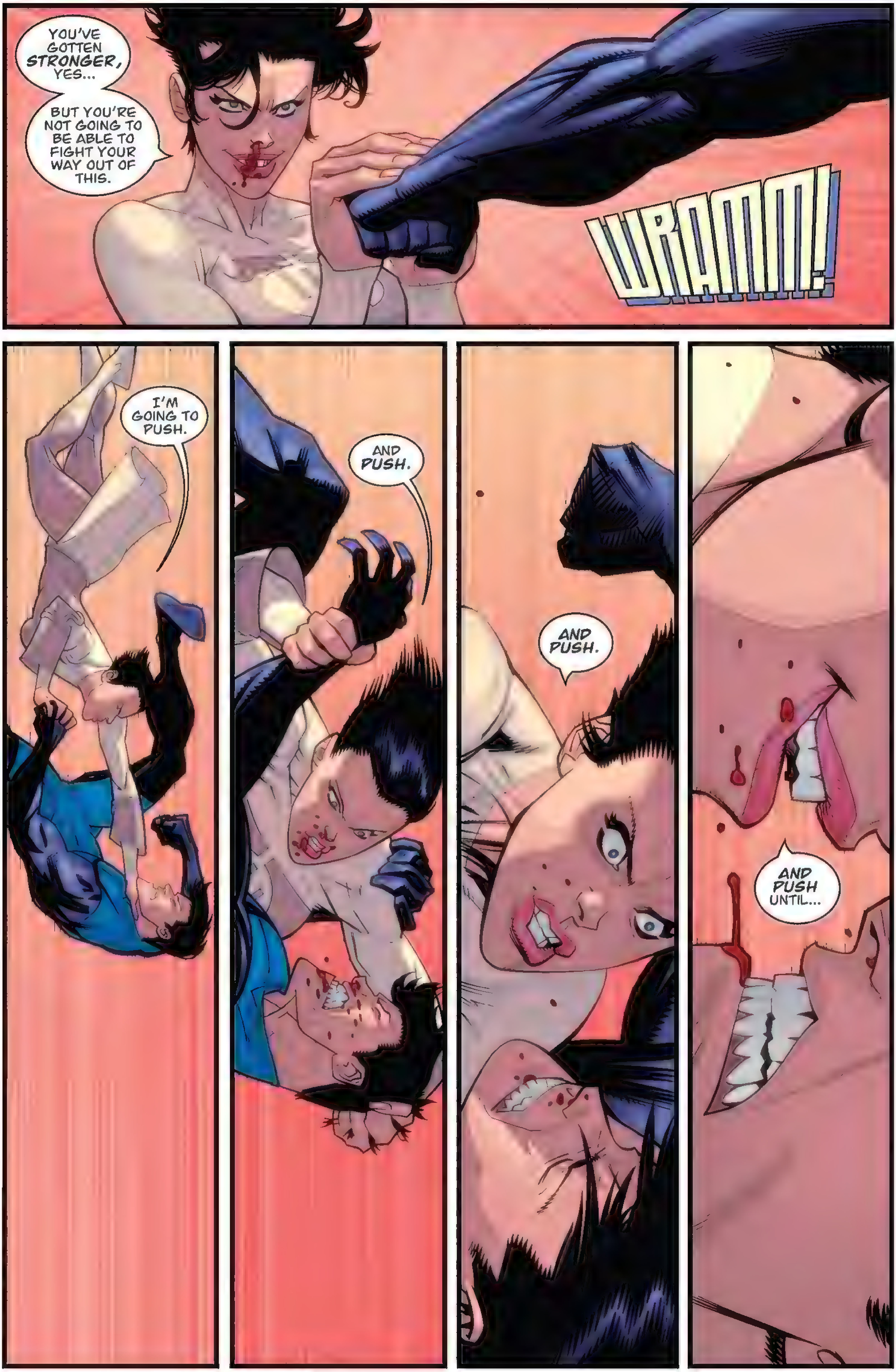
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

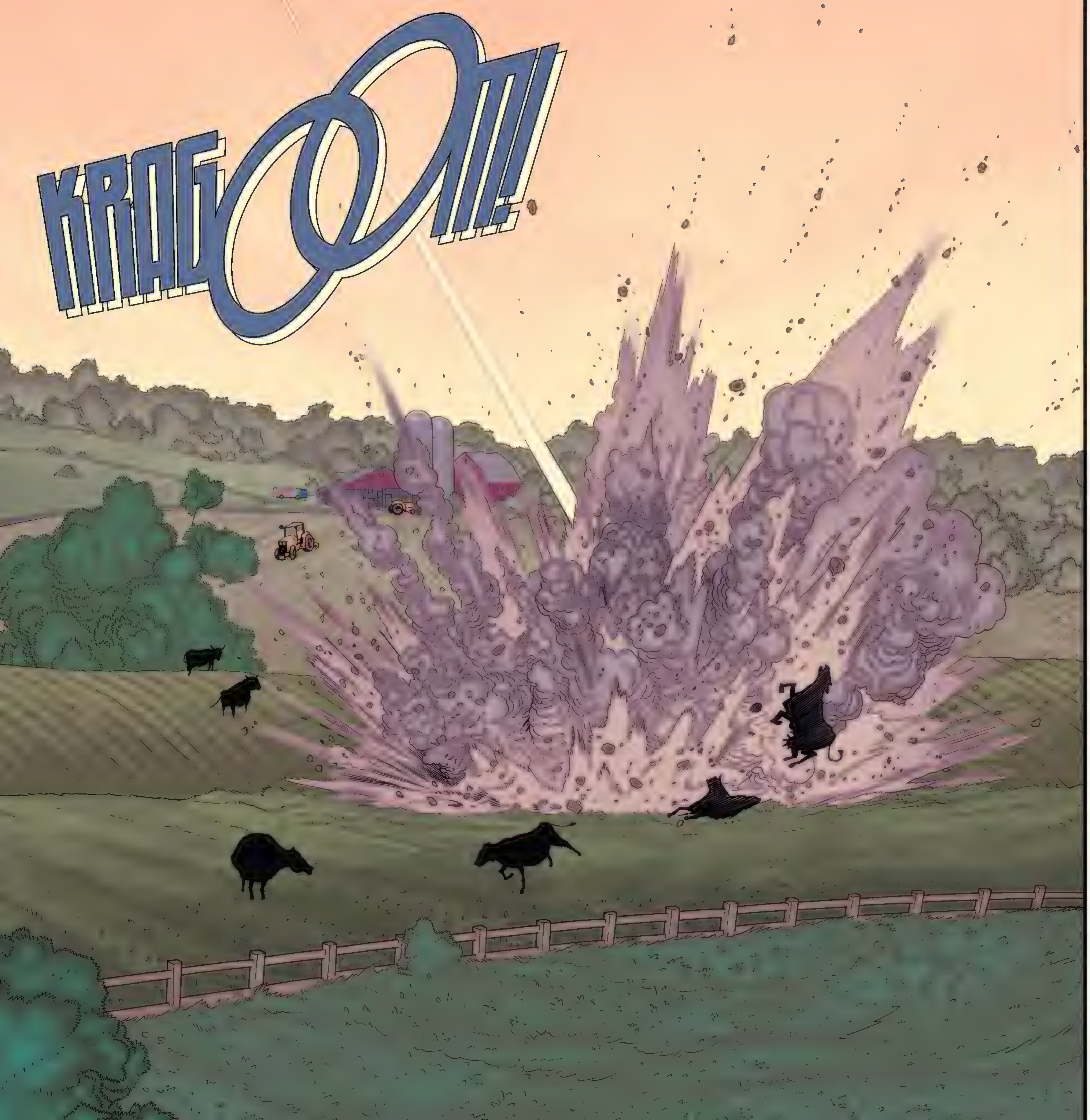

NONE OF YOUR--
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS. YOU KNOW OUR MISSION HERE. WE ARE TO PROCREATE, MAKE MORE VILTRUMITE HALF-BREEDS SO THEY CAN ADD TO OUR RANKS AND PREVENT OUR EXTINCTION.
THE MALES OF OUR RACE ARE PERFORMING ADMIRABLY. MANY CHILDREN HAVE BEEN CREATED ALREADY.
I AM NOT FULFILLING MY DUTY.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, BUT--
STOP.
I REFUSE TO MATE WITH THE CREATURES THAT RESIDE ON THIS PLANET.
YOU ARE YOUNG AND YOU ARE WEAK... BUT YOU HAVE VILTRUMITE BLOOD PUMPING THROUGH YOUR VEINS.
SO YOU'LL DO.
FLATTERED, BUT NO... I'M TAKEN. REALLY. I'M NOT INTERESTED.
AND I'VE GOT SOMEWHERE ELSE I REALLY NEED TO BE.
SO-- BYE!
I SAID--

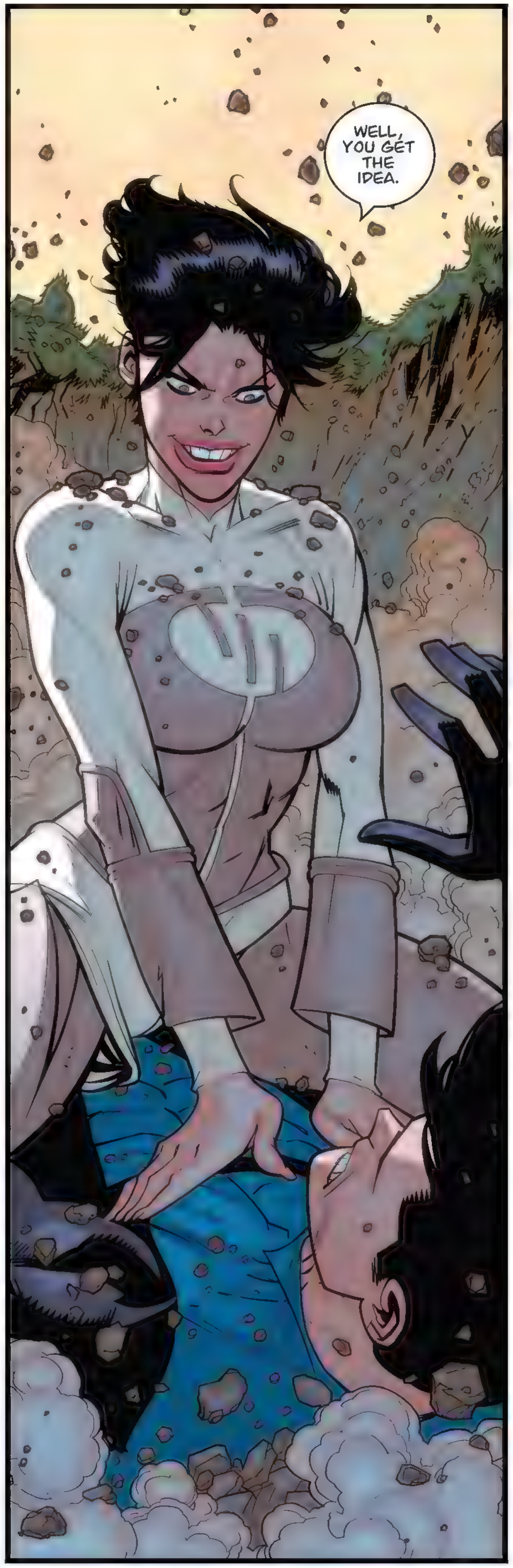

STOP!
WHAM!
I'M NOT GOING TO FIGHT YOU RIGHT NOW!
THERE'S A LOT AT STAKE HERE, AND I'M HAVING A **HORRIBLE** DAY AND I CAN'T DEAL WITH **THIS**-- NOT TODAY.
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT, EITHER.
BUT YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR MANY MONTHS AND I CAN'T STALL ANY LONGER. YOUR FATHER IS NOT AS FORCEFUL AS THRAGG, BUT THE ORDERS REMAIN.
WE ARE TO **REBUILD** THE EMPIRE.
DO YOU HONESTLY THINK I DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH YOU'D **ENJOY** THIS?
THIS ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN.

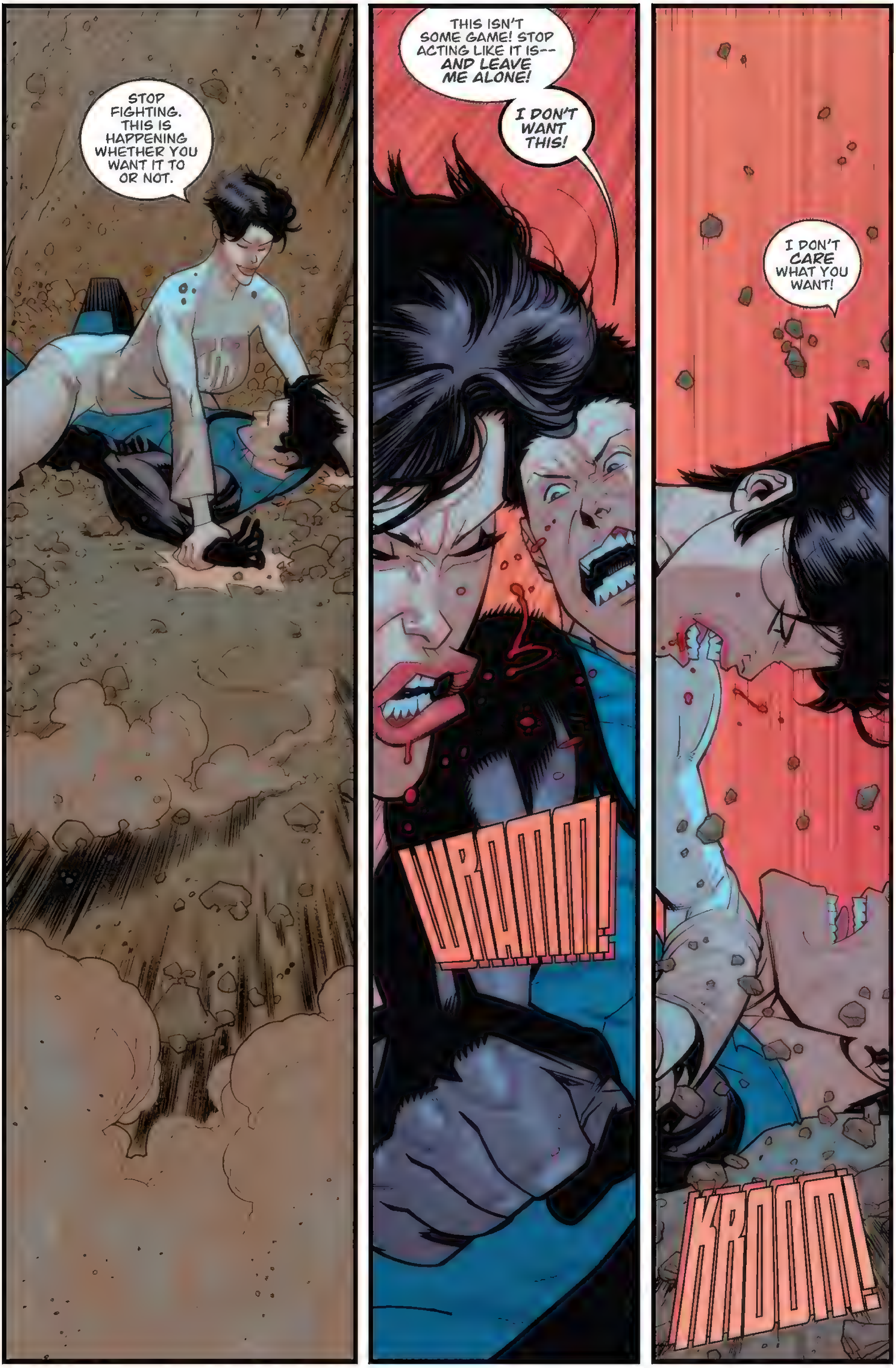
WRAMM!
I WAS TRYING TO DO THIS THE HUMAN WAY. I FIGURED YOU'D BE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THAT.
NOW I SEE I HAVE TO DO THIS THE VILTRUMITE WAY.
LUCKY ME.
WROKK!
JUST LEAVE.
DON'T MAKE ME FIGHT YOU.
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU DO SO MUCH MORE THAN FIGHT ME.

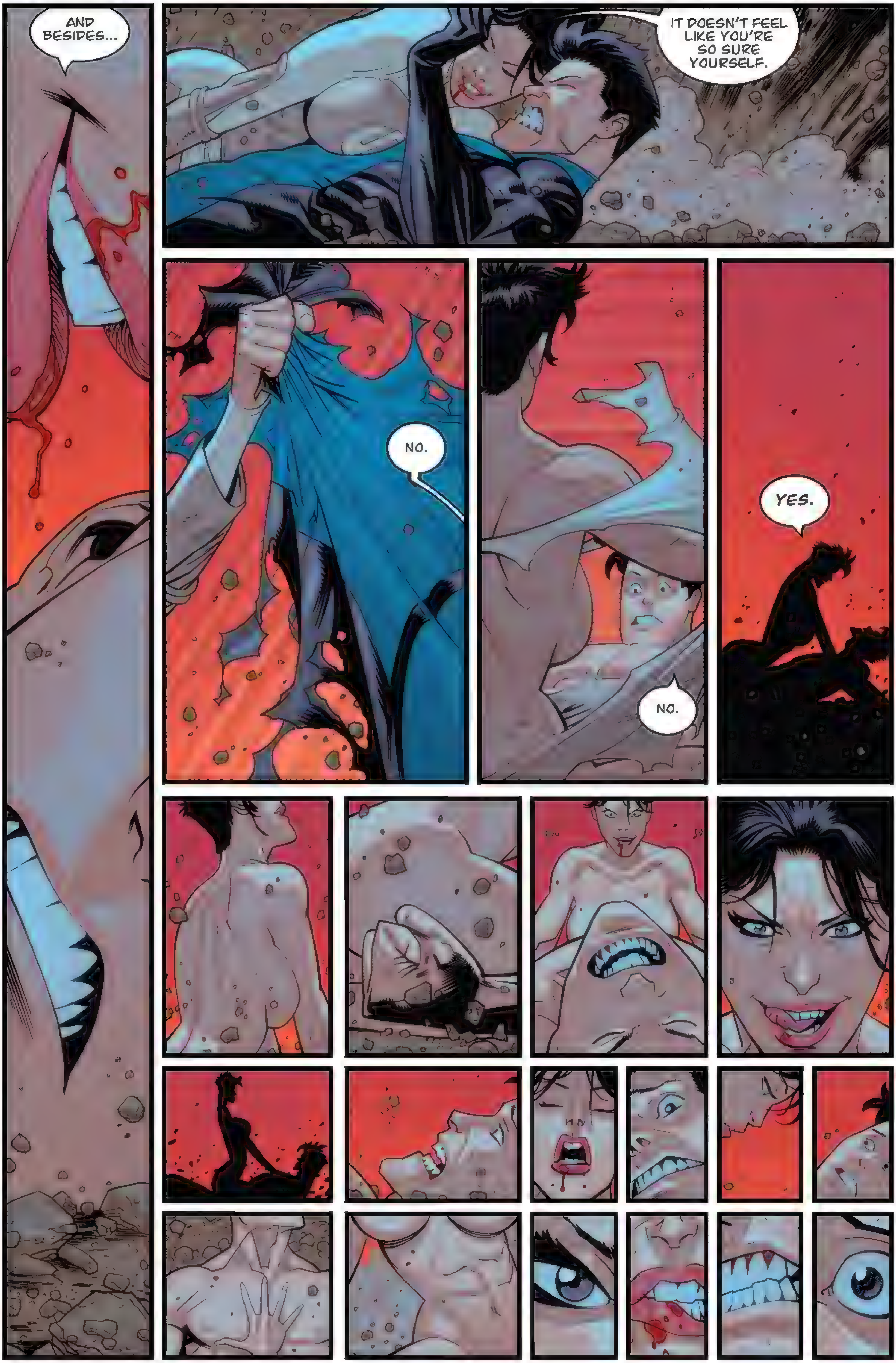

WRAKK!
WRAMM!
CHOOM!
GET THE MESSAGE?
OH, GOOD...
...YOU KNOW WHAT I **LIKE.**

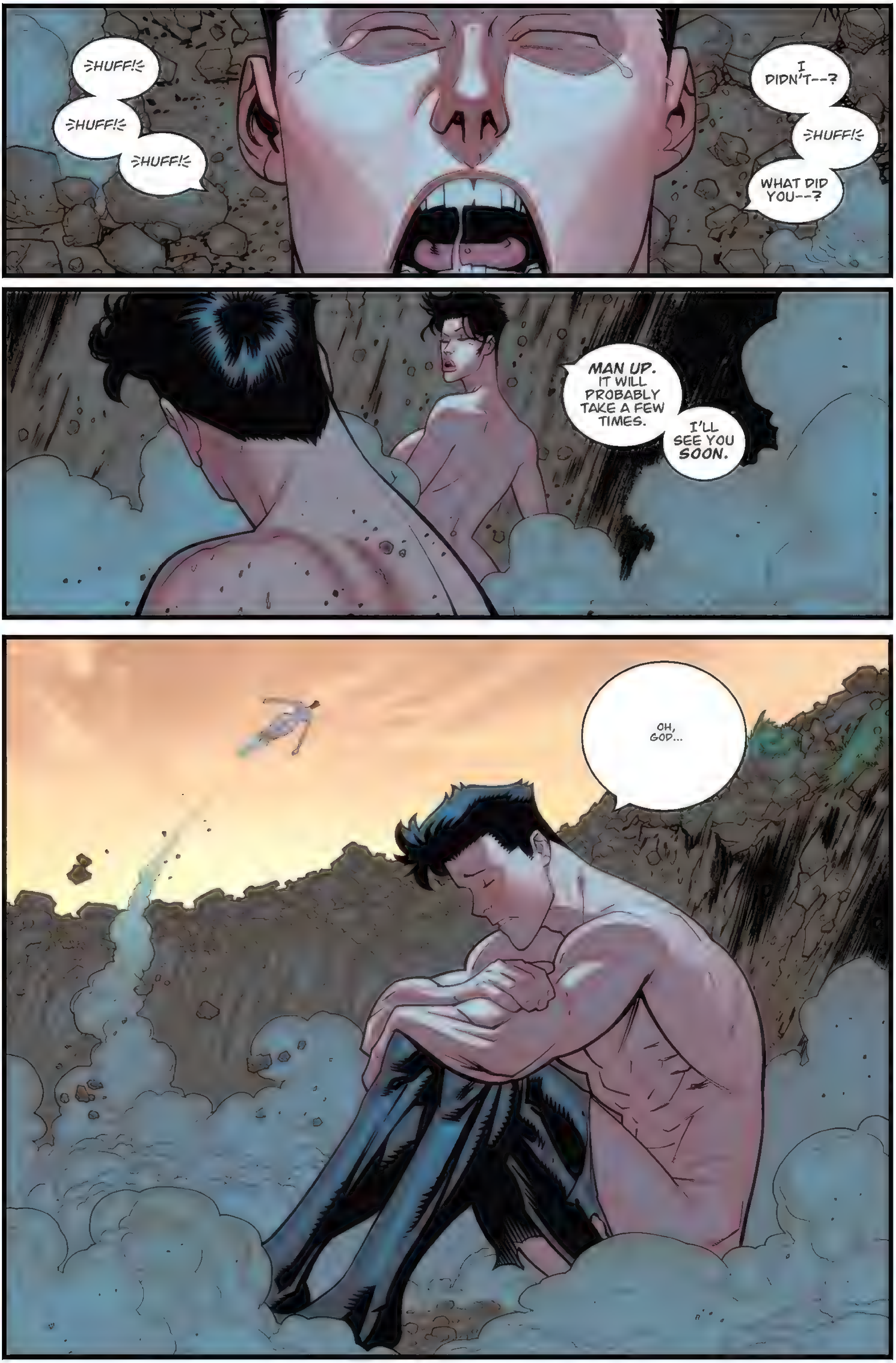

YOU'VE GOTTEN **STRONGER**, YES...
BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO FIGHT YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS.
WRAMM!
I'M GOING TO PUSH.
AND *PUSH*.
AND *PUSH*.
AND *PUSH* UNTIL...


KRAGOOM!!

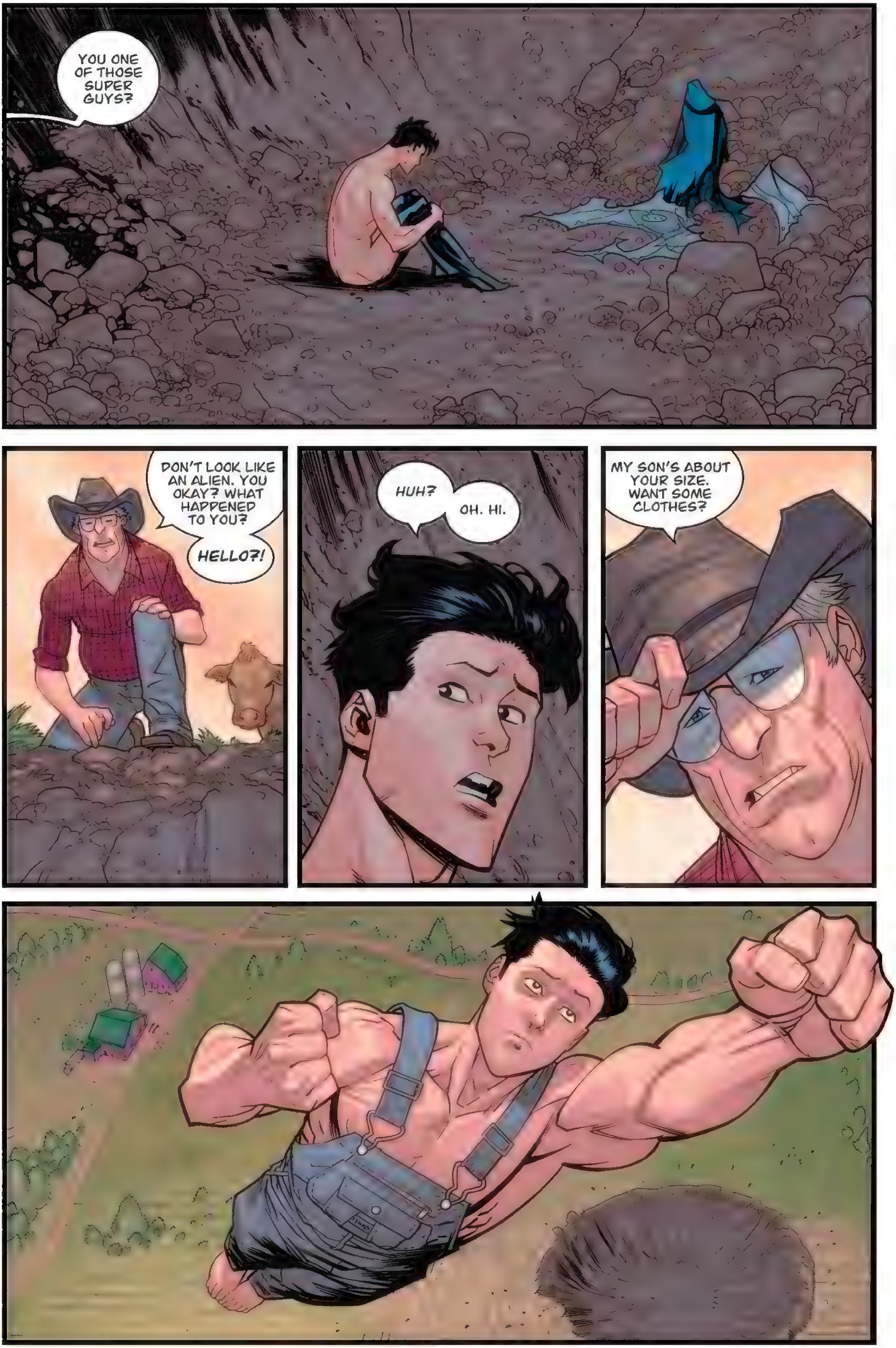

WELL, YOU GET THE IDEA.

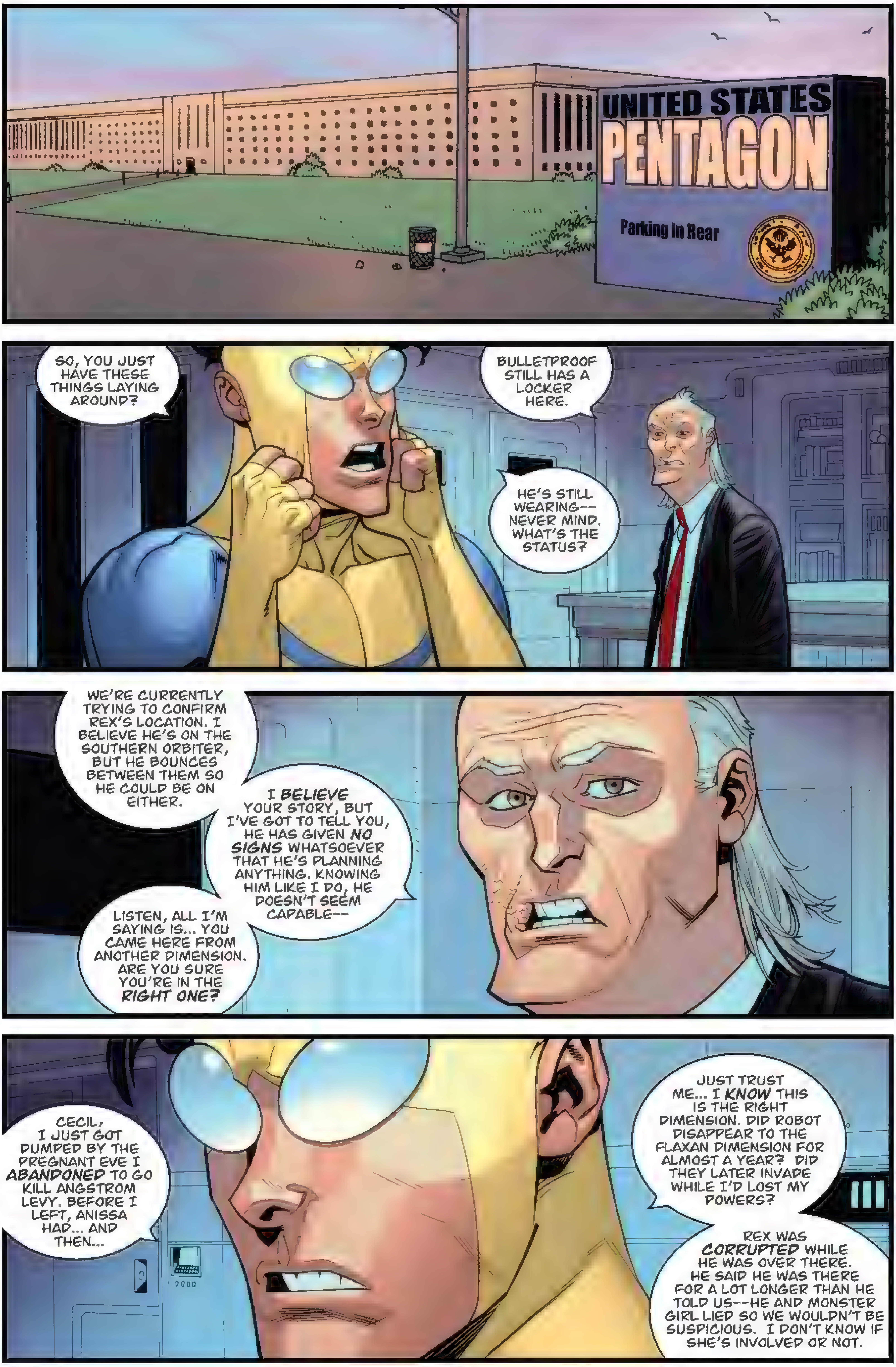

STOP FIGHTING. THIS IS HAPPENING WHETHER YOU WANT IT TO OR NOT.
THIS ISN'T SOME GAME! STOP ACTING LIKE IT IS-- **AND LEAVE ME ALONE!**
I DON'T WANT THIS!
WRAMM!
I DON'T **CARE** WHAT YOU WANT!
KROOM!

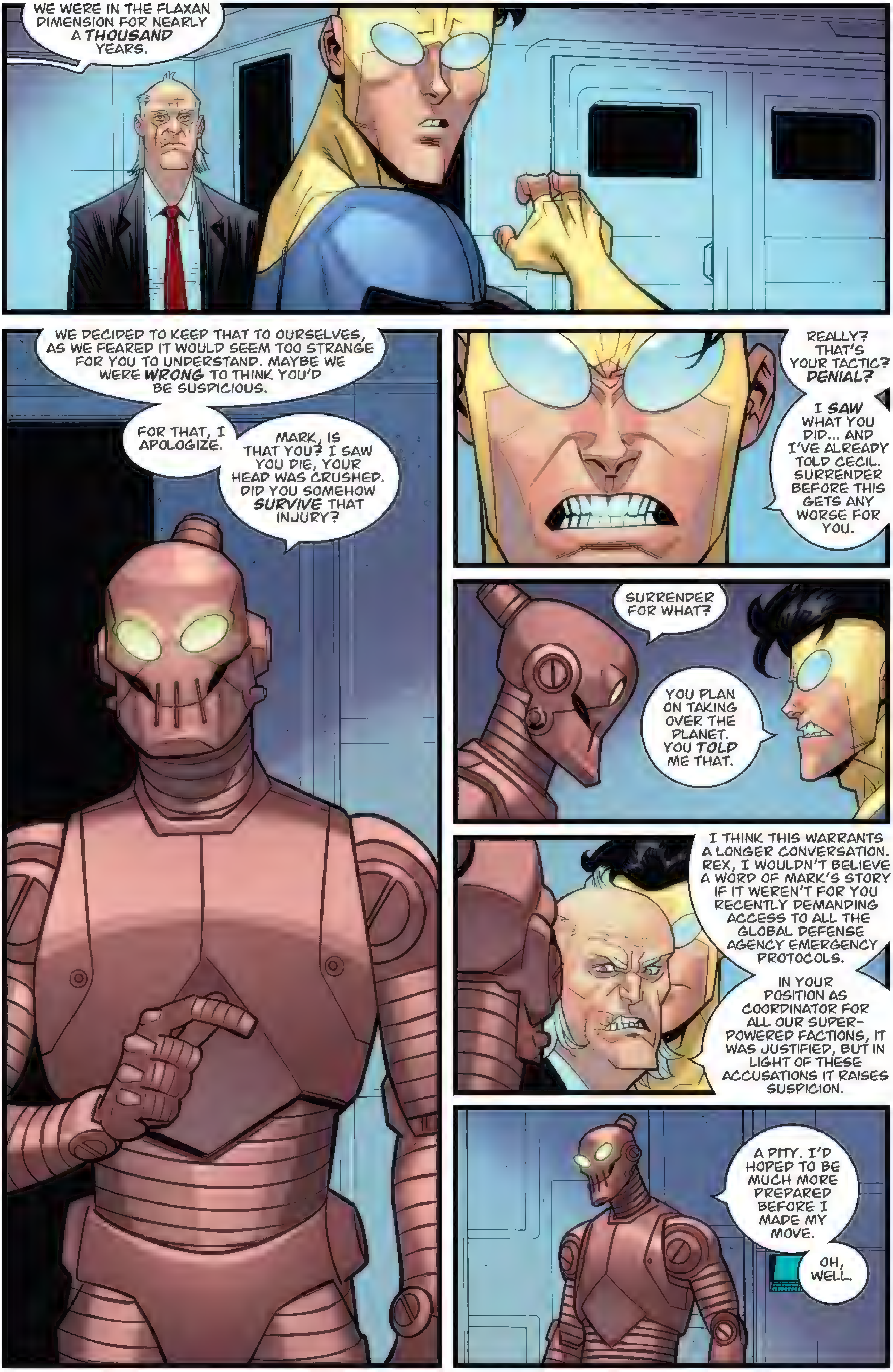

AND BESIDES...
IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE YOU'RE SO SURE YOURSELF.
NO.
NO.
YES.

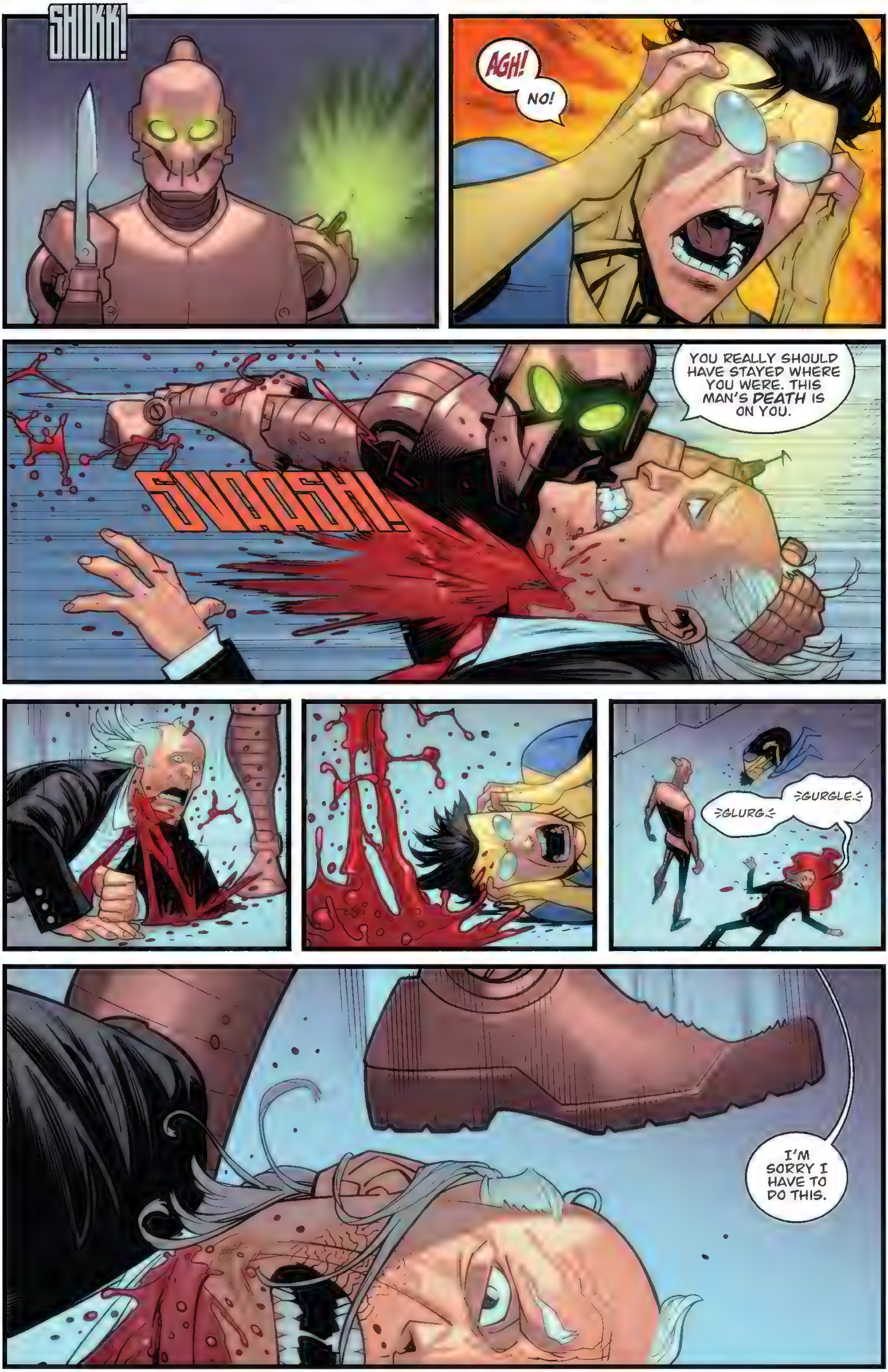

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
I DIDN'T--?
HUFF!
WHAT DID YOU--?
MAN UP. IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE A FEW TIMES.
I'LL SEE YOU SOON.
OH, GOD...

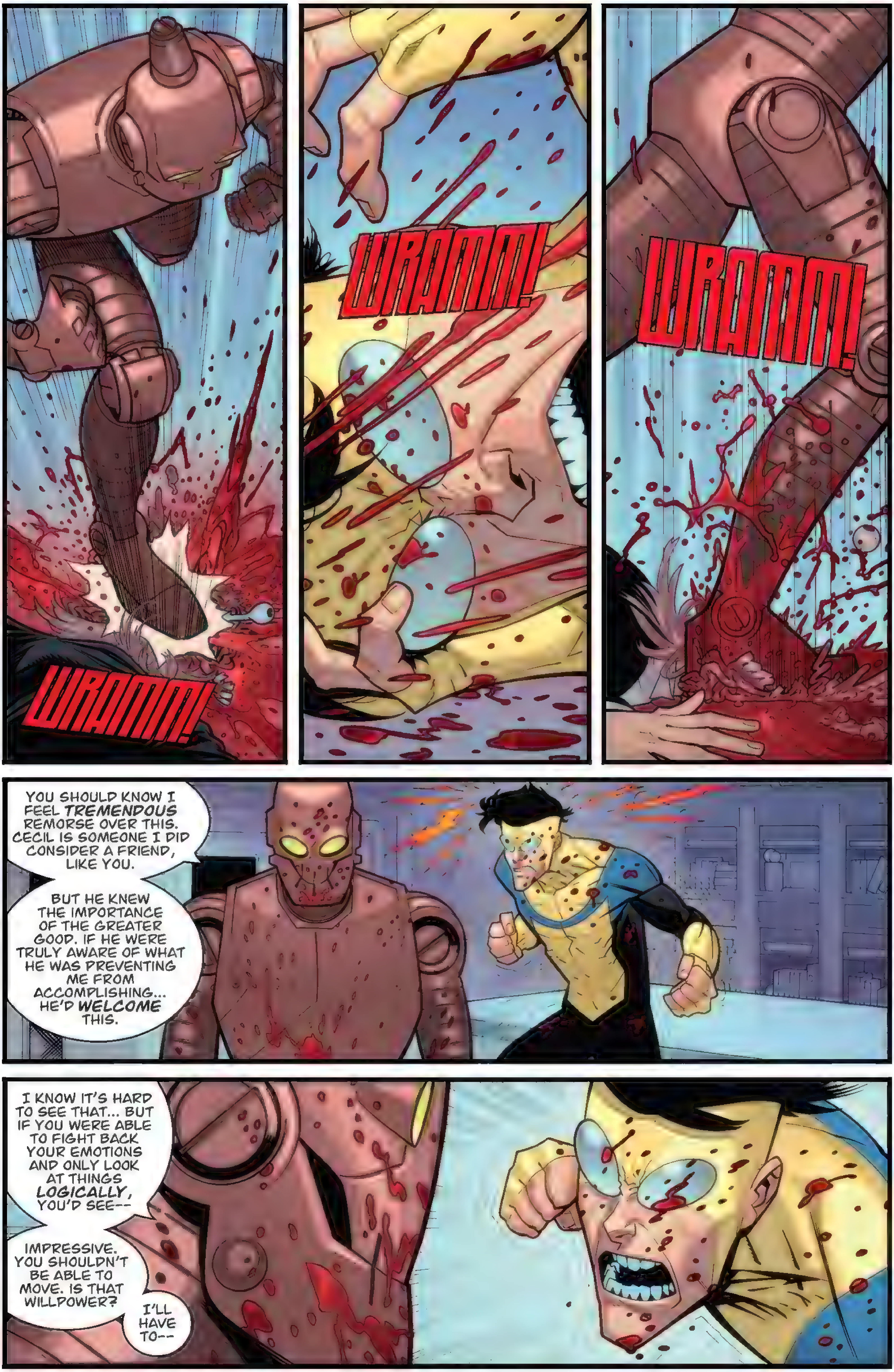
CHAPTER III

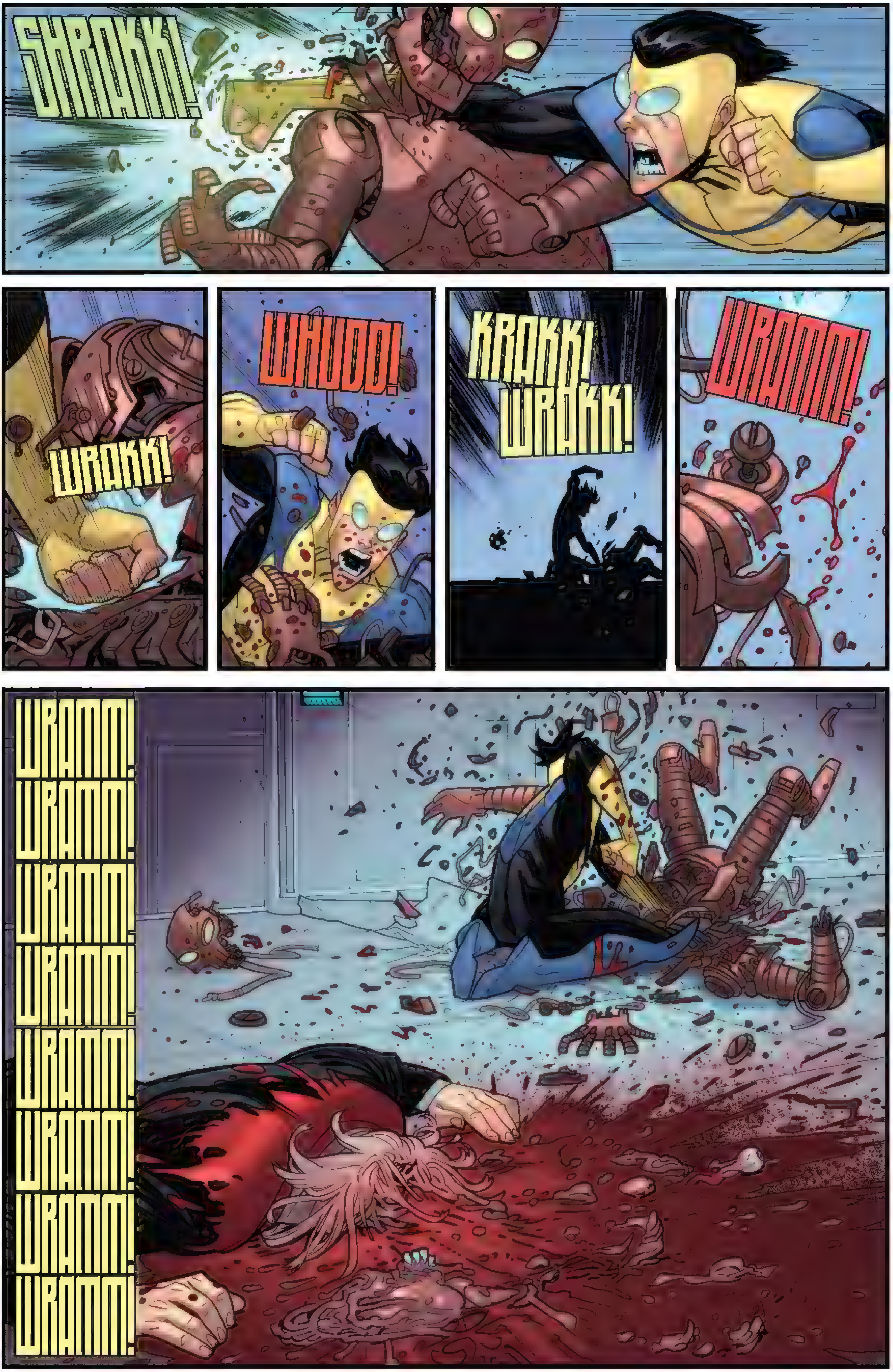

YOU ONE OF THOSE SUPER GUYS?
DON'T LOOK LIKE AN ALIEN. YOU OKAY? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
HELLO?!
HUH?
OH. HI.
MY SON'S ABOUT YOUR SIZE. WANT SOME CLOTHES?

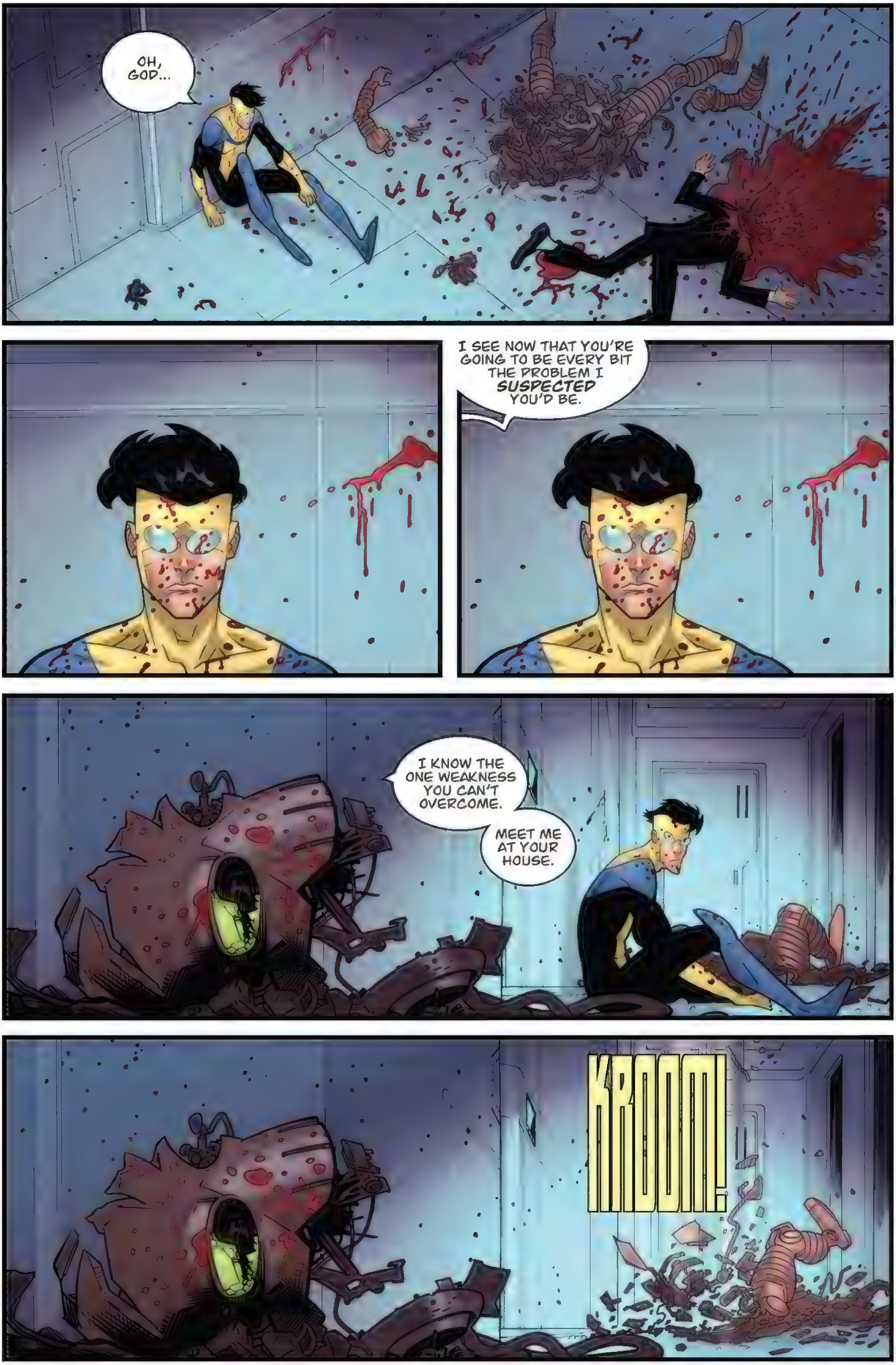

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
SO, YOU JUST HAVE THESE THINGS LAYING AROUND?
BULLETPROOF STILL HAS A LOCKER HERE.
HE'S STILL WEARING-- NEVER MIND. WHAT'S THE STATUS?
WE'RE CURRENTLY TRYING TO CONFIRM REX'S LOCATION. I BELIEVE HE'S ON THE SOUTHERN ORBITER, BUT HE BOUNCES BETWEEN THEM SO HE COULD BE ON EITHER.
I *BELIEVE* YOUR STORY, BUT I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU, HE HAS GIVEN *NO SIGNS* WHATSOEVER THAT HE'S PLANNING ANYTHING. KNOWING HIM LIKE I DO, HE DOESN'T SEEM CAPABLE--
LISTEN, ALL I'M SAYING IS... YOU CAME HERE FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION. ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE IN THE *RIGHT ONE?*
CECIL, I JUST GOT DUMPED BY THE PREGNANT EVE I *ABANDONED* TO GO KILL ANGSTROM LEVY. BEFORE I LEFT, ANISSA HAD... AND THEN...
JUST TRUST ME... I *KNOW* THIS IS THE RIGHT DIMENSION. DID ROBOT DISAPPEAR TO THE FLAXAN DIMENSION FOR ALMOST A YEAR? DID THEY LATER INVADE WHILE I'D LOST MY POWERS?
REX WAS *CORRUPTED* WHILE HE WAS OVER THERE. HE SAID HE WAS THERE FOR A LOT LONGER THAN HE TOLD US--HE AND MONSTER GIRL LIED SO WE WOULDN'T BE SUSPICIOUS. I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'S INVOLVED OR NOT.

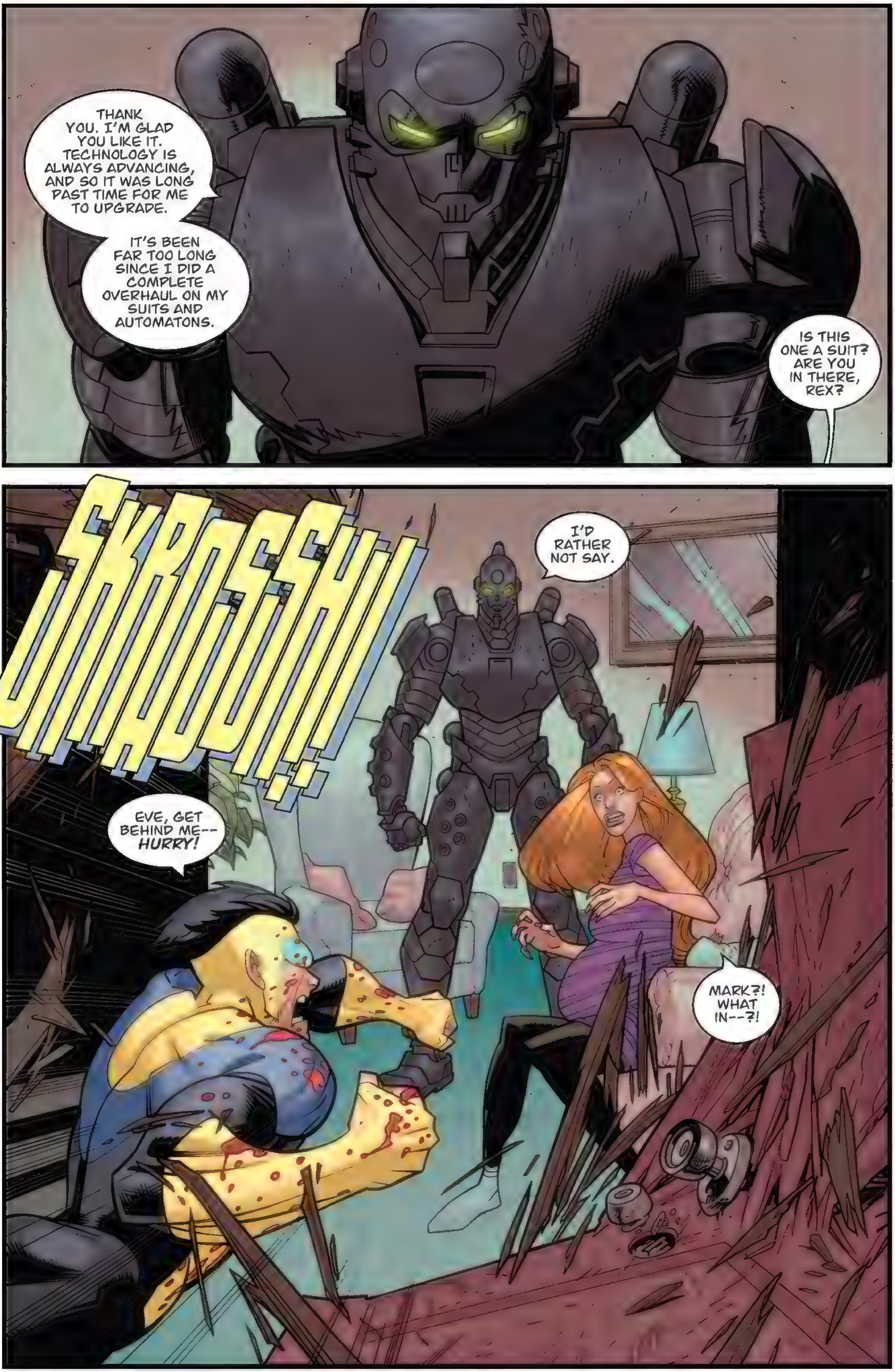

WE WERE IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION FOR NEARLY A *THOUSAND* YEARS.
WE DECIDED TO KEEP THAT TO OURSELVES, AS WE FEARED IT WOULD SEEM TOO STRANGE FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND. MAYBE WE WERE *WRONG* TO THINK YOU'D BE SUSPICIOUS.
FOR THAT, I APOLOGIZE.
MARK, IS THAT YOU? I SAW YOU DIE, YOUR HEAD WAS CRUSHED. DID YOU SOMEHOW *SURVIVE* THAT INJURY?
REALLY? THAT'S YOUR TACTIC? *DENIAL?*
I *SAW* WHAT YOU DID... AND I'VE ALREADY TOLD CECIL. SURRENDER BEFORE THIS GETS ANY WORSE FOR YOU.
SURRENDER FOR WHAT?
YOU PLAN ON TAKING OVER THE PLANET. YOU *TOLD* ME THAT.
I THINK THIS WARRANTS A LONGER CONVERSATION. REX, I WOULDN'T BELIEVE A WORD OF MARK'S STORY IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU RECENTLY DEMANDING ACCESS TO ALL THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS.
IN YOUR POSITION AS COORDINATOR FOR ALL OUR SUPER-POWERED FACTIONS, IT WAS JUSTIFIED, BUT IN LIGHT OF THESE ACCUSATIONS IT RAISES SUSPICION.
A PITY. I'D HOPED TO BE MUCH MORE PREPARED BEFORE I MADE MY MOVE.
OH, WELL.

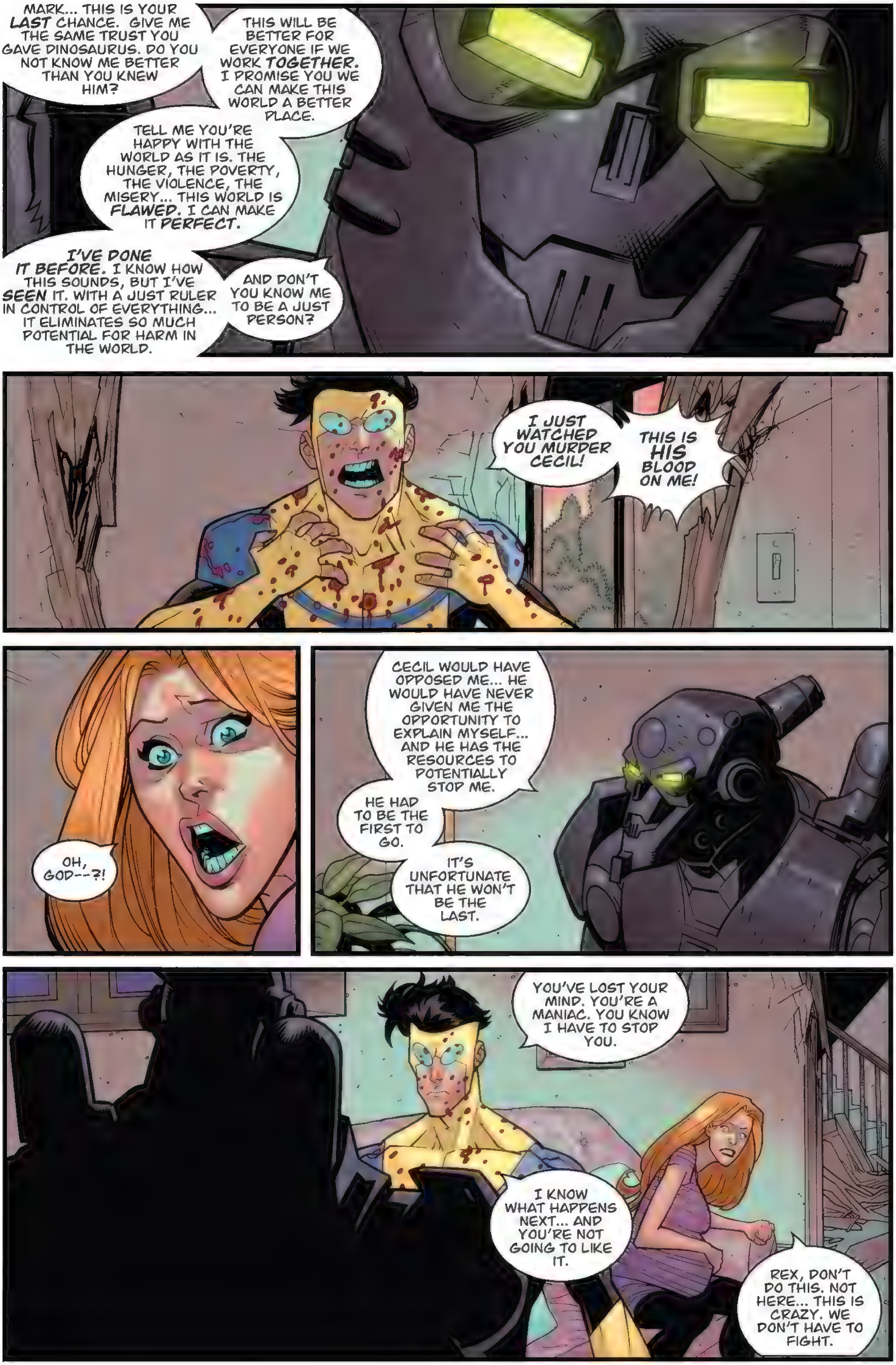

SHUKK!
AGH!
NO!
YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE STAYED WHERE YOU WERE. THIS MAN'S DEATH IS ON YOU.
SVOOSH!
GURGLE
GLURG
I'M SORRY I HAVE TO DO THIS.

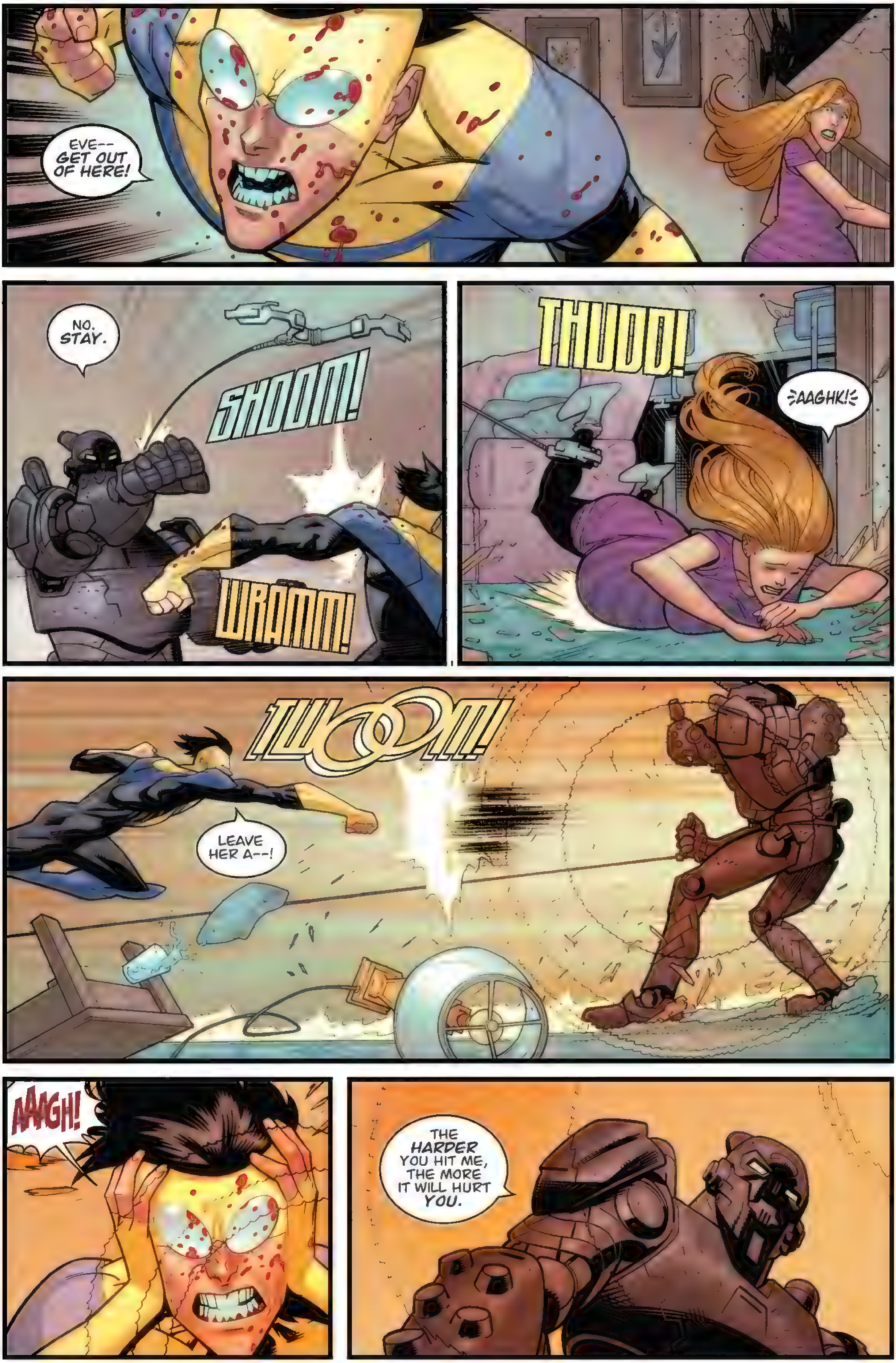

WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
YOU SHOULD KNOW I FEEL TREMENDOUS REMORSE OVER THIS. CECIL IS SOMEONE I DID CONSIDER A FRIEND, LIKE YOU.
BUT HE KNEW THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GREATER GOOD. IF HE WERE TRULY AWARE OF WHAT HE WAS PREVENTING ME FROM ACCOMPLISHING... HE'D WELCOME THIS.
I KNOW IT'S HARD TO SEE THAT... BUT IF YOU WERE ABLE TO FIGHT BACK YOUR EMOTIONS AND ONLY LOOK AT THINGS LOGICALLY, YOU'D SEE--
IMPRESSIVE. YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MOVE. IS THAT WILLPOWER?
I'LL HAVE TO--

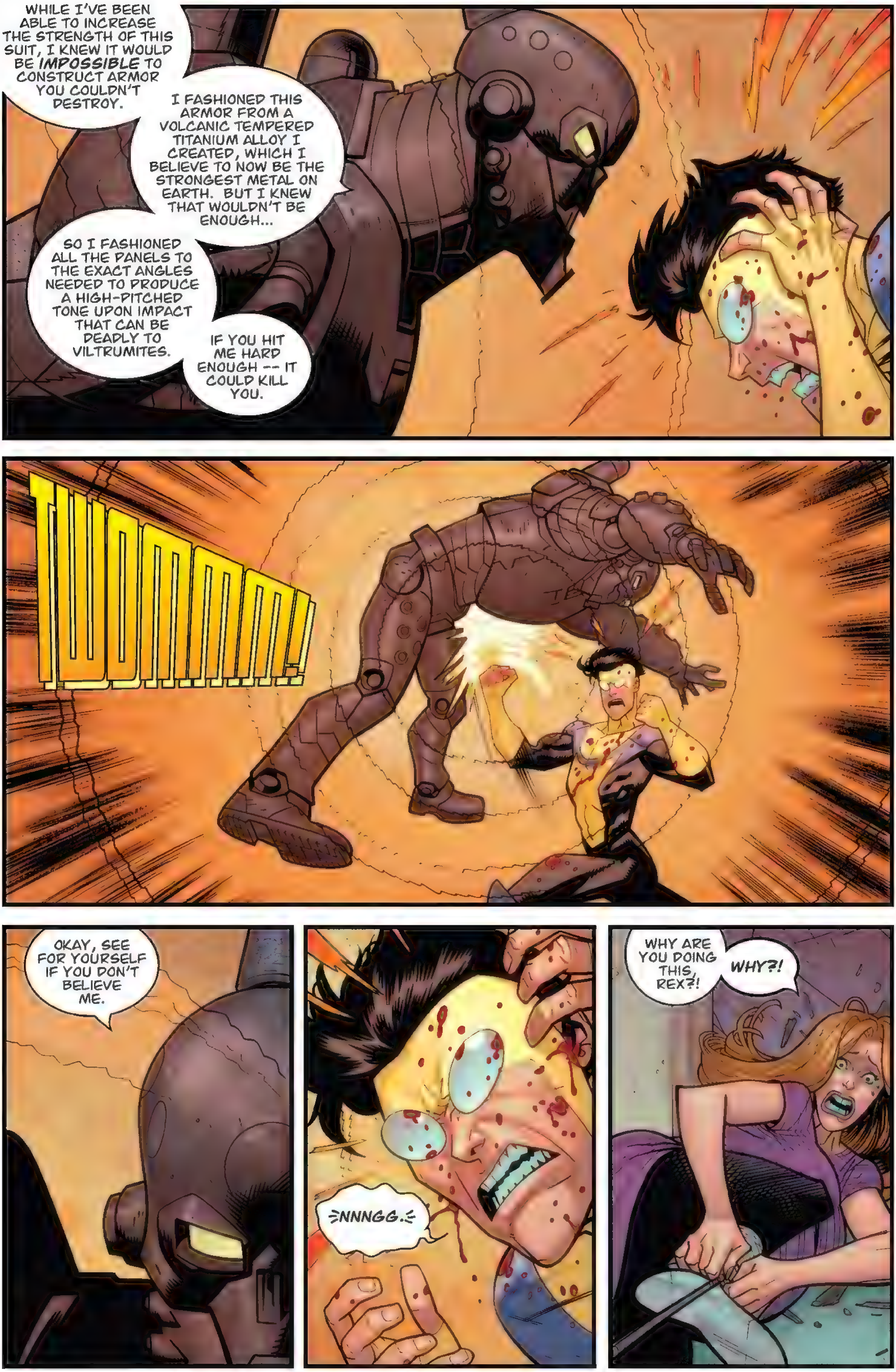

SHRAKK!
WRAKK!
WHUDD!
KRAKK!
WRAKK!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!
WRAMM!


OH, GOD...
I SEE NOW THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE EVERY BIT THE PROBLEM I SUSPECTED YOU'D BE.
I KNOW THE ONE WEAKNESS YOU CAN'T OVERCOME.
MEET ME AT YOUR HOUSE.
KROOM!

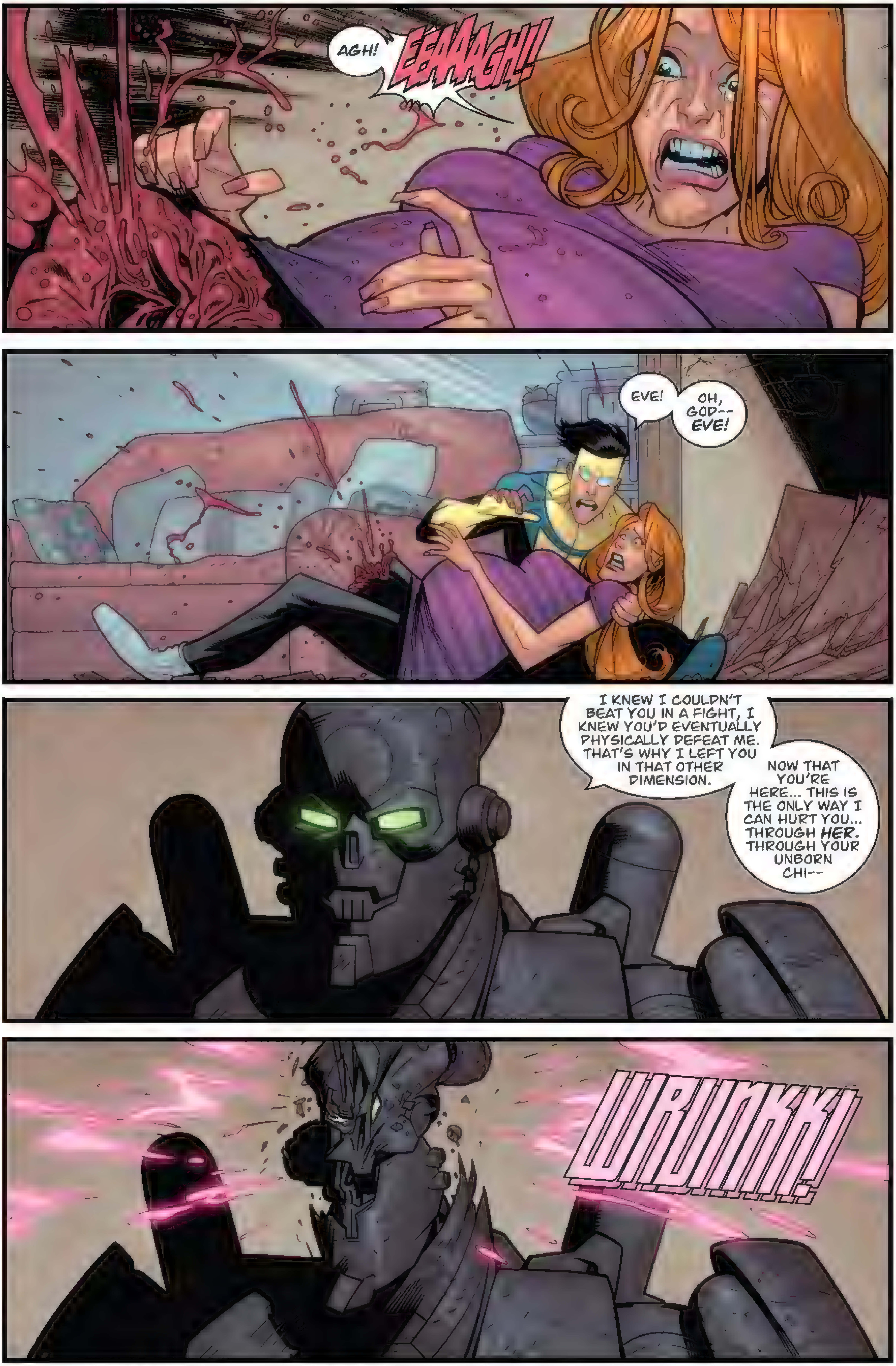

THANK YOU. I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT. TECHNOLOGY IS ALWAYS ADVANCING, AND SO IT WAS LONG PAST TIME FOR ME TO UPGRADE.
IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE I DID A COMPLETE OVERHAUL ON MY SUITS AND AUTOMATONS.
IS THIS ONE A SUIT? ARE YOU IN THERE, REX?
SKROSSH!!
I'D RATHER NOT SAY.
EVE, GET BEHIND ME-- *HURRY!*
MARK?! WHAT IN--?!


MARK... THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE. GIVE ME THE SAME TRUST YOU GAVE DINOSAURUS. DO YOU NOT KNOW ME BETTER THAN YOU KNEW HIM?
THIS WILL BE BETTER FOR EVERYONE IF WE WORK TOGETHER. I PROMISE YOU WE CAN MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE.
TELL ME YOU'RE HAPPY WITH THE WORLD AS IT IS. THE HUNGER, THE POVERTY, THE VIOLENCE, THE MISERY... THIS WORLD IS FLAWED. I CAN MAKE IT PERFECT.
I'VE DONE IT BEFORE. I KNOW HOW THIS SOUNDS, BUT I'VE SEEN IT. WITH A JUST RULER IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING... IT ELIMINATES SO MUCH POTENTIAL FOR HARM IN THE WORLD.
AND DON'T YOU KNOW ME TO BE A JUST PERSON?
I JUST WATCHED YOU MURDER CECIL!
THIS IS HIS BLOOD ON ME!
OH, GOD--?!
CECIL WOULD HAVE OPPOSED ME... HE WOULD HAVE NEVER GIVEN ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN MYSELF... AND HE HAS THE RESOURCES TO POTENTIALLY STOP ME.
HE HAD TO BE THE FIRST TO GO.
IT'S UNFORTUNATE THAT HE WON'T BE THE LAST.
YOU'VE LOST YOUR MIND. YOU'RE A MANIAC. YOU KNOW I HAVE TO STOP YOU.
I KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT... AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.
REX, DON'T DO THIS. NOT HERE... THIS IS CRAZY. WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT.

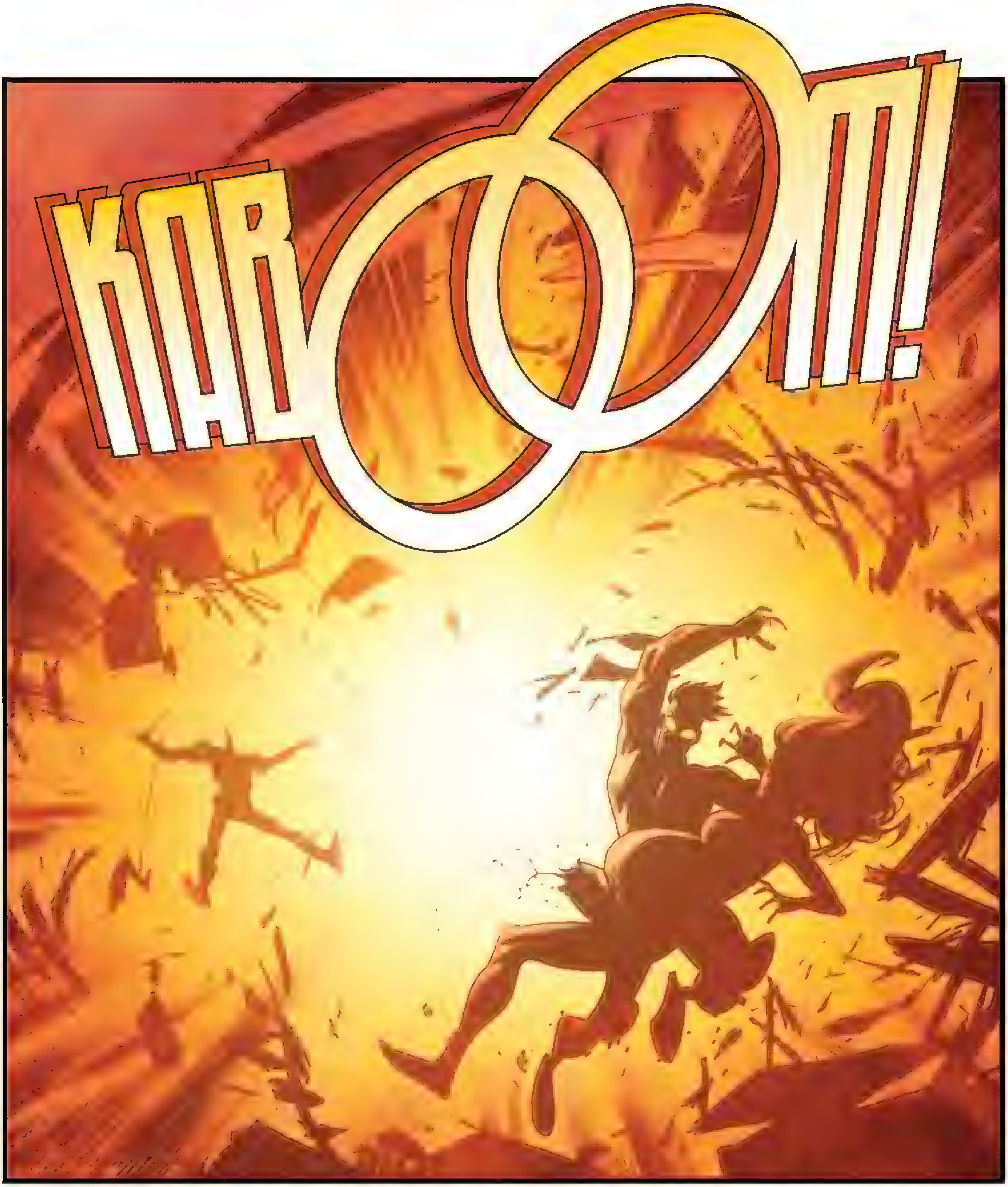

EVE-- GET OUT OF HERE!
NO. STAY.
SHOOM!
WRAMM!
THUDD!
AAGHK!
TWOOM!
LEAVE HER A--!
AAGH!
THE HARDER YOU HIT ME, THE MORE IT WILL HURT YOU.

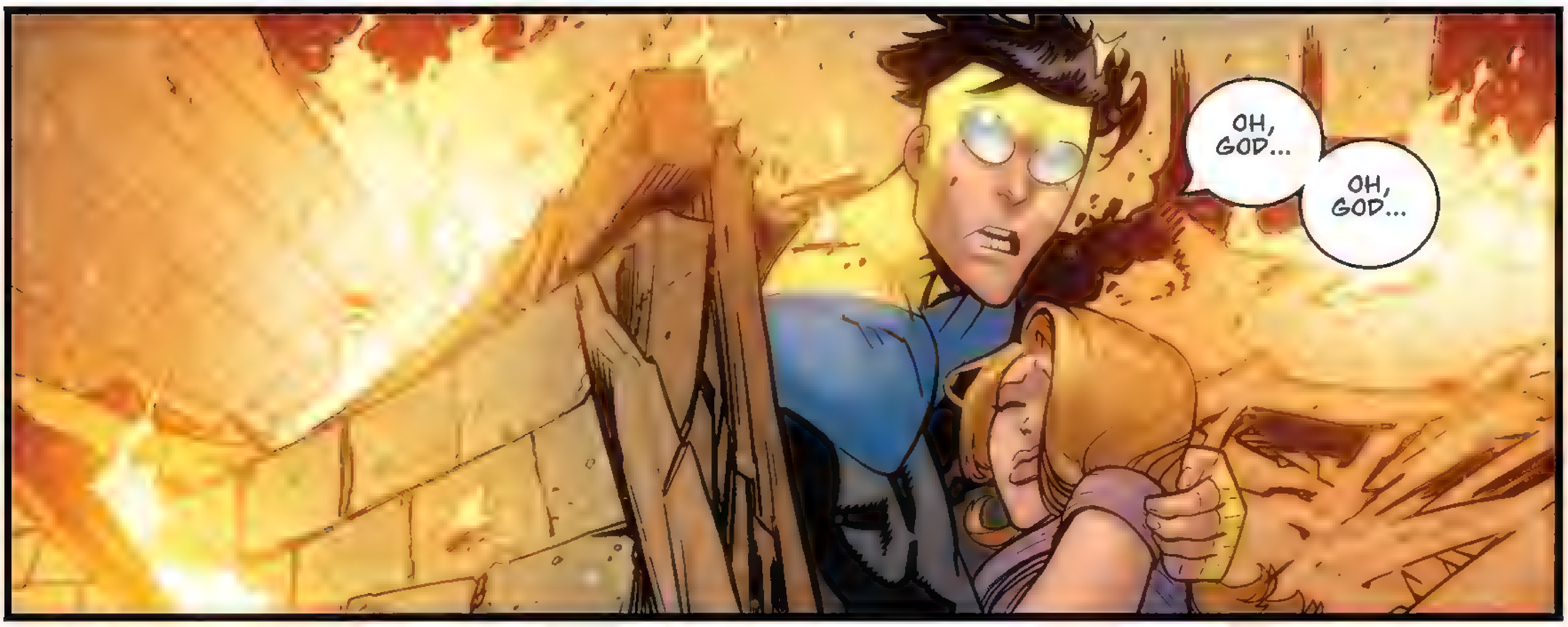

WHILE I'VE BEEN ABLE TO INCREASE THE STRENGTH OF THIS SUIT, I KNEW IT WOULD BE *IMPOSSIBLE* TO CONSTRUCT ARMOR YOU COULDN'T DESTROY.
I FASHIONED THIS ARMOR FROM A VOLCANIC TEMPERED TITANIUM ALLOY I CREATED, WHICH I BELIEVE TO NOW BE THE STRONGEST METAL ON EARTH. BUT I KNEW THAT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH...
SO I FASHIONED ALL THE PANELS TO THE EXACT ANGLES NEEDED TO PRODUCE A HIGH-PITCHED TONE UPON IMPACT THAT CAN BE DEADLY TO VILTRUMITES.
IF YOU HIT ME HARD ENOUGH -- IT COULD KILL YOU.
TWOMMM!!
OKAY, SEE FOR YOURSELF IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
NNNGG.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS, REX?!
WHY?!

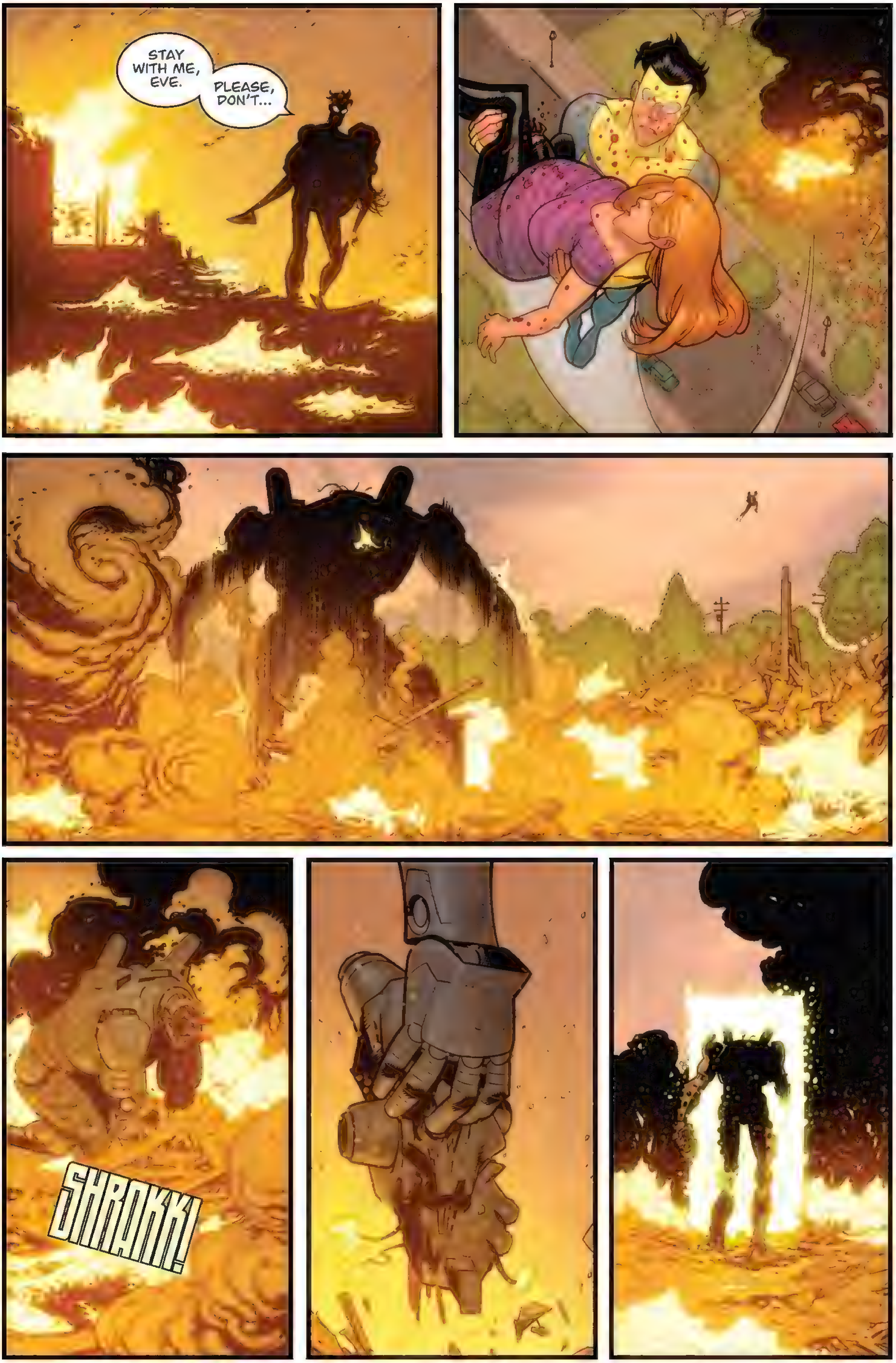
SHUT UP.
SPLAGKK!

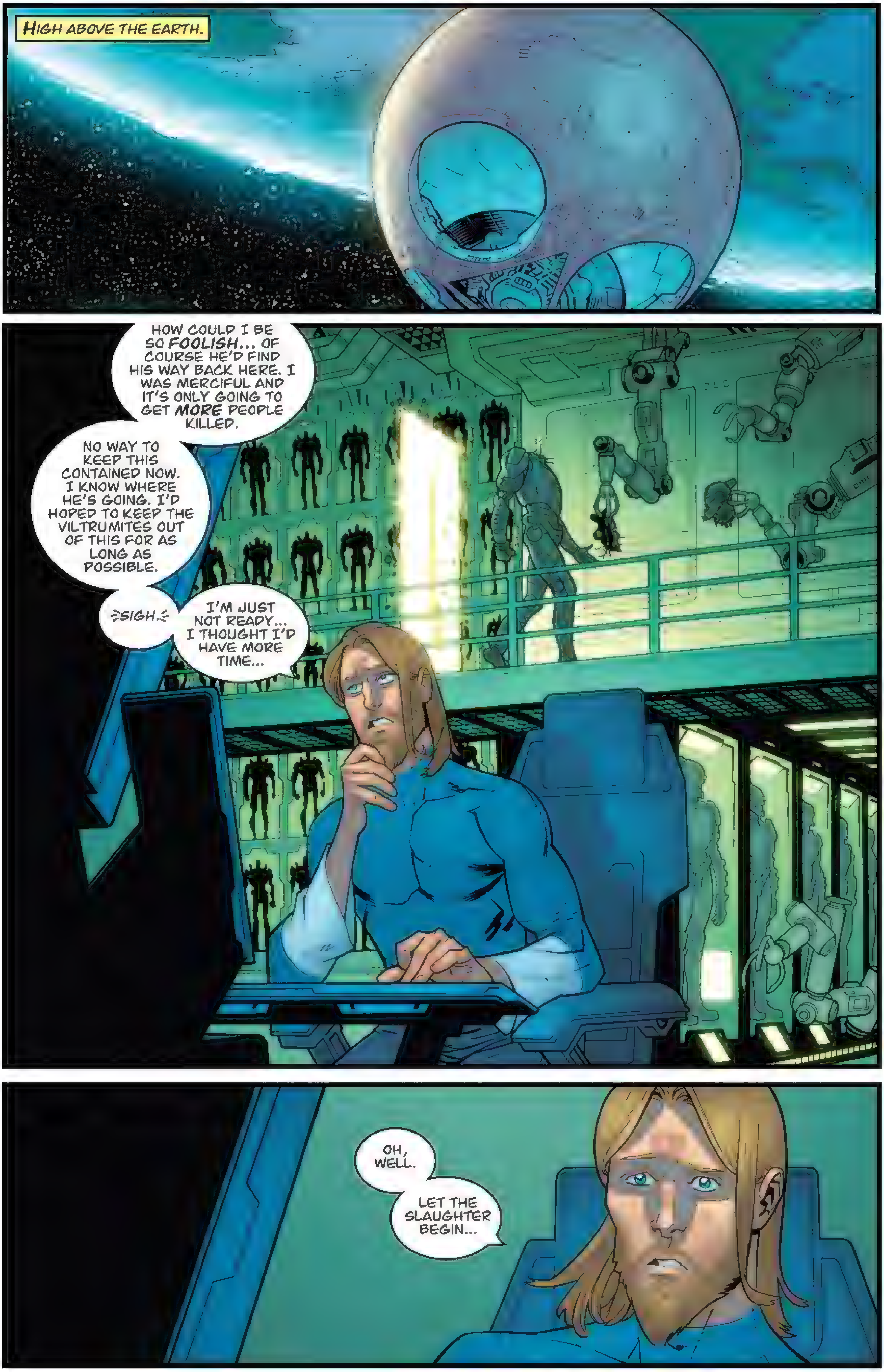

AGH!
EEAAAGH!!
EVE!
OH, GOD-- EVE!
I KNEW I COULDN'T BEAT YOU IN A FIGHT, I KNEW YOU'D EVENTUALLY PHYSICALLY DEFEAT ME. THAT'S WHY I LEFT YOU IN THAT OTHER DIMENSION.
NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE... THIS IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN HURT YOU... THROUGH HER. THROUGH YOUR UNBORN CHI--
WRUNKK!

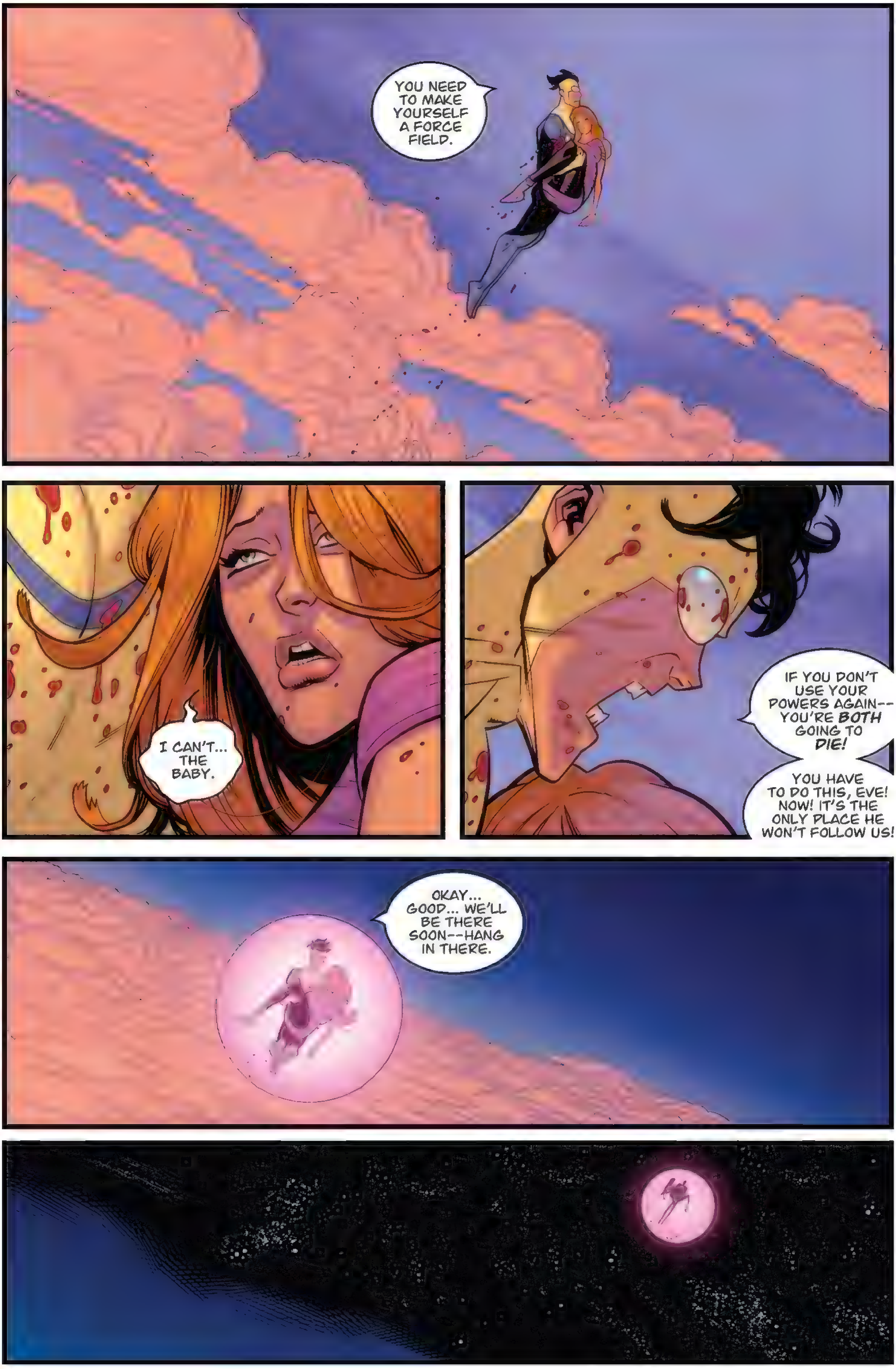
WHUDD!
EVE... YOUR POWERS... THE BABY!
I COULDN'T-- I HAD TO.
I'VE GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE.
HE'S--
SHOOM!

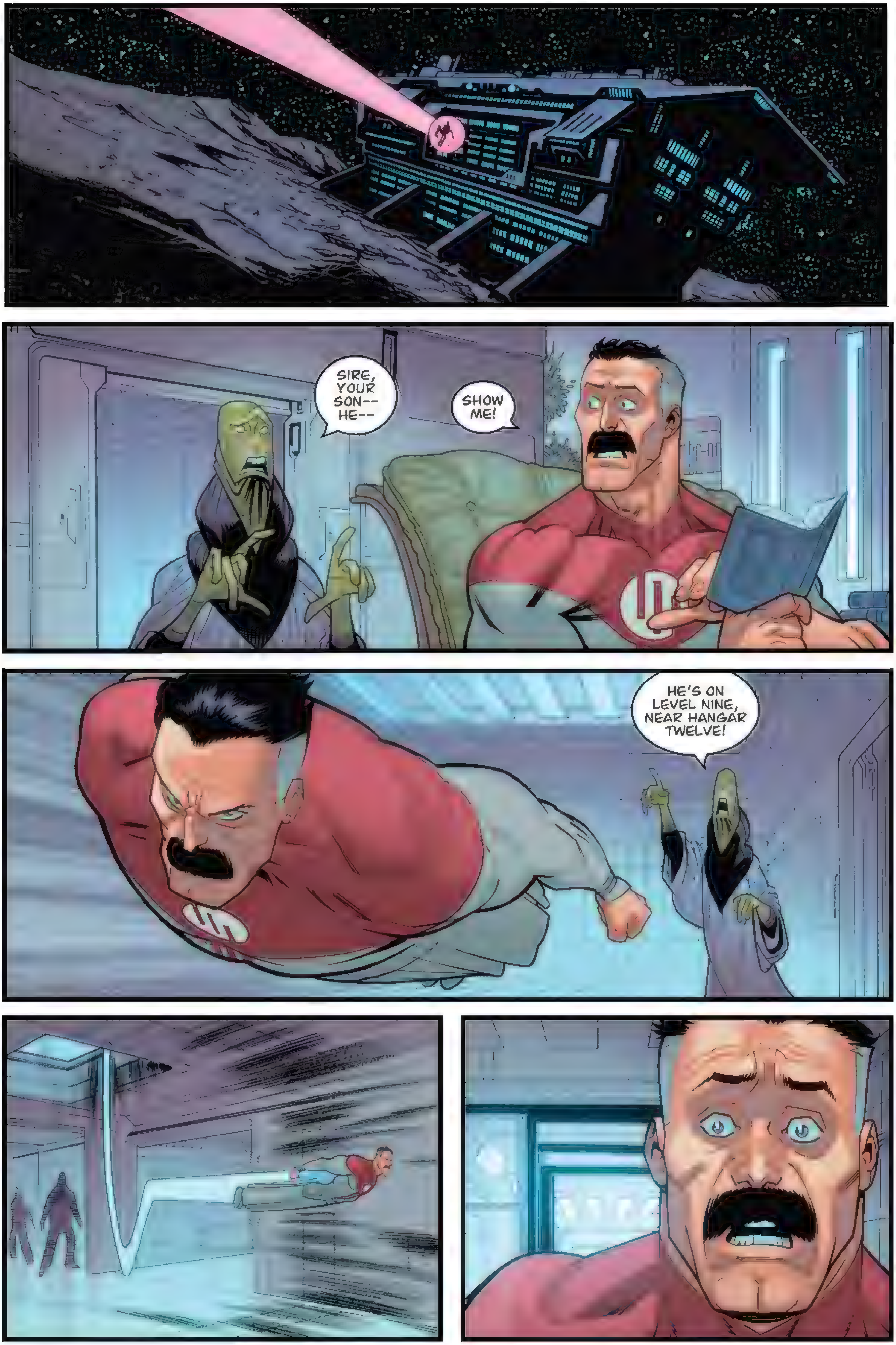

KABOOM!


OH, GOD...
OH, GOD...


STAY WITH ME, EVE.
PLEASE, DON'T...
SHRAKK!

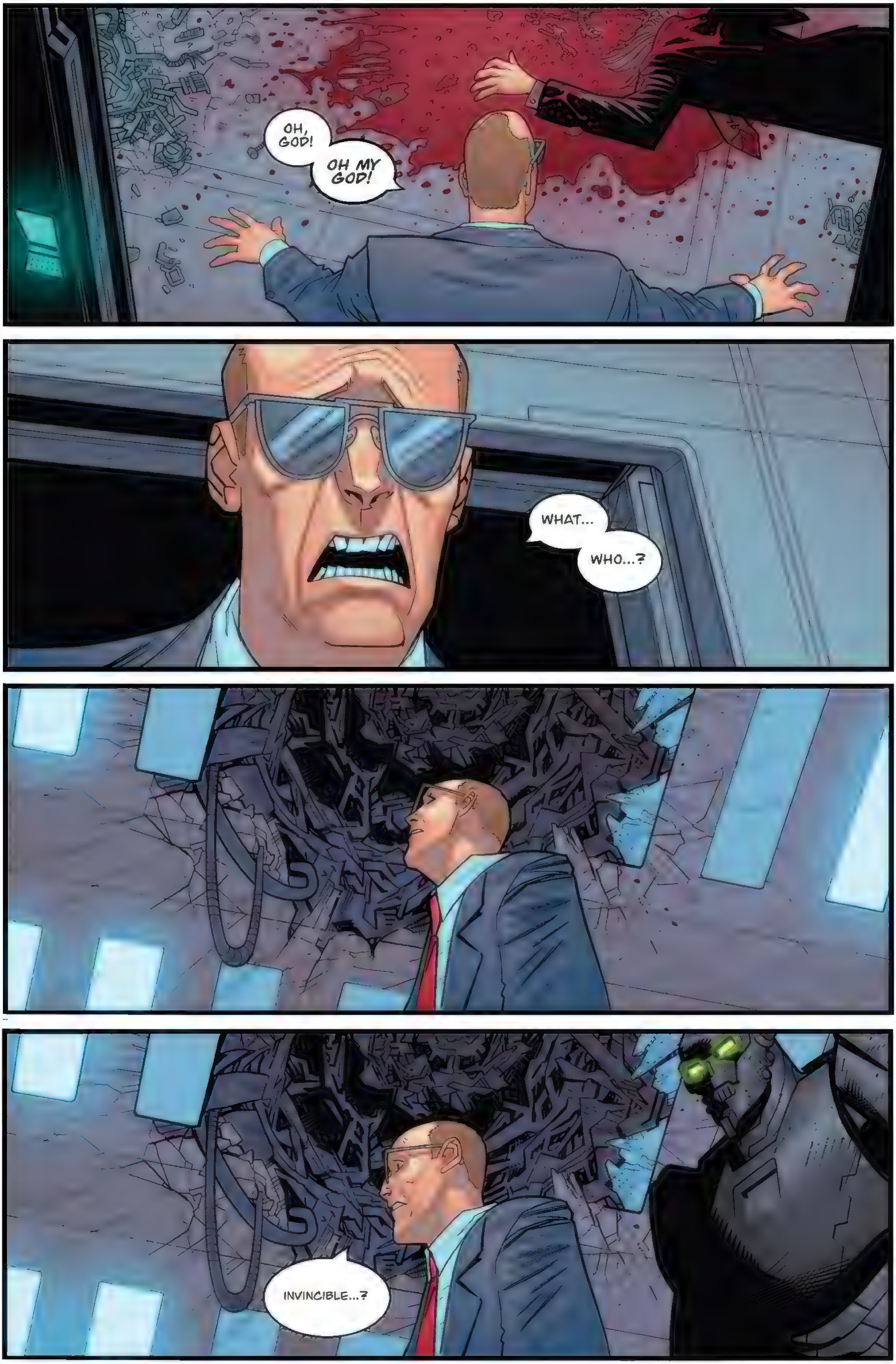

HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH.
HOW COULD I BE SO FOOLISH... OF COURSE HE'D FIND HIS WAY BACK HERE. I WAS MERCIFUL AND IT'S ONLY GOING TO GET MORE PEOPLE KILLED.
NO WAY TO KEEP THIS CONTAINED NOW. I KNOW WHERE HE'S GOING. I'D HOPED TO KEEP THE VILTRUMITES OUT OF THIS FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
SIGH.
I'M JUST NOT READY... I THOUGHT I'D HAVE MORE TIME...
OH, WELL.
LET THE SLAUGHTER BEGIN...

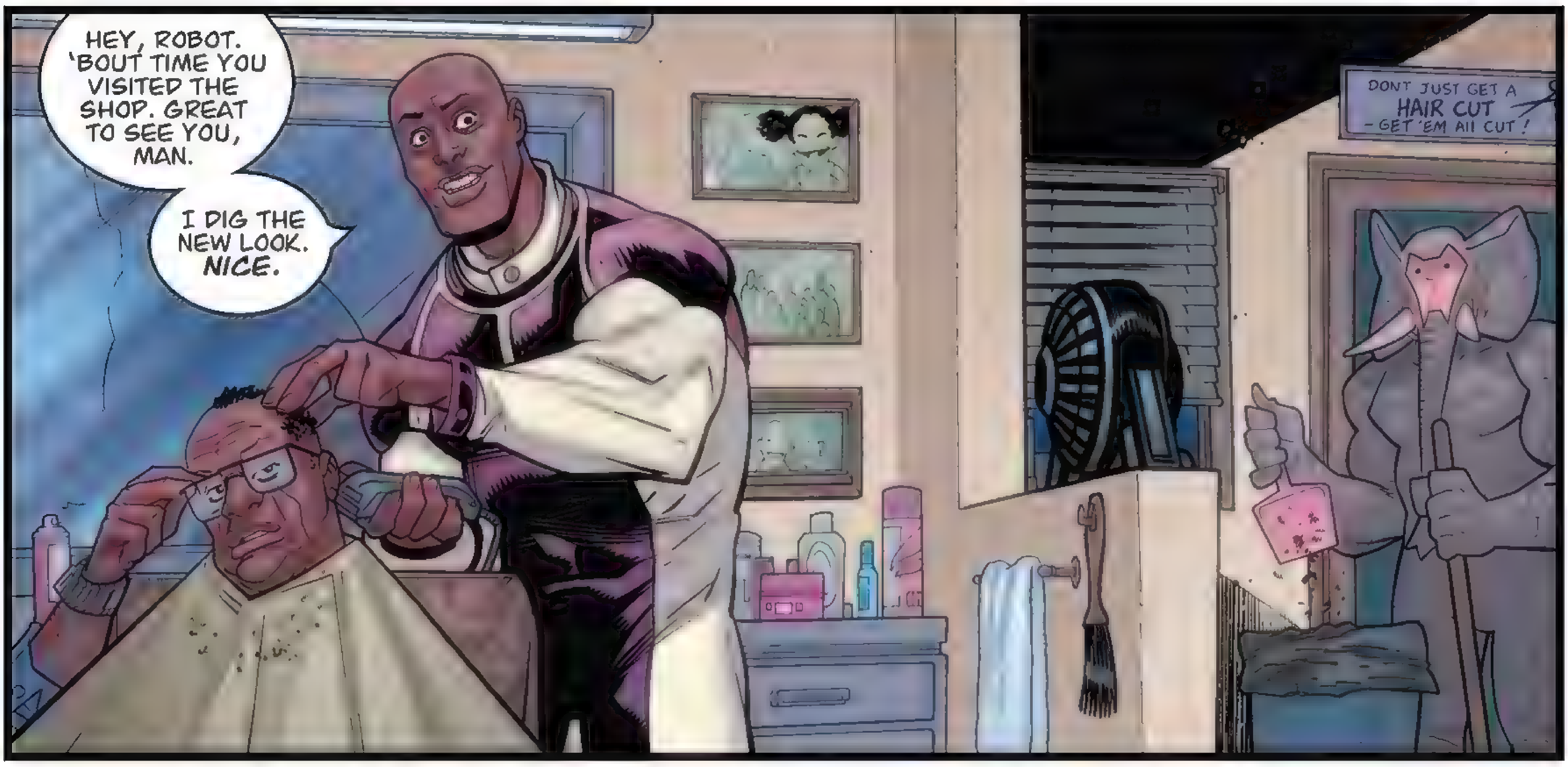

YOU NEED TO MAKE YOURSELF A FORCE FIELD.
I CAN'T... THE BABY.
IF YOU DON'T USE YOUR POWERS AGAIN-- YOU'RE *BOTH* GOING TO *DIE!*
YOU HAVE TO DO THIS, EVE! NOW! IT'S THE ONLY PLACE HE WON'T FOLLOW US!
OKAY... GOOD... WE'LL BE THERE SOON--HANG IN THERE.

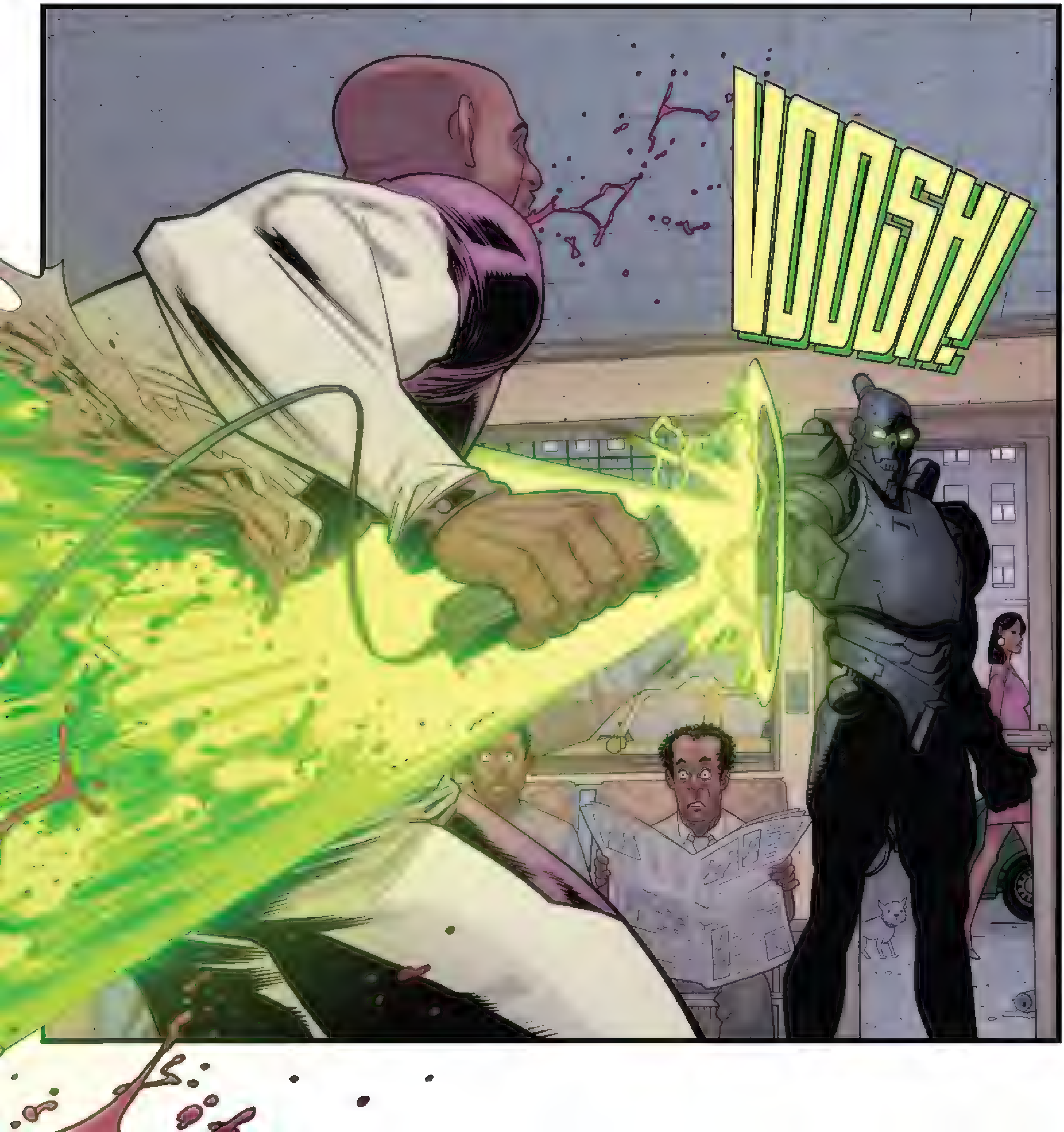

SIRE, YOUR SON-- HE--
SHOW ME!
HE'S ON LEVEL NINE, NEAR HANGAR TWELVE!

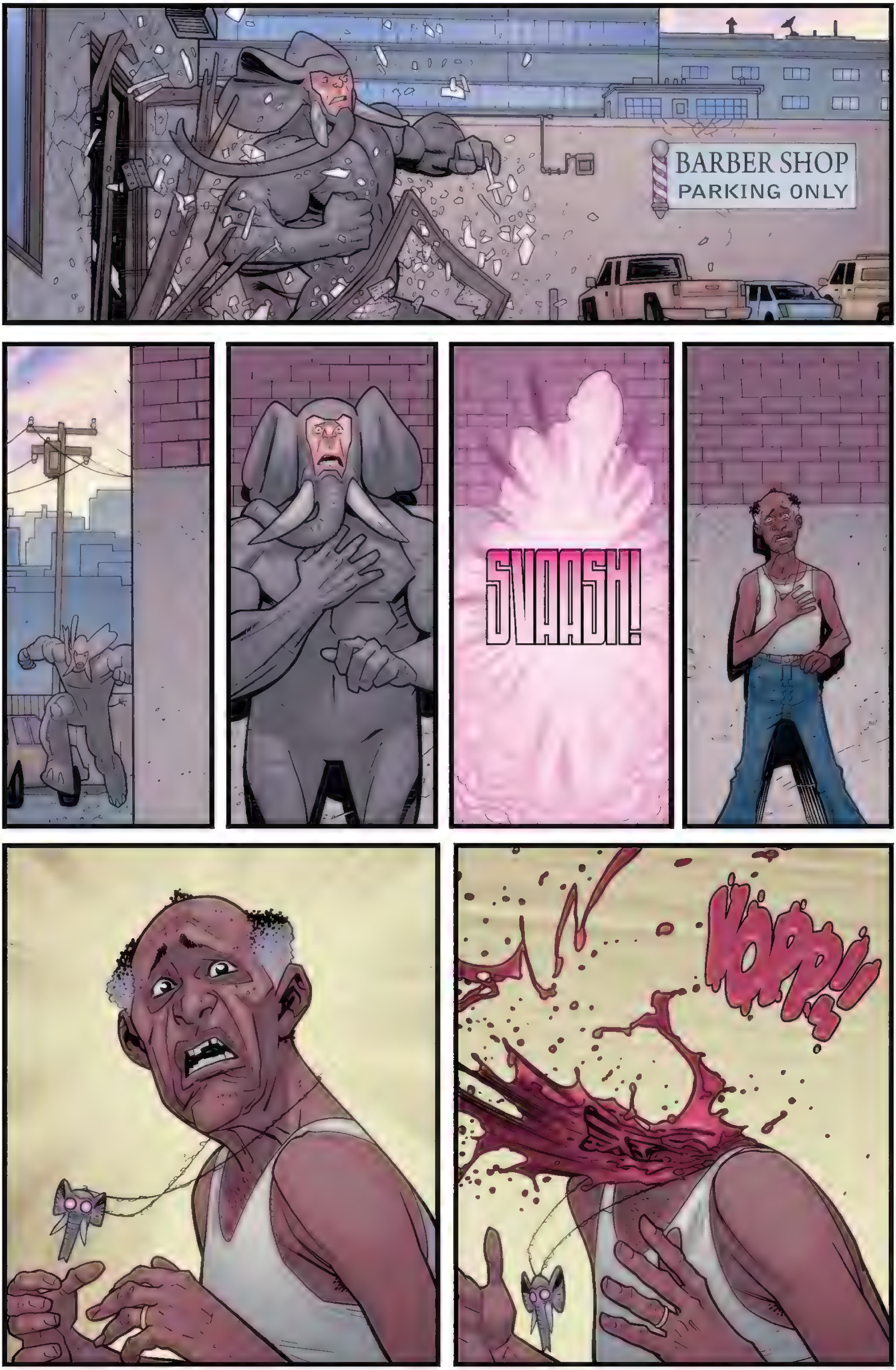
HELP...

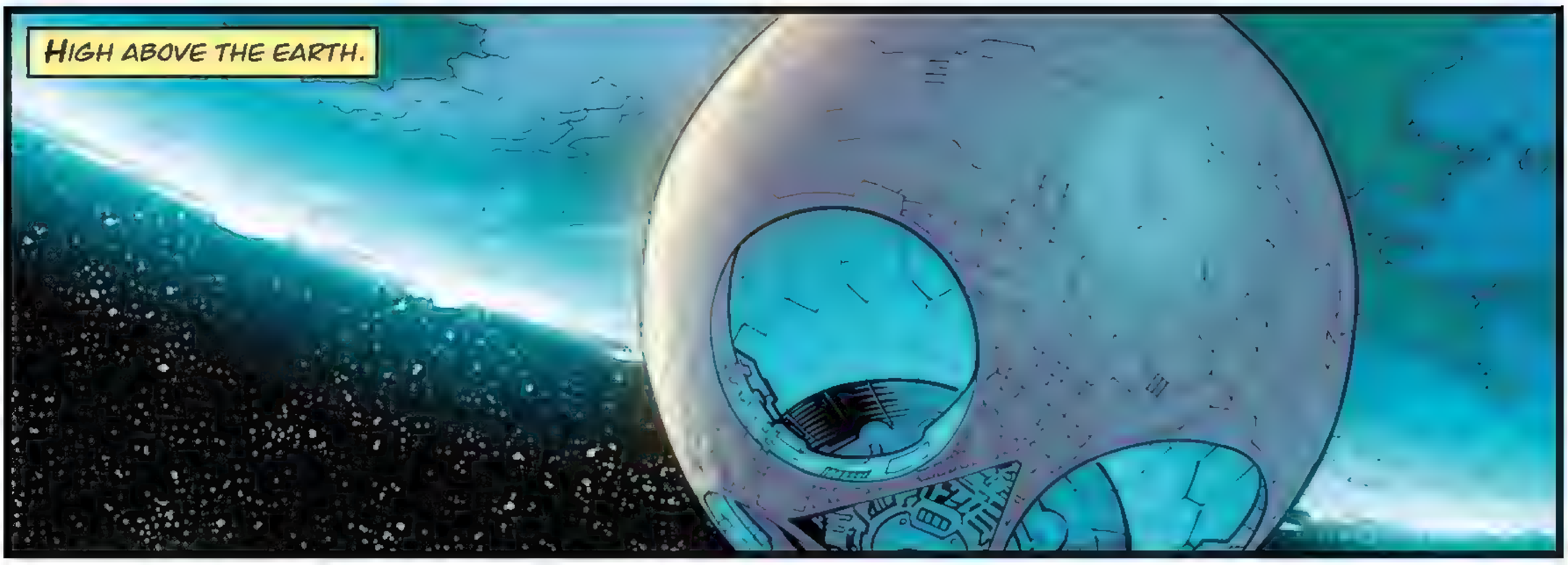
CHAPTER 112

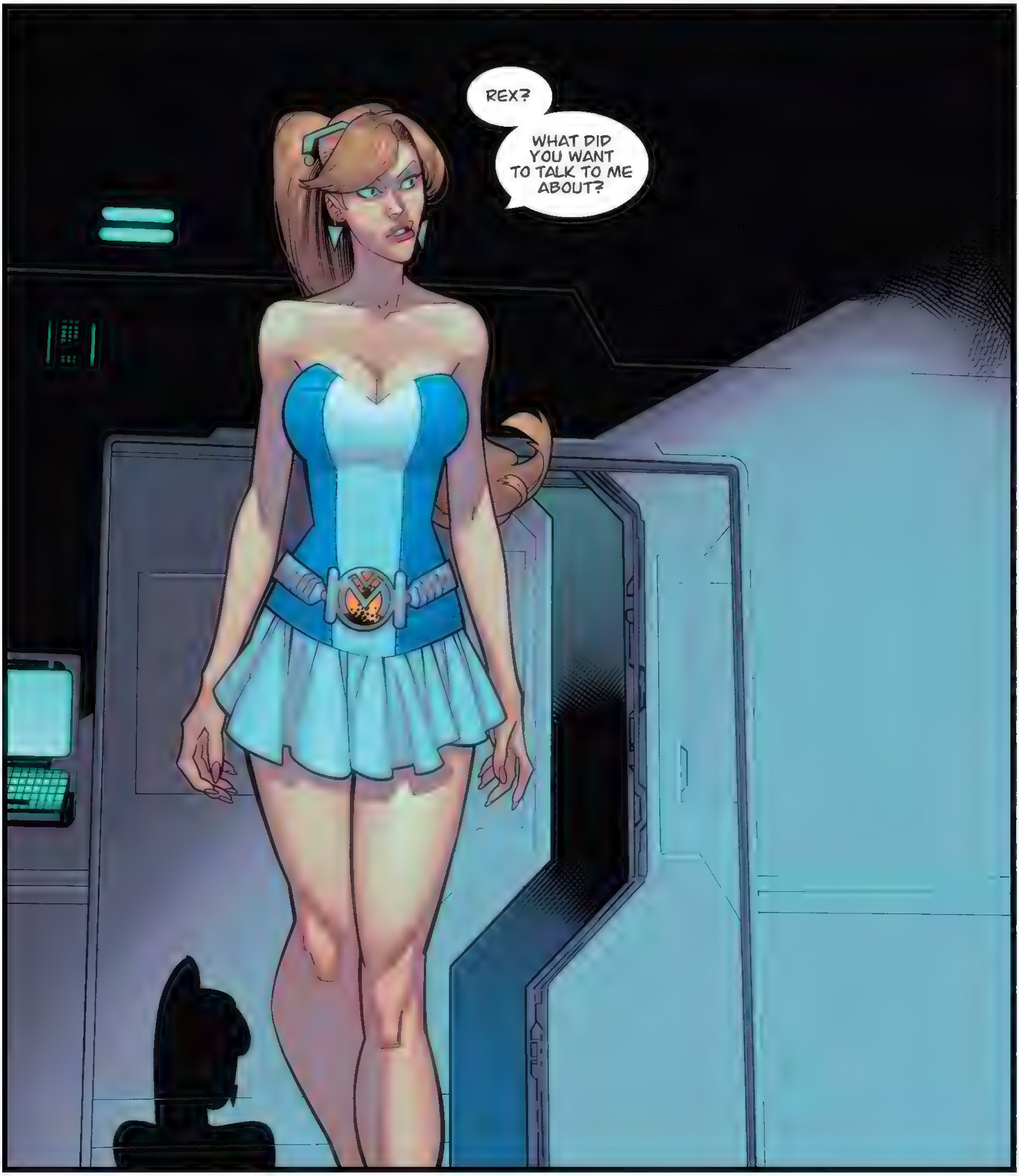

OH, GOD!
OH MY GOD!
WHAT...
WHO...?
INVINCIBLE...?

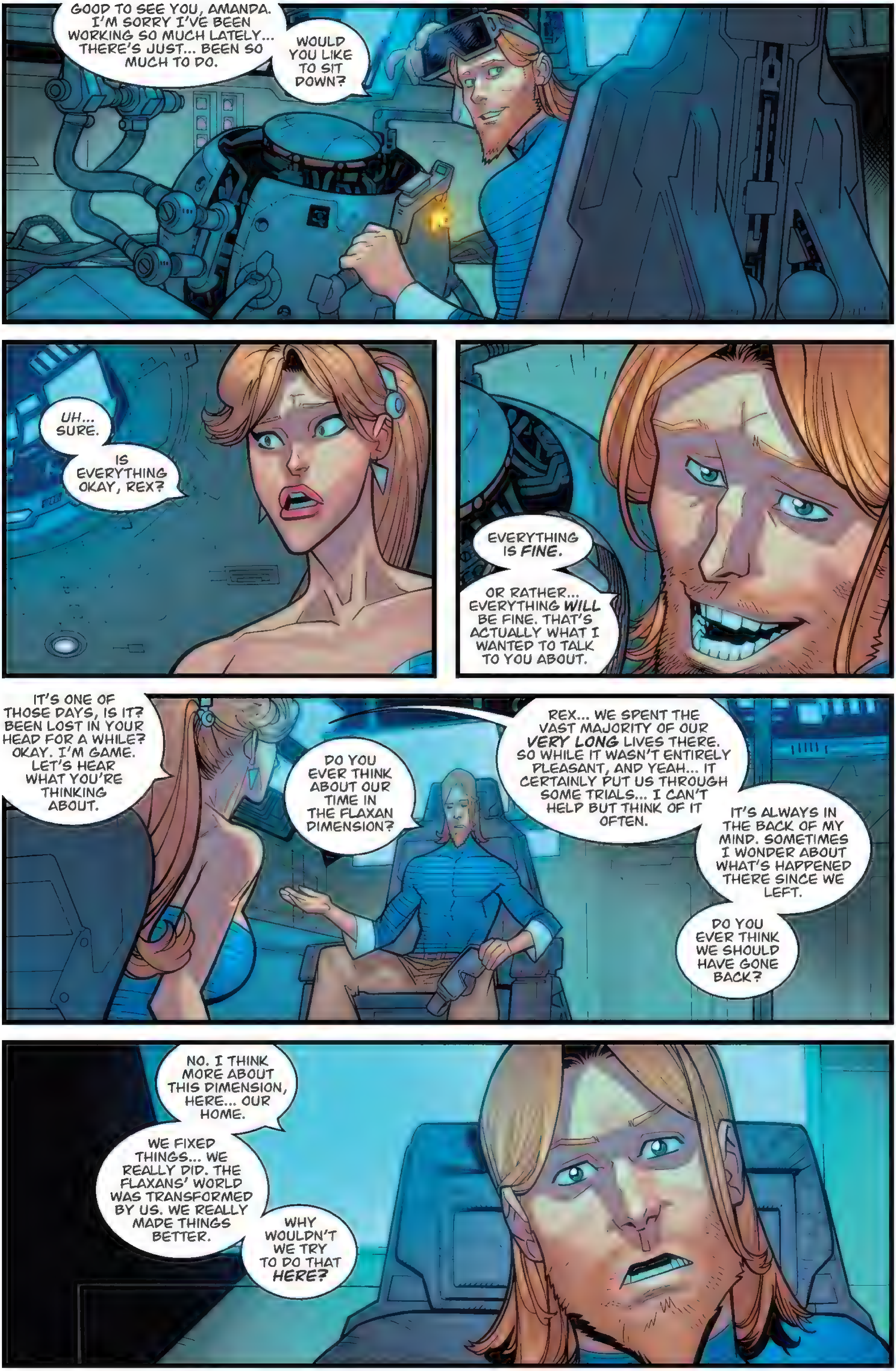

HEY, ROBOT. 'BOUT TIME YOU VISITED THE SHOP. GREAT TO SEE YOU, MAN.
I DIG THE NEW LOOK. NICE.
DONT JUST GET A HAIR CUT - GET 'EM ALL CUT!

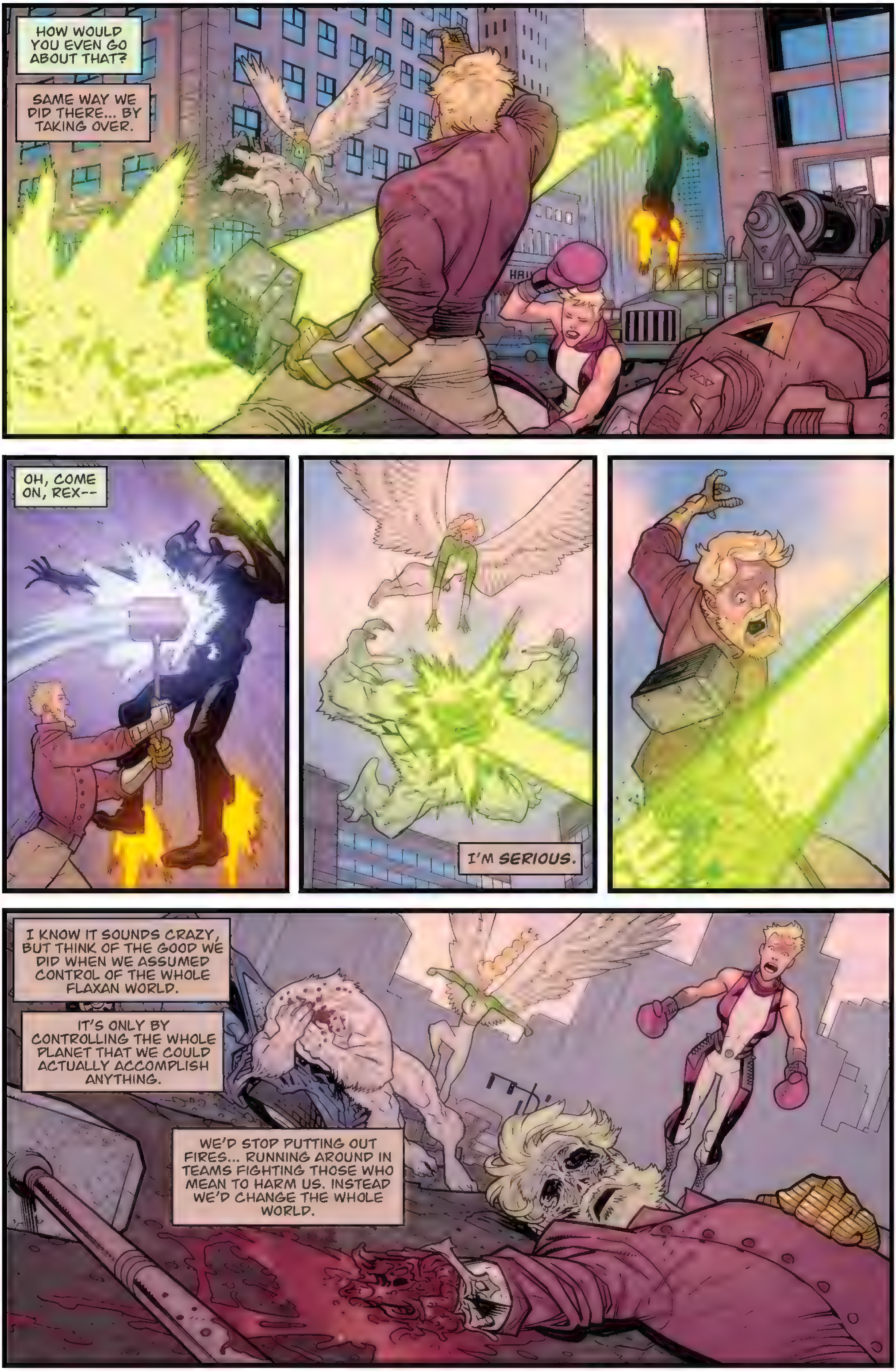

VOOSH!!

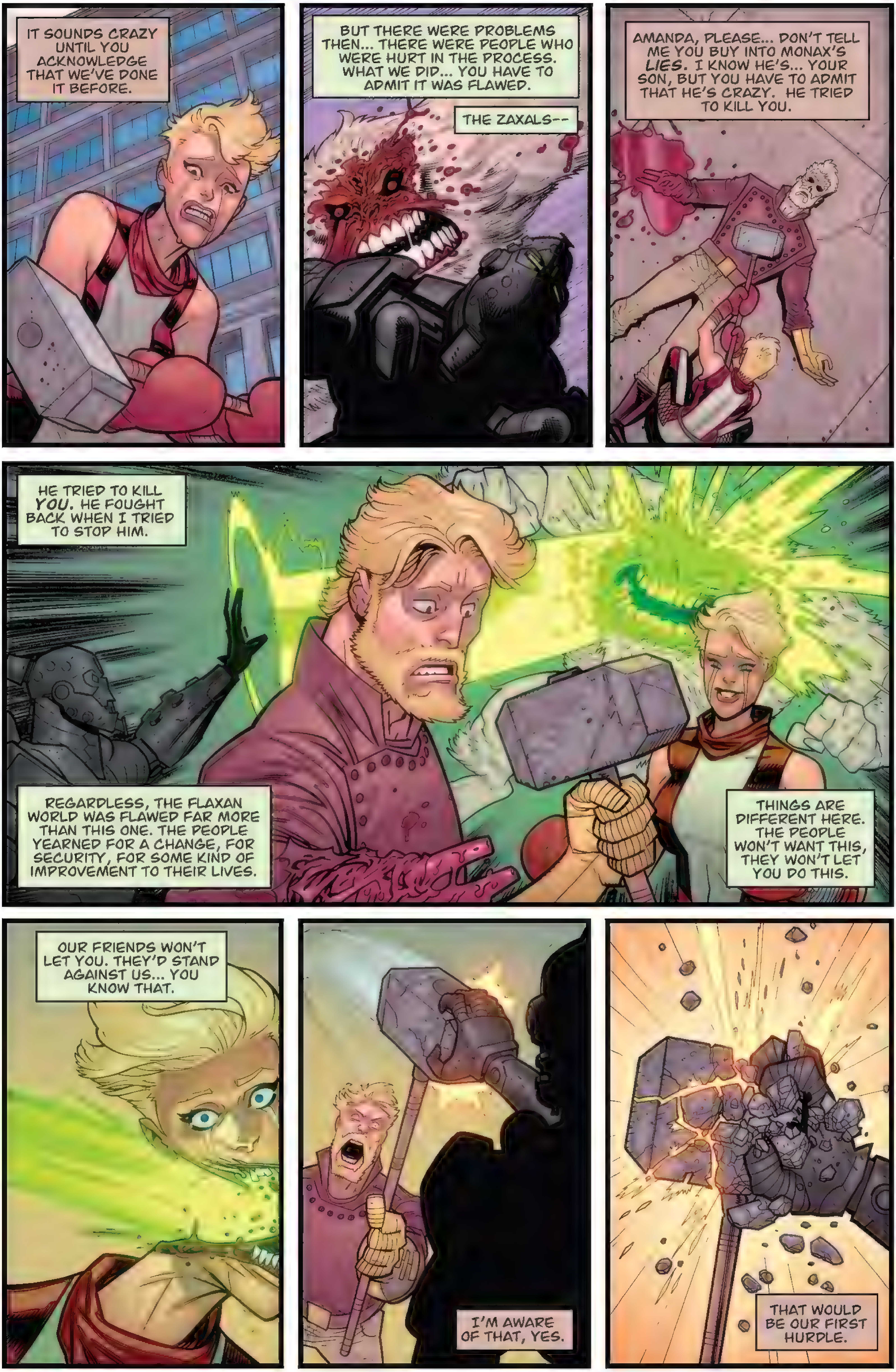

BARBER SHOP
PARKING ONLY
SVAASH!
KOPP!!


HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH.

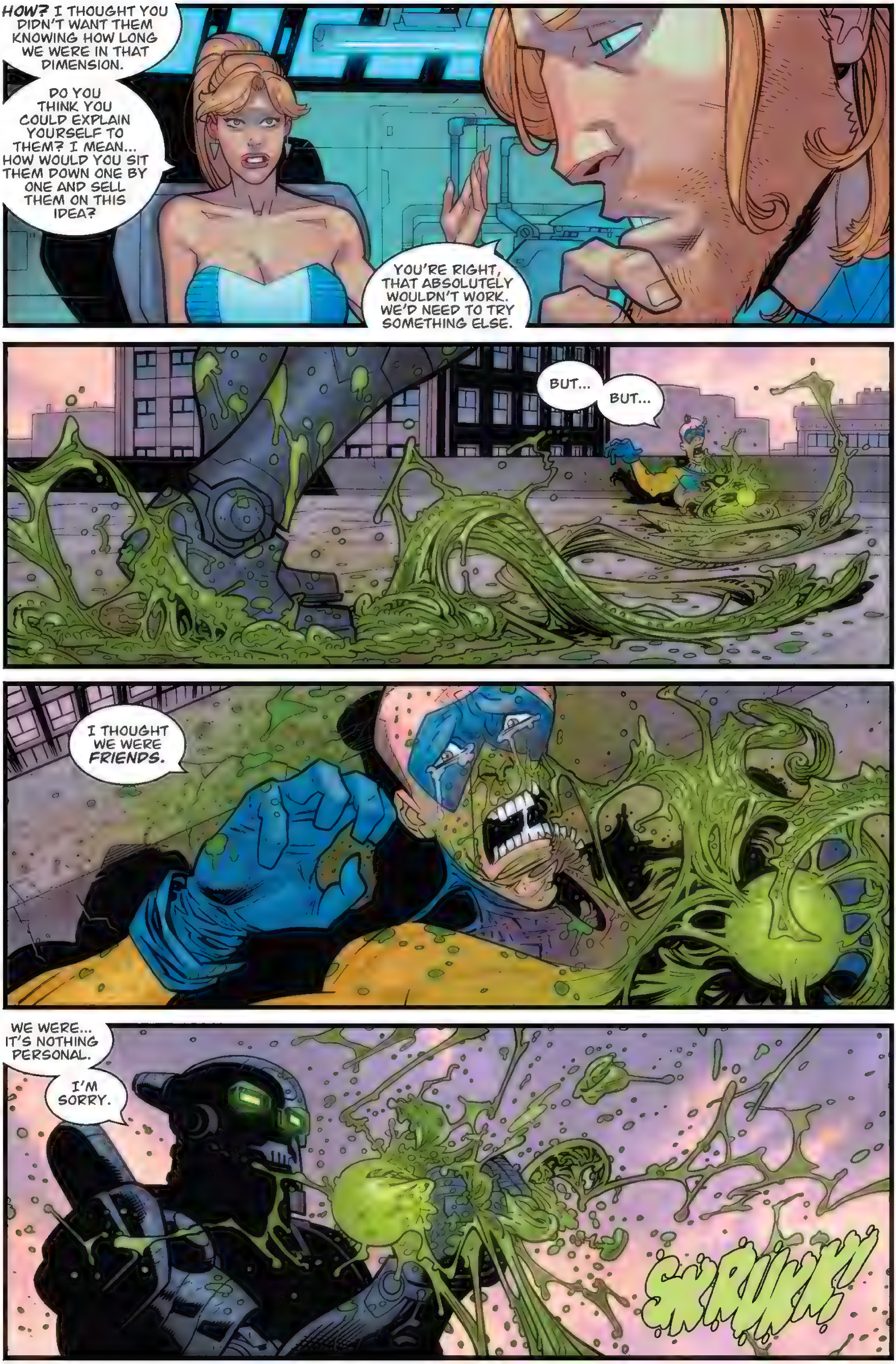

REX?
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?

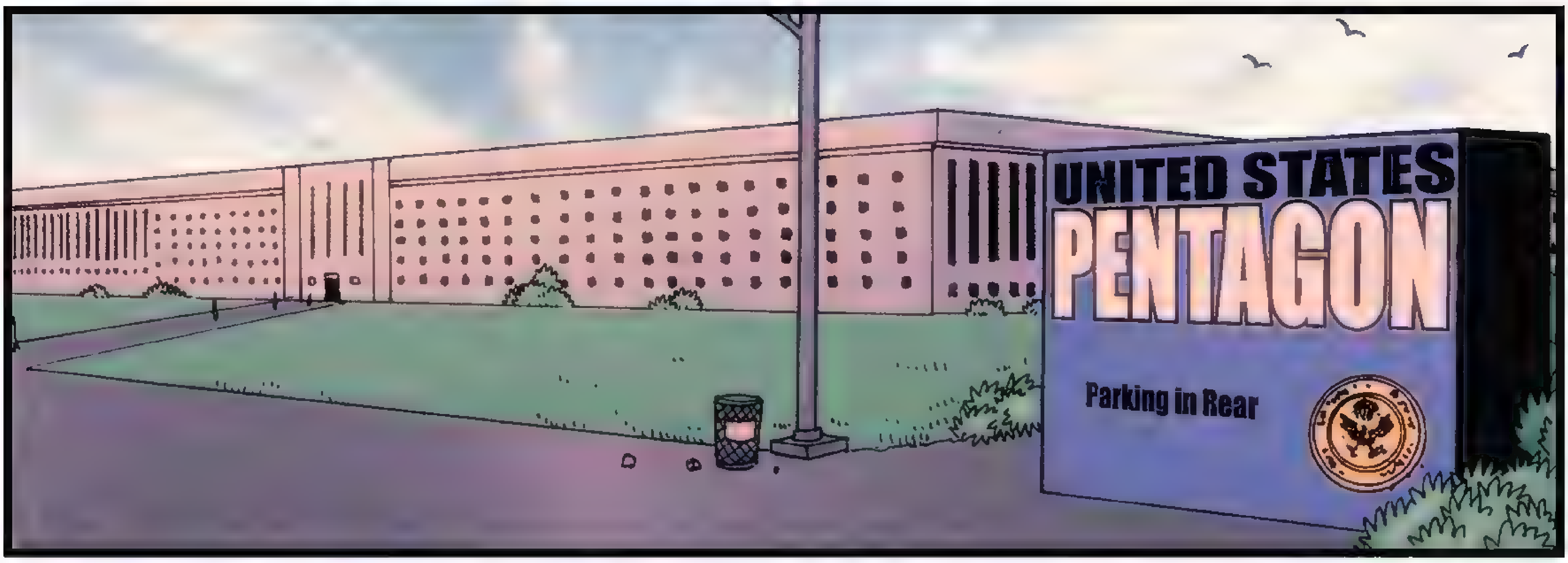

GOOD TO SEE YOU, AMANDA. I'M SORRY I'VE BEEN WORKING SO MUCH LATELY... THERE'S JUST... BEEN SO MUCH TO DO.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SIT DOWN?
UH... SURE.
IS EVERYTHING OKAY, REX?
EVERYTHING IS *FINE*.
OR RATHER... EVERYTHING ***WILL*** BE FINE. THAT'S ACTUALLY WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
IT'S ONE OF THOSE DAYS, IS IT? BEEN LOST IN YOUR HEAD FOR A WHILE? OKAY. I'M GAME. LET'S HEAR WHAT YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT.
DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT OUR TIME IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION?
REX... WE SPENT THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR ***VERY LONG*** LIVES THERE. SO WHILE IT WASN'T ENTIRELY PLEASANT, AND YEAH... IT CERTAINLY PUT US THROUGH SOME TRIALS... I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK OF IT OFTEN.
IT'S ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. SOMETIMES I WONDER ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED THERE SINCE WE LEFT.
DO YOU EVER THINK WE SHOULD HAVE GONE BACK?
NO. I THINK MORE ABOUT THIS DIMENSION, HERE... OUR HOME.
WE FIXED THINGS... WE REALLY DID. THE FLAXANS' WORLD WAS TRANSFORMED BY US. WE REALLY MADE THINGS BETTER.
WHY WOULDN'T WE TRY TO DO THAT ***HERE?***

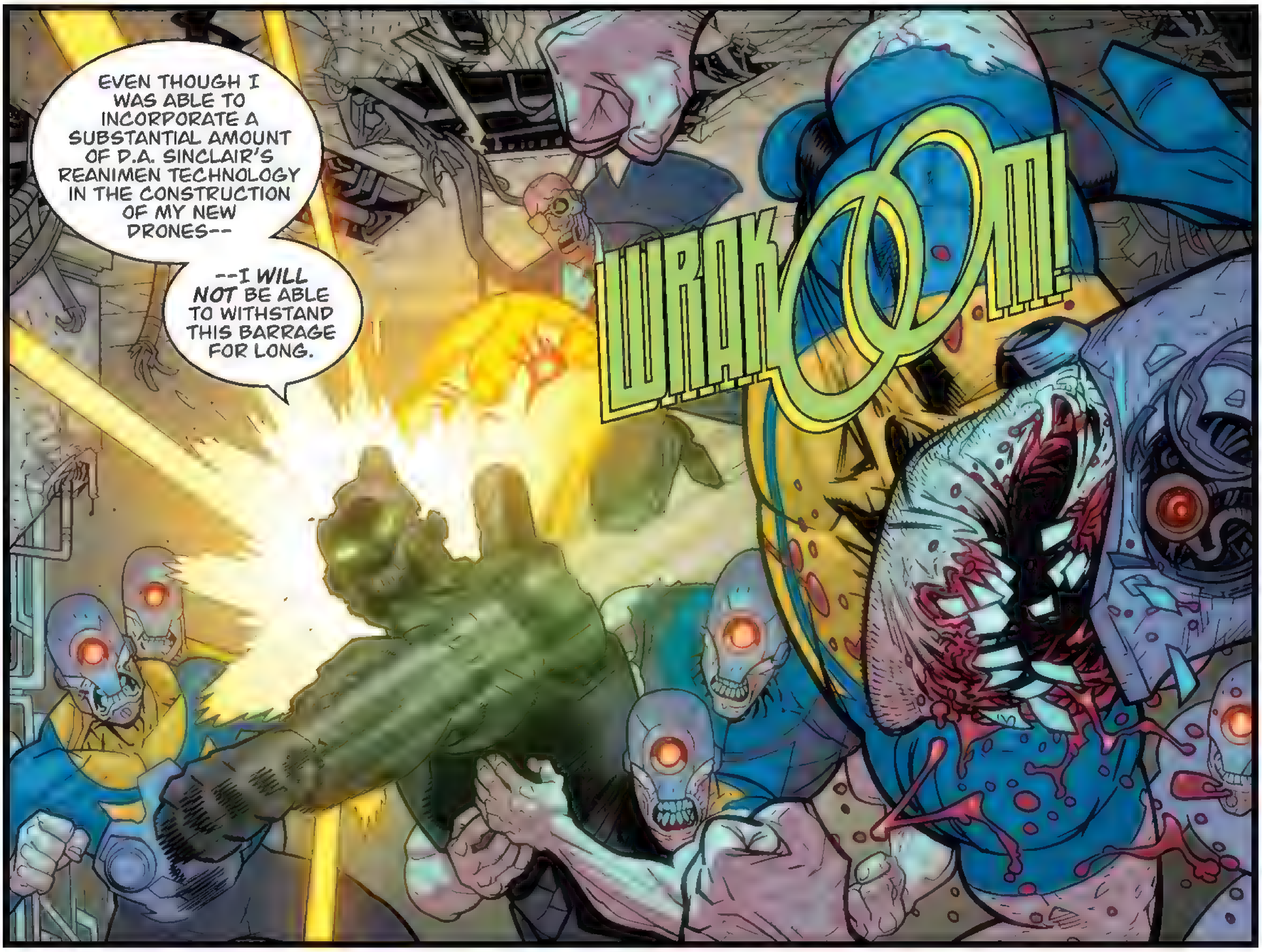

HOW WOULD YOU EVEN GO ABOUT THAT?
SAME WAY WE DID THERE... BY TAKING OVER.
OH, COME ON, REX--
I'M *SERIOUS.*
I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT THINK OF THE GOOD WE DID WHEN WE ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE WHOLE FLAXAN WORLD.
IT'S ONLY BY CONTROLLING THE WHOLE PLANET THAT WE COULD ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.
WE'D STOP PUTTING OUT FIRES... RUNNING AROUND IN TEAMS FIGHTING THOSE WHO MEAN TO HARM US. INSTEAD WE'D CHANGE THE WHOLE WORLD.

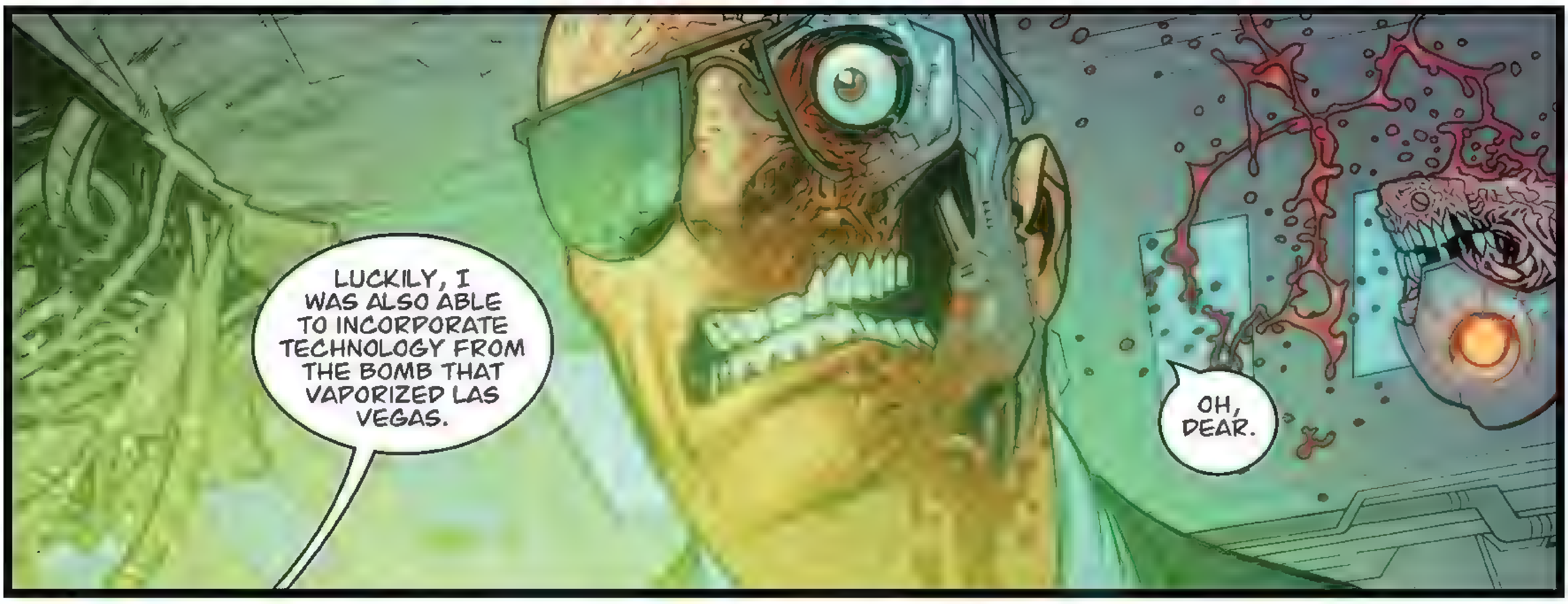

IT SOUNDS CRAZY UNTIL YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE'VE DONE IT BEFORE.
BUT THERE WERE PROBLEMS THEN... THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE HURT IN THE PROCESS. WHAT WE DID... YOU HAVE TO ADMIT IT WAS FLAWED.
THE ZAXALS--
AMANDA, PLEASE... DON'T TELL ME YOU BUY INTO MONAX'S *LIES*. I KNOW HE'S... YOUR SON, BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT HE'S CRAZY. HE TRIED TO KILL YOU.
HE TRIED TO KILL *YOU*. HE FOUGHT BACK WHEN I TRIED TO STOP HIM.
REGARDLESS, THE FLAXAN WORLD WAS FLAWED FAR MORE THAN THIS ONE. THE PEOPLE YEARNED FOR A CHANGE, FOR SECURITY, FOR SOME KIND OF IMPROVEMENT TO THEIR LIVES.
THINGS ARE DIFFERENT HERE. THE PEOPLE WON'T WANT THIS, THEY WON'T LET YOU DO THIS.
OUR FRIENDS WON'T LET YOU. THEY'D STAND AGAINST US... YOU KNOW THAT.
I'M AWARE OF THAT, YES.
THAT WOULD BE OUR FIRST HURDLE.

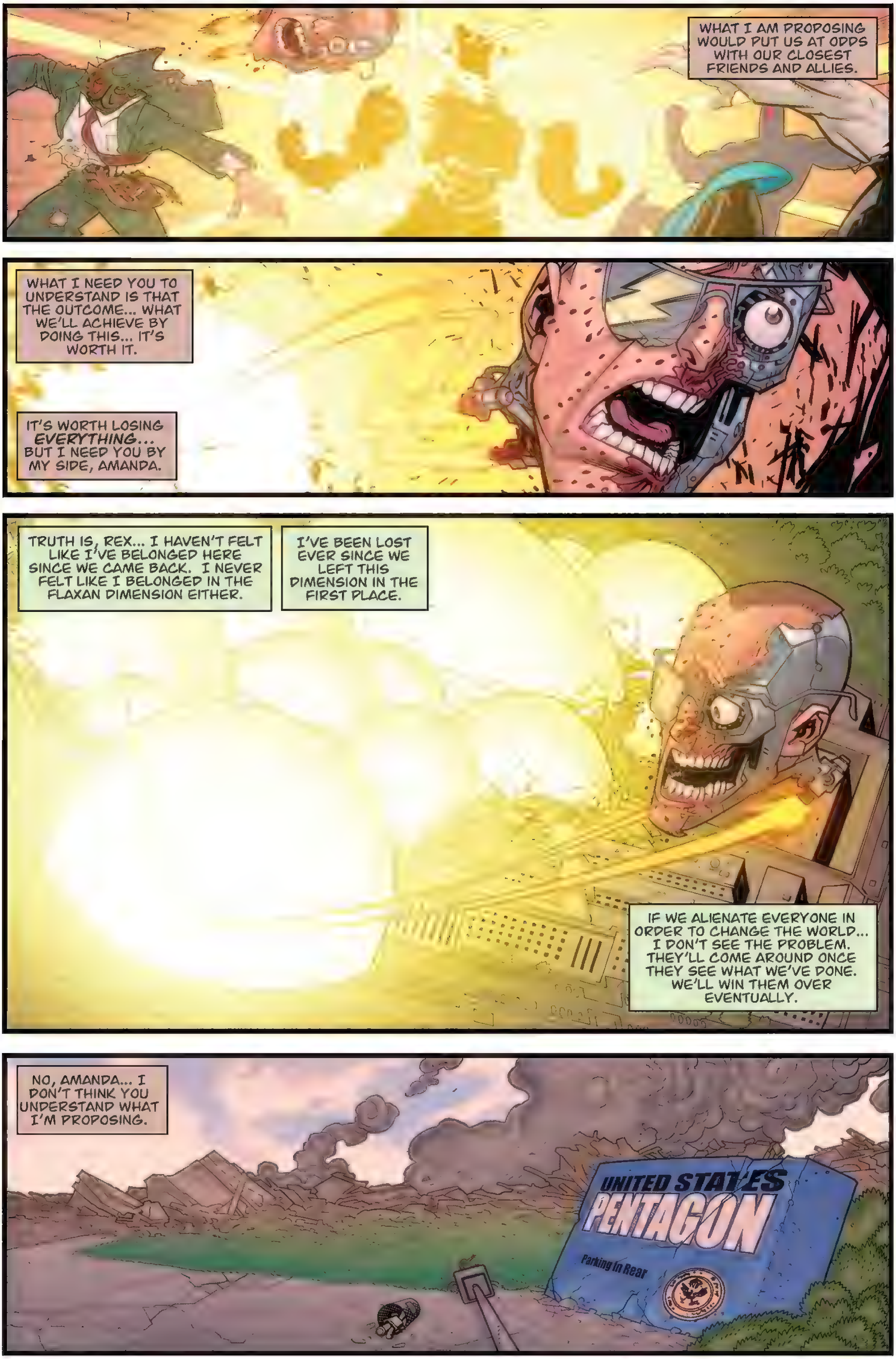
ANYTHING THAT COULD POTENTIALLY STAND IN OUR WAY WOULD NEED TO BE DEALT WITH FIRST.

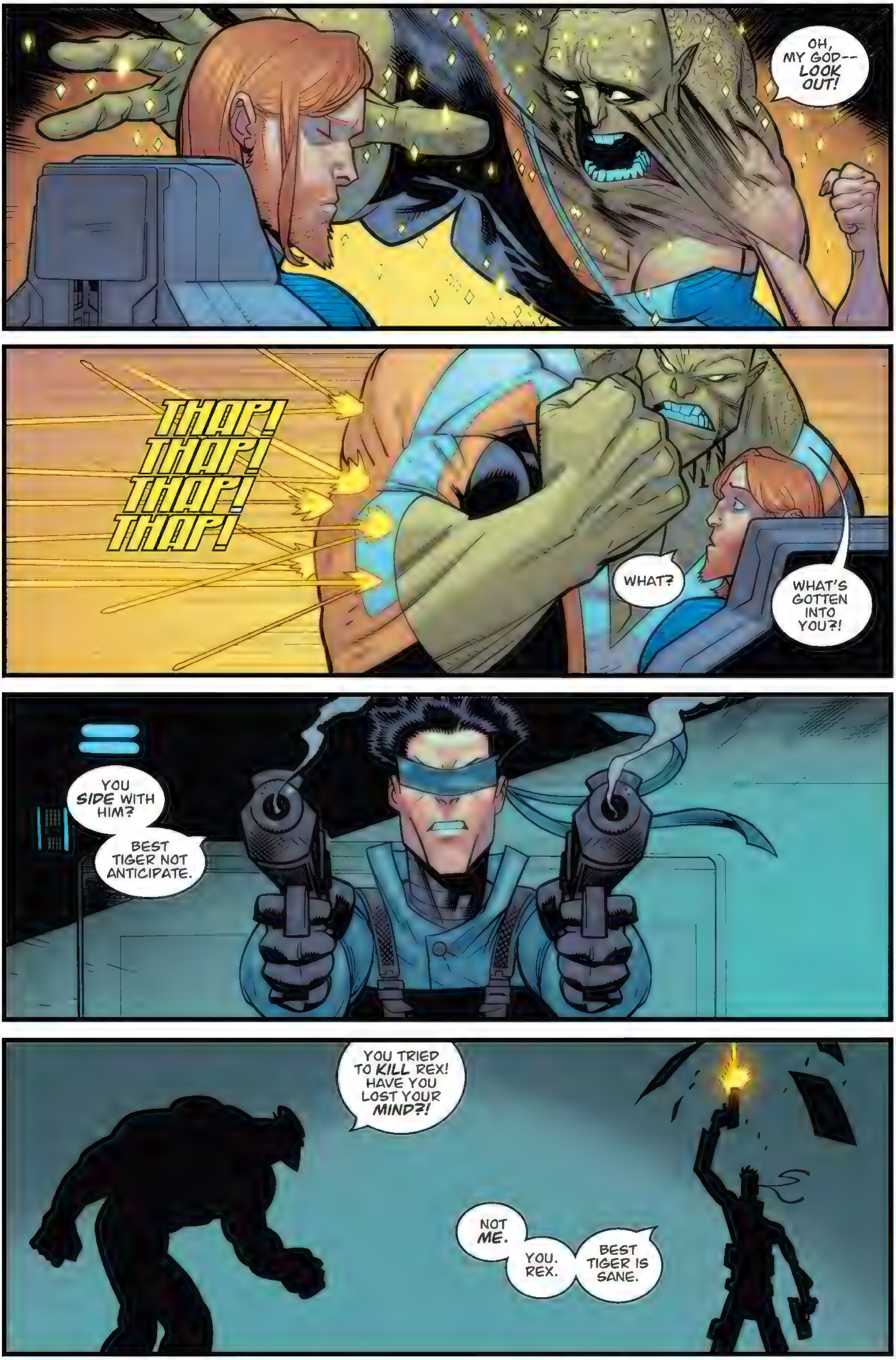

HOW? I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T WANT THEM KNOWING HOW LONG WE WERE IN THAT DIMENSION.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD EXPLAIN YOURSELF TO THEM? I MEAN... HOW WOULD YOU SIT THEM DOWN ONE BY ONE AND SELL THEM ON THIS IDEA?
YOU'RE RIGHT, THAT ABSOLUTELY WOULDN'T WORK. WE'D NEED TO TRY SOMETHING ELSE.
BUT...
BUT...
I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.
WE WERE... IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL.
I'M SORRY.
SKRUNK!

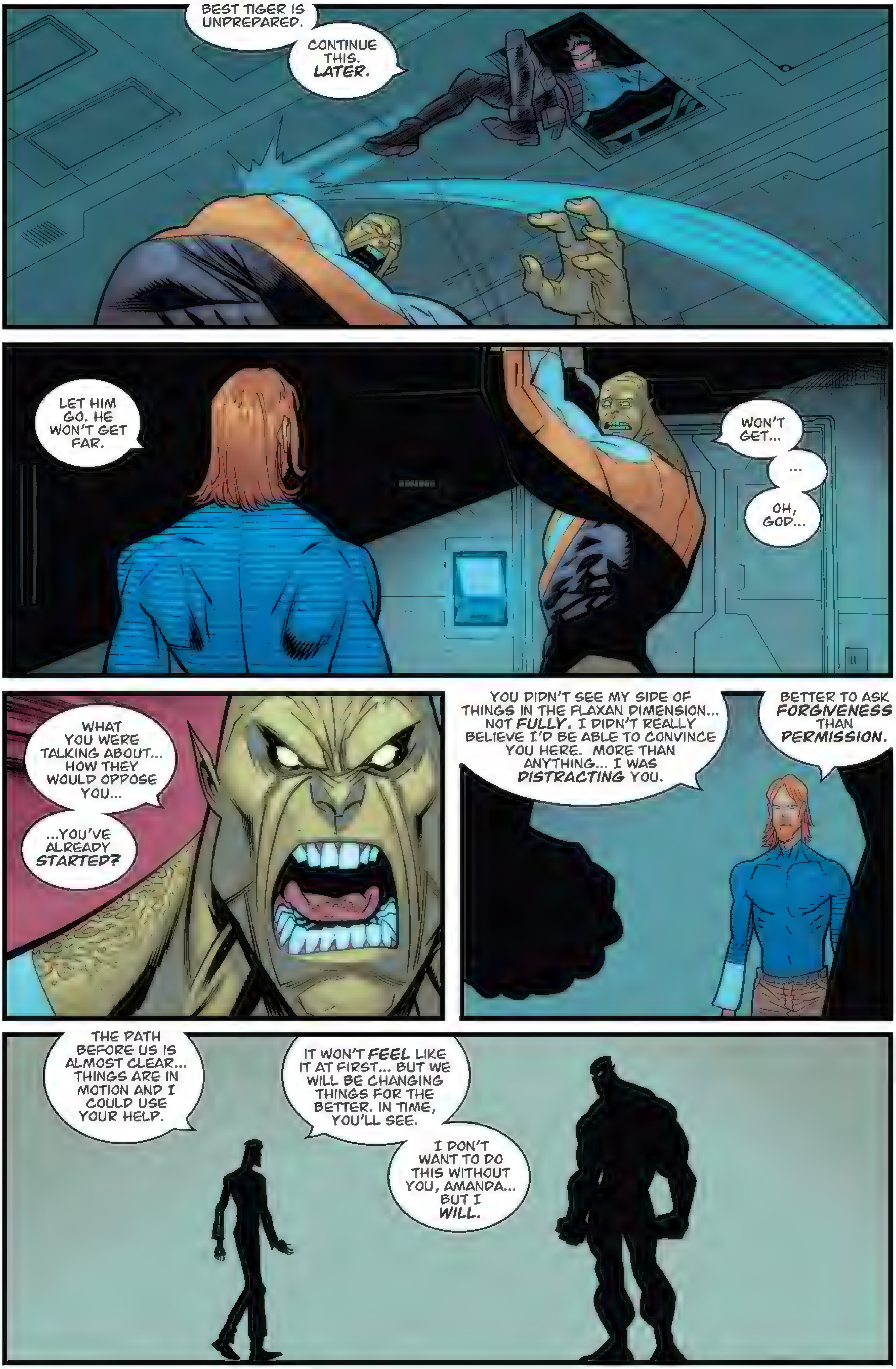

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

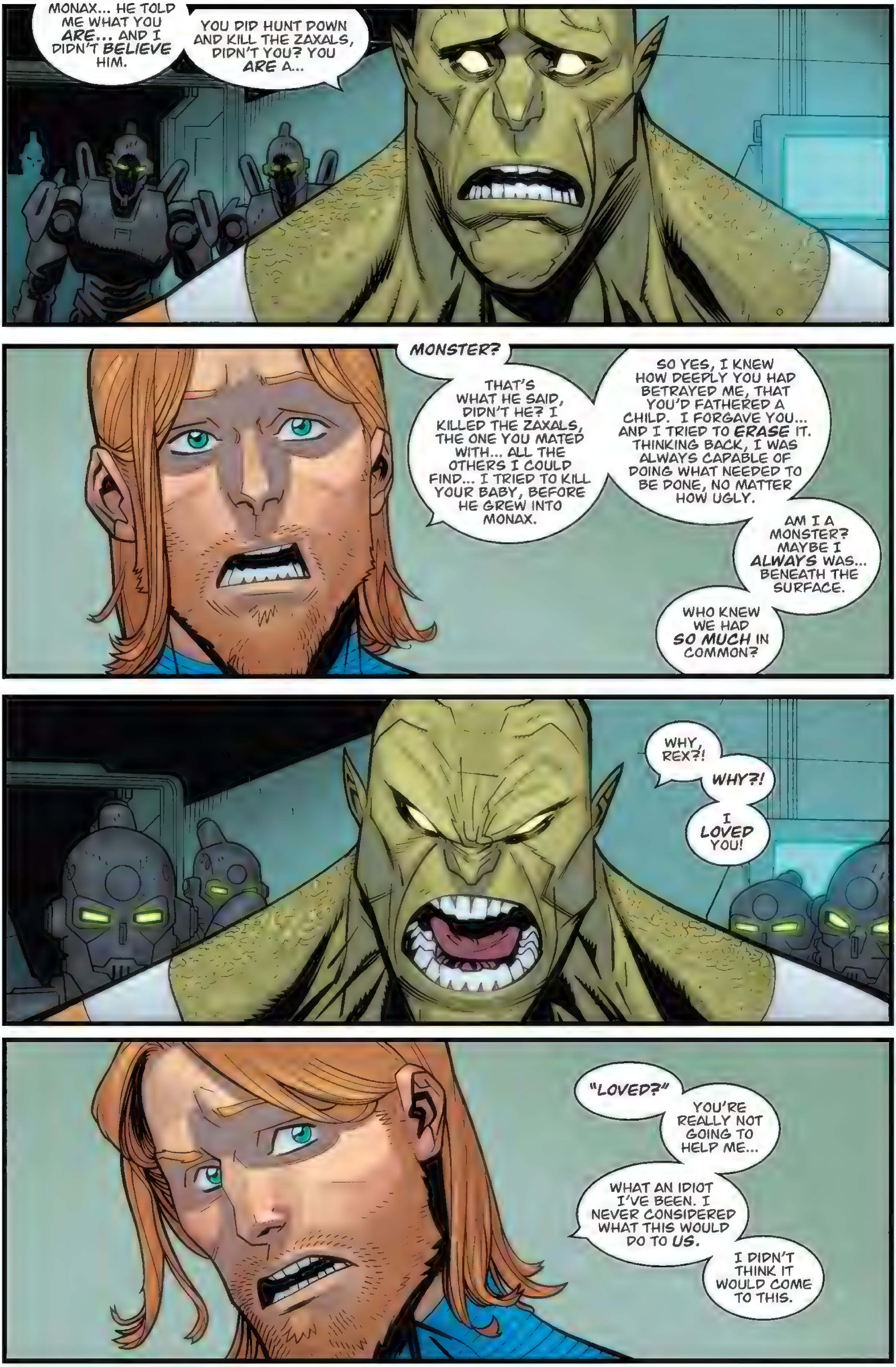

EVEN THOUGH I WAS ABLE TO INCORPORATE A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF D.A. SINCLAIR'S REANIMEN TECHNOLOGY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MY NEW DRONES--
--I *WILL NOT* BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THIS BARRAGE FOR LONG.
WRAKOOM!

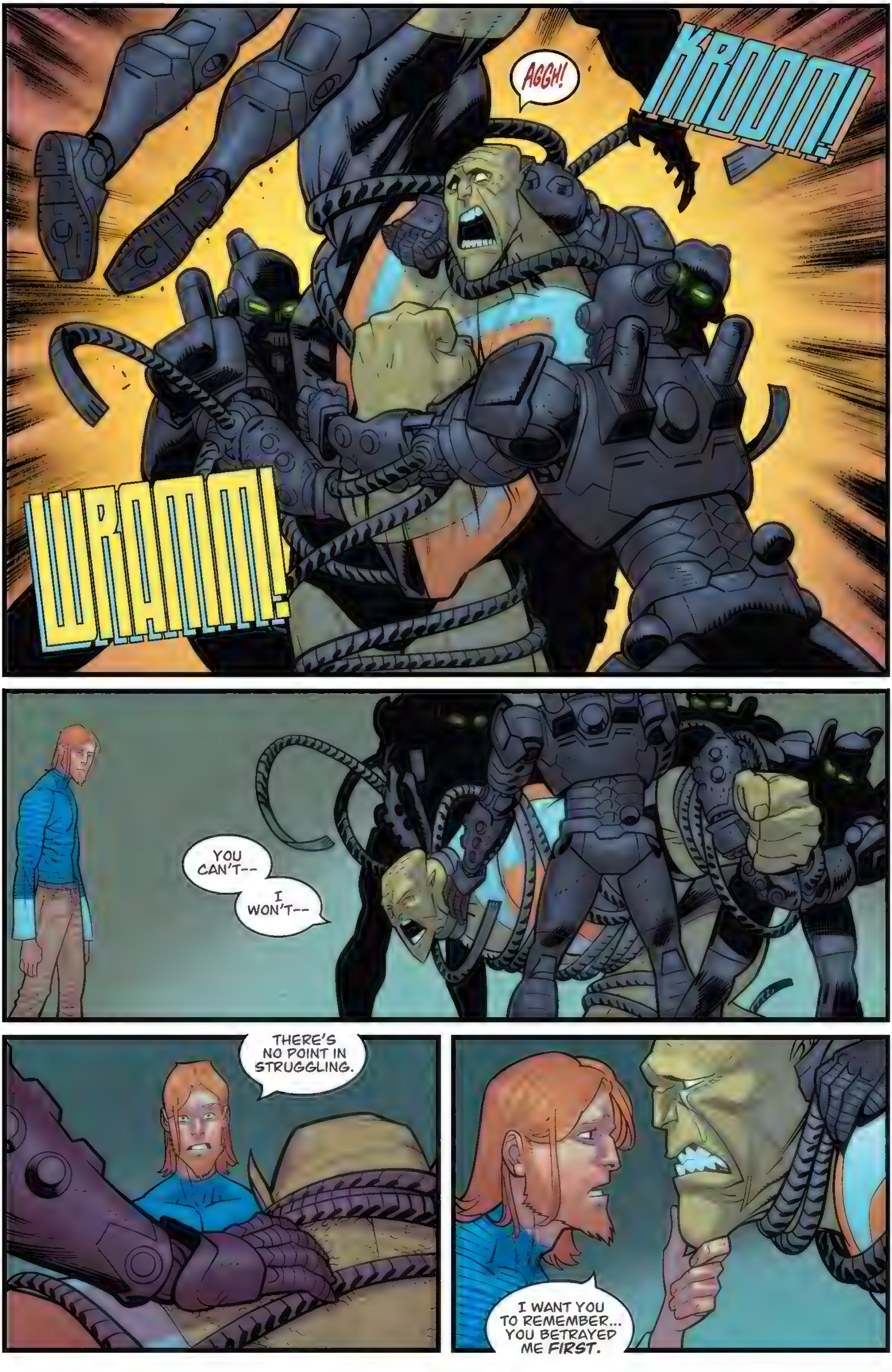

LUCKILY, I WAS ALSO ABLE TO INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY FROM THE BOMB THAT VAPORIZED LAS VEGAS.
OH, DEAR.

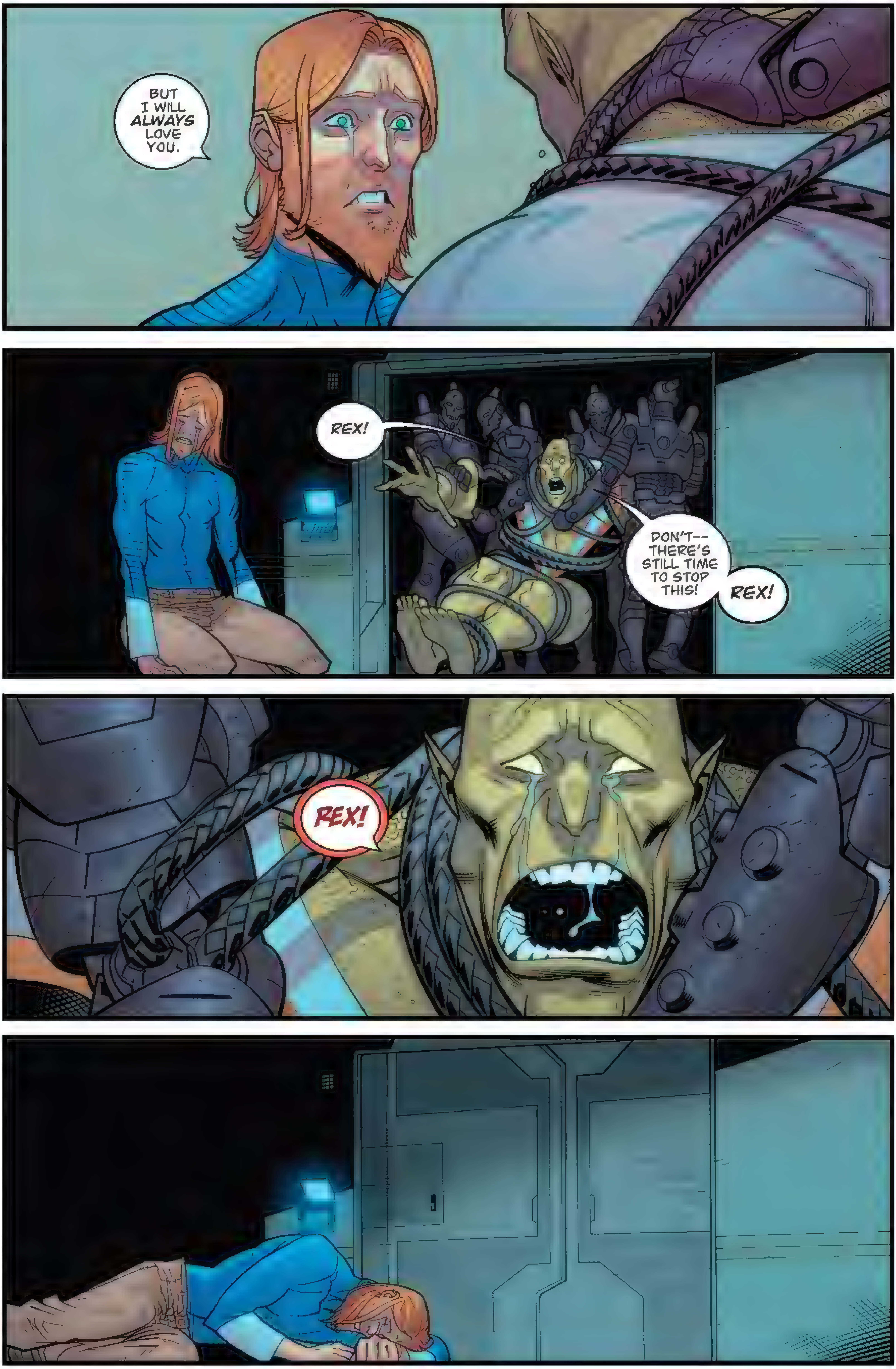

WHAT I AM PROPOSING WOULD PUT US AT ODDS WITH OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS AND ALLIES.
WHAT I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT THE OUTCOME... WHAT WE'LL ACHIEVE BY DOING THIS... IT'S WORTH IT.
IT'S WORTH LOSING *EVERYTHING...* BUT I NEED YOU BY MY SIDE, AMANDA.
TRUTH IS, REX... I HAVEN'T FELT LIKE I'VE BELONGED HERE SINCE WE CAME BACK. I NEVER FELT LIKE I BELONGED IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION EITHER.
I'VE BEEN LOST EVER SINCE WE LEFT THIS DIMENSION IN THE FIRST PLACE.
IF WE ALIENATE EVERYONE IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE WORLD... I DON'T SEE THE PROBLEM. THEY'LL COME AROUND ONCE THEY SEE WHAT WE'VE DONE. WE'LL WIN THEM OVER EVENTUALLY.
NO, AMANDA... I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M PROPOSING.
UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking In Rear


OH, MY GOD-- LOOK OUT!
THAP! THAP! THAP! THAP!
WHAT?
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?!
YOU SIDE WITH HIM?
BEST TIGER NOT ANTICIPATE.
YOU TRIED TO KILL REX! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
NOT ME.
YOU. REX.
BEST TIGER IS SANE.

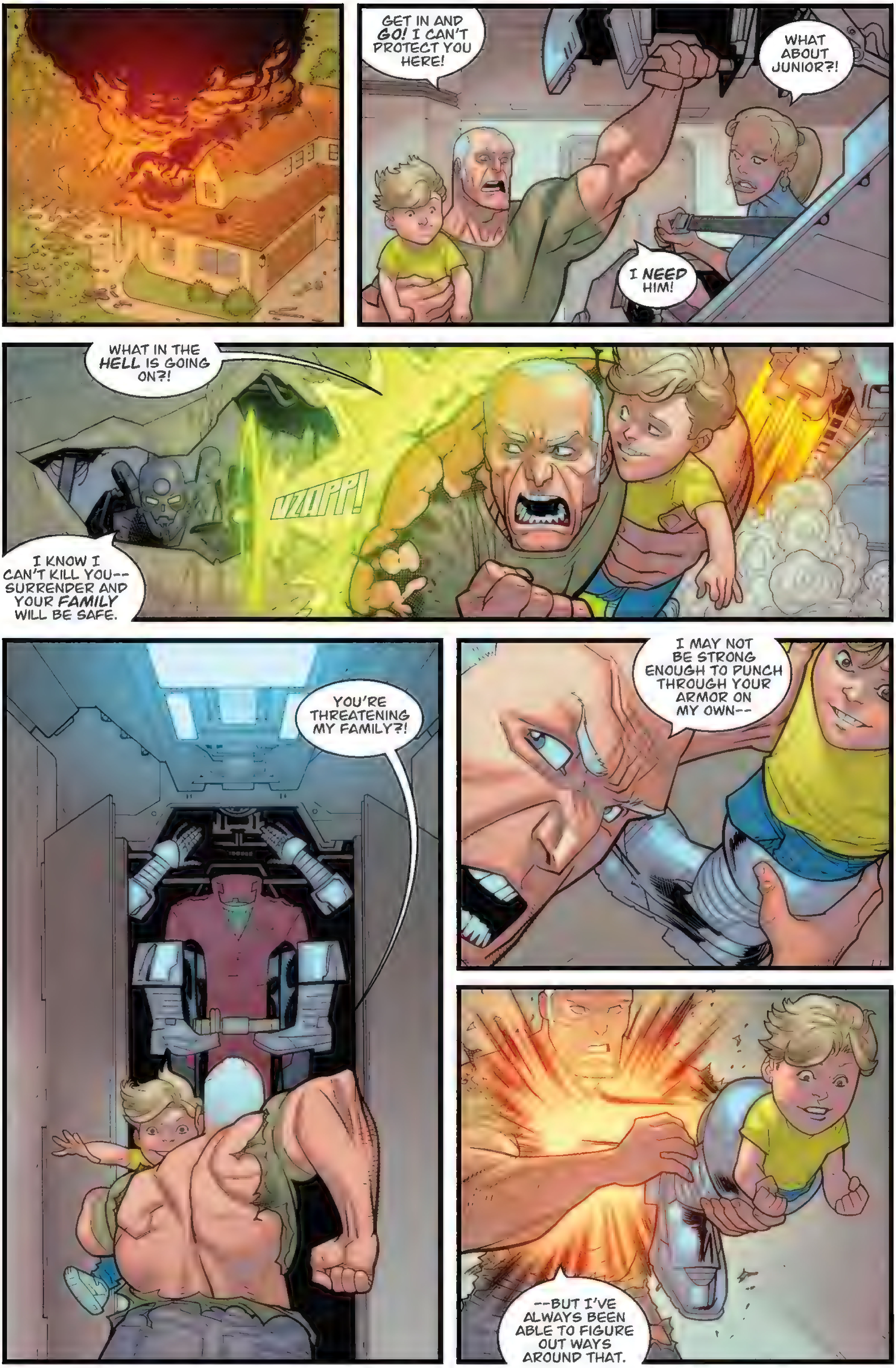

BEST TIGER IS UNPREPARED.
CONTINUE THIS. *LATER*.
LET HIM GO. HE WON'T GET FAR.
WON'T GET...
...
OH, GOD...
WHAT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT... HOW THEY WOULD OPPOSE YOU...
...YOU'VE ALREADY *STARTED?*
YOU DIDN'T SEE MY SIDE OF THINGS IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION... NOT *FULLY*. I DIDN'T REALLY BELIEVE I'D BE ABLE TO CONVINCE YOU HERE. MORE THAN ANYTHING... I WAS *DISTRACTING* YOU.
BETTER TO ASK *FORGIVENESS* THAN *PERMISSION*.
THE PATH BEFORE US IS ALMOST CLEAR... THINGS ARE IN MOTION AND I COULD USE YOUR HELP.
IT WON'T *FEEL* LIKE IT AT FIRST... BUT WE WILL BE CHANGING THINGS FOR THE BETTER. IN TIME, YOU'LL SEE.
I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS WITHOUT YOU, AMANDA... BUT I *WILL*.

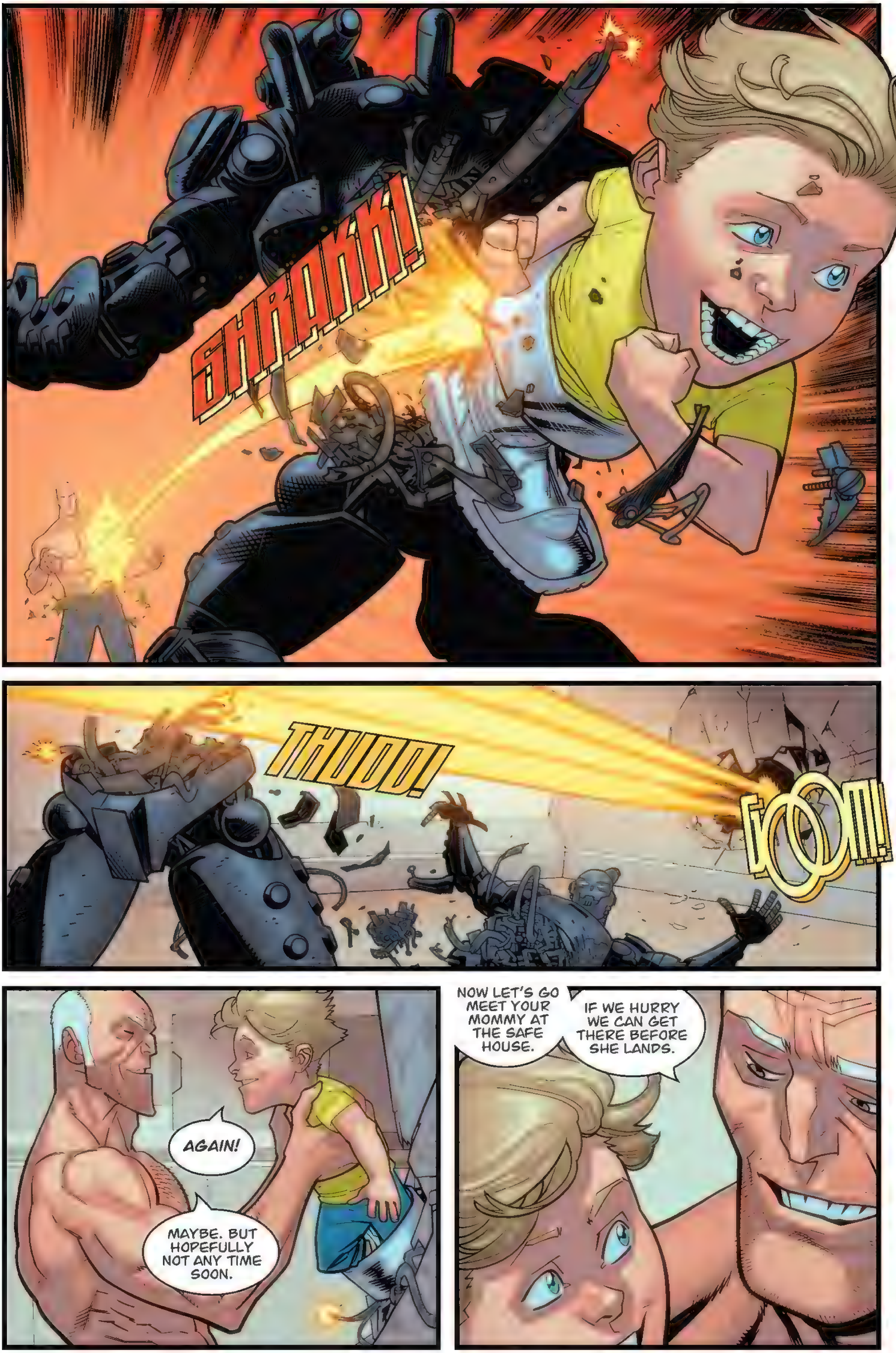

MONAX... HE TOLD ME WHAT YOU *ARE*... AND I DIDN'T *BELIEVE* HIM.
YOU DID HUNT DOWN AND KILL THE ZAXALS, DIDN'T YOU? YOU *ARE* A...
MONSTER?
THAT'S WHAT HE SAID, DIDN'T HE? I KILLED THE ZAXALS, THE ONE YOU MATED WITH... ALL THE OTHERS I COULD FIND... I TRIED TO KILL YOUR BABY, BEFORE HE GREW INTO MONAX.
SO YES, I KNEW HOW DEEPLY YOU HAD BETRAYED ME, THAT YOU'D FATHERED A CHILD. I FORGAVE YOU... AND I TRIED TO *ERASE* IT. THINKING BACK, I WAS ALWAYS CAPABLE OF DOING WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE, NO MATTER HOW UGLY.
AM I A MONSTER? MAYBE I *ALWAYS* WAS... BENEATH THE SURFACE.
WHO KNEW WE HAD *SO MUCH* IN COMMON?
WHY, REX?!
WHY?!
I *LOVED* YOU!
"LOVED?"
YOU'RE REALLY NOT GOING TO HELP ME...
WHAT AN IDIOT I'VE BEEN. I NEVER CONSIDERED WHAT THIS WOULD DO TO *US*.
I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD COME TO THIS.

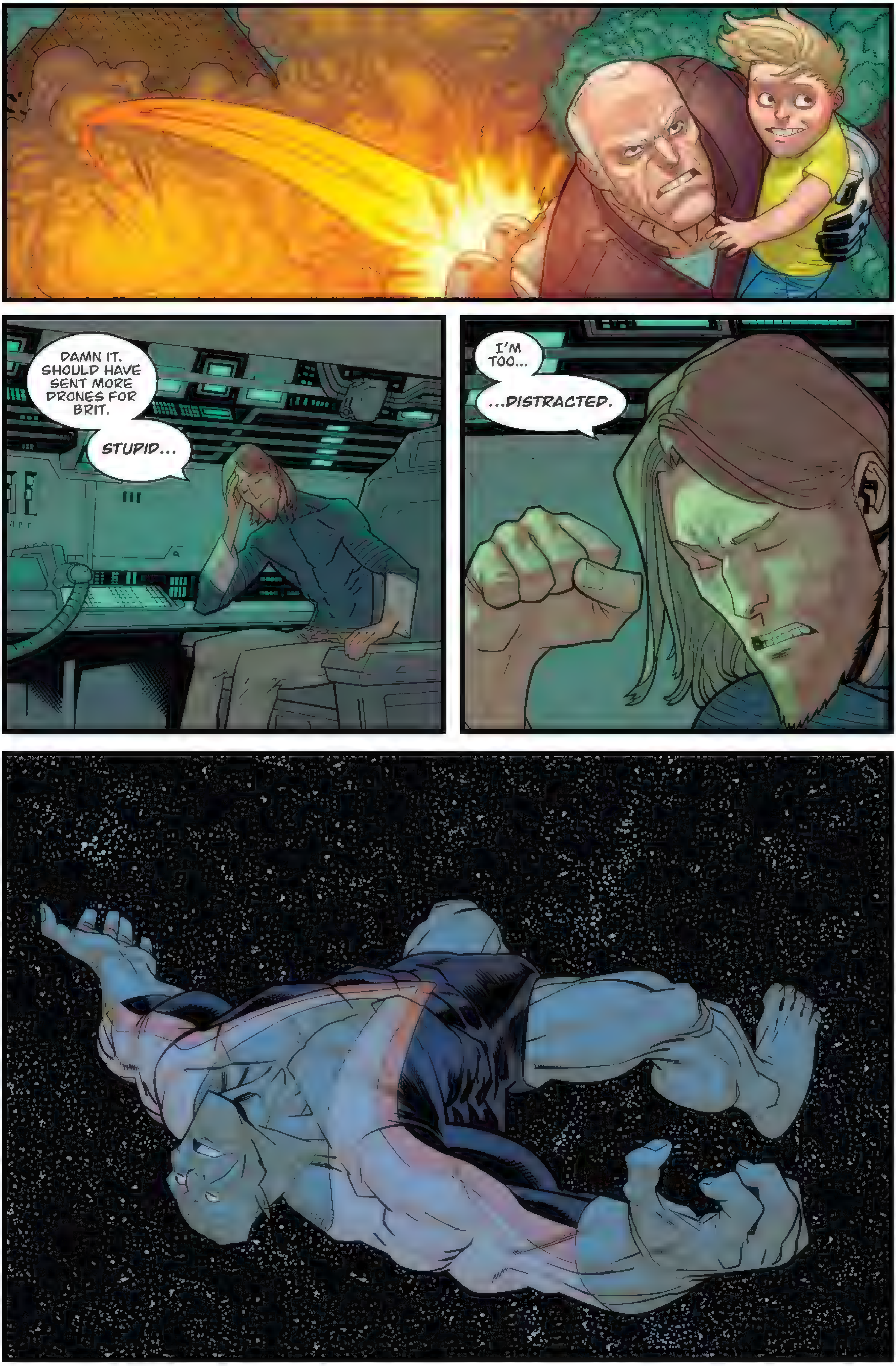

AGGH!
KROOM!
WRAMM!
YOU CAN'T--
I WON'T--
THERE'S NO POINT IN STRUGGLING.
I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER... YOU BETRAYED ME *FIRST*.

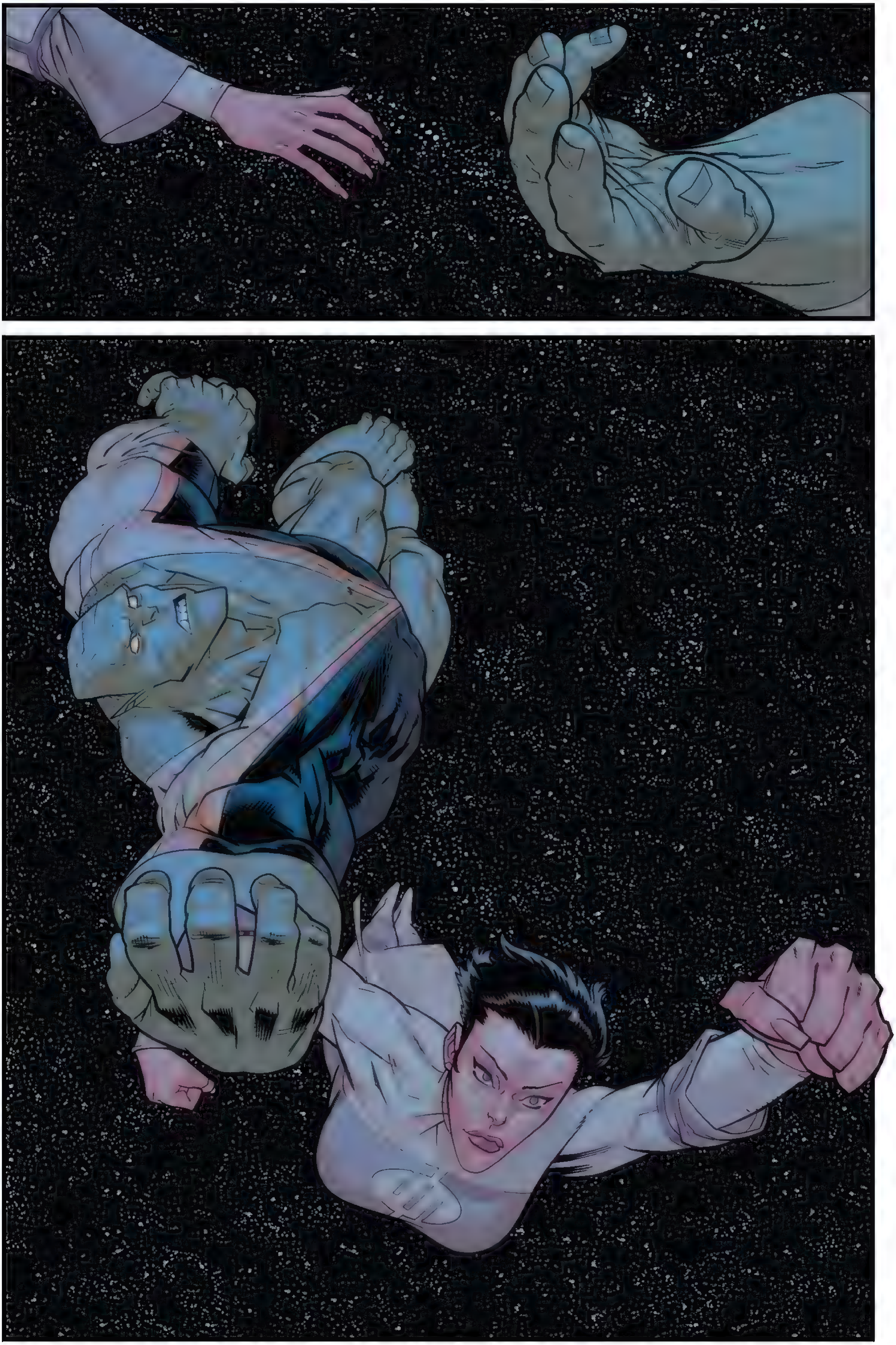

BUT I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
REX!
DON'T-- THERE'S STILL TIME TO STOP THIS!
REX!
REX!

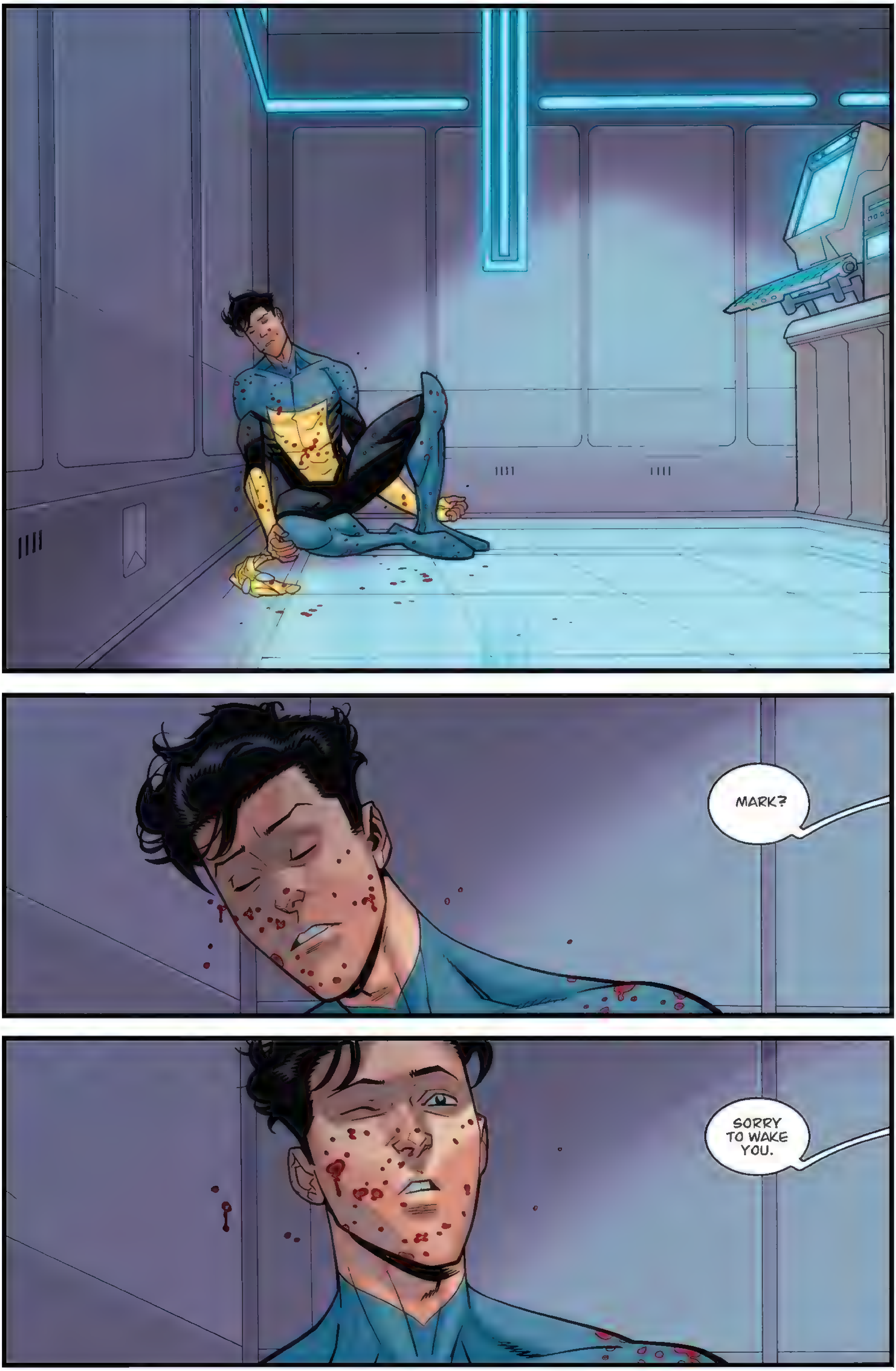
CHAPTER 113


GET IN AND GO! I CAN'T PROTECT YOU HERE!
WHAT ABOUT JUNIOR?!
I NEED HIM!
WHAT IN THE HELL IS GOING ON?!
VZOPP!
I KNOW I CAN'T KILL YOU-- SURRENDER AND YOUR FAMILY WILL BE SAFE.
YOU'RE THREATENING MY FAMILY?!
I MAY NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO PUNCH THROUGH YOUR ARMOR ON MY OWN--
--BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO FIGURE OUT WAYS AROUND THAT.

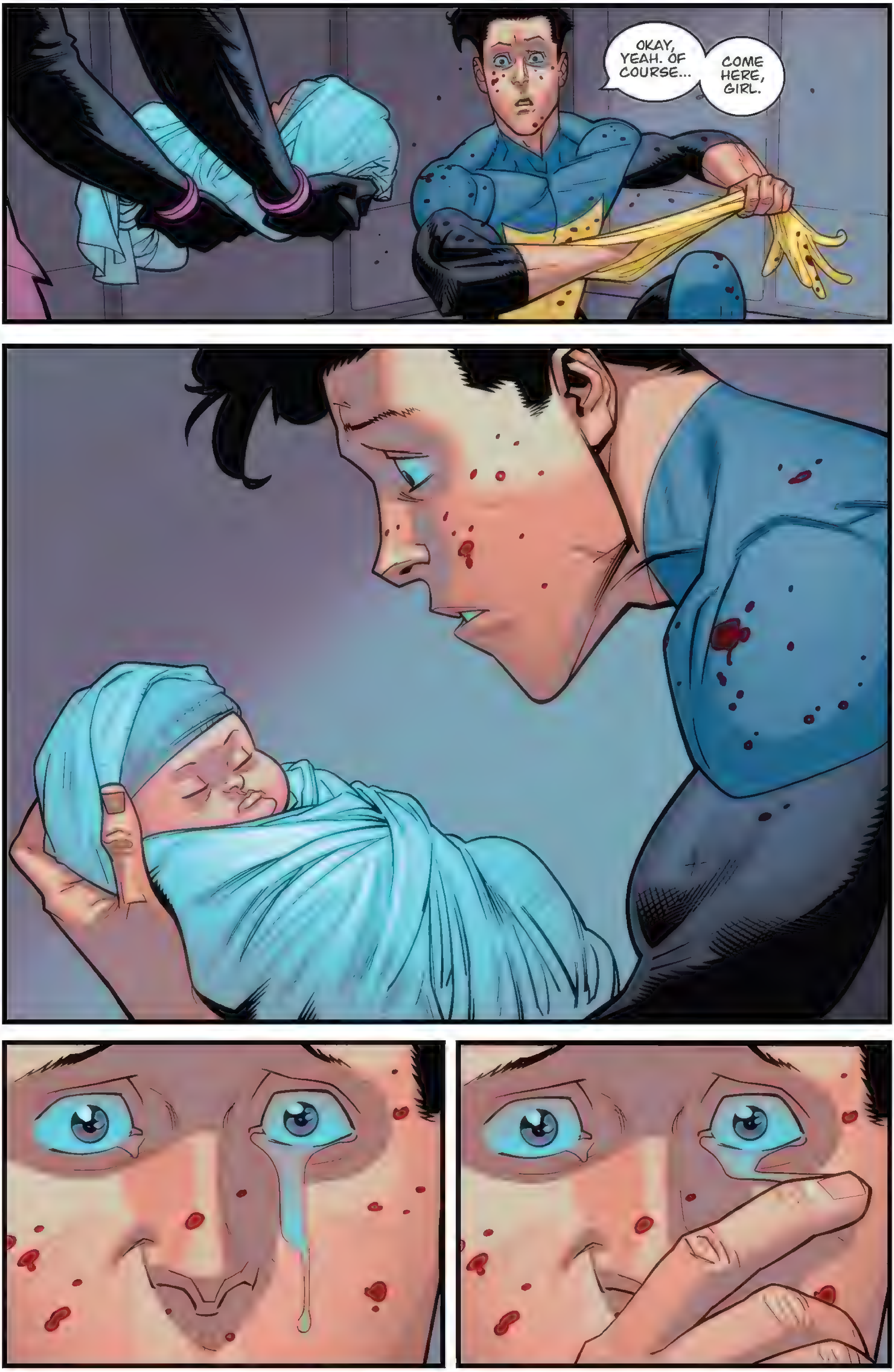

SHRAKK!
THUDD!
BOOM!
AGAIN!
MAYBE. BUT HOPEFULLY NOT ANY TIME SOON.
NOW LET'S GO MEET YOUR MOMMY AT THE SAFE HOUSE.
IF WE HURRY WE CAN GET THERE BEFORE SHE LANDS.

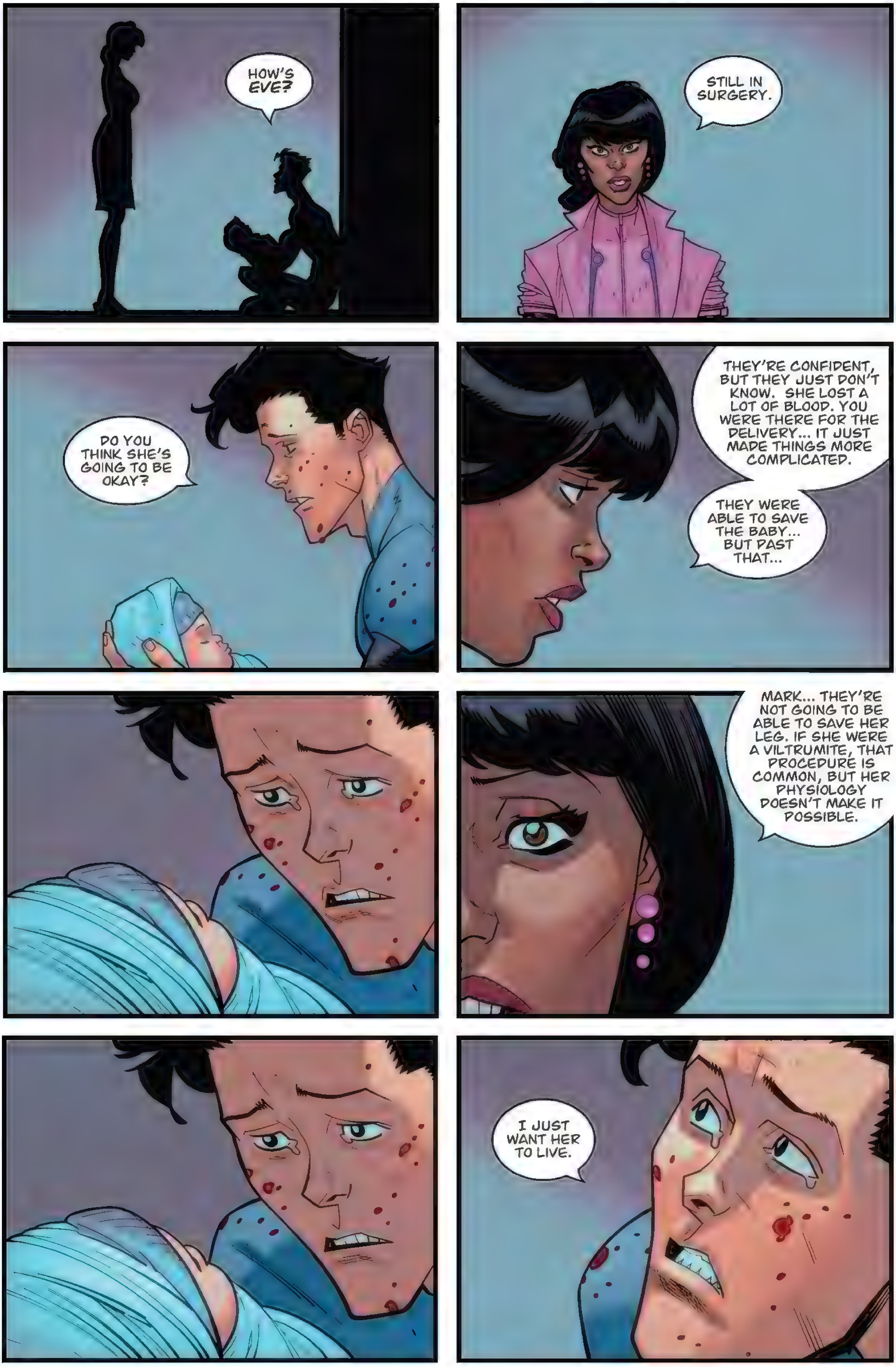

DAMN IT. SHOULD HAVE SENT MORE DRONES FOR BRIT.
STUPID...
I'M TOO...
...DISTRACTED.

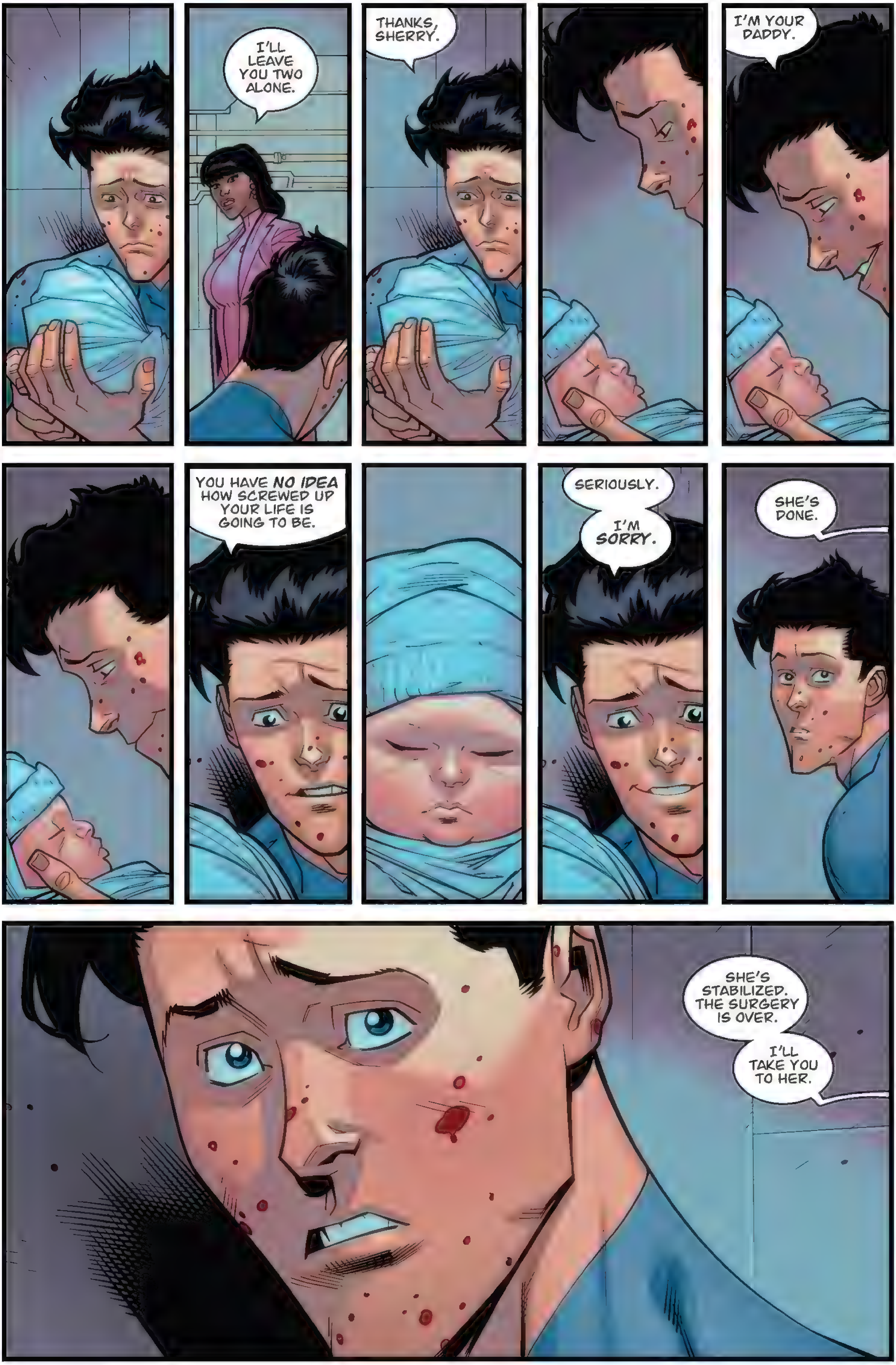


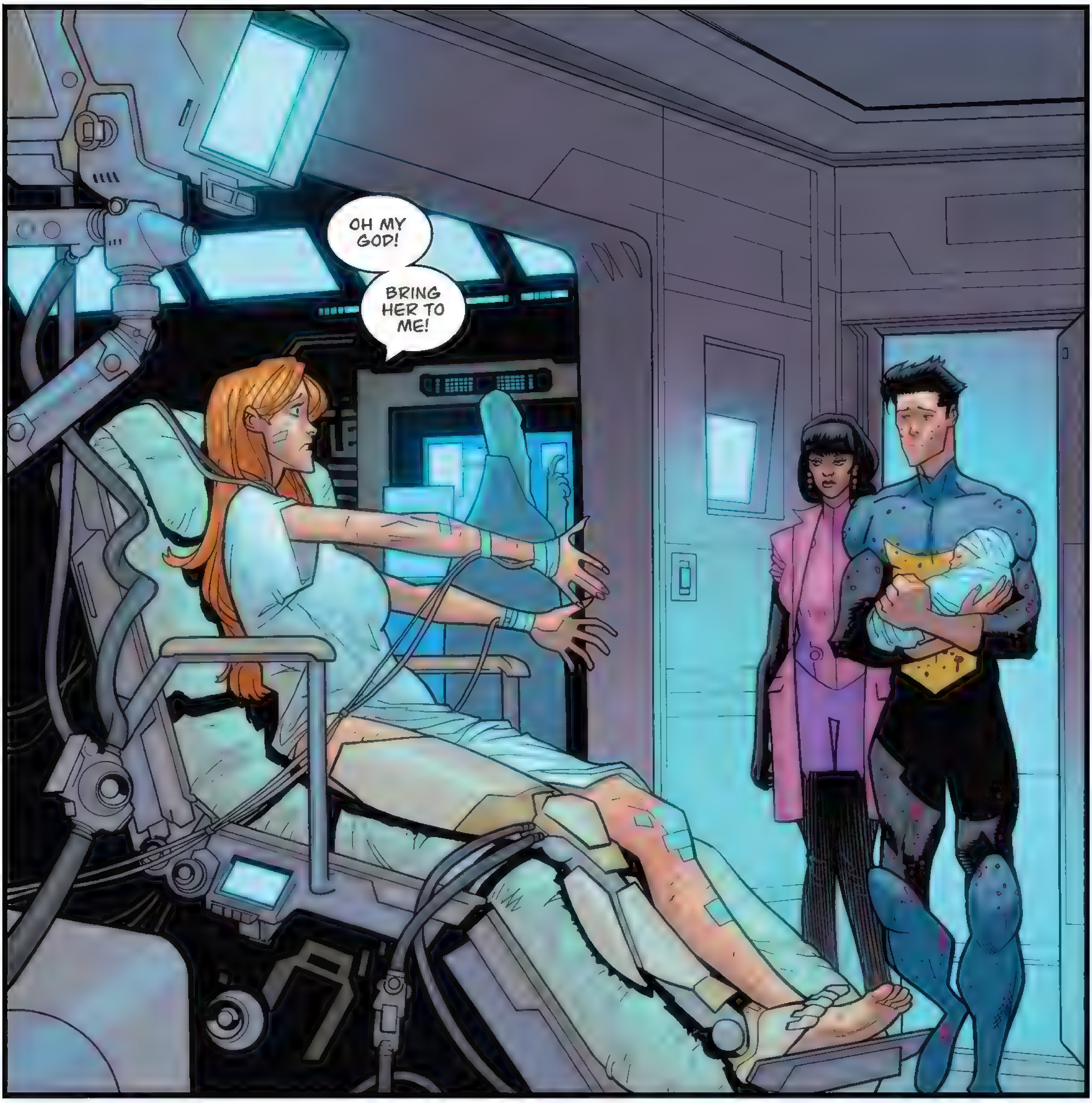

MARK?
SORRY TO WAKE YOU.

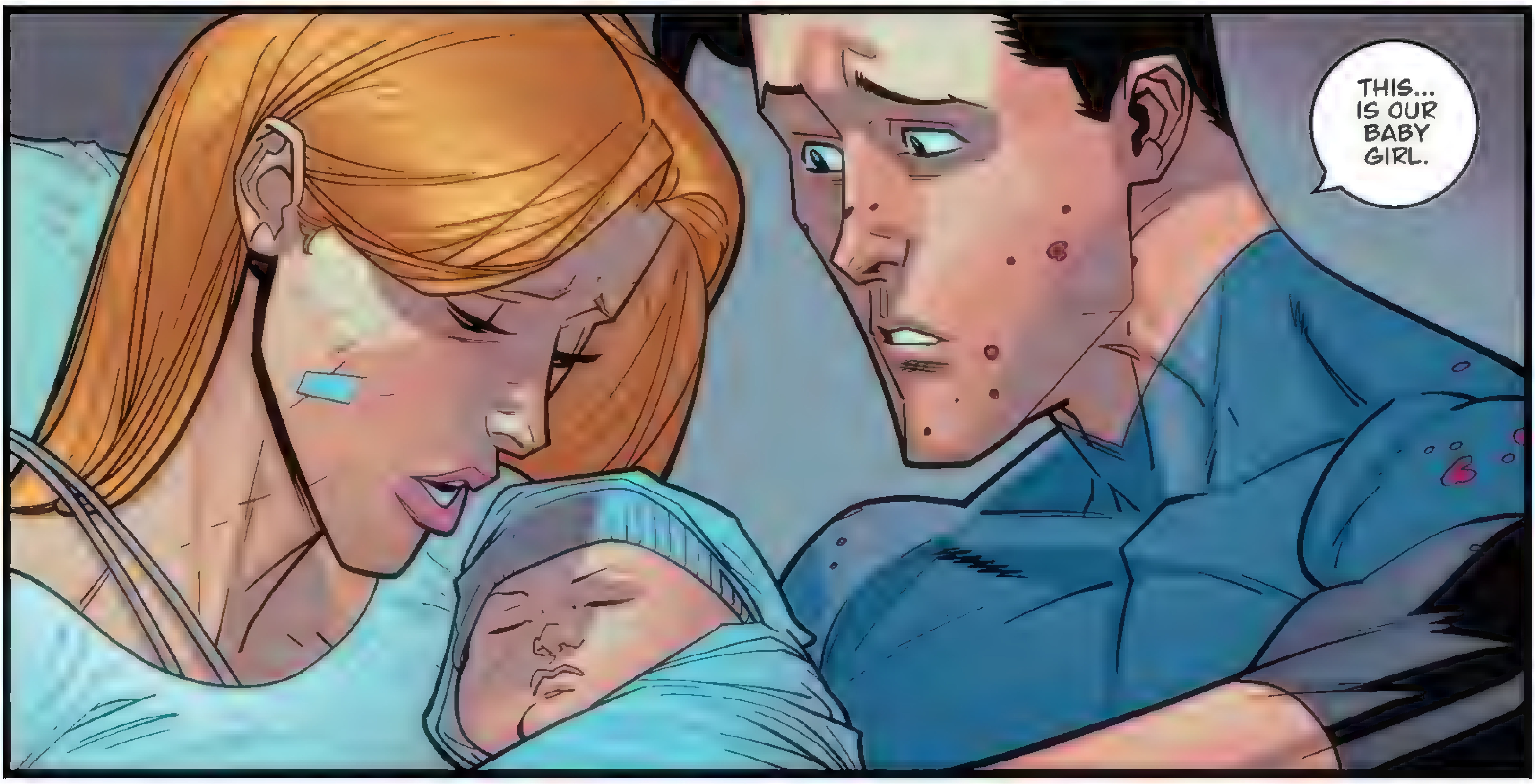
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HOLD HER?

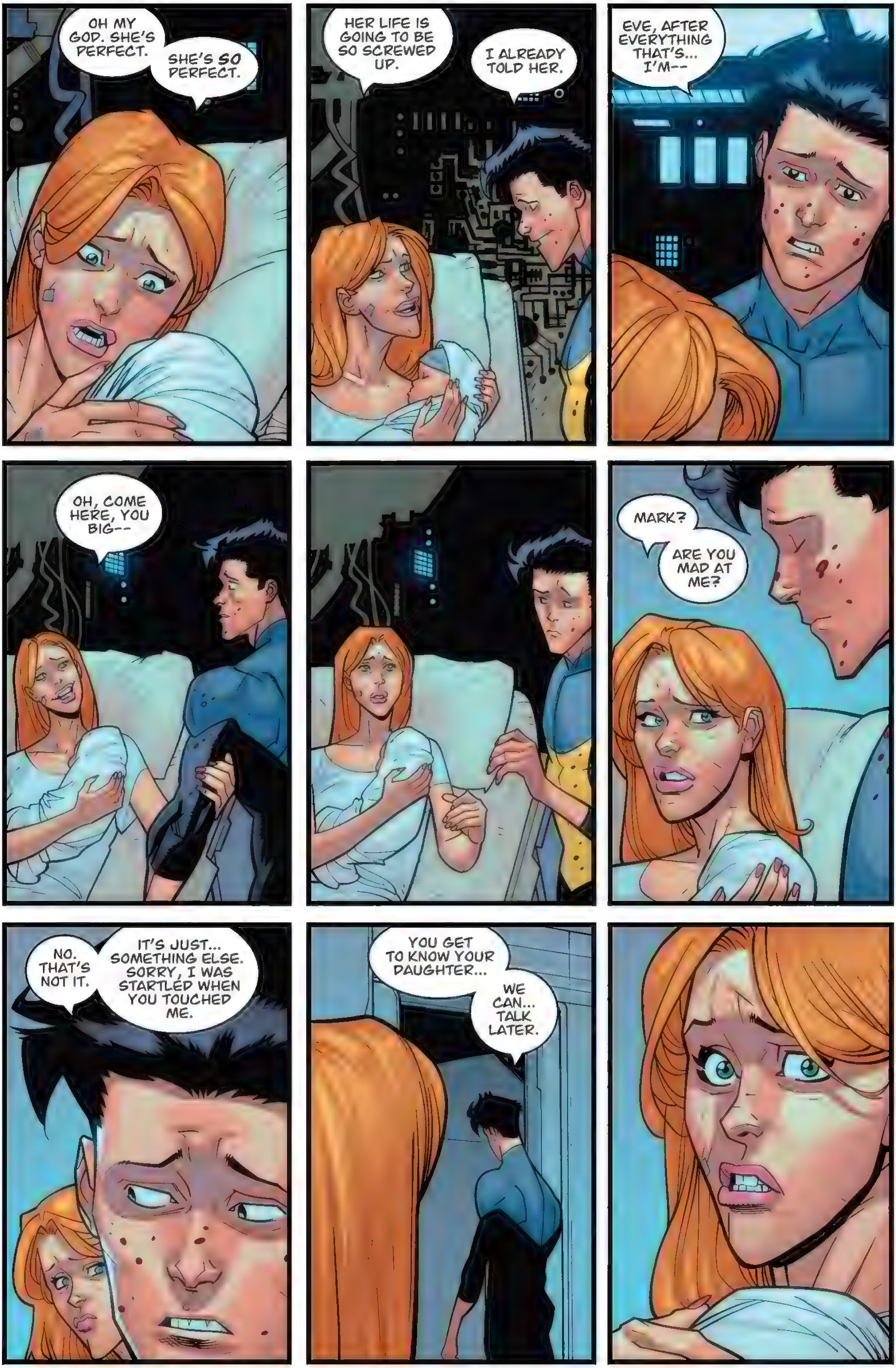

OKAY, YEAH. OF COURSE...
COME HERE, GIRL.

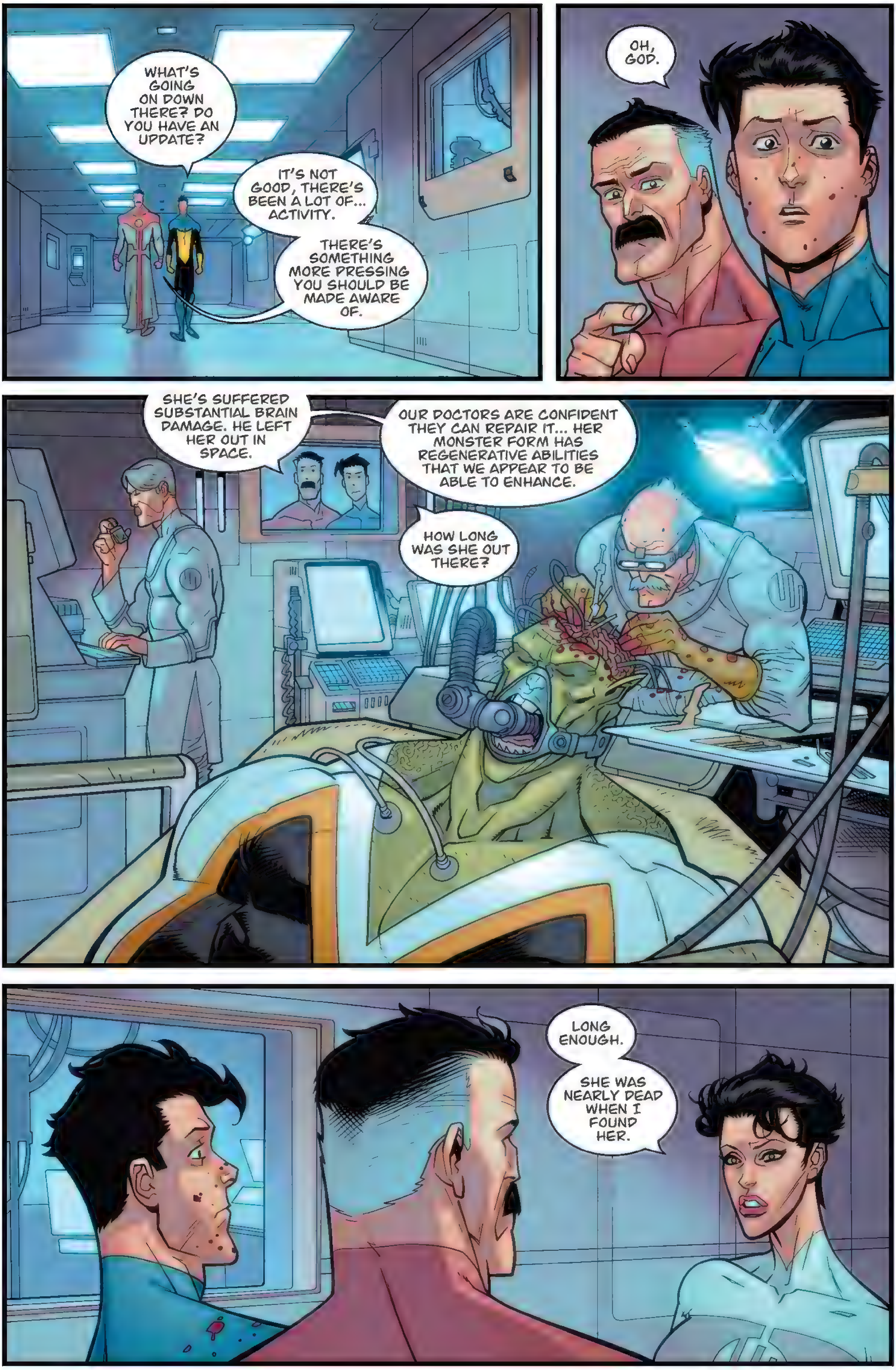

HOW'S EVE?
STILL IN SURGERY.
DO YOU THINK SHE'S GOING TO BE OKAY?
THEY'RE CONFIDENT, BUT THEY JUST DON'T KNOW. SHE LOST A LOT OF BLOOD. YOU WERE THERE FOR THE DELIVERY... IT JUST MADE THINGS MORE COMPLICATED.
THEY WERE ABLE TO SAVE THE BABY... BUT PAST THAT...
MARK... THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO SAVE HER LEG. IF SHE WERE A VILTRUMITE, THAT PROCEDURE IS COMMON, BUT HER PHYSIOLOGY DOESN'T MAKE IT POSSIBLE.
I JUST WANT HER TO LIVE.

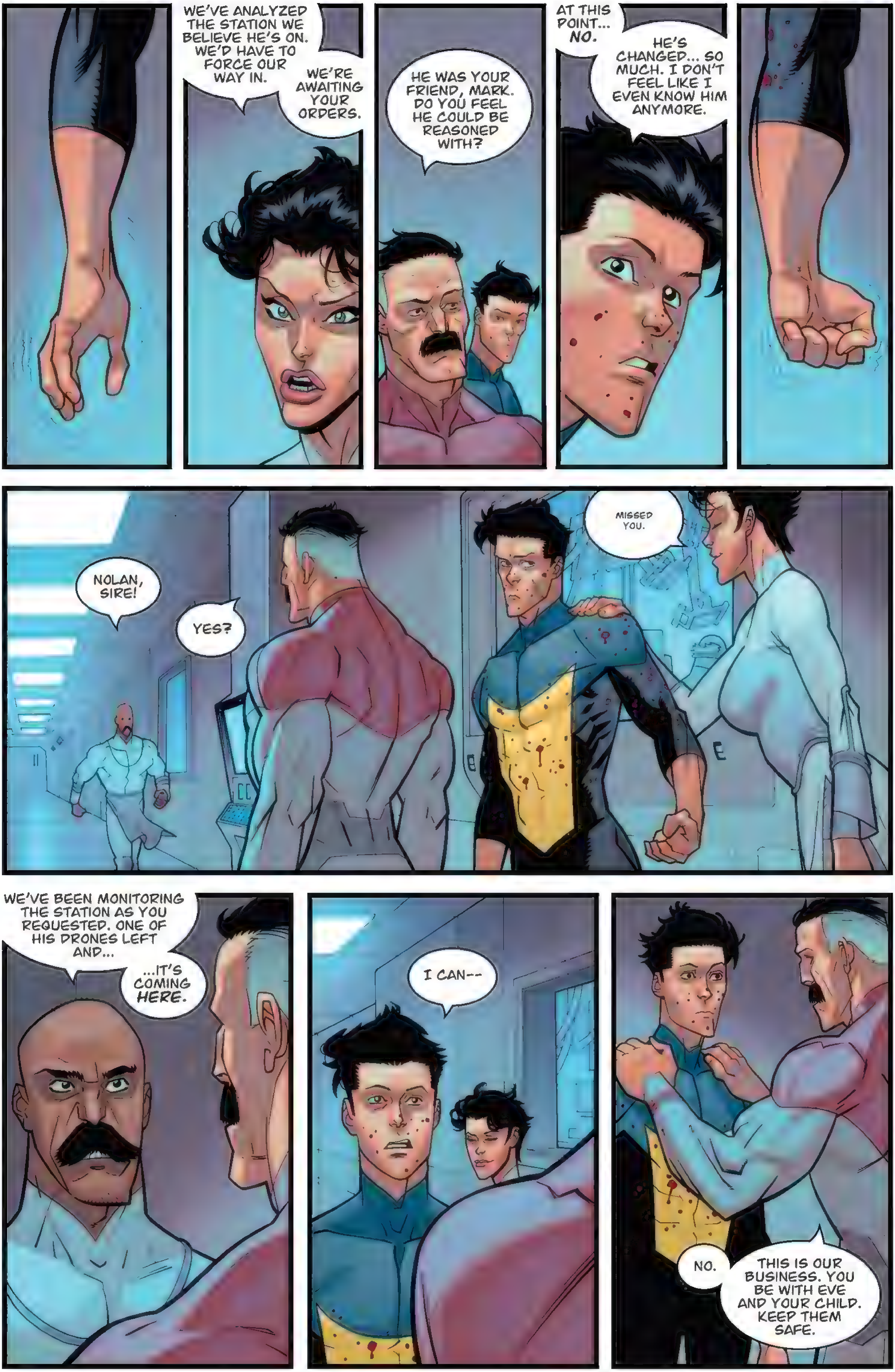

I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE.
THANKS, SHERRY.
I'M YOUR DADDY.
YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* HOW SCREWED UP YOUR LIFE IS GOING TO BE.
SERIOUSLY.
I'M *SORRY*.
SHE'S DONE.
SHE'S STABILIZED. THE SURGERY IS OVER.
I'LL TAKE YOU TO HER.

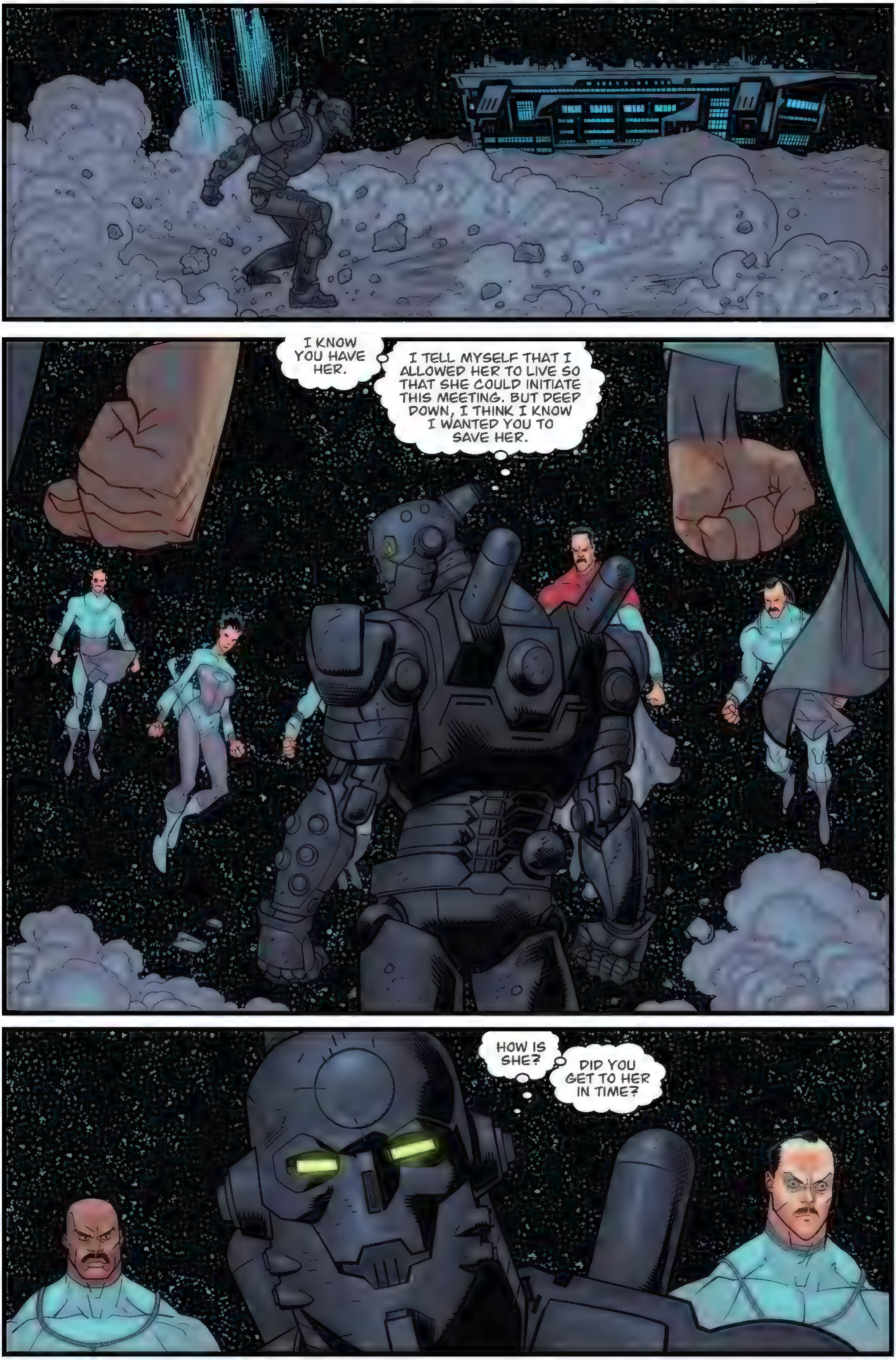

OH MY GOD!
BRING HER TO ME!

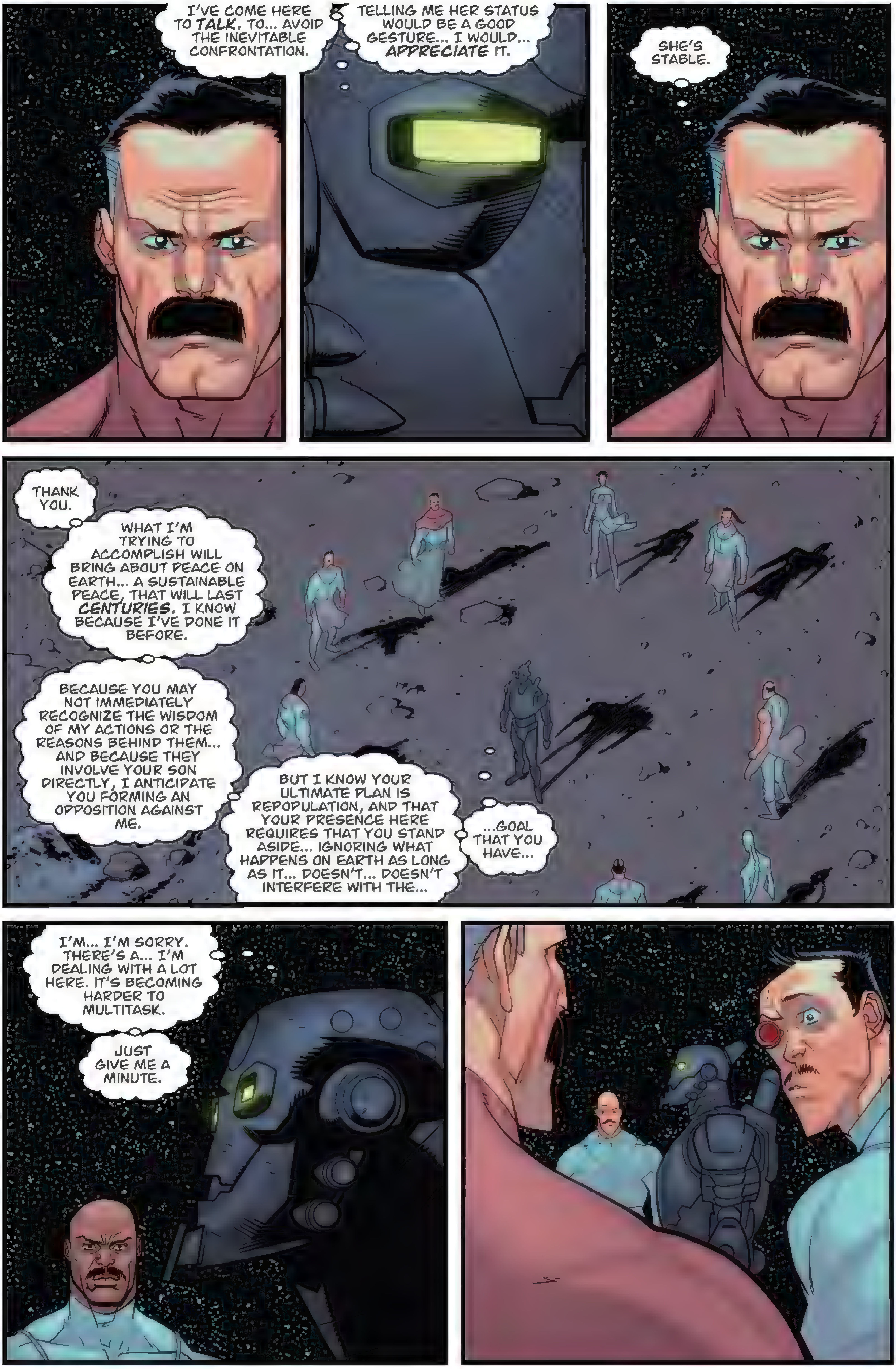

THIS... IS OUR BABY GIRL.


OH MY GOD. SHE'S PERFECT.
SHE'S *SO* PERFECT.
HER LIFE IS GOING TO BE SO SCREWED UP.
I ALREADY TOLD HER.
EVE, AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S... I'M--
OH, COME HERE, YOU BIG--
MARK?
ARE YOU MAD AT ME?
NO. THAT'S NOT IT.
IT'S JUST... SOMETHING ELSE. SORRY, I WAS STARTLED WHEN YOU TOUCHED ME.
YOU GET TO KNOW YOUR DAUGHTER...
WE CAN... TALK LATER.

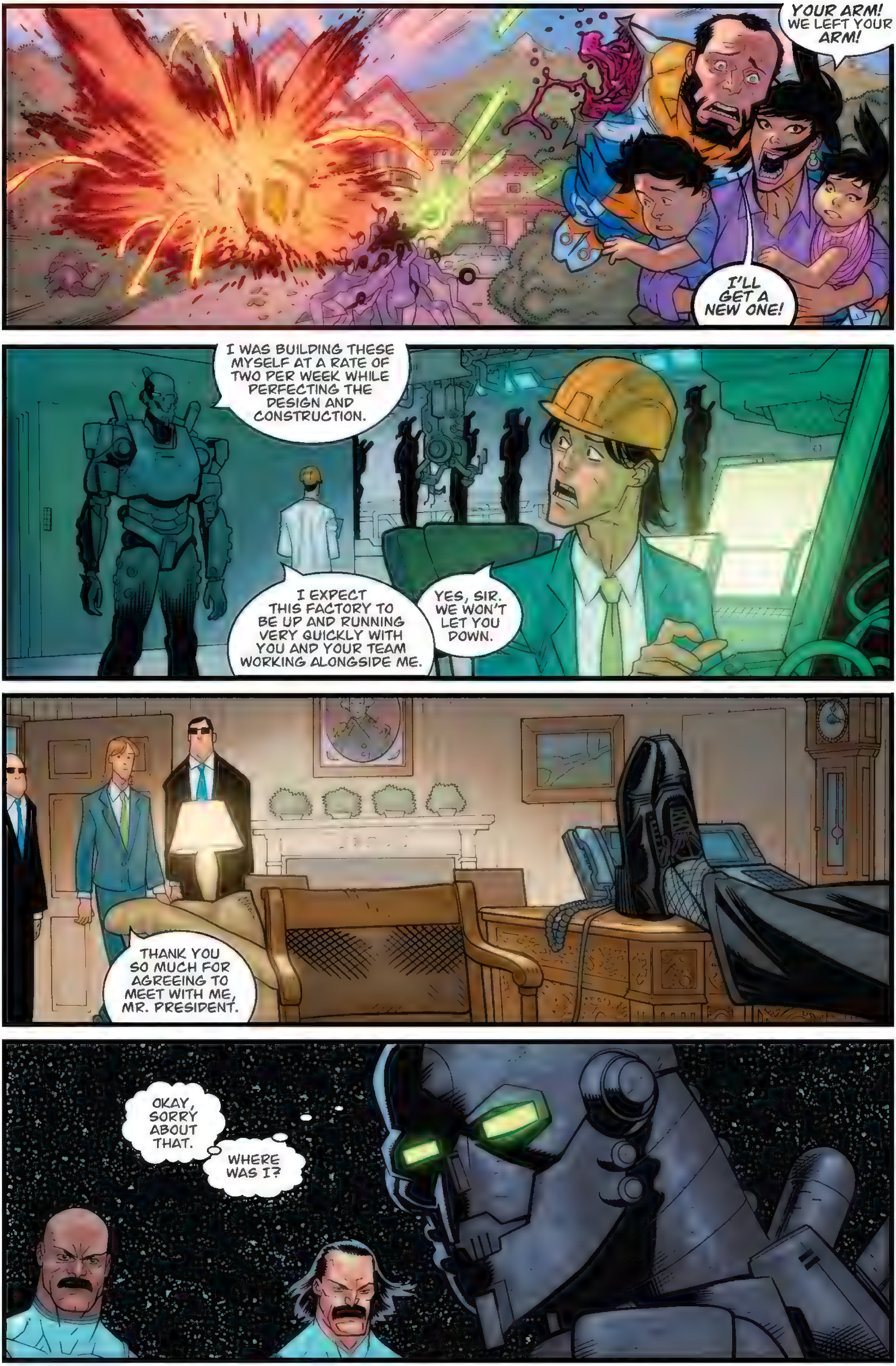

WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE? DO YOU HAVE AN UPDATE?
IT'S NOT GOOD, THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF... ACTIVITY.
THERE'S SOMETHING MORE PRESSING YOU SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF.
OH, GOD.
SHE'S SUFFERED SUBSTANTIAL BRAIN DAMAGE. HE LEFT HER OUT IN SPACE.
OUR DOCTORS ARE CONFIDENT THEY CAN REPAIR IT... HER MONSTER FORM HAS REGENERATIVE ABILITIES THAT WE APPEAR TO BE ABLE TO ENHANCE.
HOW LONG WAS SHE OUT THERE?
LONG ENOUGH.
SHE WAS NEARLY DEAD WHEN I FOUND HER.

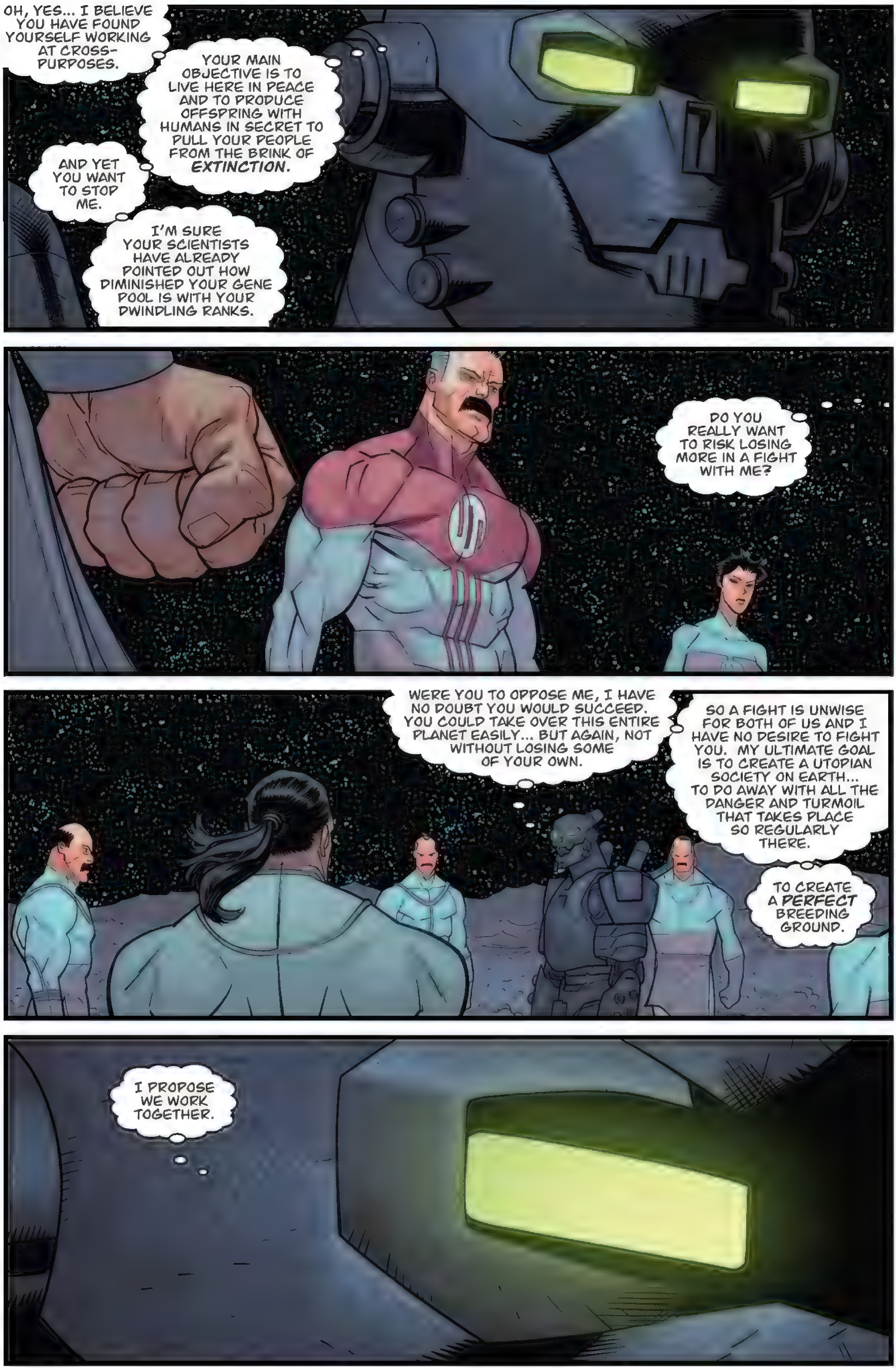

WE'VE ANALYZED THE STATION WE BELIEVE HE'S ON. WE'D HAVE TO FORCE OUR WAY IN.
WE'RE AWAITING YOUR ORDERS.
HE WAS YOUR FRIEND, MARK. DO YOU FEEL HE COULD BE REASONED WITH?
AT THIS POINT... NO.
HE'S CHANGED... SO MUCH. I DON'T FEEL LIKE I EVEN KNOW HIM ANYMORE.
NOLAN, SIRE!
YES?
MISSED YOU.
WE'VE BEEN MONITORING THE STATION AS YOU REQUESTED. ONE OF HIS DRONES LEFT AND...
...IT'S COMING HERE.
I CAN--
NO.
THIS IS OUR BUSINESS. YOU BE WITH EVE AND YOUR CHILD. KEEP THEM SAFE.

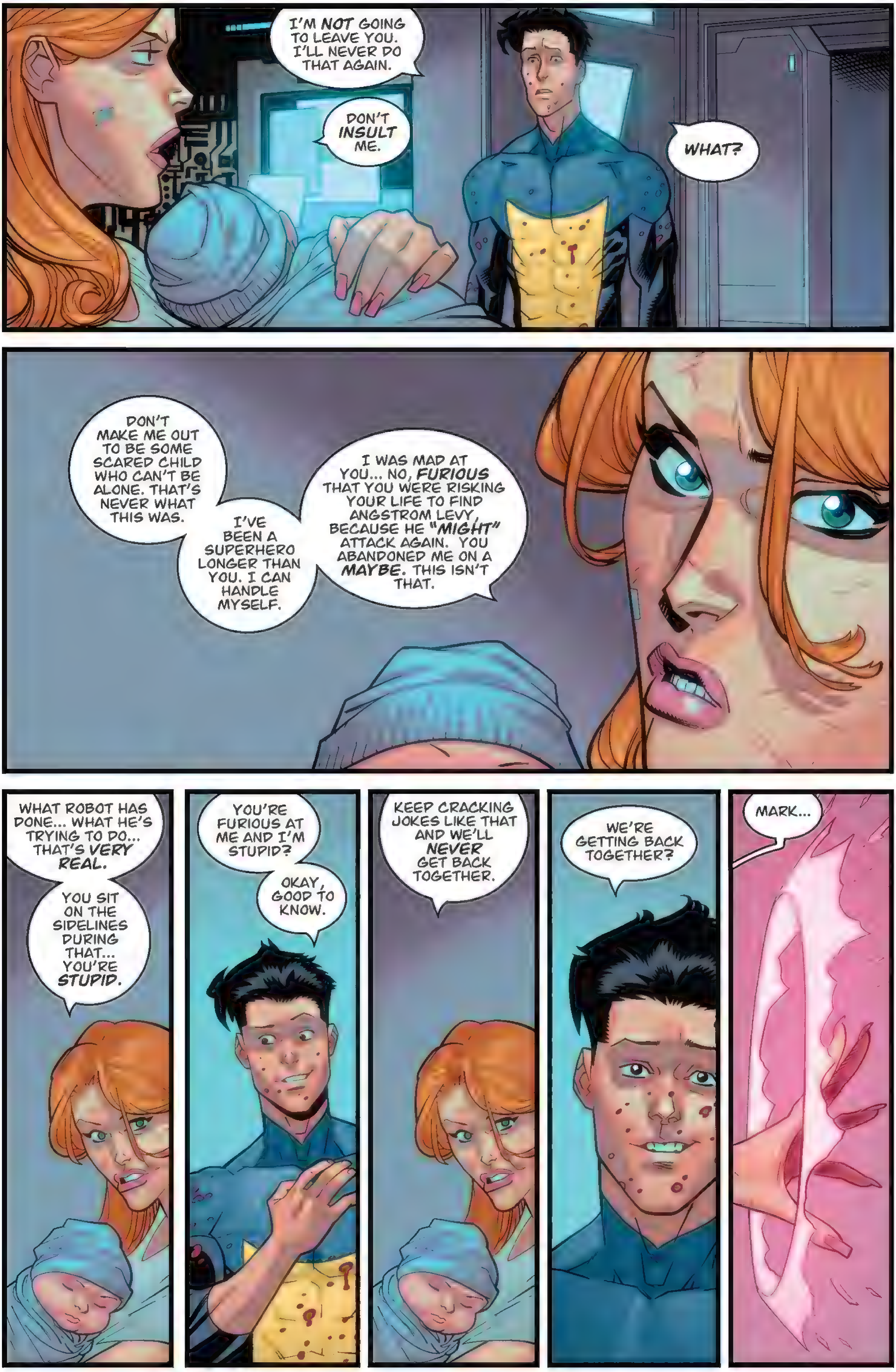

I KNOW YOU HAVE HER.
I TELL MYSELF THAT I ALLOWED HER TO LIVE SO THAT SHE COULD INITIATE THIS MEETING. BUT DEEP DOWN, I THINK I KNOW I WANTED YOU TO SAVE HER.
HOW IS SHE?
DID YOU GET TO HER IN TIME?


I'VE COME HERE TO *TALK*. TO... AVOID THE INEVITABLE CONFRONTATION.
TELLING ME HER STATUS WOULD BE A GOOD GESTURE... I WOULD... *APPRECIATE* IT.
SHE'S STABLE.
THANK YOU.
WHAT I'M TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH WILL BRING ABOUT PEACE ON EARTH... A SUSTAINABLE PEACE, THAT WILL LAST *CENTURIES.* I KNOW BECAUSE I'VE DONE IT BEFORE.
BECAUSE YOU MAY NOT IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZE THE WISDOM OF MY ACTIONS OR THE REASONS BEHIND THEM... AND BECAUSE THEY INVOLVE YOUR SON DIRECTLY, I ANTICIPATE YOU FORMING AN OPPOSITION AGAINST ME.
BUT I KNOW YOUR ULTIMATE PLAN IS REPOPULATION, AND THAT YOUR PRESENCE HERE REQUIRES THAT YOU STAND ASIDE... IGNORING WHAT HAPPENS ON EARTH AS LONG AS IT... DOESN'T... DOESN'T INTERFERE WITH THE...
...GOAL THAT YOU HAVE...
I'M... I'M SORRY. THERE'S A... I'M DEALING WITH A LOT HERE. IT'S BECOMING HARDER TO MULTITASK.
JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE.

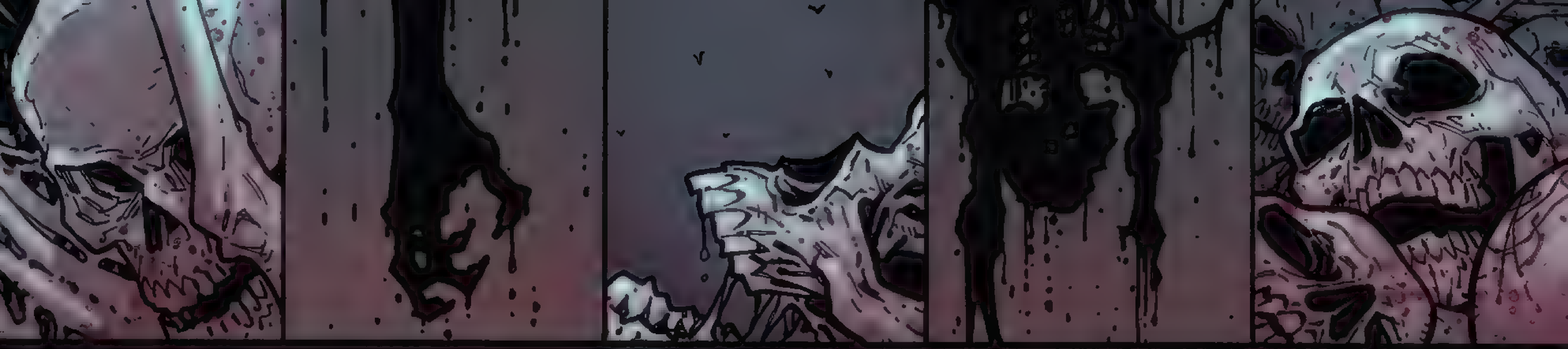
THROKOOM!


YOUR ARM! WE LEFT YOUR ARM!
I'LL GET A NEW ONE!
I WAS BUILDING THESE MYSELF AT A RATE OF TWO PER WEEK WHILE PERFECTING THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION.
I EXPECT THIS FACTORY TO BE UP AND RUNNING VERY QUICKLY WITH YOU AND YOUR TEAM WORKING ALONGSIDE ME.
YES, SIR. WE WON'T LET YOU DOWN.
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR AGREEING TO MEET WITH ME, MR. PRESIDENT.
OKAY, SORRY ABOUT THAT.
WHERE WAS I?


OH, YES... I BELIEVE YOU HAVE FOUND YOURSELF WORKING AT CROSS-PURPOSES.
YOUR MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO LIVE HERE IN PEACE AND TO PRODUCE OFFSPRING WITH HUMANS IN SECRET TO PULL YOUR PEOPLE FROM THE BRINK OF *EXTINCTION*.
AND YET YOU WANT TO STOP ME.
I'M SURE YOUR SCIENTISTS HAVE ALREADY POINTED OUT HOW DIMINISHED YOUR GENE POOL IS WITH YOUR DWINDLING RANKS.
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO RISK LOSING MORE IN A FIGHT WITH ME?
WERE YOU TO OPPOSE ME, I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU WOULD SUCCEED. YOU COULD TAKE OVER THIS ENTIRE PLANET EASILY... BUT AGAIN, NOT WITHOUT LOSING SOME OF YOUR OWN.
SO A FIGHT IS UNWISE FOR BOTH OF US AND I HAVE NO DESIRE TO FIGHT YOU. MY ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO CREATE A UTOPIAN SOCIETY ON EARTH... TO DO AWAY WITH ALL THE DANGER AND TURMOIL THAT TAKES PLACE SO REGULARLY THERE.
TO CREATE A *PERFECT* BREEDING GROUND.
I PROPOSE WE WORK TOGETHER.


I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE YOU. I'LL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN.
DON'T INSULT ME.
WHAT?
DON'T MAKE ME OUT TO BE SOME SCARED CHILD WHO CAN'T BE ALONE. THAT'S NEVER WHAT THIS WAS.
I'VE BEEN A SUPERHERO LONGER THAN YOU. I CAN HANDLE MYSELF.
I WAS MAD AT YOU... NO, FURIOUS THAT YOU WERE RISKING YOUR LIFE TO FIND ANGSTROM LEVY, BECAUSE HE "MIGHT" ATTACK AGAIN. YOU ABANDONED ME ON A MAYBE. THIS ISN'T THAT.
WHAT ROBOT HAS DONE... WHAT HE'S TRYING TO DO... THAT'S VERY REAL.
YOU SIT ON THE SIDELINES DURING THAT... YOU'RE STUPID.
YOU'RE FURIOUS AT ME AND I'M STUPID?
OKAY, GOOD TO KNOW.
KEEP CRACKING JOKES LIKE THAT AND WE'LL NEVER GET BACK TOGETHER.
WE'RE GETTING BACK TOGETHER?
MARK...

SHUT UP AND GO SAVE THE WORLD.
YES, MA'AM.



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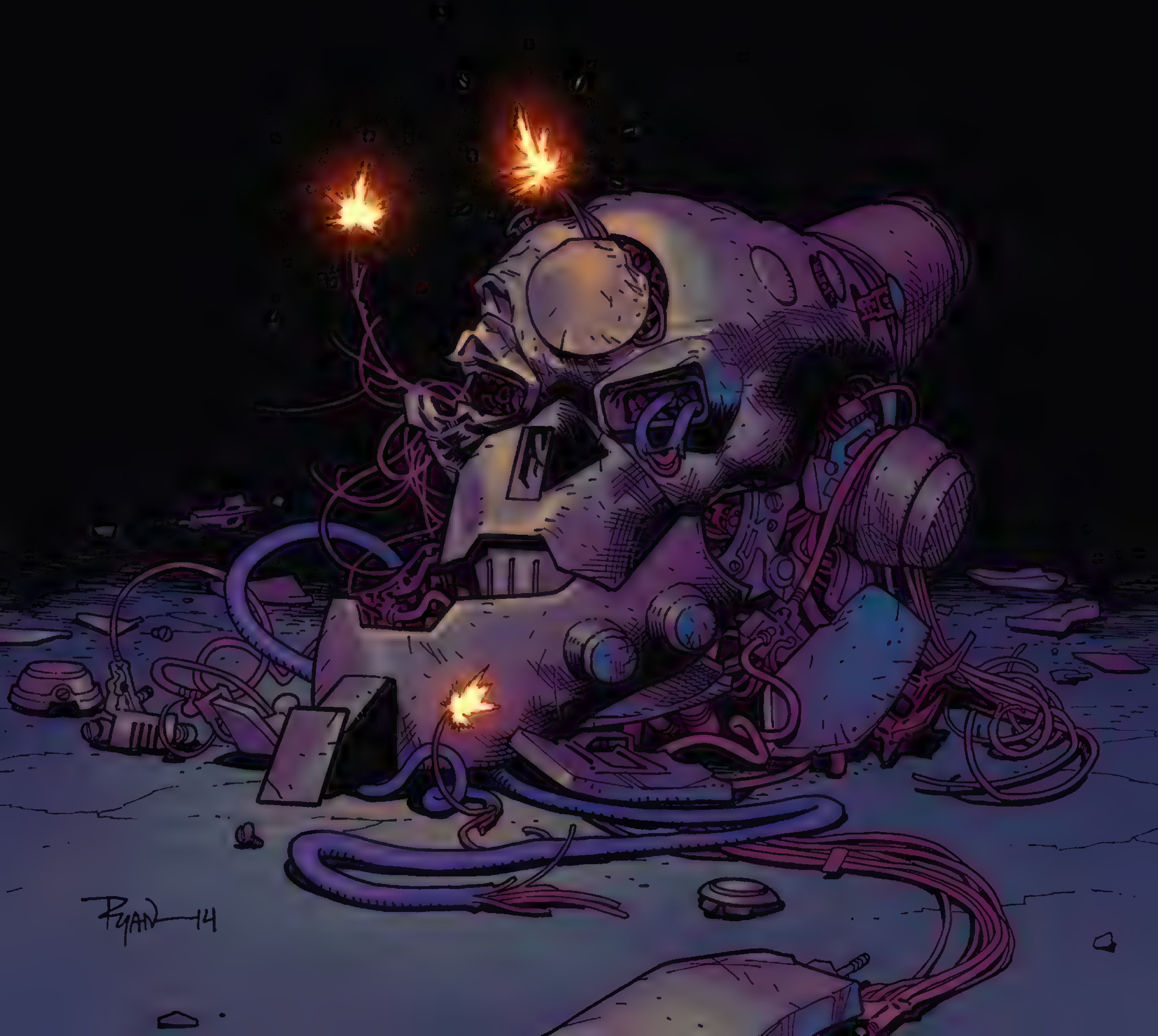
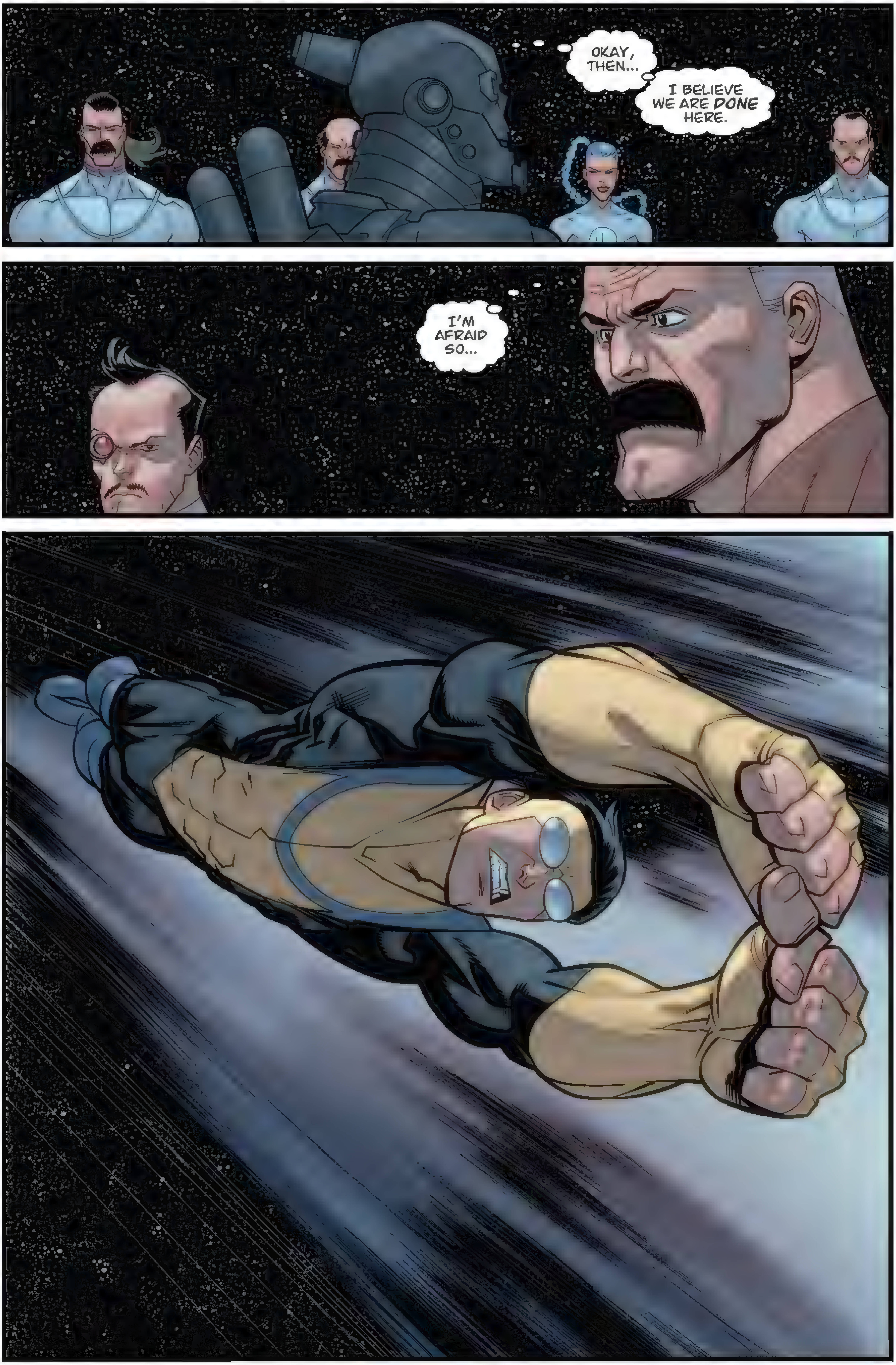
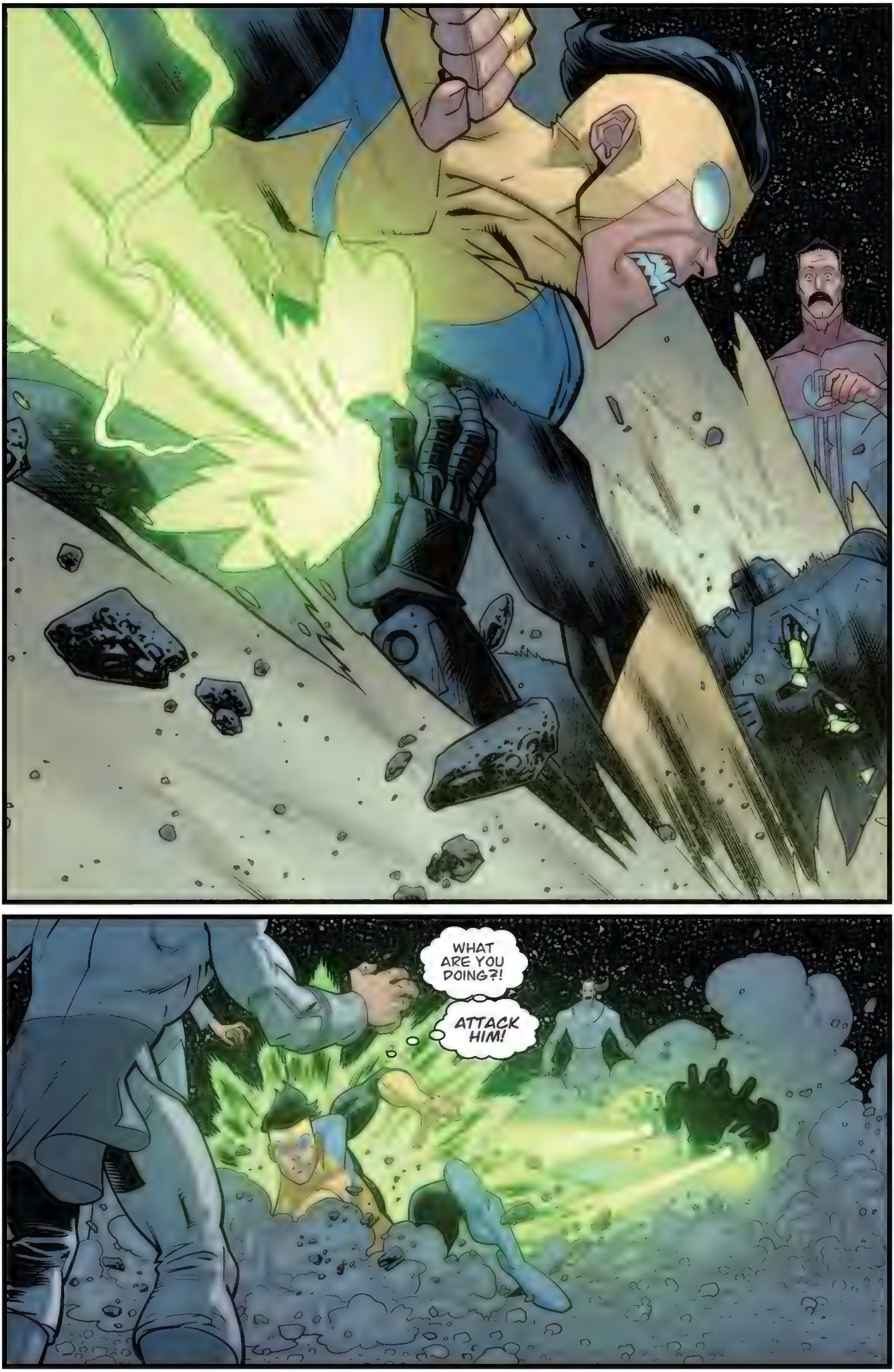
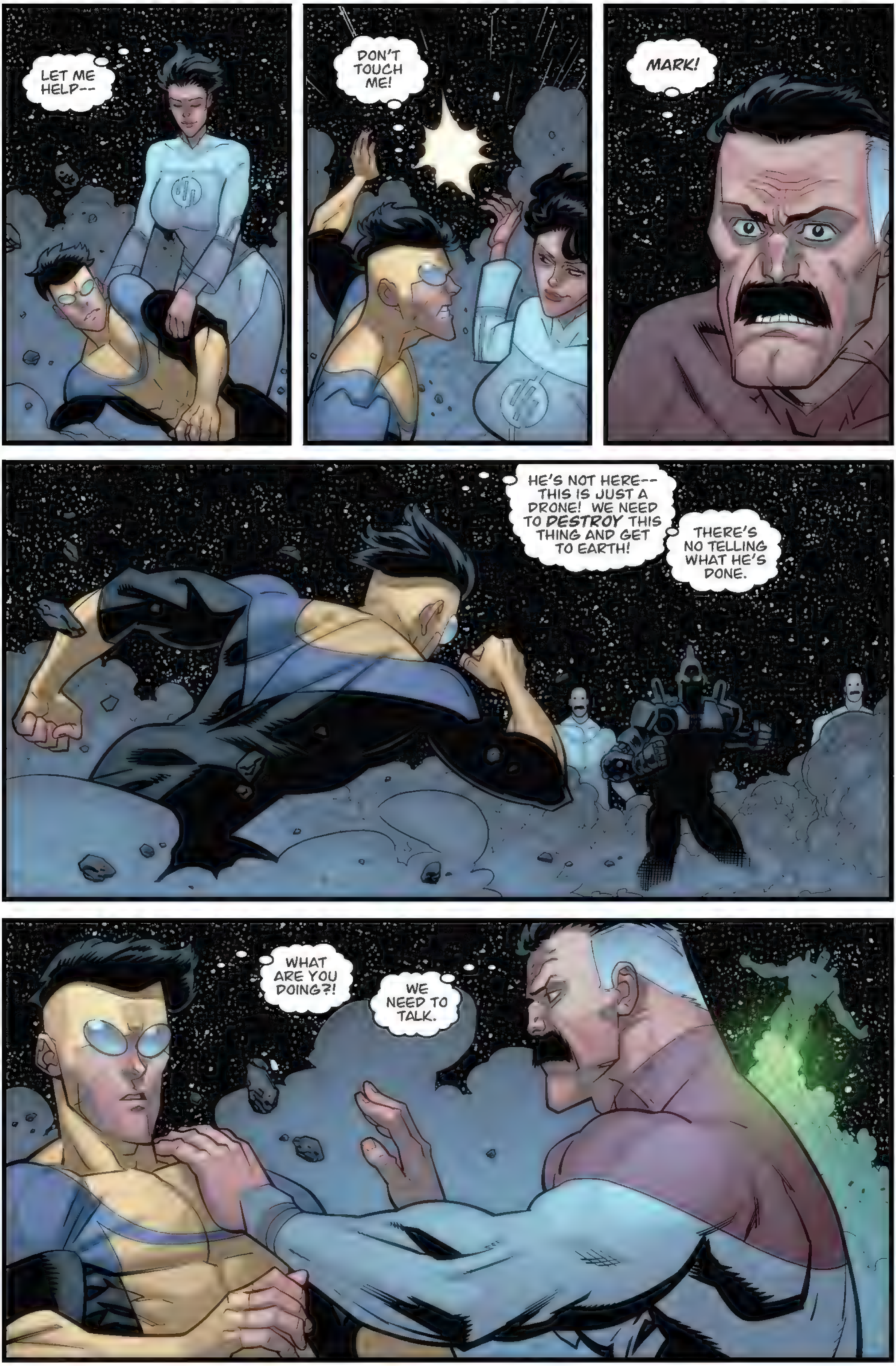
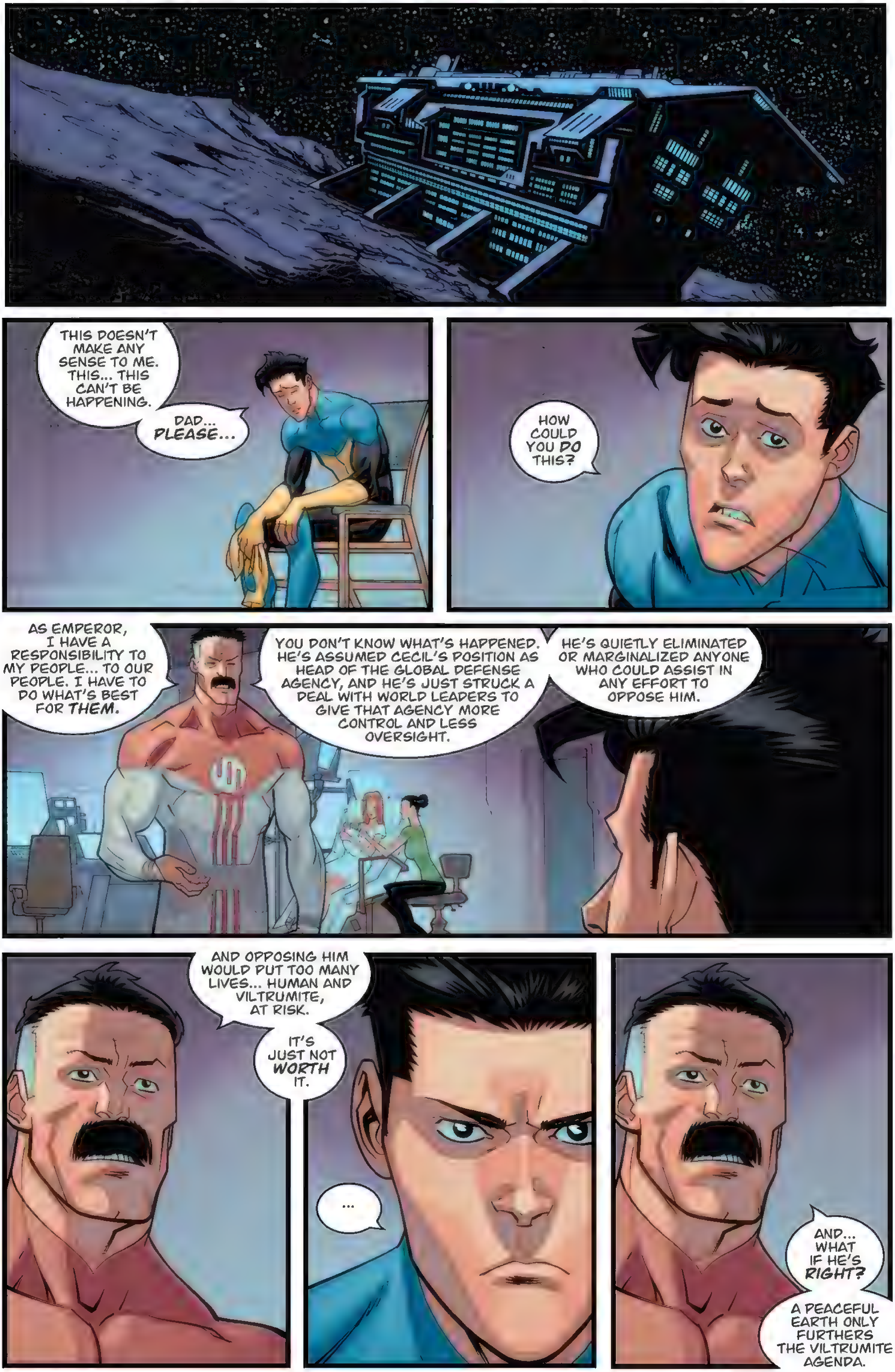
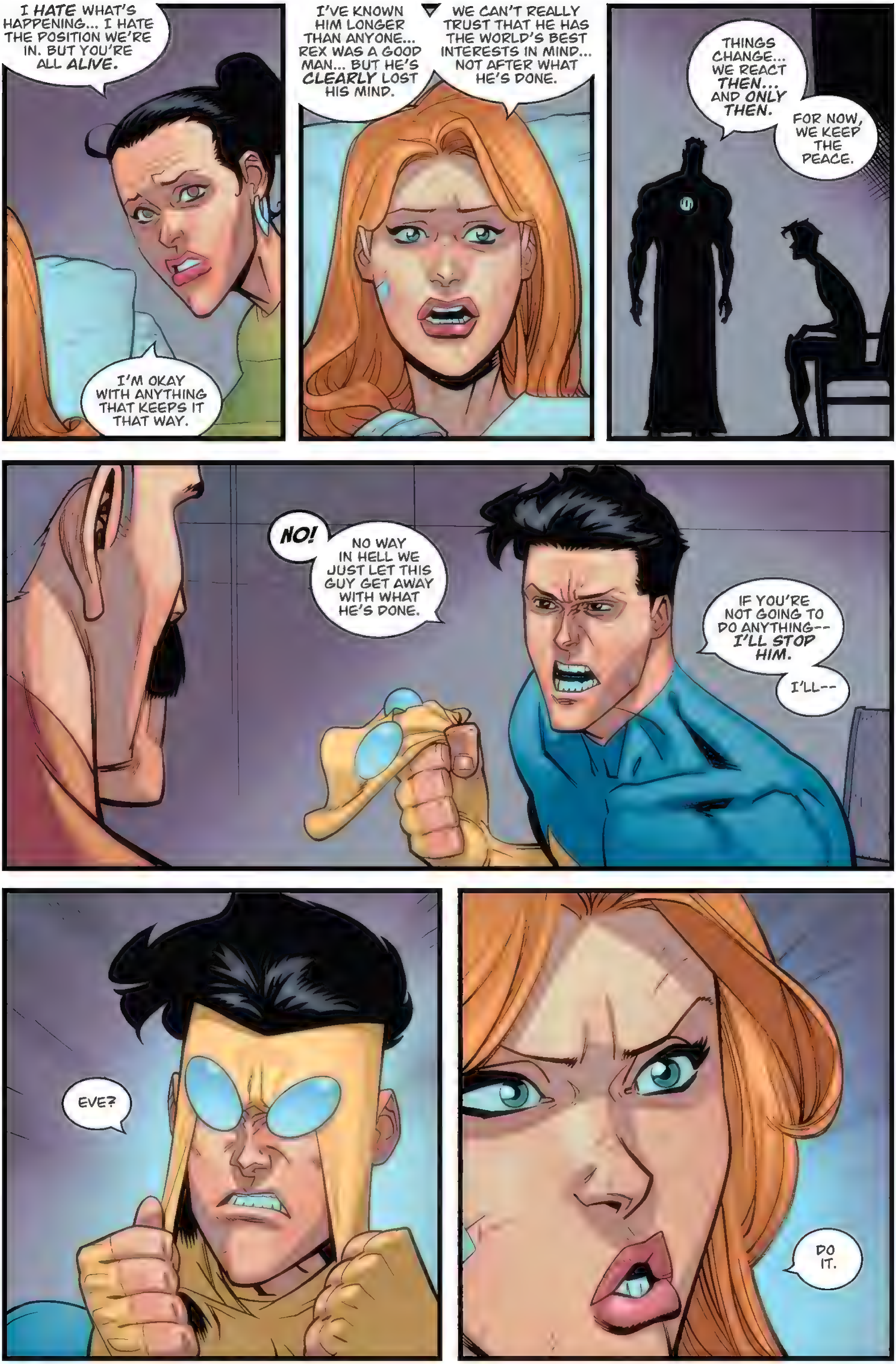



OKAY, THEN...
I BELIEVE WE ARE **DONE** HERE.
I'M AFRAID SO...

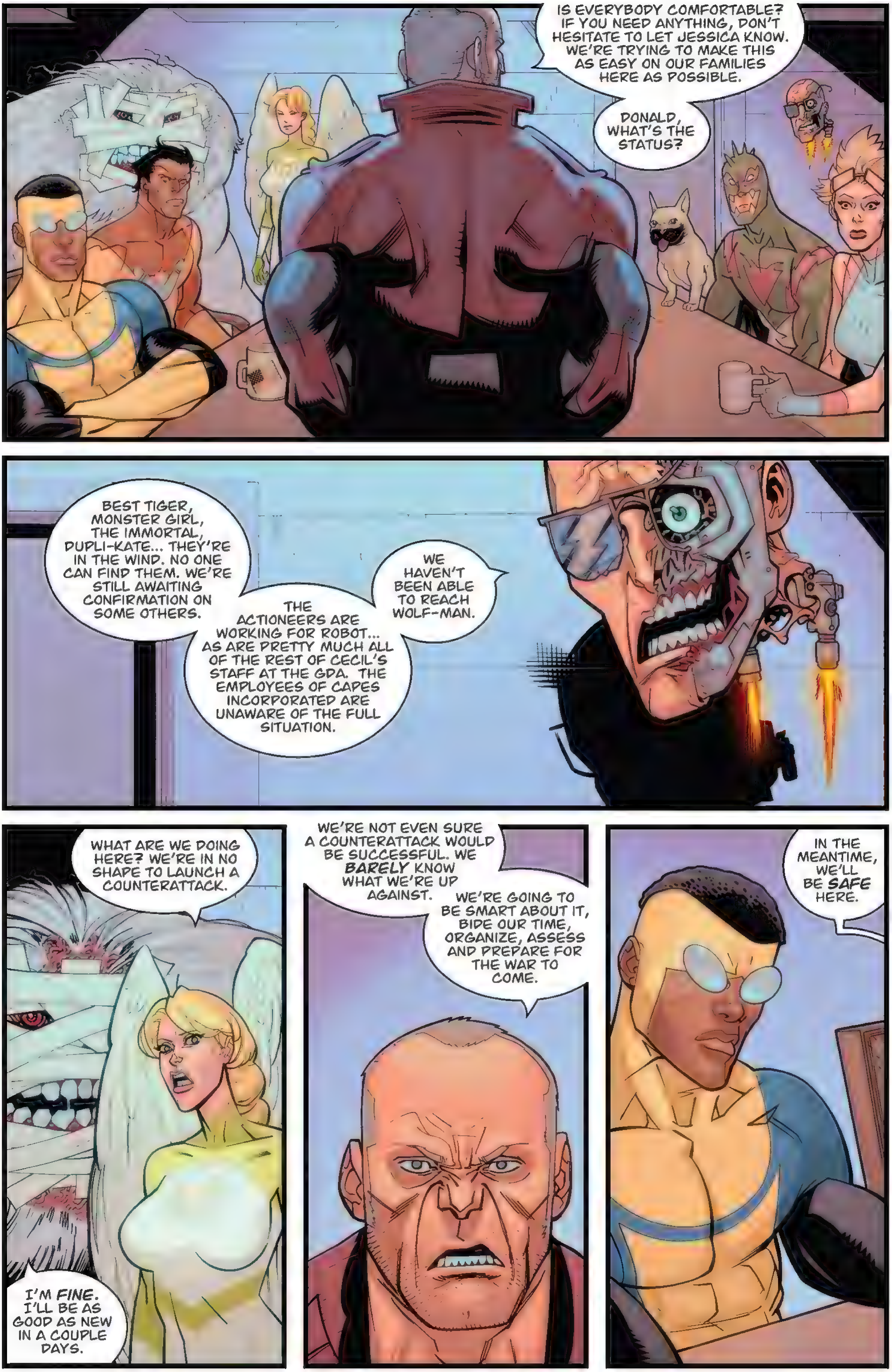

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
ATTACK HIM!


LET ME HELP--
DON'T TOUCH ME!
MARK!
HE'S NOT HERE-- THIS IS JUST A DRONE! WE NEED TO *DESTROY* THIS THING AND GET TO EARTH!
THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT HE'S DONE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WE NEED TO TALK.

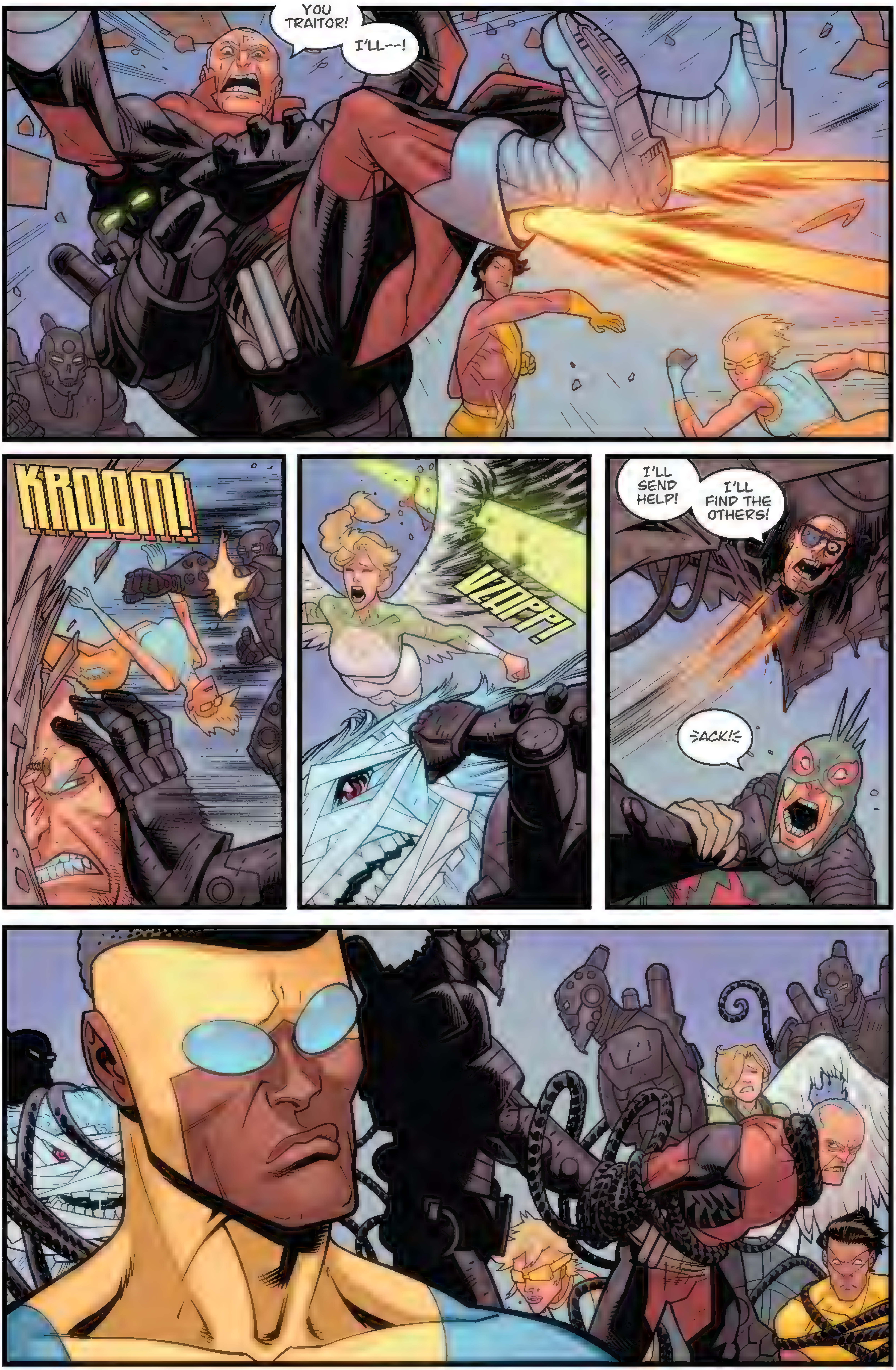

THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE TO ME. THIS... THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING.
DAD... PLEASE...
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS?
AS EMPEROR, I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MY PEOPLE... TO OUR PEOPLE. I HAVE TO DO WHAT'S BEST FOR THEM.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED. HE'S ASSUMED CECIL'S POSITION AS HEAD OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, AND HE'S JUST STRUCK A DEAL WITH WORLD LEADERS TO GIVE THAT AGENCY MORE CONTROL AND LESS OVERSIGHT.
HE'S QUIETLY ELIMINATED OR MARGINALIZED ANYONE WHO COULD ASSIST IN ANY EFFORT TO OPPOSE HIM.
AND OPPOSING HIM WOULD PUT TOO MANY LIVES... HUMAN AND VILTRUMITE, AT RISK.
IT'S JUST NOT WORTH IT.
...
AND... WHAT IF HE'S RIGHT?
A PEACEFUL EARTH ONLY FURTHERS THE VILTRUMITE AGENDA.

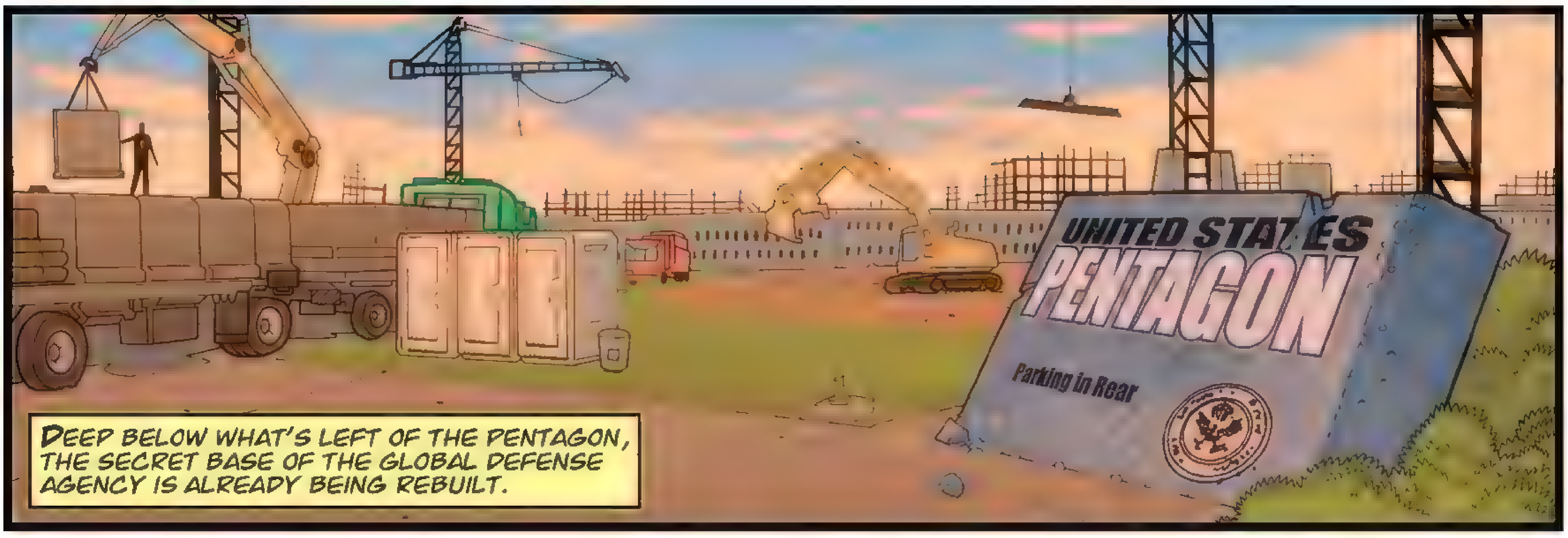

I HATE WHAT'S HAPPENING... I HATE THE POSITION WE'RE IN. BUT YOU'RE ALL ALIVE.
I'M OKAY WITH ANYTHING THAT KEEPS IT THAT WAY.
I'VE KNOWN HIM LONGER THAN ANYONE... REX WAS A GOOD MAN... BUT HE'S CLEARLY LOST HIS MIND.
WE CAN'T REALLY TRUST THAT HE HAS THE WORLD'S BEST INTERESTS IN MIND... NOT AFTER WHAT HE'S DONE.
THINGS CHANGE... WE REACT THEN... AND ONLY THEN.
FOR NOW, WE KEEP THE PEACE.
NO!
NO WAY IN HELL WE JUST LET THIS GUY GET AWAY WITH WHAT HE'S DONE.
IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING-- I'LL STOP HIM.
I'LL--
EVE?
DO IT.

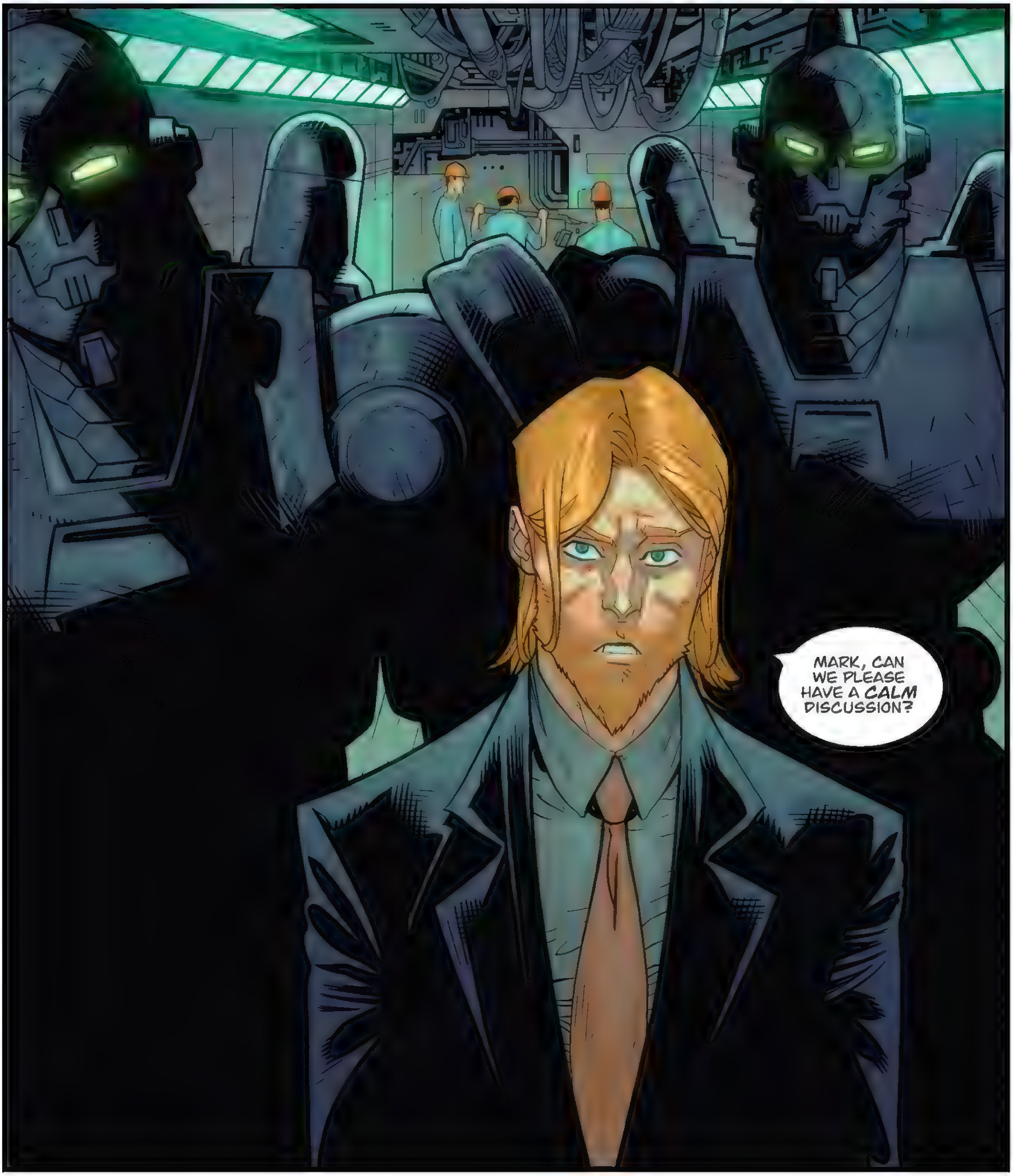
VOOSH!
HE COULD RUIN EVERYTHING.
NO... HE'S GOING TO *FIX* YOUR MISTAKE.
I HOPE FOR YOUR SAKE AND THE SAKE OF YOUR CHILD THAT YOU ARE RIGHT.

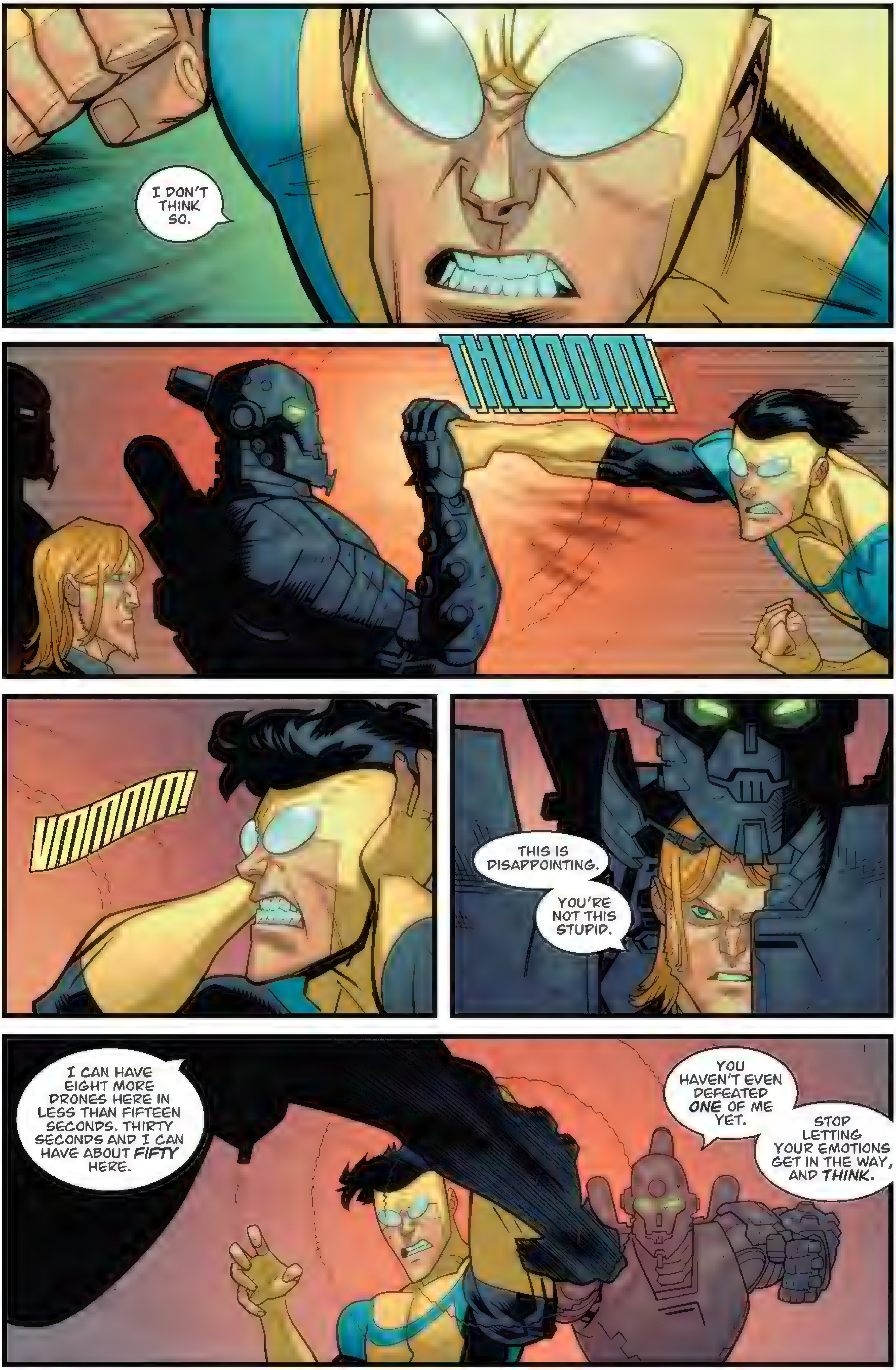

IS EVERYBODY COMFORTABLE? IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, DON'T HESITATE TO LET JESSICA KNOW. WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE THIS AS EASY ON OUR FAMILIES HERE AS POSSIBLE.
DONALD, WHAT'S THE STATUS?
BEST TIGER, MONSTER GIRL, THE IMMORTAL, DUPLI-KATE... THEY'RE IN THE WIND. NO ONE CAN FIND THEM. WE'RE STILL AWAITING CONFIRMATION ON SOME OTHERS.
THE ACTIONEERS ARE WORKING FOR ROBOT... AS ARE PRETTY MUCH ALL OF THE REST OF CECIL'S STAFF AT THE GDA. THE EMPLOYEES OF CAPES INCORPORATED ARE UNAWARE OF THE FULL SITUATION.
WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO REACH WOLF-MAN.
WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE? WE'RE IN NO SHAPE TO LAUNCH A COUNTERATTACK.
I'M *FINE*. I'LL BE AS GOOD AS NEW IN A COUPLE DAYS.
WE'RE NOT EVEN SURE A COUNTERATTACK WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. WE *BARELY* KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.
WE'RE GOING TO BE SMART ABOUT IT, BIDE OUR TIME, ORGANIZE, ASSESS AND PREPARE FOR THE WAR TO COME.
IN THE MEANTIME, WE'LL BE *SAFE* HERE.

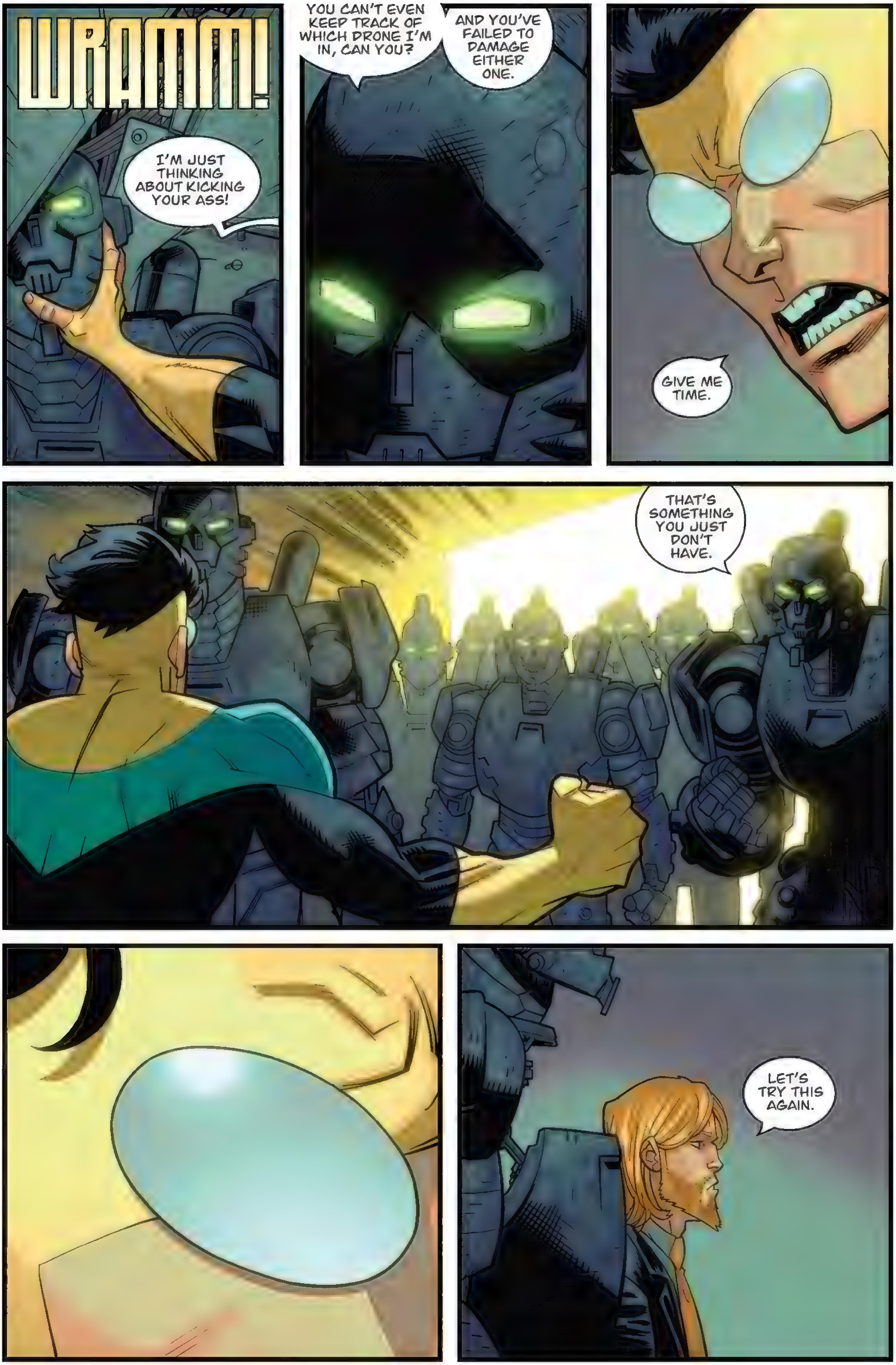
KROOM!
HE'S NOT GOING TO KILL ANY OF US! SURRENDER SO YOU CAN BE TAKEN PRISONER!
SURRENDER?!
YOU DID THIS?! YOU LED HIM HERE!
IT WAS THE ONLY WAY.
YOU'LL SEE.

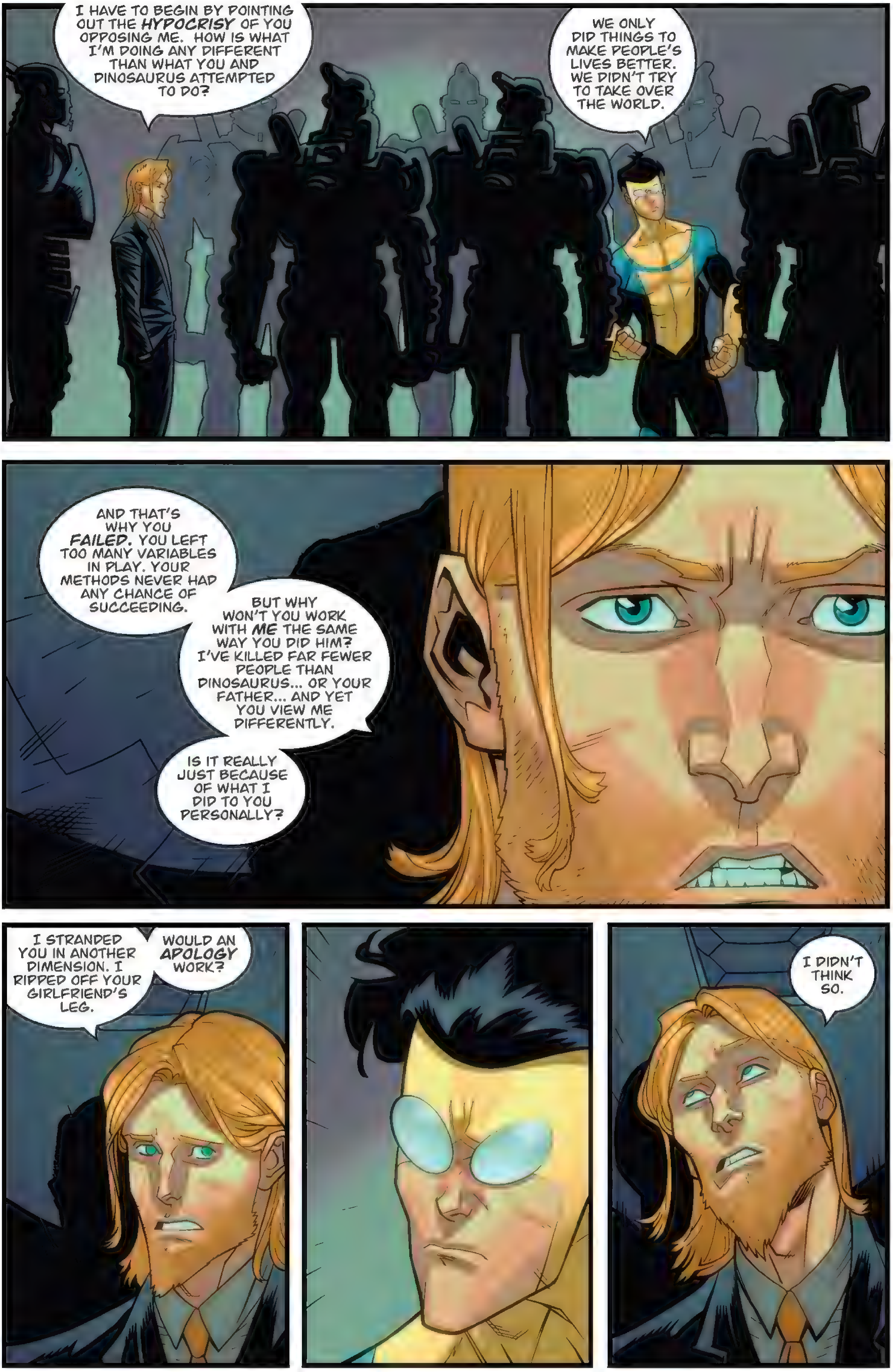

YOU TRAITOR!
I'LL--!
KROOM!
VZIPP!
I'LL SEND HELP!
I'LL FIND THE OTHERS!
ACK!

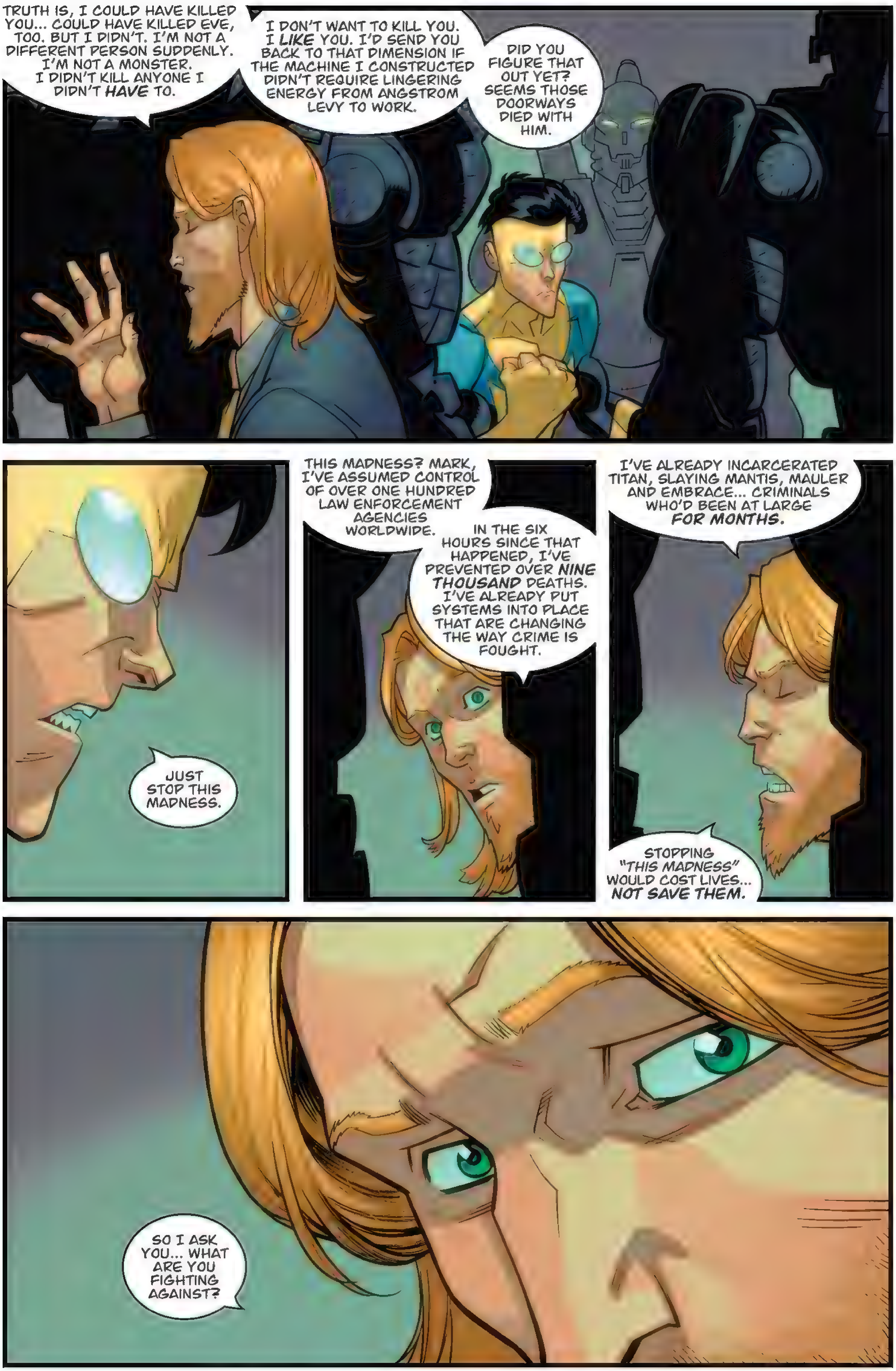

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
DEEP BELOW WHAT'S LEFT OF THE PENTAGON, THE SECRET BASE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY IS ALREADY BEING REBUILT.

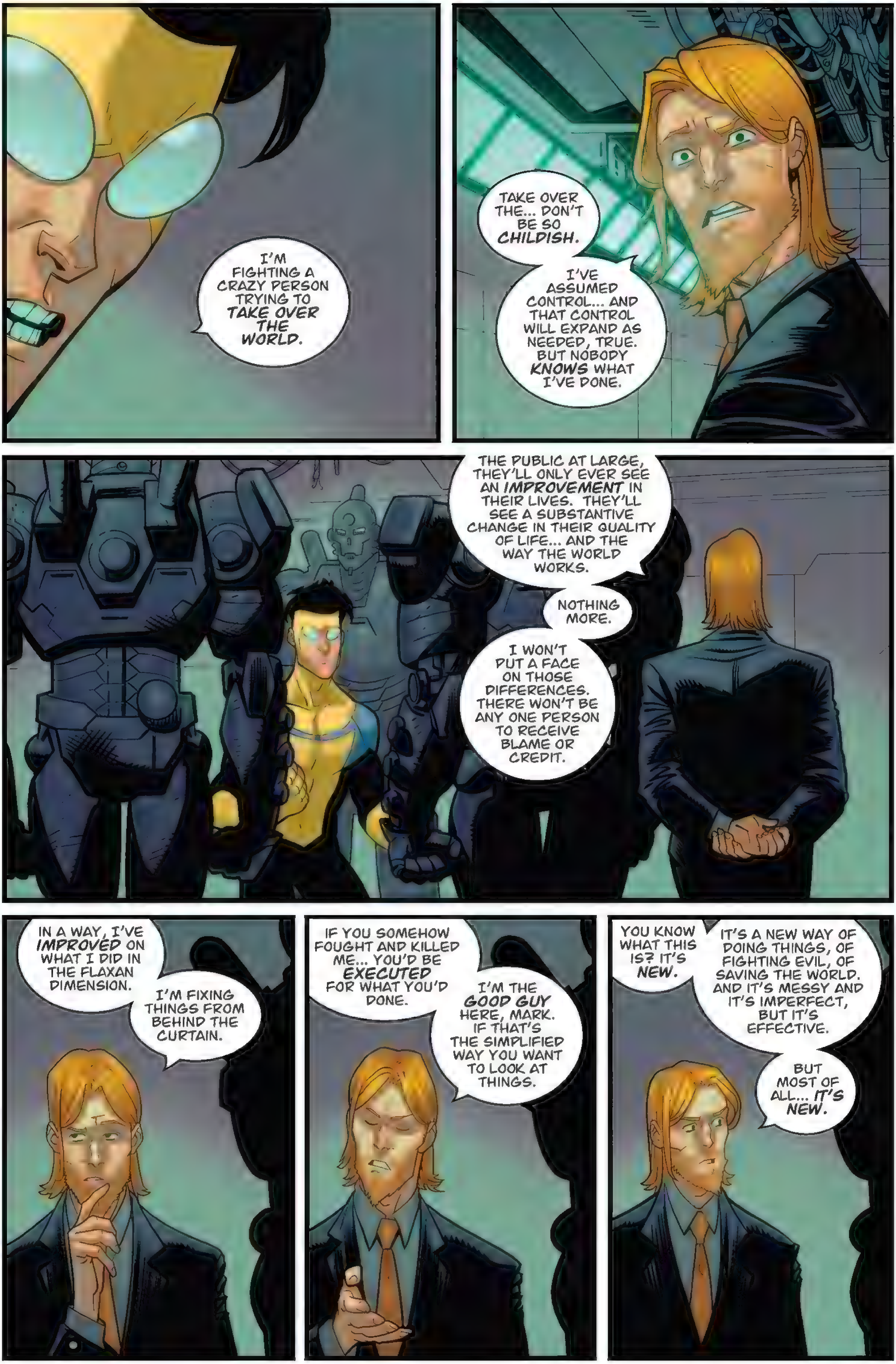

MARK, CAN WE PLEASE HAVE A CALM DISCUSSION?

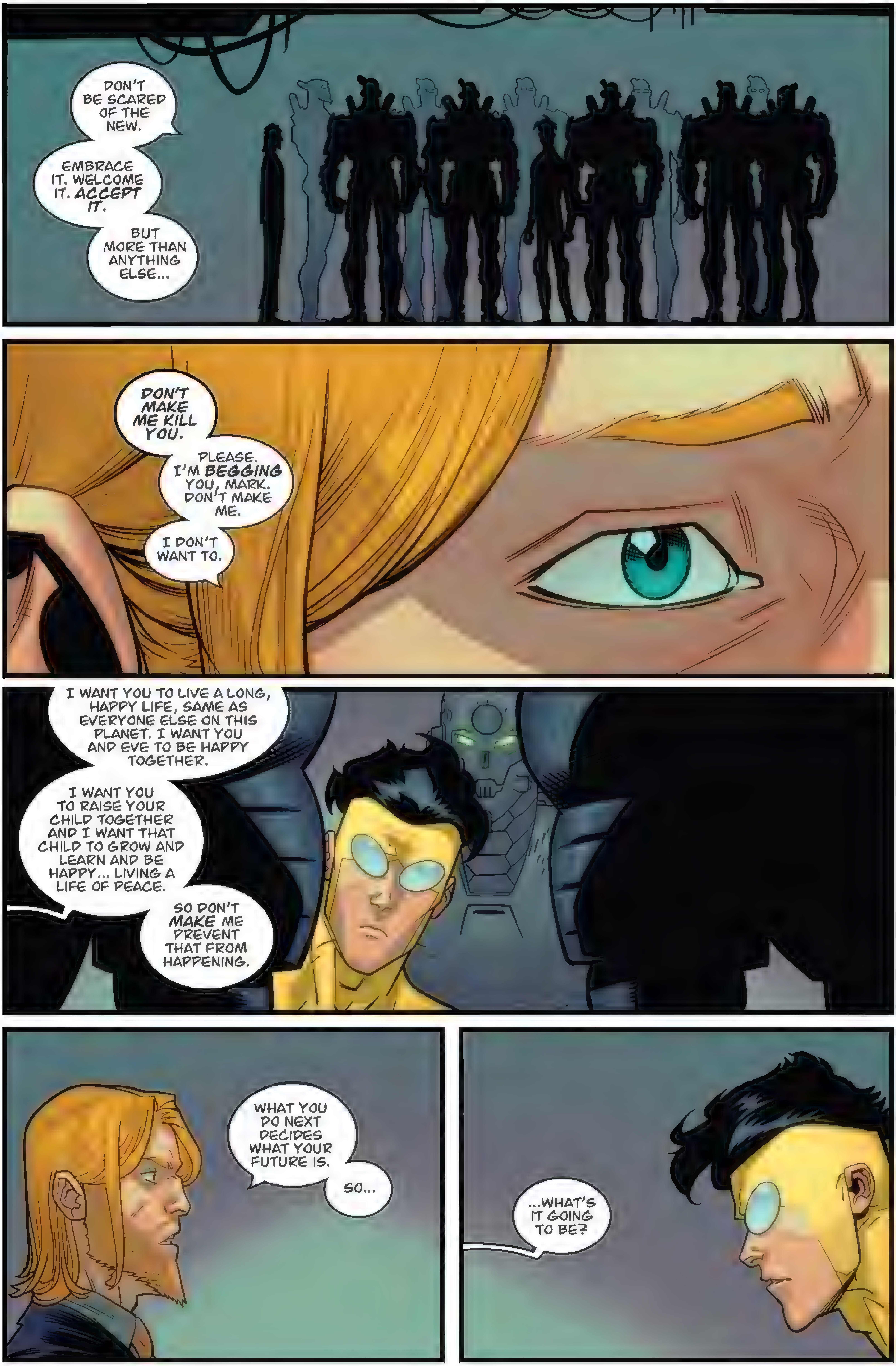

I DON'T THINK SO.
THWOOM!
VMMMM!
THIS IS DISAPPOINTING.
YOU'RE NOT THIS STUPID.
I CAN HAVE EIGHT MORE DRONES HERE IN LESS THAN FIFTEEN SECONDS. THIRTY SECONDS AND I CAN HAVE ABOUT *FIFTY* HERE.
YOU HAVEN'T EVEN DEFEATED *ONE* OF ME YET.
STOP LETTING YOUR EMOTIONS GET IN THE WAY, AND *THINK*.

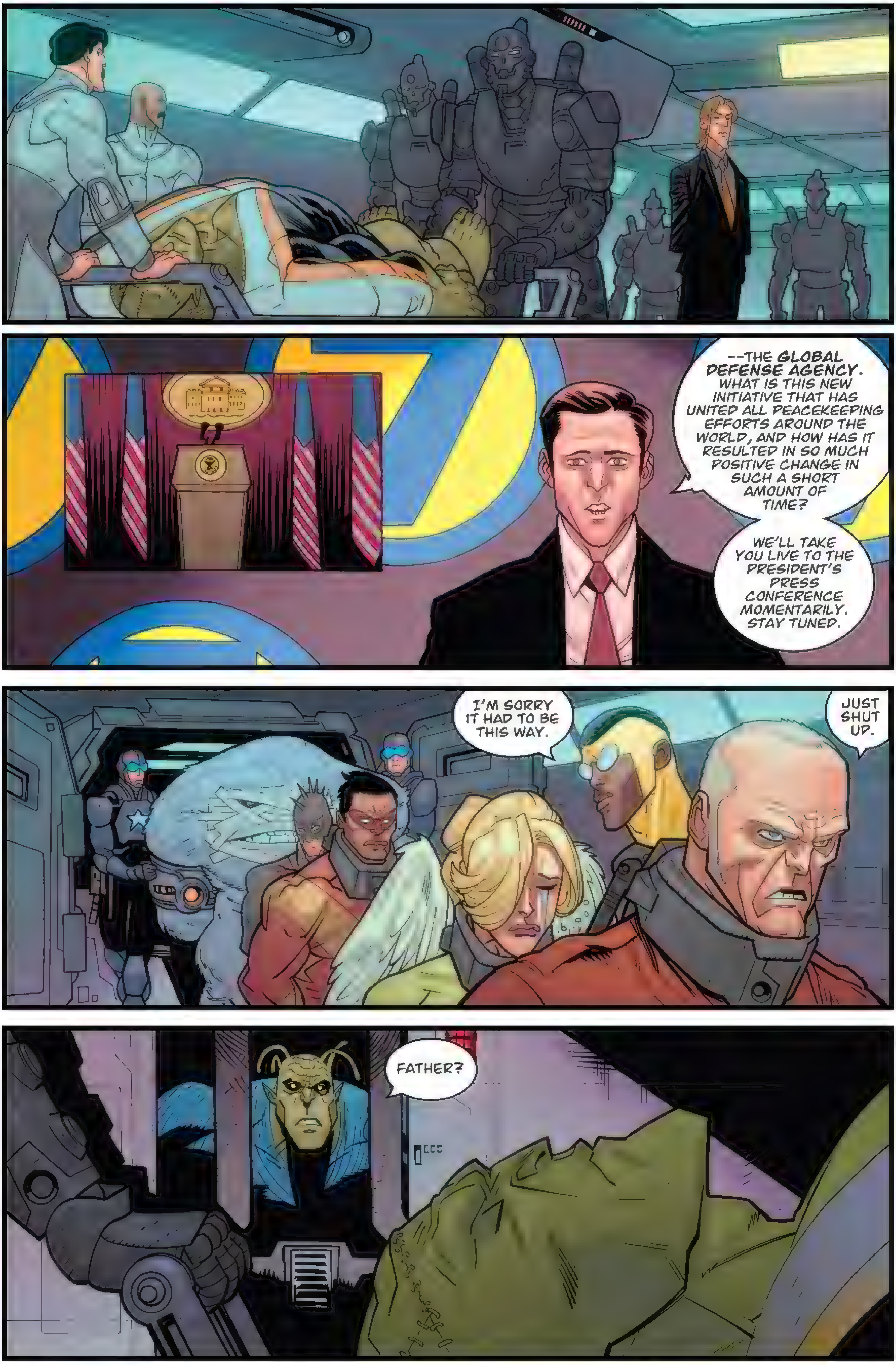

WRAMMM!
I'M JUST THINKING ABOUT KICKING YOUR ASS!
YOU CAN'T EVEN KEEP TRACK OF WHICH DRONE I'M IN, CAN YOU?
AND YOU'VE FAILED TO DAMAGE EITHER ONE.
GIVE ME TIME.
THAT'S SOMETHING YOU JUST DON'T HAVE.
LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN.

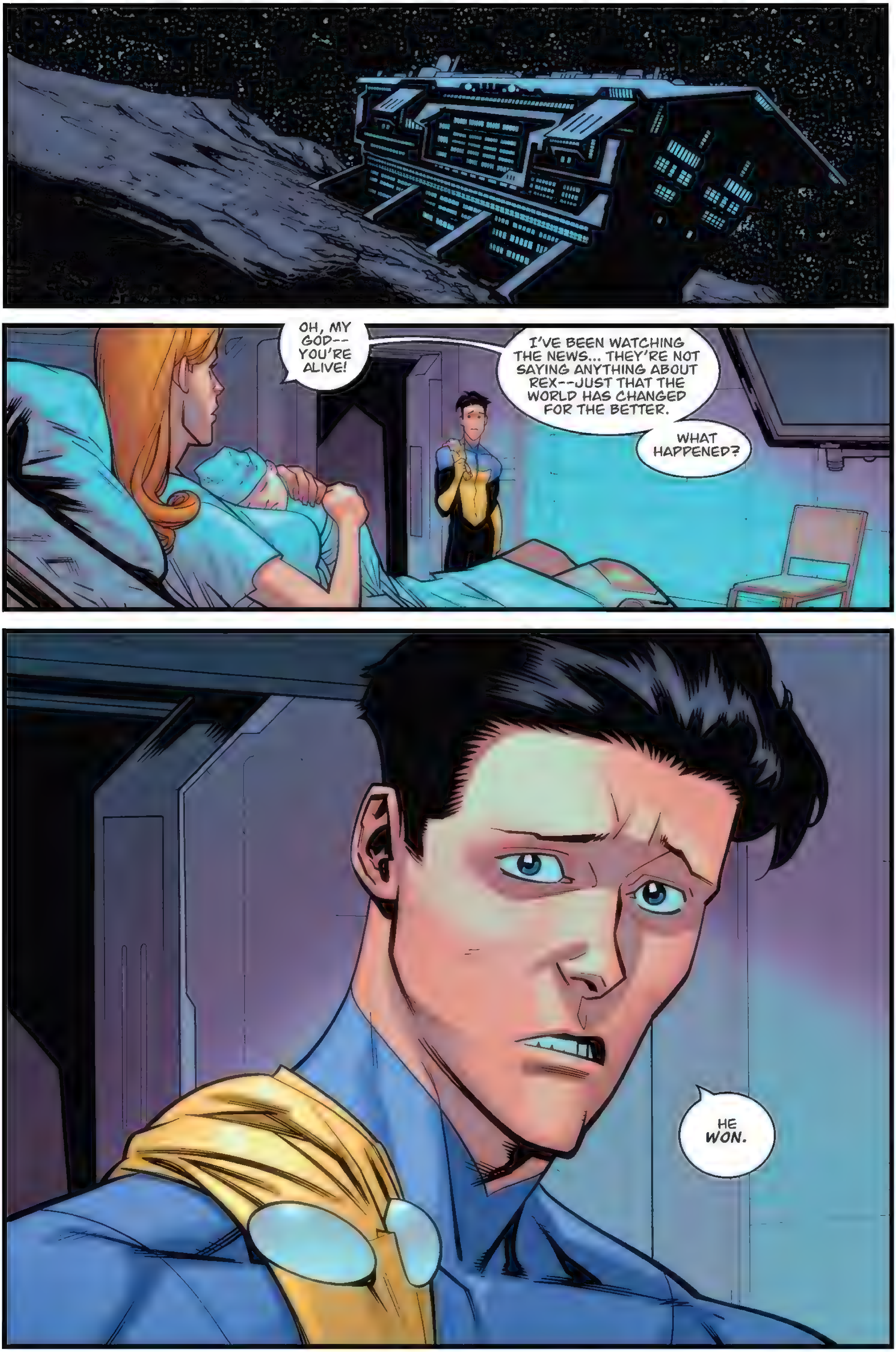

I HAVE TO BEGIN BY POINTING OUT THE *HYPOCRISY* OF YOU OPPOSING ME. HOW IS WHAT I'M DOING ANY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT YOU AND DINOSAURUS ATTEMPTED TO DO?
WE ONLY DID THINGS TO MAKE PEOPLE'S LIVES BETTER. WE DIDN'T TRY TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD.
AND THAT'S WHY YOU *FAILED*. YOU LEFT TOO MANY VARIABLES IN PLAY. YOUR METHODS NEVER HAD ANY CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING.
BUT WHY WON'T YOU WORK WITH *ME* THE SAME WAY YOU DID HIM? I'VE KILLED FAR FEWER PEOPLE THAN DINOSAURUS... OR YOUR FATHER... AND YET YOU VIEW ME DIFFERENTLY.
IS IT REALLY JUST BECAUSE OF WHAT I DID TO YOU PERSONALLY?
I STRANDED YOU IN ANOTHER DIMENSION. I RIPPED OFF YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S LEG.
WOULD AN *APOLOGY* WORK?
I DIDN'T THINK SO.

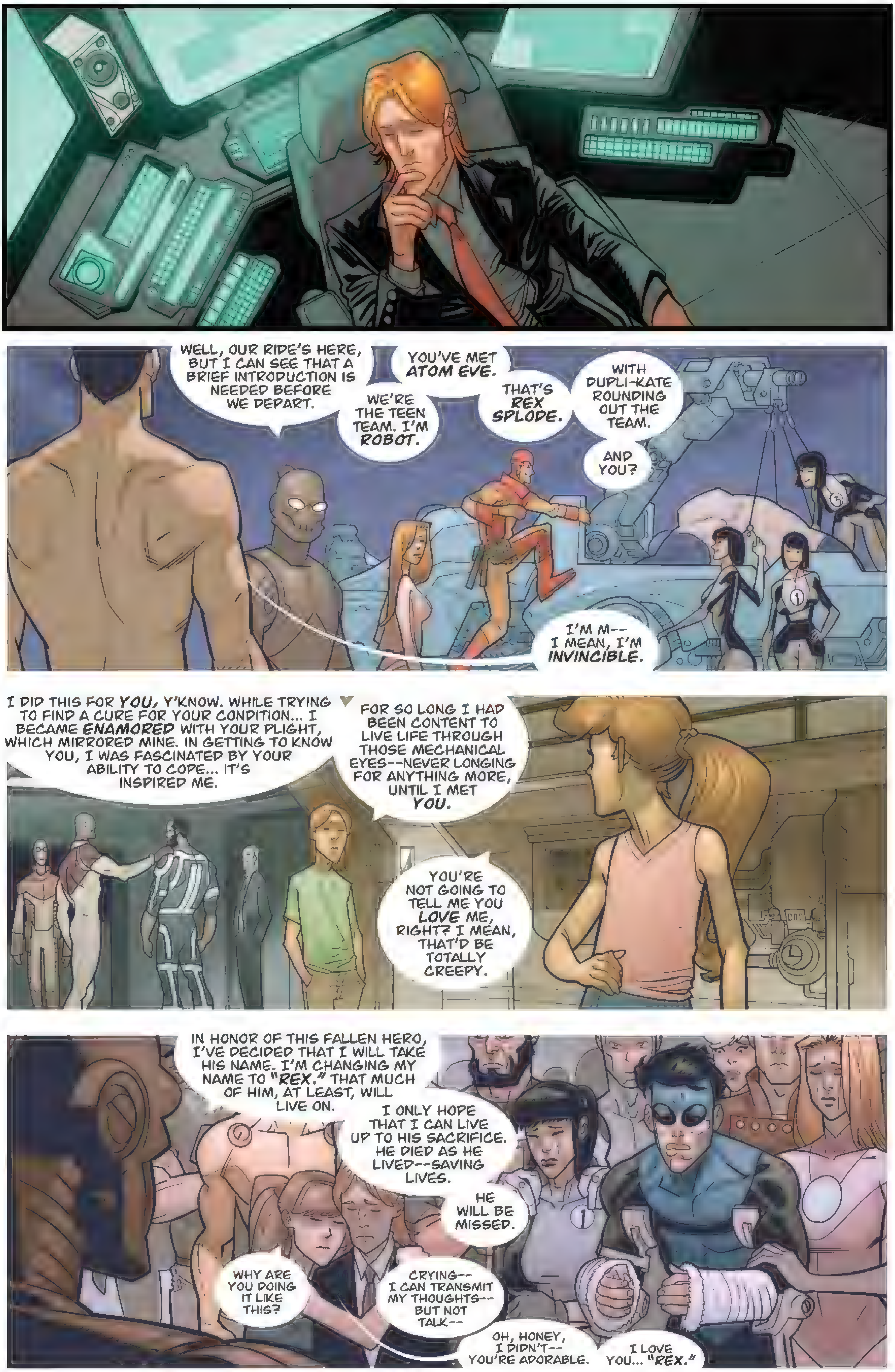

TRUTH IS, I COULD HAVE KILLED YOU... COULD HAVE KILLED EVE, TOO. BUT I DIDN'T. I'M NOT A DIFFERENT PERSON SUDDENLY. I'M NOT A MONSTER. I DIDN'T KILL ANYONE I DIDN'T *HAVE* TO.
I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU. I *LIKE* YOU. I'D SEND YOU BACK TO THAT DIMENSION IF THE MACHINE I CONSTRUCTED DIDN'T REQUIRE LINGERING ENERGY FROM ANGSTROM LEVY TO WORK.
DID YOU FIGURE THAT OUT YET? SEEMS THOSE DOORWAYS DIED WITH HIM.
JUST STOP THIS MADNESS.
THIS MADNESS? MARK, I'VE ASSUMED CONTROL OF OVER ONE HUNDRED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES WORLDWIDE.
IN THE SIX HOURS SINCE THAT HAPPENED, I'VE PREVENTED OVER *NINE THOUSAND* DEATHS. I'VE ALREADY PUT SYSTEMS INTO PLACE THAT ARE CHANGING THE WAY CRIME IS FOUGHT.
I'VE ALREADY INCARCERATED TITAN, SLAYING MANTIS, MAULER AND EMBRACE... CRIMINALS WHO'D BEEN AT LARGE *FOR MONTHS.*
STOPPING "THIS MADNESS" WOULD COST LIVES... *NOT SAVE THEM.*
SO I ASK YOU... WHAT ARE YOU FIGHTING AGAINST?

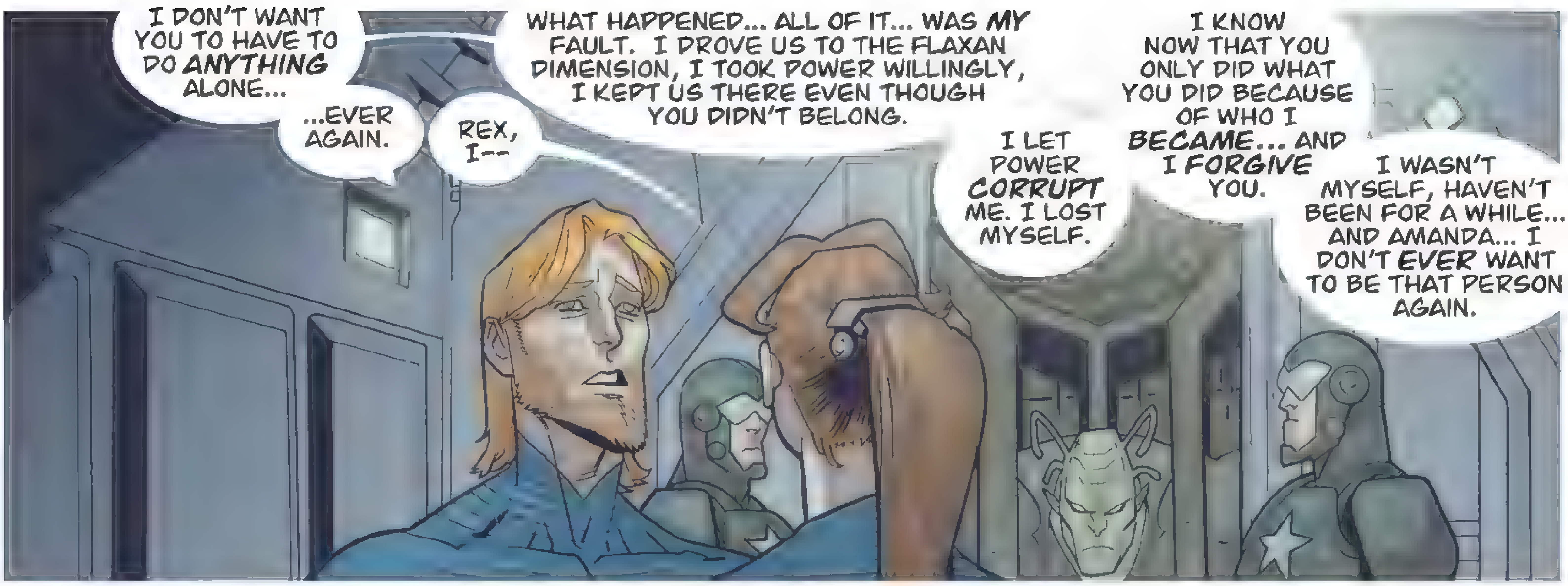

I'M FIGHTING A CRAZY PERSON TRYING TO *TAKE OVER THE WORLD.*
TAKE OVER THE... DON'T BE SO *CHILDISH.*
I'VE ASSUMED CONTROL... AND THAT CONTROL WILL EXPAND AS NEEDED, TRUE. BUT NOBODY *KNOWS* WHAT I'VE DONE.
THE PUBLIC AT LARGE, THEY'LL ONLY EVER SEE AN *IMPROVEMENT* IN THEIR LIVES. THEY'LL SEE A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE IN THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE... AND THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS.
NOTHING MORE.
I WON'T PUT A FACE ON THOSE DIFFERENCES. THERE WON'T BE ANY ONE PERSON TO RECEIVE BLAME OR CREDIT.
IN A WAY, I'VE *IMPROVED* ON WHAT I DID IN THE FLAXAN DIMENSION.
I'M FIXING THINGS FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN.
IF YOU SOMEHOW FOUGHT AND KILLED ME... YOU'D BE *EXECUTED* FOR WHAT YOU'D DONE.
I'M THE *GOOD GUY* HERE, MARK. IF THAT'S THE SIMPLIFIED WAY YOU WANT TO LOOK AT THINGS.
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS? IT'S *NEW.*
IT'S A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS, OF FIGHTING EVIL, OF SAVING THE WORLD. AND IT'S MESSY AND IT'S IMPERFECT, BUT IT'S EFFECTIVE.
BUT MOST OF ALL... *IT'S NEW.*

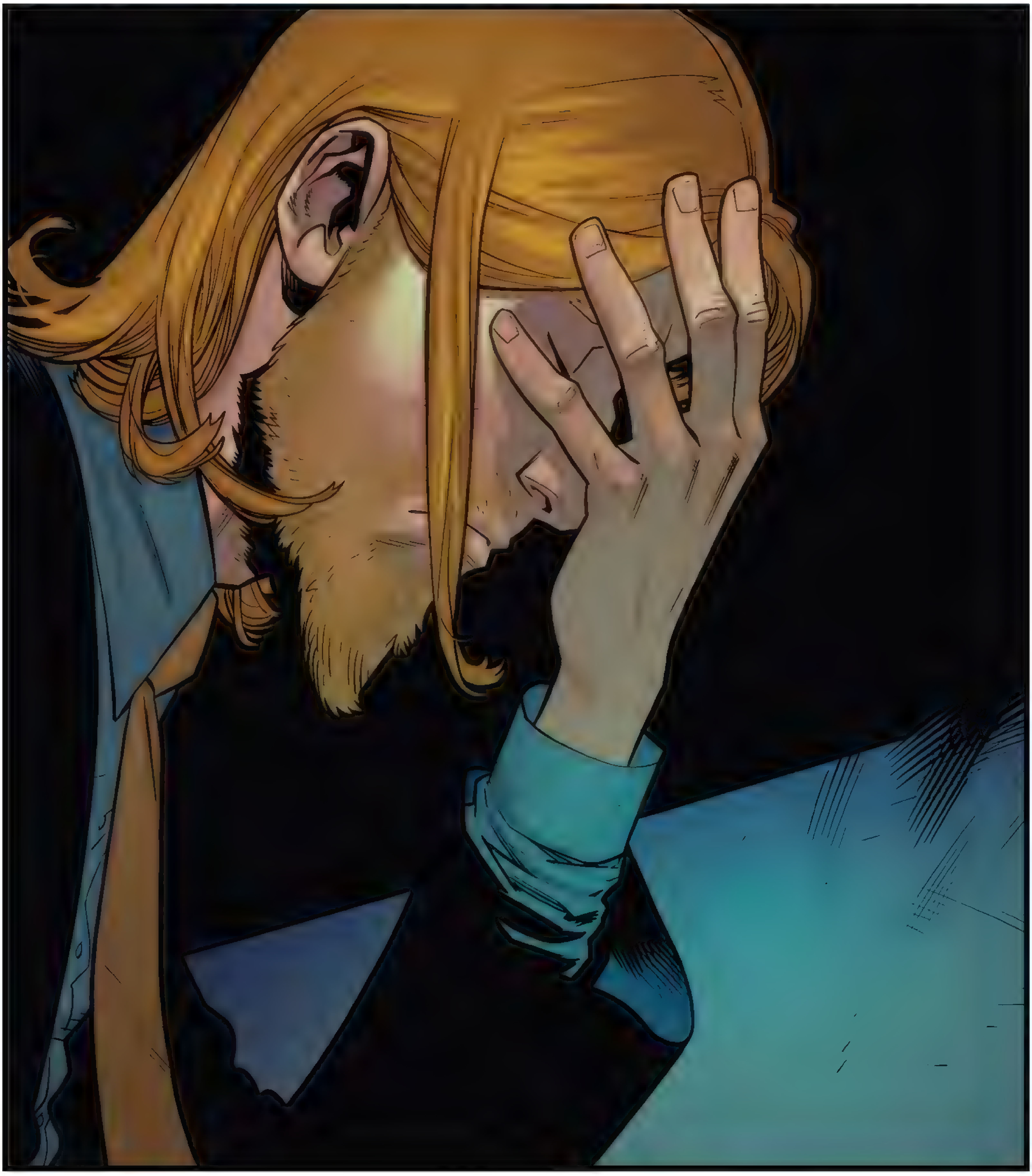

DON'T BE SCARED OF THE NEW.
EMBRACE IT. WELCOME IT. *ACCEPT* IT.
BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...
DON'T MAKE ME KILL YOU.
PLEASE. I'M *BEGGING* YOU, MARK. DON'T MAKE ME.
I DON'T WANT TO.
I WANT YOU TO LIVE A LONG, HAPPY LIFE, SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE ON THIS PLANET. I WANT YOU AND EVE TO BE HAPPY TOGETHER.
I WANT YOU TO RAISE YOUR CHILD TOGETHER AND I WANT THAT CHILD TO GROW AND LEARN AND BE HAPPY... LIVING A LIFE OF PEACE.
SO DON'T *MAKE* ME PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING.
WHAT YOU DO NEXT DECIDES WHAT YOUR FUTURE IS.
SO...
...WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?


--THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY. WHAT IS THIS NEW INITIATIVE THAT HAS UNITED ALL PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS AROUND THE WORLD, AND HOW HAS IT RESULTED IN SO MUCH POSITIVE CHANGE IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME?
WE'LL TAKE YOU LIVE TO THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE MOMENTARILY. STAY TUNED.
I'M SORRY IT HAD TO BE THIS WAY.
JUST SHUT UP.
FATHER?


OH, MY GOD-- YOU'RE ALIVE!
I'VE BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS... THEY'RE NOT SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT REX--JUST THAT THE WORLD HAS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER.
WHAT HAPPENED?
HE *WON.*


WELL, OUR RIDE'S HERE, BUT I CAN SEE THAT A BRIEF INTRODUCTION IS NEEDED BEFORE WE DEPART.
WE'RE THE TEEN TEAM. I'M ROBOT.
YOU'VE MET ATOM EVE.
THAT'S REX SPLODE.
WITH DUPLI-KATE ROUNDING OUT THE TEAM.
AND YOU?
I'M M-- I MEAN, I'M INVINCIBLE.
I DID THIS FOR YOU, Y'KNOW. WHILE TRYING TO FIND A CURE FOR YOUR CONDITION... I BECAME ENAMORED WITH YOUR PLIGHT, WHICH MIRRORED MINE. IN GETTING TO KNOW YOU, I WAS FASCINATED BY YOUR ABILITY TO COPE... IT'S INSPIRED ME.
FOR SO LONG I HAD BEEN CONTENT TO LIVE LIFE THROUGH THOSE MECHANICAL EYES--NEVER LONGING FOR ANYTHING MORE, UNTIL I MET YOU.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, RIGHT? I MEAN, THAT'D BE TOTALLY CREEPY.
IN HONOR OF THIS FALLEN HERO, I'VE DECIDED THAT I WILL TAKE HIS NAME. I'M CHANGING MY NAME TO "REX." THAT MUCH OF HIM, AT LEAST, WILL LIVE ON.
I ONLY HOPE THAT I CAN LIVE UP TO HIS SACRIFICE. HE DIED AS HE LIVED--SAVING LIVES.
HE WILL BE MISSED.
WHY ARE YOU DOING IT LIKE THIS?
CRYING-- I CAN TRANSMIT MY THOUGHTS-- BUT NOT TALK--
OH, HONEY, I DIDN'T-- YOU'RE ADORABLE.
I LOVE YOU... "REX."


I DON'T WANT YOU TO HAVE TO DO *ANYTHING* ALONE...
...EVER AGAIN.
REX, I--
WHAT HAPPENED... ALL OF IT... WAS *MY* FAULT. I DROVE US TO THE FLAXAN DIMENSION, I TOOK POWER WILLINGLY, I KEPT US THERE EVEN THOUGH YOU DIDN'T BELONG.
I LET POWER *CORRUPT* ME. I LOST MYSELF.
I KNOW NOW THAT YOU ONLY DID WHAT YOU DID BECAUSE OF WHO I *BECAME...* AND I *FORGIVE* YOU.
I WASN'T MYSELF, HAVEN'T BEEN FOR A WHILE... AND AMANDA... I DON'T *EVER* WANT TO BE THAT PERSON AGAIN.



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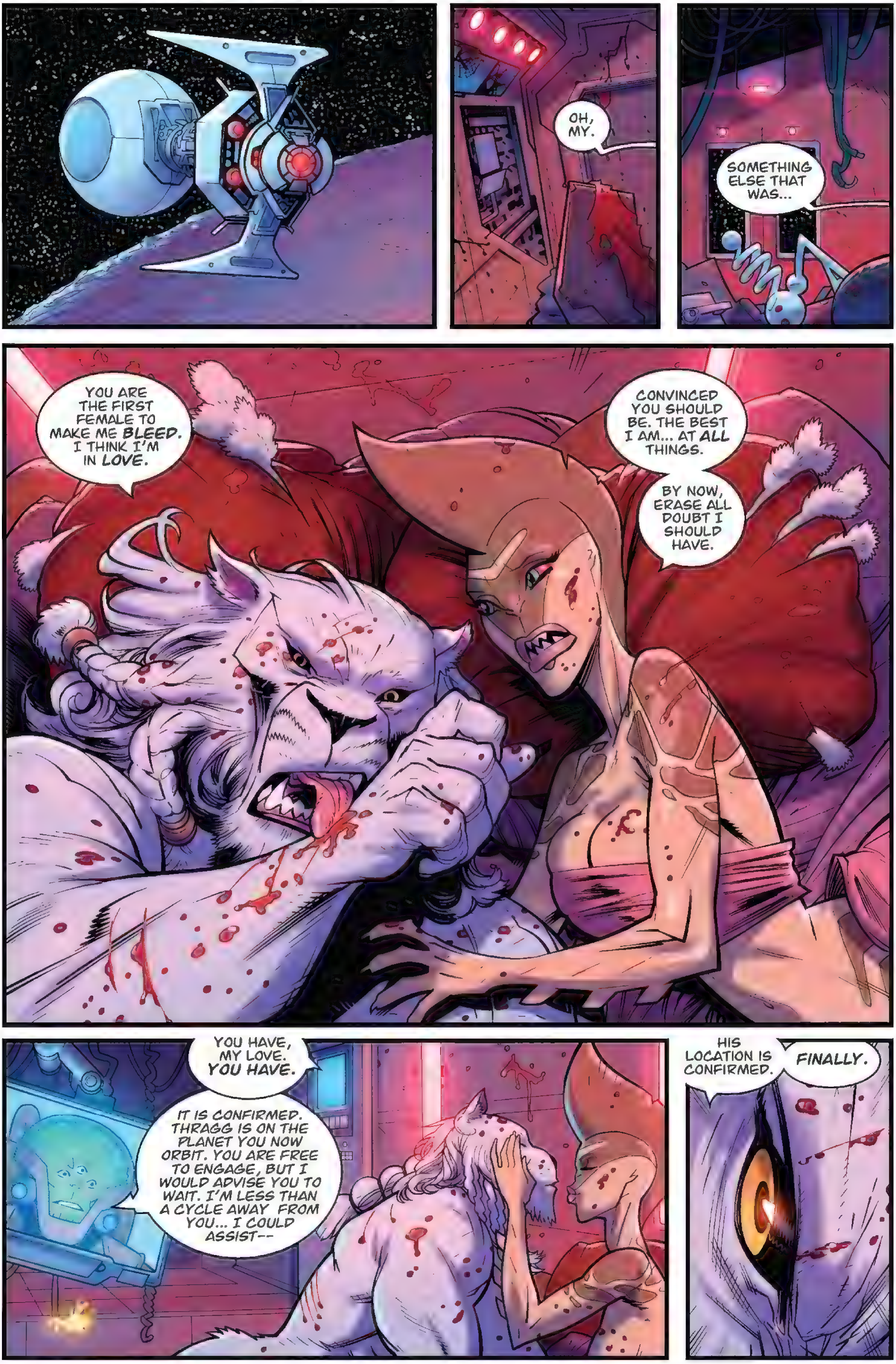
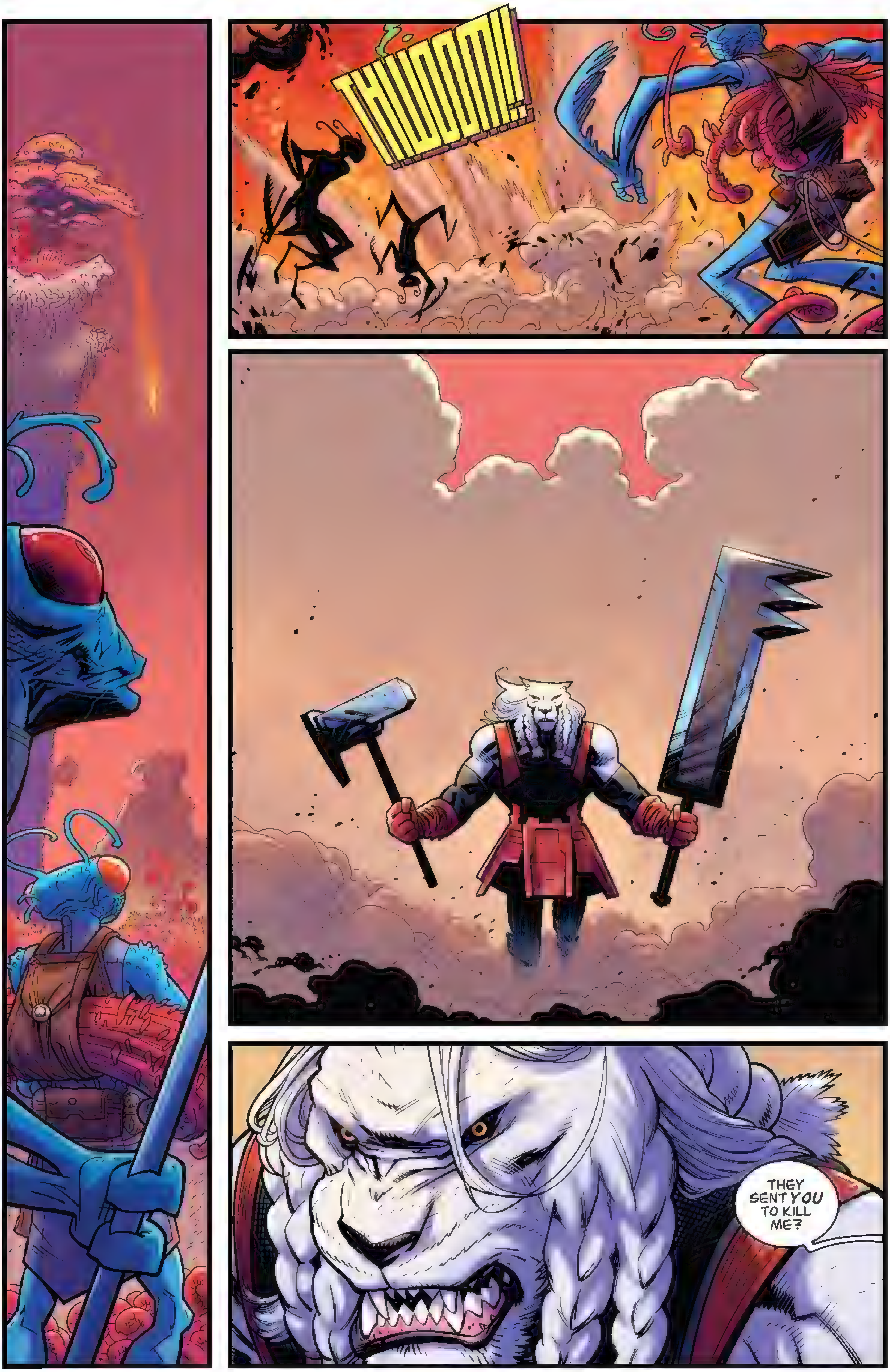
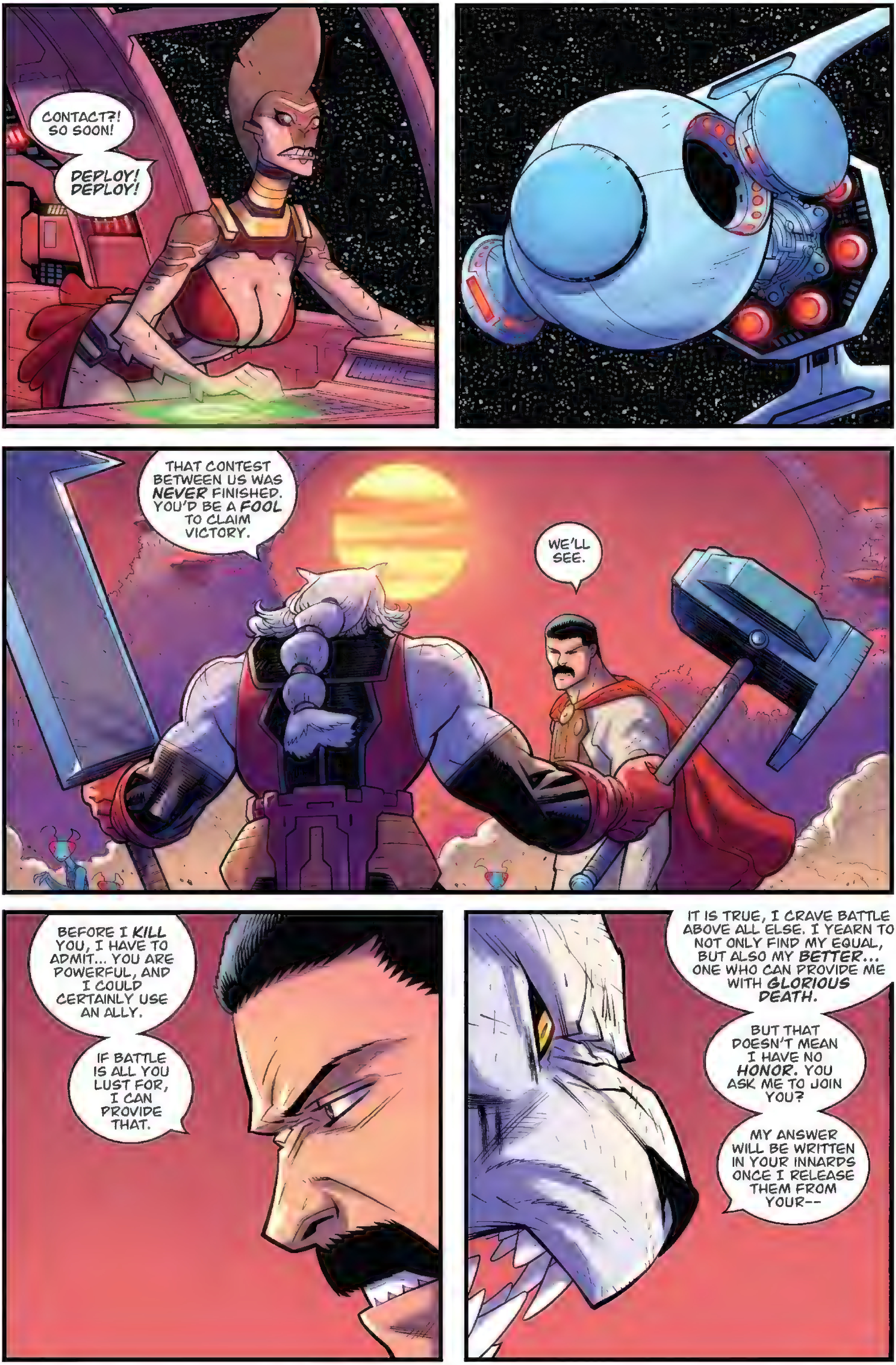
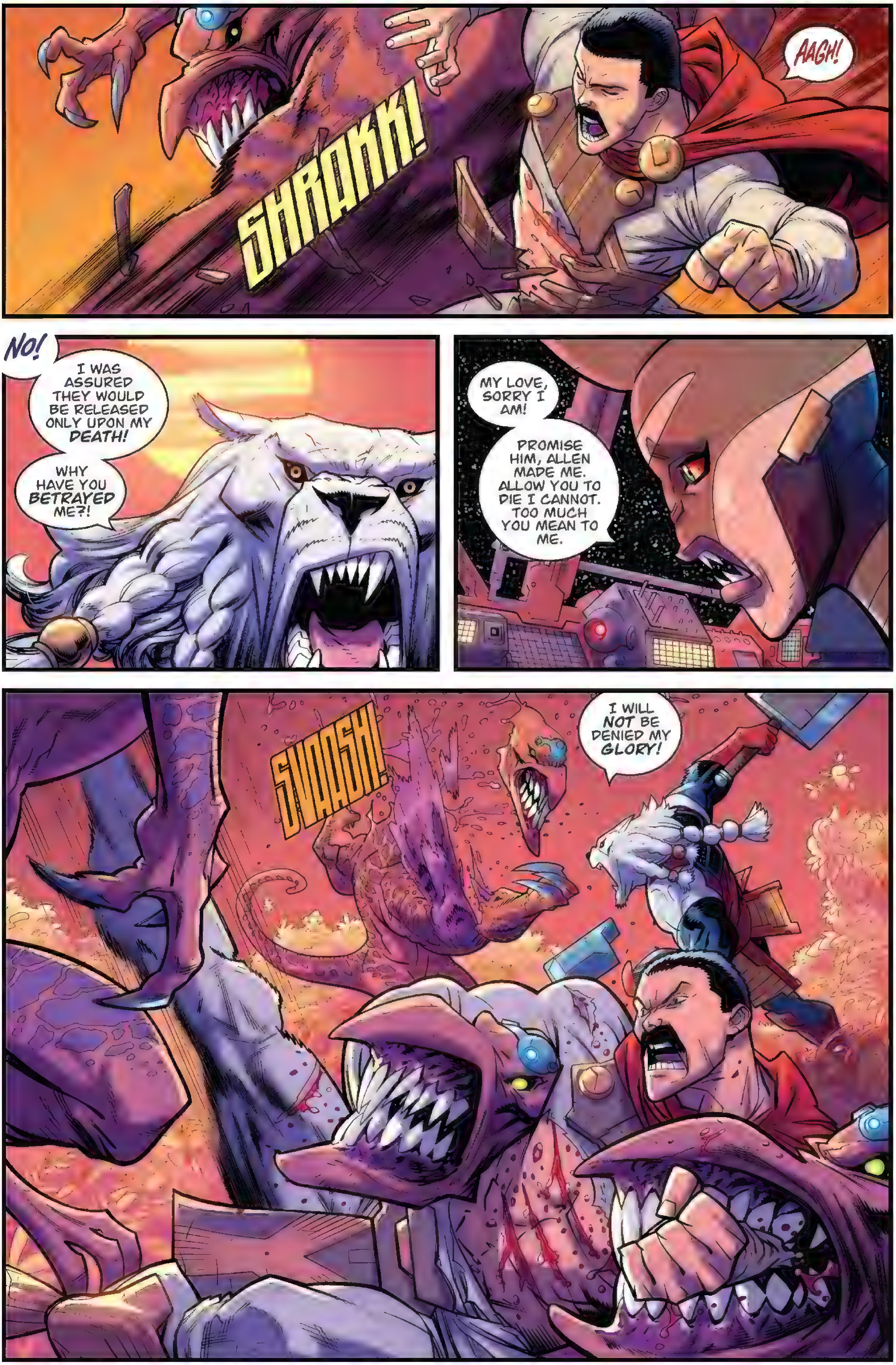

OH, MY.
SOMETHING ELSE THAT WAS...
YOU ARE THE FIRST FEMALE TO MAKE ME BLEED. I THINK I'M IN LOVE.
CONVINCED YOU SHOULD BE. THE BEST I AM... AT ALL THINGS.
BY NOW, ERASE ALL DOUBT I SHOULD HAVE.
YOU HAVE, MY LOVE. YOU HAVE.
IT IS CONFIRMED. THRAGG IS ON THE PLANET YOU NOW ORBIT. YOU ARE FREE TO ENGAGE, BUT I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO WAIT. I'M LESS THAN A CYCLE AWAY FROM YOU... I COULD ASSIST--
HIS LOCATION IS CONFIRMED.
FINALLY.

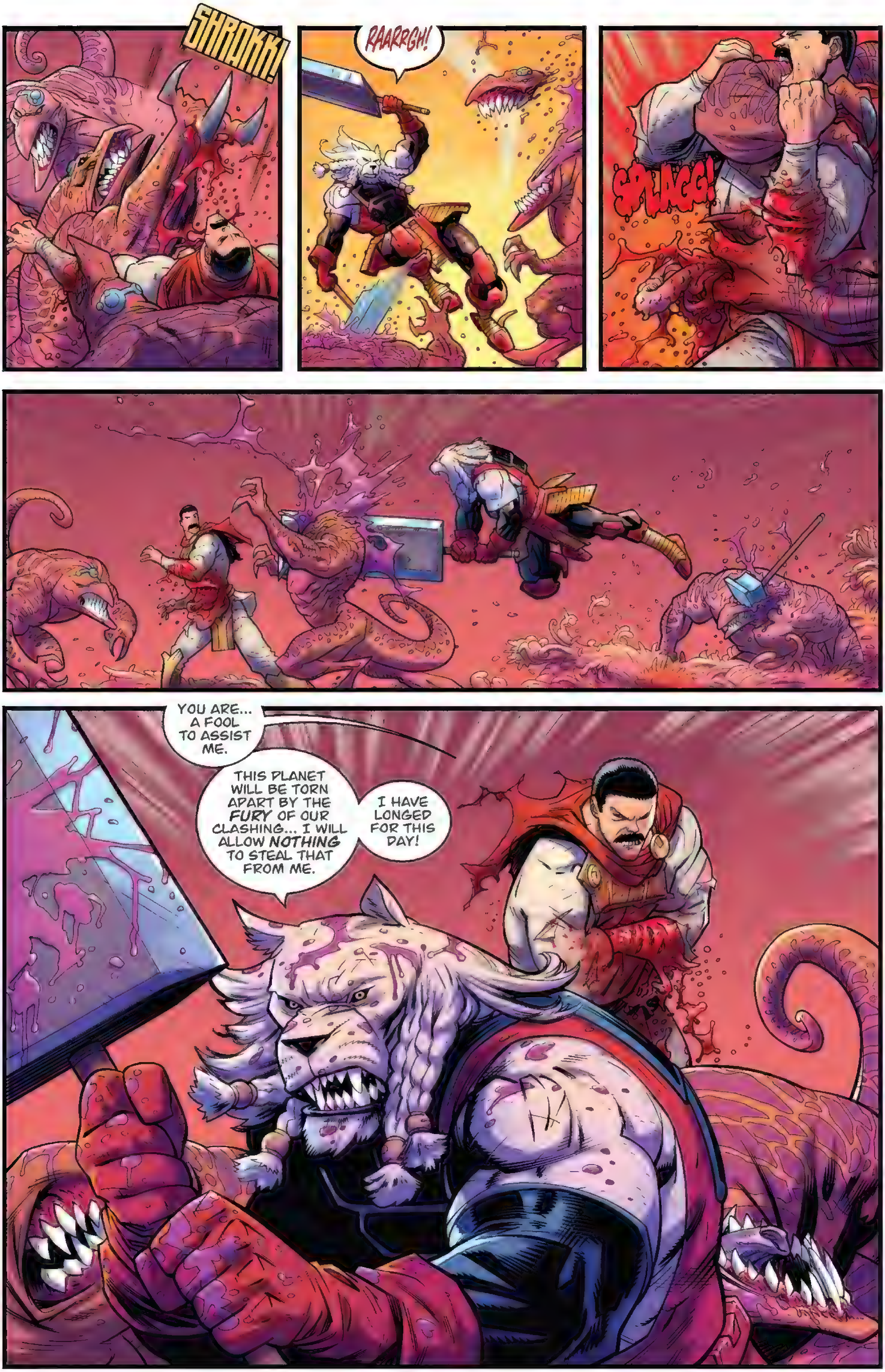

THWOOM!!
THEY SENT *YOU* TO KILL ME?

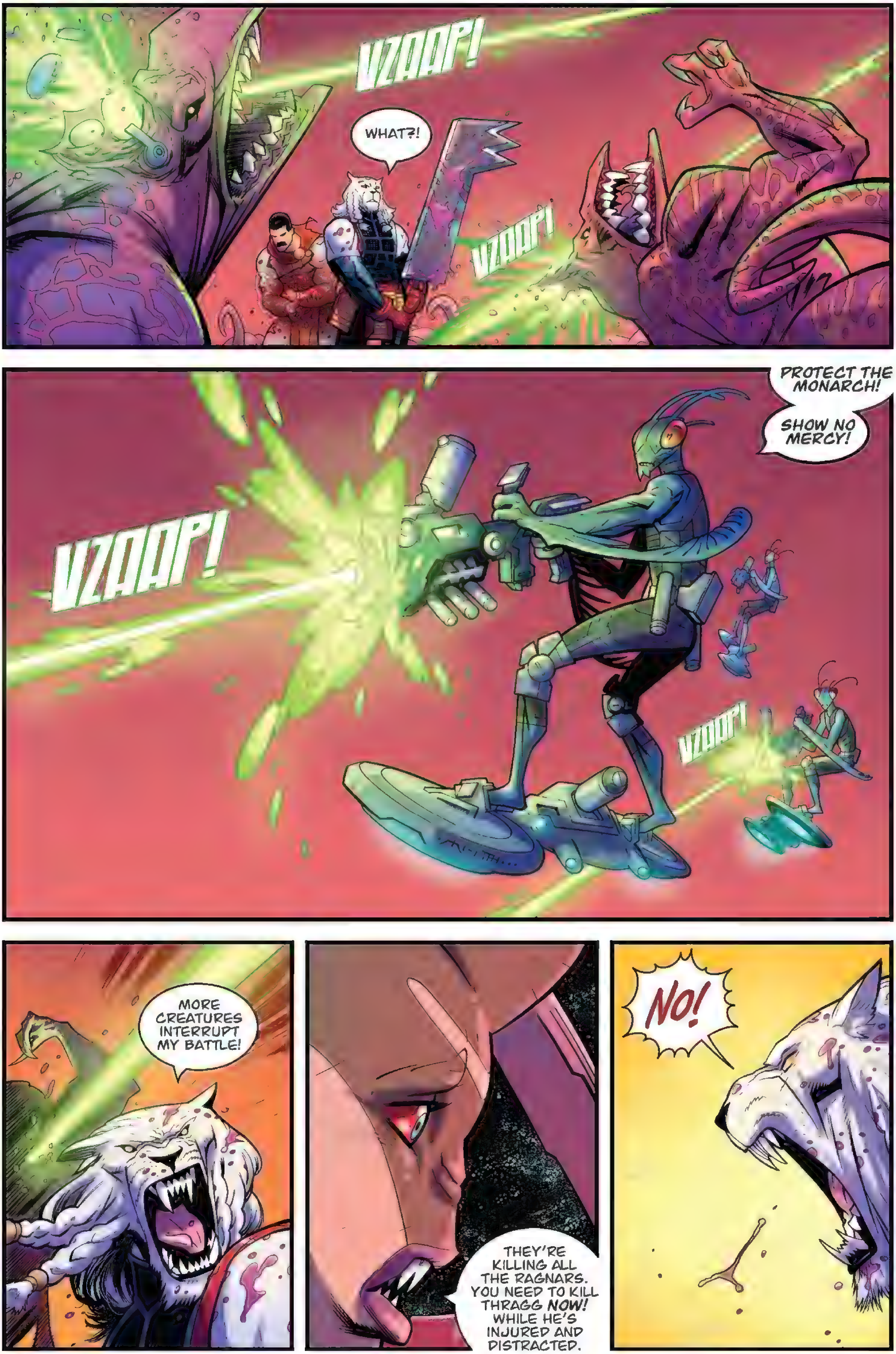
I HAVE DEFEATED YOU BEFORE.
EASILY, AS I RECALL.

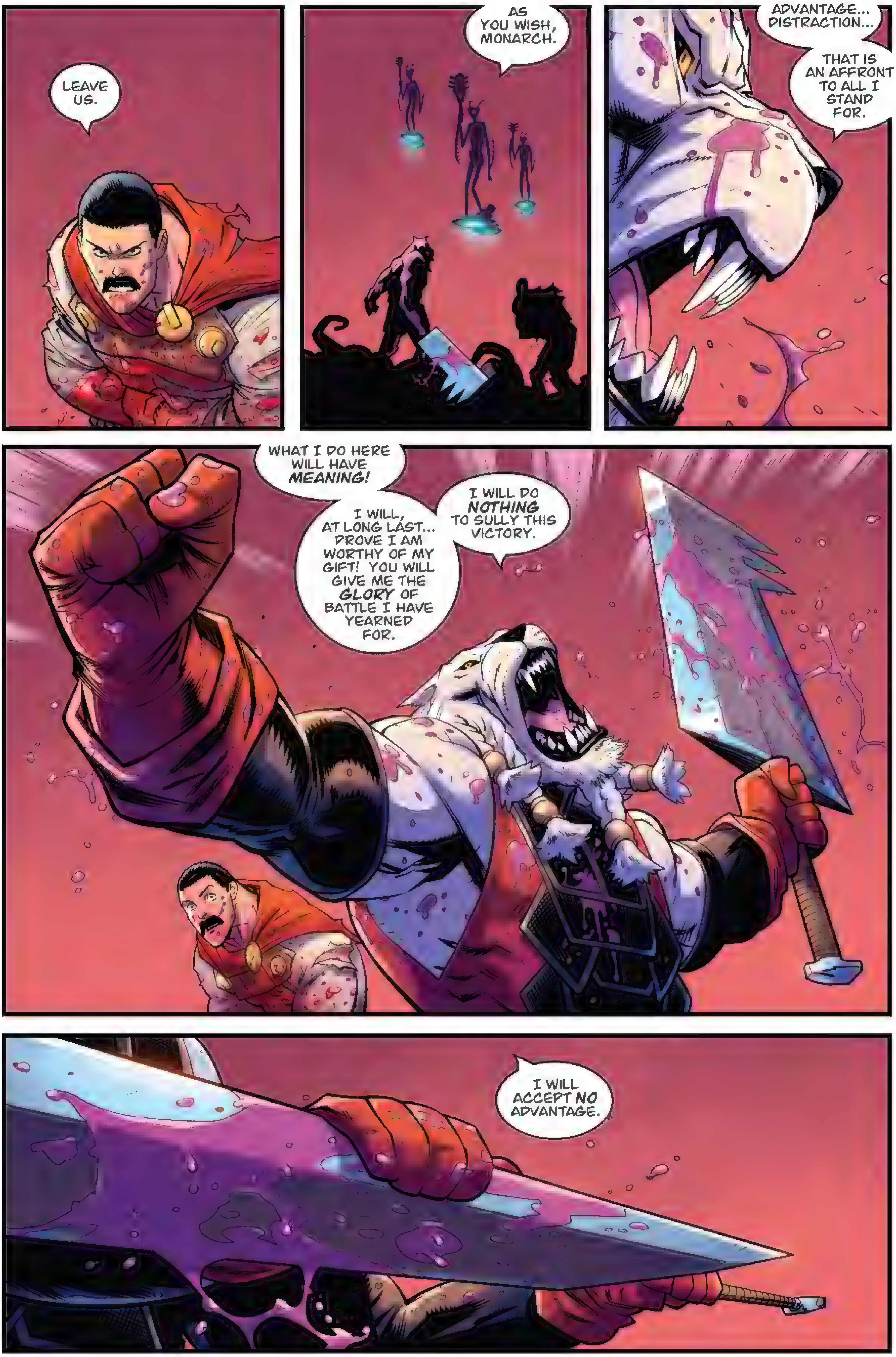

CONTACT?! SO SOON!
DEPLOY! DEPLOY!
THAT CONTEST BETWEEN US WAS NEVER FINISHED. YOU'D BE A FOOL TO CLAIM VICTORY.
WE'LL SEE.
BEFORE I KILL YOU, I HAVE TO ADMIT... YOU ARE POWERFUL, AND I COULD CERTAINLY USE AN ALLY.
IF BATTLE IS ALL YOU LUST FOR, I CAN PROVIDE THAT.
IT IS TRUE, I CRAVE BATTLE ABOVE ALL ELSE. I YEARN TO NOT ONLY FIND MY EQUAL, BUT ALSO MY BETTER... ONE WHO CAN PROVIDE ME WITH GLORIOUS DEATH.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE NO HONOR. YOU ASK ME TO JOIN YOU?
MY ANSWER WILL BE WRITTEN IN YOUR INNARDS ONCE I RELEASE THEM FROM YOUR--

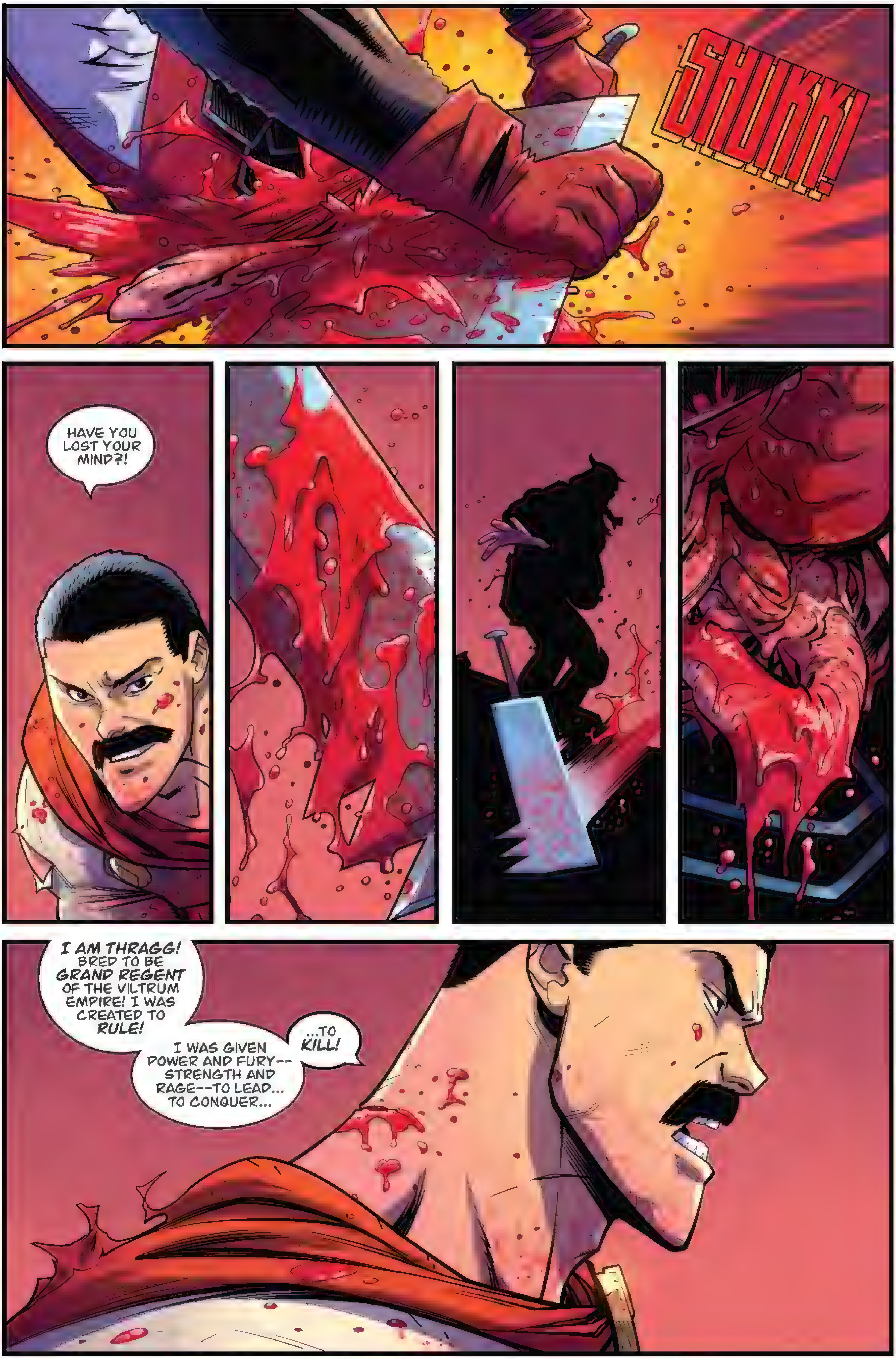
RAGNARS?
WELL PLAYED.

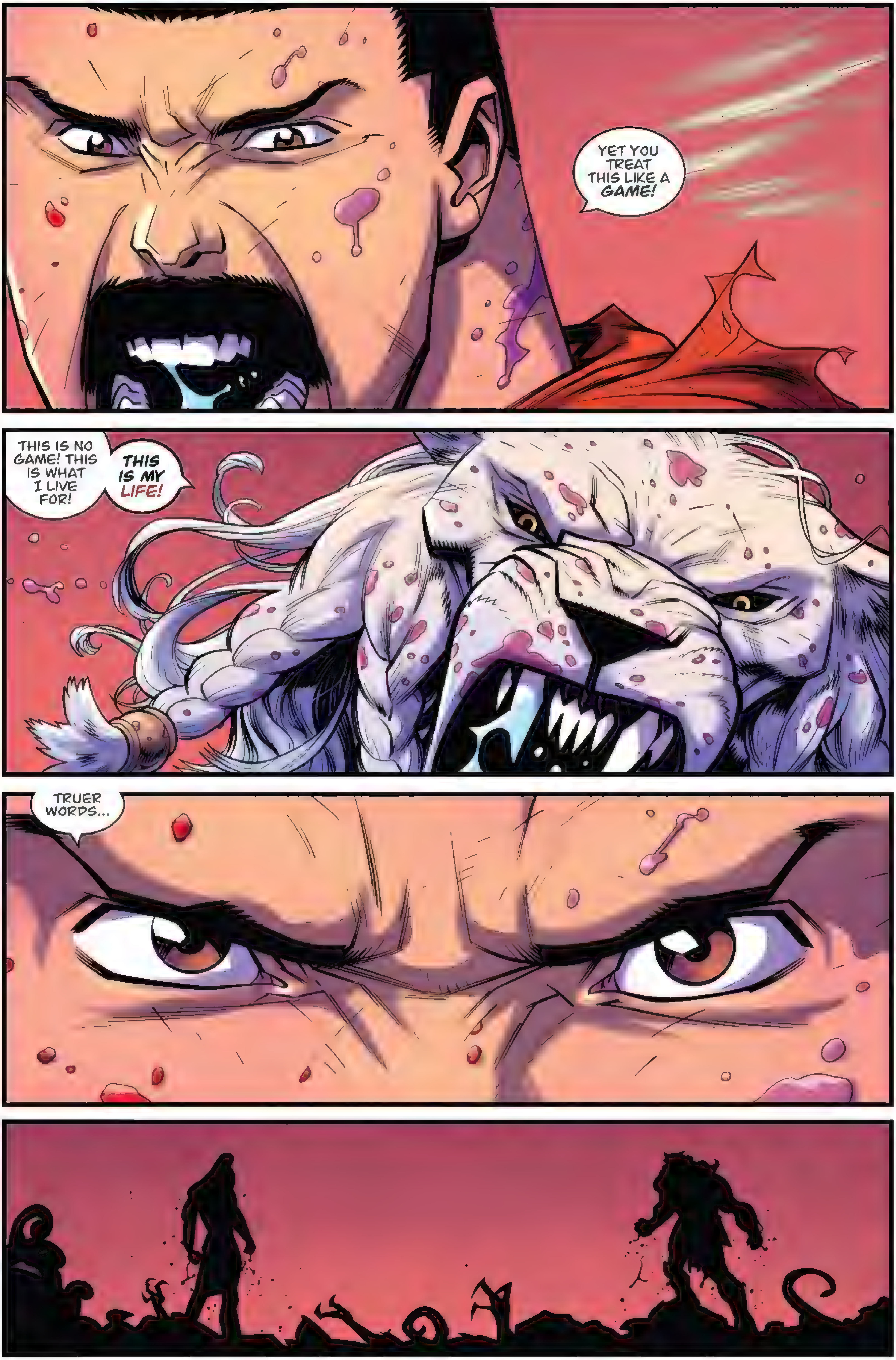

SHRAKK!
AAGH!
NO!
I WAS ASSURED THEY WOULD BE RELEASED ONLY UPON MY *DEATH!*
WHY HAVE YOU *BETRAYED* ME?!
MY LOVE, SORRY I AM!
PROMISE HIM, ALLEN MADE ME. ALLOW YOU TO DIE I CANNOT. TOO MUCH YOU MEAN TO ME.
SVAASH!
I WILL *NOT* BE DENIED MY *GLORY!*


SHROKK!
RAARRGH!
SPLAGG!
YOU ARE... A FOOL TO ASSIST ME.
THIS PLANET WILL BE TORN APART BY THE *FURY* OF OUR CLASHING... I WILL ALLOW *NOTHING* TO STEAL THAT FROM ME.
I HAVE LONGED FOR THIS DAY!


VZAAP!
WHAT?!
VZAAP!
PROTECT THE MONARCH!
SHOW NO MERCY!
VZAAP!
VZAAP!
MORE CREATURES INTERRUPT MY BATTLE!
THEY'RE KILLING ALL THE RAGNARS. YOU NEED TO KILL THRAGG *NOW!* WHILE HE'S INJURED AND DISTRACTED.
NO!

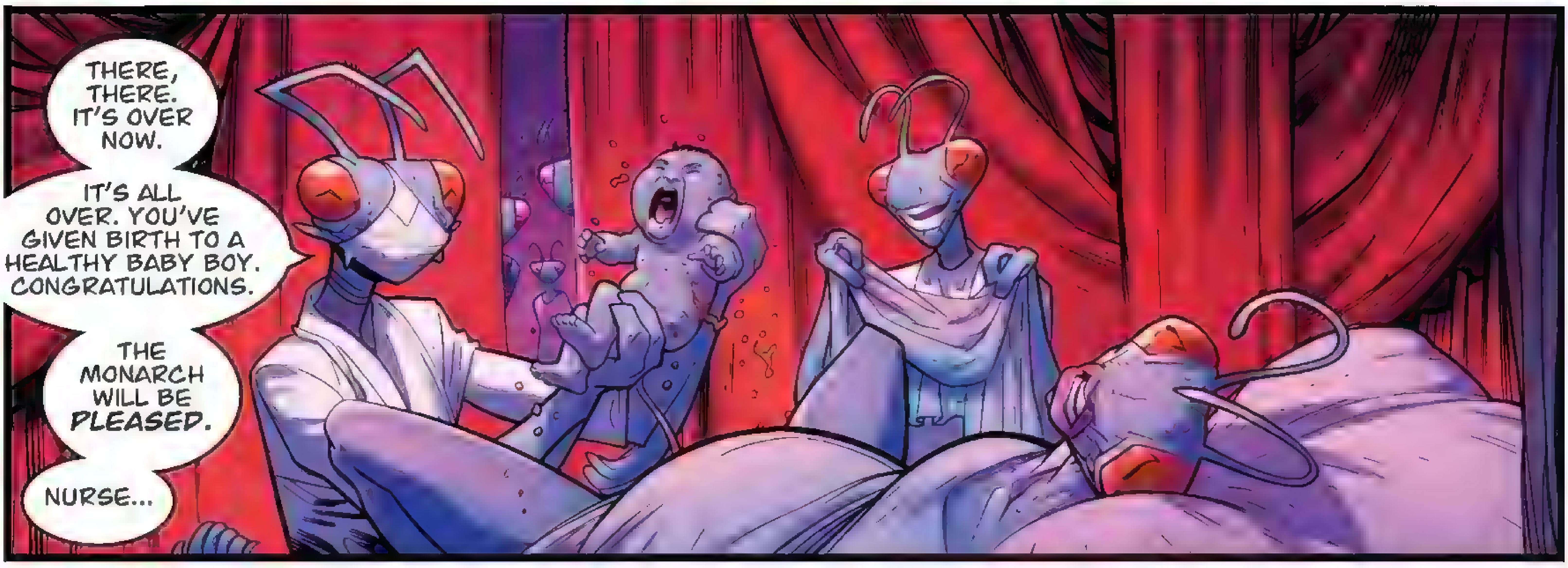

LEAVE US.
AS YOU WISH, MONARCH.
ADVANTAGE... DISTRACTION...
THAT IS AN AFFRONT TO ALL I STAND FOR.
WHAT I DO HERE WILL HAVE *MEANING!*
I WILL, AT LONG LAST... PROVE I AM WORTHY OF MY GIFT! YOU WILL GIVE ME THE *GLORY* OF BATTLE I HAVE YEARNED FOR.
I WILL DO *NOTHING* TO SULLY THIS VICTORY.
I WILL ACCEPT *NO* ADVANTAGE.

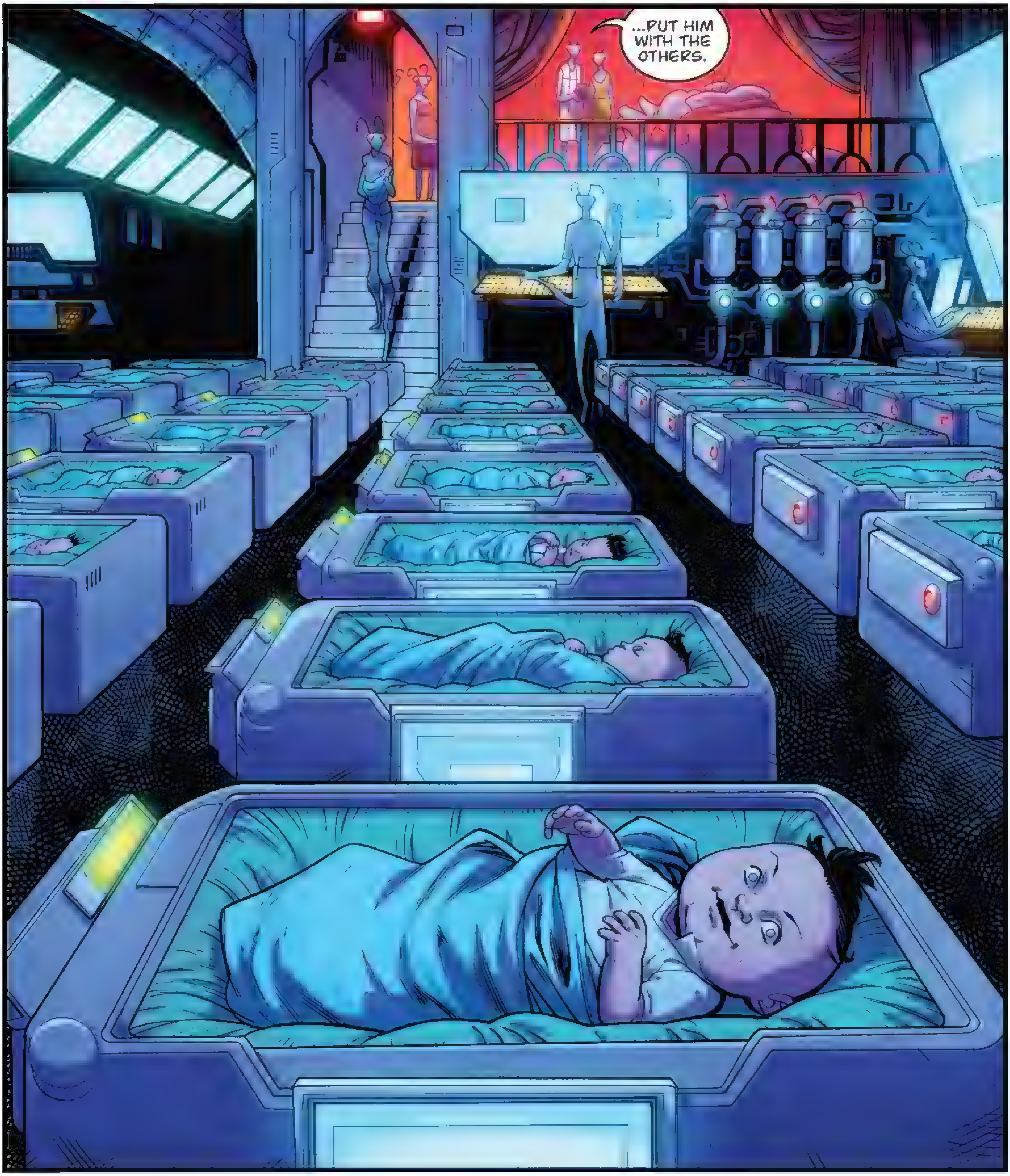

SHUKK!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
I AM THRAGG! BRED TO BE GRAND REGENT OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE! I WAS CREATED TO RULE!
I WAS GIVEN POWER AND FURY-- STRENGTH AND RAGE--TO LEAD... TO CONQUER...
...TO KILL!


YET YOU TREAT THIS LIKE A GAME!
THIS IS NO GAME! THIS IS WHAT I LIVE FOR!
THIS IS MY LIFE!
TRUER WORDS...

KRAK!
WRAMM!
WHAPP!
KROOM!
WROKK!
I SENSE MY VICTORY DRAWING NEAR!
NO!
YOU FIGHT FOR GLORY-- WHILE I FIGHT FOR THE VERY EXISTENCE OF MY PEOPLE--WHOM I HAVE SWORN TO PROTECT AT ALL COSTS!
I WILL NOT FALL!

AAGGH!
PLEASE, PLEASE... MAKE IT STOP!
NO! NO! N--
NNNNNGGGG!
YEEAAAAAGH!!!


THERE, THERE. IT'S OVER NOW.
IT'S ALL OVER. YOU'VE GIVEN BIRTH TO A HEALTHY BABY BOY. CONGRATULATIONS.
THE MONARCH WILL BE *PLEASED*.
NURSE...


...PUT HIM WITH THE OTHERS.

CHAPTER 116

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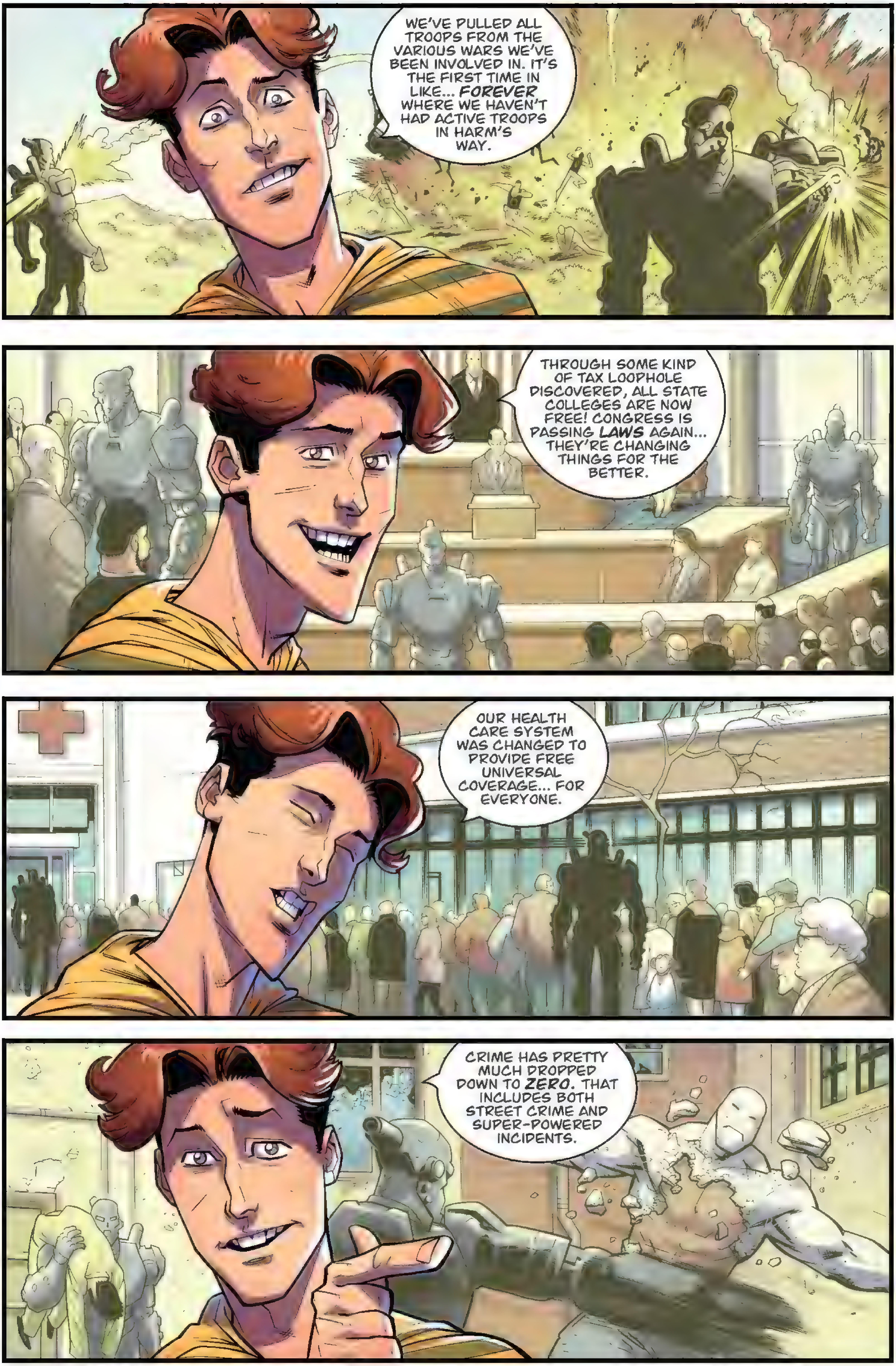
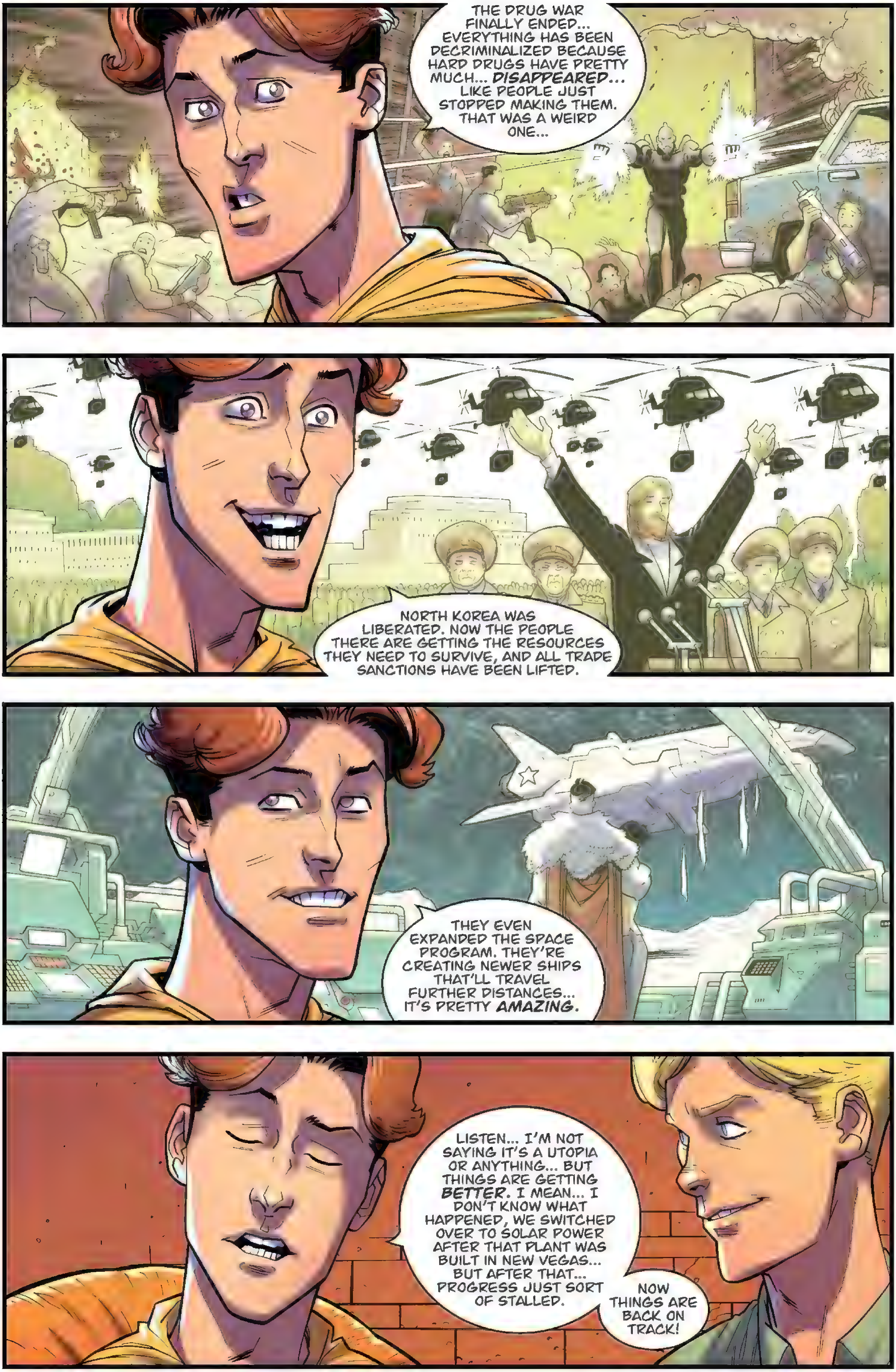
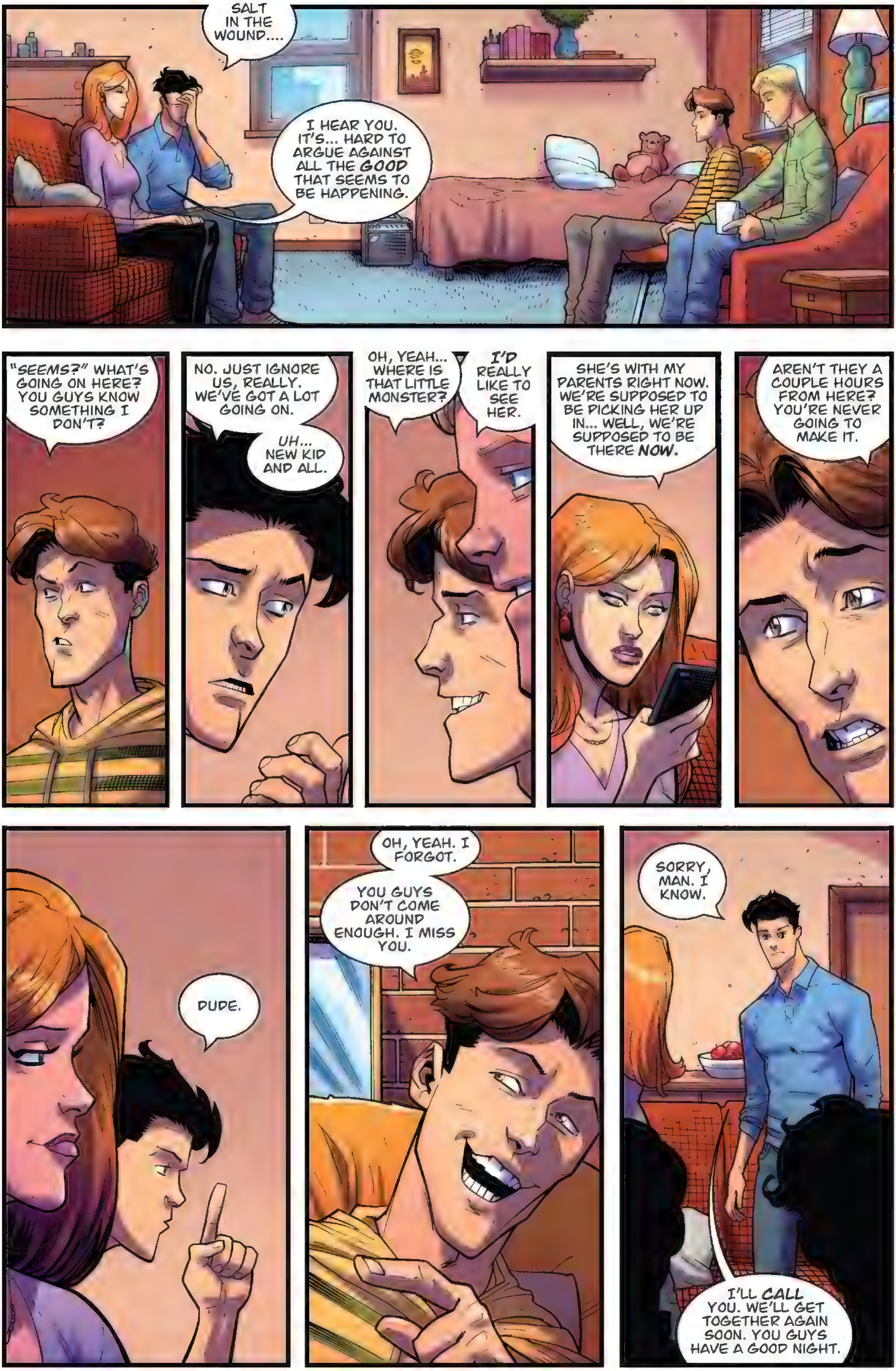
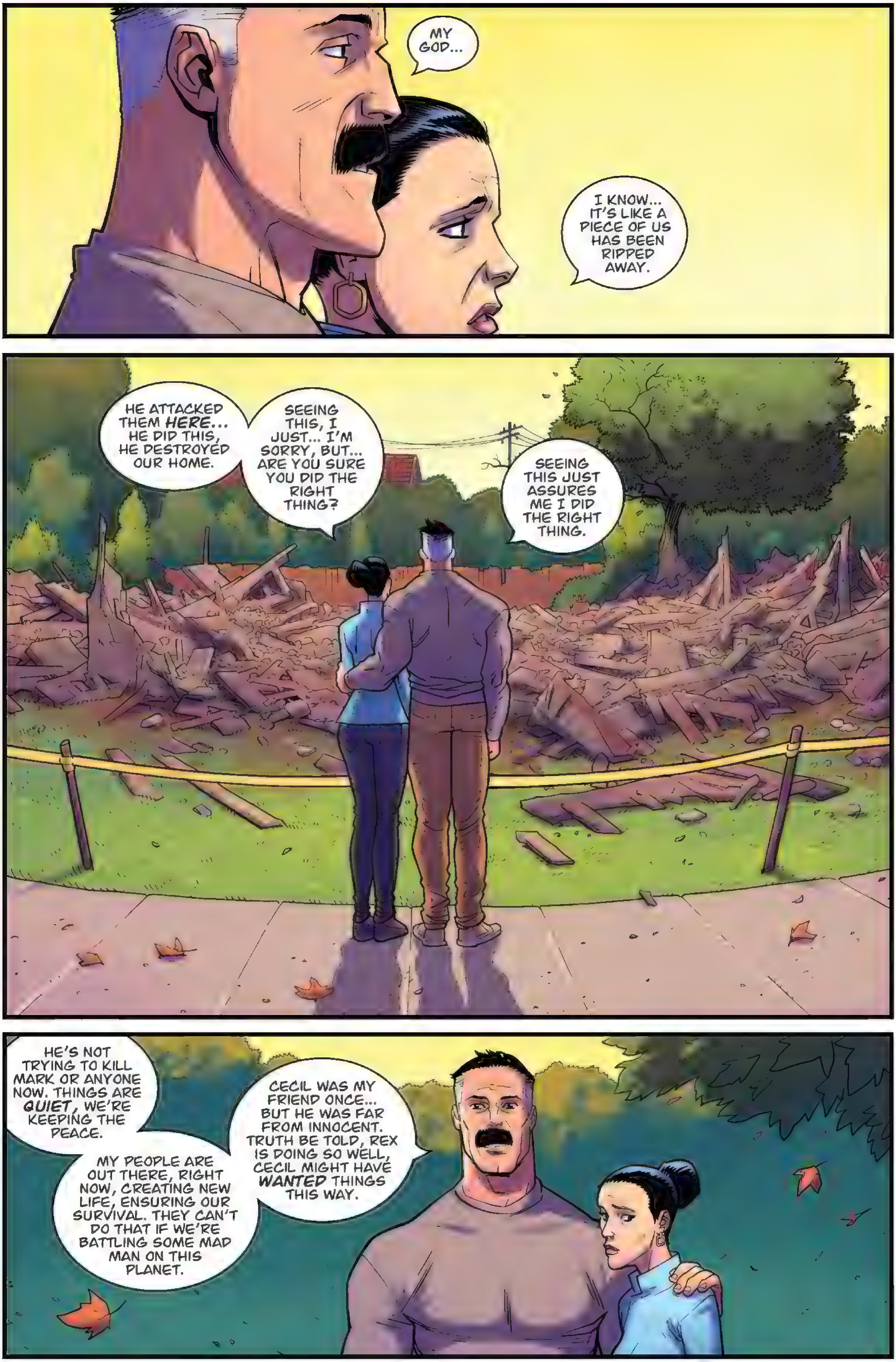
FIRE LINE DO NOT CROSS
FIRE LIN
E DO NOT CROSS
FIRE LINE DO
Ryan 14

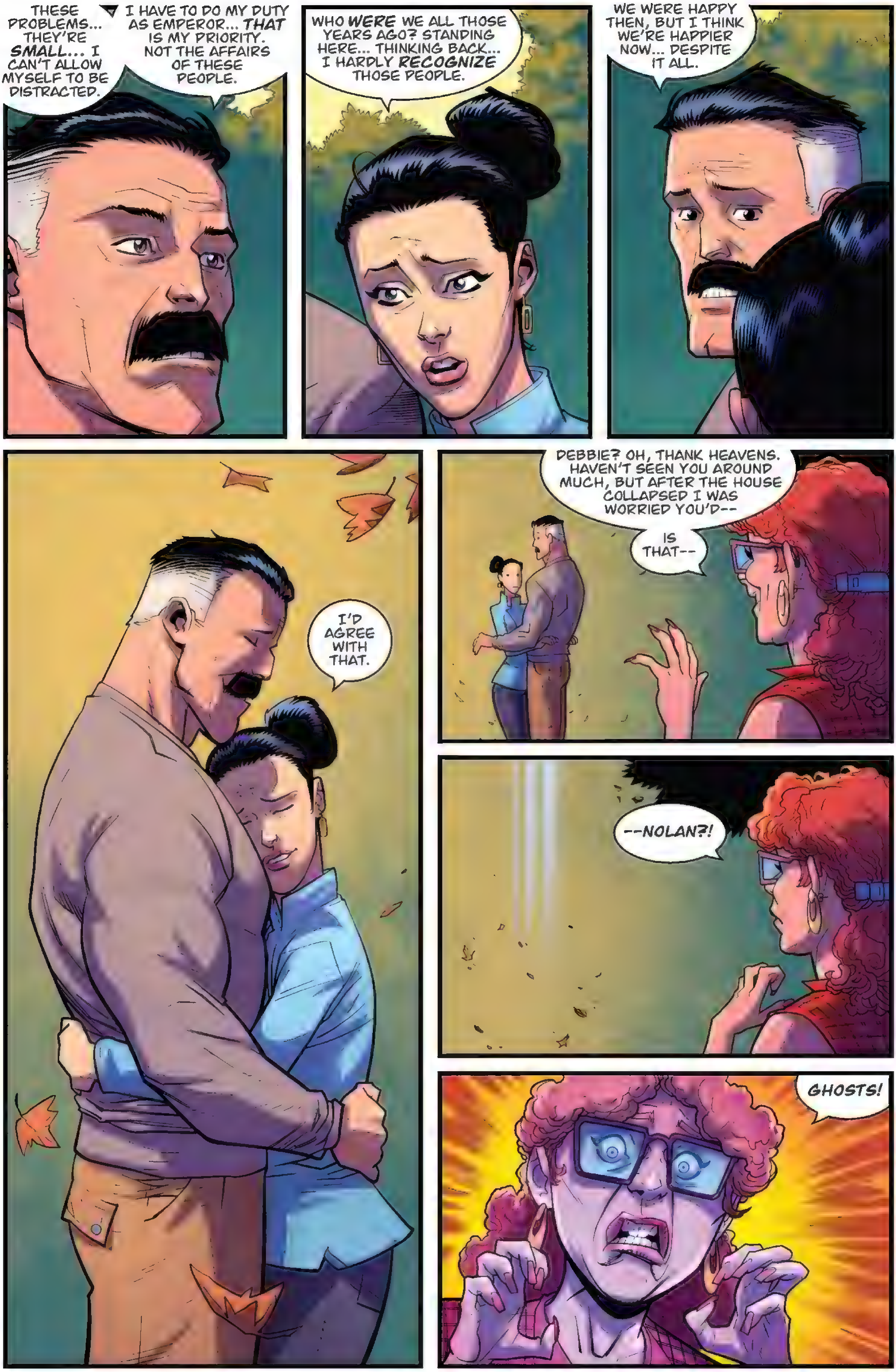
OF **COURSE** I'M EXCITED! IT'S A WHOLE NEW WORLD OUT THERE!
EVERYTHING IS CHANGING SO FAST I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT. I MEAN... HAVE YOU GUYS NOT BEEN PAYING ATTENTION?
HOW COULD YOU NOT BE **THRILLED** WITH EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENING? IT'S ALL **GREAT!**

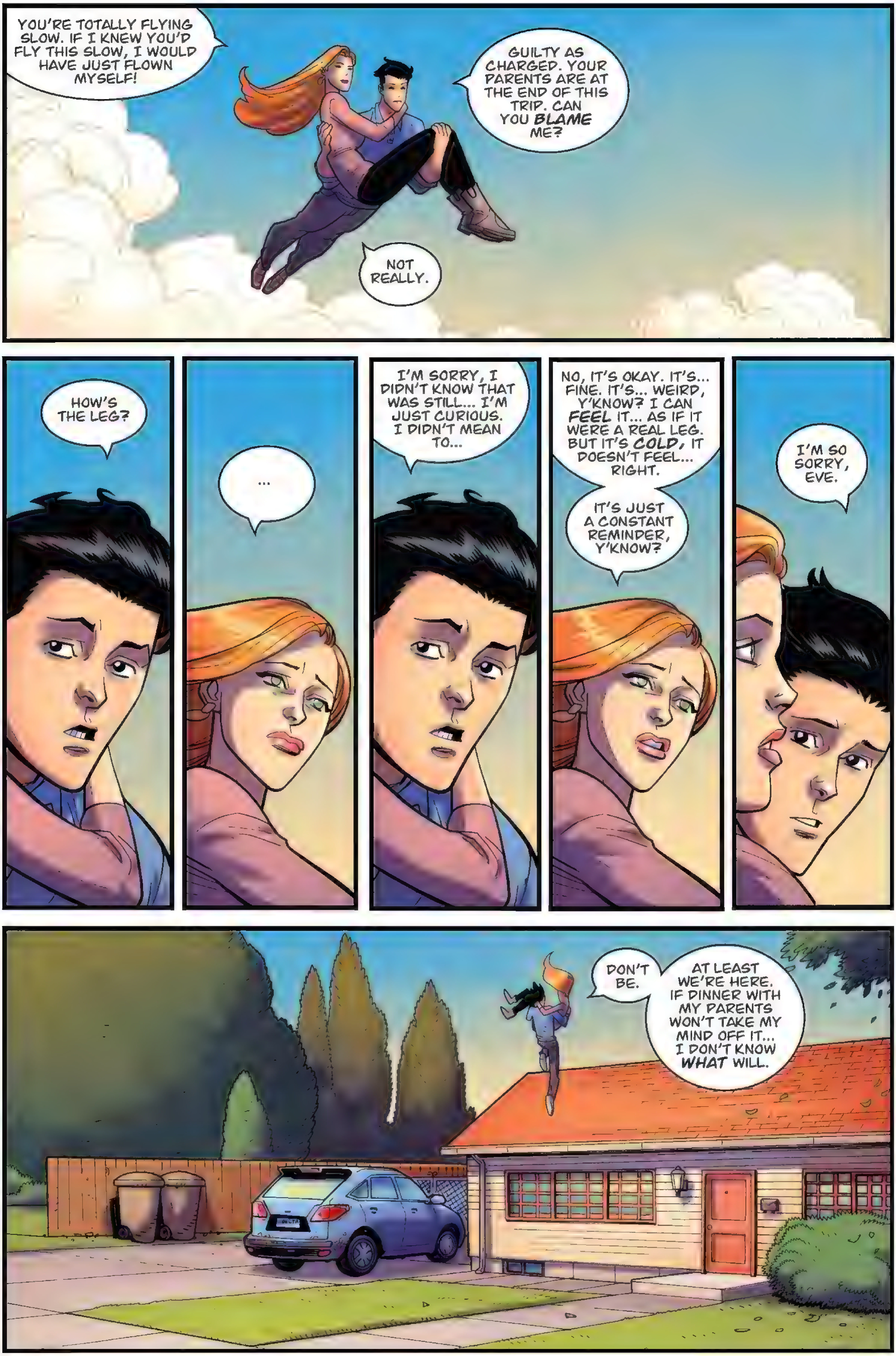

WE'VE PULLED ALL TROOPS FROM THE VARIOUS WARS WE'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN. IT'S THE FIRST TIME IN LIKE... *FOREVER* WHERE WE HAVEN'T HAD ACTIVE TROOPS IN HARM'S WAY.
THROUGH SOME KIND OF TAX LOOPHOLE DISCOVERED, ALL STATE COLLEGES ARE NOW FREE! CONGRESS IS PASSING *LAWS* AGAIN... THEY'RE CHANGING THINGS FOR THE BETTER.
OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WAS CHANGED TO PROVIDE FREE UNIVERSAL COVERAGE... FOR EVERYONE.
CRIME HAS PRETTY MUCH DROPPED DOWN TO *ZERO*. THAT INCLUDES BOTH STREET CRIME AND SUPER-POWERED INCIDENTS.


THE DRUG WAR FINALLY ENDED... EVERYTHING HAS BEEN DECRIMINALIZED BECAUSE HARD DRUGS HAVE PRETTY MUCH... *DISAPPEARED*... LIKE PEOPLE JUST STOPPED MAKING THEM. THAT WAS A WEIRD ONE...
NORTH KOREA WAS LIBERATED. NOW THE PEOPLE THERE ARE GETTING THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO SURVIVE, AND ALL TRADE SANCTIONS HAVE BEEN LIFTED.
THEY EVEN EXPANDED THE SPACE PROGRAM. THEY'RE CREATING NEWER SHIPS THAT'LL TRAVEL FURTHER DISTANCES... IT'S PRETTY *AMAZING*.
LISTEN... I'M NOT SAYING IT'S A UTOPIA OR ANYTHING... BUT THINGS ARE GETTING *BETTER*. I MEAN... I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, WE SWITCHED OVER TO SOLAR POWER AFTER THAT PLANT WAS BUILT IN NEW VEGAS... BUT AFTER THAT... PROGRESS JUST SORT OF STALLED.
NOW THINGS ARE BACK ON TRACK!

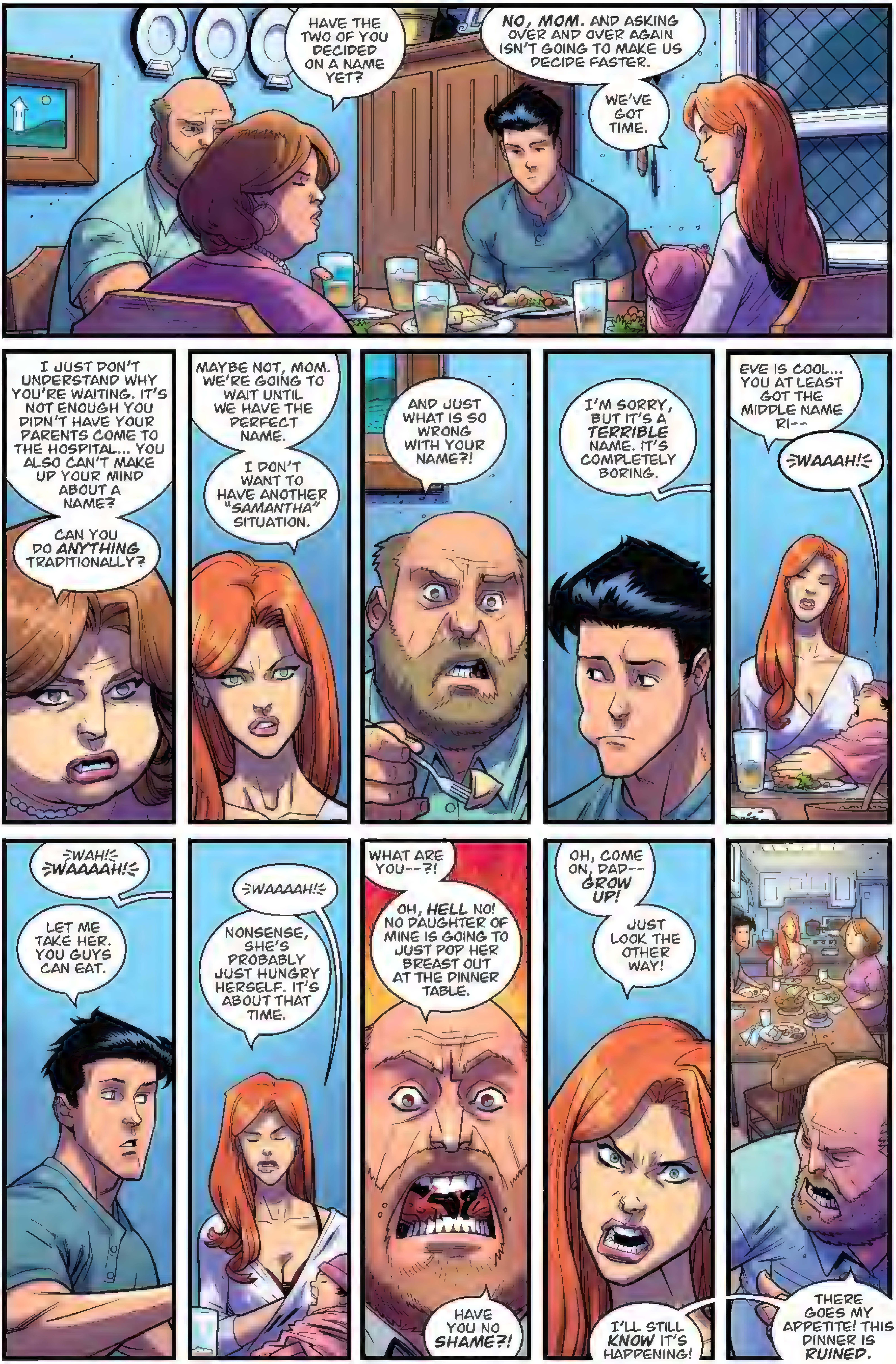

SALT IN THE WOUND....
I HEAR YOU. IT'S... HARD TO ARGUE AGAINST ALL THE GOOD THAT SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING.
"SEEMS?" WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? YOU GUYS KNOW SOMETHING I DON'T?
NO. JUST IGNORE US, REALLY. WE'VE GOT A LOT GOING ON.
UH... NEW KID AND ALL.
OH, YEAH... WHERE IS THAT LITTLE MONSTER?
I'D REALLY LIKE TO SEE HER.
SHE'S WITH MY PARENTS RIGHT NOW. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PICKING HER UP IN... WELL, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THERE NOW.
AREN'T THEY A COUPLE HOURS FROM HERE? YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO MAKE IT.
DUDE.
OH, YEAH. I FORGOT.
YOU GUYS DON'T COME AROUND ENOUGH. I MISS YOU.
SORRY, MAN. I KNOW.
I'LL CALL YOU. WE'LL GET TOGETHER AGAIN SOON. YOU GUYS HAVE A GOOD NIGHT.

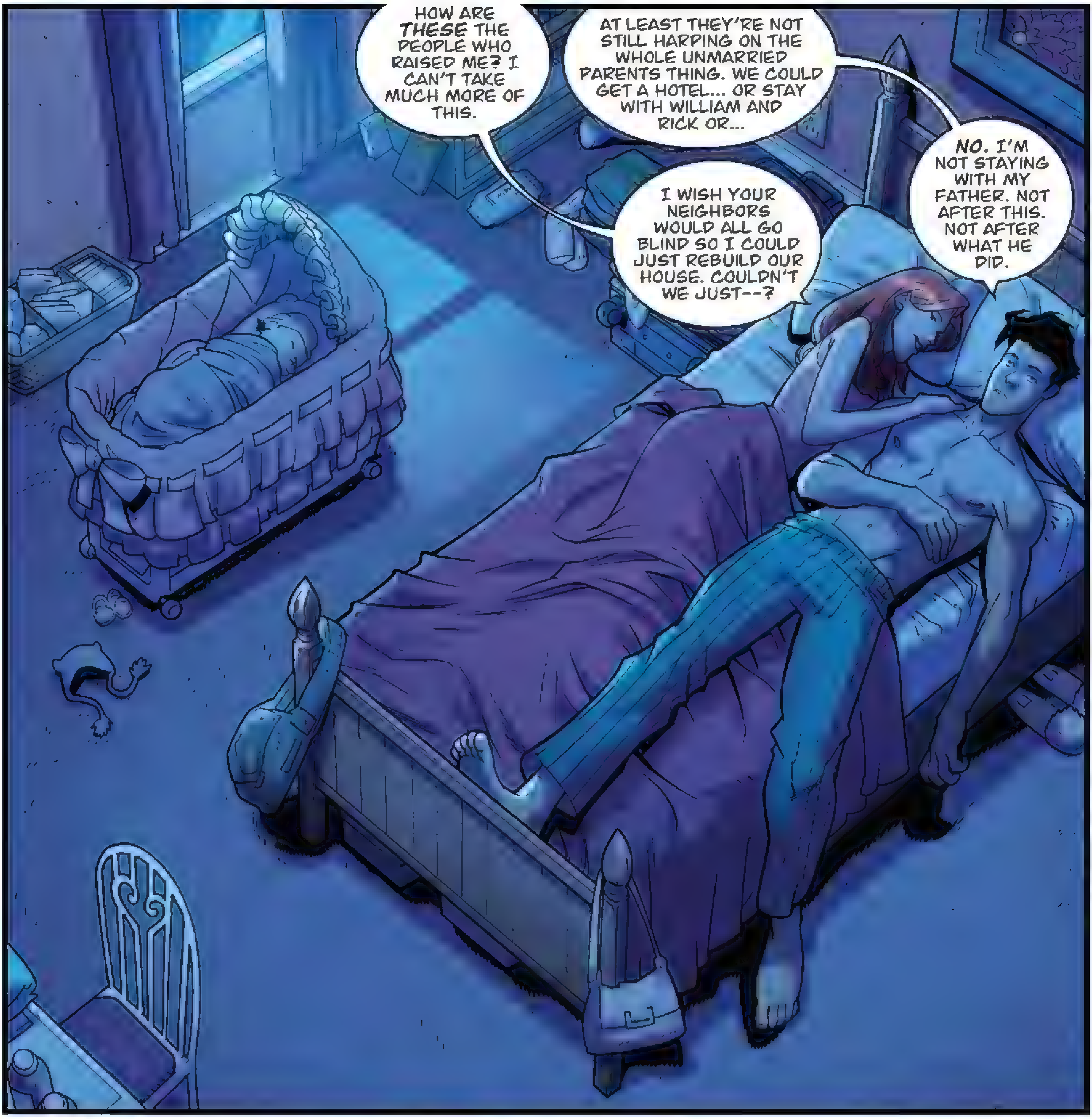

MY GOD...
I KNOW... IT'S LIKE A PIECE OF US HAS BEEN RIPPED AWAY.
HE ATTACKED THEM **HERE**... HE DID THIS, HE DESTROYED OUR HOME.
SEEING THIS, I JUST... I'M SORRY, BUT... ARE YOU SURE YOU DID THE RIGHT THING?
SEEING THIS JUST ASSURES ME I DID THE RIGHT THING.
HE'S NOT TRYING TO KILL MARK OR ANYONE NOW. THINGS ARE **QUIET**, WE'RE KEEPING THE PEACE.
MY PEOPLE ARE OUT THERE, RIGHT NOW, CREATING NEW LIFE, ENSURING OUR SURVIVAL. THEY CAN'T DO THAT IF WE'RE BATTLING SOME MAD MAN ON THIS PLANET.
CECIL WAS MY FRIEND ONCE... BUT HE WAS FAR FROM INNOCENT. TRUTH BE TOLD, REX IS DOING SO WELL, CECIL MIGHT HAVE **WANTED** THINGS THIS WAY.

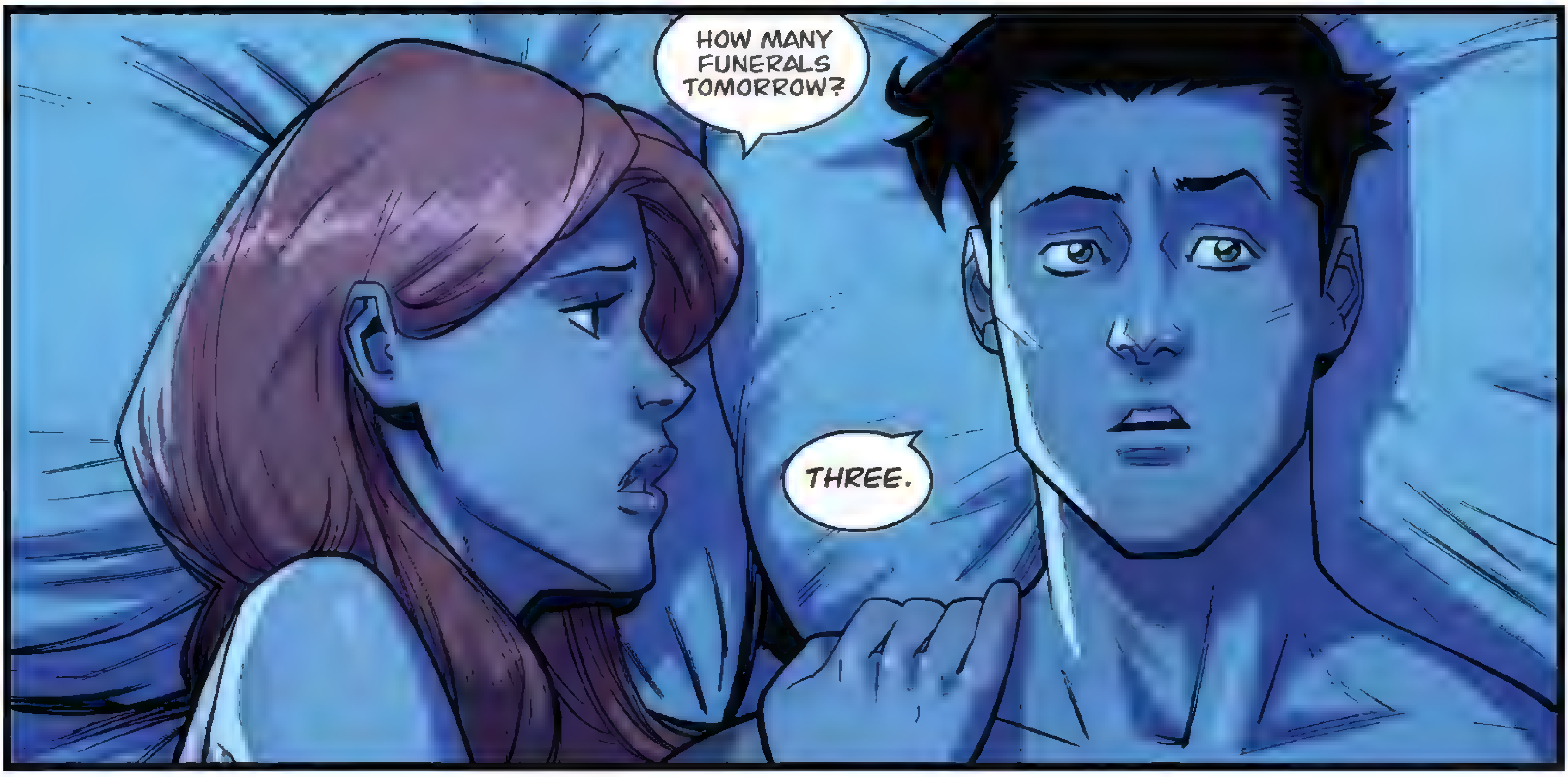

THESE PROBLEMS... THEY'RE SMALL... I CAN'T ALLOW MYSELF TO BE DISTRACTED.
I HAVE TO DO MY DUTY AS EMPEROR... THAT IS MY PRIORITY. NOT THE AFFAIRS OF THESE PEOPLE.
WHO WERE WE ALL THOSE YEARS AGO? STANDING HERE... THINKING BACK... I HARDLY RECOGNIZE THOSE PEOPLE.
WE WERE HAPPY THEN, BUT I THINK WE'RE HAPPIER NOW... DESPITE IT ALL.
I'D AGREE WITH THAT.
DEBBIE? OH, THANK HEAVENS. HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND MUCH, BUT AFTER THE HOUSE COLLAPSED I WAS WORRIED YOU'D--
IS THAT--
--NOLAN?!
GHOSTS!

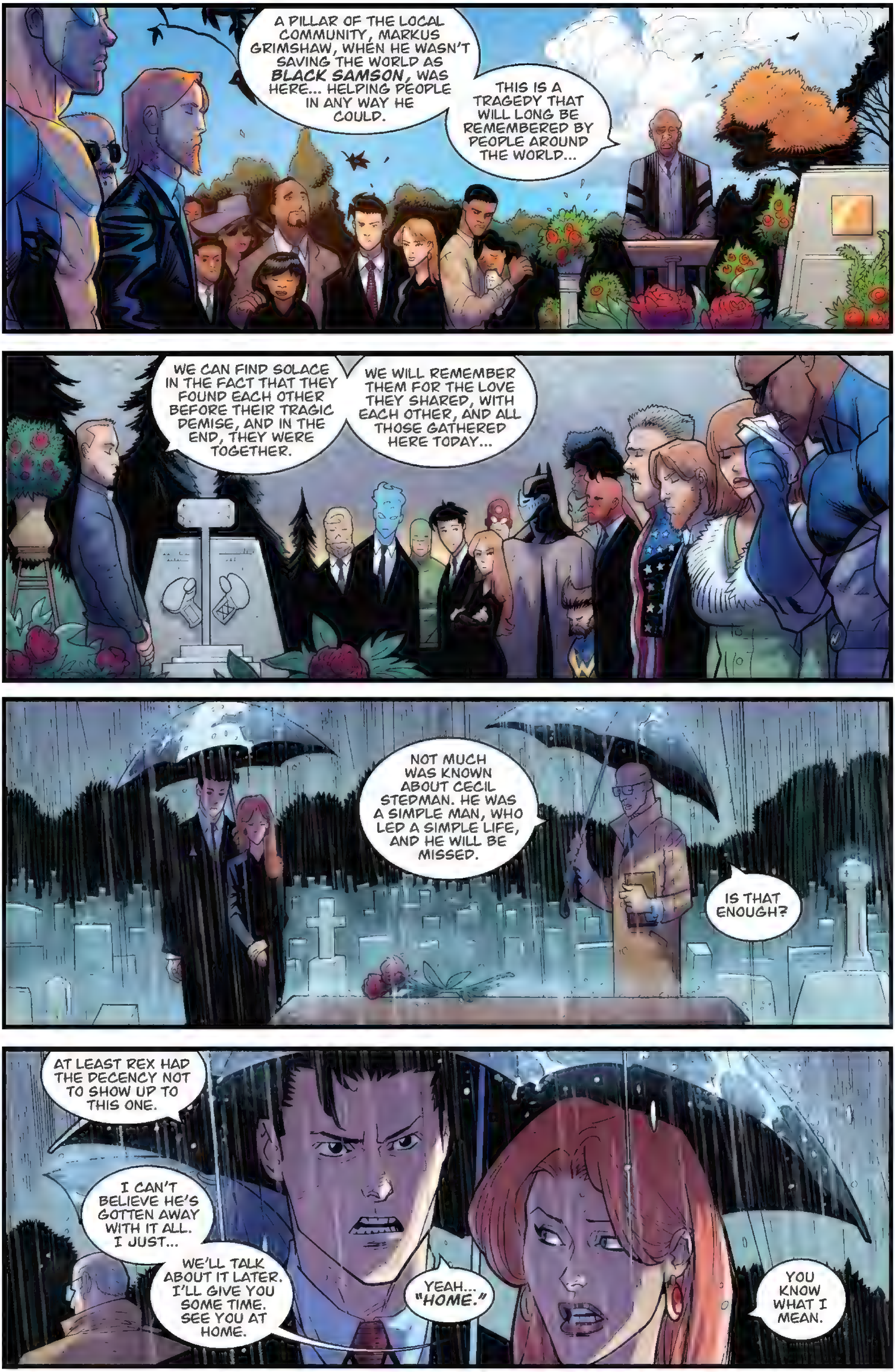

YOU'RE TOTALLY FLYING SLOW. IF I KNEW YOU'D FLY THIS SLOW, I WOULD HAVE JUST FLOWN MYSELF!
GUILTY AS CHARGED. YOUR PARENTS ARE AT THE END OF THIS TRIP. CAN YOU **BLAME** ME?
NOT REALLY.
HOW'S THE LEG?
...
I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WAS STILL... I'M JUST CURIOUS. I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
NO, IT'S OKAY. IT'S... FINE. IT'S... WEIRD, Y'KNOW? I CAN **FEEL** IT... AS IF IT WERE A REAL LEG. BUT IT'S **COLD,** IT DOESN'T FEEL... RIGHT.
IT'S JUST A CONSTANT REMINDER, Y'KNOW?
I'M SO SORRY, EVE.
DON'T BE.
AT LEAST WE'RE HERE. IF DINNER WITH MY PARENTS WON'T TAKE MY MIND OFF IT... I DON'T KNOW **WHAT** WILL.

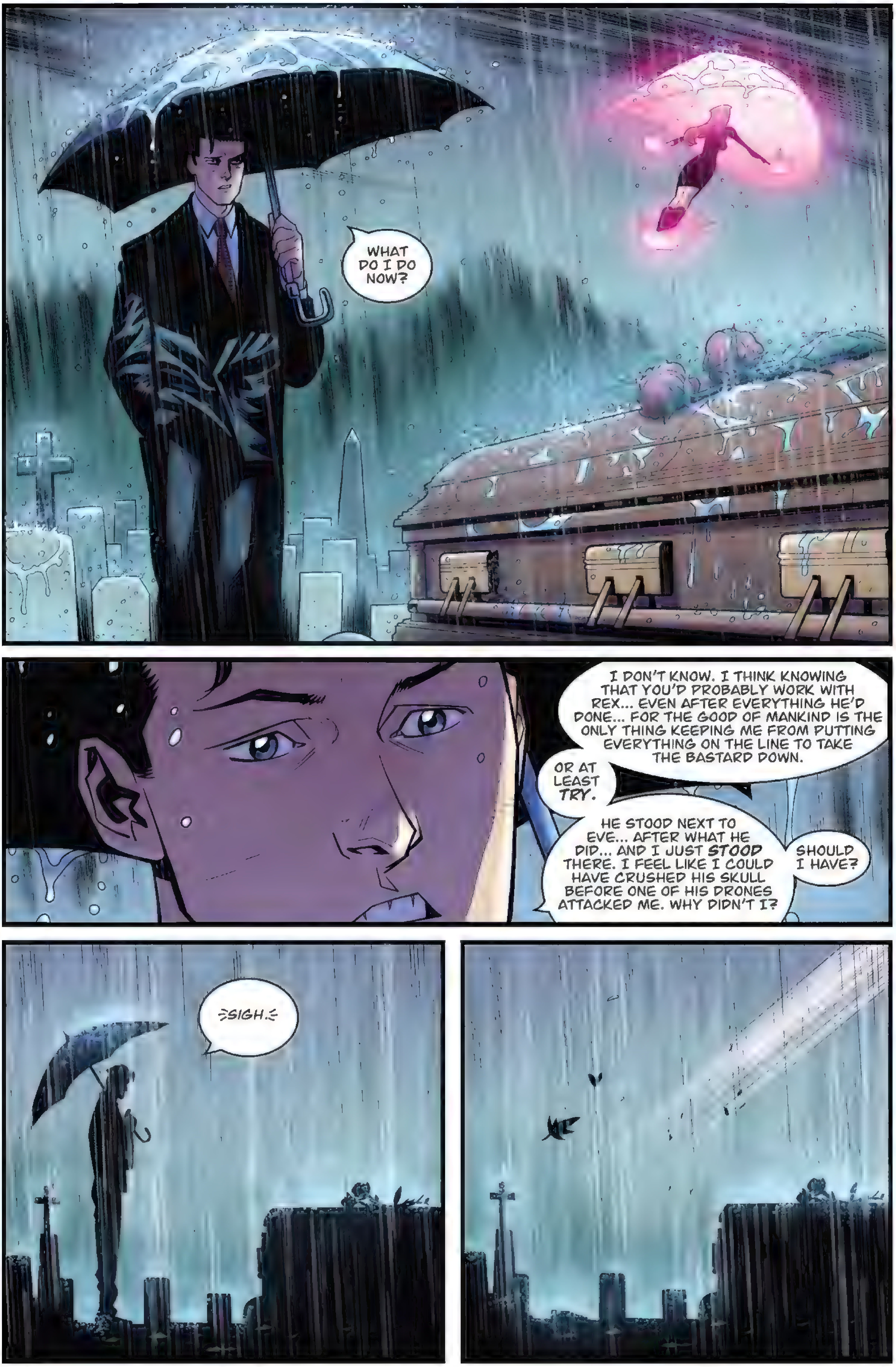
ELSEWHERE.

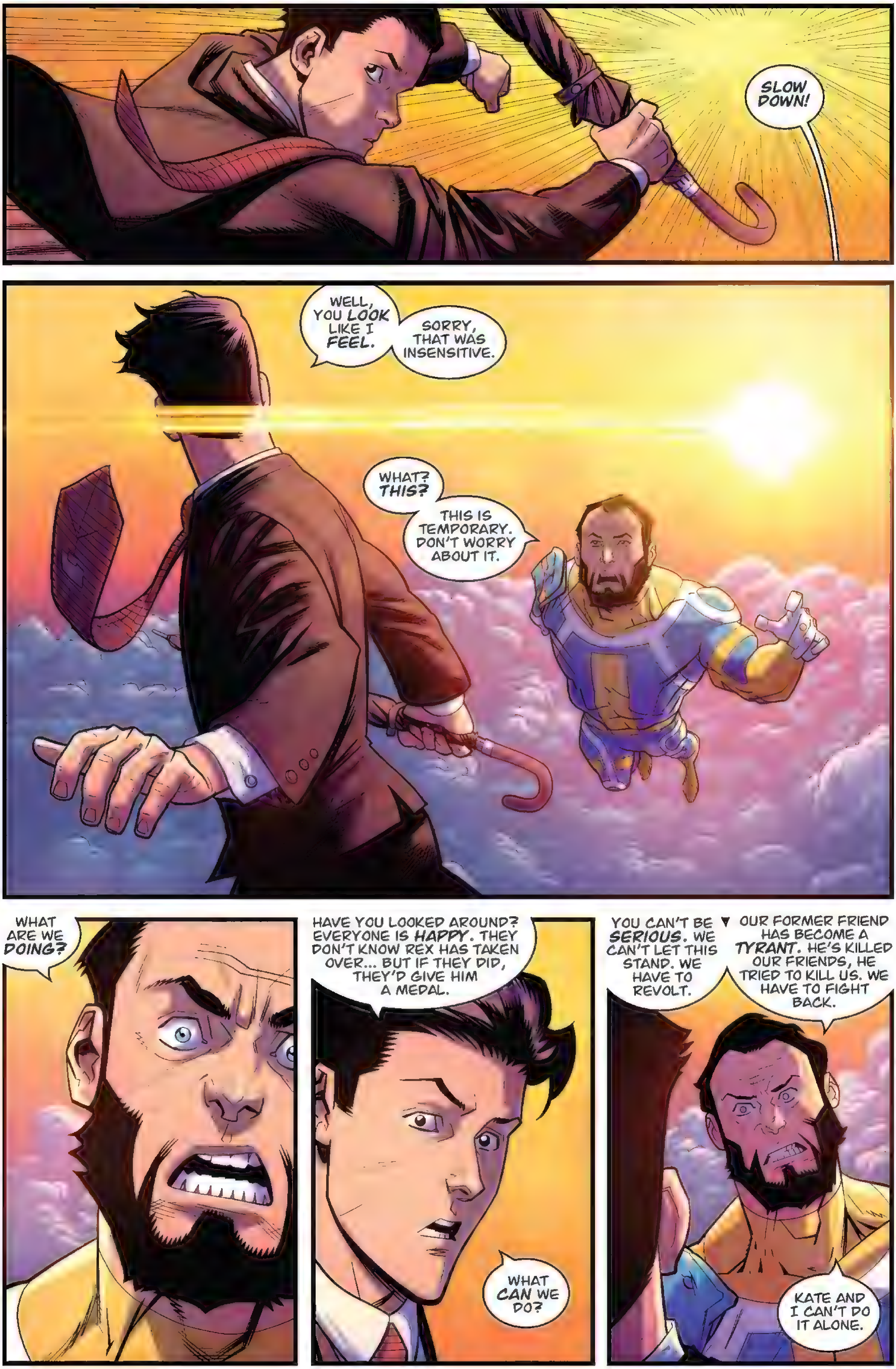

HAVE THE TWO OF YOU DECIDED ON A NAME YET?
NO, MOM. AND ASKING OVER AND OVER AGAIN ISN'T GOING TO MAKE US DECIDE FASTER.
WE'VE GOT TIME.
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE WAITING. IT'S NOT ENOUGH YOU DIDN'T HAVE YOUR PARENTS COME TO THE HOSPITAL... YOU ALSO CAN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT A NAME?
CAN YOU DO ANYTHING TRADITIONALLY?
MAYBE NOT, MOM. WE'RE GOING TO WAIT UNTIL WE HAVE THE PERFECT NAME.
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANOTHER "SAMANTHA" SITUATION.
AND JUST WHAT IS SO WRONG WITH YOUR NAME?!
I'M SORRY, BUT IT'S A TERRIBLE NAME. IT'S COMPLETELY BORING.
EVE IS COOL... YOU AT LEAST GOT THE MIDDLE NAME RI--
WAAAH!
WAH! WAAAAH!
LET ME TAKE HER. YOU GUYS CAN EAT.
WAAAAH!
NONSENSE, SHE'S PROBABLY JUST HUNGRY HERSELF. IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME.
WHAT ARE YOU--?!
OH, HELL NO! NO DAUGHTER OF MINE IS GOING TO JUST POP HER BREAST OUT AT THE DINNER TABLE.
HAVE YOU NO SHAME?!
OH, COME ON, DAD-- GROW UP!
JUST LOOK THE OTHER WAY!
I'LL STILL KNOW IT'S HAPPENING!
THERE GOES MY APPETITE! THIS DINNER IS RUINED.

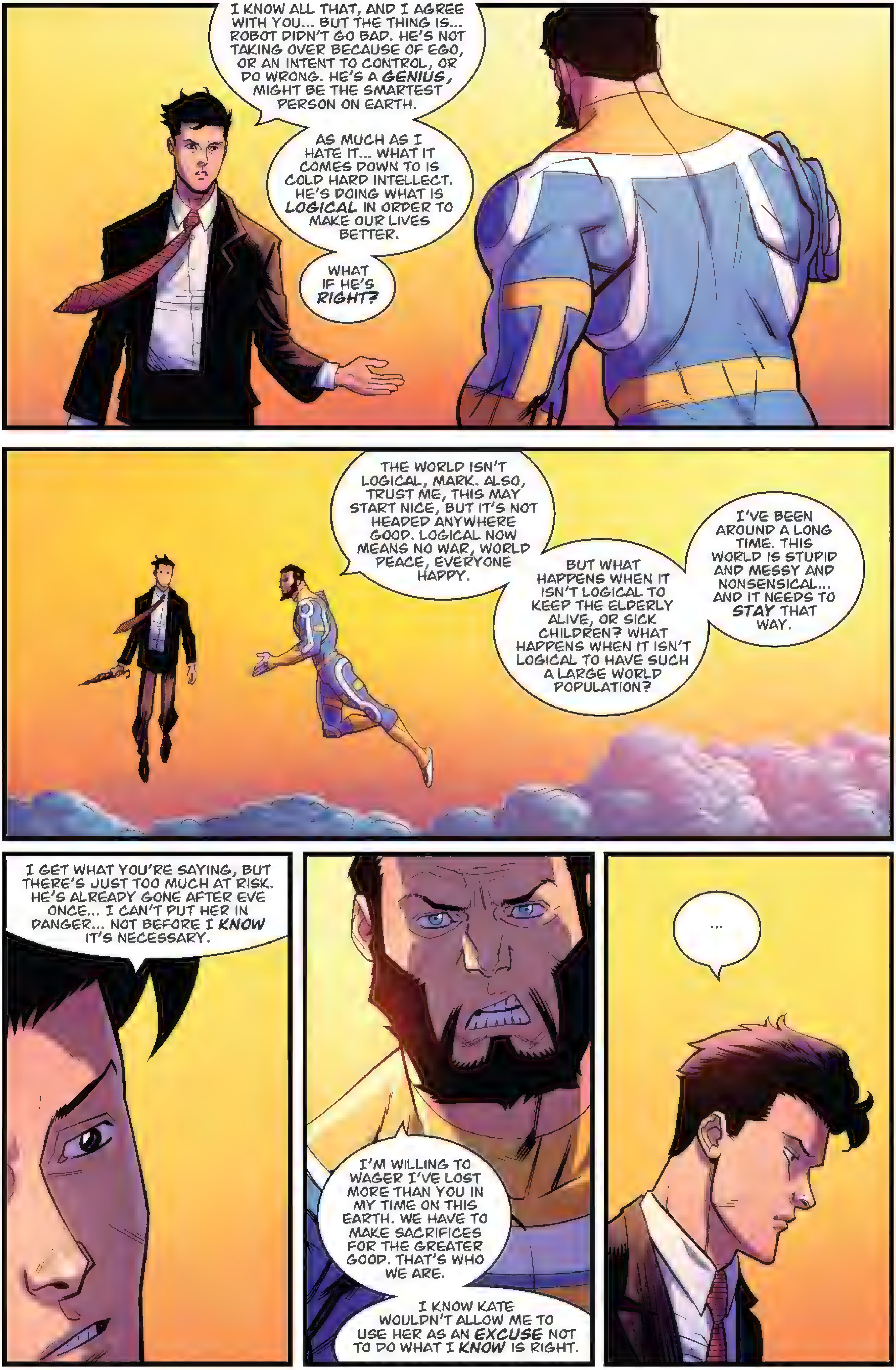

HOW ARE *THESE* THE PEOPLE WHO RAISED ME? I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS.
AT LEAST THEY'RE NOT STILL HARPING ON THE WHOLE UNMARRIED PARENTS THING. WE COULD GET A HOTEL... OR STAY WITH WILLIAM AND RICK OR...
I WISH YOUR NEIGHBORS WOULD ALL GO BLIND SO I COULD JUST REBUILD OUR HOUSE. COULDN'T WE JUST--?
NO. I'M NOT STAYING WITH MY FATHER. NOT AFTER THIS. NOT AFTER WHAT HE DID.

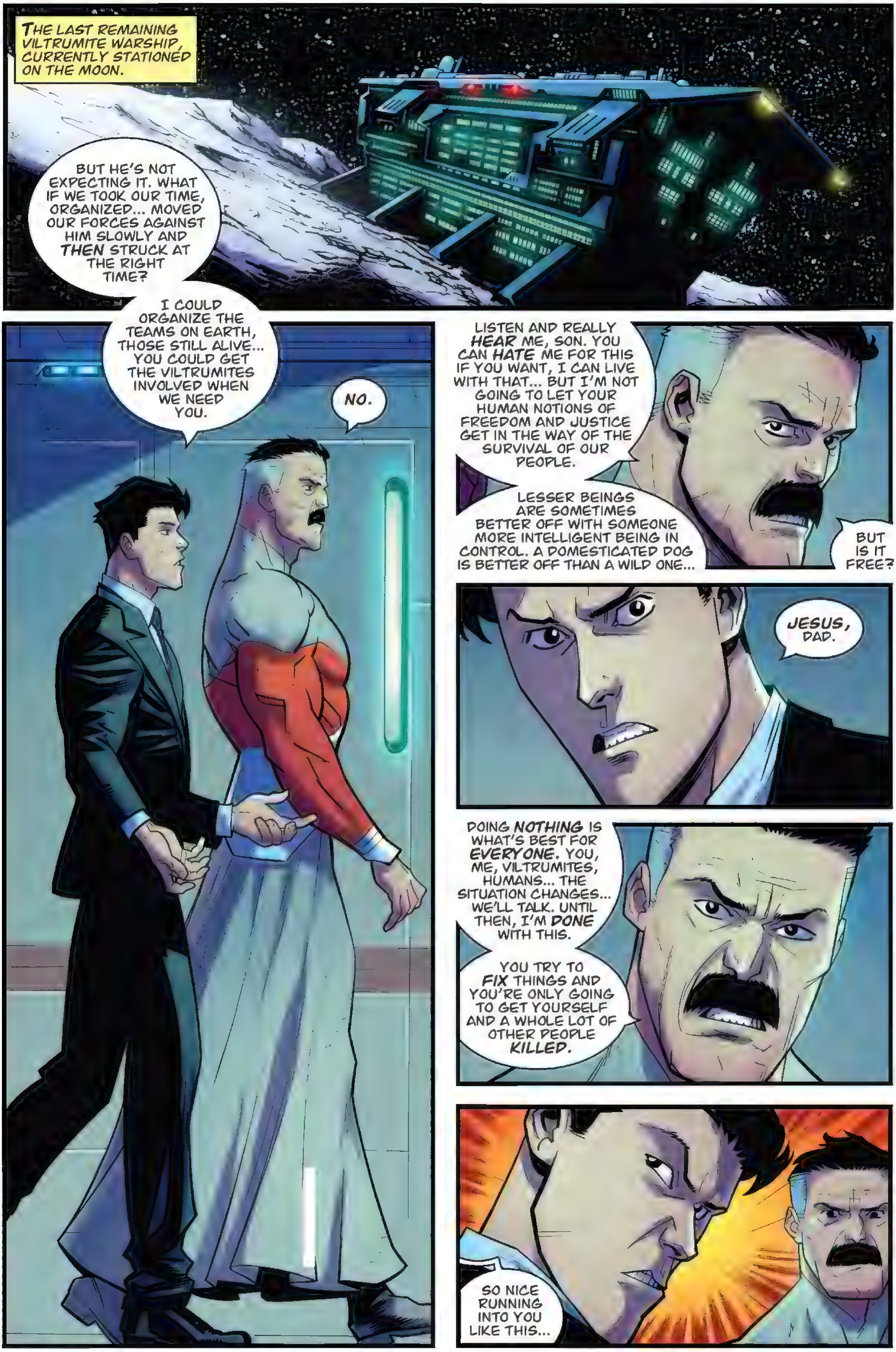

HOW MANY FUNERALS TOMORROW?
THREE.

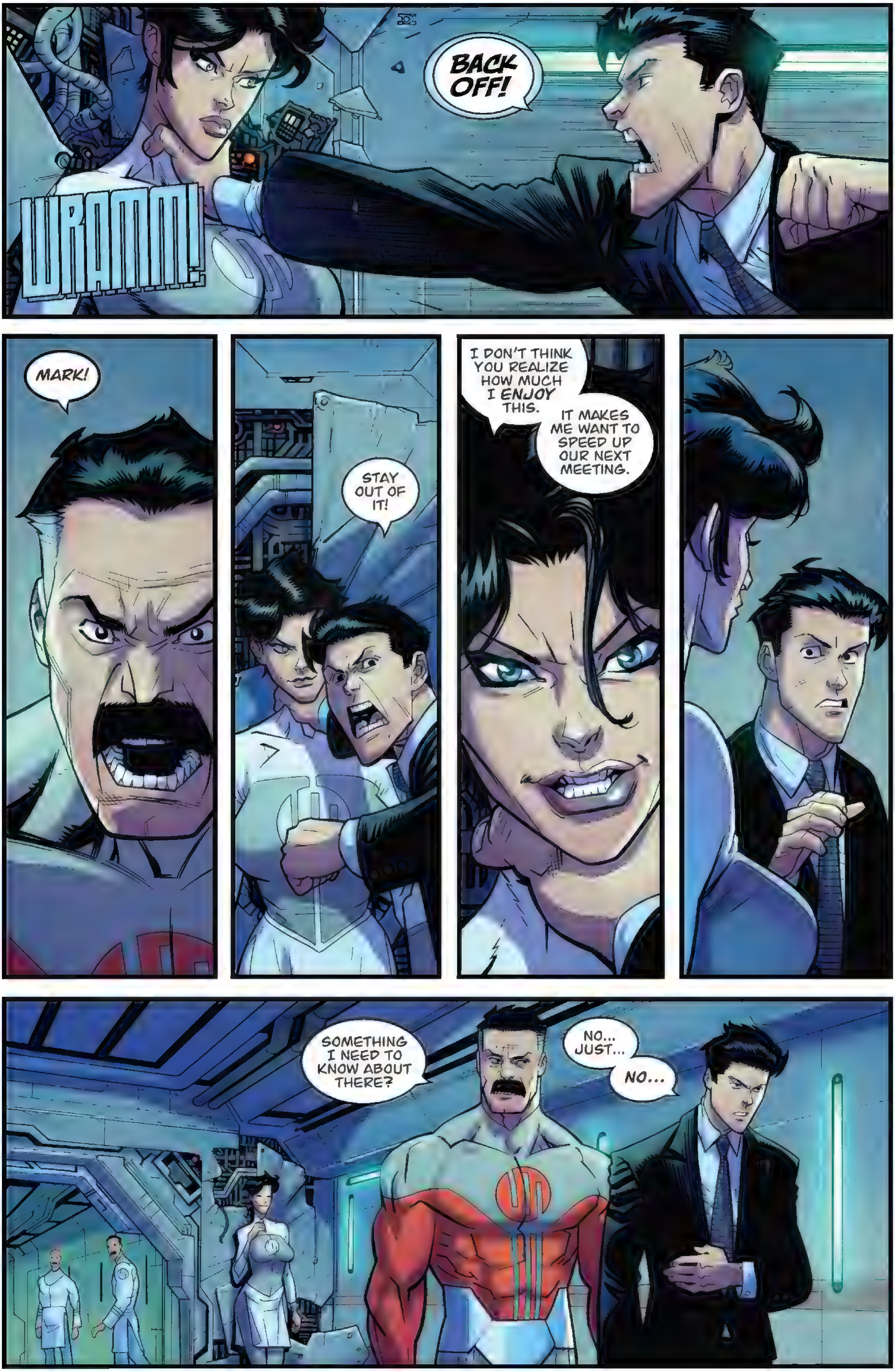

A PILLAR OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, MARKUS GRIMSHAW, WHEN HE WASN'T SAVING THE WORLD AS **BLACK SAMSON**, WAS HERE... HELPING PEOPLE IN ANY WAY HE COULD.
THIS IS A TRAGEDY THAT WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED BY PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD...
WE CAN FIND SOLACE IN THE FACT THAT THEY FOUND EACH OTHER BEFORE THEIR TRAGIC DEMISE, AND IN THE END, THEY WERE TOGETHER.
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM FOR THE LOVE THEY SHARED, WITH EACH OTHER, AND ALL THOSE GATHERED HERE TODAY...
NOT MUCH WAS KNOWN ABOUT CECIL STEDMAN. HE WAS A SIMPLE MAN, WHO LED A SIMPLE LIFE, AND HE WILL BE MISSED.
IS THAT ENOUGH?
AT LEAST REX HAD THE DECENCY NOT TO SHOW UP TO THIS ONE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT ALL. I JUST...
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER. I'LL GIVE YOU SOME TIME. SEE YOU AT HOME.
YEAH... ***"HOME."***
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.


WHAT DO I DO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW. I THINK KNOWING THAT YOU'D PROBABLY WORK WITH REX... EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING HE'D DONE... FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND IS THE ONLY THING KEEPING ME FROM PUTTING EVERYTHING ON THE LINE TO TAKE THE BASTARD DOWN.
OR AT LEAST *TRY*.
HE STOOD NEXT TO EVE... AFTER WHAT HE DID... AND I JUST *STOOD* THERE. I FEEL LIKE I COULD HAVE CRUSHED HIS SKULL BEFORE ONE OF HIS DRONES ATTACKED ME. WHY DIDN'T I?
SHOULD I HAVE?
SIGH.

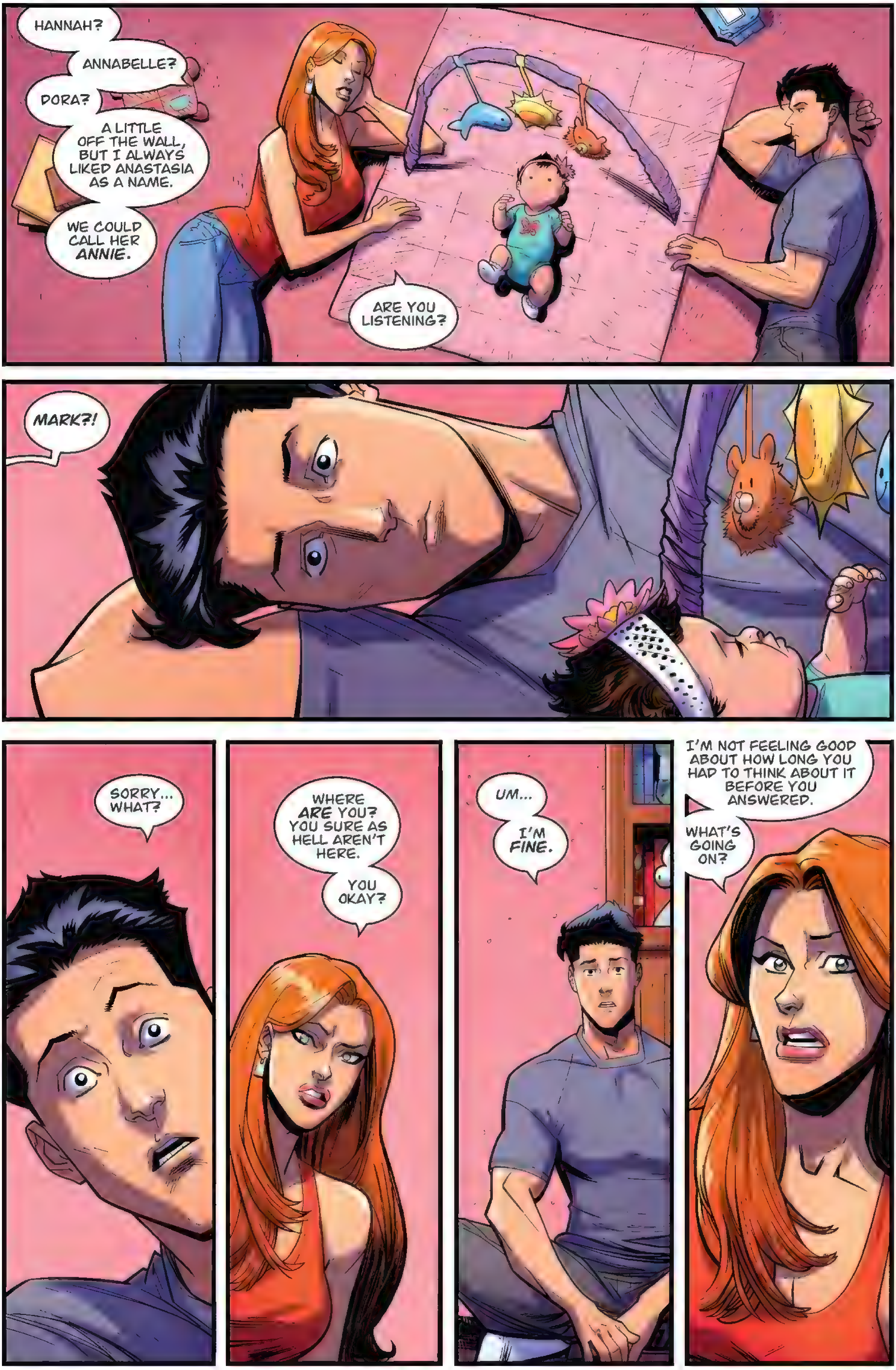

SLOW DOWN!
WELL, YOU **LOOK** LIKE I **FEEL.**
SORRY, THAT WAS INSENSITIVE.
WHAT? **THIS?**
THIS IS TEMPORARY. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
WHAT ARE WE **DOING?**
HAVE YOU LOOKED AROUND? EVERYONE IS **HAPPY**. THEY DON'T KNOW REX HAS TAKEN OVER... BUT IF THEY DID, THEY'D GIVE HIM A MEDAL.
WHAT **CAN** WE DO?
YOU CAN'T BE **SERIOUS**. WE CAN'T LET THIS STAND. WE HAVE TO REVOLT.
OUR FORMER FRIEND HAS BECOME A **TYRANT**. HE'S KILLED OUR FRIENDS, HE TRIED TO KILL US. WE HAVE TO FIGHT BACK.
KATE AND I CAN'T DO IT ALONE.

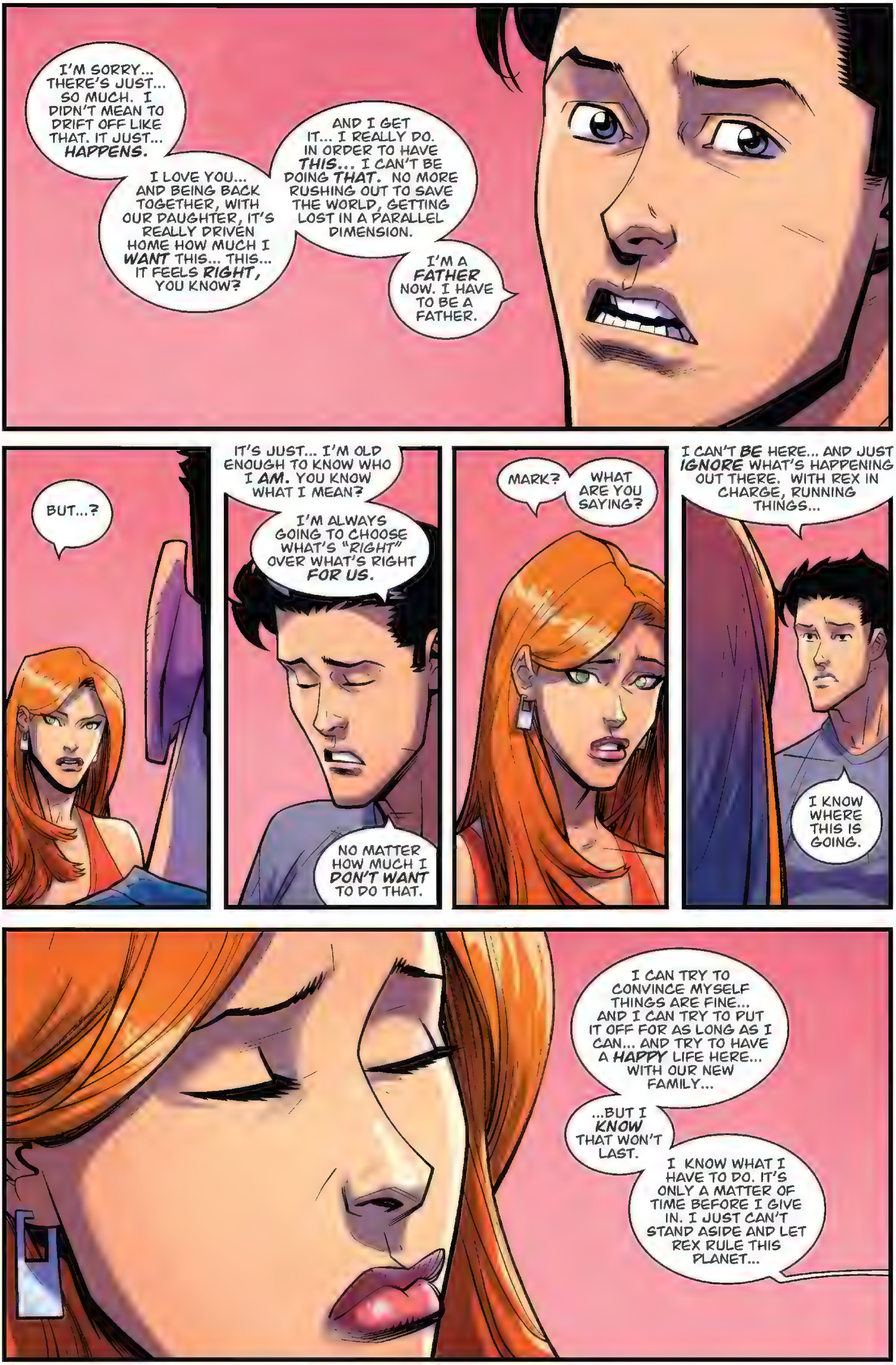

I KNOW ALL THAT, AND I AGREE WITH YOU... BUT THE THING IS... ROBOT DIDN'T GO BAD. HE'S NOT TAKING OVER BECAUSE OF EGO, OR AN INTENT TO CONTROL, OR DO WRONG. HE'S A **GENIUS**, MIGHT BE THE SMARTEST PERSON ON EARTH.
AS MUCH AS I HATE IT... WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS COLD HARD INTELLECT. HE'S DOING WHAT IS **LOGICAL** IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR LIVES BETTER.
WHAT IF HE'S **RIGHT?**
THE WORLD ISN'T LOGICAL, MARK. ALSO, TRUST ME, THIS MAY START NICE, BUT IT'S NOT HEADED ANYWHERE GOOD. LOGICAL NOW MEANS NO WAR, WORLD PEACE, EVERYONE HAPPY.
BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT ISN'T LOGICAL TO KEEP THE ELDERLY ALIVE, OR SICK CHILDREN? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT ISN'T LOGICAL TO HAVE SUCH A LARGE WORLD POPULATION?
I'VE BEEN AROUND A LONG TIME. THIS WORLD IS STUPID AND MESSY AND NONSENSICAL... AND IT NEEDS TO **STAY** THAT WAY.
I GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, BUT THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH AT RISK. HE'S ALREADY GONE AFTER EVE ONCE... I CAN'T PUT HER IN DANGER... NOT BEFORE I **KNOW** IT'S NECESSARY.
I'M WILLING TO WAGER I'VE LOST MORE THAN YOU IN MY TIME ON THIS EARTH. WE HAVE TO MAKE SACRIFICES FOR THE GREATER GOOD. THAT'S WHO WE ARE.
I KNOW KATE WOULDN'T ALLOW ME TO USE HER AS AN **EXCUSE** NOT TO DO WHAT I **KNOW** IS RIGHT.
...


THE LAST REMAINING VILTRUMITE WARSHIP, CURRENTLY STATIONED ON THE MOON.
BUT HE'S NOT EXPECTING IT. WHAT IF WE TOOK OUR TIME, ORGANIZED... MOVED OUR FORCES AGAINST HIM SLOWLY AND *THEN* STRUCK AT THE RIGHT TIME?
I COULD ORGANIZE THE TEAMS ON EARTH, THOSE STILL ALIVE... YOU COULD GET THE VILTRUMITES INVOLVED WHEN WE NEED YOU.
NO.
LISTEN AND REALLY *HEAR* ME, SON. YOU CAN *HATE* ME FOR THIS IF YOU WANT, I CAN LIVE WITH THAT... BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOUR HUMAN NOTIONS OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE GET IN THE WAY OF THE SURVIVAL OF OUR PEOPLE.
LESSER BEINGS ARE SOMETIMES BETTER OFF WITH SOMEONE MORE INTELLIGENT BEING IN CONTROL. A DOMESTICATED DOG IS BETTER OFF THAN A WILD ONE...
BUT IS IT FREE?
JESUS, DAD.
DOING *NOTHING* IS WHAT'S BEST FOR *EVERYONE.* YOU, ME, VILTRUMITES, HUMANS... THE SITUATION CHANGES... WE'LL TALK. UNTIL THEN, I'M *DONE* WITH THIS.
YOU TRY TO *FIX* THINGS AND YOU'RE ONLY GOING TO GET YOURSELF AND A WHOLE LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE *KILLED.*
SO NICE RUNNING INTO YOU LIKE THIS...


BACK OFF!
WRAMM!
MARK!
STAY OUT OF IT!
I DON'T THINK YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH I *ENJOY* THIS.
IT MAKES ME WANT TO SPEED UP OUR NEXT MEETING.
SOMETHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THERE?
NO... JUST...
NO...

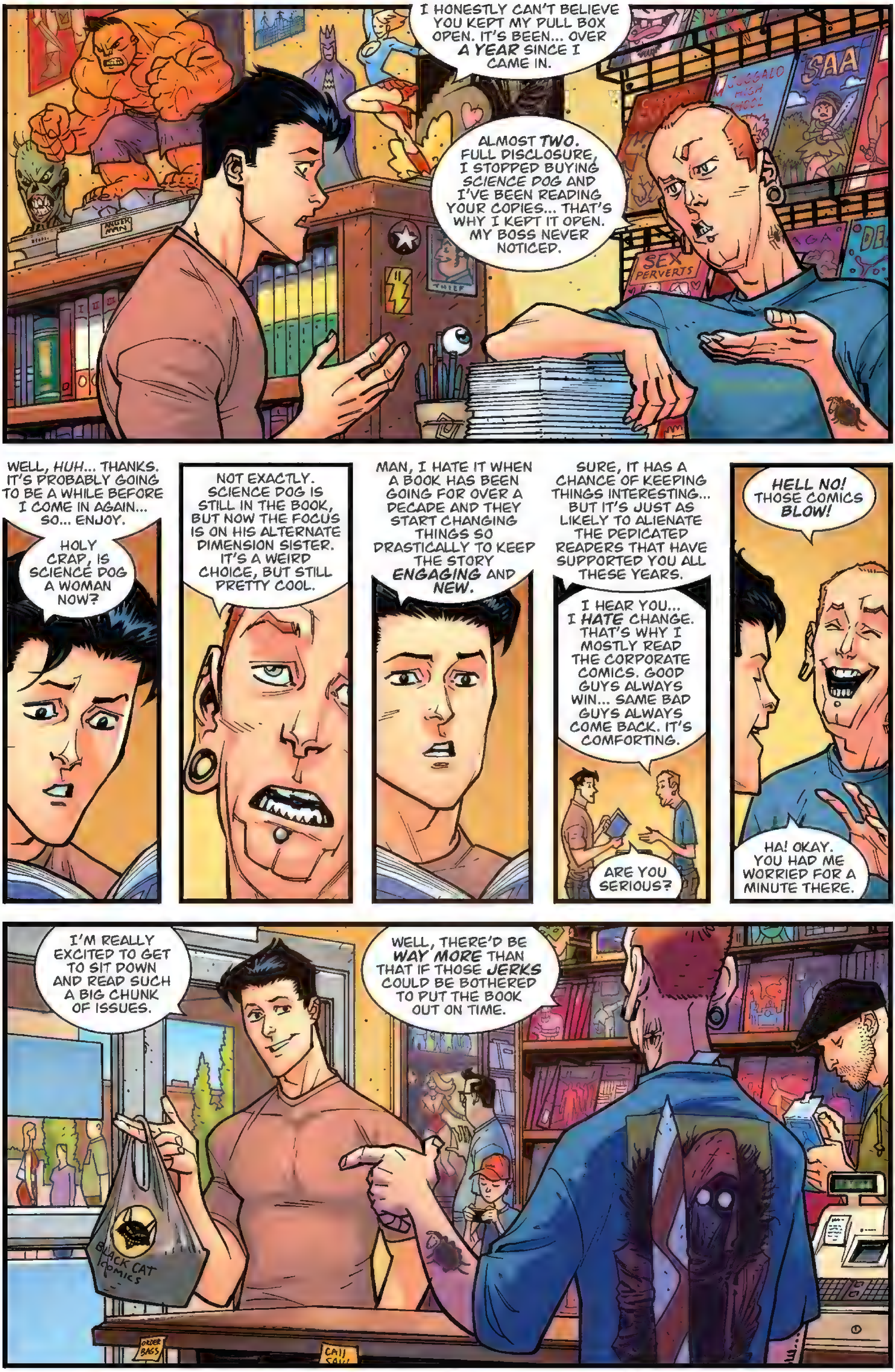
Elsewhere.

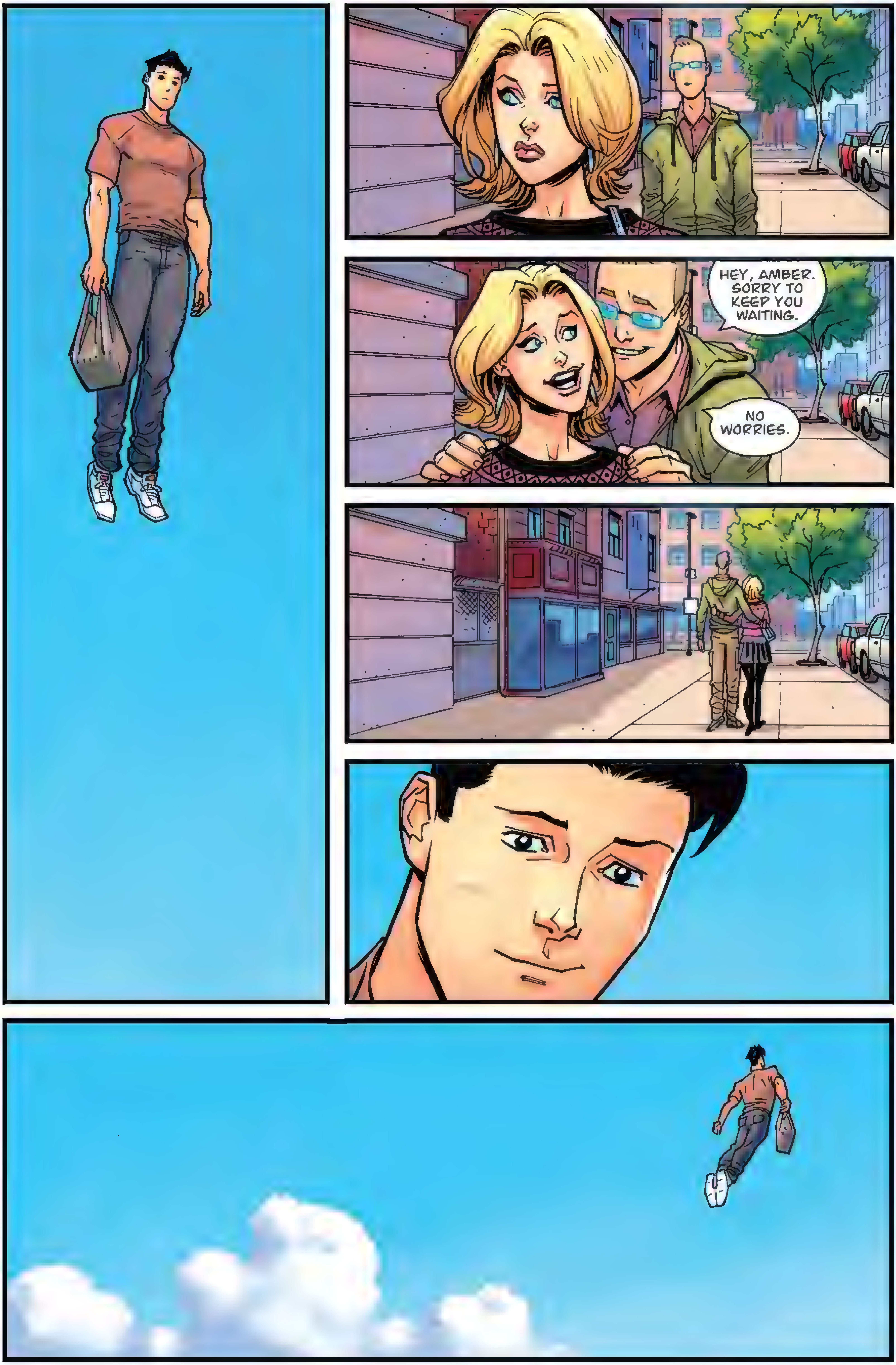

HANNAH?
ANNABELLE?
DORA?
A LITTLE OFF THE WALL, BUT I ALWAYS LIKED ANASTASIA AS A NAME.
WE COULD CALL HER ANNIE.
ARE YOU LISTENING?
MARK?!
SORRY... WHAT?
WHERE ARE YOU? YOU SURE AS HELL AREN'T HERE.
YOU OKAY?
UM...
I'M FINE.
I'M NOT FEELING GOOD ABOUT HOW LONG YOU HAD TO THINK ABOUT IT BEFORE YOU ANSWERED.
WHAT'S GOING ON?

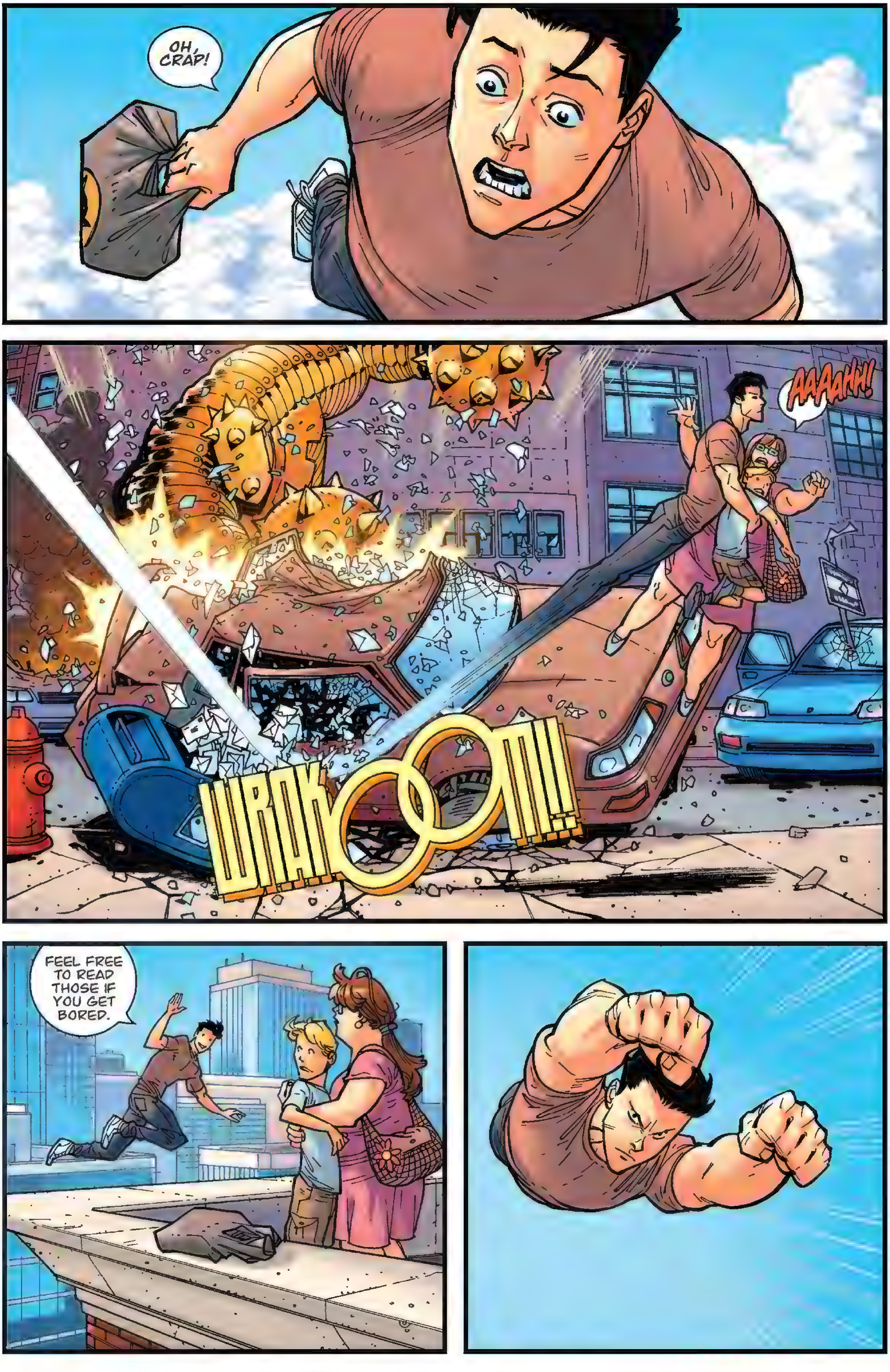

I'M SORRY... THERE'S JUST... SO MUCH. I DIDN'T MEAN TO DRIFT OFF LIKE THAT. IT JUST... **HAPPENS.**
I LOVE YOU... AND BEING BACK TOGETHER, WITH OUR DAUGHTER, IT'S REALLY DRIVEN HOME HOW MUCH I **WANT** THIS... THIS... IT FEELS **RIGHT**, YOU KNOW?
AND I GET IT... I REALLY DO. IN ORDER TO HAVE **THIS...** I CAN'T BE DOING **THAT.** NO MORE RUSHING OUT TO SAVE THE WORLD, GETTING LOST IN A PARALLEL DIMENSION.
I'M A **FATHER** NOW. I HAVE TO BE A FATHER.
BUT...?
IT'S JUST... I'M OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW WHO I **AM.** YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
I'M ALWAYS GOING TO CHOOSE WHAT'S "*RIGHT*" OVER WHAT'S RIGHT **FOR US.**
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I **DON'T WANT** TO DO THAT.
MARK?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I CAN'T **BE** HERE... AND JUST **IGNORE** WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE. WITH REX IN CHARGE, RUNNING THINGS...
I KNOW WHERE THIS IS GOING.
I CAN TRY TO CONVINCE MYSELF THINGS ARE FINE... AND I CAN TRY TO PUT IT OFF FOR AS LONG AS I CAN... AND TRY TO HAVE A **HAPPY** LIFE HERE... WITH OUR NEW FAMILY...
...BUT I **KNOW** THAT WON'T LAST.
I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE I GIVE IN. I JUST CAN'T STAND ASIDE AND LET REX RULE THIS PLANET...

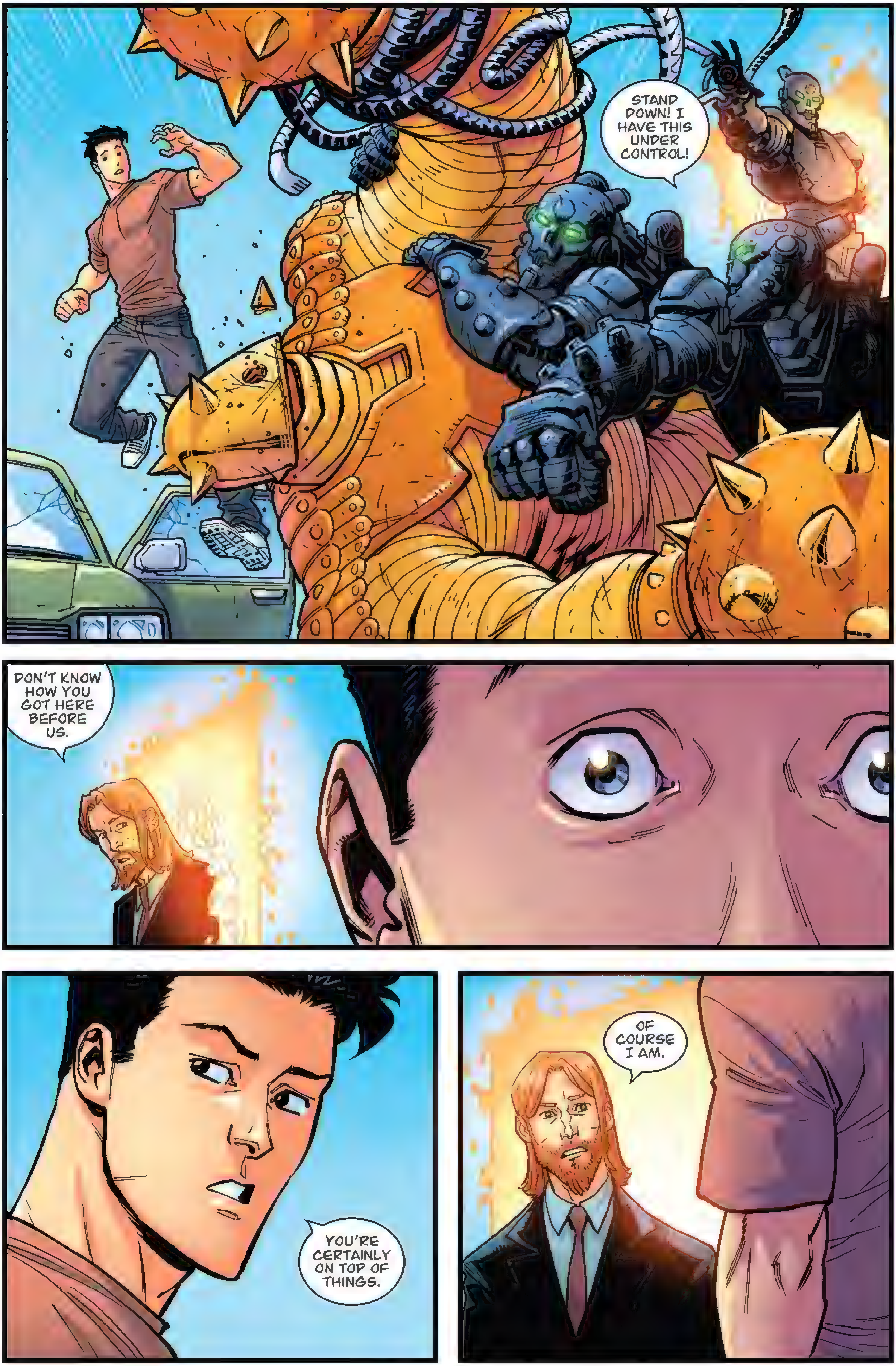
...SO I THINK WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO *LEAVE* IT.

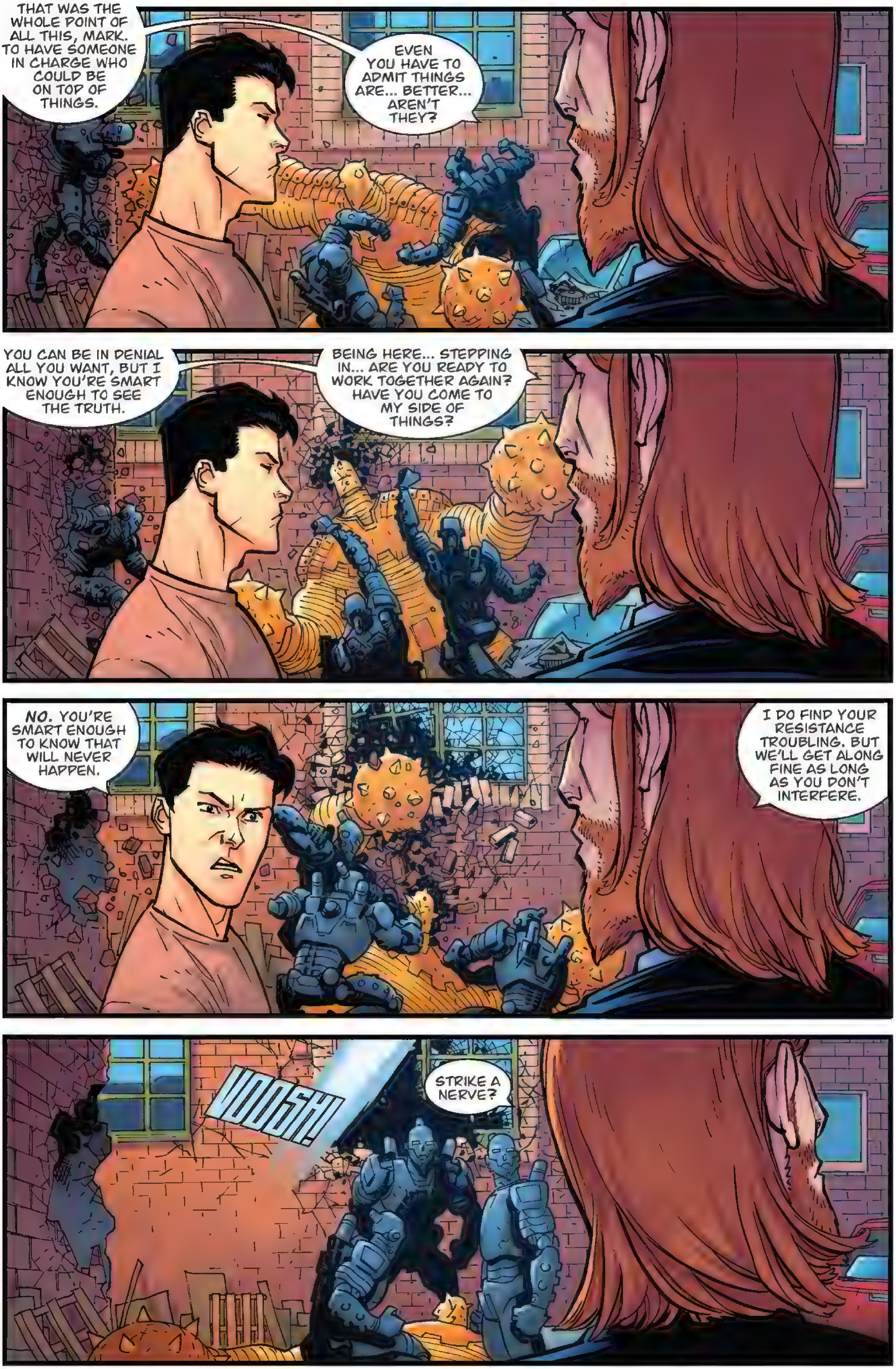
CHAPTER 117

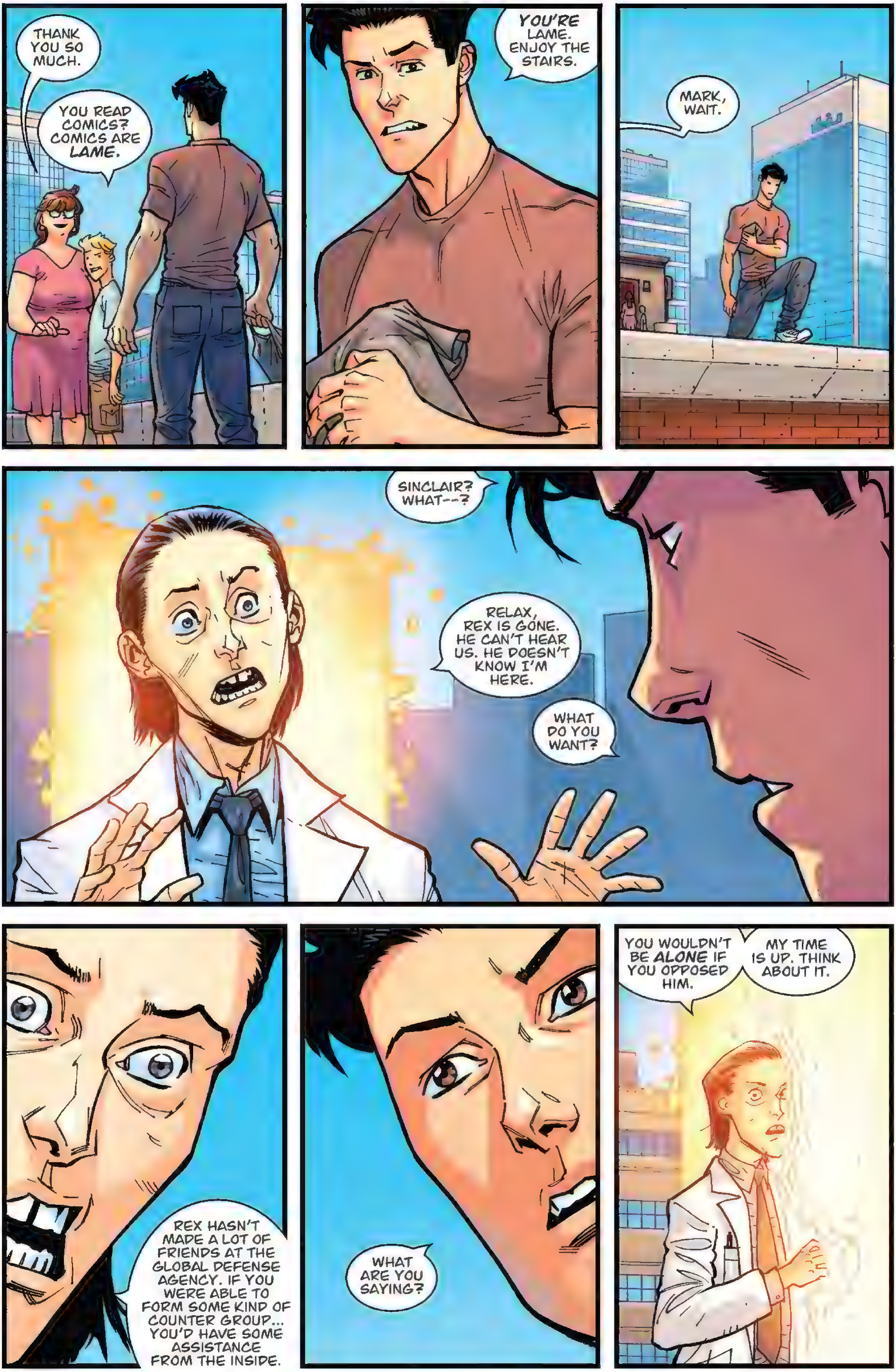

I HONESTLY CAN'T BELIEVE YOU KEPT MY PULL BOX OPEN. IT'S BEEN... OVER A YEAR SINCE I CAME IN.
ALMOST TWO. FULL DISCLOSURE, I STOPPED BUYING SCIENCE DOG AND I'VE BEEN READING YOUR COPIES... THAT'S WHY I KEPT IT OPEN. MY BOSS NEVER NOTICED.
ANGER MAN
JUGGALO HIGH SCHOOL
SAA
SEX PERVERTS
THIEF
WELL, HUH... THANKS. IT'S PROBABLY GOING TO BE A WHILE BEFORE I COME IN AGAIN... SO... ENJOY.
HOLY CRAP, IS SCIENCE DOG A WOMAN NOW?
NOT EXACTLY. SCIENCE DOG IS STILL IN THE BOOK, BUT NOW THE FOCUS IS ON HIS ALTERNATE DIMENSION SISTER. IT'S A WEIRD CHOICE, BUT STILL PRETTY COOL.
MAN, I HATE IT WHEN A BOOK HAS BEEN GOING FOR OVER A DECADE AND THEY START CHANGING THINGS SO DRASTICALLY TO KEEP THE STORY ENGAGING AND NEW.
SURE, IT HAS A CHANCE OF KEEPING THINGS INTERESTING... BUT IT'S JUST AS LIKELY TO ALIENATE THE DEDICATED READERS THAT HAVE SUPPORTED YOU ALL THESE YEARS.
I HEAR YOU... I HATE CHANGE. THAT'S WHY I MOSTLY READ THE CORPORATE COMICS. GOOD GUYS ALWAYS WIN... SAME BAD GUYS ALWAYS COME BACK. IT'S COMFORTING.
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
HELL NO! THOSE COMICS BLOW!
HA! OKAY. YOU HAD ME WORRIED FOR A MINUTE THERE.
I'M REALLY EXCITED TO GET TO SIT DOWN AND READ SUCH A BIG CHUNK OF ISSUES.
WELL, THERE'D BE WAY MORE THAN THAT IF THOSE JERKS COULD BE BOTHERED TO PUT THE BOOK OUT ON TIME.
BLACK CAT COMICS
ORDER BAGS
CALL SAM

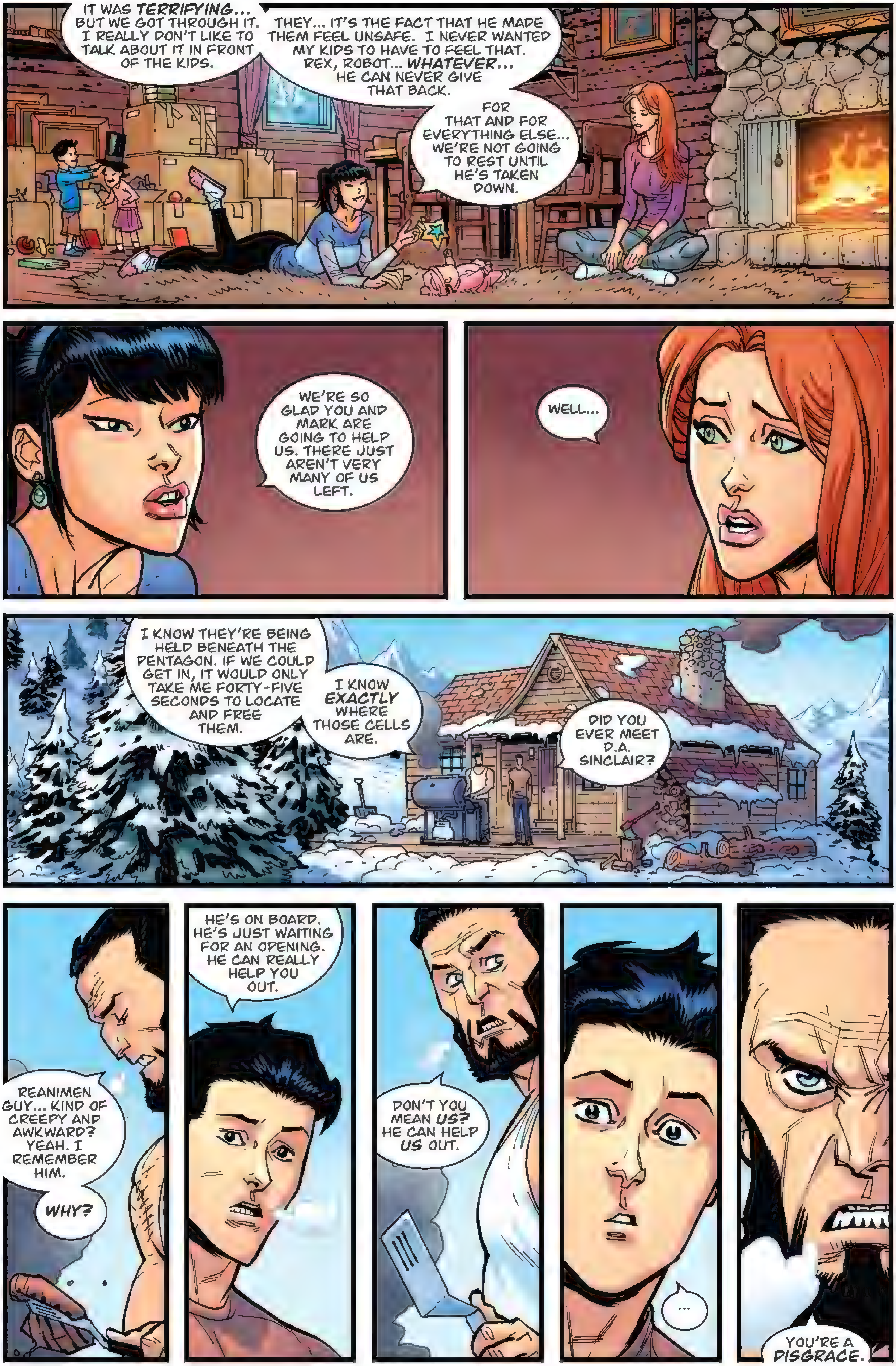

HEY, AMBER. SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
NO WORRIES.

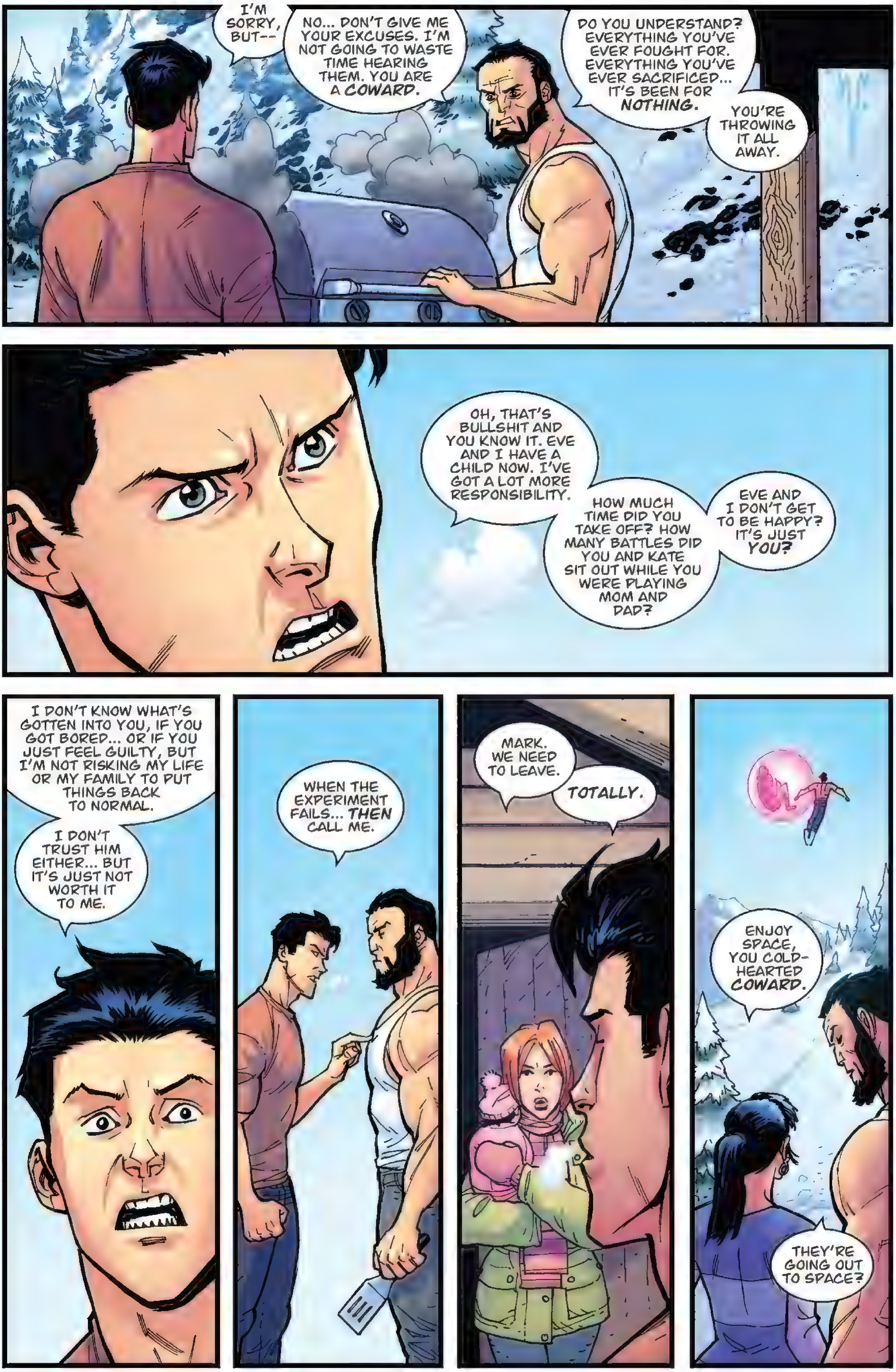

OH, CRAP!
AAAAHH!
WRAKOOM!!!
FEEL FREE TO READ THOSE IF YOU GET BORED.

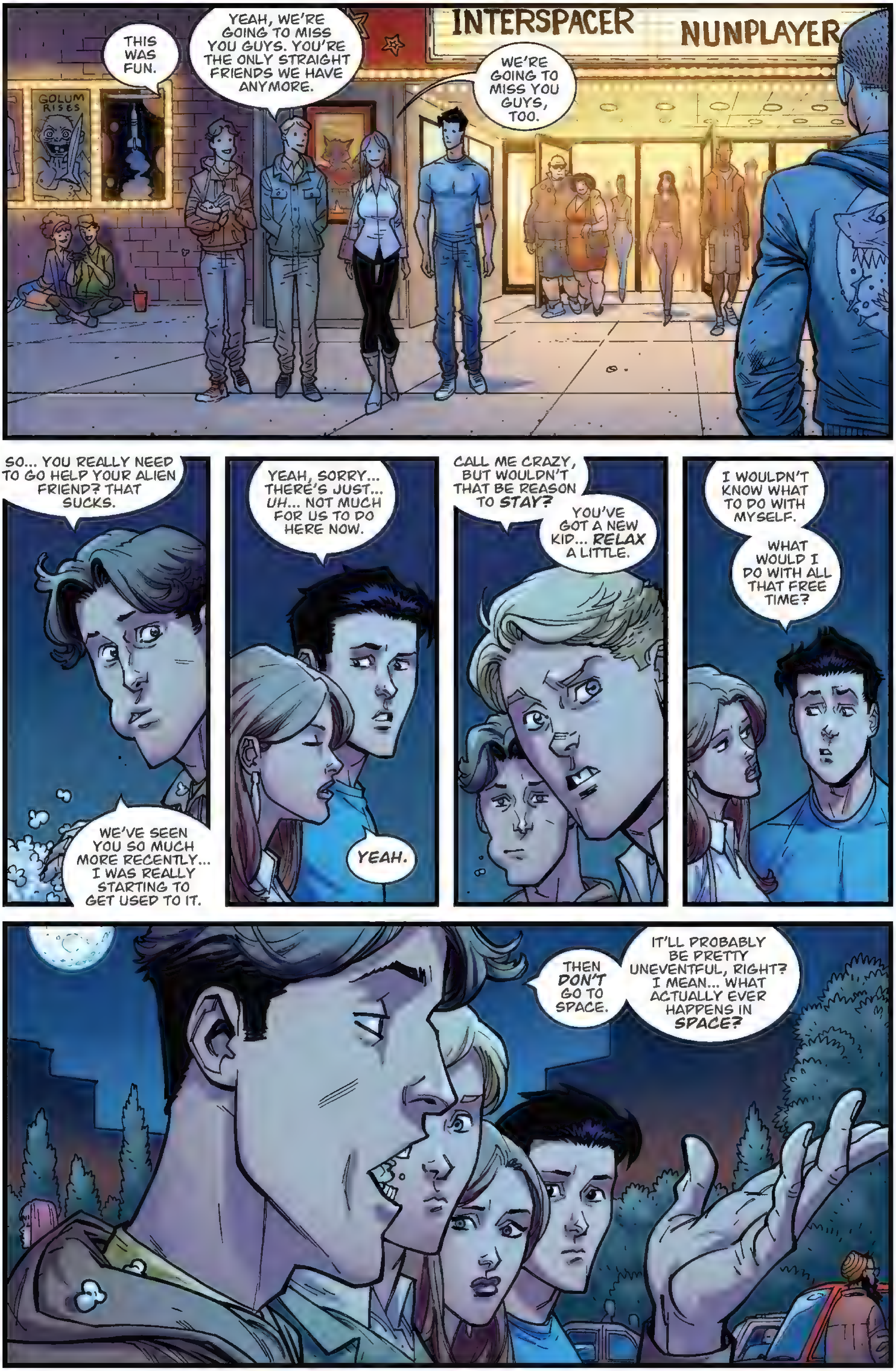

STAND DOWN! I HAVE THIS UNDER CONTROL!
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT HERE BEFORE US.
YOU'RE CERTAINLY ON TOP OF THINGS.
OF COURSE I AM.

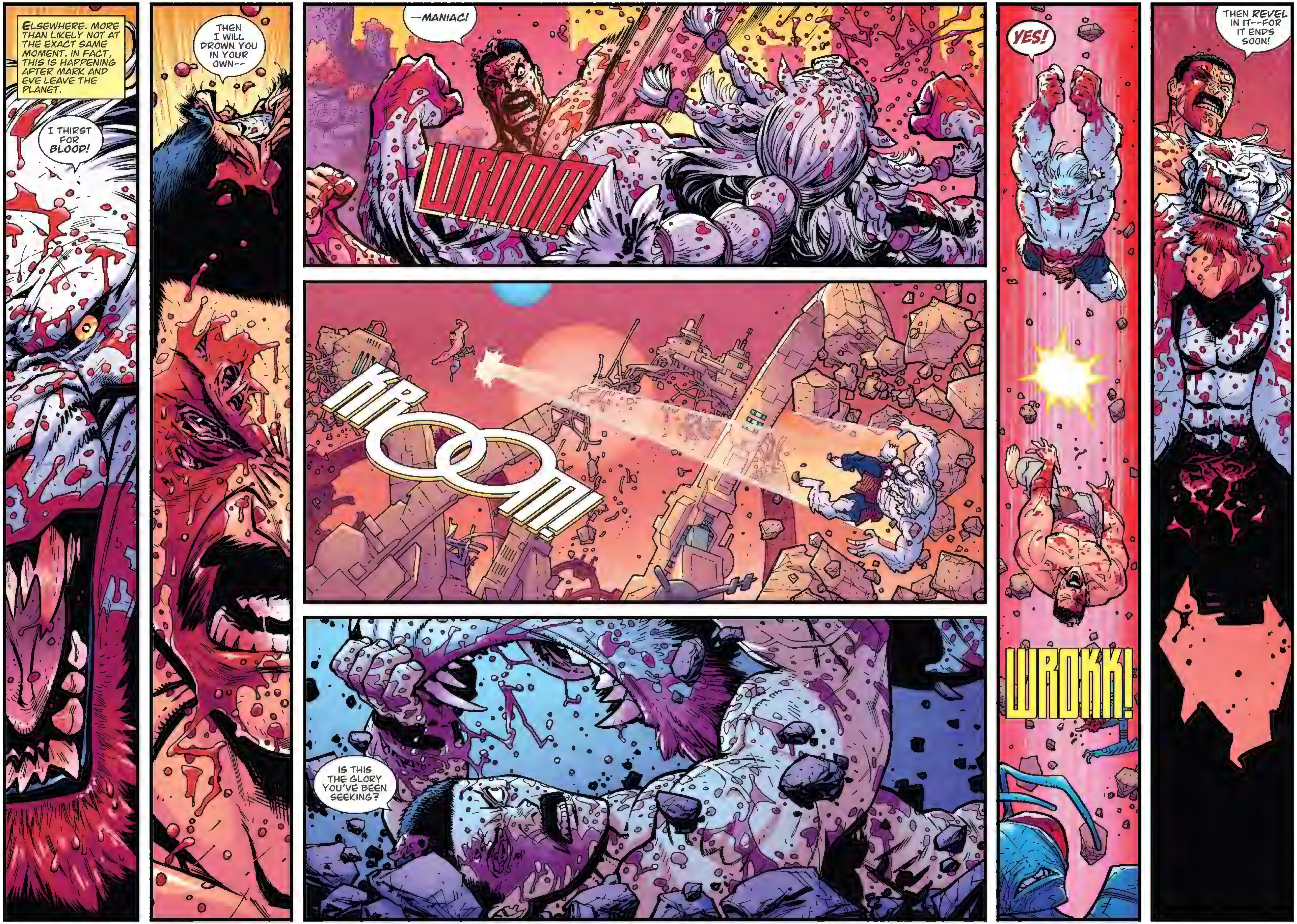

THAT WAS THE WHOLE POINT OF ALL THIS, MARK. TO HAVE SOMEONE IN CHARGE WHO COULD BE ON TOP OF THINGS.
EVEN YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THINGS ARE... BETTER... AREN'T THEY?
YOU CAN BE IN DENIAL ALL YOU WANT, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THE TRUTH.
BEING HERE... STEPPING IN... ARE YOU READY TO WORK TOGETHER AGAIN? HAVE YOU COME TO MY SIDE OF THINGS?
NO. YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.
I DO FIND YOUR RESISTANCE TROUBLING. BUT WE'LL GET ALONG FINE AS LONG AS YOU DON'T INTERFERE.
VOOSH!
STRIKE A NERVE?

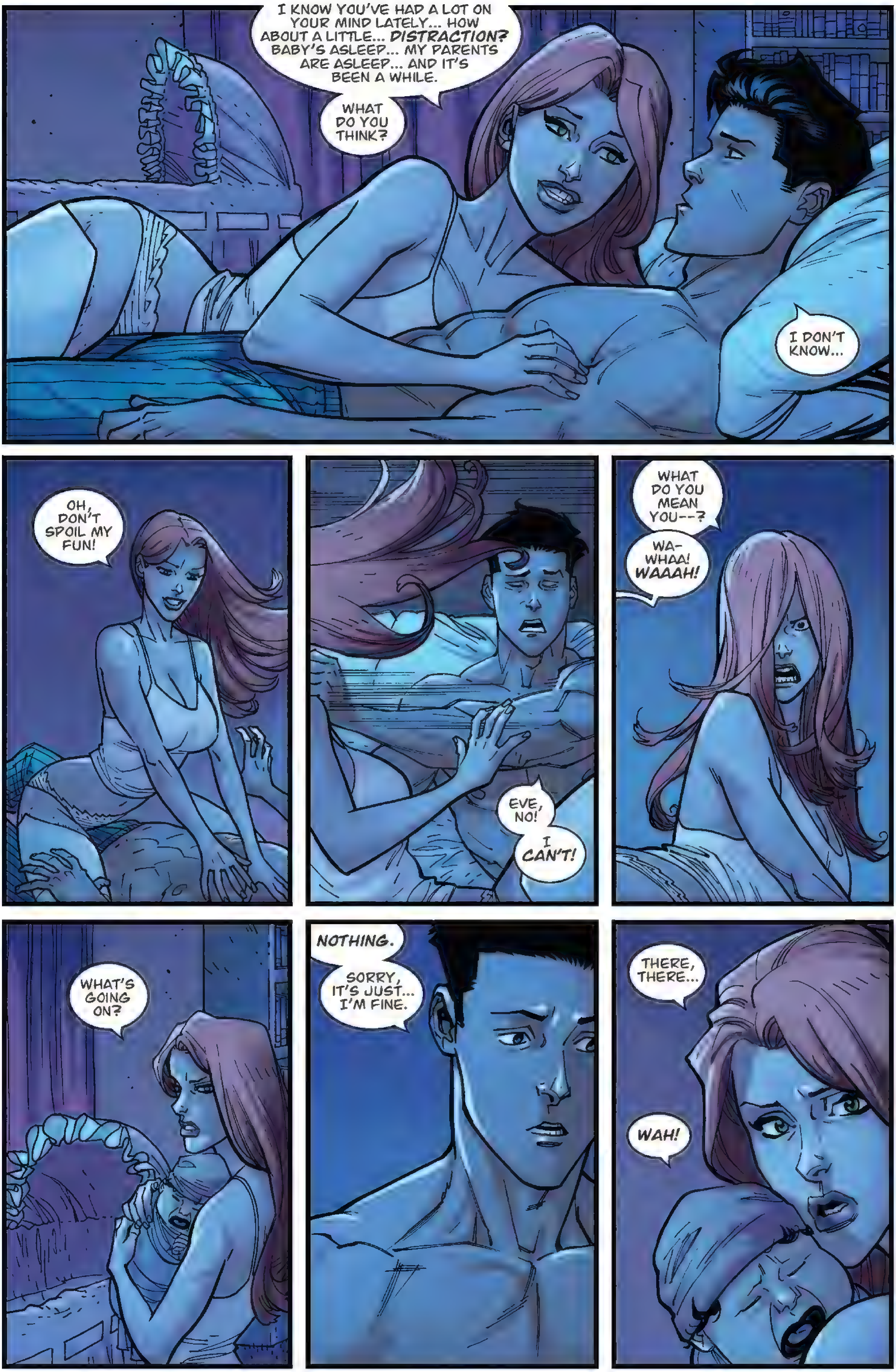

THANK YOU SO MUCH.
YOU READ COMICS? COMICS ARE *LAME.*
YOU'RE LAME. ENJOY THE STAIRS.
MARK, WAIT.
SINCLAIR? WHAT--?
RELAX, REX IS GONE. HE CAN'T HEAR US. HE DOESN'T KNOW I'M HERE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
REX HASN'T MADE A LOT OF FRIENDS AT THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY. IF YOU WERE ABLE TO FORM SOME KIND OF COUNTER GROUP... YOU'D HAVE SOME ASSISTANCE FROM THE INSIDE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU WOULDN'T BE *ALONE* IF YOU OPPOSED HIM.
MY TIME IS UP. THINK ABOUT IT.

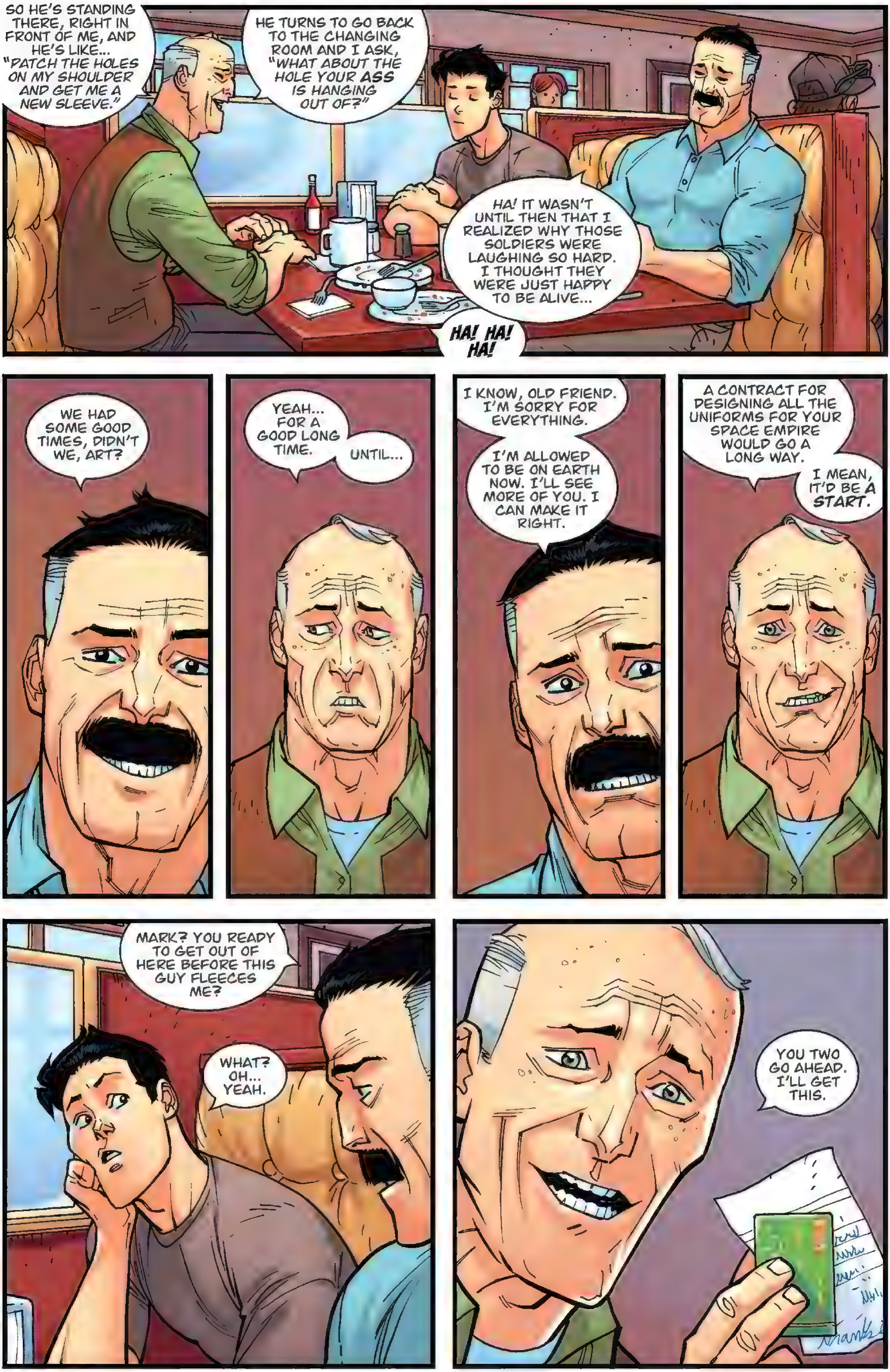

IT WAS TERRIFYING... BUT WE GOT THROUGH IT. I REALLY DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT IN FRONT OF THE KIDS.
THEY... IT'S THE FACT THAT HE MADE THEM FEEL UNSAFE. I NEVER WANTED MY KIDS TO HAVE TO FEEL THAT. REX, ROBOT... WHATEVER... HE CAN NEVER GIVE THAT BACK.
FOR THAT AND FOR EVERYTHING ELSE... WE'RE NOT GOING TO REST UNTIL HE'S TAKEN DOWN.
WE'RE SO GLAD YOU AND MARK ARE GOING TO HELP US. THERE JUST AREN'T VERY MANY OF US LEFT.
WELL...
I KNOW THEY'RE BEING HELD BENEATH THE PENTAGON. IF WE COULD GET IN, IT WOULD ONLY TAKE ME FORTY-FIVE SECONDS TO LOCATE AND FREE THEM.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THOSE CELLS ARE.
DID YOU EVER MEET D.A. SINCLAIR?
REANIMEN GUY... KIND OF CREEPY AND AWKWARD? YEAH. I REMEMBER HIM.
WHY?
HE'S ON BOARD. HE'S JUST WAITING FOR AN OPENING. HE CAN REALLY HELP YOU OUT.
DON'T YOU MEAN US? HE CAN HELP US OUT.
...
YOU'RE A DISGRACE.

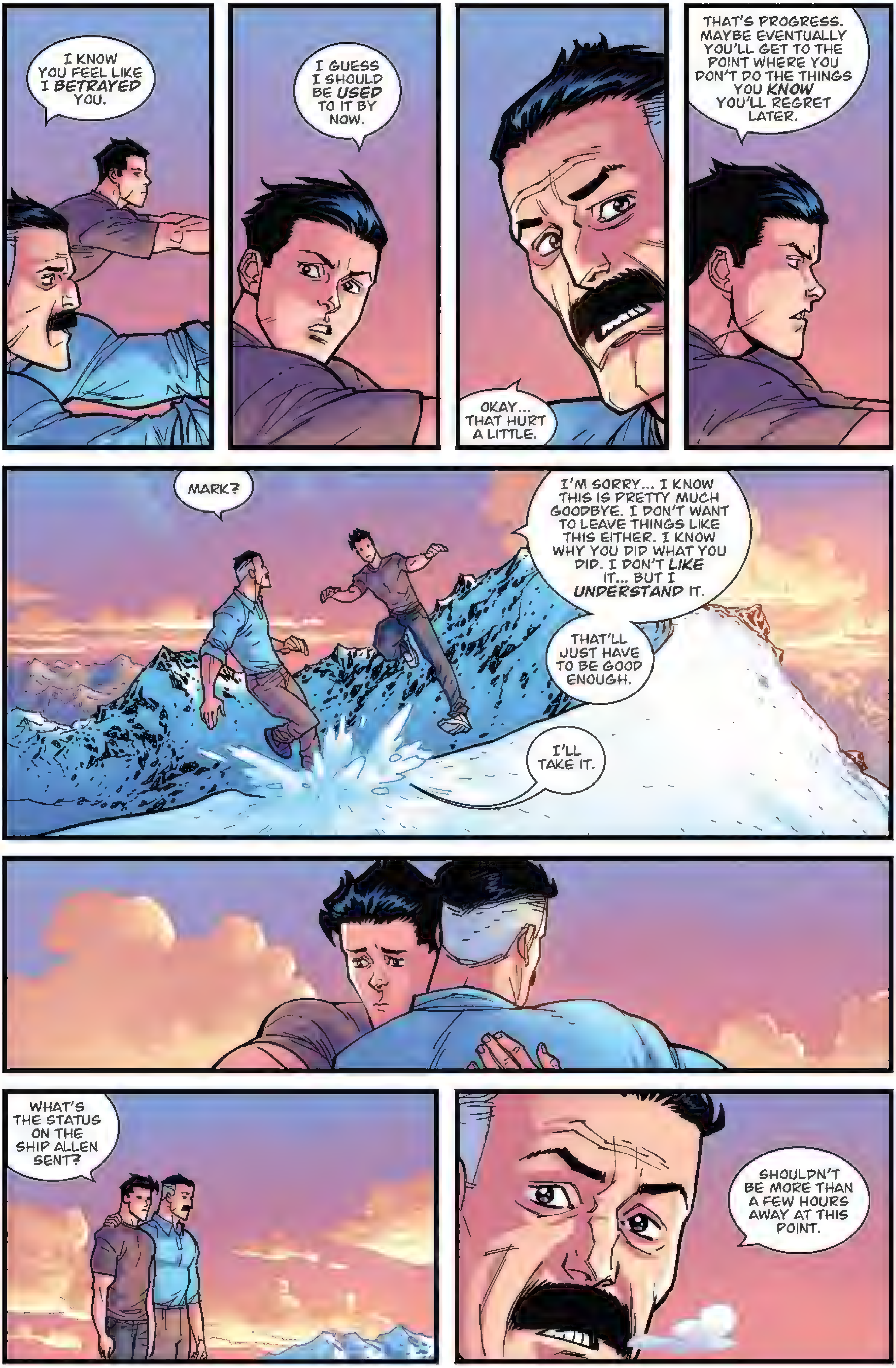

I'M SORRY, BUT--
NO... DON'T GIVE ME YOUR EXCUSES. I'M NOT GOING TO WASTE TIME HEARING THEM. YOU ARE A **COWARD**.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND? EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER FOUGHT FOR. EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER SACRIFICED... IT'S BEEN FOR **NOTHING**.
YOU'RE THROWING IT ALL AWAY.
OH, THAT'S BULLSHIT AND YOU KNOW IT. EVE AND I HAVE A CHILD NOW. I'VE GOT A LOT MORE RESPONSIBILITY.
HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU TAKE OFF? HOW MANY BATTLES DID YOU AND KATE SIT OUT WHILE YOU WERE PLAYING MOM AND DAD?
EVE AND I DON'T GET TO BE HAPPY? IT'S JUST **YOU?**
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, IF YOU GOT BORED... OR IF YOU JUST FEEL GUILTY, BUT I'M NOT RISKING MY LIFE OR MY FAMILY TO PUT THINGS BACK TO NORMAL.
I DON'T TRUST HIM EITHER... BUT IT'S JUST NOT WORTH IT TO ME.
WHEN THE EXPERIMENT FAILS... **THEN** CALL ME.
MARK. WE NEED TO LEAVE.
TOTALLY.
ENJOY SPACE, YOU COLD-HEARTED **COWARD**.
THEY'RE GOING OUT TO SPACE?

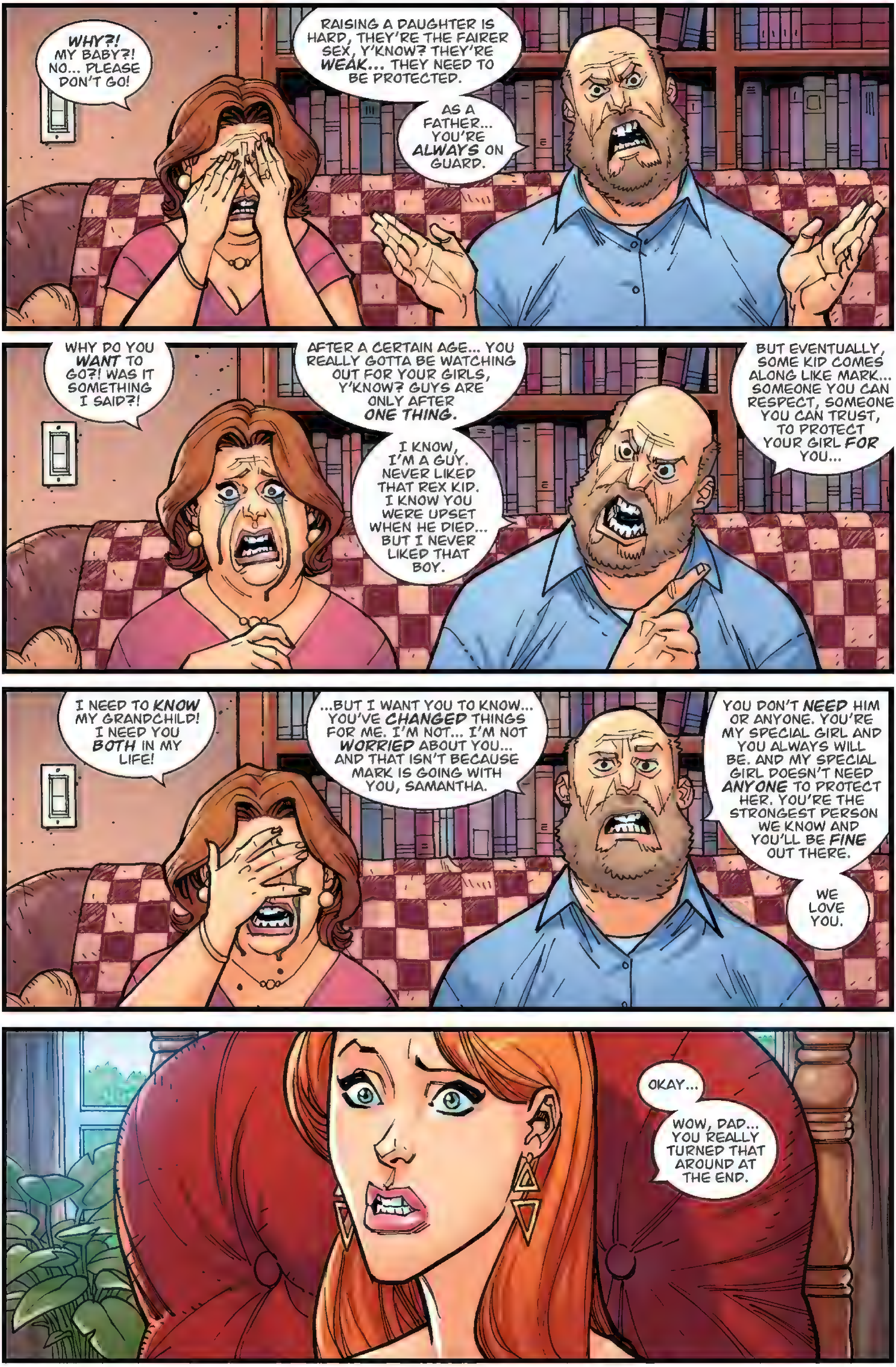

INTERSPACER
NUNPLAYER
GOLUM RISES
THIS WAS FUN.
YEAH, WE'RE GOING TO MISS YOU GUYS. YOU'RE THE ONLY STRAIGHT FRIENDS WE HAVE ANYMORE.
WE'RE GOING TO MISS YOU GUYS, TOO.
SO... YOU REALLY NEED TO GO HELP YOUR ALIEN FRIEND? THAT SUCKS.
WE'VE SEEN YOU SO MUCH MORE RECENTLY... I WAS REALLY STARTING TO GET USED TO IT.
YEAH, SORRY... THERE'S JUST... UH... NOT MUCH FOR US TO DO HERE NOW.
YEAH.
CALL ME CRAZY, BUT WOULDN'T THAT BE REASON TO *STAY?*
YOU'VE GOT A NEW KID... **RELAX** A LITTLE.
I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF.
WHAT WOULD I DO WITH ALL THAT FREE TIME?
THEN *DON'T* GO TO SPACE.
IT'LL PROBABLY BE PRETTY UNEVENTFUL, RIGHT? I MEAN... WHAT ACTUALLY EVER HAPPENS IN *SPACE?*

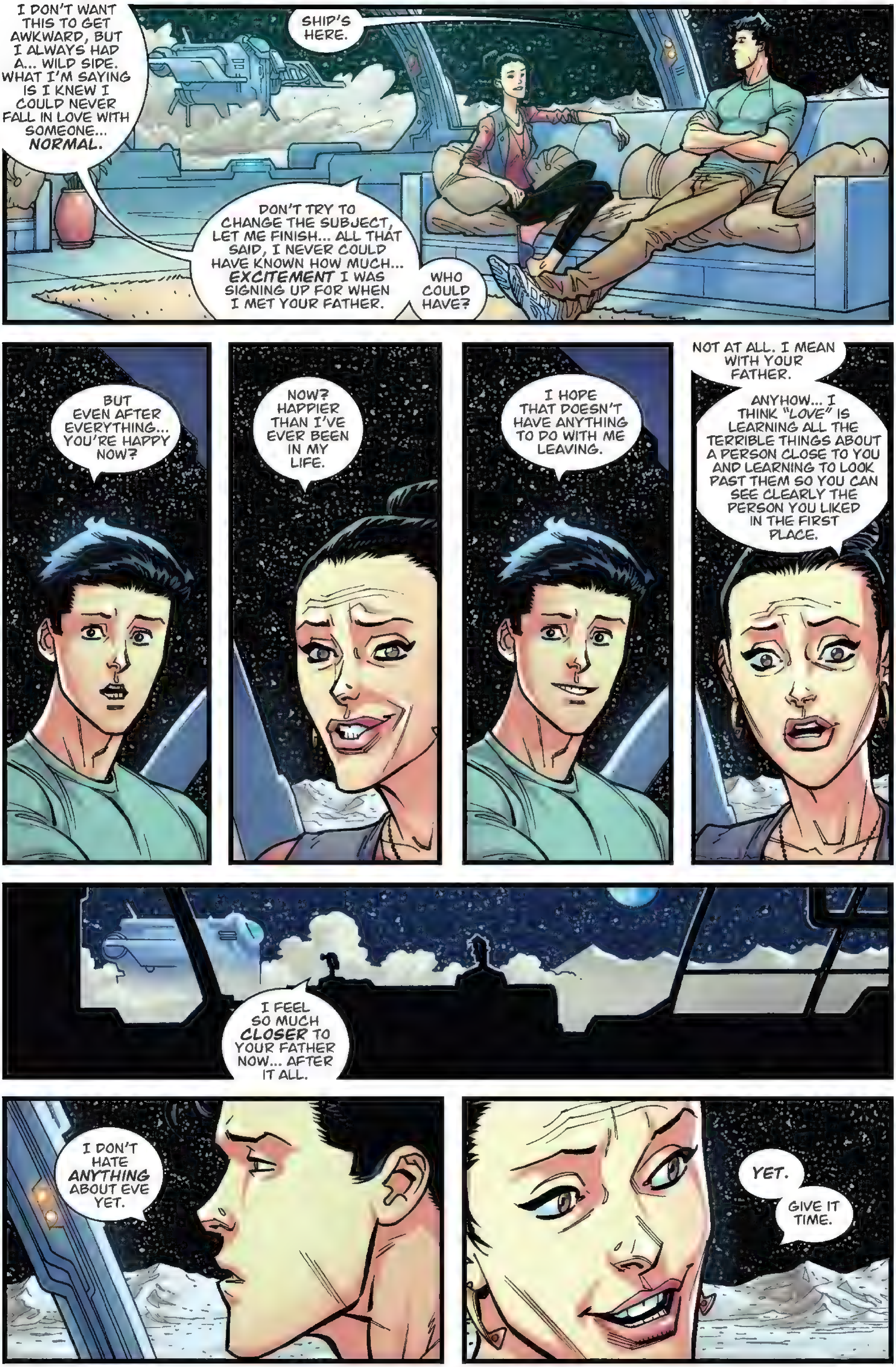

ELSEWHERE. MORE THAN LIKELY NOT AT THE EXACT SAME MOMENT. IN FACT, THIS IS HAPPENING AFTER MARK AND EVE LEAVE THE PLANET.
I THIRST FOR BLOOD!
THEN I WILL DROWN YOU IN YOUR OWN--
--MANIAC!
WRAMM!
KROOM!
IS THIS THE GLORY YOU'VE BEEN SEEKING?
YES!
WROKK!
THEN REVEL IN IT--FOR IT ENDS SOON!

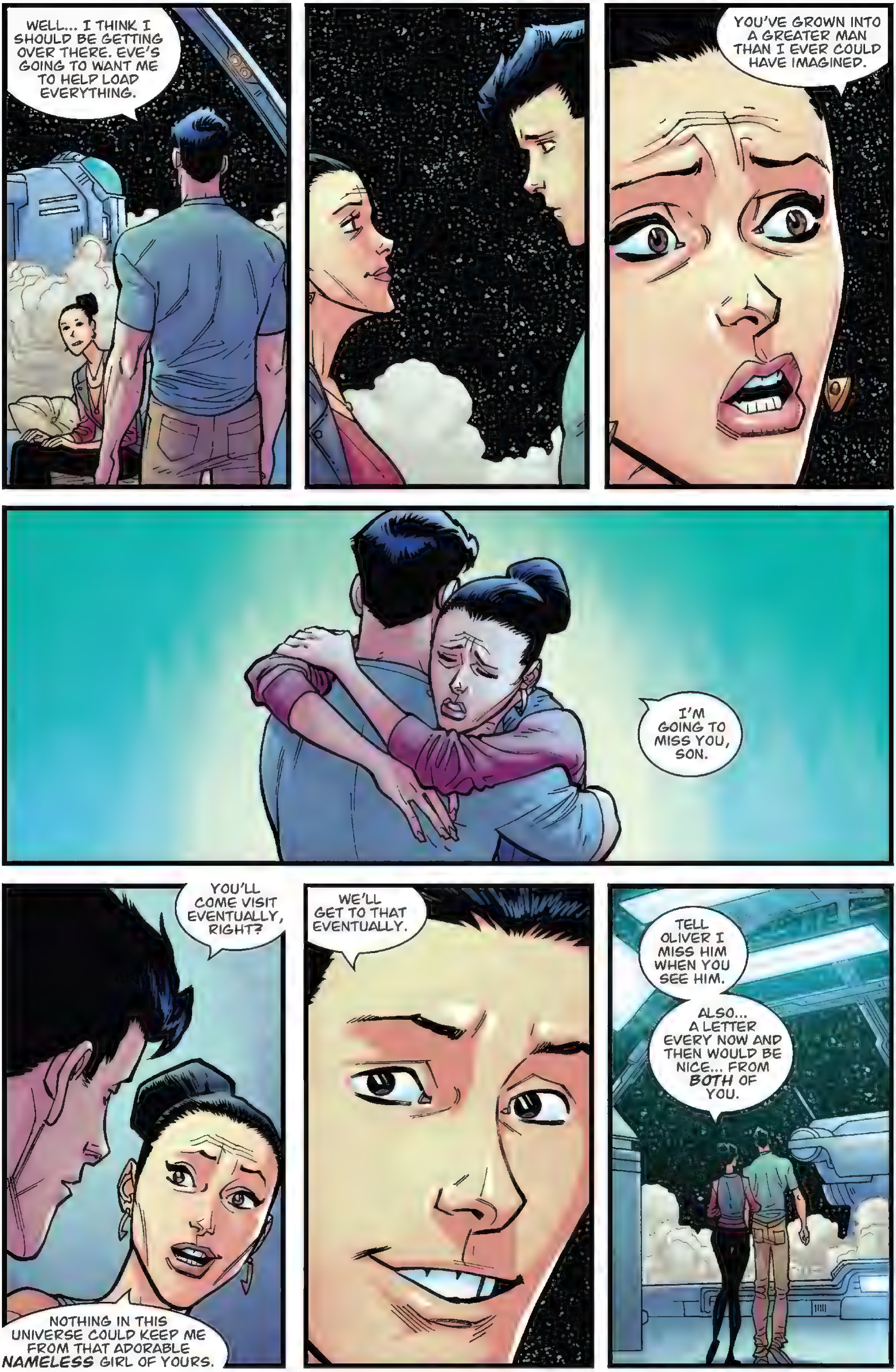

I KNOW YOU'VE HAD A LOT ON YOUR MIND LATELY... HOW ABOUT A LITTLE... *DISTRACTION?* BABY'S ASLEEP... MY PARENTS ARE ASLEEP... AND IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I DON'T KNOW...
OH, DON'T SPOIL MY FUN!
EVE, NO!
I *CAN'T!*
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU--?
WA- WHAA! *WAAAH!*
WHAT'S GOING ON?
NOTHING.
SORRY, IT'S JUST... I'M FINE.
THERE, THERE...
WAH!

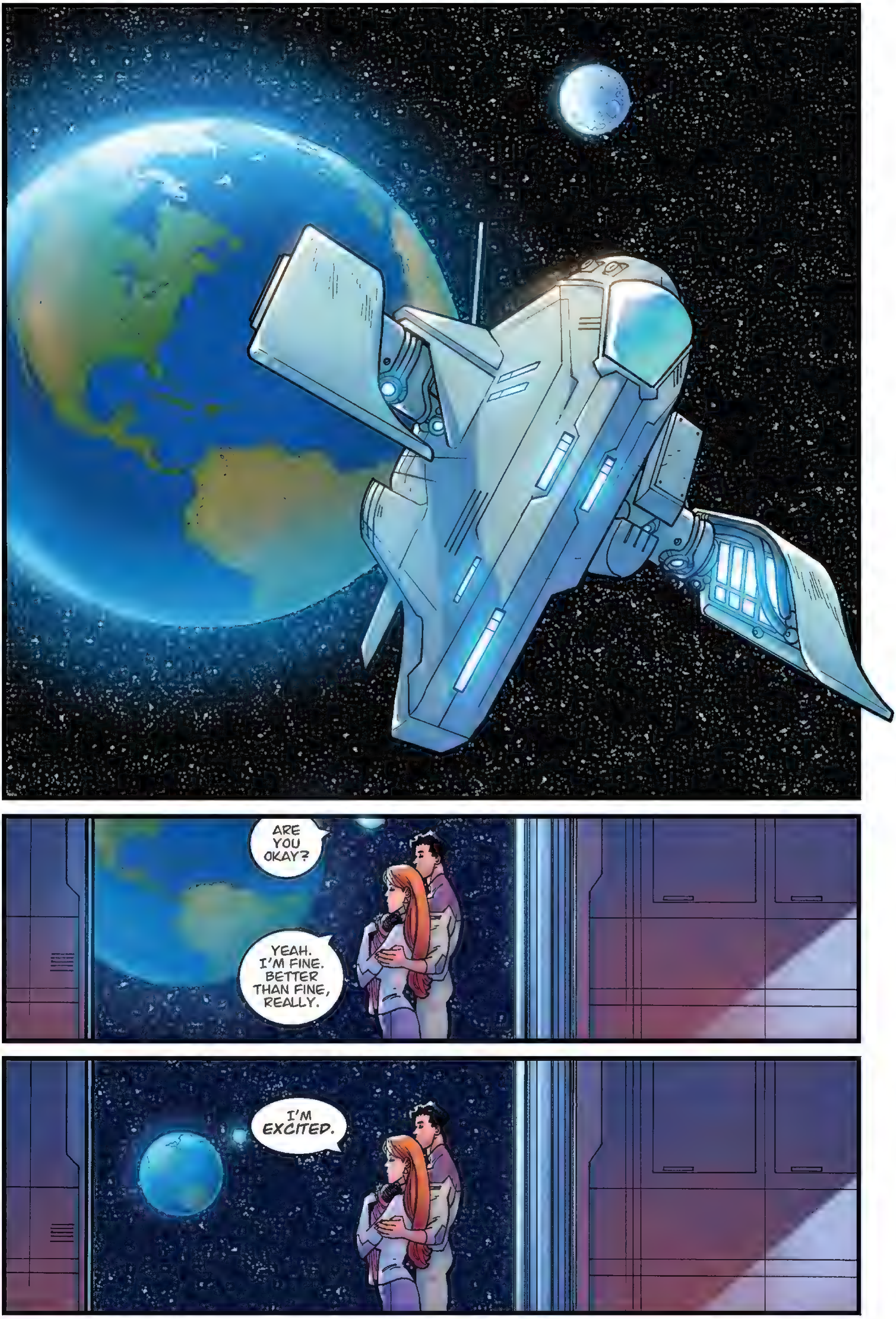

SO HE'S STANDING THERE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, AND HE'S LIKE... "PATCH THE HOLES ON MY SHOULDER AND GET ME A NEW SLEEVE."
HE TURNS TO GO BACK TO THE CHANGING ROOM AND I ASK, "WHAT ABOUT THE HOLE YOUR **ASS** IS HANGING OUT OF?"
HA! IT WASN'T UNTIL THEN THAT I REALIZED WHY THOSE SOLDIERS WERE LAUGHING SO HARD. I THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST HAPPY TO BE ALIVE...
HA! HA! HA!
WE HAD SOME GOOD TIMES, DIDN'T WE, ART?
YEAH... FOR A GOOD LONG TIME.
UNTIL...
I KNOW, OLD FRIEND. I'M SORRY FOR EVERYTHING.
I'M ALLOWED TO BE ON EARTH NOW. I'LL SEE MORE OF YOU. I CAN MAKE IT RIGHT.
A CONTRACT FOR DESIGNING ALL THE UNIFORMS FOR YOUR SPACE EMPIRE WOULD GO A LONG WAY.
I MEAN, IT'D BE A *START*.
MARK? YOU READY TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THIS GUY FLEECES ME?
WHAT? OH... YEAH.
YOU TWO GO AHEAD. I'LL GET THIS.

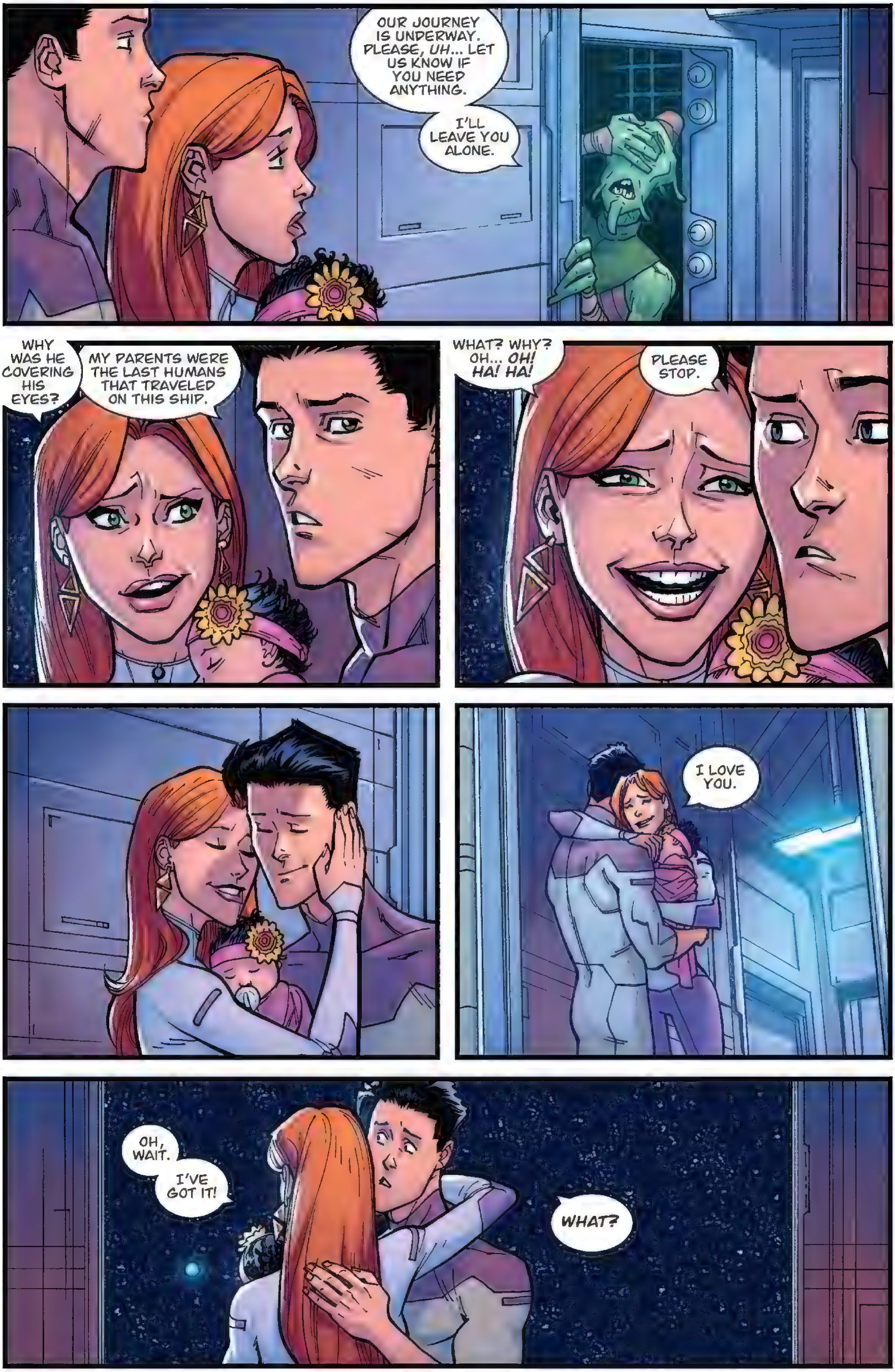

I KNOW YOU FEEL LIKE I **BETRAYED** YOU.
I GUESS I SHOULD BE **USED** TO IT BY NOW.
OKAY... THAT HURT A LITTLE.
THAT'S PROGRESS. MAYBE EVENTUALLY YOU'LL GET TO THE POINT WHERE YOU DON'T DO THE THINGS YOU **KNOW** YOU'LL REGRET LATER.
MARK?
I'M SORRY... I KNOW THIS IS PRETTY MUCH GOODBYE. I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THINGS LIKE THIS EITHER. I KNOW WHY YOU DID WHAT YOU DID. I DON'T **LIKE** IT... BUT I **UNDERSTAND** IT.
THAT'LL JUST HAVE TO BE GOOD ENOUGH.
I'LL TAKE IT.
WHAT'S THE STATUS ON THE SHIP ALLEN SENT?
SHOULDN'T BE MORE THAN A FEW HOURS AWAY AT THIS POINT.


WHY?! MY BABY?! NO... PLEASE DON'T GO!
RAISING A DAUGHTER IS HARD, THEY'RE THE FAIRER SEX, Y'KNOW? THEY'RE *WEAK*... THEY NEED TO BE PROTECTED.
AS A FATHER... YOU'RE *ALWAYS* ON GUARD.
WHY DO YOU *WANT* TO GO?! WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID?!
AFTER A CERTAIN AGE... YOU REALLY GOTTA BE WATCHING OUT FOR YOUR GIRLS, Y'KNOW? GUYS ARE ONLY AFTER *ONE THING.*
I KNOW, I'M A GUY. NEVER LIKED THAT REX KID. I KNOW YOU WERE UPSET WHEN HE DIED... BUT I NEVER LIKED THAT BOY.
BUT EVENTUALLY, SOME KID COMES ALONG LIKE MARK... SOMEONE YOU CAN RESPECT, SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST, TO PROTECT YOUR GIRL *FOR* YOU...
I NEED TO *KNOW* MY GRANDCHILD! I NEED YOU *BOTH* IN MY LIFE!
...BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW... YOU'VE *CHANGED* THINGS FOR ME. I'M NOT... I'M NOT *WORRIED* ABOUT YOU... AND THAT ISN'T BECAUSE MARK IS GOING WITH YOU, SAMANTHA.
YOU DON'T *NEED* HIM OR ANYONE. YOU'RE MY SPECIAL GIRL AND YOU ALWAYS WILL BE. AND MY SPECIAL GIRL DOESN'T NEED *ANYONE* TO PROTECT HER. YOU'RE THE STRONGEST PERSON WE KNOW AND YOU'LL BE *FINE* OUT THERE.
WE LOVE YOU.
OKAY...
WOW, DAD... YOU REALLY TURNED THAT AROUND AT THE END.


I DON'T WANT THIS TO GET AWKWARD, BUT I ALWAYS HAD A... WILD SIDE. WHAT I'M SAYING IS I KNEW I COULD NEVER FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE... **NORMAL.**
SHIP'S HERE.
DON'T TRY TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, LET ME FINISH... ALL THAT SAID, I NEVER COULD HAVE KNOWN HOW MUCH... ***EXCITEMENT*** I WAS SIGNING UP FOR WHEN I MET YOUR FATHER.
WHO COULD HAVE?
BUT EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING... YOU'RE HAPPY NOW?
NOW? HAPPIER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN IN MY LIFE.
I HOPE THAT DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME LEAVING.
NOT AT ALL. I MEAN WITH YOUR FATHER.
ANYHOW... I THINK "*LOVE*" IS LEARNING ALL THE TERRIBLE THINGS ABOUT A PERSON CLOSE TO YOU AND LEARNING TO LOOK PAST THEM SO YOU CAN SEE CLEARLY THE PERSON YOU LIKED IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I FEEL SO MUCH ***CLOSER*** TO YOUR FATHER NOW... AFTER IT ALL.
I DON'T HATE ***ANYTHING*** ABOUT EVE YET.
YET.
GIVE IT TIME.

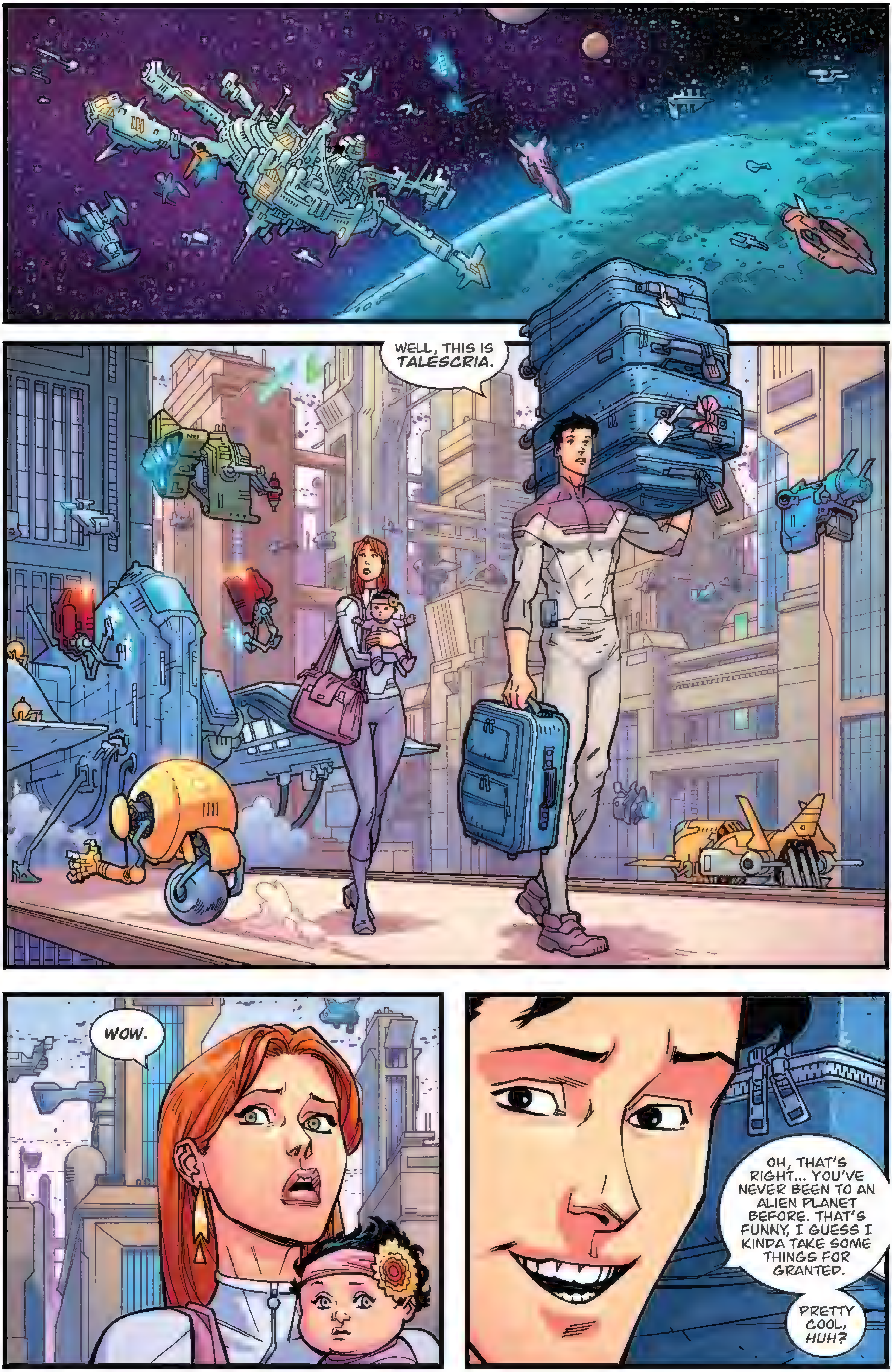

WELL... I THINK I SHOULD BE GETTING OVER THERE. EVE'S GOING TO WANT ME TO HELP LOAD EVERYTHING.
YOU'VE GROWN INTO A GREATER MAN THAN I EVER COULD HAVE IMAGINED.
I'M GOING TO MISS YOU, SON.
YOU'LL COME VISIT EVENTUALLY, RIGHT?
NOTHING IN THIS UNIVERSE COULD KEEP ME FROM THAT ADORABLE *NAMELESS* GIRL OF YOURS.
WE'LL GET TO THAT EVENTUALLY.
TELL OLIVER I MISS HIM WHEN YOU SEE HIM.
ALSO... A LETTER EVERY NOW AND THEN WOULD BE NICE... FROM *BOTH* OF YOU.

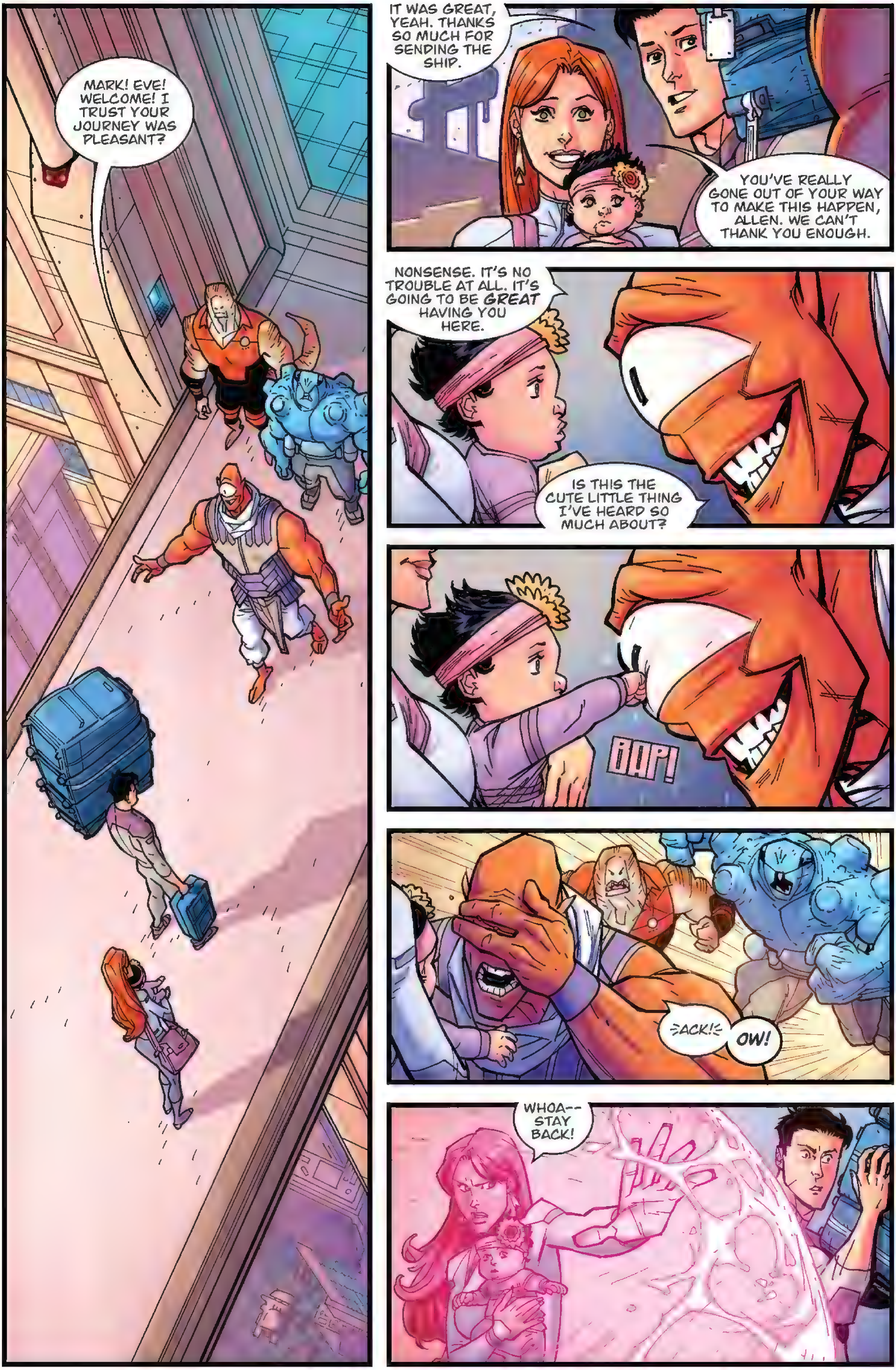

ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH. I'M FINE. BETTER THAN FINE, REALLY.
I'M EXCITED.

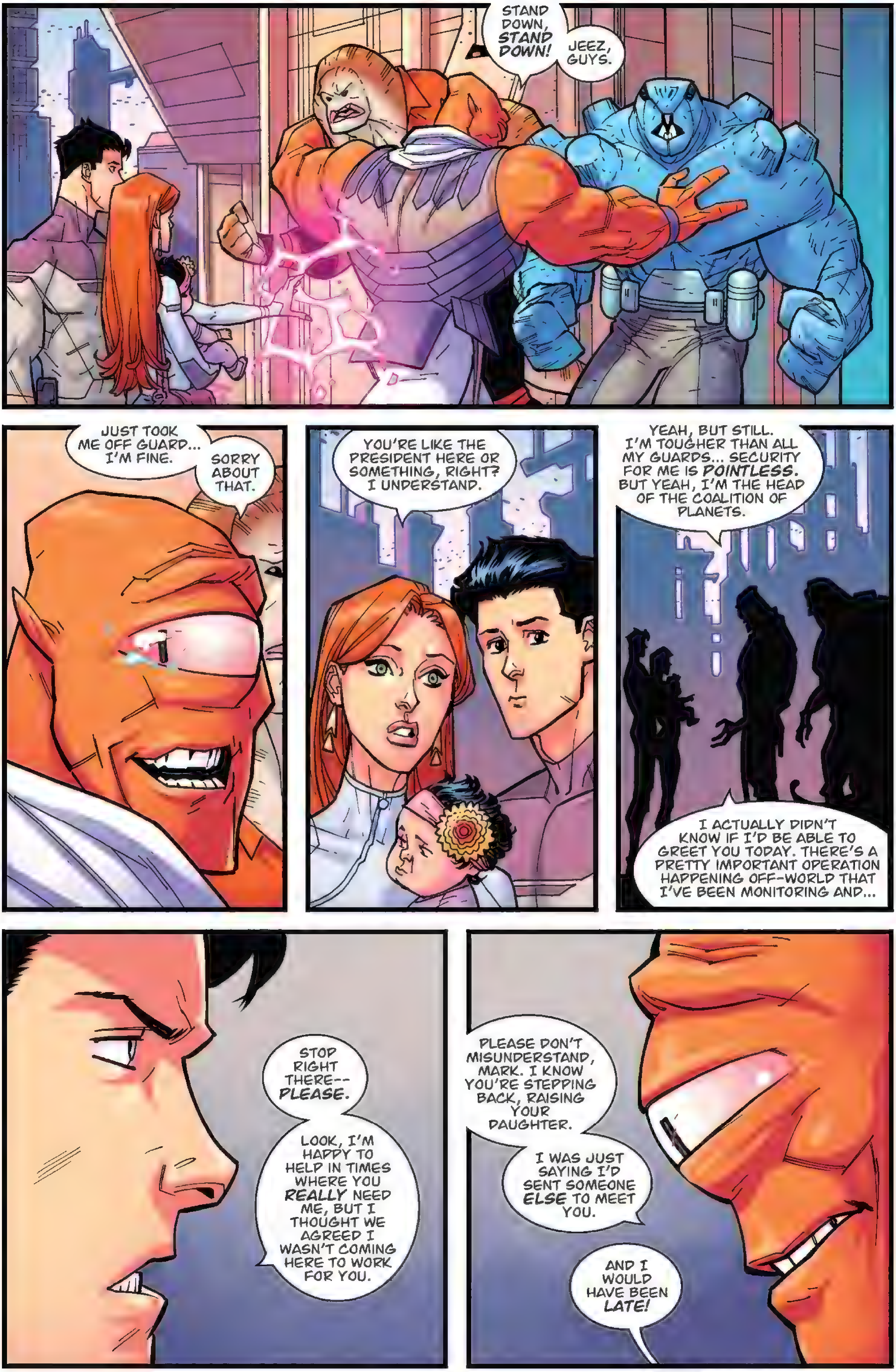

OUR JOURNEY IS UNDERWAY. PLEASE, *UH*... LET US KNOW IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.
I'LL LEAVE YOU ALONE.
WHY WAS HE COVERING HIS EYES?
MY PARENTS WERE THE LAST HUMANS THAT TRAVELED ON THIS SHIP.
WHAT? WHY? OH... *OH! HA! HA!*
PLEASE STOP.
I LOVE YOU.
OH, WAIT.
I'VE GOT IT!
WHAT?

I THINK WE SHOULD NAME HER *TERRA*.
SHE'S OUR OWN LITTLE PIECE OF EARTH...
THAT'S BEAUTIFUL. I LOVE IT.

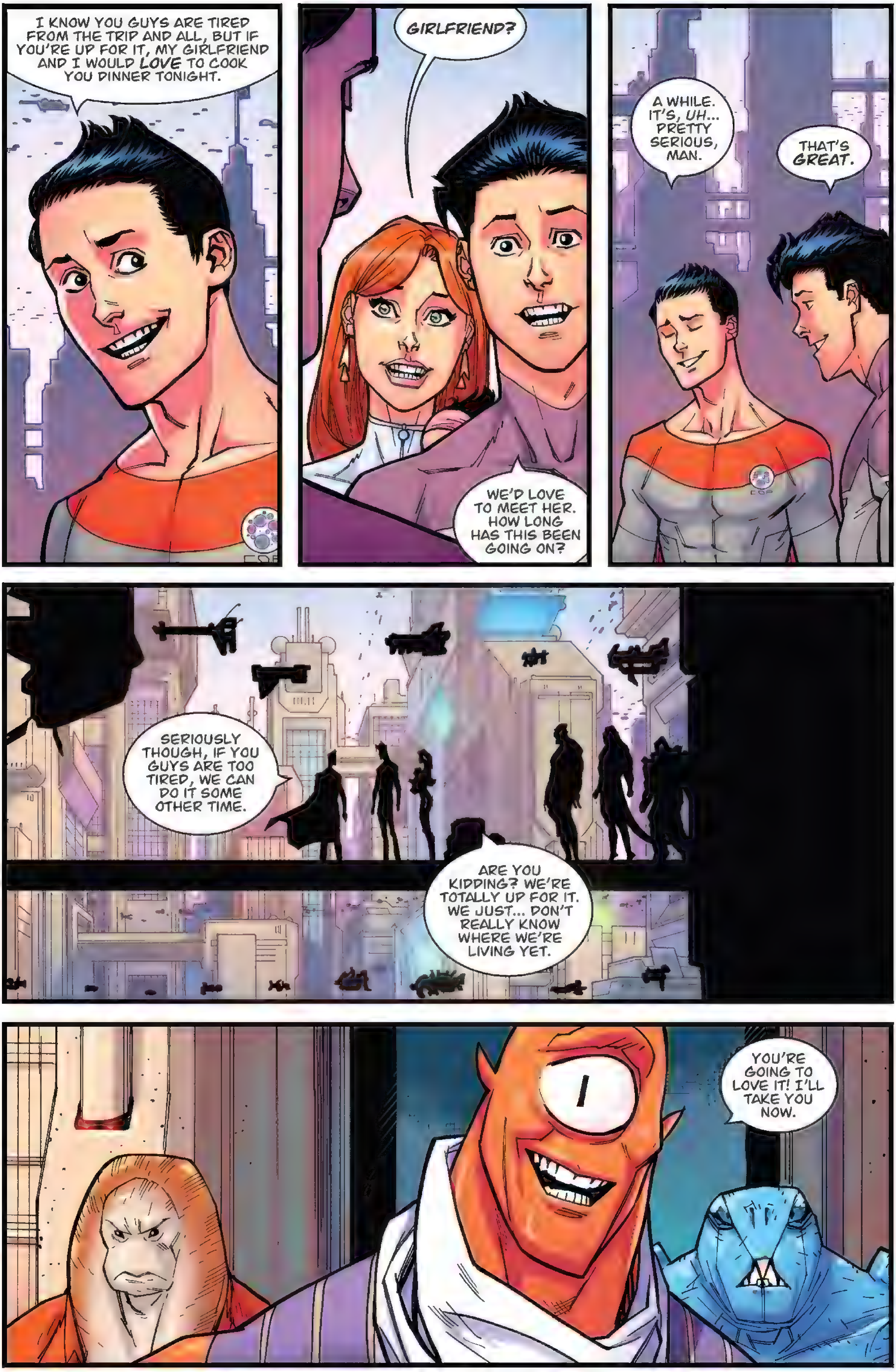
CHAPTER 118

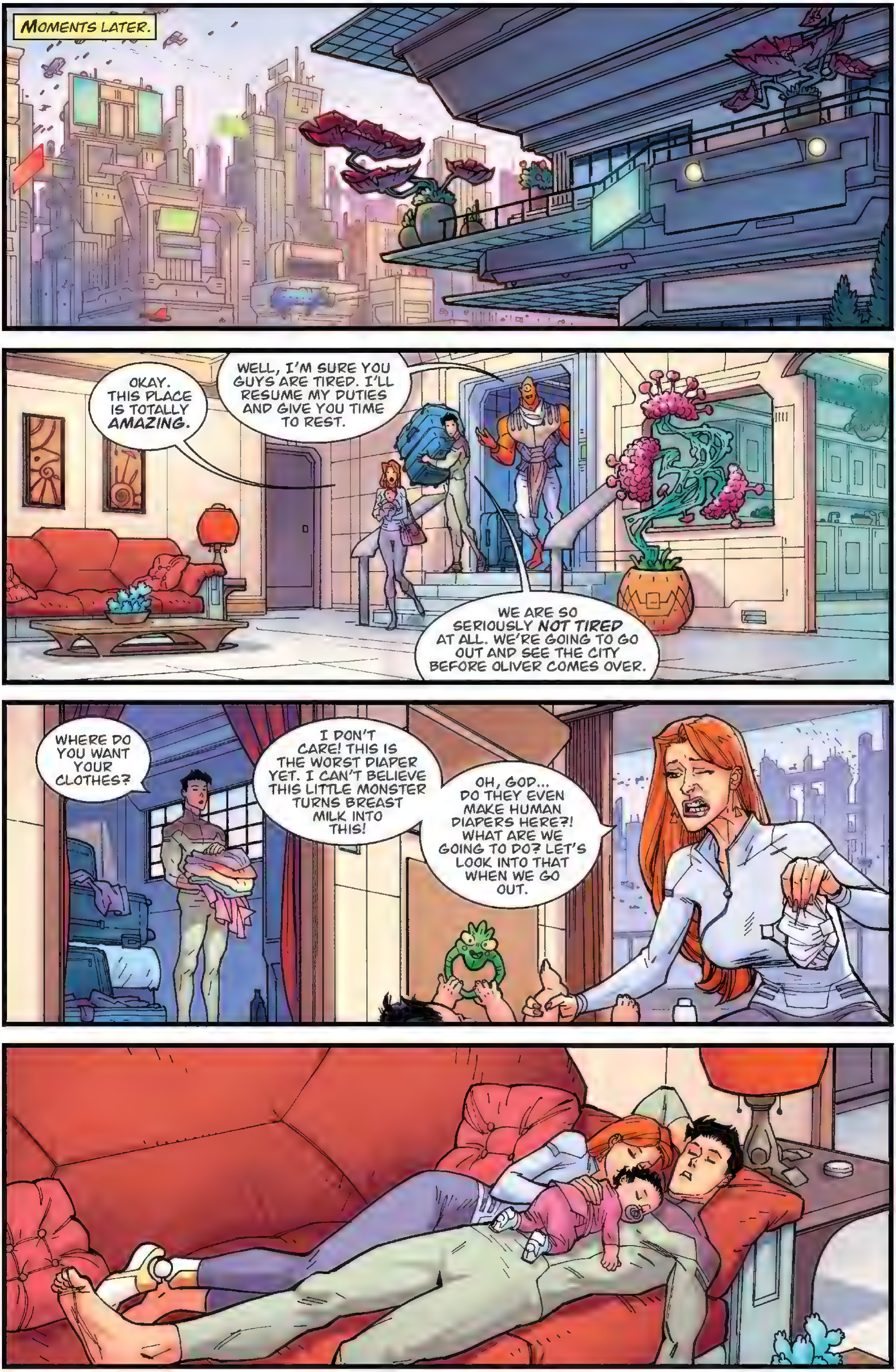

WELL, THIS IS *TALESCRIA.*
WOW.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT... YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO AN ALIEN PLANET BEFORE. THAT'S FUNNY, I GUESS I KINDA TAKE SOME THINGS FOR GRANTED.
PRETTY COOL, HUH?

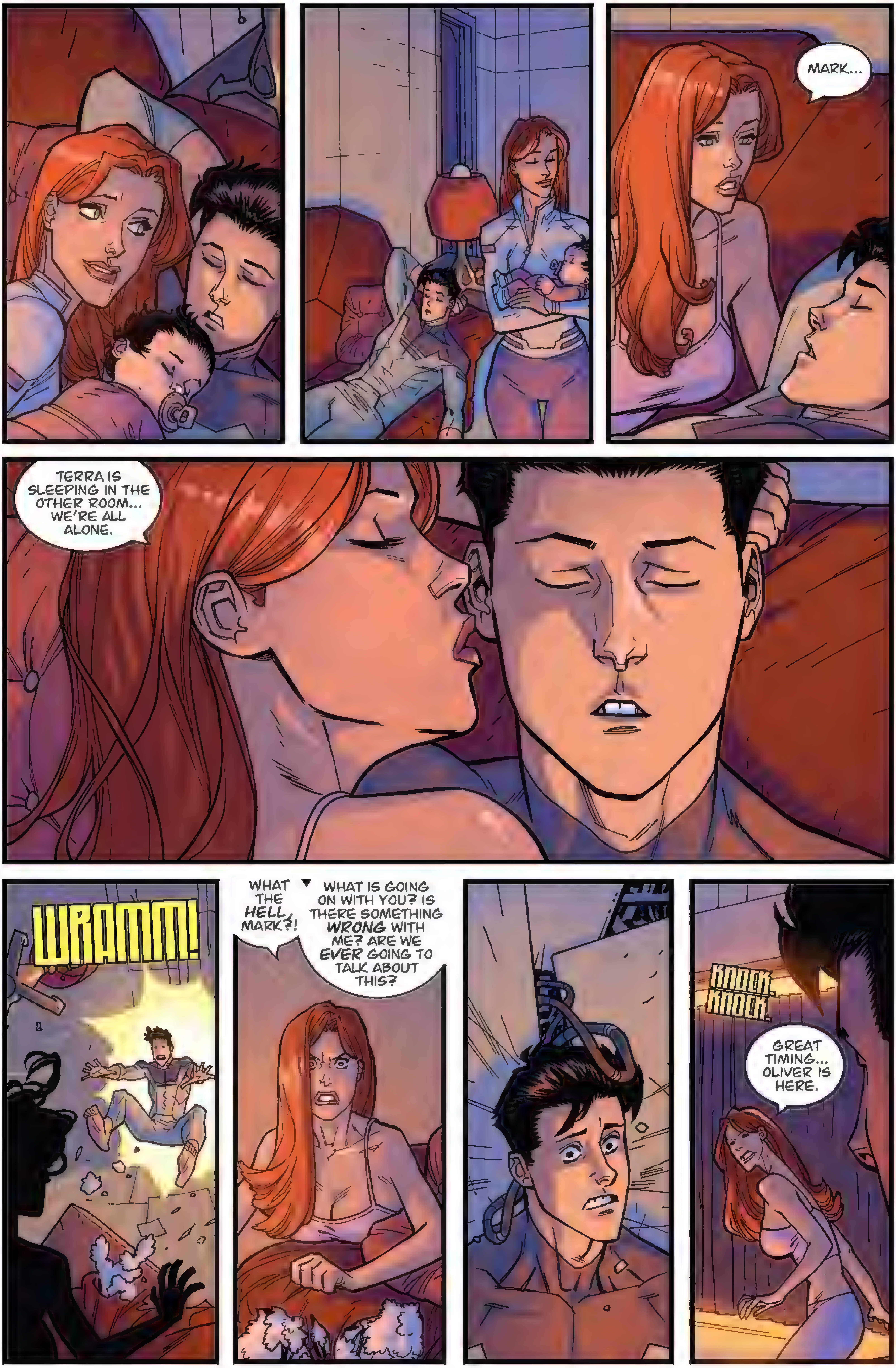

MARK! EVE! WELCOME! I TRUST YOUR JOURNEY WAS PLEASANT?
IT WAS GREAT, YEAH. THANKS SO MUCH FOR SENDING THE SHIP.
YOU'VE REALLY GONE OUT OF YOUR WAY TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN, ALLEN. WE CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.
NONSENSE. IT'S NO TROUBLE AT ALL. IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT HAVING YOU HERE.
IS THIS THE CUTE LITTLE THING I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT?
BOP!
ACK!
OW!
WHOA-- STAY BACK!

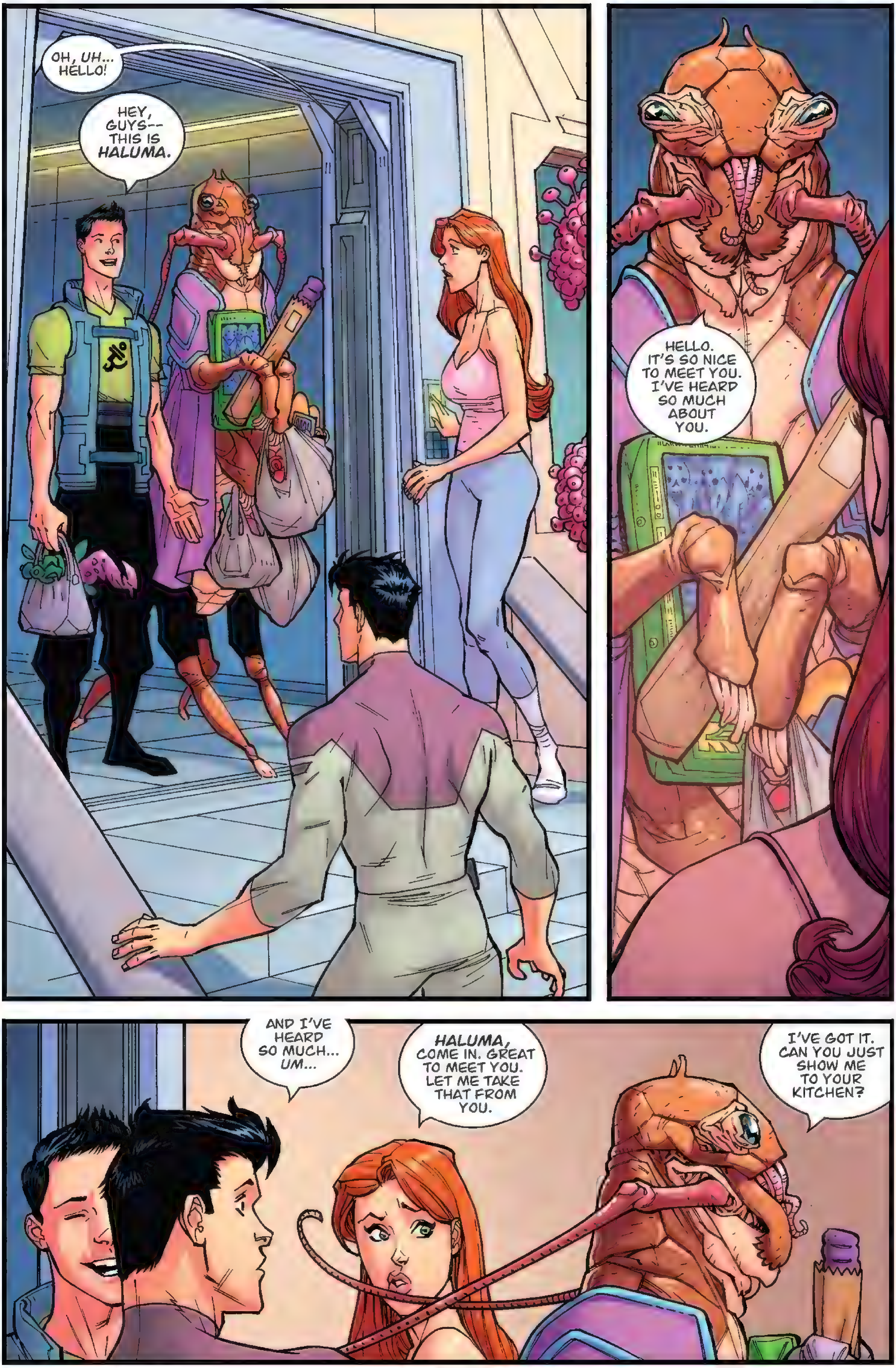

STAND DOWN, STAND DOWN!
JEEZ, GUYS.
JUST TOOK ME OFF GUARD... I'M FINE.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
YOU'RE LIKE THE PRESIDENT HERE OR SOMETHING, RIGHT? I UNDERSTAND.
YEAH, BUT STILL. I'M TOUGHER THAN ALL MY GUARDS... SECURITY FOR ME IS POINTLESS. BUT YEAH, I'M THE HEAD OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
I ACTUALLY DIDN'T KNOW IF I'D BE ABLE TO GREET YOU TODAY. THERE'S A PRETTY IMPORTANT OPERATION HAPPENING OFF-WORLD THAT I'VE BEEN MONITORING AND...
STOP RIGHT THERE-- PLEASE.
LOOK, I'M HAPPY TO HELP IN TIMES WHERE YOU REALLY NEED ME, BUT I THOUGHT WE AGREED I WASN'T COMING HERE TO WORK FOR YOU.
PLEASE DON'T MISUNDERSTAND, MARK. I KNOW YOU'RE STEPPING BACK, RAISING YOUR DAUGHTER.
I WAS JUST SAYING I'D SENT SOMEONE ELSE TO MEET YOU.
AND I WOULD HAVE BEEN LATE!

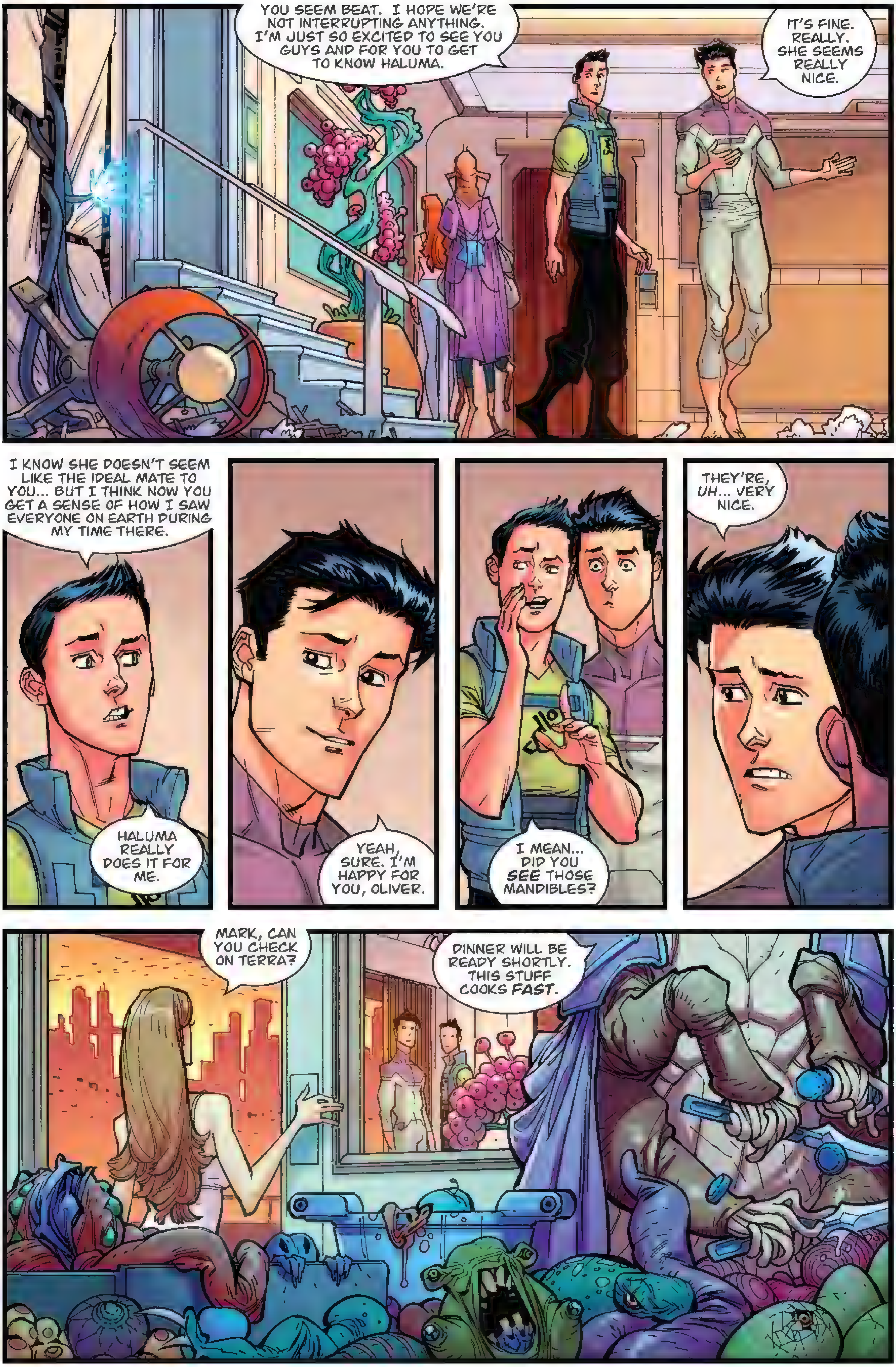
SORRY ABOUT THAT. I KIND OF LOST TRACK OF TIME.
I'M STILL PRETTY IRRESPONSIBLE. WHAT CAN YOU DO?
OLIVER?
WHOA, MAN. YOU'RE GOING TO BE OLDER THAN ME SOON.
THIS IS *CRAZY.*
WELL, MY AGING IS SLOWING AS I GET OLDER... WE'LL PROBABLY BE THE **SAME** AGE FOR A WHILE, BIG BROTHER.

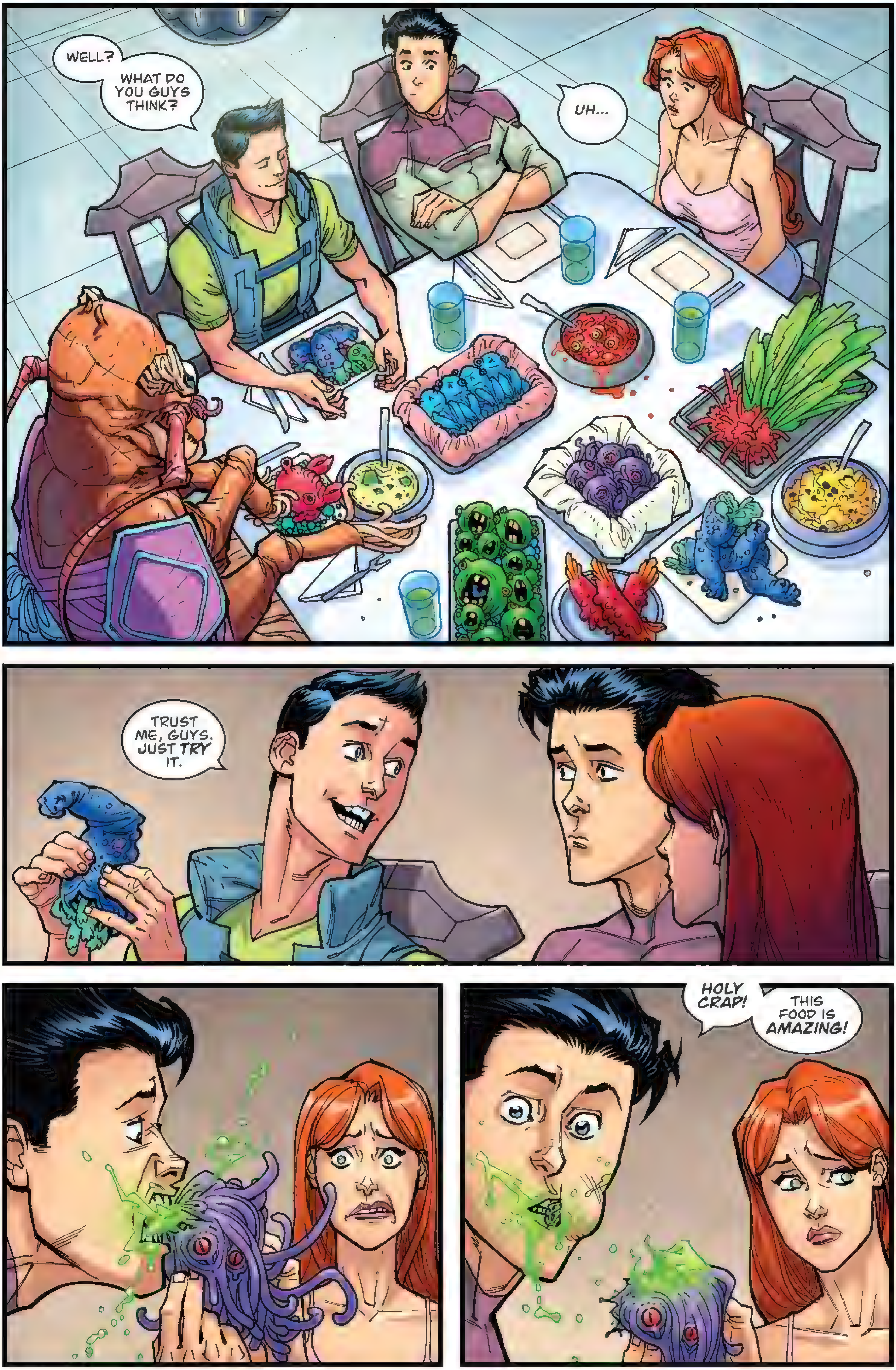

I KNOW YOU GUYS ARE TIRED FROM THE TRIP AND ALL, BUT IF YOU'RE UP FOR IT, MY GIRLFRIEND AND I WOULD *LOVE* TO COOK YOU DINNER TONIGHT.
GIRLFRIEND?
WE'D LOVE TO MEET HER. HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON?
A WHILE. IT'S, UH... PRETTY SERIOUS, MAN.
THAT'S *GREAT.*
SERIOUSLY THOUGH, IF YOU GUYS ARE TOO TIRED, WE CAN DO IT SOME OTHER TIME.
ARE YOU KIDDING? WE'RE TOTALLY UP FOR IT. WE JUST... DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE WE'RE LIVING YET.
YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE IT! I'LL TAKE YOU NOW.

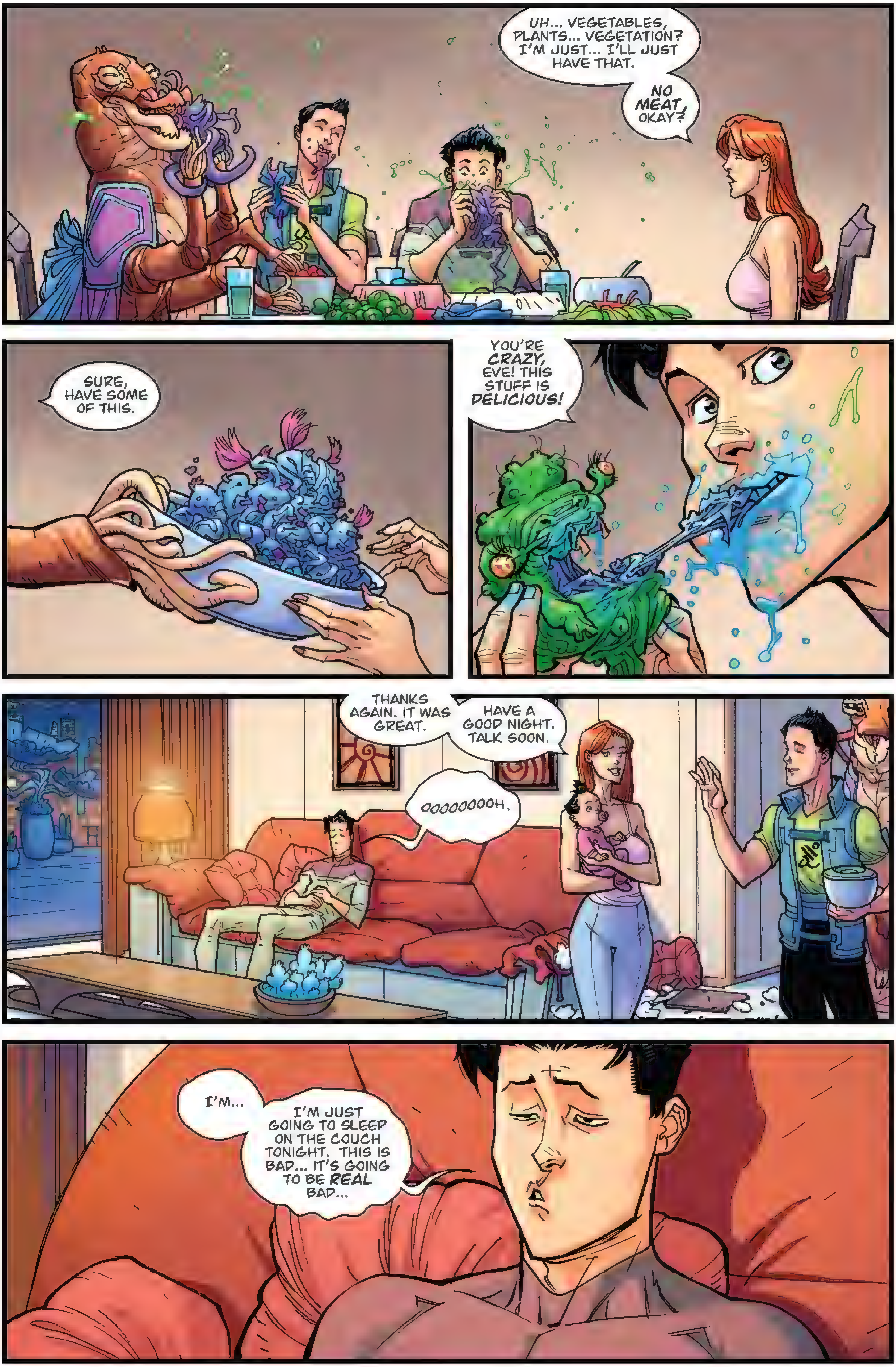

MOMENTS LATER.
OKAY. THIS PLACE IS TOTALLY *AMAZING.*
WELL, I'M SURE YOU GUYS ARE TIRED. I'LL RESUME MY DUTIES AND GIVE YOU TIME TO REST.
WE ARE SO SERIOUSLY *NOT TIRED* AT ALL. WE'RE GOING TO GO OUT AND SEE THE CITY BEFORE OLIVER COMES OVER.
WHERE DO YOU WANT YOUR CLOTHES?
I DON'T CARE! THIS IS THE WORST DIAPER YET. I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS LITTLE MONSTER TURNS BREAST MILK INTO THIS!
OH, GOD... DO THEY EVEN MAKE HUMAN DIAPERS HERE?! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? LET'S LOOK INTO THAT WHEN WE GO OUT.

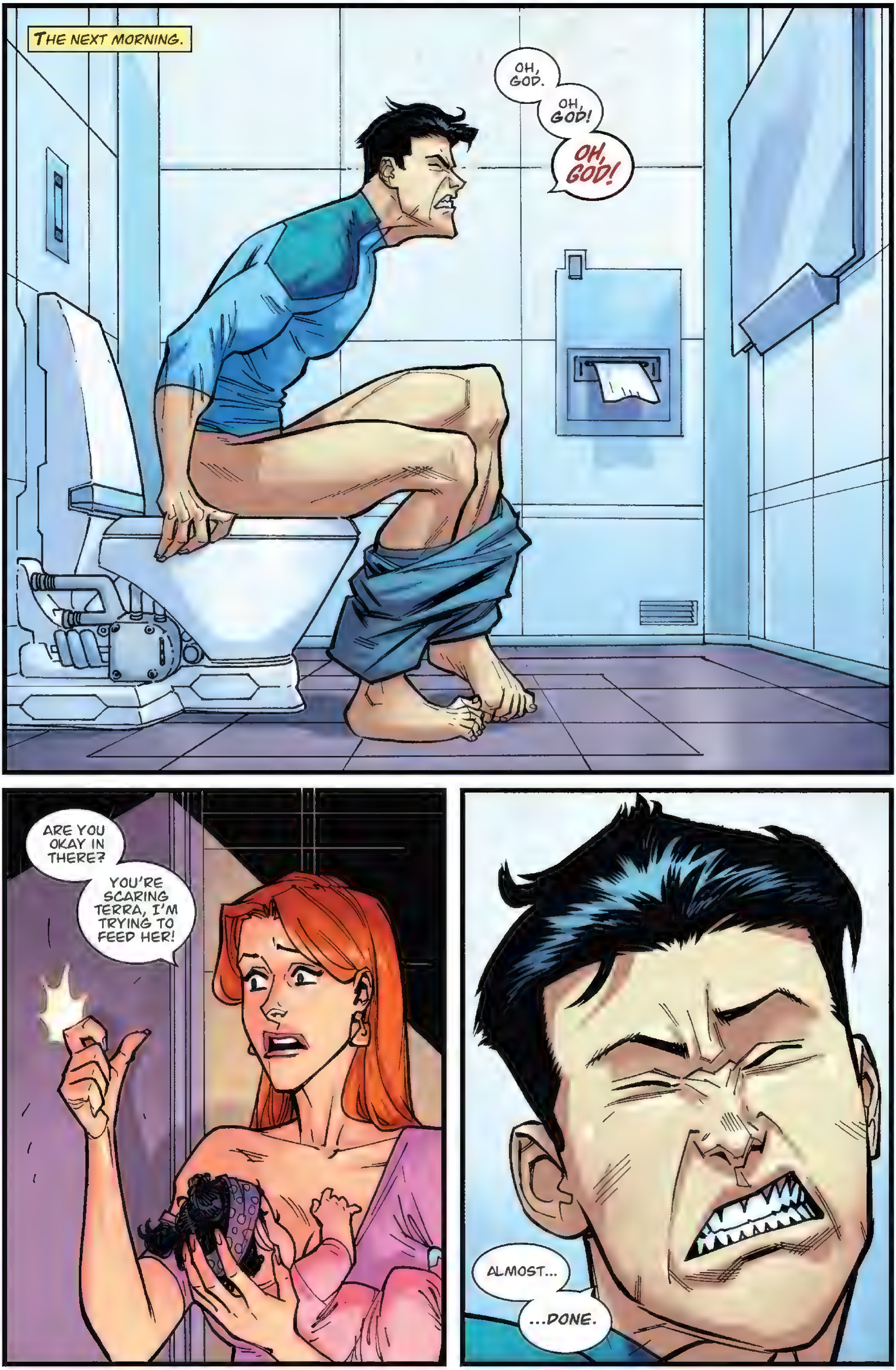

MARK...
TERRA IS SLEEPING IN THE OTHER ROOM... WE'RE ALL ALONE.
WRAMM!
WHAT THE *HELL*, MARK?!
WHAT IS GOING ON WITH YOU? IS THERE SOMETHING *WRONG* WITH ME? ARE WE *EVER* GOING TO TALK ABOUT THIS?
KNOCK KNOCK
GREAT TIMING... OLIVER IS HERE.

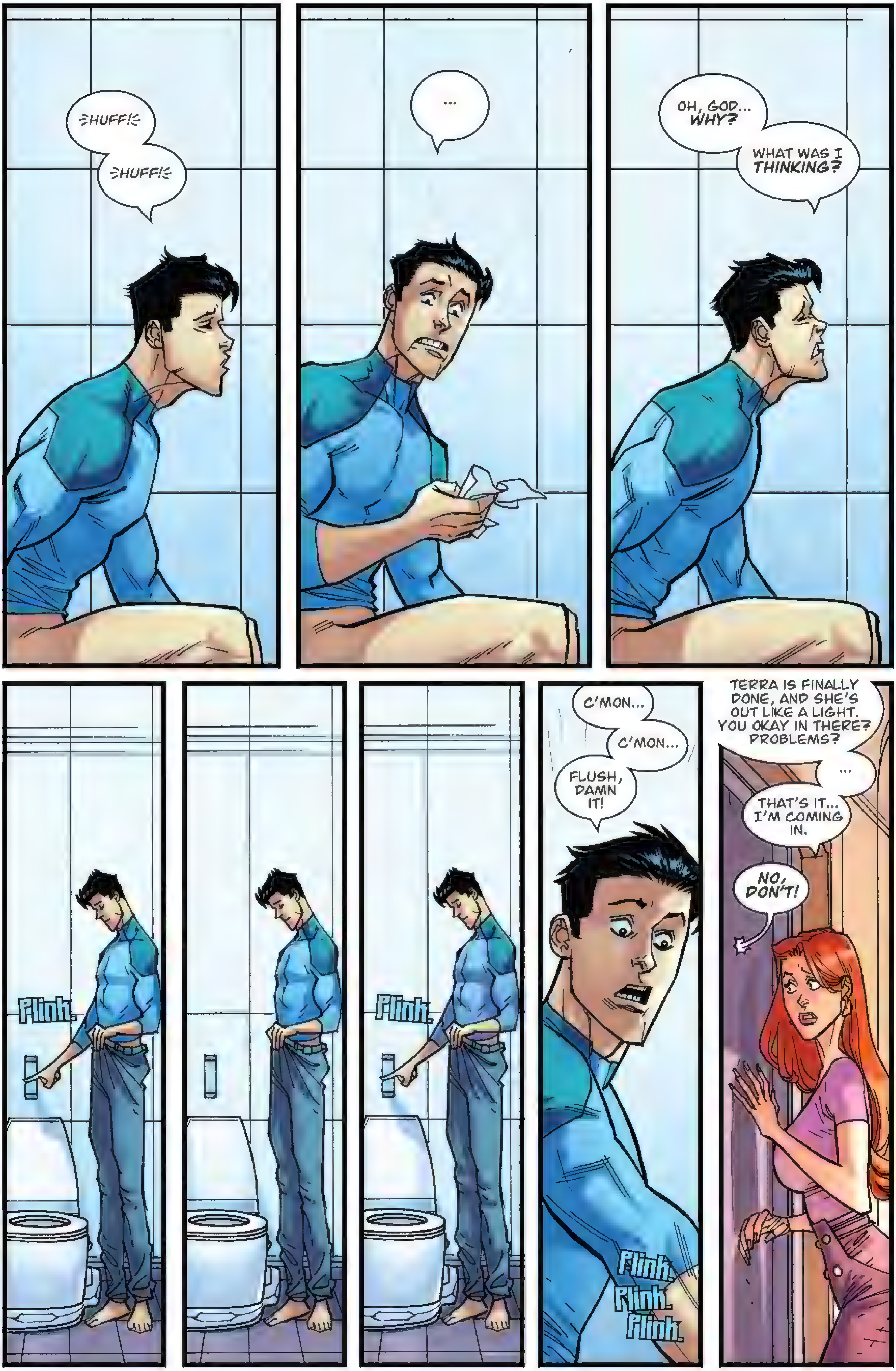

OH, UH... HELLO!
HEY, GUYS-- THIS IS *HALUMA.*
HELLO. IT'S SO NICE TO MEET YOU. I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU.
AND I'VE HEARD SO MUCH... *UM...*
HALUMA, COME IN. GREAT TO MEET YOU. LET ME TAKE THAT FROM YOU.
I'VE GOT IT. CAN YOU JUST SHOW ME TO YOUR KITCHEN?

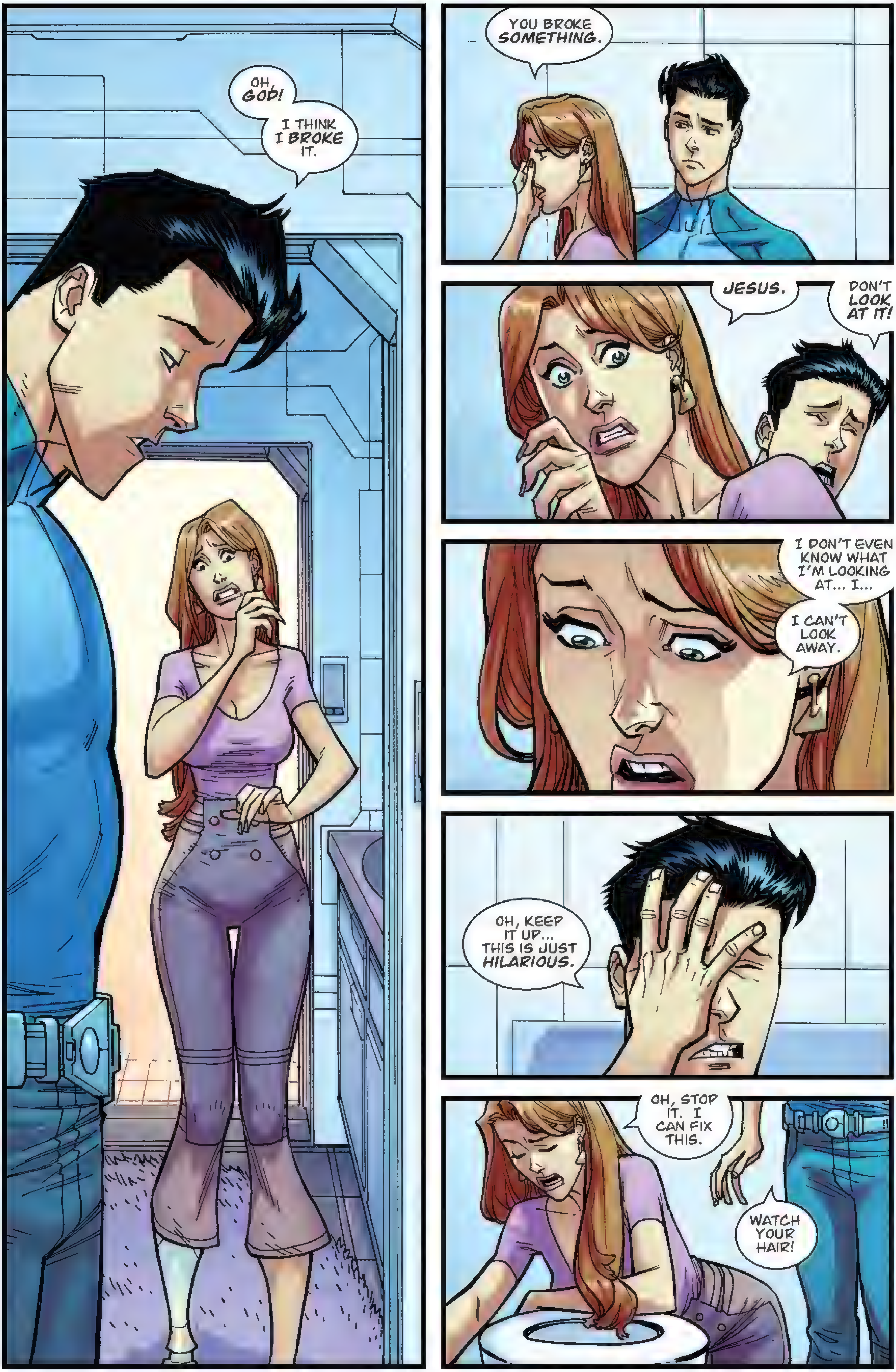

YOU SEEM BEAT. I HOPE WE'RE NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING. I'M JUST SO EXCITED TO SEE YOU GUYS AND FOR YOU TO GET TO KNOW HALUMA.
IT'S FINE. REALLY. SHE SEEMS REALLY NICE.
I KNOW SHE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE IDEAL MATE TO YOU... BUT I THINK NOW YOU GET A SENSE OF HOW I SAW EVERYONE ON EARTH DURING MY TIME THERE.
HALUMA REALLY DOES IT FOR ME.
YEAH, SURE. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU, OLIVER.
I MEAN... DID YOU **SEE** THOSE MANDIBLES?
THEY'RE, UH... VERY NICE.
MARK, CAN YOU CHECK ON TERRA?
DINNER WILL BE READY SHORTLY. THIS STUFF COOKS **FAST**.

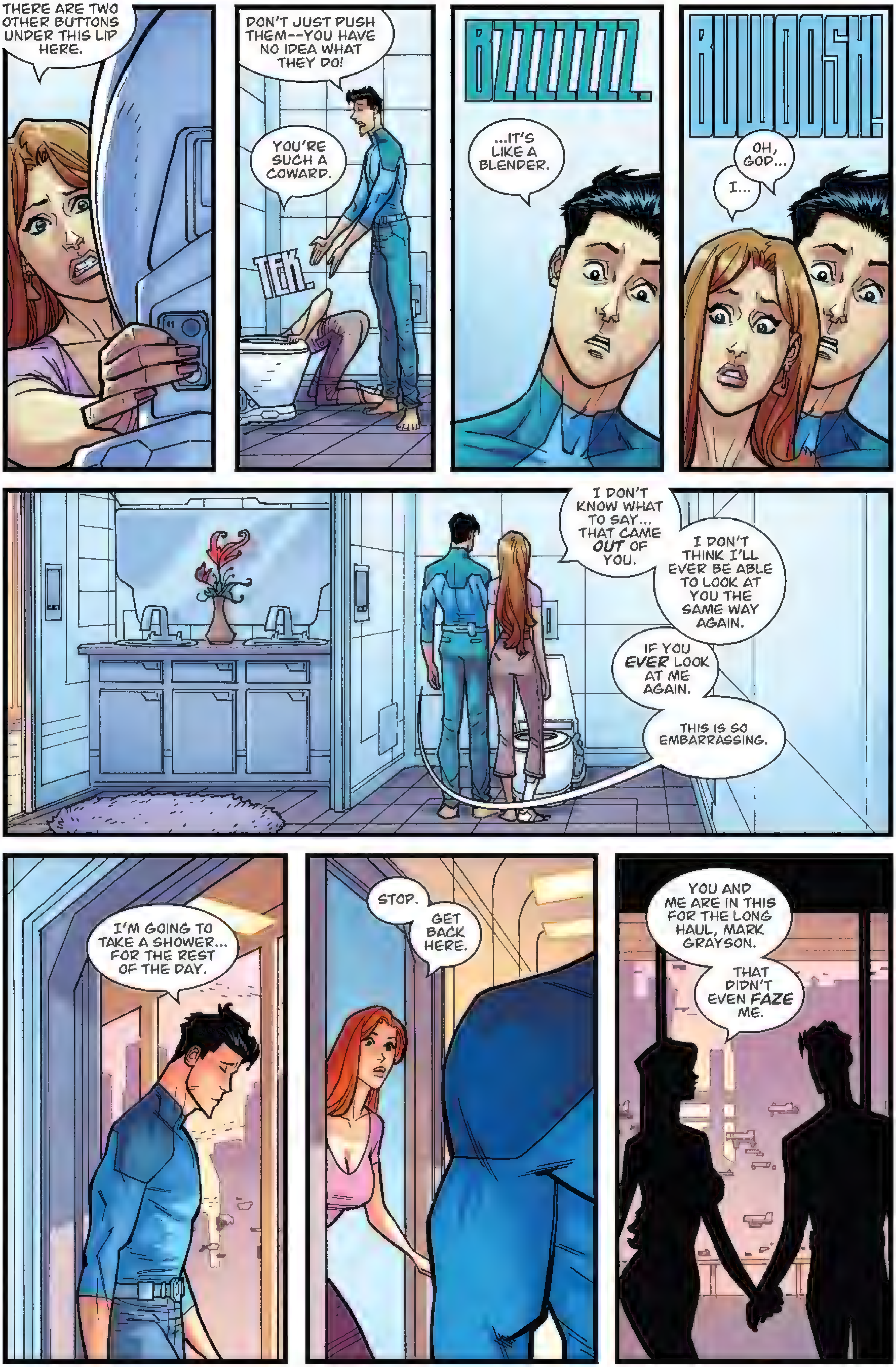

WELL?
WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?
UH...
TRUST ME, GUYS. JUST *TRY* IT.
HOLY CRAP!
THIS FOOD IS *AMAZING!*

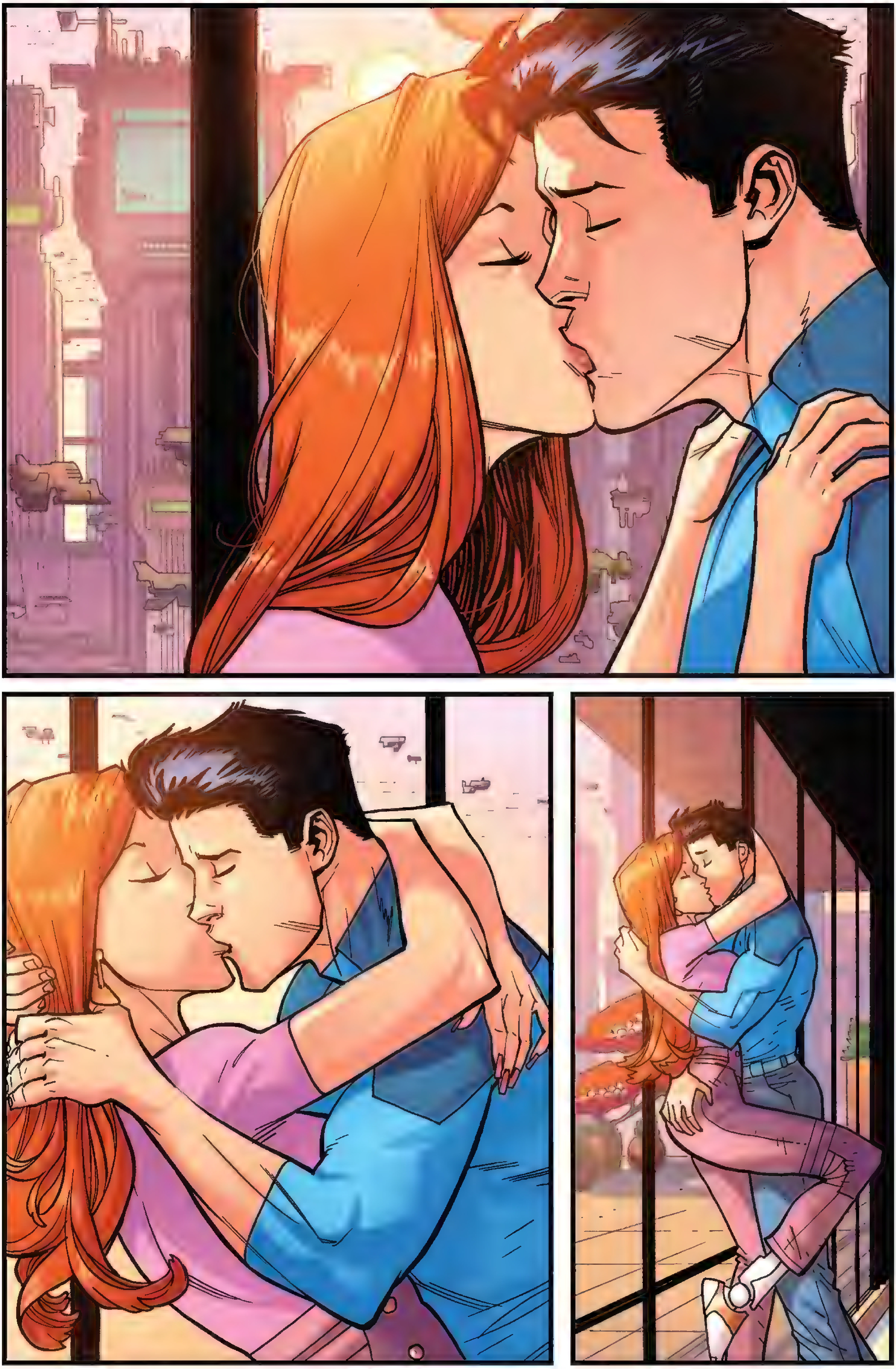

UH... VEGETABLES, PLANTS... VEGETATION? I'M JUST... I'LL JUST HAVE THAT.
NO MEAT, OKAY?
SURE, HAVE SOME OF THIS.
YOU'RE CRAZY, EVE! THIS STUFF IS DELICIOUS!
THANKS AGAIN. IT WAS GREAT.
HAVE A GOOD NIGHT. TALK SOON.
OOOOOOOOH.
I'M...
I'M JUST GOING TO SLEEP ON THE COUCH TONIGHT. THIS IS BAD... IT'S GOING TO BE REAL BAD...

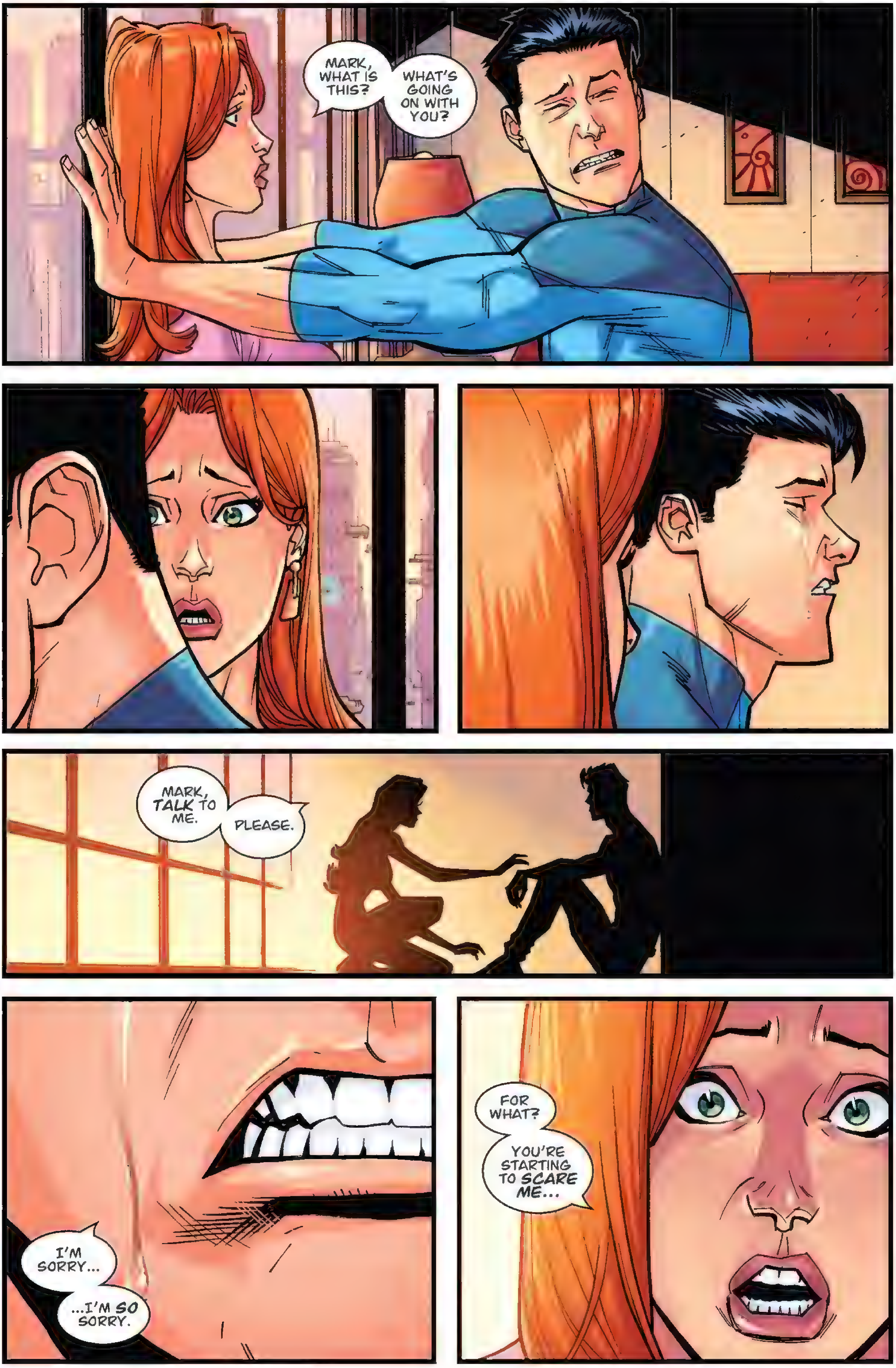

THE NEXT MORNING.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD!
OH, GOD!
ARE YOU OKAY IN THERE?
YOU'RE SCARING TERRA, I'M TRYING TO FEED HER!
ALMOST...
...DONE.

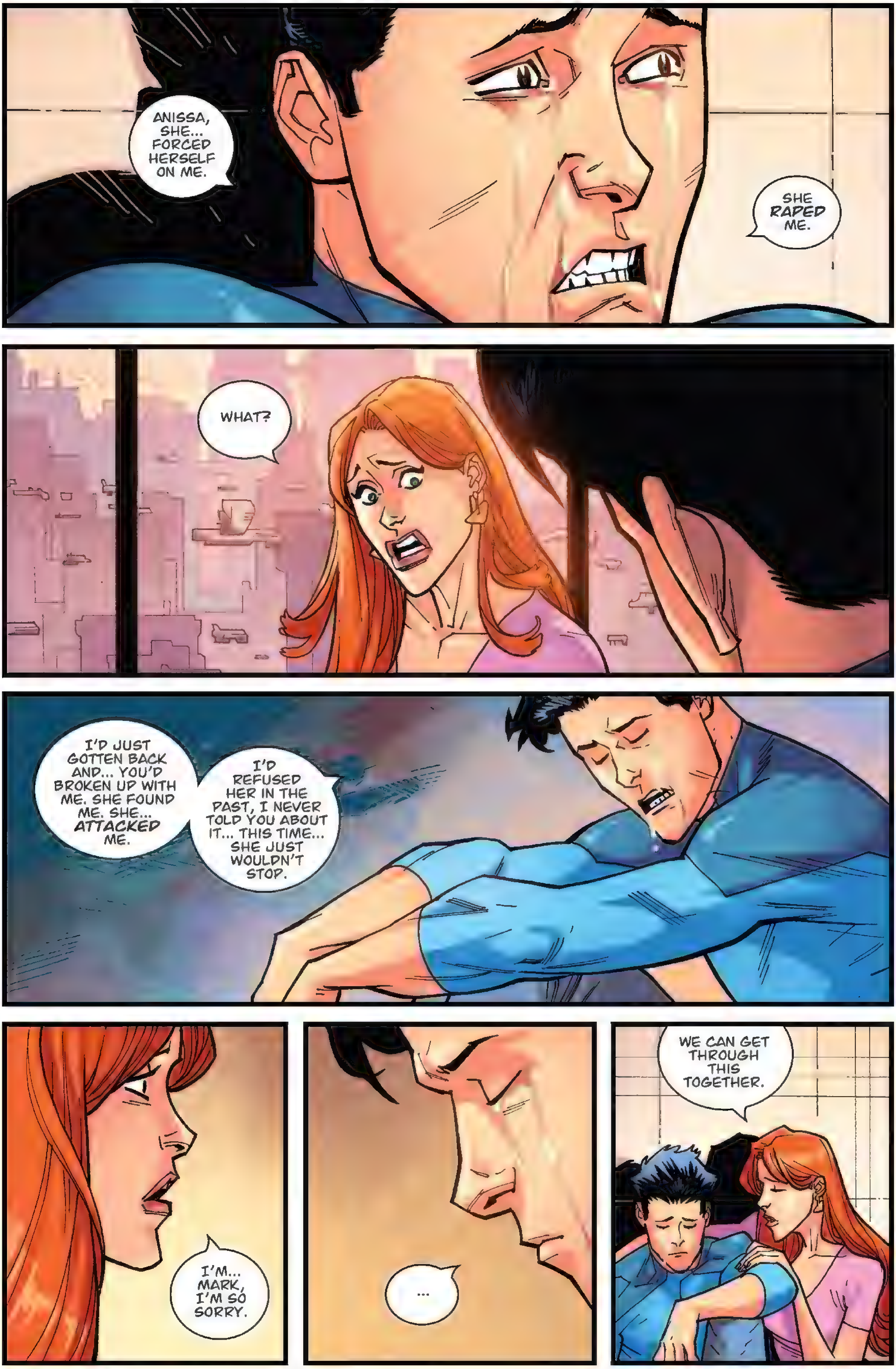

HUFF!
HUFF!
...
OH, GOD... WHY?
WHAT WAS I THINKING?
Plink.
Plink.
C'MON...
C'MON...
FLUSH, DAMN IT!
Plink.
Plink.
Plink.
TERRA IS FINALLY DONE, AND SHE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT. YOU OKAY IN THERE? PROBLEMS?
...
THAT'S IT... I'M COMING IN.
NO, DON'T!

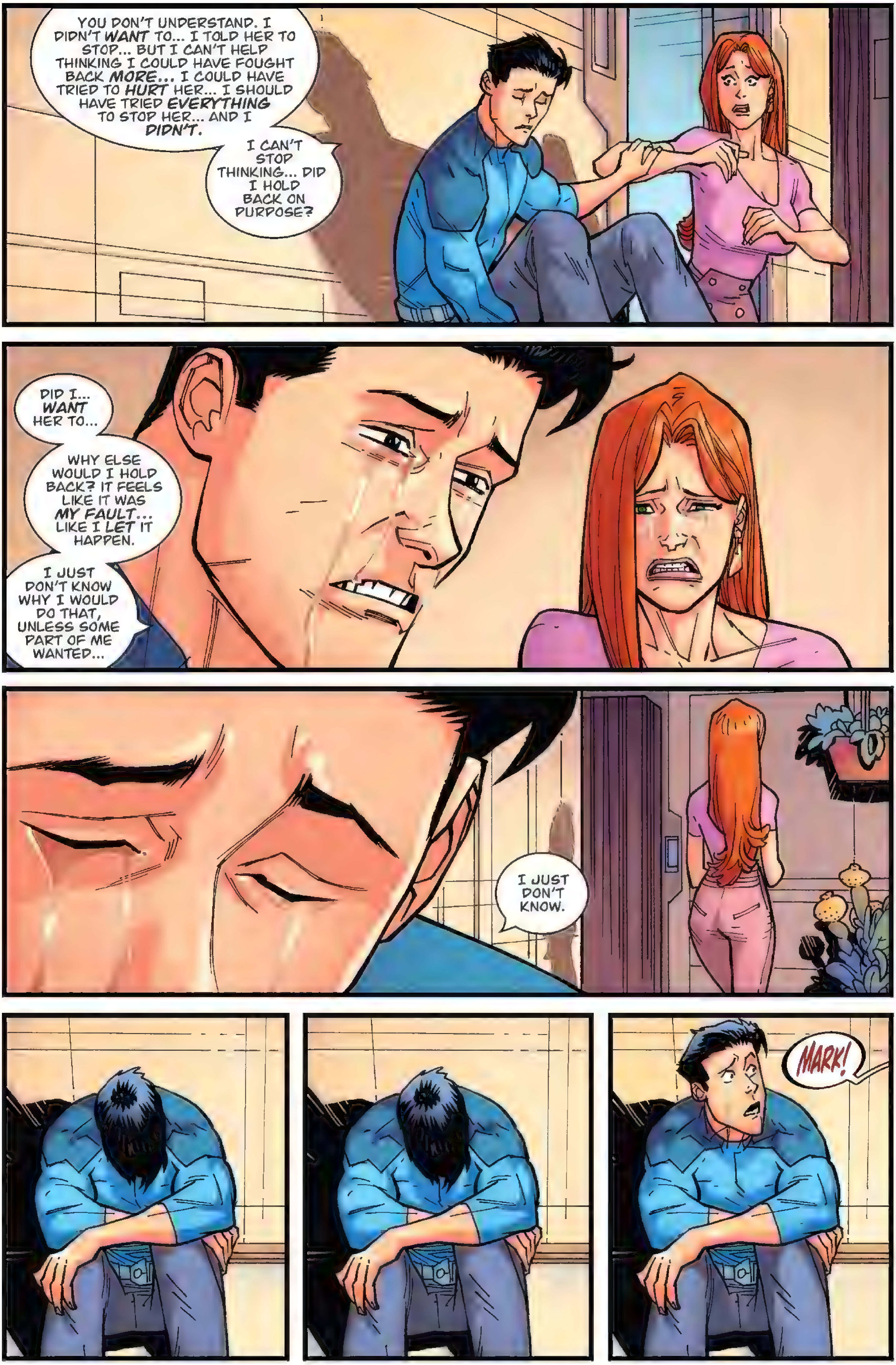

OH, GOD!
I THINK I BROKE IT.
YOU BROKE SOMETHING.
JESUS.
DON'T LOOK AT IT!
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M LOOKING AT... I...
I CAN'T LOOK AWAY.
OH, KEEP IT UP... THIS IS JUST HILARIOUS.
OH, STOP IT. I CAN FIX THIS.
WATCH YOUR HAIR!

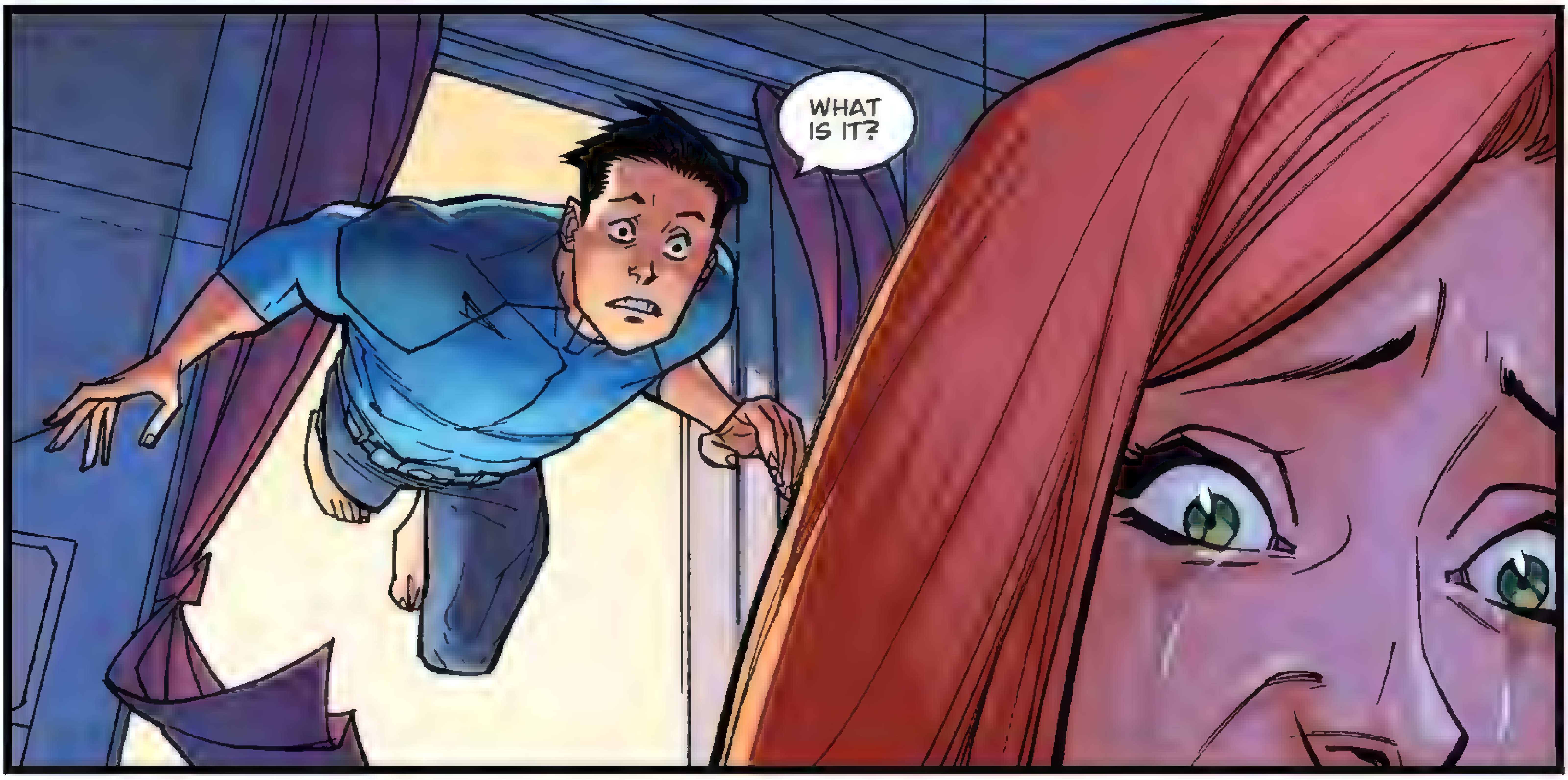

THERE ARE TWO OTHER BUTTONS UNDER THIS LIP HERE.
DON'T JUST PUSH THEM--YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY DO!
YOU'RE SUCH A COWARD.
TEK.
BZZZZZZ.
...IT'S LIKE A BLENDER.
BWOOSH!
OH, GOD...
I...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY... THAT CAME OUT OF YOU.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE ABLE TO LOOK AT YOU THE SAME WAY AGAIN.
IF YOU EVER LOOK AT ME AGAIN.
THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING.
I'M GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER... FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.
STOP.
GET BACK HERE.
YOU AND ME ARE IN THIS FOR THE LONG HAUL, MARK GRAYSON.
THAT DIDN'T EVEN FAZE ME.

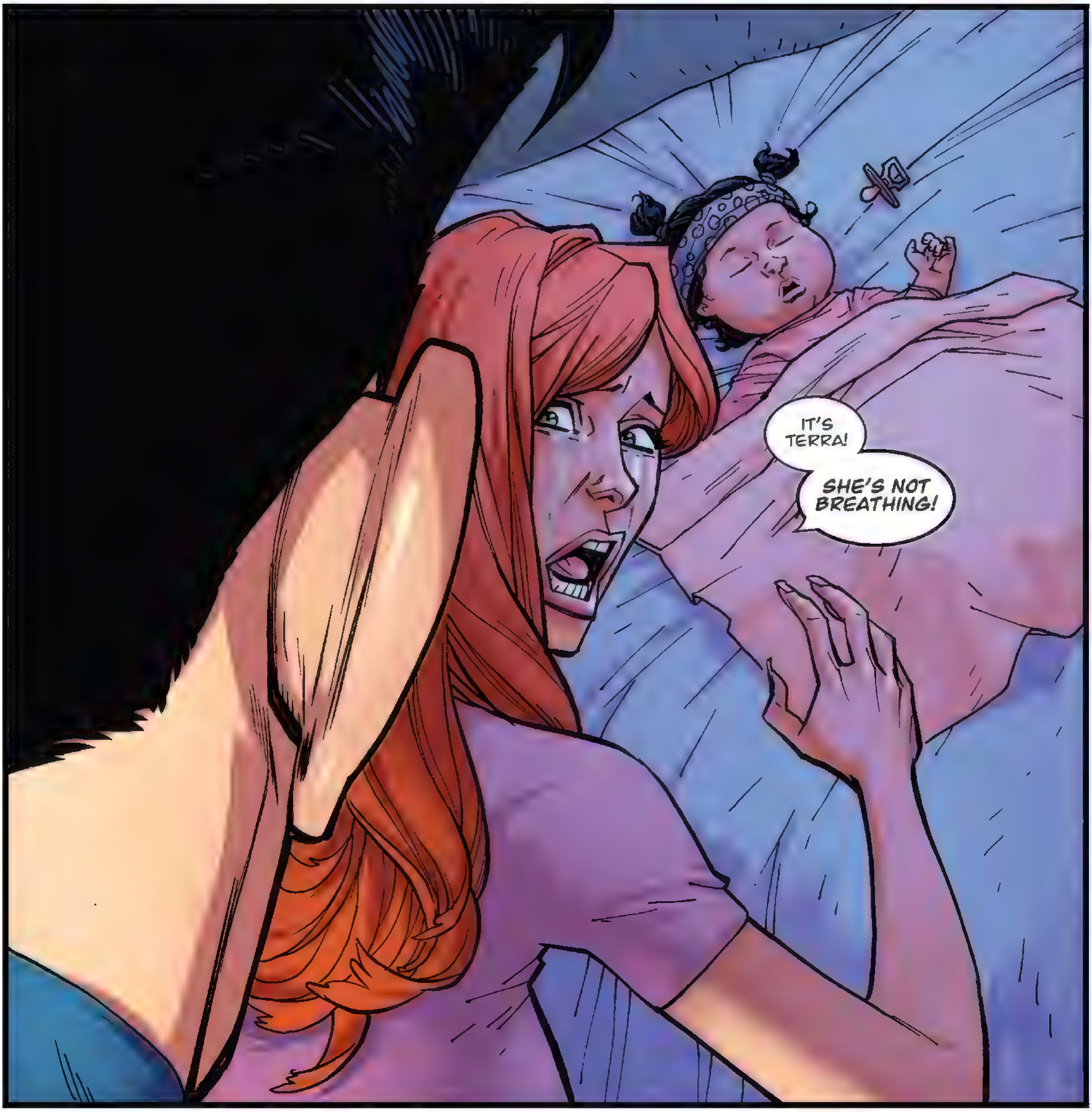



MARK, WHAT IS THIS?
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU?
MARK, TALK TO ME.
PLEASE.
I'M SORRY...
...I'M SO SORRY.
FOR WHAT?
YOU'RE STARTING TO SCARE ME...


ANISSA, SHE... FORCED HERSELF ON ME.
SHE *RAPED* ME.
WHAT?
I'D JUST GOTTEN BACK AND... YOU'D BROKEN UP WITH ME. SHE FOUND ME. SHE... *ATTACKED* ME.
I'D REFUSED HER IN THE PAST, I NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT IT... THIS TIME... SHE JUST WOULDN'T STOP.
I'M... MARK, I'M SO SORRY.
...
WE CAN GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER.

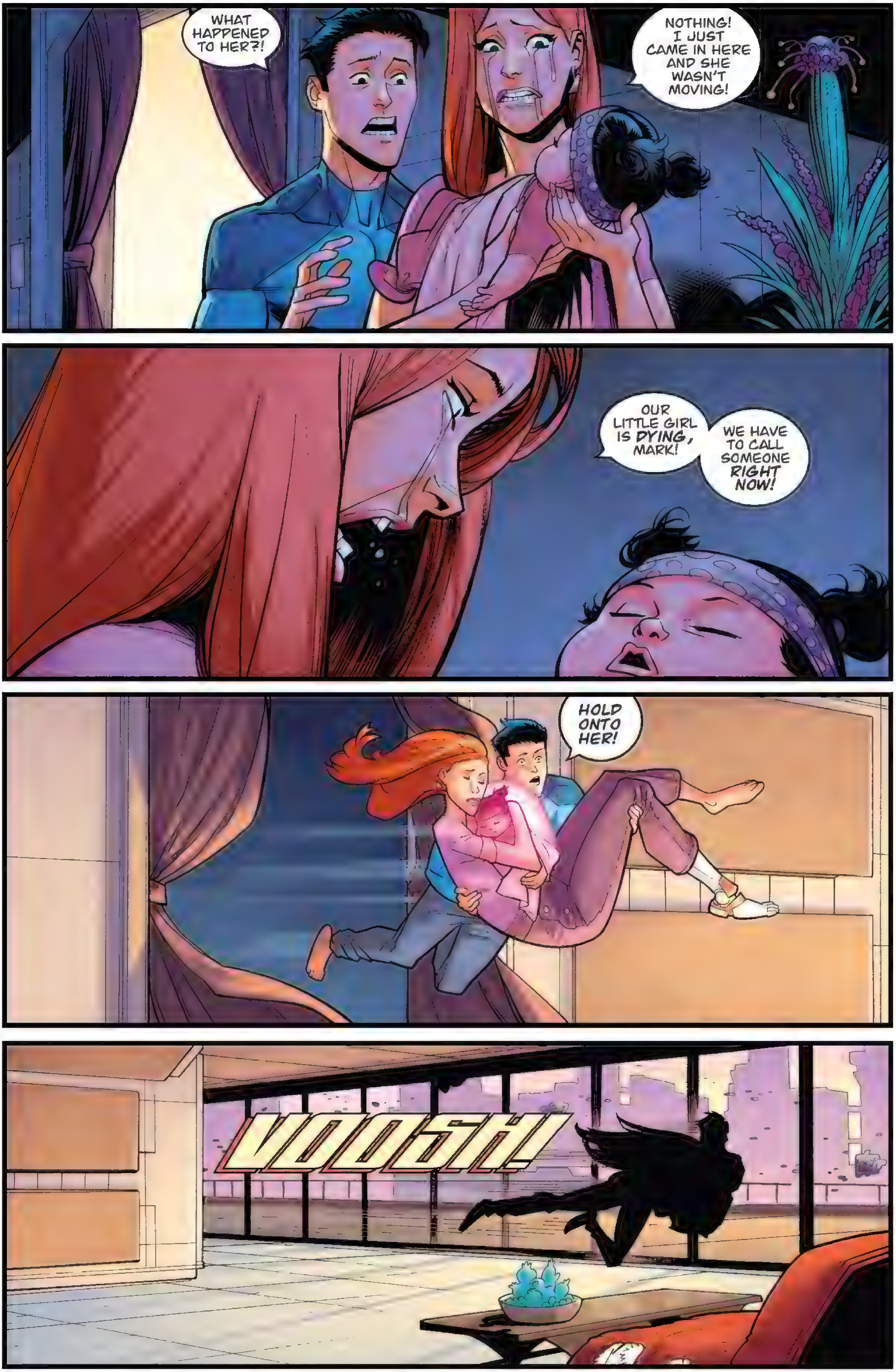

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I DIDN'T WANT TO... I TOLD HER TO STOP... BUT I CAN'T HELP THINKING I COULD HAVE FOUGHT BACK MORE... I COULD HAVE TRIED TO HURT HER... I SHOULD HAVE TRIED EVERYTHING TO STOP HER... AND I DIDN'T.
I CAN'T STOP THINKING... DID I HOLD BACK ON PURPOSE?
DID I... WANT HER TO...
WHY ELSE WOULD I HOLD BACK? IT FEELS LIKE IT WAS MY FAULT... LIKE I LET IT HAPPEN.
I JUST DON'T KNOW WHY I WOULD DO THAT, UNLESS SOME PART OF ME WANTED...
I JUST DON'T KNOW.
MARK!


WHAT IS IT?

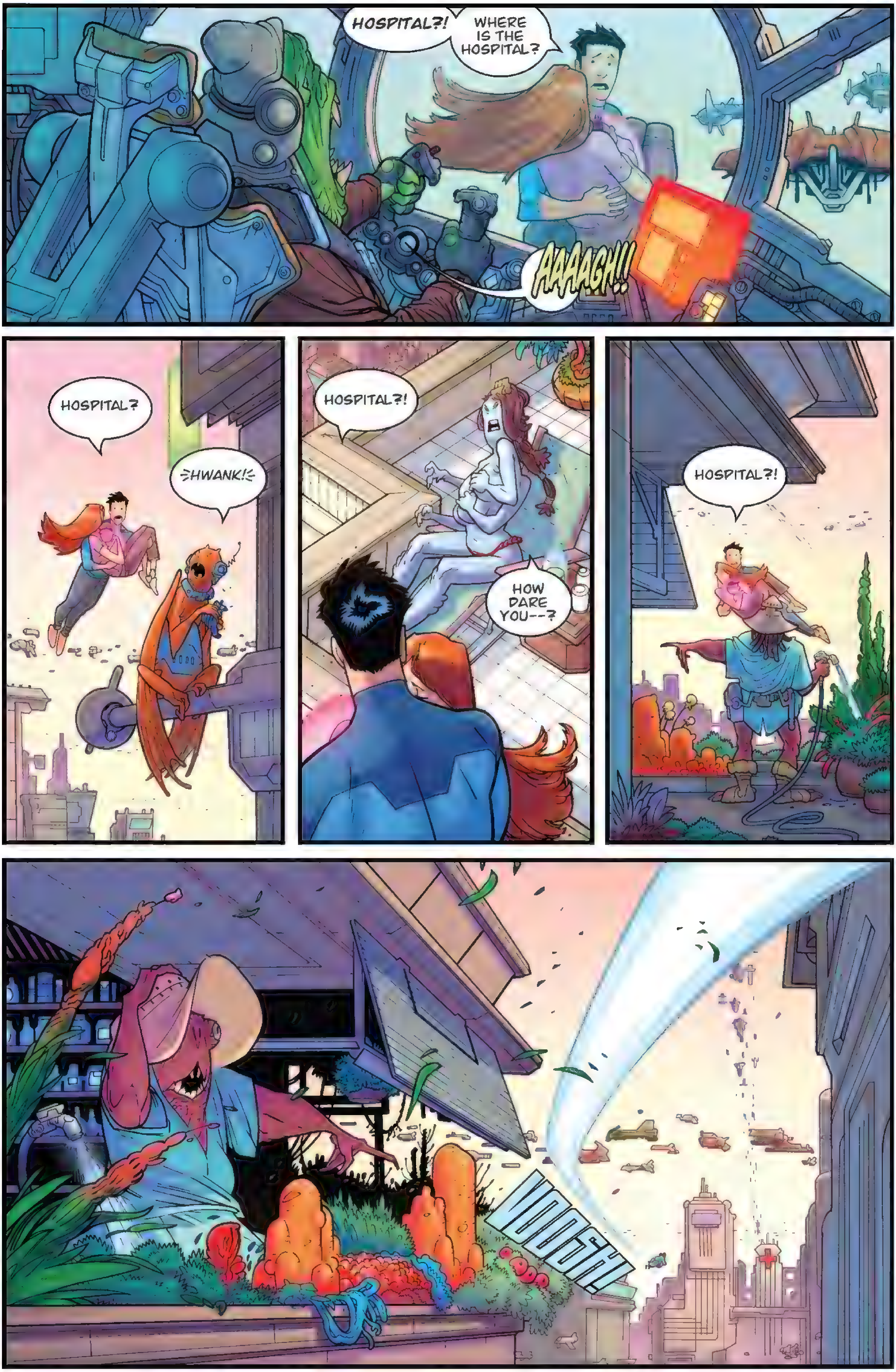

IT'S TERRA!
SHE'S NOT BREATHING!

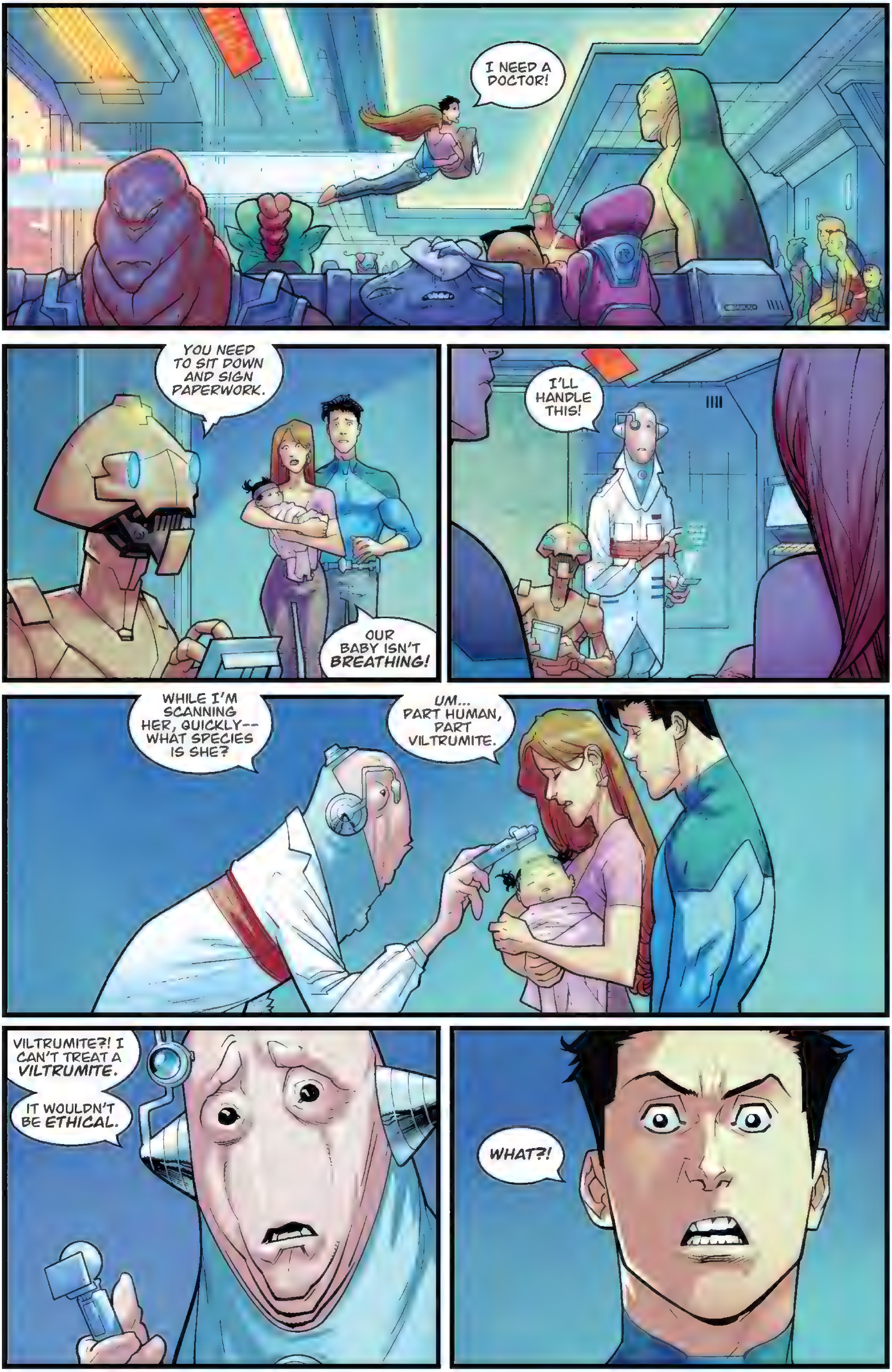
CHAPTER 119

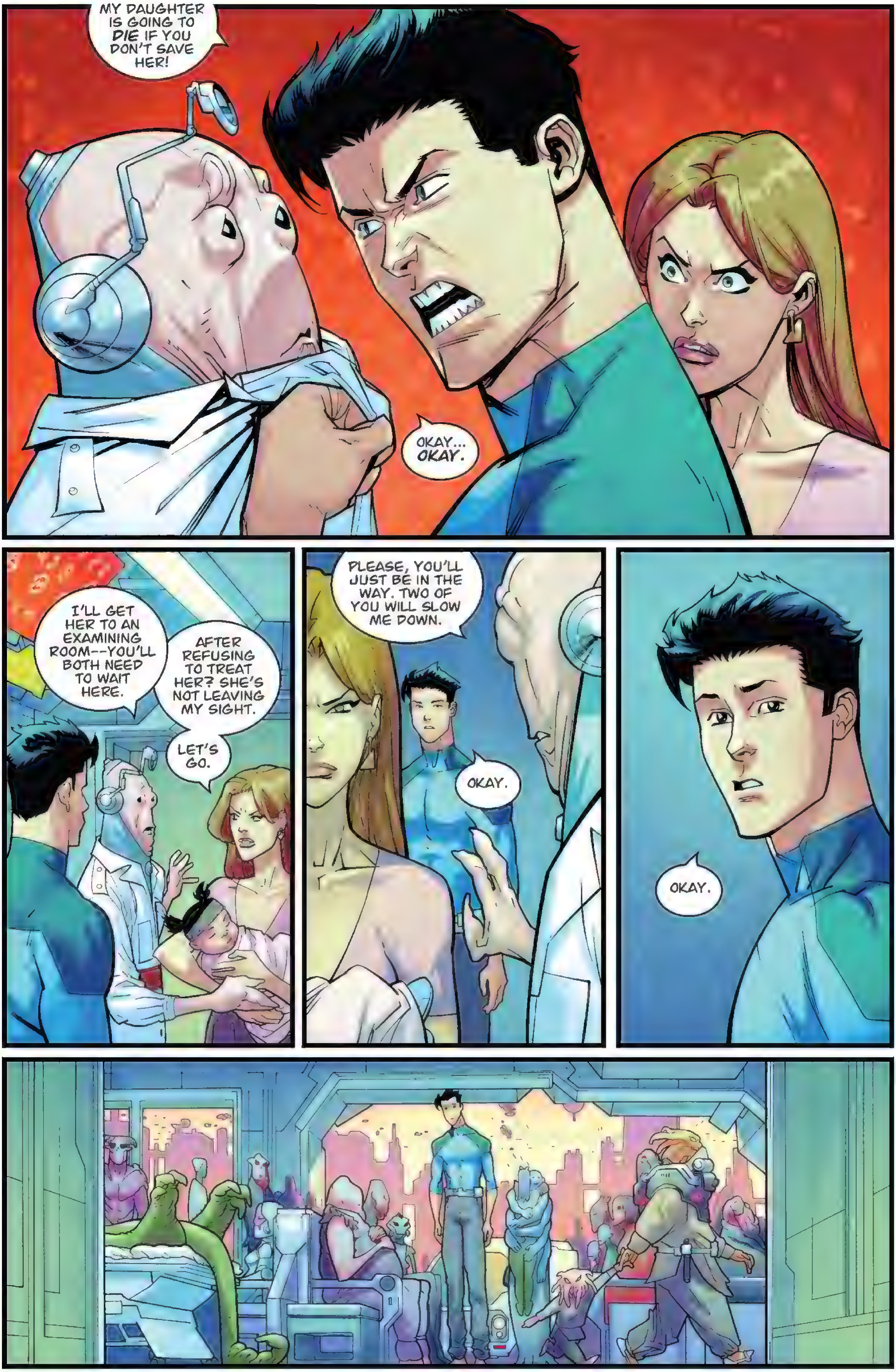
URGENT
OTTLEY

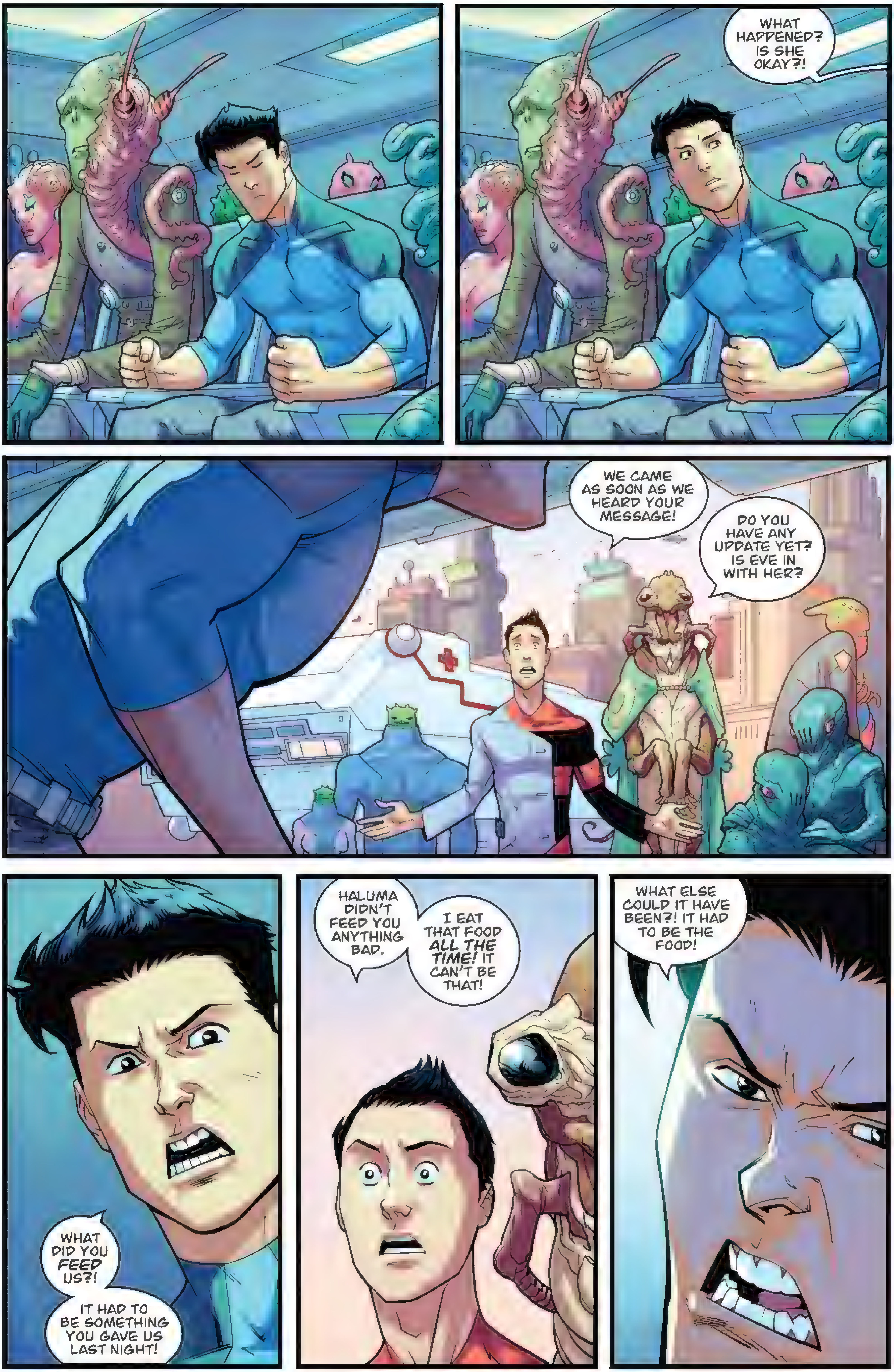

WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?!
NOTHING! I JUST CAME IN HERE AND SHE WASN'T MOVING!
OUR LITTLE GIRL IS DYING, MARK!
WE HAVE TO CALL SOMEONE RIGHT NOW!
HOLD ONTO HER!
VOOSH!

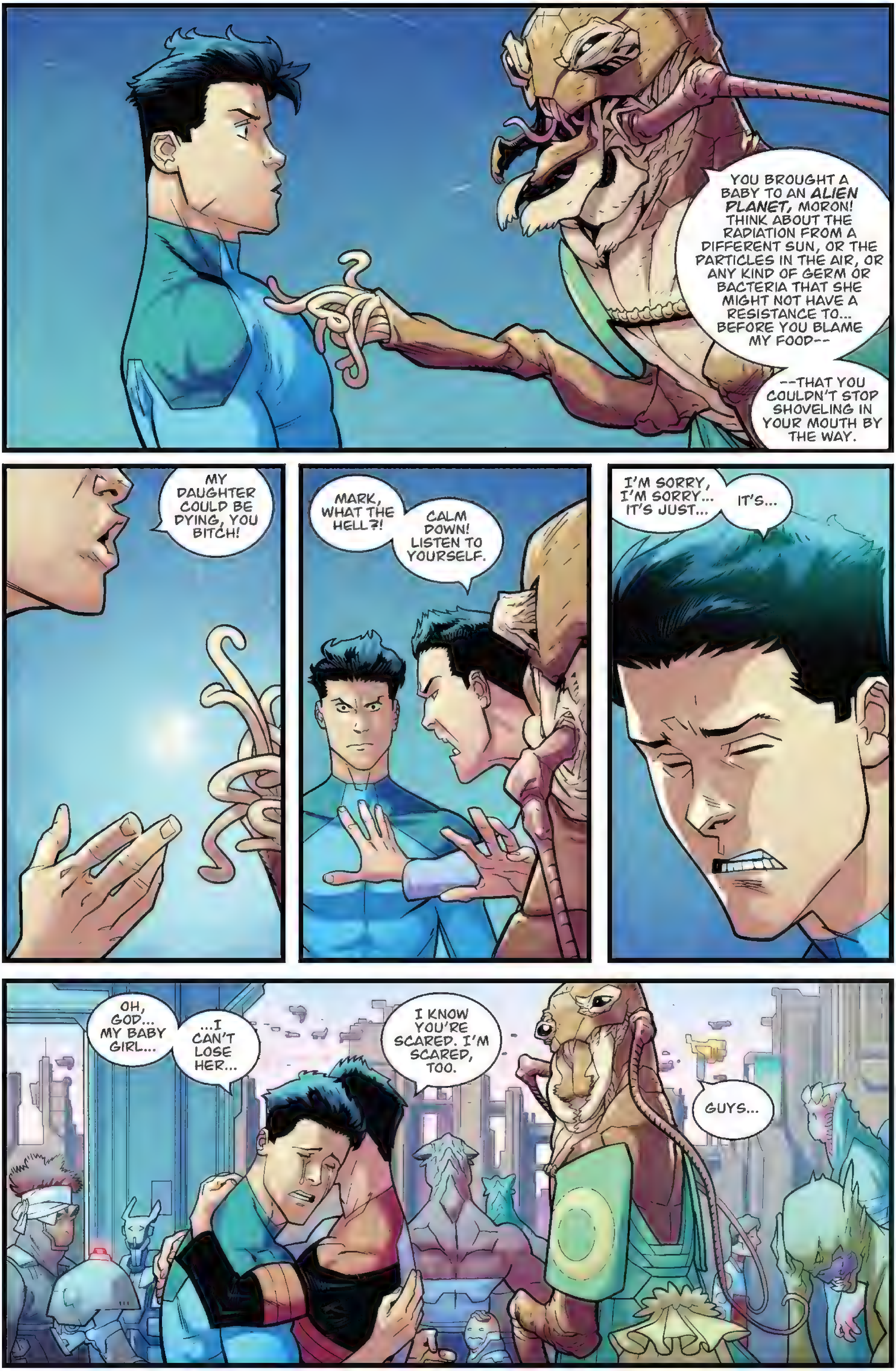
WE NEED TO FIND A HOSPITAL!

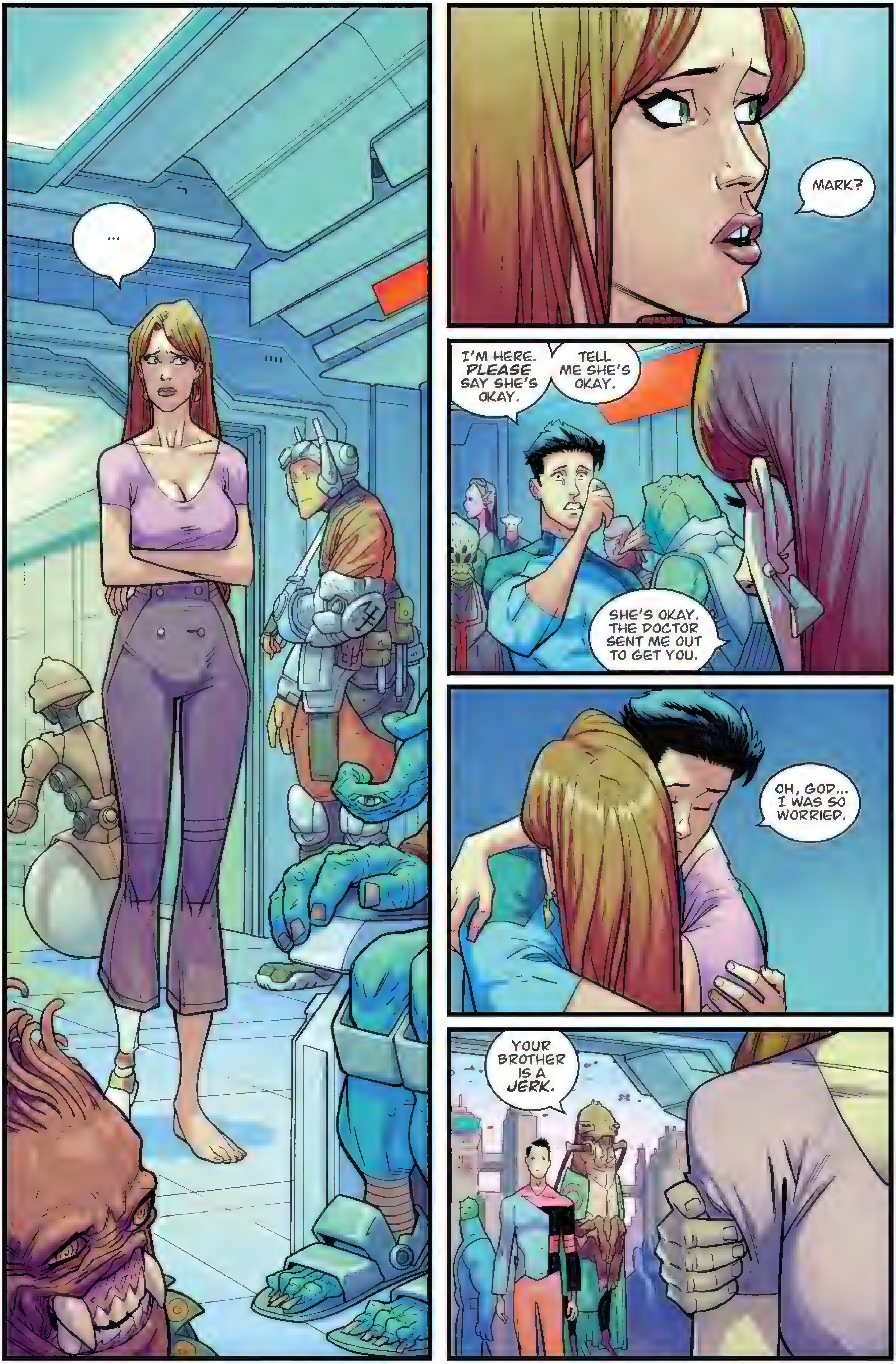

HOSPITAL?!
WHERE IS THE HOSPITAL?
AAAAGH!!
HOSPITAL?
HWANK!
HOSPITAL?!
HOW DARE YOU--?
HOSPITAL?!
VOOOSH!

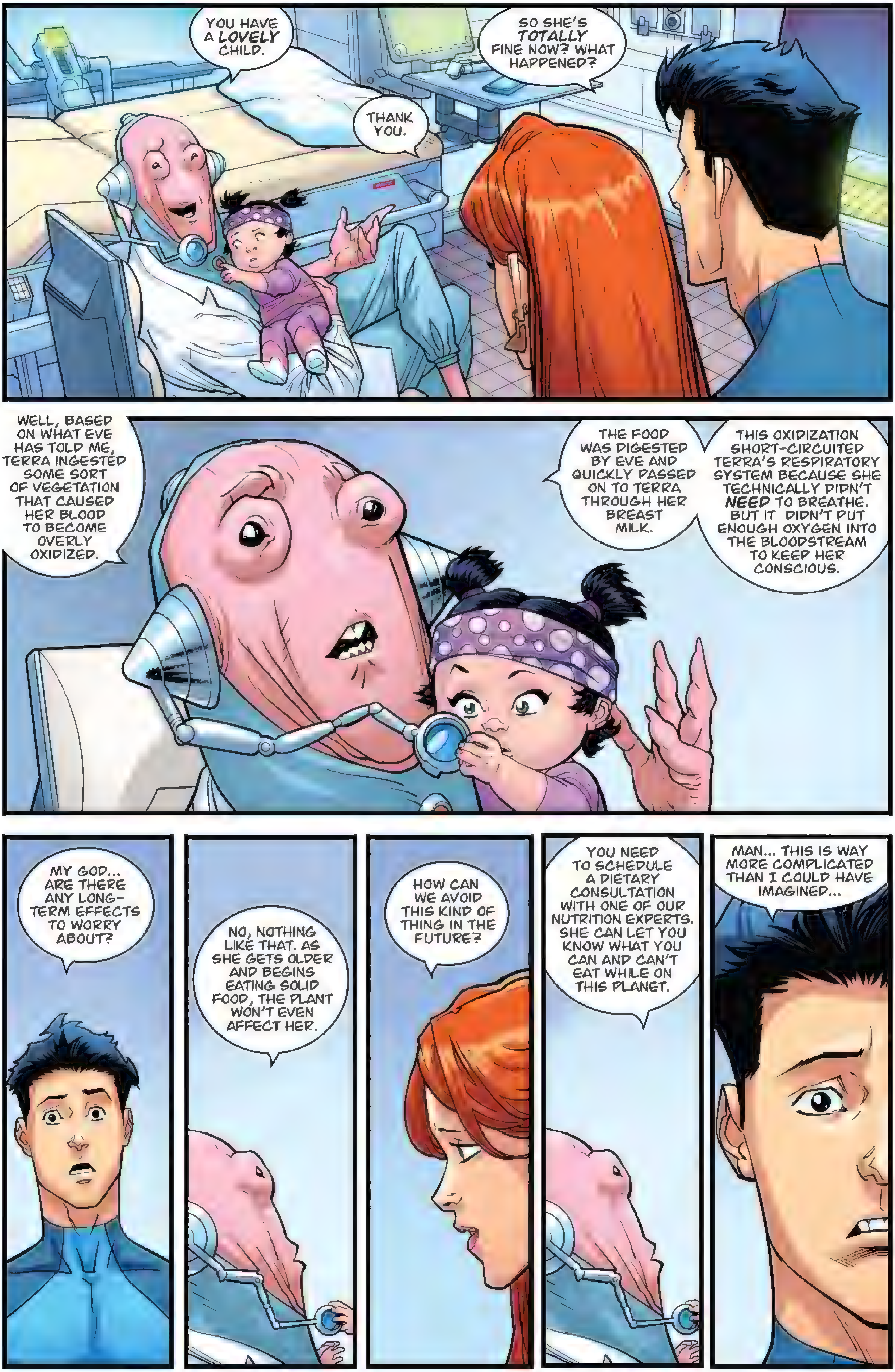

I NEED A DOCTOR!
YOU NEED TO SIT DOWN AND SIGN PAPERWORK.
OUR BABY ISN'T *BREATHING!*
I'LL HANDLE THIS!
WHILE I'M SCANNING HER, QUICKLY-- WHAT SPECIES IS SHE?
UM... PART HUMAN, PART VILTRUMITE.
VILTRUMITE?! I CAN'T TREAT A *VILTRUMITE.*
IT WOULDN'T BE *ETHICAL.*
WHAT?!

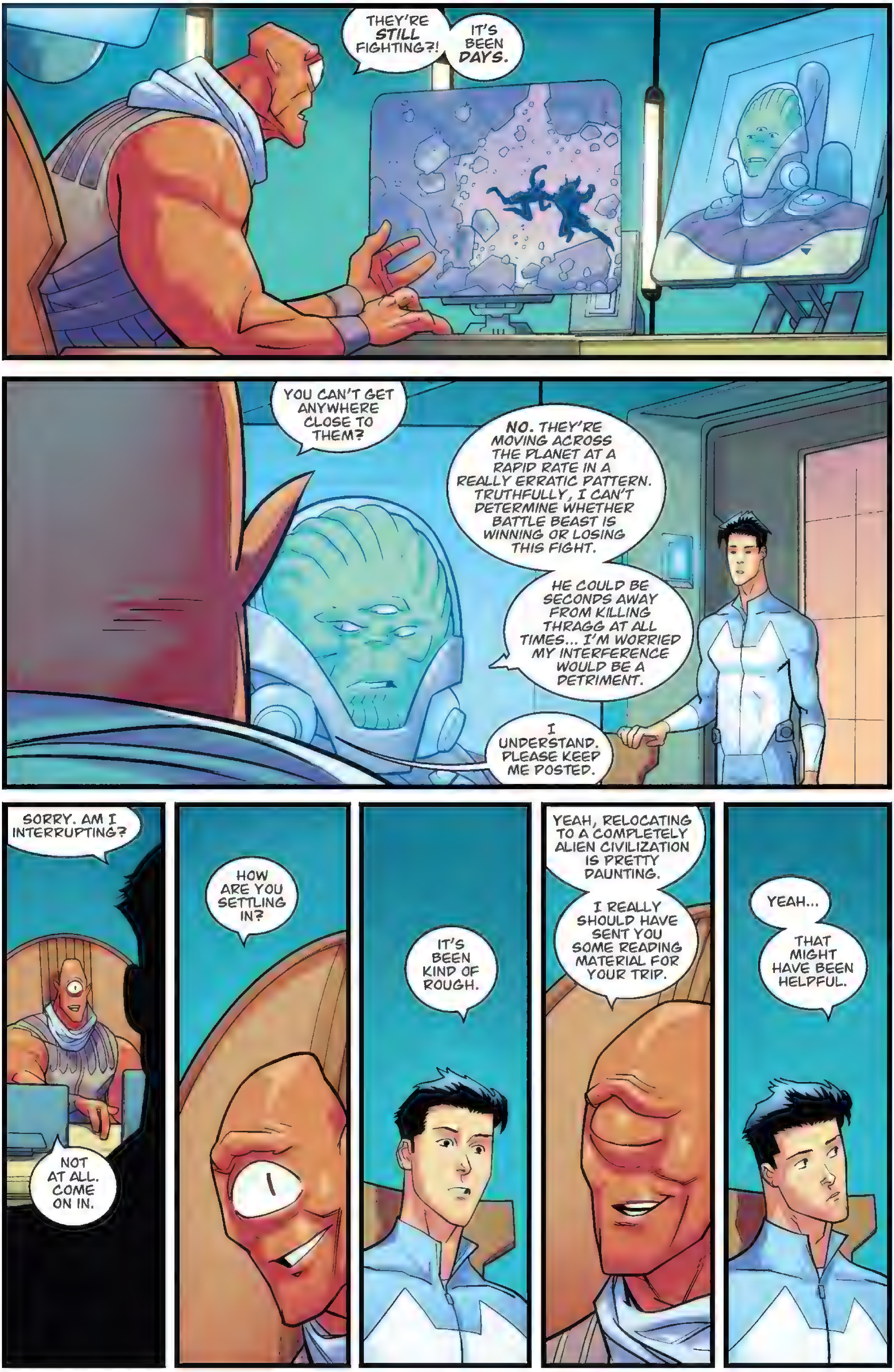

MY DAUGHTER IS GOING TO *DIE* IF YOU DON'T SAVE HER!
OKAY... **OKAY.**
I'LL GET HER TO AN EXAMINING ROOM--YOU'LL BOTH NEED TO WAIT HERE.
AFTER REFUSING TO TREAT HER? SHE'S NOT LEAVING MY SIGHT.
LET'S GO.
PLEASE, YOU'LL JUST BE IN THE WAY. TWO OF YOU WILL SLOW ME DOWN.
OKAY.
OKAY.

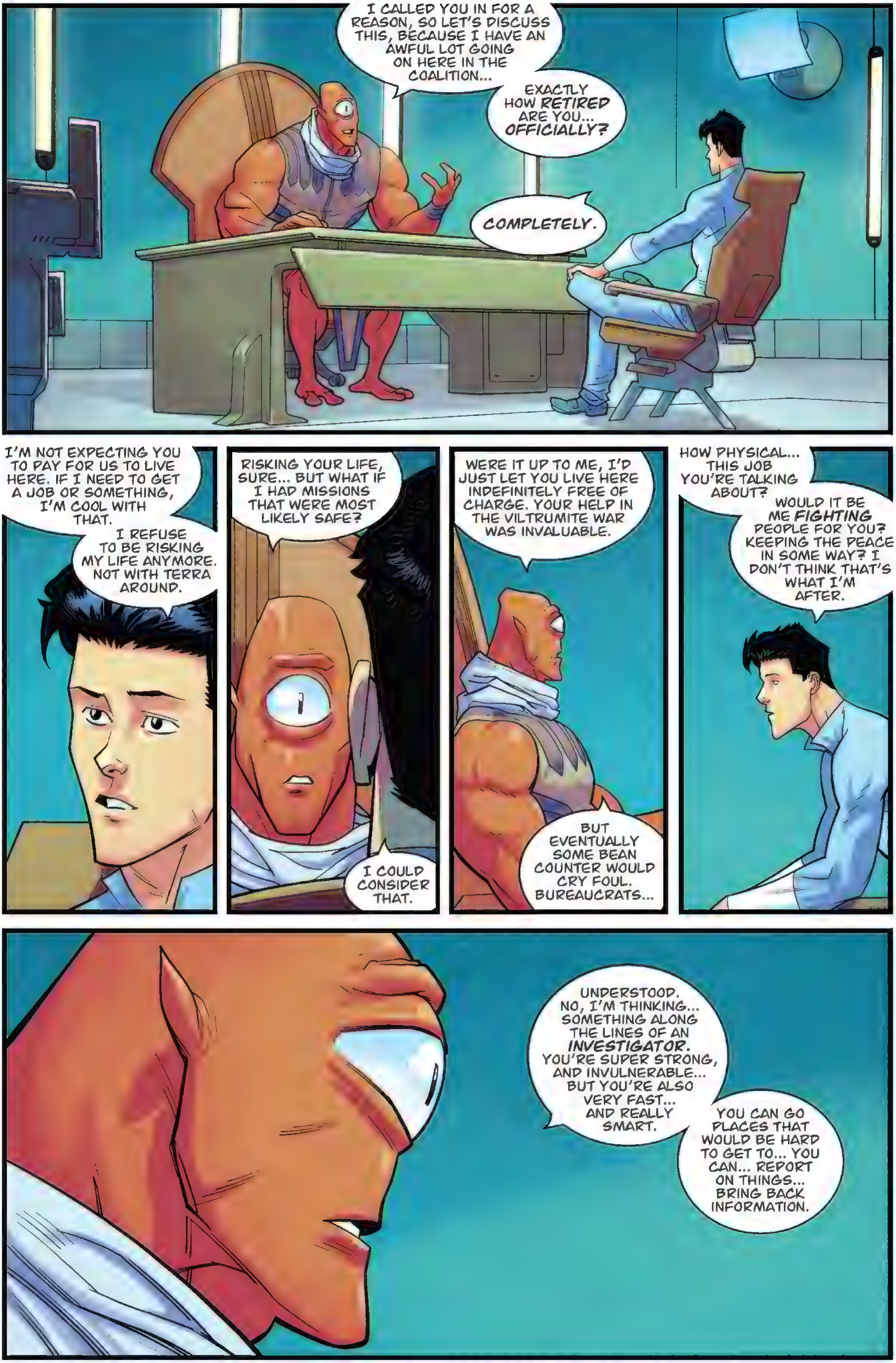

WHAT HAPPENED? IS SHE OKAY?!
WE CAME AS SOON AS WE HEARD YOUR MESSAGE!
DO YOU HAVE ANY UPDATE YET? IS EVE IN WITH HER?
WHAT DID YOU FEED US?!
IT HAD TO BE SOMETHING YOU GAVE US LAST NIGHT!
HALUMA DIDN'T FEED YOU ANYTHING BAD.
I EAT THAT FOOD ALL THE TIME! IT CAN'T BE THAT!
WHAT ELSE COULD IT HAVE BEEN?! IT HAD TO BE THE FOOD!

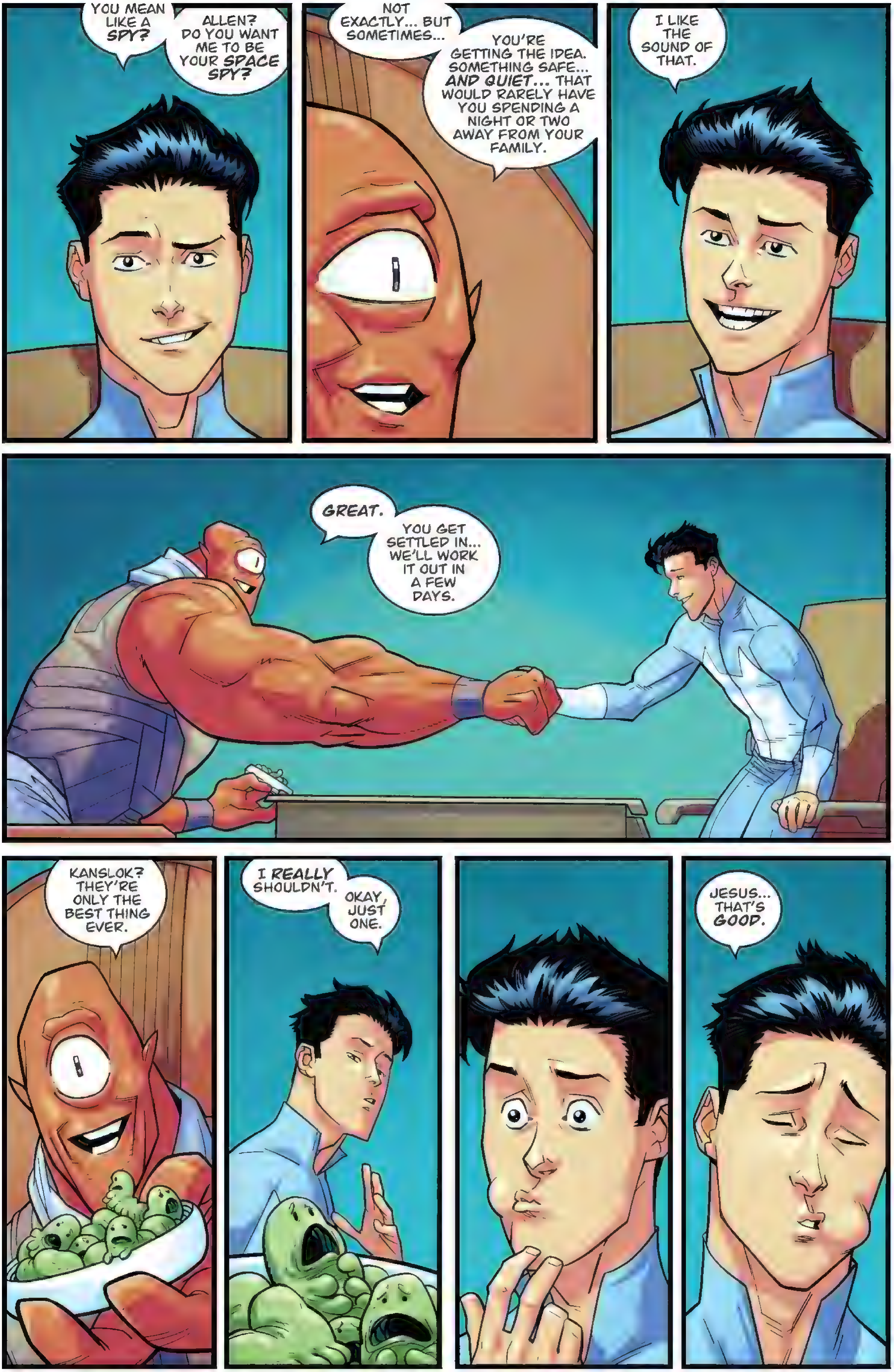

YOU BROUGHT A BABY TO AN ALIEN PLANET, MORON! THINK ABOUT THE RADIATION FROM A DIFFERENT SUN, OR THE PARTICLES IN THE AIR, OR ANY KIND OF GERM OR BACTERIA THAT SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE A RESISTANCE TO... BEFORE YOU BLAME MY FOOD--
--THAT YOU COULDN'T STOP SHOVELING IN YOUR MOUTH BY THE WAY.
MY DAUGHTER COULD BE DYING, YOU BITCH!
MARK, WHAT THE HELL?!
CALM DOWN! LISTEN TO YOURSELF.
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY... IT'S JUST...
IT'S...
OH, GOD... MY BABY GIRL...
...I CAN'T LOSE HER...
I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED. I'M SCARED, TOO.
GUYS...

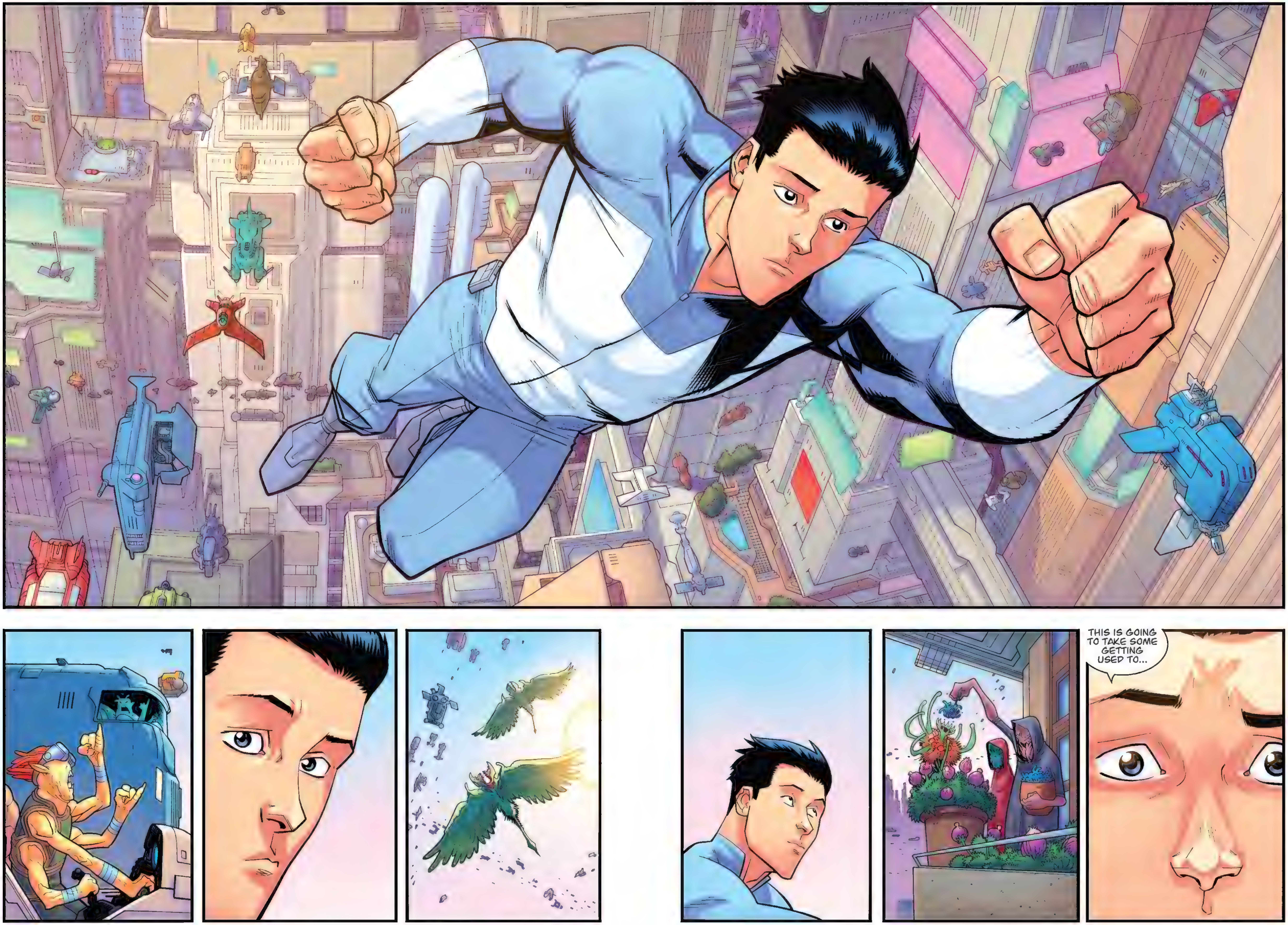

...
MARK?
I'M HERE. PLEASE SAY SHE'S OKAY.
TELL ME SHE'S OKAY.
SHE'S OKAY. THE DOCTOR SENT ME OUT TO GET YOU.
OH, GOD... I WAS SO WORRIED.
YOUR BROTHER IS A JERK.

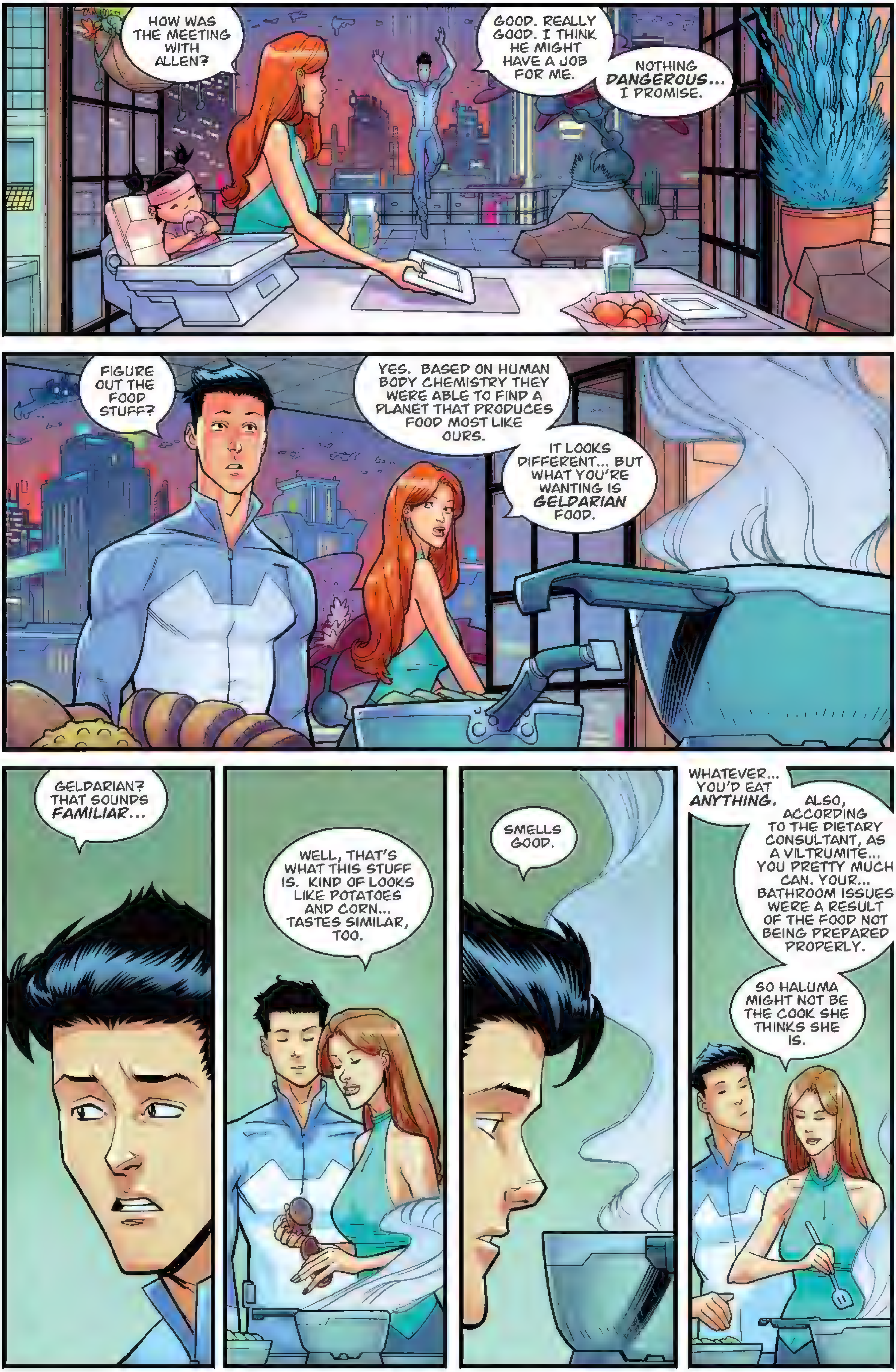

YOU HAVE A **LOVELY** CHILD.
THANK YOU.
SO SHE'S ***TOTALLY*** FINE NOW? WHAT HAPPENED?
WELL, BASED ON WHAT EVE HAS TOLD ME, TERRA INGESTED SOME SORT OF VEGETATION THAT CAUSED HER BLOOD TO BECOME OVERLY OXIDIZED.
THE FOOD WAS DIGESTED BY EVE AND QUICKLY PASSED ON TO TERRA THROUGH HER BREAST MILK.
THIS OXIDIZATION SHORT-CIRCUITED TERRA'S RESPIRATORY SYSTEM BECAUSE SHE TECHNICALLY DIDN'T ***NEED*** TO BREATHE. BUT IT DIDN'T PUT ENOUGH OXYGEN INTO THE BLOODSTREAM TO KEEP HER CONSCIOUS.
MY GOD... ARE THERE ANY LONG-TERM EFFECTS TO WORRY ABOUT?
NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT. AS SHE GETS OLDER AND BEGINS EATING SOLID FOOD, THE PLANT WON'T EVEN AFFECT HER.
HOW CAN WE AVOID THIS KIND OF THING IN THE FUTURE?
YOU NEED TO SCHEDULE A DIETARY CONSULTATION WITH ONE OF OUR NUTRITION EXPERTS. SHE CAN LET YOU KNOW WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T EAT WHILE ON THIS PLANET.
MAN... THIS IS WAY MORE COMPLICATED THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED...

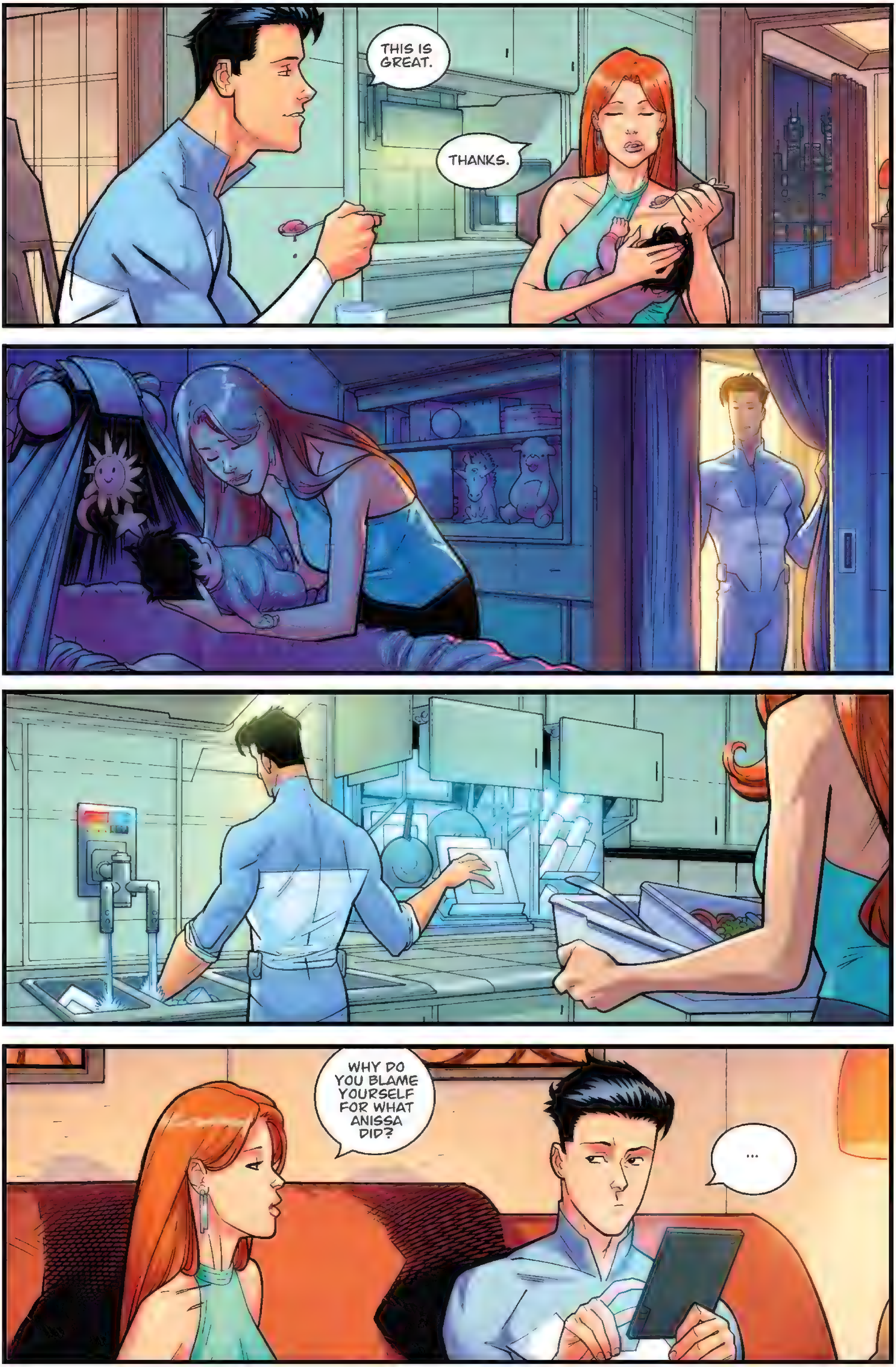

THEY'RE *STILL* FIGHTING?!
IT'S BEEN *DAYS*.
YOU CAN'T GET ANYWHERE CLOSE TO THEM?
NO. THEY'RE MOVING ACROSS THE PLANET AT A RAPID RATE IN A REALLY ERRATIC PATTERN. TRUTHFULLY, I CAN'T DETERMINE WHETHER BATTLE BEAST IS WINNING OR LOSING THIS FIGHT.
HE COULD BE SECONDS AWAY FROM KILLING THRAGG AT ALL TIMES... I'M WORRIED MY INTERFERENCE WOULD BE A DETRIMENT.
I UNDERSTAND. PLEASE KEEP ME POSTED.
SORRY. AM I INTERRUPTING?
NOT AT ALL. COME ON IN.
HOW ARE YOU SETTLING IN?
IT'S BEEN KIND OF ROUGH.
YEAH, RELOCATING TO A COMPLETELY ALIEN CIVILIZATION IS PRETTY DAUNTING.
I REALLY SHOULD HAVE SENT YOU SOME READING MATERIAL FOR YOUR TRIP.
YEAH...
THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HELPFUL.

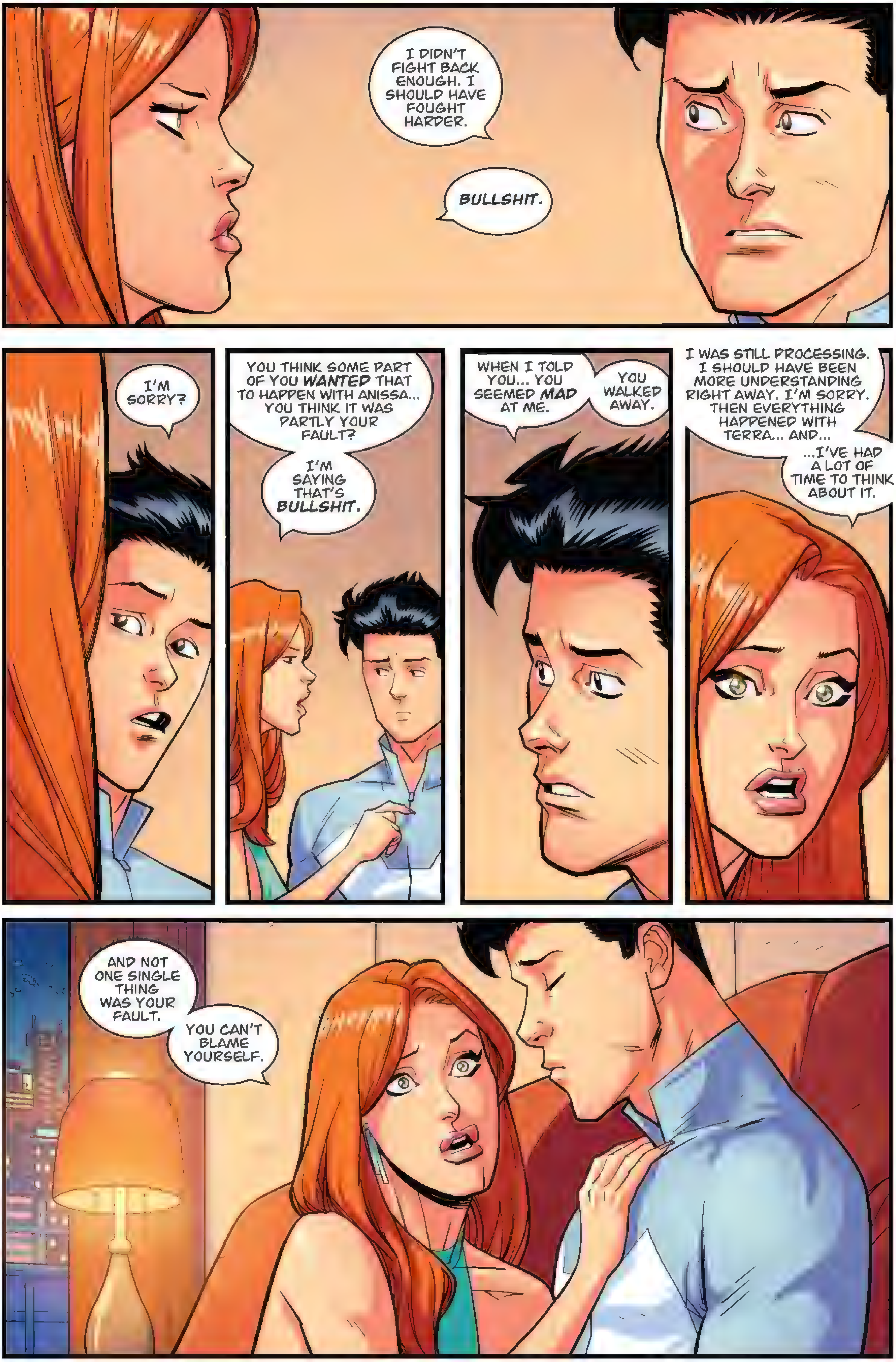

I CALLED YOU IN FOR A REASON, SO LET'S DISCUSS THIS, BECAUSE I HAVE AN AWFUL LOT GOING ON HERE IN THE COALITION...
EXACTLY HOW **RETIRED** ARE YOU... **OFFICIALLY?**
COMPLETELY.
I'M NOT EXPECTING YOU TO PAY FOR US TO LIVE HERE. IF I NEED TO GET A JOB OR SOMETHING, I'M COOL WITH THAT.
I REFUSE TO BE RISKING MY LIFE ANYMORE. NOT WITH TERRA AROUND.
RISKING YOUR LIFE, SURE... BUT WHAT IF I HAD MISSIONS THAT WERE MOST LIKELY SAFE?
I COULD CONSIDER THAT.
WERE IT UP TO ME, I'D JUST LET YOU LIVE HERE INDEFINITELY FREE OF CHARGE. YOUR HELP IN THE VILTRUMITE WAR WAS INVALUABLE.
BUT EVENTUALLY SOME BEAN COUNTER WOULD CRY FOUL. BUREAUCRATS...
HOW PHYSICAL... THIS JOB YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?
WOULD IT BE ME **FIGHTING** PEOPLE FOR YOU? KEEPING THE PEACE IN SOME WAY? I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT I'M AFTER.
UNDERSTOOD. NO, I'M THINKING... SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF AN **INVESTIGATOR.** YOU'RE SUPER STRONG, AND INVULNERABLE... BUT YOU'RE ALSO VERY FAST... AND REALLY SMART.
YOU CAN GO PLACES THAT WOULD BE HARD TO GET TO... YOU CAN... REPORT ON THINGS... BRING BACK INFORMATION.

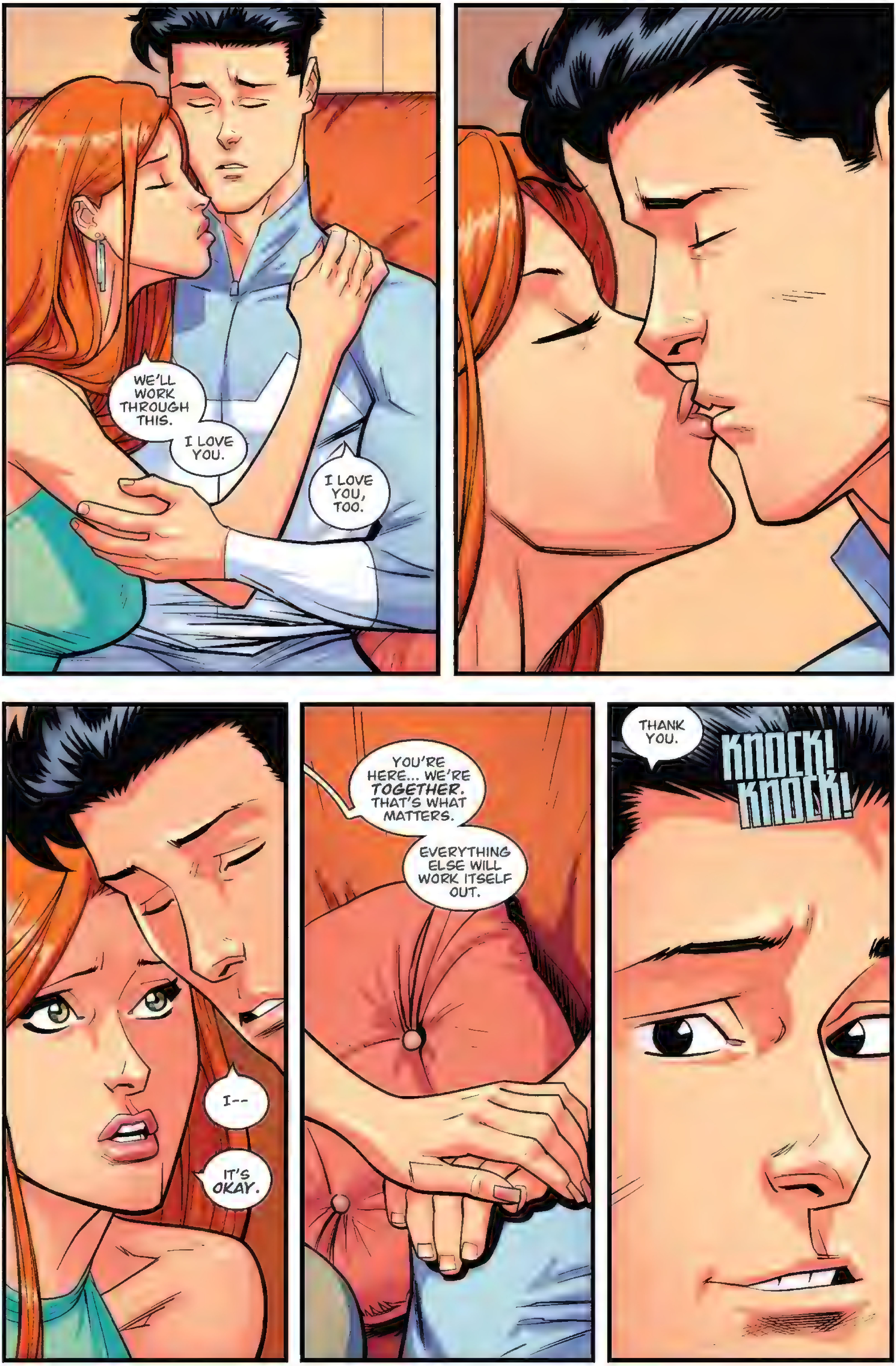

YOU MEAN LIKE A *SPY?*
ALLEN? DO YOU WANT ME TO BE YOUR *SPACE SPY?*
NOT EXACTLY... BUT SOMETIMES...
YOU'RE GETTING THE IDEA. SOMETHING SAFE... *AND QUIET...* THAT WOULD RARELY HAVE YOU SPENDING A NIGHT OR TWO AWAY FROM YOUR FAMILY.
I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.
GREAT.
YOU GET SETTLED IN... WE'LL WORK IT OUT IN A FEW DAYS.
KANSLOK? THEY'RE ONLY THE BEST THING EVER.
I *REALLY* SHOULDN'T.
OKAY, JUST ONE.
JESUS... THAT'S *GOOD.*

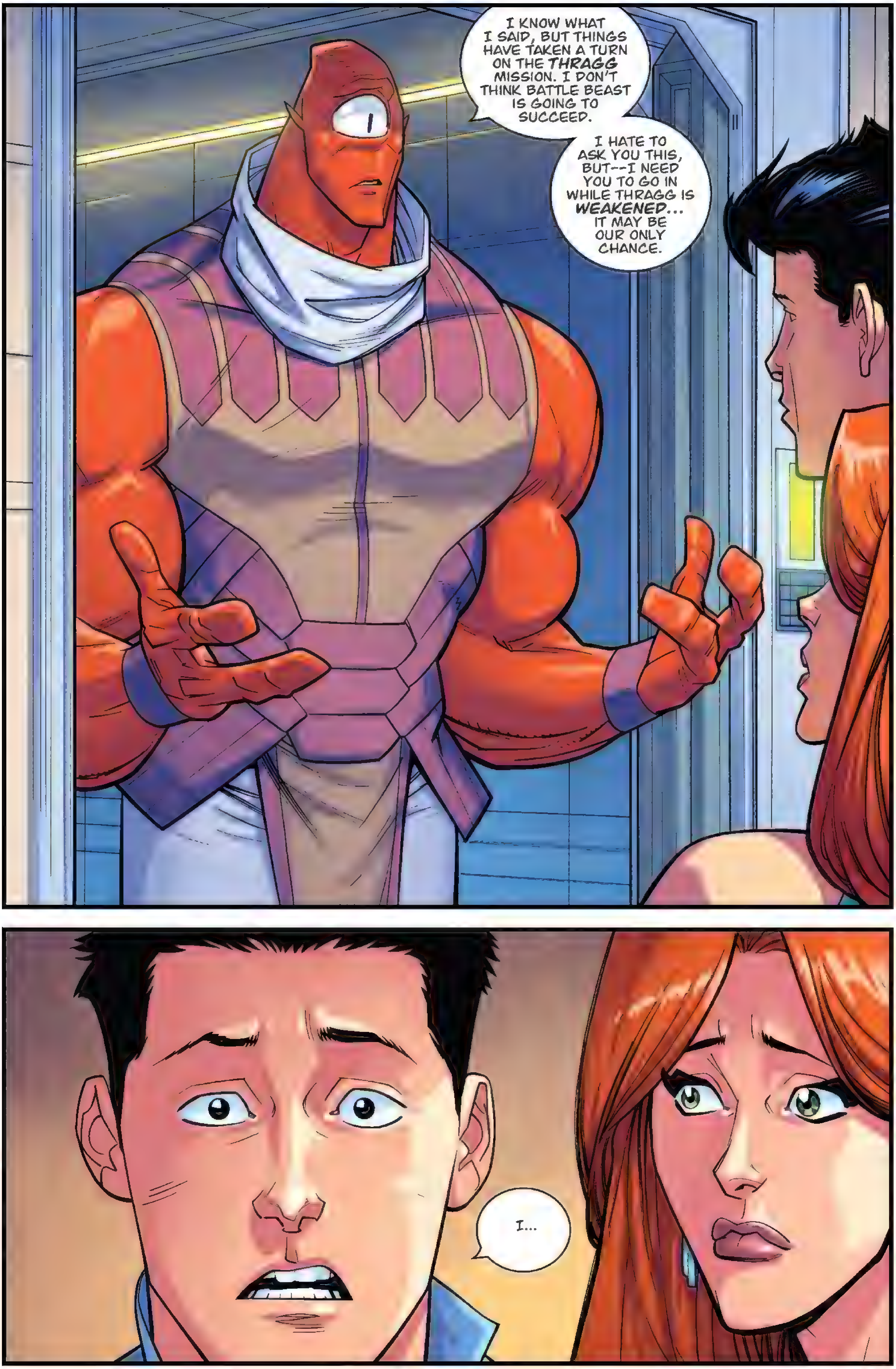

THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO...


HOW WAS THE MEETING WITH ALLEN?
GOOD. REALLY GOOD. I THINK HE MIGHT HAVE A JOB FOR ME.
NOTHING *DANGEROUS*... I PROMISE.
FIGURE OUT THE FOOD STUFF?
YES. BASED ON HUMAN BODY CHEMISTRY THEY WERE ABLE TO FIND A PLANET THAT PRODUCES FOOD MOST LIKE OURS.
IT LOOKS DIFFERENT... BUT WHAT YOU'RE WANTING IS *GELDARIAN* FOOD.
GELDARIAN? THAT SOUNDS *FAMILIAR*...
WELL, THAT'S WHAT THIS STUFF IS. KIND OF LOOKS LIKE POTATOES AND CORN... TASTES SIMILAR, TOO.
SMELLS GOOD.
WHATEVER... YOU'D EAT *ANYTHING*.
ALSO, ACCORDING TO THE DIETARY CONSULTANT, AS A VILTRUMITE... YOU PRETTY MUCH CAN. YOUR... BATHROOM ISSUES WERE A RESULT OF THE FOOD NOT BEING PREPARED PROPERLY.
SO HALUMA MIGHT NOT BE THE COOK SHE THINKS SHE IS.


THIS IS GREAT.
THANKS.
WHY DO YOU BLAME YOURSELF FOR WHAT ANISSA DID?
...


I DIDN'T FIGHT BACK ENOUGH. I SHOULD HAVE FOUGHT HARDER.
BULLSHIT.
I'M SORRY?
YOU THINK SOME PART OF YOU ***WANTED*** THAT TO HAPPEN WITH ANISSA... YOU THINK IT WAS PARTLY YOUR FAULT?
I'M SAYING THAT'S ***BULLSHIT.***
WHEN I TOLD YOU... YOU SEEMED ***MAD*** AT ME.
YOU WALKED AWAY.
I WAS STILL PROCESSING. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE UNDERSTANDING RIGHT AWAY. I'M SORRY. THEN EVERYTHING HAPPENED WITH TERRA... AND...
...I'VE HAD A LOT OF TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT.
AND NOT ONE SINGLE THING WAS YOUR FAULT.
YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF.

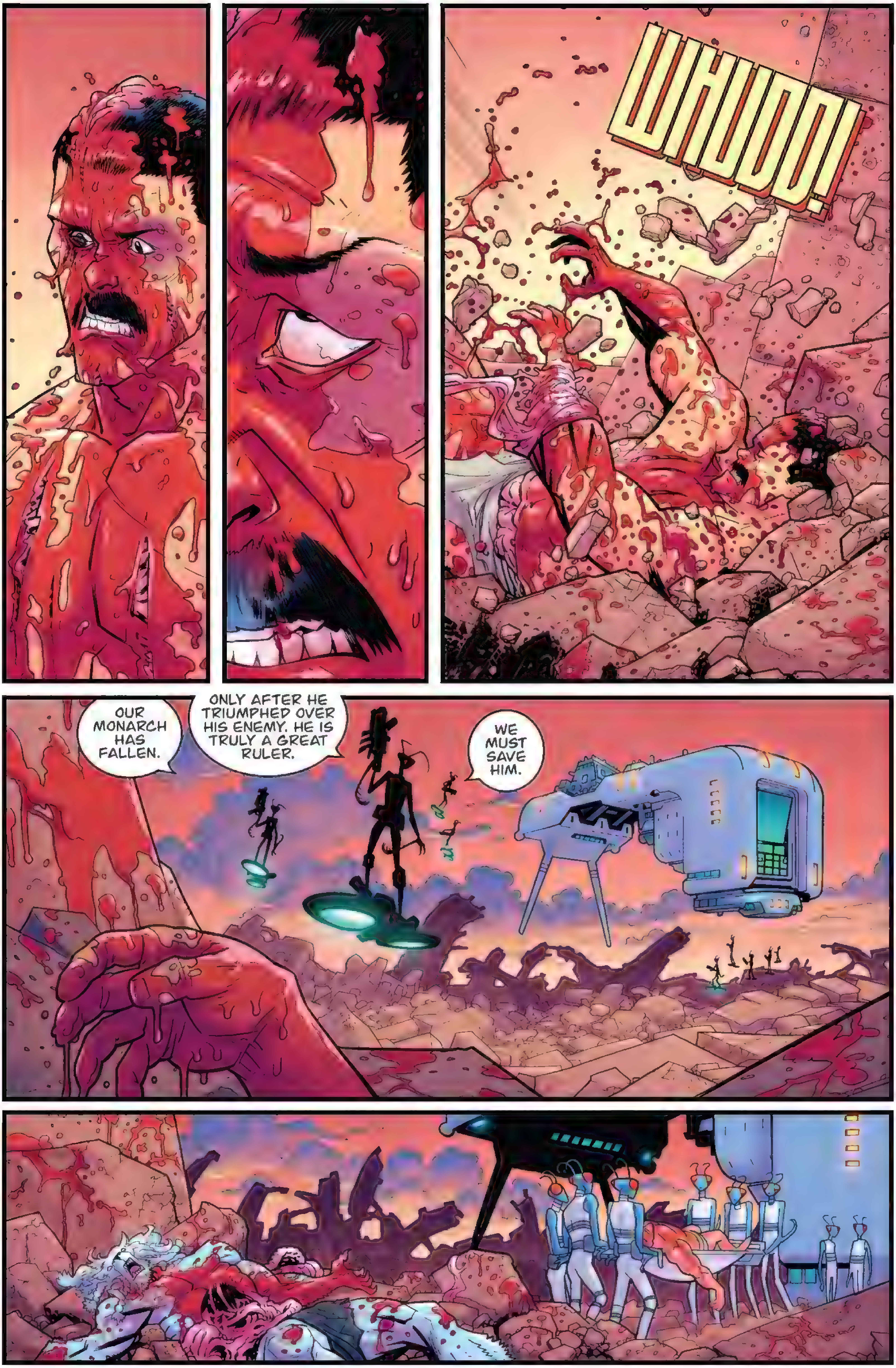

WE'LL WORK THROUGH THIS.
I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU, TOO.
I--
IT'S OKAY.
YOU'RE HERE... WE'RE *TOGETHER*. THAT'S WHAT MATTERS.
EVERYTHING ELSE WILL WORK ITSELF OUT.
THANK YOU.
KNOCK! KNOCK!


I KNOW WHAT I SAID, BUT THINGS HAVE TAKEN A TURN ON THE THRAGG MISSION. I DON'T THINK BATTLE BEAST IS GOING TO SUCCEED.
I HATE TO ASK YOU THIS, BUT--I NEED YOU TO GO IN WHILE THRAGG IS WEAKENED... IT MAY BE OUR ONLY CHANCE.
I...

CHAPTER 120

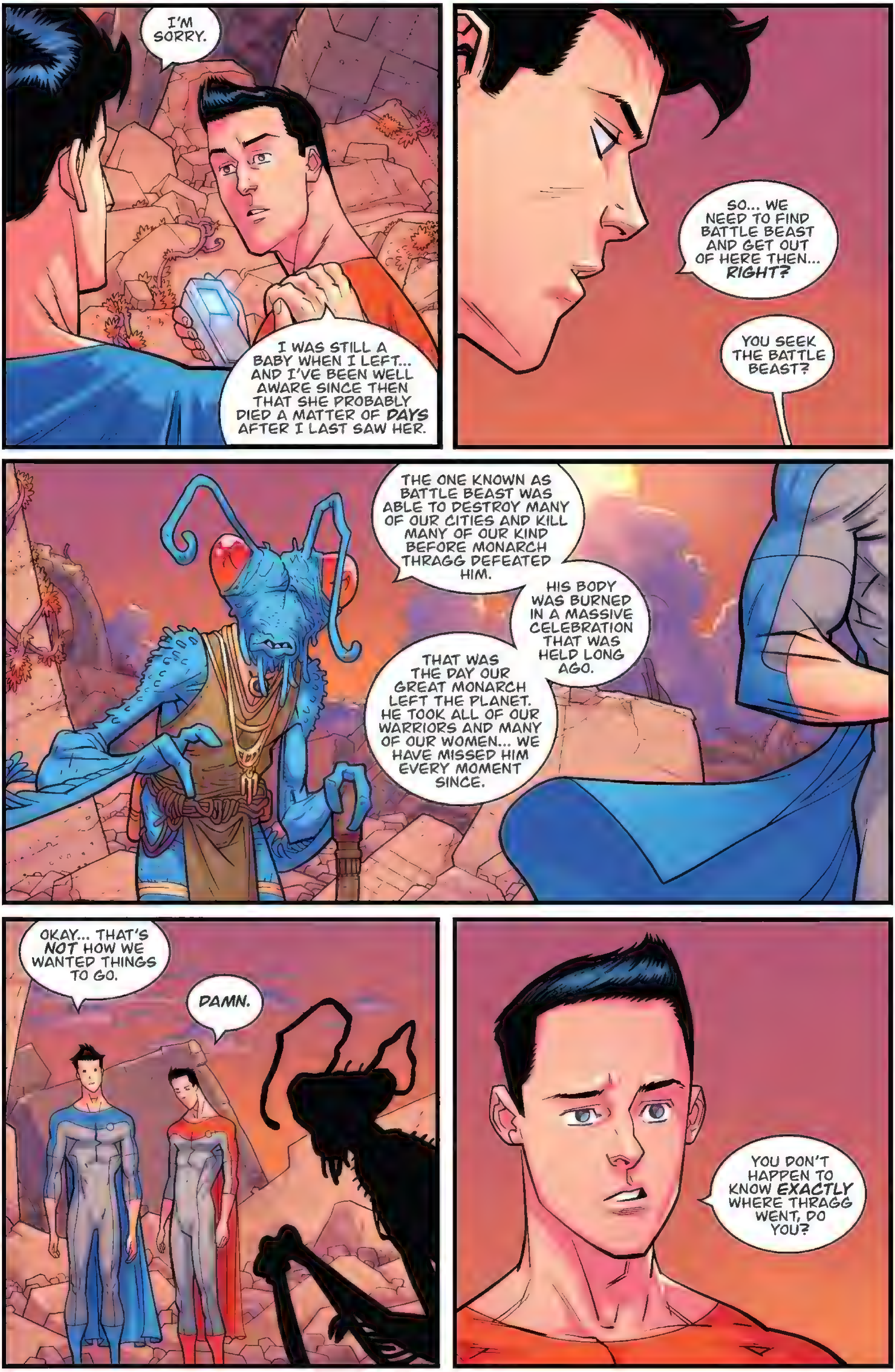
TH--
THANK...
...YOU.

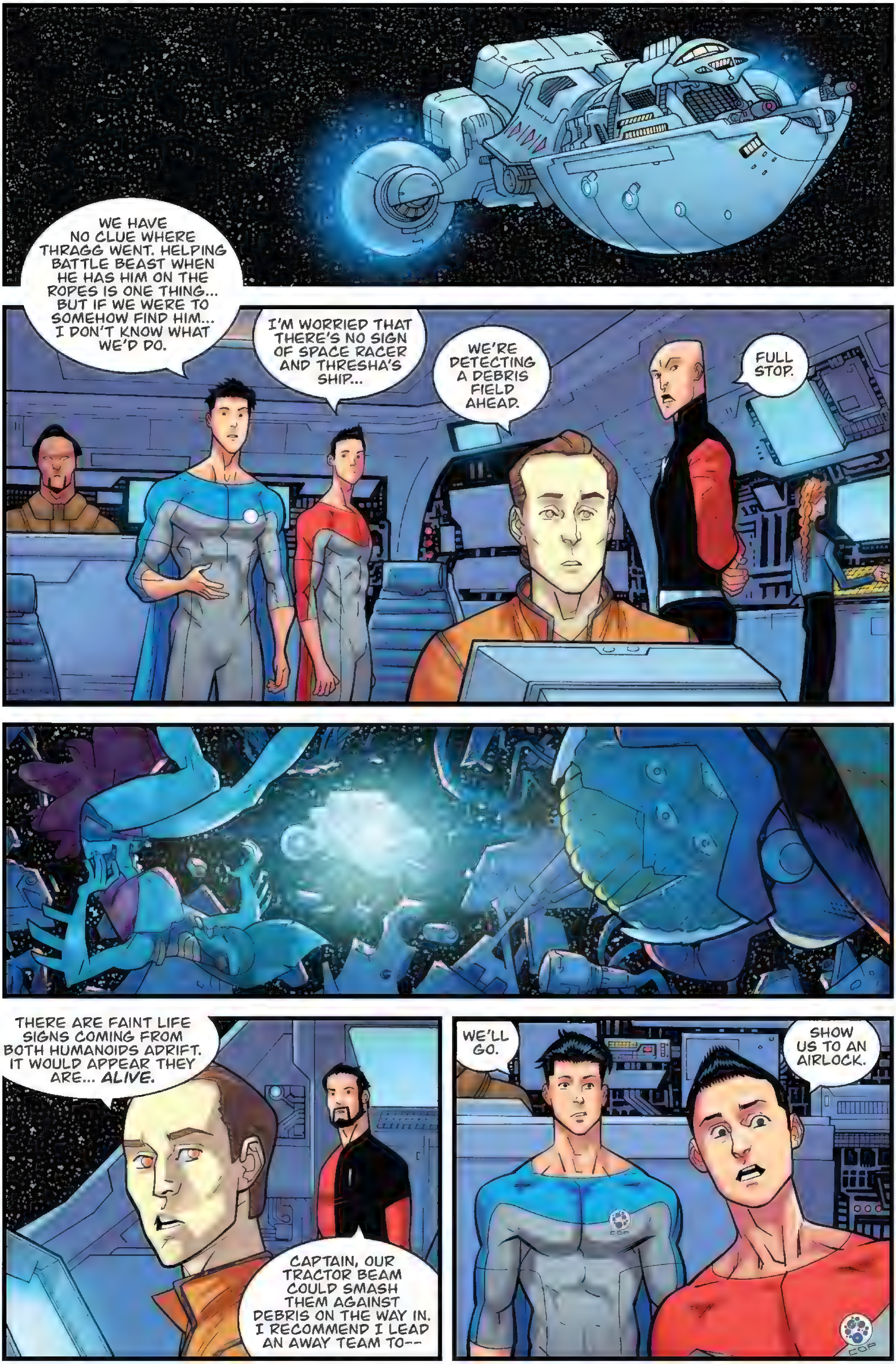
SQUISH!
IT'S... DONE.

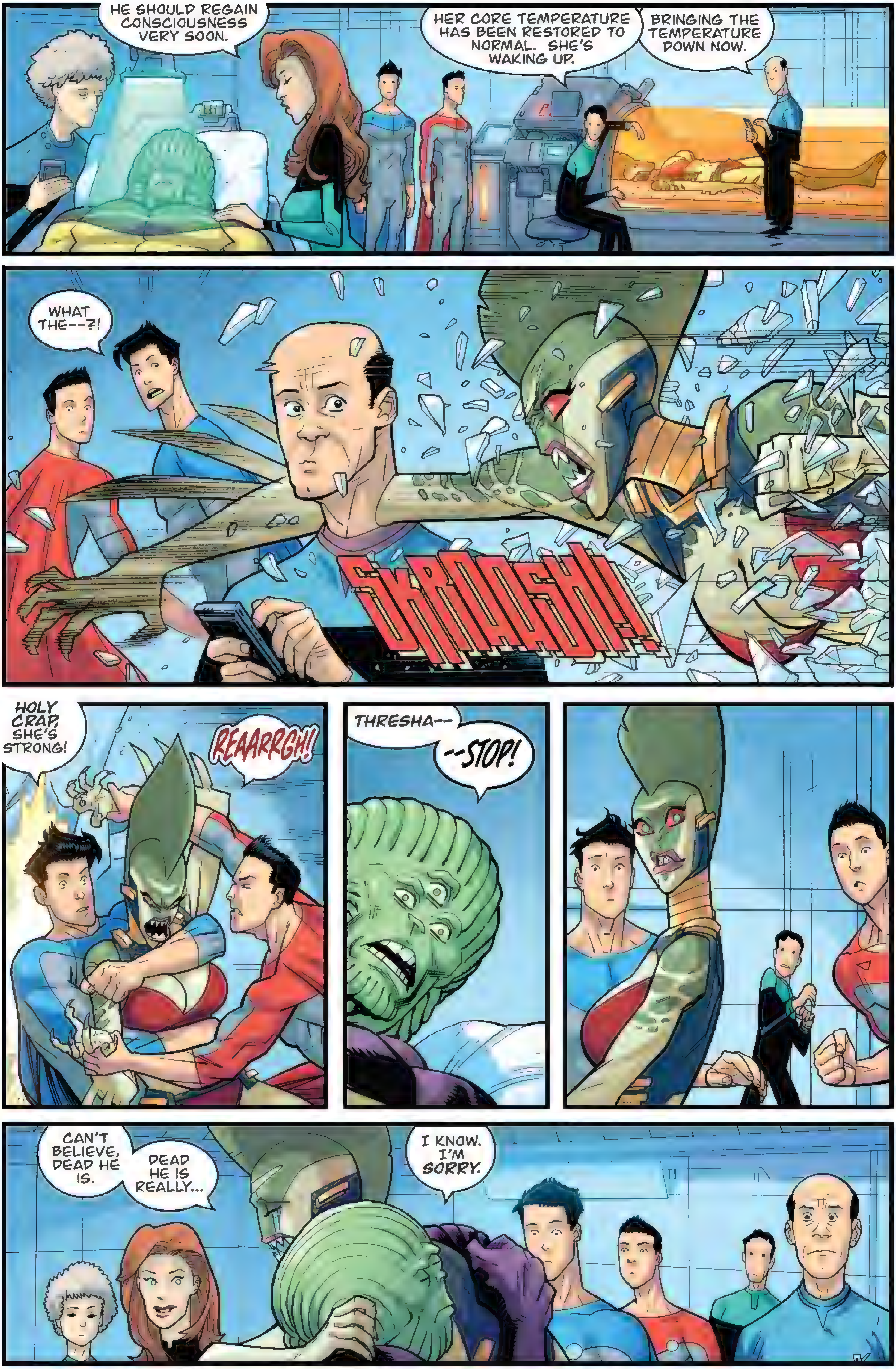

WHUDD!
OUR MONARCH HAS FALLEN.
ONLY AFTER HE TRIUMPHED OVER HIS ENEMY. HE IS TRULY A GREAT RULER.
WE MUST SAVE HIM.

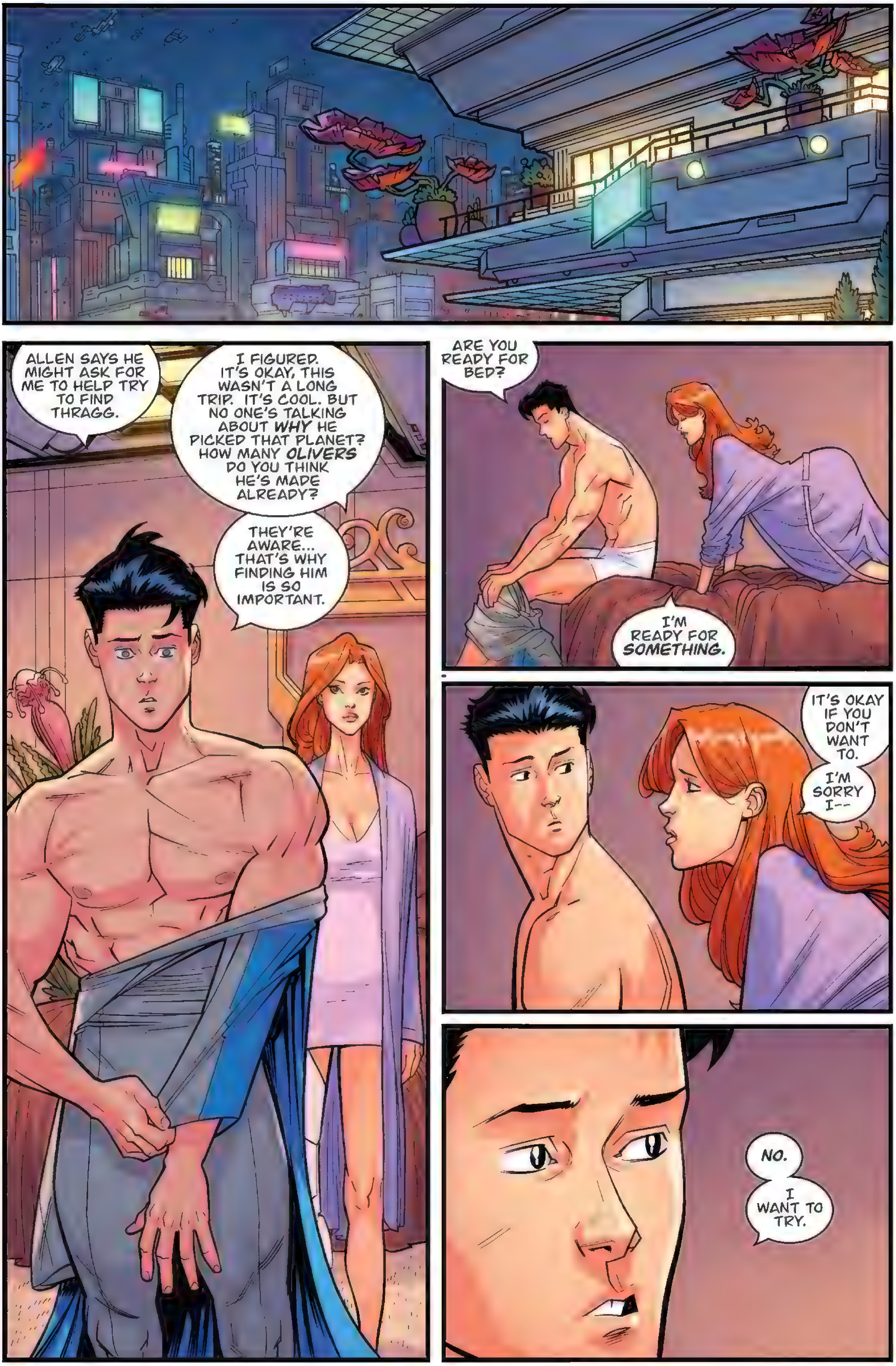
KILLED MY LOVE, THEY HAVE! DEAD HE IS!
DEAD THEY NOW MUST BE, TOO!
THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM! THEY'LL KILL US! WE MUST LEAVE NOW!
WANT TO DIE, I DO!
BE WITH MY BELOVED I WILL!
SWOOSH!
I'M SORRY.
WRAMM!

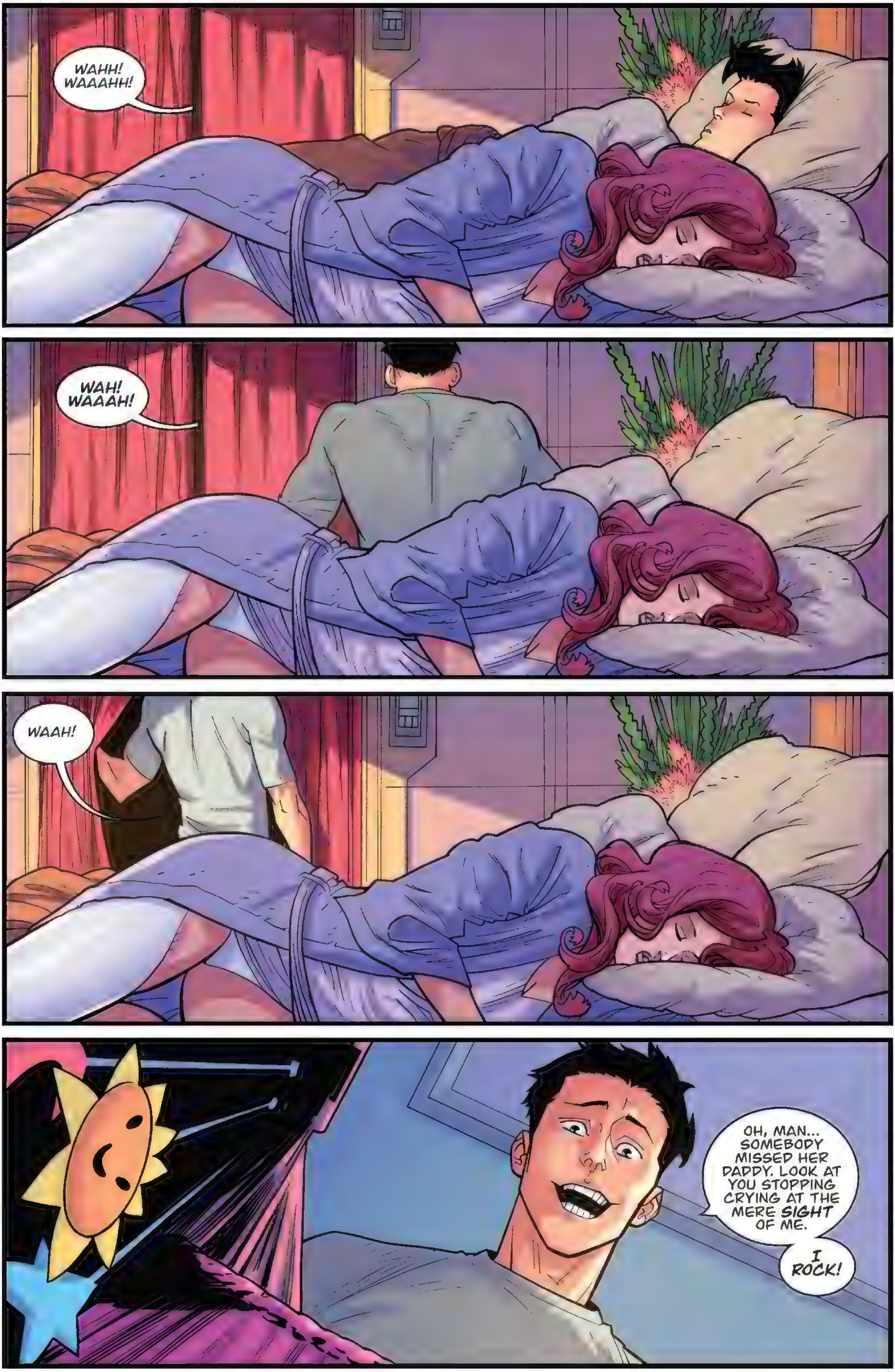
WELL... THERE DEFINITELY *WAS* A HUGE BATTLE HERE... BUT THAT WAS A WHILE AGO.
THE FEED STOPPED ABRUPTLY FOUR DAYS AGO... CLEARLY THE FIGHT MUST HAVE STOPPED AT SOME POINT AFTER THAT.
YEAH... BUT WHO *WON?*
I'M GOING TO TAKE THE FACT THAT THRAGG HASN'T ATTACKED US YET AS A GOOD SIGN.
IS THIS *WEIRD* FOR YOU?
A LITTLE. BUT IT'S BEEN *GENERATIONS* SINCE I WAS BORN. THINGS MOVE SO FAST HERE... I BARELY RECOGNIZE THE PLACE, AND EVERYONE WHO WOULD REMEMBER ME IS *LONG* DEAD.
INCLUDING MY MOTHER.


I'M SORRY.
I WAS STILL A BABY WHEN I LEFT... AND I'VE BEEN WELL AWARE SINCE THEN THAT SHE PROBABLY DIED A MATTER OF **DAYS** AFTER I LAST SAW HER.
SO... WE NEED TO FIND BATTLE BEAST AND GET OUT OF HERE THEN... ***RIGHT?***
YOU SEEK THE BATTLE BEAST?
THE ONE KNOWN AS BATTLE BEAST WAS ABLE TO DESTROY MANY OF OUR CITIES AND KILL MANY OF OUR KIND BEFORE MONARCH THRAGG DEFEATED HIM.
HIS BODY WAS BURNED IN A MASSIVE CELEBRATION THAT WAS HELD LONG AGO.
THAT WAS THE DAY OUR GREAT MONARCH LEFT THE PLANET. HE TOOK ALL OF OUR WARRIORS AND MANY OF OUR WOMEN... WE HAVE MISSED HIM EVERY MOMENT SINCE.
OKAY... THAT'S ***NOT*** HOW WE WANTED THINGS TO GO.
DAMN.
YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO KNOW ***EXACTLY*** WHERE THRAGG WENT, DO YOU?

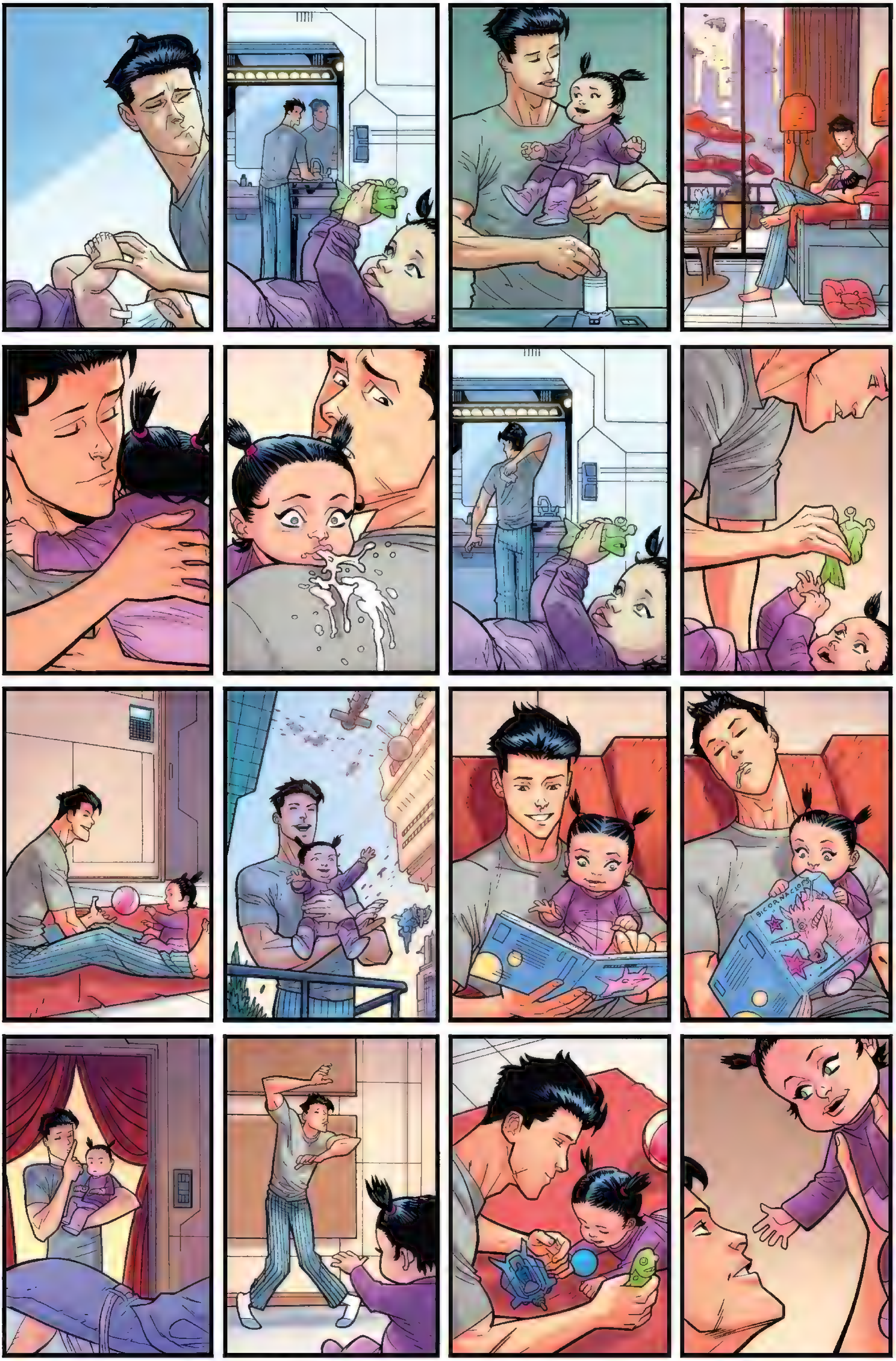

WE HAVE NO CLUE WHERE THRAGG WENT. HELPING BATTLE BEAST WHEN HE HAS HIM ON THE ROPES IS ONE THING... BUT IF WE WERE TO SOMEHOW FIND HIM... I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'D DO.
I'M WORRIED THAT THERE'S NO SIGN OF SPACE RACER AND THRESHA'S SHIP...
WE'RE DETECTING A DEBRIS FIELD AHEAD.
FULL STOP.
THERE ARE FAINT LIFE SIGNS COMING FROM BOTH HUMANOIDS ADRIFT. IT WOULD APPEAR THEY ARE... ALIVE.
CAPTAIN, OUR TRACTOR BEAM COULD SMASH THEM AGAINST DEBRIS ON THE WAY IN. I RECOMMEND I LEAD AN AWAY TEAM TO--
WE'LL GO.
SHOW US TO AN AIRLOCK.
COP
COP

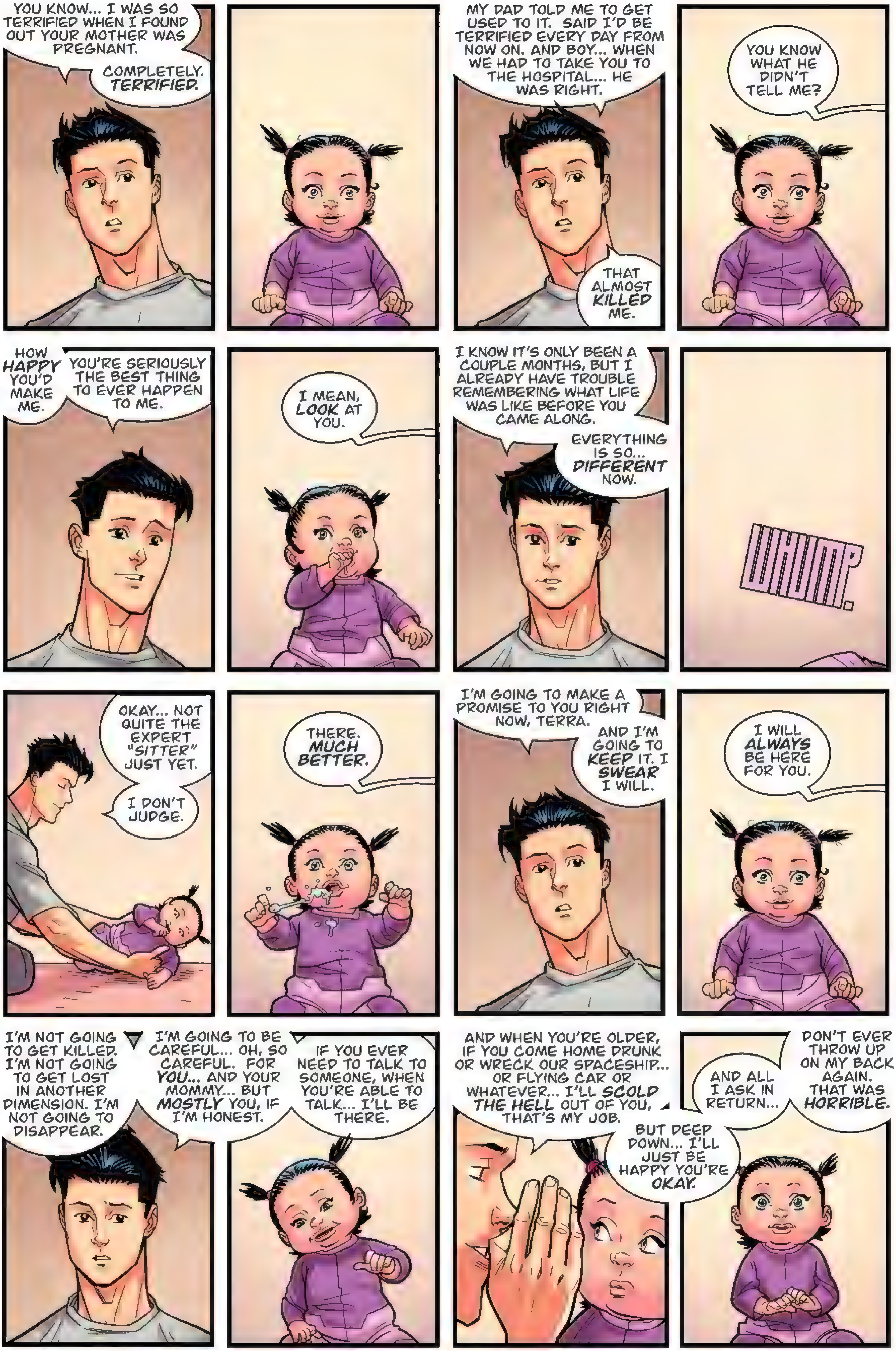

HE SHOULD REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS VERY SOON.
HER CORE TEMPERATURE HAS BEEN RESTORED TO NORMAL. SHE'S WAKING UP.
BRINGING THE TEMPERATURE DOWN NOW.
WHAT THE--?!
SKRASH!!
HOLY CRAP, SHE'S STRONG!
REAARRGH!
THRESHA--
--STOP!
CAN'T BELIEVE, DEAD HE IS.
DEAD HE IS REALLY...
I KNOW. I'M SORRY.

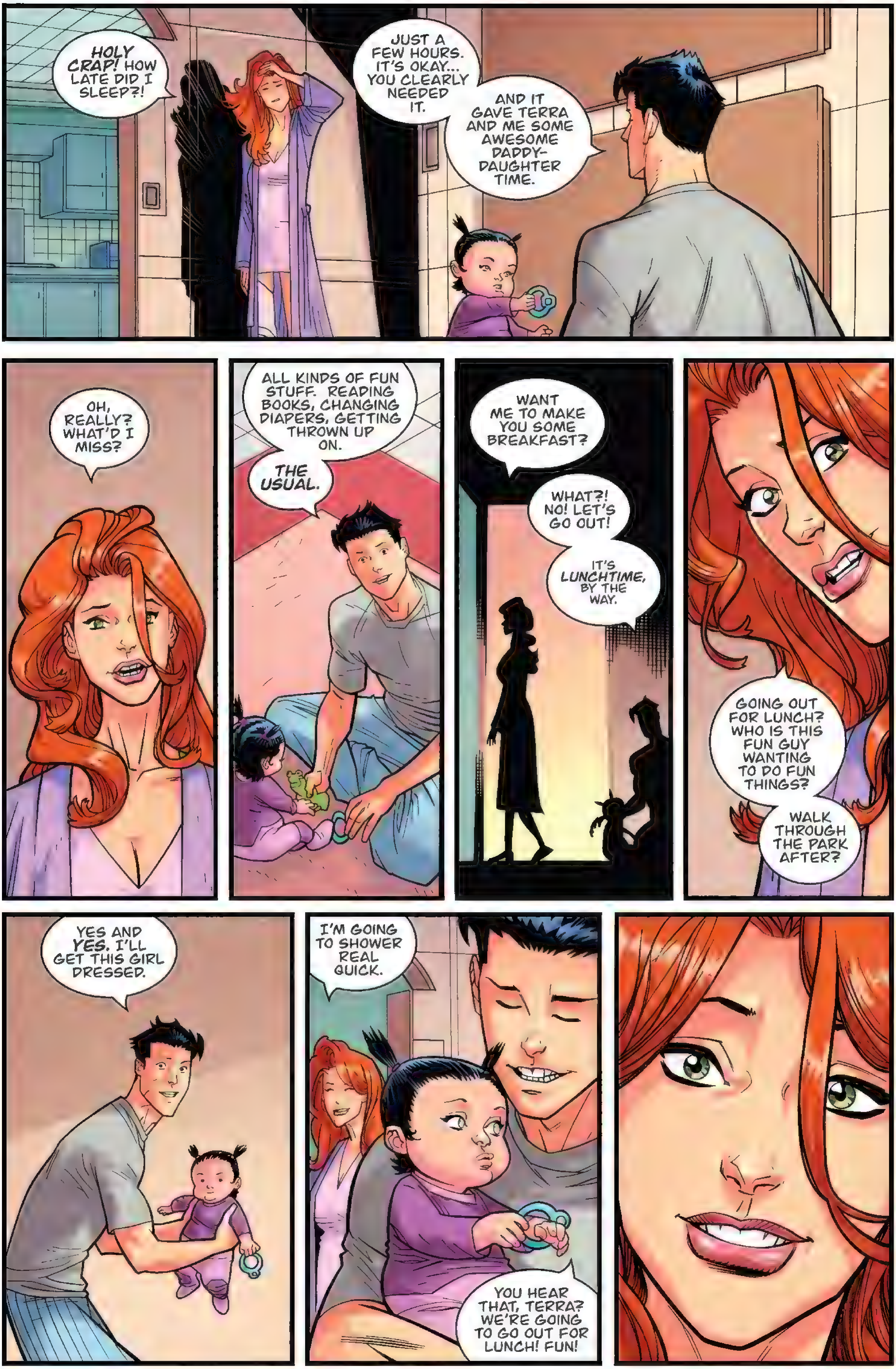

ALLEN SAYS HE MIGHT ASK FOR ME TO HELP TRY TO FIND THRAGG.
I FIGURED. IT'S OKAY, THIS WASN'T A LONG TRIP. IT'S COOL. BUT NO ONE'S TALKING ABOUT *WHY* HE PICKED THAT PLANET? HOW MANY *OLIVERS* DO YOU THINK HE'S MADE ALREADY?
THEY'RE AWARE... THAT'S WHY FINDING HIM IS SO IMPORTANT.
ARE YOU READY FOR BED?
I'M READY FOR *SOMETHING.*
IT'S OKAY IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.
I'M SORRY I--
NO.
I WANT TO TRY.

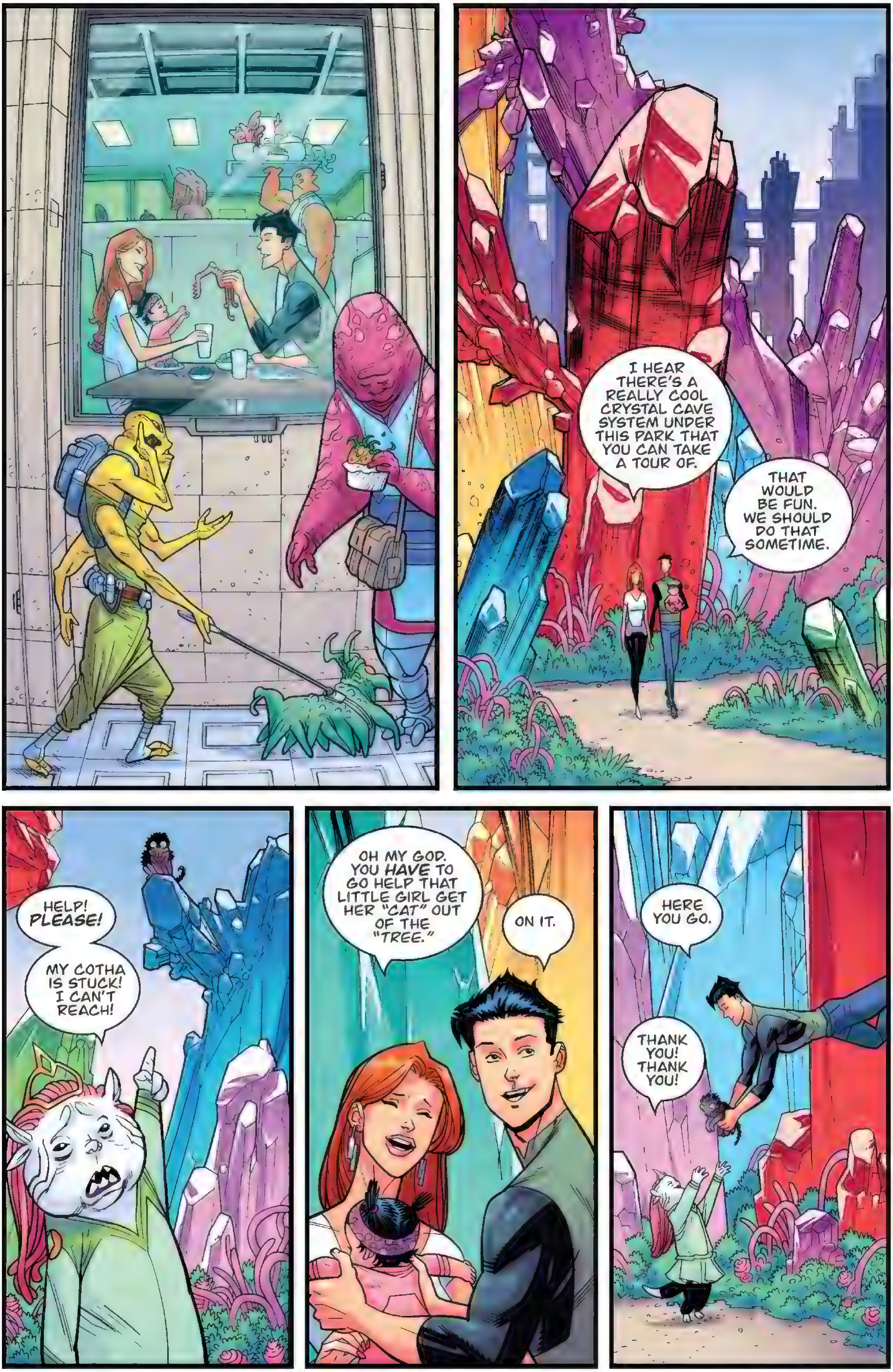

WAHH! WAAAHH!
WAH! WAAAH!
WAAH!
OH, MAN... SOMEBODY MISSED HER DADDY. LOOK AT YOU STOPPING CRYING AT THE MERE **SIGHT** OF ME.
I ROCK!

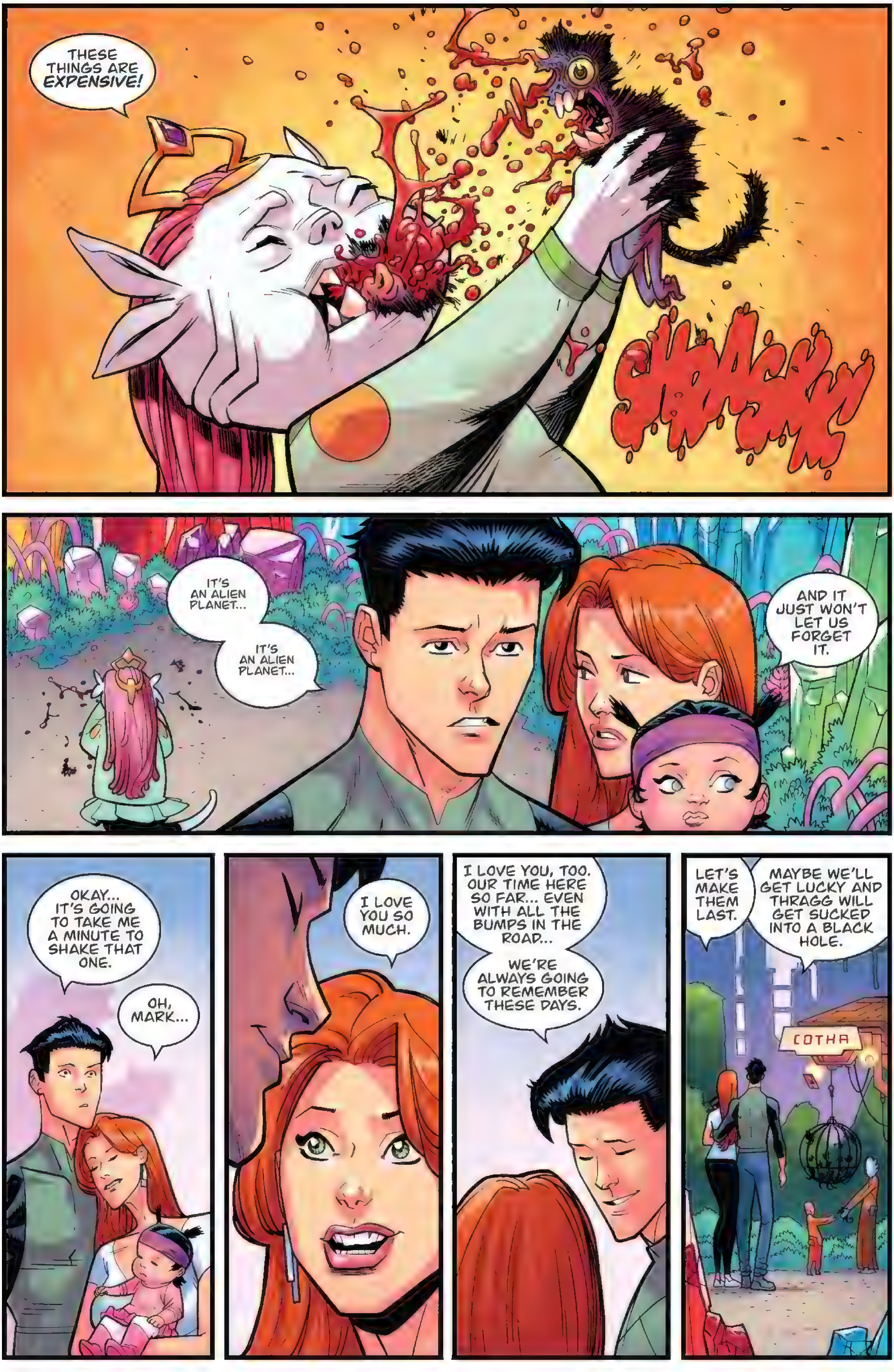
AND YOU...
YOU'RE PRETTY DAMN AWESOME, TOO.


BICORNACIOPS


YOU KNOW... I WAS SO TERRIFIED WHEN I FOUND OUT YOUR MOTHER WAS PREGNANT.
COMPLETELY. TERRIFIED.
MY DAD TOLD ME TO GET USED TO IT. SAID I'D BE TERRIFIED EVERY DAY FROM NOW ON. AND BOY... WHEN WE HAD TO TAKE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL... HE WAS RIGHT.
THAT ALMOST KILLED ME.
YOU KNOW WHAT HE DIDN'T TELL ME?
HOW HAPPY YOU'D MAKE ME.
YOU'RE SERIOUSLY THE BEST THING TO EVER HAPPEN TO ME.
I MEAN, LOOK AT YOU.
I KNOW IT'S ONLY BEEN A COUPLE MONTHS, BUT I ALREADY HAVE TROUBLE REMEMBERING WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE YOU CAME ALONG.
EVERYTHING IS SO... DIFFERENT NOW.
WHUMP.
OKAY... NOT QUITE THE EXPERT "SITTER" JUST YET.
I DON'T JUDGE.
THERE. MUCH BETTER.
I'M GOING TO MAKE A PROMISE TO YOU RIGHT NOW, TERRA.
AND I'M GOING TO KEEP IT. I SWEAR I WILL.
I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE FOR YOU.
I'M NOT GOING TO GET KILLED. I'M NOT GOING TO GET LOST IN ANOTHER DIMENSION. I'M NOT GOING TO DISAPPEAR.
I'M GOING TO BE CAREFUL... OH, SO CAREFUL. FOR YOU... AND YOUR MOMMY... BUT MOSTLY YOU, IF I'M HONEST.
IF YOU EVER NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE, WHEN YOU'RE ABLE TO TALK... I'LL BE THERE.
AND WHEN YOU'RE OLDER, IF YOU COME HOME DRUNK OR WRECK OUR SPACESHIP... OR FLYING CAR OR WHATEVER... I'LL SCOLD THE HELL OUT OF YOU. THAT'S MY JOB.
BUT DEEP DOWN... I'LL JUST BE HAPPY YOU'RE OKAY.
AND ALL I ASK IN RETURN...
DON'T EVER THROW UP ON MY BACK AGAIN. THAT WAS HORRIBLE.


HOLY CRAP! HOW LATE DID I SLEEP?!
JUST A FEW HOURS. IT'S OKAY... YOU CLEARLY NEEDED IT.
AND IT GAVE TERRA AND ME SOME AWESOME DADDY-DAUGHTER TIME.
OH, REALLY? WHAT'D I MISS?
ALL KINDS OF FUN STUFF. READING BOOKS, CHANGING DIAPERS, GETTING THROWN UP ON.
THE USUAL.
WANT ME TO MAKE YOU SOME BREAKFAST?
WHAT?! NO! LET'S GO OUT!
IT'S LUNCHTIME, BY THE WAY.
GOING OUT FOR LUNCH? WHO IS THIS FUN GUY WANTING TO DO FUN THINGS?
WALK THROUGH THE PARK AFTER?
YES AND YES. I'LL GET THIS GIRL DRESSED.
I'M GOING TO SHOWER REAL QUICK.
YOU HEAR THAT, TERRA? WE'RE GOING TO GO OUT FOR LUNCH! FUN!

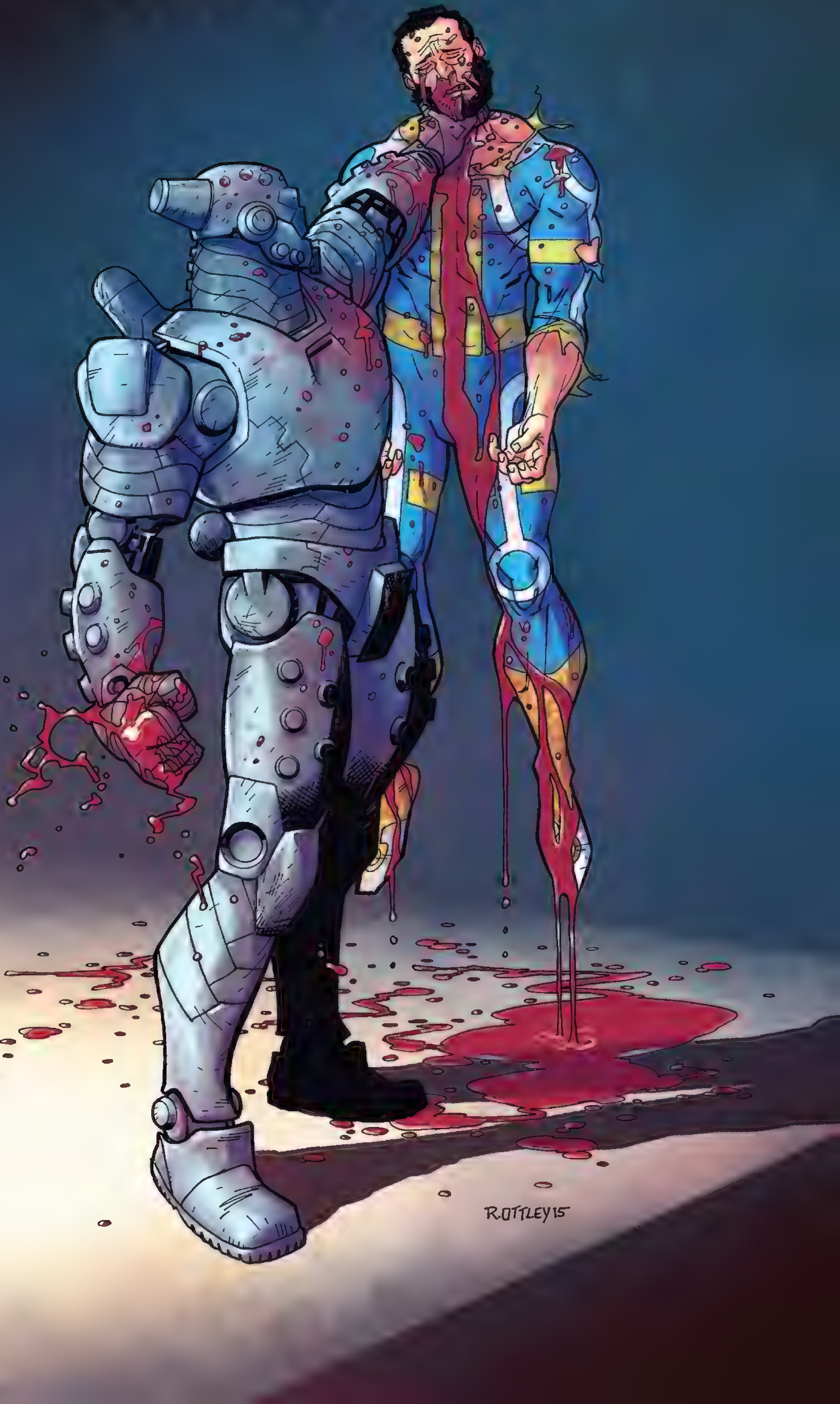

I HEAR THERE'S A REALLY COOL CRYSTAL CAVE SYSTEM UNDER THIS PARK THAT YOU CAN TAKE A TOUR OF.
THAT WOULD BE FUN. WE SHOULD DO THAT SOMETIME.
HELP! PLEASE!
MY COTHA IS STUCK! I CAN'T REACH!
OH MY GOD. YOU HAVE TO GO HELP THAT LITTLE GIRL GET HER "CAT" OUT OF THE "TREE."
ON IT.
HERE YOU GO.
THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

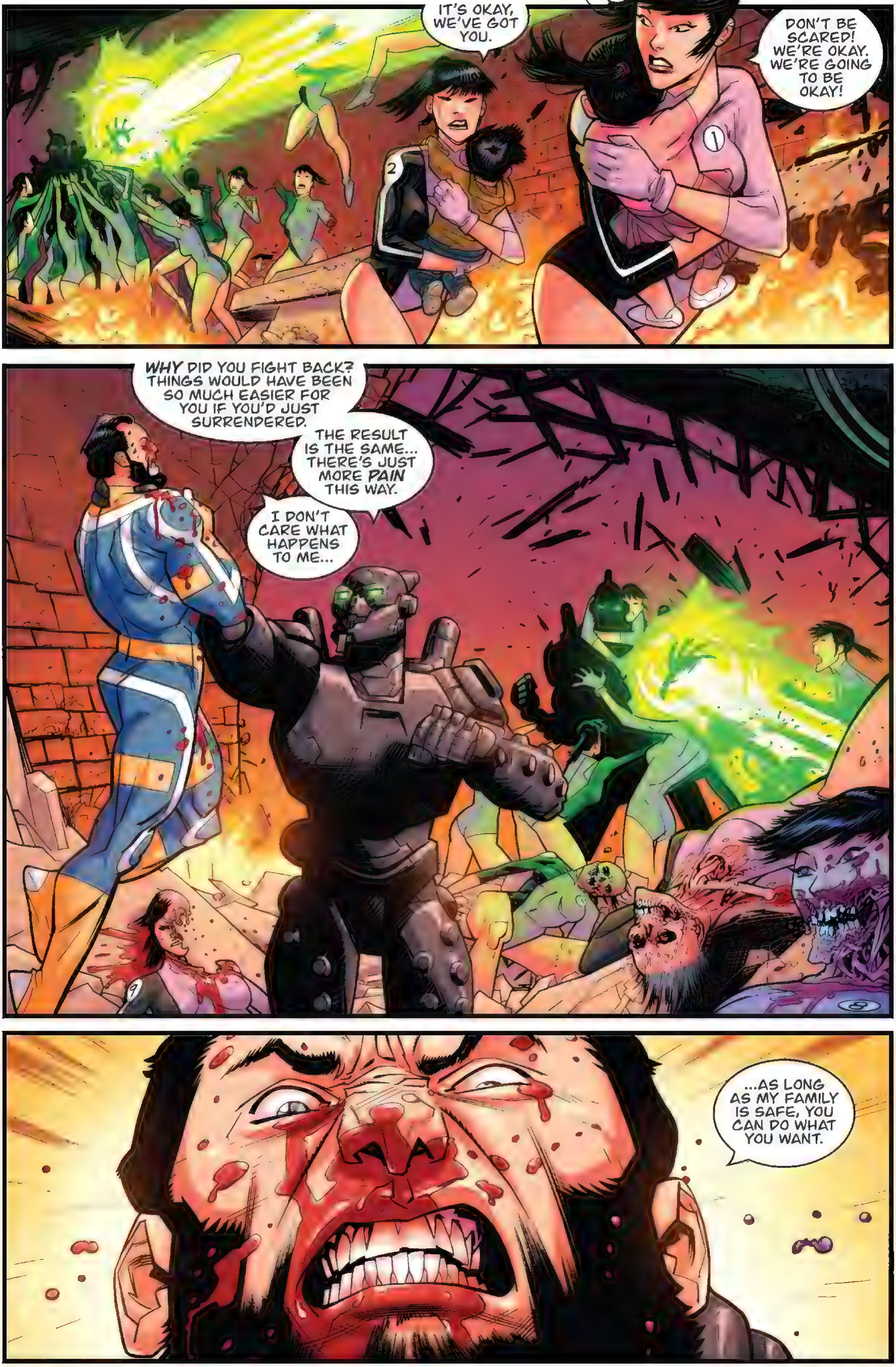

THESE THINGS ARE EXPENSIVE!
SHAKK
IT'S AN ALIEN PLANET...
IT'S AN ALIEN PLANET...
AND IT JUST WON'T LET US FORGET IT.
OKAY... IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME A MINUTE TO SHAKE THAT ONE.
OH, MARK...
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.
I LOVE YOU, TOO. OUR TIME HERE SO FAR... EVEN WITH ALL THE BUMPS IN THE ROAD...
WE'RE ALWAYS GOING TO REMEMBER THESE DAYS.
LET'S MAKE THEM LAST.
MAYBE WE'LL GET LUCKY AND THRAGG WILL GET SUCKED INTO A BLACK HOLE.
COTHA

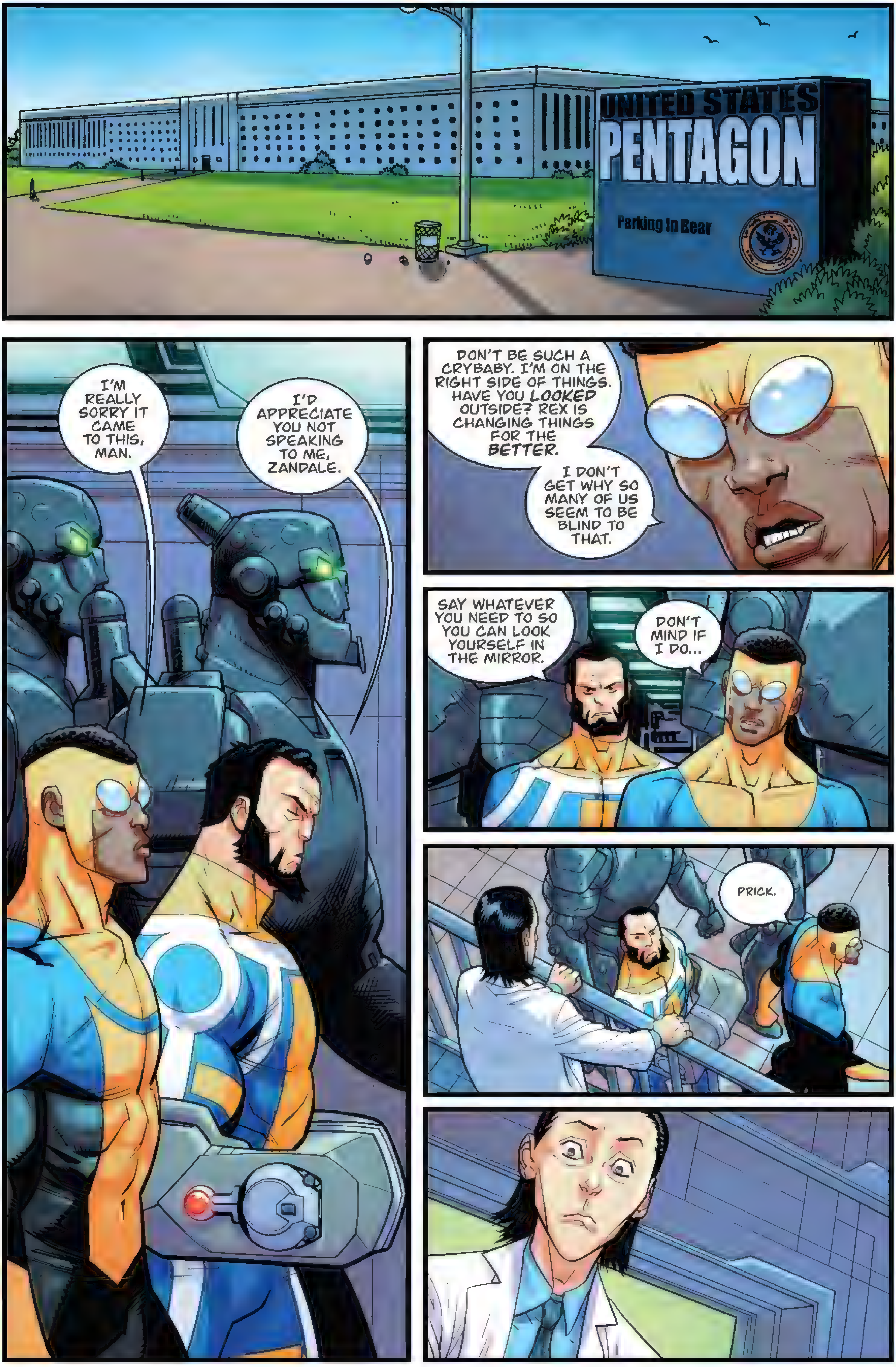
HOW FARE YOU, MONARCH?

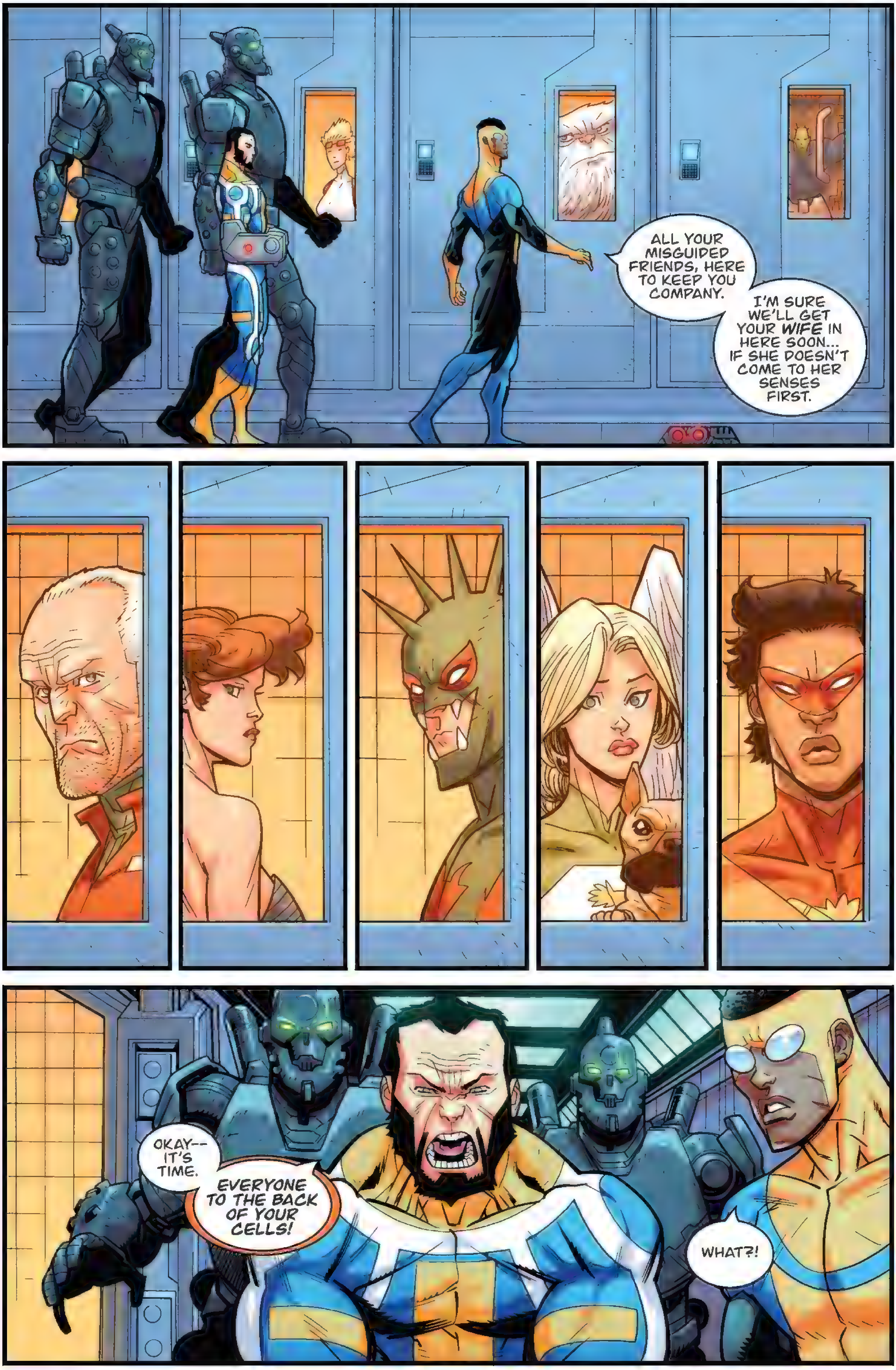
MY HEALTH IS...
...IMPROVING.

CHAPTER 121

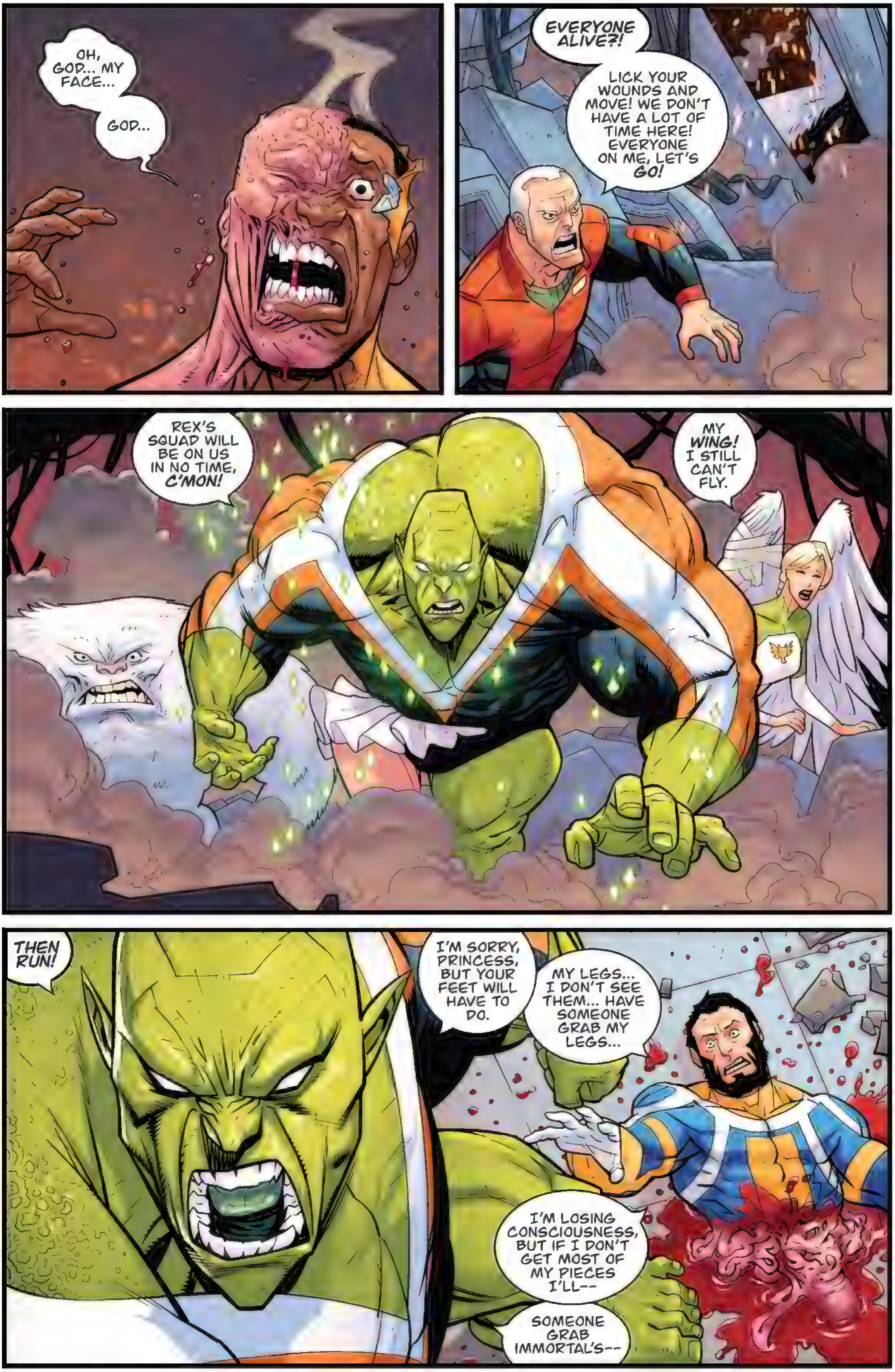


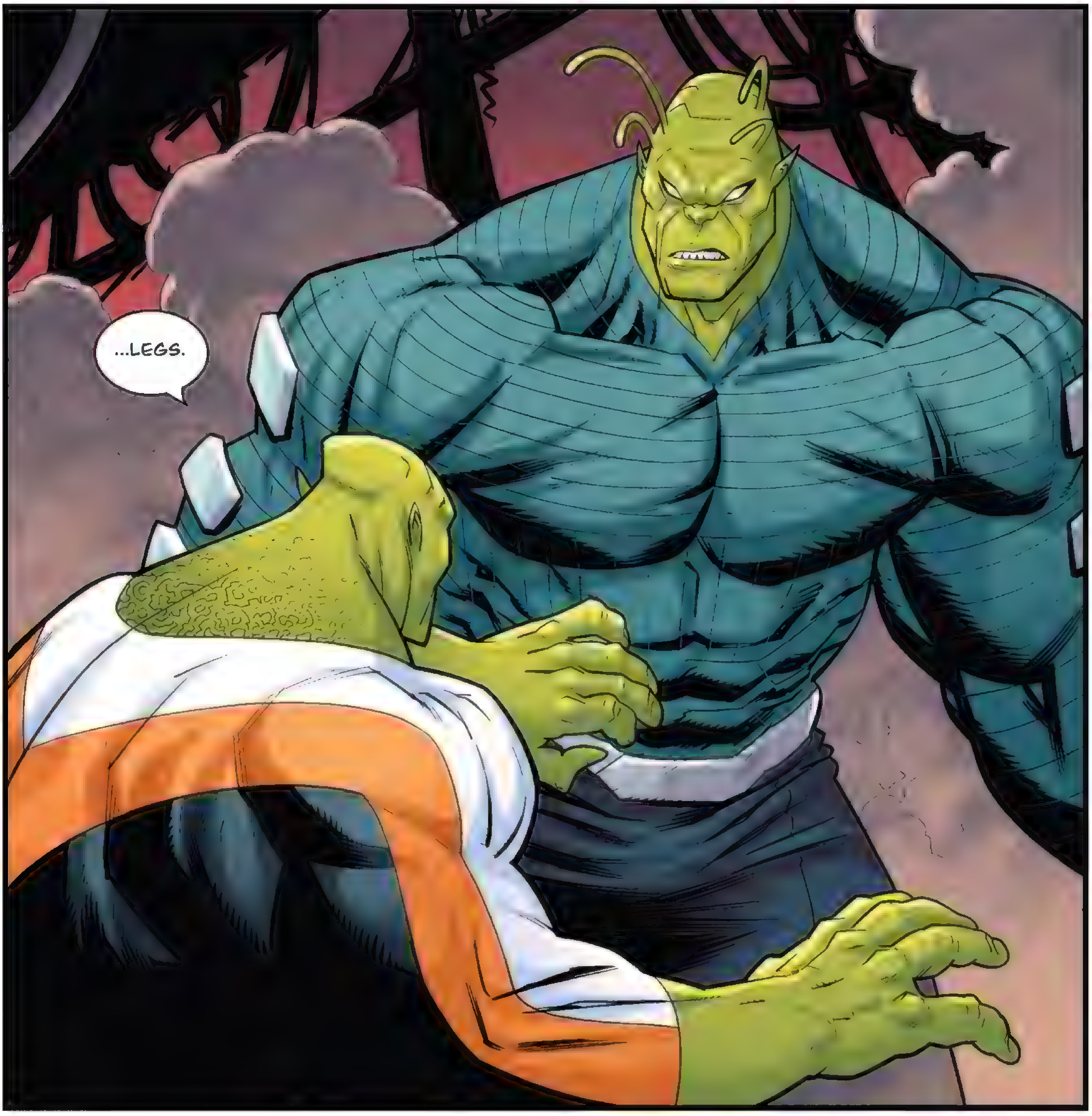

IT'S OKAY, WE'VE GOT YOU.
DON'T BE SCARED! WE'RE OKAY. WE'RE GOING TO BE OKAY!
2
1
WHY DID YOU FIGHT BACK? THINGS WOULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH EASIER FOR YOU IF YOU'D JUST SURRENDERED.
THE RESULT IS THE SAME... THERE'S JUST MORE *PAIN* THIS WAY.
I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO ME...
9
8
...AS LONG AS MY FAMILY IS SAFE, YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT.

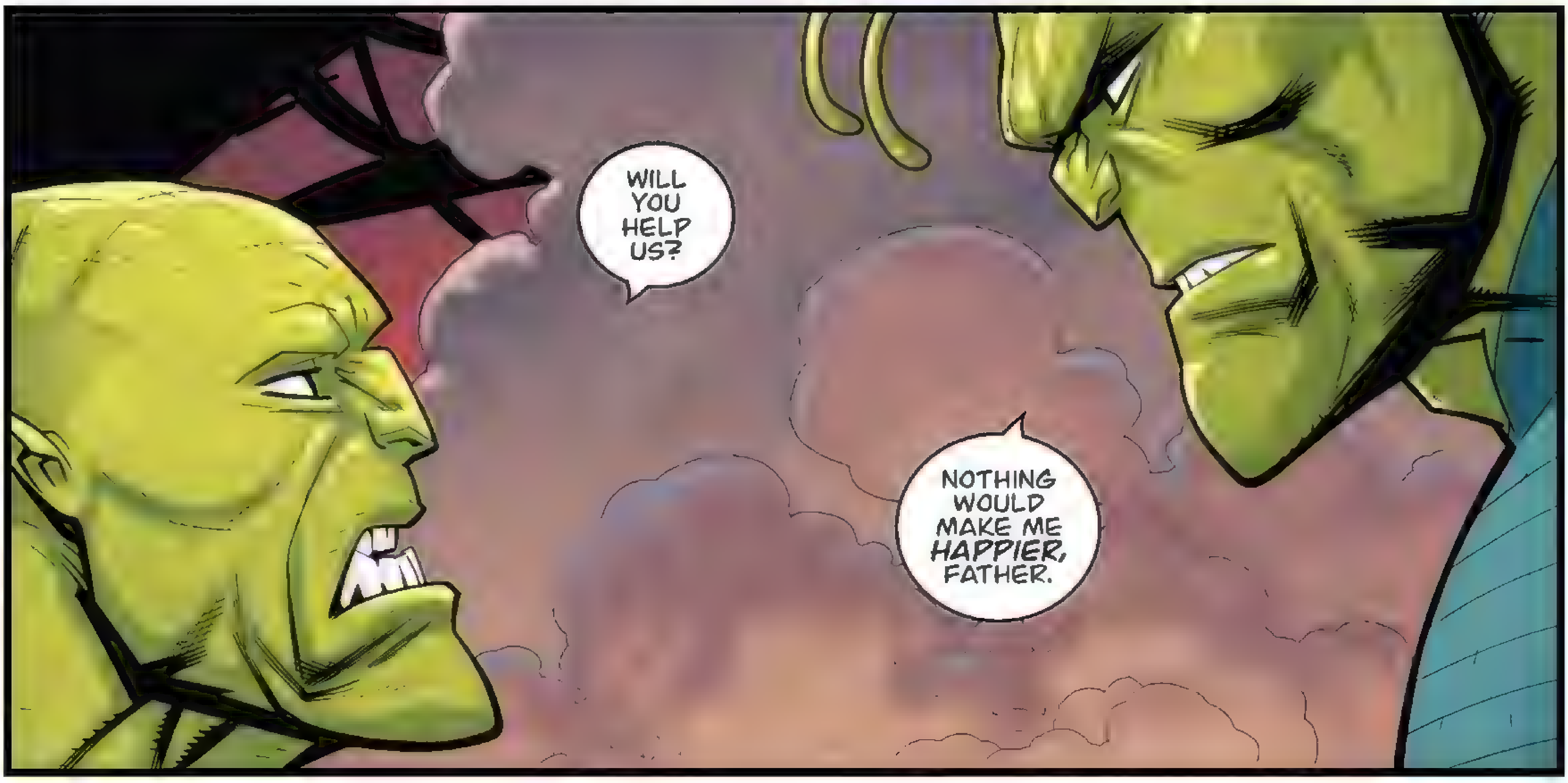

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking In Rear
I'M REALLY SORRY IT CAME TO THIS, MAN.
I'D APPRECIATE YOU NOT SPEAKING TO ME, ZANDALE.
DON'T BE SUCH A CRYBABY. I'M ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THINGS. HAVE YOU *LOOKED* OUTSIDE? REX IS CHANGING THINGS FOR THE **BETTER.**
I DON'T GET WHY SO MANY OF US SEEM TO BE BLIND TO THAT.
SAY WHATEVER YOU NEED TO SO YOU CAN LOOK YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR.
DON'T MIND IF I DO...
PRICK.

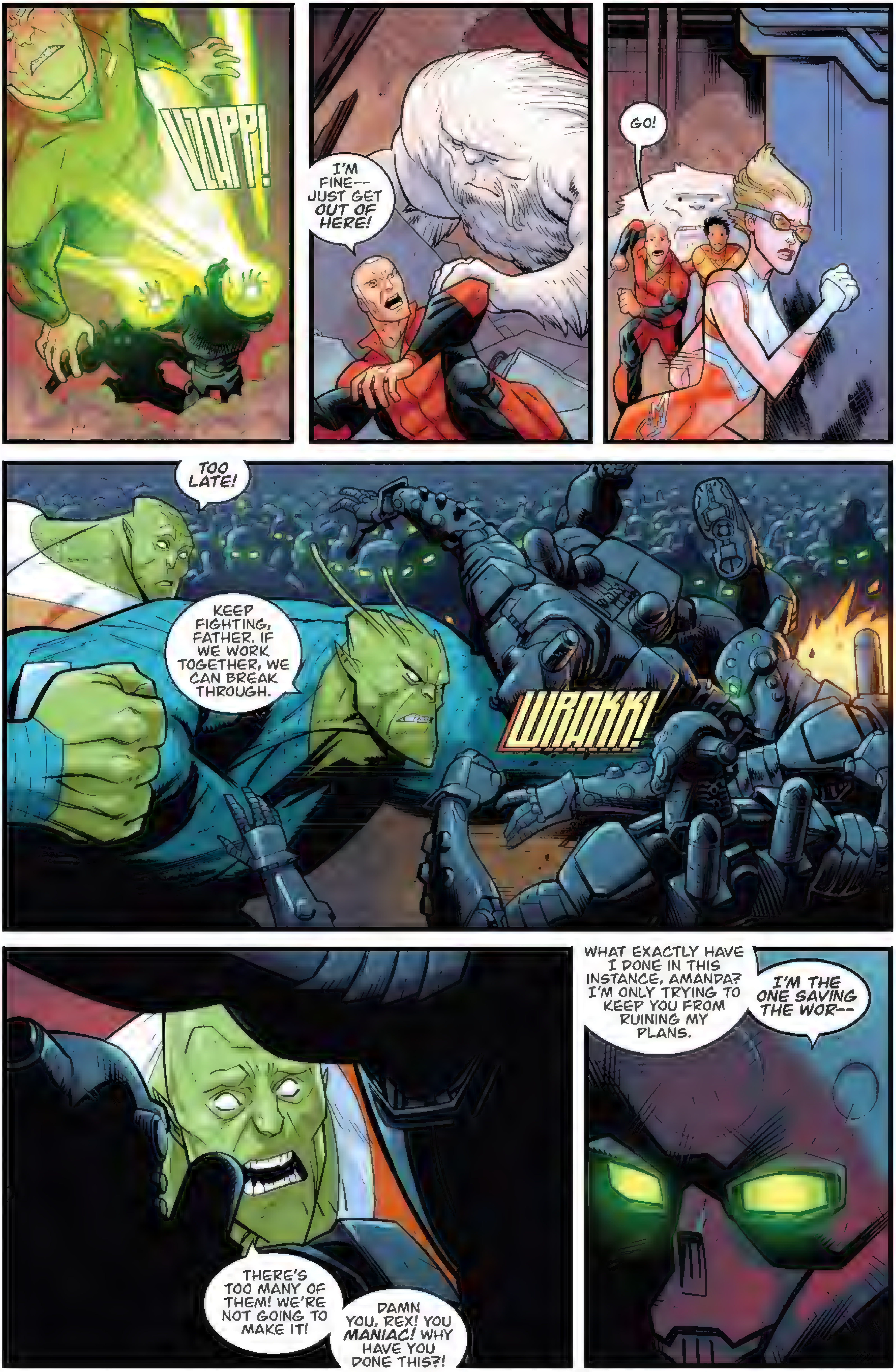

ALL YOUR MISGUIDED FRIENDS, HERE TO KEEP YOU COMPANY.
I'M SURE WE'LL GET YOUR *WIFE* IN HERE SOON... IF SHE DOESN'T COME TO HER SENSES FIRST.
OKAY-- IT'S TIME.
EVERYONE TO THE BACK OF YOUR CELLS!
WHAT?!

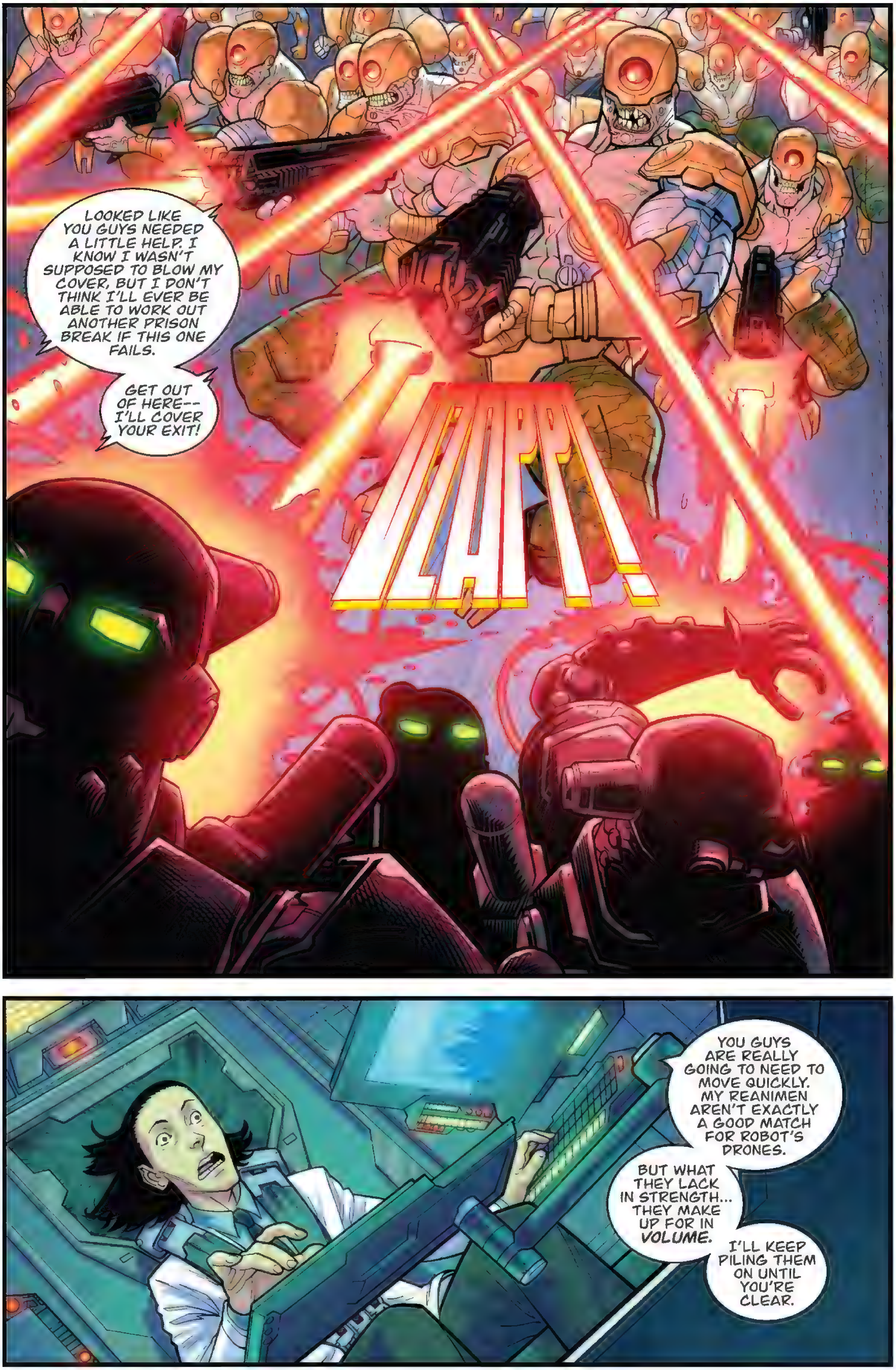
THRAKKA-BOOM!!


OH, GOD... MY FACE...
GOD...
EVERYONE ALIVE?!
LICK YOUR WOUNDS AND MOVE! WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME HERE! EVERYONE ON ME, LET'S *GO!*
REX'S SQUAD WILL BE ON US IN NO TIME, *C'MON!*
MY *WING!* I STILL CAN'T FLY.
THEN RUN!
I'M SORRY, PRINCESS, BUT YOUR FEET WILL HAVE TO DO.
MY LEGS... I DON'T SEE THEM... HAVE SOMEONE GRAB MY LEGS...
I'M LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT IF I DON'T GET MOST OF MY PIECES I'LL--
SOMEONE GRAB IMMORTAL'S--

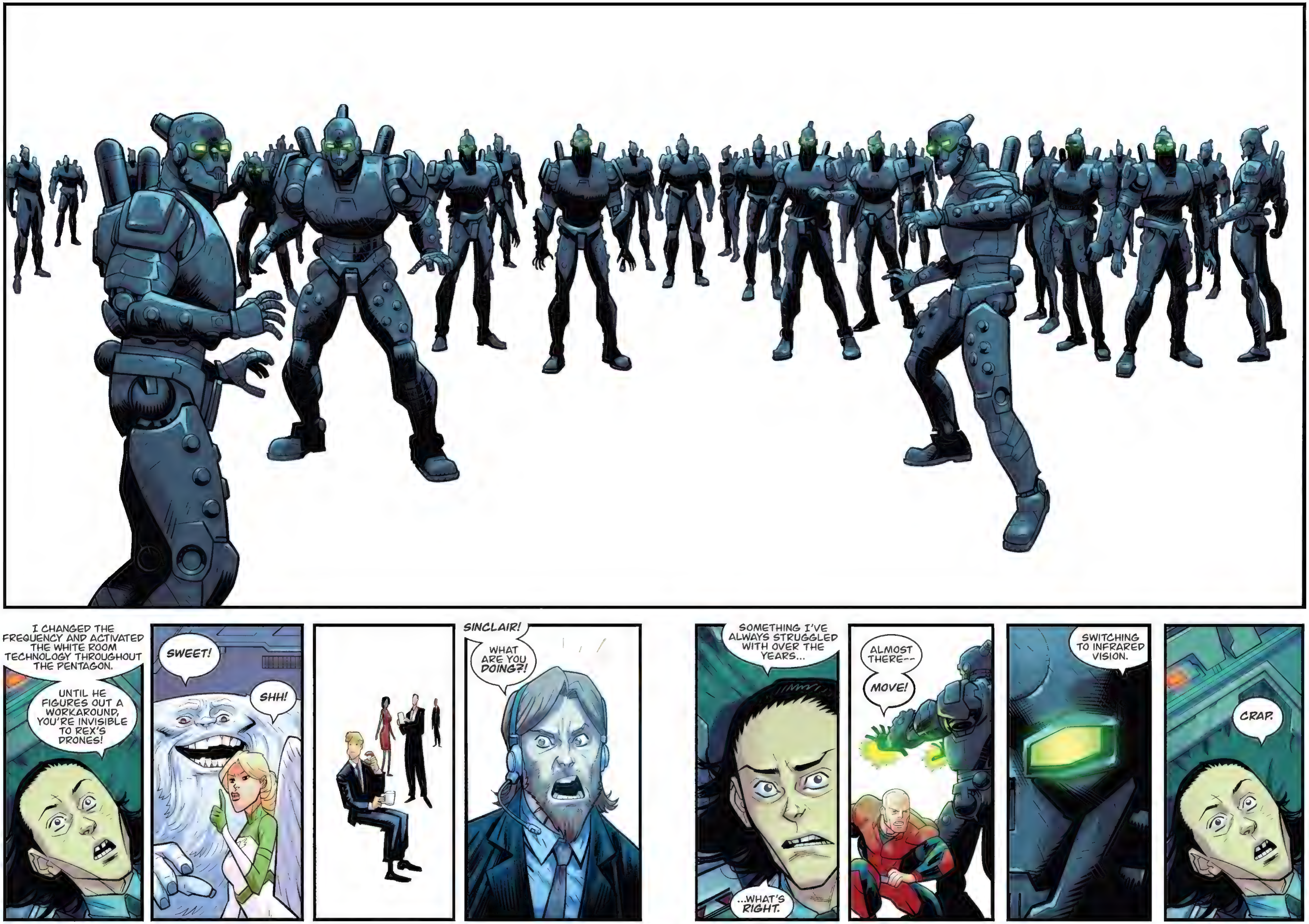

...LEGS.

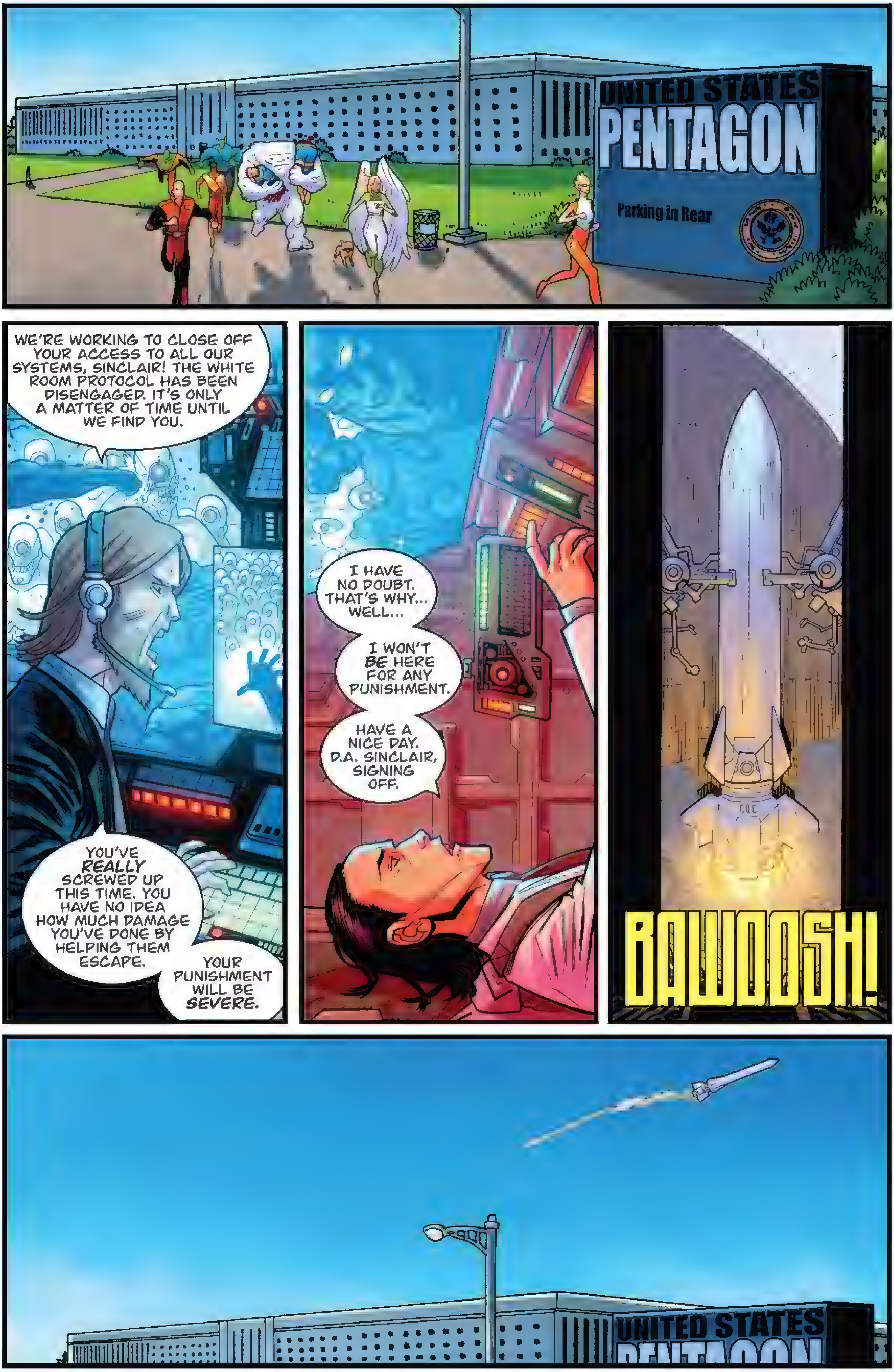

WILL YOU HELP US?
NOTHING WOULD MAKE ME *HAPPIER,* FATHER.

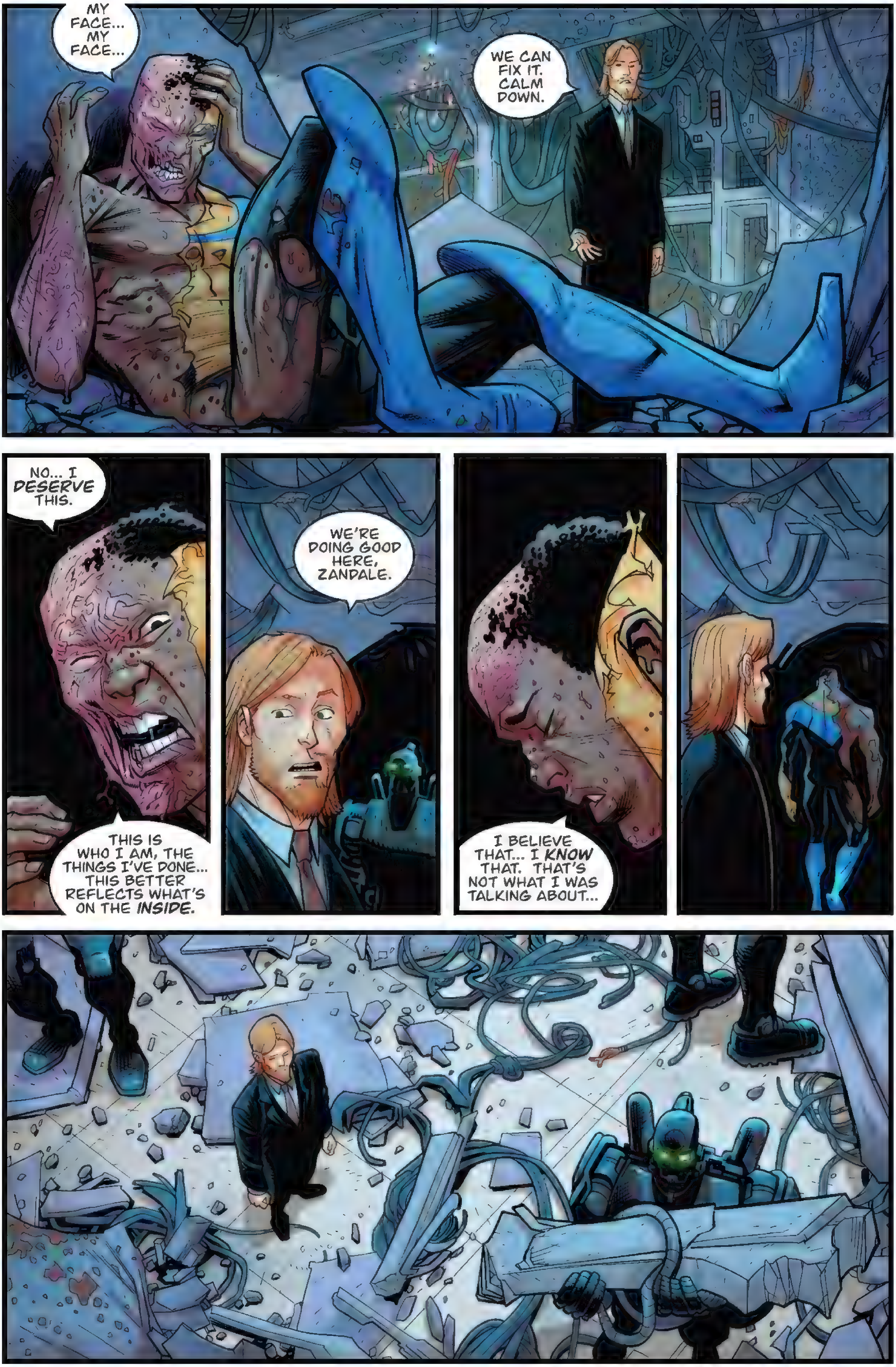

VLOPP!
I'M FINE-- JUST GET *OUT OF HERE!*
GO!
TOO LATE!
KEEP FIGHTING, FATHER. IF WE WORK TOGETHER, WE CAN BREAK THROUGH.
WRAKK!
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM! WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT!
DAMN YOU, REX! YOU *MANIAC!* WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS?!
WHAT EXACTLY HAVE I DONE IN THIS INSTANCE, AMANDA? I'M ONLY TRYING TO KEEP YOU FROM RUINING MY PLANS.
I'M THE ONE SAVING THE WOR--

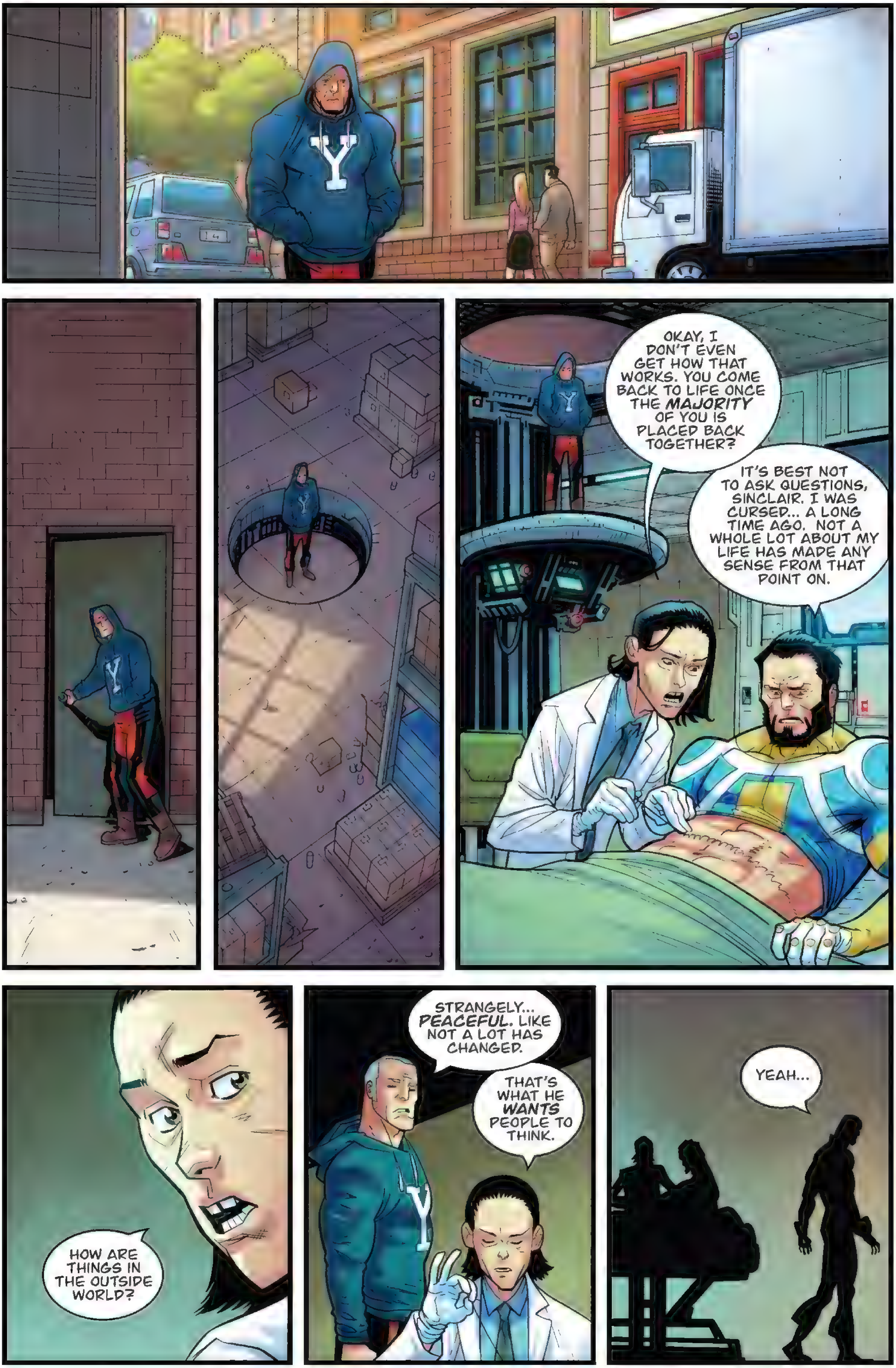

LOOKED LIKE YOU GUYS NEEDED A LITTLE HELP. I KNOW I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BLOW MY COVER, BUT I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE ABLE TO WORK OUT ANOTHER PRISON BREAK IF THIS ONE FAILS.
GET OUT OF HERE-- I'LL COVER YOUR EXIT!
ZAPP!
YOU GUYS ARE REALLY GOING TO NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY. MY REANIMEN AREN'T EXACTLY A GOOD MATCH FOR ROBOT'S DRONES.
BUT WHAT THEY LACK IN STRENGTH... THEY MAKE UP FOR IN *VOLUME*.
I'LL KEEP PILING THEM ON UNTIL YOU'RE CLEAR.

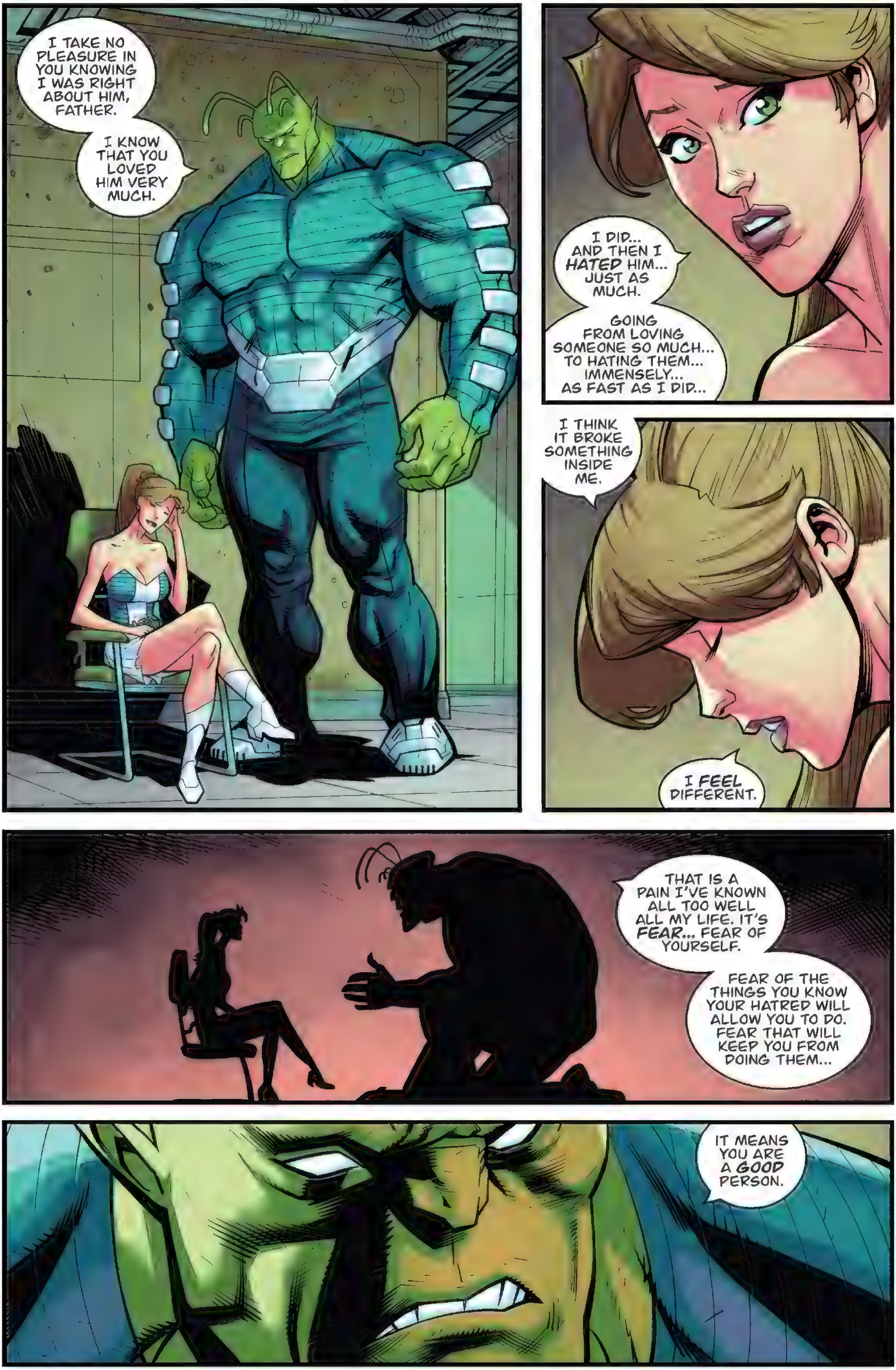
VZAPP!
SKRAGK!
WE HAVE TO CLEAR A PATH, SOLDIER--
--DO IT!
WRAKOOM!
THIS ISN'T WORKING!
THERE ARE STILL *TOO MANY* OF THEM!
WAIT! I HAVE AN IDEA!
THIS SHOULD BUY YOU THE TIME YOU NEED.

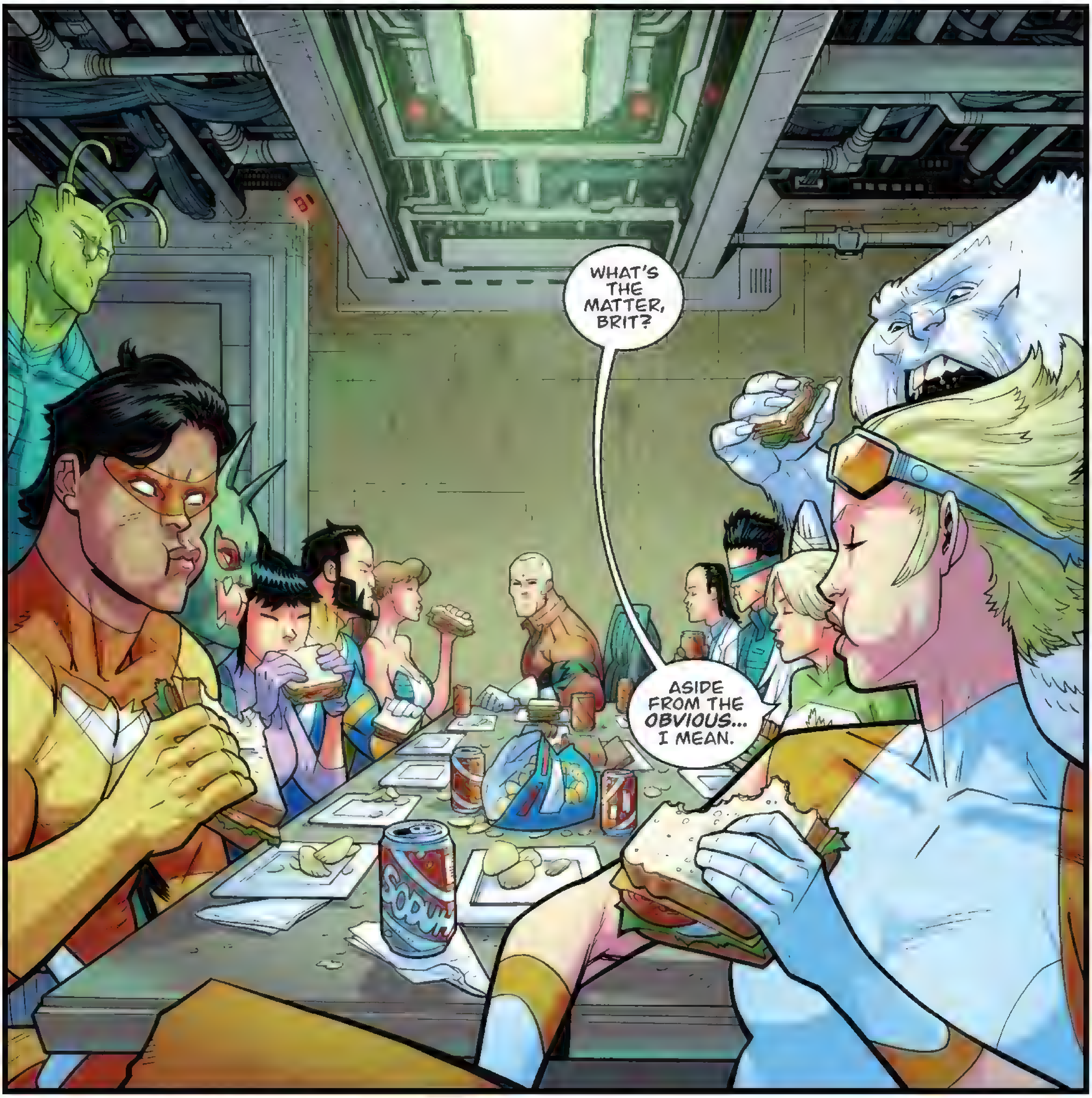

I CHANGED THE FREQUENCY AND ACTIVATED THE WHITE ROOM TECHNOLOGY THROUGHOUT THE PENTAGON.
UNTIL HE FIGURES OUT A WORKAROUND, YOU'RE INVISIBLE TO REX'S DRONES!
SWEET!
SHH!
SINCLAIR!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS STRUGGLED WITH OVER THE YEARS...
...WHAT'S RIGHT.
ALMOST THERE--
MOVE!
SWITCHING TO INFRARED VISION.
CRAP.

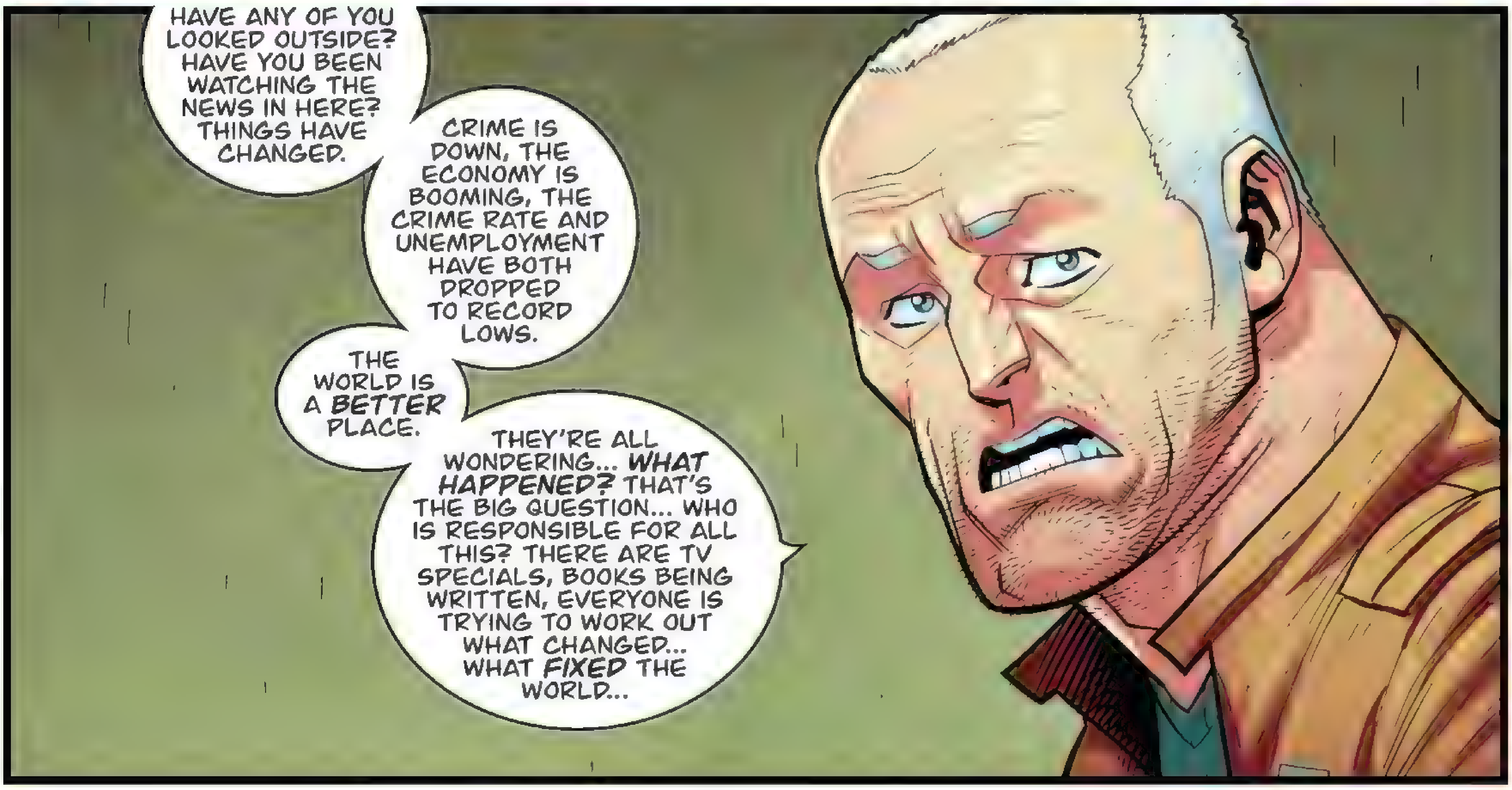

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WE'RE WORKING TO CLOSE OFF YOUR ACCESS TO ALL OUR SYSTEMS, SINCLAIR! THE WHITE ROOM PROTOCOL HAS BEEN DISENGAGED. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL WE FIND YOU.
YOU'VE *REALLY* SCREWED UP THIS TIME. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH DAMAGE YOU'VE DONE BY HELPING THEM ESCAPE.
YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE *SEVERE.*
I HAVE NO DOUBT. THAT'S WHY... WELL...
I WON'T *BE* HERE FOR ANY PUNISHMENT.
HAVE A NICE DAY. D.A. SINCLAIR, SIGNING OFF.
BAWOOSH!
UNITED STATES

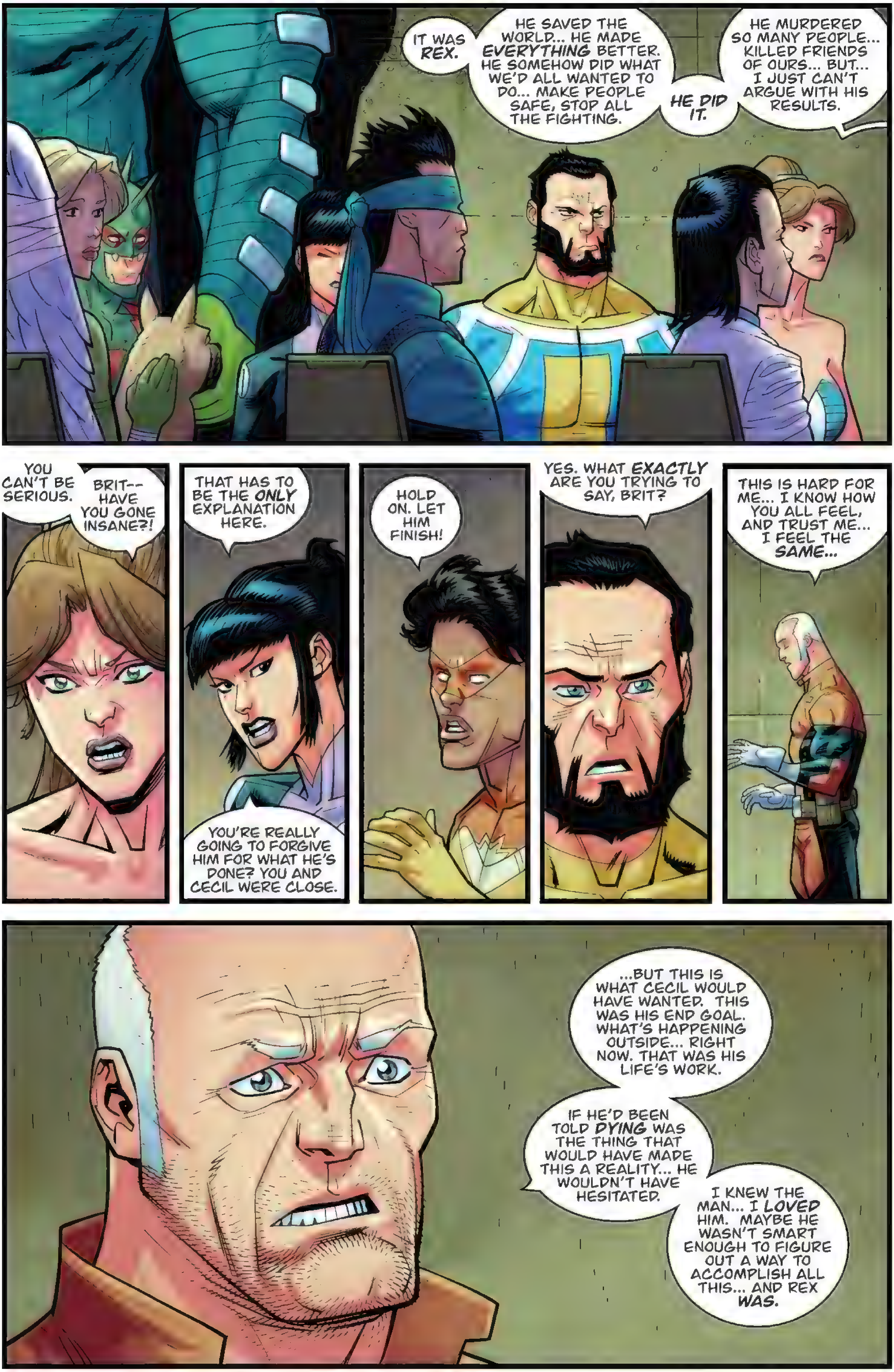

MY FACE... MY FACE...
WE CAN FIX IT. CALM DOWN.
NO... I *DESERVE* THIS.
THIS IS WHO I AM, THE THINGS I'VE DONE... THIS BETTER REFLECTS WHAT'S ON THE *INSIDE*.
WE'RE DOING GOOD HERE, ZANDALE.
I BELIEVE THAT... I *KNOW* THAT. THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT...

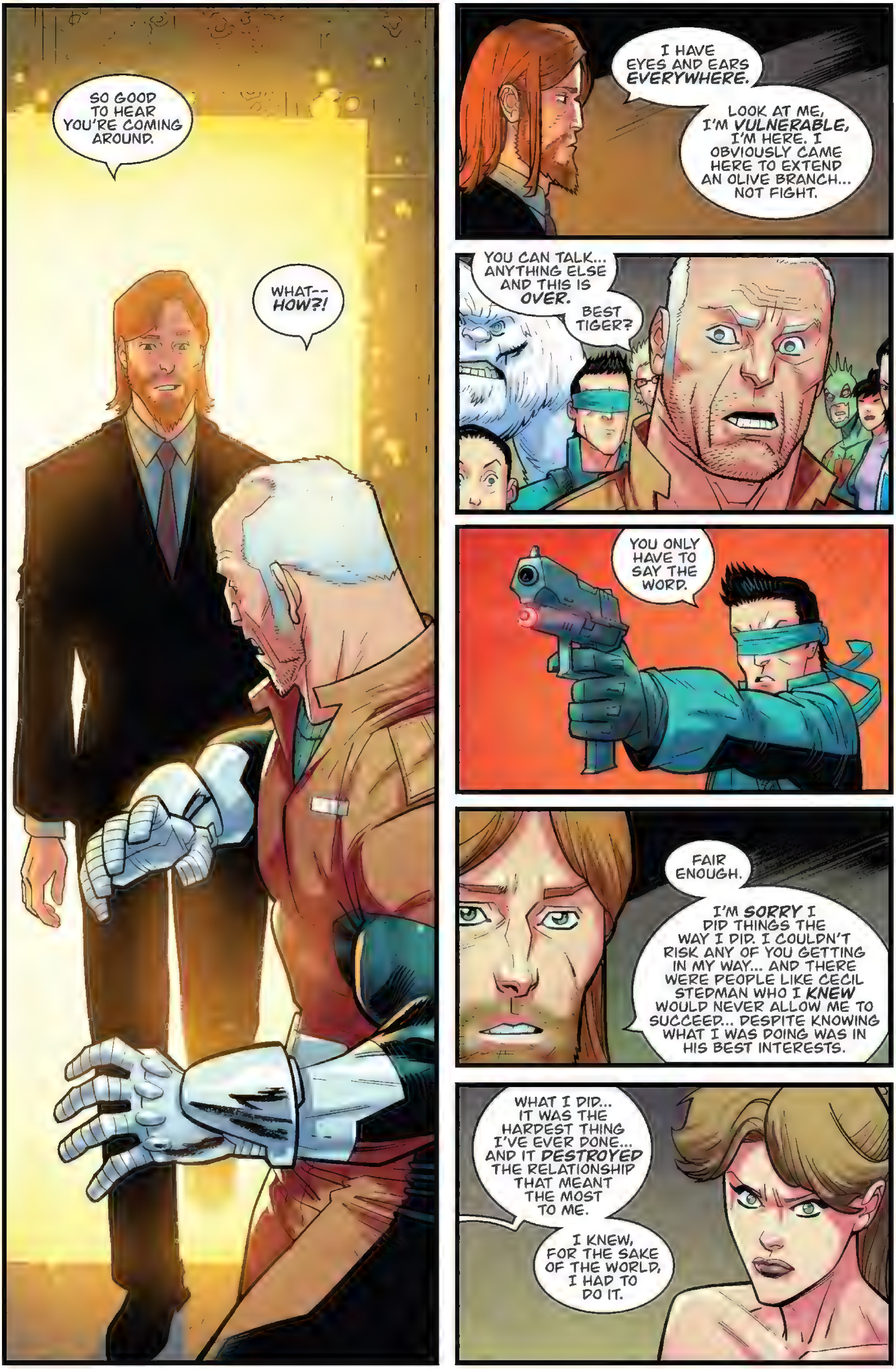

OKAY, I DON'T EVEN GET HOW THAT WORKS. YOU COME BACK TO LIFE ONCE THE *MAJORITY* OF YOU IS PLACED BACK TOGETHER?
IT'S BEST NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS, SINCLAIR. I WAS CURSED... A LONG TIME AGO. NOT A WHOLE LOT ABOUT MY LIFE HAS MADE ANY SENSE FROM THAT POINT ON.
HOW ARE THINGS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD?
STRANGELY... *PEACEFUL*. LIKE NOT A LOT HAS CHANGED.
THAT'S WHAT HE *WANTS* PEOPLE TO THINK.
YEAH...

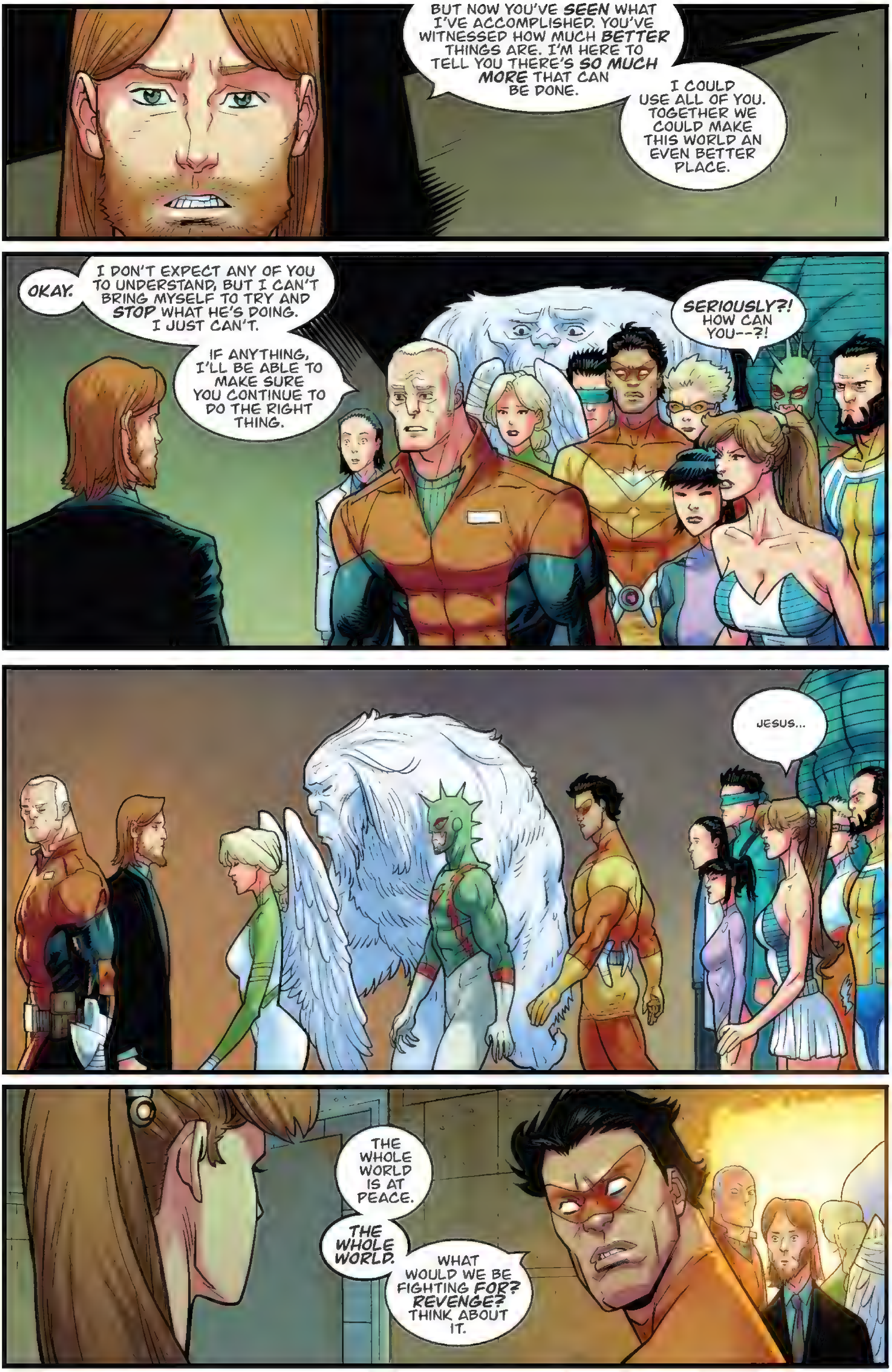

I TAKE NO PLEASURE IN YOU KNOWING I WAS RIGHT ABOUT HIM, FATHER.
I KNOW THAT YOU LOVED HIM VERY MUCH.
I DID... AND THEN I *HATED* HIM... JUST AS MUCH.
GOING FROM LOVING SOMEONE SO MUCH... TO HATING THEM... IMMENSELY... AS FAST AS I DID...
I THINK IT BROKE SOMETHING INSIDE ME.
I *FEEL* DIFFERENT.
THAT IS A PAIN I'VE KNOWN ALL TOO WELL ALL MY LIFE. IT'S *FEAR*... FEAR OF YOURSELF.
FEAR OF THE THINGS YOU KNOW YOUR HATRED WILL ALLOW YOU TO DO. FEAR THAT WILL KEEP YOU FROM DOING THEM...
IT MEANS YOU ARE A *GOOD* PERSON.

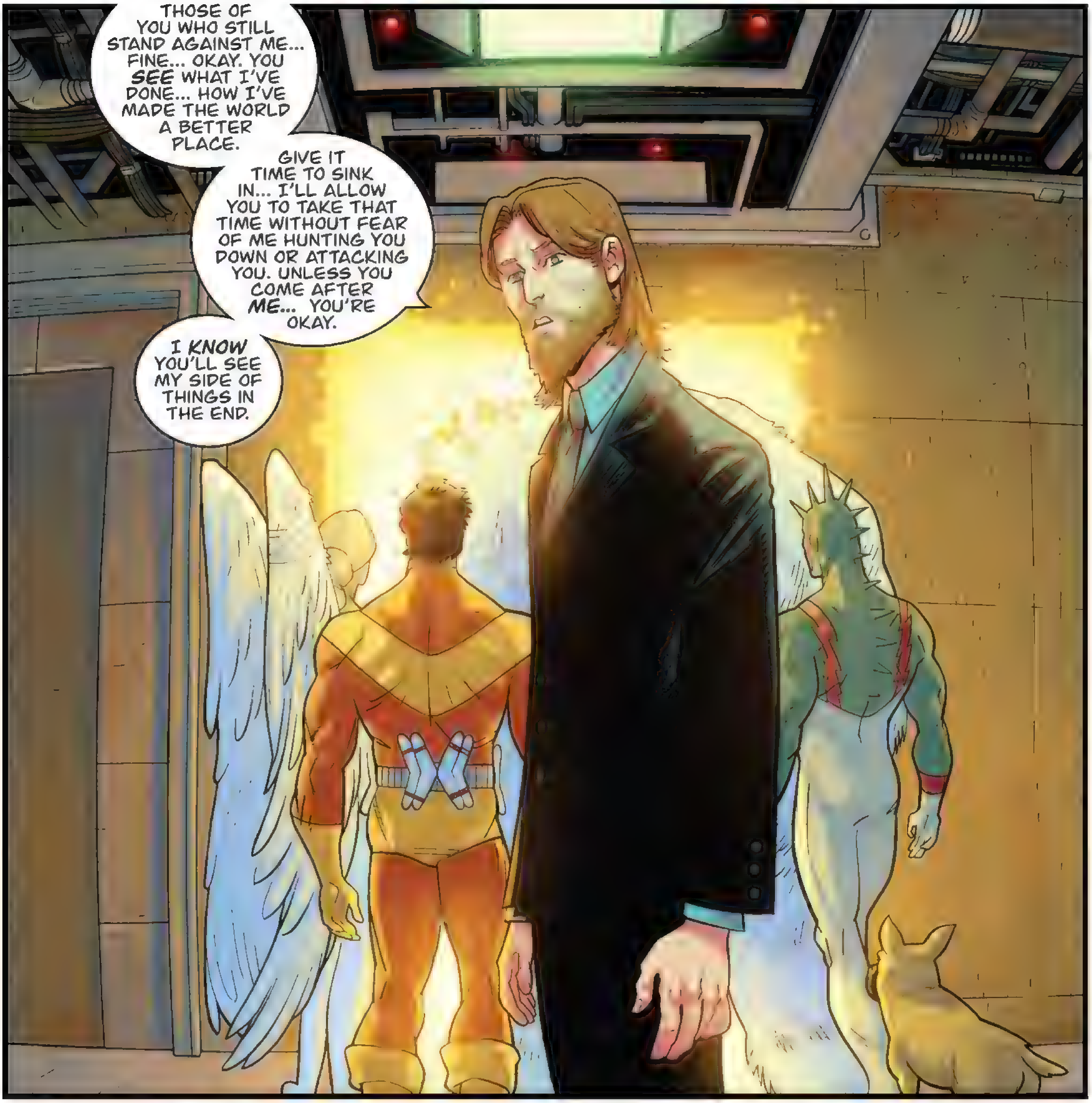

WHAT'S THE MATTER, BRIT?
ASIDE FROM THE *OBVIOUS*... I MEAN.
SODA

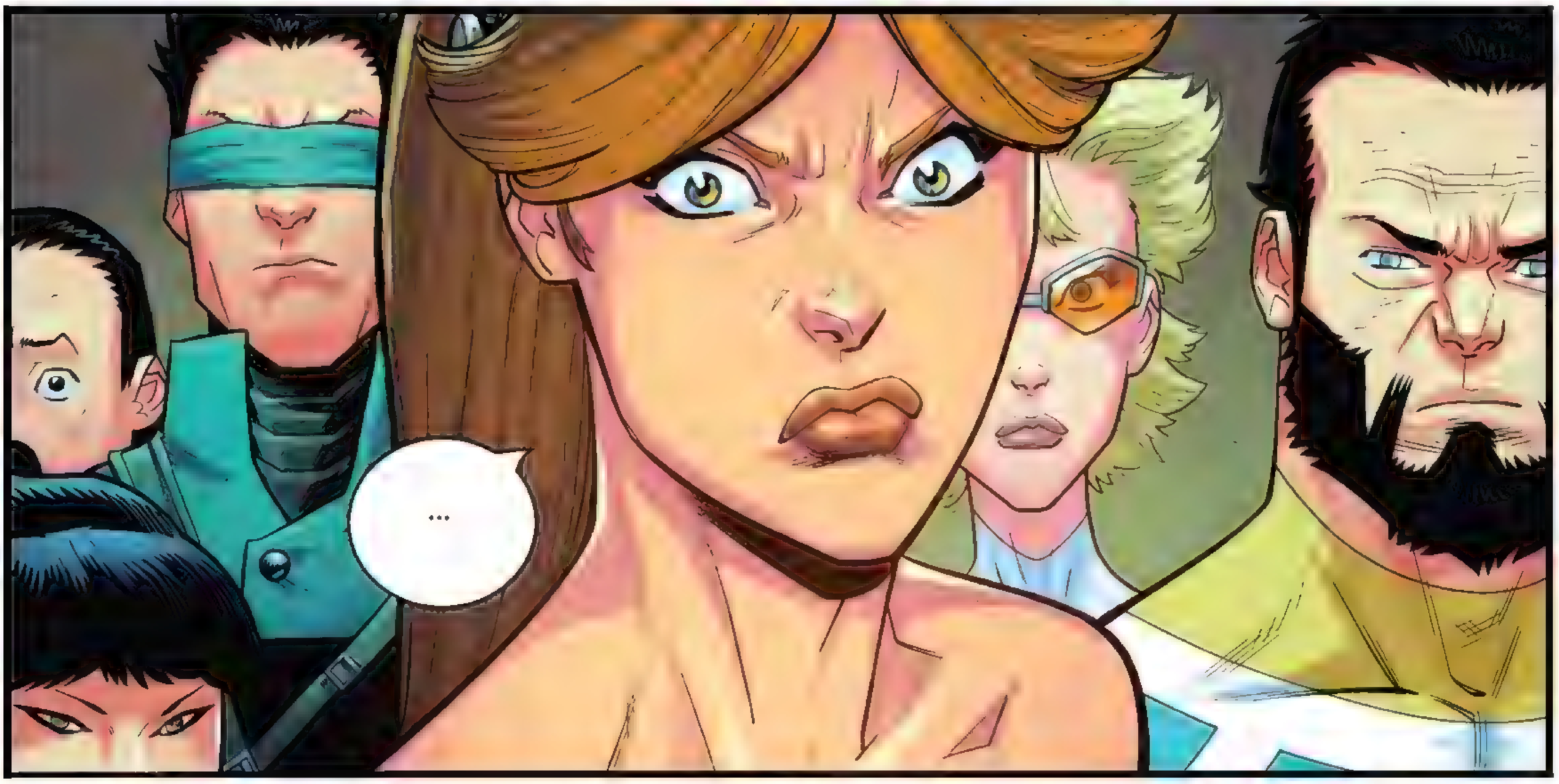

HAVE ANY OF YOU LOOKED OUTSIDE? HAVE YOU BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS IN HERE? THINGS HAVE CHANGED.
CRIME IS DOWN, THE ECONOMY IS BOOMING, THE CRIME RATE AND UNEMPLOYMENT HAVE BOTH DROPPED TO RECORD LOWS.
THE WORLD IS A *BETTER* PLACE.
THEY'RE ALL WONDERING... *WHAT HAPPENED?* THAT'S THE BIG QUESTION... WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS? THERE ARE TV SPECIALS, BOOKS BEING WRITTEN, EVERYONE IS TRYING TO WORK OUT WHAT CHANGED... WHAT *FIXED* THE WORLD...


IT WAS *REX.*
HE SAVED THE WORLD... HE MADE *EVERYTHING* BETTER. HE SOMEHOW DID WHAT WE'D ALL WANTED TO DO... MAKE PEOPLE SAFE, STOP ALL THE FIGHTING.
HE DID IT.
HE MURDERED SO MANY PEOPLE... KILLED FRIENDS OF OURS... BUT... I JUST CAN'T ARGUE WITH HIS RESULTS.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
BRIT-- HAVE YOU GONE INSANE?!
THAT HAS TO BE THE *ONLY* EXPLANATION HERE.
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO FORGIVE HIM FOR WHAT HE'S DONE? YOU AND CECIL WERE CLOSE.
HOLD ON. LET HIM FINISH!
YES. WHAT *EXACTLY* ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY, BRIT?
THIS IS HARD FOR ME... I KNOW HOW YOU ALL FEEL, AND TRUST ME... I FEEL THE *SAME...*
...BUT THIS IS WHAT CECIL WOULD HAVE WANTED. THIS WAS HIS END GOAL. WHAT'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE... RIGHT NOW. THAT WAS HIS LIFE'S WORK.
IF HE'D BEEN TOLD *DYING* WAS THE THING THAT WOULD HAVE MADE THIS A REALITY... HE WOULDN'T HAVE HESITATED.
I KNEW THE MAN... I *LOVED* HIM. MAYBE HE WASN'T SMART ENOUGH TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO ACCOMPLISH ALL THIS... AND REX *WAS.*


SO GOOD TO HEAR YOU'RE COMING AROUND.
WHAT-- *HOW?!*
I HAVE EYES AND EARS *EVERYWHERE.*
LOOK AT ME, I'M *VULNERABLE,* I'M HERE. I OBVIOUSLY CAME HERE TO EXTEND AN OLIVE BRANCH... NOT FIGHT.
YOU CAN TALK... ANYTHING ELSE AND THIS IS *OVER.*
BEST TIGER?
YOU ONLY HAVE TO SAY THE WORD.
FAIR ENOUGH.
I'M *SORRY* I DID THINGS THE WAY I DID. I COULDN'T RISK ANY OF YOU GETTING IN MY WAY... AND THERE WERE PEOPLE LIKE CECIL STEDMAN WHO I *KNEW* WOULD NEVER ALLOW ME TO SUCCEED... DESPITE KNOWING WHAT I WAS DOING WAS IN HIS BEST INTERESTS.
WHAT I DID... IT WAS THE HARDEST THING I'VE EVER DONE... AND IT *DESTROYED* THE RELATIONSHIP THAT MEANT THE MOST TO ME.
I KNEW, FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD, I HAD TO DO IT.


BUT NOW YOU'VE SEEN WHAT I'VE ACCOMPLISHED. YOU'VE WITNESSED HOW MUCH BETTER THINGS ARE. I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THERE'S SO MUCH MORE THAT CAN BE DONE.
I COULD USE ALL OF YOU. TOGETHER WE COULD MAKE THIS WORLD AN EVEN BETTER PLACE.
OKAY.
I DON'T EXPECT ANY OF YOU TO UNDERSTAND, BUT I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO TRY AND STOP WHAT HE'S DOING. I JUST CAN'T.
IF ANYTHING, I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE SURE YOU CONTINUE TO DO THE RIGHT THING.
SERIOUSLY?! HOW CAN YOU--?!
JESUS...
THE WHOLE WORLD IS AT PEACE.
THE WHOLE WORLD.
WHAT WOULD WE BE FIGHTING FOR? REVENGE? THINK ABOUT IT.


THOSE OF YOU WHO STILL STAND AGAINST ME... FINE... OKAY. YOU SEE WHAT I'VE DONE... HOW I'VE MADE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.
GIVE IT TIME TO SINK IN... I'LL ALLOW YOU TO TAKE THAT TIME WITHOUT FEAR OF ME HUNTING YOU DOWN OR ATTACKING YOU. UNLESS YOU COME AFTER ME... YOU'RE OKAY.
I KNOW YOU'LL SEE MY SIDE OF THINGS IN THE END.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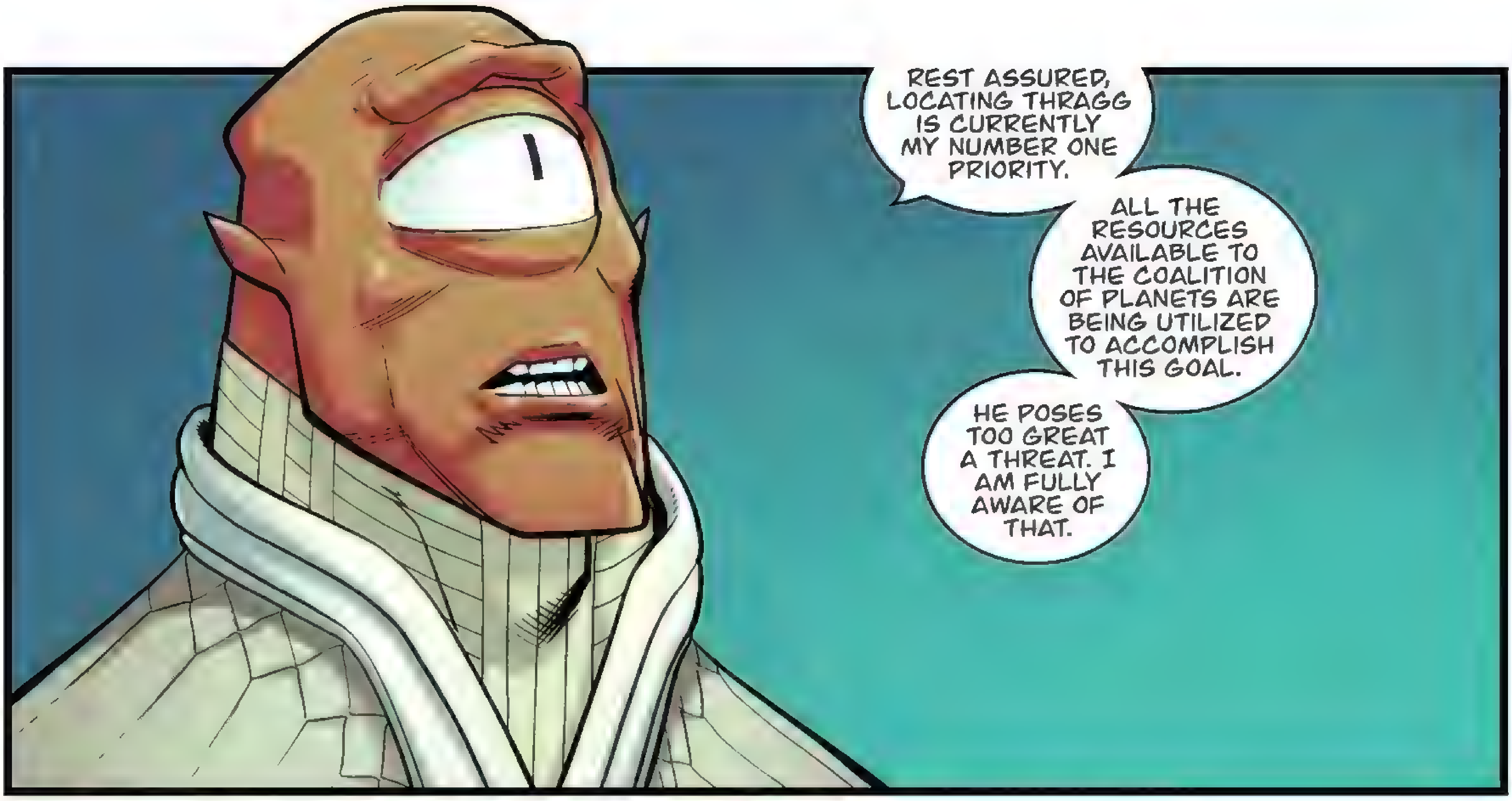
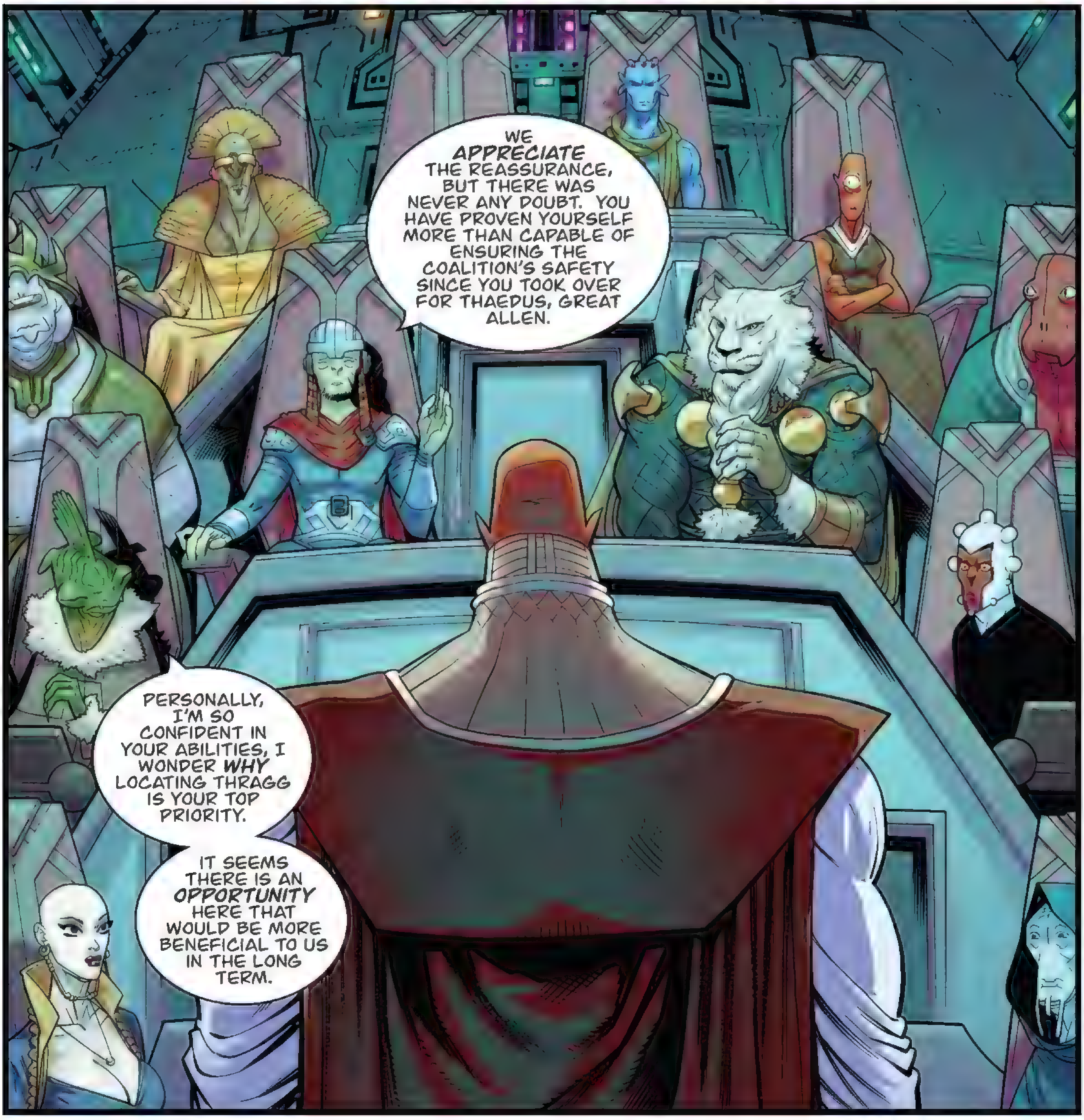
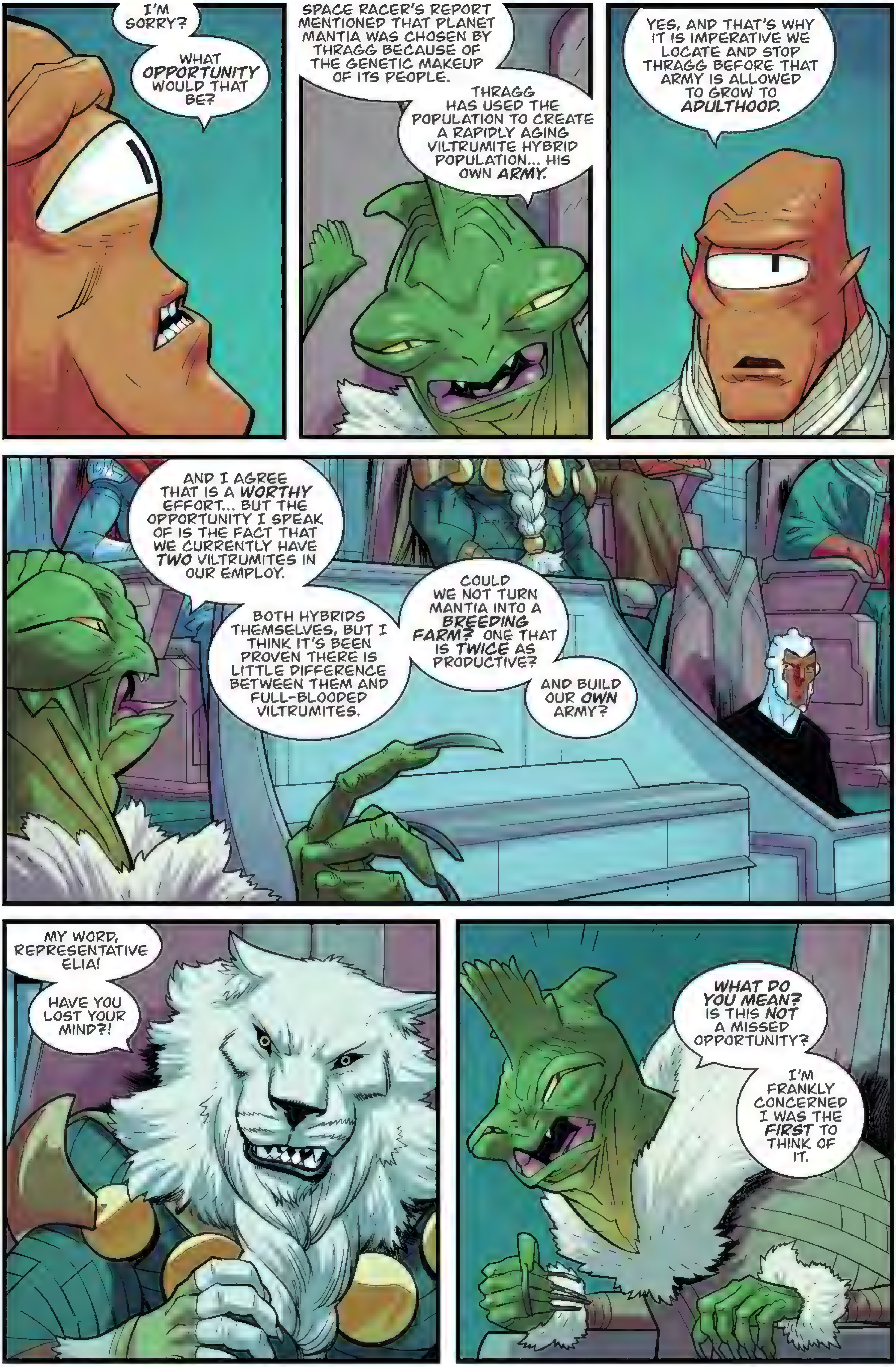
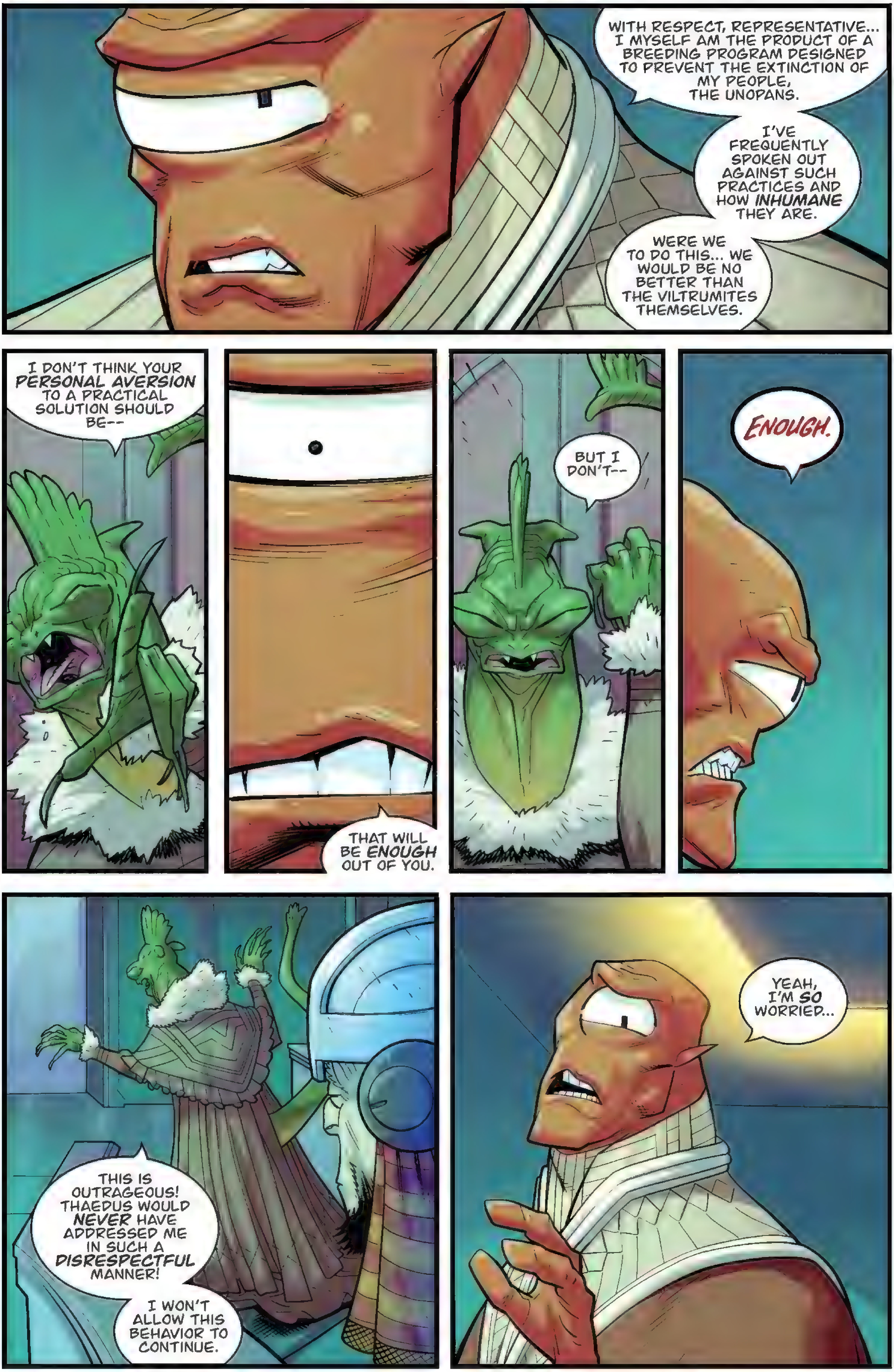
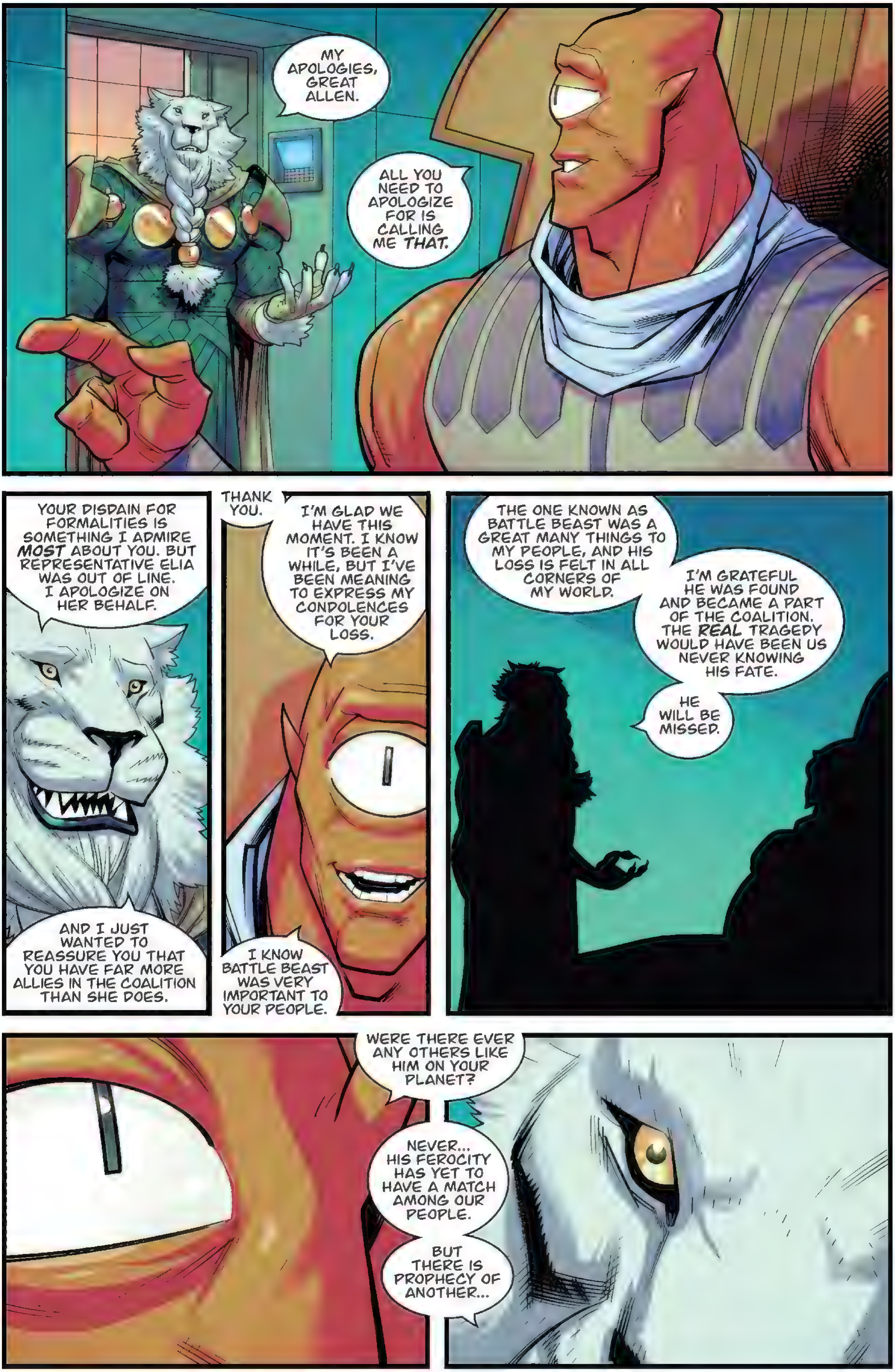
CHAPTER 122

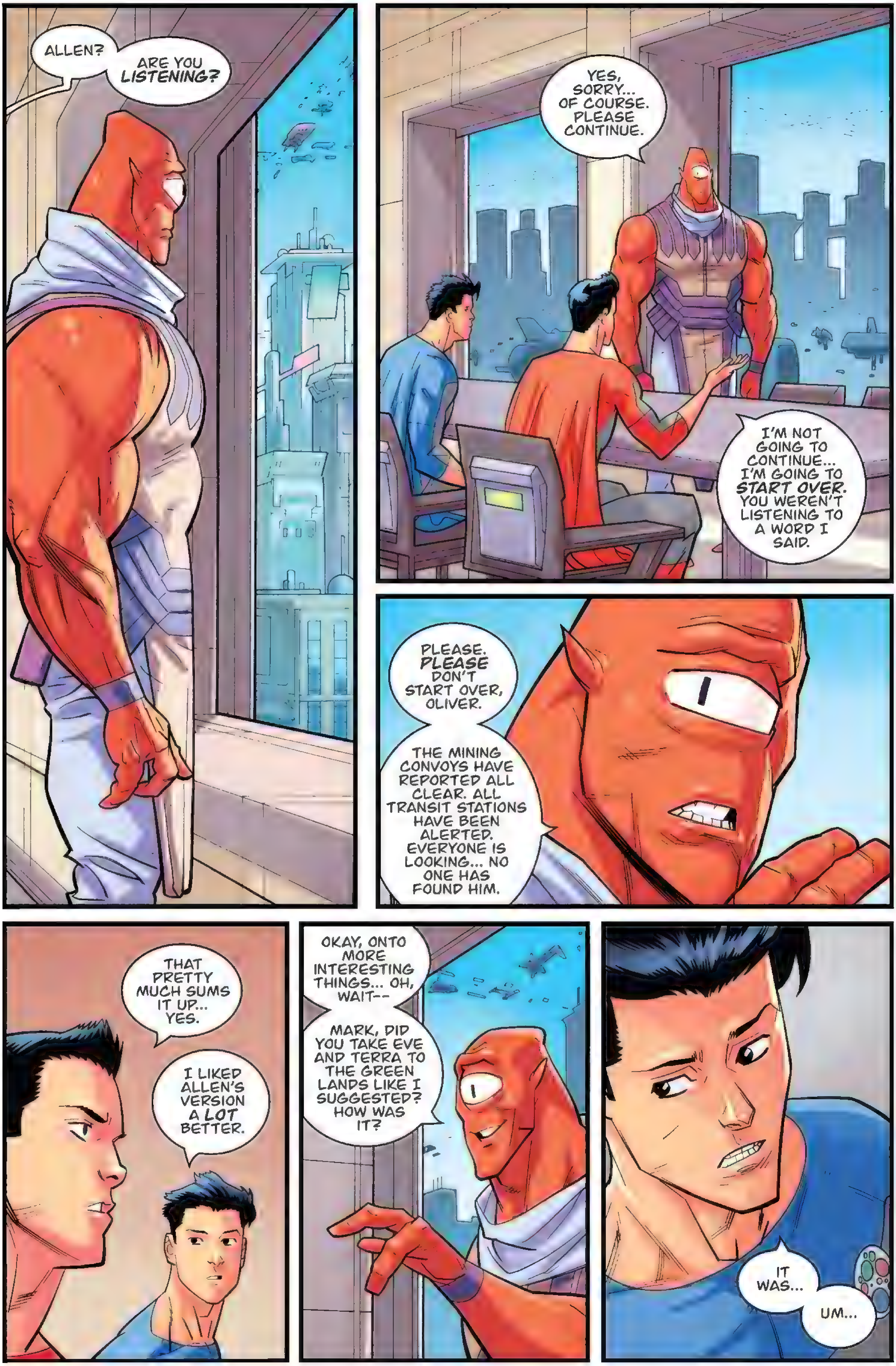

REST ASSURED, LOCATING THRAGG IS CURRENTLY MY NUMBER ONE PRIORITY.
ALL THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS ARE BEING UTILIZED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL.
HE POSES TOO GREAT A THREAT. I AM FULLY AWARE OF THAT.

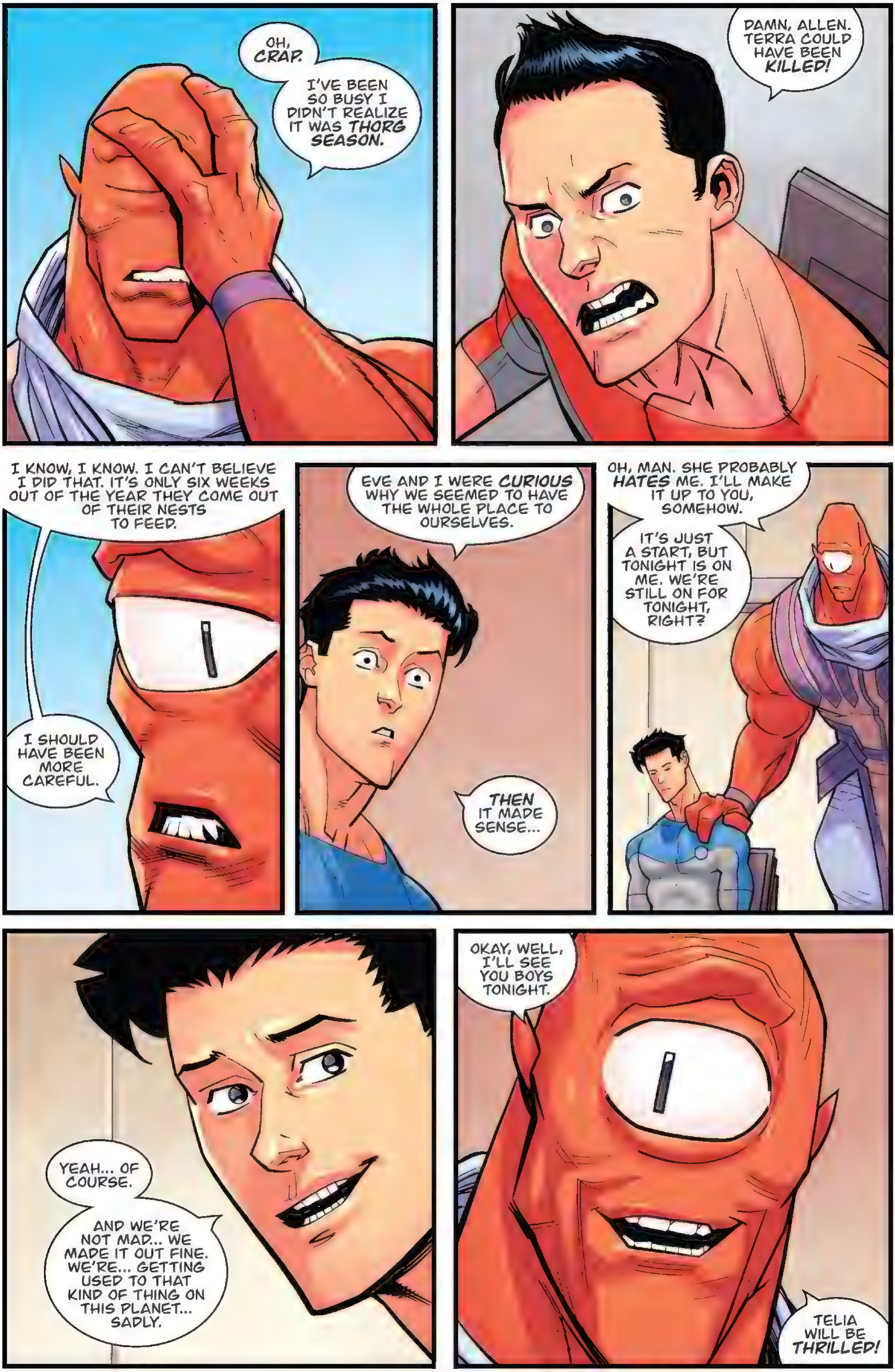

WE *APPRECIATE* THE REASSURANCE, BUT THERE WAS NEVER ANY DOUBT. YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF MORE THAN CAPABLE OF ENSURING THE COALITION'S SAFETY SINCE YOU TOOK OVER FOR THAEDUS, GREAT ALLEN.
PERSONALLY, I'M SO CONFIDENT IN YOUR ABILITIES, I WONDER *WHY* LOCATING THRAGG IS YOUR TOP PRIORITY.
IT SEEMS THERE IS AN *OPPORTUNITY* HERE THAT WOULD BE MORE BENEFICIAL TO US IN THE LONG TERM.

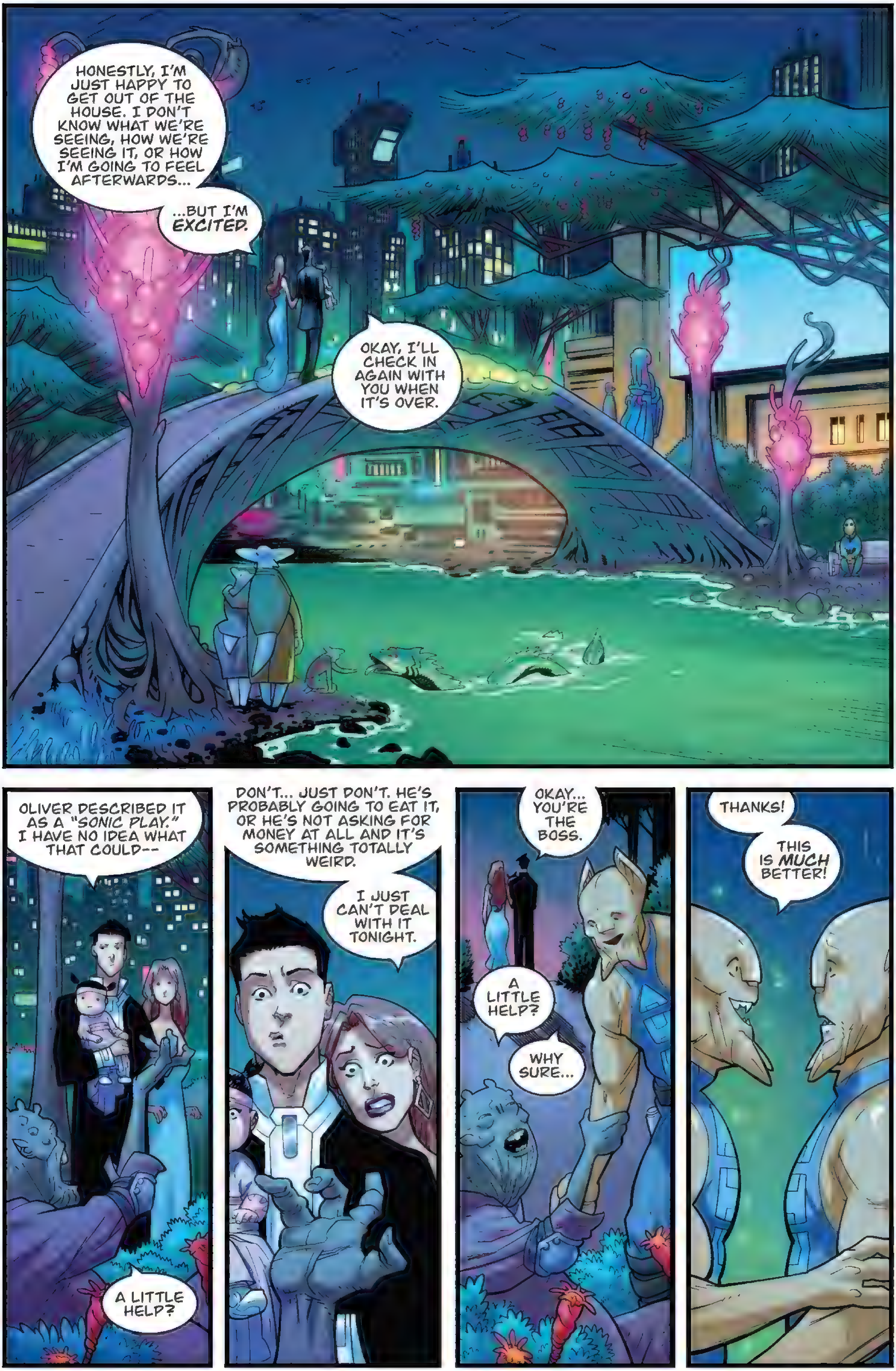

I'M SORRY?
WHAT *OPPORTUNITY* WOULD THAT BE?
SPACE RACER'S REPORT MENTIONED THAT PLANET MANTIA WAS CHOSEN BY THRAGG BECAUSE OF THE GENETIC MAKEUP OF ITS PEOPLE.
THRAGG HAS USED THE POPULATION TO CREATE A RAPIDLY AGING VILTRUMITE HYBRID POPULATION... HIS OWN *ARMY.*
YES, AND THAT'S WHY IT IS IMPERATIVE WE LOCATE AND STOP THRAGG BEFORE THAT ARMY IS ALLOWED TO GROW TO *ADULTHOOD.*
AND I AGREE THAT IS A *WORTHY* EFFORT... BUT THE OPPORTUNITY I SPEAK OF IS THE FACT THAT WE CURRENTLY HAVE *TWO* VILTRUMITES IN OUR EMPLOY.
BOTH HYBRIDS THEMSELVES, BUT I THINK IT'S BEEN PROVEN THERE IS LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM AND FULL-BLOODED VILTRUMITES.
COULD WE NOT TURN MANTIA INTO A *BREEDING FARM?* ONE THAT IS *TWICE* AS PRODUCTIVE?
AND BUILD OUR *OWN* ARMY?
MY WORD, REPRESENTATIVE ELIA!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IS THIS *NOT* A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?
I'M FRANKLY CONCERNED I WAS THE *FIRST* TO THINK OF IT.

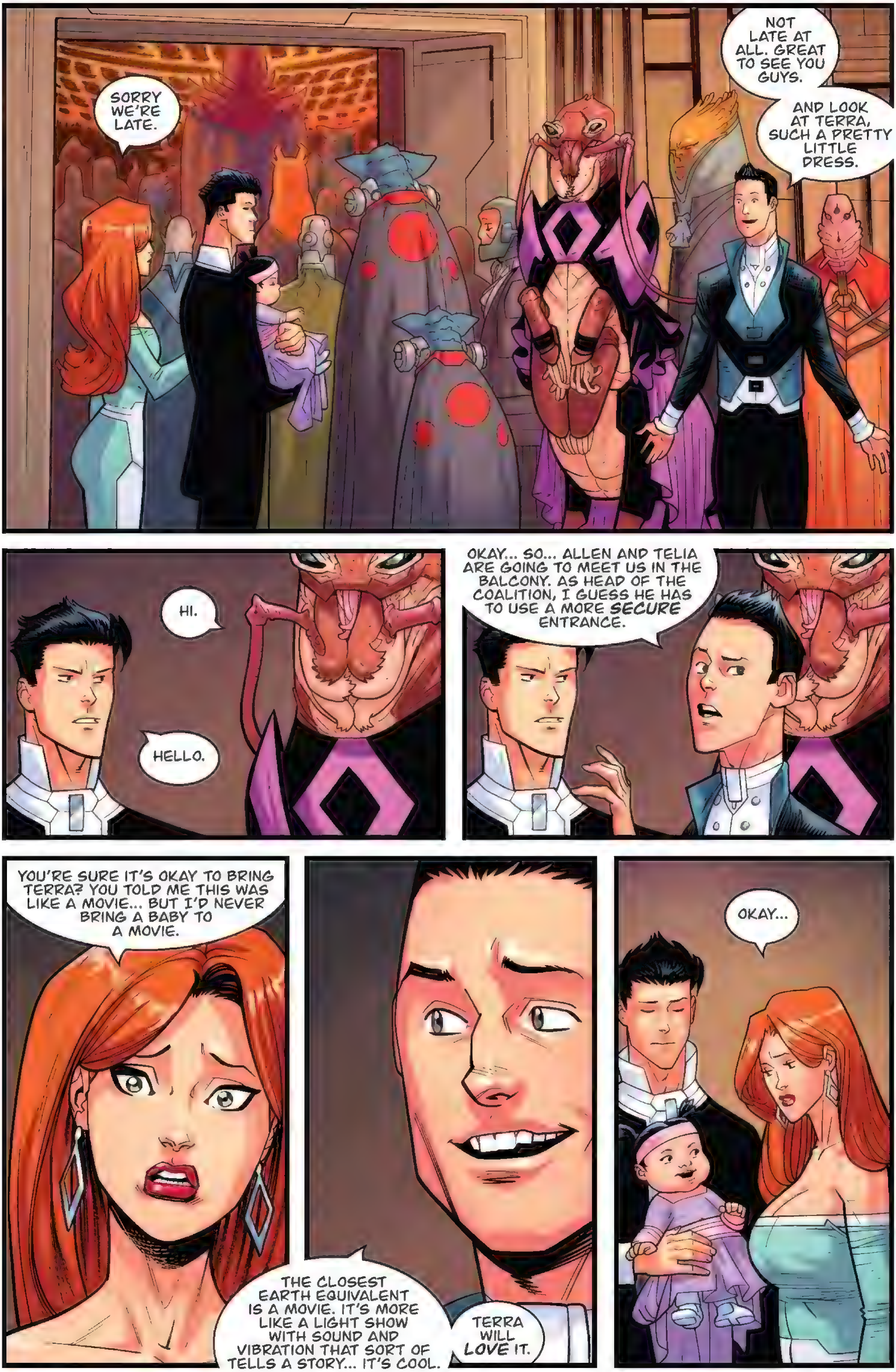

WITH RESPECT, REPRESENTATIVE... I MYSELF AM THE PRODUCT OF A BREEDING PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PREVENT THE EXTINCTION OF MY PEOPLE, THE UNOPANS.
I'VE FREQUENTLY SPOKEN OUT AGAINST SUCH PRACTICES AND HOW *INHUMANE* THEY ARE.
WERE WE TO DO THIS... WE WOULD BE NO BETTER THAN THE VILTRUMITES THEMSELVES.
I DON'T THINK YOUR *PERSONAL AVERSION* TO A PRACTICAL SOLUTION SHOULD BE--
THAT WILL BE *ENOUGH* OUT OF YOU.
BUT I DON'T--
ENOUGH.
THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! THAEDUS WOULD *NEVER* HAVE ADDRESSED ME IN SUCH A *DISRESPECTFUL* MANNER!
I WON'T ALLOW THIS BEHAVIOR TO CONTINUE.
YEAH, I'M *SO* WORRIED...

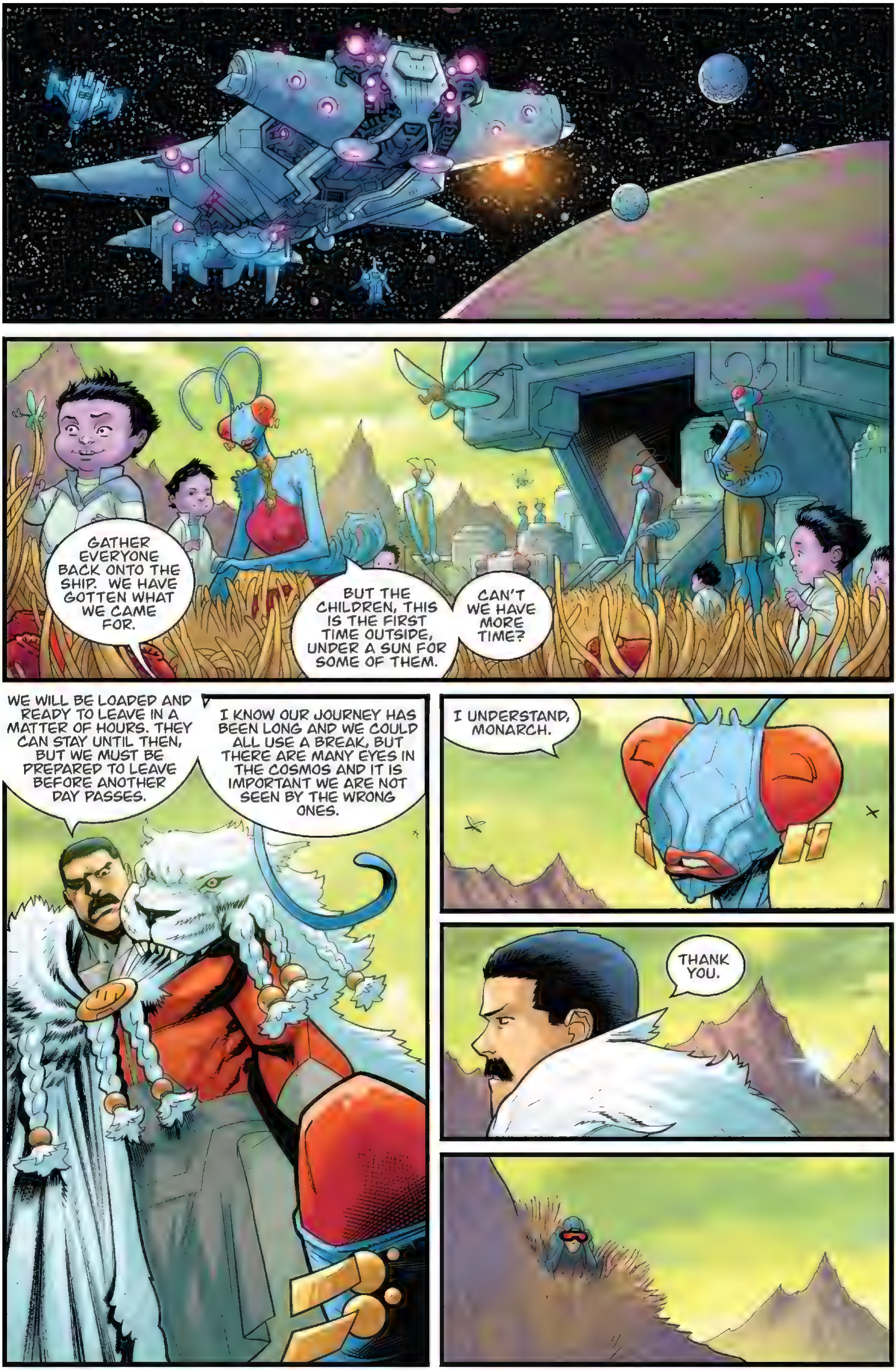

MY APOLOGIES, GREAT ALLEN.
ALL YOU NEED TO APOLOGIZE FOR IS CALLING ME *THAT.*
YOUR DISDAIN FOR FORMALITIES IS SOMETHING I ADMIRE *MOST* ABOUT YOU. BUT REPRESENTATIVE ELIA WAS OUT OF LINE. I APOLOGIZE ON HER BEHALF.
AND I JUST WANTED TO REASSURE YOU THAT YOU HAVE FAR MORE ALLIES IN THE COALITION THAN SHE DOES.
THANK YOU.
I'M GLAD WE HAVE THIS MOMENT. I KNOW IT'S BEEN A WHILE, BUT I'VE BEEN MEANING TO EXPRESS MY CONDOLENCES FOR YOUR LOSS.
I KNOW BATTLE BEAST WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO YOUR PEOPLE.
THE ONE KNOWN AS BATTLE BEAST WAS A GREAT MANY THINGS TO MY PEOPLE, AND HIS LOSS IS FELT IN ALL CORNERS OF MY WORLD.
I'M GRATEFUL HE WAS FOUND AND BECAME A PART OF THE COALITION. THE *REAL* TRAGEDY WOULD HAVE BEEN US NEVER KNOWING HIS FATE.
HE WILL BE MISSED.
WERE THERE EVER ANY OTHERS LIKE HIM ON YOUR PLANET?
NEVER... HIS FEROCITY HAS YET TO HAVE A MATCH AMONG OUR PEOPLE.
BUT THERE IS PROPHECY OF ANOTHER...

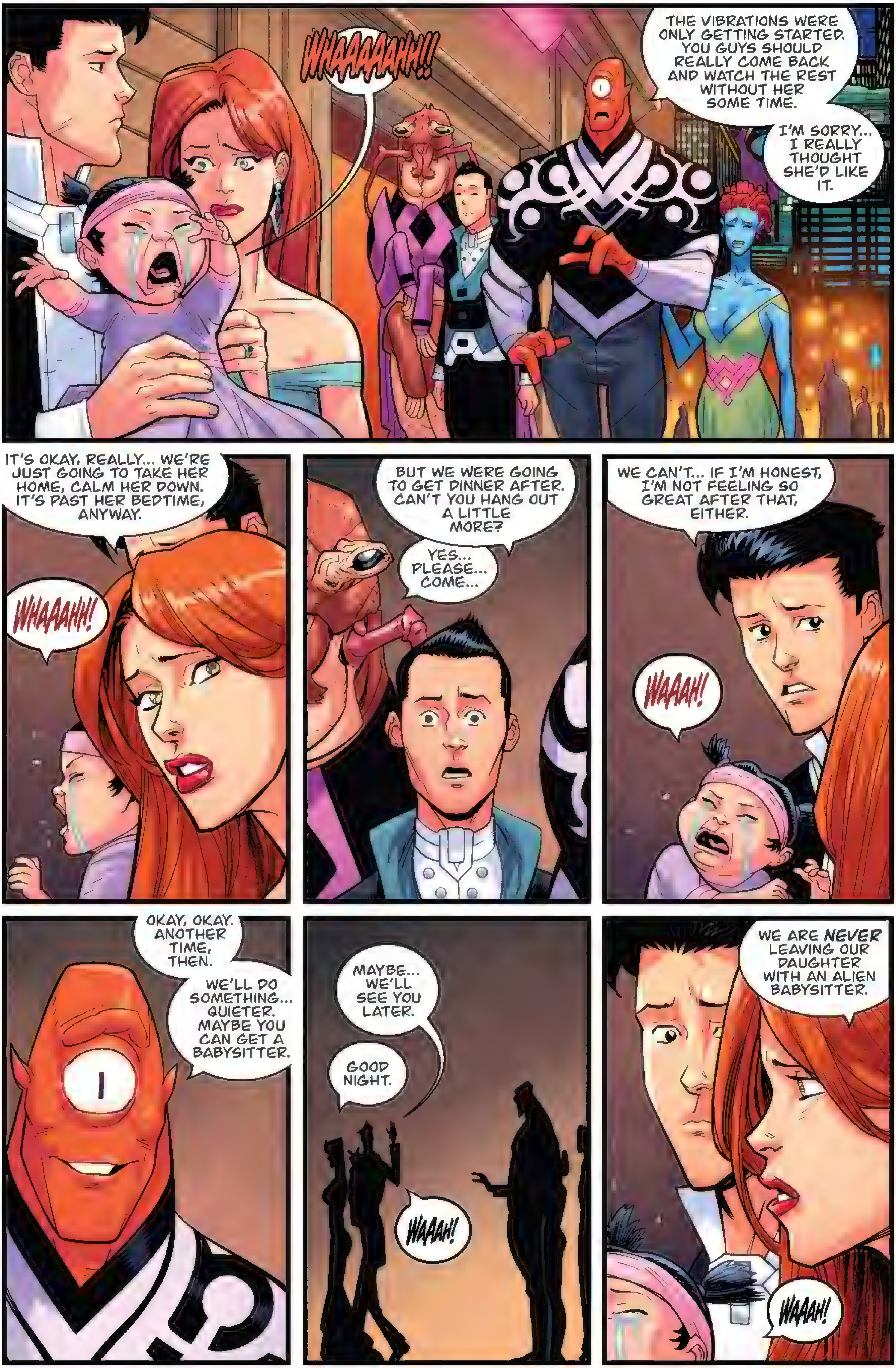

ALLEN?
ARE YOU LISTENING?
YES, SORRY... OF COURSE. PLEASE CONTINUE.
I'M NOT GOING TO CONTINUE... I'M GOING TO START OVER. YOU WEREN'T LISTENING TO A WORD I SAID.
PLEASE. PLEASE DON'T START OVER, OLIVER.
THE MINING CONVOYS HAVE REPORTED ALL CLEAR. ALL TRANSIT STATIONS HAVE BEEN ALERTED. EVERYONE IS LOOKING... NO ONE HAS FOUND HIM.
THAT PRETTY MUCH SUMS IT UP... YES.
I LIKED ALLEN'S VERSION A LOT BETTER.
OKAY, ONTO MORE INTERESTING THINGS... OH, WAIT--
MARK, DID YOU TAKE EVE AND TERRA TO THE GREEN LANDS LIKE I SUGGESTED? HOW WAS IT?
IT WAS...
UM...

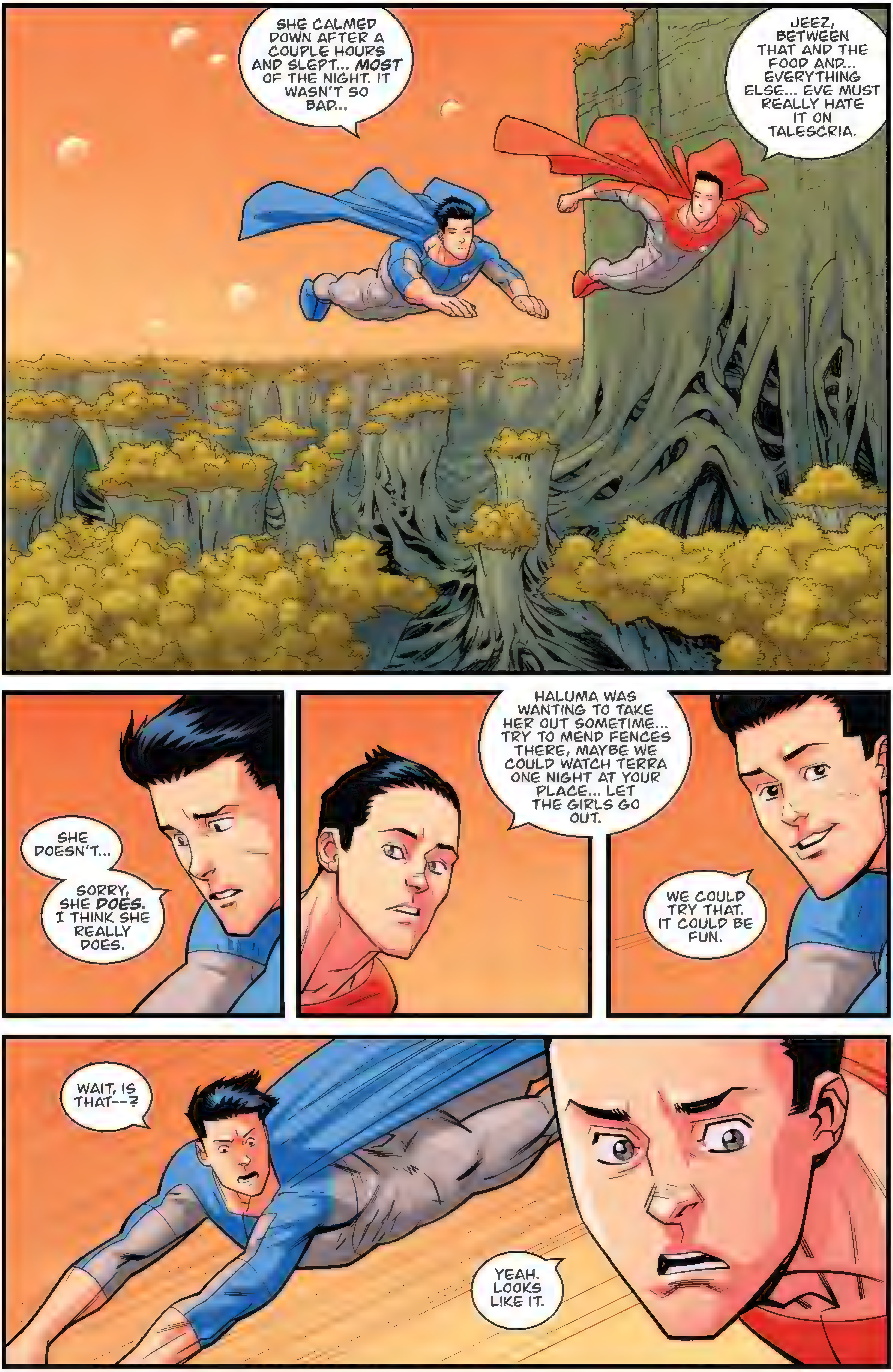

OH, *CRAP.*
I'VE BEEN SO BUSY I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS *THORG SEASON.*
DAMN, ALLEN. TERRA COULD HAVE BEEN *KILLED!*
I KNOW, I KNOW. I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THAT. IT'S ONLY SIX WEEKS OUT OF THE YEAR THEY COME OUT OF THEIR NESTS TO FEED.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL.
EVE AND I WERE *CURIOUS* WHY WE SEEMED TO HAVE THE WHOLE PLACE TO OURSELVES.
THEN IT MADE SENSE...
OH, MAN. SHE PROBABLY *HATES* ME. I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU, SOMEHOW.
IT'S JUST A START, BUT TONIGHT IS ON ME. WE'RE STILL ON FOR TONIGHT, RIGHT?
YEAH... OF COURSE.
AND WE'RE NOT MAD... WE MADE IT OUT FINE. WE'RE... GETTING USED TO THAT KIND OF THING ON THIS PLANET... SADLY.
OKAY, WELL, I'LL SEE YOU BOYS TONIGHT.
TELIA WILL BE *THRILLED!*

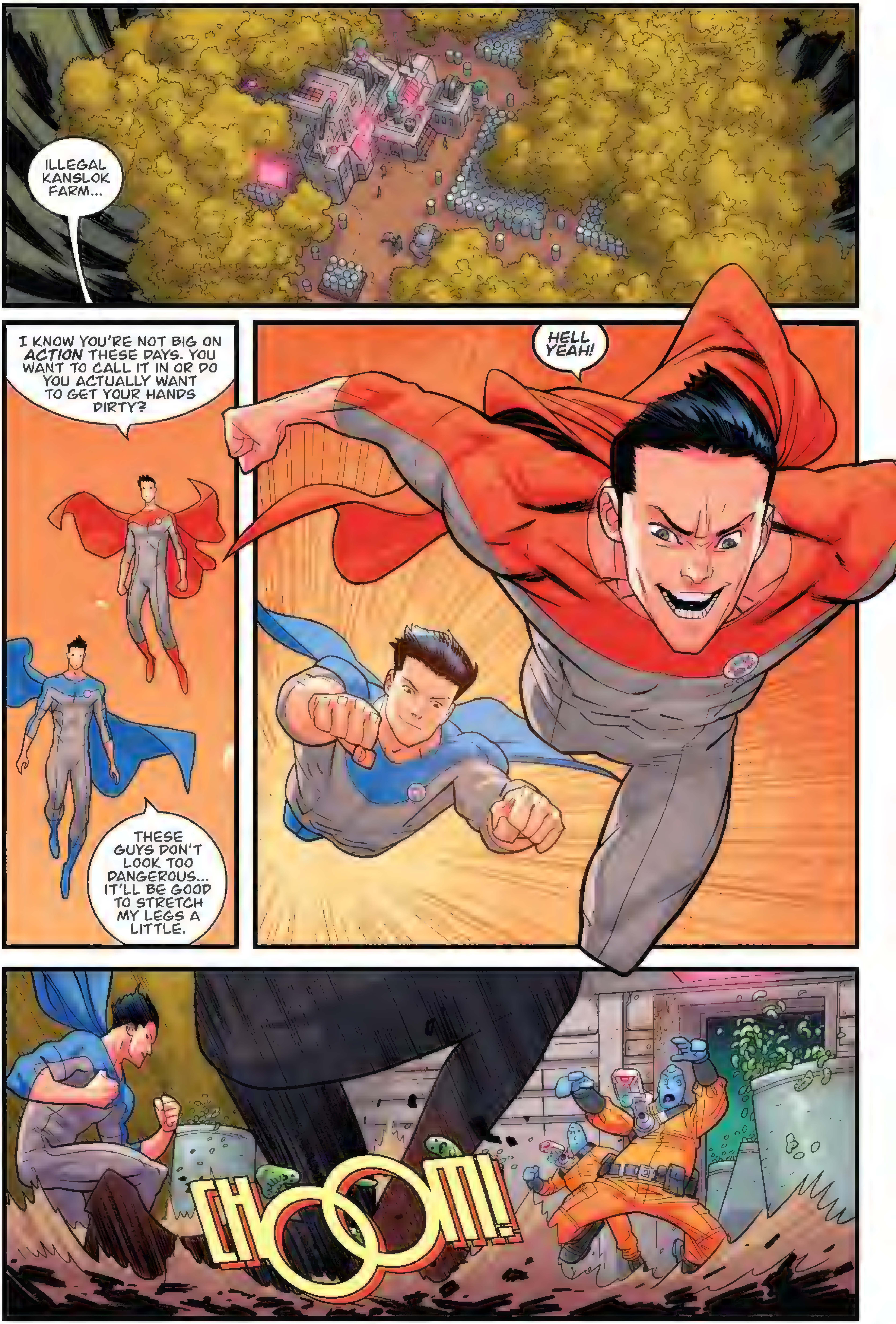

HONESTLY, I'M JUST HAPPY TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE SEEING, HOW WE'RE SEEING IT, OR HOW I'M GOING TO FEEL AFTERWARDS...
...BUT I'M *EXCITED*.
OKAY, I'LL CHECK IN AGAIN WITH YOU WHEN IT'S OVER.
OLIVER DESCRIBED IT AS A "SONIC PLAY." I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THAT COULD--
A LITTLE HELP?
DON'T... JUST DON'T. HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO EAT IT, OR HE'S NOT ASKING FOR MONEY AT ALL AND IT'S SOMETHING TOTALLY WEIRD.
I JUST CAN'T DEAL WITH IT TONIGHT.
OKAY... YOU'RE THE BOSS.
A LITTLE HELP?
WHY SURE...
THANKS!
THIS IS *MUCH* BETTER!


SORRY WE'RE LATE.
NOT LATE AT ALL. GREAT TO SEE YOU GUYS.
AND LOOK AT TERRA, SUCH A PRETTY LITTLE DRESS.
HI.
HELLO.
OKAY... SO... ALLEN AND TELIA ARE GOING TO MEET US IN THE BALCONY. AS HEAD OF THE COALITION, I GUESS HE HAS TO USE A MORE **SECURE** ENTRANCE.
YOU'RE SURE IT'S OKAY TO BRING TERRA? YOU TOLD ME THIS WAS LIKE A MOVIE... BUT I'D NEVER BRING A BABY TO A MOVIE.
THE CLOSEST EARTH EQUIVALENT IS A MOVIE. IT'S MORE LIKE A LIGHT SHOW WITH SOUND AND VIBRATION THAT SORT OF TELLS A STORY... IT'S COOL.
TERRA WILL **LOVE** IT.
OKAY...


GATHER EVERYONE BACK ONTO THE SHIP. WE HAVE GOTTEN WHAT WE CAME FOR.
BUT THE CHILDREN, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME OUTSIDE, UNDER A SUN FOR SOME OF THEM.
CAN'T WE HAVE MORE TIME?
WE WILL BE LOADED AND READY TO LEAVE IN A MATTER OF HOURS. THEY CAN STAY UNTIL THEN, BUT WE MUST BE PREPARED TO LEAVE BEFORE ANOTHER DAY PASSES.
I KNOW OUR JOURNEY HAS BEEN LONG AND WE COULD ALL USE A BREAK, BUT THERE ARE MANY EYES IN THE COSMOS AND IT IS IMPORTANT WE ARE NOT SEEN BY THE WRONG ONES.
I UNDERSTAND, MONARCH.
THANK YOU.

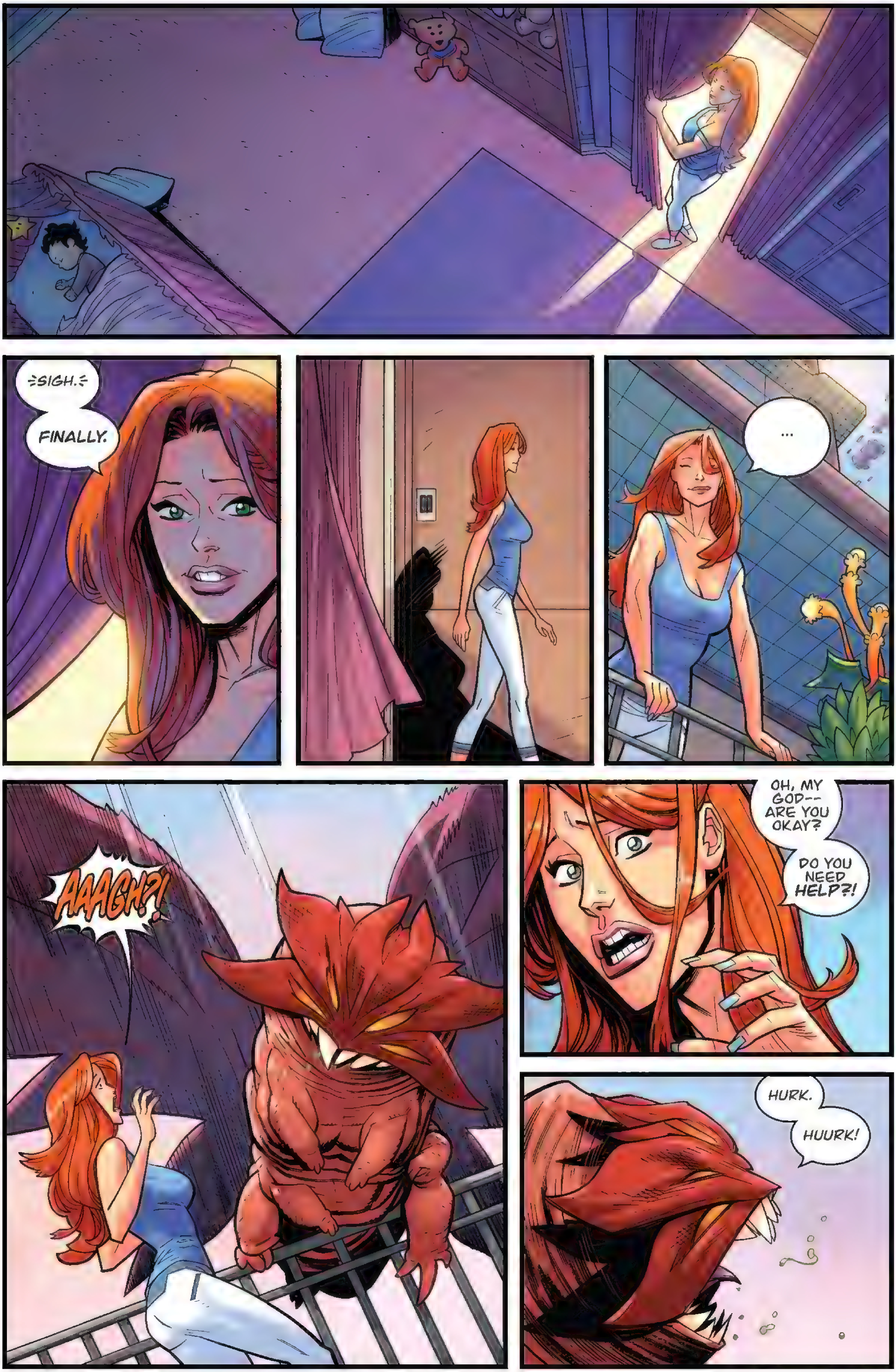

WHAAAAAHH!!
THE VIBRATIONS WERE ONLY GETTING STARTED. YOU GUYS SHOULD REALLY COME BACK AND WATCH THE REST WITHOUT HER SOME TIME.
I'M SORRY... I REALLY THOUGHT SHE'D LIKE IT.
IT'S OKAY, REALLY... WE'RE JUST GOING TO TAKE HER HOME, CALM HER DOWN. IT'S PAST HER BEDTIME, ANYWAY.
WHAAAHH!
BUT WE WERE GOING TO GET DINNER AFTER. CAN'T YOU HANG OUT A LITTLE MORE?
YES... PLEASE... COME...
WE CAN'T... IF I'M HONEST, I'M NOT FEELING SO GREAT AFTER THAT, EITHER.
WAAAH!
OKAY, OKAY. ANOTHER TIME, THEN.
WE'LL DO SOMETHING... QUIETER. MAYBE YOU CAN GET A BABYSITTER.
MAYBE... WE'LL SEE YOU LATER.
GOOD NIGHT.
WAAAH!
WE ARE *NEVER* LEAVING OUR DAUGHTER WITH AN ALIEN BABYSITTER.
WAAAH!


SHE CALMED DOWN AFTER A COUPLE HOURS AND SLEPT... *MOST* OF THE NIGHT. IT WASN'T SO BAD...
JEEZ, BETWEEN THAT AND THE FOOD AND... EVERYTHING ELSE... EVE MUST REALLY HATE IT ON TALESCRIA.
SHE DOESN'T...
SORRY, SHE *DOES.* I THINK SHE REALLY DOES.
HALUMA WAS WANTING TO TAKE HER OUT SOMETIME... TRY TO MEND FENCES THERE, MAYBE WE COULD WATCH TERRA ONE NIGHT AT YOUR PLACE... LET THE GIRLS GO OUT.
WE COULD TRY THAT. IT COULD BE FUN.
WAIT, IS THAT--?
YEAH. LOOKS LIKE IT.

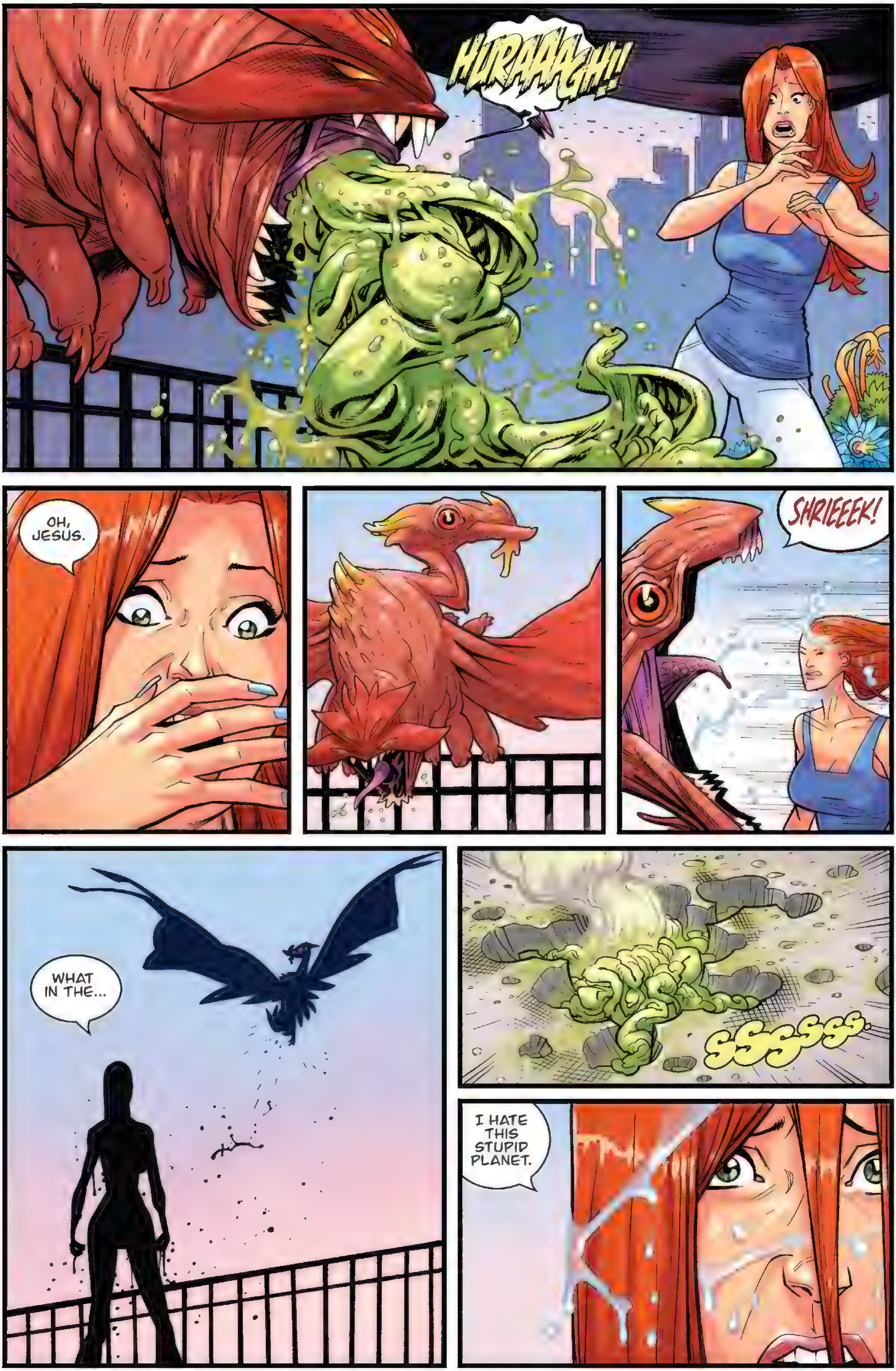

ILLEGAL KANSLOK FARM...
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT BIG ON *ACTION* THESE DAYS. YOU WANT TO CALL IT IN OR DO YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY?
THESE GUYS DON'T LOOK TOO DANGEROUS... IT'LL BE GOOD TO STRETCH MY LEGS A LITTLE.
HELL YEAH!
CHOOM!

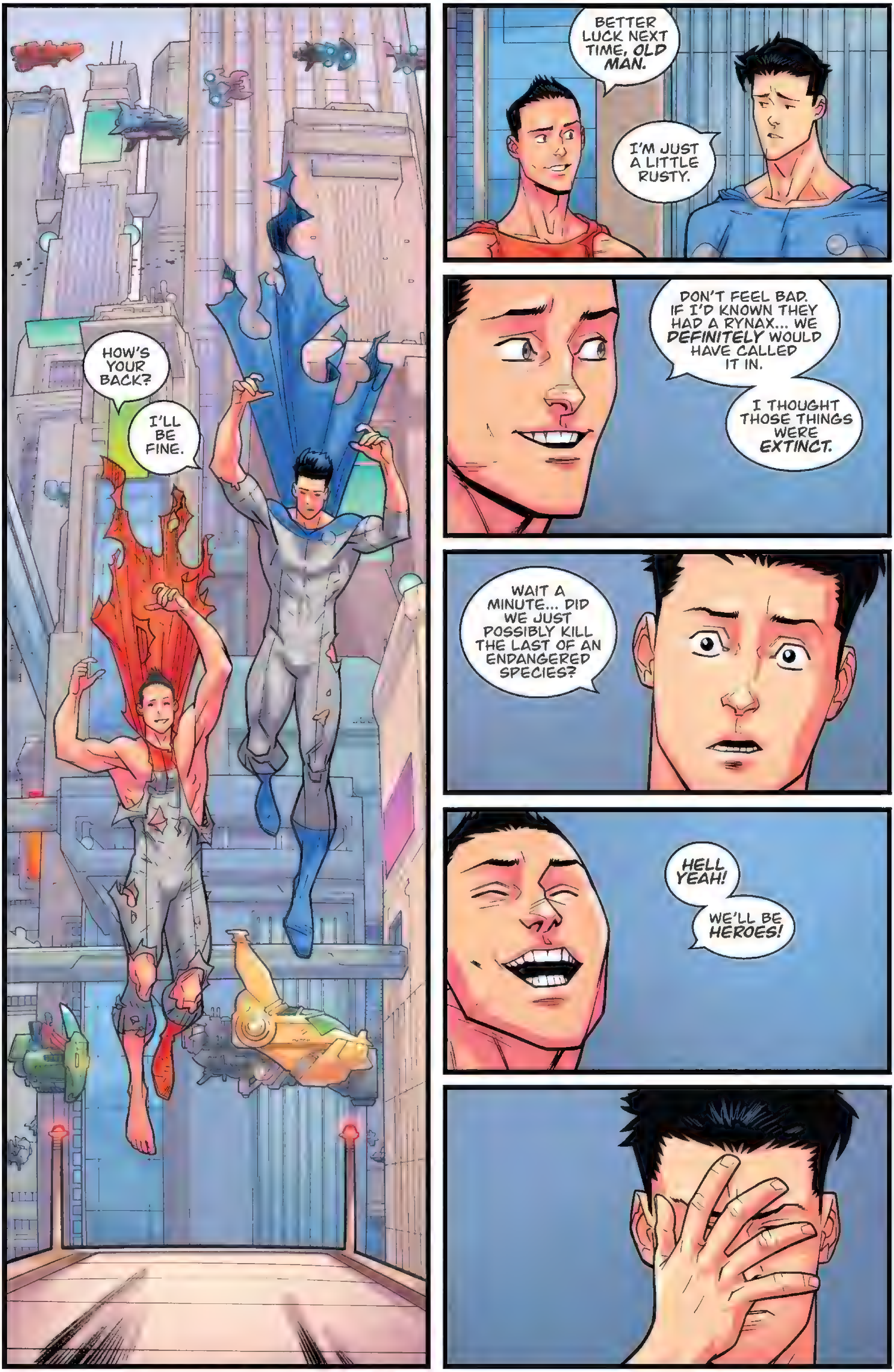
RYNAX!
WHERE IN THE WORLD DID THEY GET A RYNAX?!
RYNAX!

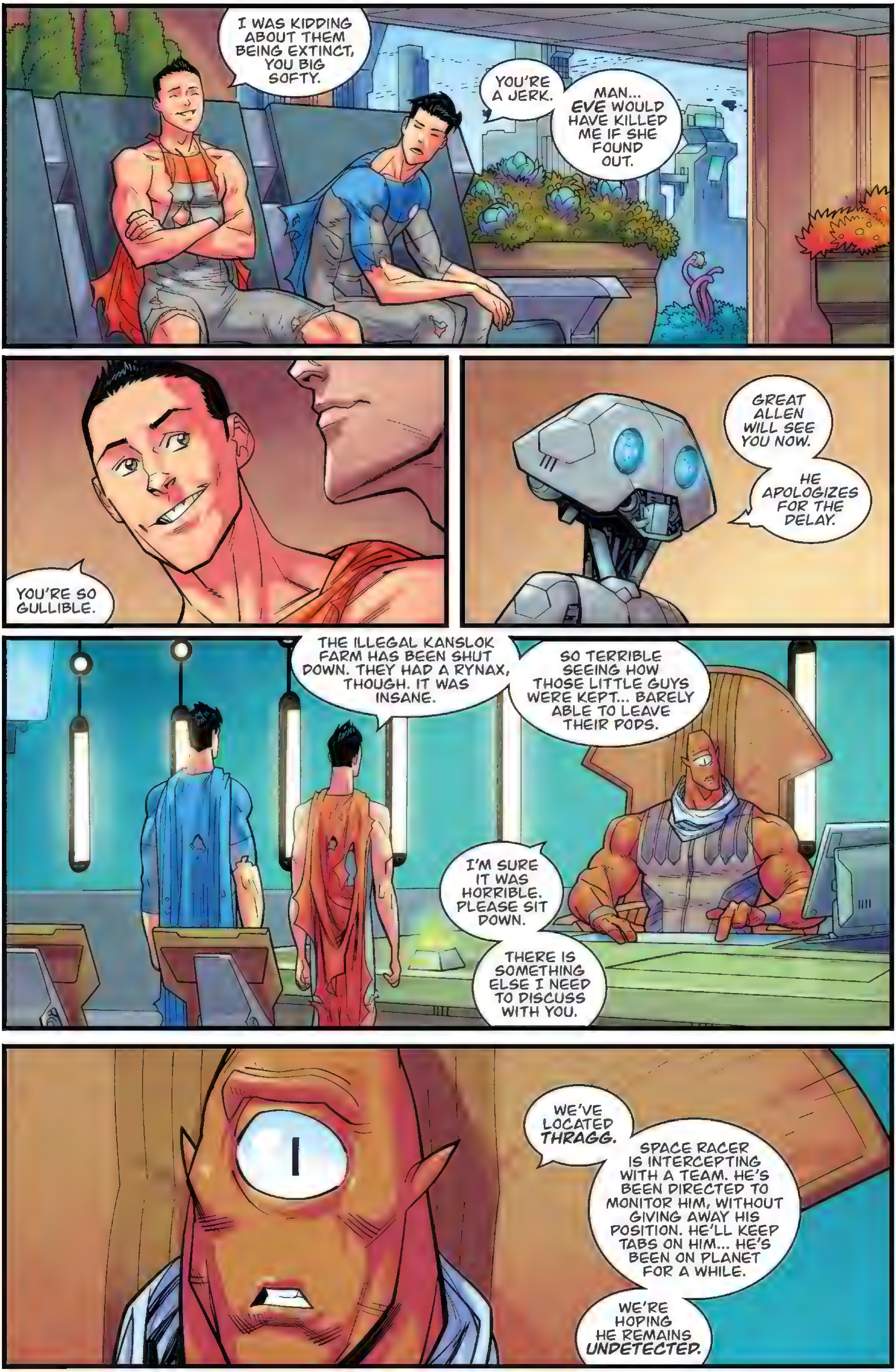
WHAT IS THIS THING?!
RYNAX!
IT'S A RYNAX!
VERY FUNNY!
RYNAX!
BOOM!
WOW.
A LITTLE HELP?!
RYNAX!



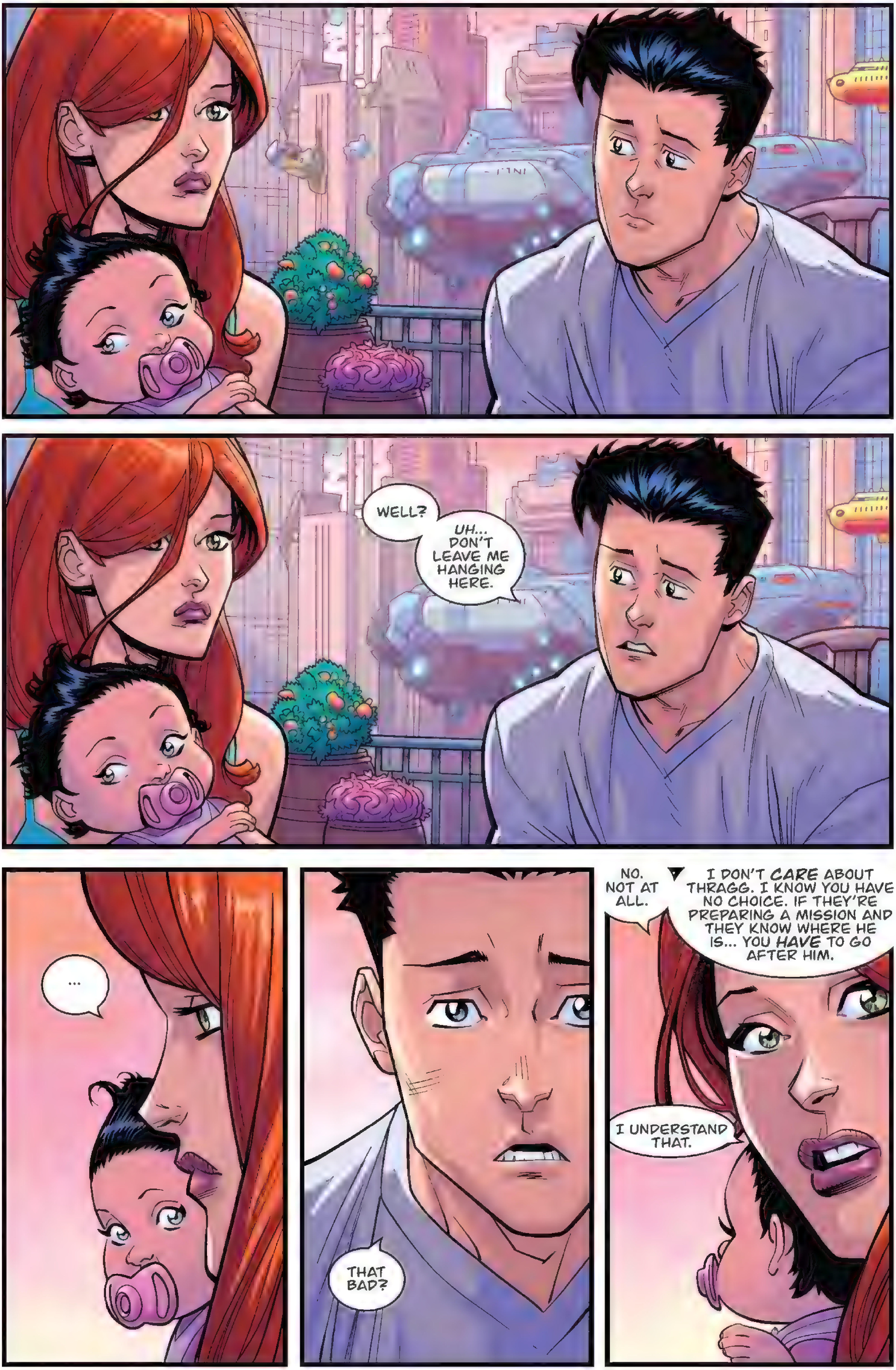
⫶SIGH.⫶
FINALLY.
...
AAAGH?!
OH, MY GOD-- ARE YOU OKAY?
DO YOU NEED HELP?!
HURK.
HUURK!

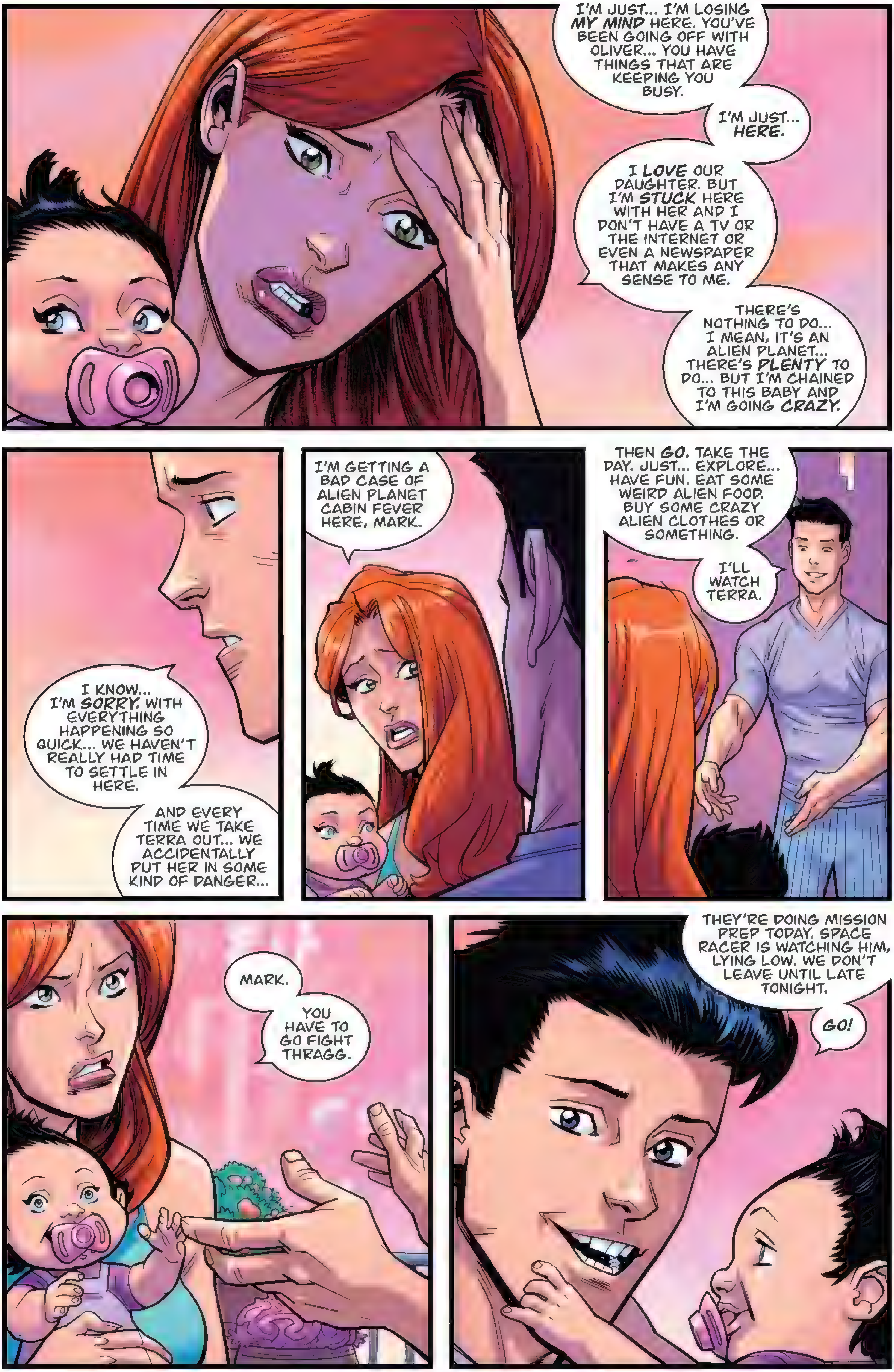

HURAAAGH!!
OH, JESUS.
SHRIEEEK!
WHAT IN THE...
SSSSSS
I HATE THIS STUPID PLANET.

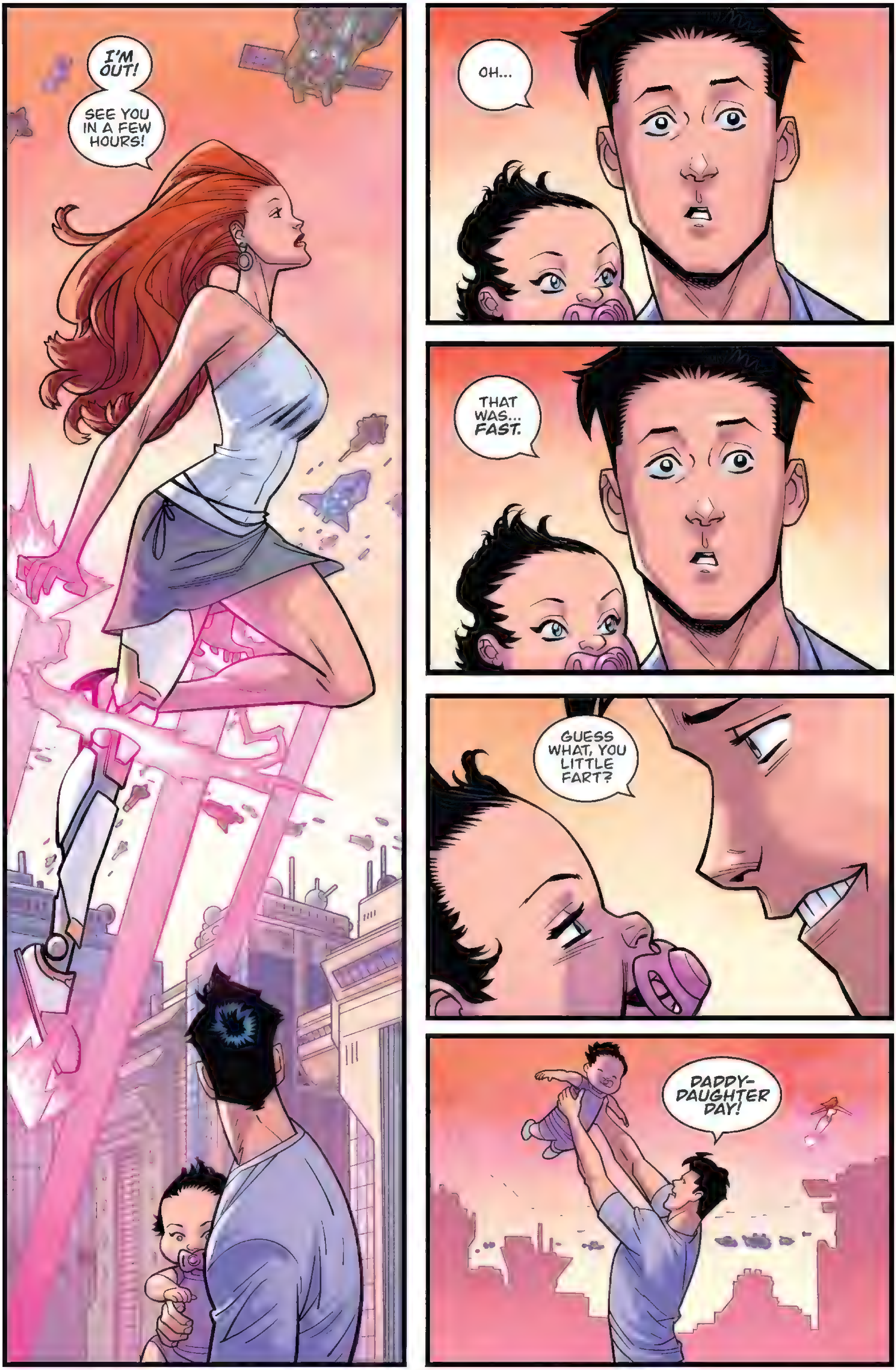

HOW'S YOUR BACK?
I'LL BE FINE.
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME, *OLD MAN.*
I'M JUST A LITTLE RUSTY.
DON'T FEEL BAD. IF I'D KNOWN THEY HAD A RYNAX... WE *DEFINITELY* WOULD HAVE CALLED IT IN.
I THOUGHT THOSE THINGS WERE *EXTINCT.*
WAIT A MINUTE... DID WE JUST POSSIBLY KILL THE LAST OF AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?
HELL YEAH!
WE'LL BE *HEROES!*

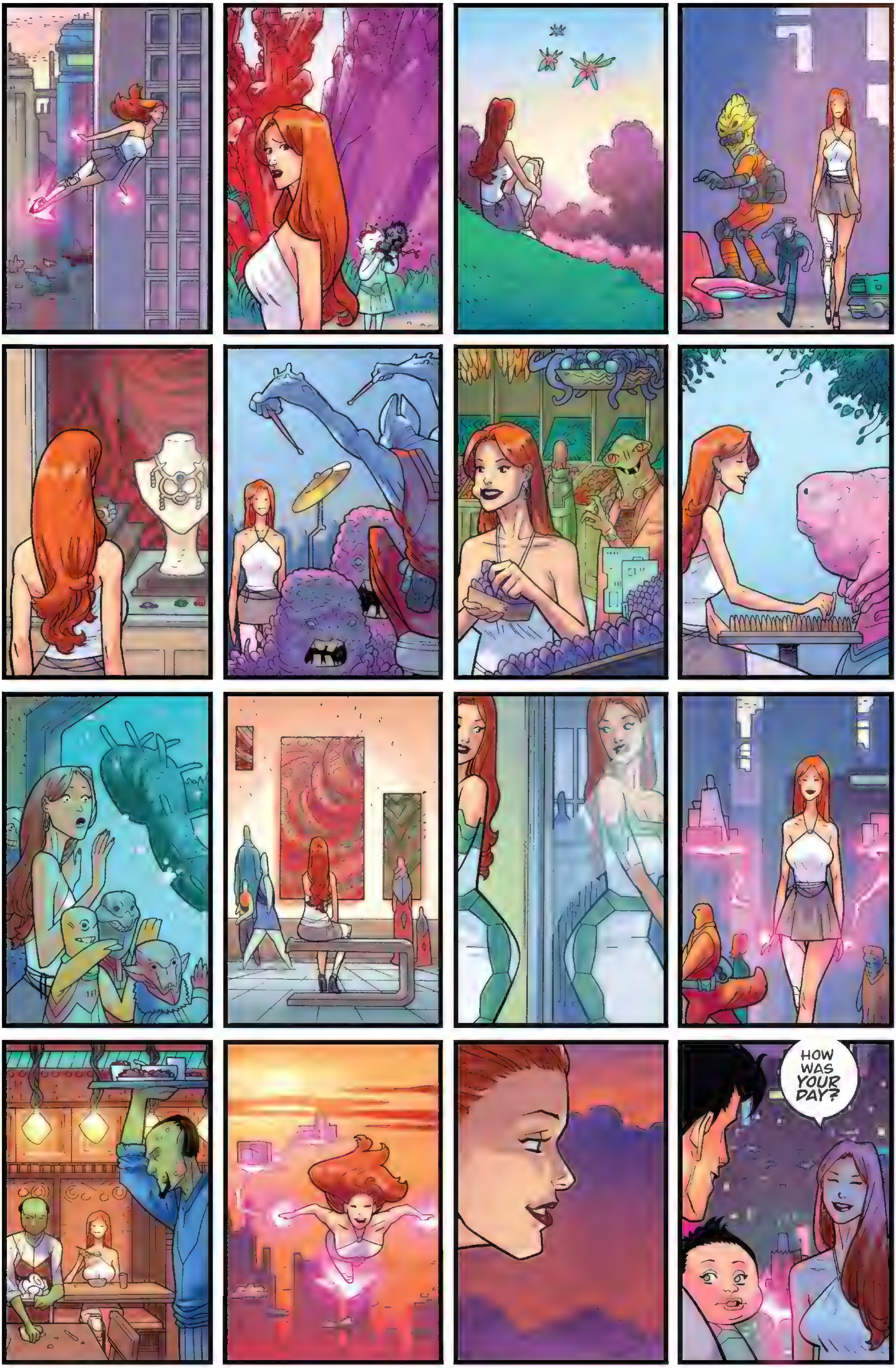

I WAS KIDDING ABOUT THEM BEING EXTINCT, YOU BIG SOFTY.
YOU'RE A JERK.
MAN... EVE WOULD HAVE KILLED ME IF SHE FOUND OUT.
YOU'RE SO GULLIBLE.
GREAT ALLEN WILL SEE YOU NOW.
HE APOLOGIZES FOR THE DELAY.
THE ILLEGAL KANSLOK FARM HAS BEEN SHUT DOWN. THEY HAD A RYNAX, THOUGH. IT WAS INSANE.
SO TERRIBLE SEEING HOW THOSE LITTLE GUYS WERE KEPT... BARELY ABLE TO LEAVE THEIR PODS.
I'M SURE IT WAS HORRIBLE. PLEASE SIT DOWN.
THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE I NEED TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.
WE'VE LOCATED THRAGG.
SPACE RACER IS INTERCEPTING WITH A TEAM. HE'S BEEN DIRECTED TO MONITOR HIM, WITHOUT GIVING AWAY HIS POSITION. HE'LL KEEP TABS ON HIM... HE'S BEEN ON PLANET FOR A WHILE.
WE'RE HOPING HE REMAINS UNDETECTED.

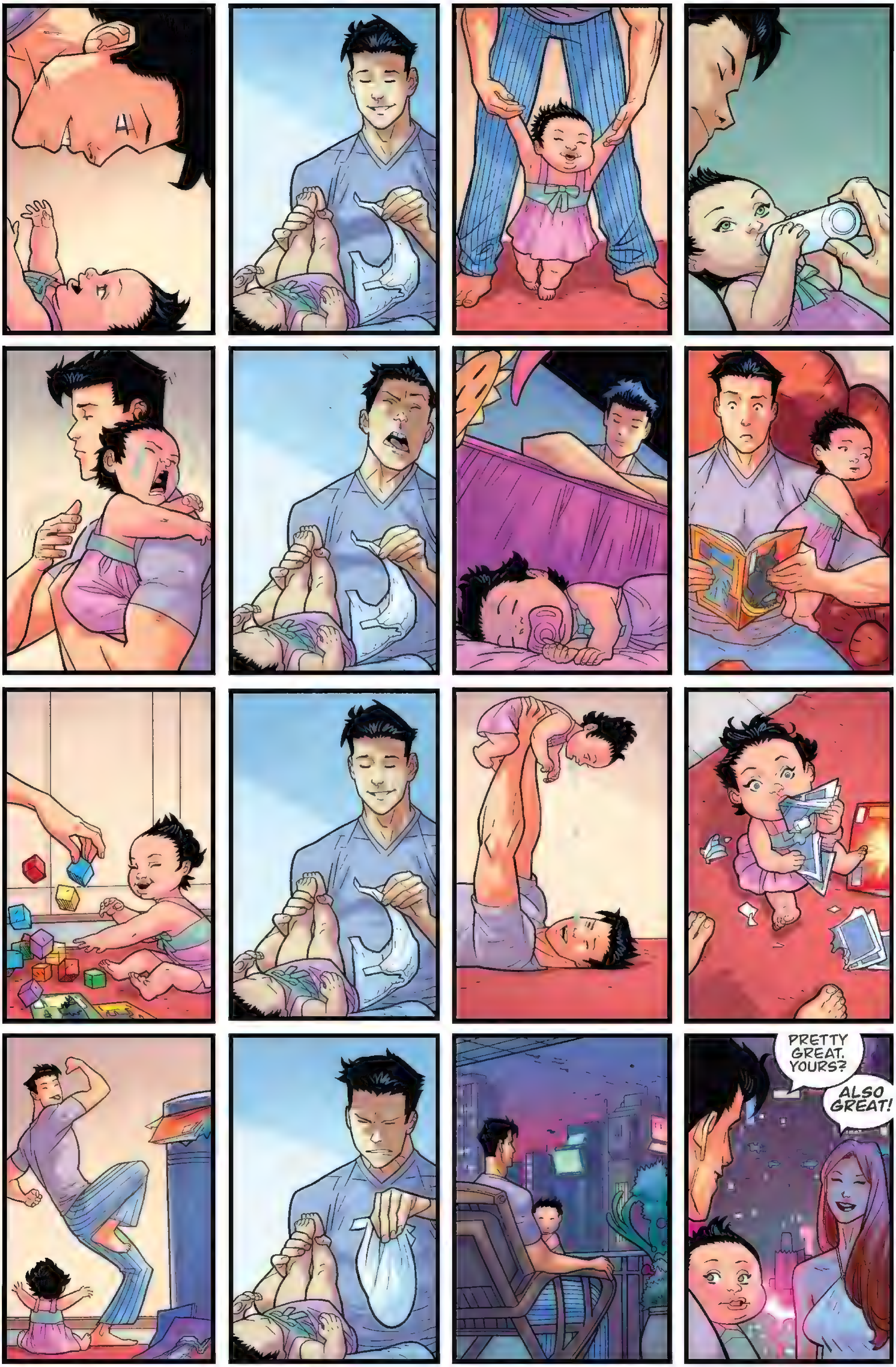
CHAPTER 123

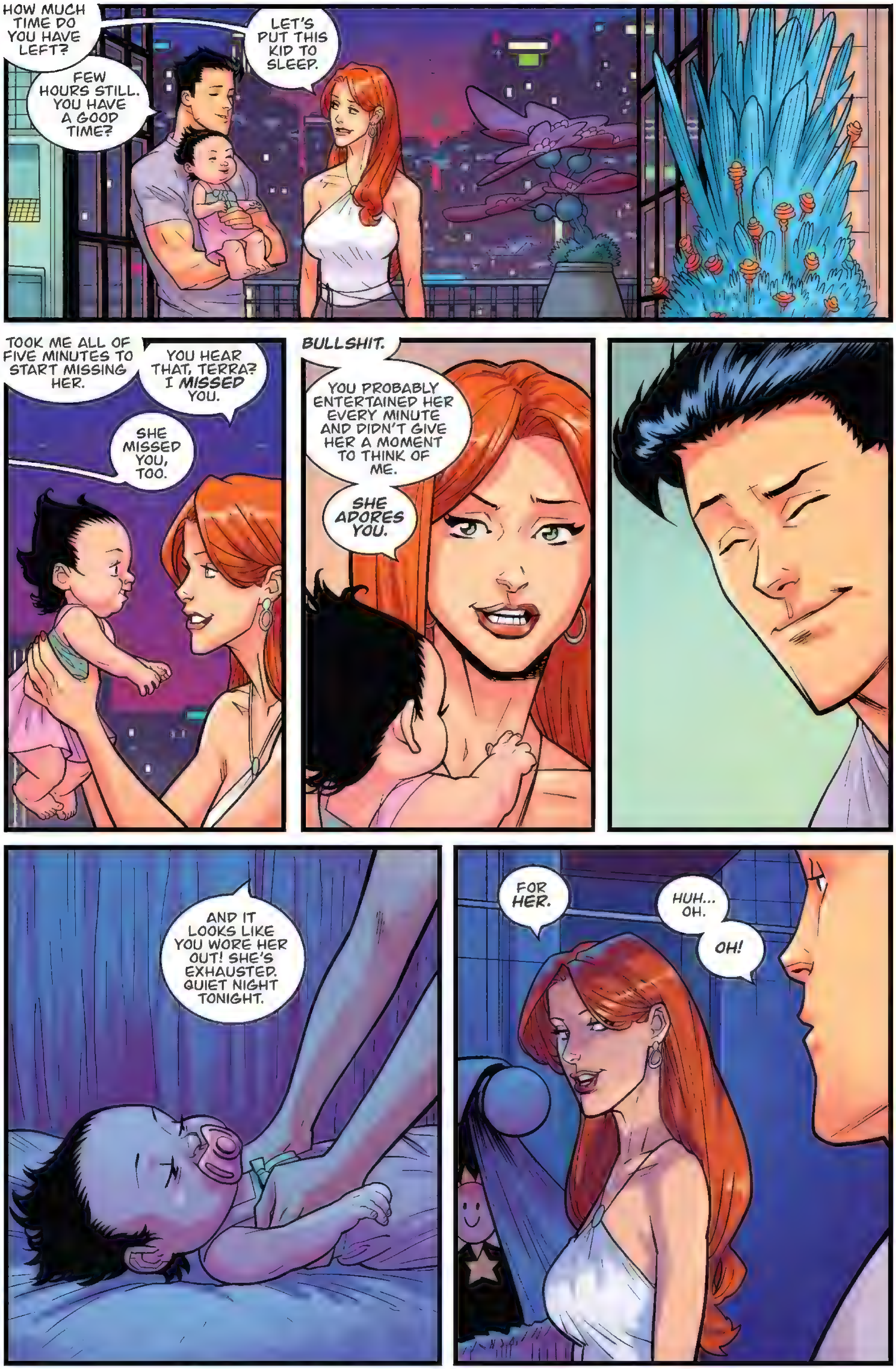

WELL?
UH... DON'T LEAVE ME HANGING HERE.
...
THAT BAD?
NO. NOT AT ALL.
I DON'T **CARE** ABOUT THRAGG. I KNOW YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. IF THEY'RE PREPARING A MISSION AND THEY KNOW WHERE HE IS... YOU **HAVE** TO GO AFTER HIM.
I UNDERSTAND THAT.

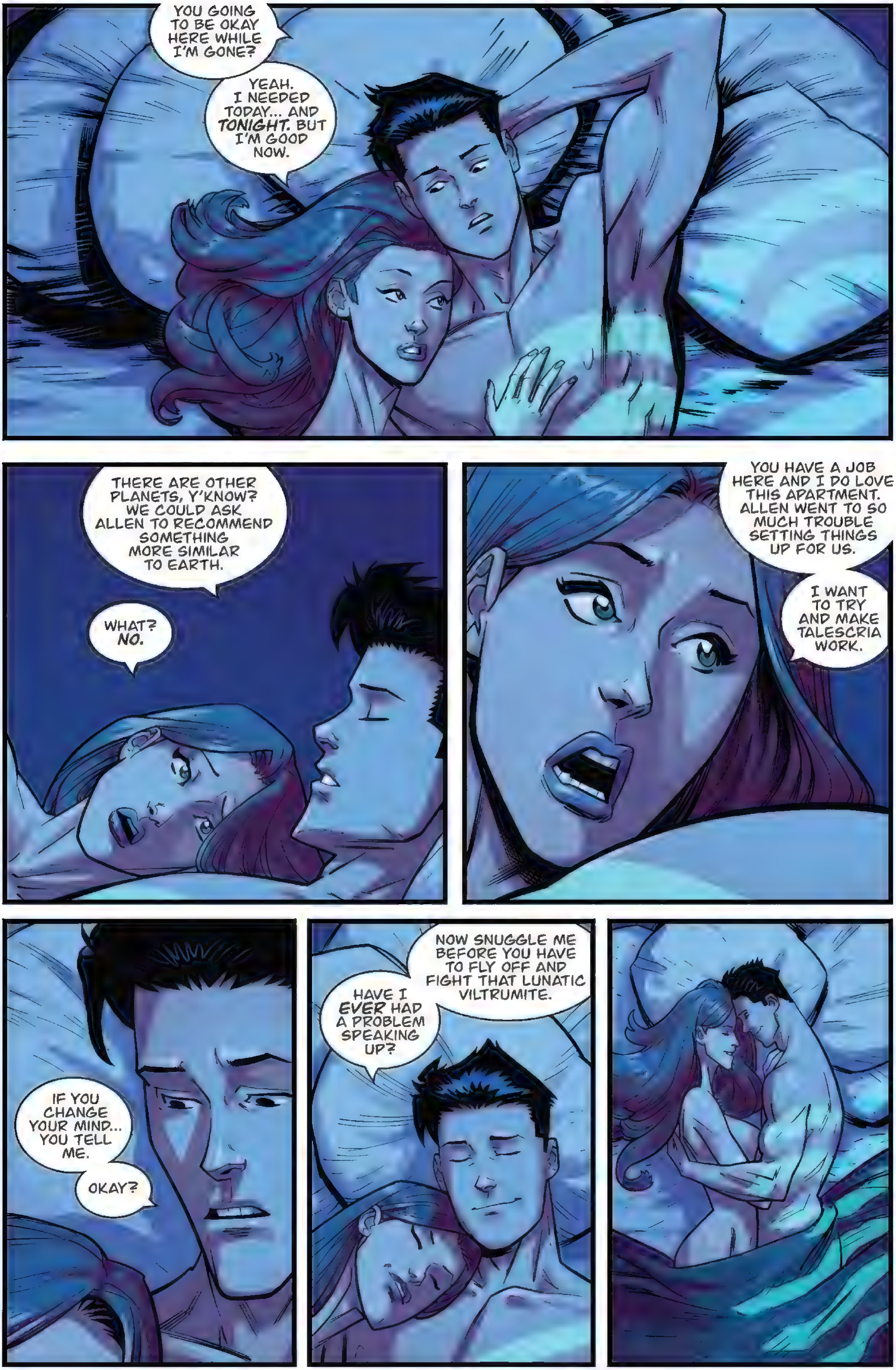

I'M JUST... I'M LOSING *MY MIND* HERE. YOU'VE BEEN GOING OFF WITH OLIVER... YOU HAVE THINGS THAT ARE KEEPING YOU BUSY.
I'M JUST... *HERE.*
I *LOVE* OUR DAUGHTER. BUT I'M *STUCK* HERE WITH HER AND I DON'T HAVE A TV OR THE INTERNET OR EVEN A NEWSPAPER THAT MAKES ANY SENSE TO ME.
THERE'S NOTHING TO DO... I MEAN, IT'S AN ALIEN PLANET... THERE'S *PLENTY* TO DO... BUT I'M CHAINED TO THIS BABY AND I'M GOING *CRAZY.*
I KNOW... I'M *SORRY.* WITH EVERYTHING HAPPENING SO QUICK... WE HAVEN'T REALLY HAD TIME TO SETTLE IN HERE.
AND EVERY TIME WE TAKE TERRA OUT... WE ACCIDENTALLY PUT HER IN SOME KIND OF DANGER...
I'M GETTING A BAD CASE OF ALIEN PLANET CABIN FEVER HERE, MARK.
THEN *GO.* TAKE THE DAY. JUST... EXPLORE... HAVE FUN. EAT SOME WEIRD ALIEN FOOD. BUY SOME CRAZY ALIEN CLOTHES OR SOMETHING.
I'LL WATCH TERRA.
MARK.
YOU HAVE TO GO FIGHT THRAGG.
THEY'RE DOING MISSION PREP TODAY. SPACE RACER IS WATCHING HIM, LYING LOW. WE DON'T LEAVE UNTIL LATE TONIGHT.
GO!

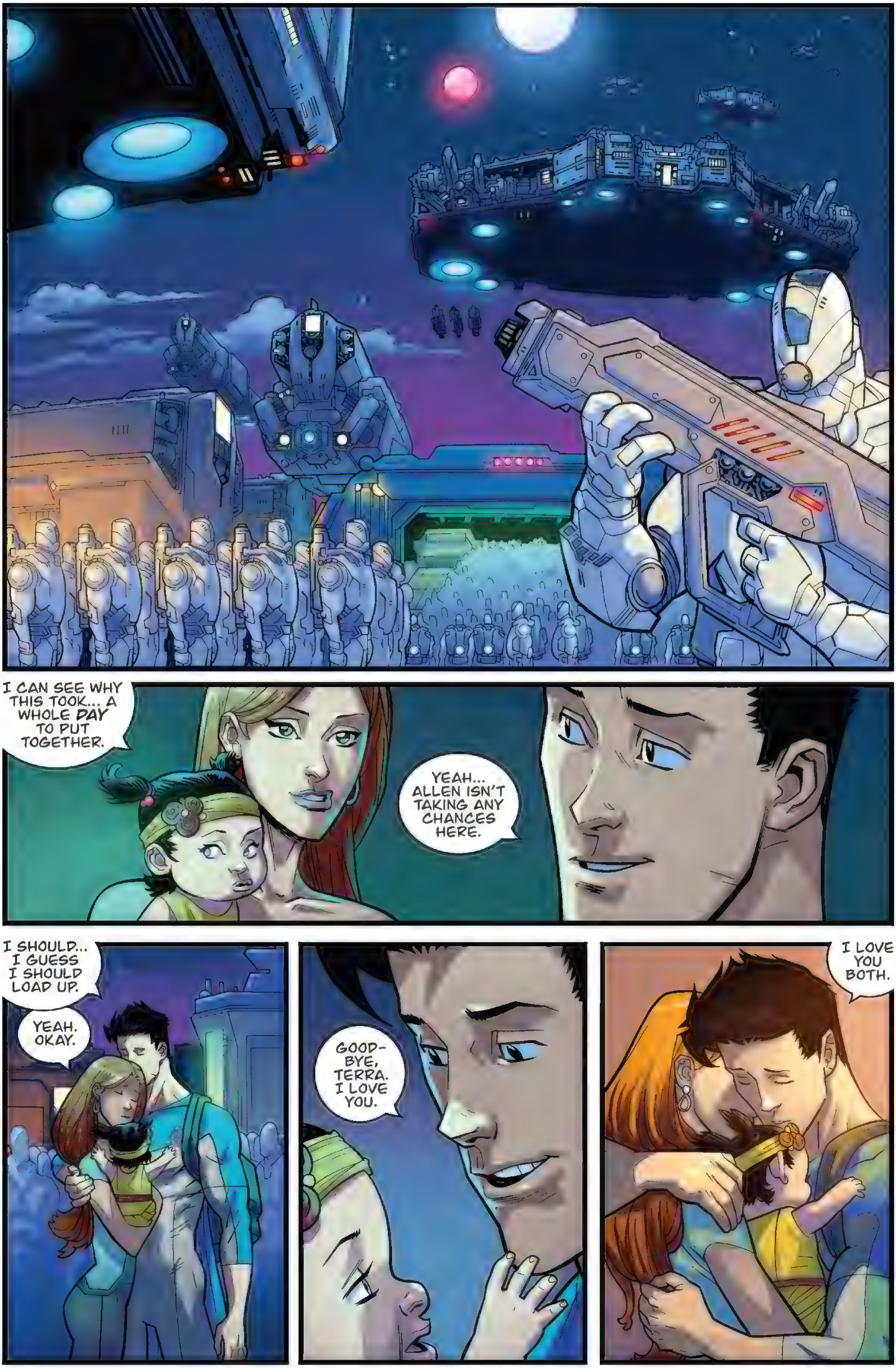

I'M OUT!
SEE YOU IN A FEW HOURS!
OH...
THAT WAS... *FAST.*
GUESS WHAT, YOU LITTLE FART?
DADDY-DAUGHTER DAY!

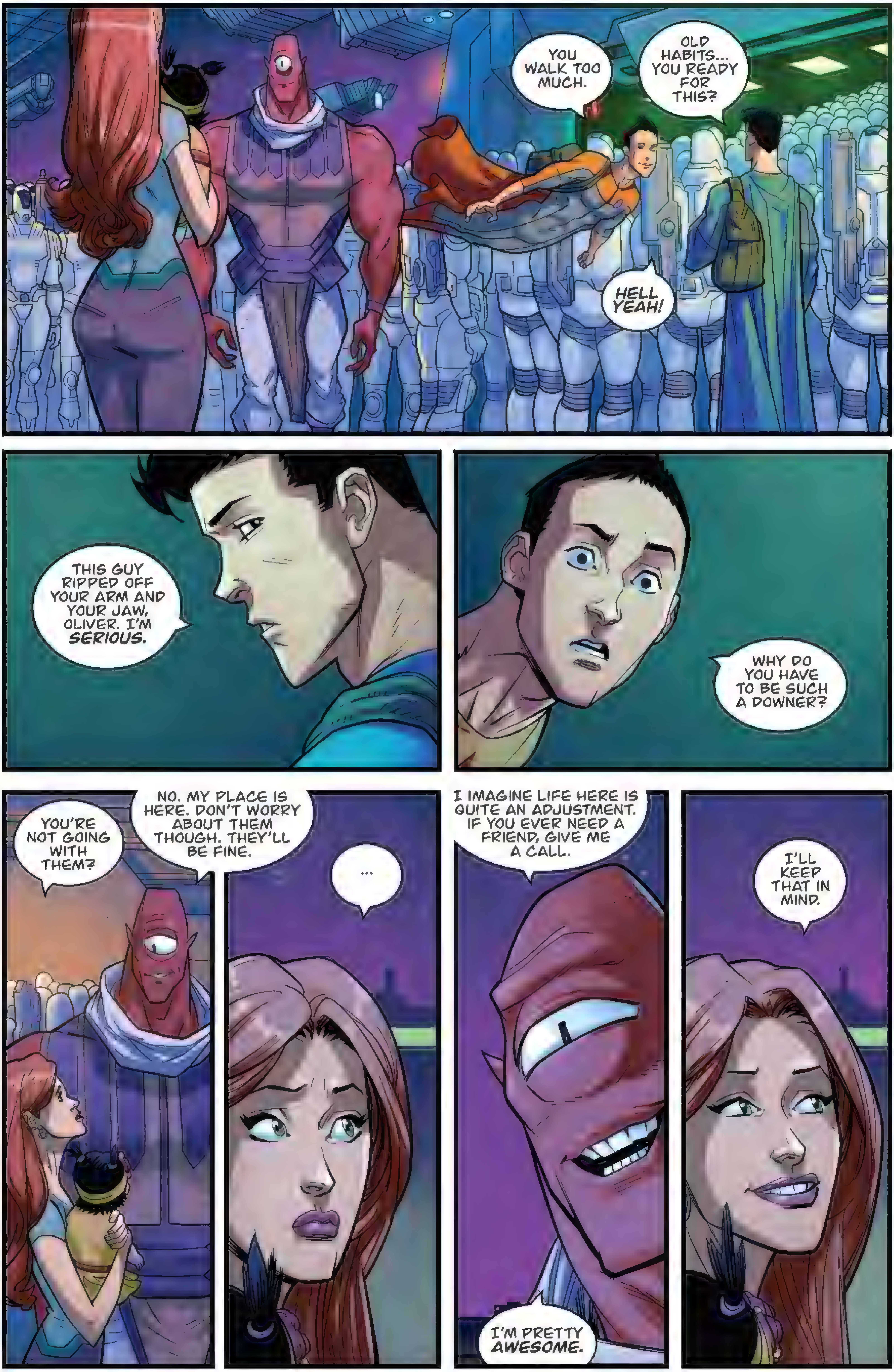

HOW WAS YOUR DAY?

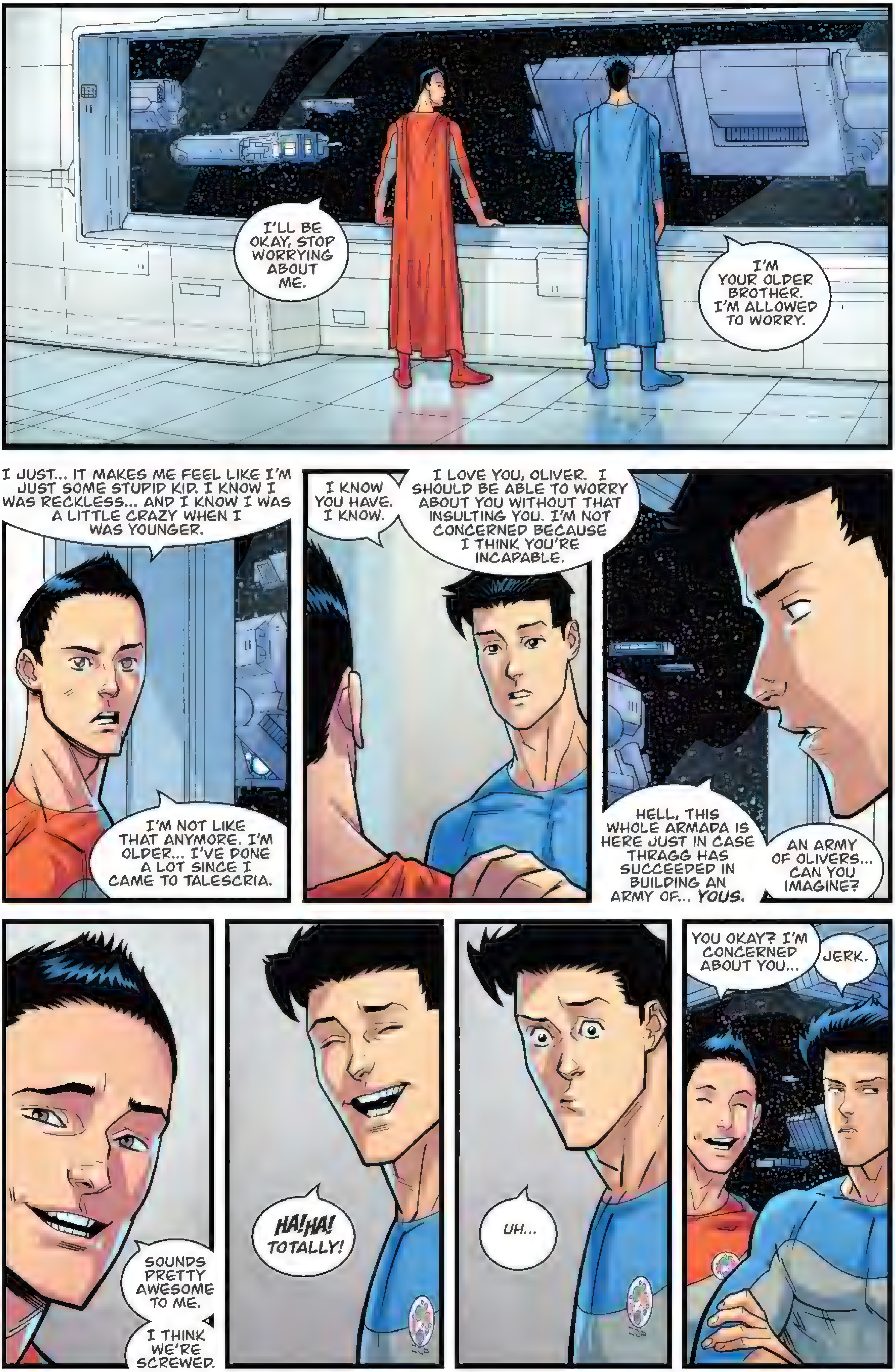

PRETTY GREAT. YOURS?
ALSO GREAT!


HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE LEFT?
LET'S PUT THIS KID TO SLEEP.
FEW HOURS STILL. YOU HAVE A GOOD TIME?
TOOK ME ALL OF FIVE MINUTES TO START MISSING HER.
YOU HEAR THAT, TERRA? I *MISSED* YOU.
SHE MISSED YOU, TOO.
BULLSHIT.
YOU PROBABLY ENTERTAINED HER EVERY MINUTE AND DIDN'T GIVE HER A MOMENT TO THINK OF ME.
SHE ADORES YOU.
AND IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WORE HER OUT! SHE'S EXHAUSTED. QUIET NIGHT TONIGHT.
FOR *HER.*
HUH... OH.
OH!

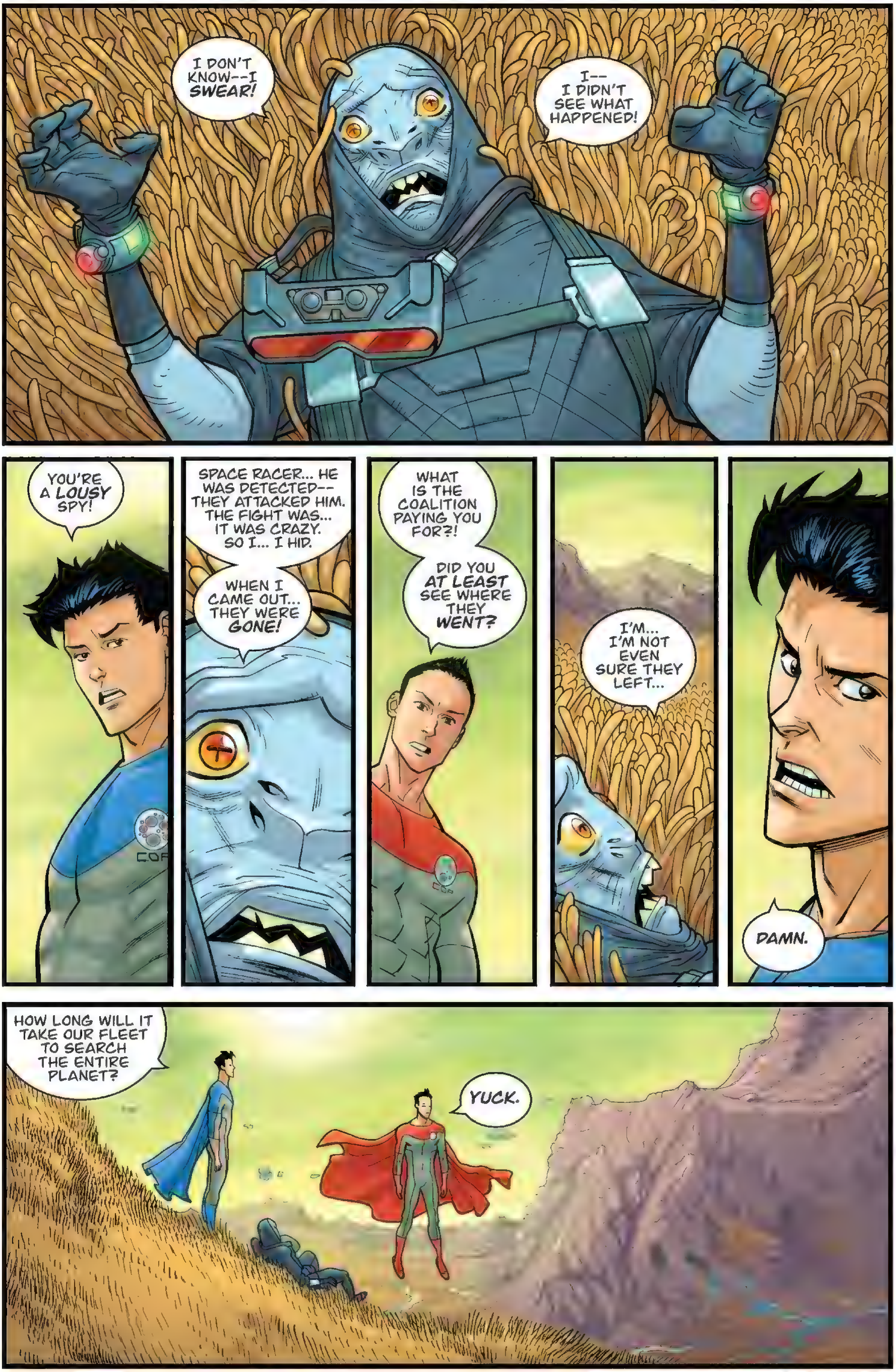

YOU GOING TO BE OKAY HERE WHILE I'M GONE?
YEAH. I NEEDED TODAY... AND *TONIGHT*. BUT I'M GOOD NOW.
THERE ARE OTHER PLANETS, Y'KNOW? WE COULD ASK ALLEN TO RECOMMEND SOMETHING MORE SIMILAR TO EARTH.
WHAT? *NO.*
YOU HAVE A JOB HERE AND I DO LOVE THIS APARTMENT. ALLEN WENT TO SO MUCH TROUBLE SETTING THINGS UP FOR US.
I WANT TO TRY AND MAKE TALESCRIA WORK.
IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND... YOU TELL ME.
OKAY?
HAVE I *EVER* HAD A PROBLEM SPEAKING UP?
NOW SNUGGLE ME BEFORE YOU HAVE TO FLY OFF AND FIGHT THAT LUNATIC VILTRUMITE.

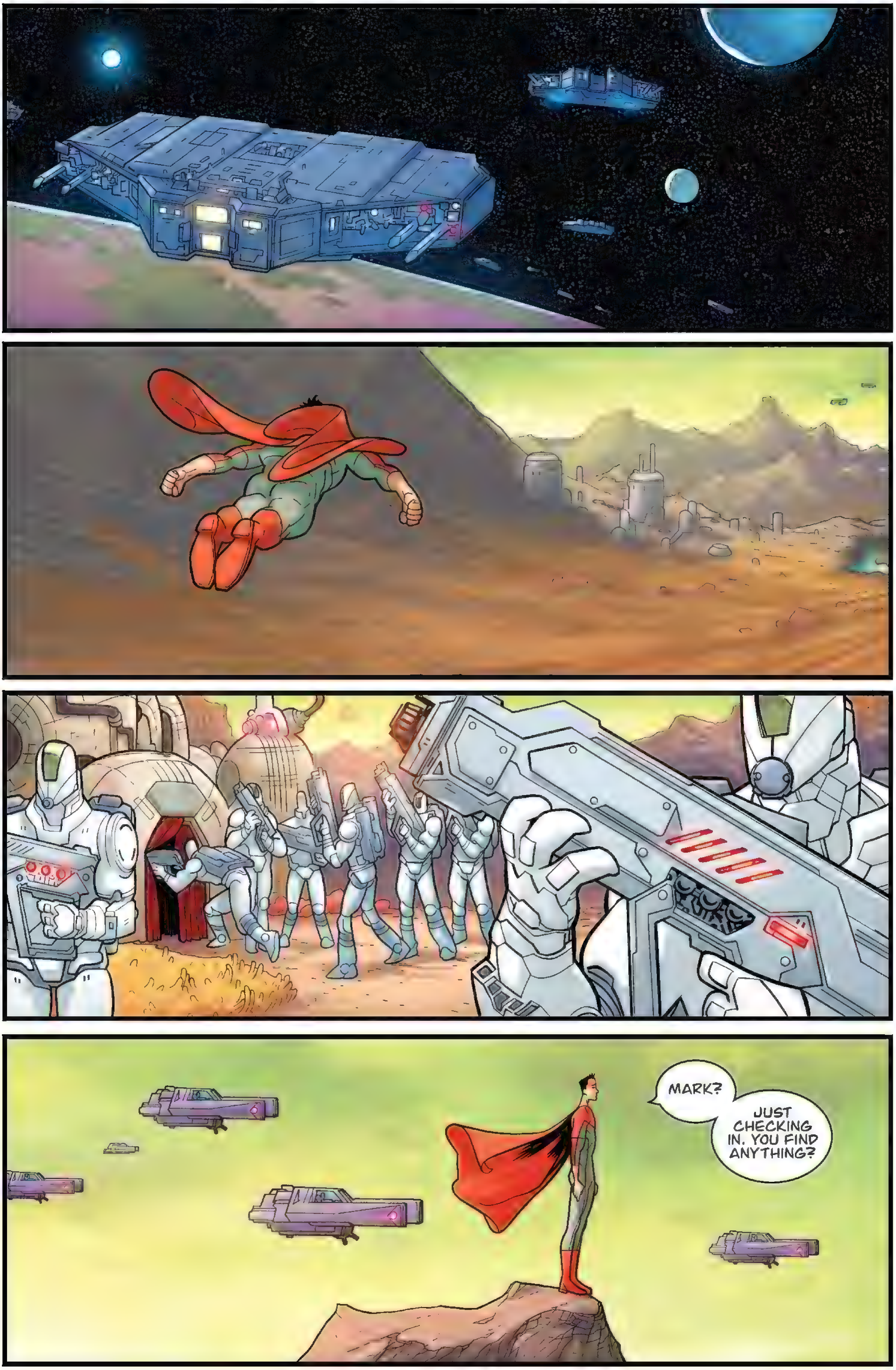

I CAN SEE WHY THIS TOOK... A WHOLE *DAY* TO PUT TOGETHER.
YEAH... ALLEN ISN'T TAKING ANY CHANCES HERE.
I SHOULD... I GUESS I SHOULD LOAD UP.
YEAH. OKAY.
GOOD-BYE, TERRA. I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU BOTH.

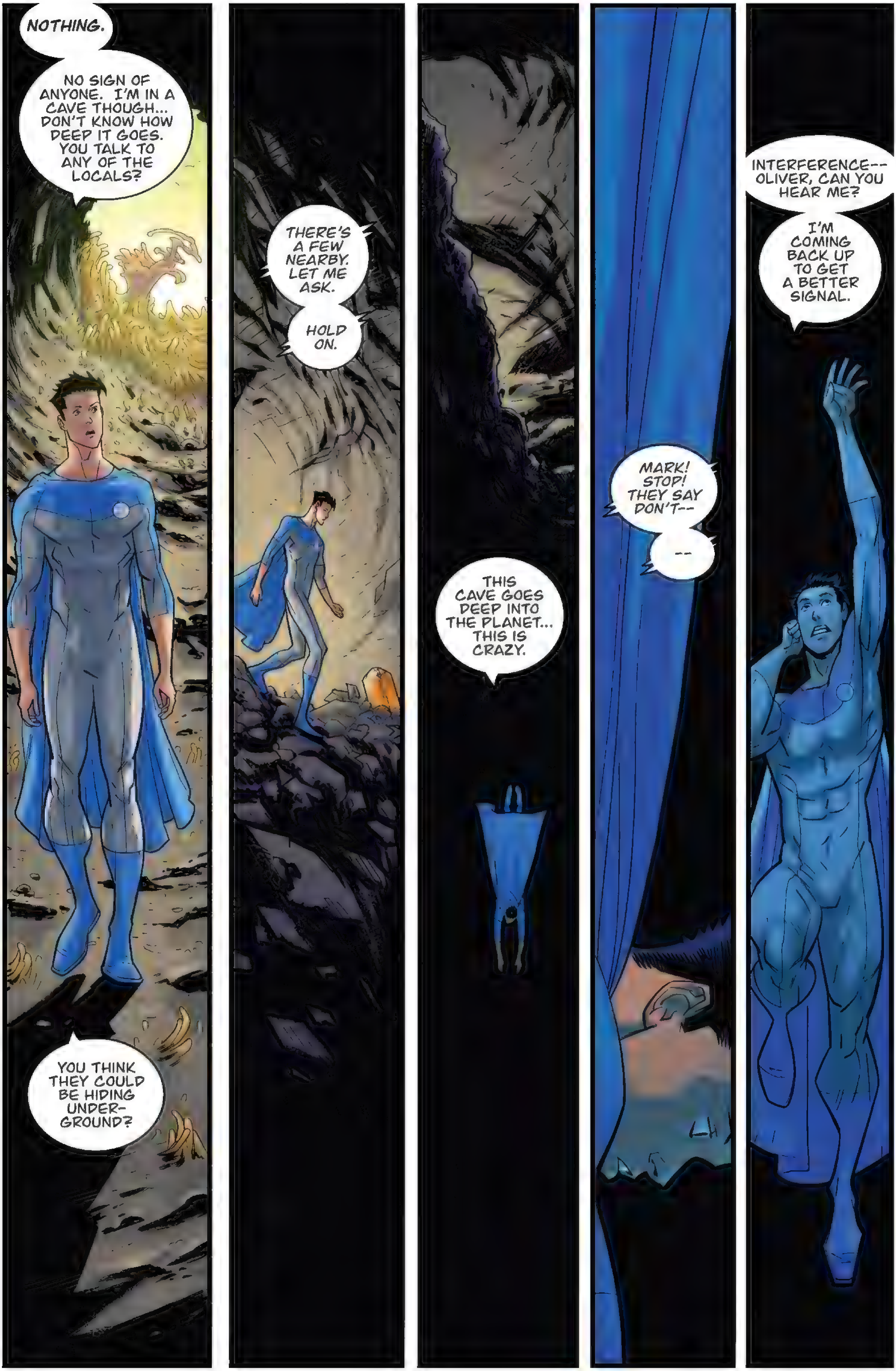

YOU WALK TOO MUCH.
OLD HABITS... YOU READY FOR THIS?
HELL YEAH!
THIS GUY RIPPED OFF YOUR ARM AND YOUR JAW, OLIVER. I'M SERIOUS.
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SUCH A DOWNER?
YOU'RE NOT GOING WITH THEM?
NO. MY PLACE IS HERE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM THOUGH. THEY'LL BE FINE.
...
I IMAGINE LIFE HERE IS QUITE AN ADJUSTMENT. IF YOU EVER NEED A FRIEND, GIVE ME A CALL.
I'M PRETTY AWESOME.
I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND.

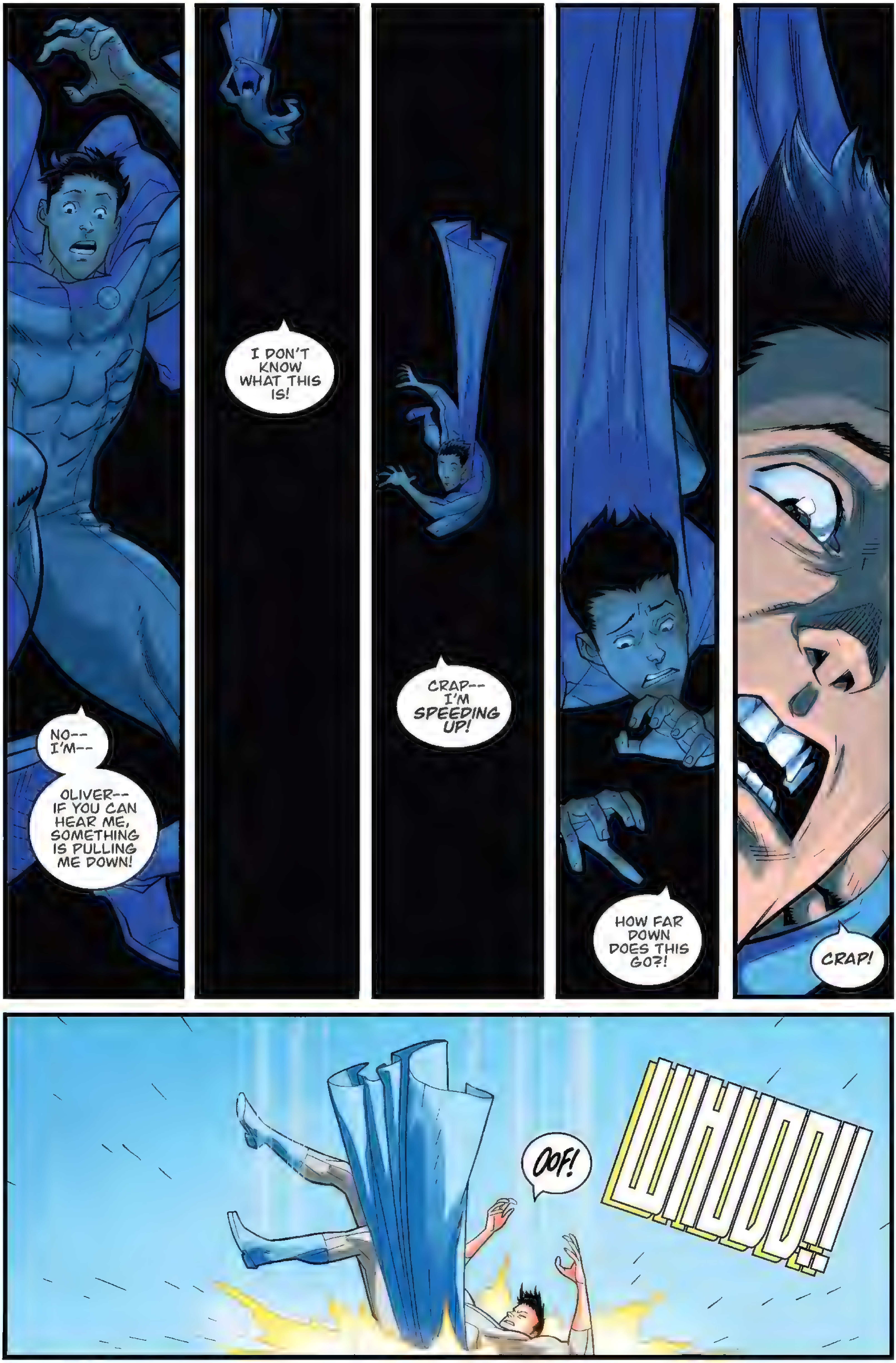

I'LL BE OKAY, STOP WORRYING ABOUT ME.
I'M YOUR OLDER BROTHER. I'M ALLOWED TO WORRY.
I JUST... IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M JUST SOME STUPID KID. I KNOW I WAS RECKLESS... AND I KNOW I WAS A LITTLE CRAZY WHEN I WAS YOUNGER.
I'M NOT LIKE THAT ANYMORE. I'M OLDER... I'VE DONE A LOT SINCE I CAME TO TALESCRIA.
I KNOW YOU HAVE. I KNOW.
I LOVE YOU, OLIVER. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO WORRY ABOUT YOU WITHOUT THAT INSULTING YOU. I'M NOT CONCERNED BECAUSE I THINK YOU'RE INCAPABLE.
HELL, THIS WHOLE ARMADA IS HERE JUST IN CASE THRAGG HAS SUCCEEDED IN BUILDING AN ARMY OF... *YOUS.*
AN ARMY OF OLIVERS... CAN YOU IMAGINE?
SOUNDS PRETTY AWESOME TO ME.
I THINK WE'RE SCREWED.
HA! HA! TOTALLY!
UH...
YOU OKAY? I'M CONCERNED ABOUT YOU...
JERK.

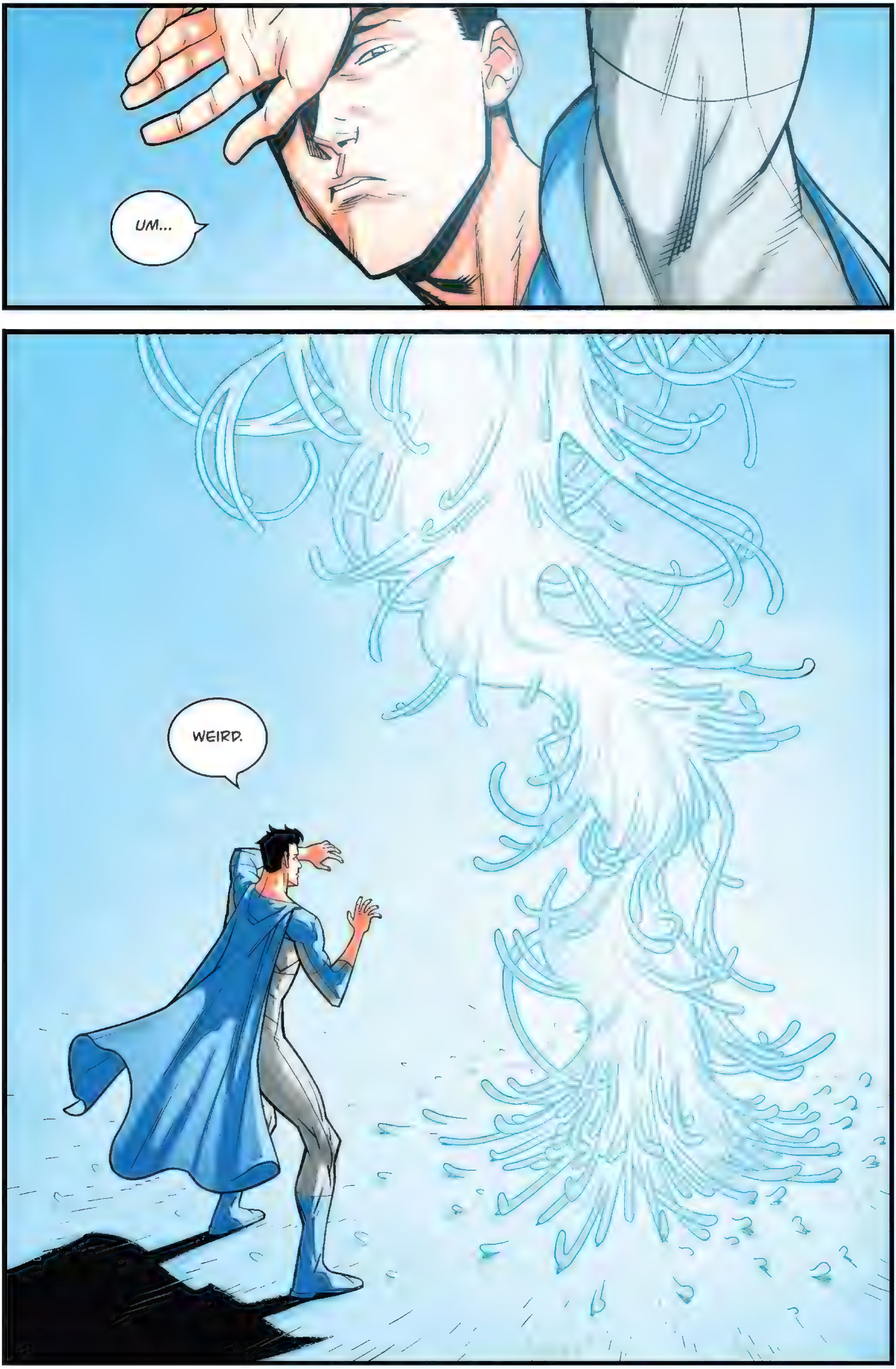
OKAY... NOT WHAT I EXPECTED.
WHEN WE LOST CONTACT WITH SPACE RACER... I KNEW SOMETHING WAS UP, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT... *THIS.*
I MEAN, IT'S LIKE HE WAS NEVER HERE. THEY REPORTED HUNDREDS OF THRAXANS LIVING HERE, SETTING UP HOMES... PLAYING WITH CHILDREN.
WELL... LET'S FIND YOUR SPY.

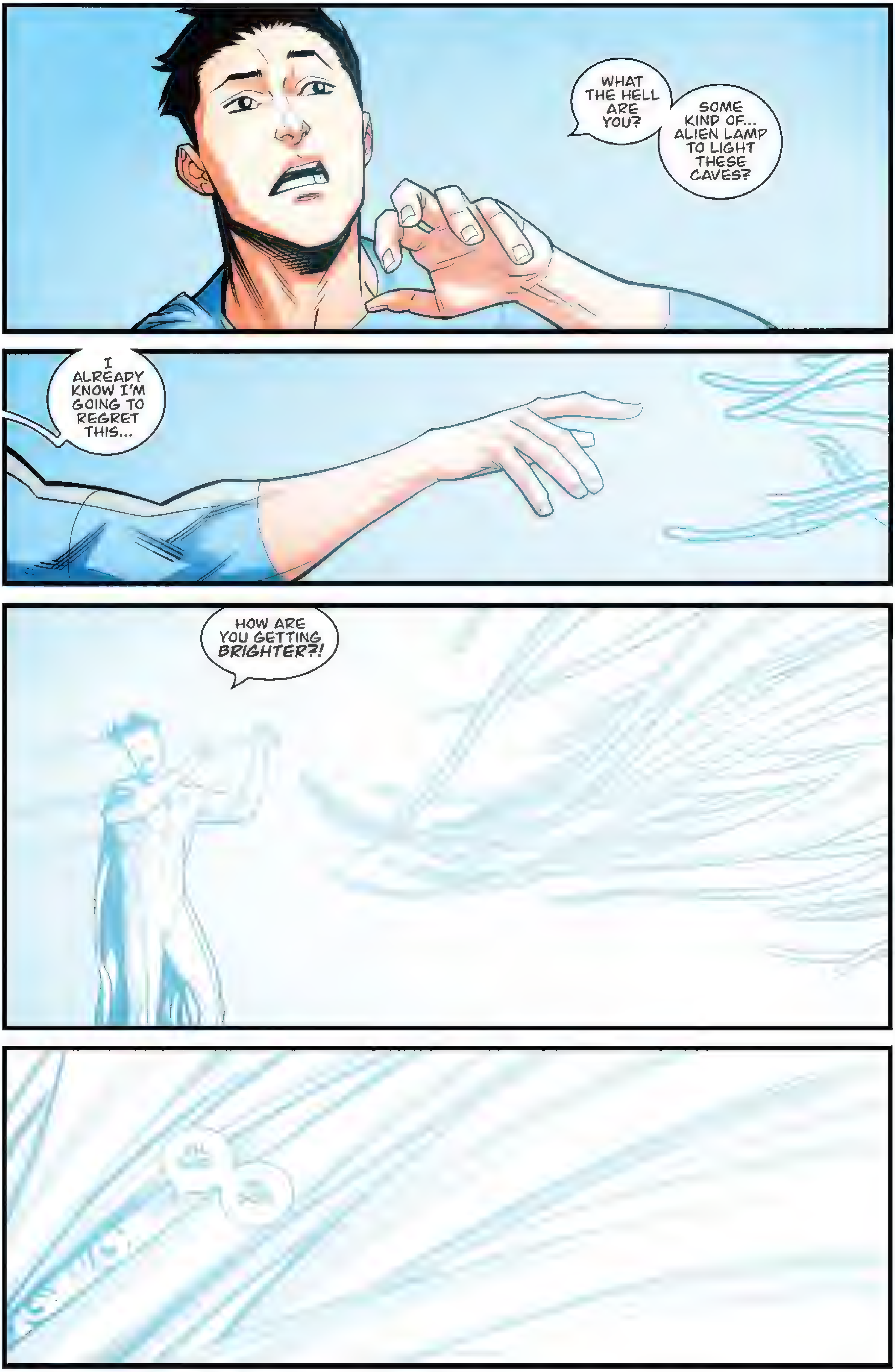

I DON'T KNOW--I *SWEAR!*
I-- I DIDN'T SEE WHAT HAPPENED!
YOU'RE A *LOUSY* SPY!
SPACE RACER... HE WAS DETECTED-- THEY ATTACKED HIM. THE FIGHT WAS... IT WAS CRAZY. SO I... I HID.
WHEN I CAME OUT... THEY WERE *GONE!*
WHAT IS THE COALITION PAYING YOU FOR?!
DID YOU *AT LEAST* SEE WHERE THEY *WENT?*
I'M... I'M NOT EVEN SURE THEY LEFT...
DAMN.
HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE OUR FLEET TO SEARCH THE ENTIRE PLANET?
YUCK.

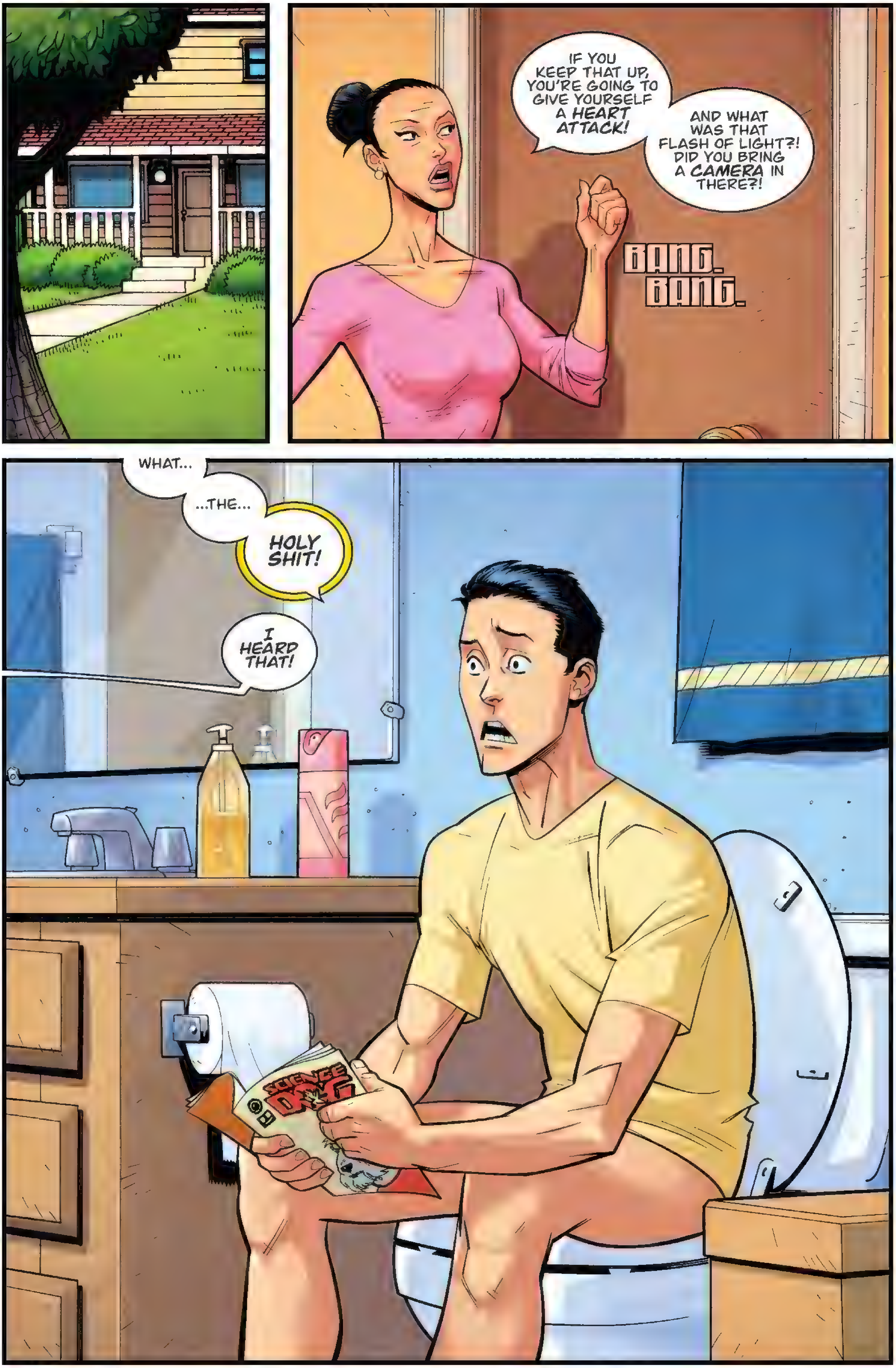

MARK?
JUST CHECKING IN. YOU FIND ANYTHING?


NOTHING.
NO SIGN OF ANYONE. I'M IN A CAVE THOUGH... DON'T KNOW HOW DEEP IT GOES. YOU TALK TO ANY OF THE LOCALS?
YOU THINK THEY COULD BE HIDING UNDERGROUND?
THERE'S A FEW NEARBY. LET ME ASK.
HOLD ON.
THIS CAVE GOES DEEP INTO THE PLANET... THIS IS CRAZY.
MARK! STOP! THEY SAY DON'T--
--
INTERFERENCE--OLIVER, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
I'M COMING BACK UP TO GET A BETTER SIGNAL.


NO-- I'M--
OLIVER-- IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, SOMETHING IS PULLING ME DOWN!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS!
CRAP-- I'M SPEEDING UP!
HOW FAR DOWN DOES THIS GO?!
CRAP!
OOF!
WHUDD!!

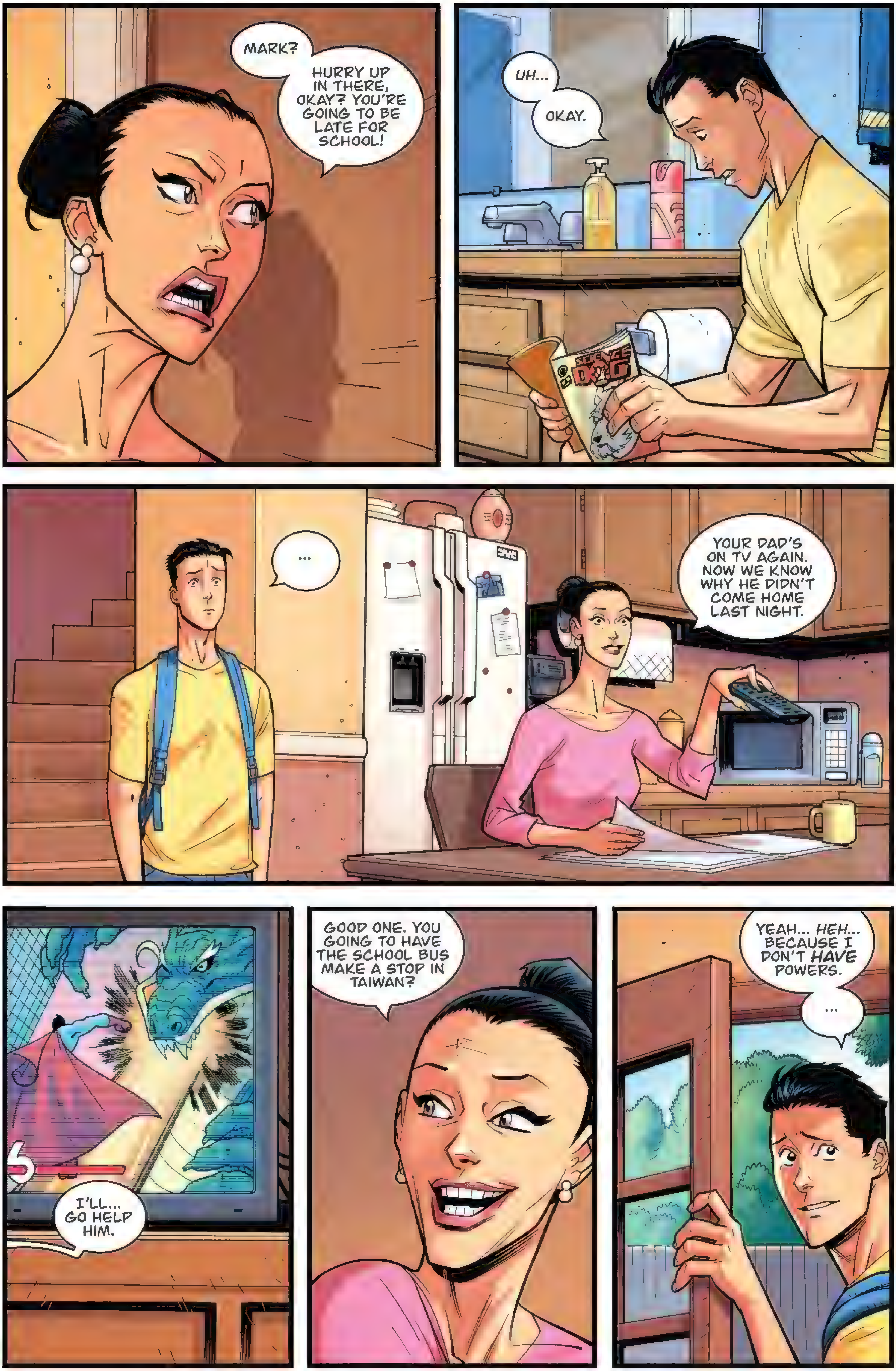

UM...
WEIRD.

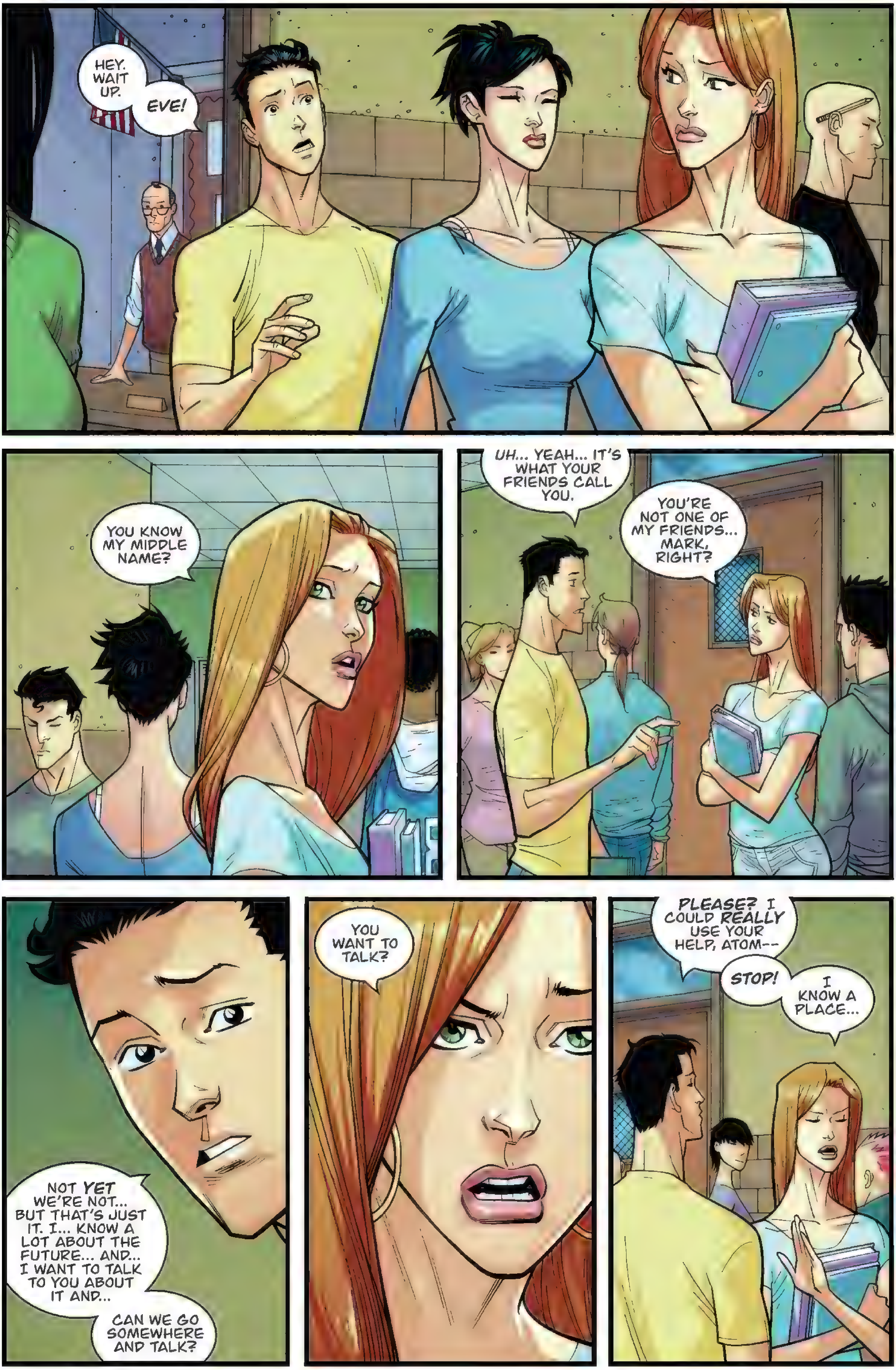

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU?
SOME KIND OF... ALIEN LAMP TO LIGHT THESE CAVES?
I ALREADY KNOW I'M GOING TO REGRET THIS...
HOW ARE YOU GETTING **BRIGHTER?!**

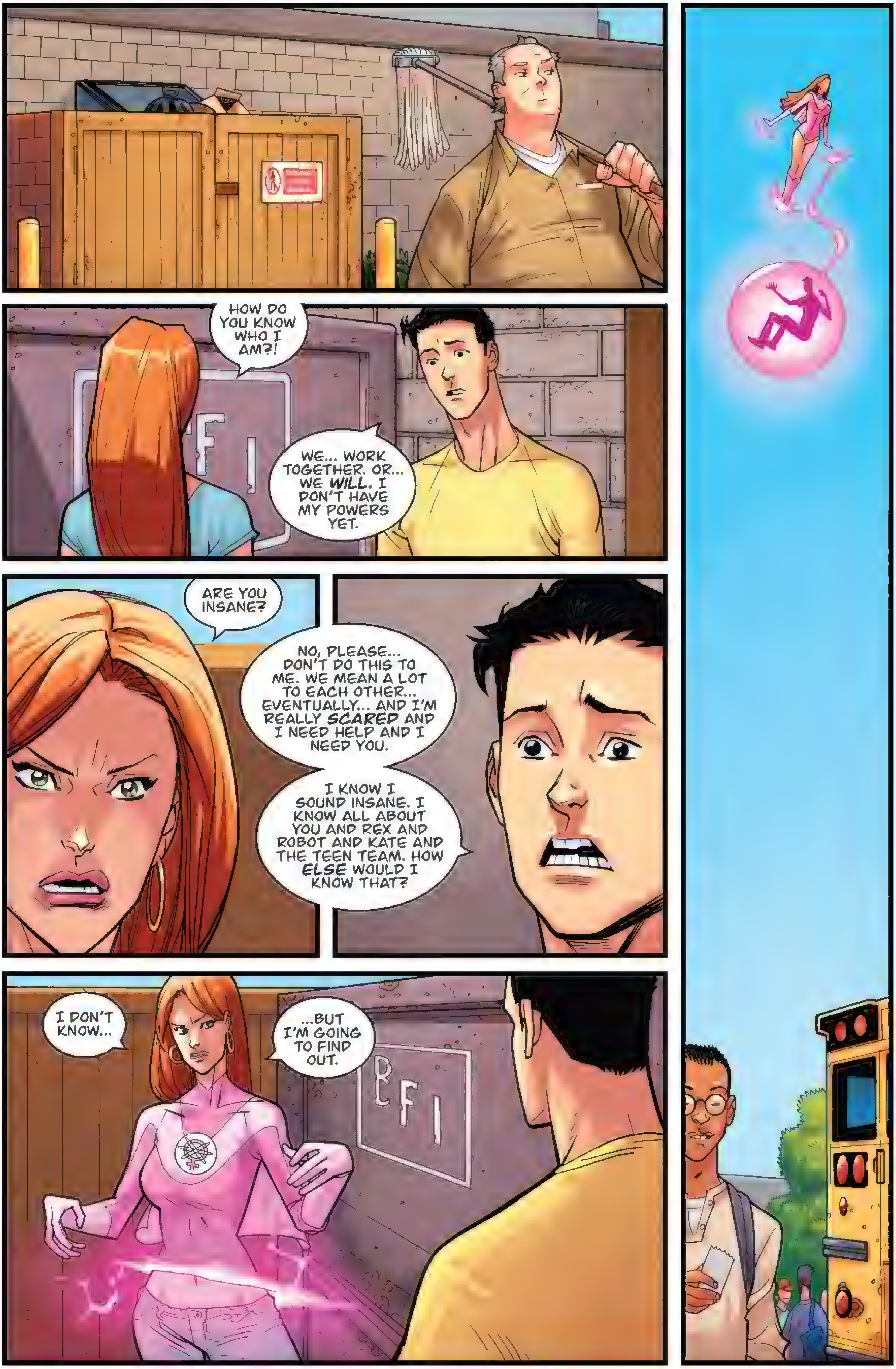

IF YOU KEEP THAT UP, YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE YOURSELF A HEART ATTACK!
AND WHAT WAS THAT FLASH OF LIGHT?! DID YOU BRING A CAMERA IN THERE?!
BANG. BANG.
WHAT...
...THE...
HOLY SHIT!
I HEARD THAT!
SCIENCE DOG

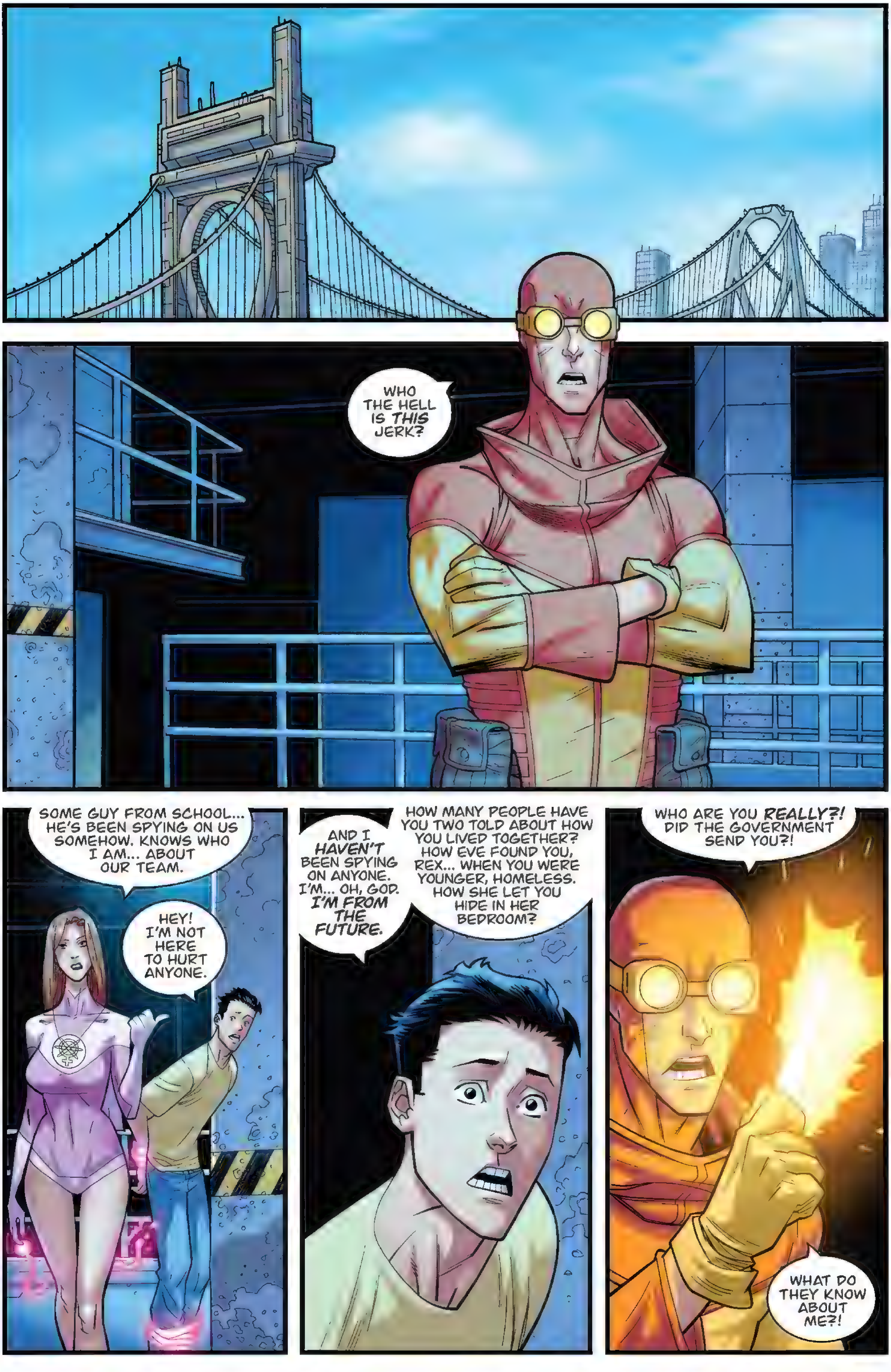
CHAPTER 124

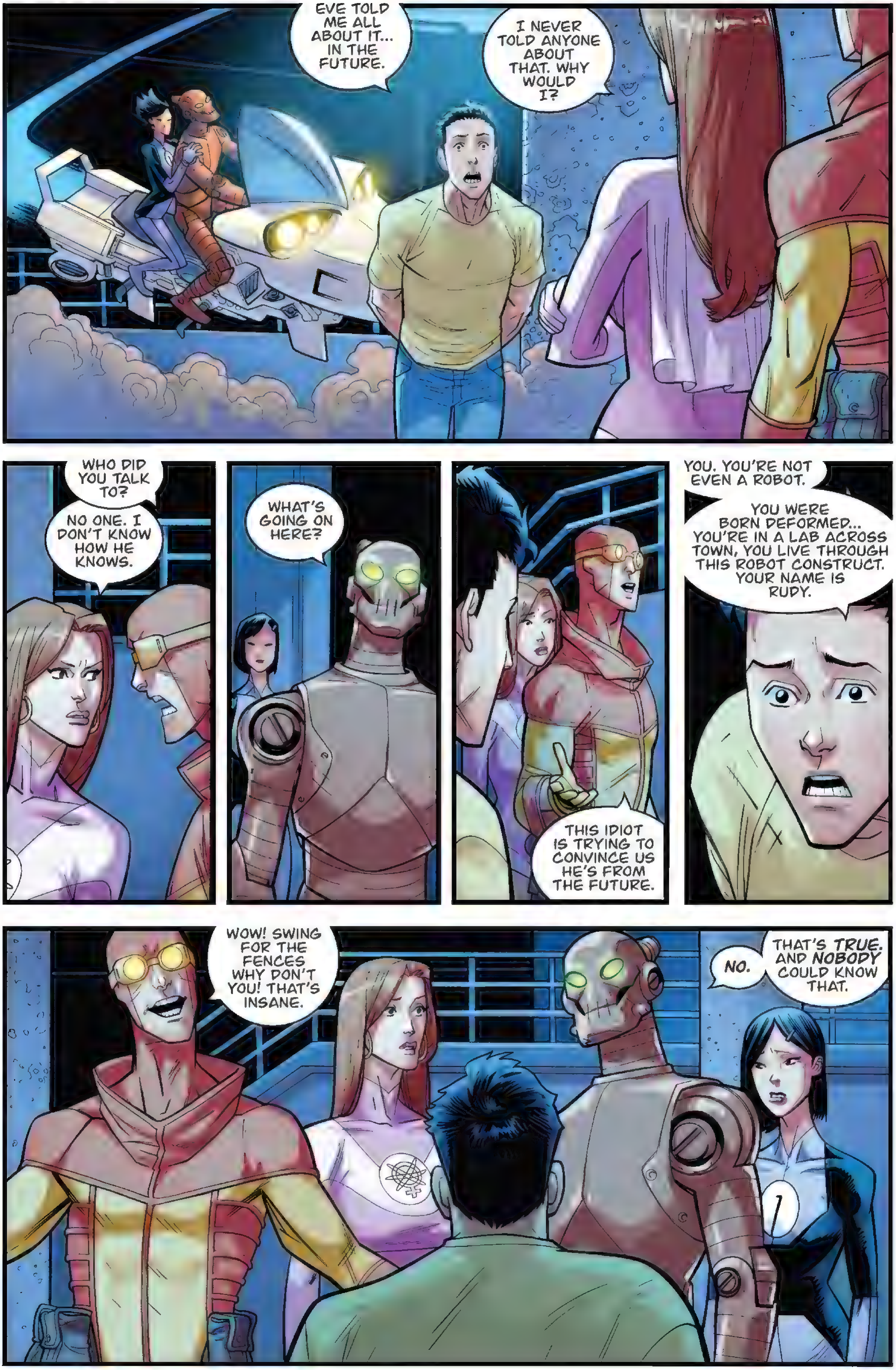
2
1
3
R. OTTLEY

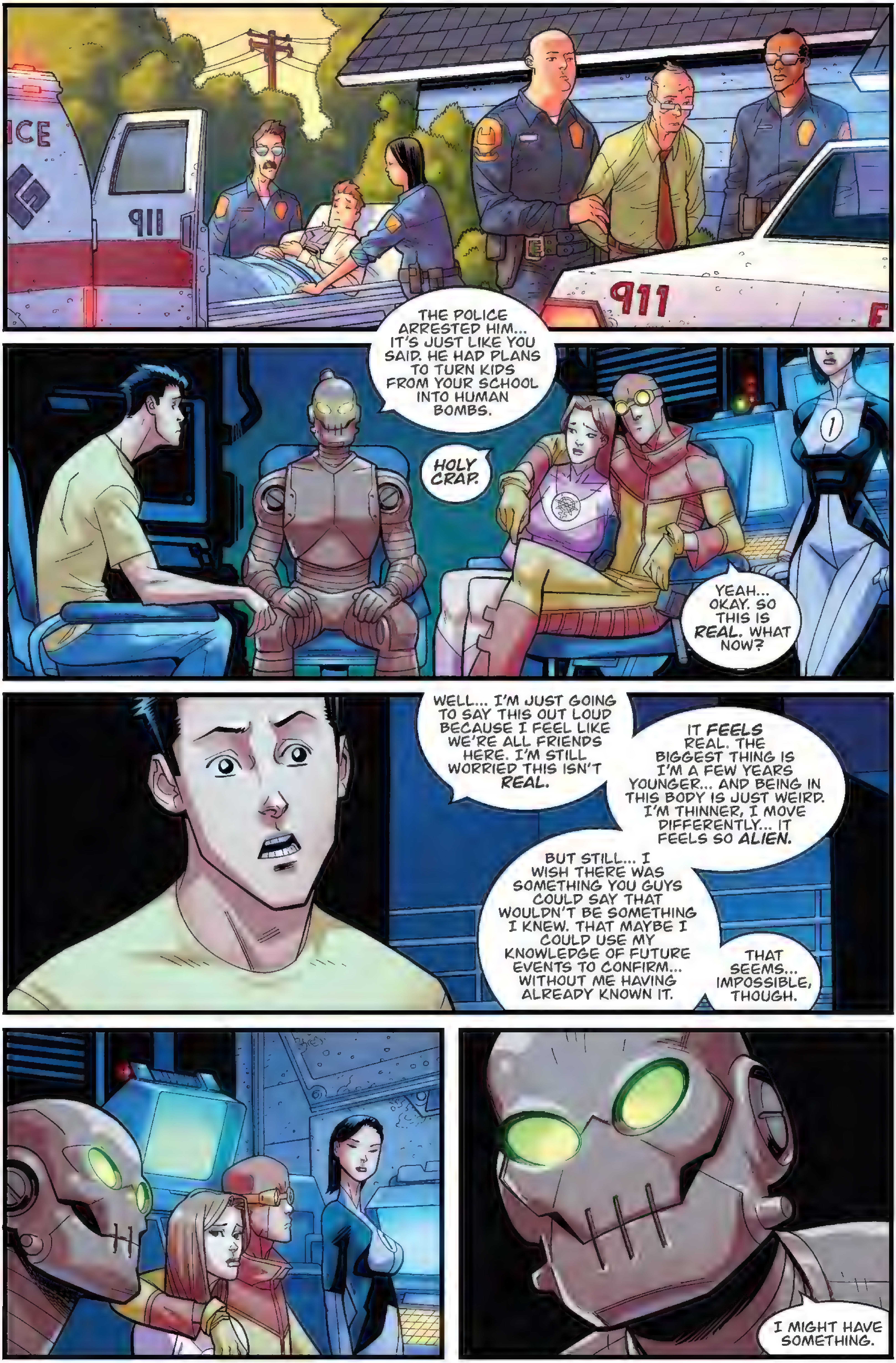

MARK?
HURRY UP IN THERE, OKAY? YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!
UH...
OKAY.
SCIENCE DOG
...
YOUR DAD'S ON TV AGAIN. NOW WE KNOW WHY HE DIDN'T COME HOME LAST NIGHT.
I'LL... GO HELP HIM.
GOOD ONE. YOU GOING TO HAVE THE SCHOOL BUS MAKE A STOP IN TAIWAN?
YEAH... HEH... BECAUSE I DON'T *HAVE* POWERS.
...

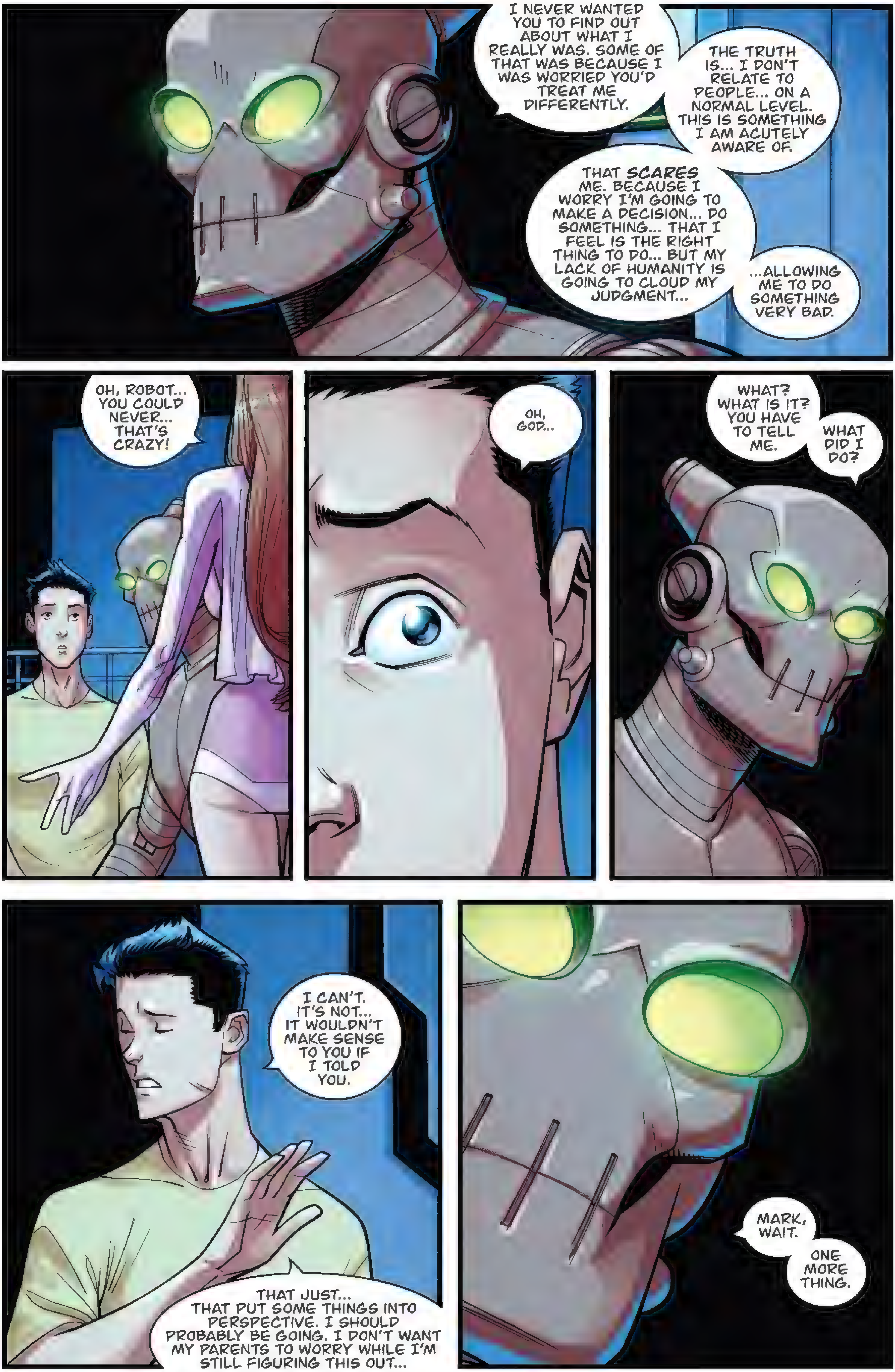

HEY. WAIT UP.
EVE!
YOU KNOW MY MIDDLE NAME?
UH... YEAH... IT'S WHAT YOUR FRIENDS CALL YOU.
YOU'RE NOT ONE OF MY FRIENDS... MARK, RIGHT?
NOT *YET* WE'RE NOT... BUT THAT'S JUST IT. I... KNOW A LOT ABOUT THE FUTURE... AND... I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT IT AND...
CAN WE GO SOMEWHERE AND TALK?
YOU WANT TO TALK?
PLEASE? I COULD *REALLY* USE YOUR HELP, ATOM--
STOP!
I KNOW A PLACE...

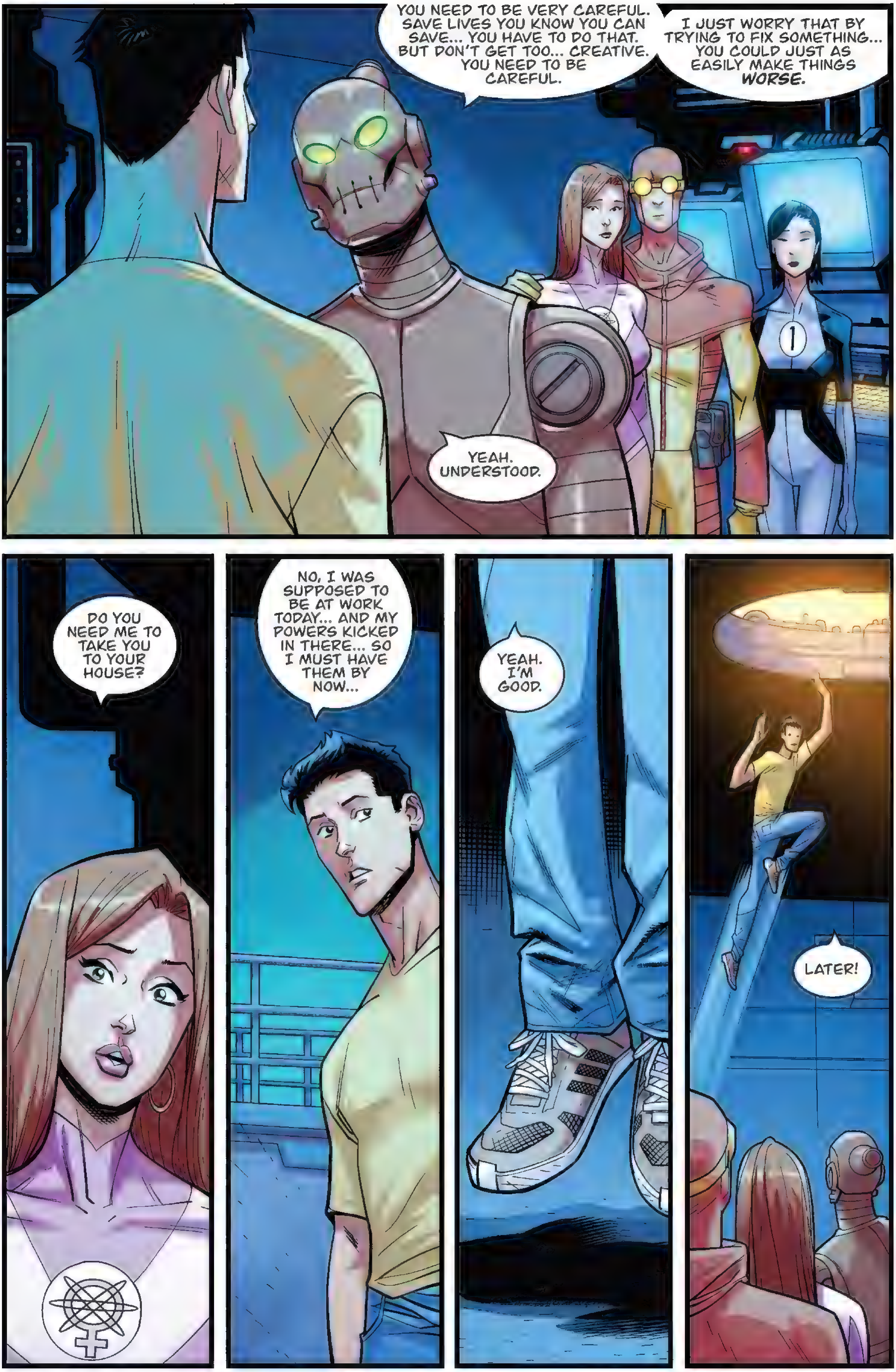

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!
WE... WORK TOGETHER. OR... WE *WILL*. I DON'T HAVE MY POWERS YET.
ARE YOU INSANE?
NO, PLEASE... DON'T DO THIS TO ME. WE MEAN A LOT TO EACH OTHER... EVENTUALLY... AND I'M REALLY *SCARED* AND I NEED HELP AND I NEED YOU.
I KNOW I SOUND INSANE. I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU AND REX AND ROBOT AND KATE AND THE TEEN TEAM. HOW *ELSE* WOULD I KNOW THAT?
I DON'T KNOW...
...BUT I'M GOING TO FIND OUT.
BFI

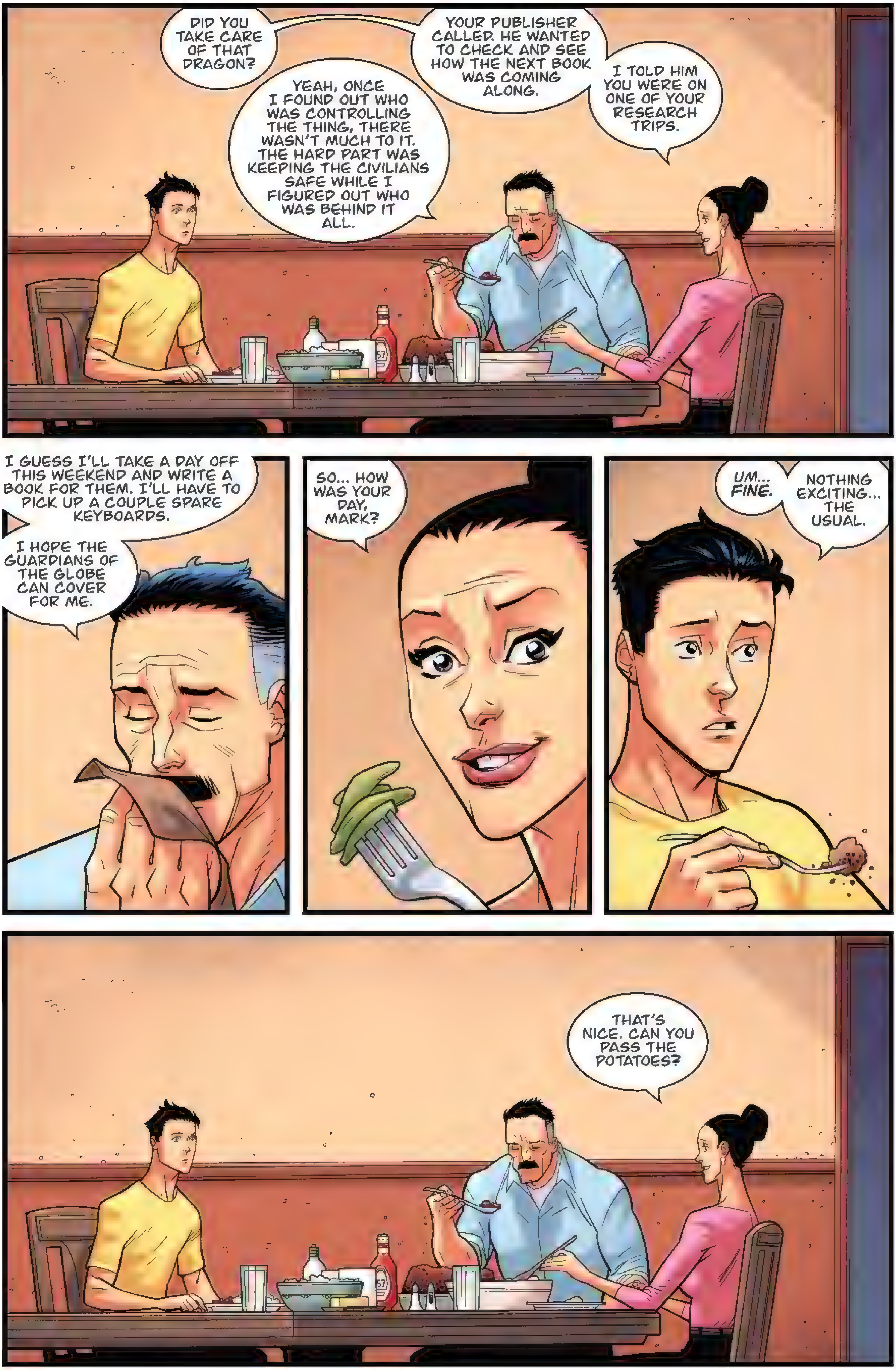

WHO THE HELL IS *THIS* JERK?
SOME GUY FROM SCHOOL... HE'S BEEN SPYING ON US SOMEHOW. KNOWS WHO I AM... ABOUT OUR TEAM.
HEY! I'M NOT HERE TO HURT ANYONE.
AND I ***HAVEN'T*** BEEN SPYING ON ANYONE. I'M... OH, GOD. ***I'M FROM THE FUTURE.***
HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU TWO TOLD ABOUT HOW YOU LIVED TOGETHER? HOW EVE FOUND YOU, REX... WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER, HOMELESS. HOW SHE LET YOU HIDE IN HER BEDROOM?
WHO ARE YOU ***REALLY?!*** DID THE GOVERNMENT SEND YOU?!
WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT ME?!

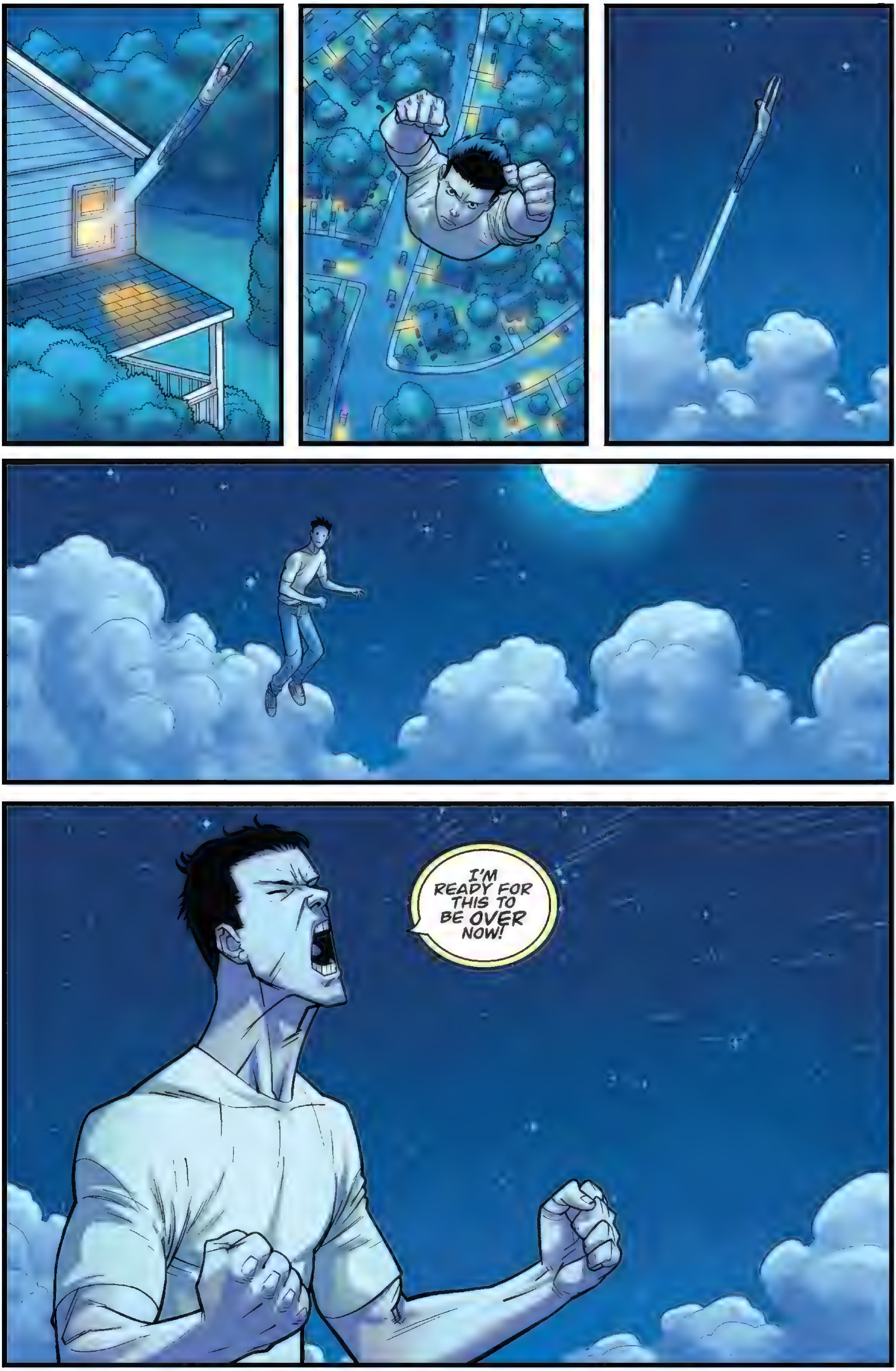

EVE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT IT... IN THE FUTURE.
I NEVER TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THAT. WHY WOULD I?
WHO DID YOU TALK TO?
NO ONE. I DON'T KNOW HOW HE KNOWS.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
THIS IDIOT IS TRYING TO CONVINCE US HE'S FROM THE FUTURE.
YOU. YOU'RE NOT EVEN A ROBOT.
YOU WERE BORN DEFORMED... YOU'RE IN A LAB ACROSS TOWN, YOU LIVE THROUGH THIS ROBOT CONSTRUCT. YOUR NAME IS RUDY.
WOW! SWING FOR THE FENCES WHY DON'T YOU! THAT'S INSANE.
NO.
THAT'S *TRUE*. AND *NOBODY* COULD KNOW THAT.

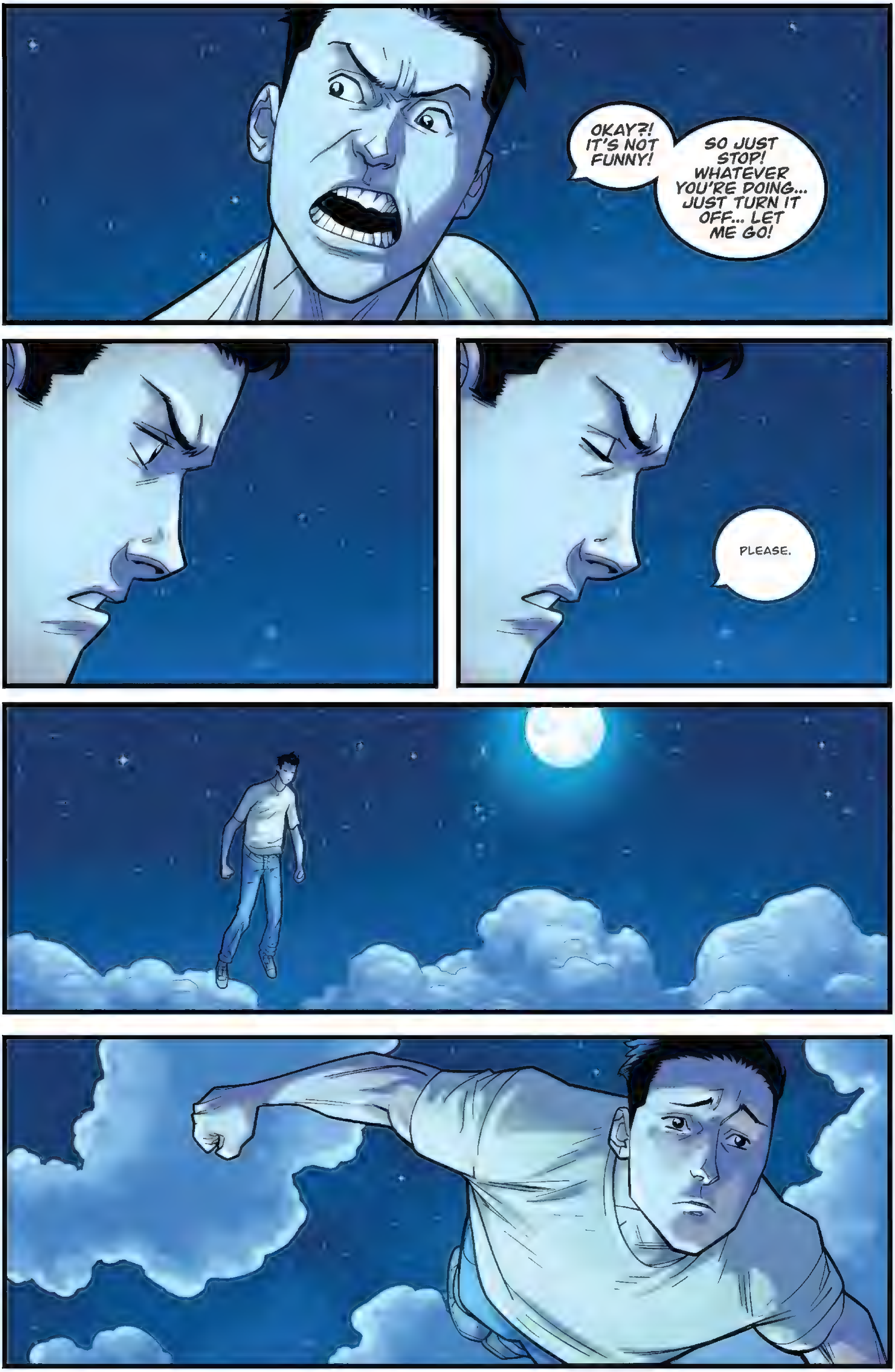

ICE
911
911
THE POLICE ARRESTED HIM... IT'S JUST LIKE YOU SAID. HE HAD PLANS TO TURN KIDS FROM YOUR SCHOOL INTO HUMAN BOMBS.
HOLY CRAP.
1
YEAH... OKAY. SO THIS IS *REAL*. WHAT NOW?
WELL... I'M JUST GOING TO SAY THIS OUT LOUD BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE WE'RE ALL FRIENDS HERE. I'M STILL WORRIED THIS ISN'T *REAL.*
IT *FEELS* REAL. THE BIGGEST THING IS I'M A FEW YEARS YOUNGER... AND BEING IN THIS BODY IS JUST WEIRD. I'M THINNER, I MOVE DIFFERENTLY... IT FEELS SO *ALIEN.*
BUT STILL... I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING YOU GUYS COULD SAY THAT WOULDN'T BE SOMETHING I KNEW. THAT MAYBE I COULD USE MY KNOWLEDGE OF FUTURE EVENTS TO CONFIRM... WITHOUT ME HAVING ALREADY KNOWN IT.
THAT SEEMS... IMPOSSIBLE, THOUGH.
I MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING.


I NEVER WANTED YOU TO FIND OUT ABOUT WHAT I REALLY WAS. SOME OF THAT WAS BECAUSE I WAS WORRIED YOU'D TREAT ME DIFFERENTLY.
THE TRUTH IS... I DON'T RELATE TO PEOPLE... ON A NORMAL LEVEL. THIS IS SOMETHING I AM ACUTELY AWARE OF.
THAT **SCARES** ME. BECAUSE I WORRY I'M GOING TO MAKE A DECISION... DO SOMETHING... THAT I FEEL IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO... BUT MY LACK OF HUMANITY IS GOING TO CLOUD MY JUDGMENT...
...ALLOWING ME TO DO SOMETHING VERY BAD.
OH, ROBOT... YOU COULD NEVER... THAT'S CRAZY!
OH, GOD...
WHAT? WHAT IS IT? YOU HAVE TO TELL ME.
WHAT DID I DO?
I CAN'T. IT'S NOT... IT WOULDN'T MAKE SENSE TO YOU IF I TOLD YOU.
THAT JUST... THAT PUT SOME THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE. I SHOULD PROBABLY BE GOING. I DON'T WANT MY PARENTS TO WORRY WHILE I'M STILL FIGURING THIS OUT...
MARK, WAIT.
ONE MORE THING.

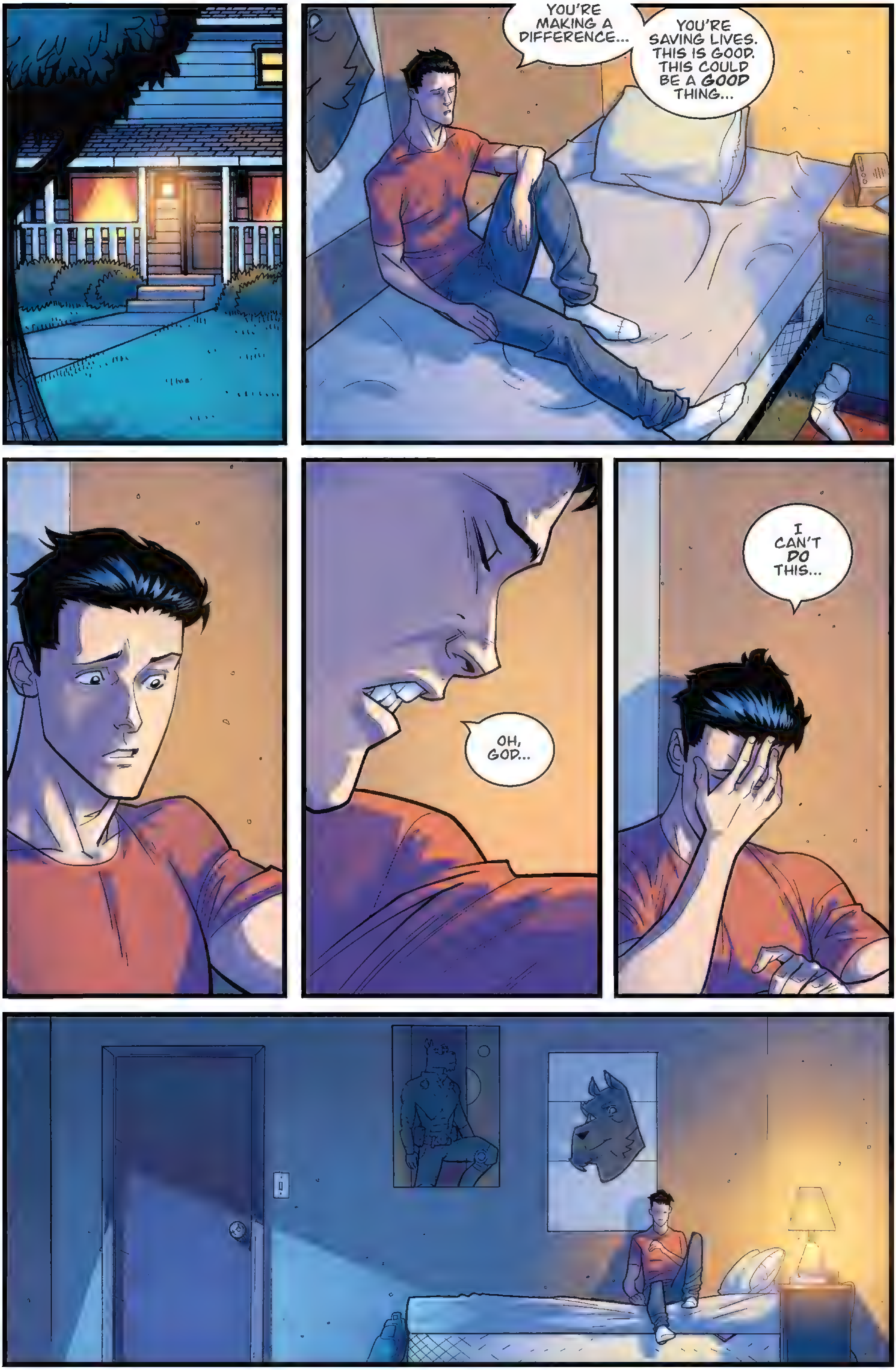

YOU NEED TO BE VERY CAREFUL. SAVE LIVES YOU KNOW YOU CAN SAVE... YOU HAVE TO DO THAT. BUT DON'T GET TOO... CREATIVE. YOU NEED TO BE CAREFUL.
I JUST WORRY THAT BY TRYING TO FIX SOMETHING... YOU COULD JUST AS EASILY MAKE THINGS **WORSE.**
YEAH. UNDERSTOOD.
DO YOU NEED ME TO TAKE YOU TO YOUR HOUSE?
NO, I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AT WORK TODAY... AND MY POWERS KICKED IN THERE... SO I MUST HAVE THEM BY NOW...
YEAH. I'M GOOD.
LATER!


DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT DRAGON?
YOUR PUBLISHER CALLED. HE WANTED TO CHECK AND SEE HOW THE NEXT BOOK WAS COMING ALONG.
YEAH, ONCE I FOUND OUT WHO WAS CONTROLLING THE THING, THERE WASN'T MUCH TO IT. THE HARD PART WAS KEEPING THE CIVILIANS SAFE WHILE I FIGURED OUT WHO WAS BEHIND IT ALL.
I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ON ONE OF YOUR RESEARCH TRIPS.
57
I GUESS I'LL TAKE A DAY OFF THIS WEEKEND AND WRITE A BOOK FOR THEM. I'LL HAVE TO PICK UP A COUPLE SPARE KEYBOARDS.
I HOPE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CAN COVER FOR ME.
SO... HOW WAS YOUR DAY, MARK?
UM... FINE.
NOTHING EXCITING... THE USUAL.
THAT'S NICE. CAN YOU PASS THE POTATOES?
57

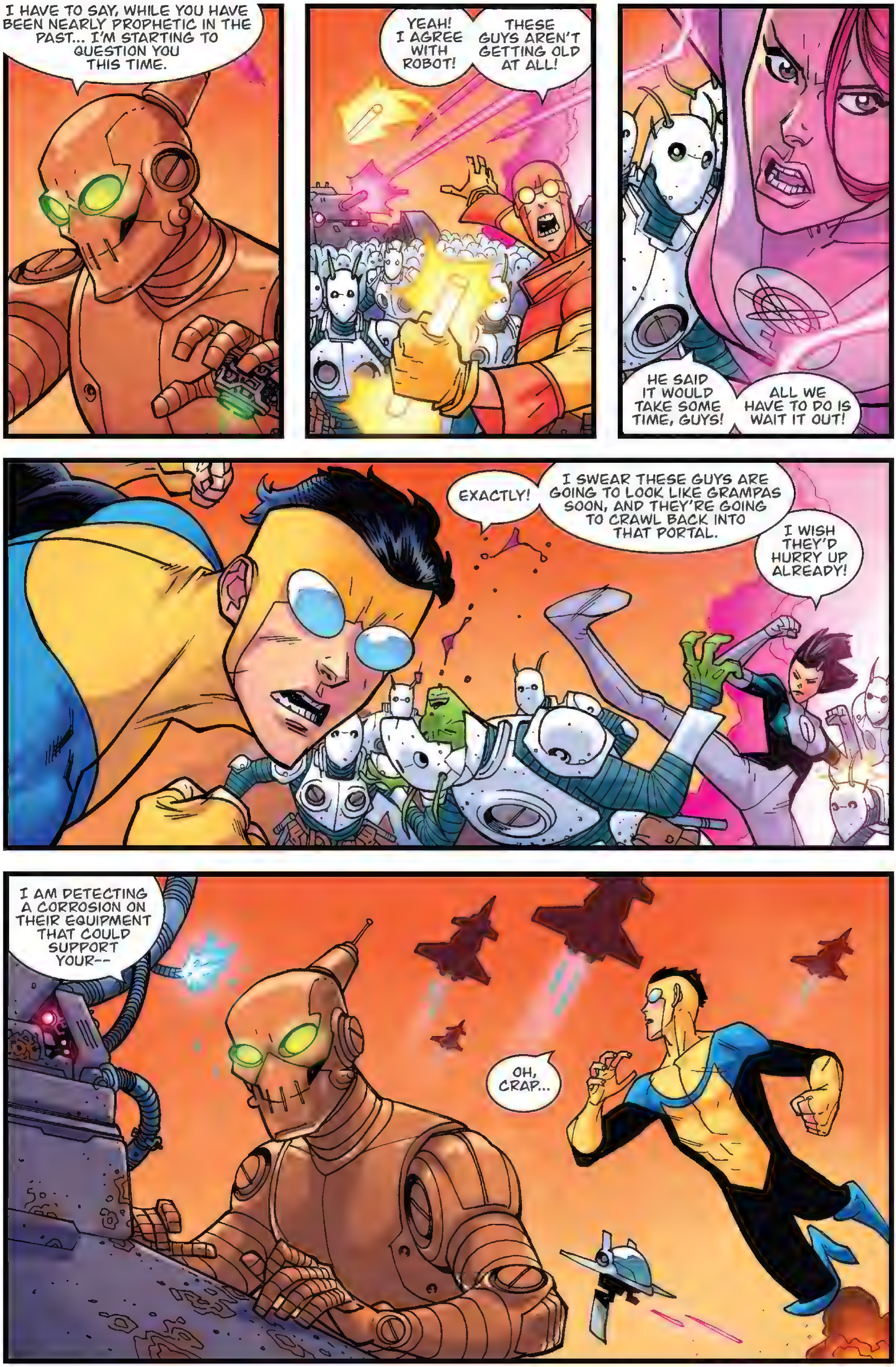

I'M READY FOR THIS TO BE OVER NOW!

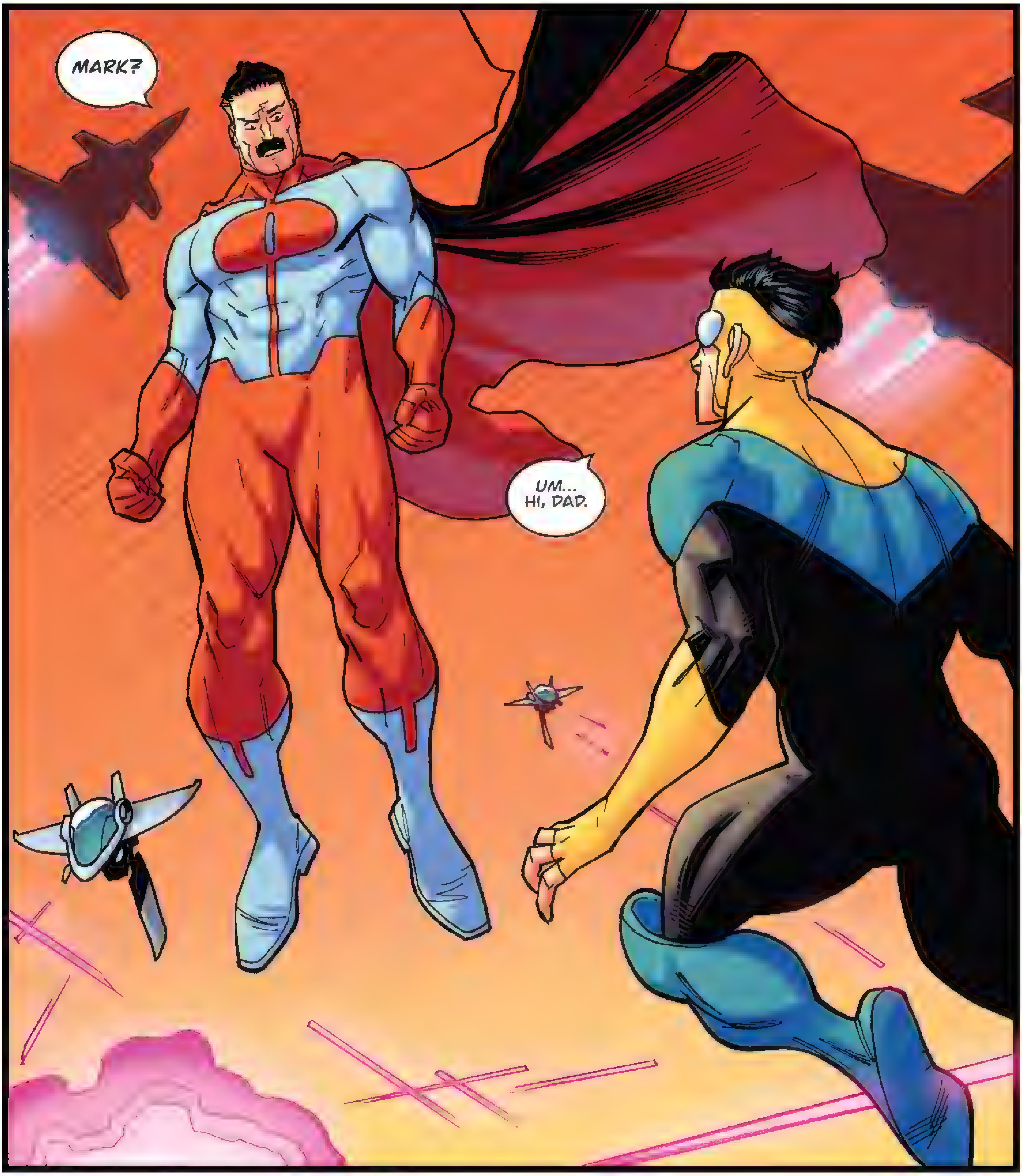

OKAY?! IT'S NOT FUNNY!
SO JUST STOP! WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING... JUST TURN IT OFF... LET ME GO!
PLEASE.

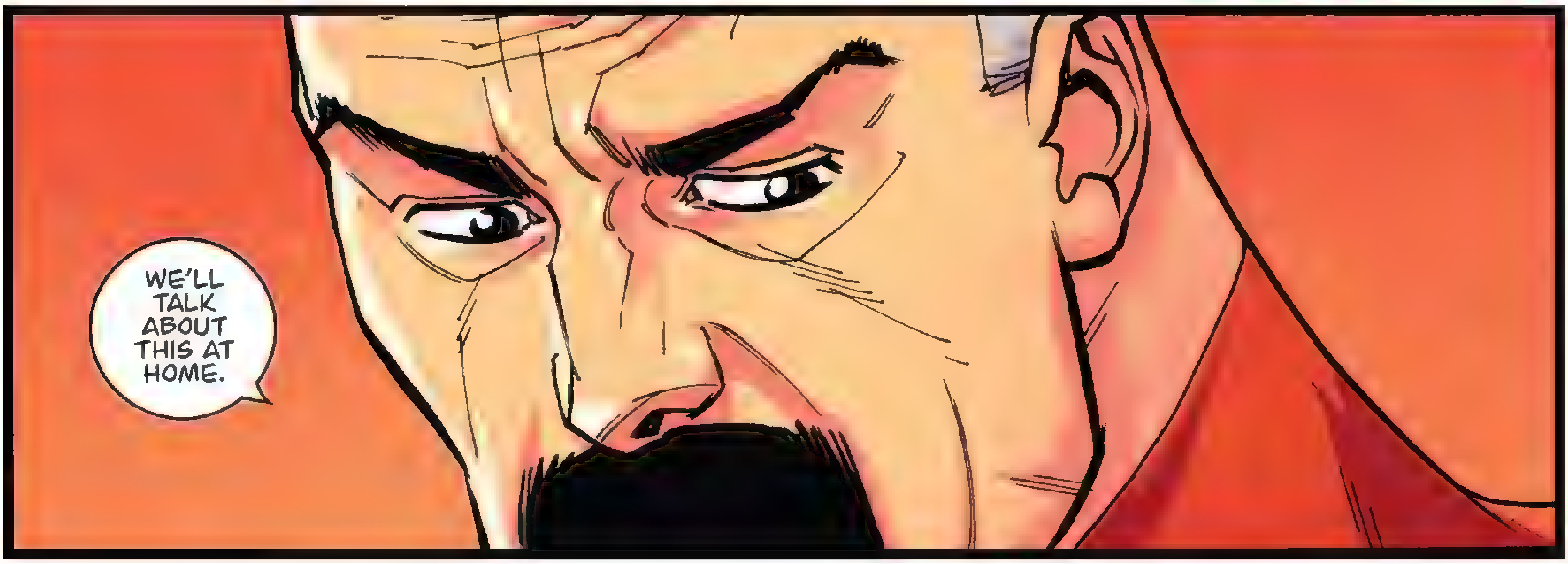
THANKS, THIS IS *EXACTLY* WHAT I WANTED.
NO PROBLEM, REALLY... IT WAS *EASY.* I'VE NEVER HAD SOMEONE GIVE ME SUCH *SPECIFIC* DIRECTION BEFORE.
WHAT WAS YOUR NAME AGAIN? AND HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT MY PLACE?
HOW DID HE KNOW WHAT WE WERE DOING?!
THIS GUY STICKS OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB! I KNEW WE SHOULD HAVE USED KILLCANNON!
WHAT THE--?!
KRROOM!
MY WORK IS TOO IMPORTANT! YOU CAN'T STOP ME NOW!
DON'T WORRY... YOU'LL GET A SECOND CHANCE.

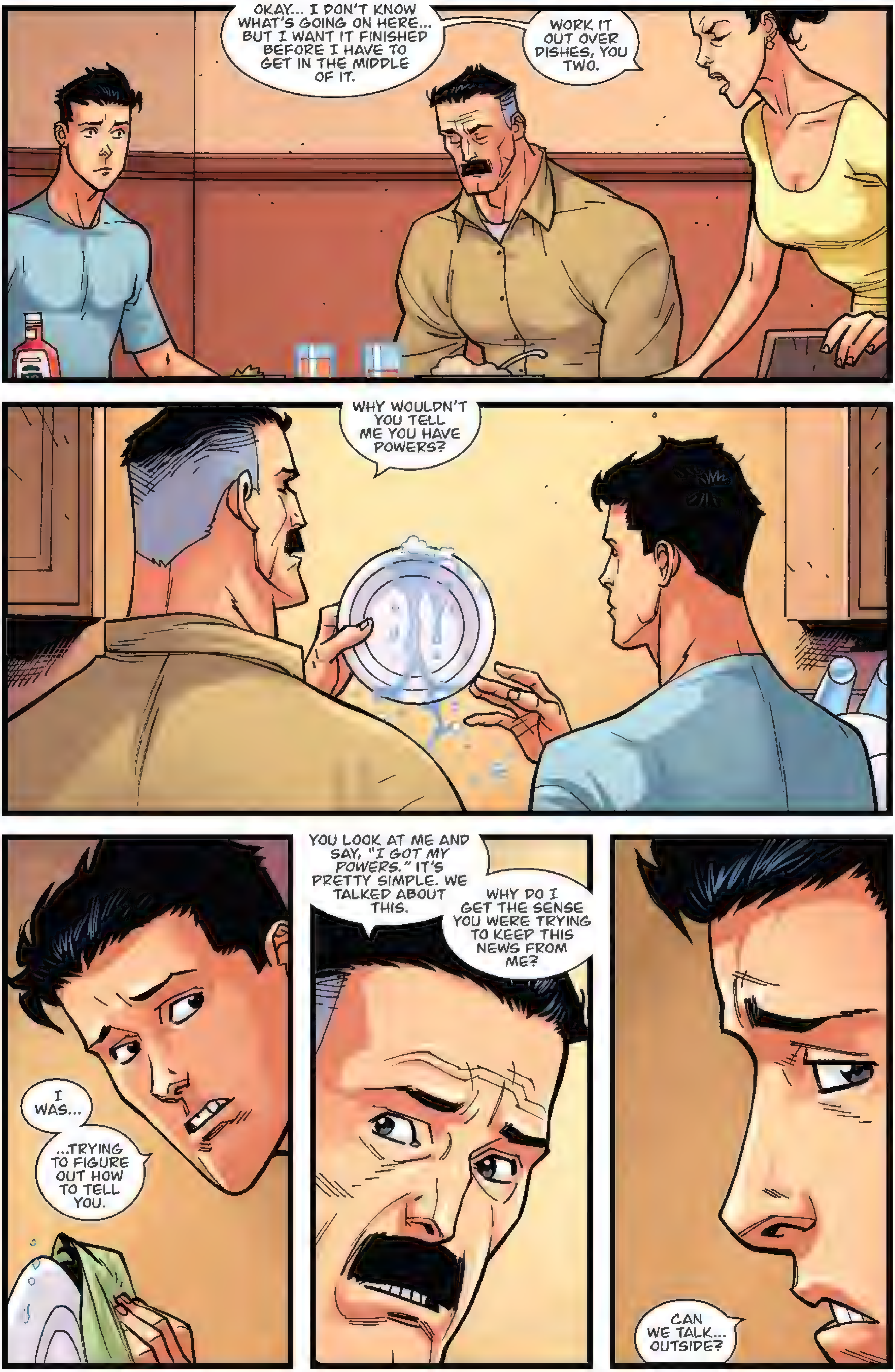

YOU'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE...
YOU'RE SAVING LIVES. THIS IS GOOD. THIS COULD BE A GOOD THING...
OH, GOD...
I CAN'T DO THIS...

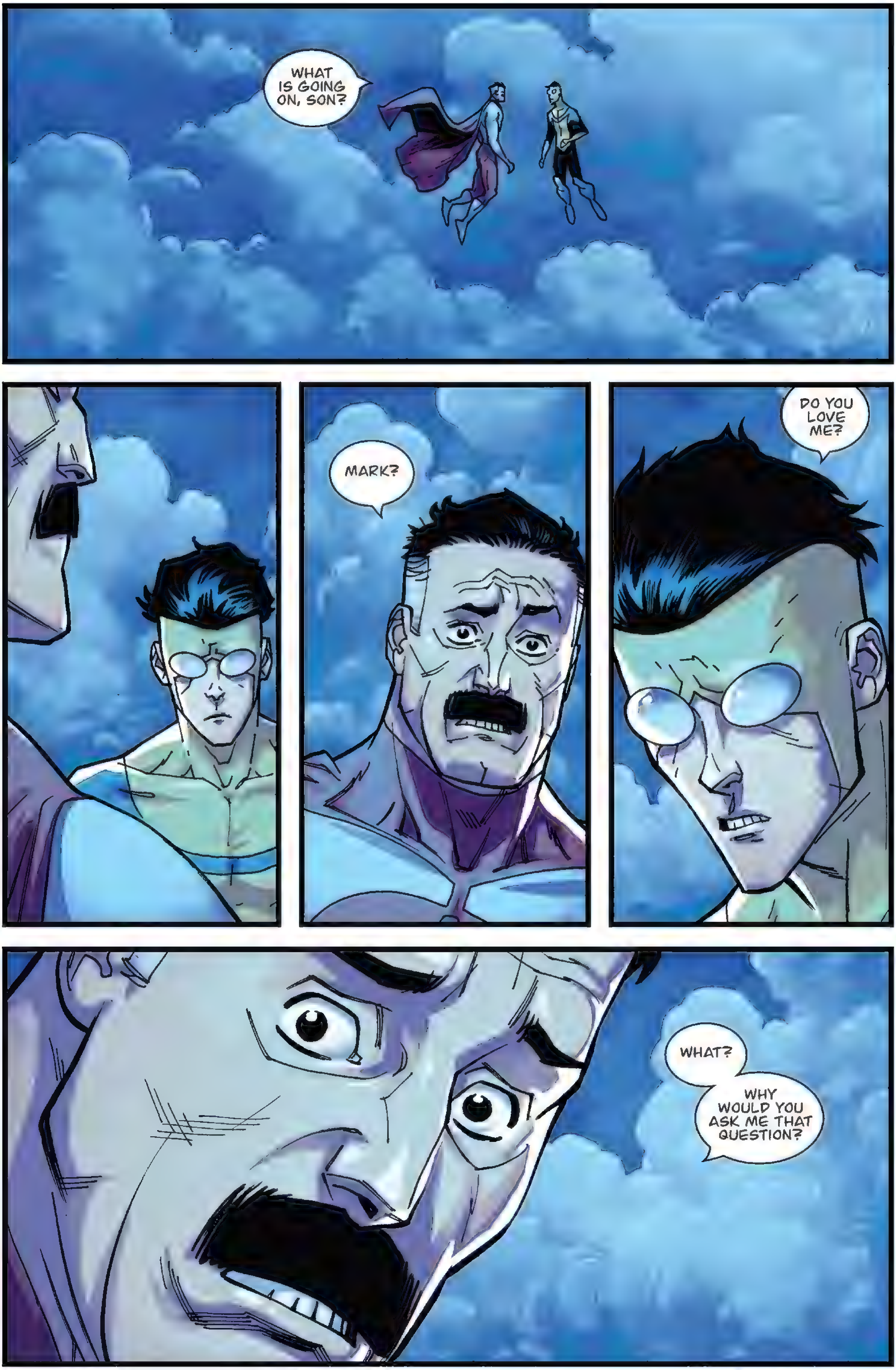
THAT'S IT-- KEEP IT UP!
WE JUST NEED TO HOLD THEM IN PLACE!

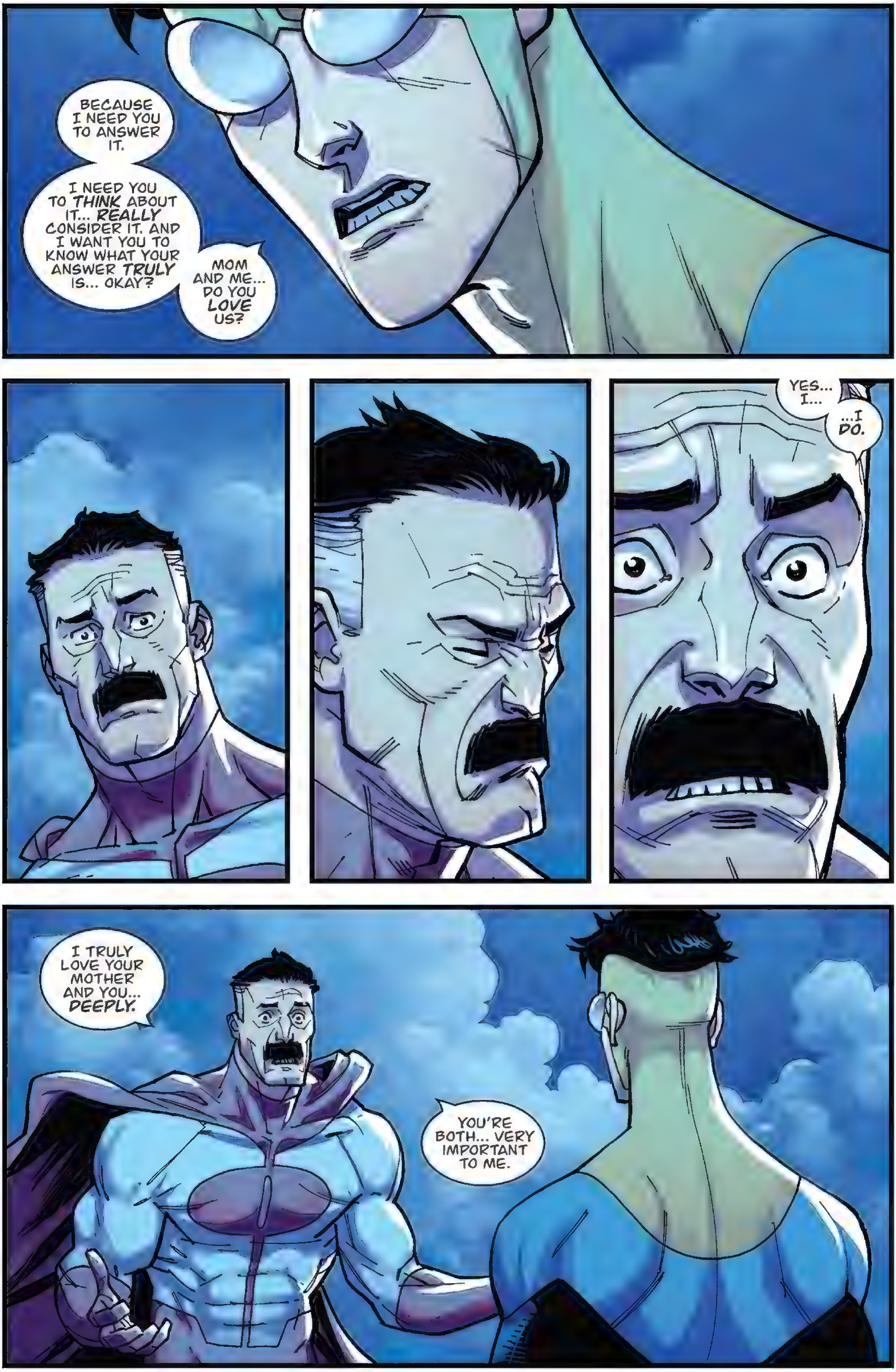

I HAVE TO SAY, WHILE YOU HAVE BEEN NEARLY PROPHETIC IN THE PAST... I'M STARTING TO QUESTION YOU THIS TIME.
YEAH! I AGREE WITH ROBOT!
THESE GUYS AREN'T GETTING OLD AT ALL!
HE SAID IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME, GUYS!
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT IT OUT!
EXACTLY!
I SWEAR THESE GUYS ARE GOING TO LOOK LIKE GRAMPAS SOON, AND THEY'RE GOING TO CRAWL BACK INTO THAT PORTAL.
I WISH THEY'D HURRY UP ALREADY!
I AM DETECTING A CORROSION ON THEIR EQUIPMENT THAT COULD SUPPORT YOUR--
OH, CRAP...

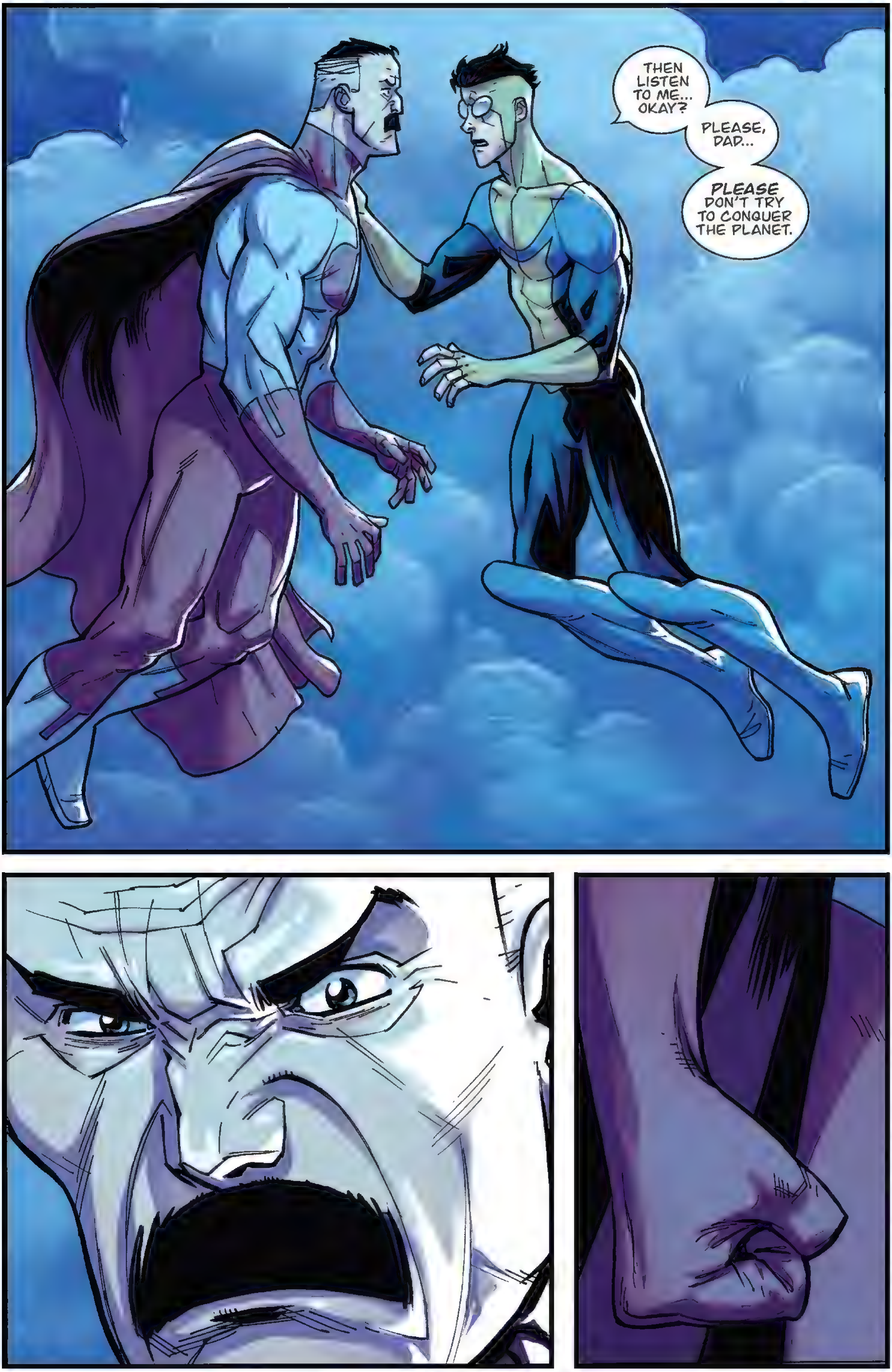

MARK?
UM... HI, DAD.


WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS AT HOME.

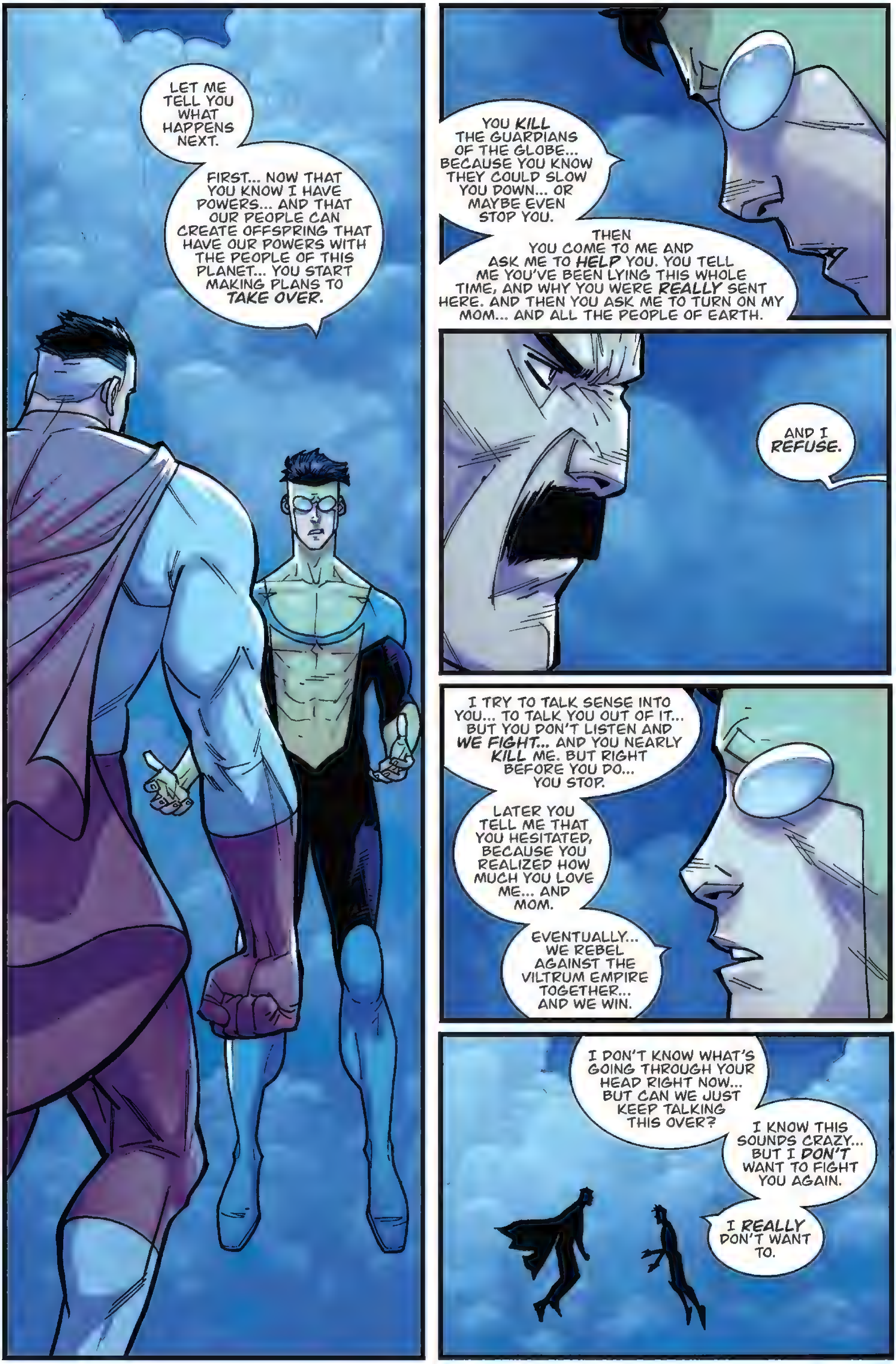

OKAY... I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE... BUT I WANT IT FINISHED BEFORE I HAVE TO GET IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.
WORK IT OUT OVER DISHES, YOU TWO.
WHY WOULDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU HAVE POWERS?
I WAS...
...TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO TELL YOU.
YOU LOOK AT ME AND SAY, "I GOT MY POWERS." IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE. WE TALKED ABOUT THIS.
WHY DO I GET THE SENSE YOU WERE TRYING TO KEEP THIS NEWS FROM ME?
CAN WE TALK... OUTSIDE?


WHAT IS GOING ON, SON?
MARK?
DO YOU LOVE ME?
WHAT?
WHY WOULD YOU ASK ME THAT QUESTION?

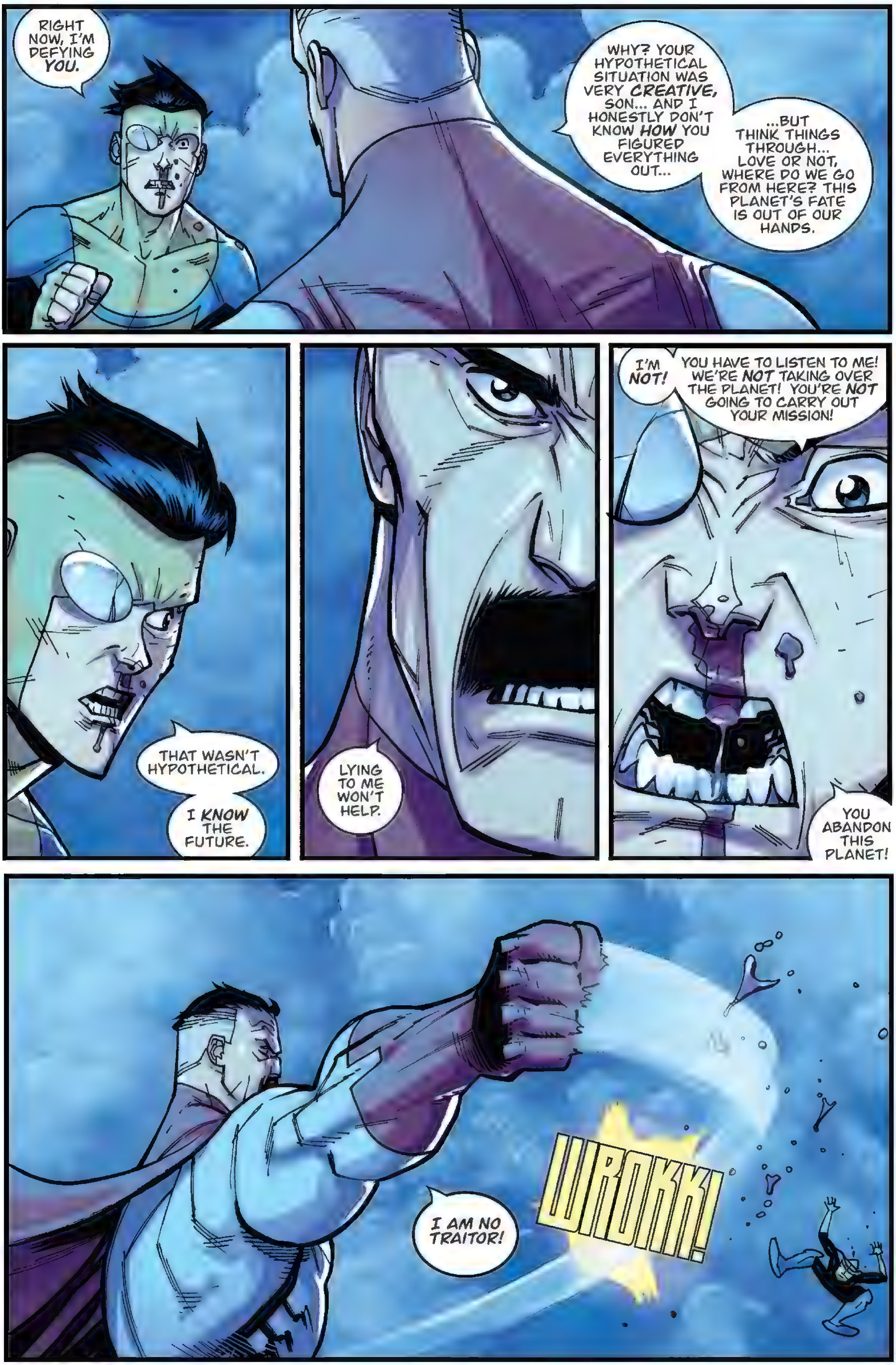

BECAUSE I NEED YOU TO ANSWER IT.
I NEED YOU TO *THINK* ABOUT IT... *REALLY* CONSIDER IT. AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW WHAT YOUR ANSWER *TRULY* IS... OKAY?
MOM AND ME... DO YOU *LOVE* US?
YES... I...
...I *DO.*
I TRULY LOVE YOUR MOTHER AND YOU... *DEEPLY.*
YOU'RE BOTH... VERY IMPORTANT TO ME.

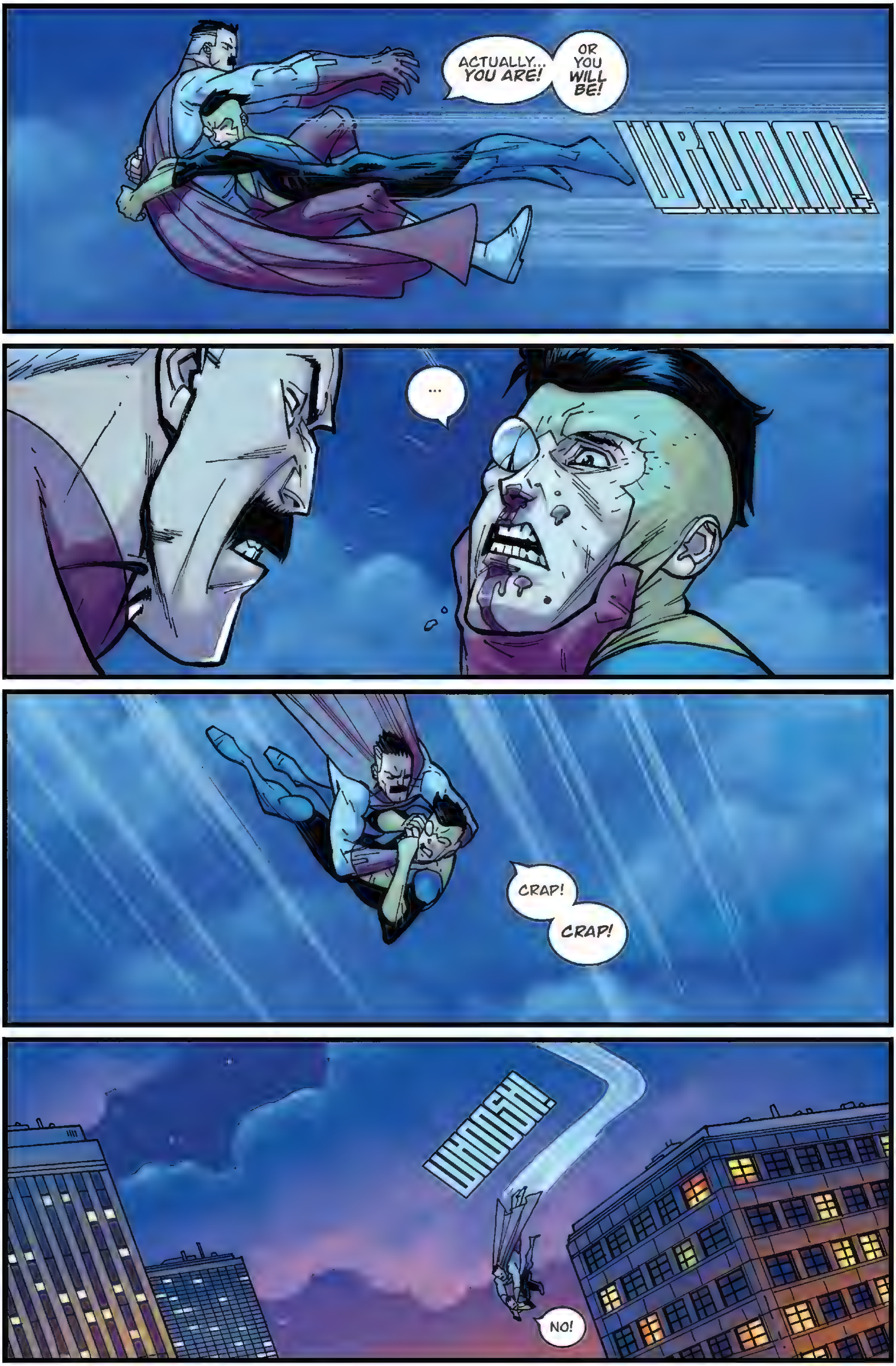

THEN LISTEN TO ME... OKAY?
PLEASE, DAD...
PLEASE DON'T TRY TO CONQUER THE PLANET.

CHAPTER 125

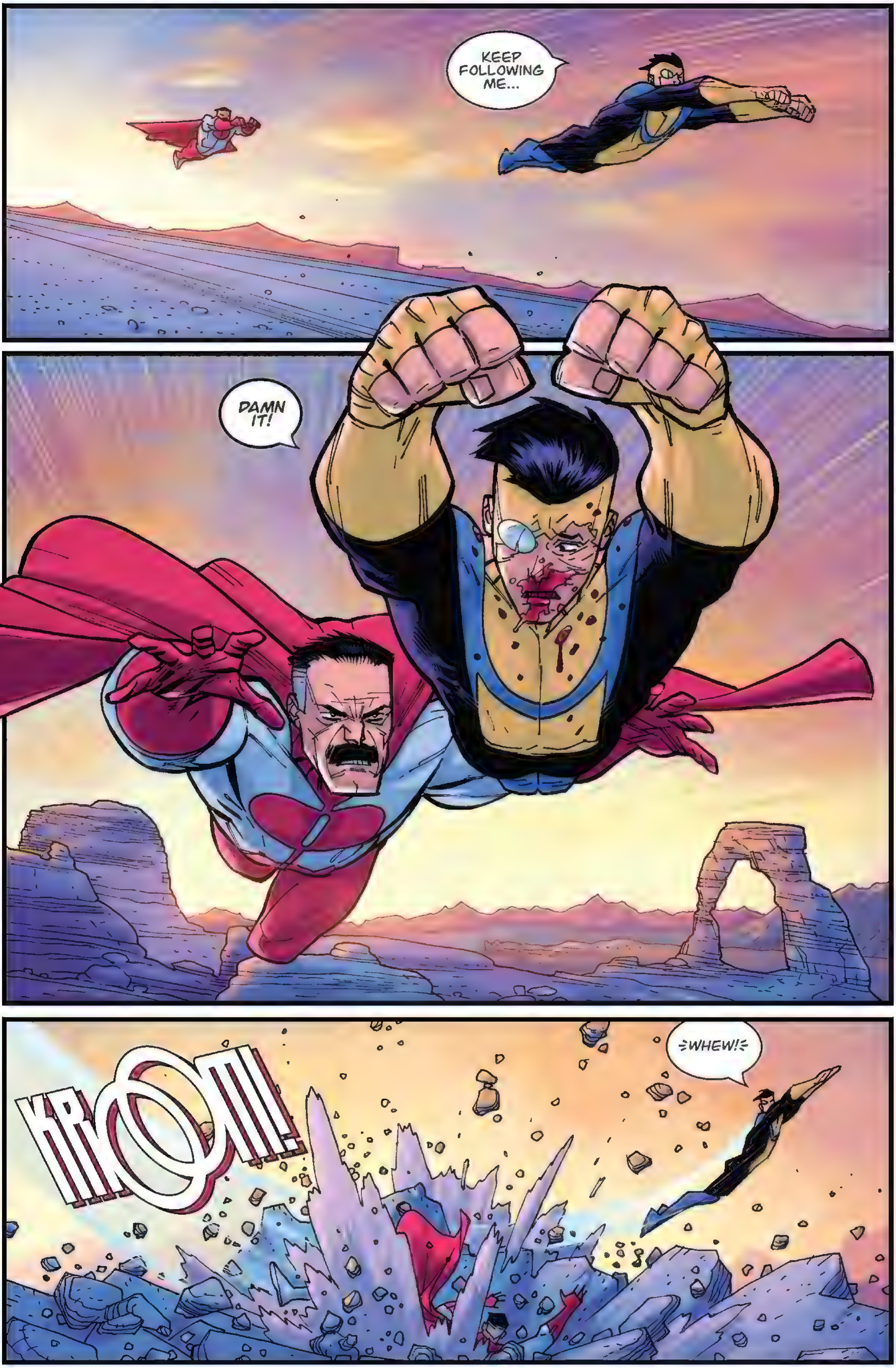

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
FIRST... NOW THAT YOU KNOW I HAVE POWERS... AND THAT OUR PEOPLE CAN CREATE OFFSPRING THAT HAVE OUR POWERS WITH THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET... YOU START MAKING PLANS TO TAKE OVER.
YOU KILL THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE... BECAUSE YOU KNOW THEY COULD SLOW YOU DOWN... OR MAYBE EVEN STOP YOU.
THEN YOU COME TO ME AND ASK ME TO HELP YOU. YOU TELL ME YOU'VE BEEN LYING THIS WHOLE TIME, AND WHY YOU WERE REALLY SENT HERE. AND THEN YOU ASK ME TO TURN ON MY MOM... AND ALL THE PEOPLE OF EARTH.
AND I REFUSE.
I TRY TO TALK SENSE INTO YOU... TO TALK YOU OUT OF IT... BUT YOU DON'T LISTEN AND WE FIGHT... AND YOU NEARLY KILL ME. BUT RIGHT BEFORE YOU DO... YOU STOP.
LATER YOU TELL ME THAT YOU HESITATED, BECAUSE YOU REALIZED HOW MUCH YOU LOVE ME... AND MOM.
EVENTUALLY... WE REBEL AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE TOGETHER... AND WE WIN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING THROUGH YOUR HEAD RIGHT NOW... BUT CAN WE JUST KEEP TALKING THIS OVER?
I KNOW THIS SOUNDS CRAZY... BUT I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU AGAIN.
I REALLY DON'T WANT TO.

WHAMM!
YOU CAN'T DEFY THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.


RIGHT NOW, I'M DEFYING *YOU.*
WHY? YOUR HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION WAS VERY *CREATIVE,* SON... AND I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW *HOW* YOU FIGURED EVERYTHING OUT...
...BUT THINK THINGS THROUGH... LOVE OR NOT, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? THIS PLANET'S FATE IS OUT OF OUR HANDS.
THAT WASN'T HYPOTHETICAL.
I *KNOW* THE FUTURE.
LYING TO ME WON'T HELP.
I'M *NOT!*
YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME! WE'RE *NOT* TAKING OVER THE PLANET! YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO CARRY OUT YOUR MISSION!
YOU ABANDON THIS PLANET!
I AM NO TRAITOR!
WROKK!

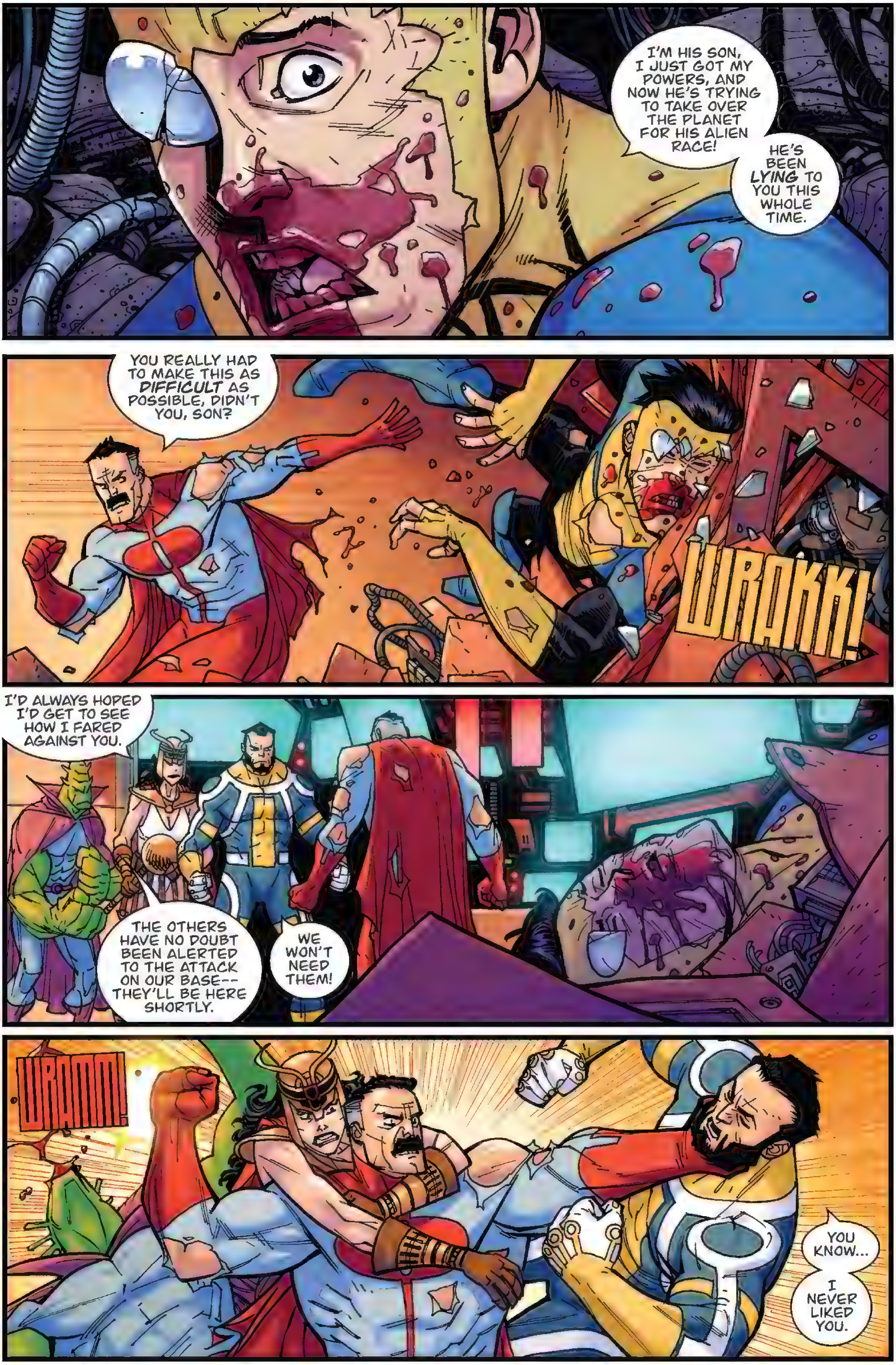

ACTUALLY... YOU ARE!
OR YOU WILL BE!
WHAMM!
...
CRAP!
CRAP!
WHOOSH!
NO!

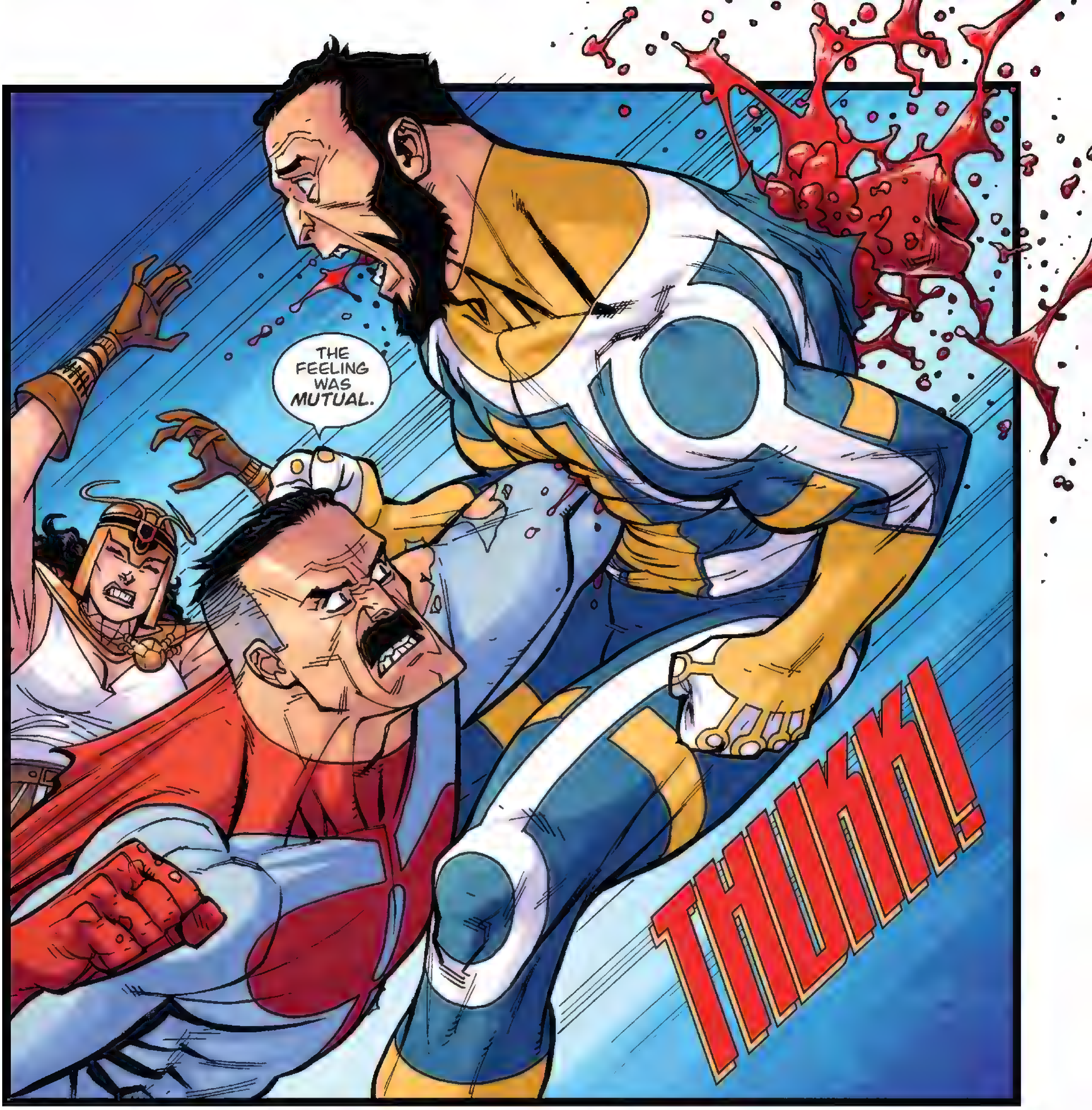
KRAK!
CAN WE GO BACK TO TALKING NOW?!
WHAMM!
OH, GOD!
VOOSH!
OKAY... I SHOULD HAVE PLANNED THIS BETTER...

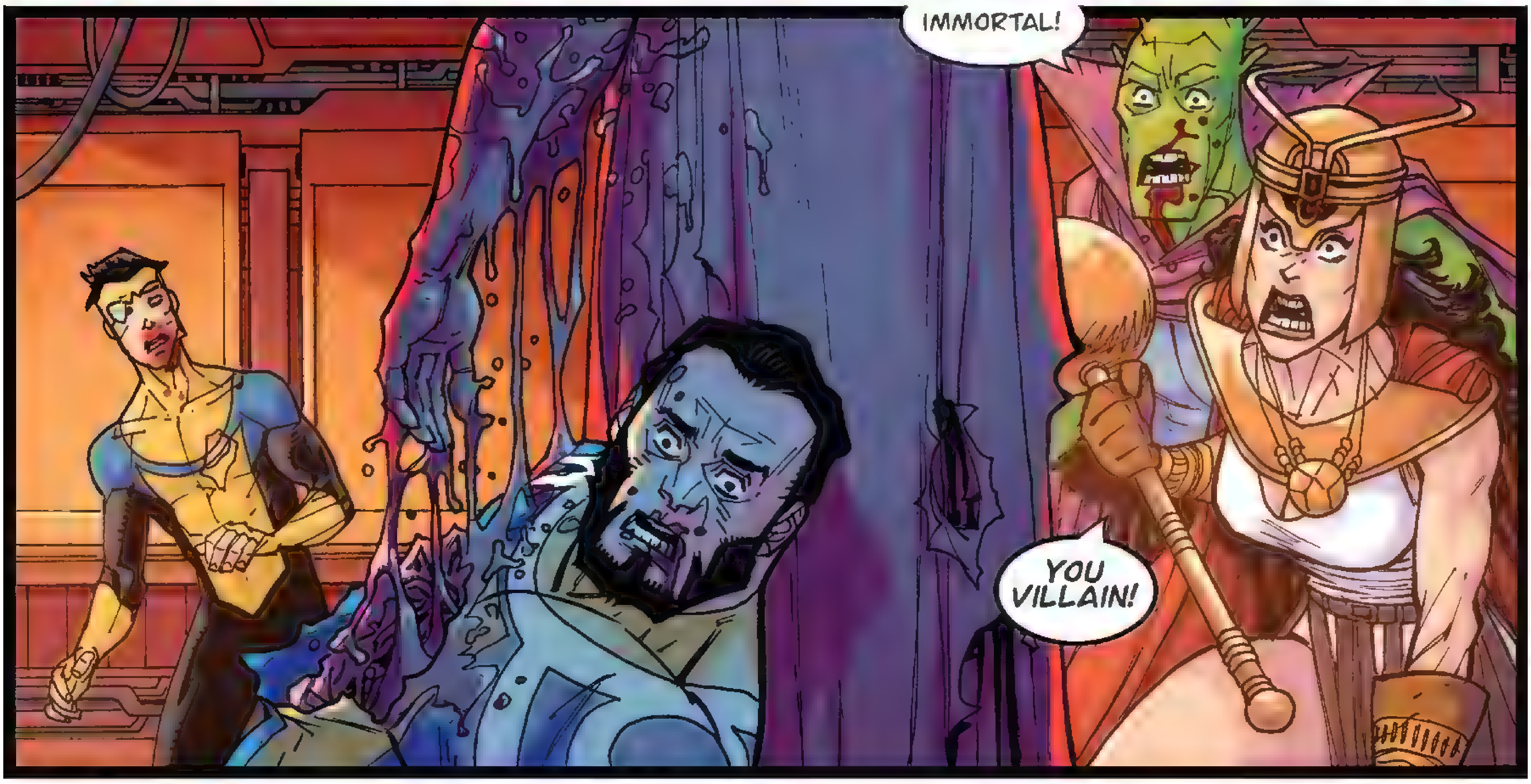

KEEP FOLLOWING ME...
DAMN IT!
KROOM!
WHEW!

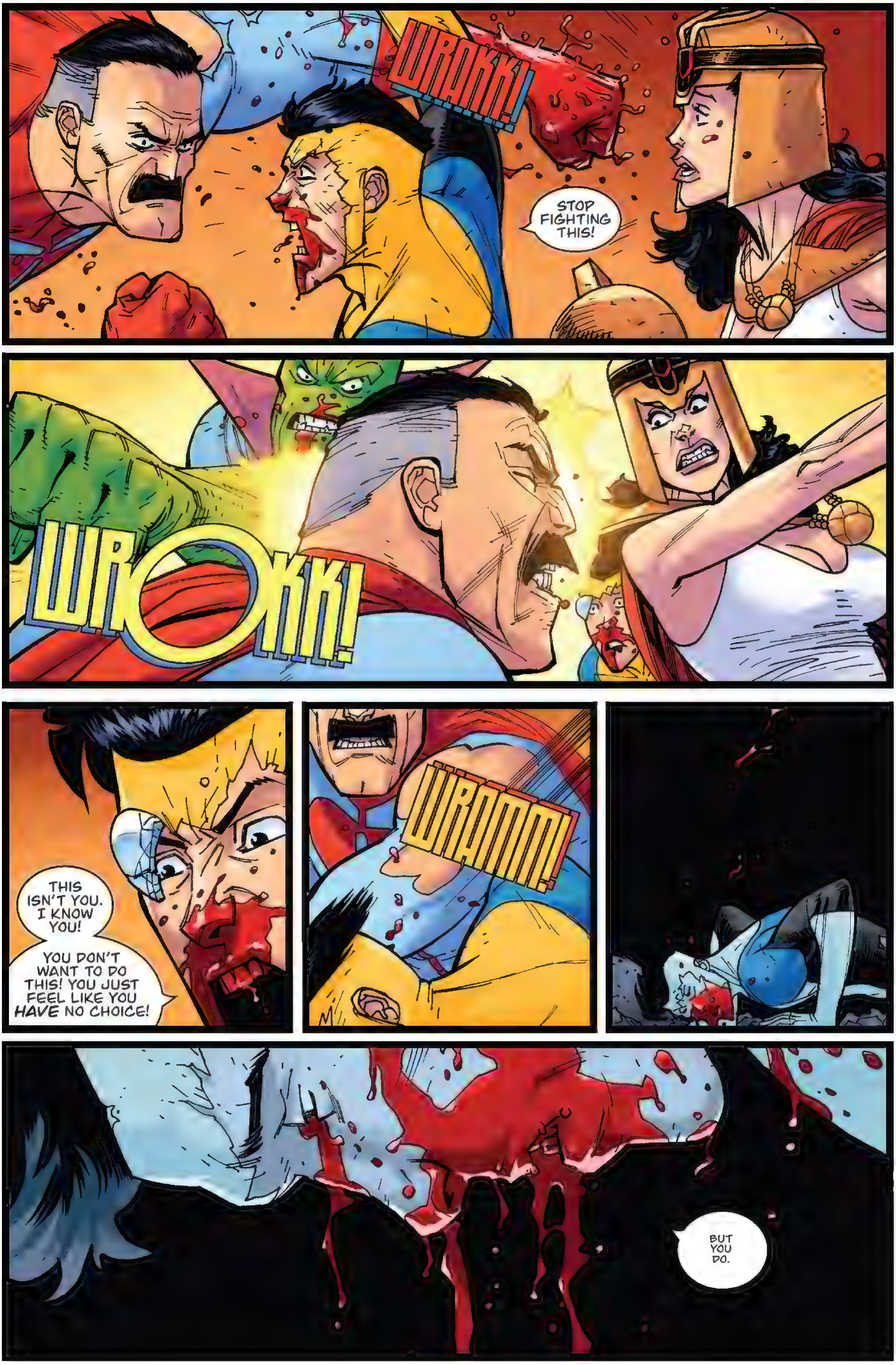
WRAMM!
OOF!
MORE TO THE LEFT...
VOOSH!
WRAKOOM!!
DAD, PLEASE! STOP FIGHTING AND **LISTEN** TO ME!
I WON'T STOP UNTIL I'VE **BEATEN** SOME SENSE INTO YOU. THIS PLANET'S FATE WAS DECIDED THE MOMENT OUR PEOPLE DISCOVERED IT.
WE'D ONLY ASSURE OUR DEMISE BY TRYING TO SAVE IT.

OMNI-MAN?!
WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?

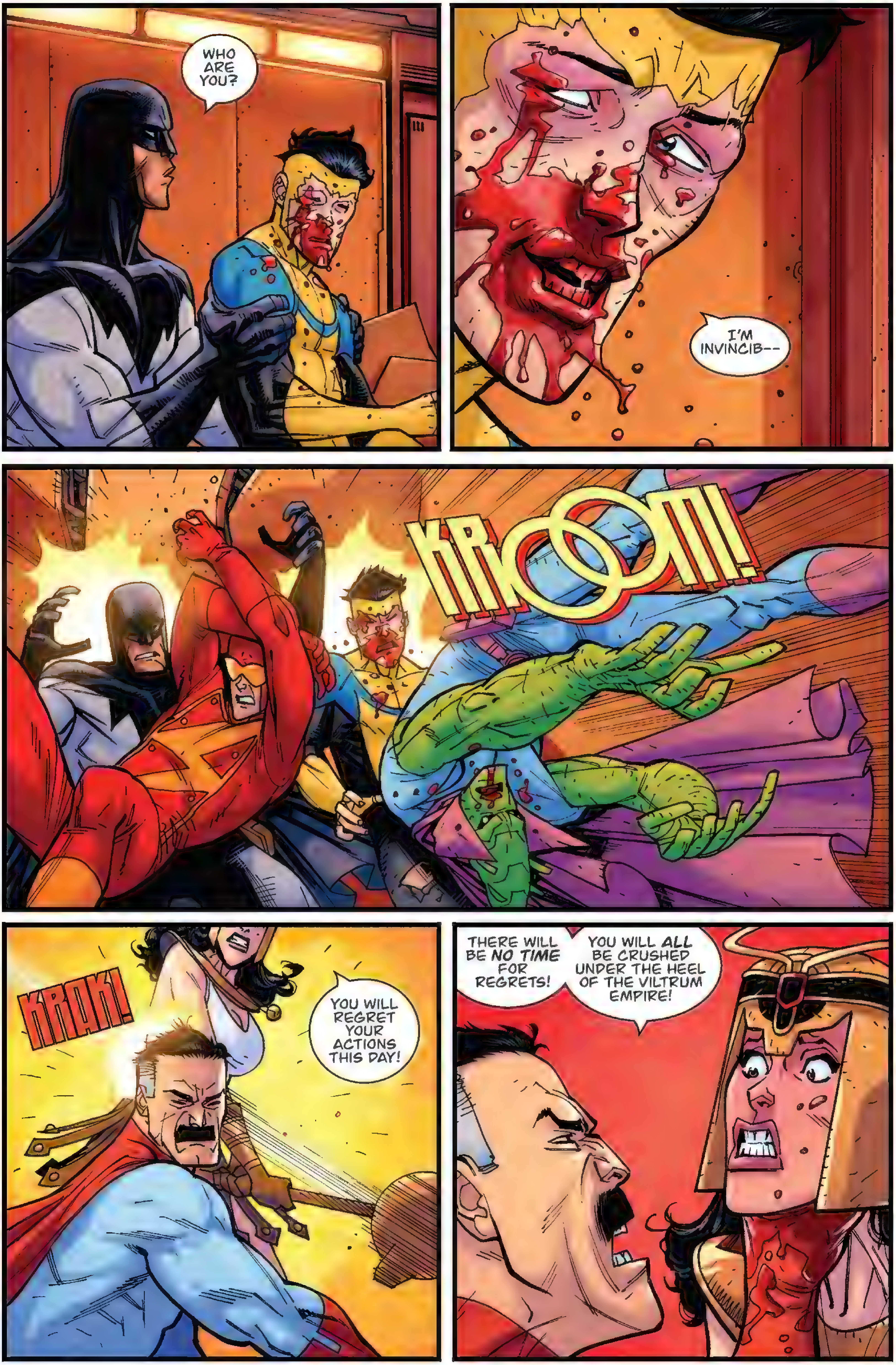

I'M HIS SON, I JUST GOT MY POWERS, AND NOW HE'S TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE PLANET FOR HIS ALIEN RACE!
HE'S BEEN *LYING* TO YOU THIS WHOLE TIME.
YOU REALLY HAD TO MAKE THIS AS *DIFFICULT* AS POSSIBLE, DIDN'T YOU, SON?
WRAKK!
I'D ALWAYS HOPED I'D GET TO SEE HOW I FARED AGAINST YOU.
THE OTHERS HAVE NO DOUBT BEEN ALERTED TO THE ATTACK ON OUR BASE-- THEY'LL BE HERE SHORTLY.
WE WON'T NEED THEM!
WRAMM!
YOU KNOW...
I NEVER LIKED YOU.

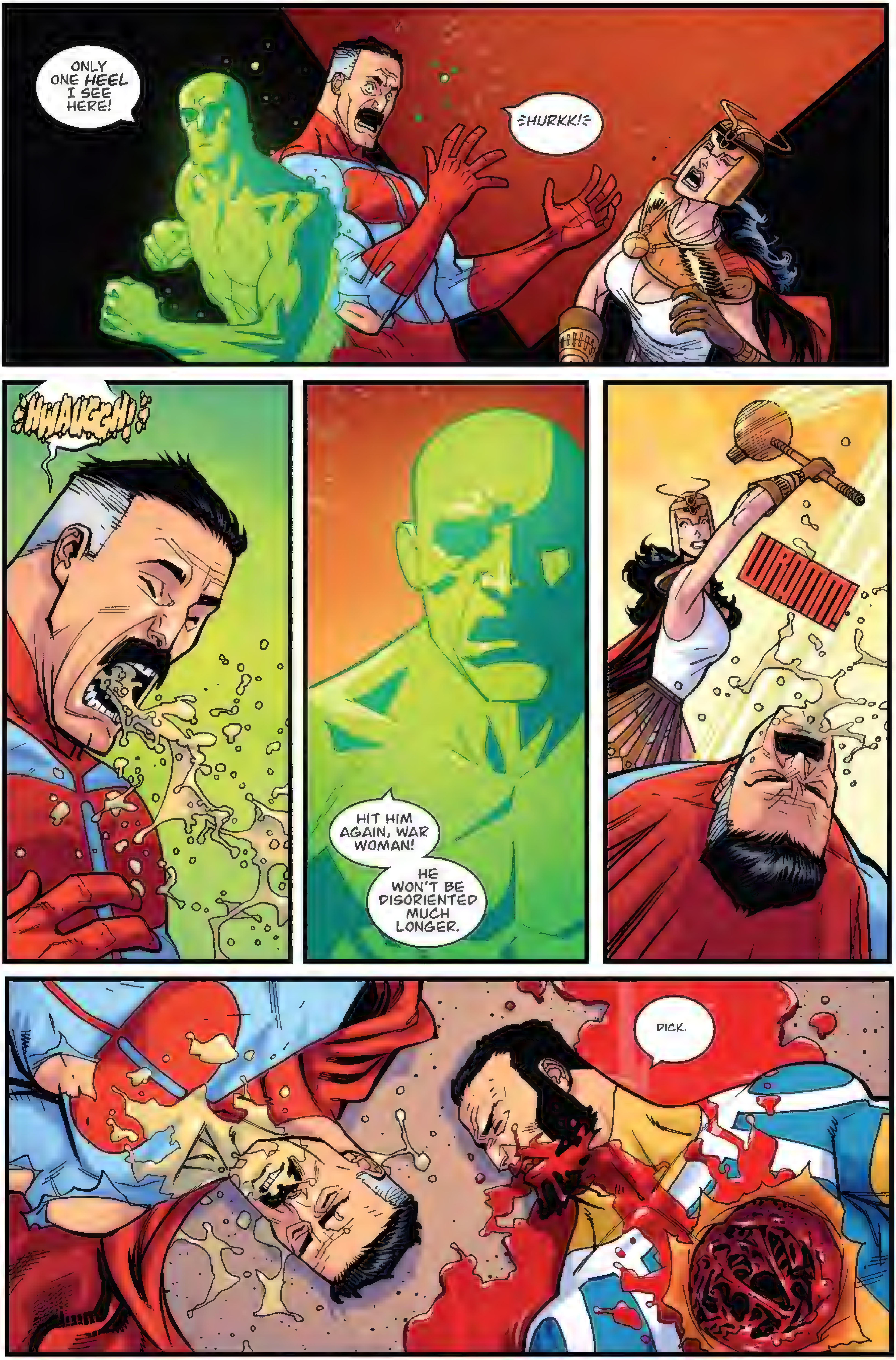

THE FEELING WAS MUTUAL.
THUKK!

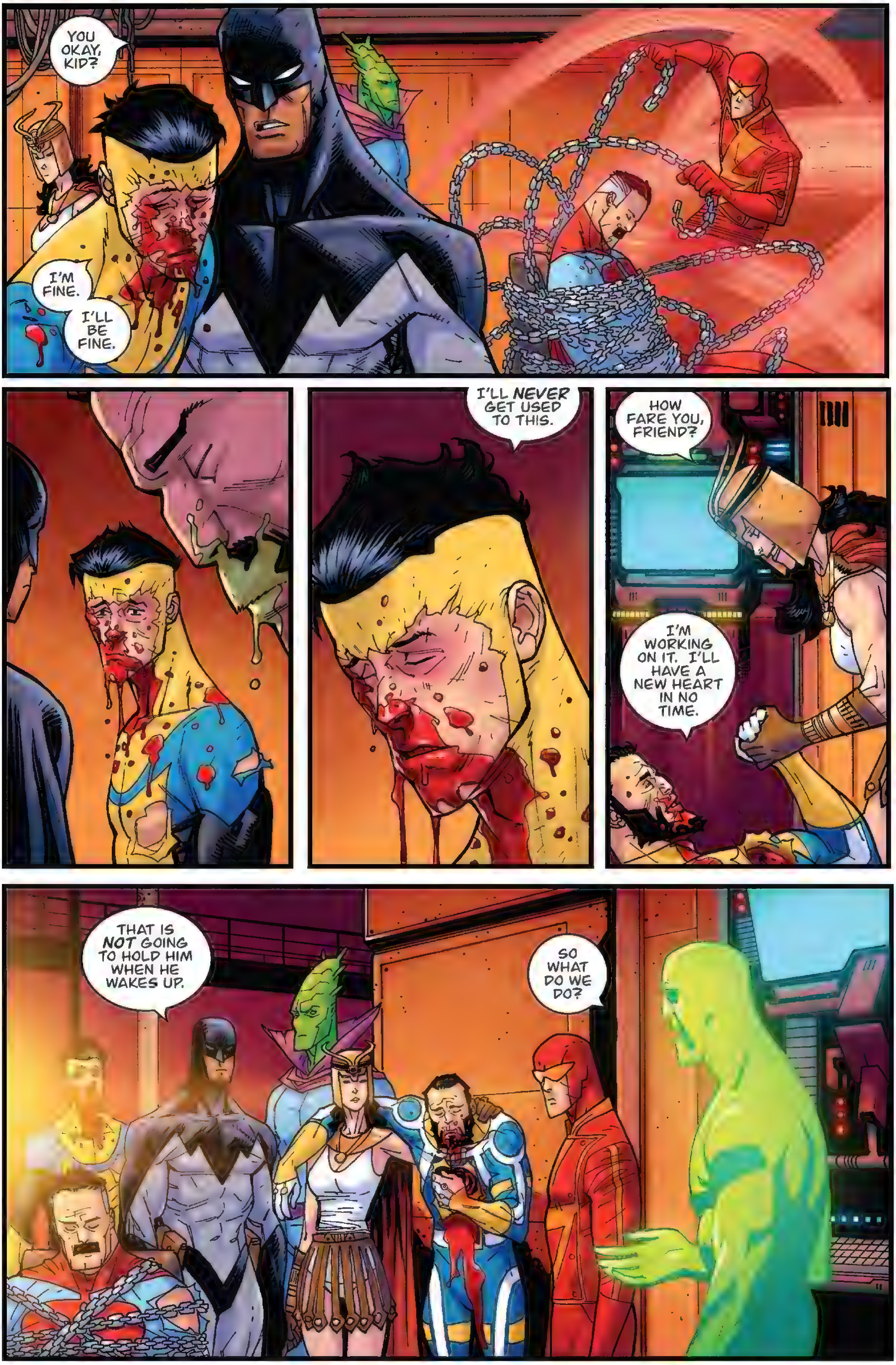

IMMORTAL!
YOU VILLAIN!

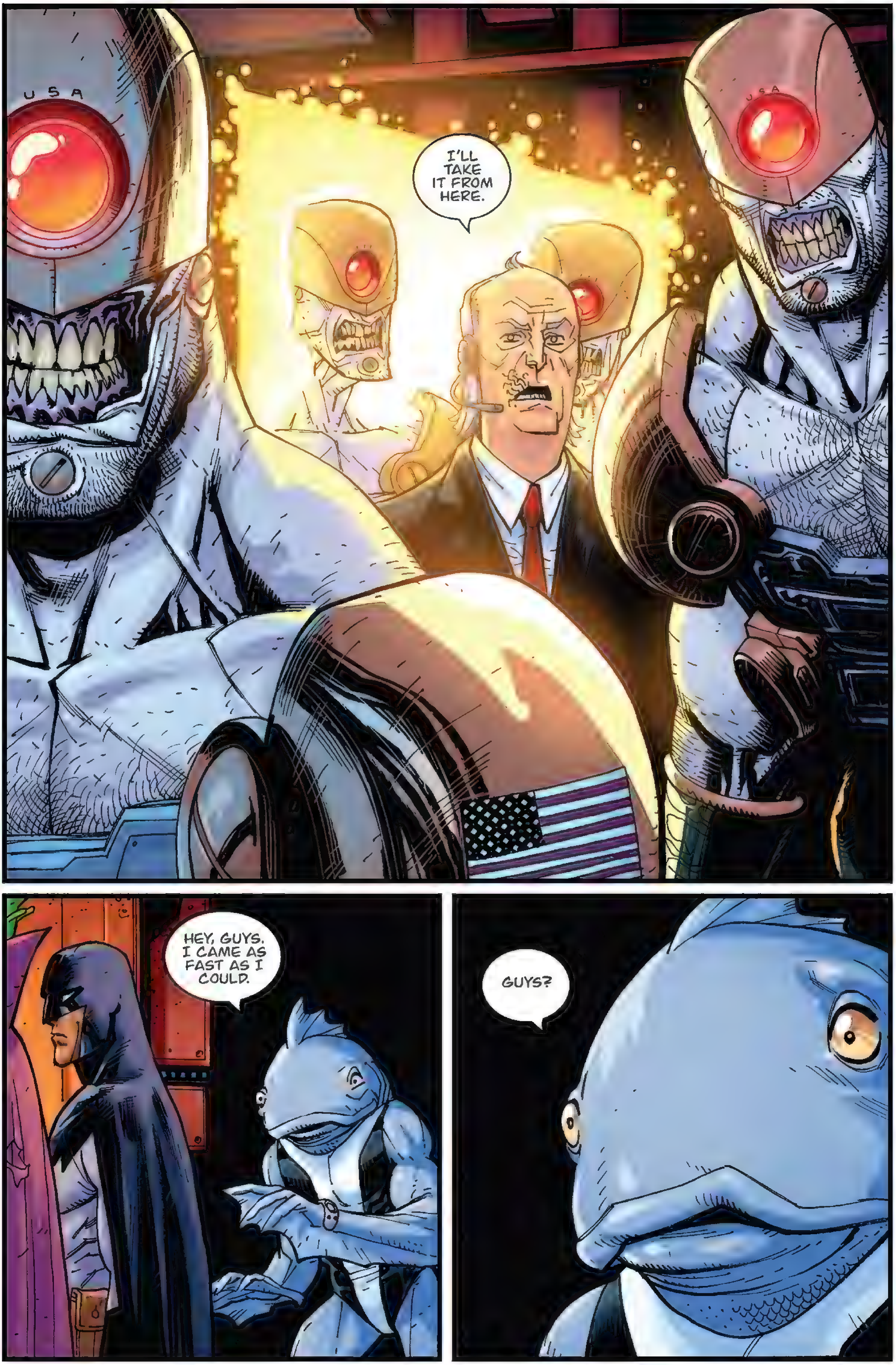

WRAKK!
STOP FIGHTING THIS!
WROKK!
THIS ISN'T YOU. I KNOW YOU!
YOU DON'T WANT TO DO THIS! YOU JUST FEEL LIKE YOU *HAVE* NO CHOICE!
WRAMM!
BUT YOU DO.

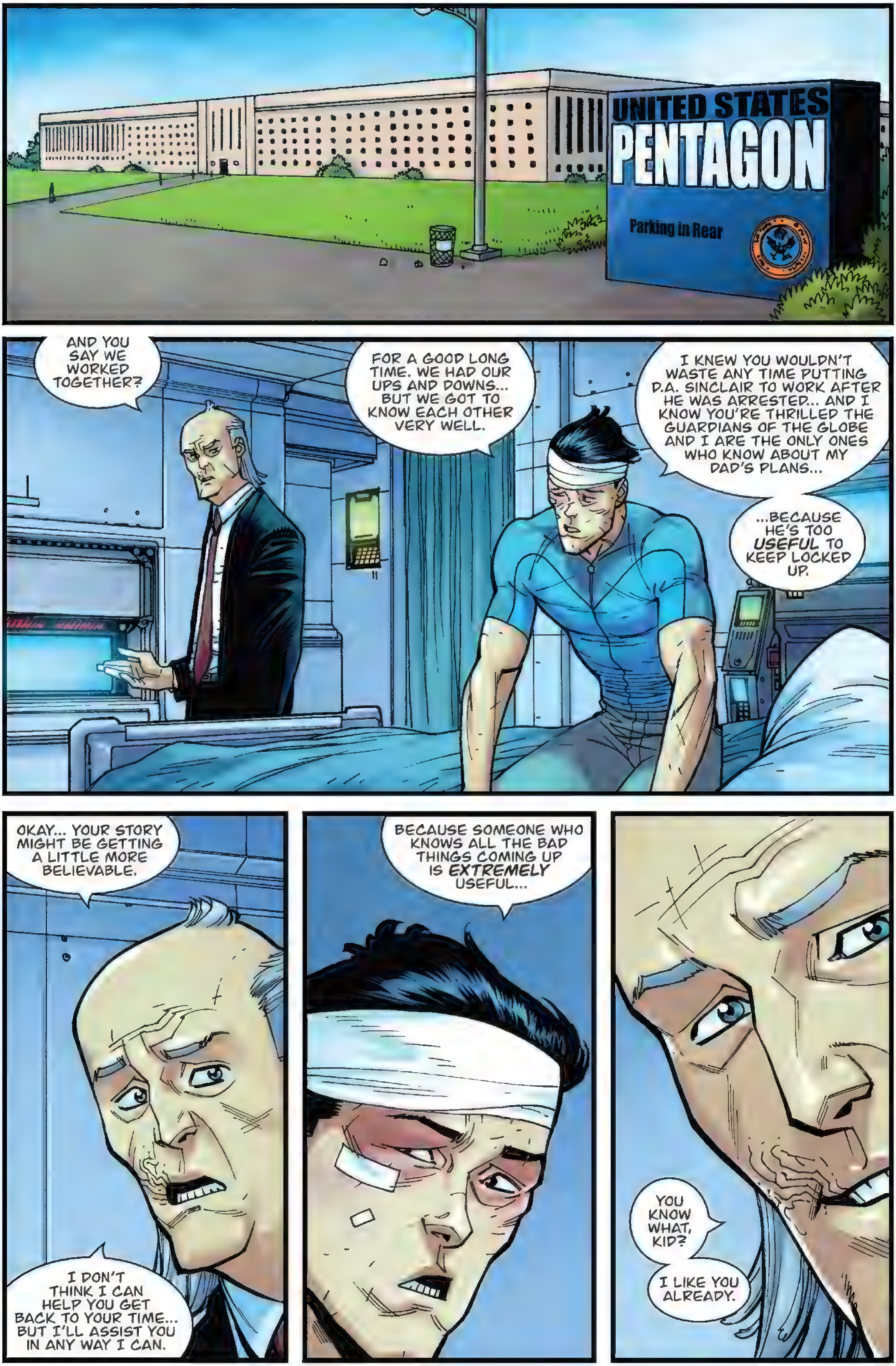
WOOSH!
WHAT IS THIS?!
MIND CONTROL?
NO!
WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED!
FOCUS ON HIM-- KEEP HIM OFF BALANCE!
DON'T LET UP!
YOU COULD USE A LITTLE FOCUS YOURSELF, KID.
THE LONGER THIS TAKES, THE MORE LIKELY WE'LL LOSE.

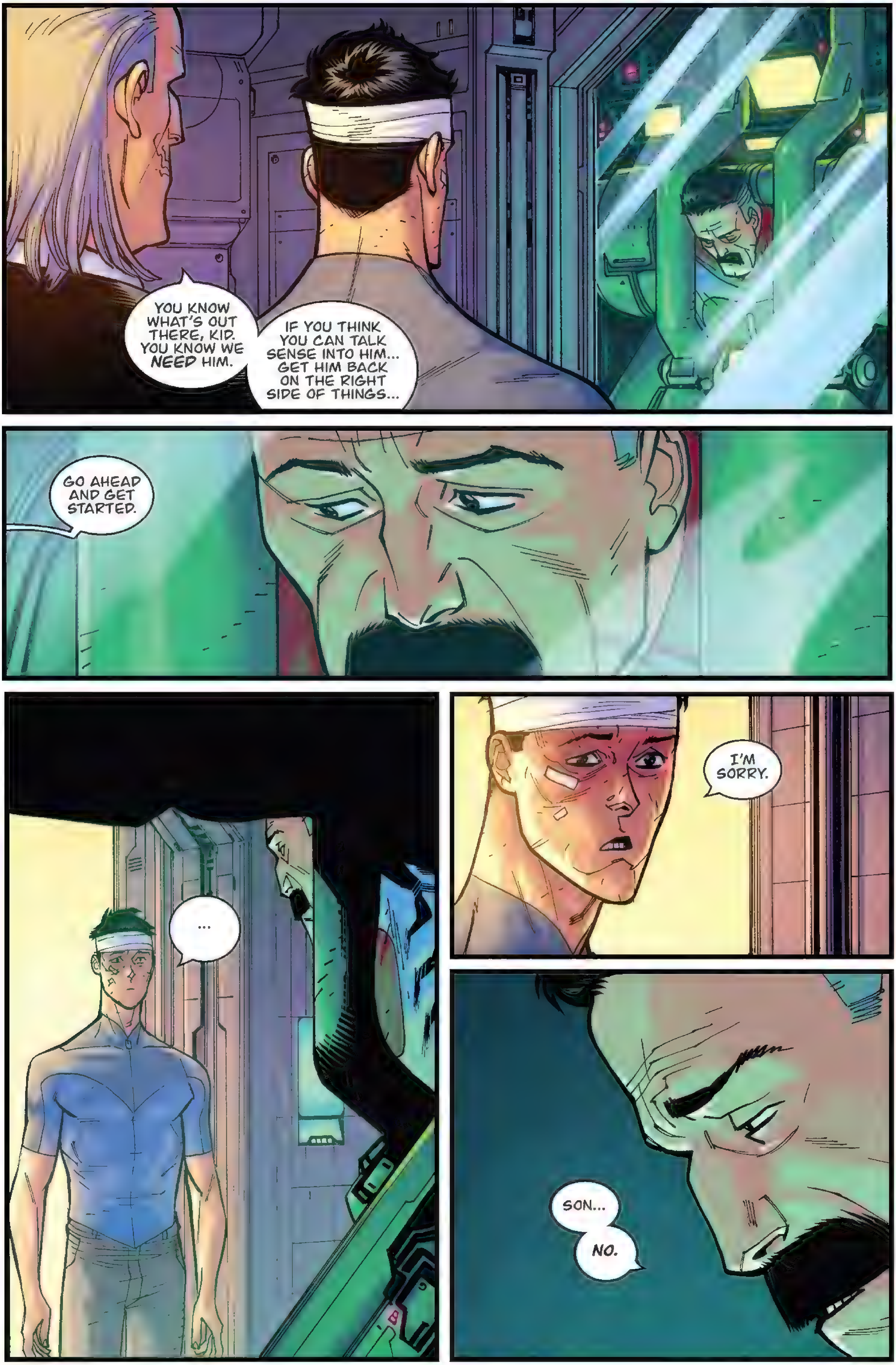

WHO ARE YOU?
I'M INVINCIB--
KROOM!
KRAK!
YOU WILL REGRET YOUR ACTIONS THIS DAY!
THERE WILL BE NO TIME FOR REGRETS!
YOU WILL ALL BE CRUSHED UNDER THE HEEL OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE!

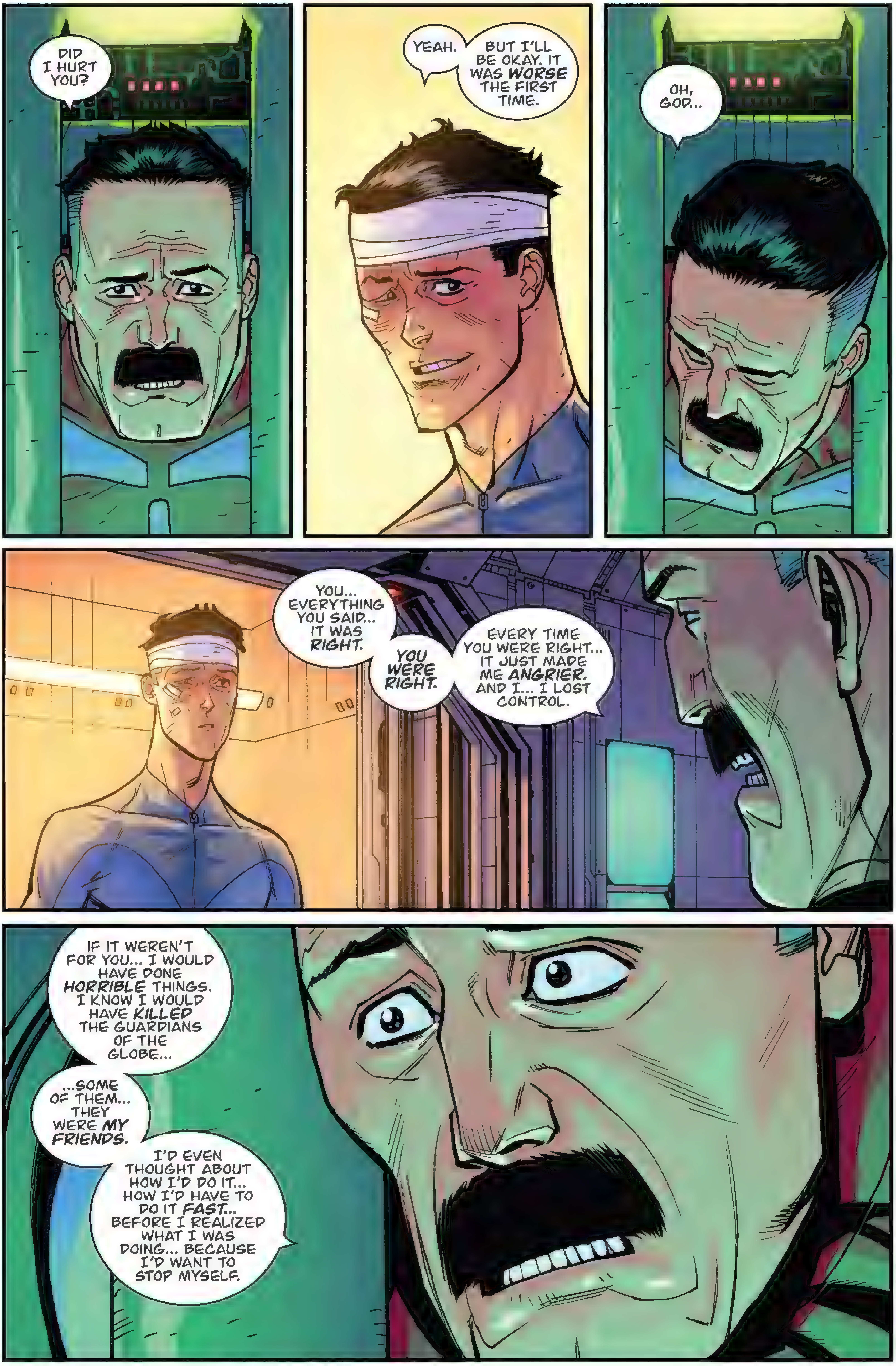

ONLY ONE HEEL I SEE HERE!
=HURKK!=
HWAUGGH!
HIT HIM AGAIN, WAR WOMAN!
HE WON'T BE DISORIENTED MUCH LONGER.
VROMM!
DICK.

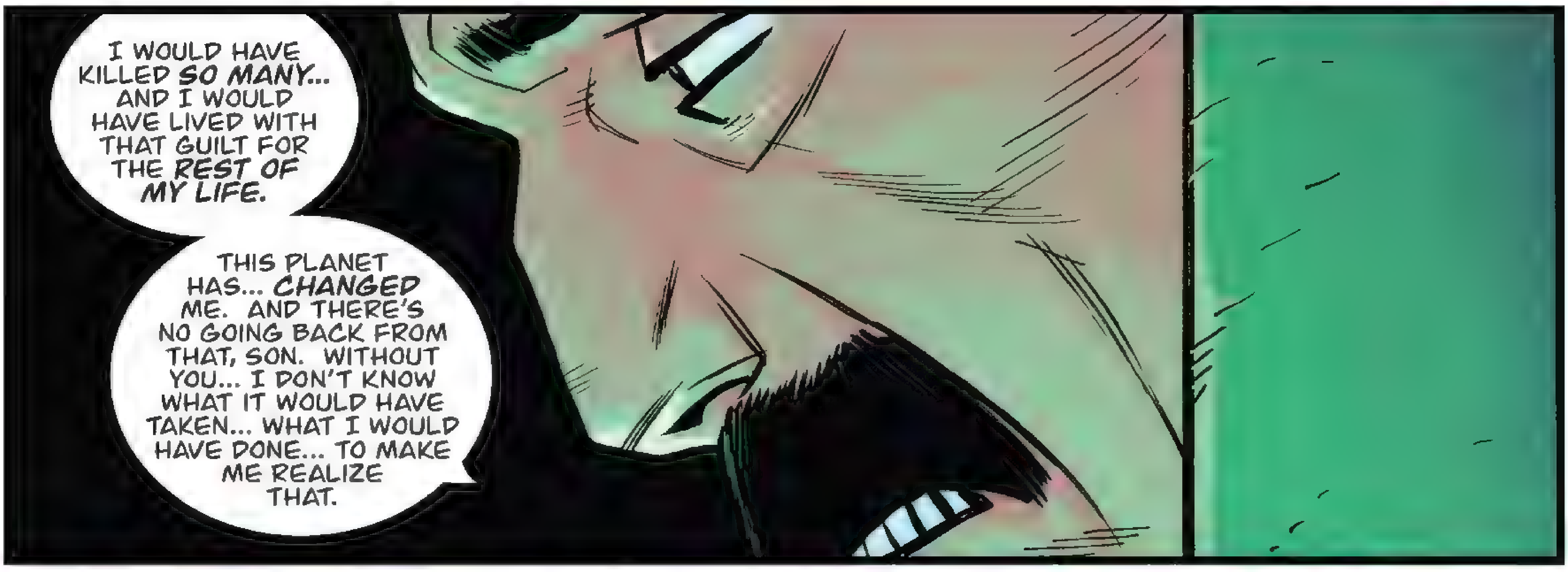

YOU OKAY, KID?
I'M FINE.
I'LL BE FINE.
I'LL *NEVER* GET USED TO THIS.
HOW FARE YOU, FRIEND?
I'M WORKING ON IT. I'LL HAVE A NEW HEART IN NO TIME.
THAT IS *NOT* GOING TO HOLD HIM WHEN HE WAKES UP.
SO WHAT DO WE DO?

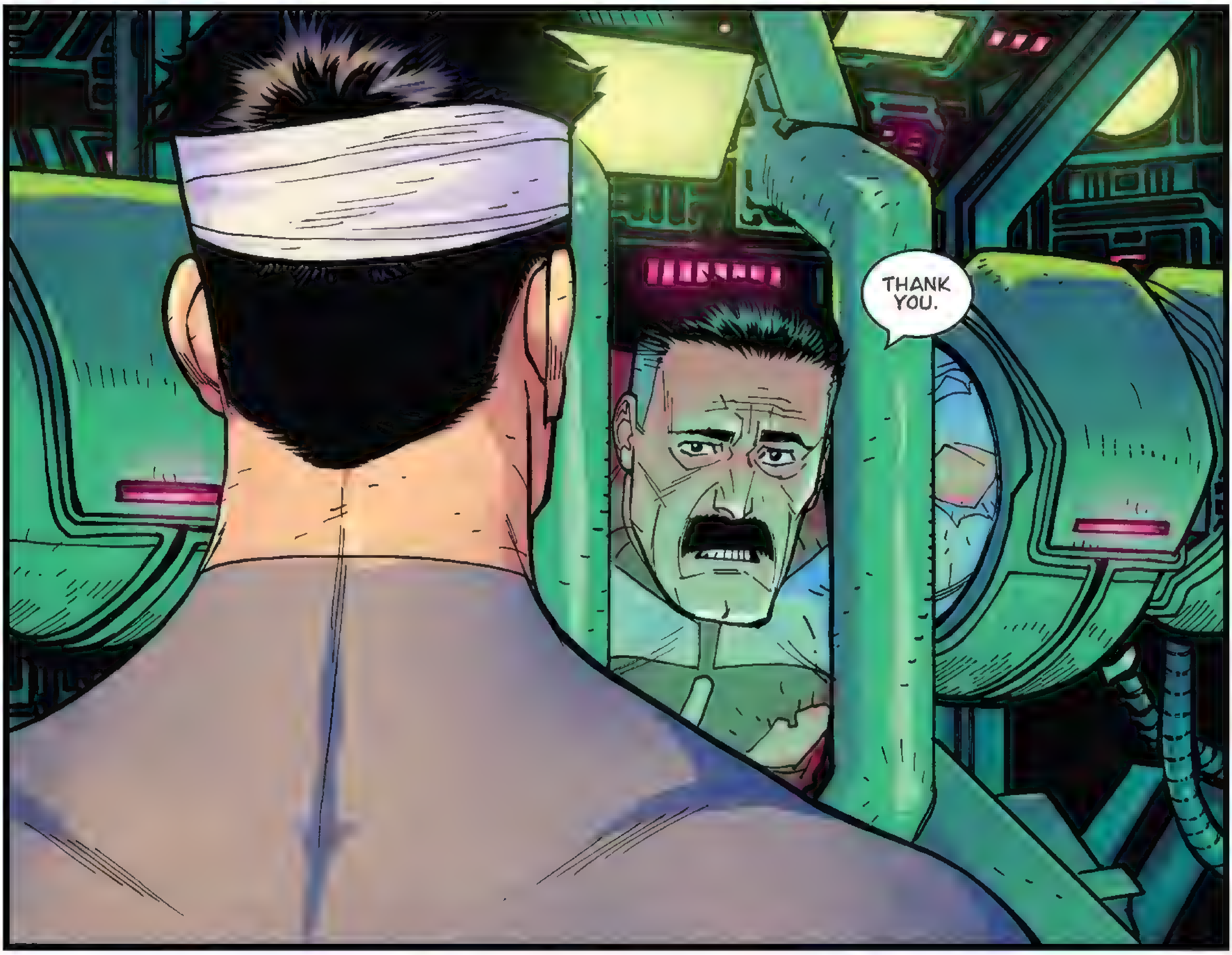

USA
USA
I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
HEY, GUYS. I CAME AS FAST AS I COULD.
GUYS?

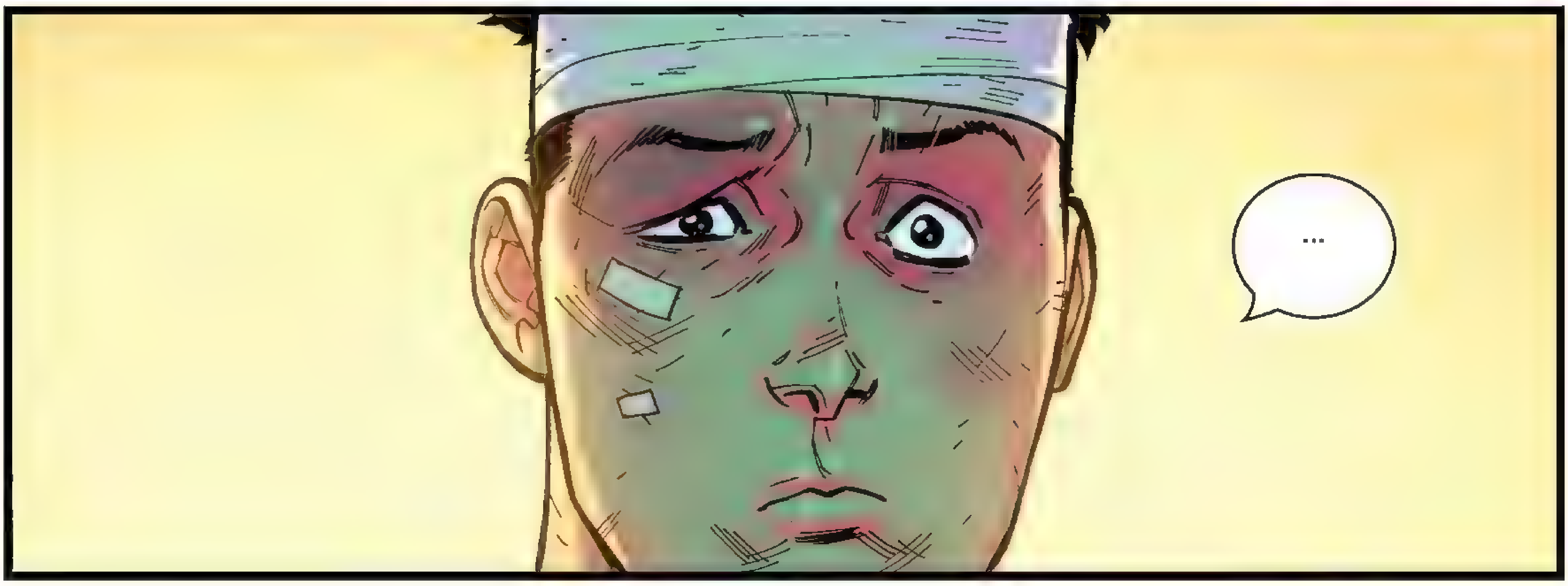

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
AND YOU SAY WE WORKED TOGETHER?
FOR A GOOD LONG TIME. WE HAD OUR UPS AND DOWNS... BUT WE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER VERY WELL.
I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T WASTE ANY TIME PUTTING D.A. SINCLAIR TO WORK AFTER HE WAS ARRESTED... AND I KNOW YOU'RE THRILLED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE AND I ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO KNOW ABOUT MY DAD'S PLANS...
...BECAUSE HE'S TOO *USEFUL* TO KEEP LOCKED UP.
OKAY... YOUR STORY MIGHT BE GETTING A LITTLE MORE BELIEVABLE.
I DON'T THINK I CAN HELP YOU GET BACK TO YOUR TIME... BUT I'LL ASSIST YOU IN ANY WAY I CAN.
BECAUSE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS ALL THE BAD THINGS COMING UP IS *EXTREMELY* USEFUL...
YOU KNOW WHAT, KID?
I LIKE YOU ALREADY.


YOU KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE, KID. YOU KNOW WE *NEED* HIM.
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN TALK SENSE INTO HIM... GET HIM BACK ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THINGS...
GO AHEAD AND GET STARTED.
...
I'M SORRY.
SON...
NO.


DID I HURT YOU?
YEAH.
BUT I'LL BE OKAY. IT WAS WORSE THE FIRST TIME.
OH, GOD...
YOU... EVERYTHING YOU SAID... IT WAS RIGHT.
YOU WERE RIGHT.
EVERY TIME YOU WERE RIGHT... IT JUST MADE ME ANGRIER. AND I... I LOST CONTROL.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU... I WOULD HAVE DONE HORRIBLE THINGS. I KNOW I WOULD HAVE KILLED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE...
...SOME OF THEM... THEY WERE MY FRIENDS.
I'D EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT HOW I'D DO IT... HOW I'D HAVE TO DO IT FAST... BEFORE I REALIZED WHAT I WAS DOING... BECAUSE I'D WANT TO STOP MYSELF.


I WOULD HAVE KILLED **SO MANY**... AND I WOULD HAVE LIVED WITH THAT GUILT FOR THE **REST OF MY LIFE**.
THIS PLANET HAS... **CHANGED** ME. AND THERE'S NO GOING BACK FROM THAT, SON. WITHOUT YOU... I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN... WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE... TO MAKE ME REALIZE THAT.


THANK YOU.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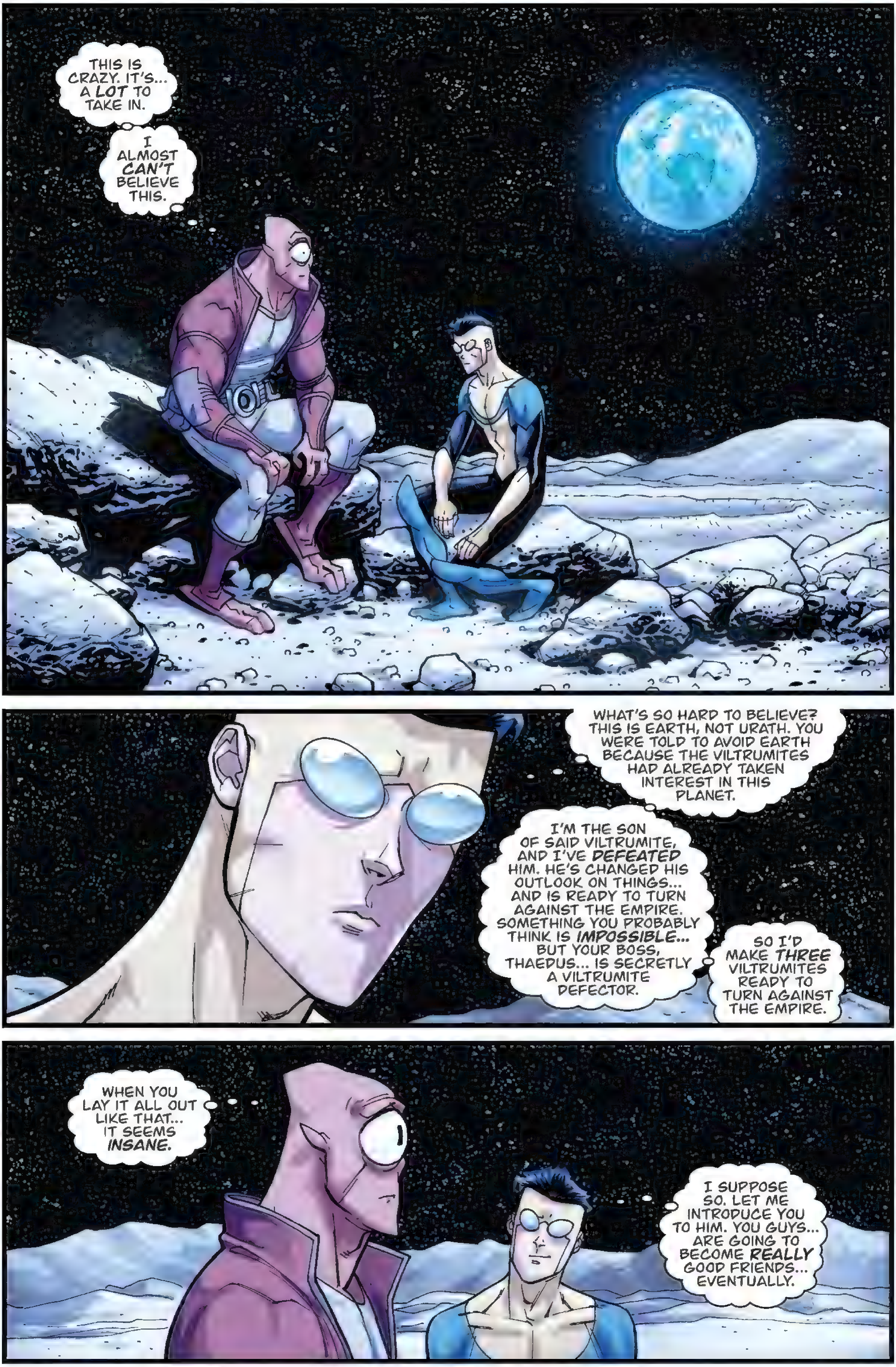
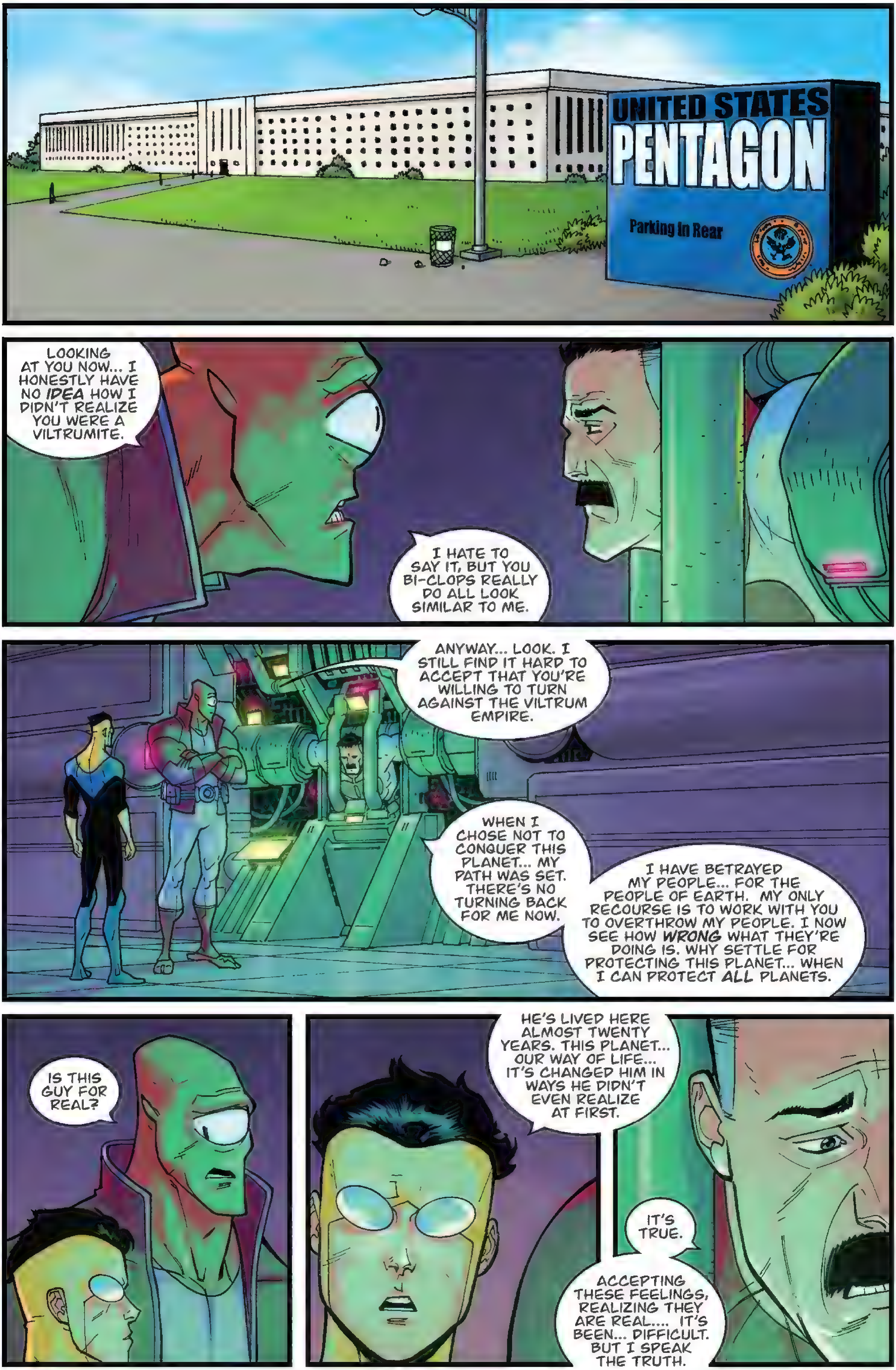
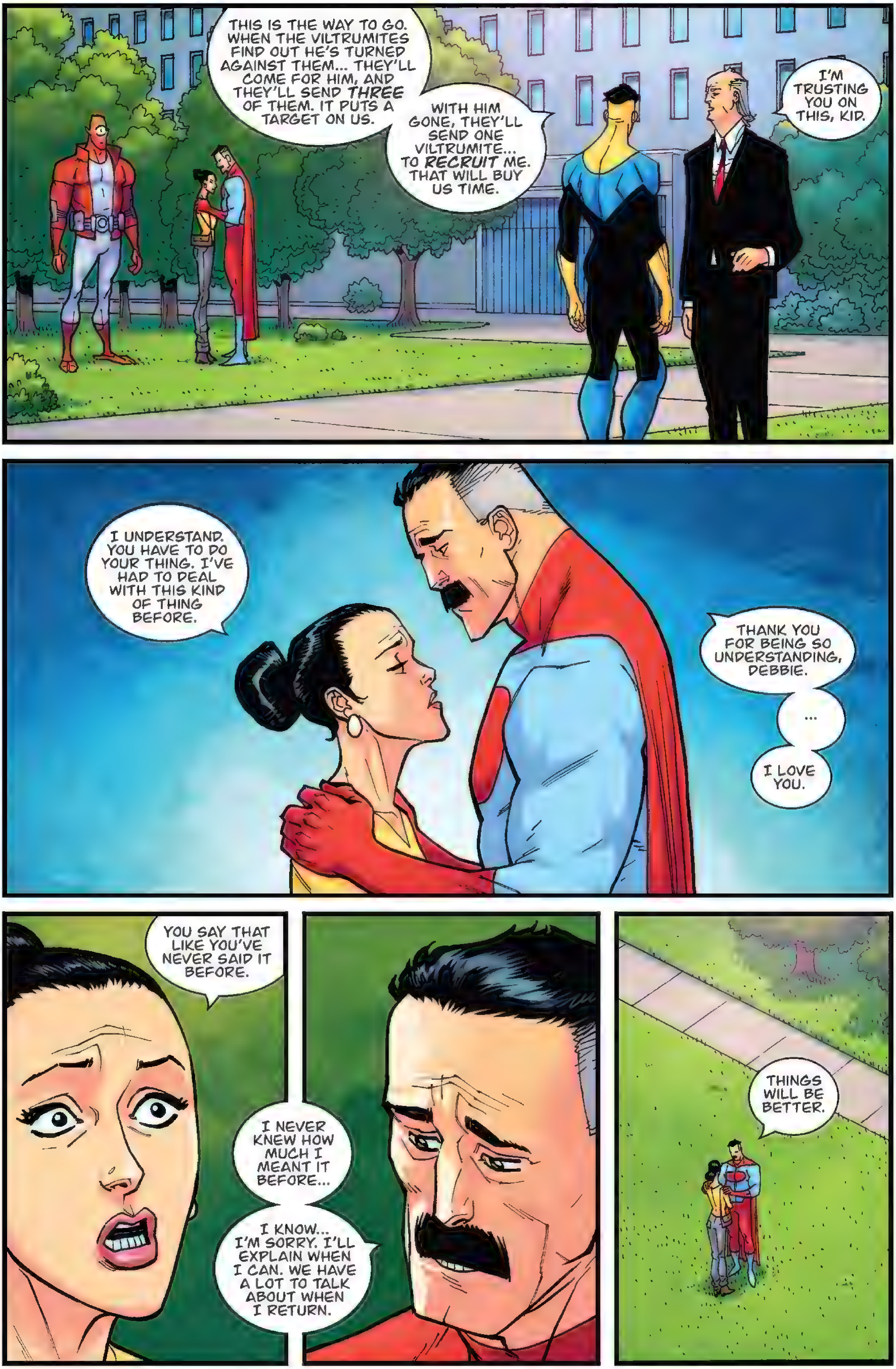
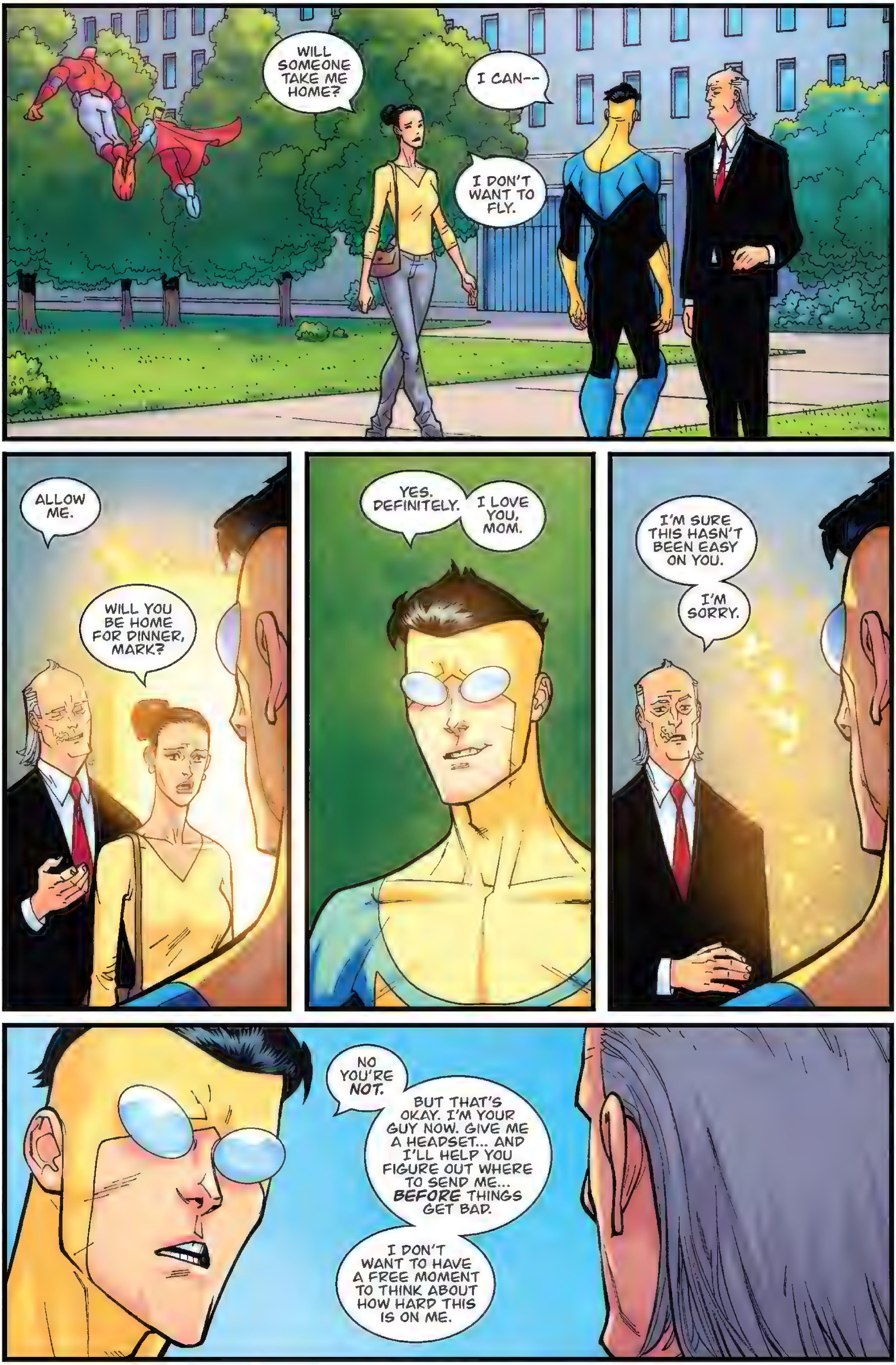
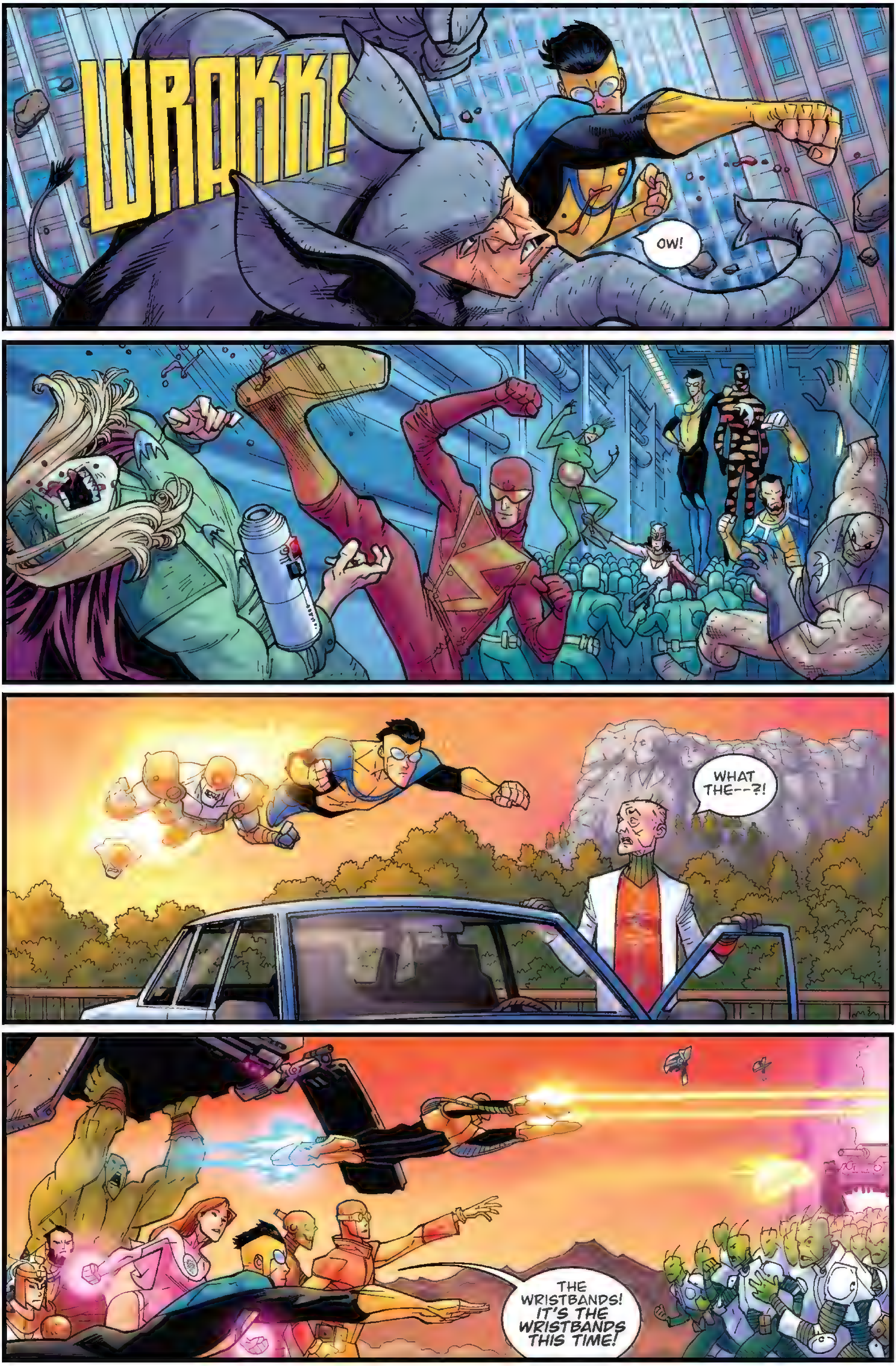
CHAPTER 126

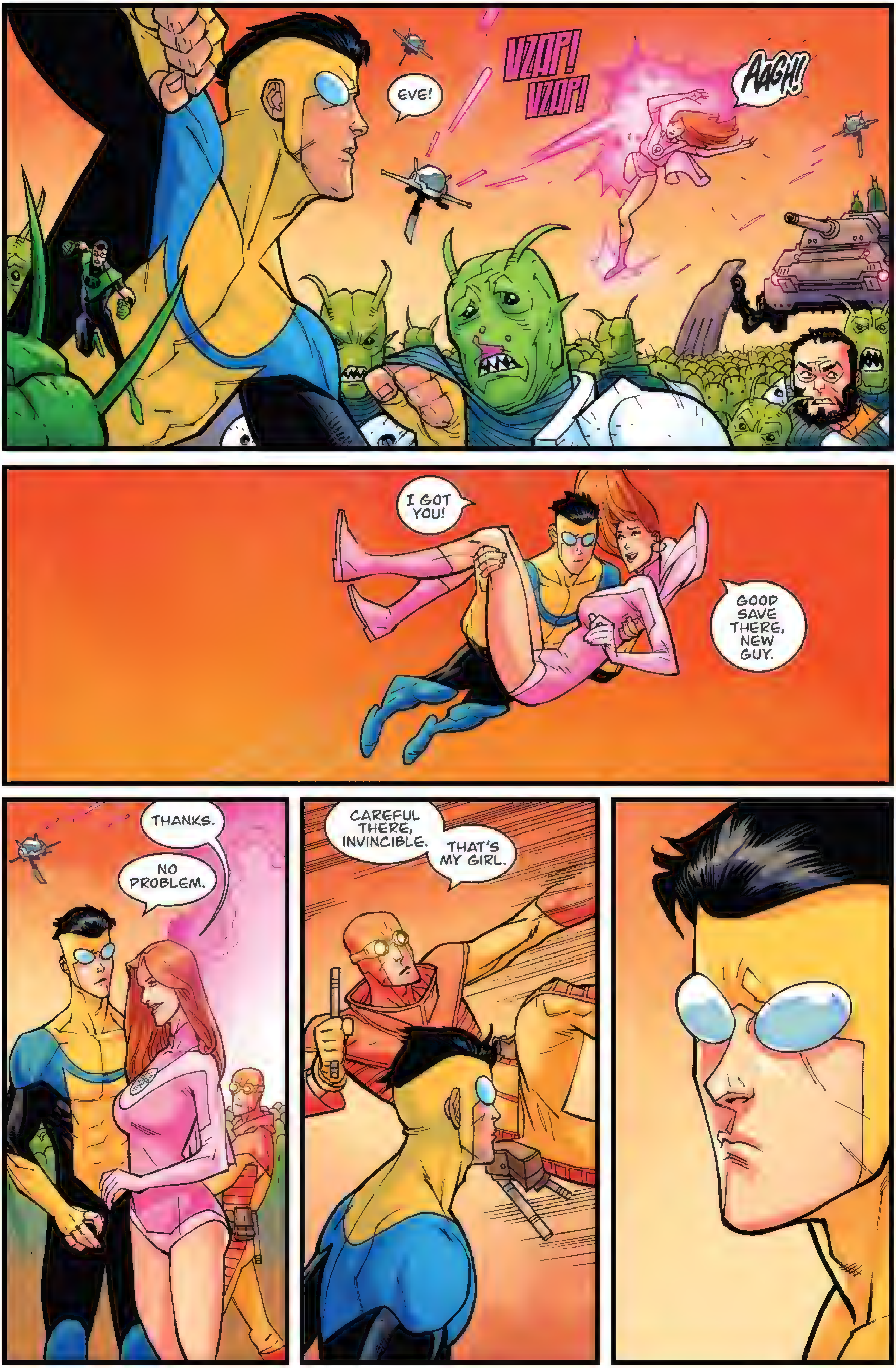

THIS IS CRAZY. IT'S... A **LOT** TO TAKE IN.
I ALMOST **CAN'T** BELIEVE THIS.
WHAT'S SO HARD TO BELIEVE? THIS IS EARTH, NOT URATH. YOU WERE TOLD TO AVOID EARTH BECAUSE THE VILTRUMITES HAD ALREADY TAKEN INTEREST IN THIS PLANET.
I'M THE SON OF SAID VILTRUMITE, AND I'VE **DEFEATED** HIM. HE'S CHANGED HIS OUTLOOK ON THINGS... AND IS READY TO TURN AGAINST THE EMPIRE. SOMETHING YOU PROBABLY THINK IS **IMPOSSIBLE...** BUT YOUR BOSS, THAEDUS... IS SECRETLY A VILTRUMITE DEFECTOR.
SO I'D MAKE **THREE** VILTRUMITES READY TO TURN AGAINST THE EMPIRE.
WHEN YOU LAY IT ALL OUT LIKE THAT... IT SEEMS **INSANE.**
I SUPPOSE SO. LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO HIM. YOU GUYS... ARE GOING TO BECOME **REALLY** GOOD FRIENDS... EVENTUALLY.

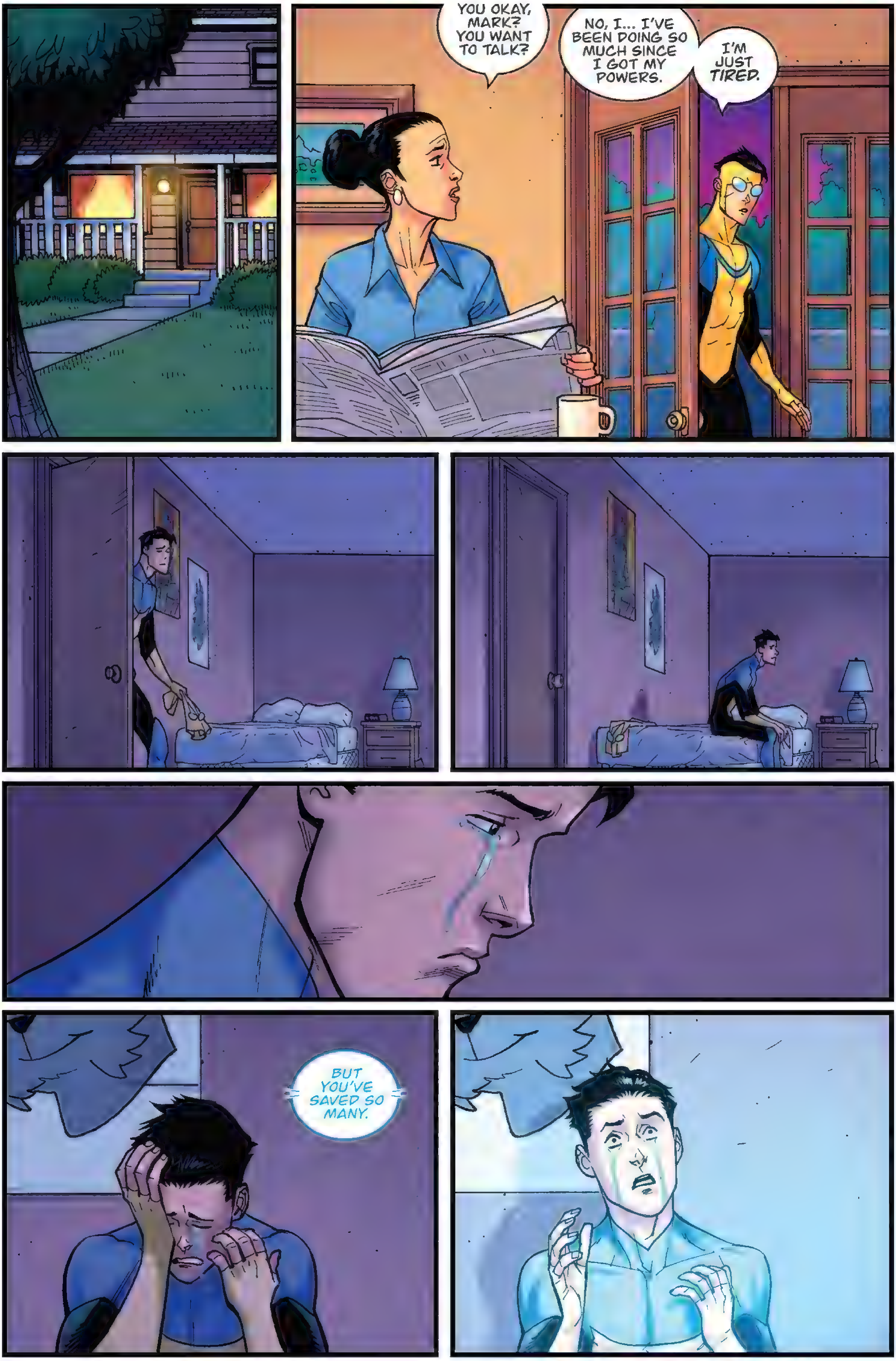

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
LOOKING AT YOU NOW... I HONESTLY HAVE NO *IDEA* HOW I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE A VILTRUMITE.
I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT YOU BI-CLOPS REALLY DO ALL LOOK SIMILAR TO ME.
ANYWAY... LOOK. I STILL FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT THAT YOU'RE WILLING TO TURN AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
WHEN I CHOSE NOT TO CONQUER THIS PLANET... MY PATH WAS SET. THERE'S NO TURNING BACK FOR ME NOW.
I HAVE BETRAYED MY PEOPLE... FOR THE PEOPLE OF EARTH. MY ONLY RECOURSE IS TO WORK WITH YOU TO OVERTHROW MY PEOPLE. I NOW SEE HOW *WRONG* WHAT THEY'RE DOING IS. WHY SETTLE FOR PROTECTING THIS PLANET... WHEN I CAN PROTECT *ALL* PLANETS.
IS THIS GUY FOR REAL?
HE'S LIVED HERE ALMOST TWENTY YEARS. THIS PLANET... OUR WAY OF LIFE... IT'S CHANGED HIM IN WAYS HE DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE AT FIRST.
IT'S TRUE.
ACCEPTING THESE FEELINGS, REALIZING THEY ARE REAL.... IT'S BEEN... DIFFICULT. BUT I SPEAK THE TRUTH.

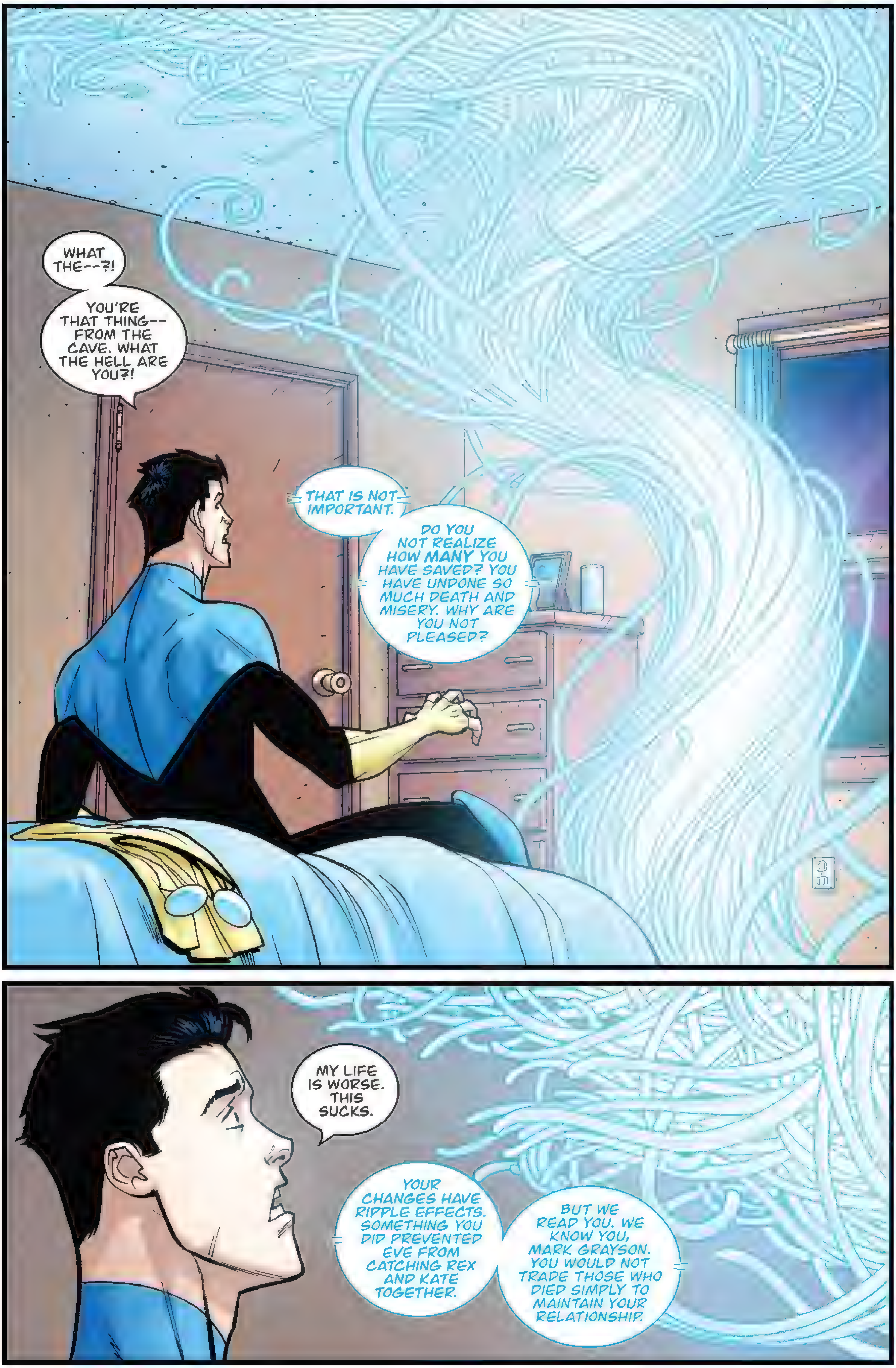

THIS IS THE WAY TO GO. WHEN THE VILTRUMITES FIND OUT HE'S TURNED AGAINST THEM... THEY'LL COME FOR HIM, AND THEY'LL SEND *THREE* OF THEM. IT PUTS A TARGET ON US.
WITH HIM GONE, THEY'LL SEND ONE VILTRUMITE... TO *RECRUIT* ME. THAT WILL BUY US TIME.
I'M TRUSTING YOU ON THIS, KID.
I UNDERSTAND. YOU HAVE TO DO YOUR THING. I'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH THIS KIND OF THING BEFORE.
THANK YOU FOR BEING SO UNDERSTANDING, DEBBIE.
...
I LOVE YOU.
YOU SAY THAT LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SAID IT BEFORE.
I NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH I MEANT IT BEFORE...
I KNOW... I'M SORRY. I'LL EXPLAIN WHEN I CAN. WE HAVE A LOT TO TALK ABOUT WHEN I RETURN.
THINGS WILL BE BETTER.

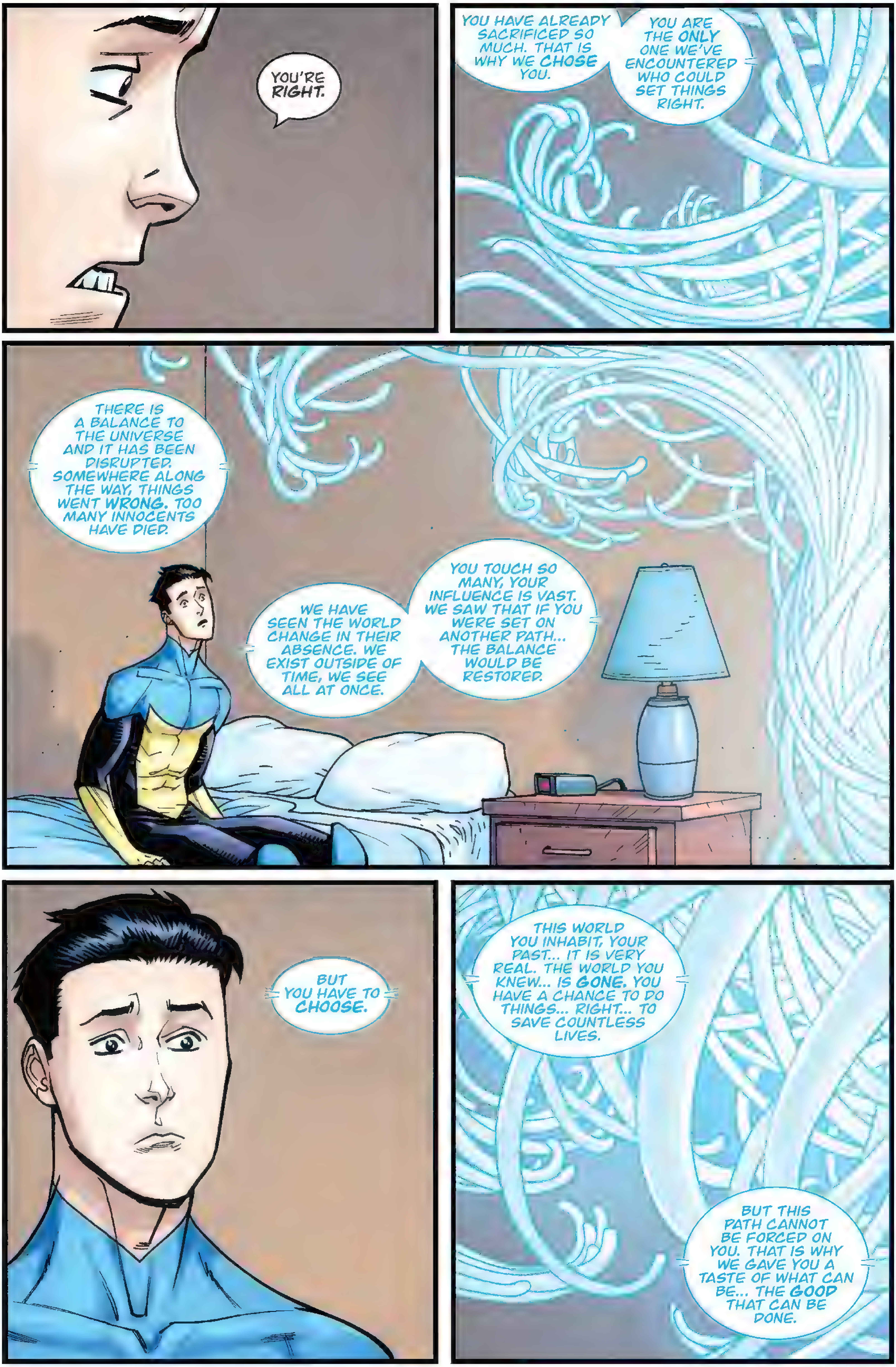

WILL SOMEONE TAKE ME HOME?
I CAN--
I DON'T WANT TO FLY.
ALLOW ME.
WILL YOU BE HOME FOR DINNER, MARK?
YES. DEFINITELY.
I LOVE YOU, MOM.
I'M SURE THIS HASN'T BEEN EASY ON YOU.
I'M SORRY.
NO YOU'RE *NOT.*
BUT THAT'S OKAY. I'M YOUR GUY NOW. GIVE ME A HEADSET... AND I'LL HELP YOU FIGURE OUT WHERE TO SEND ME... *BEFORE* THINGS GET BAD.
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE A FREE MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT HOW HARD THIS IS ON ME.

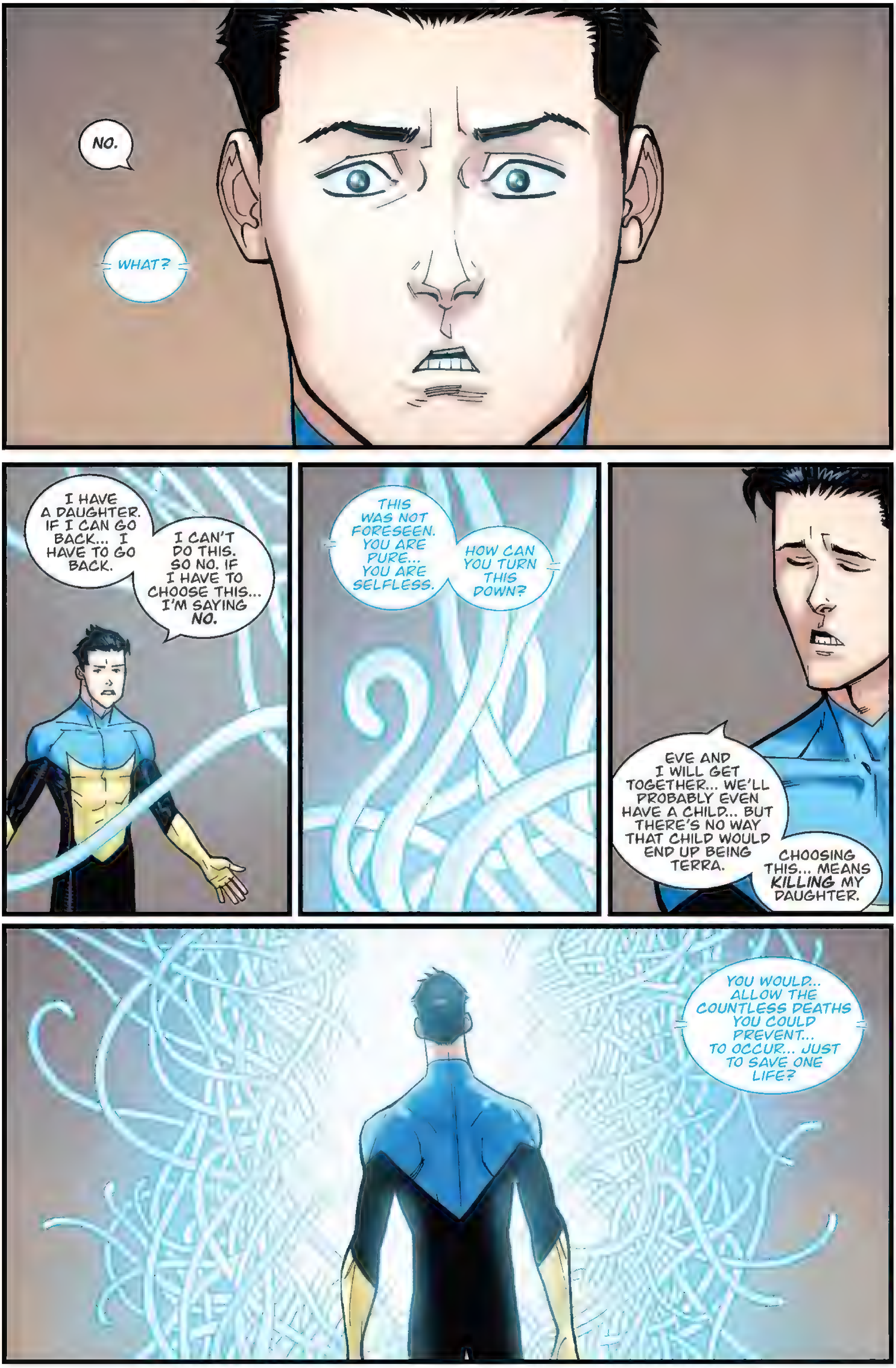

WRAKK!
OW!
WHAT THE--?!
THE WRISTBANDS! IT'S THE WRISTBANDS THIS TIME!

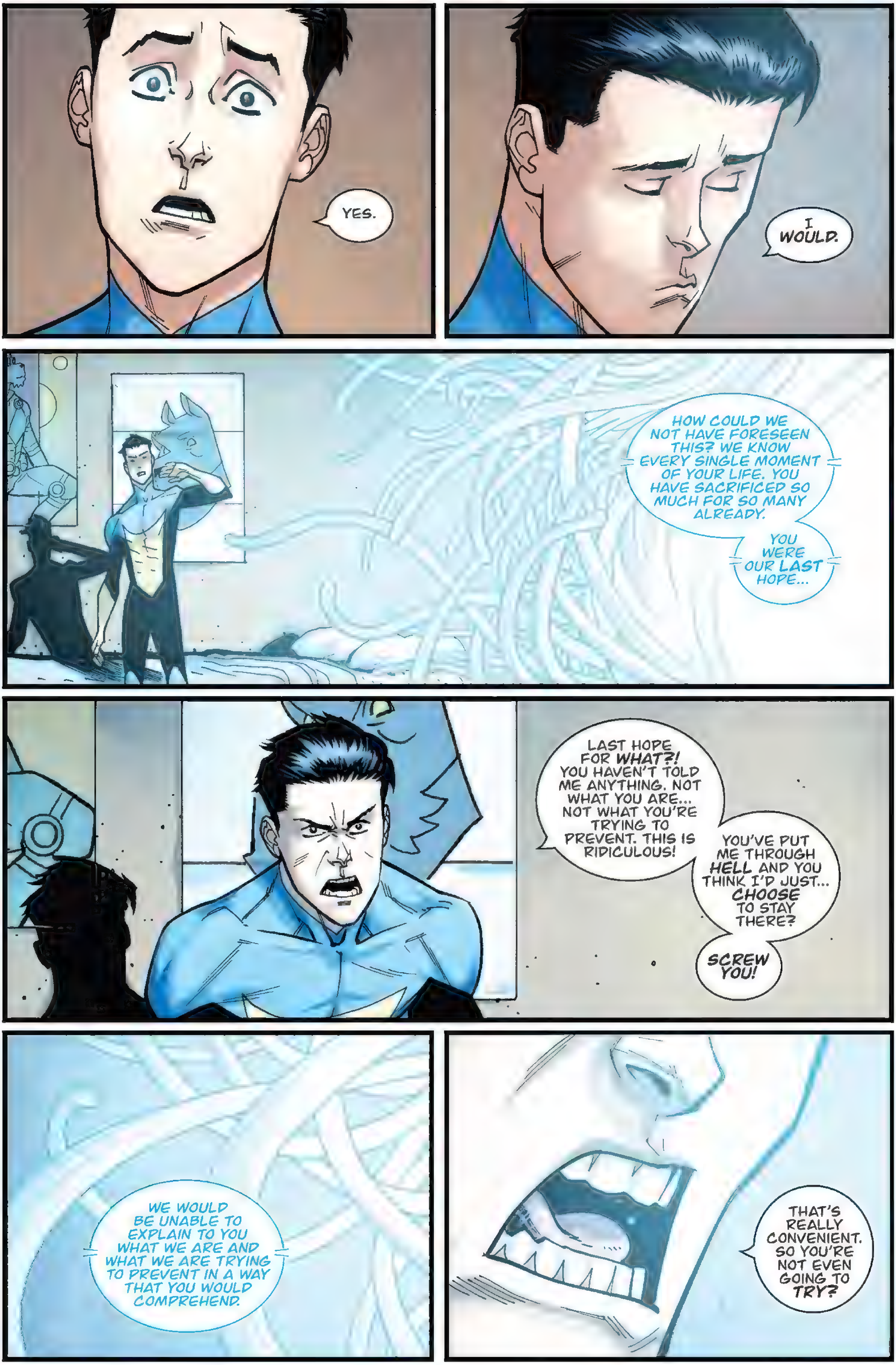

EVE!
VZAP! VZAP!
AAGH!
I GOT YOU!
GOOD SAVE THERE, NEW GUY.
THANKS.
NO PROBLEM.
CAREFUL THERE, INVINCIBLE.
THAT'S MY GIRL.

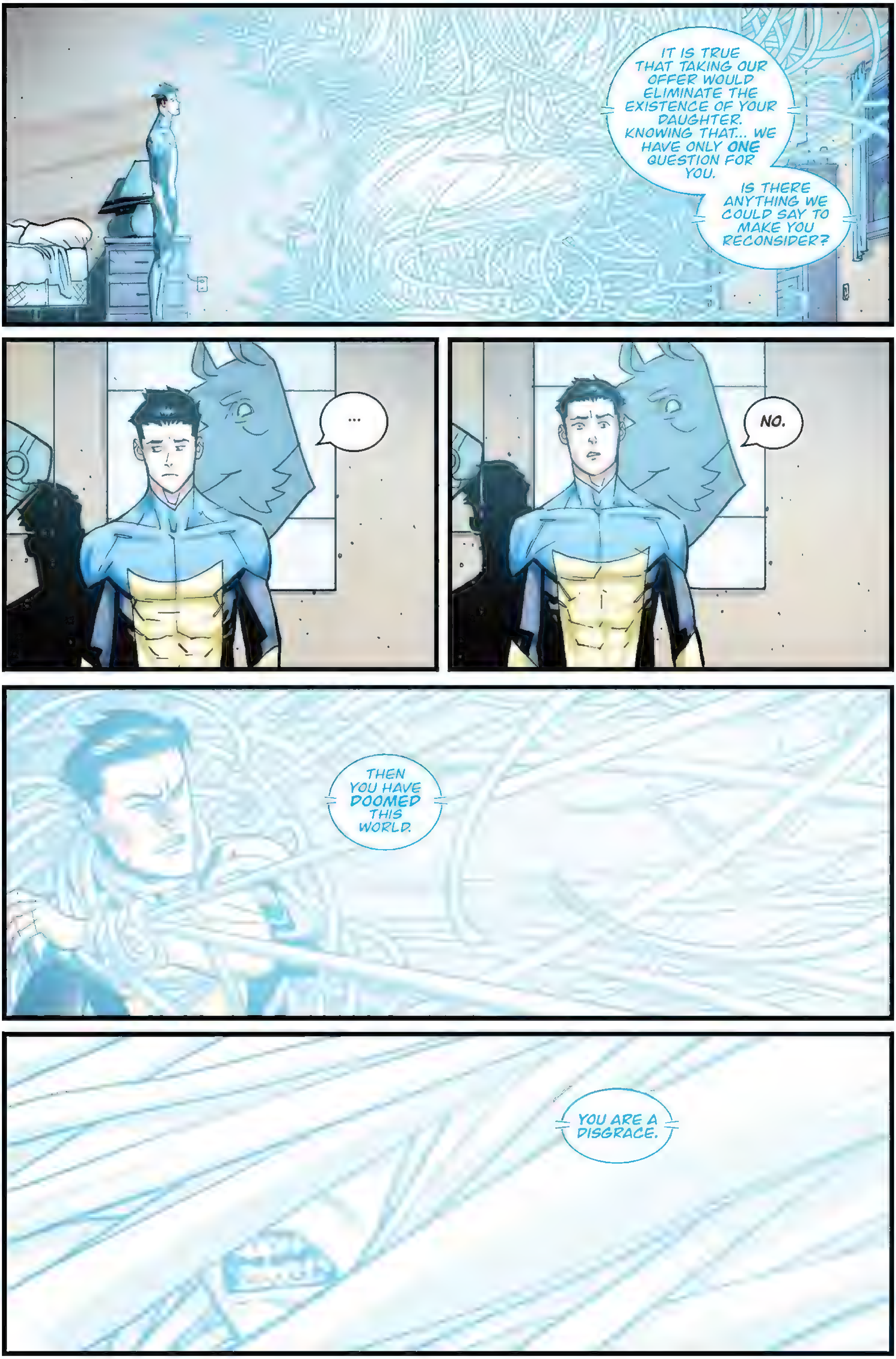

YOU OKAY, MARK? YOU WANT TO TALK?
NO, I... I'VE BEEN DOING SO MUCH SINCE I GOT MY POWERS.
I'M JUST *TIRED.*
BUT YOU'VE SAVED SO MANY.

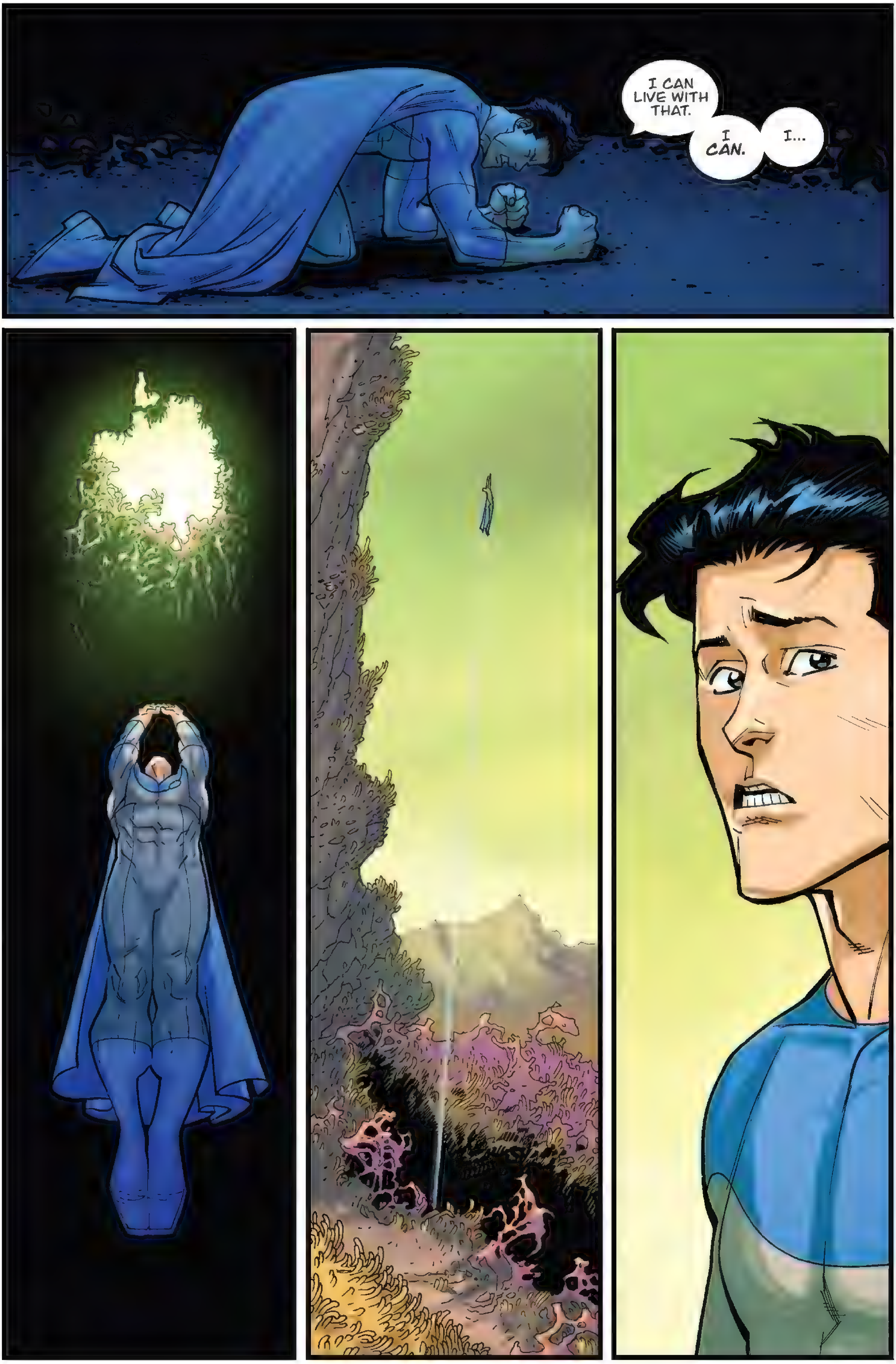

WHAT THE--?!
YOU'RE THAT THING-- FROM THE CAVE. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU?!
THAT IS NOT IMPORTANT.
DO YOU NOT REALIZE HOW **MANY** YOU HAVE SAVED? YOU HAVE UNDONE SO MUCH DEATH AND MISERY. WHY ARE YOU NOT PLEASED?
MY LIFE IS WORSE. THIS SUCKS.
YOUR CHANGES HAVE RIPPLE EFFECTS. SOMETHING YOU DID PREVENTED EVE FROM CATCHING REX AND KATE TOGETHER.
BUT WE READ YOU. WE KNOW YOU, MARK GRAYSON. YOU WOULD NOT TRADE THOSE WHO DIED SIMPLY TO MAINTAIN YOUR RELATIONSHIP.


YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU HAVE ALREADY SACRIFICED SO MUCH. THAT IS WHY WE **CHOSE** YOU.
YOU ARE THE **ONLY** ONE WE'VE ENCOUNTERED WHO COULD SET THINGS RIGHT.
THERE IS A BALANCE TO THE UNIVERSE AND IT HAS BEEN DISRUPTED. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, THINGS WENT **WRONG.** TOO MANY INNOCENTS HAVE DIED.
WE HAVE SEEN THE WORLD CHANGE IN THEIR ABSENCE. WE EXIST OUTSIDE OF TIME, WE SEE ALL AT ONCE.
YOU TOUCH SO MANY, YOUR INFLUENCE IS VAST. WE SAW THAT IF YOU WERE SET ON ANOTHER PATH... THE BALANCE WOULD BE RESTORED.
BUT YOU HAVE TO **CHOOSE.**
THIS WORLD YOU INHABIT, YOUR PAST... IT IS VERY REAL. THE WORLD YOU KNEW... IS **GONE.** YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO DO THINGS... RIGHT... TO SAVE COUNTLESS LIVES.
BUT THIS PATH CANNOT BE FORCED ON YOU. THAT IS WHY WE GAVE YOU A TASTE OF WHAT CAN BE... THE **GOOD** THAT CAN BE DONE.

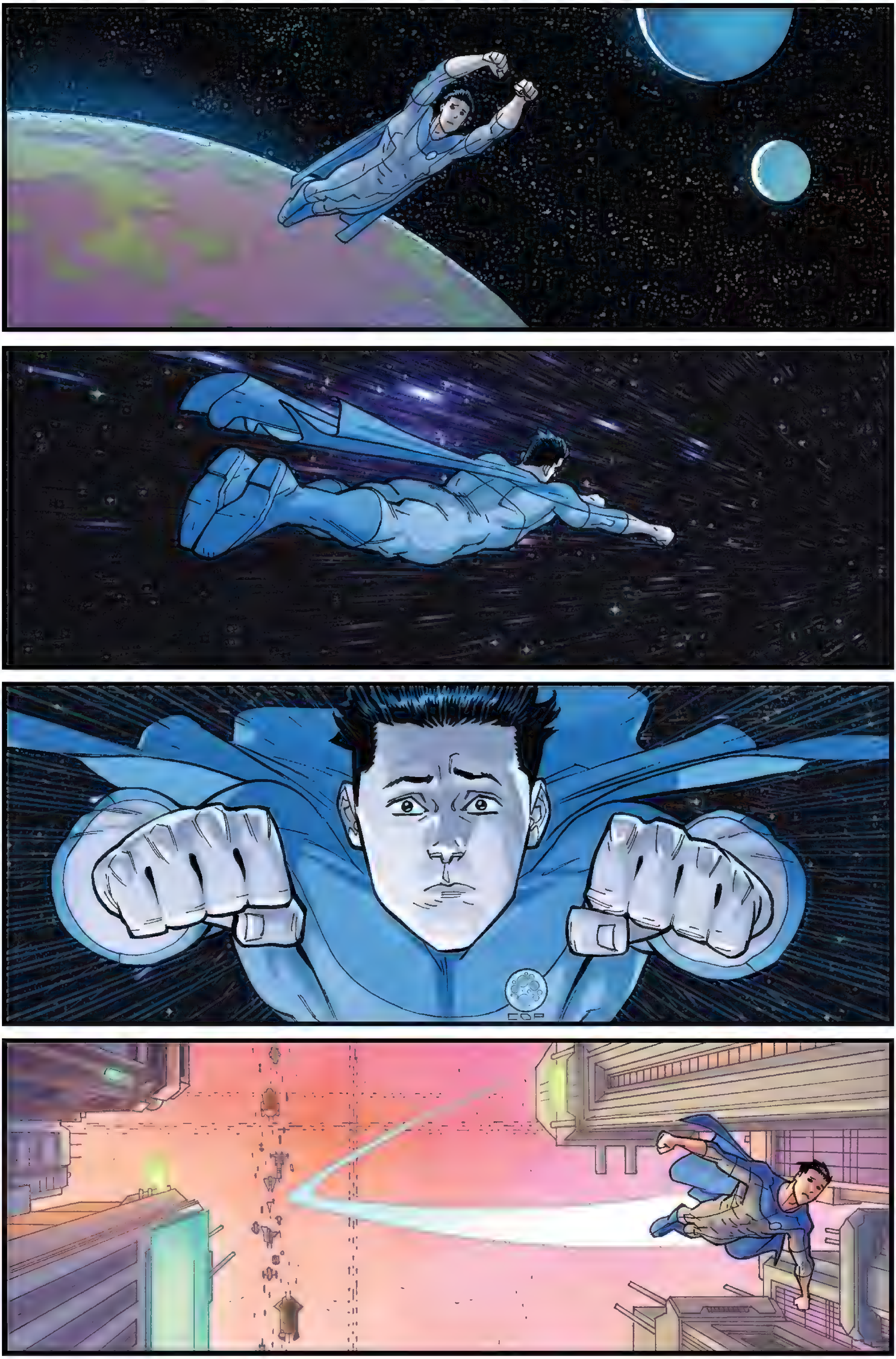

NO.
WHAT?
I HAVE A DAUGHTER. IF I CAN GO BACK... I HAVE TO GO BACK.
I CAN'T DO THIS. SO NO. IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE THIS... I'M SAYING NO.
THIS WAS NOT FORESEEN. YOU ARE PURE... YOU ARE SELFLESS.
HOW CAN YOU TURN THIS DOWN?
EVE AND I WILL GET TOGETHER... WE'LL PROBABLY EVEN HAVE A CHILD... BUT THERE'S NO WAY THAT CHILD WOULD END UP BEING TERRA.
CHOOSING THIS... MEANS KILLING MY DAUGHTER.
YOU WOULD... ALLOW THE COUNTLESS DEATHS YOU COULD PREVENT... TO OCCUR... JUST TO SAVE ONE LIFE?

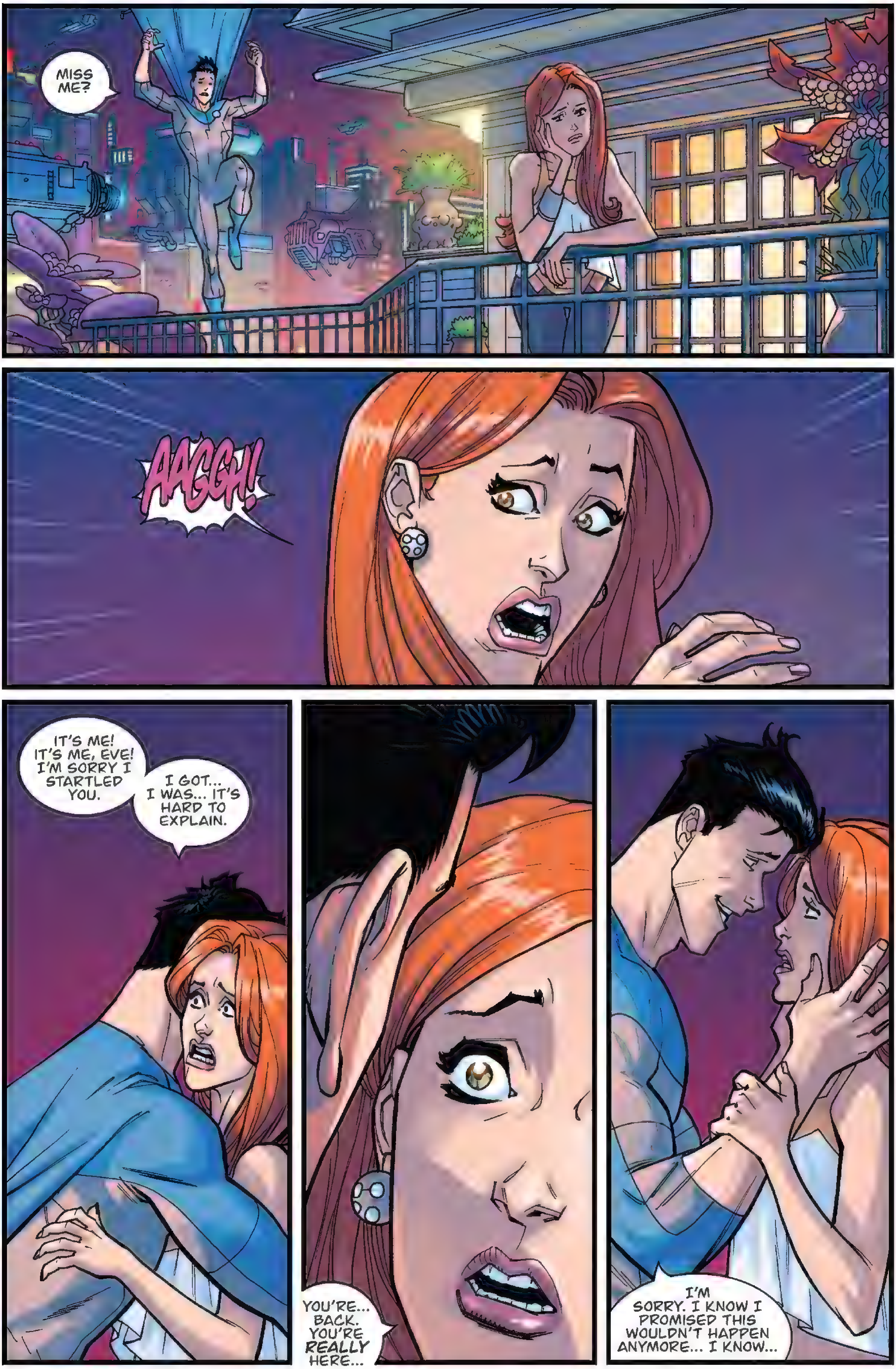

YES.
I WOULD.
HOW COULD WE NOT HAVE FORESEEN THIS? WE KNOW EVERY SINGLE MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE. YOU HAVE SACRIFICED SO MUCH FOR SO MANY ALREADY.
YOU WERE OUR LAST HOPE...
LAST HOPE FOR WHAT?! YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ME ANYTHING. NOT WHAT YOU ARE... NOT WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO PREVENT. THIS IS RIDICULOUS!
YOU'VE PUT ME THROUGH HELL AND YOU THINK I'D JUST... CHOOSE TO STAY THERE?
SCREW YOU!
WE WOULD BE UNABLE TO EXPLAIN TO YOU WHAT WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO PREVENT IN A WAY THAT YOU WOULD COMPREHEND.
THAT'S REALLY CONVENIENT. SO YOU'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO TRY?

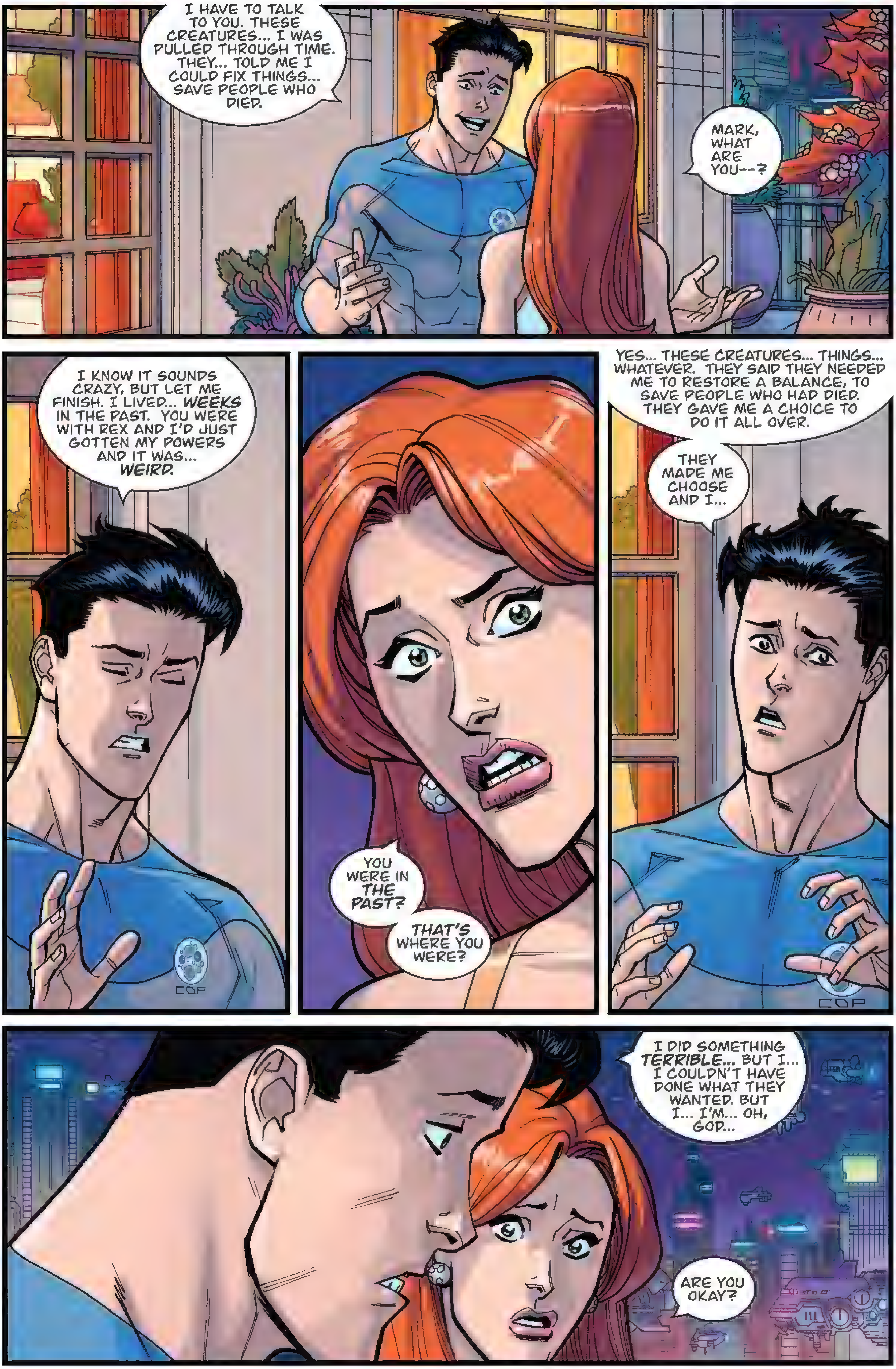

IT IS TRUE THAT TAKING OUR OFFER WOULD ELIMINATE THE EXISTENCE OF YOUR DAUGHTER. KNOWING THAT... WE HAVE ONLY ONE QUESTION FOR YOU.
IS THERE ANYTHING WE COULD SAY TO MAKE YOU RECONSIDER?
...
NO.
THEN YOU HAVE DOOMED THIS WORLD.
YOU ARE A DISGRACE.

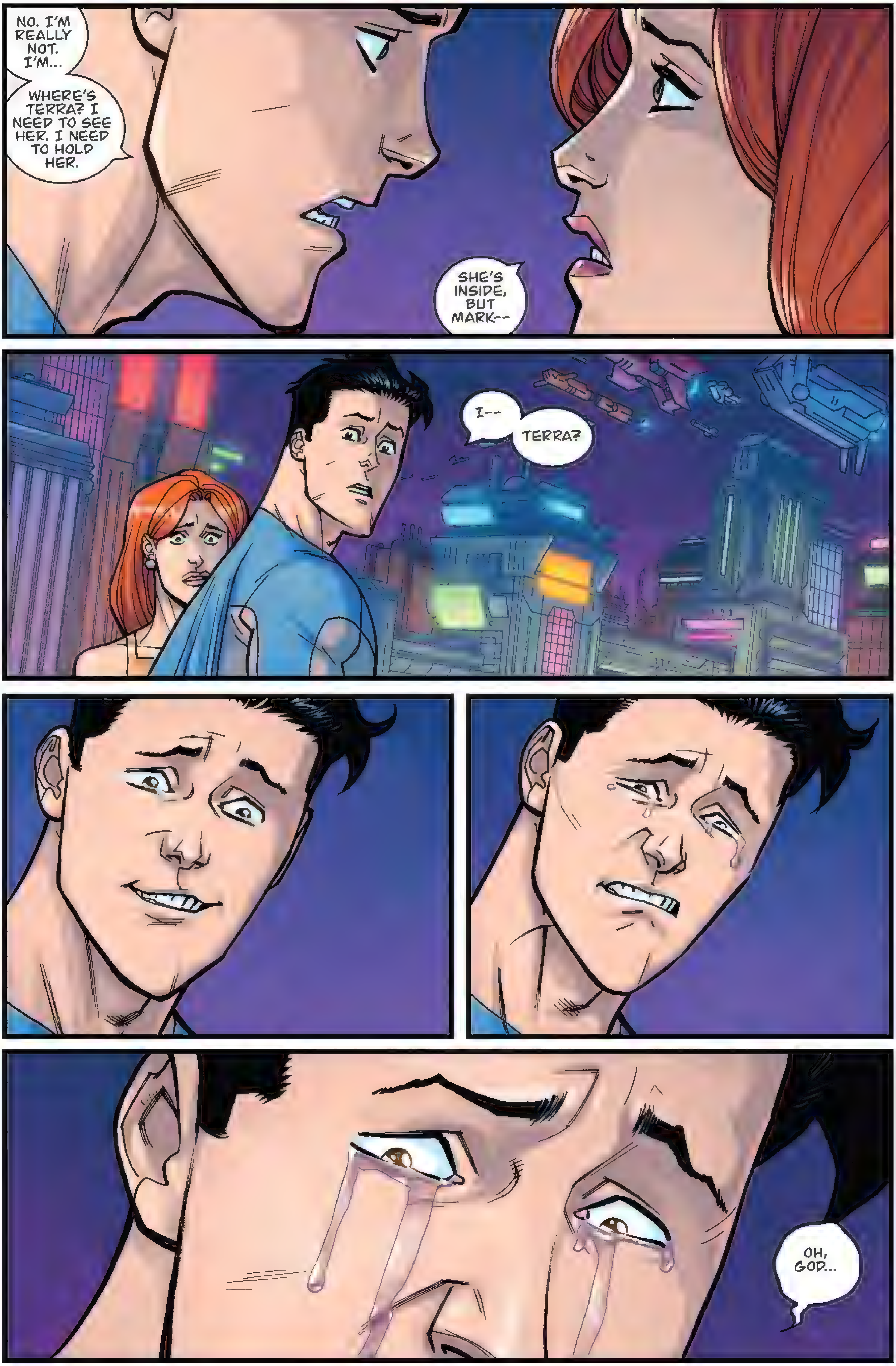

I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.
I CAN.
I...

OH, GOD...


COP

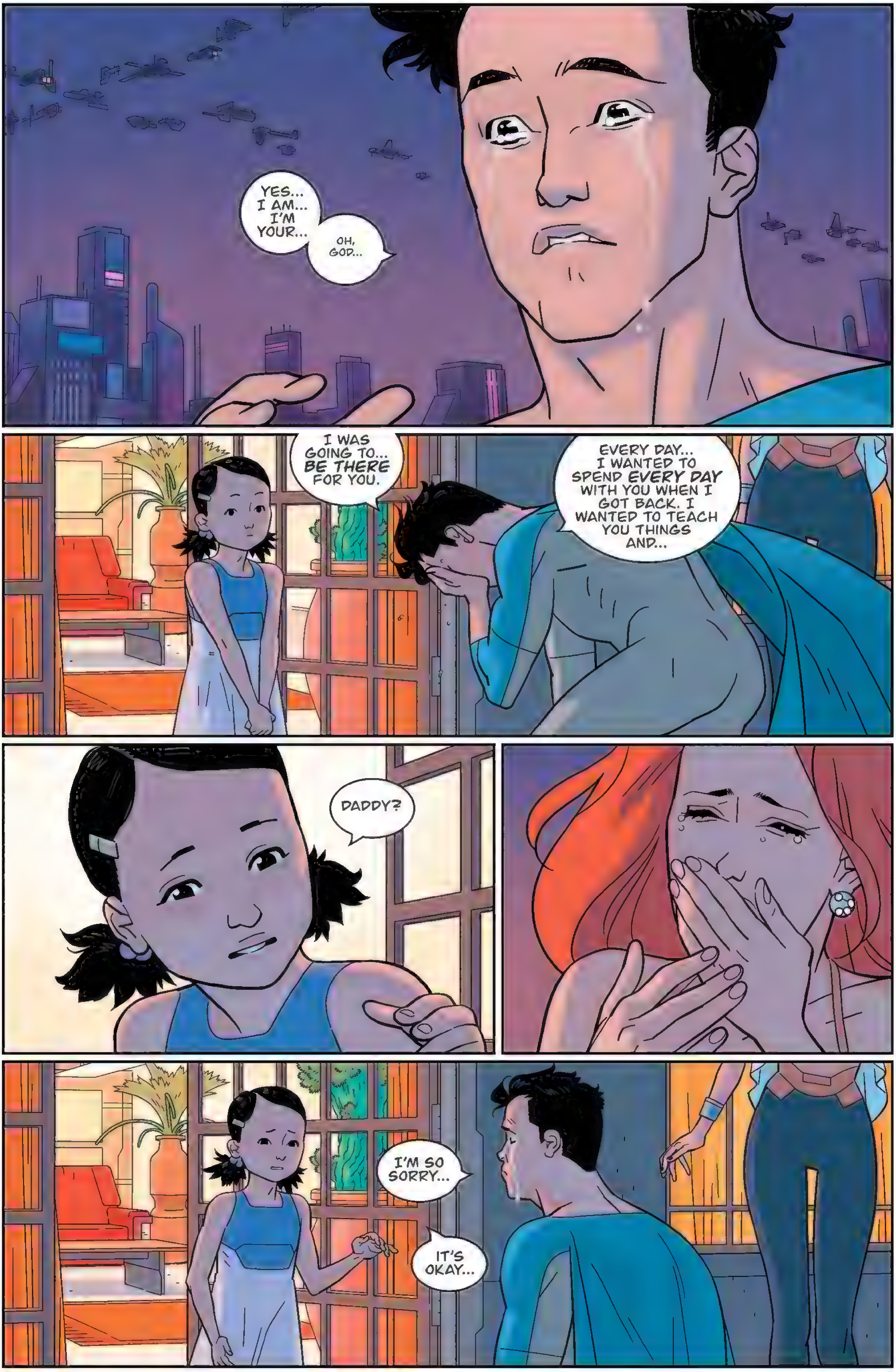

MISS ME?
AAGGH!
IT'S ME! IT'S ME, EVE! I'M SORRY I STARTLED YOU.
I GOT... I WAS... IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN.
YOU'RE... BACK. YOU'RE **REALLY** HERE...
I'M SORRY. I KNOW I PROMISED THIS WOULDN'T HAPPEN ANYMORE... I KNOW...


I HAVE TO TALK TO YOU. THESE CREATURES... I WAS PULLED THROUGH TIME. THEY... TOLD ME I COULD FIX THINGS... SAVE PEOPLE WHO DIED.
MARK, WHAT ARE YOU--?
I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT LET ME FINISH. I LIVED... WEEKS IN THE PAST. YOU WERE WITH REX AND I'D JUST GOTTEN MY POWERS AND IT WAS... WEIRD.
COP
YOU WERE IN THE PAST?
THAT'S WHERE YOU WERE?
YES... THESE CREATURES... THINGS... WHATEVER. THEY SAID THEY NEEDED ME TO RESTORE A BALANCE, TO SAVE PEOPLE WHO HAD DIED. THEY GAVE ME A CHOICE TO DO IT ALL OVER.
THEY MADE ME CHOOSE AND I...
COP
I DID SOMETHING TERRIBLE... BUT I... I COULDN'T HAVE DONE WHAT THEY WANTED. BUT I... I'M... OH, GOD...
ARE YOU OKAY?

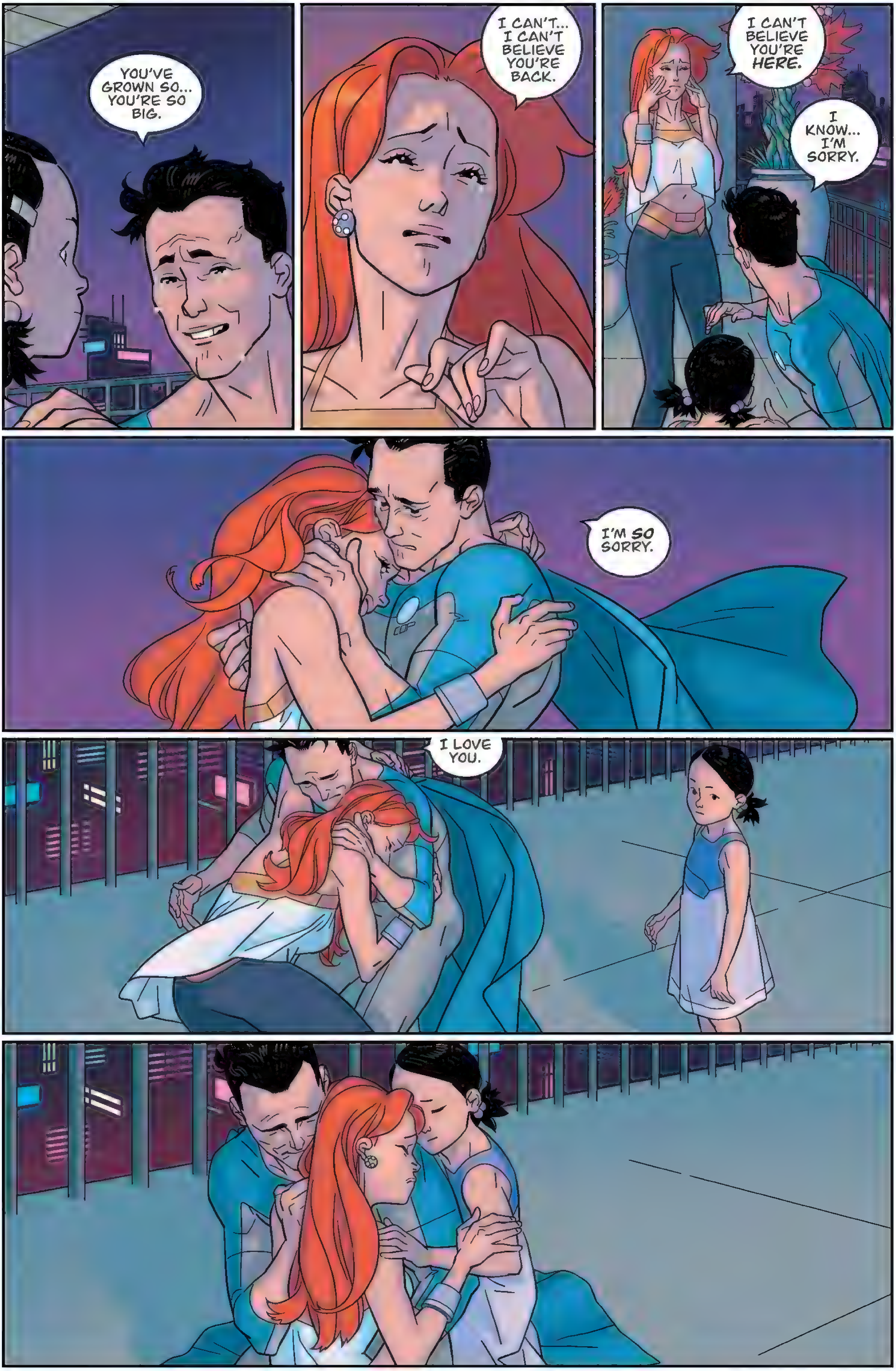

NO. I'M REALLY NOT. I'M...
WHERE'S TERRA? I NEED TO SEE HER. I NEED TO HOLD HER.
SHE'S INSIDE, BUT MARK--
I--
TERRA?
OH, GOD...

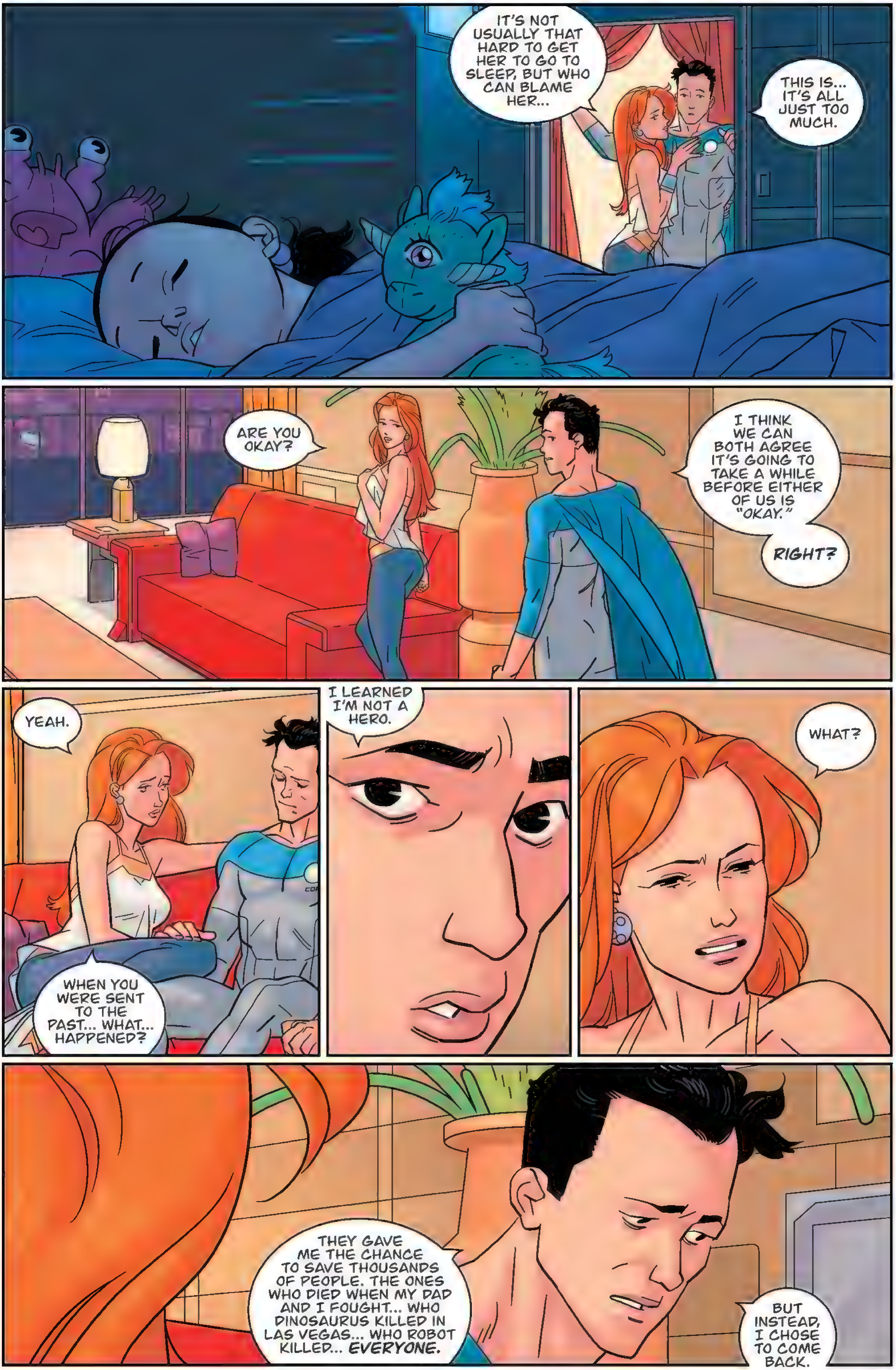
ARE YOU MY DADDY?

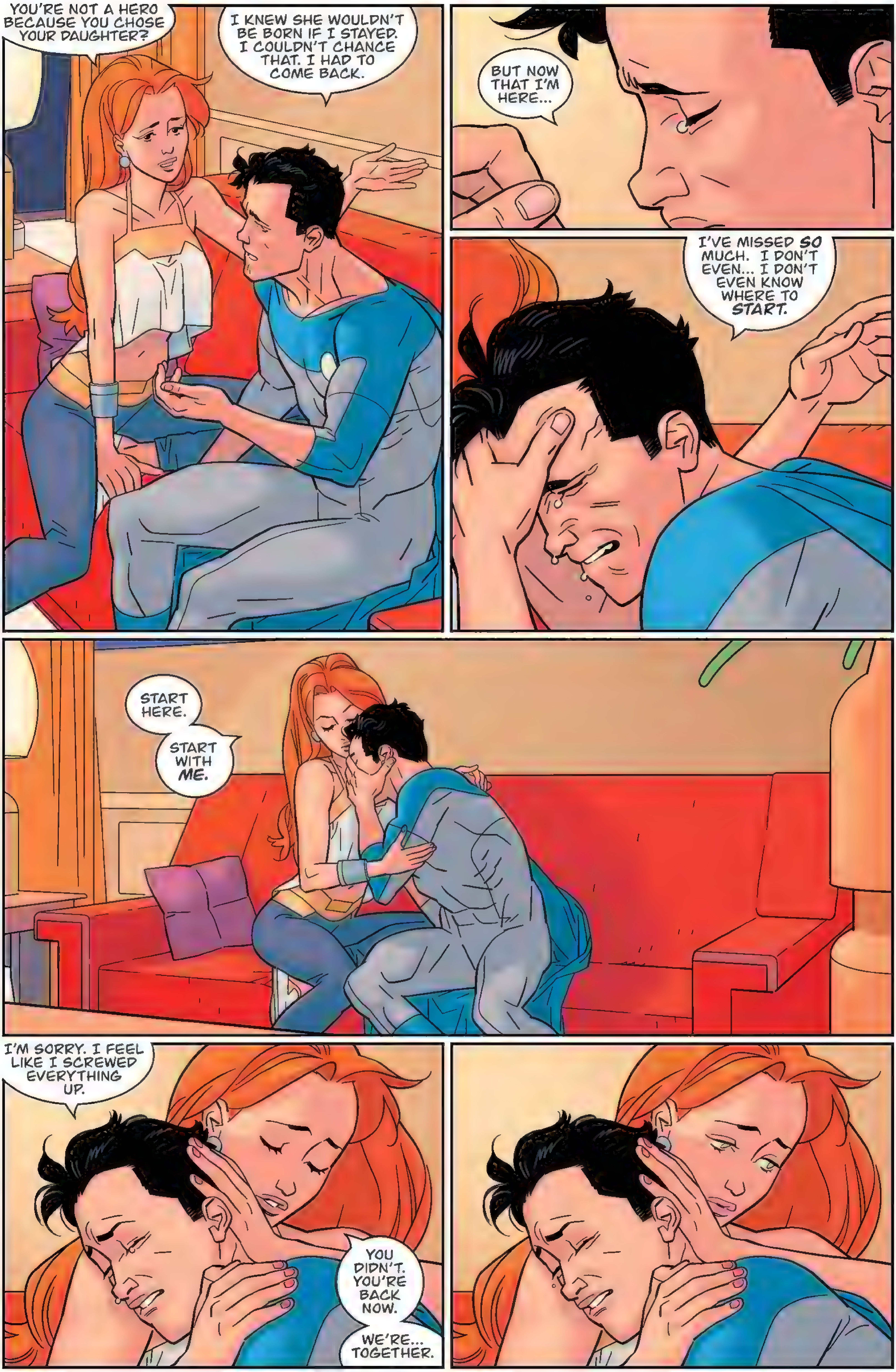
CHAPTER 127

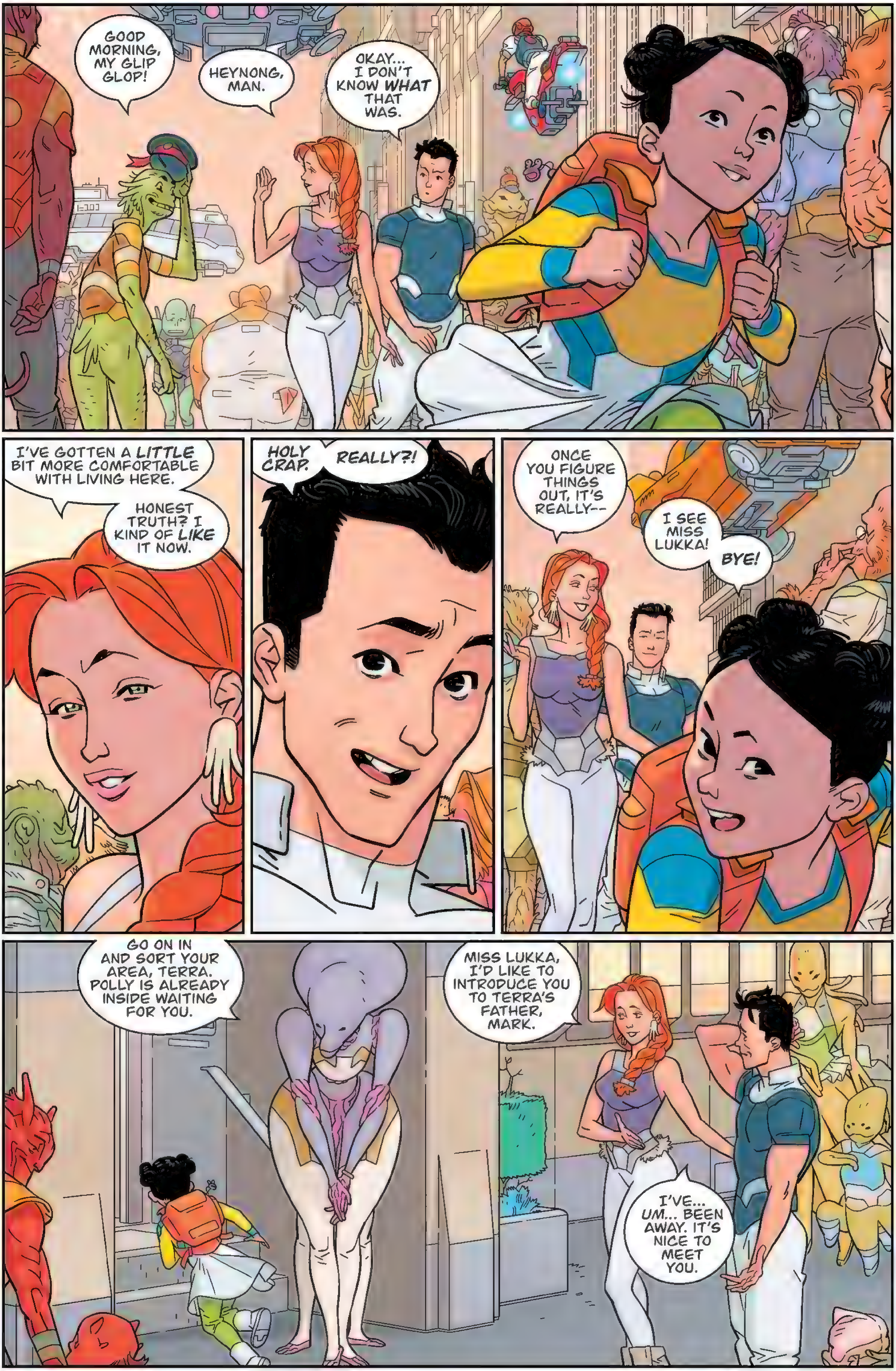

YES... I AM... I'M YOUR...
OH, GOD...
I WAS GOING TO... **BE THERE** FOR YOU.
EVERY DAY... I WANTED TO SPEND **EVERY DAY** WITH YOU WHEN I GOT BACK. I WANTED TO TEACH YOU THINGS AND...
DADDY?
I'M SO SORRY...
IT'S OKAY...

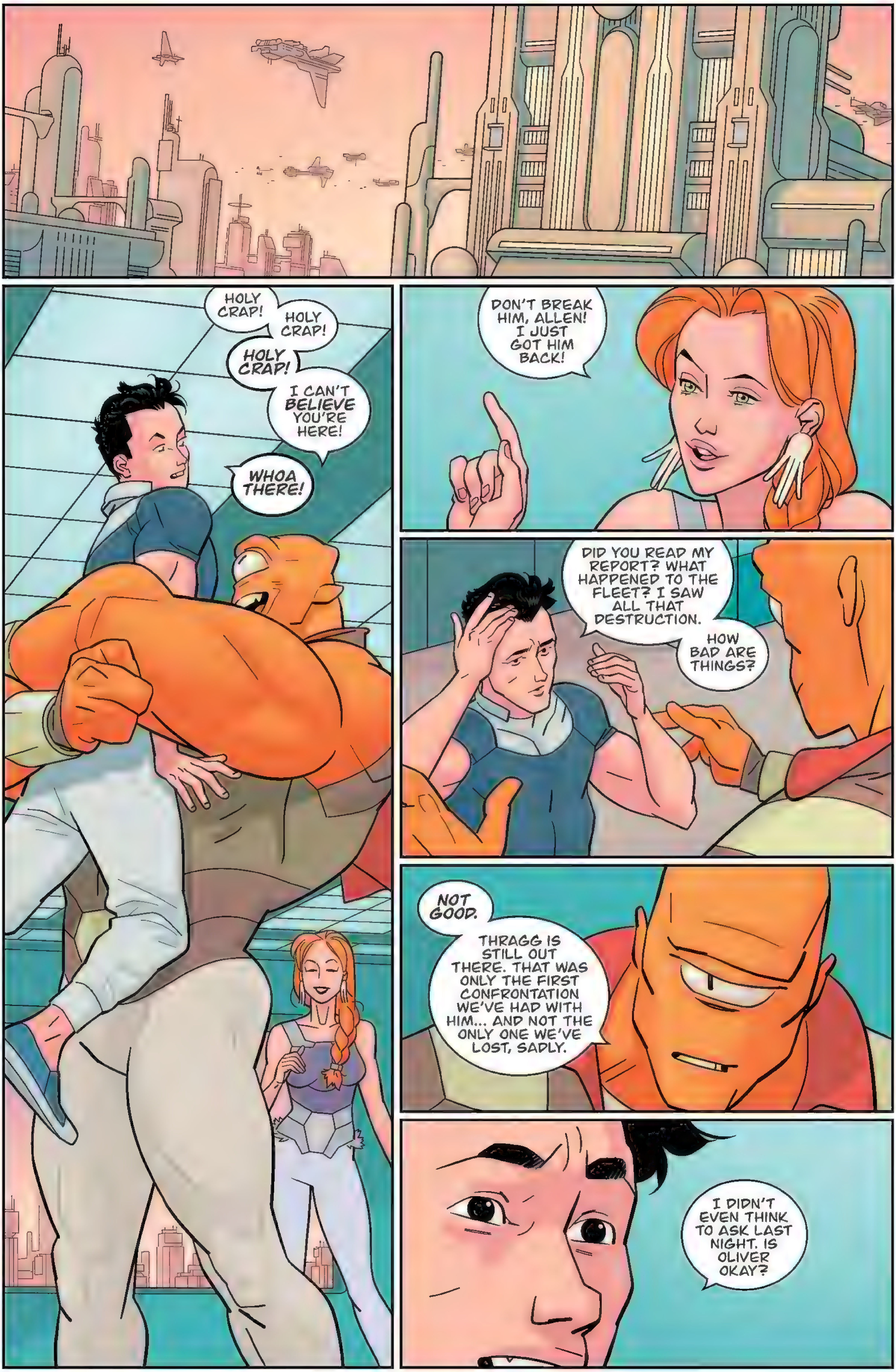
...I STILL LOVE YOU.


YOU'VE GROWN SO... YOU'RE SO BIG.
I CAN'T... I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE BACK.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE *HERE.*
I KNOW... I'M SORRY.
I'M *SO* SORRY.
I LOVE YOU.

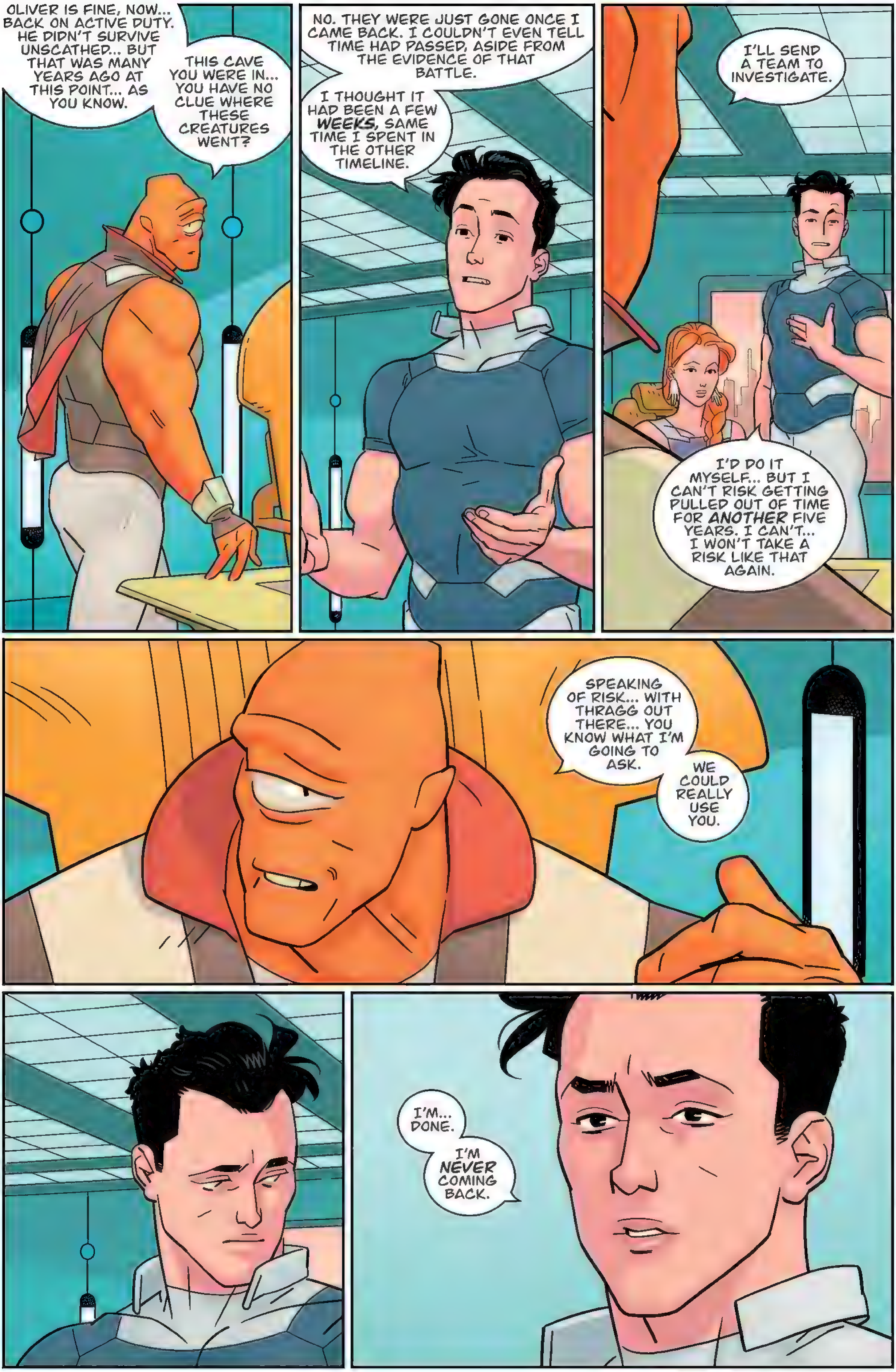

IT'S NOT USUALLY THAT HARD TO GET HER TO GO TO SLEEP, BUT WHO CAN BLAME HER...
THIS IS... IT'S ALL JUST TOO MUCH.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I THINK WE CAN BOTH AGREE IT'S GOING TO TAKE A WHILE BEFORE EITHER OF US IS "OKAY."
RIGHT?
YEAH.
WHEN YOU WERE SENT TO THE PAST... WHAT... HAPPENED?
I LEARNED I'M NOT A HERO.
WHAT?
THEY GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO SAVE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. THE ONES WHO DIED WHEN MY DAD AND I FOUGHT... WHO DINOSAURUS KILLED IN LAS VEGAS... WHO ROBOT KILLED... EVERYONE.
BUT INSTEAD, I CHOSE TO COME BACK.

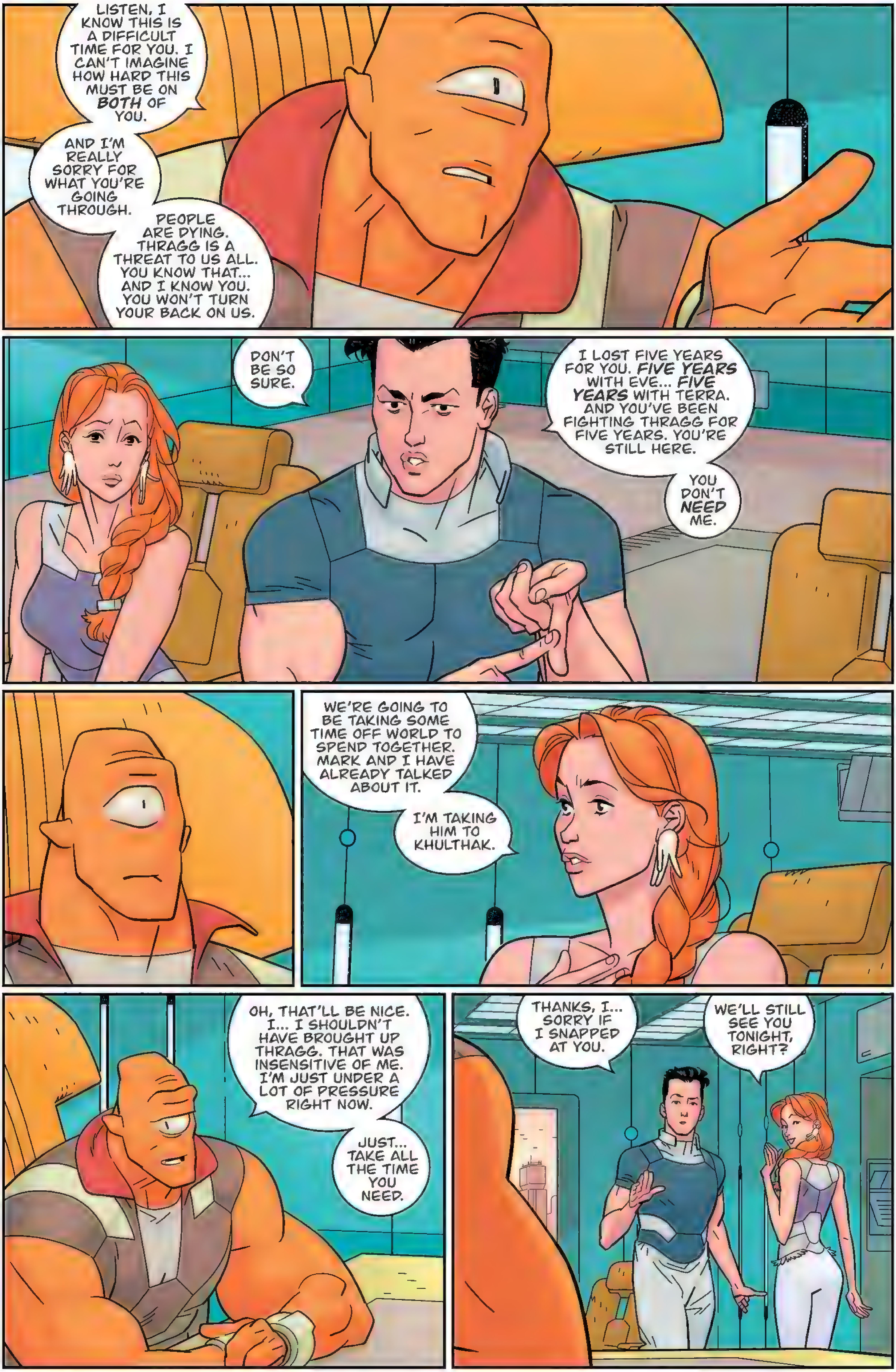

YOU'RE NOT A HERO BECAUSE YOU CHOSE YOUR DAUGHTER?
I KNEW SHE WOULDN'T BE BORN IF I STAYED. I COULDN'T CHANCE THAT. I HAD TO COME BACK.
BUT NOW THAT I'M HERE...
I'VE MISSED SO MUCH. I DON'T EVEN... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START.
START HERE.
START WITH ME.
I'M SORRY. I FEEL LIKE I SCREWED EVERYTHING UP.
YOU DIDN'T. YOU'RE BACK NOW.
WE'RE... TOGETHER.

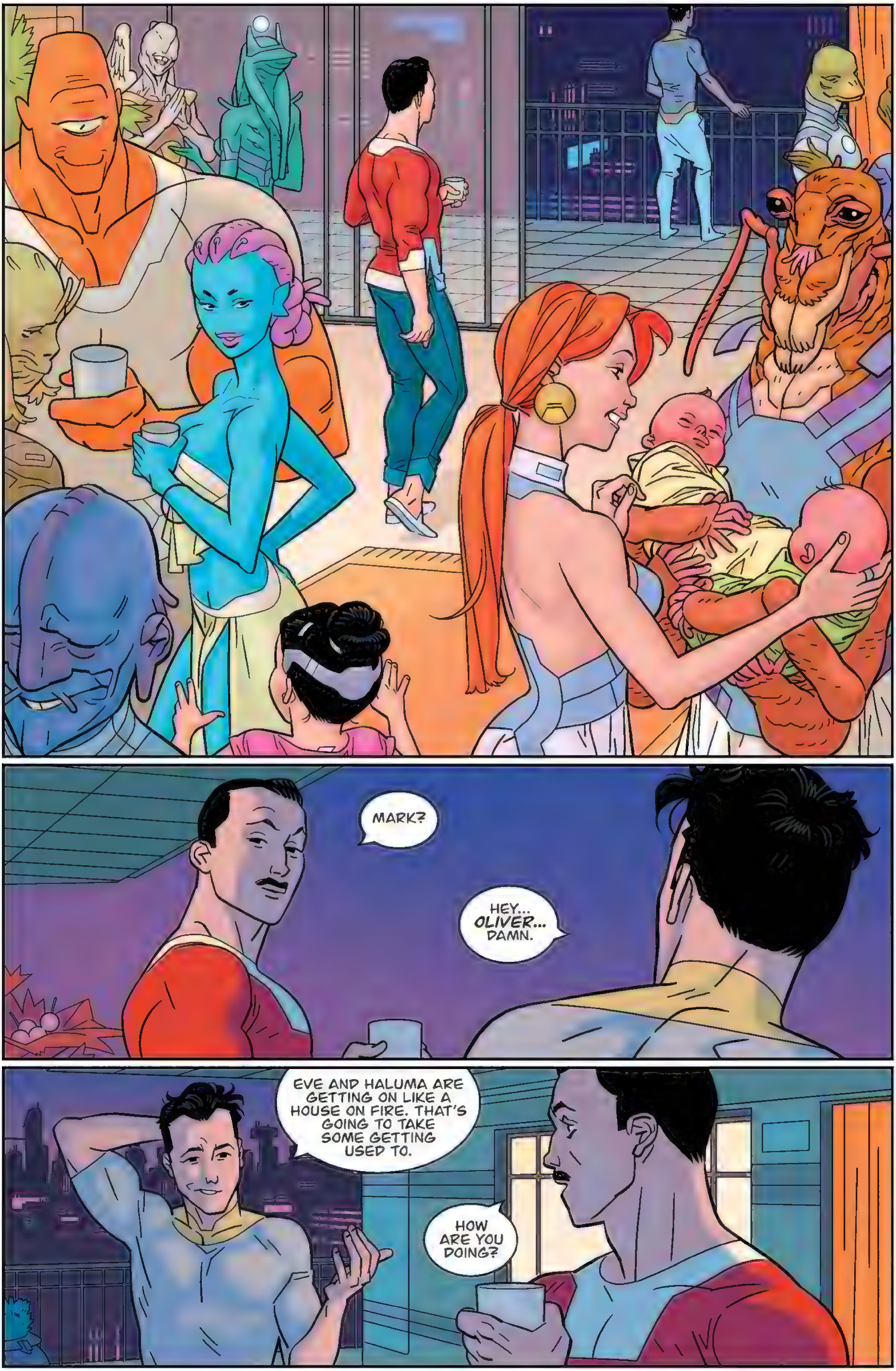

GOOD MORNING, MY GLIP GLOP!
HEYNONG, MAN.
OKAY... I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* THAT WAS.
I'VE GOTTEN A *LITTLE* BIT MORE COMFORTABLE WITH LIVING HERE.
HONEST TRUTH? I KIND OF *LIKE* IT NOW.
HOLY CRAP.
REALLY?!
ONCE YOU FIGURE THINGS OUT, IT'S REALLY--
I SEE MISS LUKKA!
BYE!
GO ON IN AND SORT YOUR AREA, TERRA. POLLY IS ALREADY INSIDE WAITING FOR YOU.
MISS LUKKA, I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO TERRA'S FATHER, MARK.
I'VE... UM... BEEN AWAY. IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU.

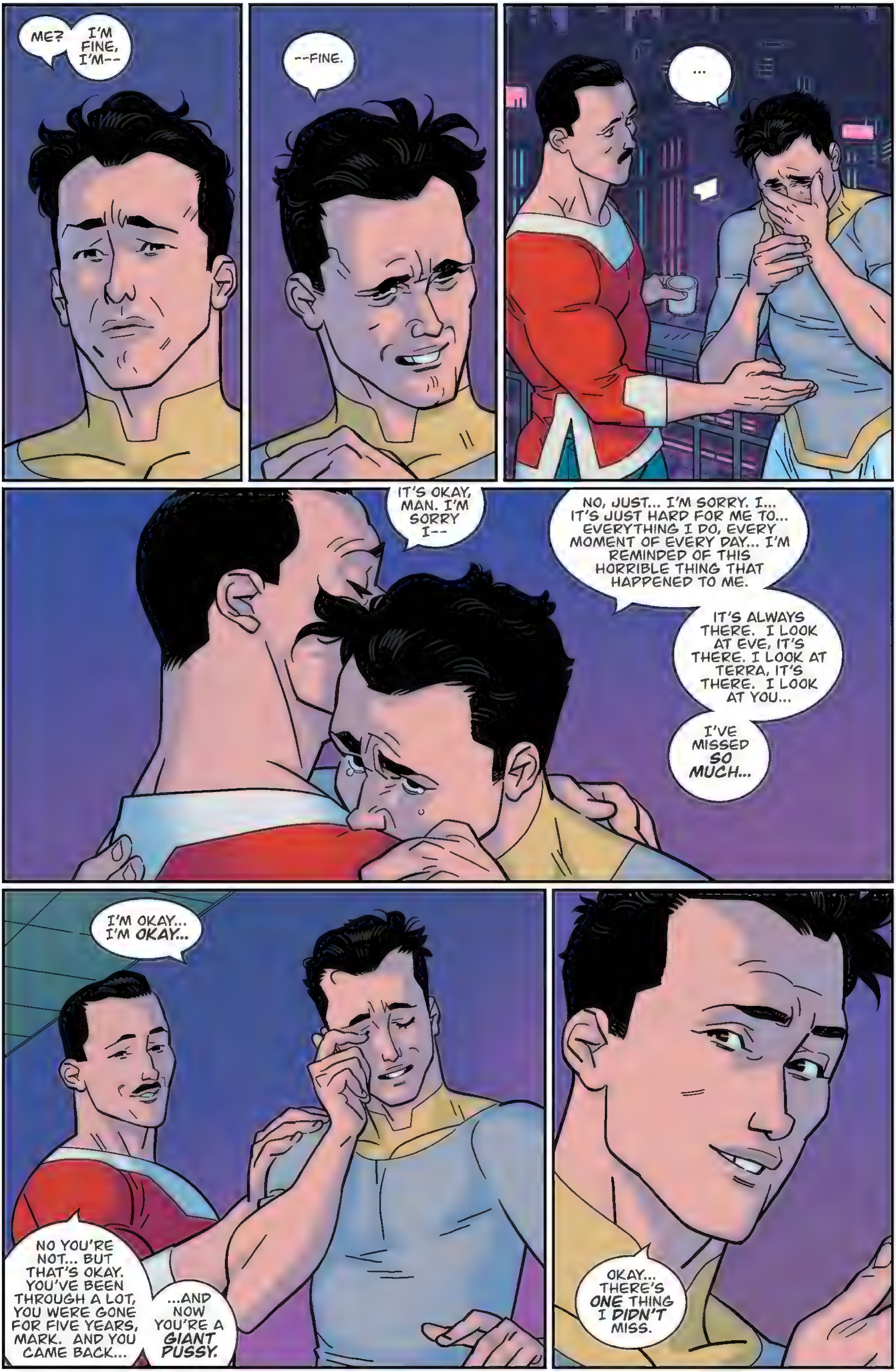


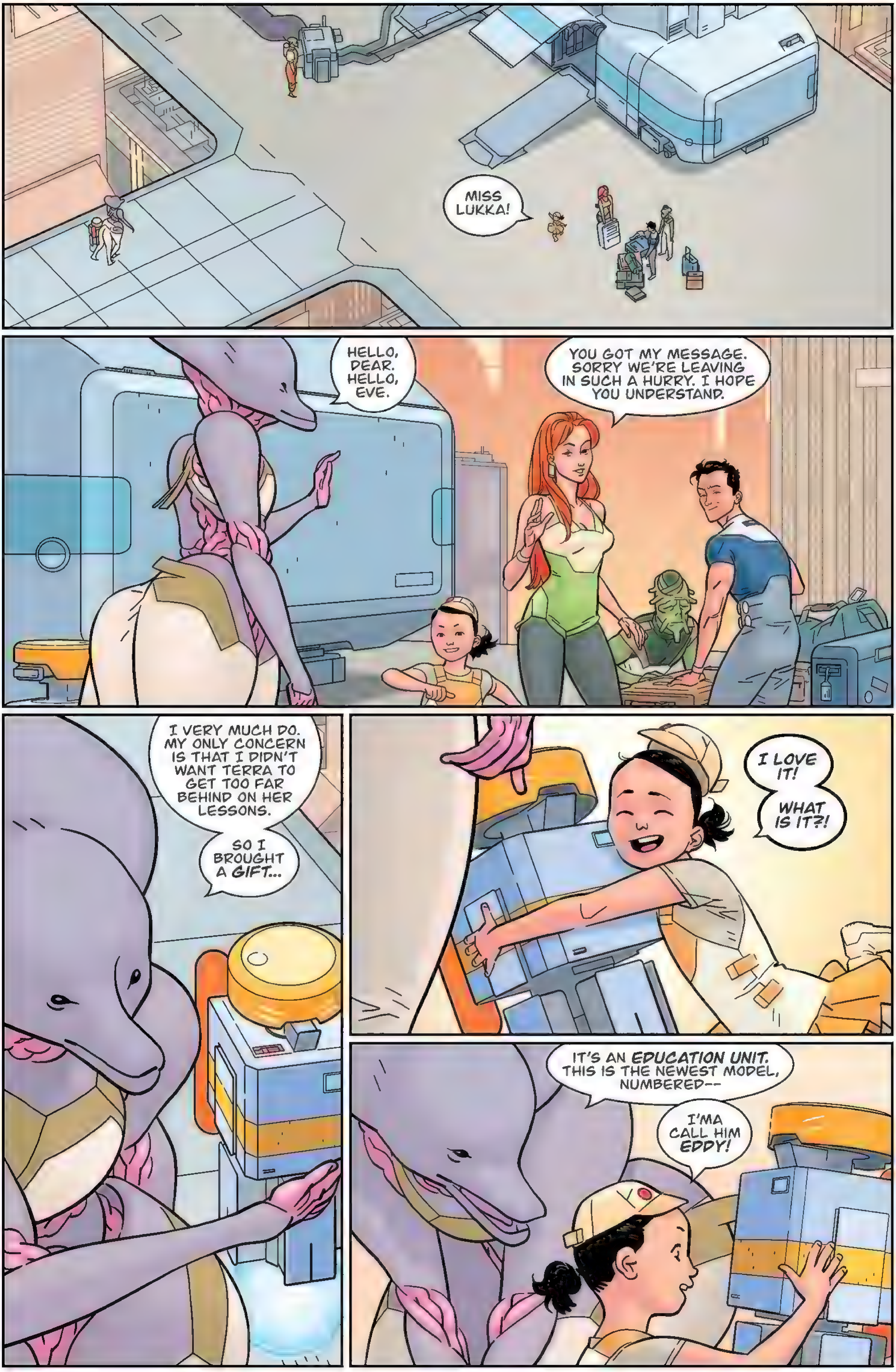
HOLY CRAP!
HOLY CRAP!
HOLY CRAP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE HERE!
WHOA THERE!
DON'T BREAK HIM, ALLEN! I JUST GOT HIM BACK!
DID YOU READ MY REPORT? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FLEET? I SAW ALL THAT DESTRUCTION.
HOW BAD ARE THINGS?
NOT GOOD.
THRAGG IS STILL OUT THERE. THAT WAS ONLY THE FIRST CONFRONTATION WE'VE HAD WITH HIM... AND NOT THE ONLY ONE WE'VE LOST, SADLY.
I DIDN'T EVEN THINK TO ASK LAST NIGHT. IS OLIVER OKAY?


OLIVER IS FINE, NOW... BACK ON ACTIVE DUTY. HE DIDN'T SURVIVE UNSCATHED... BUT THAT WAS MANY YEARS AGO AT THIS POINT... AS YOU KNOW.
THIS CAVE YOU WERE IN... YOU HAVE NO CLUE WHERE THESE CREATURES WENT?
NO. THEY WERE JUST GONE ONCE I CAME BACK. I COULDN'T EVEN TELL TIME HAD PASSED, ASIDE FROM THE EVIDENCE OF THAT BATTLE.
I THOUGHT IT HAD BEEN A FEW *WEEKS*, SAME TIME I SPENT IN THE OTHER TIMELINE.
I'LL SEND A TEAM TO INVESTIGATE.
I'D DO IT MYSELF... BUT I CAN'T RISK GETTING PULLED OUT OF TIME FOR *ANOTHER* FIVE YEARS. I CAN'T... I WON'T TAKE A RISK LIKE THAT AGAIN.
SPEAKING OF RISK... WITH THRAGG OUT THERE... YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO ASK.
WE COULD REALLY USE YOU.
I'M... DONE.
I'M *NEVER* COMING BACK.

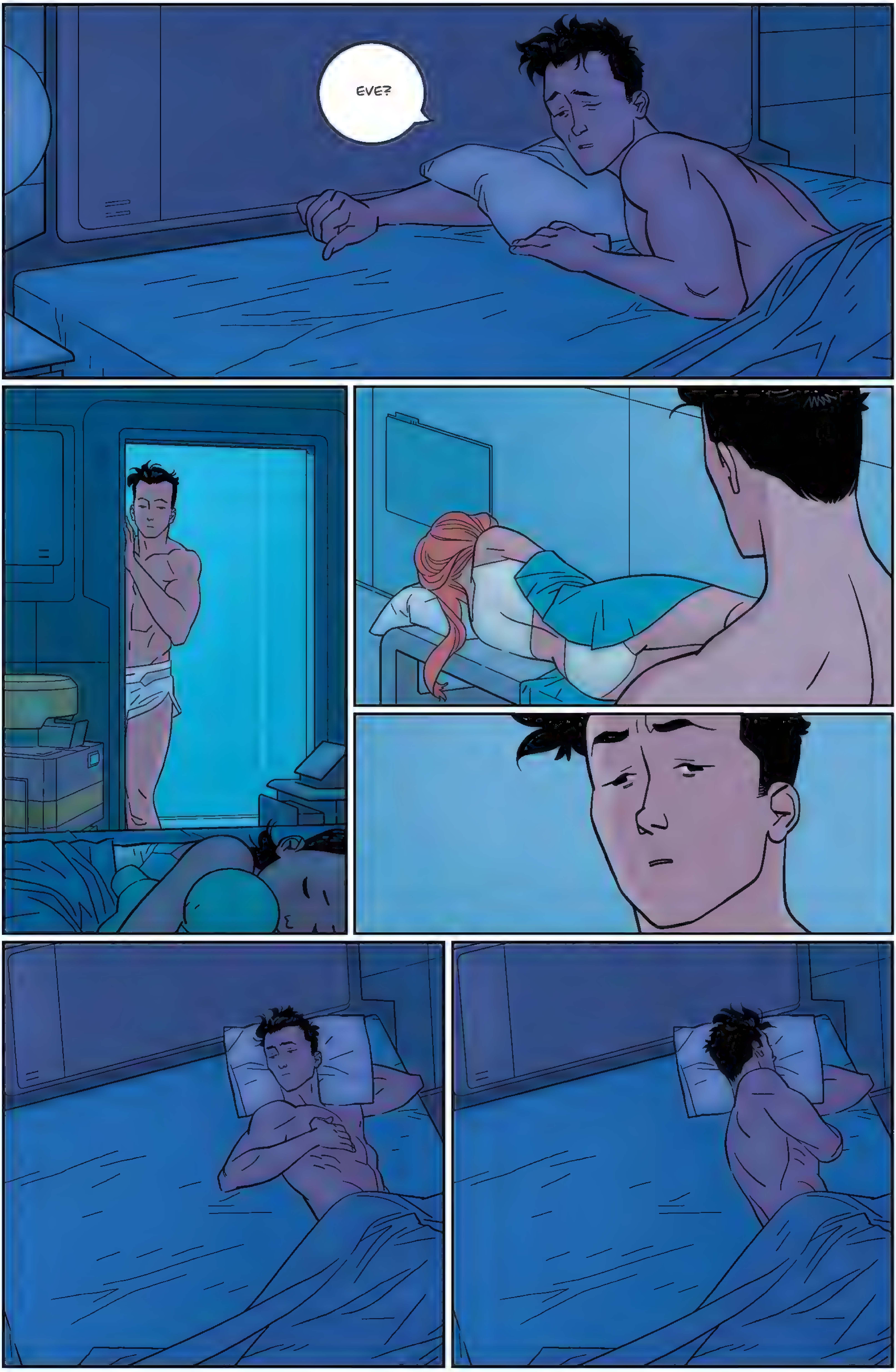

LISTEN, I KNOW THIS IS A DIFFICULT TIME FOR YOU. I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW HARD THIS MUST BE ON *BOTH* OF YOU.
AND I'M REALLY SORRY FOR WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.
PEOPLE ARE DYING. THRAGG IS A THREAT TO US ALL. YOU KNOW THAT... AND I KNOW YOU. YOU WON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON US.
DON'T BE SO SURE.
I LOST FIVE YEARS FOR YOU. *FIVE YEARS* WITH EVE... *FIVE YEARS* WITH TERRA. AND YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING THRAGG FOR FIVE YEARS. YOU'RE STILL HERE.
YOU DON'T *NEED* ME.
WE'RE GOING TO BE TAKING SOME TIME OFF WORLD TO SPEND TOGETHER. MARK AND I HAVE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT IT.
I'M TAKING HIM TO KHULTHAK.
OH, THAT'LL BE NICE. I... I SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT UP THRAGG. THAT WAS INSENSITIVE OF ME. I'M JUST UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE RIGHT NOW.
JUST... TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED.
THANKS, I... SORRY IF I SNAPPED AT YOU.
WE'LL STILL SEE YOU TONIGHT, RIGHT?

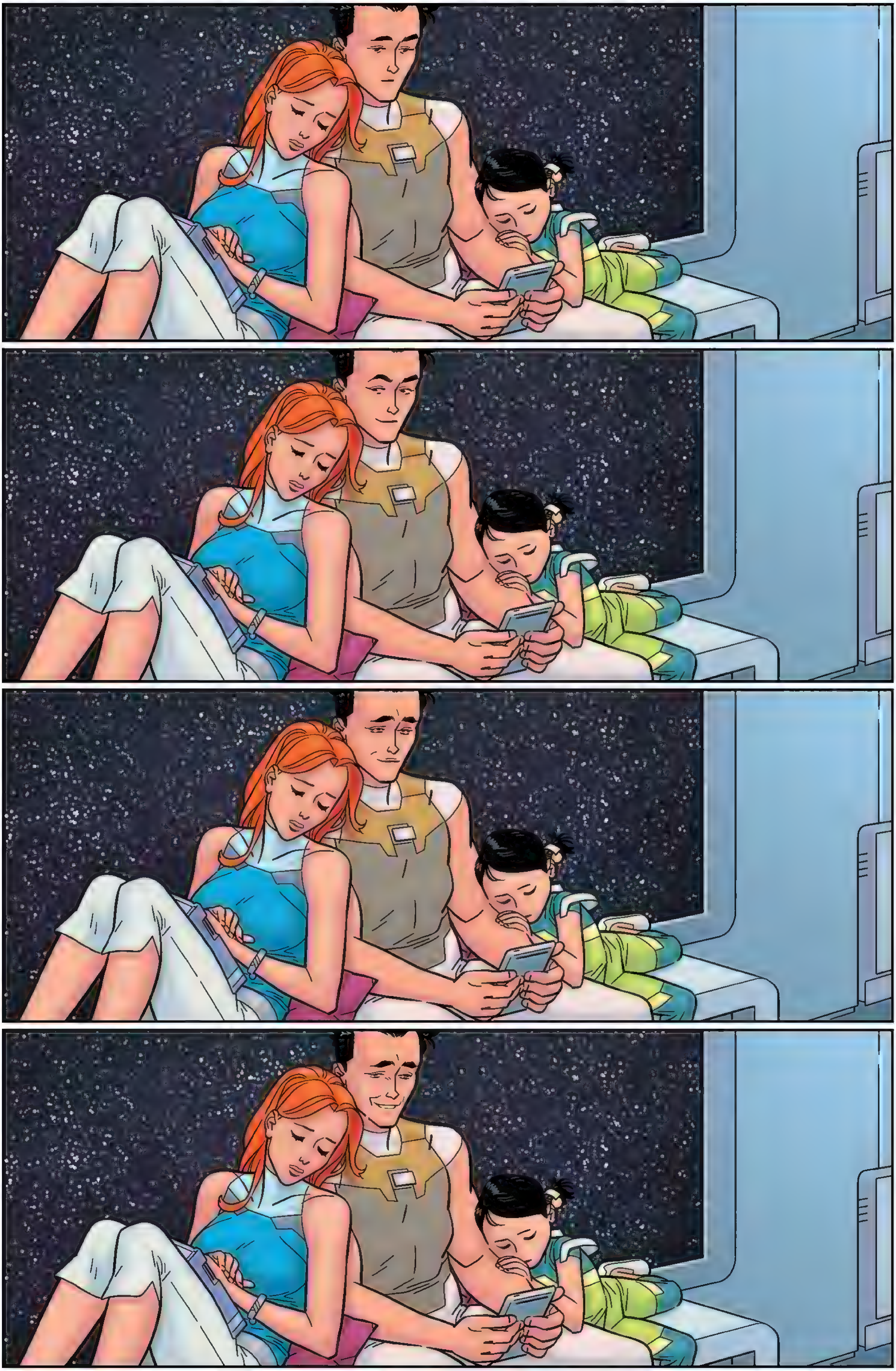

MARK?
HEY... OLIVER... DAMN.
EVE AND HALUMA ARE GETTING ON LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE. THAT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO.
HOW ARE YOU DOING?

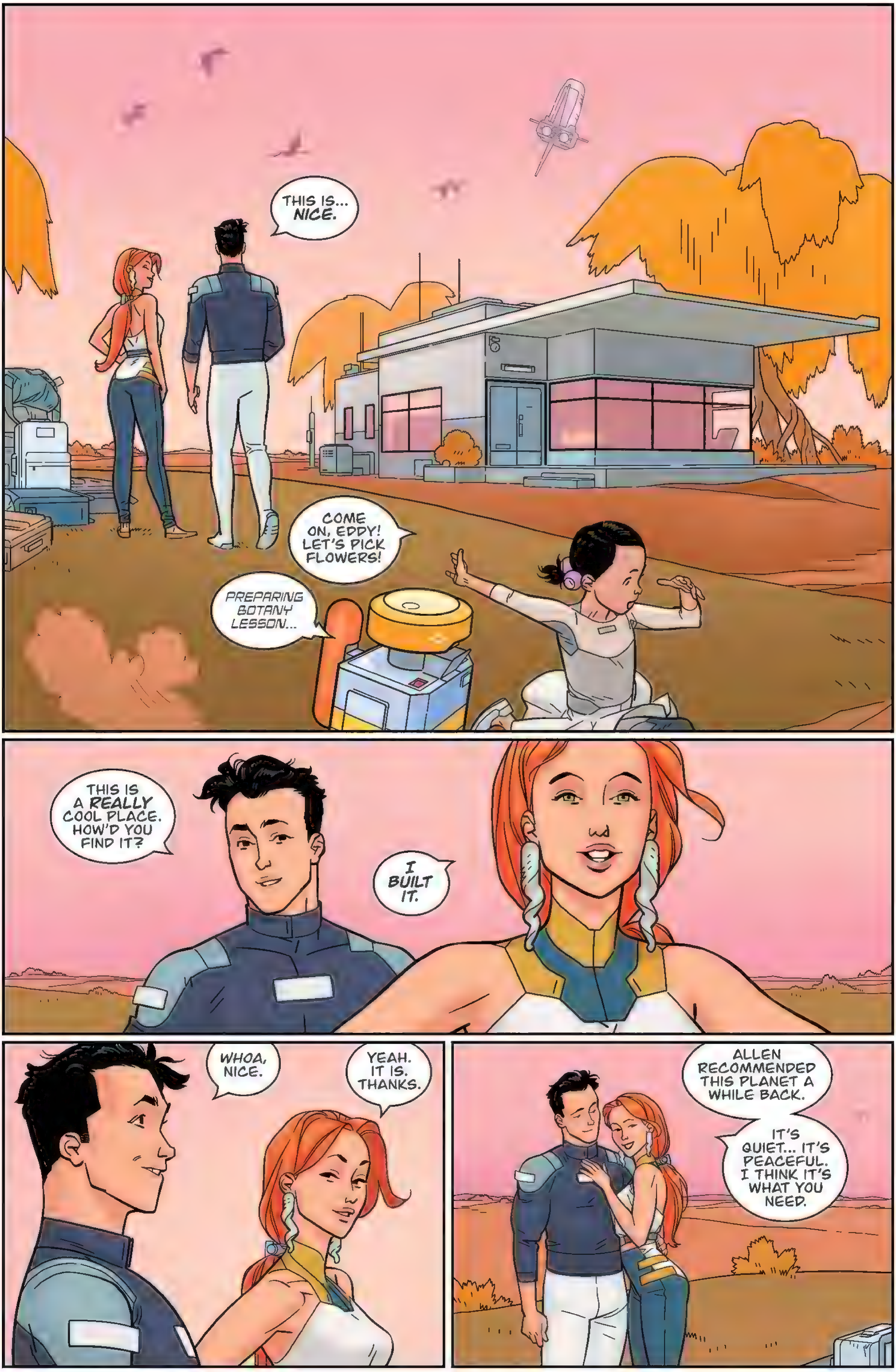

ME?
I'M FINE, I'M--
--FINE.
...
IT'S OKAY, MAN. I'M SORRY I--
NO, JUST... I'M SORRY. I... IT'S JUST HARD FOR ME TO... EVERYTHING I DO, EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY DAY... I'M REMINDED OF THIS HORRIBLE THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME.
IT'S ALWAYS THERE. I LOOK AT EVE, IT'S THERE. I LOOK AT TERRA, IT'S THERE. I LOOK AT YOU...
I'VE MISSED *SO MUCH...*
I'M OKAY... I'M *OKAY...*
NO YOU'RE NOT... BUT THAT'S OKAY. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT, YOU WERE GONE FOR FIVE YEARS, MARK. AND YOU CAME BACK...
...AND NOW YOU'RE A *GIANT PUSSY.*
OKAY... THERE'S *ONE* THING I *DIDN'T* MISS.

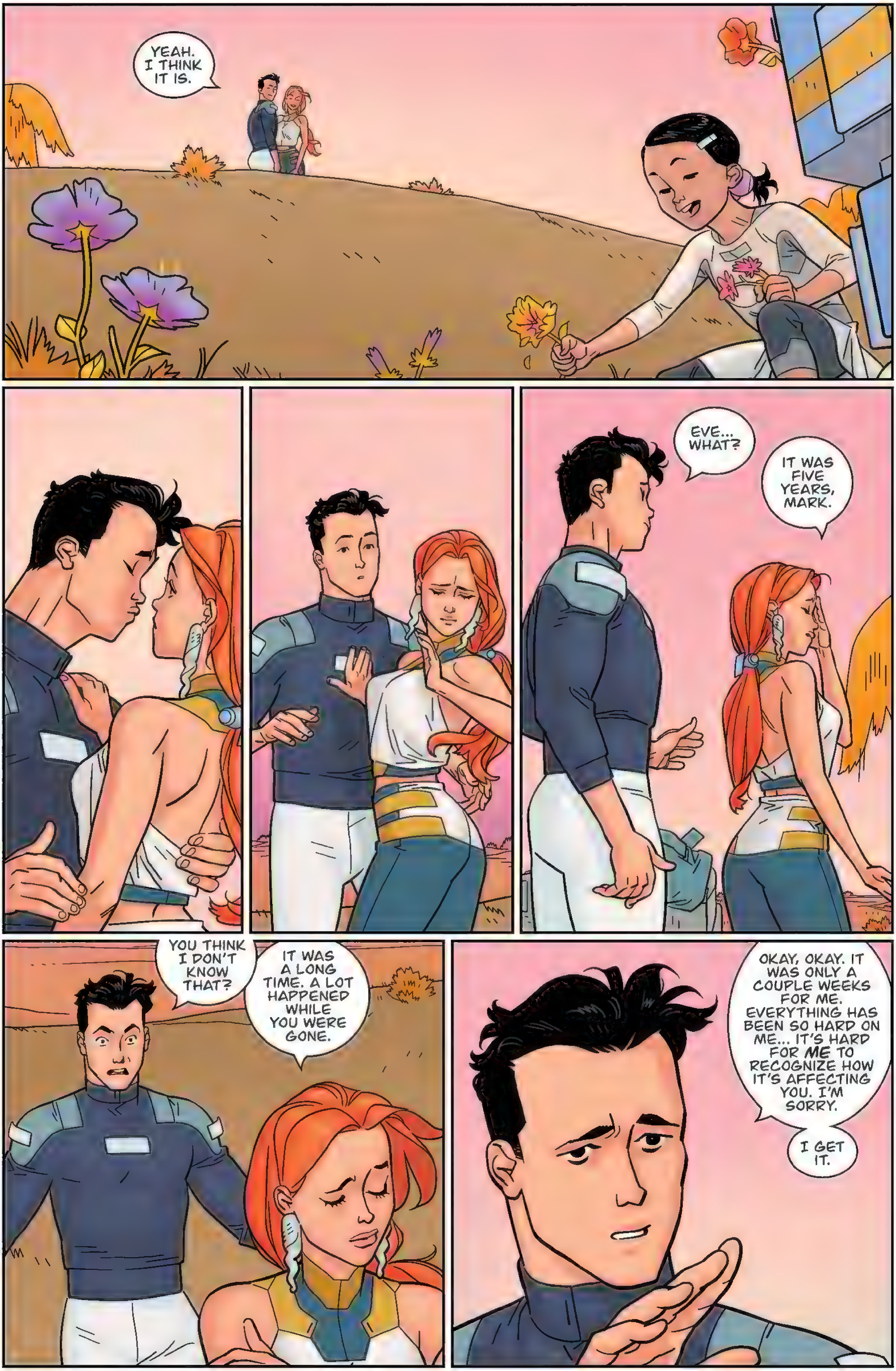

MISS LUKKA!
HELLO, DEAR. HELLO, EVE.
YOU GOT MY MESSAGE. SORRY WE'RE LEAVING IN SUCH A HURRY. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND.
I VERY MUCH DO. MY ONLY CONCERN IS THAT I DIDN'T WANT TERRA TO GET TOO FAR BEHIND ON HER LESSONS.
SO I BROUGHT A *GIFT*...
I LOVE IT!
WHAT IS IT?!
IT'S AN *EDUCATION UNIT.* THIS IS THE NEWEST MODEL, NUMBERED--
I'MA CALL HIM *EDDY!*

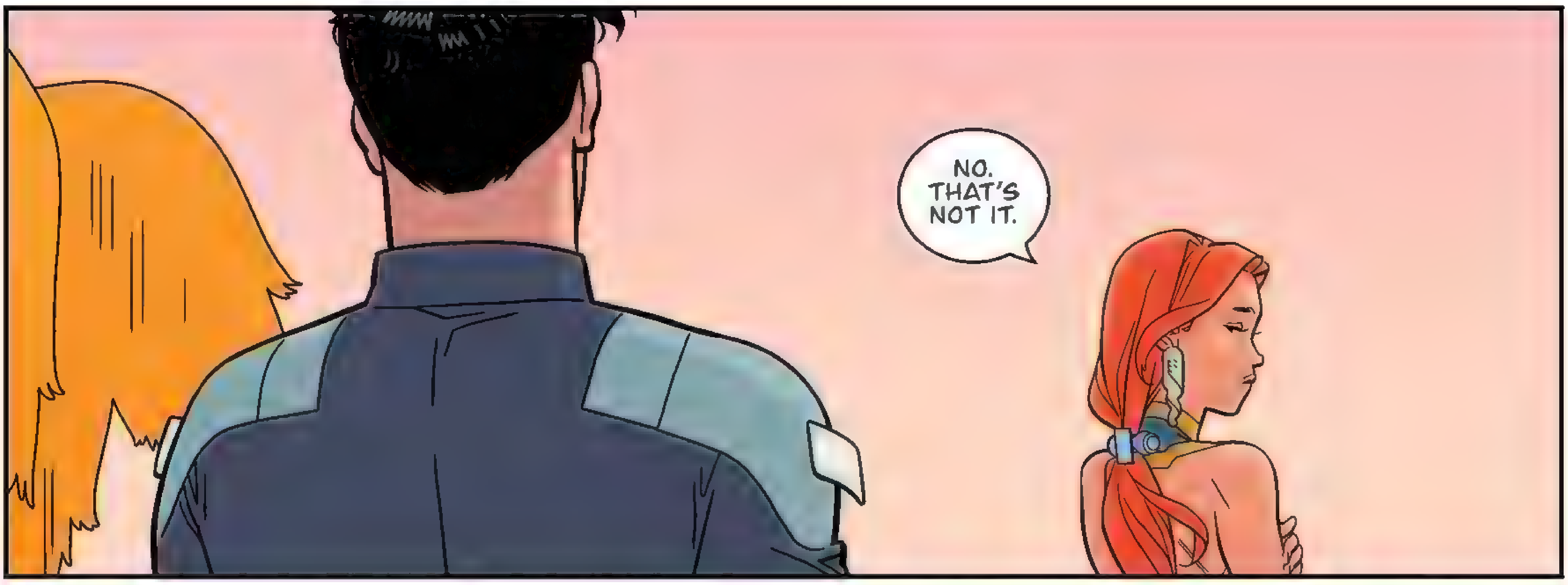
HEY.
CHEER UP!
WE'RE GOING TO A SECLUDED PLANET. IT'S JUST GOING TO BE YOU, ME AND TERRA. *THAT'S IT.*
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME. OKAY? THIS IS WHAT WE ALL NEED.
I KNOW. SORRY.
CHEERING UP, BOSS.
I'LL NEVER GET USED TO THIS.
WE'RE IN SPACE!
BOO YA!

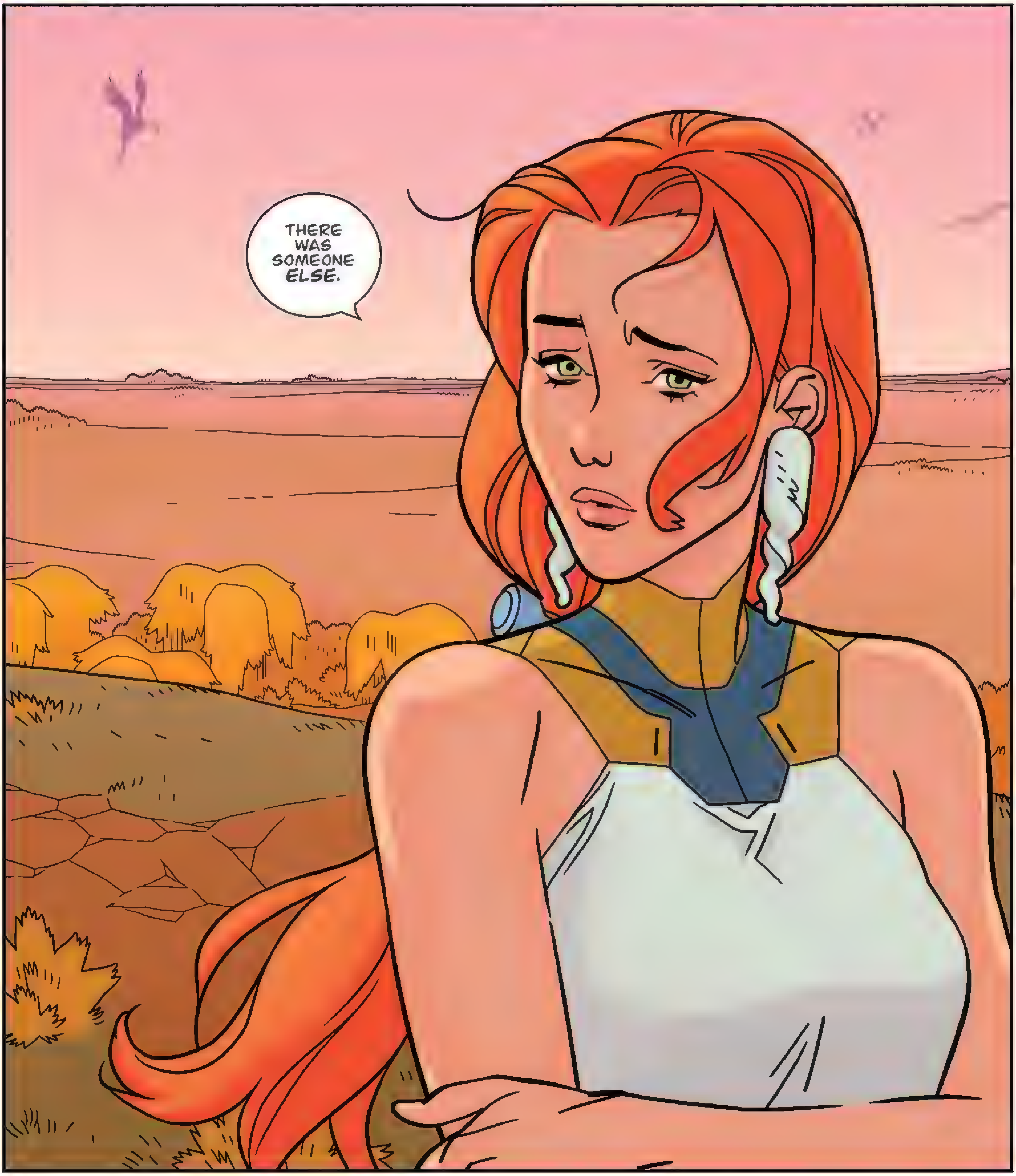

EVE?

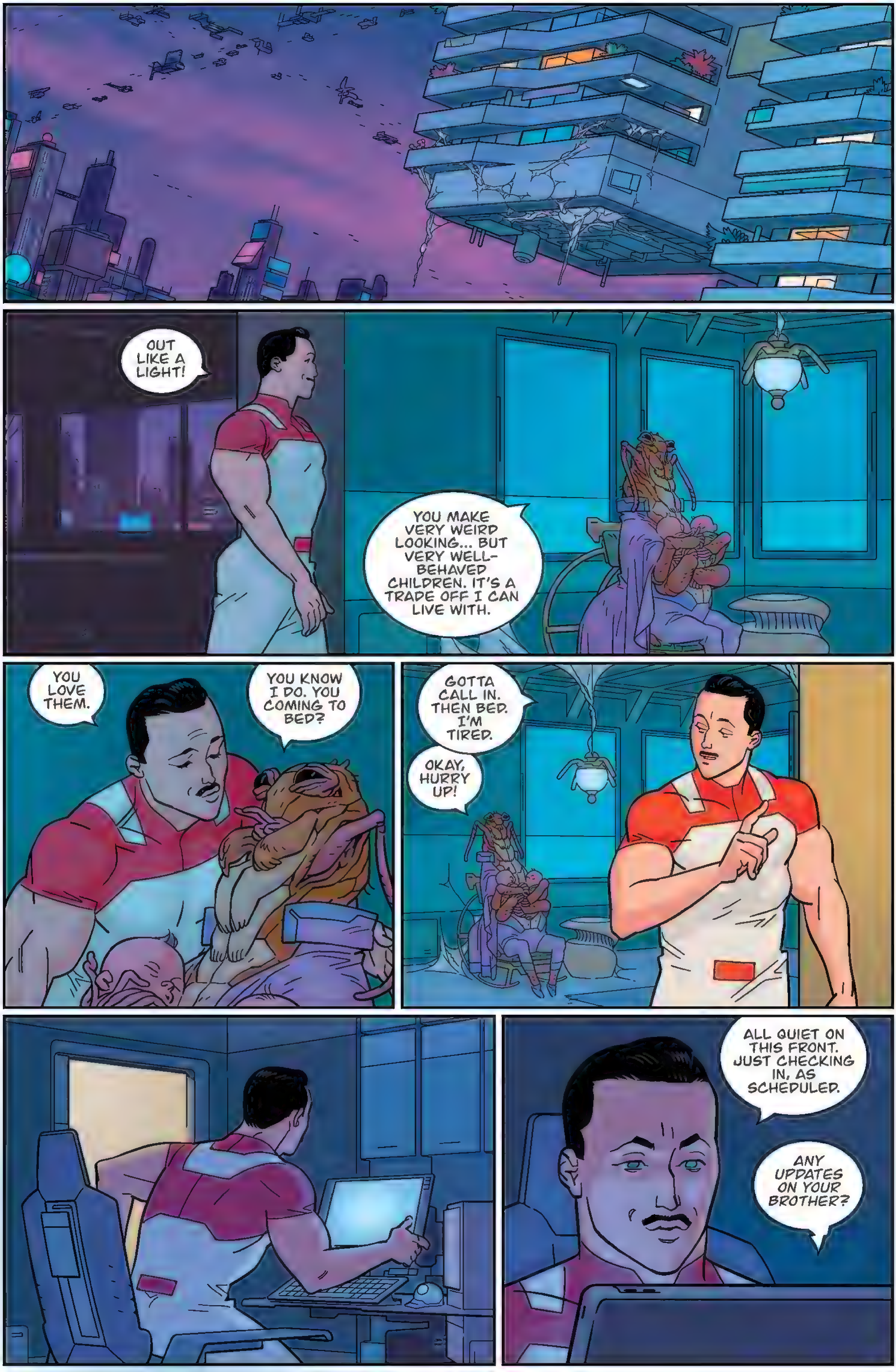


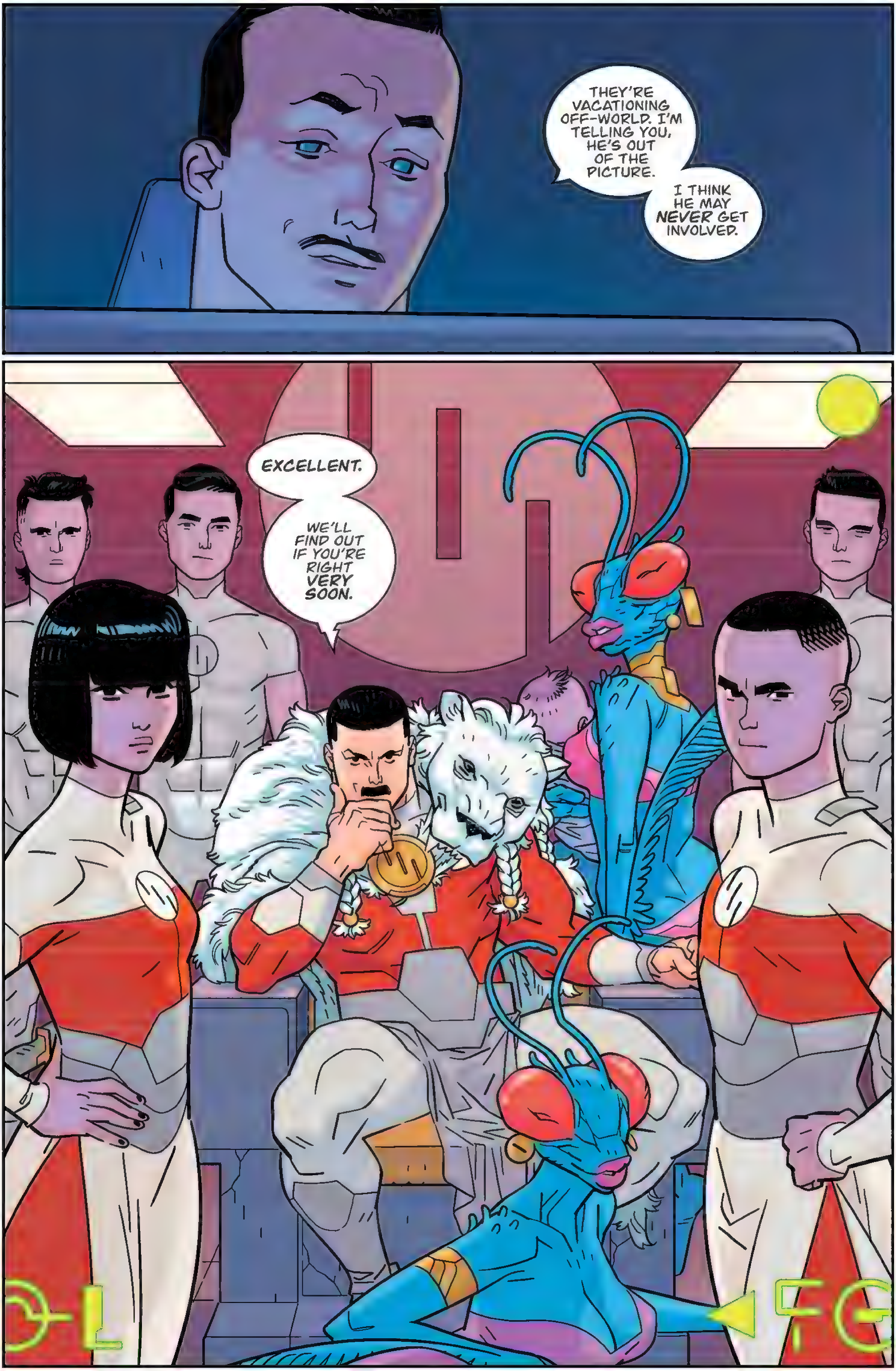

THIS IS... *NICE.*
COME ON, EDDY! LET'S PICK FLOWERS!
PREPARING BOTANY LESSON...
THIS IS A *REALLY* COOL PLACE. HOW'D YOU FIND IT?
I BUILT IT.
WHOA, NICE.
YEAH. IT IS. THANKS.
ALLEN RECOMMENDED THIS PLANET A WHILE BACK.
IT'S QUIET... IT'S PEACEFUL. I THINK IT'S WHAT YOU NEED.


YEAH. I THINK IT IS.
EVE... WHAT?
IT WAS FIVE YEARS, MARK.
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT?
IT WAS A LONG TIME. A LOT HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE GONE.
OKAY, OKAY. IT WAS ONLY A COUPLE WEEKS FOR ME. EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SO HARD ON ME... IT'S HARD FOR *ME* TO RECOGNIZE HOW IT'S AFFECTING YOU. I'M SORRY.
I GET IT.

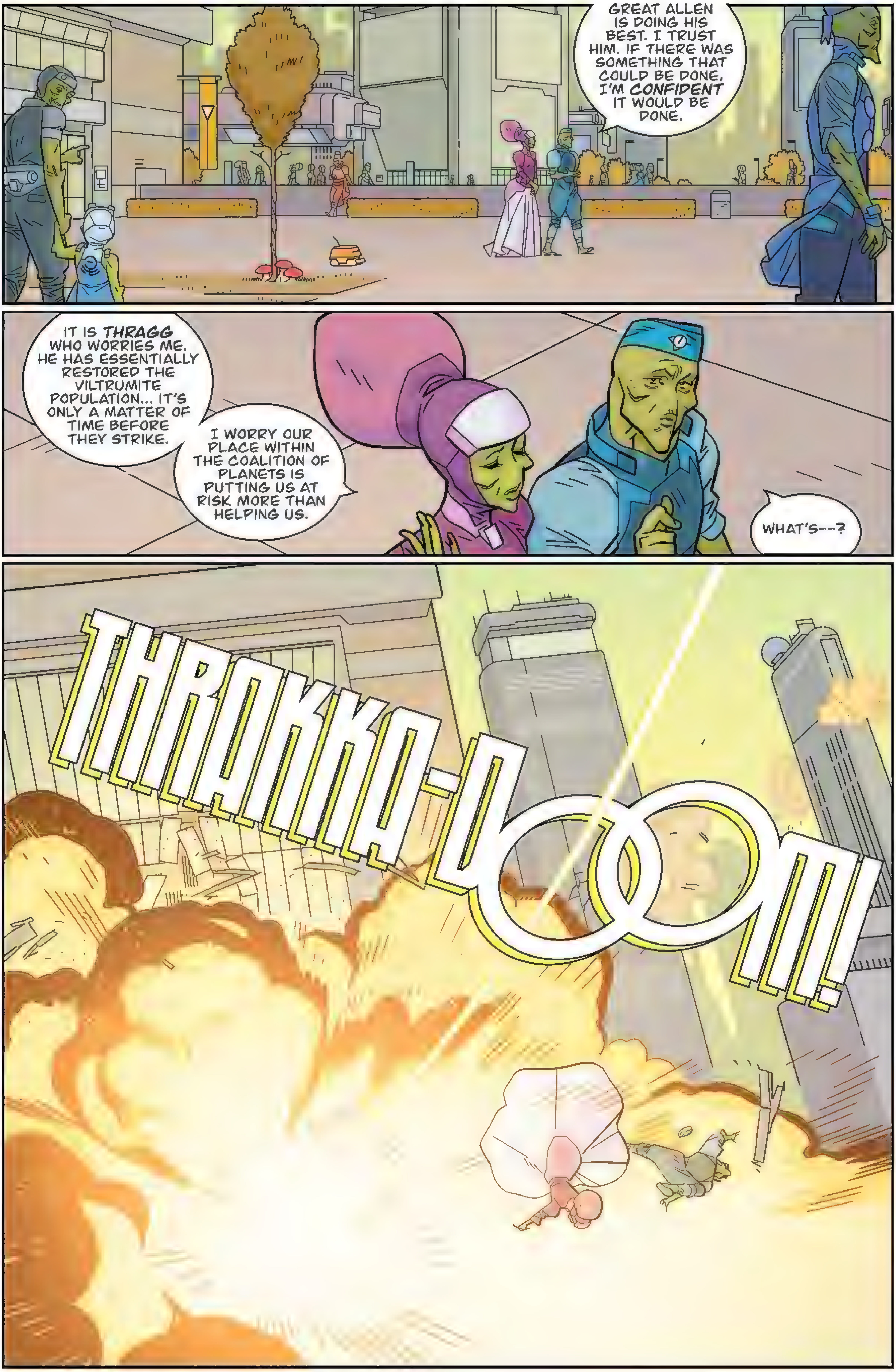

NO. THAT'S NOT IT.

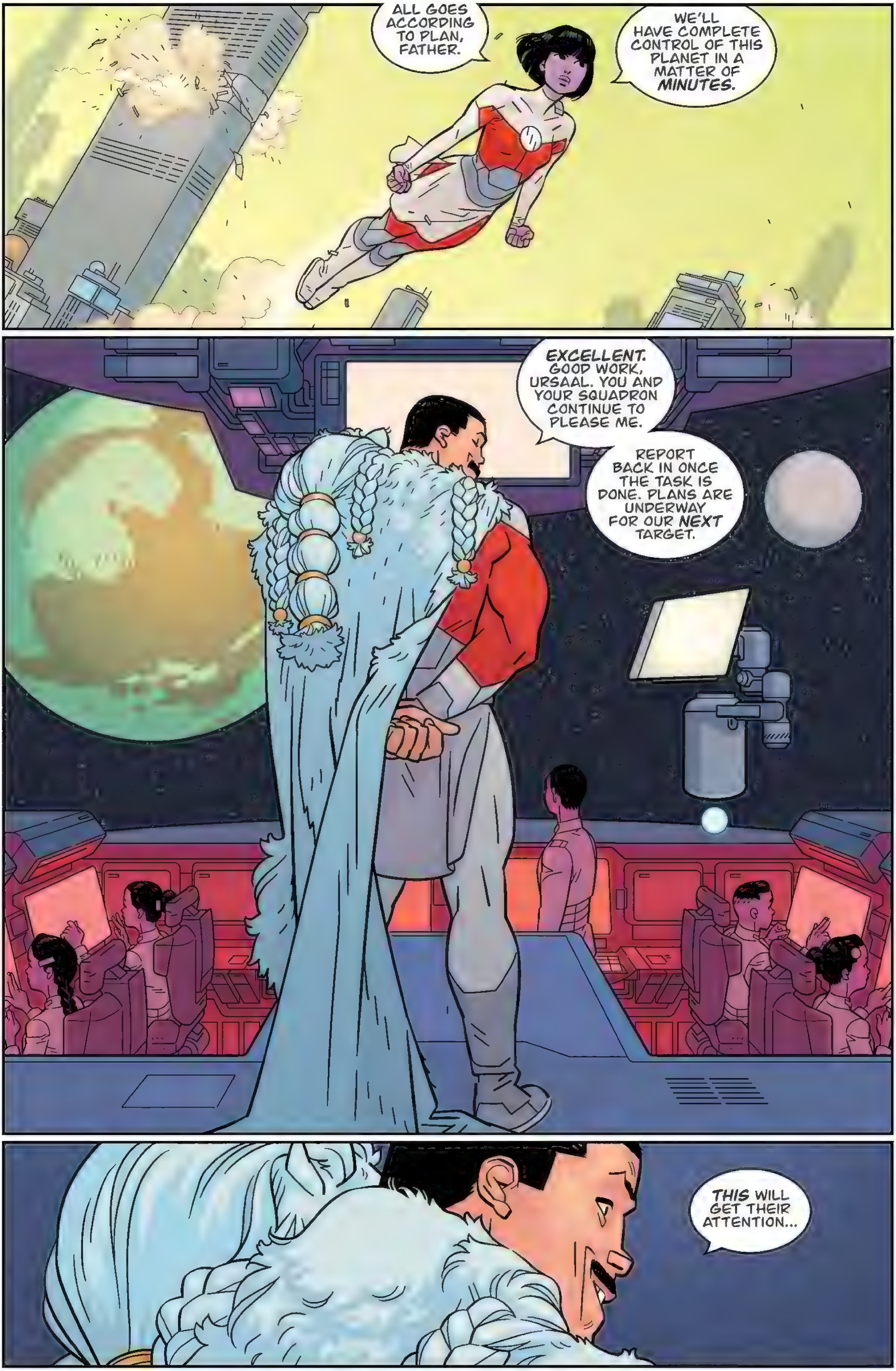

THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE.

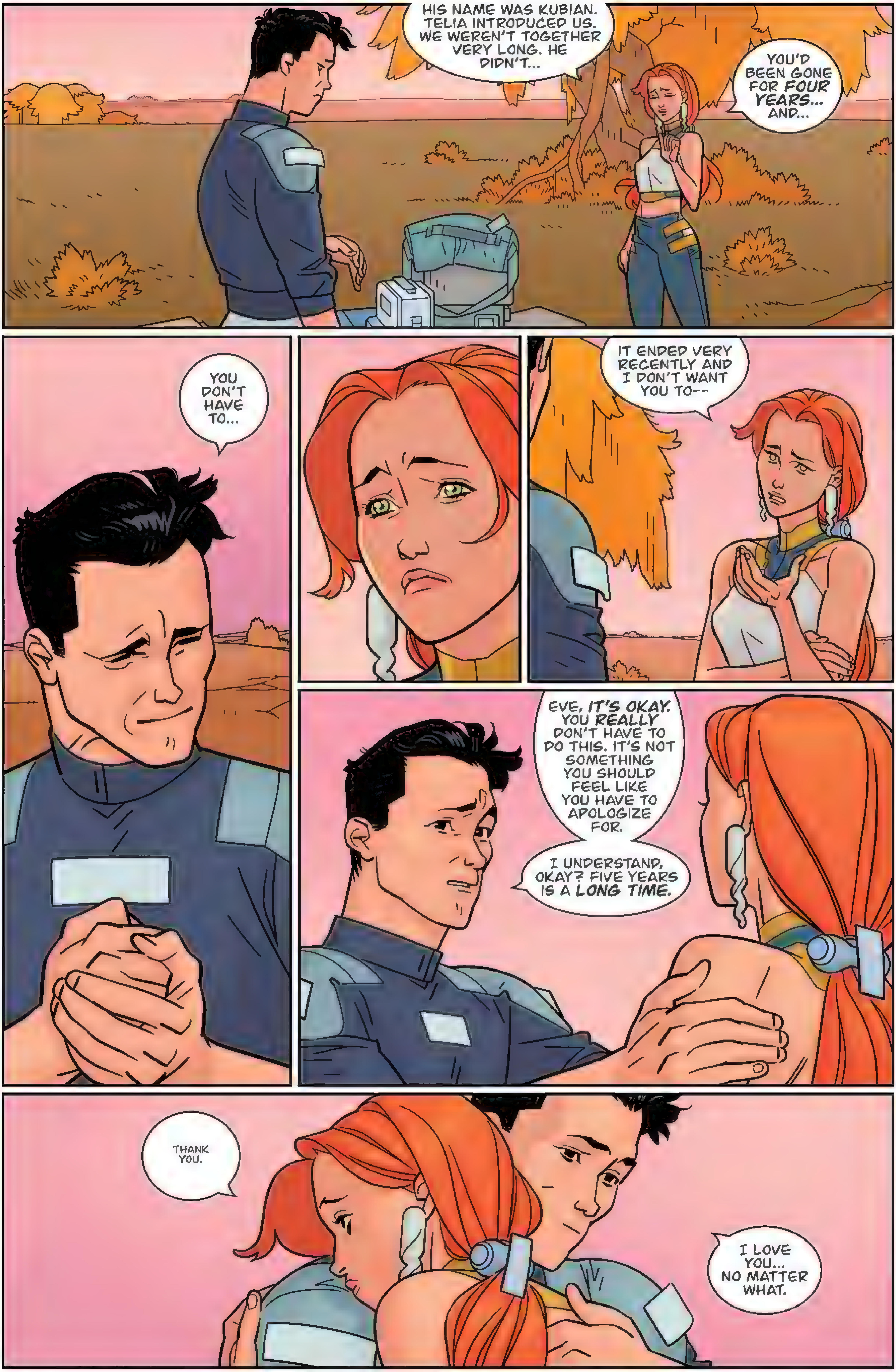

OUT LIKE A LIGHT!
YOU MAKE VERY WEIRD LOOKING... BUT VERY WELL-BEHAVED CHILDREN. IT'S A TRADE OFF I CAN LIVE WITH.
YOU LOVE THEM.
YOU KNOW I DO. YOU COMING TO BED?
GOTTA CALL IN. THEN BED. I'M TIRED.
OKAY, HURRY UP!
ALL QUIET ON THIS FRONT. JUST CHECKING IN, AS SCHEDULED.
ANY UPDATES ON YOUR BROTHER?

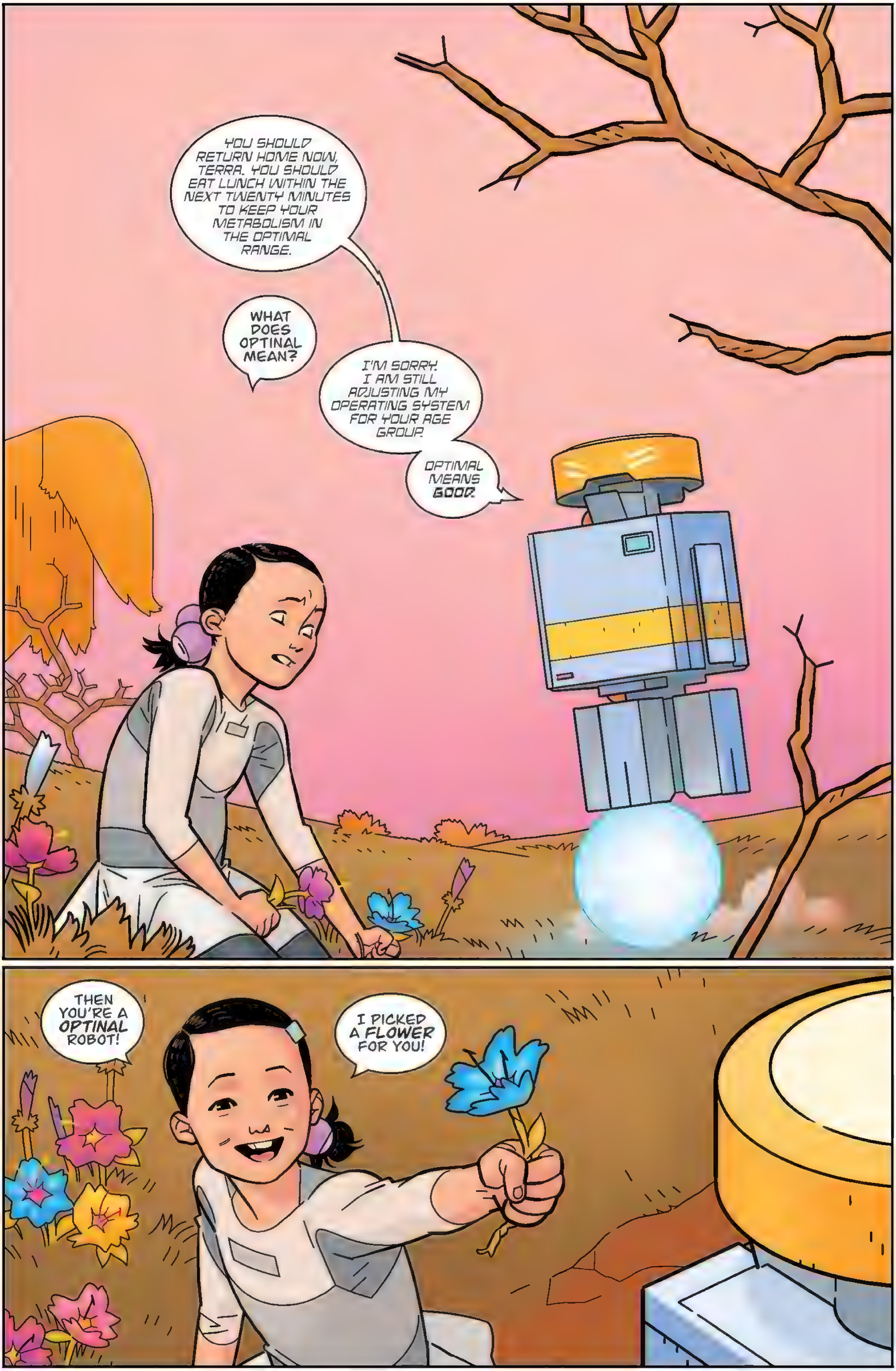

THEY'RE VACATIONING OFF-WORLD. I'M TELLING YOU, HE'S OUT OF THE PICTURE.
I THINK HE MAY *NEVER* GET INVOLVED.
EXCELLENT.
WE'LL FIND OUT IF YOU'RE RIGHT *VERY SOON.*

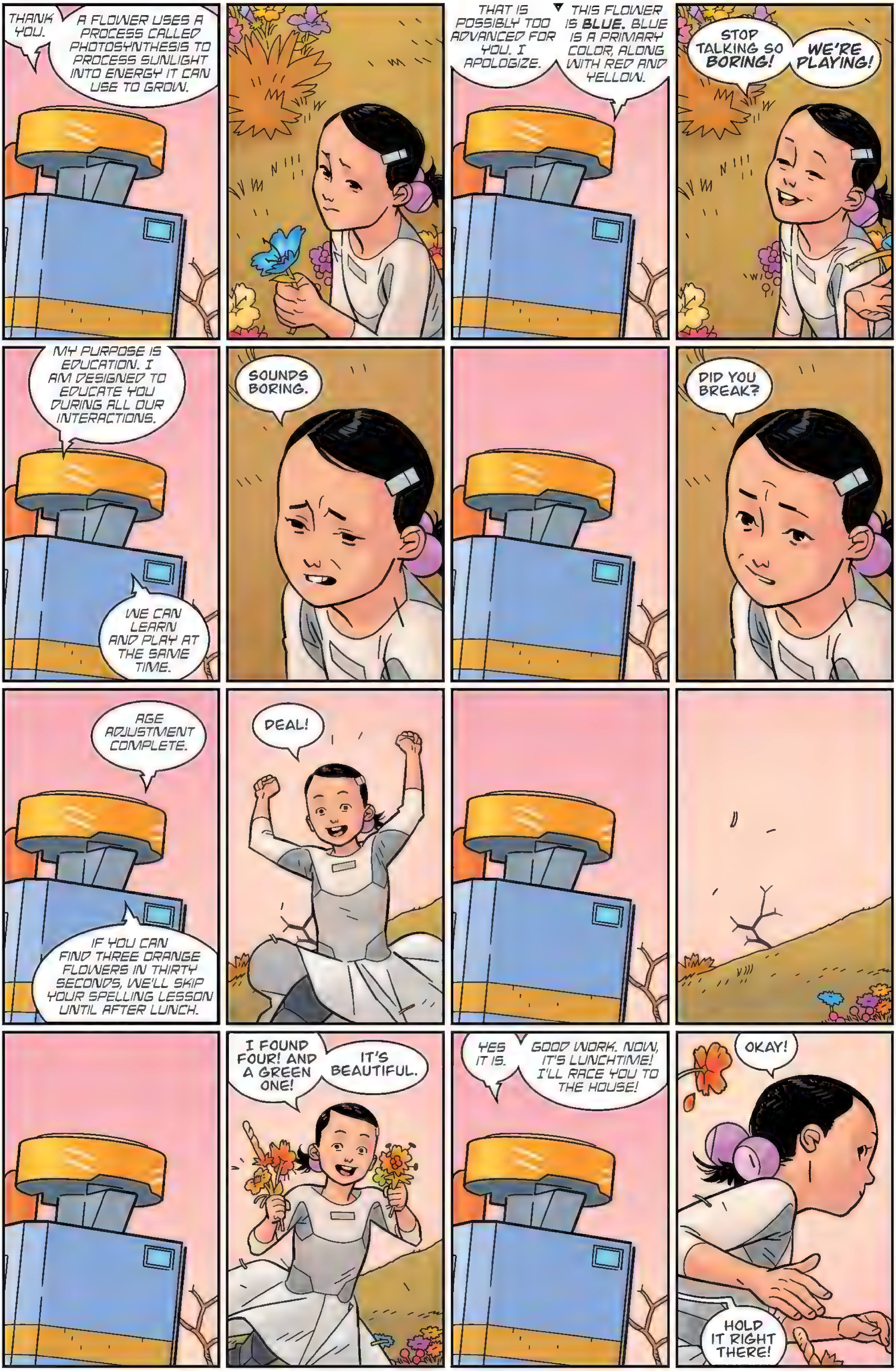
CHAPTER 128

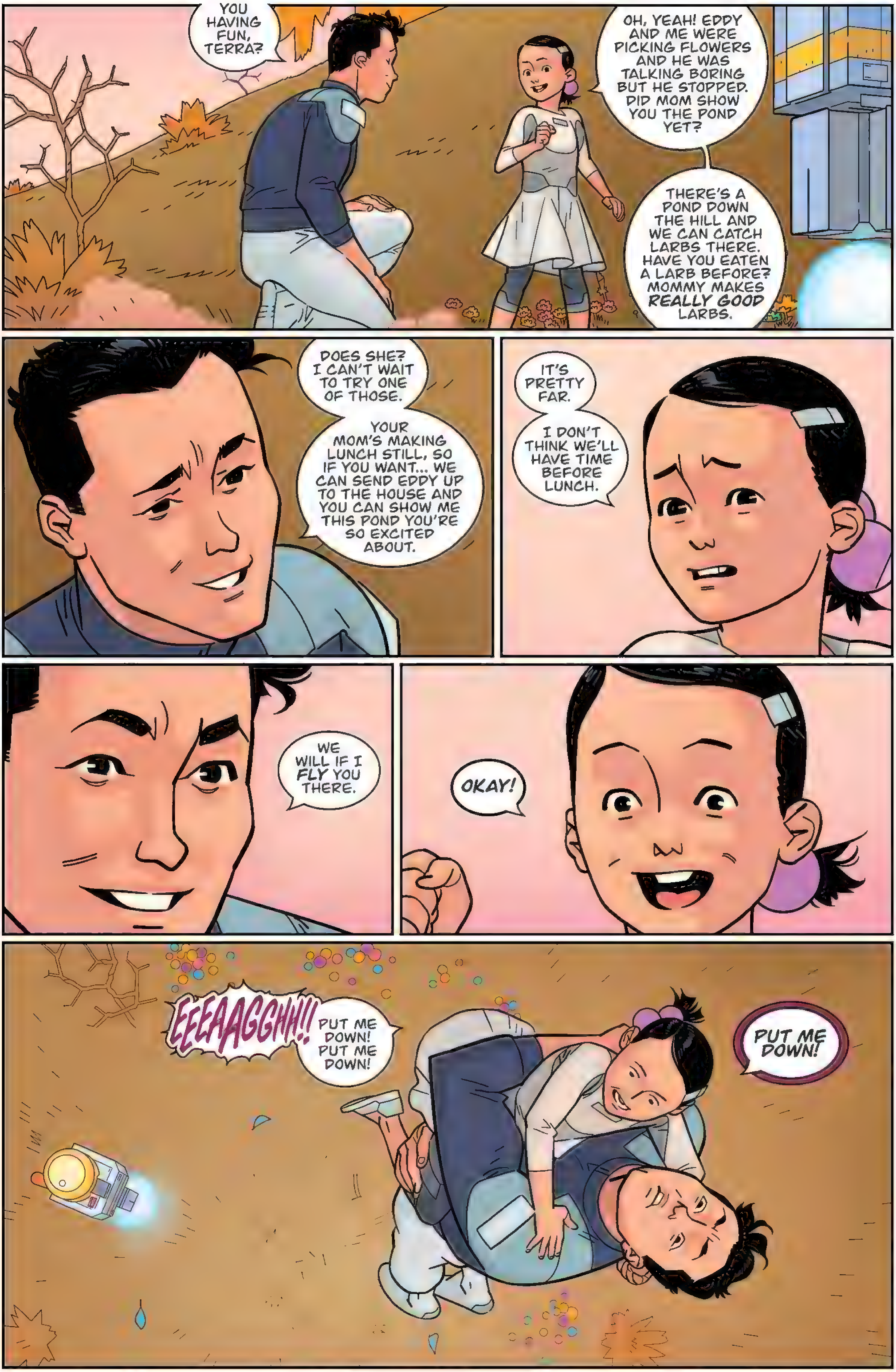

GREAT ALLEN IS DOING HIS BEST. I TRUST HIM. IF THERE WAS SOMETHING THAT COULD BE DONE, I'M *CONFIDENT* IT WOULD BE DONE.
IT IS *THRAGG* WHO WORRIES ME. HE HAS ESSENTIALLY RESTORED THE VILTRUMITE POPULATION... IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY STRIKE.
I WORRY OUR PLACE WITHIN THE COALITION OF PLANETS IS PUTTING US AT RISK MORE THAN HELPING US.
WHAT'S--?
THRAKKA-DOOM!

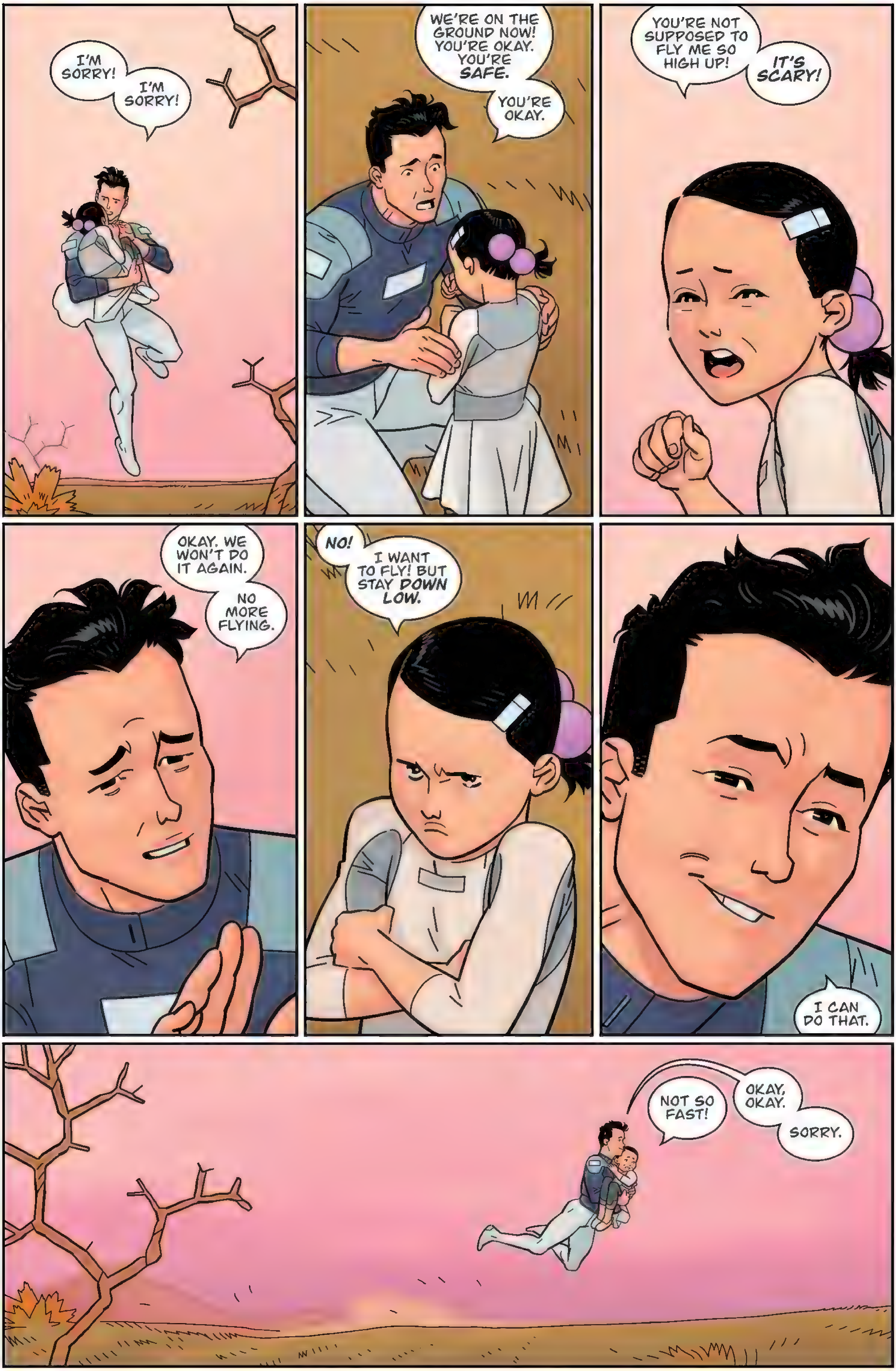

ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN, FATHER.
WE'LL HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THIS PLANET IN A MATTER OF *MINUTES.*
EXCELLENT. GOOD WORK, URSAAL. YOU AND YOUR SQUADRON CONTINUE TO PLEASE ME.
REPORT BACK IN ONCE THE TASK IS DONE. PLANS ARE UNDERWAY FOR OUR *NEXT* TARGET.
THIS WILL GET THEIR ATTENTION...

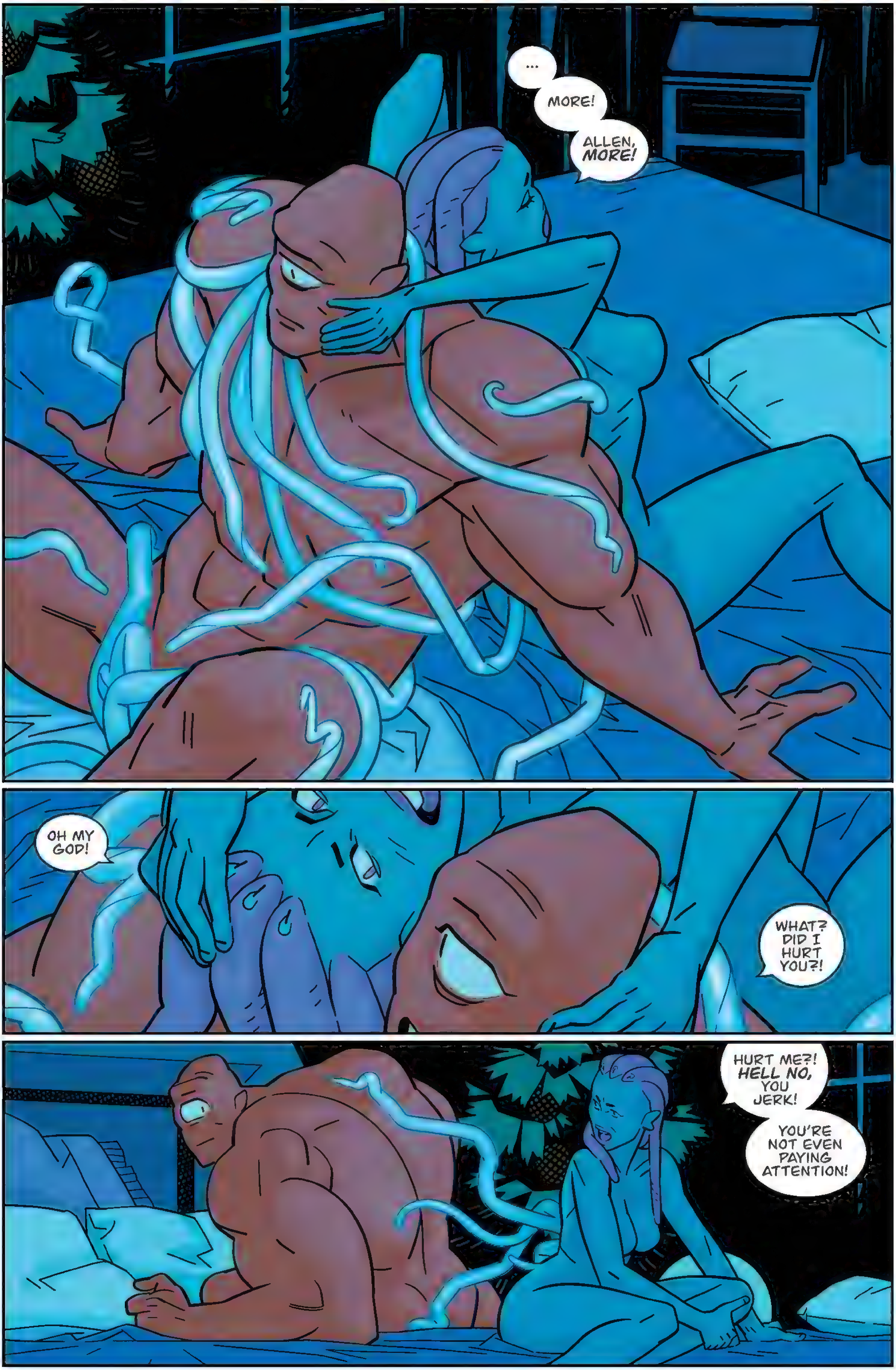

HIS NAME WAS KUBIAN. TELIA INTRODUCED US. WE WEREN'T TOGETHER VERY LONG. HE DIDN'T...
YOU'D BEEN GONE FOR FOUR YEARS... AND...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO...
IT ENDED VERY RECENTLY AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO--
EVE, IT'S OKAY. YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU SHOULD FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO APOLOGIZE FOR.
I UNDERSTAND, OKAY? FIVE YEARS IS A LONG TIME.
THANK YOU.
I LOVE YOU... NO MATTER WHAT.

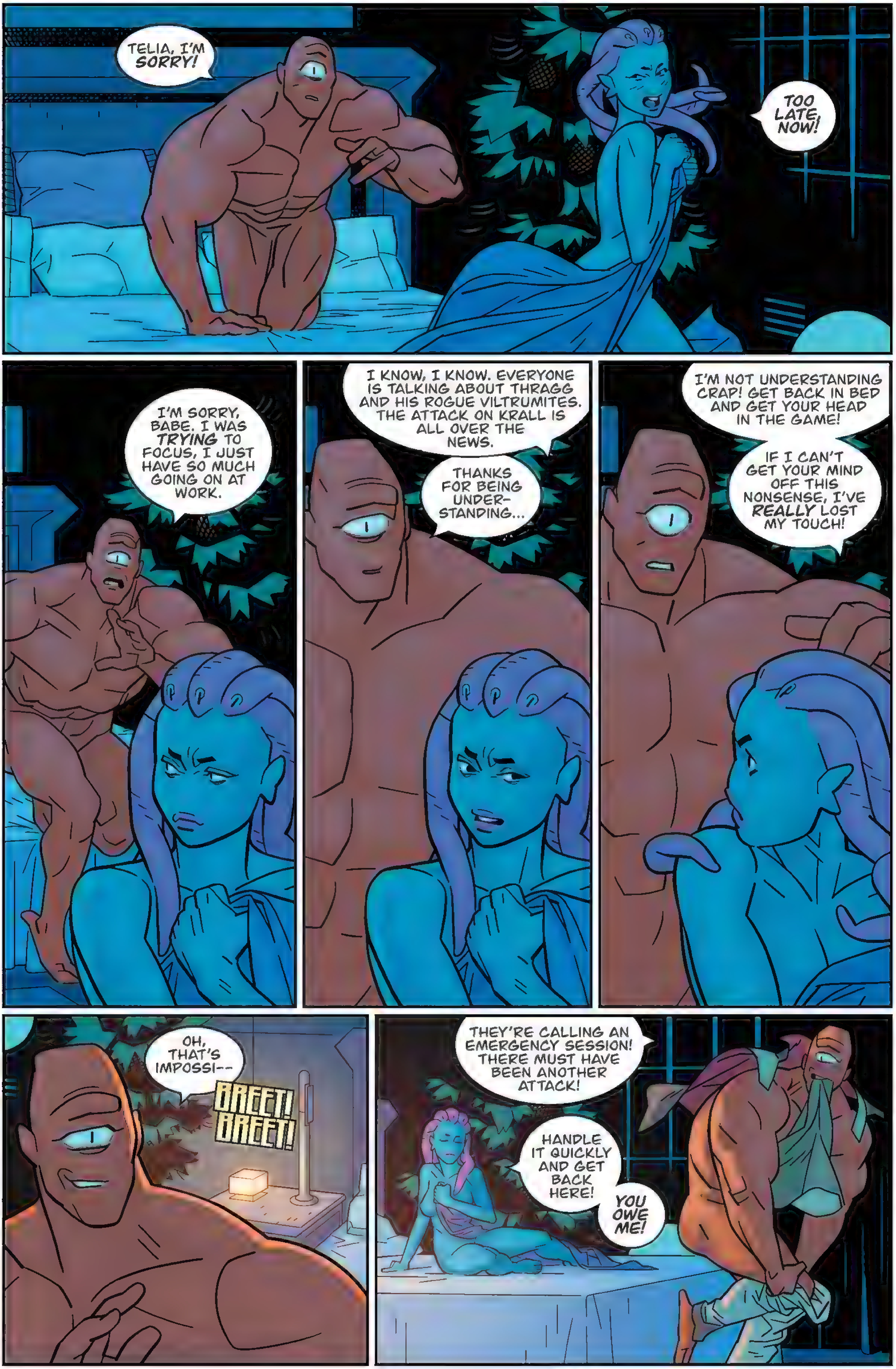

YOU SHOULD RETURN HOME NOW, TERRA. YOU SHOULD EAT LUNCH WITHIN THE NEXT TWENTY MINUTES TO KEEP YOUR METABOLISM IN THE OPTIMAL RANGE.
WHAT DOES OPTINAL MEAN?
I'M SORRY. I AM STILL ADJUSTING MY OPERATING SYSTEM FOR YOUR AGE GROUP.
OPTIMAL MEANS **GOOD**.
THEN YOU'RE A **OPTINAL** ROBOT!
I PICKED A **FLOWER** FOR YOU!

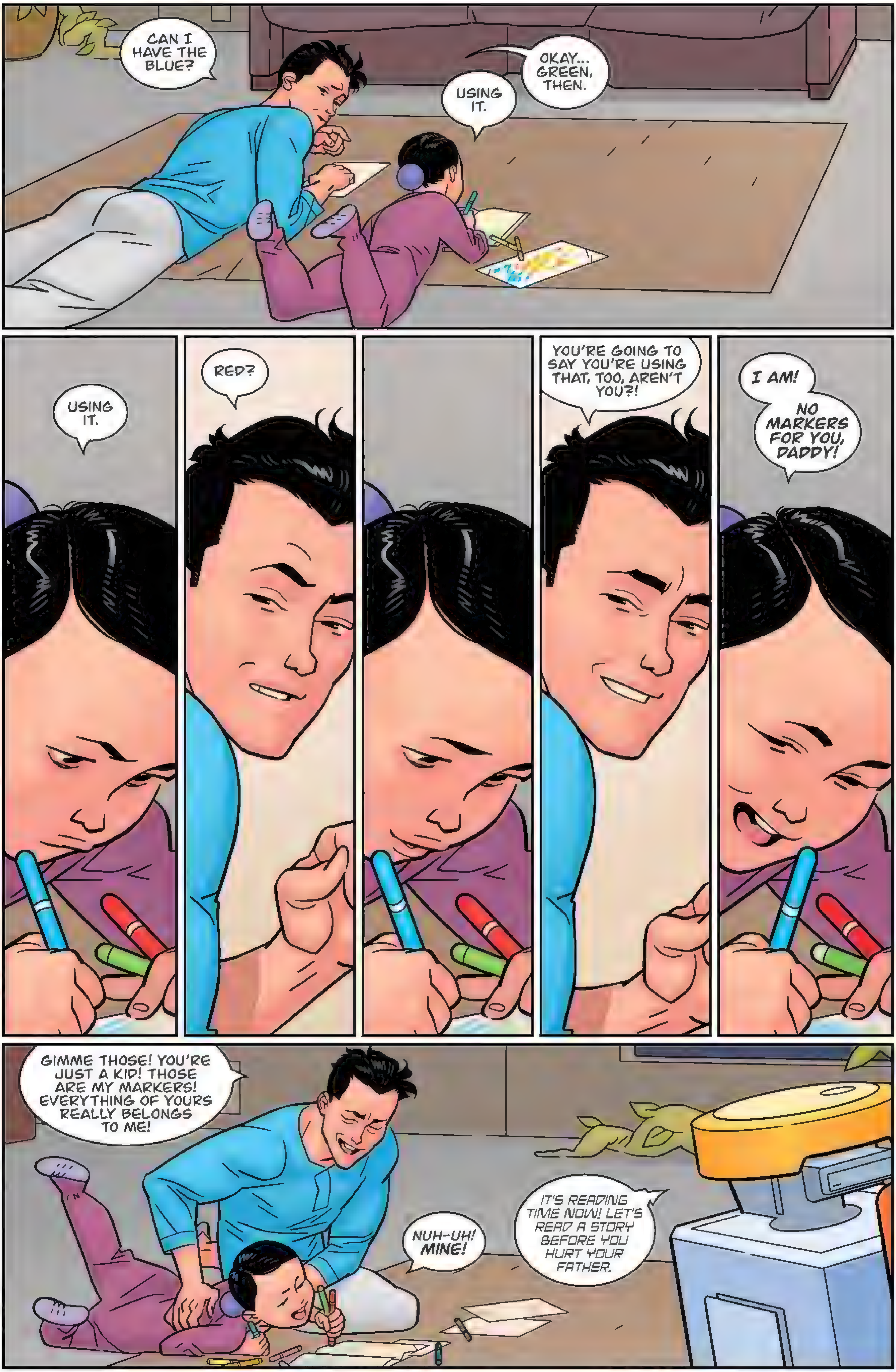

THANK YOU.
A FLOWER USES A PROCESS CALLED PHOTOSYNTHESIS TO PROCESS SUNLIGHT INTO ENERGY IT CAN USE TO GROW.
THAT IS POSSIBLY TOO ADVANCED FOR YOU. I APOLOGIZE.
THIS FLOWER IS **BLUE.** BLUE IS A PRIMARY COLOR, ALONG WITH RED AND YELLOW.
STOP TALKING SO BORING!
WE'RE PLAYING!
MY PURPOSE IS EDUCATION. I AM DESIGNED TO EDUCATE YOU DURING ALL OUR INTERACTIONS.
WE CAN LEARN AND PLAY AT THE SAME TIME.
SOUNDS BORING.
DID YOU BREAK?
AGE ADJUSTMENT COMPLETE.
IF YOU CAN FIND THREE ORANGE FLOWERS IN THIRTY SECONDS, WE'LL SKIP YOUR SPELLING LESSON UNTIL AFTER LUNCH.
DEAL!
I FOUND FOUR! AND A GREEN ONE!
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.
YES IT IS.
GOOD WORK. NOW, IT'S LUNCHTIME! I'LL RACE YOU TO THE HOUSE!
OKAY!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

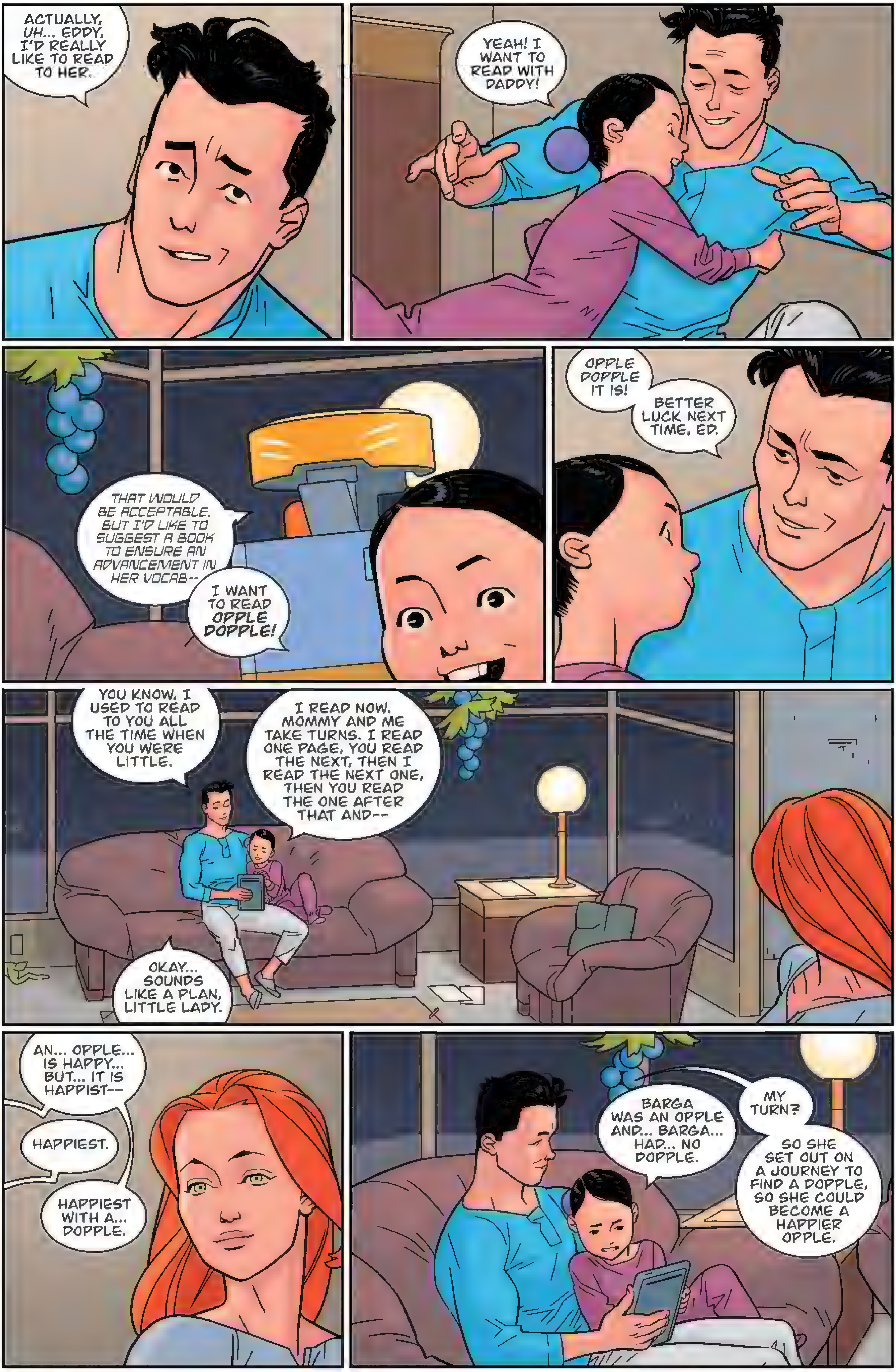

YOU HAVING FUN, TERRA?
OH, YEAH! EDDY AND ME WERE PICKING FLOWERS AND HE WAS TALKING BORING BUT HE STOPPED. DID MOM SHOW YOU THE POND YET?
THERE'S A POND DOWN THE HILL AND WE CAN CATCH LARBS THERE. HAVE YOU EATEN A LARB BEFORE? MOMMY MAKES REALLY GOOD LARBS.
DOES SHE? I CAN'T WAIT TO TRY ONE OF THOSE.
YOUR MOM'S MAKING LUNCH STILL, SO IF YOU WANT... WE CAN SEND EDDY UP TO THE HOUSE AND YOU CAN SHOW ME THIS POND YOU'RE SO EXCITED ABOUT.
IT'S PRETTY FAR.
I DON'T THINK WE'LL HAVE TIME BEFORE LUNCH.
WE WILL IF I FLY YOU THERE.
OKAY!
EEEAAGGHH!!
PUT ME DOWN! PUT ME DOWN!
PUT ME DOWN!

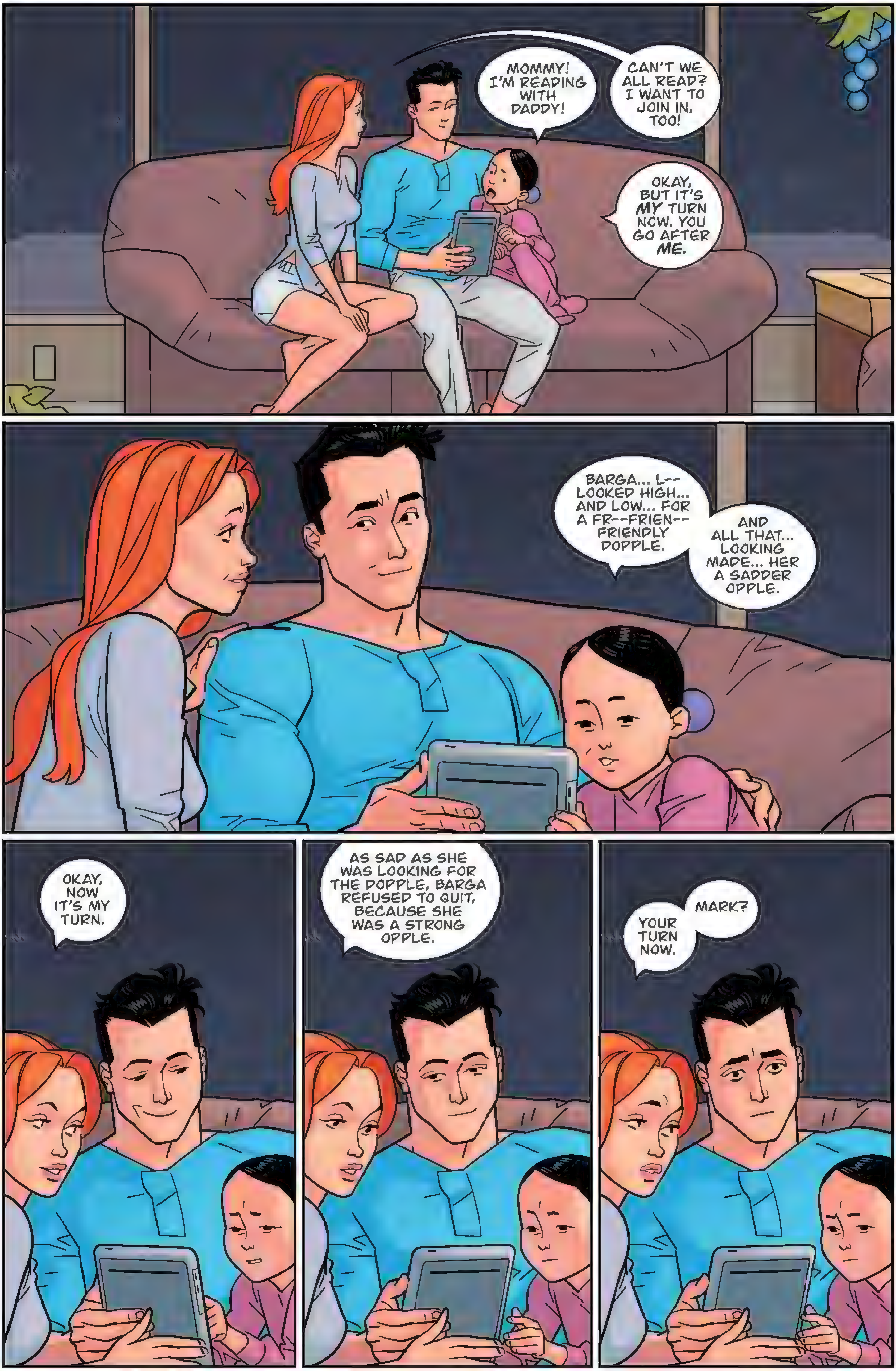

I'M SORRY!
I'M SORRY!
WE'RE ON THE GROUND NOW! YOU'RE OKAY. YOU'RE **SAFE.**
YOU'RE OKAY.
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO FLY ME SO HIGH UP!
IT'S SCARY!
OKAY. WE WON'T DO IT AGAIN.
NO MORE FLYING.
NO!
I WANT TO FLY! BUT STAY ***DOWN LOW.***
I CAN DO THAT.
NOT SO FAST!
OKAY, OKAY.
SORRY.

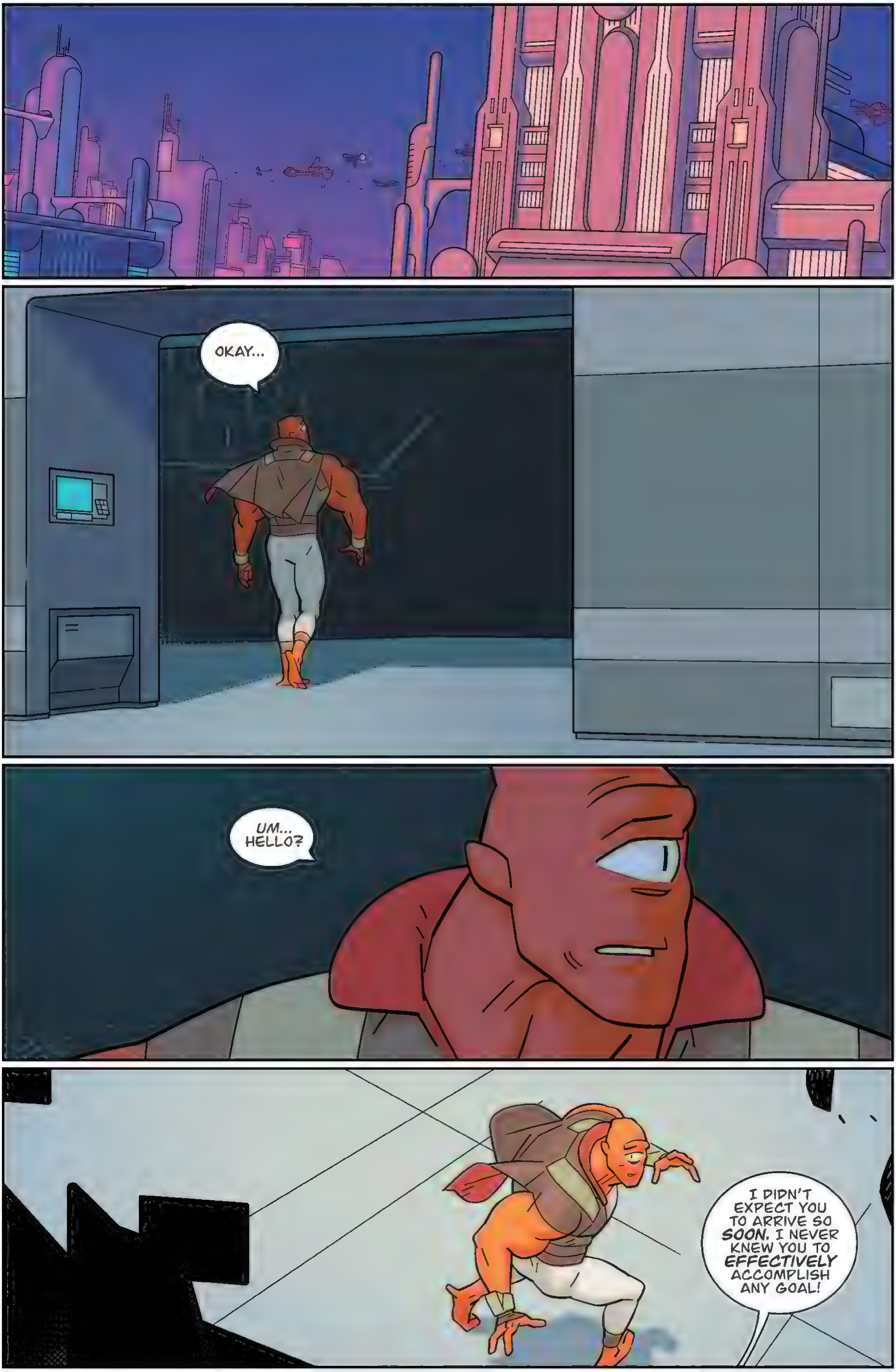

...
MORE!
ALLEN, ***MORE!***
OH MY GOD!
WHAT? DID I HURT YOU?!
HURT ME?! ***HELL NO,*** YOU JERK!
YOU'RE NOT EVEN PAYING ATTENTION!

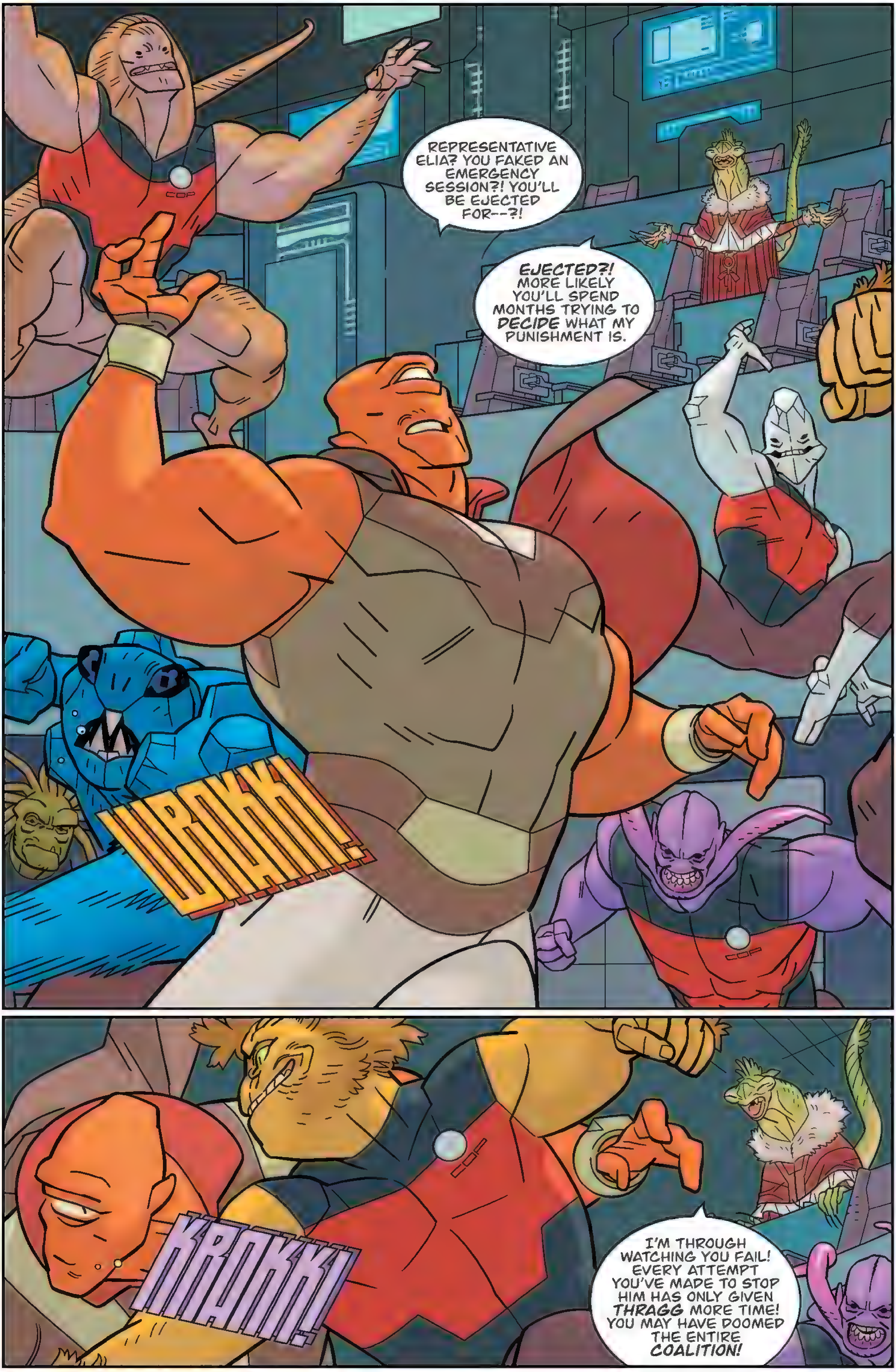

TELIA, I'M *SORRY!*
TOO LATE NOW!
I'M SORRY, BABE. I WAS *TRYING* TO FOCUS, I JUST HAVE SO MUCH GOING ON AT WORK.
I KNOW, I KNOW. EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT THRAGG AND HIS ROGUE VILTRUMITES. THE ATTACK ON KRALL IS ALL OVER THE NEWS.
THANKS FOR BEING UNDERSTANDING...
I'M NOT UNDERSTANDING CRAP! GET BACK IN BED AND GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME!
IF I CAN'T GET YOUR MIND OFF THIS NONSENSE, I'VE *REALLY* LOST MY TOUCH!
OH, THAT'S IMPOSSI--
BREET! BREET!
THEY'RE CALLING AN EMERGENCY SESSION! THERE MUST HAVE BEEN ANOTHER ATTACK!
HANDLE IT QUICKLY AND GET BACK HERE!
YOU OWE ME!

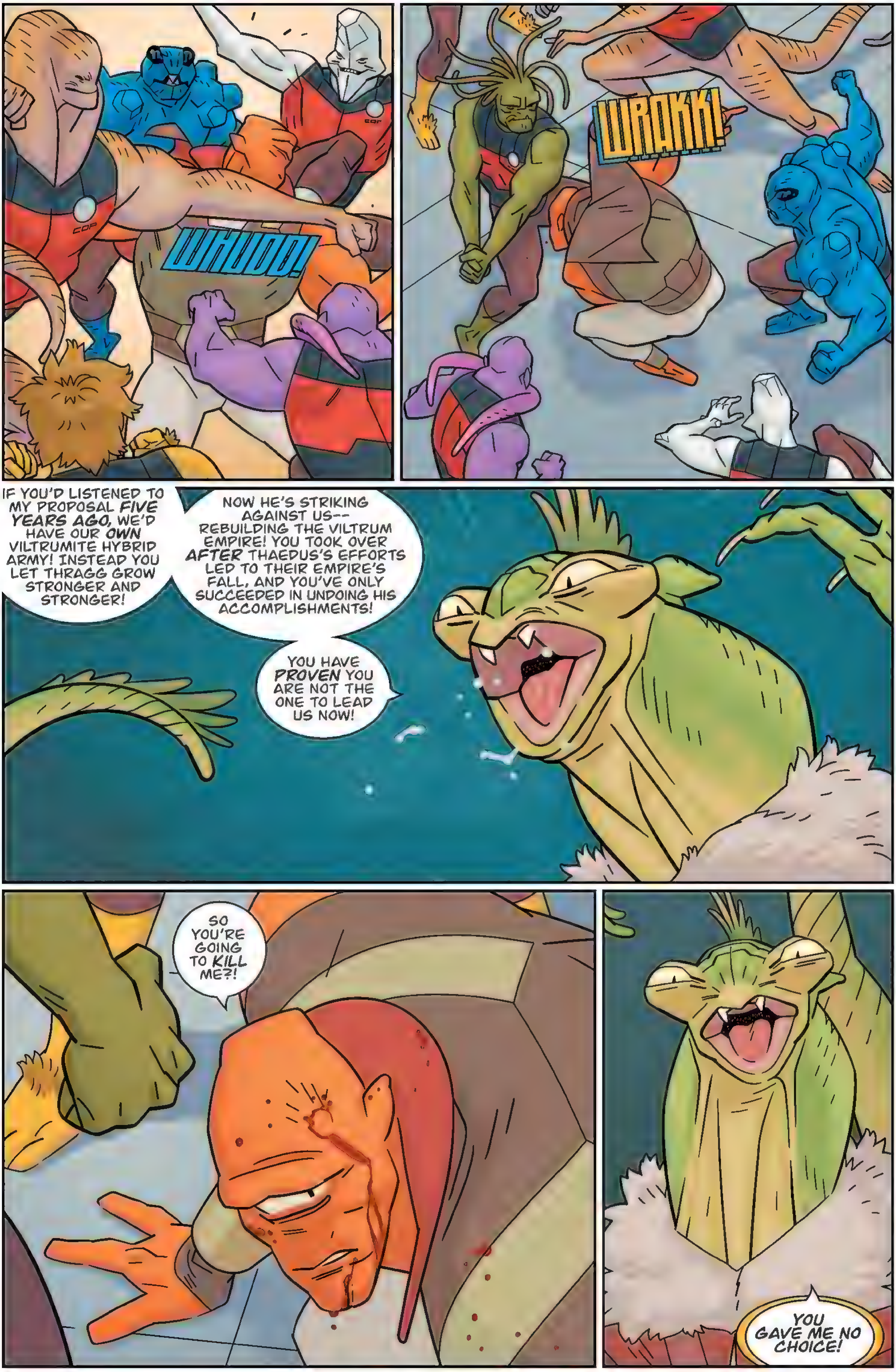

CAN I HAVE THE BLUE?
USING IT.
OKAY... GREEN, THEN.
USING IT.
RED?
YOU'RE GOING TO SAY YOU'RE USING THAT, TOO, AREN'T YOU?!
I AM!
NO MARKERS FOR YOU, DADDY!
GIMME THOSE! YOU'RE JUST A KID! THOSE ARE MY MARKERS! EVERYTHING OF YOURS REALLY BELONGS TO ME!
NUH-UH! MINE!
IT'S READING TIME NOW! LET'S READ A STORY BEFORE YOU HURT YOUR FATHER.

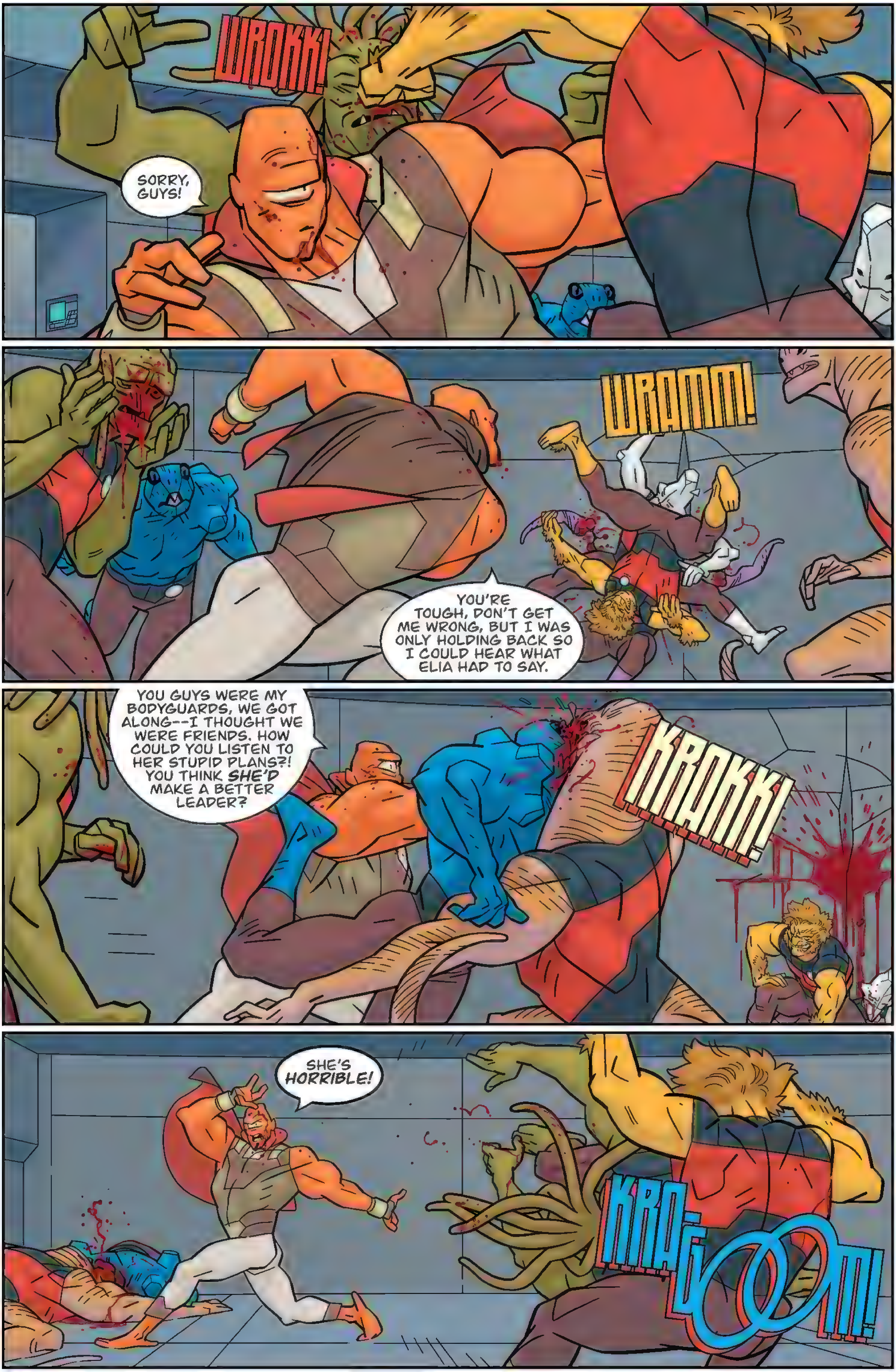

ACTUALLY, UH... EDDY, I'D REALLY LIKE TO READ TO HER.
YEAH! I WANT TO READ WITH DADDY!
THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. BUT I'D LIKE TO SUGGEST A BOOK TO ENSURE AN ADVANCEMENT IN HER VOCAB--
I WANT TO READ OPPLE DOPPLE!
OPPLE DOPPLE IT IS!
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME, ED.
YOU KNOW, I USED TO READ TO YOU ALL THE TIME WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE.
I READ NOW. MOMMY AND ME TAKE TURNS. I READ ONE PAGE, YOU READ THE NEXT, THEN I READ THE NEXT ONE, THEN YOU READ THE ONE AFTER THAT AND--
OKAY... SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN, LITTLE LADY.
AN... OPPLE... IS HAPPY... BUT... IT IS HAPPIST--
HAPPIEST.
HAPPIEST WITH A... DOPPLE.
BARGA WAS AN OPPLE AND... BARGA... HAD... NO DOPPLE.
MY TURN?
SO SHE SET OUT ON A JOURNEY TO FIND A DOPPLE, SO SHE COULD BECOME A HAPPIER OPPLE.

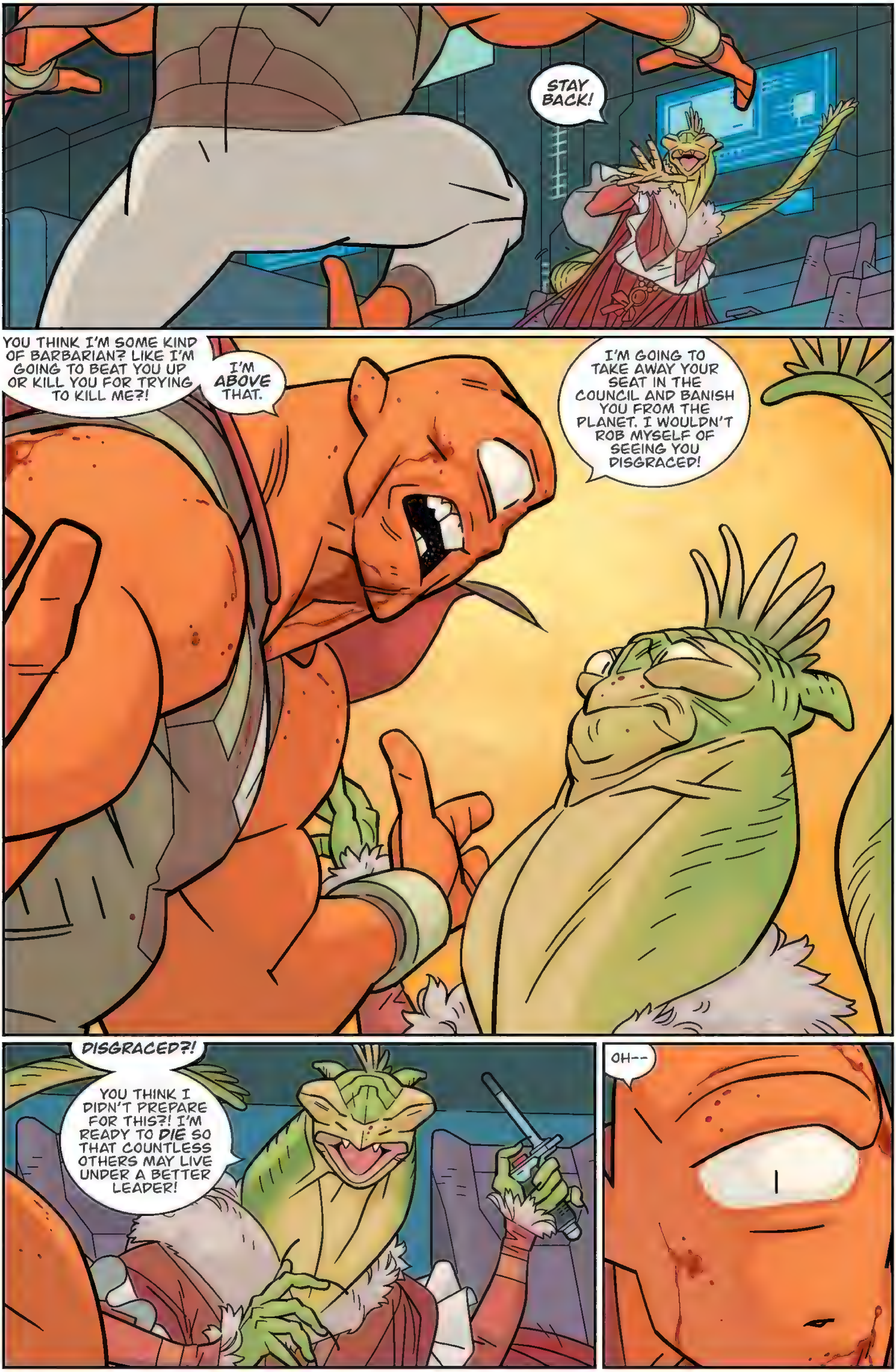

MOMMY! I'M READING WITH DADDY!
CAN'T WE ALL READ? I WANT TO JOIN IN, TOO!
OKAY, BUT IT'S *MY* TURN NOW. YOU GO AFTER *ME*.
BARGA... L--LOOKED HIGH... AND LOW... FOR A FR--FRIEN--FRIENDLY DOPPLE.
AND ALL THAT... LOOKING MADE... HER A SADDER OPPLE.
OKAY, NOW IT'S MY TURN.
AS SAD AS SHE WAS LOOKING FOR THE DOPPLE, BARGA REFUSED TO QUIT, BECAUSE SHE WAS A STRONG OPPLE.
MARK?
YOUR TURN NOW.

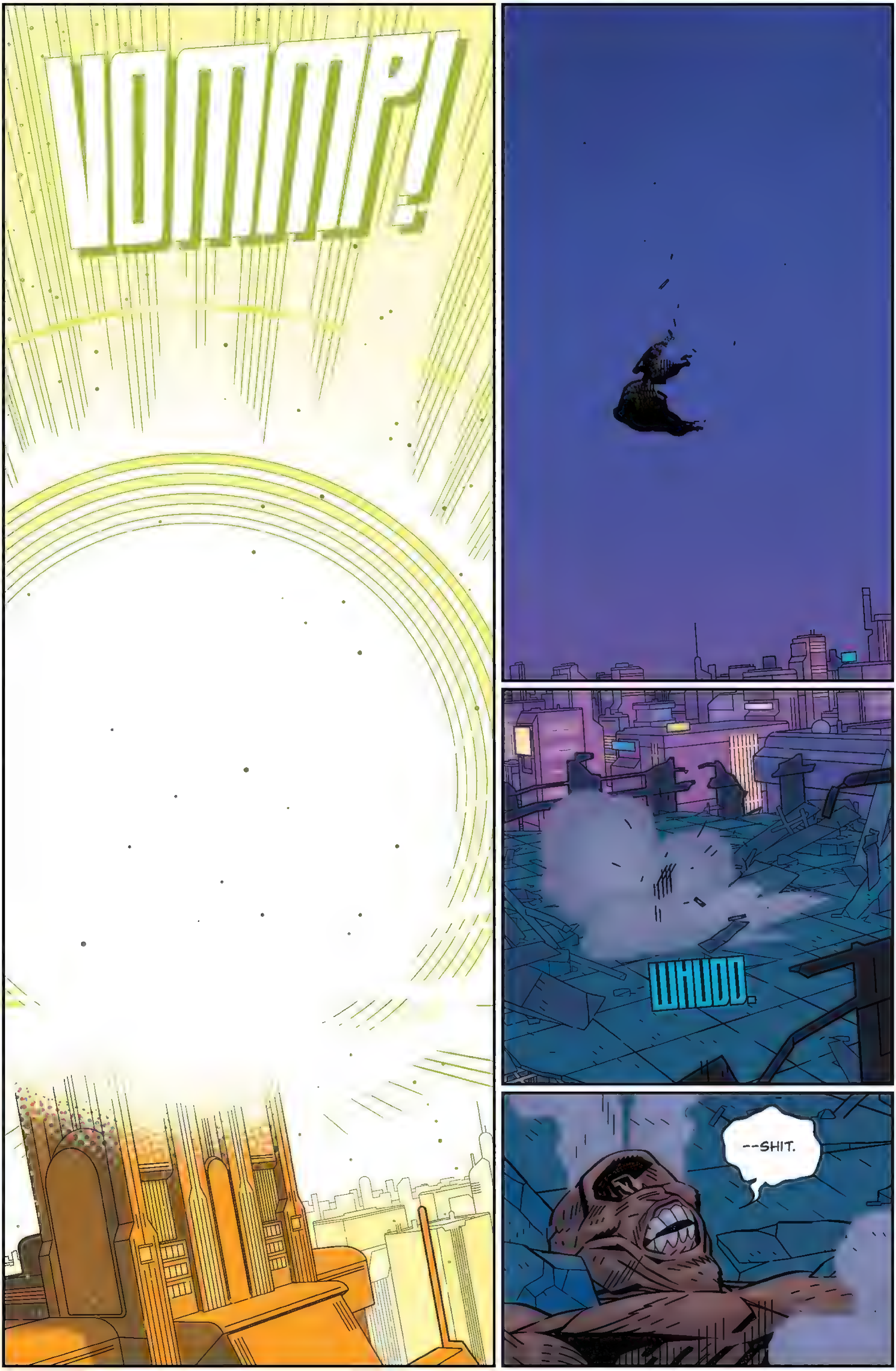

OKAY...
UM... HELLO?
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO ARRIVE SO **SOON.** I NEVER KNEW YOU TO **EFFECTIVELY** ACCOMPLISH ANY GOAL!

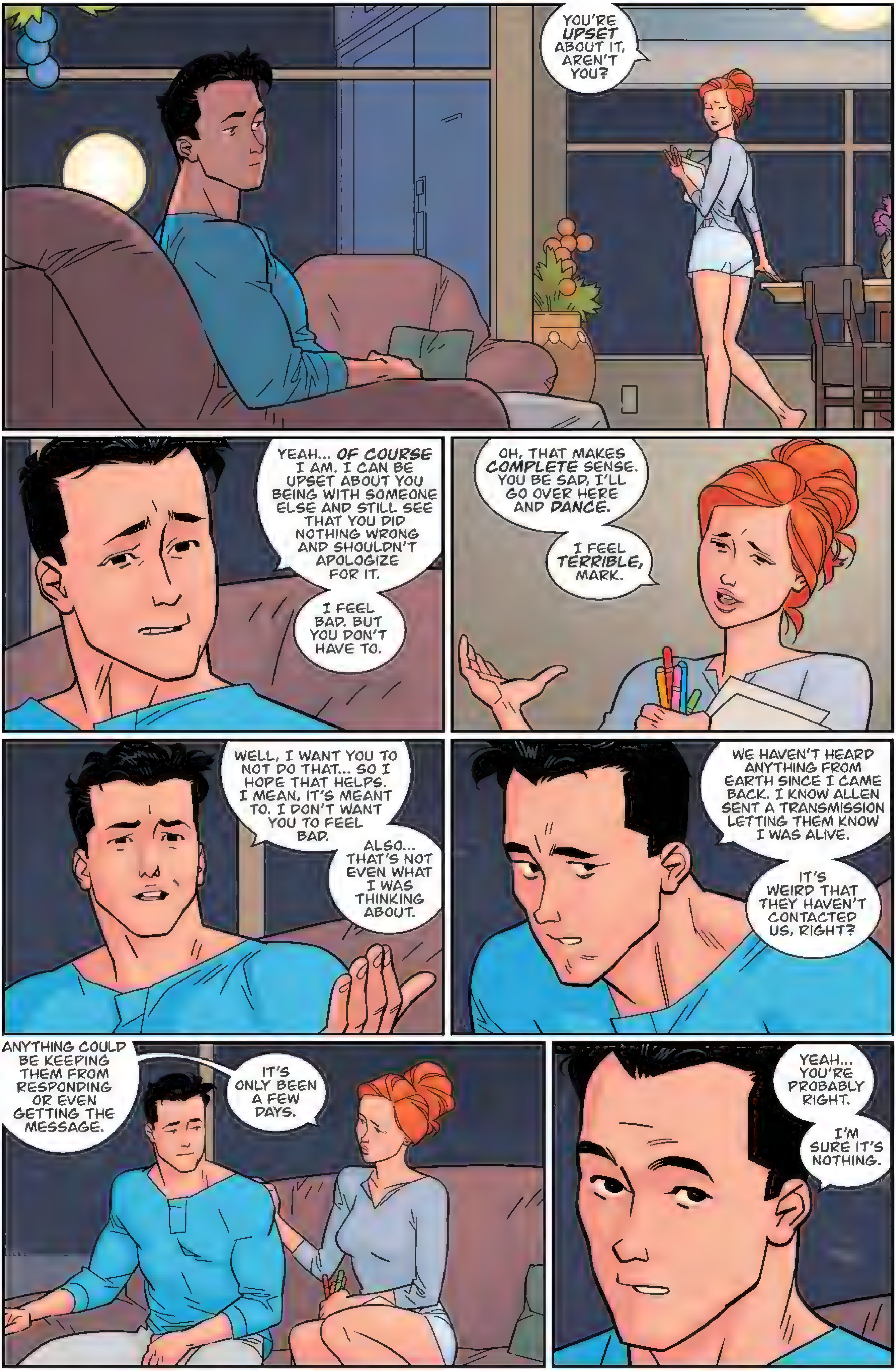

REPRESENTATIVE ELIA? YOU FAKED AN EMERGENCY SESSION?! YOU'LL BE EJECTED FOR--?!
EJECTED?! MORE LIKELY YOU'LL SPEND MONTHS TRYING TO *DECIDE* WHAT MY PUNISHMENT IS.
COP
WHAKK!
COP
COP
KRAKK!
I'M THROUGH WATCHING YOU FAIL! EVERY ATTEMPT YOU'VE MADE TO STOP HIM HAS ONLY GIVEN *THRAGG* MORE TIME! YOU MAY HAVE DOOMED THE ENTIRE *COALITION!*


WHUDD!
WRAKK!
IF YOU'D LISTENED TO MY PROPOSAL *FIVE YEARS AGO,* WE'D HAVE OUR *OWN* VILTRUMITE HYBRID ARMY! INSTEAD YOU LET THRAGG GROW STRONGER AND STRONGER!
NOW HE'S STRIKING AGAINST US-- REBUILDING THE VILTRUM EMPIRE! YOU TOOK OVER *AFTER* THAEDUS'S EFFORTS LED TO THEIR EMPIRE'S FALL, AND YOU'VE ONLY SUCCEEDED IN UNDOING HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS!
YOU HAVE *PROVEN* YOU ARE NOT THE ONE TO LEAD US NOW!
SO YOU'RE GOING TO *KILL* ME?!
YOU GAVE ME NO CHOICE!

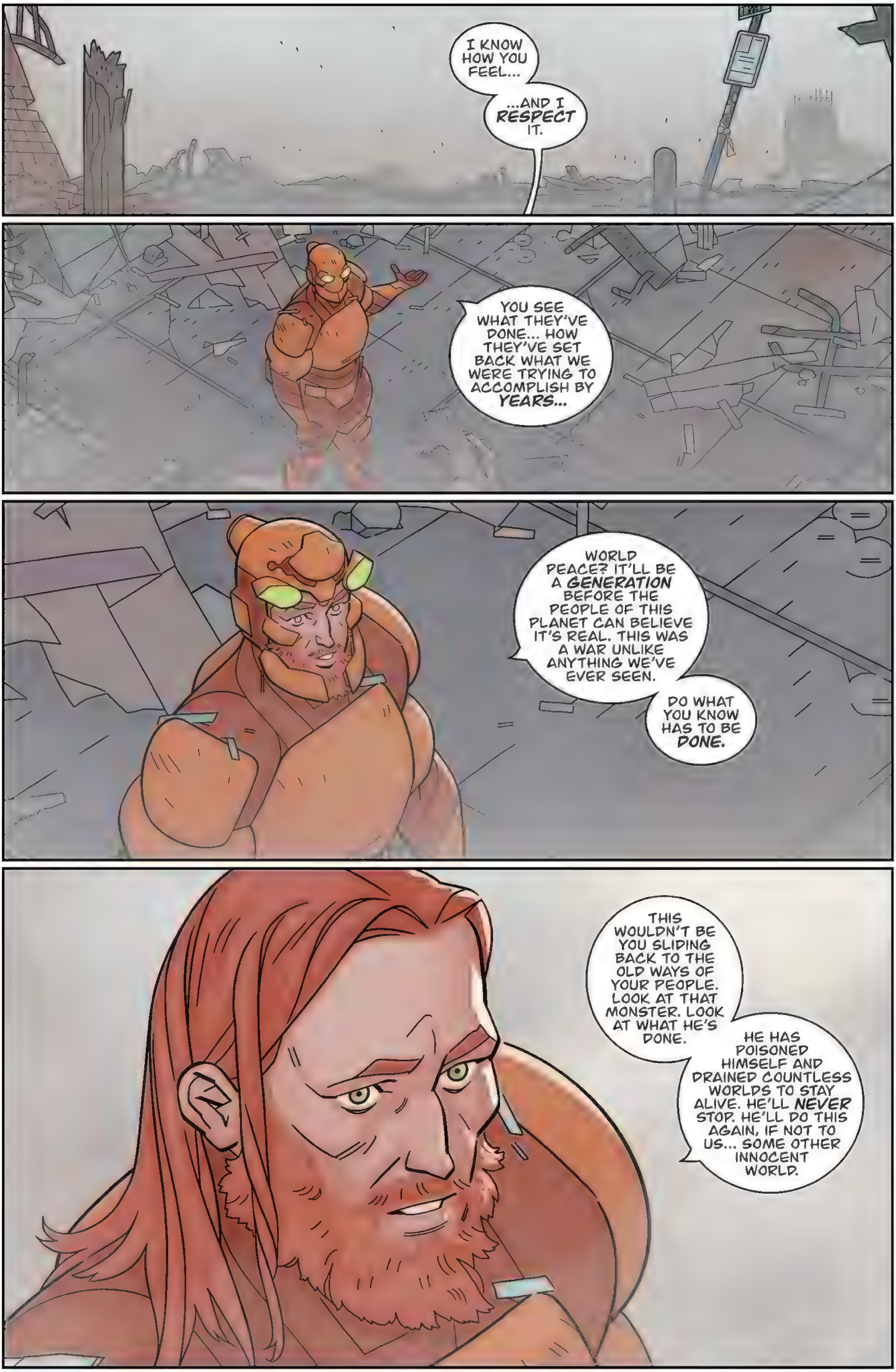

WROKK!
SORRY, GUYS!
WRAMM!
YOU'RE TOUGH, DON'T GET ME WRONG, BUT I WAS ONLY HOLDING BACK SO I COULD HEAR WHAT ELIA HAD TO SAY.
YOU GUYS WERE MY BODYGUARDS, WE GOT ALONG--I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS. HOW COULD YOU LISTEN TO HER STUPID PLANS?! YOU THINK *SHE'D* MAKE A BETTER LEADER?
KRAKK!
SHE'S *HORRIBLE!*
KRAKOOOM!


STAY BACK!
YOU THINK I'M SOME KIND OF BARBARIAN? LIKE I'M GOING TO BEAT YOU UP OR KILL YOU FOR TRYING TO KILL ME?!
I'M ***ABOVE*** THAT.
I'M GOING TO TAKE AWAY YOUR SEAT IN THE COUNCIL AND BANISH YOU FROM THE PLANET. I WOULDN'T ROB MYSELF OF SEEING YOU DISGRACED!
DISGRACED?!
YOU THINK I DIDN'T PREPARE FOR THIS?! I'M READY TO ***DIE*** SO THAT COUNTLESS OTHERS MAY LIVE UNDER A BETTER LEADER!
OH--

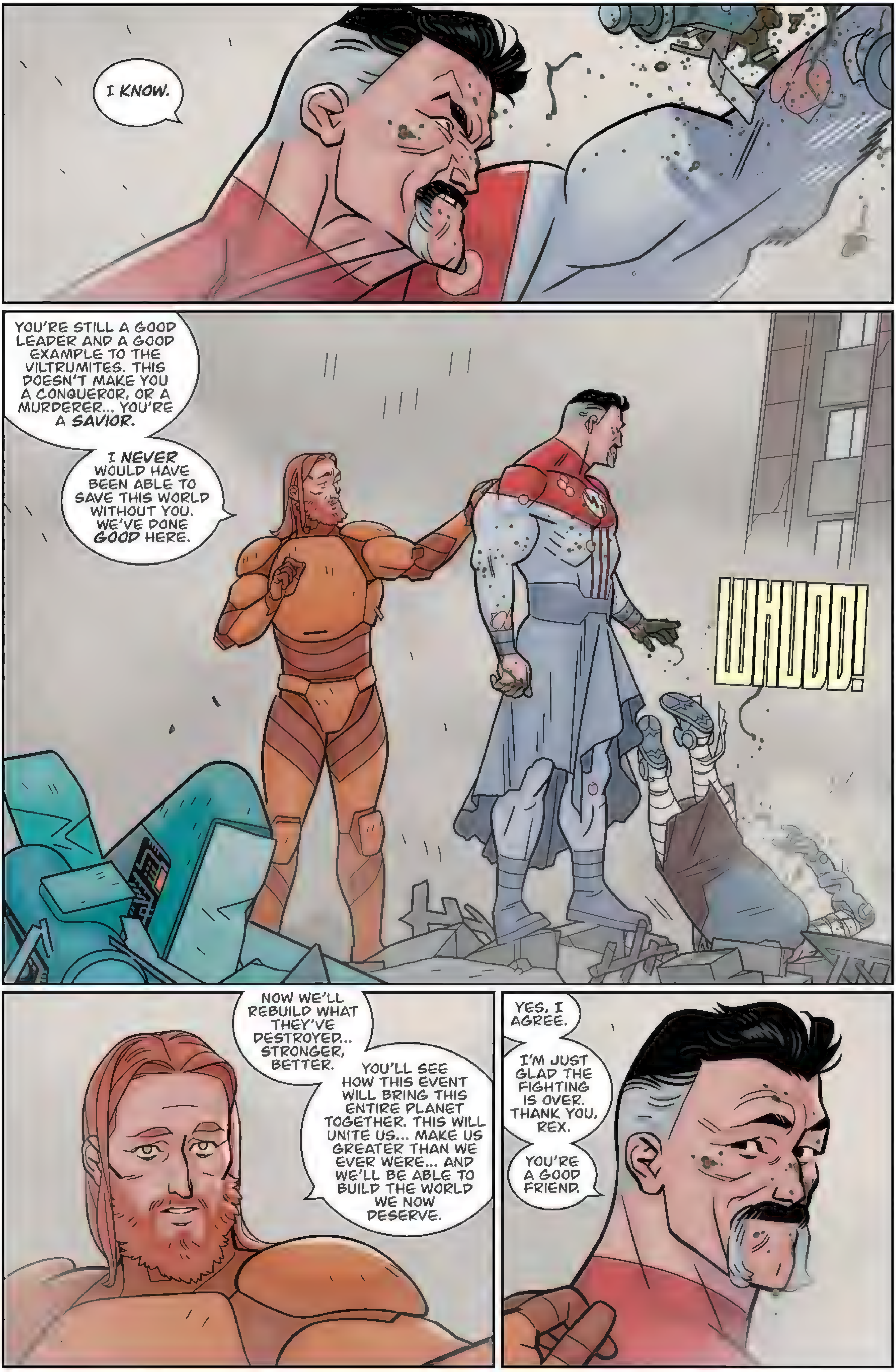

VOMMP!
WHUDD.
--SHIT.

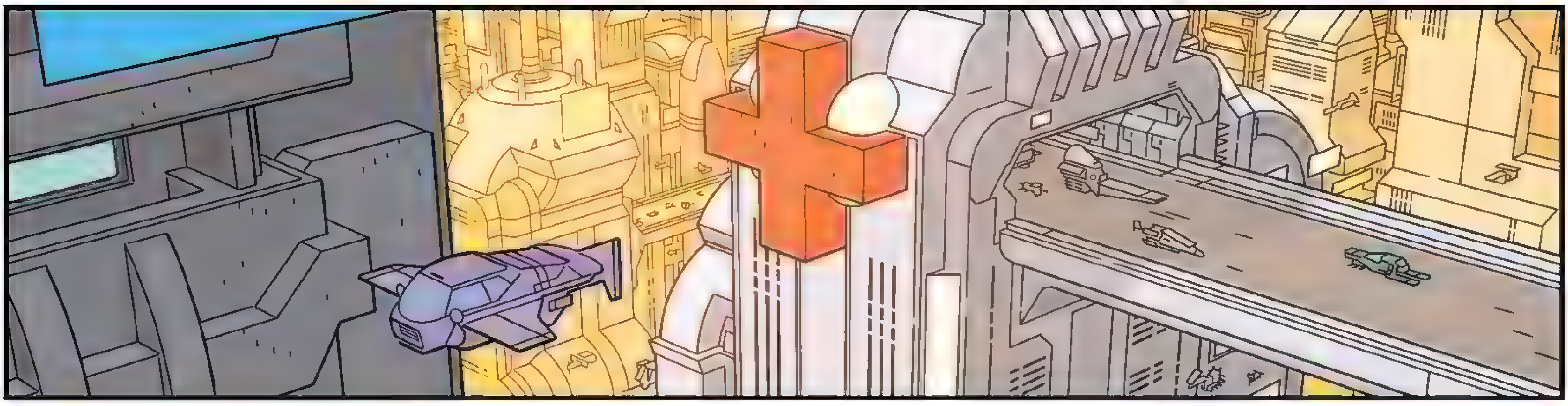

YOU'RE *UPSET* ABOUT IT, AREN'T YOU?
YEAH... *OF COURSE* I AM. I CAN BE UPSET ABOUT YOU BEING WITH SOMEONE ELSE AND STILL SEE THAT YOU DID NOTHING WRONG AND SHOULDN'T APOLOGIZE FOR IT.
I FEEL BAD. BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO.
OH, THAT MAKES *COMPLETE* SENSE. YOU BE SAD, I'LL GO OVER HERE AND *DANCE.*
I FEEL *TERRIBLE,* MARK.
WELL, I WANT YOU TO NOT DO THAT... SO I HOPE THAT HELPS. I MEAN, IT'S MEANT TO. I DON'T WANT YOU TO FEEL BAD.
ALSO... THAT'S NOT EVEN WHAT I WAS THINKING ABOUT.
WE HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING FROM EARTH SINCE I CAME BACK. I KNOW ALLEN SENT A TRANSMISSION LETTING THEM KNOW I WAS ALIVE.
IT'S WEIRD THAT THEY HAVEN'T CONTACTED US, RIGHT?
ANYTHING COULD BE KEEPING THEM FROM RESPONDING OR EVEN GETTING THE MESSAGE.
IT'S ONLY BEEN A FEW DAYS.
YEAH... YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.
I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING.

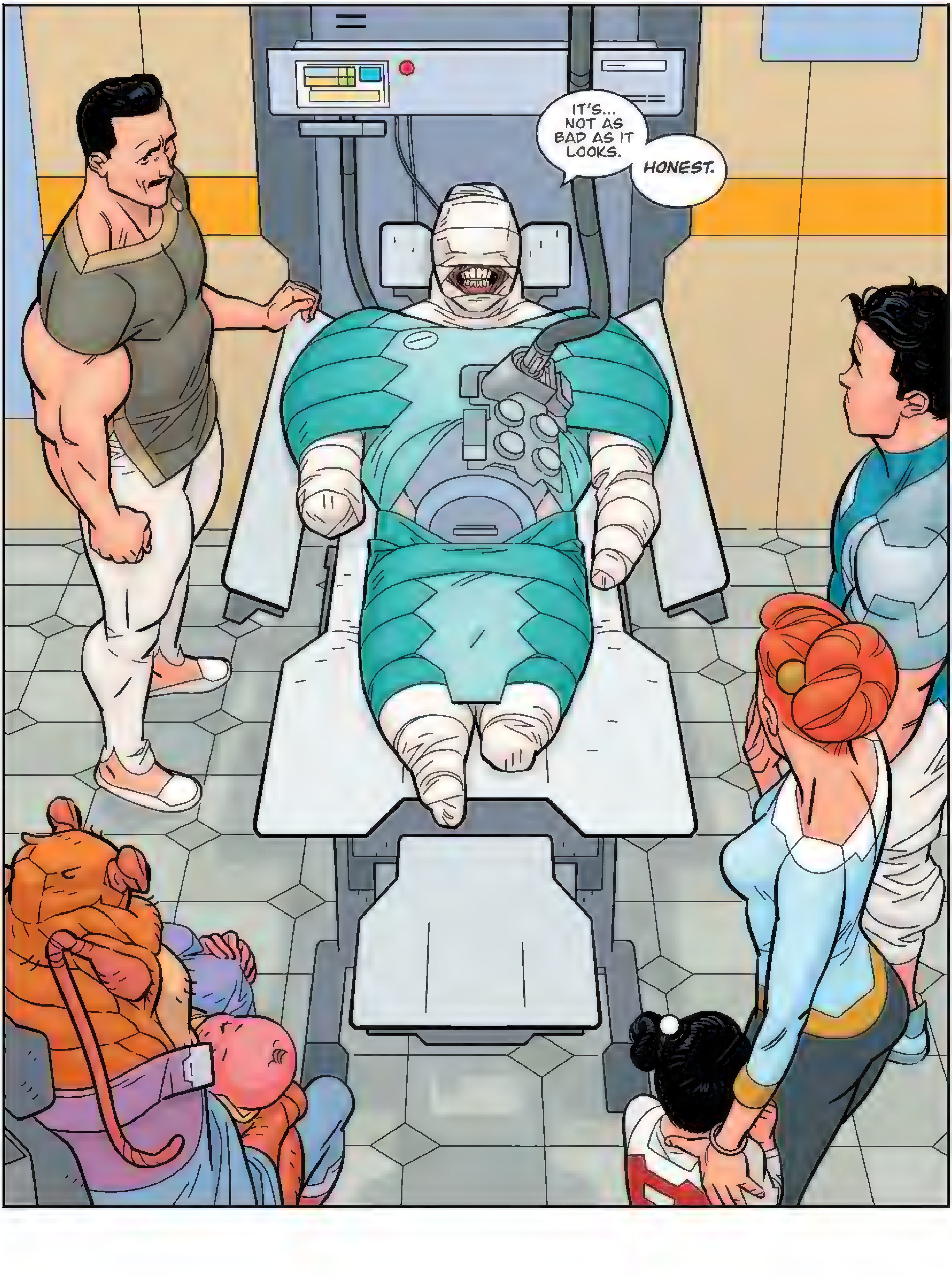
CHAPTER 129

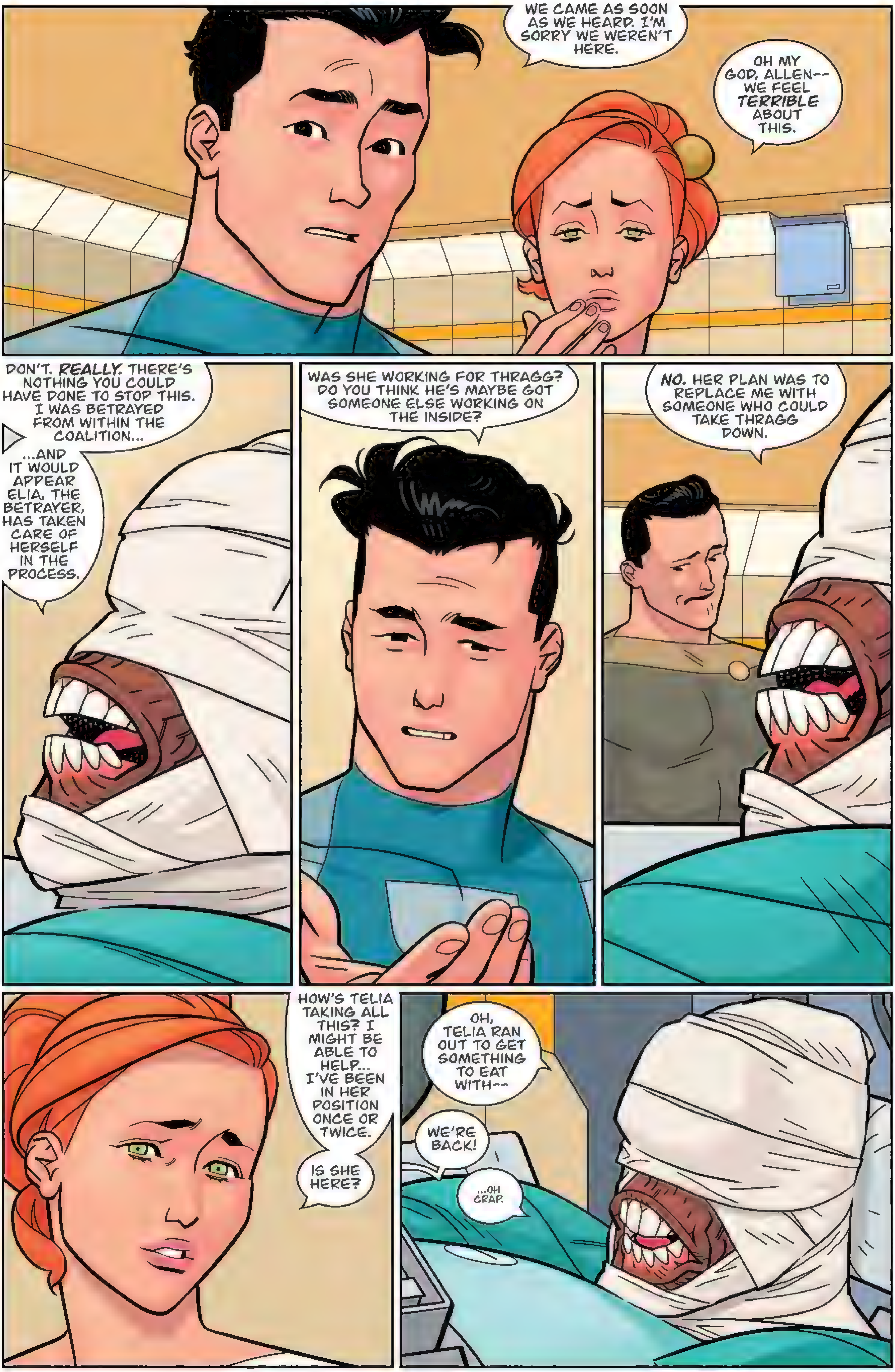

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL...
...AND I *RESPECT* IT.
YOU SEE WHAT THEY'VE DONE... HOW THEY'VE SET BACK WHAT WE WERE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH BY *YEARS...*
WORLD PEACE? IT'LL BE A *GENERATION* BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET CAN BELIEVE IT'S REAL. THIS WAS A WAR UNLIKE ANYTHING WE'VE EVER SEEN.
DO WHAT YOU KNOW HAS TO BE *DONE.*
THIS WOULDN'T BE YOU SLIDING BACK TO THE OLD WAYS OF YOUR PEOPLE. LOOK AT THAT MONSTER. LOOK AT WHAT HE'S DONE.
HE HAS POISONED HIMSELF AND DRAINED COUNTLESS WORLDS TO STAY ALIVE. HE'LL *NEVER* STOP. HE'LL DO THIS AGAIN, IF NOT TO US... SOME OTHER INNOCENT WORLD.

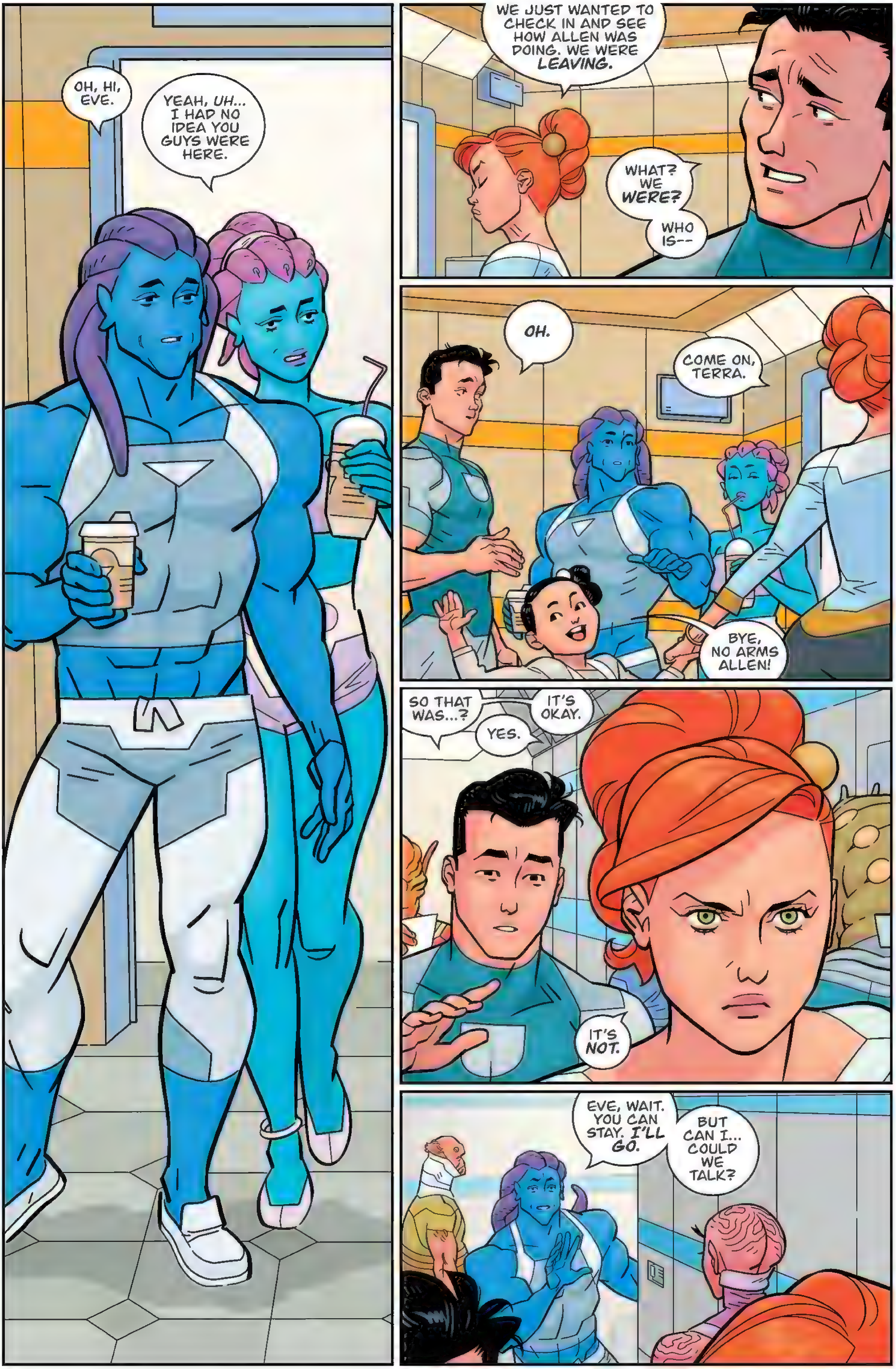
YOU HAVE TO KILL HIM.

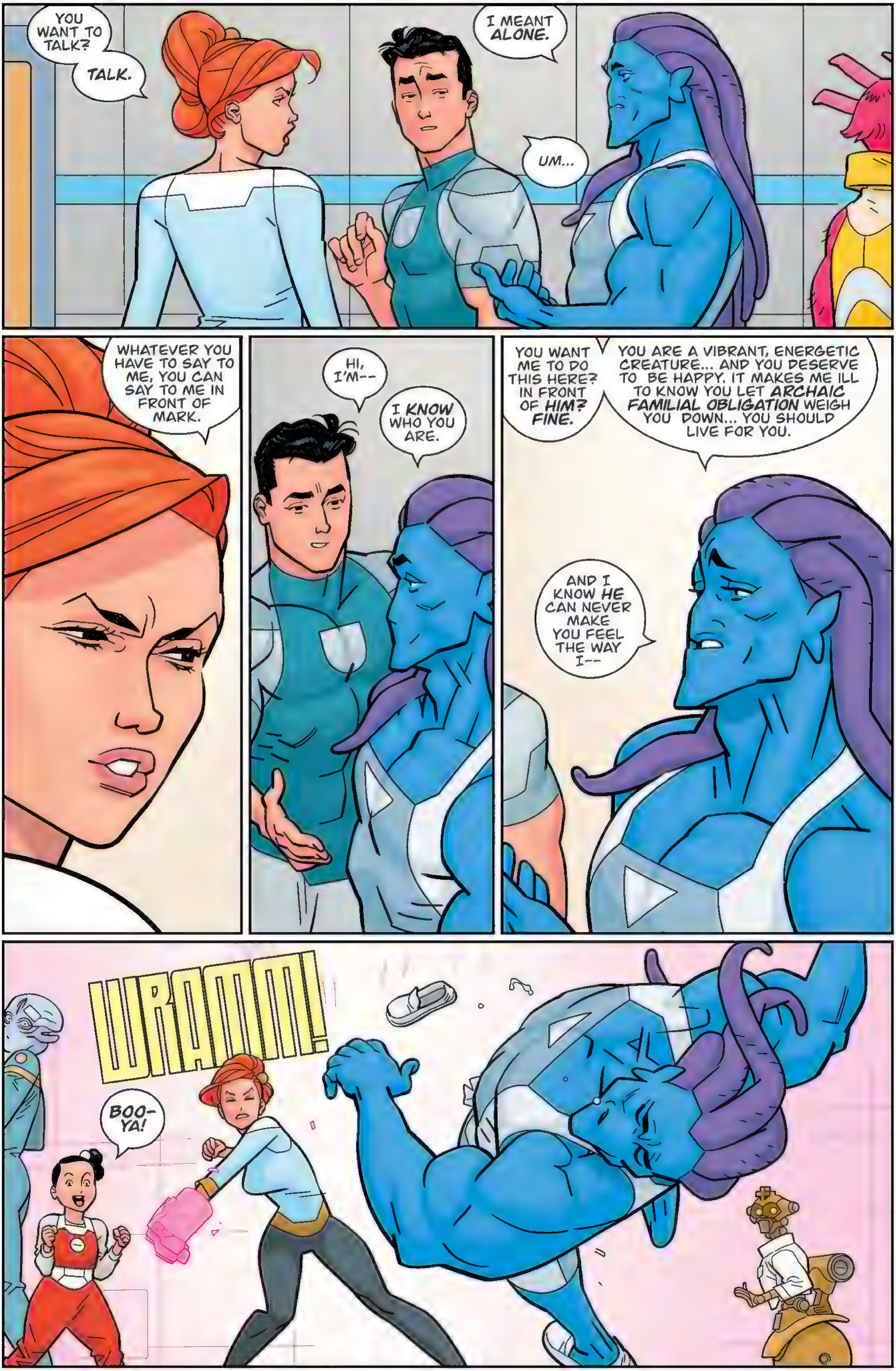

I KNOW.
YOU'RE STILL A GOOD LEADER AND A GOOD EXAMPLE TO THE VILTRUMITES. THIS DOESN'T MAKE YOU A CONQUEROR, OR A MURDERER... YOU'RE A *SAVIOR.*
I *NEVER* WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE THIS WORLD WITHOUT YOU. WE'VE DONE *GOOD* HERE.
WHUDD!
NOW WE'LL REBUILD WHAT THEY'VE DESTROYED... STRONGER, BETTER.
YOU'LL SEE HOW THIS EVENT WILL BRING THIS ENTIRE PLANET TOGETHER. THIS WILL UNITE US... MAKE US GREATER THAN WE EVER WERE... AND WE'LL BE ABLE TO BUILD THE WORLD WE NOW DESERVE.
YES, I AGREE.
I'M JUST GLAD THE FIGHTING IS OVER. THANK YOU, REX.
YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND.

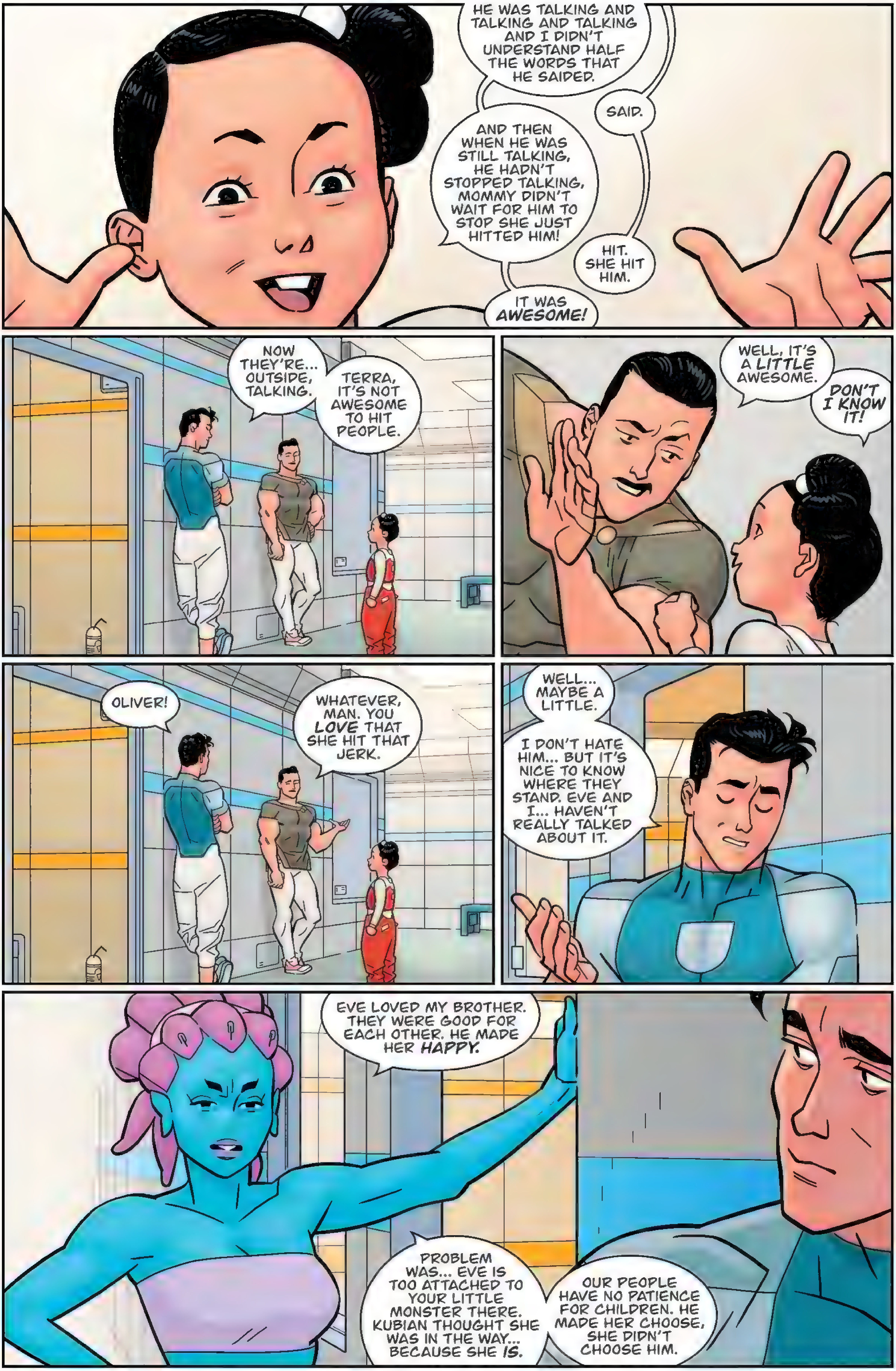


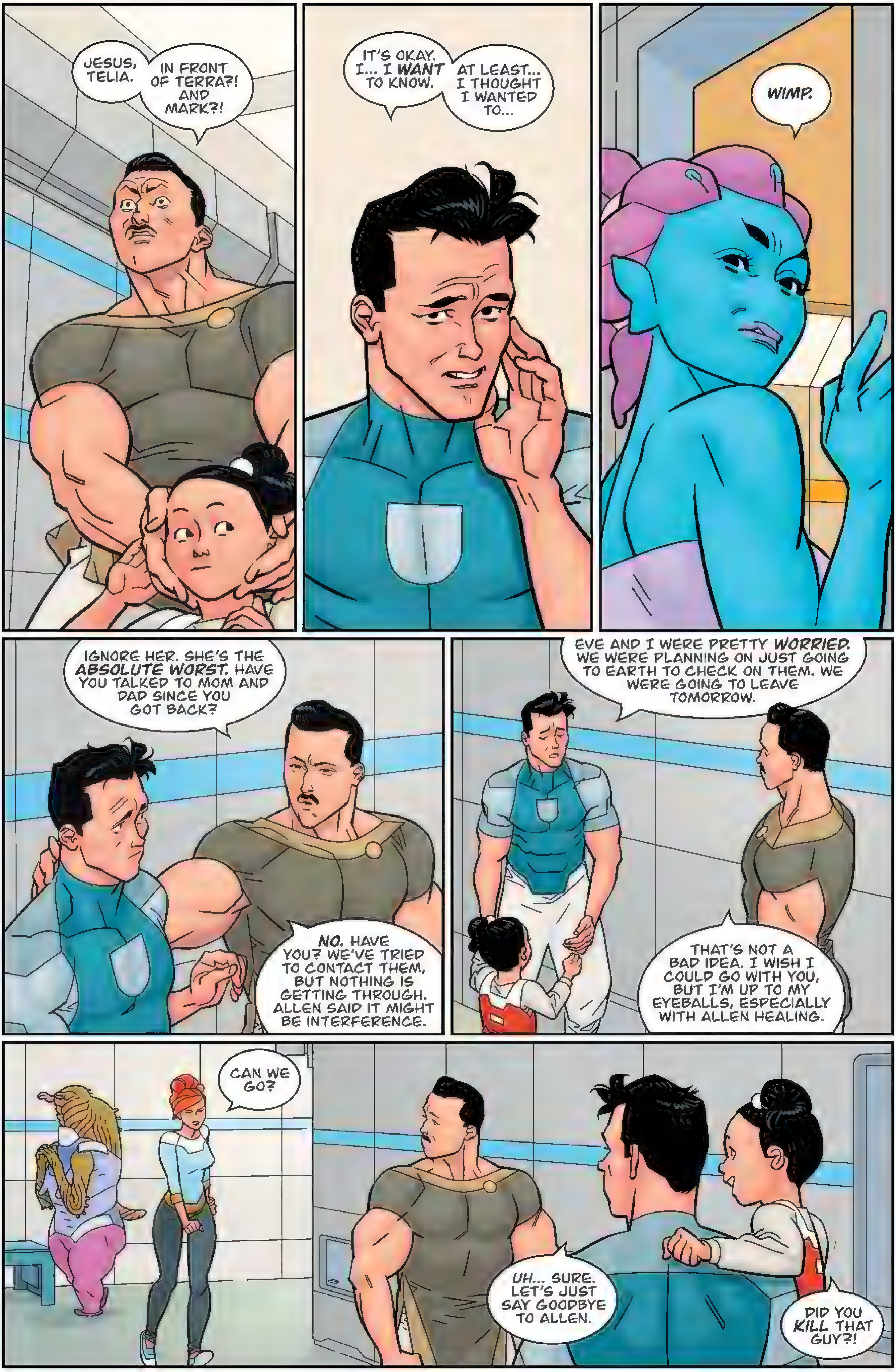

IT'S... NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS.
HONEST.

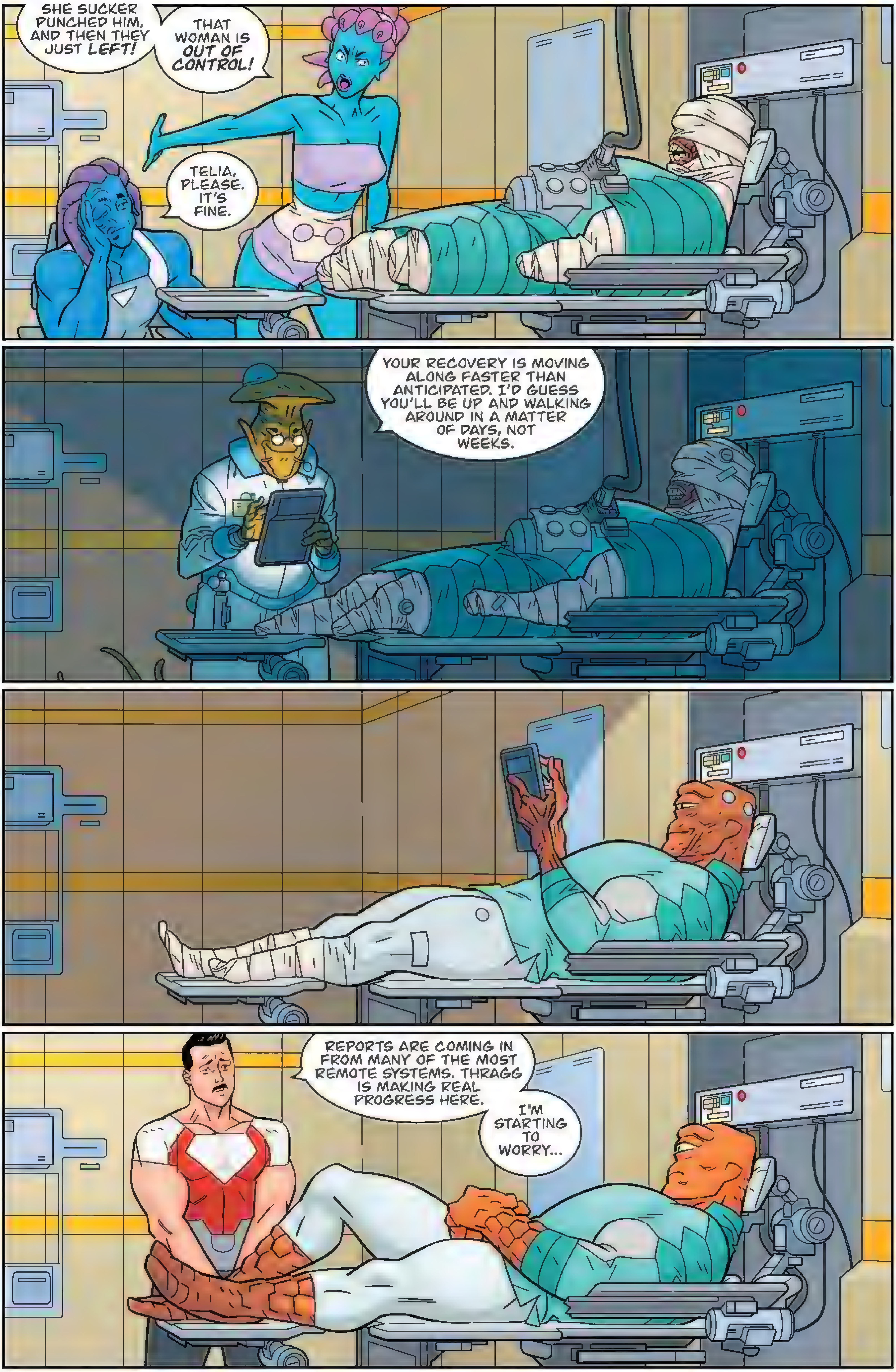

WE CAME AS SOON AS WE HEARD. I'M SORRY WE WEREN'T HERE.
OH MY GOD, ALLEN-- WE FEEL *TERRIBLE* ABOUT THIS.
DON'T. *REALLY.* THERE'S NOTHING YOU COULD HAVE DONE TO STOP THIS. I WAS BETRAYED FROM WITHIN THE COALITION...
...AND IT WOULD APPEAR ELIA, THE BETRAYER, HAS TAKEN CARE OF HERSELF IN THE PROCESS.
WAS SHE WORKING FOR THRAGG? DO YOU THINK HE'S MAYBE GOT SOMEONE ELSE WORKING ON THE INSIDE?
NO. HER PLAN WAS TO REPLACE ME WITH SOMEONE WHO COULD TAKE THRAGG DOWN.
HOW'S TELIA TAKING ALL THIS? I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP... I'VE BEEN IN HER POSITION ONCE OR TWICE.
IS SHE HERE?
OH, TELIA RAN OUT TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT WITH--
WE'RE BACK!
...OH CRAP.


OH, HI, EVE.
YEAH, UH... I HAD NO IDEA YOU GUYS WERE HERE.
WE JUST WANTED TO CHECK IN AND SEE HOW ALLEN WAS DOING. WE WERE *LEAVING.*
WHAT? WE *WERE?*
WHO IS--
OH.
COME ON, TERRA.
BYE, NO ARMS ALLEN!
SO THAT WAS...?
YES.
IT'S OKAY.
IT'S *NOT.*
EVE, WAIT. YOU CAN STAY. *I'LL GO.*
BUT CAN I... COULD WE TALK?

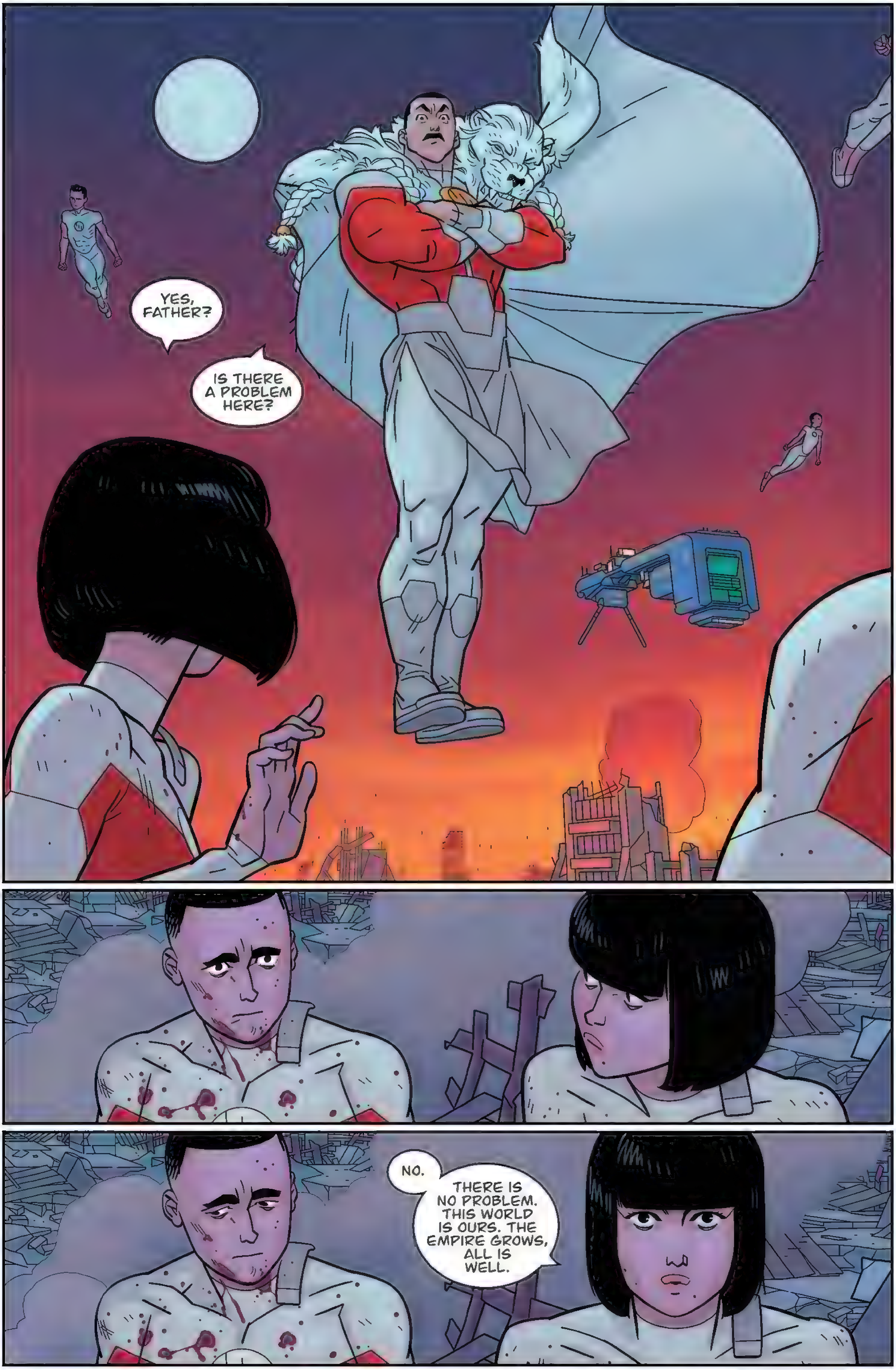

YOU WANT TO TALK?
TALK.
I MEANT *ALONE.*
UM...
WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO SAY TO ME, YOU CAN SAY TO ME IN FRONT OF MARK.
HI, I'M--
I *KNOW* WHO YOU ARE.
YOU WANT ME TO DO THIS HERE? IN FRONT OF *HIM? FINE.*
YOU ARE A VIBRANT, ENERGETIC CREATURE... AND YOU DESERVE TO BE HAPPY. IT MAKES ME ILL TO KNOW YOU LET *ARCHAIC FAMILIAL OBLIGATION* WEIGH YOU DOWN... YOU SHOULD LIVE FOR YOU.
AND I KNOW *HE* CAN NEVER MAKE YOU FEEL THE WAY I--
WRAMM!
BOO-YA!

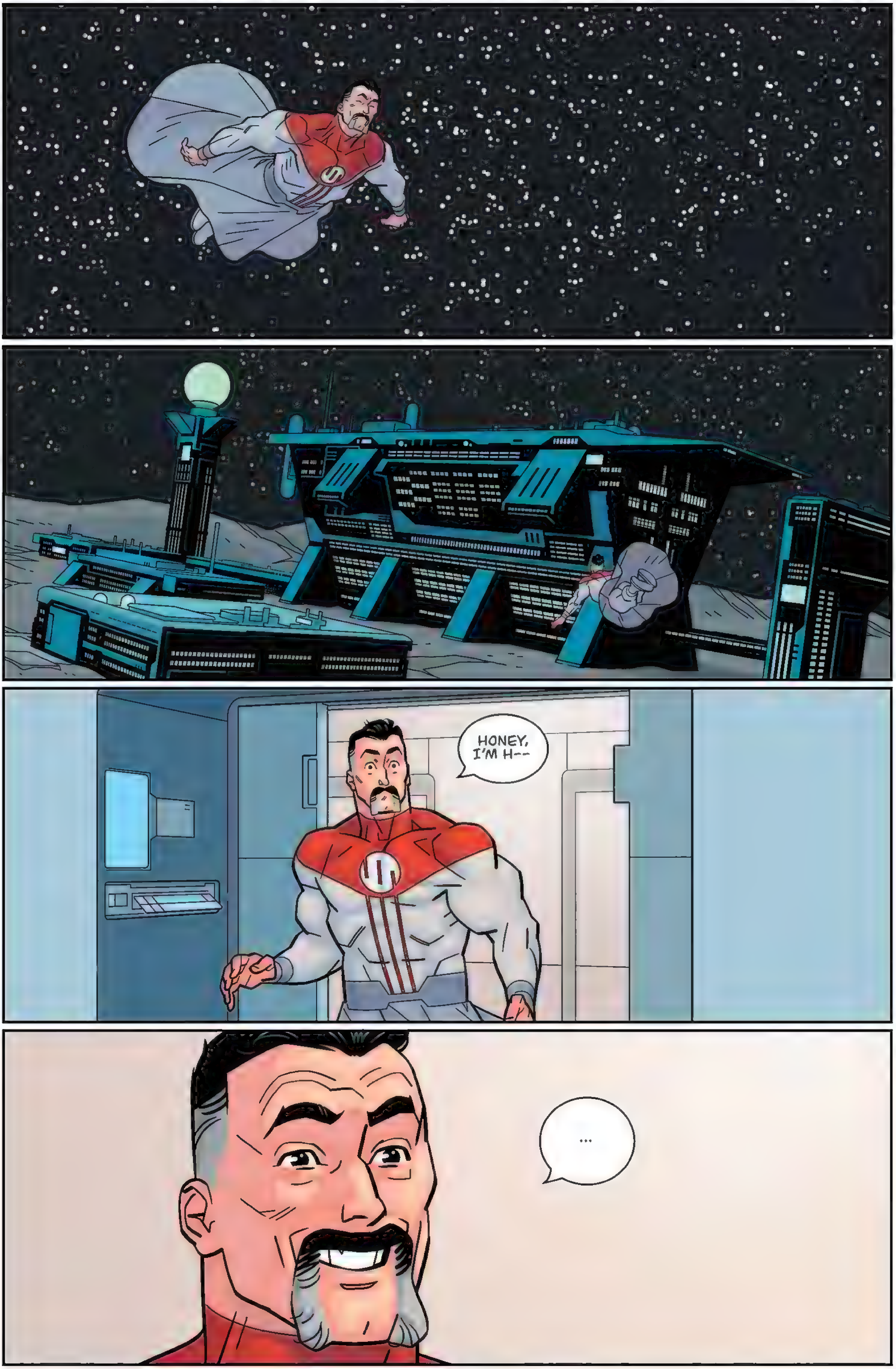

HE WAS TALKING AND TALKING AND TALKING AND I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HALF THE WORDS THAT HE SAIDED.
SAID.
AND THEN WHEN HE WAS STILL TALKING, HE HADN'T STOPPED TALKING, MOMMY DIDN'T WAIT FOR HIM TO STOP SHE JUST HITTED HIM!
HIT. SHE HIT HIM.
IT WAS *AWESOME!*
NOW THEY'RE... OUTSIDE, TALKING.
TERRA, IT'S NOT AWESOME TO HIT PEOPLE.
WELL, IT'S A *LITTLE* AWESOME.
DON'T I KNOW IT!
OLIVER!
WHATEVER, MAN. YOU *LOVE* THAT SHE HIT THAT JERK.
WELL... MAYBE A LITTLE.
I DON'T HATE HIM... BUT IT'S NICE TO KNOW WHERE THEY STAND. EVE AND I... HAVEN'T REALLY TALKED ABOUT IT.
EVE LOVED MY BROTHER. THEY WERE GOOD FOR EACH OTHER. HE MADE HER *HAPPY.*
PROBLEM WAS... EVE IS TOO ATTACHED TO YOUR LITTLE MONSTER THERE. KUBIAN THOUGHT SHE WAS IN THE WAY... BECAUSE SHE *IS.*
OUR PEOPLE HAVE NO PATIENCE FOR CHILDREN. HE MADE HER CHOOSE. SHE DIDN'T CHOOSE HIM.

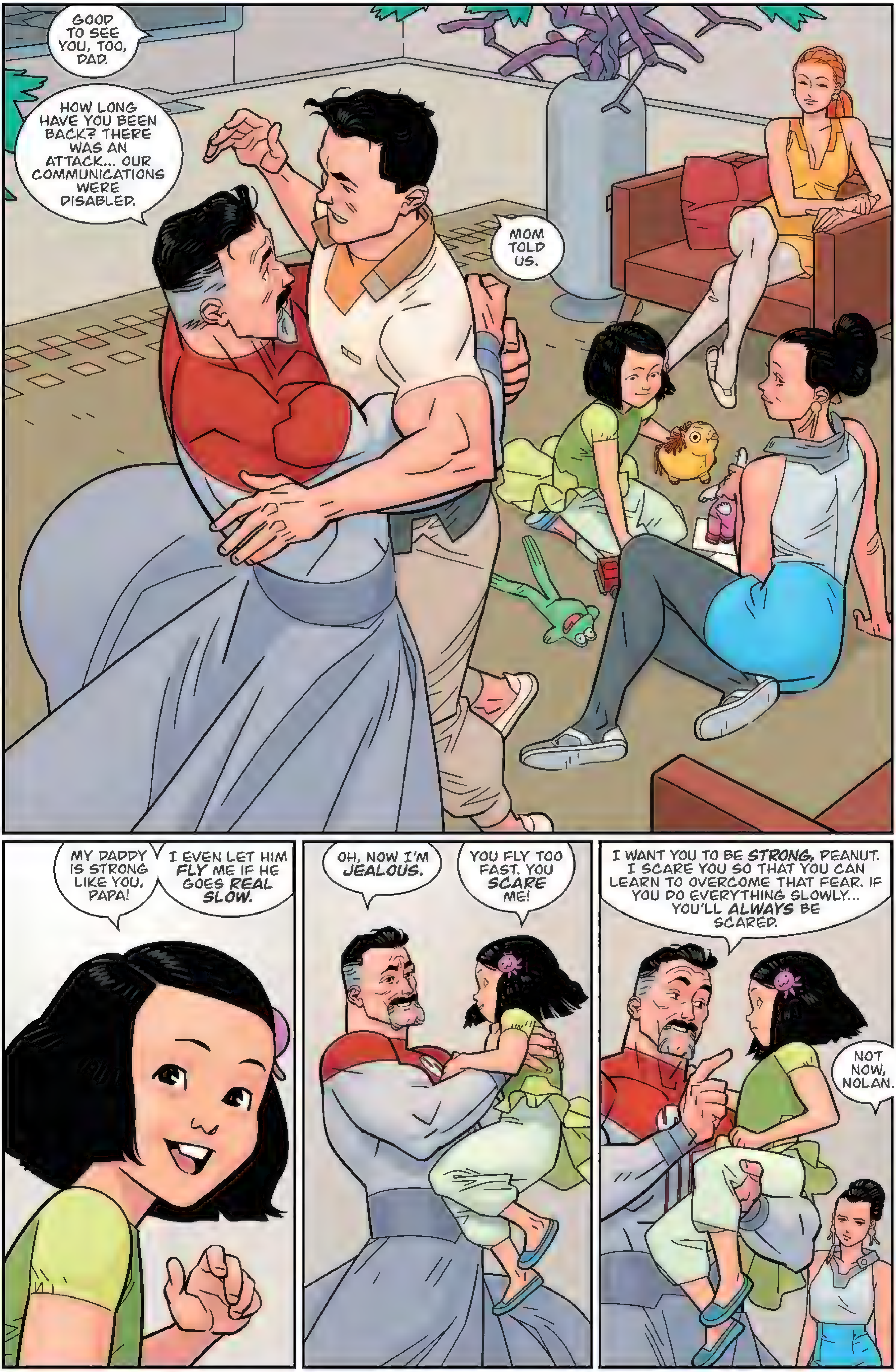

JESUS, TELIA.
IN FRONT OF TERRA?! AND MARK?!
IT'S OKAY. I... I *WANT* TO KNOW.
AT LEAST... I THOUGHT I WANTED TO...
WIMP.
IGNORE HER. SHE'S THE *ABSOLUTE WORST.* HAVE YOU TALKED TO MOM AND DAD SINCE YOU GOT BACK?
NO. HAVE YOU? WE'VE TRIED TO CONTACT THEM, BUT NOTHING IS GETTING THROUGH. ALLEN SAID IT MIGHT BE INTERFERENCE.
EVE AND I WERE PRETTY *WORRIED.* WE WERE PLANNING ON JUST GOING TO EARTH TO CHECK ON THEM. WE WERE GOING TO LEAVE TOMORROW.
THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA. I WISH I COULD GO WITH YOU, BUT I'M UP TO MY EYEBALLS, ESPECIALLY WITH ALLEN HEALING.
CAN WE GO?
UH... SURE. LET'S JUST SAY GOODBYE TO ALLEN.
DID YOU *KILL* THAT GUY?!

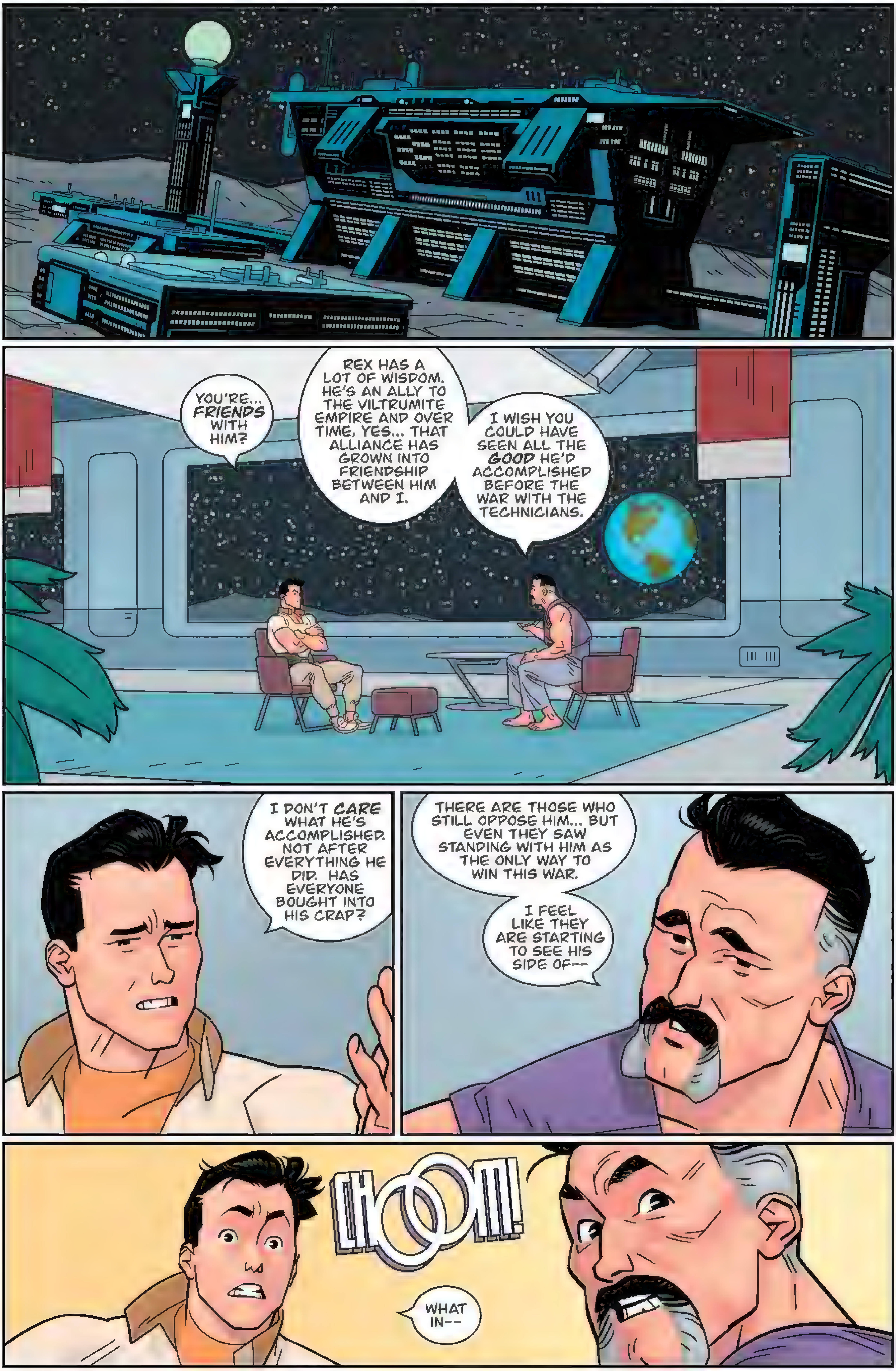

SHE SUCKER PUNCHED HIM, AND THEN THEY JUST *LEFT!*
THAT WOMAN IS *OUT OF CONTROL!*
TELIA, PLEASE. IT'S FINE.
YOUR RECOVERY IS MOVING ALONG FASTER THAN ANTICIPATED. I'D GUESS YOU'LL BE UP AND WALKING AROUND IN A MATTER OF DAYS, NOT WEEKS.
REPORTS ARE COMING IN FROM MANY OF THE MOST REMOTE SYSTEMS. THRAGG IS MAKING REAL PROGRESS HERE.
I'M STARTING TO WORRY...

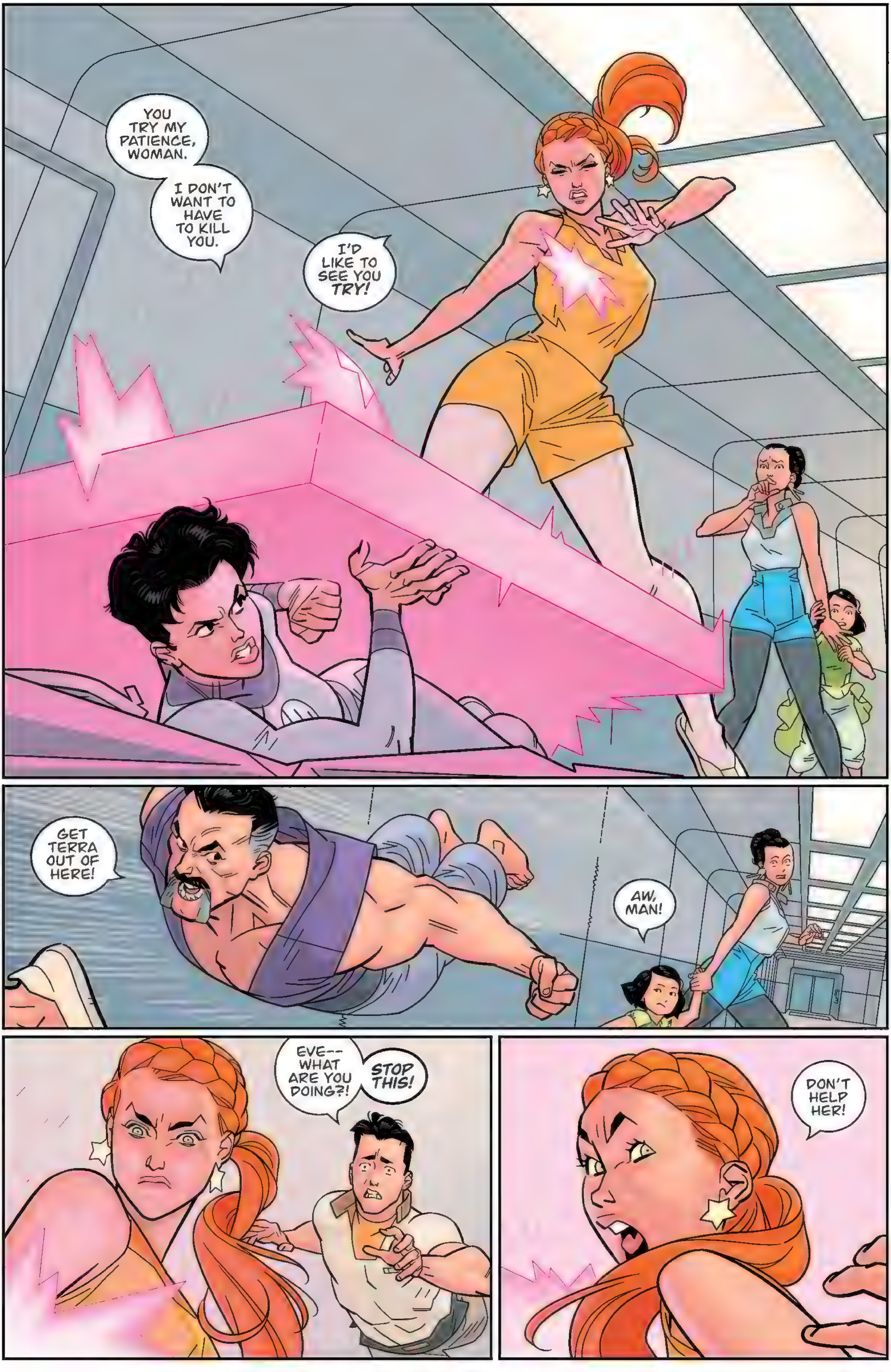
SVAASH!
WRAMM!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND, SISTER?!
I FEAR IT IS YOU WHO HAS LOST YOURS, ONANN!
I CARRY OUT OUR FATHER'S COMMAND! I *CONQUER!* THESE PEOPLE SHOULD FEAR US! I AM ENSURING THAT.
THESE PEOPLE *DO* FEAR US... AND THEY *ARE* CONQUERED. WHY TORMENT THEM FURTHER WHEN WE CAN MAKE THEM *LOYAL* TO THE EMPIRE?
URSAAL?!

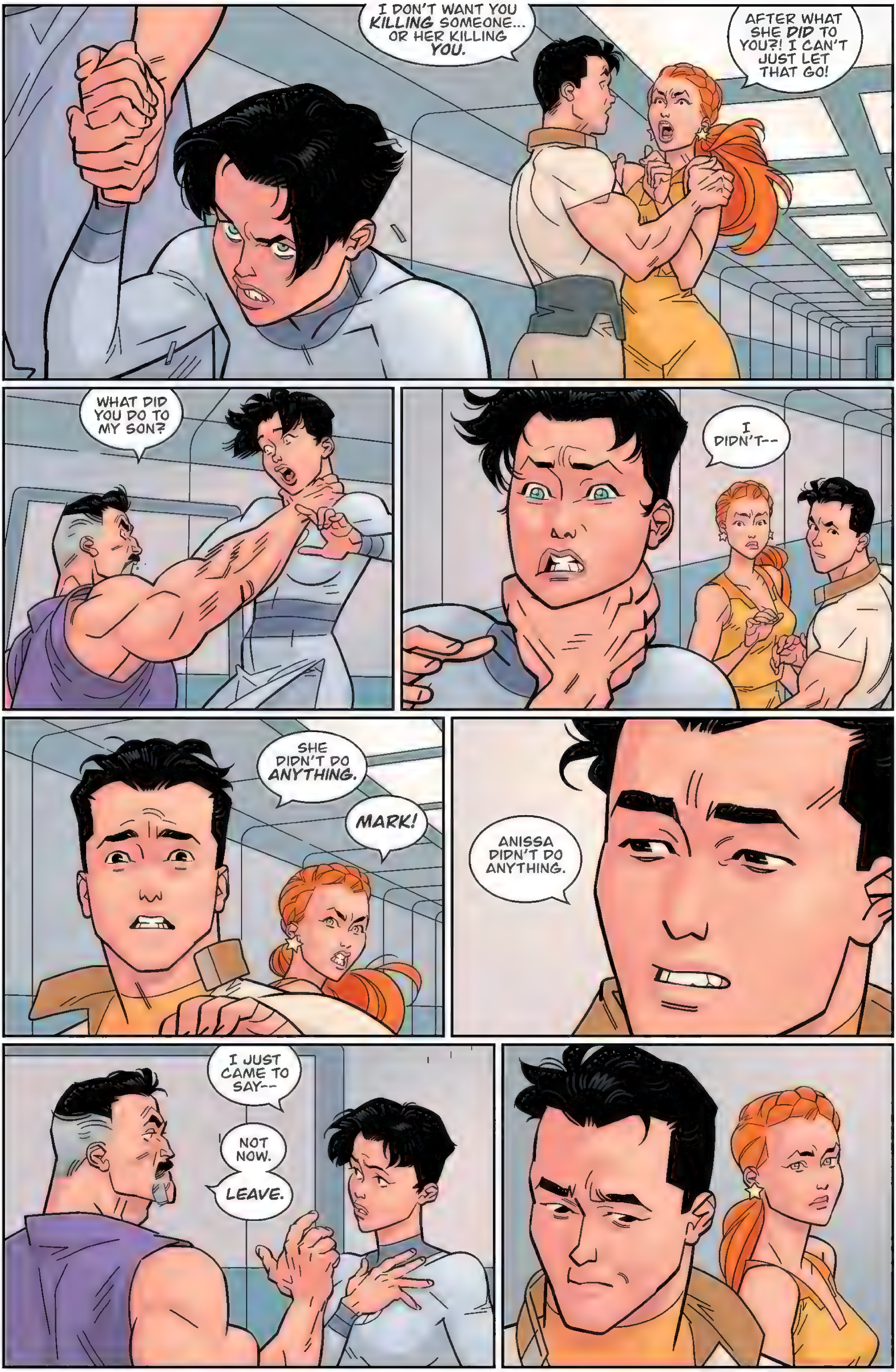

YES, FATHER?
IS THERE A PROBLEM HERE?
NO.
THERE IS NO PROBLEM. THIS WORLD IS OURS. THE EMPIRE GROWS, ALL IS WELL.

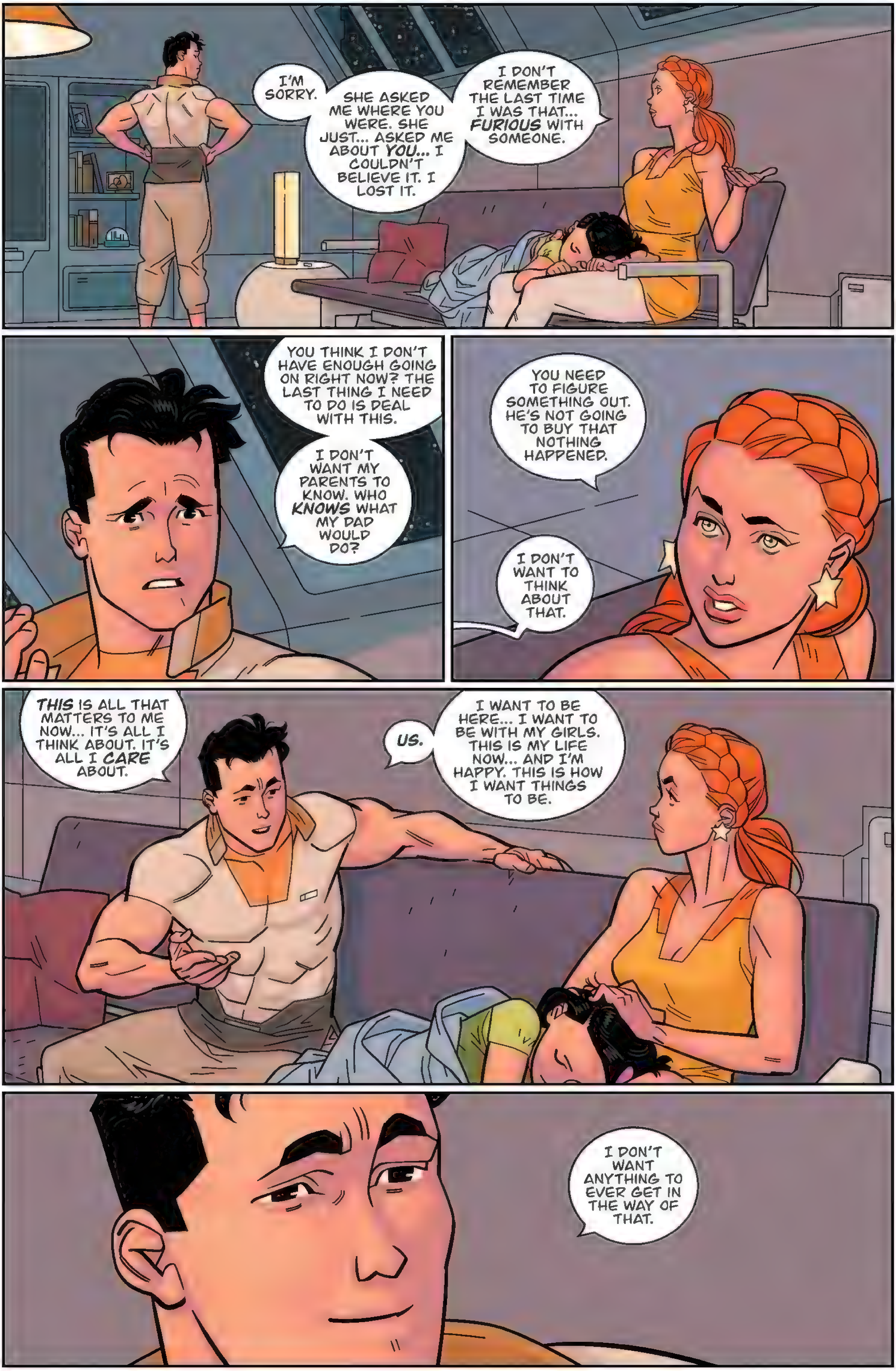

HONEY, I'M H--
...

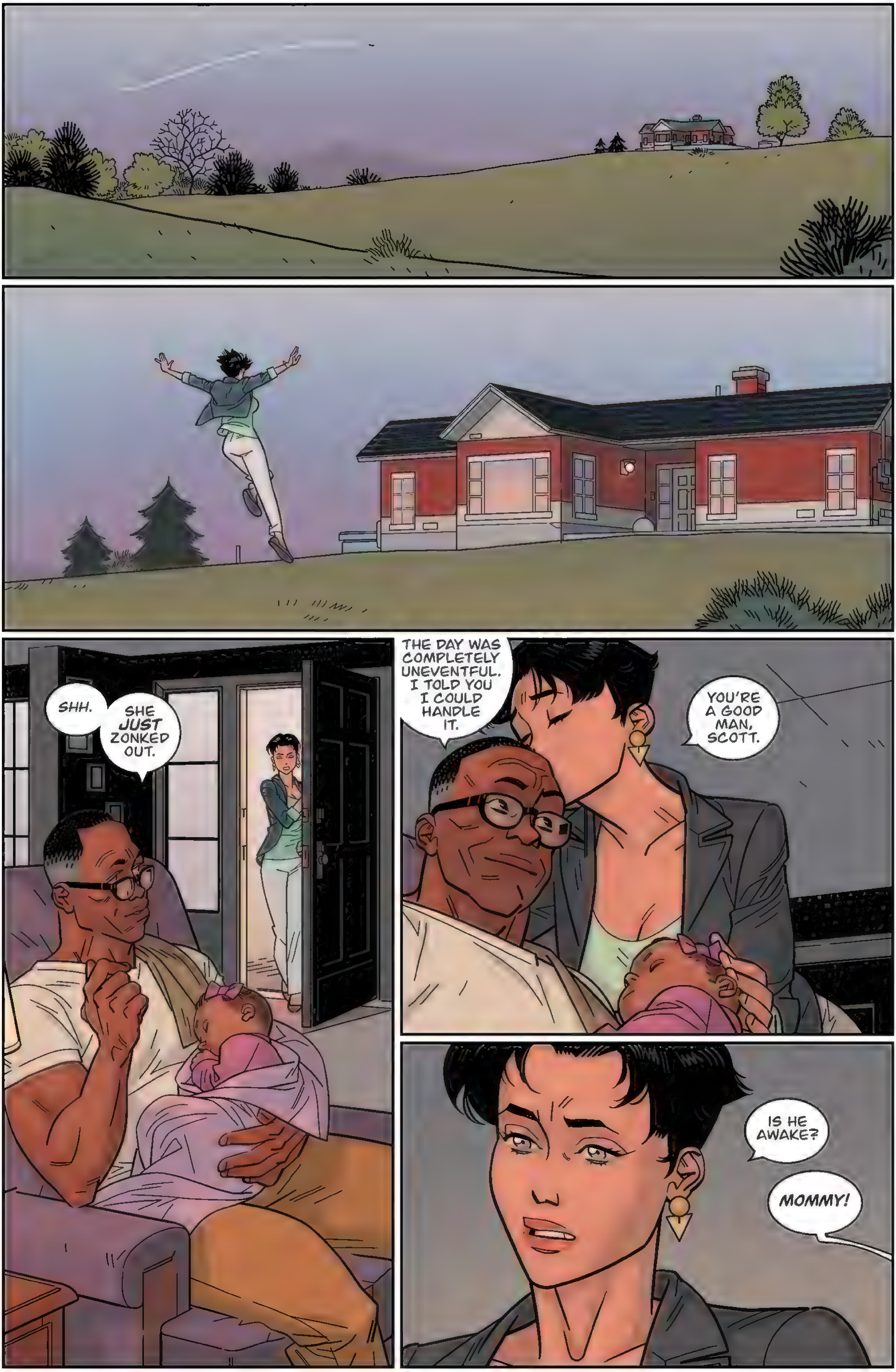

GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOO, DAD.
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN BACK? THERE WAS AN ATTACK... OUR COMMUNICATIONS WERE DISABLED.
MOM TOLD US.
MY DADDY IS STRONG LIKE YOU, PAPA!
I EVEN LET HIM **FLY** ME IF HE GOES **REAL SLOW.**
OH, NOW I'M **JEALOUS.**
YOU FLY TOO FAST. YOU **SCARE** ME!
I WANT YOU TO BE **STRONG,** PEANUT. I SCARE YOU SO THAT YOU CAN LEARN TO OVERCOME THAT FEAR. IF YOU DO EVERYTHING SLOWLY... YOU'LL **ALWAYS** BE SCARED.
NOT NOW, NOLAN.

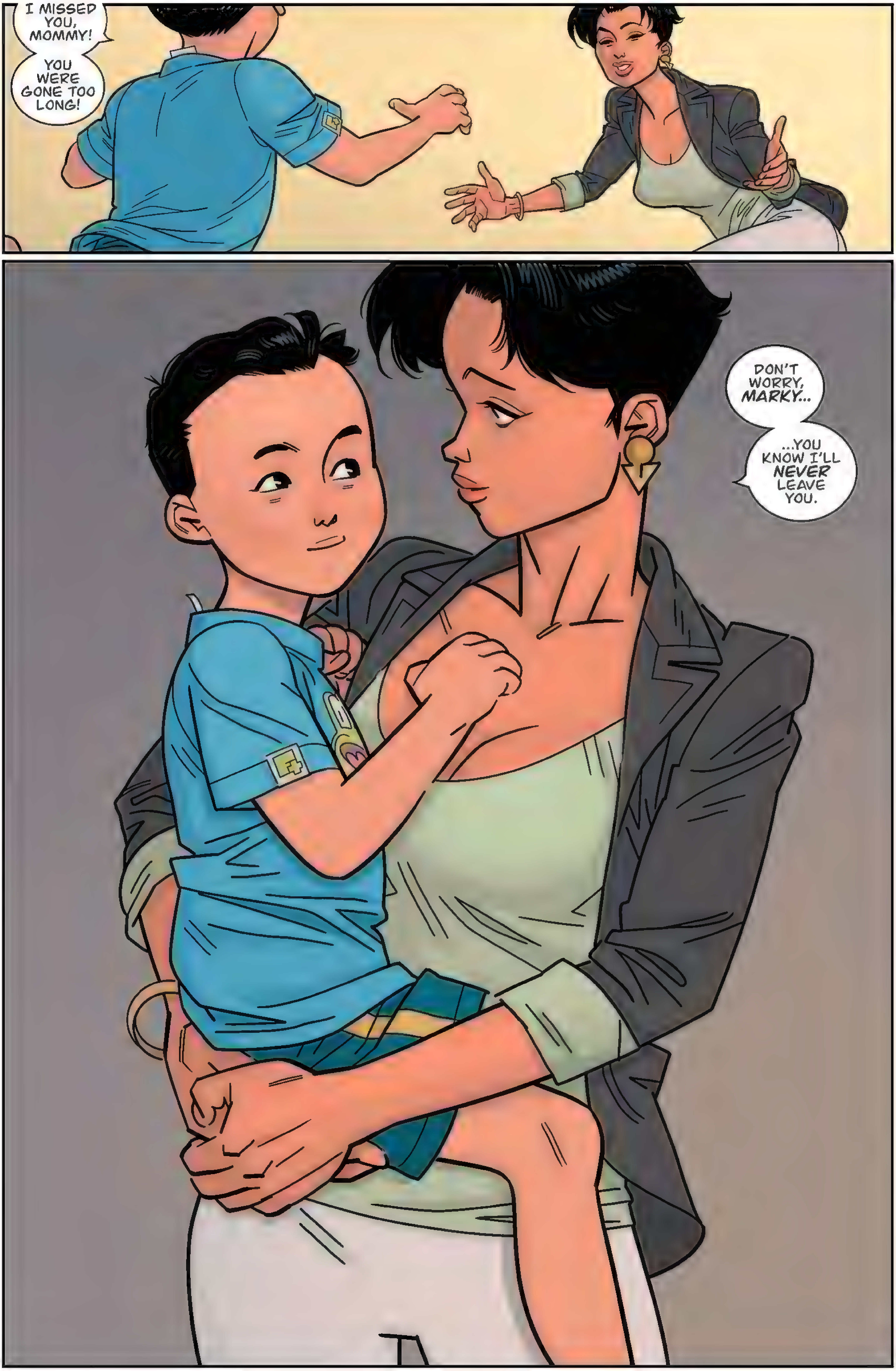

YOU'RE... FRIENDS WITH HIM?
REX HAS A LOT OF WISDOM. HE'S AN ALLY TO THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE AND OVER TIME, YES... THAT ALLIANCE HAS GROWN INTO FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN HIM AND I.
I WISH YOU COULD HAVE SEEN ALL THE GOOD HE'D ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE THE WAR WITH THE TECHNICIANS.
I DON'T CARE WHAT HE'S ACCOMPLISHED. NOT AFTER EVERYTHING HE DID. HAS EVERYONE BOUGHT INTO HIS CRAP?
THERE ARE THOSE WHO STILL OPPOSE HIM... BUT EVEN THEY SAW STANDING WITH HIM AS THE ONLY WAY TO WIN THIS WAR.
I FEEL LIKE THEY ARE STARTING TO SEE HIS SIDE OF--
CHOOM!
WHAT IN--


YOU TRY MY PATIENCE, WOMAN.
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO KILL YOU.
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU *TRY!*
GET TERRA OUT OF HERE!
AW, MAN!
EVE-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
STOP THIS!
DON'T HELP HER!


I DON'T WANT YOU KILLING SOMEONE... OR HER KILLING YOU.
AFTER WHAT SHE DID TO YOU?! I CAN'T JUST LET THAT GO!
WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY SON?
I DIDN'T--
SHE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
MARK!
ANISSA DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
I JUST CAME TO SAY--
NOT NOW.
LEAVE.

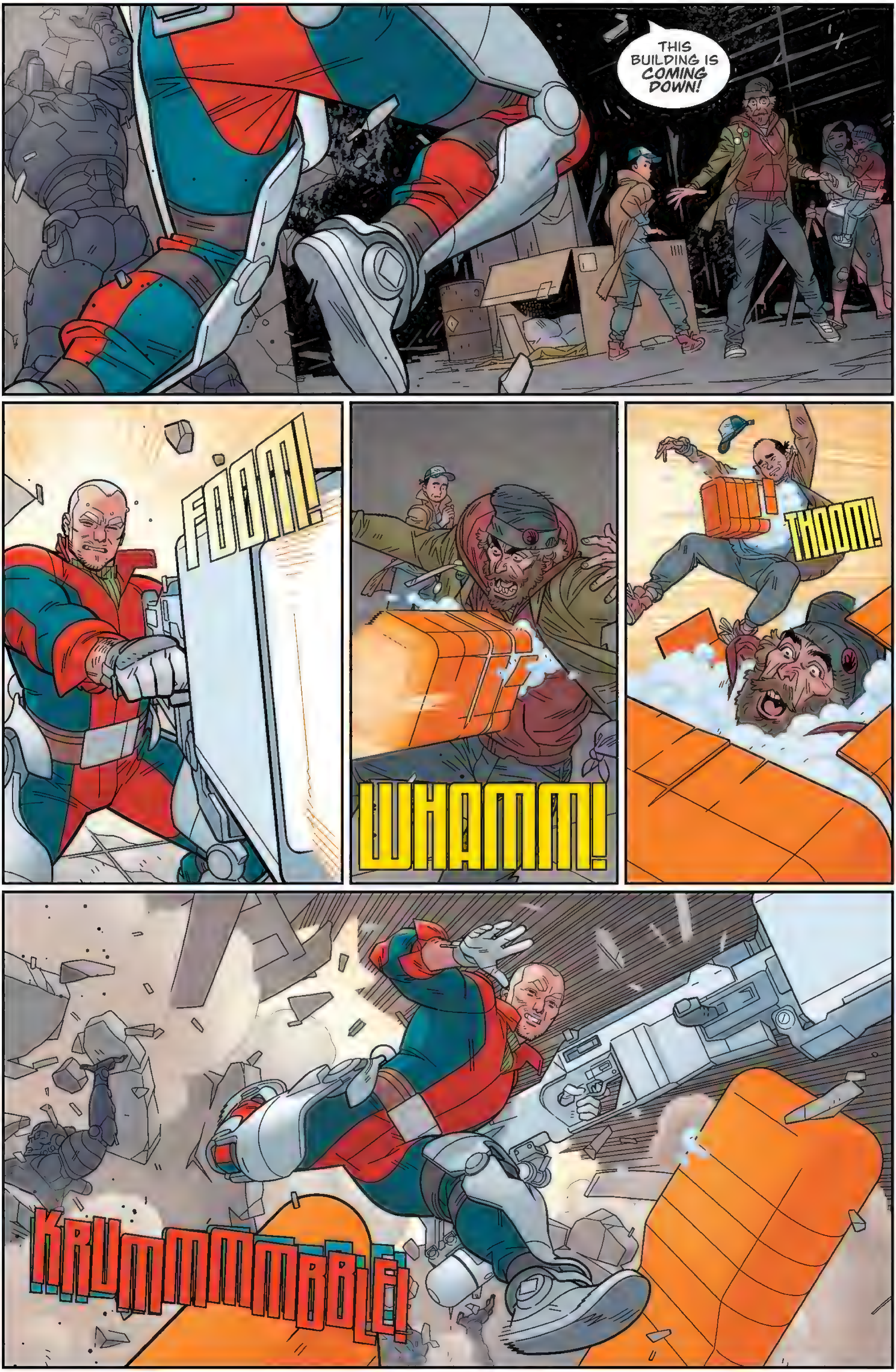

I'M SORRY.
SHE ASKED ME WHERE YOU WERE. SHE JUST... ASKED ME ABOUT *YOU*... I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I LOST IT.
I DON'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I WAS THAT... *FURIOUS* WITH SOMEONE.
YOU THINK I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH GOING ON RIGHT NOW? THE LAST THING I NEED TO DO IS DEAL WITH THIS.
I DON'T WANT MY PARENTS TO KNOW. WHO *KNOWS* WHAT MY DAD WOULD DO?
YOU NEED TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. HE'S NOT GOING TO BUY THAT NOTHING HAPPENED.
I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT THAT.
THIS IS ALL THAT MATTERS TO ME NOW... IT'S ALL I THINK ABOUT. IT'S ALL I *CARE* ABOUT.
US.
I WANT TO BE HERE... I WANT TO BE WITH MY GIRLS. THIS IS MY LIFE NOW... AND I'M HAPPY. THIS IS HOW I WANT THINGS TO BE.
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO EVER GET IN THE WAY OF THAT.

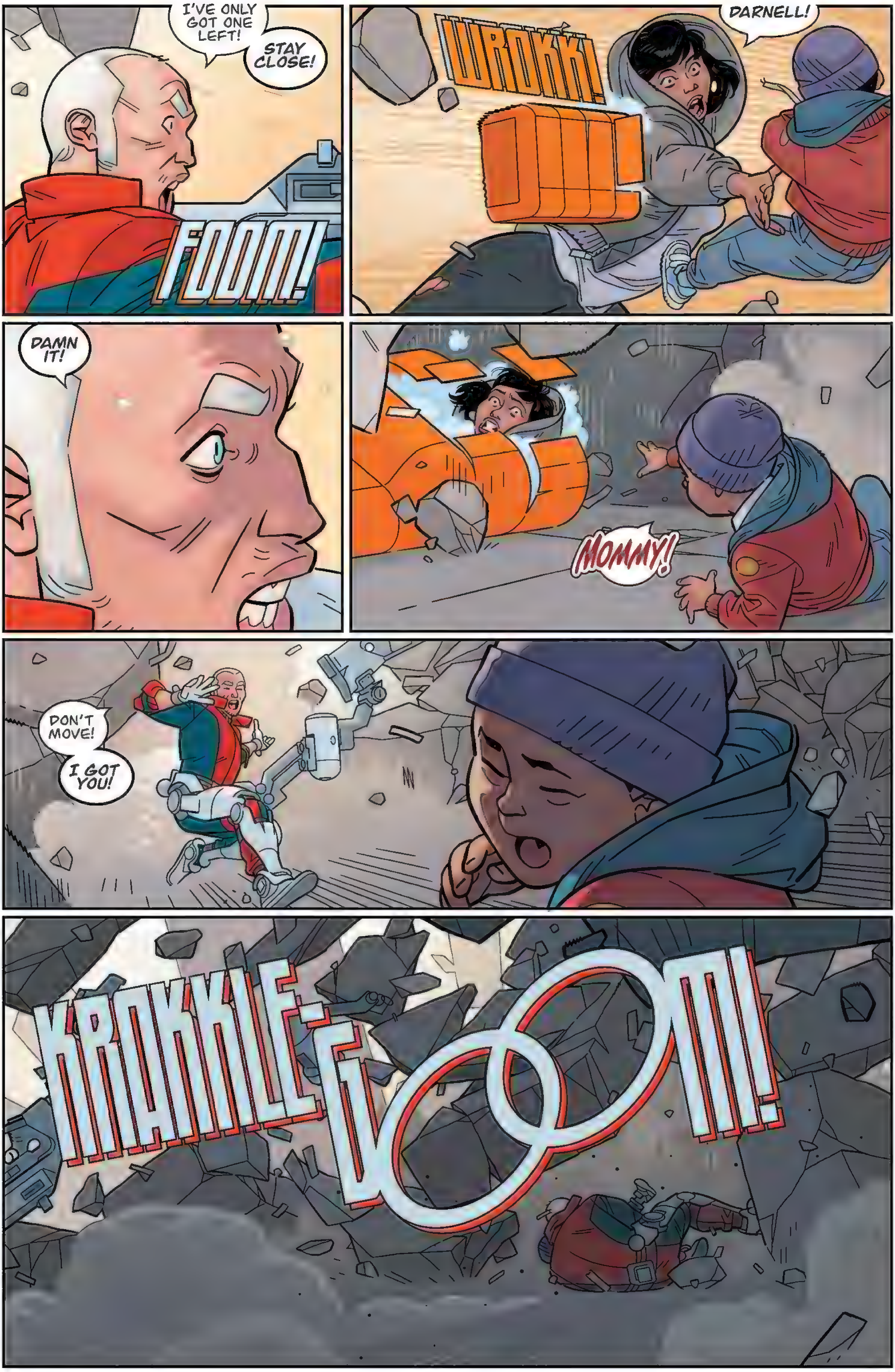

SHH.
SHE *JUST* ZONKED OUT.
THE DAY WAS COMPLETELY UNEVENTFUL. I TOLD YOU I COULD HANDLE IT.
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, SCOTT.
IS HE AWAKE?
MOMMY!

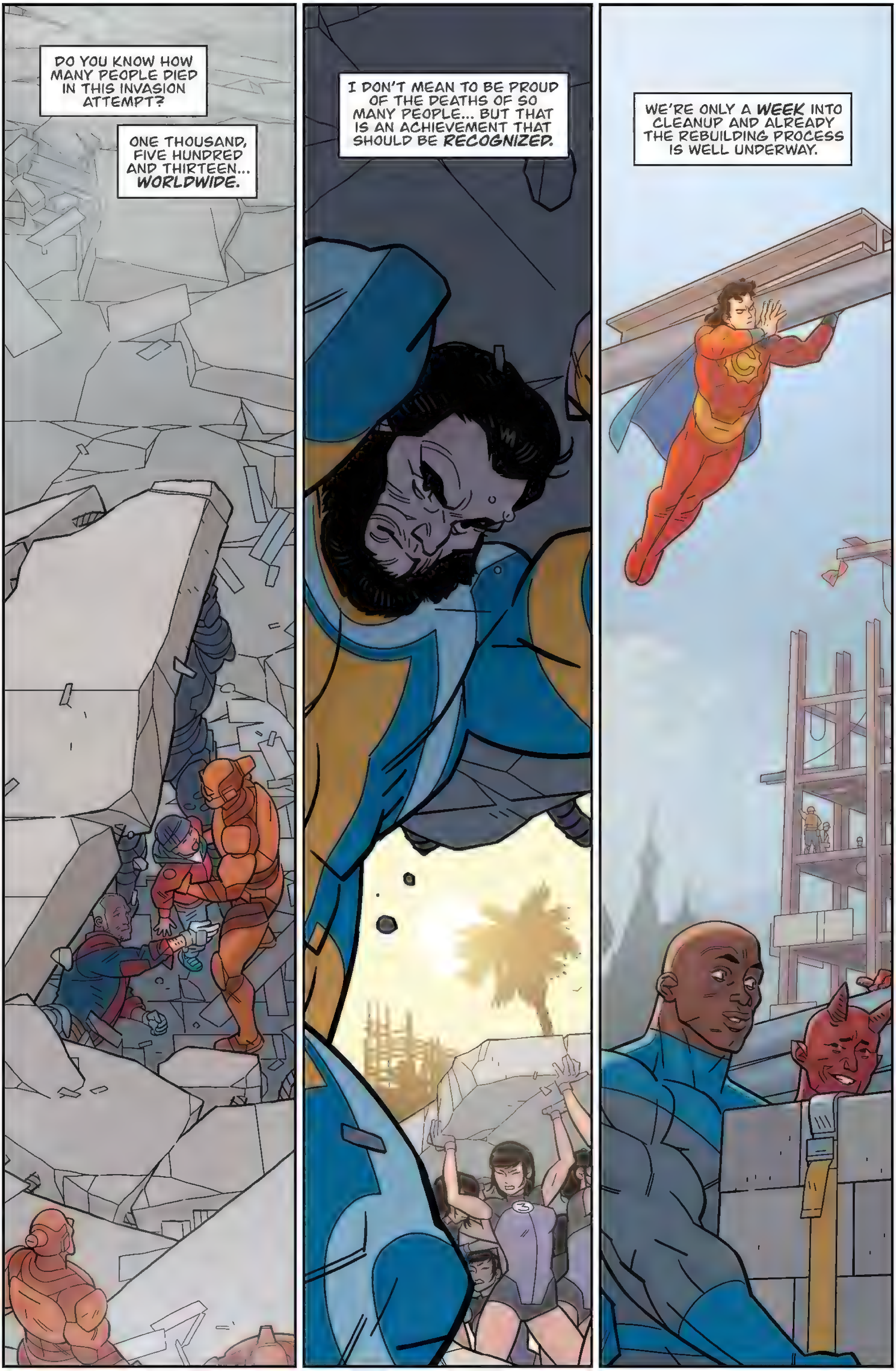

I MISSED YOU, MOMMY!
YOU WERE GONE TOO LONG!
DON'T WORRY, *MARKY*...
...YOU KNOW I'LL *NEVER* LEAVE YOU.

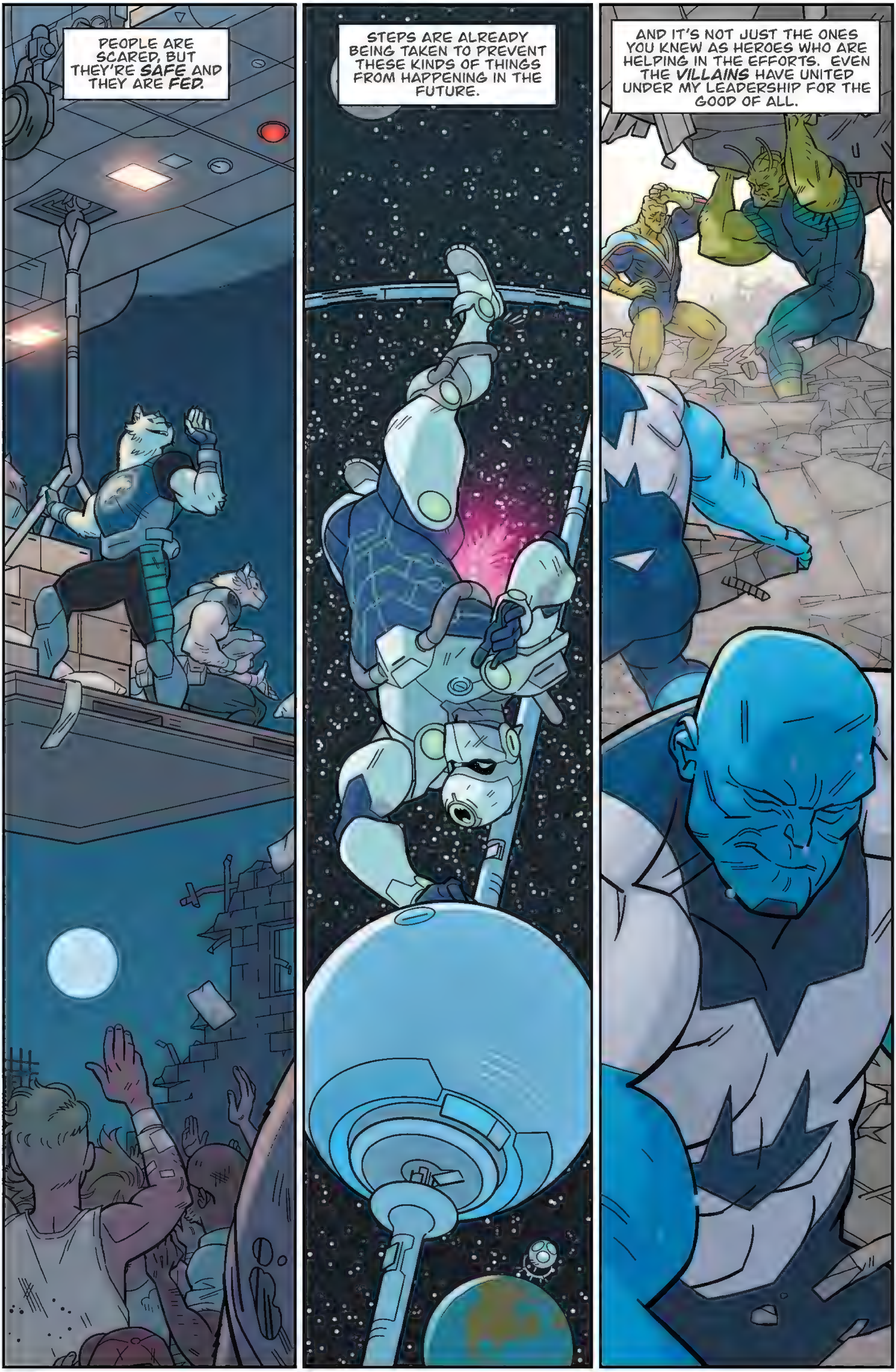
CHAPTER 130

RUN TO ME!
HURRY!
LIFELINE

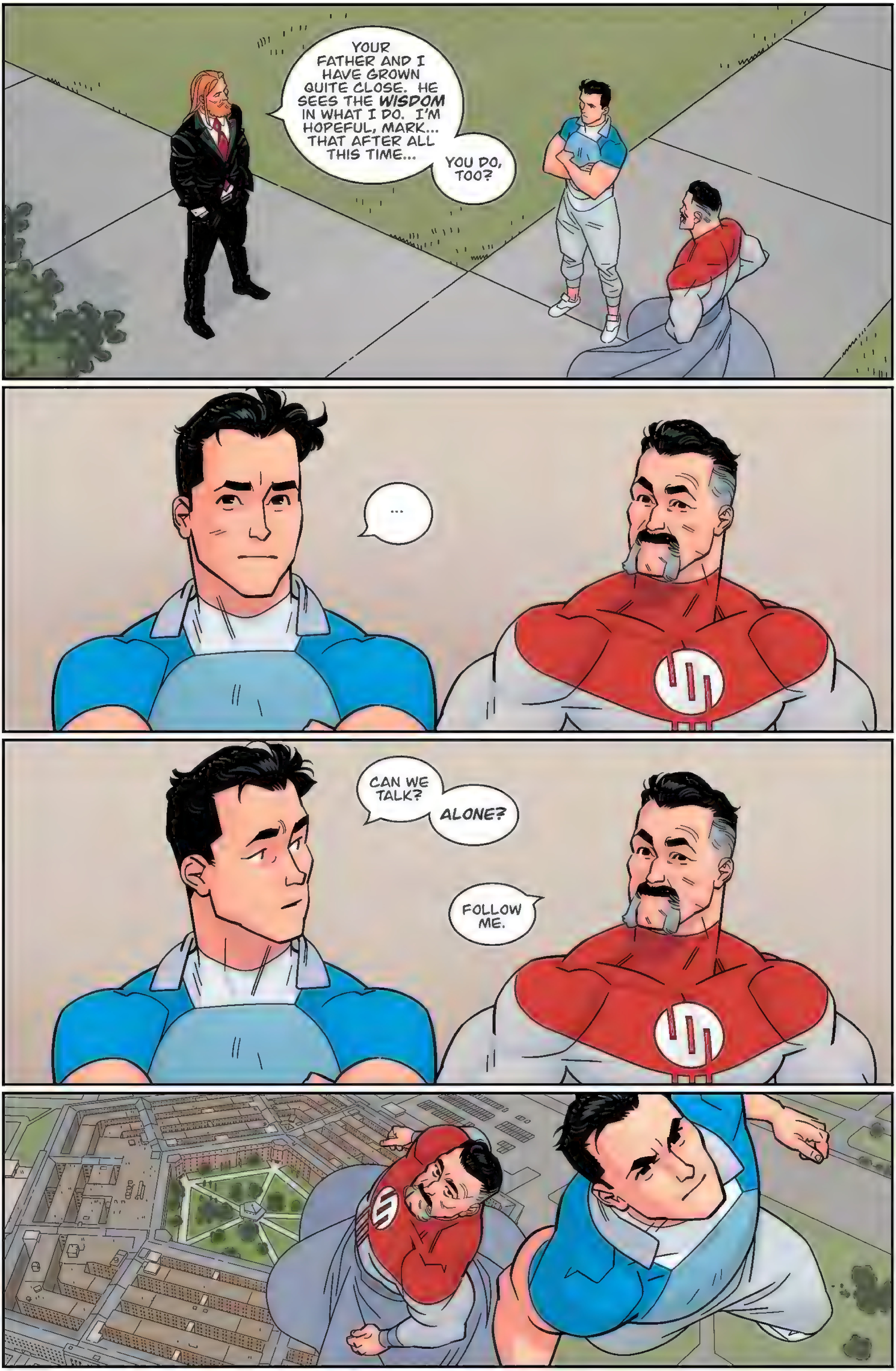

THIS BUILDING IS COMING DOWN!
FOOM!
WHAMM!
THOOM!
KRUMMMMBBLE!

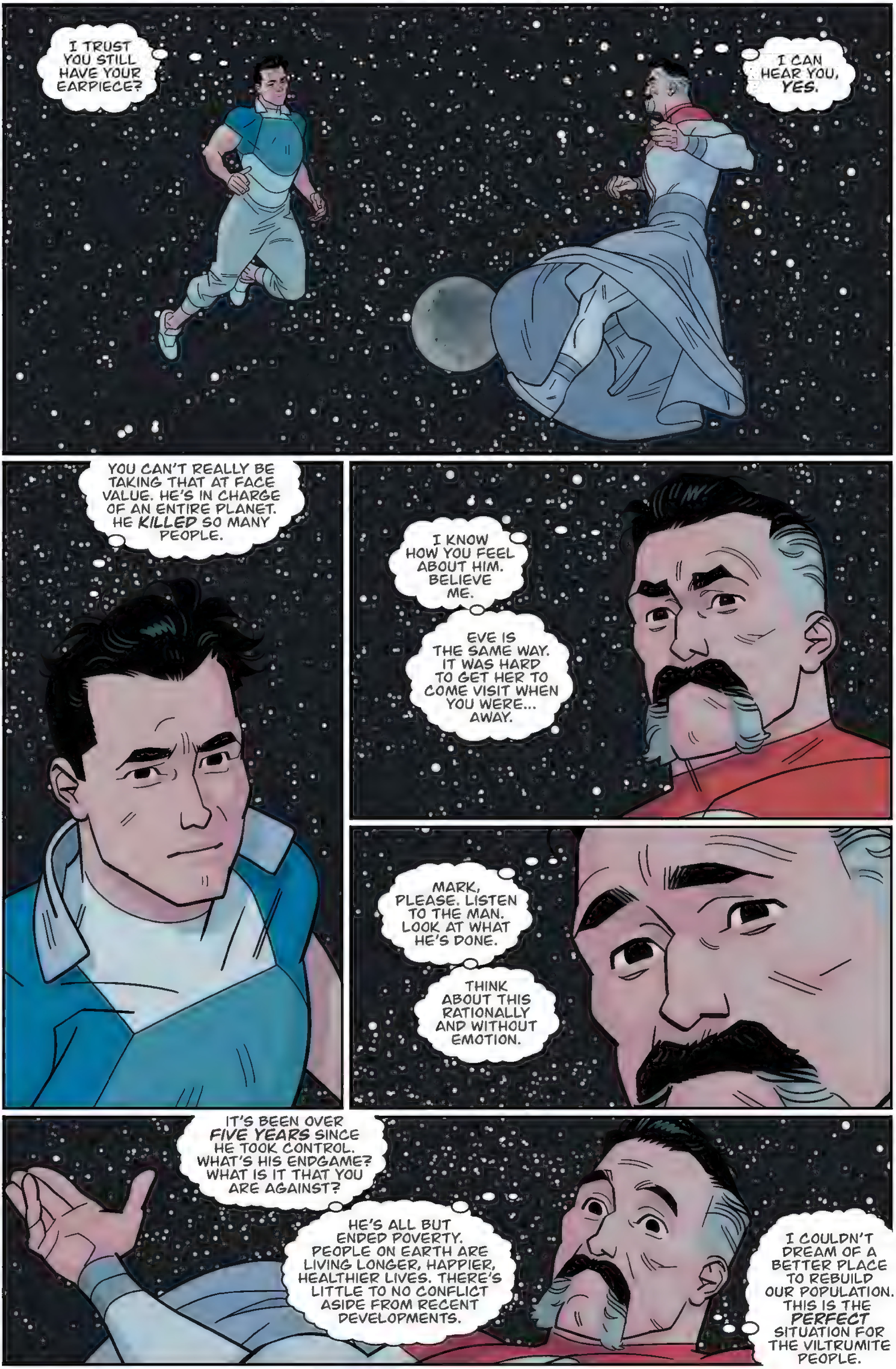

I'VE ONLY GOT ONE LEFT!
STAY CLOSE!
FOOM!
WROKK!
DARNELL!
DAMN IT!
MOMMY!
DON'T MOVE!
I GOT YOU!
KRAKKLE-DOOM!


DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED IN THIS INVASION ATTEMPT?
ONE THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN... *WORLDWIDE.*
I DON'T MEAN TO BE PROUD OF THE DEATHS OF SO MANY PEOPLE... BUT THAT IS AN ACHIEVEMENT THAT SHOULD BE *RECOGNIZED.*
WE'RE ONLY A *WEEK* INTO CLEANUP AND ALREADY THE REBUILDING PROCESS IS WELL UNDERWAY.

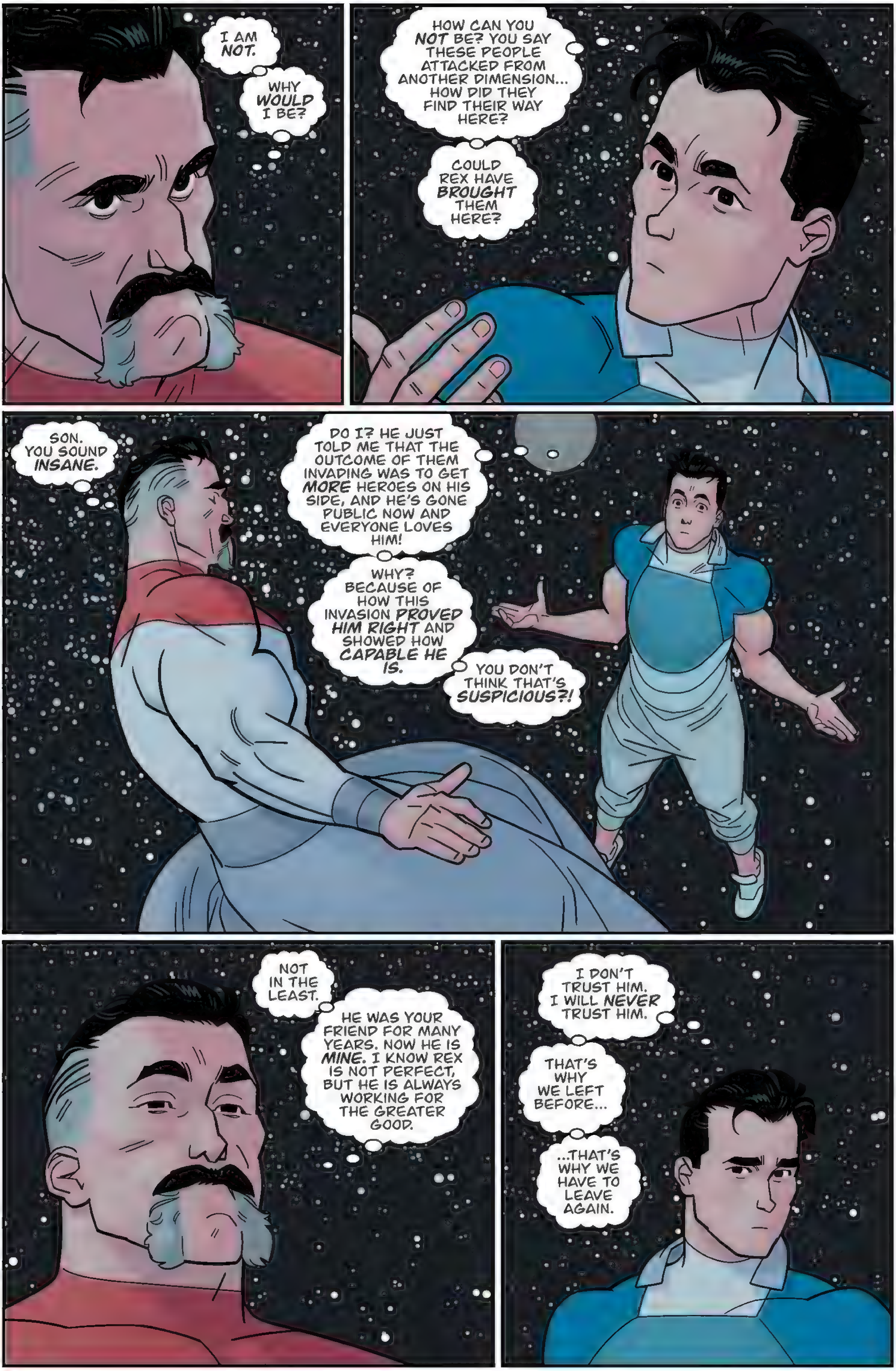

PEOPLE ARE SCARED, BUT THEY'RE *SAFE* AND THEY ARE *FED*.
STEPS ARE ALREADY BEING TAKEN TO PREVENT THESE KINDS OF THINGS FROM HAPPENING IN THE FUTURE.
AND IT'S NOT JUST THE ONES YOU KNEW AS HEROES WHO ARE HELPING IN THE EFFORTS. EVEN THE *VILLAINS* HAVE UNITED UNDER MY LEADERSHIP FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.

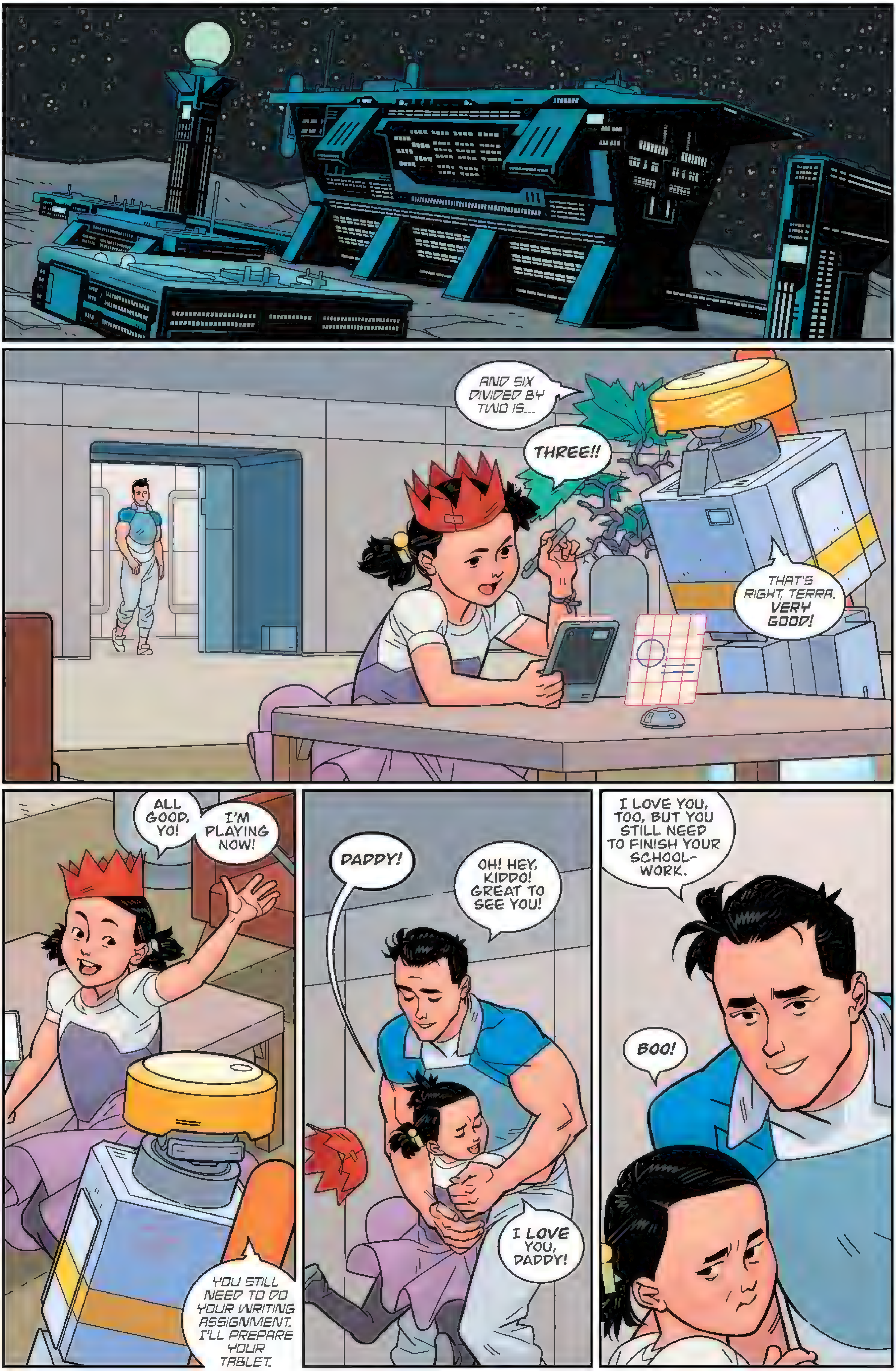
"A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING AND EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE."
I'VE LEARNED THAT IF YOU FIND OUT WHAT A VILLAIN WANTS... AND GIVE IT TO THEM... WELL, THEN YOU HAVE AN **ALLY.**
POWER, RESPECT, MONEY? HELP THEM MEET THAT GOAL... ON YOUR TERMS... THEN THE OTHER STUFF... THE "*BAD*" STUFF BECOMES LESS IMPORTANT... AND THEY BECOME PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.
I'M GLAD TO SAY AS TIME GOES ON, MORE AND MORE OF OUR FRIENDS ARE STARTING TO SEE THINGS MY WAY. AFTER ALL, YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH RESULTS.
THERE ARE STILL A FEW HOLDOUTS. BUT THEY DON'T INTERFERE, THEY KEEP THEIR DISTANCE. AND IN THE CASE OF MONSTER GIRL AND MONAX... THEY EVEN PITCH IN AND HELP WHEN NEEDED.
DON'T LET THE CURRENT STATE OF THINGS FOOL YOU. PEOPLE ARE HAPPY. LIFE IS **GOOD.**

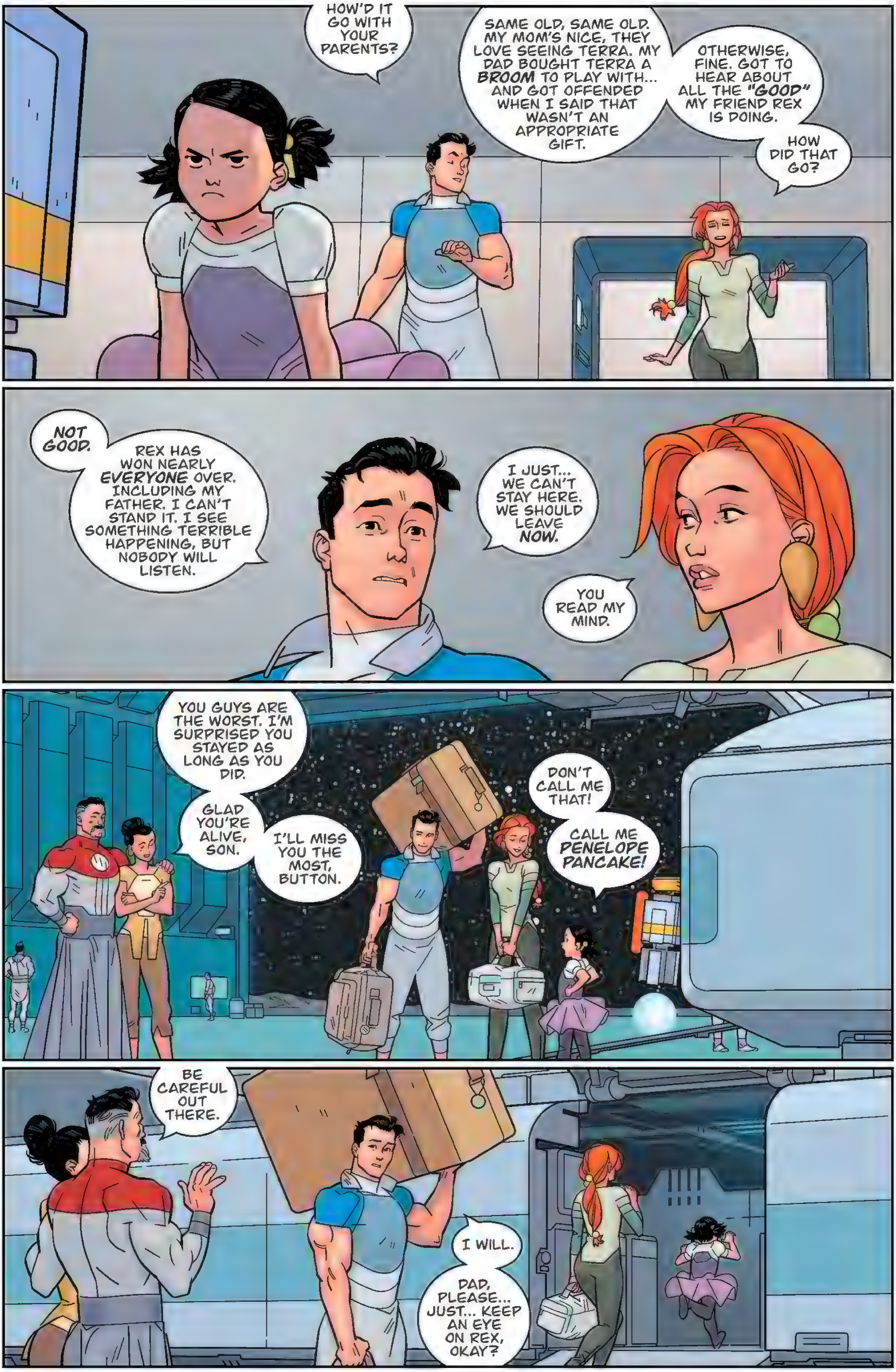

YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE GROWN QUITE CLOSE. HE SEES THE WISDOM IN WHAT I DO. I'M HOPEFUL, MARK... THAT AFTER ALL THIS TIME...
YOU DO, TOO?
...
CAN WE TALK?
ALONE?
FOLLOW ME.

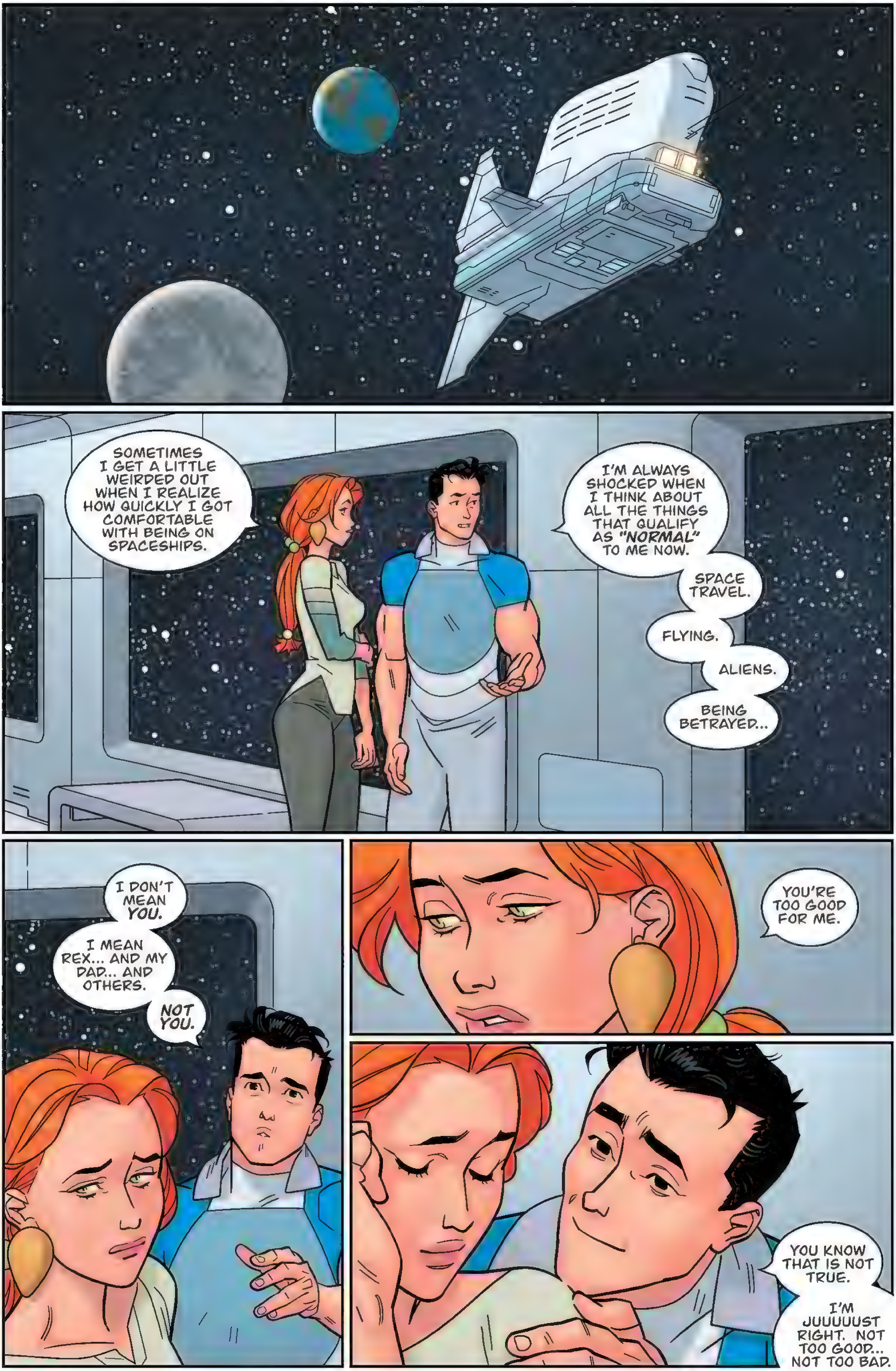

I TRUST YOU STILL HAVE YOUR EARPIECE?
I CAN HEAR YOU, *YES.*
YOU CAN'T REALLY BE TAKING THAT AT FACE VALUE. HE'S IN CHARGE OF AN ENTIRE PLANET. HE *KILLED* SO MANY PEOPLE.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT HIM. BELIEVE ME.
EVE IS THE SAME WAY. IT WAS HARD TO GET HER TO COME VISIT WHEN YOU WERE... AWAY.
MARK, PLEASE. LISTEN TO THE MAN. LOOK AT WHAT HE'S DONE.
THINK ABOUT THIS RATIONALLY AND WITHOUT EMOTION.
IT'S BEEN OVER *FIVE YEARS* SINCE HE TOOK CONTROL. WHAT'S HIS ENDGAME? WHAT IS IT THAT YOU ARE AGAINST?
HE'S ALL BUT ENDED POVERTY. PEOPLE ON EARTH ARE LIVING LONGER, HAPPIER, HEALTHIER LIVES. THERE'S LITTLE TO NO CONFLICT ASIDE FROM RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.
I COULDN'T DREAM OF A BETTER PLACE TO REBUILD OUR POPULATION. THIS IS THE *PERFECT* SITUATION FOR THE VILTRUMITE PEOPLE.

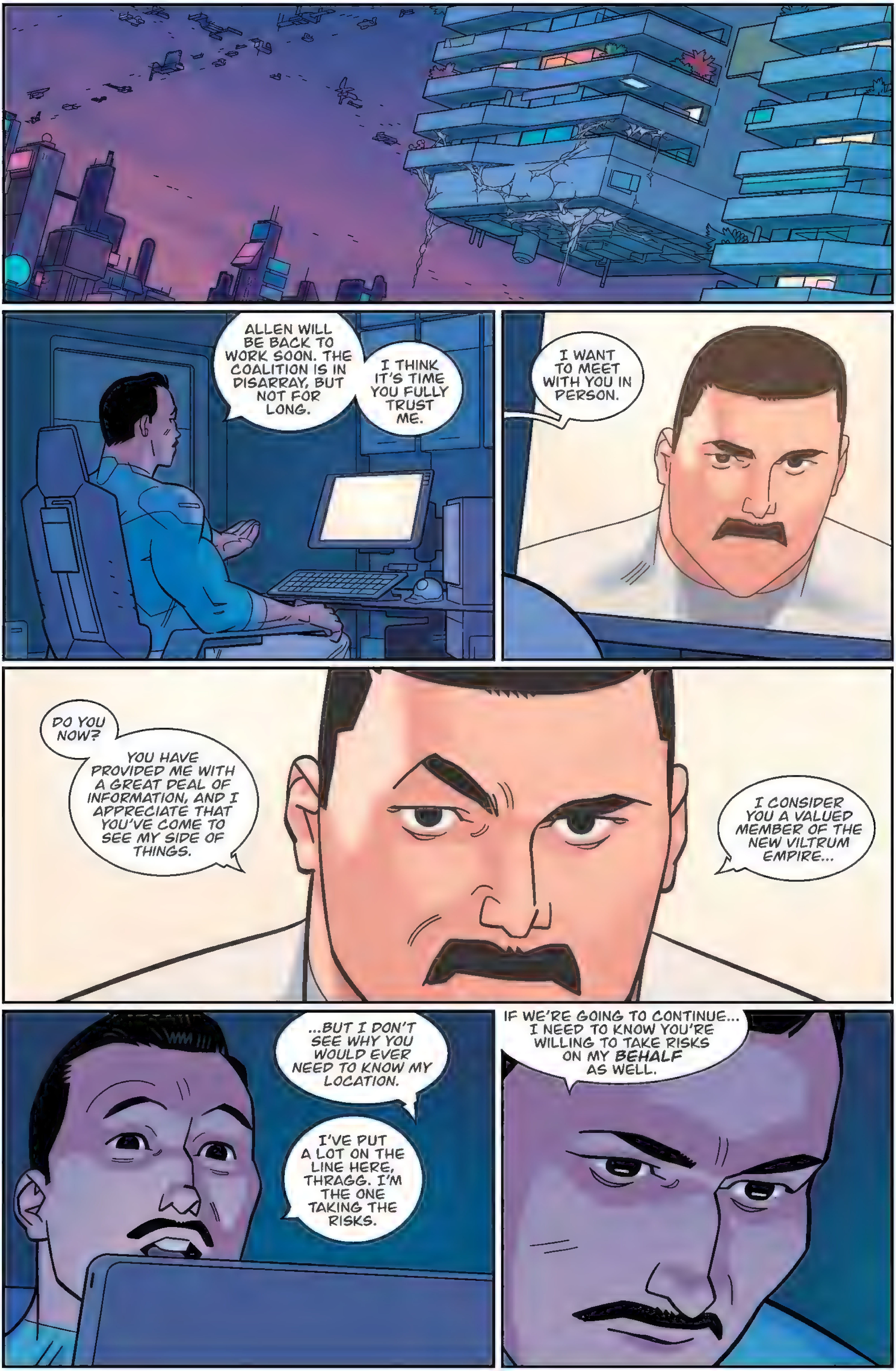
...
AT FIRST HE WAS DOING THINGS FROM THE SHADOWS, INFLUENCING PEOPLE IN KEY PLACES, DRIVING POLICY BUT NOT TAKING A PUBLIC ROLE IN THINGS.
AS TIME WENT ON, HE BECAME THE FACE OF THINGS MORE AND MORE. THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY HAS GONE PUBLIC WITH REX AS THE LEAD.
PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF HIS PROGRAMS AND WHAT HE'S DONE FOR THEM.
DURING THE LAST ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT HE *WON* ON WRITE-IN VOTES AND TURNED THE POSITION *DOWN.*
HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE PRESIDENT. HE WANTS TO BE *KING.*
DOES HE? HE COULD HAVE EASILY MADE HIMSELF GRAND EMPEROR OF THE PLANET AT THIS POINT.
NEARLY EVERY SUPER-POWERED PERSON ON THE PLANET TAKES ORDERS FROM HIM. HE COULD ENSLAVE THE WHOLE PLANET IN A MATTER OF HOURS.
AND YET HE *HASN'T.*
YOU'RE NOT SUSPICIOUS OF HIM AT ALL?

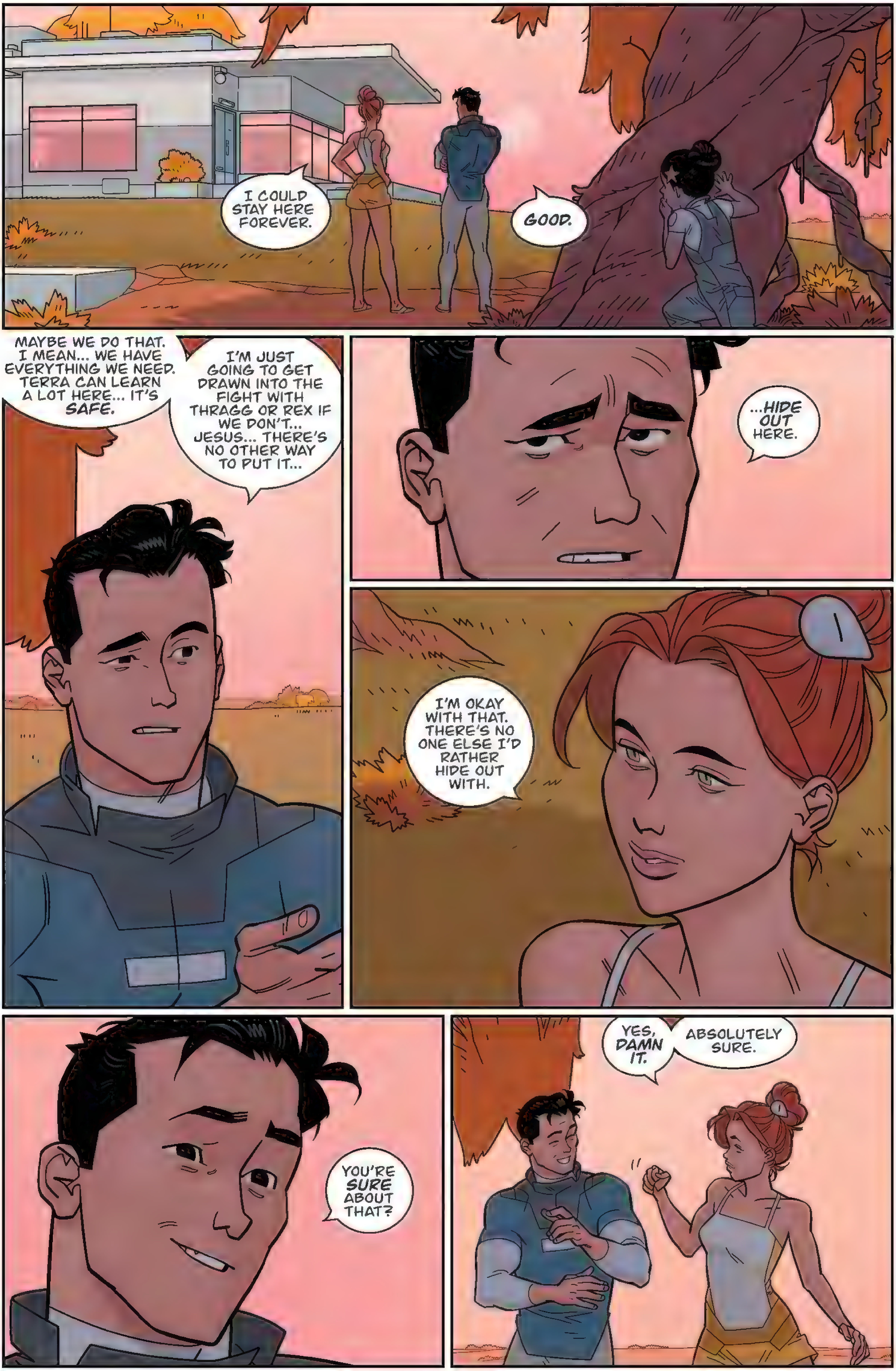

I AM *NOT.*
WHY *WOULD* I BE?
HOW CAN YOU *NOT* BE? YOU SAY THESE PEOPLE ATTACKED FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION... HOW DID THEY FIND THEIR WAY HERE?
COULD REX HAVE *BROUGHT* THEM HERE?
SON. YOU SOUND *INSANE.*
DO I? HE JUST TOLD ME THAT THE OUTCOME OF THEM INVADING WAS TO GET *MORE* HEROES ON HIS SIDE, AND HE'S GONE PUBLIC NOW AND EVERYONE LOVES HIM!
WHY? BECAUSE OF HOW THIS INVASION *PROVED HIM RIGHT* AND SHOWED HOW *CAPABLE HE IS.*
YOU DON'T THINK THAT'S *SUSPICIOUS?!*
NOT IN THE LEAST.
HE WAS YOUR FRIEND FOR MANY YEARS. NOW HE IS *MINE.* I KNOW REX IS NOT PERFECT, BUT HE IS ALWAYS WORKING FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
I DON'T TRUST HIM. I WILL *NEVER* TRUST HIM.
THAT'S WHY WE LEFT BEFORE...
...THAT'S WHY WE HAVE TO LEAVE AGAIN.

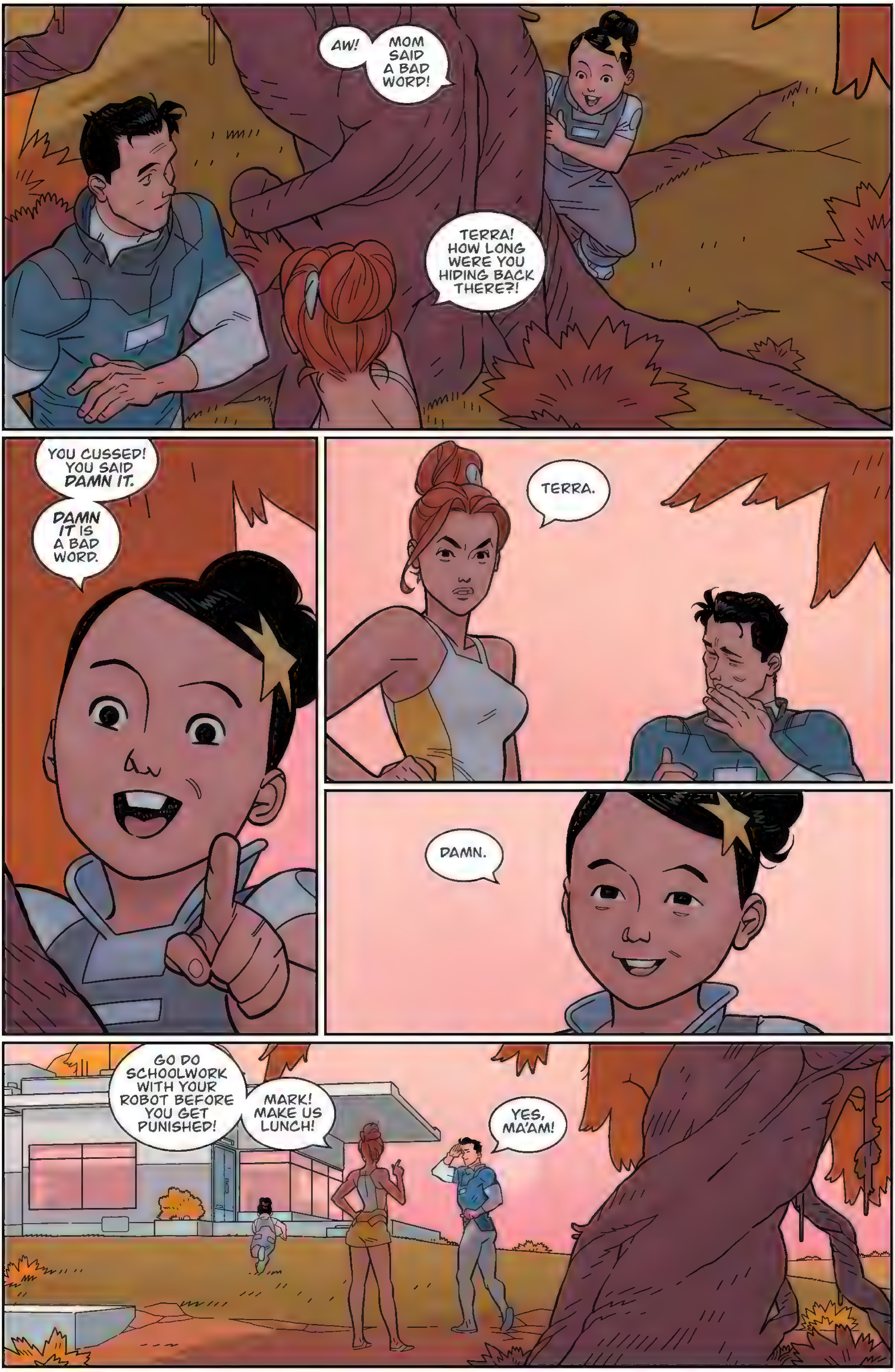

AND SIX DIVIDED BY TWO IS...
THREE!!
THAT'S RIGHT, TERRA. VERY GOOD!
ALL GOOD, YO!
I'M PLAYING NOW!
YOU STILL NEED TO DO YOUR WRITING ASSIGNMENT. I'LL PREPARE YOUR TABLET.
DADDY!
OH! HEY, KIDDO! GREAT TO SEE YOU!
I LOVE YOU, DADDY!
I LOVE YOU, TOO, BUT YOU STILL NEED TO FINISH YOUR SCHOOL-WORK.
BOO!

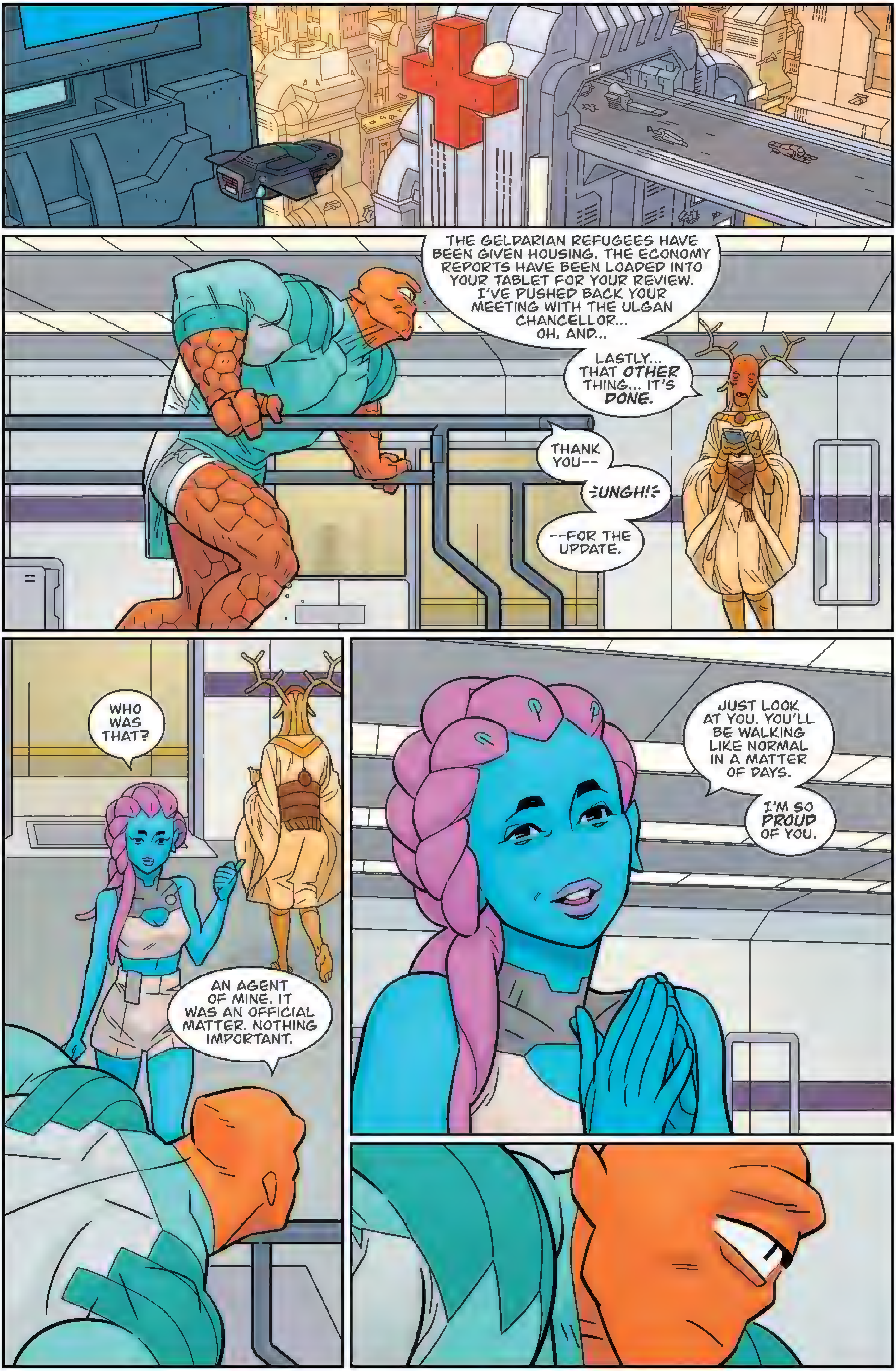

HOW'D IT GO WITH YOUR PARENTS?
SAME OLD, SAME OLD. MY MOM'S NICE, THEY LOVE SEEING TERRA. MY DAD BOUGHT TERRA A **BROOM** TO PLAY WITH... AND GOT OFFENDED WHEN I SAID THAT WASN'T AN APPROPRIATE GIFT.
OTHERWISE, FINE. GOT TO HEAR ABOUT ALL THE **"GOOD"** MY FRIEND REX IS DOING.
HOW DID THAT GO?
NOT GOOD.
REX HAS WON NEARLY **EVERYONE** OVER. INCLUDING MY FATHER. I CAN'T STAND IT. I SEE SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENING, BUT NOBODY WILL LISTEN.
I JUST... WE CAN'T STAY HERE. WE SHOULD LEAVE ***NOW.***
YOU READ MY MIND.
YOU GUYS ARE THE WORST. I'M SURPRISED YOU STAYED AS LONG AS YOU DID.
GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE, SON.
I'LL MISS YOU THE MOST, BUTTON.
DON'T CALL ME THAT!
CALL ME ***PENELOPE PANCAKE!***
BE CAREFUL OUT THERE.
I WILL.
DAD, PLEASE... JUST... KEEP AN EYE ON REX, OKAY?

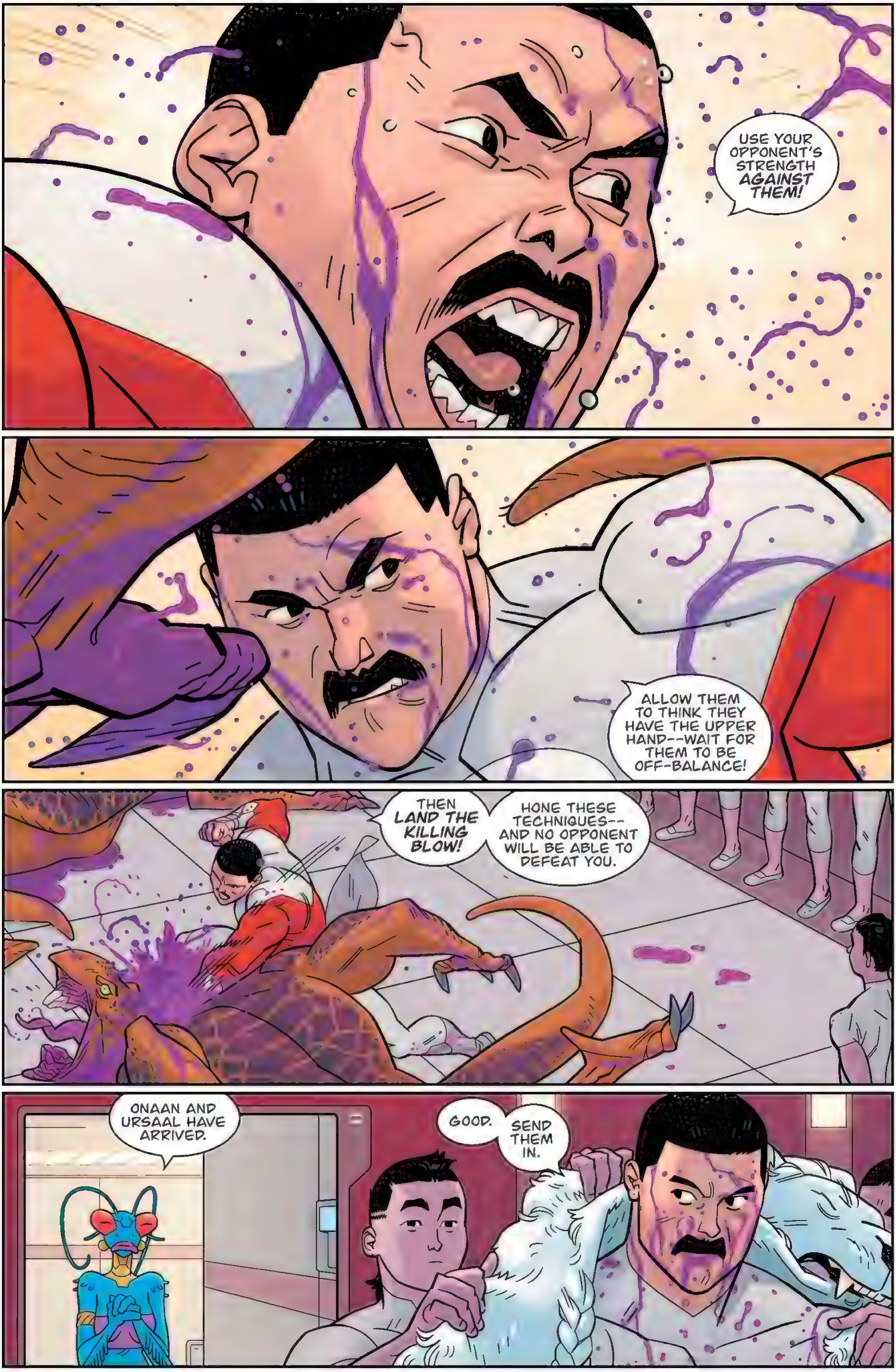

SOMETIMES I GET A LITTLE WEIRDED OUT WHEN I REALIZE HOW QUICKLY I GOT COMFORTABLE WITH BEING ON SPACESHIPS.
I'M ALWAYS SHOCKED WHEN I THINK ABOUT ALL THE THINGS THAT QUALIFY AS *"NORMAL"* TO ME NOW.
SPACE TRAVEL.
FLYING.
ALIENS.
BEING BETRAYED...
I DON'T MEAN *YOU.*
I MEAN REX... AND MY DAD... AND OTHERS.
NOT YOU.
YOU'RE TOO GOOD FOR ME.
YOU KNOW THAT IS NOT TRUE.
I'M JUUUUUST RIGHT. NOT TOO GOOD... NOT TOO BAD.

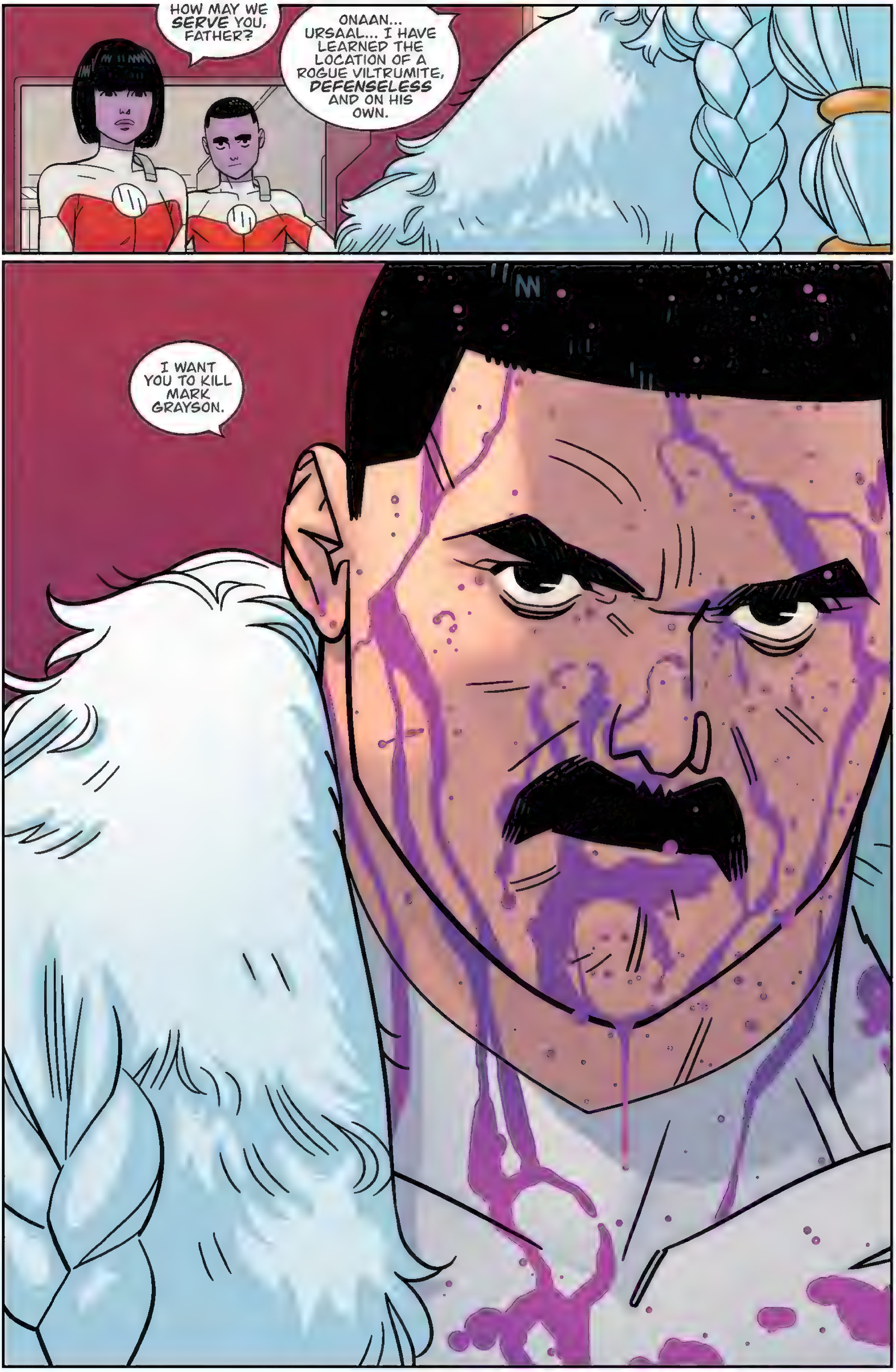

ALLEN WILL BE BACK TO WORK SOON. THE COALITION IS IN DISARRAY, BUT NOT FOR LONG.
I THINK IT'S TIME YOU FULLY TRUST ME.
I WANT TO MEET WITH YOU IN PERSON.
DO YOU NOW?
YOU HAVE PROVIDED ME WITH A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION, AND I APPRECIATE THAT YOU'VE COME TO SEE MY SIDE OF THINGS.
I CONSIDER YOU A VALUED MEMBER OF THE NEW VILTRUM EMPIRE...
...BUT I DON'T SEE WHY YOU WOULD EVER NEED TO KNOW MY LOCATION.
I'VE PUT A LOT ON THE LINE HERE, THRAGG. I'M THE ONE TAKING THE RISKS.
IF WE'RE GOING TO CONTINUE... I NEED TO KNOW YOU'RE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS ON MY BEHALF AS WELL.


I COULD STAY HERE FOREVER.
GOOD.
MAYBE WE DO THAT. I MEAN... WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED. TERRA CAN LEARN A LOT HERE... IT'S *SAFE*.
I'M JUST GOING TO GET DRAWN INTO THE FIGHT WITH THRAGG OR REX IF WE DON'T... JESUS... THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO PUT IT...
...*HIDE OUT* HERE.
I'M OKAY WITH THAT. THERE'S NO ONE ELSE I'D RATHER HIDE OUT WITH.
YOU'RE *SURE* ABOUT THAT?
YES, *DAMN IT*.
ABSOLUTELY SURE.

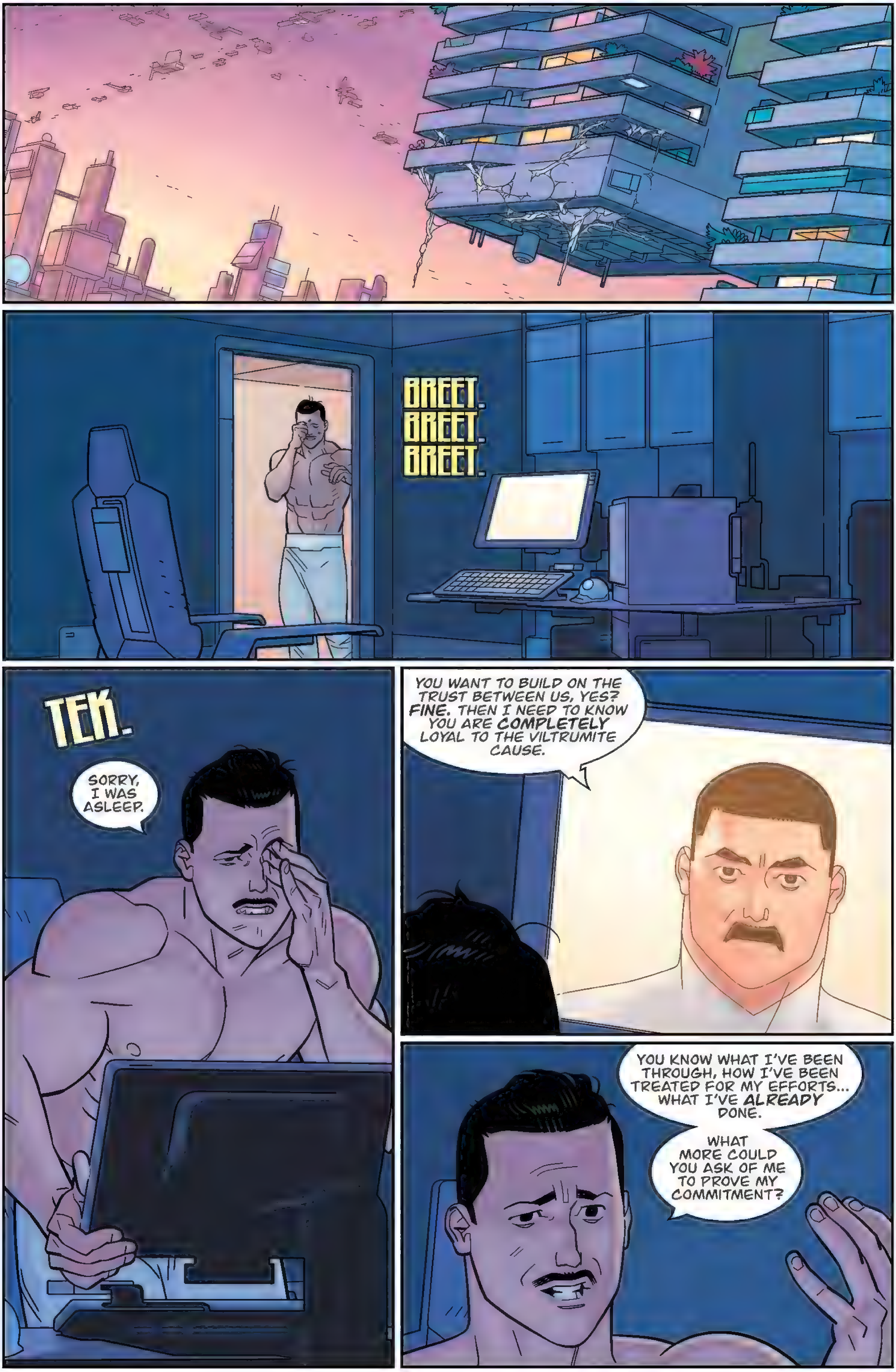

AW!
MOM SAID A BAD WORD!
TERRA! HOW LONG WERE YOU HIDING BACK THERE?!
YOU CUSSED! YOU SAID *DAMN IT.*
DAMN IT IS A BAD WORD.
TERRA.
DAMN.
GO DO SCHOOLWORK WITH YOUR ROBOT BEFORE YOU GET PUNISHED!
MARK! MAKE US LUNCH!
YES, MA'AM!

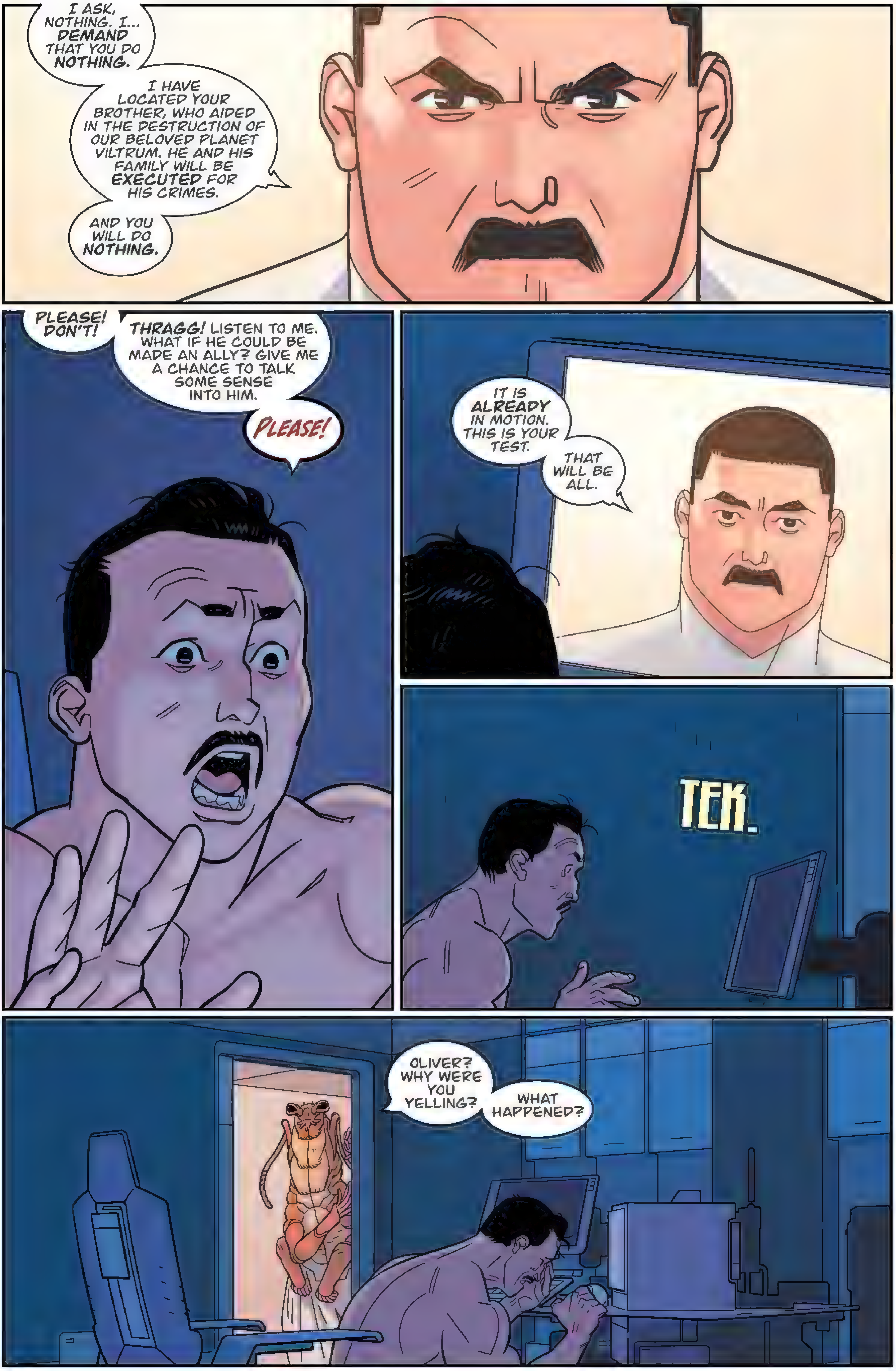

THE GELDARIAN REFUGEES HAVE BEEN GIVEN HOUSING. THE ECONOMY REPORTS HAVE BEEN LOADED INTO YOUR TABLET FOR YOUR REVIEW. I'VE PUSHED BACK YOUR MEETING WITH THE ULGAN CHANCELLOR... OH, AND...
LASTLY... THAT OTHER THING... IT'S DONE.
THANK YOU--
UNGH!
--FOR THE UPDATE.
WHO WAS THAT?
AN AGENT OF MINE. IT WAS AN OFFICIAL MATTER. NOTHING IMPORTANT.
JUST LOOK AT YOU. YOU'LL BE WALKING LIKE NORMAL IN A MATTER OF DAYS.
I'M SO PROUD OF YOU.

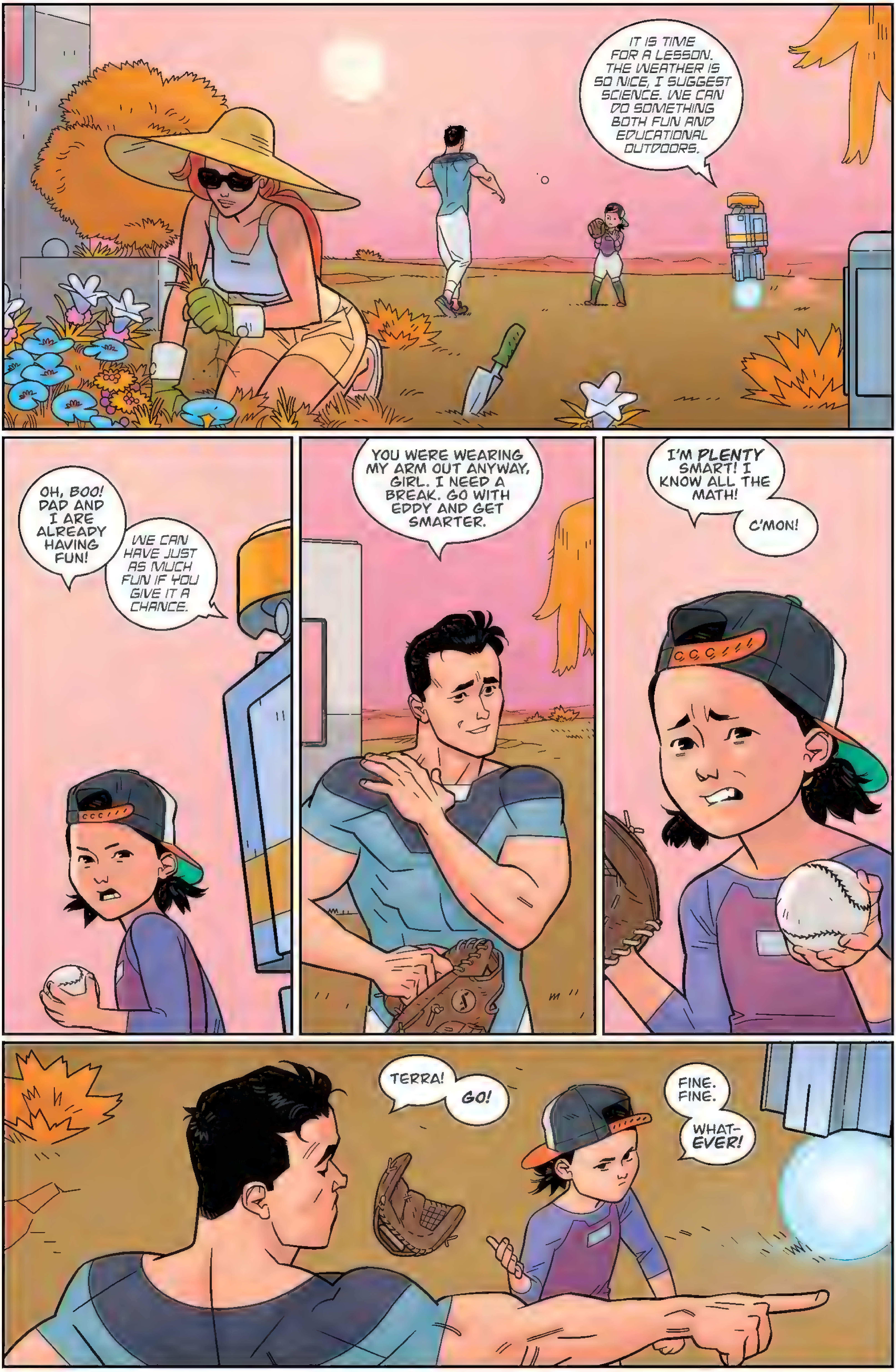

USE YOUR OPPONENT'S STRENGTH *AGAINST THEM!*
ALLOW THEM TO THINK THEY HAVE THE UPPER HAND--WAIT FOR THEM TO BE OFF-BALANCE!
THEN *LAND THE KILLING BLOW!*
HONE THESE TECHNIQUES--AND NO OPPONENT WILL BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOU.
ONAAN AND URSAAL HAVE ARRIVED.
GOOD.
SEND THEM IN.

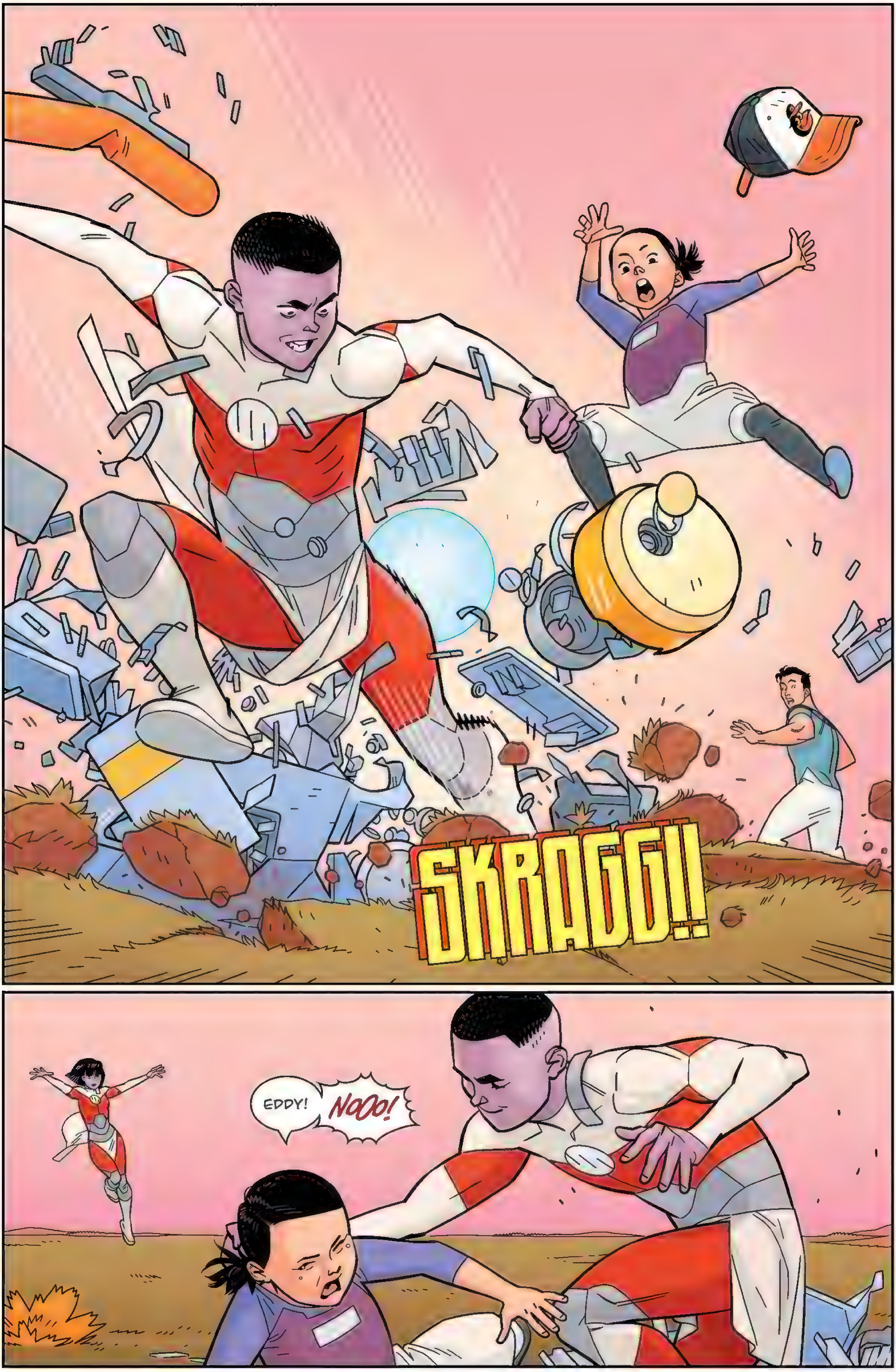

HOW MAY WE *SERVE* YOU, FATHER?
ONAAN... URSAAL... I HAVE LEARNED THE LOCATION OF A ROGUE VILTRUMITE, **DEFENSELESS** AND ON HIS OWN.
I WANT YOU TO KILL MARK GRAYSON.

CHAPTER 131

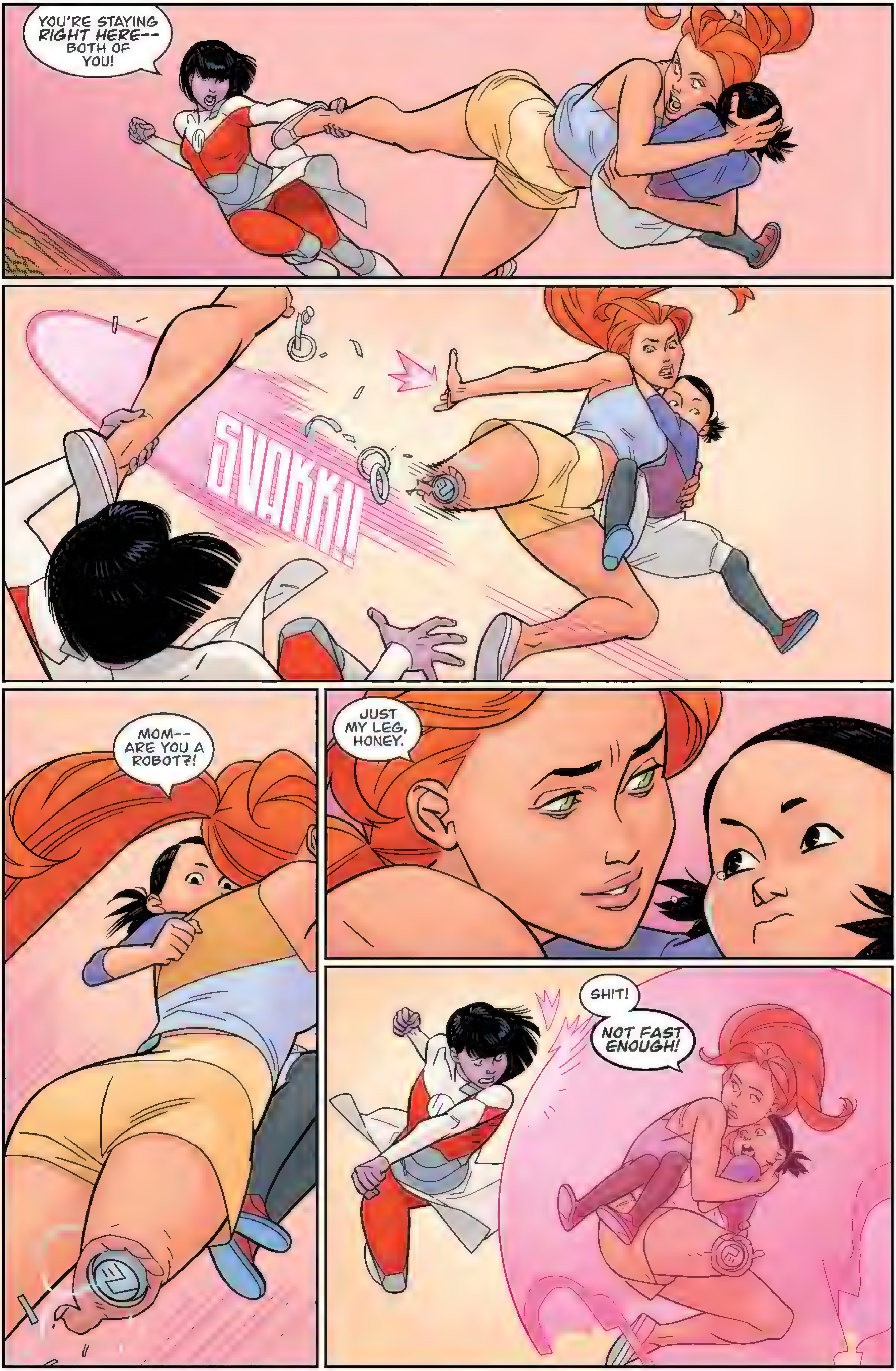

BREET. BREET. BREET.
TEK.
SORRY, I WAS ASLEEP.
YOU WANT TO BUILD ON THE TRUST BETWEEN US, YES? FINE. THEN I NEED TO KNOW YOU ARE COMPLETELY LOYAL TO THE VILTRUMITE CAUSE.
YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH, HOW I'VE BEEN TREATED FOR MY EFFORTS... WHAT I'VE ALREADY DONE.
WHAT MORE COULD YOU ASK OF ME TO PROVE MY COMMITMENT?

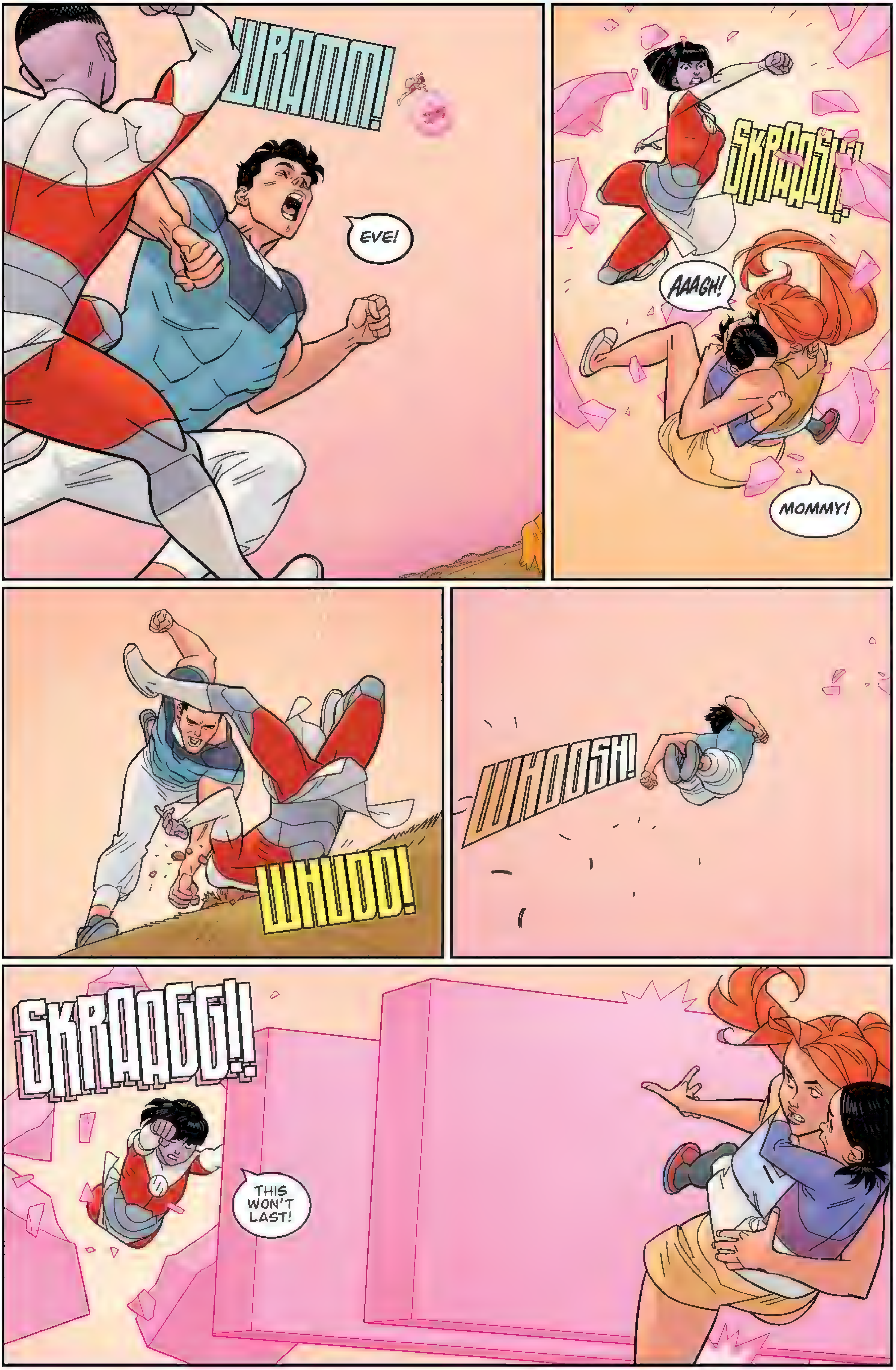

I ASK, NOTHING. I... **DEMAND** THAT YOU DO **NOTHING.**
I HAVE LOCATED YOUR BROTHER, WHO AIDED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR BELOVED PLANET VILTRUM. HE AND HIS FAMILY WILL BE **EXECUTED** FOR HIS CRIMES.
AND YOU WILL DO **NOTHING.**
PLEASE! DON'T!
THRAGG! LISTEN TO ME. WHAT IF HE COULD BE MADE AN ALLY? GIVE ME A CHANCE TO TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM.
PLEASE!
IT IS **ALREADY** IN MOTION. THIS IS YOUR TEST.
THAT WILL BE ALL.
TEK.
OLIVER? WHY WERE YOU YELLING?
WHAT HAPPENED?

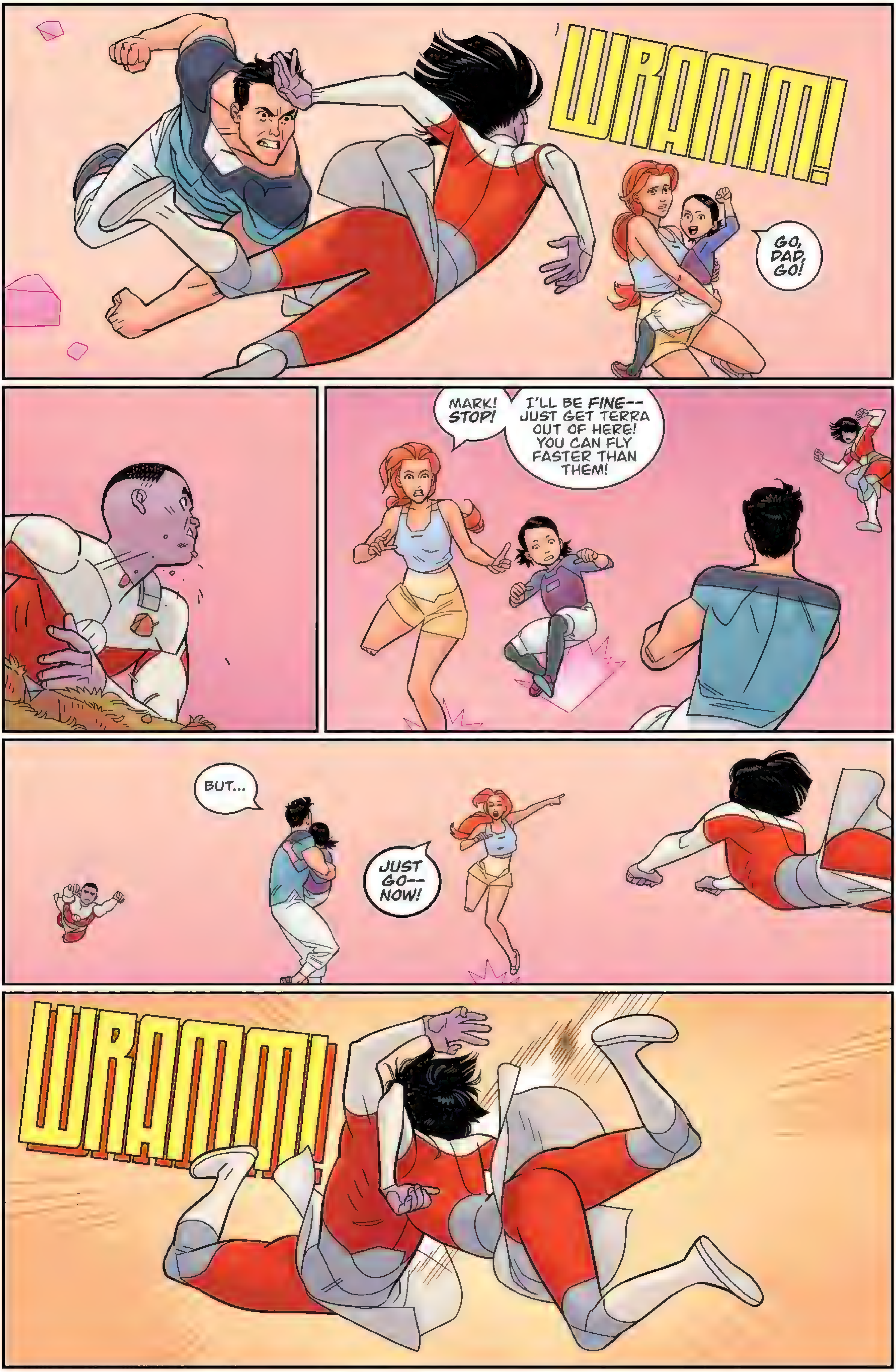

IT IS TIME FOR A LESSON. THE WEATHER IS SO NICE, I SUGGEST SCIENCE. WE CAN DO SOMETHING BOTH FUN AND EDUCATIONAL OUTDOORS.
OH, BOO! DAD AND I ARE ALREADY HAVING FUN!
WE CAN HAVE JUST AS MUCH FUN IF YOU GIVE IT A CHANCE.
YOU WERE WEARING MY ARM OUT ANYWAY, GIRL. I NEED A BREAK. GO WITH EDDY AND GET SMARTER.
I'M PLENTY SMART! I KNOW ALL THE MATH!
C'MON!
TERRA!
GO!
FINE. FINE.
WHAT-EVER!

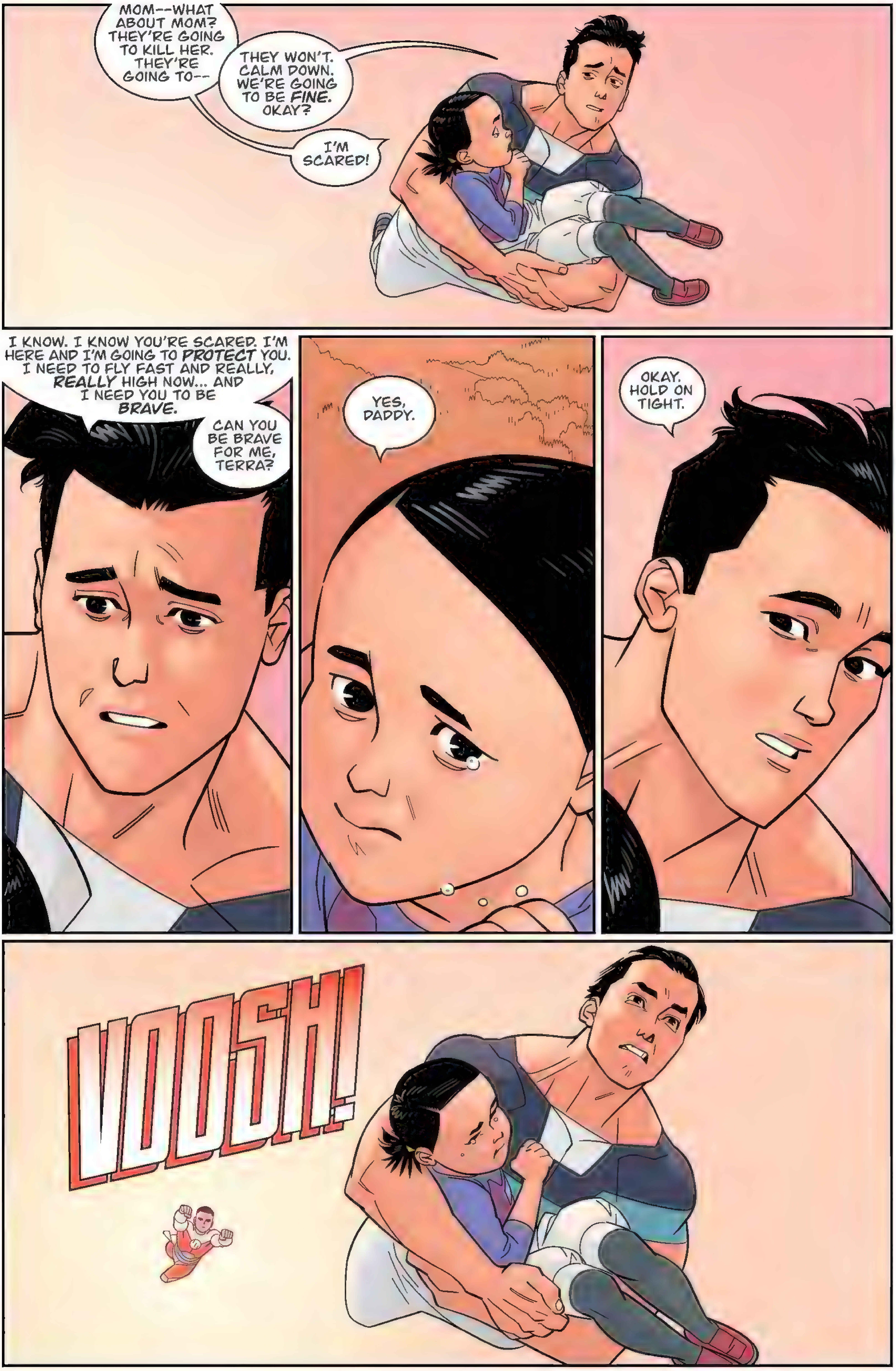

SKRAGG!!
EDDY!
NOOO!

YOU KILLED HIM!
YOU KILLED MY FRIEND!
THIS ONE IS FEISTY! I'M GOING TO ENJOY SPLITTING HER OVER MY KNEE!
TERRA!!
LET HER GO!
WRAMM!
GET TERRA OUT OF HERE!
I'LL HANDLE THEM!
WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS?
I DON'T KNOW.

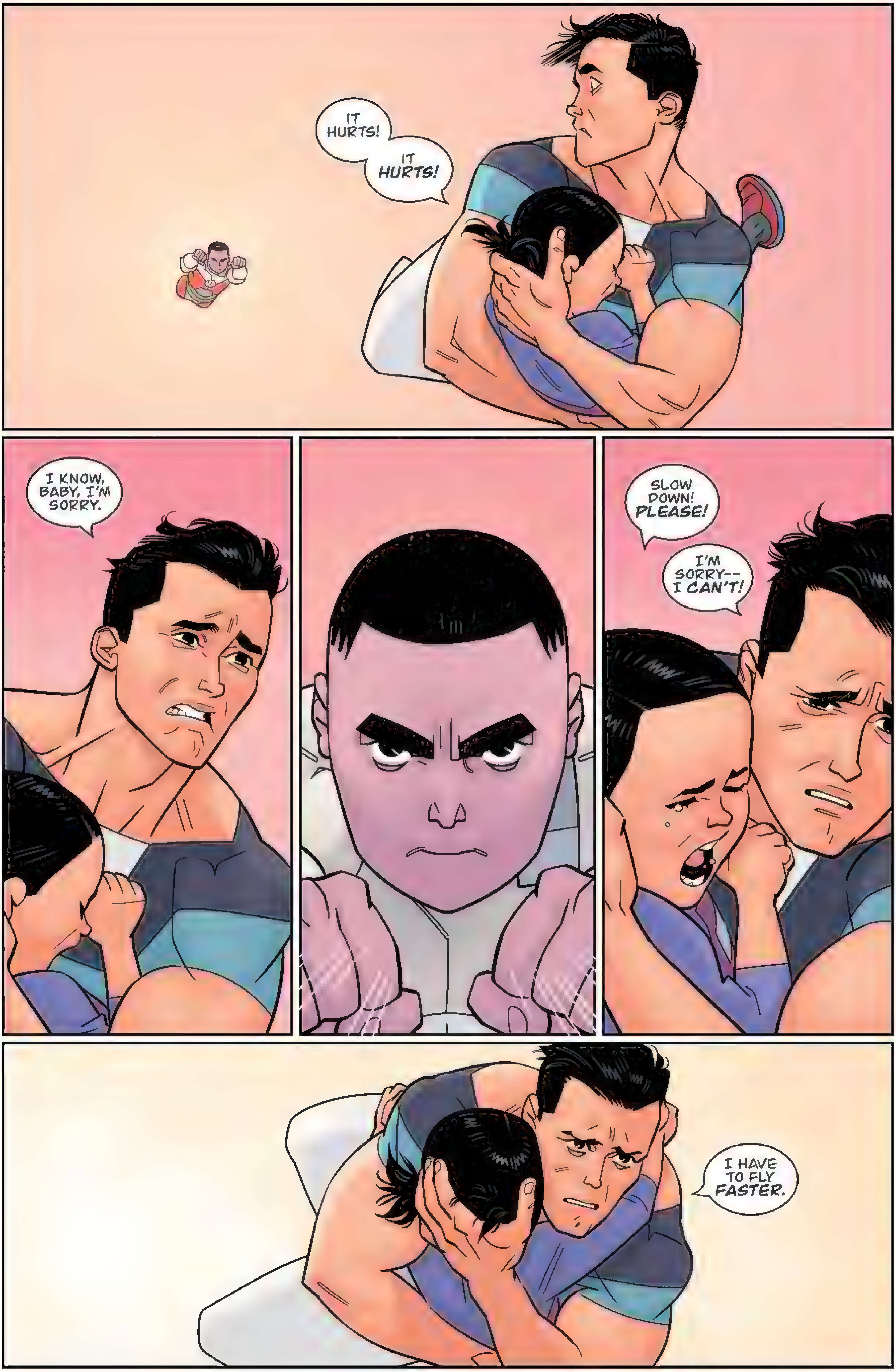

YOU'RE STAYING *RIGHT HERE*-- BOTH OF YOU!
SVAKK!!
MOM-- ARE YOU A ROBOT?!
JUST MY LEG, HONEY.
SHIT!
NOT FAST ENOUGH!


WRAMM!
EVE!
SKRAASH!!
AAAGH!
MOMMY!
WHUDD!
WHOOSH!
SKRAAGG!!
THIS WON'T LAST!

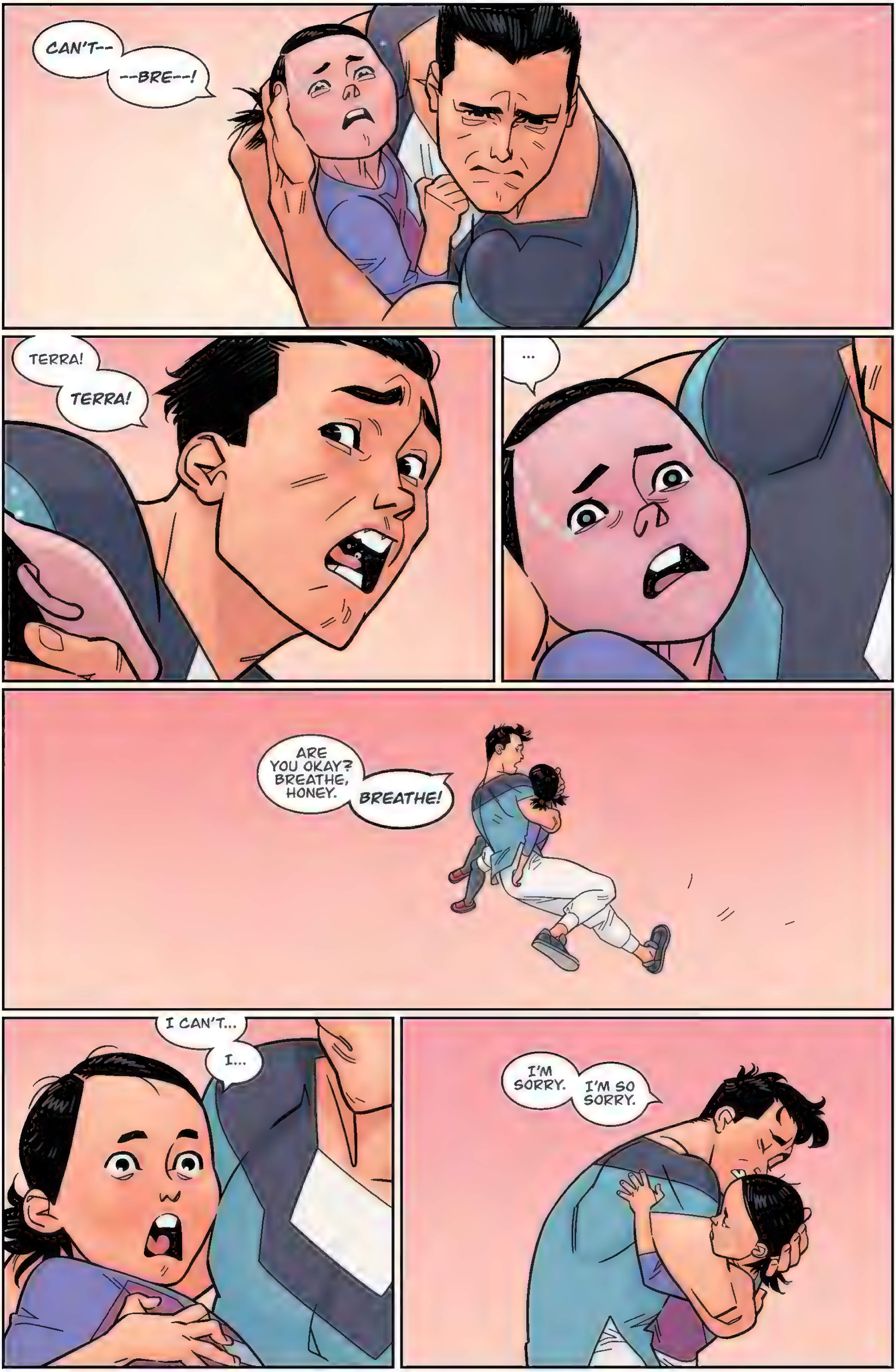

WRAMM!
GO, DAD, GO!
MARK! STOP!
I'LL BE *FINE*-- JUST GET TERRA OUT OF HERE! YOU CAN FLY FASTER THAN THEM!
BUT...
JUST GO-- NOW!
WRAMM!

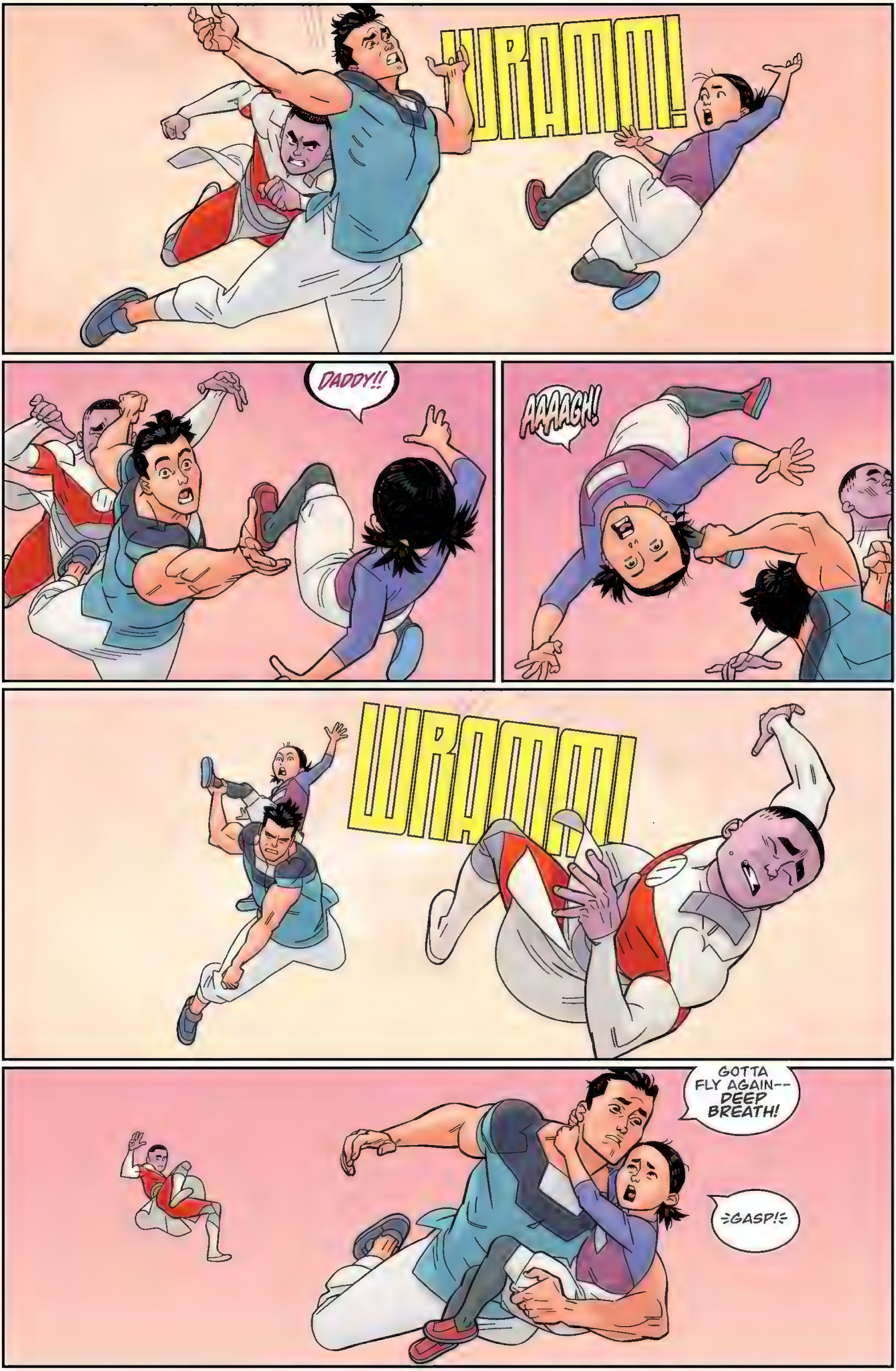

MOM--WHAT ABOUT MOM? THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HER. THEY'RE GOING TO--
THEY WON'T. CALM DOWN. WE'RE GOING TO BE *FINE*. OKAY?
I'M SCARED!
I KNOW. I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED. I'M HERE AND I'M GOING TO *PROTECT* YOU. I NEED TO FLY FAST AND REALLY, *REALLY* HIGH NOW... AND I NEED YOU TO BE *BRAVE*.
CAN YOU BE BRAVE FOR ME, TERRA?
YES, DADDY.
OKAY. HOLD ON TIGHT.
VOOSH!

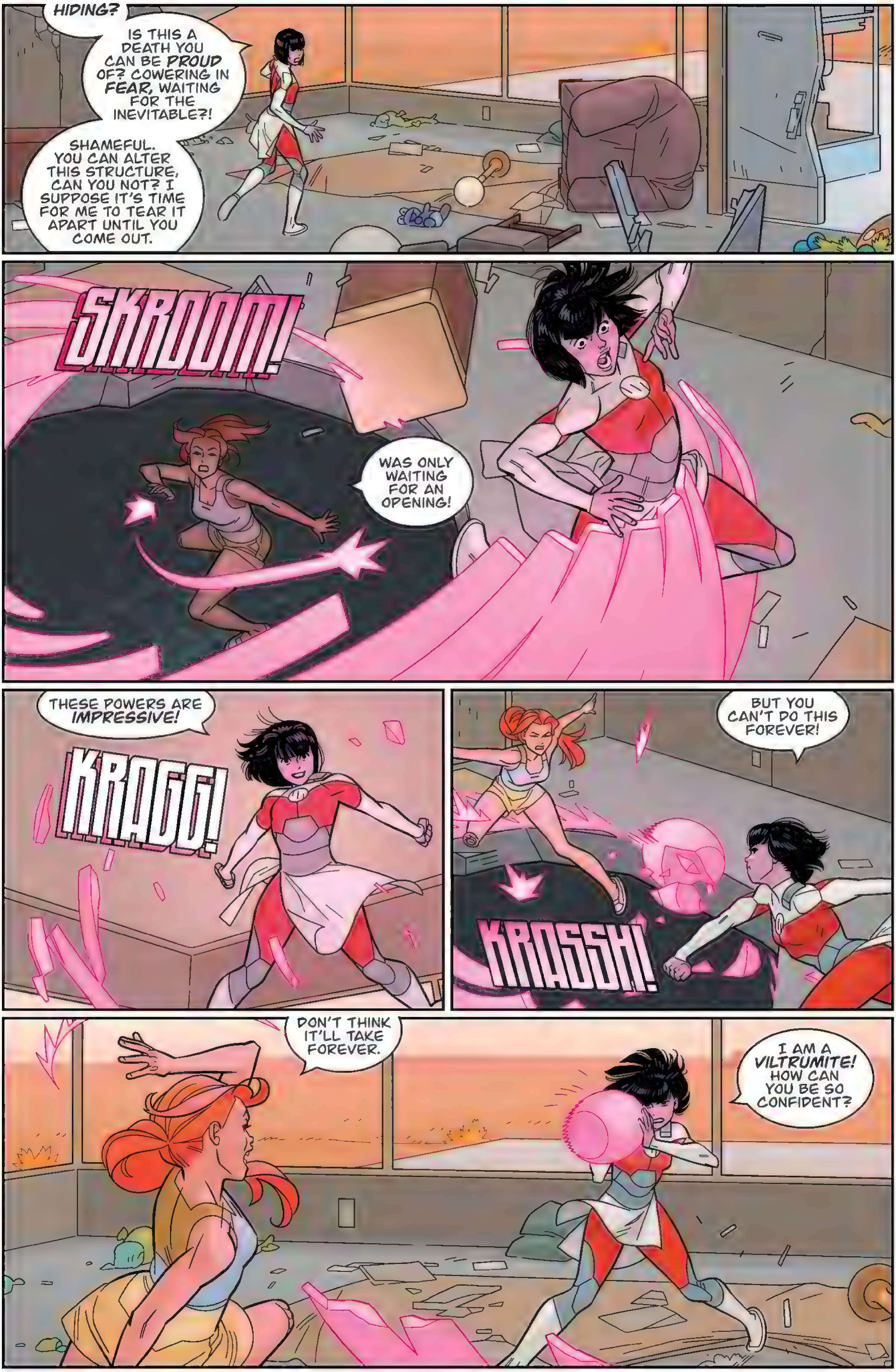
YOU'VE BEEN MARKED FOR DEATH BY THE VILTRUM EMPIRE-- SO DIE YOU WILL!
YOU CANNOT STOP THIS-- WHY BOTHER FIGHTING?! YOU'RE ONLY MAKING THIS--
KROOM!
IRRK!
YOU CAN'T HURT ME IF YOU CAN'T SEE ME!
POINTLESS! YOU'RE JUST WASTING TIME!
SKROOM!

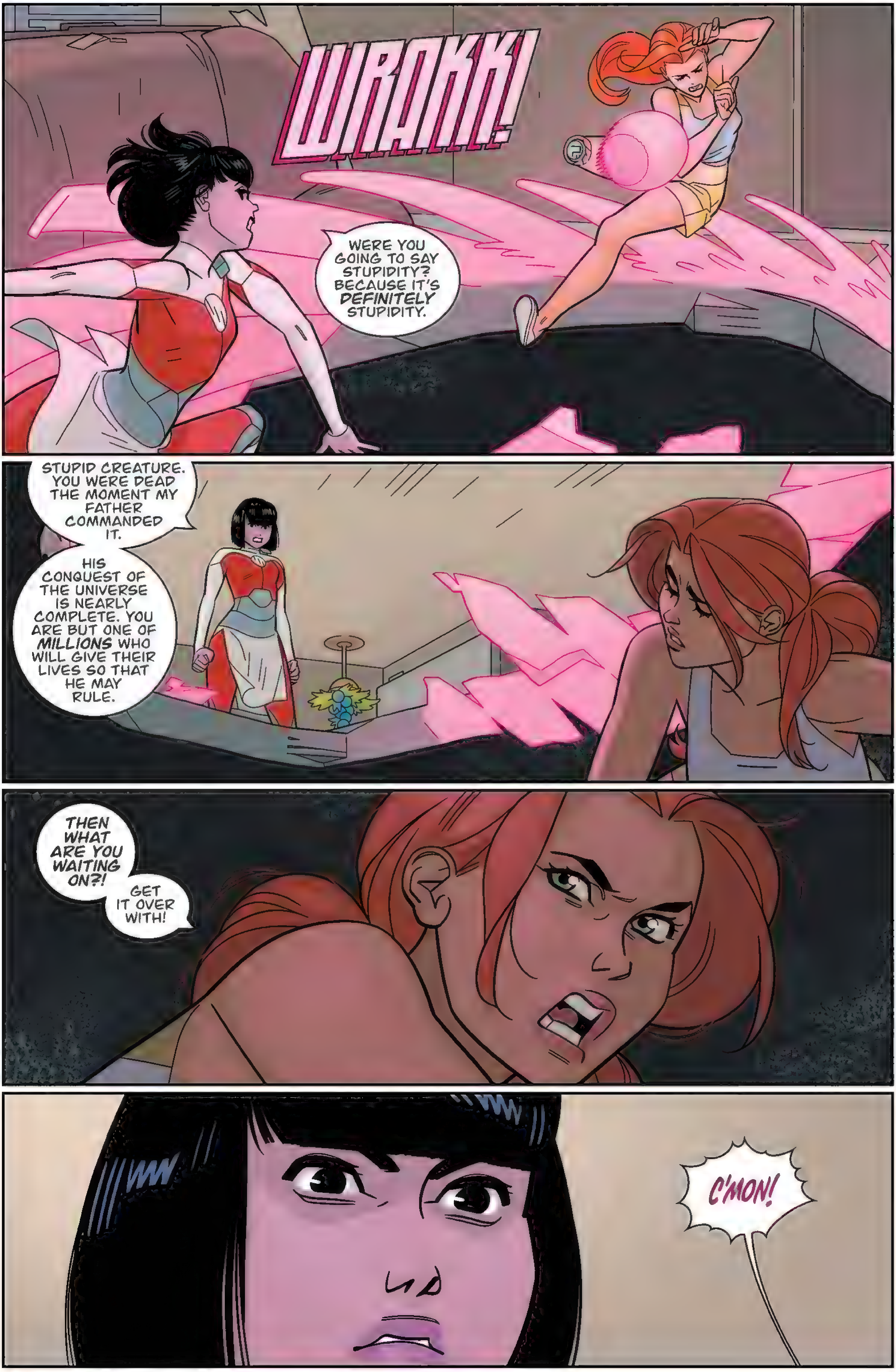

IT HURTS!
IT **HURTS!**
I KNOW, BABY, I'M SORRY.
SLOW DOWN! **PLEASE!**
I'M SORRY-- **I CAN'T!**
I HAVE TO FLY **FASTER.**

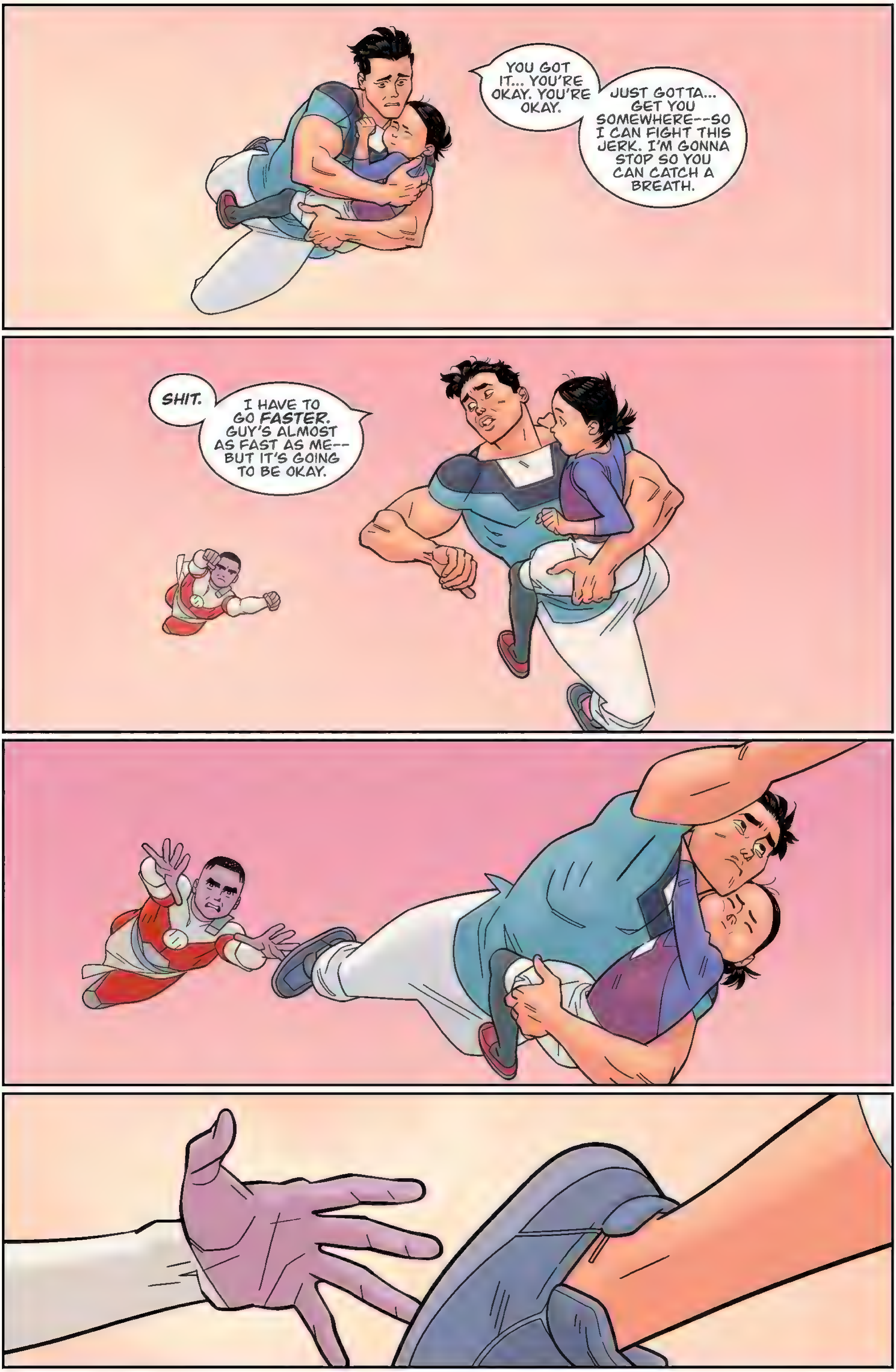
FWA-BOOOM!!

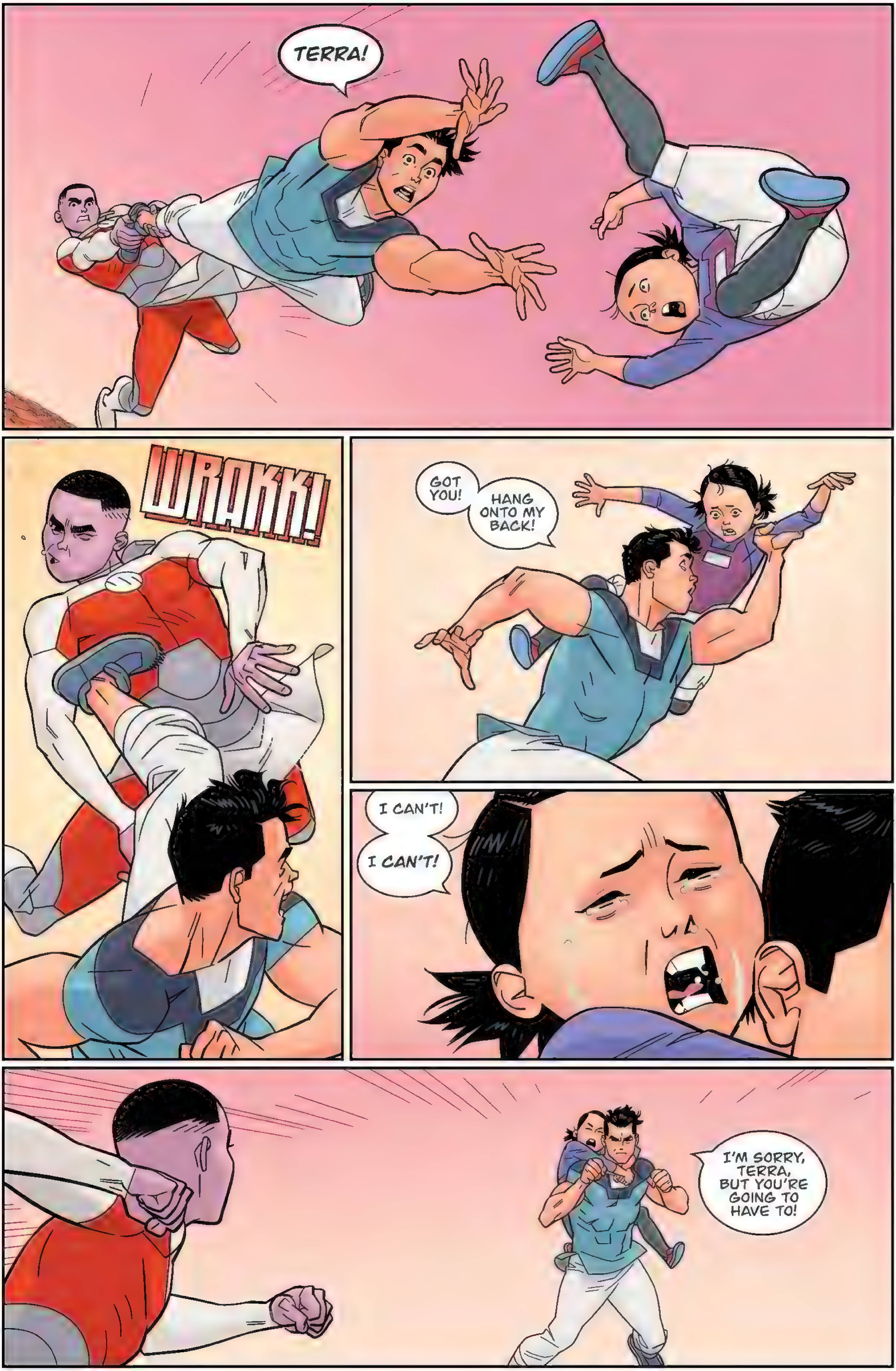

CAN'T--
--BRE--!
TERRA!
TERRA!
...
ARE YOU OKAY? BREATHE, HONEY.
BREATHE!
I CAN'T...
I...
I'M SORRY.
I'M SO SORRY.

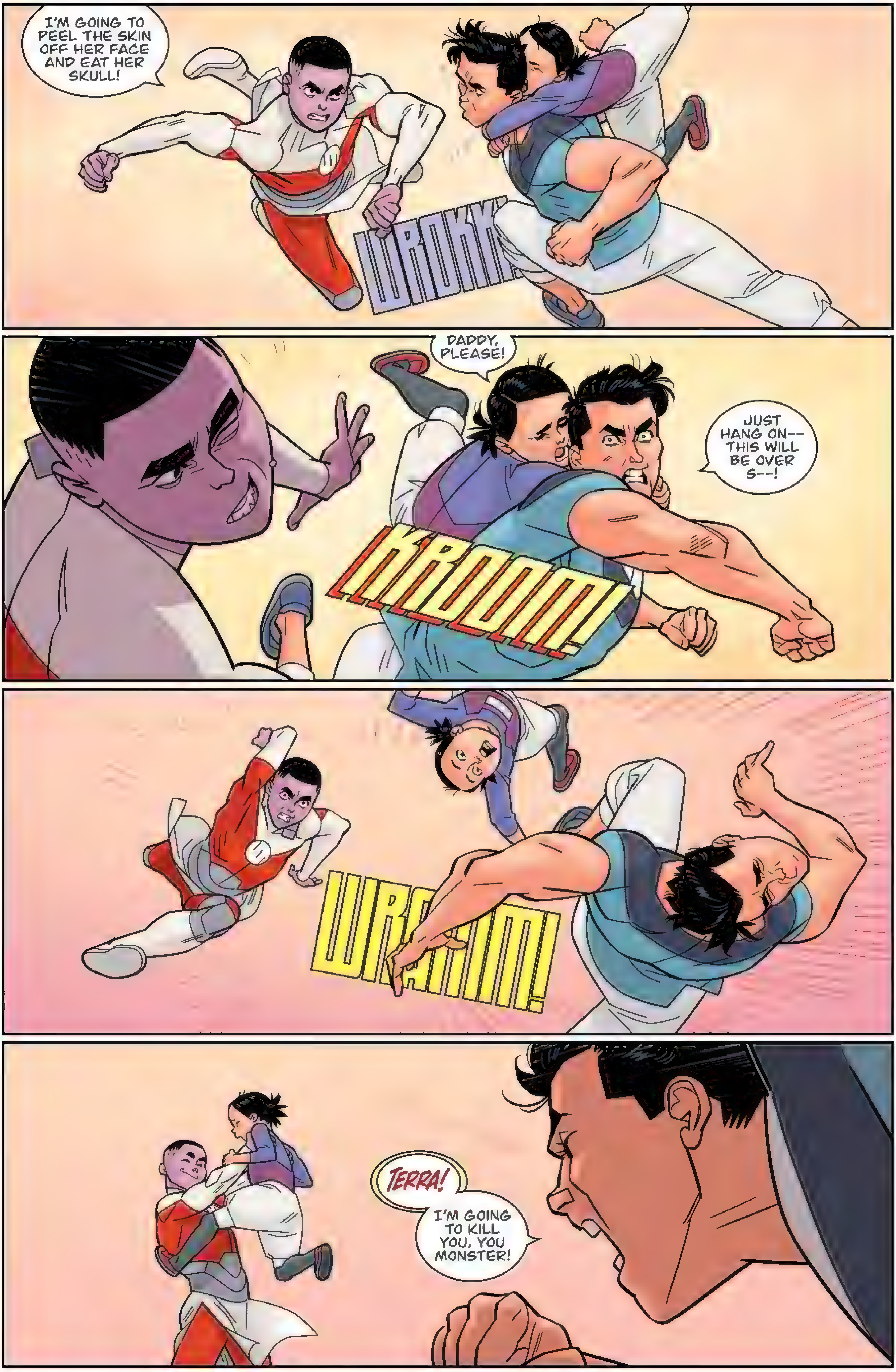

WRAMM!
DADDY!!
AAAAGH!
WRAMM!
GOTTA FLY AGAIN-- DEEP BREATH!
GASP!

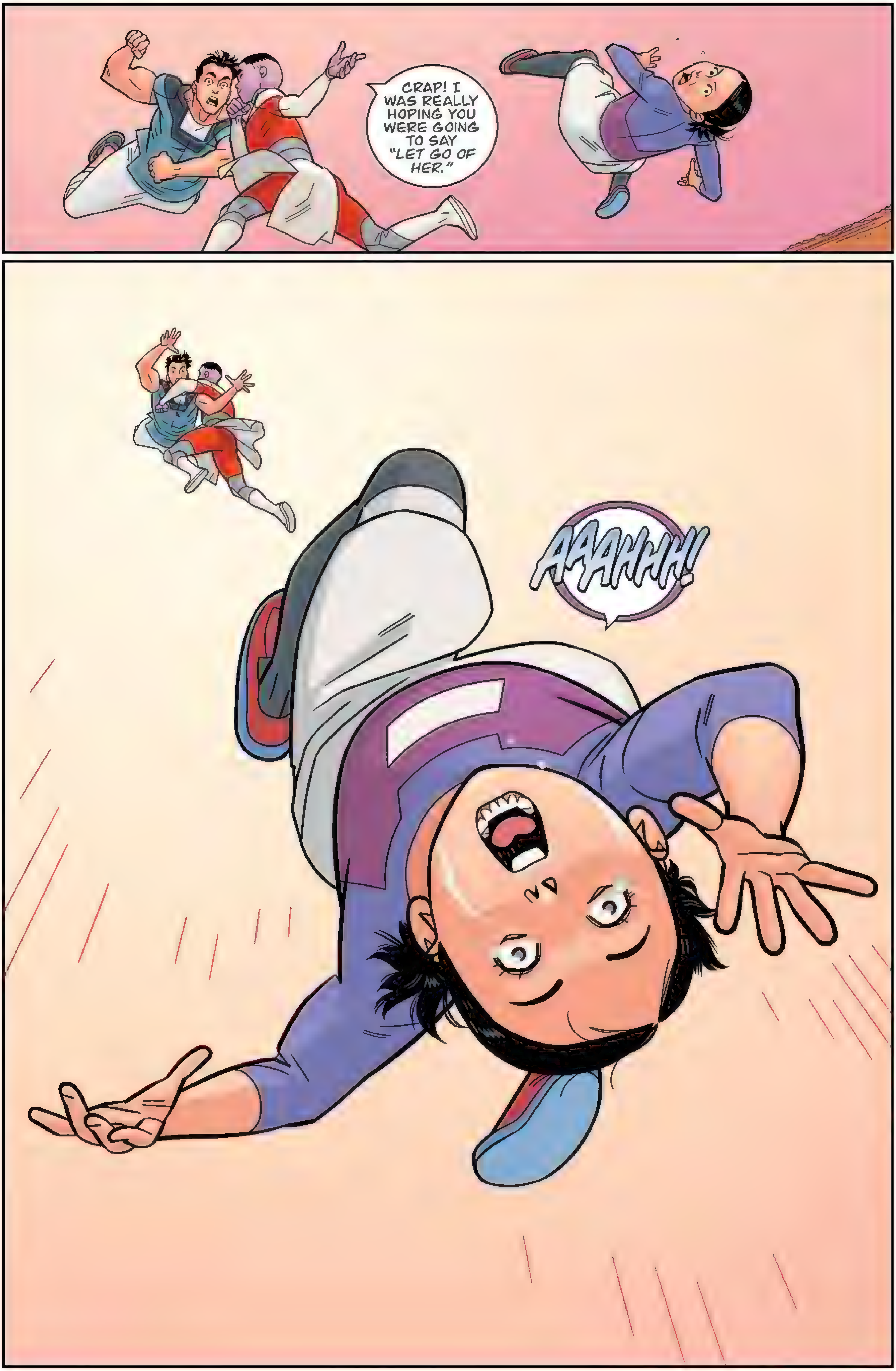

HIDING?
IS THIS A DEATH YOU CAN BE *PROUD* OF? COWERING IN *FEAR*, WAITING FOR THE INEVITABLE?!
SHAMEFUL. YOU CAN ALTER THIS STRUCTURE, CAN YOU NOT? I SUPPOSE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO TEAR IT APART UNTIL YOU COME OUT.
SKROOM!
WAS ONLY WAITING FOR AN OPENING!
THESE POWERS ARE *IMPRESSIVE!*
KRAGG!
BUT YOU CAN'T DO THIS FOREVER!
KRASSH!
DON'T THINK IT'LL TAKE FOREVER.
I AM A *VILTRUMITE!* HOW CAN YOU BE SO CONFIDENT?


WRAKK!
WERE YOU GOING TO SAY STUPIDITY? BECAUSE IT'S *DEFINITELY* STUPIDITY.
STUPID CREATURE. YOU WERE DEAD THE MOMENT MY FATHER COMMANDED IT.
HIS CONQUEST OF THE UNIVERSE IS NEARLY COMPLETE. YOU ARE BUT ONE OF *MILLIONS* WHO WILL GIVE THEIR LIVES SO THAT HE MAY RULE.
THEN WHAT ARE YOU WAITING ON?!
GET IT OVER WITH!
C'MON!


YOU GOT IT... YOU'RE OKAY. YOU'RE OKAY.
JUST GOTTA... GET YOU SOMEWHERE--SO I CAN FIGHT THIS JERK. I'M GONNA STOP SO YOU CAN CATCH A BREATH.
SHIT.
I HAVE TO GO FASTER. GUY'S ALMOST AS FAST AS ME-- BUT IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.

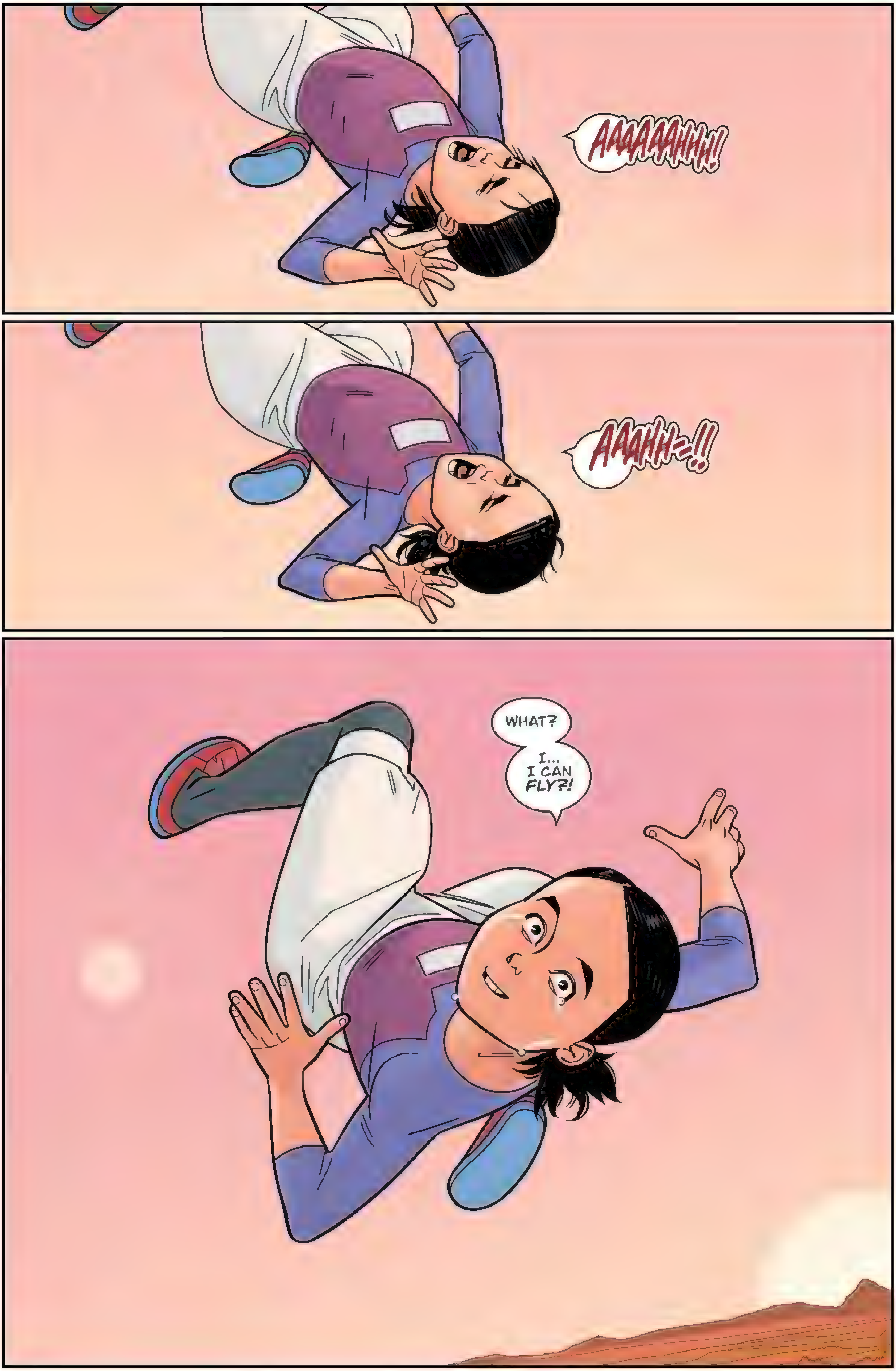

TERRA!
WRAKK!
GOT YOU!
HANG ONTO MY BACK!
I CAN'T!
I CAN'T!
I'M SORRY, TERRA, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO!

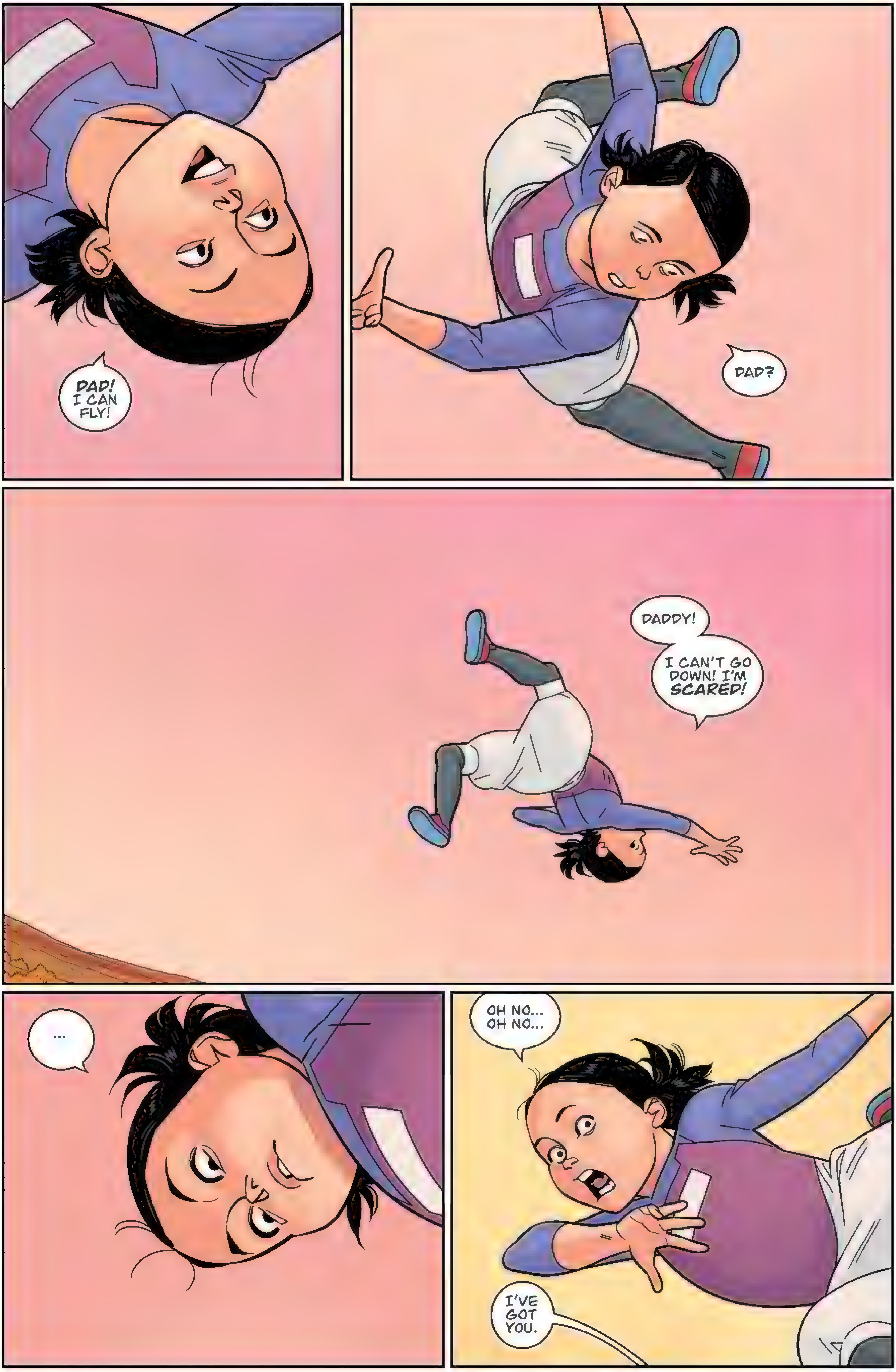

I'M GOING TO PEEL THE SKIN OFF HER FACE AND EAT HER SKULL!
WROKK!
DADDY, PLEASE!
JUST HANG ON-- THIS WILL BE OVER S--!
KROOM!
WRAAM!
TERRA!
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, YOU MONSTER!


CRAP! I WAS REALLY HOPING YOU WERE GOING TO SAY "LET GO OF HER."
AAAHHH!

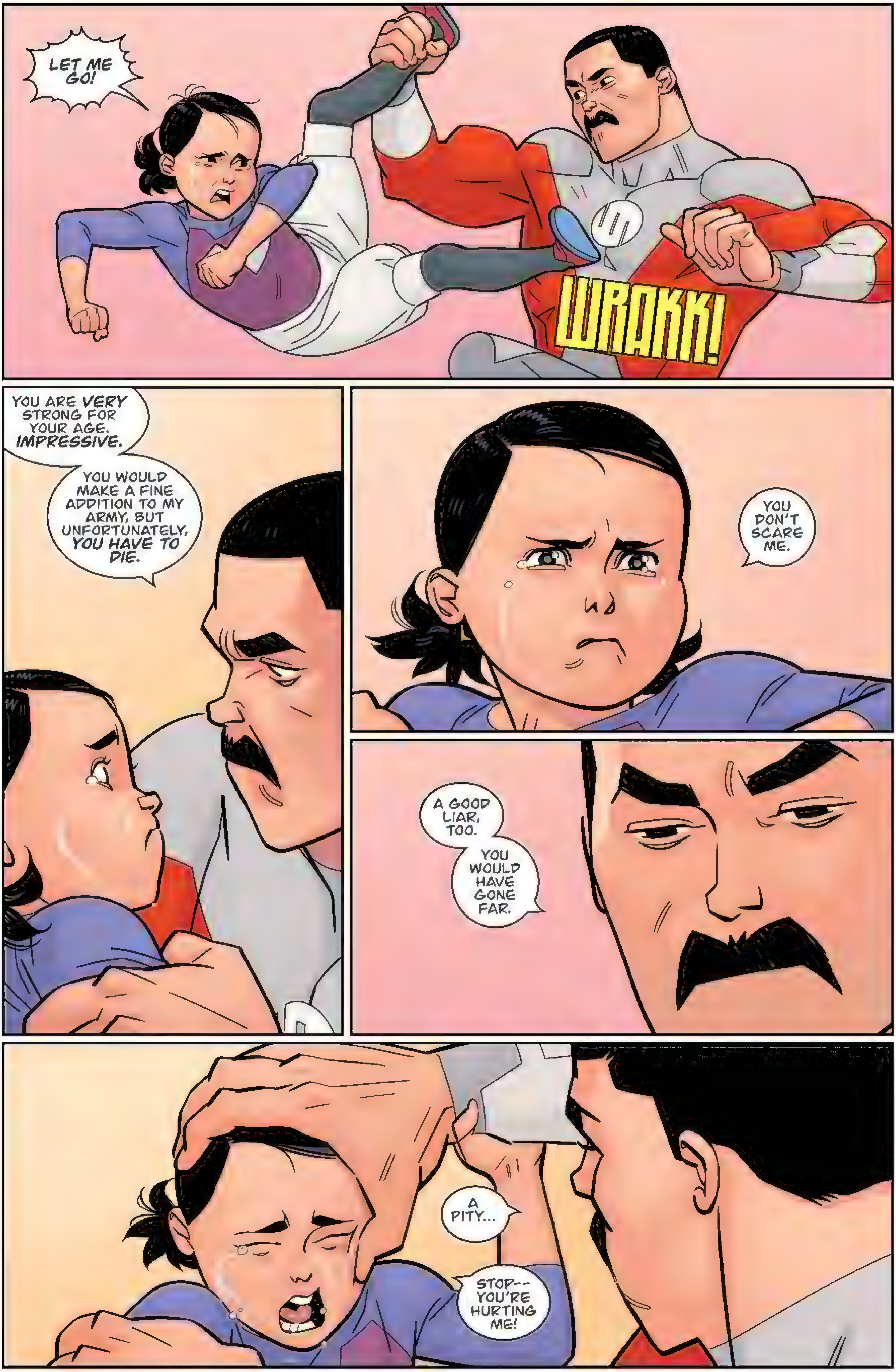
CHAPTER 132

DADDY!
GET BACK HERE!
WRAMM!
WE'RE GOING TO LEAVE YOU *JUST* ALIVE ENOUGH TO CLEAN UP HER REMAINS.
YOU'LL SEE HER AGAIN. DON'T WORRY.
TERRA!!

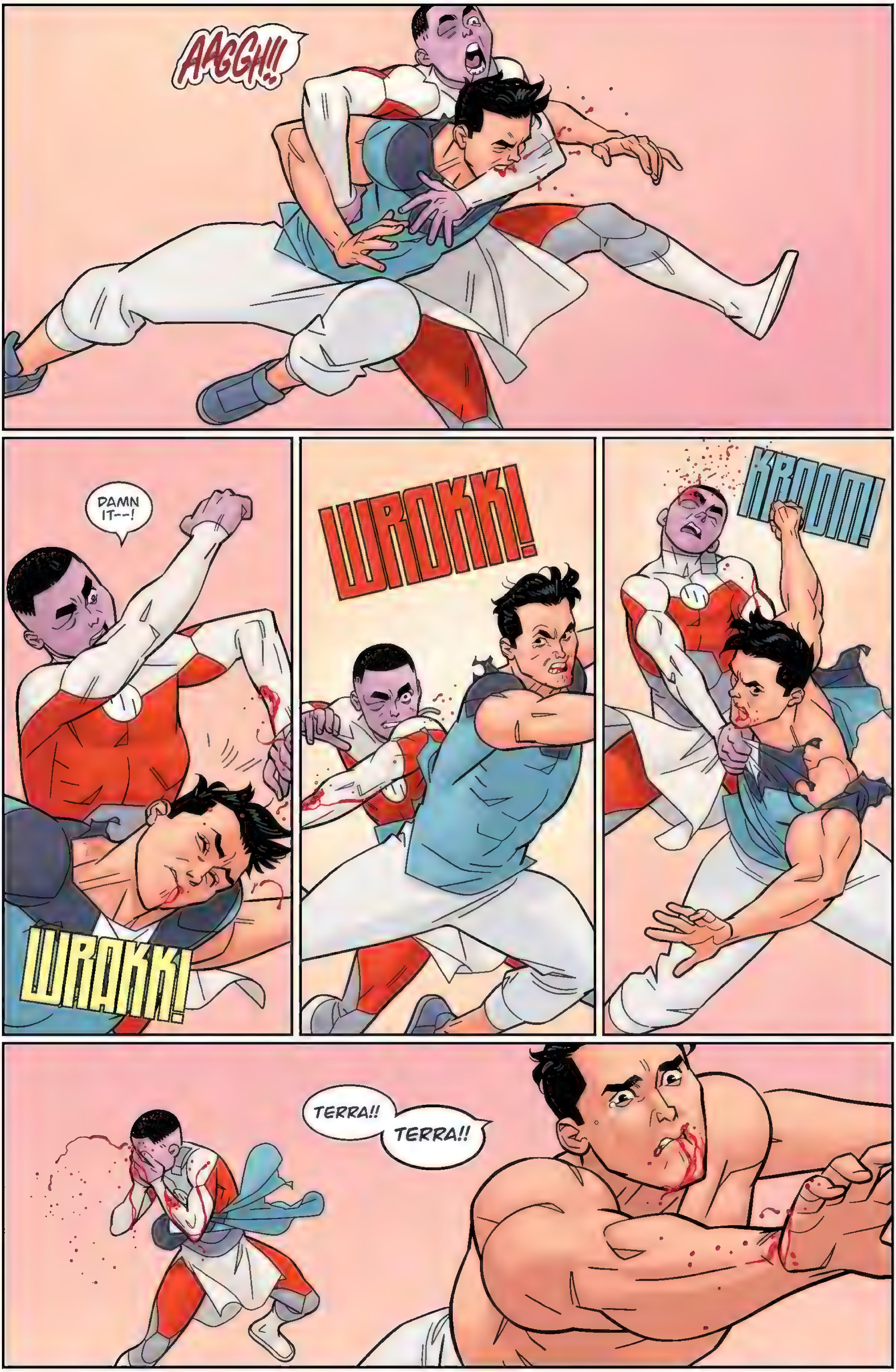

AAAAAAHHH!
AAAHH–!!
WHAT?
I... I CAN FLY?!

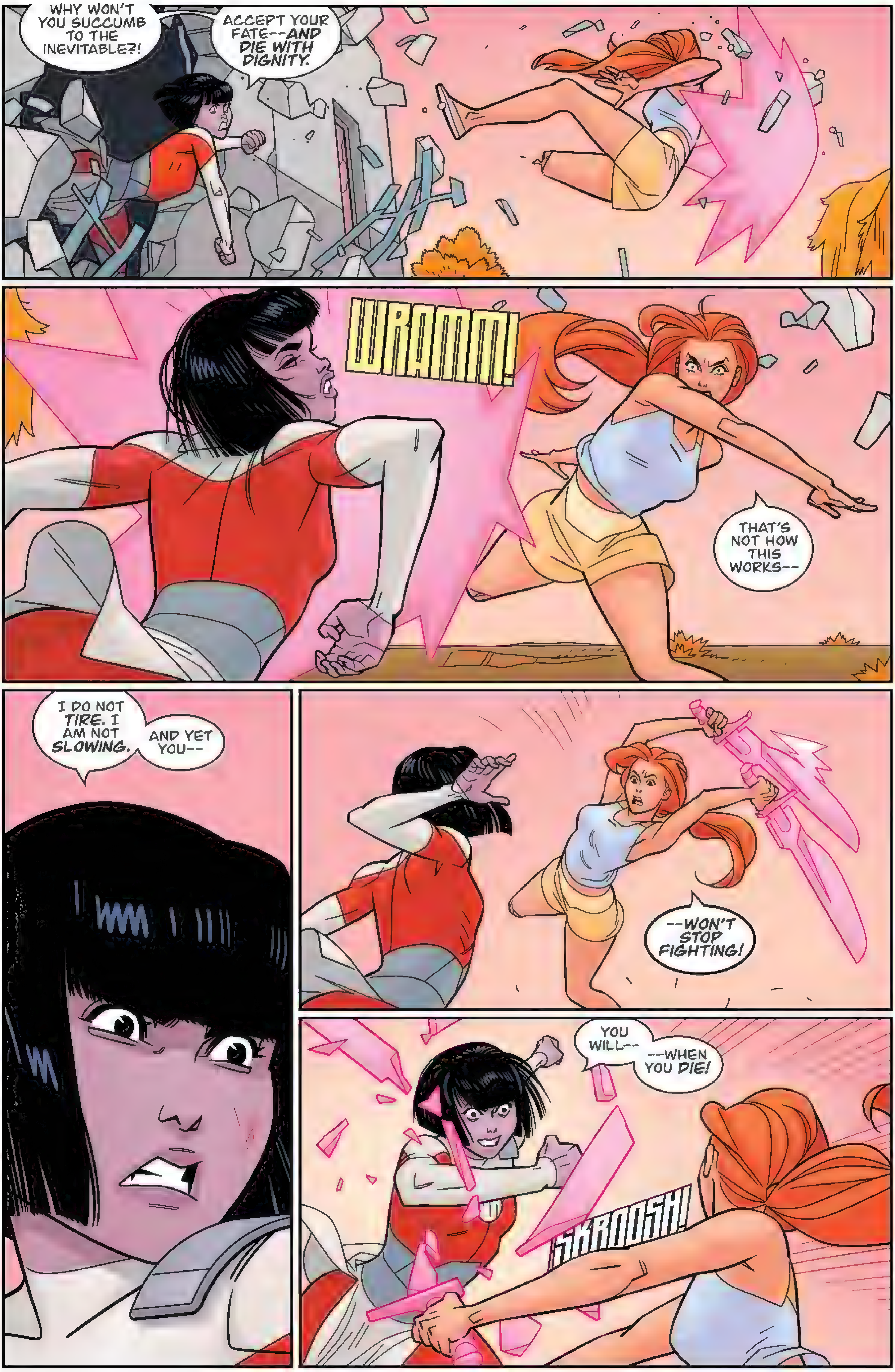

DAD! I CAN FLY!
DAD?
DADDY!
I CAN'T GO DOWN! I'M SCARED!
...
OH NO... OH NO...
I'VE GOT YOU.

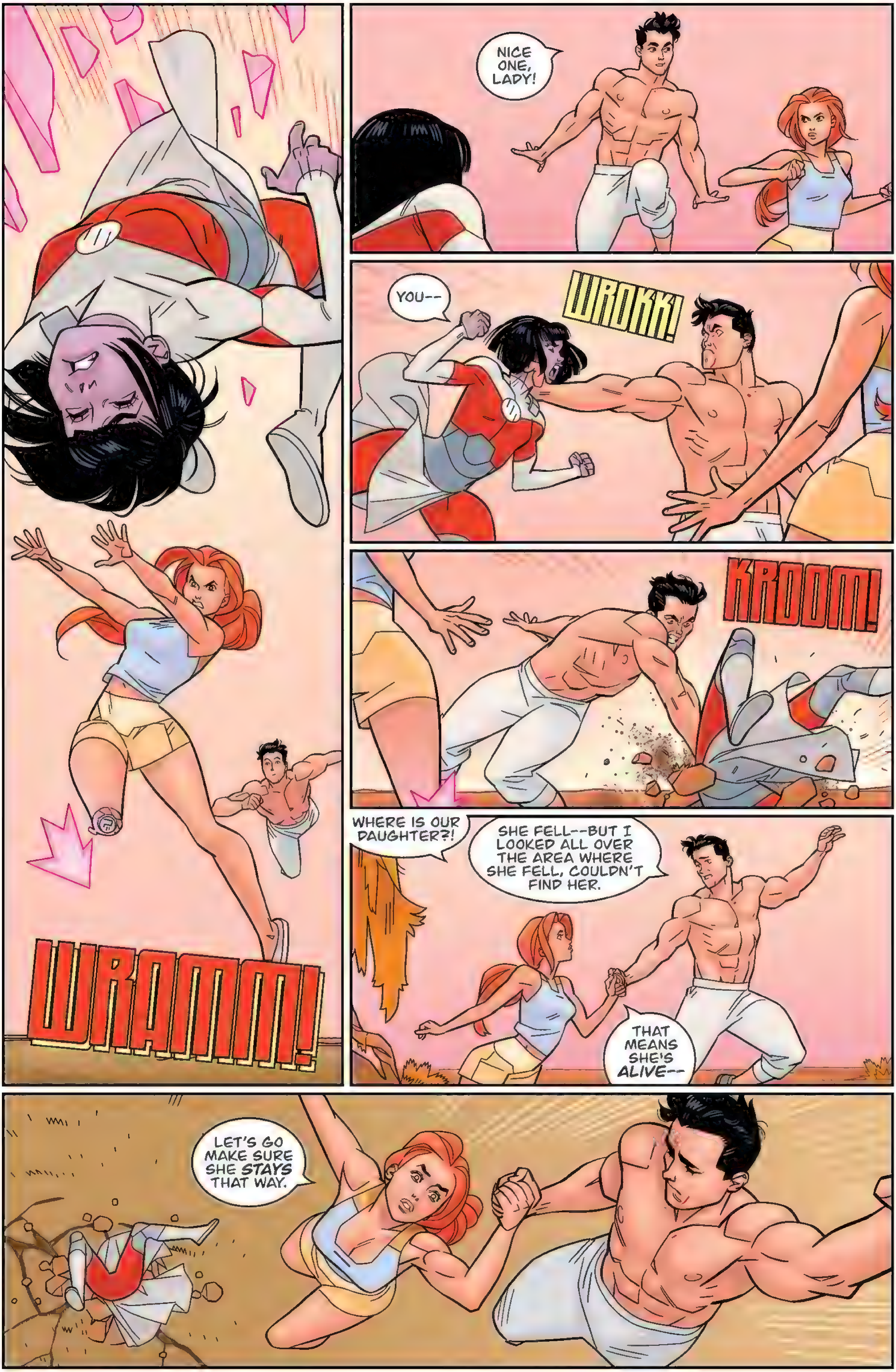
SHAME...
...FALLING WOULD HAVE BEEN A FAR LESS PAINFUL DEATH...

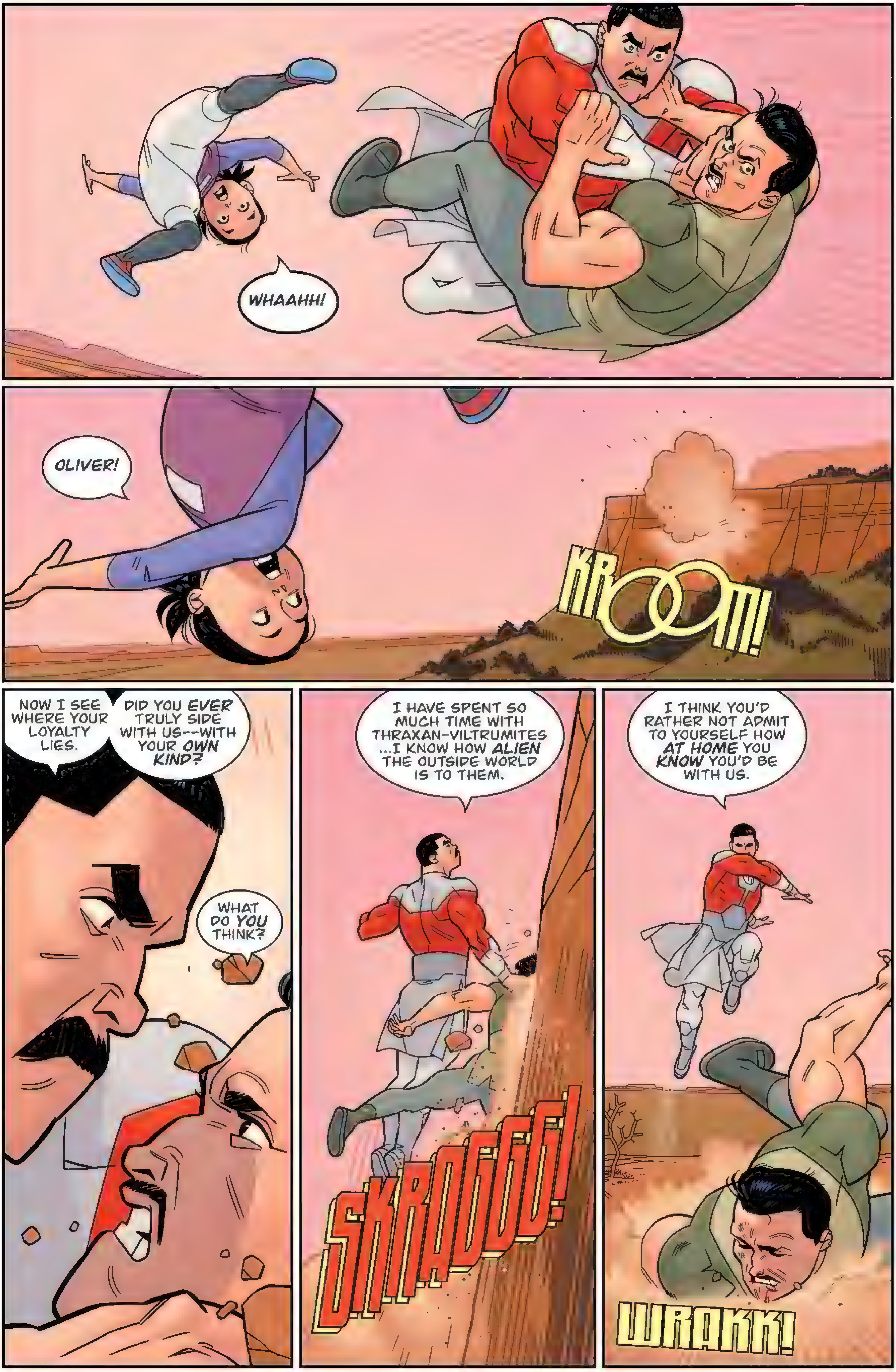

LET ME GO!
WRAKK!
YOU ARE VERY STRONG FOR YOUR AGE. IMPRESSIVE.
YOU WOULD MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO MY ARMY, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, YOU HAVE TO DIE.
YOU DON'T SCARE ME.
A GOOD LIAR, TOO.
YOU WOULD HAVE GONE FAR.
A PITY...
STOP-- YOU'RE HURTING ME!

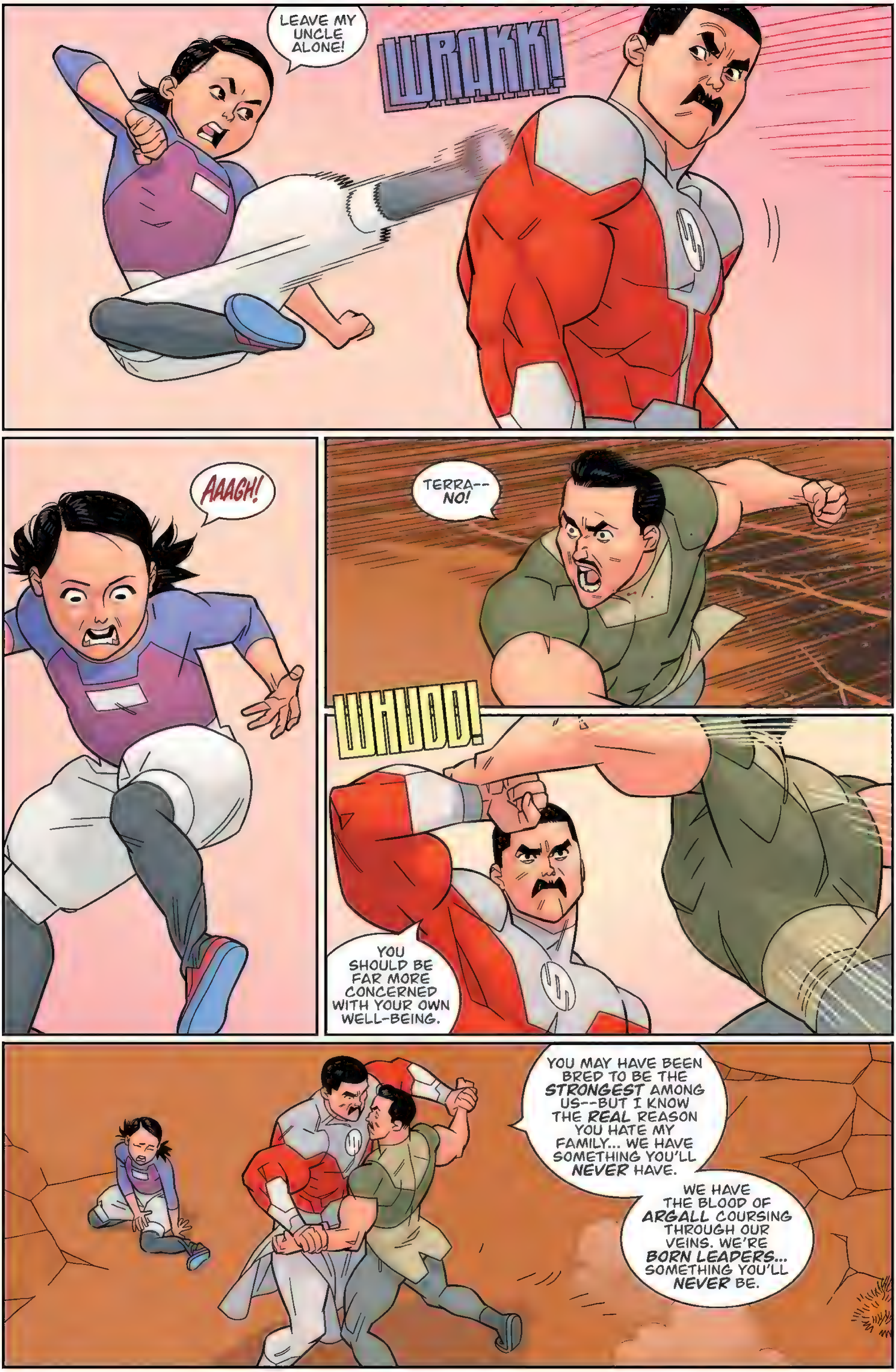
WRAKOOM!!
AAAHH!!
GO!
FIND YOUR FATHER!
I'LL--
TRY--

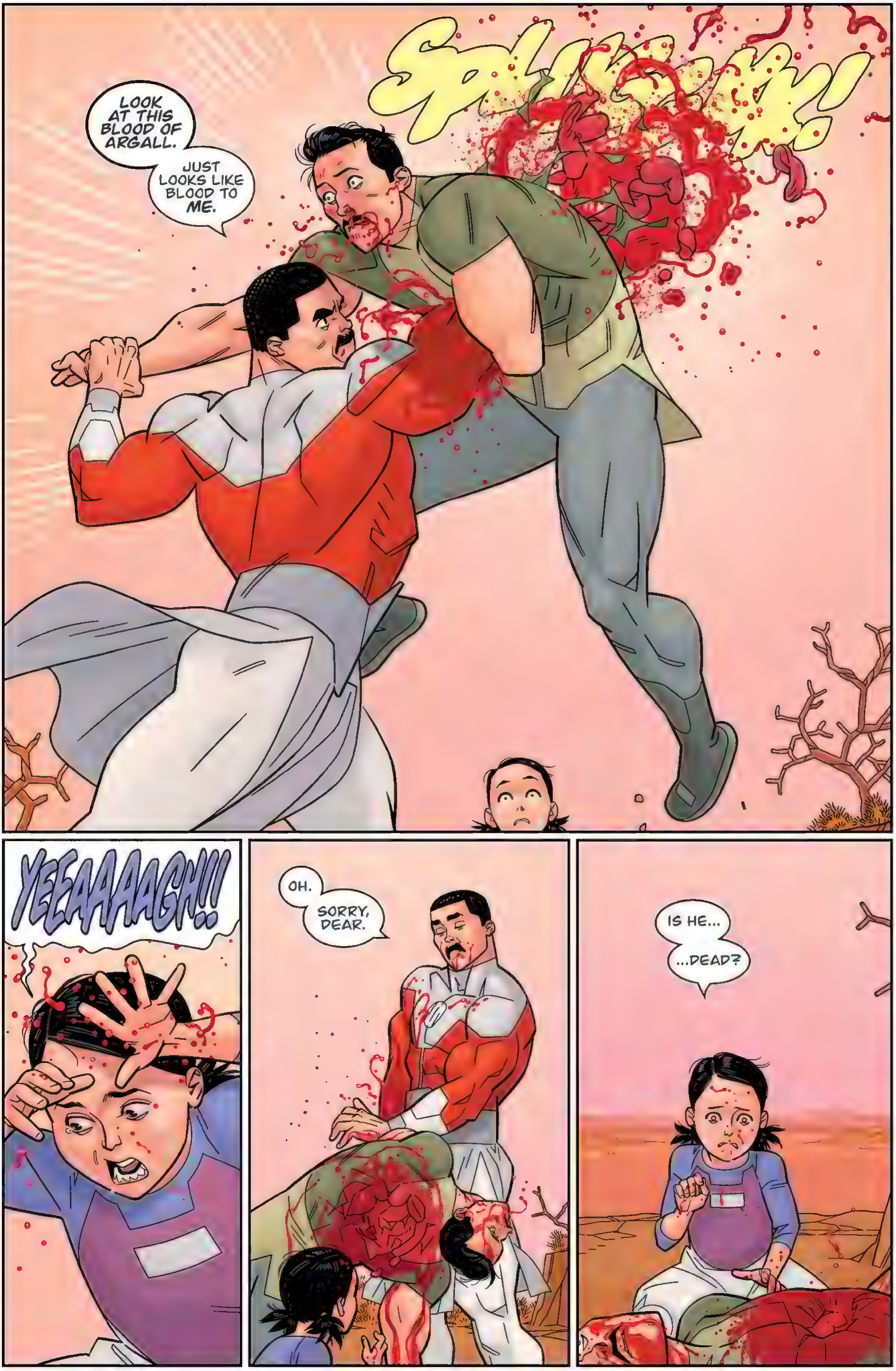

AAGGH!!
DAMN IT--!
WRAKK!
WROKK!
KROOM!
TERRA!!
TERRA!!

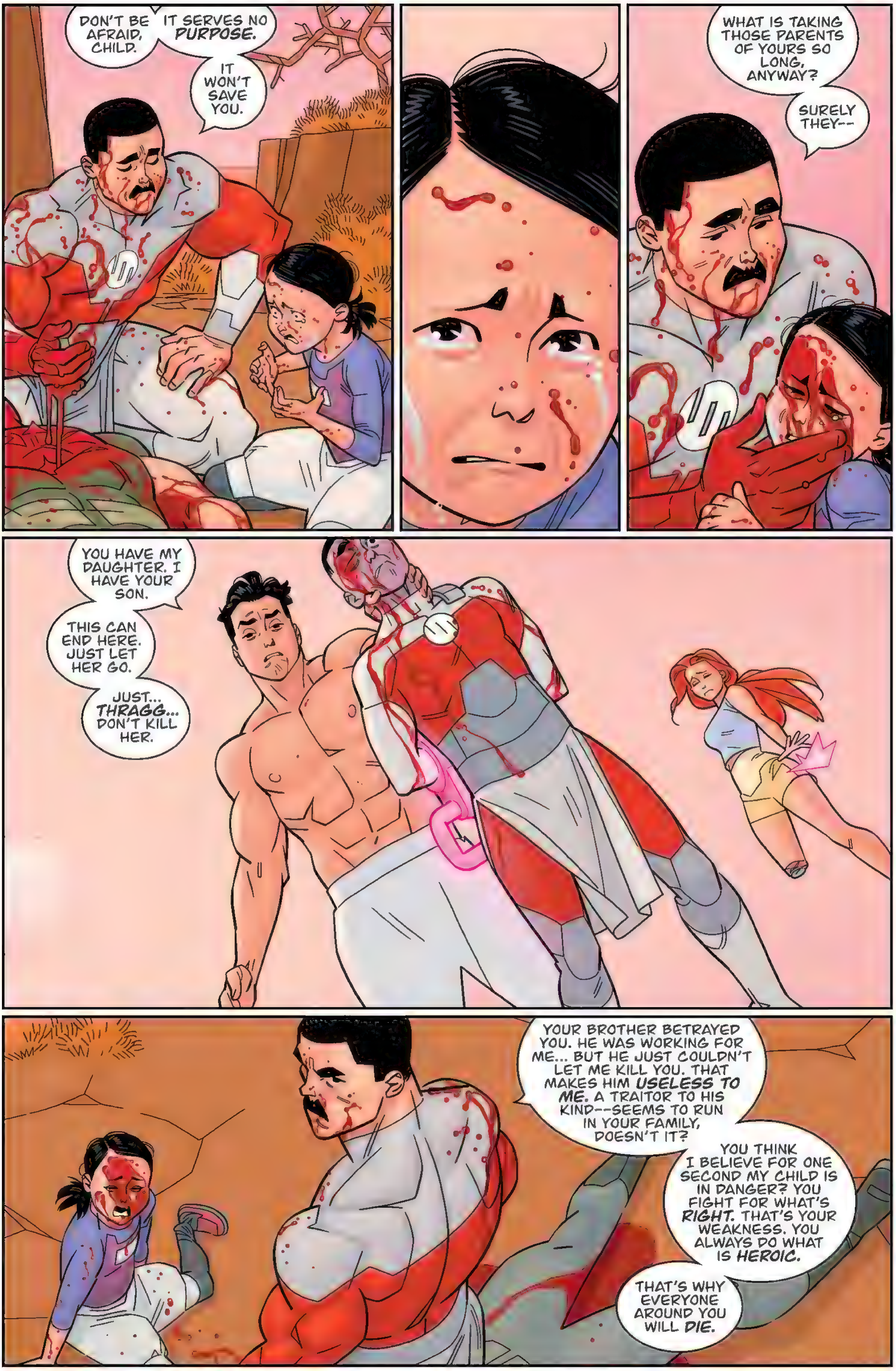

WHY WON'T YOU SUCCUMB TO THE INEVITABLE?!
ACCEPT YOUR FATE--**AND DIE WITH DIGNITY.**
WRAMM!
THAT'S NOT HOW THIS WORKS--
I DO NOT **TIRE.** I AM NOT **SLOWING.**
AND YET YOU--
--WON'T STOP FIGHTING!
YOU WILL--
--WHEN YOU **DIE!**
SKROOSH!

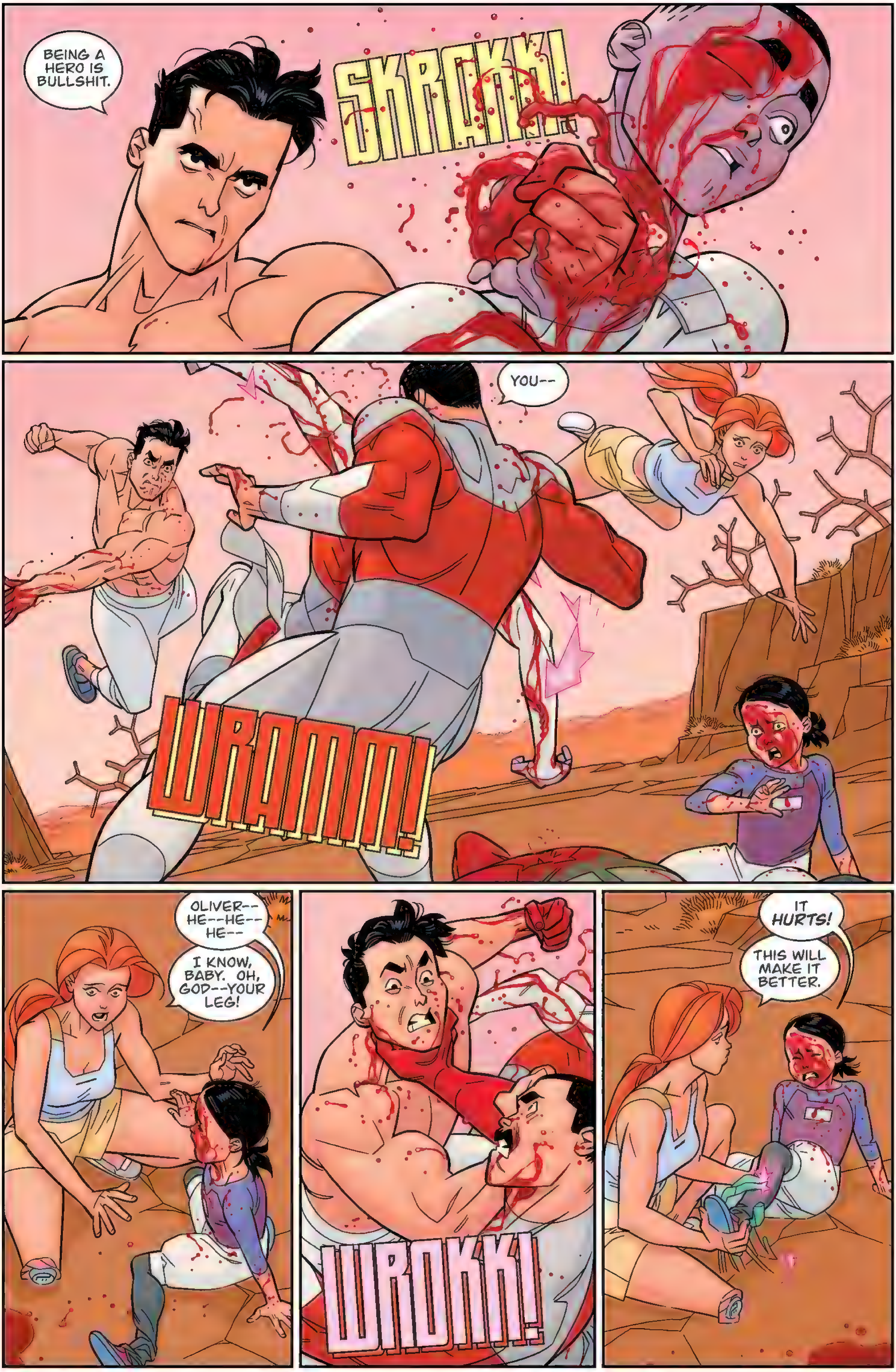

WRAMMM!
NICE ONE, LADY!
YOU--
WROKK!
KROOM!
WHERE IS OUR DAUGHTER?!
SHE FELL--BUT I LOOKED ALL OVER THE AREA WHERE SHE FELL, COULDN'T FIND HER.
THAT MEANS SHE'S *ALIVE*--
LET'S GO MAKE SURE SHE *STAYS* THAT WAY.


WHAAHH!
OLIVER!
KROOM!
NOW I SEE WHERE YOUR LOYALTY LIES.
DID YOU *EVER* TRULY SIDE WITH US--WITH YOUR *OWN KIND?*
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?
I HAVE SPENT SO MUCH TIME WITH THRAXAN-VILTRUMITES ...I KNOW HOW *ALIEN* THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS TO THEM.
SKRAGGG!
I THINK YOU'D RATHER NOT ADMIT TO YOURSELF HOW *AT HOME* YOU *KNOW* YOU'D BE WITH US.
WRAKK!

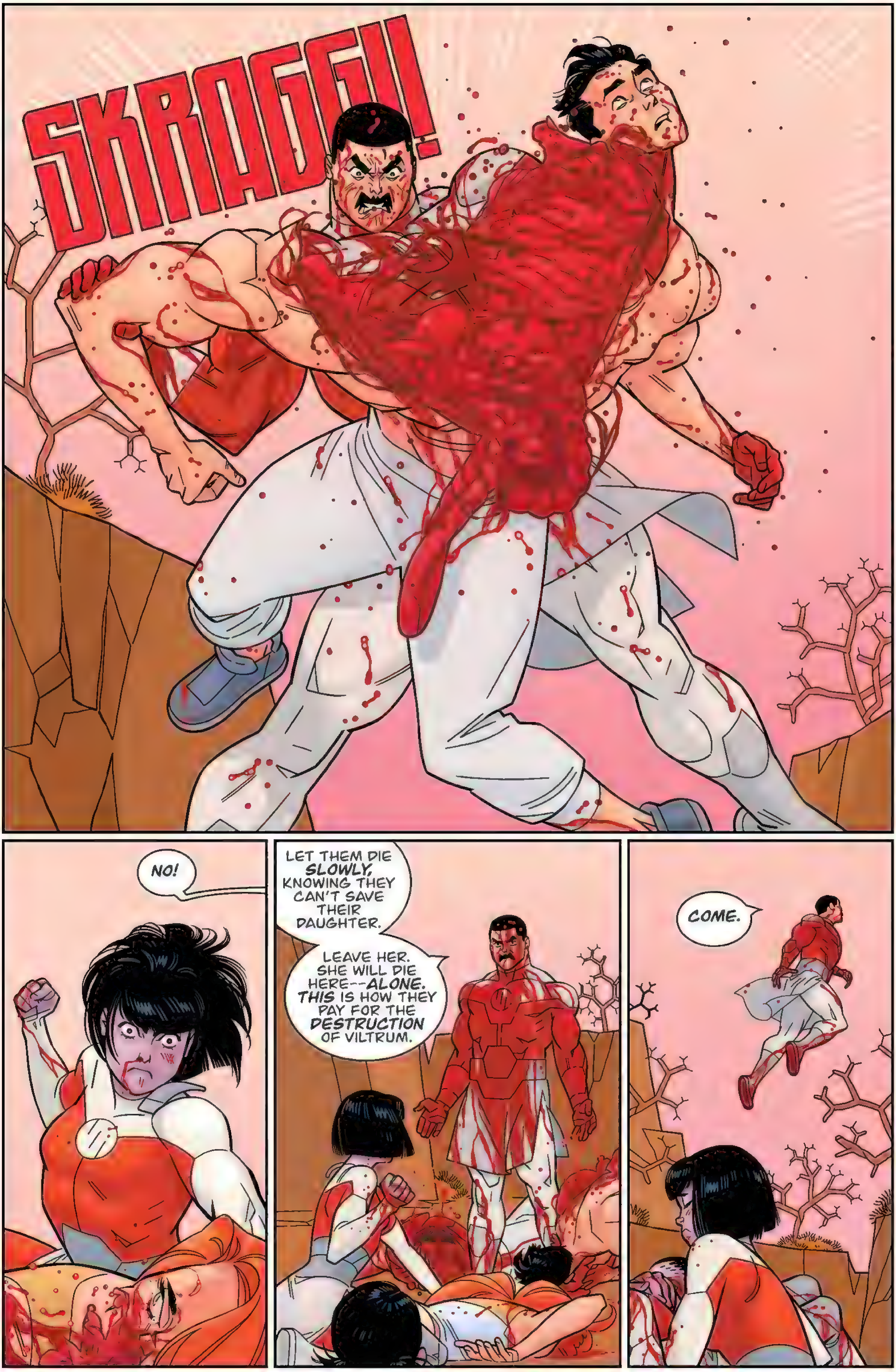

LEAVE MY UNCLE ALONE!
WRAKK!
AAAGH!
TERRA-- NO!
WHUDD!
YOU SHOULD BE FAR MORE CONCERNED WITH YOUR OWN WELL-BEING.
YOU MAY HAVE BEEN BRED TO BE THE STRONGEST AMONG US--BUT I KNOW THE REAL REASON YOU HATE MY FAMILY... WE HAVE SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER HAVE.
WE HAVE THE BLOOD OF ARGALL COURSING THROUGH OUR VEINS. WE'RE BORN LEADERS... SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER BE.

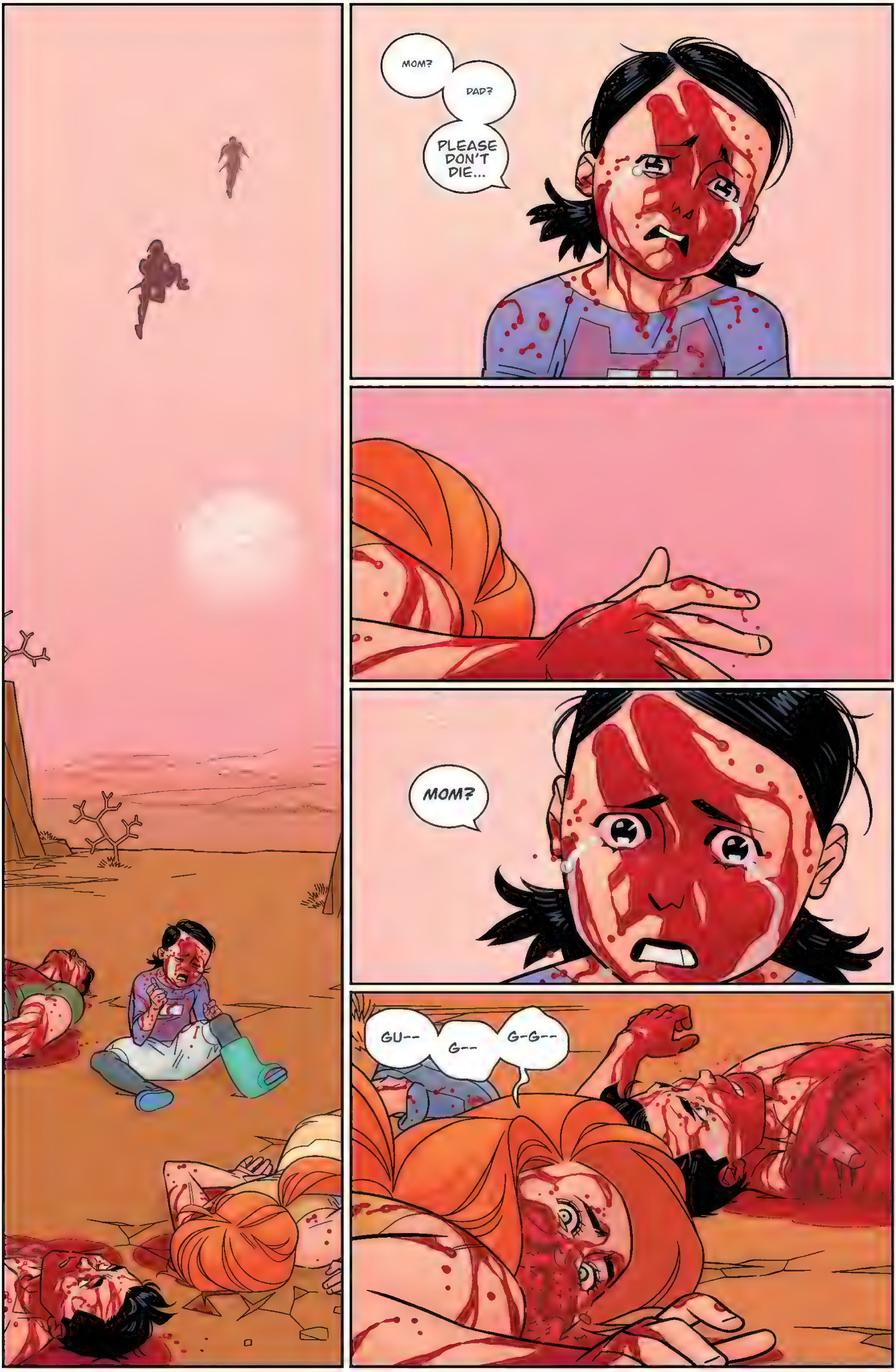

LOOK AT THIS BLOOD OF ARGALL.
JUST LOOKS LIKE BLOOD TO ME.
YEEAAAAAGH!!
OH.
SORRY, DEAR.
IS HE...
...DEAD?

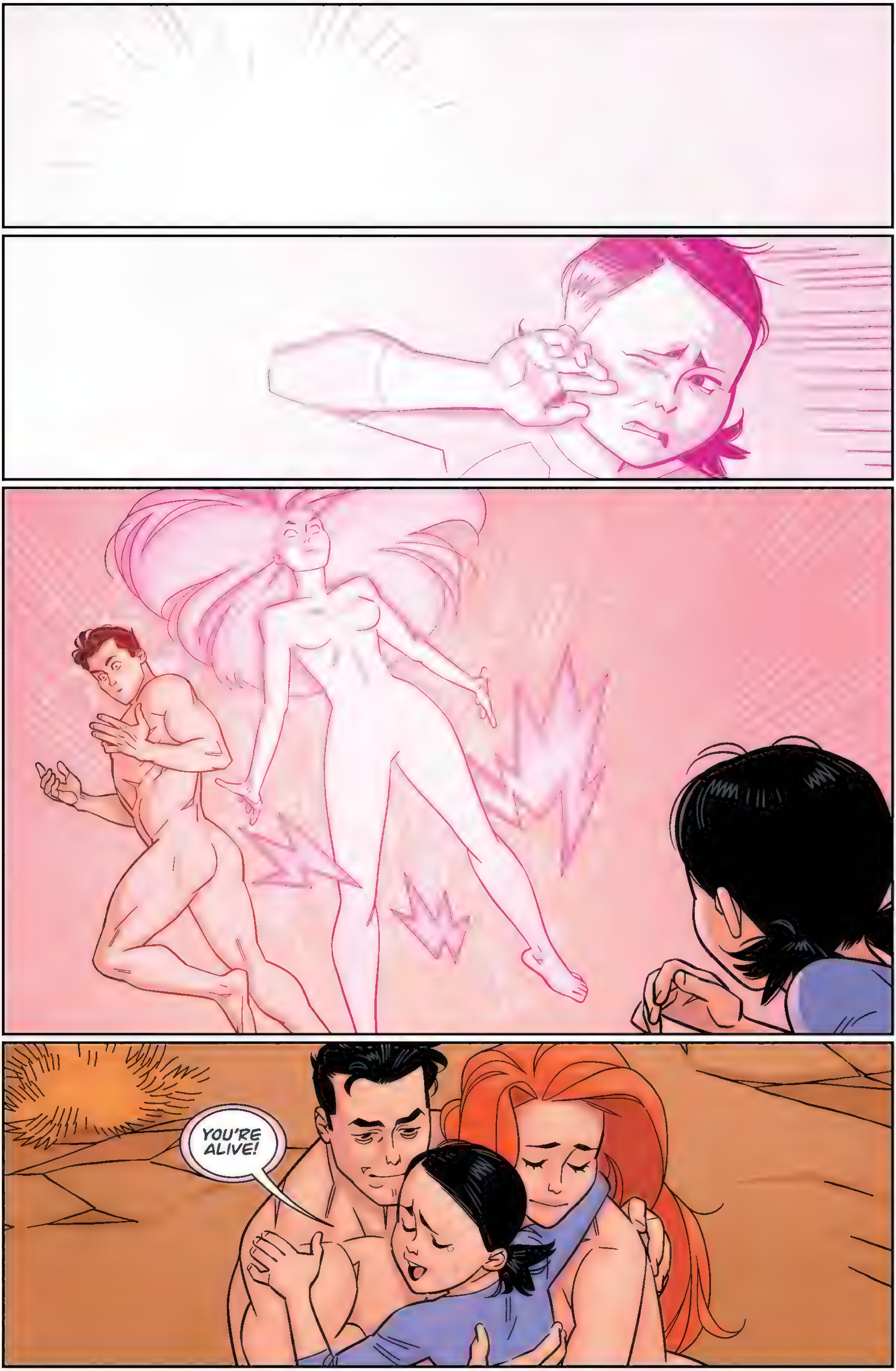

DON'T BE AFRAID, CHILD.
IT SERVES NO *PURPOSE.*
IT WON'T SAVE YOU.
WHAT IS TAKING THOSE PARENTS OF YOURS SO LONG, ANYWAY?
SURELY THEY--
YOU HAVE MY DAUGHTER. I HAVE YOUR SON.
THIS CAN END HERE. JUST LET HER GO.
JUST... *THRAGG...* DON'T KILL HER.
YOUR BROTHER BETRAYED YOU. HE WAS WORKING FOR ME... BUT HE JUST COULDN'T LET ME KILL YOU. THAT MAKES HIM *USELESS TO ME.* A TRAITOR TO HIS KIND--SEEMS TO RUN IN YOUR FAMILY, DOESN'T IT?
YOU THINK I BELIEVE FOR ONE SECOND MY CHILD IS IN DANGER? YOU FIGHT FOR WHAT'S *RIGHT.* THAT'S YOUR WEAKNESS. YOU ALWAYS DO WHAT IS *HEROIC.*
THAT'S WHY EVERYONE AROUND YOU WILL *DIE.*

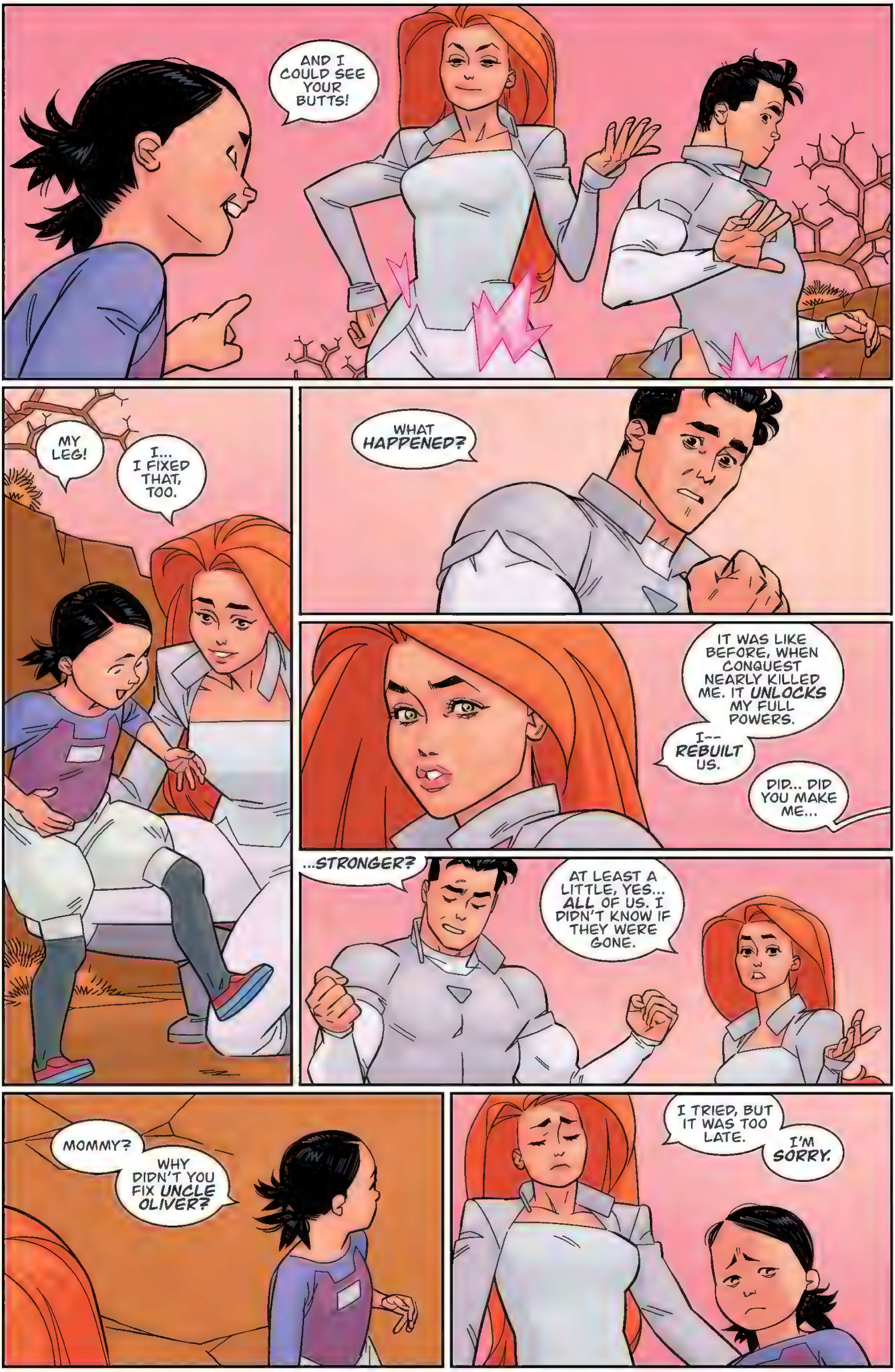

BEING A HERO IS BULLSHIT.
SKRAKK!
YOU--
WRAMM!
OLIVER-- HE--HE-- HE--
I KNOW, BABY. OH, GOD--YOUR LEG!
WROKK!
IT *HURTS!*
THIS WILL MAKE IT BETTER.

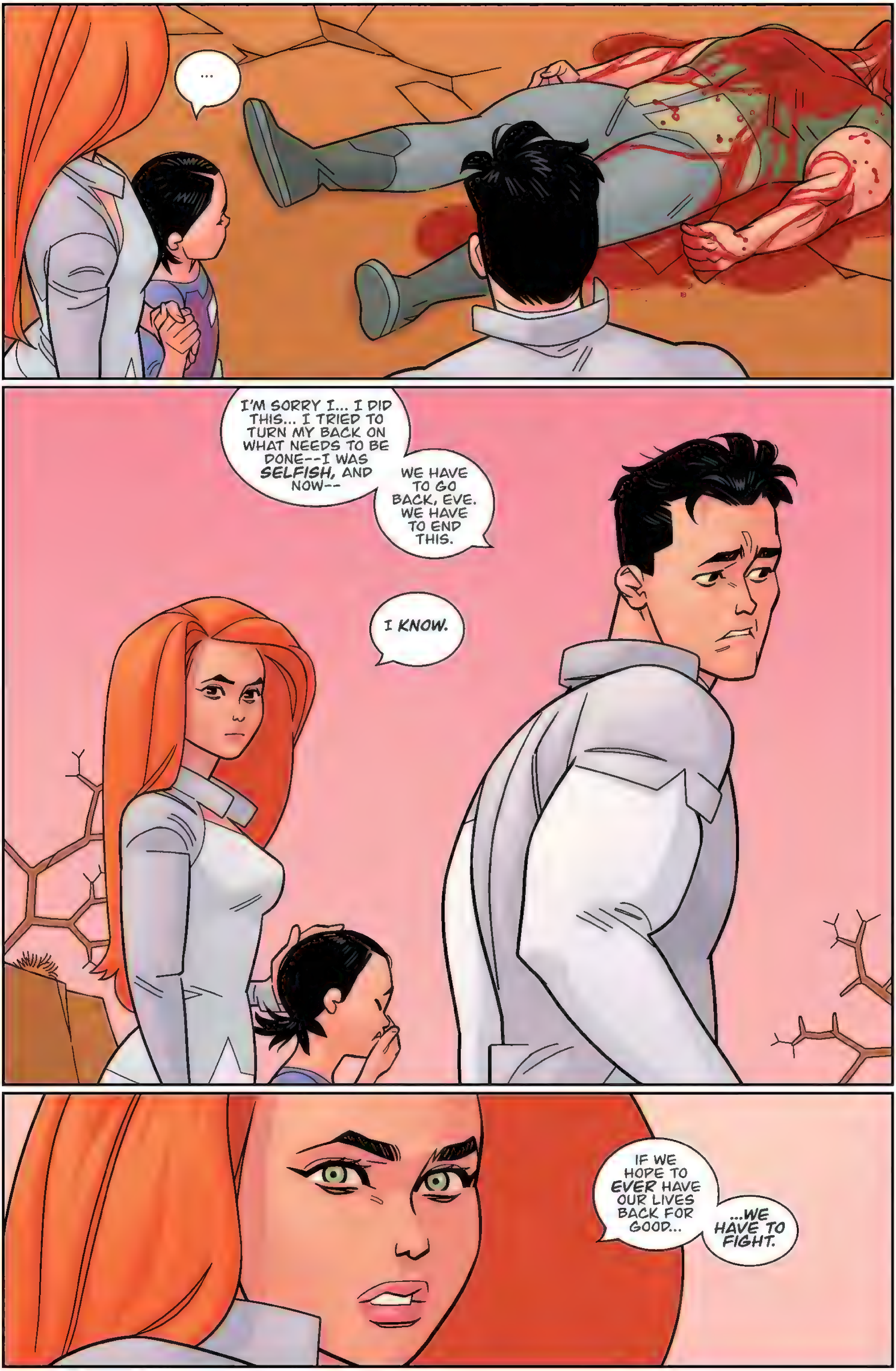
IT'S NEVER GOING TO BE BETTER-- EVER AGAIN!
KRAKK!
MOMMY!
EVE!
DON'T MAKE THIS EASIER.
WROKK!
NO!!
WRAMM!
MOMMY!
YOU--
I CAN'T FEEL MY--
--KILLED MY BROTHER!
SKROOM!


SKRAGGH!
NO!
LET THEM DIE **SLOWLY,** KNOWING THEY CAN'T SAVE THEIR DAUGHTER.
LEAVE HER. SHE WILL DIE HERE--**ALONE. THIS** IS HOW THEY PAY FOR THE **DESTRUCTION** OF VILTRUM.
COME.

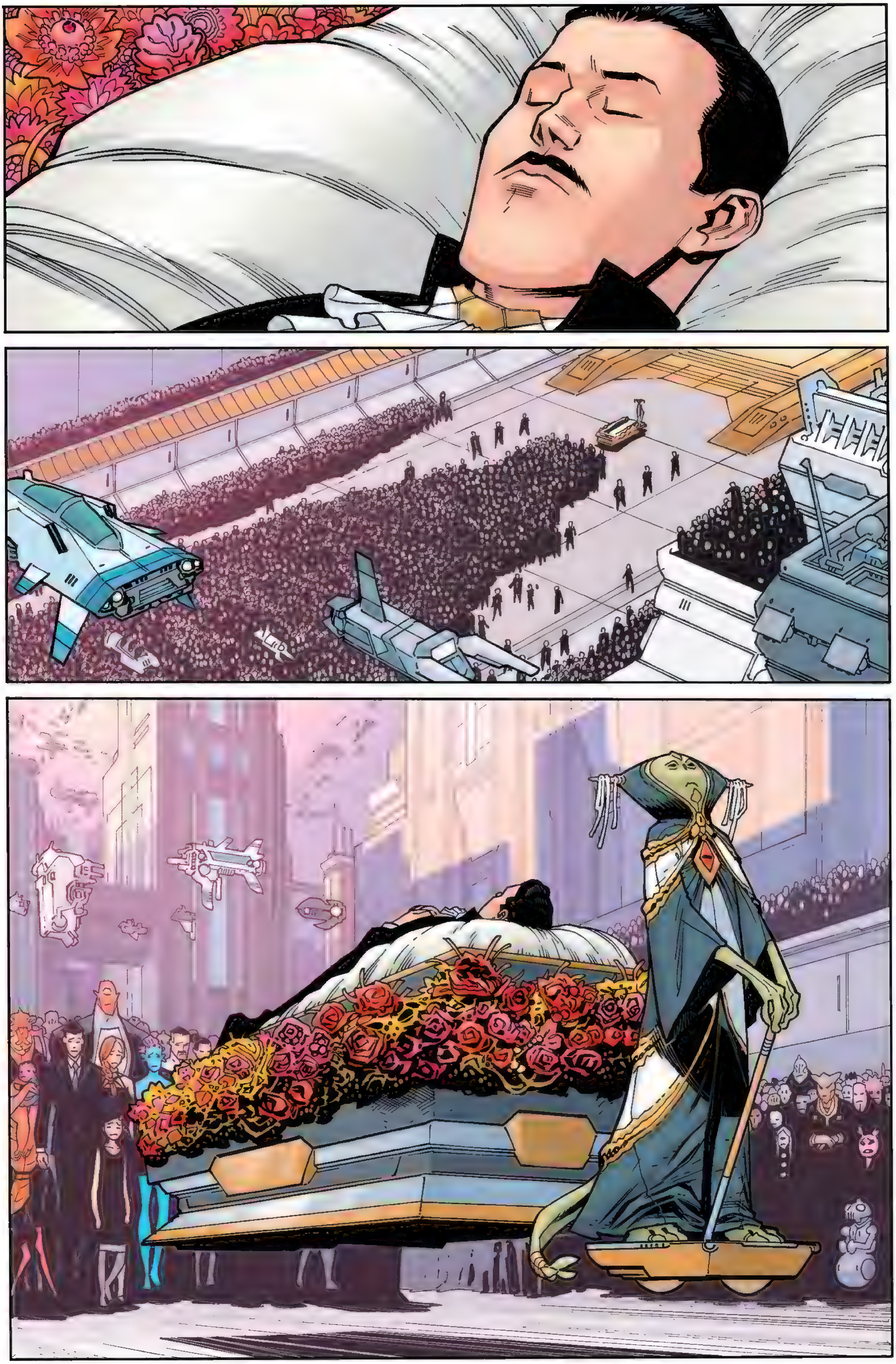

MOM?
DAD?
PLEASE DON'T DIE...
MOM?
GU--
G--
G-G--

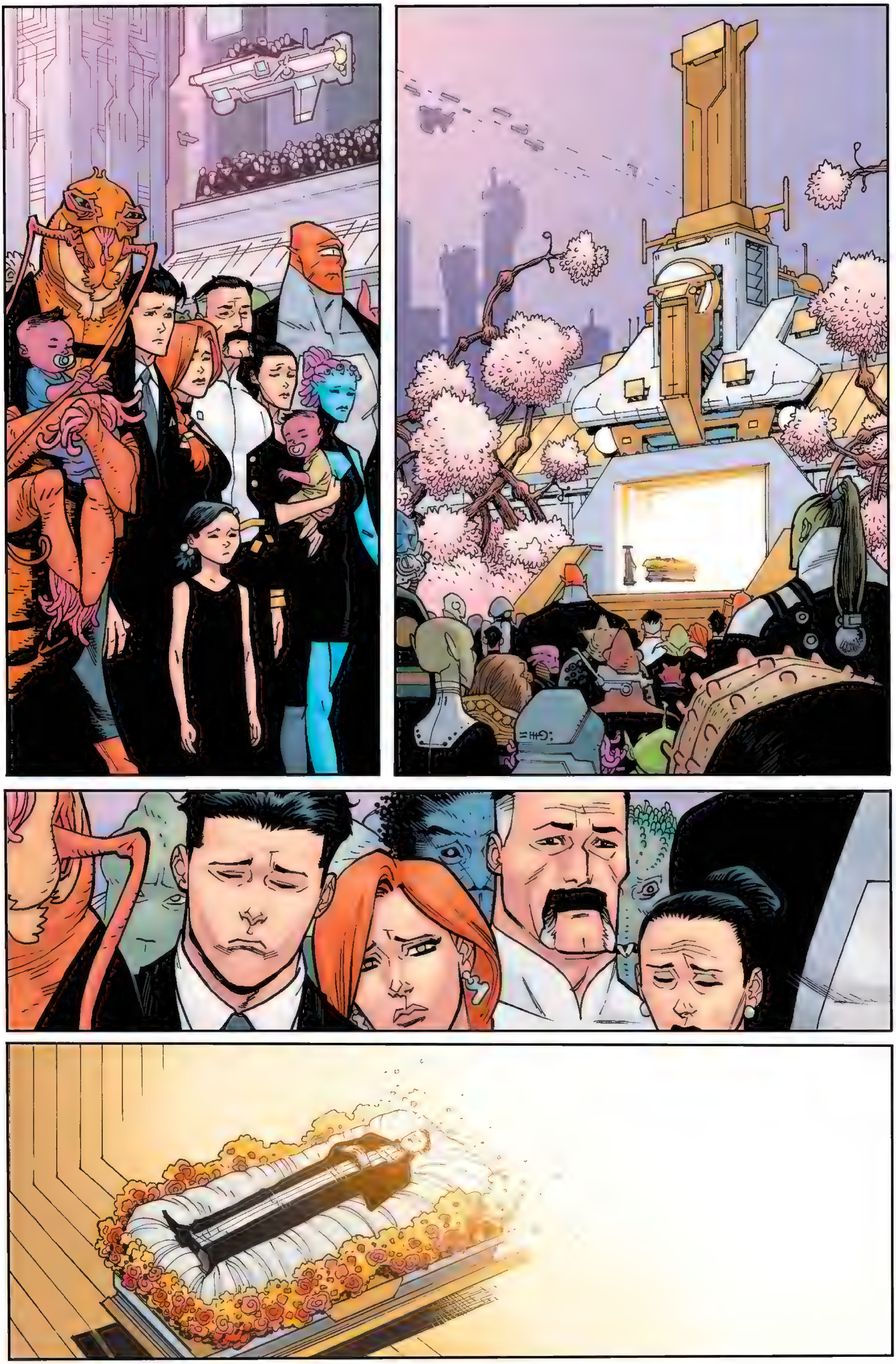

YOU'RE ALIVE!

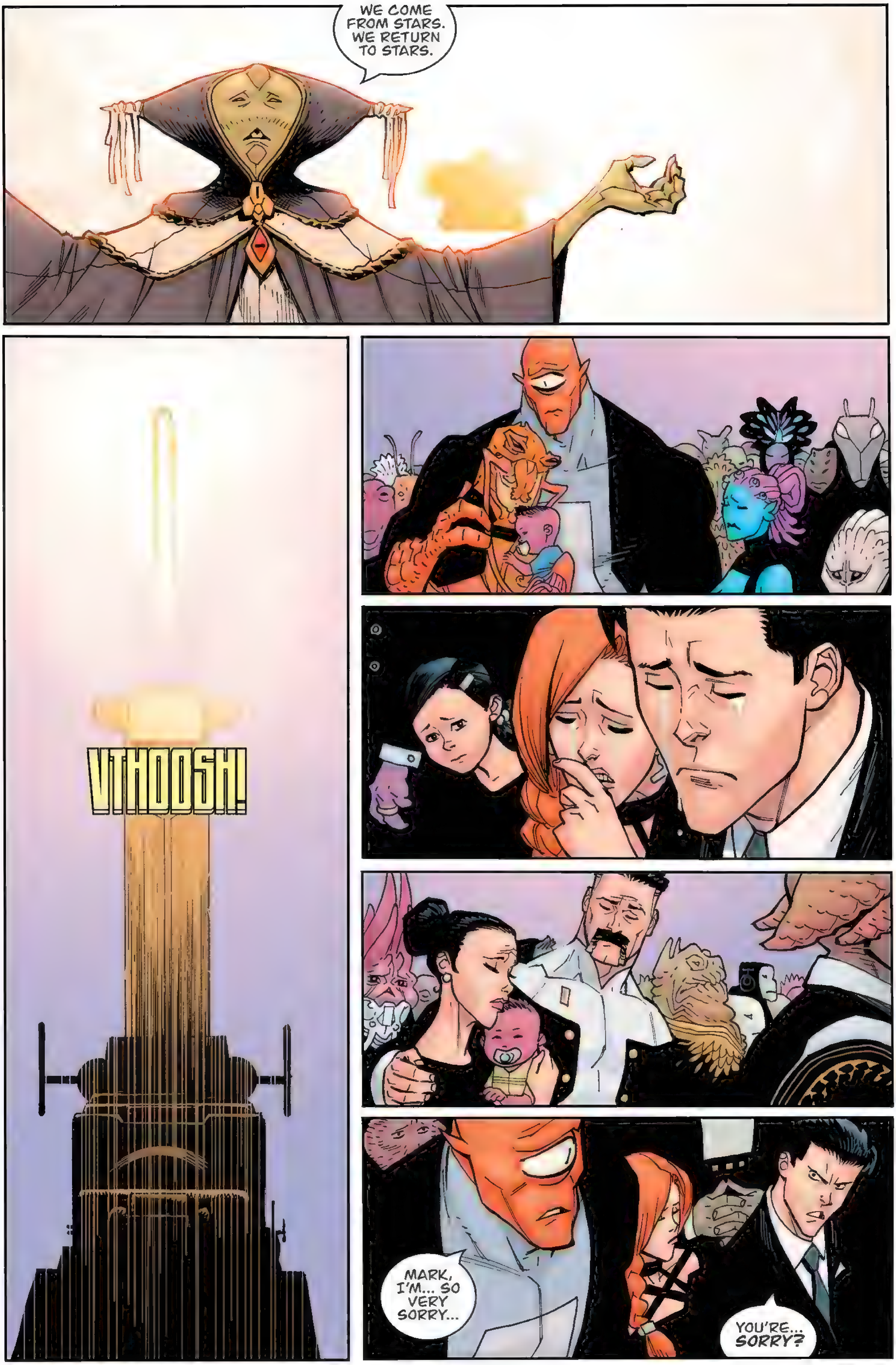

AND I COULD SEE YOUR BUTTS!
MY LEG!
I... I FIXED THAT, TOO.
WHAT *HAPPENED?*
IT WAS LIKE BEFORE, WHEN CONQUEST NEARLY KILLED ME. IT *UNLOCKS* MY FULL POWERS.
I-- *REBUILT* US.
DID... DID YOU MAKE ME...
...*STRONGER?*
AT LEAST A LITTLE, YES... *ALL* OF US. I DIDN'T KNOW IF THEY WERE GONE.
MOMMY?
WHY DIDN'T YOU FIX *UNCLE OLIVER?*
I TRIED, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.
I'M *SORRY.*


...
I'M SORRY I... I DID THIS... I TRIED TO TURN MY BACK ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE--I WAS SELFISH, AND NOW--
WE HAVE TO GO BACK, EVE. WE HAVE TO END THIS.
I KNOW.
IF WE HOPE TO EVER HAVE OUR LIVES BACK FOR GOOD...
...WE HAVE TO FIGHT.

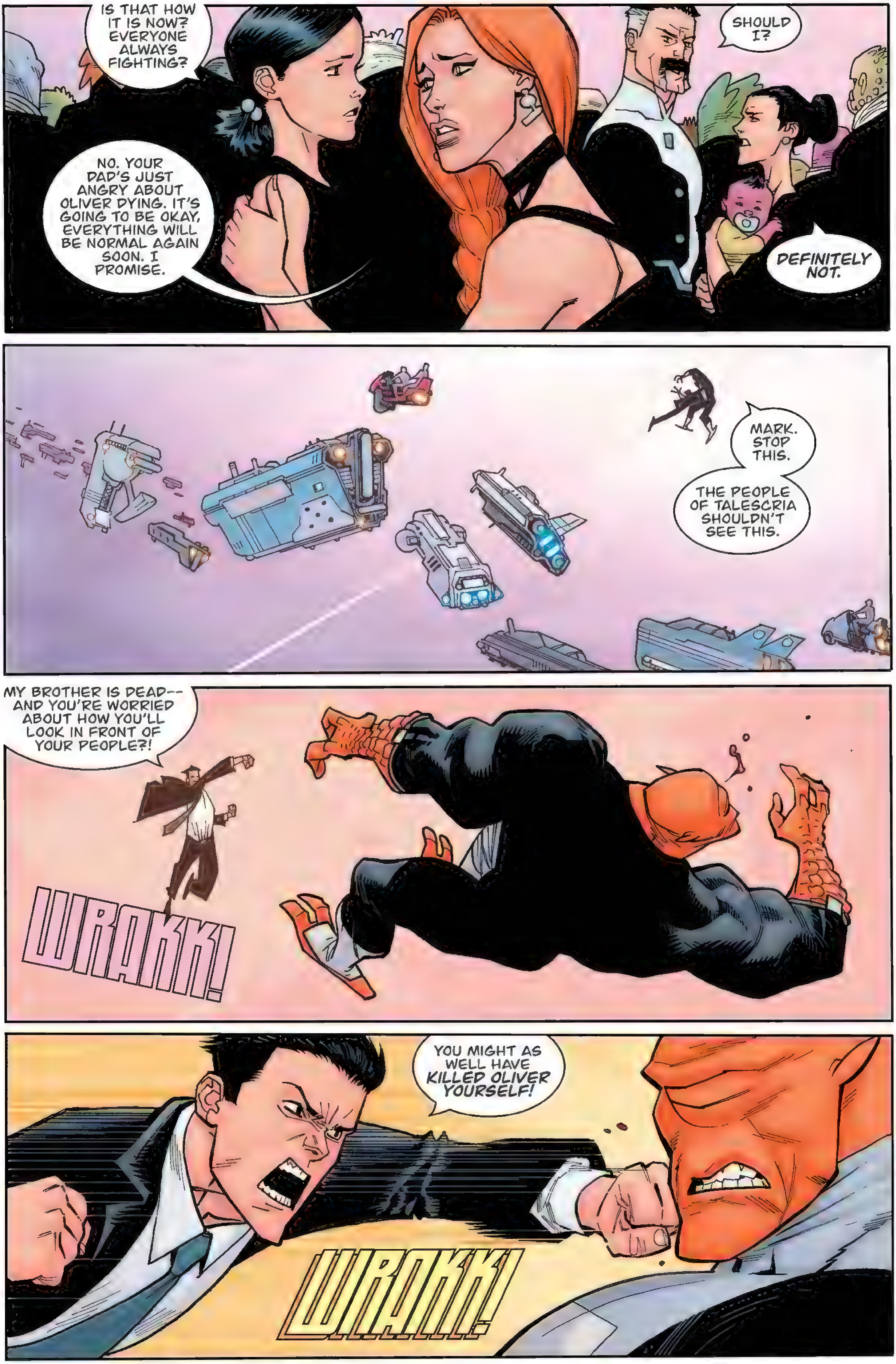
CHAPTER 133



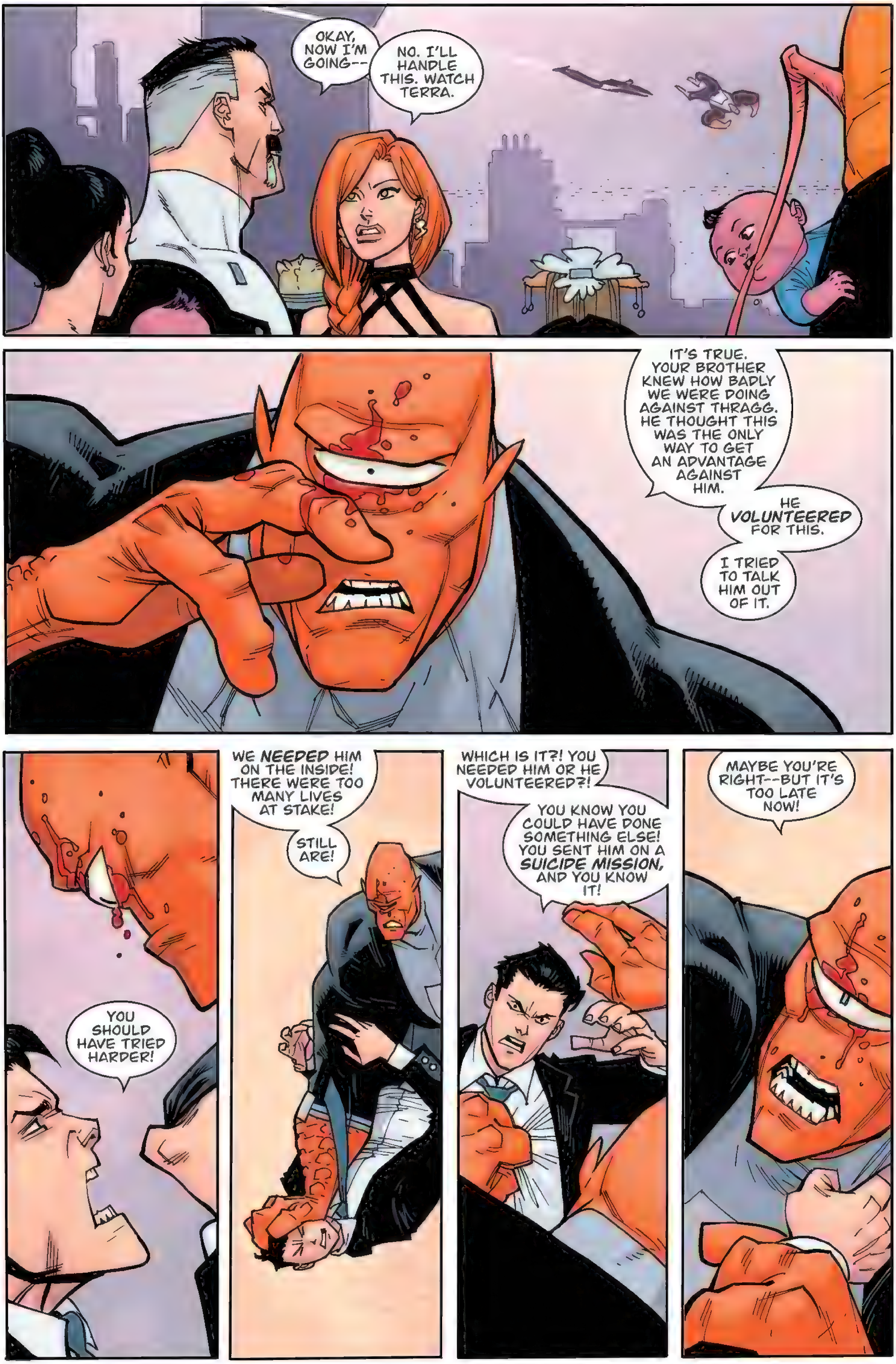


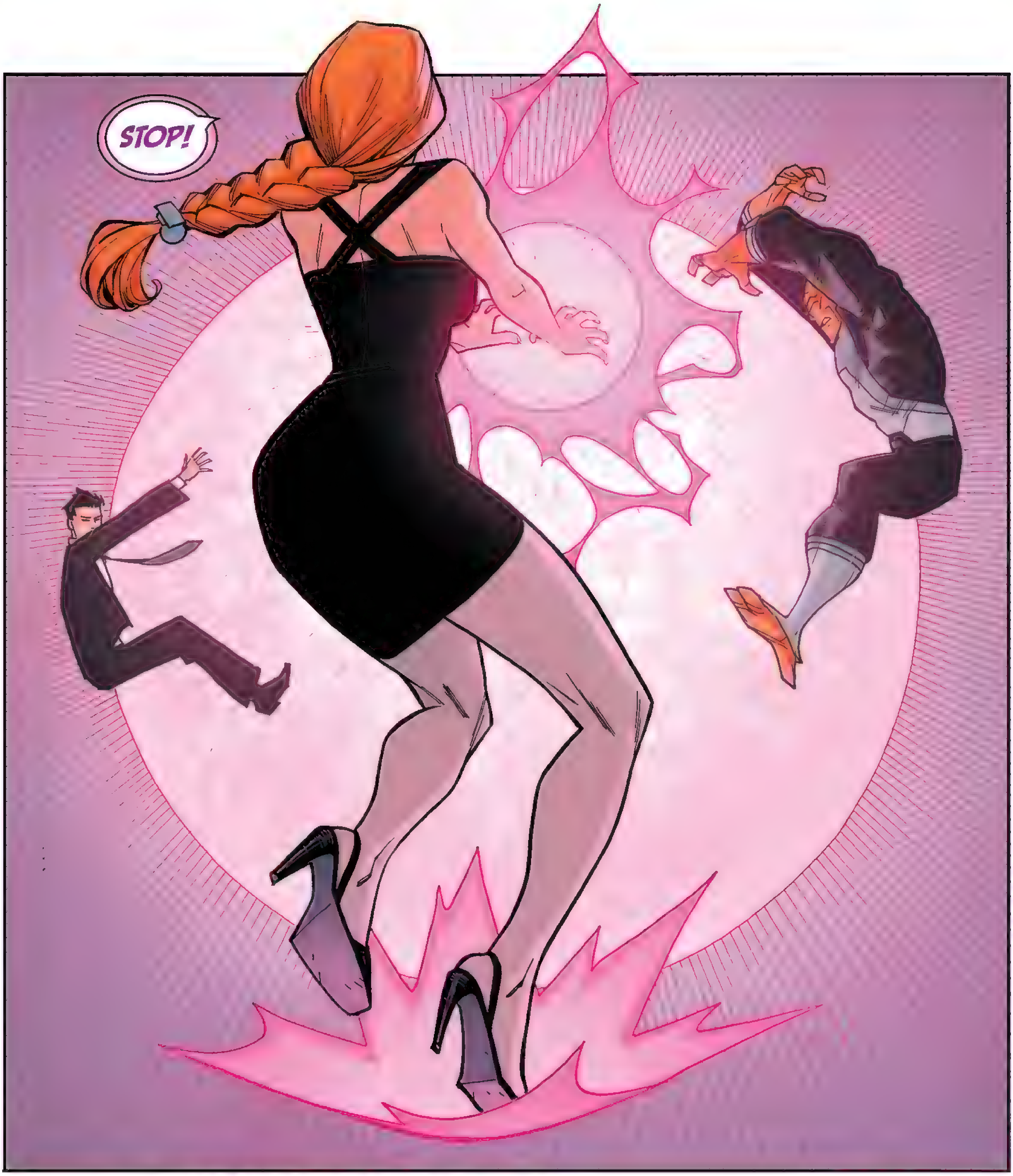

WE COME FROM STARS. WE RETURN TO STARS.
VTHOOSH!
MARK, I'M... SO VERY SORRY...
YOU'RE... SORRY?

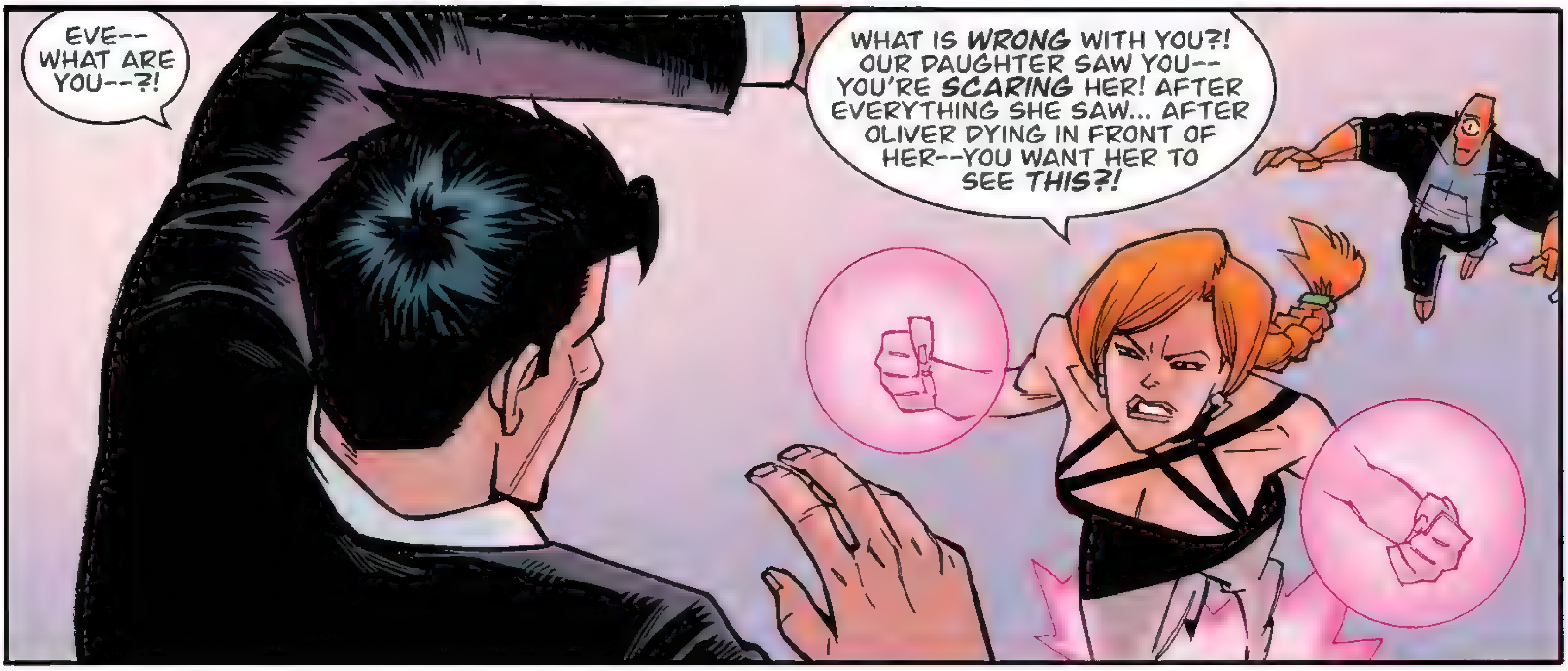
YOU'RE SORRY?!
KRAKK!
MARK!
WRAMM!
YOU'RE SORRY OLIVER DIED?
YOU'RE SORRY YOU LET THRAGG KILL HIM?!
THE BEST YOU CAN DO IS SAY YOU'RE SORRY?!
AAAAAGH!
KROOM!

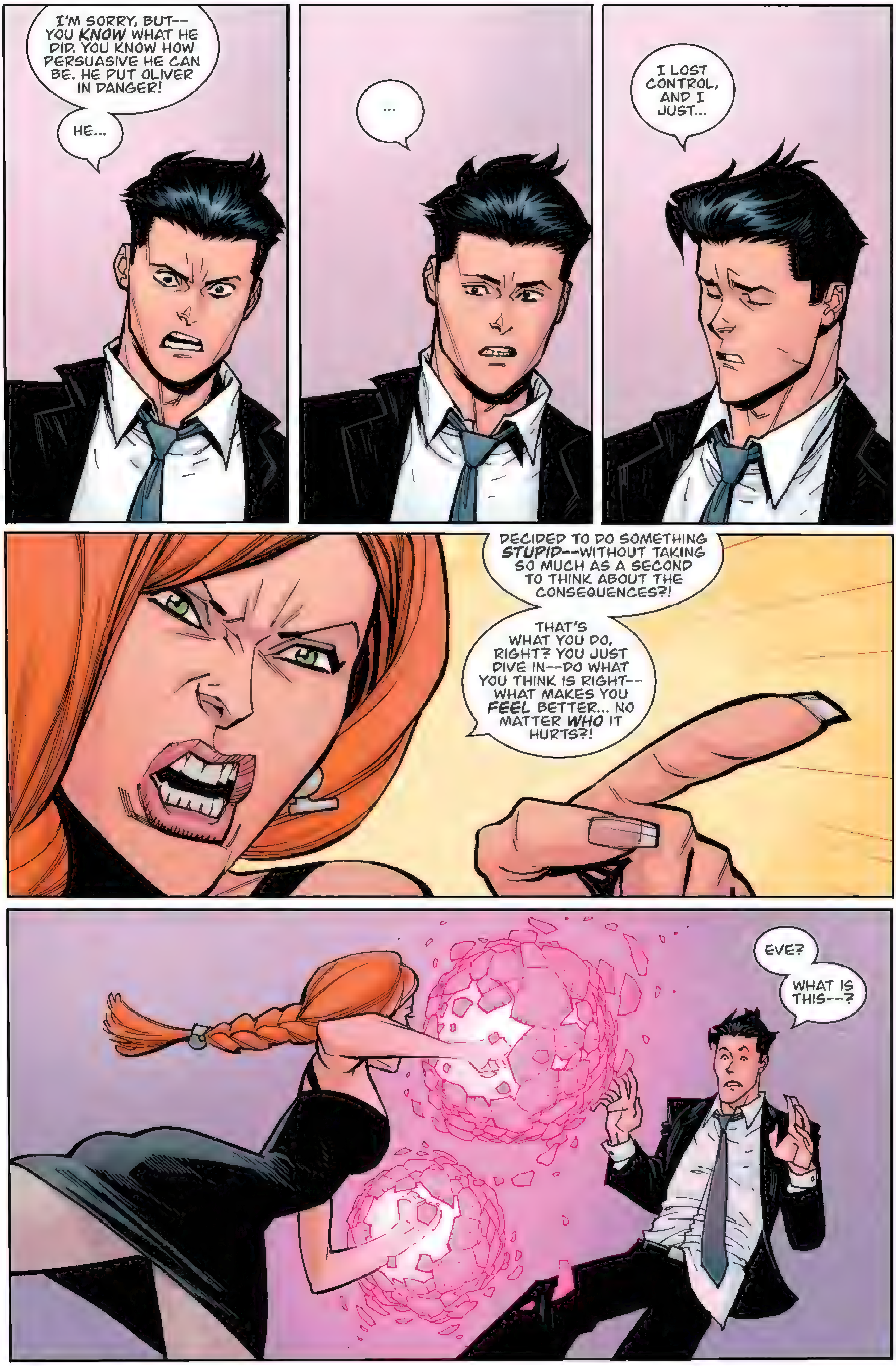

IS THAT HOW IT IS NOW? EVERYONE ALWAYS FIGHTING?
NO. YOUR DAD'S JUST ANGRY ABOUT OLIVER DYING. IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, EVERYTHING WILL BE NORMAL AGAIN SOON. I PROMISE.
SHOULD I?
DEFINITELY NOT.
MARK. STOP THIS.
THE PEOPLE OF TALESCRIA SHOULDN'T SEE THIS.
MY BROTHER IS DEAD-- AND YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT HOW YOU'LL LOOK IN FRONT OF YOUR PEOPLE?!
WRAKK!
YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE KILLED OLIVER YOURSELF!
WRAKK!

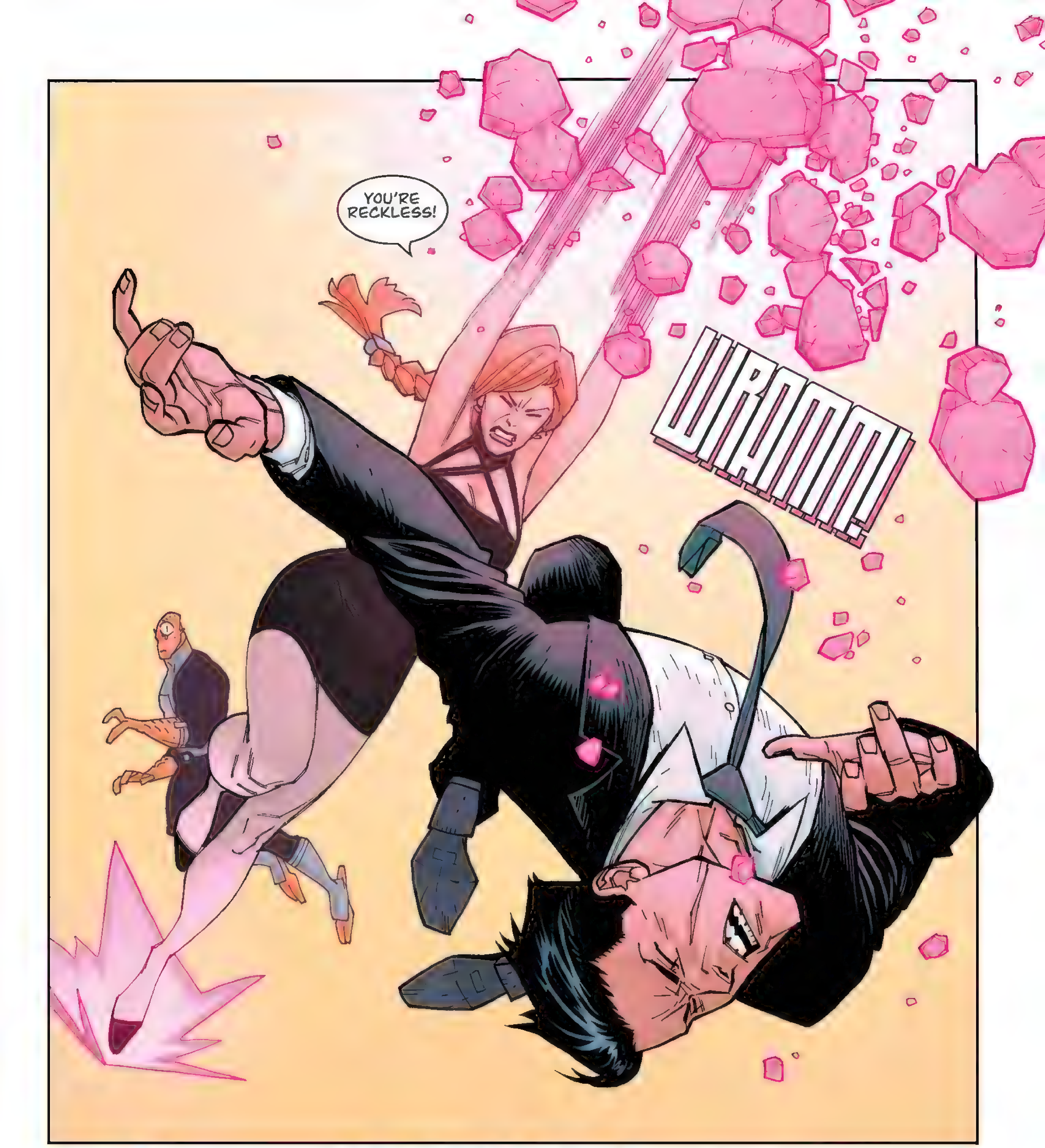
THOOM!
OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH!
I DIDN'T KILL YOUR BROTHER! THRAGG DID!
THIS WASN'T MY--
THOOM!
YOU HAD HIM WORKING UNDERCOVER FOR THRAGG--YOU DIDN'T THINK THRAGG WOULD FIND OUT?! YOU DIDN'T THINK THRAGG WOULD KILL HIM?!
YOU KNEW HOW DANGEROUS WHAT YOU WANTED HIM TO DO WAS!
HE VOLUNTEERED! HE WANTED TO DO THIS!
BULLSHIT!
WROKK!

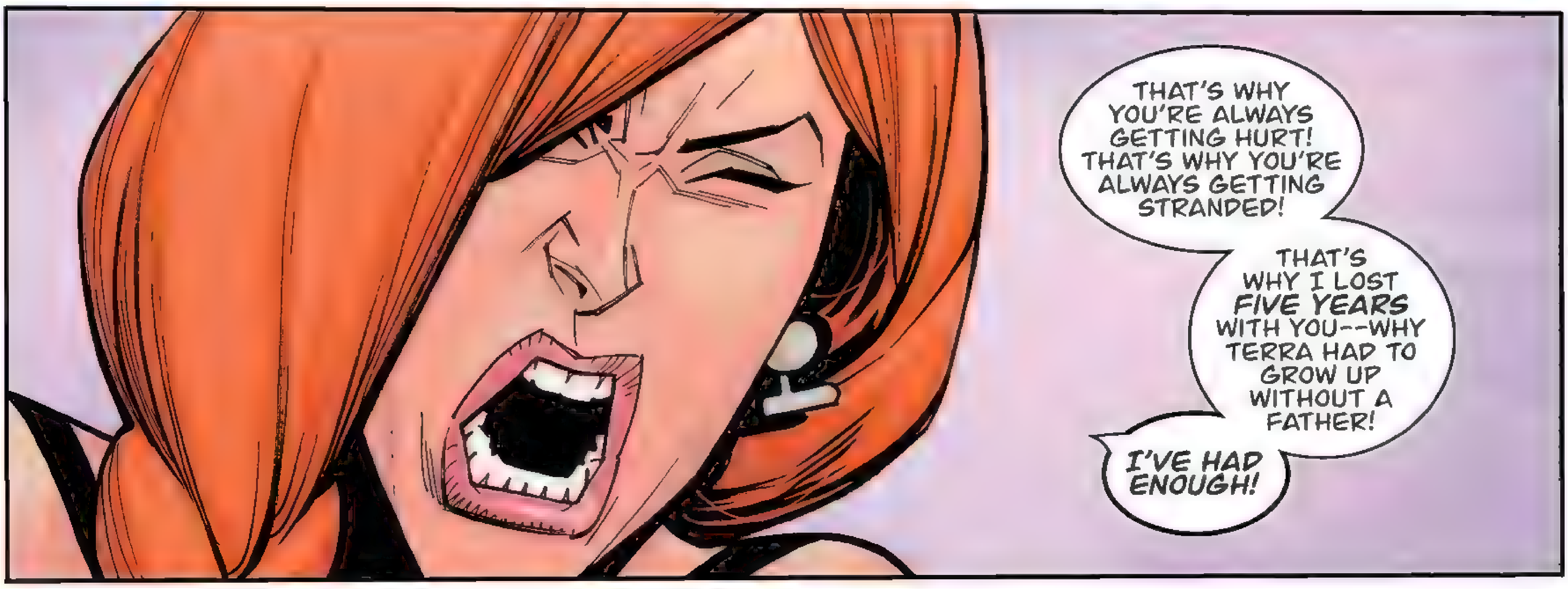

OKAY, NOW I'M GOING--
NO. I'LL HANDLE THIS. WATCH TERRA.
IT'S TRUE. YOUR BROTHER KNEW HOW BADLY WE WERE DOING AGAINST THRAGG. HE THOUGHT THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO GET AN ADVANTAGE AGAINST HIM.
HE *VOLUNTEERED* FOR THIS.
I TRIED TO TALK HIM OUT OF IT.
YOU SHOULD HAVE TRIED HARDER!
WE *NEEDED* HIM ON THE INSIDE! THERE WERE TOO MANY LIVES AT STAKE!
STILL ARE!
WHICH IS IT?! YOU NEEDED HIM OR HE VOLUNTEERED?!
YOU KNOW YOU COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING ELSE! YOU SENT HIM ON A *SUICIDE MISSION,* AND YOU KNOW IT!
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT--BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW!

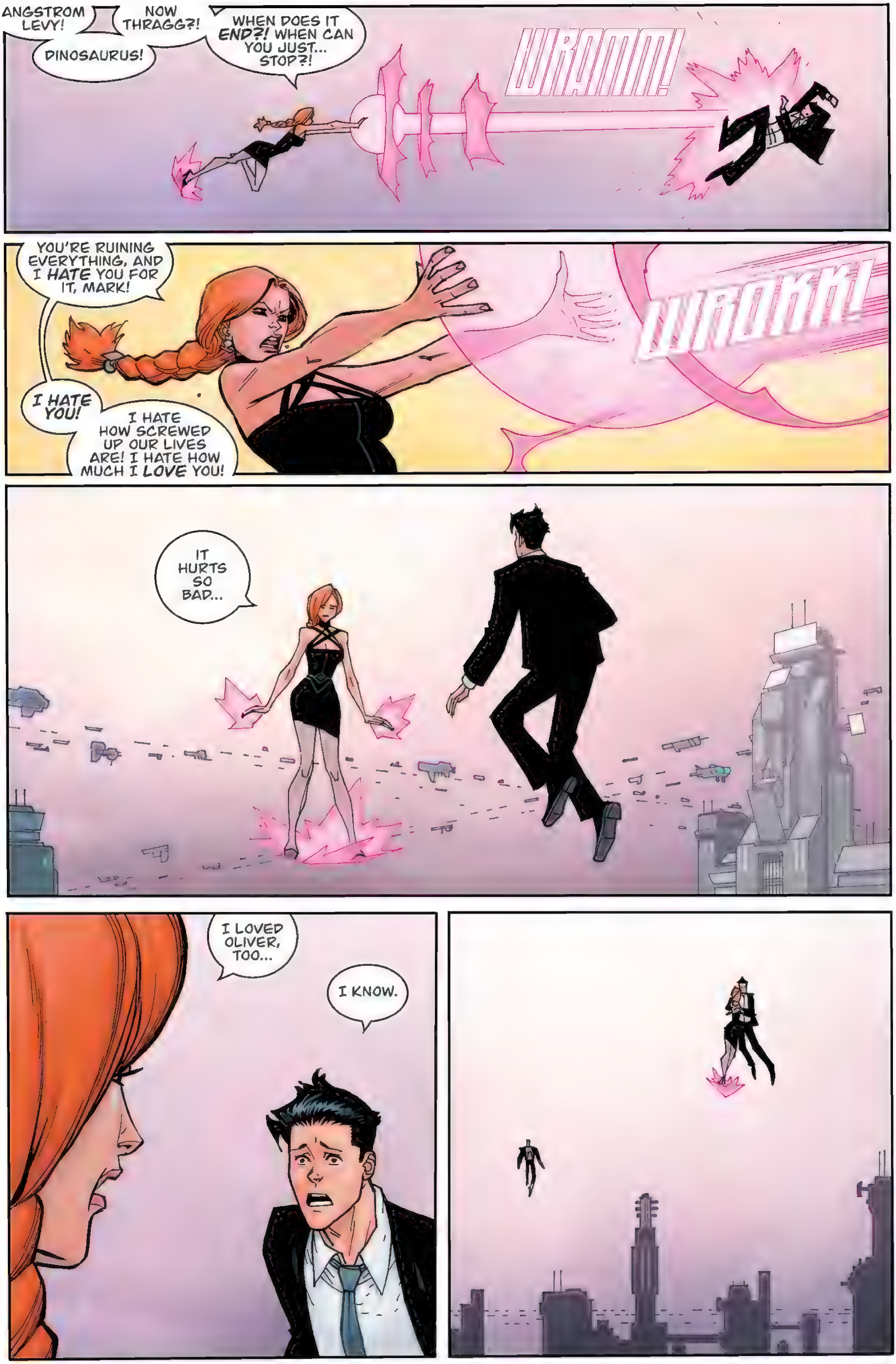

STOP!

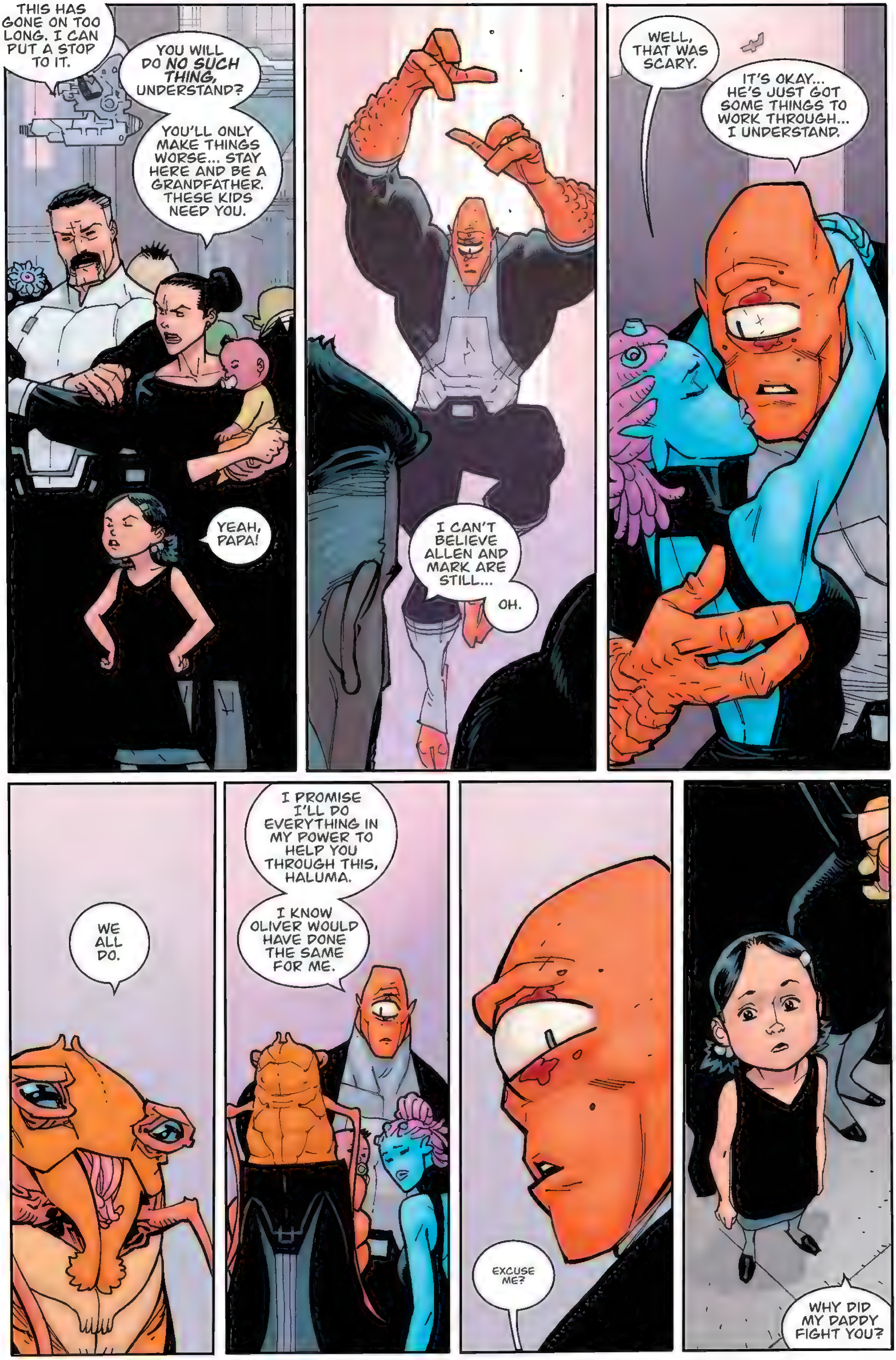

EVE-- WHAT ARE YOU--?!
WHAT IS *WRONG* WITH YOU?! OUR DAUGHTER SAW YOU-- YOU'RE *SCARING* HER! AFTER EVERYTHING SHE SAW... AFTER OLIVER DYING IN FRONT OF HER--YOU WANT HER TO SEE *THIS?!*

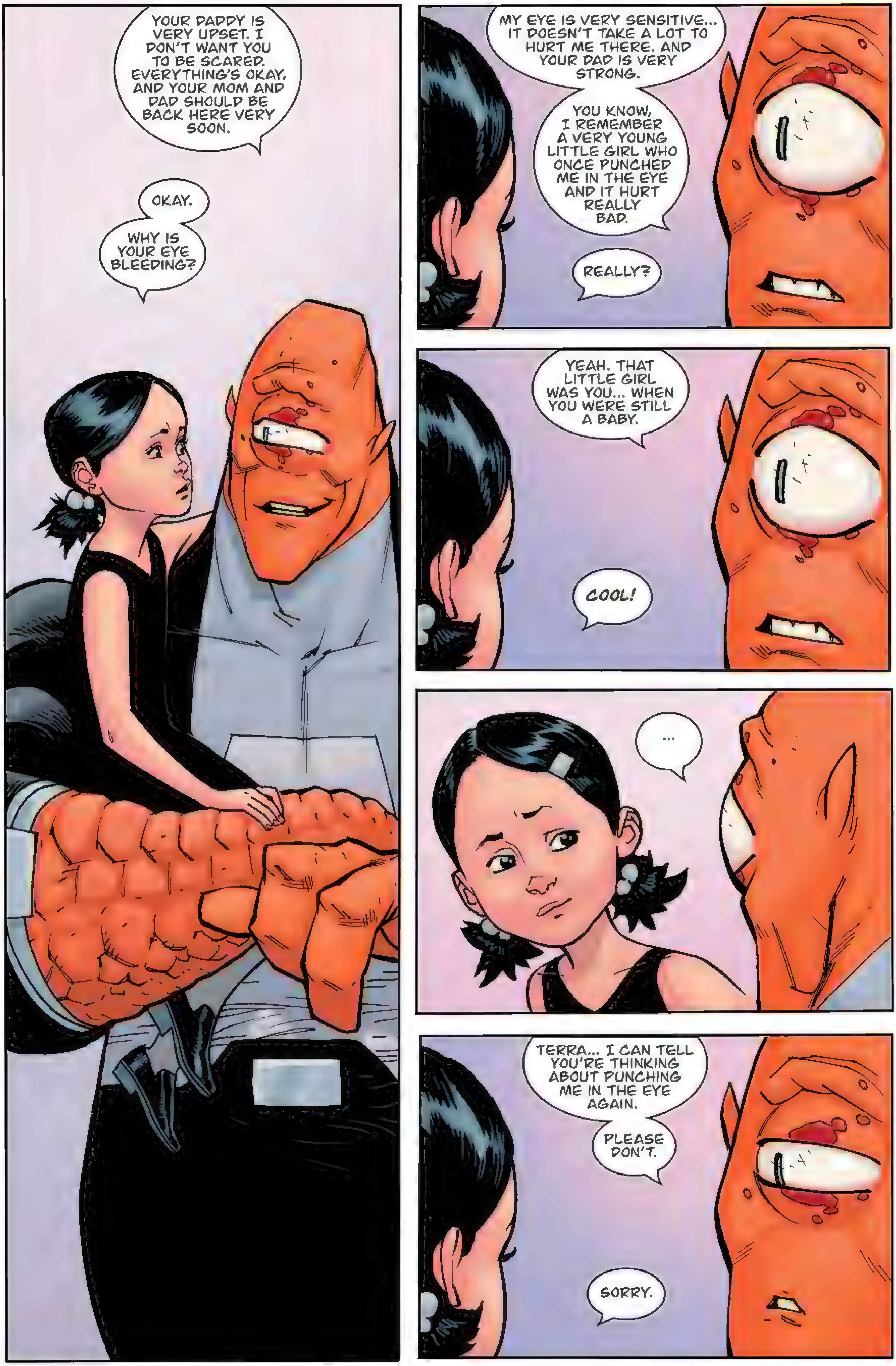

I'M SORRY, BUT-- YOU **KNOW** WHAT HE DID. YOU KNOW HOW PERSUASIVE HE CAN BE. HE PUT OLIVER IN DANGER!
HE...
...
I LOST CONTROL, AND I JUST...
DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING **STUPID**--WITHOUT TAKING SO MUCH AS A SECOND TO THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES?!
THAT'S WHAT YOU DO, RIGHT? YOU JUST DIVE IN--DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT--WHAT MAKES YOU **FEEL** BETTER... NO MATTER **WHO** IT HURTS?!
EVE?
WHAT IS THIS--?

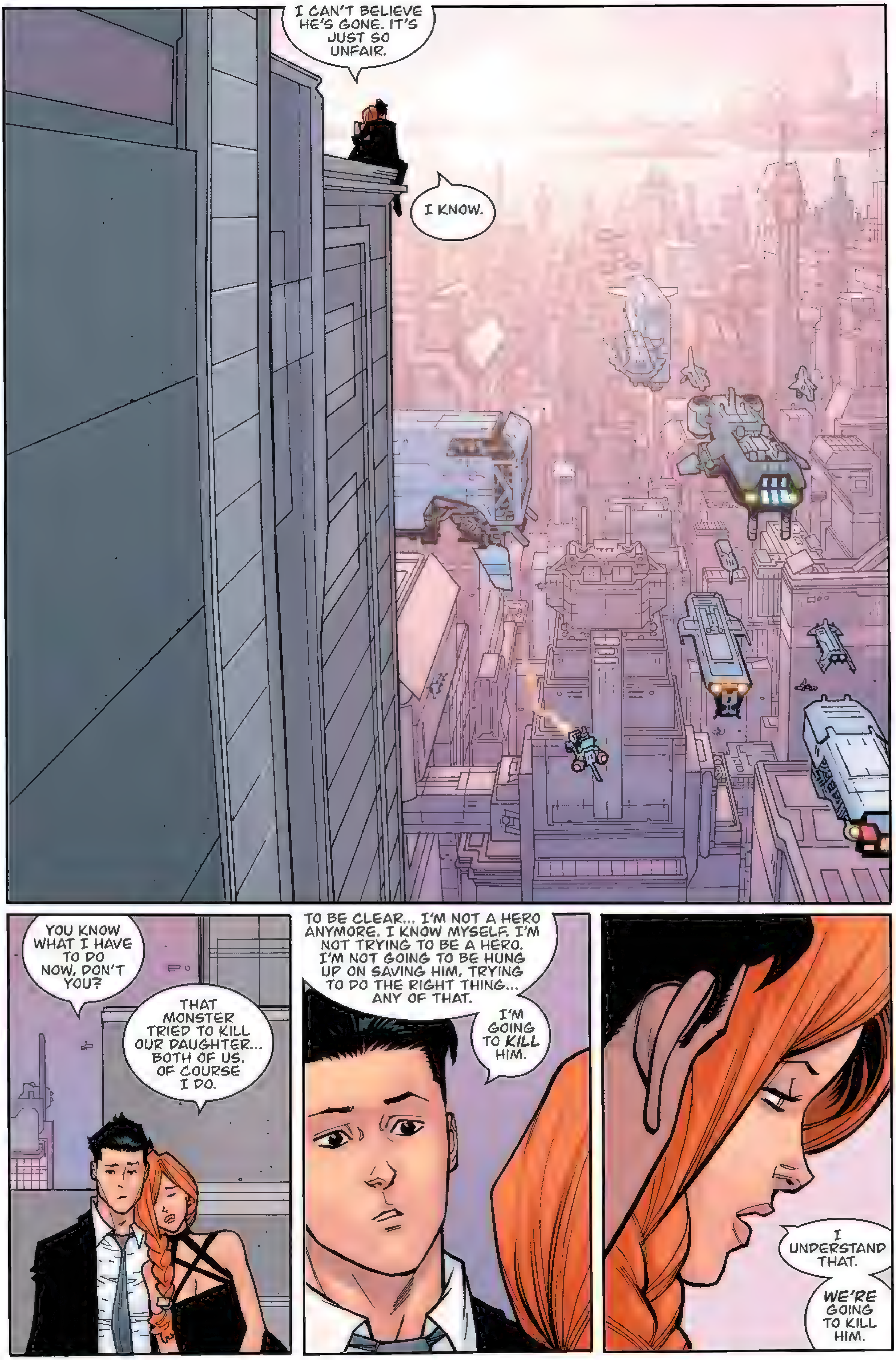

YOU'RE RECKLESS!
WROOM!

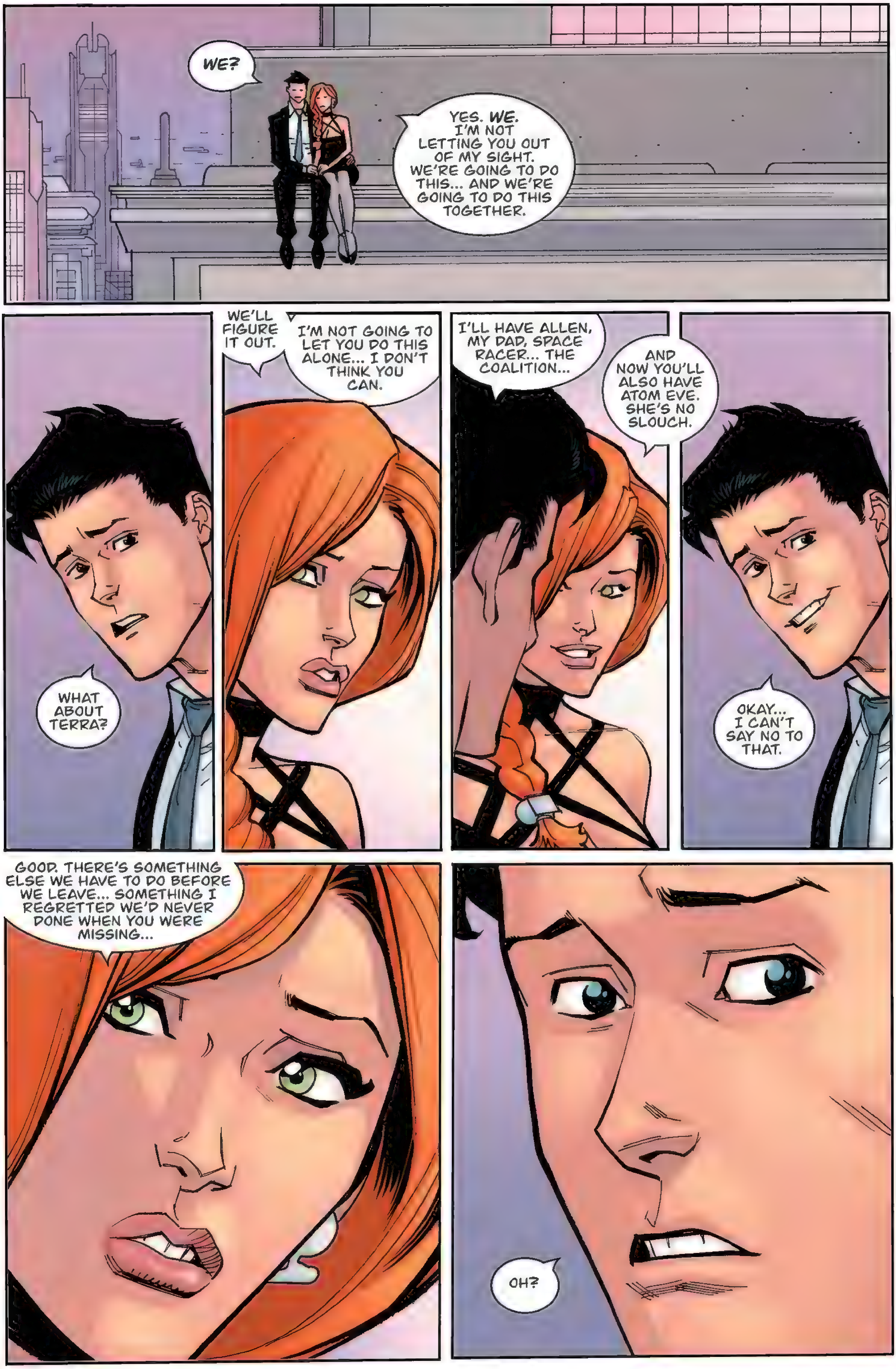

THAT'S WHY YOU'RE ALWAYS GETTING HURT! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE ALWAYS GETTING STRANDED!
THAT'S WHY I LOST FIVE YEARS WITH YOU--WHY TERRA HAD TO GROW UP WITHOUT A FATHER!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH!

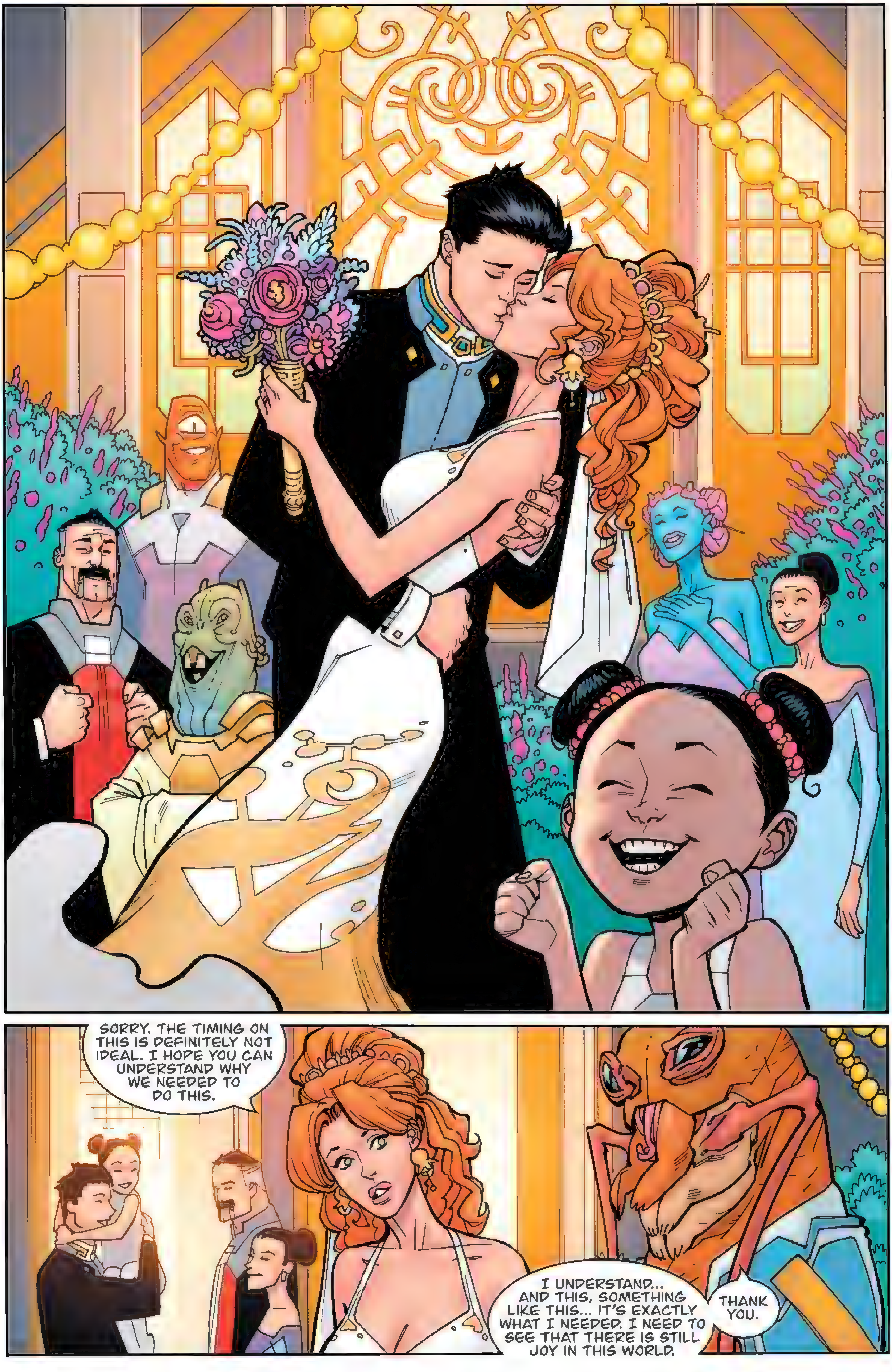

ANGSTROM LEVY!
NOW THRAGG?!
DINOSAURUS!
WHEN DOES IT *END?!* WHEN CAN YOU JUST... STOP?!
WRAMM!
YOU'RE RUINING EVERYTHING, AND I *HATE* YOU FOR IT, MARK!
I HATE YOU!
I HATE HOW SCREWED UP OUR LIVES ARE! I HATE HOW MUCH I *LOVE* YOU!
WROKK!
IT HURTS SO BAD...
I LOVED OLIVER, TOO...
I KNOW.


THIS HAS GONE ON TOO LONG. I CAN PUT A STOP TO IT.
YOU WILL DO NO SUCH THING, UNDERSTAND?
YOU'LL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE... STAY HERE AND BE A GRANDFATHER. THESE KIDS NEED YOU.
YEAH, PAPA!
I CAN'T BELIEVE ALLEN AND MARK ARE STILL...
OH.
WELL, THAT WAS SCARY.
IT'S OKAY... HE'S JUST GOT SOME THINGS TO WORK THROUGH... I UNDERSTAND.
WE ALL DO.
I PROMISE I'LL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO HELP YOU THROUGH THIS, HALUMA.
I KNOW OLIVER WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME FOR ME.
EXCUSE ME?
WHY DID MY DADDY FIGHT YOU?

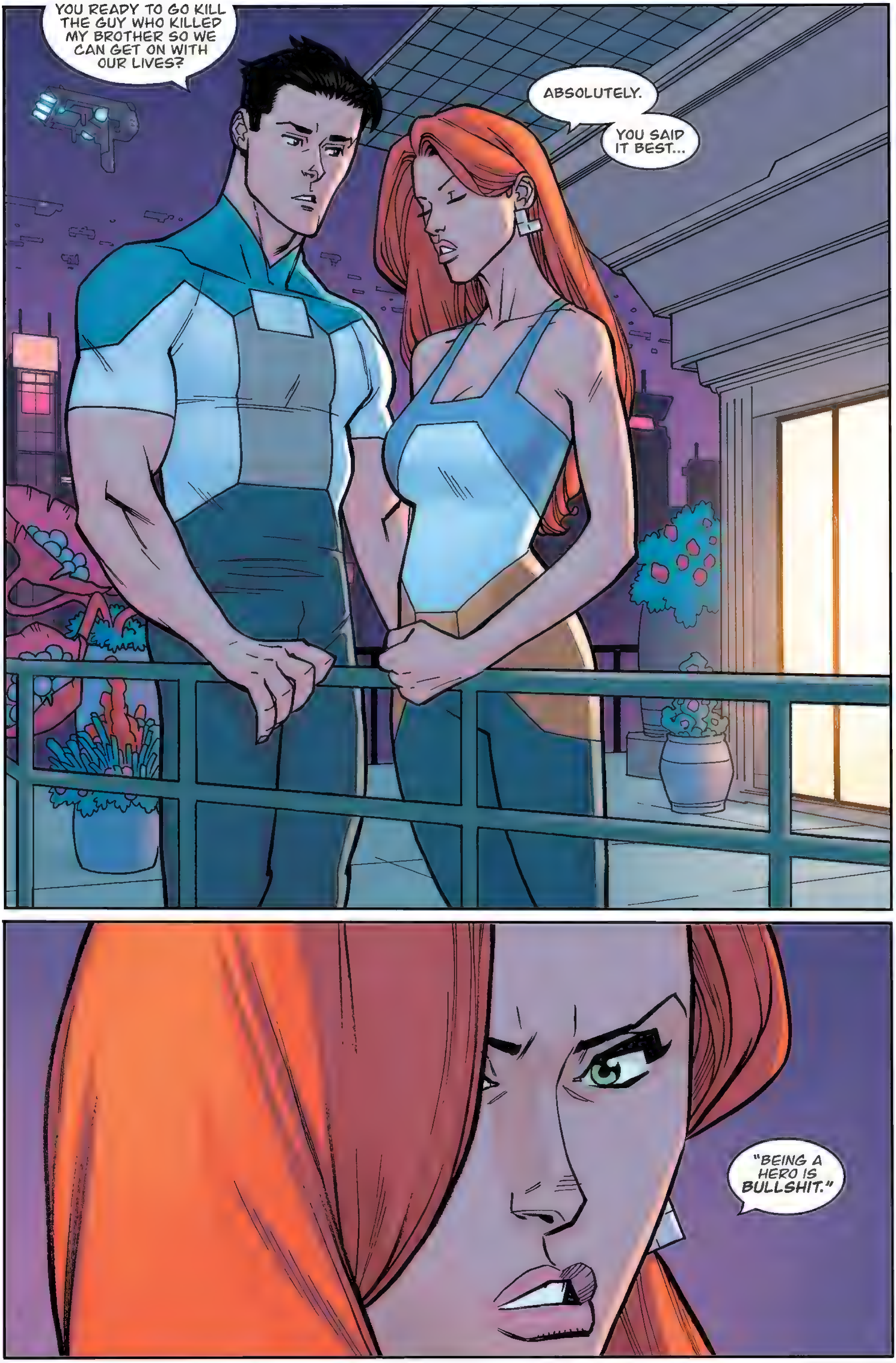

YOUR DADDY IS VERY UPSET. I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE SCARED. EVERYTHING'S OKAY, AND YOUR MOM AND DAD SHOULD BE BACK HERE VERY SOON.
OKAY.
WHY IS YOUR EYE BLEEDING?
MY EYE IS VERY SENSITIVE... IT DOESN'T TAKE A LOT TO HURT ME THERE. AND YOUR DAD IS VERY STRONG.
YOU KNOW, I REMEMBER A VERY YOUNG LITTLE GIRL WHO ONCE PUNCHED ME IN THE EYE AND IT HURT REALLY BAD.
REALLY?
YEAH. THAT LITTLE GIRL WAS YOU... WHEN YOU WERE STILL A BABY.
COOL!
...
TERRA... I CAN TELL YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT PUNCHING ME IN THE EYE AGAIN.
PLEASE DON'T.
SORRY.

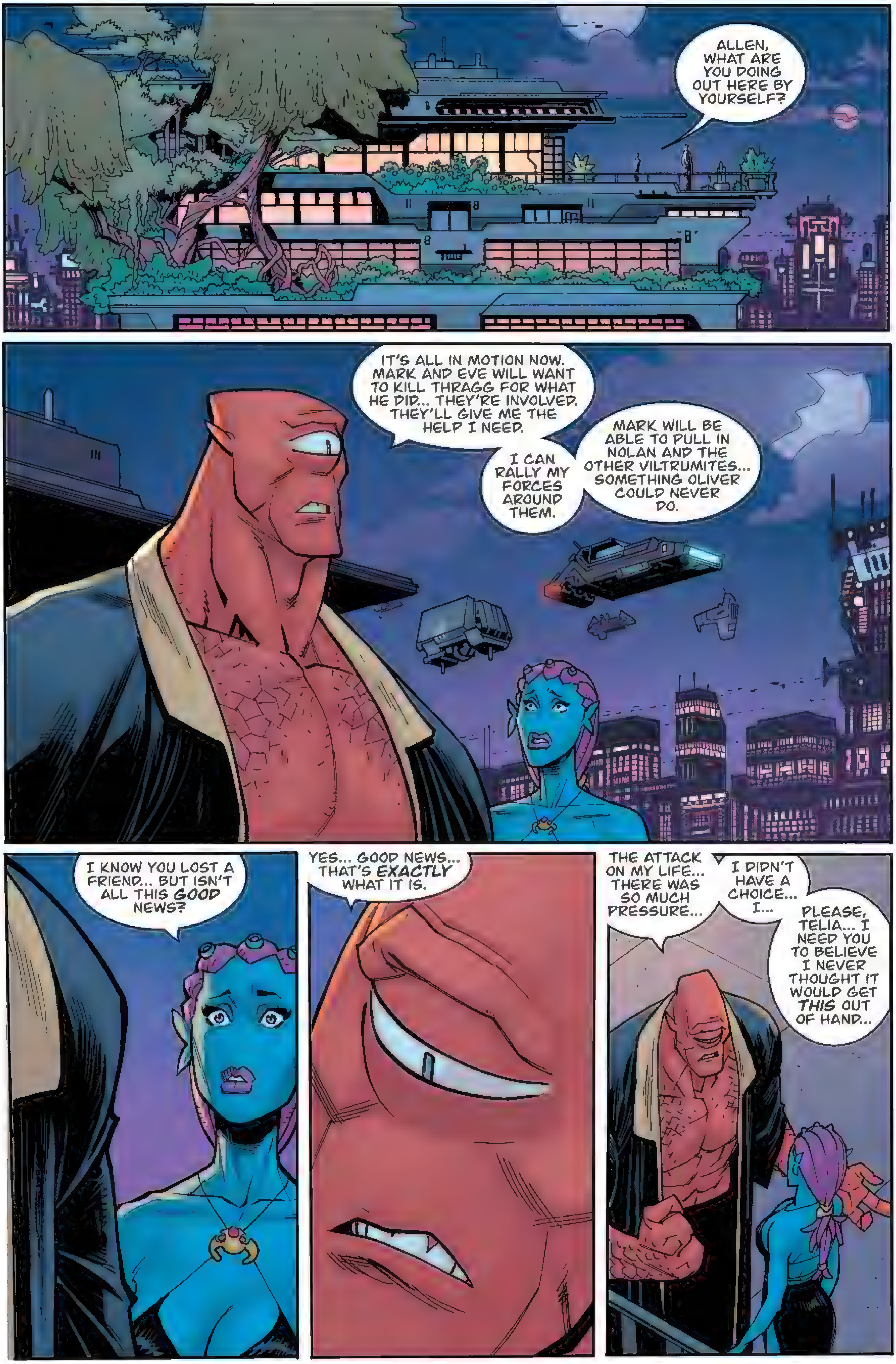

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S GONE. IT'S JUST SO UNFAIR.
I KNOW.
YOU KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO NOW, DON'T YOU?
THAT MONSTER TRIED TO KILL OUR DAUGHTER... BOTH OF US. OF COURSE I DO.
TO BE CLEAR... I'M NOT A HERO ANYMORE. I KNOW MYSELF. I'M NOT TRYING TO BE A HERO. I'M NOT GOING TO BE HUNG UP ON SAVING HIM, TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING... ANY OF THAT.
I'M GOING TO KILL HIM.
I UNDERSTAND THAT.
WE'RE GOING TO KILL HIM.

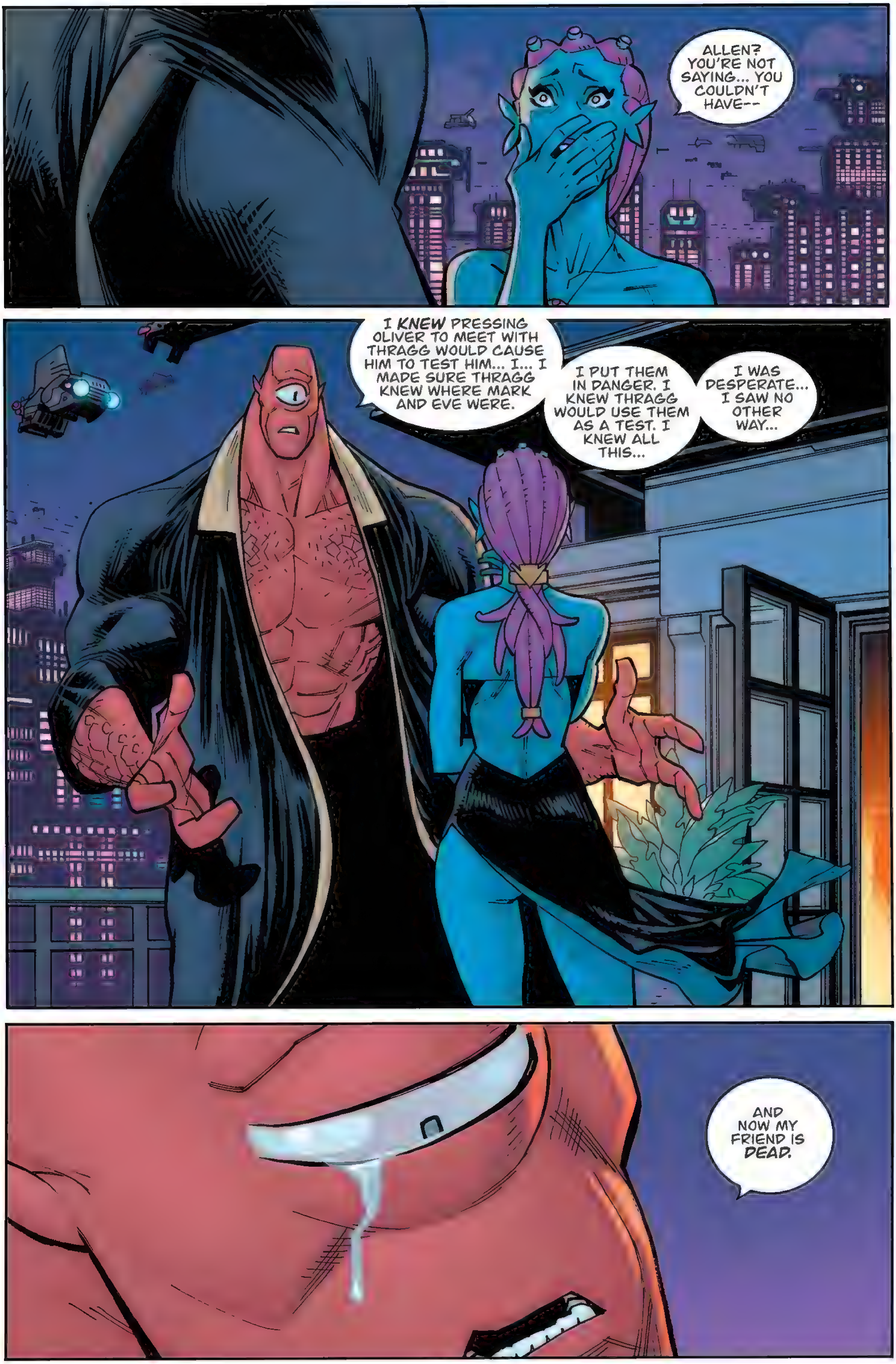

WE?
YES. WE. I'M NOT LETTING YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT. WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS... AND WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS TOGETHER.
WHAT ABOUT TERRA?
WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT.
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU DO THIS ALONE... I DON'T THINK YOU CAN.
I'LL HAVE ALLEN, MY DAD, SPACE RACER... THE COALITION...
AND NOW YOU'LL ALSO HAVE ATOM EVE. SHE'S NO SLOUCH.
OKAY... I CAN'T SAY NO TO THAT.
GOOD. THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE WE HAVE TO DO BEFORE WE LEAVE... SOMETHING I REGRETTED WE'D NEVER DONE WHEN YOU WERE MISSING...
OH?


SORRY. THE TIMING ON THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT IDEAL. I HOPE YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHY WE NEEDED TO DO THIS.
I UNDERSTAND... AND THIS, SOMETHING LIKE THIS... IT'S EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED. I NEED TO SEE THAT THERE IS STILL JOY IN THIS WORLD.
THANK YOU.

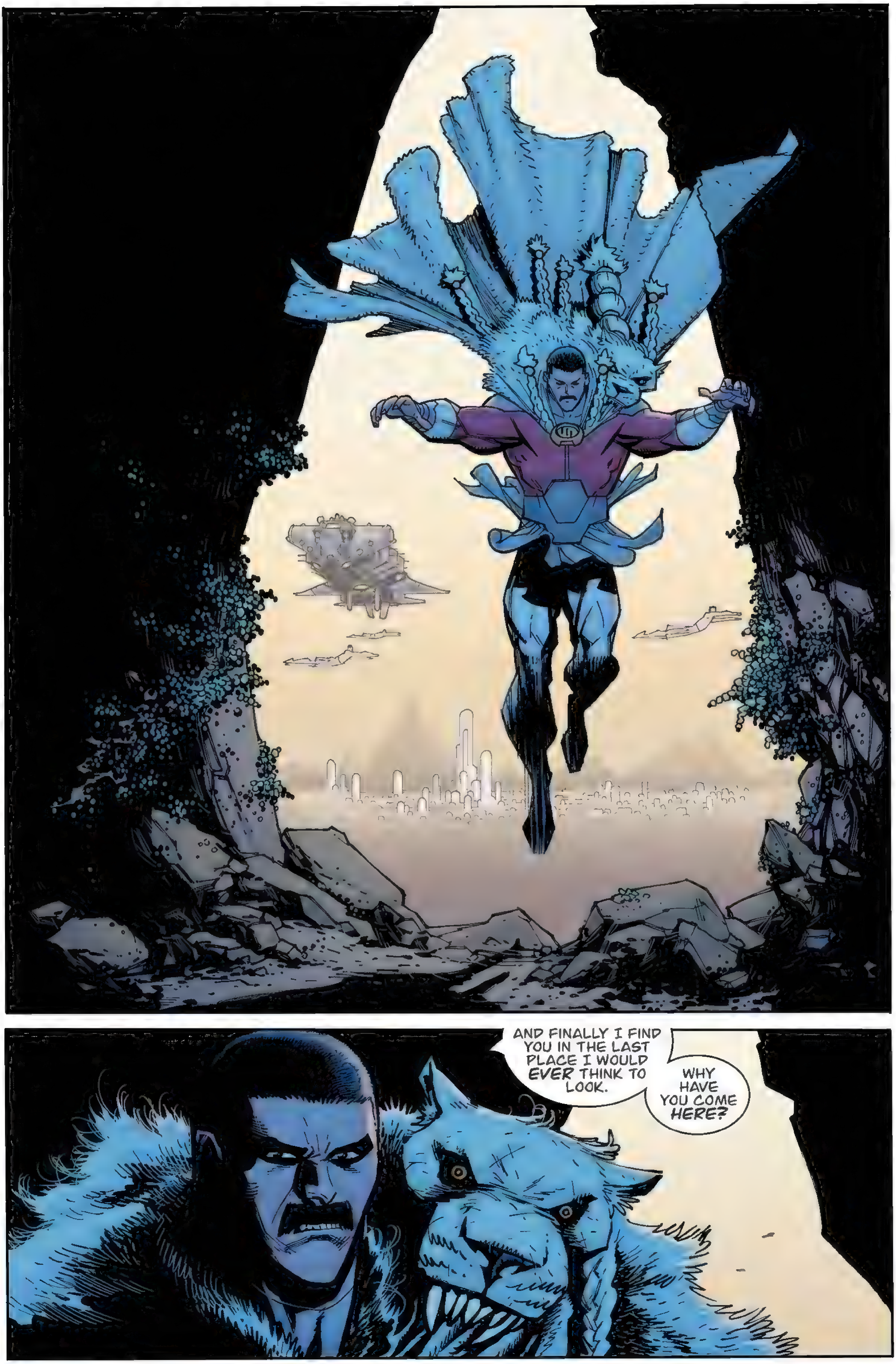
TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED. SHE'LL BE JUST FINE. I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU TWO.
THANKS, MOM.
MOM AND DAD ARE MARRIED!
WE'RE *REALLY* MARRIED.
YEAH.
GIVE ME YOURS.
OKAY... WE'LL PUT THEM BACK ON WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER. I DON'T WANT THEM GETTING DAMAGED.
AND IT'LL GIVE US SOMETHING TO COME BACK TO.
OKAY.

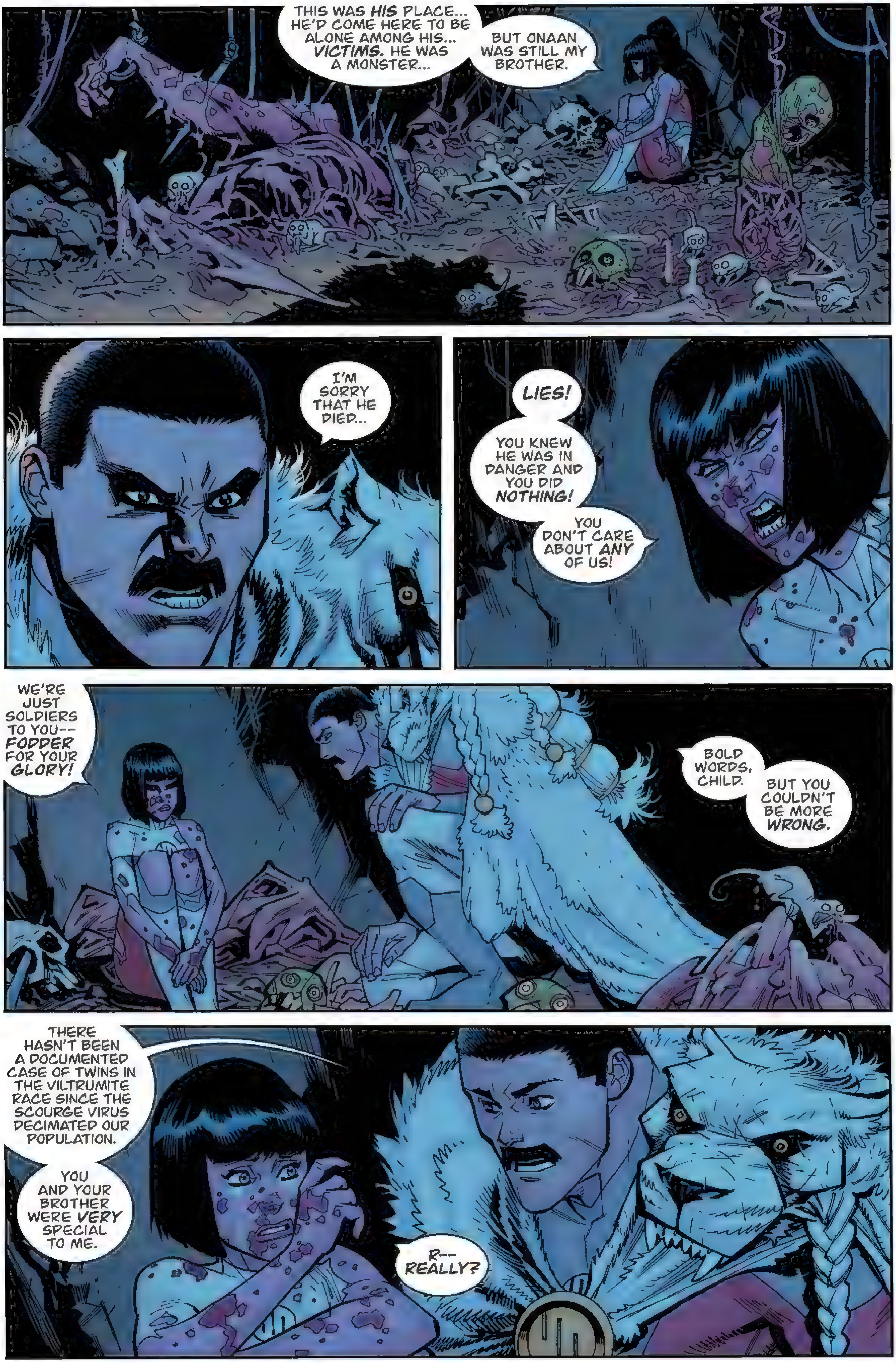

YOU READY TO GO KILL THE GUY WHO KILLED MY BROTHER SO WE CAN GET ON WITH OUR LIVES?
ABSOLUTELY.
YOU SAID IT BEST...
"BEING A HERO IS **BULLSHIT.**"

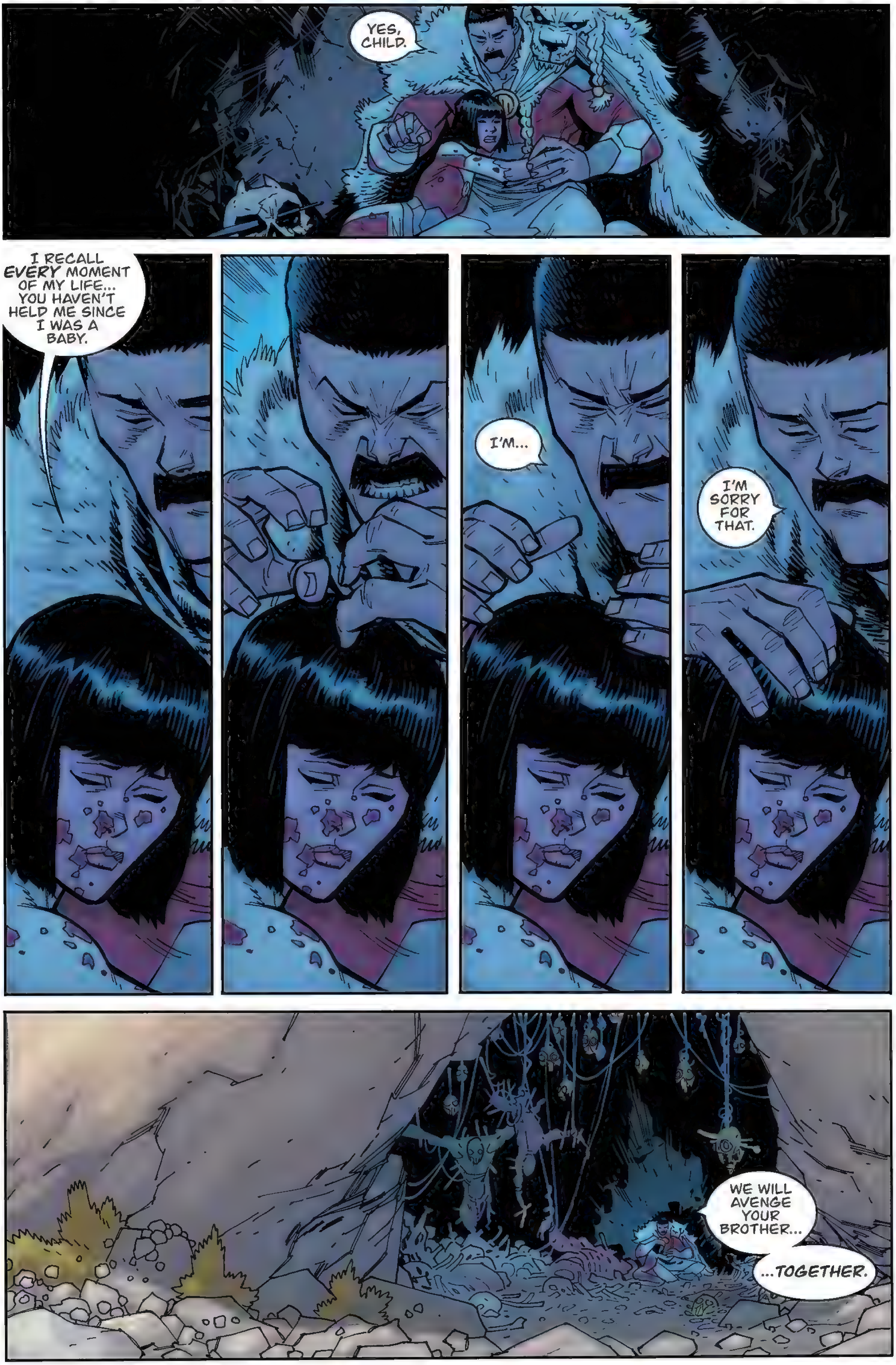

ALLEN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE BY YOURSELF?
IT'S ALL IN MOTION NOW. MARK AND EVE WILL WANT TO KILL THRAGG FOR WHAT HE DID... THEY'RE INVOLVED. THEY'LL GIVE ME THE HELP I NEED.
I CAN RALLY MY FORCES AROUND THEM.
MARK WILL BE ABLE TO PULL IN NOLAN AND THE OTHER VILTRUMITES... SOMETHING OLIVER COULD NEVER DO.
I KNOW YOU LOST A FRIEND... BUT ISN'T ALL THIS *GOOD* NEWS?
YES... GOOD NEWS... THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT IT IS.
THE ATTACK ON MY LIFE... THERE WAS SO MUCH PRESSURE...
I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE... I...
PLEASE, TELIA... I NEED YOU TO BELIEVE I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD GET *THIS* OUT OF HAND...

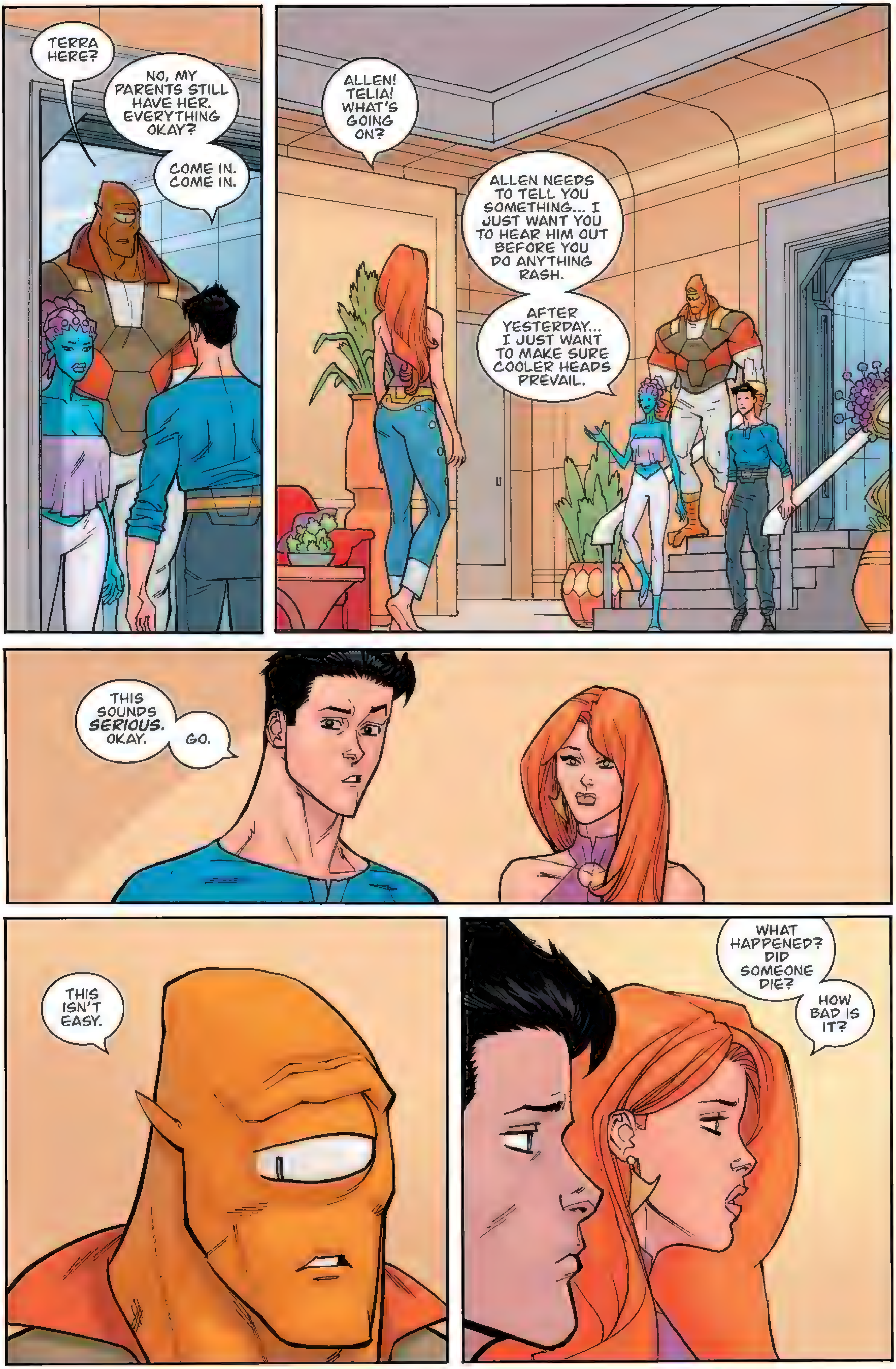

ALLEN? YOU'RE NOT SAYING... YOU COULDN'T HAVE--
I *KNEW* PRESSING OLIVER TO MEET WITH THRAGG WOULD CAUSE HIM TO TEST HIM... I... I MADE SURE THRAGG KNEW WHERE MARK AND EVE WERE.
I PUT THEM IN DANGER. I KNEW THRAGG WOULD USE THEM AS A TEST. I KNEW ALL THIS...
I WAS DESPERATE... I SAW NO OTHER WAY...
AND NOW MY FRIEND IS *DEAD.*

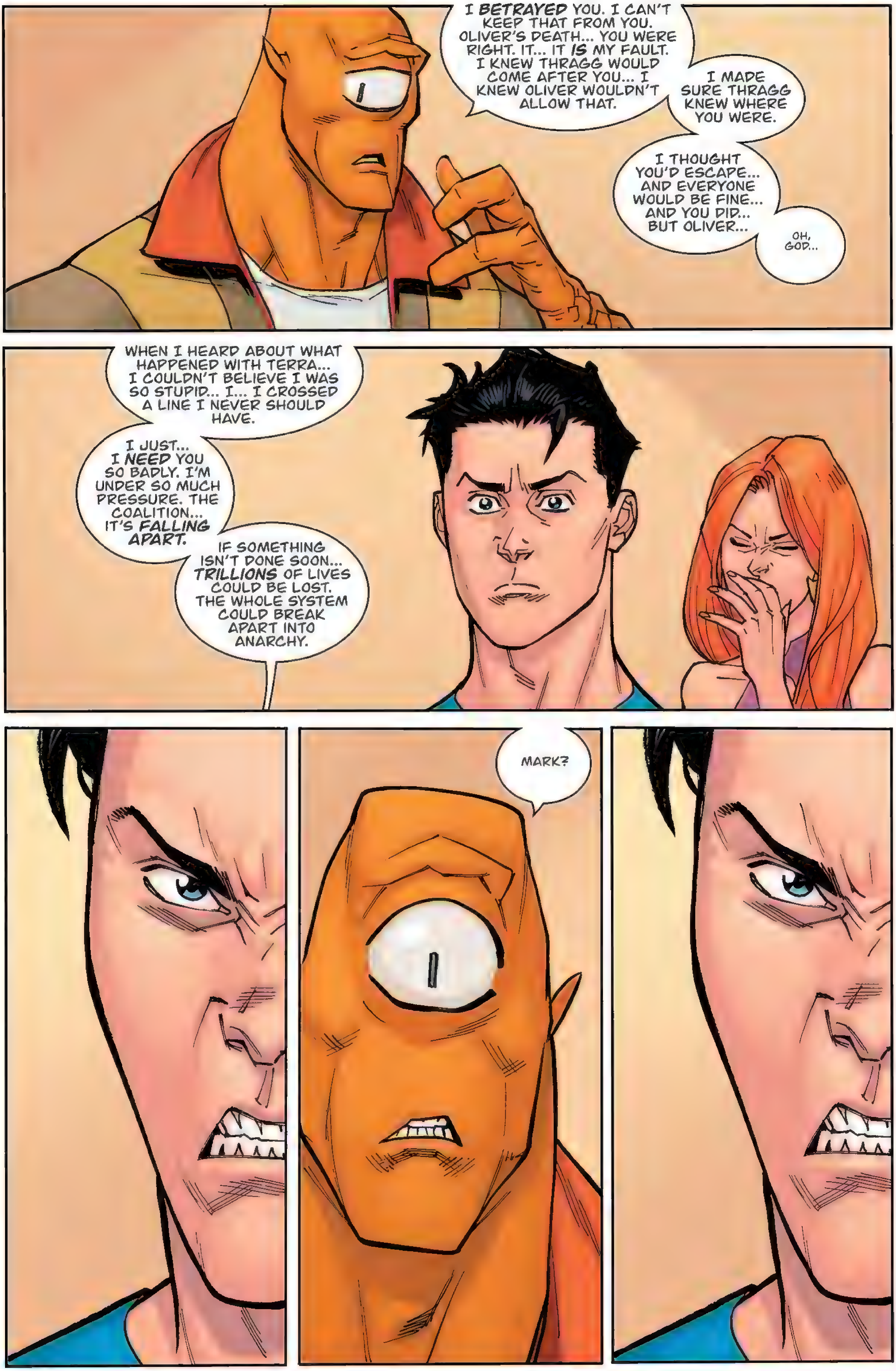
CHAPTER 134

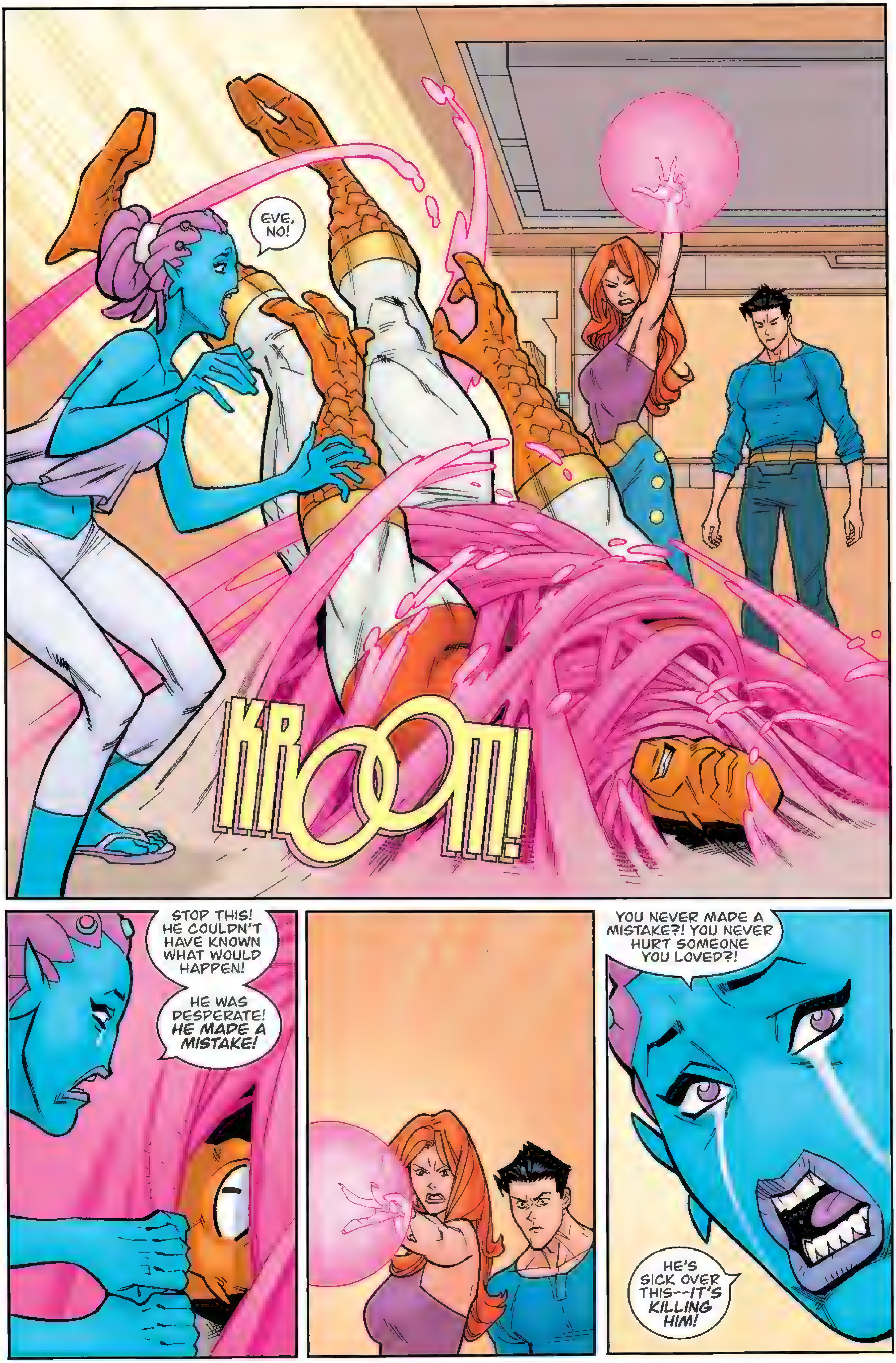

AND FINALLY I FIND YOU IN THE LAST PLACE I WOULD *EVER* THINK TO LOOK.
WHY HAVE YOU COME *HERE?*

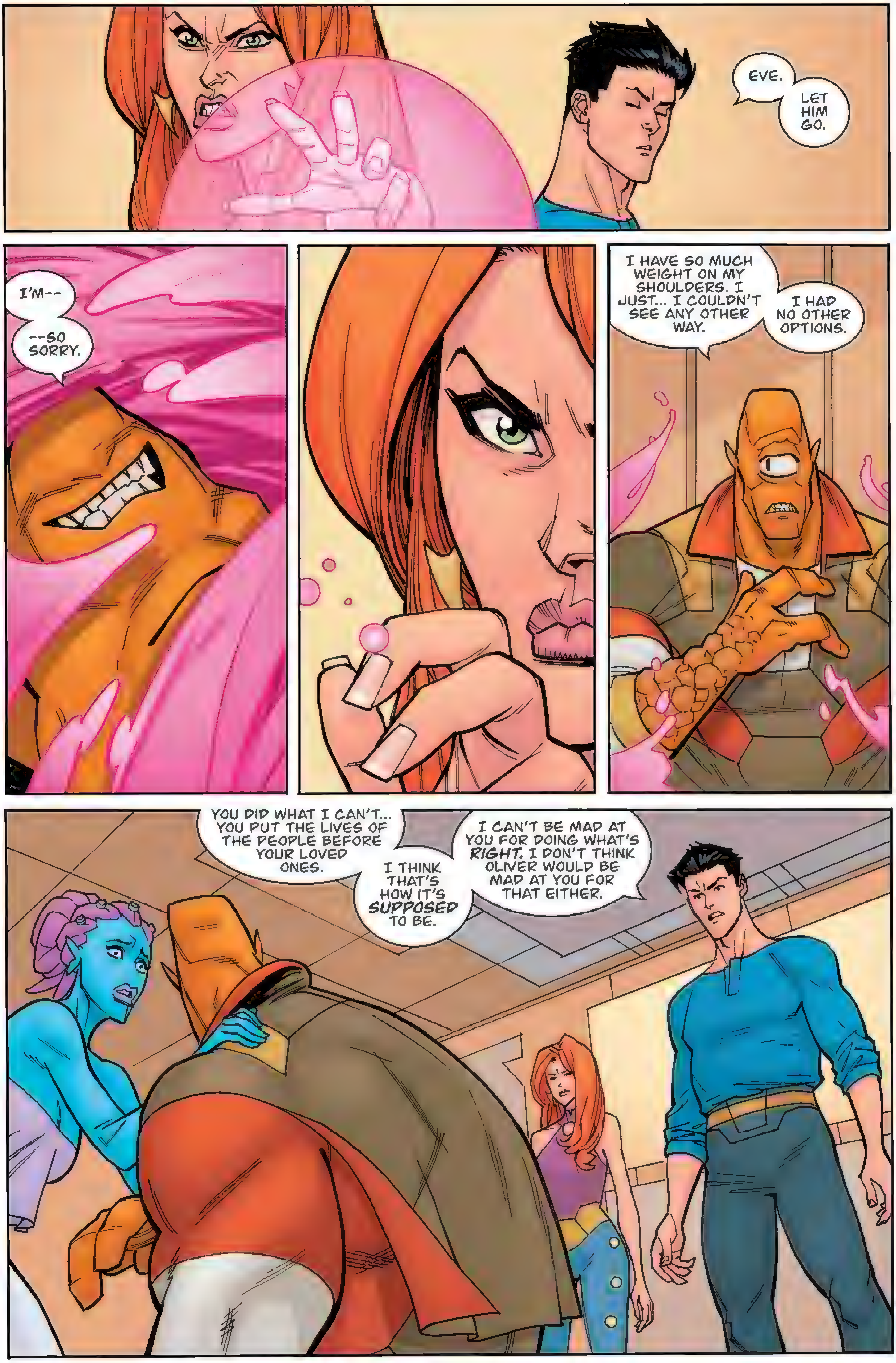

THIS WAS *HIS* PLACE... HE'D COME HERE TO BE ALONE AMONG HIS... *VICTIMS.* HE WAS A MONSTER...
BUT ONAAN WAS STILL MY BROTHER.
I'M SORRY THAT HE DIED...
LIES!
YOU KNEW HE WAS IN DANGER AND YOU DID *NOTHING!*
YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT *ANY* OF US!
WE'RE JUST SOLDIERS TO YOU-- *FODDER* FOR YOUR *GLORY!*
BOLD WORDS, CHILD.
BUT YOU COULDN'T BE MORE *WRONG.*
THERE HASN'T BEEN A DOCUMENTED CASE OF TWINS IN THE VILTRUMITE RACE SINCE THE SCOURGE VIRUS DECIMATED OUR POPULATION.
YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WERE *VERY* SPECIAL TO ME.
R-- *REALLY?*]

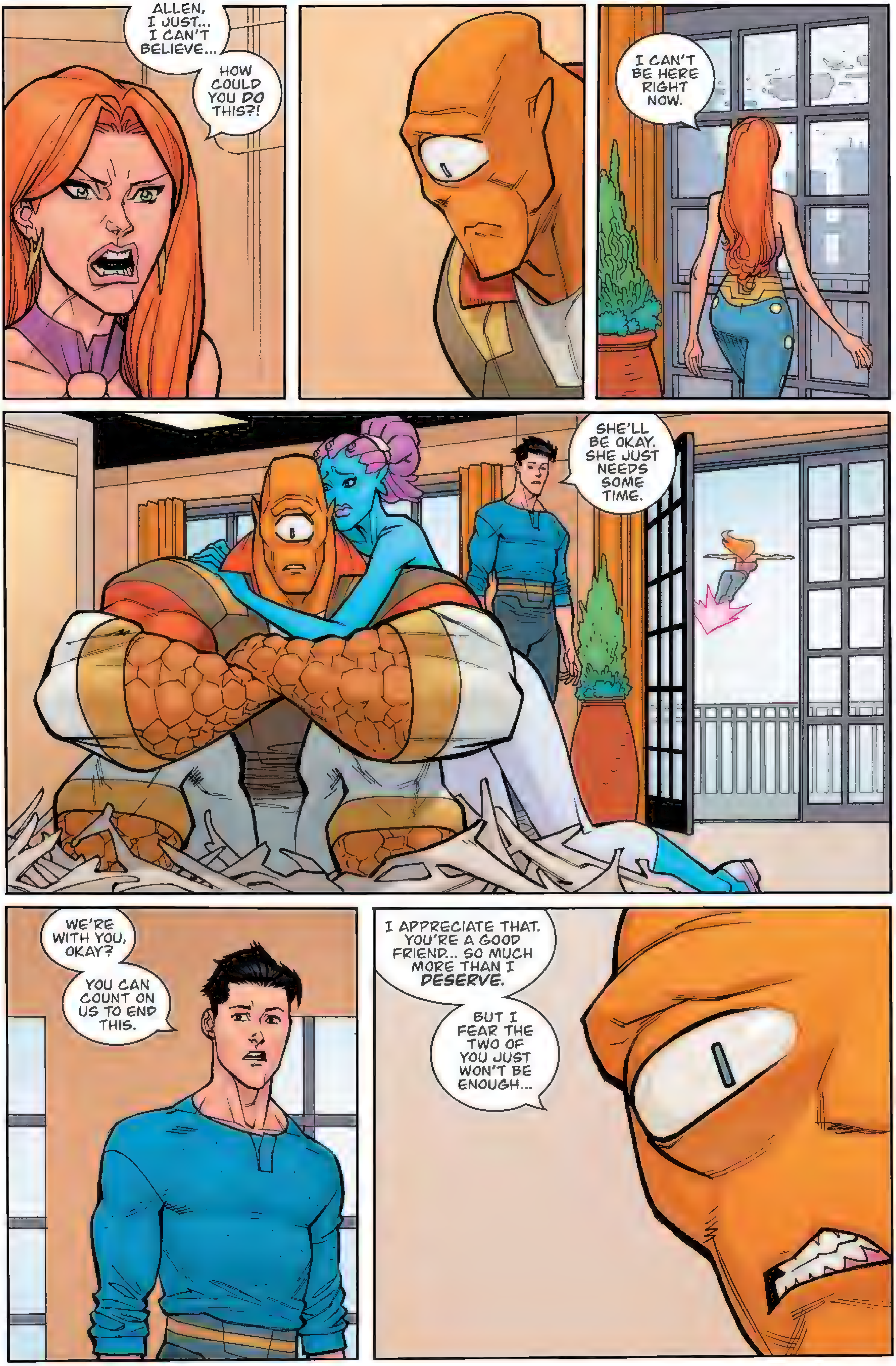

YES, CHILD.
I RECALL *EVERY* MOMENT OF MY LIFE... YOU HAVEN'T HELD ME SINCE I WAS A BABY.
I'M...
I'M SORRY FOR THAT.
WE WILL AVENGE YOUR BROTHER...
...TOGETHER.

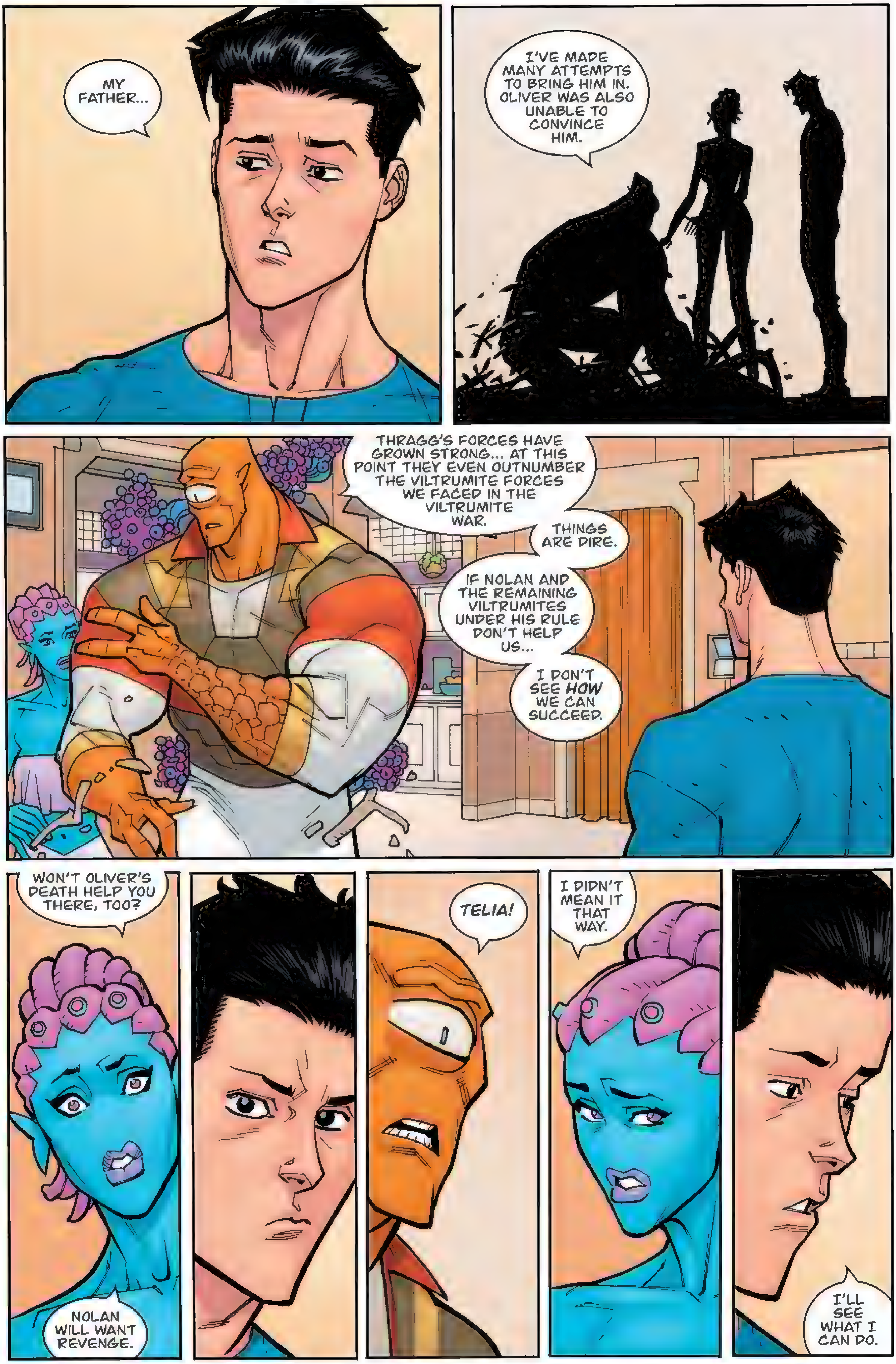

TERRA HERE?
NO, MY PARENTS STILL HAVE HER. EVERYTHING OKAY?
COME IN. COME IN.
ALLEN! TELIA! WHAT'S GOING ON?
ALLEN NEEDS TO TELL YOU SOMETHING... I JUST WANT YOU TO HEAR HIM OUT BEFORE YOU DO ANYTHING RASH.
AFTER YESTERDAY... I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE COOLER HEADS PREVAIL.
THIS SOUNDS **SERIOUS.** OKAY.
GO.
THIS ISN'T EASY.
WHAT HAPPENED? DID SOMEONE DIE?
HOW BAD IS IT?

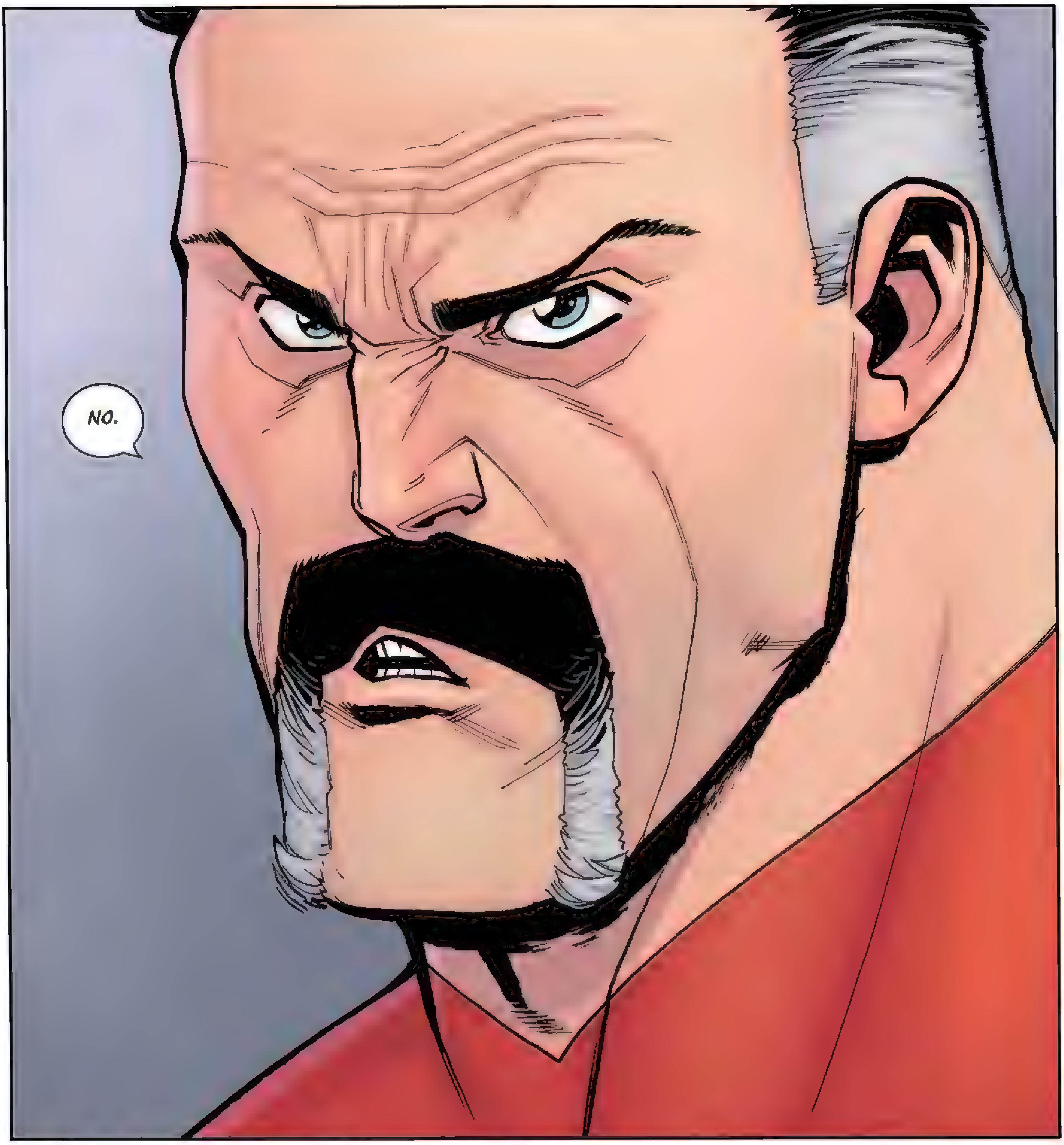

I BETRAYED YOU. I CAN'T KEEP THAT FROM YOU. OLIVER'S DEATH... YOU WERE RIGHT. IT... IT IS MY FAULT. I KNEW THRAGG WOULD COME AFTER YOU... I KNEW OLIVER WOULDN'T ALLOW THAT.
I MADE SURE THRAGG KNEW WHERE YOU WERE.
I THOUGHT YOU'D ESCAPE... AND EVERYONE WOULD BE FINE... AND YOU DID... BUT OLIVER...
OH, GOD...
WHEN I HEARD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WITH TERRA... I COULDN'T BELIEVE I WAS SO STUPID... I... I CROSSED A LINE I NEVER SHOULD HAVE.
I JUST... I NEED YOU SO BADLY. I'M UNDER SO MUCH PRESSURE. THE COALITION... IT'S FALLING APART.
IF SOMETHING ISN'T DONE SOON... TRILLIONS OF LIVES COULD BE LOST. THE WHOLE SYSTEM COULD BREAK APART INTO ANARCHY.
MARK?

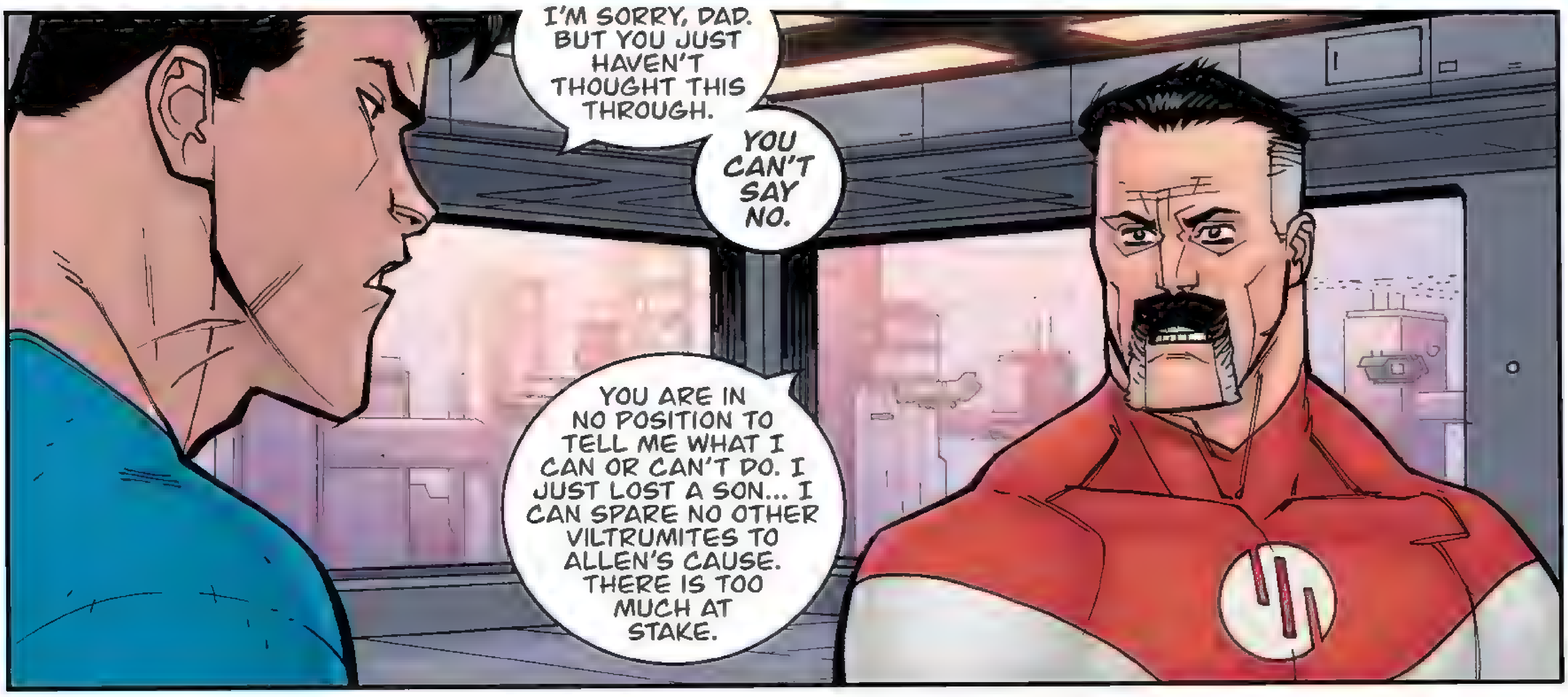

EVE, NO!
KROOM!
STOP THIS! HE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN!
HE WAS DESPERATE! *HE MADE A MISTAKE!*
YOU NEVER MADE A MISTAKE?! YOU NEVER HURT SOMEONE YOU LOVED?!
HE'S SICK OVER THIS--*IT'S KILLING HIM!*

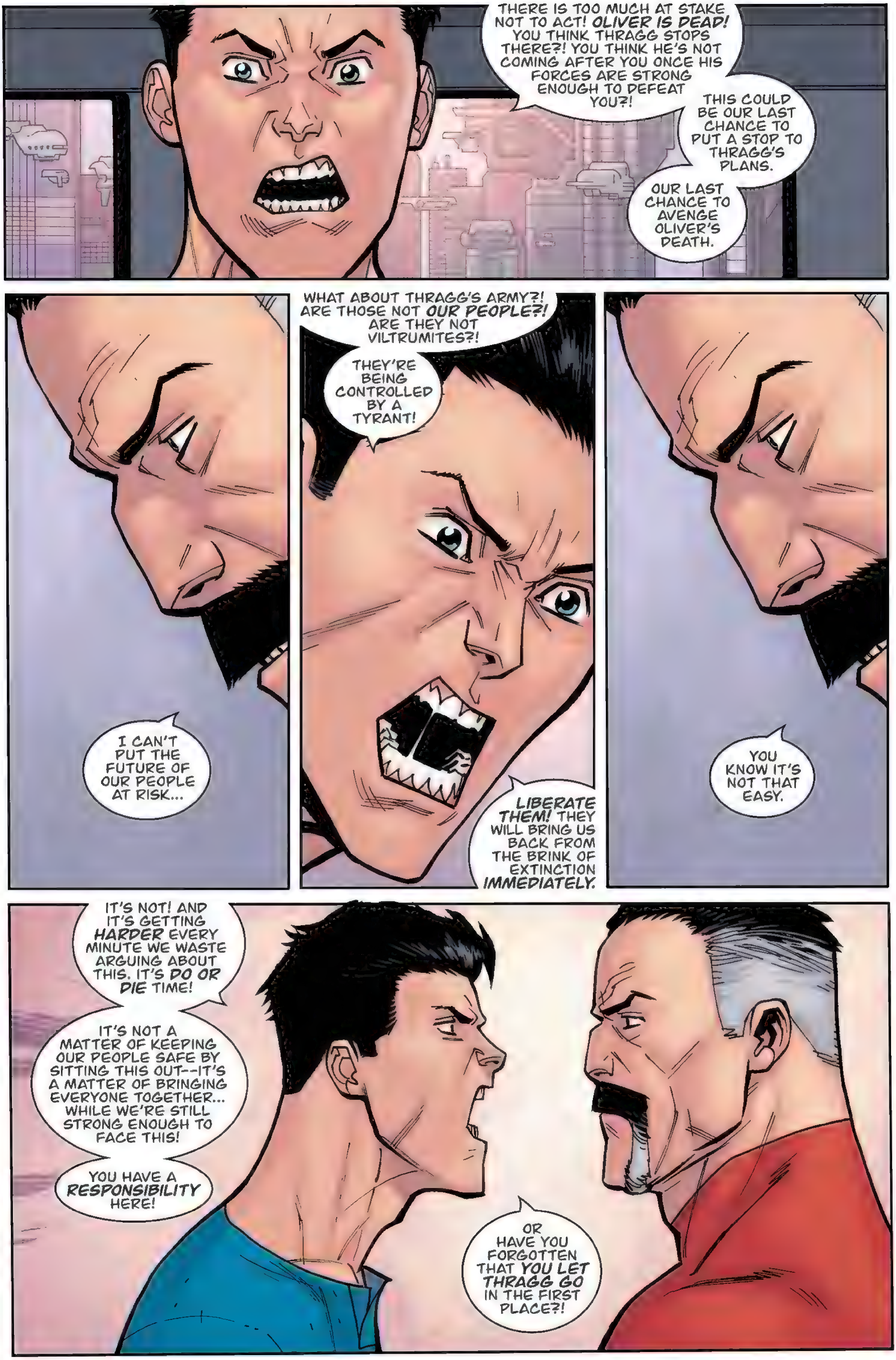

EVE.
LET HIM GO.
I'M--
--SO SORRY.
I HAVE SO MUCH WEIGHT ON MY SHOULDERS. I JUST... I COULDN'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY.
I HAD NO OTHER OPTIONS.
YOU DID WHAT I CAN'T... YOU PUT THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE BEFORE YOUR LOVED ONES.
I THINK THAT'S HOW IT'S *SUPPOSED* TO BE.
I CAN'T BE MAD AT YOU FOR DOING WHAT'S *RIGHT.* I DON'T THINK OLIVER WOULD BE MAD AT YOU FOR THAT EITHER.

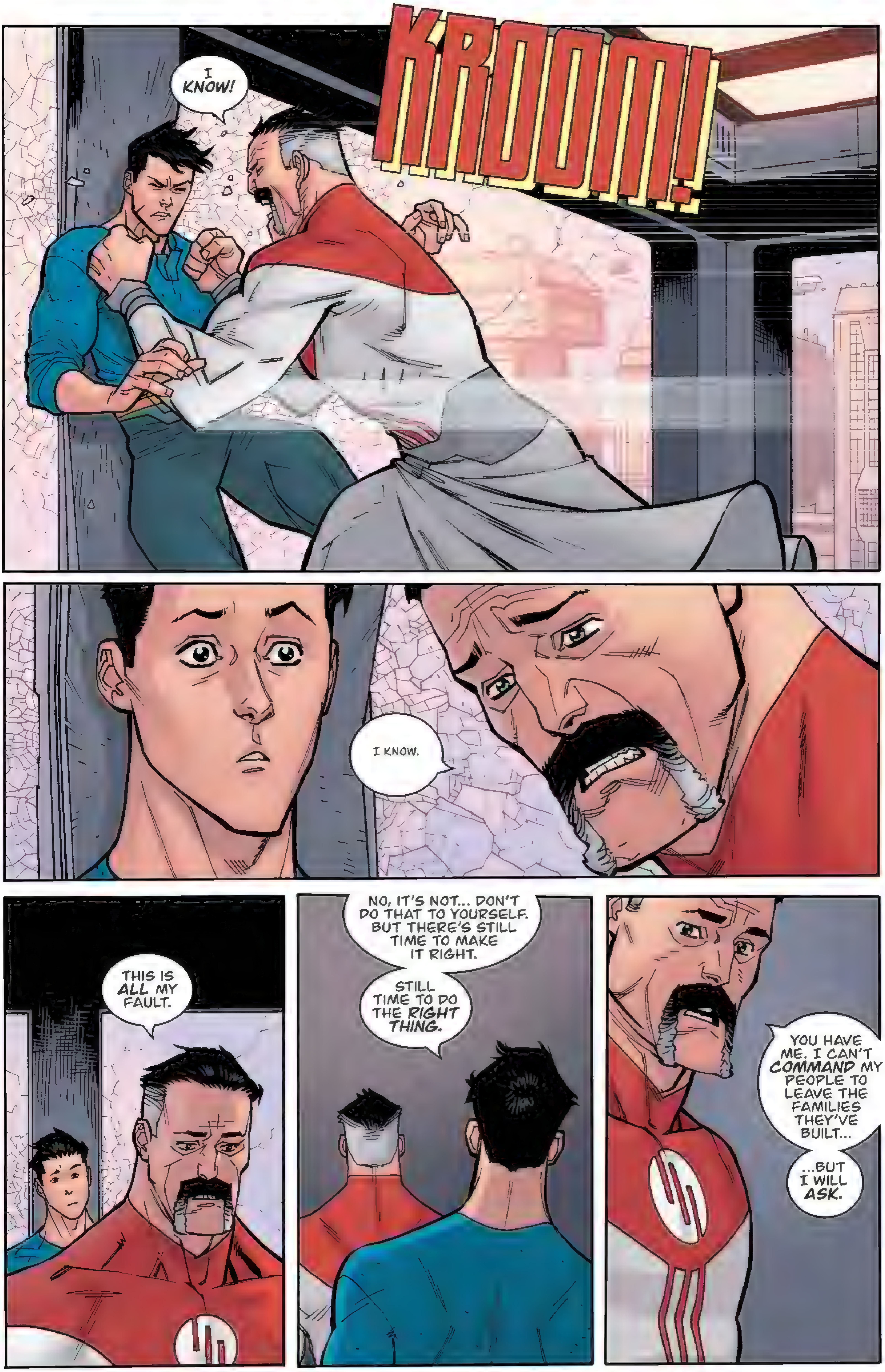

ALLEN, I JUST... I CAN'T BELIEVE...
HOW COULD YOU *DO* THIS?!
I CAN'T BE HERE RIGHT NOW.
SHE'LL BE OKAY. SHE JUST NEEDS SOME TIME.
WE'RE WITH YOU, OKAY?
YOU CAN COUNT ON US TO END THIS.
I APPRECIATE THAT. YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND... SO MUCH MORE THAN I **DESERVE.**
BUT I FEAR THE TWO OF YOU JUST WON'T BE ENOUGH...

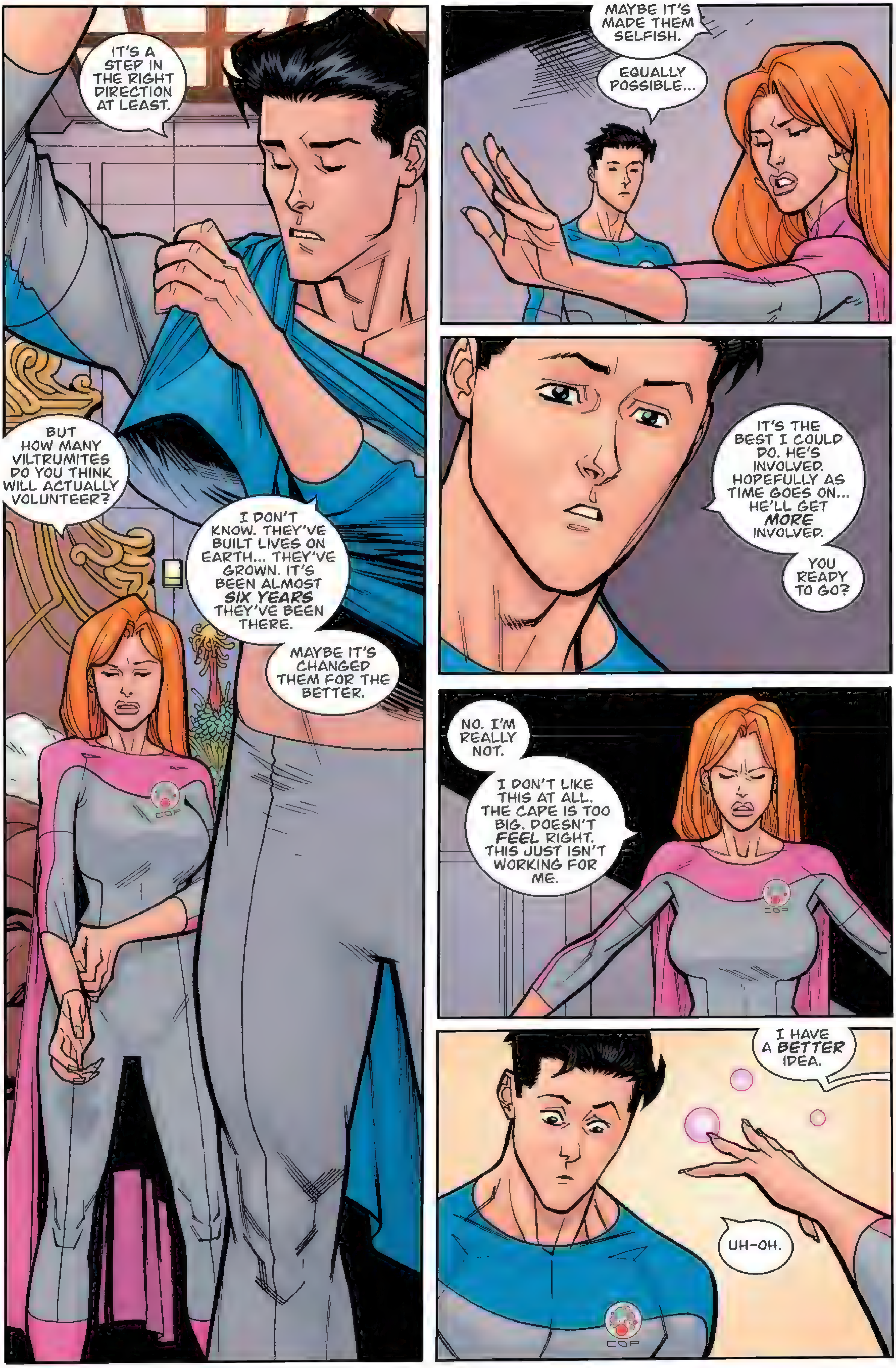

MY FATHER...
I'VE MADE MANY ATTEMPTS TO BRING HIM IN. OLIVER WAS ALSO UNABLE TO CONVINCE HIM.
THRAGG'S FORCES HAVE GROWN STRONG... AT THIS POINT THEY EVEN OUTNUMBER THE VILTRUMITE FORCES WE FACED IN THE VILTRUMITE WAR.
THINGS ARE DIRE.
IF NOLAN AND THE REMAINING VILTRUMITES UNDER HIS RULE DON'T HELP US...
I DON'T SEE *HOW* WE CAN SUCCEED.
WON'T OLIVER'S DEATH HELP YOU THERE, TOO?
NOLAN WILL WANT REVENGE.
TELIA!
I DIDN'T MEAN IT THAT WAY.
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.


NO.


I'M SORRY, DAD. BUT YOU JUST HAVEN'T THOUGHT THIS THROUGH.
YOU CAN'T SAY NO.
YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO TELL ME WHAT I CAN OR CAN'T DO. I JUST LOST A SON... I CAN SPARE NO OTHER VILTRUMITES TO ALLEN'S CAUSE. THERE IS TOO MUCH AT STAKE.

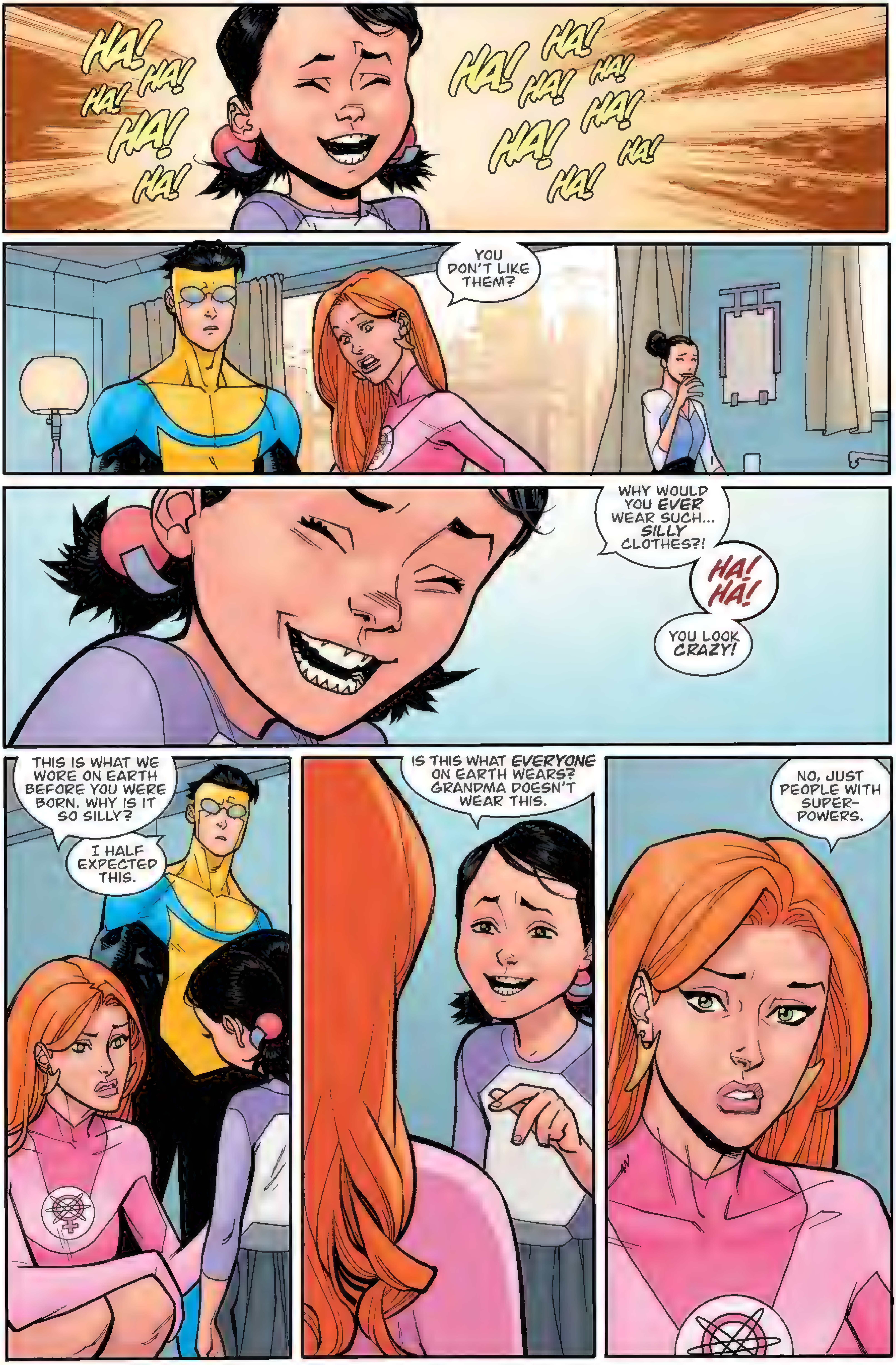

THERE IS TOO MUCH AT STAKE NOT TO ACT! **OLIVER IS DEAD!** YOU THINK THRAGG STOPS THERE?! YOU THINK HE'S NOT COMING AFTER YOU ONCE HIS FORCES ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT YOU?!
THIS COULD BE OUR LAST CHANCE TO PUT A STOP TO THRAGG'S PLANS.
OUR LAST CHANCE TO AVENGE OLIVER'S DEATH.
I CAN'T PUT THE FUTURE OF OUR PEOPLE AT RISK...
WHAT ABOUT THRAGG'S ARMY?! ARE THOSE NOT **OUR PEOPLE?!** ARE THEY NOT VILTRUMITES?!
THEY'RE BEING CONTROLLED BY A TYRANT!
LIBERATE THEM! THEY WILL BRING US BACK FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION **IMMEDIATELY.**
YOU KNOW IT'S NOT THAT EASY.
IT'S NOT! AND IT'S GETTING **HARDER** EVERY MINUTE WE WASTE ARGUING ABOUT THIS. IT'S **DO OR DIE** TIME!
IT'S NOT A MATTER OF KEEPING OUR PEOPLE SAFE BY SITTING THIS OUT--IT'S A MATTER OF BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER... WHILE WE'RE STILL STRONG ENOUGH TO FACE THIS!
YOU HAVE A **RESPONSIBILITY** HERE!
OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT **YOU LET THRAGG GO** IN THE FIRST PLACE?!

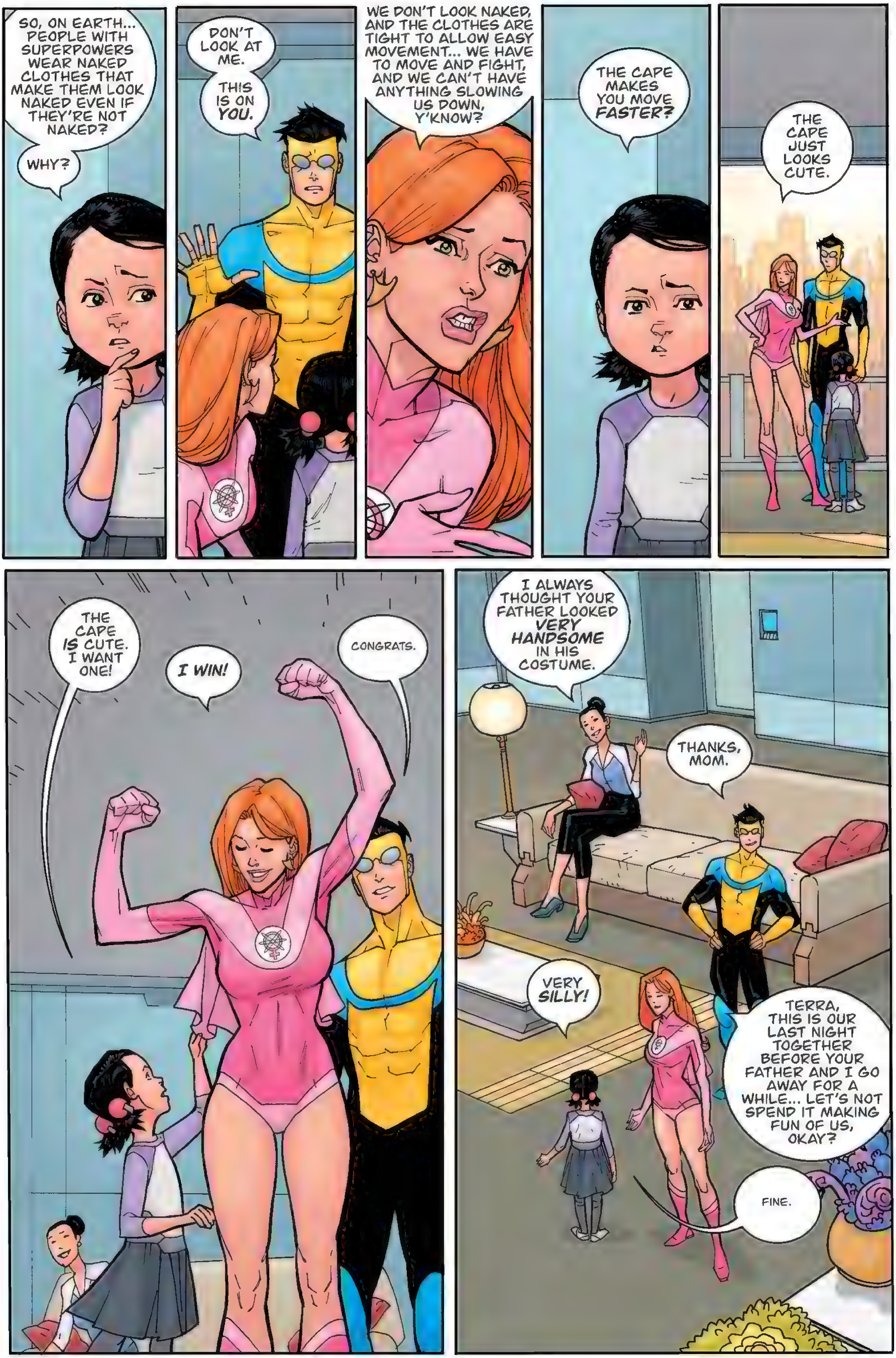

I KNOW!
KROOM!
I KNOW.
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.
NO, IT'S NOT... DON'T DO THAT TO YOURSELF. BUT THERE'S STILL TIME TO MAKE IT RIGHT.
STILL TIME TO DO THE RIGHT THING.
YOU HAVE ME. I CAN'T COMMAND MY PEOPLE TO LEAVE THE FAMILIES THEY'VE BUILT...
...BUT I WILL ASK.

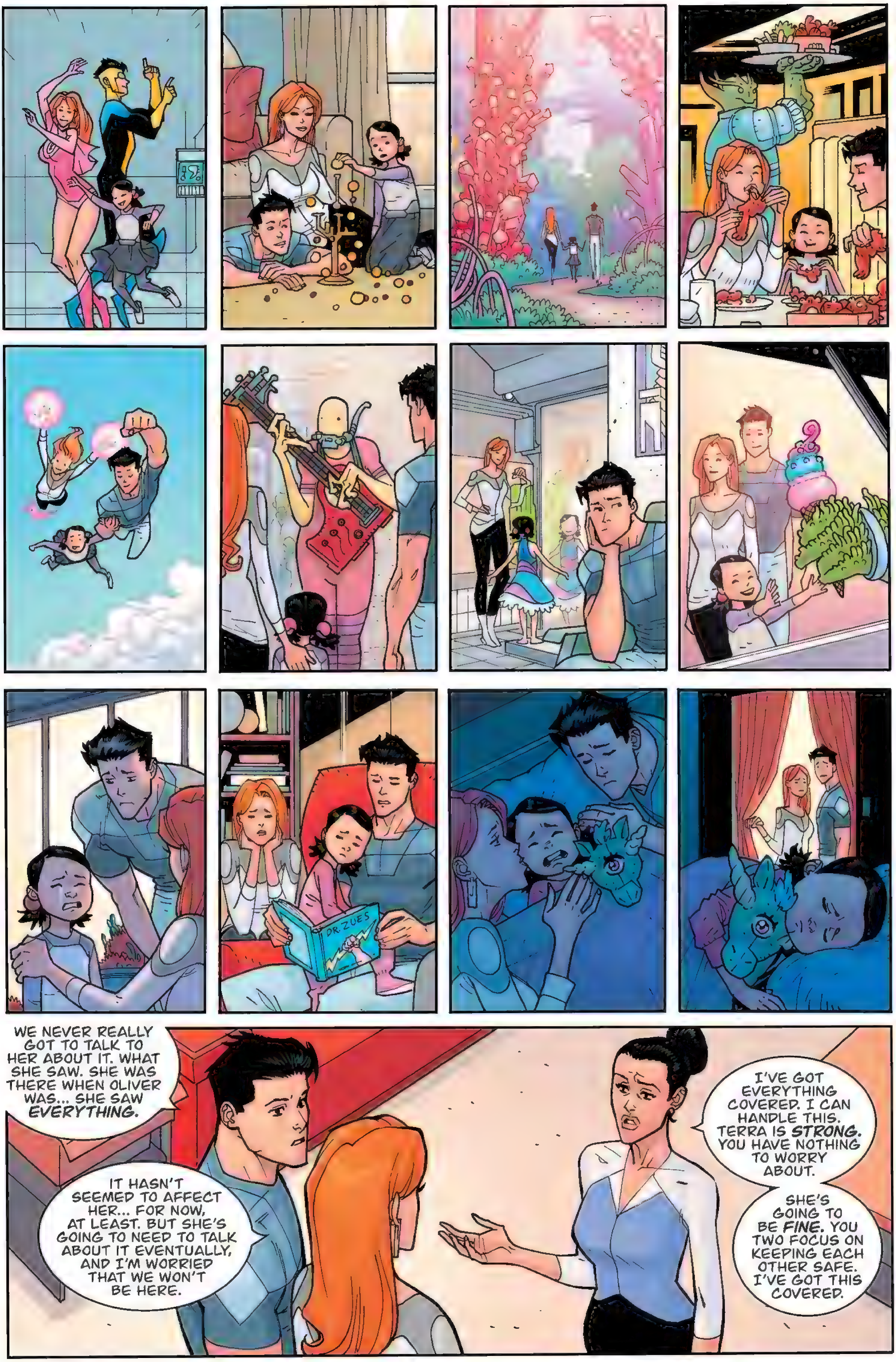

IT'S A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AT LEAST.
BUT HOW MANY VILTRUMITES DO YOU THINK WILL ACTUALLY VOLUNTEER?
I DON'T KNOW. THEY'VE BUILT LIVES ON EARTH... THEY'VE GROWN. IT'S BEEN ALMOST *SIX YEARS* THEY'VE BEEN THERE.
MAYBE IT'S CHANGED THEM FOR THE BETTER.
MAYBE IT'S MADE THEM SELFISH.
EQUALLY POSSIBLE...
COP
IT'S THE BEST I COULD DO. HE'S INVOLVED. HOPEFULLY AS TIME GOES ON... HE'LL GET *MORE* INVOLVED.
YOU READY TO GO?
NO. I'M REALLY NOT.
I DON'T LIKE THIS AT ALL. THE CAPE IS TOO BIG. DOESN'T *FEEL* RIGHT. THIS JUST ISN'T WORKING FOR ME.
COP
I HAVE A *BETTER* IDEA.
UH-OH.
COP

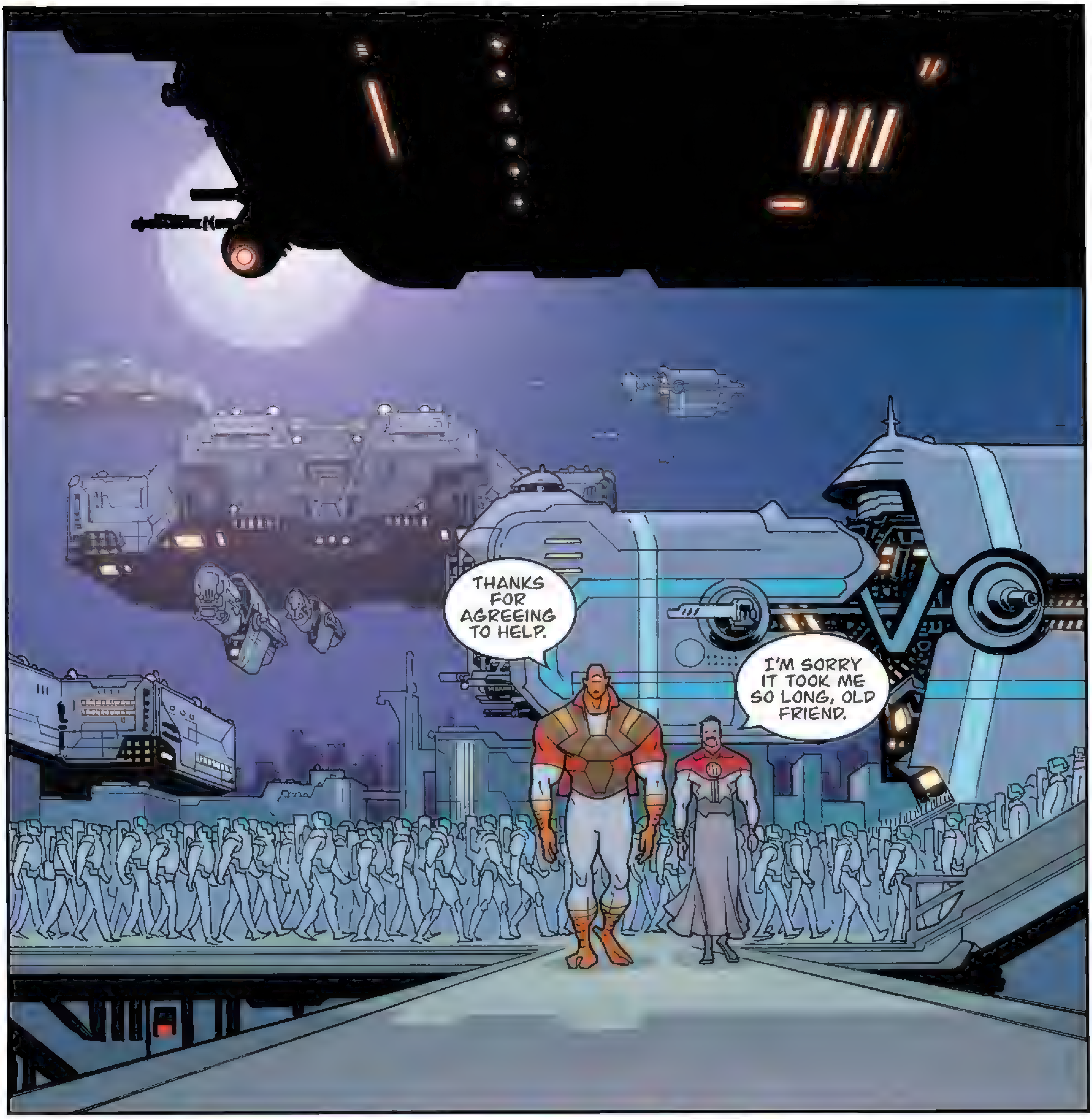
MUCH BETTER!
REALLY?

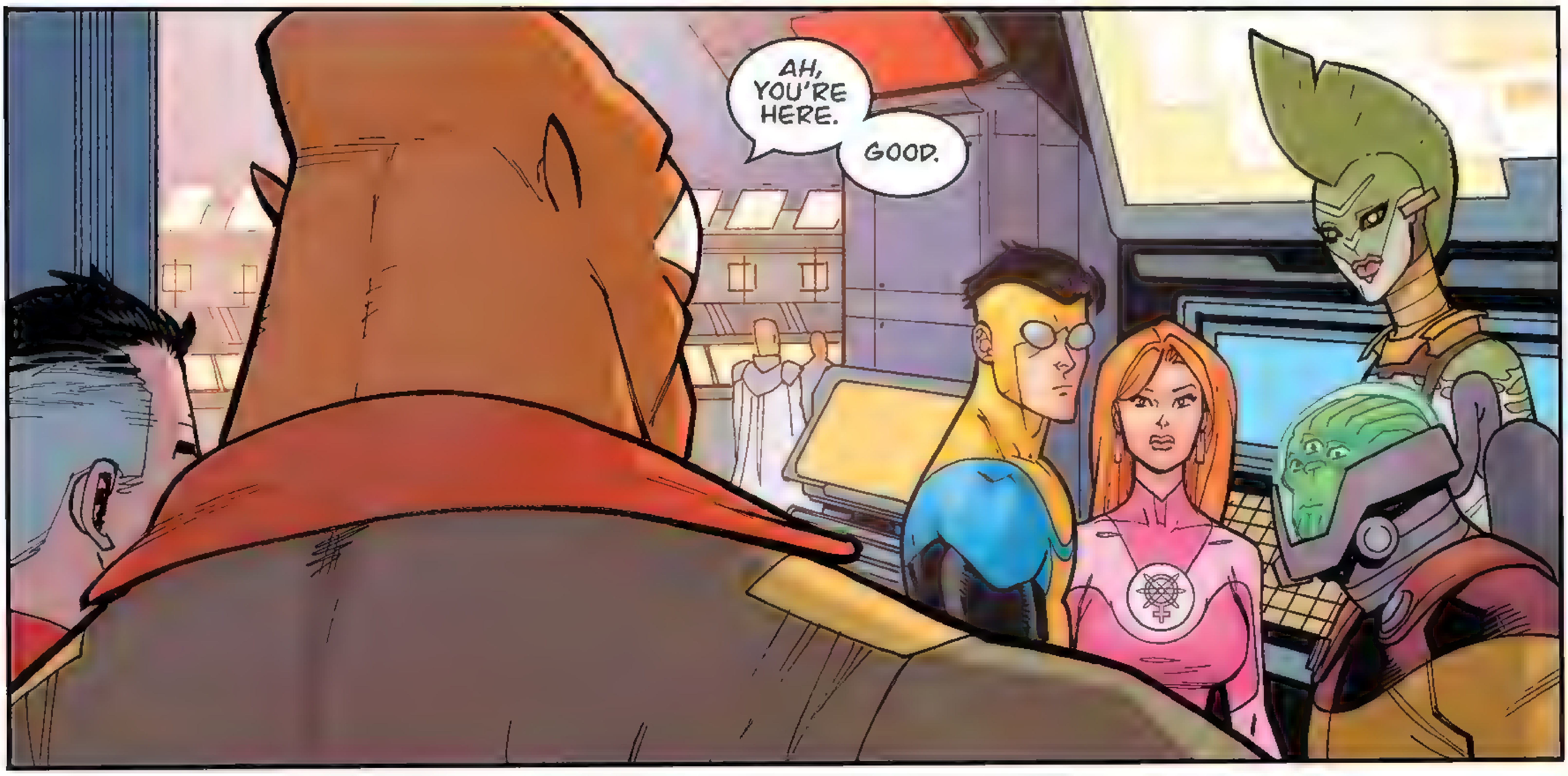
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
I DON'T KNOW... IT'S JUST... *WHY?* I DON'T NEED TO WEAR A MASK ANYMORE. MY IDENTITY ISN'T SECRET.
SO WHAT'S THE POINT?
ISN'T "IT LOOKS COOL" ENOUGH?
THE DAMN THING WILL GET RIPPED OFF WITHIN *FIVE MINUTES* OF YOUR FIRST FIGHT ANYWAY.
FAIR ENOUGH.
FEELS GOOD... ALTHOUGH IT HASN'T BEEN ALL THAT LONG FOR ME.
WELL, IT'S BEEN SO LONG FOR ME I'M SURE I GOT SOME OF THE DETAILS WRONG.
OKAY, LET'S CHECK IN ON THE GIRL.
I CAN'T *WAIT* TO HEAR WHAT SHE THINKS OF THESE COSTUMES.

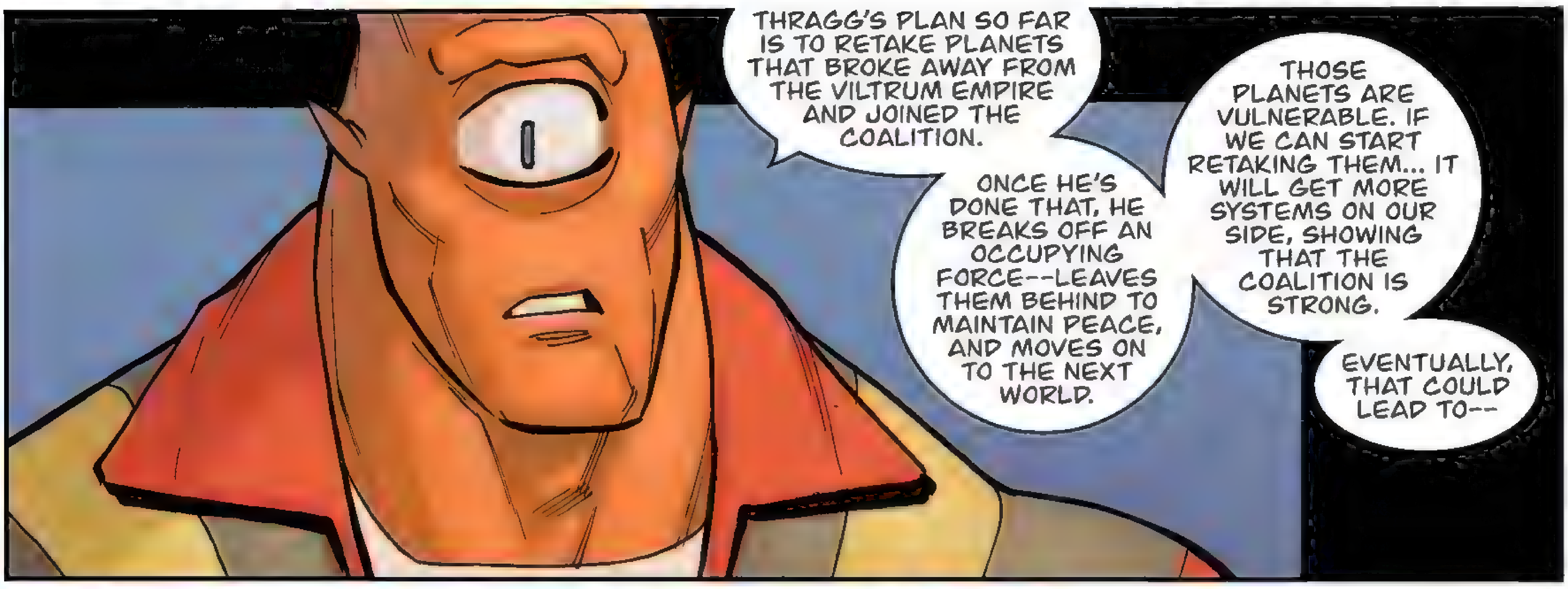

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
YOU DON'T LIKE THEM?
WHY WOULD YOU EVER WEAR SUCH... SILLY CLOTHES?!
HA! HA!
YOU LOOK CRAZY!
THIS IS WHAT WE WORE ON EARTH BEFORE YOU WERE BORN. WHY IS IT SO SILLY?
I HALF EXPECTED THIS.
IS THIS WHAT EVERYONE ON EARTH WEARS? GRANDMA DOESN'T WEAR THIS.
NO, JUST PEOPLE WITH SUPER-POWERS.

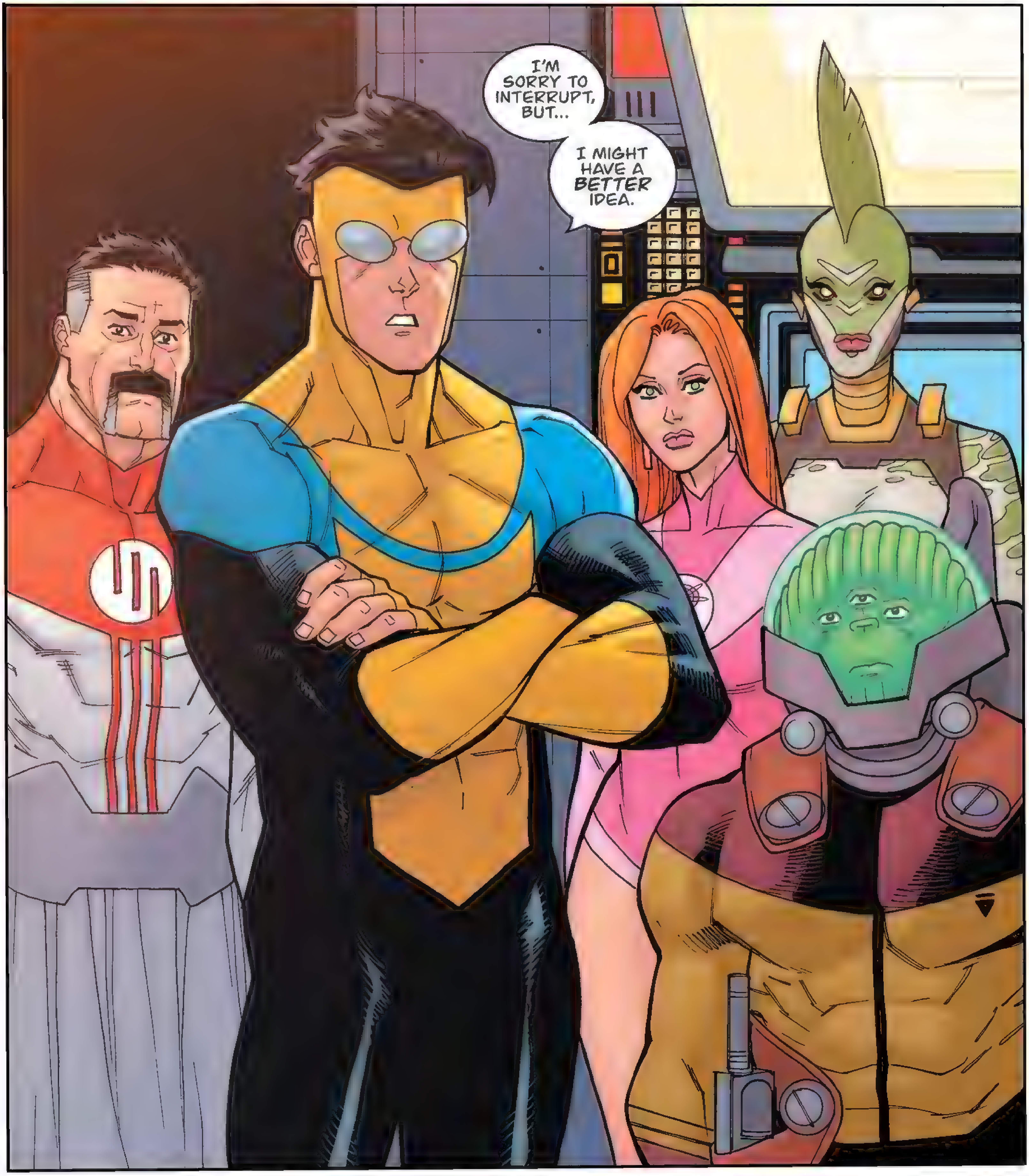

SO, ON EARTH... PEOPLE WITH SUPERPOWERS WEAR NAKED CLOTHES THAT MAKE THEM LOOK NAKED EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT NAKED?
WHY?
DON'T LOOK AT ME.
THIS IS ON *YOU.*
WE DON'T LOOK NAKED, AND THE CLOTHES ARE TIGHT TO ALLOW EASY MOVEMENT... WE HAVE TO MOVE AND FIGHT, AND WE CAN'T HAVE ANYTHING SLOWING US DOWN, Y'KNOW?
THE CAPE MAKES YOU MOVE *FASTER?*
THE CAPE JUST LOOKS CUTE.
THE CAPE *IS* CUTE. I WANT ONE!
I WIN!
CONGRATS.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOUR FATHER LOOKED *VERY HANDSOME* IN HIS COSTUME.
THANKS, MOM.
VERY *SILLY!*
TERRA, THIS IS OUR LAST NIGHT TOGETHER BEFORE YOUR FATHER AND I GO AWAY FOR A WHILE... LET'S NOT SPEND IT MAKING FUN OF US, OKAY?
FINE.


DR. ZUES
WE NEVER REALLY GOT TO TALK TO HER ABOUT IT. WHAT SHE SAW. SHE WAS THERE WHEN OLIVER WAS... SHE SAW *EVERYTHING*.
IT HASN'T SEEMED TO AFFECT HER... FOR NOW, AT LEAST. BUT SHE'S GOING TO NEED TO TALK ABOUT IT EVENTUALLY, AND I'M WORRIED THAT WE WON'T BE HERE.
I'VE GOT EVERYTHING COVERED. I CAN HANDLE THIS. TERRA IS *STRONG*. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
SHE'S GOING TO BE *FINE*. YOU TWO FOCUS ON KEEPING EACH OTHER SAFE. I'VE GOT THIS COVERED.


THANKS FOR AGREEING TO HELP.
I'M SORRY IT TOOK ME SO LONG, OLD FRIEND.

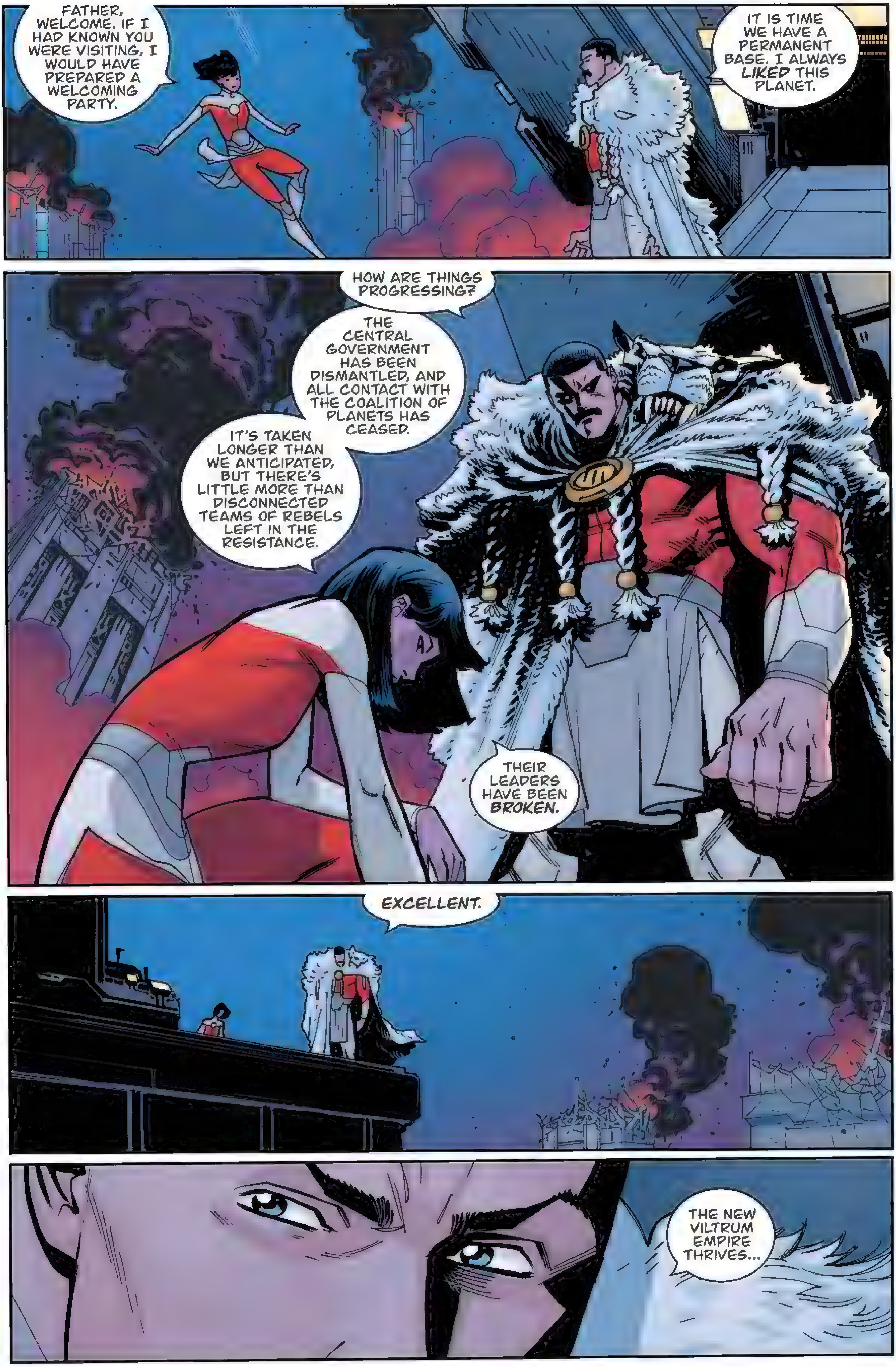

AH, YOU'RE HERE.
GOOD.

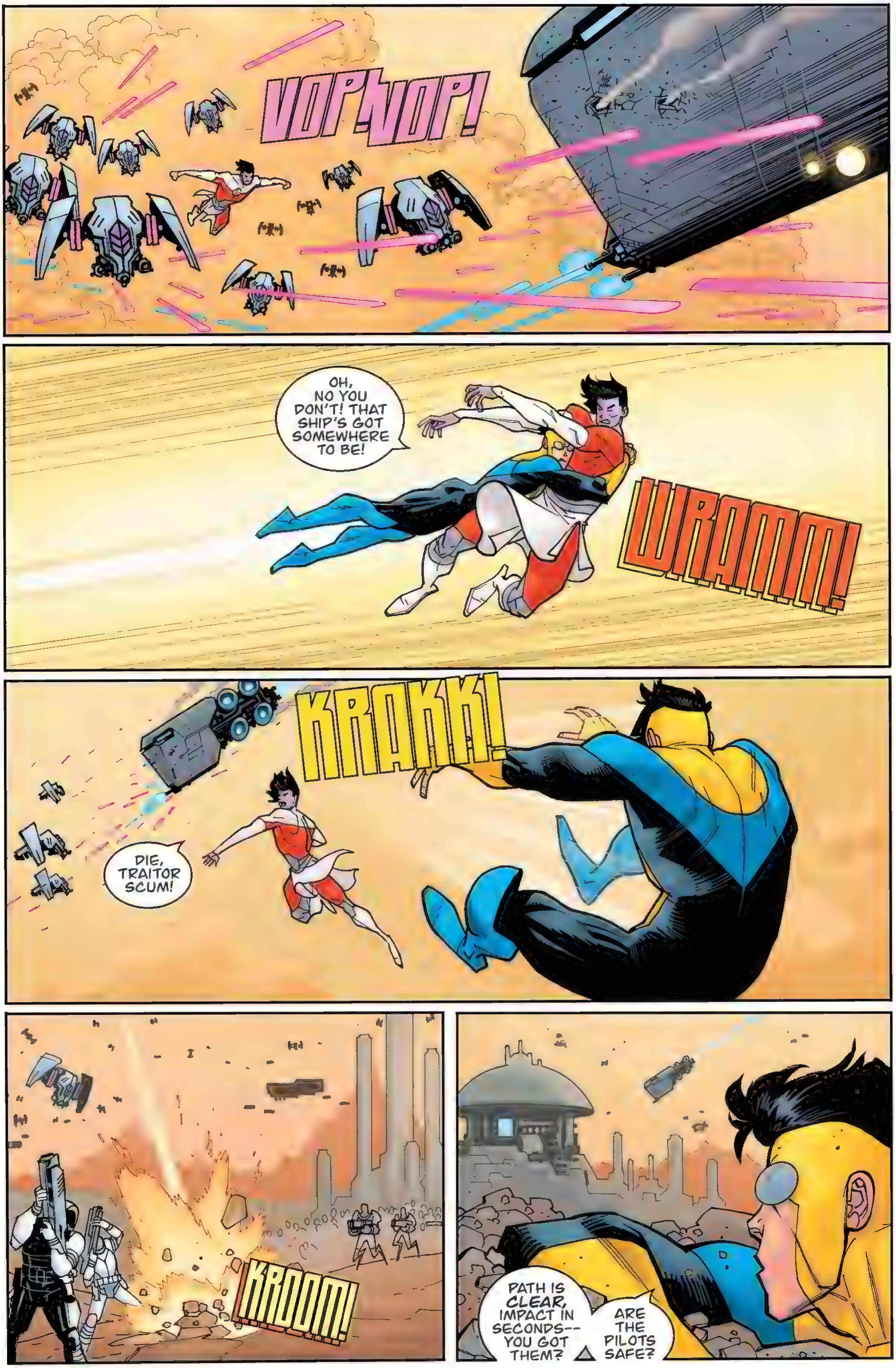

THRAGG'S PLAN SO FAR IS TO RETAKE PLANETS THAT BROKE AWAY FROM THE VILTRUM EMPIRE AND JOINED THE COALITION.
ONCE HE'S DONE THAT, HE BREAKS OFF AN OCCUPYING FORCE--LEAVES THEM BEHIND TO MAINTAIN PEACE, AND MOVES ON TO THE NEXT WORLD.
THOSE PLANETS ARE VULNERABLE. IF WE CAN START RETAKING THEM... IT WILL GET MORE SYSTEMS ON OUR SIDE, SHOWING THAT THE COALITION IS STRONG.
EVENTUALLY, THAT COULD LEAD TO--

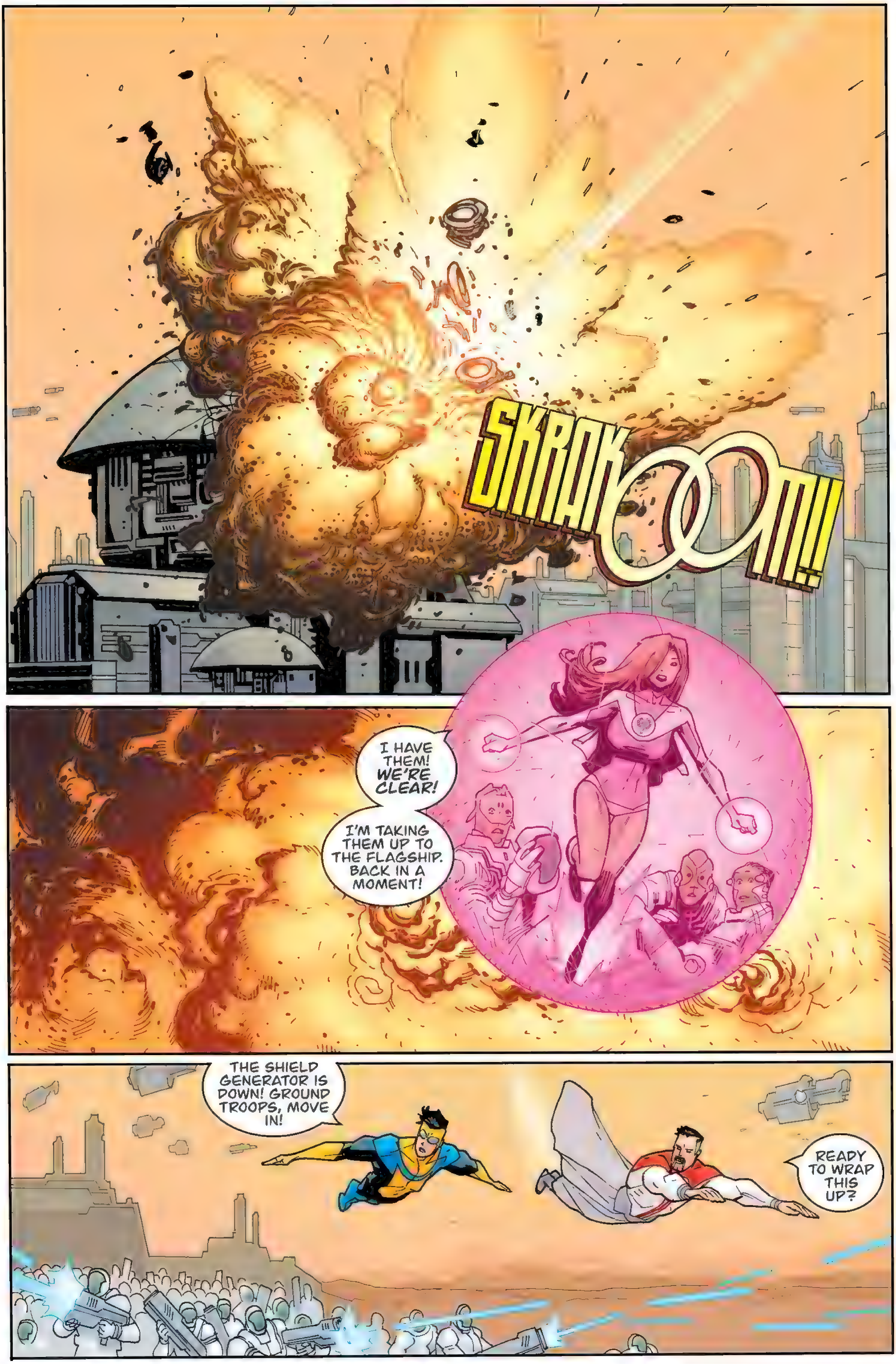

I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT...
I MIGHT HAVE A BETTER IDEA.

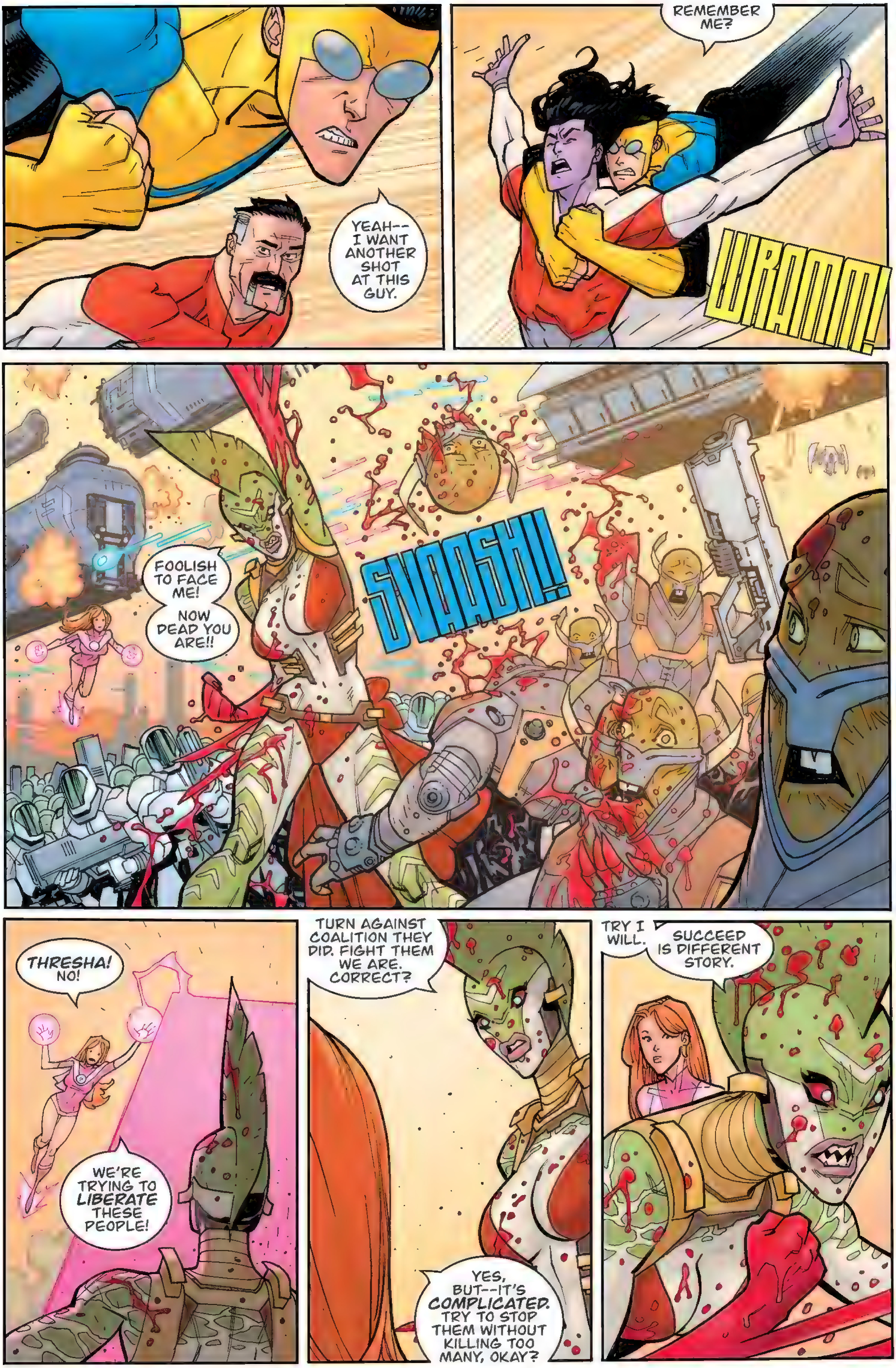
CHAPTER 135

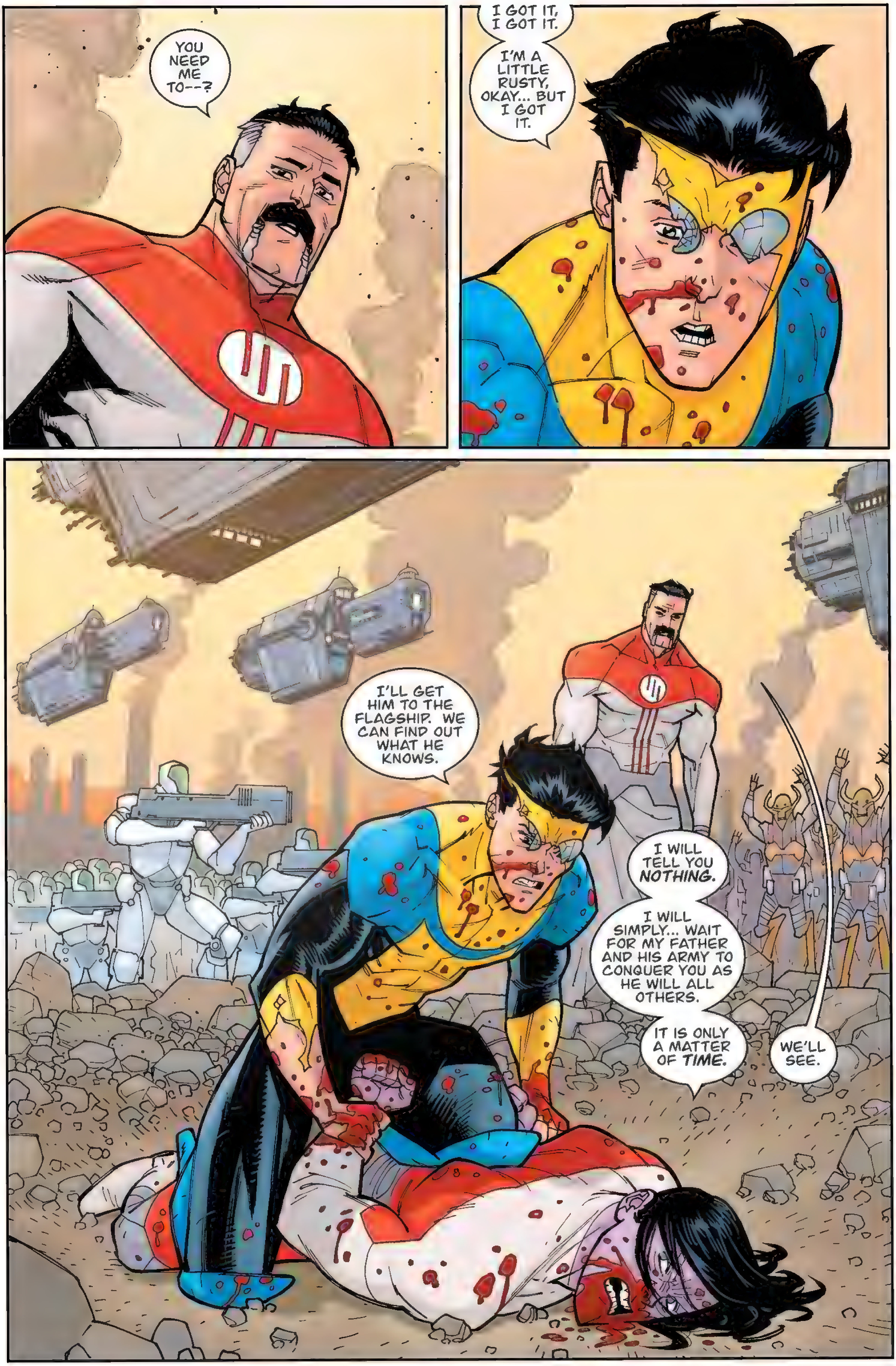
SKRAKOOM!


FATHER, WELCOME. IF I HAD KNOWN YOU WERE VISITING, I WOULD HAVE PREPARED A WELCOMING PARTY.
IT IS TIME WE HAVE A PERMANENT BASE. I ALWAYS *LIKED* THIS PLANET.
HOW ARE THINGS PROGRESSING?
THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DISMANTLED, AND ALL CONTACT WITH THE COALITION OF PLANETS HAS CEASED.
IT'S TAKEN LONGER THAN WE ANTICIPATED, BUT THERE'S LITTLE MORE THAN DISCONNECTED TEAMS OF REBELS LEFT IN THE RESISTANCE.
THEIR LEADERS HAVE BEEN *BROKEN.*
EXCELLENT.
THE NEW VILTRUM EMPIRE THRIVES...

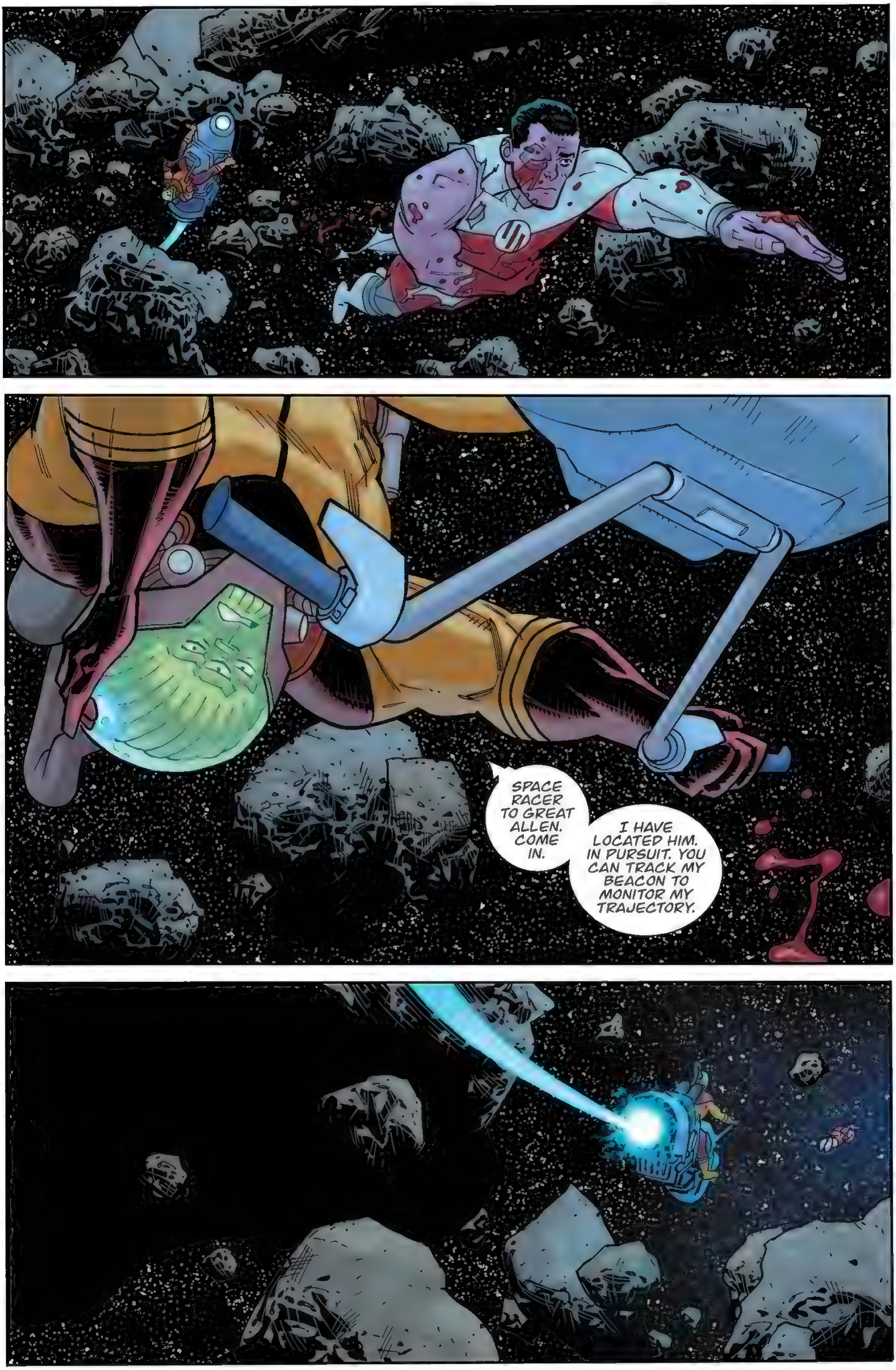

VOPVOP!
OH, NO YOU DON'T! THAT SHIP'S GOT SOMEWHERE TO BE!
WRAMM!
KRAKK!
DIE, TRAITOR SCUM!
KROOM!
PATH IS CLEAR, IMPACT IN SECONDS-- YOU GOT THEM?
ARE THE PILOTS SAFE?

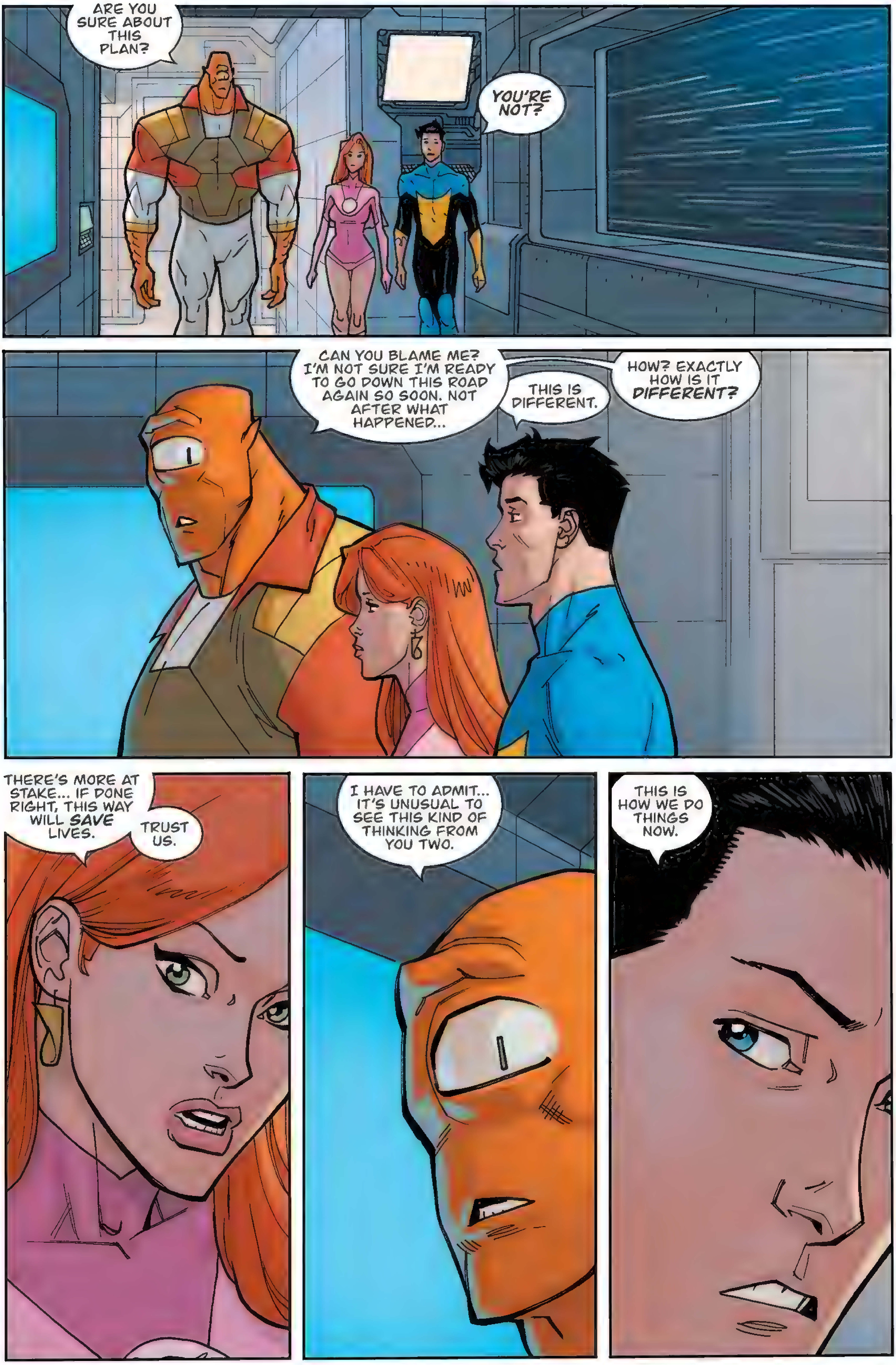

SKRAKOOM!!
I HAVE THEM! WE'RE CLEAR!
I'M TAKING THEM UP TO THE FLAGSHIP. BACK IN A MOMENT!
THE SHIELD GENERATOR IS DOWN! GROUND TROOPS, MOVE IN!
READY TO WRAP THIS UP?

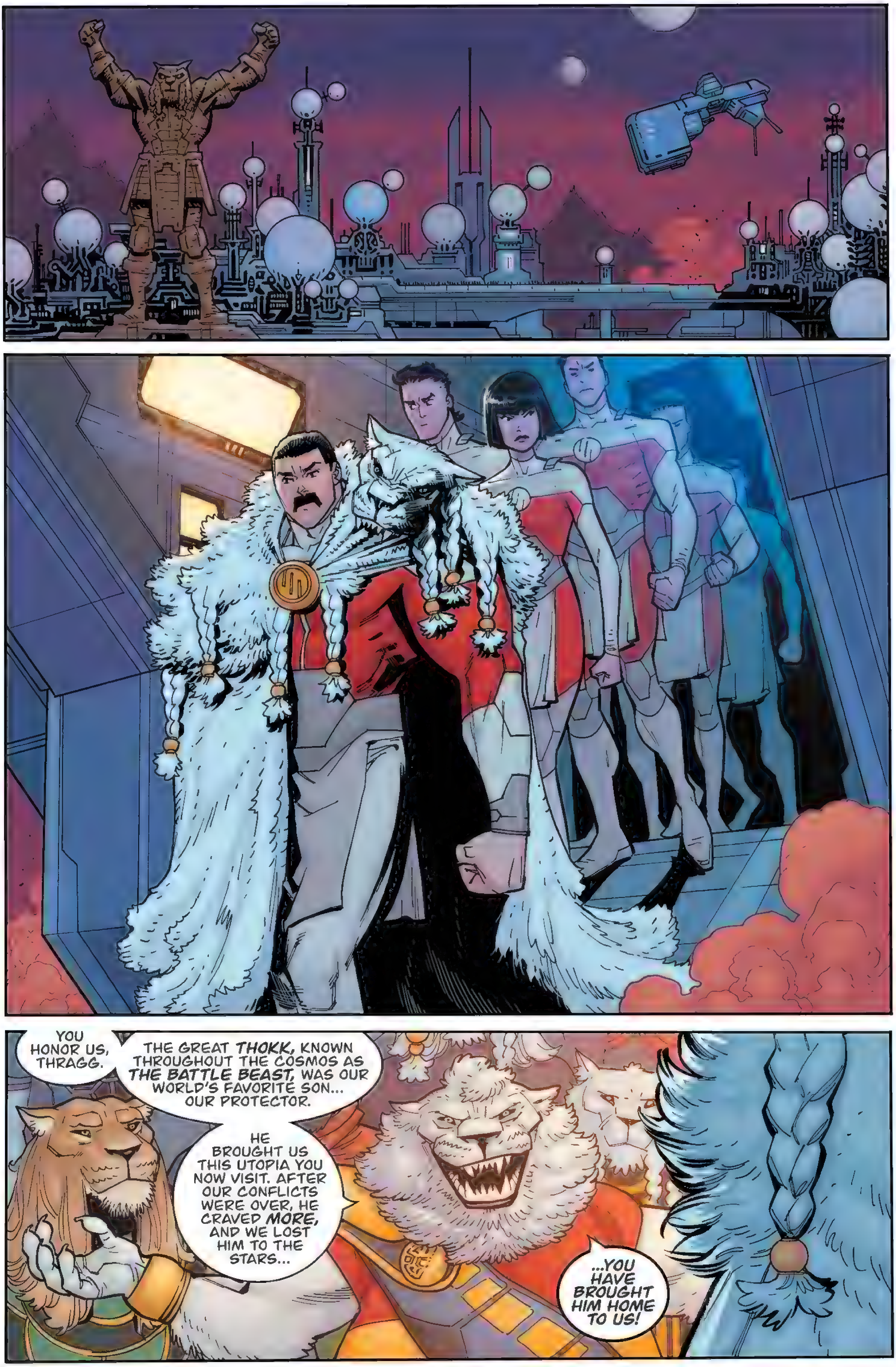

YEAH-- I WANT ANOTHER SHOT AT THIS GUY.
REMEMBER ME?
WRAMM!
FOOLISH TO FACE ME!
NOW DEAD YOU ARE!!
SVAASH!!
THRESHA! NO!
WE'RE TRYING TO LIBERATE THESE PEOPLE!
TURN AGAINST COALITION THEY DID. FIGHT THEM WE ARE. CORRECT?
YES, BUT--IT'S COMPLICATED. TRY TO STOP THEM WITHOUT KILLING TOO MANY, OKAY?
TRY I WILL.
SUCCEED IS DIFFERENT STORY.

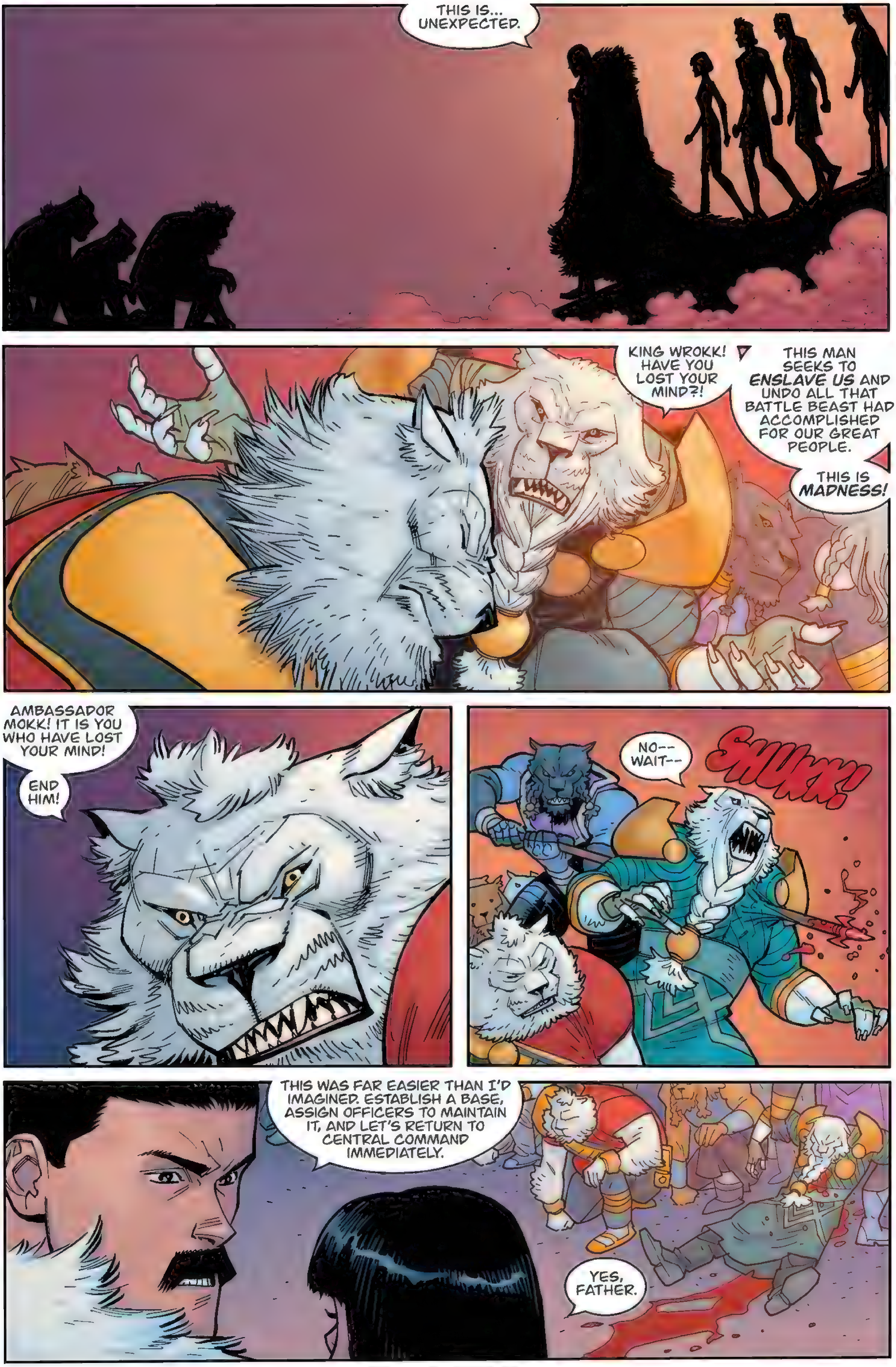

YOU NEED ME TO--?
I GOT IT, I GOT IT.
I'M A LITTLE RUSTY, OKAY... BUT I GOT IT.
I'LL GET HIM TO THE FLAGSHIP. WE CAN FIND OUT WHAT HE KNOWS.
I WILL TELL YOU *NOTHING.*
I WILL SIMPLY... WAIT FOR MY FATHER AND HIS ARMY TO CONQUER YOU AS HE WILL ALL OTHERS.
IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF *TIME.*
WE'LL SEE.

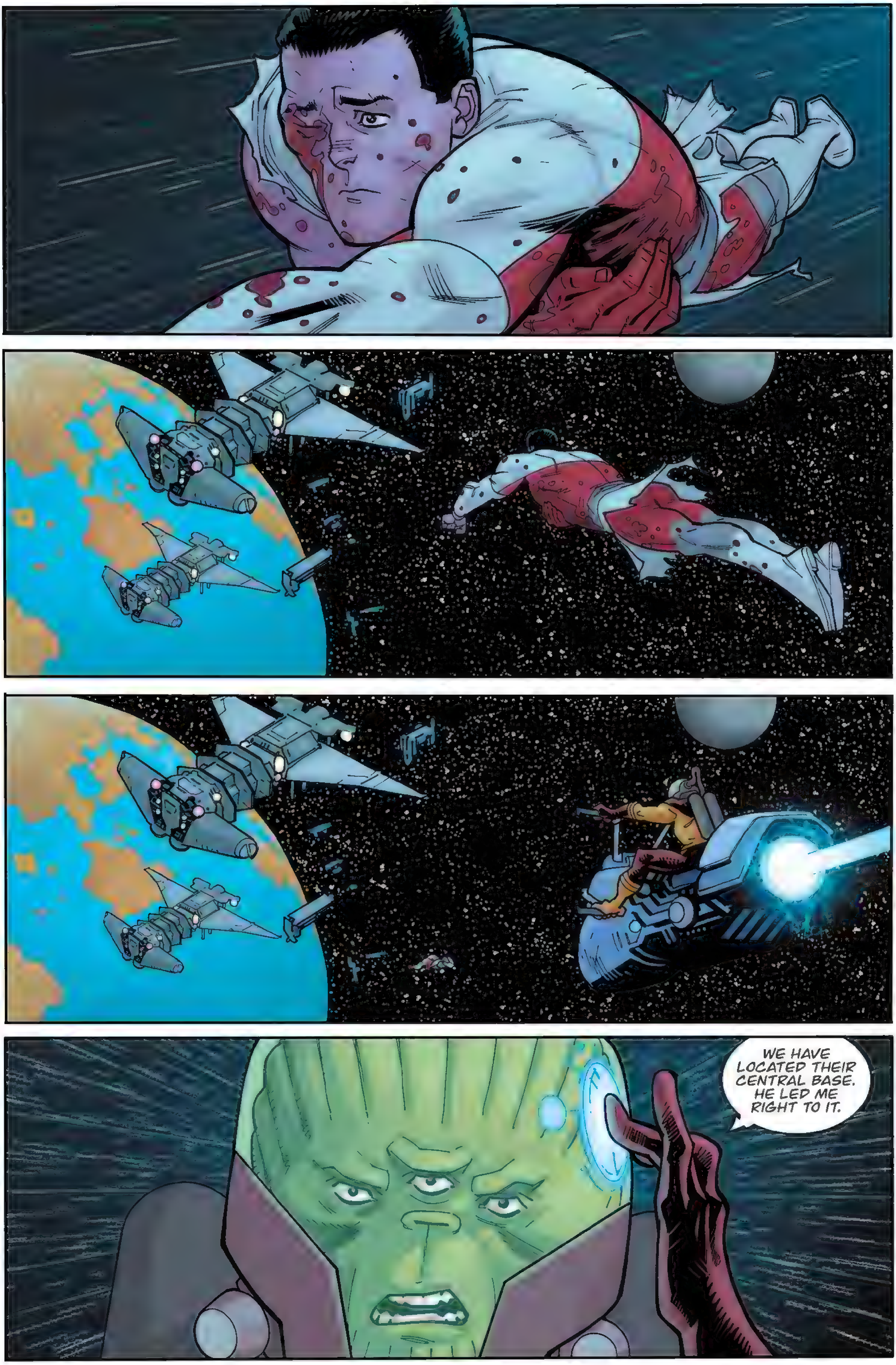
TELL ME... TELL ME RIGHT NOW. YOU KNOW ALL THAT I FACE, THE HORRIBLE POSITION I'M IN.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO, GREAT ALLEN?
I PLEDGE MY ALLEGIANCE TO THE COALITION, YOU LEAVE THE SAME KIND OF PITIFUL ASSISTANCE TO MY FORCES THAT THRAGG AND THE VILTRUMITES LEFT BEHIND TO AID ME AGAINST YOU... AND HE CONQUERS US AGAIN.
MY PEOPLE CAN'T TAKE THIS. WE CAN'T BE A PAWN IN YOUR GAME. I HAVE TO REMAIN NEUTRAL. IF THRAGG RETURNS, WE *WILL NOT FIGHT.*
WE HAVE NO CHOICE--THE DAMAGE WE HAVE SUSTAINED WILL ALREADY SET US BACK YEARS.
WE HAVE NO PLAN TO ABANDON YOU AND FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON OTHER TERRITORIES.
WE HAVE A *BETTER* WAY.
YOU DON'T NEED TO FIGHT. YOU JUST NEED TO TRUST US.

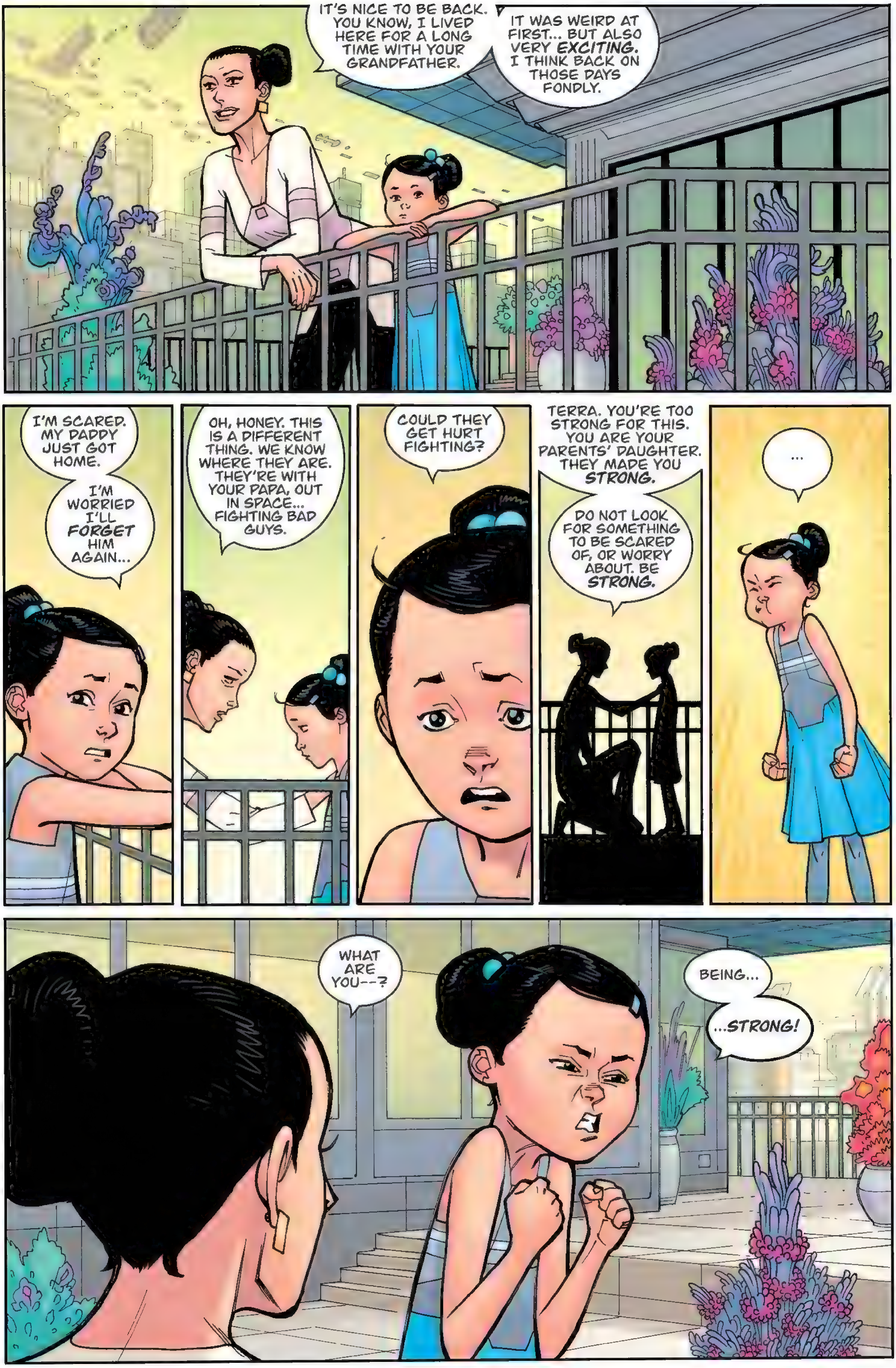

SPACE RACER TO GREAT ALLEN. COME IN.
I HAVE LOCATED HIM. IN PURSUIT. YOU CAN TRACK MY BEACON TO MONITOR MY TRAJECTORY.

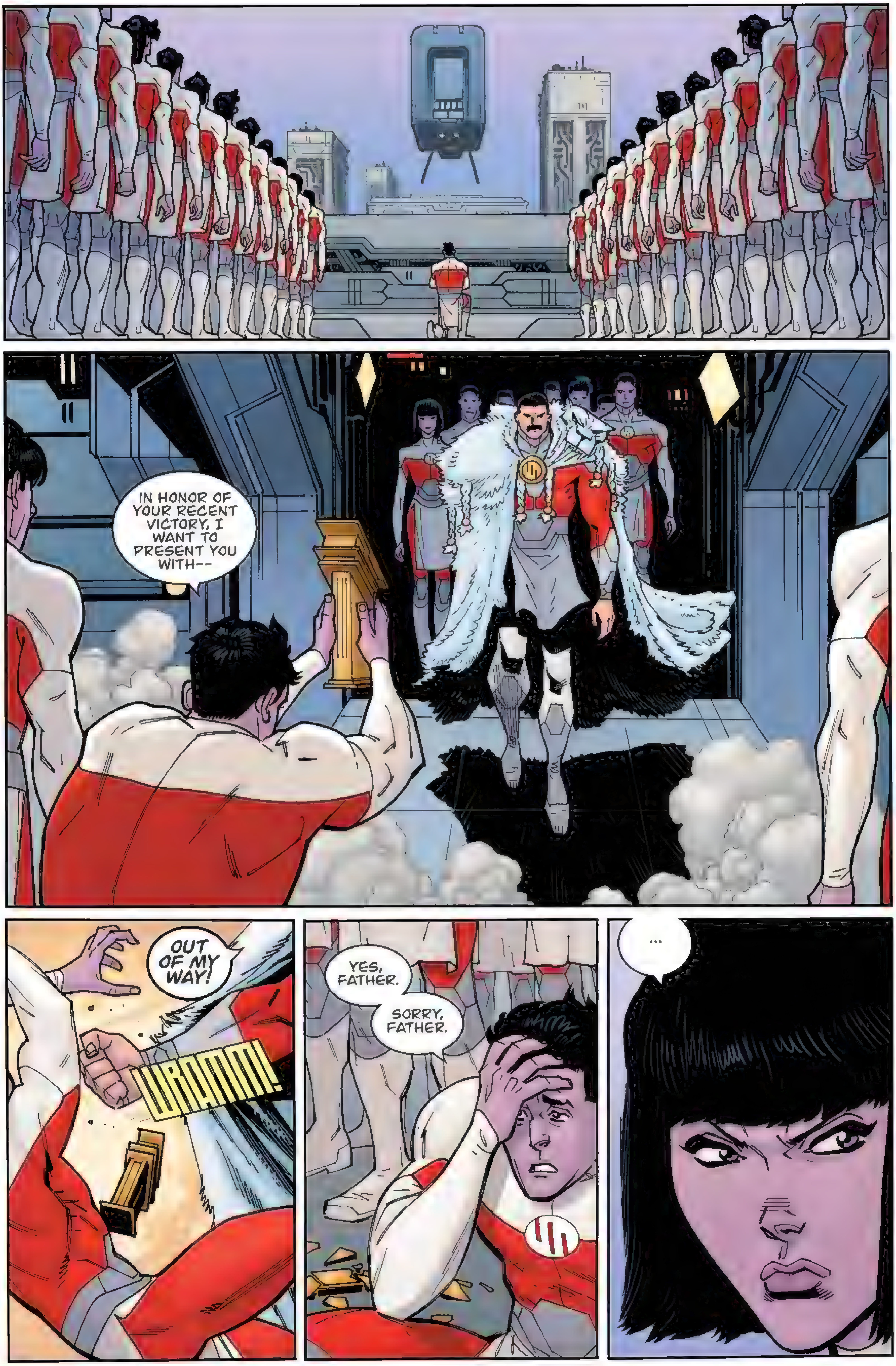

ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS PLAN?
YOU'RE NOT?
CAN YOU BLAME ME? I'M NOT SURE I'M READY TO GO DOWN THIS ROAD AGAIN SO SOON. NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED...
THIS IS DIFFERENT.
HOW? EXACTLY HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?
THERE'S MORE AT STAKE... IF DONE RIGHT, THIS WAY WILL SAVE LIVES.
TRUST US.
I HAVE TO ADMIT... IT'S UNUSUAL TO SEE THIS KIND OF THINKING FROM YOU TWO.
THIS IS HOW WE DO THINGS NOW.

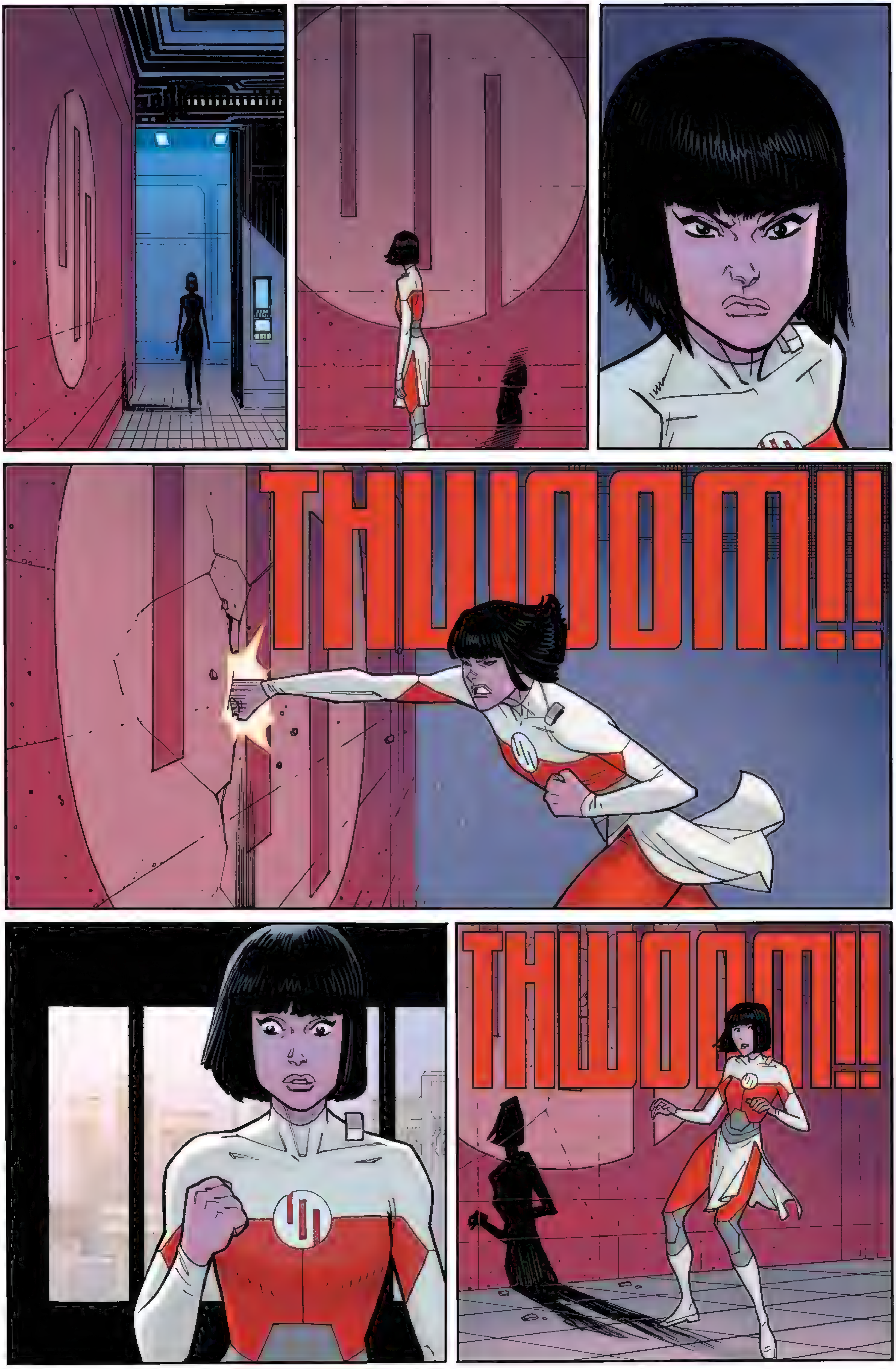

YOU HONOR US, THRAGG.
THE GREAT *THOKK,* KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE COSMOS AS *THE BATTLE BEAST,* WAS OUR WORLD'S FAVORITE SON... OUR PROTECTOR.
HE BROUGHT US THIS UTOPIA YOU NOW VISIT. AFTER OUR CONFLICTS WERE OVER, HE CRAVED *MORE,* AND WE LOST HIM TO THE STARS...
...YOU HAVE BROUGHT HIM HOME TO US!

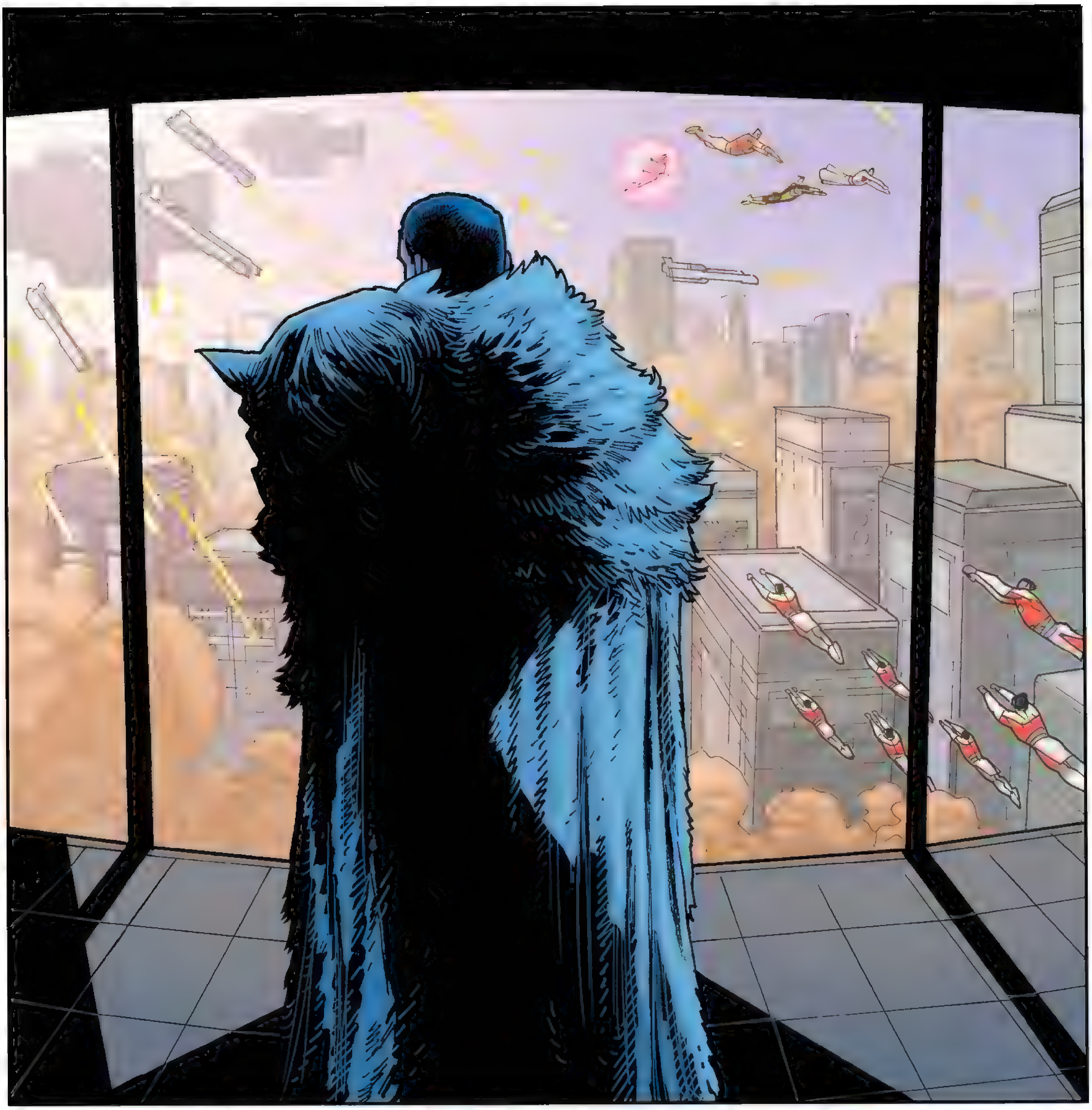

THIS IS... UNEXPECTED.
KING WROKK! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
THIS MAN SEEKS TO ENSLAVE US AND UNDO ALL THAT BATTLE BEAST HAD ACCOMPLISHED FOR OUR GREAT PEOPLE.
THIS IS MADNESS!
AMBASSADOR MOKK! IT IS YOU WHO HAVE LOST YOUR MIND!
END HIM!
NO-- WAIT--
SHUKK!
THIS WAS FAR EASIER THAN I'D IMAGINED. ESTABLISH A BASE, ASSIGN OFFICERS TO MAINTAIN IT, AND LET'S RETURN TO CENTRAL COMMAND IMMEDIATELY.
YES, FATHER.

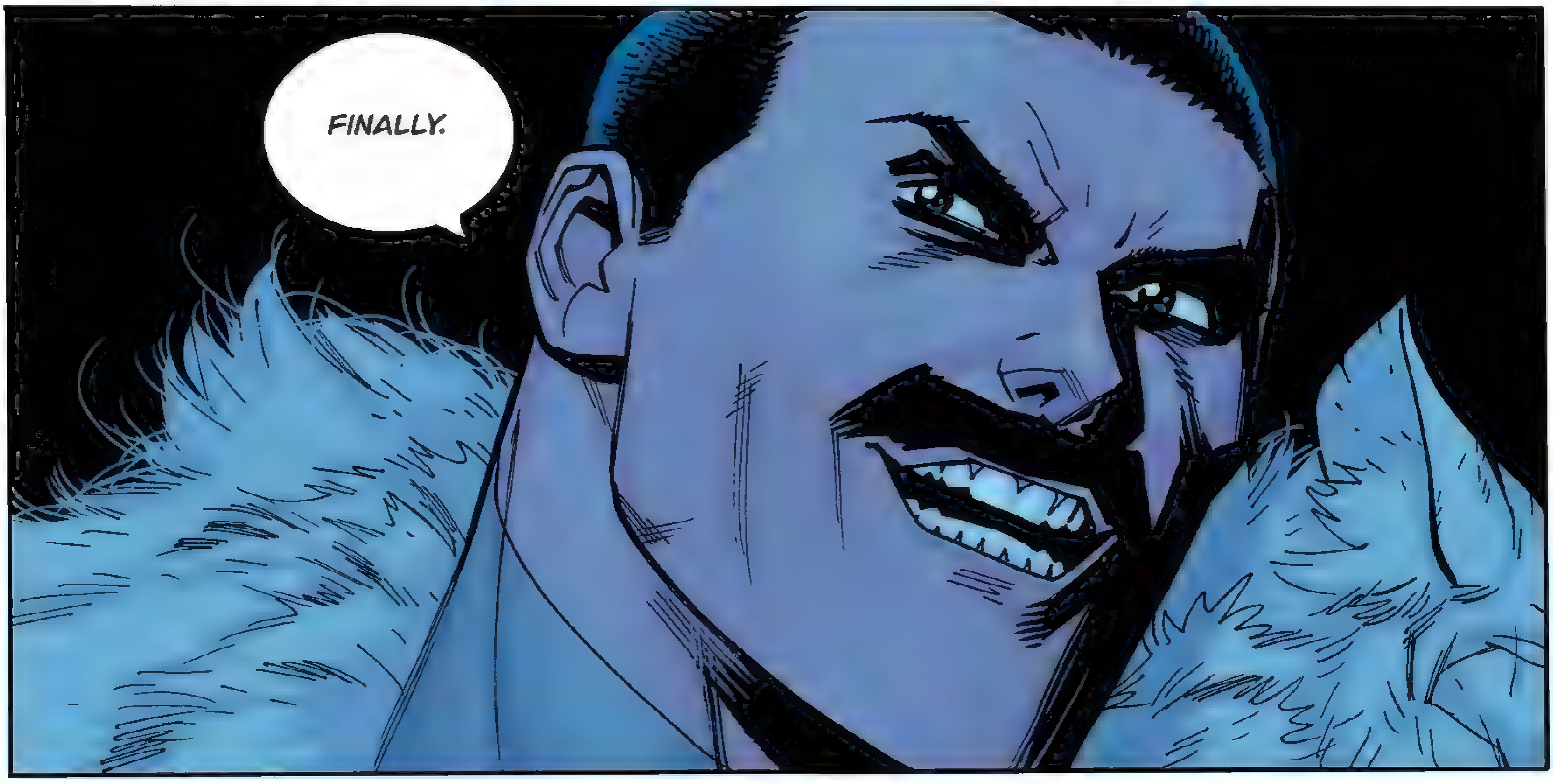

WE HAVE LOCATED THEIR CENTRAL BASE. HE LED ME RIGHT TO IT.


IT'S NICE TO BE BACK. YOU KNOW, I LIVED HERE FOR A LONG TIME WITH YOUR GRANDFATHER.
IT WAS WEIRD AT FIRST... BUT ALSO VERY EXCITING. I THINK BACK ON THOSE DAYS FONDLY.
I'M SCARED. MY DADDY JUST GOT HOME.
I'M WORRIED I'LL FORGET HIM AGAIN...
OH, HONEY. THIS IS A DIFFERENT THING. WE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE. THEY'RE WITH YOUR PAPA, OUT IN SPACE... FIGHTING BAD GUYS.
COULD THEY GET HURT FIGHTING?
TERRA. YOU'RE TOO STRONG FOR THIS. YOU ARE YOUR PARENTS' DAUGHTER. THEY MADE YOU STRONG.
DO NOT LOOK FOR SOMETHING TO BE SCARED OF, OR WORRY ABOUT. BE STRONG.
...
WHAT ARE YOU--?
BEING...
...STRONG!

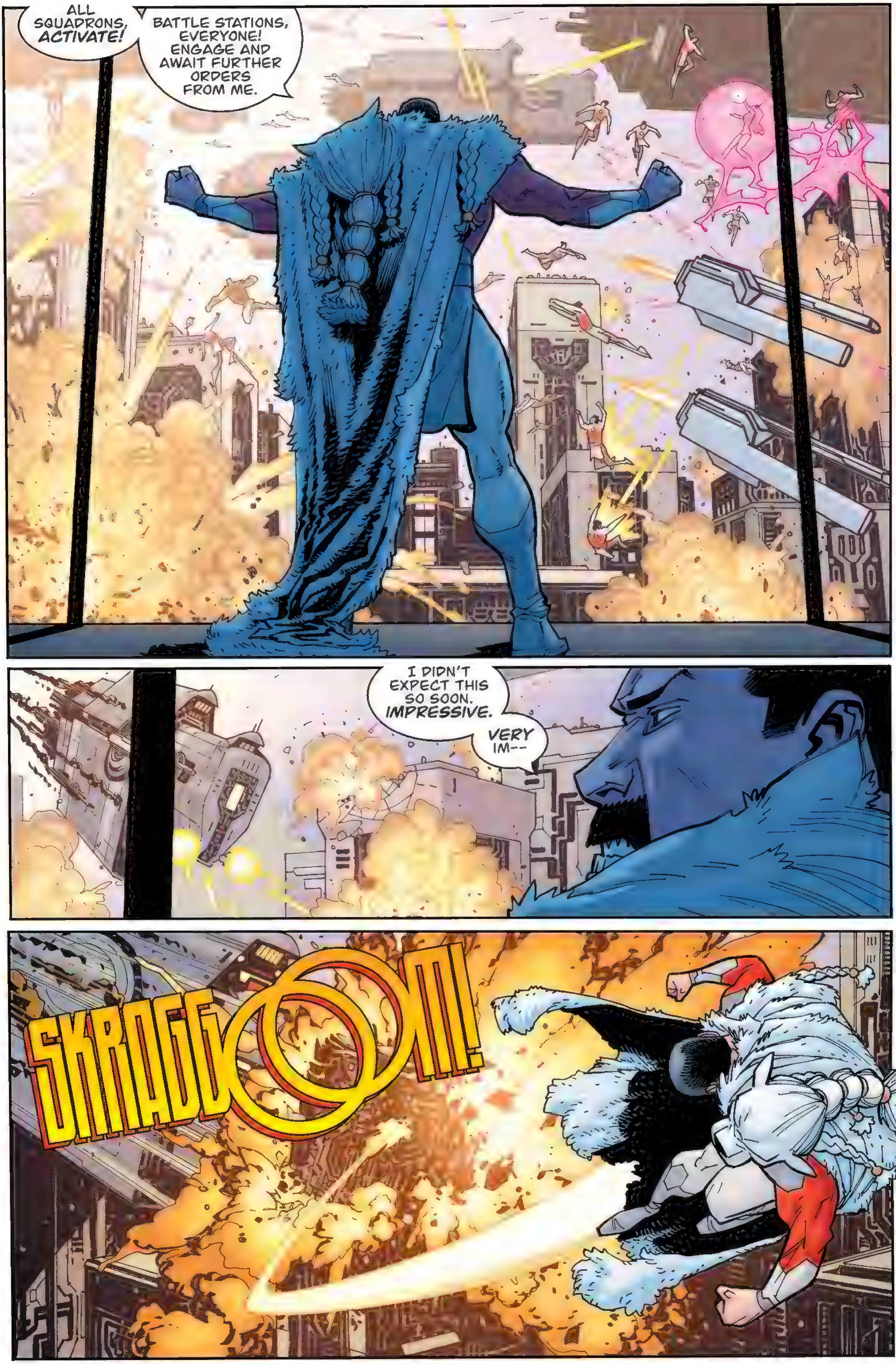

IN HONOR OF YOUR RECENT VICTORY, I WANT TO PRESENT YOU WITH--
OUT OF MY WAY!
WHAMM!
YES, FATHER.
SORRY, FATHER.
...


THWOOM!!
THWOOM!!



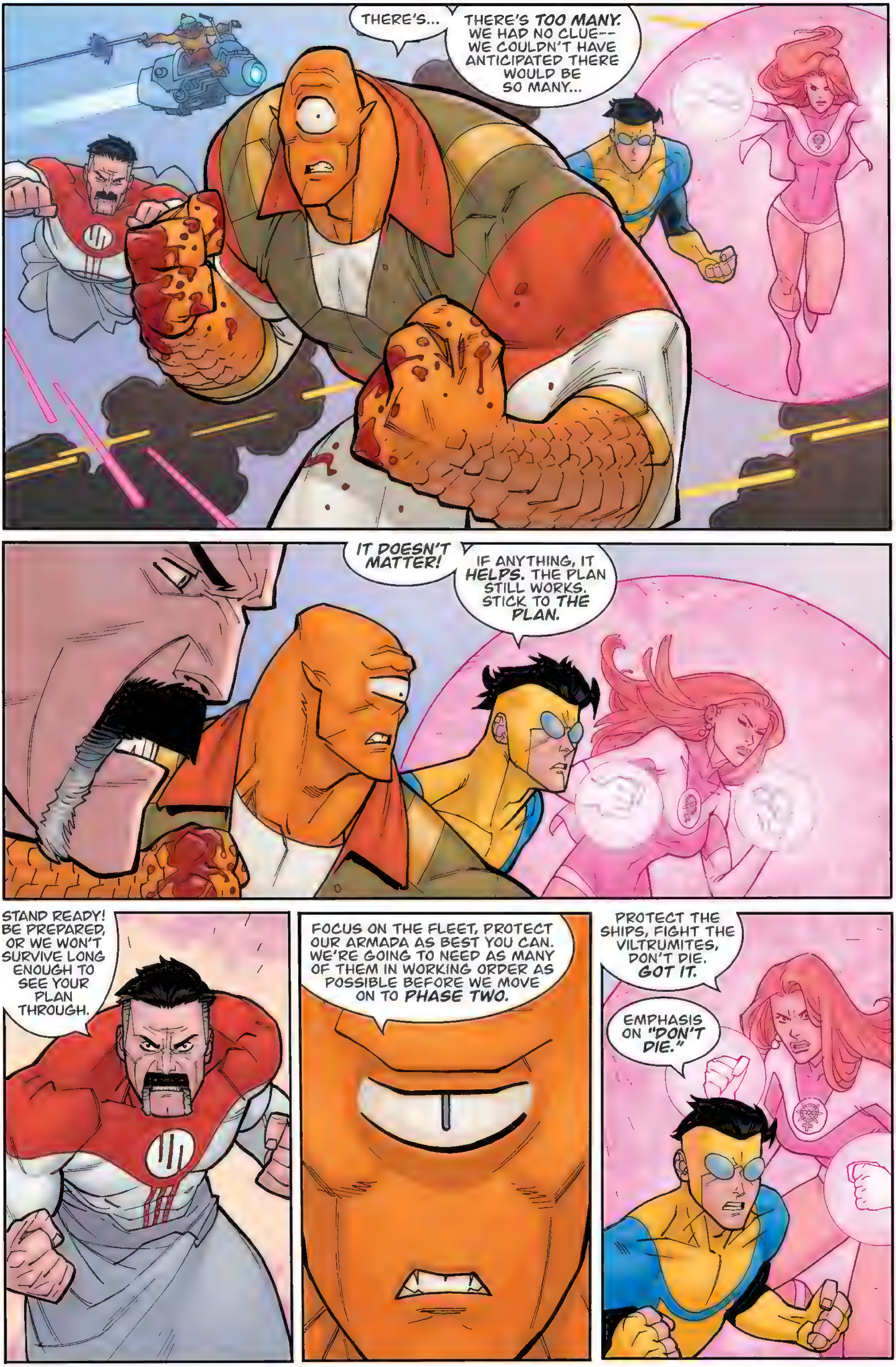

FINALLY.

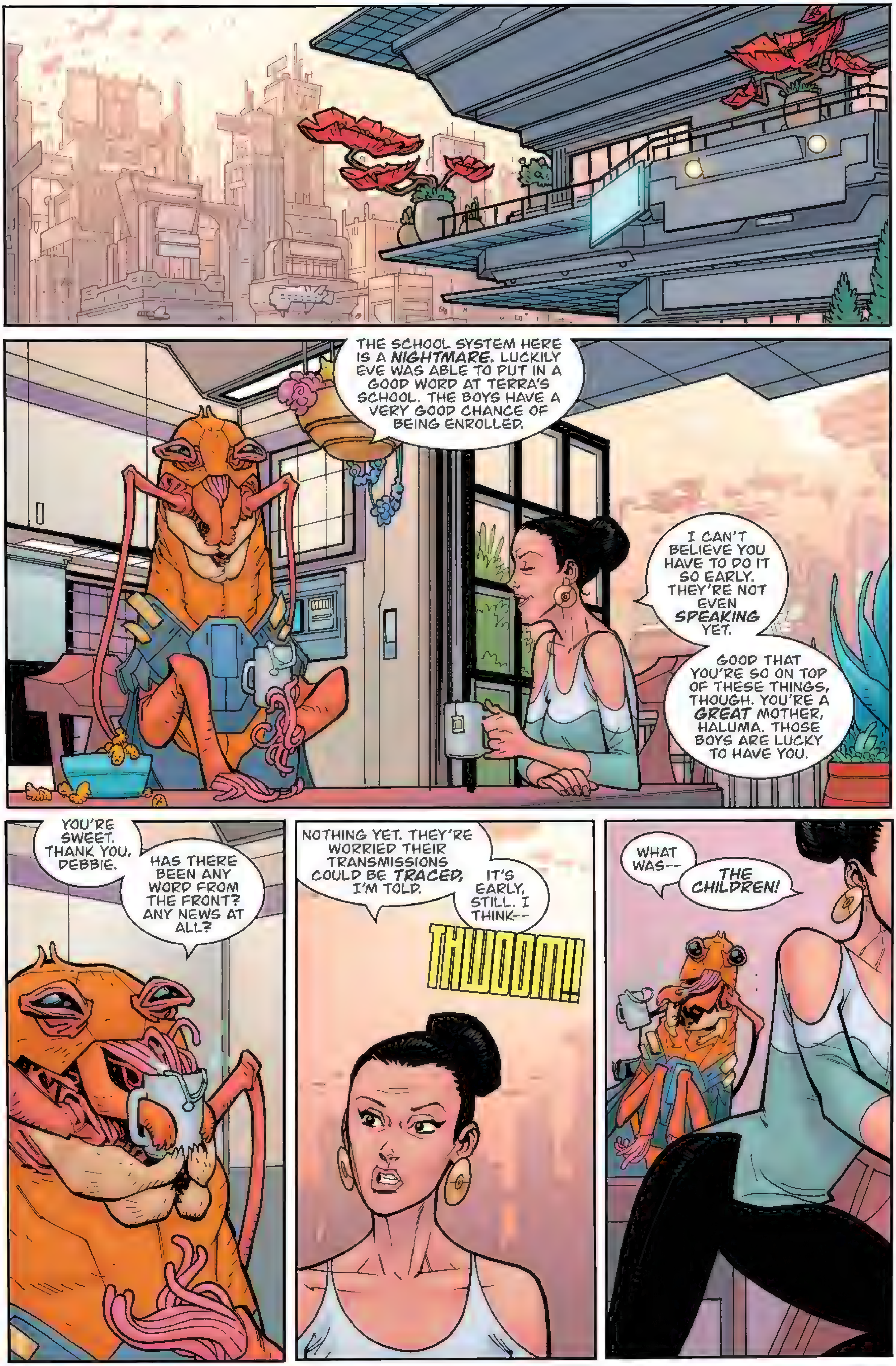
CHAPTER 136

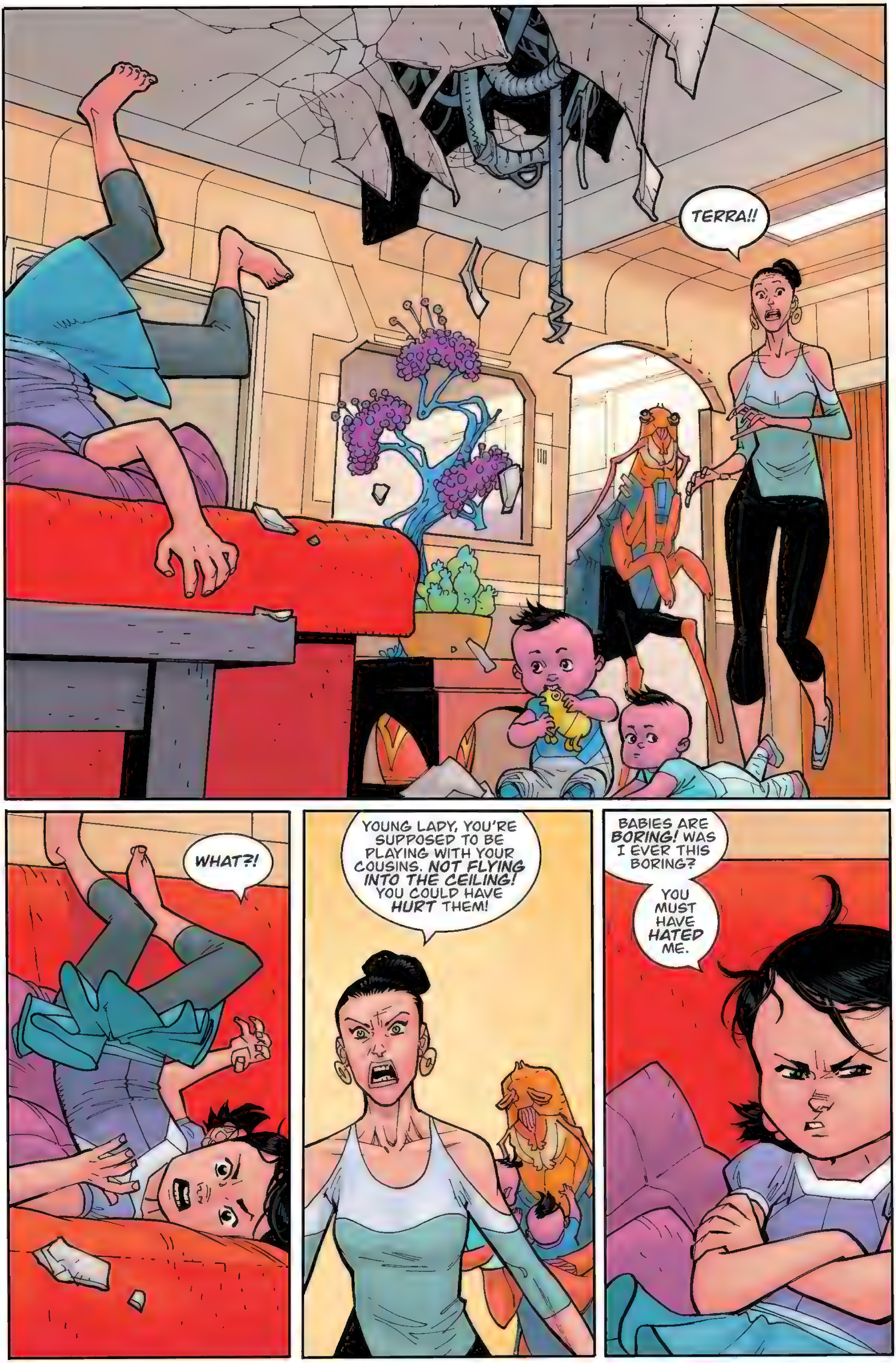

ALL SQUADRONS, *ACTIVATE!*
BATTLE STATIONS, EVERYONE! ENGAGE AND AWAIT FURTHER ORDERS FROM ME.
I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS SO SOON. *IMPRESSIVE.*
VERY IM--
SKRAGGOOM!

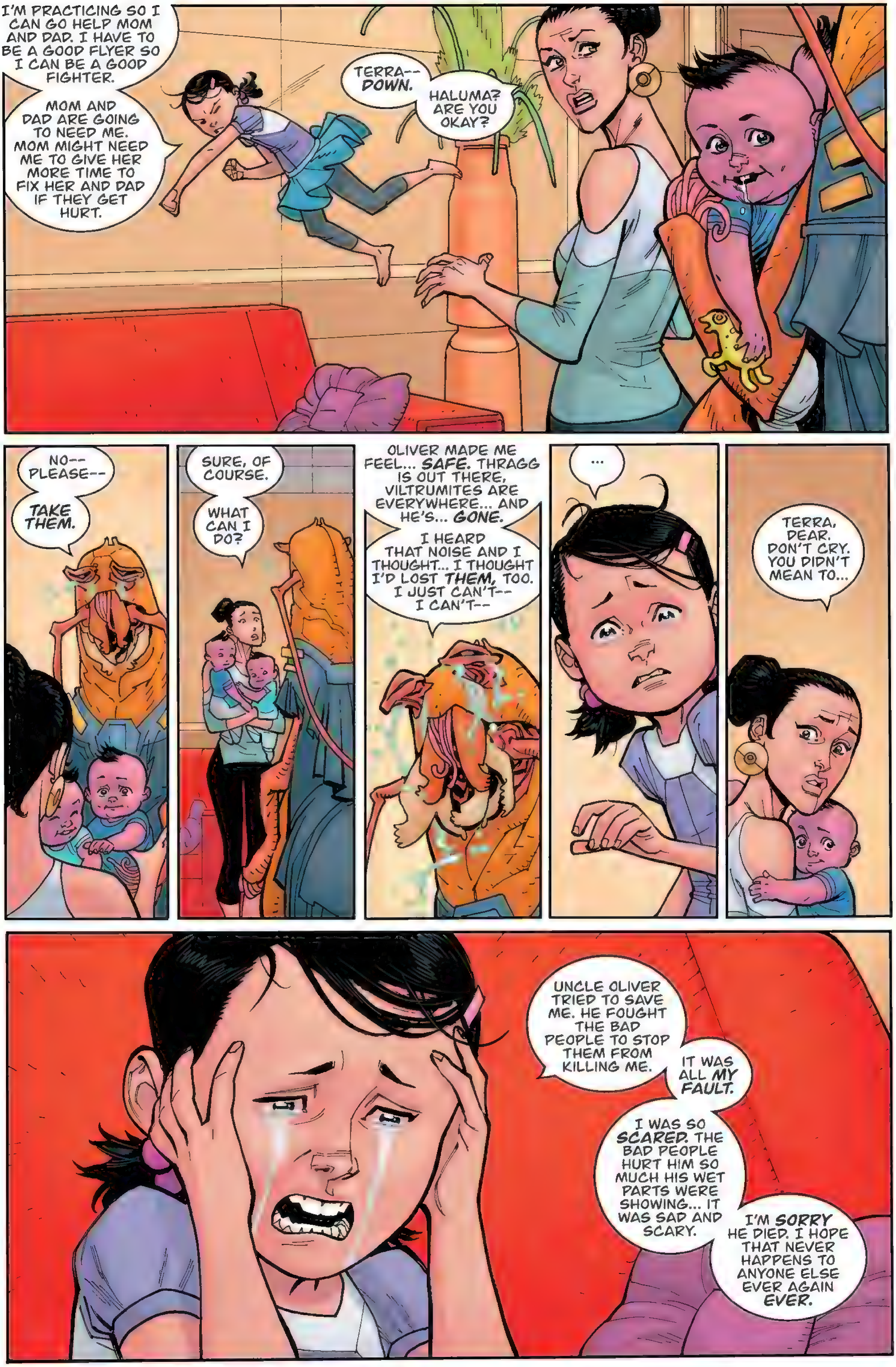
LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT HIS ATTENTION.
THAT WAS *QUICK.*
MARK GRAYSON... OF **COURSE** YOU'RE ALIVE...
VILTRUMITES OF THE TRUE EMPIRE!
LET'S END THIS QUICKLY!
ALL FORCES CONVERGE ON ME!

BRING ME THE SKULLS OF THESE TRAITORS!

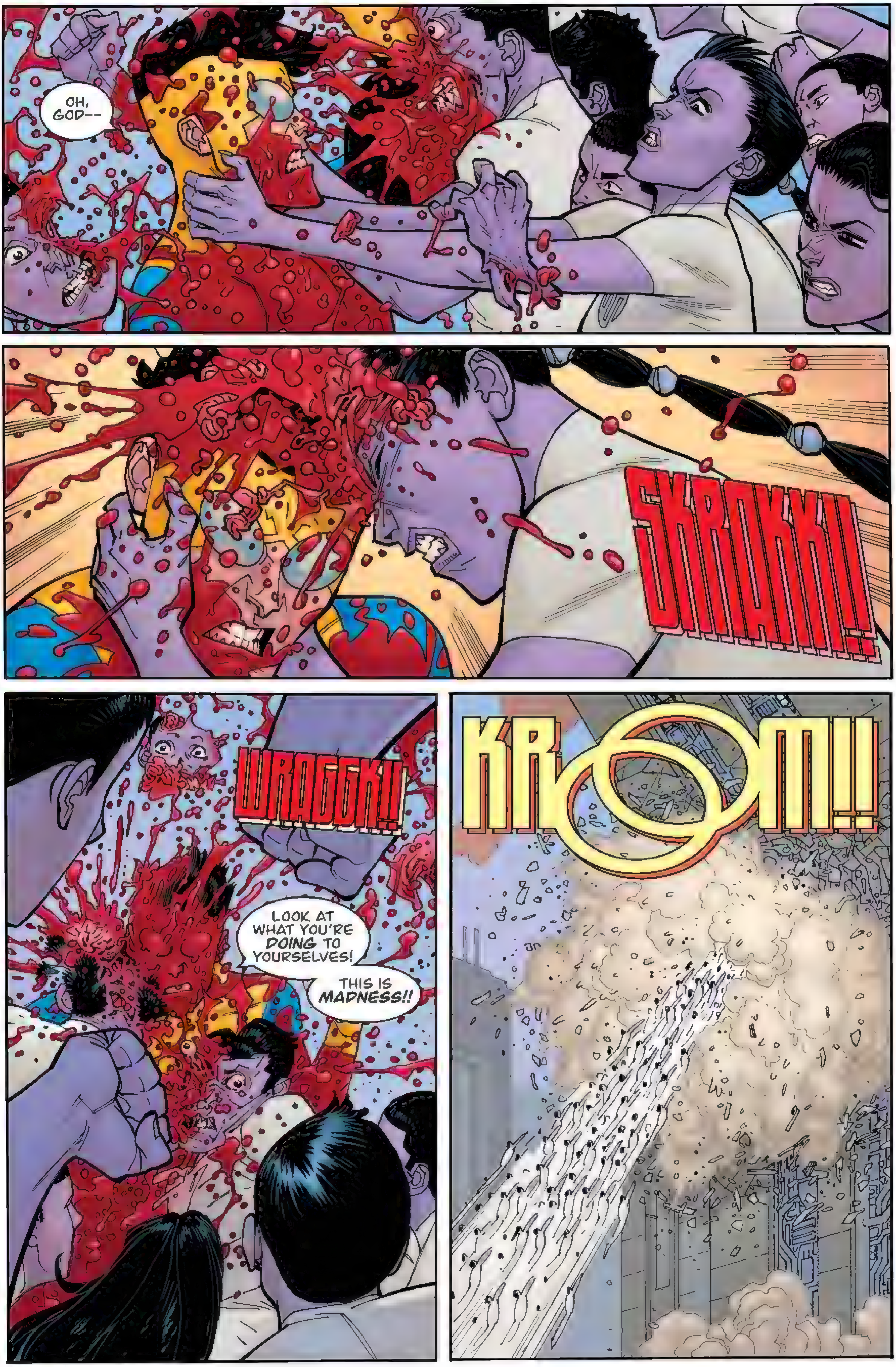

THERE'S...
THERE'S *TOO MANY.* WE HAD NO CLUE-- WE COULDN'T HAVE ANTICIPATED THERE WOULD BE SO MANY...
IT DOESN'T MATTER!
IF ANYTHING, IT *HELPS.* THE PLAN STILL WORKS. STICK TO *THE PLAN.*
STAND READY! BE PREPARED, OR WE WON'T SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE YOUR PLAN THROUGH.
FOCUS ON THE FLEET, PROTECT OUR ARMADA AS BEST YOU CAN. WE'RE GOING TO NEED AS MANY OF THEM IN WORKING ORDER AS POSSIBLE BEFORE WE MOVE ON TO *PHASE TWO.*
PROTECT THE SHIPS, FIGHT THE VILTRUMITES, DON'T DIE. *GOT IT.*
EMPHASIS ON *"DON'T DIE."*


THE SCHOOL SYSTEM HERE IS A *NIGHTMARE*. LUCKILY EVE WAS ABLE TO PUT IN A GOOD WORD AT TERRA'S SCHOOL. THE BOYS HAVE A VERY GOOD CHANCE OF BEING ENROLLED.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE TO DO IT SO EARLY. THEY'RE NOT EVEN ***SPEAKING*** YET.
GOOD THAT YOU'RE SO ON TOP OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH. YOU'RE A ***GREAT*** MOTHER, HALUMA. THOSE BOYS ARE LUCKY TO HAVE YOU.
YOU'RE SWEET. THANK YOU, DEBBIE.
HAS THERE BEEN ANY WORD FROM THE FRONT? ANY NEWS AT ALL?
NOTHING YET. THEY'RE WORRIED THEIR TRANSMISSIONS COULD BE *TRACED*, I'M TOLD.
IT'S EARLY, STILL. I THINK--
THWOOM!!
WHAT WAS--
THE CHILDREN!


TERRA!!
WHAT?!
YOUNG LADY, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PLAYING WITH YOUR COUSINS. *NOT FLYING INTO THE CEILING!* YOU COULD HAVE *HURT* THEM!
BABIES ARE *BORING!* WAS I EVER THIS BORING?
YOU MUST HAVE *HATED* ME.


I'M PRACTICING SO I CAN GO HELP MOM AND DAD. I HAVE TO BE A GOOD FLYER SO I CAN BE A GOOD FIGHTER.
MOM AND DAD ARE GOING TO NEED ME. MOM MIGHT NEED ME TO GIVE HER MORE TIME TO FIX HER AND DAD IF THEY GET HURT.
TERRA-- *DOWN.*
HALUMA? ARE YOU OKAY?
NO-- PLEASE--
TAKE THEM.
SURE, OF COURSE.
WHAT CAN I DO?
OLIVER MADE ME FEEL... *SAFE.* THRAGG IS OUT THERE, VILTRUMITES ARE EVERYWHERE... AND HE'S... *GONE.*
I HEARD THAT NOISE AND I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT I'D LOST *THEM,* TOO. I JUST CAN'T-- I CAN'T--
...
TERRA, DEAR. DON'T CRY. YOU DIDN'T MEAN TO...
UNCLE OLIVER TRIED TO SAVE ME. HE FOUGHT THE BAD PEOPLE TO STOP THEM FROM KILLING ME.
IT WAS ALL *MY FAULT.*
I WAS SO *SCARED.* THE BAD PEOPLE HURT HIM SO MUCH HIS WET PARTS WERE SHOWING... IT WAS SAD AND SCARY.
I'M *SORRY* HE DIED. I HOPE THAT NEVER HAPPENS TO ANYONE ELSE EVER AGAIN *EVER.*

SKRAKOOM!!


OH, GOD--
SKROKK!!
WRAGGK!!
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE *DOING* TO YOURSELVES!
THIS IS *MADNESS!!*
KROOM!!

DAMN IT!
DAMN IT!
WRAKK!!
SKREESH!!
CRUSH MY ORB ALL YOU WANT-- WHEN I'M NOT IN IT!
OH, HELL--I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BUY ME AT LEAST A FEW SECONDS!
HERE WE GO!

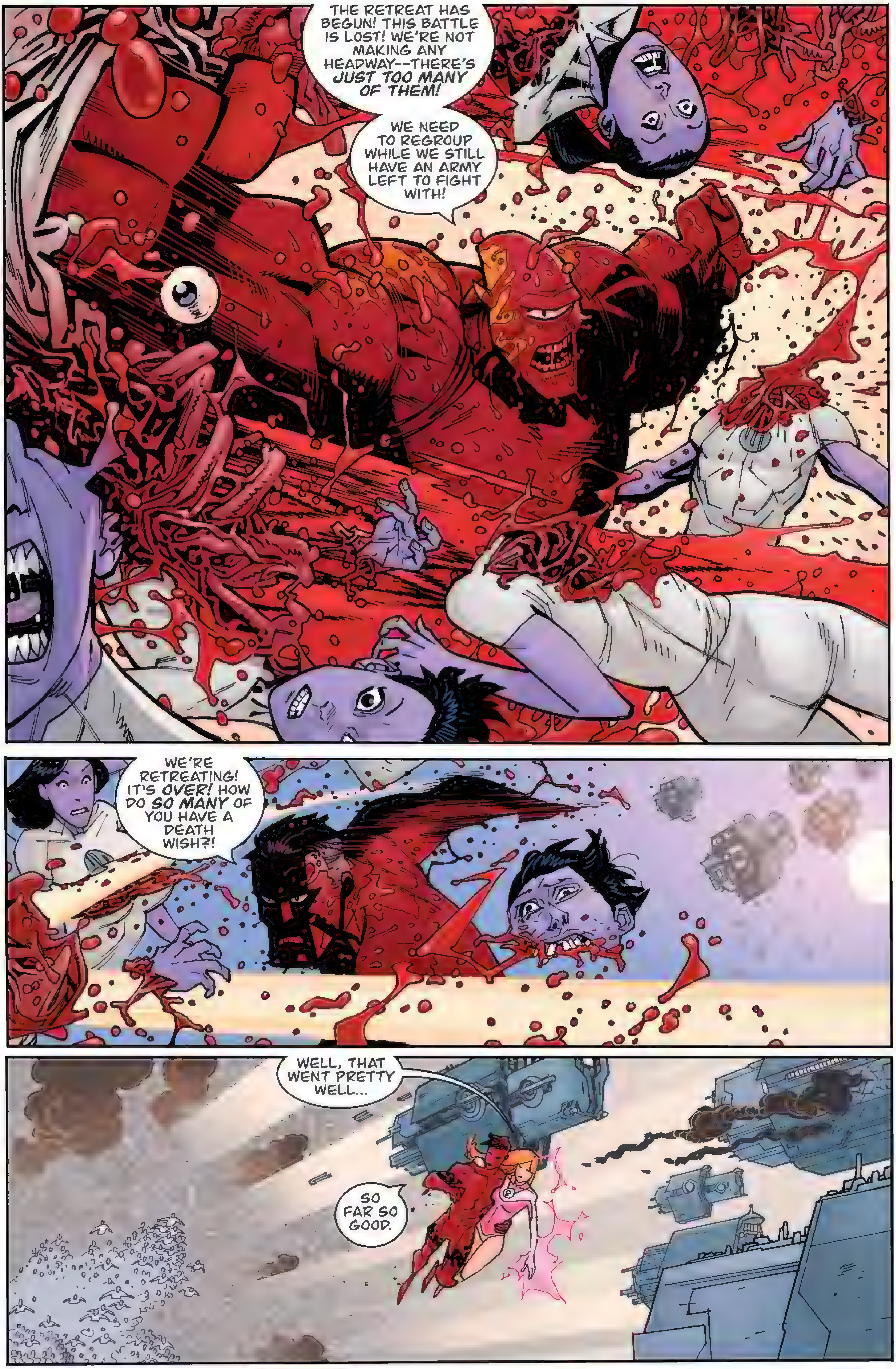
WRAKK!
THOOM!
WROKK!
KROOM!
KRAKK!
OH, GOD!
OH, GOD!
YEEAGH!!
SKRAKOOOM!!
YOU SURE YOU CAN HANDLE THIS? THERE'S SO MANY OF THEM--THEY'RE TEARING OUR FORCES TO SHREDS.
YEAH-- I THINK SO. IT WAS ROUGH FOR A MOMENT, BUT I'M OKAY. THEY'RE NOT SO--

GRAHHH!
WRAKK!
EVE!
SVOOSH!

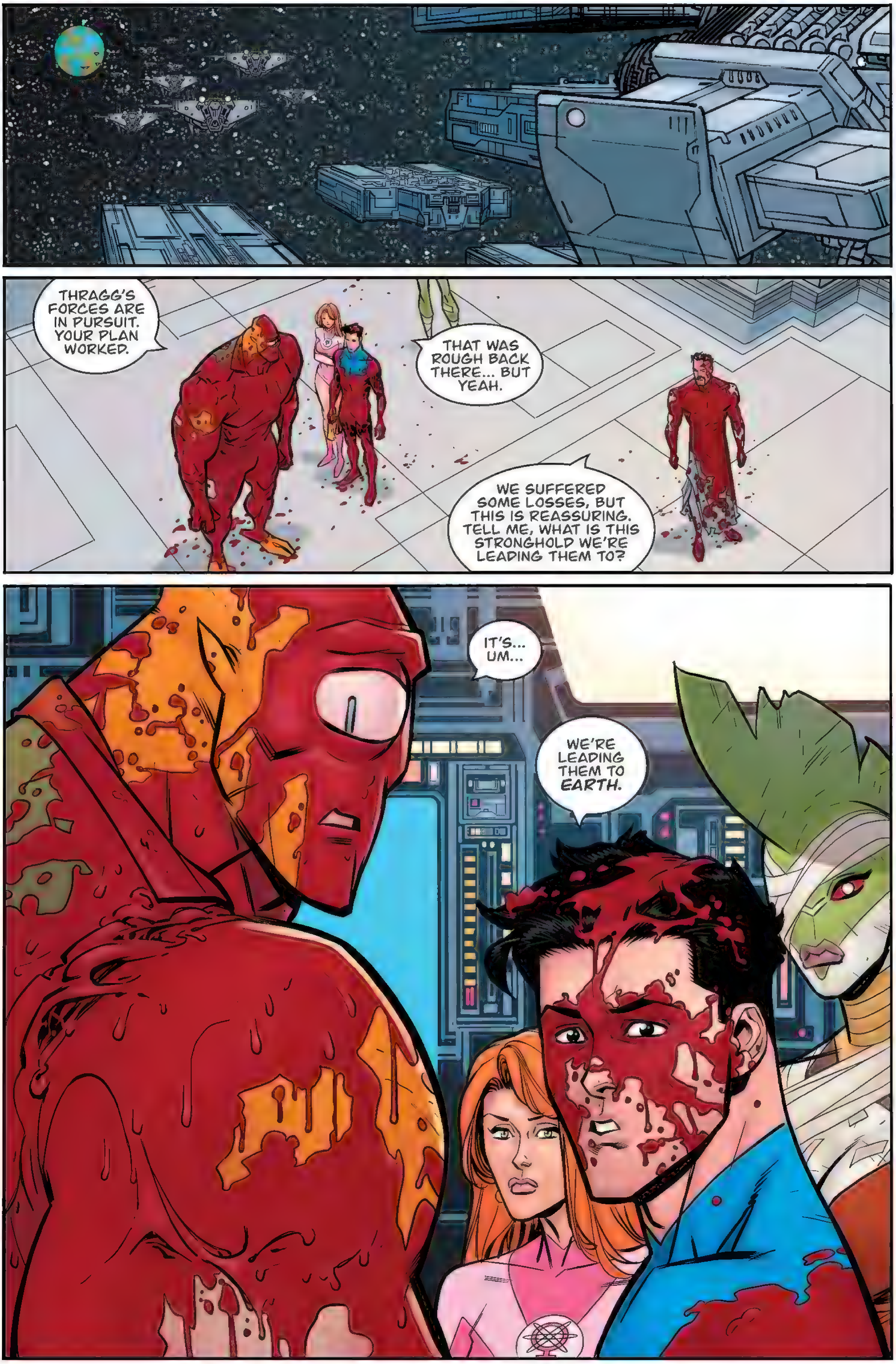
EVE!
HANG ON!
WRAMM!
WRAKK!
WROKK!
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING?! YOU'RE WILLING TO *DIE* FOR THIS?!
EVE!
SPLOOW!
GOT YOU!
THANKS!

SKRA-
KROOM!!
VOPP!
FATHER!

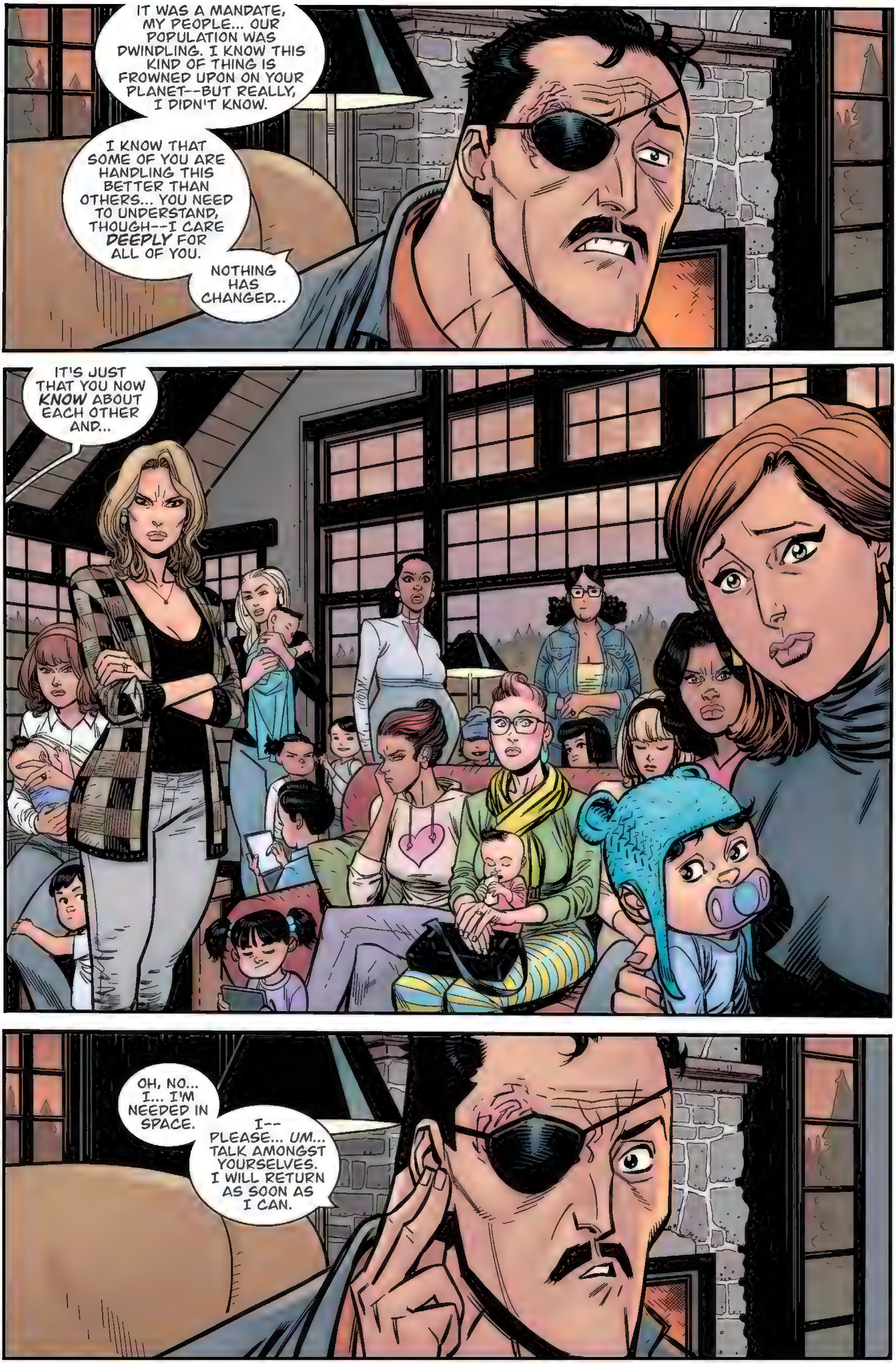
THEY'RE BREAKING RANK. WE'VE GOT THEM ON THE RUN. THIS BATTLE IS WON.
BUT AT WHAT COST?!
WHAT?
MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE DYING! THEY'RE THROWING THEMSELVES AT THE ENEMY--IT'S KILLING THEM!
DON'T YOU SEE THE BODY COUNT?
I SEE EVERYTHING!
THRAKK!
THE FALLEN WERE WEAK, AND IT IS OUR WAY TO CAST THEM OFF... OUR EMPIRE WILL BE BUILT WITH THE STRONG.
WE WILL BE STRONGER FROM THIS BATTLE... IT HAS TEMPERED US.
IT IS NOT YOUR PLACE TO QUESTION MY WILL OR MY MOTIVES. IF YOU FEEL SUCH PITY FOR THE WEAK, LET ME KNOW...
...AND YOU CAN JOIN THEM.

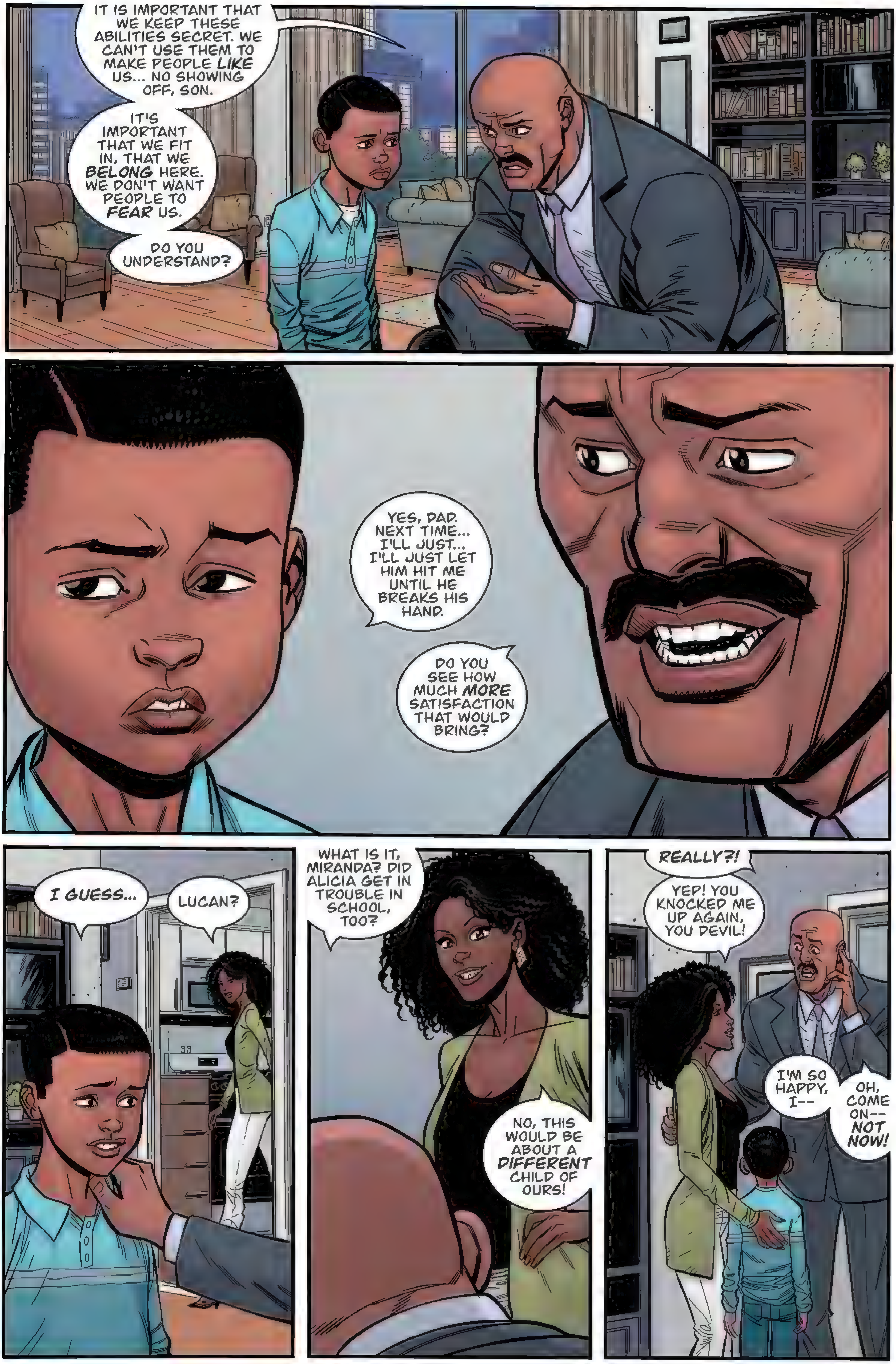

THE RETREAT HAS BEGUN! THIS BATTLE IS LOST! WE'RE NOT MAKING ANY HEADWAY--THERE'S *JUST TOO MANY OF THEM!*
WE NEED TO REGROUP WHILE WE STILL HAVE AN ARMY LEFT TO FIGHT WITH!
WE'RE RETREATING! IT'S *OVER!* HOW DO *SO MANY* OF YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH?!
WELL, THAT WENT PRETTY WELL...
SO FAR SO GOOD.

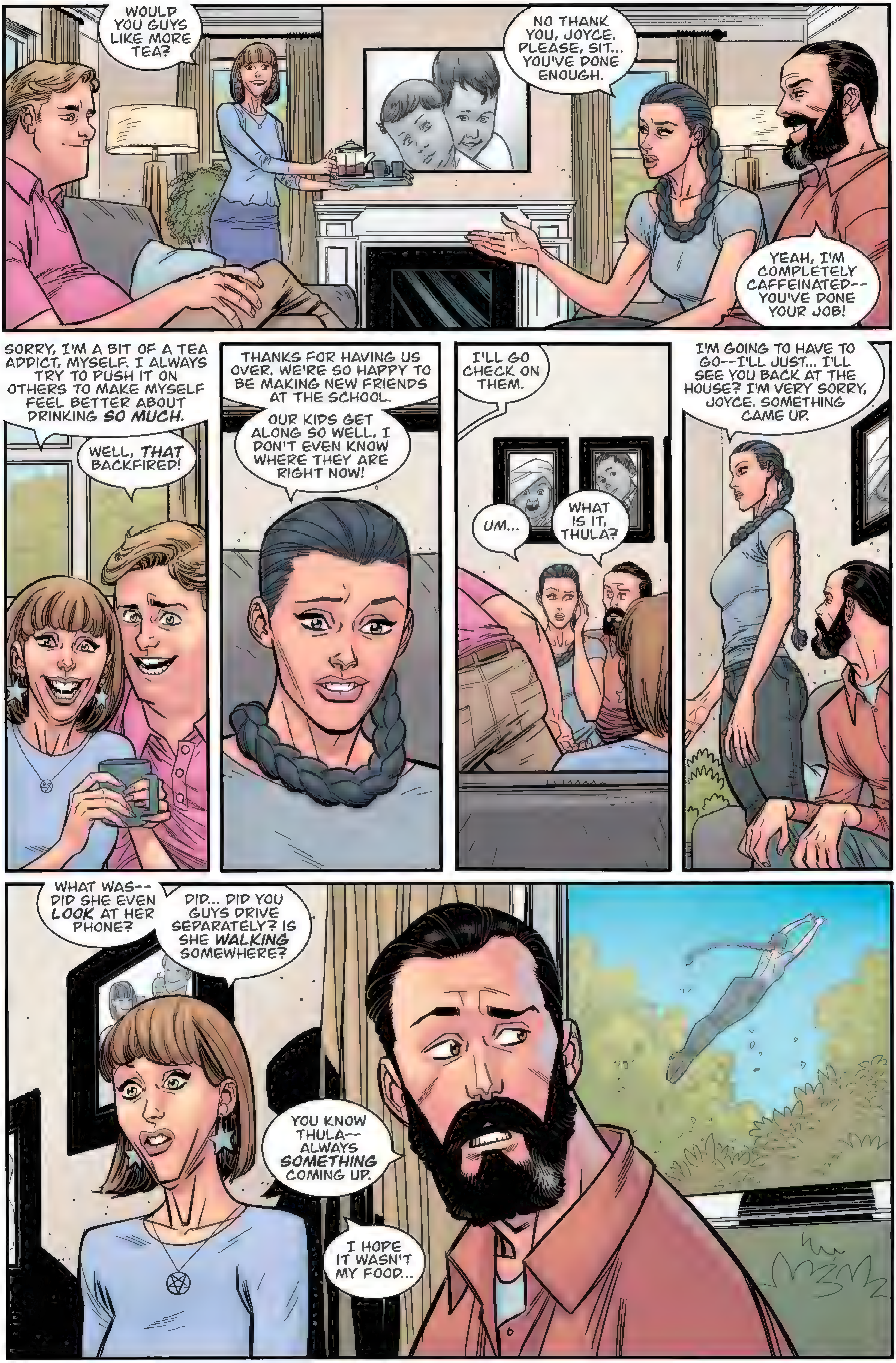
THEY THINK THEY CAN ESCAPE US.
NO.
I WILL NOT ALLOW THEM TO LICK THEIR WOUNDS AND ATTACK US AGAIN. WE FINISH THIS-- *NOW.*
LAUNCH THE FLEET.
YES... FATHER.
YOU OKAY?
ME? YEAH. I'M... UGH. I'M *FINE.*
BEST HONEYMOON *EVER.*
I'VE BEEN MONITORING THE PLANET--ALL OF OUR FORCES THAT REMAIN HAVE JOINED THE FLEET.
EXCELLENT--

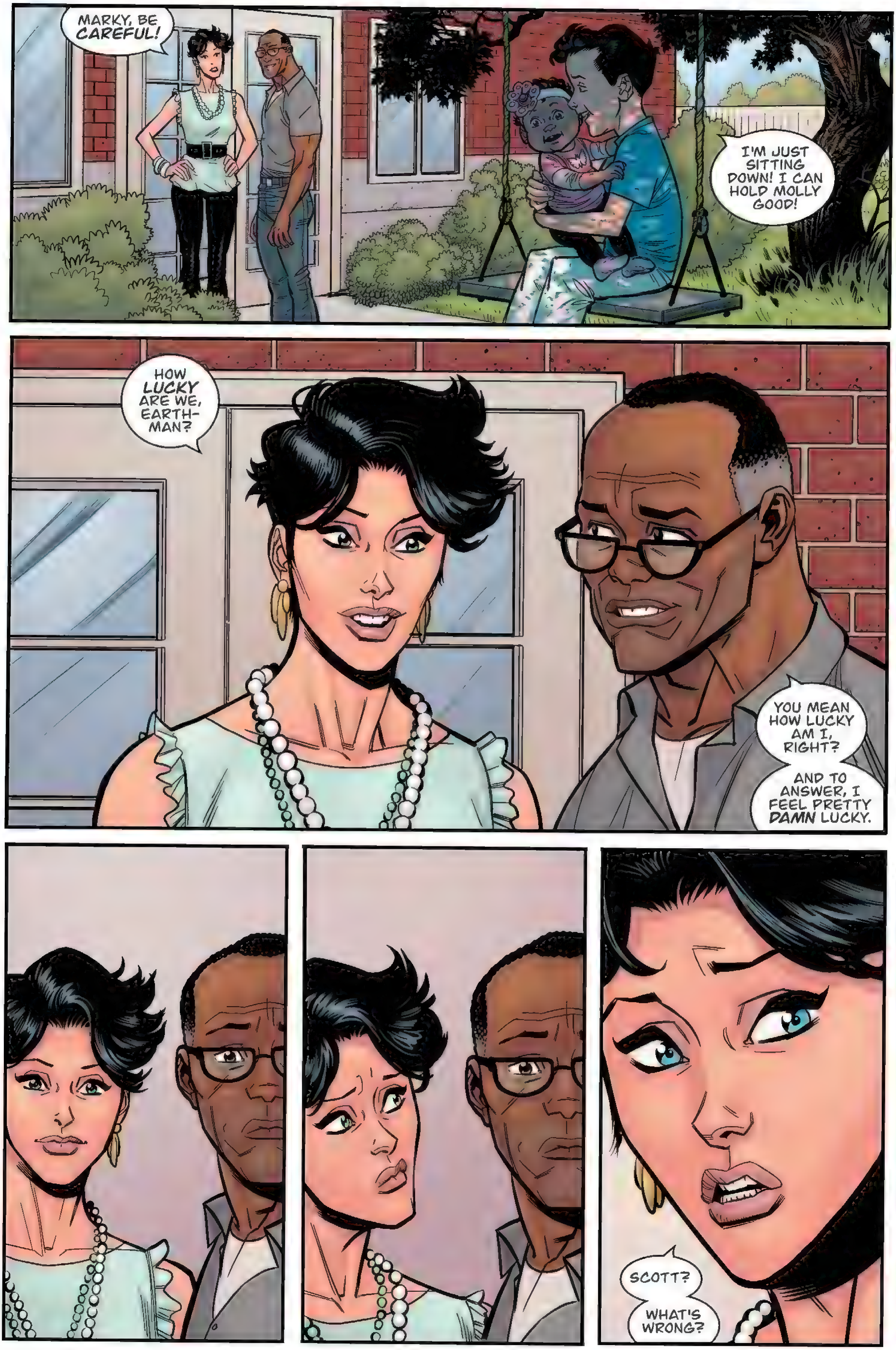

THRAGG'S FORCES ARE IN PURSUIT. YOUR PLAN WORKED.
THAT WAS ROUGH BACK THERE... BUT YEAH.
WE SUFFERED SOME LOSSES, BUT THIS IS REASSURING. TELL ME, WHAT IS THIS STRONGHOLD WE'RE LEADING THEM TO?
IT'S... UM...
WE'RE LEADING THEM TO *EARTH*.

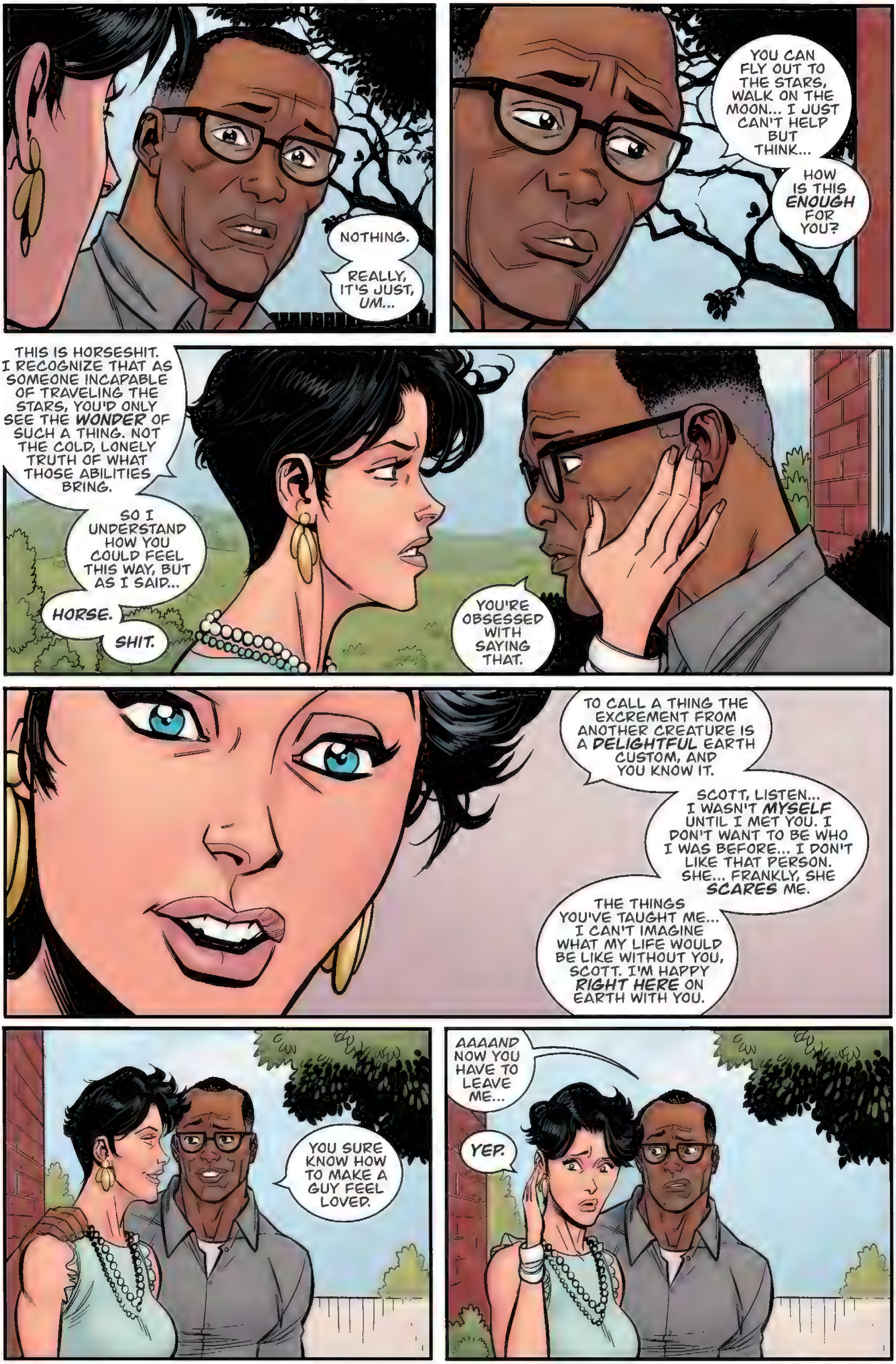
CHAPTER 137

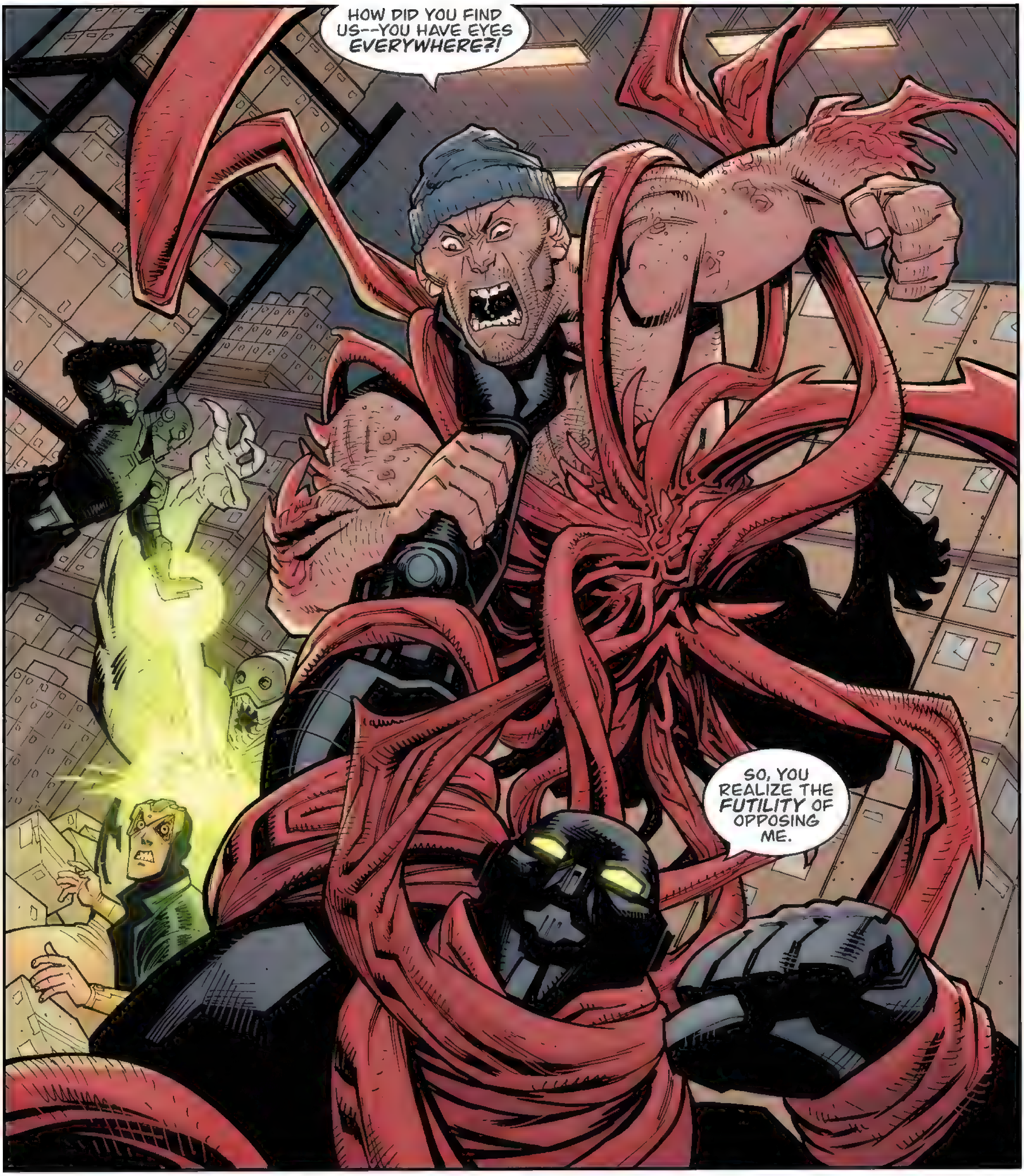

IT WAS A MANDATE, MY PEOPLE... OUR POPULATION WAS DWINDLING. I KNOW THIS KIND OF THING IS FROWNED UPON ON YOUR PLANET--BUT REALLY, I DIDN'T KNOW.
I KNOW THAT SOME OF YOU ARE HANDLING THIS BETTER THAN OTHERS... YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND, THOUGH--I CARE *DEEPLY* FOR ALL OF YOU.
NOTHING HAS CHANGED...
IT'S JUST THAT YOU NOW *KNOW* ABOUT EACH OTHER AND...
OH, NO... I... I'M NEEDED IN SPACE.
I-- PLEASE... UM... TALK AMONGST YOURSELVES. I WILL RETURN AS SOON AS I CAN.

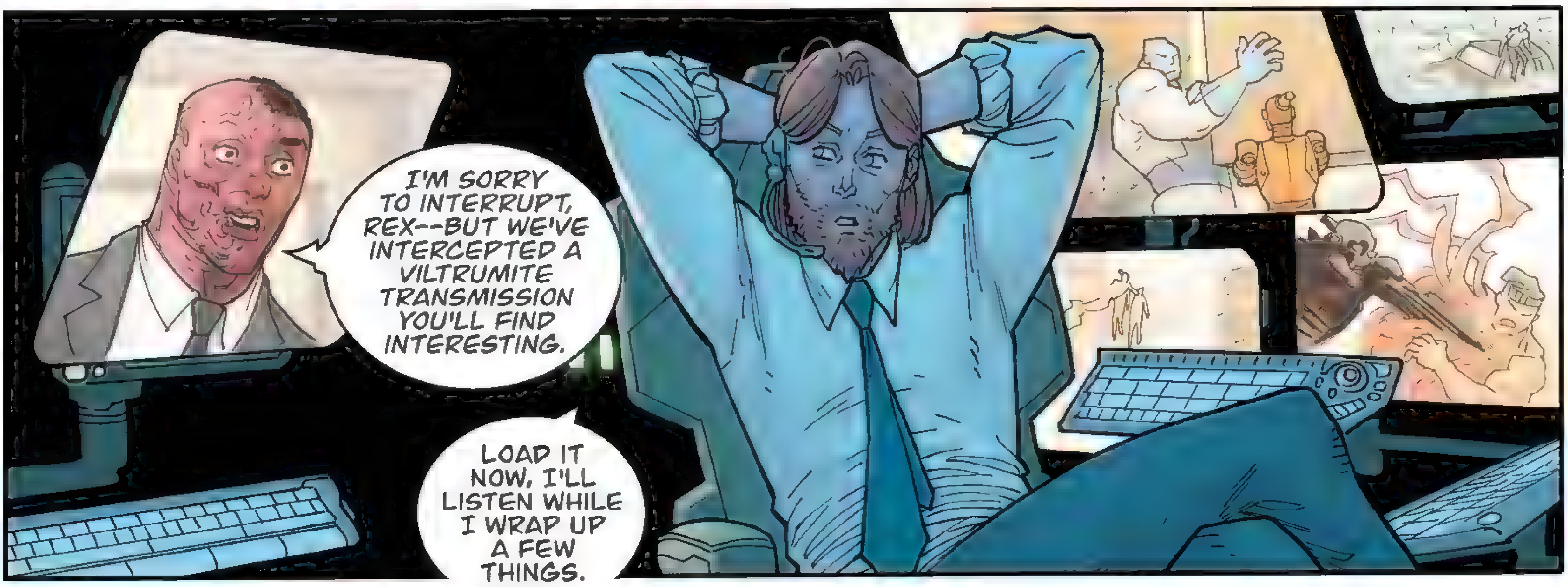

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE KEEP THESE ABILITIES SECRET. WE CAN'T USE THEM TO MAKE PEOPLE *LIKE* US... NO SHOWING OFF, SON.
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE FIT IN, THAT WE *BELONG* HERE. WE DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO *FEAR* US.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, DAD. NEXT TIME... I'LL JUST... I'LL JUST LET HIM HIT ME UNTIL HE BREAKS HIS HAND.
DO YOU SEE HOW MUCH *MORE* SATISFACTION THAT WOULD BRING?
I GUESS...
LUCAN?
WHAT IS IT, MIRANDA? DID ALICIA GET IN TROUBLE IN SCHOOL, TOO?
NO, THIS WOULD BE ABOUT A *DIFFERENT* CHILD OF OURS!
REALLY?!
YEP! YOU KNOCKED ME UP AGAIN, YOU DEVIL!
I'M SO HAPPY, I--
OH, COME ON-- *NOT NOW!*


WOULD YOU GUYS LIKE MORE TEA?
NO THANK YOU, JOYCE. PLEASE, SIT... YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH.
YEAH, I'M COMPLETELY CAFFEINATED--YOU'VE DONE YOUR JOB!
SORRY, I'M A BIT OF A TEA ADDICT, MYSELF. I ALWAYS TRY TO PUSH IT ON OTHERS TO MAKE MYSELF FEEL BETTER ABOUT DRINKING SO MUCH.
WELL, THAT BACKFIRED!
THANKS FOR HAVING US OVER. WE'RE SO HAPPY TO BE MAKING NEW FRIENDS AT THE SCHOOL.
OUR KIDS GET ALONG SO WELL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THEY ARE RIGHT NOW!
I'LL GO CHECK ON THEM.
UM...
WHAT IS IT, THULA?
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GO--I'LL JUST... I'LL SEE YOU BACK AT THE HOUSE? I'M VERY SORRY, JOYCE. SOMETHING CAME UP.
WHAT WAS--DID SHE EVEN LOOK AT HER PHONE?
DID... DID YOU GUYS DRIVE SEPARATELY? IS SHE WALKING SOMEWHERE?
YOU KNOW THULA--ALWAYS SOMETHING COMING UP.
I HOPE IT WASN'T MY FOOD...

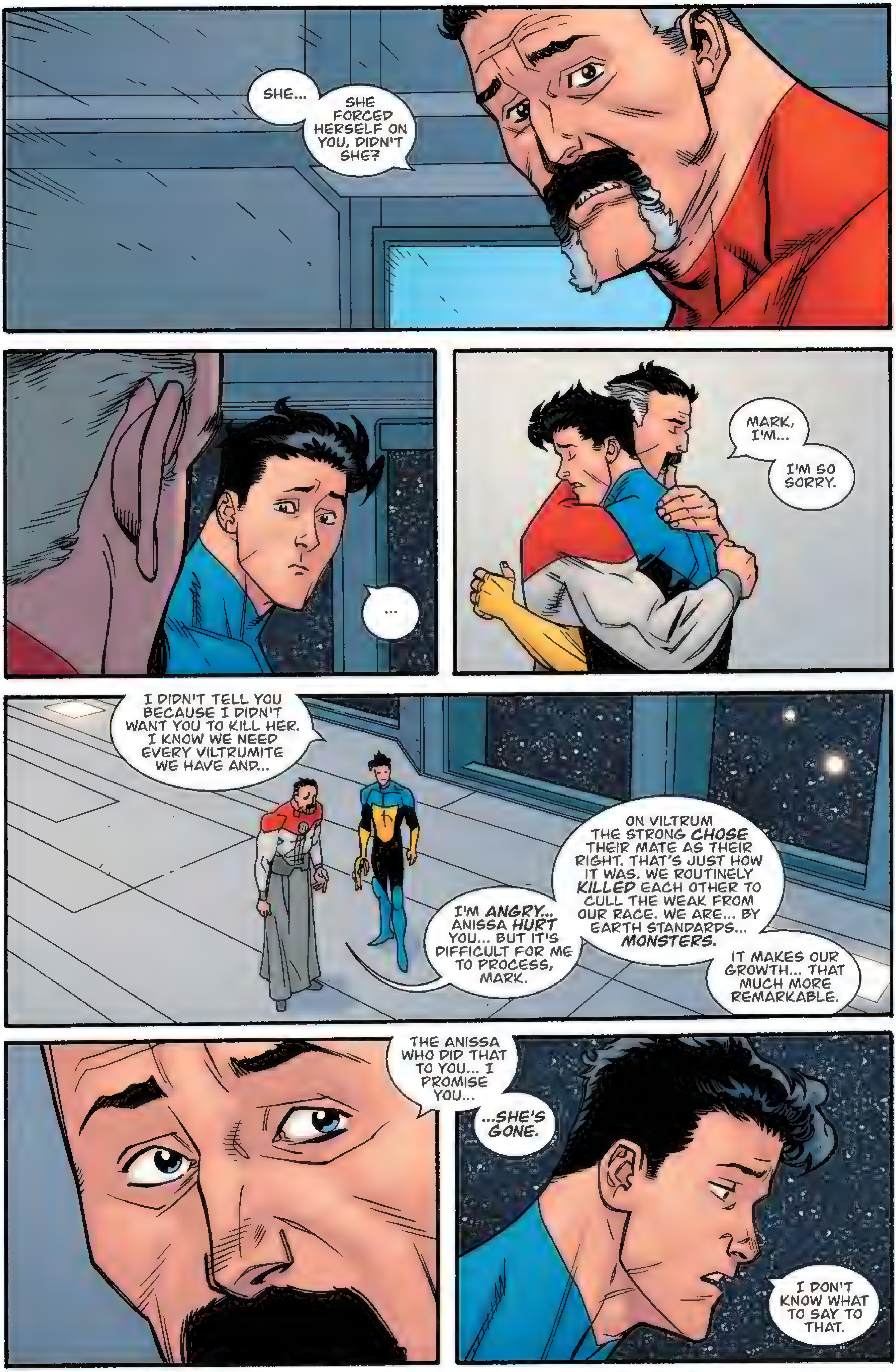

MARKY, BE CAREFUL!
I'M JUST SITTING DOWN! I CAN HOLD MOLLY GOOD!
HOW LUCKY ARE WE, EARTH-MAN?
YOU MEAN HOW LUCKY AM I, RIGHT?
AND TO ANSWER, I FEEL PRETTY DAMN LUCKY.
SCOTT?
WHAT'S WRONG?

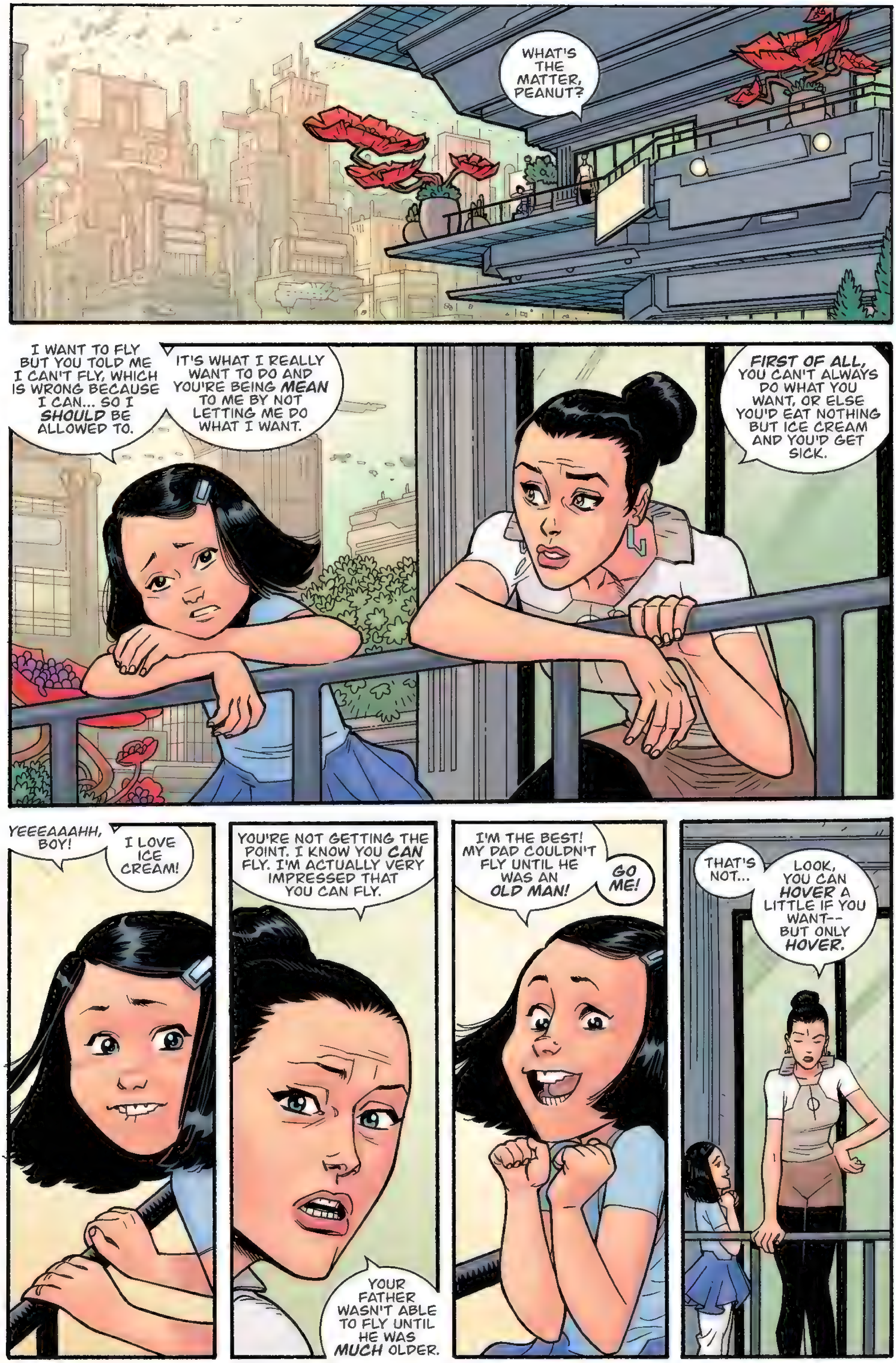

NOTHING.
REALLY, IT'S JUST, UM...
YOU CAN FLY OUT TO THE STARS, WALK ON THE MOON... I JUST CAN'T HELP BUT THINK...
HOW IS THIS **ENOUGH** FOR YOU?
THIS IS HORSESHIT. I RECOGNIZE THAT AS SOMEONE INCAPABLE OF TRAVELING THE STARS, YOU'D ONLY SEE THE **WONDER** OF SUCH A THING. NOT THE COLD, LONELY TRUTH OF WHAT THOSE ABILITIES BRING.
SO I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU COULD FEEL THIS WAY, BUT AS I SAID...
HORSE.
SHIT.
YOU'RE OBSESSED WITH SAYING THAT.
TO CALL A THING THE EXCREMENT FROM ANOTHER CREATURE IS A **DELIGHTFUL** EARTH CUSTOM, AND YOU KNOW IT.
SCOTT, LISTEN... I WASN'T **MYSELF** UNTIL I MET YOU. I DON'T WANT TO BE WHO I WAS BEFORE... I DON'T LIKE THAT PERSON. SHE... FRANKLY, SHE **SCARES** ME.
THE THINGS YOU'VE TAUGHT ME... I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT MY LIFE WOULD BE LIKE WITHOUT YOU, SCOTT. I'M HAPPY **RIGHT HERE** ON EARTH WITH YOU.
YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO MAKE A GUY FEEL LOVED.
AAAAND NOW YOU HAVE TO LEAVE ME...
YEP.


HOW DID YOU FIND US--YOU HAVE EYES *EVERYWHERE?!*
SO, YOU REALIZE THE *FUTILITY* OF OPPOSING ME.

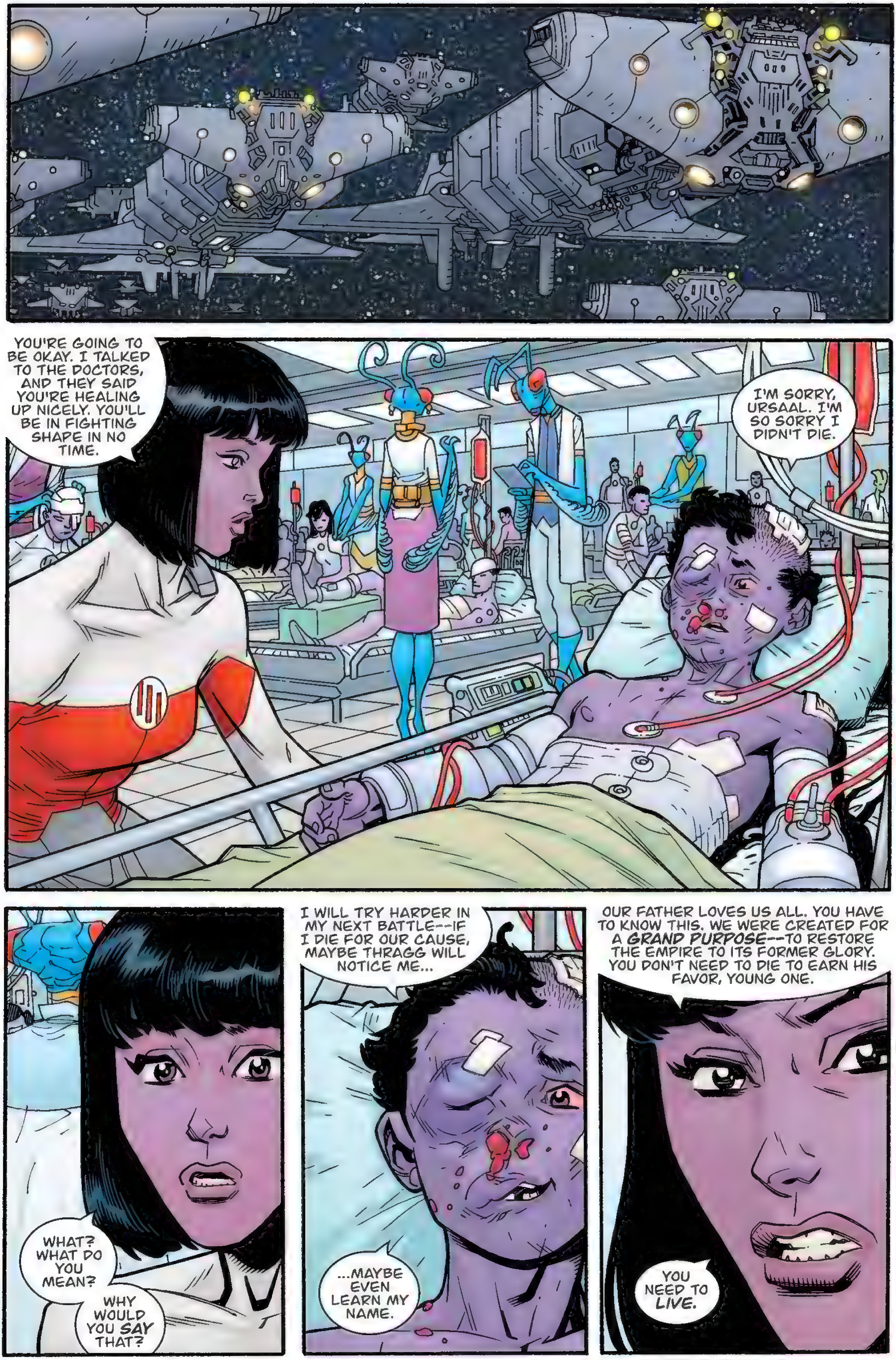

I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, REX--BUT WE'VE INTERCEPTED A VILTRUMITE TRANSMISSION YOU'LL FIND INTERESTING.
LOAD IT NOW, I'LL LISTEN WHILE I WRAP UP A FEW THINGS.

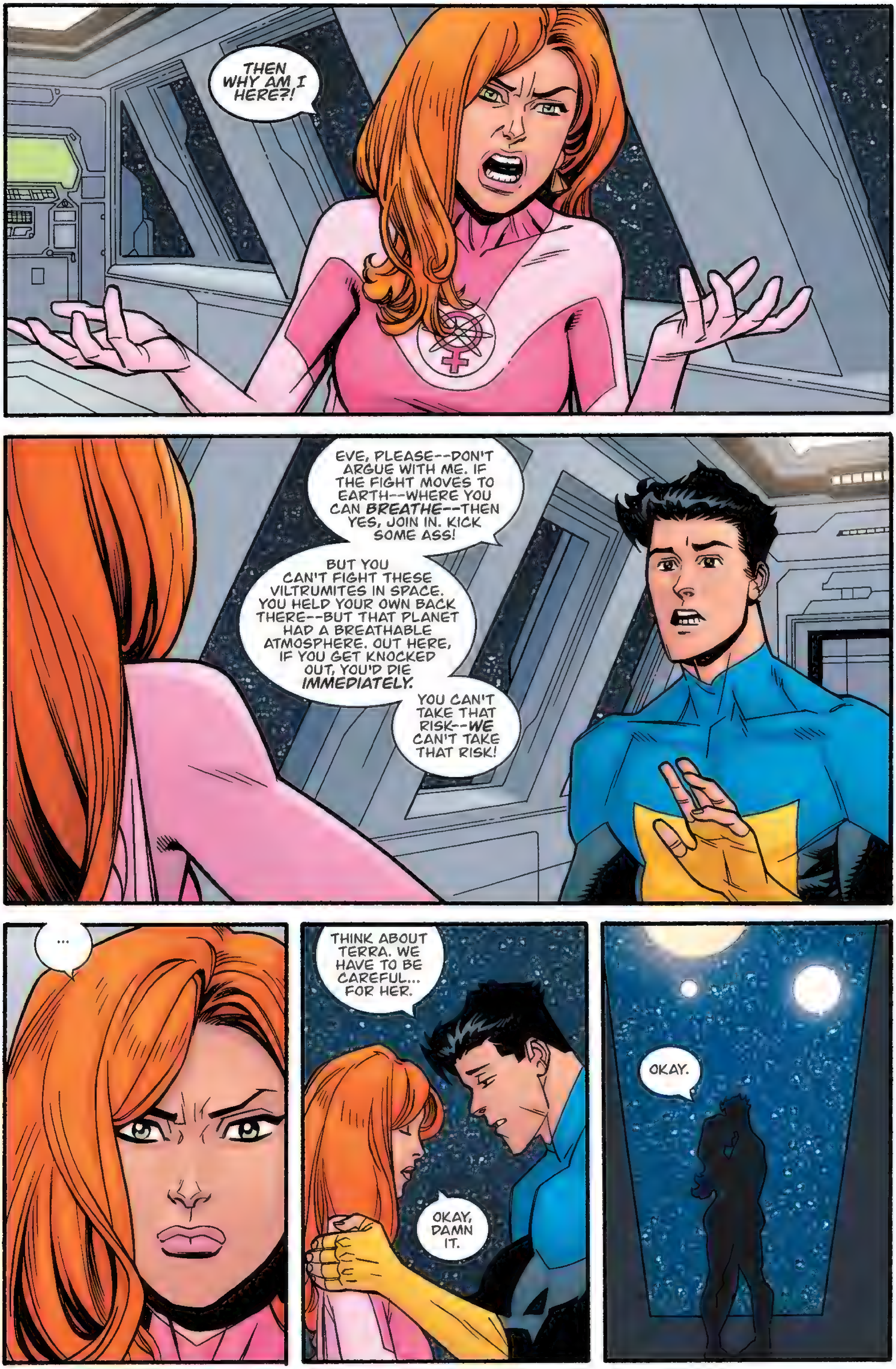
I AM STILL NOT HAPPY WITH YOU. *YOU FORCED MY HAND.*
STOP LOOKING SO DAMN PLEASED WITH YOURSELF, SON.
DON'T I KIND OF *ALWAYS* DO THAT? ISN'T THAT OUR THING? YOU *WANT* TO DO THE RIGHT THING--I JUST TAKE AWAY THE CHOICE.
I'M SORRY, I CAN'T HELP IT. MY PLAN WORKED.
AND YOU DON'T YET KNOW THE FULL *CONSEQUENCES* OF THIS PLAN.
THERE'S STILL A LOT LEFT TO NAVIGATE. WE HAVEN'T WON JUST YET.
I KNOW THAT. I DO.
I JUST HONESTLY THINK IT'S A WIN IN AND OF ITSELF TO SEE VILTRUMITES... *CARING* FOR THEIR FAMILIES ON EARTH.
IT'S NOT EXACTLY A *NEW* PHENOMENON.
I KNOW, I KNOW.
IT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW, *REASSURING* TO SEE IT TAKING HOLD SO QUICKLY.
I WILL ADMIT, TO SEE THE CHANGES OUR TIME ON EARTH HAS BROUGHT EVEN TO THE HARDEST VILTRUMITES AMONG US... IT IS REMARKABLE.
SOME OF THEM-- SEEM ALMOST COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
LIKE ANISSA?
MARK-- WHAT *IS* IT BETWEEN YOU TWO?
...

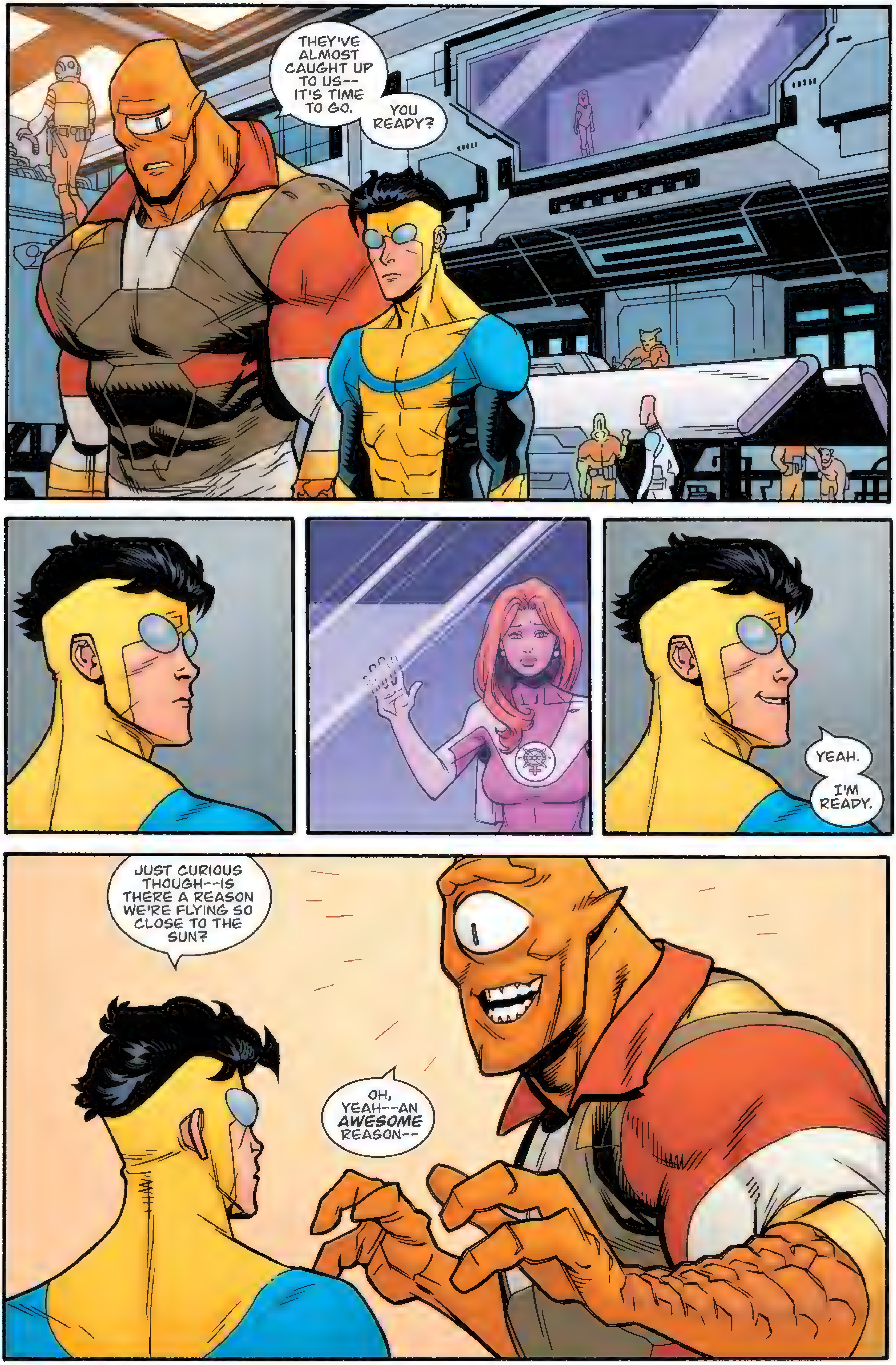

SHE...
SHE FORCED HERSELF ON YOU, DIDN'T SHE?
...
MARK, I'M...
I'M SO SORRY.
I DIDN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KILL HER. I KNOW WE NEED EVERY VILTRUMITE WE HAVE AND...
I'M **ANGRY...** ANISSA **HURT** YOU... BUT IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO PROCESS, MARK.
ON VILTRUM THE STRONG **CHOSE** THEIR MATE AS THEIR RIGHT. THAT'S JUST HOW IT WAS. WE ROUTINELY **KILLED** EACH OTHER TO CULL THE WEAK FROM OUR RACE. WE ARE... BY EARTH STANDARDS... **MONSTERS.**
IT MAKES OUR GROWTH... THAT MUCH MORE REMARKABLE.
THE ANISSA WHO DID THAT TO YOU... I PROMISE YOU...
...SHE'S GONE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO THAT.


WHAT'S THE MATTER, PEANUT?
I WANT TO FLY BUT YOU TOLD ME I CAN'T FLY, WHICH IS WRONG BECAUSE I CAN... SO I ***SHOULD*** BE ALLOWED TO.
IT'S WHAT I REALLY WANT TO DO AND YOU'RE BEING ***MEAN*** TO ME BY NOT LETTING ME DO WHAT I WANT.
FIRST OF ALL, YOU CAN'T ALWAYS DO WHAT YOU WANT, OR ELSE YOU'D EAT NOTHING BUT ICE CREAM AND YOU'D GET SICK.
YEEEAAAHH, BOY!
I LOVE ICE CREAM!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING THE POINT. I KNOW YOU ***CAN*** FLY. I'M ACTUALLY VERY IMPRESSED THAT YOU CAN FLY.
YOUR FATHER WASN'T ABLE TO FLY UNTIL HE WAS ***MUCH*** OLDER.
I'M THE BEST! MY DAD COULDN'T FLY UNTIL HE WAS AN ***OLD MAN!***
GO ME!
THAT'S NOT...
LOOK, YOU CAN ***HOVER*** A LITTLE IF YOU WANT-- BUT ONLY ***HOVER.***

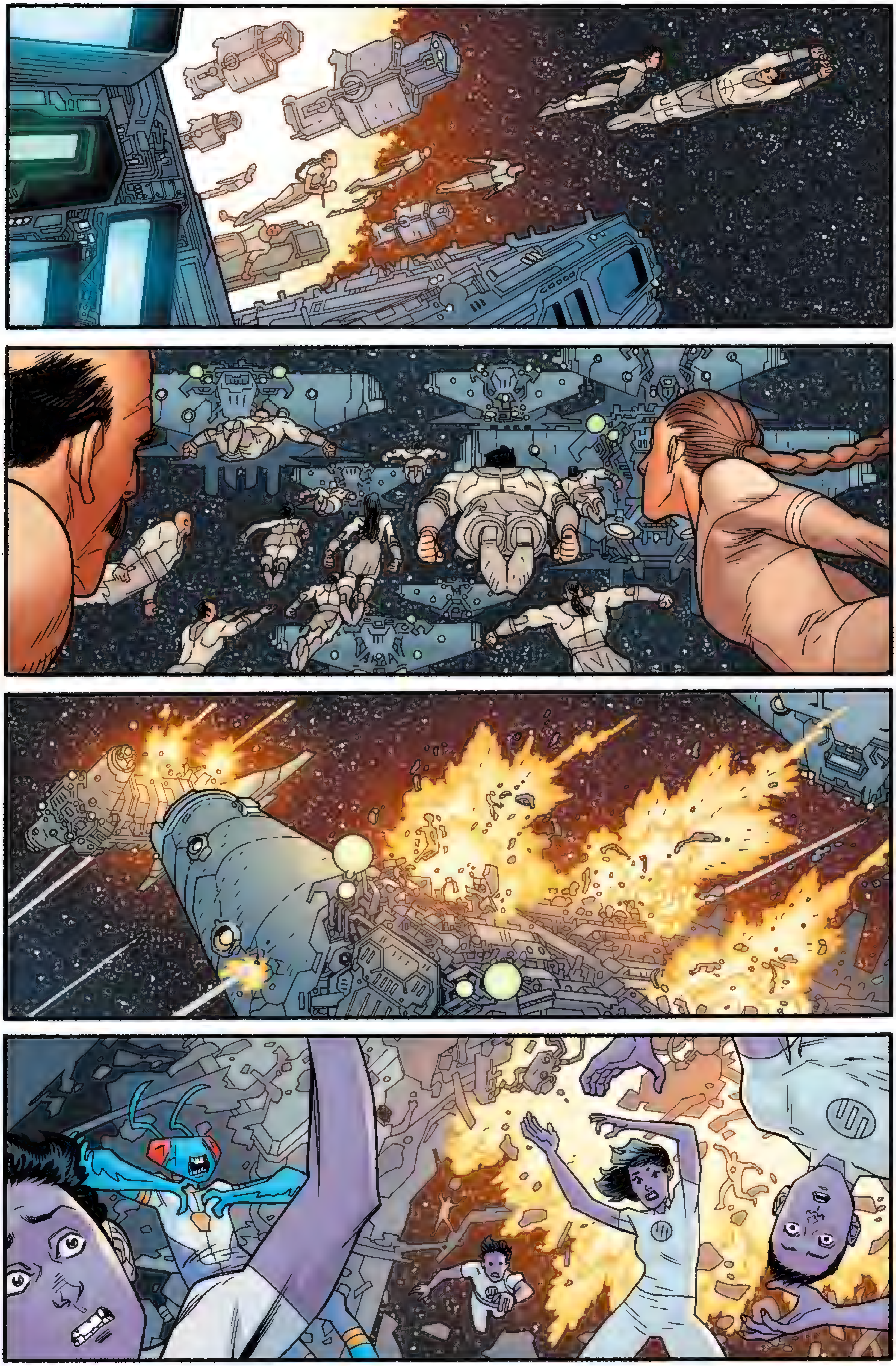
TERRA, GET US BACK TO THE BALCONY *RIGHT NOW!*
I CAN'T!


YOU'RE GOING TO BE OKAY. I TALKED TO THE DOCTORS, AND THEY SAID YOU'RE HEALING UP NICELY. YOU'LL BE IN FIGHTING SHAPE IN NO TIME.
I'M SORRY, URSAAL. I'M SO SORRY I DIDN'T DIE.
WHAT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHY WOULD YOU **SAY** THAT?
I WILL TRY HARDER IN MY NEXT BATTLE--IF I DIE FOR OUR CAUSE, MAYBE THRAGG WILL NOTICE ME...
...MAYBE EVEN LEARN MY NAME.
OUR FATHER LOVES US ALL. YOU HAVE TO KNOW THIS. WE WERE CREATED FOR A ***GRAND PURPOSE***--TO RESTORE THE EMPIRE TO ITS FORMER GLORY. YOU DON'T NEED TO DIE TO EARN HIS FAVOR, YOUNG ONE.
YOU NEED TO ***LIVE***.

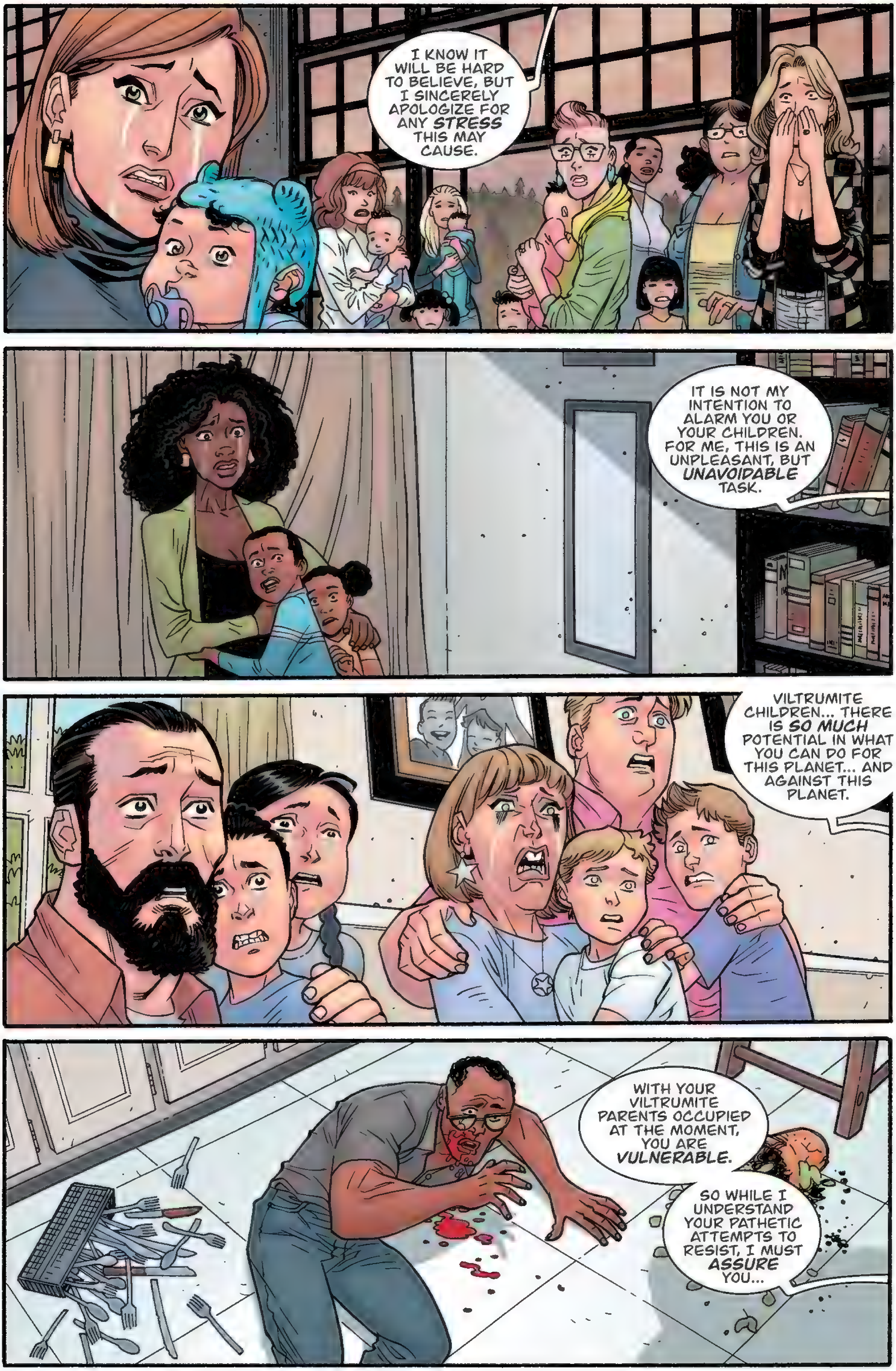

THEN WHY AM I HERE?!
EVE, PLEASE--DON'T ARGUE WITH ME. IF THE FIGHT MOVES TO EARTH--WHERE YOU CAN *BREATHE*--THEN YES, JOIN IN. KICK SOME ASS!
BUT YOU CAN'T FIGHT THESE VILTRUMITES IN SPACE. YOU HELD YOUR OWN BACK THERE--BUT THAT PLANET HAD A BREATHABLE ATMOSPHERE. OUT HERE, IF YOU GET KNOCKED OUT, YOU'D DIE *IMMEDIATELY.*
YOU CAN'T TAKE THAT RISK--*WE* CAN'T TAKE THAT RISK!
...
THINK ABOUT TERRA. WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL... FOR HER.
OKAY, DAMN IT.
OKAY.


THEY'VE ALMOST CAUGHT UP TO US-- IT'S TIME TO GO.
YOU READY?
YEAH.
I'M READY.
JUST CURIOUS THOUGH--IS THERE A REASON WE'RE FLYING SO CLOSE TO THE SUN?
OH, YEAH--AN *AWESOME* REASON--

"--IT'S SO THEY CAN'T SEE OUR ADDITIONAL FORCES UNTIL IT'S *TOO LATE.*"



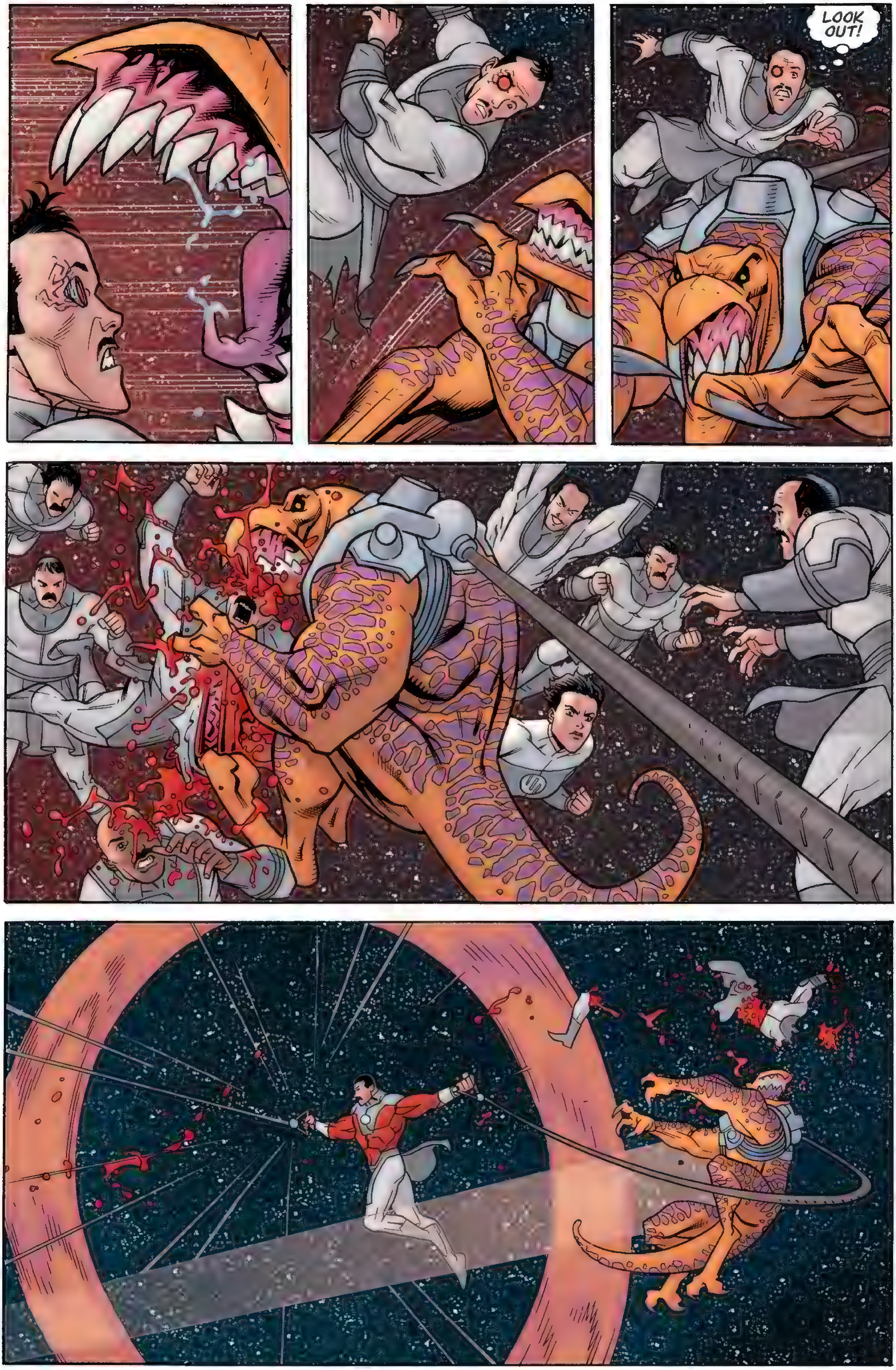
GATHER YOUR ELITE GUARD, URSAAL. WE HAVE LULLED THEM INTO A FALSE CONFIDENCE BY HAVING THEM FACE THE CADETS.
NO MATTER HOW MANY OF MY FORMER VILTRUMITE ALLIES THEY CALL--THIS BATTLE WILL HAVE A ***FAR DIFFERENT*** OUTCOME.

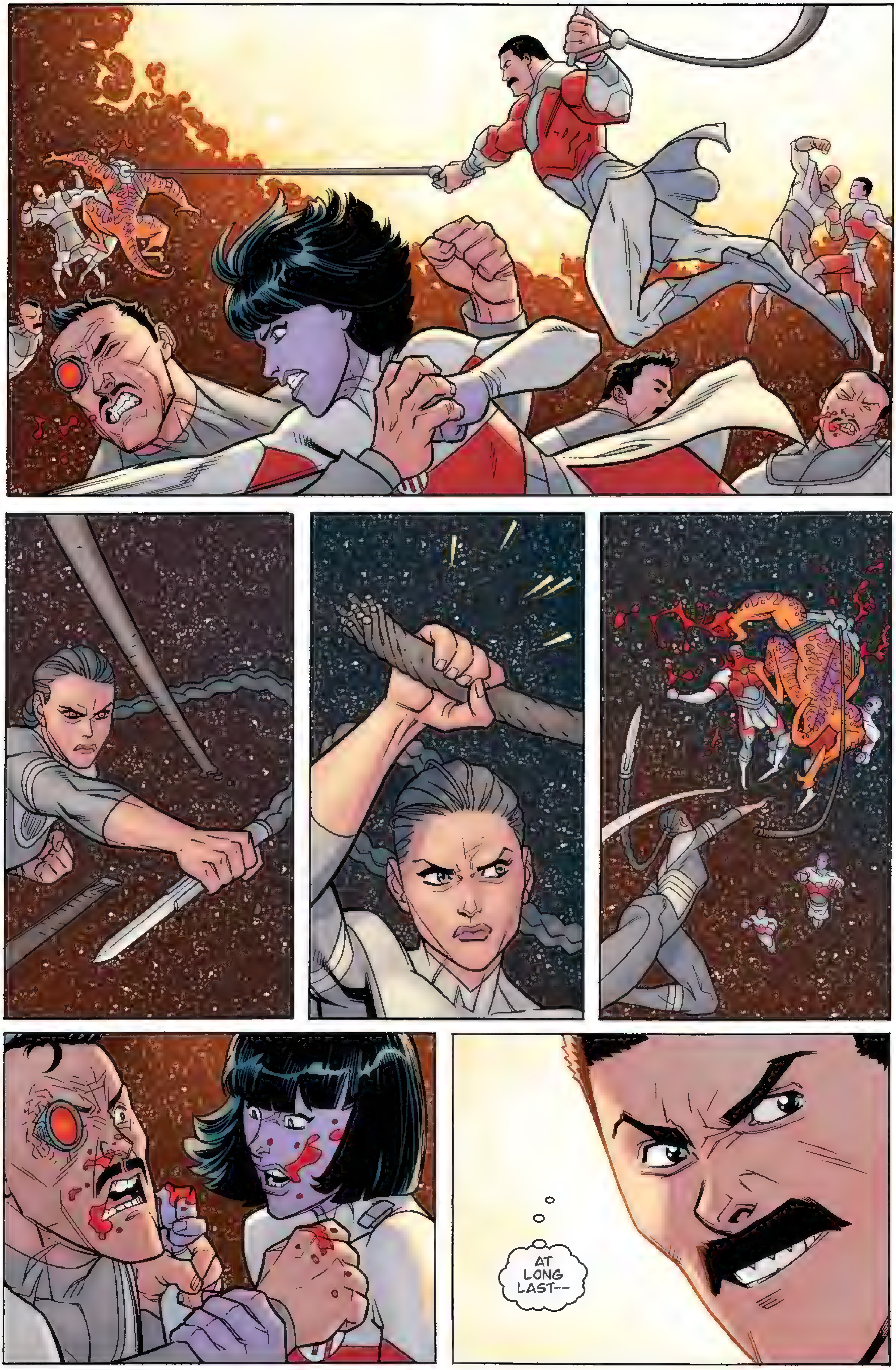

I KNOW IT WILL BE HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE FOR ANY STRESS THIS MAY CAUSE.
IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO ALARM YOU OR YOUR CHILDREN. FOR ME, THIS IS AN UNPLEASANT, BUT UNAVOIDABLE TASK.
VILTRUMITE CHILDREN... THERE IS SO MUCH POTENTIAL IN WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THIS PLANET... AND AGAINST THIS PLANET.
WITH YOUR VILTRUMITE PARENTS OCCUPIED AT THE MOMENT, YOU ARE VULNERABLE.
SO WHILE I UNDERSTAND YOUR PATHETIC ATTEMPTS TO RESIST, I MUST ASSURE YOU...

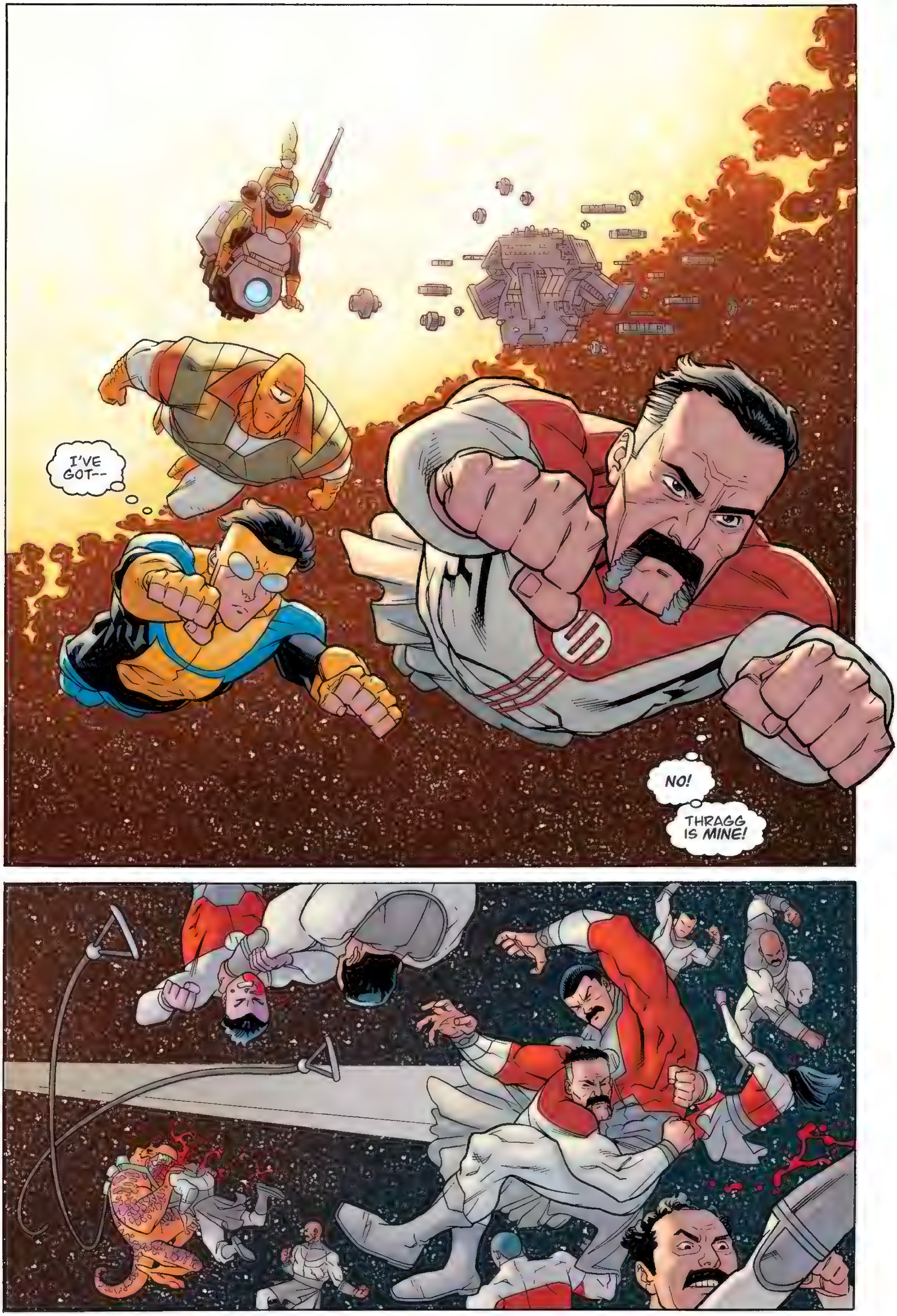
...IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.

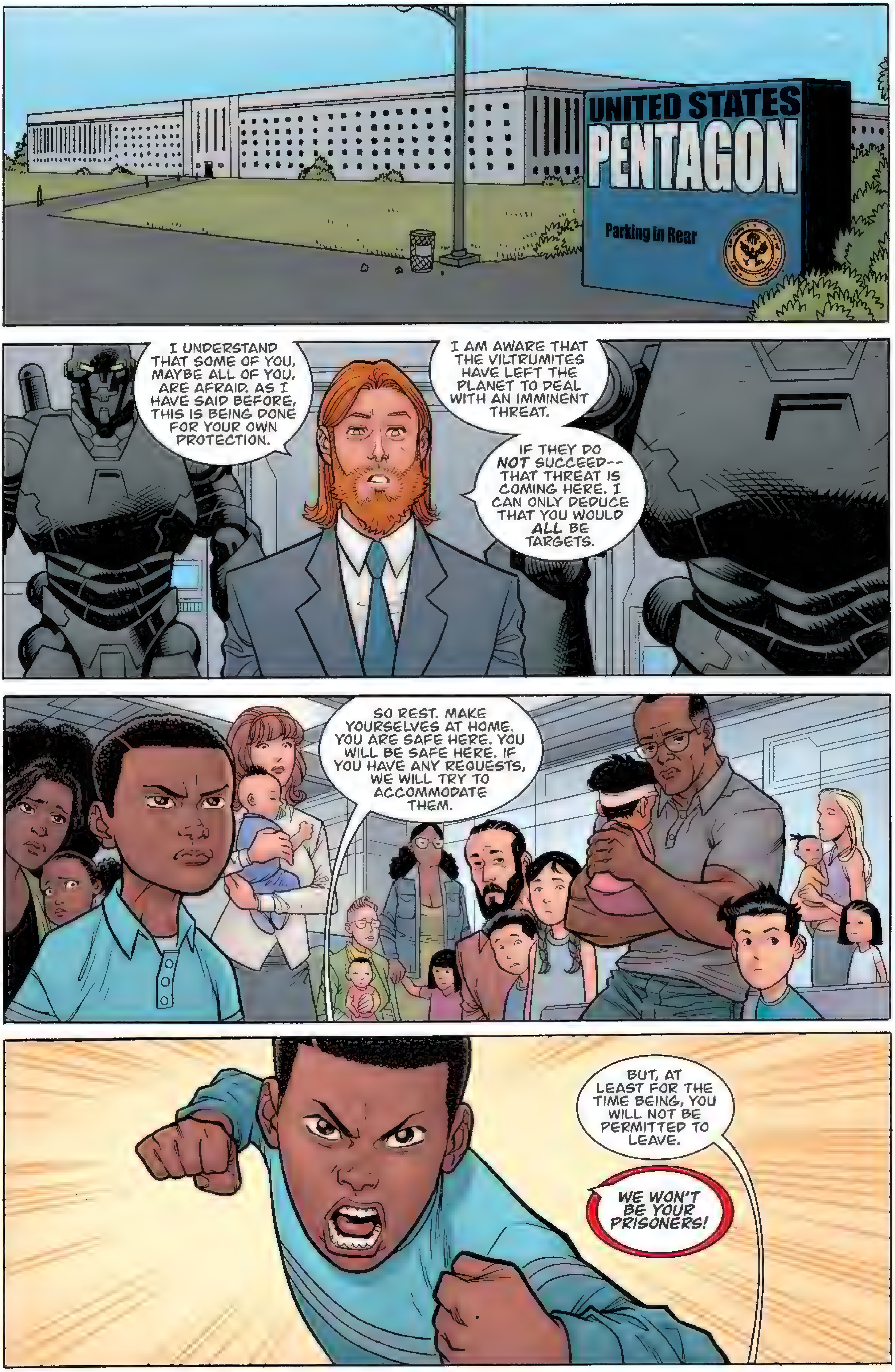
CHAPTER 138

OKAY, PEOPLE-- IT'S TIME. ***GET READY!***
THE VILTRUMITES HAVE ENGAGED THRAGG'S FORCES--WE NEED TO GET OUT THERE AND KEEP THE PRESSURE ON.
WE ARE PREPARED.
OUR FORCES WILL LAY DOWN COVERING FIRE TO MASK OUR ARRIVAL. MAKE WAY TO THE HATCH--***LET'S GO!***

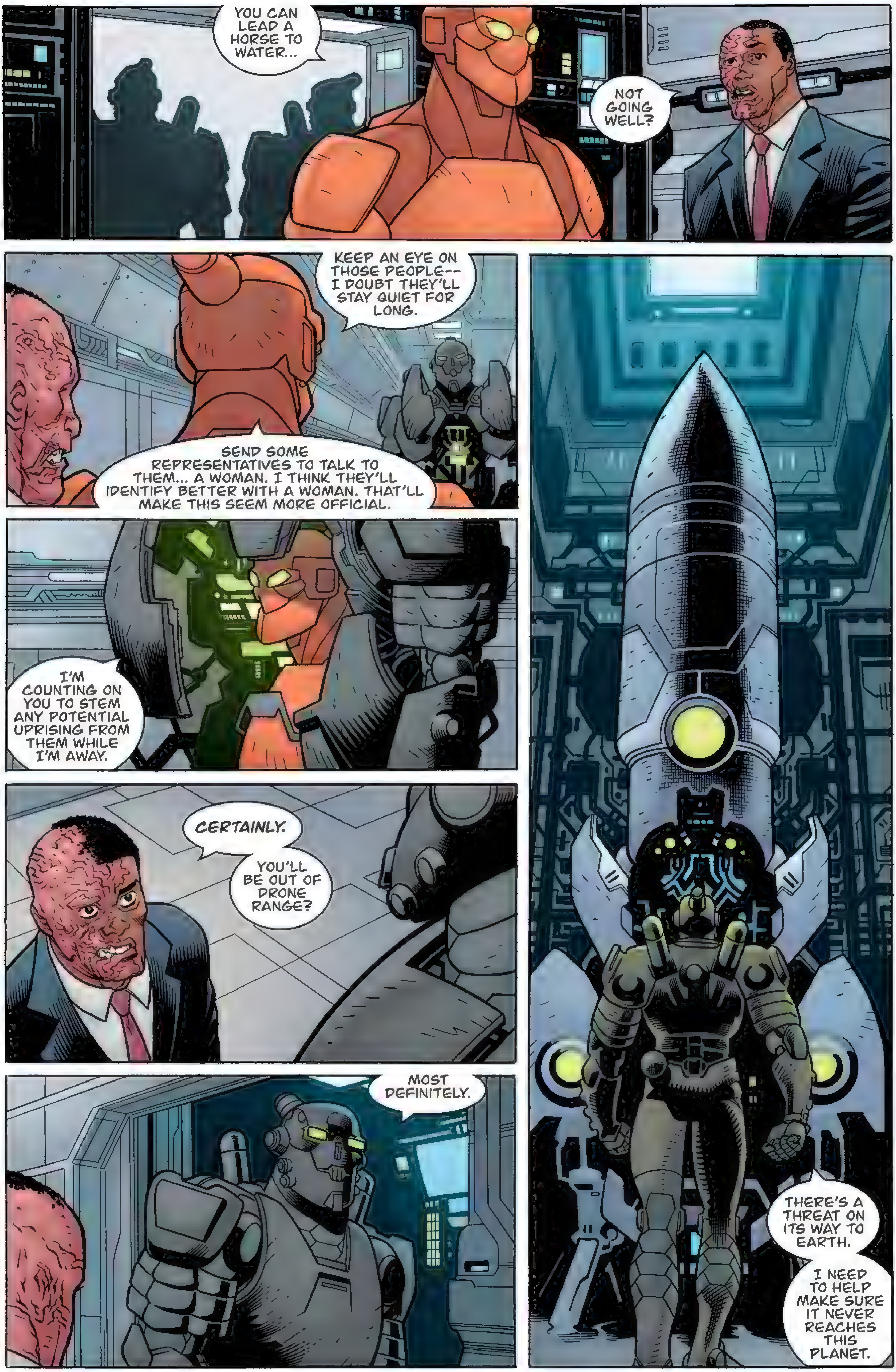

LOOK OUT!

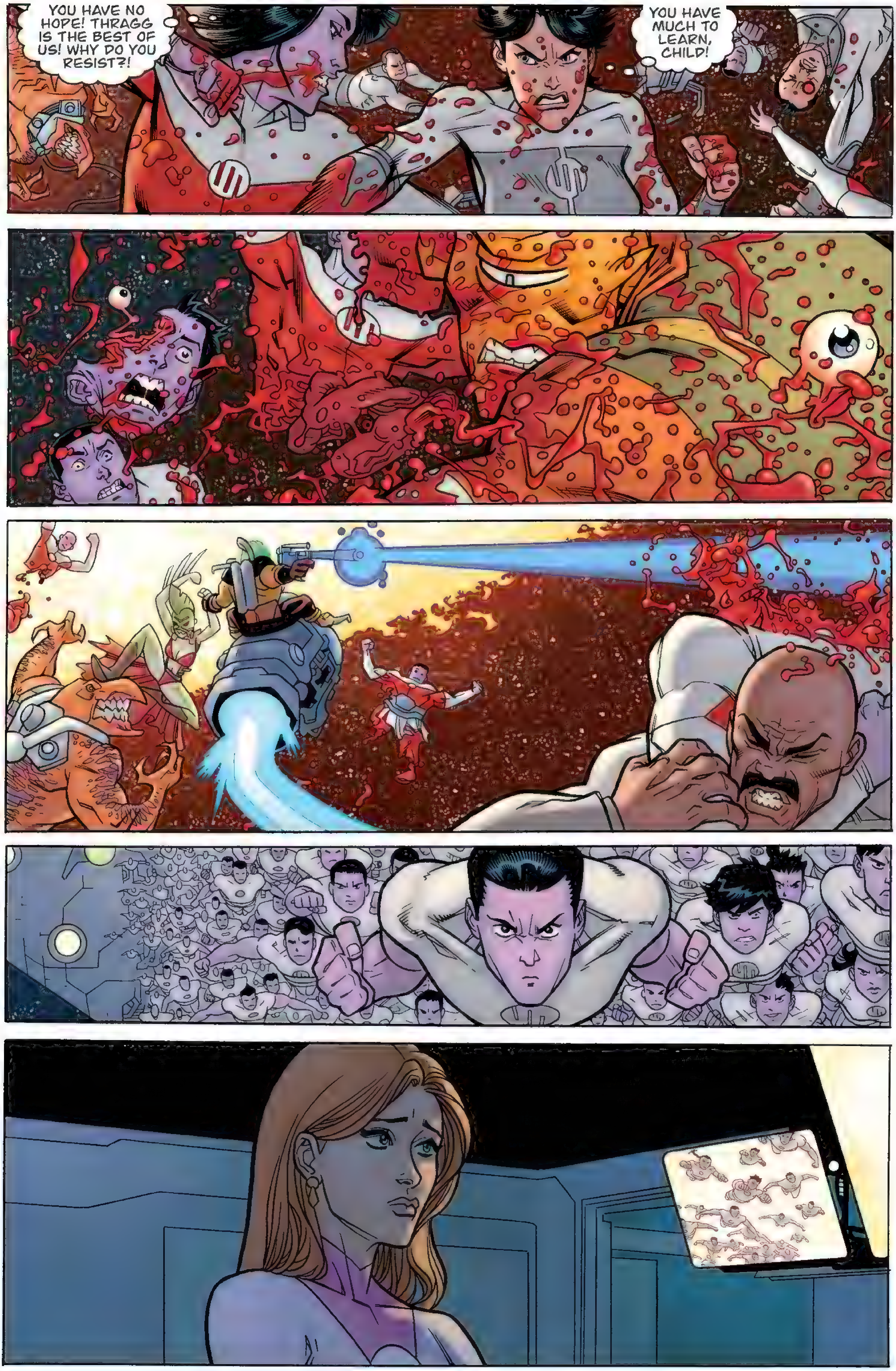

AT LONG LAST--

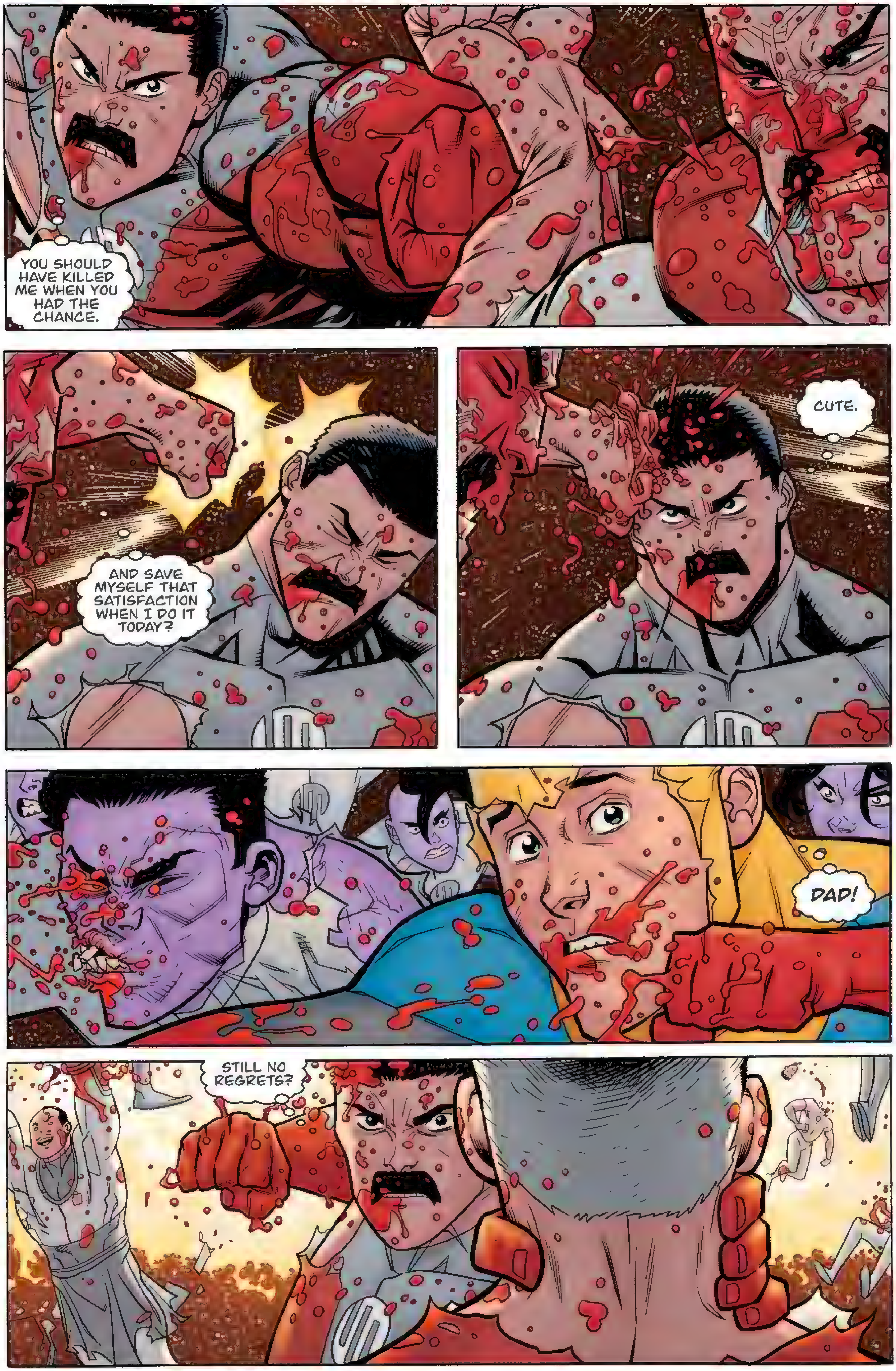

I'VE GOT--
NO!
THRAGG IS MINE!

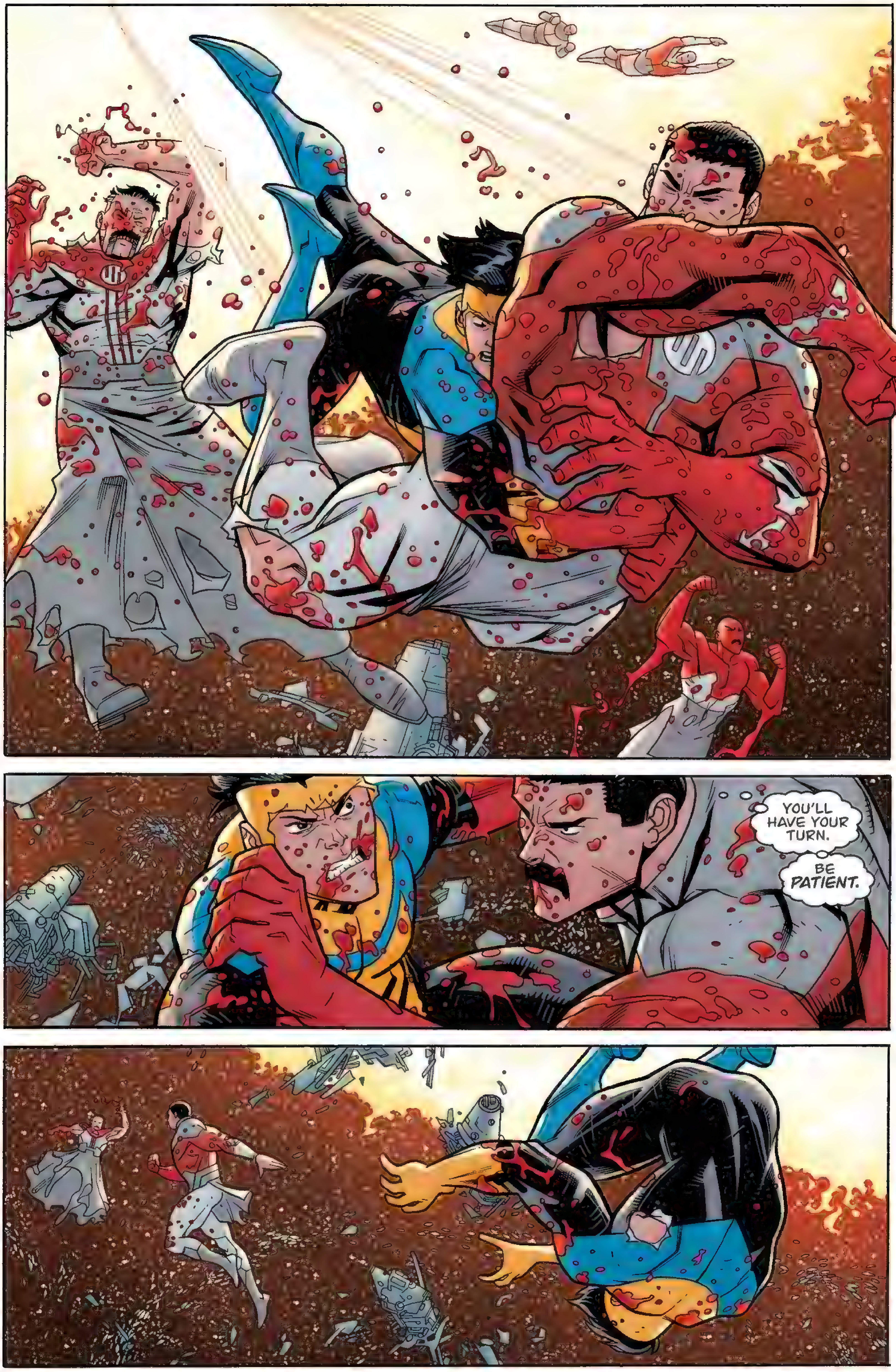

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF YOU, MAYBE ALL OF YOU, ARE AFRAID. AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, THIS IS BEING DONE FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION.
I AM AWARE THAT THE VILTRUMITES HAVE LEFT THE PLANET TO DEAL WITH AN IMMINENT THREAT.
IF THEY DO *NOT* SUCCEED-- THAT THREAT IS COMING HERE. I CAN ONLY DEDUCE THAT YOU WOULD *ALL* BE TARGETS.
SO REST. MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME. YOU ARE SAFE HERE. YOU WILL BE SAFE HERE. IF YOU HAVE ANY REQUESTS, WE WILL TRY TO ACCOMMODATE THEM.
BUT, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE.
WE WON'T BE YOUR PRISONERS!

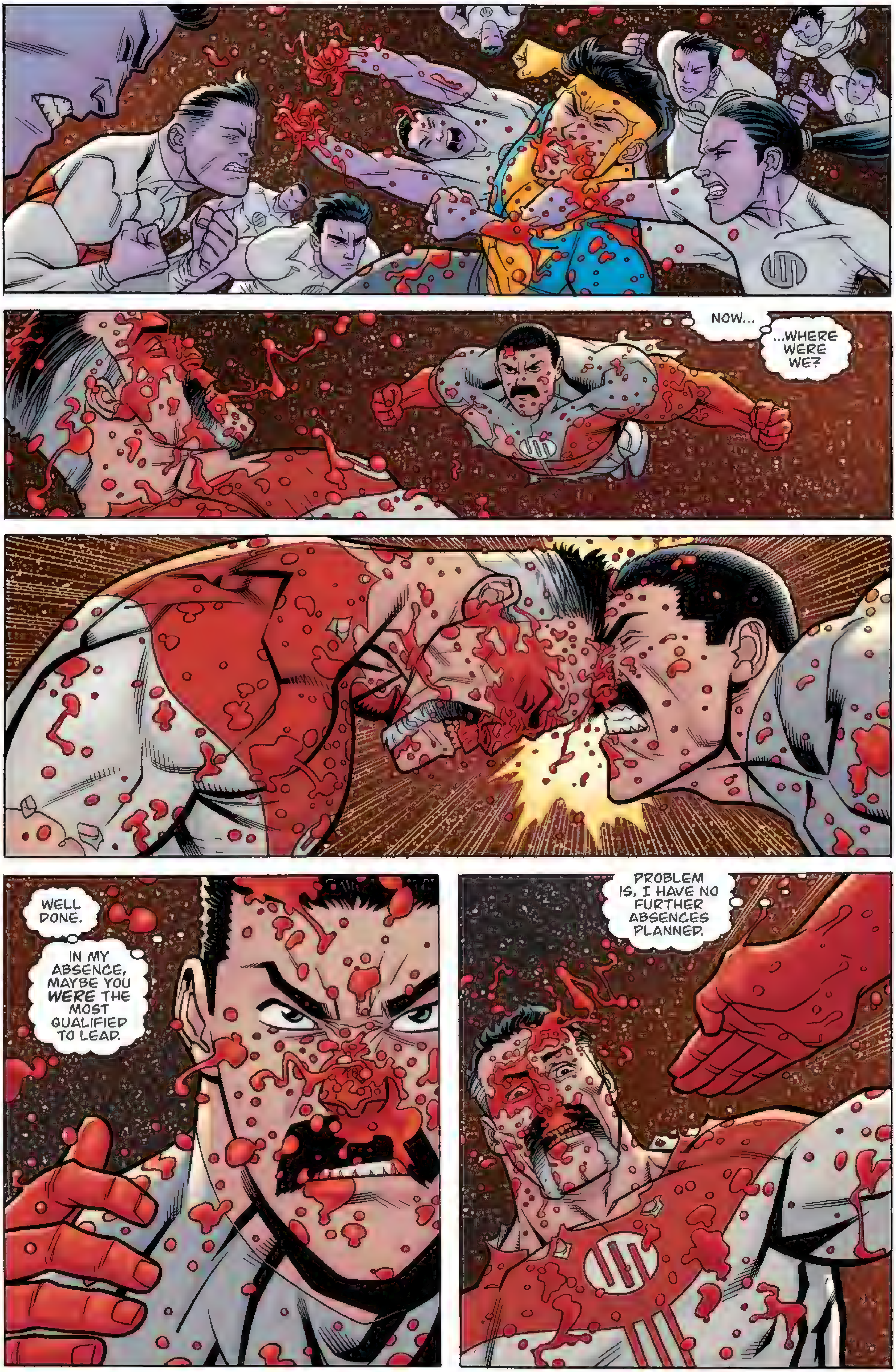
WRAKK!
KALMON!
ONE MAN'S PRISON IS ANOTHER MAN'S SAFE HOUSE.
IT'S ALL A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE.
AAHH!
WHUDD!
I WILL NOT WASTE ANOTHER MOMENT CONVINCING YOU THAT WHAT I AM DOING IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
I ONLY ASK YOU TO RECOGNIZE THAT YOU ARE SAFE AND COMFORTABLE.
IF THERE IS ANY FURTHER RESISTANCE FROM ANY OF YOU-- THAT WILL CEASE TO BE THE CASE.


YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER...
NOT GOING WELL?
KEEP AN EYE ON THOSE PEOPLE-- I DOUBT THEY'LL STAY QUIET FOR LONG.
SEND SOME REPRESENTATIVES TO TALK TO THEM... A WOMAN. I THINK THEY'LL IDENTIFY BETTER WITH A WOMAN. THAT'LL MAKE THIS SEEM MORE OFFICIAL.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU TO STEM ANY POTENTIAL UPRISING FROM THEM WHILE I'M AWAY.
CERTAINLY.
YOU'LL BE OUT OF DRONE RANGE?
MOST DEFINITELY.
THERE'S A THREAT ON ITS WAY TO EARTH.
I NEED TO HELP MAKE SURE IT NEVER REACHES THIS PLANET.


YOU HAVE NO HOPE! THRAGG IS THE BEST OF US! WHY DO YOU RESIST?!
YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN, CHILD!

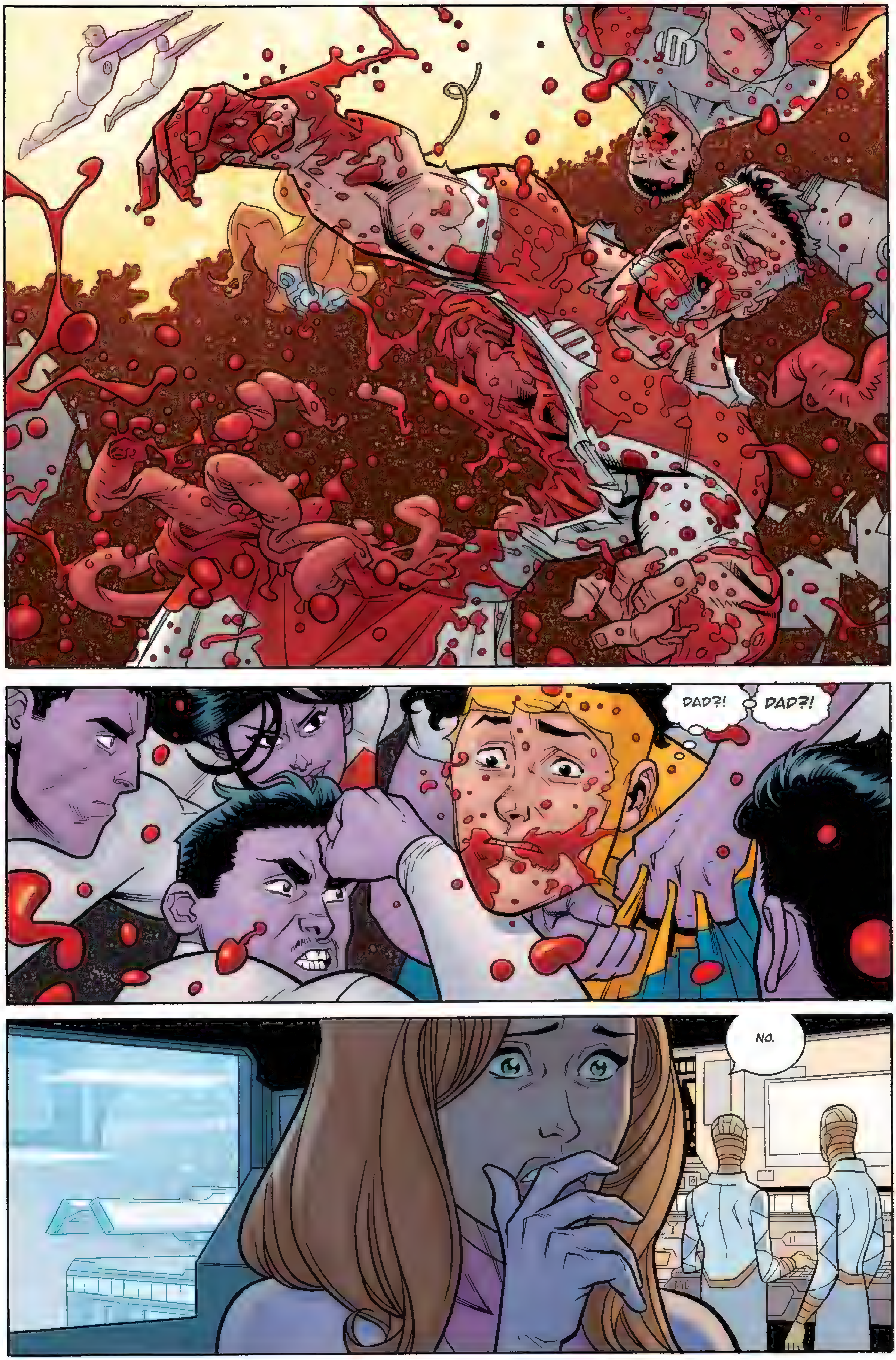

YOU SHOULD HAVE KILLED ME WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE.
AND SAVE MYSELF THAT SATISFACTION WHEN I DO IT TODAY?
CUTE.
DAD!
STILL NO REGRETS?


YOU'LL HAVE YOUR TURN.
BE PATIENT.

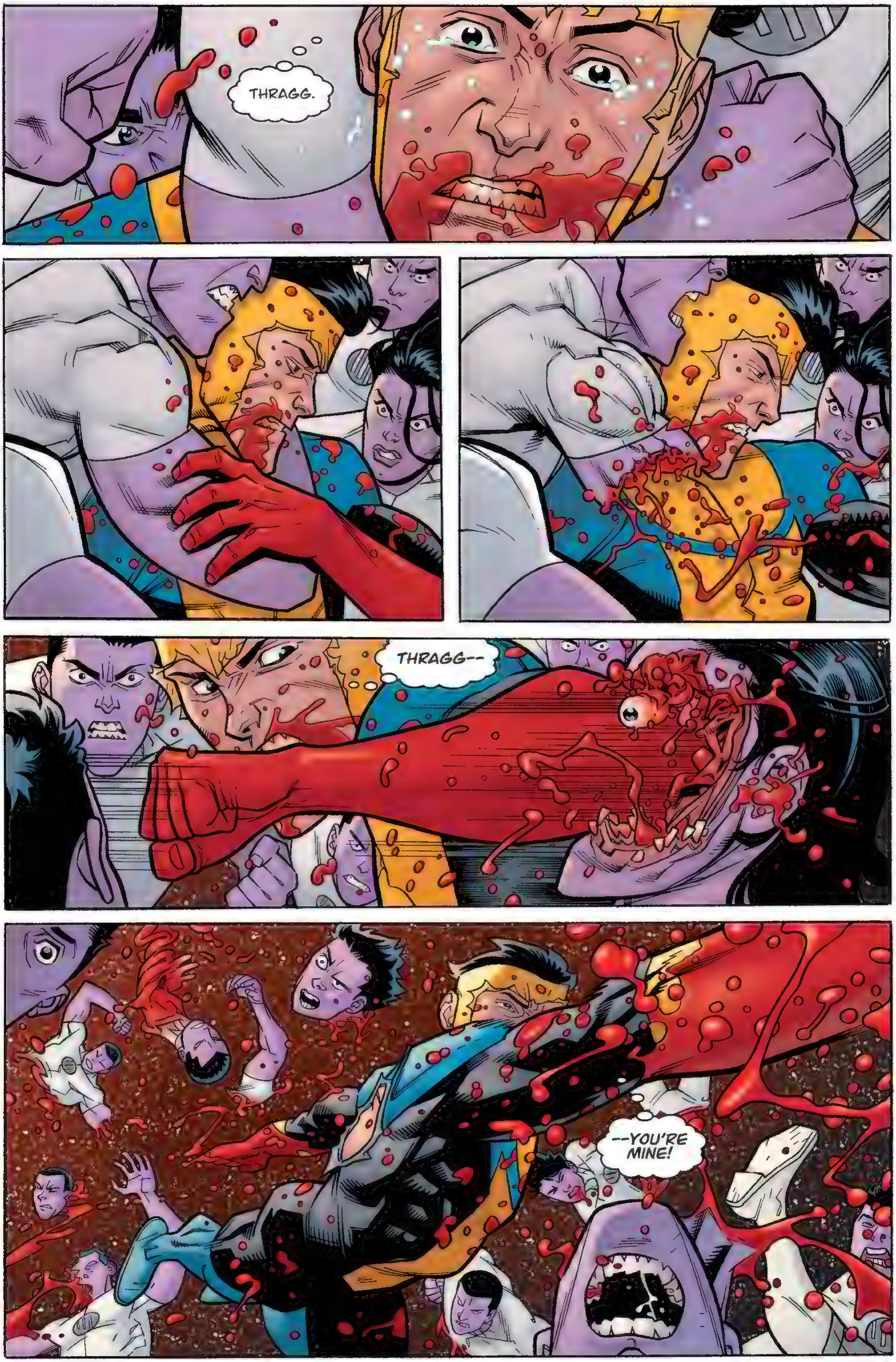

NOW...
...WHERE WERE WE?
WELL DONE.
IN MY ABSENCE, MAYBE YOU *WERE* THE MOST QUALIFIED TO LEAD.
PROBLEM IS, I HAVE NO FURTHER ABSENCES PLANNED.

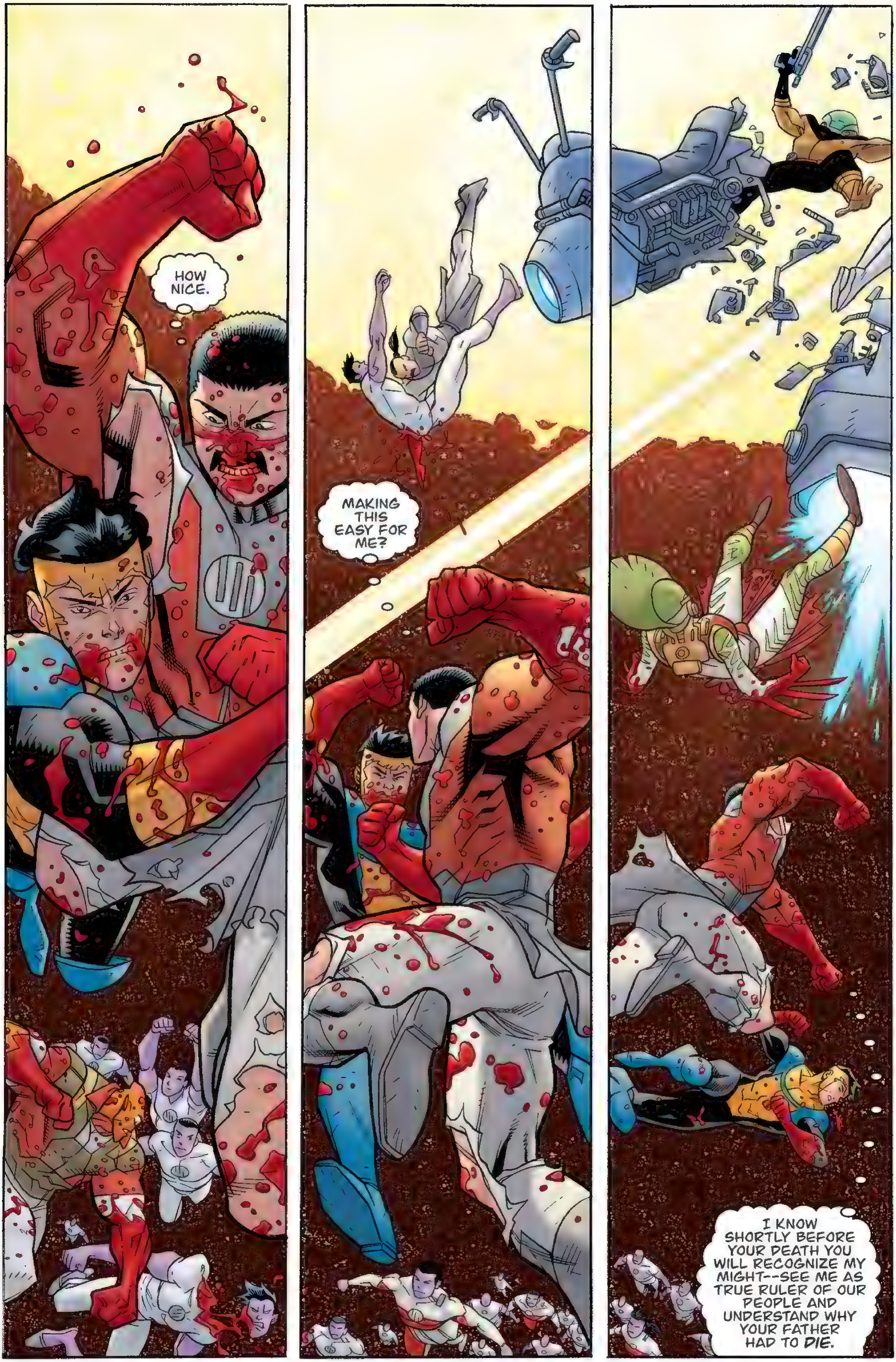
IMPRESSIVE.
MOVED AT THE LAST MINUTE-- PROTECTING YOUR *HEART.* A LESSON YOU SHOULD HAVE TAUGHT YOUR SON...
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN THAT TO--

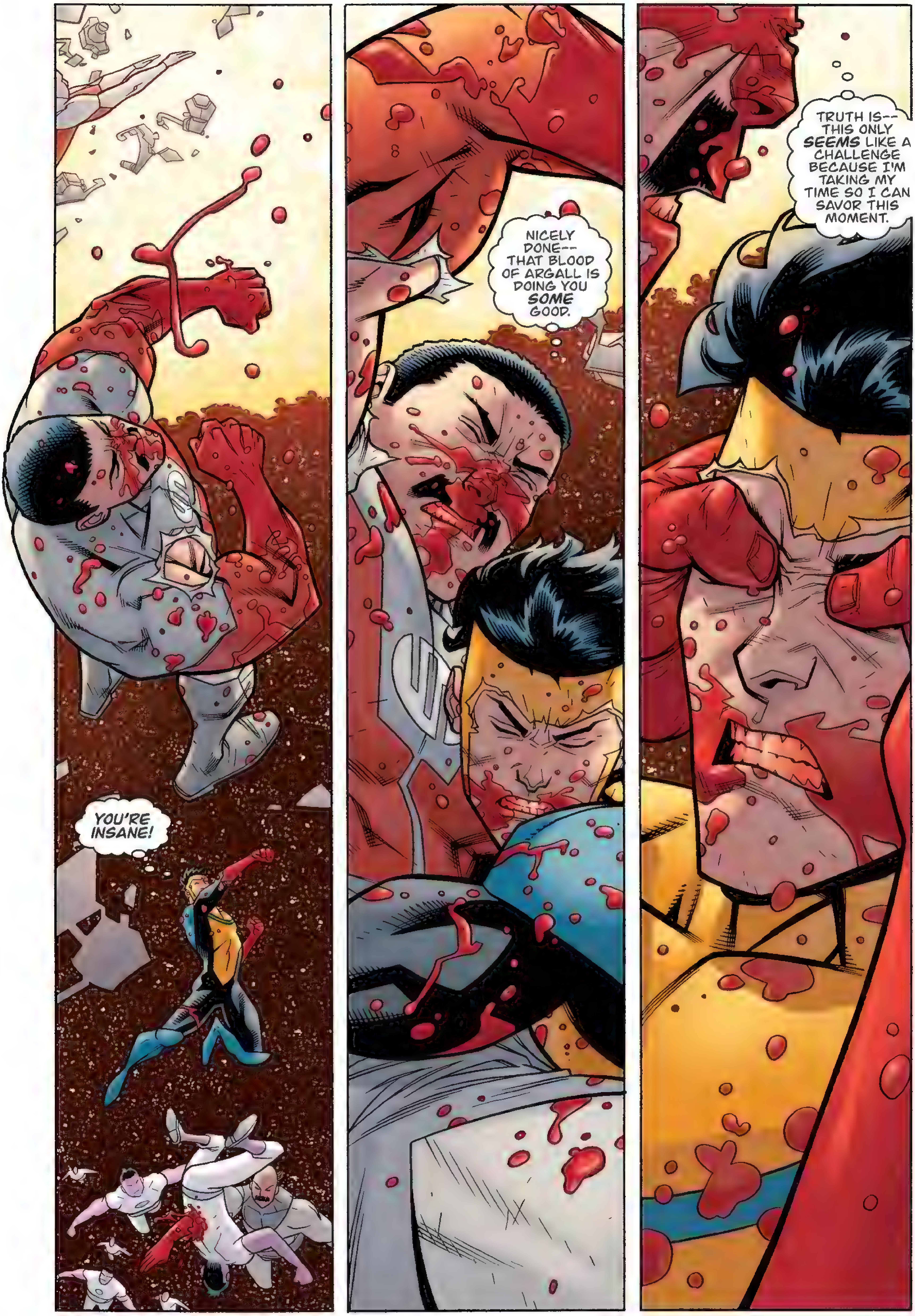
CHAPTER 139


DAD?!
DAD?!
NO.

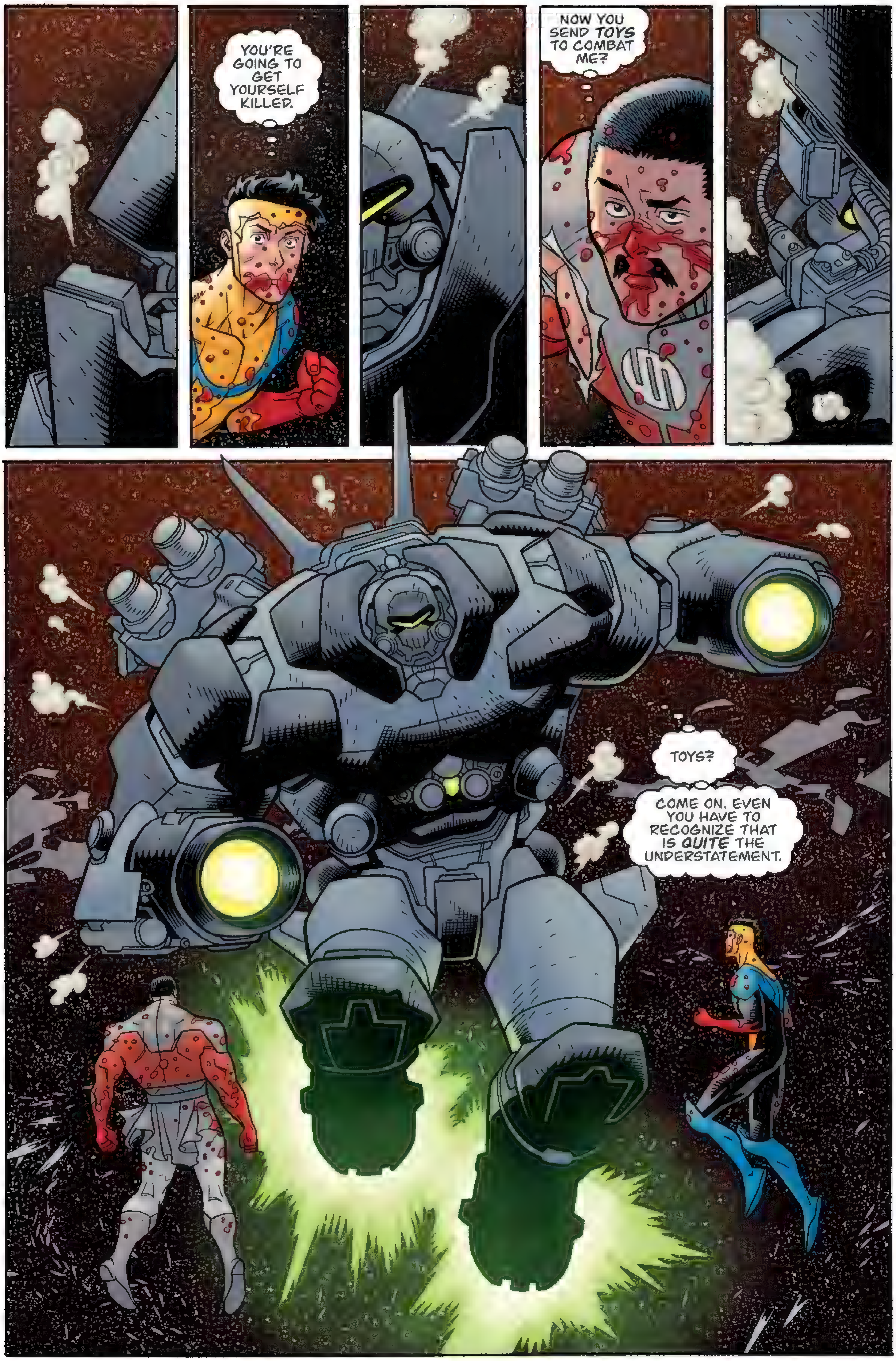
WHAT ARE HIS LIFE SIGNS?!
DO YOU HAVE A READING?!
I'M STILL READING A HEARTBEAT--BUT IT IS FAINT, AND THERE'S NO WAY HIS REMAINS CAN KEEP SENDING OXYGEN TO HIS BRAIN.
HE'LL BE DEAD IN MOMENTS, I'M AFRAID.
READY THE NEAREST AIRLOCK!
YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO--

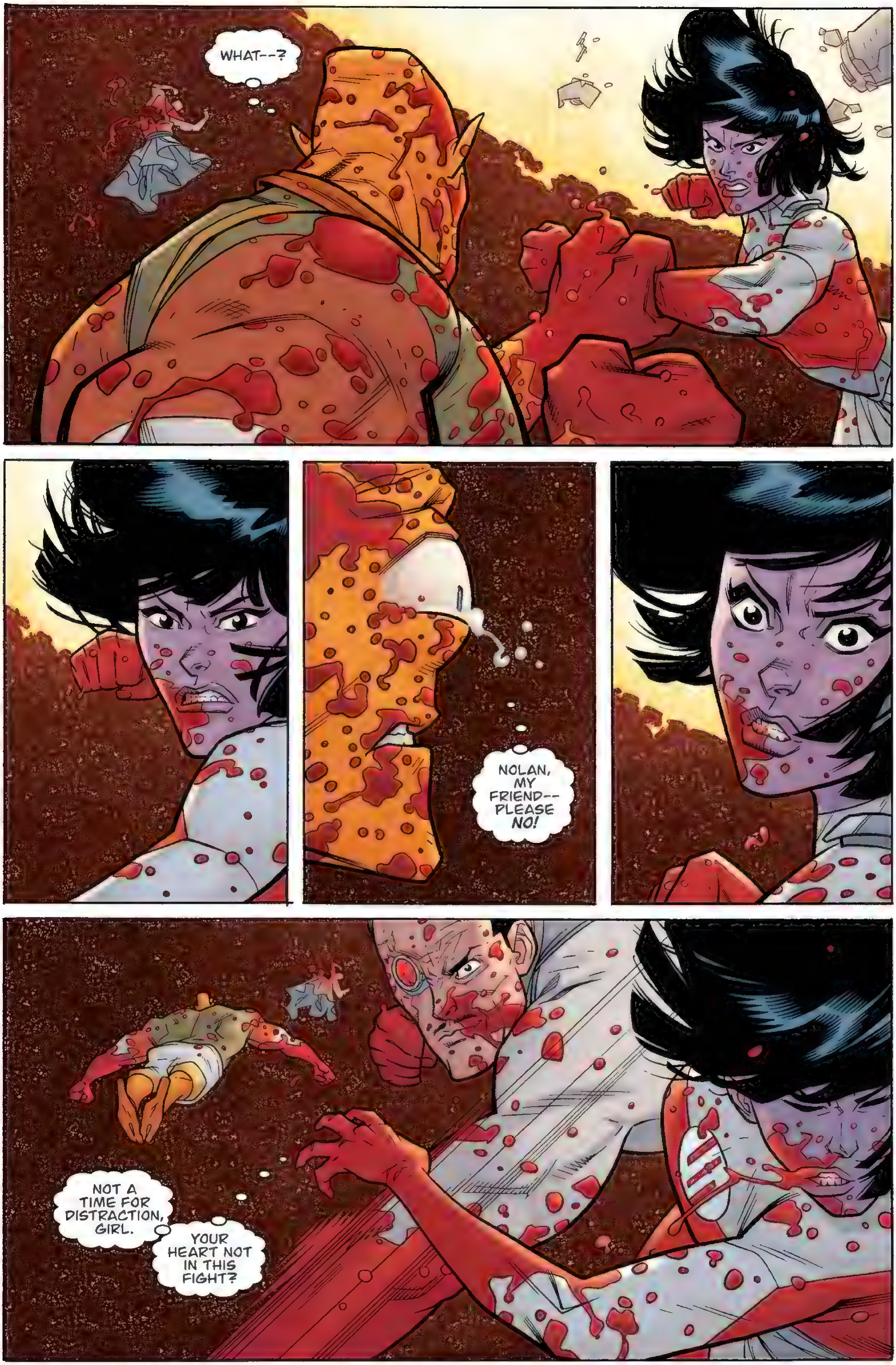

THRAGG.
THRAGG--
--YOU'RE MINE!

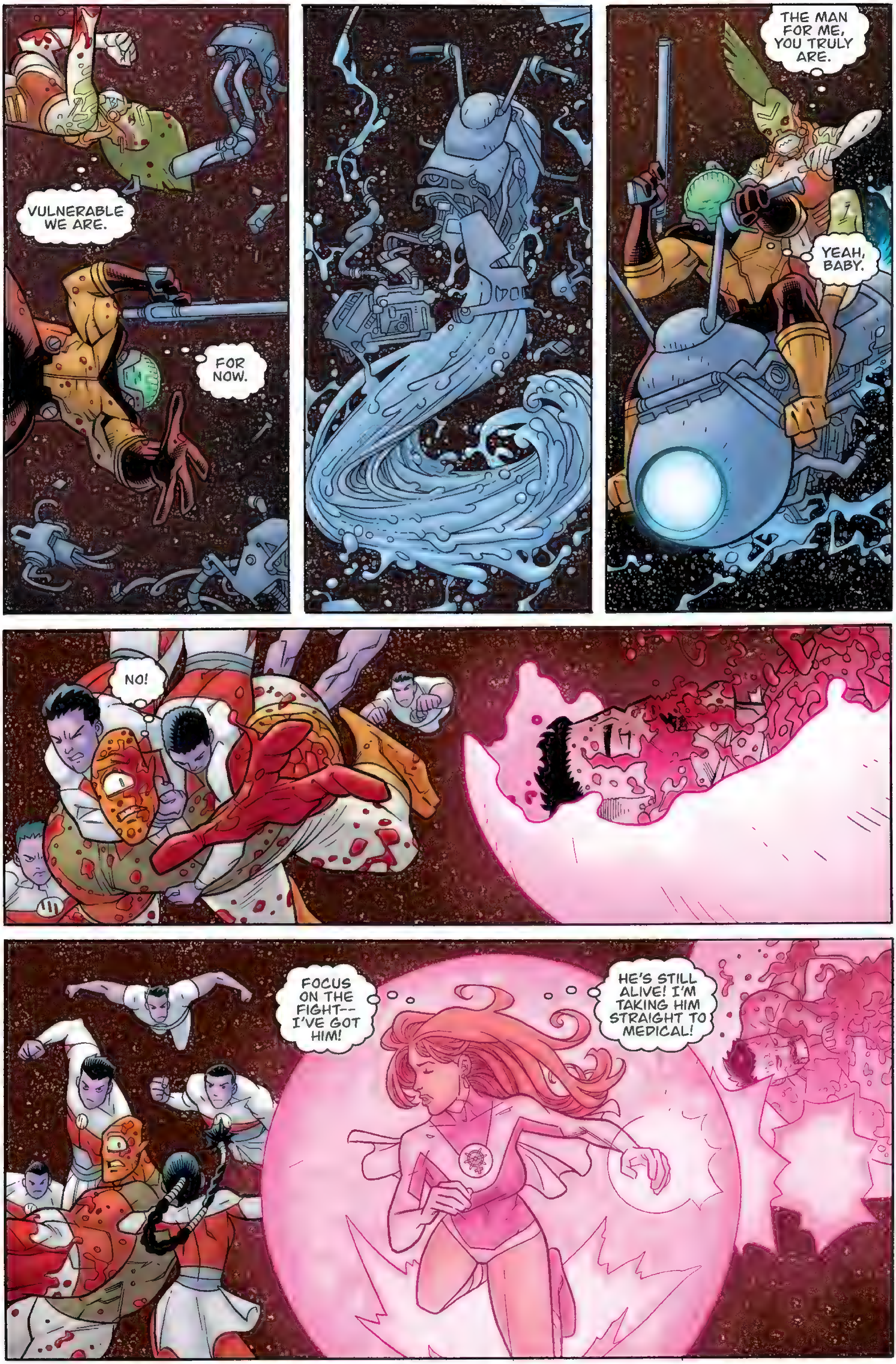

HOW NICE.
MAKING THIS EASY FOR ME?
I KNOW SHORTLY BEFORE YOUR DEATH YOU WILL RECOGNIZE MY MIGHT--SEE ME AS TRUE RULER OF OUR PEOPLE AND UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR FATHER HAD TO ***DIE***.

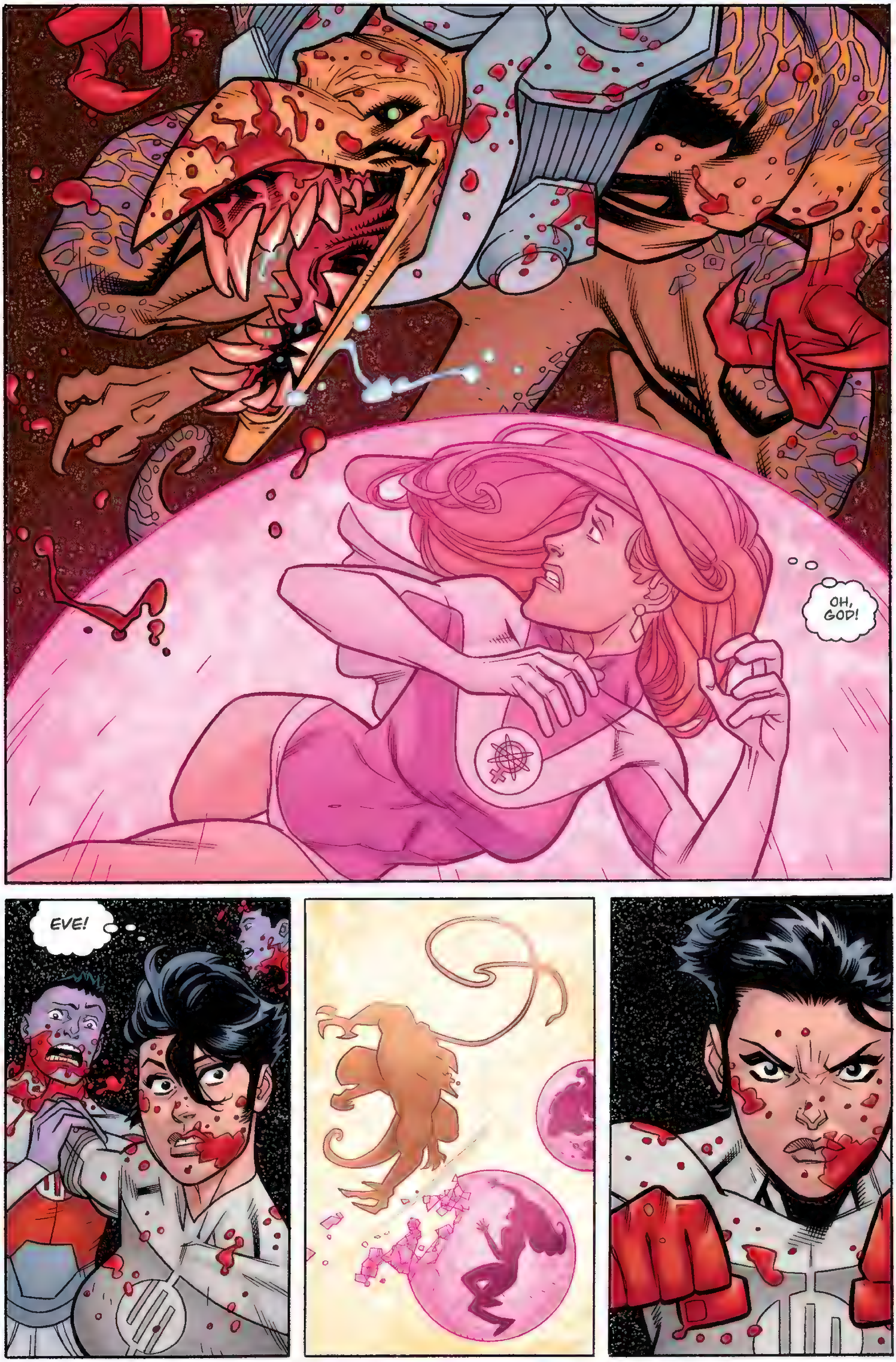

YOU'RE INSANE!
NICELY DONE-- THAT BLOOD OF ARGALL IS DOING YOU **SOME** GOOD.
TRUTH IS-- THIS ONLY **SEEMS** LIKE A CHALLENGE BECAUSE I'M TAKING MY TIME SO I CAN SAVOR THIS MOMENT.

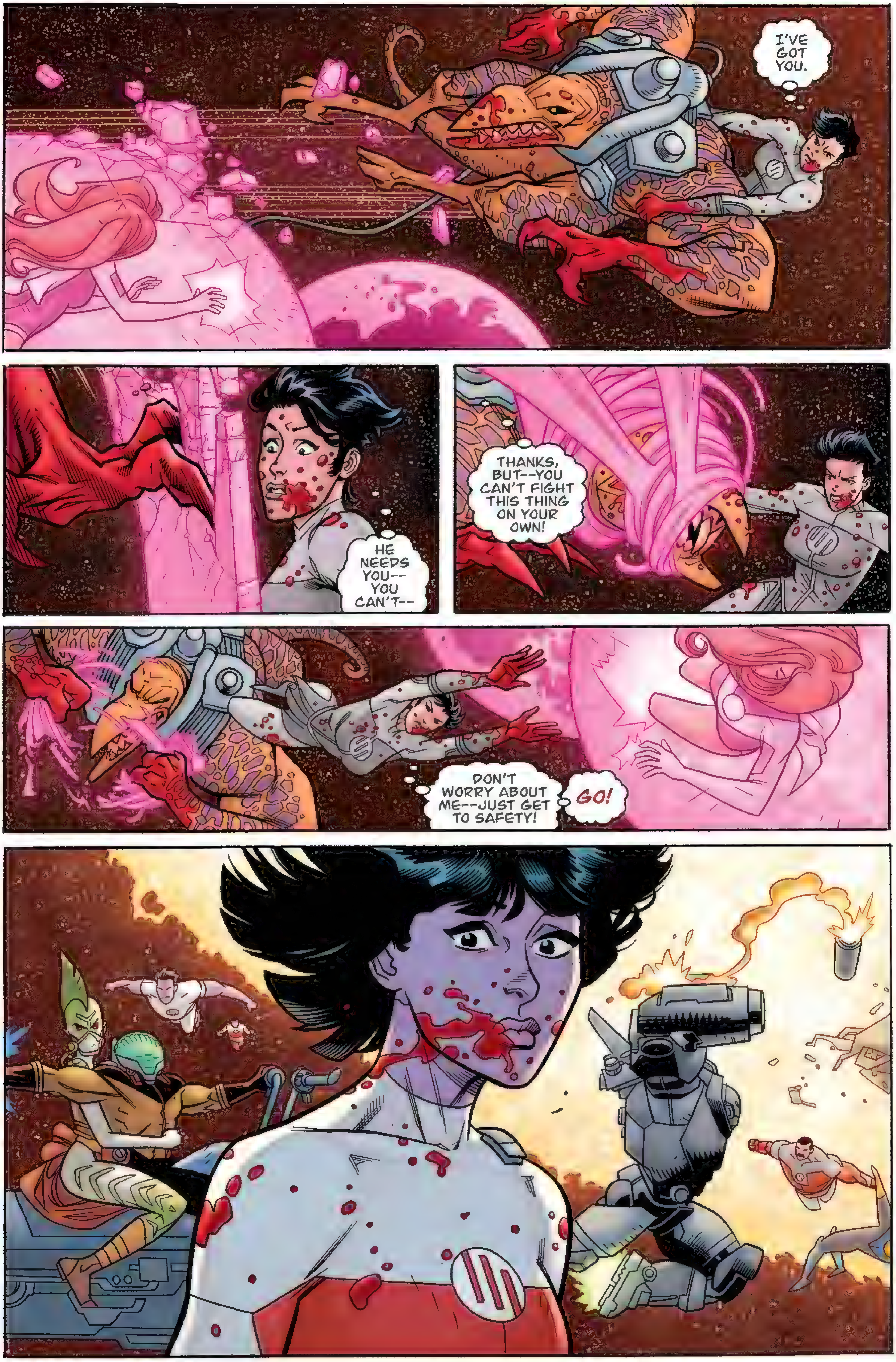
REX?!
JUST BECAUSE WE DISAGREE DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN'T WORK TOGETHER WHEN OUR INTERESTS ARE ALIGNED.

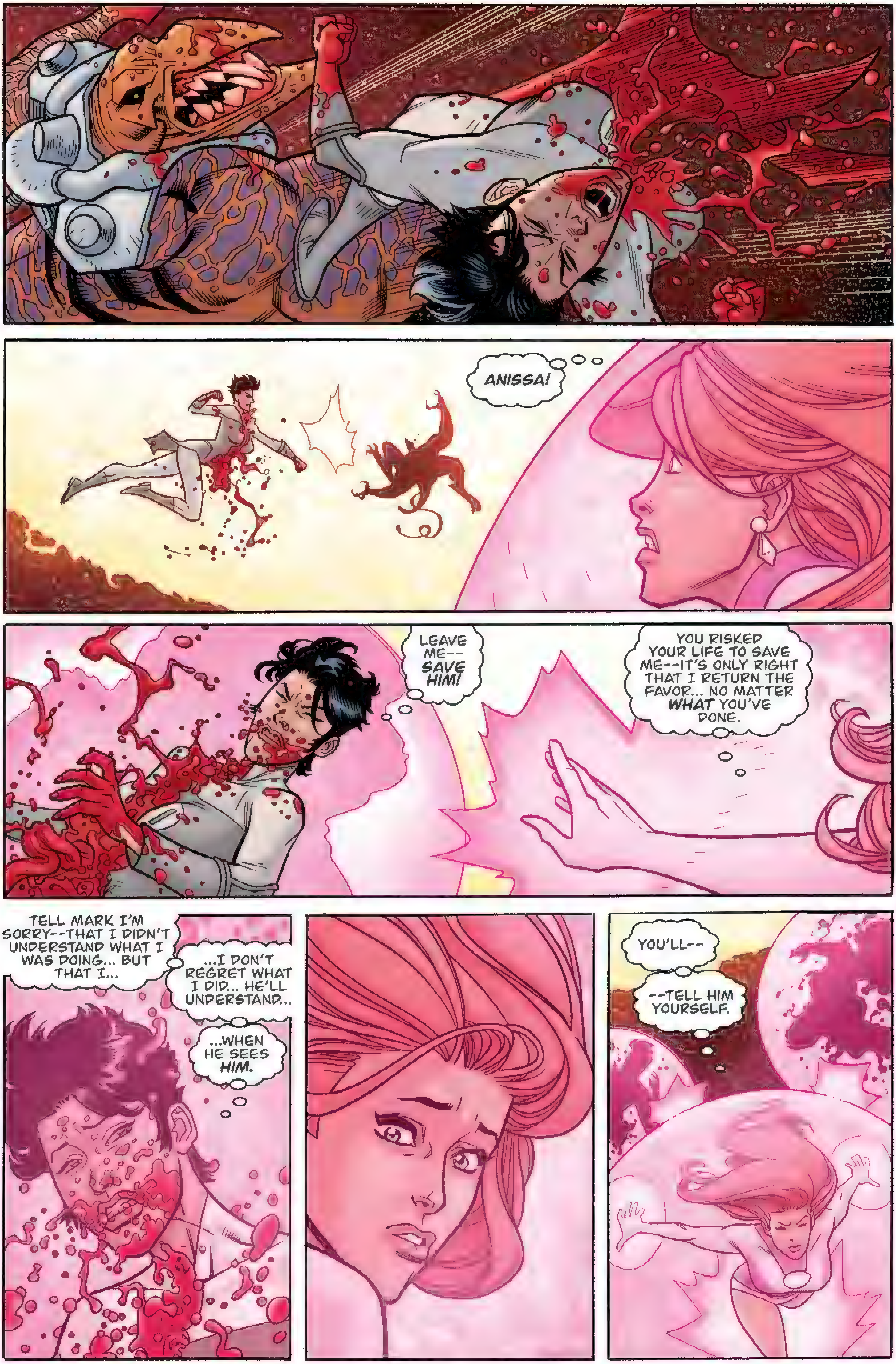

YOU'RE GOING TO GET YOURSELF KILLED.
NOW YOU SEND *TOYS* TO COMBAT ME?
TOYS?
COME ON. EVEN YOU HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT IS *QUITE* THE UNDERSTATEMENT.

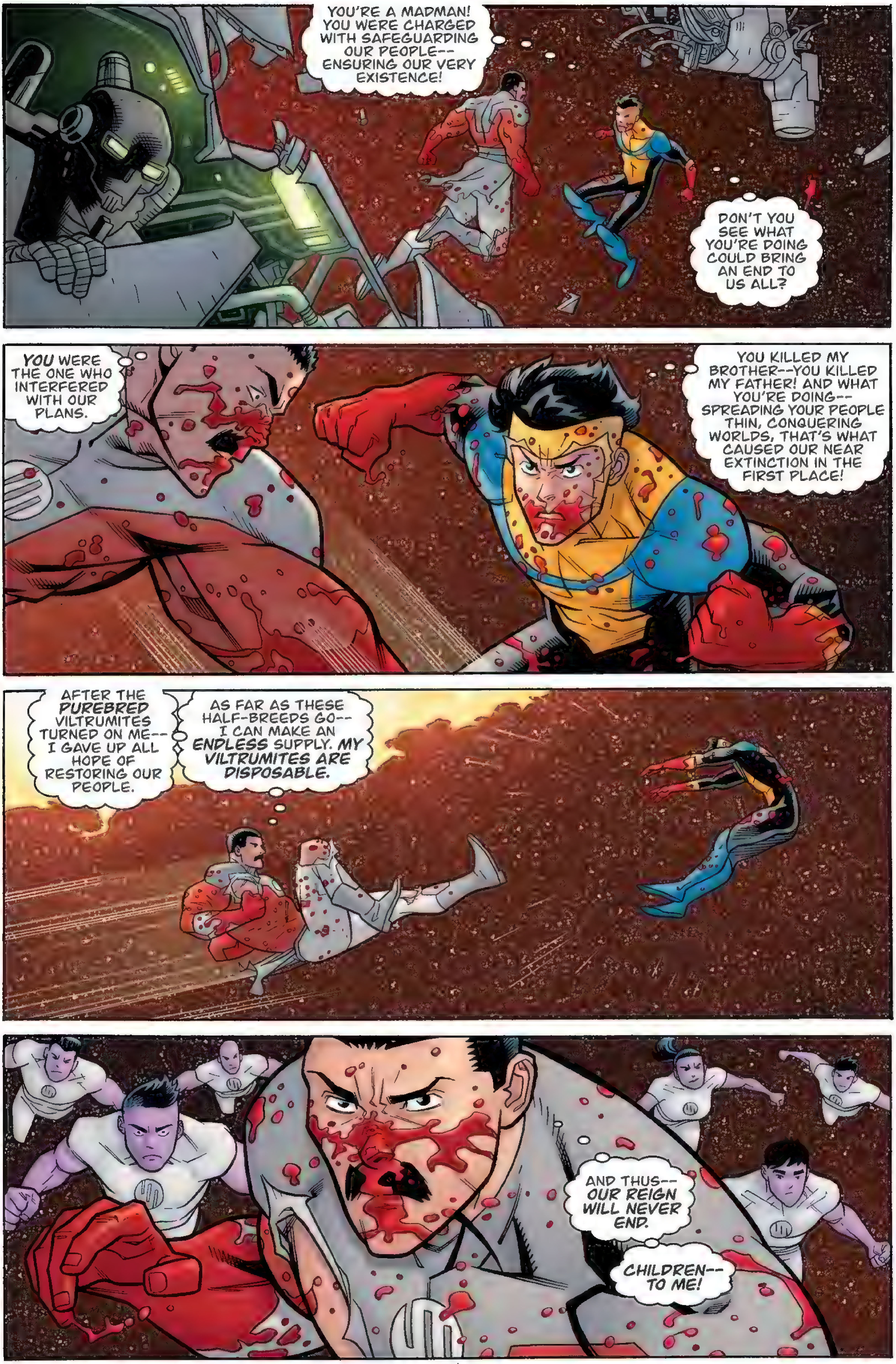

WHAT--?
NOLAN, MY FRIEND-- PLEASE NO!
NOT A TIME FOR DISTRACTION, GIRL.
YOUR HEART NOT IN THIS FIGHT?


VULNERABLE WE ARE.
FOR NOW.
THE MAN FOR ME, YOU TRULY ARE.
YEAH, BABY.
NO!
FOCUS ON THE FIGHT-- I'VE GOT HIM!
HE'S STILL ALIVE! I'M TAKING HIM STRAIGHT TO MEDICAL!

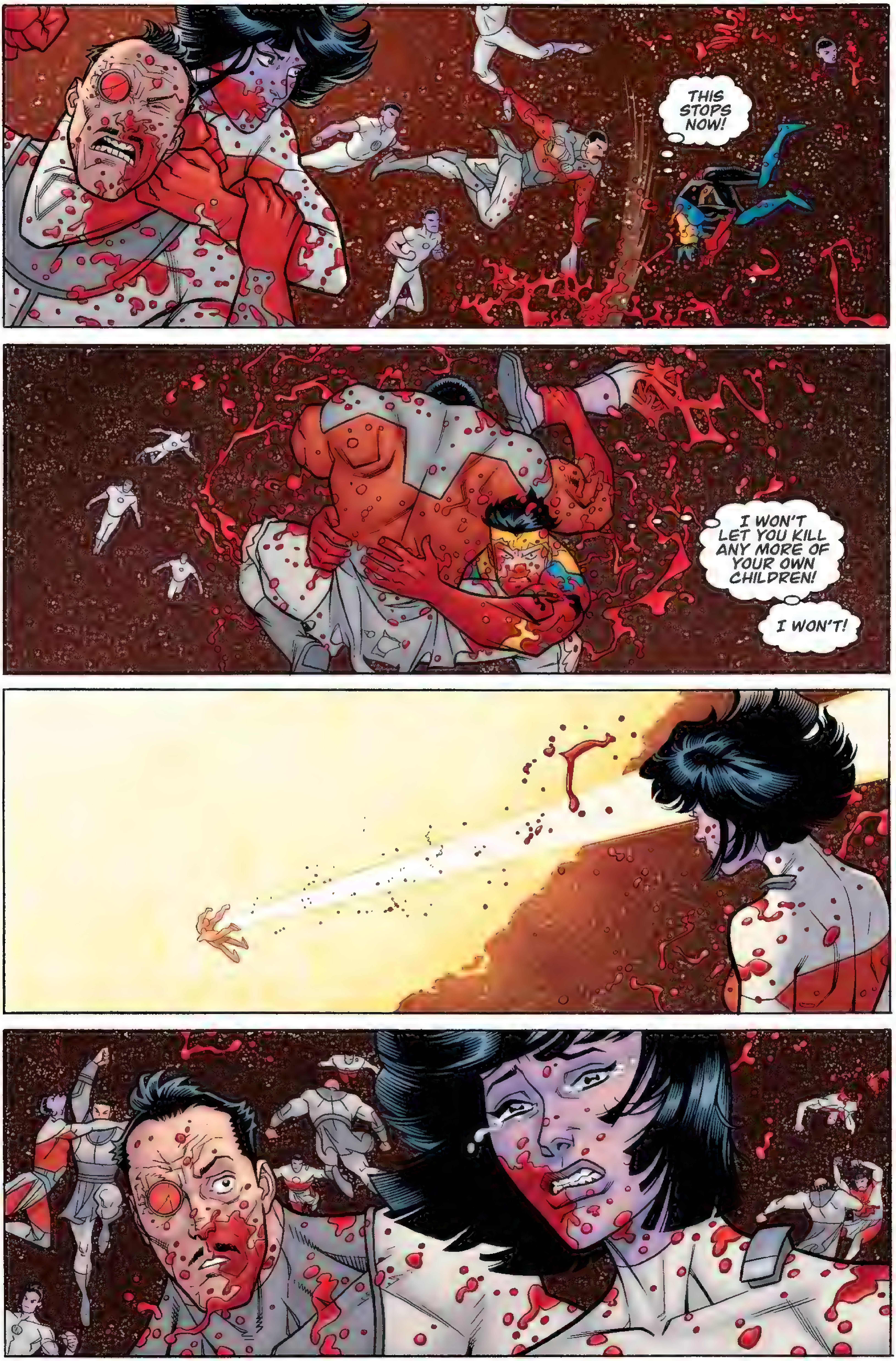

OH, GOD!
EVE!

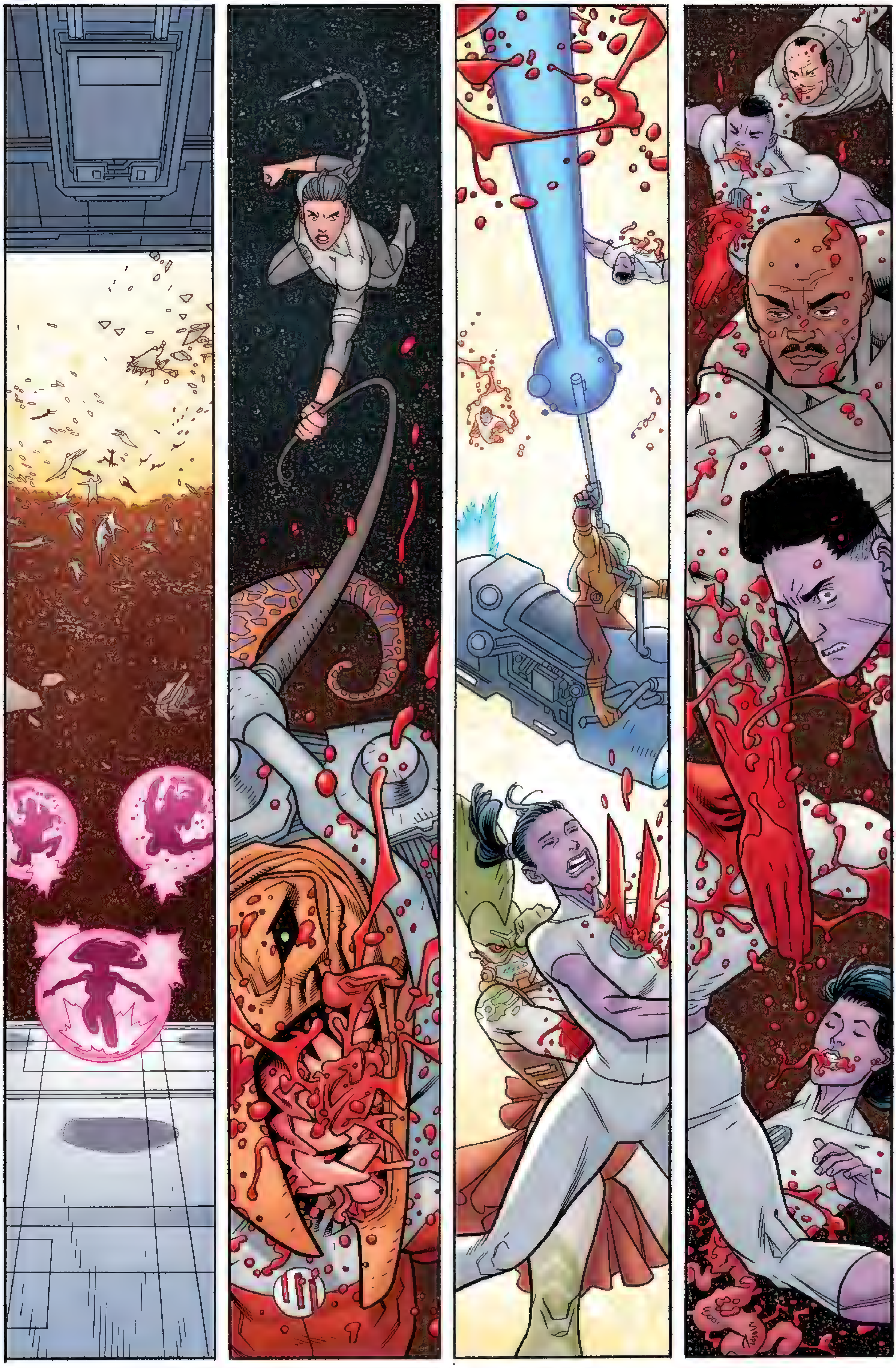

I'VE GOT YOU.
HE NEEDS YOU-- YOU CAN'T--
THANKS, BUT--YOU CAN'T FIGHT THIS THING ON YOUR OWN!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME--JUST GET TO SAFETY!
GO!

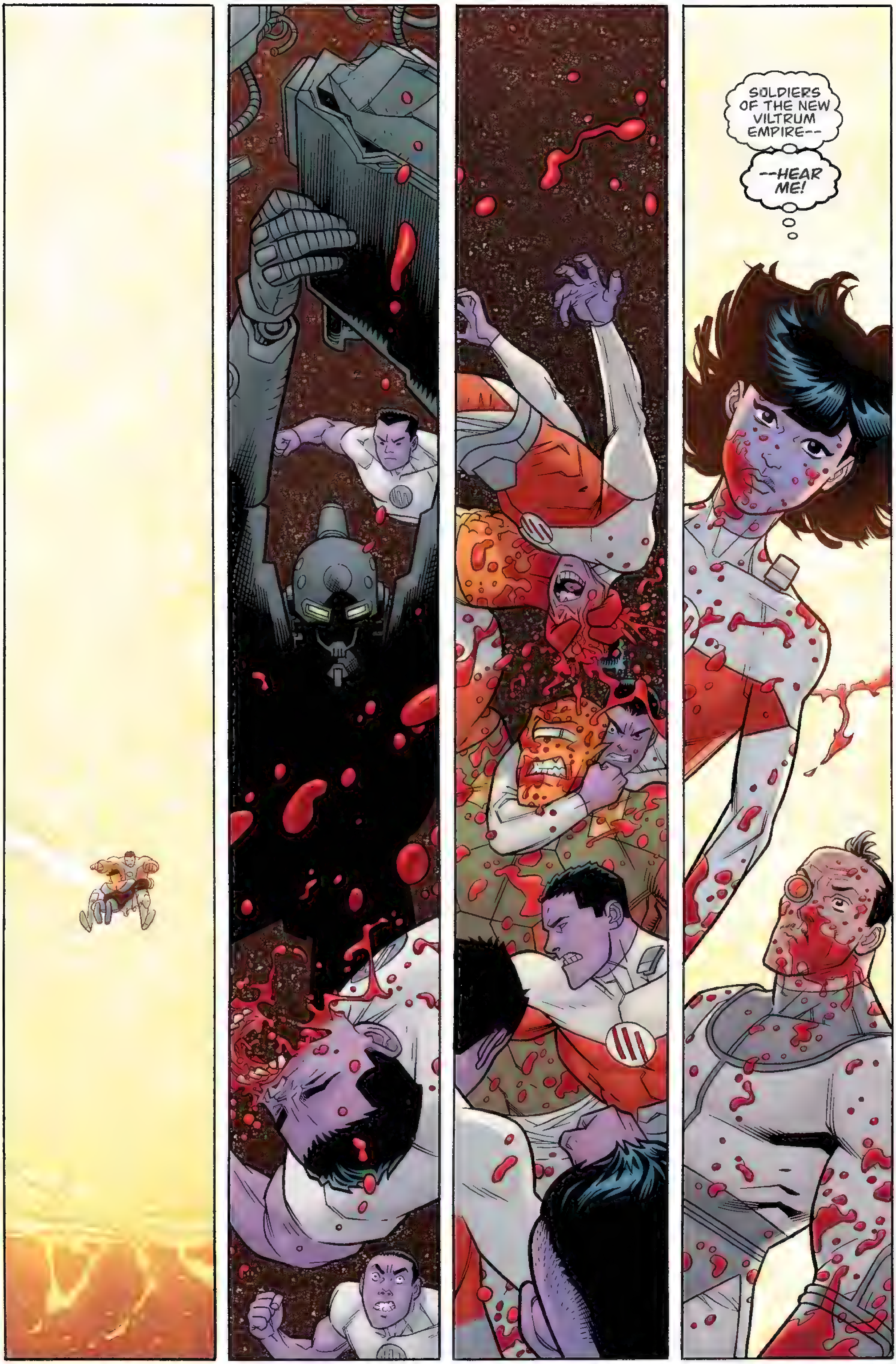

ANISSA!
LEAVE ME-- SAVE HIM!
YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE TO SAVE ME--IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT I RETURN THE FAVOR... NO MATTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
TELL MARK I'M SORRY--THAT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I WAS DOING... BUT THAT I...
...I DON'T REGRET WHAT I DID... HE'LL UNDERSTAND...
...WHEN HE SEES HIM.
YOU'LL--
--TELL HIM YOURSELF.

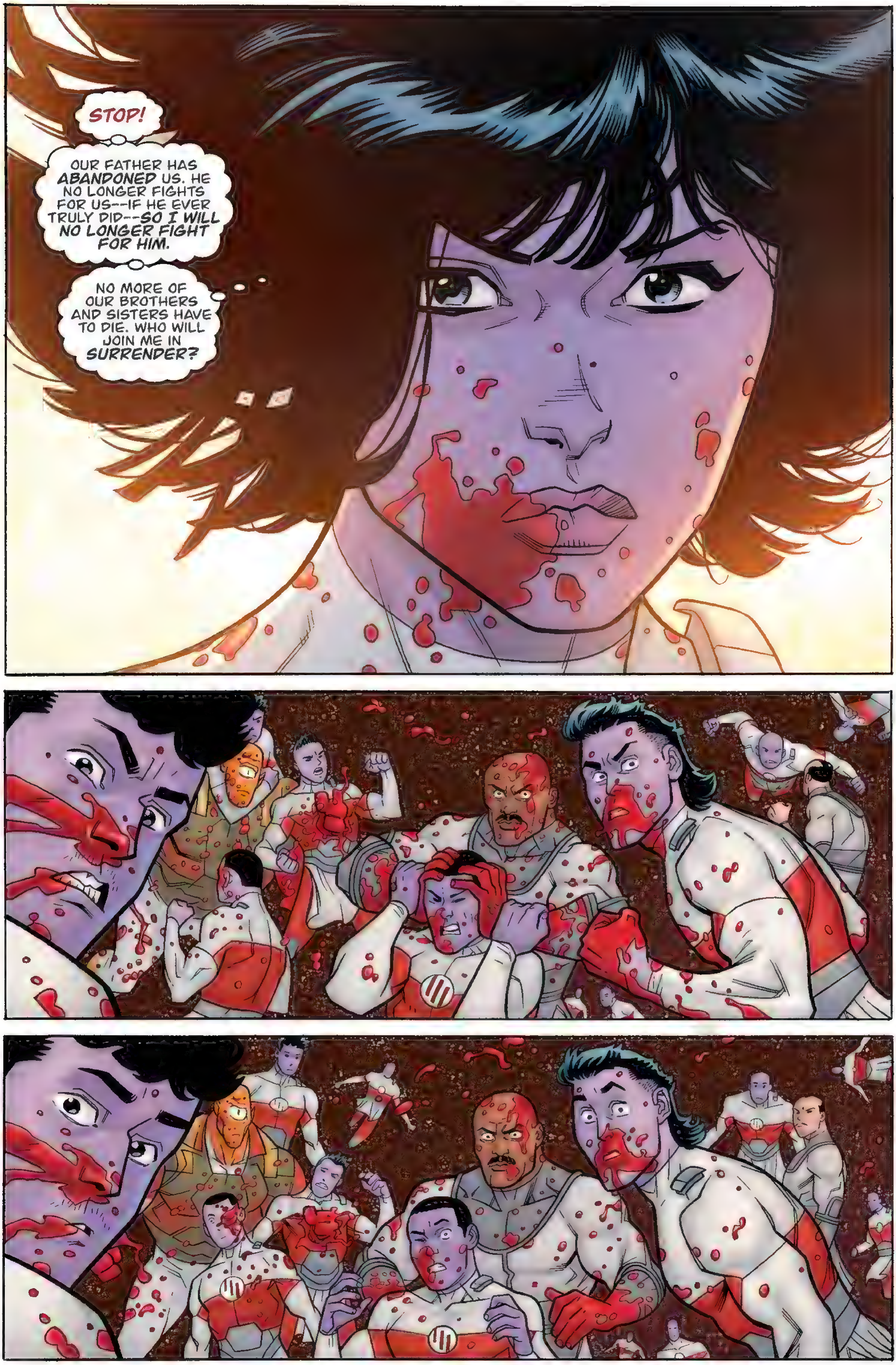

YOU'RE A MADMAN! YOU WERE CHARGED WITH SAFEGUARDING OUR PEOPLE-- ENSURING OUR VERY EXISTENCE!
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING COULD BRING AN END TO US ALL?
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO INTERFERED WITH OUR PLANS.
YOU KILLED MY BROTHER--YOU KILLED MY FATHER! AND WHAT YOU'RE DOING-- SPREADING YOUR PEOPLE THIN, CONQUERING WORLDS, THAT'S WHAT CAUSED OUR NEAR EXTINCTION IN THE FIRST PLACE!
AFTER THE *PUREBRED* VILTRUMITES TURNED ON ME-- I GAVE UP ALL HOPE OF RESTORING OUR PEOPLE.
AS FAR AS THESE HALF-BREEDS GO-- I CAN MAKE AN *ENDLESS* SUPPLY. *MY VILTRUMITES ARE DISPOSABLE.*
AND THUS-- *OUR REIGN WILL NEVER END.*
CHILDREN-- TO ME!

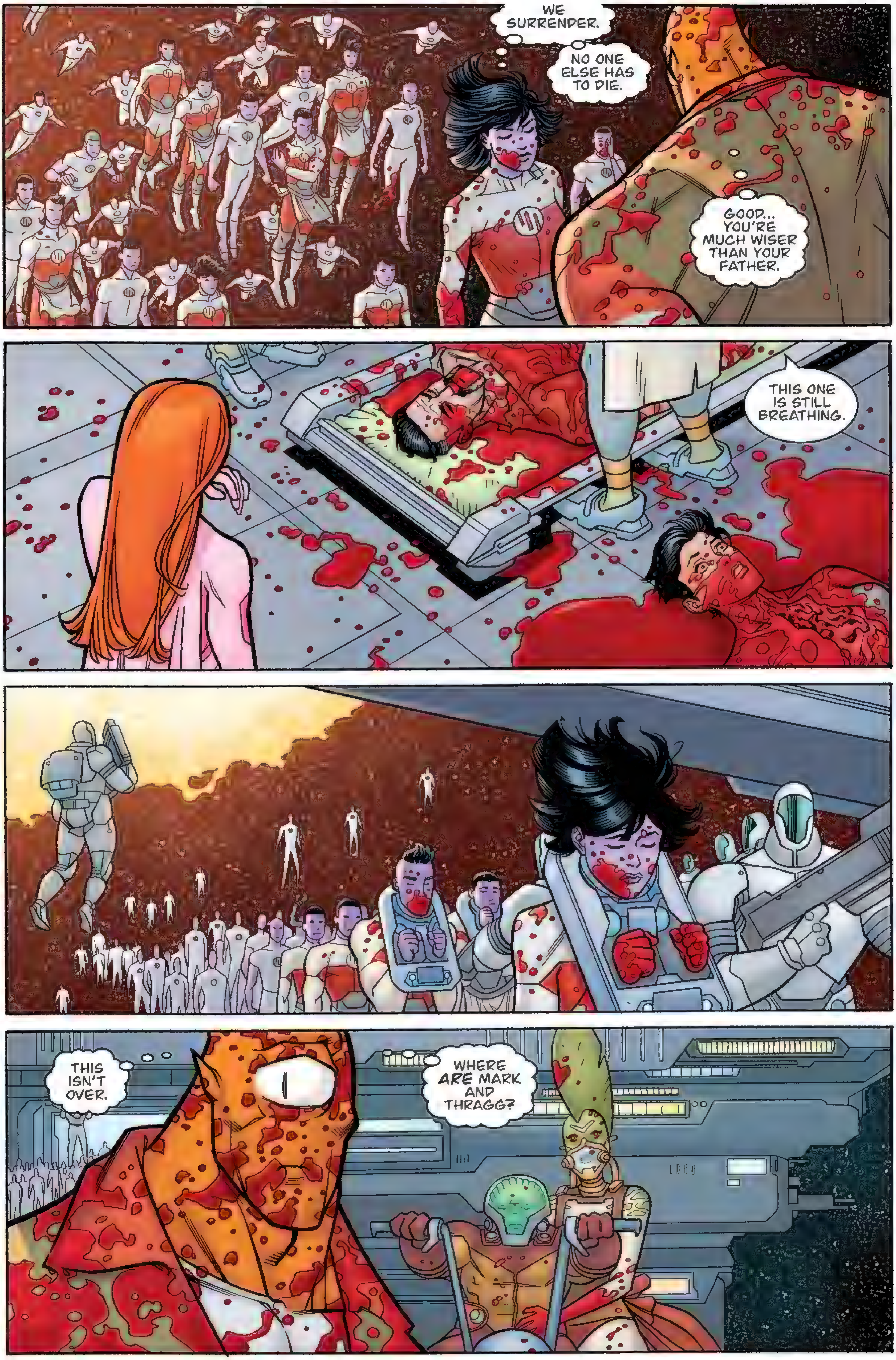
YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE THOSE LOWER THAN YOU ARE FODDER TO BE USED AS YOU PLEASE!
LOOK AT THEM!
WEAK.
USELESS.
THE VILTRUM EMPIRE IS ALREADY DEAD.
YOU JUST WON'T ADMIT IT.
NO!


THIS STOPS NOW!
I WON'T LET YOU KILL ANY MORE OF YOUR OWN CHILDREN!
I WON'T!

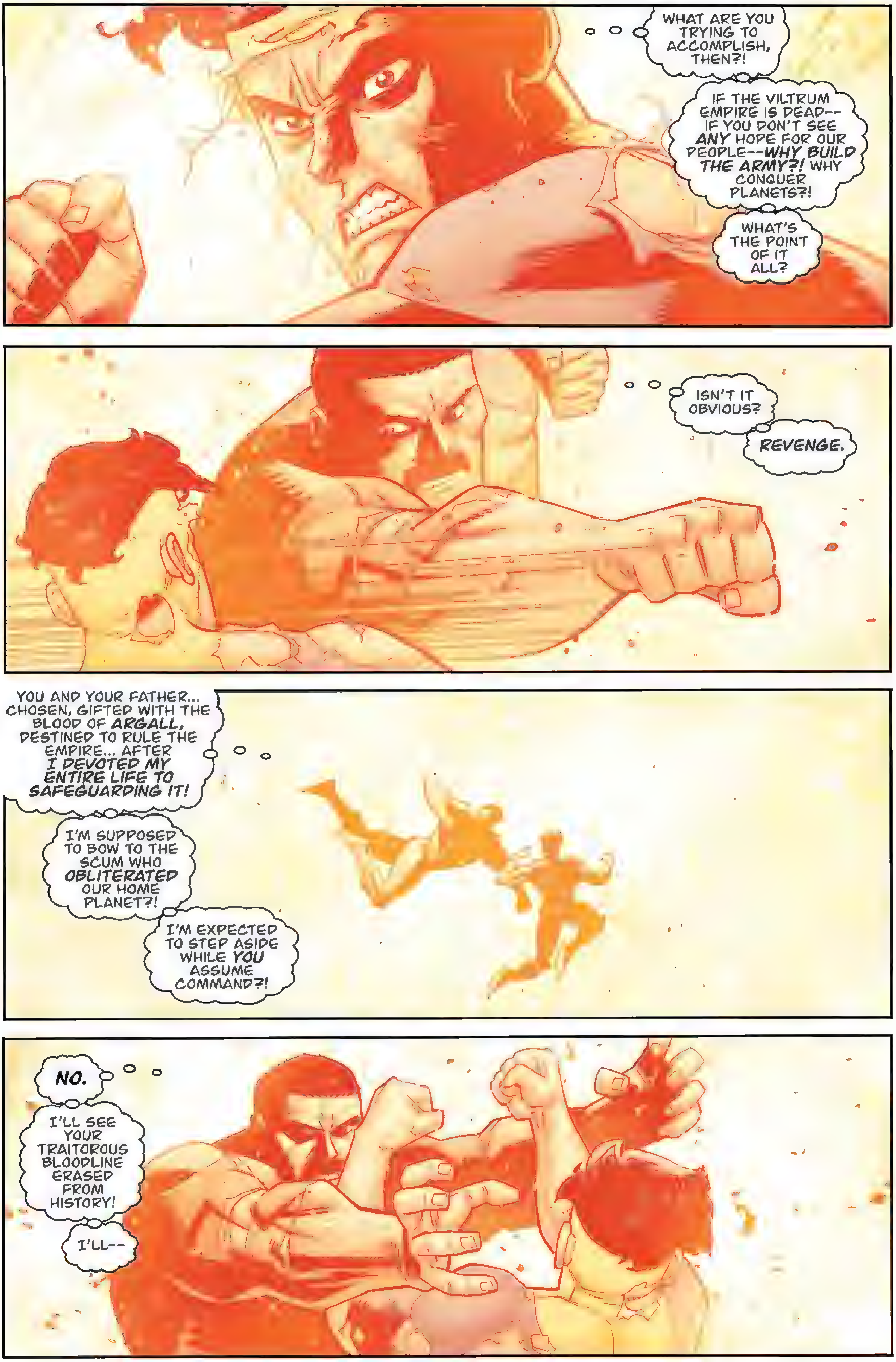


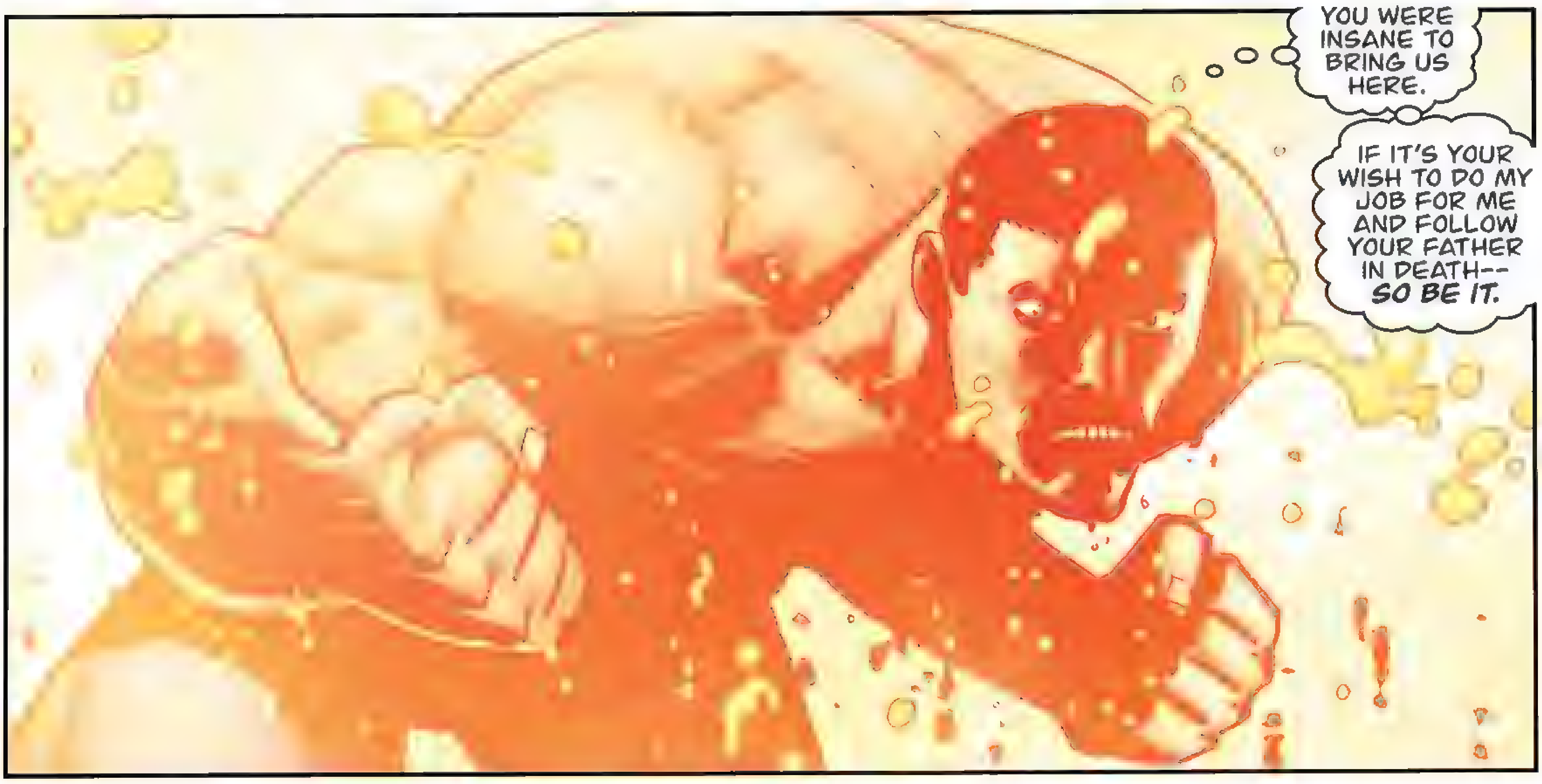

SOLDIERS OF THE NEW VILTRUM EMPIRE--
--HEAR ME!

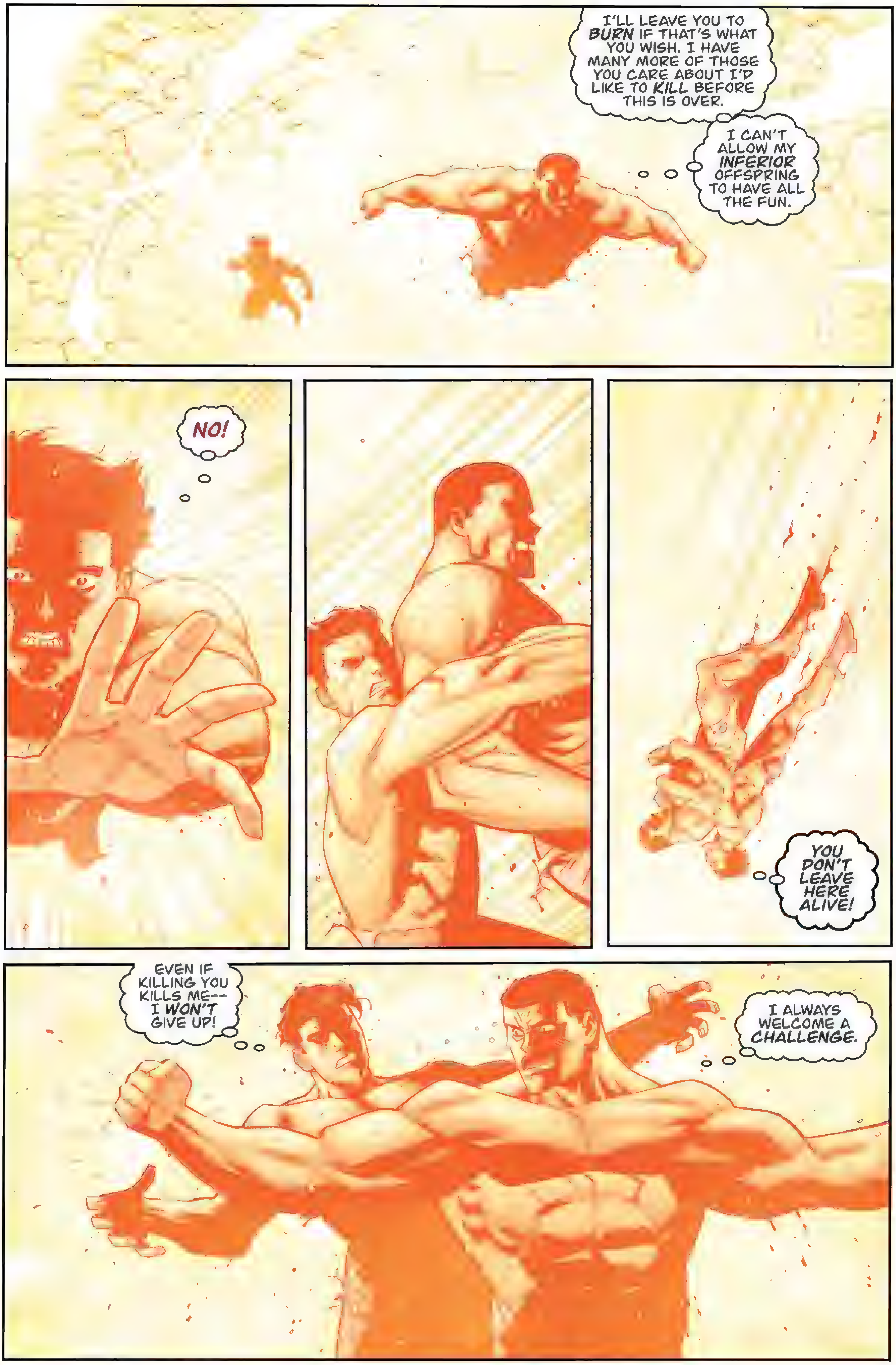

STOP!
OUR FATHER HAS ABANDONED US. HE NO LONGER FIGHTS FOR US--IF HE EVER TRULY DID--SO I WILL NO LONGER FIGHT FOR HIM.
NO MORE OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAVE TO DIE. WHO WILL JOIN ME IN SURRENDER?

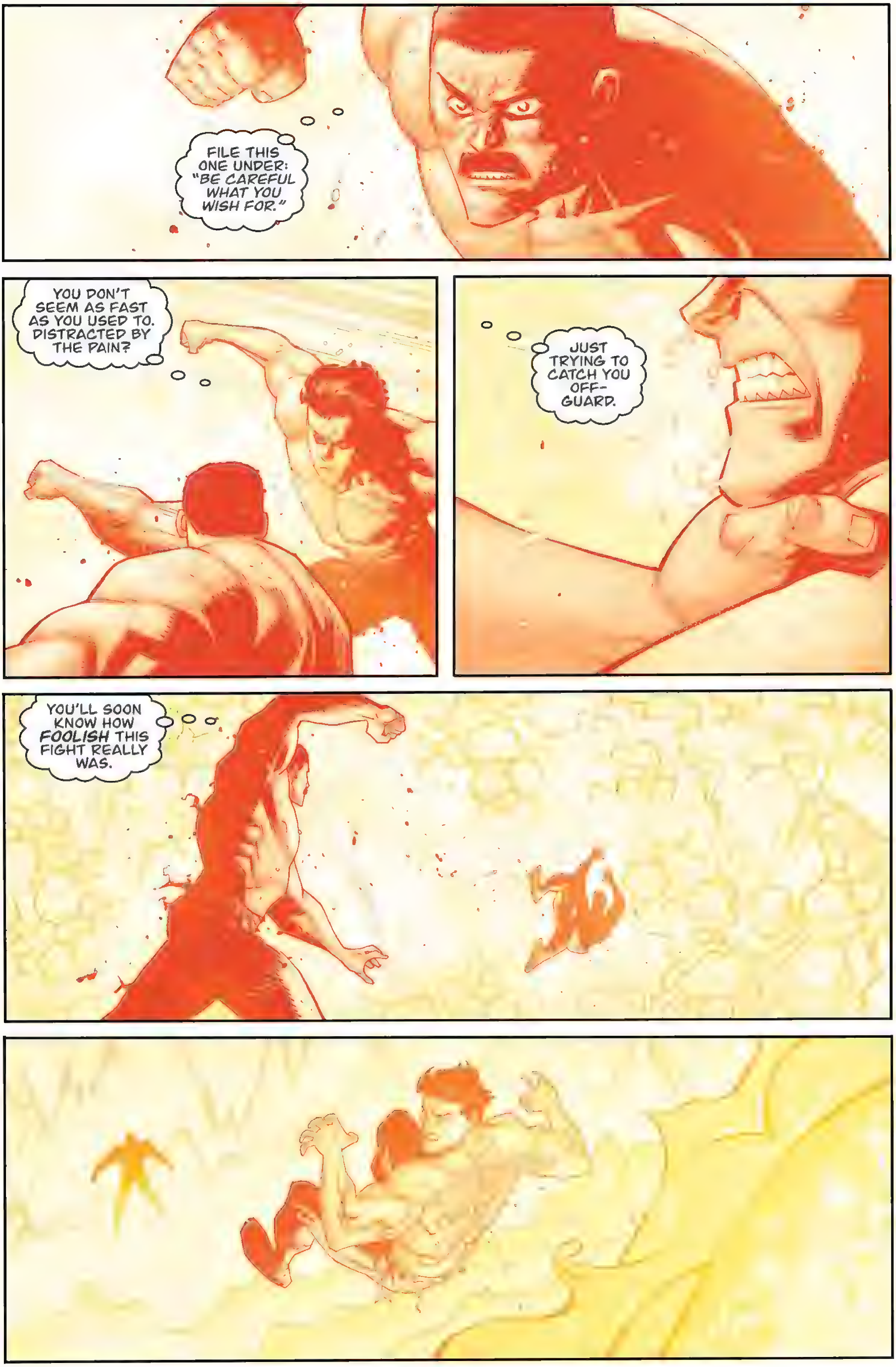

WE SURRENDER.
NO ONE ELSE HAS TO DIE.
GOOD... YOU'RE MUCH WISER THAN YOUR FATHER.
THIS ONE IS STILL BREATHING.
THIS ISN'T OVER.
WHERE **ARE** MARK AND THRAGG?

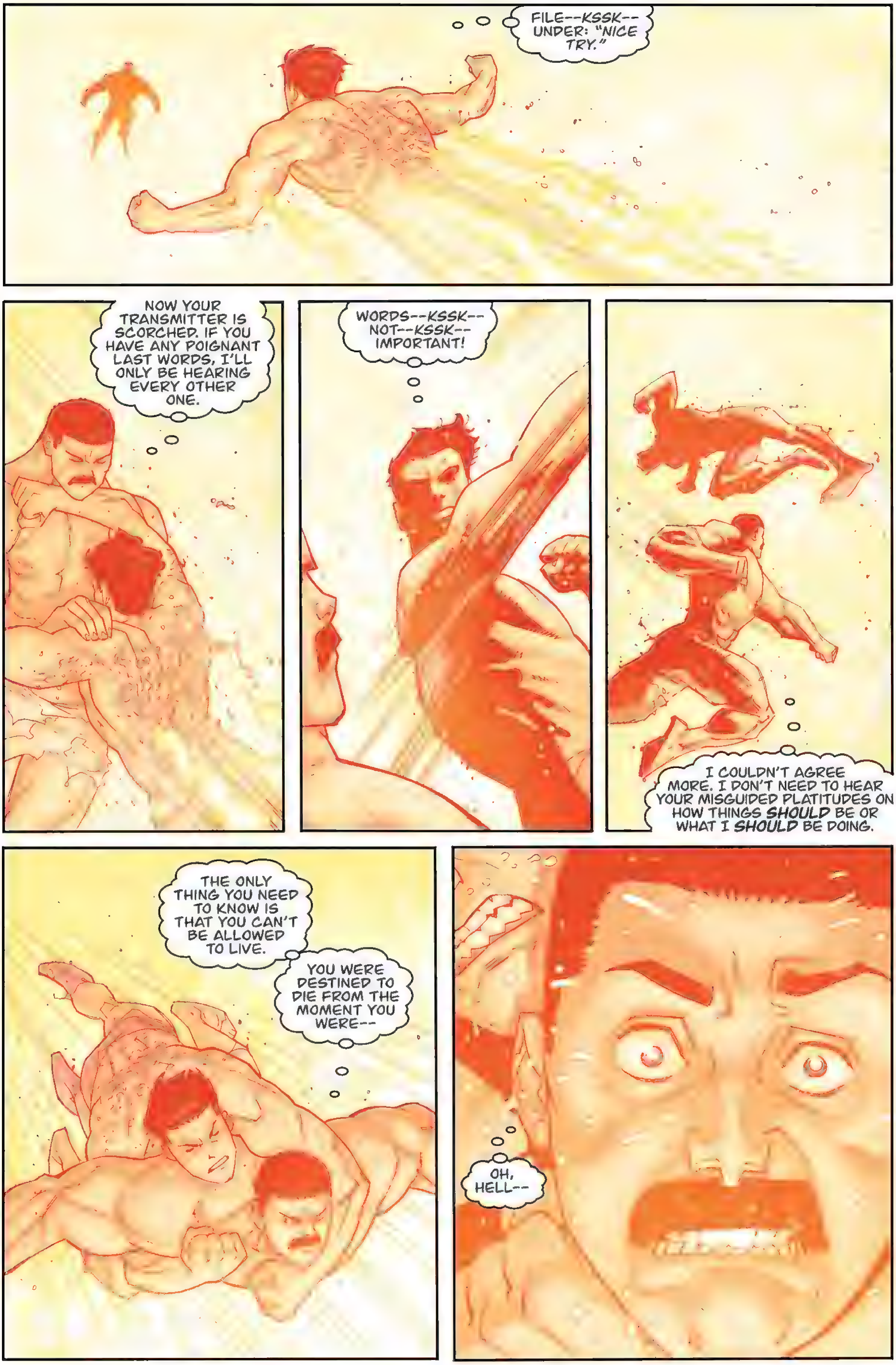
CHAPTER 140

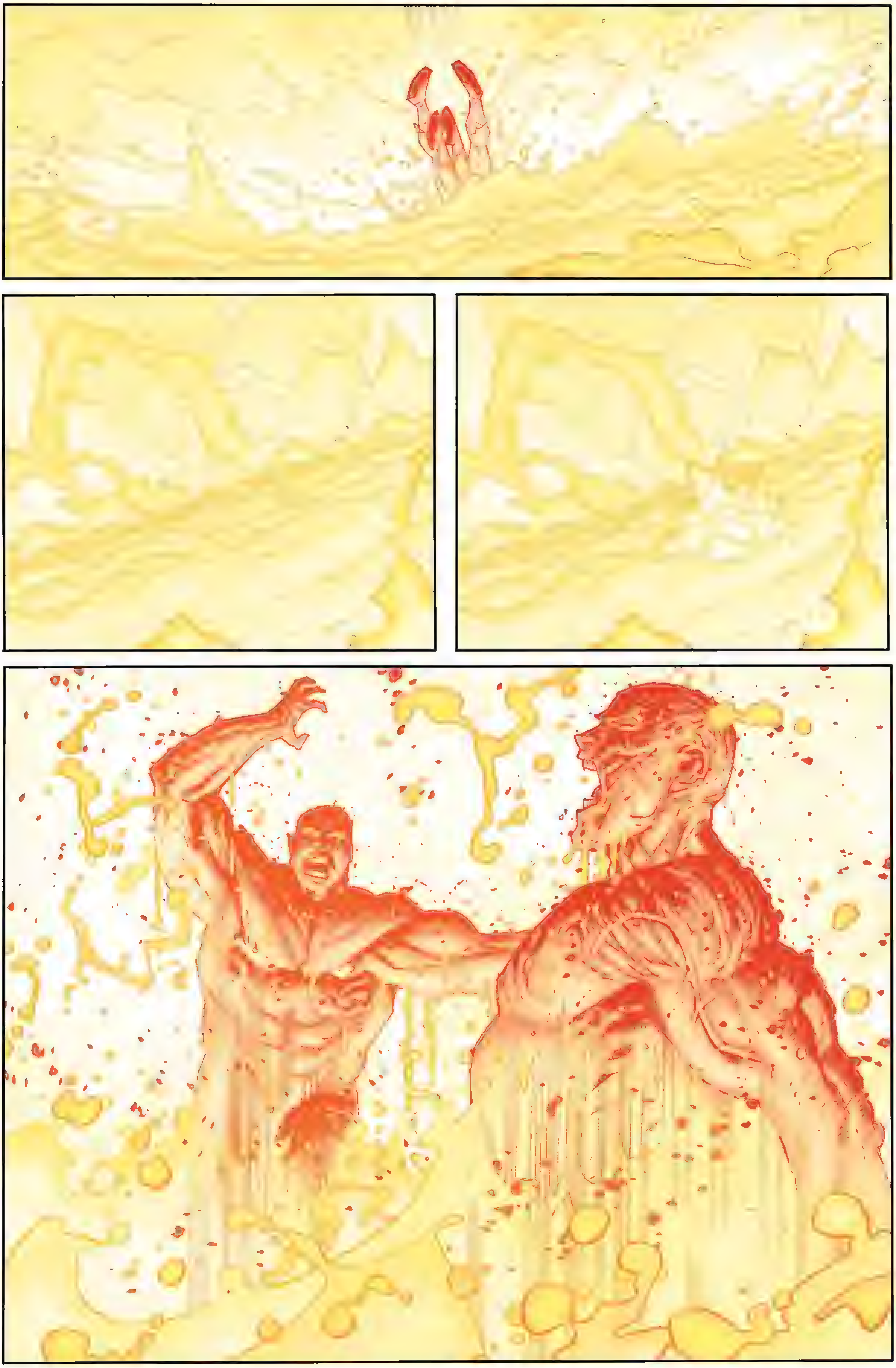

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH, THEN?!
IF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE IS DEAD-- IF YOU DON'T SEE **ANY** HOPE FOR OUR PEOPLE--**WHY BUILD THE ARMY?!** WHY CONQUER PLANETS?!
WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT ALL?
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
REVENGE.
YOU AND YOUR FATHER... CHOSEN, GIFTED WITH THE BLOOD OF **ARGALL,** DESTINED TO RULE THE EMPIRE... AFTER ***I DEVOTED MY ENTIRE LIFE TO SAFEGUARDING IT!***
I'M SUPPOSED TO BOW TO THE SCUM WHO **OBLITERATED** OUR HOME PLANET?!
I'M EXPECTED TO STEP ASIDE WHILE ***YOU*** ASSUME COMMAND?!
NO.
I'LL SEE YOUR TRAITOROUS BLOODLINE ERASED FROM HISTORY!
I'LL--

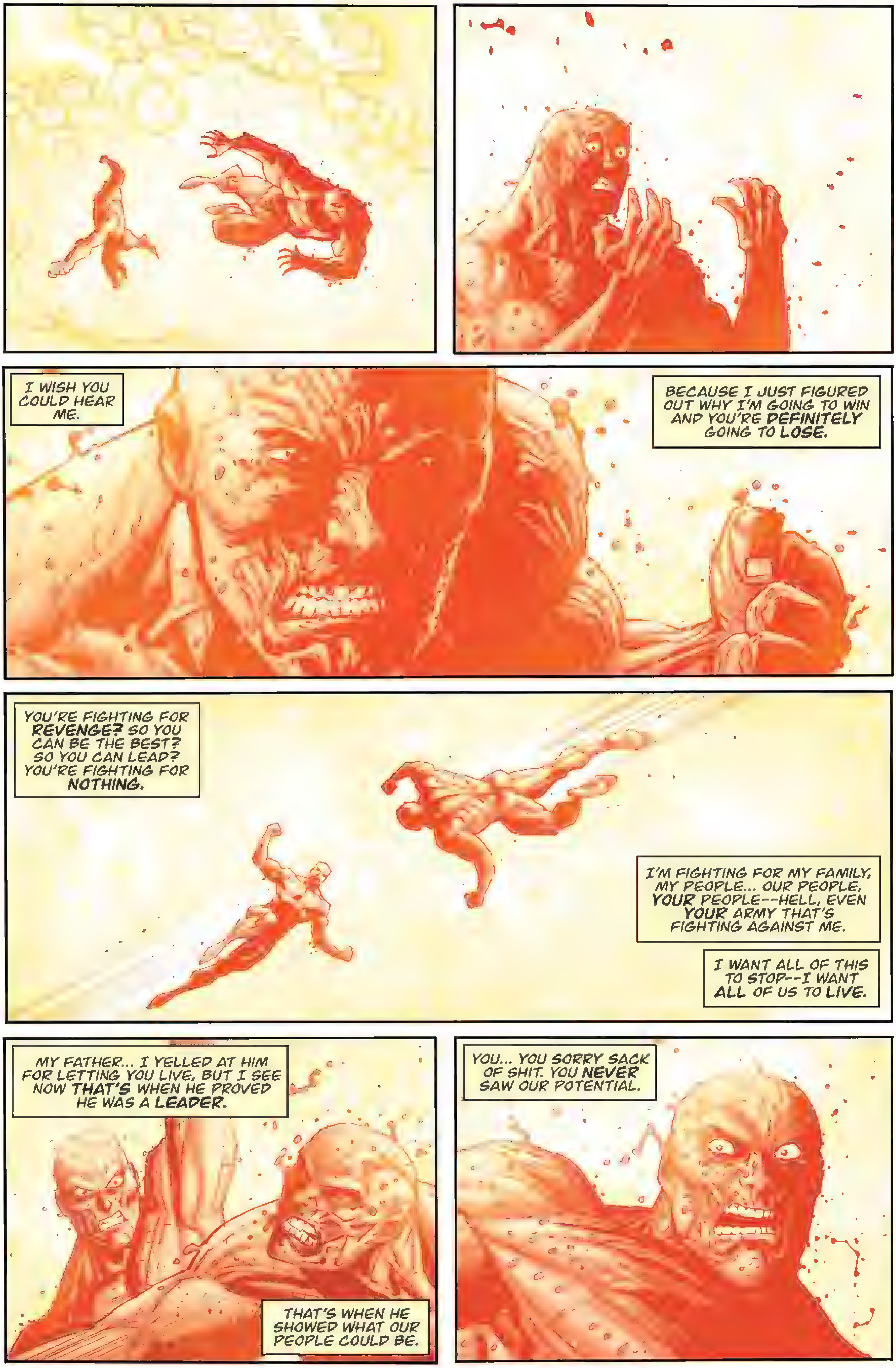

YOU WERE INSANE TO BRING US HERE.
IF IT'S YOUR WISH TO DO MY JOB FOR ME AND FOLLOW YOUR FATHER IN DEATH-- **SO BE IT.**

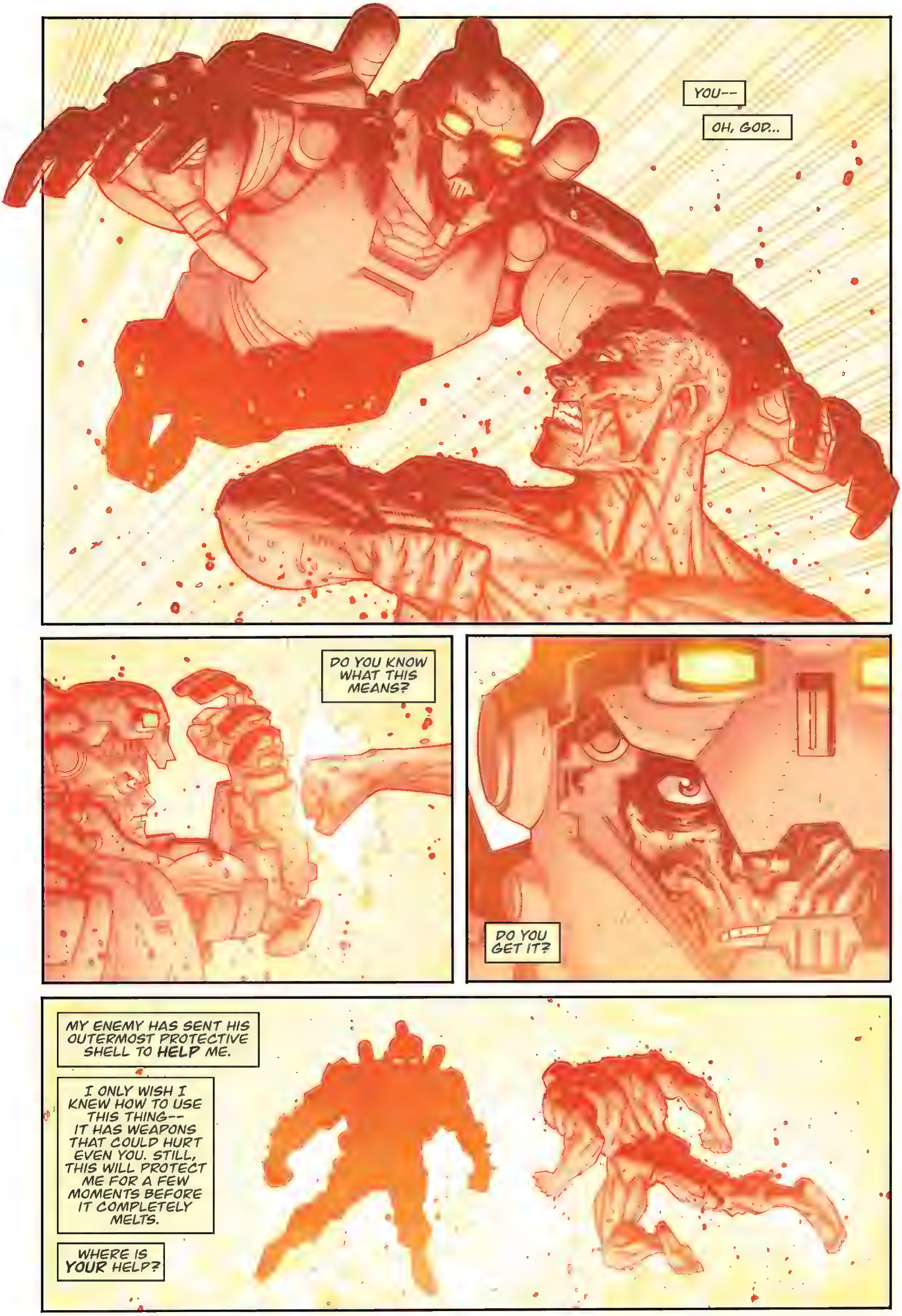

I'LL LEAVE YOU TO **BURN** IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WISH. I HAVE MANY MORE OF THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT I'D LIKE TO **KILL** BEFORE THIS IS OVER.
I CAN'T ALLOW MY **INFERIOR** OFFSPRING TO HAVE ALL THE FUN.
NO!
YOU DON'T LEAVE HERE ALIVE!
EVEN IF KILLING YOU KILLS ME-- I **WON'T** GIVE UP!
I ALWAYS WELCOME A **CHALLENGE.**

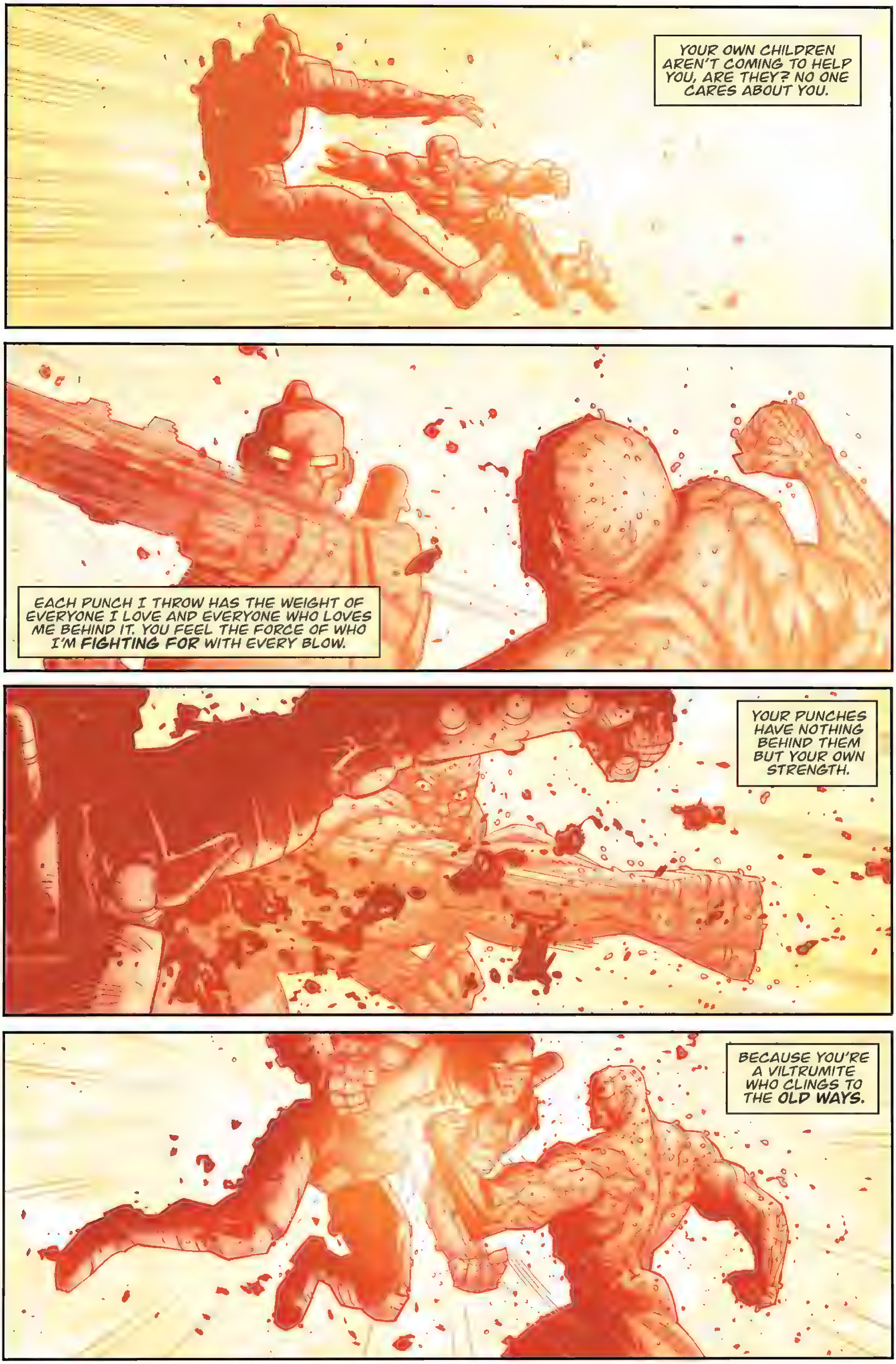

FILE THIS ONE UNDER: "BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR."
YOU DON'T SEEM AS FAST AS YOU USED TO. DISTRACTED BY THE PAIN?
JUST TRYING TO CATCH YOU OFF-GUARD.
YOU'LL SOON KNOW HOW *FOOLISH* THIS FIGHT REALLY WAS.

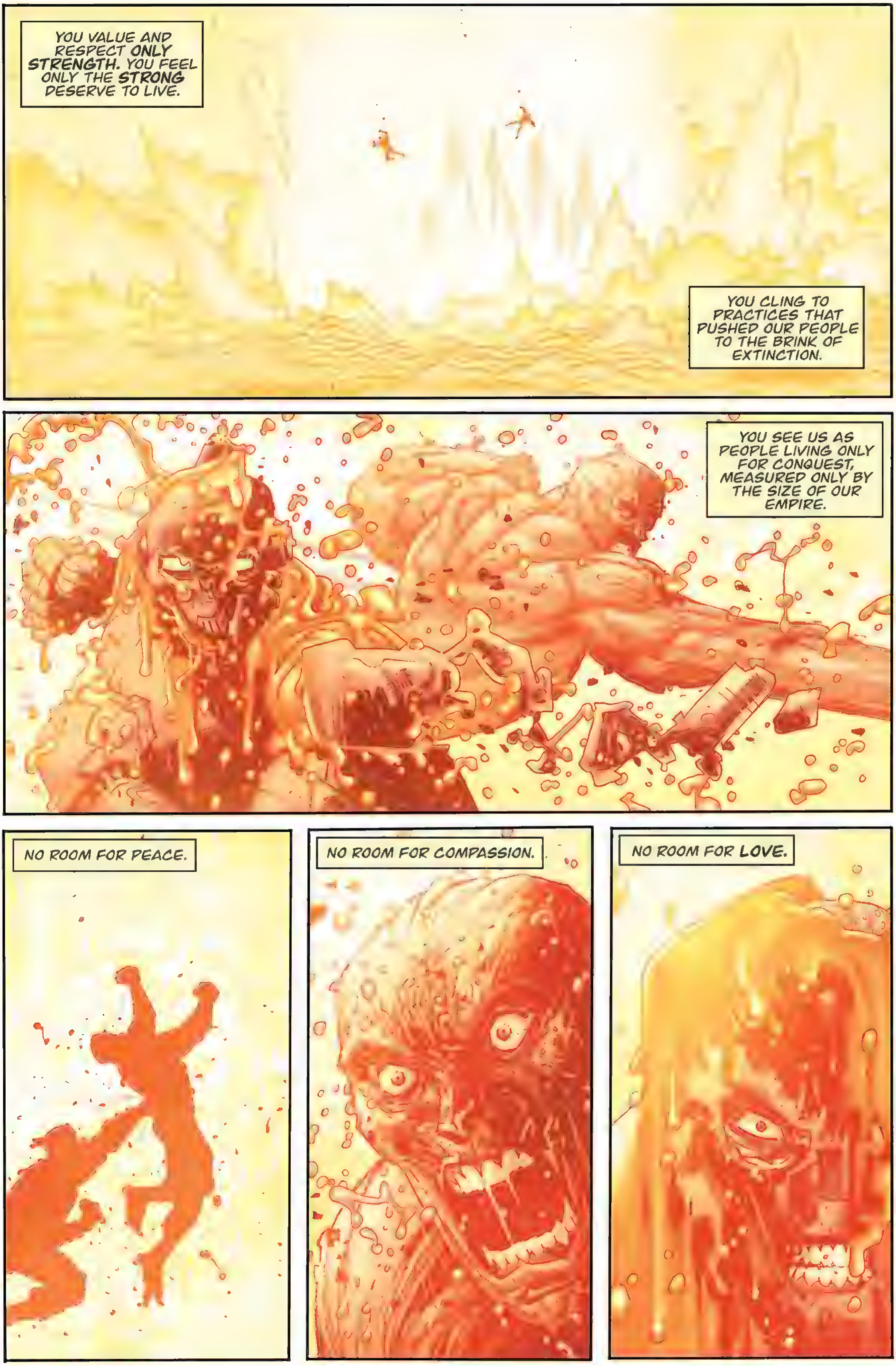

FILE--KSSK--UNDER: "NICE TRY."
NOW YOUR TRANSMITTER IS SCORCHED. IF YOU HAVE ANY POIGNANT LAST WORDS, I'LL ONLY BE HEARING EVERY OTHER ONE.
WORDS--KSSK--NOT--KSSK--IMPORTANT!
I COULDN'T AGREE MORE. I DON'T NEED TO HEAR YOUR MISGUIDED PLATITUDES ON HOW THINGS **SHOULD** BE OR WHAT I **SHOULD** BE DOING.
THE ONLY THING YOU NEED TO KNOW IS THAT YOU CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO LIVE.
YOU WERE DESTINED TO DIE FROM THE MOMENT YOU WERE--
OH, HELL--]




I WISH YOU COULD HEAR ME.
BECAUSE I JUST FIGURED OUT WHY I'M GOING TO WIN AND YOU'RE **DEFINITELY** GOING TO **LOSE.**
YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR **REVENGE?** SO YOU CAN BE THE BEST? SO YOU CAN LEAD? YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR **NOTHING.**
I'M FIGHTING FOR MY FAMILY, MY PEOPLE... OUR PEOPLE, **YOUR** PEOPLE--HELL, EVEN **YOUR** ARMY THAT'S FIGHTING AGAINST ME.
I WANT ALL OF THIS TO STOP--I WANT **ALL** OF US TO **LIVE.**
MY FATHER... I YELLED AT HIM FOR LETTING YOU LIVE, BUT I SEE NOW **THAT'S** WHEN HE PROVED HE WAS A **LEADER.**
THAT'S WHEN HE SHOWED WHAT OUR PEOPLE COULD BE.
YOU... YOU SORRY SACK OF SHIT. YOU **NEVER** SAW OUR POTENTIAL.

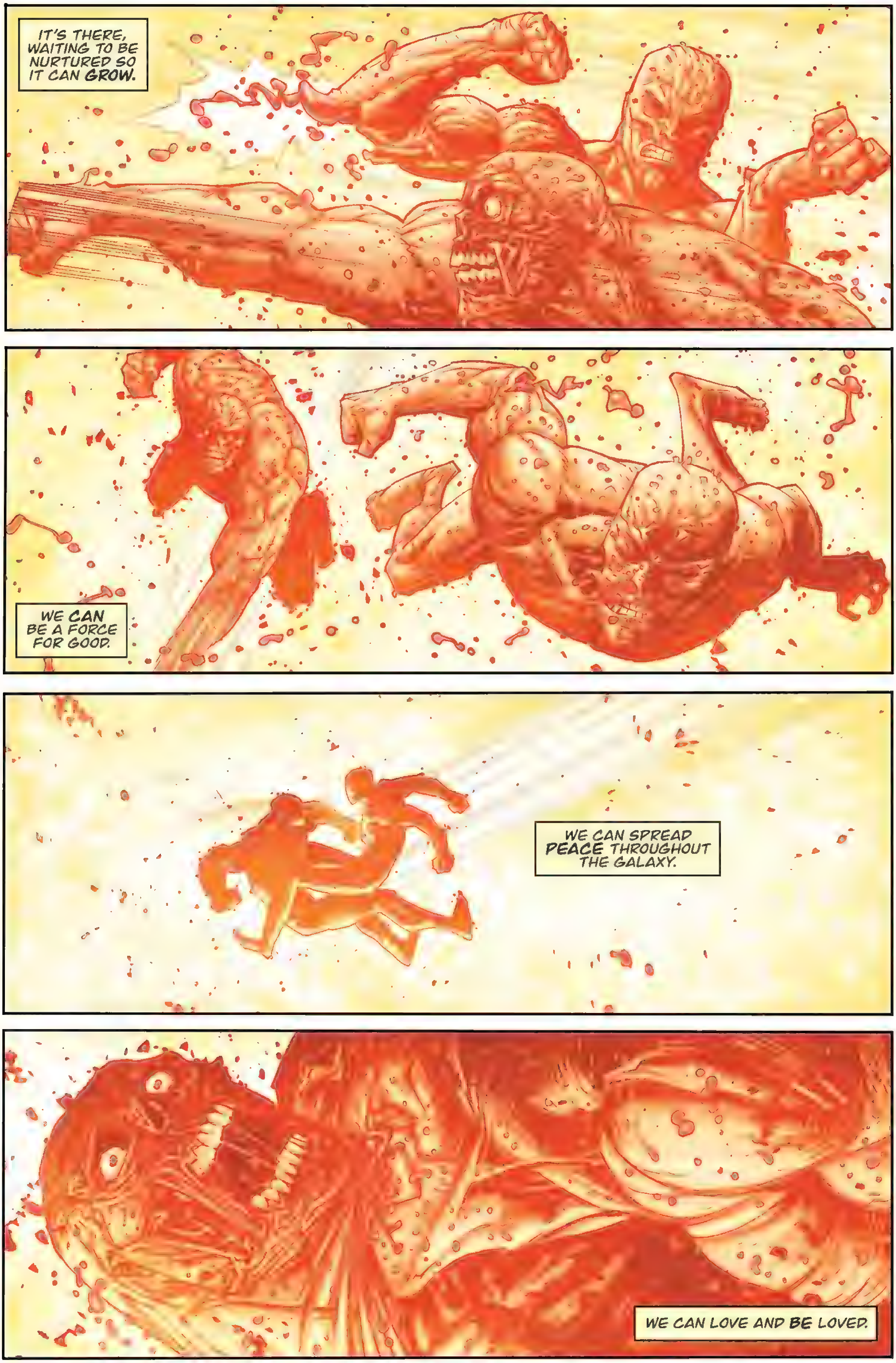

YOU--
OH, GOD...
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?
DO YOU GET IT?
MY ENEMY HAS SENT HIS OUTERMOST PROTECTIVE SHELL TO **HELP** ME.
I ONLY WISH I KNEW HOW TO USE THIS THING-- IT HAS WEAPONS THAT COULD HURT EVEN YOU. STILL, THIS WILL PROTECT ME FOR A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE IT COMPLETELY MELTS.
WHERE IS **YOUR** HELP?


YOUR OWN CHILDREN AREN'T COMING TO HELP YOU, ARE THEY? NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOU.
EACH PUNCH I THROW HAS THE WEIGHT OF EVERYONE I LOVE AND EVERYONE WHO LOVES ME BEHIND IT. YOU FEEL THE FORCE OF WHO I'M **FIGHTING FOR** WITH EVERY BLOW.
YOUR PUNCHES HAVE NOTHING BEHIND THEM BUT YOUR OWN STRENGTH.
BECAUSE YOU'RE A VILTRUMITE WHO CLINGS TO THE **OLD WAYS.**

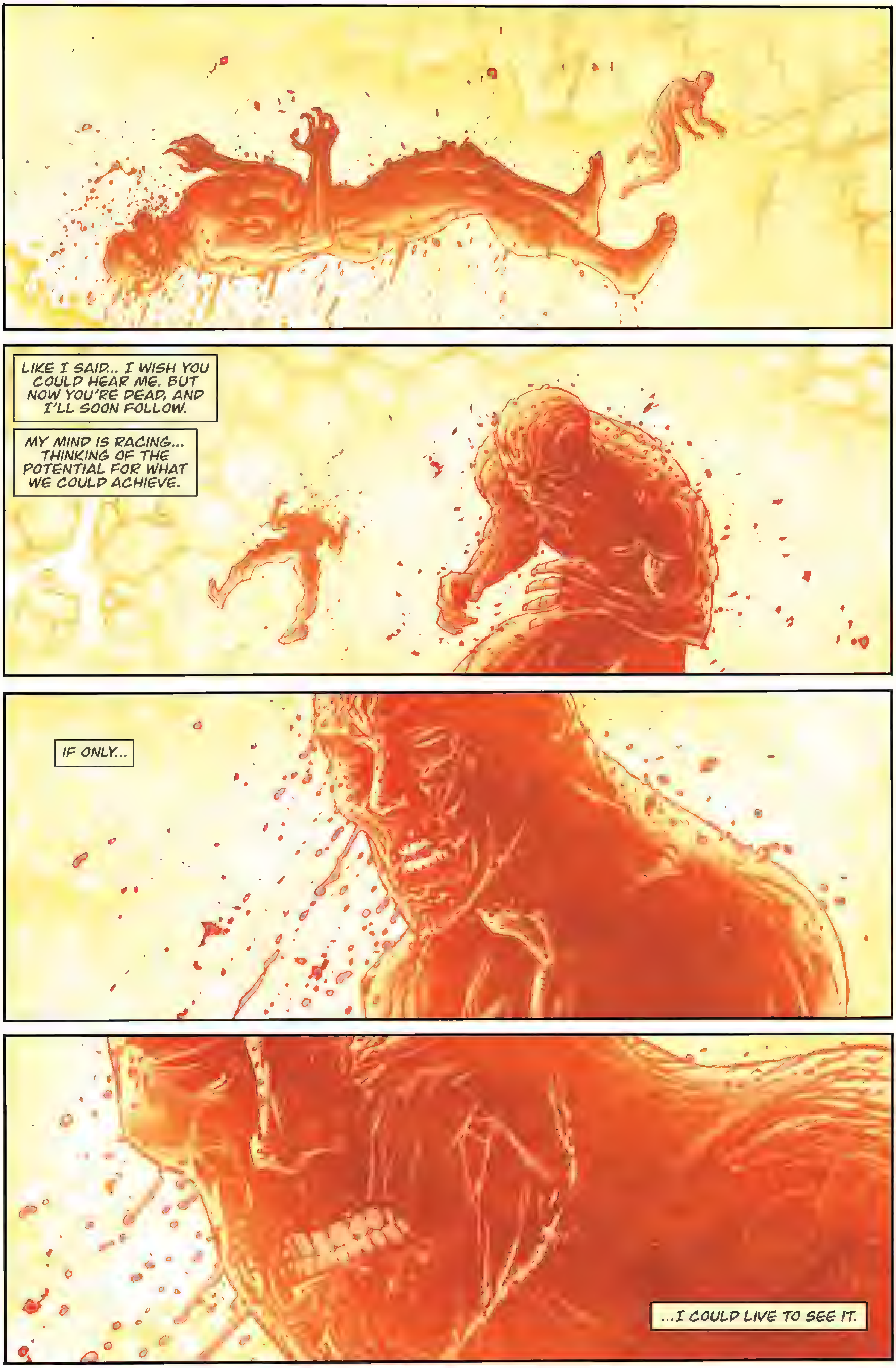

YOU VALUE AND RESPECT **ONLY STRENGTH.** YOU FEEL ONLY THE **STRONG** DESERVE TO LIVE.
YOU CLING TO PRACTICES THAT PUSHED OUR PEOPLE TO THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION.
YOU SEE US AS PEOPLE LIVING ONLY FOR CONQUEST, MEASURED ONLY BY THE SIZE OF OUR EMPIRE.
NO ROOM FOR PEACE.
NO ROOM FOR COMPASSION.
NO ROOM FOR **LOVE.**

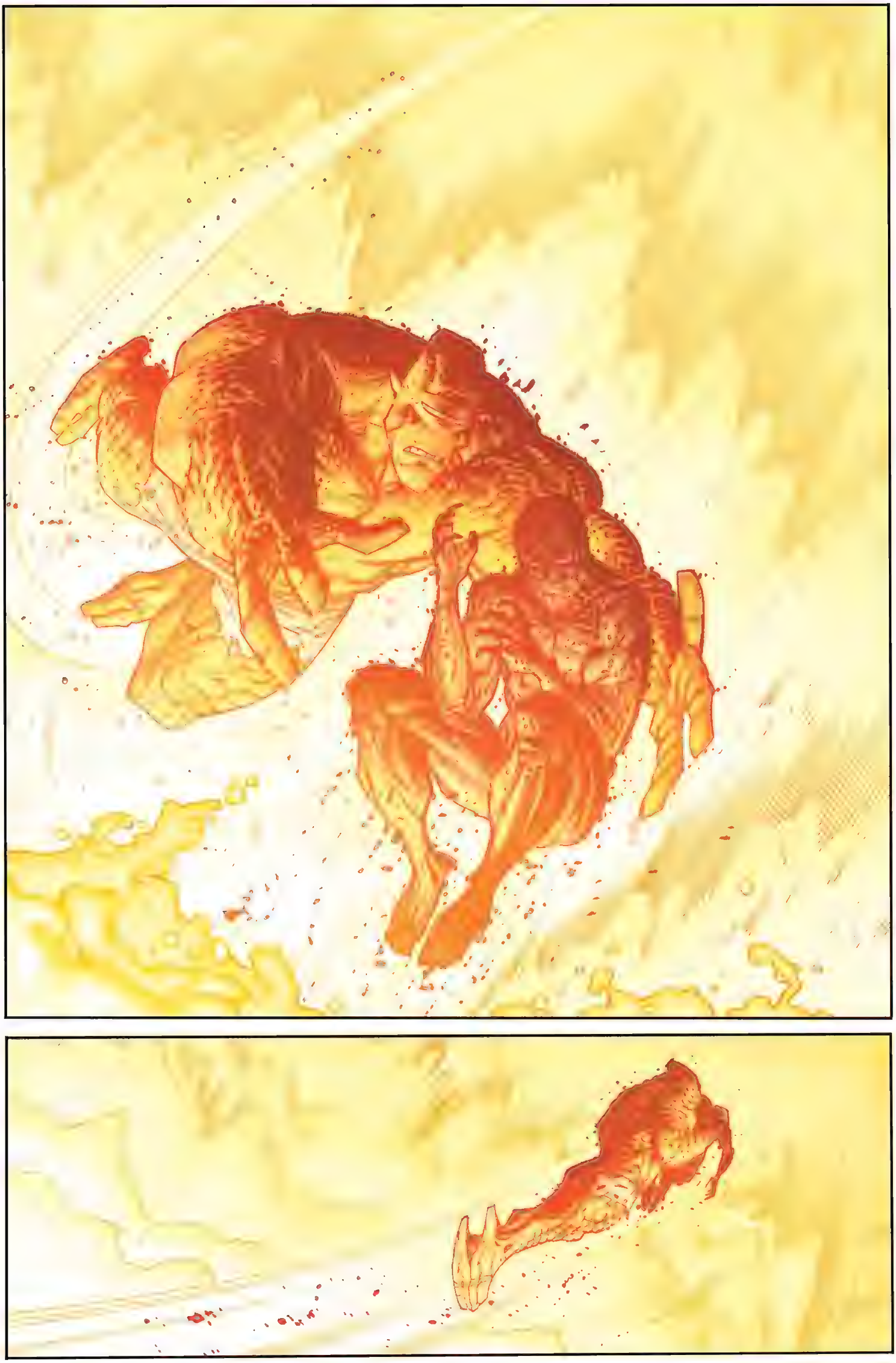
YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE KEEPING THE EMPIRE ALIVE--PULLING US BACK FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION. THE TRUTH IS YOU WERE **HOLDING US BACK.**
UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP THE VILTRUMITES STOOD FOR NOTHING...
...FOUGHT FOR NOTHING.
JUST LIKE **YOU.**
LOOK AT WHAT THEY BECAME UNDER MY FATHER'S LEADERSHIP. LOOK AT HOW THEY **TRANSFORMED.**
YOU CAN'T SEE IT... YOU CAN'T **ALLOW** YOURSELF TO SEE IT. BUT IT'S THERE.

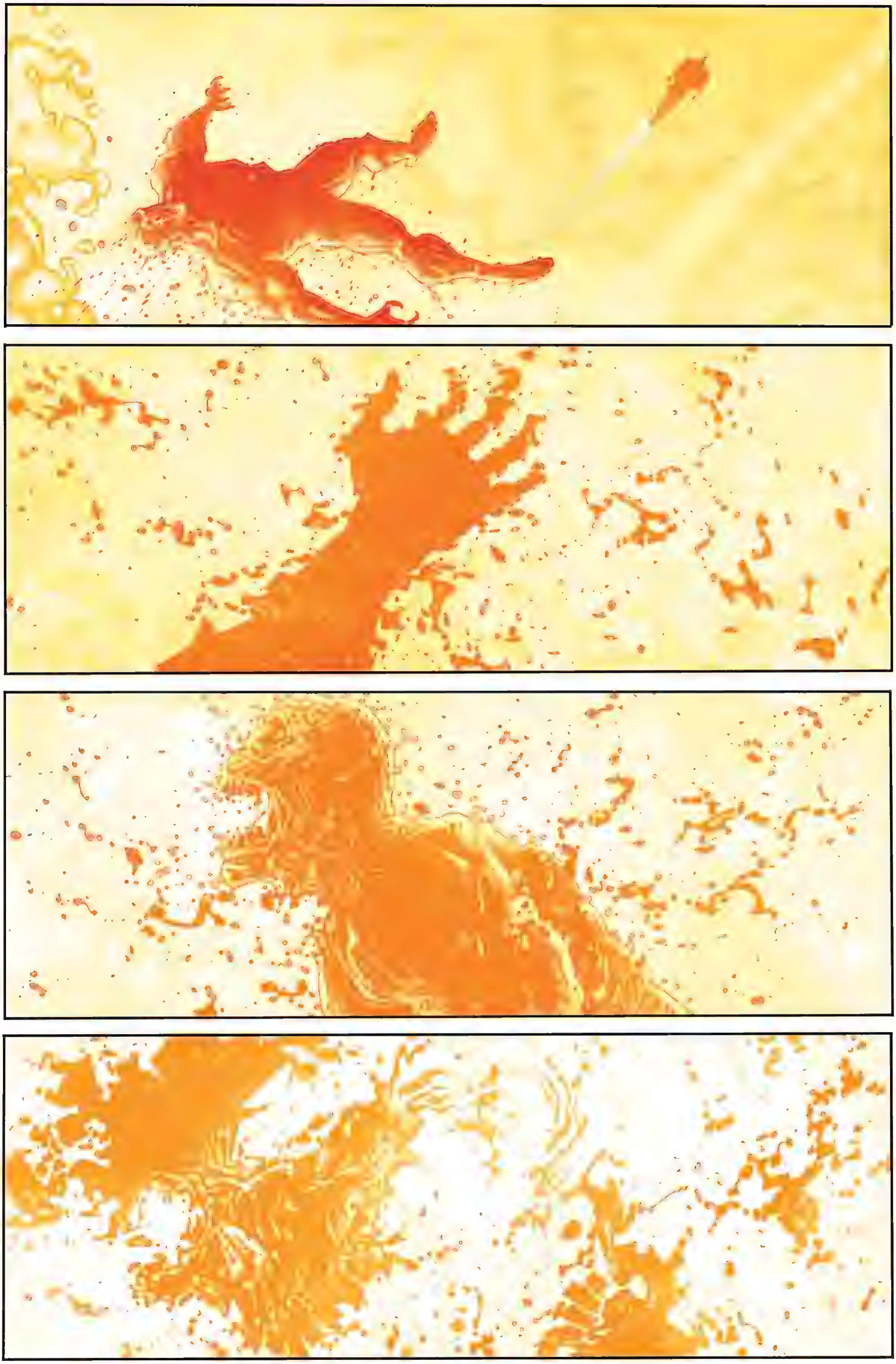
THEY'RE HERE-- THEY'RE FIGHTING FOR **EARTH**--FOR THEIR FAMILIES THERE.
IT ISN'T A HUGE SHIFT, BUT IT'S THERE. IT SHOWS THE POTENTIAL OF WHAT THE VILTRUM EMPIRE CAN BE.
IT PROVES THERE WAS A COMPASSION IN OUR PEOPLE... ALWAYS THERE BENEATH THE SURFACE, BURIED UNDER ALL THAT STRENGTH AND FURY.

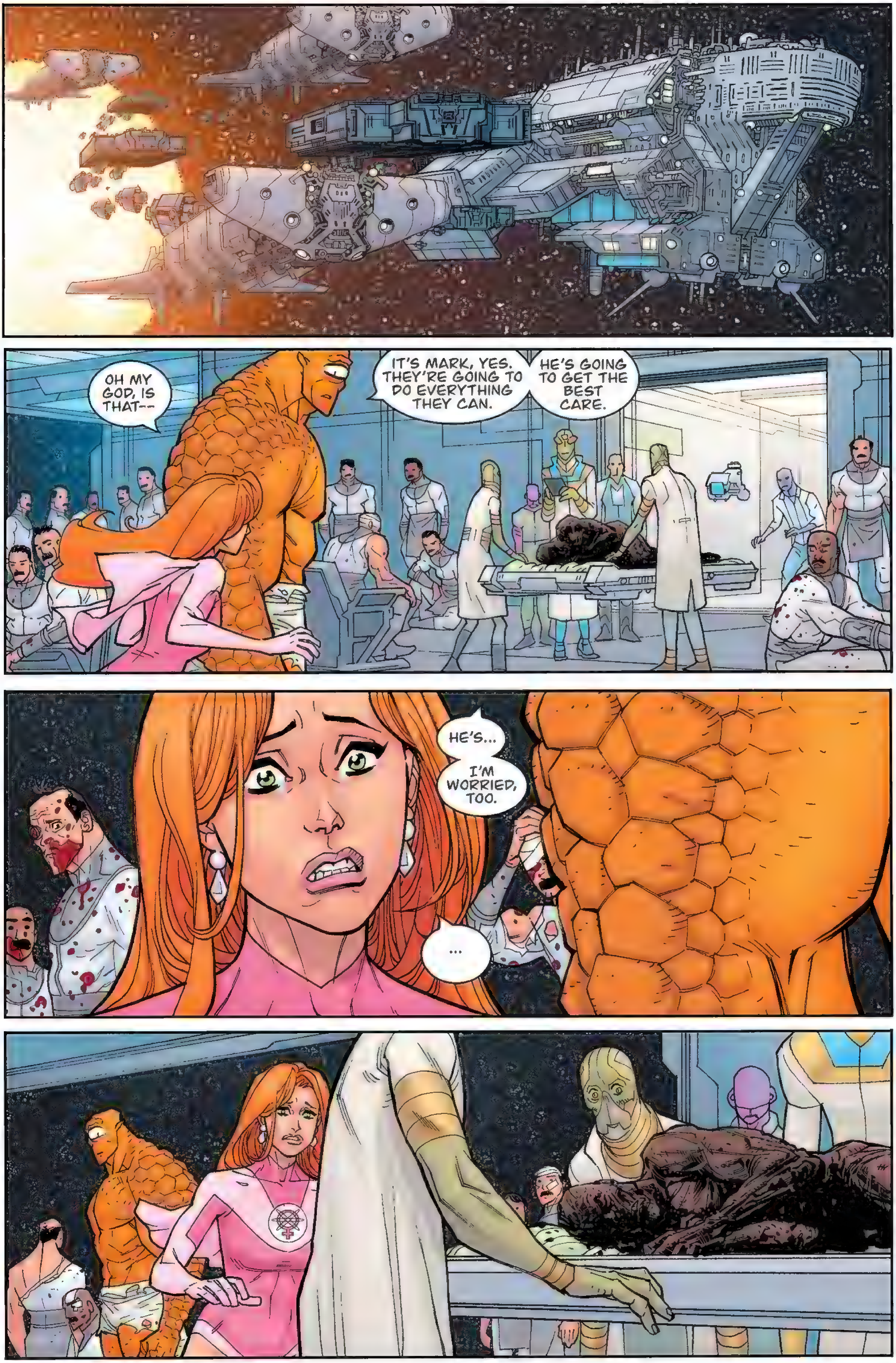

IT'S THERE, WAITING TO BE NURTURED SO IT CAN GROW.
WE CAN BE A FORCE FOR GOOD.
WE CAN SPREAD PEACE THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
WE CAN LOVE AND BE LOVED.

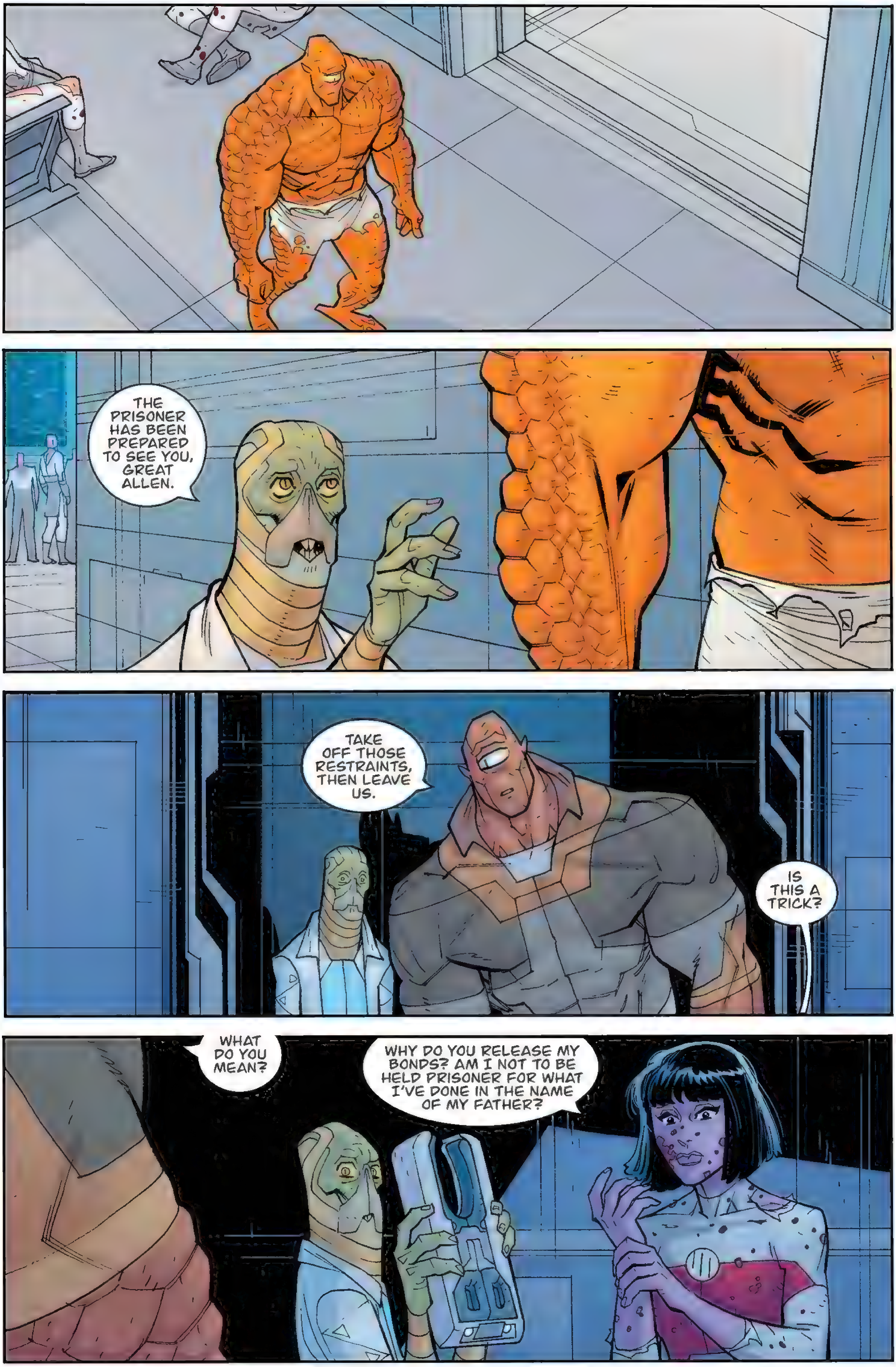
WE CAN BE HAPPY.

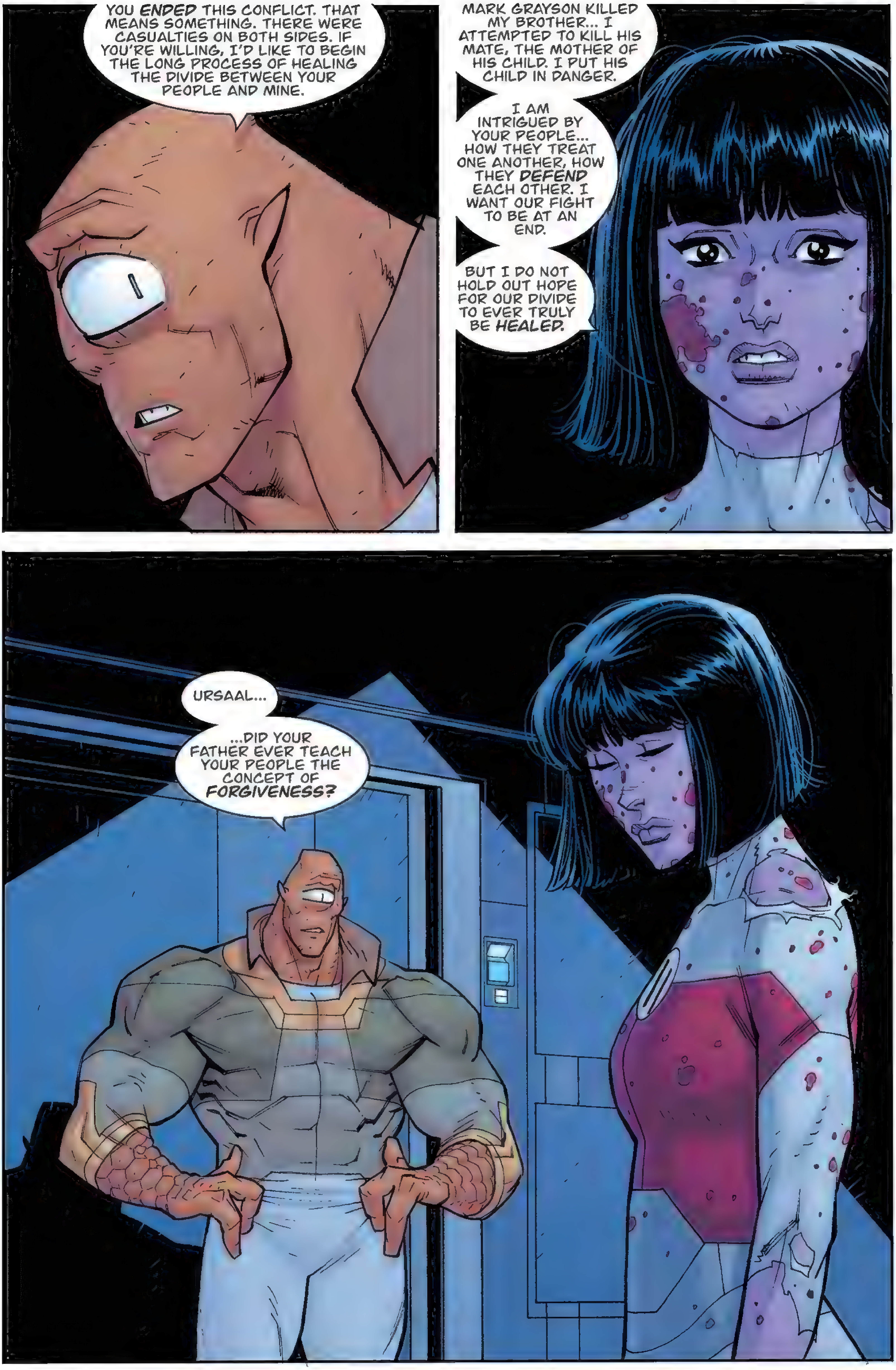

LIKE I SAID... I WISH YOU COULD HEAR ME. BUT NOW YOU'RE DEAD, AND I'LL SOON FOLLOW.
MY MIND IS RACING... THINKING OF THE POTENTIAL FOR WHAT WE COULD ACHIEVE.
IF ONLY...
...I COULD LIVE TO SEE IT.



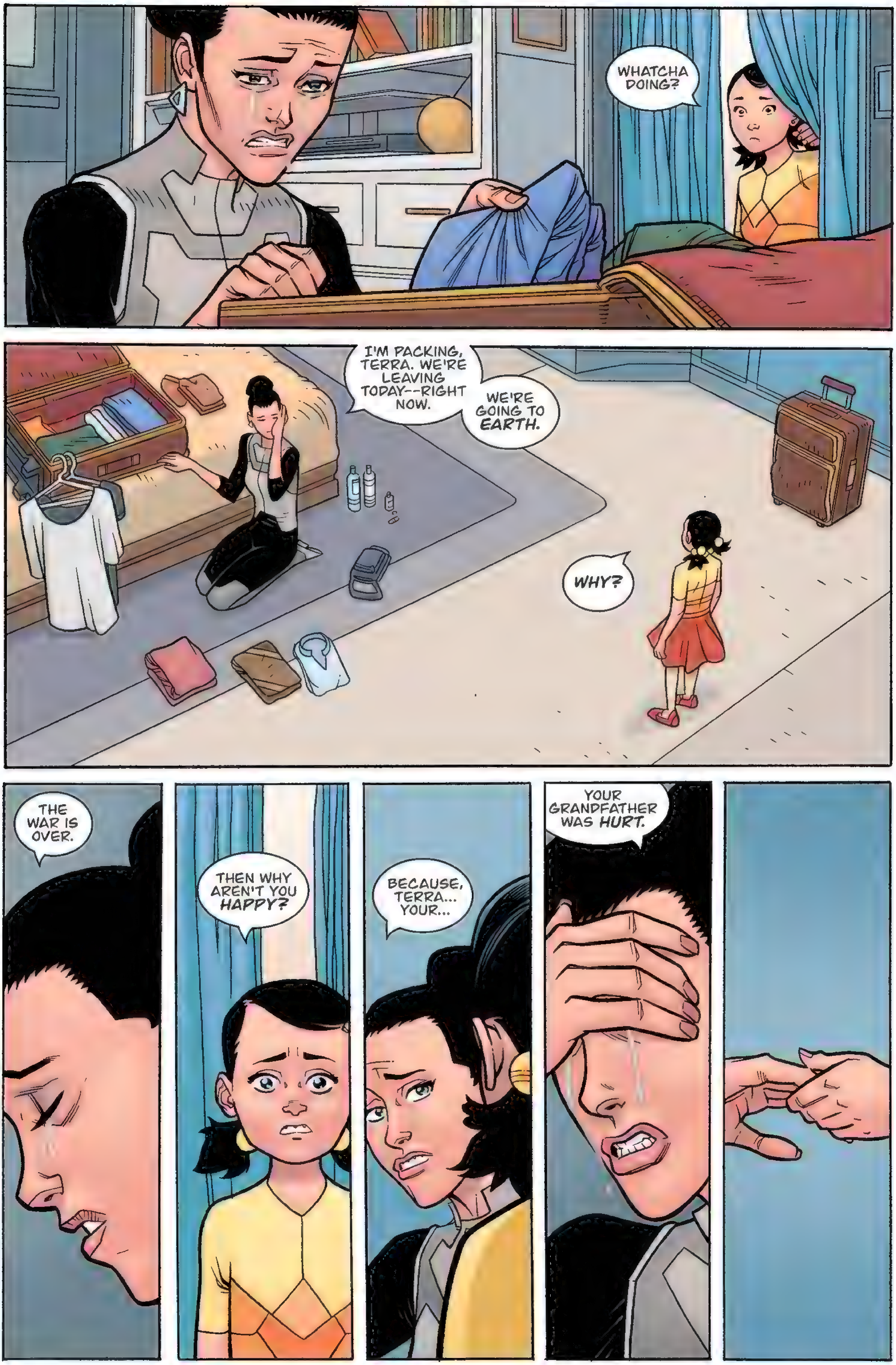


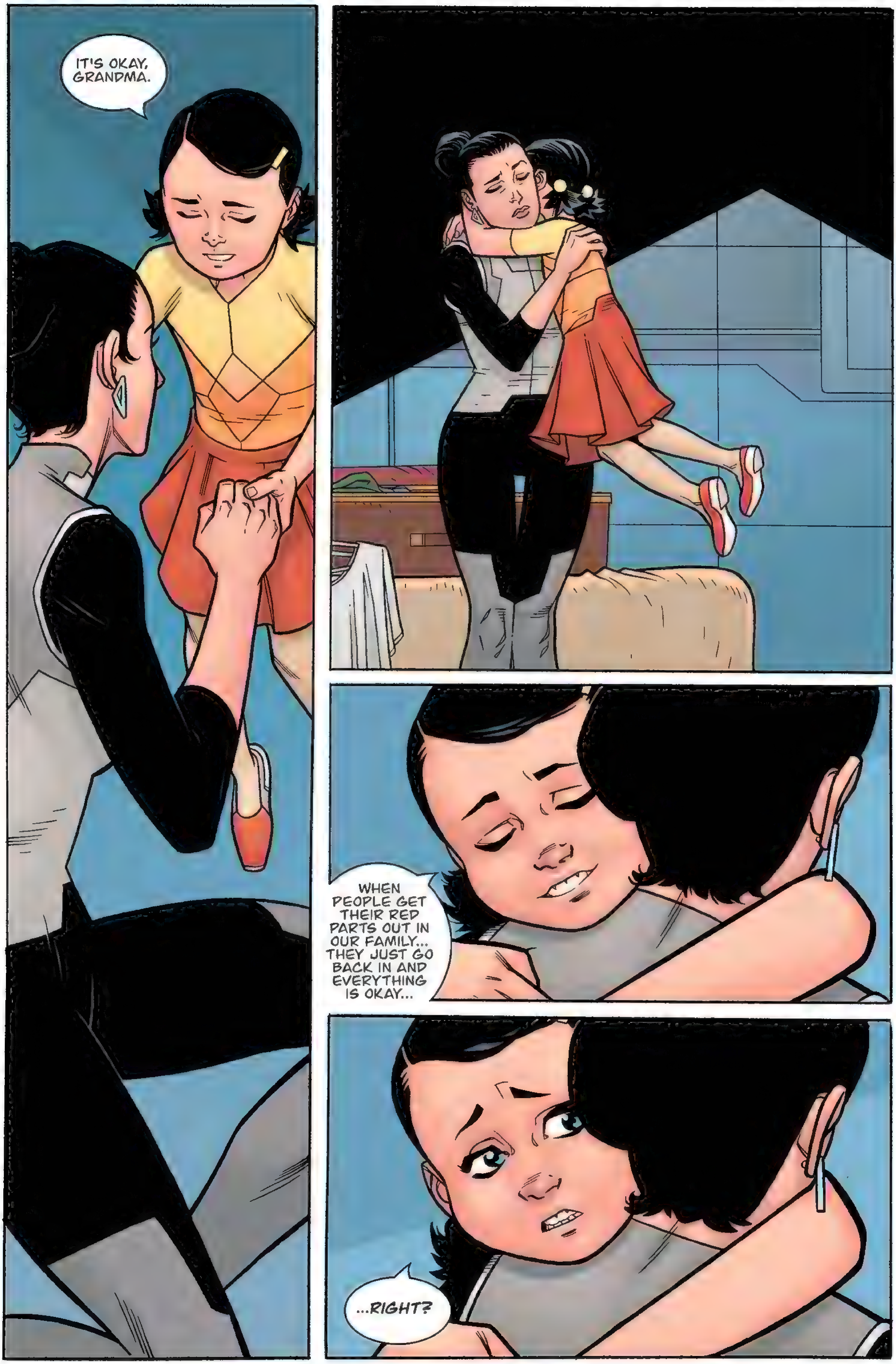

OH MY GOD, IS THAT--
IT'S MARK, YES. THEY'RE GOING TO DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN.
HE'S GOING TO GET THE BEST CARE.
HE'S...
I'M WORRIED, TOO.
...

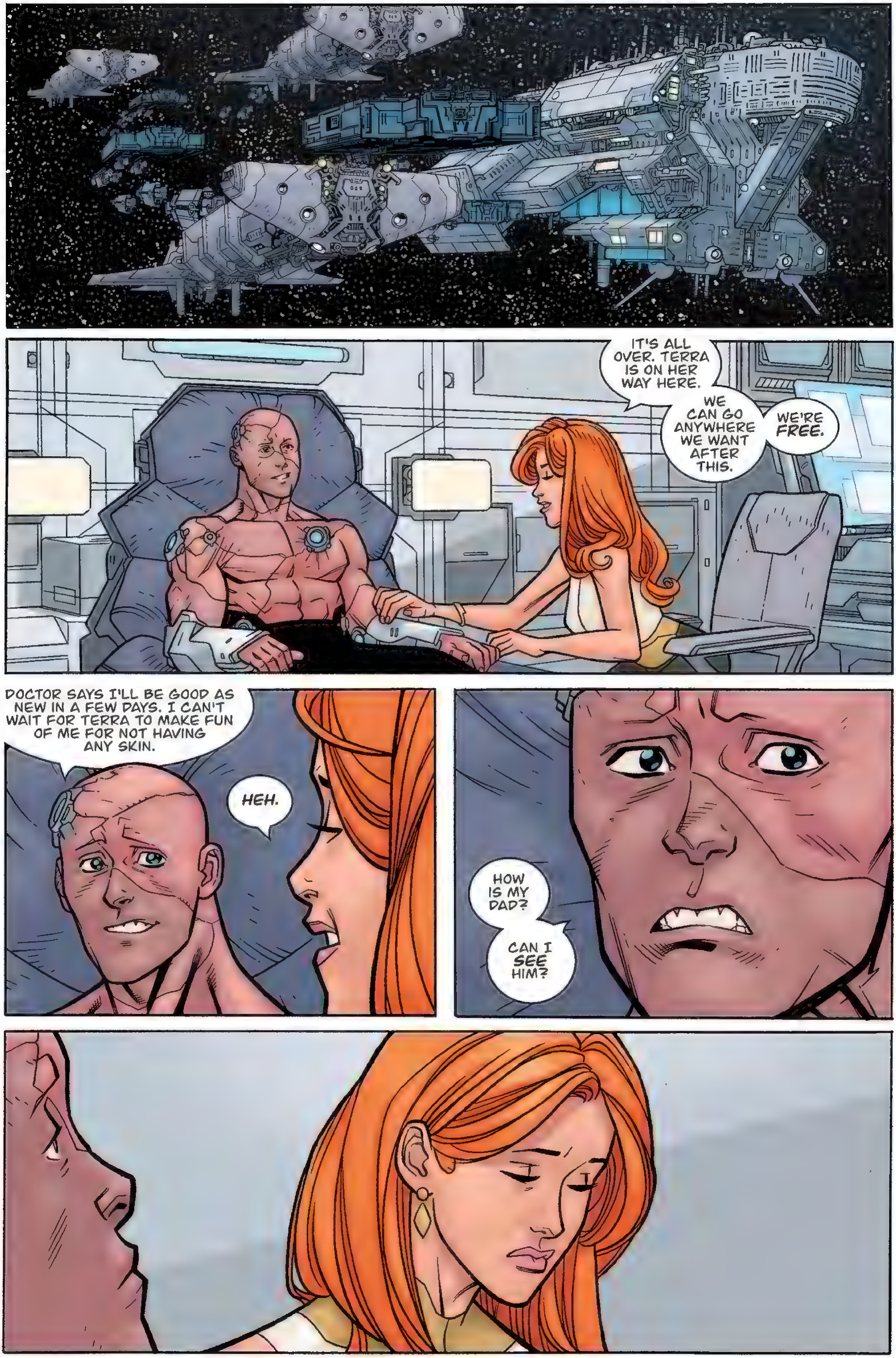

THE PRISONER HAS BEEN PREPARED TO SEE YOU, GREAT ALLEN.
TAKE OFF THOSE RESTRAINTS, THEN LEAVE US.
IS THIS A TRICK?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHY DO YOU RELEASE MY BONDS? AM I NOT TO BE HELD PRISONER FOR WHAT I'VE DONE IN THE NAME OF MY FATHER?


YOU *ENDED* THIS CONFLICT. THAT MEANS SOMETHING. THERE WERE CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES. IF YOU'RE WILLING, I'D LIKE TO BEGIN THE LONG PROCESS OF HEALING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN YOUR PEOPLE AND MINE.
MARK GRAYSON KILLED MY BROTHER... I ATTEMPTED TO KILL HIS MATE, THE MOTHER OF HIS CHILD. I PUT HIS CHILD IN DANGER.
I AM INTRIGUED BY YOUR PEOPLE... HOW THEY TREAT ONE ANOTHER, HOW THEY *DEFEND* EACH OTHER. I WANT OUR FIGHT TO BE AT AN END.
BUT I DO NOT HOLD OUT HOPE FOR OUR DIVIDE TO EVER TRULY BE *HEALED*.
URSAAL...
...DID YOUR FATHER EVER TEACH YOUR PEOPLE THE CONCEPT OF *FORGIVENESS?*

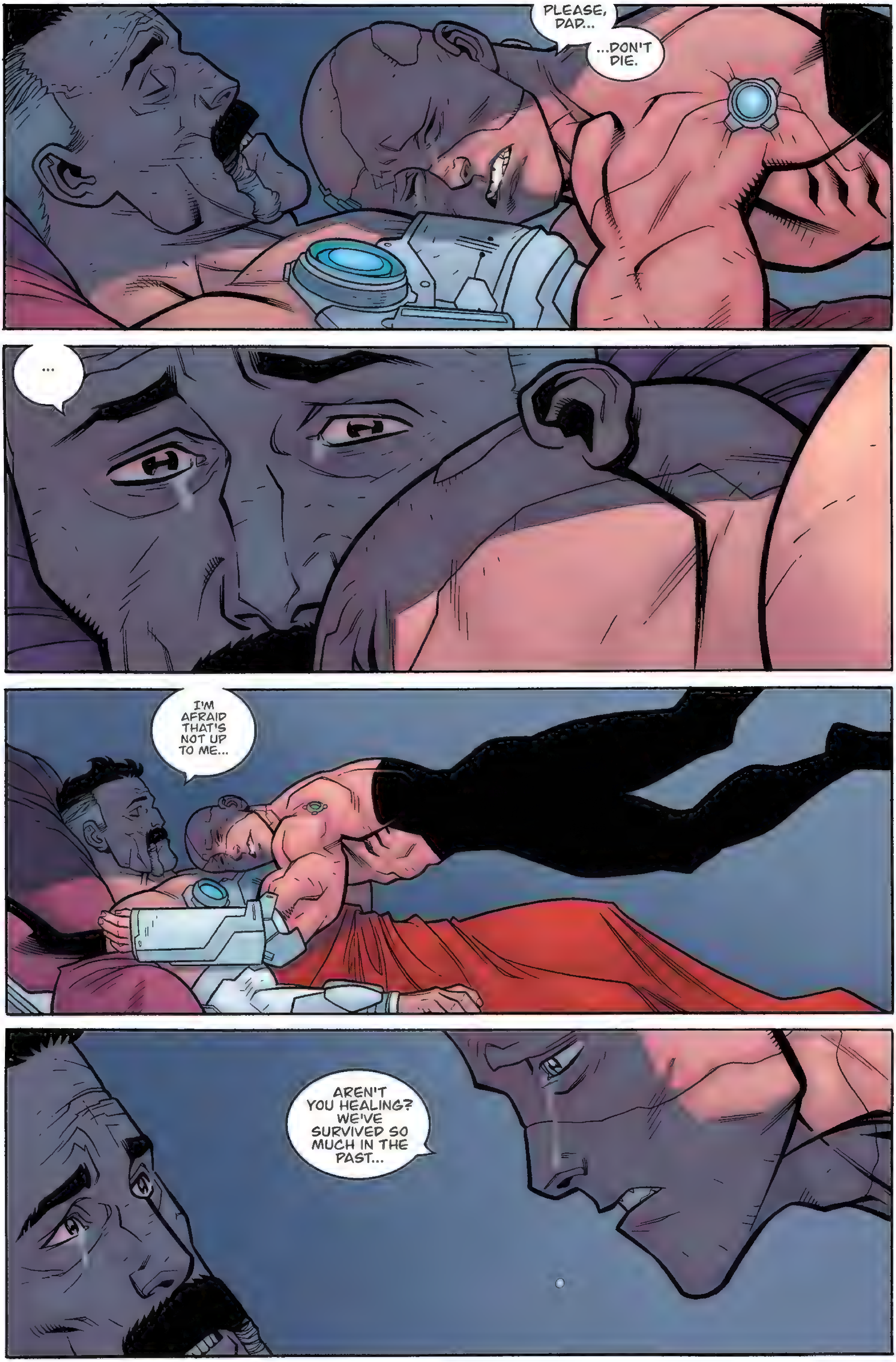
CHAPTER 141

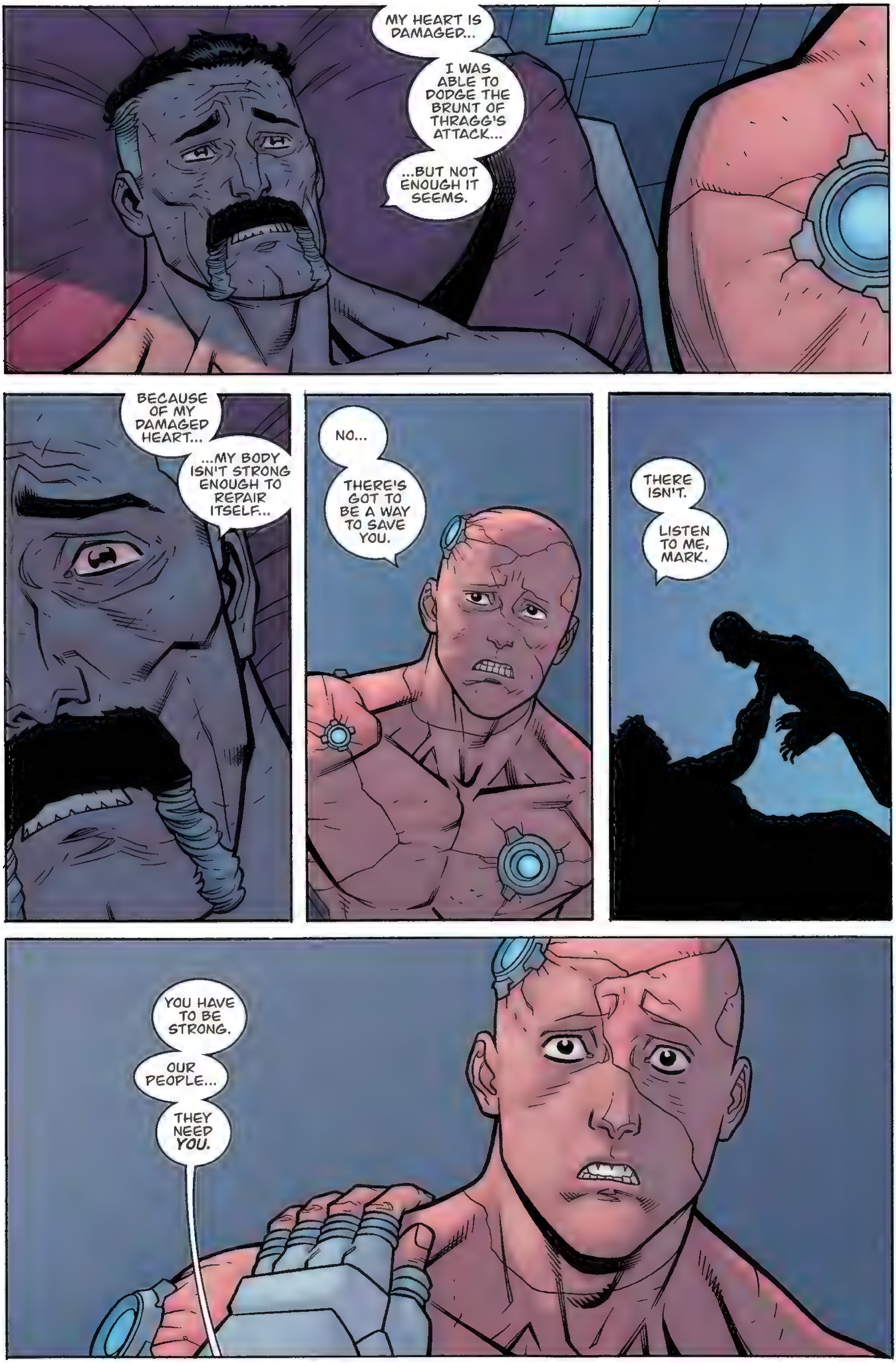

WHATCHA DOING?
I'M PACKING, TERRA. WE'RE LEAVING TODAY--RIGHT NOW.
WE'RE GOING TO EARTH.
WHY?
THE WAR IS OVER.
THEN WHY AREN'T YOU HAPPY?
BECAUSE, TERRA... YOUR...
YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS HURT.

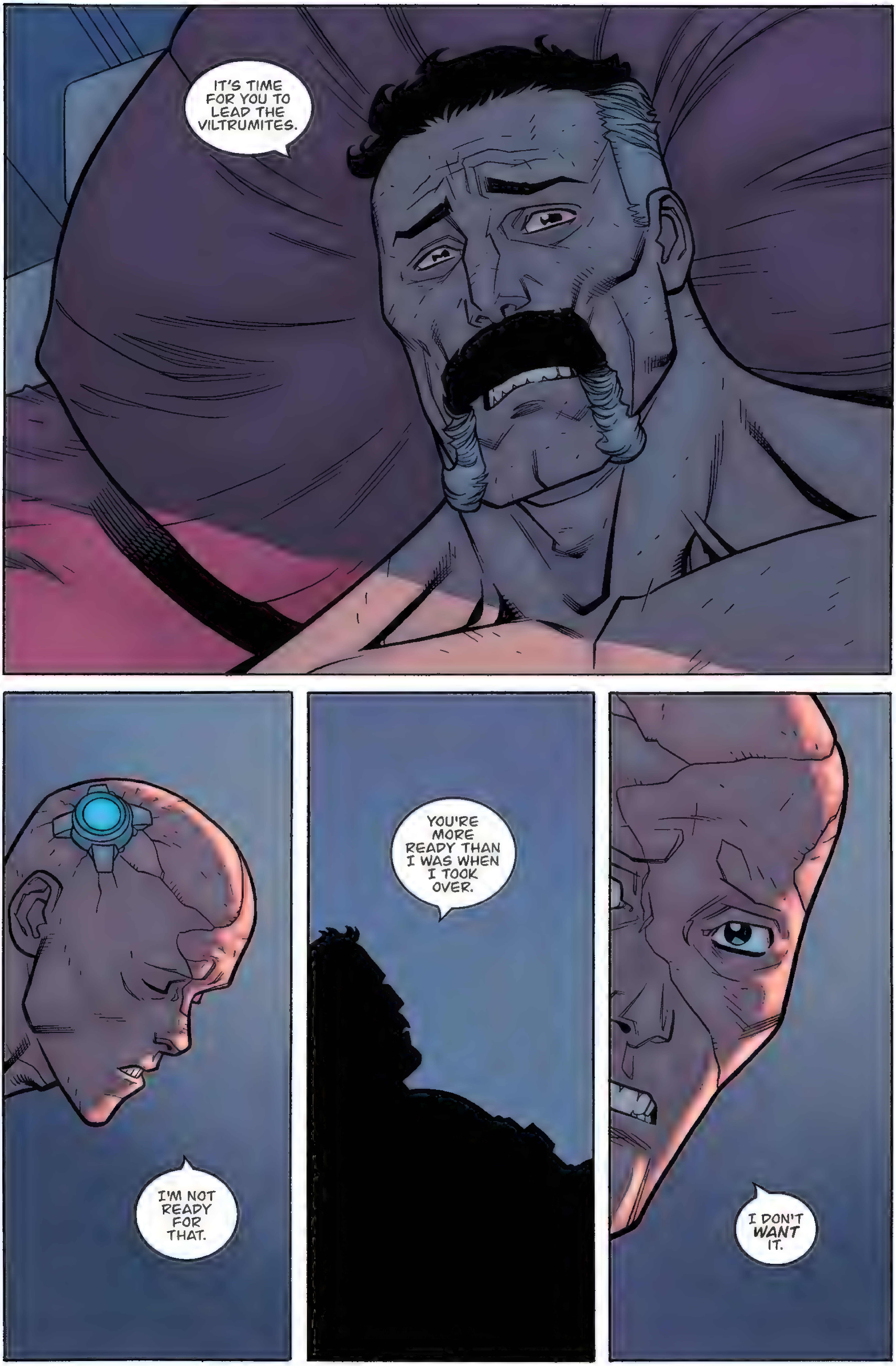

IT'S OKAY, GRANDMA.
WHEN PEOPLE GET THEIR RED PARTS OUT IN OUR FAMILY... THEY JUST GO BACK IN AND EVERYTHING IS OKAY...
...RIGHT?

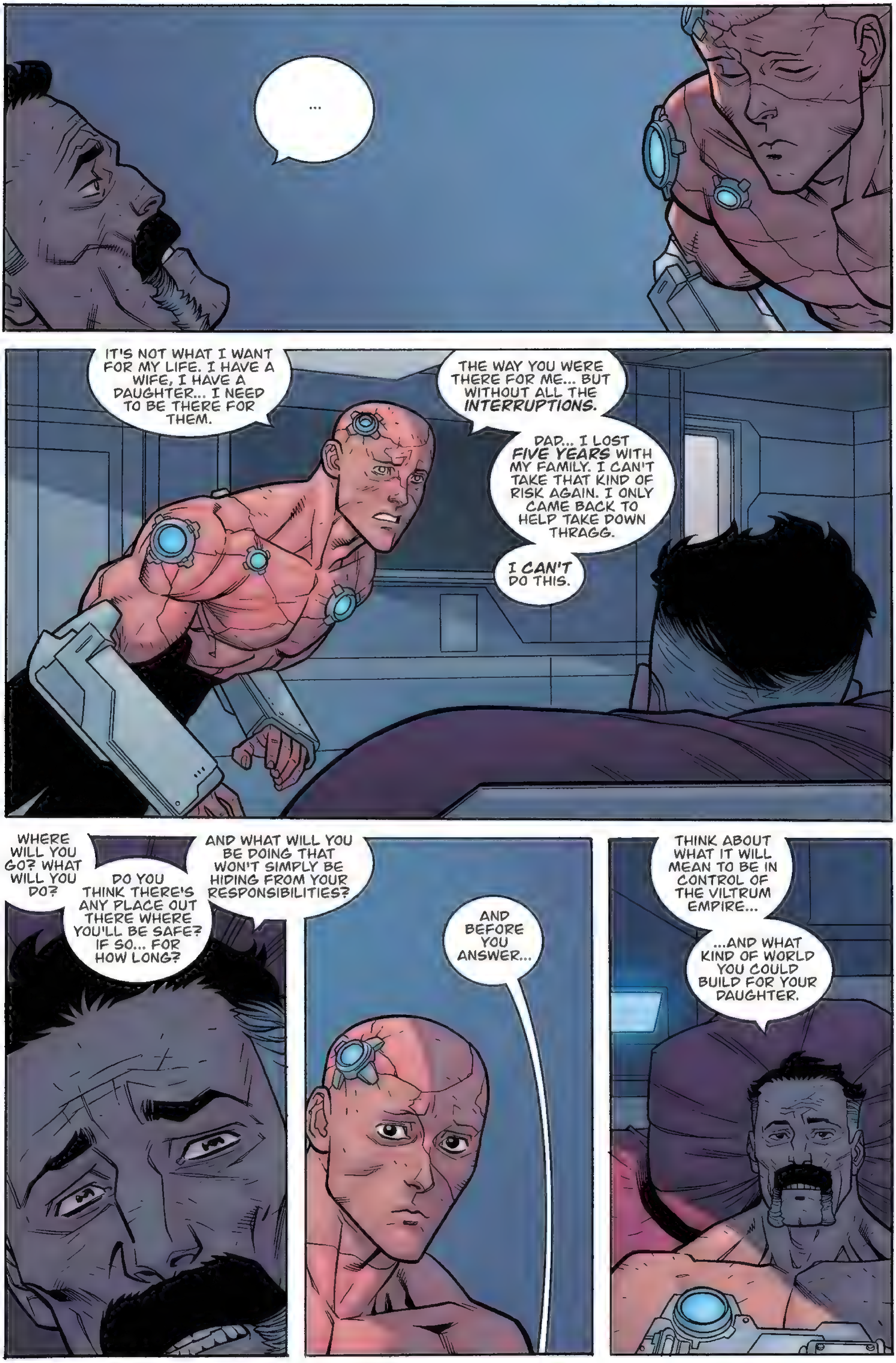

IT'S ALL OVER. TERRA IS ON HER WAY HERE.
WE CAN GO ANYWHERE WE WANT AFTER THIS.
WE'RE FREE.
DOCTOR SAYS I'LL BE GOOD AS NEW IN A FEW DAYS. I CAN'T WAIT FOR TERRA TO MAKE FUN OF ME FOR NOT HAVING ANY SKIN.
HEH.
HOW IS MY DAD?
CAN I SEE HIM?

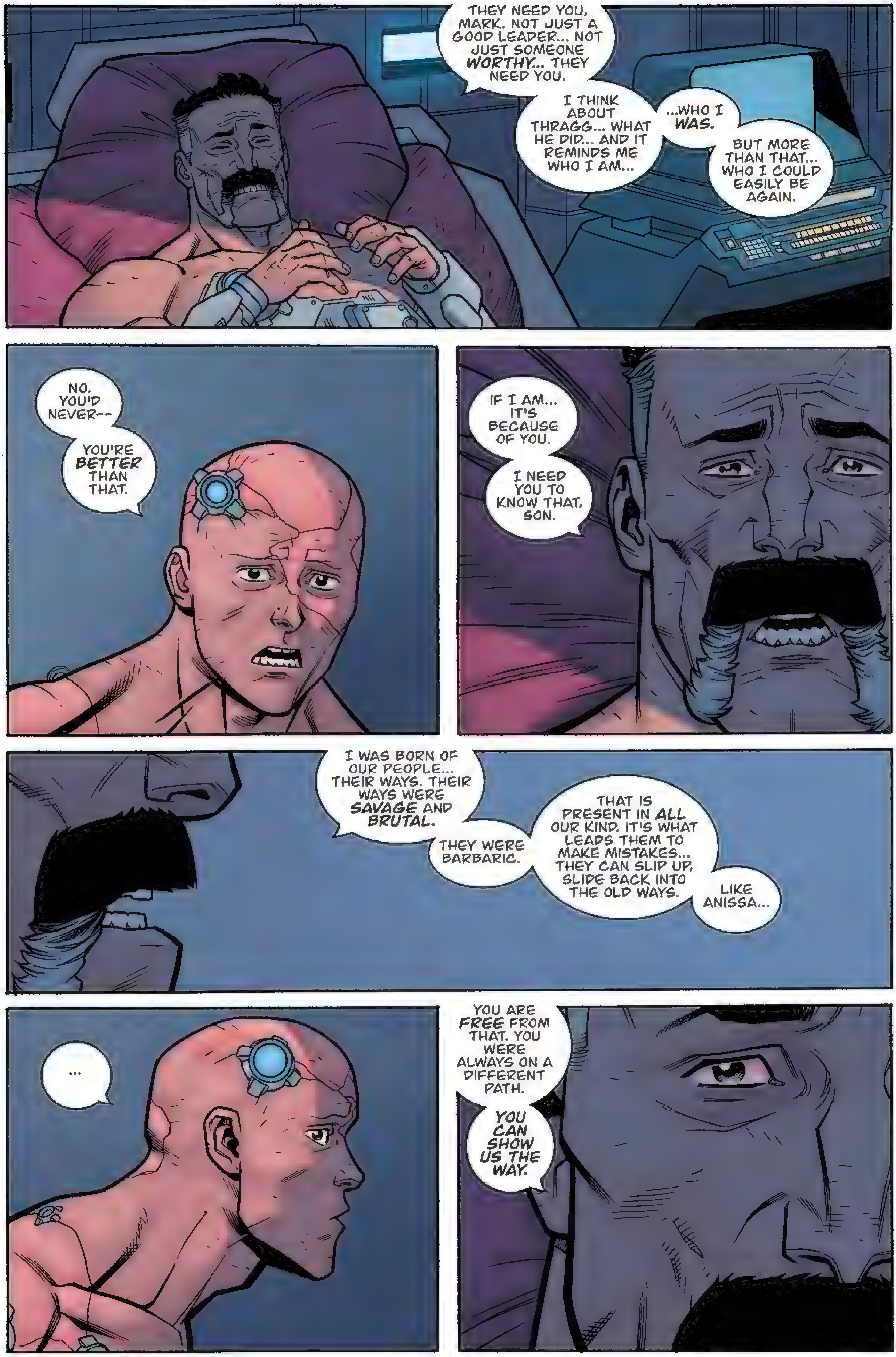
DAD?
SON... COME IN.
ARE YOU...?
THEY SAY THAT YOU'RE--
OH, GOD...

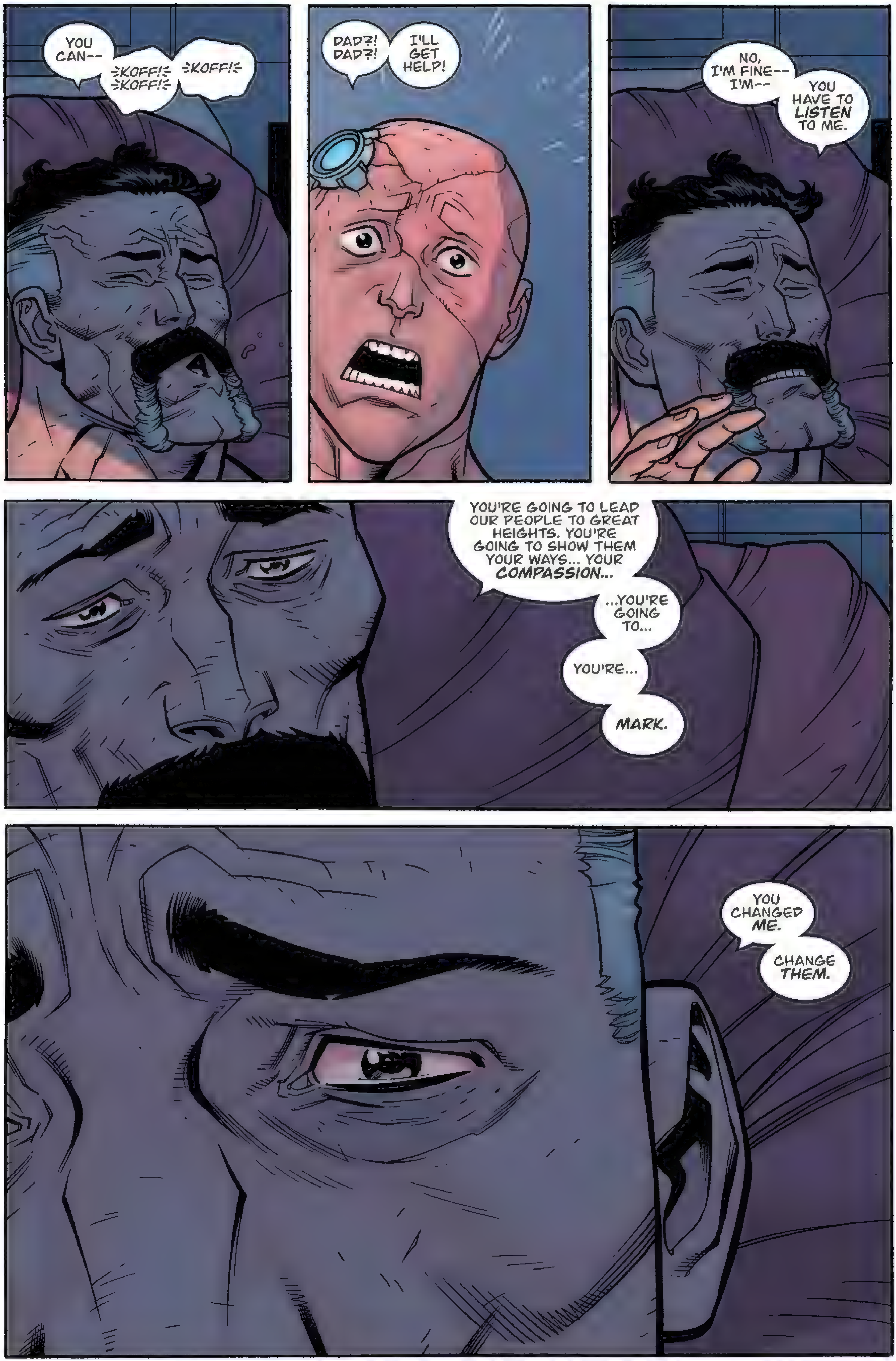

PLEASE, DAD...
...DON'T DIE.
...
I'M AFRAID THAT'S NOT UP TO ME...
AREN'T YOU HEALING? WE'VE SURVIVED SO MUCH IN THE PAST...


MY HEART IS DAMAGED...
I WAS ABLE TO DODGE THE BRUNT OF THRAGG'S ATTACK...
...BUT NOT ENOUGH IT SEEMS.
BECAUSE OF MY DAMAGED HEART...
...MY BODY ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO REPAIR ITSELF...
NO...
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO SAVE YOU.
THERE ISN'T.
LISTEN TO ME, MARK.
YOU HAVE TO BE STRONG.
OUR PEOPLE...
THEY NEED *YOU*.

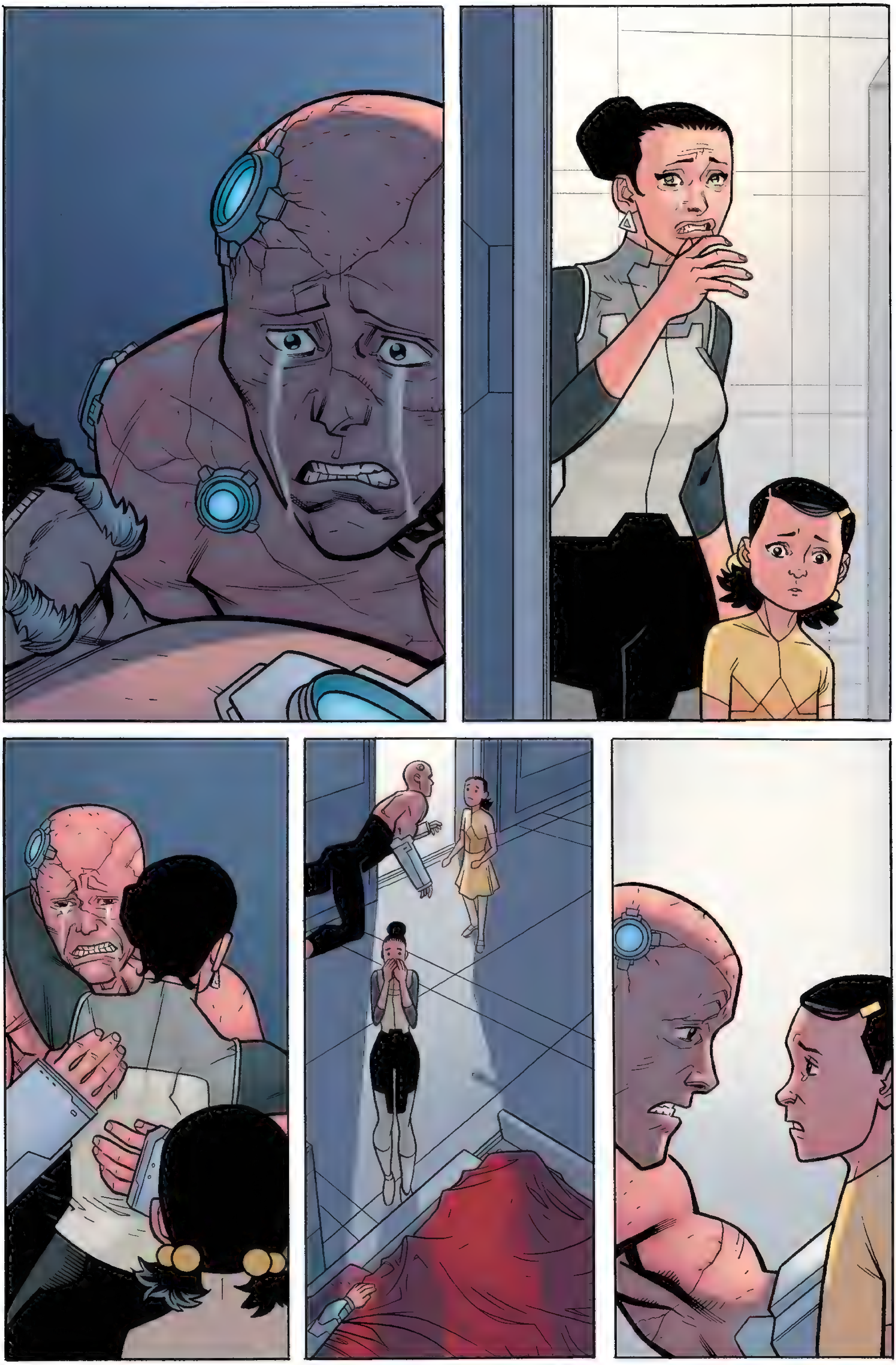

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO LEAD THE VILTRUMITES.
I'M NOT READY FOR THAT.
YOU'RE MORE READY THAN I WAS WHEN I TOOK OVER.
I DON'T *WANT* IT.

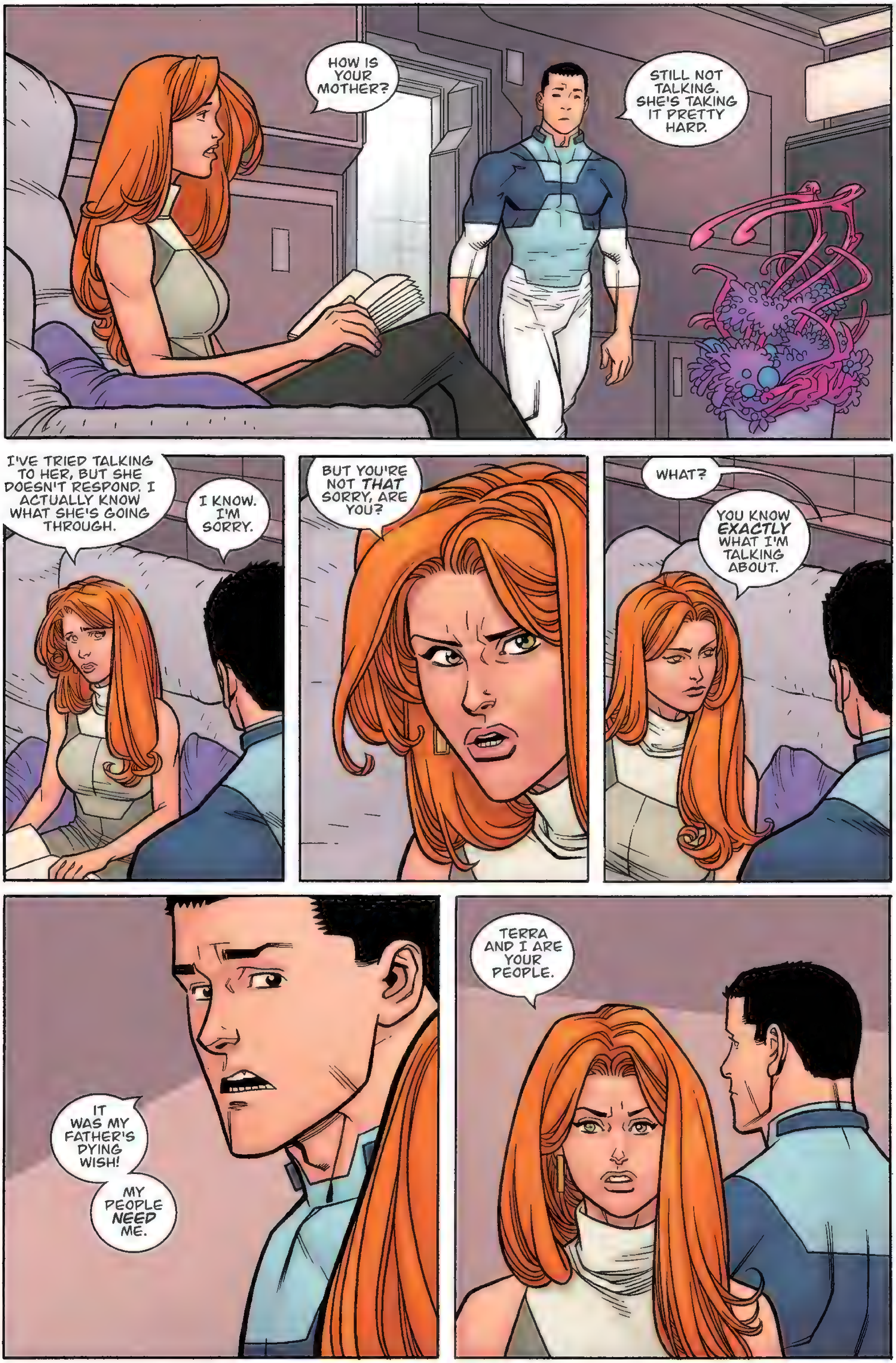

...
IT'S NOT WHAT I WANT FOR MY LIFE. I HAVE A WIFE, I HAVE A DAUGHTER... I NEED TO BE THERE FOR THEM.
THE WAY YOU WERE THERE FOR ME... BUT WITHOUT ALL THE *INTERRUPTIONS.*
DAD... I LOST *FIVE YEARS* WITH MY FAMILY. I CAN'T TAKE THAT KIND OF RISK AGAIN. I ONLY CAME BACK TO HELP TAKE DOWN THRAGG.
I *CAN'T* DO THIS.
WHERE WILL YOU GO? WHAT WILL YOU DO?
DO YOU THINK THERE'S ANY PLACE OUT THERE WHERE YOU'LL BE SAFE? IF SO... FOR HOW LONG?
AND WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING THAT WON'T SIMPLY BE HIDING FROM YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?
AND BEFORE YOU ANSWER...
THINK ABOUT WHAT IT WILL MEAN TO BE IN CONTROL OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE...
...AND WHAT KIND OF WORLD YOU COULD BUILD FOR YOUR DAUGHTER.

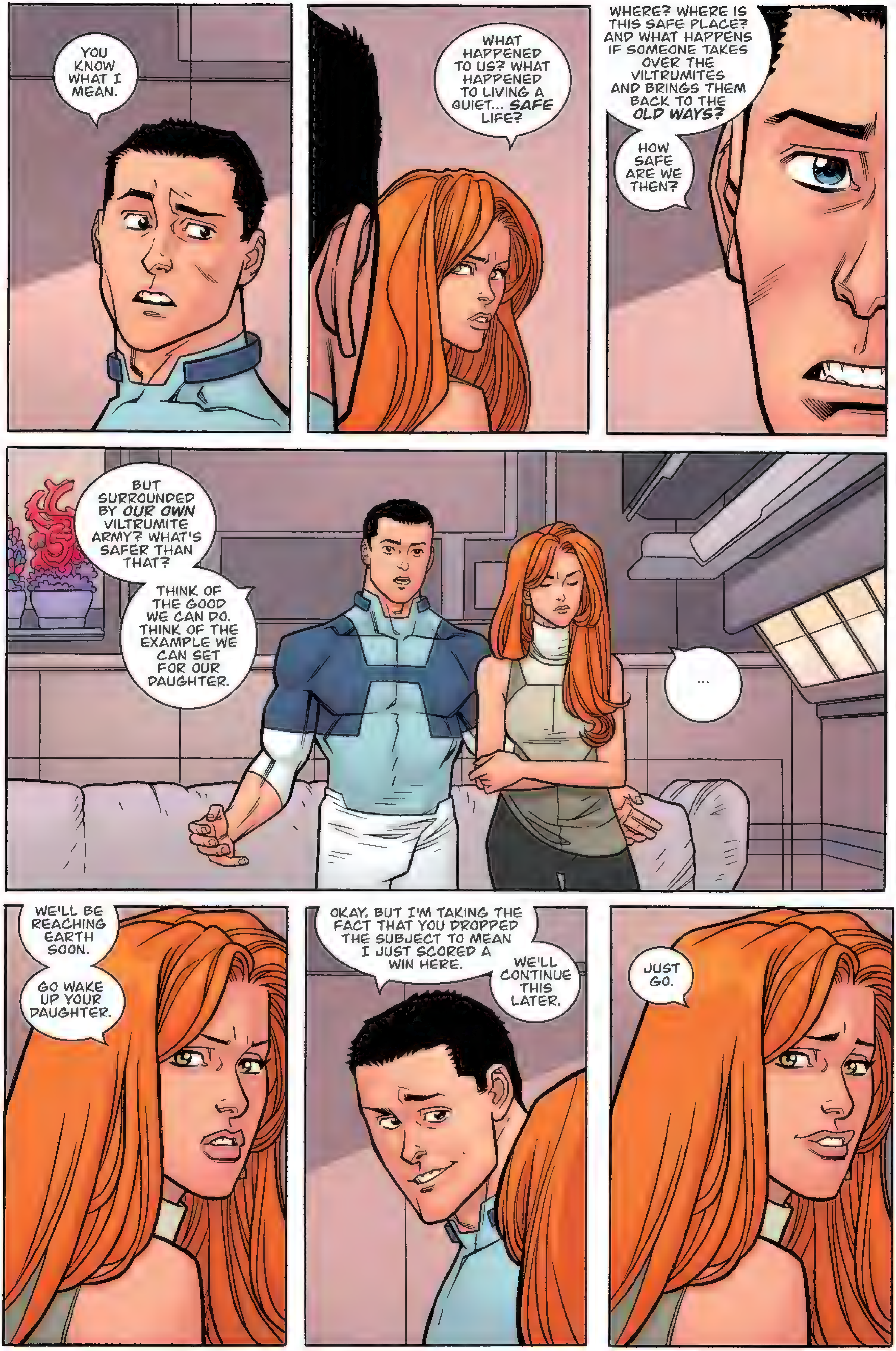

THEY NEED YOU, MARK. NOT JUST A GOOD LEADER... NOT JUST SOMEONE *WORTHY*... THEY NEED YOU.
I THINK ABOUT THRAGG... WHAT HE DID... AND IT REMINDS ME WHO I AM...
...WHO I *WAS.*
BUT MORE THAN THAT... WHO I COULD EASILY BE AGAIN.
NO. YOU'D NEVER--
YOU'RE *BETTER* THAN THAT.
IF I AM... IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU.
I NEED YOU TO KNOW THAT, SON.
I WAS BORN OF OUR PEOPLE... THEIR WAYS. THEIR WAYS WERE *SAVAGE* AND *BRUTAL.*
THEY WERE BARBARIC.
THAT IS PRESENT IN *ALL* OUR KIND. IT'S WHAT LEADS THEM TO MAKE MISTAKES... THEY CAN SLIP UP, SLIDE BACK INTO THE OLD WAYS.
LIKE ANISSA...
...
YOU ARE *FREE* FROM THAT. YOU WERE ALWAYS ON A DIFFERENT PATH.
YOU CAN SHOW US THE WAY.

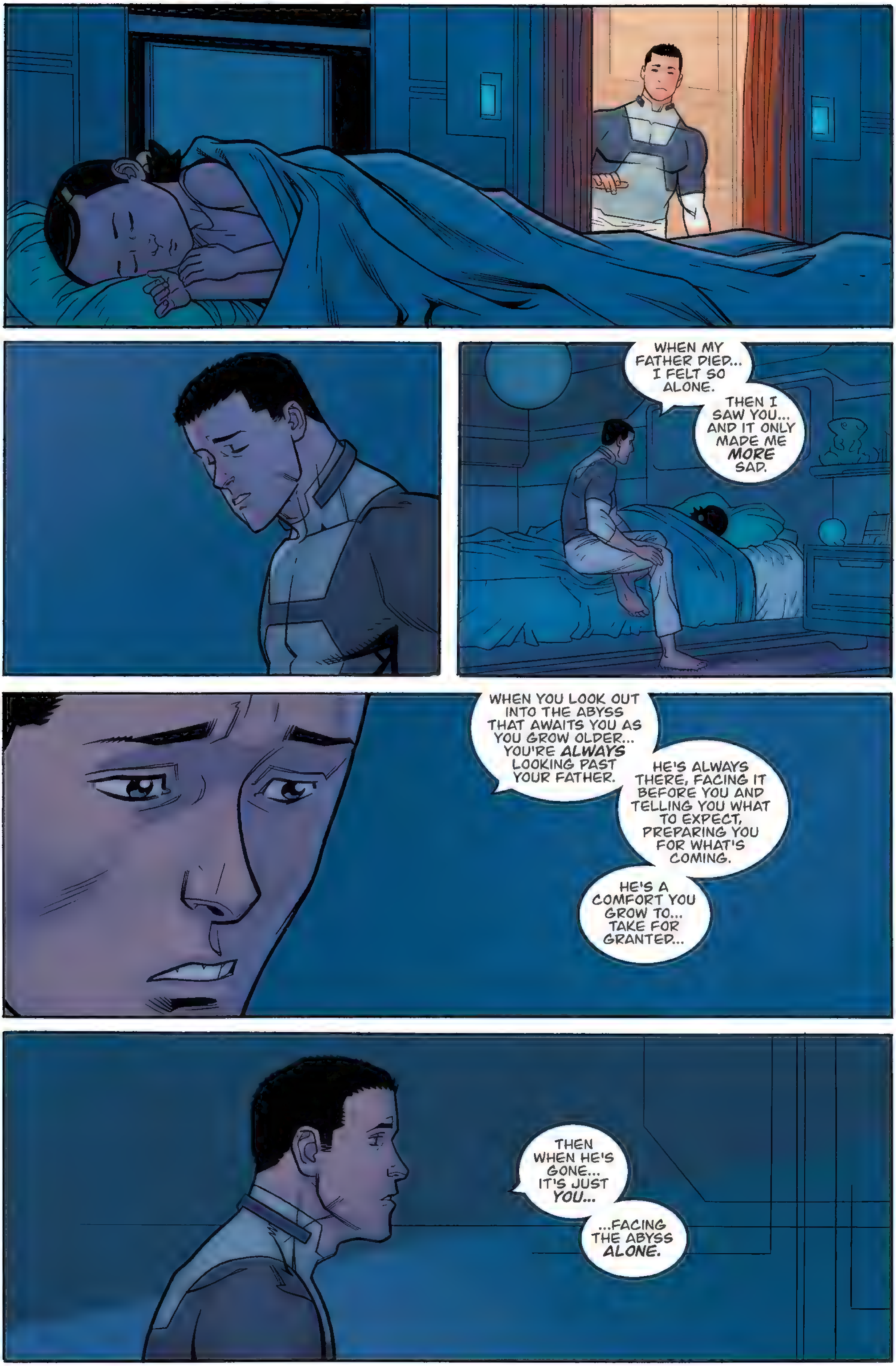

YOU CAN--
KOFF! KOFF!
KOFF!
DAD?! DAD?!
I'LL GET HELP!
NO, I'M FINE-- I'M--
YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME.
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAD OUR PEOPLE TO GREAT HEIGHTS. YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW THEM YOUR WAYS... YOUR COMPASSION...
...YOU'RE GOING TO...
YOU'RE...
MARK.
YOU CHANGED ME.
CHANGE THEM.

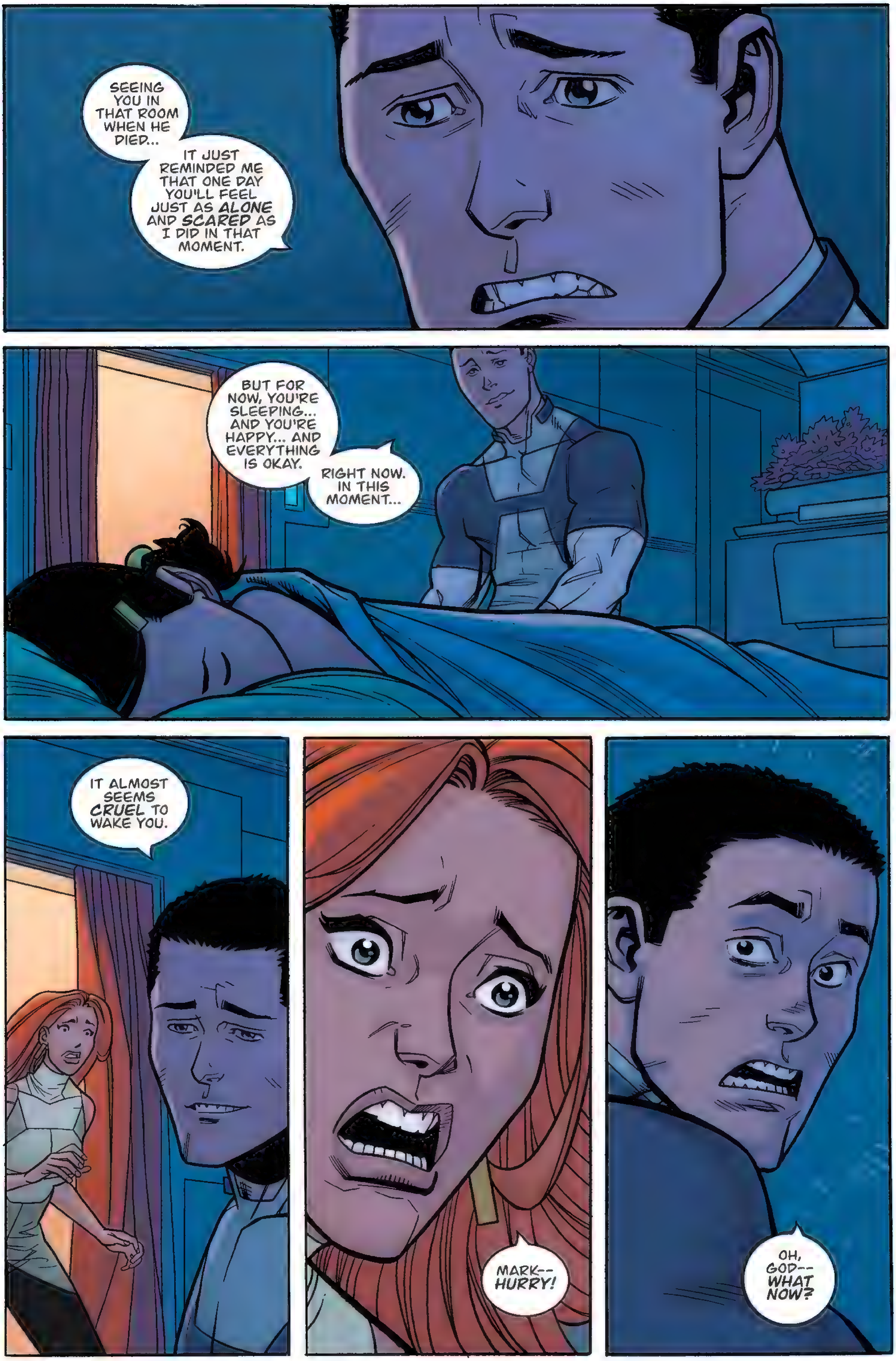
NO.
I WON'T LET YOU DO THAT.
YOU CAN'T PUT THAT ALL ON ME. MOM DIDN'T RAISE ME **ALONE. YOU** WERE THERE, TOO.
WHATEVER PART OF ME THAT YOU SAY CHANGED YOU... **YOU** HELPED PUT THAT THERE.
YOU RAISED ME WITH HUMANITY... YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO. YOU COULD HAVE TAUGHT ME THE VILTRUMITE WAYS FROM DAY ONE.
THE GOOD YOU HAVE BROUGHT TO THE VILTRUMITES... IT STARTED WITH **YOU.** IT'S ALREADY THERE, AND IT'S **GROWING.**
IF WE CAN **CHANGE** AS A PEOPLE... IT'S YOU WHO SHOWED US THE WAY. YOU--
...
DAD?




HOW IS YOUR MOTHER?
STILL NOT TALKING. SHE'S TAKING IT PRETTY HARD.
I'VE TRIED TALKING TO HER, BUT SHE DOESN'T RESPOND. I ACTUALLY KNOW WHAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH.
I KNOW. I'M SORRY.
BUT YOU'RE NOT *THAT* SORRY, ARE YOU?
WHAT?
YOU KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
IT WAS MY FATHER'S DYING WISH!
MY PEOPLE *NEED* ME.
TERRA AND I ARE YOUR PEOPLE.

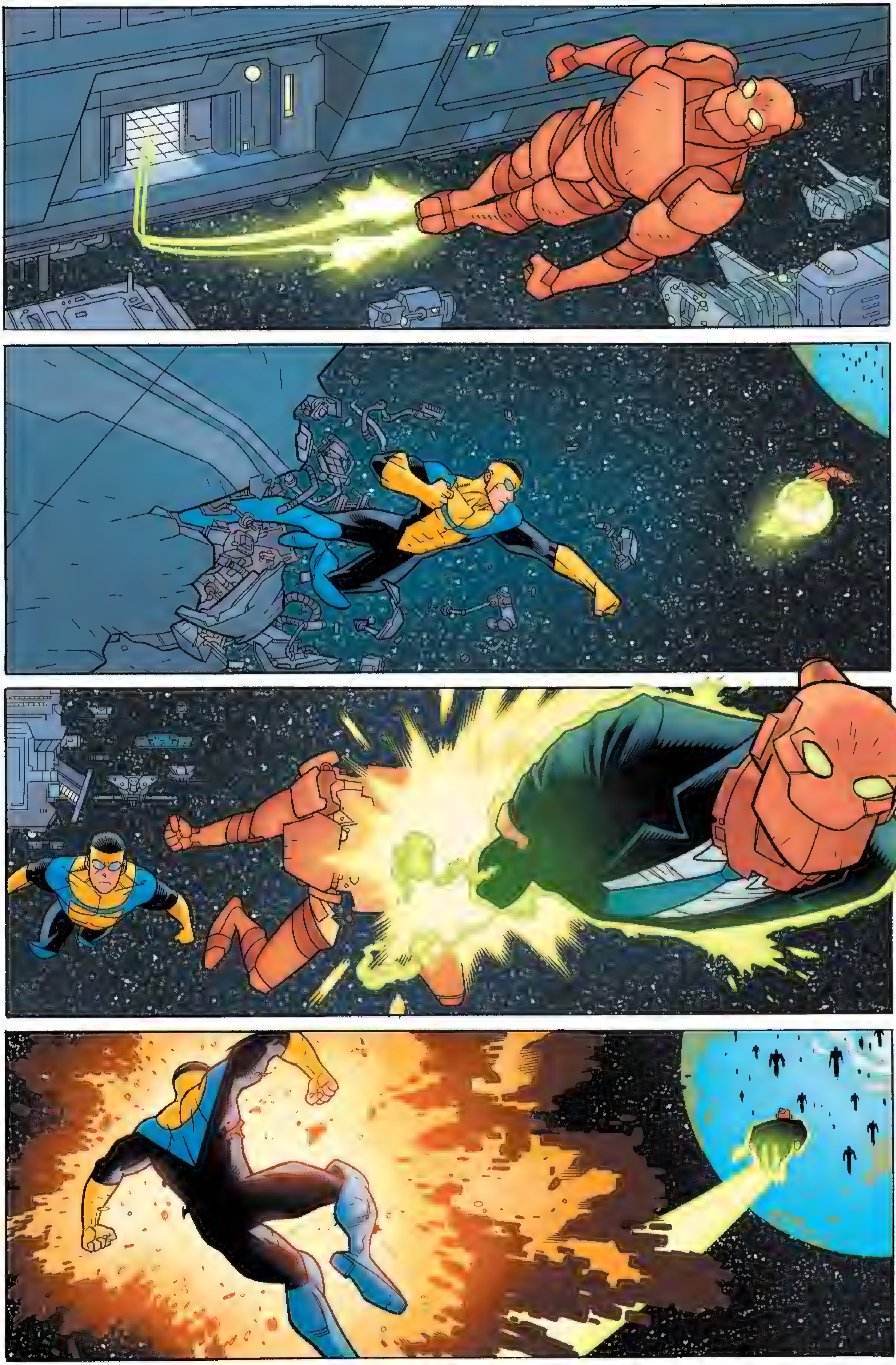

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
WHAT HAPPENED TO US? WHAT HAPPENED TO LIVING A QUIET... *SAFE* LIFE?
WHERE? WHERE IS THIS SAFE PLACE? AND WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMEONE TAKES OVER THE VILTRUMITES AND BRINGS THEM BACK TO THE *OLD WAYS?*
HOW SAFE ARE WE THEN?
BUT SURROUNDED BY *OUR OWN* VILTRUMITE ARMY? WHAT'S SAFER THAN THAT?
THINK OF THE GOOD WE CAN DO. THINK OF THE EXAMPLE WE CAN SET FOR OUR DAUGHTER.
...
WE'LL BE REACHING EARTH SOON.
GO WAKE UP YOUR DAUGHTER.
OKAY, BUT I'M TAKING THE FACT THAT YOU DROPPED THE SUBJECT TO MEAN I JUST SCORED A WIN HERE.
WE'LL CONTINUE THIS LATER.
JUST GO.

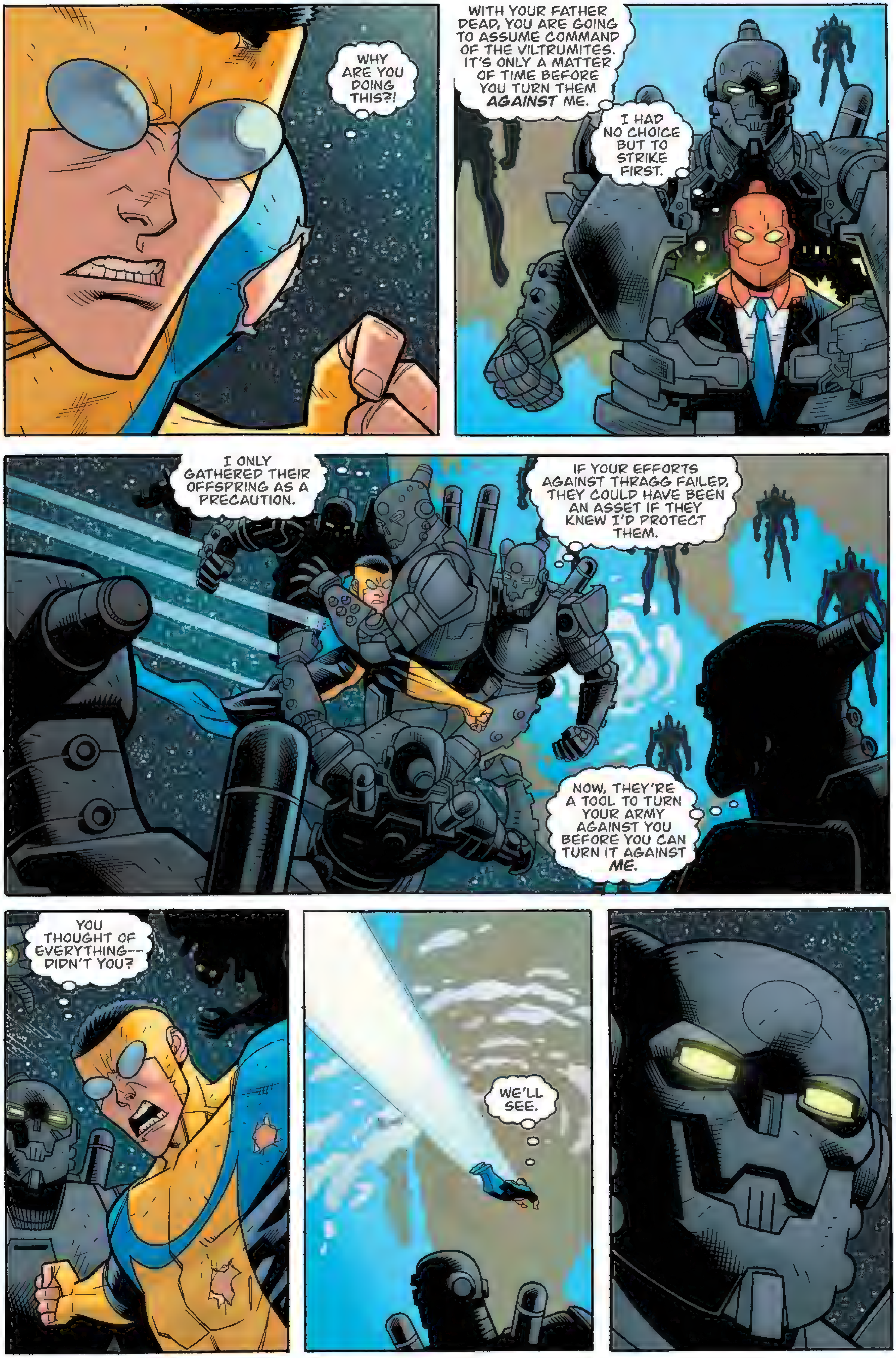

WHEN MY FATHER DIED... I FELT SO ALONE.
THEN I SAW YOU... AND IT ONLY MADE ME *MORE* SAD.
WHEN YOU LOOK OUT INTO THE ABYSS THAT AWAITS YOU AS YOU GROW OLDER... YOU'RE *ALWAYS* LOOKING PAST YOUR FATHER.
HE'S ALWAYS THERE, FACING IT BEFORE YOU AND TELLING YOU WHAT TO EXPECT, PREPARING YOU FOR WHAT'S COMING.
HE'S A COMFORT YOU GROW TO... TAKE FOR GRANTED...
THEN WHEN HE'S GONE... IT'S JUST *YOU*...
...FACING THE ABYSS *ALONE*.

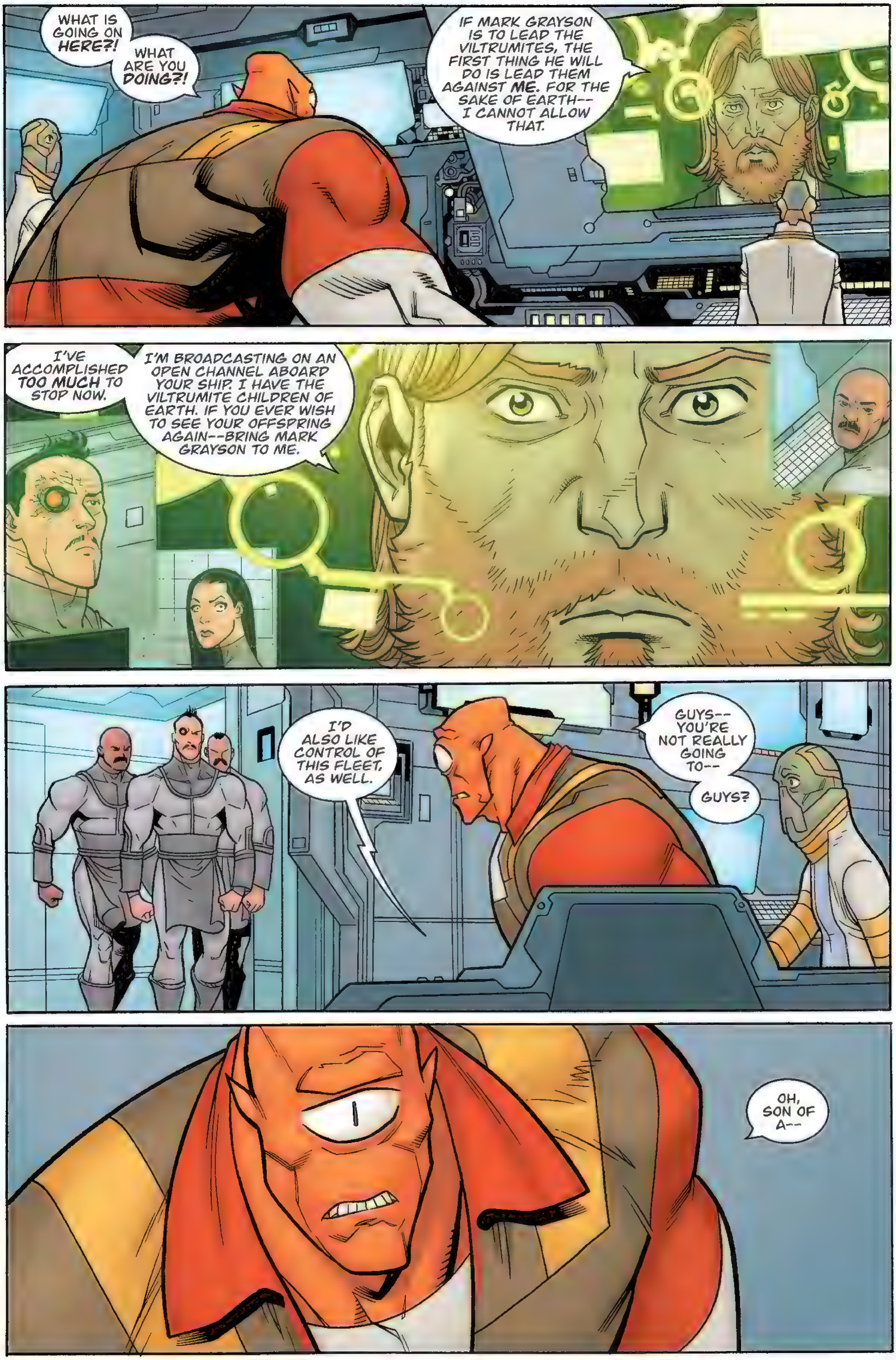

SEEING YOU IN THAT ROOM WHEN HE DIED...
IT JUST REMINDED ME THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL FEEL JUST AS ALONE AND SCARED AS I DID IN THAT MOMENT.
BUT FOR NOW, YOU'RE SLEEPING... AND YOU'RE HAPPY... AND EVERYTHING IS OKAY.
RIGHT NOW. IN THIS MOMENT...
IT ALMOST SEEMS CRUEL TO WAKE YOU.
MARK-- HURRY!
OH, GOD-- WHAT NOW?

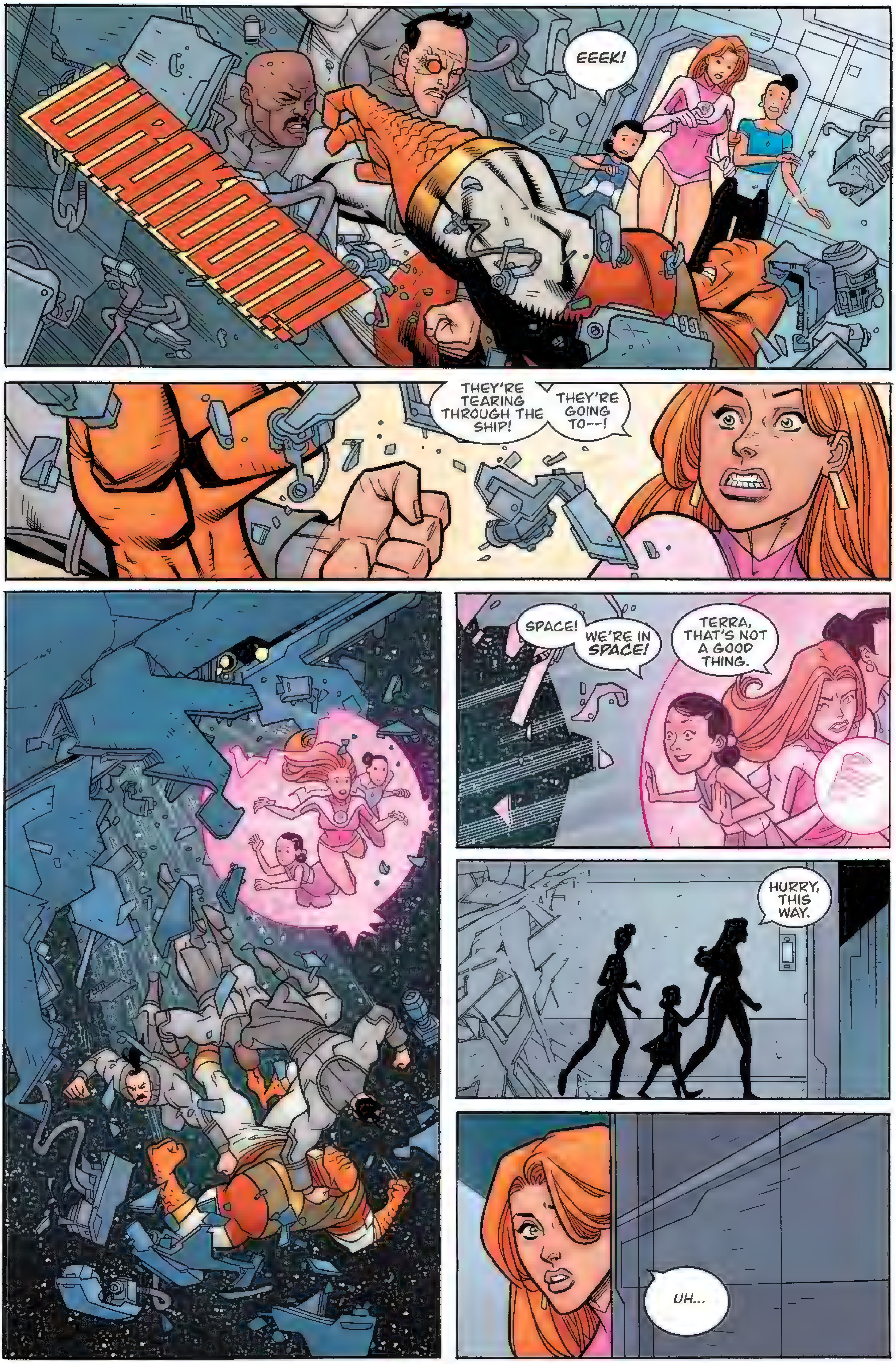
CHAPTER 142

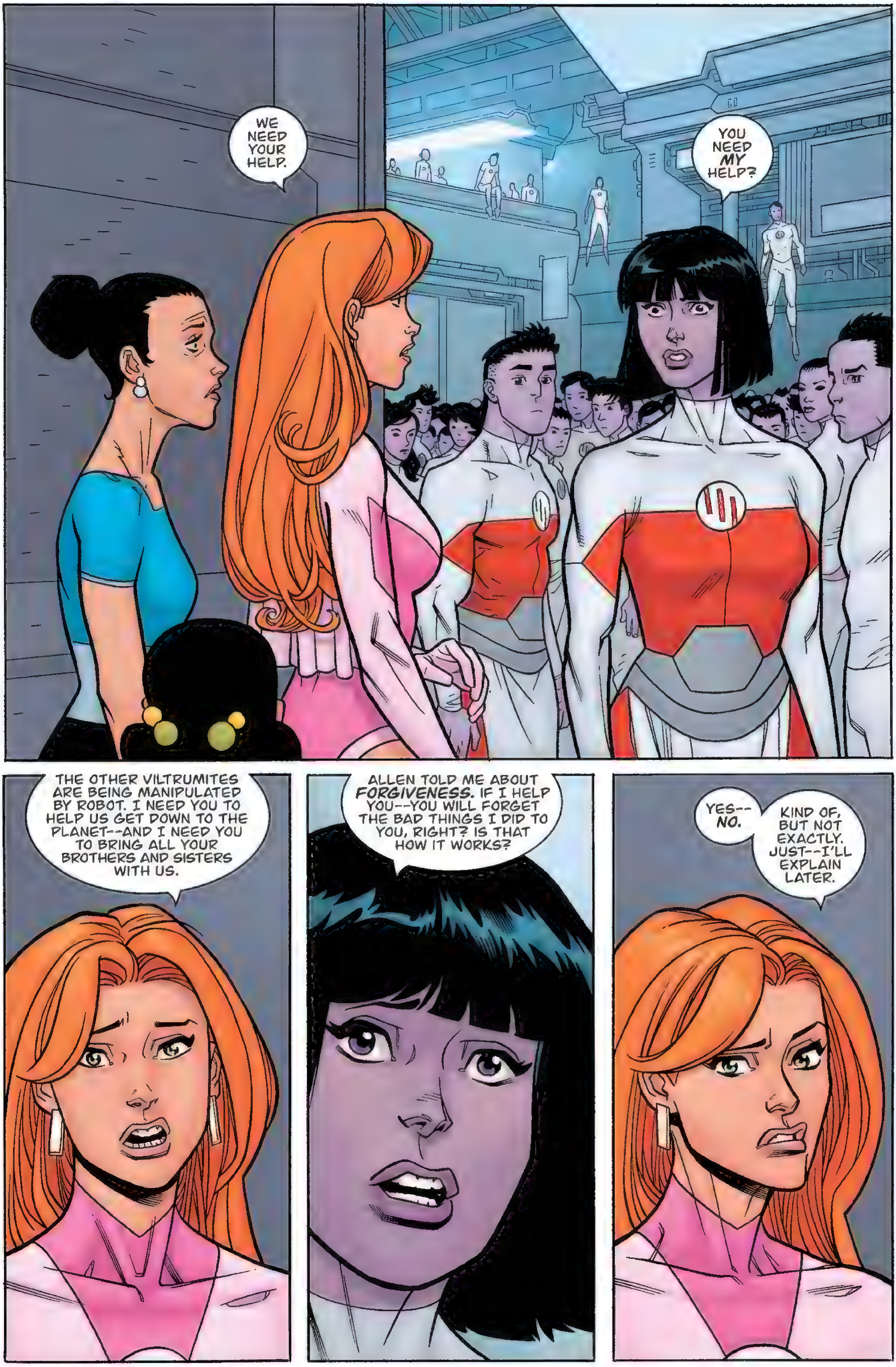
WHERE'S *REX?* IS HE STILL ON THE SHIP?!
MARK, *SLOW DOWN!*
STAY WITH *TERRA! KEEP HER SAFE!*
WHERE?!
WHERE?!
WHERE IS REX?!
REX? *ROBOT?*
I DON'T KNOW! I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE IS OR WHY HE HAS A *BLOCKADE* KEEPING US FROM EARTH!
WAIT-- WAIT! I FOUND HIM!

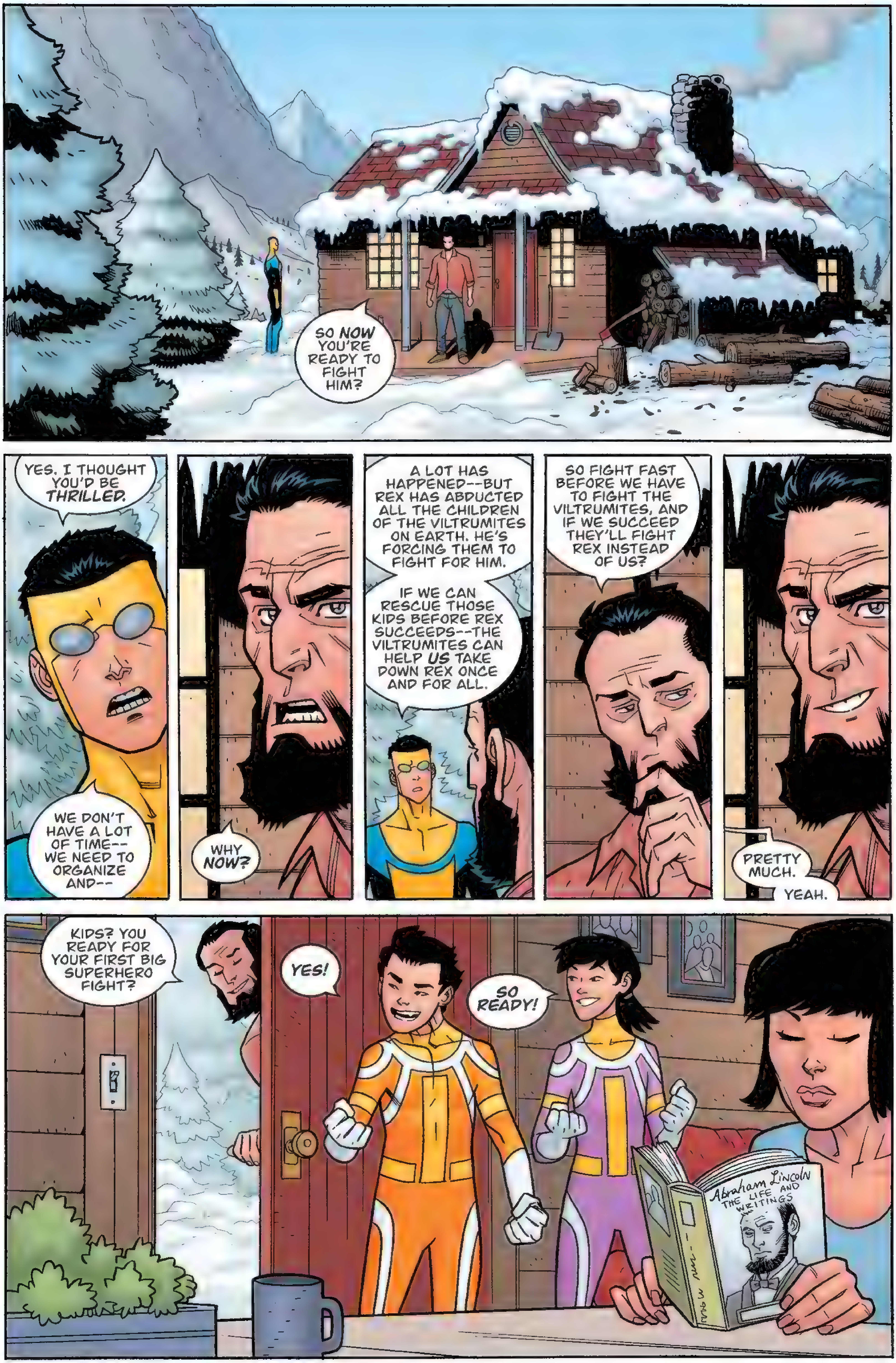


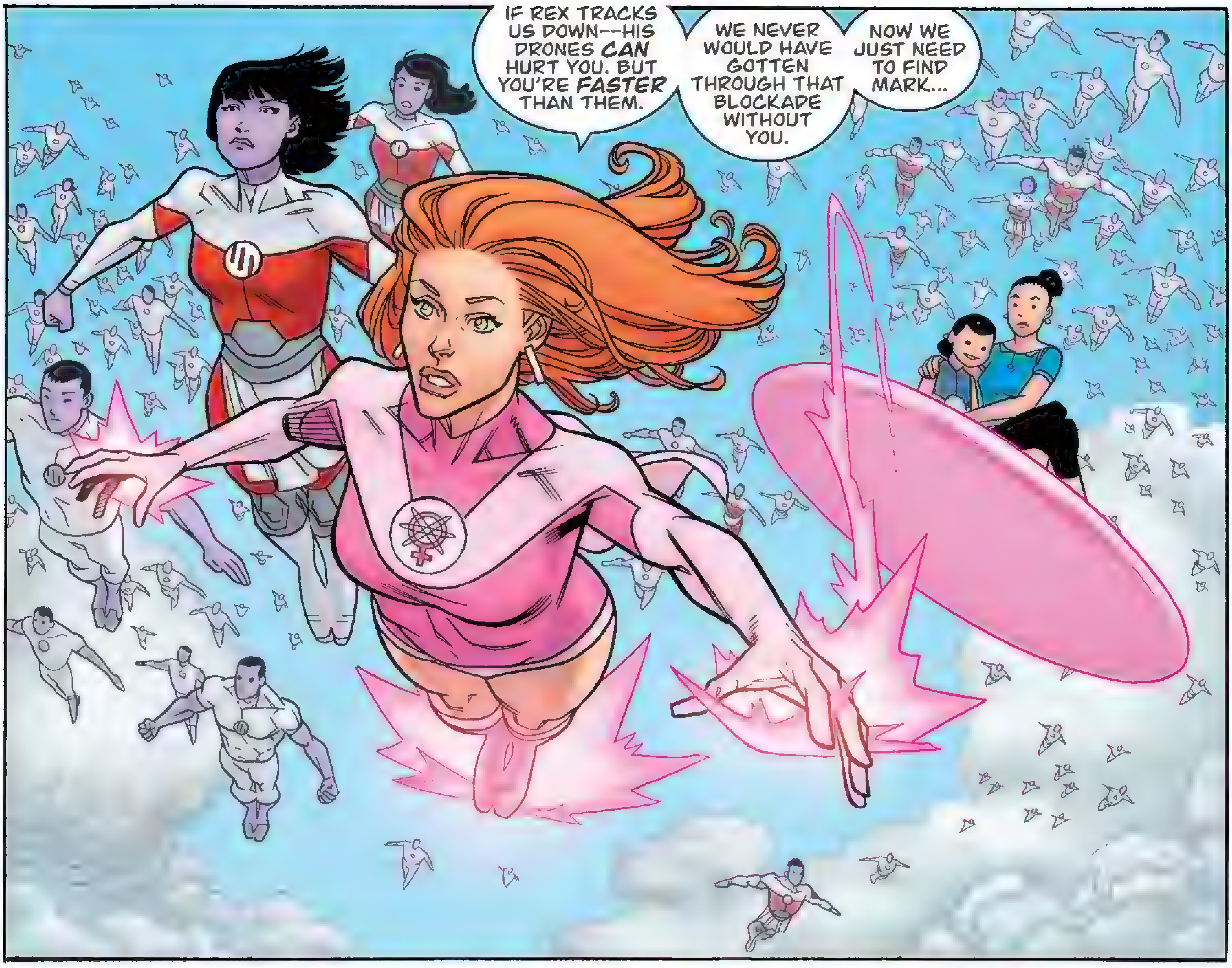

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!
WITH YOUR FATHER DEAD, YOU ARE GOING TO ASSUME COMMAND OF THE VILTRUMITES. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE YOU TURN THEM *AGAINST* ME.
I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO STRIKE FIRST.
I ONLY GATHERED THEIR OFFSPRING AS A PRECAUTION.
IF YOUR EFFORTS AGAINST THRAGG FAILED, THEY COULD HAVE BEEN AN ASSET IF THEY KNEW I'D PROTECT THEM.
NOW, THEY'RE A TOOL TO TURN YOUR ARMY AGAINST YOU BEFORE YOU CAN TURN IT AGAINST *ME.*
YOU THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING-- DIDN'T YOU?
WE'LL SEE.

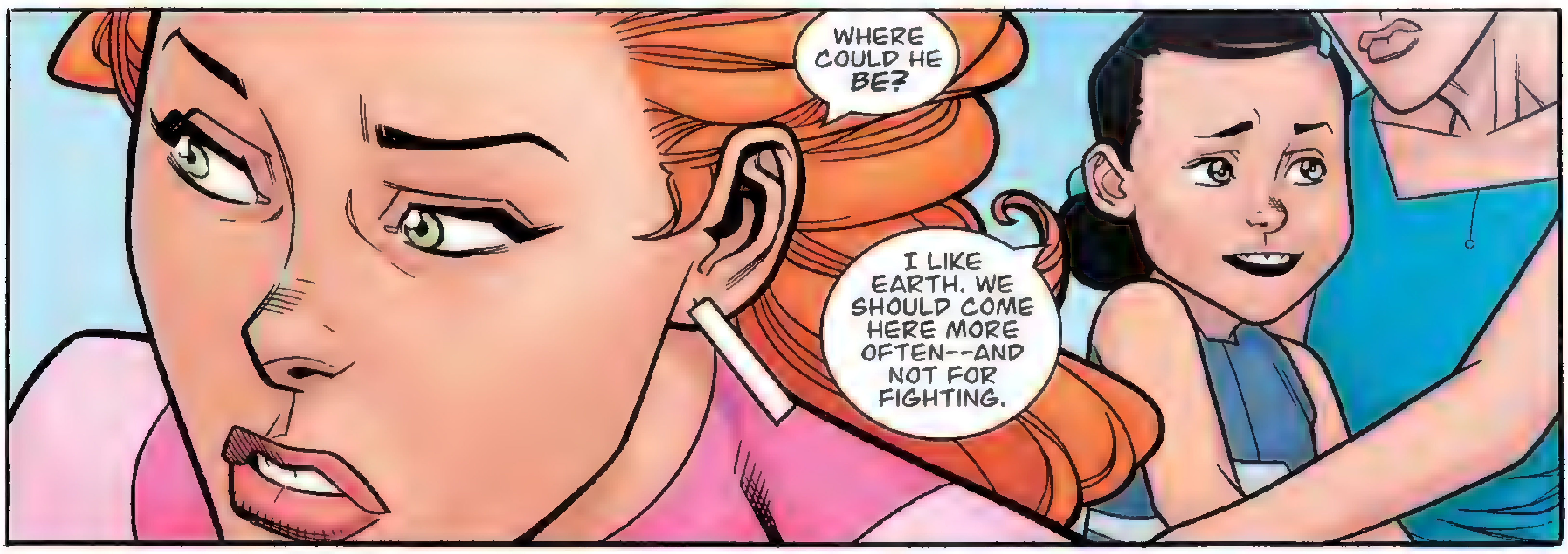

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
IF MARK GRAYSON IS TO LEAD THE VILTRUMITES, THE FIRST THING HE WILL DO IS LEAD THEM AGAINST ME. FOR THE SAKE OF EARTH-- I CANNOT ALLOW THAT.
I'VE ACCOMPLISHED TOO MUCH TO STOP NOW.
I'M BROADCASTING ON AN OPEN CHANNEL ABOARD YOUR SHIP. I HAVE THE VILTRUMITE CHILDREN OF EARTH. IF YOU EVER WISH TO SEE YOUR OFFSPRING AGAIN--BRING MARK GRAYSON TO ME.
I'D ALSO LIKE CONTROL OF THIS FLEET, AS WELL.
GUYS-- YOU'RE NOT REALLY GOING TO--
GUYS?
OH, SON OF A--

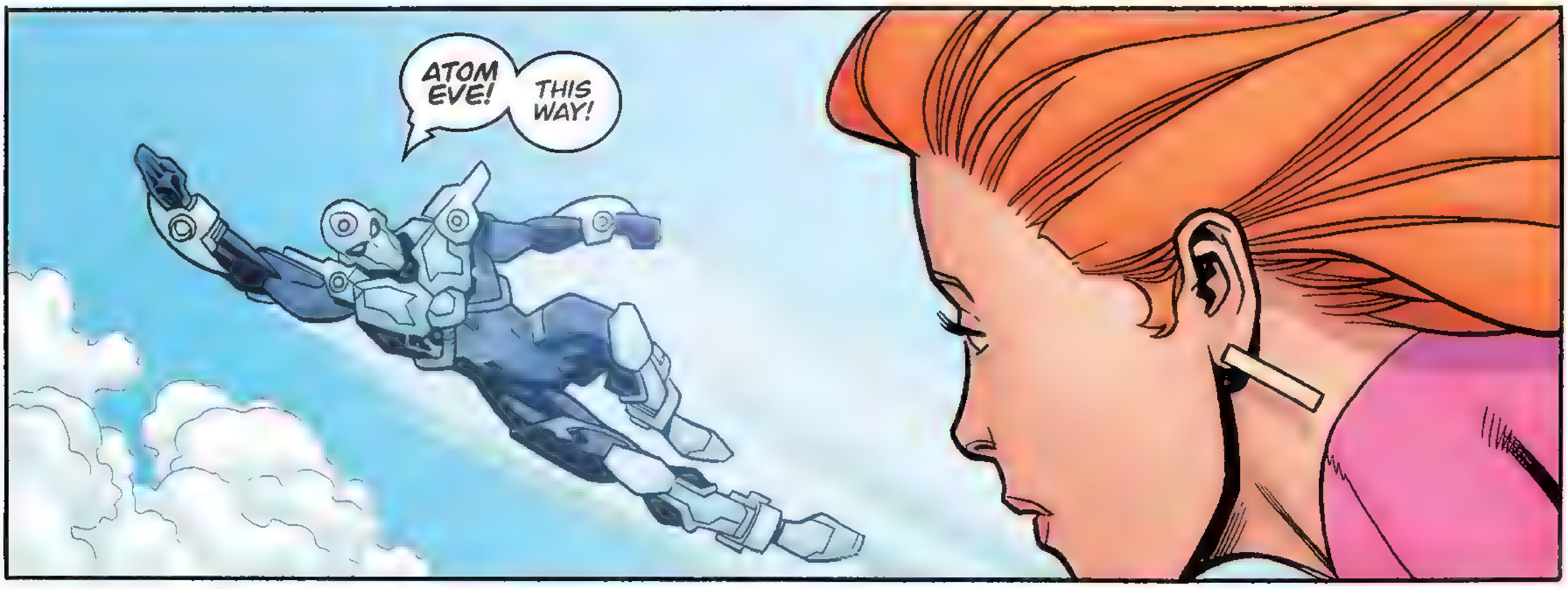

EEEK!
THEY'RE TEARING THROUGH THE SHIP!
THEY'RE GOING TO--!
SPACE!
WE'RE IN SPACE!
TERRA, THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING.
HURRY, THIS WAY.
UH...

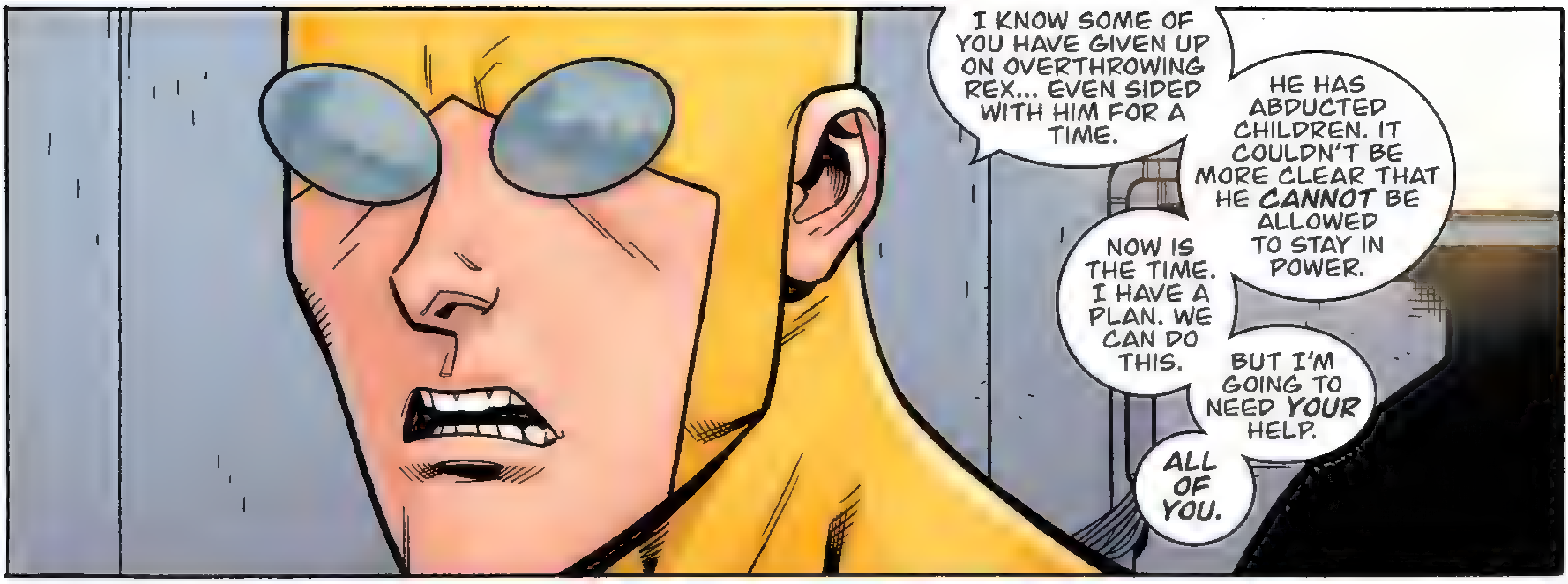

WE NEED YOUR HELP.
YOU NEED *MY* HELP?
THE OTHER VILTRUMITES ARE BEING MANIPULATED BY ROBOT. I NEED YOU TO HELP US GET DOWN TO THE PLANET--AND I NEED YOU TO BRING ALL YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WITH US.
ALLEN TOLD ME ABOUT *FORGIVENESS.* IF I HELP YOU--YOU WILL FORGET THE BAD THINGS I DID TO YOU, RIGHT? IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?
YES-- *NO.*
KIND OF, BUT NOT EXACTLY. JUST--I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.

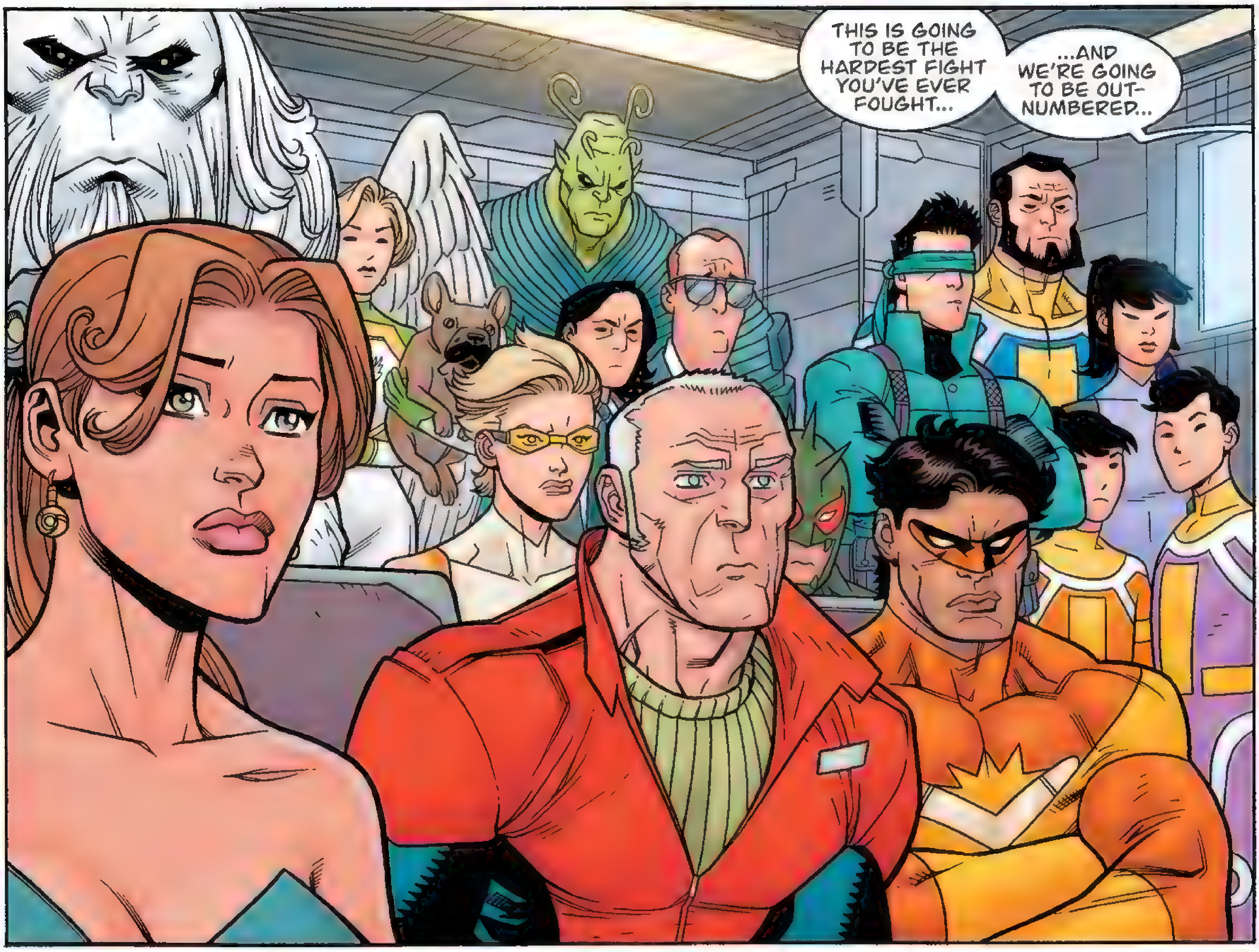

SO *NOW* YOU'RE READY TO FIGHT HIM?
YES. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE *THRILLED.*
WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME-- WE NEED TO ORGANIZE AND--
WHY *NOW?*
A LOT HAS HAPPENED--BUT REX HAS ABDUCTED ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE VILTRUMITES ON EARTH. HE'S FORCING THEM TO FIGHT FOR HIM.
IF WE CAN RESCUE THOSE KIDS BEFORE REX SUCCEEDS--THE VILTRUMITES CAN HELP *US* TAKE DOWN REX ONCE AND FOR ALL.
SO FIGHT FAST BEFORE WE HAVE TO FIGHT THE VILTRUMITES, AND IF WE SUCCEED THEY'LL FIGHT REX INSTEAD OF US?
PRETTY MUCH.
YEAH.
KIDS? YOU READY FOR YOUR FIRST BIG SUPERHERO FIGHT?
YES!
SO READY!
Abraham Lincoln THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

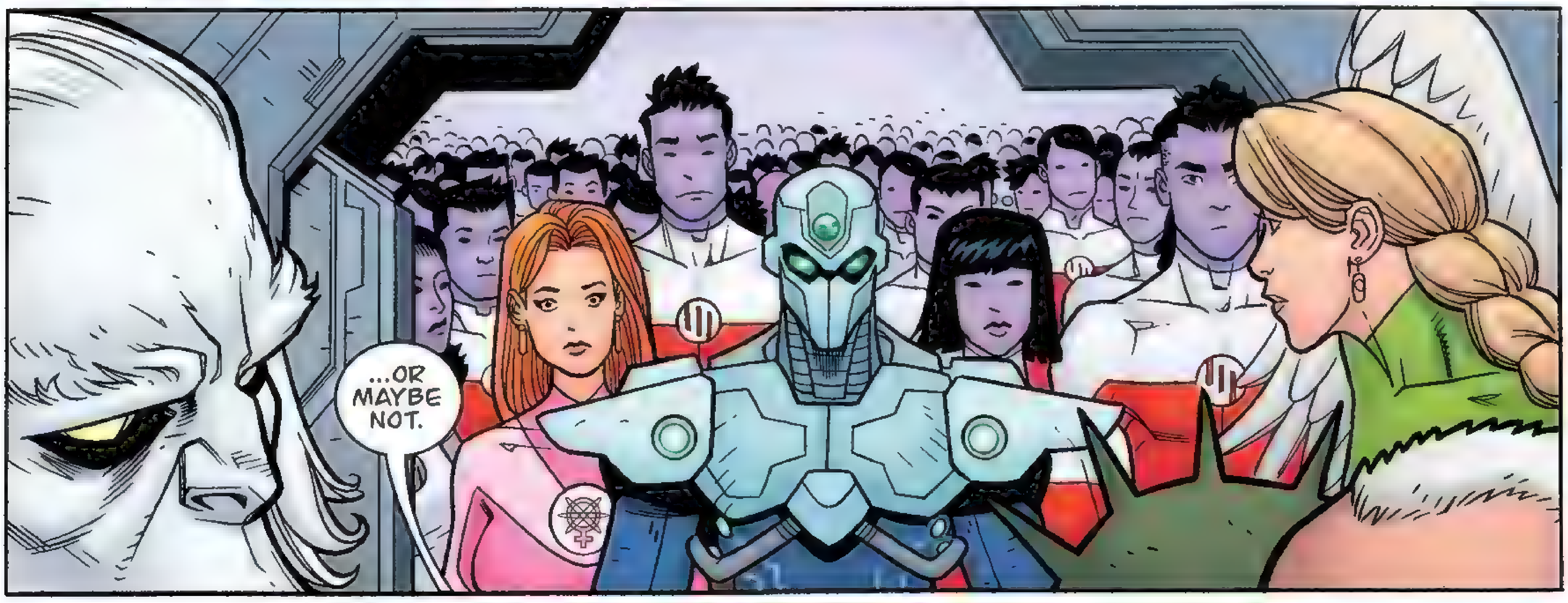

IF REX TRACKS US DOWN--HIS DRONES CAN HURT YOU. BUT YOU'RE FASTER THAN THEM.
WE NEVER WOULD HAVE GOTTEN THROUGH THAT BLOCKADE WITHOUT YOU.
NOW WE JUST NEED TO FIND MARK...

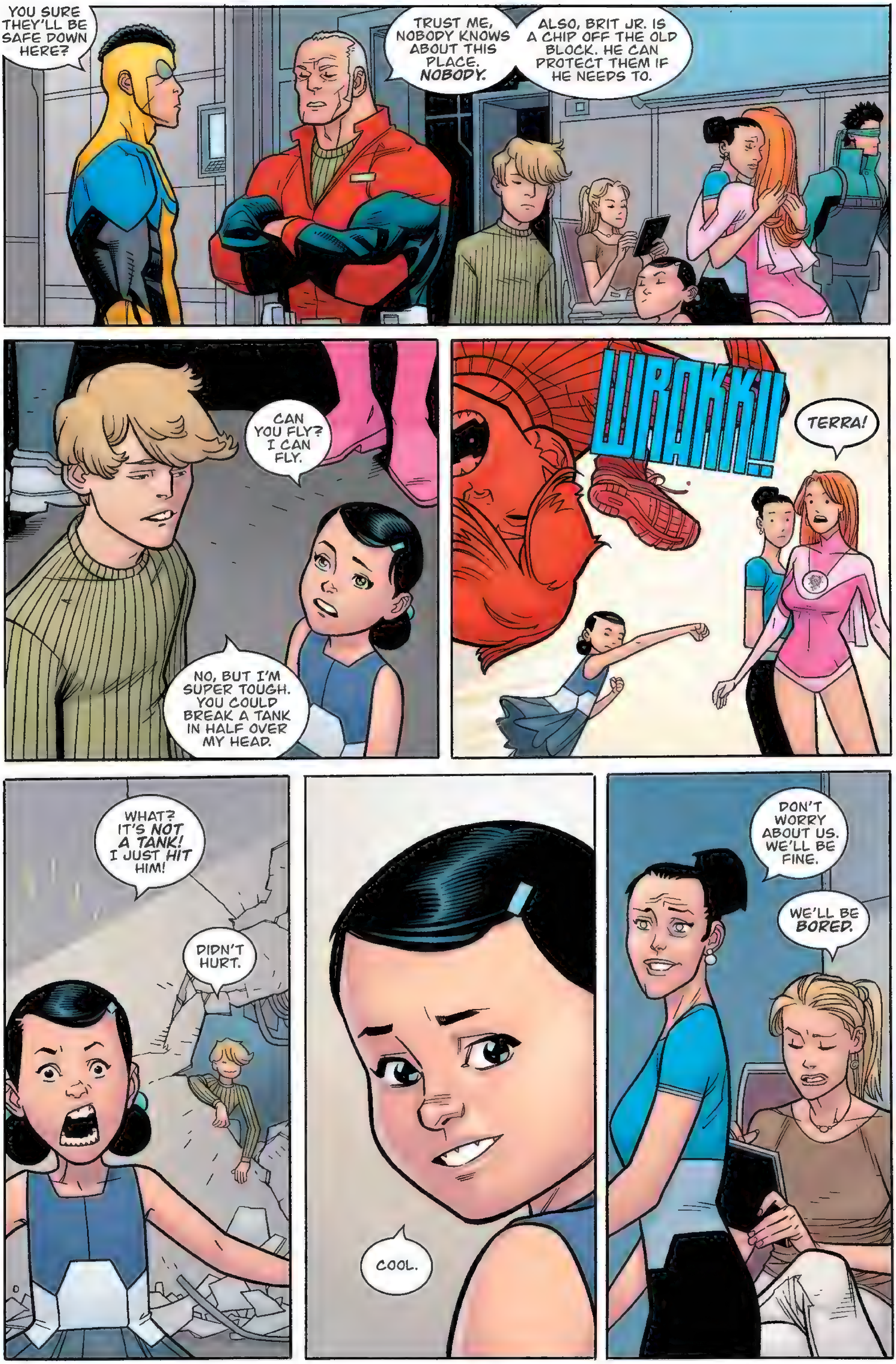

WHERE COULD HE BE?
I LIKE EARTH. WE SHOULD COME HERE MORE OFTEN--AND NOT FOR FIGHTING.

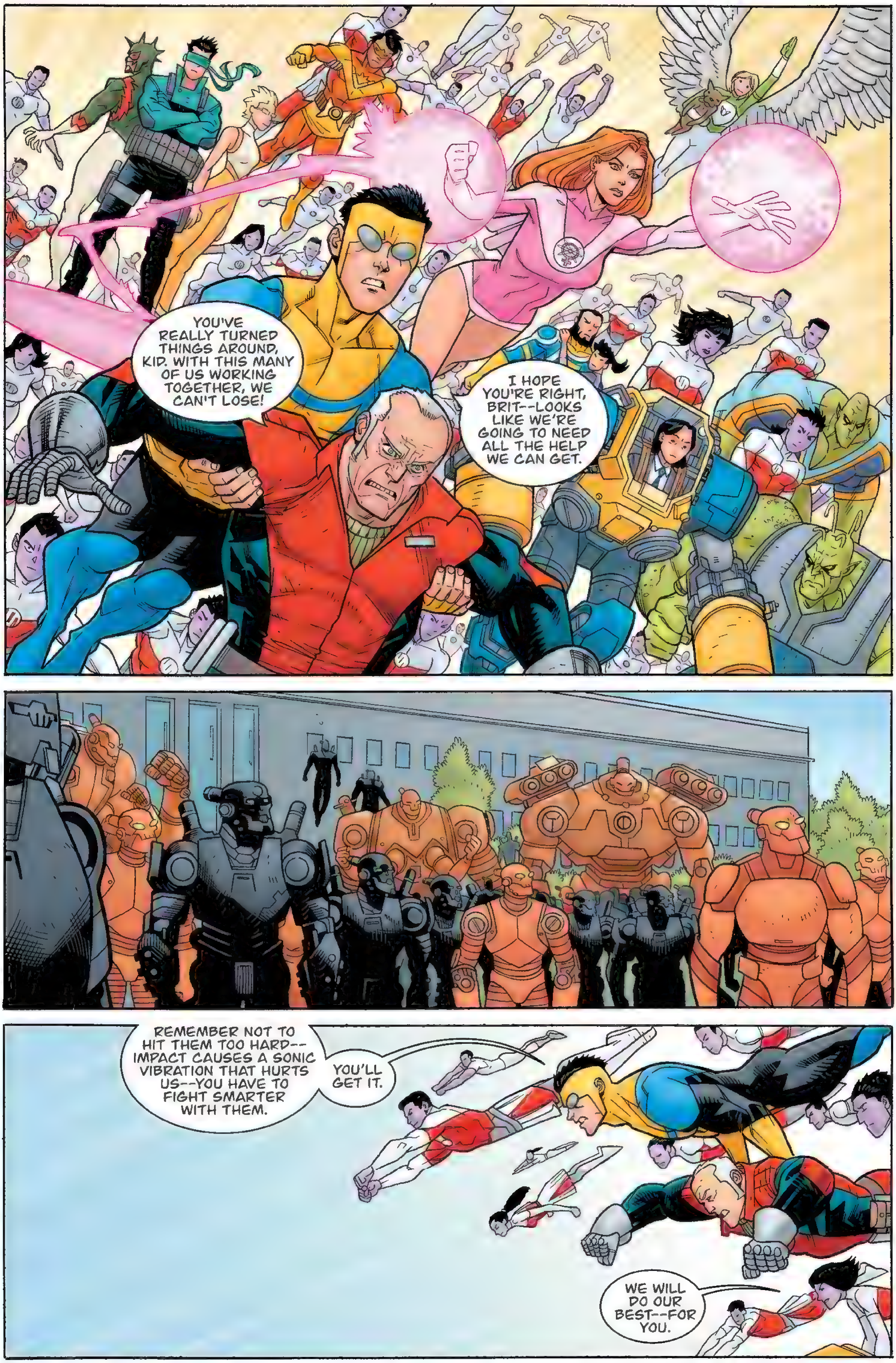

ATOM EVE!
THIS WAY!

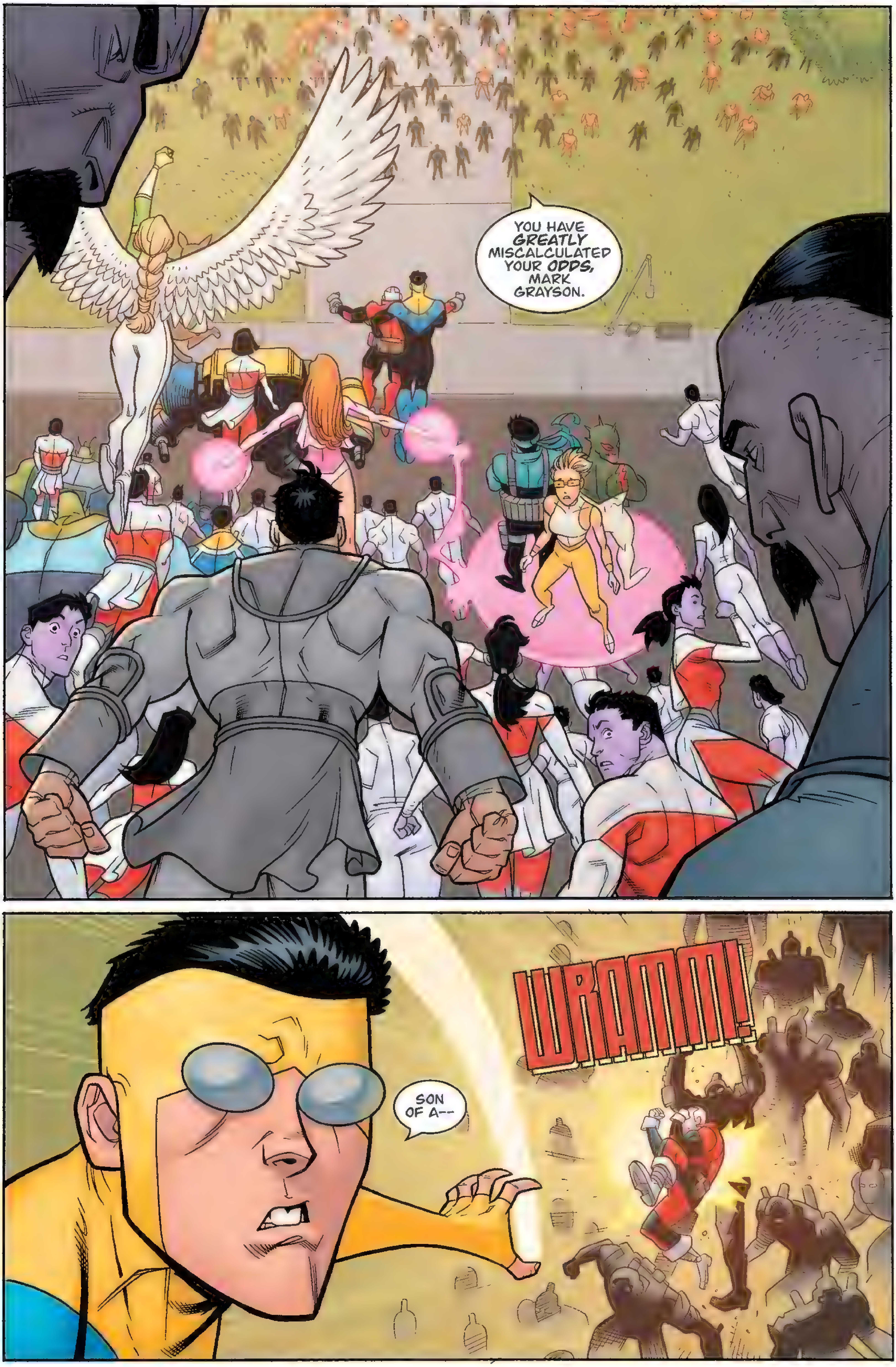

I KNOW SOME OF YOU HAVE GIVEN UP ON OVERTHROWING REX... EVEN SIDED WITH HIM FOR A TIME.
HE HAS ABDUCTED CHILDREN. IT COULDN'T BE MORE CLEAR THAT HE **CANNOT** BE ALLOWED TO STAY IN POWER.
NOW IS THE TIME. I HAVE A PLAN. WE CAN DO THIS.
BUT I'M GOING TO NEED **YOUR** HELP.
ALL OF YOU.

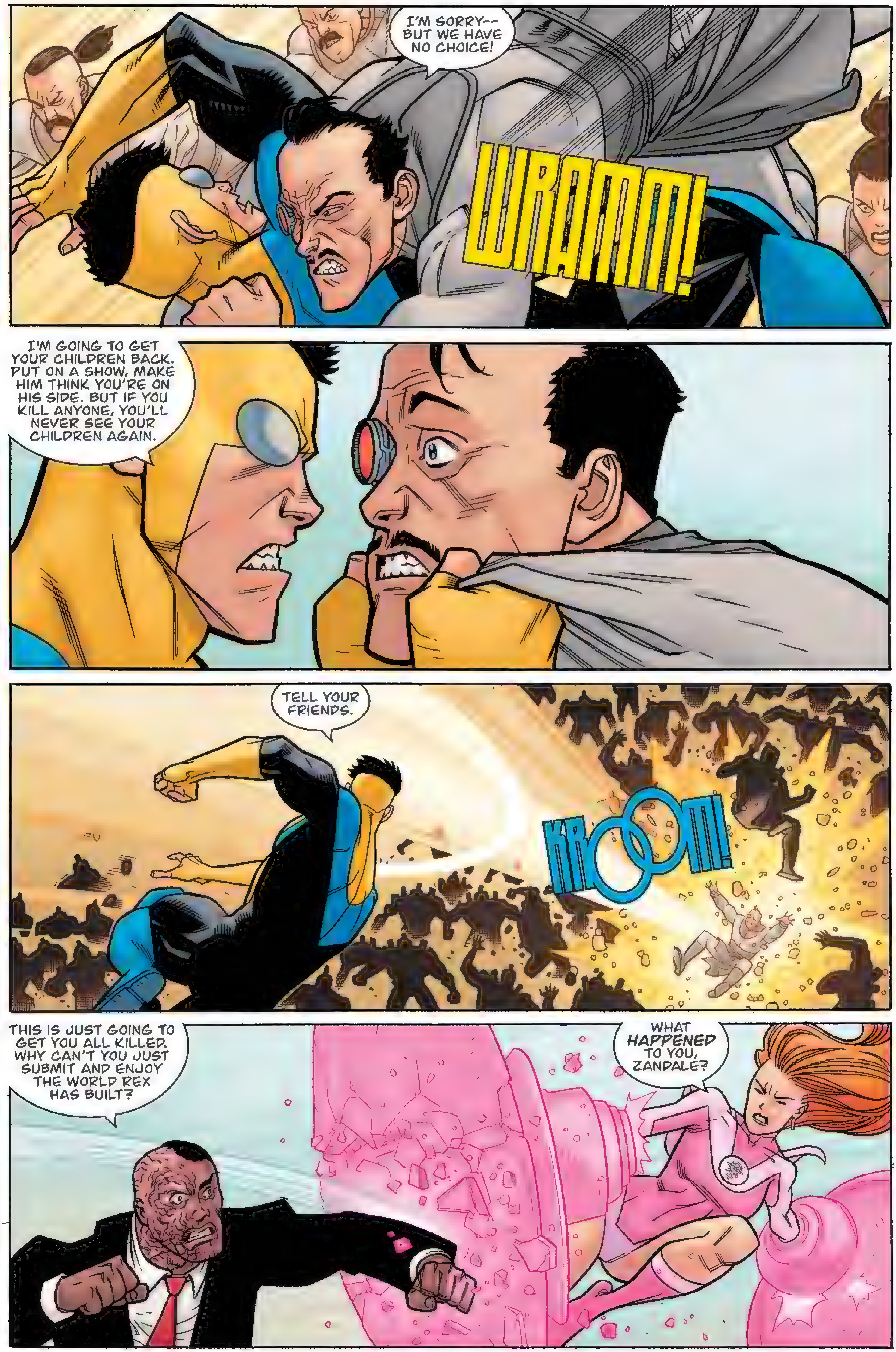

THIS IS GOING TO BE THE HARDEST FIGHT YOU'VE EVER FOUGHT...
...AND WE'RE GOING TO BE OUTNUMBERED...


...OR MAYBE NOT.

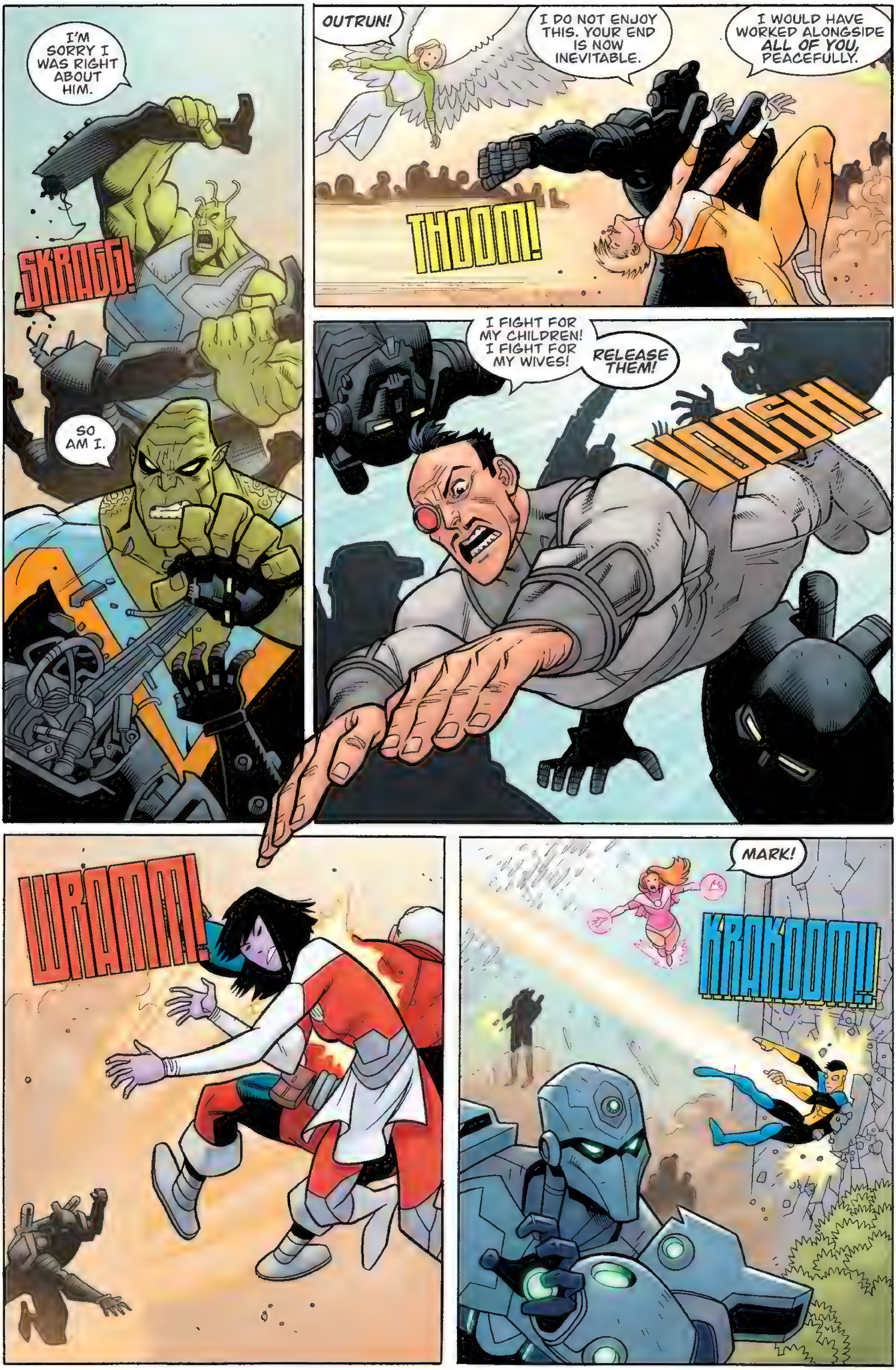

YOU SURE THEY'LL BE SAFE DOWN HERE?
TRUST ME, NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT THIS PLACE. NOBODY.
ALSO, BRIT JR. IS A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK. HE CAN PROTECT THEM IF HE NEEDS TO.
CAN YOU FLY? I CAN FLY.
NO, BUT I'M SUPER TOUGH. YOU COULD BREAK A TANK IN HALF OVER MY HEAD.
WRAKK!!
TERRA!
WHAT? IT'S NOT A TANK! I JUST HIT HIM!
DIDN'T HURT.
COOL.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT US. WE'LL BE FINE.
WE'LL BE BORED.

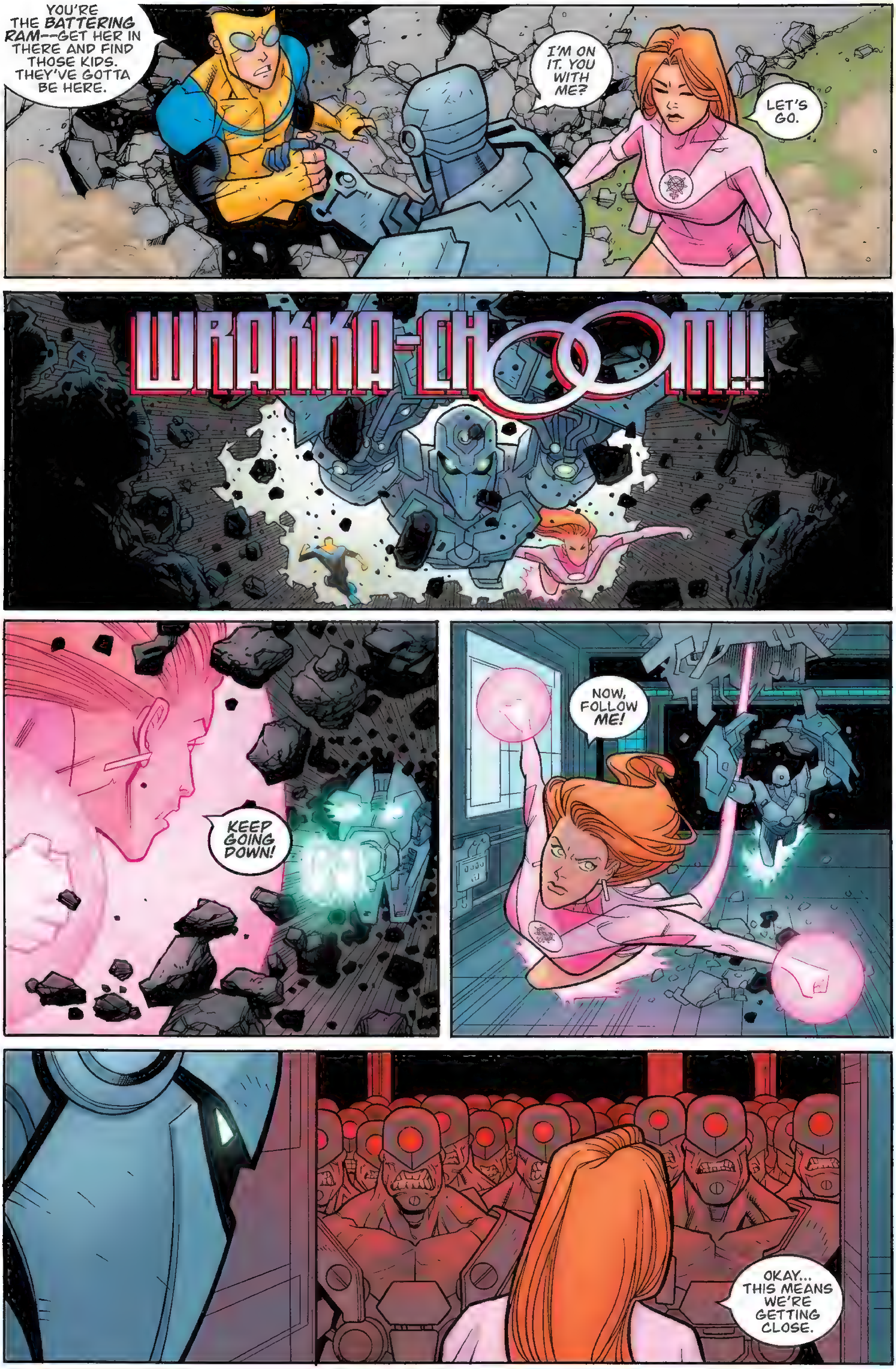

YOU'VE REALLY TURNED THINGS AROUND, KID. WITH THIS MANY OF US WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN'T LOSE!
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, BRIT--LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.
REMEMBER NOT TO HIT THEM TOO HARD--IMPACT CAUSES A SONIC VIBRATION THAT HURTS US--YOU HAVE TO FIGHT SMARTER WITH THEM.
YOU'LL GET IT.
WE WILL DO OUR BEST--FOR YOU.

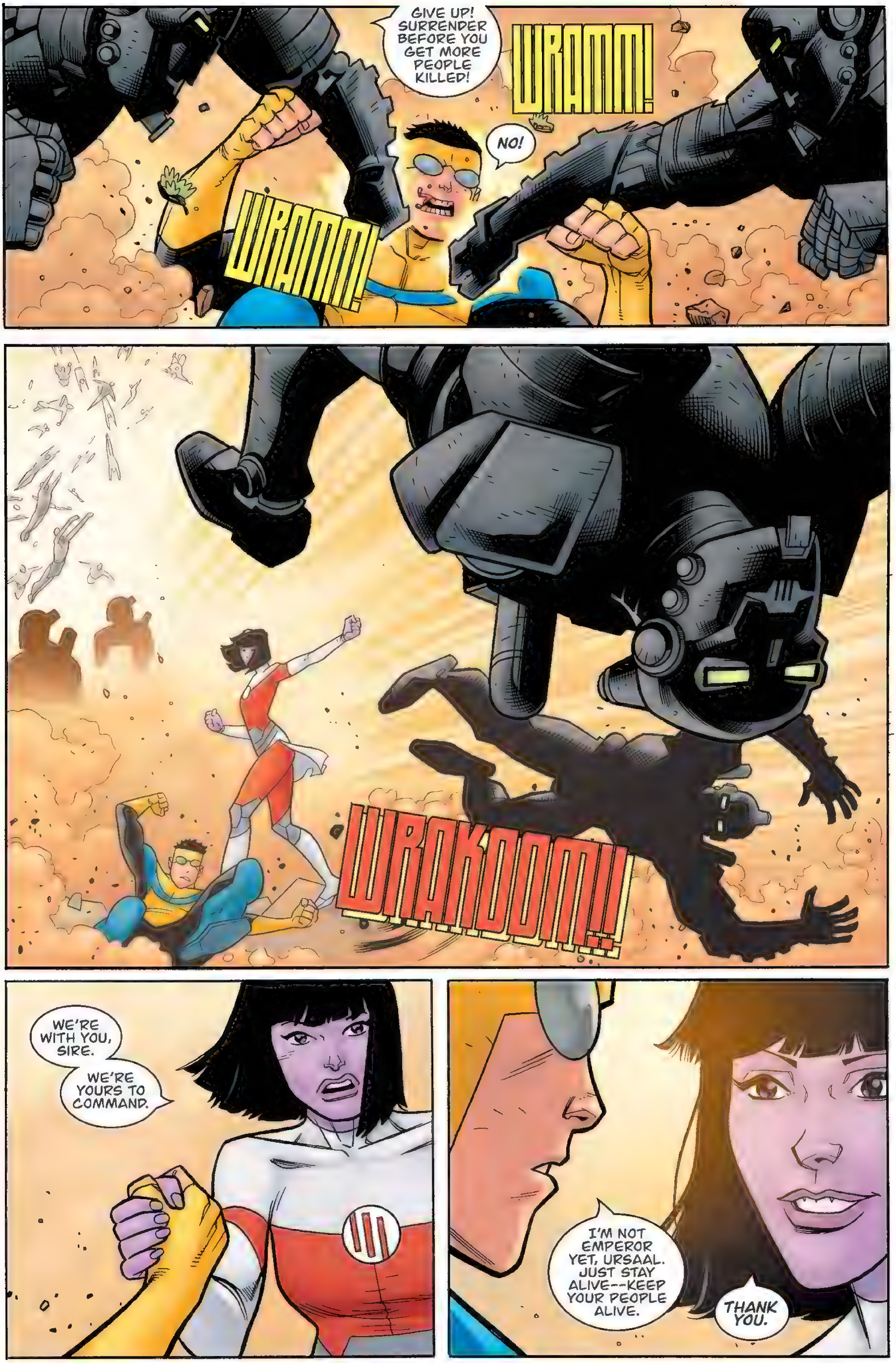

YOU HAVE **GREATLY** MISCALCULATED YOUR **ODDS**, MARK GRAYSON.
WRAMM!
SON OF A--


I'M SORRY-- BUT WE HAVE NO CHOICE!
WRAMM!
I'M GOING TO GET YOUR CHILDREN BACK. PUT ON A SHOW, MAKE HIM THINK YOU'RE ON HIS SIDE. BUT IF YOU KILL ANYONE, YOU'LL NEVER SEE YOUR CHILDREN AGAIN.
TELL YOUR FRIENDS.
KROOOM!
THIS IS JUST GOING TO GET YOU ALL KILLED. WHY CAN'T YOU JUST SUBMIT AND ENJOY THE WORLD REX HAS BUILT?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, ZANDALE?

YOU REALLY COULDN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE, **COULD YOU?**
YOU WON'T GIVE UP UNTIL EVERYONE YOU CARE ABOUT IS **DEAD.**
WHAT YOU DID IS ***WRONG.*** WHAT YOU'RE ***DOING*** IS WRONG. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE GIVEN UP--I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU OUT ***IMMEDIATELY.***
THIS PLANET ISN'T YOURS TO MANIPULATE AS YOU SEE FIT!

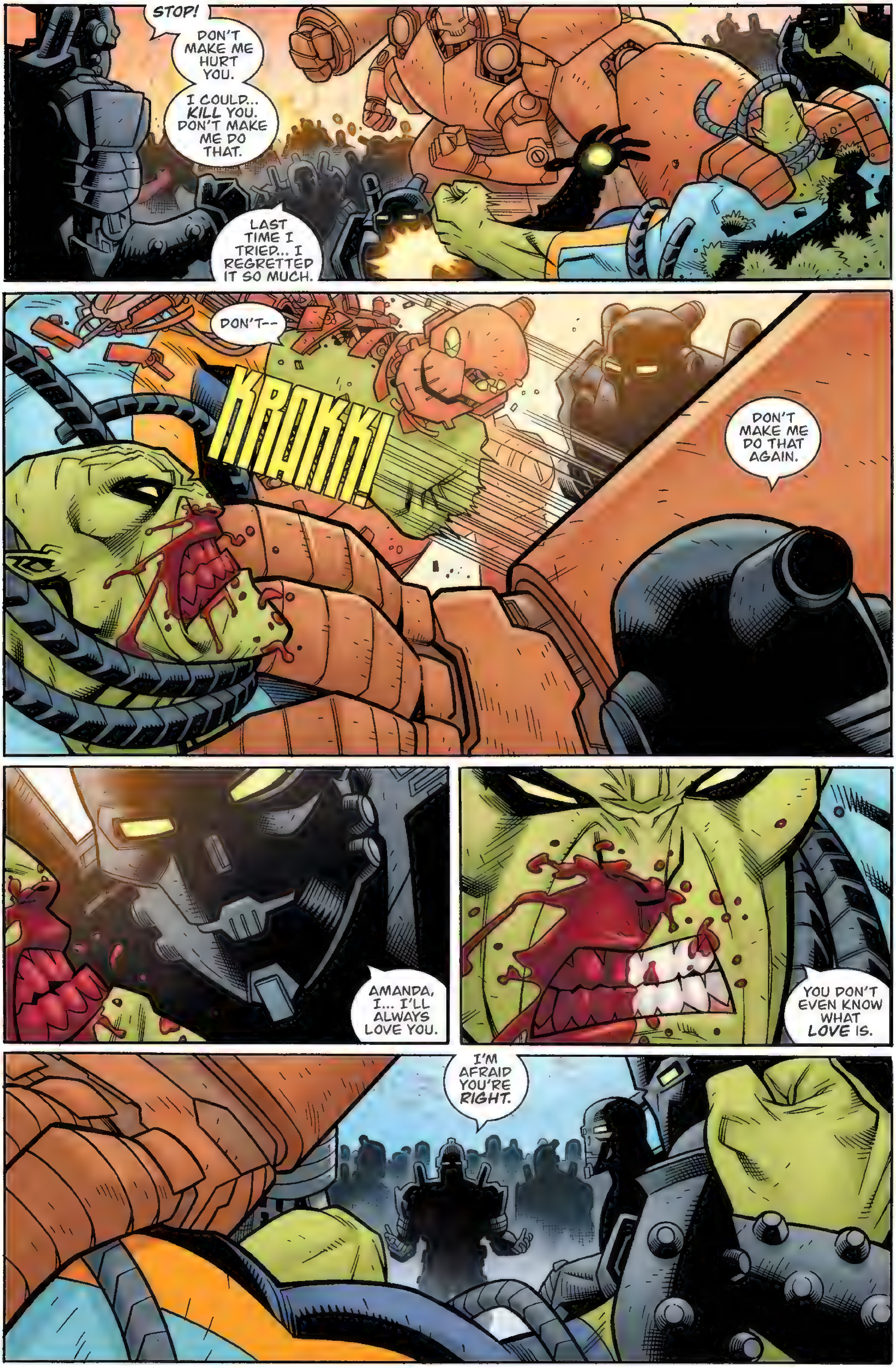

I'M SORRY I WAS RIGHT ABOUT HIM.
SKRAGG!
SO AM I.
OUTRUN!
I DO NOT ENJOY THIS. YOUR END IS NOW INEVITABLE.
I WOULD HAVE WORKED ALONGSIDE ALL OF YOU, PEACEFULLY.
THOOM!
I FIGHT FOR MY CHILDREN! I FIGHT FOR MY WIVES!
RELEASE THEM!
VOOSH!
WRAMM!
MARK!
KRAKOOM!!


YOU'RE THE BATTERING RAM--GET HER IN THERE AND FIND THOSE KIDS. THEY'VE GOTTA BE HERE.
I'M ON IT. YOU WITH ME?
LET'S GO.
WRAKKA-CHOOM!!
KEEP GOING DOWN!
NOW, FOLLOW ME!
OKAY... THIS MEANS WE'RE GETTING CLOSE.

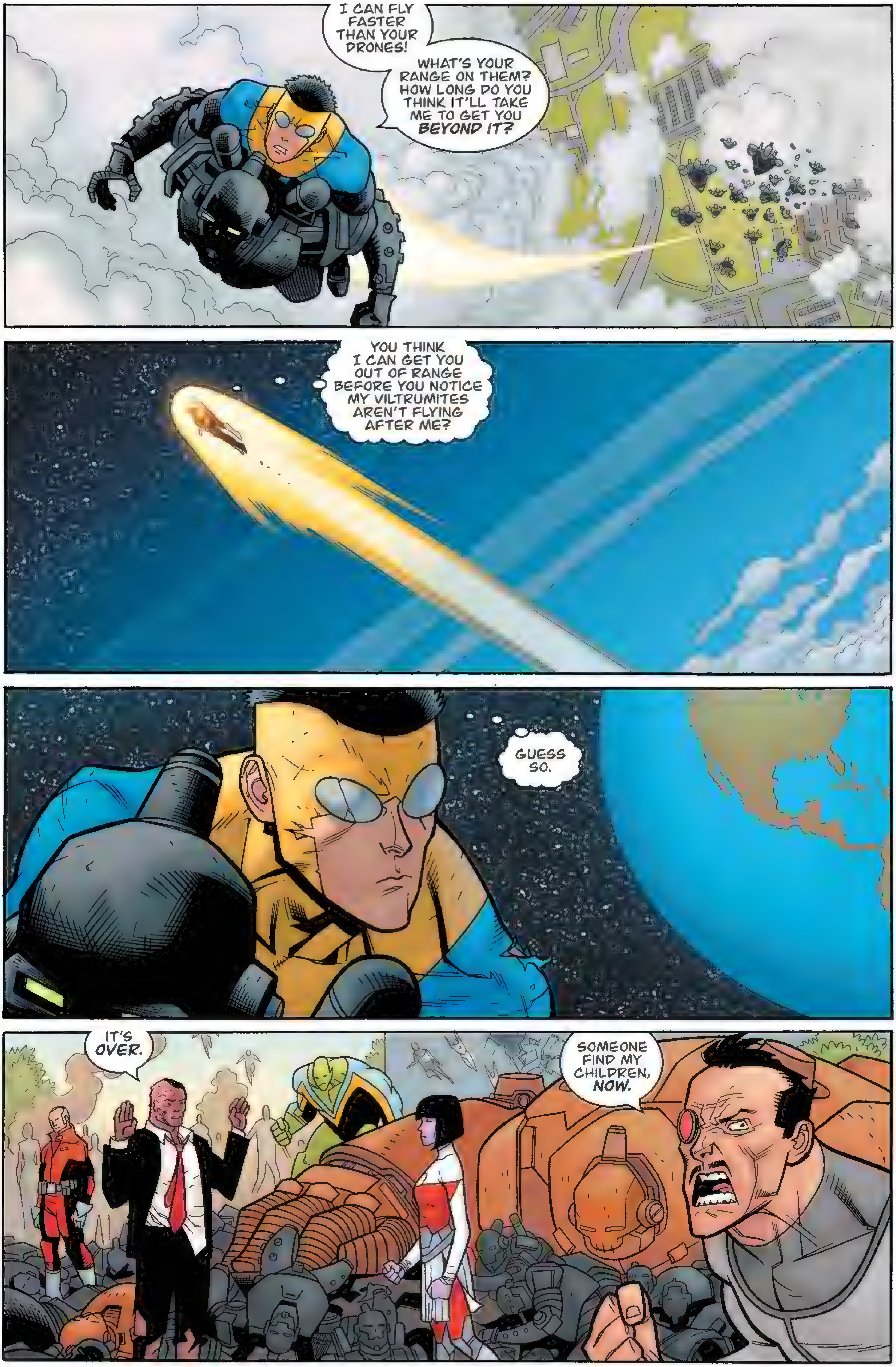

GIVE UP! SURRENDER BEFORE YOU GET MORE PEOPLE KILLED!
WRAMM!
NO!
WRAMM!
WRAKOOM!!
WE'RE WITH YOU, SIRE.
WE'RE YOURS TO COMMAND.
I'M NOT EMPEROR YET, URSAAL. JUST STAY ALIVE--KEEP YOUR PEOPLE ALIVE.
THANK YOU.

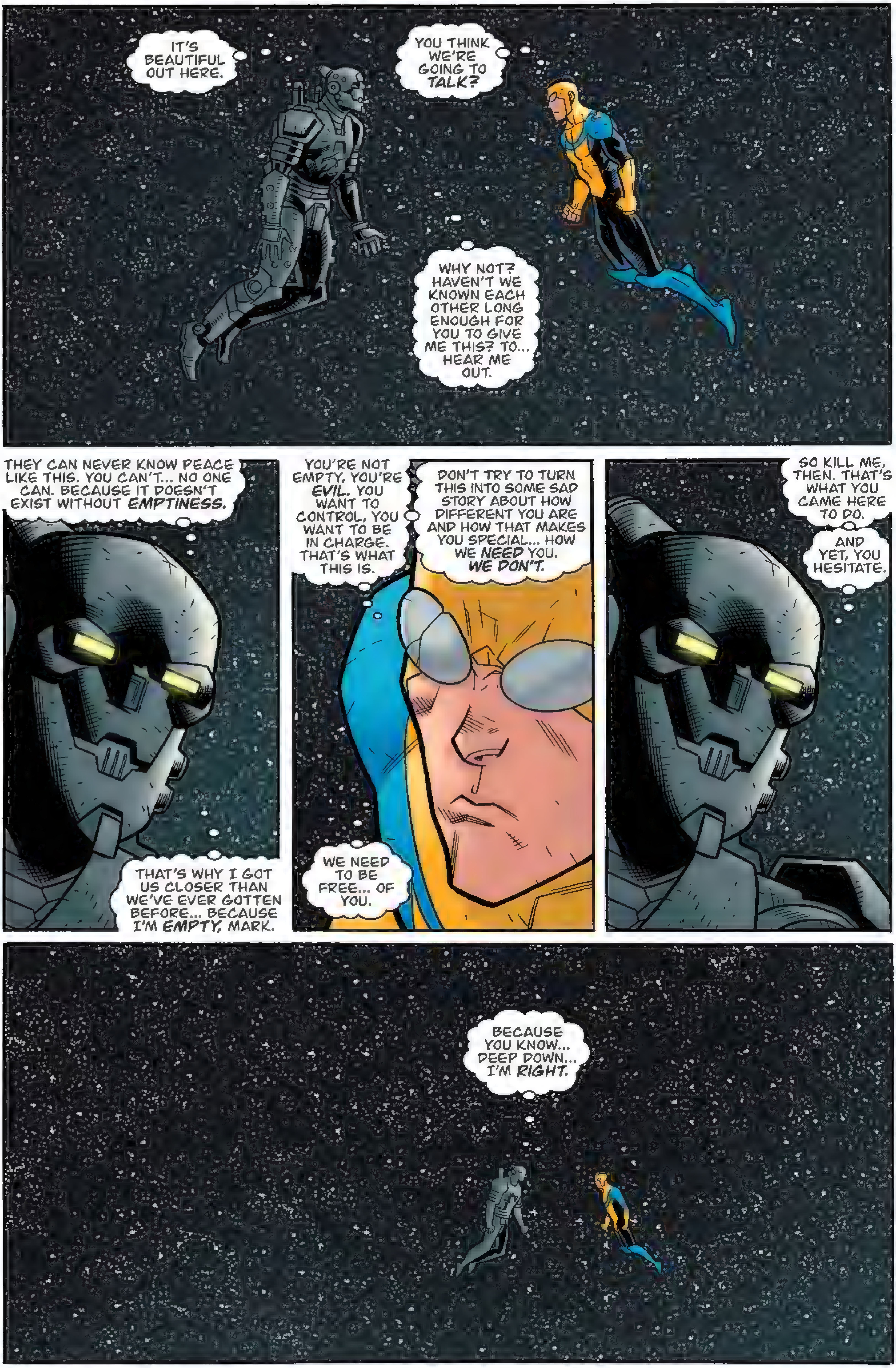
VOOSH!
SON, NO!
MONAX!
WHY DO YOU STILL FIGHT ME, AMANDA?
AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE SHARED--AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE LIVED THROUGH--CAN'T YOU ADMIT YOU *UNDERSTAND* ME?
YOU--

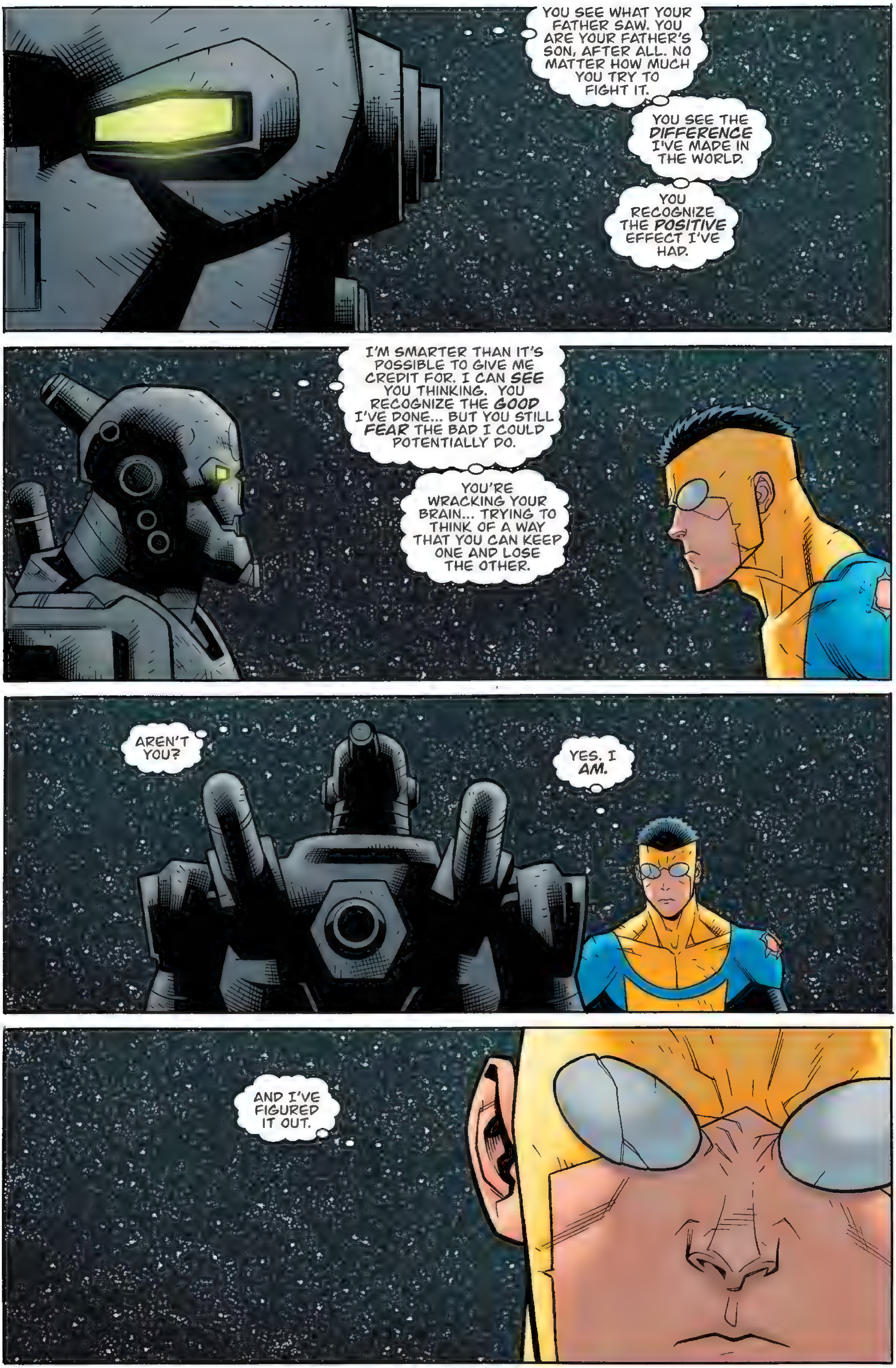
I KNOW YOU'RE *INSIDE* ONE OF THESE, REX!
WRAKOOM!
YOU HAVE TO BE HERE *SOMEWHERE!*
WRAMM!
SKRAGG!!
UNDERSTAND THIS! I'M GOING TO FIND YOU!
AND I'M GOING TO--
WHOOM!

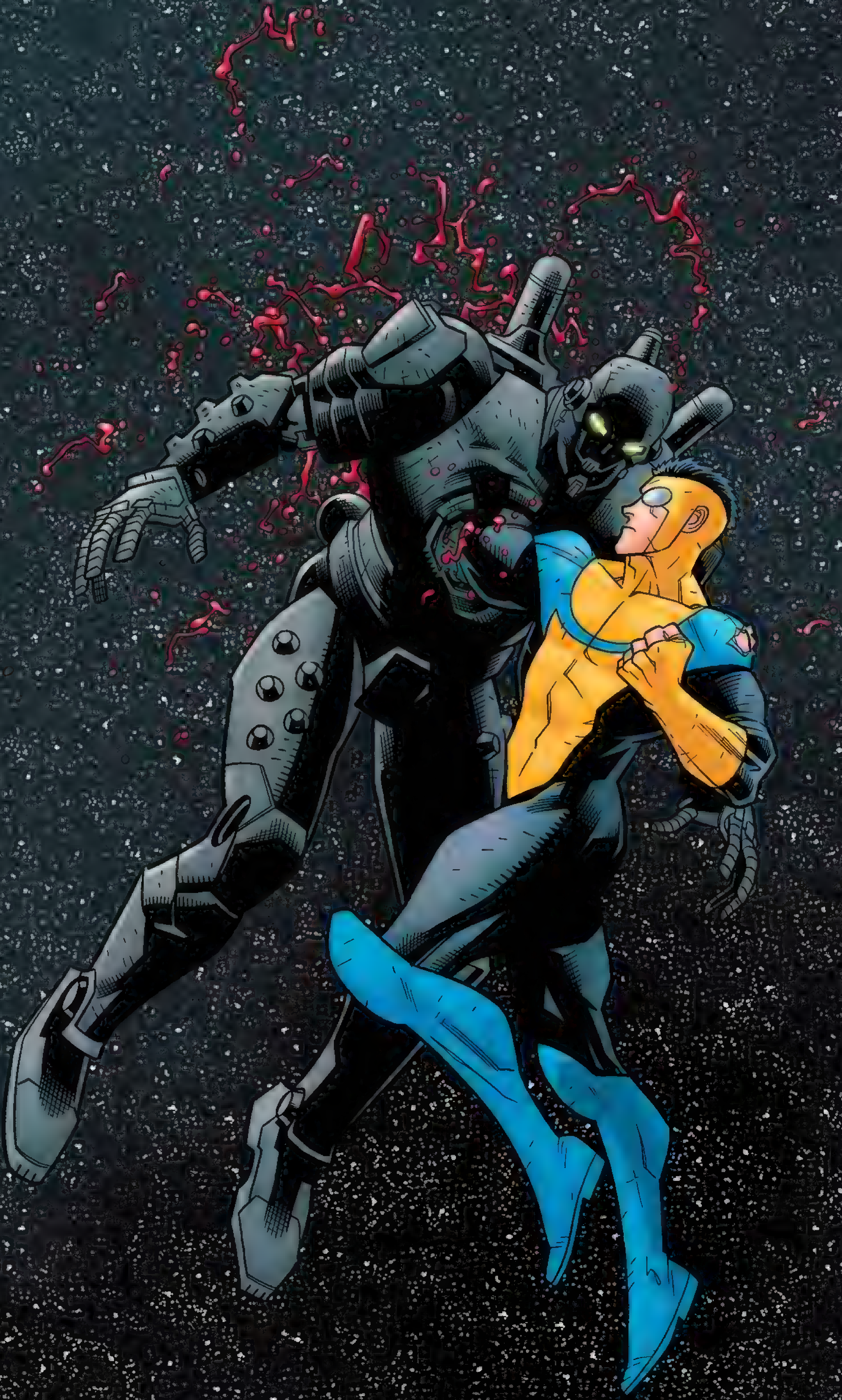

STOP!
DON'T MAKE ME HURT YOU.
I COULD... KILL YOU. DON'T MAKE ME DO THAT.
LAST TIME I TRIED... I REGRETTED IT SO MUCH.
DON'T--
KROKK!
DON'T MAKE ME DO THAT AGAIN.
AMANDA, I... I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT LOVE IS.
I'M AFRAID YOU'RE RIGHT.

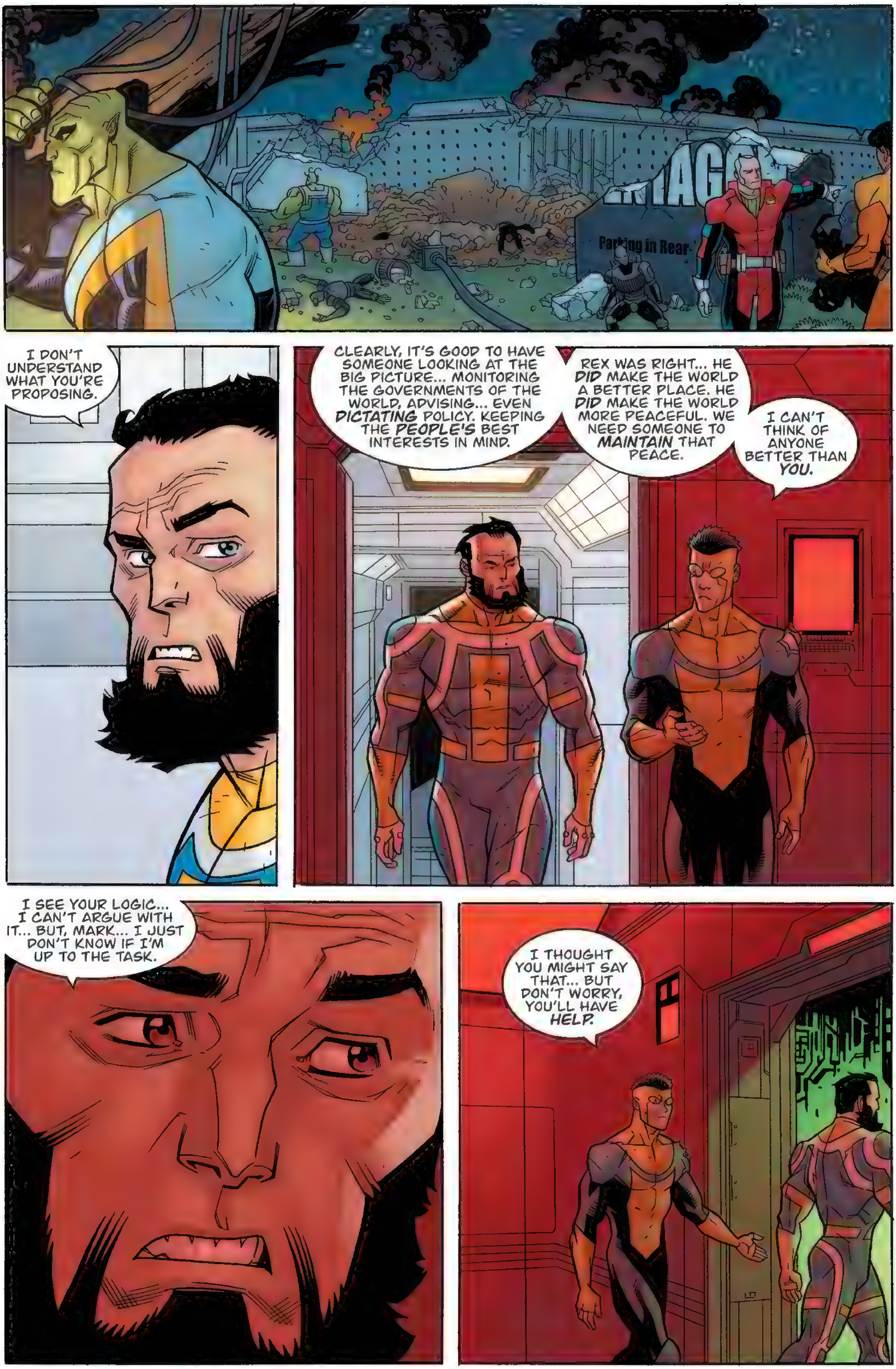
HE'S HERE!
LOOK!
REX IS INSIDE THIS ONE!
KROOM!
SHIT.
SHIT.
NICE TRY-- BUT I'VE GOT YOU NOW.
CHOOM!

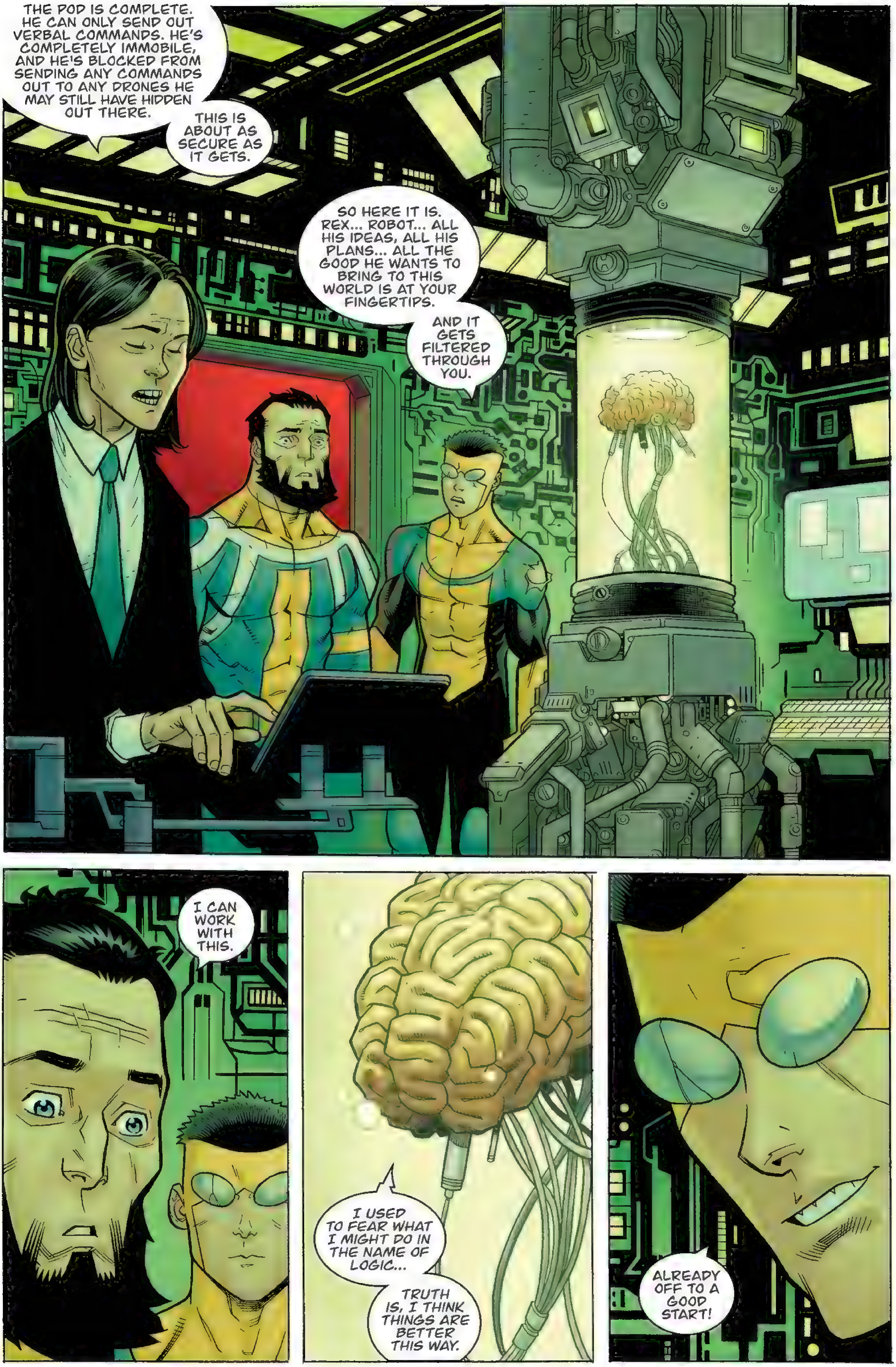

I CAN FLY FASTER THAN YOUR DRONES!
WHAT'S YOUR RANGE ON THEM? HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT'LL TAKE ME TO GET YOU *BEYOND IT?*
YOU THINK I CAN GET YOU OUT OF RANGE BEFORE YOU NOTICE MY VILTRUMITES AREN'T FLYING AFTER ME?
GUESS SO.
IT'S OVER.
SOMEONE FIND MY CHILDREN, *NOW.*

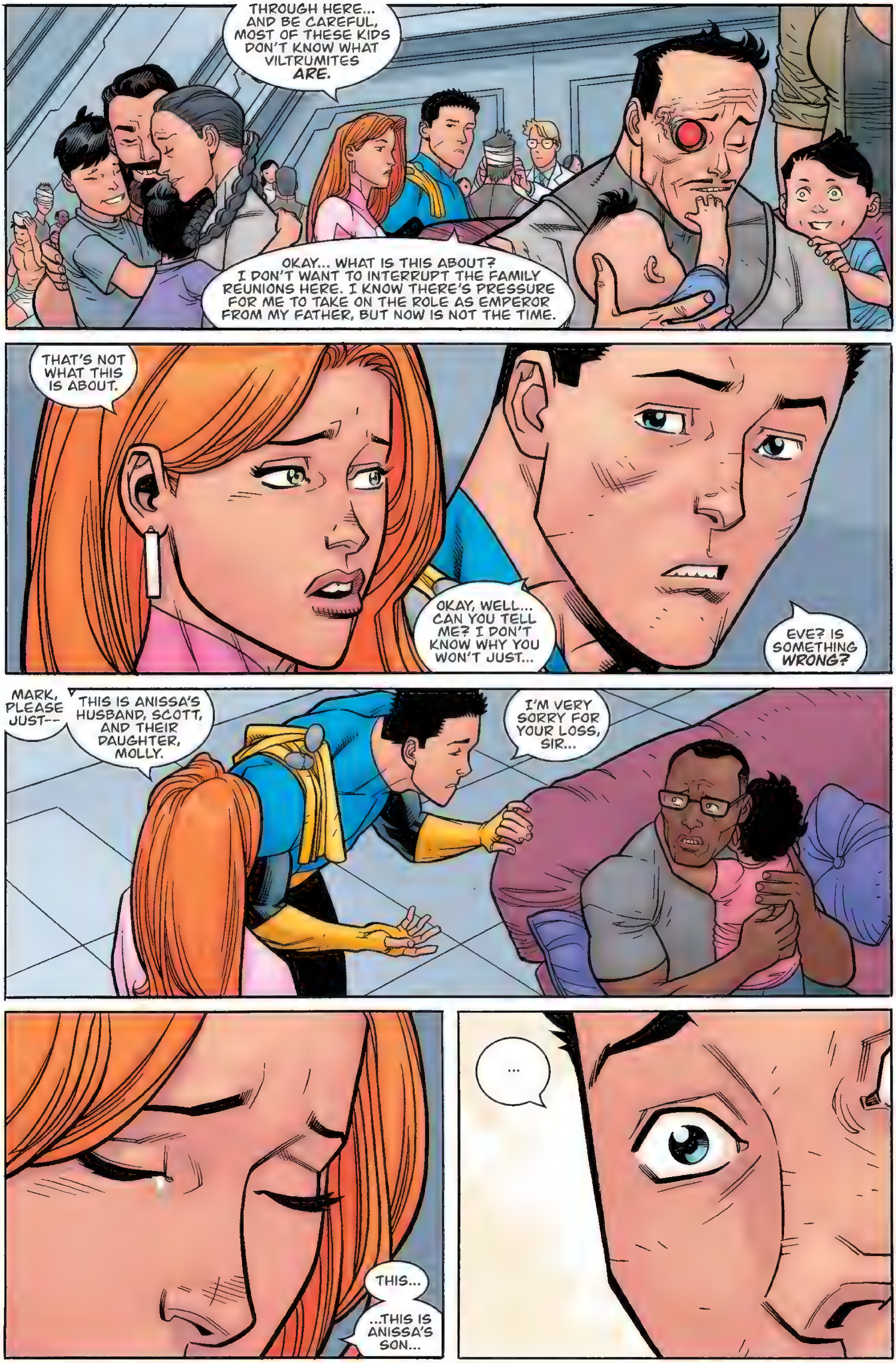

IT'S BEAUTIFUL OUT HERE.
YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO *TALK?*
WHY NOT? HAVEN'T WE KNOWN EACH OTHER LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TO GIVE ME THIS? TO... HEAR ME OUT.
THEY CAN NEVER KNOW PEACE LIKE THIS. YOU CAN'T... NO ONE CAN. BECAUSE IT DOESN'T EXIST WITHOUT ***EMPTINESS.***
THAT'S WHY I GOT US CLOSER THAN WE'VE EVER GOTTEN BEFORE... BECAUSE I'M ***EMPTY,*** MARK.
YOU'RE NOT EMPTY, YOU'RE ***EVIL.*** YOU WANT TO CONTROL, YOU WANT TO BE IN CHARGE. THAT'S WHAT THIS IS.
DON'T TRY TO TURN THIS INTO SOME SAD STORY ABOUT HOW DIFFERENT YOU ARE AND HOW THAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL... HOW WE ***NEED*** YOU. ***WE DON'T.***
WE NEED TO BE FREE... OF YOU.
SO KILL ME, THEN. THAT'S WHAT YOU CAME HERE TO DO.
AND YET, YOU HESITATE.
BECAUSE YOU KNOW... DEEP DOWN... I'M ***RIGHT.***


YOU SEE WHAT YOUR FATHER SAW. YOU ARE YOUR FATHER'S SON, AFTER ALL. NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU TRY TO FIGHT IT.
YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE I'VE MADE IN THE WORLD.
YOU RECOGNIZE THE POSITIVE EFFECT I'VE HAD.
I'M SMARTER THAN IT'S POSSIBLE TO GIVE ME CREDIT FOR. I CAN SEE YOU THINKING. YOU RECOGNIZE THE GOOD I'VE DONE... BUT YOU STILL FEAR THE BAD I COULD POTENTIALLY DO.
YOU'RE WRACKING YOUR BRAIN... TRYING TO THINK OF A WAY THAT YOU CAN KEEP ONE AND LOSE THE OTHER.
AREN'T YOU?
YES. I AM.
AND I'VE FIGURED IT OUT.




Parking in Rear
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE PROPOSING.
CLEARLY, IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SOMEONE LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE... MONITORING THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD, ADVISING... EVEN *DICTATING* POLICY. KEEPING THE *PEOPLE'S* BEST INTERESTS IN MIND.
REX WAS RIGHT... HE *DID* MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. HE *DID* MAKE THE WORLD MORE PEACEFUL. WE NEED SOMEONE TO *MAINTAIN* THAT PEACE.
I CAN'T THINK OF ANYONE BETTER THAN *YOU.*
I SEE YOUR LOGIC... I CAN'T ARGUE WITH IT... BUT, MARK... I JUST DON'T KNOW IF I'M UP TO THE TASK.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT SAY THAT... BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL HAVE *HELP.*


THE POD IS COMPLETE. HE CAN ONLY SEND OUT VERBAL COMMANDS. HE'S COMPLETELY IMMOBILE, AND HE'S BLOCKED FROM SENDING ANY COMMANDS OUT TO ANY DRONES HE MAY STILL HAVE HIDDEN OUT THERE.
THIS IS ABOUT AS SECURE AS IT GETS.
SO HERE IT IS. REX... ROBOT... ALL HIS IDEAS, ALL HIS PLANS... ALL THE GOOD HE WANTS TO BRING TO THIS WORLD IS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.
AND IT GETS FILTERED THROUGH YOU.
I CAN WORK WITH THIS.
I USED TO FEAR WHAT I MIGHT DO IN THE NAME OF LOGIC...
TRUTH IS, I THINK THINGS ARE BETTER THIS WAY.
ALREADY OFF TO A GOOD START!

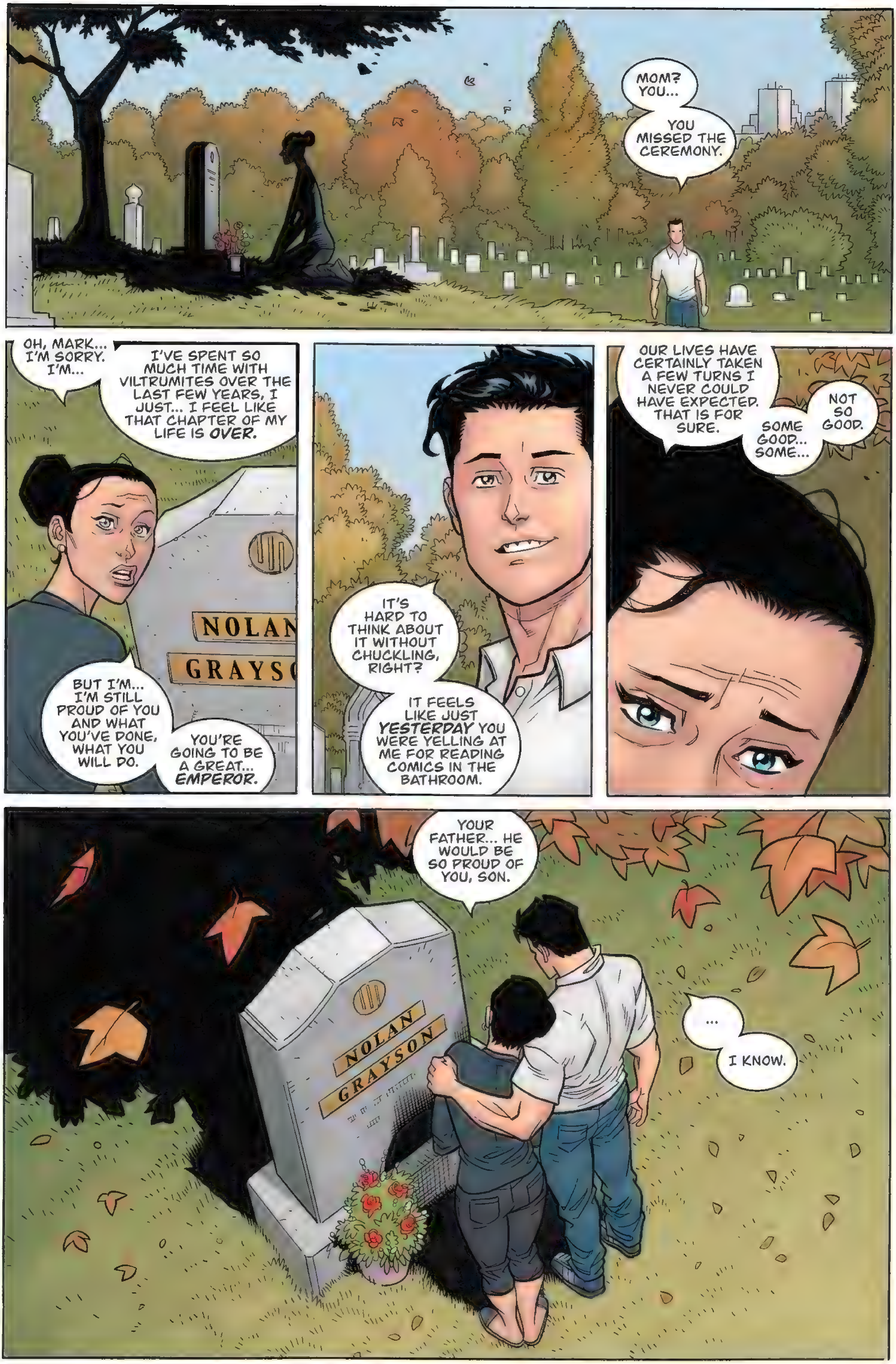

THROUGH HERE... AND BE CAREFUL, MOST OF THESE KIDS DON'T KNOW WHAT VILTRUMITES ARE.
OKAY... WHAT IS THIS ABOUT? I DON'T WANT TO INTERRUPT THE FAMILY REUNIONS HERE. I KNOW THERE'S PRESSURE FOR ME TO TAKE ON THE ROLE AS EMPEROR FROM MY FATHER, BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME.
THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
OKAY, WELL... CAN YOU TELL ME? I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WON'T JUST...
EVE? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
MARK, PLEASE JUST--
THIS IS ANISSA'S HUSBAND, SCOTT, AND THEIR DAUGHTER, MOLLY.
I'M VERY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, SIR...
THIS...
...THIS IS ANISSA'S SON...
...

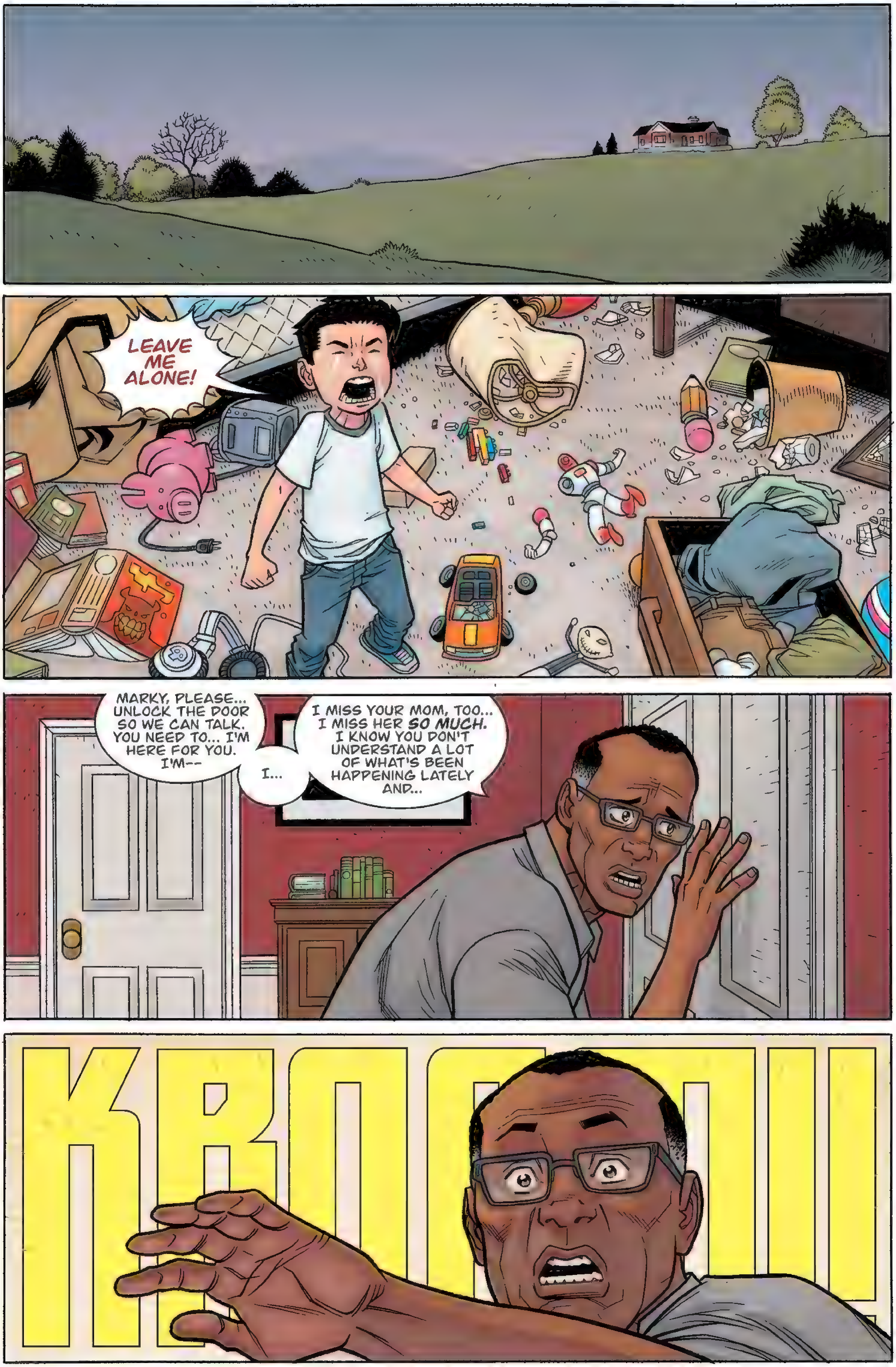
...MARKY.
IS MY MOM REALLY DEAD?

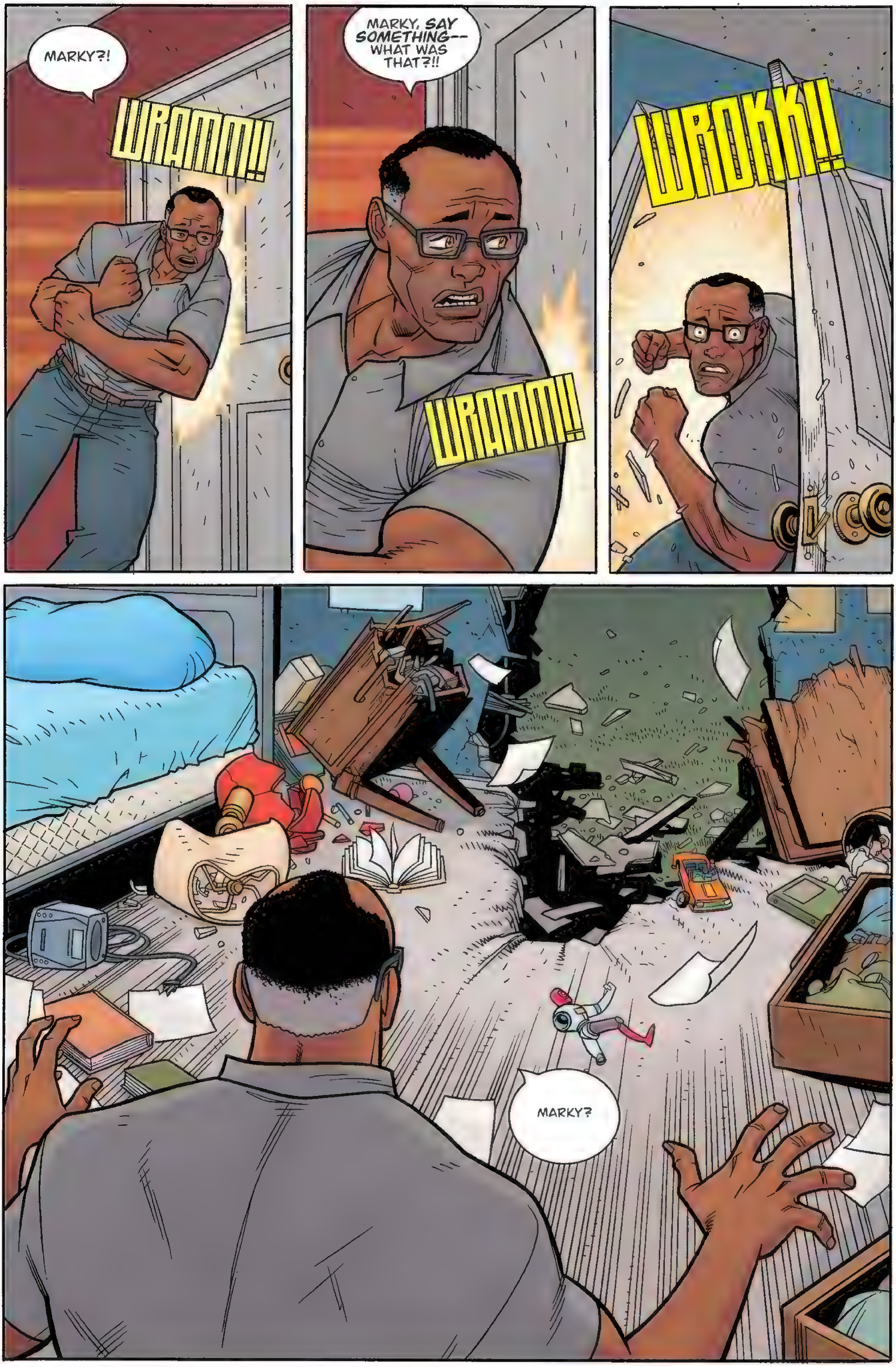
CHAPTER 143

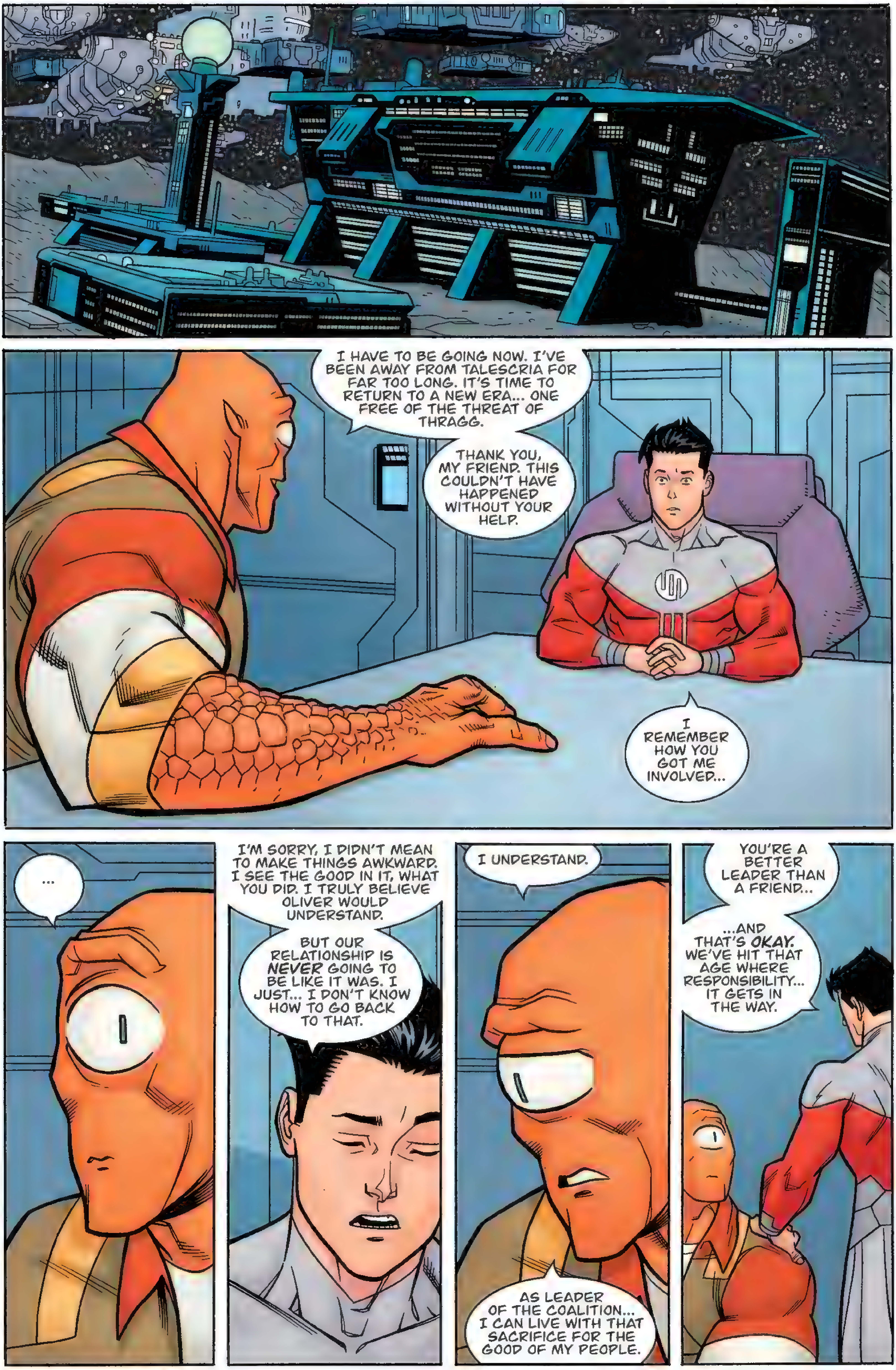
IT'S BEEN *TWO WEEKS,* MARK. YOU HAVE TO TALK TO HIM.
HE'S YOUR SON.
MARK?
...
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS SOONER OR LATER. MARK-- JUST--
THE CEREMONY STARTS SOON... I'M GOING TO GET READY. I... I GUESS I'LL SEE YOU THERE.

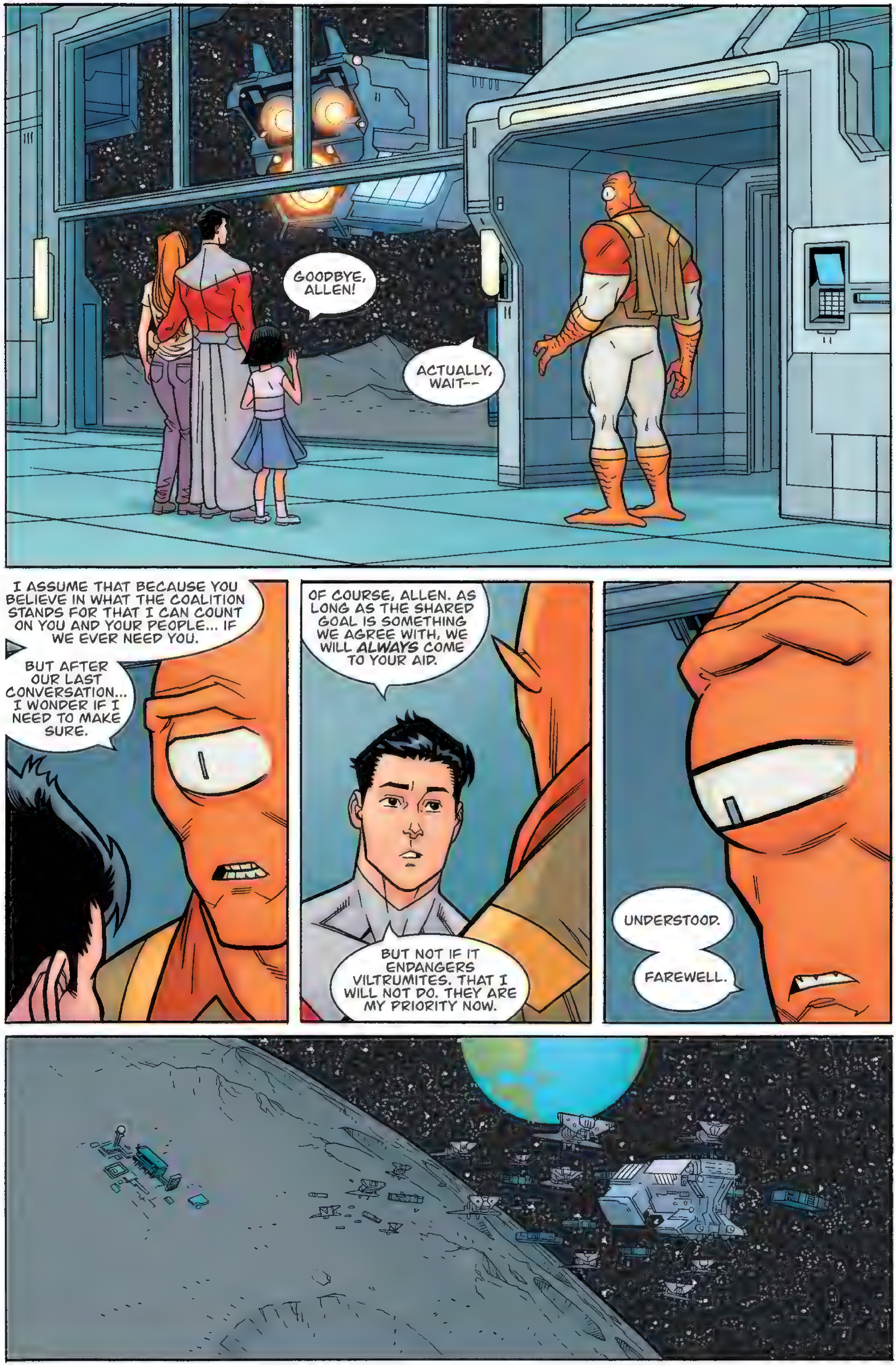
WHAT MAKES DADDY SO SPECIAL?
NOT *NOW*, TERRA.

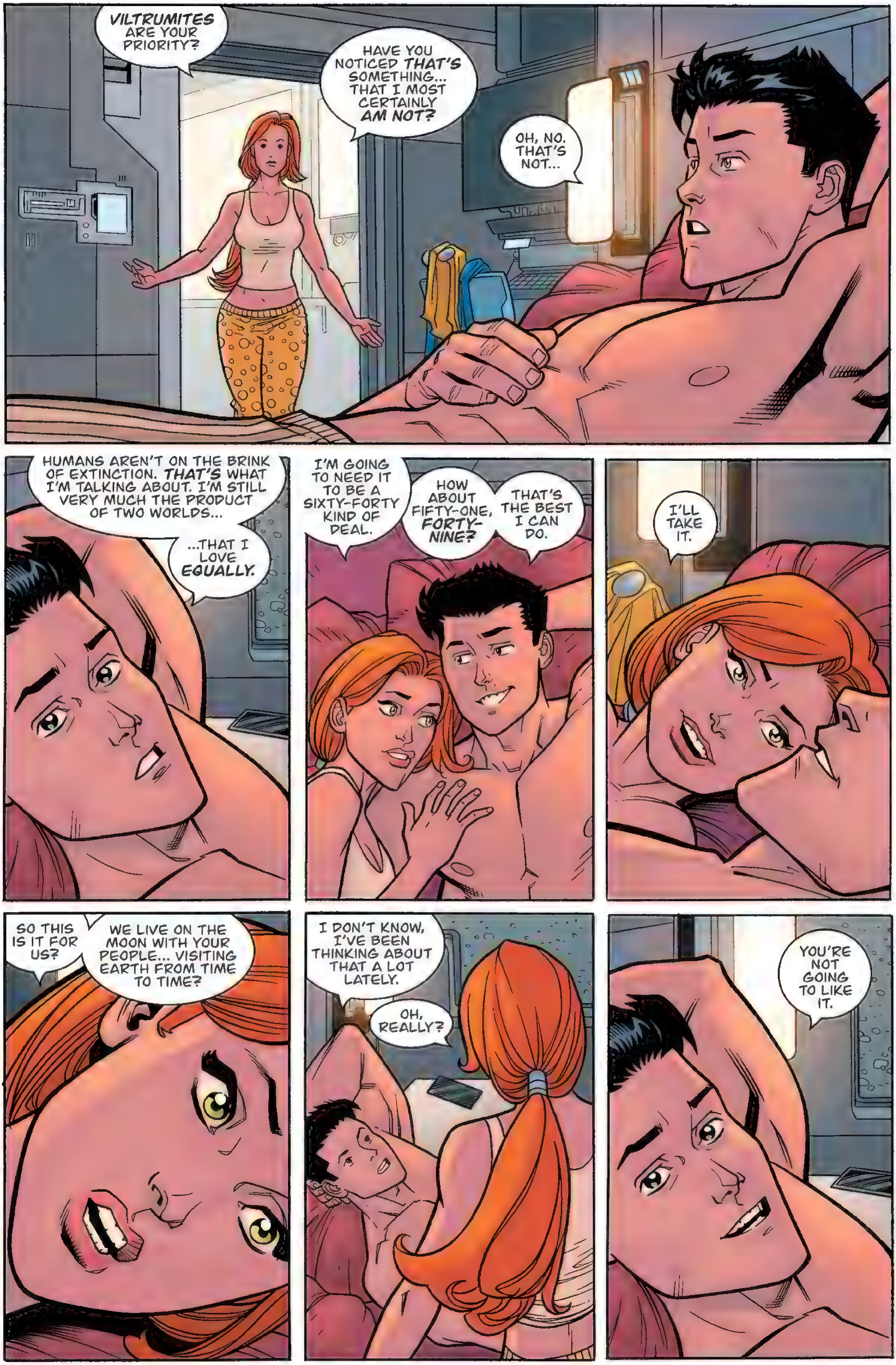

MOM? YOU...
YOU MISSED THE CEREMONY.
OH, MARK... I'M SORRY. I'M...
I'VE SPENT SO MUCH TIME WITH VILTRUMITES OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, I JUST... I FEEL LIKE THAT CHAPTER OF MY LIFE IS OVER.
NOLAN GRAYSON
BUT I'M... I'M STILL PROUD OF YOU AND WHAT YOU'VE DONE, WHAT YOU WILL DO.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE A GREAT... EMPEROR.
IT'S HARD TO THINK ABOUT IT WITHOUT CHUCKLING, RIGHT?
IT FEELS LIKE JUST YESTERDAY YOU WERE YELLING AT ME FOR READING COMICS IN THE BATHROOM.
OUR LIVES HAVE CERTAINLY TAKEN A FEW TURNS I NEVER COULD HAVE EXPECTED. THAT IS FOR SURE.
SOME GOOD... SOME...
NOT SO GOOD.
YOUR FATHER... HE WOULD BE SO PROUD OF YOU, SON.
NOLAN GRAYSON
...
I KNOW.

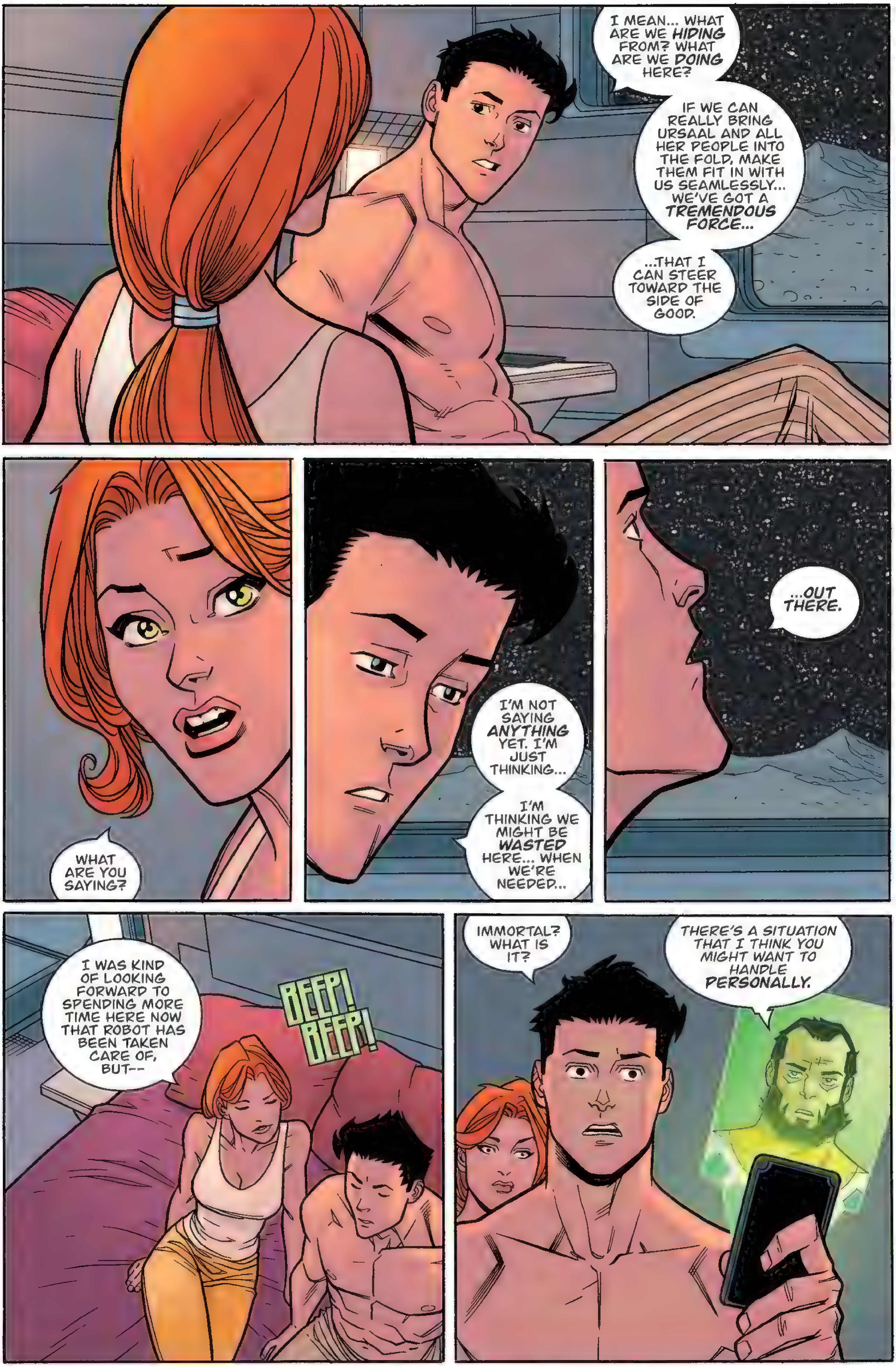

LEAVE ME ALONE!
MARKY, PLEASE... UNLOCK THE DOOR SO WE CAN TALK. YOU NEED TO... I'M HERE FOR YOU. I'M--
I...
I MISS YOUR MOM, TOO... I MISS HER *SO MUCH.* I KNOW YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND A LOT OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING LATELY AND...
KROOM!!

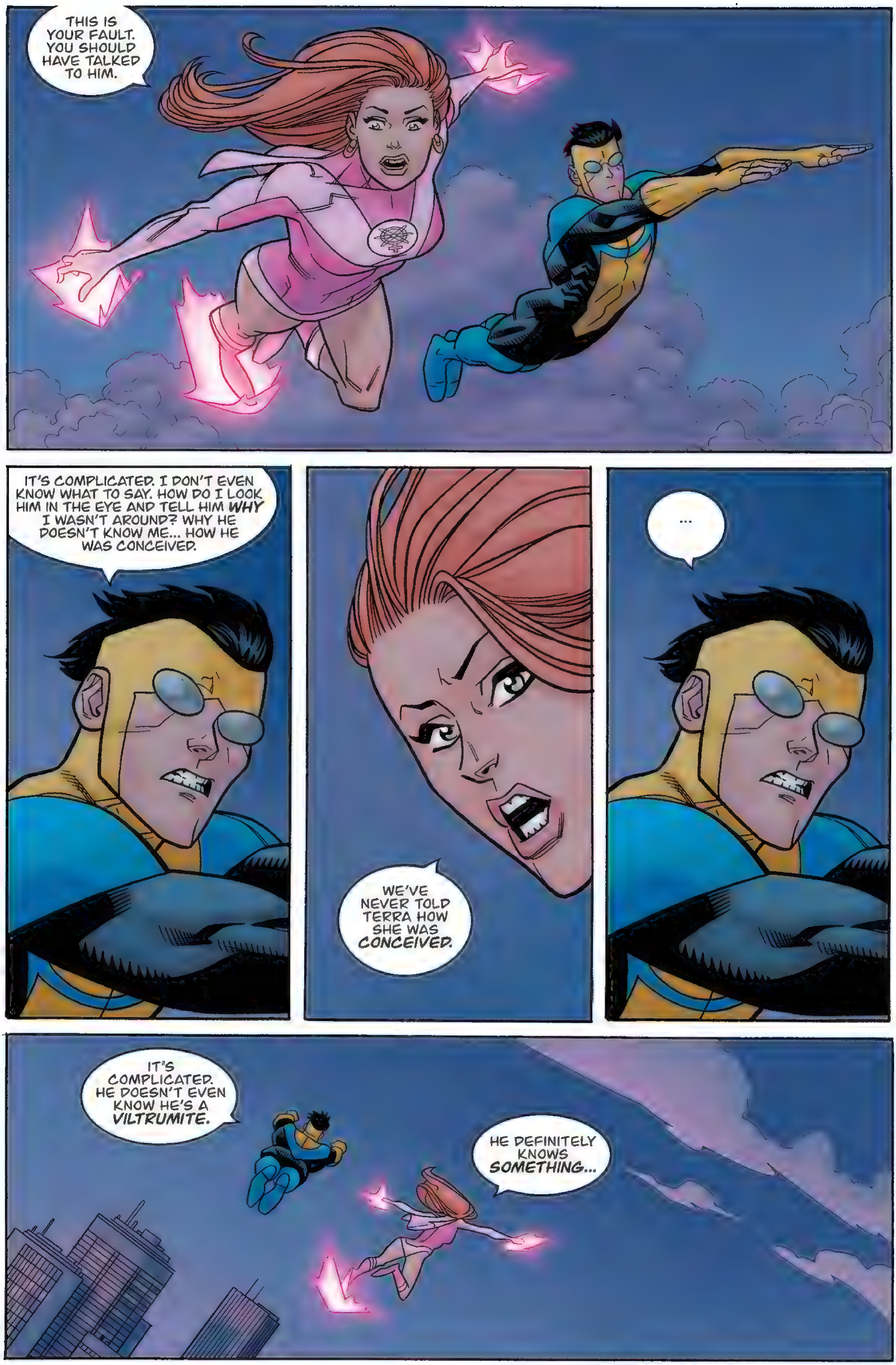

MARKY?!
WRAMM!!
MARKY, SAY SOMETHING-- WHAT WAS THAT?!!
WRAMM!!
WROKK!!
MARKY?


I HAVE TO BE GOING NOW. I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM TALESCRIA FOR FAR TOO LONG. IT'S TIME TO RETURN TO A NEW ERA... ONE FREE OF THE THREAT OF THRAGG.
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND. THIS COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT YOUR HELP.
I REMEMBER HOW YOU GOT ME INVOLVED...
...
I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE THINGS AWKWARD. I SEE THE GOOD IN IT, WHAT YOU DID. I TRULY BELIEVE OLIVER WOULD UNDERSTAND.
BUT OUR RELATIONSHIP IS *NEVER* GOING TO BE LIKE IT WAS. I JUST... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GO BACK TO THAT.
I UNDERSTAND.
AS LEADER OF THE COALITION... I CAN LIVE WITH THAT SACRIFICE FOR THE GOOD OF MY PEOPLE.
YOU'RE A BETTER LEADER THAN A FRIEND...
...AND THAT'S *OKAY.* WE'VE HIT THAT AGE WHERE RESPONSIBILITY... IT GETS IN THE WAY.

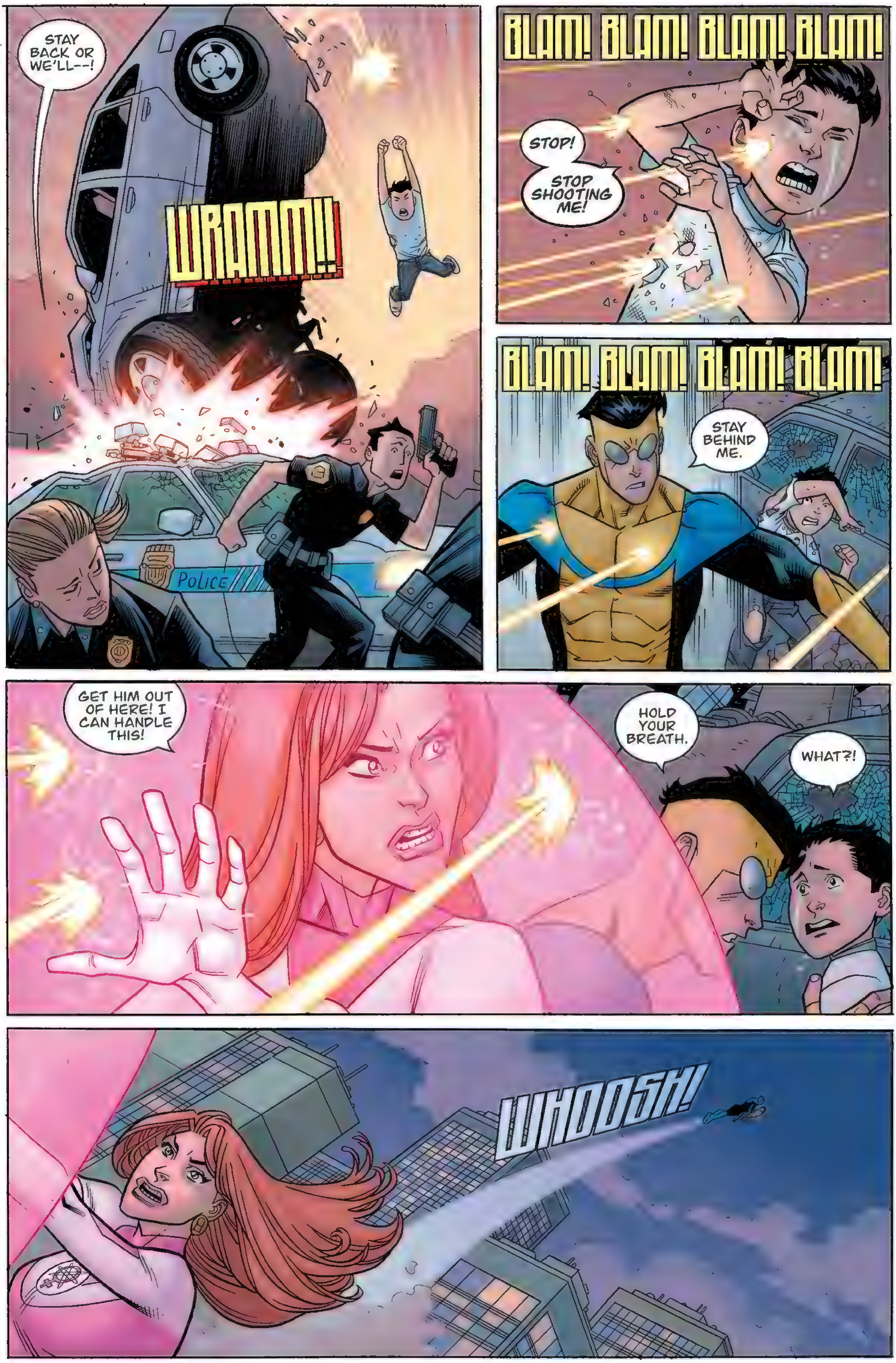

GOODBYE, ALLEN!
ACTUALLY, WAIT--
I ASSUME THAT BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IN WHAT THE COALITION STANDS FOR THAT I CAN COUNT ON YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE... IF WE EVER NEED YOU.
BUT AFTER OUR LAST CONVERSATION... I WONDER IF I NEED TO MAKE SURE.
OF COURSE, ALLEN. AS LONG AS THE SHARED GOAL IS SOMETHING WE AGREE WITH, WE WILL *ALWAYS* COME TO YOUR AID.
BUT NOT IF IT ENDANGERS VILTRUMITES. THAT I WILL NOT DO. THEY ARE MY PRIORITY NOW.
UNDERSTOOD.
FAREWELL.

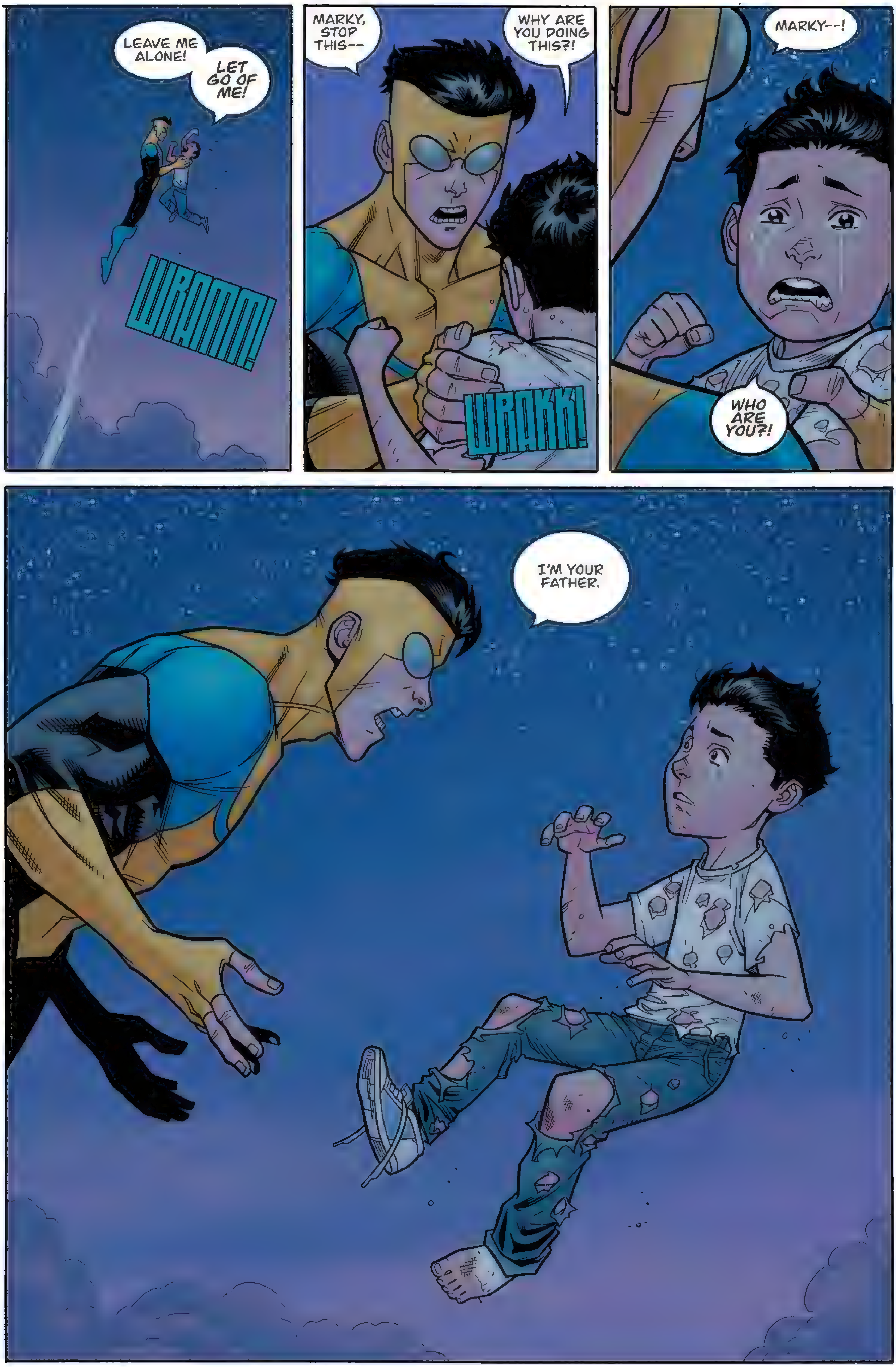

VILTRUMITES ARE YOUR PRIORITY?
HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT'S SOMETHING... THAT I MOST CERTAINLY AM NOT?
OH, NO. THAT'S NOT...
HUMANS AREN'T ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION. THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. I'M STILL VERY MUCH THE PRODUCT OF TWO WORLDS...
...THAT I LOVE EQUALLY.
I'M GOING TO NEED IT TO BE A SIXTY-FORTY KIND OF DEAL.
HOW ABOUT FIFTY-ONE, FORTY-NINE?
THAT'S THE BEST I CAN DO.
I'LL TAKE IT.
SO THIS IS IT FOR US?
WE LIVE ON THE MOON WITH YOUR PEOPLE... VISITING EARTH FROM TIME TO TIME?
I DON'T KNOW, I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT A LOT LATELY.
OH, REALLY?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.

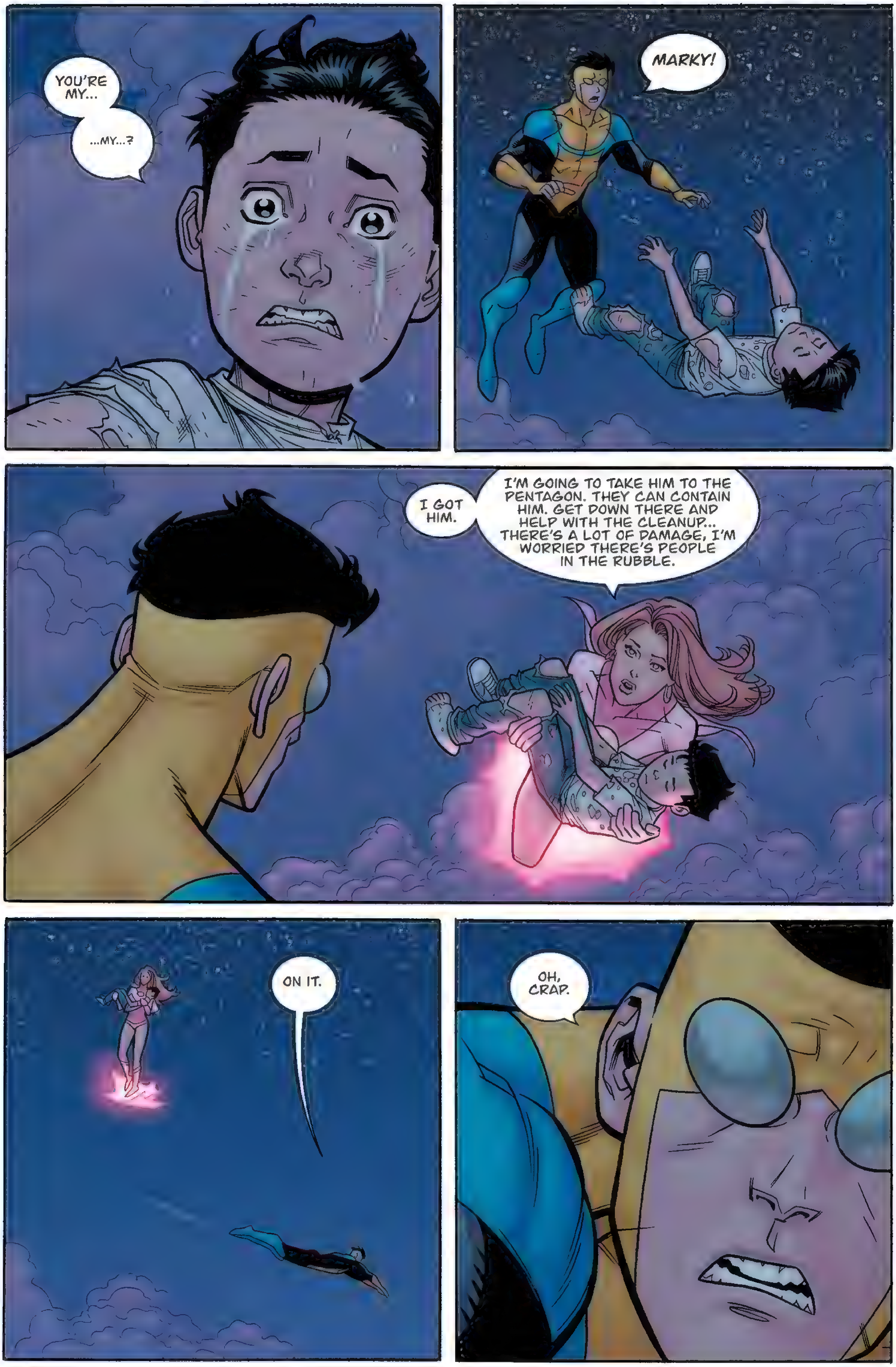

I MEAN... WHAT ARE WE HIDING FROM? WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
IF WE CAN REALLY BRING URSAAL AND ALL HER PEOPLE INTO THE FOLD, MAKE THEM FIT IN WITH US SEAMLESSLY... WE'VE GOT A TREMENDOUS FORCE...
...THAT I CAN STEER TOWARD THE SIDE OF GOOD.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING YET. I'M JUST THINKING...
I'M THINKING WE MIGHT BE WASTED HERE... WHEN WE'RE NEEDED...
...OUT THERE.
I WAS KIND OF LOOKING FORWARD TO SPENDING MORE TIME HERE NOW THAT ROBOT HAS BEEN TAKEN CARE OF, BUT--
BEEP! BEEP!
IMMORTAL? WHAT IS IT?
THERE'S A SITUATION THAT I THINK YOU MIGHT WANT TO HANDLE PERSONALLY.

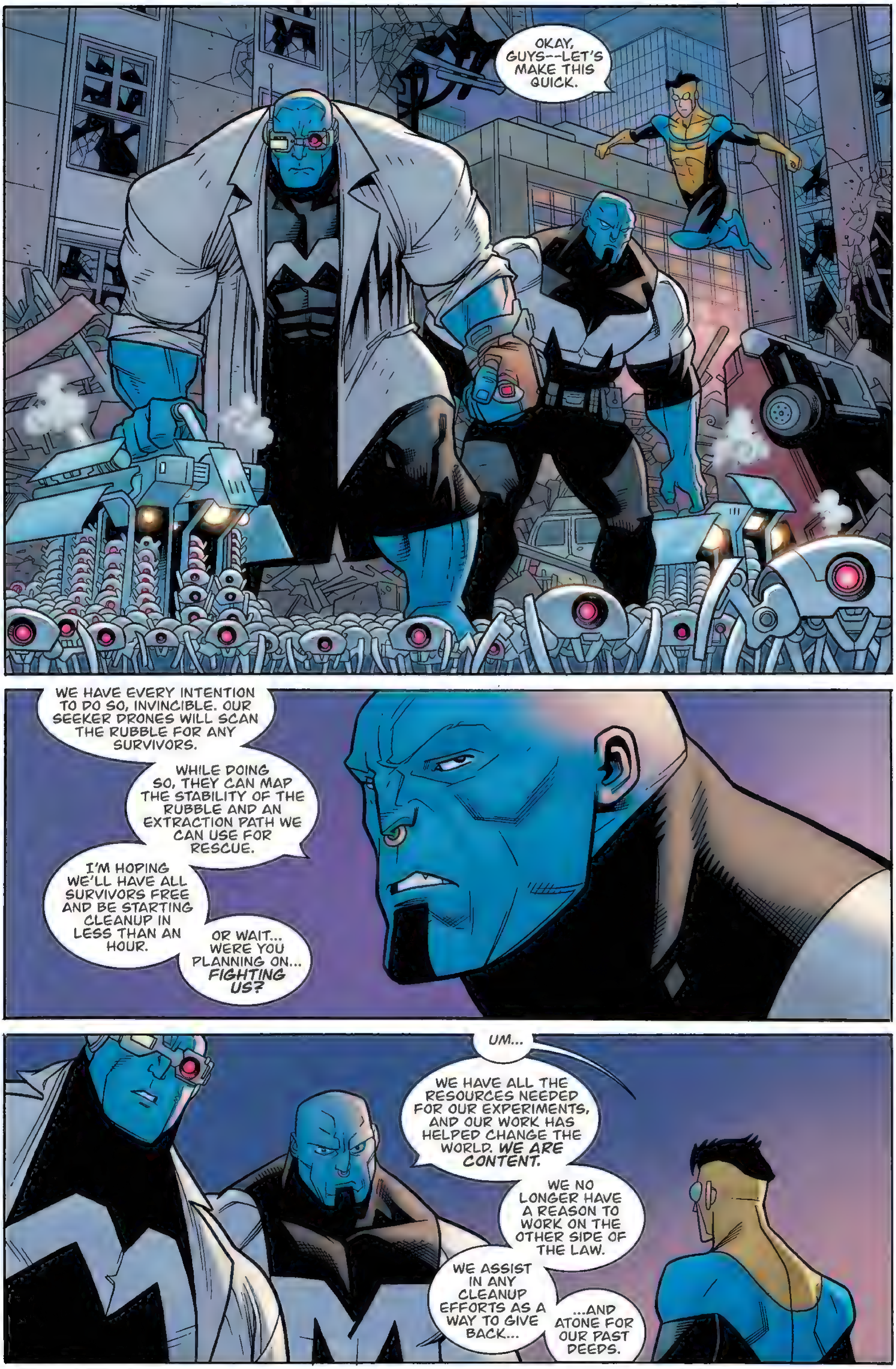

THIS IS YOUR FAULT. YOU SHOULD HAVE TALKED TO HIM.
IT'S COMPLICATED. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY. HOW DO I LOOK HIM IN THE EYE AND TELL HIM **WHY** I WASN'T AROUND? WHY HE DOESN'T KNOW ME... HOW HE WAS CONCEIVED.
WE'VE NEVER TOLD TERRA HOW SHE WAS **CONCEIVED.**
...
IT'S COMPLICATED. HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HE'S A **VILTRUMITE.**
HE DEFINITELY KNOWS **SOMETHING...**

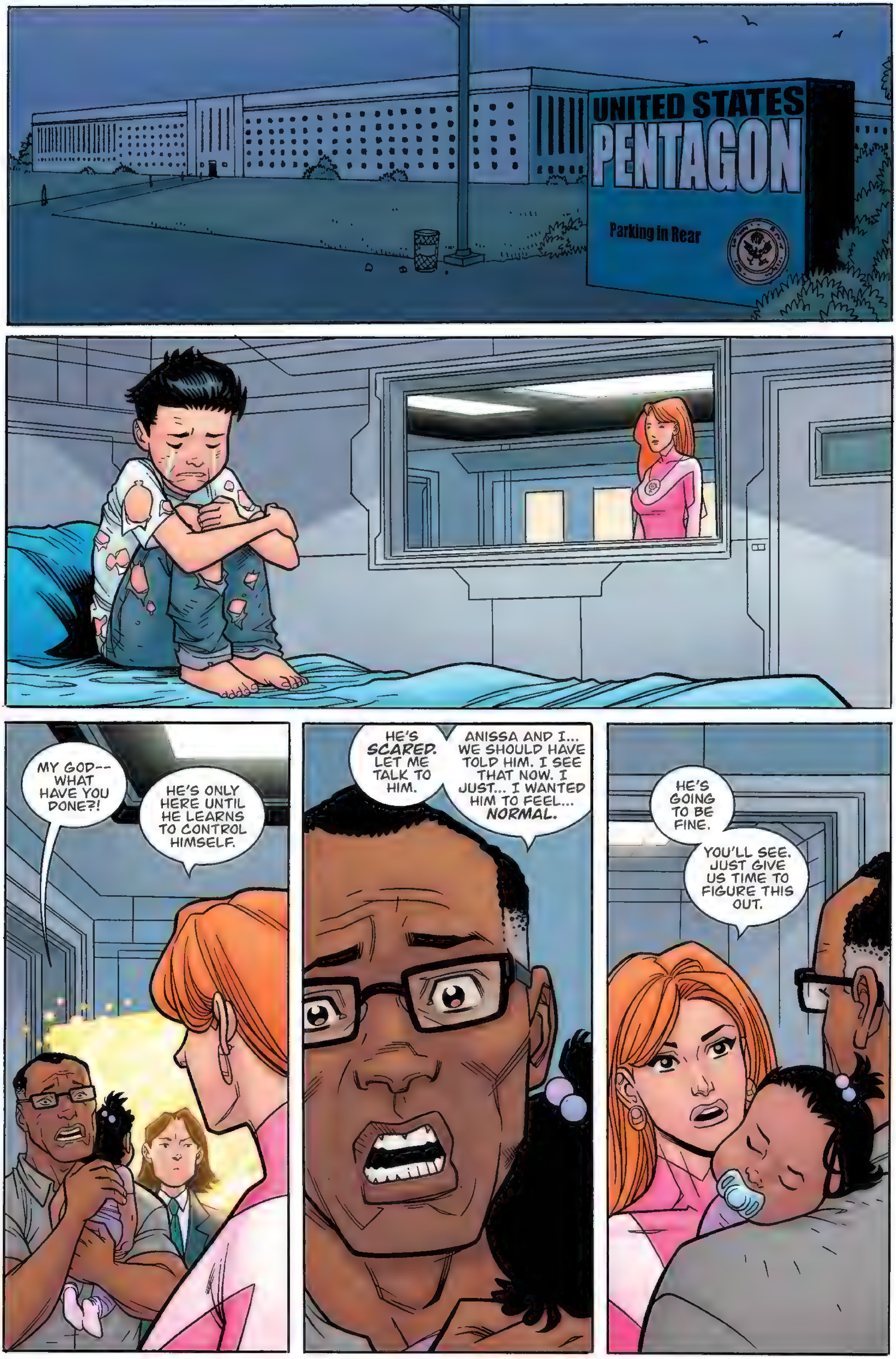
NO TURN ON RED
ONLY
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?!!

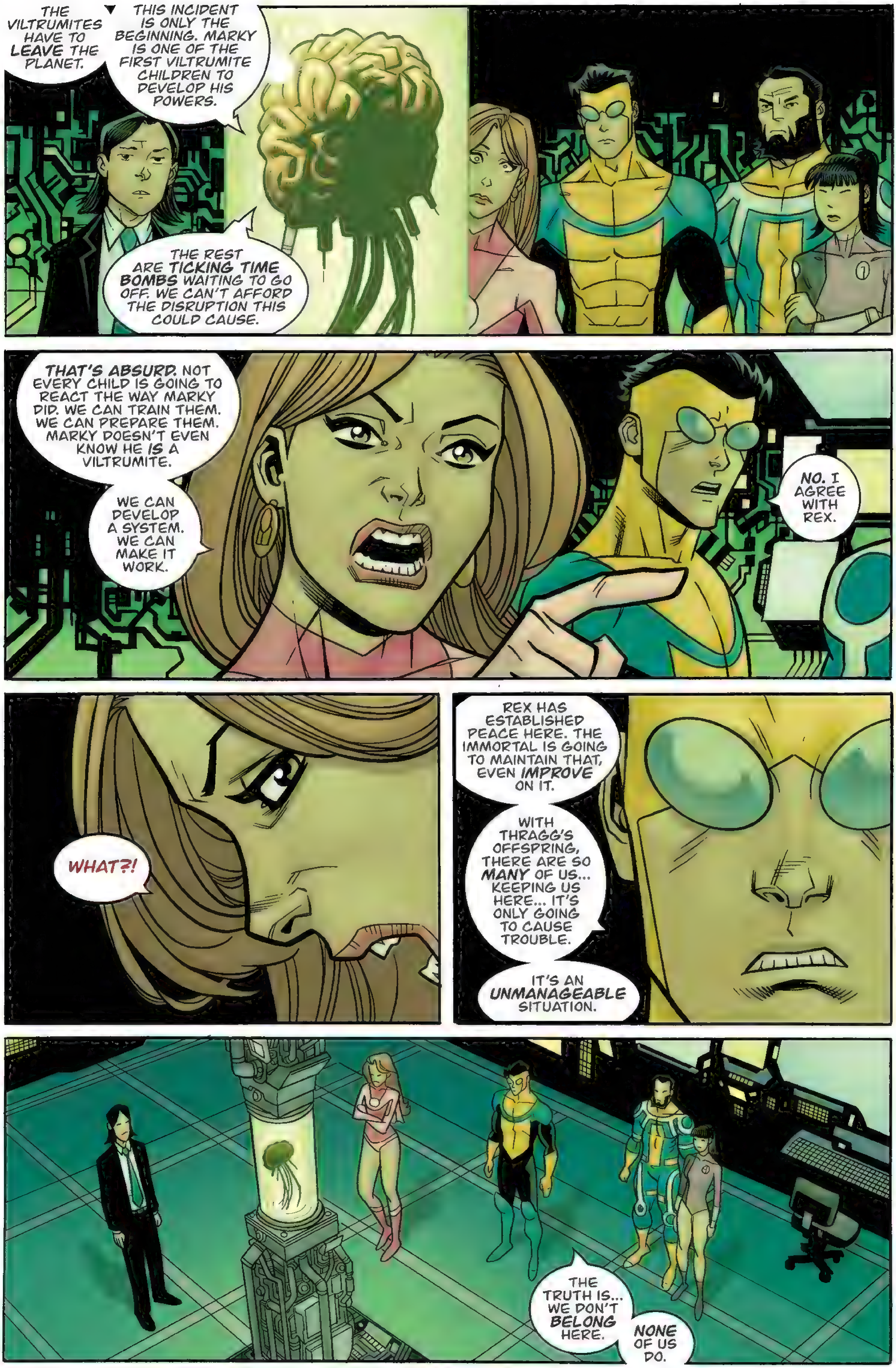

STAY BACK OR WE'LL--!
WRAMM!!
POLICE
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
STOP!
STOP SHOOTING ME!
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
STAY BEHIND ME.
GET HIM OUT OF HERE! I CAN HANDLE THIS!
HOLD YOUR BREATH.
WHAT?!
WHOOSH!

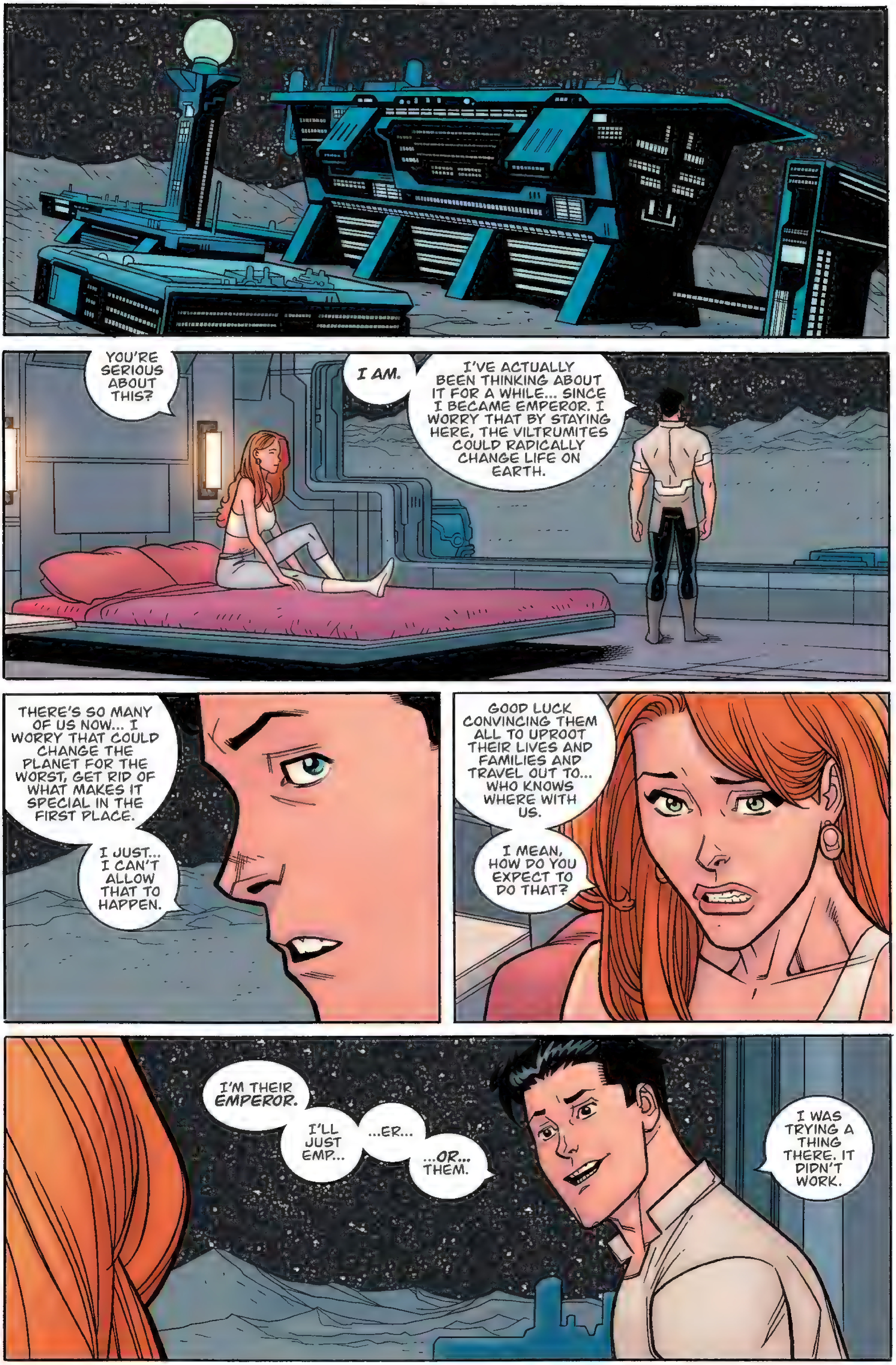

LEAVE ME ALONE!
LET GO OF ME!
WROMM!
MARKY, STOP THIS--
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!
WRAKK!
MARKY--!
WHO ARE YOU?!
I'M YOUR FATHER.

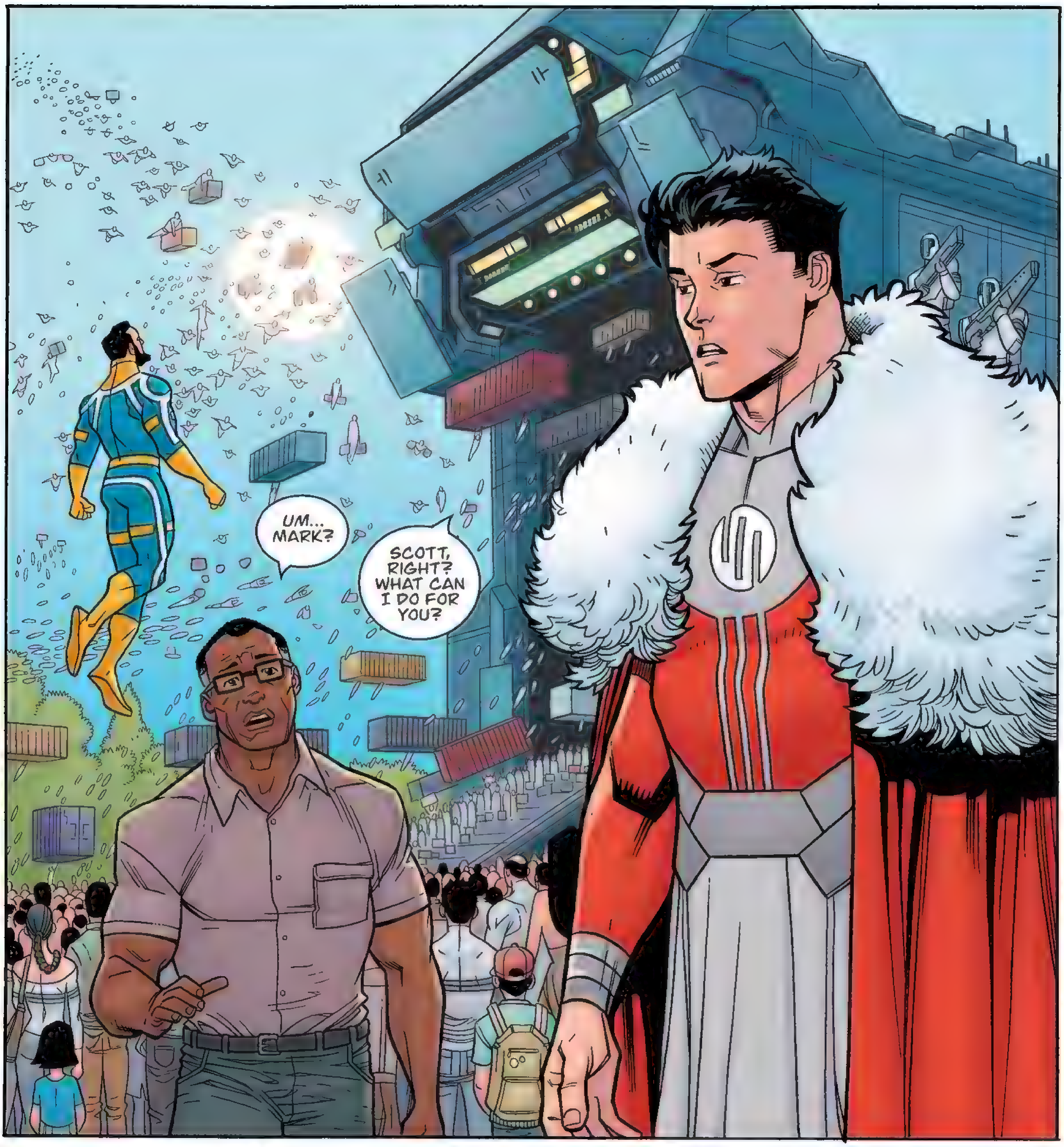

YOU'RE MY...
...MY...?
MARKY!
I GOT HIM.
I'M GOING TO TAKE HIM TO THE PENTAGON. THEY CAN CONTAIN HIM. GET DOWN THERE AND HELP WITH THE CLEANUP... THERE'S A LOT OF DAMAGE, I'M WORRIED THERE'S PEOPLE IN THE RUBBLE.
ON IT.
OH, CRAP.

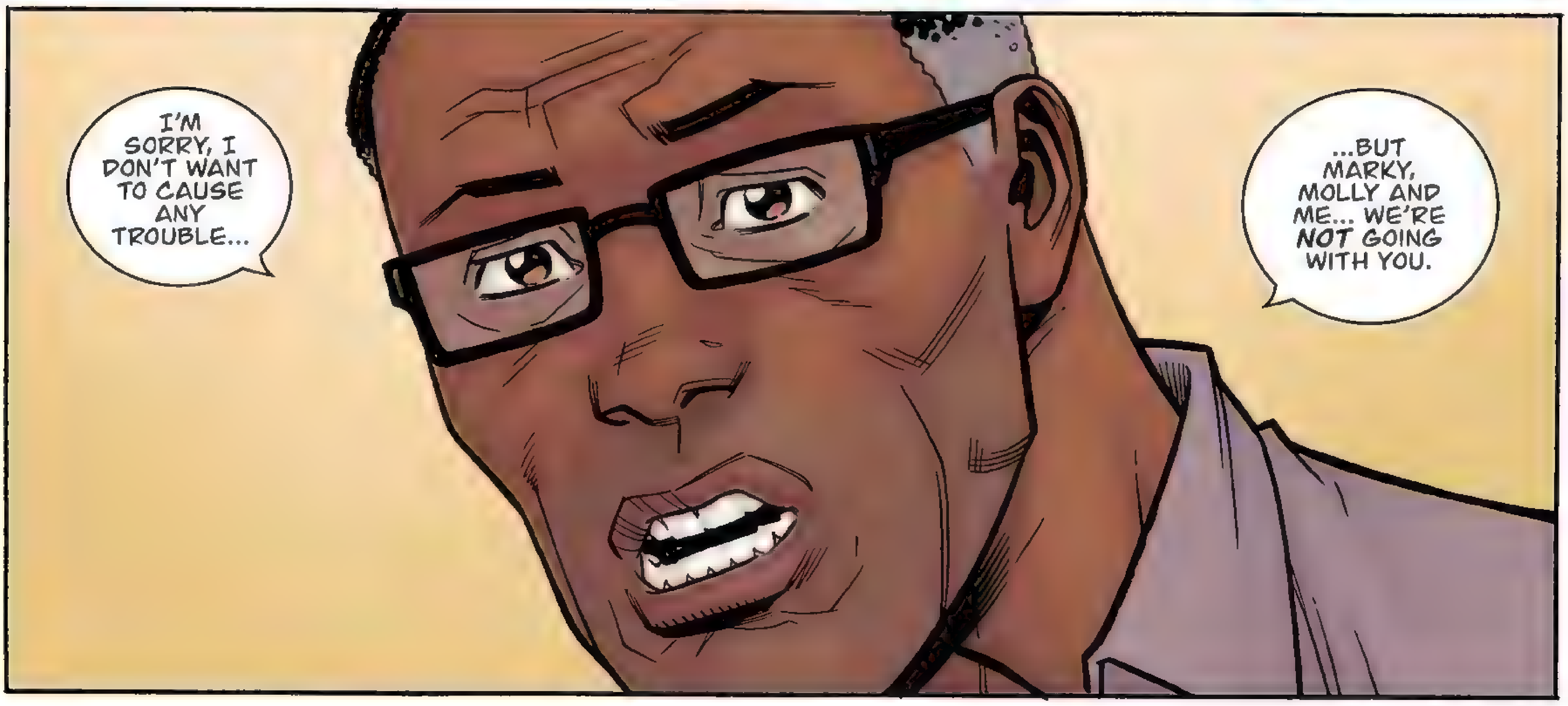

OKAY, GUYS--LET'S MAKE THIS QUICK.
WE HAVE EVERY INTENTION TO DO SO, INVINCIBLE. OUR SEEKER DRONES WILL SCAN THE RUBBLE FOR ANY SURVIVORS.
WHILE DOING SO, THEY CAN MAP THE STABILITY OF THE RUBBLE AND AN EXTRACTION PATH WE CAN USE FOR RESCUE.
I'M HOPING WE'LL HAVE ALL SURVIVORS FREE AND BE STARTING CLEANUP IN LESS THAN AN HOUR.
OR WAIT... WERE YOU PLANNING ON... FIGHTING US?
UM...
WE HAVE ALL THE RESOURCES NEEDED FOR OUR EXPERIMENTS, AND OUR WORK HAS HELPED CHANGE THE WORLD. WE ARE CONTENT.
WE NO LONGER HAVE A REASON TO WORK ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW.
WE ASSIST IN ANY CLEANUP EFFORTS AS A WAY TO GIVE BACK...
...AND ATONE FOR OUR PAST DEEDS.


UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
MY GOD-- WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
HE'S ONLY HERE UNTIL HE LEARNS TO CONTROL HIMSELF.
HE'S *SCARED.* LET ME TALK TO HIM.
ANISSA AND I... WE SHOULD HAVE TOLD HIM. I SEE THAT NOW. I JUST... I WANTED HIM TO FEEL... *NORMAL.*
HE'S GOING TO BE FINE.
YOU'LL SEE. JUST GIVE US TIME TO FIGURE THIS OUT.


THE VILTRUMITES HAVE TO LEAVE THE PLANET.
THIS INCIDENT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. MARKY IS ONE OF THE FIRST VILTRUMITE CHILDREN TO DEVELOP HIS POWERS.
THE REST ARE TICKING TIME BOMBS WAITING TO GO OFF. WE CAN'T AFFORD THE DISRUPTION THIS COULD CAUSE.
THAT'S ABSURD. NOT EVERY CHILD IS GOING TO REACT THE WAY MARKY DID. WE CAN TRAIN THEM. WE CAN PREPARE THEM. MARKY DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HE IS A VILTRUMITE.
WE CAN DEVELOP A SYSTEM. WE CAN MAKE IT WORK.
NO. I AGREE WITH REX.
WHAT?!
REX HAS ESTABLISHED PEACE HERE. THE IMMORTAL IS GOING TO MAINTAIN THAT, EVEN IMPROVE ON IT.
WITH THRAGG'S OFFSPRING, THERE ARE SO MANY OF US... KEEPING US HERE... IT'S ONLY GOING TO CAUSE TROUBLE.
IT'S AN UNMANAGEABLE SITUATION.
THE TRUTH IS... WE DON'T BELONG HERE.
NONE OF US DO.

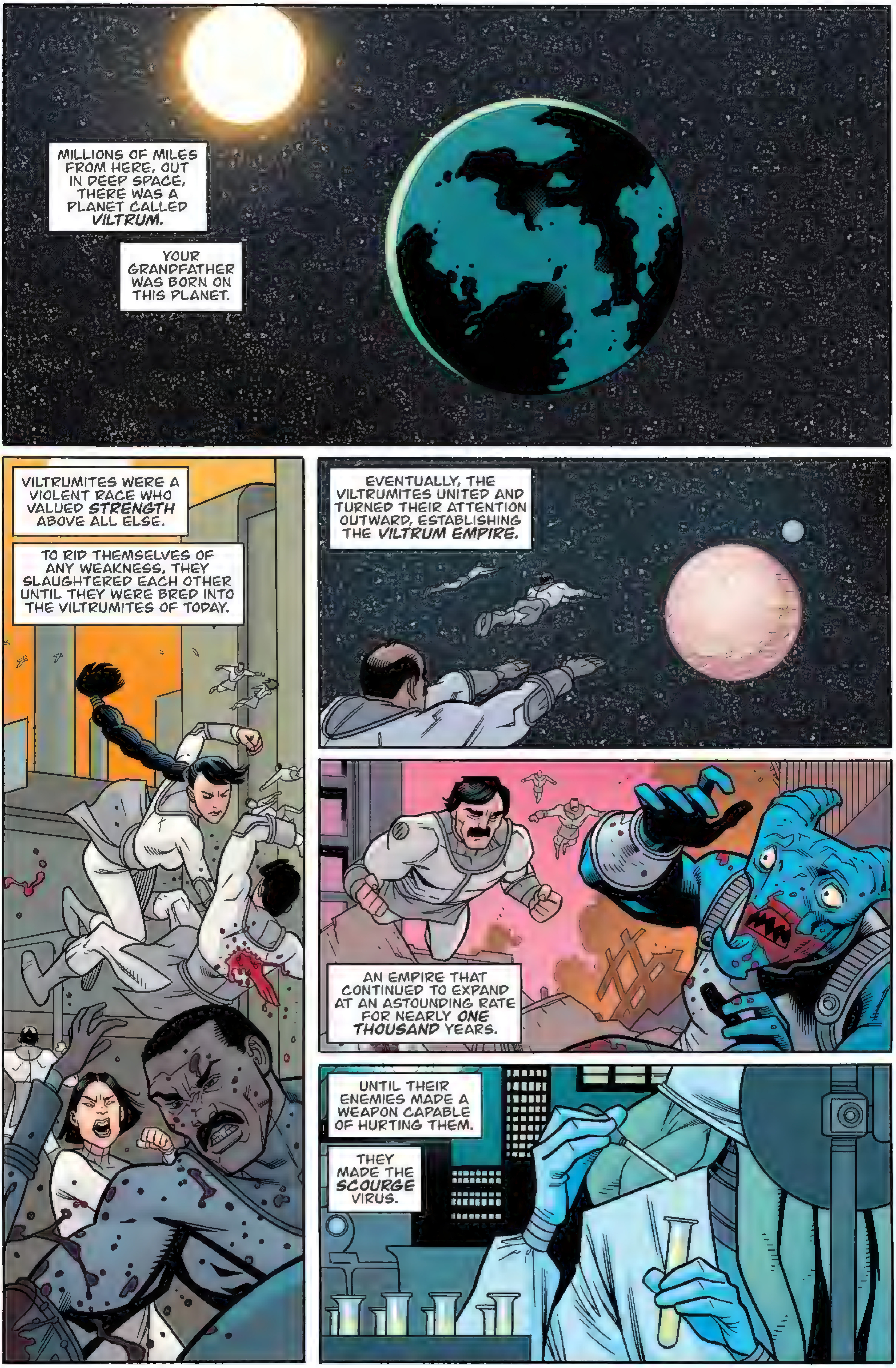

YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS?
I AM.
I'VE ACTUALLY BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE... SINCE I BECAME EMPEROR. I WORRY THAT BY STAYING HERE, THE VILTRUMITES COULD RADICALLY CHANGE LIFE ON EARTH.
THERE'S SO MANY OF US NOW... I WORRY THAT COULD CHANGE THE PLANET FOR THE WORST, GET RID OF WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I JUST... I CAN'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN.
GOOD LUCK CONVINCING THEM ALL TO UPROOT THEIR LIVES AND FAMILIES AND TRAVEL OUT TO... WHO KNOWS WHERE WITH US.
I MEAN, HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO DO THAT?
I'M THEIR *EMPEROR.*
I'LL JUST EMP...
...ER...
...*OR*... THEM.
I WAS TRYING A THING THERE. IT DIDN'T WORK.

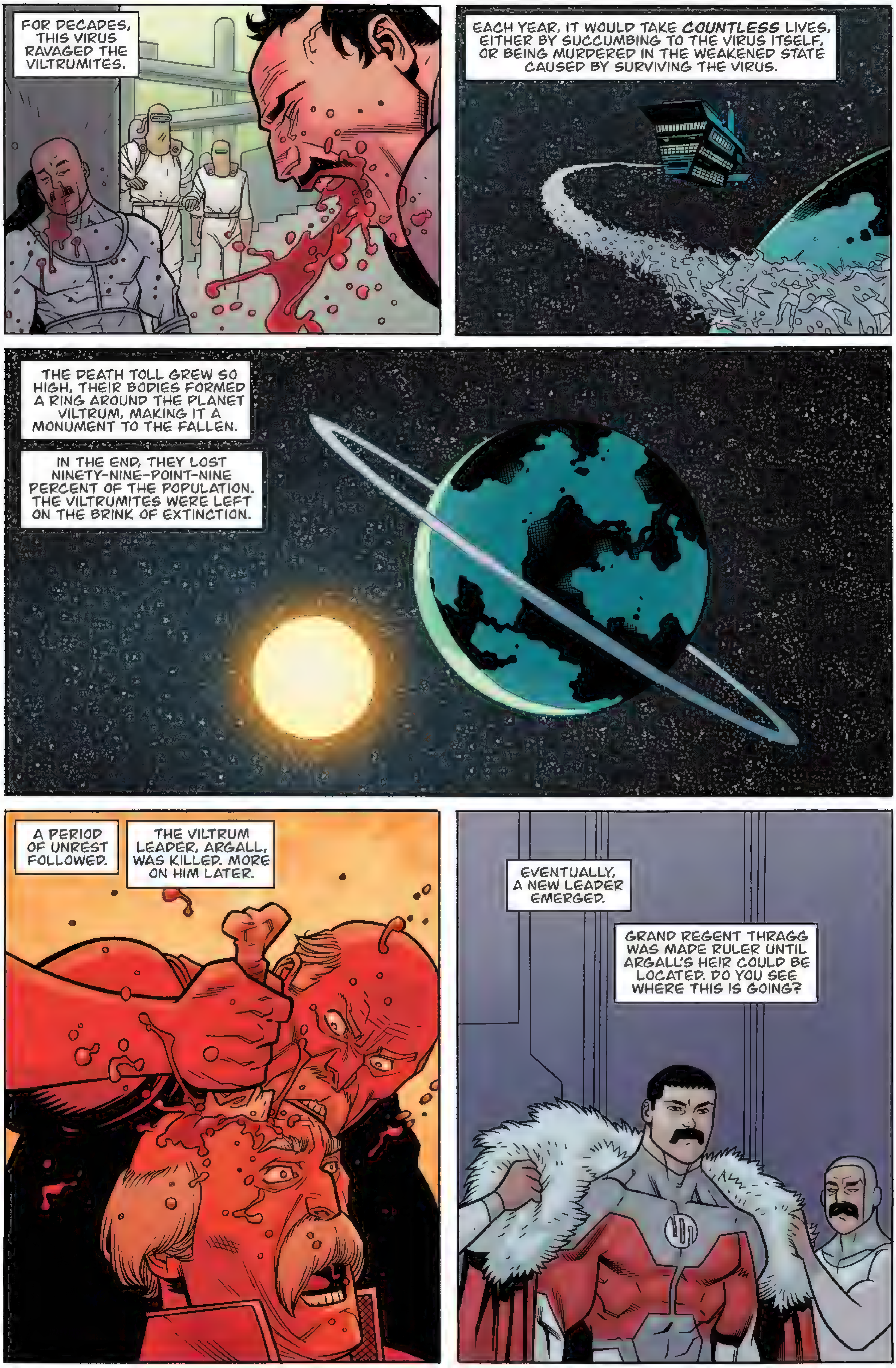

UM... MARK?
SCOTT, RIGHT? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?


I'M SORRY, I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE ANY TROUBLE...
...BUT MARKY, MOLLY AND ME... WE'RE NOT GOING WITH YOU.

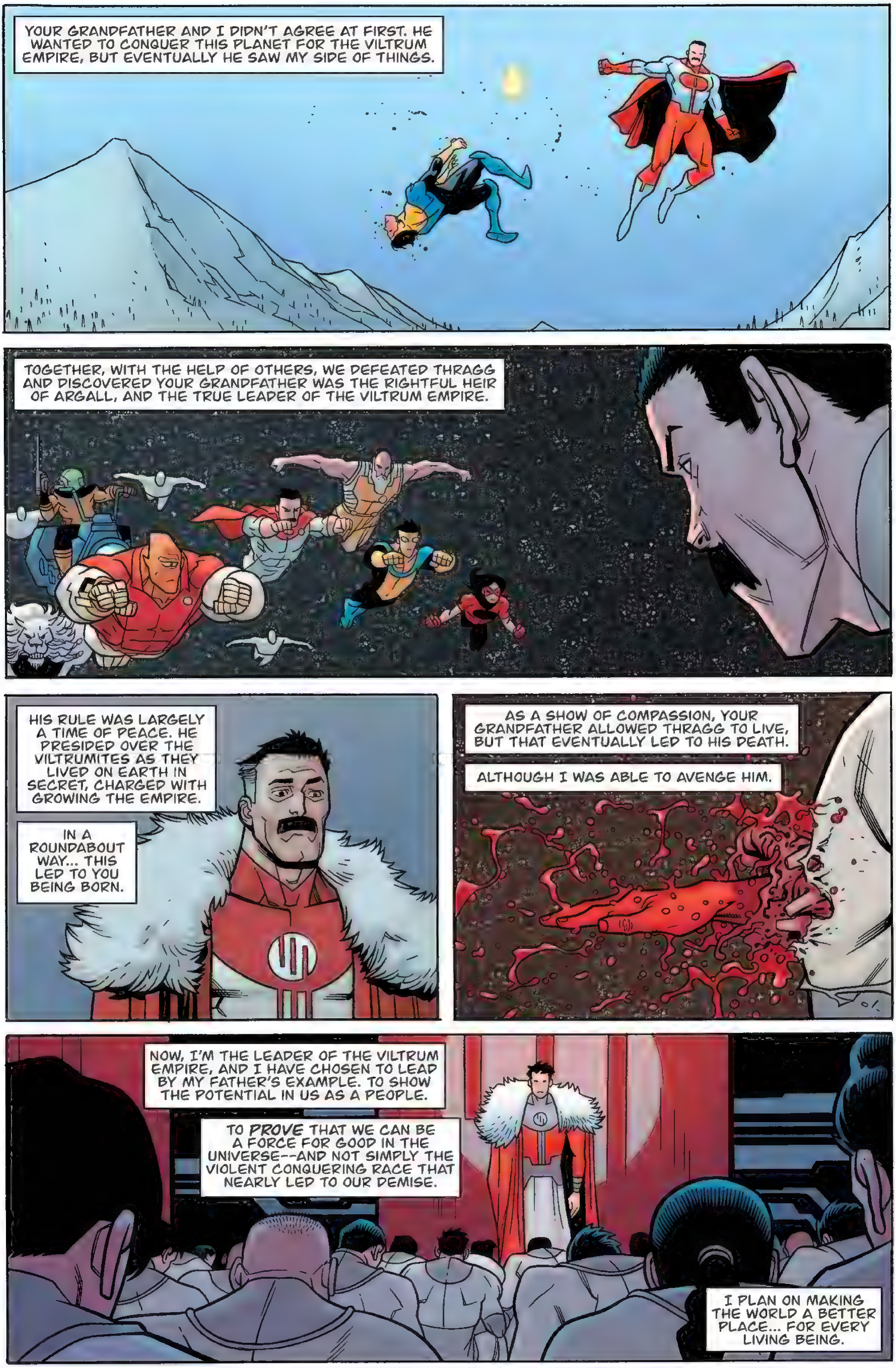
CHAPTER 144

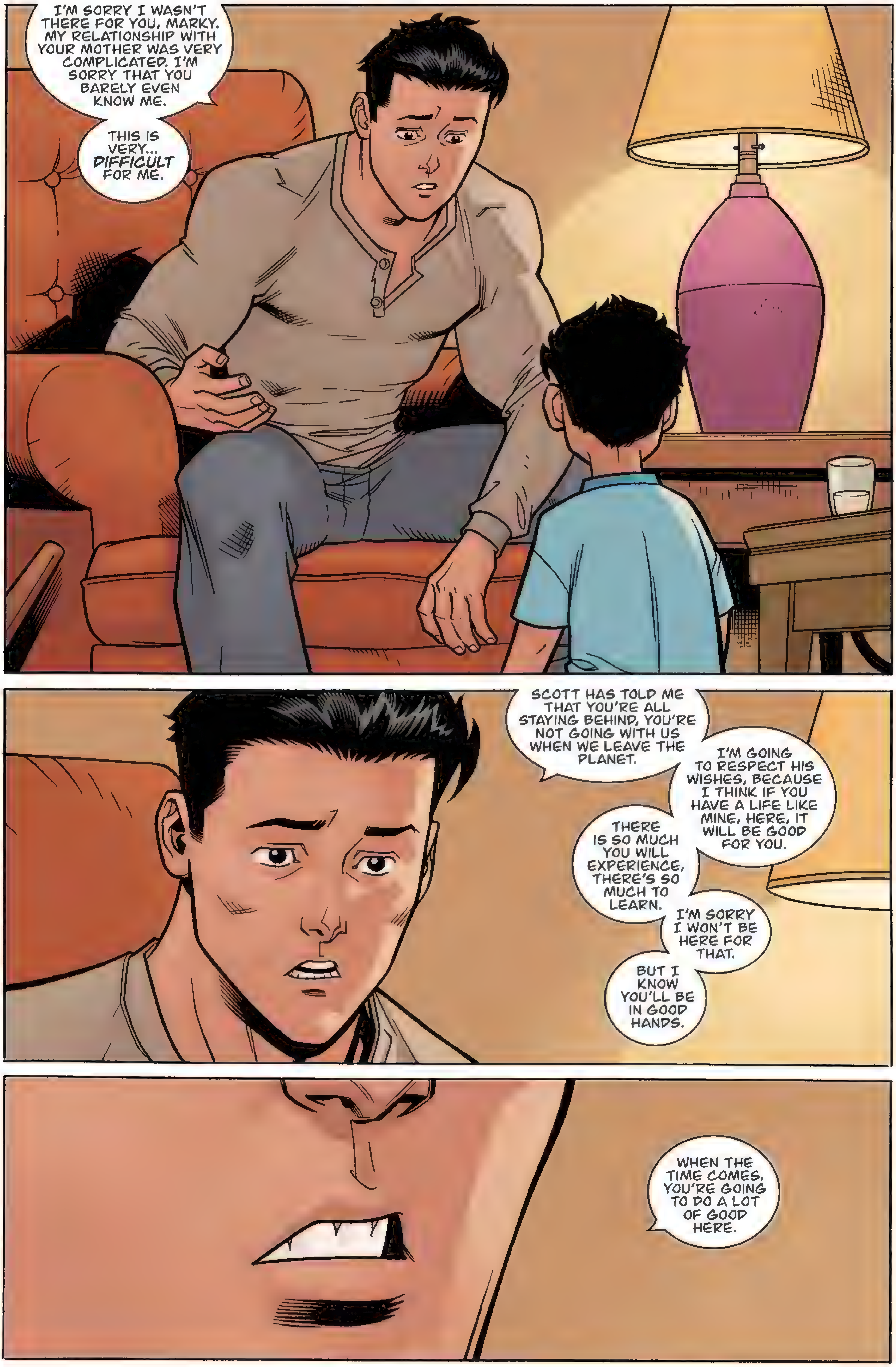
MARKY, I KNOW YOU'VE NOTICED BY NOW YOU'RE NOT LIKE NORMAL KIDS. YOUR MOTHER CHOSE TO AVOID THE SUBJECT, BUT NOW THAT SHE'S GONE AND YOU'VE GOTTEN YOUR POWERS... IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH.
YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH FOR ME TO TELL YOU WHERE YOU *REALLY* COME FROM.

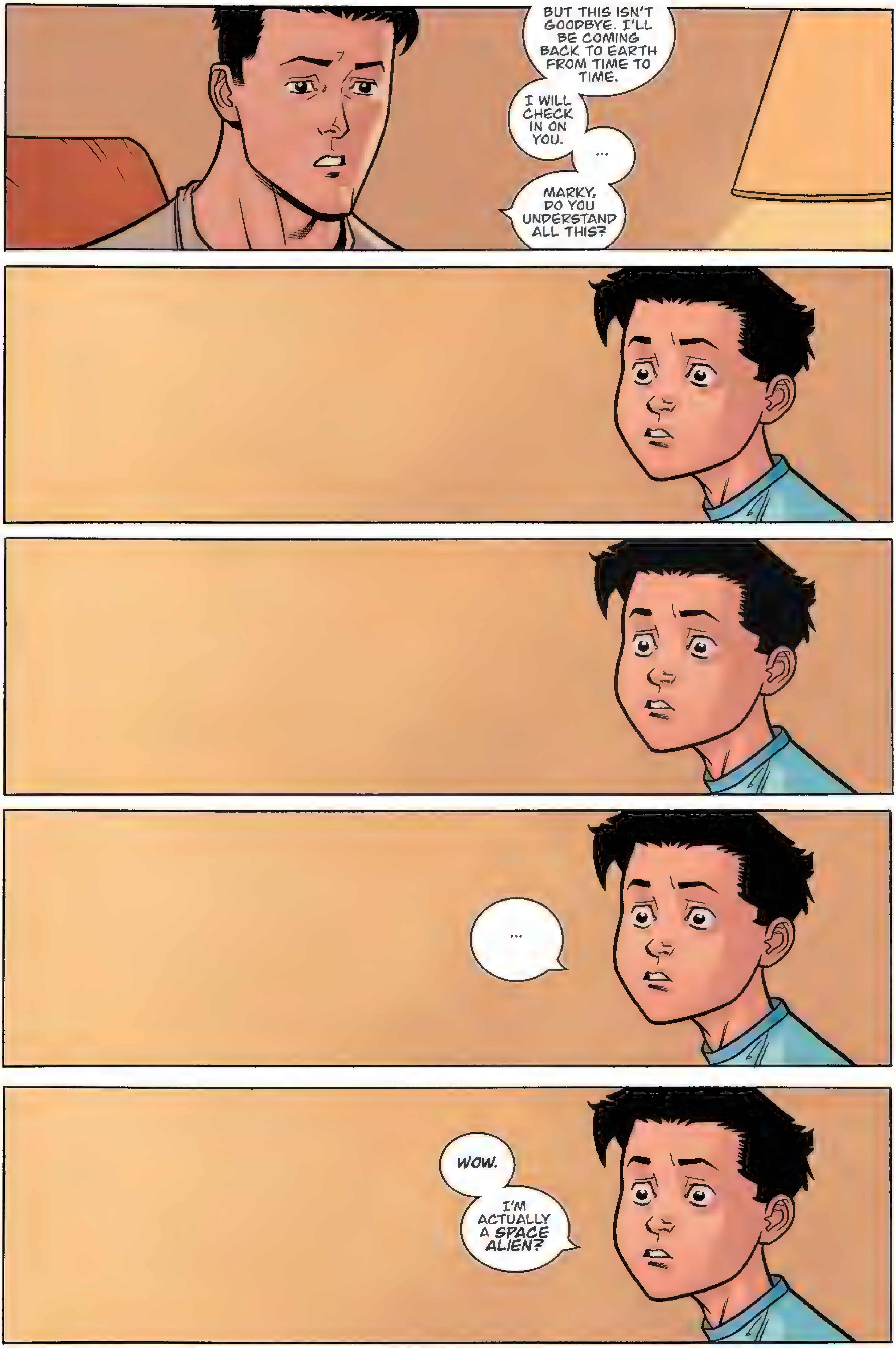

MILLIONS OF MILES FROM HERE, OUT IN DEEP SPACE, THERE WAS A PLANET CALLED *VILTRUM.*
YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS BORN ON THIS PLANET.
VILTRUMITES WERE A VIOLENT RACE WHO VALUED *STRENGTH* ABOVE ALL ELSE.
TO RID THEMSELVES OF ANY WEAKNESS, THEY SLAUGHTERED EACH OTHER UNTIL THEY WERE BRED INTO THE VILTRUMITES OF TODAY.
EVENTUALLY, THE VILTRUMITES UNITED AND TURNED THEIR ATTENTION OUTWARD, ESTABLISHING THE *VILTRUM EMPIRE.*
AN EMPIRE THAT CONTINUED TO EXPAND AT AN ASTOUNDING RATE FOR NEARLY *ONE THOUSAND* YEARS.
UNTIL THEIR ENEMIES MADE A WEAPON CAPABLE OF HURTING THEM.
THEY MADE THE *SCOURGE* VIRUS.


FOR DECADES, THIS VIRUS RAVAGED THE VILTRUMITES.
EACH YEAR, IT WOULD TAKE **COUNTLESS** LIVES, EITHER BY SUCCUMBING TO THE VIRUS ITSELF, OR BEING MURDERED IN THE WEAKENED STATE CAUSED BY SURVIVING THE VIRUS.
THE DEATH TOLL GREW SO HIGH, THEIR BODIES FORMED A RING AROUND THE PLANET VILTRUM, MAKING IT A MONUMENT TO THE FALLEN.
IN THE END, THEY LOST NINETY-NINE-POINT-NINE PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. THE VILTRUMITES WERE LEFT ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION.
A PERIOD OF UNREST FOLLOWED.
THE VILTRUM LEADER, ARGALL, WAS KILLED. MORE ON HIM LATER.
EVENTUALLY, A NEW LEADER EMERGED.
GRAND REGENT THRAGG WAS MADE RULER UNTIL ARGALL'S HEIR COULD BE LOCATED. DO YOU SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING?

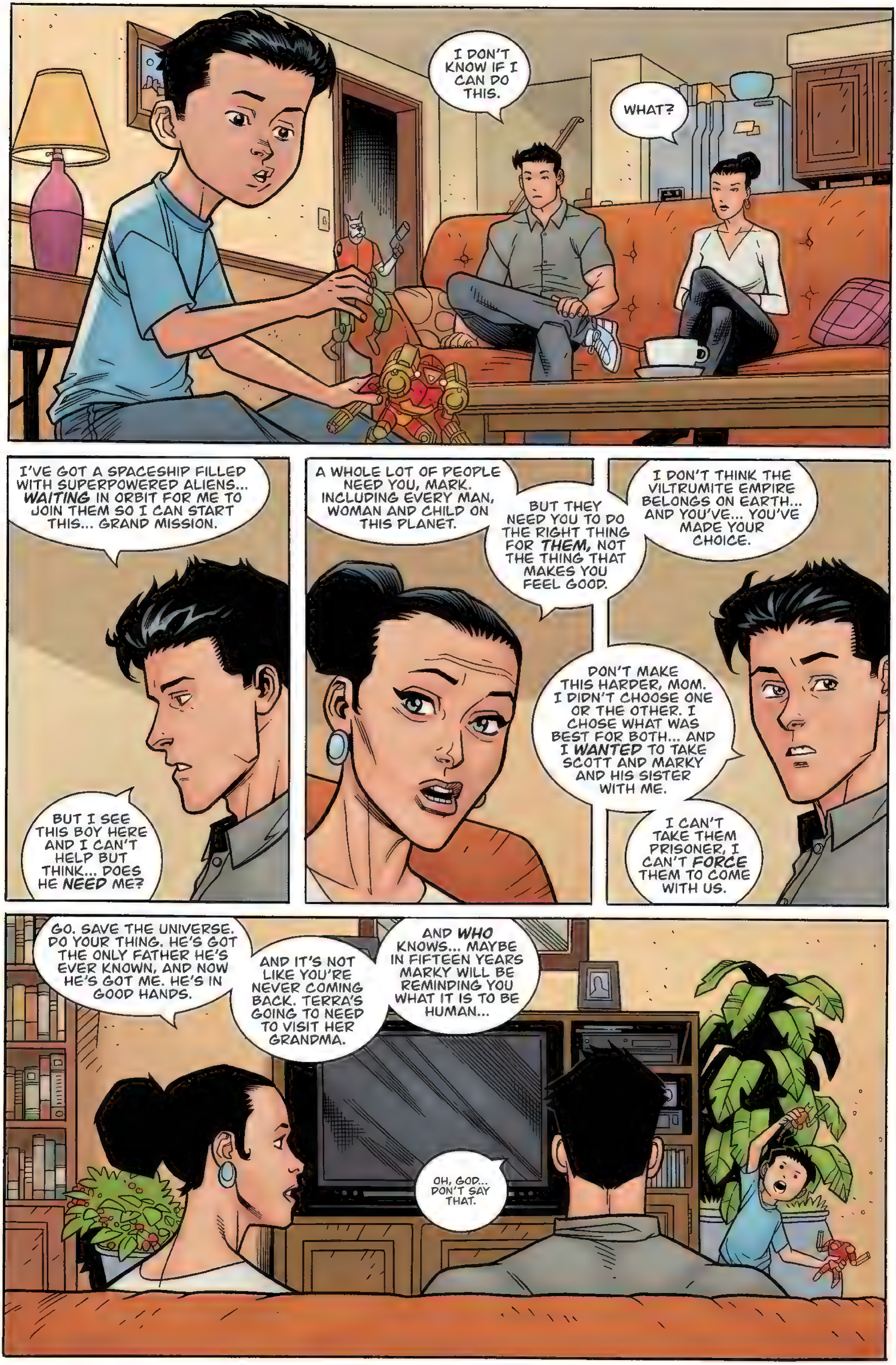
THAT'S WHEN A NEW PLAN EMERGED TO REBUILD THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
AGENTS WOULD BE SENT OUT, ALONE, TO LIVE AMONG THE PEOPLE OF ALIEN WORLDS, TO SEE IF THEY WERE... COMPATIBLE WITH VILTRUMITE DNA.
IT'S THIS MISSION THAT BROUGHT YOUR GRANDFATHER TO EARTH.
AND LED TO ME BEING BORN.
I WAS JUST LIKE YOU. I HAD *NO IDEA* THAT I WAS A VILTRUMITE. UNTIL ONE DAY WHEN MY FATHER SAT ME DOWN, LIKE I AM WITH YOU NOW, AND EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO ME.
AND TOLD ME I'D GET POWERS.
THANKFULLY, HE WAS ABLE TO DO THIS *BEFORE* MY POWERS KICKED IN... I GUESS I WAS KIND OF A LATE BLOOMER.
ONCE I GOT MY POWERS, I HAD MANY ADVENTURES AND DID LOTS OF GOOD AS INVINCIBLE.
YOU CAN PROBABLY READ ALL KINDS OF THINGS ABOUT ME ON THE INTERNET.

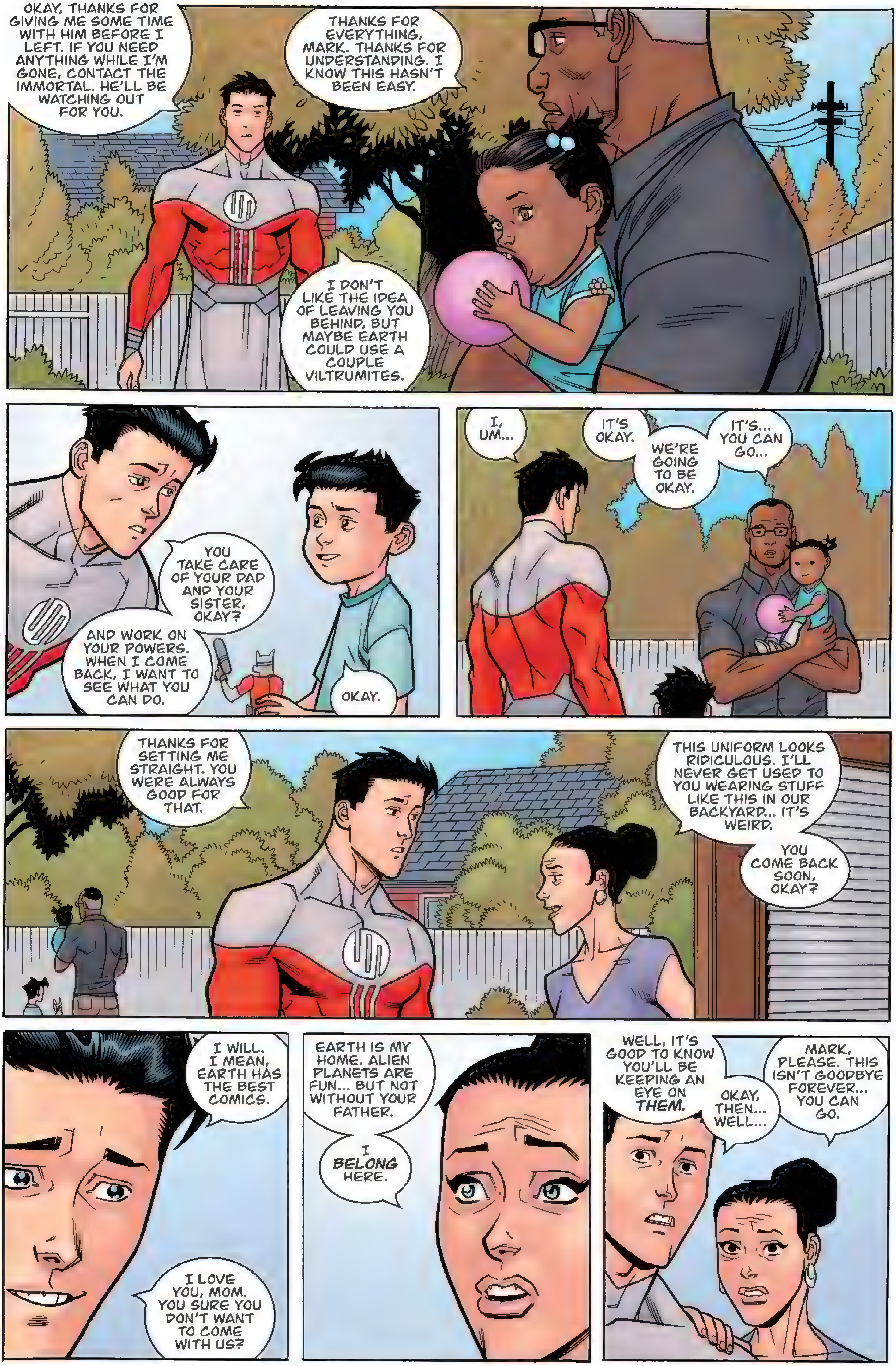

YOUR GRANDFATHER AND I DIDN'T AGREE AT FIRST. HE WANTED TO CONQUER THIS PLANET FOR THE VILTRUM EMPIRE, BUT EVENTUALLY HE SAW MY SIDE OF THINGS.
TOGETHER, WITH THE HELP OF OTHERS, WE DEFEATED THRAGG AND DISCOVERED YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS THE RIGHTFUL HEIR OF ARGALL, AND THE TRUE LEADER OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
HIS RULE WAS LARGELY A TIME OF PEACE. HE PRESIDED OVER THE VILTRUMITES AS THEY LIVED ON EARTH IN SECRET, CHARGED WITH GROWING THE EMPIRE.
IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY... THIS LED TO YOU BEING BORN.
AS A SHOW OF COMPASSION, YOUR GRANDFATHER ALLOWED THRAGG TO LIVE, BUT THAT EVENTUALLY LED TO HIS DEATH.
ALTHOUGH I WAS ABLE TO AVENGE HIM.
NOW, I'M THE LEADER OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE, AND I HAVE CHOSEN TO LEAD BY MY FATHER'S EXAMPLE. TO SHOW THE POTENTIAL IN US AS A PEOPLE.
TO *PROVE* THAT WE CAN BE A FORCE FOR GOOD IN THE UNIVERSE--AND NOT SIMPLY THE VIOLENT CONQUERING RACE THAT NEARLY LED TO OUR DEMISE.
I PLAN ON MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE... FOR EVERY LIVING BEING.

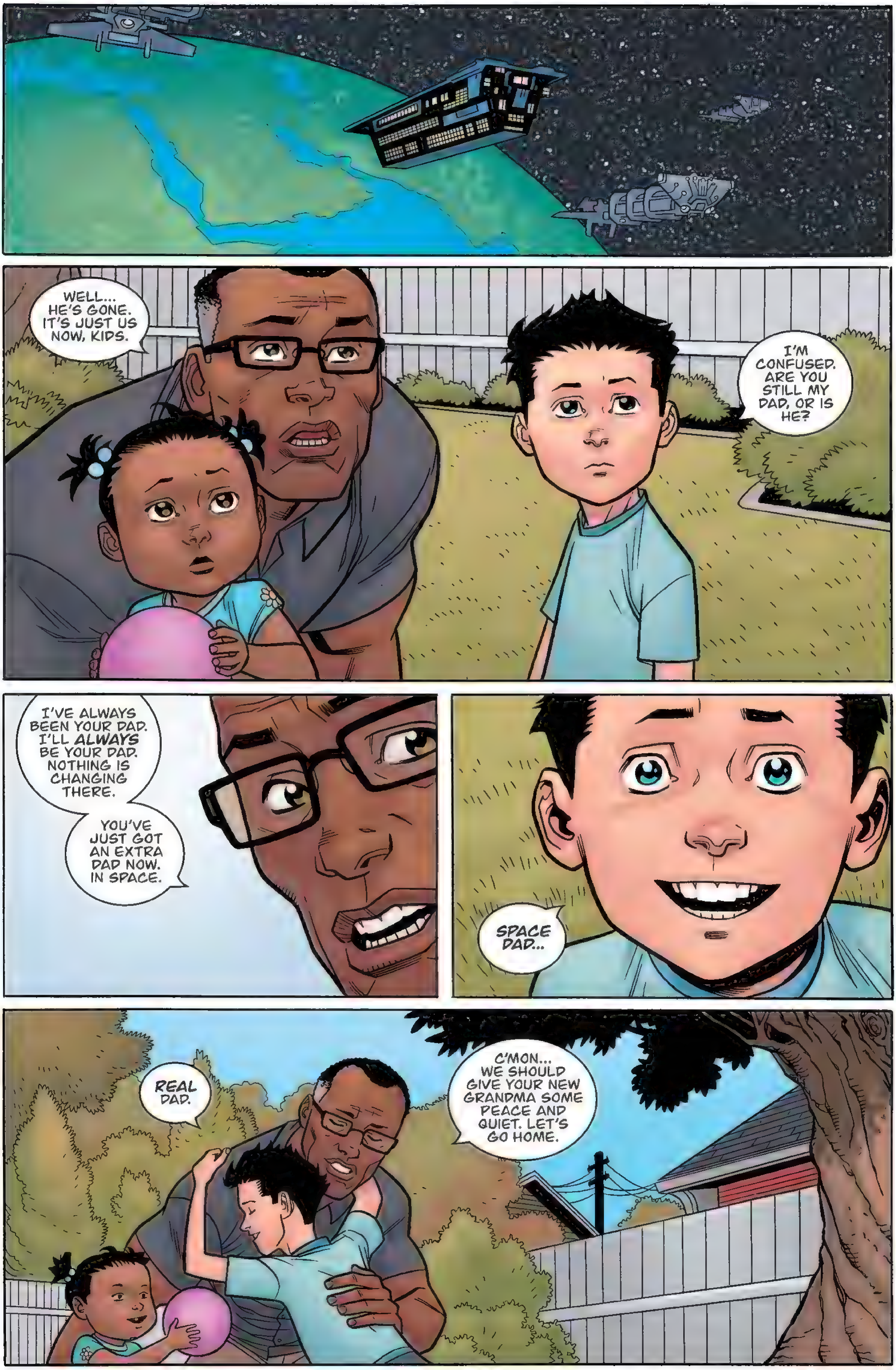

I'M SORRY I WASN'T THERE FOR YOU, MARKY. MY RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MOTHER WAS VERY COMPLICATED. I'M SORRY THAT YOU BARELY EVEN KNOW ME.
THIS IS VERY... DIFFICULT FOR ME.
SCOTT HAS TOLD ME THAT YOU'RE ALL STAYING BEHIND, YOU'RE NOT GOING WITH US WHEN WE LEAVE THE PLANET.
I'M GOING TO RESPECT HIS WISHES, BECAUSE I THINK IF YOU HAVE A LIFE LIKE MINE, HERE, IT WILL BE GOOD FOR YOU.
THERE IS SO MUCH YOU WILL EXPERIENCE, THERE'S SO MUCH TO LEARN.
I'M SORRY I WON'T BE HERE FOR THAT.
BUT I KNOW YOU'LL BE IN GOOD HANDS.
WHEN THE TIME COMES, YOU'RE GOING TO DO A LOT OF GOOD HERE.

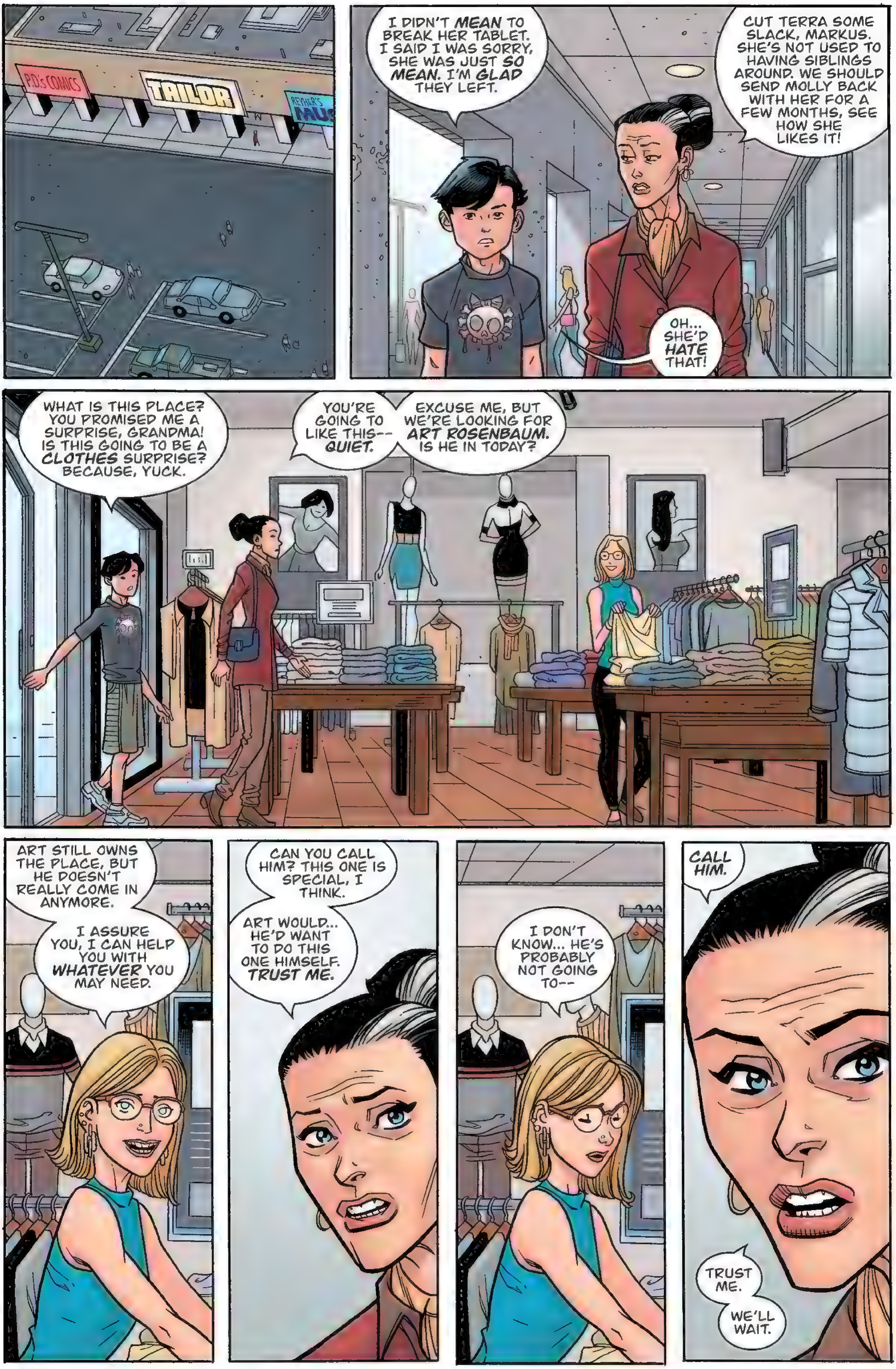

BUT THIS ISN'T GOODBYE. I'LL BE COMING BACK TO EARTH FROM TIME TO TIME.
I WILL CHECK IN ON YOU.
...
MARKY, DO YOU UNDERSTAND ALL THIS?
...
WOW.
I'M ACTUALLY A SPACE ALIEN?

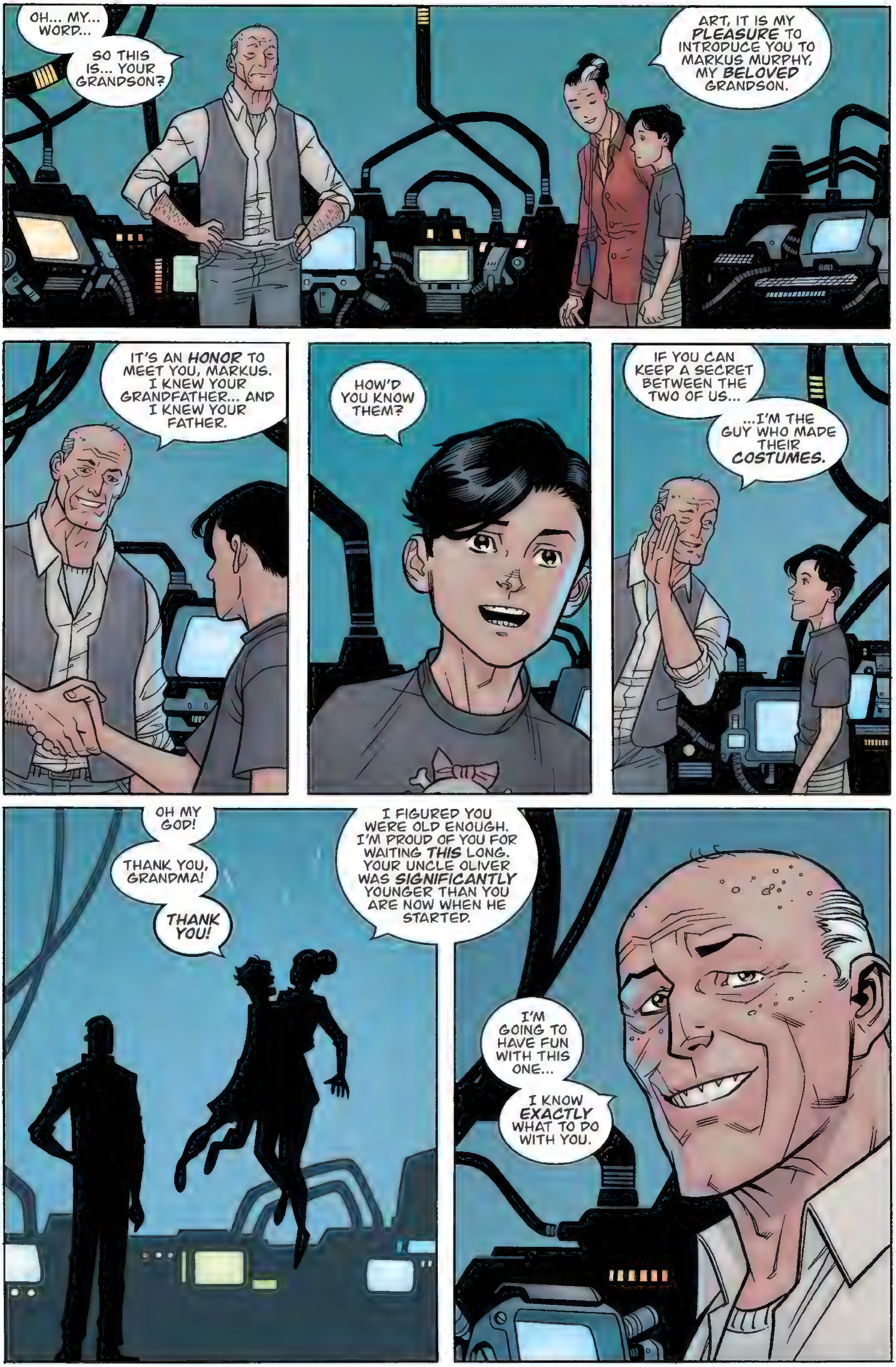
THE REBELS SURRENDERED, THE KINGDOM SECURED... BUT YOU... YOU COULDN'T STOP. IT MUST BE TRUE, YOUR FATHER'S CURSE... IT FLOWS THROUGH YOUR VEINS NOW THAT HE IS NOT ALIVE TO CONTAIN IT.
I AM SORRY FOR WHAT I HAVE DONE HERE. I LOST CONTROL. THE RAGE WITHIN CANNOT BE CONTAINED. I, TOO, MUST NOW SEEK OUT WORTHY OPPONENTS UNTIL I MEET MY END.
THEY SAY IT WAS A VILTRUMITE WHO WAS FINALLY ABLE TO BEST YOUR BELOVED FATHER IN BATTLE.
VILTRUMITE?
THEN I KNOW WHO HAS BROUGHT THIS CURSE UPON ME. IT IS DECIDED. I WILL NOT REST UNTIL EVERY VILTRUMITE IN THE UNIVERSE IS DEAD...
...OR I ***AM.***


I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO THIS.
WHAT?
I'VE GOT A SPACESHIP FILLED WITH SUPERPOWERED ALIENS... *WAITING* IN ORBIT FOR ME TO JOIN THEM SO I CAN START THIS... GRAND MISSION.
BUT I SEE THIS BOY HERE AND I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK... DOES HE *NEED* ME?
A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE NEED YOU, MARK. INCLUDING EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD ON THIS PLANET.
BUT THEY NEED YOU TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR *THEM,* NOT THE THING THAT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD.
I DON'T THINK THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE BELONGS ON EARTH... AND YOU'VE... YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE.
DON'T MAKE THIS HARDER, MOM. I DIDN'T CHOOSE ONE OR THE OTHER. I CHOSE WHAT WAS BEST FOR BOTH... AND I *WANTED* TO TAKE SCOTT AND MARKY AND HIS SISTER WITH ME.
I CAN'T TAKE THEM PRISONER, I CAN'T *FORCE* THEM TO COME WITH US.
GO. SAVE THE UNIVERSE. DO YOUR THING. HE'S GOT THE ONLY FATHER HE'S EVER KNOWN, AND NOW HE'S GOT ME. HE'S IN GOOD HANDS.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE NEVER COMING BACK. TERRA'S GOING TO NEED TO VISIT HER GRANDMA.
AND *WHO* KNOWS... MAYBE IN FIFTEEN YEARS MARKY WILL BE REMINDING YOU WHAT IT IS TO BE HUMAN...
OH, GOD... DON'T SAY THAT.


OKAY, THANKS FOR GIVING ME SOME TIME WITH HIM BEFORE I LEFT. IF YOU NEED ANYTHING WHILE I'M GONE, CONTACT THE IMMORTAL. HE'LL BE WATCHING OUT FOR YOU.
THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, MARK. THANKS FOR UNDERSTANDING. I KNOW THIS HASN'T BEEN EASY.
I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF LEAVING YOU BEHIND, BUT MAYBE EARTH COULD USE A COUPLE VILTRUMITES.
YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR DAD AND YOUR SISTER, OKAY?
AND WORK ON YOUR POWERS. WHEN I COME BACK, I WANT TO SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO.
OKAY.
I, UM...
IT'S OKAY.
WE'RE GOING TO BE OKAY.
IT'S... YOU CAN GO...
THANKS FOR SETTING ME STRAIGHT. YOU WERE ALWAYS GOOD FOR THAT.
THIS UNIFORM LOOKS RIDICULOUS. I'LL NEVER GET USED TO YOU WEARING STUFF LIKE THIS IN OUR BACKYARD... IT'S WEIRD.
YOU COME BACK SOON, OKAY?
I WILL. I MEAN, EARTH HAS THE BEST COMICS.
I LOVE YOU, MOM. YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO COME WITH US?
EARTH IS MY HOME. ALIEN PLANETS ARE FUN... BUT NOT WITHOUT YOUR FATHER.
I *BELONG* HERE.
WELL, IT'S GOOD TO KNOW YOU'LL BE KEEPING AN EYE ON *THEM.*
OKAY, THEN... WELL...
MARK, PLEASE. THIS ISN'T GOODBYE FOREVER... YOU CAN GO.


WELL... HE'S GONE. IT'S JUST US NOW, KIDS.
I'M CONFUSED. ARE YOU STILL MY DAD, OR IS HE?
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN YOUR DAD. I'LL *ALWAYS* BE YOUR DAD. NOTHING IS CHANGING THERE.
YOU'VE JUST GOT AN EXTRA DAD NOW. IN SPACE.
SPACE DAD...
REAL DAD.
C'MON... WE SHOULD GIVE YOUR NEW GRANDMA SOME PEACE AND QUIET. LET'S GO HOME.


P.D.'s COMICS
TAILOR
I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO BREAK HER TABLET. I SAID I WAS SORRY. SHE WAS JUST *SO MEAN.* I'M *GLAD* THEY LEFT.
CUT TERRA SOME SLACK, MARKUS. SHE'S NOT USED TO HAVING SIBLINGS AROUND. WE SHOULD SEND MOLLY BACK WITH HER FOR A FEW MONTHS, SEE HOW SHE LIKES IT!
OH... SHE'D *HATE* THAT!
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? YOU PROMISED ME A SURPRISE, GRANDMA! IS THIS GOING TO BE A *CLOTHES* SURPRISE? BECAUSE, YUCK.
YOU'RE GOING TO LIKE THIS-- *QUIET.*
EXCUSE ME, BUT WE'RE LOOKING FOR *ART ROSENBAUM.* IS HE IN TODAY?
ART STILL OWNS THE PLACE, BUT HE DOESN'T REALLY COME IN ANYMORE.
I ASSURE YOU, I CAN HELP YOU WITH *WHATEVER* YOU MAY NEED.
CAN YOU CALL HIM? THIS ONE IS SPECIAL, I THINK.
ART WOULD... HE'D WANT TO DO THIS ONE HIMSELF. *TRUST ME.*
I DON'T KNOW... HE'S PROBABLY NOT GOING TO--
CALL HIM.
TRUST ME.
WE'LL WAIT.


OH... MY... WORD...
SO THIS IS... YOUR GRANDSON?
ART, IT IS MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MARKUS MURPHY, MY BELOVED GRANDSON.
IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, MARKUS. I KNEW YOUR GRANDFATHER... AND I KNEW YOUR FATHER.
HOW'D YOU KNOW THEM?
IF YOU CAN KEEP A SECRET BETWEEN THE TWO OF US...
...I'M THE GUY WHO MADE THEIR COSTUMES.
OH MY GOD!
THANK YOU, GRANDMA!
THANK YOU!
I FIGURED YOU WERE OLD ENOUGH. I'M PROUD OF YOU FOR WAITING THIS LONG. YOUR UNCLE OLIVER WAS SIGNIFICANTLY YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE NOW WHEN HE STARTED.
I'M GOING TO HAVE FUN WITH THIS ONE...
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO DO WITH YOU.

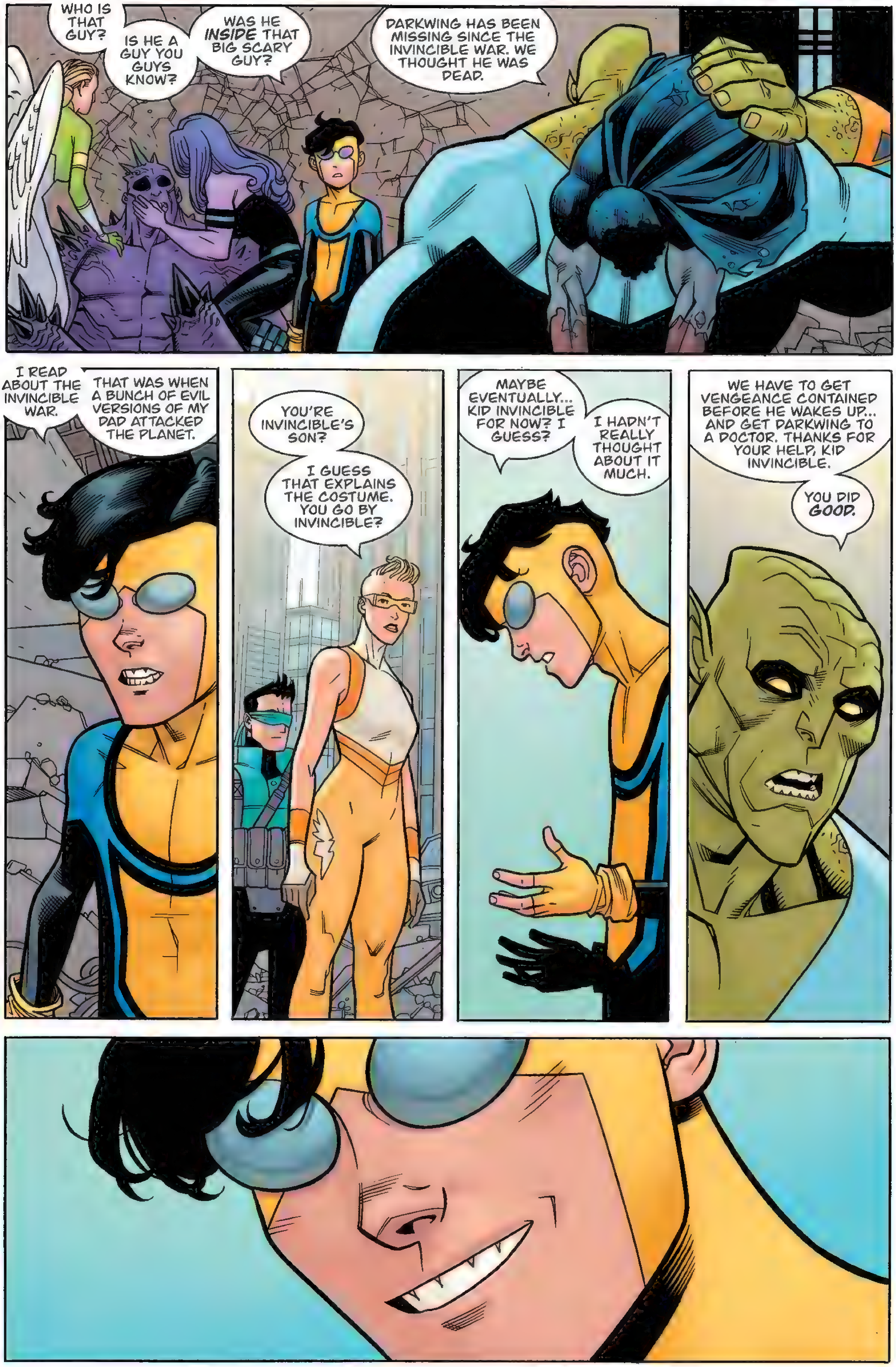
WAHOO!

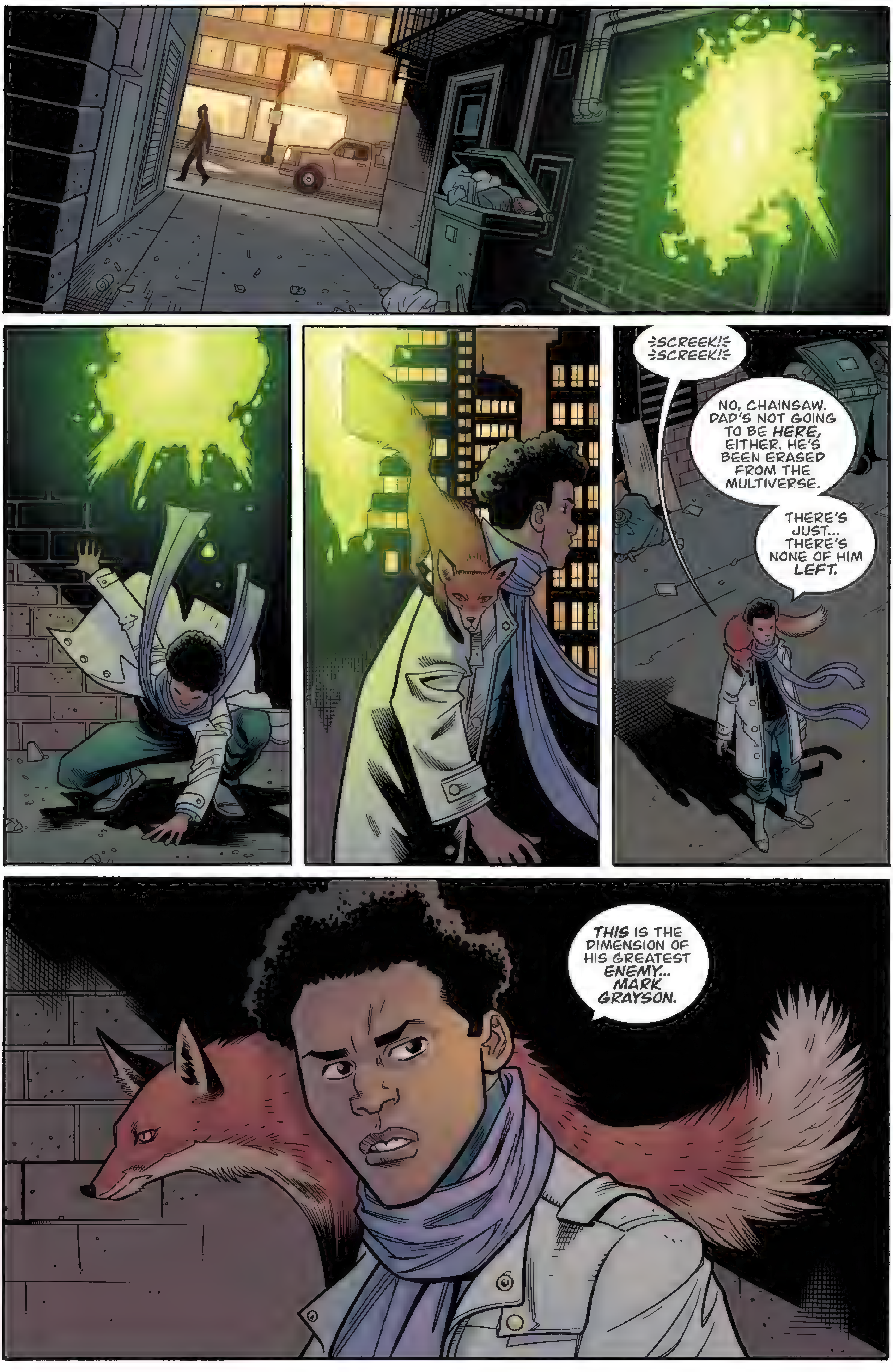
OH, MAN!
FIRST FIGHT!
FIRST FIGHT!

THWOOM!
WE'VE GOT THIS, KID! IF YOU WANT TO WATCH--JUST STAY OUT OF THE WAY.
I'M TOUGH-- YOU'LL SEE!
I CAN HELP!
KROOM!!

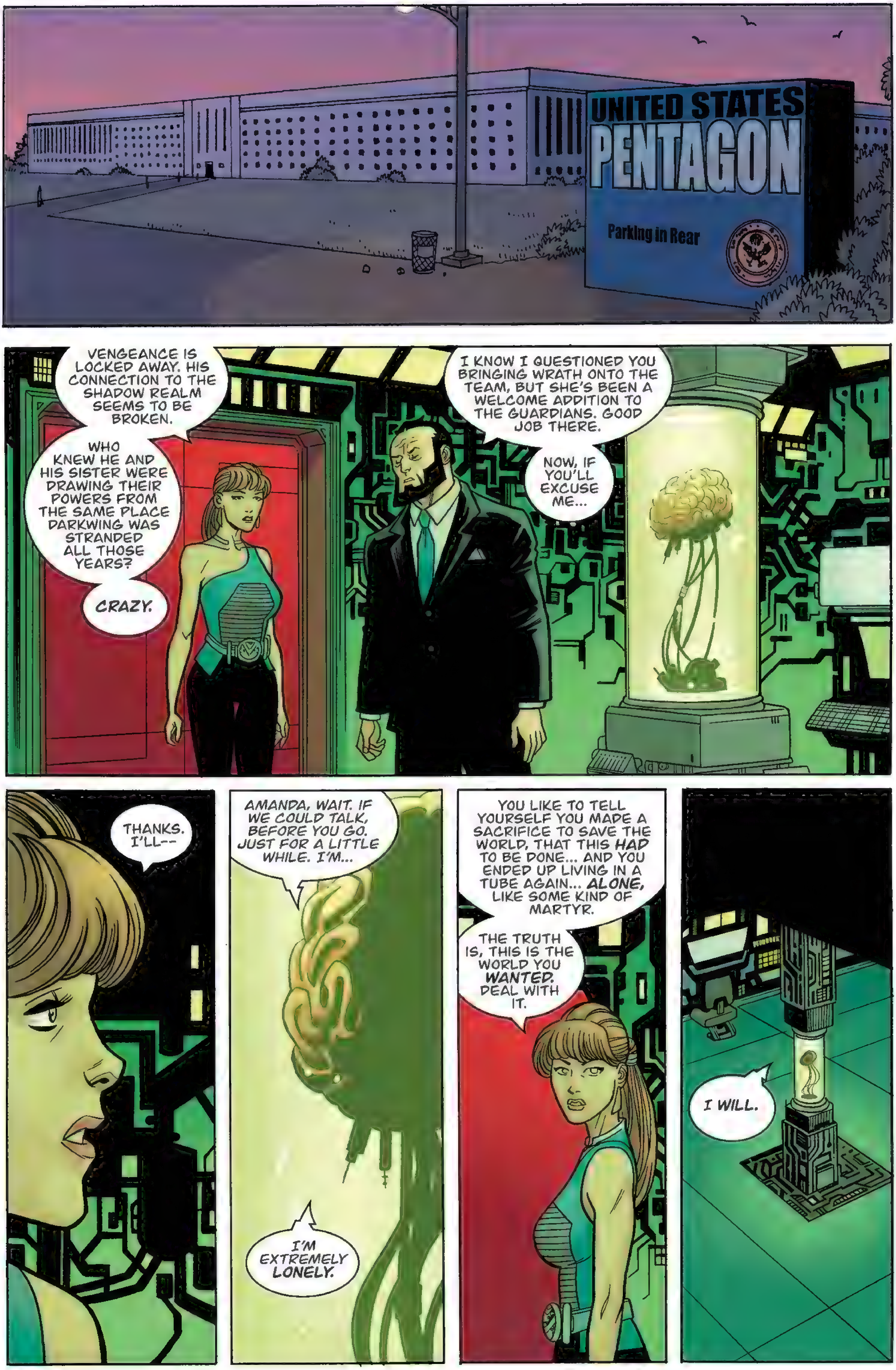
WRAMM!
SPAK! SPAK! SPAK!
THIS KID HAS SPIRIT!
CLAWS ARE TRIMMED, YOUNG ONE!
WRAMM!
THANKS, GUN GUY!
WRATH?! A LITTLE HELP?! GET YOUR BROTHER IN LINE!
VENGEANCE, PLEASE! YOU'VE LOST YOUR WAY! WE USE THE DARKNESS TO GIVE US POWER! YOU CAN'T ALLOW IT TO CONTROL YOU!
BREAK YOUR LINK--RELEASE THE POWER BEFORE IT CONSUMES YOU!
I CAN SEE INTO THE VOID AND THE VOID STARES BACK INTO ME! I FEEL MY BODY SURGING WITH POWER!
POWER!
POWER!
POWER!

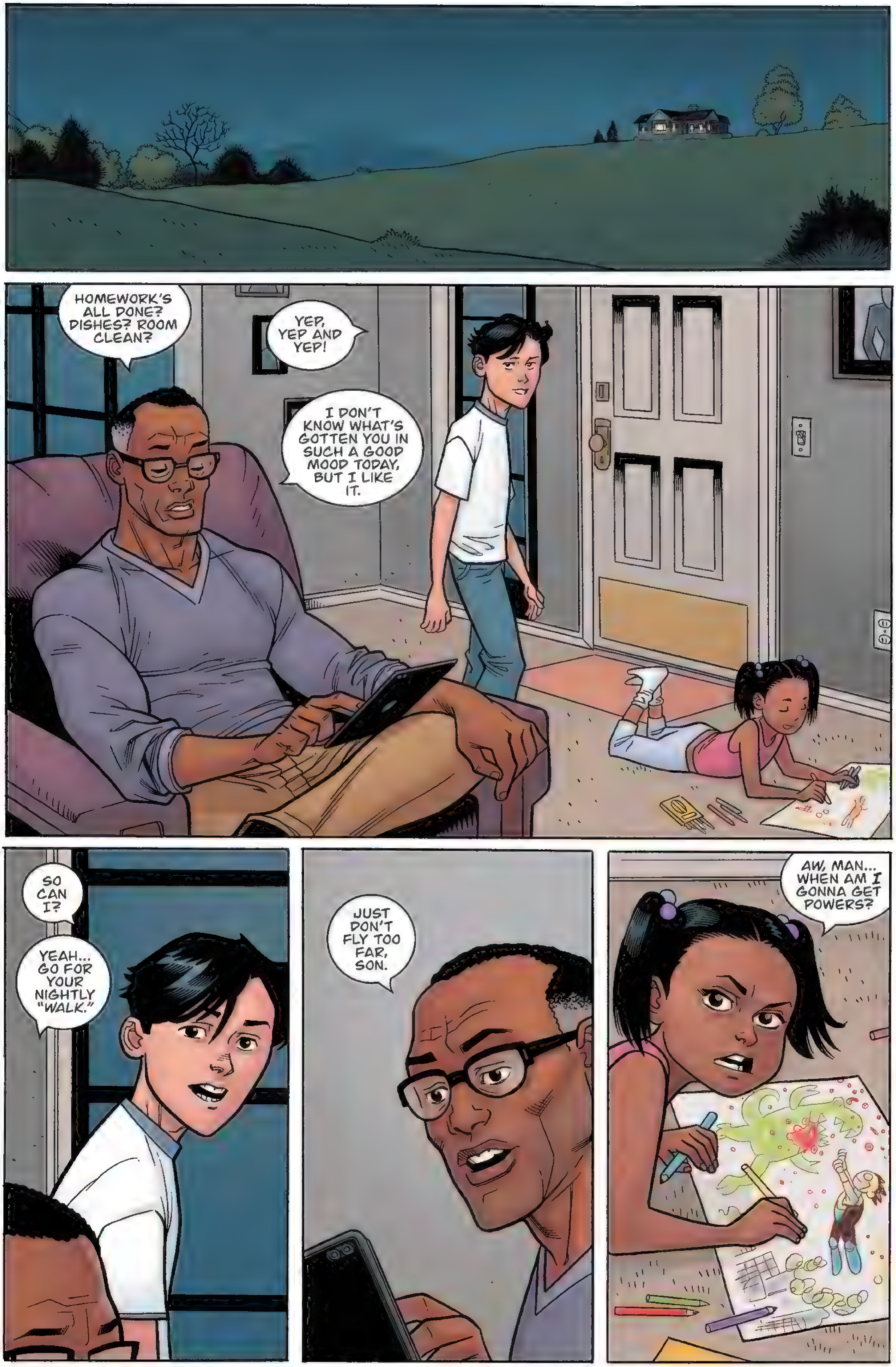
GRAAAAAAAGH!!!
AAAAAAAAHHH!!!
WRAMM!
HOME? IS THIS HOME?!
EARTH?!
I'M ALIVE? I'M--
DARKWING?
DARKWING--!

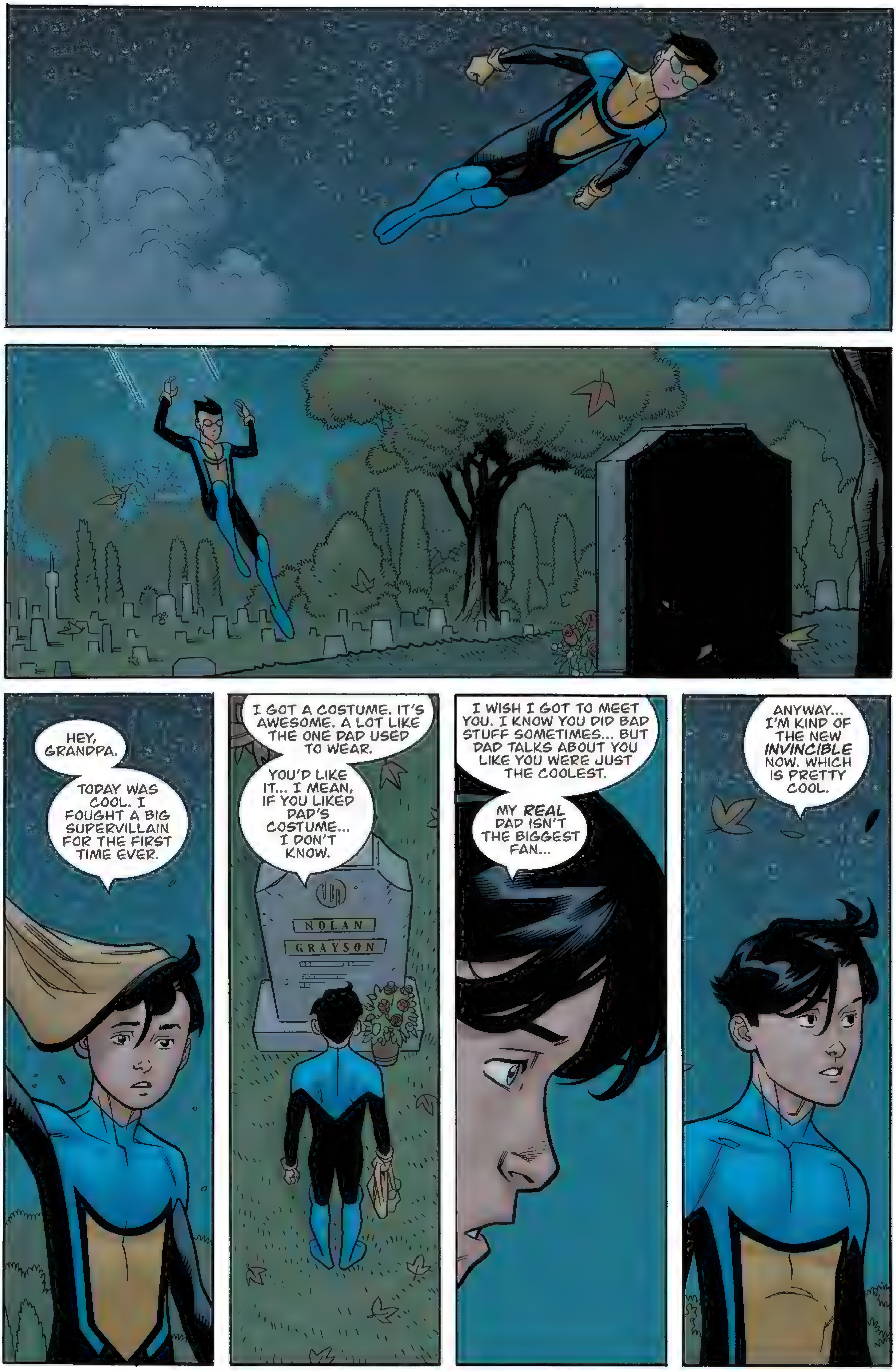

WHO IS THAT GUY?
IS HE A GUY YOU GUYS KNOW?
WAS HE *INSIDE* THAT BIG SCARY GUY?
DARKWING HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE THE INVINCIBLE WAR. WE THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD.
I READ ABOUT THE INVINCIBLE WAR.
THAT WAS WHEN A BUNCH OF EVIL VERSIONS OF MY DAD ATTACKED THE PLANET.
YOU'RE INVINCIBLE'S SON?
I GUESS THAT EXPLAINS THE COSTUME. YOU GO BY INVINCIBLE?
MAYBE EVENTUALLY... KID INVINCIBLE FOR NOW? I GUESS?
I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT MUCH.
WE HAVE TO GET VENGEANCE CONTAINED BEFORE HE WAKES UP... AND GET DARKWING TO A DOCTOR. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, KID INVINCIBLE.
YOU DID *GOOD.*

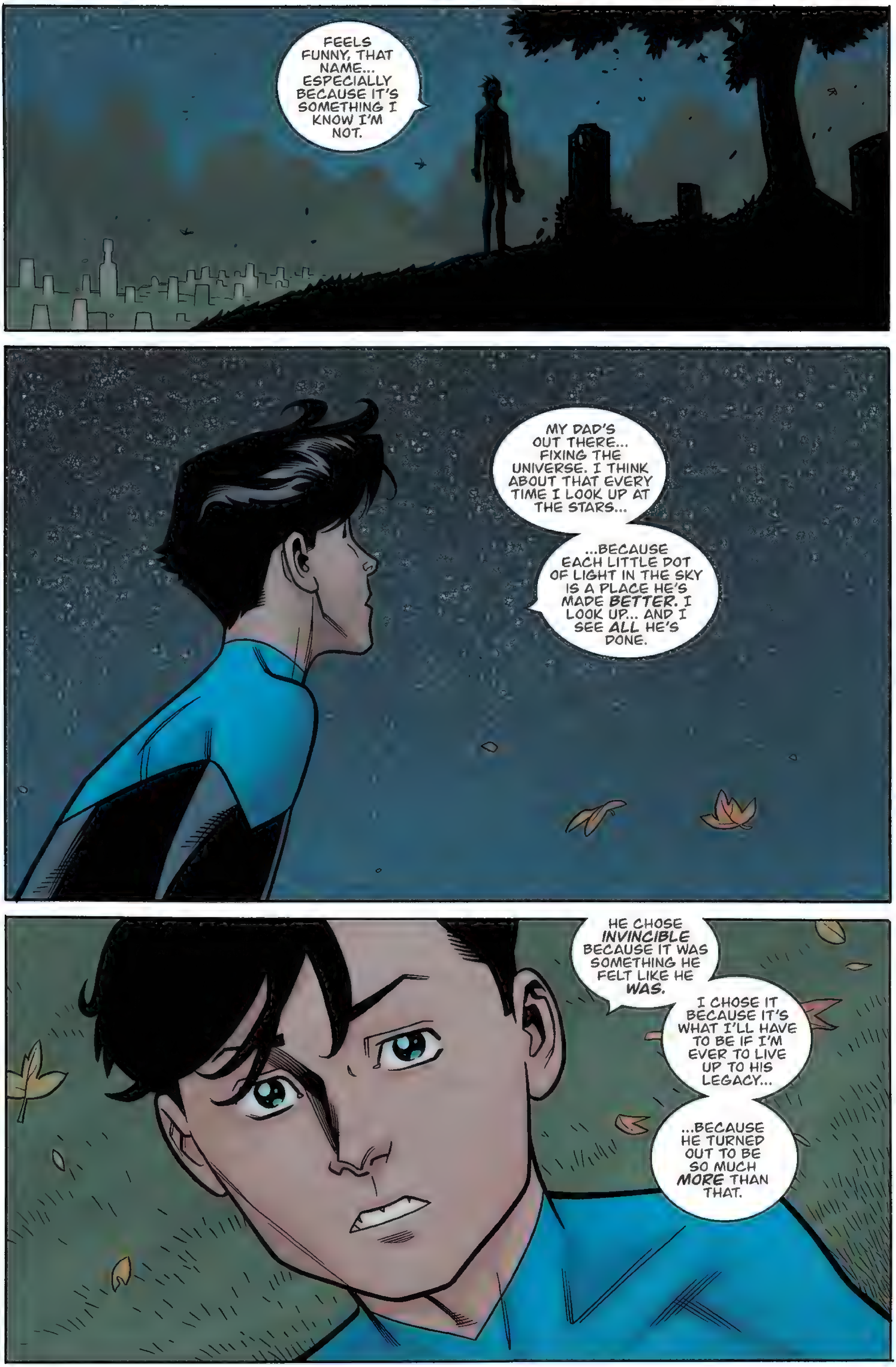


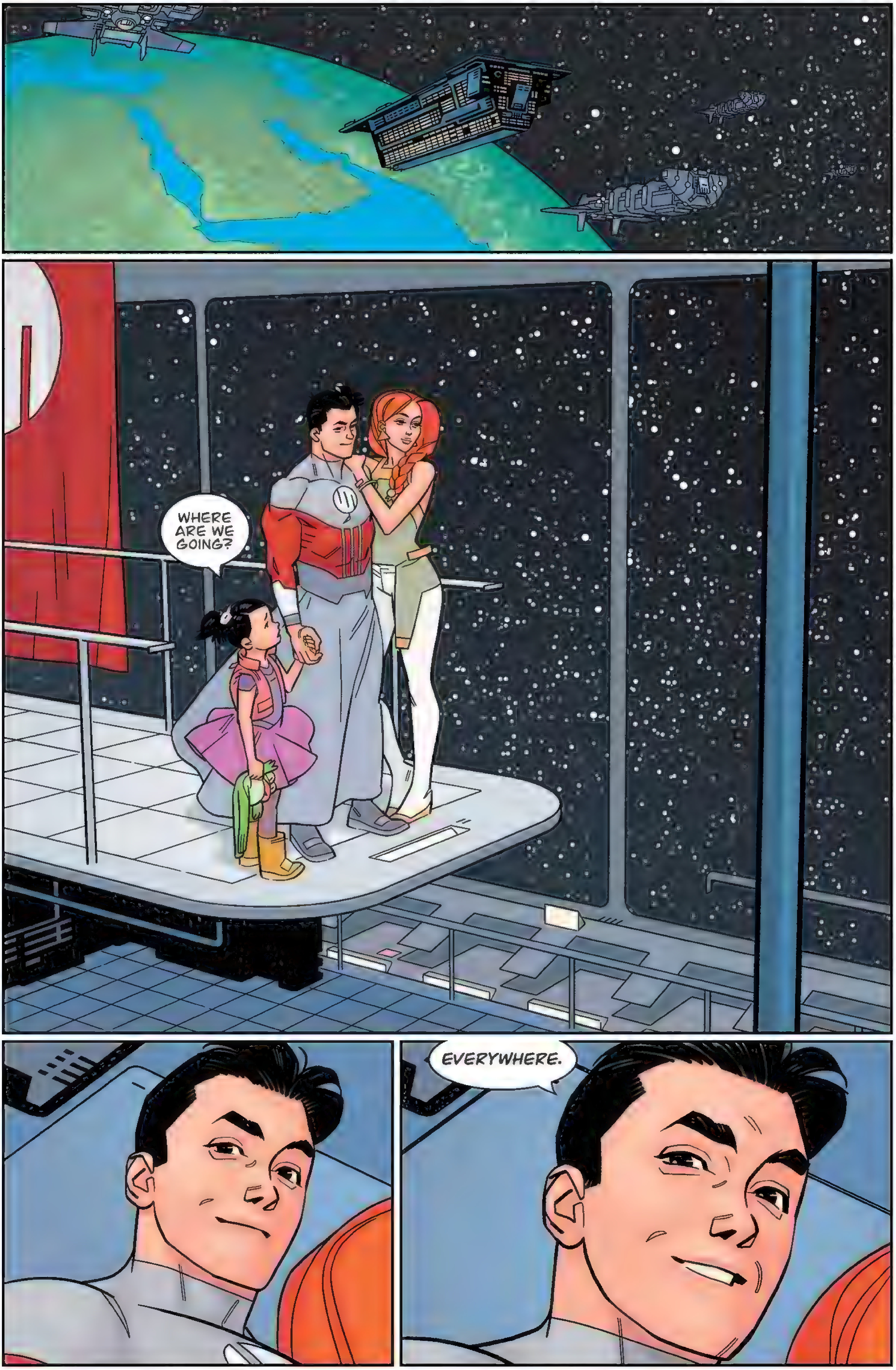
SCREEK! SCREEK!
NO, CHAINSAW. DAD'S NOT GOING TO BE HERE, EITHER. HE'S BEEN ERASED FROM THE MULTIVERSE.
THERE'S JUST... THERE'S NONE OF HIM LEFT.
THIS IS THE DIMENSION OF HIS GREATEST ENEMY... MARK GRAYSON.

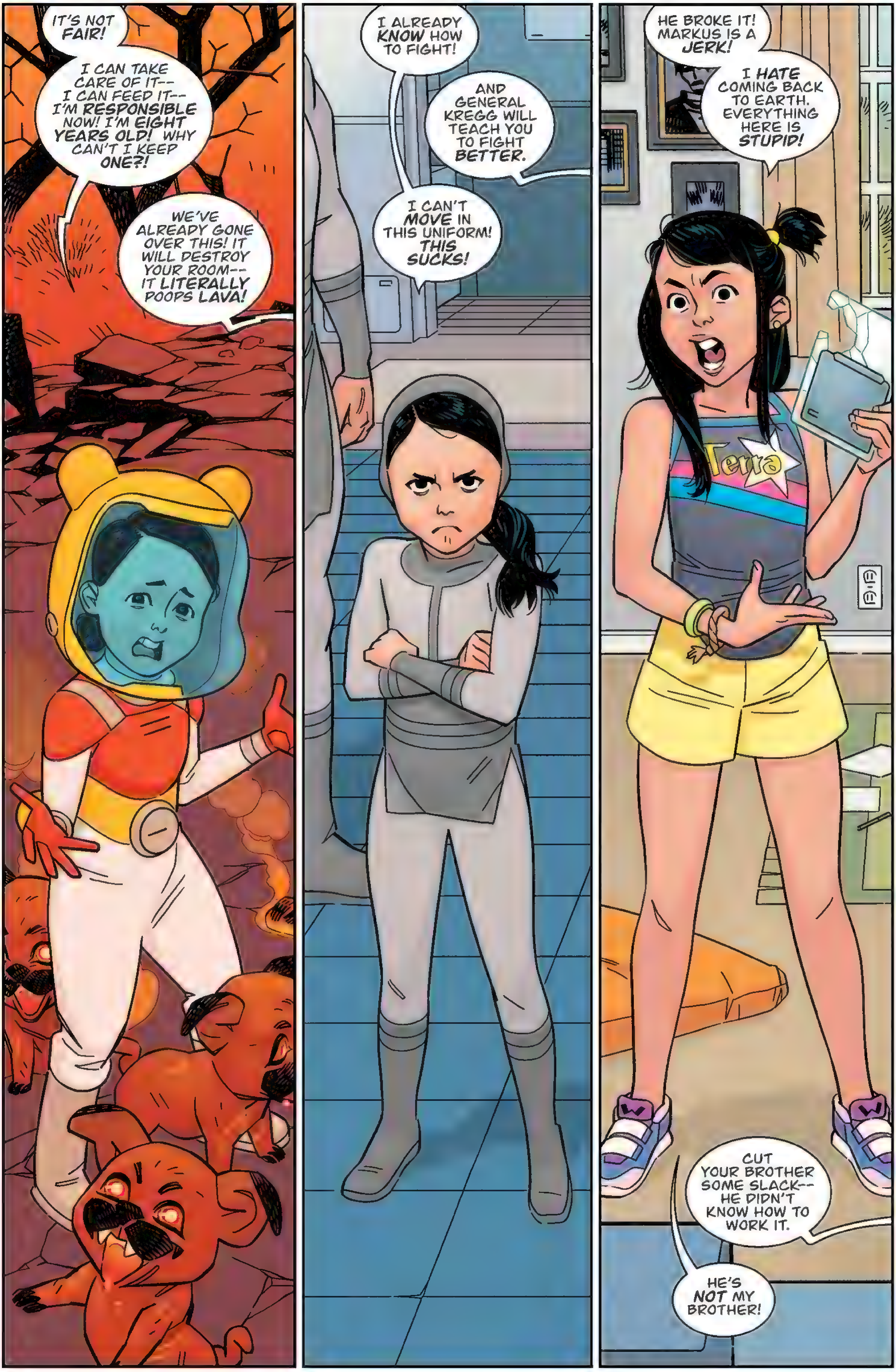

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
VENGEANCE IS LOCKED AWAY. HIS CONNECTION TO THE SHADOW REALM SEEMS TO BE BROKEN.
WHO KNEW HE AND HIS SISTER WERE DRAWING THEIR POWERS FROM THE SAME PLACE DARKWING WAS STRANDED ALL THOSE YEARS?
CRAZY.
I KNOW I QUESTIONED YOU BRINGING WRATH ONTO THE TEAM, BUT SHE'S BEEN A WELCOME ADDITION TO THE GUARDIANS. GOOD JOB THERE.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
THANKS. I'LL--
AMANDA, WAIT. IF WE COULD TALK, BEFORE YOU GO. JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE. I'M...
*I'M EXTREMELY **LONELY.***
YOU LIKE TO TELL YOURSELF YOU MADE A SACRIFICE TO SAVE THE WORLD, THAT THIS ***HAD*** TO BE DONE... AND YOU ENDED UP LIVING IN A TUBE AGAIN... ***ALONE,*** LIKE SOME KIND OF MARTYR.
THE TRUTH IS, THIS IS THE WORLD YOU ***WANTED.*** DEAL WITH IT.
I WILL.

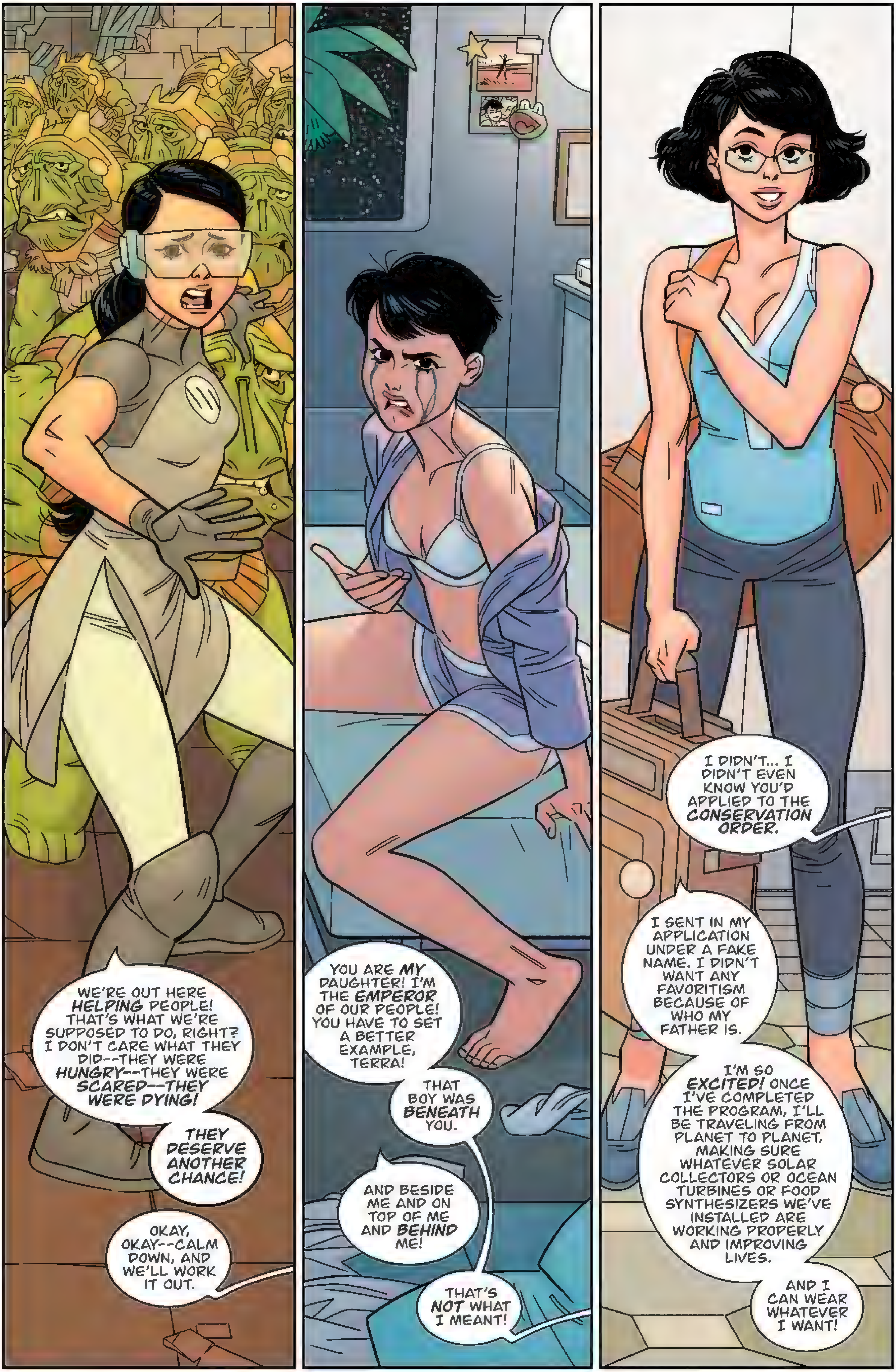

HOMEWORK'S ALL DONE? DISHES? ROOM CLEAN?
YEP, YEP AND YEP!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOTTEN YOU IN SUCH A GOOD MOOD TODAY, BUT I LIKE IT.
SO CAN I?
YEAH... GO FOR YOUR NIGHTLY "WALK."
JUST DON'T FLY TOO FAR, SON.
AW, MAN... WHEN AM I GONNA GET POWERS?

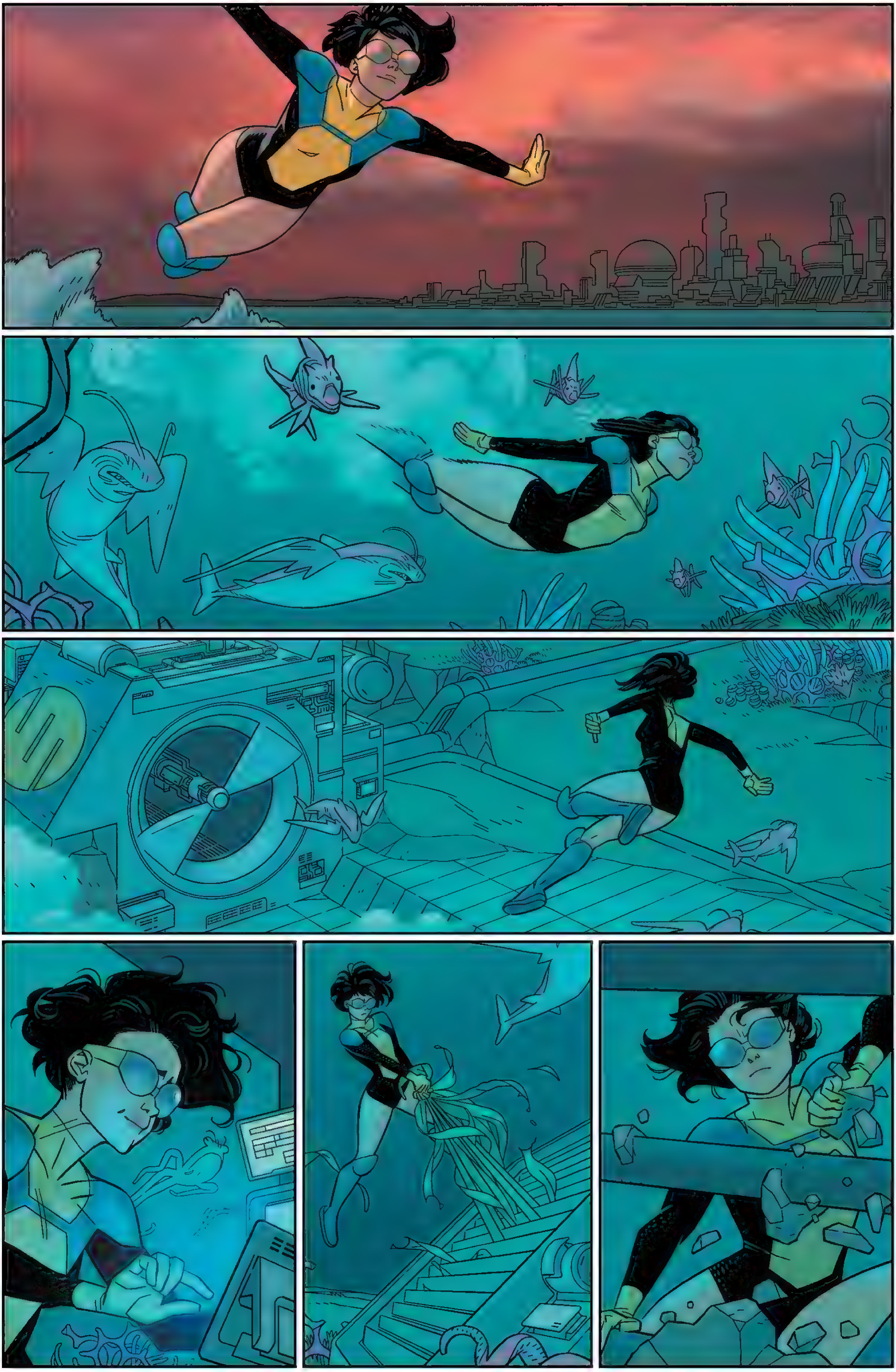

HEY, GRANDPA.
TODAY WAS COOL. I FOUGHT A BIG SUPERVILLAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER.
I GOT A COSTUME. IT'S AWESOME. A LOT LIKE THE ONE DAD USED TO WEAR.
YOU'D LIKE IT... I MEAN, IF YOU LIKED DAD'S COSTUME... I DON'T KNOW.
NOLAN
GRAYSON
I WISH I GOT TO MEET YOU. I KNOW YOU DID BAD STUFF SOMETIMES... BUT DAD TALKS ABOUT YOU LIKE YOU WERE JUST THE COOLEST.
MY *REAL* DAD ISN'T THE BIGGEST FAN...
ANYWAY... I'M KIND OF THE NEW *INVINCIBLE* NOW. WHICH IS PRETTY COOL.

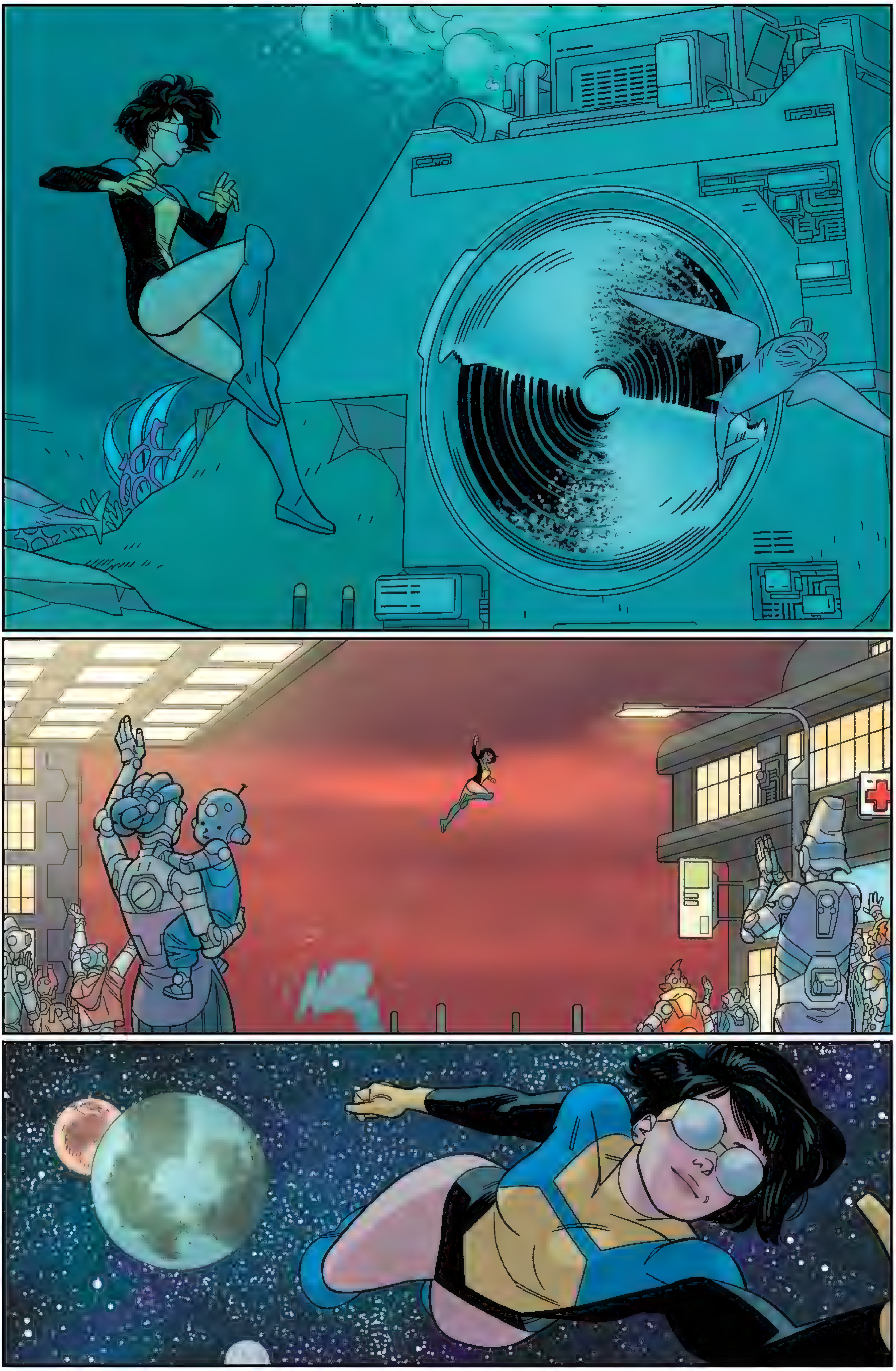

FEELS FUNNY, THAT NAME... ESPECIALLY BECAUSE IT'S SOMETHING I KNOW I'M NOT.
MY DAD'S OUT THERE... FIXING THE UNIVERSE. I THINK ABOUT THAT EVERY TIME I LOOK UP AT THE STARS...
...BECAUSE EACH LITTLE DOT OF LIGHT IN THE SKY IS A PLACE HE'S MADE BETTER. I LOOK UP... AND I SEE ALL HE'S DONE.
HE CHOSE INVINCIBLE BECAUSE IT WAS SOMETHING HE FELT LIKE HE WAS.
I CHOSE IT BECAUSE IT'S WHAT I'LL HAVE TO BE IF I'M EVER TO LIVE UP TO HIS LEGACY...
...BECAUSE HE TURNED OUT TO BE SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT.

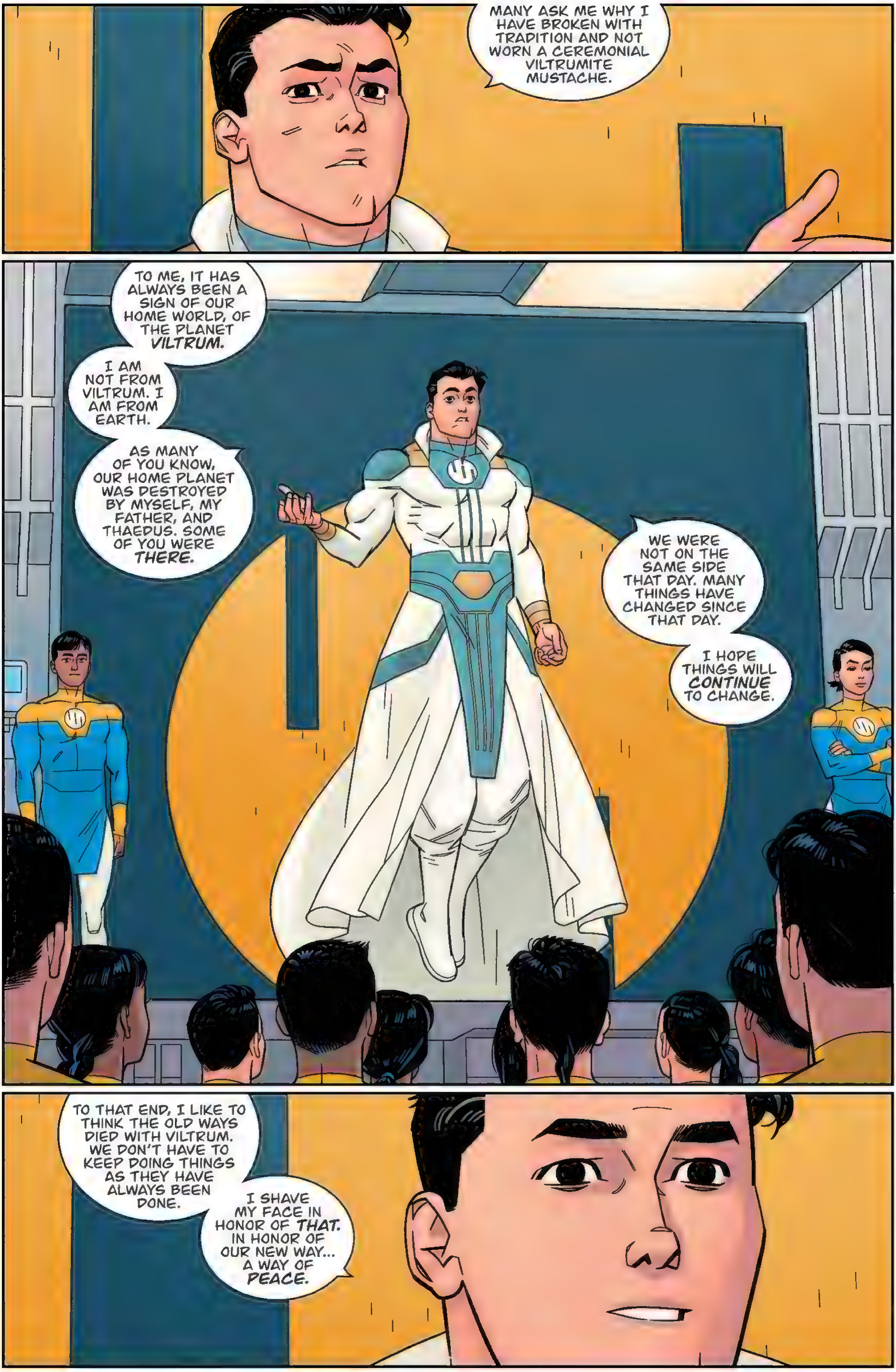

WHERE ARE WE GOING?
EVERYWHERE.

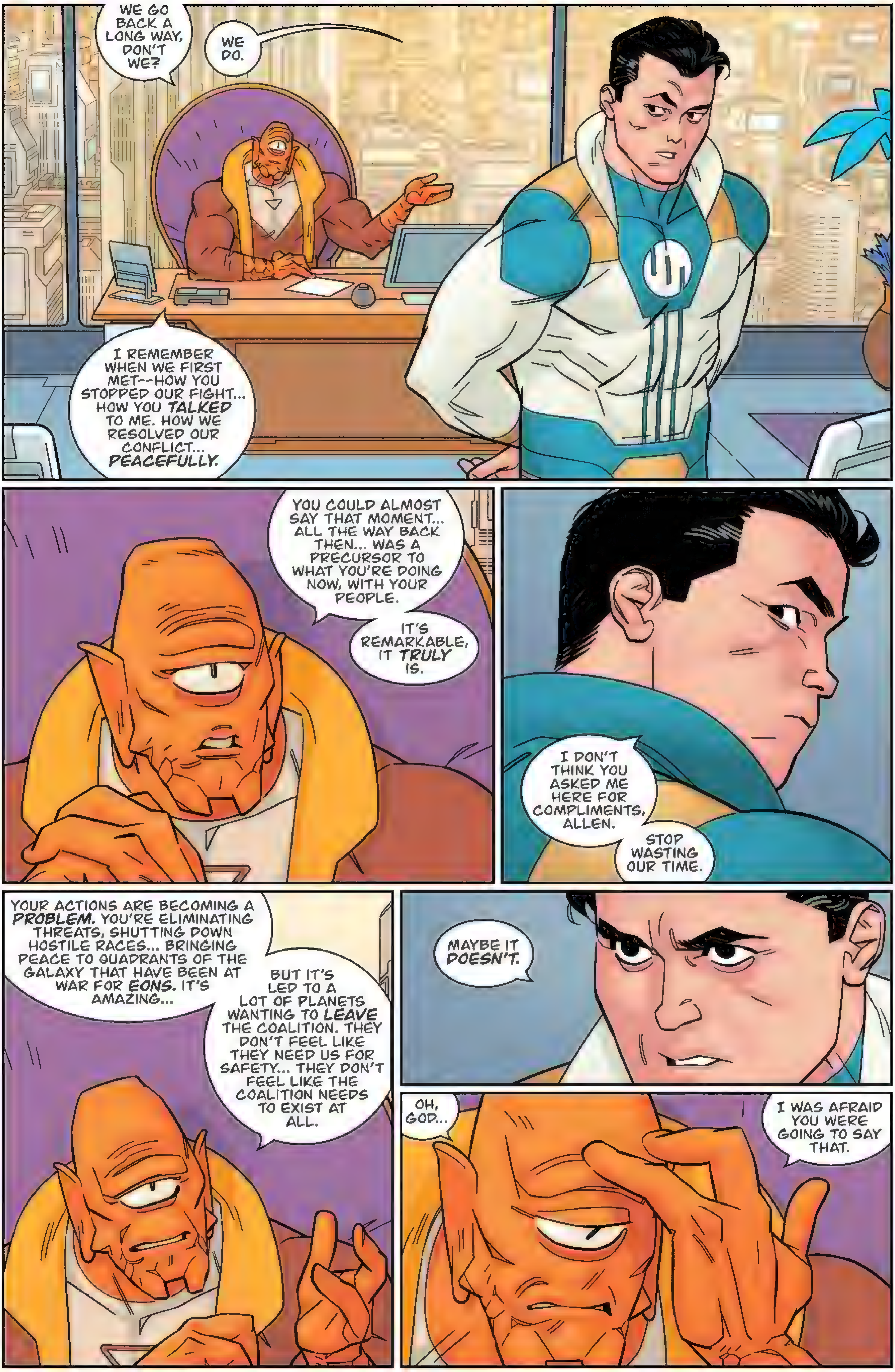

IT'S NOT FAIR!
I CAN TAKE CARE OF IT-- I CAN FEED IT-- I'M RESPONSIBLE NOW! I'M EIGHT YEARS OLD! WHY CAN'T I KEEP ONE?!
WE'VE ALREADY GONE OVER THIS! IT WILL DESTROY YOUR ROOM-- IT LITERALLY POOPS LAVA!
I ALREADY KNOW HOW TO FIGHT!
AND GENERAL KREGG WILL TEACH YOU TO FIGHT BETTER.
I CAN'T MOVE IN THIS UNIFORM! THIS SUCKS!
HE BROKE IT! MARKUS IS A JERK!
I HATE COMING BACK TO EARTH. EVERYTHING HERE IS STUPID!
Terra
CUT YOUR BROTHER SOME SLACK-- HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO WORK IT.
HE'S NOT MY BROTHER!

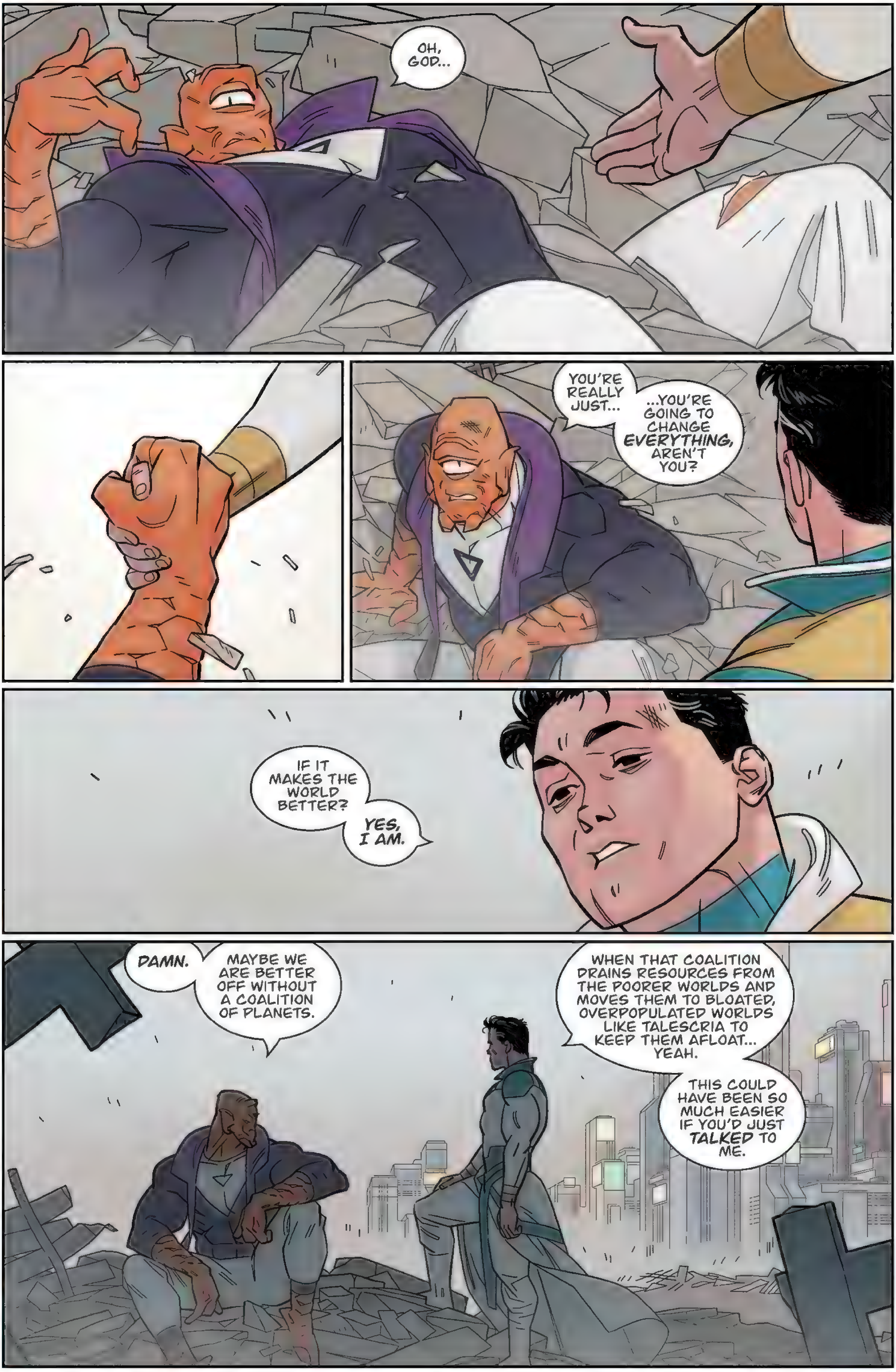

WE'RE OUT HERE *HELPING* PEOPLE! THAT'S WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO DO, RIGHT? I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY DID--THEY WERE *HUNGRY*--THEY WERE *SCARED--THEY WERE DYING!*
THEY DESERVE ANOTHER CHANCE!
OKAY, OKAY--CALM DOWN, AND WE'LL WORK IT OUT.
YOU ARE *MY* DAUGHTER! I'M THE *EMPEROR* OF OUR PEOPLE! YOU HAVE TO SET A BETTER EXAMPLE, TERRA!
THAT BOY WAS *BENEATH* YOU.
AND BESIDE ME AND ON TOP OF ME AND *BEHIND* ME!
THAT'S *NOT* WHAT I MEANT!
I DIDN'T... I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU'D APPLIED TO THE *CONSERVATION ORDER.*
I SENT IN MY APPLICATION UNDER A FAKE NAME. I DIDN'T WANT ANY FAVORITISM BECAUSE OF WHO MY FATHER IS.
I'M SO *EXCITED!* ONCE I'VE COMPLETED THE PROGRAM, I'LL BE TRAVELING FROM PLANET TO PLANET, MAKING SURE WHATEVER SOLAR COLLECTORS OR OCEAN TURBINES OR FOOD SYNTHESIZERS WE'VE INSTALLED ARE WORKING PROPERLY AND IMPROVING LIVES.
AND I CAN WEAR WHATEVER I WANT!

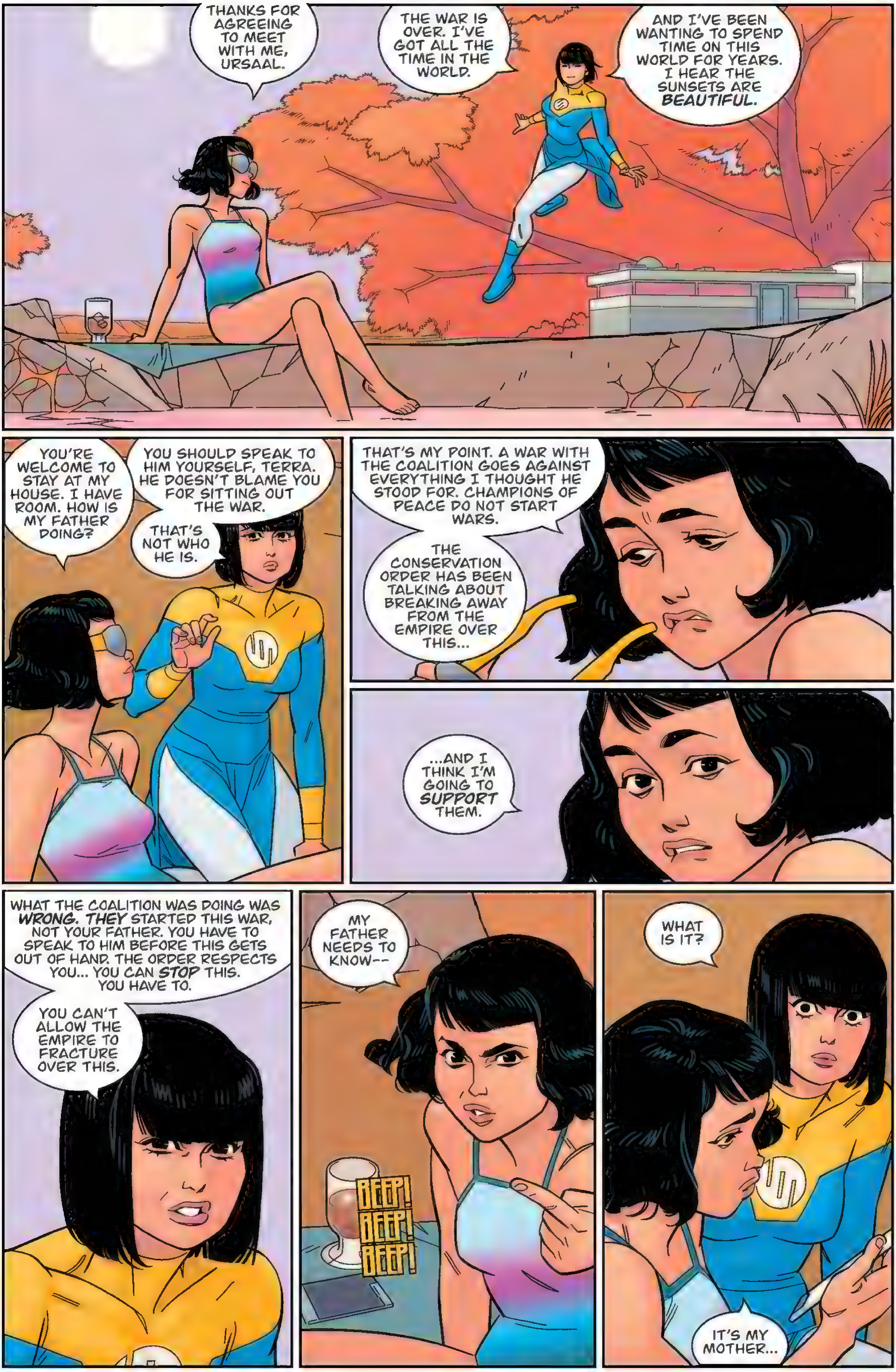


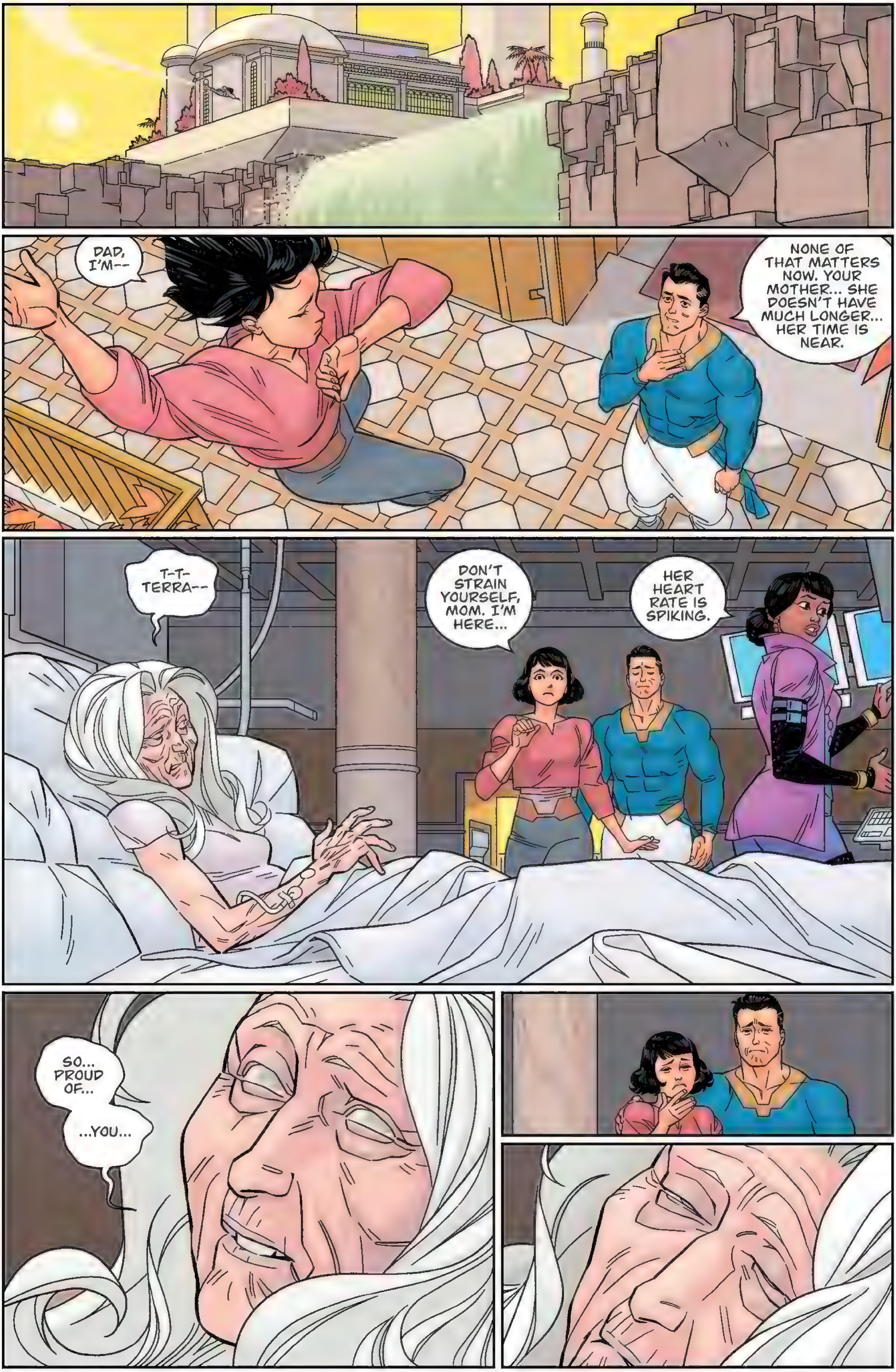


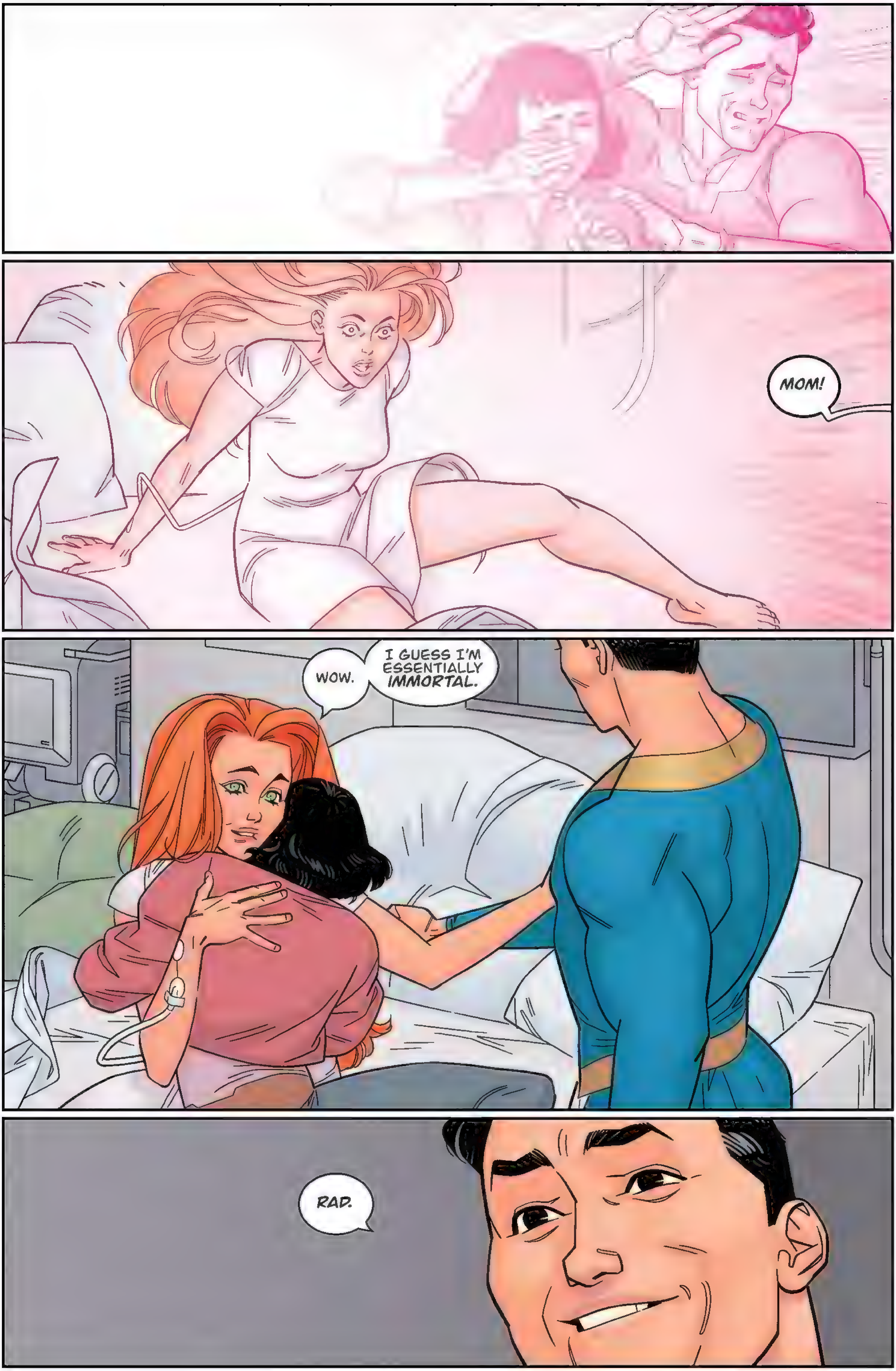

MANY ASK ME WHY I HAVE BROKEN WITH TRADITION AND NOT WORN A CEREMONIAL VILTRUMITE MUSTACHE.
TO ME, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SIGN OF OUR HOME WORLD, OF THE PLANET *VILTRUM.*
I AM NOT FROM VILTRUM. I AM FROM EARTH.
AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, OUR HOME PLANET WAS DESTROYED BY MYSELF, MY FATHER, AND THAEDUS. SOME OF YOU WERE *THERE.*
WE WERE NOT ON THE SAME SIDE THAT DAY. MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE THAT DAY.
I HOPE THINGS WILL *CONTINUE* TO CHANGE.
TO THAT END, I LIKE TO THINK THE OLD WAYS DIED WITH VILTRUM. WE DON'T HAVE TO KEEP DOING THINGS AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DONE.
I SHAVE MY FACE IN HONOR OF *THAT.* IN HONOR OF OUR NEW WAY... A WAY OF *PEACE.*

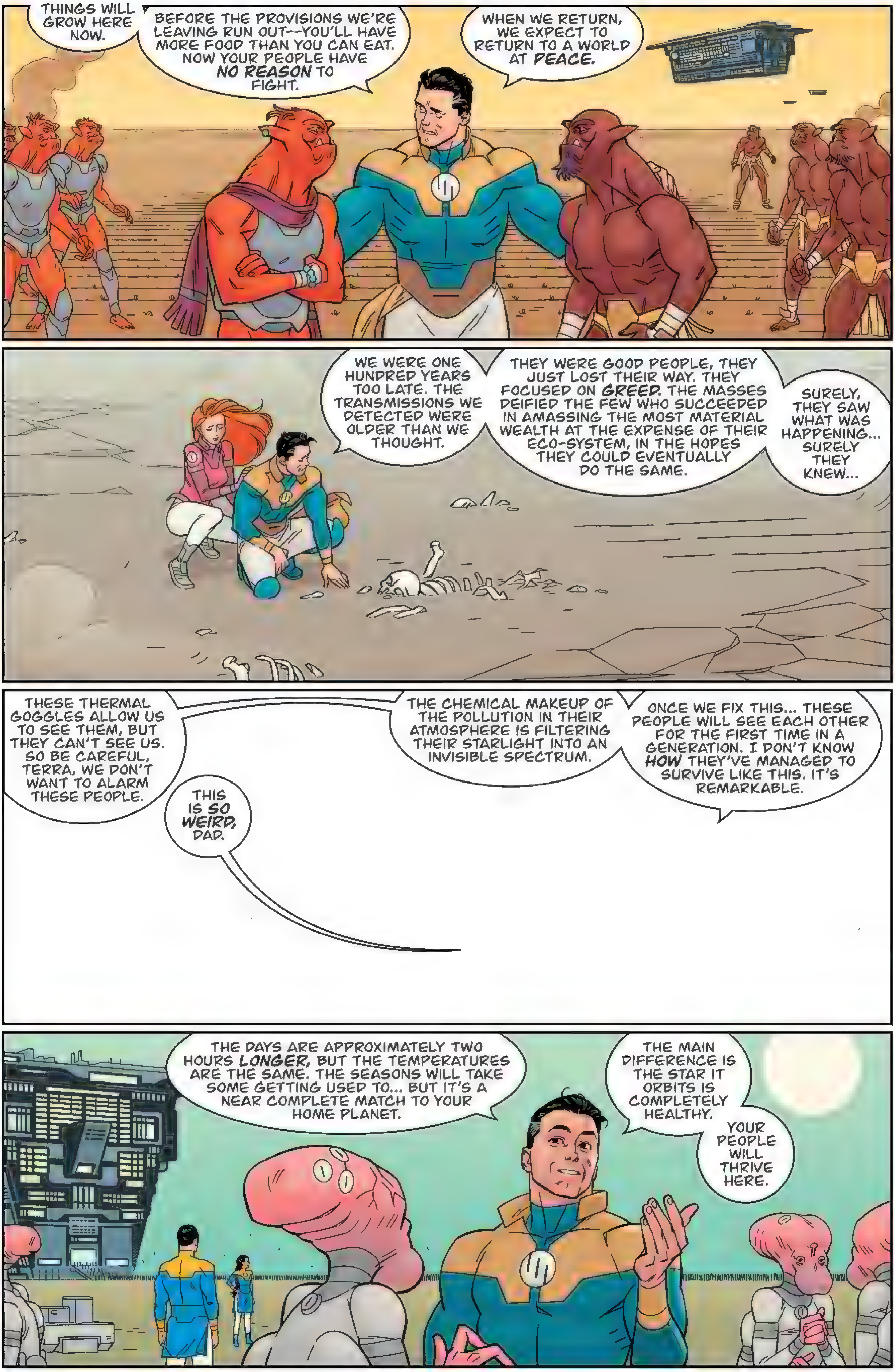

WE GO BACK A LONG WAY, DON'T WE?
WE DO.
I REMEMBER WHEN WE FIRST MET--HOW YOU STOPPED OUR FIGHT... HOW YOU *TALKED* TO ME. HOW WE RESOLVED OUR CONFLICT... *PEACEFULLY.*
YOU COULD ALMOST SAY THAT MOMENT... ALL THE WAY BACK THEN... WAS A PRECURSOR TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW, WITH YOUR PEOPLE.
IT'S REMARKABLE, IT *TRULY* IS.
I DON'T THINK YOU ASKED ME HERE FOR COMPLIMENTS, ALLEN.
STOP WASTING OUR TIME.
YOUR ACTIONS ARE BECOMING A *PROBLEM.* YOU'RE ELIMINATING THREATS, SHUTTING DOWN HOSTILE RACES... BRINGING PEACE TO QUADRANTS OF THE GALAXY THAT HAVE BEEN AT WAR FOR *EONS.* IT'S AMAZING...
BUT IT'S LED TO A LOT OF PLANETS WANTING TO *LEAVE* THE COALITION. THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY NEED US FOR SAFETY... THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE THE COALITION NEEDS TO EXIST AT ALL.
MAYBE IT *DOESN'T.*
OH, GOD...
I WAS AFRAID YOU WERE GOING TO SAY THAT.

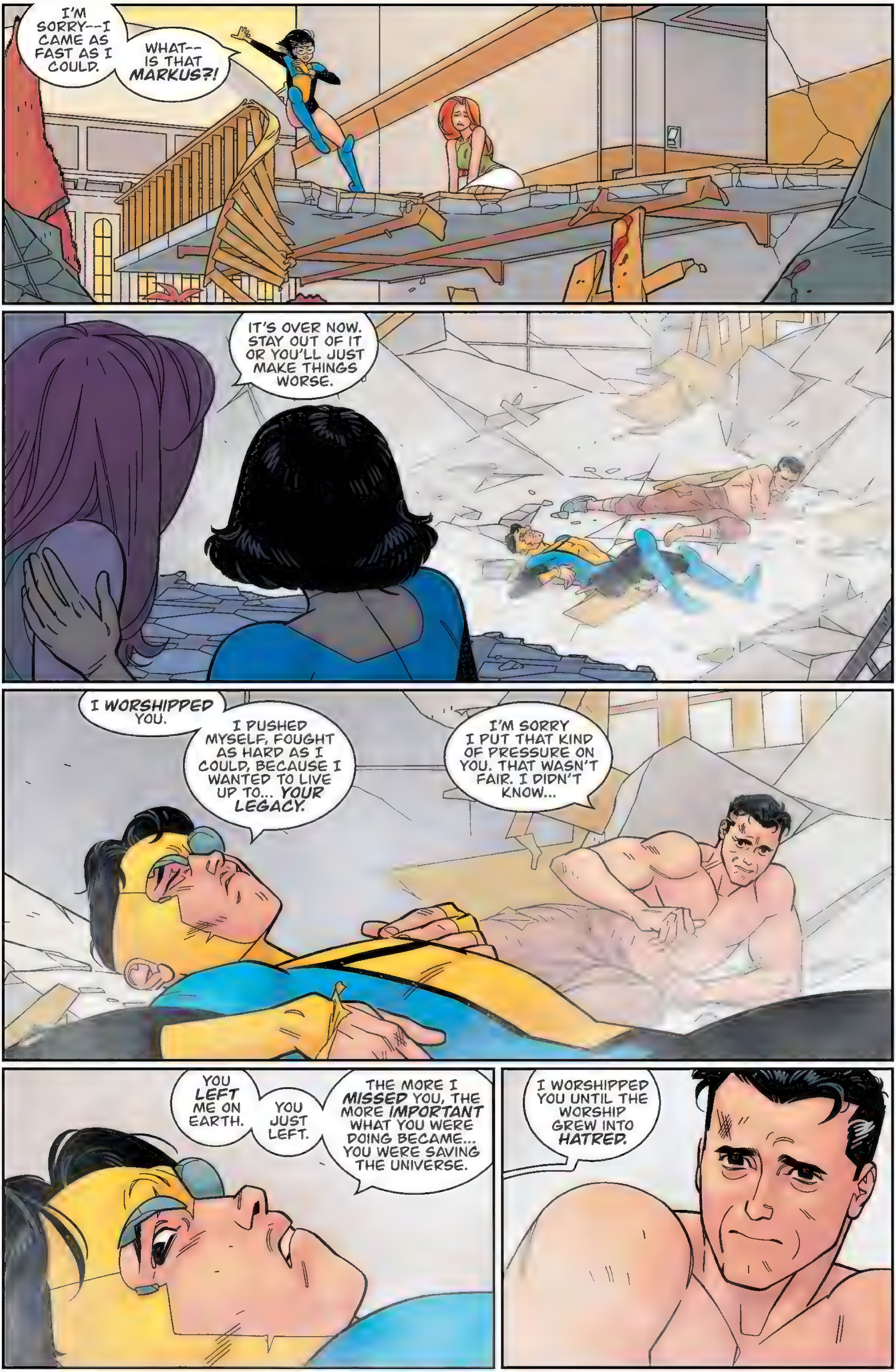

OH, GOD...
YOU'RE REALLY JUST...
...YOU'RE GOING TO CHANGE *EVERYTHING,* AREN'T YOU?
IF IT MAKES THE WORLD BETTER?
YES, I AM.
DAMN.
MAYBE WE ARE BETTER OFF WITHOUT A COALITION OF PLANETS.
WHEN THAT COALITION DRAINS RESOURCES FROM THE POORER WORLDS AND MOVES THEM TO BLOATED, OVERPOPULATED WORLDS LIKE TALESCRIA TO KEEP THEM AFLOAT... YEAH.
THIS COULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH EASIER IF YOU'D JUST *TALKED* TO ME.

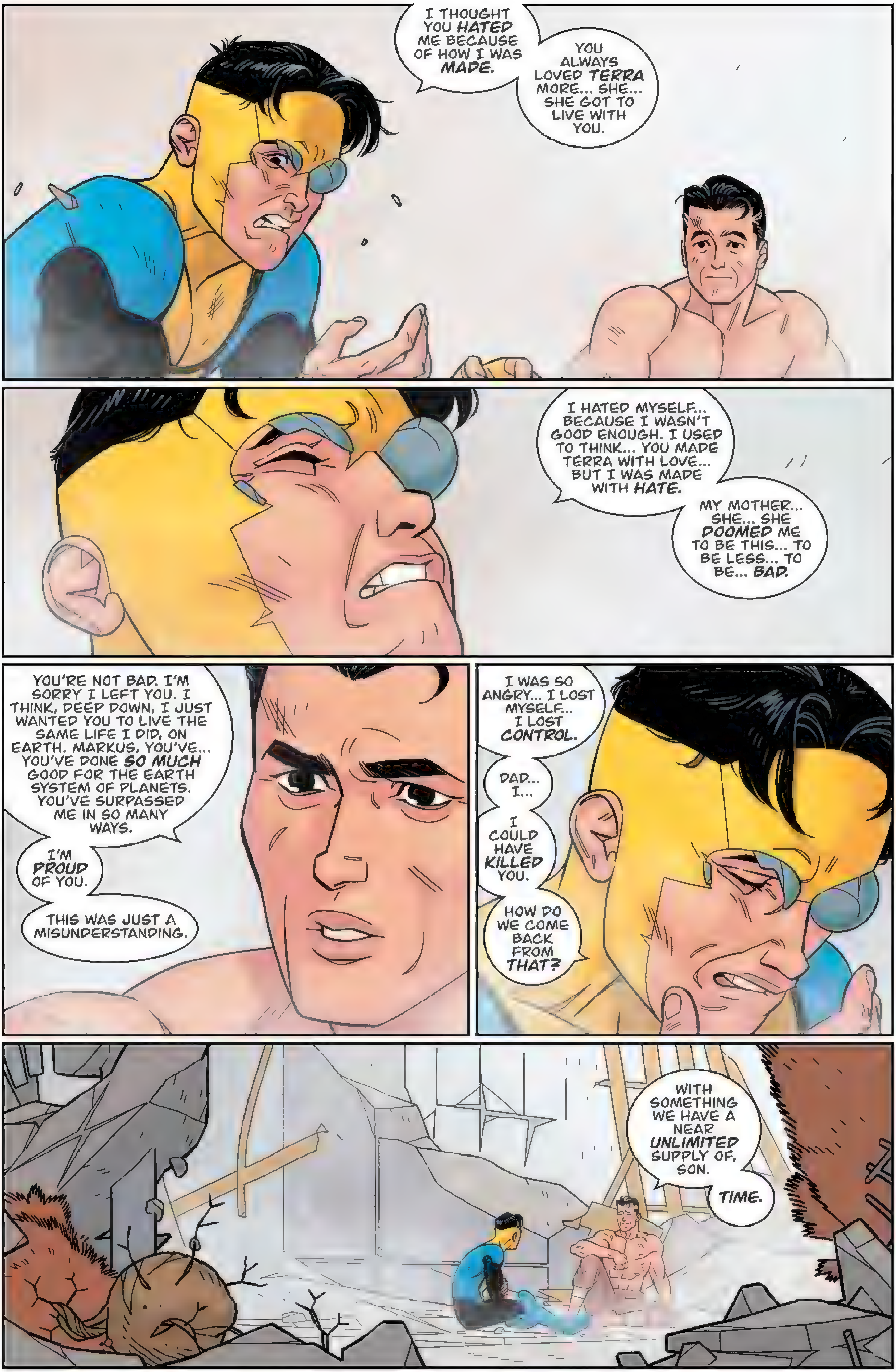

THANKS FOR AGREEING TO MEET WITH ME, URSAAL.
THE WAR IS OVER. I'VE GOT ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.
AND I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SPEND TIME ON THIS WORLD FOR YEARS. I HEAR THE SUNSETS ARE *BEAUTIFUL.*
YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY AT MY HOUSE. I HAVE ROOM. HOW IS MY FATHER DOING?
YOU SHOULD SPEAK TO HIM YOURSELF, TERRA. HE DOESN'T BLAME YOU FOR SITTING OUT THE WAR.
THAT'S NOT WHO HE IS.
THAT'S MY POINT. A WAR WITH THE COALITION GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING I THOUGHT HE STOOD FOR. CHAMPIONS OF PEACE DO NOT START WARS.
THE CONSERVATION ORDER HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT BREAKING AWAY FROM THE EMPIRE OVER THIS...
...AND I THINK I'M GOING TO *SUPPORT* THEM.
WHAT THE COALITION WAS DOING WAS *WRONG. THEY* STARTED THIS WAR, NOT YOUR FATHER. YOU HAVE TO SPEAK TO HIM BEFORE THIS GETS OUT OF HAND. THE ORDER RESPECTS YOU... YOU CAN *STOP* THIS. YOU HAVE TO.
YOU CAN'T ALLOW THE EMPIRE TO FRACTURE OVER THIS.
MY FATHER NEEDS TO KNOW--
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
WHAT IS IT?
IT'S MY MOTHER...

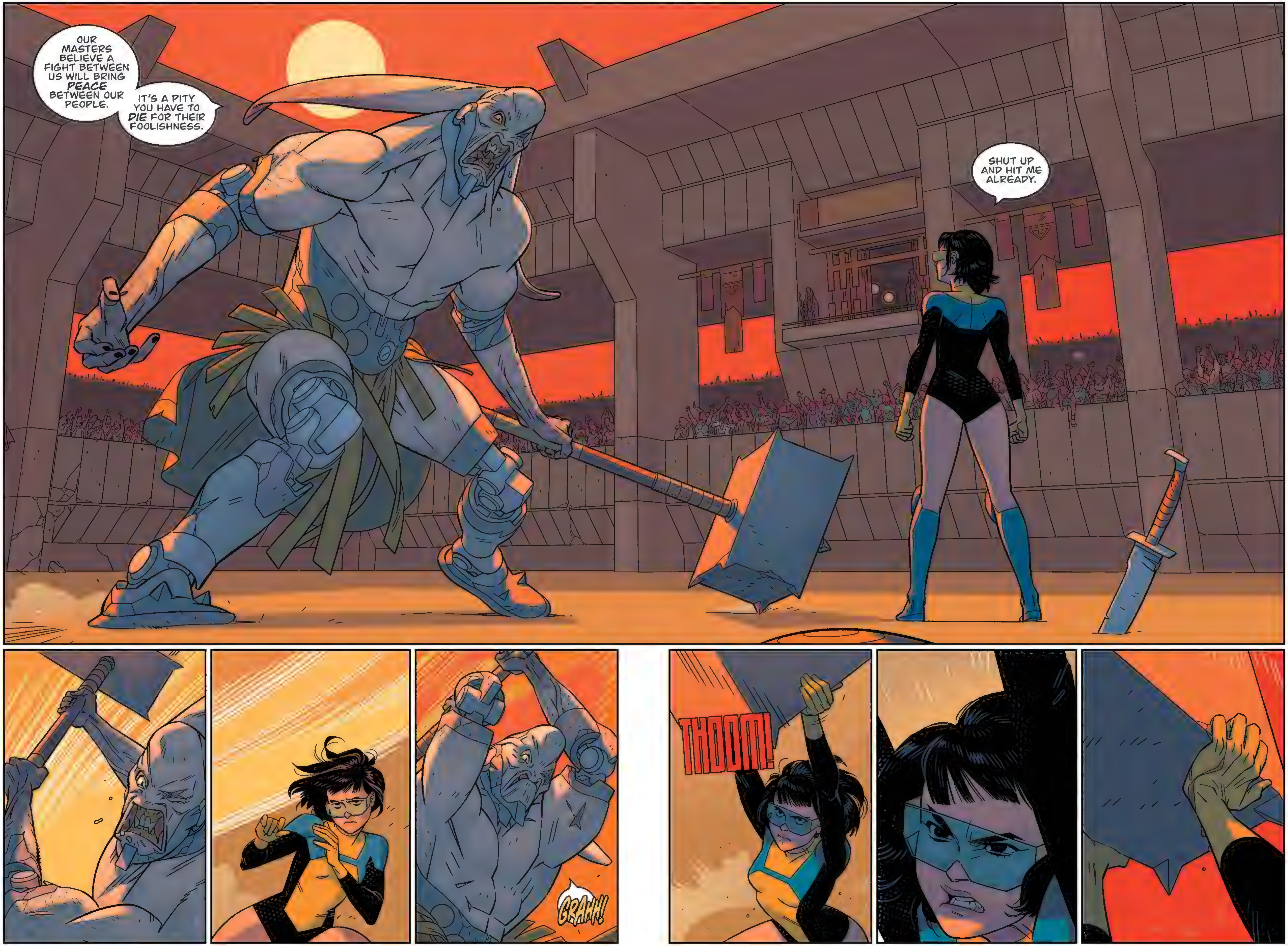

DAD, I'M--
NONE OF THAT MATTERS NOW. YOUR MOTHER... SHE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH LONGER... HER TIME IS NEAR.
T-T-TERRA--
DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF, MOM. I'M HERE...
HER HEART RATE IS SPIKING.
SO... PROUD OF...
...YOU...

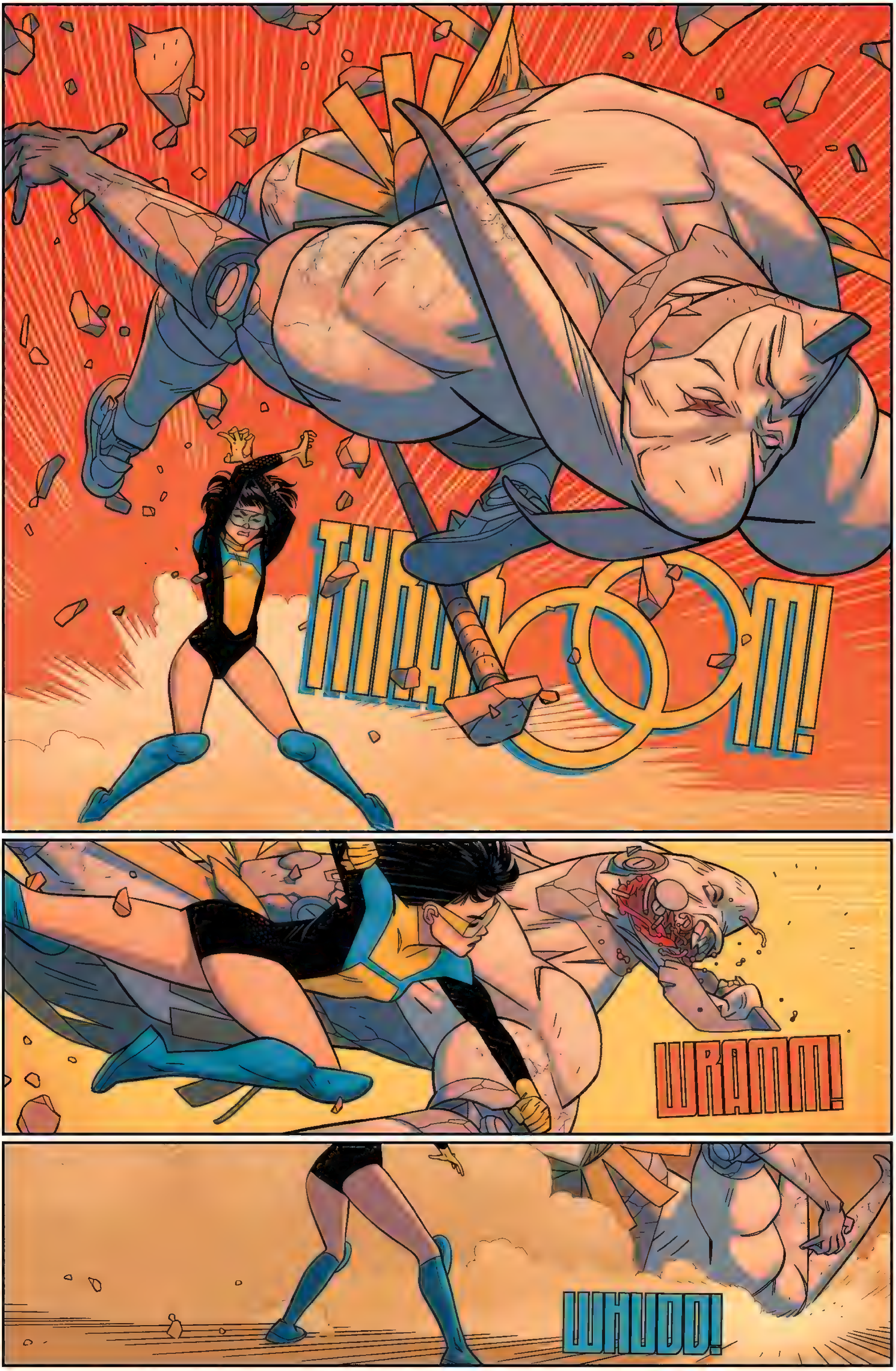

MOM!
WOW.
I GUESS I'M ESSENTIALLY *IMMORTAL*.
RAD.

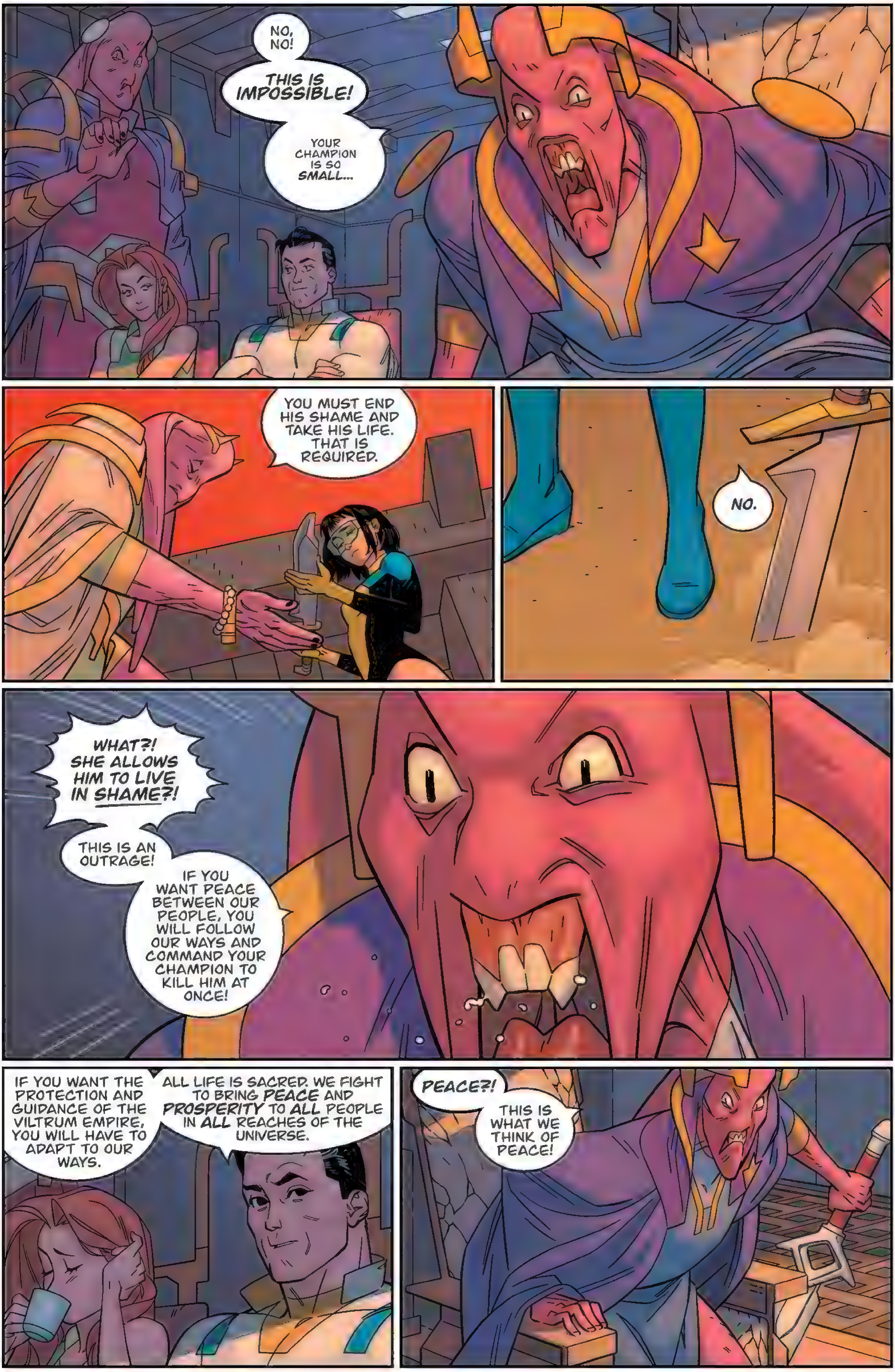

THINGS WILL GROW HERE NOW.
BEFORE THE PROVISIONS WE'RE LEAVING RUN OUT--YOU'LL HAVE MORE FOOD THAN YOU CAN EAT. NOW YOUR PEOPLE HAVE NO REASON TO FIGHT.
WHEN WE RETURN, WE EXPECT TO RETURN TO A WORLD AT PEACE.
WE WERE ONE HUNDRED YEARS TOO LATE. THE TRANSMISSIONS WE DETECTED WERE OLDER THAN WE THOUGHT.
THEY WERE GOOD PEOPLE, THEY JUST LOST THEIR WAY. THEY FOCUSED ON GREED. THE MASSES DEIFIED THE FEW WHO SUCCEEDED IN AMASSING THE MOST MATERIAL WEALTH AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR ECO-SYSTEM, IN THE HOPES THEY COULD EVENTUALLY DO THE SAME.
SURELY, THEY SAW WHAT WAS HAPPENING... SURELY THEY KNEW...
THESE THERMAL GOGGLES ALLOW US TO SEE THEM, BUT THEY CAN'T SEE US. SO BE CAREFUL, TERRA, WE DON'T WANT TO ALARM THESE PEOPLE.
THIS IS SO WEIRD, DAD.
THE CHEMICAL MAKEUP OF THE POLLUTION IN THEIR ATMOSPHERE IS FILTERING THEIR STARLIGHT INTO AN INVISIBLE SPECTRUM.
ONCE WE FIX THIS... THESE PEOPLE WILL SEE EACH OTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A GENERATION. I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY'VE MANAGED TO SURVIVE LIKE THIS. IT'S REMARKABLE.
THE DAYS ARE APPROXIMATELY TWO HOURS LONGER, BUT THE TEMPERATURES ARE THE SAME. THE SEASONS WILL TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO... BUT IT'S A NEAR COMPLETE MATCH TO YOUR HOME PLANET.
THE MAIN DIFFERENCE IS THE STAR IT ORBITS IS COMPLETELY HEALTHY.
YOUR PEOPLE WILL THRIVE HERE.


I'M SORRY--I CAME AS FAST AS I COULD.
WHAT-- IS THAT ***MARKUS?!***
IT'S OVER NOW. STAY OUT OF IT OR YOU'LL JUST MAKE THINGS WORSE.
I ***WORSHIPPED*** YOU.
I PUSHED MYSELF, FOUGHT AS HARD AS I COULD, BECAUSE I WANTED TO LIVE UP TO... ***YOUR LEGACY.***
I'M SORRY I PUT THAT KIND OF PRESSURE ON YOU. THAT WASN'T FAIR. I DIDN'T KNOW...
YOU ***LEFT*** ME ON EARTH.
YOU JUST LEFT.
THE MORE I ***MISSED*** YOU, THE MORE ***IMPORTANT*** WHAT YOU WERE DOING BECAME... YOU WERE SAVING THE UNIVERSE.
I WORSHIPPED YOU UNTIL THE WORSHIP GREW INTO ***HATRED.***

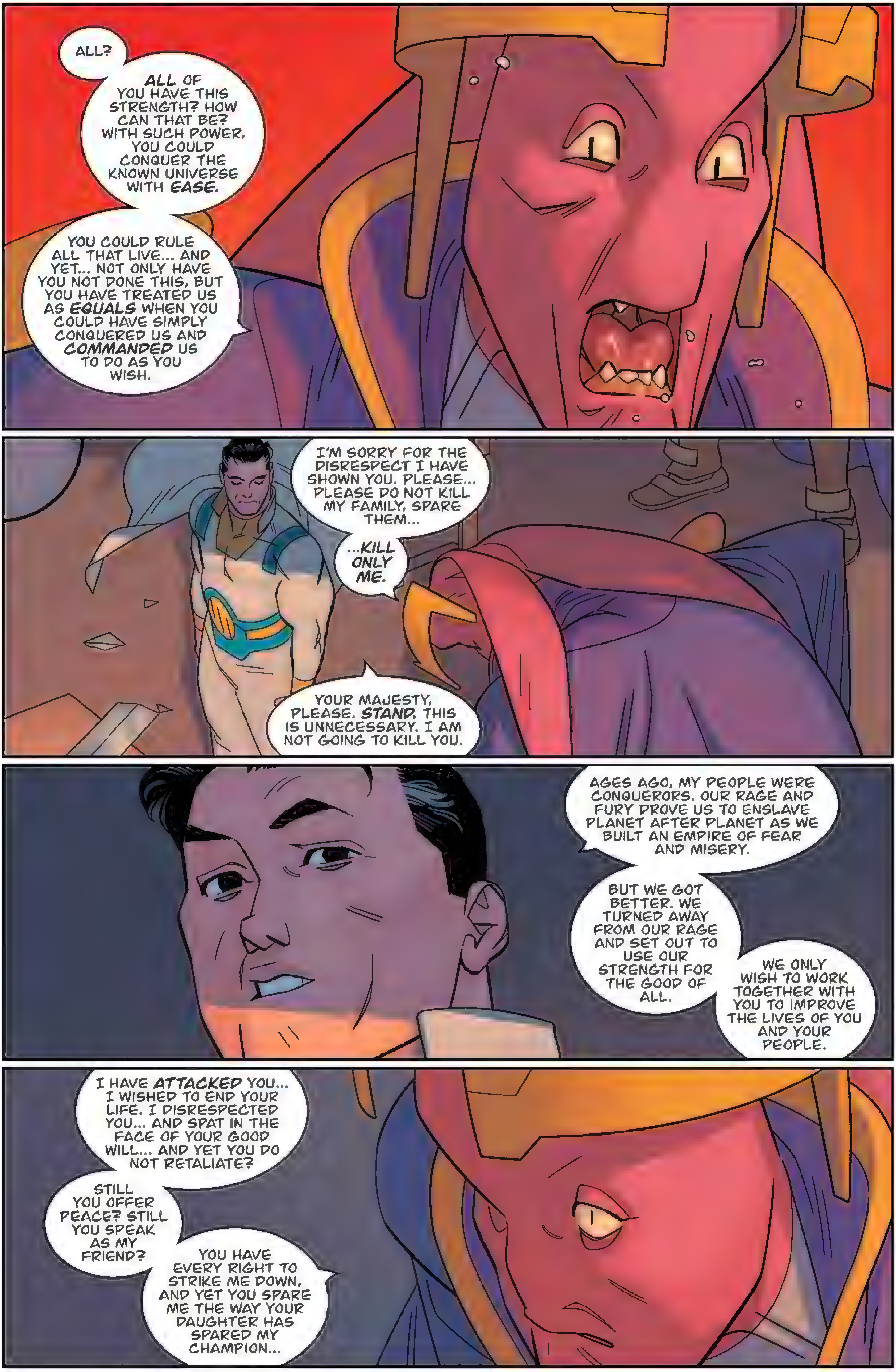

I THOUGHT YOU HATED ME BECAUSE OF HOW I WAS MADE.
YOU ALWAYS LOVED TERRA MORE... SHE... SHE GOT TO LIVE WITH YOU.
I HATED MYSELF... BECAUSE I WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH. I USED TO THINK... YOU MADE TERRA WITH LOVE... BUT I WAS MADE WITH HATE.
MY MOTHER... SHE... SHE DOOMED ME TO BE THIS... TO BE LESS... TO BE... BAD.
YOU'RE NOT BAD. I'M SORRY I LEFT YOU. I THINK, DEEP DOWN, I JUST WANTED YOU TO LIVE THE SAME LIFE I DID, ON EARTH. MARKUS, YOU'VE... YOU'VE DONE SO MUCH GOOD FOR THE EARTH SYSTEM OF PLANETS. YOU'VE SURPASSED ME IN SO MANY WAYS.
I'M PROUD OF YOU.
THIS WAS JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING.
I WAS SO ANGRY... I LOST MYSELF... I LOST CONTROL.
DAD... I...
I COULD HAVE KILLED YOU.
HOW DO WE COME BACK FROM THAT?
WITH SOMETHING WE HAVE A NEAR UNLIMITED SUPPLY OF, SON.
TIME.


OUR MASTERS BELIEVE A FIGHT BETWEEN US WILL BRING **PEACE** BETWEEN OUR PEOPLE.
IT'S A PITY YOU HAVE TO **DIE** FOR THEIR FOOLISHNESS.
SHUT UP AND HIT ME ALREADY.
GRAHH!
THOOM!

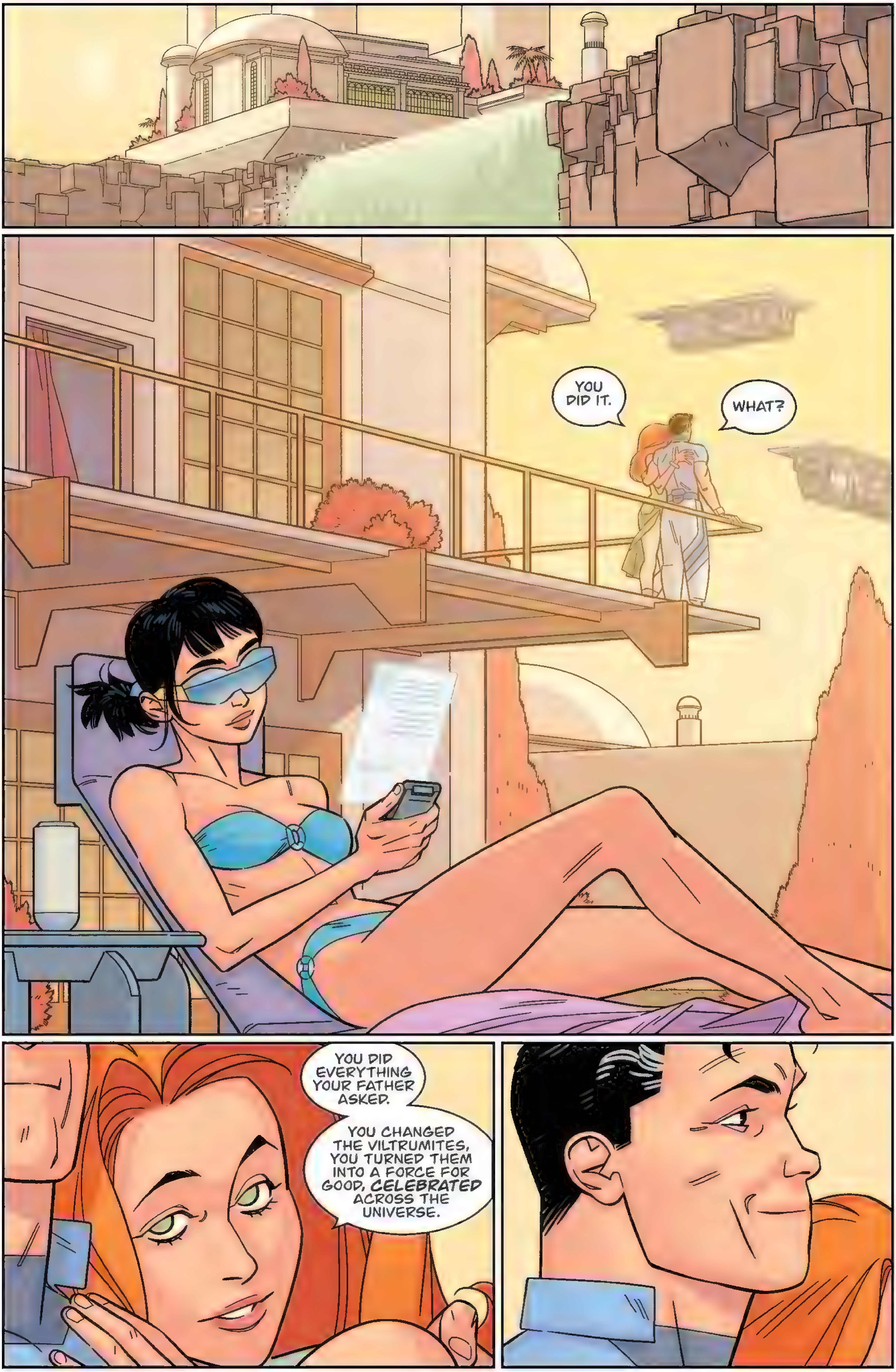

THRAKOOM!
WRAMM!
WHUDD!

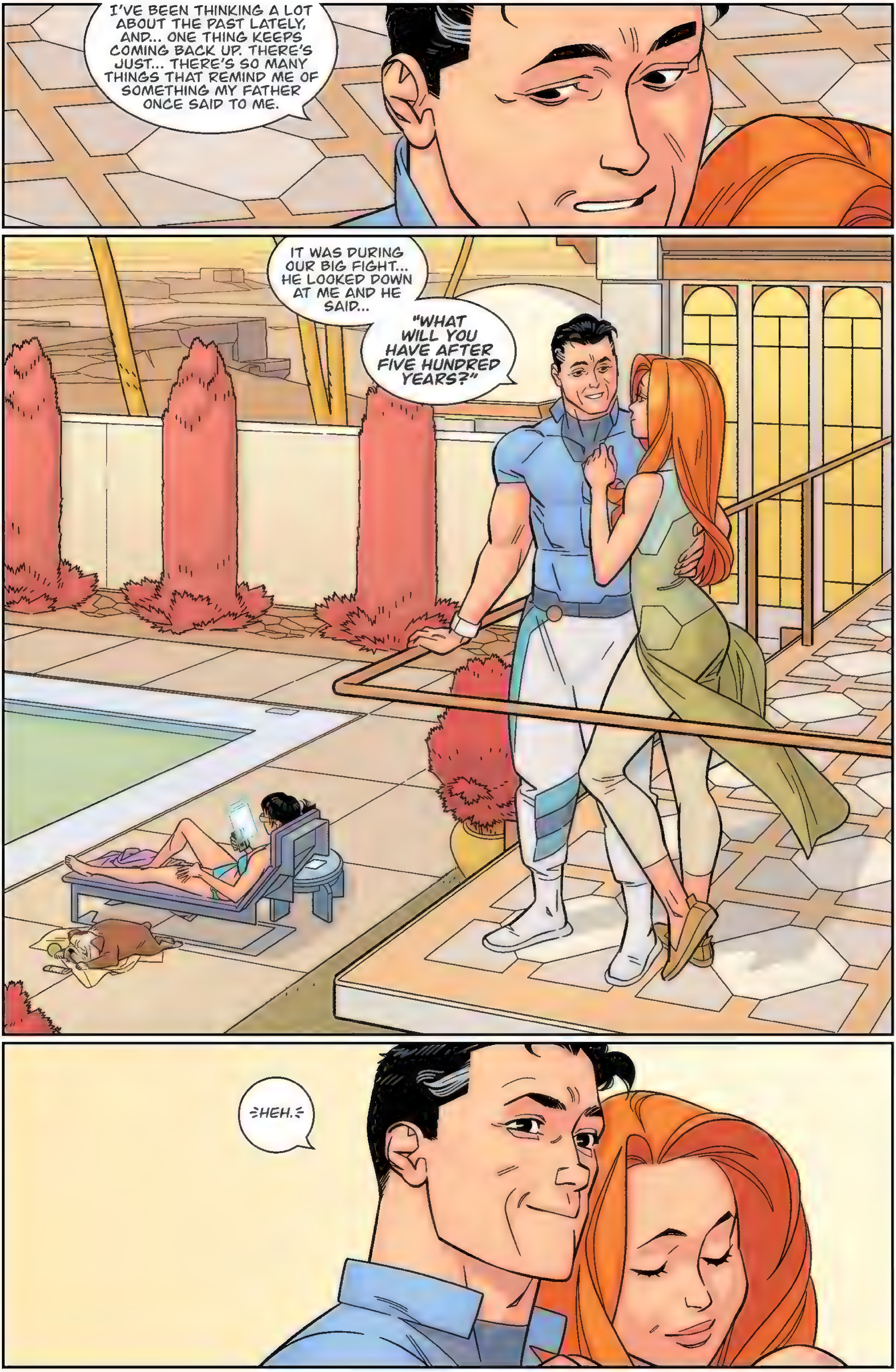

NO, NO!
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!
YOUR CHAMPION IS SO SMALL...
YOU MUST END HIS SHAME AND TAKE HIS LIFE. THAT IS REQUIRED.
NO.
WHAT?! SHE ALLOWS HIM TO LIVE IN SHAME?!
THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
IF YOU WANT PEACE BETWEEN OUR PEOPLE, YOU WILL FOLLOW OUR WAYS AND COMMAND YOUR CHAMPION TO KILL HIM AT ONCE!
IF YOU WANT THE PROTECTION AND GUIDANCE OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE, YOU WILL HAVE TO ADAPT TO OUR WAYS.
ALL LIFE IS SACRED. WE FIGHT TO BRING PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO ALL PEOPLE IN ALL REACHES OF THE UNIVERSE.
PEACE?!
THIS IS WHAT WE THINK OF PEACE!

SKRASSH!!
YOU... YOU'RE AS STRONG AS YOUR CHAMPION?
WE ALL ARE.

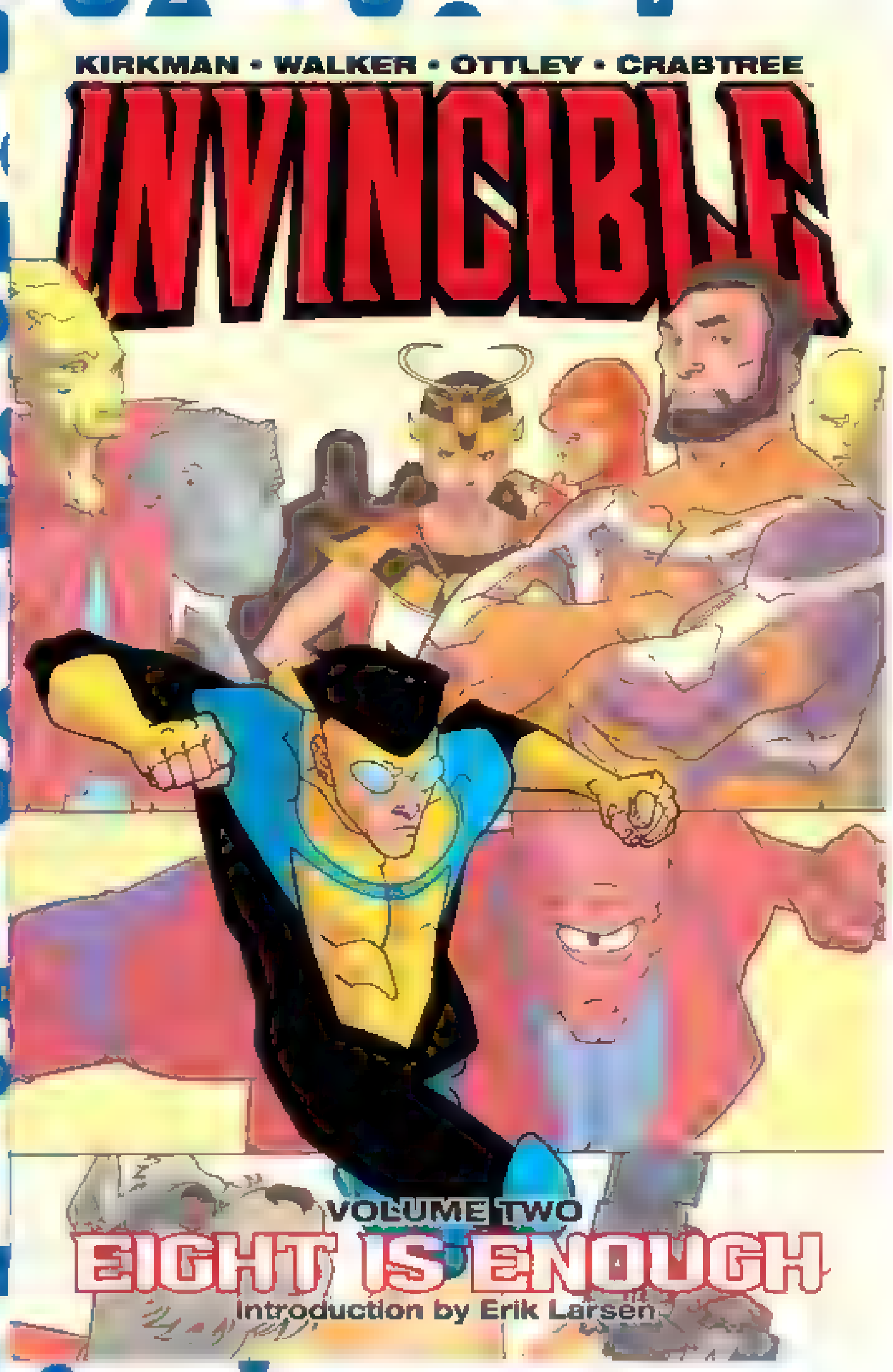

ALL?
ALL OF YOU HAVE THIS STRENGTH? HOW CAN THAT BE? WITH SUCH POWER, YOU COULD CONQUER THE KNOWN UNIVERSE WITH *EASE.*
YOU COULD RULE ALL THAT LIVE... AND YET... NOT ONLY HAVE YOU NOT DONE THIS, BUT YOU HAVE TREATED US AS *EQUALS* WHEN YOU COULD HAVE SIMPLY CONQUERED US AND *COMMANDED* US TO DO AS YOU WISH.
I'M SORRY FOR THE DISRESPECT I HAVE SHOWN YOU. PLEASE... PLEASE DO NOT KILL MY FAMILY. SPARE THEM...
...KILL ONLY ME.
YOUR MAJESTY, PLEASE. *STAND.* THIS IS UNNECESSARY. I AM NOT GOING TO KILL YOU.
AGES AGO, MY PEOPLE WERE CONQUERORS. OUR RAGE AND FURY DROVE US TO ENSLAVE PLANET AFTER PLANET AS WE BUILT AN EMPIRE OF FEAR AND MISERY.
BUT WE GOT BETTER. WE TURNED AWAY FROM OUR RAGE AND SET OUT TO USE OUR STRENGTH FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.
WE ONLY WISH TO WORK TOGETHER WITH YOU TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE.
I HAVE *ATTACKED* YOU... I WISHED TO END YOUR LIFE. I DISRESPECTED YOU... AND SPAT IN THE FACE OF YOUR GOOD WILL... AND YET YOU DO NOT RETALIATE?
STILL YOU OFFER PEACE? STILL YOU SPEAK AS MY FRIEND?
YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO STRIKE ME DOWN, AND YET YOU SPARE ME THE WAY YOUR DAUGHTER HAS SPARED MY CHAMPION...

YES.
THAT IS THE VILTRUMITE WAY.

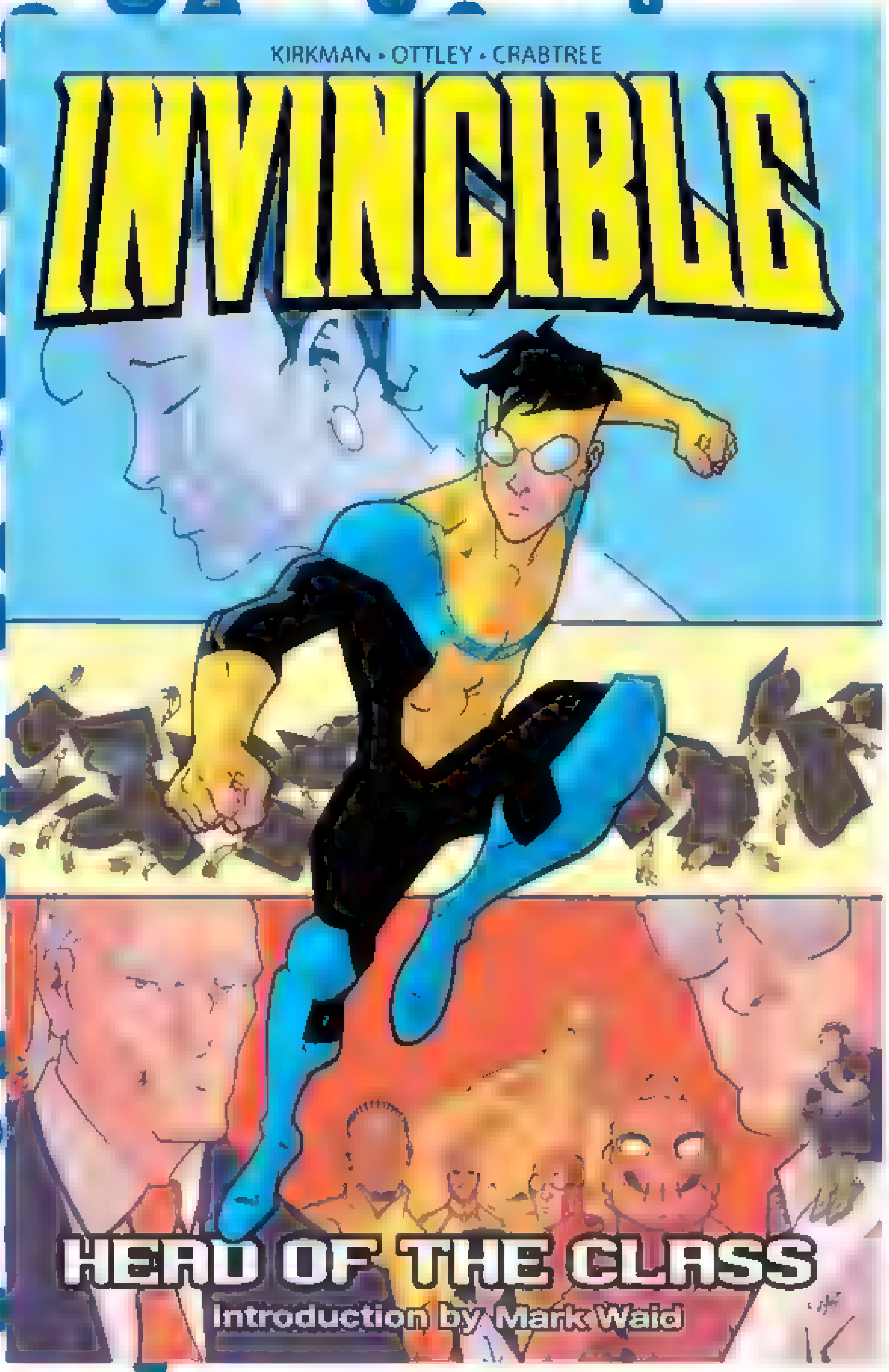

YOU DID IT.
WHAT?
YOU DID EVERYTHING YOUR FATHER ASKED.
YOU CHANGED THE VILTRUMITES, YOU TURNED THEM INTO A FORCE FOR GOOD, **CELEBRATED** ACROSS THE UNIVERSE.

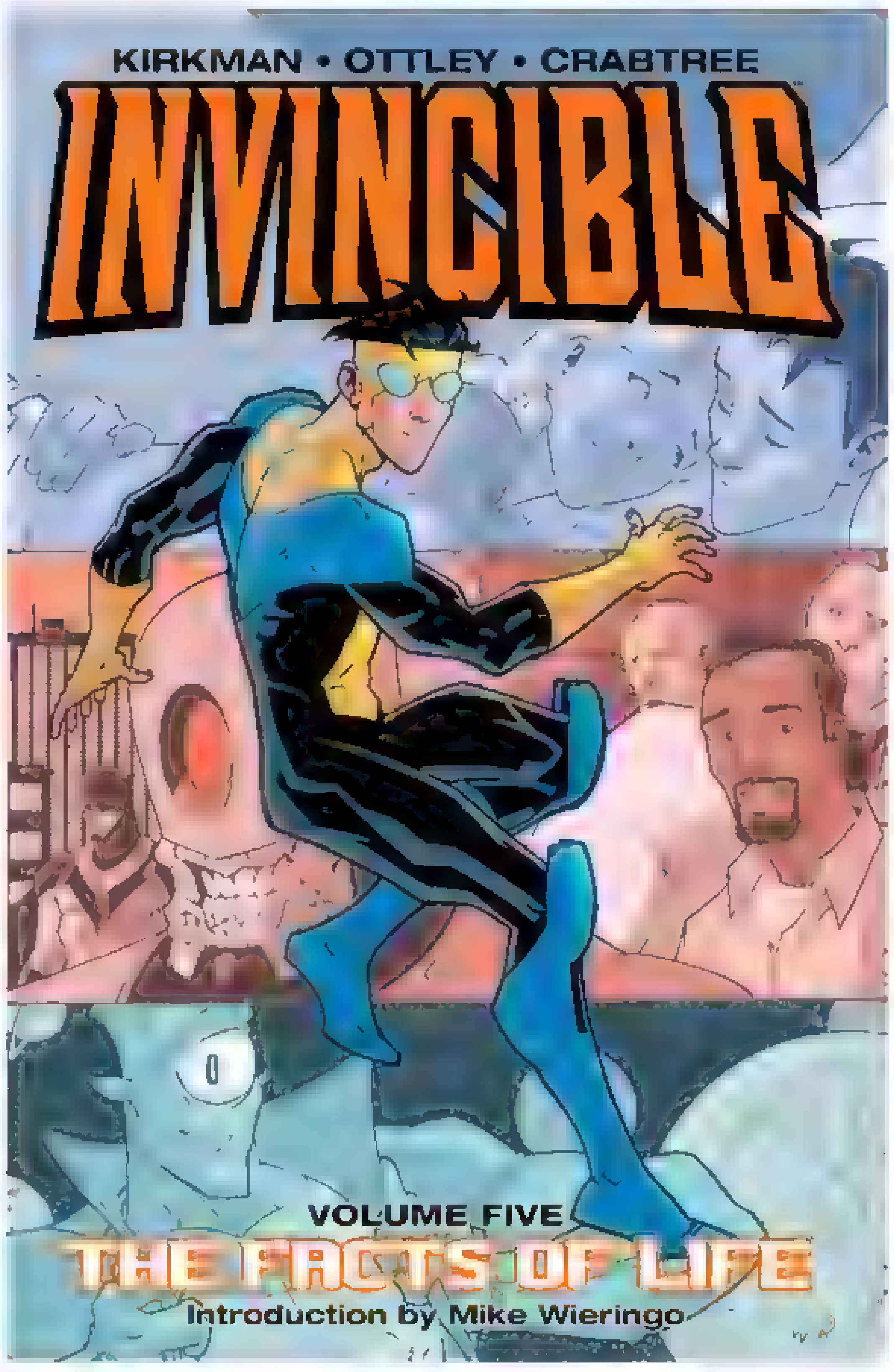

I'VE BEEN THINKING A LOT ABOUT THE PAST LATELY, AND... ONE THING KEEPS COMING BACK UP. THERE'S JUST... THERE'S SO MANY THINGS THAT REMIND ME OF SOMETHING MY FATHER ONCE SAID TO ME.
IT WAS DURING OUR BIG FIGHT... HE LOOKED DOWN AT ME AND HE SAID...
"WHAT WILL YOU HAVE AFTER FIVE HUNDRED YEARS?"
HEH.

KIRKMAN • WALKER • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
CRISIS AVERTED
VOLUME ONE
FAMILY MATTERS
Introduction by Kurt Busiek


KIRKMAN • WALKER • OTTLEY • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWO
EIGHT IS ENOUGH
Introduction by Erik Larsen

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME THREE
PERFECT STRANGERS
Introduction by Tom Brevoort


KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
HEAD OF THE CLASS
Introduction by Mark Waid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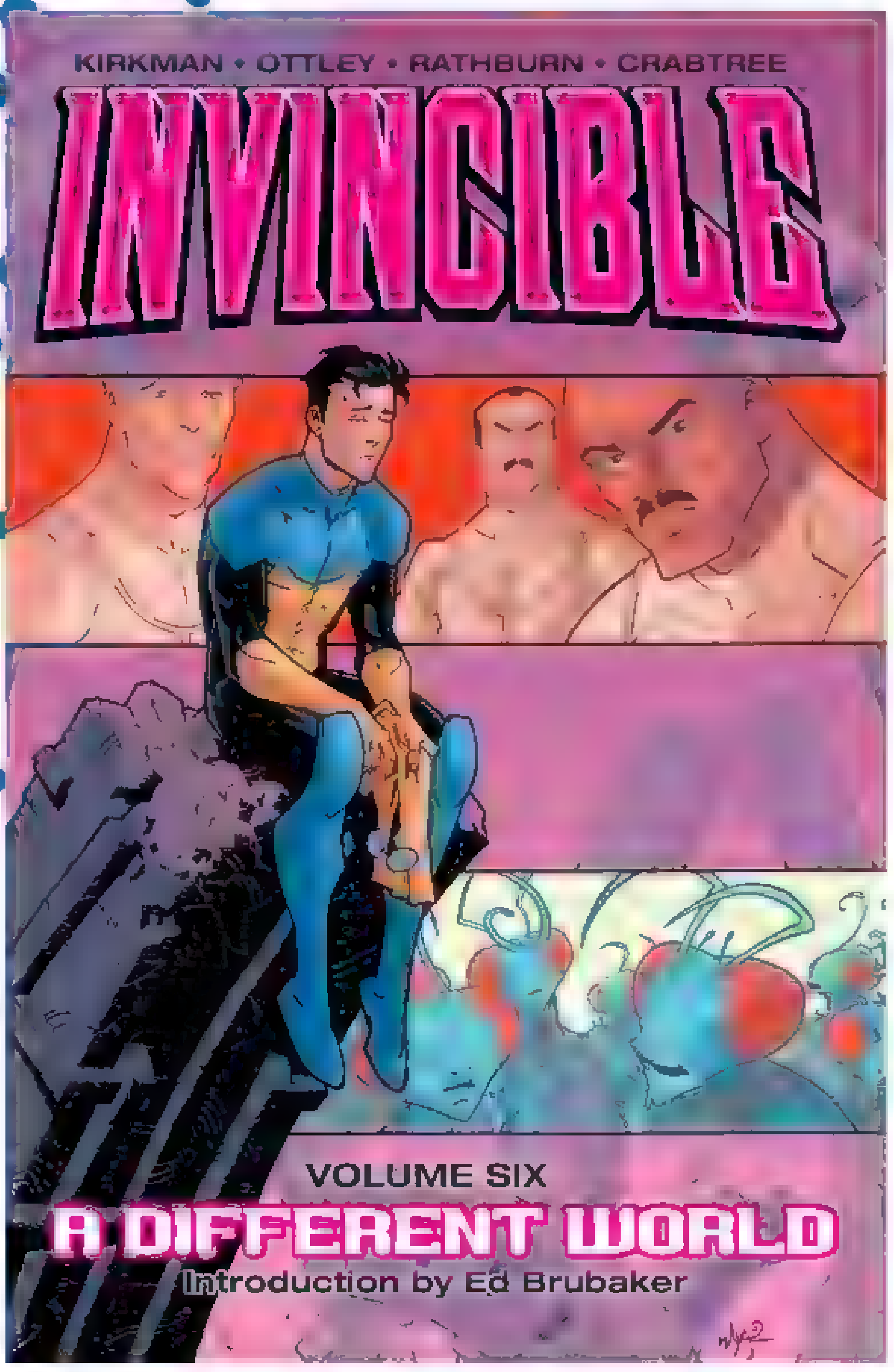
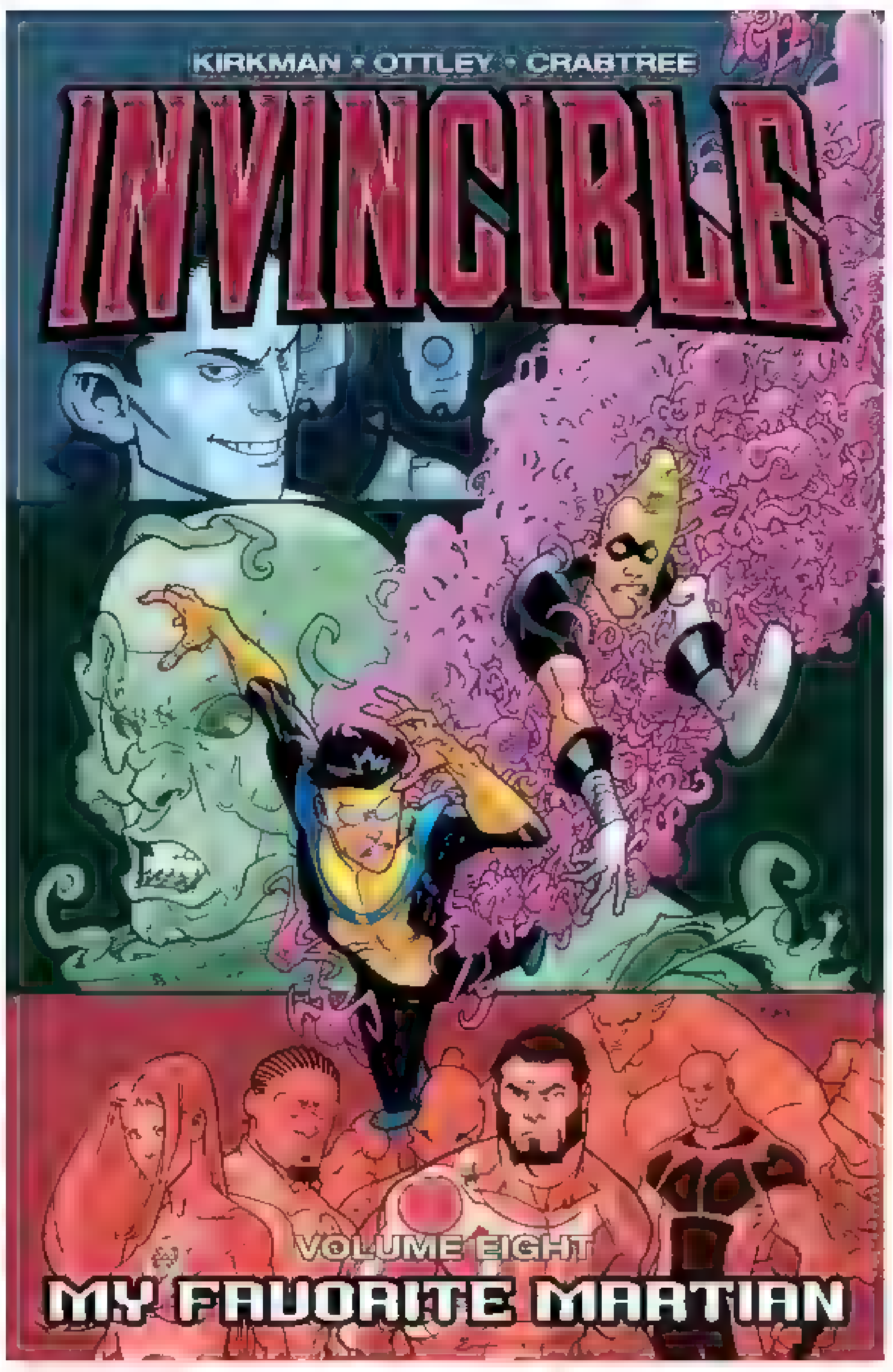
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME FIVE
THE FACTS OF LIFE
Introduction by Mike Wieringo


KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME SIX
A DIFFERENT WORLD
Introduction by Ed Brubaker

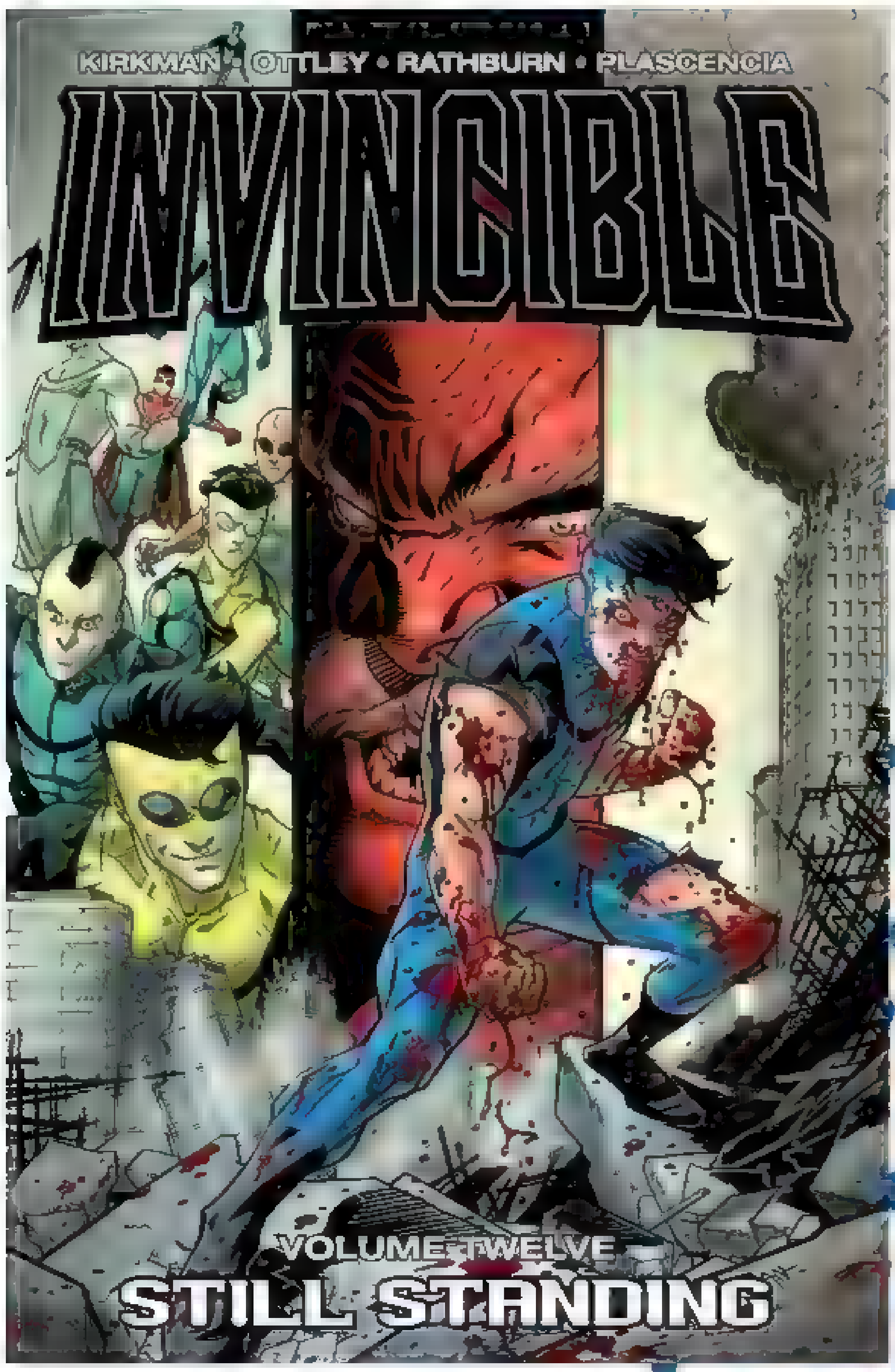
KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME SEVEN
THREE'S COMPANY
Introduction by Eric Stephenson


KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME EIGHT
MY FAVORITE MARTIAN

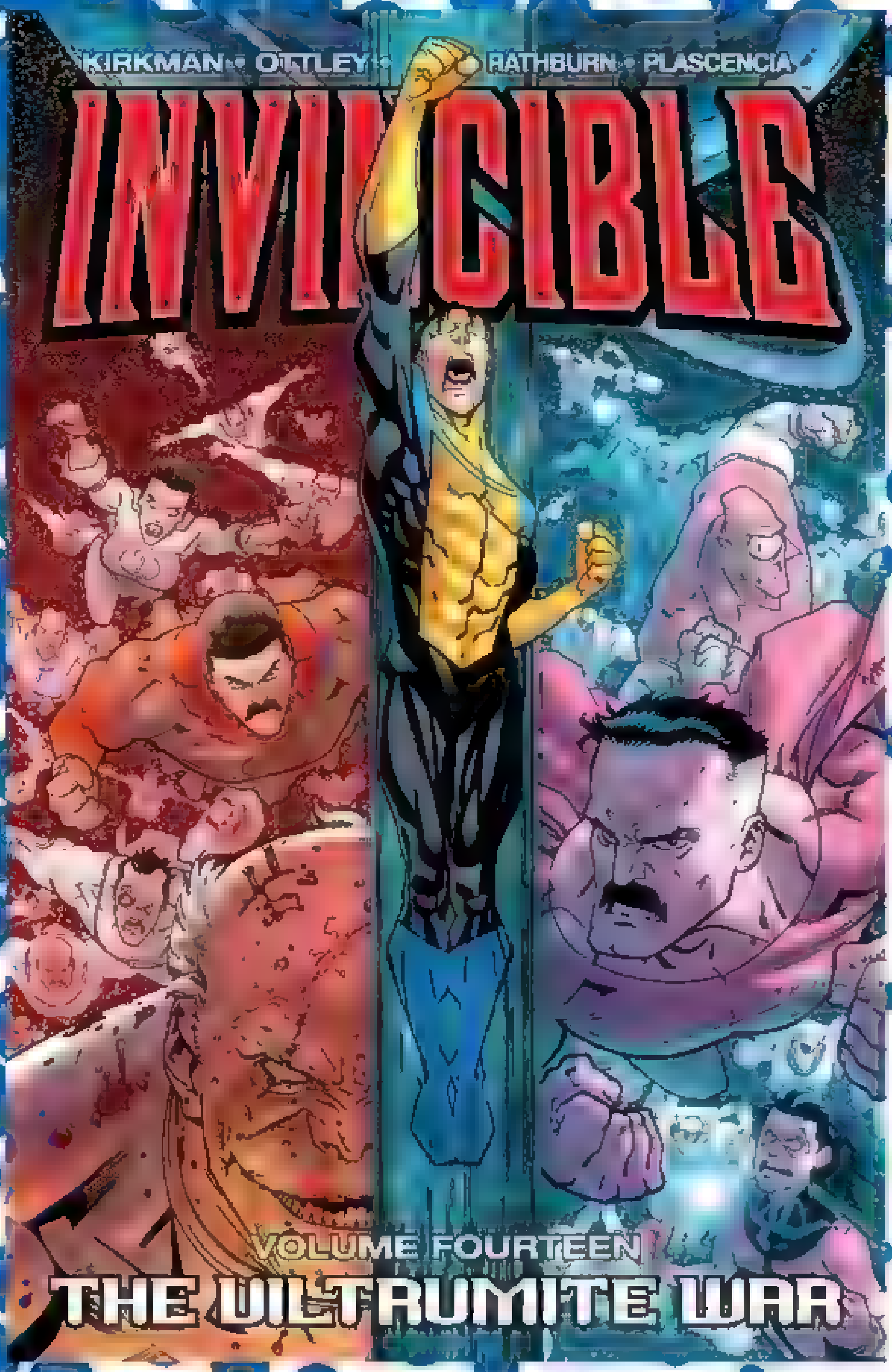
KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME NINE
OUT OF THIS WORLD

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE • PLASCENCIA
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TEN
WHO'S THE BOSS?

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • PLASCENCIA
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME ELEVEN
HAPPY DAYS


KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • PLASCENCIA
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWELVE
STILL STANDING

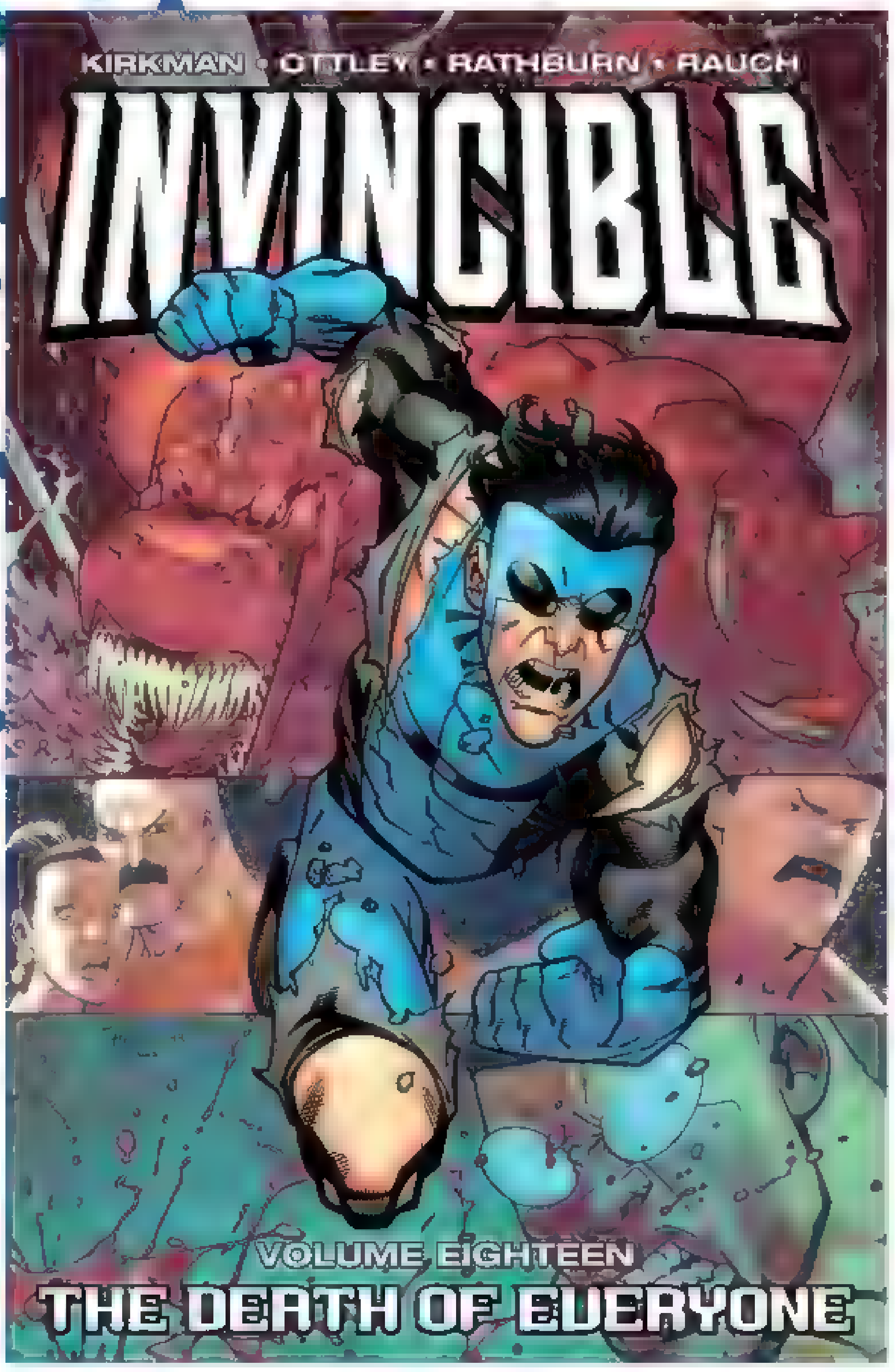
KIRKMAN • WALKER • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • PLASCENCIA
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME THIRTEEN
GROWING PAINS

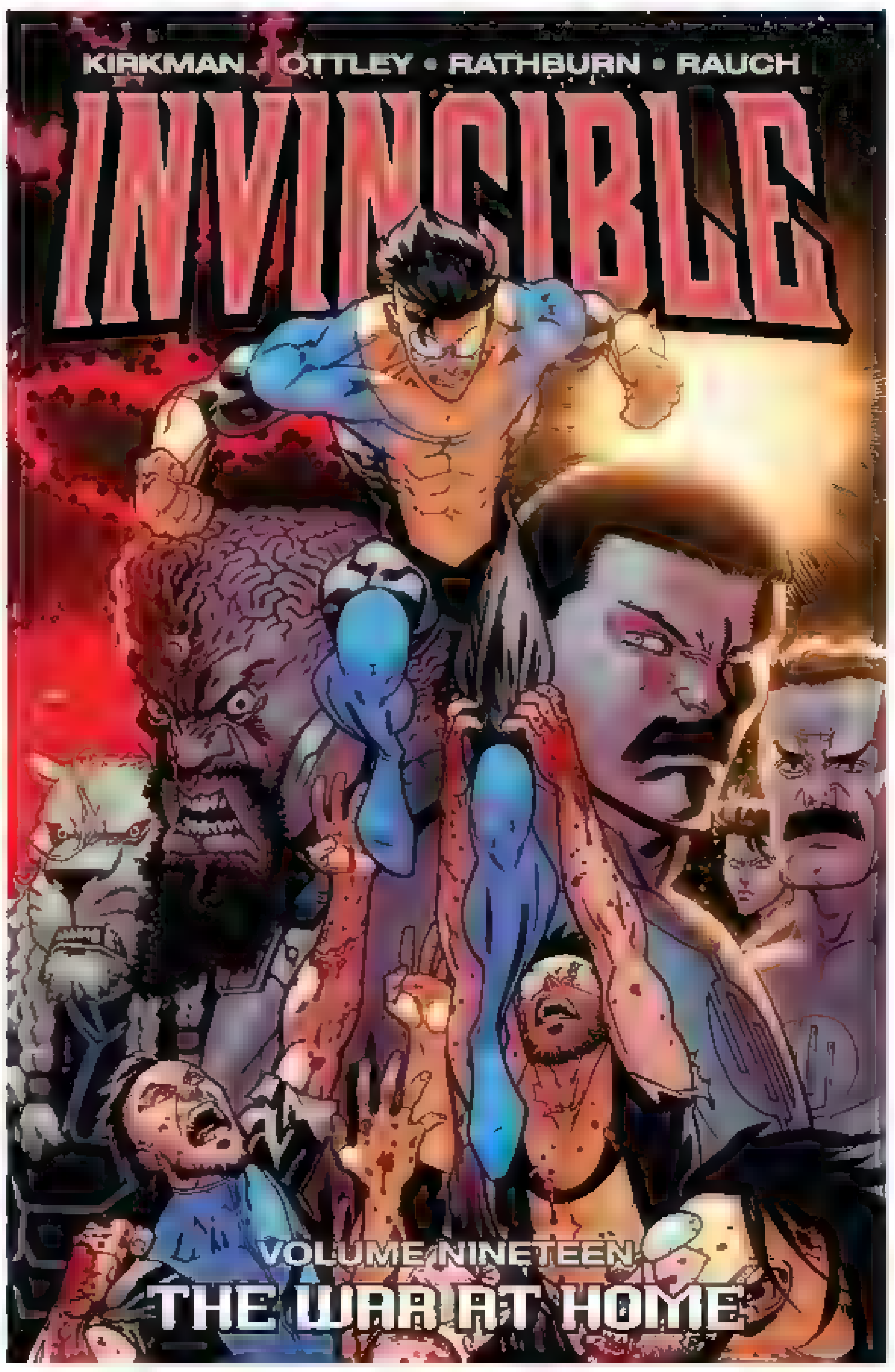

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • PLASCENCIA
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME FOURTEEN
THE VILTRUMITE WAR

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • RAUCH
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME FIFTEEN
GET SMART

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • WALKER • RATHBURN • RAUCH
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME SIXTEEN
FAMILY TIES

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • WALKER • RATHBURN • RAUCH
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME SEVENTEEN
WHAT'S HAPPENING


KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • RAUCH
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME EIGHTEEN
THE DEATH OF EVERYONE


KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • RAUCH
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME NINETEEN
THE WAR AT HOME

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • RAUCH
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWENTY
FRIENDS

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • BEAULIEU
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWENTY-ONE
MODERN FAMILY

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • BEAULIEU
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWENTY-TWO
REBOOT?

KIRKMAN • WALKER • FAIRBAIRN
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWENTY-THREE
FULL HOUSE

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • FAIRBAIRN
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWENTY-FOUR
THE END OF ALL THINGS
PART ONE

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • WALKER • FAIRBAIRN
INVINCIBLE
VOLUME TWENTY-FIVE
THE END OF ALL THINGS
PART TWO

And there you have it, the end of INVINCIBLE. I hope it was everything everyone wanted. I know I'm satisfied with where we ended up.

When we started this series FIFTEEN years ago, I had high hopes that it would last a good, long time and be a memorable series, but I never could have imagined a fifteen-year, one hundred and forty-four issue run! You may not know this, but there was a time I was pretty sure issue #13 was going to be the last issue. Then, miraculously, sales on issue #12 spiked up a teeny tiny bit, and sales continued to spike until the book was healthy, and we were able to go as long as we wanted... which is, sadly, until now.

This series is everything I've ever loved about superhero comics crammed into one series. I think it's fulfilled that promise, and while there's certainly other things I love about superhero comics, I think our story is told. Mark Grayson radically changed his alien race from a warring scourge of the galaxy to the saviors of the galaxy. His story is told. His mission, that he didn't even fully realize he was on, has been completed... and he got to live happily ever after.

I wonder how many of you thought this series would end with everyone dying a horrible death?

It's been such a gift to be able to write this series for this long, to be allowed to explore this world fully, dig into these characters, and, y'know... torture them for as long as we have. I thank you for the YEARS of support you've given us. We could never have done this without you. This series is a dream come true for me, and I will never be able to thank you properly for allowing me to do it.

I want to thank Ryan and Cory for joining me on this journey. Cory, even though he didn't draw all the issues, was a continued presence, helping to guide things by designing new characters here and there, and griping at me when he didn't like where the story was going or whatever dumb thing I'd told him I was planning. Ryan has been the heart and soul of this book since issue #8. While I've spent the better part of a week out of every month writing scripts for this series... Ryan has been chained to a table slaving away non-stop for that entire time! He still managed to squeeze in some *Haunt,* a DC annual, *Space Grub, Grizzly Shark,* a bunch of covers, and a few odds and ends in that time. It's been remarkable seeing him grow into one of the best artists in comics in that time. This book would never have survived without Ryan pulling all of our weight.

I want to thank Cliff Rathburn for pitching in on inks for more than half of Ryan's issues. Cliff has long been my secret weapon, working on all kinds of Skybound books. Is it okay to reveal that Cliff will be working with Ryan on the project he has lined up for after this? I'm excited about it! It's going to be amazing! Also, big thanks to Mark Morales and Dexter Vines for helping out during this final run.

I want to thank the elite team of colorists who brought us here. Bill Crabtree, FCO Plascencia, Nikos Koutis, John Rauch, Jean-Francois Beaulieu and Nathan Fairbairn! Each one brought their own style and take to these characters, and kept the book looking fresh and new as we marched through the years.

Rus Wooton! He's lettered this book since I threw in the towel after issue #13. (Lettering is hard, people.) It's a thankless job that doesn't get a lot of attention in comics, but it's oh-so essential, and Rus has become one of the best of the best in his field. You see his name in almost every great comic being published today. Thanks for lending your talents to this book for so long, Rus!

I'd like to thank Aubrey Sitterson, Sina Grace and, of course, the esteemed Mr. Sean Mackiewicz for stepping into the editor role when I got too big and important to keep track of all the behind the scenes stuff, and keeping the trains running on time. We definitely would have never made it this far without them.

Huge thanks to Eric Stephenson, Jim Valentino and Erik Larsen for helping this book land at Image Comics, giving it the platform it's had, and also for a ton of help and advice along the way. Jim Valentino, when I told him Omni-Man was going to kill the Guardians of the Globe in issue #25 and reveal that he's a bad guy, responded, "Move that up or there's not going to be an issue #25!" And when I told him I might be able to push it to issue #12, said, "Can you get it in issue #5?" And that got me to put it in issue #7. The series DEFINITELY wouldn't have made it to issue #25 if he hadn't done that. Thanks, Jim!

Erik Larsen deserves to be called out separately, as my love for Savage Dragon could be pointed to as my main source of inspiration for this comic. So, if you're reading this and haven't read that series, fix that! Erik also helped out with cover designs in the early days and talked me off a ledge or two more than once. He's been a great mentor, and if you're struggling to break into comics, he's a good friend to have.

Eric Stephenson remains, to this day, the best advocate for new ideas in comics. He championed this book from day one, and was also instrumental in helping a little-known zombie series find its audience. It's no wonder he's risen through the ranks to become the best publisher Image Comics has ever had.

Lastly, I'll thank David Alpert, my Skybound partner. He's been there since damn near day one, always pushing me to not suck. Without him, you wouldn't have all the cool upcoming INVINCIBLE non-comics stuff... like the movie we're currently developing at Universal with Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg... or all the other stuff we haven't announced yet. This comic is most certainly NOT the end.

Also, a huge thank you to all the other people who got us here, but didn't leave enough of an impression (heh!) to get a thank you here in this column! I still love you. It was just an oversight. If it makes you feel better, you're one of the only people actually reading this.

-ROBERT KIRKMAN

ROBERT KIRKMAN is the creator of many popular comic books, including the Eisner Award-winning THE WALKING DEAD, INVINCIBLE, SUPER DINOSAUR, OUTCAST BY KIRKMAN & AZACETA, and OBLIVION SONG. In 2008, Kirkman became a partner at Image Comics, and in 2010, he opened Skybound, his own imprint at Image, which publishes his titles as well as other original work. That same year, he became a creator, executive producer and writer on *The Walking Dead* television show. Kirkman is also the executive producer of AMC's *Fear the Walking Dead* and Cinemax's *Outcast*.

Starting with issue #8, **RYAN OTTLEY** has not only made INVINCIBLE his home, but he has made it his own as well. For years, the artist has joined forces with Robert Kirkman in detailing the ongoing adventures of young Mark Grayson. Not only is Ottley a talented storyteller, but he also boasts an unparalleled work ethic. He's drawn over 100 issues of INVINCIBLE, becoming one of the best artists in the business, while still having time to create *Sea Bear & Grizzly Shark* with Jason Howard.

The co-creator of INVINCIBLE, **CORY WALKER** was also the series' original artist, drawing issues #1-7 and setting the tone for the title. Since then, he's drawn for Marvel and DC Entertainment, including issues of *Marvel Team-Up, The Irredeemable Ant-Man, Punisher War Journal,* and *Shadowpact,* in addition to drawing the critically acclaimed *Destroyer MAX,* alongside writer Robert Kirkman. Walker has never forgotten his creation however, and has contributed frequent guest spots on INVINCIBLE issues, covers and back-ups.

CLIFF RATHBURN began inking Invincible with #52. He also works on THE WALKING DEAD, SUPER DINOSAUR and GREEN VALLEY for Skybound, and created, wrote and illustrated *Reaper* for Image Comics.

A longtime comics pro, **MARK MORALES** has worked for many companies including Image, Dark Horse, Chaos, DC Comics and Marvel Comics, mostly as an inker. Past projects from him include *Thor, Daredevil, Batman, X-Men, Justice League, Avengers vs X-Men, Spider-Man/Deadpool* and *Astonishing X-Men.* Currently he is working on *The Avengers* for Marvel Comics.

JOHN RAUCH is an American comic book colorist whose credits include INVINCIBLE, *The Darkness, Teen Titans: Year One, Patsy Walker: Hellcat,* and a bunch of other stuff not worth bragging about. He enjoys speaking about himself in the third person and pretending he is more talented and relevant than he really is in order to help fight off bouts of depression.

JEAN-FRANCOIS BEAULIEU is a Canadian comic book colorist whose credits include INVINCIBLE, GREEN VALLEY, KILL THE MINOTAUR, *Rocket Raccoon,* Marvel's *Oz* series, and *I Hate Fairyland.*

NATHAN FAIRBAIRN is an award-winning colorist whose work on titles such as *Scott Pilgrim, Batman Incorporated,* and *Wonder Woman: Earth One* has frequently topped the New York Times Best Sellers list. He is the writer and co-creator of *Lake of Fire,* available now from Image Comics.

Anyone who looks at the credits of their favorite comic books is likely familiar with the name **RUS WOOTON.** With his work on INVINCIBLE, THE WALKING DEAD, OUTCAST BY KIRKMAN & AZACETA, *Black Science, Manhattan Projects* and more, a case could easily be made for Wooton being the go-to letterer for creator-owned comics.

SEAN MACKIEWICZ is the Editor-in-Chief of Skybound Entertainment. Choosing his favorite title to work on is like picking your favorite child…if all your children were covered in blood.

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